

SOCCER-COACH-L

BASIC COACHING MANUAL

Version 1.0

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Preface to MS Word 97 Version

In 1998, members of the SOCCER-COACH-L mailing list began a project to create a soccer coaching manual for new and experienced coaches of young soccer players (players in the range of 4 to 11 years of age). This work was completed in the first quarter of 1999 and the manual was placed on the list's web site. The most current version of the manual can be found at <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/>.

This is a Microsoft Word 97 version of that online, Web-based Soccer Basic Coaching Manual. It is essentially the same in content as the Web-based version. However, there are some differences:

- this version reflects the online Manual as it existed in May, 1999. Any updates to the Web pages made since then may not be reflected in this Word 97 version;
- the Web-based version contains links which allow the user to jump to other pages within the Manual; the Word version does not contain these intra-document links; however this version does retain most of the links to Web sites external to the Manual pages;
- there are some formatting and editing changes to reflect the fact that this version will be read as a hard copy printed version.

The same conditions specified in **Note on copyright** and **Note on reproduction** apply to this Word 97 version of the Manual.

Shel Fung
July 29, 1999

Overview

Welcome to the **SOCCER-COACH-L Basic Coaching Manual**. We hope that you find many items of interest to you, whether you are an experienced coach looking for new ideas or a brand new coach with no idea where to start. Please make sure you read our disclaimer and the notices on copyright and reproduction before going on.

The Manual was created by a dedicated group of soccer coaches who are members of the SOCCER-COACH-L mailing list, in the hopes that this Manual will assist youth soccer coaches in teaching the "beautiful game" to their players.

What will you find in the Manual? A good place to start is the complete outline, which allows you to go directly to the topic of greatest interest to you. General information on each of the sections is set out below; it may help you to narrow your search, or assist you if you simply want to browse.

The sections in the Manual are as follows:

Basic Principles: What to Teach, and Why provides information on what skills should be taught to new players; what it is reasonable to expect u10 or older players to know after one year of training; helpful information on when and how to teach positions; and background information on the basic principles involved in individual and small-group play, which are essential for all coaches and players to know in order to be able to function well at the higher levels.

Practical Guidelines for Coaching contains a number of suggestions on the "nuts & bolts" of teaching soccer, including how to communicate your policies to new players/parents; how to set up your first practice; how to pick drills to teach your players, based on their skill levels and other constraints; what players to put together for drills and why; and a wide range of information on how to help your players to learn soccer (including how to handle disruptive parents and players).

Practice Plans to Teach the Basics has lots of complete practice plans; an assortment of games which can be used for warm-ups or in place of games in the drills; a sample stretching routine; and a host of other information (such as glossaries of common dribbling moves and common soccer terms) which should prove invaluable to the beginning coach. It may even provide the experienced coach with some new ideas or games.

Guidelines for Game Day includes helpful information on getting your players warmed up & ready to play; effective ways to handle subs during the match; how to analyze the match and quickly make adjustments for common problems; and how to deal with assorted common game day problems, including safety issues, problem officials, and problem parents.

Coaching the Very Young Child (U6 and below) provides information on how to introduce soccer to the youngest set, including helpful information on dealing with the uniform tendency of such players to make a large swarm around the ball during games.

Resources for Coaching is devoted to providing assorted information which may be helpful to the coach, including available coaching clinics or licensing courses in a number of countries; book and video which may be helpful; links to other websites with soccer coaching information; sample forms; safety & risk management information; and other items of general interest to coaches.

Further Reading (under construction in the Web-based Manual) will contain additional information from the archives of the SOCCER-COACH-L list, as well as other materials which may be of interest to the more advanced coach. These pages are always under construction. If you have any favorite drills for more advanced players, we encourage you to send them to [our webmaster](#) - or to join [SOCCER-COACH-L](#) and share your knowledge with other coaches.

Legal Notices: Every coach who uses any materials in this Manual should take steps to ensure that the materials are in compliance with the policies and procedures of his or her governing club or administrative body, as well as the applicable laws of his or her country or region; that the drills or games utilized are appropriate for the ages and skill levels of his or her players; that he or she has clarified any unclear illustrations or descriptions with appropriate experts in the field; that he or she will exercise common sense and good judgement in obtaining further information where any materials may be unclear, or where the use of such materials may be inadvisable; and that he or she has taken all reasonable and necessary steps to ensure that players will be properly selected, trained and supervised in the performance of any exercises, games or drills contained in the Manual. No warranties are provided as to the suitability or fitness of any of the materials for any particular purpose, nor are any claims made by the Manual Committee of special expertise (including expertise in matters of safety, medicine, psychology, law, or other learned disciplines) upon which the reader or third parties may rely. Any user or other recipient of any materials in this Manual is hereby notified that the Manual Committee retains all copyright in the materials in the Manual. Please review the **Note on copyright** and **Note on reproduction** below for restrictions on the reproduction of these materials.

Translated to Plain English: The materials in the Manual are being provided free of charge for the personal use by soccer coaches. Use the Manual at your own risk. If you screw up, it is your own fault. And, if we screwed something up, you need to understand that we are all amateurs who are doing this for love, not for money - so we make no guarantees about the quality of anything in the Manual. You need to take full responsibility for checking out any advice or materials which you decide to use with whatever experts in the applicable fields which you or your Club or insurance carriers might find to be necessary or appropriate, and it is your own darned fault (not ours - either individually or collectively) if you don't bother to do this.

Note on copyright: This work is a creation of the SOCCER-COACH-L Coaching Manual Collective, which is a pseudonym for a joint project among several individuals intended to provide basic information for the benefit of soccer (Association Football) coaches, especially those who are new to the game.

The copyright in this jointly created work is jointly held by the individuals named in the list of contributors contained in the Acknowledgements section of this Manual, who created and wrote this work.

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How to use these pages

(NOTE: This applies only when accessing the Web-based version of the Manual).

The left-hand frame is a navigation frame. To view the main page for any section, click the name of the section (in other words, to see the introductory page for the 'Resources' section, click the word 'Resources' in the left-hand frame. To display a list of all the pages in a section, click the arrowhead beside the name of the section; to hide the list, simply click the arrowhead again, or click the arrowhead for another section. In this way, you can display a list of pages for any section while viewing any page in the manual. A non-frames version of the manual will be available once content has been finalized. A downloadable, printable version of the manual will also be made available when time permits.

Updated 31 March 1999

Acknowledgements

This *Coaching Manual* was a collective work created as a labor of love, and as a gift to the soccer community, by three groups of dedicated coaches. Most of the drafting work was done by a core group of coaches who have worked with the target age groups, and was supplemented by articles from other contributors who lacked the time to fully participate in the full project. In addition, a third group of coaches assisted in the editing of the Manual and/or acted as advisors for the final product.

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Updated 11 April 1999

Basic Principles: What to Teach and Why

This section is about the basic principles of what you should try to teach your players, and what those things are important. The actual mechanics of the coaching sections can be found in the "Practice Plans to Teach the Basics" section. Here's what you'll find here:

1. Reasonable Expectations after One Year of Training
2. The Most Important Skills to Teach
3. Basic Guide to Formations and Positional Skills
4. Individual Attacking
5. Group Attacking
6. Individual Defending
7. Group Defending

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Reasonable Expectations after One Year of Training

After one year (one long or two short outdoor seasons, or one outdoor and one indoor season, depending on local conditions) of formal soccer training, most coaches on the List think that it is realistic to expect most beginners at age U-10 and above to be able to do the following:

1. Head a fairly gentle ball (they shouldn't even think of attempting teeth-rattlers until around U13 or so).
2. Be able to execute a decent chest trap (and decide whether to use the head or chest as the ball is coming in).
3. Know the basic rules for a first defender (delay/deny), and be able to successfully mark/hold an attacker of similar size/speed/skill for a count of about 7-8.
4. Execute a basic standing tackle and shoulder charge.
5. Be able to pass a stationary ball thru cones 1 yard apart at distances of 6 yards with dominant foot. Be able to pass accurately with non-dominant foot at the 3 yard distance.
6. Be able to receive/control with 2 touches/then push pass a moving ball thru cones 1 yard apart at a distance of 4 yards (2-3 yards with non-dominant).
7. Be able to execute a laces kick with some power and accuracy.
8. Be able to execute a lofted kick/chip which will clear an average-sized player in their age bracket.
9. Understand the basic rules on throw-ins, and be able to execute them properly.
10. Be able to dribble/beat an unskilled defender by use of simple cuts and changes of pace.
11. Be able to shield the ball and hold in 1 v 1 situation to count of 8.
12. Understand basic principles of keepaway (talking, taking the ball where the defenders aren't, basic rules of support triangles, planning your reception to take ball into space/away from pressure).
13. Understand usual game rules (restarts, fouls, fair play, ref signals, basic offsides if applicable).
14. Understand/follow the team rules (paying attention, bringing proper equipment to practice, cleanup, subbing, calling if late/missing, no hassle of teammates, etc.).
15. Be able to juggle the ball with the foot or thigh at least 5-10 times.
16. Be able to pass the ball appropriately to a teammate who is 10 yards or more away, both when teammate is stationary and when moving (i.e., understands the concept of leading a moving player so that he does not overrun the ball).
17. Be able to receive a well-struck ball passed with the inside of both feet, and with at least the outside of the dominant foot.

Updated 31 March 1999

The Most Important Skills to Teach

Soccer players need a lot of different skills, and it does not matter for most of these skills whether you teach Skill A or Skill B first. However, there are some skills that are absolute "must-haves" for any player- and are so important that you probably will want to teach them first.

These are basic ball-holding skills (receiving and shielding); basic ball-stealing skills (defense); and basic take-on skills (attacking). Most kids naturally seem to have a few basic defensive skills, even if they were never formally taught. The other two areas require instruction to accomplish with even minimal competency, so there is a good argument to start first with ball-holding skills; move next to take-on skills; and then to get to ball-stealing skills.

Why ball-holding before take-on? Simple. Once you get possession, the other side is going to try to take the ball back. If you can hang onto the ball under pressure, you'll have time to make better decisions (including finding an open teammate to pass the ball to). Also, if you are confident that you can hold the ball, you are much less likely to blindly try to simply whack it away and let someone else worry about it (a technique commonly known as "passing the responsibility rather than the ball" or the "hot-potato phenomenon"). What are ball-holding skills? Most folks refer to them as receiving and shielding skills. The first step (receiving) is to bring the ball under control quickly. Then, you use your body/legs to get between the opponent and the ball to protect (shield) the ball. It includes really basic stuff like simply stepping over the ball when somebody is coming in, as well as somewhat harder stuff (but still easy) like rolling/pulling the ball back behind you or to your side. The rolling/pulling of the ball requires some work, as you need to learn to use both feet - and to switch feet. However, one of the key ingredients is to learn to bend the knees; get the arms out; and use your weight to push back into the opponent. As kids get more advanced, they can learn how to spring off of an opponent (or roll off of him by using a circle turn). However, at the very beginning stages, they are fine if they can simply get their bottoms down; get those knees bent; push hard back into the opponent; and get enough weight on their support leg to be able to free their far foot and use it to roll the ball around. Along with these ball-holding skills, you will want to introduce some basic receiving skills, so that they can bring the ball under control quickly (which is essential if they are going to have any hope of shielding it).

How to do this? Start with two equal-sized players with a single ball in a grid about 3-yards square and have them work on holding the ball by using simple rolls, pullbacks and other touches to shield the ball. If you teach your players ANYTHING, teach them the skills to keep possession. Once they realize that they have the skills to keep an opponent from stealing the ball, they will gain the confidence to lift their heads up and find another player to pass off to. Before they gain this confidence, you can expect terrible passing simply because they will get flustered at the first hint of pressure (and might even "feel" panicked at pressure which is 10-20 yards away). Until your players can hold a ball 1 v 1 in a grid about 10 feet by 10 feet for a count of around 7-8, they are not going to have enough confidence to do very well on the field.

After learning some basic shielding/receiving skills, the next thing to learn is some basic dribbling skills. Different coaches have different philosophies on how to teach dribbling. Many coaches spend a lot of time trying to teach young players a lot of fancy moves which were made famous by noted international stars (who, incidentally, only perfected these fancy moves after years and years of hard work on the basics). This approach works for some kids who are naturally graceful and quick. However, it can have the unfortunate result of convincing an awful lot of kids that "I can't dribble" when they simply are still growing; are a bit clumsy; and cannot get their big feet and/or unwieldy bodies to do all of the ballerina stuff.

What these coaches don't realize is that a player only needs to know about 3 basic moves to be able to dribble very successfully--and that virtually all top-notch players use these same 3 moves about 90% of the time when they are dribbling the ball. ANYBODY CAN LEARN THESE 3 MOVES (and this includes the coach)!

The moves are the check (a/k/a "magic hop" in some Vogelsinger videos); the simple cut/explosion using the outside of the dribble foot; and the chop (cut with the inside of the foot). If they can master these three moves, and learn the standard, straight-ahead dribbling technique (i.e. knee over the ball; front of dribble foot pulls the ball along so it

stays on/near the foot at all times), they can learn to beat a reasonable number of defenders especially if those defenders are coming in at speed.

The key to take-on skills is getting the head up to watch the defender which is dependent on having enough ball-control that you know where the ball is and what it is going to do without needing to look. Then, as soon as the defender tries to stab at the ball, you can take advantage of his "dead leg" (weight mainly on one leg) by attacking the outside of the dead leg and going around him. Piece of cake!!

Of course, once your players become convinced that they can dribble, they probably will want to work on "cool moves". This is a great warm-up. In fact, it can be great homework (Coach at end of practice: "Johnny needs to learn a new move and teach it to us at next practice; anyone who uses it in the scrimmage gets a lollipop"). But don't put the cart before the horse. Convince them that they can dribble and the fancy moves will take care of themselves.

The next thing to learn is basic defense including simple delay as well as ball-stealing. The first thing to teach is simple delaying tactics by use of good footwork to get in the attacker's way. Time is the defender's friend, and speed is the attacker's friend, so you want to delay and delay and delay to allow your teammates to come and help. Once you're "numbers up", it's easier to steal the ball! The second skill is the standing tackle followed by the shoulder charge.

Of course, after you've taught these very basic skills, you'll need to work on passing technique and kicking technique since most kids won't be able to pass accurately or do a laces kick or a chip without instruction (although most will toe-kick just fine). Whatever you do, please don't teach your kids that the "proper" way to score is to break the net with a hard shot. Many kids get the impression that they cannot play forward unless they have a very hard shot. This is garbage. Most goals in games will be scored by passes, not by blistering shots on goal (pull out your WC tapes and watch - this is universally true for most goals, except for set plays). So, get them used to scoring by simply passing the ball into the net and their future coaches will thank you. Nothing wrong with scoring by a kick, mind you. Just don't get them into the mindset that their spectacular dribbling run through 6 defenders needs to end with a bullet shot as they'll inevitably put the ball out too far in front of them to get the shot off and the keeper will make a meal of it. On the other hand, they most likely would have scored if they had simply kept the head up; watched the keeper; and pushed it past him.

Depending on your age group, the next stage is often to introduce wall passes but these take lots of ball control/receiving/passing skills which often are not present at younger ages or with newer players. You'll also want to introduce the basic cutback or drop at some stage, as well as the square pass. The cutback or drop (where the on-ball player takes the ball to the goal line and cuts it back to the penalty mark) are common support options. These are all basic 2v1 options for support - and I haven't even added the overlap!

There is not much point in even adding much in the 3v1 or 3v2 attacking category until your kids have mastered the basic jobs of the on-ball player and the player who is closest to him (the 2nd attacker, in coach-speak). Once the kids have figured out how to keep the ball; take somebody on; and provide simple 2v1 support; add in the concepts of basic triangles for support and focus on the job of the off-ball players to promptly move so that the on-ball player always has 2 safe, short passing options. Along with improving first-touch and some more basic take-on, finishing and defending skills, this should be quite enough to occupy your team (and you) through the next World Cup.

Along the way, expect them to make mistakes in deciding what was the "best" support option. Expect them to go to sleep from time to time, and not move into a good support position. Expect their first-touch to fail them. But, if you work them in these basics and push them to learn these simple rules, they are likely to be among the best players on the field in a few years.

Updated 6 April 1999

Basic Guide to Formations and Positional Training

Most teams (and new coaches) are thrown into games after just a few practices, often before the coach has had a real chance to teach the players anything. Thus, new coaches often feel intense pressure to "win", and may take early losses personally. This can lead them to worry excessively about where to put their players to maximize their "wins" when they really should be worrying about giving their young charges valuable experience in all parts of the field. These same fears of "failure" (i.e., not winning) can also cause some youth coaches to focus on a few stars and relegate the rest to the bench or supporting roles. When this happens, most of the players don't learn anything or have any fun, and even the development of the "stars" can be harmed in the long run.

How You Define "Winning" Will Affect All You Do

It is important to let players and parents know what the coach defines as "winning" at the start of the season. In their developmental years, kids really do "win" at soccer or, for that matter, any other sport if they have fun with their friends; learn enough about the game to become a fan; and get some healthy exercise. Numerous studies show that while kids certainly enjoy winning contests, their short attention span allows them to quickly forget the score in the last game, at least until some adult makes a big deal out of it. In addition, because kids are naturally more focused on their own performance than on the performance of the group, kids can be perfectly happy if they had a great game themselves even if the team lost in a blow-out.

Because kids have these wonderfully short memories and an ingrained focus on "me", any coach can have a "winning" season by setting the kids up to succeed at some task in every game and praising them for this accomplishment. Of course, a good coach also wants to teach them to work together and to whittle down the "me" focus a bit. Therefore, good coaches will include some team objectives that encourage the kids to work together (e.g., "Let's see if we can get 3 passes in a row in each quarter"). So, don't be afraid to use a long-term focus and to define "winning" in a way that gives everyone a fair chance to succeed.

Develop a Long-Term Focus

The first few games simply show the skills that any prior coaches taught your players and give you an idea of their natural athletic talent. So, the last thing on the mind of a new coach should be worries about winning the early games. Instead, the focus properly should be on long-term skill development. When this happens, the wins ultimately will start coming to your team as they become one of the more skilled teams on the field. This can take up to a year or more, so be sure to let everyone know in advance that you do not intend to worry at all about the short-term won/loss record.

How does a new coach who knows nothing about soccer get these kids trained and organized, so that they will be the most skilled? It is not very hard, as long as you keep it simple.

Basic Soccer Positioning Is Easy

Soccer is a very simple game. It has only 3 basic positions that are used in attacking, and only 3 basic positions that are used in defending. This is why many soccer clubs are moving towards 3v3 and 4v4 games at the younger age levels, so that players get a good foundation in this basic positioning. In addition, by playing 3v3 or 4v4 soccer, younger players end up with substantially more contact with the ball, which improves their skill level and makes things more fun.

Basic Defensive Positioning in a Nutshell

The 3 basic positions of players on defense are best described by the acronym "PCB" (Pressure-Cover-Balance).

The person closest to the ball is called the First Defender, and his job is to provide PRESSURE on the ball.

The second-closest person who is goal-side of the ball (meaning closer to his team's goal than the opponent) is called the Second Defender. His job is to provide COVER. That is, to be in a position to immediately become the pressure person if the attacker gets by the First Defender. In addition, the Second Defender will frequently have the additional job of guarding (called "marking") another off-ball attacker to whom the ball might be passed for a shot. The Second Defender will normally choose to take up a position ball-side of his mark if possible, but will mark goal-side if the ball-side position makes it impossible for him to provide support for the First Defender. Goal-side marking is also used if a defender knows that his mark is much faster than he is, as it gives him the lead that he needs to keep from being beaten.

The defender who is in the deepest position (closest to goal) if a line were to be drawn directly from the attacker to the goal is called the Third Defender. His job is to provide BALANCE to the defense. In essence, he is providing additional cover for the two primary defenders, and also watching out for additional incoming attackers making runs towards the center or far post areas of the goal.

All players should be taught these basic principles, and how to apply them in a game setting. It's also very important that players understand their supporting duties to those players who are immediately around them. For example, someone who is a midfielder must know that they must automatically and immediately assume the role of the "pressuring defender" if they're the closest player to the ball. Additionally, they must understand that they need to loop around to provide cover for the defender behind them and pick up his mark if they're initially beaten by the attacker. Sometimes, young players mistakenly believe that, unless they have been given the job title of "defender", they do not have defensive duties. Indeed, some coaches refuse to even use the label of "defender" in order to avoid this confusion, and just refer to the players at the back of the group as "backs", in order to reinforce the idea that everyone is a "defender" when their team does not have the ball.

It is normally easier for players to learn this basic positioning in terms of "Pressure-Cover-Balance", rather than using terms like First Defender. Thus, all that a young player needs to know is that the closest player to the ball is the Pressure player and to know what the job of the Pressure player is. Ditto for the Cover player and the Balance player.

Basic Offensive Positioning in a Nutshell

There are also 3 basic positions in the attack. The person with the ball is called the First Attacker. His job is to retain possession while getting the ball as close to goal as possible by dribbling, passing or shooting.

The player(s) within an easy ground pass of the First Attacker are called Second Attackers. Up until the time when the ball is advanced to within scoring range of the goal, the primary role of the Second Attacker(s) is to prevent loss of possession, while still allowing the ball to be advanced forward if at all possible. Prior to getting into scoring range, a single Second Attacker typically will position himself so as to allow short relay passes between himself and the First Attacker in order to move the ball around the defenders). Of course, the goal of the attackers is to get the ball past all of the defenders into unobstructed space within scoring range of the goal and then, ultimately, into the goal itself.

Therefore, as the ball moves into scoring range, the role of the single Second Attacker switches from a "safety-first" orientation of keeping possession, which may even involve moving the ball away from the goal in order to keep it. Instead of "safety", the Second Attacker's role is to set up a shot on goal for himself or the First Attacker.

At this point, the Second Attacker's needs to move into a position that will allow the First Attacker to pass the ball into "scoring space" behind or to the side of the defenders, i.e., space from which an immediate shot can be taken. The positioning of the single Second Attacker will depend on the number of defenders to be beaten. Normally, however, a single Second Attacker will position himself on the far side of the defenders and set up within scoring range of the far post area. This allows him to distract and/or pull one defender away from the central goal area or, if unobserved, to sneak in the "back door" while everyone is watching the attacker with the ball.

Where there are two Second Attackers (i.e. close supporters) available, they will position themselves to form a moving triangle with their on-ball teammate, by moving into space between or to the side of the defenders so that the ball always has a clear path to their feet. As the ball is moved into scoring range, one of these players will often abandon his close support role and will become a Third Attacker although this job also may be taken up by any other off-ball teammate who can fulfill the duties.

The Third Attacker's job is to unbalance the defense by making deep runs, usually to the far side of the goal. By doing this, the Third Attacker pulls defenders away from the goal mouth; distracts the keeper and defenders in front of the goal; and opens up space in front of the goal which can be exploited by incoming teammates.

All players need to be taught these basic principles of attacking support. In particular, they need to learn the concepts of setting support triangles (basic keepaway) and how to move to create basic 2-man and 3-man attacking support, because these tools are essential weapons used by all soccer players to maintain possession in tight spaces and create scoring chances.

Applying These Basic Positioning Principles in Games

Ideally, your players would not be required to play any games before they acquired some basic ball skills and learned some a bit of soccer positioning. In truth, most clubs probably would be better off if they held skills contests like races to see which team could dribble around all of the cones in the shortest amount of time instead of games for beginning players. However, many clubs throw the kids into games before they are remotely ready to play, which causes coaches to pull their hair out as they try to figure out ways to organize the kids so that they have fun and put their skills to some use.

Part of the puzzle can be solved by making some preliminary decisions about the "style of play" which your team will use on attacks and defensively. Because attacking is harder to learn than defense, it can often be helpful to pay more attention to defensive skills at the outset. This can serve to hold down the scores against your team while your kids are learning the basics. Also, narrow losses can help to keep parental morale up, especially if the kids clearly are having fun and getting praised for their work.

Picking a Defensive Style of Play

With just a little direction, even very young players will be able to understand that if their team sends everyone to the opposing goal, their own goal will be wide-open and vulnerable to a counterattack. But, of course, if everyone stays back to guard their goal, they won't ever score or have any fun at all.

One good approach is to ask your players to think up some solutions to the defensive problem. One of the first suggestions that you'll probably get is to leave somebody by the goal. However, when you ask for volunteers, you are likely to find that everyone will want to be in the attacking group. Well, if nobody wants to stay to guard the goal, then what other solutions are available?

Option 1: Man-Marking

One defensive solution is to have everyone pick one of the players on the other team to guard when the other team has the ball. Instantly, you have introduced the concepts of marking and following your mark. But, what happens if somebody loses his mark, either because he gets distracted or is slower than his mark or is simply beaten? Well, then you need to have the nearest available player jump in and cover for him, right? This is the second basic element of defensive support and needs to be learned and re-learned constantly. However, man-marking may be unsuited for players below U-10s, as they tend to be very easily distracted. In addition, because of the lack of size and strength in the younger groups, most opposing players tend not to be scoring threats until fairly close to goal so it may well be a waste of defensive manpower to mark players outside of scoring range.

Option 2: High Pressure Defense (Defensive Swarm)

If young children are put onto a field with a soccer ball, divided into teams, and just told to use their feet to kick the ball into the goal of the opponent, they will instinctively play "swarm ball" (or "magnet ball" or take the "beehive" approach to the game. Why? Because they all like to be where the action is which, oddly enough, is where the ball is. As a result, they instinctively are applying a defensive style which is known as "high-pressure defense", in which several players try to surround the opponent and keep him from going forward.

Is the swarm a "bad" thing? Not necessarily so, at least from a defensive standpoint, as long as any attackers that choose to stay out of the swarm are accounted for. The swarm actually tends to be very effective at shutting down attacks by an opponent until the opposition learns to spread out on its attacks and develops the skill to accurately pass the ball to open players. Moreover, kids tend to adjust automatically as the swarm becomes less effective, so the size of the swarm naturally gets smaller over time even without coaching intervention.

Whether or not to permit a swarm obviously will depend on the number of players that you have on the field. In 3v3 or 4v4, it will be harder to swarm with more than 2 players, because you will leave your goal wide open. In 6v6 or above, it is possible to use a multi-person swarm fairly effectively.

Option 3: Low-Pressure Defense

There is also another defensive solution available which is relatively easy for younger players to execute. In this solution, you can send 1 player to slow down the person with the ball and another one to back him up in order to give everyone else on the team time to get back and set up in front of the goal area. This is called "low-pressure defense," and is an approach which can work well IF 1) the pressuring players know how to do their jobs and 2) the retreating players are ready to become the pressuring players themselves if the ball is played to an attacker who is close to them. In fact, many top-level international teams use the low-pressure defensive system, so we weren't kidding when we said that a defensive "swarm" is not necessarily a bad thing. Of course, attacking players must be closely marked when they get into scoring range, particularly when they've developed the leg strength to make lofted shots on goal.

Handling Other Common Defensive Problems

What happens if the other team has some really fast players? Well, if you also have some really fast players who are good defensively, one easy solution is to man-mark these particular threats even if you are using a low-pressure or high-pressure system overall. Also bear in mind that even a slow defender can be quite effective in stopping a speedy attacker once he learns basic defensive footwork and positioning. Lots of players who have had exposure to other sports such as basketball will already have been exposed to these concepts. Essentially, the job of the initial pressuring defender is to slow the attacker down by getting in his way, giving ground as slowly as possible, but not making any attempt to win the ball until cover has arrived. This is a job that anyone can do with practice, so don't allow your slower players to avoid learning these vital skills because of their lack of speed.

Picking an Attacking Style of Play

Once you have decided on the best way to defend your own goal, then you are ready to decide on the best way to attack your opponent's. Many youth coaches are inclined to put their biggest/fastest kids as attackers to try to outrun the opposition, and to try to get the ball to these speedsters as quickly as possible by having their defenders 'boot it' down the field. While this approach, known as "boot-ball", is somewhat similar to an attacking style known as "direct play" it is done with considerably less finesse.

Although this approach may be effective initially, it doesn't tend to produce good soccer players in the long run for a couple of reasons. First, it promotes over-specialization since nobody gets to be an attacker except for 1-2 stars and all the rest of the team learns is how to kick the ball hard and far. Second, it fails to teach any of the players how to retain the ball in tighter spaces by using teammates. Over time, the early-maturing players who were the "stars" on these teams lose their size/speed advantage as puberty starts to level the playing field. Additionally, since all they know is how to be a fast-break forward, most upper-level teams will not be interested in them. Meanwhile, the

supporting players whose only job was to mindlessly boot the ball up-field to the stars will not have any ball control skills and will likely have only mediocre defensive skills as well. So, resist the temptation to adopt the boot-ball style of play.

In the long run, the best future training for players is to teach "possession-style" soccer based upon the basic offensive positioning noted above. In this approach to the game, players are taught to control the ball well by using their body and feet to shield it from an opponent. They are also taught to use supporting teammates to move the ball in tight spaces by means of short passes which get longer as they develop strength and ball control. Additionally, they pick up the courage/ability to take on a pressuring opponent by dribbling. After developing these skills early in a small-sided setting (e.g. 1 v 1, 2 v 1, 3 v 3, etc.), the players will have little difficulty when extra players are added into the mix as the extra players will simply provide additional options on where to move the ball.

For suggestions on how to train your players in these basic positions, see the Practice Plan section.

Picking Formations for Older Recreational Teams

Okay, but what if you are stuck with a team that is playing 8 v 8 or 9 v 9 or 11 v 11, even though it is plain that many of them need lots of remedial work on the basic skills? And, what happens when you get your team assigned only 2 weeks before your first game so that there is no possible way to cover even beginning 1 v 1 work before you are thrown to the sharks?

You know that many parents and players may start questioning your abilities if your team starts losing its games by big margins, even if you have solid credentials as a coach. Also, since this is recreational soccer, your job of player development is likely to be complicated by having at least 1-2 players who have little athletic talent/interest, or who have physical/mental impairments that make learning more challenging. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that some of these kids could become soccer players even if you spent every waking hour on the task. Finally, the kids on your team might have lots of overall athletic talent, but may be smaller/younger than average and be unable to win footraces or pushing contests with kids who are a foot taller and 50 pounds heavier. At this point, you may simply have to face the reality that short-term wins are very unlikely, no matter what you do.

When you are facing these types of predicaments, it may become necessary to use some initial positioning assignments just to buy the time needed to work on the basic skills of the core group of players, bearing in mind that it may take 2 or more seasons to accomplish this. While it IS possible to play virtually positionless soccer from the beginning by adopting an approach based upon natural swarming, it may be so unfamiliar to your audience that you decide that it's more trouble than it is worth. So, if you decide to use positional assignments for your group, here are some suggestions.

The First Few Weeks

For the first few games at least, consider putting your best players on central defense. While you probably won't score, at least you'll avoid getting clobbered quite as badly. Then, as soon as you can, try to develop a few promising players to work in as wing defenders which will allow you to rotate your more seasoned players into the central midfield or even into a forward role. It is generally considered that the hardest job on the field is sweeper, or central defender, if you're not playing with sweeper. The second hardest is center midfield and central defender with a sweeper behind him, followed by center forward, left defender, left mid, right forward, right defender, left forward, and right midfielder. Typically, for weaker or less-talented players, it is conventional wisdom to put them in one of the easier positions and sandwich them between two solid players so that there is good cover if they run into problems.

Take Care with Positional Rules

Having started out with assigning players to particular positions in a formation, it may be difficult to try to abandon the positional approach later. All is not lost, however. Why? Because you can set positional rules which allow players lots of flexibility to participate in the play. For example, those players who are assigned to act as wing defenders can be given positional "rules" to cover opposing attackers, but don't need to have their feet nailed to the midline. Instead, you might allow them to follow the opposing attackers anywhere so, if their mark (the player they are responsible for) drops back to his own penalty to try to get the ball, your defender will be on his heels trying to steal it back and put it in the net. Your sweeper likewise can be given great freedom to simply play off of the main group of teammates as the trailing defender, i.e. the 3rd Defender or Balance player. If everyone is at the opposing goal, then he can move up as well and even score if the ball comes his way. Your center midfielder might be assigned to act as the fill-in for the sweeper, and told to drop back to cover if the sweeper goes to goal. Other players will also be given support duties for the players beside, in front of, and behind them.

Adopt Developmental Rotation Plans

Additionally, you need to create a plan to train your players so that, over the course of 1-2 seasons, most will be able to play in any position on the field. Finally, you will need to spend considerable time teaching the fundamental principles of support and defense, as well as the basic skills that form their foundation. As a result, as your players gain the knowledge and skill to apply these principles, their "positions" can ultimately serve more as guidelines for their major area of responsibility while they are in this particular relative space.

What initial formation should you choose? The basic decisions involved in choosing formations will be covered in the "Advanced" section, along with a discussion of various common types of formations. However, regardless of the formation, you must remember that your ultimate goal is to develop every player to the point where he can do any job on the field with reasonable competence and that, to reach this goal, each player **MUST** know the basic principles of offensive and defensive support.

Specialization Is for Advanced Players - Not Beginners

As players get to high school age, it is likely that they will start to "specialize" in one or two particular areas of the field which best suit their talents. At this stage, coaches will also pay greater attention to adopting a formation and style of play that capitalizes on the special skills/talents available, while masking any weaknesses. This approach is possible because the players have progressed intellectually to the point where their brains are ready for the challenge of complex tactical decisions and they will have developed emotionally to the point where they are more willing to sacrifice their individual goals for the goals of the group. Even at this age, however, coaches must be mindful of their duty to work on correcting those weaknesses, instead of merely trying to cover them up.

Do not make the mistake of treating your young charges like older high-school players. There is, obviously, huge difference between a 17 year-old and an 8 year-old. Similarly, but less obviously, there is a huge difference between a 12 year-old beginner and a 12 year-old who has been playing soccer for six years.

New players need to gain experience in all positions. Don't try to constantly "hide" them in positions that will cover up their deficiencies. This is the lazy coach approach. Far better to take the time to develop their skills, so that they don't need to be hidden.

Of course, this does not mean that a player should be forced into a position/job for which he clearly is not ready. Many shy players are reluctant to play goalkeeper, for instance. While it may be okay to give them chances to try this out in practice, and even push them to try, games may be a different story. If they really think that they'll humiliate themselves playing keeper, they'll rarely do a good job there. Ditto for players who are fearful of playing forward or back positions. So, if you get a shy one or one who is afraid to try new things, you may need to take a longer-term approach to their particular development. As long as you are keeping the player's development in mind in making positioning decisions, rather than focusing on the "wins", you should pat yourself on the back.

Will you make mistakes? Of course. Some probably will be doozies. But, every game or two, you will have some little tyke who gets the wonderful "I can't believe I did it" grin on his face as he attempts something which he never thought was possible and sees it work. Be careful about those grins, though. They tend to be addictive!

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Basic Principles of Individual Attacking

In general, attacking is much harder than defending. Why? Because attacking usually requires more advance (and advanced) thinking. In other words, a defender reacts - while an attacker has to have a plan if he is going to have a good chance of success. In addition, attacking requires better ball control than defending, because it is difficult to keep possession long enough to get within scoring range by just whacking at the ball. As a result, the coach must spend a lot of time in developing the ball control skills of his players, and in training them in the various elements of individual attacking.

Individual attacking has 3 basic phases. The first phase is what is commonly known as the First Touch phase. The quality of the First Touch, and the planning which goes into this First Touch, often will be the key difference between a successful attacker and one who constantly bombs out. The second phase is the actions required to beat any field defenders, so that you are 1 v 1 with the keeper (called "field attacking"). The final phase is the actions required to beat the keeper and/or last field defender blocking the ability of the ball to "see" the goal so that you can put the ball in the net. This final phase will be called Finishing (although it is important to bear in mind that the other phases may be compressed into this single phase, with a ball received in a way which allows the very first touch to be a shot on goal).

Indeed, any time that an attacker realizes that the ball is going to come to him, his first decision should be "do I have a decent chance at scoring a goal with my first touch?" If the answer is "yes", then he must always make the attempt to score. As noted later, a player misses 100% of the shots which he does not take, and it is critical to educate young players early in the notion of thinking about a shot first.

If no shot is "on" with the first touch, then the player must get the ball under control and take another look to see if a shot is now available (because defenders move around - so a momentary opening may have arisen). If a shot is still not "on", then he must figure out the best route to take to get into a good scoring position, then look once more for the chance for a shot. In other words, he needs to remember that his ultimate objective is to score goals.

First Touch Phase

If at all possible, the attacker wants to receive the ball so that he will be facing in the direction where he wants to go. However, he also wants to know what is going on behind him - so that he can anticipate the kinds of pressure which he will be getting from the back once he turns. And, of course, he wants to keep an eye on the ball itself, so that he can receive the ball well. How can he accomplish all of these objectives?

By adopting an initial stance which is open to the entire field, then turning as he receives the ball so that his eyes can sweep over as much of the field as possible to assess any obstacles to the attack. Commonly, the player will start with his back very close to one touchline and his body turned to be parallel to the touchline (which gives him a clear view of the entire field). Sometimes, of course, a player will be in the middle of the field. In this case, it usually is more advantageous to be facing somewhat towards the opposing goal, then to turn in at least a 180 degree arc as the ball is being received, so that the player can view as much of the field as possible prior to receiving the ball.

After checking out the obstacles in his path, the player must decide where the best space will be to receive and control the ball. It is imperative that the player know where the best space is BEFORE the ball arrives, so that he can use the best receiving option to put the ball into this space. In deciding what space is the "best space", the attacker must consider two things:

- What are my chances of scoring if I keep possession here?
- What are my opponent's chances of scoring if I lose possession here?

