

Lee County Strikers

Academy Program

Orlando Cervantes

Director of Coaching

Overview

○ Purpose:

- The Academy format is designed as a bridge from recreational soccer to competitive soccer.
- The format's purpose is to develop the technical ability (skills) of each player. Ball mastery is the key.
 - ✧ Team building and an emphasis on winning are NOT part of the Academy program.
 - ✧ Winning is part of the process. It is great if the team wins, but the the development of each player should never suffer for the sake of winning.
 - ✧ Players will make mistakes during games that will cause goals to be scored against them. Creativity is encouraged and demanded. At these ages, creativity leads to mistakes. Mistakes are critical to learning.
- The Academy program provides players an environment to learn, grow, and develop without pressure

Overview

○ Structure

• Open Rosters

✧ Players can move to different teams for games and practices. This allows players to:

1. Push themselves outside their comfort zone
2. Get used to players with different styles, personalities, skill levels.
3. Players get more games and opportunities to develop (more playing time)
4. The emphasis on Academy is individual development, so team “cohesion” suffers.
 - Team focus begins at the U11 age group and is stressed at U15 and up

• Skill Development

✧ We want a ball for every player in every practice.

✧ BALL MASTERY is the the emphasis.

- If a child learns the necessary ball skills at the youngest ages, they consistently win and advance in the older age groups
- Comfort on the ball is the key to players participating in advanced soccer at the older ages
- The true measure of skill development at the Academy is noticed at U13 and above

• Positional Development

✧ Players are expected to rotate positions frequently. This builds an understanding of the game while giving each player experience in all positions. This includes playing goalkeeper.

Academy vs. Traditional League

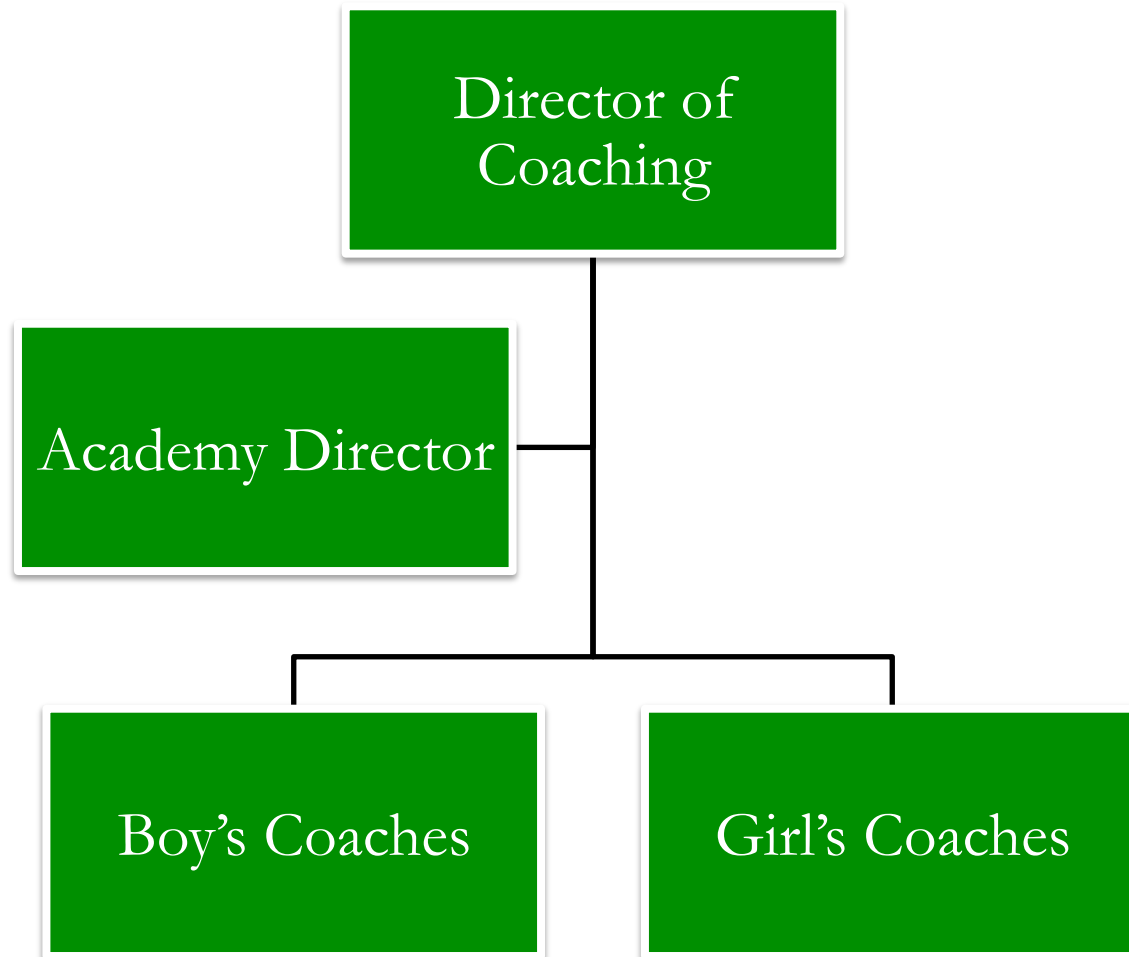
Academy

- Flexible rosters- variable and developmental
- Training as group, rather than as a team; creates club culture at an early age
- Focus on individual development
- Development focus is long-term
- Success is measured by individual progress
- Less pressure to win
- Having fun while learning is key

Traditional League

- Fixed rosters- predictable
- Team training, team focus
- Difficult to develop a club culture
- Short-term focus (winning, league finish, tournament championships, etc.)
- Success is measured by team success
- There is more pressure on coaches to win, so individual development suffers
- Pressure on players and parents as well
- Rigid game schedule set by league

Academy Coaching Structure



Coaching Expectations

- Coaches are expected to conduct themselves in professional manner at all times.
- Academy coaches should hold a minimum of an “E” coaching license. A “D” is preferred
- Coaches are to be at practice a minimum of 15 minutes early to set up (assuming the coach does not have a previous session).
- Coaches should be on the field 30 minutes before each game (assuming the coach is not coming from another game)
- Warm-ups for games at these ages should not exceed 30 minutes (20 minutes is preferred)
- Each coach should communicate effectively with team administrator, Academy Director, and the Director of Coaching

Questions?

Please contact the Lee County Strikers Director of Coaching, Orlando Cervantes with any questions.

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