



TRAINING METHODOLOGY

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We believe players learn best when training mirrors the complexity and creativity of the real game. Our training methodology is built upon two core theories: the Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) and Representative Learning Design (RLD). These applied theories are grounded in broader frameworks such as Ecological Dynamics, Nonlinear Pedagogy, Differential Learning, and Affordances in Action, making them inherently interconnected. The ultimate objective is to create a game-realistic and adaptive training model that develops players capable of responding effectively to the ever-changing demands of Soccer.

What is the Constraints-Led Approach?

The Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) is a coaching methodology that shapes player learning by manipulating constraints rather than prescribing specific actions. Constraints can be individual (e.g., a player's physical or technical ability), environmental (e.g., pitch size, weather), or task-related (e.g., game rules, number of touches allowed). By adjusting these variables, coaches create conditions that guide players toward discovering effective solutions on their own, promoting adaptability and decision-making. Unlike traditional drills that focus on isolated skills, CLA ensures that learning emerges naturally within the dynamic and complex environment of the game, leading to better skill transfer and game intelligence.

What is Representative Learning Design (RLD)?

Representative Learning Design (RLD) ensures that training activities accurately reflect the perceptual, cognitive, and decision-making demands of real game situations. It emphasizes creating practice environments where players experience the same types of information, pressures, and challenges they would face in a match. This means training should include realistic opposition, space, time constraints, and tactical contexts rather than isolated drills. By maintaining fidelity to game conditions, RLD enhances skill transfer, enabling players to develop behaviors and decision-making processes that are directly applicable in competitive play.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On a day-to-day basis, our training environment is designed to put the key tenets of the stated theoretical framework into practice in a variety of ways. We aim to:

- Design training sessions by manipulating task, environmental, and individual constraints to guide players toward desired behaviors.
- Encourage self-organization, adaptability, and creative problem-solving by reducing explicit instruction and allowing players to explore solutions.
- Use modified game scenarios with specific rules to shape player decision-making in real match contexts.
- Ensure training sessions closely mirror the perceptual and decision-making demands of the actual game.
- Use game-realistic drills and small-sided games where players encounter similar affordances and pressures as in match play.

- Develop training environments that promote skill transfer by integrating realistic movement patterns, opponents, and time constraints.
- Recognize that skill development emerges from the interaction between the player, task, and environment.
- Encourage training environments that force players to perceive and act based on relevant environmental cues (e.g., defenders' movements, teammates' positioning, and space availability).
- Ensure adaptability by designing open-ended tasks where solutions emerge naturally rather than being pre-defined.
- Acknowledge that learning is an individualized and non-linear process, with players developing at different rates based on exposure to various challenges.
- Use Guided Discovery, allowing players to explore and find solutions through different game situations rather than receiving explicit instructions.
- Implement variable training loads and complexity, ensuring players face progressive challenges that promote deeper learning.
- Advocate constant variation in training to enhance adaptability and prevent players from becoming too reliant on repetitive patterns.
- Encourage skill acquisition through trial and error, exposing players to diverse conditions that force them to adapt and refine their decision-making.
- Incorporate modifications in field dimensions, ball types, rule changes, and opponent behaviors to stimulate creative problem-solving.
- Focus on how players perceive and utilize opportunities for action (affordances) in the game.
- Develop training scenarios where players must recognize and act on different affordances, such as when to dribble, pass, shoot, or press.
- Ensure that training tasks present realistic affordances, reinforcing perceptual awareness and decision-making under pressure.

STAGES AND GOALS

General Focus	Stage	Ages	Goal of Each Stage
Initiation	Stage 1 - Active Start	U4-U5	Fun*
	Stage 2 - Fundamentals	U6-U10	Learning
	Stage 3: Learn to Train	U10-U12	Performance
Development	Stage 4: Train to Train	U12-U15	Learning* Performance Fun
Competition	Stage 5: Train to Compete	U15-U18	Performance* Learning Fun

TRAINING PRIORITIES

STAGE 1: ACTIVE START (U4-U5)

Training the Coordinative Structure

The focus is to build coordination through basic physical literacy. Exercises that develop fundamental movement skills (running, jumping, balancing, etc.), and body awareness, while keeping activities fun and engaging.

1. Games (Exploring Movement & Coordination)
 - Games without a ball (Tag games, Freeze Dance, Obstacle Courses)
 - Animal walks (Bear crawls, Kangaroo jumps, Crab walks)
 - Balance & reaction games (Statue Freeze, One-Leg Challenges, "Jump & Stop")
2. Circuits (Developing Agility & Motor Skills)
 - Individual circuits (Hopping over cones, stepping through hoops, weaving through markers)
 - Partner/group circuits (Follow the Leader, Relay Races, Mirror Movements)
3. Spatial Awareness Games
 - Moving through different zones (Dribbling or running into color-coded areas)
 - Directional movement games (Turn & run, quick stops, changes in pace/direction)
4. Object Manipulation Games
 - Throwing & catching (Bean bags, soft balls, scarves)
 - Kicking & rolling (Rolling balls at cones, kicking balloons, kicking into zones)
5. Chaotic Play (Free-Flowing Exploration)
 - Multiple activities in the same space (e.g., one group dribbling, another playing tag)
6. Mini-Games (Simple Play Situations)
 - 1v1 Dribbling Races
 - Dribbling through gates
 - "Treasure Hunt" (collect cones while dribbling)
7. Match (Free Play - Let them explore!)
 - Small 2v2 or 3v3 games with no coaching interventions
 - The focus is on fun, movement, and ball interaction

Training the Cognitive Structure (Basic Problem-Solving & Engagement in Play)

Exercises that encourage simple decision-making, listening, and responding to cues in a game environment.

