



## College Prep Phase

### Train to Win the Game

In the College Prep Phase (CPP) we look to challenge our players individually and as a group. With long term player development at the front of everything we do as a club, in the [Foundation Phase \(FP\)](#) we were teaching the players in a fun yet challenging way to ‘train to love the game.’ In the [Youth Development Phase \(YDP\)](#), our U13-U15 players start to advance their tactical knowledge around the game as the ‘train to understand the game.’ Now in the CPP, we ‘train to win the game’,

As players get to the 16-19-year-old ages, each needs to be challenged to push themselves further for their teammates and as an individual. As players are moved to new positions, our traditional 4-3-3 formation, and overall playing time awarded to players is adjusted based on the competitive edge.

As the CPP coaching staff, we work closely with our players and with the phase coaches within the club to continually adjust our approach to development to ensure each player coming through the full Hotspurs pathway is prepared to reach their highest potential and goals within soccer.

Our aim is to create a whole person, whether they decide to try out for our [First Teams](#), play in college, or stop playing altogether. No matter what path they take, we want to be there to support their ambitions. Here’s how we do that for our 16-19-year-old players:

### College Prep Phase Focus

The College Prep Phase is the final phase in the Academy Program following the Foundation Phase (FP) and Youth Development Phase (YDP). During this phase, players are in their high school program and begin training to compete and ultimately prepare for college or professional playing opportunities.

Our main aim at this phase is to aid the players to get to the desired level of their choice. At this point players usually know if they want to play collegiately. It’s OK if a player does not, and as a coaching staff, we ensure we know each individual’s goals so we can continue to aid in their development to meet those goals.

### Training Focuses for The College Prep Phase

As players progress through the phases, he/she will be exposed to new/different ideas. The idea is to layer on the skills in the right order, as it relates to their age and learning ability. Here is a breakdown of what players can expect their training structure to look like:

#### **Technical**

- - U16-19 – (15%) Emphasis on body shape to enhance vision and refinement of technique learned throughout the Hotspurs Pathway.

#### **Tactical**

- - U16-19 – (40%) Vision and communication to understand whole-field match conditions and creative problem solving to dominate the mental field of play. We utilize tactical documents to help understand

the game model as well as video footage using VEO cameras. Each game is analyzed by coaching staff and individual comments provided for players as fitting.

## **Physical**

- - U16-19 – (25%) Physical aspects of training are always considered i.e., work to rest ratios, and throughout the winter, we have dedicated sessions to speed and strength training.

## **Psychological**

- - U16-19 – (20%) On-field emphasis on developing strategies for focus and quick thinking.

## **Training Sessions in the CPP**

With tactics shifting to the main focus in our CPP sessions, we still hit each of the pillars for development that were emphasized in the FP and YDP. This alignment is further emphasized by maintaining our 6 team targets (playing out from the back, team defending, transitions, ball circulation, pressing, chance creation) that define our style of play.

While players are more honed in on specific positions at this point in their playing cycle, we are engaging every player at every possible opportunity within games and sessions. This requires additional guided learning, as were used in the previous phases, that makes them think and react over critical points in the game. We do not give them the answer, they have to work to figure it out as a group or individually.

Within sessions, we use two coaches — one as lead and one as a support (ghost) coach that will manage the opposition of whatever that session's target is. For example, if the main aim of the session is playing out from the back for our defensive and midfield units, our attacking unit focuses on their team defending. With our lead and support coach (ghost coach) approach, each individual and group of individuals within the team are able to develop from each session — even when the aim of the session isn't on their unit.

## **Opportunities to Play Collegiately**

Per the phase name, college recruiting is an important part of our phase. Aside from ensuring technical, tactical, physical, and psychosocial preparation, we feel it's important to give both players and parents information to aid their journey — from college coach Information sessions to recruiting profiles, to college showcases, we aim to provide the players with the tools and information to utilize.

We [provide players with direct access](#) to the NCSA College Recruitment Platform. This recruiting platform allows for players to build out their full college recruitment profile. From film and relevant information college coaches are seeking. This allows players to easily share their highlights with prospective college coaches and coaches to organically find our Hotspurs players. Additionally, these profiles are housed in our [Spurs Player College Marketplace](#) where coaches can access our players, knowing they came from the Hotspurs program — giving them an increased understanding of the expectations and type of player they are considering.

Further, we attend and host our own college showcases. Coaches are provided information on each of our eligible players and are invited specifically by the club. However, [the recruitment process](#) is one that the player must be actively involved in. We help guide our players through making continued contact directly with the coaches at schools they've determined a good fit to build a dialogue.

To that end, we put the emphasis on the players maintaining their information on their profile, engaging with coaches, and taking control of where they want to be. Our promise is to support and guide and assist them in every way possible.

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Ideally, the purpose of this phase model is to get our players ready to play beyond our academy – whether that be at college, in our First Teams, or in a professional setup.

In each phase of our [club phase model](#), we look to develop players throughout their *entire* playing journey. In the CPP however, unlike the previous 2 phases, seeing at equal playing time is not a guarantee.

As we train and compete to win in this phase, players with the greatest understanding, fight, and commitment that is needed to win the game will remain on the pitch. As a coaching staff, we have to know what type of players we are dealing with and know how they respond to feedback. Some players need to be told in a stern fashion, but others may need the proverbial ‘arm around the shoulder.’ It’s about knowing your players and staff and maintaining the correct balance and techniques with all of the players. Continuing to develop players, we recognize when necessary to bring a player off to give specific tactical information so when they’re back in a similar role/situation, they’re able to navigate each possible decision.

Again, committing to preparing players to play at the highest level they strive for, players are trained to recognize the role of the coaching staff to adjust as needed. To the end of development, of course, players are given opportunities to demonstrate an understanding of the information shared in the game situation again. This strongly plays to our belief in the CPP to get the players into a position both mentally and physically to progress as far as possible when they take up new opportunities within the game.

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