Joël Corbeau, of France, described the progressive phases of player development as such:

"Me and the ball"
"Me, the rival and the ball"
"Me, the mate, the rival and the ball"
"Me, the mates, the rivals and the ball"
"Me, my team, the rivals and the ball"
The Maroons Soccer Club mission is to deliver an inspiring soccer learning experience that creates a culture of intelligent, skilled & confident soccer players who play the beautiful game, beautifully.

To achieve our mission, Maroons Soccer Club operates a Player Development Pathway, a progressive teaching model where each development phase guides player acquisition of skills and learning necessary to advance in the game and develop game intelligence. The long-term benefits of the Pathway include:

- Each Club player advancing toward their maximum potential
- Progressive learning season to season, and consistency across age groups and levels
- Improved training habits with higher focus, work rate, and total effort
- More consistent level of effective teaching and quality training; more touches, more often
- Increased game intelligence and decision making based on visual cues & thirds of field
- Increased quality and consistency of play
- Higher player retention through increased player satisfaction and enjoyment
- More players reaching a higher level (academy, ODP, high school, college)

The Player Development Pathway and the learning process do not have a fast-forward button. Players must dedicate time and touches to acquire the necessary skills and learn the game in stages, layering in, maintaining, and building the critical elements of technical skills and tactical application. As players acquire and gain repetition of fundamental skills and build their foundation, these skills are carried forward to form the base for the next stage of development.

The Pathway is guided by the recommended approaches from US Soccer, US Youth Soccer, National Soccer Coaches Association of America. The key elements include:

- Maroons Style of Play
- Player Development Progression
- The Maroons Way: Behaviors & Characteristics of a Maroons Player
- Maroons Curriculum & Phased Learning Agenda
- Player Development & Teaching Process
- Maroons Style of Teaching
- Model Training Session Approach
- Diamond Shape Foundation
- Maroons Guiding Curriculum
MAROONS STYLE OF PLAY

The Maroons Soccer Club Style of Play is to **Play the Beautiful Game, Beautifully.**

Our goal is to incorporate and reflect in our play the exciting elements of the world’s favorite game. In simple terms, our style of play should translate to: **More Possession, More Penetration, More Goals.**

Ball Mastery is the critical foundation to deliver our Style of Play and this is also the key foundation of the Maroons Player Development Pathway. Ball Mastery is the player’s ability to manipulate the ball with both feet and perform technical skills -- dribbling, passing, receiving, finishing -- under constantly changing variables of time and space. Ball Mastery is achieved over time and through quality touches.

**Ball Comfort ➔ Ball Control ➔ Ball Manipulation ➔ Ball Mastery**

Players progress from Ball Comfort to Ball Control as they increase their understanding of how to use various foot parts, skill moves, and improve 1st touch. Continued time, touches, exploration, and repetition in game-like situations allows the player to move from Ball Control to Ball Manipulation. As the player gains repetition of touches and gets closer to the 10,000 hour rule and 1 million touches, players demonstrate abilities reflective of Ball Mastery.

Players that become Ball Masters will, over time, outperform and be able to maximize and achieve their potential to play at higher levels in the game, and to play the beautiful game, beautifully.

Here are notable characteristics that form the Maroons Soccer Club Style of Play:

- Player demonstrates **Ball Mastery** through individual flair and creativity in final third, and a willingness and desire to attack 1v1, and create opportunities for goals
- Understanding and ability to apply the **Diamond Shape Foundation**
- Increased understanding & ability to achieve **Penetration**; 1st look positive
- Demonstrated understanding & ability to maintain **Possession**; Playing negative when needed
- Ability to identify and take advantage of **Numbers Up** situations
- Teams look to **Play From the Back** with goal keepers who are fully integrated in attack and defense; back passes to goal keepers are commonplace
- **Quality Support** on the Ball with off ball mobility that creates **More Passes & Combo Play**
- **Well Organized Defense** with proper pressure, cover, balance, compactness
- **Well Organized Attacks** with penetration, quality support, mobility, depth, improvisation
- **Quick Thinking Restarts** to gain an advantage to penetrate
The Maroons Soccer Club has a structured player progression based on ability across the four pillars of player development, level of game intelligence, and commitment. Player assessments throughout the year, the tryout process, and player ranking informs player selection to the most appropriate level.

