



Date: 30 november 2024

Education and Development Strategy

Responsible: **Development Group**

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Disclaimer:

This document was originally written in Swedish and has been translated into English. While every effort has been made to accurately reflect the content, the meaning may vary slightly due to language differences and nuances in word choice.



Table of contents

Purpose and approach	3
Incremental Problem Solving	3
Holistic approach	3
Objective	3
Purpose of the document	4
Use of the Document	4
Vision and values	5
The club's vision	5
Vision Youth Section	5
Values	6
Player.....	7
The player Progression Ladder	7
References Players	12
Coaches.....	13
Education required by the federation to obtain a coach license youth	13
Coach education for Örebro Black Knights Youth Section.....	14
Education Levels and Content	14
Ongoing training	14
The Coache's Progression Ladder	15
Mentorship program for coach development	17
References Coaches.....	19

Purpose and approach

Incremental Problem Solving

In order to effectively solve the problems we face in our youth section, we need to break down the larger issues into more manageable parts (incremental problem solving). In the field of training, we do this by dividing the training strategy for coaches and players into different levels and using a coach and player Progression ladder, which will be explained in the training strategy in this document. By using incremental problem-solving for our larger problems, we can start working towards solutions in a structured, purposeful and holistic way.

Holistic approach

A holistic approach means a holistic view of the human being that focuses not only on the bodily needs but also on the psychological, social and existential ones. Together, it is these needs that shape people and their conditions. By approaching the bigger problems in this way, we enable a focused treatment of the challenges we have faced with consistent, structured and sustainable development/education of both our coaches and players.

Objective

The goal is that this in turn leads to:

- Increased coach quality
- Increased number of coaches
- Dissemination of experience already in the club
- Increased opportunities for players to develop and succeed
- Through consistent strategy create conditions for players to be ready for the next step in development.
- Improved communication and cooperation within the youth teams.
- Fostering a positive and supportive environment for all parties.
- Ensuring that all coaches and players have access to the necessary resources and support.
- Development and implementation of effective training and development programs that give participants experiences to bring both in their sporting careers and as individuals.



Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to create a holistic starting point for how the development in our youth section should look like. The aim is to look at the development of players, coaches and the youth program from a long-term perspective create the best conditions for both players and coaches' sporting and personal development. By having a well-thought-out plan for how youth should develop in the best way, we can create a youth program that is considered one of the best both nationally and internationally.

Use of the Document

This document is not intended to be a verbatim training plan for the exact trainings, lectures, etc. that are to be held during a year, for example. It is to serve as a governing document to lean on when deciding how education in our youth section should look and function. The document is the basis for, together with the experience that exists in the club and collaboration with RF-SISU, and should be referred to how coaches should behave, be trained, educate and adapt teaching depending on the age group of the youth.

As this document is a support for creating a long-term, holistic and sustainable development in the youth section and needs to be supplemented with short-term plans that provide a more concrete plan to meet the goals addressed in the document.



Vision and values

Disclaimer:

The original text for the club's and youth sections' visions is in Swedish, and this is a direct translation into English. Therefore, the meaning conveyed may differ slightly from the original intent due to variations in word choice and language nuances.

The club's vision

"Örebro Black Knights shall be an established and attractive club for members, partners, audiences and media."

Vision Youth Section

"We strive to promote personal development for both players and leaders by creating a meaningful environment for development. We are building an inclusive culture where every individual is given the opportunity to grow and contribute."



Values

A set of values is a set of fundamental values and principles that guide an organizational culture, decisions and actions. It describes what the organization stands for and serves as a compass for the members' behaviors and attitudes.

All decisions and behaviors within the Örebro Black Knights and our youth section should be supported by our values,

URSA(*Utveckling/Development, Respekt/Respect, Samhörighet/Togetherness and Ansvar/Responsibility*) because it creates a unified culture, builds trust, strengthens morale and motivation, facilitates decision-making, improves cooperation and team spirit, develops responsible individuals and promotes sustainable success.

"Utveckling/Development - We strive for constant development in making our work a little better every day, every week, every month. Development of oneself, one's technique, one's strength, one's knowledge and to constantly focus on the development of both the individual as well as the team and the club."

"Respekt/Respect - We should all show Respect for each individual and for each one's unique personality. We show respect clearly and humbly towards our teammates, opponents, leaders, referees and in all internal and external contacts and relationships we have when we represent our club."

"Samhörighet/Togetherness - A sense of belonging is something we create together through community and a sense of security."

