

Virginia Youth Soccer Association



The Club Technical Director Program

Introduction

The rationale for the Club Technical Director concept is built on the belief that Virginia's Soccer Clubs are the backbone of player development. The aim is for the Virginia Youth Soccer Association to offer ideas for a systematic, progressive club-wide approach that will create the best possible environment for optimum development of our young soccer players.

Player Development and Coaching Education programs will always be closely linked. It is well understood that the quality of the players produced by an organization has a direct correlation to the teaching skills of its coaches. If the technical direction of a Club is haphazard, poorly planned and lacks guidance and proper focus, then the players and coaches that are produced will not be of the highest standard. In providing sound and qualified technical direction there also comes an increase in personal satisfaction, thus reducing the drop out rate in the game and subsequently increasing the value of promoting or broadening athletic participation.

Club Technical Directors have, for many years, been the backbone of many successful youth clubs in Europe and South America as well as other parts of the US and even here in Virginia. The concept, where clubs can map

out their own direction and ultimately produce quality players by design, is a proven and very successful one.

In order to raise the bar of development for our Virginia youth soccer players, we must find more qualified coaches with a strong background in both the game and their ability to instruct. The implementation of a system where clubs appoint qualified coaches to oversee player and coaching development is a bonafide way that we can achieve soccer excellence in the development of the game in Virginia.



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Purpose

The purpose of the Club Technical Director Program is fourfold

- 1) To provide VYSA clubs with the philosophy, guidance and direction to implement the program
- 2) To provide VYSA clubs with an opportunity to promote and broaden athletic participation, to increase personal player satisfaction and to reduce the drop out rate
- 3) To provide VYSA clubs that have an existing Technical Director with further guidance on enhancing that service
- 4) To provide coaches that fit the criteria an opportunity to offer their services to an interested club or group

Objectives

The Club Director has three main objectives

- 1) To educate all coaches within their club by providing them with an easily accessible resource person in the form of a “Club Technical Director”
- 2) To increase the skill level of Virginia players by providing them with a higher standard of training and higher standard of coaching at the club level
- 3) To help develop and build programs that provides players of varying abilities with an opportunity to play at the highest levels to which they can aspire



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Duties and Tasks

Duties And Tasks that the Club Technical Director may fulfill

- 1) To conduct age appropriate coaching clinics in the club
- 2) To conduct skill development clinics and training sessions for players and coaches in the club
- 3) To create long and short term seasonal and yearly objectives with regard to age groups and skill development
- 4) To help coaches in the club plan and implement practice sessions
- 5) To act as a resource for all coaches and players in the club
- 6) To educate parents on the club's policies and philosophies on youth development and age appropriate activities through orientations, seminars and written material
- 7) To create a library of books, articles and videos for coaches in the club
- 8) To organize and conduct summer camps for players within the club
- 9) To help schedule, conduct and facilitate player tryouts in the club
- 10) To organize and facilitate state run coaching clinics in the club
- 11) To interview, evaluate and select coaches for the travel portion of the Club as they relate to the Club's philosophy
- 12) To assess, evaluate and give written feedback to travel coaches within the Club
- 13) To promote the Club and the game of soccer in whatever ancillary duties that the Club deems necessary
- 14) To organize information seminars on various sport science topics (e.g. Nutrition, First-Aid, Psychology, etc.)
- 15) To attend Club Board meetings to give regular updates of technical developments within the Club
- 16) To liaise with the state to channel general coaching information to the player, coaches and parents of the Club
- 17) To identify talented players in the club system and ensure that the district and state select teams are made aware of them
- 18) To help identify and secure indoor facilities to ensure year- round training
- 19) To design manuals and information packets for coaches
- 20) To design and implement player evaluation forms
- 21) To implement a Code of Conduct for the players and parents
- 22) To assist the club with the technical coaching aspects of a Risk Management Policy
- 23) To design training priorities for each group and level

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The Present Situation

Unlike other established soccer-playing nations where children play an unstructured form of the game in streets, parks and playgrounds, the US youngster plays the majority of his or her soccer within the structured setting of the Club in organized practices and games. The first introduction that our young players get to the game is through the recreation coach and the entry-level programs that local clubs provide. Under the current system, the recreational coaches are often well-intentioned, parent-volunteers who, for the most part, lack a qualified background in the game. Further, parent-coaches bring diversified backgrounds and approaches to coaching, resulting in inconsistent player development.

