



# The Highlanders' Way

## Competency Based Long Term Player Development



The Essential Techniques - Connecting The Dots To Form A Complete Picture Of The Game!

November 17, 2011

Dear Highlanders' Academy player and family,

We are so happy that you have decided to attend the Highlanders' Academy and put part of your development in the hands of our curriculum. We want you to continue your development so we have put these pages together in order to outline the techniques and concepts that have covered during the Academy Phase One.

We pride ourselves by having a comprehensive teaching program based on specific competencies which we feel are the Essential Techniques of the game and we call the overall program, 'The Highlanders' Way'. Within our programs, we play a large number of specific games which help players learn various movement skills and a number of techniques that are essential to soccer success.

Players should review this list of competencies and remember what these felt like and the instruction that they were given during the Academy session. If a player can't remember, then go to our website ([www.thehighlandersway.blogspot.com](http://www.thehighlandersway.blogspot.com)) where they will find links to video of these techniques. Continue to check the site because more video is added on a regular basis. In many cases a player can also reference the laminated technical cards which we provided to the Academy players. We know many of our Academy players have attached these to their kitbags/backpacks for quick reference during practice and this is something we certainly promote.

**Remember, there are no secrets to success and development – simply identify what you want to make better and go practice, practice, practice.**

Thanks again, practice intelligently in order to connect the dots and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Neil Sedgwick  
Academy Director

Steve Simonson  
Director of Boys Development

Dave Dew  
Director of Girls Development



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### The Highlanders' Way – Competency Based Long Term Development

The Highlanders' Long Term Player Development Model, which we follow, progressively graduates players through the stages of technical development, helping them put in place prerequisite techniques before moving to the next level of performance. If you have these tools by age 14, your ability to work on varied tactics becomes greatly enhanced. In soccer organized by age group alone, and this is no slight on clubs because they have to be organized by age groups, players are matched with the potential for wide variances in competencies. In this model the challenge for top players is limited, and less competent players will only progress if they are highly motivated. Also, we often find the top player's learning curve will plateau because they are not highly motivated nor challenged. Meanwhile, the lower level player matched with stronger players, plays less, achieves less, is discouraged by the disparity and we often lose them from the game.

Many comparisons have been used over the years to this competency based process: in music (piano, you do not teach Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 11, without first learning scales and then progressing slowly), in figure skating (a triple toe loop without first learning a single), in math (how to multiply without an understanding of addition), in gymnastics (a somersault on the balance beam without learning the technique on the floor). However, sport, especially our sport, is divided by age and within a single year there exists a range of ability. It is understood by educators that maturity at a certain age will show a disparity of plus or minus 2 years in true maturational levels. Consequently, a team with all 14 year olds will have varied physical capabilities, technical abilities, tactical understanding and levels of maturity that are perhaps four years apart in one or more of these areas. It is difficult for a coach to maximize achievement in these environments.

Due to our academy and prospects structure, we are able to organize our training groups in a manner based on competence, not age group. We will attempt to match players up in like groups according to physical maturity and if they are weaker technically, we encourage players to develop the skills of the group in front of them.

To illustrate this, we have players playing at a U17 level with the physical abilities of a 20 year old, but the technical ability of a top 15 year old. And we have players training with a U12 group who have the physiques of a U10 but the technical abilities and the maturity of 12 year olds. Single age groups do not solve developmental issues.

This method of grouped training allows players to be successful at a technical level that is most appropriate for them. Therefore, the training is personalized and addresses the needs of the child ensuring that their technical development is maximized.

We teach progressively in our program ... this is the Highlanders' Way. If players do not have the tools, the competencies, we put them with players of similar ability UNTIL they have shown competency.

If a player is new to our program, we train them in a group of like competencies at their age or close to their age. We provide them with instruction and information needed to meet competencies. It is then up to their effort and application in our sessions and on their own to practice and reach their requisite competencies.

Why so much focus on technique? A carpenter needs tools to build a house. Limited tools, limited house. Technique acquisition is also maximized during the years represented by our academy. With a full 'tool kit' of techniques then the tactical knowledge increases because more solutions are available to a player. Greater solutions and execution, typically leads to a greater sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy, thus keeping an individual in the game and hopefully pursuing a healthy and active lifestyle through their teens and beyond.

That being said, some may feel that our academy is elitist in nature. That our academy may limit the confidence in a player by holding them back from their peer group of similar age. Ultimately, we want every child to be as successful as possible. We want all of our players to reach their full potential as players, and as people. Understanding this, we feel that the personalized training provided by our competency-based approach, addresses and bridges the needs/gaps of a player. This in itself, allows the player to best develop the technical skills and tactical prowess to achieve personalized excellence.

We do not hold players back, our competency-based approach is meant to motivate and push the driven player to a new level (as long as the player comes with the right attitude). Ultimately, we want players with the tools to play in our senior teams (PDL or WLeague) or beyond.



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### What Are the Competencies?