"Ansvar/Responsibility - Responsibility is something everyone is expected to take, for our own and for the development of others. We all have a responsibility to follow set rules and procedures and to protect our club. Each person is responsible for their attitude and behavior in everything we do and how it affects ourselves and others."

Player

The player Progression Ladder

U9: Joy of movement

In the U9 team, it's all about creating joy around movement and introducing the children to American football in a playful way. The physical and motor development is in focus, where basic movement skills (running, jumping, throwing) are trained through play and games. The training aims to develop coordination, balance and agility, without any focus on competition or specific technique.

Physical: A focus on basic motor skills is crucial, as children at this age have a high malleability for motor development (*BAILEY ET AL., 2013*).

Technical: A broad base of technical skills should be introduced, but without specialization, to avoid early burn and promote long-term commitment (*CÔTÉ & HANCOCK, 2016*).

Mental: According to *DIAMOND (2013)*, *THE* ability to think abstractly is limited at this age. The training is therefore mainly about creating security and giving the children encouragement to dare to try without being afraid of making mistakes.

Social: The development of group dynamics and social skills occurs through play and cooperation, which strengthens their social and emotional development (*DECI & RYAN, 2000*).

Holistic development: The training creates a safe and fun environment that promotes children's basic motor skills and confidence, which is necessary for their long-term development. They receive a positive introduction to team environments and social interactions, which creates a holistic development (*LTAD, 2014*).



2024-11-30

U11/U13: Learning to Train

In U11/U13, the training continues to build on the children's physical, technical and social abilities, with a broad basic education in the various elements of the game. Players are introduced to a basic tactical understanding and encouraged to experiment with different positions.

Physical: Physical development continues to focus on coordination and functional mobility, which is optimal for this age (*LLOYD ET AL., 2014*).

Technical: Players should continue to develop broad technical skills and not specialize too early to avoid overload and monotony (*CÔTÉ & VIERIMAA, 2016*).

Mental: *DIAMOND (2013)* explains that children begin to understand the connection between action and outcome. Through small problem-solving exercises, they can try things out, which increases their understanding of the game in a fun way. It is important that we avoid overloading them with information. According to *CÔTÉ AND HANCOCK (2016)*, too much focus on performance can create pressure and inhibit confidence, so we should strive to create a supportive environment for learning.

Social: Team spirit is strengthened through cooperation and respect for each other, which is important for creating a positive climate and promoting social skills such as how to treat each other (*FRASER-THOMAS ET AL., 2005*).

Holistic development: At this age, broad and balanced development is essential. Players learn both technical skills and basic tactical concepts, while social interaction and self-reflection are given a greater role. This lays the foundation for future success both within and outside of the sport (*LTAD, 2014*).



2024-11-30

U15: Train to Train

The U15 team introduces more advanced tactical and technical aspects of the game, in a 9-a-side format. The players also begin to take more responsibility for their actions and solution-oriented thinking is given more space. This age marks an important transition from a broad technical foundation to more consciously developing skills related to specific positions on both sides of the ball.

Physical: Physical development must take into account players' growth spurt and periods of rapid maturity, without burning out players (*LLOYD ET AL., 2014*).

Technical: A broad base is still important, but players are now starting to specialize in their multiple positions (*CÔTÉ & VIERIMAA, 2016*).

Mentally: *DIAMOND (2013)* points out that teenagers can now begin to deal with more complex decisions and reflection. We therefore introduce exercises that require them to think a little more strategically and deal with different situations where they have to make decisions in real time based on what they have learned in the past.

Social: Cooperation and team responsibility are becoming more important, and players are taught to take greater social responsibility, which supports their social and emotional development (*FRASER-THOMAS ET AL., 2005*).

Holistic development: U15 is a crucial period to build on previous experiences and lay the foundation for accelerating development later in life. Players not only get to develop technical and tactical skills, but also the ability to think independently and reflect on their decisions. Physical training becomes more focused on supporting the growth and maturity of players (*LTAD, 2014*).



2024-11-30

U18: Learning to Compete

At the U18 level, training focuses on preparing players to compete while continuing to develop their fundamental football and physical skills. Understanding the importance of prioritizing processes over final outcomes is crucial. In this phase, players deepen their technical and tactical abilities within their positional profile and related positional roles. The focus is on making well-informed decisions under pressure and being solution oriented. Training and competition are not solely about winning but about executing the right actions at the right time, reflecting on results, and continuously improving processes.

