



ARSENAL COLORADO: FOUNDATIONS





ARSENAL COLORADO COACHING PROGRAM

MISSION STATEMENT

Arsenal Colorado uses the power of soccer to inspire, to develop, to achieve, and to build community.

VISION

Arsenal Colorado is creating a nationally recognized soccer club that maximizes the development of all our soccer players consistent with their commitment. We will accomplish this through development and support of coaching excellence, employee growth, volunteer opportunities, outstanding service, and superior facilities.

VALUES

Integrity: Do the right thing, on and off the field

Inspiration: We will become the best we can be

Attitude: Work hard, have fun, and achieve your goals

Innovation: We create passion, skill, and confidence

Community: We are a soccer family of respect, diversity, inclusiveness, and pride

Accountability: Be responsible to teammates, coaches, staff, parents, and each other

Communication: We will be honest, fair, and timely

Teamwork: We come together with common goals and build strong relationships

Value: Provide a safe, high-quality experience

Healthy Lifestyle: Get fit, make friends, and feel good

Tradition: We are Arsenal Colorado for life

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

The player development philosophy of Arsenal Colorado is to develop players to the highest level of their ability by challenging individual players technically, tactically, psychologically and physically. The most effective means of accomplishing this is to group players of like-ability and compete at the highest level possible, as often as possible. In doing so, players are forced to compete outside of their comfort level physically and mentally, resulting in improved technical ability, enhanced tactical understanding, increased fitness level and intensified psychological capabilities.

COACHING VISION

To create a State, Regional and National program that is competitive, respected, progressive, and acknowledged in developing and attracting top level players and coaches.





COACHING PHILOSOPHY

Arsenal Colorado will lead its players down a development path that provides them the opportunity to reach their full potential as soccer players. Through professional coaching, a cutting edge curriculum, multiple competition platforms, a state of the art training and match facility and a well-implemented coaching philosophy, we will enhance each player's growth and overall experience.

Our coaching philosophy is centered on enriching each player's soccer experience through current benchmarked standards and an age-appropriate curriculum that enhances player development, broadens their knowledge, and instills a passion for the game. Our goal is to contribute positively to the personal growth of all players.

ROLE OF THE COACH

Coaching for Arsenal Colorado is a privilege that carries with it many responsibilities. It is important to set high and consistent coaching standards for each team. Following a consistent model serves to increase player development and helps provide for a smooth transition from one coach to another. The coach is the most visible and direct contact our members have with the club. As such, many times, the opinion and attitude the membership has towards the club is formed by their experience with the coach. Coaches need to carry themselves in a professional manner, always adhering to the club's



Standards of Conduct and Policies and Procedures. Coaches must be supportive of the club, its policies, the coaching staff, the membership and the sport itself. Coaches are highly encouraged to participate in coaching education opportunities through the club or any other recognized organization. Additionally, coaches are expected to adopt and implement the club's age-appropriate curriculum, coaching and player development philosophies, vision statement, and goals and objectives, in order to enhance the experience of all members.

COACHING OBJECTIVES

The primary objective for our coaches is to create a positive learning environment where players develop physically and psychologically and maintain a love for the game. Expectations for our coaches include:

- Create an atmosphere where players are encouraged to train outside their comfort zone, learning from mistakes with no fear of repercussions
- Foster a team and club culture in which players thrive on competition, work hard and develop internal motivation to excel
- Develop players to a level where they can make individual decisions and team adjustments on their own
- Create a setting where players achieve a high level of fitness and develop a strong work ethic

The coach's objective is to develop, educate and promote every player to the highest level possible, while creating a functional, well-balanced team. Coaches can achieve this through organization, timely communication, thoughtful planning and a commitment to excellence. The coach should always keep



the long term development of the individual as a priority, while balancing the short term needs of the team.

To achieve these goals, our coaches should follow the four recognized pillars of coaching: technical, tactical, psychological and physical. Coaches should incorporate these criteria into every training session to achieve successful development of the players and team. A player's confidence level is influenced by their technical abilities. When a player is technically sound the quality and overall success of their decision making improves. As a result, the player's speed of play increases. As the speed of play increases, players are able to acquire knowledge and understanding of team tactics more efficiently. With comprehension of team tactics, the psychological components of the individual and team are more effectively addressed. All of this should be carried out in such a manner to ensure an adequate level of fitness allowing players to succeed.