If not too risky, an attacker always wants to hang onto the ball or to help a teammate to do so, and will follow the ancient maxim "If we have the ball, the other side can't score." However, if the slightest goof on his part will turn the ball over to an opponent right in front of his own goal, then it is too risky to keep possession - and his job turns into one of finding the least dangerous parts of the field in which to turn over possession. Thus, when close to his own goal, the attacker will quickly move the ball to safe spaces to the sides of field (or will send the ball far upfield to a teammate) if this can be done safely, but will boot the ball upfield or over the endlines or touchline before considering turning over possession right in front of his own goal.

When near the opposing goal, however, there is no immediate risk if he loses possession of the ball, so he can afford to take risks. In this situation, the best space into which to put the ball is the space where he can take a shot which has a reasonable chance of going in. Usually, the space to the side of and slightly behind the defenders is normally the "best" space in which to direct the ball - even though the defender or goalkeeper may have a 50% chance of getting there first. Why? Because, even if you score a goal only 50% of the time that you take a shot, these are great odds - and it is foolish to pass up the chance when there is no real downside to taking the shot. Young players may not instinctively understand this - especially if they are naturally cautious - so the coach must train them to understand when it is a good idea to take a shot; when it is a good idea to try to retain possession; and when it is a good idea to cut your losses and dump the ball out of bounds.

Once the player has pre-selected the "best" space into which to play the ball, he will turn his attention to the actual reception of the ball. This requires that he pre-select the body surface which will allow him to best control the ball and redirect it to the intended space. The player then will get his body into position to permit proper reception of the ball with this body surface, so that the ball can be put into the intended space with precision.

As the player gains more experience, and as his opponents become quicker at making decisions themselves, he will discover that it is essential that he anticipate several moves in advance and pre-decide what he is going to do next. Just like in a match of chess or checkers, where it requires several moves to finally lay the trap to capture a piece, soccer requires smart players who use their brains as much or more than their bodies if they wish to be successful at higher levels.

Initially, however, the young player has more than enough to worry about in deciding what is the "best" space. Ordinarily, the coach will preselect the body surface to use (normally starting with passes on the ground) - and will try to make the job of the attacker as easy as possible by giving the new attacker plenty of room or by placing restrictions on the defender which will allow the attacker to develop confidence in stages. It may take a number of practice sessions before beginners can control the ball very well on the ground. Plenty of time should be spent to allow the players to become comfortable with the ball, and to develop a good first touch so that they can accurately move the ball into the chosen space to get away from pressure.

Field Attacking Phase

Once your player has taken his crucial first touch and has gotten the ball under control in a less-pressured area where he can have time to look up, his next step is to see how many defenders are between the player and the goal, and to develop a plan to get around them. Why? Because the player wants to get the ball away from his own goal (to keep his opponent from scoring) and to get the ball fairly close to the opposing goal (to improve his chances of scoring).

When the player receives the ball, and is not yet in shooting distance of goal, what he wants to do is to get within scoring range of the goal in a way which is best calculated to allow him to "beat" the opposing defenders. By the same token, one of the most dangerous defenders to an attacker is a defender coming up from behind him at speed, so the attacker does not want to get around the defender too early if there is any chance that the defender will be able to catch up with the attacker before he gets to goal.

If the attacker is blessed with unusually high speed, and can outrun any opponent, he has the luxury of being able to race towards the opposing goal at top speed. It is very difficult for a defender to slow down an attacker who is moving at top speed without committing a foul, and it is relatively easy for the attacker to move around any stationary defender with a simple touch to one side. As a result, this can be an excellent technique for a very fast

attacker to use on some occasions. However, a wise coach will not overuse such attacks, because this makes the attacks (and the likely attacker) too predictable for the defense; the team wastes valuable learning time by using single attacking option instead of learning various styles of attacking; and the fast player wastes too much time on emphasizing a style of play which likely won't benefit him in the long run, while failing to learn how to participate in group attacking or how to handle opponents who are as fast as he is (as speed differences tend to diminish significantly after adolescence). Instead, the wise coach will try to train his players in how to attack individually, and as a group, when the opponents are as fast as they are.

How does an individual attacker make a successful attack against one or more defenders when he does not have any true speed advantage? The answer is that he learns how to use the element of surprise to create momentary speed advantages, and use these momentary speed advantages to get past the defender and to quickly cut back into the anticipated path of the defender to reduce the ability of the defender to catch him. There are several ways to obtain these momentary speed advantages. One way is to "take-on" the defender by going right at him, and then using fakes to get around him. This technique is discussed in more detail below.

Another way to get around the defender is through moves involving rapid changes of speed/direction. For example, as the defender is starting to bottle up the attacker on the touchline, the attacker can sprint forward and force the defender to sprint with him, then the attacker can quickly cut the ball back so that the defender keeps going for a few steps, while the attacker rapidly takes the ball around the back of the defender. This same option can be used in a variety of ways. For instance, the attacker can start this same move, fake a cutback, then keep accelerating down the same path when the defender starts to reverse direction. Once around the defender, the attacker immediately cuts onto the defender's path towards goal in order to force the defender to have to loop around to try to win the ball back.

An option which is useful in the middle of the field when a defender is closing from the side is to slow the run so that the defender adjusts his angle of approach (point of intersection), then accelerate when it is too late from him to recalculate and readjust. While this may be a bit sophisticated for very young players, it is easily within the grasp of players who are 9 and above.

To "take-on" a defender, an attacker wants to aim his attack almost straight at the first defender who is between him and the goal. Why? By coming directly at the defender, the attacker forces the defender to commit to him and, once committed, the defender automatically must start falling back as the attacker approaches. By causing the defender to fall back, this brings the attacker closer to the opposing goal (which is his objective). Nonetheless, the attacker knows that, at some point, the defender will stop falling back and will be forced to try to steal the ball, because the defender otherwise will end up dropping into the goal itself (and even off the field) which will make it easy to score.

So, the attacker wants to keep a close eye on the defender and try to keep him distracted by making some little foot-fakes (basically, small waves of the foot around the ball to pretend that he is thinking of spurting in one direction or the other), in order to worry the defender enough to focus his attention - but also make him scared to dive in to try to win the ball. The attacker wants to pick the time when he will try to beat the defender so that he can be in control of what is going to happen.

When the attacker is getting ready to take-on the defender, the attacker will want to bring the ball under close control and start to take smaller mincing steps (almost like he is prancing). The attacker will then use a fake or cut (or a series of these) to try to get the defender to make lunge towards the ball. As the defender lunges in the direction of the fake, he is said to "bite" on the move - and the act of lunging is called "diving in". By diving in, the defender will have shifted all of his weight to one leg (usually the front foot). This momentarily renders the defender powerless to use the leg on which he has put all of his weight. This is called having gone "dead-leg" on this leg - which means that he cannot lift this leg or use it until he shifts his body weight back to the other leg.

When the defender has cooperated by going dead-leg, it is usually a simple matter for the attacker to use this mistake to go around the defender. However, a defender obviously will not leave this "window" open for long - so it is very important that the player learn to explode through this window. Some young children grasp the idea more readily if you explain to them that, when the opportunity comes, you want them to EXPLODE (or jump) through the window

just like they had a bunch of robbers chasing them. Once they have gotten through the window, they must then learn to SLAM THE DOOR on the defender by cutting back into his path to make it harder for the defender to catch up.

For beginning attackers, the most critical skills are to get their heads up and watch the defender for mistakes - then to try to explode around the defender when he dives. However, as the players become familiar with the basics of these techniques (and become more skilled in using the ball), they will need instruction in how to use dead-leg opportunities to their maximum advantage.

In the most common type of dead leg situation, the attacker dives forward from a sideways-on stance, so that his momentum is coming forward. In this situation, the player is completely "dead" on the front foot - and essentially is dead on the back foot, so the attacker has the lovely choice of going by him on the inside or outside of his lunging leg. If the attacker can go around the outside of this leg (bringing him around the defender's back), this is almost always the better option because it is much more awkward for the defender to turn outside than inside (so it takes longer to make this turn). Nonetheless, especially with new attackers who lack much skill in feinting and who take a long time to change direction themselves, it may be more workable to fake to one side and then immediately cut to the opposite side when the defender bites - and introduce this concept at a later date.

Another common dead-leg situation arises when the defender has lunged to the side (stabbed at the ball or "dived") in response to a fake. At the moment of this dive, the defender is also "dead" on both legs. Once again, because of the awkwardness of the turn, the outside option is better - but the inside option works too.

Dead-leg situations also arise when a defender is backpedaling rapidly. When the defender is running backwards, he has to move his weight from leg to leg - and his backward momentum can be used against him. Normally, the best time to take advantage of this situation is when the defender is just reaching back to put his weight on the inside leg (so that he has no choice with his momentum but to land on this leg). At this moment, if the attacker cuts and explodes sharply to the inside, the same dead-leg advantage will arise as if the attacker had gotten the defender to dive at the ball. These same principles also apply in deciding when to cut back behind a defender who is running alongside the attacker (i.e., the cutback should be timed for when the defender is reaching forward with the inside foot, as his momentum will require him to continue forward and put his weight on that foot, allowing the defender to cut over his back and head to goal - and forcing the defender to do an awkward turn to try to get back around to follow).

Obviously, the coach will not introduce all of these concepts at once. However, the coach needs to be aware of these various options, as well as the underlying theory, so that he can gradually find ways to introduce these concepts and allow the players to experiment to see "if this stuff works". Children often learn best when given some exploratory time to verify that something really does work or really is true. Thus, the lesson may sink in better if they are given the chance to try these ideas out and do some quick scientific experimentation to see if coach knows anything.

The Finishing Phase

Before the attacker gets into shooting range, his main job is to hang onto the ball. As long as he has possession of the ball, the other team cannot score, so it is to his benefit to do what needs to be done to keep possession of the ball - but only until he gets into scoring distance of the opposing goal. Once in a good shooting position, there is little risk in taking a shot - and a lot of potential benefit to be gained.

While this is obvious to adults, it is not always obvious to children. Many children are very literal-minded. If the coach tells them to make sure to always try to hold onto possession by passing the ball around to open teammates, it is not uncommon to see them pass the ball around in front of the goal - and never attempt to put it in the net. Furthermore, if the coach spends lots of time on drills which have them carefully placing their balls on the ground, then backing up to take a net-breaking shot on goal, they will often pass up open chances to simply roll the ball into the goal in favor of trying to score "the way that coach taught us". As a result, it is very important to explain to young players when it is okay to take risks, and when it is better to play safe. It is also important to give them permission to score (which also means giving permission to miss, because the easiest way for a new player to avoid getting yelled at if he misses is to never take a shot).

The first thing to teach the attackers is that very little actual space is needed to get the ball around a defender or goalkeeper so that it can roll into the net. The ball just needs to clear the legs of the defender by an inch or less on either side. It is important to illustrate this idea to young players, so that they understand that it is possible to score goals in very tight quarters - and that they should try to do this.

The second thing to teach young players is that, to score goals, the best place to send the ball is to the place where it will be hardest for the defenders to get to it. Usually, this means that the safest place to send the ball is to the corners of the goal. However, if the middle of the goal is wide open, it is fine to send the ball there.

The third thing to teach young players is that you want them to score a lot of goals - and the very best way to do this is to pass the ball into the net as soon as they see an opening to do this, because passes are more accurate than shots and are easier to get off quickly. As a result, players should be encouraged to score goals using simple passes with the inside or outside to put a MOVING ball into the net. The coach should strive to create game-like situations in practice. As a practical matter, no defender or goalkeeper is going to allow your attackers to put a ball down in front of the goal, back up, and then run at it to blast it into the net. Scoring drills which involve long lines and stationary balls do a poor job of duplicating game conditions, and do not tend to create players who are comfortable in scoring goals with a moving ball by putting it around the feet of vigilant defenders.

The fourth thing to teach young players is when and where to take a shot. In other words, to introduce them to the concept of when they have entered "scoring range" - and should start to think about taking a shot.

Understanding Finishing Angles

For players and keepers to understand shooting angles, one of the easiest things to do is to purchase two long pieces of brightly-colored plastic rope. Yellow ski rope is perfect. Tie one end of one rope to a goalpost, and one end of the other rope to the other goalpost (if you only have one rope, tie both ends to the posts). Then, put an attacker on the field in front of the goal and intersect the ropes so that the attacker is standing on the intersection. Now, take the goalkeeper and put him between the ropes so that he can touch the rope on either side if he dives to that side. Show the players out in the field that they can get a pretty good idea of whether the goalkeeper is in proper position by just holding out their arms so that their hands are pointed at each goal post - and seeing whether they think that the keeper is centered on the angle and is out far enough. Initially, put all of the players behind the attacker, so that they get an idea of what you are doing.

Next, divide the players so that half are behind the keeper and the other half are behind the attacker. Set up sample angles, starting at the middle of the goal and working towards one side. Put a cone where the keeper needed to stand to be positioned properly. Once you get to very narrow angles towards the sides, have the groups change places to see things from a different point of view.

From this angle-mapping exercise, the players will see quite easily that the best approach on goal is dead-on towards the center of the goal. This approach makes the job of the keeper more difficult, because he must come very far off of the goalline in order to be able to cut down the shooting angle of the player. Because he is so far out, if he misses, the attacker has an easy shot on goal. Once attackers have learned to accurately chip the ball, it becomes even easier to punish a keeper who comes off his line - by simply lifting the ball over his head so that it can roll into the net behind him. Although you probably won't work on chips until later, it can be fun to point this out to the players to get them started thinking on scoring opportunities. Another thing that the players will learn from this exercise is that, once the ball can clear the inside of the near post (even if they are coming in from an angle), the keeper has so much territory to cover that it becomes much easier to slot the ball around him.

With this basic information on angles, they are ready to start to learn how to finish. This is a life-long process which involves some rapid processing of information, so miscalculations are inevitable (even among pros). Even the very best strikers in the world, who are playing at the highest levels, score only about once out of every six tries - which is one of the reasons that it is so important to encourage players not to get discouraged if the first few do not go in.

There are 3 basic finishing options which they will need to learn. These are central finishing, and angle finishing to the near and far posts.

Central Finishing

When coming in centrally, it is usually best for the attacker to come in at speed. Indeed, in general, it is a good idea to teach players to finish at speed, as there always will be breakaways in games and it is a pity to see a player who cannot capitalize on these chances.

To finish at speed is really quite easy - but, like anything, there is a knack to doing it. Because the player is going at speed, and his momentum will transfer to the ball, a "pass" at speed will be as hard as many shots. This pass also will keep the ball on the ground, which will force the keeper to make a difficult save (ground balls are harder to save than air balls).

There are three things that the player must do as he approaches goal at speed. The first is to get the ball under close control, which means that he is going to need to pull/drag the ball along with his dribbling foot to keep it right in front of him (see practice plan on straight-ahead dribbling for more details). The second is to pick the corner of the net where he wants the ball to go. The third is to turn the dribble foot at the proper angle to put the ball there - and to keep running as his foot strikes the ball so that he arrives at the net just a bit behind the ball.

While working on this technique, the best approach is to make a bunch of cone goals and let the kids experiment with making scoring runs. It is fine to let them just make hard passes thru the goal; keep on running; then turn around and come back the other way.

Until they get the technique down, there is no point in working with the opposition of a keeper. However, once they have the basic idea down, it is time to add a keeper. Of course, the easiest keeper to finish on is a keeper who freezes in goal. At younger ages, this is quite common (and sometimes happens for various reasons, even at higher levels). So, this is a good place to start.

Make several goals so that only 3 players are working on finishing at any one goal - which permits you to have one who is getting his ball, one who is getting ready to go, and one who is heading back to set up for another run) - and put a parent in goal with instructions to stay in the goal, but to move to make the save if the player send the ball early. Players will soon learn that, if they shoot too early on a stationary keeper, they will give him too much time to get over for the save. As a result, they will learn to hold the ball until they feel certain that they can get a shot/pass into the chosen corner before the keeper can get there. As players gain experience, they will want to start experimenting with fakes (and keepers also will want to try some fakes of their own to try to get the player to shoot with a non-favored foot or otherwise disrupt the shot).

After learning to shoot on a stationary keeper when coming in centrally at speed, the players will need to learn to finish on a keeper who is coming off his line. This is harder to learn, but is an essential part of their finishing tools. There are three basic ways to beat a keeper who is coming off of his line with the intent of diving at the ball. The first is to shoot early (taking the shot as soon as you see that he is coming out). The second is to shoot just before he arrives (by using a quick sidestep to get space just as he dives at the ball). The third is to use a feint to cause him to dive to the wrong side, then pass the ball around him for an easy finish. Most players will opt for the first and third options, as the chances of being taken out by the keeper are fairly high in the second option (although courageous older players may use this to try to draw a PK in situations where they held the ball a bit too long and seemed likely to lose the ball anyway). This is NOT something to teach younger players, however. Besides, they will have plenty to do in working on the first and third options - particularly since the coach will insist that they alternate using their dominant and non-dominant foot for finishing (as there is nothing worse than to see a player miss an obvious scoring chance as he wasted time trying to use the favored foot for a shot).

Now, in all of these scenarios, the situation was set up so that the player had plenty of time to go 1 v 1 with the keeper. While this often occurs in games, the most frequent situation is that a defender will be rapidly closing from the side or the back, so that there will be a smaller "window" of opportunity in which to shoot. Thus, the next thing which the coach will want to do is to add a defender who has instructions to run at a steady pace about 6 feet behind the attacker. If the attacker slows down, the defender will gain on him (and this is exactly what you want to have happen in order for realistic pressure to be applied). The attacker has to learn to be aware of the defender - but to leave his real focus on the keeper.

The next phase is to work on situations where a defender is coming in from the near side. Before the defender gets within slide tackling range of the ball (10-15 feet), it is important to move the ball to the far foot - which is the foot farthest from the incoming defender. This is one of the reasons why it is essential that players learn to dribble with both feet - as defenders have an aggravating habit of coming in from different sides, so attackers have to be prepared for this. Indeed, as defenders become more skilled, they will quickly figure out when an attacker is one-footed and will take advantage of this information by heavily guarding the favored side.

Once the ball is on his far foot, the attacker effectively has ruled out the slide tackle as an immediate option. However, the slide tackle is still an option to clear away a shot. Given the incoming angle of the defender, a near post shot is usually not available. Furthermore, as soon as the defender gets his body inside the posts and can help to cut down the near post angle, there is a high likelihood that the keeper will charge the attacker - with pretty good confidence that the attacker will be trying to put the ball in the far corner. So, what are the options? One option is to go for the far post early. Another option is to look for timing errors on the charge and split the defenders with a neat pass to the central/near area. An additional option (for more advanced players) is to fake a shot at the far post, then chip the keeper or slot the ball towards the near side as he dives towards the far post.

From this discussion of the multiple options just for central finishing with one or no defenders, it should be clear to newer coaches why attacking is harder to teach new players than defending. Likewise, it is obvious that training attackers takes considerable amounts of time, observation and encouragement. These factors often cause youth coaches to decide to focus their efforts on just 2-3 attackers who show some natural talent/affinity for goal scoring. However, all players need to be introduced to these basic concepts - and it is not as hard as it might seem to provide this training to all of them.

Angle Finishing to Near/Far Posts

Of course, there are going to be times when the player is not able to come at the goal from a central position, and will be forced to come in from the side. Until the ball clears the inside of the nearest goal post, the far post is likely to be the only real shooting option. However, once the ball clears the first goal post, either option is available - and, in most instances, a shot should be made on the near post as soon as the ball clears the post. Why? Because the goalkeeper typically is moving backwards towards the central area of the goal so that his body will cover more of the goal - and the near post is most often wide open (unless an alert defender has moved in to block shots to that post).

When coming in at an angle, with the ball not yet clear of the near post, the goalkeeper knows that there is only one area of the goal which is available - which is the far post area. In order to try to block this option, the keeper often will station himself somewhat more centrally, so that he can block both high and low shots on the far post. However, against an attacker with good take-on skills who seems to be penetrating well, the keeper may prefer to stand just off the near post - expecting to charge the attacker if he gets close enough to goal that there seems to be a risk of the ball clearing the near post side.

The attacker should watch carefully to see which option is chosen by the goalkeeper. If the keeper is already cheating towards the back post (in soccer, the term "cheating" simply means to be moving more in one direction - it does not carry moral overtones), then it may prove to be productive to fake a kick towards the back post to cause the keeper to rapidly backpedal when you are a few feet from clearing the near post, then to quickly accelerate and slot the ball to the open near post area. with the outside of the foot nearest the goal or with the inside of the other foot.

Another option is to fake a high shot, then to shoot low and hard at the keeper's ankles. In general, low hard shots near the ankles are some of the most difficult balls to save. It is almost impossible to get down in time, so the only real option is to kick the ball away. However, if you have gone dead-leg on kicking leg, or have shifted your weight backwards, it usually is impossible to get to these balls at all. On the other hand, if the keeper is standing even with the near post, this means that he is vulnerable to shots on the far post, as well as in the central area if the attacker can get the ball inside the posts. For younger players who have inaccurate high shots, this keeper strategy is often successful - as the window which is open for the high shot is rather small. Moreover, a taller keeper often can jump and deflect the shot. So, what should the attacker do in this situation?

In general, the attacker should try to bring the ball as central as he can, and should take the keeper on in much the same fashion as a field player. Because most keepers expect a far post shot, they will tend to hold their charges on the ball until the attacker is right on them. This works to the advantage of a patient attacker, as he can often induce the keeper to go dead-leg on his near post leg by a feinted attempt at the far post (then slip the ball between the ankle and the near post); or get close enough to the keeper that he can "nutmeg" him (the ultimate gotcha of an attacker); or fake a pass to the near post, then pass the ball to himself centrally and do an off-balance pass to the far post; or, by being patient, end up with an open teammate on the far post who can accept an easy drop pass which can be slotted into the far post netting.

Once again, encourage creativity in this finishing. Some players develop all sorts of tactical feints and "smooth moves" to handle these situations - including back-heeling balls into the net, or doing behind the heel tucks, and so forth. These moves are exciting to players, and are fun to watch for the crowd, so let the players spend occasional time on perfecting their "moves." Usually, it takes considerable experimentation in practice before a player will find the courage to try new moves in games, so do not be surprised if a player will not use a move in a game which he has done well in practice. Especially in early adolescence, where "coolness" is highly important, it is fairly common for many players to wait on showing their new moves until they are CERTAIN that they will not make fools of themselves in the process. Contests sometimes can help to break this fear - but the best cure is time.

During training on angle finishing, you will need to add a defender who is coming in from various angles, so that the attacker will be exposed to realistic game situations and learn the best ways to adjust to these additional obstacles. Encourage players to learn to pounce on scoring chances and take the half-shot. There is an old saying in soccer that "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take." As a coach, you want to make sure that you don't inadvertently punish players for taking the risk of shooting by criticizing their failure to pass the ball to a teammate. It is very easy to inadvertently train players to never shoot (so that the entire team is passing the responsibility and the ball around an open net).

In the next section, we will discuss group attacking, starting with basic 2v1 attacking. However, coaches are well-advised to spend most of their time with new players on development of take-on skills and on development of individual finishing skills, for two reasons. First, young children are inherently "me" focused. As a result, until around age 9, many will not want to share the ball with somebody else or even give much thought to the needs/positioning of other members of their own team. Therefore, during this self-centered developmental stage, kids are ripe for learning individual skills. Secondly, in order to be ready to use a teammate well, players need to understand the basic angles involved in finishing.

For example, in a situation with the keeper standing on the near post to stop an angled scoring run, one of the options available to an individual attacker who is fairly close to the inside of the near post is to pass the ball to himself towards the central area of the goal, then quickly try to slot the ball to the far corner. When a second attacker is added into this equation, this supporting player needs to realize what the positioning of the on-ball player and the keeper is telling him, so that he gets into position to accept the pass; holds his run so that he connects with the pass at the right moment; and then finishes the pass for the on-ball attacker.

This example illustrates why players who well-trained in individual scoring options already will have many of the tools needed to work in combination with other players, and underscores the importance which the coach must place on the acquisition of these skills.

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Understanding Small Group Attacking Principles

The importance of learning the basic principles of small group attacking cannot be over-emphasized. The basic patterns which are involved in 1 v 1, 2 v 1 and 3 v 1 (or 3 v 2) attacking are the cornerstone of all other attacking patterns. As a result, unless the player has developed an understanding of basic small group attacking patterns, he will be ill-prepared to work within a larger group setting.

The move by many clubs to small group play at the lower age levels is a direct result of the recognition of the importance of developing an early awareness of fundamental small group attacking principles. In upper-level games, it is quite common that most players will not touch the ball for more than 2-3 minutes in an entire 90 minutes of play, yet they will have played extremely hard for the full 90 minutes. How? By making a huge number of supporting and covering runs to assist teammates, as well as doing his/her part to control the ball and play it correctly when in their possession. Their individual skill work will prepare them for their actual time on the ball, while their small group work will prepare them for their time off the ball (by showing them when, where and how to make proper supporting runs). In a nutshell, most of small group work teaches a player how to move when he doesn't have the ball.

When Are Players Ready for this Work?

When are young players ready for instruction in small group attacking? When they have reasonable ball-handling skills and have spent enough time to grasp the basics of individual attacking (and individual defending). Typically, most players will not be ready for significant work on 2-man attacking patterns until after 1-2 years or more of basic soccer training. The reason for this is that group attacking skills require that the player has basic ball-handling skills, as well as the confidence to take on and beat a defender.

Until the players have the ability to pass between one another with reasonable accuracy, as well as the ability to dribble and shoot with some proficiency, their ability to work as a group is going to be minimal. If group attacking work is attempted before these skills are adequately developed, passes will go awry; those passes which are executed properly will be poorly received; and, even when received well, the receiver will get so flustered by the presence of any opponents that he will be fearful to look up to find a teammate (even if someone else is wide open).

It is important for new coaches to be aware that it is not uncommon for coaches to be forced to go back to the basics, even with a team of older players, if those players never developed good ball control when younger. As a result, just because a player has played for X seasons (and theoretically should be ready for more advanced work), the coach should not assume that the skills actually are there. As a result, if you try one of the combination drills and it keeps falling apart, it may not mean that the drill is terrible or that you did a bad job of presenting it. The truth may be that the players just are not ready yet.

Other factors also may affect readiness to begin small group work. One factor is mental/emotional development. Before around age 8 or 9, children tend to be so focused on themselves that they do not see teammates, so they may not be ready yet to work cooperatively. Another factor is the time spent in practice, as well as the quality of prior coaching instruction and prior exposure to the game. For instance, the youngest brother in a family of 4 soccer-playing boys is likely to have been exposed to fairly competitive soccer since birth, and to have competed regularly against older siblings, so this child may be far ahead of other children who are the same age.

Still another factor is relative physical development and general body control. Coaches must be alert to the natural variation in growth rates, which may affect coordination, speed, agility and other athletic qualities. For example, if a number of players are going through a growth spurt at the same time and experiencing temporary trouble with ball control (because they have no idea where their feet end), this may not be a good time to introduce new topics where ball control is highly important.

So, what is the best way to judge if your team is ready for this work? If they get their heads up on a regular basis when dribbling; if they can receive balls on the ground and then move purposefully with the ball for a few steps; if they have started to watch out for each other, and talk somewhat (even if it is just "I'm in" or "I watch out"); if they can pass accurately to someone who is stationary, as well as someone who is moving; and, finally, if they can link together 5-6 passes in basic 4v1 or 5v2 keepaway. If they aren't ready yet, the coach should just keep working on the individual skills. As a practical matter, when they finally start "seeing" teammates and have the skills to pass/receive balls accurately, they likely will start using teammates on their own without any prodding from the coach.

Learning the Importance of Support

In the individual attacking training, the players already have learned that the first decision when the ball arrives (or even before the ball arrives) is whether they have a decent chance of a shot. If the answer is Yes, then they shoot. If the answer is No, the next question is whether they can easily dribble to a place where they will have a decent shot. If the answer is Yes, then they should dribble - unless they have a teammate who is in a better position than they are. As a result, they already know that the on-ball player is the one who makes the final decision about whether or not to keep the ball.

Now, they are ready to move to the next stage of understanding - and realize that most of the actual decisions of the on-ball attacker are going to be "made for him" by the supporting attacker(s). How can this be? Because, unless the supporting attackers move into positions which help the on-ball attacker to keep possession (either by drawing some defenders away or by actually accepting a pass), the opponents will gang up on the on-ball attacker and easily strip him of the ball. Secondly, unless the supporting attackers talk to the on-ball attacker - and act like extra eyes and ears - the on-ball attacker is much more likely to lose the ball to an opponent coming up behind him. Finally, unless they help him, he also is much more likely to fail to see an open teammate in an excellent position to score, which hurts the team. As a result, at this stage, it is time to impress upon the players that the OFF-BALL PLAYERS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE ON THE FIELD in more advanced level play.

So, how do they learn their roles and positioning so that they can stop playing as individuals, and start to play as a team? During beginning keepaway games, the players began this process when they learned to establish and maintain immediate safety outlets for the ball. They learned that this meant moving to a place where the ball could "see" their feet - and to a place where the on-ball attacker could see them with no more than a slight turn of his head. They also learned that the on-ball attacker needs to have at least one close support player within easy passing range of the on-ball attacker - but that this close support person needs to be far enough away that he can receive and control a pass before a defender can shift over to him. They discovered for themselves that this usually meant setting up close support around 15 feet away, unless they were sure that the on-ball attacker could look up long enough to see them when farther away and could pass accurately to them. They also learned that at least one support player needed to stay fairly close, but that the others could provide pressure outlets by getting farther away into wide open space, and that they could keep the ball longer if they quickly relayed the ball to this open player if the on-ball player passed to them. Finally, once the safety outlets had been created, they learned that they needed to provide feedback and instructions to the on-ball attacker to warn him of an opponent coming from behind, as well as to help him to decide where to pass the ball next.

These same principles will be used in teaching movement with a purpose (i.e., movement towards the opposing goal in order to get into scoring range). While keepaway games are great for developing passing and receiving skills, as well as comfort on the ball, they are just the beginning stage of possession play and are a prelude to exercises which involve moving the ball forward towards a goal through the combined efforts of 1 or 2 other teammates.

The basic two-man combination attacking patterns can be divided into 4 basic categories, including passes to the side of the defender; passes behind the defender; passes in front of the defender; and faked/trick passes. The basic passing patterns are as follows:

1. Passes behind the defense
 - slotted or thru pass

- diagonal run
2. Passes to the side of the defense
 - give-n-go
 - overlap
 - wall pass
 3. Passes in front of the defense
 - square balls
 - drop passes
 4. Faked passes and other tricks
 - take over
 - dummy run

The basic slotted pass is the easiest pass to learn. In this pass, the supporting attacker is running alongside and slightly to the rear of the on-ball attacker, at a distance of about 10-15 feet away. The on-ball attacker head directly at the defender, in order to commit the defender to him. Then, when about 2-3 yards ahead of the defender, the on-ball attacker slots the ball into space to the side of and behind the defender to his teammate to run onto, and then runs around the back side of the defender. The coach can set up a series of cone or flag defenders in a zig-zag fashion, so that A1 takes on the first cone and passes to A2, then A2 takes on the next cone and passes to A1. Later, the coach can add a series of defenders in a Tunnel of Death (see practice plans), but initially will want to anchor or restrict them in some way in order to insure success. In the next session, the coach will want to include a weaving pattern to the combination, so that A1 takes on the defender and passes to A2; A2 then moves to the inside (into the path which the defender might take), while A1 loops behind him to the outside - after which A2 takes on a defender and passes to A1, and the pattern is repeated. This is a common pattern used to run the ball along the touchlines, and also makes a nice warm-up.

The next pattern which the coach may wish to introduce is the give-n-go, because the patterns are very similar to the previous patterns. In the give-n-go, the object is to pass the ball to A2, who immediately passes the ball back into space behind the defender, so that A1 must make a quick sprint around the defender to pick up the return pass. The give-n-go is also a very useful technique to move the ball along the touchlines. Once again, requiring players to string together a series of give-n-goes makes for a challenging warm-up in future practices, because it tests their ability to do 1-touch passing and receiving while on the move. Because of this challenge, there is some chance that the coach may need to drop back and work on 1-touch passing/receiving before the players achieve much success in this technique.

Once these techniques are mastered, the coach will want to introduce the wall pass and the diagonal run, as well as the overlap. The wall pass is similar to a give-n-go, except that A2 is usually stationary along the touchline, so that the ball is played to him for a quick return much in the same manner as if his feet were a wall on a building. The diagonal run is a looping run away from the on-ball attack, which is very useful when longer passes are contemplated, because the diagonal nature of the run makes it easier for the receiver to pick up the ball anywhere along the diagonal (so he is more easily able to adjust to a less-accurate service).

The introduction of the overlap is an important step, because it introduces the concept of drawing a defender away in order to create space for a teammate - and illustrates to the players that the dribbler actually has power to rearrange the defenders by his own movement. This is the cornerstone of upper-level play, in which a player may be said to have done a first-rate job for the entire match without ever touching the ball, simply by creating valuable space for teammates to run into. The concept requires the ability to think abstractly in two or three dimensions, and it will take time for players to fully understand how valuable it is to be able to create space for teammates and why the runs which they are making are not worthless just because they did not get the ball.

After these passes have been taught, the coach will move to square balls, checking runs, drop balls, take-overs and dummy runs. A square ball is a pass which sends the ball laterally across the face of the goal to a teammate who is

running alongside the dribbler (usually a couple of steps behind), and the first touch of the receiver almost always should be a shot on goal (normally by a pass with the inside of the far foot). It is often difficult for younger players to master the footwork involved in making square passes until they have developed good coordination, so this technique probably should not be attempted before around age 9 (unless the players have exceptional footskills).

A checking run occurs when the runner makes a run as if to accept a long service behind the defense, which tends to pull defenders towards their own goal. As a result, a large space typically opens in the territory which the defenders just left - and the runner simply checks back into this space in order to receive a ball without immediate interference from the defense. In checking back for the ball, the runner usually will have his back towards goal - so it is common that he will execute a drop pass, which is simply a back-pass to a teammate who is facing goal. The drop can create excellent scoring chances, because the player accepting the drop usually is coming in at speed and the transfer of his extra momentum to the ball can result in wicked shot on goal. Furthermore, because the drop is going against the direction of play, the defenders frequently are facing in the wrong direction and never even see the receiver until it is too late.

The take-over run is simply a quick switch of the ball to a teammate going in the opposite direction in order to confuse the defense. The on-ball attacker dribbles the ball close by a teammate and continues on running as if he has the ball, while leaving the ball for his teammate to pick up and go in the opposite direction. The dummy run is a similar type of ploy, in which a runner makes a hard run to a certain space (often making a lot of noise to draw attention to himself), while the actual play goes down the opposite side. These techniques are very appealing to players in their early to mid-teens, and this may be the best time to introduce them, after the players already have developed solid skills and are ready for a bit of finesse and trickery.

All of these are valuable techniques - and it is likely that it will take several seasons to fully explore them in a progressively realistic defensive setting. One of the things which young players often have a hard time in remembering is that, when the ball is passed, they switch roles with the on-ball attacker and instantly become the support player once they have passed the ball. It is not uncommon for them to simply forget that they need to be moving to provide the next support angle or pass option. Once again, patience is needed to prod them along, while reassuring them (and yourself) that they are making progress.

In the course of teaching these basic 2-man attacking principles, the coach also will want to devote time to training the players in the following additional principles:

- When the dribbler goes straight at the defender, there are times when the defender will judge that the runner is more dangerous - and will drop off to follow the runner. When this happens, the on-ball attacker usually will want to keep the ball and continue to dribble into the space vacated by the defender.
- When the dribbler heads into the space currently occupied by a support player, the support player usually needs to move out of this space (because it is silly to allow a single defender to be able to cover both attackers). The only exception is where a take-over appears to be a viable option (as when the opponents have shifted so far to one side that it makes sense to move the ball into the opposite direction, into the spaces left open).
- The longest forward pass where possession will still be maintained is usually the best pass.
- In passes to the side of the defender, the runner should try to make his run wide enough and angled enough to be able to see both the goal and the ball at the same time, if at all possible. This is particularly true when getting within scoring range, as the runner's first touch might need to be a shot.
- When checking back to the ball, players should make a run which is at a diagonal to the field (as this allows them to intercept the ball at more spots than they could if making a vertical run).

- Runs should be timed with the dribbler to create the most time and space possible for the runner. A run that is too soon can be easily detected and defended, whereas a late run will not provide the playing option to the passing player.
- When first receiving the ball, be aware that most defenders will try to give a sharp bump to the attacker in order to throw him off-balance as the ball comes in. To counter this, be sure to keep the center of gravity low, and even tilted slightly back in the direction of the expected bump, so that the ball can be received correctly.

Moving to 2 v 1 Finishing Work

As the players learned during their earlier training on the phases of individual attacking, the object of any attacker is to hang onto the ball and to keep possession until the ball can be moved into scoring range. Because the alleys down the sides of the field are the least crowded, supporting player most usually will be running along the touchline (or fairly close to it) in order to provide a safety outlet for the ball. The inside player, on the other hand, will constantly be on the alert for openings to make a run towards goal, and will want to probe and push at the defense so that he can take advantage of any lapse which opens shooting space in the central area.

Just as with individual attacking, safety stops being a major consideration when the ball is moving into scoring range. At this point, the job of the Support player is to find the best space behind or to the side of the last defender(s) where he can receive the ball for a decent shot on goal. Because most younger players cannot control air balls very well, or serve air balls with any accuracy, it is usually best to start training the players in finishing opportunities which can be created through passes on the ground. Thus, the Support player will need to get into a position where the ball can "see" his feet (or, later, into a position where the ball can "see" space which he can reach ahead of the keeper or defender).

