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*Translated from the original in spanish*

**Original article**

## **The tactical-offensive teaching in U-12 player's soccer: its theoretical importance**

### **La enseñanza táctica-ofensiva en futbolistas sub-12: su importancia teórica**

### **Ensino tático-ofensivo em jogadores de futebol sub-12: a sua importância teórica**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The training of tactical-offensive fundamentals involves modeling all possible tactical actions when the team is in possession of the ball; the efficient management of these fundamentals makes it possible to increase sports performance, hence the need to know the practical and theoretical importance, in terms of methodological decision-making as part of the teaching-learning process, emphasizing in initiation categories. The objective of this research is to evaluate theoretically the importance of tactical-offensive training in U-12 soccer players by consulting specialists. For this purpose, the author is based on a descriptive-analytical research, studying six variables that denote the theoretical importance of tactical-offensive training, variables qualified by 26 national specialists of children's soccer. As results, the measures in the scores were determined, an overall qualitative qualification of medium high was obtained, with a level of concordance among specialists of acceptable level ( $w=0.520$ ). The theoretical importance of the tactical-



offensive training for soccer players of the U-12 category obtained an overall qualification of moderately high. It is considered necessary to improve the Ecuadorian technical personnel in the subject under study, given the existence of a relative undervaluation of tactical-offensive training and a lack of contents of the preparation of the athlete, related to the tactical-offensive approach of the training of the initiation soccer player.

**Keywords:** Offensive-Tactics; U-12 Soccer; Theoretical Importance.

## RESUMEN

El entrenamiento de los fundamentos táctico-ofensivos implica modelar todas las acciones tácticas posibles cuando el equipo se encuentra en posesión del balón; la gestión eficiente en dichos fundamentos posibilita incrementar el rendimiento deportivo, de ahí la necesidad de conocer la importancia práctica y también teórica, en función de la toma de decisiones metodológicas como parte del proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, enfatizando en categorías de iniciación. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo valorar teóricamente la importancia del entrenamiento de la táctica-ofensiva en futbolistas sub-12 mediante consulta a especialistas. Para ello, el autor se basa en una investigación descriptiva-analítica, estudiando seis variables que denotan la importancia teórica del entrenamiento táctico-ofensivo, variables calificadas por 26 especialistas nacionales de fútbol infantil. Como resultados, se determinaron las medias en los puntajes, se obtuvo una calificación cualitativa general de *medianamente alta*, con un nivel de concordancia entre especialistas de nivel aceptable ( $w=0.520$ ). La importancia teórica que reviste el entrenamiento táctico-ofensivo para futbolistas de la categoría sub-12 obtuvo una calificación general de medianamente alta. Se considera la necesidad de superación del personal técnico ecuatoriano en la materia objeto de estudio, dado la existencia de una subvaloración relativa del entrenamiento táctico-ofensivo y una carencia de contenidos de la preparación del deportista, relacionados con el enfoque táctico-ofensivo del entrenamiento del futbolista de iniciación.

**Palabras clave:** Táctica-ofensiva; Fútbol sub-12; Importancia teórica.

## RESUMO

A formação dos fundamentos táctico-ofensivos envolve a modelação de todas as ações tácticas possíveis quando a equipa está na posse da bola; a gestão eficiente destes fundamentos permite aumentar o desempenho desportivo, daí a necessidade de conhecer a importância prática e teórica, em termos de tomada de decisões metodológicas como parte do processo ensino-aprendizagem, enfatizando em categorias de iniciação. O objectivo desta investigação é avaliar teoricamente a importância do treino táctico-ofensivo em jogadores de futebol sub-12 através da consulta de especialistas. Para tal, o autor baseia-se numa pesquisa descritiva-analítica, estudando seis variáveis que denotam a importância teórica do treino táctico-ofensivo, variáveis qualificadas por 26 especialistas nacionais de futebol infantil. Como resultados, as notas médias foram determinadas, obteve-se uma qualificação geral qualitativa de médio-alto, com um nível de concordância entre especialistas de nível aceitável ( $w=0,520$ ). A importância teórica do treino táctico-ofensivo para jogadores de futebol sub-12 foi classificada como média-alta. É considerada a necessidade de melhorar o pessoal técnico equatoriano no tema de estudo, dada a existência de uma relativa subavaliação do treino táctico-ofensivo e a falta de conteúdo da preparação do atleta, relacionada com a abordagem táctico-ofensiva do treino do jogador de futebol iniciante.