Most recreation coaches get involved because they want to coach their child or because the club implores them to step forward or otherwise the youngsters may not have a place to play. After the volunteer is in place, the club often turns its attention elsewhere and the new coach is left to his/her own devices to develop training ideas and game plans. Providing comprehensive training or on-going education is beyond the means of many clubs. Consideration of long term player development is almost impossible for the parent-coach working under such constraints. These circumstances may leave the player with a poor experience and unable to reach his or her playing potential.

Just as players need role models to observe and emulate, the same holds true for coaches. If an entry-level coach has never seen a proper

practice session being run, there is a slim chance that he/she will be able to conduct one at a high standard. The value of a Club Technical Director as a role model should not be underestimated. The advantages of having grass roots coaches observing quality training sessions are invaluable. It is also a tremendous value to have a qualified professional giving feedback and guidance to that same set of novice coaches.

The players themselves can benefit in four major ways

- 1) By having the chance to participate in practice sessions, clinics and camps run by the Club TD, they will improve as players.
- 2) The individual coaches of their respective teams have had the opportunity to work with the Club TD and therefore the quality of instruction the players are now receiving from these coaches is much better.
- 3) The players can utilize the Club TD to gain game advice, college advice or any other pertinent advice (physical, tactical, psychological, nutritional, etc.) that they might otherwise not have received.
- 4) The technical direction of the entire club is well mapped out and thus the players gain a certain familiarity and develop a pride in understanding the exact route they need to take in order to fully develop their playing opportunities.

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The Club TD program can benefit all types of Clubs, even those with the most extreme opposite philosophies. For the recreation clubs, where fun and enjoyment are the major priorities, the benefits of having a Club TD in place will ensure: the fundamentals of the game are taught; the right activities for the age appropriate abilities are delivered; the pedagogical development of the child is ensured; and the joy of the game and the consistency in skill development are carried out. For the travel teams it is obvious that the “professional” can help by providing high-level consistent training that they didn’t receive before. Our greatest resource is our players. VYSA and the clubs owe it to the players to provide them with all the experience and instruction that we can. In having a Club TD, a qualified person is in place to deal with the immediate as well as future needs of both the players and coaches entrusted in their care.

An Example Of How This Concept Could Operate

The Problem

A club decides that the current quality of coaching available within its organization is not leading to the improvement of their players’ skills as had been hoped. To compound this situation, their coaches are unsure about a variety of technical matters and do not know where to go for advice. The club wants to ensure that the right activities coincide with the proper age appropriate abilities.

The Solution

The Club decides to contact the Virginia Youth Soccer Association and asks for a list of coaches who may be interested in serving as their Club TD. The VYSA provides this list of coaches to the club. The club contacts the potential interested individual. The terms of employment (part-time or full time) are an individual working agreement between the coach and the club, as is the financial arrangement.



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What to Look for In a Club Technical Director

- 1) Qualified coaching credentials-recommendation
 - ◆ A USSF “A” License (or equivalent) or in pursuit of an “A” License
 - ◆ A National Youth License (or equivalent)

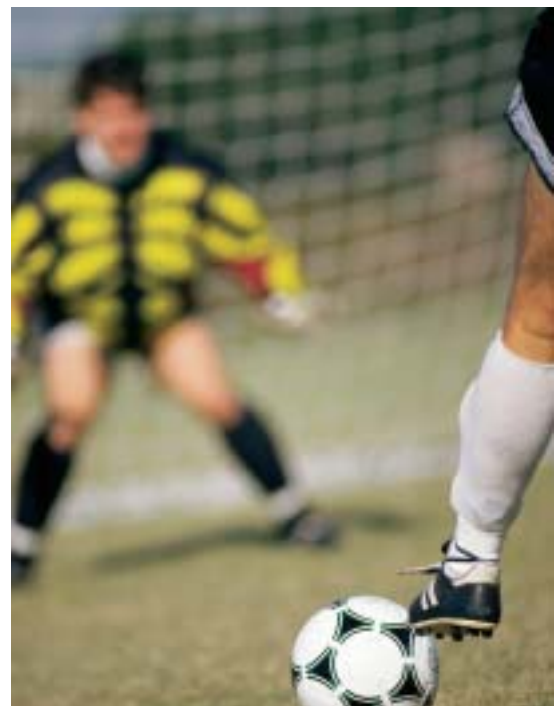
Note: *Do not discount possible strong candidates with a lower level license that show the maturity, desire and commitment to pursue a higher license.*