Here is a common training scenario. Assume that you have 2 attackers coming down the right side, with the attacker about 15 yards inside and his Support player running near the touchline. Once the attackers get about midway into the opposing half (or slightly deeper), they will want to move the ball into the central goal area (because shots have a higher percentage rate in the central area). The final pass before they head towards goal usually will be to the inside player in a 2v1 attack and, as soon as the pass has been made, the Support player will sprint to overlap behind the on-ball player and head towards the goal, using a curved run so that he can see the other attacker and accept a dropped pass if one is sent. Ideally, the Support player wants to be able to get to the far side of the defender, so that the defender (and the keeper) cannot watch him and the on-ball attacker at the same time. However, because he wants the ball to be able to see his feet, the Support player probably wants to stay at the top of the PA in order to keep the drop option open until another option (such as a square pass) becomes more likely from the angle and positioning of the dribbler. Simply by his presence, the Support player is likely to draw the defender towards him (because he is so dangerous in the central area). As a result, there is a big possibility that space may open up on the back post for a shot by the dribbler. The coach will have to exercise judgement in deciding whether to restrict players from taking obvious shots and, if such restrictions are imposed, look for ways to release them as quickly as possible so that finishing continues to be encouraged.

The coach should realize that decisions to shoot or pass are made in split seconds, as are the decisions to stay put or make a run. Miscues will be common in the early stages, and it is easy for the coach and players to become frustrated or to conclude that this stuff doesn't work. This is a time when the coach must become a cheerleader, and constantly look for ways to praise the effort and to praise the idea, even where the execution leaves something to be desired. With practice, the players will grasp these concepts, and start to make impressive scoring runs of which everyone will be proud.

Moving to 3 v 1 Finishing Work

When you add another player, the objectives and positioning remain very similar to those used in 2-man attacking. During the field possession stage, the two support players will form a moving triangle with the on-ball player. One will tend to get to the space to the side/rear of the defender (i.e., will move into the typical space occupied if there

was only 1 supporting attacker), while the additional support player will try to assist in penetrating the defense more quickly by taking a more forward position. If he is faster than the defense and the ball is in the opponent's half, he will want to get to a position which allows the ball to be played into space behind the defender and give him an unobstructed run towards goal. However, if he is slower than the defense or the ball is in his own half, he will simply take position ahead of the ball which allows him to provide adequate support.

This triangular positioning involves the same concepts used in keepaway and allows the ball to be moved past the defenders through short passes. The coach will want to emphasize and reemphasize the importance of these triangles, as the ability to quickly set support triangles is the litmus test for really good teams.

Once the 3-man group has successfully maintained their triangles and have moved the ball into scoring range, the rear player in the supporting triangle typically will peel off to make the looping run to the far post (i.e., he will make the same run as the supporting attacker in a 2-man combo). The other support player typically will move to take up a position in the vicinity of the near post (although he normally will be stationed at the top of the PA in order to be able to serve as an outlet player if needed - or as a shooter - or as a relay to the far post attacker). Thus, when in position, the supporting players continue to form a triangle with the ball - and continue to allow the ball to see their feet. The only difference is that, instead of trying to provide outlets for the ball into "safe" space, they are now trying to provide outlets for the ball which will permit an immediate shot attempt.

Some examples of three-man combination patterns are:

- **A** square passes to **B**, a **C** checks towards **B**; **B** plays a long forward ball to **C** as **A** runs forward; **C** lays off the ball to **A** and spins away; **A** passes to **C**; the next sequence begins with **B** checking as **A** and **C** pass back and forth.
- **A** dribbles towards **B**; **B** overlaps **A**, the plays a ball forward to a checking **C**; **C** lays off to **B** and spins away, receiving a return pass from **B**.
- **A** square passes to **B**, a **C** checks towards **B**; **B** plays a long forward ball to **C** and makes a long wide run forward; **C** drops to **A** and **A** makes a long direct pass forward towards **B**; **C** spins after the drop and receives the next pass from **B**.

How These Principles Relate to Larger Group Attacks

All movements in soccer "key" off of the actions by this primary group of 3 players around the ball. To illustrate this point, let's say that you are going to work on 6v4 attacking (something which occurs often in a game setting of 11 v 11). The fundamental need for the support triangle will still be there, so the nearest 2 players will serve the role of close support. The remaining 3 attackers usually will be allocated by sending two to provide deep penetration options (near/far post) and one to act as a pivot player/defender. By doing this, the team can more quickly get the ball into scoring range without loss of possession - and already will have players in place to make near/far post runs. Thus, the additional players simply make the game go faster because other players already are in the necessary space - and also cuts down on the number of runs needed from the close support players (so they don't get as tired).

Thus, once the players understand how the 3 primary attackers players should move, they will know where to move themselves (as it will be instantly clear when they are simply filling in and making the same run to the same place where they would have gone in a 2-man or 3-man attack). In turn, this makes it easier for them to "read" the other players, and to automatically know where their help is needed.

Most coaches will not introduce 3-man patterns until around u12, instead devoting the early years to work on basic skills and 2-man attacking patterns. However, this brief discussion is included in this Manual, because it is important for new coaches to understand how the basic 2-man and 3-man patterns link together (and why small group work is so important for the long term development of their players).

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Understanding Individual Defensive Principles

All defensive systems depend on the individual defensive skills of the each player. Simply put, unless a player has solid individual defensive skills, the player is unlikely to be able to understand or apply group defensive principles very well.

The following individual defensive skills should be learned by all players, regardless of the playing position:

- good defensive footwork (quick movements in all directions, as well as quick stops)
 - proper positioning to slow, contain and shepherd an attacker with the ball
 - how and when to try to win the ball ("tackling")
 - how/where to move next if beaten by an on-ball attacker
- Once these individual skills are learned, then the player must learn group skills, such as:
- when/where/how to provide backup support for a teammate who is the primary defender of the on-ball attacker
 - how to double team to win the ball
 - proper positioning when guarding ("marking") an off-ball attacker
 - how/where to move next if beaten by an off-ball attacker

The most important beginning skills to teach a defender are placement, positioning and footwork in a 1 v 1 setting. Why are these skills so important? Defense by definition is a reactive state, where the attacker causes the defender to take steps to stop some action. Because of this, the defender be able to move quickly in all directions. The player must be able to stop and restart his movement in reaction to actions by the attacker. To do this, the player must be in a balanced position as often as possible, and the feet must be trained to move in the quickest and most efficient manner possible. The defender also must maintain the optimal distance from the attacker to give himself time to react before the attacker had gotten around him and is heading for goal.

Once properly placed in relation to the attacker, the defender must learn to position his body/legs in a manner which will block the attacker's best scoring options while also allowing quick reactions on his part. Next, the defender must learn to use his body to channel the attacker into less favorable areas of the field while patiently waiting for an opportunity to steal the ball. Of course, he also will need to learn techniques for winning the ball when the chance arises, and learn how to recover in the event that he is beaten by the attacker.

Placement in Relation to the Attacker

What is the correct placement of a defender who is guarding an attacker who has the ball? Normally, the defender will place himself a bit ahead of the attacker, at an angle so that he is between the attacker and the goal. This is called getting goalside of the ball.

If at all possible, the defender wants to place himself so that he is turned to face the attacker, because this placement allows him to keep a closer eye on the attacker and make more rapid adjustments so that he can stay in the way of the attacker.

The optimal distance of the defender from the attacker is determined by the attacker's current pace and potential speed. Usually, the defender will want to move within about 2 strides of the attacker or closer - and then maintain this distance by retreating using short quick steps.

Of course, occasions will arise when the attacker already has gotten up to speed, and the defender is not fast enough to get ahead of the attacker, so the defender has no choice but to simply run alongside of the attacker. Training on the ways to handle these situations will come after training on basic placement, positioning and footwork, so this will be discussed later.

Learning Defensive Stances and Footwork

Once in place, the position of the body itself, along with the footwork used to maintain this position, become vital. Because the defender is moving backward, it is essential that the center of gravity be lowered so that the defender does not lose his balance and fall over. Likewise, it is essential that the defender use his body/legs to create obstacles in the way of the attacker, so as to lure the attacker to head into the channels which the defender has chosen to leave open.

There are two basic defensive stances. The first (and most used) stance is similar to that used by boxers or fencers, and is called the "sideways-on" stance. This stance is used near the boundary lines, or in situations where it makes sense to try to steer the attacker in a certain direction. The knees are bent; center of gravity is lowered; rear foot is turned sideways; weight is balanced over both feet. Movement is made backwards or forwards by very quick shuffle steps. Movement to the sides is made with a galloping motion. Correct instruction in this basic defensive footwork is essential, so the coach should spend the necessary time to be sure that all players can move properly.

The second stance is the closed or blocking stance, which is used when the ball is in the middle section of the field or in the final defensive third where the primary object is to prevent a successful shot/cross from being made. In this stance, the feet are kept fairly close together (with the heels often angled inward), and the torso bent forward with the knees bent so as to allow most of the weight on the toes. In this stance, the defender usually will get fairly close to the attacker, and move backwards with small quick steps.

Especially with younger players, the coach likely will teach these different stances in different sessions, and will start with teaching the footwork for a sideways-on stance. After spending some time on the basic footwork involved, the coach will begin to teach the player how to apply these skills in order to close down an attacker who had just received the ball.

The defender usually wants to come in quickly and hard in order to try to fluster the attacker and force an error. If the attacker is flustered and turns his back on the defender to try to protect the ball, then the defender must learn how to close the attacker down from the back and try to win the ball. But, the defender first needs to know how to handle an attacker who is confident on the ball and who is going to try to beat him. As a result, when the defender comes pouncing in - and does not manage to fluster the attacker- the defender must put on the brakes while a few yards away and go into the defensive stance (more experienced defenders often will get even closer and then quickly retreat back - but it is so easy to misjudge the timing of such a move, or the speed of the attacker, that coaches should not introduce this until much later in training).

On the field, the first thing a defender must decide when he is closing down the attacker is where he will want to try to steer the attacker. In general, the defender will want to steer the attacker towards the nearest touchline. Why? Because what the defender wants to do is to try to trap the attacker against the touchline. In essence, the defender wants to use the touchline as an extra defender to help to bottle up and contain the attacker in a place where the attacker cannot score.

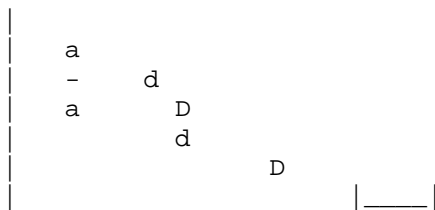
To accomplish this, the defender will come in at an angle which blocks off the central part of the field, while leaving space towards the touchline. The attacker naturally will want to try to escape into space away from the defender, and will tend to move towards the touchline. However, if the defender leaves too much space along the touchline, the attacker will try to move underneath the defender and go down the line to get away from the defender. And, if the defender shuts down too much of the space along the touchline, the attacker may try to come over the top of the defender and move into the central part of the field. As a result, the defender will need to experiment a bit to see the optimal angle and distance from the attacker which will keep the attacker moving towards the touchline, but which also will keep the attacker from being able to beat the defender.

Factors which will influence the distance and angle used will include the relative speed/quickness of the attacker as compared to the defender; the relative skill of the attacker compared to the defender; and the "footedness" of the attacker (whether the attacker is particularly weak in using one particular foot). Another big factor is the available support. For example, a forward who is near the goal of an opponent can afford to be beaten, because all of the rest of his team (as well as most of the field) is between his goal and an opposing defender with the ball. Thus, there is

little risk in going for the ball, so this player can afford to be much more aggressive in trying to win the ball than an unsupported defender could be. Finally, the choices which the defender will make may depend on the area of the field in which the ball is (particularly when support is available).

Before learning how to defend when support is available, however, the new player must learn how to defend as if there is no support is available. In general, if an attacker is fast compared to the defender, the defender will need to get farther away from the attacker. Likewise, if the attacker is very quick, the defender must stay fairly far away in order to keep from being beaten. If the attacker is along the touchline, the angle to be set runs from a point about 2 yards inside the near post thru the defender to the attacker. Basically, what the defender is trying to do is to move inside and back at an angle which will allow him to traverse the shortest distance possible and still remain between the attacker and the goal.

As the illustration shows, a line drawn from inside the near post will go through the defender (d) and the attacker (a). Where the defender is slow, he will move farther in along the line toward the goal, as this positioning will permit him to run less distance than the attacker, which compensates for the speed differential and allows him to still remain in the way of the attacker. Because he is forced to fall off of the defender to keep from being beaten, he has weighed the risks of being beaten against the potential reward of getting close enough to steal the ball, and has opted for safety. When unsupported, or when close to your own goal (even if support may be available), "Safety First" is the number one rule for defenders.



As can be seen from the positioning of the defender, the attacker would have to make an arc over the top of the defender to be able to get around him. However, a right-footed attacker typically will prefer taking the ball down the touchline to trying to carry it around the top of the defender on the unfavored foot. By the same token, a left-footed attacker may be completely unable to go down the touchline, and will be forced to try to escape by going around the top of the defender. Thus, the defender can use this information to predict the movements of the attacker, and allow more space on the side which the attacker will refuse to use because of his footedness problem. Of course, this fact will illustrate to the intelligent coach why it is so important to train players to dribble, pass and shoot with both feet.

When Field Position May Influence Positioning

As noted above, the defender wants to try to force the attacker into an area of the field which will help his team. Much of his decision-making depends on which part of the field the attacker is in.

If the attacker is in his own defensive third of the field, the defender usually should try to force the attacker towards the middle. Why? Because, if the defender gains the ball right in front of the attacker's goal, the chances of scoring go up dramatically. Even in 1 v 1 situations, the defender may want to apply heavy pressure in front of the opponent's net, because of the potential rewards involved.

If the attacker has the ball in the middle third of the field towards one touchline, the defender would do well to force the attacker towards the touch, thereby restricting his options. Note that some upper-level teams tend to try to force attackers inside, into the path of their own defenders and mids, because the space is more congested and they believe that this reduces the chances that any attack will be successful. This strategy is probably too risky to use with beginners.

In the defensive third, most teams will try to take the attacker as wide as possible, or keep him as wide as possible (because it is harder to score a goal from narrow angles than if looking right into the mouth of the goal from the center). If a defender is deep in the defender's territory with an attacker close to the touchlines, the defender should

not over-commit and allow the attacker to beat him along the goal line because the attacker is almost guaranteed to get to the goal before he can recover.

If the attacker is in the central area in front of the goal, the defender should try to stay between the attacker and the goal, and try to keep the attacker moving laterally. If possible, the defender should take the attacker towards his weaker side (if he has one), but not give up a shooting angle by getting to one side of the attacker to force him in a direction. However, once it becomes clear that the attacker is going to get off a shot, the defender may be forced to take the risk of a tackle. This is often the case in 1 v 1 games (and is one of the reasons to give players plenty of work in such games). As the defenders will learn from 1 v 1 exercises (where no support will ever be forthcoming), they often have better luck when they choose the time to close down the attacker instead of letting the attacker select the moment for the shot. As will be learned below, when they decide to go in for the ball, they must go in with everything which they have - and leave no stone unturned (short of committing a major foul) in their push to get the ball.

Learning When & How to Steal the Ball

In soccer, any type of ball-stealing is usually called "tackling". This can be confusing to Americans because tackling in American-style football involves an attempt to knock the opponent down (which is a major foul in soccer). The mechanics of basic standing soccer tackles are covered in the Practice Plans, and will not be repeated here. We will focus here on when to use those skills - and, more importantly, when not to use them. The first thing to teach defenders is the importance of PATIENCE in the timing of any tackle. The defender will want to try to steer the attacker into the safest space, with the greatest support available, before considering a tackle (unless the attacker makes a major mistake which allows the defender to take the ball back with little risk). Usually, if the defender can delay things long enough, the attacker almost always will make a mistake and allow an opening to an alert defender to steal the ball - or support will arrive which will allow a double team.

It usually is not the time to attempt a tackle when:

- the defender is not in a good balanced position
- the attacker is skilled, and is in a balanced position
- a missed tackle could result in an immediate shot attempt
- a successful tackle or tackle attempt will not result in gaining possession (i.e., knocking the ball out of play or to another attacker)
- a successful tackle attempt will not result in an advantage to the team
- if teammates have not yet moved into position to provide support.

Good opportunities to make a tackle attempt are when:

- there is a very good chance of gaining possession
- due to field position and available support, a missed tackle attempt will not put the team in harm
- the attacker is off-balance or unaware, and the chances of success are good
- attacker is moving into such a dangerous situation that a failed tackle attempt would be the same as no attempt (tough decision)
- a teammate is available for a double-team.

When any tackle attempt is made, the defender should commit totally to the ball. If the defender is able to get his support foot beside the ball on the tackle, then the defender is in a great position for making the tackle. If the defender must reach for the ball, then the chances of success are less, and the best the defender often can do is to knock the ball away. This does not necessarily mean that this is a bad choice. There are many times when a defender may wish to knock a ball over the touchline for a throw-in, as this will give time to other teammates to get back to help. And, even in 1 v 1 games, this may allow the defender some extra time to catch his breath. So, while the coach will want to teach ball-winning skills, players also need to be taught when it can be useful to simply knock the ball out. Often, coaches will cover these ideas in basic sessions in defense, with the general rule to get the ball if you can do it safely and to knock it out if you cannot.

Once the defender is in control of the attacker, forcing him in the defender's direction of preference, it is important that the defender continue to maintain a high level of pressure on the attacker. The defender often does not need to confront the attacker with a tackle attempt, until the defensive support is in place and the defender is ready. When in doubt, the best course is usually to delay; use patience; and wait for support and/or an opportunity to arise.

The feint tackle is one way to keep the attacker off-balanced. The defender feints a reach for the ball, yet maintains excellent balance and position. The defender should not actually get caught with the body weight going forward, only the feinting foot.

The attacker will have to react (if there is a reaction) in one of two ways. First, he may protect the ball by pulling it back or stepping in with a shielding motion. Or secondly, he may attempt to push the ball past the defender, assuming that the defender has dived in and is off balance. As a result, in the first case, the defender is forcing the attacker to focus totally on the ball, which cuts down on the attacker's ability to give the ball to a teammate and increases the chances that he can win the ball with heavy pressure. In the second case, the defender has tricked the attacker, and should be in good position to cut-off the attempted pass and may even be able to step between the attacker and the ball.

Learning What to Do If Beaten

In the course of any game, there will be times when the defender "bites" on a feint by the attacker, and dives in toward the direction in which he expected the ball to be, while the attacker merrily goes around him and heads towards goal. This is always upsetting to the defender, but is going to happen from time to time.

So, what does the defender do next? Usually, if there is a teammate available, the teammate will have slipped into a support position behind him. In such a situation, he simply swaps places with his teammate, and drops into a position as the supporting defender (this is called "recovering into a supporting position"). But, what if he was the only or last defender?

While the situation is not good, all is not lost. If the defender is faster than the attacker, he may be able to pursue the attacker and use his shoulder to push/steer the attacker away from the goal. This is entirely legal, and is called a "shoulder charge".

Even if the attacker is much faster, or has a head start, the defender must never give up - and should set an immediate course for the inside of the near goalpost. This action is called a "recovery run" - and what the defender is doing is called "recovering". Often, because of the angle originally set by the defender, the attacker must make a looping run to get into an area of the field where the angles are right for a shot on goal. As a result, the defender often has less distance to cover than the attacker, and can get into a position where he can cut off the easy angles for a shot - even if he cannot entirely block the shot.

Furthermore, many attackers are not very good at shooting at a dead run, so they will tend to slow up in order to set up their shots. As a result, a defender often will be able to catch up to them - and knock the ball away just as they were getting ready to take a shot. This is particularly true when the attacker allows the ball to get too far ahead of him.

In addition, new attackers often will get nervous when they hear the pounding of feet right beside or behind them, and will rush their shots. Likewise, they may take their eyes off the ball, and mis-hit the shot. Finally, of course, strange things can happen. The ball may hit a clod of dirt, or the attacker may trip, or the attacker may even run over the ball. Therefore, defenders must be taught always to recover towards goal at top speed, and never to give up until a goal has actually been scored.

Learning the full range of individual defensive skills takes time, and lots of actual experience with all different sizes/shapes and skill levels of opponents. While new defenders often will be taught initially by pairing them with another player of similar size and skill, the coach must be careful to expand the horizons of the defender as quickly as his confidence level will permit. Even a very small player, or one who may be chunky/slow, can learn to do a

good job against an opponent who is considerably faster if exposed to these situations regularly. Likewise, even if a player has such outstanding dribbling skills that he seems destined to become a striker in later years, the coach is well-advised to force this player to spend considerable time in learning basic defense. After all, this player may have the luck to get on a team which already has Ronaldo and Baggio (or their twins). If so, the player can end up in the midfield with solid defensive skills. Otherwise, this promising player may well end up on the bench.

Updated 16 March 1999

Understanding Basic Group Defensive Principles

All defensive training should begin with training of defensive skills in a 1 v 1 setting, and then progress to 2 v 1 training (numbers down and numbers up), 2 v 2 training, and 3 v 3 training. In this way, players will learn improve their own individual defensive skills and learn the proper techniques for working as a team to prevent the opponents from scoring, by learning to prevent them from taking the ball to dangerous parts of the field; or from passing balls into dangerous parts of the field to other teammates; or from allowing target receivers to collect any errant passes which might slip through; or from allowing such receivers who might get a ball in dangerous territory from getting off a shot. The essence of team defense is to use the available manpower to close down as many of the dangerous attacking options as possible, while patiently waiting for mistakes to occur or sufficient backup to arrive that efforts can be made to win the ball back.

Dividing Up Responsibilities When There Are Two Defenders

In team defense, the closest person to the ball (whether a forward, midfielder or defender) automatically should step in to put delaying pressure on the ball. In soccer terminology, this person is called the First Defender or the Pressure player. The importance of immediate pressure on the ball cannot be overstated. Tell your players that you want somebody on the ball by the count of 2, then shout "2" - to get the point across that you want this pressure to occur instantly.

Why is Pressure so important? The longer time that you give any attacker to make decisions, the better decisions he will make. And, the less time that you give your teammates to get back to cover your own goal, the worse are your chances of successfully stopping the attack. So, immediate Pressure is applied to force errors by the attackers; slow down their attack; give your own teammates time to provide support; and, hopefully, to give your team the opportunity to try to regain the ball in a favorable part of the field. Just as in individual defense, the Pressure player's first job is to get into position to slow down the attacker and to remain in his way until a good opportunity arises to try to regain possession. The difference is that, once backup support has arrived, the Pressure player usually can stop being patient and can move to aggressively win the ball back, because his backup player can move in to take over if he is beaten. Thus, the availability of backup support often allows the team to get the ball back in better field position and at a time when the opponents are moving in the wrong direction to handle their own defense well.

So, who is the teammate who is supposed to provide this immediate backup. Usually, the teammate who is the nearest player goalside of the ball - or the player who can most quickly get into this supporting position - is responsible for getting into a position behind the Pressure defender, so that he can provide a safety valve if the Pressure defender is beaten. This person is called the Cover player (or Second Defender). Finally, the remaining teammates who are available for backup along the direct route of the ball towards goal provide additional support for the two primary defenders, and are called the Balance players or Third Defenders. The jobs of the Balance players involve many of the same basic skills and decisions as those made by the two primary defenders, so it is important to provide solid background in the Pressure and Cover roles before moving to substantial training on Balance.

The Role and Duties of the Cover Player

The Cover player is the player who is the nearest teammate who is in the proper position goalside of the ball, or who can make the easiest run to get into this position. Proper positioning depends on the position of the ball on the field, as well as the position of any supporting attacker and the speed of the attacking group. Positioning is covered in more detail below.

The Cover player has the following duties:

1. Support of the Pressure player;
2. Marking or closing down supporting attacker(s);

3. Stopping passes of the ball into dangerous areas behind the defense.

The positioning of the Cover player depends upon where the ball is located on the field. If the attacker is relatively close to one touchline, the defense will want to bottle the attacker up on the touchline (and use the touchline as an extra defender), just as in individual defending. Thus, the Pressure player will try to steer the attacker close to one touchline by positioning himself sideways on so as to make a funnel towards the touchline, and the Cover player typically will move to close off the end of the funnel. However, the Cover player often will take an intermediate step and provide backup along a line from the goal to the far post until the attacker has been moved fairly close to the touchline. The Cover player must carefully gauge when to close the funnel and how distance can safely be left between him and the Pressure player, as the last thing which he wants to have happen is for the attacker to be able to cut in towards goal between him and the Pressure player (a tactic known as "splitting the defenders").

If the attacker has his back towards your goal, and is being heavily pressured from the rear by the Pressure player, then the Cover player has two choices. One is to provide fairly close support from the rear, to enable the Pressure player to move around towards the front to try to win the ball. The other is to become the Pressure player himself by coming in from the front, and allowing the rear player to provide Cover.

Finally, if the attacker has managed to turn towards your goal and is not near any touchline, then the Cover player typically will take a position about 2-3 yards to the rear and to the side (trying to add his body as extra coverage for the goal). The closer that the attacker is to goal, the closer the Cover player usually will position himself to the Pressure player, so as to be able to provide near-instant Pressure if his teammate is beaten.

When providing defensive backup, the Cover player must make an assessment of the relative speed and skill of the attacker. In general, where the attacker is considerably faster or more skilled than the defenders involved, the Cover player must drop off farther, so that he will not be beaten by the on-ball attacker or by a speedy runner to whom the ball is passed. The relative distance between the ball and the last backup defender is called "depth" of the defense. A defense which has a lot of depth defensively is often safer. However, the amount of depth to provide in any defense is a product of multiple factors (and, obviously, there are times when defensive support may be so far away that it is not useful). All defenses tend to compress in depth as the ball comes into scoring range, both because the defenders have run out of field and because the proximity of the attackers to goal requires that the defenders get closer so that they can react more quickly.

Once the Cover player is at the correct depth, where should he stand in relation to the Pressure defender? If the ball is located toward the sides of the field, a good rule of thumb on support angle can be reached by drawing a line from the far post to the ball. The support defender moves up or back along this line. The reason for adopting this angle is that the body of the Cover player fills up any passing and shooting lanes to the far post, while the body of the Pressure player fills up passes/shots to the near post. In essence, even though the defenders are separated by several yards, they will appear to be almost shoulder-to-shoulder from the attacker's viewpoint (as if they were making a wall across the goal).

In the center of the field, there really is no "far post", because the ball may be equally distant from either post. What then? In this case, the supporting defender may wish to pull up within a couple of yards back and to the side of the Pressure defender, in order to create the illusion of a horizontal wall which is blocking the ball. If in scoring range, he may pull up even closer. In general, the Cover player will pull up to the side which blocks a shot by the favored foot of the attacker (unless other factors, such as another attacker, make it more sensible to position to the other side).

What if there is also a supporting attacker to worry about? This will be covered in 2v2 attacking. First, we will address the situation where there is a free defender who can provide fulltime backup support (i.e., he doesn't have another attacker whom he also has to mark).

Basic Elements of 2 v 1 Defense

The first thing that the Cover player needs to do is to get into position. If he already is goalside of the ball, then it is a simple matter to shift up and over to establish the correct position. However, if he is upfield from the ball, then he must make an angled or looping run as he comes back to get into position. Why? He wants to keep his eye on the ball at all times, and he wants to be able to provide backup in the event that the Pressure player is beaten. As a result, he needs to estimate where along the path towards goal he would have to be to intersect the attacker if the attacker quickly got past the Pressure player, and then start heading for that spot. Then, as he sees that the Pressure player is managing to contain the attacker (so the risk of a break-through has gone down), he starts to angle around towards his ultimate Cover position.

Once in place, the Cover player becomes the "boss" of the defense - and it is his job to instruct the Pressure player on what to do next. Why? Because the Cover player can look around, while the Pressure player should have his eyes glued to the ball.

While positioning is important, the real work in training the Cover player involves training in communication skills. The Cover player provides the same type of support for the Pressure player that the 2nd attacker provides for the on-ball attacker. His job is to serve at the eyes/ears of the on-ball defender - and to provide clear communication about the best way to defend. Of course, his first obligation is to announce his arrival by shouting "Cover" when he is in place. Normally, his first instruction will be to start trying to steer the opponent towards one touchline ("Take him left" or "Take him right"). If possible, a right-footed attacker should be steered towards the right side of the defense (i.e., towards the attacker's left), in order to force the attacker to use his non-favored foot. Then, the Cover player starts to give instructions to the Pressure player on ball-winning ("Not Yet" or "Now"). or "Not Yet"). Normally, the Pressure player should wait for a signal from the Cover player before moving in to tackle the ball - so that he can be sure that the Cover player is ready to spring forward to provide instant Pressure if the tackle doesn't work.

Of course, the Cover player must be especially alert when the attacker is within scoring distance of the goal and will have a decent scoring chance if he manages to beat the Pressure player. This is especially true when the attacker is coming in centrally, so that the attacker has the full goal to shoot on. The Cover player knows that, once the attacker gets the ball within easy passing range of goal, it can be a simple matter to slip the ball between the legs of the defenders and into the net. As a result, if the attacker hasn't made a mistake which can be capitalized upon (such as putting the ball too far out in front) by the time that he has entered the PA, the Cover player will need to consider orchestrating a double-team rush on the attacker. When should this be done? Usually at the time when the attacker is approaching the penalty mark, and has just stepped on his shooting foot (so he only can get off a hurried shot/pass with his non-favored foot before the two defenders converge on him). The decisions involved at the same as in making the rush in individual defending. The only real difference is that the two defenders combine as they are going in, so that they can overwhelm and bottle up the attacker and/or put so much pressure upon him that his shot is easily saved by the keeper.

When the attacker is coming in from an acute angle to the side of the goal, then the defensive job is much easier (particularly until the attacker gets close enough to the goal to have a near post shot). The Pressure player will try to steer the attacker towards the endline, while the Cover player shuts off the funnel by positioning himself somewhere in front of the near goal post. This leaves the keeper free to take the middle of the goal (to be able to push high far post shots over the bar). In this situation, because the Pressure player generally can kick the ball out, the real interest of the Cover player is to keep the attacker from coming between him and the Pressure player - which will leave a big hole. Thus, he will want to close in a bit, and simply use patience to wait for a mistake.

When the attacker is coming in at an angle of 40-60 degrees, the defenders have a difficult choice to make. If they over-commit in trying to steer him to the endline, he may be able to spin over the top of them towards the central goal area and have an unobstructed shot on goal. On the other hand, if they over-protect the central area, they leave the wing area open for an attack. As a result, they usually will want to position themselves directly along the angle of his path. If they cannot close on the attacker before he clears the near post, then the Pressure player must drop down to cover the near post (so that the keeper can move more centrally) and the Cover player will need to slide in to block shots on the central or far post areas. This is a tricky time for the defenders, because failure to move

together will create a momentary gap which can allow a shot (or hard near post pass) or allow the defender to slip through altogether.

In addition to training the players on how to set the proper angles in these situations, it is important to train them on recovery runs. When the Pressure player is beaten, the Cover player immediately steps up to provide Pressure. At the same moment, the Pressure player must INSTANTLY make a recovery run to get into a position to intercept the attacker if he beats the former Cover player. The most dangerous instance in 2v1 defending is during this transition time. If the former Cover player does not close quickly and carefully, both defenders will be beaten - unless the former Pressure player gets into an immediate backup position. Usually, the best option for the recovering defender is to make a sprint at top speed to an interception point on the line towards goal, while turning his head to see if further adjustments are in order. In general, the depth of the interception point should be set as deep as possible, while still permitting the defender to reach the attacker before he is likely to shoot. Once again, if the recovering defender sees that the new Pressuring defender has contained the attacker, he can flatten his run and come back to set up a Cover position. But, his first thought must be to get into a position where he could stop a shot (or intercept a cross, if a supporting attacker is in the picture).

As can be seen, even 2v1 defense is not particularly simple - and it can take a number of seasons for players to fully grasp how to handle the various options (and how to communicate well). However, smart players end up discovering the most of these principles on their own by being placed in these situations frequently. Hence, a smart coach will try to find time in practices for small group games or drills where the players can experiment with their own solutions - and learn from their mistakes.

2 v 2 Defense

The next step is to train players in 2v2 defensive coverage. The role of the Cover player in 2v2 is more complex, because he has two jobs - to provide Cover and to provide marking for his off-ball attacker. As was discussed in Group Attacking, the 2nd attacker (off-ball close support) will be trying to help maintain possession when outside of scoring range. Therefore, it usually is possible for the Cover player to devote most of his attention to the ball (instead of this attacker) until about the time when the ball is approaching scoring range. He accomplishes this by stationing himself goalside of the Pressure player, at an angle and distance which allows him to keep an eye on his mark, while still being able to move to provide quick pressure if the Pressure player is beaten.

As a general rule of thumb, when there is another attacker in the vicinity, the Cover player will first determine how close this attacker is to the ball and to the goal. In general, the wider the attacker is laterally and the closer this attacker is horizontally to the ball, the wider the Cover player may want to play away from the ball (so that he can intercept any long passes which may be sent in behind him or get to the supporting attacker more quickly if the ball gets through). In other words, the wide attacker is sufficiently worrisome that he is forced to pull away from his Cover job somewhat, so that he can get to the wide receiver quickly. On the other hand, as long as the supporting attacker remains well behind the dribbler and well away from the ball, the Cover player can devote his main attention to the ball.

As a general rule of thumb, a distance halfway between the two attackers is a good starting point if the attackers are square (i.e., on the same line horizontally) and outside of scoring range. If the second attacker is forward or if the ball is coming into scoring range, the defender must move closer to this potential receiver - even at the risk of abandoning his Cover duties.

In deciding whether to stay with his mark, or remain as in a Cover role, the defender must consider whether the dribbler or the mark is the more dangerous player. If the dribbler is in a clearly better position to score, the Cover player usually will want to stick with the covering role. If the receiver is clearly in the better position to score (i.e., the dribbler is at a sharp angle to goal, while the receiver is stationed or moving centrally), the Cover player must move ballside/goalside of this receiver and get into the likely passing lanes for the ball. When the situation is unclear, then he will need to make a choice based upon what he knows about his teammate's ability, the ability of the opponents, the ability of his keeper, and a host of other factors which may give him clues that one option is

better than the other. When in doubt, the best decision normally is to mark any central receiver out of play, and leave the dribbler to the Pressure player and the keeper.

The defender is obligated to continue to mark an attacker who is moving forward until one of several things occur:

- the attacker's position is not considered dangerous any more
- another defender has taken over marking responsibilities
- the dribbler has beaten the Pressure player and has become more dangerous
- the dribbler has become so dangerous that Cover is more important.

So, what must the Cover player do when the ball is passed to the receiver?

The most important part of his job is what is called "closing down" the attacker. The "close down" starts when a ball is passed to an attacker. When the ball is in flight, the defender uses this time to sprint towards the receiving attacker. If the defender is relatively close to the attacker, he should turn with the attacker (taking his eyes off the ball), try to beat the attacker to space he is going and turn back to find the ball. An extended forearm touching the attacker can help the defender know where the attacker is. The defender must not slow down his turn with the attacker, as he may obstruct the attacker. The beauty of this defensive reaction is that it takes the defender automatically into a supportive position.

If the defender is relatively far away from the attacker, it is critical that he use the time that the ball is in flight to gobble up as much ground as possible. All too often, the defender does not react soon enough, and gives the attacker too much space to receive and decide what the next play will be. Just before the receiver is to touch the ball, however, the defender must stop the sprint and go into a balanced state, being ready to react in any direction. The closer to the attacker, the more critical it is to get balanced. It is when the defender is in motion that the attacker can use the defender's momentum to beat him. The defender must first stop, then change directions. Often, in a directional change, the player is again off balance and can be beat again. A balanced player can react quickly while remaining balanced for the next reaction. To get balanced requires the player to suspend movement, with feet a comfortable distance apart. The body may be turned slightly facing the ball and the direction the player wants the attacker to go.

Each time that the attacker makes a touch on the ball, the defender uses the time before the next touch to close down more space. If the touch stays close to the attacker, the defender should go into a sideways-on (or side-on) stance and take short steps or hops to get closer to the attacker. The defender should stay as balanced as possible with any leanings away from attacker back towards the defended goal. The defender must not allow the attacker to get past or behind him, and that is why the defender should be ready to react quickly going backwards as he shuffles forward towards the ball. The reason he needs to be side-on is to be in a better position to go back.

In general, defenders who are beaten by the attacker on the first or second touch are not on balance. Likewise, defenders that are not tight enough initially may not be working hard enough on the initial pass. Furthermore, defenders that stay well off the attacker after reception are not closing down properly. Thus, if a coach sees these errors, corrections are in order before bad habits become engrained.

While the former Cover player is busy worrying about the current dribbler, the former Pressure player must decide what to do next. In general, if his mark does not go forward immediately or makes a wide run away from the ball, he should drop back into the basic Cover position. Why? Because this player is now the Cover player! This switching of roles is often the hardest thing for young players to remember. As a result, it is necessary to practice 2v2 situations over and over until the switching off of roles, as well as the rules of Pressure and Cover, become so engrained that they are instinctive.

Handling Numbers Down Defense

Ideally, no player ever would end up in a game where he has to defend against 2 attackers without any backup support. However, realistically, this happens in game situations (even if just for a few seconds until backup arrives),

so players need to be trained on how to approach numbers-down defending with confidence. The basic positioning of the solo defender is essentially the same as if he were a Cover player in a 2v2 setting.

In general, until the ball comes within shooting range, a solo defender will try to position himself so that he can remain in the path of the on-ball attacker and slow him down - but he will want to drop off towards goal sufficiently to also keep an eye on the off-ball attacker. As a general rule, most off-ball attackers will remain to one side and slightly behind the on-ball attacker until the ball is entering scoring range. At this point, the off-ball attacker will start to try to move to the far side of the defender in order to prevent the defender from staying enough to provide any pressure on the ball and still keep an eye on the off-ball attacker.