**Grey Team**

**“A”**

Premier team that looks to compete in premier and A flight in each age group; Teams participate in State Cup; May include dual carded players

**White Team**

**“B”**

Players with strong potential to advance to top level team; Some teams may participate in State Cup

**Black Team**

**“C”**

Small-sided & occasionally full-sided teams that help ensure Club fields two strong full-sided teams

**Red Team**

**“D”**

Small-sided teams to identify and advance late developing players with potential for higher level

The learning agenda for each level is similar and progresses along the Player Development Pathway. Additionally, all players, regardless of specific team level, are supported by Club Expectations that players are appropriately rotated through positions. The best way for a player to advance to a higher level team within Maroons is to gain increased training time with a ball and advance individual ability for ball control, see Ball Mastery. Players are also encouraged to participate in supplemental Club programs like Free-Play Football Fridays, Futsal, Goal Keeper Training, and Juggling Elite, and Skills Ladder (in development) which are offered at no additional cost, as well as Ball Mastery (additional cost).

The Maroons Soccer Club is progressing toward horizontal integration where top players are identified and encouraged to train and increasingly play at a level matching their ability, rather than only their age (e.g. a top U12 player would occasionally train with U13). Allowing players to compete at the level appropriate for their ability ensures players stay engaged and challenged. Players might remain with their age-appropriate team and peers for matches, and should be given the opportunity to train and play at higher levels. Players performing consistently at the top of the Grey team should have the opportunity to train up and play up. See Elite Players -- Beyond Maroons for more information.
THE MAROONS WAY:
BEHAVIORS & CHARACTERISTICS OF A MAROONS PLAYER

Even before a Maroons player begins training, there are some simple habits and characteristics that each Maroons player should adopt as part of the learning process. Referred to as The Maroons Way, these preferred and accepted approaches will create a more robust learning environment by preparing the player mentally and physically for accelerated development.

The following represents The Maroons Way:

- Players should wear appropriate Maroons training apparel to sessions, as guided by team coach.
- Before a session officially starts, players will take the opportunity to get incremental touches by engaging in appropriate activities, as defined by the team coach, such as:
  - Individual and partner juggling
  - 1 and 2 touch dynamic passing with teammate
  - Practicing free kicks or game of “Cross Bar”, neither involving goal keepers
  - Small-sided games—1v1, 1v1+1, 2v2, 3v1, 2v2+1, 3v3; 4v2
- Train the way we want to play.
- Players will ensure team area is clean of all gear and trash, always leaving better than before.
- Following each match, players will shake opponent’s hands, and each of the referee’s hands.
- Players should participate in Free-Play Football Fridays, Futsal, Goal Keeper Training, Juggling Elite and Skills Ladder (in development) to measure progress.
- Players are encouraged to become a student of the game by watching soccer on TV, attending high level games, watch skill videos online to build understanding.

As players adopt The Maroons Way and progress through the Player Development Pathway, they acquire the skills, confidence, and intelligence that allow them to more consistently showcase the Maroons Style of Play. Here are some of the notable characteristics that will form the foundation of each Maroons player as they progress through the Pathway:

- Players understand the importance of possession.
- Skilled, two-footed players who are technically proficient under pressure:
  - 1st touch receiving to activate next action and avoid pressure
  - Ball Masters with demonstrated dribbling ability and creativity
  - Increasingly successful in the 1v1 in the final third
- Confident players who are comfortable and composed on the ball, constantly looking for opportunities to penetrate.
- Players with demonstrated understanding and application of attacking and defending roles:
  - 1st attacker-- Penetrate
  - 2nd attacker-- Support
  - 3rd attacker-- Unbalance
  - 1st defender-- Pressure
  - 2nd defender-- Cover
  - 3rd defender-- Balance
- Players capable of adapting to various positional roles (goal keeper, back, midfield, forward).
- Intelligent players that make good decisions based on visual cues and thirds-of-field.
- Players that bring a positive attitude and demonstrate strong training mentality & work rate.
- Increased level of player and team communication.
- Team oriented players who also have individual flair and identity.
MAROONS CURRICULUM & PHASED LEARNING AGENDA