- 2) Strong practical coaching experience at appropriate age levels
- 3) Strong practical playing experience

Note: *Just because a candidate played professionally does not necessarily translate into a person that can impart his/her knowledge.*
- 4) Strong interpersonal skills
- 5) Leadership ability
- 6) Teaching or instructional ability
- 7) Ability to communicate with youths, teens and adults
- 8) Morally and ethically sound
- 9) Coaching and player development philosophy conducive to the club

- 10) Dynamic person with innovative ideas, flexibility and motivational skills
- 11) Good time management skills
- 12) Responsible and committed
- 13) A student of the game
- 14) Supportive of state and national programs
- 15) Organizational ability: able to communicate with office staff, make board presentations, etc.
- 16) Financial experience in club operations

Note: *While this is the job of the board the candidate must be able to grasp financial issues and how they relate to technical development.*



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Considerations for the Club

- 1) Determine the long term direction of the Club
- 2) Interview and hire a qualified individual
- 3) Establish a player development philosophy in conjunction with the Club Technical Director
- 4) Establish a coaching development philosophy in conjunction with the Club Technical Director
- 5) Communicate those philosophies and priorities to players, parents, coaches and administrators associated with the Club
- 6) Establish age specific training priorities
- 7) Determine an action plan and schedule and communicate that schedule to everyone involved
- 8) Provide the TD with administrative support
- 9) Provide the TD with the proper equipment to get the job done
- 10) Accord the TD a timely and professional business environment
- 11) Give consideration to allow the opportunity for the TD to coach a team within the Club

Note: *In order to remain current, the top technical person in the club must stay in touch with the game. You don't*

want him/her to become a glorified clinician. Some clubs will have this person coach a young team one season in one gender and another young team, in the other gender, the next.

- 12) Allow the TD to determine the technical direction of the Club
- 13) Give consideration to an appropriate benefit package
- 14) Allow the TD to pursue further coaching education
- 15) Provide the need for appropriate commitment to the TD

Action Plan

1) Perspective of the Club

- ◆ Review the technical objectives of the club and how a Club TD would help meet those objectives
- ◆ Determine the financial resources that the club has available for the position
- ◆ Contact the VYSA for a list of qualified interested coaches
- ◆ Contact and interview those coaches that are deemed suitable.
- ◆ Advertise within your club's means as well as the VYSA website that a coaching vacancy exists

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2) Perspective of the Potential Club Technical Director

- ◆ Inform the VYSA Technical Director that you would be interested in being a Club TD and inform him of the geographic areas where you would be willing to work
- ◆ Provide the VYSA Technical Director with a resume and background information about yourself
- ◆ Contact Clubs directly and let them know of your interest in serving as a TD. Be prepared and be ready with a list of services that you could offer the club on your own merit
- ◆ Promote your own services and let potential employers know of your interest through specific club, league or district newsletters

Possible Issues To Deal With

1) Financial

Some Club Members will ask, *“Why should we have to pay for something that we can get for free?”*

The answer to the question is related to the quality of services. By hiring a Club TD you are ensuring that the

standard of instruction given to your players and coaches is of an excellent quality. By paying for these services you will ensure that the job is taken in a serious and professional manner and that tangible value will be gained through the level of commitment. In paying a qualified professional you are holding him/her accountable to the club for the services that he/she provides. It's a difficult chore when we hold volunteers accountable for the development of our youth. The TD's professionalism, commitment and passion will filter down through the technical areas into all aspects of the club, leaving the volunteers more energized about their tasks as well. Coaching knowledge is professional knowledge. Qualified coaches have gone to great lengths and efforts to educate themselves over their careers and they have also put in long on the job hours. These individuals provide services and possess specialized knowledge in the principles of developing our children. The same thing cannot be said for all volunteers.

Volunteers tend to work in the game during their spare time because they have to make a living in order to support their families. The TD position immediately makes the club the number one priority and the primary focus.

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To pay a Club Technical Director you may have to:

- ◆ Redirect funds within the club
- ◆ Offer camps and clinics
- ◆ Pursue corporate and private funding
- ◆ Host tournaments
- ◆ Hold bingos, raffles or sales
- ◆ Raise player fees
- ◆ Raise team fees

2) Is The Job is Already Being Done?