When this move starts to happen, the defender has two basic choices (which depend on which of the two attackers is considered more dangerous). If the two attackers are coming directly in on goal (attacking centrally), then the most dangerous attacker is probably the on-ball attacker, because the goal is relatively open for a shot. In this situation, the best choice is likely to be to make a sudden hard sprint at the on-ball attacker in order to force him to make a rapid shot or pass before he planned to do so (because forced shots/passes often are screwed up - and a hard charge may leave the intended receiver offside). Of course, when the defender makes this decision to come out hard, he must do everything possible to win the ball or knock it away, leaving the keeper to worry about handling the off-ball attacker if the pass gets through. To minimize the possibility of a pass, the solo defender may slightly angle his run to put his body in the easiest passing lanes to the receiver (unless covering the dominant foot appears to be the better option).

On the other hand, if the on-ball attacker has a very poor shooting angle because he is coming in from the side of the goal - but his off-ball receiver is stationed centrally around the top of the box (as he should be)- the most dangerous attacker usually is the receiver. As a result, in this situation, the defender will try to position himself more centrally than the keeper (who will be standing close to the near post). Normally, he will stand around the top of the goal area, in the hopes of intercepting any horizontal pass to the receiver (which is the most dangerous pass to him) and helping the keeper by blocking a low far post shot by the dribbler. Essentially, at this point, the solo defender is leaving the dribbler to the keeper, and simply trying to provide backup to prevent passes to the receiver. He knows that, if the receiver gets the ball, he is sunk - because the whole net is wide open, so he simply does the best that he can to cut off the easy options - and hopes that the attackers cannot convert on the more difficult options.

Group Defensive Duties of All Players

When there are more than two teammates available to assist in defense, the concept of marking becomes very important. If a player has consistently marked his man out for the whole game, and prevented any service to his mark by making the mark appear not to be open, the player has done an excellent defensive job without having come anywhere near the ball. This can be a hard concept for young players to accept unless the coach makes a big deal out of excellent marking - and praises them despite the fact that they are not seeing much action. As the coach moves into teaching team defense, the first rule of team defense to be taught is that everyone on the team becomes a defender when the team does not have the ball. Thus, all players must understand the 4 basic jobs of team defense, which are: No Get, No Turn, No Pass/No Shoot.

"No Get" means to prevent the player whom they are guarding from ever getting the ball. There is a detailed practice plan on **marking** in the "Practice Plans to Teach the Basics" section of the Manual, so the methods to be used to prevent an opponent from getting the ball will not be discussed in detail here.

Of course, it is not always possible to keep an opposing player from getting the ball - especially when serving as a midfielder, because there will be times when he cannot get back into proper marking position in time because of an unexpected loss of possession (or because his mark is a bit quicker and/or checked back to get the ball). If his mark manages to successfully receive the ball, then the job of the defender becomes one of "No Turn" (i.e., trying to keep the attacker from turning in the direction of his goal, if this can be done safely).

When is it a good idea to apply heavy pressure to prevent the turn? It is a good idea to do this when you have backup support behind you (which is why midfielders normally will apply very heavy pressure to stop the turn). It also can

be a good idea to try to do this when additional support will be available quickly or the risk of allowing the turn is relatively high.

Of course, occasions will arise in a game where the attacker may be able to collect the ball and turn in the direction of the goal before anyone on the team can get to him. Once the attacker has turned and is heading towards goal, the primary object of the initial defender on the scene is to prevent the attacker from getting off a shot on goal from decent scoring range/position. This is accomplished by getting in his way; trying to slow him down until reinforcements can arrive; and trying to steer him to the outside (which cuts down his shooting angle and makes the keeper's job a lot easier). Thus, at this point, the marking defender will work to insure No Pass/No Shoot, with his emphasis normally on preventing the shot (unless the pass is considerably more dangerous). These concepts will continue to be applied in 3v3 defense, as well as in any other situation where more than 2 defenders are available.

3 v 3 Defense

Most teams which play 3v3 will leave one player back as a pivot player and supporting defender. Thus, defending in 3v3 can be easier than in 2v2, because most attacks end up being 2v3 (with the spare defender free to move in to provide extra cover or pressure to win possession).

The defensive group has 3 basic choices in how to position this extra defender, ranging from fairly risky to fairly conservative. Which positioning to choose depends in large part upon the skill of the opposing team.

The most risky choice is to have the spare defender station himself as an outlet player - staying between the defense and the sole defender of the opposing team. This choice is somewhat risky, because the attackers are now 2v2 against the defenders (so the advantage of extra defensive numbers is lost). However, it is somewhat better offensively because it provides an immediate outlet for a counterattack if possession is won (with your team needing to beat only 1 opponent to score). It also has the advantage of preventing the opponents from putting all 3 players into their attack, as this will leave their goal undefended if the ball comes to the outlet player.

The most conservative choice to use the extra defender in a sweeper-type role, which frees up the other defender to closely mark the supporting attacker. However, because there is no outlet player available when possession is regained, this approach will reduce scoring chances unless your team plays good possession-style soccer (or has a high-endurance player who can sprint forward to become the outlet player when possession is regained).

The third choice is a hybrid of these two approaches, in which the extra defender becomes a floating Cover player who plays in any part of the field in order to quickly provide double-team opportunities on the ball (this type of player is also called a "libero", meaning a unrestricted player). If the Libero has developed the ability to read the field well, and is able to accurately anticipate when he will be needed, this option can work very nicely. However, if the Libero is relatively unskilled, the only thing that he may end up accomplishing is exhausting himself (especially if the opponents have a good short-passing game).

Usually, in a 3v3 contest, players will start with the conservative approach while they assess the strength of their opponents, and will then start taking some risks if this appears to be appropriate. However, it will take several seasons before players can be trained to recognize the proper balance between defensive risk and offensive reward. There are multiple variables which must be weighed in a short amount of time, and mistakes are bound to happen. However, if the coach constantly exposes the players to 3v3 games with varying team composition (so players have to contend with individual opponents who may be weaker or stronger), the players will learn to assess their own capabilities, the capabilities of their teammates, and the capabilities of their opponents. As they learn to make these assessments, they will become increasingly skilled in making the small-group tactical decisions which are required to be successful at playing soccer at all levels.

Summary

This is a very basic outline of the types of decisions which are involved defensively in small group play. Once players are familiar with these basic decisions, they will be prepared to make better use of additional players on the

field. Why? Because teams which have 11 players per side on the field usually will not have more than 5-6 players who are playing offense or defense at any given time. The roles of the players immediately around the ball (Pressure & Cover) do not change. If anything, their roles are easier when playing in a larger group, because the extra players cut down on the amount of running/work and provide extra coverage. For instance, if the team is defending 6v4, this means that it has two spare defenders available. How should it use these two extra defenders. Well, common sense (and 2v1 and 3v2 experience) tells you that the first one should be assigned to dedicated Cover, while the remaining player may be utilized the best by creating double-team options or assisting in marking a particularly dangerous opponent.

If a player has never been allowed to play in small groups, or has never been rotated through defense, he will have no idea how to approach this golden opportunity. Often, he will just stand around aimlessly, or go stand by his mark upfield (where he is doing no good at all). However, once he understands the basic principles involved in small group play, he is more likely to move automatically to provide defensive support when needed - and to automatically present himself as an outlet player when not needed on defense. Thus, even if technically serving as a defender, a player trained in solid 3v3 skills will realize that, if the opponent only has sent up one attacker who is easily handled by the 2 defenders already back, his best bet is to become an outlet player for them - and to bring the ball upfield until he is challenged; or until he can see that other teammates are better positioned to take the ball forward; or until other circumstances make it more important that he return to the back.

Many youth coaches refuse to label their primary defensive players as "defenders", because they wish to impress upon all of their players that defense is everybody's job when the team does not have the ball. So, they choose to refer to these primary defenders as "backs". This may be helpful with young players. However, the coach probably will want to introduce the more common definition of their role at some point in training so that the players are not confused when they go to camps or play for other coaches. In either event, the coach certainly will want to impress upon all players that they have defensive jobs, and teach all players how to perform those defensive duties in a competent manner in a small group setting.

Updated 12 March 1999

Coaching Resources

Without in any way claiming to give you everything you'll ever need to be a coach, this section aims to provide you with some basic tools that we know you're going to need before very long: things like information on how to become a certified coach, samples of the various forms you'll need to give out to your playeres, safety and first-aid tips, some hints on activities, and a information on things like coaching books, videos and web site. This is a miscellany: browse around and enjoy yourself!

1. Coaching courses and certification
2. Useful items to get for practices
3. Sample medical and other forms
4. Medical Information for Soccer Coaches
5. Risk management and safety tips
6. The Coach's First-Aid Kit
7. A guide to the Laws of the Game
8. A guide to on-field communication
9. A soccer glossary
10. Information on Stretching (located in another section of the Manual)
11. Fun Games to Teach Skills
12. Training aids for coaches (located in another section of the Manual)
 - Helpful books
 - Helpful videos and CDs
 - Websites with useful drills/skills info

Updated 11 April 1999

Certification and Licensing for Soccer Coaches

This page provides basic information on certification and licensing programs for coaches in the following countries:

1. United States
2. Netherlands
3. Scotland
4. Spain
5. Australia
6. England
7. Canada

United States

NSCAA

The National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) offers two levels of coaching licenses offered by the organization. Information regarding course offerings can be found at: <http://www.nscaa.com>

The first level, Non-Residential Programs, has two diplomas - State diploma and Regional diploma. The breakdown:

- **State Diploma** - For newly involved coaches, especially with kids in the 6 - 12 age group. Topics include coach as facilitator, 7-a-side for games, organization of a session, laws of the game, games approach to teaching technique, care and prevention of injuries, small-sided games. Course reference manual and diploma awarded upon completion of course. Cost: \$350 for up to 20 people total (cost divided among number of participants), for more than 20 coaches, add \$10.
- **Regional Diploma** - A 13-hour course designed for youth and schoolcoaches working with players ages 12 - 19. Gives deeper understanding of how technical and tactical concepts can be applied to player development. Course manual and diploma awarded upon completion. Cost - \$675 for up to 20 coaches (cost divided amongst number of coaches, add \$20 per coach over that number).

USYSA affiliates

These courses are offered by the state associations which are affiliated with USYSA. To find the office of your state association, go to: <http://soccertimes.com/directory/usysa.htm>.

- **U6/U8 or U8/U10 Youth Module**

Time 4-8 hours
Cost Generally Free

These courses have replaced the G and F courses. These courses are designed to be age specific and are the initial training courses offered to a new or just getting started parent/coach. This is primarily a classroom course.

This module is critical to ensure a positive and developmentally appropriate soccer experience for players of this age. This course addresses this by providing the most current and advanced information on the cognitive, psycho-motor and social development of the adolescent player.

This course takes a Games and Activities approach to teaching and learning. The coach serves as a facilitator creating a fun learning environment of games and activities.

- **E Certificate** (General Certificate of 11-A-Side Soccer)
- Time** 15-20 hours
Cost \$50-\$100

This course focuses on the development of the player as an individual and also as part of a team. This development takes a player from being technically oriented to refining those techniques and applying them to game situations.

This course has both classroom and field sessions where the coach is taught the proper techniques of soccer, the progression for teaching technique, how to recognize and correct technical breakdown, the principle of attack and defense, care and prevention of injuries and team management.

Some testing may occur and be used as a learning experience.

- **D Certificate** (The Consolidation of Techniques & Tactics)
- Time** 30-40 hours
Cost \$100-\$150

The curriculum focus is to provide a framework and understanding of practical coaching tools to improve the player's technique and to expand the tactical awareness of the players function within the team, by improving the coaches ability to create game like situations in practice that challenge and improve the individual and the team.

The successful candidate should be able to devise a training session to develop and correct technique through proper teaching progression, have an understanding of the principles of attack and defense and be able to identify technical and tactical breakdowns within the course of play and set training sessions to correct them.

Testing covers the area of methods, tactics, laws, team management and practical coaching. The candidate is required to plan and conduct a training session in the practical environment.

This course is designed for coaches who are working with U12 to U14 teams.

- **National Licenses**
National "A", "B" and "C" courses consist of five days of instruction and two days of extensive oral, written and practical examinations. The "A" license is valid for a period of four (4) years. "A" licensed coaches must participate in the USSF license maintenance program in order to keep their license current. The "B" and "C" licenses are non-expiring licenses. Coaches with expired "A" licenses must re-take the "A" course and pass the examinations in order to be awarded the "A" license.

The **National Youth License** course consists of four days of classroom and field instruction and one day of written and practical examinations. The instruction for the course is age-specific. Each day of the course is devoted to the physical, psychological and social characteristics displayed by children of a specific age, i.e. Under-6, Under-8, Under-10 and Under-12. Must have an E license, unless waiver granted.

Applicants for a **C license** must be at least 18 years of age, and have held a National "D" license for a minimum of 12 months. "D" license certification may be waived for highly-experienced coaches and players.

Applicants for a **B license** must be at least 18 years of age and "C" license held for a minimum of 12 months, unless granted a waiver due to coaching/playing experience or comparable licensing by another country.

Applicants for an **A license** must be 21 years of age, and have held a "B" license certification for a minimum of one year. Absolutely no waivers will be considered for entrance into the course, per the USYSA.

3. AYSO courses

The AYSO site lists summaries of coaching courses, as well as links/directories to affiliates. Their URL is <http://soccer.org/>. Course offerings include:

U-6 Coaching Course	
Target	All first-time U-6 coaches
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the U-6 manual
U-8 Coaching Course	
Target	All first-time U-8 coaches and all U-6 coaches who have moved into the U-8 program
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the U-8 manual
U-10 Coaching Course	
Target	All first-time U-10 coaches and all U-8 coaches who have moved into the U-10 program
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the U-10 manual
Youth Coaching Course	
Description	8 hours
Target	All first-time U-12 coaches and all U-10 coaches who have moved into the U-12 program
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the Youth Course Manual
Intermediate Coaching Course	
Description	15 hours
Target	Youth Coaching Course Graduates
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the Intermediate Course Manual
Advanced Coaching Course	
Description	18 hours
Target	Intermediate Coaching Course Graduates
Materials	A combination of personal orientation and the Advanced Course Manual
National Coaching Course	
Description	Week-long
When offered	Summer
Target	Advanced Coaching Course Graduates

Netherlands

To become a Certified Youth Leader (Football) you need to complete 3 courses.

1. **Jeugdvoetbalspelleider (JVSL)**. This is aimed at the parent who has decided to coach. The course gives knowledge and insight into teaching football technique to pupil footballers (6-12 years). The motto (and title of the course book) is "The ball is round and that's hard enough." The course gives a good basis for a volunteer to train up to youth team (up to 14 years). This is an evening course consisting of 8 x 3 hour sessions. If there are enough takers, courses can be held at your own club. Minimum age is 16 years and costs are Hfl 80 including books.
2. **Jeugdvoetbalbegeleider (JVBL)**. This is to prepare you to coach a youth team (up to 14 years). The following are included in the course: how to handle young players; age phases of the youth; boys and girls football; injury prevention; rules; organisation of extracurricular activities. The course is 6 x 2.5 hour sessions. Minimum age 16 years. Costs Hfl 60 including books.
3. **Club Referee**

There are also more advanced courses:

1. **Youth Football Trainer (Jeugd Voetbal Trainer - JVT)**. In a period of 4 months, 20 lessons (60 hours) plus an attachment to a club (usually own club!) for a minimum of 20 hours. 2 lessons each week on one evening and a Saturday morning. Cost Hfl 475 excluding books (Hfl 75) and entrance test (Hfl 25). Entry Criteria: min 18 years old and ability to pass an ability test. Suitability is checked by interview, examining motivation and background for suitability to coach and lead children. Aim and content: Achieve basic knowledge and ability to train youth players, to lead them during matches and all that involves. Ability to translate game situations into training and vice versa, coaching during games, lead the rest of the youth cadre and (jointly) prepare a youth plan.
2. **Trainer Coach III**. Length: approx 4 months, 24 x 3 hour lessons weekly on Monday evening and Saturday morning. Cost: Hfl 800 excl books (Hfl 100) and registration fee (Hfl 50). Entry Criteria: Min 18 yrs and currently training a team for a min of 1 hr per week. An ability test and examination of suitability and motivation (by interview). Aim and Content: Achieve basic knowledge and ability to train players (m&f) in the FA 5th class and below and to coach them during games.
3. **Trainer Coach II**. Length: approx 9 months, 24 weekly lessons of 2.5 hrs on Monday evenings plus 24 x 3 hour lessons on Saturday morning and a 2 day course in Zeist. If candidate is not currently Head Coach at a club then an attachment to a club is required, for 1 evening per week, (level is the A selection: 1st team FA 2nd/3rd class). Candidates will be required to visit games and prepare essays. Cost: Hfl 2,600 excluding books (Hfl 100 in addition to those required for Trainer Coach III). Entry criteria: candidates must hold Diploma Oefenmeester III or Diploma Trainer D. Aim and Content: Achieve a more complete knowledge and ability to train and coach players in the FA 2nd Class.
4. **Trainer Coach I**. Length: Approx 9 months during which 12 x 2 day (Monday and Tuesday residential) meetings in Zeist, plus 3 x 1 day for final exams, above which attendance at several games [assume professional games here] required. An attachment [to what it does not say but assume it will be to a professional or top class amateur club] of 1.5 hrs per week is required. Costs: Hfl 8,000, incl accommodation at Zeist, excluding course material [no price quoted] travel costs and match entry fees.. Entry Criteria: Hold any of: Oefenmeester II Diploma, Trainer C Diploma or Trainer Coach II diploma and pass the entrance test and interview. Aim and content: Achieve knowledge and ability to function as Oefenmeester in Amateur Football or as Assistant Oefenmeester in Professional Football.

Scotland

Scotland offers a number of coaching courses. For more information about course offerings, check the URL of the Scottish Football Association at: <http://www.scottishfa.co.uk>.

EUFA Pro-Licence	
Entry requirements	Invitation
Hours	240
Practical	specialist training, styles of play, squad training, tactical games, teaching practice.
Theoretical	altitude training, performance psychology, rest and regeneration, media relations, tournament planning, the doctor and the coach, the law and the coach, business management, mental training, European youth development, refereeing issues.
Assessment	interview, log book, study report, coaching in the game, match analysis.
SFA A(advanced) Licence Diploma	
Entry requirements	A (introductory) certificate
Hours	60
Practical	goalkeeping specialism, creative techniques, shaping a team, teaching practice.
Theoretical	planning the season, styles of play, psychological preparation, communication skills, the physiotherapist and the coach.
Assessment	coaching in the game(11v11), defence, midfield and attack, team talk.
SFA A (introductory) Intermediate Certificate	
Entry requirements	B Licence Diploma
Hours	60
Practical	developing speed, testing and assessment, rotational exercises, teaching practice.
Theoretical	refereeing issues, testing and assessment, match analysis, motivation, senior team management.
Assessment	written paper, interview, log book, coaching in the game(11v11).
SFA B Licence Diploma	
Entry requirements	C,D,E and G Certificates
Hours	120
Practical	group skills, zone games, set plays, endurance and strength, small sided games, teaching practice.
Theoretical	aerobic and anaerobic training, youth development, prevention of injuries, the referee and the coach, diet and nutrition, match analysis, people with disabilities.
Assessment	practical themes, coaching in the game(11v11), laws, log book.
SFA C (club coach) Certificate	
Entry requirements	NONE
Hours	30
Practical	technique and skill development, passing, finishing, dribbling, control, possession, speed and flexibility, small sided games, defending, attacking.
Theoretical	the coaching process module, laws of the game module.
Assessment	practice assessments, group skills.
SFA D (development) Certificate	
Entry requirements	NONE

Hours	10
Practical	warm ups, calm downs, technique work in pairs and groups, synchronised skills, speed and perception.
Theoretical	youth team management module, physical preparation module.
Assessment	none.
SFA E (early touches) Certificate	
Entry requirements	NONE
Hours	10
Practical	individual activities, movement and balance, work in pairs and groups, relays, fun games, small sided games.
Theoretical	working with children module, first aid module.
Assessment	none.
SFA G (goalkeeping) Certificate	
Entry requirements	NONE
Hours	10
Practical	warm ups, handling, shape, mobility, positioning, catching, distribution.
Theoretical	working with children module, first aid module.
Assessment	none.
SFA G (goalkeeping) Licence Diploma	
Entry requirements	invitation
Hours	30
Practical	game appreciation, circuit training, speed, stamina, power.
Theoretical	laws re. goalkeeping, physical preparation, diet and nutrition.
Assessment	practical goalkeeping themes, worksheets.
SVQ Level 2 Coaching (Scottish Vocational Qualification)	
Entry requirements	N/A
Hours	80
Practical	as per C,D,E and G certificates.
Theoretical	as per C,D,E and G certificates, diet and nutrition, administration and media studies.
Assessment	training session, worksheets, log book, interview.

Spain

Spain has a three-year program for training soccer coaches, which is offered through the Escuela Nacional de Entrenadores (National School of Coaches), in coordination with Federacion Española de Fútbol (Spanish Soccer Federation). After the first year, the coach is certified to coach players under 18. After the second year, the coach is certified to coach at regional category. After the third year, the coach is certified to coach at the professional level. The coaching school can be contacted at:

Federacion Española de Fútbol
C/Alberto Bosch-13
28014 Madrid
Spain
Phone 34 91 4201362
Fax: 34 91 4202094

In Spain, the coaches who tend to obtain coaching licenses mostly are those who work with professional or semi-pro teams/clubs. Many professional clubs run schools for younger children (age 10+) as a part of their programs, and those programs often will send these coaches through this training (although this varies from club to club).

Australia

The Australian soccer community is currently revising its approach to coaching clinics, and is expected to adopt an approach which is similar to that taken by Scotland and the USYSA. As a result, readers are advised to check one or more of the following sources for further information as these revised course offerings are put into place. The Australian Sports Commission's home page is located at <http://www.ausport.gov.au>, and contains links to various soccer associations in Australia. The Australian Institute of Sport soccer page is located at: <http://www.ausport.gov.au/aissoc.html> and the Australian Women's Soccer Association's homepage is located at <http://www.ausport.gov.au/soccer/awshome.html>. The NSW Soccer Federation's homepage is at <http://www.soccernsw.com.au>.

England

England offers a variety of training courses for coaches. For more information, see the website of the FA Coaches Association (FACA) is located at: <http://www.coach-soccer.livjm.ac.uk>.

Membership of the FACA is necessary for licenses to remain valid; with the additional requirement that all members undergo a minimum of 24 hours of continuing professional development over a three year period.

1. FA Junior Team Managers

For Managers and Coaches of Club Teams aged 7-16 years of age, as well as prospective candidates for the FA Coaching Certificate, Youth Leaders and prospective Youth Leaders, Colleges of FE students, and CCPR CSLA students (Minimum age - 16 years).

The course addressed common problems in team management, as well as providing information on developing fitness; understanding normal physical development; adaptation of training to normal development curves; first-aid and risk management; benefits of mini-soccer for new players; games and drills to teach soccer skills to youth players.

2. FA Coaching Certificate

Candidates (minimum 17 years of age) who have had some experience of regular football participation - at any level - and wish to become more committed to coaching football particularly to players from 7 to 14 years of age. In the course, candidates are taught to coach the basic skills and techniques, and shown how to teach the principles of attack and defence through the use of practices and small sided games. They also are introduced to the elements involved in the coaching process, as well as taught to plan, conduct and evaluate a series of sessions in a systematic and progressive manner. Finally, they are taught team management skills, including first-aid and risk management. Initial course of training 50 contact hours; Final training and assessment 10 contact hours.

3. FA Coaching Licence (UEFA B Award)

This course is offered to those who have the FA Coaching Certificate, or those with the FA Preliminary Coaching Award who, by the end of this course of Training and Assessment, have successfully undertaken an emergency Aid Course (Equivalent); satisfactorily completed the worksheets from the FA Coaching Certificate; satisfactorily completed the requirements of the recorded coaching in the Log Book for the FA Coaching Certificate.

The course teaches coaches how to train players in advanced individual techniques, group skills, principles of players; develop a deeper understanding of the coaching process, and the particular needs of teenagers

and young; and learn to plan and prepare coaching sessions in relation to a match programme (including evaluation, correction and adjustments needed). Finally, the course focuses on team management and risk management issues.

The Initial Course of training is 46 contact hours. Final training Assessment is 14 contact hours.

Special Notes on English Mini-Soccer

Small sided football will become mandatory for all children at all levels up to and including Year 5 (under 10's). This will encourage a four year structure of mini-soccer from the under 7 age range and provide a more enjoyable and lasting introduction to football for the hundreds and thousands of youngsters involved.

The FACA believes that mini-soccer provides a number of benefits to younger players, including: More touches of the ball, more participation, more enjoyment; Fewer players on the pitch, simpler decisions, better understanding; Smaller pitches, greater concentration, more interest; More individual success, more children playing, sustained participation levels beyond 10 years old.

Canada

Introduction to Canada's National Coaching Certification Program and the Canadian Soccer Association Program

National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP)

	Theory	Technical	Practical	Certified
Level One	X	X	X	X
Level Two				
Level Three				
Level Four				
Level Five				

The program is structured on five levels and presents coaches with the Theoretical, Technical and Practical aspects of coaching. Theory courses are sponsored by the Provincial governments across the country and relate detailed information on such topics as leadership, motivation, training and teaching methods, etc., common to coaches in all sports. The Technical courses are offered by the National/Provincial Sport Associations and present the specific skills, drills and tactics of a particular sport in a progressive, logical sequence. The Practical component of the program consists of actual on-the-field coaching where the principles learned in Theory and Technical are practically applied by coaches working with their athletes. When a coach completes all three components of a level, that coach becomes formally certified.

The Canadian Soccer Association Coaching Program

The National Coaching Certification Program forms the basis of the CSA's Coaching Program.

	Theory	Technical			Practical	Certified
		C	Y	S		
Level One	X		X		X	X
Level Two						
Level Three					C Licence	
Level Four	B Licence Program					
Level Five	A Licence Program					

In order to provide coaches with specific and relevant technical/tactical information based on the physiological and psychological growth and development patterns of players, the Technical component has been divided into three streams:

Children's Soccer: for coaches of players 6-10 years old

Youth Soccer: for coaches of players 11-16 years old
Senior Soccer: for coaches of players 17 years and older

The Youth and Senior streams are in effect up to and including Level 3, while the Children's stream is in effect up to and including Level 2. In order to enter the Coaching Program, each coach must choose a stream based on the age of the players with which he/she works. A coach working with 14-year-old players, for instance, would take the Level 1 Youth course and upon completion of the Practical and Theory components would be certified as a level 1 Youth Coach. That same coach would then proceed to Level 2 Youth and so on up to Level 3. A coach may remain in a particular coaching stream for as long as he/she is working with players within that particular age group. If, however, the coach decides to work with children or senior players he/she should work through the appropriate coaching stream beginning at Level 1 in order to gain full certification as a Children's or Senior Coach.

Those with a strong background in soccer, who have performed at the elite level (i.e. National Team, Provincial Team, Professional, semi-professional and Division 1 Senior Amateur Provincial League) may apply for exemption from Level 1 and Level 2 Technical/Practical and may enter the program at Level 3 as part of the elite stream. Coaches accepted into the elite stream must complete the Level 1-3 Theory components before entry into the 'C' Licence course will be permitted. The CSA requires that coaches reach a minimum standard of competence in a practical coaching environment. Each coach is, therefore, formally assessed and graded by Staff Instructors as part of the course. This process begins with the Level 3 Practical course which is designated the 'C' Licence. The 'A' and 'B' Licence programs are designed for high performance coaches and cater to those wishing to make a career of coaching at the highest level.

Updated 8 April 1999

Individual and Team Equipment for Training Sessions and Games

Individual Equipment

From Day One, coaches should insist that players (and parents) be responsible for bringing the following items to all soccer games and training sessions:

Shoes

- molded cleats or turf shoes. Basketball/tennis shoes are acceptable alternatives for very young players or on hard dry ground. Baseball/football cleats are not.

Shinguards

- for all contact soccer activities. All leagues require them for games.

Ball

- #3, 4, or 5 depending on age. A rubber/plastic ball is acceptable, but a stitched synthetic leather ball feels more user friendly. Write your name on it with a permanent marker and bring it to every practice. Take responsibility for pumping it up - about the same pressure as a basketball.

Water bottle

- even in cool weather. Eight ounces every 20 minutes is a good rule of thumb.

Clothing

- official team jersey, shorts, socks for games. Additional garments worn underneath uniform in cold weather should be the same color. Bring extra layers in cool weather for both games and practice. For training sessions, a white top is preferred unless you're lucky enough to have reversible game jerseys. No baseball caps.

Small equipment/travel bag

- to carry these personal items.

Team Equipment

The following team equipment items are listed more or less in order of importance:

1. Coach's first-aid kit
2. Cell phone
(For medical emergencies and "I'm late/I'm lost" calls. You can get one for about \$11/month from AAA.)
3. Medical release forms
(Keep them in a ziplock bag at all games, practices, tournaments, etc., along with other official paperwork, such as rosters and player passes, where appropriate.)
4. Balls
(Use #3, 4, or 5 depending on what your league uses. Coach should carry a #5 for demonstration purposes. Many activities will require one ball for each player.)
5. Ball pump

(with needle attached to flexible tubing so kids can use it without breaking needles.)

6. Net ball bag
7. Pinnies, practice bibs or tank tops
(to distinguish one group of players from another during drills, small-sided games, etc.); you can make your own.
8. Cones
A couple of dozen 7" flat cones in a variety of colors to mark areas; eight 11" flat cones for corners, small goals, and shooting targets. Don't buy taller lightweight rigid cones; they are easily knocked over and can cause injury.
9. GK gloves and jersey
The latter must be a different color than the players' jerseys. Pinnies are a nice substitute for the jersey, especially for younger players where GK changes during games are more frequent.
10. Clipboard/dry erase board with soccer field on the back
Large magnetic board (commercial or recycled dryer door) with small magnets simulating players give an even clearer picture.
11. Office supplies
Dry erase markers, pencils, pens, index cards, plain paper, computer printouts for easy reference to training session plans, game lineups, tactical ideas. Peel-apart clear plastic sheets available at office supply stores allow you to laminate essential paperwork for rainy days.
12. Large equipment bag
13. Hair elastics (for making pony tails)
14. Watch with stopwatch feature
To keep training session, pre-game activities, and game substitutions on schedule.
15. Whistle
In case a volunteer referee is needed on game day (but don't use it for training sessions)
16. Velcro strips
For attaching nets to goal
17. Duct tape
To repair shoes, hold up socks, etc., but not for attaching nets to goal. They're too easily damaged.
18. Corner flag
For corners and adjustable width small-sided goals and gates. Start with four; eight is even better. Avoid the kind with 1/4" multiple-bend steel points that are friction fit into thin PVC pipe. They come loose, get lost, and destroy lawnmower blades . . . or worse. Consider making your own.
19. PUGG goals
Lightweight, easy to set up, collapse to fit into your trunk. A step up from large cones for small-sided goals at a modest cost.
20. Coerver goal
A portable goal that can be shot at from either side. Where practice field goals are permanently located, the full-sized version can create a shorter field for small-sided games with goalies. A good long-term investment.
21. Nets
For scrimmages and shooting games.

A portable rebound surface made of 2 X 12s or plywood is highly recommended for individual training at home and can be used for occasional team training if you have access to a pickup truck.

Updated 2 April 1999

Easy Plans to Make Your Own Pinnies (Practice Bibs)

NB: These have about as many names as there are coaches. We've heard them called 'bibs', 'vests', 'pinnies', 'pennies' and 'pennigs'. They are like a loose tank top in a bright colour designed to be worn over whatever a player wears to practice. In warm climates, they can be worn over bare skin or a t-shirt; where it's cold, they may need to be made big enough to fit over a sweatshirt and warm-up jacket. They also will need periodic washing!

If you purchase ready-made pinnies, they will cost about \$5 each. For coaches who have limited funds, it is very easy to make enough pinnies for an entire team for around \$5-8 total.

To do this, you will need to purchase cloth which is 60 inches wide and cut it down the center fold (so that you have two strips which are 30 inches wide). You are going to cut the cloth into 15 x 30 inch rectangles (i.e. you will get two pinnies per each 15 in length x 60 in wide portion of your original cloth). So, your first step is to decide how many pinnies you want - as this will govern the length of cloth which you will buy. For example, to get 12 pinnies, you will need 90 inches of fabric (2.5 yards).

In general, you will want at least the same number of pinnies as you will field players for a game (i.e., if you play 11 v 11, make 12 pinnies - as you are bound to lose a few). In addition, it is useful in intra-team scrimmages to have an extra set of pinnies to distinguish one group from another. You only need around 6 or so of these contrasting pinnies. So, if you want 12 pinnies of one color, and 6 of a contrasting color, you would buy 2.5 yards of the primary color and 1.25 yards of the other color.

What type of material should you buy? Something which is light-weight, doesn't fray much, and is durable. Cheap woven polyester double-knit works nicely, and often can be purchased on Final Discount tables for around \$2/yard. Be sure to get "loud" colors which are easily visible.

How do you make them? After cutting the material down the center fold, put one long strip over the other. Cut every 15 inches or so (obviously, kids come in different sizes, so you may need to make a bit larger or smaller, depending on your team size).

You will then have a stack of pinnies which are 15 inches wide by 30 inches long. Taking two pieces of material at a time, fold in half (so that dimensions are 15x15). Now, all that you need to do is to cut a neck hole. Usually, works fine to cut a semi-circle out of the folded cloth which is about 7 inches wide and about 3 inches deep.

If the fabric tends to fray a bit, it is easy to run a quick hem around the edges and neck hole by just folding over the edges and running a quick seam. Otherwise, you can just use "as is".

You can sew some elastic or some fabric ties (bias tape works well) to the sides, if you want to keep the sides from flapping. However, the pinnies work fine without this extra effort, and the ties do make it more likely that they will rip. Before you go to this trouble, you may want to use the pinnies for a few weeks and ask the kids for their opinions.

They probably will vote "no", since most kids love to experiment with ways to wear pinnies (and will view extra ties as getting in the way of turning the pinnies into turbans, capes, etc.).

All in all, not a bad expenditure of \$5-8 (especially when you also can use a pinny as a keeper jersey in very hot weather - or to cover a jacket in very cold weather).

Updated 1 November 1998

Sample Forms for Coaches

This is a collection of some typical forms that coaches will need to use over the course of a season. These are included here merely as examples, and you should feel free to modify them in any way that seems useful or appropriate to you, since your needs will almost certainly vary from those of each form's original designer, and in any case some of these forms may be superseded by material provided by your own club or association.

You may wish to include whatever material you decide on as part of an information package to be distributed at your preseason meeting.

Samples of the following forms are included here:

1. Player information sheet
2. Parent information sheet
3. List of team rules
4. Player agreement
5. Medical authorization and release
6. Practice and game checklist for players
7. Sample practice schedule
8. Uniform sign-up sheet
9. Sample game schedule

PLAYER INFORMATION SHEET

Name:

Positions Played Last Two Seasons and How Often:

Goals Scored/Assists In Last Two Seasons:

Positions which I would like to play this year:

List Soccer Camps/Private Coaching in Last Two Years:

My strongest soccer skills are:

What types of soccer skills do you think that you need more help on?

How many games/practices did you miss in your last season? Why?

Have you tried out for a competitive team or do you want to play competitive soccer at some point:

What did you like the most about your last soccer coach?

What did you like the least about your last soccer coach?

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

Name:

Phone # (Work/Home:

Child's Name:

Have you played soccer?

Have you been coach/asst. coach of any soccer teams:

Areas in which I am willing to help the team: (Check Boxes)

Making phone calls for cancelled games/practices

Helping supervise at practice

How often:

Helping make practice jerseys

Serving as Team Mom/Dad

Assisting Team Mom/Dad

Describe the personality of your child and the best ways that you have found to motivate him.

Does your child have any disorders (such as hyperactivity) which can create disciplinary problems? If so, PLEASE give medication before practice/games, and please list the best ways you have found to deal with these problems:

TEAM RULES

1. Players must call if they will miss practice.
2. If a player misses practice during the week, he must make arrangements with coach for skills work to do at home to cover areas missed.
3. Team line-ups for games are prepared on Friday evenings before each game. Players must advise by 8:00 pm on Friday if the player will be unable to make game. **Note:** If player looks questionable due to illness or injury, please call in order to allow back-up plan if player is unavailable.
4. Players are expected to show positive attitudes, and to follow directions given by coaches. The coaches will not permit whining, grumbling, horse-play, or other disruptive acts during games or practices.
5. Players must show courtesy towards teammates at all times. Coaches will not permit name-calling, teasing, criticizing or other acts designed to hurt feelings or cause injury.
6. All players must be willing to play all positions, and follow the assignments given by coaches. Over the season, every player will be on both defense and offense. The attitude of "I'm too good to play defense" is silly. All good players need such skills.
7. All players will be assigned about 15 minutes/day of homework on specific soccer skills. Please encourage players to practice at home - this is the only way that they will improve their skills.
8. Failure to follow Team Rules, and abide by the Player Agreement, may result in appropriate discipline (including reduced playing time). For severe and uncorrected problems, players could be asked to leave the team - although we hope this never happens.
9. During games, players are expected to show courtesy to opponents and to referees. The decision of the referee is binding, so don't whine over bad calls.
10. Parents should avoid any taunting of opponents or disagreement with the referees, in order to teach sportsmanship to our kids. All communications to our child or teammates should be general and positive ("Good pass", "Nice kick", "Way to go"). Please avoid giving coaching instructions or criticizing your child.

PLAYER AGREEMENT

I am making the following promises to my coach and to my other team-mates as a part of my participation on the [insert team name] Soccer Team.

1. I have read the Team Rules, and I promise to do my best to follow them.
2. I promise to work hard at practice, and to follow the instructions of my coaches.
3. I promise to do my soccer homework assignments so that I can improve my skills and become a better soccer player.
4. I promise to call my Coach if I cannot make a practice or attend a game, and I also promise to call my Coach promptly if I have any questions, complaints or problems about anything relating to the Team.