1. Reaction Games (Listening & Decision-Making)
 - Red Light, Green Light (Stop & go control)
 - Call & React (Coach calls colors or numbers, kids react with a movement)
2. Follow-the-Leader Activities
 - Mirroring movements with a partner or coach
 - Dribbling-based following games
3. Simple Challenges (Introducing Playful Competition)
 - "Can you...?" challenges (Can you hop on one foot? Can you dribble and stop on a cone?)
4. Storytelling & Themed Play
 - Sessions built around themes (Pirates looking for treasure, Animals in the jungle, Superhero movements)
5. Free Play & Exploration

STAGE 2: FUNDAMENTALS (U6-U10):

Training the Coordinative structure:

Exercises that primarily engage the coordinative structure to achieve movements and actions, individually and collectively

1. Games
 - Games without a ball
 - Hand games
 - Advanced hand games
 - Games with feeders
2. Circuits
 - Individuals
 - In pairs or groups
3. Combined actions
 - Triangles,
 - Rectangles,
 - Rhombuses
4. Possession games
 - With non-game specific objectives. For example: driving through goals, reaching zones, throwing cones placed on the field
5. Chaotic games
 - Different games in the same area
6. Mini-games (Reduced games)
 - 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 2v2+1 with directionality
7. Reduced parts
 - Situations reduced to maximum 2v2 or 3v3 with neutrals
8. Match (Free Game)

Training the Cognitive structure (Individual technical-tactical actions)

Exercises that emphasize more directionality and a higher player count as well as engage the cognitive structure to resolve more complex situations. 3v3s will continue to be the most complex, but prioritizing 2v2s with and without superiorities (neutrals).

1. Combined actions (explaining why the movements and actions happen)
2. Possession Games
3. Chaotic games
4. Rondos (regular and large)
5. Small-sided games
6. Positional games (basic)
7. Attack – Defense games
8. Matches (correcting individual tactical instructions)

STAGE 3: LEARN TO TRAIN (U10-U12) & STAGE 4: TRAIN TO TRAIN (U12-U15)

Training the Coordinative structure:

Exercises that primarily engage the coordinative structure to achieve movements and actions, individually and collectively

1. Games
 - Games without a ball
 - Hand games
 - Advanced hand games
 - Games with feeders
2. Circuits
 - Individuals
 - In pairs or groups
3. Combined actions
 - Triangles,
 - Rectangles,
 - Rhombuses
4. Possession games
 - With non-game specific objectives. For example: driving through goals, reaching zones, throwing cones placed on the field
5. Chaotic games
 - Different games in the same area
6. Mini-games (Reduced games)
 - 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 2v2+1 with directionality
7. Reduced parts
 - Situations reduced to maximum 2v2 or 3v3 with neutrals
8. Match (Free Game)

Training the Cognitive structure (individual technical-tactical actions)

Exercises that emphasize more directionality and a higher player count as well as engage the cognitive structure to resolve more complex situations. 5v5s (with or without neutrals) will continue to be the most complex, but prioritizing 3v3s and 4v4s with and without superiorities (neutrals).

1. Combined actions (explaining why the movements and actions happen)
2. Possession Games
3. Chaotic games
4. Rondos (regular and large)
5. Small-sided games
6. Positional games (basic)
7. Attack – Defense games
8. Matches (correcting individual tactical instructions)

Training the Cognitive structure (group tactics)

Exercises that continue to emphasize directionality, but involves a higher player count as well as engage the cognitive structure to resolve more complex tactical situations. 7v7s (with or without neutrals) will be the most complex, but prioritizing 4v4s and 5v5s with and without superiorities (neutrals).

1. Positional games
2. Waves games
3. Large Rondos
4. Line games
5. Reduced situations
6. Reduced parts
7. Matches (correcting group tactical instructions)

STAGE 5: TRAIN TO COMPETE (U15-U18)

Same as previous stages but with greater complexity. Much more work will be done on specific game situations (specifying where it will happen on the field). New teaching methods will be introduced:

- 1. Movements.** Players pass the ball with their hands and make movements in a small space according to where the ball is and what the possessor is doing.
- 2. Automatism.** With and without the ball. What to do depending on where the ball is and what the opponent is doing. From simpler situations (only one line participates) to more complex ones (all 11 players participate). Patterns, functional exercises, phases of play can all be utilized.
- 3. Game routines.** Work on specific game situations, teaching the different game options that the possessor will have, gradually increasing the number of opponents who participate in the action.



DIDACTIC METHODOLOGY

TEACHING STYLE

Our coaching style is predicated on the principles of Guided Discovery.

