

SBSC Coaching Basics

2026 Fall Season

Goals:

As a developmental league the main goal for SBSC Rec shouldn't be wins and losses; but instead, it should be about making sure we continuously develop kids for as long as they are with us, starting with the fundamentals of sound soccer - playing and understanding - and building on those fundamentals each practice, each season and through age groups.

Whether players move on from SBSC Rec to play Travel or HS soccer, our goal will be to provide them the knowledge and skills needed to play beyond our league, and to be a sound player on either side of the ball at any position (keeper being an exception).

Below are the strategies and tactics in order to accomplish this goal.

Overall Goals:

- **Core Goal:** Continuous player development in the SBSC Recreational League, not wins and losses.
- **Foundation:** Start with the fundamentals of sound soccer (playing and understanding).
- **Long-Term Outcome:** Provide players with the knowledge and skills needed to be sound players at any position (excluding keeper) to play in high school or beyond.

Overall Philosophy:

- **Defense:** Team Defense (guard space, press-and-cover).
- **Offense:** Possession Offense (attack mistakes made by the other team).
- **Movement:** Formation moves up and back together as a unit.

Overall Strategy:

- Focus on Team defense, possession, and counter attacking weaknesses.
- 90% of the game is passing; master passing.
- When in possession, everyone is on offense; when the opposing team has the ball, the entire team is on defense.

Basic Tactics:

- Specific and age-appropriate skills, which should build upon previous skills and lead into more advanced skills
- Specific and age-appropriate positions and tactics, building upon previous positions and tactics and lead to more advanced skills and tactics
- Specific exercises, stretches and warm-ups (including hydration!) to guard against injury and promote healthy player development

For instance:

- "Basic" passing skills would include opening body towards the direction you want to receive, receiving with outside foot in that direction, and being in position to pass immediately or continue with dribble.
- Passing drills will include more movement; we will teach passing into space or running into space to receive a pass or be a backup
- 'Head up' would include knowing where you are going to go before you receive the ball, anticipation
- Add outside foot in dribbling/passing/receiving.
- Add square cone drills in place of cone-to-cone or gate drills.

SBSC Age Group Advancement Schedule:

	U6	U8	U11	U15
SKILLS	Introduction	Skills U6 plus:	Skills U8 plus:	Skills U11 plus:
	control	toe taps	shooting: pass into net	shooting: longer range, head over ball
	dribbling	foundations	roll over	moves to create space: directional receiving, head fakes, quick moves
	receiving (all inside foot)	pull backs	passing/dribbling outside feet	dribbling: close control, at speed
	passing (all inside foot)	passing: forward, back, square	chest/thigh/other control of ball above the waist	
		body position to receive ball - outside foot		
CONCEPTS	Introduction	Concepts U6 plus:	Concepts U8 plus:	Concepts U11 plus:
	on your toes	shielding	pivots	defensive staggering
	head up	communication	offensive and defensive switches	diamond formation
	control/look/pass	pass and move	guarding and taking angles	CDM/CAM
	spacing	show for ball	passing/running into space	1-1 beating man
	team game, and only one ball: passing and sharing is essential	triangles	control above the waist	1-1 guarding man
		press/cover	pass and move	drawing defenders on/off the ball
		keeper	defend towards edges	
		first touch	keeper triangle - coming out	

		balance head/shoulders/hips	stop/step	inside/outside turn while dribbling
FORMATIONS	2-2 no keeper	3-2 w/ keeper	4-2-2 w/ keeper	4-4-2 w/ keeper
	basic	roles		
	throw ins	movement	switches	box to box midfielders
		lanes and areas of pitch	rotating sides	transitional midfielders
		kick off	advanced set-pieces	R/L back into offense
		throw ins		
		free kicks		
		corner kicks		
		goal kicks		
Tactics	Introduction	Tactics U6 plus:	Tactics U8 plus:	Tactics U11 plus:
	team offense	offense creates space	pass to receive (give and go)	counter attacking
	team defense	defense closes space	press and cover	mid blocking

Cornerstones for Practice, Planning and Performance

PRACTICE OPENINGS • pass w/ partner • stretches • dribble - toe taps • dribble - foundations • dribble - pull backs • circle passing	PRACTICE BASICS • everyone on their ball, sharing ball, all the time • short-sided drills/concepts building up to larger sides • have a plan • keep it moving, avoid standing/waiting • transition between drills quickly (during water breaks)
MANTRAS • control, look, pass (sometimes shield) • one touch, two touch • every drill counts • every pass counts • every possession counts • practice hard, have fun playing the game	PLAY AS A TEAM!