- The Maroons Guiding Curriculum is structured after the recommended approaches from US Soccer, US Youth Soccer, and the National Soccer Coaches Association of America and is inspired by our Parent Coaches and Professional Coach Trainers, and is much like that used in teaching school:
  - The subject is SOCCER
  - The students are the PLAYERS
  - The classroom is the PITCH
  - The teacher is the COACH

- Players, Coaches and Parents are core stakeholders where each is involved in the development and learning approach. The relationship between player, coach, and parent is an important ingredient to player development. The Club has expectations for each audience:
  - Club Expectations for Players
  - Club Expectations for Coaches
  - Club Expectations for Parents

- The teaching is brought to life by our passionate coaches who employ the Maroons Style of Teaching to guide learning against the four pillars of player development:
  - Technical: The specific skills involved in soccer – dribbling, passing, receiving, finishing, tackling, etc. This is THE critical foundation for success in soccer and each player should work toward a level of Ball Mastery
  - Tactical: The players’ ability to understand and gain success in the game, understand positions, apply the various roles of defense, attack, transition, etc.
  - Physical: The player's endurance, work rate, agility, strength, speed, etc.
  - Psychological / Social: The player's game intelligence, attitude, desire to excel, training mentality, confidence, commitment, social skills, communication, leadership, ability to handle confrontation, etc.

- Supplemental programs are provided to increase training opportunities and accelerate each player’s learning and development:
  - Juggling Elite: Recognition and reward program that promotes juggling skills
  - Skills Ladder: Individual based challenges designed to measure technical self progress (conceptual, to be developed)
  - Functional Striker Training: Development program to improve goal scoring ability
  - Functional Goalie Training: Development program to advance goalie skills
  - Ball Manipulation to Mastery: Program designed to develop advanced ball skills & creativity
  - Free-Play Football Fridays, Fall: Structured “street soccer” where kids come and PLAY
  - Futsal, Winter: Classic Brazilian game played indoors that provides deep practice
  - Speed, Agility, Quickness (SAQ): Develop physical abilities to maximize performance
  - HS Winter Development Program: Program for high school players to continue development following high school season
  - HS Summer Prep Program: A summer program designed to prepare the incoming first year high school player for the rigors of high school tryouts and demands of high school soccer.
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT & TEACHING PROCESS:

- Player development and the teaching process are continuous. At the start of each season, the team’s head coach will review the *Maroons Guiding Curriculum*. Working closely with the team’s Professional Coach Trainer and the Maroons Director of Player Development & Coaching, the head coach will develop a *Seasonal Learning Plan*. Ahead of each training session, the Professional Coach Trainer will design the *Training Session Lesson Plan* against the agreed topic of focus. This *Training Session Lesson Plan* should be shared with the Parent Coaches. The Coach and the Trainer will assess learning and how well that learning is translating into matches. Based on *Match Analysis*, the Professional Coach Trainer and the team’s coaches will determine if any modifications are required for the team’s learning agenda.

- For our players U10 and younger, the *Maroons Guiding Curriculum* will be closely followed. Advanced small-sided teams will tend to progress more quickly through curriculum. The head coach and Professional Coach Trainer will adapt the learning agenda based on their specific players’ abilities, game intelligence, and progress, always ensuring that the learning objectives by age group are covered.

- Maroons relies on our energetic and motivating Professional Coach Trainers to bring the specific topics and training sessions to life.

- The head coach of each team should keep a copy of the *Seasonal Learning Plan* and each training session lesson plan to refer to during the season and to help prepare for future seasons.

