



U14
Player Development
Handbook
(for age groups U13 & U14)



INTRODUCTION

This U14 development handbook is geared towards coaches of U13 & U14 players. Its aim is to provide coaches of these age groups with the following:

- What to expect in terms of player psychological development and behavior.
- How to teach soccer techniques.
- Basic techniques and skills to teach at this age.
- Drills and exercises to use during practices.
- Resources.

Information contained in this handbook came from a variety of sources. Five that were used extensively:

- Hopkinton Youth Soccer Association
- Jeff Pill, U-14 Region 1 Director of Coaching for USSF.
- Washington State Youth Soccer Association
- Oregon Youth Soccer Association
- Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association



Youth Soccer Player Development



The following ideas about player development are offered to youth coaches to help you identify age-appropriate aims. For each two-year age grouping, proposed guidelines are contained in the major elements of the game: technical, tactical, psychological or mental, and physical or fitness-related. We have also suggested some ideas about the practice environment and listed some resources for coaches of each age grouping.

Our purpose is to suggest a framework for the coherent introduction of soccer's techniques, tactical ideas, and fitness components. These ideas and guidelines, this framework,- these suggestions are directed to you coaches to help you to plan a helpful progression of practice plans and intentions for your season.

Please remember:

- These ideas are general. Every child is different: each has her or his own physique, mentality, motivation, cultural situation, etc. Some eight year olds are athletic and have played soccer for three years and love to compete; other eight year olds are not so athletic, are just beginning soccer, and are playing because their best friends are.
- Kids learn and develop and grow at different rates! There are precocious kids, late bloomers, erratic learners, etc.
- Patience is vital.

One way to consider this outline is as a source of simple, seasonal objectives. These objectives should always be considered in relation to long term outcomes and the players' needs - not the coaches' needs.

These ideas are not intended as final objectives or "end results" even though objectives are given. Objectives rather should be used as structure for your planning. Player development is a long never-ending process to be undertaken patiently by both players and coaches. Also, there are many intangible qualities which lead to success on the soccer field which are not discussed here: imagination, fantasy, tenacity, concentration, and others. An abundance of any of these intangibles - persistence, fighting power, creative flair, for example - can enhance a player's technique or tactical sense or compensate for deficiencies in these.

We urge you to avoid trying, to "get ahead" of the ideas in this framework, but not to avoid reviewing and consolidating. Keep focusing on re-visiting past skills and ideas to ensure players have a very solid technical basis. Hesitate to go ahead, but don't hesitate to go back!

It is impossible to quantify the elements of soccer which are discussed here. These guidelines are intended to express in a general, global way what it is reasonable to expose players to at each age. Some players may exceed expectations; others may struggle to reach them. For example, one nine year old may receive a ball during a scrimmage, see that she can play it ahead, and turn up the field, balanced and with fluid technique. Another nine year old may have no idea about



what to do when the ball arrives, be tense and rather clumsy as she tries to control it, and be indifferent to your suggestions when you approach her.



Few players will “master” all these elements at a given age, and their performance will almost certainly be inconsistent as they grow through pre-adolescence and puberty. Some players are more “technical”, some more insightful and intuitive, some more physically gifted. *A coach’s challenge is to help each player achieve the most enjoyment and fulfillment at each age.*

There are some parts of soccer involvement, which are universal and consistent. All players of any age should reflect them: respect for the game, teammates, opponents, coaches, etc.; punctuality, responsibility, sporting attitudes.

Ultimately, all players must learn how to attack and how to defend by themselves, as part of a group, and as part of a team. A reasonable aim for players at each age level, in relation to the techniques and tactical issues listed here:

- Technically - solid, stable skills, under pressure and at speed.
- Tactically - recognition and understanding of situations and decisive action or reaction in response to them.

There is an implicit challenge to all of us coaches! We must all commit ourselves to learning as much as we can about children, technique, tactics, and physical preparation.

In considering these ideas, coaches -should not lose sight of the most important element of youth soccer development: FUN!

The two big words are FUN and PLAY!



PLAYERS: U13 & U14

Characteristics

- Recognize and enjoy competition.
- This age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices.
- Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly.
- Beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely.
- Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases.
- It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3rd grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes.

At U12 the coach should be aware of the above characteristics and challenge his or her players accordingly. Coaches should also be able to determine which players are better suited to constructive criticism at the group level and which benefit more from a quiet word after practice.

Coaching Rational

Some of the players that are playing as U12's are seasoned veterans of the youth soccer scene. Some of them may have already been involved in traveling to play in tournaments. As a result, some of them might be very nervous about the whole process. It is our job to keep things in perspective for these young, developing players. True, some of them are becoming quite skillful and are seeing how fun it is to play the game when they can really control the ball. However, many of them are still learning the ropes. Even the more experienced players need to have the game be fun!

Emphasis is still placed on having players learn how to control the ball with his/her body, but now, they need to find themselves in more game-like situations. Training is more dynamic and starting to have players make simple, basic decisions such as "Which way is there more space?" or "Who should I pass to?"

Following are some more items that a coach of U12 players should consider:

- Use small-sided games as the main teaching vehicle. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but the full 11-a-side game is still too complicated for them to understand.
- How we group players during training takes on even added significance because of the wide margins of ability levels. We need to mix players up often.
- Stretching is becoming more important, along with a good warm-up. Since the game is faster, make sure that they also have good shin guards. Safety and preventive measures take on added significance.
- Training twice a week is plenty. Sessions need not go longer than one hour, fifteen minutes.
- They should all come with their own ball. In fact, they still need to be encouraged to play with it by themselves.
- Put them into competitive environments as much as possible. This will not only keep them focused, but, it will allow the game itself to teach them. It also will keep things fun for them, and allow you to deal with issues such as 'winning' and 'losing' which is now a very big concern for them.
- Now it is possible to teach them positional play with the expectation that they will get it only some of the



time. However, it is absolutely necessary that you do not allow players to specialize in any one position. They need to learn basic principles of the game, first. Having them play all of the positions, or at least 2-3 where they can be successful, is best for their individual development. Remember, our first

responsibility is to develop players and let them have fun.

- Whenever possible, allow them to solve their own puzzles. Don't immediately give them solutions on how they can play better.

TEACHING SOCCER TECHNIQUES

Soccer players do not automatically know how to execute the various techniques (skills) associated with the game. Even after learning the basic skills, players need instruction on how and when to use the techniques they have learned in a game situation.

The coach should know and understand the specific phases of an effective training session in order to get the most from his rapidly developing players, but at the same time he must also make it fun. This can also be aided by continually reading new coaching materials for ideas, sharing ideas with higher level coaches, and by always being original.

**** COACHES MUST PARTICIPATE IN STATE LICENSING CLINICS TO BE EFFECTIVE AT THIS, AND ADVANCED AGE LEVELS ****

Fundamentals

Our job as coaches is to teach our players the basic techniques and give them the knowledge of the game and confidence in themselves that will help them reach their full potential as soccer players. Here are some tips to help you teach the fundamentals to your players:

- Explain the importance of the technique ... keep it short, keep it simple. The players are more apt to learn if you tell them how and when the technique fits into a game setting.
- Give 3 or 4 key points to help the players perform the technique.
- Demonstrate the technique. If you are unable to do it, ask one of your better players to do it for you.
- Organize the team into small groups. The smaller the better, depending upon the technique and the amount of help you have.
- Practice the technique. Observe the players trying to do the technique.
- Make corrections as necessary. Be POSITIVE and try to point out when the technique is being done well; however, you must correct technique that is being done wrong. You can do this without directing your corrections at any particular player. If none of your players can perform the technique, you need to reconsider whether it is appropriate for their age and experience level.
- Practice under match conditions. In order to tell if the players can do the technique in a game situation, increase the difficulty by adding a defender, making their space smaller, or by speeding up the pace of the activity. Small-sided games work well to show whether a technique has been learned.

