

Coaching

U6, U8 & U10 PLAYERS



THE SPIRIT AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH LICENSE

U6, U8, U10 ACTIVITIES AND WHY THEY WORK

GOOD TEACHING U6-U8-U10

THE USE OF SMALL SIDED GAMES IN TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

Theresa Echtermeyer (Director of Coaching, Highlands Ranch Soccer Association), Sam Snow (Director of Coaching, US Youth Soccer), Adrian Parrish (Technical Director, Kentucky Youth Soccer Association), Tom Goodman (Technical Director, New England Futbol Club) and Ian Barker (Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA)
Editor: David Newbery (Elearning Coordinator, NSCAA)



National Soccer Coaches Association of America

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**National Soccer Coaches
Association of America**

Dear NSCAA Member,

On behalf of NSCAA we would like to thank you for your recent participation in the webinar series entitled 'Coaching U6, U8 and U10 Players'.

NSCAA is committed to deliver coaching education in a variety of methods – methods that reflect different learning styles and interest levels of our members. Presenting vibrant and engaging content in a convenient and low cost elearning format to supplement and enhance existing NSCAA courses and events is a priority.

Benefits of elearning are considerable, both for the individual and NSCAA. We had a tremendous response to our first series 'Attacking Principles' and we are delighted with the increased interest for this series. Expect to see many more opportunities in the near future to engage with top professional educators without the need to leave your home, office or local library.

This series would not have been possible without contributions of our presenters, each individual volunteering their time to create and present 5 unique sessions. The sessions and presenters were:

1. The Spirit and Principles of the National Youth License

Ian Barker, Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA.

2. U6, U8, U10 Activities and Why They Work

Theresa Echtermeyer, Director of Coaching Highlands Ranch Soccer Association.

3. Good Teaching U6-U8-U10

Sam Snow, Director of Coaching, US Youth Soccer.

4. The Use of Small Sided Games in Technical and Tactical Development

Adrian Parrish, Technical Director, Kentucky Youth Soccer Association.

5. The Review Session

Tom Goodman, Technical Director, New England Futbol Club.

NSCAA would also like to highlight the involvement of our presenting partner – Soccer Coach Weekly. The activities in this manual and those used in the webinar series are exceptional. Even the most complex movement patterns - on and off the ball - are illustrated in such detail that you can fully understand the entire activity with just 3 diagrams.

We hope you enjoy the manual. Please don't hesitate to provide us with feedback relating to the webinars, manual and discussions.

Ian Barker

Director of Coaching Education

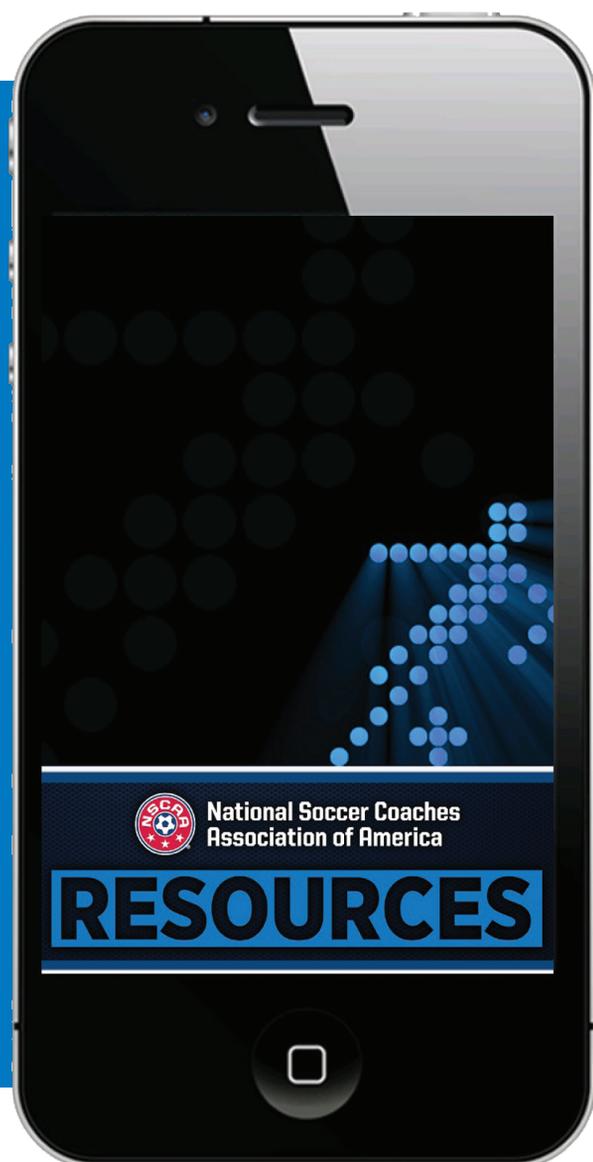
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7 PAC MAN

An excellent activity to get players moving as soon as they arrive at a training session - emphasizes individual ball mastery, fundamental movement skills and working corroboratively in pairs.

8 BANDIT

A fast paced and continuous activity working attackers and defenders. Attackers must possess the ball and avoid the 'bandit' to score through a 3 sided goal.

9 HOSPITAL TAG

A favorite activity to get young players moving and laughing. All against all - with or without a ball. Players must 'tag' an opponent and send them to the hospital to receive their medicine.

10 GATEKEEPER

A great dribbling and turning activity requiring attackers to lift their heads to see 'open' gates. On the coaches command, Gate Keepers open and shut the gates, forcing attackers to change direction.

11 STEAL THE BACON

A terrific activity equally as fun to play with 5 and 14 year old players. The coach can manipulate the variables to make it a simple dribbling and passing game to a complex game of team tactics.

12 KNOCK OUT

A coaching classic - without elimination! All players start with a ball in a confined space and attempt to 'knock out' the other players balls. Once players understand the game, the coach can introduce pairs.

13 U6, U8, U10 ACTIVITIES AND WHY THEY WORK

Theresa provided examples of 6 activities suitable for young players and discussed why these sessions work - emphasizing coaching methods and what variables to manipulate for desired outcomes. Presented by Theresa Echtermeyer.

17 1V1 ON THE FLY

This is a fast paced and competitive activity ideal

for all age groups. The 1 v 1 set up encourages use of all necessary techniques and tactics needed to be successful in 1 v 1 duals.

18 PORT AND STARBOARD

This activity will help get player's attention and work on their listening skills. Forward and lateral dribbling and a strong emphasis on ball mastery - close control and change of pace.

19 TIMED TAG

This is a good fitness/agility game. Tag requires players to move quickly in small spaces and with short bursts of high intensity. This transfers well to the game of soccer.

20 RAPID SHOOTING

This fun shooting activity gives all players the opportunity to shoot in a fast paced competitive game. The goal is to encourage young players to shoot when they are in shooting range.

21 SIX BALL GAME

Good game to work on passing and receiving technique under pressure. Players learn to play away from pressure and to battle to keep possession.

22 4V1/4V2 IN THIRDS

The game provides attackers with many opportunities to pass and receive the ball in a 'live' situation - great for working on technique and problem solving in a fun quick paced environment.

23 GOOD TEACHING U6, U8 & U10

Sam examined the important role of the youth coach and provided examples of 6 activities suitable for young players - emphasizing characteristics of a good coach of U6, U8 and U10 players. Presented by Sam Snow.

26 PAINT THE GRID

This is a technical warm-up for passing and receiving. Receiving into space will aid players in 'painting' the grid quickly.

27 BALL MASTER

This activity raises awareness of group shape, off-the-ball movement, accurate and firm passing and working in small groups.

28 GROUP PAC MAN/WOMEN

This activity adds competition - attackers vs defenders using a fun theme. Players need to start plotting tactical decisions as a group.

29 THREE ZONE GAME

This activity help players recognize when to make a penetrating pass. Passers and receivers must recognize the same cues.

30 END LINES

This activity places demands on transition - players moving from defending to an attacking triangle as soon as they regain possession.

31 TRIANGLES 6 VS. 6 MATCH

This activity brings together the skills and decision making of the 5 previous activities emphasizing creating passing triangles and maximizing space.

32 SMALL SIDED IN TECHNICAL & TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

The focus of Adrian's presentation was to demonstrate how a coach can develop technical skills and rudimentary tactical understanding with young players using small sided games.

34 TAIL TAG

Young players love to play chase games. They do so in their natural environment - with friends in schools and in the yard.

35 SHARKS AND MINNOWS

Young players need the opportunity to experience success and failure using fun games. Slanting line activities give the players opportunity to enter games at a level they are comfortable.

36 EXPLOSIVE SQUARES

This game encourages support and movement off the ball. Players learn how to deal with the basics of passing and receiving and additional conditions are added to build the pressure and challenge.

37 4V4 WITH FOUR GOALS

Players love scrimmaging and coaches can use games to teach players techniques and tactics without them realizing they are learning.

38 COCONUT SHY

This activity can be used to introduce shooting technique or passing over a longer distance. Ideal activity between 2 higher intensity activities to allow players an opportunity to rest.

39 2V2 SHOOTING GAME

This is a dynamic game emphasizing attack and defending. The coach determines the tempo of play and feeds different players to start the attack. Fast paced and great fun!

40 THE REVIEW SESSION

As with the previous series focusing on Attacking Principles, we concluded with a review session. Tom provided a brief review of the Principles of Coaching.

COACHING U6, U8 and U10

An introduction to the Coaching U6, U8 and U10. By David Newbery



DAVID NEWBERY
Elearning Coordinator, NSCAA

For 25 years David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches and club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching.

David was appointed to lead the NSCAA Club Standards Project in January 2012 and most recently to direct NSCAA 'live' learning. David has been providing consultant services and support to volunteer based youth programs for the past 10 years, helping clubs to become more serious about player and coach development. He contributes articles regularly to soccer publications, has written books focusing on player and coach development and presents at national soccer events. In his spare time David operates a youth soccer program for players age 3 to 8 in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

As a Director of Coaching for a small Rhode Island/Connecticut based club focusing exclusively on children age 3-8 years, I was thrilled to have an opportunity to learn from the experiences, anecdotes and stories from such a prestigious and experienced presentation team. Not only did I manage to pick up a couple of new activities, but I also acquired 3-4 variations to activities I have played a hundred times before. Probably more importantly however, I now have a new perspective that will refresh my approach to coaching education and will undoubtedly make me a better coach from the experience. Like many Directors of Coaching participating in the series, I hope the beneficial effects of self-improvement will result in better experiences for the 400 young players I will coach and 50 coaches I will mentor in 2014.

This series is written for coaches working with players who are between the ages of 4 and 10. It is however important to consider development does not typically follow the convenience of school years or age groups, but instead player development occurs on a continuum where physical, cognitive, emotional and psychological readiness is more important than the chronological age of the child. Due to significant differences in the development pace of young players of the same age, I prefer to focus on developmental stages than age of players when planning coach training. The series provides direction for Coaches, Directors and Administrators with varying levels of knowledge, experience and qualification who are responsible for

teaching and nurturing youth soccer players. In the series the presenters detailed an approach to coaching – a concept known as 'Player Development', which is an education philosophy that has gained a great deal of attention. Essentially, the critical years for shaping a child's successful participation in soccer are between the ages of 4 and 10. The speed and capacity for pre-adolescent players to learn are high and the gains in performance and understanding the most dramatic. It is essential that children receive coaching that considers the developmental stage of each child and that coaches focus on individuals before the team. Players should be competent in:

- Basic soccer skills, such as dribbling, turning, creating space and passing.
- Understand the essentials of attacking and defending.
- Perform fundamental movement skills, such as running, jogging, jumping, skipping, throwing and catching.

Players must develop competency in these essential elements before graduating to large-sided games (8v8+). Elementary skills and techniques not only provide the foundation for soccer, but also provide the basis for participation in most other sports.

I look forward to receiving your comments. Join the discussion on NSCAA LinkedIn Group (currently close to 13,000 participants – www.linkedinun.com) or email me dnewbery@nscaa.com.

COACHING U6, U8 AND U10 - INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this session was to provide an overview of Principles, Methods and Strategies of Coaching U6, U8 and U10 Players. Presented by Ian Barker



IAN BARKER

Director of Coaching Education, National Soccer Coaches Association of America

Ian is somewhat unique having held leadership positions with US Youth Soccer and NSCAA and he has had extensive experience at youth and college levels. Ian coached for 21 seasons with the men's programs at the University of Wisconsin and Macalester College, before becoming NSCAA Director of Coaching Education in 2012.

Ian was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Minnesota Youth Soccer Association for 10 years and is a Head Coach of Region II Boys Olympic Development Program

Ian's qualifications are extensive and he holds the USSF A License, NSCAA Premier Diploma and NSCAA Master Coach Diploma.

Summary of Webinar Presentation

Ian commenced his presentation with a tribute to Doctor Tom Fleck who is credited with the development of the National Youth License.

In his opening remarks Ian created the juxtaposition between a young adult and a young child playing soccer in the U6, U8 and U10 age groups. He drew a significant distinction between adapting activities appropriate for older players and coaching activities designed specifically for young players. He pointed to an increasing amounts of research focusing on the physical, cognitive and social development of children and referred to the chronological age of players being a reasonable guide for coaching, but not an absolute blueprint. Instead it was proposed that children develop in stages, and progression between stages should be determined by mastery of skills, techniques and tactics regardless of the child's age. Stages represent the building blocks of development and once one block is complete, the child should move to the next level of difficulty and complexity.

Ian characterized an U6 player as being focused on oneself and to this end proposed that coaches must ensure a 5 year old player should have contact with his or her own ball for the majority of a training session. U8 players on the other hand are developing friendships and in many case have a 'best friend'. Coaches are now able to introduce 1v1 activities and the theme of working collaboratively and competitively in pairs. In referring to abstract-thought as a characteristic of U10 players - the idea that some players will realize it is better to stand away from the play in space than to chase the ball around the field. It was suggested that as players move through the age groups, the coach can reduce the number of balls in play and move the focus from individual, to pairs and then to small groups.

Before moving into the activities, Ian provided a list of 6 Principles of Coaching U6, U8 and U10 players:

1. Development appropriateness – activities need to be selected that meet the cognitive, physical and psychological maturity of the player.
2. Create a safe and sensible space – a primary objective for a coach must be to create a positive and safe environment.
3. Structure sessions from simple to complex – it is important for players to establish a solid foundation and understanding before progressing to more difficult and challenging activities.
4. Information is clear, on-topic and concise – coaches need to ensure

that their communication style is adapted for the developmental stage of the players and where appropriate use 'camouflaged language' to conceal coaching points. Delivery is also important and one way to engage young players is to kneel down so the coach's eyes are at the same level as the players.

5. Include decision-making and interpretation as part of the learning process – right from the start of development, coaches should use techniques such as guided discovery and questioning to encourage players to think about solutions, to respond positively and improvise.
6. Make it soccer relevant - when selecting or designing activities for young players coaches should certainly plan for fun and for players to have free-play. However it is also important to appreciate that learning to play the game is a key objective of coaching.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Ian Barker

Q1: Should coaches always emphasize small sided games and technical skills to develop creativity? Giuseppe Emma

Response: At these ages small sided games, as small as 1 vs. 1, are essential. For sure we can help the players with game understanding, but by far and away our primary energy should be toward technical training through activities as opposed to drills.

Q2: Is there value to using a Futsal Ball over a normal ball to increase touches on the ball with young players? Giuseppe Emma

Response: A Futsal Ball would be a great training tool. A size 3 is often harder for a small child to manipulate, so a smaller ball can be good. In indoor training the size and the weight of the Futsal Balls potentially allows the players to maintain closer control, so using them here could be beneficial.

Q3: As the season progresses, how do you balance working with more skilled players with lesser skilled players. Especially when introducing more advanced skills such as "making a move", "finishing" and "tactics"? Al Mendoza

Response: This is an age old problem for sure. In the technical challenges as long as each child has a ball the degree of challenge can be differentiated to each child. Vary distances and objectives for players reflecting their comfort level and experience. In terms of tactics we

should avoid asking players to achieve something that is not consistent with their technical ability. If you have 12 children you may decide to split the group into two - coach the same activity, but try to balance out the ability level and challenge. The younger ages lend themselves far more to mixed ability groups than the older ones.

Q4: For the U6 age group, do you think it can be a good idea to play an activity without the ball first so the players get an idea of the game rather than jumping straight in with a ball? Matthew Hodgson

Response: Yes, absolutely. This is the notion of "simple to complex". It is presented here in the Hospital Tag activity. The players play "everyone is it" first without the ball. This way the players learn the way the game is played, the rules, dimensions etc. Challenges presented by manipulating the ball are significant for a young player, so sometimes moving around the area without a ball and getting a feel for the environment can be a good way to start.

Q5A: Where is a good place to find more good fun games for kids that maintain your objectives? Dexter McFarlin

Q5B: You said its better to have a handful of activities or drills versus 500, but is there a best resource for additional examples of drills we can add to our basket that you recommend? Garrett Sacken

Response: Our presenting partner Soccer Coach Weekly have a number of developmentally appropriate publications, including How to Coach 3 to 5 year olds and How to Coach 6 to 8 year olds. Here is a link: <http://www.greenstarmedia.net/category/all-products/format/manuals/page/2>
The NSCAA is developing an online resource: <http://www.nscaa.com/education/U6-U8>. Also, check out the NSCAA app which has content for these ages.

Q6: In a game such as 'Steal the Bacon', can you incorporate another group of 3 so that all 12 players in the team get to play? Or do you feel that larger numbers take away from the activity? Robert Judd

Response: In my opinion none of these games are number contingent; the beauty is that coach gets to manage the variables. If you have 12 players create either 2 teams of 6 players or 4 teams of 3 players. The key is to have enough balls to be able to engage the players at this age. Hence we play 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4 in the final game rather than 11 vs. 11.

Q7A: In the activity 'gatekeepers', can you explain how the gatekeepers are moving around the space? Alison Cefalu

Q7B: In gatekeepers, how does the coach signal which gates are blocked, and do those players blocking gates act as goalies? Chris Burt

Response: The gatekeepers are defenders/goalkeepers - when they are between the 2 cones (gate), the dribbling attackers cannot go through the gate and must look for another open gate. When the gatekeepers are to the side of the gate the gate is open for a dribbler to penetrate through. Begin with half the gates open and half closed. The coach can control the gates with voice commands by pointing. If the dribblers realize that by watching the coach they can get a headstart on a gate, then the coach should move providing a new challenge for the dribblers.

Q8: If you have a child that is not focusing should you have an assistant take the individual to do a one on one session? Jennifer Eppley

Response: Having an assistant's help is a great solution. You should always have one other adult present for injury, bathroom breaks and all manner of risk management. If that adult is not a coach then the child may take a time out. Alternatively first try to engage the child in another way as ball chaser, assistant coach, score keeper. It is possible that the child does not want to play, but still wants to be included. This is common at the youngest ages. Parents should be encouraged to stay at practice through the formative years of participation (through U10). This serves many purposes, including support to the coaches. Under no

circumstances should a coach be left to take children to the bathroom or to pass the responsibility to another coach or parent bystander.

Q9: In most of the activities there seems to be a set number of players in the area. However, a big issue for coaches occurs when the players don't all arrive on time for the session. How can the coach adapt numbers for the activities? Neal Morrin

Response: One idea would be to set up one or two small games right away and as children drift in over a short time just get them playing. When you have a set idea of your numbers you can then choose games that will work. You may start with small numbers and do some relay races. If you have a tag game you may be the tagger and this way make sure all the kids, albeit a small number, are kept active. As you get comfortable you can have great sessions with just 3-5 kids and still get a lot done. See the tag games included in Theresa's, Sam's and Adrian's sessions - all good activities for small or large numbers.

Q10: In what order are the activities presented to the kids? Are all these activities part of 1 session? Vin Crispino

Response: Great question. I would do any one of these activities for 8-12 minutes and then take a break. If the children come back to the session and want to play that activity again, why not? Unlike a progression on a single theme for older players, at the younger ages have 4-6 activities in mind, including some form of final scrimmage at the end. Treat each activity as a mini session, so during a 45-60 minute session you may have 4-5 activities.

Q11: Over the course of a season, how often would you re-use a particular exercise? In other words - if you have 10 practices, how many times might you play Bandit? Beau Dure

Response: I think you could have 2-3 sessions' worth of activities, including various small scrimmage games and have more than enough for a season. The trick is to identify the activities that the children really like and then be able to tweak the rules and degree of challenge. Making space smaller or larger, removing or adding balls are examples of managing variables. You will find that the players will have favorite activities that they will ask to play every session!

Q12: How long should the coach spend on one activity in a session? Zerihun Jemaneh Woldegeorgies

Response: The key is the physical and mental "endurance" of the children. You want to stop the activity as the players start to fade physically and cannot focus. At that point it is time for a quick break and then return to the activity or a new one. I would say 8-12 minutes on and 2-4 minutes off. It is important to be comfortable with pit stops and even sometimes just talking to the players about the activities at a break.

Q13: Should coaches use the progressive method, with such concepts as directional play, multidirectional play, and use of goals or zones, with these activities throughout a practice session? Jeff Norman

Response: This is a good question. We should seek to end with a scrimmage of some sort, most often two teams with goals. Earlier in the session "maze games" where players move through 360 degrees in a "confused" space are great. We want to avoid "lines, laps and lectures" and be happy playing fun games. A skilled coach of these ages can progress all manner of activities in ways suggested in your question - and that is great.

Q14: How long should a training session last for U6, U8 and U10? Paul McNally

Response: I would say 45-60 minutes, tops at U6-U8. Depending on the experience level and focus level of U10s a little longer might be possible; however a well-planned 60 minute session should be adequate. Critically, on task time is important – more time on the ball, the more benefit to the player and the quicker they will get tired. Also, most parents appreciate a short duration focused session and are more likely to want to stay and support the coach.

Q15: In the activity ‘Hospital Tag’ do players sit out once they are tagged? Paul McNally

Response: No. I hope the activity book that comes with the course explains this better than I did in the webinar. “Hospital Tag” is a game that everyone plays indefinitely and it is the coach who stops when the energy declines. Basically after being tagged twice you should be dribbling with your hands as Band-Aids on the tag. A third tag sends you to the hospital where you perform the cure, e.g. 5 ball taps and then you are right back in.

Q16: Should the coach emphasize proper technique versus random fun through play? Grant Vreuls

Response: Random fun play is the priority in my opinion. Importantly though, it is very appropriate to preview some technique and review in short bursts throughout. One of the strongest ideas is to suggest why good technique helps you be more effective in the game. For example dribbling under close control and accuracy passing the ball at a player below the knee in Pac Man is critical.

Q17: What age do you start to introduce goalies? And should all players be involved in goalie training? Nathan Wilcox

Response: This is a contentious one. Many children love playing goalie and many children understand the position exists. I would never ask a U6-U10 to play goalie if they did not want to. I might do some throw and catch training with all the kids for improving motor skills and hand and eye coordination. Goalies prevent goals and if you want high scoring do not use them. If you do feel that goalies work for you make the goals very wide and not very high, this challenges the field players to place the ball and allows the goalies to engage in side to side movement. (You will get different answers on this one!)

Q18: At what age should speed & agility be incorporated into training? Paulo Pedrosa

Response: All the activities in my presentation include speed and agility and the coach can manage the degree of intensity. The type of movement education seen in good PE classes addresses speed and agility. I would be mindful of these concepts, but not overly formal with U6-U10.

Q19: What types of mini drills should eliminated players perform before reentering the Knock Out game? Jake Brown

Response: I would suggest ball taps, juggles (possibly hand to foot/thigh) and certainly something related to the ball as opposed to push ups.

Q20: What age group would you introduce the game Bandit to? Martin Larrosa

Response: I think this activity can work for U8s with a little experience and certainly should be something U10s could grasp in terms of ideas and possibilities.

Q21: How do you deal with a player when they’ve decided to step out and not participate in an activity? d’Alary Dalton

Response: I like to assure the child that participation is their choice. Very often this encourages the child that they can play the game and are not

under pressure. I like to try to have the child participate as an assistant in some way, chasing balls, keeping score etc. One thing to be aware of is that one child opting out can create an ‘epidemic’. If that happens we take a group break and do some review. The last resort is to have a player sit out entirely with an adult helper and then self-select back in.

Q22: Would you recommend a small sided game immediately after any of these activities? Kevin Denson

Response: Yes, I think that would be great. A session that flows with activities followed by a small sided game could be great. Perhaps three activities and three rounds of 3 vs.3 would be perfect. If you did this try to have the fields set permanently and then use another space for the activities. Certainly as a coach you can vary the flow of your 45-60 minute sessions creatively week to week with these ages.

Q23A: What is the best level NSCAA course for U-6, U-8 coaches to take for Recreational Players? Garrett Sacken

Response: Garrett, the NSCAA Level 1 and 2 Diplomas address this material very well. Visit NSCAA.com for a full course listing: <http://www.nscaa.com/education/coaching-courses>

Q23B: I got my USSF E License. Where do I fit in as far as NSCAA? David Vargas

David, your E License was probably 18 hours in length. If so I would suggest the NSCAA Level 6 Diploma where you create lesson plans and present in a non pass/fail environment. For U6-U10 coaching it is not a “backward” step to consider the 4-6 hour Level 1 and Level 2 Diplomas.

Pac-Man

An excellent activity to get players moving as soon as they arrive at a training session - emphasizes individual ball mastery, fundamental movement skills and working corroboratively in pairs.

WHY USE IT

To address techniques of dribbling and passing in a fun activity.

SET UP

A restricted space with a supply of balls on the outside of the space.

HOW TO PLAY

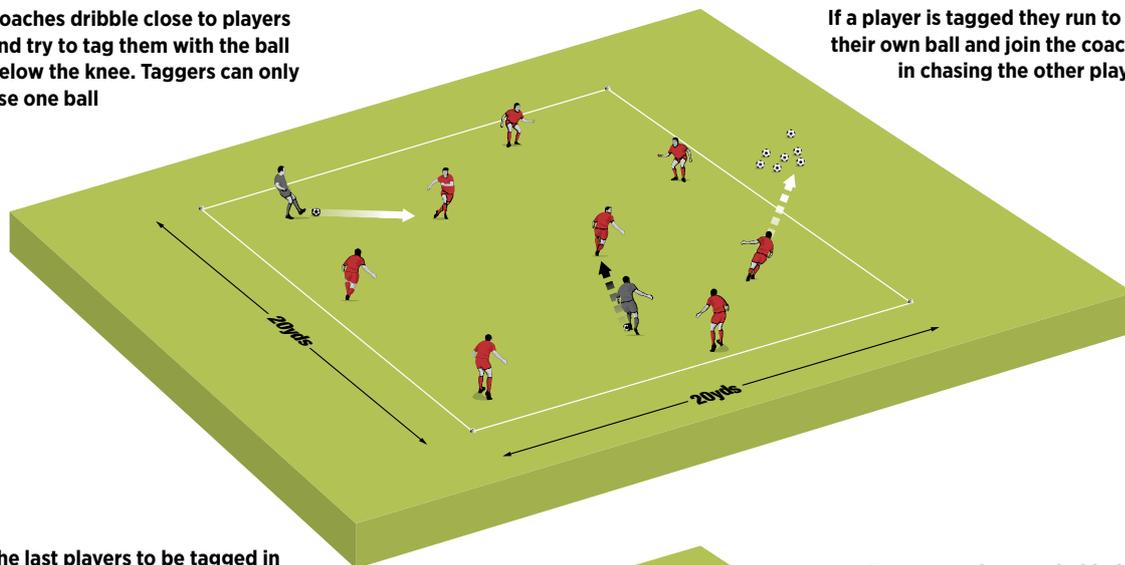
2-3 coaches /players (Ghosts) try to tag players without a ball (Pac-Men). If a Pac-Man gets tagged they get a ball and play in with the Ghosts. Progress to teams of 2 Ghosts to one ball.

TECHNIQUE

Players work on surface of the foot, position of the head and non-kicking foot, accuracy and weight of passing.

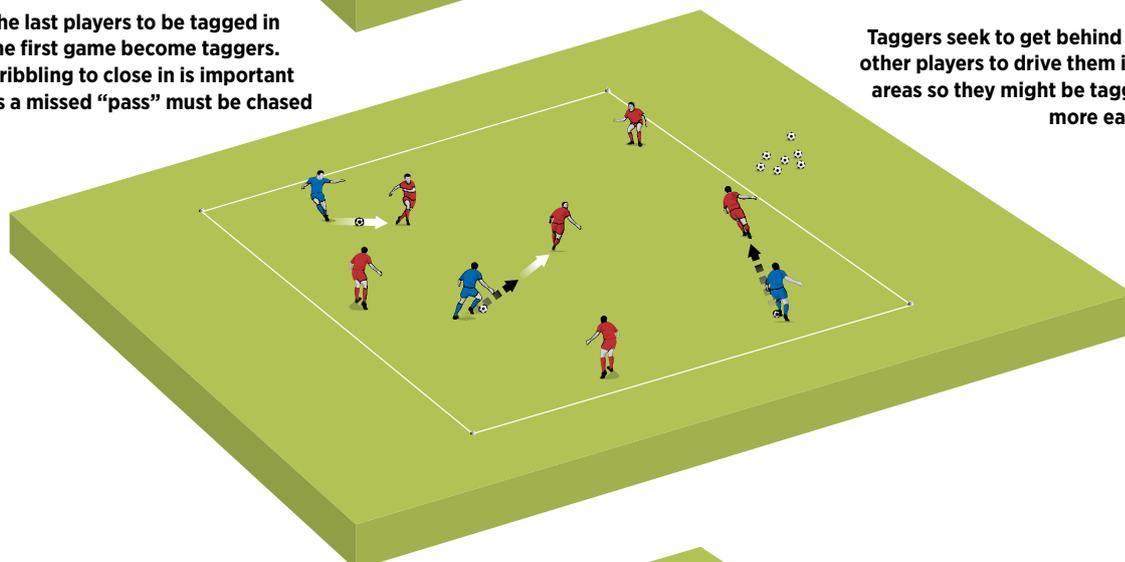
Coaches dribble close to players and try to tag them with the ball below the knee. Taggers can only use one ball

If a player is tagged they run to get their own ball and join the coaches in chasing the other players

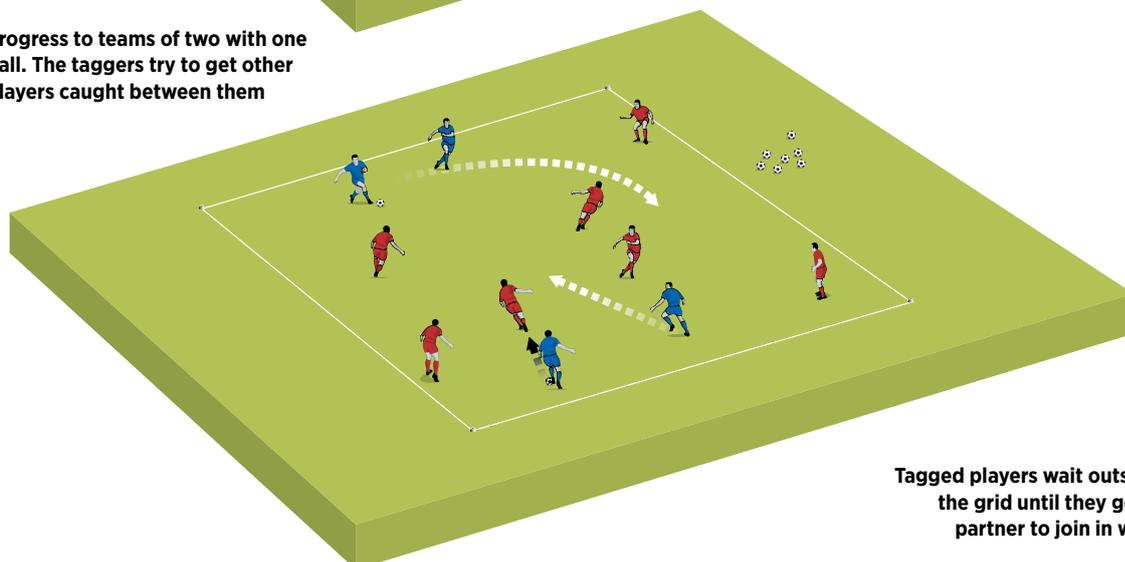


The last players to be tagged in the first game become taggers. Dribbling to close in is important as a missed "pass" must be chased

Taggers seek to get behind the other players to drive them into areas so they might be tagged more easily



Progress to teams of two with one ball. The taggers try to get other players caught between them



Tagged players wait outside the grid until they get a partner to join in with

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Bandit

A fast paced and continuous activity working attackers and defenders. Attackers must possess the ball and avoid the 'bandit' to score through a 3 sided goal.