Signature of Player

MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE

In connection with the participation of my son/daughter, *[insert player's name]*, on the *[insert team name]* Soccer Team, affiliated with the *[insert club name]* Soccer Club, this is to authorize the Team Coaches (*[insert coach's name]* or his/her designee) to consent to the rendering of any medical treatment which they consider to be appropriate, in the event that my child is injured or becomes ill during practices, games or other team activities. This is to further authorize any hospital, physician, emergency medical technician or other health care provider to provide such medical treatment and care as may be required for the health, safety and well-being of my child. I hereby release any claims which I might otherwise have against any such health care provider for the rendition of medical services to my child in reliance upon this Medical Authorization. I likewise release any claims which I might otherwise have against the *[insert club name]* Soccer Club, any Team Coaches or their designees for the authorization of such medical care or treatment for my child as any of the Team Coaches believe to be warranted under the circumstances.

I understand and agree that I will be financially responsible for all charges incurred in connection with such medical treatment. List name/address/phone number/Group or Policy Number of health care insurance carrier:

I further acknowledge that I have been advised that participation in soccer is inherently risky; that participation in this sport involves vigorous physical activity and hard physical contact; and that participants have been known to sustain serious or fatal injuries/illnesses in this sport. I hereby represent that my child is physically fit to participate in this sport. I understand and agree to release and indemnify *[insert club name]* Soccer Club and any of the Team coaches in the event of any injury or illness of my child arising out of his participation in Team activities.

My child's regular family doctor is:

Phone:

His/Her dentist is:

Phone:

Other doctors of my child are:
(Please list specialty).

My child has the following drug allergies:

My child is taking the following medications:

and has the following medical conditions:

Emergency contacts in the event that I cannot be located are:

Date
Parent/Guardian
Evening/Weekend Phone:

PRACTICE AND GAMES

A. PRACTICE

BRING EQUIPMENT BAG AND THE FOLLOWING TO EVERY PRACTICE:

1. One-half gallon or larger water jug
2. Large towel to sit on for stretches
3. Small towel/washcloth (if desired) for drying off
4. Soccer ball - Size 4 (stitched are better than molded)
5. Old pair of pull-on pants for tackling practice
6. Shin guards (mandatory)

PLEASE LABEL ALL EQUIPMENT & BAGS WITH NAME OF PLAYER

ARRIVE PROMPTLY FOR PRACTICE

IF RUNNING LATE, DO WARM-UP AND STRETCHES BEFOREHAND

B. GAMES

ALL PLAYERS MUST ARRIVE 20 MINUTES BEFORE SCHEDULED GAME TIME IN ORDER TO DO WARM-UPS, STRETCHES, AND OBTAIN GAME LINEUPS

1. Players must wear the team uniform for games.
2. Players must wear soccer shoes (no toe cleats) and shin guards.
3. Remove all jewelry, watches, earrings, chains.
4. Bring water jug and equipment bag (see above).
5. If assigned day to bring half-time or ending snacks, players will need to bring this to bench area.
 - Suggested half-time snacks are fruit (such as grapes and orange slices). Please bring paper towels or washrag in Ziploc bag to clean off hands afterwards. Suggested ending snacks are cans of pop or cartons of juice (with cookies or small candy).
6. Most games will be played at [*insert name of facility*], located [*insert location*]. However, some games may be at other locations, to be announced after we get game schedule.

SAMPLE PRACTICE SCHEDULE

5:45-5:50: Roll call. Hand-in homework sheets.

5:50-6:10: Warm-up, stretches, individual skills work.

6:10-6:30: Small-group activities/contests

6:30-6:35: Water Break

6:35-6:50: Large-group activities/contests

6:50-7:10: Scrimmage

7:10-7:15: Homework assignments; individual discussions

7:15: Practice ends

Notes

1. Please pick up players promptly. Coach has to stay at field until all players are picked up.
2. Please advise coaches of any carpool arrangements, so that we can contact the appropriate person if problems arise during practice (such as bad weather) where practice needs to end early or where player has nonserious injury (such as sprain/strain) and needs early pickup.
3. If weather conditions are questionable for practice, please call [*insert number here*]. We will try to have a recorded announcement available if practice is cancelled.
4. If you will be picking up player(s), please keep a "weather eye" out in the event of approaching storms during practice, and start heading for fields if storms appear to be approaching. Club rules (as well as common sense) do not permit players on field if there is nearby lightning.
5. There are no adjacent buildings where we can take cover so we will need to try to cram players into any available cars if there is a sudden storm which requires us to take cover.

UNIFORM SIGN-UP SHEET

Note: Numbers are picked in the order that you sign up. Please check list before picking a number. If two players ask me for a number at the same time, I will draw straws or flip a coin.

[Record numbers, sizes, etc. and have players initial to show that they received the uniforms in good condition. If some parts of the uniform may be kept by the player while others must be returned, this should be clearly indicated on the sheet.]

SAMPLE GAME SCHEDULE

GAME SCHEDULE: *[insert team name here]*

Please arrive at least 20 minutes before game time, to do warm-ups and get lineup instructions. Bring water bottle; wear uniform and regulation soccer shoes (no toe cleats); and bring ball (clearly marked with name). Players bringing refreshments will serve as Team Captains for the game.

If you are scheduled for refreshments, and cannot make the game for some reason, it is your responsibility to trade with someone else on the list. Appropriate half-time snacks are orange slices, grapes or other fruit. End of game snacks are usually a can of pop or juice and (optional) a candy bar for each player. We have ten players on the team. Games will be on the U10 fields at the south end of the complex, either field 23 or 24. Please note that we will switch fields from week to week, so the field is indicated below.

[insert information about dates, times, locations, opponents and special responsibilities such as provision of snacks]

Updated 7 April 1999

Medical Information for Soccer Coaches

- _ Introduction
- _ The Basics for All Coaches
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- _ Returning from Injury
- _ The First Aid Kit
- _ General Injury Categories
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 - ◆ Strains and sprains
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 - _ Hypothermia
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 - _ Lightning
- _ Injuries to Specific Anatomical Regions
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 - ◆ Lower extremities

Introduction

If you are an experienced physician, paramedic, nurse, or other medical personnel, then this section is probably not for you. The truth is that most coaches have no formal medical training, and yet, it is often the coach who is on the 'front line' for handling injuries in any sports activity. A youth coach should be prepared to deal with simple injuries, recognize more serious injuries, and work with the child following return from injury. This may entail taking first aid classes and basic CPR classes (an excellent idea for all youth sports). In addition, coaches should always have copies of the medical release forms that most clubs use with them at all times. Besides insurance information and emergency numbers, these forms should have information on any medical conditions that the child has such as medication allergies, asthma, cardiac conditions, etc.

The following information is meant to provide guidelines for the youth soccer coach in dealing with some of the problems that may arise during the course of a season.

The Basics for All Coaches

By far the most useful item in your coaching bag of tricks will be commonsense. If you are uncertain about the severity of an injury, **CALL FOR HELP!** Remember that this is a game, not life or death. If the player is not responsive or is not in control of themselves, don't play around -- get help immediately! Your best bet is to have someone get to a phone and call your local emergency number.

Unless the injury is obviously severe, walk to the player. Younger children may dramatize the amount of pain they are feeling and the sight of an adult in full flight rushing to their side, may inadvertently send a signal that, by golly, they really are badly hurt. Remember that no one may enter the field without the referee's permission, including the

coach, assistants, and parents. Wait until the referee's signal before coming out to check on the player. Be aware that most parents do not know this nicety and want you out there NOW. (A little parental education early in the season may save you a lot of aggravation down the road.) On your way out, instruct everyone to get 10 yards away from the injured - this is a fairly common request in soccer and it's a command most can respond to automatically. On the way out, calm yourself and avoid feelings of panic - now is the time to be cool and in control; afterwards, you can 'go to pieces' but now your players need you to be coldly analytical. Just because you're not a medical professional does not mean that you can't ACT like one. The "pros" first talk, look and listen -- you should never grab an injured person and move them right away. NEVER try to assist or move an injured player unless they are moving themselves and have demonstrated that they are doing so without crippling pain. Make this apply to everyone else without parental or emergency medical personnel involvement. Pain is a real blessing in injury cases since it will tell the injured when they are going too far. Let the injured person get themselves up on their own -- a serious injury will usually cause enough pain to keep the person from doing themselves anymore harm. If the player is responsive, talk calmly to them and ask them where it hurts or what happened. Getting the player calm enough to talk to and examine is one of the most important (and hardest) things you must accomplish. If the injury is a cut or scrape, you usually know the site and severity by inspection. However, if there is no visible injury, ask where it hurts. With younger children, be prepared for a vague waving of the hand covering anywhere from a quarter to half of the body. Ask them to point with one finger where it hurts the most. This should narrow the search down to a reasonable area.

Things to look for are:

1. bleeding wounds
2. an abnormal condition of the eyes
3. 'odd' looking arms, legs, or neck

If you see any of these signs, you need to involve the parent(s)/guardian(s) and call for 911 for help - but you are still not done. If bleeding is continuing freely (particularly if it is actually spurting), you'll have to take some basic steps to stop or control the bleeding. As you put on plastic gloves, tell the player that you are putting them on for the player's protection, and then apply clean gauze or bandages over the wound, applying gentle but firm pressure on the wound. If the eyes look abnormal, then shock is a possibility; if possible, gently elevate the legs and cover the player with coats/blankets/etc to keep them warm. If the neck looks 'odd', do not move the player but try to keep them warm. If an arm or leg looks 'odd' this is a sign of a possible serious broken bone, so movement should be minimal, but you can start with "RICE".

"RICE" is an acronym that is easy to remember but helps one recall what to do for most injuries:

- **Rest**
- **Ice**
- **Compression**
- **Elevation**

"**Rest**" means keeping the injured relaxed and warm, usually lying down, and keeping the injured area still. If the weather is nasty, take steps to shelter the player, and if possible, get a coat or tarp tucked gently underneath them.

"**Ice**" is straight forward - apply an ice pack (or ice inside a cloth) to the injury to minimize swelling.

"**Compression**" means to apply gentle pressure to keep bleeding under control - note that internal bleeding is what causes swelling, so the same idea works for both. In the case where there is no external bleeding, a gentle but firm wrap with an elastic bandage will help control the swelling.

"**Elevation**" is also straightforward - the usual rule of thumb is to get the injured area higher than the heart. Remember to let the player do most of the moving; in most cases, folding a coat or blanket a couple of times and sliding that underneath is all you want to do.

Even in the 'scrape' cases, you want to use "RICE". Make it a point to talk to the parents - ask them to watch for any complications. If the effects of the injury are not completely gone by the end of the game, recommend that they call their family physician. As a coach, there are only a few people to whom you can transfer responsibility for injury

care - duly authorized medical personnel and the injured player's parent or guardian. The duly authorized medical personnel are a dispatched emergency care unit or hospital/treatment center, and not another parent or spectator even if they happen to be a doctor. Get parents involved early.

When a Player Is Injured

We often neglect to teach our players what to do in case of an injury to themselves, their teammates, or their opponents. Often the referee may not see the incident or know that a player is injured. Even if they do witness the event, they may decide that it is not severe enough to warrant immediate stoppage of the game. Typically they will allow play to continue until advantage is lost. Injured players should be instructed to sit, kneel, or lie down. Teammates should call "player down" to inform the referee. If the injury appears significant (and this is completely a judgment call) the team in possession should kick the ball out of bounds, point to the injured player, and tell the referee, "player down". Good sportsmanship suggests that the ball be returned to the team that intentionally kicked it out by throwing it to their end and allowing them to receive the ball.

Returning from Injury

A child who is injured and complains of pain should NOT be pushed back into playing. By the same token, if you are concerned regarding an injury, don't let the players 'talk' you into playing them. A general rule of thumb for an injured player to return to competition is: 1) the player wants to continue; 2) they must demonstrate a full, active range of motion of the affected part on the sideline; and 3) the player must demonstrate the ability to perform age appropriate skills at competition speed on the sideline prior to returning to play. In the case of significant injury (including illness), you should require both parental and medical approval before allowing the child to resume practice. This is not meant to protect you from possible litigation but to ensure that the player has received proper, qualified attention to the injury. (It's also important to remember that referees have discretion on allowing kids to play with limb casts and braces so you should check in advance if at all possible to avoid any surprises.)

The First Aid Kit

Every coach has his or her own opinion on what is essential in a First Aid Kit. The essentials would certainly include disposable gloves, Band-Aids, gauze, tape and antiseptic. Additional items may be included according to your personal preference. A bag or container to keep things organized is very helpful. A plastic school lunch box makes an excellent container and is very affordable. In general it is cheaper in the long term to buy items individually rather than pre-made kits available in stores.

General Injury Categories

Lacerations

Any bleeding wound requires that the player be removed from the field and the injury be covered prior to returning to play. The coach should put on disposable gloves prior to examining the wound, for protection of him/herself and the player (there are many diseases, such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS, which can be transmitted via blood-to-blood contact). The wound should be cleaned with gauze and clean water so the severity can be determined. Large cuts or gaping wounds that likely require stitches should be covered and the player sent to an appropriate medical facility. Minor cuts or scrapes can be cleaned and bandaged and the player may be permitted to return to play.

If there is **active bleeding**, apply a dressing to the site and put firm pressure on the dressing. If possible, elevate the site of bleeding. If the dressing becomes saturated, apply another ON TOP of the first dressing and continue to apply pressure. Any wound that will not stop bleeding or has bright red, pulsating blood requires prompt medical treatment. Never use a tourniquet.

Strains and Sprains

Technically, sprains deal with joints while strains deal with muscles. Treatment for each injury, however, is similar in the acute phase. Use the "RICE" principles. Remove the player from the field and have them relax. Apply "ice" either in the form of an ice bag or using one of the disposable, chemical ice packs that will conform to the surface they are applied to. Ice should not be placed directly on the skin. Use a towel or a t-shirt for protection and remove the ice after 10 to 15 minutes for 5 minutes before reapplying. Use some form of wrap to apply "compression" (and to hold the ice in place) but don't apply too tightly. As swelling occurs, this can cause a tourniquet effect and inhibit blood flow past the compression site. If possible, "elevate" the injured part. If there is no significant pain or swelling and the player feels able to play, they may return to the game. They should be observed, however, for any limitation of movement or obvious pain and removed from the game at first opportunity.

Fractures and Dislocations

In the event of an obvious fracture or dislocation, the player should immediately be sent to an appropriate medical facility. DO NOT attempt to re-set a fracture (realign the bones) or relocate a dislocation. You may make the injury worse. Try to stabilize the injured limb as best as possible. If the player cannot move or is in too much pain, call for help. Emergency technicians are trained in the proper way to transport and stabilize patients.

Environmental Causes

Nature has a number of nasty tricks to play on soccer players and spectators. In the fall and winter, it can be cold and wet. The temptation is to bundle up and wear sweat pants and sweatshirts under the uniform. As the player sweats, however, these clothes become saturated. As the sweat evaporates, it can actually increase the cooling effect on the skin by the cold air. If it is not too cold, it is better to eliminate the heavy undergarments and dry the skin with towels when the player comes off the field to minimize the evaporative, cooling effect. Mild **hypothermia** can be recognized by involuntary shivering, cold hands or cold feet. This is treated by drying the skin, adding layers of dry clothing, and finding shelter.

Moderate hypothermia is characterized by violent shivering, loss of fine motor coordination (can't tie shoes or zip coat), and mild confusion. This can be treated the same way as mild hypothermia. Be sure to keep the player (or spectator!) hydrated. Hot liquids provide internal heat as well as a "fuel source" in the sugar or fats they might contain.

In severe hypothermia shivering stops. Movements are uncoordinated, and there may be loss of consciousness. This is a medical emergency and you should call for help immediately.

Frost nip refers to freezing of the top layers of skin and is generally reversible. The top layers are waxy, white and hard but the deeper tissues are still soft. This is mostly seen on cheeks, earlobes, fingers, and toes. Re-warm the area by blowing warm air on it or placing it against a warm body part (stomach or armpits). Frostbite means the skin is frozen all the way through. Skin is white and "wooden" feeling with numbness. To re-warm, place the body part in a water bath of 105 to 110 degrees F. Do not add replacement warm water directly to injury. Immerse for 25 to 40 minutes. Thawing is complete when sensation and color have returned and skin is pliable. There can be significant pain when the area is re-warmed. Do not rub the area. Any ice crystals that have formed in the cells can tear the walls and worsen the injury! Do not use alcohol (increases heat loss), caffeine (it causes water loss), or tobacco (nicotine cause the blood vessels to constrict).

The other extreme is **heat stroke and heat exhaustion**. Perspiration cools the body by evaporation and helps keep the internal temperature normal. Heat exhaustion occurs when the body sweats too much causing dehydration and salt loss. This in turn produces cramps, dizziness, vomiting, clammy skin, flushed complexion, and weak pulse. The player should be moved to a shady, cool area and given liquids. In heat stroke, the player stops sweating, the skin is hot and dry, and the pulse may be pounding. Confusion,

seizures, and loss of consciousness may occur. Immediately call for an ambulance, move the victim to a cool, shaded area, and sponge with cool water.

Bug bites and stings are another common problem. If a stinger is visible, it should be removed with tweezers or the edge of a credit card. Ice can be re-applied to bites or stings for pain control. On rare occasion, an individual may be allergic to stings and develop hives, wheezing, or complain that their throat is closing. This is an emergency and requires help immediately. Some coaches (or players) carry a bee sting allergy kit (available in pharmacies) if they know they have an allergic individual on the team. Be sure you know-how to use it ahead of time!

Perhaps the most common weather related problem is **lightning**. The best way to deal with lightning is planning and prevention. Know where safe shelters are. These include enclosed vehicles with the windows up, enclosed buildings, and low ground. DO NOT stand near metallic objects such as fences, flag poles, bleachers, and gates. Stay away from trees, water, and open fields. Two of the most dangerous times for a fatal lightning strike are before the storm arrives and after the storm has passed. Lightning may travel as far as 10 km horizontally from the thunderhead, reaching the ground some distance ahead (or behind) the storm clouds. Every five seconds between the flash of light and the sound of thunder is approximately 1 mile. So when the flash and bang are separated by 15 seconds or less, it is time to seek shelter. Make sure to allow for time to reach the shelter. Plan on waiting at least 30 minutes after the storm has passed before resuming outdoor activities. If an individual should be "struck" by lightning, they do not carry an electric charge and it is safe to touch them. The most dangerous problem is cardiac arrest (the heart stops beating). Call for help and begin immediate CPR. In any event the victim should go to an emergency room since there can be some subtle and delayed reactions to a lightning strike.

Injuries to Specific Anatomic Regions

Head Injuries

Head injuries range from bumps to cuts to nosebleeds. Scalp lacerations can bleed profusely (accentuated if it is raining) and often require stitches. The more serious problems, however, are difficult to see since they occur inside the head, affecting the brain. Bumps and bangs to the head require observation mostly. Ice may be used to limit the swelling. The player should be examined by qualified medical personnel if there was loss of consciousness, disorientation or confusion, bleeding from the ear, unequal pupils, or inability of the eyes to follow movement of your finger. Severe headaches are also a danger sign, but it is difficult in children to quantify the severity of a headache. Unconscious players should not be moved since a spine injury cannot be ruled out. Do not use ammonia capsules to "bring them around" since the quick movements of the head to get away from the inhalant can cause more injury. Be sure to check that the player is breathing and has a pulse. If not, call for help and begin CPR.

Nosebleeds can be frightening to small children. Apply pressure to both sides of the nose, and ice to the bridge of the nose, and hold for 2 to 5 minutes. Do not tilt the head back since this allows the blood to drip down the back of the throat and may make them feel as though they are choking. If bleeding cannot be stopped, or there is a suspicion that the nose is broken, seek medical attention.

Foreign bodies in the eye are common especially on windy days. Do not rub the eye since this can scratch the cornea. If the player can cooperate, the eye can be gently rinsed with water. In general, the tearing action will wash away the offending particle. If the player continues to complain of a feeling that there is something in the eye even though there is nothing visible, it is possible that their cornea was scratched and they should seek medical attention.

Cuts inside the mouth may occur and are usually not severe although some may require stitches. It is recommended that players use mouth guards, particularly children with braces since these can cut severely.

If a permanent tooth is knocked out: 1) handle it by the top (crown), not the root; 2) rinse it in clean water; and 3) try to reinsert the tooth into its socket (have the player hold the tooth in place by biting down on a clean gauze). If the tooth cannot be reinserted, wrap it in a clean gauze wet with water or milk, and immediately seek dental care (on occasion, teeth can be reinserted into the jaw).

Neck and Spine

The rule of thumb with any potential damage to the neck or remainder of the spine is to assume the worst. Never force a player to move, or try to move them if they cannot or will not move themselves. Call for help immediately. Do not move the player yourself!

Upper Extremities

The majority of injuries tend to be scrapes and cuts. However, broken bones (particularly about the wrist) and dislocations (especially involving the fingers and shoulders) also do occur. If in doubt regarding the severity of an injury, always err on the side of caution.

Groin

Prevention is worth more than a pound of cure in this case. Male players should wear an athletic support and cup. If an injury does occur, most are limited to pain and discomfort. Marked swelling and persistent pain indicate a need for medical examination

Lower Extremities

Once again cuts and scrapes are the predominant injury, especially about the knee. Sprained ankles are also common. The player should rest, ice the ankle region, and elevate the foot. It is probably best to leave the shoe on to minimize the swelling. If the pain subsides and the player is willing, they may return to the game. Persistent pain, marked swelling, or obvious deformity suggest a fracture and require medical attention.

Knee injuries including cruciate ligament tears are more common in the older age groups. Significant swelling or persistent pain indicates a need for an exam by qualified medical personnel.

Players often complain of pain in the heel after playing on hard ground. This is probably caused by repeated pounding as the foot hits the ground and the force is transmitted through the studs of the cleats. New shoes are changing the stud pattern to try and relieve this problem. Alternatively, heel cups or additional cushioning may help. Some players use "turf" shoes when playing on hard, compacted surfaces to avoid this problem.

Blisters are extremely common. They can be avoided, to a certain extent, by wearing well-fitted shoes, keeping the feet dry and wearing good quality socks. Do not tear away the skin covering a blister, it protects the new, tender skin underneath it. NU-Skin can be used to make a plastic bandage over the skin for blister prevention. If you must "pop" a blister, use a sterile needle. Moleskin can be used on the area around the blister (not on the blister) to prevent further irritation.

Updated 7 April 1999

Risk Management Tips for Coaches

Even if your club or organization offers insurance against lawsuits by injured players, no coach wants to spend needless uncompensated hours in litigation - or deal with the personal anguish if a player is seriously hurt. Here are some basic risk-management tips which will help you to avoid such problems.

1. Properly plan the activity, and teach skills in a 'reasonable' progression. Avoid teaching advanced skills too quickly, or pushing players to do things that they are not reasonably capable of doing without risk to themselves or others.
 - develop a season plan
 - observe players to determine physical capacity and skill level
 - develop written practice plans
 - adapt your plans to individual needs
 - don't deviate from your plans without good cause
 - keep records of your plans
2. Provide proper instruction so players learn to execute skills correctly. Be sure to warn of the risks to self and others if the skill is not done properly.
 - keep abreast of current instructional standards for your sport and use them
 - teach skills with customary methods of your sport and the development level of your athletes
 - make your instructions clear, complete, and consistent
3. Proper conditioning and training will also help prevent injury. Stretching is a good habit to begin at the younger age groups, and should be mandatory.
4. Provide a safe physical environment--you have a duty to notice hazards and to do what you can to reduce their risk (i.e., place a bright colored cloth over a protruding rock on a practice field).
 - note and remedy hazardous conditions through regular inspections
 - change any dangerous conditions that you can
 - give clear practice rules to avoid injury
 - ensure players wear shin guards for all practices and games
 - make players remove all jewelry
 - monitor the weather carefully and take steps to insure player safety including wearing appropriate clothing
 - do not stay outdoors when lightning is nearby, and have contingency plans for weather problems
 - do not allow children to climb on goals or hang from goals
 - make certain that portable goals are anchored
 - consider obtaining a cellular phone to make emergency calls
5. Provide adequate and proper equipment
 - make sure that equipment used on the field is safe
 - use flat or collapsible cones for field markings when possible
 - if making own equipment, double-check that design and materials are safe
 - avoid using white (interior grade) PVC pipe for equipment, as it tends to shatter
 - encourage the use of mouth guards and athletic supporters (with a hard cup)
 - teach your athletes to check all equipment carefully before using
6. Match your athletes with others of their own height/weight/ability where physical contact is likely to take place
 - match players in size, maturity, skill and experience as well as age
 - enforce eligibility rules
 - modify the practice structure when mismatches cannot easily be corrected

- be especially alert to mismatches with persons of the opposite gender, as well as with athletes recovering from injury or athletes with some disability.
7. Supervise the activity closely
 - always provide supervision as long as any player is left on the fields
 - stay at the fields until all players are picked up by their parents
 - do not permit child to leave with unknown person or with parent who does not have custody, unless permission from parent has been given
 - provide special supervision when teaching new skills and when the risk of injury increases
 - know your sport and your players sufficiently that you can anticipate potentially dangerous situations and step in to prevent them from occurring
 - use posters, notices and signs to support your rules
 - do not condone reckless or overly aggressive behavior that threatens the safety of any athlete
 8. Warn of inherent risks, as you are responsible to provide instructions regarding the safety of the sport. Courts have held soccer coaches liable for failure to warn of the risks of contact or collisions. Even though it may seem obvious to you, issue the warning of all risks that are apparent.
 - use written notices, releases, videos, and repeated warnings to make sure your athletes understand the risks
 - make sure that parents and players understand that soccer is a contact sport, and that sprains, strains and broken bones are common and probably unavoidable.
 - whenever you see a player doing something which is unsafe, stop and warn the entire team
 - exercise care that players don't fall onto corner flags or pointy cones
 - if you see that a player is seriously mismatched with an opponent, make quick adjustments
 - if an opponent is unduly rough, and officials fail to protect your players, remember that player safety is your ultimate responsibility, so you **MUST** take appropriate action to protect your kids
 9. Provide appropriate emergency assistance
 - do not move an injured athlete until certain that it is safe to do so
 - protect the injured athlete from further harm
 - provide the proper first aid
 - attempt to maintain or restore life using CPR when required
 - comfort and reassure the athlete
 - if in doubt, call 911 and get EMT evaluation

Updated 11 March 1999

A Coach's First-Aid Kit

The Basic Kit

These items are a suggestion as to what would be useful to have on hand. Certainly, additional items may be included according to your personal preference.

1. Disposable gloves (use for injuries involving blood loss)
2. Band-Aids (assortment of sizes, types, colors, etc.)
3. Adhesive tape
4. Gauze sponges (for cleaning cuts, applying pressure, etc.)
5. Scissors
6. Pack of tissues or roll of toilet paper (useful for cleanups, bloody noses, etc.)
7. Chemical ice packs or plastic bags to hold ice
8. Antiseptic (spray or ointment)
9. Sun tan lotion
10. Ace bandage (to hold ice bags onto limb)
11. Sting relief (medication or cream to relieve the itch and, possibly tweezers)
12. Medical release forms

Other Items You May Want to Add

NOTE: the following list should be considered to be representative rather than exhaustive. On the other hand, it may not be possible or advisable for all coaches to secure all items listed.

Tapes

Qty	Item
2	3-inch rolls elastic bandage (see notes below)
2	4-inch rolls elastic bandage (see notes below)
8	rolls 1.5 inch tape
8	rolls pre wrap
1	1 inch roll anti-allergenic cloth tape
2	medium ankle brace
1	large triangular bandage (for a sling)
2	large heel cups
1	12" plastic sanitary shovel (see notes below)
1	tape shear
1	scissors
1	tweezers

There are some good self-cling wraps on the market which are much easier to use than the Ace bandages with the little clamps. These self-clings can be particularly useful on the field when you're trying to do many things at once.

Upset Stomach

Qty	Item
1 4-oz bottle	anti-diarrhea liquid for bacterial infections

1 16-oz bottle	anti-diarrhea liquid for indigestion
1 60-tab bottle	double strength chewable anti acid tablets

Cuts & Abrasions

1 bottle	antibacterial wash
1 bottle	witch hazel and alcohol
1 can	witch hazel pads (see notes below)
1 2-oz can	benzocaine spray
20 2-inch strips	adhesive bandage
50 .75-inch strips	adhesive bandage
40 3" x 3" pads	sterile gauze pad
5 3" x 4" pads	non-stick pad
1 pkg.	moleskin for blisters (see notes below)
1 pkg.	butterfly bandages to close small cuts
1 4-oz can	anti-bacterial spray scrub
1 4-oz can	skin toughener
1 4-oz can	spray on antiseptic bandage
1 3-oz tube	abrasion ointment (zinc oxide, lanolin)
1 3-oz tube	lubricant (lanolin, zinc oxide, benzocaine)
1 small bottle	petroleum jelly
1 1.5-oz tube	antibiotic ointment
4 pairs	latex gloves

Strains & Sprains

1 3-oz tube	balm (menthol, methyl salicylate, oleo resin capsicum)
1 3-oz tube	analgesic balm (methyl salicylate)
1 4-oz bottle	sports balm (methyl salicylate, menthol)
1 6-oz bottle	salycin
1 6-oz can	cold spray
9 large	locking freezer bag
4 small	locking freezer bag
1	air cast
8 bag	instant freeze pack

Bruises & Fever

1 500 tablet bottle	generic 325 mg ASA
1 100 tablet bottle	500 mg acetaminophen
1 50 tablet bottle	200 mg ibuprofen

1 50 tablet bottle	220 mg Naproxen Sodium
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Eye / Skin / Nails

1 0.5 oz bottle	polyvinyl alcohol eye drops
1 0.5 oz bottle	eye drops
1 0.5 oz bottle	contact lens wetting solution
1 4.0 oz bottle	contact lens cleaning solution
1 6 oz bottle	sun block (high SPF)
1 6 oz can	insect repellent
1 0.15 oz tube	lip balm
1	nail clipper
2	emery board
1	padded aluminum finger splint
1 0.5 oz tube	1% cortisone cream
1 4 oz can	anti-fungal spray
1 15 oz bottle	baby powder (see notes below)

Ice

You may want to carry a small cooler with ice. You could then fill a plastic zip-lock bag and use that to ice injuries. As an alternative, you can use the chemical ice packs, but there is some risk of leakage that you should be aware of. Cold spray is very difficult to use safely if you have not worked with it and is not recommended. In almost every use, direct application of ice or a freeze pack is safer and easier to use.

Special Medical Conditions

Depending on the medical conditions of your players you may find yourself carrying inhalers (make sure they are marked with the child's name and instructions), insulin, or other medication. Be sure to ask parents if the kids are allergic to bee stings and have them give you extra EPI pens or Benadryl for your kit. It is always preferable to have the parents in charge of these items since they know their child's condition better than you do.

In addition, you might include a cell phone with emergency phone numbers

Notes

1. The plastic sanitary shovel is for filling ankle-breaking holes and divots and for covering sprinkler heads. Plastic helps get past airport security without questions.
2. Witch hazel pads, in an alcohol solution, are an excellent in the field tool for cleaning wounds. They are also good for quick relief of bee stings.
3. The baby powder, sprinkled on skin, on the sock, and inside the shoe, prevents blisters better than any other protection in most weather conditions.
4. Please do not use elastic bandages (e.g. "Ace Wraps") for anything more than holding ice packs on an injury, not for restricting motion. Use tape and a brace instead.
5. Moleskin should be cut to surround a blister, then the "hole" in the donut where the blister sits should be filled with petroleum jelly.
6. Rubber bands are useful for tying back loose hair
7. Large tongue depressors are useful in mud games to clean cleats

8. Unless you have a spare uniform at a game or practice it would be wise to have a way to disinfect clothing that gets soaked with blood on the spot - 1 part bleach mixed with 10 parts water (NOT ahead of time) works well.
9. Blankets, umbrellas, and tarps are also useful.

Updated 11 March 1999

The Laws of Soccer

The laws of the game are very brief, and are intended more to define the basic parameters rather than to describe how to play or officiate the game. A considerable amount of judgment and discretion has been given to the referee, who has full control, and whose decisions on matters of fact are not even subject to appeal.

Following is a very brief introduction to the aspects of the game that are related to the laws. For a fuller explanation, you should look in the laws themselves or the "Frequently Asked Questions" web pages prepared especially for coaches. These exist in a brief summary version of around 15 pages and a comprehensive version of over 150 pages available in RTF or .zip format, both of which may be downloaded as document files. The links in the following text lead to the Coaches' FAQ on the LOTG. For more information on any of these subjects, please follow the link. There is also a page that offers suggestions on teaching the laws.

Pre-game Basics

Starting at about age 11 or 12, soccer typically is played with 11 players per side [Law 3 - Number of Players], with a full-size ball -- about 26 inches around, called a Size 5 [Law 2 - The Ball].) For younger players the sizes of the field, goal and ball are usually scaled down, and the number of players is also commonly reduced, perhaps down to 3 on a team.

The field for regulation adult soccer games is about 70 yards wide by 110 yards long, with a goal 8 feet high by 8 yards wide at each end [Law 1 - The Field of Play]. Lines on and around the field are about 4-5 inches wide, and are considered to be a part of the playable field area which they enclose. A ball in the air over one of the lines, or rolling on the ground outside but partly hanging over the line, is in play. Also, the referee, the goals and the corner flags are all part of the field, so a ball that strikes one of these remains in play unless it then goes out over a line. The principal lines on a soccer field are the boundaries: goal lines at the ends (with a goal in the center of each), and touch lines along the sides. The principal areas are the largish penalty areas at each end and the smaller goal areas they contain. The penalty area is important mainly because the goalkeeper can use her hands to play the ball in her own penalty area and because fouls there can lead to penalty kicks, but there are also some technical restrictions involving the goal and penalty areas that apply during free kicks and goal kicks.

There is usually a center referee for most club soccer matches. Sometimes, there will be two assistant referees (also called linesman) who help make the calls [Law 5 - Referees and Law 6 - Assistant Referees]. The officials may be volunteers, or the league may pay them, or each team may need to pay them before the game. After checking the players' uniforms and shoes [Law 4 - Players' Equipment], and walking the field to make sure that it is playable and properly marked, the referee usually will call for the captains of each team to come to the center circle in order to hold the coin toss which determines which side will kick off and which team will start on which end of the field [Law 8 - Start and Restart of Play]. Each coach appoints his own captains (usually 1-3 players). At older levels, the captains are in charge of the team on the field, so they may be the best and most-seasoned leaders. At the younger ages, however, captains frequently are selected randomly (such as the kids who brought snacks for the game).

The visiting team usually gets to call the coin toss. The team winning the toss picks the end to defend. The team losing the toss gets kickoff. At half-time, the teams will switch ends. Thus, there is often no real advantage in picking one end or another, unless the sun's angle will affect the goalkeeper's vision or the wind may affect the ball's flight. The two halves of the game should be of equal length, however the referee will probably add a minute or two to allow for time lost through substitutions or injuries. (Substitutions can only be made with the referee's permission and play is stopped, not on-the-fly as in hockey.)

Starting and Restarting Play

Each half of the game, and any overtime period(s), starts with a kickoff. Each team goes to its own half of the field, and the defending team must be outside the 10-yard circle in the center. The ball is in play as soon as it is kicked (it

must go forward), and it stays in play until it goes completely over a boundary line or the referee blows his whistle to stop play [Law 9 - Ball In and Out of Play]. Kickoffs also occur after every score. The only way to score is to propel the ball (with feet, head, or body (excluding the arms) completely across the goal line, between the posts and beneath the crossbar, either in the air or on the ground." [Law 10 - Method of Scoring].

The most common stoppage in a soccer game is when the ball leaves the field along one of the sides, going over one of the touch lines. The restart for this is a throw-in [Law 15] from the point where the ball went out. The throw-in is taken by a player from the team that did not touch it last. A throw-in must be thrown with two hands, straight over the top of the head, with both feet on the ground. It's difficult to throw the ball a very long way like this, which is the idea -- the purpose is just to get the ball back into play.

If the ball goes out over the goal line but not through the goal, the restart is a goal kick [Law 16] if an attacker touched it last, or a corner kick [Law 17] if it was last touched by a defender. A goal kick is kicked from anywhere in the goal area or on one of its lines (since the lines are part of the area), and must go entirely outside the penalty area before any player can touch it. The other team must vacate the penalty area and stay outside of it until the ball leaves the penalty area. A corner kick is played by the attackers from inside the little arc at the corners of the field on the side where the ball went out. The defenders must stay at least 10 yards away, and the ball is in play as soon as it is kicked.

With older players, many goals are scored on free kicks [Law 13] which are awarded after fouls or offside infractions. Serious fouls lead to direct free kicks from which a goal may be scored immediately. On an indirect free kick (such as after offside), the ball must touch at least one player besides the kicker (for instance, one player pushes it to a teammate who then scores) for the score to count. The referee indicates an indirect free kick by holding one arm in the air from when he awards the kick until the ball is touched by the second player. For either kind of free kick, the opponents must move at least 10 yards away from the spot of the kick and remain there until the kick is taken. They may form a "wall" if they wish. The kicking team may prevent this by taking the kick immediately, thereby not giving them enough time to get the wall organized.

Offside

Offside [Law 11] is like the analogous rule in American football, although there are obviously some differences because a soccer game isn't divided into discrete plays each with its own line of scrimmage. The soccer law says a player can't play behind the other team's defense unless he dribbled the ball there himself, or unless he's chasing a ball that was played to him when he was not behind the other team's defense. The place behind the other team's defense is called offside position. A player is in an offside position if she is all of these things:

- in the opponents' half of the field, and
- ahead of the ball (closer to the opponents' goal line than the ball), and
- ahead of the second-last defender (usually, the last defender is the keeper, and the second-last is the deepest fullback) and
- she is not receiving a throw-in, corner kick or goal kick (those three are exempt).

