



CELTIC FC FLORIDA WHAT IS ACADEMY?

Simply put, an “Academy” is a group of players placed in a group of players within a specific age range at a club, instead of being placed on individual teams. There are no “A” or “B” or 1st and 2nd teams, etc. Rather, players are kept in the larger player group and are moved back and forth according to progress and development throughout the year.

Clubs within our league will have Academies of varying sizes. Some clubs may only field enough players to make up one team (i.e. 8-10 players), while others may have 40 or 50 players grouped together based only on age and gender. Individual trainers and clubs will have differing styles and philosophies with regard to how they will train their Academy players, but all should share a common approach – with an emphasis on player development.

An integral component to the Academy format is a removal of Standings and Records of teams. This should remove the incentive for clubs or coaches from playing games just to win, and allowing players to learn the game without the fear of failure.

HOW THE ACADEMY FORMAT CAN ADDRESS THE CURRENT PROBLEMS

By grouping all players together by age and gender in one Academy program, coaches and trainers will have the freedom they need to truly focus on training and development. The importance is placed on training, and not the success of individual “teams”. The goal is for players to train as a group, with allowances for smaller group training within the larger Academy group. For games, players can be grouped based on a variety of criteria on a weekly basis; the lack of strict team rosters offers the club flexibility to change the team’s components without hindrance. For example, players may be grouped one week by ability level (more advanced together, and least advanced together) and the next week by making more equal teams, or by having players play different positions on different weeks, etc.

Ideally, with positive guidance from coaches and parents, players will be challenged to excel without being overly pushed to win. Coaches should set goals beyond the final score such as improvement in passing, communication, beating players 1v1, etc. While these goals are harder to measure than a final score, they are the type of skills that coaches should teach players and parents to focus on.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ACADEMY:

- No Fear of Failure – Players are allowed to experiment and be creative. Players should not be discouraged from taking on defenders or trying new “moves”. If creativity is stifled now, they will most likely have a fear of ever trying anything new. If a player tries to take on a defender and causes a counter attack conceding a goal – they should be encouraged and applauded for trying, not reprimanded for



the end result. With time, players will gain confidence along with their new skills and will learn decision making through success and failure.

- Technical over Tactical – Small sided games at younger age groups are implemented in order to simplify the tactics of the game. Combined with no net gain for winning every game, coaches should have freedom to stress fundamental skills, even if shape or formation suffers.
- Positions and Team Play – Players should have opportunities to attempt to learn a variety of positions. Today's forward may be tomorrow's defender or Goal Keeper. Players should not be labeled by position – at U9 there should be no forwards or midfielders – only soccer players.
- Goals-Based Soccer – Developmental goals, not results, should be prioritized. The individual improvement of each player should be the guide for success – not the final team record.
- Player Retention – Without the reward/punishment of win-loss records, clubs have more incentive to include a wider range of players in their programs. Players who are not currently as physically advanced can receive opportunities to train and improve. Enjoyment of the game should be stressed over final results. The club's philosophy towards this program should be explained to parents and players, and coaches should ask for support in achieving their goals.

COMPETITION AND WINNING?

As stated before, competitiveness is an important component of the game of soccer. A desire to win is natural in all players, and should not be discouraged. Players of all ages want to win and are naturally competitive. They will know who won at the end of the game.

It is understood that coaches, players and teams will play to win. The hope is that this is not the **ONLY** focus. Teams should take pride in their own successes, not in the failure of their opponents. Academy Coaches are encouraged to communicate with their opponents prior to matches to discuss their goals for the game, and how they can cooperate to help each other accomplish each team's goals while maintaining a competitive environment.

Coaches and clubs should at no time attempt to “stack” teams to win every game. Game rosters should be composed as best as possible to allow maximum playing time for all players, and to allow player movement in positions and amongst teams.

Coaches should set clearly defined goals for each player, each game and for the season – and should place as much emphasis on the achievement of those goals as on the net result of the games.

For questions or more information, please contact info@celticflorida.org.