WHY USE IT

Teams work on communication and vision as well as technique.

SET UP

3 cones to make a triangle of 3 goals. 2 teams of 4 players. 2 balls.

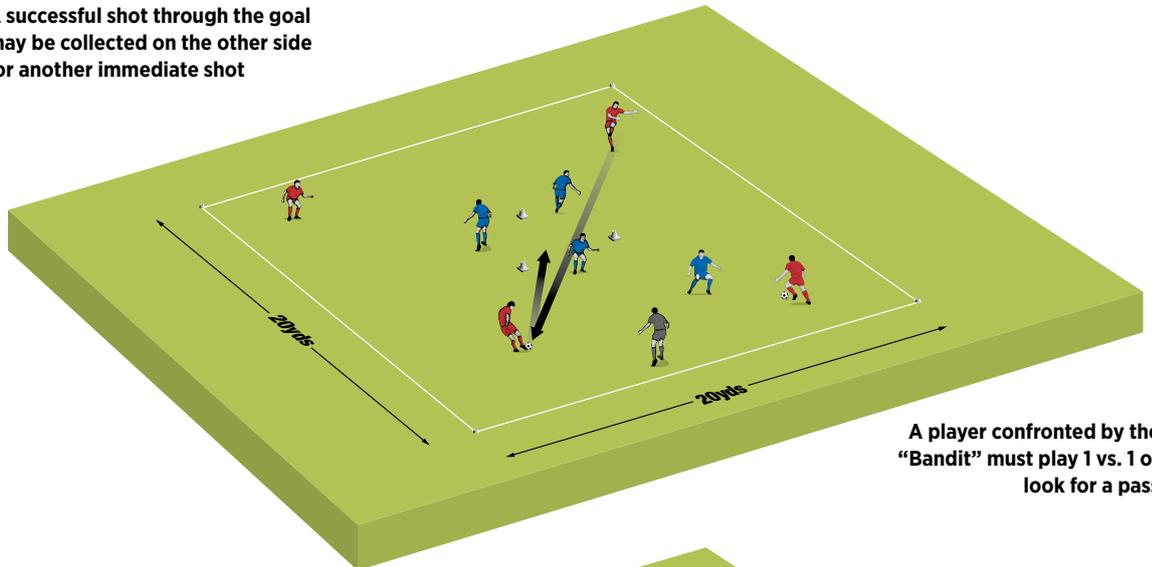
HOW TO PLAY

One team defends a 3 sided goal with 3 GKs and a Bandit who defends. The other team tries to score as many goals as possible back and forth through the goals.

TECHNIQUE

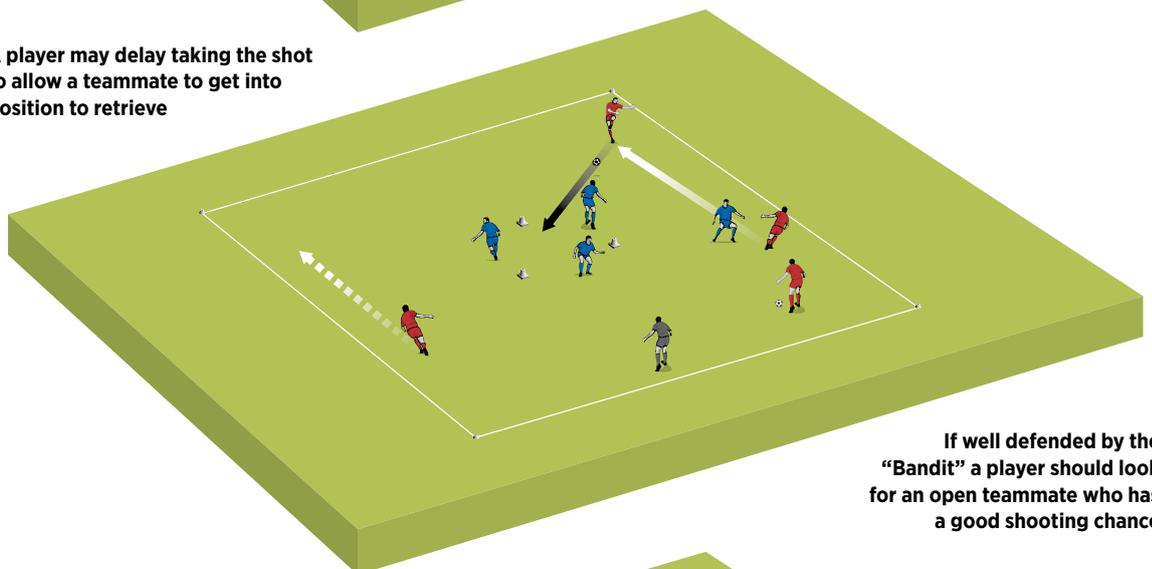
This game includes shooting, passing, tackling and goal keeping.

A successful shot through the goal may be collected on the other side for another immediate shot



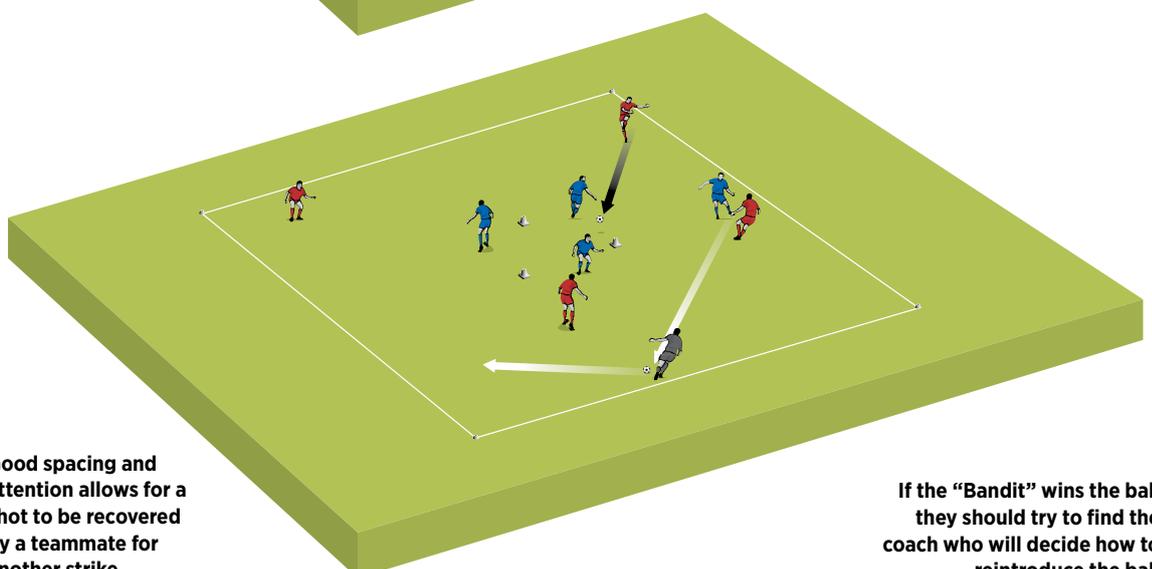
A player confronted by the "Bandit" must play 1 vs. 1 or look for a pass

A player may delay taking the shot to allow a teammate to get into position to retrieve



If well defended by the "Bandit" a player should look for an open teammate who has a good shooting chance

Good spacing and attention allows for a shot to be recovered by a teammate for another strike



If the "Bandit" wins the ball they should try to find the coach who will decide how to reintroduce the ball

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Hospital Tag

A favorite activity to get young players moving and laughing. All against all - with or without a ball. Players must 'tag' an opponent and send them to the hospital to receive their medicine.

WHY USE IT

To improve dribbling and body awareness.

SET UP

A rectangular playing space with 2 coned areas in final phase. 8-12 players. One ball for each.

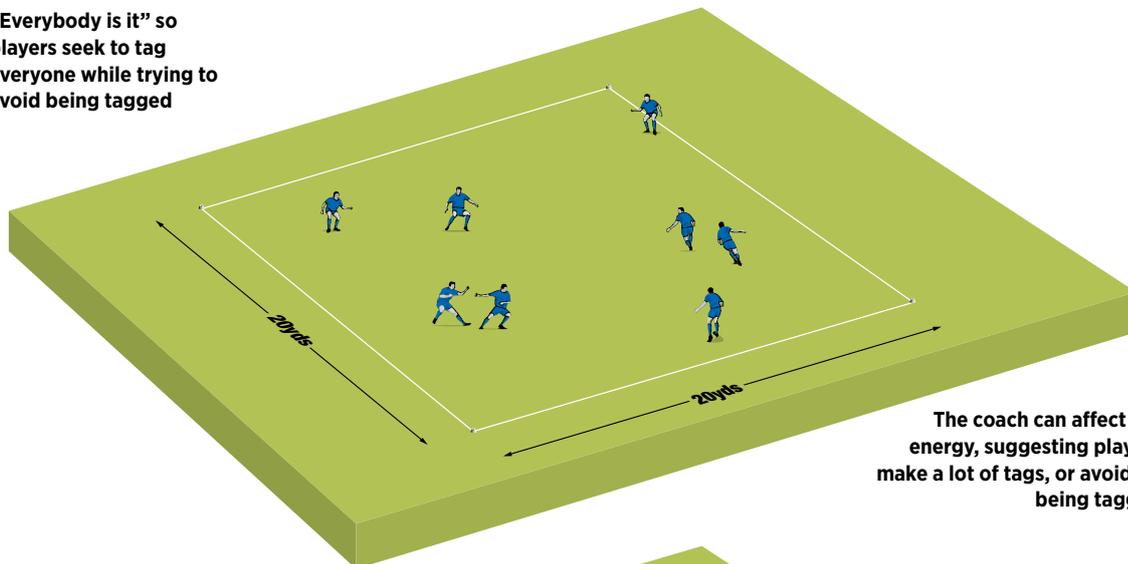
HOW TO PLAY

Every player can tag everyone else. Play without a ball, then a ball each and finally with the Hospital. One tag place and hand on the tag, second tag place second hand on the tag, third tag visit the Hospital and perform 5 ball touches for a cure.

TECHNIQUE

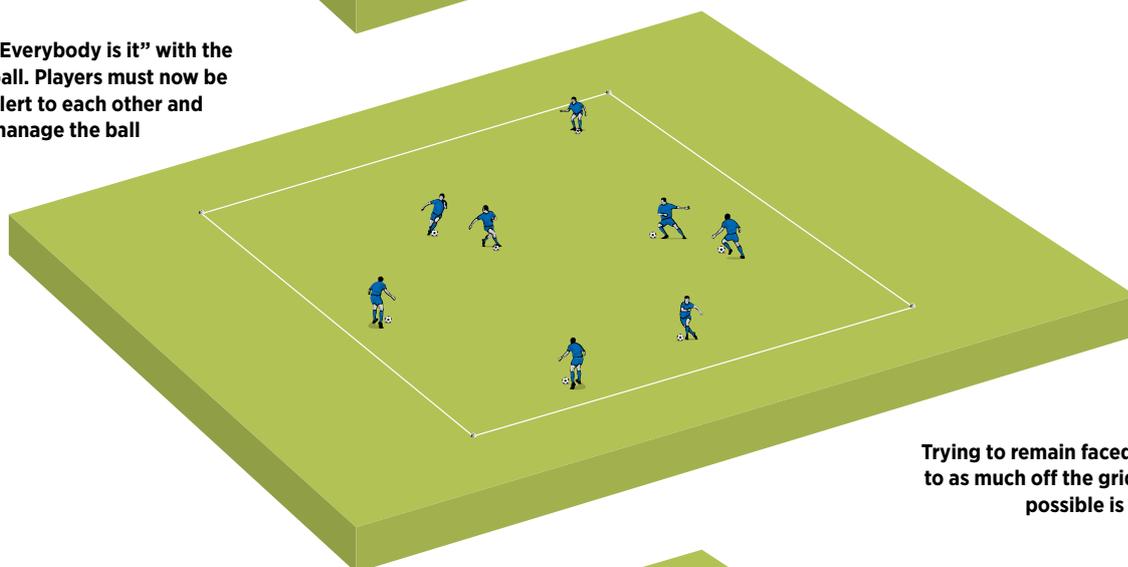
Game includes dribbling and body awareness.

"Everybody is it" so players seek to tag everyone while trying to avoid being tagged



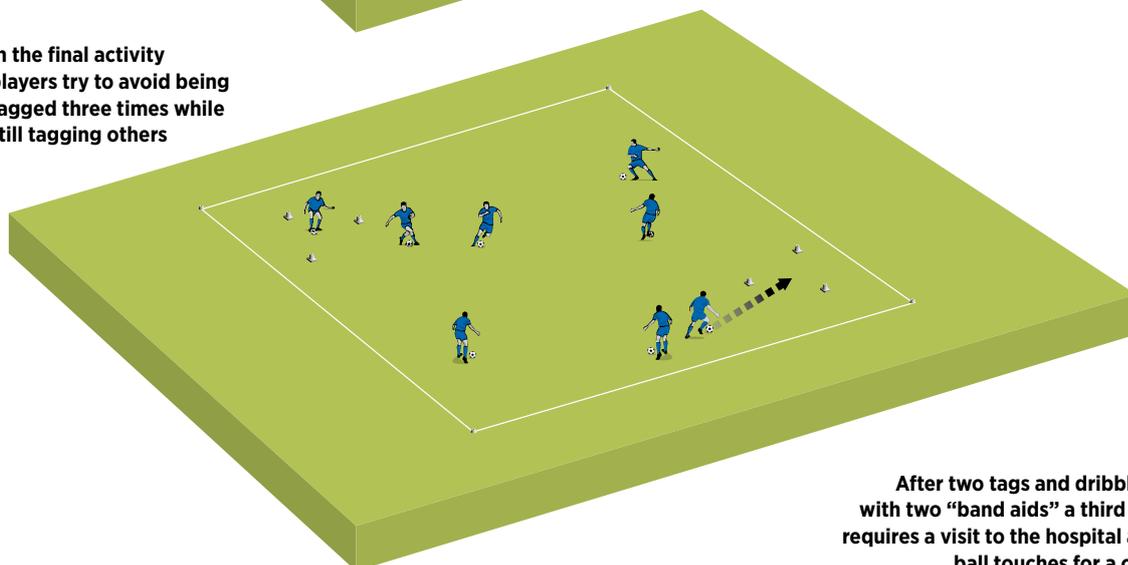
The coach can affect the energy, suggesting players make a lot of tags, or avoiding being tagged

"Everybody is it" with the ball. Players must now be alert to each other and manage the ball



Trying to remain faced up to as much off the grid as possible is key

In the final activity players try to avoid being tagged three times while still tagging others



After two tags and dribbling with two "band aids" a third tag requires a visit to the hospital and ball touches for a cure

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Gate Keeper

A great dribbling and turning activity requiring attackers to lift their heads to see 'open' gates. On the coaches command, Gate Keepers open and shut the gates, forcing attackers to change direction.

WHY USE IT

Players work on dribbling and turning.

SET UP

4 cone gates, 4 players as gate keepers, 4 players with a ball each.

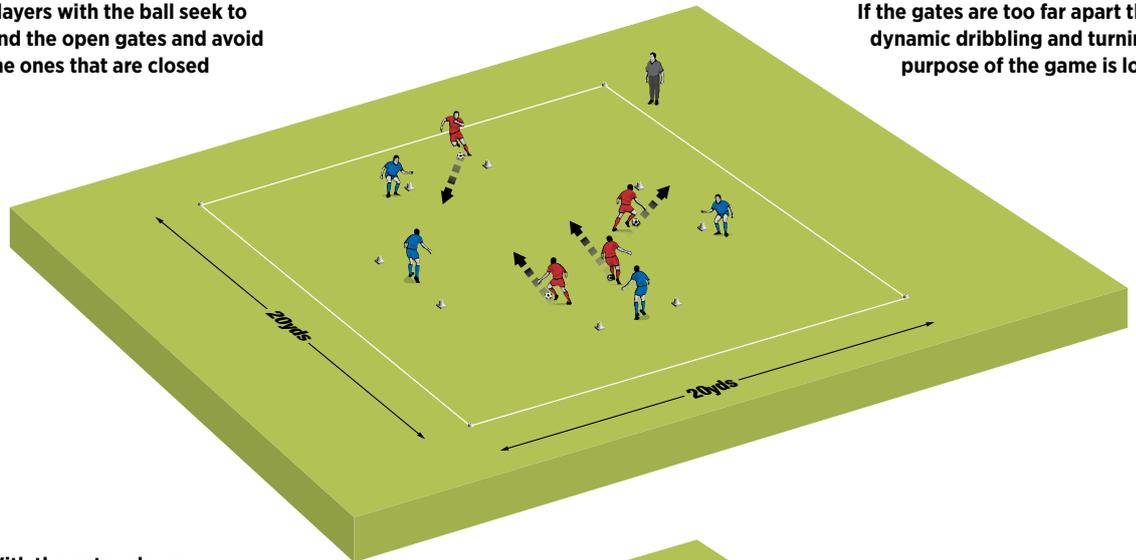
HOW TO PLAY

Gate keepers "open" or "close" gates as instructed by coach. Players with the ball must dribble through the open gates. Progress and introduce a defender who attempts to steal the ball.

TECHNIQUE

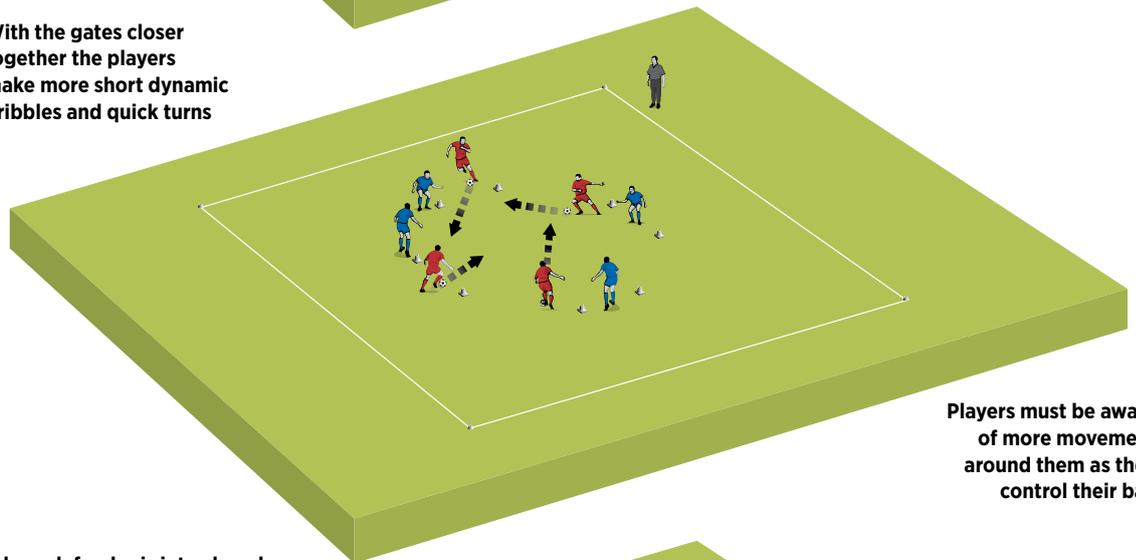
Dribbling and turning.

Players with the ball seek to find the open gates and avoid the ones that are closed



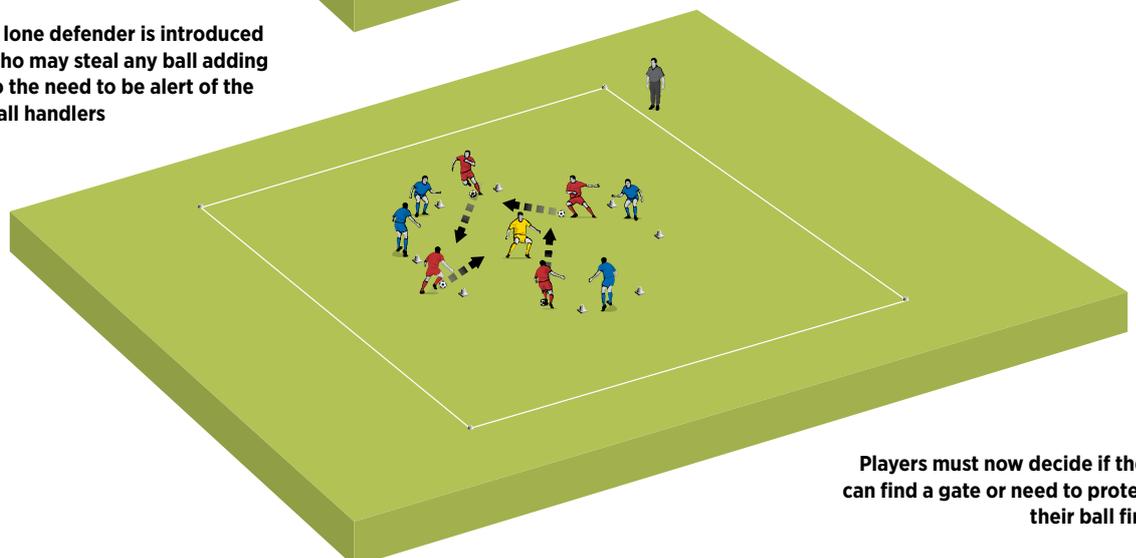
If the gates are too far apart the dynamic dribbling and turning purpose of the game is lost

With the gates closer together the players make more short dynamic dribbles and quick turns



Players must be aware of more movement around them as they control their ball

A lone defender is introduced who may steal any ball adding to the need to be alert of the ball handlers



Players must now decide if they can find a gate or need to protect their ball first

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Steal the Bacon

A terrific activity equally as fun to play with 5 and 14 year old players. The coach can manipulate the variables to make it a simple dribbling and passing game to a complex game of team tactics.

WHY USE IT

Develops decision making and team work.

SET UP

3 teams, 3 cone areas, and a ball for each player, (progress by reducing number of balls).

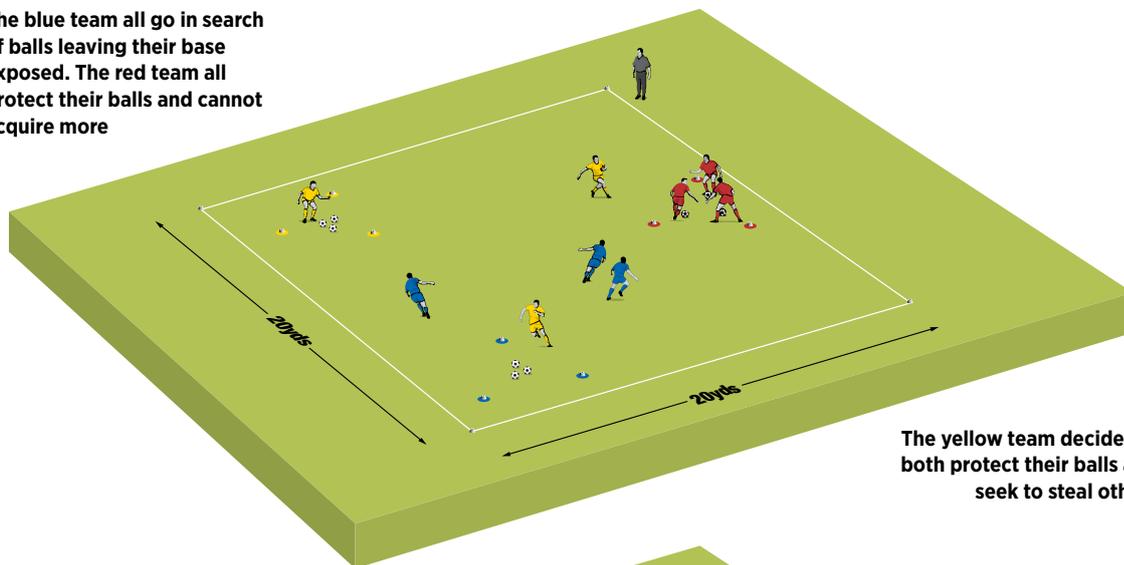
HOW TO PLAY

The coach commands "start" and "stop". Teams try to collect as many balls into their area as possible.

TECHNIQUE

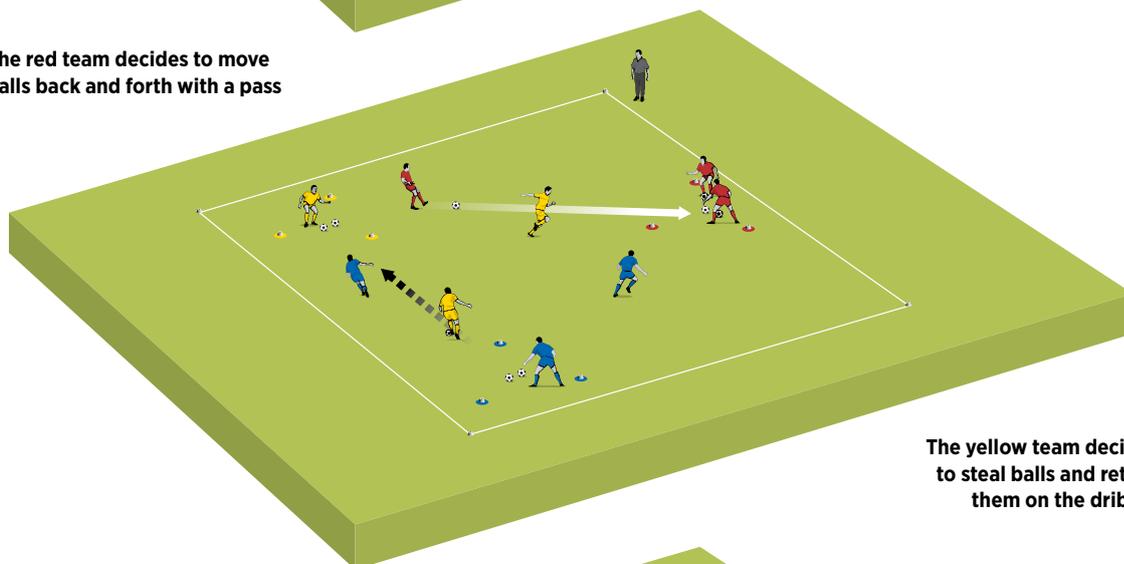
Shielding, dribbling, passing, tackling.

The blue team all go in search of balls leaving their base exposed. The red team all protect their balls and cannot acquire more



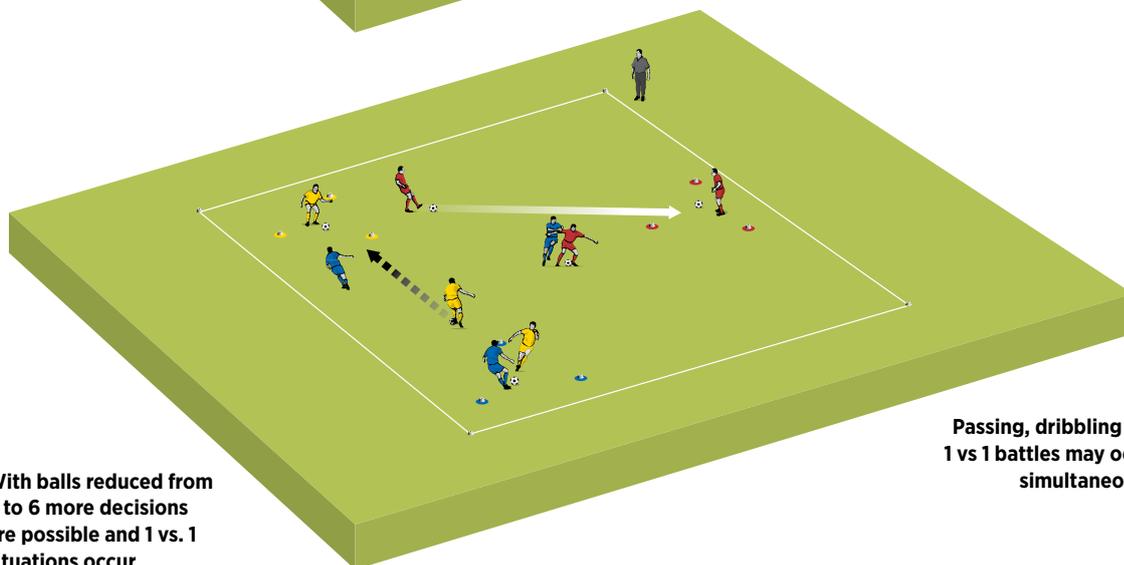
The yellow team decides to both protect their balls and seek to steal others

The red team decides to move balls back and forth with a pass



The yellow team decides to steal balls and return them on the dribble

With balls reduced from 9 to 6 more decisions are possible and 1 vs. 1 situations occur



Passing, dribbling and 1 vs 1 battles may occur simultaneously

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Knock Out

A coaching classic - without elimination! All players start with a ball in a confined space and attempt to 'knock out' the other players balls. Once players understand the game, the coach can introduce pairs.

