



St Marks GAA Player Pathway



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St.Marks GAA Player Pathway

Introduction - Player Pathway

The purpose of the player pathway initiative is to help guide coaches, managers, teachers and parents you play an active role in development of young Gaelic footballers.

The guide has been designed through a broad consultation process involving a wide variety of expert coaches and coach educators from the G.A.A community and should be viewed as a working document.

It should be noted that these are guidelines and recommendations for coaches, mentors, teachers and parents that may be used with a degree of flexibility. They are not written in stone as players grow, develop and learn at different rates through their lives. This is general guide to bear in mind when working with players.

This document should be viewed as a route map which sets out the key characteristics and identifies the age-appropriate content that should be coached or practiced at a particular age and stage of the player's career. It is intended, at its most basic form, to give young players the best opportunity to succeed at whatever level they may play and reach their full potential "doing the right thing, at the right time and in the right way".

The player partway is a systematic approach adopted by the Dublin GAA to maximise player potential and increase the enjoyment of all our players. It provides a framework for the development of skills apostrophe physical focus and game sense capacities that coaches can follow stage by stage.



YOUNG GAELIC PLAYER PATHWAY.

There are five key age groups or stages in the pathway outlined which have detailed player characteristics and describe the practical elements that must be coached during these ages.

“A journey must begin with a single step”

THE FIVE AGES OR STAGES ARE:

STAGE	Approximate age	Emphasis
Learning to master the ball	4 - 6 years	Should be about fun and participation with key emphasis on physical literacy and core movements skills with the ball
Learning to use the ball well	7 - 9 years	Major skills learning phase where all the basic skills in football are learned
Learning to play together	10 - 12 years	Emphasis understanding how to play and work together as a team
Learning about positions	13 – 15 years	The principle of play and applying good game sense increase
Learning to perform	16 – 18 years	Combining all aspects of performance including, decision making, higher physical demands of the game and coping with competition



Learning to master the ball 4-6 years

Player characteristics

- Children of this age are self-centred, and co-operation is largely absent
- At this age many still think that the ball is their own 'toy', so they will try to run with the ball and score rather than pass.
- They will respond to partner work and skills practice for a short time. This helps introduce them to teamwork and cooperation.
- These children will only watch the ball. They cannot and will not look for space to run into.
- They usually enjoy being asked questions and this should give the coach plenty of opportunities to check for understanding
- When their team is not in possession, they find it difficult to understand defending a goal. To them they are merely chasing a ball
- They respond best to target games and races (Hitting and throwing, running)



Learning to Master the Ball 4–6-year-olds

Skill Emphasis	Physical Focus	Game Specific
Football Handling Throw Bowling Ball Two handed Bounce catch One hand bounce Body Catch Pick Up stationary & moving Kicking Ground Kick Dribble Punt Kick (Two Hands) (Hard foot) Travelling Knee taps solo	ABC & RJTs Agility For Example: Chasing games, Dodging, Shadow running Balance: For Example: Animal walking Hop in & out of hoops Co-ordination: Skipping Bean Bag Toss Pass through the ladder Running -Good Technique Forward, Backward, sideways Marching Stopping Jumping Take-off & Landing, Jump Jacks Throwing Target Roll	Target Games: For Example: Skittles Through the gate Tower ball Court Games Over the river Part – Invasion Getting through the traffic 4v4 (two zones) No Goalie Up North Down South (Ball each scoring)



learning to use the ball well 7-9 Years

Player characteristics

- They will begin to look up when in possession and start choosing options [e.g., passing rather than shooting]
- They will have difficulty tackling opponents but will kick the ball away from them and attempt to block any shots
- Use questions to challenge and introduce decision making
- Players will beg for a game at every opportunity, yet their technique is best improved through individual, paired and small group work. This is an ideal time to use the 'Whole-Part-Whole' approach to some sessions where the coach starts with a game, stops it after ten minutes, works on one technique for a short period then restarts the game
- Coaches need to focus on positive feedback, this is the age were. drop-outs occur if children think they are no good.
- At this age players will now try to win the game not only by scoring but also by attempting to deny the opposition the opportunity to score
- They will also begin to understand the need to change the direction of a run or a pass to be more effective and they will begin to grasp the idea that a player may need support from behind and to the side as well as in front.
- Coaches should continue to run small-sided games and conditioned games, one of the better games is called 'Over the River' and tennis
- At this age players must also get used to attacking the ball [i.e., running and not stopping] and breaking tackles
- First critical period for speed development.



