

- **Principle of distributed practice** - Short periods of intense practice will result in more learning than longer, massed practice sessions.
- **Principle of variable practice** - Block practice<sup>7</sup> aids performance while variable practice<sup>8</sup> aids in learning. Variable practice causes an increase in attention.

*Remember, plan the practice and practice the plan.*

Recommended Training Sessions to Match Ratio			
Age Group	Frequency	Duration	Ratio
U-6	1 day per week	45 minutes	1:1*
U-8	1 day per week	45 to 60 minutes	1:1
U-10	2 days per week	60 to 75 minutes	2:1
U-12	2 to 3 days per week	75 minutes	2 or 3:1
U-14	3 days per week	75 to 90 minutes	3:1
U-16	3 days per week	90 minutes	3 or 4:1
U-18+	4 to 5 days per week	90 to 120 minutes	4 or 5:1

*\*Or 0:1 – The idea here is for the U-6 players to show up on game day for their hour, which includes 20 to 30 minutes of appropriate activities and then a 3v3 match. This is the approach in which the players are not assigned to teams, but all children in the age group meet at the same time and place to be trained and have a game.*

Table 7: Training recommendations

### Beware of Tournamentitis

Tournamentitis – true it’s not a real word, but it does convey the condition of too many tournaments on the American soccer scene. On almost every weekend of the year there are hundreds of tournaments of every type taking place. They are for all ages and every level of play.

Tournaments started as a means to supply games for teams when there were far fewer teams than today. The distance between the teams often meant that the investment in time and money to get to another soccer club caused everyone to maximize the effort by playing many games. These tournaments began in earnest in the 1970s. Clearly, the number of soccer clubs has grown dramatically since then. The distance between clubs has become closer simply because of the proliferation of teams in towns. Yes, geography still plays a major role in the way soccer is managed in the U.S. The impact of distance on time and cost for travel will not change. What has changed, and will continue to change, is the distance between the home grounds of clubs.

In the 1980s, tournaments took on another focus. They became the main revenue stream for many clubs. Proceeds helped build facilities, turning the wheels of local governments and businesses to support soccer because of their financial impact on a community. The profits made even helped create jobs within the clubs for administrators and coaches. Tournaments have certainly aided with positive

<sup>7</sup> Block practice concentrates on one physical skill at a time before moving on to another.

<sup>8</sup> Variable practice does not present skills consecutively, but in a random order. Variable practice is more demanding since players must switch skills continuously. It would seem that the block method would be more effective. This is not the case. The variable practice is more difficult for players and hence demands a higher degree of mental focus. This demand develops better motor patterns for skills.