Physical: Physical training becomes more individualized to optimize performance and reduce injury risks based on players' specific physical attributes and positional needs. Training focuses on improving strength, speed, and endurance while also enhancing the physical capacity to manage the increasing pressure and tempo of competitive situations (*LLOYD ET AL., 2014*). Simultaneously, it remains vital to reinforce fundamental physical skills to provide a solid foundation for future development.

Technical: This phase emphasizes technical specialization within the player's positional profile(s) to ensure efficiency and precision in game situations. Players learn to adapt and choose appropriate techniques to meet increasing demands. This level requires not only technical proficiency but also the ability to apply various technical skills in competitive environments (*CÔTÉ & VIERIMAA, 2016*). To become competitive, players must also continue to develop their basic football skills to handle the growing complexity of the game.

Mentally: At the U18 level, players are expected to develop a high level of solution oriented thinking and decision making under pressure. *DIAMOND (2013)* explains that teenagers at this age have developed the capacity to manage multiple variables simultaneously. Through evaluating and reflecting on their choices, players learn to make decisions under stress, strengthening their mental toolbox for future challenges. Additionally, they practice analyzing the consequences of their decisions, better preparing them for higher competitive levels and life beyond football (*PIAGET, 1950; LTAD, 2014*).

Social:

Players at this stage are encouraged to strengthen their leadership and team responsibility. They are expected to take a more active role both socially and tactically within the team, fostering strong team spirit and a culture of shared accountability. Being aware of their own and their



2024-11-30

teammates' strengths and weaknesses becomes essential for creating a cohesive and effective team (*FRASER-THOMAS ET AL., 2005*).

Holistic Development: Training at the U18 level encompasses all aspects of player development, both fundamental and specialized. Emphasis is placed on integrating physical, technical, mental, and social skills. Solution oriented thinking becomes a central component, allowing players to work on problem solving in both controlled and semi-controlled environments. Evaluating and reflecting on both outcomes and processes helps players develop a deeper understanding of how their actions impact the team and the tactical decisions made on the field (*LTAD, 2014*).

Players are also taught to focus on continuous improvement, reflecting on their performances to understand how they can enhance their processes.

This holistic approach prepares players to not only perform on the field but also grow as individuals and team members off the field. It is about creating a culture where players take responsibility for their own choices and execution.

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Coaches

Our coaching program shall aim to develop leaders who can fulfill Örebro Black Knight's vision and values through a values-driven leadership. Through a well-thought-out strategy to create a long-term plan in both personal and professional development for our leaders, we want to create a strong and inclusive culture where coaches play a central role. By continuously integrating our core values – development, respect, togetherness and responsibility – into coach education, we ensure that each coach is equipped to guide the juniors in and out of performance.

The coaches are key people in developing the club and the players. By emphasizing value-driven leadership in our education, we strive to shape coaches who not only have the leadership skills in the sport but are also committed to building character and promoting sustainable values in our club but also out in working life. By educating and supporting our coaches in this way, we create a solid foundation for driving Örebro Black Knights towards national and international success while building and maintaining a positive and unified club culture with the coaches' and players' individual development in focus.

Education required by the federation to obtain a coach license youth

Amerikansk Fotbollslära Grund - AFG (SWE3)
"Fundamentals of American Football"

Grundutbildning för Tränare - GFT (RF-SISU)
"Coaching Fundamentals"

Hantering av Hjärnskakning, Grund (SWE3)
"Concussion Management, Basic"



Coach education for Örebro Black Knights Youth Section

Purpose: Our coach education program should offer a structured path for the coaches within the Örebro Black Knights youth section to develop their leadership and support the players' progress on and off the field. By providing the necessary tools, knowledge and skills, we provide coaches with what they need to effectively contribute to achieving the club's vision and values. The training should be adapted to the coaches' level of experience and aims to equip them to be able to integrate the club's values in their work and promote value-driven leadership. Below is a plan for what coaches would benefit from educating or further educating themselves in order to continue their development and grow in their role, with the vision of creating coaches who can promote both athletic and personal progress in our players while contributing to a positive and inclusive coaching culture.

Education Levels and Content

Parts that are included in the levels are a support for being able to plan the development of leaders and are open to be able to teach in different ways, for example, Theoretical, workshops, practical application (Learn by doing), mentoring, etc.

Ongoing training

The club should try to support our coaches to continuously develop their leadership and sporting knowledge to achieve the goals of the different levels. (Tactical and Technical).

