



Center of Excellence - Program Overview

“Good players practice until they get it right,
GREAT players practice until they never get it wrong.”

LIONEL MESSI

Coerver® Coaching’s Center of Excellence is about developing; flawless foundational skills, building the confidence to unleash those talents automatically within play and having fun doing it.

Coerver Colorado’s Center of Excellence does this patiently, systematically and in depth over the course of 12 or 16 winter weekly sessions. The curriculum will focus on enhancing fundamental skills through the series of small sided activities progressing players' skill sets from the Proficiency (“I can use this”) then Mastery (“I can make a difference with this”) to the ultimate goal of Automaticity (“It just happens!! And I made a difference”).

In the level of Automaticity, skills get used before there is a conscious decision to use them. Allowing players to free cognitive abilities to be more spontaneous, impactful, and quick in play.

Sessions are designed to immerse the most talented players in high level purposeful and deliberate skills training. Each session is done in a “**climate of fearlessness**”, mistakes are viewed as great learning opportunities. A **relentlessly positive environment** derived from solution oriented feedback promotes *spontaneity and daring risk on approach* - qualities which are so important both in advancing to higher levels of play and maximizing enjoyment of the game.

The heart of the training is developing technical mastery of footskills, ball moves, striking the ball, techniques of passing and receiving, and using those skills in 1 v 1 games, against high level opponents. We then build from that “individual option” to combination play in small sided games.

COE players become different from others their age – most notably in the skill, poise, confidence and Grit with which they play. They learn to “*use that difference to make a difference*”. The COE has become the standard by which soccer skill development is measured in Colorado.

Mission Statement - The Center of Excellence is committed to providing a fearless environment for growth, an intense training ground for competition and acquiring the knowledge to provide customized help in developing the mental and physical qualities of a great athlete. All will be done through a patient, systematic, and in-depth training framework.

Who Is This Program For? - The Center of Excellence is designed for players who are high achievers, who enjoy challenge and competition, who love the game and put a high priority on soccer. Players that have Skill, want more and have the Grit to accomplish it.

Typically these boys and girls will show determination – to get better, to learn all they can, to try things that are new and different. They will be persistent. They will have that mix of passion, perseverance, and self-discipline that keeps us moving forward in spite of obstacles. “Success is a function of persistence and doggedness and the willingness to work hard for twenty-two minutes to make sense of something that most people would give up on after thirty seconds.” These Players demonstrate those qualities not just as athletes, but in most of the things they do in life.

On the field, these are players with “field smarts”, playing when they don’t have the ball. They are thinking about how to get open for a pass. They anticipate the movement of teammates and the ball, without just reacting to them.

When they have the ball, their play demonstrates composure much more often than panic. These are not necessarily the players who appear to dominate on the field at the younger ages. That recognition tends to go to the biggest and/or fastest players, who are often biggest and fastest simply because they are the oldest in the age group. *Speed and coordination are useful traits, but they are less reliable predictors of future success than the qualities listed in those earlier paragraphs.*

The Colorado Center of Excellence is designed specifically for players with those qualities, and not every player will be suited to this program.

Barriers to Skills Training - Despite its importance, sustained and systematic skills training is not often found in youth sports, soccer included. Many coaches – including those who may themselves *have* strong skills – have not learned to *teach* them effectively. A further challenge for coaches is to maintain the patience and perseverance that successful skills training requires.

Another barrier, perhaps the greater one, is related to increasing pressures to win more and more at earlier and earlier ages. This easily leads to the trap of “*winning today (at the sacrifice of tomorrow.)*” Here you see training that prioritizes team organization over player development and team environments where a fear of mistakes stifles boldness and creativity (because “mistakes make you lose”.) At its worst, excessive focus on the scoreboard promotes over-training scenarios, substituting quantity for quality in ways that too often put players’ progress at risk, or in reverse.

COERVER COLORADO “Skillful Players First”: The Foundation -
“Teach skills and they will play a lifetime.”

This is a description of the players we’d like to see at program’s end:

By the end of the Under-14 year, players will be exceptionally skilled. They will be poised in play, confident, creative, bold, and make excellent use of the fundamental elements of team play. They will also have a unique vision of the game and regularly anticipate the coming movements of players and the ball. Lastly, they will demonstrate the ability to make good decisions about the mix of individualism (“*I can beat you myself*”) and team play (“*or with the help of my teammates*”).

We achieve this through a focus on:

> Superior 1v1 Skills - the ability and confidence to take on and beat an opponent in a one-on-one situation, together with the poise to keep possession of the ball under strong defensive pressure. Players can expect some sort of one-on-one activity at every session.

> A Dynamic First Touch - the skill and composure to place the ball seemingly anywhere with the first touch. A spot where it can be played again quickly and productively.

> Accuracy and Power - when striking a ball - with several surfaces of *either* foot. Driven Balls, Striking to goal, Finishing tight spaces. Consistency, Power, Accuracy

> Mastery of the Small Group Situations - (2v1, 3v1, 3v2, etc.) which are the building blocks of team play.

> Vision and Scan of Field- Player’s are required to keep their “head on a swivel” and turnovers are incurred for player’s inability to know where teammates, defenders, and space are. (ex. bad touch, poor movement off the ball)

- > Mastery of the Great Soccer Habits - that form the basis for a player's "Sense of the Game" (i.e. "Game Smarts" "Awareness")
- > Grit - "make the maximum effort, continue to learn and improve."

The Staff - Allies in learning!! -

The staff consists of Nationally Licensed Coaches as well as Coerver *MASTER* Coaches. These master coaches have been coaching with Coerver for 5+ years and have a true understanding of the culture, skill teaching techniques specific to Coerver Colorado and the expectations of Growth!

