

PLAYING FORMATIONS

The following information details the New York Red Bulls Youth Programs philosophy to selecting formations for youth players on game day.

Game day coaching should be educational for a youth player. It is an extension of the training session where transfer of learning should occur. The use of formations should help enhance the learning process of the topics covered throughout the week in training.

IMPORTANT FORMATION CONSIDERATIONS

When choosing a formation, clubs must encourage players, coaches, and parents to honor the game and understand a selection of formation is for player development. This is a player-centered philosophy.

While the formation selection puts players in a role, they must then make their own technical and tactical decisions.

Formation selection on match day should help bring out the learning outcomes the coach focused on in the sessions that week.

Clubs must encourage players, coaches, and parents to rotate their players in all positions. Player rotation will allow the player to learn from all perspectives and gain a deeper understanding of the game.

Once the player crosses the white line, it is their game. The position or positions they play should begin developing the player to move to the next level of the game, including moving up to age appropriate numbers: 4v4, 7v7, 9v9, to 11v11.

FORMATION SELECTION

The following information provides formations which will help a youth player develop their game. Each formation provides a different strategy for the coach to help maximize the development of the players. Click on the links below for age specific formations information:

4 v 4 - 8 Years Old and Younger

MAIN AREA OF BUILDING BLOCKS FOCUS: TECHNIQUE/SKILL DEVELOPMENT

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| FORMATION | 2-2 |
| WHY USE IT? | The box shape allows for two straight passes, which can help younger players who may struggle to pass from angles. The shape, with only two lines of attack, is also much simpler for younger players to understand. The use of two forward players allows more players to start higher up on the field. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing Receiving Shielding Shooting |
| 2 - 2 Formation | 2 - 2 Formation integrated into a 1-2-2-2 Formation |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 7 v 7 – 1-2-2-2 |

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| FORMATION | 1-2-1 |
| WHY USE IT? | Having players naturally in a diamond gives simplified angles of support but also creates three lines of attack. Only one forward player creates space wider and allows for more 1 v 1 situations in these areas. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing Receiving Dribbling Crossing |
| 1-2-1 Formation | 1-2-1 Formation integrated into a 1-3-2-1 Formation |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 7 v 7 – 1-3-2-1 |

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| FORMATION | 2-1-1 |
| WHY USE IT? | Playing two players deep with a midfielder and forward creates three lines of attack but changes the size of space in the wide areas (creating more). |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing Receiving Running with the ball Turning |
| 2-1-1 Formation | 2-1-1 Formation integrated into a 1-2-3-1 Formation |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 7 v 7 – 1-2-3-1 |

7 v 7 - 10 Years Old and Younger

MAIN AREAS OF BUILDING BLOCKS FOCUS: TECHNIQUE/SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, INDIVIDUAL / GROUP TACTICS

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| FORMATION | 1-2-2-2 |
| WHY USE IT? | Simplified shape for more beginner players. With two players in each line players now have to start to work in pairs, two players in the forward line gives us players starting high on the field. The lack of naturally dedicated width could also improve player mobility as they now have to start to figure out who needs to create this and when to do so. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing and Receiving Shooting Defending Combination Play |
| Formation 1-2-2-2 | Formation 1-2-2-2 integrated into Formation 1-2-3-3 |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 9 v 9 – 1-2-3-3 |
| FORMATION | 1-3-2-1 |
| WHY USE IT? | Three defenders provide a solid backline. Two Central Midfield players without higher wide players mean that the Central Midfielders have to work on going beyond the ball as well as under it. Lots of space in wide areas due to the wide player's deeper starting position. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing and Receiving Running with the ball Defending Combination Play |
| Formation 1-3-2-1 | Formation 1-3-2-1 integrated into Formation 1-3-2-3 |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 9 v 9 – 1-3-2-3 |

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| FORMATION | 1-2-3-1 |
| WHY USE IT? | Well-structured shape to help teach the principles of the game with the naturally created triangles. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing Receiving Dribbling Attacking/Defending 1 v 1 Possession |
| Formation 1-2-3-1 | Formation 1-2-3-1 integrated into Formation 1-2-4-2 |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 9 v 9 – 1-2-4-2 |

9 v 9 - 12 Years Old and Younger

MAIN AREAS OF BUILDING BLOCKS: INDIVIDUAL / GROUP TACTICS

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| FORMATION | 1-2-3-3 |
| WHY USE IT? | Three forwards and three midfield players higher on the field can help when working on pressing the ball high on the field but also on attacking topics as well. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Crossing and Finishing Attacking 1 v 1 Combination Play Group Defending |
| Formation 1-2-3-3 | |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 11 v 11 – 1-4-3-3 |

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| FORMATION | 1-3-2-3 |
| WHY USE IT? | Players working in pairs in the wide areas allows for multiple topics to be conducted in relation to this area of the field. This formation also allows for lots of natural triangles. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Possession Attacking 2 vs 1 Combination play |
| Formation 1-3-2-3 | |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 11 v 11 – 1-4-2-3-1 |

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| FORMATION | 1-2-4-2 |
| WHY USE IT? | Lots of natural triangles which create a structure that helps to bring out the principles of the game, two forwards as well. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Passing and Receiving Shooting Possession Combination play |
| Formation 1-2-4-2 | |
| TRANSITIONS INTO | 11 v 11 – 1-4-4-2 |

11 v 11 - 13 Years old and Older

MAIN AREAS OF BUILDING BLOCK FOCUS: GROUP TEAM / TEAM TACTICS

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| FORMATION | 1-4-3-3 |
| WHY USE IT? | Isolation of wide players, numbers in the center of the field and lots of players starting higher on the field. Four defenders provide solidity at the back. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Defending/Attacking wide areas Defending – Attacking 3rd Attacking – final 3rd |
| Formation 1-4-3-3 | |

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| FORMATION | 1-4-2-3-1 |
| WHY USE IT? | Multiple lines of attack and lots of numbers in the midfield. Solid back line with four players with the use of two controlling midfield players. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Building out from the back Midfield Combining with forwards Playing through the lines |
| Formation 1-4-2-3-1 | |

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| FORMATION | 1-4-4-2 (Diamond) |
| WHY USE IT? | Lots of players centrally with four players, this also allows you to specialize with the four central players. Four defenders at the back allows for a solid backline. Two forward players. |
| WHICH TOPICS DOES IT HELP TO ENHANCE? | Building out from the back Midfield Combining with forwards Playing through the lines |
| Formation 1-4-4-2 | |