U11/U12 General Characteristics:

Mental/Psychological (Cognitive)

* Eager to learn
* Ability to sequence thought and actions, perform more complex tasks (simultaneously run, strike a ball, and think)
* Ability to use more abstract thought to meed the demands of the game (e.g., well-timed overlapping run)
* Use their teammates to solve game problems
* Training must replicate the game

Physical (Psychomotor)

* Continue to gain tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power (related to body size and muscle mass)
* Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
* More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receive with chest, head ball)
* Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
* Children continue to be in growth spurts
* Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
* Height can be well over 5 feet and weight can be 100+ pounds
* Age range for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 7-14, average of 10
* Age range for the beginning of pubescence in boys in 9-16, average of 12
* Onset of puberty brings a growth spurt that affects balance and coordination; gain strength and power but temporarily lose agility and suppleness

Social (Psychosocial)

* Gender differences are more apparent
* Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychological implications regarding relationships with their teammates
* Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents
* Children tend to conform to peer pressure
* Developing a conscience, morality, and a scale of values

Components of the Game for U11/U12 Players (in priority order):

**Technical**: Dribbling to penetrate, to possess, feints with the ball, receiving air balls with all parts of body, heading to score and clear, finishing, passing with deception, crossing, introduce slide tackle; goalkeepers work on footwork, throwing, kicking, diving, angle play, parrying, and boxing

**Psychological**: Teamwork, confidence, desire, mental rehearsal, intrinsic motivation, handling distress, how to learn from each match, sportsmanship, parental involvement, emotional management

**Physical**: Conditioning, speed, strength, aerobic exercise, proper warm-up and cool-down

**Tactical**: 1v1 through 3v3 attacking and defending, introduce the principles of play, verbal and visual communication for all players, half-time analysis, begin to identify potential roles for players, goalkeepers command the goalmouth, near post play by the goalkeeper, saving penalty kicks, simple set play patterns, speed in setting up walls

Coaching Tips:

1. Coach is a patient and motivating teacher
2. Coach has ability to understand and demonstrate technique
3. Coaches provide environments/activities conducive to problem-solving and decision-making by the players; use guided discovery method applied to both individual and small group tactics
4. General rule of thumb is eight players, one ball (except for dribbling)
5. Introduce and teach basics of all principles of attack and defense
6. Sessions should have a technical and/or tactical theme (dribbling and/or 1v1 decision-making)
7. Sessions should involve fun and imaginative game like activities as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities
8. Coaching on technique and introduce functional training (position specific)
9. Small-sided directional games (4v4m 5v4, 5v5, 6v5, 6v6, and 7v6)