WHY USE IT

Encourages players to keep the ball, to try to dispossess and to regain the ball if they lose it.

SET UP

A rectangle space and a ball for each player.

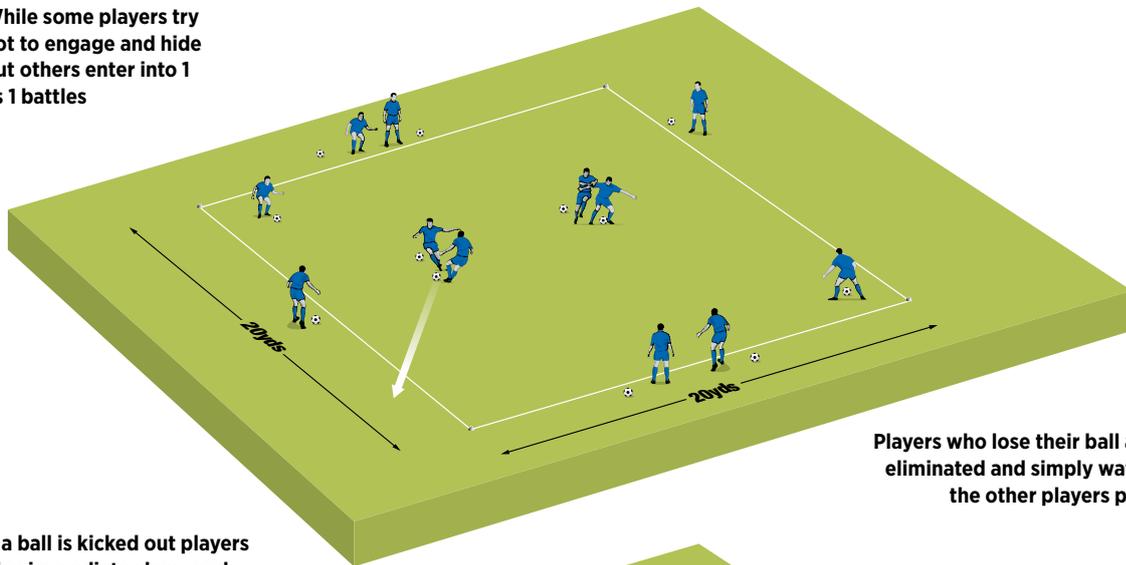
HOW TO PLAY

First phase players try to kick opponents' balls out the area and keep their ball in to be last player in. Second phase players can chase their balls and return to play. (Game can be played in teams).

TECHNIQUE

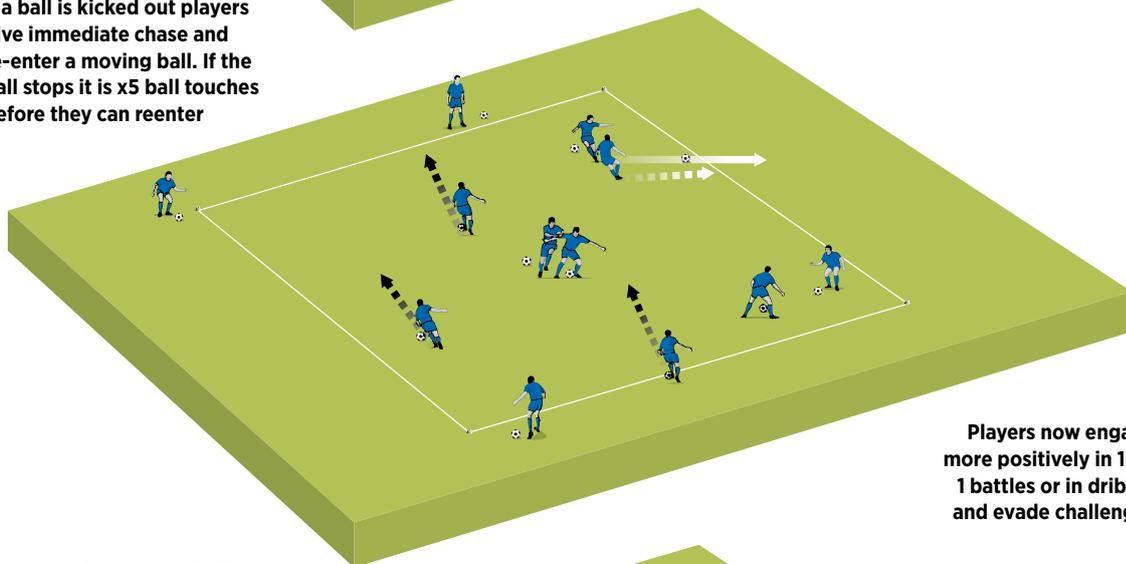
Shielding, tackling, progressing to dribbling and passing.

While some players try not to engage and hide out others enter into 1 vs 1 battles



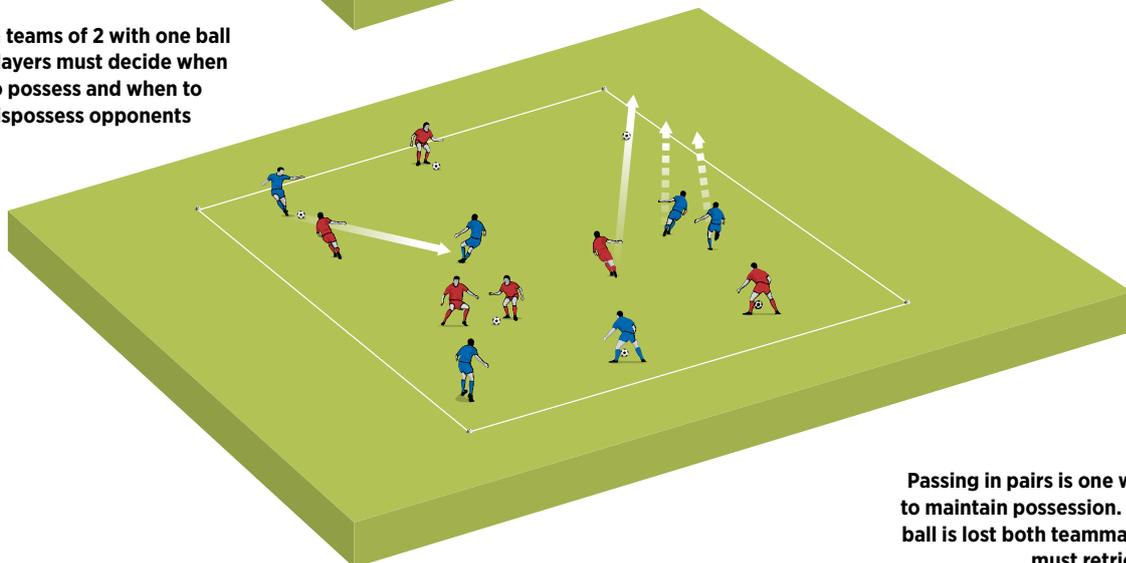
Players who lose their ball are eliminated and simply watch the other players play

If a ball is kicked out players give immediate chase and re-enter a moving ball. If the ball stops it is x5 ball touches before they can reenter



Players now engage more positively in 1 vs. 1 battles or in dribble and evade challenges

In teams of 2 with one ball players must decide when to possess and when to dispossess opponents



Passing in pairs is one way to maintain possession. If a ball is lost both teammates must retrieve

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

U6, U8, U10 ACTIVITIES AND WHY THEY WORK

Theresa provided examples of 6 activities suitable for young players and discussed why these sessions work - emphasizing coaching methods and what variables to manipulate for desired outcomes.



THERESA ECHTERMAYER

Director of Coaching Highlands Ranch Soccer Association

Theresa has been a full time Director of Coaching for over 20 years - 12 years with Real Colorado and 8 years in her current role with Highlands Ranch Soccer Association in Colorado. There is no better topic for Theresa to present, nor many more experienced practitioners working with the U6, U8 and U10 age groups. Theresa is the only staff member overseeing 1350 recreational players ages 4-11. Highlands Ranch Soccer Association is a grassroots club with a very low cost to participate. Theresa also shares her time with Littleton Soccer Club, where she is the DOC in charge of 6 and under age groups, community outreach and TOPSoccer Program. An integral DOC responsibility is coach education and Theresa performs this role for both programs. Theresa also coaches high school teams - boys and girls at Mountain Vista HS and previously coached in the W-League for 6 years with the Fort Collins Force and Denver Lady Cougars. Theresa is an integral member of NSCAA coaching staff and is an NSCAA National Staff Instructor.

Summary of Webinar Presentation

Theresa Echtermeyer started her presentation with a recap of the Principles of Coaching young players outlined by Ian Barker in his introductory session. Theresa divided her webinar into 3 distinct sections: U6, U8 and U10.

U6 Coaching Characteristics

Theresa's focus was on the characteristics of coaches working with children at different age groups. The first section highlighted 5 key characteristics of working with 4 or 5-year-old children:

1. Personality - it is important for the coach to relate well to young players in this age group. Theresa's advice is to be yourself for children feed off the coach's personality and love it when we are positive with them.
2. Performer - Theresa likened the role of the coach to a performer onstage and suggested that children are always watching us, so we have to be careful what we say and how we say it. Pay particular attention to body language, eye contact and the use of our voice - whether soft or loud.
3. Parenting - Theresa sees the role of a coach as an extension of the parents and to this end we need to establish reasonable expectations for behavior and engagement. The sessions need to be structured but not overly so and we must avoid taking the element of free play away at this very young age group.
4. Patience - an important characteristic for any coach working with 4 and 5-year-old players, particularly when we consider that young players need continued repetition and reinforcement of commands and instructions.
5. Play - Theresa suggested that coaches willing to play and get involved in the activities at the levels of the players are more likely to have an enjoyable and successful experience. Theresa quoted Mr. Rogers "play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning".

Theresa's advice and tips for coaching U6 players include:

- Be imaginative by using the activity to tell a story.
- Limit the amount of instruction that you give at any point in the session and give the players an opportunity to get going with the ball as

soon as they arrive.

- Coach in 'layers' of information - gives children little tidbits, enough for them to play the game.
- Select activities that are easy to explain and for children to understand the rules
- Introduce basic principles of the game such as attack and defense by introducing activities that require players to aim for a target such as a goal.

U8 Player Characteristics

For the U8 age group, Theresa focused on the characteristics of players and identified some of the typical behaviors a coach should expect:

1. U6 characteristics still apply - Theresa was quick to point out that many of the characteristics one would expect with a 4-5-year-old are also present as players transition into the next stage of development, such as individual focus and short attention span.
2. Players are more coordinated - as with many other aspects of physical development, coordination is improving and as a result activities can be more challenging than in the previous age group.
3. Players are more social - Theresa explained 6 and 7-year-old players start to get excited about seeing their friends practice and are more likely to want to pair-up than when they were 4-5 years old.
4. Children are able to work in pairs in small groups - resulting from the social development, the coach can now introduce games that involve cooperation between 2 players.
5. More emphasis on skills - although fun is still a crucial element of participation, the coach can now start to introduce more technical skills and use the adult names instead of using child language - i.e. a coach can now refer to 'dribbling' instead of 'taking the dog for a walk'.
6. Players want to please the coach - interestingly, 6 and 7-year-old players are now more interested in what the coach thinks of them and their performance. As a result, what the coach says now takes on more meaning to the player.

Theresa's advice and tips for coaching U8 players include:

- Be watchful for early signs of players looking to separate themselves

from the group and find space away from the masses - these concrete examples of advanced understanding can be highlighted by the coach.

- The coach can start to introduce activities that include competition, as the players enjoy these environments.
- Some activities such as rapid shooting offer an opportunity for players to experience transition from attack to defense and offense to attack.

U10 Player Characteristics

Theresa had described the U10 age group as an important transitional time for many players moving out of recreation soccer into a competitive environment:

1. More ownership of his or her own soccer playing career - players at the U10 level are more inclined to be excited about being on a team and be in part of a group with a common identity and brand. Children at this age group look forward to games against other towns and clubs.
2. Self-esteem is fragile – 8-9-year-old players are still young children and so it is important for the coach to continue to provide constructive coaching intervention sandwiched between a great deal of positive praise.
3. Players have longer focus - certainly in comparison to the formative years of development, a coach of an 8 or 9-year-old can plan to run activities longer and have less activities in a session.
4. Skill development is still the top priority - coaches at this age group have to avoid the trap of spending training time focusing on game performance and limiting the time spent on developing individual technique and working collaboratively in pairs in small groups.
5. Players need to have measurable success - setting homework tasks and challenges within sessions are a great strategy when working with this age group. I.e. introduce juggling challenges and homework activities between sessions.

Theresa’s advice and tips for coaching U10 players include:

- Start to teach the players the principles of attack and defense - starting with the basic principles that can be taught to individuals such as penetration and pressure defending.
- Setup practices so that you can transition quickly between activities - less downtime is needed for breaks - more on task time is required.
- Add competition to the activities in terms of time limits, variable scoring and targets.
- Select activities that provide a coach with an opportunity to teach basic tactics and principles - such as width and support - cover and balance.
- The coach should position him/herself where the pace of the activity and the focus can be manipulated - by controlling restarts and service.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Theresa Echtermeyer

Q1: In the first couple of games (4/5yr olds) you have set up some 1v1 exercises. Is this realistic for recreation club coaches? Neil O’Donnell

Response: Yes it is very realistic. We introduce this 1 v 1 progression with 3 and 4 year olds. It is important to have at least 2 adults helping with demos and managing the players in line. You should find that after a few practices playing this game your players will be able to play with little or no guidance from the coaches.

Q2: For ‘1v1 on the fly’ can you have players play to both goals if you are working on changing direction? Kyle Jackson

Response: I suggest you let the blue team attack one goal and the red team attack the other goal. This game is designed to help young players learn the rules of the game and to help them become comfortable in 1 v 1 duals to a specific target.

Q3: Can the rapid shooting game be done with one goalkeeper that has been designated as the team goalkeeper rather than having rotating goalkeepers? Jake Brown

Response: Yes! I would suggest that you have at least 3 different players take turns as goalkeeper. The goalkeeper will get exhausted pretty quickly in this activity due to the amount of shots being taken in a short period of time.

Q4: In the rapid shooting games, it appeared that the graphic showed a full sized goal - was that the intent? David Kovack

Response: Yes. Full sized goals.

Q5: In the timed tag activity, would it be wrong if I let players use a ball to tag others by throwing it at an opponent? Giuseppe Emma

Response: Not at all. I have never tried this with my teams, but I could see players enjoying another variation to the game. You would need to keep safety protocol in mind. Some rules/guidelines might include: Players can only tag below the waste and all tosses have to be from within 3 or fewer steps or 3 yards away.

Q6: Can you use the 6 ball game to start to teach some defending basics also? Kevin Denson

Response: Absolutely! This is a great game to teach players the basic principles of defending. You can also teach defenders techniques of tackling and when and how to WIN the ball.

Q7: Is there a certain time limit for the 6 ball game that you would recommend for the U10 age group? Emily Hester

Response: No time limit. The game is over after the 6th ball has been won by the defenders or cleared out of the grid. If you are worried about the game going too long just add more defenders. Make sure you play at least two rounds. If you have 3 groups of 4 and you give each team two opportunities to be the attacking team, this game should take 10 to 12 minutes.

Q8: For U6 what dimensions would you recommend for 1 v 1’s? Othon Castillo

Response: 15x20 is a good starting point. If players are constantly kicking or dribbling the ball out of bounds you may need to increase the space so they have more success. If your players need more of a challenge beating players in tighter spaces then make the grid smaller.

Q9: How important are dribbling moves, fakes and feints when encouraging youth players to take risks and play creatively? When should those skills be introduced at the youth level? Antonio Superbia

Response: I think you can introduce ‘moves’ as young as age 4. The key is to keep it fun for the little ones. In the Port and Starboard game the coach might demo a couple of ‘moves’ during the activity. The goal is to paint the picture quickly and let them be creative! Don’t worry too much at the younger ages if the kids are not executing the move perfectly. As the season progresses you as the coach can ‘layer’ in more moves in each of your training sessions. As players get older they absolutely need to have as many ‘tricks’ and ‘moves’ in their soccer ‘tool box’ as possible! The coach can continue to encourage players to try new moves and use them to beat opponents during practices and games.

Q10: When should we encourage kids to pass the ball when he is a star dribbler? Pedro Becerra

Response: This is a difficult one. At the youth level there are always players who are ahead of their teammates and opponents on the player development scale. The fine line is when and how do we ask those 'star dribblers' to pass the ball? I would say for 4, 5 and 6 year olds the answer is to let them dribble and shoot all they want. I think by age 7 or 8 players are able to see passing as an option and a means to be successful when beating the opponent or keeping possession. During training you can show your players when it might be better to pass the ball to a teammate instead of trying to dribble and beat the entire team. It is very important that ALL players ages 10 and under have the confidence to take players on, so continue to work on 1 v 1's, and encourage players to take risks and enjoy having the ball at their feet. There will be plenty of time to teach players more about team tactics as they get older.

Q11: When coaching 5 and 6 year old players, should I do exercises where it is girl v boy, or always boy v boy and girl v girl? Jean-Luc Hourcade

Response: At age 5 and 6 you can match boys against girls. It is probably more important to match players of similar athleticism and awareness. Try not to match up a 'Nature lover' with a 'Cheetah' in every round.

Q12: When playing at u6/u8/u10 levels what is your opinion on teams playing as co-ed rather than boys and girls on their own? Matthew Hodgson

Response: I have very little experience with co-ed youth soccer teams. I know for some leagues it is easier to form teams that are co-ed because of player numbers, field locations and coaching availability. I know that many of these leagues have much success retaining numbers and developing players in a co-ed format. I think one of the bigger issues with placing players on co-ed league teams at the young ages is the dilemma of how you will place these players on teams in the future. By age 9 players will most likely have to be put on an all boys team or all girls team to prepare for the transition into competitive. This could be a tough thing to administrate as well as being difficult on the players to be split apart after playing together for 4 or 5 years.

Q13: I've found when I turn activities into competitive games, the players tend to do the activities 'sloppy' to "win" the competition and they don't concentrate on the actual skill I'm trying to teach. What's the best way to avoid this? Doug Barkholz

Response: I think if you encourage players to perform one or two moves that you have been working on during the 1 v 1's or add conditions to activities as needed you can keep your practice constructive and competitive at the same time. If players are getting 'sloppy' you might want to have a quick 'focus' moment during the training session. Ask players what they think they are doing well and then follow with asking them what they need to improve on to have more success and to get better!

Q14: I've run into not enough players showing up to practice because they have other extracurricular activities and it really throws off practice for the team - any suggestions? Jenny Crespo

Response: I think this will always be a problem with younger teams. Children who are 8, 9 and 10 years old are involved in multiple activities. I think the important thing is for you to set player and team expectations and standards before the season begins. Try to explain to the parents the benefits of having the majority of players at trainings and games the majority of the time. Of course players will have conflicts and you must expect that they will miss some soccer along the way. Many clubs have guidelines set in place to help you manage your team. If you have

multiple players with conflicts see if you can move at least one practice day or time to fit every family's schedule.

This is a very complicated subject and I could write at least another two paragraphs, but my best advice is to focus on the players who ARE at your trainings. Coaches need to be flexible and adjust practice plans as needed. Maybe focus on 1 v 1's or fun shooting activities. These practices can be very productive and often are the most fun!

Q15: Should you start fast footwork training prior to the games for U6 players or is it too early to emphasize technical skills? Grant Vreuls

Response: I think any warm up that gets players touching a ball and having fun is great for pre-game warm up! Too often we see 7 players waiting in line to shoot on goal. Another great pre-game warm up is the 1 v 1 on the fly that I used in this webinar series. Start with the fast footwork then move right to a small field set up with cones and play 1 v 1 for 5 minutes and your team should be ready to go!

Q16: What is the best way to motivate U10 boys to give you a 100% in practice when they are only giving you less than 100%? Dan Komorowski

Response: I'm not sure it's realistic to get 100% from an entire group of 10 year olds every moment of every session. That being said, I think the best way to get the most out of youth players is to set up training sessions that are full of challenging and fun activities. Keep coaching moments short and concise. Allow players to participate in problem solving. Ask THEM how they think the team is doing? What can we do to make practice better and more enjoyable? Finally, make sure you catch them 'being good'. The best way to get the behavior you want is to PRAISE individual players and your team when they ARE performing at high levels.

Q17: What do you do when the boys at U10 age group misbehave and are not paying attention? Do you recommend running, push-ups and at what point would you sit a player out? Dan Komorowski

Response: In matters of ongoing discipline issues it's always best for you to bring the parent of the player or players involved into the solution. I don't ever use physical activity as a punishment. I think sitting players out can be avoided if the coaches are able to set the right tone and expectations for their players. Here are some suggestions on how to set a good tone for training so you can possibly avoid some of these issues: I think trying to build a good rapport with your players and giving them ownership in the team sets everyone up for success. Communication is the key. If players feel like they are connected with you and with each other throughout session this will help. Start with a quick team huddle at the beginning of training and ask the boys how their day was. Be interested in what is going on in their lives. Keep 'happy' and establish eye contact and use a language they can relate to. Then get them playing quickly in a fun activity that does not require a lot of set up or explanation from the coach. Get them moving! Throughout the session ask questions and give players an opportunity to give you feedback. If players feel like they are part of the solution and valued by the coach they are less likely to drift off or act out. Smiling and being positive also sets a great tone for your training session. Players feed off our energy and if we are positive and calm they can feel that.

Q18: Would you rate the use of tactic board too pedantic to explain sessions to U6? Giuseppe Emma

Response: I would not use a tactic board for U6 players. I think a tactic board can be used for older age groups maybe U9's and above and even then I would use it sparingly. When you are teaching tactics it's always better to paint clear pictures for players when they are on the field with the ball and other players. It's true; "The game is the best teacher."

Q19: You mentioned keeping games with older ones competitive; how do you balance the learning of motor skills and spatial awareness brought out in the small sided activities with playing these games to win? James Ballin

Response: I think it is different for every team and each age group. If you design your training sessions to go from simple to complex I think you will find the balance you are looking for. Being competitive doesn't mean you have to sacrifice quality or technique. Adding games that are competitive will put players in more realistic game situations and promote player development.

Q20: If the players are developing well in the training environment but in league play they are losing, how do you recommend explaining this to the parents? James Ballin

Response: Keep parents informed about what the club and/or your goals are for your team and their age group. I think if parents and players are given the 'why' not just the 'what' then everyone involved will appreciate that you are trying to develop soccer players vs. just trying to win games. Are there other ways you can measure your team's and players' successes besides by their win loss record? Here are a few player development oriented goals that you might tell parents you are focusing on: Players are; striking the ball better, able to connect passes, creating scoring opportunities, moving together as a unit, working hard and enjoying themselves, etc. This takes the emphasis off the result on Saturday's game and gives players and parents the opportunity to focus on their team and individual successes! I would also ask your club to re-evaluate your league placement if you are losing more than 80% of your games. This might mean you belong in a different division.

Q21: How do you properly deal with the over helpful parent who tries to coach during your practices? Marc Campoverde

Response: I would recommend that you have a club coach or director help you with this. I always let parents know that it's very difficult for players to have more than one person giving them instruction. Imagine what it must be like for an 8 year old to have two parents and two coaches yelling at them at the same time 4 different directives. YIKES! We want the player to become confident and competent as decision makers on the pitch. Players can only accomplish this if they are given the freedom to make their own decisions and mistakes without an adult yelling out constant feedback or instructions during games and practices. I know that some parents struggle letting go and allowing the coach to do the teaching. Many clubs and programs have parent code of conduct rules and behavior guidelines. If your club has this in place, be sure to go over these rules and guidelines in your pre-season parent meeting. If the problem persists and you are not comfortable addressing this issue with the over helpful parent it is always best to ask a club coach or director to step in.

1 v 1 On the fly!

This is a fast paced and competitive activity ideal for all age groups. The 1 v 1 set up encourages use of all necessary techniques and tactics needed to be successful in 1 v 1 duals.

WHY USE IT

For young players it is important that they understand the simple rules of the game, such as out of bounds and which goal to go towards. There is also a fun team element to this game.

SET UP

15x20 yard grid. Two small goals or 4 tall cones. 6 small disc cones. 6 yellow and 6 green bibs.

Coach A is on one touchline with as many balls as possible at his/her feet. 3-6 players either side of the coach. Coach B (or parent) stands just inside the far touchline at the half.

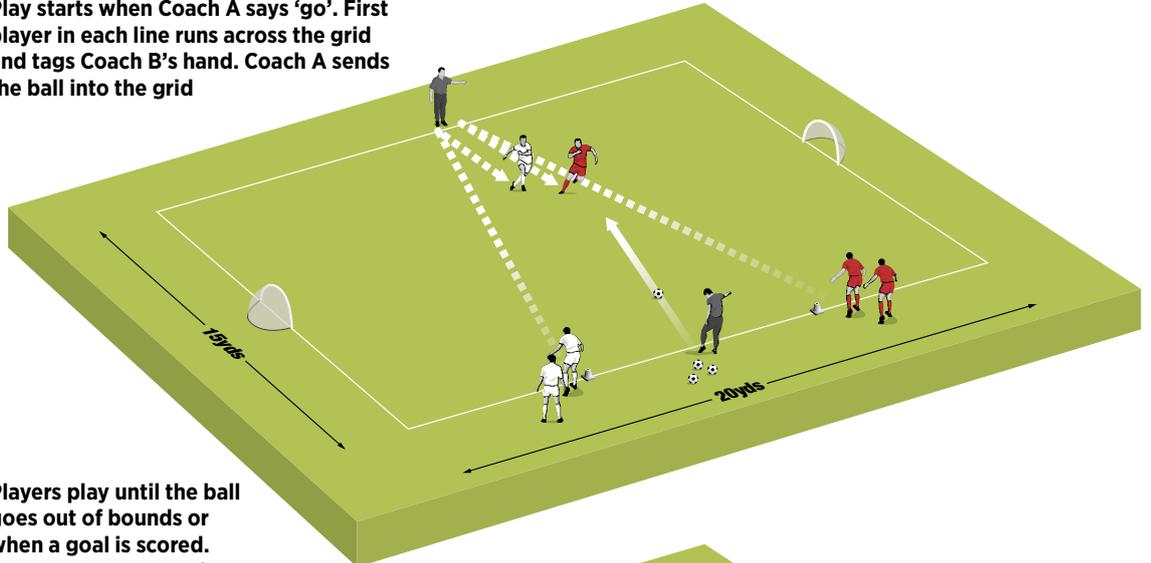
HOW TO PLAY

Each team is given a name - i.e. Pineapples and Kiwis. Make sure each team knows which goal they are trying to score on. Then on the coach's command the first player in each team run over to Coach B and tags his/her hand. The two players then turn and look for the ball passed into the grid by Coach A. The players are allowed to play until a goal is scored or until the ball goes out of bounds.

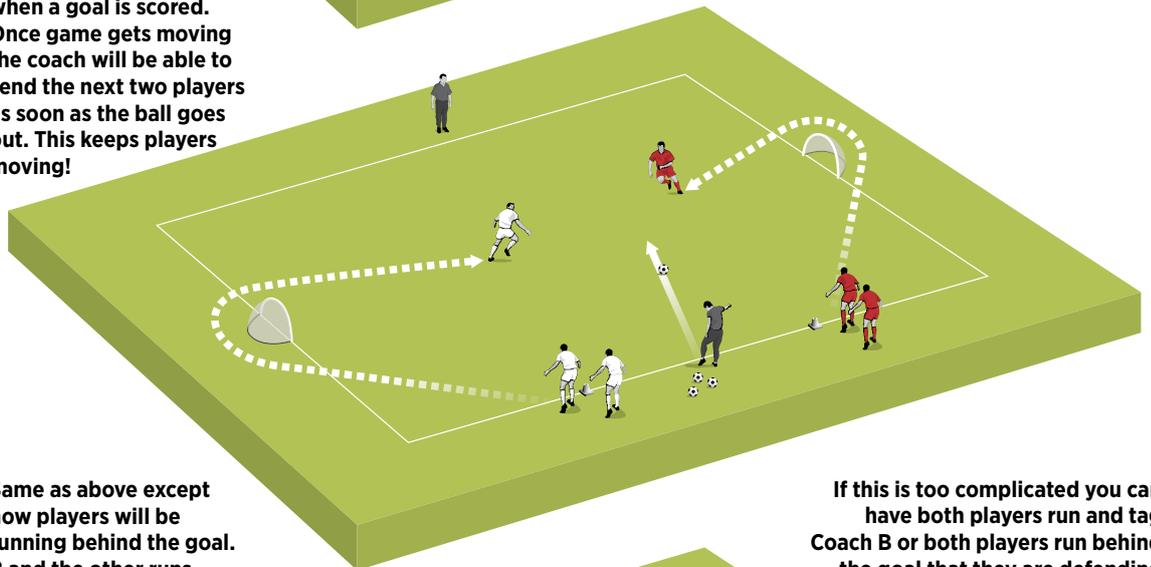
TECHNIQUE

Coach encourages players to dribble the ball and KEEP IT IN PLAY! Coach can also teach players to look up, keep the ball close when they are attacking and go with speed and SHOOT!