- **Workshops and Seminars:** Sessions focusing on specific leadership areas such as motivation, team culture, mental training, taping, etc. (RF-SISU & external parties)
- **Collaboration with Other Clubs:** Collaborations and visits to other clubs National Teams and coaches to learn from their methods and experiences.
- **Evaluation and Feedback:** Teach our coaches techniques and methods to continuously receive and absorb feedback from players, colleagues and mentors as well as regular evaluation meetings to identify areas for development (Quality Control).
- **Mentorship (Mentoring Program):** More experienced coaches act as mentors for new coaches, offering support and guidance.



2024-11-30

Goals:

- That each coach should have a clear understanding of the club's values and be able to implement them in their leadership.
- To ensure that all coaches have the leadership skills necessary to support the players' development in the best way.
- To create an inclusive and positive coaching culture and team culture that reflects the club's vision and values.
- To ensure that value-driven leadership and process-driven work are a central part of the coach education at all levels.
- To create a motivating program to offer our young leaders important experiences for their coaching careers and for working life.
- To create an attractive environment for players, leaders and coaches.

Through this Coaching Strategy, we aim to create a strong foundation for our coaches, which in turn will contribute to the sustainable and successful development of our juniors and in turn the entire club.

The Coache's Progression Ladder

Level 1: Basic Coach Training, **GFT**

Target group:

Content:

Amerikansk Fotbollslära Grund - AFG (SWE3)
"Fundamentals of American Football"

Grundutbildning för Tränare - GFT (RF-SISU)
"Coaching Fundamentals"

Hantering av Hjärnskakning, Grund (SWE3)
"Concussion Management, Basic"



2024-11-30

Level 2: Coach Coach Education, *Lead Players*

Target group: Coaches with some experience in a leading role

Content:

- Introduction to the Coaching Role
- URSA and Culture
- Values-driven leadership
- Process-oriented work
- Training on how to promote solution-oriented thinking.

Level 3: Advanced Coach Education, *Leading Teams*

Target group: Experienced coaches with responsibility of Team building and leading

Content: TBD

Mentor Education

Level 4: Elite Coach Education, *Leadership Program*

Target group: Very experienced coaches and coaches for elite teams, with a program focus.

Content: TBD

Mentor Education

Target group: Those who are to act in a Mentor assignment

Content:

- Introduction to the Mentor Assignment
- BAR/AAR
- Problematization and mentalization

Mentorship program for coach development

The mentorship program is designed to strengthen and support the skills and confidence of less experienced coaches through a process based on reflection and self-development. By allowing coaches to own their own development process, a structure is created where they build long-term leadership. The mentor acts as a supportive partner in the mentor's journey towards independence and competence (McQuade, Davis, & Nash, 2015).

Planned approach and structure

The program begins with a pre-match meeting where the mentor and mentee are matched based on their needs and experience levels. They work together during the year through regular meetings and continuous communication, and the goal is for mentees to receive tools and support to independently reflect, analyze and find solutions in accordance with the club's values and guidelines (Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009). To strengthen the community, larger gatherings can be arranged where coaches share experiences and development ideas, a strategy supported by research on reflection as a necessary component of coach development (Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne, & Eubank, 2006).

The mentor's role and approach

The mentor's task is to stimulate reflection and problem-solving, not to provide ready-made solutions. By asking questions and using mentalization techniques, the mentor is encouraged to explore different perspectives and to find their own methods to handle situations (McQuade et al., 2015). This method, which is based on guiding rather than pointing out a specific solution, creates an environment where mentees can develop their personal leadership within the framework of the club's values and policies (Nash & Sproule, 2011).

The mentorship process

In a structured mentoring process, the mentor observes the mentee's training sessions and possibly also matches once a month. After each observation, feedback takes place where the mentor uses reflective questions to inspire further development. Through Before Action Review (BAR) and After Action Review (AAR), mentees both before and after matches get the opportunity to set a common goal and reflect on results and areas for improvement. This structured approach is based on the principle of reflective practices and reinforces a learning process in which mentees gradually build their analytical skills (Lyle & Cushion, 2017).



Conclusion and reflection

At the end of the season, a closing meeting is arranged, could for example be in the form of a dinner, where the coaches of the club gather and mentors and mentors can reflect on the year and celebrate joint progress. The purpose of this module is to strengthen the relationships within the coaching staff and build an club culture that is characterized by mutual help, learning and cooperation among the coaches (Jones et al., 2009).

The mentorship program aims to promote a coaching culture where learning takes place at the pace and on the individual's terms. The program contributes to the club's vision by developing coaches and creating a meaningful environment for development, where learning and support are fundamental to leadership development and creates the opportunity for coaches to grow and contribute at their own pace and based on their unique circumstances. Through action and a culture centered around reflection, we want to support the coaches' personal development and competence.

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