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**Palavras-chave:** Ofensiva táctica; Fútbol sub-12; Importância teórica.

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## INTRODUCTION

The teaching-learning process involves a set of logical operations that are implemented to achieve a pedagogical objective, reaching a goal that depends on the sequencing, organization and systematization of the actions that compose them. Sport, being eminently a pedagogical process, poses concrete actions that incorporate long-term strategies, styles and teaching methods, centered on the student, (Morales & González, 2014) which for the case of sports training is governed through various pedagogical principles, as evidenced by Martin, Carl, & Lehnertz, (2007).

Tactics in sports is defined as a rational behavior regulated on the capacity of sports performance, aimed at giving a motor response to the opponent's action, (Díaz, 2020) while the offense is considered an action developed individually and collectively in function of attacking the opponent to achieve sporting success (Col, 2007). For the case of soccer, both tactics and offense are components trained together, (Pulling, Twitchen, & Pettefer, 2016) through a technical-tactical approach to preparation, usually oriented to a game-like training (Calero-Morales., 2014; Calero., 2019).

The training of tactics and offense in initiation soccer has specific assumptions to consider, prioritizing the collective training without obviating individual potentialities, although individual actions are subordinated to the common tactical combination, as specified by Ray (2011), a vital aspect to design the contents of the preparation of the athlete to improve offensive tactics, as evidenced in various works such as those arranged in Marcos, Martínez, & Martín, (2016) and in Carbo, Vélez, Cañizares, & Echeverría, (2019).

The consultation of different research sources evidences the importance of offensive tactics training in soccer, (Rivera, García, & Goenaga, 2018) including children's soccer, (Infante, Aliaga, & Cuadro, 2019) even for the teaching-educational training environment in Ecuador, with works such as those provided in Rizzo (2017) with technical-tactical exercises to improve the teaching-learning process of U-10 soccer and Cadena-Cataña (2017), by studying the tactical-offensive and defensive fundamentals of U-12 soccer and its impact on sports training, among others.

In this sense, the authors of this research consider that the importance of teaching offensive-tactics in U-12 soccer players is highly relevant as part of the sports training process in the stages of sports initiation, which merits specialized strategies and studies for sports training such as those provided by dos Santos Gonzaga, Albuquerque, Malloy-Diniz, Greco, & da Costa (2014), by relating affective decision-making on tactical behavior in players under 15 years of age or the effects of the change in the rules of the game on sports tactics, in initiation soccer players, as described by Machado *et al.*, (2019).

However, it is not clear the extent of the importance of the tactical-offensive training in soccer players of initiation in Ecuadorian coaches; an idea that could determine the priority of the tactical-offensive training in the sports training models of Ecuadorian soccer players of the infantile category, an aspect that could evidence some needs of improvement, of the national sports professional specialized in soccer. Therefore, the purpose of the research is to evaluate, through consultation with national specialists, the



theoretical importance of tactical-offensive training in U-12 soccer players as part of the design of the content of the preparation of the athlete.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The present research is characterized as descriptive-analytical, consulting by means of an online questionnaire 26 specialists in formative soccer in the Republic of Ecuador (Quito, Guayaquil, Ambato, Cuenca and Esmeraldas).

The selection of the specialists was based on a non-probabilistic intentional sampling, characterized by the fulfillment of three inclusion assumptions; the first was to have a practical experience of at least ten years in the category of interest (U-12) or younger; second, to have a third level degree in Sciences of Physical Activity and Sport or similar; and third, to demonstrate competencies in the profession, evidenced by relevant results in national championships.

