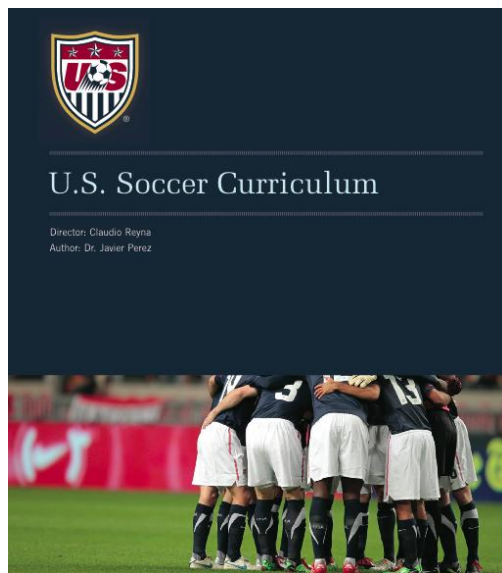


Youth Soccer Changes in America By: Diane Scavuzzo -  
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## U.S. Soccer Curriculum from Claudio Reyna: The Youth Player Development Summit - What's New Really?

*Claudio Reyna on Soccer: The emphasis is development over winning. Winning is important, it's a soccer game and you play to win, but ...." Is anyone in youth soccer really just focused on winning anymore?*

There is so much controversy and information on player development for today's young soccer player, it is often difficult to navigate all the hype to discover the real news, the significant changes that will affect our players and hopefully make our country a more formidable opponent on the stage of World Cup soccer.



**U.S. Soccer** has just concluded a major soccer summit exploring what works and doesn't in youth soccer. Everyone involved in youth soccer should read the soccer curriculum, which has been compiled after an intense review of soccer training in the U.S. and what works in countries across the globe.

U.S. Soccer Youth Technical Director **Claudio Reyna** presented the new **U.S. Soccer Coaching Curriculum** to more than 150 of the top youth leaders in the U.S. Soccer community on Wednesday.

Reyna outlined key concepts of the new curriculum designed to improve development of players in the organized player base in the United States. Reyna announced new guidelines and there is a new soccer [Style and Principles of Play](#) short outline or the complete, 98 MB PDF of the full soccer

### U.S. Soccer Youth Soccer Program

[\*\*CURRICULUM\*\*](#) for download. These new guidelines review player development systems in the U.S. and across the world, and explain what U.S. Soccer wants to see happen on soccer fields in America.

The new curriculum is designed to improve development of competitive soccer players in the United States, concentrating on creating more organized, age-appropriate training sessions, developing better, more patient coaching practices and creating an environment that is fun for the players. Fun? Patient coaches at youth practices? The interesting emphasis of these new programs seems to be aimed at lightening the seriousness and near desperation to raise the level of performance that has persevered through competitive youth soccer in recent years.

"We have created this curriculum to serve as a blueprint for the thousands of coaches across the country working with these young players at such an important time in their development," said U.S. Soccer Youth Technical Director **Claudio Reyna**.

Reyna has actually complimented coaches that are patient with their athletes and stressed that correcting every mistake a young player makes is a mistake. The new program focuses on training soccer players, and providing our youth with the required technical and tactical skills to be successful on an international soccer field.

The news for soccer development isn't exactly new. Reyna said "This isn't anything new. It's very consistent with leading nations around the world and what they're doing. **Javier Perez** was also a major contributor to it. He spent six years at Real Madrid working with young players. It was a combination of understanding the American landscape, the American coaches, and getting together our ideas and applying it to soccer in the U.S. All the ideas that I've seen in my career, it's been my goal to share what I've seen and put it on paper, really make it a reference for coaches."

The U.S. Soccer curriculum is the culmination of world wide influences. Reyna said, "The curriculum is from a lot of different leading nations. The core of it is really the philosophy, which is all of the components around the game: tactical, technical, physical and psychosocial. Those four components are the demands of a soccer game, no matter what age. The curriculum was about translating that into practice. It is making sure that coaches are training those components day in and day out, week in and week out. What really struck me not only from my own career as a player, but from speaking to other players and going around the world is that there are things that are clearly logical that they're doing. There's a lot of routine and repetition. There were very clear messages when I saw the coaches working with youth players. The best coaches I had were the ones with the clearest information. It was with those experiences that the curriculum was formed. It's simple and easy for everyone and I think that's one thing we really wanted to focus on."

