

## ALITHSA Arsenal: Age Group Priorities - U8 & U9



**Q: How long is the average attention span of an 8 year old?**

A: 20-25 sec., which is why we spend our time economically by ensuring the kids are playing instead of being subjected to long lectures, laps, and boring drills.

**Q: What equipment does my son / daughter need for practice and games?**

A: They need:

- Size 4 ball for practice and games
- Shin guards (for training and games)
- Comfortable training clothes; kit for game day
- Fluids (water or Gatorade)

**Q: Why don't ALITHSA's professional coaches condition players?**

A: We do, but we condition players in our 'fun activities', which is more specific to soccer fitness. We encourage players to play soccer away from practice and also encourage players' to play multi-sports to keep kids active and fit. Remember: for young players to be physically health and able to withstand the demands of the game, they must be active on days they're not training or playing games as well as eating the right foods.

**Q: What do ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches teach U8/U9 players?**

A: We teach our young players:

- A love of the game.
- To meet the demands of the game.
- Have fun: by designing fun activities and maximum involvement. NOT Boring 'drills' with long lines (we wonder why kids quit playing soccer?). Kids want to play!
- Technical Excellence: \* dribbling \* first touch \* passing \* striking the ball \* tackling \* shielding, etc...
- Combination Play: \* wall pass \*takeovers \*overlaps \*general link-up play.
- Play with confidence: Through our 'simple to challenging' coaching methods, we will facilitate success and confidence.
- Play with respect: respect to our team; opposition; officials; parents; club, and community.

**Q: Why is ALITHSA Arsenal focused on player development, not just winning soccer games?**

A: Our goal is not to have kids peak at soccer at the age of 10. If that were our goal, many players would burn-out and lose their love for the sport. Long-term development of players is enhanced by teaching core skills and tactics – such as progressive possession soccer instead of 'longball' or 'kickball' – at a young age. These skills may not pay off right away in terms of wins and losses, but will definitely pay off as the players mature into outstanding teenage soccer players (and in some cases, beyond...) A recent study from the United States Soccer Federation found that on average, a typical soccer player will reach their peak, technically, tactically, physically and mentally at age 27.

**Q: My daughter has never played as defender, why is the coach playing her there?**

A: We will strive to improve upon the skills and biomechanics of each player, but we will also strive to improve 'all round' soccer players by playing players in a variety of positions. We will do our best not to pigeonhole players. ALITHSA's philosophy is everybody attacks and everybody defends; players will not be asked to mark a blade of grass, they will be encouraged to explore and express themselves. We must allow players' to get a feel of the game, without placing too many restrictions on them.

**Q: How much playing time will me son get?**

A: Playing time is based on attendance at practice, ability, attitude, and work rate. Each player in ALITHSA Arsenal Travel will receive at least 1/3 playing time in each game.

**Q: ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches are pretty quite on game day, why is that?**

A: This is a major part of our training plan: young players must be allowed to play, make their own decisions and get a feel of the game. Because the game of soccer is so quick and physically & mentally demanding, that through our own experiences, studies, and child Psychology, our approach on game day will be of an analytical nature so we know how to 'cycle' our training sessions. We will NOT be running up and down the sideline coaching / commentating on the game... this kind of coaching is very common and shown to be counter-productive, in that players will stop enjoying the sport; they're not allowed to take risks; and generally speaking: players' will not develop into 'creative thinking' players. The majority of coaching will take place in training sessions.

**Q: What can parents do to aid the progress of their child?**

A: We suggest:

- NO COACHING! This will only contradict what they are being taught by our professional coaches. We must ensure our young players are not confused and they're not being overloaded with information.
- Have your son / daughter watch more soccer games. Not just any game, but let's inspire them by having them tune into the U.S. National team games; kids will more likely get aroused and try to emulate the household names, and practice on their own. Growing up, we all had our idols that we wanted to be like, let's give our young players the opportunity to get excited by having them watch the world's best players (household names).
- Multi-sports is a good thing. In a perfect world, this would not conflict with soccer practices and games, but we are realistic enough to know that sometimes there is a conflict... we understand this and will not hold players / parents for ransom. A compromise will be met.
- DIET: young players should be able to withstand the physical demands that soccer places upon them. Unfortunately, this is a big problem with many children in the U.S. WHY? Lack of physical activity, but also the refueling of kids in between games, practices and throughout the week. All of you that have or still play sports, know that as soon you start feeling fatigued, your technique, tactics (decision making), and mental toughness will diminish rapidly. Please make sure your child eats a balanced diet. It will go a long way to improving the overall well-being of your child and also improve their performances on the soccer field.