Competency based development focuses on first establishing a base of movements that we refer to as 'The Essential Techniques'. Simultaneously taking techniques & adding decision making required when opposition is introduced. **Below you will find the level at which we focus within our Academy by age group. Players may be beyond or behind in these areas so we modify continuously.**

	Age					Age			
	10	12	14	16		10	12	14	16
<b>Dribbling</b>					<b>Ball Striking (with the laces for passing or shooting)</b>	I	L	L	A
• Basic 'Skipping' w/ ball or "touching every step"	L	A	A	P	• Plant Foot - "Heel to the center of the ball"				
• Change of direction	L	A	A	P	• Kicking Foot - "Pointed to the side and not down"				
• Change of speed	I	L	A	A	• Leaning Body - "Lean body to the side"				
• Rolls	L	A	P	P	• Shoulders Back/Hips Forward - "End up where you start"				
					• Opposite arm "Belly button to shoulder height"				
<b>Turns</b>									
• Slide / Slide with a Drag Back	L	L	A	P					
• Inside & Outside of Foot Twist Off or Hook Turns	L	A	A	P	• Avoid: Jumping through the ball				
• Stop Turn	L	A	A	P	• Avoid: Bending or leaning over top of the ball				
• Step Over Turn	L	L	A	P	• Avoid: Pointing the toe straight down				
• Cruyff Turn	I	L	A	A					
• Zidane or Maradona	I	I	L	A	<b>Juggling (Makes the game three dimensional)</b>				
<b>1v1 Techniques</b>					• Posture for juggling on all body parts	L	L	A	P
• Dead Touch / Dead Touch with a Step Over	I	L	L	A	• Hips forward and shoulders back				
• Matthew's Move	L	L	A	A	<b>With Feet:</b>	I	L	A	P
• Beardsley Move	I	I	L	A	• Lock ankle in so slight backspin is on the ball				
• Scissors / Double Scissors	L	L	A	A	• Every juggle is a kick (avoid juggling w/ straight leg)				
• Revellino	I	L	A	A	<b>With Thigh (not knee):</b>	L	L	A	P
					<b>With Head: Posture (Avoid 'sitting down')</b>	L	L	A	P
<b>Shielding (Protecting the ball)</b>	L	L	A	A					
• Shielding and using turns	I	L	A	A	<b>Heading</b>				
					• Maintain posture: hips forward & shoulders back	L	L	A	P
<b>Passing &amp; Control (Cannot Separate the Two)</b>					• ALIOPS!	L	L	A	P
<b>Passing:</b>	I	L	L	A					
• Maintain posture of hips forward / shoulders back					<b>Defending</b>				
• "Step backwards" (happens if posture is right)					• Basic individual defending of jockeying	I	L	L	A
• "Balanced & contact in front of non-kicking foot"					• "Step into the space between dribbler & the ball"	I	L	L	A
<b>Control on the Ground:</b>	I	L	A	A	• Principles of Goal-side, Pressure, Cover, Balance				
• Hop backwards & be in the air on your first touch									
• Avoid drawing foot back to absorb the ball					<b>Attacking</b>				
• Keep posture so head is up & can see the field					• Attacking Principles of Width, Depth & Penetration	I	L	L	A
<b>Turns with First Touch (Inside &amp; Outside of Foot)</b>	I	L	L	A	• Combinations: 1-2, Overlap, Cross Over/Take Over	I	L	L	A
<b>Control From Air (Using ½ Volley) "Find the Bounce":</b>	L	L	A	A					
• Hop and be on way down when making touch					<b>Mental Qualities of Academy Players</b>				
• Use of turns with inside or outside of the foot	I	L	L	A	• Activity Level (Training Capacity, Attitude & Focus)	I	L	L	A
• Control on Chest & Thigh	I	L	L	A	• Attentive (Attention Control & Goal Driven)	I	L	L	L
					• Correction from Reflection (Imagery & Modeling)	I	I	L	L
<b>Opening Up</b>									
• Allow the ball to run across your body to the back foot. Hop backwards – Be in air on touch	I	L	L	A	<b>This outline is used for initial assessment, but can also be used by players &amp; parents to monitor progress.</b>				

\*I=Introduce, L=Learn, A=Automate, P=Perfect (Level of Development/Teaching: Category shown on following page)



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### What do the levels or Development Categories really reference?

**I = Introduce:** This level is exactly what it states. Fundamental positions, stances, and patterns are introduced to the players and they develop an understanding of these areas. They can execute the various pieces of the techniques or tactics in the correct order but the movements look awkward and unsynchronized or delayed with regard to tactics. For the **coach** this means we provide a quick introduction of topics, essentially putting the 'jargon or language of the sport' in front of them and the valuable pictures that they need to model. However, we do not spend a great deal of time on these topics however we do expose the young player to these areas.

**L = Learn:** At this level players are able to change the techniques (movements) in order to find success under various conditions and in different areas of the field. This occurs with limited pressure in the beginning and then more pressure as experience is gained. Here a **coach** must match the level of ability to that of the player. Not a complete match, but a match that slightly exceeds the current competencies of the player. The **coach** must focus training sessions around these topics, not all at once, but systematically throughout the year. This is where the art and experience of coaching comes into play. A coach must recognize where an athlete stands today, and moves them day by day toward the end goal...the end goal being the next column in the LTPDM.