Play starts when Coach A says 'go'. First player in each line runs across the grid and tags Coach B's hand. Coach A sends the ball into the grid

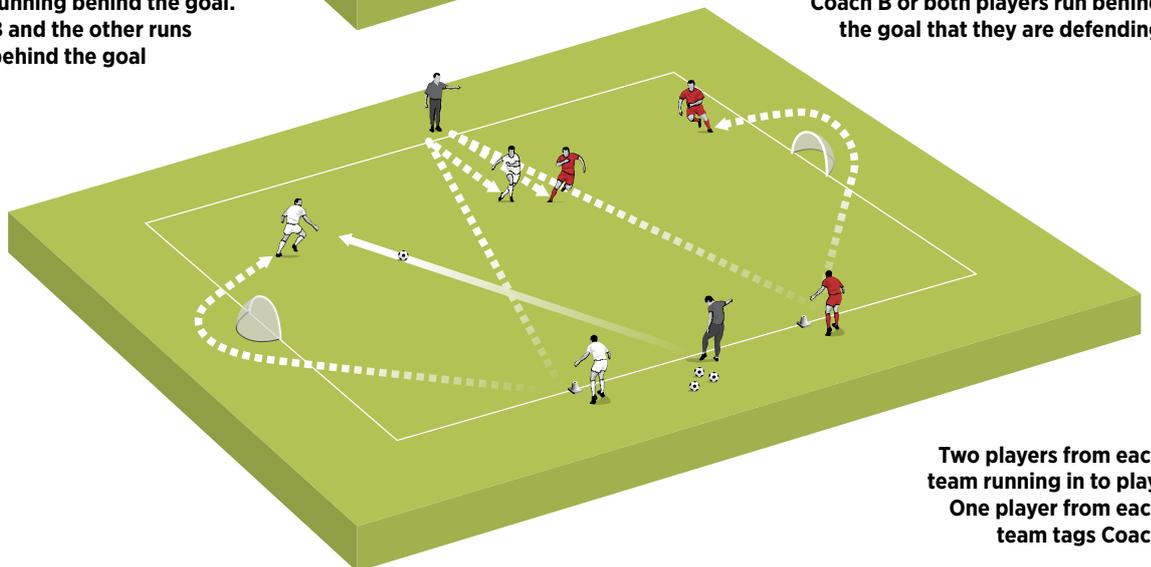


Players play until the ball goes out of bounds or when a goal is scored. Once game gets moving the coach will be able to send the next two players as soon as the ball goes out. This keeps players moving!



Same as above except now players will be running behind the goal. B and the other runs behind the goal

If this is too complicated you can have both players run and tag Coach B or both players run behind the goal that they are defending



Two players from each team running in to play. One player from each team tags Coach

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Port and Starboard

This activity will help get player's attention and work on their listening skills. Forward and lateral dribbling and a strong emphasis on ball mastery - close control and change of pace.

WHY USE IT

Age appropriate and FUN. Players encouraged to be creative and imaginative. Works on fundamental movement skills. One ball per player ratio = many touches on the ball.

SET UP

20 x 20 grid. Each player with a ball. Four tall cones set up in a diamond shape 3 red, 3 yellow & 3 green bibs.

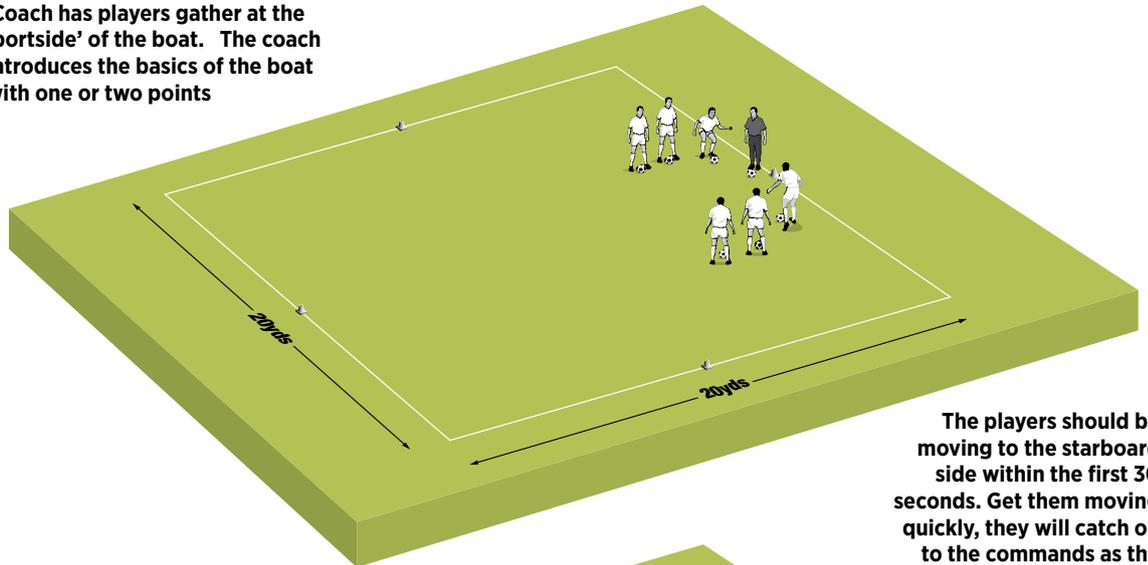
HOW TO PLAY

Coach explains to the players they are sailors on a ship. The coach is the captain. The coach has a variety of commands for the sailors as they move around the ship dribbling their soccer balls. All start at the 'port' and then move around the ship to the starboard, bow and stern. Along the way players may be asked to put their foot on the ball and 'salute the captain', 'hit the deck', work on special tricks and moves with and without the ball. The list is endless!

TECHNIQUE

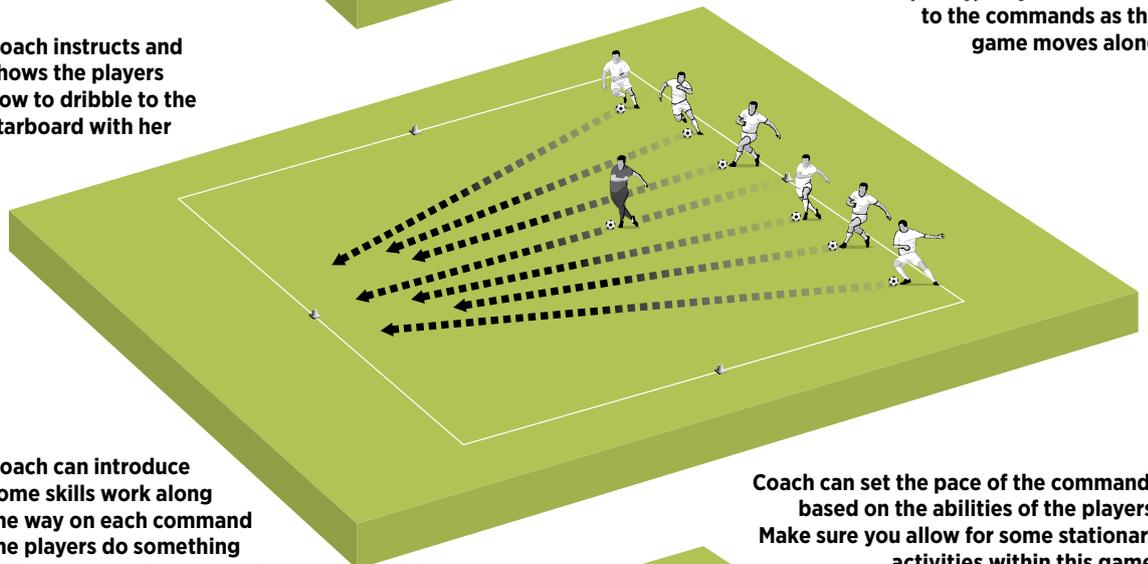
Players work on dribbling and body movements in a fun imaginative environment. Coach can add more complex 'commands' as the captain. Coach should be looking for players to be active with and without the ball. Ask them to keep their head up and be aware of the other 'sailors'. Encourage players to dribble with both feet.

Coach has players gather at the 'portside' of the boat. The coach introduces the basics of the boat with one or two points



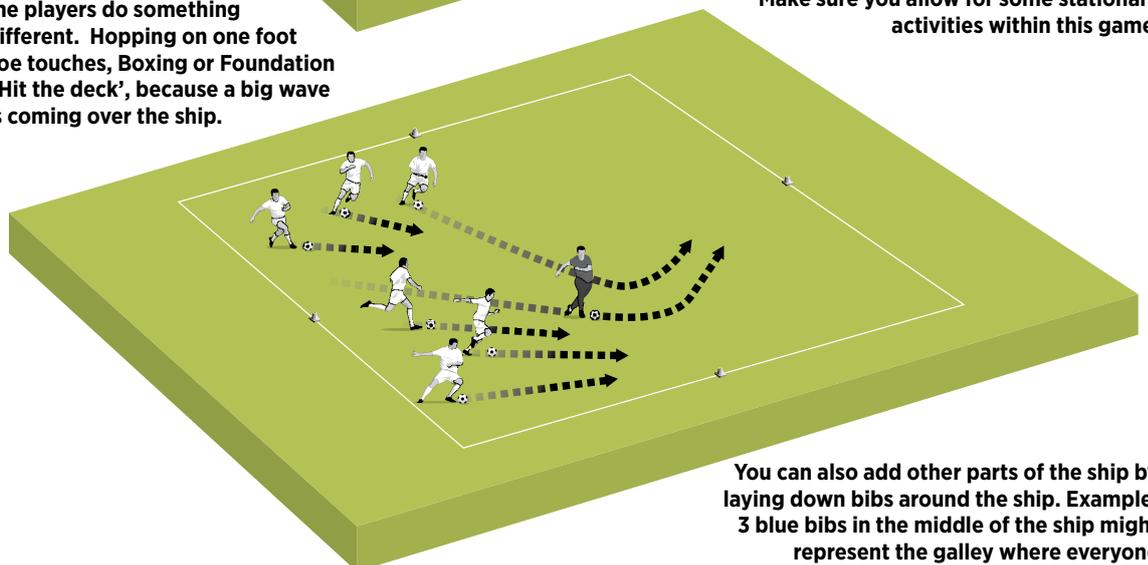
The players should be moving to the starboard side within the first 30 seconds. Get them moving quickly, they will catch on to the commands as the game moves along

Coach instructs and shows the players how to dribble to the starboard with her



Coach can set the pace of the commands based on the abilities of the players. Make sure you allow for some stationary activities within this game.

Coach can introduce some skills work along the way on each command the players do something different. Hopping on one foot Toe touches, Boxing or Foundation "Hit the deck", because a big wave is coming over the ship.



You can also add other parts of the ship by laying down bibs around the ship. Example: 3 blue bibs in the middle of the ship might represent the galley where everyone gathers to eat

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Timed Tag

This is a good fitness/agility game. Tag requires players to move quickly in small spaces and with short bursts of high intensity. This transfers well to the game of soccer.

WHY USE IT

Tag is fun and even young players come up with strategies on how to remain in the game longer. Best reason to use this game, is that it is competitive and FUN!

SET UP

15 x 15 grid (can be larger if needed), 10-12 players each player will need a ball. 4 red bibs, 8 small disc cones to mark the grid.

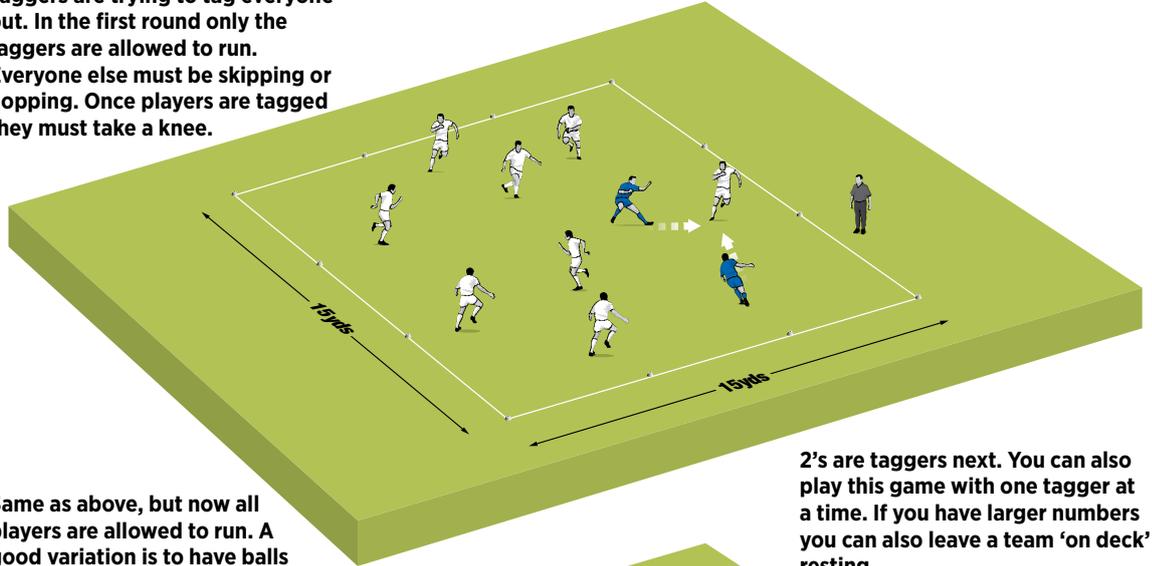
HOW TO PLAY

Pairs numbered 1 to 6. 1's stand next to the coach and 2's in the grid without a ball. On the coaches command 1's run into the grid and work together to try and tag as many players as they can in a 30 second period. If they tag all the players before the 30 seconds the coach will call out their time. "The time to beat is 22 seconds." Then the 2's repeat. Tagged players take a knee either inside or outside of the grid.

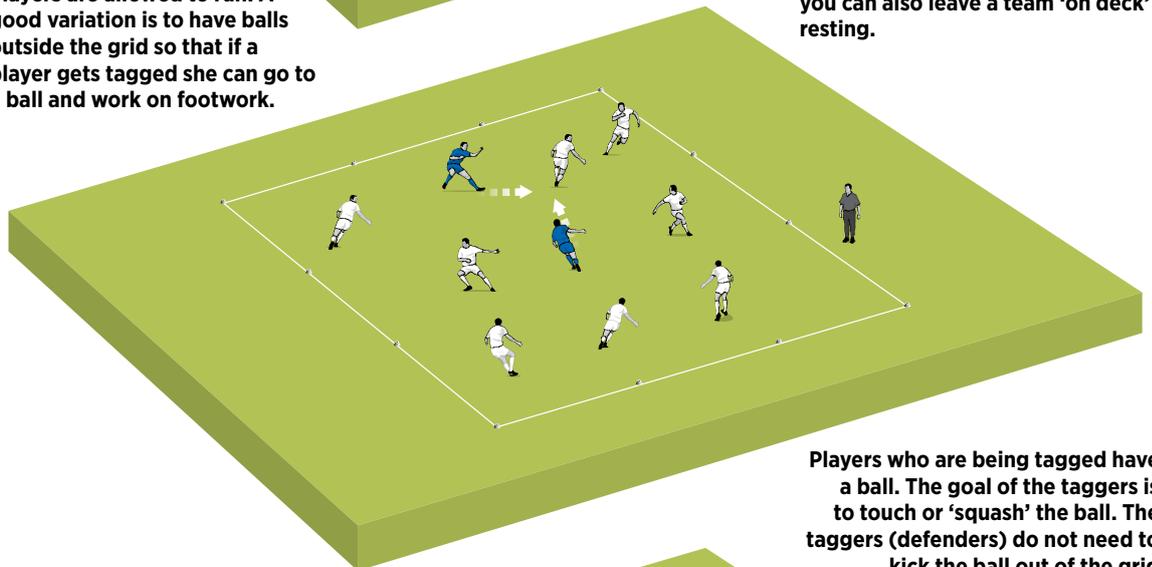
TECHNIQUE

Players look up and moving/darting quickly in and out of each other to avoid running into a teammate. Taggers need to come up with a system they think works best and work together to tag everyone in the shortest amount of time. This is a great opportunity for players to come up with strategies and problem solve on their own. Let the players think for themselves.

Taggers are trying to tag everyone out. In the first round only the taggers are allowed to run. Everyone else must be skipping or hopping. Once players are tagged they must take a knee.

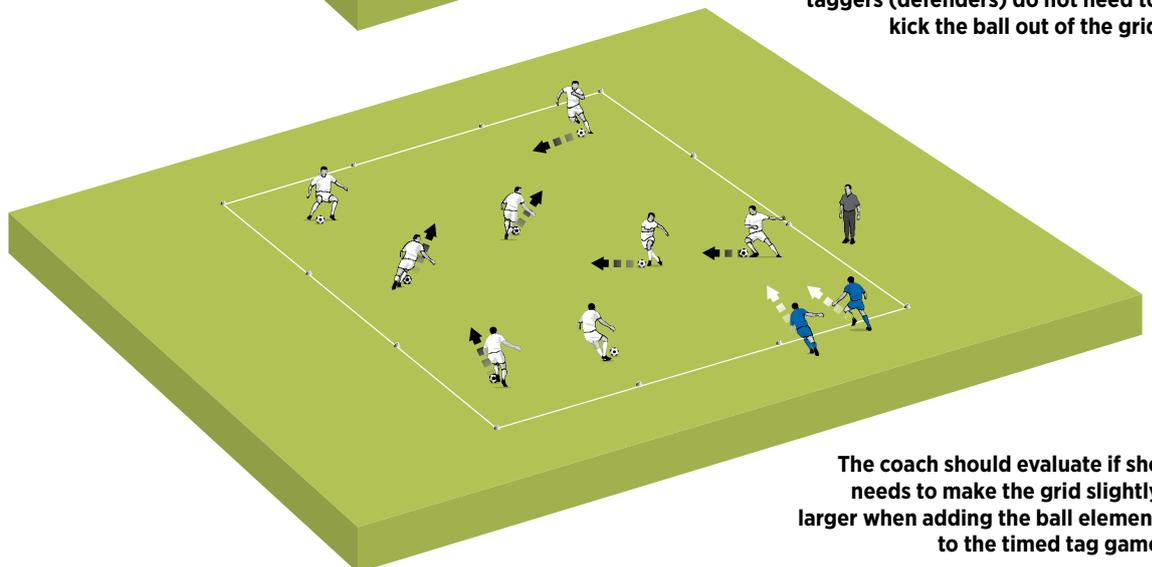


Same as above, but now all players are allowed to run. A good variation is to have balls outside the grid so that if a player gets tagged she can go to a ball and work on footwork.



2's are taggers next. You can also play this game with one tagger at a time. If you have larger numbers you can also leave a team 'on deck' resting.

Players who are being tagged have a ball. The goal of the taggers is to touch or 'squash' the ball. The taggers (defenders) do not need to kick the ball out of the grid



The coach should evaluate if she needs to make the grid slightly larger when adding the ball element to the timed tag game

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Rapid Shooting

This fun shooting activity gives all players the opportunity to shoot in a fast paced competitive game. The goal is to encourage young players to shoot when they are in shooting range.

WHY USE IT

Coaches can focus on shooting technique and encouraging players to be CONFIDENT in front of the goal. This game also allows all players on the team to be in the goal and work on shot stopping.

SET UP

40 x 44 yards (penalty area), 1 goal, Two teams of 5 to 8 players, 20 or more balls.

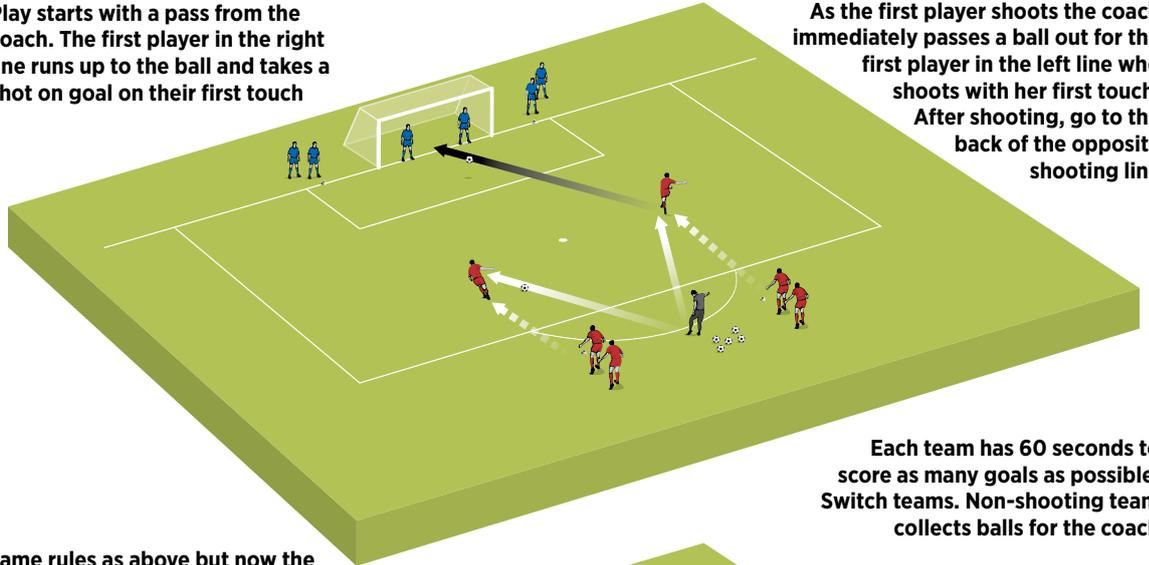
HOW TO PLAY

One team shooting team and the other are defending. Defending team has two goalkeepers in the goal at a time. If a goal is scored, the keepers run out and tag the next two keepers who take position in the goal. The coach passes balls to right and the left for attackers. First time shots. After shooting the attacker goes to the end of the shooting line. One minute to get as many goals as they can. Distribute balls quickly every 2 to 3 seconds keeping the game moving quickly. If the coach runs out of balls before one minute is up, stop the time and allow players to collect balls and then re-start the clock. At the end of one minute teams switch roles.

TECHNIQUE

The primary focus for this activity is on mentality of shooting in and around the goal area. We want players to go to the ball and shoot with confidence!

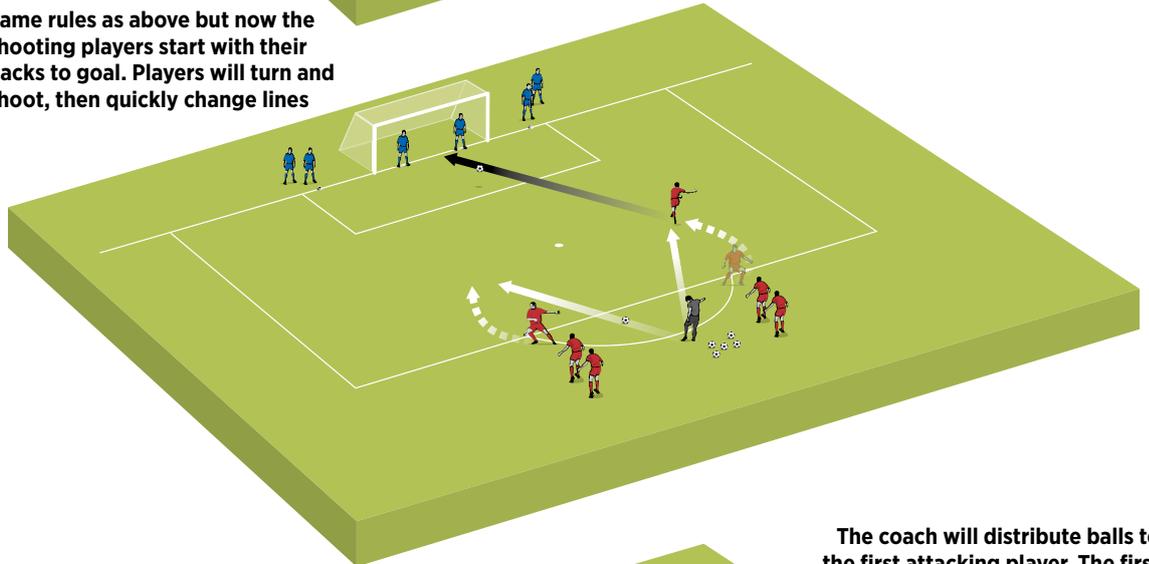
Play starts with a pass from the coach. The first player in the right line runs up to the ball and takes a shot on goal on their first touch



As the first player shoots the coach immediately passes a ball out for the first player in the left line who shoots with her first touch. After shooting, go to the back of the opposite shooting line

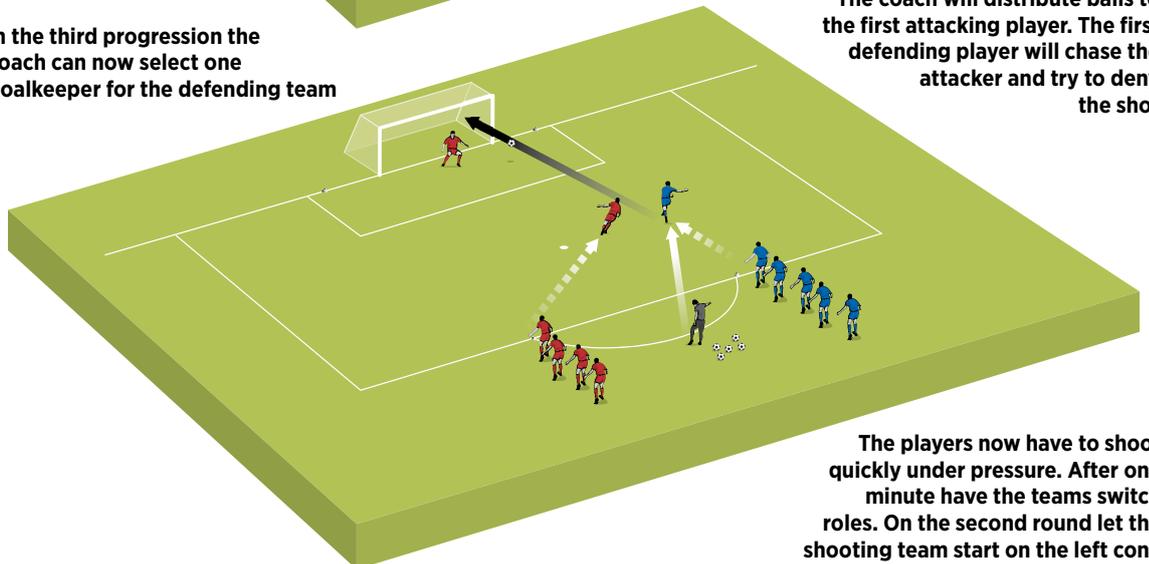
Each team has 60 seconds to score as many goals as possible. Switch teams. Non-shooting team collects balls for the coach

Same rules as above but now the shooting players start with their backs to goal. Players will turn and shoot, then quickly change lines



The coach will distribute balls to the first attacking player. The first defending player will chase the attacker and try to deny the shot

In the third progression the coach can now select one goalkeeper for the defending team



The players now have to shoot quickly under pressure. After one minute have the teams switch roles. On the second round let the shooting team start on the left cone

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

6 Ball Game

Good game to work on passing and receiving technique under pressure. Players learn to play away from pressure and to battle to keep possession.

WHY USE IT

Supporting attackers learn to move quickly and change their depth and angle or support based on the defensive pressure on the ball. Transitions are quick and players are put in game like pressure scenarios.

SET UP

15 x 20 grid to start & 20 x 25 grid to end, 12 Players, 8 cones, 12 soccer balls, 4 red bibs, 4 green bibs.

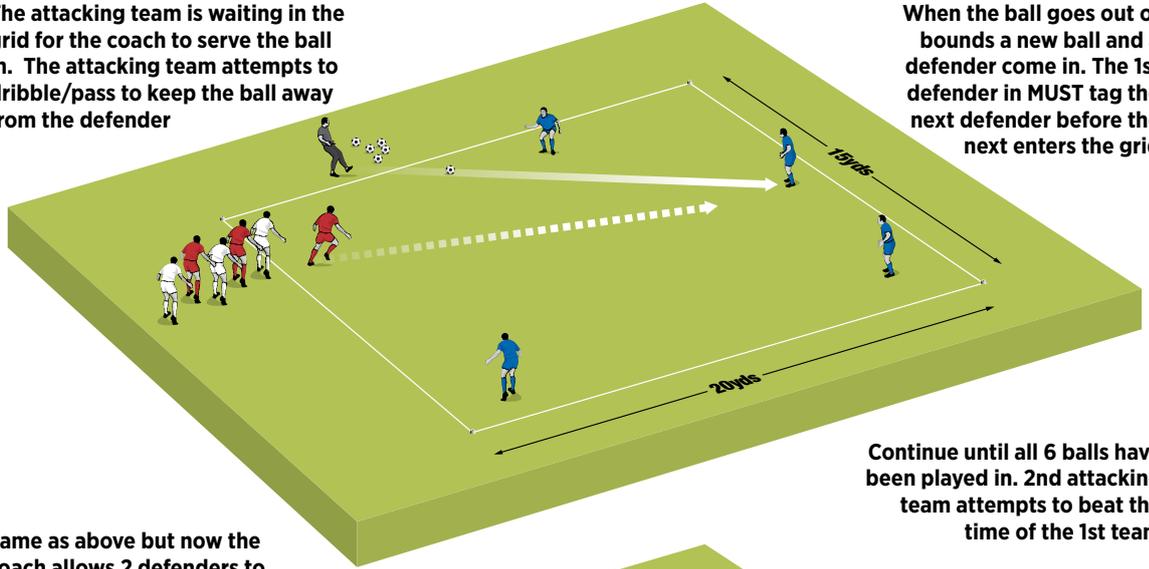
HOW TO PLAY

Coach has 6 balls. When coach serves in the first ball to the attacking team the clock starts and the first defender is allowed to enter the grid. The defender is trying to win the ball and kick it out. The attacking team is trying to keep possession. When the defender clears the ball out of the grid he/she needs to run to tag the next defender in line. During that time the coach serves out a second ball to the attacking team. This goes on until all 6 balls have been played and cleared from the grid. Switch teams.

TECHNIQUE

How is their first touch? Are they receiving with the most logical foot and which surface of the foot are they using to receive? Are players off the ball getting into good supporting positions in a timely manner? Are players communicating with each other?