CLUB DISTINCTION

Arsenal Colorado stands apart from other clubs in the state for a number of reasons. We have over 40 years of providing soccer to the community, a state-of-the art, 100-acre complex, progressive philosophies centered around the athletes, coaches and members, and a primary emphasis on player and coaching development. We strive to have a good "first touch" with every customer and ultimately do what is in the best interest of the player.

The landscape of youth soccer in America is constantly changing and these demands compel the club and its coaches to be ever vigilant. Expectations of the membership increase as more levels of competition arise. Today, members are confronted with multiple options and decisions based on the wide variety of competition platforms that include the Development Academy (DA), Elite Clubs National League (ECNL), National Premier League (NPL), National College Development Association (NCDA), National League, national competitions, college showcase tournaments, Player Development League (PDL), club leagues, state leagues and tournaments. This is a far cry from what youth soccer used to be, but in this ever shifting landscape, Arsenal Colorado is committed to embracing these changes. We will continuously evaluate the options and opportunities to determine what fits our members best.



CLUB STYLE & SYSTEM OF PLAY

Since Arsenal Colorado's inception, the philosophy of how our teams will take the field has remained the same. Traditionally the focus is on ball possession with a purpose, short passing while building an attack that creates numerical advantages. Controlling the ball means we can govern the tempo of the game. With this style of play not only do we stand a better chance of winning, our players spend more time touching the ball. In order to accomplish this, coaches must understand and convey to their teams that this approach takes time and may not translate immediately to winning.



An indirect style while in possession corresponds to high pressure while out of possession. Typically, the goal is to win the ball back quickly, pressing as a team. The system of play that the club emphasizes begins with a zonal back line that anchors the team. With this foundation, several variations of a final formation can be used depending on a team's strengths and weaknesses, the opponent, and the objective for the specific game. Coaches should strive to prepare players to succeed on the field, no matter which formation is utilized.



At the younger ages (U9-U12) individual development is the primary focus. Transitional years (U13-U14) the balance of development versus winning begins to shift and more tactical concepts can be introduced. Our senior teams (U15-U19) still must focus on continued development but a greater emphasis is placed on results and advanced tactics. This focus will afford our players success for a much larger portion of their playing career. As young players grow cognitively and physically, the position they may be most successful in may evolve. Coaches should

constantly evaluate individual players and align them in positions and responsibilities best suited for both team success and personal growth. A coach may choose to rotate positions more at younger ages than at older ages.

TEAM FORMATION

Each coach should become familiar with his or her upcoming assigned age group prior to the conclusion of the spring season. The coach needs to utilize the previous year's roster, as well as rankings and evaluations from past seasons, and collaborate with staff coaches who train these players over the course of the year. Observing games during the spring season and scouting and recruiting players from outside of the club are important tools as well. During the season prior to team formation an incoming coach should contact the previous year's team by phone as a means of introduction and to converse with them about your philosophy, development plan, expectations, etc. Team formation is the window during the year when player movement most often occurs but continuous evaluation of players on the team, within the club, and outside of the club should occur year-round. It is the philosophy of Arsenal Colorado that recruitment from outside of the club can benefit player and team development in several ways. Competition should be embraced as a positive and players develop best when surrounded by others of like ability. It is a coach's responsibility to build the best team possible and players should be chosen solely based on merit.

TEAM MANAGEMENT

Coaches should follow Arsenal Colorado Standards of Conduct and Policies and Procedures to ensure a uniform and positive soccer experience for the players. Interactions off the field are equally important to leading a team on the field. Coach interaction begins with a team meeting before the season begins. This is a great forum to present a well thought-out team development plan and set the tone regarding expectations. Arsenal Colorado staff will collaborate with team coaches to develop an appropriate team development plan based on the level of the team. Continued communication with players and parents is



important throughout the season. Coaches should determine early on what role the manager and treasurer will play in team communication. Keeping the lines of communication consistent and regular will serve to ensure expectations are reliably met. Occasional emails to the team informing parents what you are trying to accomplish, what is going well and what needs improvement helps keep everyone on the same page.

Classroom sessions with the players are a great way to teach in an alternate setting. The conference room at the club office is an excellent resource and available to reserve. This environment is a good opportunity for the players to set team and individual goals during the preseason.

Players should receive continuous feedback both informally at training sessions as well as periodic formal evaluations using the standardized club form. These evaluations should be fair and impartial and help players and parents understand where they are in regard to expected development standards. These can serve as a powerful motivation technique if used correctly.