FORMATIONS: Roles and Responsibilities

At younger ages players will learn the basics about positions and formations, each of which will build upon the other as the players-per-side increases. It is important for everyone to be teaching the same positions and formations so that players are able to progress from season to season regardless of whether or not they have the same coach(es).

The 4-4-2 formation (at U14+) is perfect for this, both defensively and offensively, especially as players progress. The tactics, passing triangles, rotations, pivots, switches, positioning, roles, responsibilities ... all remain the same at every age group although the number of players per side increases over time.

Ultimately: *knowing and understanding the positions and roles/responsibilities within a 4-4-2 will better prepare every player to understand other roles/responsibilities in various formations.*

Base Formations:

U8 - 6 (w/ keeper) - 3-2

U10 - 7 (w/ keeper) - 3-2-1

U12 - 9 (w/ keeper) - 4-2-2

U15 - 11 (w/ keeper) - 4-4-2

4-4-2 Positions/Roles

- Goalkeeper
- Right Fullback
- Left Fullback
- Right Center Back
- Left Center Back
- Holding Midfielder
- Box-to-Box Attacking Midfielder
- Right Midfielder/Winger
- Left Midfielder/Wingers
- Right Forward (striker)
- Left Forward (striker)

There are numbers for each position, but I don't think they are necessary. That said, for those interested they are (in order of above): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 9 and 10.

Attacking-4-4-2 Formation



There are variants of the 4-4-2.

A flat-4 formation would see the back line and mid line players on even horizontal lines.

A diamond-4 formation would see one CM playing up as an attacking mid (CAM), and one would play back as a designated defensive mid (CDM). The LM and RM players would remain on the outsides, but position themselves midway between the CAM and CDM, creating a diamond in the middle.

I like this more attacking-4 formation, with outside mids and backers playing up into the offense. Although it is called 'attacking', it also lends itself to a stout defensive structure, allowing team defense from box to box, starting on the opponent's side of the pitch.

If you imagine lanes on the pitch, the center 'lane' has the most players and is the strength of your formation.

PHILOSOPHY

In the philosophy of “total football” all positions and players are inter-changeable, and the team moves up and down the field together. Our “defense” begins in the front with the forwards, and our “offense” begins in the back with the backers, and many times our keeper. And, by maintaining the spacing between players up and down the pitch, it is possible to play a possession-type game and defend outside of your own third.

This formation allows us to easily attack with 3-4 players, leaving us 4-5 in support (back passes, square passes, defending). Upon change of possession the two center backs are the last line of defense, along with the left or right back, whichever isn't involved in the play up-field on the ball side.

Coaching and playing Total Football allows all players to be involved in the game, on offense and defense. Total Football depends on the overall attitude of ‘all for one and one for all’ and a concentration on passing/receiving, positioning, communicating, constant movement, and patience.

Player Responsibilities (base 4-4-2): U14+

Left forward/Right forward

The left and right forwards are the best scorers in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, switching with the right forward depending on play. Forwards in this formation are 'strikers'. They primarily play 'up' in attack, stretching the defense, or holding possession for the mids to join the attack. After a change of possession, they are the first line of defense (just like the backers move up in support of them in the offense).

Left mid/Right mid

The outside mids are the transition and support players in this formation.

This player can play like a 'winger' by widening the field and opening up the middle, but they can also play the middle as a normal midfielder. The left and right mids are transition players, supporting the attacking forwards and being outlets for the back line, while also covering and assisting the back line on defense. Mids can switch with each other, or with forwards in the attack, or even with right/left backs in transitions.

Right/Left Center mid

The inside mids control the center of the pitch, from box to box, and are the pivots in this formation.

Center mids have the positioning on the pitch that gives them the most options to attack, defend, pass, reset, etc., and they are vital to switching sides of the pitch, whether vertically or horizontally in either direction. The attacking mid acts more like a quarterback on offense and the defending mid works more like a middle linebacker on defense (the play callers, distributors and instigators).

Left/Right back

The left and right backs are the workhorses in this formation!

This player plays up-field in the attack when the ball is on their side of the field, and they also play defense. This player covers the left side of the field, but can also go into the middle during a 'switch' with a center back, or if the ball is on the opposite side of the field (following the play and occupying vacated space).

Left/Right center back

The center backs are the best defenders in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, predominately on defense but also in support of the offensive transitions happening in the midfield. While defending in the middle, they should guard from the inside-out, or in the direction of their supporting defenders. Off the ball, they play in support of the pressing defender, guarding passing and shooting lanes.

Keeper

The keeper should be the leader and organizer of the back line, and many times will be the initiator of the offense, building from the back.

The keeper has the best eyes on the field from their vantage point. They can see the larger picture of what is going on offensively and defensively. Keepers should not solely be the last line of defense as a shot stopper, they should also be able to come out in support of their back line, with the foot skills to receive a back pass and find a different outlet.