A player is involved in active play (participating is a term often used) and subject to being called for offside if she does any one of these:

- interferes with play (such as receiving a pass or trying for the ball), or
- interferes with an opponent (such as getting in their way or challenging for possession), or
- gains an advantage as a result of being in that offside position (such as getting the rebound off a goalkeeper's save, or being in the right spot to capitalize on a defender's miskick).

It's okay to be in offside position, it's just not okay to affect the game while there. It's not offside when a player who isn't in offside position runs past the defenders in pursuit of a pass -- offside position is determined when the pass is made by a teammate, not when it is received. It's also never offside when a player receives a throw-in, goal kick or corner kick, wherever he is, nor when the opponents have possession of the ball.

Fouls and Misconduct

The list of fouls that lead to *direct free kicks* is short [Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct]. Only two are clearly defined:

- deliberately playing the ball with the hands -- with the exception of the goalkeeper in her own penalty area, who may use her hands
- spitting

The others are two that are always fouls:

- holding
- contacting the opponent before the ball while tackling

and six that are fouls when done in a careless, reckless or excessively forceful manner:

- kicking
- tripping
- jumping at
- charging
- striking
- pushing

The names of the fouls may seem clear, but considering the nature of soccer there may be not much difference between reckless charging (the foul) and charging (a legal tackle), or pushing and a legal tackle. Remember this judgment is up to the referee, and the quality of a game depends partly on the ref's experience and manner, and partly on the players' willingness to get on with the game and not push the envelope.

There are also some less serious infringements that lead to *indirect free kicks*. Those that can be committed by any player include: playing "in a dangerous manner" (such as kicking high near another player's head); impeding (obstructing) an opponent without actually holding or pushing her; and preventing the goalkeeper from putting the ball into play from her hands. There are also some technical infringements that apply only to the goalkeeper: taking too many steps while holding the ball (technically more than four steps, but few referees are that picky); picking up the ball after releasing it from the hands; handling the ball after it has been deliberately kicked to her or thrown-in to her **by a teammate**; and wasting time while holding the ball. In all these cases, any free kick is awarded at the place of the foul or infringement. If a direct free kick foul is called against you within your own penalty area, the other team gets a *penalty kick* [Law 14] instead of a free kick.

Players can also be given cautions and be sent from the field if they commit more serious offenses or commit too many "ordinary" fouls. A caution is also called a "yellow card" and a sending-off a "red card", after the colored plastic the referee holds in the air when making the call. The 14 offenses that lead to this punishment are collectively known as *misconduct*, and are various forms of violence, dissent and extremely poor sportsmanship.

If the referee stops play and none of the restarts mentioned earlier applies, he restarts the game by dropping the ball. This is commonly seen when there's an injured player on the field, but the ball doesn't go out of play by itself. The referee will gather either one player from each team, or just one player, and drop the ball from about waist height. The one-player drop ball may be used when one team had clear possession when play was stopped, such as the goalkeeper holding the ball.

Updated 2 April 1999

Communication on the Field of Play

If you attend a high-level soccer match for the first time, you'll be struck by the amount of chatter among the players on the field. Much of this talk is almost incomprehensible to newcomers to the game. The table below provides an introduction to the terms you're most like to hear during a match; be warned, however, that while some terms are more or less universal, others are less so, and may vary from one region to another. When in doubt, ask!

Other than on-field communication between players, this table does not address the large technical vocabulary of soccer, a guide to which can be found in the glossary which is part of the FAQ on the Laws of the Game.

NB: The following abbreviations are used in this table: "M" indicates that the player's own name should be substituted; "N" indicates that a teammate's name would be used; "#" that a number (for example, an opponent's jersey number or a number of players) would be used.

The terms defined here are divided for ease of use into five categories:

1. **Defensive tactical instructions**
These are terms used to indicate to teammates what to do in situations that arise when the opponents have possession of the ball (note that some of these may apply regardless of field position, while others are specific to the defending third).
2. **Attacking tactical instructions**
Used when we have possession, these terms provide advice to teammates on how best to use possession of the ball; as with defensive terms, some of these may apply regardless of field position; some are used to communicate directly with the player on the ball, while others are more general in nature.
3. **Combined play**
This sub-group of attacking instructions is restricted to situations where normally only two players are involved, and especially to those where the possibility of a combination (such as an overlap, takeover, or give-and-go) is "on" but may not be recognized or taken advantage of unless specific advice or encouragement is forthcoming.
4. **Warnings and advice**
Some of these are primarily defensive in nature, some more closely connected with attack; some arise mainly in periods of transition; many are directed to teammates and opponents alike.
5. **Encouragement and support**
A few terms recognize teammates' efforts, whether or not they succeed.

Tactical instructions (defensive)	
Away	Used by GK to instruct teammates to clear the ball immediately without attempting to control it
Clear	See "away"; not recommended by some coaches because it can be confused with a shout of "keeper"
Close down	Asks 1st defender to reduce the pressurizing distance to force the 1st attacker's eyes down on the ball
Contain	See "jockey"
Double [up]	Tells teammate to assist in double-teaming the first attacker (i.e. defenders combine to win the ball)

Drop off	Retreat toward
Goalside	Get between the opponent and our goal
Got you	You can go forward; I'll cover your position
Help [him/her/N]	Asks teammates to provide defensive support for an unsupported 1st defender
Hold [him/her]	See "jockey"
Into touch	Tells recovering defender to play the ball into touch if possible rather than trying to control it
Jockey	Tells teammate to delay the attacker until defensive support arrives so he can tackle.
Lock in	See "double"
Make a wall	Used by GK to tell teammates to line up between a dead ball and the goal before a free kick; see also "# in the wall"
Mark "#"	Used to tell teammate to mark a particular opponent
Mark up	Used to tell teammates to be sure they have taken responsibility for marking an opponent man-to-man, especially on free kicks and corners
No foul	Used when opponent is shielding in a field position where we do not want to give up a free kick, i.e. in our defending third
No turn	Get tight to the opponent to keep him facing his own goal
Pressure	See "close down"
Shift (right or left)	Moves the defensive formation to mirror the movement of the ball
Squeeze in	See "tuck in"
Stay	Don't leave your mark
Switch off	Used to exchange marking assignments as opponents criss-cross (exchange positions)
Tackle	You have support now and can attempt to tackle the opponent in order to win the ball
Take ball	Used to ask teammate to take 1st defender role so you can track your mark
Track [him/her/#]	Follow (continue to mark) the designated opponent as he or she makes a run toward our goal
Tuck in	1. Asks weakside defenders to take up a position closer to the middle of the field; 2. Asks teammate to provide support to 1st defender
Two here	Advises teammates that you are marking two players, and requests assistance
Wall [# in the wall]	Used by GK to specify the number of players he wants in the defensive wall on free kicks
Tactical instructions (attacking)	
"N's on"	He or she is open for a pass
All the way	1. You can take the ball all the way to the opponents' goal; 2. It's a 50/50 ball, but you can win it if you go in hard
Bring it	See "carry"
Byline	Tells teammate to carry the ball to the goal line before playing it back
Carry	You have room to dribble forward; stay composed don't play a low-percentage pass
Check	Come back toward the teammate with the ball
Corner	Play the ball toward the corner
Cross	Play the ball across the field toward the opponents' goal
Far & wide	See "spread out"
Far post	1. Tells teammate to go there for a cross; 2. Tells 1st attacker where to direct the cross
Have it	Take a shot rather than looking to pass
Home	See "keeper's on"

If you like/want/need (me)	See "support" (2)
Keeper's on	Play back to the keeper
Leave it	See "let it run"
Let it run/go	Tells teammate to "dummy" a pass, i.e. let the ball continue on to a more distant player rather than receiving it himself
Look at N	He's open to receive the ball
Man Coming	You will be under pressure very soon
Man On [hard]	Warns of immediate pressure from a blind side
N's gone	He is making a run to space behind the defense
Near Post	1. Tells teammate to make a run to the near post; 2. Tells teammate to cross the ball to the near post
Open up	Tells receiving teammate to take "open" body position so as to be able to see as much of the field of play as possible; normally suggests that ball should be received across body to the far foot.
Right away	Play the ball as soon as possible
Send [it]	1. Instruction by overlapping teammate to tell player on the ball to release it; 2. Suggestion to play "over the top" to a teammate making a run behind the opponents' defense
Shoot	Take a shot now
Spread [out]	Spread out so as to ensure maximum depth and width on attack and stretch the opponents' defense ("use the whole field")
Switch	Play the ball to the far side of the pitch in order to switch the point of attack to the "weak side"; see also "switch off"
Switch field	See "switch"
Stretch out	See "spread out"
Support	You can take on your defender; if you lose the ball, I'm here to win it back; if you want to play back, I'm here
Take it down/in	You have time to control the ball (normally used as player is about to receive a difficult or high pass)
[Put it] through	Look to split the defenders with a pass into space for a teammate making a run off the ball
Time	You are not under pressure; get your head up and assess your options
Turn	Used to tell a teammate receiving ball with back to opponents' goal that he can turn and go forward
What you see	You are not under pressure from your blind side
Wing	Look to play the ball wide
Yes	You can play to me now: I'm ready to receive

Combined play	
1-2	Suggests a wall pass or give-and-go
Drop	Asks for a drop or heel pass, i.e. a pass made directly behind the player on the ball
Feed me	Used by a player making a run into space behind defenders to request a through or lead pass so he can catch up to it and continue his run to goal
Flick	Requests that the ball be "flicked" on by the receiver to a running teammate, either with the front foot (in the case of a pass played on the ground) or with the head (typically on a throw-in)
Go	Tells teammate to sprint forward and look for a return pass
Give-'n'-go	See "1-2"
Heel	See "drop"
Hold or hold it	Used by overlapping teammate to tell player on the ball not to release it until he has passed him
Line	Play the ball to me down the touchline
Set me up	Play the ball back to me on my preferred foot so I can play a long ball forward
Square	Indicates support in a position to one side of the player on the ball
Touch [me/N]	Play the ball to me (or to a named teammate) with your first touch
Wall pass	Asks for a pass on the ground which will be returned with the first touch as the teammate who made the first pass makes a run past a defender
Warnings and announcements	
"M's ball"	Used by field players to call for the ball to teammates will get out of their way; use in preference to "Mine!" which some referees will penalize as unsporting conduct
"M's up"	Used by field players to warn off teammates as they go up for a header
Cover	1. Used by 2nd defender to tell 1st defender he has support; 2. Used to tell teammate to become 2nd defender
Easy	Stay composed; don't panic; don't boot the ball away
I got ball	I will take the 1st defender role
Keeper	GK uses this to call for the ball so teammates will get out of his way
Mine	See "M's ball"
Move	Keep your feet moving; don't get caught ball-watching
No	Don't play the ball to me, because I'm too tightly marked and the pass would be intercepted
Out	See "push up"
Pull up	See "push up"
Push up	Asks fullbacks to move up the field to leave opponent in an off-side position and/or support our attack
Step out/up	See "push up"
Trap	1. See "push up"; 2. See "double"
You	Tells teammate he or she is in a better position to play the ball than you are (used when two teammates are converging on a ball); NB: rather than asking teammates to take responsibility, it is better for one player to take responsibility by calling for the ball
Support for teammates	
Unlucky	The idea was right, even if the outcome was not what we wanted (e.g. teammate's shot hit the post or keeper was forced to make a spectacular save)
Well done	Recognizes good effort
Well in	Recognizes a strong challenge

Well up	Recognizes a strong effort in the air
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Updated 15 March 1999

Glossary of Soccer Terms

The 6 An abbreviation referring to the goal area.

6-stud cleats See screw-ins. Law 4

The 18, The An abbreviation referring to the penalty area.

50/50 ball A loose ball contested by a player from each team and which may be won by either one of them (a frequent cause of injury as players collide in attempting to be first to the ball).

Abandon the game Occasionally the referee will stop the game with no chance of resuming it; in that case, the game is said to have been abandoned. Seriously inclement weather or bench-clearing brawls are typical reasons.

Advantage A discretionary judgement which allows an official to permit play to continue rather than stopping play to administer a foul. This is because the foul did not put the offended team at a disadvantage, or the foul, should it have been called, may take away a favorable opportunity for the offended team. Law 5

Assist One player passes the ball to a second player, who scores as a result of the pass.

Assistant referee One of two assistants to the center referee. Their duties include: Calling the ball out of play, determining the team that is awarded a corner kick, goal kick or throw-in, calling offside, notifying the referee of a pending situation, monitoring for misconduct and a ny duty that the referee deems necessary. Formerly called "linesman". Law 6

Association football The original name of soccer.

Attacking half Generally considered the offensive half. The half of the field where one particular team is trying to score.

Attacking third Some coaches prefer to divide the fields into thirds in setting tactical goals for their team. The attacking third is the third of the field where one particular team is trying to score. The other two thirds are called the defensive third and middle third.

Away Instruction issued by a goal keeper to teammates to tell them to clear the ball without attempting to control it.

Away strip See strip. Law 4

AYSO American Youth Soccer Organization. A recreational youth soccer program whose motto is "Everyone plays."

Back 1. Movement by players towards their own goal; 2. Communication to a teammate, who is carrying the ball, for a pass back; 3. Communication to a teammate letting him know that he has support behind him; 4. Another name for fullback.

Back pass A pass made to a trailing player (one who is behind the ball carrier).

Balance Used to describe the concurrent presence of coverage by a team in all important areas of the field of play. See shape.

Ball side A player who is closer to the ball than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "ball side" of the opponent. See goal side.

Bench The physical structure or area for the substitutes and coaches.

Bicycle kick A technique whereby a player kicks a ball while leaving his feet, and with his back to the intended target. Both feet are in the air, hence the reference to riding an imaginary bicycle. Also called a "scissors kick".

Booking Terminology used to indicate that a player has had his name/number recorded, by the referee, for receiving a yellow or red card. The player is said to have been "booked"; Law 12

Boots See footwear. Law 4

Box See penalty area.

Breakaway An attacker who gets behind all field defenders, with possession of the ball, is said to have a breakaway.

Captain One player who has been designated by the coach to be the one person who can communicate with the referee, while on the field. While FIFA doesn't give captains an official designation, youth soccer can utilize two or three captains. A captain is designated with a distinctive arm band.

Caught in possession A player who neither moves forward with the ball nor passes to a teammate after receiving the ball, and who is then tackled by an opponent, is said to have been "caught in possession".

Caught square When two or more defenders have been beaten by a through ball because they were positioned square to one another (in other words, in a line across the field parallel to the goal line) because one or more failed to drop off and provide support, they are said to have been "caught square".

Caution When the referee shows a yellow card to a player and records that player's name because of misconduct, he is said to have "cautioned" the player. Law 12

Center circle A circle of 10 yard (9.15 meter) radius, drawn with the center mark as its center. Law 1

Center mark The mark that is placed on the half-line, designating the midway point on the line. Law 1

Center Or "centering." See cross.

Channel 1. An imaginary lane about 10 yards wide running the length of the field and located about ten yards in from the touch line; often exploited for diagonal runs by wing- and center-forwards, who look for a through ball to be played along it. 2. To 'channel' an opponent is to steer him or her into a more predictable, easily defended direction.

Charging The initiation of contact with an opposing player. Not all charges are illegal. Law 12

Check away To move away from a teammate who has the ball; frequently used before checking back to the ball in order to create space and confuse a defender.

Check to An offensive player runs toward the ball carrier, usually to call for a pass; frequently used immediately after the player has checked away from the ball in order to create space and confuse the defenders.

Check run See check to and check away.

Chop A forceful redirection of the ball used to flee a defender. Similar to a cut, but a stronger action is required.

Clear A term used by defenders to send the ball rapidly upfield. This term is yelled out by defenders to alert the defender with the ball that he has impending pressure.

Clearance Usually a long, flighted ball used by defenders to clear the ball upfield.

Cleats Specialty footwear worn by soccer players. So called for the studs or cleats on the soles of the shoes. These are frequently permanently molded as part of the sole but may also be removable. See also footwear. Law 4

Close down The technique whereby a defender gets as close as possible to an attacker, usually the ball-carrier, without letting the attacker get past.

Compress the field As defenders push out toward the ball, thereby reducing the area in which attacking forwards can move without being in an offside position, they are said to "compress the field".

Corner arc The quarter-circle marking, with a radius of one yard, located at each of the four corners defining the field of play. Law 1

Corner flag Flagposts positioned at each of the four corners defining the field of play. Law 1

Corner kick A method of restart, awarded to the attacking team when the ball, having last been touched by the defending team, crosses the goal line without entering the goal. Law 17

Cover 1. A defender who is supporting a teammate facing the attacking player on the ball is said to be providing cover; 2. A defender moving into such a position will call "Cover!" to let his or her teammate know of the presence of support.

Cross The term used to describe a ball that has been kicked or thrown (from a throw-in) from near the touch line towards the goal.

Crossbar The structure of the goal that connects the two upright goalposts. Law 1

Cut A subtle adjustment made when carrying the ball. The ball carrier moves the ball in a different direction to avoid being tackled. Similar to a chop, but the action is not as forceful.

D Abbreviation referring to the penalty arc. Law 1

Dead ball situation Any situation when the ball is being put back into play by the attacking team, especially a direct or indirect free kick or a corner kick. Laws 13, 17

Defensive third See attacking third.

Deflection 1. An uncontrolled rebound off a player or the referee. 2. A save attempt by a goalkeeper (usually with the hands) where the ball rebounds away (see parry).

DFK Abbreviation referring to a direct free kick. Law 13

Diagonal Any action (pass, kick or run) that moves corner-to-corner with respect to the field of play. The player doesn't have to use all the space between the corners, which are simply a reference to a diagonal.

Direct free kick A method of restarting play, where the player taking the kick may shoot the ball directly into the net. Indicated by the referee when he points in the direction of the kick. Law 13

Direct play A tactical system in which a team attempts to play the ball forward into the attacking third as soon as possible after recovering possession, frequently by playing long balls over the top. Often contrasted with possession play. Law 13

Dissent Expressing disagreement by word or action with any decision of the referee. Law 12

Dive An exaggeration of the effect of contact, including falling to the ground, intended to influence the referee to award a free kick in favor of the player's team. This is considered unsporting behavior, possibly punishable by yellow card. Also a technique used by goal keepers in an attempt to stop a shot on goal.

Dive in To attempt to tackle an opponent without first slowing one's own or the opponent's forward progress, thereby making it easy for the opponent to beat the defender with a dribbling move. See jockey.

Draw Also called a tie. When both teams score an equal number of goals, including no goals scored by either team. Law 10

Dribble The practice of controlling the ball with the feet while moving on the field of play.

Drive Typically a low, hard shot on goal, taken with the instep.

Drop ball A method of restart in which the referee 'drops' the ball to the ground. The players may not kick the ball until the ball touches the ground. Law 8

Drop kick A punting method the goal keeper uses where he drops the ball to the ground, then punts the ball just after it hits the ground.

Drop off To move farther away from one's mark. Issued as an instruction to a player, from the coach or another player.

Drop pass A player passes the ball, behind himself, to a teammate or leaves the ball for a teammate. See heel.

Dummy To pretend to be about to receive the ball, but allow the ball to travel past oneself, in order to deceive the opponent.

Dummy run A run by a teammate of the player with the ball, intended to draw one or more defenders away from the area under attack.

Encroachment Being within 10 yards of the ball when a free kick, corner kick, goal kick or penalty kick is being taken by an opponent. Law 13

Fake The act of a ball carrier 'faking' an action, to elicit a response from a defender, then the ball carrier performs another move. Example- faking a shot, then passing the ball off to a teammate.

Far post The goalpost that is farthest from the ball.

Feint A maneuver performed by a ball carrier that is intended to get the defender to react, allowing the ball carrier to move the ball the other way. Any of the step-overs and moves created by famous players constitute feints.

Field of play The rectangular playing area, defined by two longer touch lines and two shorter goal lines. Also called the "pitch". Law 1

FIFA Fédération Internationale de Football Association: the world governing body of soccer.

Fixture See match.

Flagposts See corner flags. Law 1

Flat back As in "flat back four". A defensive shape where the back three or four defenders move in tandem, maintaining a formation that is relatively straight across the field, as opposed to formations based on having at least one player stationed some distance behind the other defenders.

Flats Footwear specially designed for training or indoor use. No cleats or studs are present. Law 4

Flick 1. The ability of a player to use his foot to 'flick' the ball into space so that he may run onto the ball (commonly referred to as a heel flick); 2. passing a high ball on to a teammate with the top of the head, whether from a throw-in, a clearance or a high pass; 3. an instruction used to request a teammate to pass the ball on in this way.

Follow Used as a coaching instruction to get players to follow the ball after a shot has been taken. This instruction is geared to preparing the players to get a second (or more) shot should a rebound occur.

Football See association football."

Footwear Any of the specialty shoes that are developed especially for soccer players. See cleats, flats, turf shoes, screw-ins. Law 4

Formation Often used to describe the number of players positioned by a team in the different areas of the field of play. Normally, the keeper is not included; thus a 4-4-2 formation is one with four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards, while a 3-5-2 refers to playing with three backs, five mids and two forwards. See balance and system of play.

Forward An offensive player, playing closest to the opponent's goal.

Foul An offense against an opponent or against the spirit of the game that results in a free kick.

Fourth official In FIFA-sponsored competitions, an official with responsibility for supervising substitutions, keeping order in the technical areas and so forth.

Free kick A method of restarting play. Can be either direct or indirect. Law 13

Front foot 1. The foot closest to the ball. 2. "Front [of the] foot" refers to the outside part of the foot near the shoe laces and just above the little toes.

Fullback A defensive player, playing closest to one's own goal.

Get turned See turn.

Give-and-go A tactic used when one player passes to a teammate, the first player then sprints into an open area, then the second player returns the pass to the first. Also called a "wall pass."

Gloves Handwear that is specifically designed for the goal keeper and field players. These differ in that the keeper's gloves provide padding and protection, the field player's gloves provide warmth and a rubber palm used to grip the ball for throw-ins. Law 4

Goal 1. The structure defined by two upright goal posts and one crossbar that is set on the goal line, a n equidistant from each corner. 2. To score Law 1

Goal area The box that is formed when a line is drawn six yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend six yards into the field of play and are connected by line that is parallel to the goal line. Law 1

Goalkeeper The one player on the field who is permitted to use his hands while the ball is in the field of play. Though the goal keeper can only use his hands within his own penalty area. Law 12

Goalkeeper strip See strip. Law 4

Goal kick A method of restarting play, awarded to the defensive team, after the attacking team has put the ball over the defending team's goal line without scoring a goal. Law 16

Goal line The two smaller boundary lines, forming the short ends of the rectangular field of play. Law 1_Law 10

Goalposts The two vertical structures that support the crossbar. Law 1

Goal side A player who is closer to the goal which he is defending than to the opponent he is playing against is said to be "goal side" of the opponent. See ball side.

Goalie See goal keeper. Law 12

Golden goal The goal in "sudden victory" overtime that wins and ends the game. These overtimes are sometimes given the unfortunate name "sudden death." Law 7

Half-line See halfway line. Law 1

Half-time interval The period of idle time between the two halves of the game. Law 7

Half volley A technique where a player strikes a ball just after the ball has touched the ground.

Halfway line Or "half line". The line that divides the field into two equal and mirror-image halves.

Hand ball See handling. Law 12

Handling Intentionally playing the ball with one's hand or any part of the arm. Law 12 **Head ball** See header.

Header Passing, clearing, controlling or shooting the ball with one's head.

Heel Also called backheel. To pass the ball directly behind oneself by using either the heel or sole of the foot. The term can also be used by a player to indicate that he is ready to accept a back pass.

Holding Intentionally closing one's hand on an opposing player or any part of his equipment in an attempt to interfere with his progress. Law 12

Hole player See window player.

Home strip See strip. Law 4

IFK Abbreviation for "indirect free kick". Law 13

Indirect free kick A method of restarting play, in which the ball must be touched by another player after it is kicked in order for a goal to be scored. Signaled by the referee holding one arm extended above his head until the ball has been touched by another player. Law 13

Injury time See time lost. Law 7

Inside 1. Refers to the part of the field closer to the mid-line, as opposed to the touchline. 2. Inside of the foot: the big toe side of the foot near the arch.

Instep The top part of the foot corresponding to the lower part of the laces portion of the boot.

Into touch When the ball goes into the area outside of the field of play, beyond the touch lines.

Jersey The team uniform that distinguishes the teams as different. Also, the goal keeper must have a shirt that distinguishes himself different than his team and the opponent. Law 4

Jockey 1. To delay the forward progress of an opponent with the ball by holding a position close to and goal side of the opponent so that he or she can be tackled once support arrives. 2. An instruction to a player to tell him or her not to tackle but to jockey an opponent.

Juggling A training exercise in which the ball is kept in the air, using any legal part of the body, by one player.

Jumping Intentionally jumping at an opponent. Law 12

Keepaway A small-sided game in which the object is for one side to retain possession rather than to score goals.

Keeper See goal keeper.

Kicking Intentionally kicking or trying to kick an opponent. Law 12

Kick-off A method of starting and restarting play. A game is started with a kick-off and a kick-off is performed following a goal that has been scored. The restart kick-off is performed by the team that did not score. Law 8

Lay off To play the ball to one side for a teammate, normally when one has one's back to the opponents' goal.

Libero Position name given to a player playing in one of the positions normally associated with a stopper, a defensive screen or sweeper. Unlike these players, however, the libero frequently comes forward to join the attack. .

Linesman See assistant referee. Law 6

Man on A term used for communicating that the ball carrier or the player about to receive the ball is going to be under pressure from a defender.

Man-to-man defense A defensive system in which a player (usually a marking back) will be assigned responsibility to mark a specific individual opponent. Often used to neutralize a particularly dangerous and mobile attacking player; if the strategy is effective, the neutralized player is said to have been "marked out of the game". See zone defense.

Mark 1. A defender who is guarding an opponent is said to be **marking** him or her; 2. A player guarded by another player (as in "Who's your mark?").

Mark up Used to instruct players to guard an opponent so that all attacking players are marked.

Marking back A fullback with primary responsibility for marking one of the opposing forwards.

Match A game of soccer. In Britain, a regularly scheduled league meeting between two teams is frequently referred to as a "fixture", while a match in the context of a Cup competition is often called a "tie".

Micro-soccer Any one of a number of small-sided formats (frequently 3, 4 or 5 players a side) used with very young players.

Middle third See attacking third.

Midfielder Player occupying a position between the forwards and fullbacks. **Misconduct** An offense that is a serious breach of the spirit of the game and results in either a caution or an ejection

Movement 1. A player moving with the ball. 2. Players moving, who are not carrying the ball, in an attempt to move to an unoccupied area to bring defenders with them or create an area where they can receive a pass.

Near post The goalpost that is nearest to the ball.

Nets Netting that is attached to the goalposts, crossbar and the ground, to ensure (barring any gaping holes or loose fittings) that a goal has indeed gone through the opening created by the goalposts and crossbar. Law 1

Nutmeg Describing the action of putting a ball through the space created when a defender has his legs spread. A player is said to have been "nutmegged" or "megged."

Obstruction "Impeding a player's progress." Playing the player, not the ball. A player uses his body as an impediment or an obstruction merely to prevent a play on the ball. Law 12

Offside See offside position and offside infraction. Law 11

Offside infraction A player in an offside position while his team has the ball becomes involved in active play, such as by being the recipient of a pass. Law 11

Offside position The situation where an attacking player, on the offensive half of the field, has put himself in a position where there are fewer than two opponents between him and the goal. This positioning does not constitute a foul, until he becomes involved in the play. Law 11

Offside trap The act of the defenders moving forward in unison to place an opponent in an offside position, thereby creating an offside infraction. Law 11

On goal A shot which will enter the goal if nothing stops it is said to be "on goal", "on frame" or "on target".

One-touch play When a player redirects a moving ball with the first touch, either as a pass to another player or as a shot, without using the first touch to control the ball. See two-touch play.

Onside Not being offside. Law 11

Open up 1. To turn slightly away from the direction of an approaching ball which one is about to receive in order to improve one's vision of the field of play by having more of the field in view. 2. Issued as an instruction to a player to tell him or her to open up.

Out Or "get out". See push.

Over the top To play "over the top" is to send long high balls forward into the attacking third so that they drop behind the fullbacks, with the intention of creating attacking opportunities for strikers or wing forwards.

Overlap A tactic used by the attacking team. One player will run past the ball carrier in order to put himself in a better position to receive the ball.

Overtime If the score is tied after regulation and the rules call for more time to be played, then two periods of equal and predetermined time must be played, team changing ends after each period. Normally, the periods must be played in their entirety, regardless of the score. In some cases, provisions are made for a sudden death type overtime where the game is over once there is a score. See golden goal. Law 7

Own goal A goal scored by a player into his own team's net. If a shot is taken and the ball deflects off a defender for a goal, the goal is considered to have been scored by the player taking the shot, and is not an own goal.

Parry A controlled and deliberate deflection by the goalkeeper using the hands. The goalkeeper is considered to have been in possession of the ball at the time it touched the hands.

Pass To transfer possession of the ball to a teammate.

Penalty A synonym for penalty kick. Also for calling a foul that will result in a penalty kick.

Penalty arc The arc that is present on the line, parallel to the goal line, that defines the penalty area. This arc has a 10 yard radius from the penalty mark. Also called "the D." Law 1

Penalty area The box that is formed when a line is drawn 18 yards out from each goalpost, along the goal line. The lines extend 18 yards into the field of play and are connected with a line that is parallel to the goal line. Law 1, Law 14

Penalty kick A direct kick, taken by a player, from the penalty mark as a result of a foul committed by the defensive team in their penalty area. All players except the goalkeeper and the player taking the kick must be outside the penalty area and 10 yards from the ball. Law 14

Penalty mark Also called the penalty spot. A circular mark 9" in diameter made 12 yards out from the center of the goal, where the ball is placed when a penalty kick is to be taken. Law 1, Law 14

Pitch See field of play.

PK See penalty kick. Law 14

Play in To play a teammate in is to play a through ball for him to run on to.

Player Each of the 11 (or fewer) members of a team who is legally on the field of play and taking part in the match. See substitute.

Position 1. Any one of the names which describes where a player plays and what his or her role is; see goal keeper, fullback, sweeper, stopper, screen, wheel man, libero, midfielder, forward, wingback, striker, window player, hole player, wing. 2. Defensive position: placing oneself in a proper position to defend against attack.

Possession Having control of the ball. For a goal keeper, control (possession) is having any part of the hand or arm touching the ball.

Possession play An attacking system in which a team tries to retain possession of the ball while advancing toward the attacking third and while in the attacking third, with the object of trying to create scoring opportunities. Frequently contrasted with direct play.

Pressure 1. A tactic used to attempt to dispossess an opponent of the ball. Generally refers to the close proximity of the defender. 2. Used as an instruction to tell a player to apply pressure to an opponent who has possession of the ball.

Pull See push.

Punt A method of kicking that goal keepers use to clear the ball upfield, wherein the ball is dropped from the hand and kicked before touching the ground or as a half-volley.

Push A coaching instruction used to tell players to move forward, towards the opponents' goal, in order to put opponents in an offside position, as in "push up" or "push out." Also "out", "step", "step up" and "pull".

Pushing Intentionally pushing an opposing player. Law 12

Recovery The act of defenders to get back into a defensive position.

Recreational Less competitive soccer where players have the chance to sign up to play the sport regardless of ability.

Red Card Disciplinary action of sending a player, or players off the field of play. Law 12

Referee The official who have been given full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed. FIFA matches will have one referee and two assistant referees. Other leagues may have two referees and no assistants. Law 5

Restart The use of a kick, throw or dropped ball to restart play after play has been stopped because the ball goes out of the field of play or the referee stops play for any reason. Law 8

Reverse field See switch field.

Save An action that stops a shot on goal from scoring.

SAY Soccer Association for Youth. A recreational soccer program.

Schemer See window player.

Scissors kick See bicycle kick.

Screen 1. Position name (from 'windscreen wiper'); applied to a defensive midfielder playing in front of the fullbacks with responsibility for collecting loose balls across the width of the field and then distributing them; also called "defensive screen". 2. To block the keeper's view of the ball.

Screw-ins Shoes with removable (and therefore replaceable) studs (as opposed to permanently fixed molded cleats) designed for use in wet conditions or soft ground. Often called "six-stud cleats" after the number of studs usually found on the sole of each boot. Law 4

Select More competitive soccer where players are 'selected' to be on a team following tryouts or some other prearranged qualifying standard.

Set piece See set play.

Set play A rehearsed series of actions normally initiated in a dead ball situation to attempt to create or take advantage of a scoring opportunity. These involve misdirecting opponents, usually on free kicks, or taking advantage of positions of vulnerability, for example on corner kicks.

Shape Refers to the characteristic placement of players in a given formation. If players wander a way from their assigned roles and are not replaced by teammates, a team may be said to have "lost its shape".

Shielding The tactic of a ball carrier putting his body between the ball and the defender. **Shinguards** Protective equipment worn by players to aid in prevention of injuries to the shin. Law 4

Shootout A tie-breaking device that pits one player against the goalkeeper in either penalty kicks or a breakaway type run from 35 yards away. In both cases, the winner is determined after a best of five chances alternating with each team. If tied after five, the contest continues with different players until one team scores and the other team doesn't. See Kicks.

Shot An attempt to score into the opponents goal.

Sideways-on The body position of a player, normally on defense, such that the player is turned so the hips face one touchline or the other more than either goalline. The purpose is to allow the player to react quicker in the direction of either goalline.

Six-stud cleats See screw-ins. Law 4

Sliding tackle Executing a baseball type slide in an attempt to dispossess the ball from a ball carrier.

Small-sided game Any one of numerous types of exercise or competition in which the number of players involved is less than (usually much less than) the "normal" 11 a side. Many different small-sided games are frequently used as training exercises with older players and as the normal competition format with younger players. See micro-soccer.

Space Used to define an area on the field that is free from opponents and pressure. The ball can be passed into space for a player to run on to. A player can run into space to get open for a pass or to bring defenders with him to rid the area under attack of defenders (see dummy run).

Square 1. A player situated at any point on a line parallel to the goal line with respect to a teammate is said to be in a "square" position. 2. A term used to communicate to a player that a teammate is supporting him in a square position .

Square ball A pass played "square", in other words parallel to the goal line or perpendicular to the touch line.

Step Or "step up". See push.

Stockings Socks that cover the shinguards. Law 4

Stoppage time See time lost. Law 7

Stopper Name of a position; usually applied to a single central defender playing in front of a sweeper.

Striker A position name given to a player in a central attacking position.

Striking Intentional or intent to strike an opponent. Law 12

Strip The uniform worn by all team members, consisting of jersey, shorts and stockings. Professional teams, and many competitive teams, will have both a **home strip** in the club colors and a contrasting **away strip**. Professional teams often have a **third strip** for occasions when a visiting team's away strip is too close a match to their own home strip. The goalkeeper wears a distinctive uniform often referred to as a team **goalkeeper strip**. Law 4

Studs See cleats. Law 4

Substitute Any one of a team's idle players, on the bench, waiting to enter the field of play as players. Law 3

Support A player on the ball is said to have support when he has one or more teammates in position and ready to receive a pass. A defending player, challenging the player on the ball, is said to have support when a teammate is ready to cover if he is beaten by the attacker.

Sweeper Position name; usually applied to a central defender playing behind the stopper and wing fullbacks with responsibility for "sweeping up" loose through balls which are played in behind the other defenders.

Switch 1. Word used to notify a player that another player has left his position, requiring that the open area needs to be filled. 2. Instruction to a player on the ball to switch the point of attack to another area of the field. 3. Instruction to a teammate to trade positions.

Switch field The act of directing the ball from one side of the field to the other (in other words, from an area near one touch line to an area nearer the other touch line). Frequently used as a tactic to catch the defense which has been drawn to one side of the field and lost its shape.

Switch off To trade marking assignments.

System of play A term used to describe the specific manner in which a given formation is implemented. For example, a 4-4-2 (four fullbacks, four midfielders and two forwards) may be implemented with two center backs or with a sweeper-stopper combination. The system of play will impose a characteristic shape on a team.

Tackle A defensive player's ability to dispossess the opponent of the ball while the ball is being dribbled.

Tactics A description of 'when' and 'why' some action, or reaction, is occurring.

Takeover A means of transferring possession of the ball whereby a teammate of the ball carrier runs toward and past him or her; as the teammate passes by, the ballcarrier leaves the ball for him or her to take.

Technical area A defined area in proximity to a team's bench to which the substitutes and coaching staff are normally restricted.

Technique 'How' an activity is done.

Third strip See strip. Law 4

Through ball Also "through pass". A pass played into the space behind the defenders for a teammate to run on to.

Throw-in A method of restart which is awarded to the team that did not touch the ball last before it went over the touch line. Law 15

Tie 1. See draw. 2. See match.

Time An instruction to tell a player as he receives the ball that he has time to gain control of the ball.

Time added on See time lost. Law 7

Time lost The referee has the ability to add time at the end of either half for time lost because of treatment or removal of injured players, wasted time, substitutions or any other cause. Law 7

Toe punch Or, "toe poke." Typically used for tackling, the player is able to touch the ball with his toe, attempting to dispossess the ball carrier.

Touch 1. Developing a 'feel' for the ball. 2. Defines the number of times a ball is touched: One-touch, two-touch. 3. A call to a teammate who is about to receive the ball to pass the ball on with his or her first touch.

Touch line The lines forming the long sides of the rectangular field of play. Law 1

Transition Going from offensive to defensive play (sometimes called "negative transition") and vice versa (sometimes called "positive transition").

Tripping Intentionally causing or attempting to cause an opponent to fall. Law 12

Turf shoes Footwear with many small studs designed for use on artificial turf or very hard ground. Law 4

Turn 1. To reverse direction while in possession of the ball, normally in order to go forward or to play a cross or a shot. 2. An instruction to tell a teammate about to receive the ball that he has time and space to turn. 3. To "get turned": for the ball carrier to put himself in a position facing the defender in order to try to beat him. 4. To "turn a defender": to cause him to overcommit to one side so as to dribble the ball behind him.