Organizing Drills & Specific Activities

1. Instruct: provide simple explanation of the drill and why it is important to the game.
2. Demonstrate: demo the drill with a half speed run through.
3. Observe: a) that the organization is correct; b) that the players understand; c) players' have both success and failure.
4. Correct: a) freeze the picture; b) reconstruct, demonstrate and rehearse; c) return to live action
5. Observe again
6. Reinforce: why is it important to the game.



To successfully practice and improve both technical and tactical skills at the U12 age group, the coach must concentrate efforts on the individual player and small group games. This will allow the player to maximize the number of repetitions with the ball. Small-sided does not necessarily mean even-sided, because when a new skill or tactic is being taught, we must coach for success. This means that the coach must often stack the odds in favor of the executing player, by either: having no opposition, placing restrictions on the opposition, or by allocating 'numbers-up' on the side of the player with the ball. This also prevents odd players from standing around. Once the skill has been learned, the session can evolve to place increasing pressure on the player with the ball, to simulate more realistic match conditions.

Again, it must be emphasized that coaches must attend State Coaching Clinics. It is often easier for coaches to understand exercises and the best methods of coaching when it can be both read and visualized in a clinic setting.

Technical Guidelines

- Kicking with the inside and the outside of the instep.
- Stronger and more accurate instep kicks over 15 to 20 yards.
- Chipping.
- Effective shielding from the high pressuring opponent.
- Disguise in dribbling: body feints, change of speed and direction, wrong footing defenders. Learning three or four moves to use to beat a defender. Perhaps some "Coerver training": Dribbling and feinting moves and these moves practiced under pressure.
- Beginning of consistent practice of heading - regularly, but not long duration.
- Continuing to master receiving ground balls with the insides and outsides of the feet. With an accurate "first touch" getting into a running stride to dribble, or setting up a pass or a shot. Should be comfortable with the insides and outsides of both feet.
- "Driving" or "cruising" with the ball: running fast with the ball, generally in straight lines.
- Shielding the ball effectively, "sideways on" to the defender.
- Continuing to coordinate the nervous system and the muscles. Shooting accurately - keeping the ball in the frame of the goal - with the insides of the feet and the insteps.
- Front block tackle.
- Side block tackle. Shoulder charging.
- Shooting bouncing balls: volleys and half-volleys.
- First touch receiving is away from pressure.
- Now, in receiving balls, players consciously set up their second touch with their first touch.

Tactical Guidelines

- Switching the direction of play or the point of attack.
- Making overlapping runs.
- Awareness of the different "climates" in the three thirds of the field: attack, midfield, defense.
- Continuing to focus on the "three main moments; attacking, defending and transition (i.e. the time in between) with particular emphasis on transition.
- Understanding the difference between passing to feet and passing to space.
- Good body position when asking for the ball: facing field or sideways, watching ball and immediate opponent, etc.
- Making good choices about trying to penetrate or protecting the ball, based on whether or not there is pressure when you receive the ball. Consistently intelligent first touches upon receiving.
- Reading the body position of a defender: hips square or hips turned, has she or he committed to winning the ball or not?, etc.
- Understanding the difference between losing the ball and giving it away.



- Correct body position of defenders challenging for the ball: “turned, not square.” Positioning “ball side” as well as “goal side” in marking.
- Second defender covering the first defender.
- Solid defensive understanding against one opponent and when confronted by two opponents.
- Positioning goal side of attackers when you lose the ball: cutting off the path to the goal. Marking opponents tightly.
- Elemental idea of support: helping the player with the ball. “Form a pair” with the player on the ball; other players should stay away and make the field big.
- Don’t wait for the ball - go to it!
- Play away from pressure when you receive a ball - and move it at a new angle.
- Getting free of markers: “checking off” and creating space for yourself. “Make an area of green grass around you!”
- Wall pass, the give-and-go, the 1 - 2. Beginning to build up options for the two attackers in a two versus one situation.
- Lots of 1 v 1 confrontations to perfect timing in attack and defense. Continued emphasis on the “three main moments of soccer”.
- Building up an aggressive attitude about shooting. Recognizing when you’re under pressure and when you’re not under pressure when you receive a pass. Beginning to establish a vocabulary of communication. Players should be looking up and around and away from the ball, on both attack and defense.
- No “ball watching”.

Practice Environment

- “Play time” and a leaning environment. Some pressured play in confined areas; games of numbers up and numbers down; one of the best is 5 v 2.
- High tolerance for mistakes and trial and error.
- No specializing by positions.
- Duels at full speed: lots of 1 v 1 and 2 v 1 situations. 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 games at every practice.
- #4 or # 5 ball and small goals.
- Emphasis still on technical development: the acquisition of skills.
- The week’s practice is 75 to 90 minutes long.

The way to have successful practices is to plan. The two main objectives for any soccer practice are (1) to have fun, and (2) to learn to become better soccer players. In order to achieve the second objective, it is important that you develop teaching goals for the season before you start. Use the list of Technical and Tactical Guidelines above and skills given below as guidelines for things to teach during the season.

Be realistic in selecting your objectives! Consider the age and experience of your players. Decide on your priorities - what are the most important things you want to cover. If you have doubts about whether your team is ready for a new tactic, skill or concept, introduce it after you have seen it used by some of your players.

Have a written plan for each practice. You cannot have a good practice if you do not have an idea of what you want to accomplish during that practice. The plan may be written out in detail or it may just be notes jotted on the back of an envelope, but it really should be written. Writing down your plan will help you think through the equipment and setup you will need for the topics to be covered. Save these plans as a record of performance and to help develop a progressive program for the season.

As you plan your practices with the help of the information that follows, remember these tips to keep players’ interest and avoid boredom:

- Minimize the amount of talking that you do.
- Get all of the players involved.
- Turn “drills” into games.



- Keep score. A little competition focuses players.
- Give players many touches on the ball.
- Give players many chances to shoot and score.
- Let the kids PLAY!

Keep the practice focused. If you are trying to teach new skills, your practice should concentrate on a single major topic (e.g. passing), rather than on many different topics.

Practices should follow a progression: warm-up, stretch, drills, scrimmage, and cool down.

Plan warm-ups so that each player uses a ball. Incorporate games and exercises that emphasize a lot of touches and dribbling. If possible, use or create conditioning exercises that require the players to work with a ball rather than just running; the kids will have more fun and they will learn more soccer skills!

Be sure to include stretching at the end of the warm-ups. Younger players don't need a lot of stretching, but you should start the habit early. Try to use stretching exercises that require a ball; again, the kids will enjoy it more and it increases their familiarity with the ball.

Drills should be appropriate for the skills you are teaching. Limit the number of drills in a given practice, and don't spend too long on any one drill. Remember that a child's attention span is limited!

Keep it varied and interesting with a minimum of oral instruction (don't lecture!). Demonstrate as much as possible. If you feel uncomfortable demonstrating techniques, don't hesitate to enlist your more skillful players, or perhaps older soccer players, to help you. Depending on the level you are coaching, junior high or high school players may be useful for this purpose. MAXIMIZE the number of touches for each player by running drills with several small groups at the same time; no child likes to stand in line waiting!

Small-sided games (e.g. 3 v 3) are an excellent practice tool. They help keep everyone involved and, by reducing the size of each playing field, you can have two games going at the same time.

Drills should be organized to progress into controlled scrimmages (e.g. no shots until at least four consecutive passes have been made). Follow up a controlled scrimmage with an open scrimmage. Remember that the kids signed up to play soccer!

Using Progressions

The basic idea in teaching soccer techniques is to start simple and increase the level of difficulty.