- Coaches are encouraged to share insights and lesson plans that were particularly effective with other coaches in the age group during the season. At the end of the season, coaches are also encouraged to share feedback with the Club and with the younger level coaches so we can create a continuous learning environment.
MAROONS STYLE OF TEACHING

“A good manager (coach) can, at best, make a team 10% better. But, a bad manager (coach) can make a team up to 50% worse!”

Quote from Giovanni Trapattoni who is considered the most successful coach in the history of Serie A

The Maroons Style of Teaching is THE critical element that will allow Maroons to build success over the long-term. Each player must be inspired and motivated to learn, to spend more time with a ball, and to build a life-long passion for soccer. For Maroons, Coaching IS TEACHING.

Soccer is a player’s game and the Maroons Style of Teaching is player-centric and designed to meet the needs of the player\(^1\)—focused on development and guiding. Once the match begins, it is the player and the collective team who must make the decisions and execute the skills. It is counterproductive for a coach to direct the actions of a player during the game. Player actions and decisions are based on the Thirds of Field and the player’s perception of the Visual Cues, which are constantly changing. As Maroons coaches, it is critical that you teach players the technical skills and tactical options that will build intelligence and confidence to play.

Remember: They are not your players, you are their coach.

Here are some of the notable characteristics that form the Maroons Style of Teaching foundation:

- Focus on long-term Player Development where “winning” is not the focus nor the priority:
  - Learning to play the right way involves errors as part of the learning process
  - If players do not learn to play the right way, their development will be stifled
  - As players learn, “winning” likely becomes a result, even if not the focus
  - See “Maroon’s Philosophy of Winning”

- Develop Season Learning Plan aligning with the Guiding Curriculum, adjusting for team analysis

- Deliver Excellence in Lesson Plan—topic, organization, progression, coaching points, visual cues

- Use Guided Discovery to help develop intelligent players who think and read the game effectively; Guide players toward deep practice by allowing players to learn it slowly, self-correct & repeat

- Use varying teaching approaches and Coaching Methodology & seek improvements in your ability to teach; Do a post-session analysis; Be efficient with communication; Let players solve challenges

- Maximize Time on Task through effective training that dramatically increase touches & repetition

- Rigorous focus to minimize Ratio of Players to Balls; More touches, more decisions

- Varied teaching approach to meet the preferred Learning Style of individual players: kinesthetic, tactual, auditory, and visual.

- Dominant use of Small-Sided Games, to guide discovery and to teach.

- Use Maroons Motivation for Every player in every session—Praise for a specific that highlights a coaching point (e.g. Mary I like the way you received the ball side on with your back foot)

- Show Interest Beyond the Pitch, understand each player and what they do outside of soccer; build rapport and trust; show you care

- Use Match Analysis to illuminate additional individual, group, and team learning needs.
MODEL TRAINING SESSION APPROACH

- The Maroons Training Session approach follows the professionally developed recommendations of the US Soccer Federation (USSF), US Youth Soccer, NJ Youth Soccer (operated as part of US Soccer), and the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA), the leading soccer coach development organizations in the USA.
- Coaches should invest the necessary time to plan sessions that are economical, fun and enjoyable, and where players are engaged to learn and advance their abilities. Engaged players keep coming back for more and soccer becomes a lifelong endeavor.
- The best sessions are those that end, and the players remain hungry for more.
- Coaches must properly plan each season, every training session, and every pre-game:
  - Prepare – Season learning plan, training session coach plan, pre-game coach plan
  - Teach – Implement plan, use varying Teaching Approaches & coaching methodology
  - Assess & Improve – Did learning occur? Can the players advance to the next topic? What improvements can be made to teaching or to coach plan?
- To deliver an inspiring soccer learning environment, the Coach should use varying Teaching Approaches, depending on the needs of players, (See Coaches Toolkit):
  - **Allow the game to teach.** This is the preferred and dominant approach. The coach must design the training session to allow the game to teach. Most often this will involve varying small-sided games (e.g. 3v3; 5v3), game structure (e.g. use of neutrals, 3 teams), conditions (e.g. no forward passes, half field restriction), or goals (e.g. 2 goals split wide, end zone game) to allow the topic to best come out of the game.
  - **Coach players in the flow of the game.** This might involve questioning technique to challenge thinking and coaching specific individuals on the fringes during the game.
  - **Coach players during a natural stoppage.** This might include coaching individuals or team and might include a demonstration. If teaching the team, focus of coaching point should be one from which most of team can benefit. The stoppage is kept brief.
  - **Freezing play to make coaching point.** The coaching point relates to the topic and the collective team will benefit from the learning. Proper Coaching Methodology should be used for the team stoppage—Freeze, Review, Rehearse, Restart:
    - Coach Identifies a teachable moment—individual or team related—specific to the topic and one the majority of the team should learn
    - **Freeze** the play
    - **Review** the visual cues, situation, and technique or decision making
    - **Rehearse** the coaching point to correct; Demonstrate and paint the picture
    - **Restart** the activity with correct execution, “we go live when…”
    - Coach should minimize disruption and seek to get in and out in >1 minute
- Use proper Coaching Position—outside of play where groups can be seen effectively; When coaching tactics, coach position should have same visual cues as group teaching