Two-touch play When a player first controls a moving ball with one touch and with the next touch, passes to another player or shoots. See one-touch play.

Up 1. Pass the ball forward, towards the opponents goal. 2. Movement of players towards the opponents goal.

Upper V Also "upper 90". Refers to the intersection of the crossbar and goalpost.

USSF United States Soccer Federation. The governing body of soccer in the United States.

USYSA United States Youth Soccer Association. The youth division of the USSF.

Volley A technique used by a player where he is able to strike the ball while it is in the air.

Wall The players who stand between the ball and their own goal at the time a free kick is going to be taken. These players form a human barrier between the ball and their goal. Law 13

Wall pass See give-and-go.

Wheel man Central midfielder with primary responsibility for distributing the ball when team is on the attack.

Wing Or "winger". As in "wing forward" or "wing midfielder". A player who normally plays near the touchline, often with an attacking responsibility.

Wingback A fullback playing in a wide position with responsibility for making attacking overlapping runs down the flank.

Window player Position name; applied to an attacking midfielder or to a forward who plays behind the striker(s) and takes advantage of balls laid off by them or played back to the top of the penalty area by the wing forwards; also receives penetrating balls from fullbacks or wing midfielders and distributes them Also called "schemer".

Yellow card A cautionary measure used by the referee to warn a player not to repeat an offense. A second yellow card in a match results in a red card. Law 12

Vision The ability to see the happenings on the field of play. Players with excellent 'vision' have the ability to see and know where their teammates are located in relation to the defenders.

Zone defense A defensive system in which players are assigned responsibility for particular areas of the defensive third rather than for individual opponents. See man-to-man defense.

Fun Games that Teach Skills

NOTE: Several of the games listed are "knock out" games where the losers are knocked out and the last player left is the winner. Since the first ones knocked out are often the ones who need the most practice, those knocked out should be required to do something to either get back into the game or to keep them working on their ball skills until the game is over. One possibility is to set up a parallel game for those knocked out to participate in.

DRIBBLING

Explode

Every kid has a ball. You get them all around you dribbling their balls as close as they can get. Make sure they begin their dribbling using the insides of both feet...no toe balls at the first practice! Make them keep control of the ball....always within one step....and do not let them run into one another or dribble their ball into another ball or another player. Keep telling them to get their heads up and see the open spaces. Yell "Explode!" at which point they all run away (dribbling their balls) as fast as they can. First one to get to a boundary or cone "wins".

Flags

Players start with a ball and 2 flags. A flag is a cloth strip about 2 inches wide and a foot long. Flags are stuck into the waistband of the players' pants at each side. A player is eliminated when he/she loses both flags and his/her ball. A ball is lost when it is kicked out of bounds (by another player with a ball) or stolen (by a player with at least one flag but no ball). You can only take someone's flag away when you have a ball. The first flag usually goes pretty quick. The real fun comes when they learn to protect both the ball and the remaining flag by using the flagless side to shield

Dribble Relay

Set up an 'obstacle-course' with cones as 'gates' - and team 'A' races team 'B'-they have to go out and back - if they lose control and miss a gate, they have to regain control and go through the gate. A variation is to have a small 'square' at the end. They have to stop the ball in the square, then sprint back and high-five the next player before he/she can take off. Another variation is to have several parents positioned at different places along the 'course' and have a different one hold up a number of fingers at random times during the race - and award points to the player that sees it and correctly yells out the number first. This gets the players heads up.

Freeze Tag

Set up a large rectangle with cones and have the players dribble in the rectangle. After a short time, take the ball away from one or two players who then become "it." Any player whose ball is touched by an "it" player becomes frozen and has to stop dribbling, spread his legs apart, and hold his ball above his head. He is frozen in this position until another player dribbles his ball between the frozen players legs. Switch the "it" players often and make it a contest to see who can freeze the most at one time.

Red Light/Green Light

Each player with a ball lines up at one end of the penalty area. A coach stands at the other end and yells, "Green light," and turns his back to the players. The kids race across the penalty area to see who can reach the coach first. After a few seconds, the coach yells, "Red light." At that command, the players must stop and put a foot on top of the ball. The coach turns back around and looks for players whose ball is still moving. Those players must move a certain distance back to the starting line. Repeat calling red light/green light until someone wins the race. This game encourages fast dribbling while keeping the ball close.

Simon Says

Just like the common children's game, the coach gives instructions like "Simon says dribble with your left foot" or "Simon says switch balls with someone." The players only follow the instructions if they begin with "Simon says..." Anyone following instructions that do not start with "Simon says..." are knocked out. But the knocked out players should be doing something with the ball, not just watching the game continue. Continue the game until one player is left.

Follow the leader

Pick a leader and have him dribble anywhere on the field, encouraging him to make lots of turns, changing speed, etc. All other players have to follow the leader and do whatever that player does. Switch leaders often.

Get 'em

All players must stay within a grid. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard. Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other; use the outside of the foot. Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

Dribbler's Alley

Four or more players needed. Set up one less pair of cones (gates) than the number of players you have in a line. Each gate should be about 6 feet wide and have about 10 feet between each gate. Every player guards a gate and the remaining player tries to dribble through the gates.

Last Man Out

Two players or more needed. All players stand at a cone about 20 feet from a group of balls. There is one less ball than the number of players. On the coach's command, the players run to the balls, get one and begin dribbling. The player who didn't get a ball tries to steal one from the others. The coach keeps time and after a preset period has passed, the coach stops the game. The player who, at that time does not have a ball, is out. Remove one ball from the group and repeat until there is only one person with a ball.

Tag

This drill is based on the common kids' game of tag. Mark off a grid or circle. Everybody needs a ball. Whoever is "it" must dribble to another player and tag him. The other player avoids being tagged by dribbling away from "it." If the player being chased loses his ball outside the grid, dribbles out of the grid, or is tagged, he is "it" and the game continues.

Ball Tag

Everyone has a ball and dribbles in a confined area. The player who is "it" must pass his ball so that it hits another player's ball. The player whose ball was hit then becomes "it."

Hat Tag

Bring a half dozen baseball caps to practice. Then, in a slight variation of ball tag, we assigned hats to the "taggers," gave everyone a ball and had them dribble within a grid about the size of the penalty area. Whoever got tagged, got the hat and went off in search of someone else to tag.

Bumper car dribble

The whole team does this in a small grid. Try and match players of similar height. Have one player dribbling while another partner is trying to nudge them off the ball shoulder to shoulder. This teaches them to dribble under physical pressure and teaches the players that contact is a good and fun thing. Before games I have 2 players inside a circle formed by the rest of the team playing for possession of a ball, gets the players in the mode of fighting for the ball on the field (30 sec).

Musical Chairs

One less ball than the number of players in the drill. Players run around in goal areas in a scramble until whistle is blown. Players race to get ball from center circle and dribble to score on goal. Player without ball help get balls to center, repeating this until only one player left. Make sure to keep things moving along, don't wait very long to blow the whistle. Once players have concept start adding in defenders. One more that may work for you is using a ball as the goal. Have players match up by ability. Throw one ball out as the goal. Throw a second out that the two players will try and possess and score. First player to ball is attacker, second defends goal (ball) and tries to gain possession of ball. If successful, roles reverse. Only run this for 30-45 sec depending on effort of the players. I usually have 2-3 pairs doing this at once each with their own goal (ball) and playing ball.

Egg Hunt

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. (If you have an unusual colored ball --make it the Golden Egg or something special.) At the other end of the field is a goal. I use a portable goal and call it the "basket." Blow the whistle, or whatever, and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. I like to time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

Snake

Players are grouped into threes (preferred) or fours. First player is the "head" of the snake, and does not have a ball. She's essentially the leader in a follow-the-leader game. Second player has a ball at her feet, and must follow the head of the snake, dribbling wherever she goes. Third player is the "rattle". No ball, just following. Emphasize to the "heads" to vary their lead -- some fast, some slow, some sideways, some stopping, etc. I let one lead for about 20 seconds or so. Then, on a whistle from a coach, #2 drops the ball to #3 and becomes the head of the snake. The rattle (#3) becomes the dribbler and the former head circles around to become the rattle.

Line Soccer

Start with two lines of players facing one another. Give each player a number and a "matching" player in the other line. Kick the ball between the two lines and call out a number. The two players with the corresponding number will play one on one while trying to kick the ball through the opposing line. This game teaches the players in the line not to chase after the ball since they have to defend their line in a limited area.

Circle Game

Set up a 20x40 yard grid, make a center circle, and split players into to teams that can be identified by a color. Have all the kids dribble their balls in the center circle. Call out a color. That team dribbles toward their goal. The other

team leaves their ball and runs to slow the attackers down trying to get them to a sideline and to dribble out-of-bounds, or not get to their goal line before the coach counts to 7 or Award 1 point for each out-of-bounds and 1 point for each player "held" for the coach's count. Attackers get 1 point for each "goal". Play to 10 points.

Sharks and Minnows

Start with a defined area marked, adjusted for size depending on the age of the players. Half the players have balls and are Minnows. The rest do not have balls and are the Sharks. The Minnows start at one end of the area and must dribble across the area and across the opposite goal line without losing possession of their ball. The Sharks defend the area, trying to kick the Minnows' balls out of the defined area. Minnows who retain possession turn around and go back for round two. A Minnow who loses their ball join the Sharks for round two. The last successful Minnow is the Grand Champion.

Variations of Sharks and Minnows

- Sharks steal ball and go to a goal instead of just kicking the ball out.
- Instead of eliminating players until only one is left, give points to the sharks for kicking out balls but let everyone stay in the game. Everyone gets a turn as a shark.
- Sharks who take possession of a ball immediately become Minnows; Minnows who lose the ball become Sharks.
- Players are not knocked out, but must perform some task before getting back into the game. (Such as ball dance.)
- Minnows must control the ball in a goal area to encourage good ball control instead of just kicking the ball over the end line if a Shark gets close.

Death Square

Everyone dribbles around trying to keep their own ball and kick out everyone else's ball. If a player's ball is kicked out, he must retrieve it, then dance on the ball for 10 touches before getting back in. A player gets a point for every ball he kicks out (so if you spend time outside dancing on your ball, you have less time to win points).

Under Pressure

Get all the kids dribbling around in a square area and then remove one, two, or three balls, depending on how much pressure needed. Then announce that whoever has possession of a ball after 1 minute is a winner. If they can chase someone out of bounds they automatically win that ball. Count down the last 10 seconds real loud to increase the activity. Kids without a ball have to do some token penance; a couple of pushups, make a weird face for the others, nothing real negative.

1 v 1 to Goal

Divide players into two teams of 4 or 5 each + one goal and a supply of balls. Station each team at a corner post of the goal, standing off, but facing the field. Place a GK in goal facing the field. Coach/assistant stands behind the center of the goal with a supply of balls. Coach tosses a ball over the crossbar to about the penalty spot. A player from each team both sprint to the ball and attempt to control it, turn, and get a shot off. The second to the ball defends (if he then wins the ball, then he tries to shoot). When there is a score, save, or ball goes out of play, restart the same way with a different pair of players.

Treasure Chest and Trolls

This is a three-team, three-goal game. Play with 1-3 balls to keep everyone moving and looking up. Three players on each team play, while a sub is kept locked in "troll prison." Each team has three pieces of gold behind the goal they have to defend. Small disc cones, water jugs, etc. can be used. Whenever a team scores in the opponent's goal, they get to claim a piece of treasure for their treasure chest. The trolls, older kids or parents, had their own treasure chest

and would occasionally run randomly within the field of play. If you hit the troll with the ball, you could claim a piece of troll treasure OR free a teammate from troll prison. (decision-making!) The grand finale is the "breakout" from troll prison. Let each of the prisoners escape with a ball and head for the goal while the trolls run wild on the field for a final, furious minute of play.

PASSING

The Name Game

4 or more players needed. Players stand in a circle and pass the ball to one another, but they must call out the name of the person they are passing to. This is great at the beginning of the season, so they learn everyone's names. If the players are doing well and you have enough players, add additional balls.

Battle Field

Any number of players can be used. All players line up on one end line and try to run to the other end without being hit with a ball kicked by a coach. Those who are hit join the firing squad. The game ends when everyone has been hit.

Gotcha!

Each player will need a ball. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. All the other players are around the outside of the gridded space. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard. Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other, use the outside of the foot. Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

Monkey in the Middle

The players make a circle with one player (the monkey) in the center. The players try to pass the ball around and the monkey tries to intercept it. When the monkey gets the ball he joins the circle and whoever made the "fatal" pass becomes the monkey. This game can be modified by increasing the number of monkeys and/or balls that are used.

Marbles

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines. Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble. Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts I don't require them to use their own ball. If they lose theirs, they are free to use any other ball they can find.

Who's Open

Four or Five players in circle formation about 15 yards in diameter (adjust for age). All players except one have a ball at feet. Two players inside circle with one designated as attacker and the other defender. To start, attacking player moves and calls name of player he wants to serve him a ball. He must control ball and return to the open player who did not have a ball at start of exercise (you can't give it back to the player who served it). Attacker then asks for another ball (calling name and making appropriate run) and repeats the exchange. Defender tries to dispossess attacker.

JUGGLING

P-E-L-E

Play with two players. First player juggles one, second player has to match. First player then juggles two and second player matches. First player then juggles three and so on. When a player misses, the other player gets a letter - first P then E then L then E. After awarding a letter, the players start out at one again. The first player to spell PELE is the winner. This can be played thighs only, feet only, head only or any combination.

Black Jack (21)

Play with two or more players. First player juggles as many touches as they can and keeps track of count. Second player goes after first misses. After second player misses, first player goes again starting count where they missed in first turn. For example if player got five touches in first turn, they would start second turn at six. First player to Black Jack (21) wins. This game can also be made more challenging by restricting it to certain body parts.

Combinations

Work to get "called" combinations. For example "Around the World" would be left foot, left thigh, head, right thigh, right foot.

Juggling with Movement

Start at one spot and walk/jog/run while juggling the ball. See how far you can go without dropping the ball. One variation of this is to start at the outside of the penalty area on the field, juggle up to the goal area and shoot/volley the ball into the net without letting it hit the ground.

Timed Juggles

See how many touches the player can get in a certain amount of time. We do a three minute timed contest. They don't have to be consecutive without a miss. This works great for getting the players focused and working hard for a certain time period and is great for aerobic fitness.

Team Juggling Contest

Have each player juggle and see how many touches they can get. Add the total touches for the whole team and create a team record. If they beat their team record, the coaches run a lap around the field. If they don't beat their record, the players run a lap around the field. When the kids are not very good jugglers, it doesn't take very long. I have seen huge improvements in my teams' juggling skills by doing nothing more than this in practice. It's just enough focus to get them working on their own.

GOAL KEEPING

Keeper Wars

Using four cones create two goal about 5-10 yards apart (depending on age, ability, etc). The width of the goals should be just beyond the armspan of the keepers. The keepers sit just in front of the cones facing each other. Each attempt to score goals on the other by throwing the ball through the goal. The ball must be kept below their shoulders.

Updated 16 March 1999

Practical Guidelines for Coaching

Introduction

You will learn a lot in this section about how to make your both players and your team better. There will be ideas you can't wait to try, suggestions you disagree with, and many items to put on the back burner until next season or next year. Each coach who reads through this section will develop very different lists of priorities. What one throws out, another will hold near and dear for seasons to come. This is a good thing.

Each of you is an individual, and you need to let your personality and coaching style shine through. A common trap for new coaches is to try to imitate another coach's style. Understand what type of coach you are (the ultra-organized disciplinarian? the flexible funster? the nurturing teacher?) Be open and honest with your players, parents and assistants about your style, your philosophy, your policies, and your expectations. You'll have a lot more fun being yourself, instead of pretending to be someone you're not.

The Coaching Process

If you have never coached before, or are not that familiar with soccer coaching, it's important that you have a fundamental grasp of the coaching process. Coaching involves communicating your knowledge of the game, observing what needs to be corrected, and adjusting this feedback loop as required.

Observation _ Knowledge _ Communication _ Observation _ Knowledge _ etc.

Topics in This Section

1. The Pre-Season Meeting with Parents and Players
2. Nuts & Bolts of Holding Practices
3. Player management and discipline
4. Special Ideas for Your First Practice

Updated 7 April 1999

The Pre-Season Meeting with Parents and Players

It is very important to have a preseason meeting with both parents and players. This is your opportunity to set out your coaching philosophy (including your plans for the team as a whole and your approach to player development). This is also your chance to explain team rules in a non-confrontational setting (before any discipline is needed), and to recruit volunteers to help you with administrative tasks.

Skip this first meeting at your peril. If the first time that some bossy parent has any contact with you is on Game Day when your team is getting pounded, and this parent tries to "help" you by yelling at the kids or standing beside you to offer "helpful" suggestions, you will be **very** sorry that you did not lay out your game-day ground rules early. And, when little Johnny doesn't show up for 4 practices running, doesn't call, and then appears on game-day without shin guards and no uniform (and Mom is furious that he isn't starting - or even listed on the game board), you will be very sorry that you had not given out Team Rules which covered mandatory equipment or your expectations on attendance.

We are not kidding when we suggest that this is probably the most important meeting which your team will have for the entire season. So, plan it carefully; get organized; and do your best to make an excellent first impression.

1. **Where to Have the Meeting**

You will need about 30-45 minutes to go over the items which you want to cover, so you want your "audience" to be comfortable. There are many places where you might consider holding your meeting. Libraries often have meeting rooms available. Churches also may make their meeting facilities open to outside groups. In addition, cafeterias often have meeting rooms, as do many pizza parlors and family-oriented restaurants. Of course, your home is also an option if your team is not very large.

2. **When to Have the Meeting**

Try to schedule your meeting very soon after you get your team roster. Most players will have friends on other teams in your age group, so they will know when their buddies have gotten calls from their coaches. Players can get very anxious when they haven't heard in a day or two, so get your meeting set up quickly. If you don't have a place yet, you can always call and tell the parents when you plan on having it - and then call back with the place/time.

Families are often busy with church or school activities, and it can be tough to find a time when everyone can attend. Busy times may vary from one region to another, and it's hard to set out general rules: use your own judgement in trying to find a moment when most people are likely to be free. In some places, Sunday afternoon may be the only unclaimed time in the schedule of many busy families, so around 4pm on Sunday can be an excellent time to hold this type of meeting. Mondays and Tuesday evenings frequently are slow times for restaurants, and often may be less hectic for families. Scheduling around 7 pm allows the family to eat first if they want, or to decide to eat at the restaurant. Try to avoid times when people are likely to be at church and times when parents who also have other kids may need to take them to other activities.

3. **What to Cover at the Meeting**

Here is a sample agenda for a preseason meeting, which addresses the common topics to be covered in the meeting.

1. Introductions

- First of all, introduce yourself and your assistants (if any) to the parents. Most parents like to hear something about your background and your philosophy of coaching, especially as it impinges on their own child, so you may want to say something about how much playing time each player can expect.

- It's also a good idea to go around the room and ask parents to introduce themselves and say which player they're related to. Some of the parents may know one another well, others may not, and they'll be seeing quite a bit of one another!
 - You may also want to pass around a sign-in sheet and ask people to put their name and phone number on it; this can be useful later to see who was present at the meeting and to check phone numbers.
2. Distribution of Player Packets (see below)
 3. Discussion of Plans for the Team
 - Common problems of this age group which require stretching and coordination drills at each practice.
 - Need for every player to do soccer homework between practices.
 - Expectations for player development by end of season.
 - Expectations for win/loss record by end of season.
 4. Review materials in Player Packet (Player roster with phone numbers and addresses, Team Rules and Parent Expectations, Questionnaires, Medical Release, Practice place/times, Player equipment needs, Game Information).
 5. Need by Team for volunteers (Calling trees, assistants, etc.).
 - You may want to set up a parent committee if there are matters such as fundraising or carpooling to be handled that are outside your jurisdiction. If possible, it's a good idea for this committee to be appointed on the spot and meet for a few minutes to get to know one another.
 6. Team Uniforms/Team Name
 7. Any Equipment needs of team (nets, goals, etc.) and fundraisers needed to obtain these items.
 8. Special Skills Clinics
 9. Questions/Answers

ADJOURN

4. **Tips on Making the Meeting Run Smoothly**

Many parents will want to go ahead and fill out the questionnaires at the meeting, so bring plenty of pencils/pens. Young players tend to get fidgety, so try to talk to them as much as you can. Bring a sack of candy or little treats (pencils, stickers, etc.), and start asking questions like "Why do you suppose that I want you to call me if you cannot come to practice?" - and toss a piece of candy to the people who answer correctly. Don't hesitate to reward parents, as well - they will get a kick out of this.

If uniforms are to be purchased by the team, try to get some sample uniforms (for sizes) from your uniform provider - and have a signup sheet for uniforms once you have selected which ones you want. Some coaches like to pick the team uniforms and name ahead of time -but kids enjoy this part so much that it really is a good idea to let them participate.

Some parents may be divorced, so bring extra questionnaires, rosters and game schedules to the meeting for the other parent. If you note that the parents are divorced, make a mental note to check with the parent attending the meeting with the child about custody problems (including who is allowed to pick up the child after practice). This can save a lot of arguments later.

Be sure to go over the Team Rules, and your expectations for parental behavior (especially at games). While being friendly, be firm that you expect that parents will not yell at kids on the field or yell at referees - and that the ONLY talk that you want to see is positive (good try, nice save, etc.). Remind parents that children perform worse if distracted or harshly criticized, so you really need their cooperation. Also remind them that Refs are usually inexperienced themselves at lower age groups, and often will make mistakes. However, if we yell at the Refs, we can make the Ref more rattled, or get the Ref mad at the team, or even might convince the kids that the Ref is against them, which tends to make players want to stop trying or say/do bad things to the Refs themselves (which can get the kids in really hot water) - so you expect the parents to set a good example of sportsmanship for the team.

If you are going to take a long-term approach toward player development, and move players around (instead of locking players into single positions to increase your win/loss record), tell the parents why you have chosen this route. Explain how you define "winning", and what your approach towards player development will be. Of course, there may be some parents who really want their child on a hyper-competitive team. By giving them early warning of your approach, this allows them to talk to the club about moving to a different team (which may be best for all concerned).

Some coaches haven't done much public speaking, and may be nervous about talking (especially if they have never coached soccer before - and are not sure what they are doing). As an old college professor used to say, "There is a big difference between ignorance and stupidity - one is curable." Don't be afraid to make mistakes, and to admit that you are learning by OJT. If you are trying hard, and doing your best to be fair and make learning fun, most kids and most parents will give you the benefit of the doubt. So, try to relax; get prepared for the meeting ahead of time; ask some questions yourself to get the kids/parents talking; and enjoy. It is going to be a fun year!

5. **Sample Handout**

Sample Information for Players

1. **Uniforms**
 - Each player will need to have a team uniform by the first game. Please provide your sizes before leaving, so the uniforms can be ordered.
2. **Player Packets**
 - Each new player has received a packet with Team Rules, Player and Parent Information Sheets, a Medical Authorization and a Player Agreement. It is very important to fill these out quickly. Please return them by [*insert deadline date here*].
3. **Other Information**
 - Please make sure that your player always comes to practice with a ball; water bottle; and layered clothing. On windy days, players can chill quickly so they really do need to bring a jacket.
 - Please be sure to put name and phone number on your balls. There were problems last season with balls being stolen, and it is much easier to reclaim your ball if it is marked.
 - Lost and Found is located [*insert location here*], so please check there if you lose anything.

Updated 6 April 1999

Nuts & Bolts of Holding Practices

Teaching young children takes lots of practice on the part of the coach, along with good humor and lots of patience. Here are some hints on things to do which will make it easier to teach your little charges.

1. How to select drills

There are certain skills which every soccer player needs to acquire. One of the most important is the ability to receive and control the ball with the feet, as this skill is essential in order to be able to do almost anything else with the ball. In the Principles section, there is an outline of the skills which the players will need to acquire over the course of several seasons, along with suggestions on which skills to teach first - and an explanation of why. There are also discussions of some basic principles of positioning, attacking and defending, which may be useful to read in order to understand how everything will fit together.

In order to develop a season plan, the coach normally will want to take a look at the players for a session or two, unless the players are all first-time players. This allows the coach to get an idea of the average skill level of the players and to identify players who are exceptionally weak or strong (as these players will present challenges).

Once this assessment is done, the coach will set up the plans for the season by listing out the skills which need to be learned; looking at the available practice times; and deciding which skills to teach, in which order. Some flexibility should be built into the schedule, as practices have a way of getting rained out - or the whole team will come down with chickenpox - or there may be some event (such as a huge win by a team which has been having trouble) which may cause the coach to decide to have a "fun" practice instead.

Once the coach has decided on the skills to be taught, the next step is to pick drills or games which will be useful vehicles to teach those skills. Selection of drills can be tough for a new coach, especially if the coach has not spent a lot of time teaching children in this particular age group. It is not uncommon to pick drills which end up being too easy or too hard. Here are some good rules of thumb which can help in drill selection:

- If you cannot explain the game rules in 30 seconds, the drill probably is too hard.
- Games that all kids play (like tag or relay races) require the least explanation.
- The game/drill should be designed to force the weak ones to improve (avoid knock-out games that eliminate weakest players first).
- If some initial individual skill work will be required before it is possible to play a game or hold a contest, make sure that the players understand that you have a contest planned (as it is easier to do work on "boring" things if an end is in sight).
- To avoid wasting time, try to pick a series of games/drills which allow you to use the same grids/cones more than once.
- Always have at least one backup drill ready, just in case a game falls flat.
- Avoid picking games which involve lots of idle time or standing around, such as line drills (as the old saying that "the devil makes work for idle hands" also applies to young players with idle feet).
- Design drills so that, over the course of the practice, the player ultimately will be doing the skill at game-like speed and in game-like conditions. For instance, in teaching shooting on goal, players will be unprepared to score in games if their only shooting practice involves shooting a stationary ball at an undefended goal with all the time in the world.

The important thing is to keep your eye on what your objective is. If your objective is to teach passing, then you need to be sure that you are giving plenty of practice to those who need the work the most (while still retaining some "consequences" for doing the skill poorly - at least after a decent time to experiment with no pressure has been given).

For instance, keepaway games can be changed so that the defender plays for 2 minutes and then switches out. Or, he can switch out after he has intercepted 3 bad passes. In other games (like Sharks, where balls are kicked out of the grid), the rules can be modified. For instance, Freeze Tag is a form of Sharks, but the player is merely frozen (not eliminated) if tagged, and can be reactivated when a non-frozen player touches him. Another modified form of Sharks allows the player to run to his ball; do a quick set of Round-The-World toe taps on his ball; and get right back in the game.

2. Making contingency plans

The two most common reasons that a coach must make adjustments in a drill are when there are not enough balls available or when there are the wrong number of players available (odd when he wants even, or vice versa). Here are some ideas to deal with these common problems.

Not enough balls at practice

You can guarantee that at least one kid will forget his ball at every practice. Others will have their balls stolen or have them go flat. So, if at all possible, get some spare balls which you can loan out (or even "rent" to a child - he "pays" by taking a jog around the field). Ask your parents if they have any spares at home which they can loan to you for the season (many kids get multiple balls at camps and are happy to loan one to you). Consider a fund-raiser to pick up some used balls. Don't reject flat balls. Many can be fixed by a product called "Ball Doctor" which injects a rubberized material into the ball.

But, if everyone forgot to bring a ball, it is pretty clear that you cannot hold a dribbling practice (and probably cannot hold a shooting practice or pairs passing practice). So, come to every practice prepared with a backup plan for work with only the number of balls which you have in your ball sack. Some drills/practices which require only 1 ball to 3 players:

- 1 v 1 v 1 offense/defense (2 players in grid, 1 on end as neutral or server or target);
- basic 2 v 1 keepaway;
- 2 v 1 offense or defense;
- some 3-team passing games (such as running multiple gates in a large grid), wall passes or slotted passes.

Some drills/practices which require only 1 ball to 6 players:

- 3 v 3 or 3 v 2 (plus keeper);
- 2 v 2, plus 2 neutral players;
- 4 v 2 keepaway;
- offense v defense games (such as games where Ds score on small goals at the intersection of the midline/touchlines).

Adjusting for odd/even numbers of players

Experienced coaches know that you will only have an even number of players on those days when you want to work in sets of odd numbers (3, 5, etc.). So, what do you do when you have odds when you want even, or vice versa?

- If you have an assistant or spare parent or sibling of one of your players, use this person as an extra for one group.
- If you don't have a spare, have one group form a triangle when doing work designed for pairs.
- If you have an assistant who can work with your keeper, this is a great time to do this.

Scrimmage time at the end of practice and only 9 players:

- Play 5 vs. 4 and put stronger players on the smaller team;
- Use a goalkeeper/big goal for one team, and no keeper/small for the other;
- Use parent or self as keeper for one team
- Play 4 v 4 (+1), where extra is floater/neutral who always works for team with ball

3. Getting them ready to practice

Young children often arrive at practice full of energy. After a long day indoors, they are ready to run and play - and not ready to sit and listen. Therefore, it can make your drill go a lot better if you begin with some vigorous warm-ups. Once they have been running around for awhile, they will be begging for a water-break. Use the time when they are panting/drinking for your announcements and instructions - they tend to be MUCH less disruptive when pooped.

The first thing to do in order to start getting rid of some of this excess energy is to get players working as soon as possible. Involve them in some game or fun activity as soon as they get there. There are plenty of activities that players can do alone or with 1 or 2 others. For instance, start juggling with the first arrival; include the second, then the third, etc. As the numbers get higher, start a new group. 1 v 1 keepaway games limited to a general area of the field is another good choice. You can adjust match-ups as necessary as more players arrive.

Another fun game is soccer golf, where you have to hit some far off target, such as a ball. Soccer bowling is a fun game where individuals or teams try to knock down cones from some distance by passing. Another option is to play soccer volleyball over a neutral zone (ball can't touch the zone). Allow the ball to touch the ground in your zone, but you lose the point anytime it touches outside of your team's zone or you don't play it into the other team's zone. If you have several players arrive early, get a small sided game of knock down the cones

4. How to select partners for drills

Factors which will influence how to select partners or teams for drills are varied. Common factors to be considered by the coach are: the need to divide by skill level or size to get success (or enough pressure, in the case of more skilled players); the number of players available (odd or even); the need to split up troublemakers or cliques and/or to allow players to get to know others on the team; the need to protect timid or shy players by putting them with players who are more kind-hearted; and the ability/willingness of a more seasoned player to assist a newer one in learning certain skills. Newer coaches probably will want to think about these factors ahead of time, so that they can make the necessary assignments without too much delay.

Should friends be allowed to pair up for drills?

Some coaches prefer to always assign partners from the very beginning, in order to avoid gripes when someone is split from his favorite partner (especially his partner in crime). Others think that camaraderie is developed by allowing the friendships, so they permit players to select their own partners unless the coach has particular reasons to want to split up the pairs.

It is important to split up players who have personality conflicts; or who induce each other to fool around; or players who like to bully or boss around a particular player (often a new one). If more than 1 pair needs to be split up on a regular basis, the coach is often better off simply assigning partners, as kids can be counted on to make the complaint of "why does everybody else get to select their partners - and we don't? Of course, some coaches want the complaint to come, as this gives them a chance to explain why the players are being "punished". So, it is up to the coach whether to opt for peace, or use the selection process as a disciplinary tool.

When choosing partners, this can be done very quickly, either by calling out names (John and Jim in that grid) or by counting off numbers (1,2,3 - this group goes to the first grid; 4,5,6 - this group goes to the next grid, etc.).

When should size or skill be a factor?

Even in a harmonious group, there are times when it makes sense to put the strongest with the strongest (especially in attacking/defending work). A very good (or very big) defender will destroy the confidence of a budding tiny attacker, so there are times when it makes sense to pair them up by body size and/or skill - with body size being quite important in things like teaching shoulder charges or tackles to beginners (even though, once confident, it makes sense to mix them up again). The whole idea is to set the kids up to succeed by controlling as many variables as you can which would tend to make success less likely.

How to handle very skilled players

Often, a very good player who has been playing almost since birth will end up on a team with a bunch of teammates who have never seen a soccer ball before. This is tough on the coach and on the good player, but it is not an insurmountable hurdle. Here are some ideas of ways to keep this player challenged:

- Assign this player to teach a skill to a group (most kids do not mind showing off, and the other kids already will know that this kid is really awesome, so this can work nicely - and, by breaking down the skill into steps, the player often learns more than he realizes).
- Reduce the space the stronger player must work in.
- Make their target smaller or further away
- Limit their number of touches
- Limit them to use their weaker foot only
- Pit the stronger players against you or your assistant.
- In scrimmages, put 3 strong players against 5-6 weaker players (adjust to make the sides relatively even).
- Adopt a rule that, in scrimmages, every player on Team A must have had 3 touches on the ball before the Team can score (count starts again if the ball is stolen), which forces the better player to use his teammates and to get into position to accept return passes from them in useful territory.

By being creative, the coach can provide for challenges for the better player, while keeping the better player from being so dominant that the rest of the group do not get to participate.

How to handle weak or ADHD players

The very weak player also presents significant challenges for the coach, which are very similar to the issues presented in dealing with ADHD players (even though many ADHD players often have substantial skill), because both types of players require extra attention by the coach or an assistant. Soccer is the type of sport which allows ADHD players to use their ultra-high energy levels to run around at top speed during games, so it is a sport to which many such children (or their parents) are drawn. As a result, many coaches will have at least one of these players on their teams. Dealing with the special challenges presented by these players, as well as weaker players, is addressed in the Management & Discipline Section.

5. Factors to consider in choosing teams

While the coach occasionally may allow the players to choose up sides (simply to get a feel for friendships or the assessments by players of relative skill levels), this should not be done this on a regular basis, because of the likelihood that these selections will hurt the feelings of the weakest kids. So, here are some other options for ways to choose up sides:

- Count off 1,2,1,2 - and put all of the 1s on a team and the 2s on the other.
- Grab a handful of pinnies, hand them out "randomly" (actually with an eye towards balancing the teams), and put all of the ones with pinnies on one team.
- Assign by some random criteria (all blondes on one team; everyone with a birthday from March-August on one team; everyone whose first name is from A-L on one team; everyone who likes cooked carrots on one team; and so on).

Once the teams are selected, consider having a captain who is responsible for each team. Kids need to develop leadership skills, and to learn to take responsibility by observing what is happening on the field. If the player is a "captain", consider letting the player pick the positions for his team - and put him in charge of watching to make sure that his team marks up, recovers back, and pushes up and supports. Try to let everyone act as captain from time to time - but announce who is to be captain on that particular day based upon hard work, performance in the last game, or some other criteria which serves as an "atta boy" or "atta girl" to the player. Pay attention to which kids do a good job as captain, so that you can put them in charge of certain areas of the field in games (e.g., a sweeper who is observant and confident enough to give clear instructions to his/her teammates is a jewel to have on the field).

6. How to introduce the lesson for the day

In your very first practice, you may want to adopt a Rule about what you want players to do when you are talking. Many adults don't know this - but kids love rules - so if you want them to line up or sit down or put one foot on the ball or cross their arms in front of their chests or put one hand over their mouths - just tell them. Then, if a player is being disruptive, you can simply say "What is our Rule about what you are supposed to do when coach is talking?" Players hate for everyone else to think that they cannot follow the Rules, or don't know what the Rules are, so this can be very effective in getting them to display non-disruptive behaviors. And, if you have a Rule, then a simple announcement that it is "Time to line up" will cause them to assemble for the lesson.

The younger the age group, the shorter the time that you should be talking in any single burst. And, the younger the players, the more it is necessary to get them mentally involved in the lesson. The best way to get their attention is to introduce the topic through a series of questions, which allows them to show how smart they are - and gets them thinking. Here is an example of the "right way" and the "wrong way" to introduce a new skill.

Wrong Way:

"Okay, kids, today we are going to learn how to do a push pass. I need everyone to come over here and form a line in front of me (hint: make this a rule - and you save time). No, Johnny - I said in front of me - not behind me. Now, here is how you do a push pass. You point the toe of the support leg in the direction that you want the ball to go; you bend the knee of the support leg; you turn your passing leg outwards; lock the foot; and hit the ball in the middle and allow your leg to swing through the pass. Kyle, stop pushing Andrew. Okay, let me go through those points again. You point the toe of the support leg in the direction that you want the ball to go; you bend the knee of the support leg; you turn your passing leg outwards; lock the foot; and hit the ball in the middle and allow your leg to swing through the pass. Now, I need everybody to find a partner; get into one of the grids; and work on passing. Who doesn't have a partner? No, James, the grids run the other way. Andrew, stop throwing the balls against Steven. Robert, I need you to stand at the end of the grid, with Alex at the other end. No, Freddie, you hit the ball with the inside of your foot. Kevin, where is your ball? Now, doggone it, I want everybody in a grid right now. Didn't any one of you listen to me?"

Right Way:

"Okay, kids, time to line up for a demonstration. Bring your balls with you. Kyle, I need you here beside me, please.

Today, we are going to learn to do passing. Can anybody tell me why we would want to do passing in a game?"

How many types of passes do you guys think that there are?"

Okay, now the pass that we are going to work on today is called the push pass, because you use the inside of the foot to push the ball in the direction that you want it to go.

Johnny and Andrew, I've been watching and somebody already taught you how to do push pass, so would you come up here and help demonstrate the proper way to do it? Now, guys, let's watch them to see what they are doing. See, to connect with the ball, Johnny is turning his foot out and locking his foot to make it stiff, because it is hard to pass with a wobbly foot. Does that make sense?

Okay, the next thing that Johnny is doing is pointing the toe of his supporting foot at Andrew. Why do you suppose that this might help to make the pass better?