- Start with the simplest elements of the technique. Let the players learn initially without any pressure.
- Gradually add more elements of the skill.
 - Gradually increase the difficulty level of the activity. Increase difficulty (pressure) by:
 - Increasing the number of players executing the skill in a limited area.
 - Reducing the space available for executing the drill.
 - Specifying the direction the player must move.
 - Adding a passive defender ("shadow defense").
 - Adding an active defender.
 - Perform the skill in the way it would be used in a game.



U11 & U12 AGE APPROPRIATE SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

Skills

Further development of skills taught at lower levels plus the following.

Technical - Field Play

- Controlling air balls with the chest, legs and feet.
- Offensive and defensive heading introductions.
- Basic to semi advanced juggling.
- “Block” tackling.
- Shooting of falling (full) and bouncing (half) balls (volleys).
- Dribbling for speed. Good touches at high speed
- Passing chipped and cross balls.
- Instep pass for power.
- Coerver feints/moves

Tactical - Field Play

- Wall pass (also know as give and go or 1-2).
- Overlaps
- Takeover pass
- Importance of the first touch.
- Immediate transition from defense to offense or vice versa.
- Role of the second defender (cover).
- Width in the attack.
- Player movement on throw-ins.
- Penalty kicks.
- Intro to corner kicks

Basic Techniques

Focus your attention on the listed points for each technique as you observe your players. It is important for your players to learn to practice techniques properly, but remember that this may take some time - more for some techniques than others, and more for some players than others. Again, be patient and be encouraging!

Practice all foot skills with both right and left feet.

Ball Control Training

Dribbling

Coaching points: Keep on toes all the time, touch ball after every step (keep ball close), keep the ball within the frame of the body, look up after every touch (vision), find space, contact (inside, laces, outside) will depend on the direction player wants to go. Concentrate on balance, changing speed, acceleration after change of direction, work on different types of deception (feints), keep body between ball and opponent.



Shielding - Use of body position. Play 1 v 1 in an open area. Player A has the ball at his feet and has to keep possession for a specified time, say 15 seconds. Player B tries to take the ball away from A by getting a toe to the ball. The idea is for player A to keep his body between player B and the ball, keeping the boxer's stance with both feet in line with the ball and player B's feet, with his knees slightly bent for flexibility and a low center of gravity. After each player has taken a turn at shielding, increase the time he must shield the ball to score a point. Try these variations:

a) Get player B to play the ball to player A to start the game (realistic restart) b) Restrict the area used c) Limit the player on the ball to his weaker foot d) Have player on ball look up after every touch on ball e) Get the player on the ball to feel for the marker with his arm - this will allow the player with the ball to anticipate his markers movement, while still keeping an eye on the ball

1 v 1 with direction -Play 1 v 1 in a 10 x 15 yard grid. Provide direction by giving player A two target players (on corner cones) at one end of the grid and player B two target players at the opposite end. One of the end players plays the ball to player A who has to dribble past player B in order to make space to pass the ball to one of his target players. If he does so successfully he scores a point, retreats to his end line and then becomes the defender. Swap pairs in middle frequently.

Coerver feints/moves - For the coaches who have not seen or heard of Wiel Coerver, he is an ex-professional player and coach from the Netherlands who introduced a program emphasizing 1 v 1 moves to beat an opponent. His videos and books break down each move and explain it in simple terms. They are available in the Oregon Youth Soccer office library and are well worth a look! You will be amazed at what the under 8 player in Holland can do with the ball! Here are a couple of the moves explained:

The Scissors - Standing behind the ball, swing your left foot around the front of the ball from left to right, put toes on ground, bend the left knee, drop the left shoulder, then quickly move the right foot to the left side of the ball and push it forward diagonally with the outside of the right foot. Remember that the first 3 steps after a move have got to be at pace so the defender does not catch you! Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

The Roll-Over - Standing behind the ball, roll the ball across the body with the inside of the right foot so ball is moving, then swing the right leg back around the front of the ball from left to right, bending right knee and dropping shoulder, then take ball away with the outside of the left foot. Again, remember that after the move, the player on the ball has got to get away quickly.

The great thing about these moves is that you can practice them inside on a rainy day, because you don't need a ball to quicken foot speed. Try faking the dog or cat out! Try to see the real thing 'live' at one of the Oregon Youth Soccer Coaching Clinics.

Restricted Tackling - In a rectangle of 15 x 25 yards, play 4 v 4 and create a small goal on each end line. Number each team 1, 2, 3 and 4. Each number can only tackle his opposing number. This allows plenty of chances to dribble, as rarely are similar numbers close to each other, at least at the beginning!

American Football - Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to dribble into the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored.

Passing & Receiving

Coaching points (Passing)



Keep on toes all the time (be ready), look up and take 'snapshot', make decision who to pass to, then head down and keep eye on ball, ankle locked with toe up, swing leg in straight plane, follow through center of ball. Work on combination plays such as wall passes and overlaps



Coaching points (Receiving) Keep on toes all the time (be ready), get body behind line of ball, look up take 'snapshot', make decision where to turn when ball is controlled (away from pressure), then keep eye on ball, offer largest area of contact to ball, cushion ball by giving slightly on contact, trap towards the ground, push ball out to side 1-2 yards (away from pressure) to enable to take in stride.

Keep-Away -This is an excellent exercise for warming up. Instead of having players standing around in a line waiting to shoot at goal before a game, have them gently warm up playing 3 v 1, or 5 v 2 keep-away for 15-30 second intervals. This gives players a lot more touches on the ball and produces a good feel for the particular playing surface, while alternating aerobic and anaerobic exercise. When an opposing coach sees this happen, he knows that the other coach knows what he is doing and begins to worry!

Possession Game (4 v 2) - Set up 2 adjacent squares of 15 x 15 yards and pick two teams of four players. Start with 4 v 2 in one of the squares, with the other 2 staying in the adjacent square. The 4 try to keep possession in their area. If one of the 2 wins the ball they play the ball into the adjacent square to their teammates and then join them in the square to keep possession. When the transition takes place, the nearest two opposing players also move across the center line to become the 2 trying to win the ball back from the 4. Play continues.

Wall Pass (2 v 1) - In a 10 x 15 yard grid play 2 v 0 to get the feel of a one-touch wall pass as shown in the 1996 supplement. Then add one defender into the grid, and make the offensive pair play 2 v 1 and produce a wall pass to beat the defender and score by stopping the ball on the end line under control. The players with the ball turn round and repeat the exercise, trying to score as many times as possible by utilizing the wall pass. Get player A with the ball to dribble at speed at the defender to start the move. Player B then must read the visual cue and create an appropriate angle to either side of the defender in order to allow the opportunity for the wall pass. As the players get better technically, and more used to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For Example, if Player A wants to play a wall pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right of the defender (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create an angle for a wall pass on that side.

Overlaps (2 v 1) - In a similar vein, overlaps can be created down the flanks. In an open space, practice Player A dribbling at an opponent, with player B making an overlap from behind the player with the ball. He must communicate which way he is coming from to the player with the ball who cannot see him. In a game situation, communication of direction is probably unnecessary as the player will be running towards the nearest touch-line to the ball, but communication that the player with the ball has a player open on the flank is still vitally important. Again, as the players get better technically, and more used to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For instance, if Player A wants to play an overlap pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create the overlap on that side.

Chip to Target - Create three 10 x 10 yard adjacent grids, and three teams of 4 players. Place one team in each square. The team in the middle (team B) have to sit down in their grid, but can move about. The object is for team A to chip the ball to team C over the heads of team area, or allows team B to make a contact, switches position into the middle.

