



FC LAKESIDE ACADEMY

U5s to U8s Football



Philosophy | Coaching | The Journey

What Is The FC Lakeside Academy?

- Fun football sessions for girls and boys in the U5, U6, U7 and U8 age groups, leading to organised league football at U9s
- Each age group led by coaches, supported by a Head of Academy
- Playing on Saturday mornings across The Pavilion (U5s & U6s) and CPL (U7s & U8s)
- U5s & U6s training only with U7s & U8s able to play organised matches with optional midweek training



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Our Aim

To provide children from different communities and backgrounds with a FUN, SAFE & INCLUSIVE football environment, helping them to develop a love for the ball and then the game, or simply sports and being active, for years to come.



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CHARTER
STANDARD
CLUB

What Is Success?

At the Foundation Phase and FC Lakeside Academy age groups, it has to be as simple as having players wanting to come back week after week, season after season.



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Our Sessions

We want to create sessions that feel like the street and park football that our players' parents and coaches used to play. We're here to create a fun environment of discovery and learning, helping young players to develop as children and footballers, establishing a love for the ball and *then* the game.

Chaos over structure. Discovery over instruction. Let them play!



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Our Players

As our players leave the FC Lakeside Academy, moving into more competitive football, we want to see dribblers, risk-takers, decision-makers, players that want to stay on the ball and excite, never know when they're beaten yet know how to be respectful and sporting.



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Coach & Volunteer Requirements & Duties

- All volunteers must be DBS checked through the club before starting to coach at FC Lakeside
- Coaches are asked to complete The Playmaker FA online course
- One coach per team from the U8s age group must be FA level 1 qualified
- Coaching teams are expected to undertake admin duties for their age group, from collecting playing fees to communicating with parents and organising friendly fixtures as they progress through the academy
- The Head of Academy and committee members will provide on-going support to coaches throughout the season



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Focus & Key Coaching Considerations

- Is it fun? Is it challenging? Are they getting lots of touches of the ball? Are they able to make lots of decisions? Is it player led?
- Coaches connecting with players is hugely important
- Focus on the individual and their relationship with the ball
- “Stay on the ball” – help to develop a love of being on the ball and all of the skills that go with it from dribbling and turning to shielding and stealing
- Small-sided games – more touches, more fun, more development!
- Play within sessions should look chaotic. We’re not coaching the adult game
- Players should be given plenty of opportunities to make decisions and experience individual success during play
- Players should play with no pressure, positive encouragement and very little instruction. Keep coaching messages simple and focused – offering key pieces of information to help players at the right time
- Sessions and games can be competitive whilst positive, fun and inclusive
- Players develop at different rates and times – think about managing difference
- Give social and psychological corners thought when planning sessions



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Key Focuses

Fun, inclusive football, encouraging players to stay on the ball

	U5s & U6s	U7s & U8s
Game Formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual play with maximum of 3v3 • 1hr training sessions • Mini games no longer than 10 minutes • Mini goals and appropriate playing areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5v5 MAXIMUM. Recommended to play a mix of 3v3 and 4v4 in training and organised matches • 12x6 goals with 40x30 yard pitches for 5v5 • Maximum 40mins of organised game time per player
Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the individual and the ball • Players with a ball each as much as possible • Character-based individual and team games • Stay on the ball. Forget passing! • Dribble, turn, protect & steal • Give players time to play with the ball unopposed using different parts of both feet • Think about appropriate numbers when introducing 'stealers' or 'taggers' • No 'drills', no long queues or players in goal • Very little 'coaching input' • Keep rules very simple • Lots of points scoring and success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main coaching focus on individuals over team • Ball mastery – turns, 1v1 skills to unbalance and beat defenders. Can they do this unopposed and then under more pressure and then fully opposed? • Introduce concept of sharing the ball – Why? When? How? • SSGs with simple rules or conditions for teams & players • Heavy focus on 1v1, 2v1, 2v2 • Dribble, turn, protect & steal • Use overloads to allow players more time on the ball but with some added pressure • Lots of points scoring and success • Have a coaching focus – in/out possession/transition



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Developing Players

We have to be realistic and accept that players do not attend the FC Lakeside Academy to learn from coaches and improve as players. They come to have fun, to score goals and play with their friends.

If we can create an environment which helps children to do this then we will only encourage their love of the game, play at home, school, in parks and other organised sessions. We are just one part of their football ecosystem and development!



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Managing Difference

- Whilst we want to challenge players, we need them to experience success in order for them to love the ball and the game
- When opposed or unopposed, if players repeatedly find the challenge too easy or too difficult to achieve success then it is likely to impact their love of the game as well as their development
- Differences will be across physicality and technical ability as well as factors such as confidence, ability to understand rules/tasks and work with teammates
- We must also consider how we do this without creating a 'first' and 'second' team environment as we see in adult football



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Practical Solutions To Managing Difference

- When appropriate, match players in opposed/paired activities to allow them to achieve success whilst also getting the opportunity to be stretched at times
- Use 'safe zones' during games or 'magic player' where they can't be tackled or play within an unopposed zone
- Keep games small-sided and mix from varied to matching/similar ability sides
- Give players appropriate tasks or challenge them to play quicker, try challenging skills
- Reward and encourage attributes and behaviour such as respect, teamwork, kindness and helpfulness as well as goals and skills
- Make adjustments to the format - if you're playing with mini goals, turn a goal to face away from the pitch to give a player/team more time for a recovery run. If one team is dominating, change the numbers
- Give players the opportunity to score points for different degrees of difficulty. E.g. In a 1v1, you might have 2 goals – one easier to score in for 1 point and the harder for 3 points, giving players an appropriate challenge matched to their current level. If a player has picked up a few 1 pointers, can they attempt a 3 pointer?