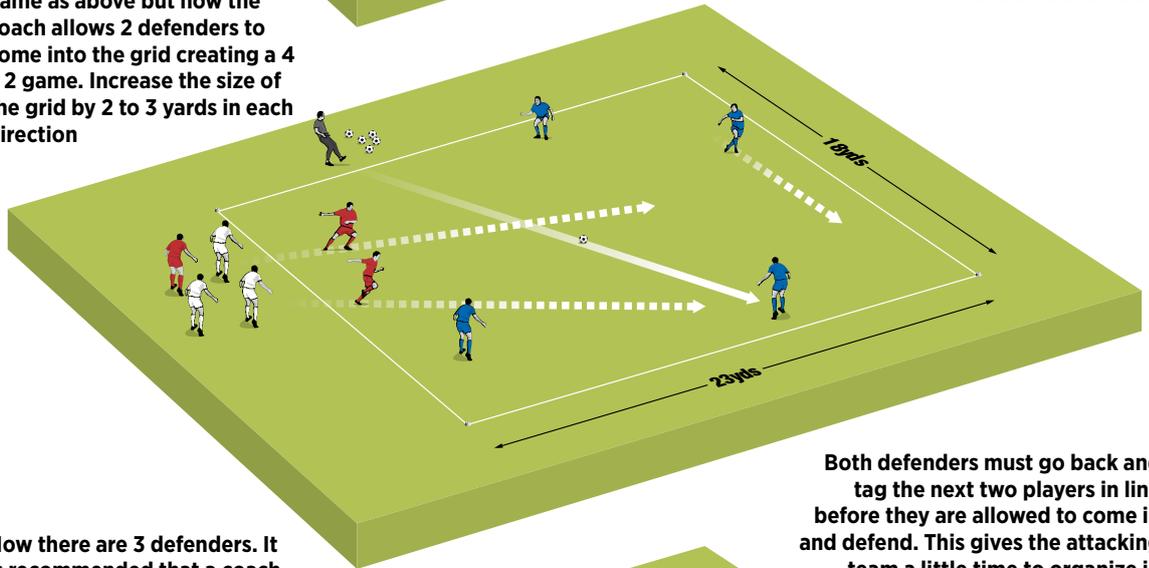
The attacking team is waiting in the grid for the coach to serve the ball in. The attacking team attempts to dribble/pass to keep the ball away from the defender



When the ball goes out of bounds a new ball and a defender come in. The 1st defender in MUST tag the next defender before the next enters the grid

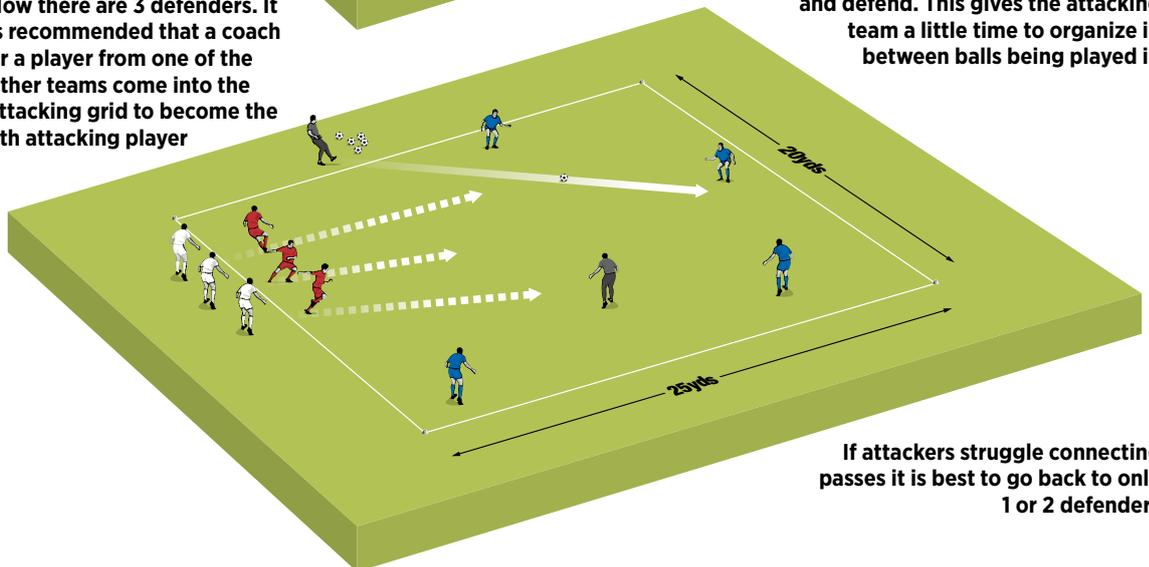
Continue until all 6 balls have been played in. 2nd attacking team attempts to beat the time of the 1st team

Same as above but now the coach allows 2 defenders to come into the grid creating a 4 v 2 game. Increase the size of the grid by 2 to 3 yards in each direction



Both defenders must go back and tag the next two players in line before they are allowed to come in and defend. This gives the attacking team a little time to organize in between balls being played in

Now there are 3 defenders. It is recommended that a coach or a player from one of the other teams come into the attacking grid to become the 5th attacking player



If attackers struggle connecting passes it is best to go back to only 1 or 2 defenders

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

4 v 1 / 4 v 2 in thirds

The game provides attackers with many opportunities to pass and receive the ball in a 'live' situation – great for working on technique and problem solving in a fun quick paced environment.

WHY USE IT

A possession game rewarding attackers and defenders.

SET UP

12 players, 12 soccer balls
4 green and 4 red bibs,
16 small disc cones, 4 tall cones, One grid set up in thirds (Two end thirds are 15 x 20, Middle third is 10 x 20)

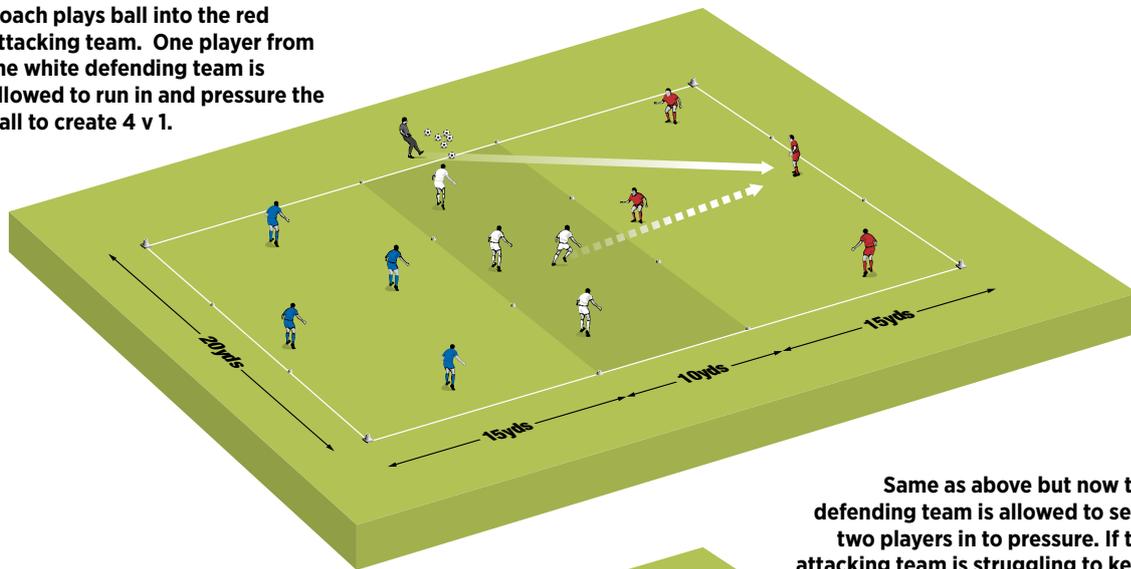
HOW TO PLAY

3 teams of 3-5 players. Each team is given a designated 'third' to start in. The two end thirds are the attacking/possessing teams. The team in the middle third is the defending team. Coach passes a ball into one of the end thirds. The team in that third will play keep away from the defending team. To start, the defending team is only allowed one player to come in and pressure. If the defending player wins the ball he/she either plays the ball out or tries to get the ball back to her team in the middle third. The defending team scores a point if they get the ball back to the middle third or to the coach. The attacking team gets a point if they make a designated number of consecutive passes.

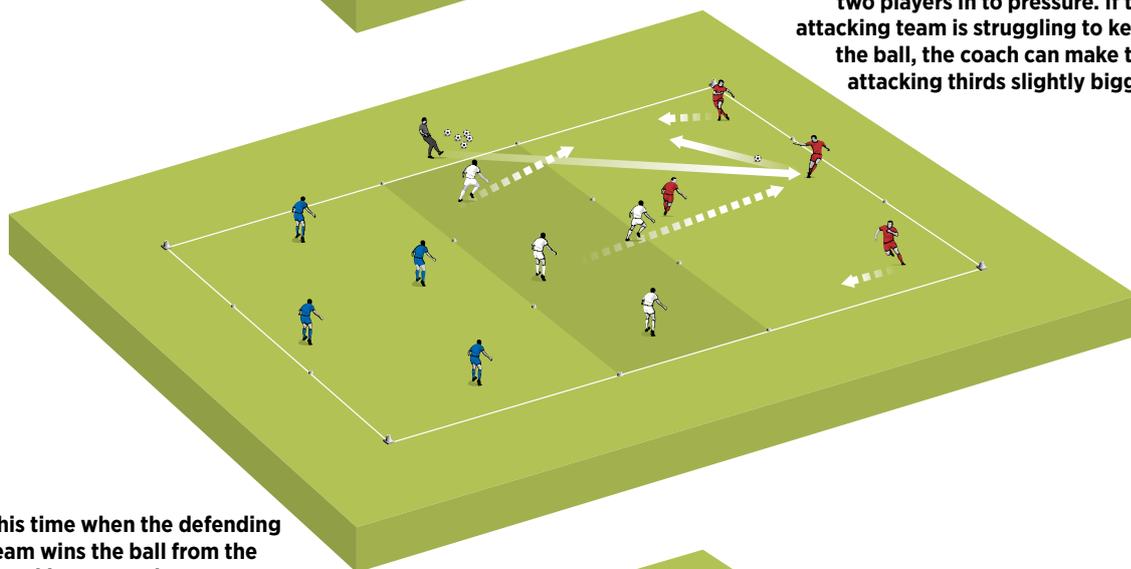
TECHNIQUE

Coach is looking for attacking players to move off the ball and get into good angles of support. Coach should look for defenders to isolate players 1 v 1 when possible and take advantage of technical errors.

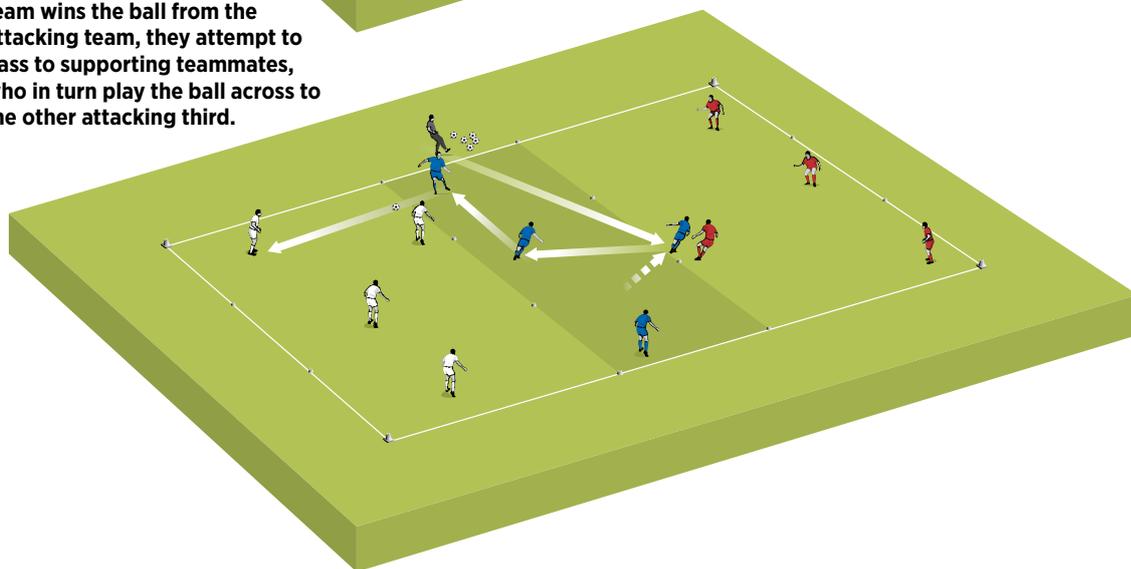
Coach plays ball into the red attacking team. One player from the white defending team is allowed to run in and pressure the ball to create 4 v 1.



Same as above but now the defending team is allowed to send two players in to pressure. If the attacking team is struggling to keep the ball, the coach can make the attacking thirds slightly bigger



This time when the defending team wins the ball from the attacking team, they attempt to pass to supporting teammates, who in turn play the ball across to the other attacking third.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

GOOD TEACHING U6, U8, U10

Sam examined the important role of the youth coach and provided examples of 6 activities suitable for young players - emphasizing characteristics of a good coach of U6, U8 and U10 players.



SAM SNOW
Technical Director, US Youth Soccer

Sam Snow joined the Technical Department of US Youth Soccer, the largest youth sports organization in America in 2003. His experience and knowledge are from many years spent in national, collegiate and youth education. Sam has coached at the high school, collegiate, state and regional levels. Sam is a former Director of Coaching for Louisiana Soccer Association and is a published author. He has a bachelor's degree from Virginia Wesleyan College and a Masters Degree from the University of South Florida

Summary of Webinar Presentation

In the early part of Sam's webinar presentation he went into great detail to stress the important role a coach plays in the lives of young players. He asked participants to consider themselves teachers of the game and to accept a great responsibility of ensuring that formative experiences for young players are positive.

Sam referred to US Soccer's player development pyramid and its categorization of 3 zones – Zone 1 (U6-U12) Zone 2 (U13-U17) and Zone 3 (U18 and older). He suggested that coaches working with players in Zone 1 (U6 – U12) should think of themselves as a teacher more so than a team manager.

Equally, Sam indicated that formal training and mentoring of coaches working with young players is as important, if not more important than working with teenagers. Sam made particular mention of a traditional model prevalent in many towns across the country where clubs assign the lowest qualified and experienced coaches to the young teams - the 'caretaker' volunteer coach. No doubt volunteer coaches have an important role to play in the development of youth soccer players, but Sam urged clubs to provide these coaches with oversight and support by seasoned practitioners. Coaches can, after all, impact an individual's passion for the game, technical developments, tactical understanding and can teach a young person life skills and good citizenship. In summary, clubs and coaches must take their responsibility seriously at these critical age groups.

Sam described some key attributes of coaches working with U6, U8 and U10 players:

- Adaptable - particularly with the youngest players - 4 and 5 years of age - a coach must be ready to react positively to all sorts of unexpected occurrences/tangents and must be prepared to 'be in the moment'.
- Ready to modify the rules - during the course of a typical training session with young players, it is highly likely that the activity won't go entirely as expected. To this end the coach must be able to adjust the environment and manipulated variables to fit the players and not force the players to fit into the activity. Although there are lessons to be learned in 'failure', with young players the coach

should attempt to create as many 'successful' situations as possible.

- Training session activities - Sam emphasized the importance of planning and suggested it was easy to identify those coaches deciding to 'wing it'. During the game environment the coach should seek teaching opportunities not only for those players actively participating in the game but more importantly with those players sitting on the sideline ready to enter the fray.
- Patience is a virtue of a quality coach of young players - they have a clear appreciation that mastery of complex techniques, tactics and other performance variables take time and require significant amount of repetition and reinforcement.
- The 'Guide on the Side' - Sam mentioned that primary coaching education organizations such as NSCAA, US Youth Soccer, and US Soccer encourage coaching candidates to veer away from traditional command style coaching (where the coach is the focal point), to styles more akin to guided discovery (where players are guided to tackle problems and create solutions).

Characteristics of a Good Coach

Disbursed between activities, Sam brought the discussion back to what makes an ideal youth coach and suggested 9 characteristics of a good coach:

1. A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful, but is not the triumph of sports.
2. A kid's coach is someone who goes to work early, misses meals, gives away weekends and plays havoc with family schedules so he or she can help out a group of youngsters.
3. A good coach is someone who stays half an hour or more after practice to make sure every one of the players has a safe ride home.
4. A good coach is someone who rarely hears a mom or dad say 'Hey thanks', but receives a lot of advice on game day.
5. A good coach is someone who makes sure that everyone gets to play.
6. A good coach is someone who teaches young people that winning is not everything, but still lies in bed at night staring at the ceiling wondering whether he/she might have done anything differently to have turned a loss into a win.
7. A good coach is someone who can help a child learn to take mistakes in stride.
8. A good coach is someone who sometimes helps a child to develop ability and confidence that sometimes did not exist before.

9. A good coach is someone a youngster will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over.

Coaching Tidbits

Sam concluded with some coaching tidbits and urged Directors and individuals responsible for training to emphasize these tips when preparing coaches for the new season:

- Have the coach look into the sun/wind/rain/crowd/other game - limit the number of distractions for players and allow them to concentrate on the coaches instruction.
- Adjust grid size - part of the art of coaching is to make changes during the course of a coaching session to emphasize different coaching points and to bring out the best in players.
- Change number of players - another variable that the coach should look to manipulate is the number of players on the defensive and offensive sides of the ball - increasing or decreasing the number to reflect the focus of the session.
- Get eye level with the players now and then.
- Age & activity appropriate questions - if using the guided discovery methodology, it is important to ensure that the questions are appropriate to the cognitive abilities of the player - low order questions for U6 and U8 players and higher order questions for U10 and above.
- Player leadership - set up grid, pick up cones, peer teaching - give players responsibility to help the coach in setting up and breaking down the practice area, and where appropriate lead their peers in demonstrations and organization.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Sam Snow

Q1: Any suggestions for educating new coaches (and parents) who think that “development is more important than victory” for coaches whose teams tend to lose many games? Richard Fowler

Response: I want coaches, parents and club administrators to understand that striving to win is indeed an objective with even the youngest players. Striving to win means trying your best; that is an important life lesson as well as a soccer lesson. The difficulty arises when desire to win quashes development. You see adults do that when they scream at referees or coaches, let a player ‘ride the pine’ for an entire match, or all of the adults collectively groan when a shot goes just wide of the goal. Our objective when coaching the U6, U8 and U10 age groups should be to develop them as good citizens and soccer players, in that order, while also striving to win. Losing is never the objective but players must learn how to move forward and learn from that experience. The outcome of the match is of secondary importance to sound development of the individual player.

Q2: Are there any team bonding activities or rituals that you would recommend doing when you first start working with a young team? Marc Campoverde

Response: I think of bonding activities or rituals as team habits. For the U6 age group we all sit together during a match. For the U8 age group a way to build connections in the team could be peer coaching for one activity per month. For the U10 age group having Halloween costume training session day in late October is a lot of fun. All players should arrive at the game site at a certain time, maybe 15 minutes before the start of the coaches warm up, just to greet each other and have some fun. Players should wear the same warm up tee shirt or jacket. Maybe everyone has the same type of ball, perhaps with the team name. For all of these age groups getting into team/club cultural habits is important,

so we all shake hands with the coach on arrival and departure, we cheer for one another during a match, we all practice good sportsmanship with the other team after a match and so on.

Q3: At U10-U12 should we form teams, as is the current practice, or should we allow players to be rostered to clubs or rec organizations in an academy format - so that players can freely move and play in developmentally appropriate games? Charlie Traugher

Response: I’m in favor of the club pass. With a club pass the player is registered to the club, not to a team; in that way the club has the ability to move players inside the club as needed. So a player could move sideways in the same age group or up an age group. Players cannot though move down an age group or to a lower level of play. The ‘academy’ set up that exists in some clubs, leagues and state associations allows players in an age group, say U10, to be in a training ‘pool’ and to then go play with team A, B or C as the coaches decide which is best for that player at that time; next week it could change. Essentially it is ability based teams, which can better meet developmental needs. Perhaps through pool training a coach could provide additional competitive training and then select some players from different teams to play in a tournament. Players would be able to stay with their own teams, but play in a more competitive environment.

Q4: Should coaches guide players continuously during the match? Such as tell them always what to do? Giuseppe Emma

Response: In a word, no. During a match the players should do most of the talking within the team. In fact they should be required to do so. The coach can shout out reminders now and then, such as ‘mark up’. The coach should definitely shout out positive reinforcement to players, particularly for subtle improvements, such as a good off-the-ball run. Coaches must not joystick (micromanage) players during a match.

Q5: Do you think that the curriculum for U10 age group needs to be based on games rather than on foot skills and moves? Emily Hester

Response: Ball skills, including ‘moves’, should be part of the curriculum for the U10 age group. What needs to be addressed here is not so much the curriculum content but the coaching methodology. Using game-like activities is a much better coaching method than drills. Drills are associated with rote repetition. Game-like activities require decision making as well as technical repetition, so they are much more like the game itself.

Q6: What is the progression we should follow with young players? Dribbling first and then passing? George Duran & Isaac Montalvo

Response: Dribbling is a foundational skill that impacts on other ball skills in soccer. Dribbling impacts balance, agility, eye-foot coordination, ‘feel’ for the ball, self-confidence in technique, etc. While it doesn’t directly impact some goalkeeper skills done with the hands, any good goalkeeper coach will tell you how important footwork is to quality goalkeeping, so a U6, U8 or U10 player who has sound dribbling skills will have positively impacted footwork if he or she becomes a goalkeeper later in their soccer career.

Q7: How can you modify the 6 activities to make them appropriate for U6? Thomas Connolly

Response: Paint The Grid - this activity can be done with the U6 age group by giving each player a ball and ask them to ‘paint’ the grid by dribbling over the grass in the grid. Ball Master - this activity can be done with each child having a ball, and the coach giving them varying challenges on how to return the ball to the Ball Master. Examples could be with two elbows, one forehead, one kneecap and one hand or by

dribbling with the feet. Group Pac Woman – the activity would need to be individualized by each player having a ball. As they dribble around the grid they try to tag other players on the shoulder. A tagged player has to do four toe taps on the ball or some other skill relevant to dribbling and then they are back in the game. Three Zone Game – this one will not work for the U6 age group even with modifications. End Lines – the activity can be modified into a game of Sharks and Minnows for the U6 age group. The Match works for the U6 players, but needs to be 3 vs 3.

Q8: How cold is too cold to have a practice at U6-U10 level? Grant Vreuls

Response: Minnesota Youth Soccer has a great index for cold weather on their website, here's the link to the specific page: <http://www.mnyouthsoccer.org/page/show/692946-mysa-weather-policy>. The guideline there is that below 35 degrees suspend training sessions and matches. At 40 degrees and colder they recommend shorten matches and halftime. For 45 degrees and lower they talk about layering clothes and other good ideas on playing soccer in cold weather. My opinion is that for the U6 age group do not play outdoors below the 45 degree mark. For the U8 age group the cut off is the same or perhaps for well acclimatized kids the 40 degree mark. For the U10 age group definitely no match outdoors once the 35 degree mark is hit and for the 40 degree mark, it would be prudent to suspend outdoor play for such a young age group. Please keep in mind that prepubescent children are more susceptible to extremes in cold and heat than pubescent or adolescent players.

Q9: How important is keeping score in the small sided activities in Zone 1? I know keeping them fun is most important but what role should competition play? James Ballin

Response: The score is mostly important to the adults. Parents will know the score and who scored. Most kids though in the U10 and younger age groups will know how many goals they have scored, but often forget the score of the match. So let the kids keep score in their heads if they want, but the club should not publish scores for the U10 and younger age groups. Competition is not merely the score line. Competition for these age groups is controlling the ball, getting a shot off while surrounded by all the other kids, making a tackle and coming away with the ball or dribbling out of the pack. That's the competition we should comment on to the kids. Talk to them about the competition of the process of play not the outcome of the game.

Q10: How should teams be formed at the zone 1 level? D'Alary Dalton

Response: I am in favor of the 'academy' approach where the kids are in pools not set teams. If more state associations would allow the club pass then this approach is feasible for more clubs.

Q11: Should you coach some exercises without the ball first at these early stages? Zerihun Jemaneh Woldegeorgies

Response: Movement education is very important for these three age groups. Definitely do some activities without the ball. But those activities can be laced into other activities with the ball. It's not a matter of one before the other, but do both throughout a training session. Working movement education into a training session can be fun and challenging for the players. Coaches who have used this method have seen the players develop over a few years right before their eyes. Physical literacy, especially agility, balance and coordination, are crucially important to future soccer performance.

Q12: At what age do you begin "specific" position enrichment for players during a practice? In the early years players tend to play multiple positions, and at what point do we look to say, the player models a particular position well and then gear training toward that position. Tim McEvilly

Response: Players are now being asked to specialize at earlier ages.

Coaches need to continue to allow players to play different positions in training sessions. I agree with the U. S. Soccer stance that players should be exposed to all positions in a team up through the U14 age group. So the beginning of position specialization will begin with the U15 age group.

Q13: What do you recommend as the training to game ratio in a week at the U6 U8 & U10 levels? Brian Haddock

Response: U6: 1:1 Or 0:1 – the idea here is for the U6 players to show up on Saturday or Sunday for their hour which includes 20 to 30 minutes of appropriate activities and then a 3 v 3 match. This is the academy approach where players are not assigned to teams, but all children in the age group meet at the same time and place to be trained and have a game. U8: 1:1. U10: 2:1.

Q14: What do you say or do to get your players to learn to recognize the triangles in motion or when playing against a defense? Chris Finn

Response: I introduce the triangle concept in the U10 age group. They can definitely get it while stationary during a training session activity, but once the activity goes back to motion it becomes difficult again. During a match I try to get them to see and set up triangles at dead ball moments, such as our throw-in, corner kick, goal kick or free kick. The only way to get them to recognize triangles in motion is to rehearse it at training sessions several times each season and then be patient as it slowly becomes a part of their game. For some kids their cognitive ability is not developed enough to recognize and utilize this small group shape in the flow of a match. Remember that the U10 age group is in and out of the fog on tactical concepts; it's beginning to happen, but sporadically.

Q15: What should a coach without a teacher's background do in order to enhance his/her questioning skills when dealing with youth players? Antonio Superbia

Response: Practice. I know that sounds over-simplified, but asking the right question at the right time in a training session is a learned skill. Study about guided discovery and then go and try it out at a training session. Afterwards reflect on how your questions impacted the players. From their responses and learning you'll find what works best for each age group and you'll refine your coaching method. Ask yourself questions at the end of training: Did the players have fun? Did they learn something to make them a better player or person? Was my training age appropriate?

Q16: You talked a lot about keeping shape and importance of triangles for U10. If you had to prioritize the top 3 most important objectives for a U10 team - what would those be? Chris Jackson

Response: 1. Communication with teammates. 2. Ball skills. 3. Reading the game.

Q17: You talked about teaching in matches. Can you say something about how to balance trying to teach in matches without introducing new concepts that may confuse players more than help them in a match? Juan Ramon Uribe

Response: Let them play! During a match the teaching I do is to reinforce concepts, laws of the game, positioning and ball skills that we've already learned. By engaging the kids on the bench in a few of these comments and questions it helps them to see more of what is happening in a match and to stay focused on the game a little more. I save teaching/coaching new things for a training session. Let them play!

Paint the Grid

This is a technical warm-up for passing and receiving. Receiving into space will aid players in 'painting' the grid quickly.

WHY USE IT

Starts to introduce the critical concept of creating triangles.

SET UP

Grid = 15 x 15.4 cones to mark off the grid. 1 ball per grid. 3 players per grid. Set grids up with a 2 yard buffer zone between each one, but keep them in a small area so that the coach can easily move from grid to grid.

HOW TO PLAY

Three players "paint the grass" by passing the ball between them and moving. If the ball comes off the grass then it doesn't count as being painted. Begin with 30 seconds, then 20 seconds and end with 10 seconds.

The goal of the players is to cover as much of the grid as possible with their passes.

The quicker the passes - the better, but not at the expense of accuracy.

If the ball goes out of the grid then that group begins their "painting" all over. Use 'Guided Discovery' questions:

Q.: What type of pass keeps the ball on the ground?

Q.: How can your movement help your team paint the grid?

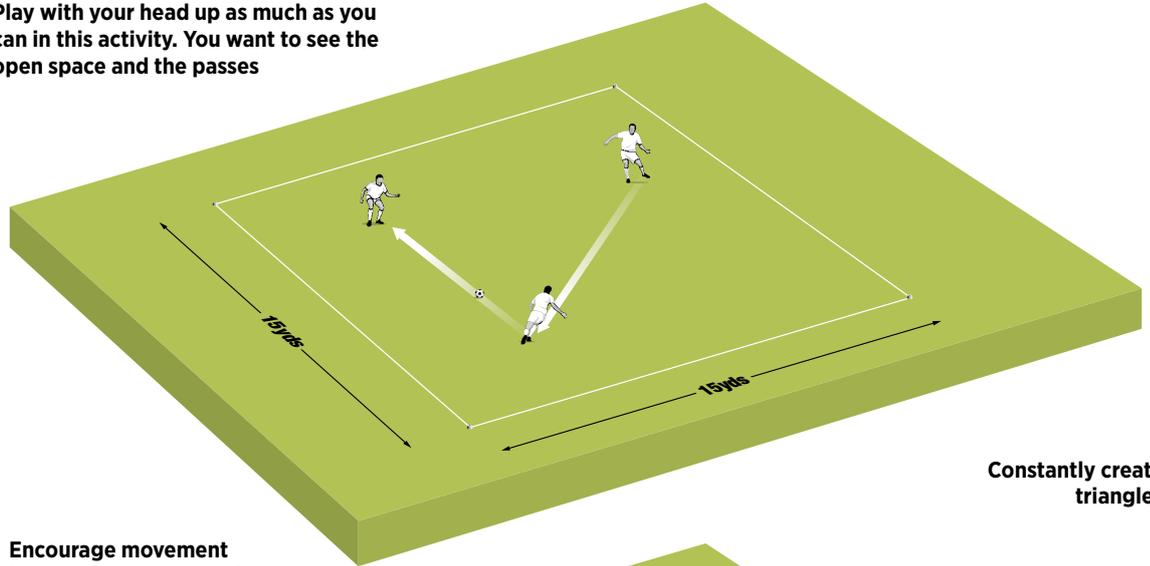
Q.: How can your movement help your team paint the grid?

TECHNIQUE

Coach should help the players refine their passing skills at this time.

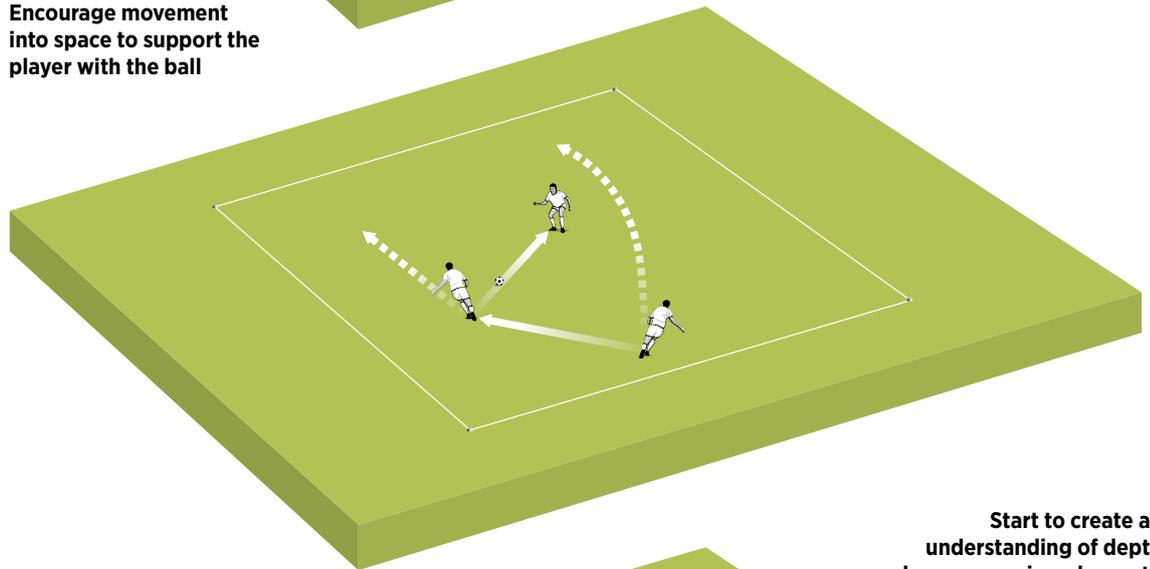
Receiving, usually into a space to make the next pass. The coach must also give good guidance to the players on this technique.