There may be Clubs that feel they have a staff full of volunteers who already, in a combined fashion, perform the duties of a single Club TD. However, it again becomes a matter of quality of service. If the volunteers do not possess the coaching knowledge and expertise of an experienced qualified coach, then their combined efforts, no matter how great, will not produce the same high standard that the club deserves.

The Club TD provides services and possesses specialized knowledge for age appropriate activities that challenge children at their own learning levels.

By centralizing technical duties to a single person, the potential for communication problems is minimized and the same standards of excellence can

easily be dispersed to each team in your Club. Consistent philosophies and objectives, as well as a visionary picture of the Club in its totality, become clear, focused and better defined.

Hiring a Club TD relieves the volunteer parents of many planning duties related to coaching and player development. In turn the enthusiasm of these volunteers can be re-directed to other organizational matters within the Club.

3) Long Term Development

Be careful of measuring the success of the position by wins, losses and how many trophies that your Club attains. In order to perform a truly successful job you must be patient with the long-term development of the coaches and the players. It is harder to convince people to invest their money in something where they cannot see immediate tangible rewards.

However, although the benefits of hiring a Club TD may be for the most part a long-range plan, parents should be asked to attend the practice sessions to see excellence in action. If they see their children improving (no matter what level of physical ability) and increasing their passion for the game, they might be willing to also recognize the immediate benefits of such a

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program. A professional educator with specialized knowledge for the recreation and travel level player and coach is a premium to have.

If the Club TD is doing the job, players will be able to compete at a higher level. When players are taught properly in the skills of the game, and are encouraged to take risks and play with flair and passion, then learning and long term development are by-products. When the learning process is happening at a younger age, mistakes will be a result of the process. Therefore if your Club is winning regularly at under 11 and under 12 and losing regularly at U17 and U18, then something has gone awry in the developmental cycle. And the club TD is just the person who can oversee and guide that development. The Clubs will also be able to retain their best players who, in the absence of a qualified coach, are likely to migrate to other clubs who have the professional.

4) **Hiring A Person From Outside The Club**

Some Clubs may hesitate to bring in an outsider who has no previous connections with the Club to oversee their technical program. The prevailing feelings are “how could an outsider possibly know what goes on within

our Club?” And “how can we trust this individual?” These doubts are natural ones. However, there are usually others involved in your Club that, when the position is being discussed, think they can do the job and wouldn’t mind the extra income for themselves. It may be more beneficial to bring in an objective technical specialist who is not bringing any previous history with parents, players, administrators or other coaches. In this case the Club has assured itself that the coaching is as objective as possible.

It is up to the Club to carefully investigate prospective candidates before doing the hiring.

5) **Virginia Youth Soccer Association’s Role**

The role of the VYSA in the Club Technical Director program is:

- ◆ To increase the communication between potential Clubs and interested coaches
- ◆ To help Clubs and potential coaches understand possible tasks, duties and requirements associated with the Club Technical Director Program
- ◆ To provide a base contract that covers the Club and the Technical Director yet is flexible enough to address individual needs

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- ◆ To liaise with the club TD to provide ongoing guidance as it relates to the direction of the game in Virginia

6) Adjustments Which Might Have To Be Made

In a perfect world, each Club across Virginia would hire a full-time Club Technical Director. However, this is a scenario that may be difficult to attain and all involved parties must be willing to look at options and compromises if they want the concept to work.

- ◆ The chances of a Club TD being hired on a part-time basis may be greater than the chances of being hired on a full-time basis. The key is that there are positions that can be created and if initially a coach is hired on a part-time basis, a quality performance may lead to a full-time appointment.
- ◆ Payment for services is going to differ from Club to Club depending on the scope of the job, location and budget. Don't sell yourself short, but be realistic with regards to salary, job description and work environment.
- ◆ The best scenario would be to be hired by a single club. However, you may find that two or more

smaller clubs may be willing to pool together to share your services. Look at the situation carefully and if it appears to be a workable situation, then consider it.

Hiring a Club TD is a major step that shouldn't be taken lightly. However, if you want your club to move in a more progressive way and to develop coaches and players by design, then take the opportunity to flesh out the concept for your members. You owe it to them.

Interested?

— For more information Contact —

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