

Lytchett Matravers Football Club



FOOTBALL FOR ALL
FUN FOR ALL

The Lytchett Matravers ID

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Introduction

When I first started coaching it was in the same way as many of you. My son was in soccer-school and his group needed coaches to take them forwards. I had played the game at a reasonable amateur level, had some opinions on how kids should be coached and if I was going to be at the games anyway I might as well do so on the coach's side of the pitch.

Thrown in at the deep end, I had no idea what to expect from the children I was working with – what they should be able to do at each stage of their development, how they think, how they are motivated, what kinds of practices would be suitable for them. There was little to no support available at the time and so I did what I expect many of you have also done – I did things that I did as a child and a player and I Googled. The internet is full of wonderful resources and information, but it's also full of content that is not appropriate for children in grassroots clubs – and information or sessions that are, to be frank, just plain rubbish. It took me a long time and trial and error to learn to learn to distinguish between the two.

Having been with many of the same children for several seasons now, having attended numerous courses and CPD events and having engaged widely with other coaches I constantly find myself wishing that I had known the things I have learned now when I first started. I have made a lot of mistakes which I hope to help other coaches avoid.

This document is intended to pass some of the benefit of that experience on to coaches and to give our club a framework for a consistent approach to coaching the young children that come to us.

The document is not just based on my opinions, it's based on widely accepted best-practices and numerous sources including the FA's own philosophy. I hope that you find it thought provoking, challenging and most importantly useful.

Stuart Bramley – Coaching Lead

The Lytchett Matravers ID

The England DNA

The FA launched the England DNA in 2014 as a playing and coaching philosophy for the national team and for the game as a whole across the country. The England DNA's ultimate purpose is to help create successful national teams – but a key part of this strategy involves grassroots clubs like our own considering and creating our own philosophy – not only to help create a higher skilled talent pool for the elite end of the game, but to ensure that all children in grassroots football receive the best possible experience and football education.

In line with the FA's England DNA, we are therefore developing our own the Lytchett Matravers "ID" – a club-wide identity and philosophy to help guide our coaches in their development of the children in their care. Not only will it give us something to work from as coaches on the training and match days, it will also provide us with a means of communicating our view of good practice to parents, coaches and children and make us accountable for the things that we do.

It is our intention that our club identity is regularly reviewed, updated and republished and we welcome feedback, comments and discussion about its contents.

Both the England DNA and Lytchett Matravers ID break down into five core components:



This document will look at each of these elements in turn and explain what each means for us at Lytchett Matravers FC.



Who We Are

The “who we are” element of the Lytchett Matravers ID describes the values and principles we hold. It is centred on our club philosophy which will underpin all of the actions that we take and the decisions we make.

“Football For All, Fun For All”

Our club’s motto “Football For all, Fun For all” clearly demonstrates that our key principles are equality of opportunity and an emphasis on kids enjoying their football. Children having fun and falling in love with the game is our priority – not winning matches. We like to win games of course, but not at any cost – and certainly not at the cost of any child’s opportunity to play, to have fun, to learn and develop.

During the foundation phase (5-11) this means that we will ensure that our children get equal playing opportunities. All should receive equal playing time at this stage of their development. This may of course not be possible within the confines of a single match for a variety of reasons such as injury, lateness, behavioural issues etc – but should be the case over the course of a number of weeks and ultimately the season as a whole. Even the youngest of children can perceive a lack of equality and fairness in their treatment and it is particularly noticeable by and emotive for parents. All children should also have equal starting opportunities as there are different psychological skills to be learned from starting games as well as coming into a game that is already in progress.

Over the course of a season all foundation phase children should have the chance to play in all positions in order to help them gain as wide a variety of experiences as possible. Early specialisation both in sport and position is detrimental to young players’ long-term development.

During the youth development phase (12-16) this will necessarily change with the developing psychology of the children and the increasingly competitive nature of their football. There is expected to be a gradual move towards more competitive playing time during this phase, however this should still not come at the expense of children’s opportunities to play and develop. All players should be playing for at least 50% of the available match time.

We seek to create positive, fun, engaging environments in which children can play without pressure or fear of making mistakes. We measure our success by the enjoyment the children experience, the community feel of our club and not by league tables, trophies and tournament wins.



How We Play

In the England DNA, the aim is for all teams to demonstrate a consistent playing style regardless of age or gender. As a grassroots football club the vast majority of the time we will be working with children of mixed abilities in groups with very different dynamics. This means that we cannot expect all of our teams to be playing in the same tactical shape and it is not our aim to mandate this.

Instead, we are focused on general principles of play during different phases – in possession, out of possession and in transition.