Play with your head up as much as you can in this activity. You want to see the open space and the passes

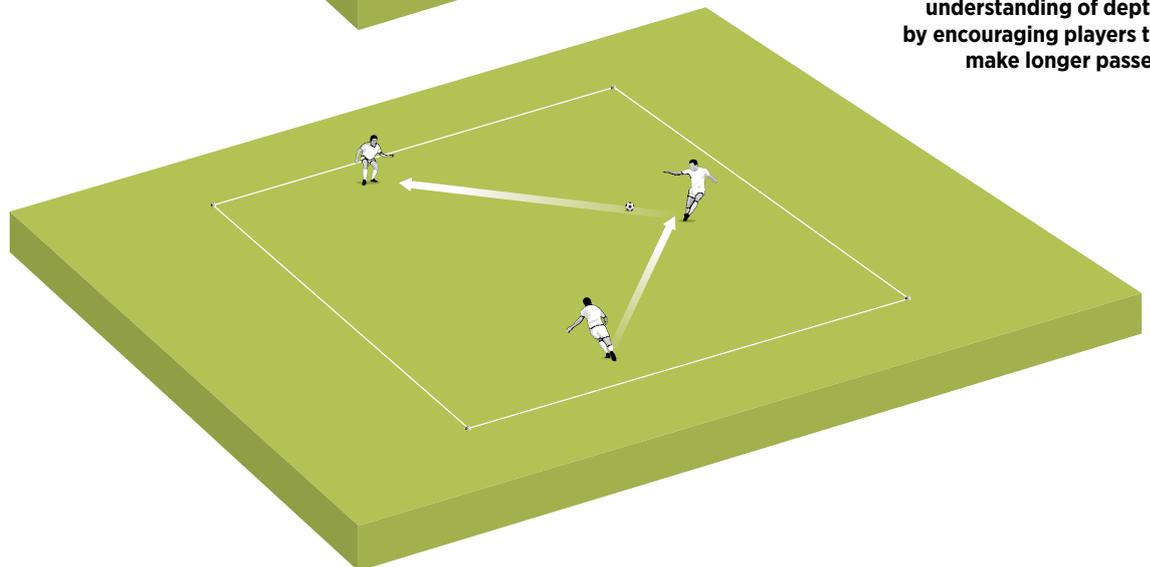


Constantly create triangles

Encourage movement into space to support the player with the ball



Start to create an understanding of depth by encouraging players to make longer passes



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Ball Master

This activity raises awareness of group shape, off-the-ball movement, accurate and firm passing and working in small groups.

WHY USE IT

The presence of the other groups executing the same objectives in the same space raises the demand on player's tactical decision making and precision of their ball skills.

SET UP

Use one half of the field. Each group of three has one ball. The Ball Master (Coach) is in the center of the playing area.

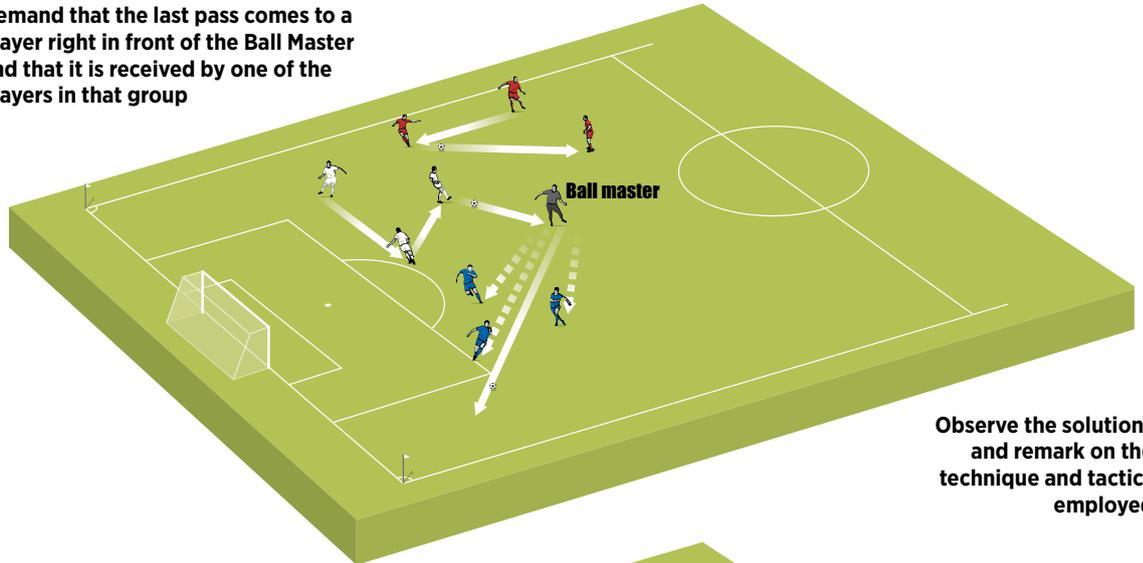
HOW TO PLAY

The Ball Master throws or kicks the ball into an open space and the team of 3 chase after it. The Ball Master challenges the teams to return their ball with a set number of consecutive passes. Vary the number of passes and/or the distance the ball is sent out to place different demands on the players. Player will need to adjust types of passes and mobility in the attack. As the players progress, the Ball Master can move, thus requiring the players to look to switch the point of attack and communicate effectively. Use 'Guided Discovery' questions: Q: How did your group decide to bring the ball back? Q: Who in the group had to do most of the looking, talking and running?

TECHNIQUE

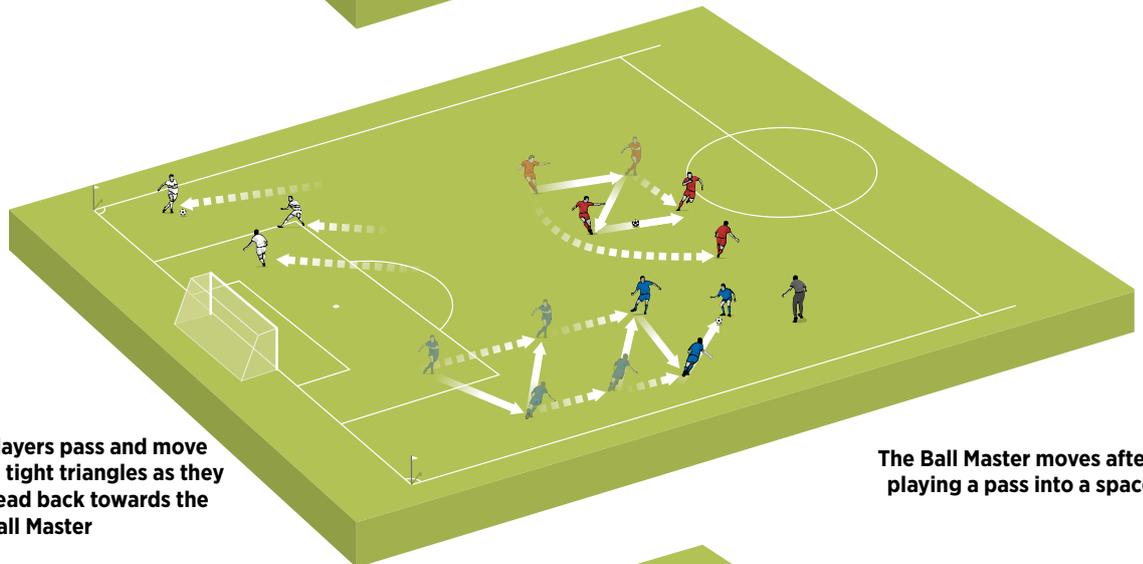
A variety of passes (short or long, on the ground or in the air, straight or bent, fast or slow) will be made by the players.

Demand that the last pass comes to a player right in front of the Ball Master and that it is received by one of the players in that group



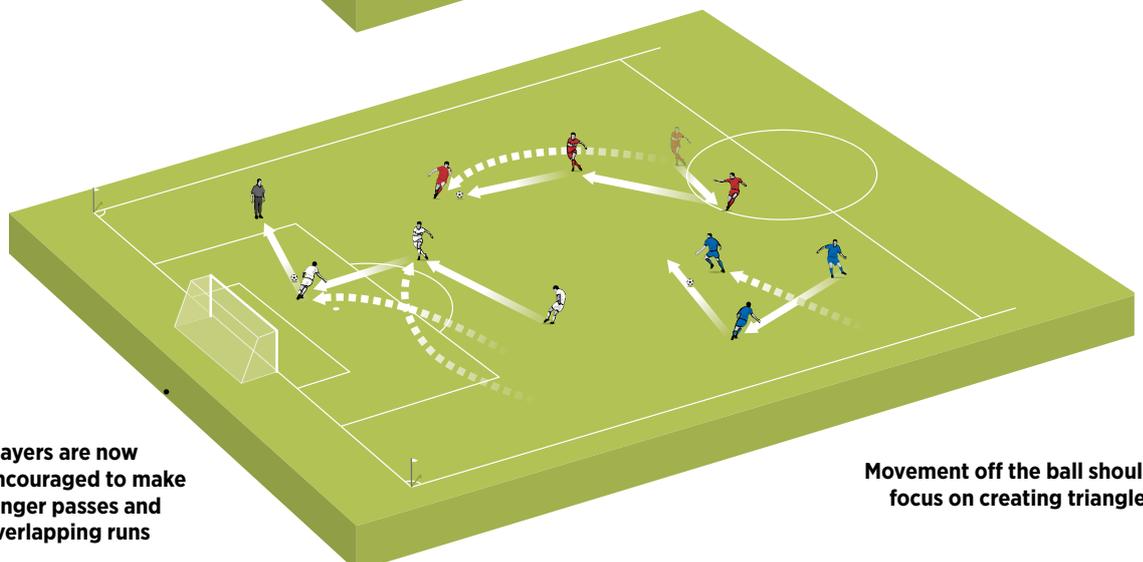
Observe the solutions and remark on the technique and tactics employed

Players pass and move in tight triangles as they head back towards the Ball Master



The Ball Master moves after playing a pass into a space

Players are now encouraged to make longer passes and overlapping runs



Movement off the ball should focus on creating triangles

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Group Pac Man/Woman

This activity adds competition - attackers vs defenders using a fun theme. Players need to start plotting tactical decisions as a group.

WHY USE IT

All ball skills are now performed in a dynamic fashion. Good group shape will now pay dividends.

SET UP

In a 20x20 area, 3 'Pac Man/Woman' in pinnies pass the ball and they try to hit the 'ghosts' in the lower leg with a pass. When a player is hit, he/she puts on a pinnie and joins the Pac Man/Woman. When the next player is hit, form 2 groups - 1 pair and 1 group of 3.

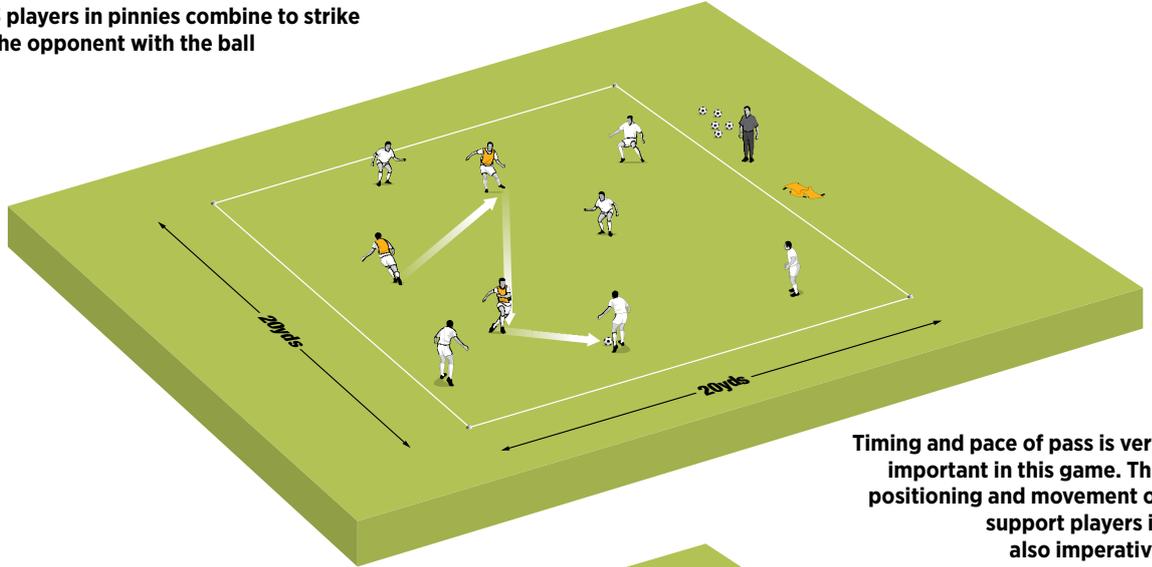
HOW TO PLAY

Pac Man/Woman exchange passes to set up a chance to hit a ghost - possession to set up penetration; group problem solving; and creating a triangle. Group vision and decision making is of great importance to success. Players must achieve the 3 C's: Communicate, Cooperate, Coordinate. Guided Discovery questions: Q: Where could you go in the grid to make it easier for your team to hit a ghost? Q: How does that triangle shape help you in this activity?

TECHNIQUE

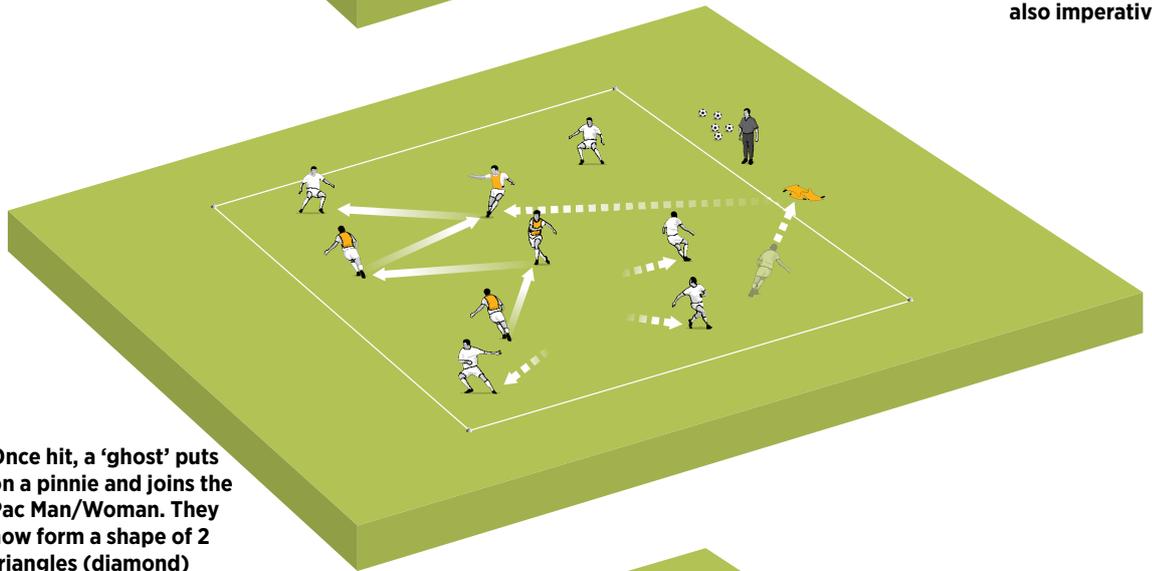
Receiving to set up the next pass or to help keep the triangle shape will be clearer to the players. Tactically the group must work to keep the triangle and get opponents inside their triangle to improve the odds of hitting that player.

3 players in pinnies combine to strike the opponent with the ball

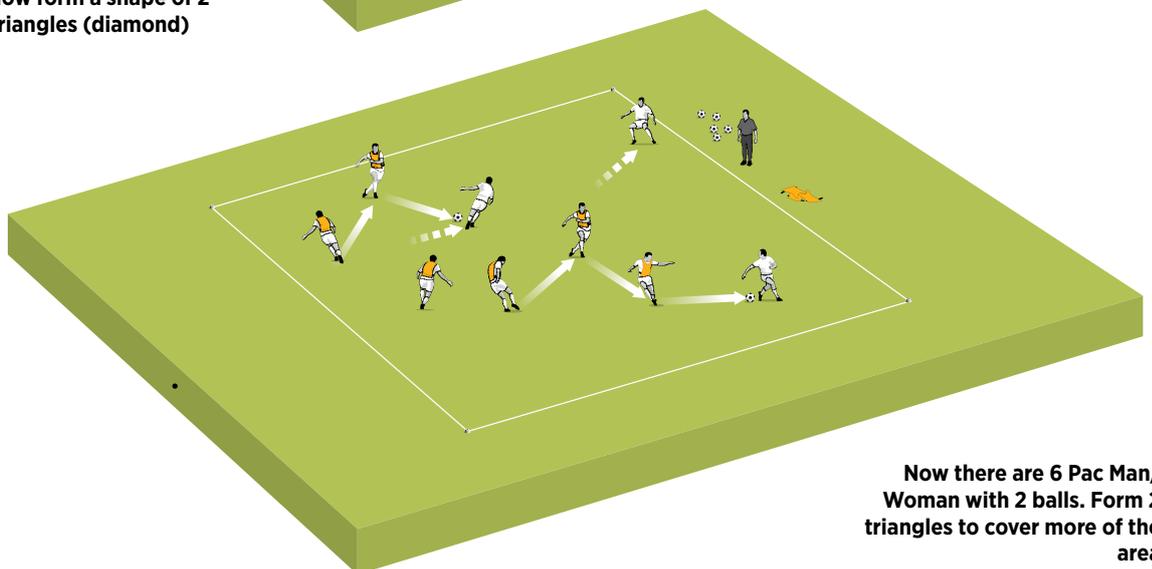


Timing and pace of pass is very important in this game. The positioning and movement of support players is also imperative

Once hit, a 'ghost' puts on a pinnie and joins the Pac Man/Woman. They now form a shape of 2 triangles (diamond)



Now there are 6 Pac Man/Woman with 2 balls. Form 2 triangles to cover more of the area



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Three Zone Game

This activity help players recognize when to make a penetrating pass. Passers and receivers must recognize the same cues.

WHY USE IT

Young players will learn about possession with the purpose of creating a penetrating pass.

SET UP

Area 30 x 10 yards - divided into three equal thirds. 10-12 cones and if possible use dot cones for the lines inside the grid. 3 red, 3 yellow and 3 blue bibs. 9 players in three groups of three in different colored training bibs. One group in each third.

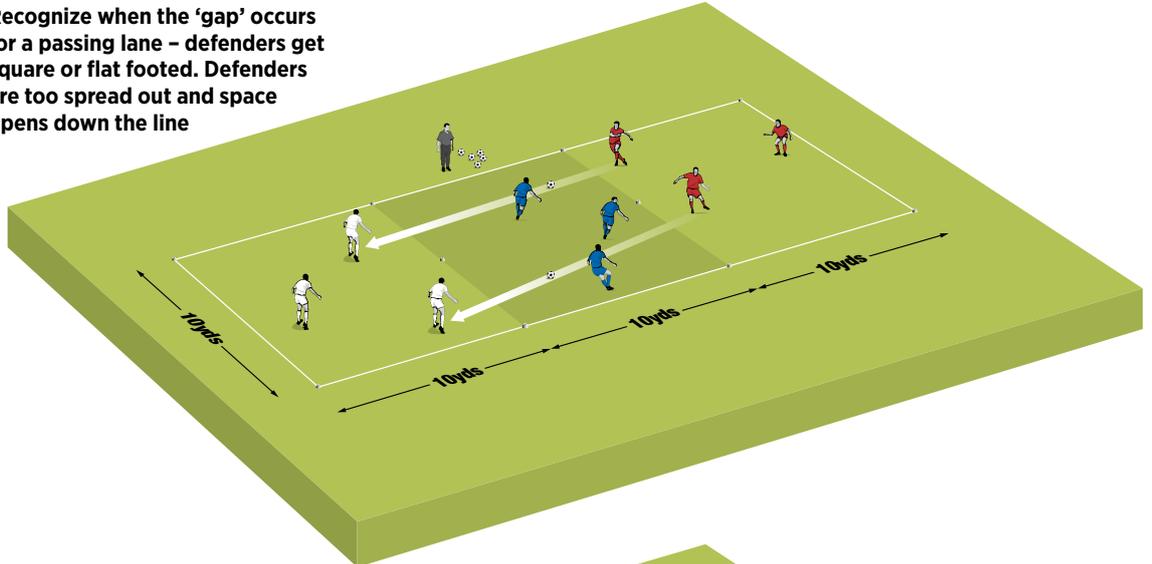
HOW TO PLAY

The group in possession of the ball must make a pass to the opposite end zone group. The group in the middle zone are defenders and they try to intercept the penetrating pass. Attackers may pass in the air, but the activity is most demanding when passes must be low. The most successful groups form a triangle to circulate the ball until the chance for a penetrating pass occurs. They should be looking for a passing lane between opponents or between an opponent and a boundary line. If the middle group gains possession or the ball goes out of bounds from the passing or receiving group then the middle team switches places

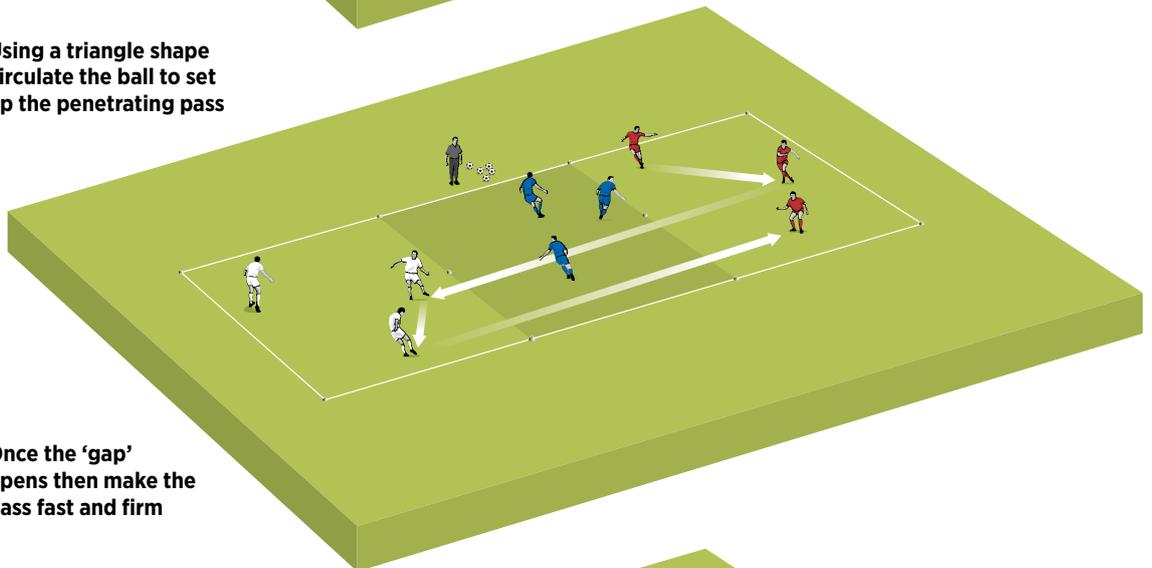
TECHNIQUE

The tactical objective here is to recognize when to possess and when to make the penetrating pass.

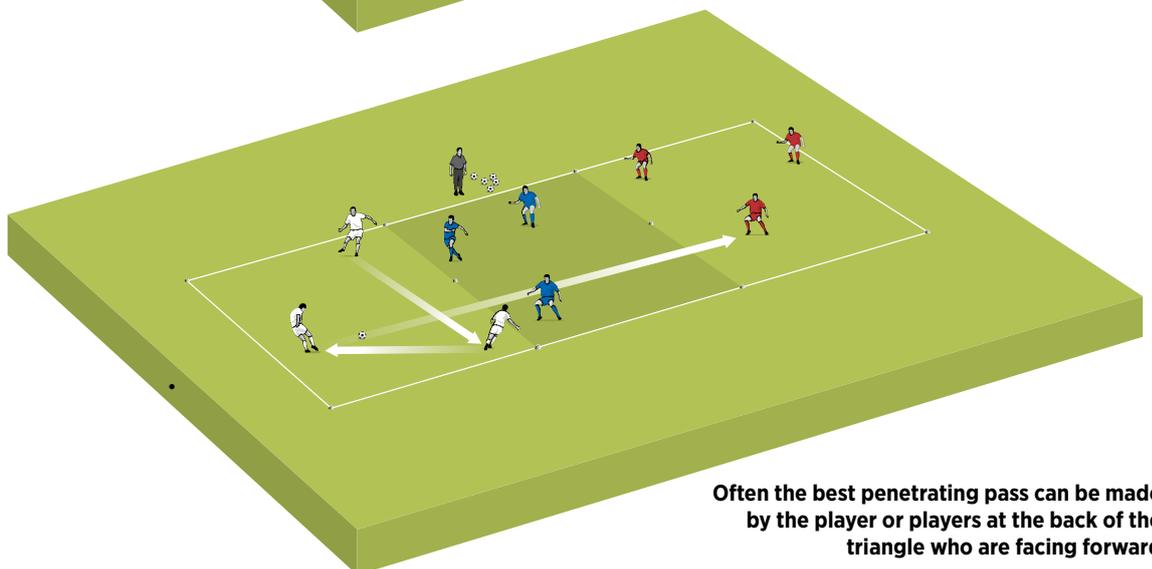
Recognize when the 'gap' occurs for a passing lane – defenders get square or flat footed. Defenders are too spread out and space opens down the line



Using a triangle shape circulate the ball to set up the penetrating pass



Once the 'gap' opens then make the pass fast and firm



Often the best penetrating pass can be made by the player or players at the back of the triangle who are facing forward

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

End Lines

This activity places demands on transition - players moving from defending to an attacking triangle as soon as they regain possession.

WHY USE IT

The activity will aid players to recognize space on the field - width and depth on attack.

SET UP

Area: 30 x 20. 3 teams of 3 players play 6 vs. 3 to end lines.

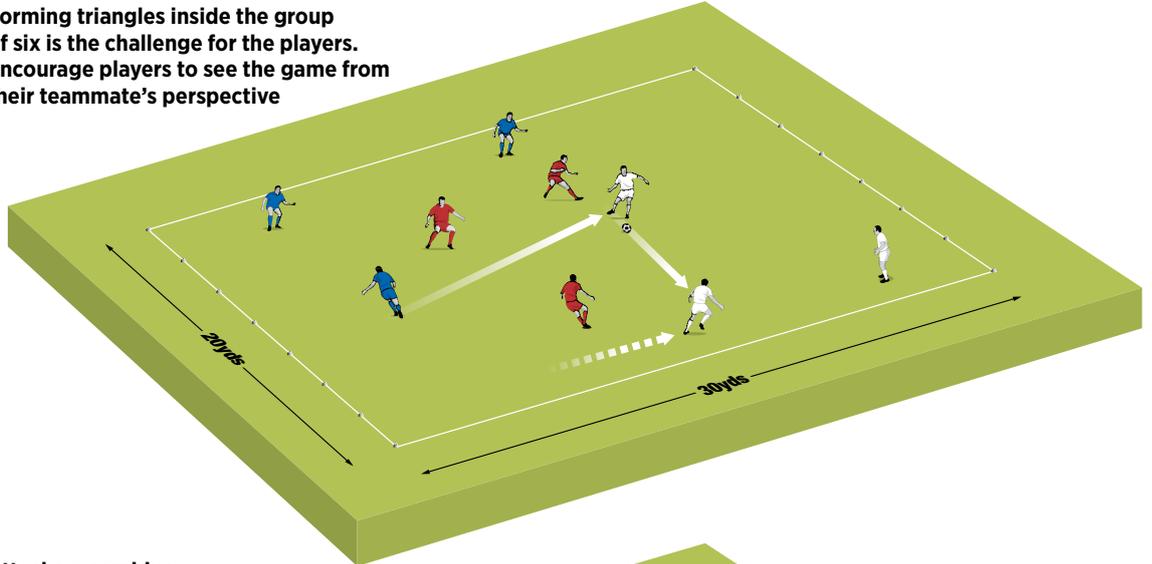
HOW TO PLAY

2 teams (6 players) designated by the coach play combinations to reach the end lines. The other team of 3 defend for approximately 3 minutes and then switch roles. Focus on triangles. The passer must always have options both to the left and right. Work on group cooperation, providing width and depth, to move the ball quickly when the attackers are numbers up. Technical speed to take advantage of the moment increases the chance for success.