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**ALITHSA Arsenal: Age Group Priorities - U10-U11**



**Q: What are the typical characteristics of a 10 year old?**

A: Attention span lengthens from U8-U9. There is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams. This is a crucial age for technical skill development. Players of this age start to:

- Show the ability to sequence thought and actions.
- Think ahead and think "if this, then that."
- Recognize fundamental tactical concepts.
- Become aware of peer pressure.

**Q: What equipment does my son / daughter need for practice and games?**

A: They need:

- Size 4 ball for practice and games
- Shin guards (for training and games)
- Comfortable training clothes; kit for game day
- Fluids (water or Gatorade)

**Q: What do ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches teach U10/U11 players?**

A: We teach our U10/U11 players:

- A love of the game.
- To meet the demands of the game.
- A progression of Technical skills: fakes, moves, passing, driving a ball, tackling, heading, receiving ball away from pressure etc...
- Attacking & Defending concepts: 1v1, 2v1, 3v2, 3v3-4v4s
- Advanced combination play: Wall pass; takeovers & fakeovers; overlaps; short, short, long.
- Possession based style of play: playing the ball out of the back and working the ball into progressive phases of the field, this will encourage maximal player involvement.
- To take risks and be creative.
- Play with respect: respect to our team; opposition; officials; parents; club, and community.

**Q: Why don't ALITHSA's professional coaches condition players?**

A: We do, but we condition players in our 'fun activities', which is more specific to soccer fitness. We encourage players to play soccer away from practice and also encourage players' to play multi-sports to keep kids active and fit. Remember: for young players to be physically healthy and able to withstand the demands of the game, players must be keeping active on days they're not training as well as eating the right foods.

*Q: Why is ALITHSA Arsenal focused on player development, and not just winning soccer games?*

A: Our goal is not to have kids peak at soccer at the age of 10. If that were our goal, many players would burn out and lose their love for the sport. Long term development of players is enhanced by teaching core skills and tactics – such as progressive possession soccer instead of ‘longball’ or ‘kickball’ – at a young age. These skills may not pay off right away in terms of wins and losses, but will definitely pay off as the players mature into outstanding teenage soccer players (and in some cases, beyond...) A recent study from the United States Soccer Federation found that on average, a soccer player will reach their peak, technically, tactically, physically and mentally at age **27**.

*Q: When will my son's team start playing beautiful soccer?*

A: Playing beautiful soccer is not easy; you're more likely to see great soccer in small periods in games; But the key thing is the purpose of what our young players are trying to achieve, E.G. If I had to choose between # 1: winning games by playing “BOOM” (long) ball or, # 2: losing games with each player maximally involved and playing a possession based style of play with players' taking risks, playing with confidence and a real purpose then, ALITHSA will most definitely choose # 2. It's paramount that we're teaching our young players' to play with a purpose. We will not abandon our philosophy of total player development regardless of game day wins' or losses; its the process that we will continue to focus upon, so when our young players are 14-15 yrs-old, they're playing 'beautiful soccer' with consistency.

*Q: My daughter has never played as defender, why is the coach playing her there?*

A: We will strive to improve upon the skills and biomechanics of each player, but we will also strive to improve 'all round' soccer players by playing players in a variety of positions. We will do our best not to pigeonhole players. ALITHSA's philosophy is everybody attacks and everybody defends; players will not be asked to mark a blade of grass, they will be encouraged to explore and express themselves. We must allow players' to get a feel of the game, without placing too many restrictions on them.

*Q: How much playing time will my son get?*

A: Playing time is based on attendance at practice, ability, attitude, and work rate. Each player in ALITHSA Arsenal Travel will receive at the very least, 1/3 playing time in each game.

*Q: ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches are pretty quite on game day, why is that?*

A: This is a major part of our training plan: young players must be allowed to play, make their own decisions and get a feel of the game. Because the game of soccer is so quick and physically & mentally demanding, that through our own experiences, studies, and child Psychology, our approach on game day will be of an analytical nature so we know how to 'cycle' our training sessions. We will NOT be running up and down the sideline coaching / commentating on the game... this kind of coaching is very common and shown to be counter productive, in that players will stop enjoying the sport; they're not allowed to take risks; and generally speaking: players' will not develop into 'creative thinking' players. The majority of coaching will take place in training sessions.