American Football - Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to pass to a teammate in the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored. Once the players have the hang of the game, introduce a 3-second rule, i.e. a player running into the end zone can stay in there a maximum of three seconds and then has to get out's. For team C to score a point, the ball has to be brought down under control (remaining in the



grid or at the coach's discretion). Team C then has 3 touches, one to control, one to lay off a short pass and one to chip the ball back to team A. Whichever team is the first to play the ball out of the playing



Shooting

Coaching points: Look up, take 'snapshot' and make decision where to place ball, then head down and keep eye on ball, Let the ball come under the body and under the shooting foot, toes and ankle locked down to expose firm instep striking surface, support foot next to ball, knee of striking leg over ball at contact, strike center of ball, follow through with head down.

Turn and Shoot - In a 10 x 15 yard grid play 1 v 1 with a server/target on each end line. The server plays the ball into player A's feet (the attacker) with his back to goal, who then tries to get around or turn player B (the defender) and pass to the target on the opposite end-line. The coach should teach the players some basic feints to get around the defender. When the players are fairly proficient, move the game into a larger grid and introduce a goal to shoot towards. To increase the level of pressure, introduce a keeper. Most players of U12 and under will only want to turn one way to shoot with their strongest foot. The coach should encourage turning in both directions, but can also use this as a tactical tip for the defender who is struggling.

Reactor - To improve reaction speed, agility and shooting under pressure, get two players lying on their front facing the goal. The coach/server rolls/throws the ball between them towards the goal from behind. The opposing players can only get up as soon as the ball comes into their line of vision. The first person to the ball shoots for goal.

Hot Box - Set up two goals facing each other about 60 yards apart. In the middle of this area create a square grid about 20 x 20. Players are placed in pairs and each pair has a number. Every player has a ball and is dribbling in the square, but keeping his or her head up watching for their partner. The players are looking for their partners because when their number is called they have to coordinate themselves to shoot into the opposite goal from their partner. When the coach calls a particular number, the two players in that pair play themselves a short pass out of the square and shoot towards goal first time. Players shag their own balls and return to the square to dribble again. Players should practice with both feet and goalkeepers can be added for more realism.

Cut Back - The most difficult cross to deal with at this age level, or any age level for that matter, is the ball cut back and driven low from the end-line across the goal. This practice is designed to help recognize and react to this situation, to finish with the inside of the instep. Divide players into three groups: one to cross, one to attack the front post, the last to attack the far post. Player A will dribble the ball along the end-line from the corner flag, until he reaches the 18 yard box line. Once there he will cross the ball with power along the ground diagonally towards the opposite corner of the 18 yard box. In the meantime, players' B and C have been making their appropriate runs, both checking away from the player with the ball, then sprinting towards their ideal position in a straight line. It is important to note that they should not arrive in the same line at the same time, otherwise player C will have to wait for the ball to come to him. It is important that the coach helps explain the timing of runs to the players.

Heading

Coaching points (Defensive) Head for width & distance away from goal Look up, take 'snapshot' and make decision, aim to make contact on the bottom half of ball (to head up and away) between hairline and eyebrows, then keep eye on ball, get behind the flight of the ball, tuck chin down, pull chest back then accelerate forward from waist on contact. Square shoulders and use arms to thrust forward for power.

Remember – Defensive header is UP and AWAY preferably towards the touchlines.

Coaching points (Attacking) Head ball down Look up, take 'snapshot' and make decision, aim to make contact on the top half of ball (to head down), between hairline and eyebrows, then keep eye on ball, get behind the flight of the ball, tuck chin down, pull chest back then accelerate forward from waist on contact.



Another coaching tip here is to have the player visualize they are standing between, and holding onto, 2 vertical poles. As the ball approaches the player pulls on the pole thrusting his/her body forward to deliver a heading blow to the ball. When described in this way, many players will actually move their hands in this motion during execution.



Remember – Attacking header is **DRIVEN ON A LINE DRIVE OR DOWN TOWARDS THE GOAL** with power.

It is vitally important that the player who is going to head the ball communicates his intentions for safety reasons (whether defending or attacking), to avoid collision with a teammate.

At the ages of 11 and 12, more and more heading takes place in the game. Every coach of this age group should introduce some practice of heading, if only to reinforce the correct techniques. Following are a few ideas for heading exercises:

Fireflies - Divide the team in two, and have each player of one team get a ball and form a fairly large circle. The other team will be in the middle. For a specified period (say 30 seconds) the players in the middle will run to a server, call for the ball from that person, get it lobbed up to him, jump off the ground and head it back to the servers' arms. Once the player has done this, he will cut and run to another server, calling that person's name to serve the ball.

Throw, Head & Catch - This game is played much like handball and can be a good warm-up game. There are two teams on a small-sided soccer field. A team can move up the field, keeping possession, only by playing in the sequence, throw-head-catch. The player with the ball cannot move his/her feet (similar to basketball - only one cannot dribble). The player must throw the ball so that a teammate can head the ball back, or to another teammate, without the ball touching the ground. If the ball hits the ground, or the opposition intercepts, then possession goes to the other team. A goal can only be scored with a header.

Defensive Heading - There are two teams (without goalkeepers) on a small field (20 x 40 yards), but players cannot cross over the half-way line. A goal can only be scored with a chip shot from one's own half. The idea being that the defensive team will most likely get practice from heading away from their goal as they cannot touch the ball with their hands.

Attacking Heading - Balls can be chipped or hand served from various points around the penalty box to a player running in unchallenged to head ball downwards towards the goal. It is easier to start with balls coming from goal-side to minimize necessary body movement. Once technique has been mastered, then progression can be established by: adding a goalkeeper, serving from different angles, getting the header to get both feet off ground jumping, adding a defender. When this progression is followed, however, the coach must allow the player who is heading the ball time to adjust his run appropriately for where the ball is being served from.

Cut Back – This is a similar exercise to 'Cut Back' in the shooting section. The only modifications are that the crosses have to get off the ground, and the attackers have to finish with a strong guided header.

Skill Games

Dribbling

Beehive II -Mark off a 20 yd. x 20 yd. square with cones. Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside the grid using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Now impose restrictions to encourage players to work on particular skills. Provide new instructions every 30 to 60 seconds. Try these variations:

- Vary speed ("1st gear", "2nd gear", etc.);g) Right or left foot only; h) Cones - put as many cones around the



square as there are players; on command everyone must find an unoccupied cone and dribble to it (or try it with one less cone than the number of players - the player who is left without a cone receives a fun “penalty”, such as a “leaper” [jumping high in the air and trying to pull both knees to the chest;

- Obstacle course - 6 to 12 cones placed randomly within the square; players concentrate on dribbling without knocking over the cones;
- Shark - players must turn, change speed and direction to avoid the shark (the coach or a player); if caught, the player must freeze and count slowly to 10 before resuming his or her dribble.

Now invent your own restrictions - the possibilities are endless!

Get Your Ball - Divide your team into two groups, one at each end of the practice field. On the midline place two fewer balls than there are players. On command all players sprint to the midline and try to get a ball. The object is to retrieve a ball and dribble it back over the endline from which you started. Players without a ball challenge the dribblers and try to kick their ball away.

Combat Zone - In a large rectangle (approx. 10 yd. x 24 yd.) establish four adjacent ones (each approx. 10 yd. x 6 yd.). Place a defender in zones 2 and 4. The remaining players, each with a ball, line up outside of zone 1. On command the offensive players dribble, one at a time, through the “free” zones (1 and 3) and try to beat the defenders in zones 2 and 4. Reverse direction and repeat; then switch the defenders and dribblers.

Variations: a) use 2 or 3 defenders per zone for experienced players; or b) send offensive players through in groups, scoring a point for each player who dribbles successfully through the defenders.

Bridges - Scatter half of the team widely around the field with instructions to stand with legs spread apart (they are the “bridges”). The remaining players, each with a ball, dribble to a bridge, pass their ball under it, retrieve the ball and advance to another bridge. Players may not pass under the same bridge twice in a row. Players keep track of the number of bridges they can negotiate in 1 minute; then switch bridges and dribblers and repeat.