PREPARE: TRAINING SESSION LESSON PLAN

- A properly completed Training Session Lesson Plan is required for every session
- Topics for the Training Session Lesson Plan should align with the Maroons Player Development Pathway and the team’s Season Learning Plan, linking in a progressive manner week to week.
- Training Session Coach Plan:
  - Written Training Session Coach Plan should align with US Soccer and NSCAA’s recommended approaches.
  - Each session should focus against one specific topic
- Activities build from simple to complex; clarity to reality
- Activities should be appropriately challenging to age and ability of players
- Plan identifies organization (field space, players, balls) and progressions that incorporate appropriate time and space constraints
- Plan incorporates individual and group activities
- Manage time in each progression and plan for efficient use of space and cones
- Diagrams provide clarity and structure of activity; activities replicate the game
- MUST note coaching points, and appropriate restrictions and/or trigger points
- Technical training sessions will include a fundamental stage with no pressure, a match-related stage where pressure is added and increased progressively, and conclude with a match condition with full pressure.
- For tactical training sessions, we recommend that the session begin with the technical aspects involved in the tactic, progress with the addition of pressure, and conclude in a game with at least two goals and two directions.

**TEACH: MODEL TRAINING SESSION APPROACH** (based on 90 minute session)

- **Maroons Arrival**
  - Players warmly greeted by Coach
  - Players take advantage of time to get some touches (see *The Maroons Way*)
  - Coach touches base with players individually, building rapport and building the relationship
  - Team review—previous game, previous training, injuries, etc.

- **Warm-up (10 minutes)**
  - Get the players moving immediately with a ball
  - Activity relates to specific topic for session
  - Prepare players physically and mentally
  - High ball to player ratio
  - Involve dynamic warm-up

- **Fundamental & Individual Activities (30 minutes)**
  - Activities related to the game;
  - Introduce topic, starting simply and slowly to allow players to understand and practice skills, working through errors and learning
  - Start with unopposed play; Keep approach simple and allow for significant individual repetition of topic
  - Maximize repetitions and time on task

- **Game-Related & Small Group Activities (30 minutes)**
  - Focus becomes more realistic, ensuring direction, targets, and objectives
  - Pressure is introduced progressively: time, space, opponents/players, restrictions
  - Encourage players to treat as a game & compete to increase learning
  - Manage organization to minimize numbers, and maximize touches and repetitions
  - Games conditioned to allow specific session topic to come out (e.g. touch restriction to encourage passing; no forward passes to encourage dribbling)
  - Use questioning technique for tactical situations to allow players to discover answers
  - Progress session, limiting time and space and forcing players to play at speed; more realistic
  - Build in coaching points, using quality demonstrations