The use of social media can be used as a means of communication for an entire team but should only be used within the boundaries of established Arsenal Colorado policies and best practices regarding risk management.

TRAINING

Training is the most important aspect of player development. Arsenal Colorado coaches should take the time to develop a training plan that includes age appropriate content. The focus of a practice should be developed with the club curriculum, team needs and player needs in mind. Be respectful of the players and parents by having a consistent training schedule that begins and ends on time. This includes arriving early and having training set up when players arrive. The warmup should serve to prepare players both physically and mentally for the session. Touches on a ball should be incorporated into the warmup whenever possible. A training session should be viewed as a teaching opportunity and that sort of methodology should be used. Different players grasp skills and concepts in a variety of ways so each coach should paint the appropriate picture using both verbal and visual techniques. While it is often necessary to stop play to make corrections, coaches should also stop play to emphasize a player's success.



There are several factors that determine how much emphasis is placed on each of the four pillars of the game. Age is an important consideration. For players twelve and under the majority of every



training session should focus on increasing technical ability. The other pillars of the game should be introduced slowly as players master the technical aspects of the game.

Talent is given but fitness is earned. Our teams should take pride in never being outworked on the field. There will be days when we have the best talent on the field and other days where the opposition does. Neither case should prevent each player from giving 100%. This level of work rate is borne from the coach creating a competitive atmosphere in training. Fitness should be embraced as a tool instead of used only as punishment.

Competitive coaches are encouraged to interact with each other and provide opportunities for players to train up to another team when appropriate. Continually being pushed is an important aspect for player development. Providing opportunities to train up also facilitates a coach's knowledge of other players within the age group which allows for better player placement. Throughout the year Arsenal Colorado will provide a variety of training opportunities for players and teams.

PLAYING CONCEPTS

While each team is different based on age, gender, level and individual player strengths and weaknesses, Arsenal Colorado believes in a core set of training and playing foundations. These principles are illustrated in the corresponding videos found on our website here:

<http://www.soccerfortcollins.org/Coaches/Resources>

- [Defensive Principles](#)
- [Offensive Principles](#)
- [Finishing](#)
- [Transition](#)
- [Role of the Forward](#)

Individual and group defending is critical to the success of Arsenal Colorado teams. Proper tenacious 1v1 defense is the basis for everything we do defensively. Players should be taught to:

- Close on the ball at speed and then break their feet into a proper defensive stance
- Be willing to tackle
- Value chances to clear the ball as much as chances to score
- Constantly put themselves into situations where they can win the ball
- Have proper positioning on punts and goal kicks

Teams must become compact in the part of the field where the ball will be delivered in order to better challenge for the ball and subsequently win the knock down (the 2nd ball). After we win possession in these situations we can transition to spread out. Interactions with teammates in a group defending situation is also critical. Players need to always be aware of their natural defensive playing partners and stay connected with them. Teams need to be taught to





understand the concepts of pressure, cover and balance on all parts of the field. Players should be leaders to communicate forcefully to help teammates defend. When unable to win the ball players must understand that their job is to dictate play so their teammates can win the ball, or to provide cover to their teammates trying to win the ball. Coaches need to ensure that players understand and are on the same page regarding team pressure in different parts of the field in regard to direction and intensity. Players need to not only understand their role, but the role of their teammates as well.

The back line should learn to never get beat by one ball or one player, and be taught to close space when there is good pressure on the ball and drop off when there is not. Midfielders should mark, pressure and fill passing lanes. Central midfielders connect the back line to the forwards, while outside midfielders should be taught to pinch when the ball is on the other side of the field. It is very important that midfielders work tirelessly to cover ground. Arsenal Colorado forwards will also be an important part of our defending. They will pressure and win the ball when appropriate, while other times dropping to help the midfield defend when needed. Forwards should dictate play in an organized and predictable manner.

In possession our main focus should be to train our players to create scoring chances within the penalty area. Nearly 90% of all Arsenal Colorado goals scored are from within the penalty area. Often times players play wasted shots from outside the area in the general direction of the goal because there is a lack of ideas in the final third. It is the job of the coach to instill in players ideas to help them succeed on the field. Teams should be taught to possess the ball and possess the field. It is important to identify and take advantage of individual matchups as well. Individual and group attacking needs to vary tempo to unbalance the defense. This also leads to a more diverse attack.