Pass, Sprint and Dribble - Players in pairs face each other about 5 yd. apart; one player with a ball, the other standing with legs spread apart. The player with the ball passes it with the inside of the foot through the legs of his partner. As soon as the ball passes between his legs, the partner turns, sprints to catch up with the ball, turns it 180o and dribbles back to his starting position; he is now the passer.

Passing

Target Ball - Divide your players into opposing teams of 3-4 players each; each player has a ball, another uniquely colored ball is used as the “target” (one for each pair of teams). Players are positioned behind two parallel serving lines about 10 yd. apart; the target ball is centered between the lines. The object is to knock the ball over your opponents’ serving line by hitting it with consecutive passes (of course, the other team is trying to do the same in the opposite direction!). All passes must originate from behind the serving line (try limiting the players to right or left foot only sometimes). The coach shags balls that die within the lane. (Tip: if the target ball moves too quickly, try putting it inside an old T-shirt or a mesh ball bag).

Pass and Run to the Cone - Place cones at the corners of a large square; 3 players and 1 ball per square. Position the players at 3 of the corners. The player with the ball passes to either of her teammates, then runs to the empty cone. The player receiving the ball controls it, passes to her remaining teammate, and runs to the new empty cone. Repeat this cycle for 3 or 4 minutes, then switch feet or exchange players. The kids should work on passing accurately and moving after making a pass, rather than standing and watching the ball.



Pass and Receive - Position the players in two lines, single-file, facing each other about 5-10 yd. apart. The first player in line A serves the ball to the first player in line B, then runs in a wide arc to the end of line B. The first player in line B controls the serve, passes crisply back to the next player in line A, then runs in a wide arc to the end of line A.

Repeat for several minutes. Vary the serve (with the hands, with the feet, high, low, rolling, bouncing, etc.). (Tip: it is important that the players run wide to the end of the opposite line so as not to interfere with the next pass).

Chip to Target - Divide the team into groups of 2 or 3 players. For each pair of groups establish 3 adjacent zones, each approximately 10 yd. wide and 6-8 yd. deep. Create a target in the middle of zone 3 using 2 or 3 cones placed side by side. Position opposing groups of players in zone 1, each player with a ball. The object is to chip the ball over zone 2 and hit the target in zone 3. Groups alternate shots and score a point for each ball that hits the target. Any ball that touches the ground in zone 2 does not count. Players shag their own ball after each shot or each round of shots. Variation: Place two defenders in zone 2 and two offensive players in each of zones 1 and 3. The object is for the offense to chip the ball over the defenders to the players in the other end zone. It may be necessary to increase the depth of the zones. Have the players rotate through the zones every 2-3 minutes.

Wall Pass - Players form 2 lines side by side at the end of the field and off to one side; 1 ball for each pair as they come off the lines. Player A passes the ball to player B and makes a straight ahead run past B. Player B receives the ball from A across his body and prepares the ball for a return pass to A. B makes the return pass to player A who is now in a new position. Then player B makes a straight ahead run past A to receive the return pass from A. The pair repeats these passes until they reach the end of the field; they can then cross to the other side of the field, turn around and come back, repeating the sequence. Run the drill for several minutes, releasing players from the lines in such a way as to allow sufficient spacing between the pairs. (Note: players must maintain their relative positions and not lapse into simply passing side to side as they run down the field.)

Shooting Drills

Turn and Shoot - Divide the team into two groups; have an assistant work with one half of the team while you work with the other half. Position the players with their backs to the goal (about 20 yd. away) and their legs spread apart. Each player places her ball between her feet. Go down the line stopping briefly in front of each player. When you tap the ball between the player's legs, the player turns, sprints to the ball, and shoots on goal. Repeat the process with each player in succession. The players shag their ball and circle wide to return to the line. Switch the position of the players periodically so that they are attacking the goal from a different angle. Increase the pace on the ball as you tap it to make it more challenging. The game can also be played with a keeper in goal.

Target Practice - Place up to 20 cones in a large (e.g. 30 yd. x 30 yd.) square. Send players, each with their own ball, on a hunting trip to shoot any cone they see. They must set each cone up again after knocking it over, and they cannot knock down the same cone twice in a row. Each player keeps his own score. Shoot for 1-2 minutes, then start a new round. For a real challenge, limit players to their non-dominant foot!

Marbles - Players are organized into pairs, each with a ball. Standing with his back to the field of play, the first player throws his ball over his head. The second player then kicks his ball from the starting point and tries to hit the ball that was thrown. Play alternates by kicks until one ball is hit. The players then reserve and start again. Coaches should emphasize instep kicks for length and side of the foot kicks for accuracy. Make it a condition that every other game is left foot only!

Four Goal Game - Set up four cone goals about two yards wide in each corner of a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid, Divide players into two equal teams. Players may score at any of the four goals. This game encourages teamwork and results in lots of shooting.

Shoot Between Cones - Set up a cone row with cones spaced 3 to 5 yards apart. Pair up players and position one player on each side of the cone row facing the cones and each other. Players should start close to the row of cones at first, striking the ball between the cones. The partner receives the ball and strikes it back between the cones. Move players farther away from the cones as their technique and accuracy improve.



Go For Goal -Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing about 18 to 20 yards from a goal of any size. The coach serves the ball toward the goal while one player from each line races to win the ball and shoot. As skills progress, add a goalkeeper. The coach should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.

Dribble Cones and Shoot - Set up two cone lines for a dribble weave about 30 yards long with a 2 yard goal at the end. Divide players into two lines or teams. Players must dribble through the cones and score at the goal at the end before the next player in line starts.

Other Games

The Numbers Game -Young players will play this game for hours! Set up a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid with goals at each end. Divide players into two teams and place each team on one of the end lines. Number the players 1 - 6 (or use colors for very young players). The coach stands at the halfline and serves a ball into the grid while calling a number. Players who are called sprint off their end line to win the ball, play 1 v 1, and try to score. Players standing on the end line may keep the ball in play but may not protect the goal. The coach could try 2 or 3 numbers. Ball should be served on the ground.

4V4 Pass and Strike - Set up a 20 yd. x 20 yd. grid with two opposing goals. Divide players into two teams. Players must pass the ball to each team member or make 4 complete passes before they can shoot on goal. If the ball is taken by the opponent the team must start over in its pass count.

Basic Tactics

It has been said that U11/U12 sees the “dawn of tactical awareness”. Players are getting stronger, becoming technically more capable and demonstrating more confidence. The main reasons for their improvement is that first, their technical practice is beginning to pay off, and secondly, they are beginning to conceptualize the game. Through improved technical competence, the player is now able to play with his head up, which gives him the vision to make better decisions.

Coaches must set up training sessions in which U11/12 players solve different tactical problems throughout the session. Furthermore, coaches will actually achieve a higher level of intensity and enthusiasm when their players are encouraged to think. A training session that is purely physical exercise is a drag for the brighter, more mature players. Players must be challenged both physically and mentally in order to actively participate and grow. Soccer is players’ game and the more often players have to think, the more effective their play will become. The coach should now more diligently begin to ‘freeze’ play to point out better options and ask them pertinent questions about the game. I guarantee you’ll be surprised with the intelligence of the answers you receive, but more importantly it will begin to help alleviate tactical breakdowns during the game.

Aside from the tactical implications of the individual skills above, we can break down group tactical development into two subsets for the U12 player: attacking and defending. By doing this we can still maintain interest and also produce new positional awareness. Again, it is best to keep the exercises small-sided, to facilitate youngsters’ visualization of the concepts.