learning to use the ball well 7–9-year-olds

Skill Emphasis	Physical Focus	Game Specific
Football	ABC & RJTs	
<p>Handling Body Catch Low catch High catch Fist pass Hand pass Crouch lift (stationary ball)</p> <p>Kicking Punt Kick (Front foot) Left & Right Hook Kick (One Hand) Pick up -foot</p> <p>Travelling High bounce Toe tap(stationary) Soft foot Roll</p> <p>Tackle Near hand tackle Shadowing, -Frontal Tackle, -Block Down</p>	<p>Agility zig zag relay</p> <p>Balance One leg hopping hop land on other leg Coordination</p> <p>Running-Good Technique On the spot Relay races Hurdle running Stopping</p> <p>Jumping leap frog Donkey kicks</p> <p>Throwing Dodge ball</p> <p>Conditioning Partner Resistance, Tug of war, Push & Pull partner The Bridge, Whole body exercises - Introduce basic Flexibility</p>	<p>Target Games Skittles Through the gate Tower ball</p> <p>Court Games Over the river Scout Ball</p> <p>Fields Games Rounders</p> <p>Part – Invasion 4v4 (zoned) No Goalie line game</p> <p>Full- Invasion 4v4(two touch) 5v5 (Wide man)</p>



Learning to play together 10-12 years old

Player characteristics

- Players will now compete with greater intensity against each other .
- At this age players will now try to win the game not only by scoring but also by attempting to deny the opposition the opportunity to score
- They will also begin to understand the need to change the direction of a run or a pass to be more effective and they will begin to grasp the idea that a player may need support from behind and to the side as well as in front.
- Coaches should continue to run small-sided games and condition them to solve problems
- During training, these players must always feel part of the session. Coaches must be ready to pay as much attention to them as to other established players and always work to improve their skills [e.g., one-to-one coaching may be needed].
- Coaches must be quick to address the problem of one or two players dominating play and preventing others from developing their skills during games.
- Many players at this age fail to recognise the need to attack the ball and prefer to wait for the ball. If this is allowed to persist, that player will find it increasingly difficult to change his/her instincts.
- Training needs to be moderately increased at this stage
- Players are now ready to develop general strength through own body weight and core exercises



learning to play together 10-12-years old

Skill Emphasis	Physical Focus	Game Specific
<p>Football</p> <p>Handling High Catch Hand passing (using both hands)</p> <p>Kicking Punt Kick left & Right Punt Kick outside foot Crouch lift moving ball Toe lift Hook Kick left & Right</p> <p>Travelling Solo Run left & Right Low bounce Dummy solo</p> <p>Tackle Near hand tackle Shadowing Shouldering Frontal Tackle Block Down</p>	<p>ABC & RJTs</p> <p>Speed Further development of speed in warm ups (Efforts less than 6 secs) quickness and change of direction and reaction sprints</p> <p>Strength Introduce Core strength twist with partner Own body strength exercises Pull ups press ups etc.... Introduce plyometric training Bounding and hopping</p> <p>Stamina Endurance related activities: Relay running Small sided games & Ball drills Circuit training with the ball</p> <p>Flexibility/Co-ordination Introduction Dynamic Stretching & Mobility exercises Warm up & Cool down concept</p>	<p>Court Games Over the river Hit the corners</p> <p>Fields Games Crazy kicks Batter bonanza</p> <p>Part – Invasion 4v1 Pass and Attack</p> <p>Full– Invasion 4v4(Split ends) 5v5</p>



Player characteristics

Learning about positions 13-15 Years olds

- While players in this stage may have the same chronically age, they may differ significantly in terms of biological age ie one may be more physically developed than another.
- The onset of puberty usually occurs during the early stages of this cycle. Aerobic and strength programmes should be individualised or grouped according to their (P.H.V) N.B Only trained coaches to undertake this training
- Broad base skills and sport specific skills
- Advanced technical skill development Skill developed under pressure
- Fitness with the ball in skills drills
- Gain an understanding of the principles of attack and defence through grids and small sided games
- Players can be introduced to moderate anaerobic and strength training through ball work
- Players should be introduced to psychological training through games that promote concentration and better decision making.