If any coach does coach a team at the Club or high school level, our program is strictly "club neutral". It will not be a venue for scouting or player recruitment, either by coaches or parents. Its focus will be fully on developing the talents of already talented players.

We also use assistants (summer staff members training to be master coaches) and "Big Brother / Big Sister" role models, high school players who have grown up with Coerver® and are on the path to joining our Summer Camps staff.

Coaches will aspire to:

- **Normalize error** - bring a *Risk On* approach to practice - Players will not take risks if they are afraid to fail. Error is an opportunity to learn and gain from feedback. *"it is ok to make a mistake"* **DOERS MAKE MISTAKES** This constant 'reaching' or 'stretching' to accomplish a ball mastery or 1v1 skill that is just out of range is vital to up level of play
- **Integrate the skills** and **Unlock Creativity** by **Shortening the Feedback Loop** within skill acquisition, providing quick solution based feedback using "pause - present - punchline - play" to present opportunity without slowing down or causing attention residue.
- **Measure Success** - Hold players accountable with a weekly **1v1 SCORECARD**, **Juggling SCORECARD** and three **tXgames** (Dribbling speed, Power Shot, Driven Ball Distance and Accuracy and Passing Gates) result. From this acquired knowledge coaches will **Demand Growth**, by focusing feedback, isolating skills for groups and specific players and communicating a practice routine with specific expectations for future growth and use in training at Coerver, games and at home.
- Make it **FUN** to practice! **LET'S GET BETTER" is the** motto and **Everybody Does It**. In a true culture of learning, top leadership can't just stand back and watch. Coaches will Model risk taking within play, and will be open to feedback in order to invest others in practice. **Power of Positive** - Leverage the camaraderie of practice, utilize friendly and positive peer to peer competition, share goals and develop and everybody does it mentality.
- Cultivate **Peer to Peer accountability** The pride of an athlete is a shared one. It is found in the "shared joy of the inner circle", a feeling among team members that no one on the outside can understand. Shared pride involves a desire to *become as good as possible for yourself and for your group of teammate*
- **Connect with the Players.** One of the most quoted of John Wooden's sayings is, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Not every player will be equally likable, but each deserves equal attention. Coach Wooden was known for his ability to "give to all players equally." This requires connecting with each athlete as an individual. It is done by such simple things as greeting each player at the start of every practice (and having a word at the end as well) and by regularly using the athlete's name.

Nomination to the Center of Excellence - The path to admission into the 23/24 Center of Excellence comes from A coach's recommendation received from participation in a 2023 Summer Camp. In those settings, senior members of the coaching staff will have evaluated the players by

the standards listed in the previous section. The invited players have also separated themselves with top performances in our benchmark skills test we call **txgames**.

The first wave of invitation letters will be sent out September 1st to selected players. Invitations go out in waves, so as not to have more invitations outstanding than we have places open in each age group. Each wave has a specific location and "RSVP Date" by which to enroll. An invited player's place is guaranteed at the designated location until that date. An invited player may still enroll after that date, but acceptance will be dependent on space available as of the RSVP Date of the then current wave of invitations.

Center of Excellence SCHEDULE - [23_24 - FULL C.O.E. and P.A. Schedule](#)

The 2023_24 Center of Excellence, will include 16 -- 90 minute sessions or 12 -- 2 hour sessions which follow detailed, written lesson plans based on age specific benchmarks and Coerver culture.

2023 - 2024 Age Groups -

"Level Seven" program will be for the Junior Class 2015/16

"Level Seven" program will be for the Class of 2015

"Level Six" curriculum for the Class of 2014

"Level Five" curriculum for the Class of 2013

"Level Four" curriculum for the Class of 2012

"Level Three" curriculum for the Class of 2011

"Level Two" curriculum will be for the Class of 2010

"Level One" curriculum will be for the Class of 2009, 2008 & 2007

As with all Coerver Colorado programs, we want to *place players where they will learn the most*. **Please sign up for your designated location stated in your invitation**. The COE provides separate training for boys and girls, with programs designed to capitalize on their different learning styles and social skills.

ESP's (Exceptional Soccer Parents) - Navigating the youth sports landscape is not easy for families. An important element of our COE involves information and education about how to make the youth sports experience the best it can be for both parents and players. We draw heavily upon the ideas of the Positive Coaching Alliance and the thoughts of some of the great coaches/educators in sports to try and provide the best learning environment for all.

With that being said each "team" will have 12-16 players. Sessions are designed for groups that size and do not work as well with groups of fewer than 12. Players in the program (and their parents) must realize the dual obligation that comes with being part of such an endeavor. This was best summed up by 1991 World Champion Tracey Bates Leone: *"You owe it to yourself and to your teammates to do everything you can and give everything you have toward your goal of Being the Best"*. Neither obligation can be fulfilled by players who are absent; in this program you can quickly fall enough behind to become a hindrance to the progress of your COE teammates. We know that even at the younger ages there are many things that call upon these players' time. **But in fairness to others, we ask that players who cannot commit to attend a minimum of 75% of the instructional sessions leave those roster spots open for other athletes who can.**

Costs - The Center of Excellence program is \$ 595.00. That includes the training sessions, an Adidas Coerver® Center of Excellence uniform (New Design) (shirt and shorts) , coach written feedback, txgames scorecards and weekly updates on benchmark scores.

PLEASE FILL OUT CORRECT SIZES ON YOUR REGISTRATION

Questions and Comments - Coerver Colorado's Center of Excellence is a demanding program and your suggestions are welcome as we always want to improve. As it's said, **"Let's Get Better"**.

Please let us know what you think by calling or an email to coervercolorado@gmail.com