Attacking Tactics

Individual Tactics (1 v 1)

- Recognize the situation
- Aim to attack space behind the opponent
- Create angle for shot or forward pass



Small Group Tactics (2 v 1), (2 v 2), (3 v 3)

- Attacking space in front of ball
- Combination play (begin with 2 v 1. Coach for success!)
- Wall pass
- Overlap
- Through pass
- Takeovers
- Coach the 1st, 2nd & 3rd attackers (keep players in a triangular shape)
- 1st Penetration, priorities: 1. Shoot, 2. Pass 3. Dribble
- 2nd Support & depth
- 3rd Unbalance defense, mobility & width

Team Tactics (5 v 5), (8 v 8)

Specific role responsibilities by thirds of the field Restarts - priorities change in different areas of the field
Coach locally (player on ball) Coach globally (team shape/movement off ball).

Defending Tactics

Individual Tactics (1 v 1)

Deny opponent time and space Prevent shot or forward pass Force opponent to make a mistake.

Small Group Tactics (2 v 1), (2 v 2), (3 v 3)

- Immediate pressure by nearest defender Support of covering players (begin with 2 v 1. Coach for success!)
- Angles and distances
- Coach the 1st, 2nd & 3rd defenders (keep players in a triangular shape) 1st Pressure & deny 2nd Cover & support 3rd Depth & balance
- Communication

Team Tactics (5 v 5), (8 v 8)

Specific role responsibilities by thirds of the field Restarts - priorities change in different areas of the field.
Coach locally (player on ball) Coach globally (team shape/movement off ball).

General

- Play positions (the various roles can be understood even as players rotate positions).
- Get open and call for the ball.
- Look and listen for passing opportunities.
- Pass and move to space and/or to support.
- Work to build and maintain triangles - the basic structure for passing and support.
- Always support the player with the ball (forward and rear 45 degrees off support within passing distance).

Team Offense

- Maintain possession of the ball. Don't give the ball away.
- Keep triangle shape around the ball (2 short passing options 45 deg off the player with the ball)
- Keep the offense wide in order to spread (and weaken) the opponents' defense and to create space for scoring opportunities.



- Penetrate as deeply as possible with every pass, without unduly risking loss of possession.
- The objective is to score so don't forget to shoot. Finish attacks with shots on goal.



Team Defense

- Support and communication are critical.
- Pressure opponents to decrease their "comfort zone".
- Delay opponents' attack when your team first loses possession of the ball to permit defense to regroup.
- Mark "goal-side" to defend against shots on goal.
- Mark "ball-side" to defend against easy passes.
- Maintain defensive balance on the field; guard against reversing the ball (crossing passes).
- Mark tighter as you get closer to your goal.
- Concentrate defense in front of the goal as the ball approaches your goal (limiting space available for goal shots) and direct ball away from goal.

Kickoff

- Short pass and dribble.
- Short pass and pass back (triangle).
- Note, that the "long boot" is not encouraged !

Throw-in

- Throw to an open teammate if possible (first look for the farthest unmarked player).
- Throw towards the other team's goal.
- Throw down the touchline.
- Throw to your goalkeeper (this is not considered an illegal pass back).
- Take throw-ins quickly (before the defense can set up) but always under control.
- Throw the ball so that it can be controlled in the air.
- Thrower should re-enter the field quickly to be open for a return pass.

Goal kicks

- Big kick up the side of the field.
- Avoid kicking the ball across the front of your goal.
- Consider having a defender take goal kicks while the goalkeeper maintains position to guard goal.

Free kick

- Close to goal, direct -shoot!
- Close to goal, indirect -short pass and shoot.
- Far from goal -big kick toward the front of the opponents' goal.

Corner kick

- Big kick into the opponents' goal area.
- Short pass and dribble or cross.



DRILLS & GAMES

Drills (Skill Games) - General Guidelines

- There are countless drills and many books and videos are available. You don't need 100 drills. Pick a few drills (say, 10) and work at them.
- Explain the drill (why it is done, how it is done).
- Demonstrate the drill (slowly, step-by-step).
- Execute the drill.
- Figure out what went wrong (it's often the instructions); fix it, and start over !
- Remember: showing is better than talking.
- Some drills will not work well at first. Maybe they need a small adjustment (e.g. too many players, or players standing too close or too far apart).
- Repetition of drills builds skills. It can also be boring. So use variations of drills, and don't repeat the same drill too often. If your players are not enjoying and not learning from a particular drill, find another that focuses on the same skills.
- Start a drill simply and progress to the harder stuff. For example, begin with a simple passing triangle; then introduce a chaser.
- Play with the kids! Sometimes you should join in the drill as a participant rather than as a coach. Not only will the kids enjoy it, but you will gain a better appreciation of the skills you are asking them to master. Call a parent from the sidelines to be goalkeeper for a shooting drill. Experiment! Don't be afraid to try new ideas.
- Split the team into small groups for you and your assistants to teach a drill; then rotate. This keeps more players busy and allows more individual attention.
- When organizing the kids into small groups, consider their abilities. For example, in some dribbling or passing drills it might be best to have pairs with similar abilities. Conversely, in competition (e.g. 2v2) you might pair stronger and weaker players for balance.
- Start a drill slowly. WALK through it first, then do it at half speed, and finally at full speed.

Dribbling

Beehive

Mark off a 10 yd. x 10 yd. square with cones. Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside the grid using correct techniques and avoiding other players. Now impose restrictions to encourage players to work on particular skills. Provide new instructions every 30 to 60 seconds. Try these variations:

- Vary speed ("1st gear", "2nd gear", etc.);
- Right or left foot only;
- Cones - put as many cones around the square as there are players; on command everyone must find an unoccupied cone and dribble to it (or try it with one less cone than the number of players - the player who is left without a cone receives a fun "penalty", such as a "leaper" [jumping high in the air and trying to pull both knees to the chest]);
- Obstacle course - 6 to 12 cones placed randomly within the square; players concentrate on dribbling without knocking over the cones;
- Shark (variation) - players must turn, change speed and direction to avoid the shark (the coach or a player); if caught, the player must freeze and count slowly to 10 before resuming his or her dribble.



Now invent your own restrictions - the possibilities are endless!



Bridges

Scatter half of the team widely around the field with instructions to stand with legs spread apart (they are the "bridges"). The remaining players, each with a ball, dribble to a bridge, pass their ball under it, retrieve the ball and advance to another bridge. Players may not pass under the same bridge twice in a row. Players keep track of the number of bridges they can negotiate in 1 minute, then switch bridges and dribblers and repeat.

Cone Dribble

Set up a number of cones arranged in two straight lines. Split the team into two groups and have them weave through the cones by dribbling. Start out slowly then turn it into a race. Dribblers can be restricted in how they dribble – right foot only, inside of feet only, etc.

Get Your Ball

Divide your team into two groups, one at each end of the practice field. On the midline place two fewer balls than there are players. On command all players sprint to the midline and try to get a ball. The object is to retrieve a ball and dribble it back over the endline from which you started. Players without a ball challenge the dribblers and try to kick their ball away.

Linking Arms Game

Set up a 35X25 field with 3-4yd flag goals. Divide team in half and put each team in each goal with their arms linked. Have each team count off so they are numbered. Teams in goals are goalies and must keep arms linked when stopping shots. Coach calls out numbers (i.e. "three" – each number 3 player from each team are "in" and go 1v1) the rolls ball to center of the field and players try to score. If a score or ball goes "out" players need to sprint back to their respective goals and link arms. First team back with arms linked gets the next ball service. Numbers can be called in multiples (i.e. "two-four" for 2v2; "one-two-six" for 3v3, etc). This game-like drill can be used with an emphasis on dribbling, passing, combination plays, shooting & finishing, shape around the ball, individual and group defending, etc.

King of the Ring

Provide a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid where each player has a ball. One player or the coach is "it" without a ball. Players start to dribble in the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is "it". Players can reenter the grid after retrieving their ball and completing some type of small skill penalty activity, like juggling the ball twice on their feet or knees or dribbling around a nearby tree before returning to the grid.