Progressing A Session

- As players develop, they will be more comfortable facing pressure. This is important in meeting the needs of individuals within the academy and specific age groups through session design
- Players should be given time to explore different techniques like dribbling using different parts of the foot, changing direction and ball mastery in a pressure-free unopposed environment
- Semi-opposed – this might be a game where there are more players with the ball than without or more ‘attackers’ than ‘defenders’ in a 2v1, 3v2, or 4 ‘stealers’ to 10 dribblers, so that they feel more pressure and have more decisions to make than in the unopposed environment but more time than in a fully opposed situation
- Fully-opposed – this may be 1v1, 2v2, 3v3 where players face more pressure and have to make quicker technical/tactical decisions



Planning A Session

	Notes
Arrival activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carried out whilst players are arriving• Low supervision• Simple games
Warm up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect with players• Tag games, invasion games, lots of movement, with and without balls
Unopposed play and ball mastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving players the chance to spend time with their own ball• Turns, dribbling, moving using both feet, different parts of the foot• Challenging players to change direction, change their speed, try skills
SSGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Split into smaller groups for small-sided games• From simple 1v1s to small conditioned games, invasion games, ball collection games especially for the younger ages• Use different scoring methods, different goals, conditions for players and teams
Final games	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These may be very similar to the SSGs in terms of numbers but a chance to just play a simple 3v3 or 4v4 with no intervention, no coaching



Matchday Best Practice: U7s & U8s

- Equal game time is a MUST amongst FC Lakeside Academy teams and pre-planned substitutions recommended. Players shouldn't be replaced in order to attempt to win a game or improve the result
- Every player should ALWAYS have the opportunity to play on a Saturday morning if matches or training scheduled
- Core fixtures played with mixed ability teams with opportunities to play 'development fixtures' or additional fixtures to stretch more engaged players
- No fixed positions at U7s and U8s
- Don't overcomplicate with instructions – focus on one objective (might be one in possession/out of possession/transition) or individual objectives



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Matchday Best Practice: U7s & U8s

- Create an environment where fun & player development is prioritised above winning games and this should be reflected in any decision making from coaches. Players will always want to win games!
- Allow players to play with freedom. Apart from occasional words of encouragement, coaches voices shouldn't be heard from the sidelines!
- Encouragement and coaching points over instruction – a simple 'transition' example... 'FC Lakeside, can we win it back in 5 seconds?' vs. 'Jack, mark number 9. Tackle him!'
- Coaches shouldn't look to replicate the adult game and must allow players to make mistakes, run with the ball and explore new skills. Shouts of PASS, CLEAR IT, NOT THERE are not appropriate
- Be flexible – be prepared to change the match formats to suit the challenges and conditions on your match day



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What To Expect Moving Into U7s & U8s

- The club tends to have around 24 players per age group – allowing for a split into 3 match day squads for 5v5 football
- 5v5 is the maximum number for game formats – we encourage 3v3 and 4v4 in training and organised fixtures
- 6 coaches or 3 lead coaches and 3 assistants per age group
- Waiting lists when squads get to their limit
- Friendly fixtures arranged with other local clubs on a Saturday morning
- Mini tournaments/leagues at U8s with fixed squads for 5v5
- Must keep in mind that there is a jump up to 7v7 at U9s so squad numbers likely to need increasing towards the end of U8s season
- Players must be 6 years of age before playing organised matches



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Code Of Conduct

- The club have a code of conduct for players, coaches and parents/spectators. We ask coaches to circulate these, for signing, at the start of the season to ensure that everyone knows what the expectations are when it comes to behaviour at FC Lakeside sessions and fixtures
- Player, coach and parent/spectator code of conduct documents are available here: <http://fclakeside.co.uk/info/>
- If coaches are made aware of code of conduct breaches by players, parents/spectators or coaches, the Head of Academy and Child Welfare Officer are on hand to discuss the appropriate action and all serious breaches must be reported to the club



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Useful Resources & References

- <https://thebootroom.thefa.com/> (FA Resources)
- https://www.youtube.com/c/FA_Learning/videos (FA Learning)
- <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMR0ISTMOPTGVTumRodbR6ipdnIhwj6KT> (FA Sessions)
- https://twitter.com/sturge_p (FA Head of Foundation Phase)
- <https://youtu.be/J5ruFd2AsuE> (A great presentation from Pete Sturges, FA Head of Foundation Phase)
- <https://www.thefa.com/-/media/cfa/derbyshirefa/files/mini-soccer-youth-futsal-handbook.ashx?la=en> (FA mini soccer guide)
- <http://fclakeside.co.uk/info/> - multiple league, club and FA docs
- <https://community.thefa.com/coaching/podcasts/podcast-dnainsights/> - DNA Insights Podcast