*Q: What can parents do to aid the progress of their child?*

A: We suggest:

- ❑ NO COACHING! This will only contradict what they are being taught by our professional coaches. We must ensure our young players are not confused and they're not being overloaded with information.
- ❑ Have your son / daughter watch more soccer games. Not just any game, but let's inspire them by having them tune into the U.S. National team games; kids will more likely get aroused and try to emulate the household names, and practice on their own. Growing up, we all had our idols that we wanted to be like, let's give our young players the opportunity to get excited by having them watch the worlds best players (household names).
- ❑ Multi-sports is a good thing. In a perfect world, this would not conflict with soccer practices and games, but we are realistic enough to know that sometimes there is a conflict... we understand this and will not hold players / parents for ransom. Multi-sports' helps to keep players fresh for the game, which helps to keep the burnout factor at bay.
- ❑ DIET: young players should be able to withstand the physical demands that soccer places upon them. Unfortunately, this is a big problem with many children in the U.S. WHY? Lack of physical activity but also the refueling of kids in between games, practices and throughout the week. All of you that have or still play sports, know that as soon you start feeling fatigued, your technique, tactics (decision making), and mental toughness will diminish rapidly. Please make sure your child eats a balanced diet. It will go a long way to improving the overall well-being of your child and also improve their performances on the soccer field.

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## ALITHSA Arsenal: Age Group Priorities - U12-U14



### *Q: Some typical characteristics for these age groups?*

A: Coaching U12 players is often described as 'the dawn of tactics'. Players are still developing technically and it's important that we, as coaches, keep a focus on their ability to control the ball, beat player's 1v1, and pass the ball well, etc... But we will place more of an emphasis than on tactics than we have done in the age groups that precede this. Typical characteristics to be aware of:

- All players are still maturing at different rates
- Players need to warm-up and stretch - - muscle injuries and nagging injuries are common otherwise
- Players of this age like to solve problems
- Egos are sensitive
- Technique still needs to be reinforced constantly
- Players of this age will be asked to be creative and take risks - - we will always encourage this no matter of age
- The game of soccer must still be fun!!!

### *Q: What equipment does my son / daughter need for practice and games?*

A: They need:

- Size 4 ball for U12. Size 5 ball for U13 and up (must bring to every practice and every game)
- Shin guards (for training and games)
- Comfortable training clothes; kit for game day
- Fluids (water or Gatorade)

### *Q: What do ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches teach U12-U14 players?*

- A love of the game.
- To meet the demands of the game.
- Dribbling skills and speed dribbling; receiving ball away from pressure
- Passing: ability to chip ball, striking ball accurately over distance, curling / bending the ball
- Heading: at goal, passing with head, defensive headers
- Communication: we will encourage players to work things out and solve problems. We want leaders!
- Support play; Intelligent movement
- Combination play
- High / low pressure group defending
- Direct / Indirect possession
- Switching the point of attack
- Attacking and shooting in the final 1/3
- Fitness (all most all of the fitness work will be incorporated with a ball)
- Play with respect: respect to our team; opposition; officials; parents; club, and community.

*The above topics will be coached in an extremely positive atmosphere. The key factor of training any topic is repetition -- we will facilitate success by having players practice these topics with high repetition in game-like situations on the training field, so our young players are able to execute these key elements in a game.*

### *Q: Why is ALITHSA Arsenal focused on player development, and not just winning soccer games?*

A: We all want to win, but our main goal is not to have kids peak at soccer at the age of 12. If that were our goal, many players would burn out and lose their love for the sport. Long-term development of players is enhanced by teaching core skills and tactics – such as progressive possession soccer instead of 'longball' or 'kickball' – at a young age. These skills may not pay off right away in terms of wins and losses, but will definitely pay off as the players mature into outstanding teenage soccer players (and in some cases, beyond...) A recent study from the United States Soccer Federation found that on average, a soccer player will reach their peak, technically, tactically, physically and mentally at age **27**.

**Q: How much playing time will my son get?**

A: Playing time is based on attendance at practice, ability, attitude, and work rate. Each player in ALITHSA Arsenal Travel will receive at the very least, 1/3 playing time in each game.

**Q: My son has never played as defender, why is coach playing him there?**

A: We will strive to improve upon the skills and biomechanics of each player, but we will also strive to develop 'all round' soccer players by playing players in a variety of positions. We will do our best not to pigeonhole players. ALITHSA's philosophy is to play an attacking brand of soccer where each player regardless of being a defender or not, will be asked to stamp their authority on the game and make an impact. Our players will not be asked to mark a blade of grass - - they will be encouraged to explore and express themselves. We must allow our players to get a feel of the game, and not put too many restrictions on them.

