

## **Settore Giovanile e Scolastico: Attività Motorie e Sportive**

### **Youth and School Department: Motor and Sports Activities**

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#### **Abstract**

The Youth and School Sector of the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (Italian Football Federation) plays a very important role within the federal structure, constituting the engine that drives and directs the grassroots activity on the national territory.

Through its national and local structures, the Youth and School Sector operates in different areas of competence, including that relating to motor and sports activity. This activity is regulated and proposed on the basis of practical and scientific evidence, with the aim of contributing to the better psycho-physical development of young players from their earliest years of activity

#### **Keywords**

Attività Motoria, Sport, Calcio, Settore Giovanile  
Motor Activity, Sport, Football, Youth Sector

## **Introduction**

In the context of the organization of the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (Italian Football Federation) activities, the Youth and School Sector is of particular strategic importance; it is the internal structure of the Federation which, as stated in Art. 15 of the F.I.G.C. Statute, “promotes, regulates and organizes, for technical, educational and social purposes, the activity of young players aged between five and sixteen”. The Sector - as the Statute affirms - is “endowed with organizational autonomy and has the power of making management choices, under the preventive and final administrative control of the F.I.G.C., in compliance with the budgetary compatibility and the federal regulations. Young players may be registered with the league member companies, which carry out activities exclusively in the Youth and School sector”.

The recently revised and updated Regulations for the Youth and School Sector, in its Art. 2, divides the areas of intervention and activities on the basis of their aims into:

- a) Activities with technical-sports purposes:
  - organization of championships and tournaments of the categories of competence;
  - organization of football activities in schools;
  - establishment of criteria for the development of the activities of the regional, provincial and local representative associations of the Youth Sector;
  - organization of the activities of the women’s representative associations of the Youth Sector;
  - organization of other events, according to the programs set by the Board of Directors;
- b) Activities with didactic-organizational purposes:
  - education and training of “young” players attending the “Basic football centers” and the “Football schools” recognized by the F.I.G.C., on the basis of the criteria established in agreement with the Technical Sector;
  - organization of courses for club managers;
  - organization of information and refresher courses for teachers of physical education and for primary school teachers, and refresher courses for coaches and trainers working in the youth sector, through courses organized in collaboration with the Technical Sector;
- c) Activities with social purposes:
  - Initiatives aimed at stimulating the development of motor activity in football, in all environments in which youth aggregation takes place, and in particular at School;
  - promotion of meetings, also jointly with public bodies, in order to encourage sports associations;
  - appropriate endeavors to disseminate the educational values of sports;
  - awareness of local authorities for the commitment to the building of sports facilities necessary to carry out basic activities;
  - dissemination of knowledge about hygiene, medicine and psychology among clubs, coaches and instructors, also in light of the results of specific research carried out by the Technical Sector

### **1. The general orientation underlying the proposed motor activity**

The youth football activity is regulated by the Youth and School Sector, in accordance with the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child in Sport, which sets out the standards with which the activities for the 5- 16 years age group are organized. To these rights correspond duties for adults who must guarantee:

1. The Right to have fun and play
2. The Right to Play Sport

3. The Right to a fair amount of rest. The activity must be carried out in a serene psychological atmosphere, both in training and in the competition; in the team groups there must be a “turn-over” that allows all those enrolled in a football school, regardless of their technical skills, to be called to play a match and to take part in it for at least one full half (uninterruptedly) and a for large portion of minutes of the third half. The technicians have the duty to respect this rule and must ensure that it is respected. In the case of the two halves the same rule will be valid. It is also mandatory that players are involved only in a single match for each of the days set by the calendars of Pulcini (8-10 Years) and Esordienti (10-12 Years) federal tournaments.
4. The Right to benefit from a healthy environment
5. The Right to practice sport in absolute safety in order to protect one’s own health. Psycho-physical well-being can be guaranteed “only” by a sports activity carried out: in healthy facilities and by requiring that students undergo a medical-sports fitness examination before the start of the activity (mandatory requirement, in accordance with a state law); the use of training methods suitable for the subject must not create imbalances, but they must rather provide benefits and promote adaptation; at this age, the use of inappropriate and useless food supplements must be avoided, while proper nutrition and ethical behavior must be favored: the latter, in case of an accident or illness, must respect the right times for recovery by avoiding, if not essential, the use and (in some cases) the abuse of drugs, always in collaboration with specialist doctors (Medical Commission of the Youth and School Sector).
6. The Right to be surrounded and trained by qualified personnel
7. The Right to attend adequate training sessions at the right pace.- The member companies of the F.I.G.C. that carry out activities in the 5-12 years age group, without prejudice to the limits of their organizational possibilities, have the duty to ensure the presence of people adequately prepared both at technical and psycho-pedagogical level covering the technical and managerial roles, in order to guarantee the correct educational, sports and training development of their students. These educators must acquire specific knowledge and skills through courses/refresher courses and information and didactic meetings periodically organized by the Technical Sector and the Youth and School Sector, in collaboration with the local structures of the CONI (the Italian National Olympic Committee).
8. The Right to participate in competitions appropriate to different ages, with training sessions that correspond to the right learning rhythms
9. The Right to measure oneself against young people with the same chances of success. Every child, young boy or girl, must be able to express his or her own psychic, cognitive, emotional, affective, relational, motor and technical potential through didactic progressions that correspond to the characteristics of the age in question. The number of players, the field size, the goals and the balls, the duration of the matches, and the training sessions must be in line with the rules laid down by the F.I.G.C. Official Communiqué No.1 for the current football season, which have taken shape through experiments, experiences and adaptations in recent years. Competition models adapted to each age group are a sort of protection of the natural evolutionary process of young people. Any acceleration or excessive load, such as psychological pressure and tension of events, can lead not only to imbalance in technical training, but also to a loss of motivation and enthusiasm with relative risk for the continuation of the activity.
10. The Right not to be a champion. Children who experience themselves in a new learning context are all champions, because they are trying to do something they only know in their representation: they are learning the game of football (F.I.G.C. Official Communiqué No.1 of the Youth and School Sector).