- **Game-Condition (15 minutes)**
- Small-sided games played with limited coaching; allow players to express themselves, develop creativity and learn from the game
- Must have goals; can involve varying game approaches or conditions to reinforce topic and learning-- multiple goals, varying dimensions, differing targets, #s up and #s down
- Ensure appropriate end of training scrimmage numbers:
  - U6-U8: 3v3 no goal keepers ideal; 4v4 no goal keepers; no more than 5v5 including goal keepers
  - U9-U10: 4v4 ideal and for tactical lessons; 3v3 no goal keepers; 5v5 including goal keepers; limited use of 6v6 including goal keepers for coaching groups
  - U11-U12: 5v5 including goal keepers ideal; 3v3 no goal keepers; 4v4 no goal keepers; limited use of 6v6 and 7v7 including goal keepers
  - U13-U14: 5v5 including goal keepers ideal; 3v3 no goal keepers; 4v4 no goal keepers; 7v7 including goal keepers; 8v8 including goal keepers
  - U15+: 4v4 no goal keepers; 5v5 including goal keepers; 7v7 and 8v8 including goal keepers
- Cool Down & Reinforcement (5 minutes)
  - Clean up session
  - Stretch and cool down activities
  - Review and reinforce key coaching points and address questions

**ASSESS & IMPROVE TEACHING APPROACH & PLAN**

“The need to regularly challenge ourselves to reflect on how we coach, and the impact of our coaching on others, is also consistent with views on coaching expertise.”

*From, NSCAA Soccer Journal, Jul-Aug 2013: “Role of Deliberate Practice in Becoming an Expert Coach”*

Maroons encourages our coaches to be constant students of the game. With a continuous improvement mentality, coaches will seek new ideas, will self-evaluate, and will openly encourage feedback from others to keep improving.

Following each training session, the coach should reflects on the session and considers the following:
- Did learning take place? What prevented deeper learning?
- Do we need to continue teaching topic? When?
- Was the topic the right one for the players and team? Too simple? Too advanced?
- What technical skills need to be further developed?
- Was the lesson plan optimized? If not, how do you make improvements—simplicity, coaching points, organization (space and players), progression
- Was each player praised and motivated during the session?
- Was the coach well engaged?
- How was the attitude and effort of the players?
- Have the players left as better players, or just tired and happy?
- How would you improve your teaching methodology and approach?
- How would you improve your organization & progressions?
- Do we need to move to more advanced topics? Or revisit earlier topics?
- Were varying **Teaching Approaches** used? Was proper **Coaching Methodology** used?
- Was proper coaching methodology used in team stoppage?
- Was proper coaching position used?
COACH TRAINING OBSERVATIONS

During the season, each Parent Coach and/or Professional Coach Trainer who runs training sessions and pre-game training will be observed and evaluated by the Maroons Director of Player Development & Coaching, Maroons Board of Trustee member, and/or by a third-party partner. Coaches are also encouraged to invite the DOC to participate in sessions which allows for in-activity collaboration.

The objective of these observations will be to understand how well the coach is performing against Club Expectations and Style of Teaching and allows for recommendations to improve the coach’s teaching approach.

Observations will be formal evaluations as well as partial observations. The coach will receive a written Coach Training Observation (see Appendix) for each formal observation & feedback and a simple email for partial observations.

1A player-centric approach meets the needs of the player and is focused on each player’s development and guiding their learning. A coach-centric approach meets the needs of the coach and involves a focus on winning, controlling, and directing/telling players what to do.
DIAMOND SHAPE FOUNDATION

The foundation of soccer is built around the triangle and the diamond shape. Maroons will build player understanding first of the triangle and then of the diamond. Players will understand the importance of the diamond-- its application, identifying Visual Cues and playing accordingly.

A large triangle will help teach principles of width and depth. A small triangle will help teach the principles of support and concentration.

4v4 FOUNDATION:

5v5 FOUNDATION:
8v8 APPLICATION:

As players learn the foundation of the diamond shape, they will constantly be able to apply the learnings based on the same visual cues.

Visual Cue: Space in advance of the ball closed. Relieve pressure and possess by playing through GK or center back; identify next best option—penetrating pass or play wide and look for 1v1 opportunities or options to combine to get in behind.