Player Responsibilities (base 4-2-2): U12

A 4-2-2 is essentially the 4-4-2 without the two outside midfielders.

Left forward/Right forward

The left and right forwards are the best scorers in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, switching with the right forward depending on play. Forwards in this formation are 'strikers'. They primarily play 'up' in attack, stretching the defense, or holding possession for the mids to join the attack. After a change of possession, they are the first line of defense (just like the backers move up in support of them in the offense).

Right/Left mid

The mids control the center of the pitch, from box to box, and are the pivots in this formation as well as the supporters of forwards in attack.

Center mids have the positioning on the pitch that gives them the most options to attack, defend, pass, reset, etc., and they are vital to switching sides of the pitch, whether vertically or horizontally in either direction. The attacking mid acts more like a quarterback on offense and the defending mid works more like a middle linebacker on defense (the play callers, distributors and instigators).

Left/Right back

The left and right backs are the workhorses in this formation!

This player plays up-field in the attack when the ball is on their side of the field, and they also play defense. This player covers the left side of the field, but can also go into the middle during a 'switch' with a center back, or if the ball is on the opposite side of the field (following the play and occupying vacated space).

Left/Right center back

The center backs are the best defenders in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, predominately on defense but also in support of the offensive transitions happening in the midfield. While defending in the middle, they should guard from the inside-out, or in the direction of their supporting defenders. Off the ball, they play in support of the pressing defender, guarding passing and shooting lanes.

Keeper

The keeper should be the leader and organizer of the back line, and many times will be the initiator of the offense, building from the back.

The keeper has the best eyes on the field from their vantage point. They can see the larger picture of what is going on offensively and defensively. Keepers should not solely be the last line of defense as a shot stopper, they should also be able to come out in support of their back line, with the foot skills to receive a back pass and find a different outlet.

Player Responsibilities (base 3-2-1): U10

A 3-2-1 is essentially the 4-3-2 with one less forward and one less back.

Forward

The forward is the best scorer in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, switching with the right forward depending on play. Forwards in this formation are 'strikers'. They primarily play 'up' in attack, stretching the defense, or holding possession for the mids to join the attack. After a change of possession, they are the first line of defense (just like the backers move up in support of them in the offense).

Right/Left mid

The mids control the center of the pitch, from box to box, and are the pivots in this formation as well as the supporters of forwards in attack.

Center mids have the positioning on the pitch that gives them the most options to attack, defend, pass, reset, etc., and they are vital to switching sides of the pitch, whether vertically or horizontally in either direction. The attacking mid acts more like a quarterback on offense and the defending mid works more like a middle linebacker on defense (the play callers, distributors and instigators).

Left/Right back

The left and right backs are the workhorses in this formation!

This player plays up-field in the attack when the ball is on their side of the field, and they also play defense. This player covers the left side of the field, but can also go into the middle during a 'switch' with a center back, or if the ball is on the opposite side of the field (following the play and occupying vacated space).

Left/Right center back

The center backs are the best defenders in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, predominately on defense but also in support of the offensive transitions happening in the midfield. While defending in the middle, they should guard from the inside-out, or in the direction of their supporting defenders. Off the ball, they play in support of the pressing defender, guarding passing and shooting lanes.

Keeper

The keeper should be the leader and organizer of the back line, and many times will be the initiator of the offense, building from the back.

The keeper has the best eyes on the field from their vantage point. They can see the larger picture of what is going on offensively and defensively. Keepers should not solely be the last line of defense as a shot stopper, they should also be able to come out in support of their back line, with the foot skills to receive a back pass and find a different outlet.

Player Responsibilities (base 3-2): U8

*A 3-2 is essentially the 3-2-1 with the two forward players playing both as mids **and** forwards.*

Right/Left Forwards/Mids

The best scorers as well as the transition players in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, switching with the right forward depending on play. Forwards in this formation are 'strikers'. They primarily play 'up' in attack, stretching the defense, or holding possession for the mids to join the attack. After a change of possession, they are the first line of defense (just like the backers move up in support of them in the offense).

Left/Right back

The left and right backs are the workhorses in this formation!

This player plays up-field in the attack when the ball is on their side of the field, and they also play defense. This player covers the left side of the field, but can also go into the middle during a 'switch' with a center back, or if the ball is on the opposite side of the field (following the play and occupying vacated space).

Center back

The center back is the best defender in this formation.

This player plays in the middle of the field, predominately on defense but also in support of the offensive transitions happening in the midfield. While defending in the middle, they should guard from the inside-out, or in the direction of their supporting defenders. Off the ball, they play in support of the pressing defender, guarding passing and shooting lanes.

Keeper

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