Soccer is still a game, but especially at the youth level, it should not be about winning but developing players. Reyna said the main points of the new curriculum is to stress development over winning. "There are probably four or five key points. One of the things is finding a style of play. The other thing we try to emphasize is development over winning. Winning is important, it's a soccer game and you play to win, but the most important part in youth especially at the younger ages is to have coaches understand and focus on development and on teaching and not the weekend game. The Monday through Friday is much more important than the Saturday or Sunday. It's very easy for me to say that, knowing part of our culture is very competitive. We love winning but development over winning is a very important message," said Reyna.

There are millions of youth soccer players in America and there are multiple levels of players.

For the "olders", one of the highest levels of training available is the **U.S. Soccer Development Academy**, a program that has been successful for training and developing soccer players. To further provide exceptional soccer training, the **SoCal Division** clubs moved to 10-month Academy season. Responding to the evolution and growth of the U.S. Soccer Development Academy, and the emphasis in skills training, the competitive youth soccer clubs in Southern California have come together to raise the bar like never before in terms of player development.

The SoCal division is the first in the Academy to commit to 10-month programming in the 2011-12 season and it is likely that other divisions will follow.

The U.S. Women's National Teams Technical Director **April Heinrichs** said, "I think we've realized that we have to lead from the top down in terms of technical development. The curriculum is very specific. It's age appropriate and gender neutral. When you look around the world, it's the federations leading the game on the technical level. In our evolution as a country, this is a perfect time for us to give some tools to the coaches to use with their players that are time-tested, pretty simple to follow and that they can use on a daily, weekly, and even annual basis."

"We are very aware that the leading countries in the world in terms of soccer do have a national identity and there's a value in that. We are at a stage in our soccer culture in the United States where we are ready to develop that identity and really be focused as a group with where we head with our youth players," said U.S. Soccer Director of Coaching Education **Dave Chesler**. "The goal of any curriculum is to give coaches throughout the country a blueprint for developing our youngest players. You're looking for consistent methodology and consistent delivery of concepts so as a country we can begin to develop an identity with our style of play."

Former U.S. Men's National Team Forward **Brian McBride** wisely said, "The whole idea is to get everyone on the same page and try to achieve the same goals rather than some groups trying to develop players this way, some trying to develop players that way or some groups trying to just win games. It's really just trying to get everyone on the same page."

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*As a parent in the competitive soccer community, this all sounds like a wonderful idea, and an idea that is not a startling revelation. And, an idea that is already in motion in many of the well respected competitive soccer clubs.*

What does the immediate future hold? U.S. Soccer is now partnered with **SPARQ**. During the final day of the Player Development Summit, SPARQ displayed the latest methods in functional performance training, a practice critical to maximizing athletic potential in youth soccer players.

SPARQ Performance Director **Paul Winsper** on the Next Steps in Player Development and here are some answers to some basic questions:

**ussoccer:** What are the overall goals for SPARQ?

**Paul Winsper:** "SPARQ is Nike's performance division. We are the voice of performance for a huge company, Nike, that is really about innovation. We are trying to innovate performance. Our main mission is to partner with U.S. Soccer and make sure everything they do is cutting edge in terms of science and performance."

**ussoccer:** What has SPARQ done to help improve the U.S. National Teams?

**Paul Winsper:** "There are two parts of (how SPARQ has done) that. First, we've helped with the Development Academy. Our model at NIKE and SPARQ is we assess our athletes, analyze the data and then put the improvement model in place. The first part with the Development Academy to date is that assessment piece. We've just finished the analysis and we're just starting to implement the improvement piece. We've put together over 13,000 athletic records for U.S. Soccer and for the Development Academy, which is the biggest on the planet. Our second step is with the National Teams. We have SPARQ representatives on staff with the U.S. U-20 Men and Women and with the U-18s a full-time guy, Robbie Elliot. He's in camp with them and he helps with nutrition, with training, with the planning the training, and with regeneration. He's working on what Nike and SPARQ are doing and it manifests itself in those training camps."

**ussoccer:** This summit is about the next steps in player development. How does SPARQ fit in to that process?

**Paul Winsper:** "We can obviously help. We have a brain trust and you see the reach that a company like Nike has in terms of coaches and athletes. We're tapping into all of those resources to make sure what we say from a performance perspective is beyond reproach and the best it can possibly be. We can be a huge help to U.S. Soccer whether it's preparing the National Teams for the next phase of their careers, preparing teams in camp to play in for a World Cup cycle, or to just informing the Development Academy of the process of how to develop better athletes to play soccer."