Players need to be shown how field position dictates proper choices and tactics. Possession is good but aggressive possession is better. Ball possession and field possession are what allow for sustained attacks. These foundations begin with good team shape. Teams should be taught to constantly keep the ball moving to offset the defense. Width in the attack is important to open up the middle of the field as well as change the point of the attack to exploit space and numerical advantages. Triangles and third runners are important to create dangerous opportunities. Players should always be aware of their natural playing partners on the fields.

Changing the pace of the game can be accomplished with dribbling, runs into space, or varying the tempo through one and two touch passes. Crosses should be taught to be hit to a dangerous spot between 4 and 9 yards out. Chances to cross should be as valued as a chance to finish. Runs should be made to the near post, to the space between the penalty spot and the goal box, to the back side of the goal area, and to the top of the penalty area.



The key to successful transition play is the ability to quickly recognize and switch from an attacking mindset to a defensive



mentality or vice versa. Offensively, once the ball is won, securing that possession by passing or dribbling out of pressure is important. What a team does in the three seconds after winning the ball can often win the game. Players must be trained to aggressively attack and exploit situations where the opposing defense does not have a good starting defensive shape and mentality. Effective offensive transition often is the result of good defensive shape. This is a team concept where players not immediately in the play sprint to connect with those transitioning on the ball. Defensive transition is equally as important. Players must read the game, think quickly, and be fit enough to run hard. A player's first thought should be whether he or she can win the ball back immediately. If that isn't an option, the second thought should be to recover behind the ball within the team's shape. Pressure should be applied as soon as possible. A player should also know to recover behind the ball in a line towards the center of the goal. Keeping a good balanced shape when attacking leads to successful defensive transition. Our goal is to be difficult to break down through use of quick recognition and organization.



Scoring goals is both a science and an art. It is the coach's job to provide players with the knowledge and technical ability to finish. While most shots should be taught to be aimed to the far post, the first thing a shooter will see is the near post. That choice shouldn't immediately be dismissed, as the near post is closer, making it difficult for a goalkeeper who is out of position to cover. If the near post is not open, players should be taught to immediately choose the far post. When attacking crosses, if a player arrives at the ball in the front third of the goal, the shot

should be directed to the back post. If a player meets the cross in the back two thirds of the goal the shot should be typically placed back from where it came. This will typically be against the momentum of the goalkeeper. Players should be encouraged to take chances in order to create a goal. Young players should rarely be criticized for creativity whether it is successful or not. Rebounds are crucial and our players should be taught to frame the goal in intelligent ways to be ready for rebounds and poor clearances.

Goalkeepers require unique training physically, technically, tactically, and psychologically. However, it is also important that goalkeepers are trained to work with the broader plan of the team. Our goalkeepers must be able to stand on an island and perform when called upon but also be able to enhance the effectiveness of the players around them. Goalkeepers are expected to participate in club sponsored goalkeeping sessions. These not only give them the specialized training required, but also allows our goalkeeping staff to better determine the strengths, weaknesses and needs of our players. Arsenal Colorado goalkeepers should be schooled in technique as well as angle play and ball handling to eliminate goal scoring chances. Our goalkeepers should be taught to aim to never give away a goal and to steal one goal a game when given the opportunity. Eliminating rebound opportunities and the ability to deal with crosses are an important part to reducing opportunities.



Goalkeepers need to stay connected with the defense through great communication and proper positioning. Eliminating chances before they become goals should be the first priority of Arsenal Colorado goalkeepers. Offensively, goalkeepers need to develop a skill set that allows them to keep possession when needed and to distribute in a variety of ways. The ability for a goalkeeper to be able to play with his or her feet is paramount. Distribution to begin short, medium and long range attacks with both their feet and arms is also key. Arsenal Colorado has a proud tradition of producing top flight goalkeepers. This should continue through collaboration between the team coach, goalkeeper trainers and the players themselves.



GAME DAY

Coaches need to have a game plan prior to arriving at the field. The following checklist will help you prepare for game day:

- Know details about your personnel, field surface, weather, focus and competition type
- Wear Arsenal Colorado branded gear on game day
- Start warm-up no more than 45 minutes before the game
- Lead team in dynamic warm-up, ball handling, passing and receiving, possession, position specific warm-up (i.e. goalkeepers), and finish with crossing
- Pre-game discussion related to specific goals and instructions for the game

Our philosophy is that players need to play in games in order to improve and as a general rule all players should get to play at least one half of each game. Exceptions may include matches where substitutions are limited by rule, special competitions such as State Cup, and disciplinary reasons. Each situation should be clearly conveyed by the coach to the players and parents ahead of time so expectations are clear. Game management is a crucial responsibility, as playing time must be managed for the entire roster.