Remember that as coaches we are not here to prove or to demonstrate our own tactical knowledge. Our role is to help children learn their own.

In Possession

Stay on the ball, master the ball

Lytchett Matravers teams aim to retain possession of the ball, making intelligent decisions to progress play by dribbling, to protect the ball or to pass the ball in order to penetrate the opposition.

We want our players to be brave, skilful, creative and comfortable in possession of the ball, to have the freedom to take risks in all areas of the pitch and to have the confidence to try new things.

Excite with the ball and seek creative solutions

Lytchett Matravers teams are positive in possession and seek creative solutions to game situations.

Connect and combine creatively to score goals

Lytchett Matravers teams are able to work together to open up compact defences using intelligent and creative combination play.

Out Of Possession

Positive and enthusiastic defending

Lytchett Matravers teams defend enthusiastically, try to win possession of the ball as high up the pitch as possible, but if they cannot they will be compact and patient. Our players are hard to beat in 1 on 1 situations and are confident enough to defend effectively without cover or support.



Intelligent defending

Our players know their defensive responsibilities, are willing to defend the goal and compete with appropriate aggressiveness for the ball. We want players to be able to delay, contain and pressure the opposition with the aim of causing mistakes which allow us to regain possession.

In Transition

Instinctive decision making

Lytchett Matravers teams react quickly, intelligently and positively in moments of transition.

A transition occurs whenever possession of the football changes from one team to another. As such, the transition is the most common event in football. Our principles of play for transition are therefore also divided into winning and losing the ball.

Having lost the ball

Positive and intelligent defensive reaction

The best time to win the ball being immediately after losing it, Lytchett Matravers teams aim to regain possession as early as possible and prevent opponents from starting counter attacks.

The player or players closest to the ball should immediately seek to win the ball back. If they cannot do so, within the first five seconds, all players should seek to return to a defensive shape behind the ball.

Having won the ball

Positive and intelligent attacking reaction

Having *gained* possession by winning the ball, Lytchett Matravers teams aim immediately to *secure* possession or initiate a counter-attack.

If a counter-attacking opportunity is available our players should seek to initiate that quickly and with accuracy. If not, we should seek to secure possession and retain the ball. This may be achieved either by hiding the ball and protecting with the body, or by making a pass to a team-mate in a safe place.

How We Coach

This is unapologetically the longest section of the Lytchett Matravers ID as it is the area upon which we have the most impact upon children and where we have the greatest opportunity to influence the quality of what we offer to our children.

The England DNA defines a core set of principles around which all England training sessions are designed. The principles here are rooted in those core principles, but simplified and made appropriate for our club.

General Principles

Use all of the FA four-corner model

The FA four-corner model is designed to ensure that we develop the whole player and it is very easy to neglect the right-hand side of the model – the psychological and social corners.

When planning your session, consider what the learning outcomes in each corner are. Every session does not need to have equal emphasis, but ideally over the course of a season we should aim to work equally across all four corners.

Use a realistic, relevant games-based approach whenever possible

What players do in practice should replicate the demands of the game, or a specific moment in the game as much as possible.

Children only improve technically when they have contact with the ball, so we want to have them enjoying sessions that give them as many touches on the ball as possible. We similarly want to avoid having children stood in lines waiting to have a go at a task. We only have them for an hour or so a week - we need to ensure that we deliver the biggest benefit we can in the limited time that we have them. We don't have time to waste queuing and they have come to learn to play and have fun, not learn to queue up and get bored. Keeping practices game-related - using goals as much as possible - is the best way to keep children engaged, motivated, making football decisions and to prevent behavioural issues.

The internet is awash with videos of players doing drills, looking organised and polished – more like an acrobatic display team than the game of football! Football is a chaotic invasion game. Games-based training might look disorganised to parents, but it is the best way for children to acquire skills and to build a football memory full of learned clues, cues and triggers that they can draw upon as they grow and develop. These things will later be thought of as instinctive but is actually the product of a wide variety of experiences that they have gained by playing.

The place for drills is in B&Q – not the football pitch!

Develop practices that enable the players to make lots of decisions

In order to learn how to apply the skills they are developing; players need to test them by making decisions in practice and getting the instant feedback from the success or failure of their choice. The more decisions they make, under pressure, in practices the more feedback they will get and the better decisions they will learn to make as a result. Games-based practices are the best way to get children making these kinds of decisions.

Use a positive and enthusiastic manner with players at all times

Greet your players with enthusiasm when they arrive and be positive and enthusiastic throughout the session. Praise players' effort and behaviour as well as good, skilful play. Consider the impact that your words and actions will have on a young player's self-esteem. We only do positive.