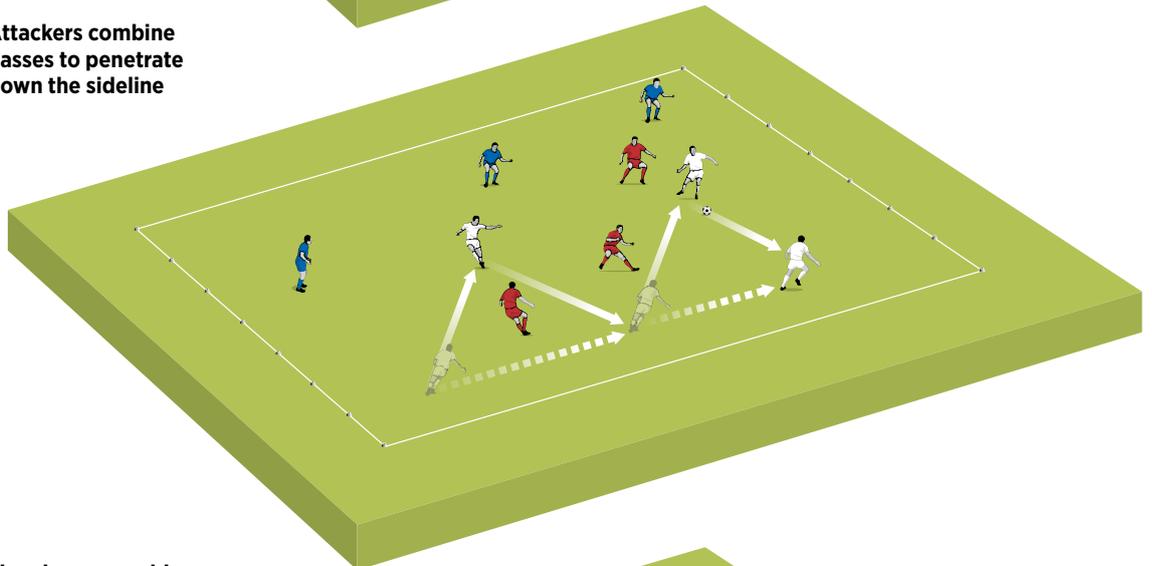
TECHNIQUE

Tactical decision making and the execution of ball skills under match-related conditions will now challenge players. Good triangles will lead to success. Ask players Guided Discovery questions such as: Q: What shape could the 6 attackers take? Q: If the forward pass isn't there what should you do?

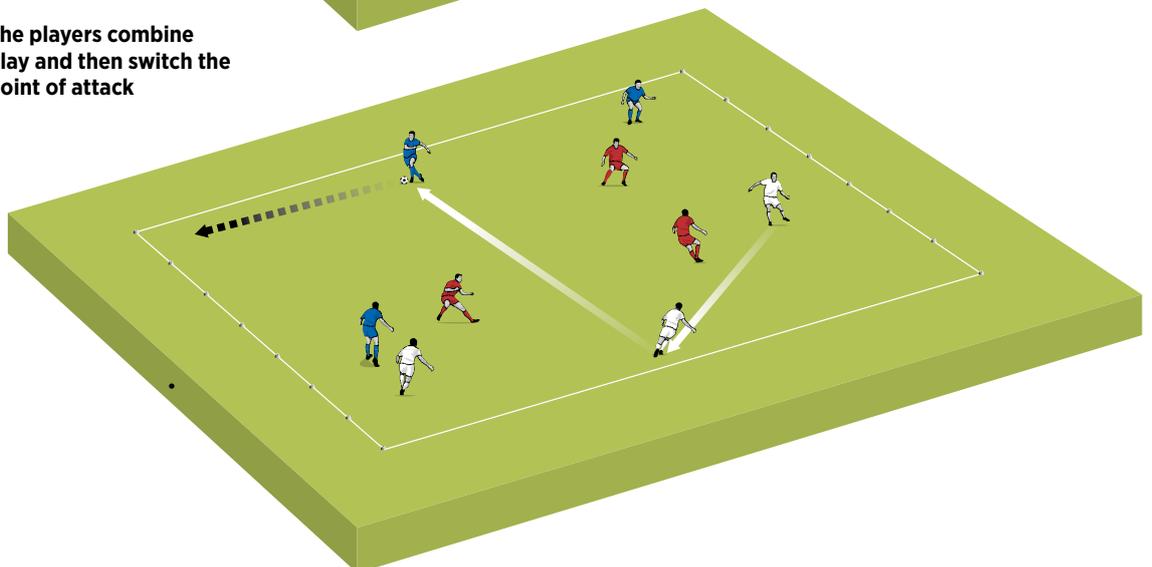
Forming triangles inside the group of six is the challenge for the players. Encourage players to see the game from their teammate's perspective



Attackers combine passes to penetrate down the sideline



The players combine play and then switch the point of attack



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Triangles 6 vs. 6 Match

This activity brings together the skills and decision making of the 5 previous activities emphasizing creating passing triangles and maximizing space.

WHY USE IT

The coach's objective here is to observe learning that has taken place by players in the previous activities.

SET UP

Play a 6 vs 6 match according to US Youth Soccer Modified Rules.

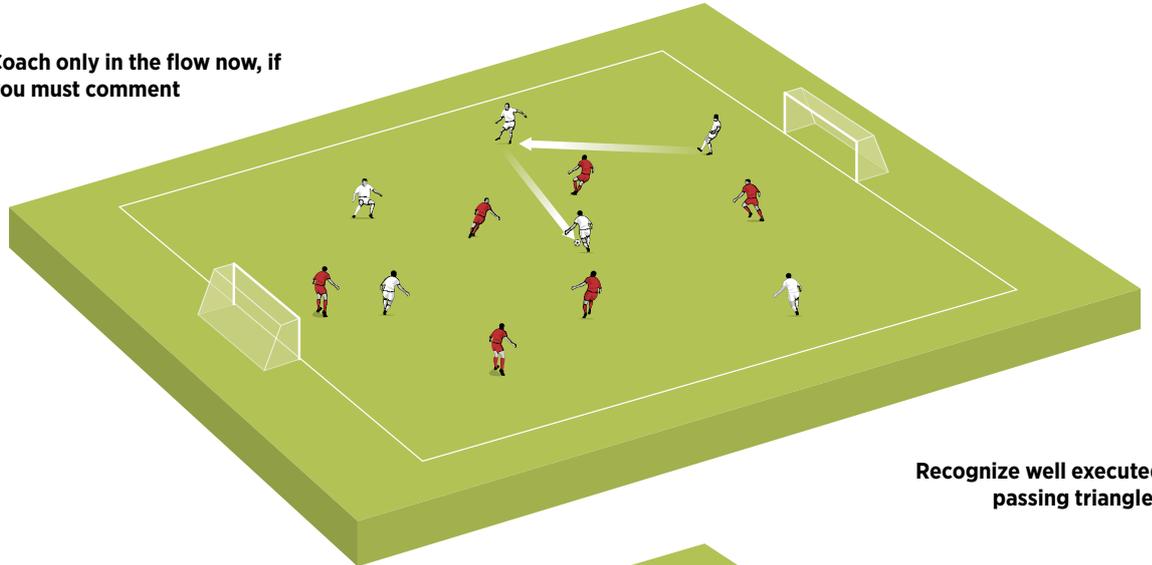
HOW TO PLAY

Let the players go with little, if any, comment by the coach. Observe their decision making and triangular shapes within their attacking play. Can the players, under match conditions, implement what they learned in other activities?

TECHNIQUE

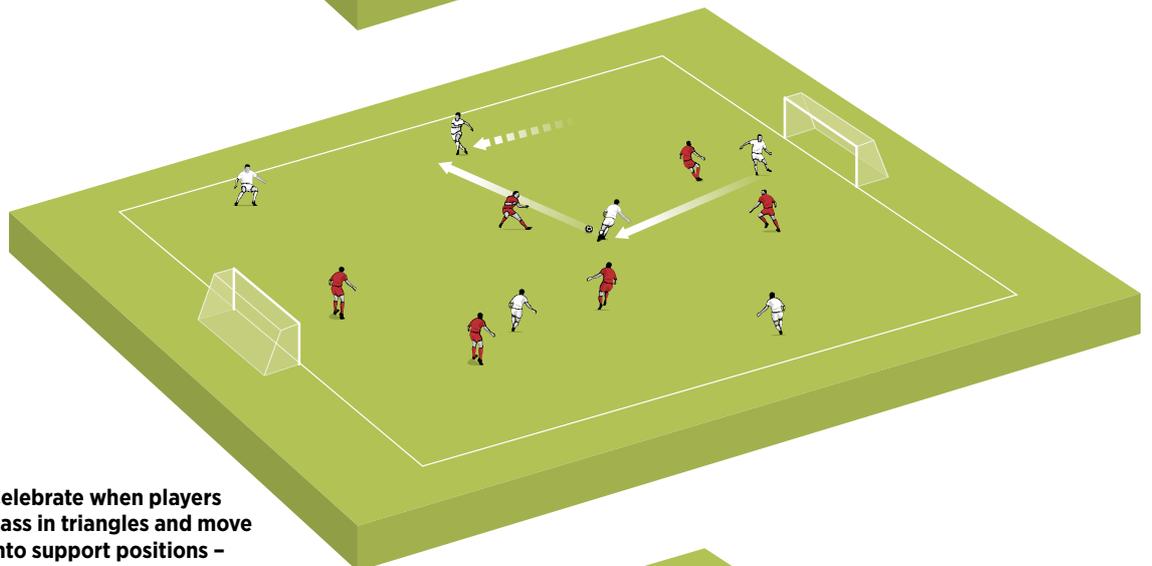
Observe the players passing and receiving skills, decisions on the types of pass to make (technique), decisions on passing for possession or penetration (tactics) and group attacking shape (support) using triangles.

Coach only in the flow now, if you must comment

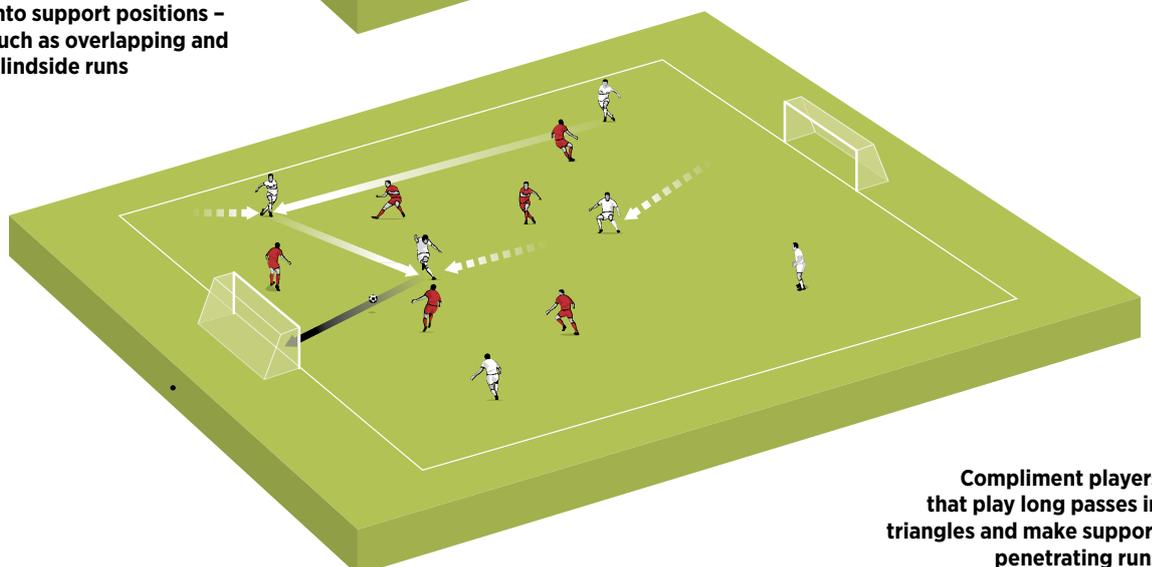


Recognize well executed passing triangles

Celebrate when players pass in triangles and move into support positions – such as overlapping and blindside runs



Compliment players that play long passes in triangles and make support penetrating runs



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

THE USE OF SMALL SIDED GAMES IN TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

The focus of Adrian's presentation was to demonstrate how a coach can develop technical skills and rudimentary tactical understanding with young players using small sided games.



ADRIAN PARRISH

Technical Director, Kentucky Youth Soccer Association

Adrian joined Kentucky Youth Soccer in October of 2005 as the Association's third full time Director of Coaching. In this role, Parrish is responsible for the Coaching Education Program and the management of the Olympic Development Program. Adrian was the former DOC for Amherst Soccer Association in Buffalo, and Coaching Education Instructor for New York State. Adrian, a native from Louth in England has played extensively at youth level and played with Boston United, a semi-professional team playing in the league below the Football League. Adrian possesses a USSF "A" License and the US Youth Soccer National Youth License. He is currently the US Youth Soccer Region II Coaching Chair, is a Region II Boys ODP staff coach, a USSF Coaching Educator and on the US Youth Soccer National staff.

Summary of Webinar Presentation

At the start of Adrian's presentation he compared two common terms one hears regularly in coaching - a 'drill' and a 'game.' Adrian suggested that a drill is associated more with a regimented activity that has a definitive and prescribed response, often with players waiting in lines for their turn. With young players it is important to play games and stay away from drill-like activities. Similar to the other presenters, Adrian mentioned a coach should be prepared to see large disparities in player ability and cognitive understanding between individuals in the same age group.

Adrian mentioned the idea of a slanting line approach - whereby a coach is able to offer challenging activities to children of varying abilities within the same session, by manipulating variables such as differences in technique and pressures of time and space. Another concept he introduced is anchoring an activity - an approach where the coach remains in the same space, but manipulates different components of the game to change the emphasis and challenge to the players. Before describing the practical activities, Adrian referred to 'marrying techniques with tactics' - suggesting that a coach can find opportunities to teach basic tactical concepts while focusing primarily on technical training. To do so, he suggested that a coach should use low order and high order guided discovery questions.

Adrian shared 6 activities that progressed in complexity and challenge. Common to all activities however were a number of objectives:

1. High-energy - in the vast majority of occasions, the best approach with young players is to get them active as quickly as possible and to manage the session in short duration bouts of high-energy activity interspersed with drink breaks and short rest periods.
2. Soccer realism - a responsibility of the coach is to correct movements that are not realistic to playing the game. For example, in the first activity - tail tag - Adrian suggested that players should be encouraged to face each other as it is unrealistic that in a game a player will run aimlessly with his or her back to the play.
3. Become a storyteller - being able to relate to young players is

essential particularly with the U6 and U8 age groups. To this end, Adrian advised coaches to become familiar with activities built on characters and stories children watch and listen to on TV and in books.

4. Technical emphasis - Adrian provided a cautionary note suggesting that we should avoid getting caught in a trap as children moved from the U6 to U8 and U8 to U10 age groups. Some coaches transition too quickly with young players from almost exclusive focus on technique to spending an inordinate amount of time working on tactics and correcting issues with game performance.
5. Challenging activities - finding the right balance between activities that players can perform too easily and those that invariably result in failure is important. It should be noted that a growing body of research suggests young players need to be challenged and in doing so they will experience necessary failure as they strive to reach a higher level of performance.
6. Move from simple to complex - it is easier for coach to manipulate variables to increase the difficulty of an activity than try to recover from setting the bar too high for the players at the beginning. Once the coach becomes intimately familiar with the ability levels of individuals and the group, it also becomes easier to select content that caters for the majority of players.
7. Add a scoring mechanism - challenging players to complete a set number of repetitions, beat a time restriction or better a previous score are all ways to help players focus and add a modicum of pressure.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Adrian Parrish

Q1: Could you play Coconut Shy both ways to have the balls retrieved easier? Ian Barker

Response:

Yes, all of the games allow room for coaches to manipulate and change them for the ability of the players or to even allow it to flow better.

Q2: For 6/7 year old recreation players, what team formation do you recommend starting with for games? Julie Cauda

Response:

We recommend 4v4 or 3v3 at these age groups. Trying to get players of this age to understand and maintain a formation is pointless due to the majority of them not cognitively being developed enough to understand. You can encourage players to keep shape, such as a diamond or a triangle because they do understand this pattern, but note that this shape may become lost as soon as the ball is put into play. You may have some players that are more mentally developed and have some understanding of formations but then you will find that this player will also be attracted to the ball and try to dictate the game.

Q3: In the activity '4v4 to 4 goals' would this be more for U8 and up players than for U6? Emily Hester

Response:

I like to experiment with these age groups to see what players are capable of understanding. I have tried this game with U6's but played 3v3. Obviously the older the players become the more tactical understanding they will have about the game and its reason for recognizing when and why to switch the play.

Q4: How can we use small sided games to develop very specific technical skills such as the Cruyff turn? Giuseppe Emma

Response:

We want players to participate in 'games' and not 'drills' so it's very important that whenever we are trying to teach players how to execute turns or moves we do them in games without them realizing they are learning. I like to play a game called 'Copy Coach'. The coach moves around an area performing different skills and players copy. You can also play the gate game (see Ian's activity 'Gate Keeper'). The coach and assistant coach can stand in the gates forcing players to turn away from them. Of course with all technical activities it needs a lot of repetition.

Q5: How do you figure out how to best utilize the slanting line method in each game/session? Jason Herrick

Response:

Not all activities have the slanting line method, but you are advised to use these games early in the season to encourage players to come out of their comfort zone. The Sharks and Minnows game offers an opportunity to implement the slanting line for dribbling and Coconut Shy for passing.

Q6: I am sold on the small game approach, but I have run into resistance occasionally from parents or other coaches who claim that this does not teach fundamentals because the kids are not standing in lines dribbling through cones. What do you say? Steven Jacobson

Response:

Players are actually running around more and gaining more physical exercise by participating in small sided games. This is how the game is played so we should make practice sessions look like the game in which they play at the weekend. There are games where lines may be needed but you need to limit the length of these so that you can keep the children's attention.

Q7: When playing Tail Tag would you recommend adding small cone goals at the end lines to provide a purpose for both the attacker and defender? Chris Lane

Response:

I prefer to keep this as a maze game which allows the players to go in any direction. We are trying to encourage players to move and express movement so I feel end lines would restrict the game.

Q8: What is a realistic juggling goal for U10 Players, if you are looking to teach but also challenge them? Tim McEvelly

Response:

The target for every player, no matter the age, is to always beat their own personal best. Juggling is very much an individual activity to improve their comfort level and technical ability on the ball.

Q9: What is the best way to encourage younger players to pass more? Marc Campoverde

Response:

I like to keep stats for the players and if your philosophy is to encourage passing then I would recommend that you just track and mark successful/unsuccessful passes. Of course you have to be careful having parents do this for you as it may be a little biased at times, but it has helped my younger players understand the importance of passing and building a tempo.

Q10: How long do you suggest staying in one game before moving on? d'Alary Dalton

Response:

The players will give you an indication when to change - are they fatigued or bored. If they are having fun and enjoying the activity you may stay on it a bit longer. If they are struggling to grasp the concept and your explanations are not working you may wish to move on or even move back because the activity may be too advanced.

Q11: In order to exploit small sided games effectively, do you think the use of a futsal ball could help players to improve their technical skills? Giuseppe Emma

Response:

Futsal is a great game for the players during the winter months, but all players and coaches would much rather be outside playing on the fields if possible. I strongly encourage coaches of all age groups to play futsal in the winter.

Tail Tag

Young players love to play chase games. They do so in their natural environment - with friends in schools and in the yard.

WHY USE IT

Tail Tag is an ideal choice of activity for young players, as it is easy for the players to understand and the coach can move quickly into a high intensity activity without little explanation. The game can be played with and without the ball.

SET UP

Area measuring 15×20 yards
Cones used to mark off the area. Each child to have a ball. Pinnies used for tails and to create 2 teams

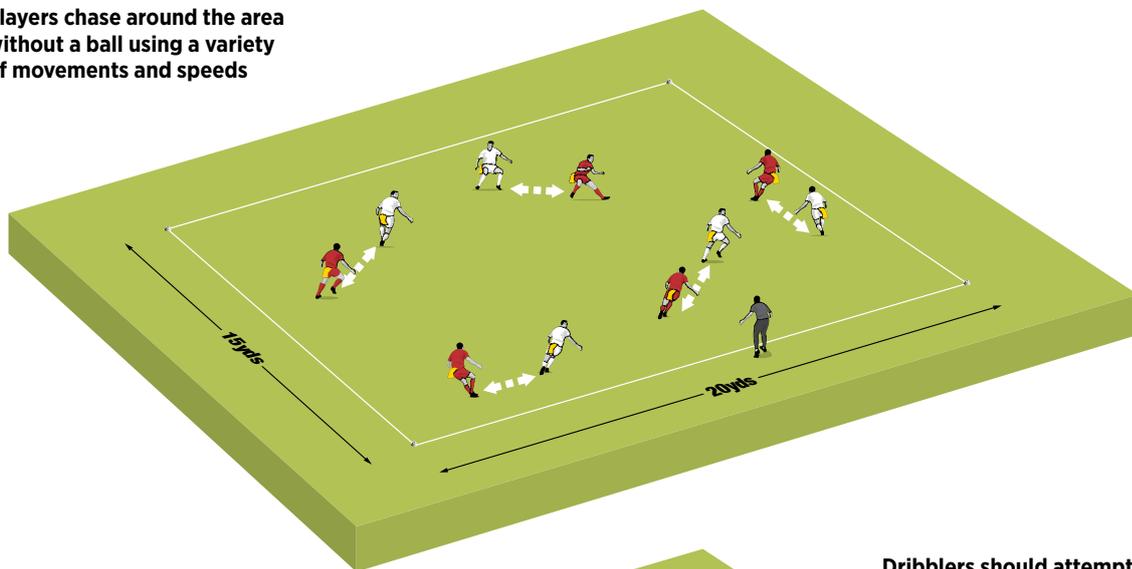
HOW TO PLAY

In the first activity the coach controls the number of variables that the players have to consider and plays tail tag without the ball. The group is separated into pairs and each player tucks a pinnie into the shorts to create a 'tail'. On the command to 'go' each player attempts to pull the tail out of the shorts of their partner. Once the tail is removed drop it on the ground and the partner puts the tail back in the shorts. Play again. The activity progresses to include a ball and concludes with a team game.

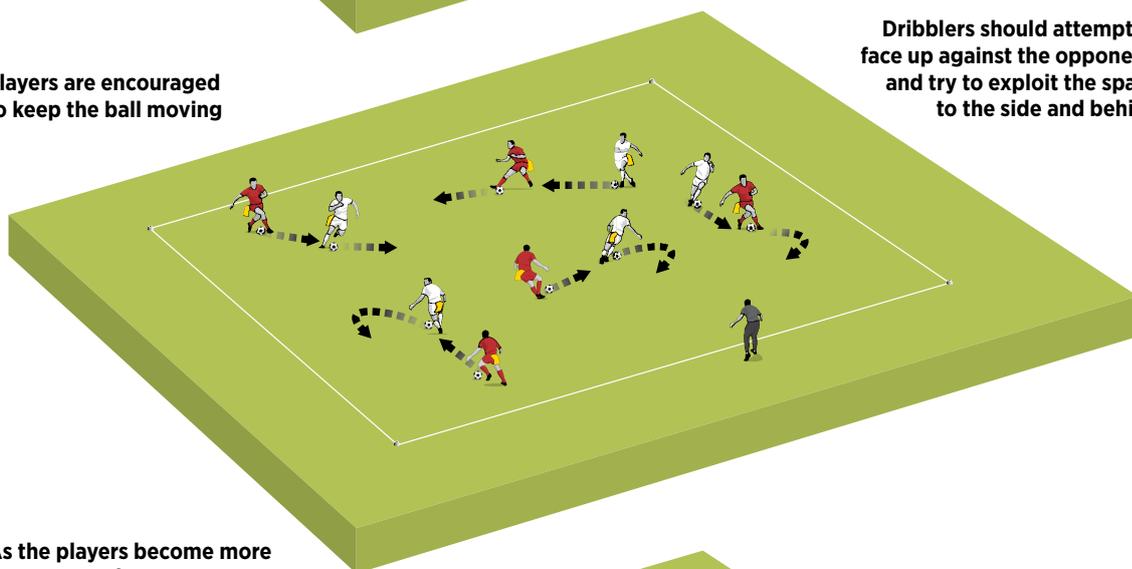
TECHNIQUE

This activity emphasizes fundamental movement skills and dribbling basics. As players become more confident and competent, the coach can discuss ways to escape from an opponent and keep possession of the ball.

Players chase around the area without a ball using a variety of movements and speeds

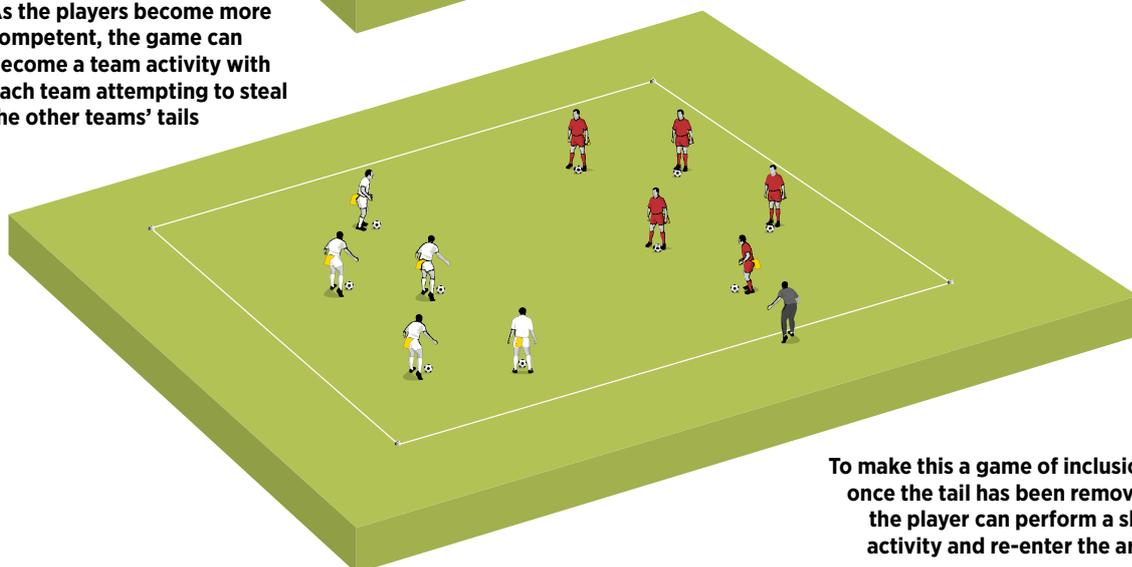


Players are encouraged to keep the ball moving



Dribblers should attempt to face up against the opponent, and try to exploit the space to the side and behind

As the players become more competent, the game can become a team activity with each team attempting to steal the other teams' tails



To make this a game of inclusion, once the tail has been removed the player can perform a skill activity and re-enter the area

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Sharks & Minnows

Young players need the opportunity to experience success and failure using fun games. Slanting line activities give the players opportunity to enter games at a level they are comfortable.

WHY USE IT

As you anchor the activity it gives players an opportunity to test their limits and also remain in a comfort zone until they are ready to test their own abilities.

SET UP

Area measuring 30x20 yards. Cones used to mark off the area. Each child to have a ball. Pinnies should be worn by any defensive players.

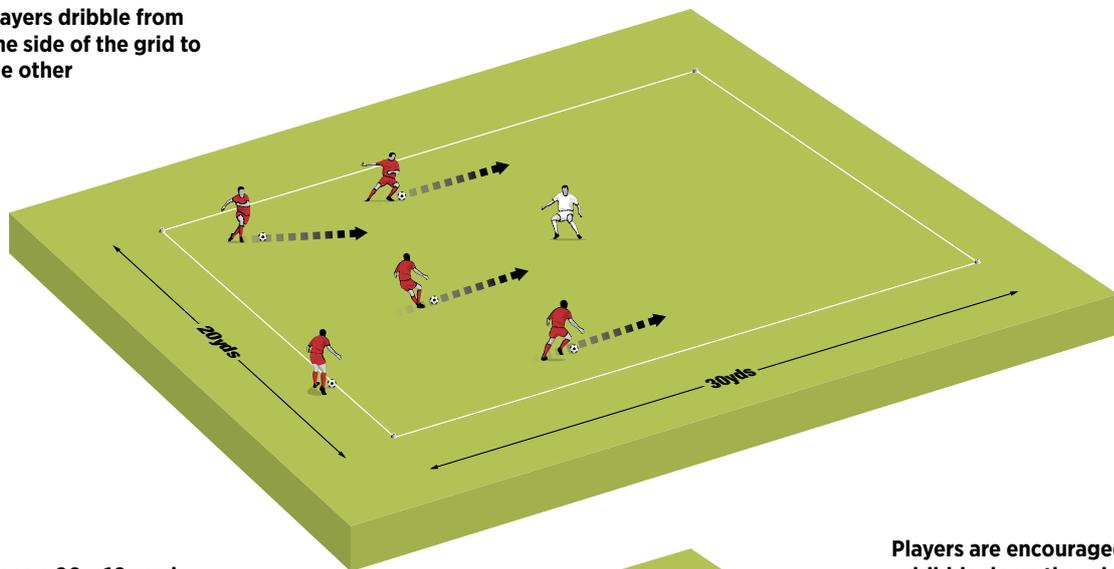
HOW TO PLAY

Players attempt to dribble from one side of the grid to the other. A defender is in the middle and attempts to win the ball from the attackers (the defender can be the coach). If the dribbling players lose the ball they join the defender in the middle. To progress, limit the space the defender can defend and award players extra points for being adventurous by attacking the defender.

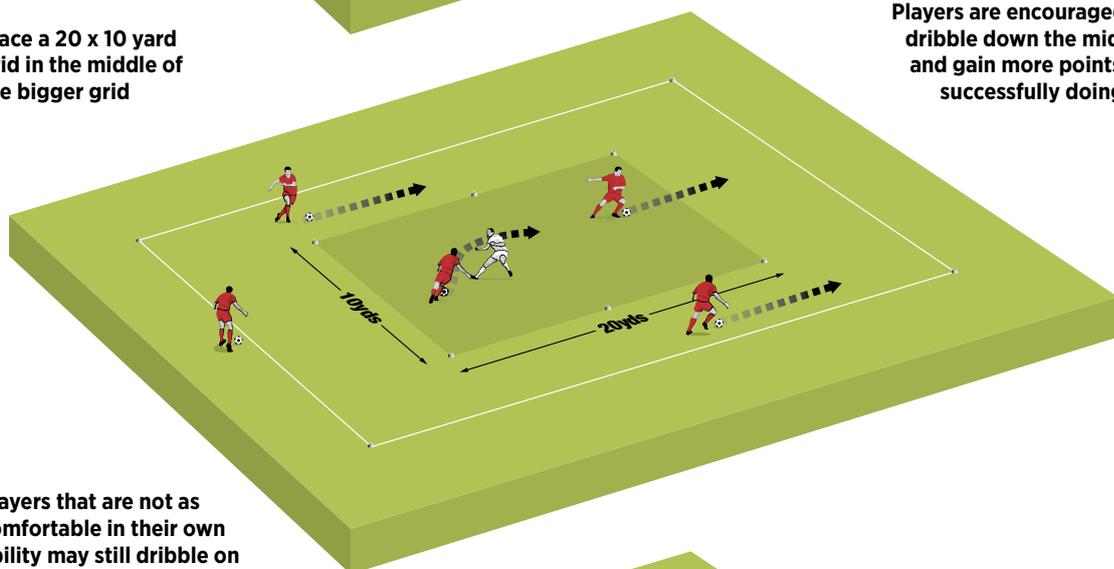
TECHNIQUE

This activity emphasizes fundamental movement skills and dribbling basics. As the session progresses introduce combination play to exploit the space behind the defenders.