Learning to perform 16-18 Years old

Player characteristics

During this phase players begin to reach their physical peak and those slow developers begin to catch up with their peers

- Encourage ideals of self-awareness and self-help within players
- At this stage a Functional Movement Screening (conducted by a physio) should be carried out on each player and the results along with their Critical Success Factors (CSFs) identified by each player in their Self-Assessment Profile should form the basis of their Personal Development Plan (PDP).
- As a result of the above each player should have a PDP, a component of which should be an individualised conditioning programme developed and delivered by a S&C Coach. Each player should be committed to their programme as they will have had an input into it through their Self-Assessment Profile.
- Advanced technical skill development Skill developed under pressure
- Understand the principles of game plays, tactics, and game sense
- Accept that the team is paramount and their role within the team structure
- Encourage positive lifestyle and build concepts of team ship and leadership
- Instil concepts of mental toughness and calmness under pressure (winning behaviours)
- Encourage flexibility and fine-tune the generic skills to play in a variety of positions
- Players should be encouraged to embrace positive life-skills i.e., time-management and to take control of their own athletic development



Learning to perform 16–18-year-olds

Skill Emphasis	Physical Focus	Game Specific
Football		
<p>Game Plays How to use a sweeper How to deal with a sweeper Man marking Zone marking</p> <p>Kicking Kicking for possession/diagonal ball Kicking for scores Cutting into score Free kicks/penalties</p> <p>Ball Retention Supporting the ball player Breaking the tackle Getting out of traffic Change the direction of play</p> <p>Tackle Near hand tackle, Group tackling, Frontal Tackle, Checking Blocking ball</p>	<p>Speed (based on test results profile) Multi directional (Efforts less than 20 secs) Quick footwork and agility Planting the foot (the 3-step movement) Running mechanics & technique Strength work to improve speed</p> <p>Strength (based on test results profile) FM Assessment to establish core strength and technique Core programme for those still not ready for weights Individual programme for those with core strength & good technique Perfect technique & control N.B Only qualified coaches to undertake this training</p> <p>Stamina (based on test results profile) small-sided games Drills incorporating the ball</p> <p>Flexibility/Co-ordination (based on test results) Maintain flexibility exercise Dynamic Warm up</p>	<p>Intense Small-sided (3secs) Across the line Total football Break-Ball & Kick 4 Goal option</p> <p>15 A SIDE Back V Forwards 15 V 15 Deploying a sweeper Defending the zones Deploying the big man Various Conditions</p>



Appendix Training Plans - Links

UNDER 6's - Academy- age-appropriate activities. Step by step layout and sample sessions. ([Please go to link](#))

UNDER 7's - Academy-.Last year in Academy. Progressive drills getting ready for Go Games. Sample Sessions. ([Please go to link...](#))

UNDER 8's - First year of Go Games. Training 1 evening a week with a Go Games match every 2nd weekend. Sample Sessions. ([link ..](#))

UNDER 9/10 - Continue training 1 evening a week with Go Games match every 2nd weekend. Training Template ([Please go to link...](#))

UNDER 11's - Streaming of players starts U11boys/ U12 girls. In training stream 1 week non stream the 2nd. Competitive training on streamed week/non competitive on non-streamed week. Training Template ([Please go to link...](#))

UNDER 12's - Introduce 2nd slot of training on the week of no match. 2nd slot should introduce S&C. First year of competitive matches for boys Grading games first followed by League games. First year of streaming for girls. Training Template ([Please go to link...](#))

CCC2

UNDER 13's - Should have 2 training slots a week x 75mins if possible.. First year of League games for girls. Grading games followed by League games for both boys and girls. Training streamed/non streamed alternatively. CCC2 Streamed Training Plan ([Please go to link...](#))

UNDER14's -Leagues formed. Starting to work on set plays and strategies in training. ([Please go to link...](#))