The national specialists consulted will evaluate several variables that show the level of theoretical importance of the teaching of offensive-tactics in soccer players of the U-12 category for the Ecuadorian teaching-educational training environment. The variables analyzed by the specialists are:

1. Practical importance of the tactical-offensive component (IpTO) for sports training in the U-12 category.
2. Priority of the tactical-offensive training in the U-12 category with respect to the technical component (PeTOt).
3. Priority of the tactical-offensive training in the U-12 category with respect to the physical component (PeTOf).
4. Number of specialized exercises in tactical preparation-available by the coach for the U-12 or younger category (CeTO).
5. Motivation level of the initiation soccer players for the tactical-offensive training, adapted to the age of study (NmTO).
6. Level of systematicity per microcycle of the tactical-offensive training in U-12 players (NsTO). Where one point is Very Low (one day a week), two points is Low (two days a week), three points is Medium High (three days a week), four points is High (two days a week) and five points is Very High (five days a week).

To classify the scores in each variable of analysis, a five-level Likert-type scale will be used, with the specialists declaring their agreement or disagreement based on their personal qualitative statement. The levels of analysis are classified as follows: level 1: Very Low; level 2: Low; level 3: Moderately High; level 4: High; and level 5: Very High.

The data collected were subjected to the Shapiro-Wilk test, which shows the non-existence of a normal distribution of the data; therefore, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance for k related samples was selected as a comparison statistic and the concordance between the judgments made by the specialists in the variables evaluated was determined.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the qualifications given by each national specialist surveyed, an aspect that allows to characterize the importance of technical and offensive training in soccer players at the initiation level, with emphasis on the U-12 category (Table 1).

**Table 1.** - Specialist evaluation data by study variable

No	Study variable						$\bar{X}$	Qualification
	IpTO	PeTOt	PeTOf	CeTO	NmTO	NsTO		
1	3	2	3	1	3	3	3	Medium High
2	2	3	4	2	5	3	3	Medium High
3	2	2	4	5	5	2	3	Medium High
4	3	1	3	2	3	4	3	Medium High
5	4	2	4	3	5	5	4	High
6	3	2	3	2	2	5	3	Medium High
7	3	2	2	3	3	5	3	Medium High
8	3	1	3	2	4	5	3	Medium High
9	2	1	5	1	5	5	3	Medium High
10	2	1	4	1	5	3	3	Medium High
11	1	1	3	1	5	3	2	Low
12	2	2	5	2	4	4	3	Medium High
13	3	3	5	2	4	3	3	Medium High
14	4	2	4	2	4	3	3	Medium High
15	1	2	3	1	4	3	2	Low
16	3	2	4	2	3	4	3	Medium High
17	4	5	5	2	4	3	4	High
18	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	Medium High
19	3	3	4	1	4	3	3	Medium High
20	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	Medium High
21	2	2	4	3	4	4	3	Medium High
22	3	1	2	2	5	3	3	Medium High
23	2	1	1	2	4	2	2	Low
24	3	2	4	1	4	3	3	Medium High
25	3	1	3	1	5	2	3	Medium High
26	3	1	5	1	4	3	3	Medium High
$\bar{X}$	2,65	1,92	3,58	1,92	4,00	3,42	3	Medium High

In the case of the variable "IpTO", the mean was established at X2.66 points for a qualitative qualification Low to Medium High, a theoretical value given by the specialists to the practical importance of tactical-offensive training in soccer players of U-12 categories. Interviews conducted by telephone with the specialists (the Covid-19 pandemic merits this method of communication), show, in a general sense, the causes



of this score, given that they consider that although the technical-tactical approach to preparation is important for cooperative-opposition sports, as evidenced in **Calero-Morales (2014)** and for the case of soccer, in **Caballero (2008)**, in the sport initiation stages, technical training is prioritized based on the improvement of basic and sport-specific motor skills, (**Peitersen, 2007; Jukic, et al., 2019**).