## 2. The proposed Motor Activity in the Basic Categories

The task of the Basic Activity is to study, design, plan, coordinate and control the modalities, rules and regulations that regulate, together with the F.I.G.C. Technical Sector, the activity of little boys and girls belonging to the following categories, both in Football and in Five-a-side Football:

- Piccoli Amici (5-6 years)
- Primi Calci (6-8 years)
- Pulcini (8-10 years)
- Esordienti (10-12 years).

During the period of the basic activity (from 5 to 12 years) there are, in fact, different goals that must be pursued, by taking into account that football is an educational tool with a multi-purpose nature. Through the game of football, in fact, children develop skills both at technical-coordination level, and at that concerning social relationships and psychological development, without neglecting the specific training that allows them practicing football in real competitive environments.

The Basic Activity takes place mainly in Football Schools and in Five-a-side Football Schools. The Youth and School Sector provides for a system of recognition of the structures, based on the quality of the clubs and the requirements they meet. There are three types of football schools:

- “Basic Football Centers”: they are all F.I.G.C. member clubs which carry out activities in at least one of the three basic categories, but that do not meet the minimum requirements for setting up a “Football School”.
- “Football Schools”: only F.I.G.C. member clubs can set up a Football School, according to the criteria and requirements established each year in the F.I.G.C. Official Communiqué No.1 of the Youth and School Sector. Among the requirements there is an adequate relationship between trainers and trainees, suitable sports facilities, the presence of a psychologist and at least one qualified instructor enrolled in the appropriate list of the Technical Sector.
- “Elite Football Schools”: these are the “Football Schools” in possession of further quality requirements established and listed every year in the F.I.G.C. Official Communiqué No.1 of the Youth and School Sector. Among the requirements there are activities for girls, an agreement with a local school, the integration with the disabled, and social initiatives in the local area

The Basic Activity is mainly of a recreational nature, carried out in a healthy environment that places the child at the center of the educational and sports project, without neglecting the development of technical skills and abilities.

The activity is structured in official tournaments, organized by the 110 Provincial and District Delegations according to the pedagogical and didactic principles described in the “Technical Guide for Football Schools” and in the “Official Communiqué No.1 of the Youth and School Sector”.

As for the activities carried out, besides the participation in the *Grassroots Festival*, it is worth mentioning the *Fun Football* (reserved for the “Piccoli Amici” category), the *Grassroots Challenge* (for the “Pulcini” category) and the *Fair Play* (for the “Esordienti” category). In this tournament, in particular, the ranking lists that determine the best teams are defined according to the sum of scores obtained especially for the behavioral and organizational aspects of the Club, as well as for the technical outcomes of the teams.

In addition, the Youth and School Sector also provides for training and refresher courses for youth technicians. The Technical Sector, in collaboration with the Youth and School Sector and the National Amateur League, organizes courses through which basic coaches are trained. The Sector provides for the organization of training and information courses in the school environ-

ment too, reserved for primary teachers and physical education teachers belonging to schools of all levels.

The activity of the Basic categories has a predominantly promotional, recreational and didactic nature, and is organized on a strictly local basis. The activity is divided into two phases: the autumn phase and the spring phase (at the beginning of the spring phase it is possible to register new teams). The Clubs can participate in tournaments organized as part of the basic activity with one or more teams, favoring the involvement of all the members of the activity. The number of players expected for each specific activity takes part in the competitions. The teams, indicated in the list to be presented to the referee, can be composed of male children only, female children only or can be mixed teams. The locally-competent Delegations of the National Amateur League organize, in accordance with the guidelines set by the Youth and School Sector, one or more tournaments lasting at least three months in total. Moreover, while taking into account the reality in which they operate, in order to organize a more homogeneous activity from a technical-didactic point of view, they must divide the teams into groups by age, as far as possible.

### **3. Motor activity proposed in the Local Federal Centers**

The Local Federal Centers (LFC) represent the pole of excellence at local level for the enhancement and technical-sports-educational training of young players aged between 12 and 15 years.

Through the LFC, the Youth and School Sector has defined a program aimed at the grassroots category of male and female football, which focuses on monitoring young male and female players in the medium-long term developing a coordinated technical and sports training course, reducing the waste of talent, defining a central training-educational approach, and combating sports abandonment by young people.

The program includes a weekly seasonal activity for a group of about 25 Under-14 players, a group of 50 Under-13 players and a group of 25 Under-15 players.

Technical training activities are carried out in all the LFCs operating in the area, together with a series of educational training/information interventions such as thematic workshops aimed at the population geographically close to the LFC (Boys, Girls, Parents, Clubs, Managers, Local Authorities, Sports and Non-Sports Institutions).

The summons for the players, who will take part in the activities of the LFC, will be published at the beginning of the activities in the Regional official communiqués and on the institutional website of FIGC-SGS. Clubs are invited to:

- Actively collaborate by participating in the activities and meetings organized by the relevant LFCs;
- make their players available, possibly accompanied by their own technicians and/or managers;
- justify any defections by their members;
- comply with and respect the LFC Ethics Charter.

The LFC Ethics Charter lays down rules of conduct to be used for the development of the civic sense of the main figures directly and/or indirectly involved in the program (young people, technical staff, managers, clubs and parents).

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