What is Guided Discovery?

Guided Discovery is a teaching methodology that encourages players to think critically and develop solutions through structured questioning and problem-solving rather than receiving direct instructions. The coach acts as a facilitator, guiding players to explore different possibilities and make their own decisions within the game environment. This approach enhances game intelligence, creativity, adaptability, and autonomy in players.

Principles of Guided Discovery

1. Player-Centered Learning – Players take an active role in problem-solving rather than passively following instructions.
2. Effective Questioning – Coaches use open-ended questions to lead players toward key learning objectives.
3. Mistakes as Learning Opportunities – Errors are seen as part of the learning process, encouraging experimentation.
4. Incremental Learning – Players progress step by step, discovering solutions through structured guidance.
5. Cognitive Engagement – Players must analyze and interpret game situations, developing deeper tactical awareness.
6. Encouraging Creativity – Players explore multiple solutions, fostering adaptability and decision-making skills.
7. Game-Based Scenarios – Learning occurs in a match-relevant environment, making it more transferable to real games.

Practical Applications of Guided Discovery

1. Designing Effective Training Sessions
 - Set up game-like scenarios where players must find solutions instead of being given answers.
 - Use progressive constraints (e.g., limiting touches or increasing touches, modifying spaces) to encourage problem-solving.
 - Create environments where players are forced to adapt and make decisions under pressure.
2. Using Questioning Techniques
 - Instead of telling players what to do, ask:
 - “What options do you have in this situation?”
 - “How can you create more space for yourself?”
 - “Why did that play work, and how can we replicate it?”
 - Guide players towards recognizing patterns and solutions rather than providing direct instructions.
3. Encouraging Decision-Making in Games
 - Allow players to make choices and experience the consequences of their decisions.

- Provide feedback that guides reflection, helping them learn from both successes and mistakes.
 - Promote peer discussions, where players share their thoughts on tactics and solutions.
4. Integrating Reflection & Self-Assessment
- After exercises or matches, ask players to evaluate their performance:
 - “What did you do well?”
 - “What would you change next time?”
 - “How did your decision impact the game?”
 - Use video analysis or tactical board reviews to reinforce learning through self-discovery.
5. Balancing Structure & Freedom
- Provide enough structure to keep learning focused but allow room for creativity.
 - Offer guidance when necessary, but avoid over-coaching or restricting decision-making.
 - Foster an environment where players feel confident to take risks and experiment.

SESSION ORGANIZATION & COACHING PROCEDURES

Dress Code & Professionalism

- Coaches must wear designated SCYSA apparel.
- No sunglasses, nor whistles, and only club-branded hat (if necessary)
- Always carry a watch, pen, and training session plan.

Pre-Session Preparation

- Arrive at least 30 minutes before the session starts.
- Know the number of players you are expecting and adapt the exercises to your expected number. Also think of any possible variations
- Equipment checklist: cones, bibs, balls (1 per player), goals.
- Have the field set up 15 minutes prior to the start of the session (Use field lines efficiently, use as few cones as possible but at the same time they have to be easy to identify, set up big spaces, it is easier to adjust the space and make it smaller than it is to make it bigger)
- Keep unused equipment organized on the side.
- Check attendance and confirm your numbers while players engage in a juggling or rondo warm-up.

During the Session

- Be active and engaged.
- Introduce topic at the start and check for understanding at the end.
- Maintain strong non-verbal communication (body language, positioning).
- Always have a ball in your hands, on the ground close by in case the one being used goes out of play, to maintain ball circulation
- Follow the methodology that we teach; guided discovery, adapted to the players and use effective questioning techniques to challenge players.
- One coach leads and stops play to correct, the other coach coaches over the game, constantly emphasizing principles and individually impacting players.
- Only correct aspects related to the session’s objective. Not generalities.

- Provide constructive feedback that balances praise and correction.
- Water breaks, before warm-ups and end of sessions are good times to give individual feedback.
- Be mindful of the tone of your voice and the way corrections are made to all players
- Ensure structured explanations, maintaining control during breaks.
- Encourage leadership and accountability among players
- Exercises have to be set up before the SCYSA coach does the demo. Use assistant coaches and breaks to re-organize setups.
- Quickly restart play in a smooth way when the ball goes out by putting a new ball in.
- Rotate neutral players and goalkeepers regularly, and if necessary remake teams to make them even.
- Ensure that players collect all equipment that need to be picked up before proceeding to water breaks

Post- Session

- Ensure all equipment is gathered and stored properly.
- Oversee handover of players to parents.
- At home, engage in self-reflection about the session. Figure out what worked, what did not work and what could be improved by the next session.

Match Preparation & Coaching

- Conduct pre-game meetings to set team objectives.
- Ensure that match-day objectives correlate to things worked on during the week
- During matches:
 - Manage player emotions and maintain composure.
 - Make tactical adjustments and substitutions effectively.
 - Do not deviate from club Game Model and style of play even when losing
- Conduct in-depth post-game debriefs at least twenty four hours after a game in order to avoid making negative statements in a heated emotional state and to be able to provide constructive feedback.