In this sense, although the authors of this study agree that the technical component is of importance in the training of the initiation soccer player, the technical-tactical approach of the preparation, where offensive elements are included, is essential in the early stages of the soccer player's training, an idea supported by a greater number of approaches issued in the international literature, as would be the case of **Caballero (2008), Marcos, Martínez, & Martín (2016) and Rizzo (2017)**.

For the case of the variable "PeTOt", the mean score was established at 1.92, from Very Low to Low level. The specialists consulted do not consider, in a general sense, that the priority of tactical-offensive training in U-12 players is high, based on the above-mentioned reasons, given that they consider technical training to be a higher priority than the technical-tactical approach to the preparation of players at the initiation level.

In the case of the variable "PeTOf", the mean score was 3.58 (Medium High to High), the second highest score in the study, given that the specialists did consider a higher priority of tactical-offensive training than physical preparation in U-12 soccer players. The authors of this study consider the reasons given by the specialists to be correct, given that physical preparation is normally prioritized in the training models applied to categories of a higher age range, a fact that is evidenced by the amount of time used to enhance it (**Calero-Morales, 2014**).

The variable "CeTO" reached an average score of 1.92 (Very Low to Low), evidencing the need to design a greater amount of sport preparation contents with tactical-offensive approaches for the categories of sport initiation. The aforementioned merits the need and, therefore, the recommendation to carry out methodological research to enhance the search and design of tactical-offensive exercises, enriching the specialized work tools of U-12 soccer coaches.

In the case of the variable "NmTO", this reached the highest score obtained in the research (4: High), given that, in the opinion of the specialists consulted, tactical-offensive training causes higher rates of motivation for training in beginner soccer players than more traditional training models, partly because training based on tactical application games is the one that generates more enjoyment, as stated by **Sánchez, Cabezón, & González (2013)**.

Finally, the mean score reached by the variable "NsTO" was 3.42 (Medium High), indicating that the specialists indicate that tactical-offensive training should be used in at least three training sessions per traditional microcycle (consisting of five days), although it is not clear the level of volume and intensity of the same, a value appropriate to the scores achieved in the variable "PeTOT", where the priority of technical training over tactical-offensive training is evident, according to the criteria issued by the national specialists consulted.

In a general sense, the total qualification, issued to classify the importance of tactical-offensive training in initiation soccer players by the specialists, was Medium High (Table 1), as was the majority of the total score evaluated by each specialist in the six variables analyzed, data arranged in the last column of Table 1.



As shown in Table 2, Kendall's coefficient evidenced an acceptable concordance ( $w=0.520$ ) in the opinions issued by the national specialists in the six variables that allow studying the importance of tactical-offensive training in U-12 soccer players, so the degree of similarity described in the ratings made in each study variable does not differ (Table 2) and (Table 3).

**Table 2.** - Index of concordance between specialists

Ranges	
Average range	
IpTO	3,23
PeTOt	2,04
PeTOf	4,48
CeTO	2,06
NmTO	4,94
NsTO	4,25

**Table 3.**- Test statistics

	<b>26</b>
<b>W de Kendall<sup>a</sup></b>	,520
<b>Chi-square</b>	67,544
<b>gl</b>	5
<b>Asymptotic sig.</b>	,000
<b>a. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance</b>	

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is stated that the theoretical importance of the tactical-offensive training for soccer players of the U-12 category is at a medium-high level, according to the conceptions expressed by the national specialists surveyed. The need for improvement of the Ecuadorian technical staff in the subject under study is considered, given the existence of a relative undervaluation of the tactical-offensive training and a lack of contents of the preparation of the athlete, related to the tactical-offensive approach of the training of the initiation soccer player.

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**Conflict of interests:**

The authors declare not to have any interest conflicts.

**Authors' contribution:**

**Oswaldo Michael Gualoto Andrango:** Conception of the idea, literature search and review, instrument making, instrument application, compilation of information resulting from the instruments applied, statistic análisis, preparation of tables, graphs and images, database preparation, general advice on the topic addressed, drafting of the original (first version), review and final version of the article, article correction, authorship coordinator, translation of terms or information obtained, review of the application of the applied bibliographic standard.



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