Players dribble from one side of the grid to the other

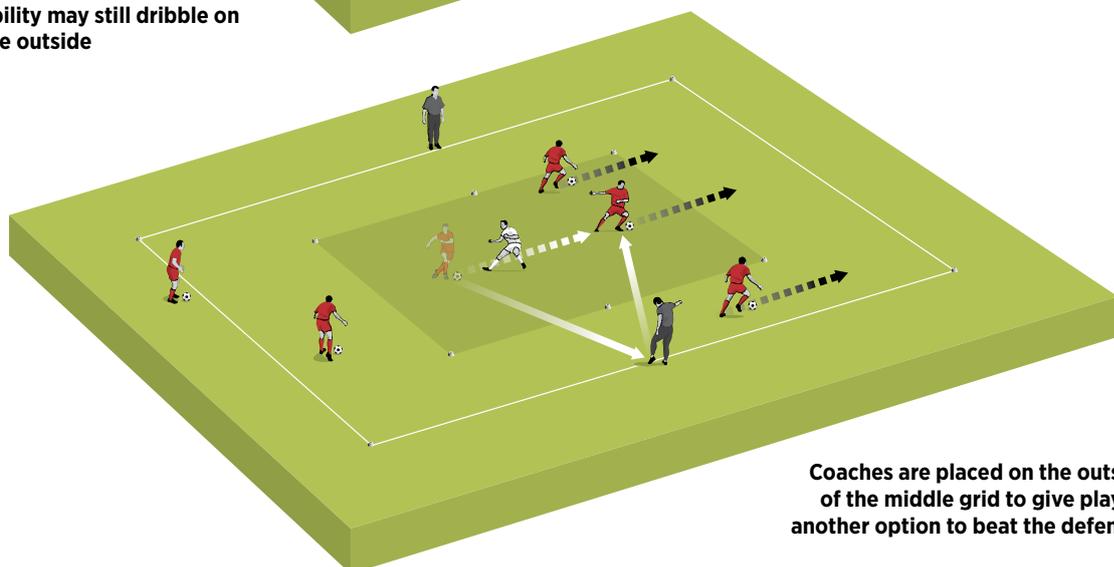


Place a 20 x 10 yard grid in the middle of the bigger grid



Players are encouraged to dribble down the middle and gain more points by successfully doing so

Players that are not as comfortable in their own ability may still dribble on the outside



Coaches are placed on the outside of the middle grid to give players another option to beat the defender

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Explosive Squares

This game encourages support and movement off the ball. Players learn how to deal with the basics of passing and receiving and additional conditions are added to build the pressure and challenge.

WHY USE IT

After making a pass you will often see players standing still and admiring their work. You will also see players struggling to create good supporting angles for the player with the ball. This activity addresses these common issues.

SET UP

Four grids of 12x12. Cones used to mark off the area. 4 balls and 4 sets of different colored pinnies.

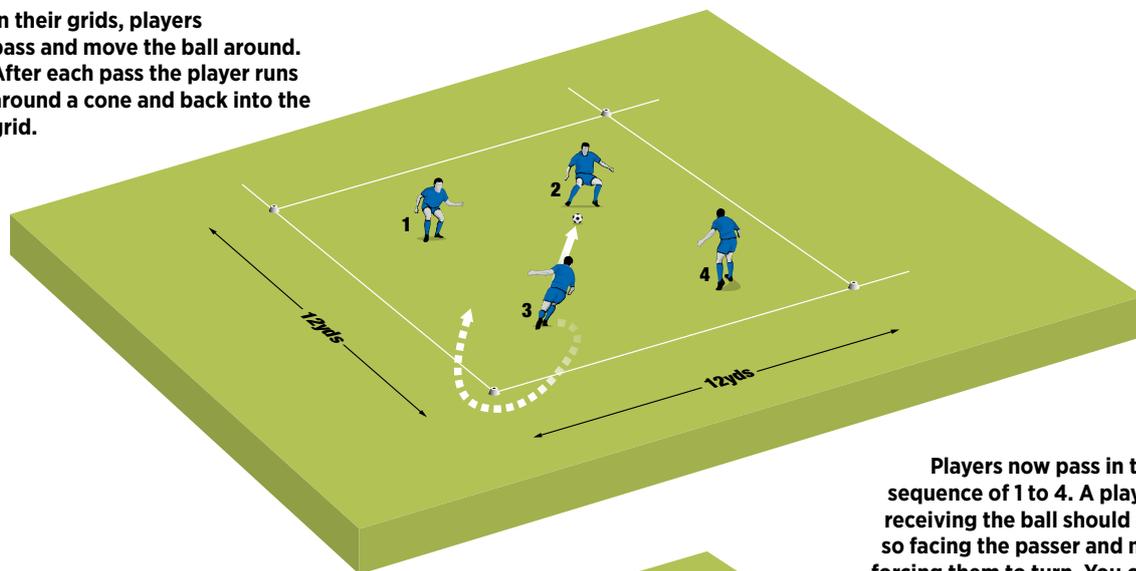
HOW TO PLAY

Players are placed in teams of 4 - they pass and move the ball around in their own grid. During the process players have to follow passing sequences and movements as well as learning how to maintain possession.

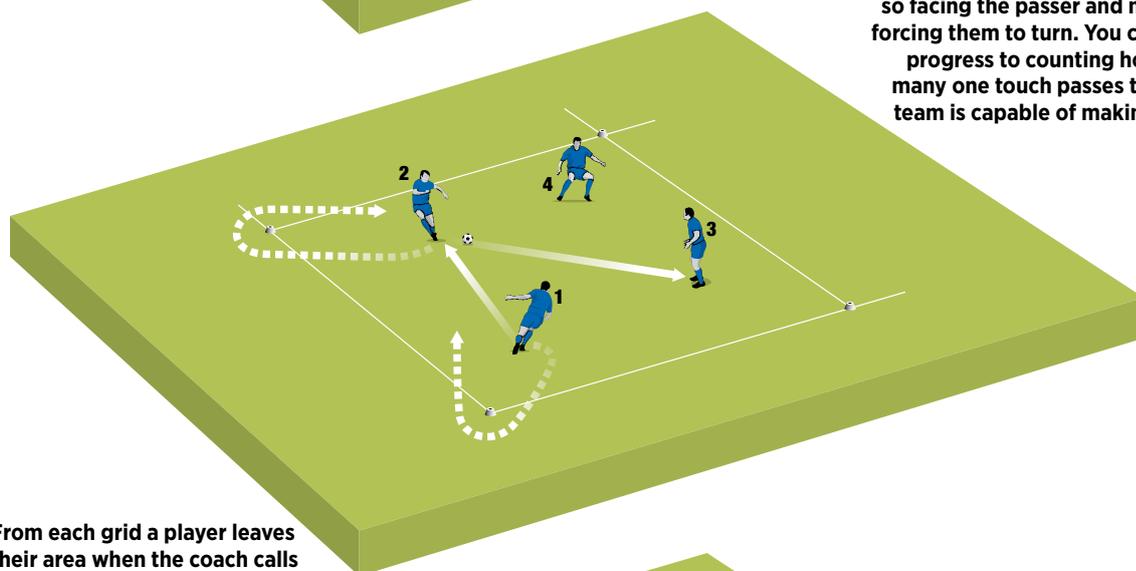
TECHNIQUE

This activity emphasizes the fundamentals of passing and receiving.

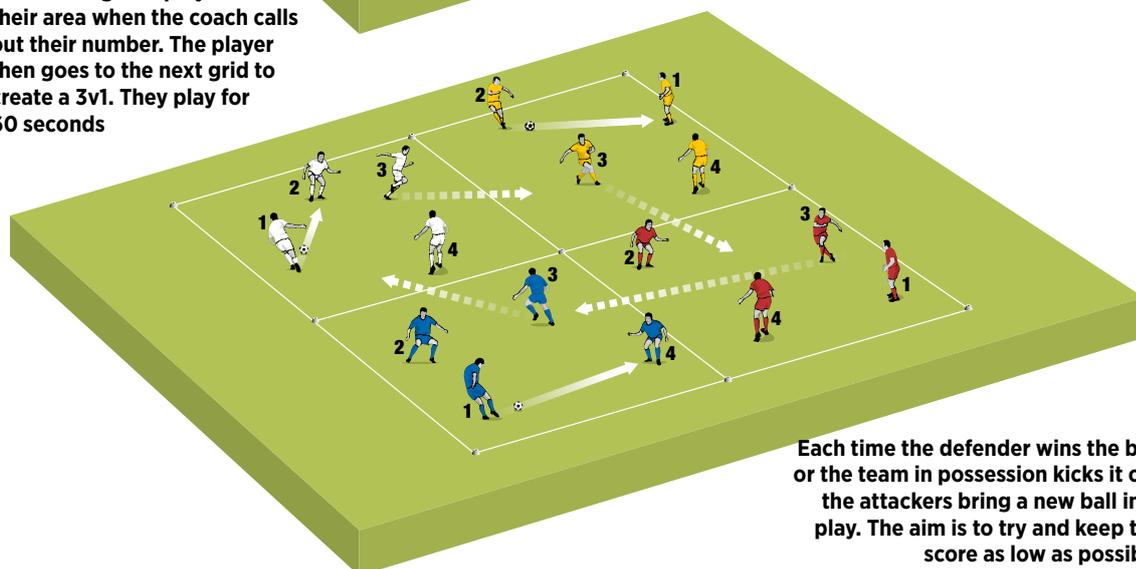
In their grids, players pass and move the ball around. After each pass the player runs around a cone and back into the grid.



Players now pass in the sequence of 1 to 4. A player receiving the ball should do so facing the passer and not forcing them to turn. You can progress to counting how many one touch passes the team is capable of making.



From each grid a player leaves their area when the coach calls out their number. The player then goes to the next grid to create a 3v1. They play for 60 seconds



Each time the defender wins the ball or the team in possession kicks it out the attackers bring a new ball into play. The aim is to try and keep the score as low as possible

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

4v4 with Four Goals

Players love scrimmaging and coaches can use games to teach players techniques and tactics without them realizing they are learning.

WHY USE IT

Not only does this game help players stay connected but also starts introducing finishing and expands players range of passing.

SET UP

40 x 25 field, with a half way line. Cones used to mark off the area. Several balls. Two different set of pinnies. Small goals or pug goals.

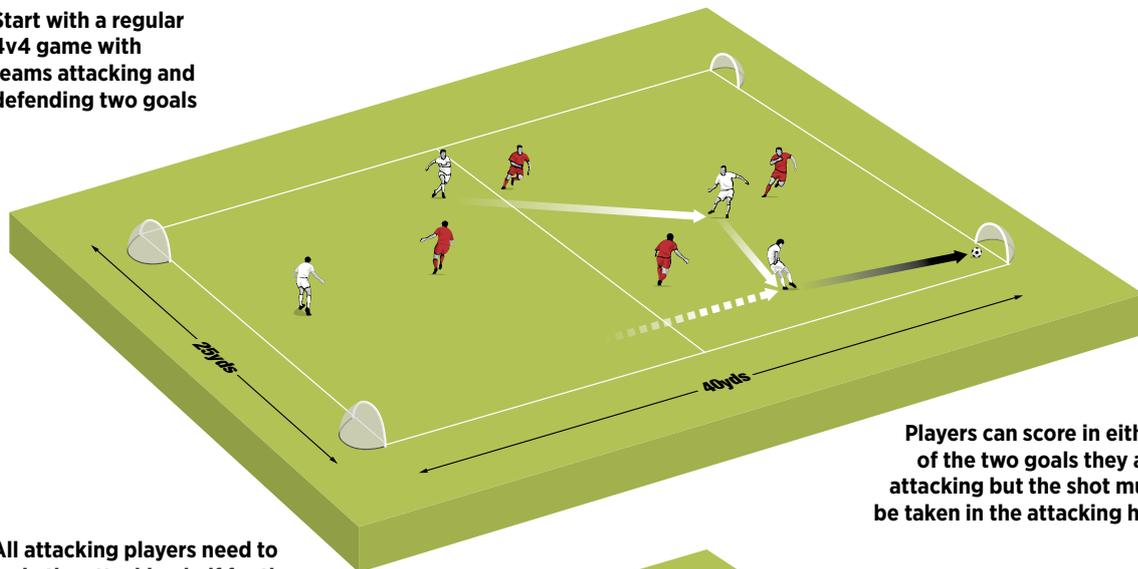
HOW TO PLAY

Two teams of 4 attack and defend two small goals. Regular soccer rules without corners.

TECHNIQUE

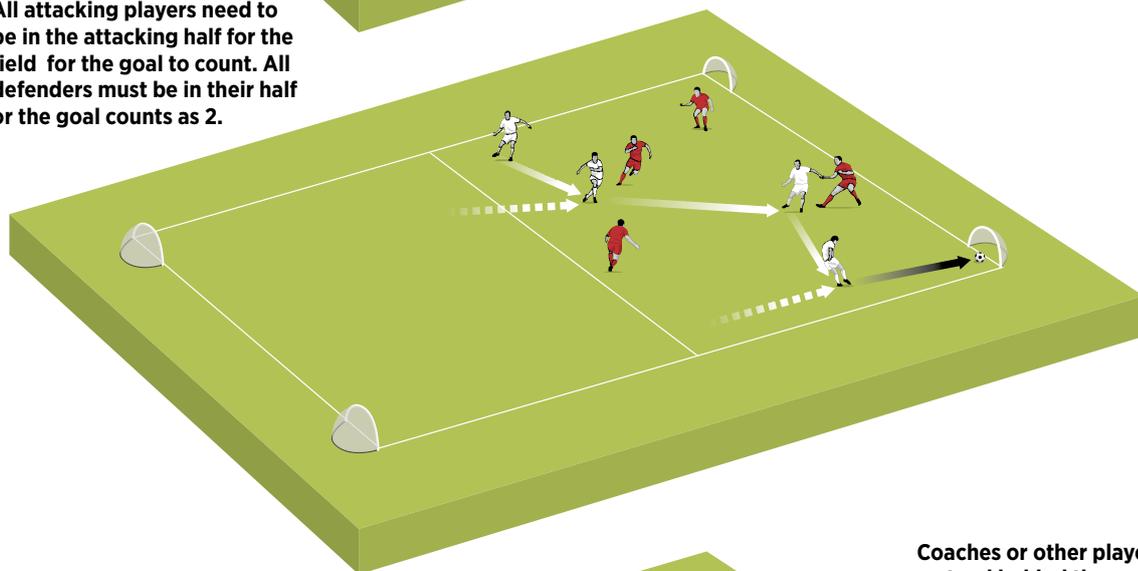
This activity helps players expand their range passing and receiving. With the introduction of finishing.

Start with a regular 4v4 game with teams attacking and defending two goals



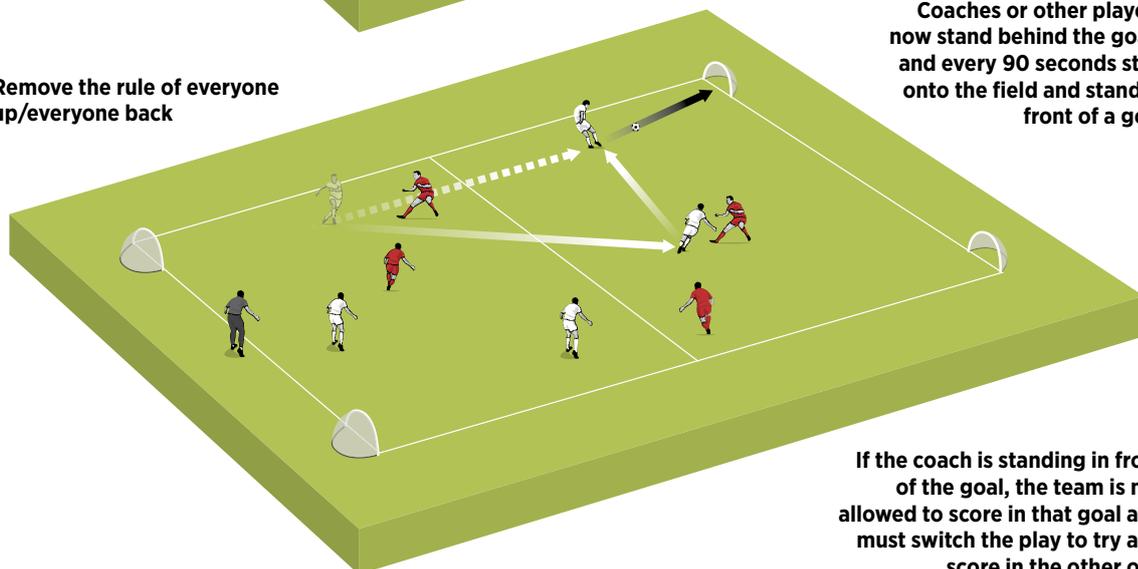
Players can score in either of the two goals they are attacking but the shot must be taken in the attacking half

All attacking players need to be in the attacking half for the field for the goal to count. All defenders must be in their half or the goal counts as 2.



Coaches or other players now stand behind the goals and every 90 seconds step onto the field and stand in front of a goal

Remove the rule of everyone up/everyone back



If the coach is standing in front of the goal, the team is not allowed to score in that goal and must switch the play to try and score in the other one

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Coconut Shy

This activity can be used to introduce shooting technique or passing over a longer distance. Ideal activity between 2 higher intensity activities to allow players an opportunity to rest.

WHY USE IT

A basic introduction of weight and accuracy of passing. Can also be a good game for a cool down or to be used during a training session following a game.

SET UP

Players are in pairs. 4 balls per pair. 3 cones per pair.

HOW TO PLAY

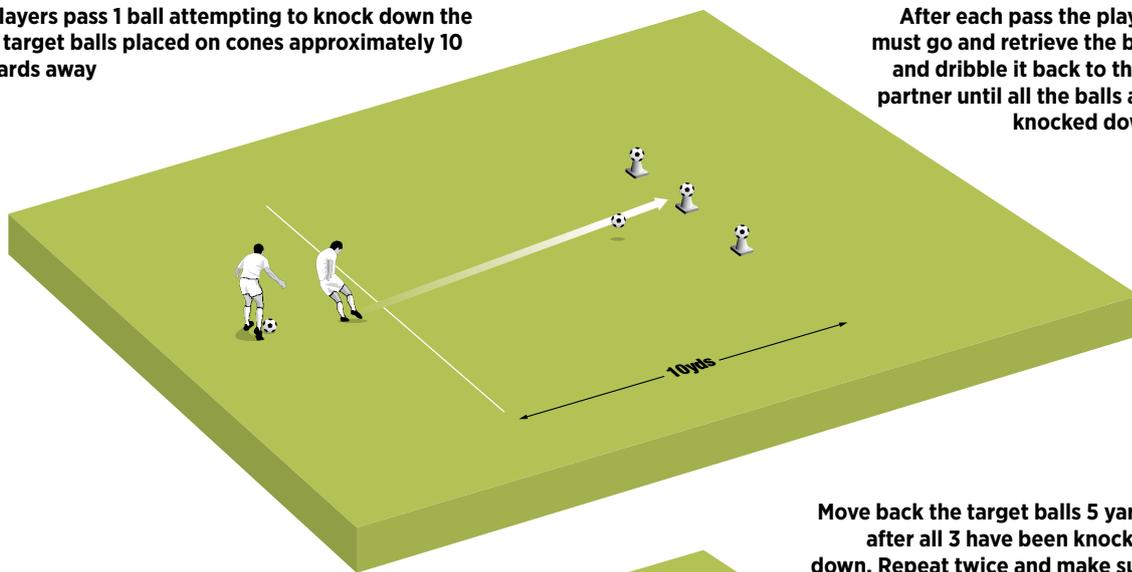
Place 3 balls on cones approximately 10 yards away from the players.

The first player passes the ball and attempts to knock the balls down off the cones. After making the pass the player goes and retrieves the ball and dribbles it back to their partner.

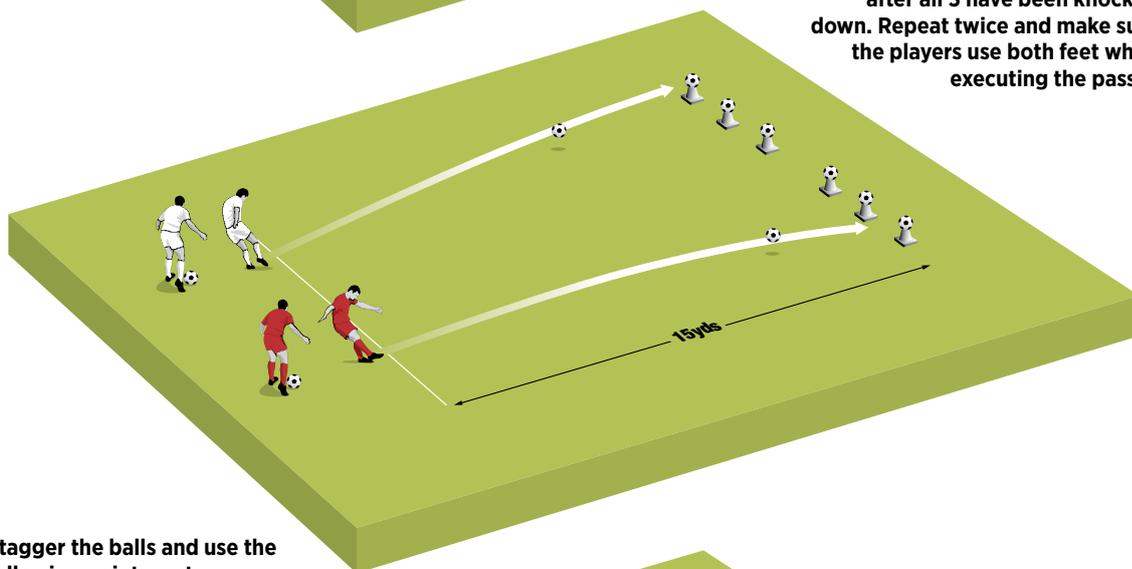
TECHNIQUE

This activity emphasizes weight and accuracy of passing.

Players pass 1 ball attempting to knock down the 3 target balls placed on cones approximately 10 yards away



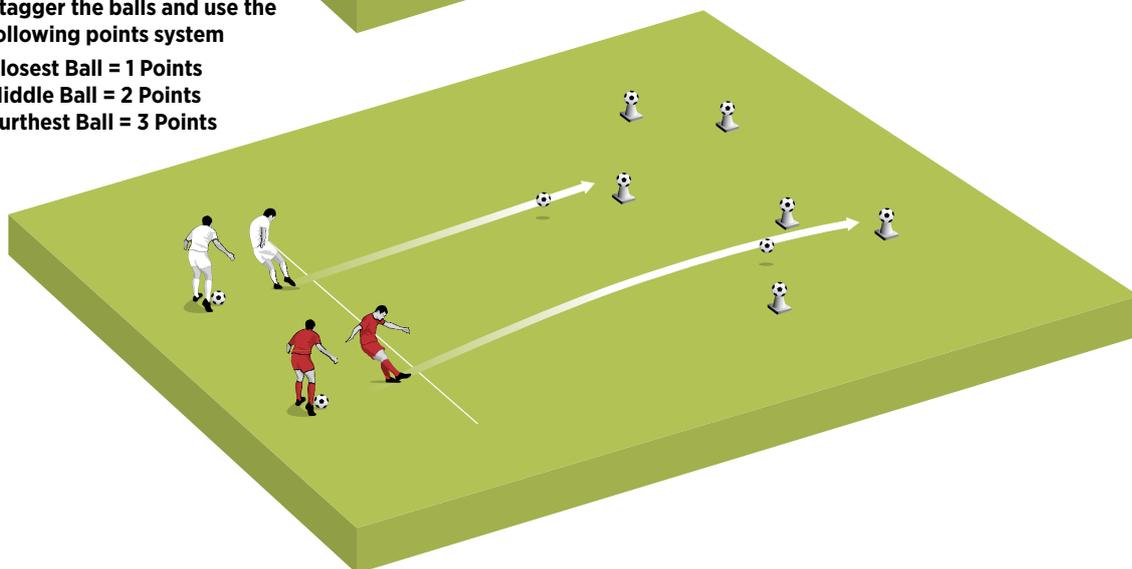
After each pass the player must go and retrieve the ball and dribble it back to their partner until all the balls are knocked down



Move back the target balls 5 yards after all 3 have been knocked down. Repeat twice and make sure the players use both feet when executing the passes

Stagger the balls and use the following points system

- Closest Ball = 1 Points
- Middle Ball = 2 Points
- Furthest Ball = 3 Points



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

COACHING U6, U8 AND U10 - THE REVIEW

As with the previous series focusing on Attacking Principles, we concluded with a review session. Tom provided a brief review of the Principles of Coaching.



TOM GOODMAN

Technical Director, New England Futbol Club

With 37 years of playing, coaching and professional experience in the game, Tom is extremely well qualified to summarize this series. Undoubtedly Tom is an expert in the development of youth soccer players and coaches. He has 20 years classroom teaching experience, over 37 years of playing the game as well as coaching players of all ages and levels, and mentoring and instructing coaches. Tom has held a variety of leadership positions in youth soccer clubs and is the former US Youth Soccer National Director of Coaching Education and Massachusetts Youth Soccer Technical Director. Amongst his many accomplishments, Tom has authored several books and articles on the topic of player and coach development.

Summary of Webinar Presentation

1. Developmental appropriateness: Tom referred to the Stages of Development - where are the players in their physical development, their cognitive development and their social development.
2. Creation of a safe and sensible space: Tom proposed a couple of questions - Are we, as coaches, creating a soccer environment conducive to learning and having fun? Is it safe and does it make sense based on the stage of development of the players?
3. Progression from simple to complex: Tom asked - If activities progress from warm-up type activities to game-like activities?
4. Information must be clear and concise: This is certainly true for all players in all age groups, but certainly more prevalent at the U6, U8 and U10 age groups.
5. Decision making and interpretation: We must create soccer environments where players can be challenged with age appropriate problems; an environment where player creativity is fostered and player decisions applauded.
6. Soccer relevance: At the end of the day, the environment created by the youth coach must have soccer relevance. In other words the execution of the skills and the decisions being made in the activities must transfer to the game of soccer.

Tom picked out a suggestion that coaches are educators of the game ... physical education teachers of soccer! He felt that the words “educators” and “teachers” stood out. The playing environment and experience for these age groups (U6-U12) was a “make it or break it” time for them in our sport. Their experiences through this time will determine whether we keep them or lose them! Good teachers create the right soccer environment for their players. An environment that fosters, Passion for the game; Technical Development; Tactical Development; Human Development.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Tom

Q1: Are formal weekend games with referees detrimental at U6-U8 in comparison to more imaginative soccer mini games? Grant Vreuls

Response: Hi Grant...I don't think that formal games with referees are detrimental as long as the games are “in-town” games and the coaching philosophy is positive. At U6 I would prefer to see training groups of 8-10 players, playing dual field games against another training group, with coaches keeping the games flowing. U7 and U8 can play the games with referees. These games also provide a training ground for young referees.

Q2: As a DOC in a smaller club we typically use younger inexperienced coaches with our younger players. How do you motivate casual coaches to pursue their coaching education and licensure? Marc Campoverde

Response: Hi Marc...usually it's the time commitment that discourages coaches from attending coaching education sessions/courses. As DOC,

I recommend that you give them a taste of good coaching education in small doses (45-60 minute sessions); stuff that they can use to run a good training session. Then after providing them with good information, recommend that they continue on through the licensing program.

Q3: If doing an activity requiring pairs and you have odd numbers of players, is it beneficial for the coach to jump in and play with the kids?

Emily Hester

Response: Hi Emily...I think that it is beneficial if the coach joins in. It's fun for the player who partners with the coach. It shows the players that you're not opposed to getting on stage with the team. Having said that, one of the principles of coaching is “Observation”. So, joining in training is fine, but you really need to watch your players so that you can help them to become better players.

Q4: Is there a special course topic that addresses “guided discovery”?

Kate Carpenter

Response: Hi Kate...I don't believe that there is. I believe that it would be very well received if offered. There was however a recent webinar session offered as part of the free webinar series - you can see the video recording of that session and many others by visiting NSCAA YouTube channel - <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX1UbdvTWB5kfMwkqVBaBgg>

Q5: What do you feel about the use of language by the coach and “yelling at the players?” Mitchell Beck

Response: Hi Mitchell...the players need to see the game and hear the game to play the game successfully. Coaches who yell at players distract them, thus interrupting their play. This makes the environment “Coach-Centered”. Coaches should create a “Player-Centered” environment conducive to learning, therefore, limiting their communication to positive comments and good probing questions.

Q6: The session Steal the Bacon, could we change it into a turning or creating space activity? Giuseppe Emma

Response: I think that once you reduce the number of soccer balls you will automatically create more pressure on the field requiring the use of turning skills. This will provide you with the environment to coach ‘turning’. Also, increasing the field size will allow you to teach “creating space”. Reducing the number of soccer balls in the activity creates more team play requiring teammates to create space for other teammates.

Q7: Would best friends/siblings make a better pair or would two kids that might not know each other very well make a better pair for a partner's game? Jake Brown

Response: The National Youth License teaches that U8 players tend to cooperate with one person at a time (usually their friend) because they have just graduated from the U6 parallel play stage. So typically best friends work well in pairs. Siblings tend to be a bit different, since they have history (home environment). At the end of the day, you simply experiment and see what works. It's good socially for the kids to pair up with different kids each practice session.



COACHING COURSE MENU

Take the next step! The NSCAA Coaching Course Menu is designed with flexibility for coaches to choose their desired level of entry based on previous experience. Levels 1-6 all offer unique material and can be taken in any order. We recommend reading each course description to determine the best fit for you; make sure to pay attention to any potential pre-requisites.

Beginner

Level 1 Diploma
Level 2 Diploma
Level 3 Diploma
Special Topics Webinars

Intermediate

Level 4 Diploma
Level 5 Diploma
Level 6 Diploma
Special Topics

Advanced

National Diploma
Adv. National
Diploma
Premier Diploma
Master Coach

Goalkeeping

GK Level 1
GK Level 2
GK Level 3
Advanced
National GK

High School

NFHS
Fundamentals
of Coaching

High School
Diploma

Director of Coaching

DOC
Diploma

Member Club

Club Standards

Advanced DOC Certificate