Coaches must be mindful that their sideline demeanor sets the tone for both players and spectators. A coach should be respectful to opposing coaches, players, fans and the referee, at all times. Coaches must also realize that rarely is the outcome of the game determined by the referee. During the first half of the game, coaches need to focus on not only their team's strengths and weaknesses but also what the opposition is doing. At half time, coaches should confer with staff or assistant coaches prior to addressing the team to ensure that instruction and adjustments are appropriate. Instructions to the team need to be limited to only the most important items and should not exceed more than four items. If the coach attempts to provide too much information, the most vital points will be lost due to information overload.



At the conclusion of the game, the coach should remind the team to be gracious, regardless of the result, when passing through the friendship line and the coach should be complimentary to the



opposing coach. The club encourages teams to thank referees after every game. Coaches should limit the team meeting to only the most necessary information. Emotions are often running high for coaches and players alike after a game and a more thorough meeting regarding the game should be conducted at the next training session.

COACHING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

We take pride in offering great coaching support. It is the job of staff coaches to help team coaches with any questions or issues that may arise. Team coaches are encouraged to regularly communicate with their assigned staff coach with updates regarding the team's successes and shortcomings. It is vital that team coaches share with staff potential or current team issues that may escalate. Often, with timely communication these issues can be solved before they become a major distraction or problem. Communication with other coaches within your age group is important as well. This gives coaches the opportunity to be knowledgeable about the entire age group, share struggles or strategies that are working well, facilitate player training opportunities, use of the club pass, and player placement. Sharing knowledge among coaches through club meetings, training, email, game day interactions is encouraged.



Keeping continued team and player development in mind, communication is imperative during coach transitions. The outgoing coach should provide insight to the incoming coach regarding player strengths and weaknesses. The incoming coach should respect this information and incorporate it into the player placement process. It should be everyone's goal to group players of like ability in order to maximize player development and team success. Any Arsenal Colorado coach should be made welcome to observe another coach from the bench on game day or at a training session.

Formal education through various coaching courses is encouraged, as well. Staff coaches are a great resource to help plan an educational path for a team coach. Your successes are the club's successes and we support you. Our Coaching Development Program provides coaches with periodic evaluations, observations, feedback and mentoring to ensure that all coaches remain up to date with new and changing methodology and philosophies.

PLAYER NUTRITION, HEALTH AND SAFETY

Soccer is a physical game and player safety should be our coaches' first priority. Ideally a coach should have basic knowledge of first aid and each team should have a first aid kit. Additionally, every coach must adhere to state and national laws, as well as club policy, regarding concussion protocol. Hydration is also very important to both the health and performance of soccer players. Every player should be required to bring water to each game and training session, and should have the opportunity to drink every 20 minutes. Often players don't understand the physical tolls soccer can take and need to be encouraged by the coach to keep hydrated. Once players are twelve or older, introduction of nutrition guidelines should occur. Arsenal Colorado staff are available as a resource to help coaches guide their teams regarding nutrition, hydration, and player safety. Coaches should all be aware of and adhere to Arsenal Colorado, CSA, and USSF risk management guidelines.



USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Arsenal Colorado believes that in order to provide the best experience for each team, coaches should be open to using new technology. This can be as simple as searching for new and creative training sessions online, or be more advanced by using specific software to track players, analyze game film, or diagram lineups and strategy. Staff coaches will keep you informed of new and exciting technology and will share information with coaches when appropriate.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Coaches should understand that many life lessons will be acquired through a player's experience with Arsenal Colorado, lessons that will benefit the individual in all aspects of their life. Players will learn to overcome adversity, be a well-balanced, functioning member of a team, develop a strong work ethic, have positive self-promotion, be healthy, both body and mind and have a competitive drive, to mention just a few. Since many of our players continue playing soccer at the collegiate level an emphasis is



placed on maintaining a strong grade point average and excelling in the classroom.

Arsenal Colorado recognizes and appreciates the positive role you play in our member's lives. Your buy-in to the club's methodology and vision helps ensure an excellent experience for everyone involved. The club is here to support and guide you along this path to form a positive partnership and to help you be the best coach possible. Thank you for everything you do!