Pacman

Two players are selected to be pacmen and stand outside the grid until the game begins. All other players dribble a ball inside the grid. Pacmen try to tag players who are dribbling the balls. If tagged, the player is frozen until another player passes a ball through the frozen player's legs. Game ends when all players are frozen.

Pass, Sprint and Dribble

Players in pairs face each other about 5 yd. apart; one player with a ball, the other standing with legs spread apart. The player with the ball passes it with the inside of the foot through the legs of his partner. As soon as the ball passes between his legs, the partner turns, sprints to catch up with the ball, turns it 180 degrees back to his starting position; he is now the passer.

Shielding

Use of body position. Play 1 v 1 in an open area. Player A has the ball at his feet and has to keep possession for a specified time, say 15 seconds. Player B tries to take the ball away from A by getting a toe to the ball. The idea is for player A to keep his body between player B and the ball, keeping the boxer's stance with both feet in line with the ball and player B's feet, with his knees slightly bent for flexibility and a low center of gravity. After each player has



taken a turn at shielding, increase the time he must shield the ball to score a point. Try these variations:



- Get player B to play the ball to player A to start the game (realistic restart)
- Restrict the area used
- Limit the player on the ball to his weaker foot
- Have player on ball look up after every touch on ball
- Get the player on the ball to feel for the marker with his arm - this will allow the player with the ball to anticipate his markers movement, while still keeping an eye on the ball.

1 v 1 with Direction

Play 1 v 1 in a 10 x 15 yard grid. Provide direction by giving player A two target players (on corner cones) at one end of the grid and player B two target players at the opposite end. One of the end players plays the ball to player A who has to dribble past player B in order to make space to pass the ball to one of his target players. If he does so successfully he scores a point, retreats to his end line and then becomes the defender. Swap pairs in middle frequently.

Coerver feints/moves

For the coaches who have not seen or heard of Wiel Coerver, he is an ex-professional player and coach from the Netherlands who introduced a program emphasizing 1 v 1 moves to beat an opponent. His videos and books break down each move and explain it in simple terms. You will be amazed at what the under 8 player in Holland can do with the ball! The great thing about these moves is that you can practice them inside on a rainy day, because you don't need a ball to quicken foot speed. Try faking the dog or cat out! Here are a couple of the moves explained:

The Scissors

Standing behind the ball, swing your left foot around the front of the ball from left to right, put toes on ground, bend the left knee, drop the left shoulder, then quickly move the right foot to the left side of the ball and push it forward diagonally with the outside of the right foot. Remember that the first 3 steps after a move have got to be at pace so the defender does not catch you! Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

The Roll-Over

Standing behind the ball, roll the ball across the body with the inside of the right foot so ball is moving, then swing the right leg back around the front of the ball from left to right, bending right knee and dropping shoulder, then take ball away with the outside of the left foot. Again, remember that after the move, the player on the ball has got to get away quickly.

The Matthews

Move the ball with the inside of your right foot to your left side and then fake to go to your left by leaning to the left. Bend your knees and move your right foot quickly behind the ball. Accelerate away with your right foot to push the ball forward and past the marker. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

American Football (Dribbling)

Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to dribble into the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored

Turning

Changing direction is an important skill that young players need to know. Here are six basic turns that are



used at the highest levels of soccer. Each turn will take many hours of practice to master, but once learned will greatly improve his/her game. For the younger players, the Stop Turn and the Drag Back should be taught. Older age players should master all the turns.



Stop Turn

Move the ball in one direction. Stop the ball with the sole of the right foot. Continue past the ball. Turn quickly, play the ball with the same foot in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

Drag Back

Move the ball in one direction. Turn the ball under the body by dragging the ball in the opposite direction with the sole of your right foot. Turn quickly, play the ball with the same foot in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

Inside Hook

Move the ball in one direction. Reach and hook the ball with the inside of your right foot and move in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

Outside Hook

Move the ball in one direction. Reach and hook the ball with the outside of your right foot and move in the opposite direction. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

Step Over

Move the ball in one direction. Step over the ball low and quickly with your right foot. Swivel your hips and play the ball in the opposite direction with the inside of your other foot. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

The Cryuff

Move the ball in one direction. Fake a kick with the right foot. Turn your right foot inward with your toe down and push the ball behind and away from you in the opposite direction. Turn quickly and play the ball in the opposite direction with the opposite foot. Bend your knees. Accelerate away after the turn. Repeat, increasing speed and agility, and practice move with both feet.

Passing

Keep Away Circle

Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle of cones. One player or the coach stands inside the circle and tries to intercept passes made between the players. Passes completed between partners count as goals. Change the player inside the circle after a pass is intercepted or after a short time interval.

Cone Game

Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle. Set up 6 or 8 cones in the middle of the circle as targets. Partners try and knock over the cones in the middle with accurate passes.



Triangle Pass

Set up a three-player triangle. Each group has one ball. Players pass to each other around the triangle shape. Make sure they reverse the direction of their passes from time to time. After a certain level of proficiency is reached, add a defender to the center of the triangle who will try to intercept the ball.

Four Corner Pass

Set up a 10 yd. x 10 yd. grid with cones at each of the four corners. Four players work with one ball, one player on each side of the grid. A fifth player defends inside the grid. Players may only run between the cones on their side of the grid as they attempt to pass the ball across the grid. Change the middle player often to keep the play crisp and fast.

Pass and Run to the Cone

Place cones at the corners of a large square; 3 players and 1 ball per square. Position the players at 3 of the corners. The player with the ball passes to either of her teammates, then runs to the empty cone. The player receiving the ball controls it, passes to her remaining teammate, and runs to the new empty cone. Repeat this cycle for 3 or 4 minutes, then switch feet or exchange players. The kids should work on passing accurately and moving after making a pass, rather than standing and watching the ball.

Pass and Receive

Position the players in two lines, single-file, facing each other about 5-10 yd. apart. The first player in line A serves the ball to the first player in line B, then runs in a wide arc to the end of line B. The first player in line B controls the serve, passes crisply back to the next player in line A, then runs in a wide arc to the end of line A. Repeat for several minutes. Vary the serve (with the hands, with the feet, high, low, rolling, bouncing, etc.). (Tip: it is important that the players run wide to the end of the opposite line so as not to interfere with the next pass).

Keep-Away

This is an excellent exercise for warming up. Instead of having players standing around in a line waiting to shoot at goal before a game, have them gently warm up playing 3 v 1, or 5 v 2 keep-away for 15-30 second intervals. This gives players a lot more touches on the ball and produces a good feel for the particular playing surface, while alternating aerobic and anaerobic exercise. When an opposing coach sees this happen, he knows that the other coach knows what he is doing and begins to worry!

Linking Arms Game

Set up a 35X25 field with 3-4yd flag goals. Divide team in half and put each team in each goal with their arms linked. Have each team count off so they are numbered. Teams in goals are goalies and must keep arms linked when stopping shots. Coach calls out numbers (i.e. "three" – each number 3 player from each team are "in" and go 1v1) the rolls ball to center of the field and players try to score. If a score or ball goes "out" players need to sprint back to their respective goals and link arms. First team back with arms linked gets the next ball service. Numbers can be called in multiples (i.e. "two-four" for 2v2; "one-two-six" for 3v3, etc). This game-like drill can be used with an emphasis on dribbling, passing, combination plays, shooting & finishing, shape around the ball, individual and group defending, etc.