Have fun. If you aren't having fun, how can we expect them to?

Have a clear theme to your practices

Ensure that your session has an overall theme or topic to help the children to learn and develop skills effectively. Make sure that you discuss this with them before you start. The children will be much better able to engage with your topic if they know what it is and what you want them to learn from the session. You wouldn't expect a schoolteacher to ever start a lesson without the pupils knowing the subject!

At the end of the session reflect with the children on what they have just done. This will help them understand its relevance to their matches and their development. Q&A is a great tool for this.

Ensure your sessions are planned before and reviewed after you deliver them

The FA suggests that the plan-do-review cycle should see equal time spent on each. In reality we can tend to spend far longer on the planning of a session than delivering it and easily neglect the review. We all have lives, jobs and families but do try and spend time on each of these key elements.

Include elements of transition in all practices and sessions where possible

In the Premier League, where the players are highly skilled at retaining possession of the ball, there is a transition on average every 8.7 seconds of open play. In grassroots, the figure is likely to be much lower. When something happens this much in the game we need to make sure that we include it in our practices. Avoid practice designs which result in one team simply putting the ball out of play or giving it back to the opposition or coach if they have worked hard to win it. Instead, ensure that there is a goal for both teams if they win possession of the ball. This could be an actual goal to score in, an end-zone to break into, a number of passes or period of time for which they need to retain that possession in order to score... anything is better than just giving the ball back or putting it out!

Use varied coaching styles based on the needs of the group

No player enjoys being shouted at or having their mistakes pointed out to their whole peer group. Young players really don't like coaches stopping their play to talk at them! Use a variety of ways of interacting with children (see the FA's five pillars table below) based on the needs of your group and the personalities of individuals within it to help them to learn.

Coaching Style	Command	Question and Answer	Observation and Feedback	Guided Discovery	Trial and Error
Intervention	Coach tells player what to do	Coach leads with questions to get responses from players	Coach and players observe	Coach asks a question and issues a challenge	Players and/or coach decide on a challenge
Example	"I want you to receive with the back foot"	"Why might you use your arms to help you maintain possession"	"Watch how John uses his first touch to take him away from the defender"	"Show me how to use your body to protect the ball"	"Try to use your first touch to take you away from pressure"
Description	Coach determines the outcome he wants	Coach poses questions and players offer verbal solutions	Players and coach observe and discuss feedback	Coach prompts and players offer visual demonstration of their solution	Players are encouraged to find solutions with minimal support from the coach

Maximise playing time in training – aim for a minimum of 70 percent ball-rolling time

Our time with the children is limited and we want to get the biggest benefit that we can out of every training session. To keep them engaged and enjoying their time we should aim for them to be playing for a minimum of 70 percent of the session. As coaches we need to explain, we need to reflect and to teach but we need to do so very clearly and concisely. Try and keep to under 30 seconds as many of the children will not have a long attention span for listening to long speeches from adults.

If you have multiple activities planned for the children, try and use a carousel/circuit approach with everything set up beforehand to minimise the time between them. It is of course understood that space and equipment constraints may make this difficult.



How We Support

The 'How We Support' component of the Lytchett Matravers ID highlights the ways in which the club supports the development of players and coaches to maximise participation and enjoyment through a strong, positive and evolving infrastructure.

The club will have exemplary practice in regards child welfare, providing children with a safe playing environment. The club will ensure that players are provided with appropriate facilities and kit.

All teams will have at least one qualified Level One coach. All coaches will hold current safeguarding and first aid certifications and will be fully DBS checked.

Coaches will have access to funding for kit, equipment and appropriate education for those wishing to develop their coaching skills further.

The club will encourage social interaction among our players, parents, coaches and community.

It is our aim to be a net contributor to our local community.



The Lytchett Matravers Player

This profile is intended to describe the qualities that we are seeking to instil in the children that we coach, aligned with the FA's four corner model for long term player development.

<p>Technical/Tactical</p> <p>Skilful Able to play in multiple positions Able to use both feet when required Comfortable in possession Finishing skills Tactically aware – understand their role and how it changes in different match scenarios Attacking and defending skills Move with the ball – both dribbling and running with the ball Pass accurately over varying distances</p>	<p>Psychological</p> <p>Creative Brave Reflective Self-aware Confident Decision makers Resilient Emotional control Committed Versatile</p>
<p>Physical</p> <p>ABCs (agility, balance and co-ordination) High fitness levels, able to work hard for the duration of their time on the pitch Strong Powerful Flexible</p>	<p>Social</p> <p>Well behaved Sporting Respectful of team-mates, opposition and coaches Reliable Communicate positively when playing Independent Responsible Accountable</p>