**A = Automate:** When players get to this level, their techniques (movements) are coordinated, consistent and efficiently performed under more complex conditions. Although limited to varying they way they perform the trained techniques (movements), players begin to create their own responses to the conditions they begin to see in games and training exercises. **Coaches** contribute to automation of an athlete's development in these phases consistently offering opportunities for repetition and variation. Growth occurs with every variation, slight or extreme, in an automated movement or tactical situation.

**P = Perfect/Improvise:** Players begin to create instantaneous responses that are their interpretations of techniques or combinations of techniques forming unique motor patterns. Much of the development here is experiential and it is mostly in the hands of the player, although **coaches** provide tactical information through instruction, video, and establishing an environment where the player's individual development occurs through their own exploration.

- Development categories modified from the CAC NCCP Theory

### Movement Education

- Posture: Remains Consistent with most techniques (shoulders back and hips forward)
- Games: A great deal of our instruction is around movement education and as instructors we watch for change of direction, leaning body thus putting weight on different parts of the foot, balance and agility – especially in our warm up activities (high activity and great deal of change of direction or movement patterns)

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### Competency Assessment Guide

What Are the Competencies? Competency based development focuses on first establishing a base of movements that we refer to as 'The Essential Techniques'. Simultaneously taking techniques & adding decision making required when opposition is introduced. **Below you will find an assessment form. The '?' indicates the athlete has no reference to the technique. The other levels 'I', 'L', 'A', 'P', are assessed by looking at the athletes and indicating a rough level of competence within each area. This is a tool which can be used by a coach or an athlete.**

Level of Athlete	?	I	L	A	P	Level of Athlete	?	I	L	A	P
<b>Dribbling</b>						<b>Ball Striking (with the laces for passing or shooting)</b>					
• Basic 'Skipping' or "touching every step"						• Plant Foot - "Heel to the center of the ball"					
• Change of direction						• Kicking Foot - "Pointed to the side and not down"					
• Change of speed						• Leaning - "Lean body to the side"					
• Rolls						• Shoulders Back/Hips Forward - "End up where you started"					
						• Opposite arm "Belly button to shoulder height"					
<b>Turns</b>											
• Slide / Slide with a Drag Back						• Avoid: Jumping through the ball					
• Inside & Outside of Foot Twist Off Turns						• Avoid: Bending or leaning over top of the ball					
• Stop Turn						• Avoid: Pointing the toe straight down					
• Step Over Turn											
• Cruyff Turn											
• Zidane or Maradona						<b>Juggling (Makes the game three dimensional)</b>					
<b>1v1 Techniques</b>						• Posture for juggling on all body parts					
• Dead Touch / Dead Touch with a Step Over						• Hips forward and shoulders back					
• Matthew's Move						<b>With Feet:</b>					
• Beardsley Move						• Lock ankle in so slight backspin is on the ball					
• Scissors / Double Scissors						• Every juggle is a kick (avoid juggling w/ straight leg)					
• Revellino						<b>With Thigh (not knee):</b>					
						<b>With Head:</b> Posture (Avoid 'sitting down')					
<b>Shielding (Protecting the ball)</b>											
• Shielding and using turns						<b>Heading</b>					
						• Maintain posture: hips forward & shoulders back					
<b>Passing &amp; Control (Cannot Separate)</b>						• ALIHOOPS!					
<b>Passing:</b>											
• Maintain posture of hips forward & shoulders back						<b>Defending</b>					
• "step backwards" (happens if posture is right)						• Basic individual defending of jockeying					
• "balanced & contact in front of plant foot"						• "Step into the space between dribbler & the ball"					
<b>Control on the Ground:</b>						• Principles of Goal-side, Pressure, Cover, Balance					
• Hop backwards & be in air on your first touch											
• Avoid drawing foot back to absorb the ball						<b>Attacking</b>					
• Keep posture so head is up & can see the field						• Attacking Principles of Width, Depth & Penetration					
<b>Turns with First Touch (Inside &amp; Outside of foot)</b>						• Combinations: 1-2, Overlap, Cross Over/Take Over					
<b>Control fr Air (Use ½ Volley) "Find the Bounce":</b>											
• Hop and be on way down when making touch						<b>Mental Qualities of Academy Players</b>					
• Use of turns with inside or outside of the foot						• Activity Level (Training Capacity, Attitude & Focus)					
• Control on Chest & Thigh						• Attentive (Attention Control & Goal Driven)					
						• Correction from Reflection (Imagery & Modeling)					
<b>Opening Up</b>						<b>This outline is used for initial assessment, but can also be used by players &amp; parents to monitor progress.</b>					
• Allow the ball to run across your body to the back foot. Hop backwards – Be in air on touch.											

\*?=No Reference Point, I=Introduce, L=Learn, A=Automate, P=Perfect