Possession Game (4 v 2)

Set up 2 adjacent squares of 15 x 15 yards and pick two teams of four players. Start with 4 v 2 in one of the squares, with the other 2 staying in the adjacent square. The 4 try to keep possession in their area. If one of the 2 wins the ball they play the ball into the adjacent square to their teammates and then join them in the square to keep possession. When the transition takes place, the nearest two opposing players also move across the center line to become the 2



trying to win the ball back from the 4. Play continues.
Wall Pass (2 v 1)



In a 10 x 15 yard grid play 2 v 0 to get the feel of a one-touch wall pass. Then, add one defender into the grid, and make the offensive pair play 2 v 1 and produce a wall pass to beat the defender and score by stopping the ball on the end line under control. The players with the ball turn round and repeat the exercise, trying to score as many times as possible by utilizing the wall pass. Get player A with the ball to dribble at speed at the defender to start the move. Player B then must read the visual cue and create an appropriate angle to either side of the defender in order to allow the opportunity for the wall pass. As the players get better technically, and more used to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For Example, if Player A wants to play a wall pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right of the defender (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create an angle for a wall pass on that side.

Overlaps (2 v 1)

In a similar vein, overlaps can be created down the flanks. In an open space, practice Player A dribbling at an opponent, with player B making an overlap from behind the player with the ball. He must communicate which way he is coming from to the player with the ball who cannot see him. In a game situation, communication of direction is probably unnecessary as the player will be running towards the nearest touch-line to the ball, but communication that the player with the ball has a player open on the flank is still vitally important. Again, as the players get better technically, and more used to the players around them, the coach should point out further visual cues. For instance, if Player A wants to play an overlap pass to the left, then he may want to run to the right (as he faces him). This will not only open up space on that side by drawing the defender away, but it can also be read as a cue for a teammate to create the overlap on that side.

American Football (Passing)

Create a playing field of 15 x 30 yards, but make the last 5 yards of each end an end zone. A touch down is scored by keeping possession and creating an opportunity to pass to a teammate in the end zone. If this is done with the ball under control, then a touch down is scored. Once the players have the hang of the game, introduce a 3-second rule, i.e. a player running into the end zone can stay in there a maximum of three seconds and then has to get out.

Shooting

Four Goal Game

Set up four cone goals about two yards wide in each corner of a 20 yd. x 30 yd. grid, Divide players into two equal teams. Players may score at any of the four goals. This game encourages teamwork and results in lots of shooting.

Shoot Between Cones

Set up a cone row with cones spaced 3 to 5 yards apart. Pair up players and position one player on each side of the cone row facing the cones and each other. Players should start close to the row of cones at first, striking the ball between the cones. The partner receives the ball and strikes it back between the cones. Move players farther away from the cones as their technique and accuracy improve.

Linking Arms Game

Set up a 35X25 field with 3-4yd flag goals. Divide team in half and put each team in each goal with their arms linked. Have each team count off so they are numbered. Teams in goals are goalies and must keep arms linked when stopping shots. Coach calls out numbers (i.e. “three” – each number 3 player from each team are “in” and go 1v1) the rolls ball to center of the field and players try to score. If a score or ball goes “out” players need to sprint back to their respective goals and link arms. First team back with arms linked gets the next ball service. Numbers can be called in multiples (i.e. “two-four” for 2v2; “one-two-six” for 3v3, etc). This game-like drill can be used with an emphasis on dribbling, passing, combination plays, shooting & finishing, shape around the ball, individual and group defending, etc.



Go For Goal

Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing about 18 to 20 yards from a goal of any size. The coach serves the ball toward the goal while one player from each line races to win the ball and shoot. As skills progress, add a goalkeeper. The coach should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.



Dribble Cones and Shoot

Set up two cone lines for a dribble weave about 30 yards long with a 2 yard goal at the end. Divide players into two lines or teams. Players must dribble through the cones and score at the goal at the end before the next player in line starts.

Turn and Shoot

Divide the team into two groups; have an assistant work with one half of the team while you work with the other half. Position the players with their backs to the goal (about 20 yd. away) and their legs spread apart. Each player places her ball between her feet. Go down the line stopping briefly in front of each player. When you tap the ball between the player's legs, the player turns, sprints to the ball, and shoots on goal. Repeat the process with each player in succession. The players shag their ball and circle wide to return to the line. Switch the position of the players periodically so that they are attacking the goal from a different angle. Increase the pace on the ball as you tap it to make it more challenging. The game can also be played with a keeper in goal.

First to the Ball

Players line up on opposite sides of the goal post. Each line is a team. The goalkeeper serves the ball into the field 15 to 20 yards from the goal. When the ball is served, the two players at the front of the line race to the ball. Both players try to win the ball from each other and score on the same goal. Keep score. This is a great game -it becomes very competitive!

Three Shots

A line of attackers forms at least 25 yards out from the goal. Two servers are positioned on either side of the goal posts with a supply of balls. The player at the front of the line starts with a ball, dribbles a few yards, then shoots on goal. After the shot, the player receives a pass from the first server. After the shot, the player receives a pass from the second server.

Variations: 1) play with a goalkeeper. 2) vary the type of serves. 3) limit the number of touches the player has.

SCRIMMAGES

General Guidelines

- Not the best for improving skills (many players, only one ball). But the kids love scrimmage and it's great fun for them. So allow plenty of time for scrimmage during every practice, but don't make it the only activity.
- Excellent for learning positions and game simulation.
- Good way to teach the rules (you are the referee!), but try not to stop play too often.

Small-sided Scrimmage

- Fewer players, thus each player gets more touches on the ball.
- Small field and small goal requires more control and passing.
- Small goal encourages accuracy.
- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED IN PRACTICE FOR ALL AGES!



- If you have a large team and sufficient space, run two games simultaneously.

Scrimmage with Conditions

- Maximum 5 touches: to encourage passing.
- Minimum 2 touches: to encourage control (no one-touch "passes").
- Minimum 5 touches: to encourage dribbling.
- Must pass 4 times before allowed to shoot: rewards passing and good spacing.
- Must pass 6 times without losing then it also counts as a goal: rewards passing and possession.

Uneven Scrimmage

- 5 v 2 with no goals: forces passing. (The larger team counts passes for points. Defense gets 2 points for possession changes)

Offense vs. Defense

- Good to practice action at the mouth of the goal.
- Good to work on set plays (goal kicks, corner kicks, free kicks).
- Have 2 or 3 extra players on offense to keep the action around the goal.
- Give defenders two small goals near the touchline at midfield.

Freeze

- Blow the whistle and call "freeze".
- All players must stop where they are.
- Coach makes observation, e.g. players open on right flank.
- Excellent teaching tool (if not used too often).

Open Scrimmage

- Full game simulation.
- All players, one game.
- Enforce rules more strictly to encourage fair play; it also gives players free kick practices.
- Play another team occasionally, if possible; practice subs and positions.



RESOURCES

U5 & U6

- Coaching 6, 7, and 8 Year Olds - Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
- Micro Soccer (video) - Tony Waiters
- FUNdamental Soccer Guide FUNdamental Soccer Practice - Karl Dewazien
- Hey Coach - This Game is Fun! - Ric Granryd

U7 & U8

- Coaching 6, 7, and 8 Year Olds - Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
- Micro Soccer (video) - Tony Waiters
- FUNdamental Soccer Guide FUNdamental Soccer Practice - Karl Dewazien
- Hey Coach - This Game is Fun! - Ric Granryd
- The Dutch 4 v 4 Training Method (video) - The Royal Dutch Soccer Association

U9 & U10

- Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds - Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
- FUNdamental Soccer Guide, FUNdamental Soccer Practice, FUNdamental Soccer Tactics - Karl Dewazien
- The Dutch 4 v 4 Training Method (video) - The Royal Dutch Soccer Association

U11 & U12

- Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds - Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
- Dutch Soccer Drills, Volume 1: Individual Skills Edited by Richard Kentwell
- Dutch Soccer Drills, Volume 2: Combination Play and Small Sided Games Edited by Richard Kentwell
- Principles of Team Play, Systems of Play, Modern Tactical Development - Allen Wade
- International Tactics Series: five videos which can be bought separately or as a group.
- Individual Attacking, Individual Defending, Group Attacking, Group Defending, Methods of Training - Jape Shattuck