**Q: ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches are pretty quite on game day, why is that?**

A: This is a major part of our training plan: young players must be allowed to play, make their own decisions and get a feel of the game. Because the game of soccer is so quick and physically & mentally demanding, that through our own experiences, studies, and child Psychology, our approach on game day will be of an analytical nature so we know how to 'cycle' our training sessions. We will NOT be running up and down the sideline coaching / commentating on the game... this kind of coaching is very common and shown to be counter productive, in that players will stop enjoying the sport; they're not allowed to take risks; and generally speaking: players' will not develop into 'creative thinking' players. The majority of coaching will take place in training sessions.

**Q: What can parents do to aid the progress of their child?**

A: We suggest:

- ❑ NO COACHING! This will only contradict what they are being taught by our professional coaches. We must ensure our young players are not confused and they're not being overloaded with information.
- ❑ Have your son / daughter watch more soccer games. Not just any game, but let's inspire them by having them tune into the U.S. National team games; kids will more likely get aroused and try to emulate the household names, and practice on their own. Growing up, we all had our idols that we wanted to be like; let's give our young players the opportunity to get excited by having them watch the world's best players (household names).
- ❑ Multi-sports is a good thing. In a perfect world, this would not conflict with soccer practices and games, but we are realistic enough to know that sometimes there is a conflict... we understand this and will not hold players/ parents for ransom. Multi-sports' helps to keep players fresh for the game, which helps to keep the burnout factor at bay.
- ❑ DIET: young players should be able to withstand the physical demands that soccer places upon them. Unfortunately, this is a big problem with many children in the U.S. WHY? Lack of physical activity but also the refueling of kids in between games, practices and throughout the week. All of you that have or still play sports, know that as soon you start feeling fatigued, your technique, tactics (decision making), and mental toughness will diminish rapidly. Please make sure your child eats a balanced diet. It will go a long way to improving the overall well-being of your child and also improve their performances on the soccer field.

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## ALITHSA Arsenal: Age Group Priorities – High School



**Q: What should my son or daughter expect from playing for ALITHSA Arsenal?**

A: They should expect to work hard and train at a level they haven't had the opportunity to experience before. The high school programs are geared towards teaching players what they need to do in order to prepare themselves to play at the collegiate levels. They will be pushed to become more complete soccer players incorporating core values that should also help them become well-rounded individuals as well.

**Q: What if my son or daughter cannot make a practice or game because of a previous commitment?**

A: This is understandable and sometimes can't be avoided. It is the responsibility to each PLAYER to notify their coach, not mom or dad, if they can't attend a game or practice. These players are getting ready for the next stage of their lives and they need to start taking responsibility for themselves by contacting their coach directly, either by phone or email.

*Q: What equipment does my son / daughter need for practice and games?*

A: They need:

- ❑ Size 5 ball for practice and games
- ❑ Shin guards (for training and games)
- ❑ Comfortable training clothes; kit for game day
- ❑ Fluids (water or Gatorade)

*Q: What do ALITHSA Arsenal professional coaches teach High School players?*

A: The four pillars of the game – TECHNICAL, TACTICAL, PHYSICAL and MENTAL. Breakdown:

- ❑ Technical and tactical concepts for the individual and team
- ❑ Advanced 1v1, 3v3, 6v6, 8v8, and 11v11 tactical progressions
- ❑ Principles of defending as a group and team
- ❑ Principles of attacking as a group and team
- ❑ Advanced combination play in the middle and front thirds of the field
- ❑ Introduction to pattern play
- ❑ Learning different tactical systems of play
- ❑ Advanced fitness sessions geared towards college
- ❑ Speed and agility training incorporated with workouts geared towards college
- ❑ Advanced finishing scenarios (outside of foot, head, volleys, etc...)
- ❑ Importance of set pieces (direct, indirect corners, etc...)
- ❑ Proper technique and importance of warming up and cooling down. Very game and position specific.

*Q: How much playing time will my son get?*

A: Playing time is based on attendance at practice, ability, attitude, and work rate. Each player in ALITHSA Arsenal Travel will receive at the very least, 1/3 playing time in each game.

*Q: Why is ALITHSA Arsenal focused on player development, and not winning soccer games?*

A: Our goal is not to have kids peak at soccer at the age of 12. If that were our goal, many players would burn out and lose their love for the sport. Long-term development of players is enhanced by teaching core skills and tactics – such as progressive possession soccer instead of 'longball' or 'kickball' – at a young age. These skills may not pay off right away in terms of wins and losses, but will definitely pay off as the players mature into outstanding teenage soccer players (and in some cases, beyond...) A recent study from the United States Soccer Federation found that on average, a soccer player will reach their peak, technically, tactically, physically and mentally at age **27**.

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Questions? Please contact ALITHSA Director of Coaching Dean Smith at [dean.psc@gmail.com](mailto:dean.psc@gmail.com)