Now, Andrew, next time that the ball comes to you, I want you to show everybody what happens if you hit the ball at the bottom instead of in the middle. Okay, guys, see that hitting the ball at the bottom makes it fly up in the air? Who can tell me why we don't usually want the ball to fly up in the air when we are passing? That's right - because it makes it lots harder for your teammate to receive it.

Okay, does everybody think that they understand how to do a push pass? What are the main 3 things that we need to know? What do we do with our passing foot? What do we do with our supporting foot? Where do we connect with the ball? Good, now get your balls and come over with me to the grids and I will show you what we are going to do.

Everybody stand at the end of this first grid. Now, Johnny, go to the far end of the grid between the cones. Take your ball with you and just put it to the side of the grid. Alex, come stand between the cones on this end. Now, put your ball on the ground, and pass it to Johnny. Johnny, I want you to receive it and pass it back to Alex.

Now, I need two players in each grid, lined up just like Andrew and Johnny. After everybody has worked on this for a little while, we are going to have a contest - so be sure to practice hard."

It is easy to see that the coach is talking LOTS more in the "right" way - and that the whole explanation is takes lots more time. So, why does this approach go over better with the kids? Three reasons:

First, the coach almost never says more than about 15 words at any one stretch (so it doesn't seem to the kids that the coach is saying very much). Secondly, the coach is allowing the kids to feel that they are smart and that they can figure out the answers themselves - because the coach is consulting them and asking for their feedback. Third, the coach is using demonstrators from the team who already know how to do the skill - which helps to convince them that they really can learn how to do this (and challenges the competitive ones to try to beat the demonstrators).

Note how the coach in the "right" example explained why passing was important before going into teaching the skill itself. By making the skill relevant, the players are more likely to want to actually try to learn to do it. Also note that the coach does a demonstration of the drill at the grids, by positioning one pair into a grid and showing what he wants to have accomplished. Most smaller players learn much better by watching and imitating, so the demonstration helps them to know exactly what is expected during the drill. Also note that the coach is promising that we aren't going to do this one exercise forever - and that a "contest" is coming up soon. This helps to keep the players working and focused, because they know that they are going to have to use this same skill later - so they won't be able to "win" if they don't work now.

Once most coaches learn to use the Q & A technique, they will solve most of their problems in introducing the drills and getting the players started on what they want them to work on. The bulk of any remaining problems will disappear with use of the 3 Rs. These are:

- Rules (we always do things this way)
- Restrictions (moving Johnny away from Jim; putting George beside you; etc.)
- Rewards (contests, games, scrimmages, etc. AFTER they do what you want).

7. How to correct errors

All beginners make mistakes. This is a normal part of learning. When players make mistakes, the very first thing which you need to decide is whether to correct the error. If, and only if, you decide that the error must be corrected at this stage will you then decide what method to use to correct the error.

Not every error needs immediate correction. In fact, one of the biggest mistakes that a coach can make is to try to get absolute perfection on the first few tries. If a player is corrected, and corrected, and corrected, it won't be long before he concludes that he cannot do ANYTHING right. And, it won't be much longer before he gives up and quits trying.

How do you decide whether to step in? The first clue is that the player is absolutely lost - and clearly doesn't understand what you wanted - so he is having zero success. Before you step in to correct one player, however, look around. Sometimes everybody is having trouble, which means one of two things: your instructions weren't clear or the skill is too difficult. If this happens, you need to stop the drill immediately; demonstrate again (don't use words - use actions); and start over. If they still don't get it with a full demonstration, the odds are very good that the skill is just too difficult - and that you need to go to your fall-back plan.

If most of your players are having some success, but are struggling with one or two elements of the skill (for instance, most are turning the foot correctly for the push pass, but accuracy is poor or the balls are often airborne), do a group correction. Young players often are very sensitive about being called aside (they think that this is a suggestion that they are stupid or slow - even though, in truth, most young players are so self-centered that they pay no attention at all to anyone else). As a result, a general statement that you noticed that a bunch of the players were having trouble with X is the better approach, followed by a quick demonstration. Then, as you go around the grids, you can simply issue reminders about "remember to hit the ball in the middle, not at the bottom".

Another option is to find the one or two players who are doing it right, and use them as your new demonstrators by praising them. For example "Okay, everybody, look at Michael He is doing the push pass exactly right. Michael, have you ever done a push pass before? No? Wow, you are doing really well. Look, everybody, see how he is turning his pass foot out and making his foot stiff, then hitting the ball in the middle. And, look at his plant foot, which is pointed right at Johnny. Way to go, Michael!" Because all of the other kids will want some praise too, this method can work very well (although the coach must be careful to spread these good examples around, to avoid looking like he has a "pet" player).

In the early stages of learning a skill, the coach must remember to praise, praise and praise. The player must feel that the coach is positive that the player CAN do it. Thus, as the coach makes the rounds, constant comments should be made to reinforce successes. Even if a player has messed up 3 out of the 4 elements of a skill, he still got one right. The coach needs to grasp onto this one right element, and build from there in order to get the player to keep on trying even when the skill is difficult for him.

How is this done? By pointing out what he did right, then pointing out a SINGLE correction which needs to be made, then getting him to try to make this correction, and praising the dickens out of his effort. Older players may be able to take multiple corrections at once, but young players do better with one step at a time if they are having trouble. So, using the example of the push pass, let's say that the only thing that the player is doing correctly is getting his plant foot pointed at the other player - but he is not turning his pass foot outward; he isn't locking his foot; and he is hitting the ball underneath with a floppy foot, so it is going airborne and flying wildly into the next grid. Overall, not having much success, right?

In this situation, with this many problems, the coach may decide that it is important enough to get success to do some individual corrections (as the player already feels like an idiot anyway, so coach really cannot make it much worse for the poor dear). The first thing to do is to offer encouragement, especially if the player is starting to get upset. It can help to remind the player of earlier successes ("well, you didn't think that you could do pull-backs either - but you learned how, didn't you?"). It also can help to mention the one

right thing which they are doing (although the coach should be careful about making too big a deal of this, especially if this is a fairly small accomplishment, as the player may end up feeling worse).

If the coach is fairly sure that the player will be able to "get it" with a fairly short demonstration, then this is the way to go. The first thing to try usually is to get the player to stand beside the coach, and watch while the coach demonstrates, then to give it another try. Then, if this doesn't work, the coach may want to get down and show the player what is needed by turning the foot outward. Sometimes, the player may simply be confused by some word used by the coach. For example, many coaches will tell a player to "lock the ankle". Often, the little ones have no idea what this means - but will immediately understand if you tell them to "make your foot stiff".

The objective of the coach in making the correction is to get the player to show the coach a "good one" before the coach moves on. There may be some interim steps to this stage, with the coach saying "better" or "almost" - but the coach wants to be fairly sure that the player really does understand the concept (even if short on the execution) before the coach moves along. The idea is to build a praise or PNP sandwich (giving praise, followed by the negative, followed by more praise). Thus, in most cases, the coach will want to say "Good, Johnny, I really like the way that you are turning your foot out and striking the ball right in the middle. You might get more accuracy if you paid more attention to your plant foot, though. Remember that you want to aim your toe at your partner. Let's try that. Better. Show me another one. Good, see how much more accurate that it. You are almost there. Another 3 minutes and I think you will have it."

However, what do you do if the poor little thing is just not catching on? The coach cannot spend more than a minute or so with the player, or he risks losing track of the others. Besides, the poor partner is going to be bored to death if you take this extra time with one player. So, what does the coach do then? There are several possibilities. One is to recruit a willing parent to help out - and just send the child off to the side for awhile to work, while putting his partner into another group. Another is to pull over your best player at this particular skill, and ask him to work with this player (with the partner switching places with him). Often, this works terrifically, because the better player gets a chance to develop leadership skills (and also tends to "own" the player whom he has helped - which promotes teamwork), while the newer player gets the chance to see that somebody who is his own age really can do this stuff.

If you don't have any available assistants, or willing/able players, then you need to figure out a way to combine this group with another group so that the partner of the weak player does not suffer (or rotate partners fairly often, for the same reason). Then, you need to hold a separate session with the player to work on the skill (before or after practice, or even on the weekend for an hour or so). On occasion, if the skill is relatively easy, a simple demo for the parent right after practice is enough, with a request that they work with the player at home later. And, finally, if you still are getting no success, it may make sense to suggest some private coaching with a different coach. This often can help, especially with technique issues like kicking, because another coach may notice something which you have missed - or be able to explain things in just enough of a different way that it will finally "click" with the player. But, don't overlook your responsibilities to the entire team - and get so bogged down in the problems of this one player that you ignore the rest. Simply do your best to help, and accept that there are times when you may not succeed. By the same token, remember that players are growing and changing constantly, and that the problem could arise from temporary coordination problems or some developmental lag. Thus, keep encouraging the player to work on the problem, and keep your fingers crossed (for him and for yourself).

8. How to adjust the drill to fix common problems

Work-rate seems too low/players are bored

Turn the drill into a contest. The work-rate, especially for boys, goes up dramatically if there is a race to see which pair is the first to, say, get 20 good passes in a row. So, if they are acting bored and aren't working hard, consider turning the drill into a contest. No idea how to do this? Just ask the kids - they are the "fun"

experts (and invent games all of the time in normal play). They will be delighted that you asked - and that you truly don't want practices to be boring. So, this is an occasion where everyone wins.

Too many players are idle

One common mistake is to have line drills(which are drills where all of the players are lined up in a row, waiting to take a turn at doing something). These drills are a recipe for disaster, as the kids are bound to get bored and will start pushing/shoving/bickering, instead of paying attention. If you have to have lines for some reason (such as shooting drills), have multiple lines and turn whatever you are doing into a competition between the groups in the lines. Another option is relay races, which force the next in line to pay attention - and forces things to move much more quickly.

Not enough success (pressure too high)

The basic rule of thumb in soccer is: More Space = More Time = Less Pressure on Attackers. By the same token, to get less pressure for defenders, you use the equation Less Space = Less Time (for the attackers) = Less Pressure on Defenders.

It obviously is important to let players have success. Generally, an offensive drill/activity will first be done with very little pressure. Pressure on the attackers can be adjusted in two ways - by increasing the space to the point where the attackers can move fairly easily around any defenders or by having the defenders move in slow-motion. Then, as the concept is learned, pressure is slowly increased. When defensive pressure is first applied on beginning attackers, it often may be better if the coach does it. Teammates will, even when instructed not to, may apply too much pressure to begin with.

Why? Defending is easier for younger players than attacking. Moreover, younger players like to move and run, so it can be hard to get them to act in slow-motion. However, it is essential to be able to restrict your defenders in the early stages of training attackers, so that your attackers don't get rattled and are able to gain confidence. Here are some ways to harness these over-eager defenders:

- Have opposition play only as a shadow (good for introducing very light pressure)
- Anchor the defender in some fashion, such as one foot always must be on a line or a cone, or one leg always must be anchored.
- Act as the defender yourself when working with very timid players, and goof up to give them success.
- Assign players to work with others of similar size and skill level.

Look for all sorts of ways to reduce pressure on the attacker, by giving the attacker more space or more time. You can do this by making the grid bigger, or giving the attacker a head start, or giving the defender a handicap. Be creative. For example, you can put a defender at a corner flag, and let him come out as soon as you serve a ball into an attacker coming straight at goal from around the 30 - or you can leave him by the goal post and not allow him to start until the attacker crosses the penalty arc. Or, you can put a defender 3-5 yards behind the attacker, and let them both go at once. And, all of these situations will arise in games (even the anchored defender, who is equivalent to somebody who has just twisted an ankle or knee), so don't be shy about using them.

New defenders also will need some help (although probably not as much as new attackers). A defensive drill/activity for newer players should be structured so that the space is relatively tight, which reduces the pressure on the defenders - and promotes their success . However, because defensive skills come somewhat more "naturally" to younger players than dribbling skills, the space which they are defending (and, hence, the pressure on them) typically can be increased more rapidly.

9. Special problems in teaching goalkeepers

Many coaches are not sure how to train a goalkeeper, so they overlook this training. In addition, even if they want to work with their keeper, they have a hard time finding practice time where they can devote attention to this specialized training.

For beginners, it is not a bad idea to hold 1-2 practices on basic goalkeeping, so that they can try their hands at the task and see if they like it. Just simple stuff on hand position to catch the ball high/middle/low; footwork to move around the goal; the basic rules on when the ball can be picked up (so they can help the keeper to remember if the ball is passed back or if the keeper is close to the edge of the box); and basic punting. When teaching angles, you will need strikers anyway, and this is an excellent time to teach everyone about common keeper/striker mistakes in finishing.

If you have an older team, and only have 2-3 players who will play in goal, some ideas/options include:

- Hold a separate session for them to cover keeper-specific techniques which will require some time to learn (such as diving saves). Consider asking a HS or Comp player to help out (a coupon to his/her favorite pizza place is a nice "thank-you", but be sure that it isn't negotiated ahead of time, as this could mess up eligibility if he/she is "paid"). Even 15-30 minutes before or after practice can be useful times to work on keeper training.
- Give practice/training to your keepers when doing finishing work. Remember: pointers which you give to your keepers will rub off on your strikers, so you are doing striker training even if you pay no attention to them. Ditto for keepers, as they will listen to the instructions to strikers about keeper mistakes, even if you pay no attention to the keeper during a striking session. If you only have 2 keepers, you might work at just one goal and rotate them in/out (using the off-duty keeper as a ball-shagger).
- Take your keepers aside (individually or together) for a few minutes when you have odd numbers for a drill (e.g., 5 groups of 3 when you wanted a 3v3 drill, or 9 players for 4v4). However, at youth ages, all keepers need plenty of field time, so consider having plenty of scrimmages with small goals/no keepers so that your keepers will develop good footskills.

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Management & Discipline

There are a number of problems which may occur over the course of a season due to the behavior of parents or players. These include attendance problems; disruptions/misconduct during practice or games; "overly-helpful" parents; and parents who are chronic grippers. Difficulties in handling these four problems are why most coaches to decide to give up coaching, so it is very important to learn how to deal with them.

Dealing with Discipline Problems

The first trick in learning to handle players is to establish your authority early. If players do not get the idea that you are the "boss", and that you will insist that they follow your rules, it will be very difficult to control them. Here are some time-honored ways to get this message across early.

Tips on Asserting Your Authority

Using "the Voice" and "the Look"

It's important for players to be able to recognize by your tone of voice and your manner when you intend a no-nonsense directive, or are drawing a boundary which they try to cross at their peril. Yelling does not work. Use a firm voice and a firm look, and DEMAND attention. Make it clear that this is non-negotiable - and your chances that they will listen increase substantially. Watch for their reaction, however. It is easy to scare little ones with a tone of voice which might induce teenagers to slowly think about complying - so adjust to your audience.

The Art of Refocusing Attention

Sometimes a quick, firm word in passing is enough to get things back on track without stopping an ongoing activity. If this doesn't work, don't try to yell or frantically run around to get the attention of the players. STOP the group, DEMAND that they all stop talking and look at you, and WAIT until everyone does so before even trying to start with the substance of your remarks. Using "the Voice", say something like: "Eyes on me. Now."

If someone starts clowning or chatting in the background after you start trying to talk substance, STOP! Firmly re-demand silence before continuing. Keep doing this until they shut up, even if you spend 20 minutes on a 30 second announcement. Eventually, the other players will start to tell this player to be quiet, because they will get bored standing around. When the disruptive one starts to get negative attention from his peers, the behavior tends to cease quickly.

Choose Your Battles Wisely

Remember that all young kids misbehave at times. If the child is not normally disruptive or if the disruption is not serious - and is quickly abandoned with a quiet word from you, there is no reason to make a big deal over it.

If you are too stern, and use the proverbial cannon to deal with a small gnat of an offense, this causes two problems. First, the compliant players will start to fear you - and will become so upset by any correction from you that they will tend to freeze up and become afraid to make mistakes for fear of displeasing you (so they won't learn very well). Secondly, the more spirited or defiant players will figure out that you have already used up all of your ammunition on a trivial offense - so they won't see any reason why they shouldn't commit HUGE offenses if the punishment is going to be the same anyway. As a result, it is not

uncommon to find utter chaos when the coach is not using good judgement on when/how/why/where to punish offenses.

How to Discipline Effectively

When misbehavior seriously disrupts the activities of the other players (either because it is persistent minor stuff or because of one egregious act), the coach needs to use "the Voice" and "the Look" to stop the behavior instantly.

It is a good idea to talk in terms of Rules - because players tend to remember Rules better. So, tell them that "Hitting a teammate is against our Rules".

Then, get the offender to tell you WHY this is against the rules. Forcing the offender to verbalize why other players might not like to be hit serves two purposes. It shows the other players that this kid knew better AND it causes the offender to suffer some humiliation in front of everyone by admitting that he knew better.

Once the player admits that he knew better, make him apologize. Sure, the apology is likely to be grudging - and delivered under his breath in the general direction of his belly button. But, by forcing him to apologize (and making him go sit out until he does apologize, if he initially refuses) helps to breed good sportsmanship down the line - and helps him to recognize that other players have rights too.

Sometimes, of course, a player may not understand why something is against the Rules. For instance, the little brother of a HS-level player may have seen lots of slide tackles in games, and truly may not understand why you got upset when he took out the ankles of a teammate with a reckless tackle. In those cases, it is important to explain why you are upset, and to explain what you want in the future.

What if one teammate started it, and the other finished it? Easy. Make them both apologize, then make the retaliator explain to you how he plans to handle things next time (e.g., come to you; use his words instead of his fists; etc.). However, the instigator should not get off scott-free. Consider giving him an extra "punishment" for starting things. Often, especially with arch-rivals, making the instigator say 5 good things about his adversary is quite effective in healing the wounds all around.

Some Tips on Using "Punishments"

Be careful in using physical activity as punishment. Especially with younger players, learning to associate running or exercise with punishment can cause them to resent that activity when you need them to do this work. Nonetheless, there are times when a quick set of jumping jacks or pushups may help to refocus the player. As long as these are not onerous (no more than 5-10), the players usually accept the penalty with good humor and no lasting effects. However, if the player is looking for attention and wanting to clown around (or wanting to challenge the coach in some fashion), he will use the penance as an opportunity to have fun at the expense of the coach. As a result, if the coach already knows that he is dealing with a defiant player, the best bet may be to tell the player to go sit out until he can behave.

ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE sanctions is forcing the misbehaving player to sit out during an activity. Giving a time-out can often be very effective. Most players want to be with everyone else - even if they are being disruptive.

Usually, the coach will give the player the option of returning when the player decides to behave. However, if the player is refusing to participate in an activity which he doesn't like, then the better course is to sit the player out for the remainder of the practice. Otherwise, the coach will send the message to the team that, if you don't want to do an exercise, just go sit down - and you won't suffer any penalty. Once the players discover that you don't get to pick and choose what you do, and you don't get to scrimmage if you don't work, the incentives will be reduced to seek a time-out simply to avoid doing work.

Okay, so where should the player be sent to sit out? The ideal spot for a player to sit out is where you (or some responsible adult) can keep them in view, but where they are far enough removed they cannot easily create further distraction for the rest of the group. Where and how far will depend on the player, the setting, and the available supervision. (Don't let a buddy join them for company; if two players must be sent out, send them to opposite ends of the field).

Sometimes Carrots Work Better!

It's important to not forget to use carrots as well as sticks. Just as in making corrections, good behavior should be praised and rewarded to reinforce behaviors you want at practices and games. One of the most effective ways to shape up a whole team that's half-hearted and distracted about whatever subject is the focus of the day's activities is to make most players' favorite part of the practice, THE SCRIMMAGE, contingent on the extent they get with the program. "The sooner we learn to do this, the longer we can scrimmage".

"Full Moon" Days

Sometimes, your players' energy and mood simply isn't a good match for the well-intended practice plan you designed. They're hopelessly restless, with unbounded energy. If the normally cooperative players are exceptionally wild, and none of the adjustments which you make seem to work, consider simply abandoning the plan for the day - and playing nothing but games (the winners of the last game get to pick the next one). As long as the games are soccer-related, the practice session is probably doing more good than you realize. The kids are getting lots of touches on the ball; team morale is soaring because coach is a good guy (and we got a free day); and coach is able to relax and enjoy watching the players act like a bunch of puppies. Consider it a vacation to recharge the batteries, and just have fun.

What to Do When Regular Discipline Won't Work

In addition to normal disruptions which can arise from high spirits or simply being a child, there will be times when unruly behavior is a symptom of further problems. So, if the tips given above don't work, it is time to try to figure out the root cause of the problem.

Disciplinary problems arise for a lot of different reasons, such as: the work is too easy or too hard; the work is boring (too much repetition or too much standing around); the partners are not helping with the work (perhaps because they are too unskilled or disruptive themselves); the player wants attention from teammates or the coach; the player is vying with the coach for control/leadership of the group; the player doesn't like a partner or wants a different partner, and is using disruption to try to force a change; or the player wants to get kicked out of practice for some reason (perhaps a parent likes soccer, but he doesn't, or the player wants to punish the parent by getting himself tossed out). Sometimes, the only thing wrong is that there is a full moon - and everyone is a bit rowdy.

So, the first thing that you need to do is to look around and see if you can figure out what is causing the problems. If everybody is acting up, the odds are good that there is something wrong with the drill (it is too easy or too boring in some way). If this is the problem, then adjust the drill or make it into a contest, and your problems are likely to be solved.

If just one group is having problems, look to see why. Often, you may have partners who don't match well in terms of skill level, or who have some innate rivalry, or who are such good buddies that they want to play when together. Be sure to watch for a minute to see if you can figure out what the problem is, then make needed adjustments. Often, this will mean that you need to switch partners.

If you switch partners, and the same problems arise between one player and his new partner (while the old partner is doing just fine), you have identified a likely problem child. However, you still may not know why the problem is arising - and may need to observe further or talk to the player to see what is going on.

Often, your best bet will be to call this player over to one side, while asking your assistant to take over. If you are alone, put the new partner in another group while you talk to the problem child. A simple inquiry about "what seems to be the problem" often will prompt an answer which gives you some clues. A happy grin, and a response of "just playing", may need nothing more than a reminder to settle down (with a reminder that he will need to sit until he is ready to work if he keeps this up). A sullen response of "this is boring" needs closer analysis (as this term may mean that the work is too hard and the player is too proud to admit it, or it can mean that the player really is bored silly). Cures for these types of problems can be found in the "How to Teach" section. A baffled look (or inability to keep looking at the coach while talking), especially when coupled with constant fidgeting, may indicate problems with ADHD - or a player who needs more explanation than normal for some other reason (such as a learning disability). Usually, this requires some discussion with the parents to find out the source of the problem. Some information on dealing with the special needs of ADHD children is included below.

On occasion, the coach will be met with a defiant stare - which almost always means real trouble ahead. Often, the player is challenging you for control of the team - and is using the disruptions to provoke you. Sometimes, these players try to hide their true agenda with passive-aggression (by slowly and maliciously complying with the strict letter of any request while obviously refusing to get with the program).

These types of defiant players will require some special handling, as they often are among the better players on the team and are eager to show their superiority. Sometimes, these kids truly believe that they are God's gift to the world, and entitled to special treatment. Often, however, these kids have perfectionistic parents who are never satisfied with the child's performance, and the child is venting his frustration at the coach or teammates.

Special Issues in Handling Defiant Players

As noted previously, some players want to try to see if they can take over the team from the coach - and will push every button in an effort to get the coach to do what they want - instead of allowing the coach to do what he wants. These little characters can be devious, and the worst are the ones who use passive-aggressive behavior to show you that you cannot boss them around (moving at the speed of molasses, and making faces behind your back).

What many coaches do not realize is that, to this brand of player, it is a "win" any time that the coach has to interrupt the presentation; any time that any other player looks at them; any time that the coach gets mad or upset; or any other time that they can behave in a defiant way and get away with it. Thus, the trick is to refuse to let them "win" - and to do it in a way that they get no feeling whatsoever that you are bothered by their behavior.

For example, if a player is deliberately "dogging it", the easiest way to deal with this behavior is to tell him that you are sure that he must be sick because he is moving so slowly - then force him to go sit down for the rest of practice. Don't give in and allow him to come back.

If the player refuses to do the drill correctly (e.g., when the ball comes to him, it seems to always go flying off at top speed - requiring a slow amble to go get it), calmly send the partner off to work with another group - on the grounds that it is clear that Johnny needs major work on his footskills before he will be able to do what everyone else is doing. Then, put Johnny off by himself to do juggling, or to pass against a wall, or whatever. Once again, don't allow him to come back to the group - at least unless he comes to you to offer a surrender (as in "I really do know how, I was just screwing off, can I come back"). And, make sure that he understands that it must be a full surrender - or he will be sent off again to do individual work (maybe for 2-3 practices).

If the player is openly defiant, calmly explain that it is YOUR team and, if he wants to be on YOUR team, he needs to plan on doing things YOUR way. Then, send him off to think about his decision. Whatever you do - especially if he is a star - do NOT tolerate this behavior. If he gets the belief that he is so wonderful that you will do anything to keep him, you will have no control over him - and little control over the others (as they will start to mimic his behavior).

If you stay calm, and get creative in tailoring your "punishment" to fit the "crime", you often can win these players over. They frequently can be natural leaders, and can become very valuable if their talents are properly channeled. So, as soon as they start to surrender, it can be a good idea to try to figure out some way that you can allow them to get favorable attention/praise from you (in other words, set them up to really please you). One way is to recruit them to help a particular player to learn to do something which they are especially good at. This allows them to feel important, while helping the coach and the other player, so everyone wins. Often, this is the first step in harnessing their leadership talents.

But, don't be afraid to call the parents if you are unable to get the player to behave. Sometimes there is something going on at home (such as a divorce) which is causing the child to act out. Sometimes the child may have emotional problems which need attention, or will have a learning disability (like ADHD). And, sometimes, it will be obvious from talking with the parents that their little darling can do no wrong in their eyes - in which case, the coach may face similar problems to those in the section dealing with attendance (and likely will need to take a similar approach).

Special Issues on Dealing with ADHD Players

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD) is a type of disability which apparently involves some mis-wiring of the brain or the hormonal systems in the body. As a result of the disorder, children tend to be markedly inattentive and often are hyperactive (sometimes to the point of being almost frantic in their movements). The disorder usually is treated by administration of stimulants (such as amphetamines) - which have the unusual effect of slowing these children down (while the rest of the population would be highly-stimulated by these same drugs). This disorder is NOT the fault of the parents. It does NOT mean that the child lacks discipline (either by the coach or by his parents). What it DOES mean is that, just like a child with diabetes or the player with asthma, this player needs to take certain drugs to be able to function normally. While these players can create some headaches and frustrations until the coach learns the proper way to handle their particular problems (and gives the parents enough feedback to adjust dosages, if necessary, to handle disruptions at practice), most of these children can do just fine in soccer. In fact, because of their high energy levels, these players often make terrific little players once their energy can be harnessed. To be able to harness their energies, the coach needs some more information about the disorder. Characteristics of ADHD/ADD arise in early childhood, often before seven years of age, for most individuals. Boys are about three times more likely than girls to have symptoms of ADHD/ADD. Individuals with ADHD/ADD may know what to do but do not consistently do what they know because of their inability to efficiently stop and think prior to responding, regardless of the setting or task (in other words, they tend to be very impulsive - and to act without thinking). This can result in serious social problems, impairment of relationships, and/or lack of success. Doing things without thinking about the consequences can put them in dangerous situations (as they might run into traffic without looking, or climb the tree while the coach's back is turned). Thus, coaches of children with ADHD must be vigilant in keeping an eye on these charges, especially when they are fairly young.

The official definition of ADHD can be found at the CHADD website (an organization for children and adults with attention deficit disorder). Children may have attention deficits (i.e., be impulsive and unable to focus) without being hyperactive - or they also can display the additional frenetic hyperactivity which is commonly associated with the disorder.

ADHD should be diagnosed by a physician or qualified mental health professional. It is not uncommon that children are suspected of having the disorder, when they simply are "full of life". Therefore, most coaches

will not be able to diagnose the disorder. Nonetheless, if the player appears to be demonstrating many characteristics of an ADHD child, the coach may wish to quietly and confidentially approach the parents to report his observations - and ask for assistance and advice on the best way to deal with the child.

Many children with ADHD/ADD have above-average intelligence, so they may actually understand your explanations better than others. However, you do have to make sure they are paying attention. It is pointless to yell at them if they are inattentive or distracted. If they clearly are having a bad day, or didn't understand, the best approach is often to take them aside with their back to the group to have this discussion, in order to reduce outside distractions. It can be useful to get face to face with them, at their level, to force them to make eye contact and focus on you. Once you have their attention, you should explain things clearly and keep it very simple. Ask them to repeat what you said so you can be sure that they understood, then send them back to the group.

Indeed, if you already know that you have an ADHD player in your group, you can do this in the guise of a normal demo, simply by saying "OK, Johnny, now show me what we are going to do so I can be sure that everyone understood me". This avoids pulling the player out, and seems to reduce the emotional overlay which can lead to additional disruptions (as no player likes to be seen as different, or stupid).

If an ADHD/ADD child becomes disruptive, the best way to manage the situation is be firm, and to remove them from the group for a few minutes. Bring the player over to stand beside you. Don't make a big deal about it - just say "John, come over and stand by me, please". Or send the child off with an assistant. Often, if they just sit for 5 minutes, they can come back in (and use it as a carrot - "John, if you stand still and just listen for 3 minutes, you can do the demo for me"). It often can be helpful to simply tell them to come and let you know when they think that they are ready to follow the rules.

Children with ADHD/ADD often display the following problems:

- They frequently have difficulty with transition, especially going from activity to inactivity (i.e. recess then to the classroom) - they may need some extra warning time and assistance.
- They may display stronger than expected emotional reactions (emotional mountains out of molehills). When this happens, it may be best to send them to sit for awhile until they can get their emotions under control (to avoid any impulsive hitting or other actions while they are upset).
- They may have great difficulty maintaining position in games and in managing their energy output (throttle tends to be stuck on "full speed ahead"). They are not doing this out of spite, they just forget in the heat of the moment. They often do better in midfield spots where they can go to the ball, but may need to be subbed frequently to avoid getting completely pooped out.
- They may tend to play "too rough" out of enthusiasm. If they are big for their ages, you need to be especially careful in pairing them with others of their same size - and nipping overly-aggressive behavior in the bud. If you have an ADHD/ADD child on your team, and you want to learn more, start at the website for Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD) (<http://www.chadd.org/>). And, if the child is exceptionally afflicted (like most disorders, the symptoms can vary in severity), you may need to get extra help. Don't be shy about asking the parents to come to help, or asking your assistant to pull the child out for special training if he is unduly disruptive. On occasion, a child who is severely afflicted may need to special or unusual accommodations. For instance, if the child tends to be too rough on the field, or to constantly steal the ball from teammates in his desire to shine, the coach may need to consider putting the child in goal - for his own safety and that of the other players. The extra physical restrictions often will help such a child to focus, and to perform very well.

In many respects, although these children may have superior intelligence, their distractibility may require similar treatment to children of sub-par intelligence or athletic ability. All of these children require additional structure; special instructions; additional supervision; and substantial patience. However, in his own way, each of these children can succeed at soccer - and the ADHD children may be able to become World Class players with proper training. Indeed, several players on the U.S. National Team have this disorder. Thus, the coach may find that the player whom he wanted to strangle at u10 is a player whose

autograph is being sought by many at u23. It helps to keep reminding yourself that this is not their fault; that yelling at them is just as unfair as it would be to yell at a child with asthma for not running when he cannot breathe; that they almost always are trying; and that, ultimately, they really will learn to cope with their disability if the adults in their lives do not yell so much that they get to the point where they see no reason to try because everybody hates them.

Dealing with Attendance Problems

The best time to deal with attendance issues is at the Preseason meeting. Remember, soccer is a team sport. As a result, it creates huge problems for the coach and the team if the players don't show up for games - as the absence of sufficient players spoils the game for everyone (and may even cause a game to be forfeited). Likewise, because many skills in soccer build on skills which were learned earlier, it can create a nightmare for the coach if a player consistently misses steps in the instruction - because the coach either has to make special effort to try to help the player to catch up; simply have the player sit out until he can find time to help him; or let the player flounder (which then disrupts the learning of his partner). Similarly, if the player is chronically late to practice, this leaves the coach with the same 3 bad choices (let the child sit; let him flounder; or try to juggle things so that he hold an extra parallel practice for the latecomer).

So, use this meeting to make clear what your expectations are on attendance. Talk about the importance of making a commitment - and keeping a commitment. Explain that you do not want to be the only adult who keeps their commitments and that, just as you won't skip practices or skip games, you don't expect the parents to allow their players to skip practices or games. Ask if everyone is willing to make a firm commitment to come to all of the practices and all of the games, unless there is some true emergency or illness. Hand out player agreements in which the player promises in writing to come to practices and games, and to work hard. Make a production out of this - and explain why you are doing so. Why is it important to address attendance problems early? The answer is easy. If you don't push hard for good attendance, the kids who will end up leaving your team are the reliable ones (because they will be sick of playing on a team where nobody shows up - and where the practices are no fun, because coach is always distracted by trying to bring others up to speed or the teammates cannot do the drills because they have missed so much work).

Furthermore, if the other parents/players see that Johnny is never coming to practices and not showing up for games (and coach doesn't act like this is a problem), some others will be tempted to start doing the same thing. So, if you allow parents and players to believe that you don't care if they show up and will accept any old excuse, your team is likely to be filled with players who show up when they feel like it - and whose skills (and win/loss record) reflect their lackadaisical approach. If one or two parents do not want to make this commitment, offer to try to move them to another team. And, if half or more of the parents do not want to make the same commitment to the team which you are, you need to consider whether it is worthwhile to bother with this group (because the chances are good that even the committed players won't bother coming by the end of the season, as it is not much fun to play or practice with people who show up so seldom that they may not even know your name). You can flatter yourself that you can make the practices so much fun that the kids will want to be there. However, the kids don't drive. Thus, if the parents view you as a glorified unpaid babysitter to use whenever it is convenient, or as a way-stop in a whirlwind tour of every extra-curricular activity in the universe, the pleas to return to practice will fall on deaf ears anyway.

Despite having this discussion at the outset, you may run into some problems with attendance by some players. Here are some things to do which may help you to nip these problems in the bud.

Always take attendance at practice. If anyone is tardy, note this as well.

Make a big deal out of any absence or tardiness. Tell the player that he was missed. Keep him late to go over anything that he missed (or ask for him to come early). Call the parents at home to ask why. Remind them that you need him at practice.

When a player is tardy, don't allow him to join the group immediately. Put him to work on doing warm-ups or fast-footwork drills. Then, hold him out of the scrimmage at the end of practice to do special work. Make sure that he understands that the reason that he is not scrimmaging is because he showed up late.

If the player is late more a few times, talk to the parent and find out why. Suggest other transportation options. Suggest a carpool. But, make sure that the parent understands what happens to YOUR schedule when the player is late - as it is very unfair to expect you to run parallel practices or to disrupt others.

Take attendance at each game, and give a star (or small treat) to anyone who made all of the practices for the week on time and who showed up for the game on time (give a reduced award to the ones who were tardy). Allocate any extra time to those with perfect attendance. If your best efforts at persuasion do not work, then your primary objectives are: trying to get the other parents/players not to follow in the path of the irresponsible parent; and, if you cannot cut the child at the end of the season, trying to convince his parents to take him to another team.

Some coaches try to achieve these objectives by benching the absent player. However, this option often is not available to Rec coaches (because Club rules may require the coach to play a player for one-half game if he shows up, even if the child never comes to practice). Besides, if the team has to play short if the player is benched, it is difficult to do this without upsetting the other parents.

Even where benching is possible, it may be very hard to punish the child (who doesn't drive) for the irresponsible behavior of the parents. The child often looks so miserable that other parents and players will feel sorry for him (which can cause a backlash). Likewise, angry confrontations with the parents whenever they show up do little good (as this scares all of the other kids; tend to upsets the other parents (who won't really understand what has gone on before or why you are so upset with this group of parents); and tend to affect how the coach comes across in the practices and games (because an irritated coach usually lacks a sense of humor and doesn't seem to be having a good time)).

So, what can you do? First, talk to the Club and make sure that they know that you could use an extra player. Often, where a team is having to play short, the Club will bend the rules on signups and allow the other players to find a classmate to come to the team late. If you can get a replacement, it may be easier to diplomatically offer to let the other child drop off so that his parents won't be bothered by having to bring him when it obviously is so much of a burden.

In most cases, you also will want to hold a team meeting to talk about how to handle the attendance problems (in order to place the spotlight on the problem and bring any complaints or problems out into the open). Some coaches are afraid to hold meetings to discuss attendance problems - because they fear that the irresponsible parents will claim that it is the coach's fault that the child doesn't come to practice. However, if someone is going to make these claims, there is a good chance that they already are doing it behind the back of the coach anyway - so it makes sense to get these complaints out in the open where the coach has some chance of giving a rebuttal to the back-biting.

Remember that, if the majority are not happy with your coaching, this is something that you need to know (as either you are wasting your time or you haven't done a good sales job on your philosophy on player development). Quite often, parents with little involvement in team activities will blame the coach when what they really mean is "we don't like the win/loss record" or "my child should be playing more". This is why it is a good idea to address your definition of "winning" and your philosophies on playing time at the Preseason meeting - and to continue to give regular updates to the parents on the progress of the children, so that they will realize that the players actually are learning new skills in practice, which will help to improve their win/loss record over time.

Also understand that, to some parents, the only thing that matters is that their child is on a "winning" team (even as a bench-sitter). There also are parents who truly believe that they are entitled to drop in and out of any activity without penalty, and it is your job to be an unpaid babysitter for times when it is convenient for them to drop the child off. If most of the parents do not agree with your coaching philosophies, then you are the wrong leader for this particular group - even though you are a good person and may be a terrific coach. If you are the wrong person for the job which is being offered, then you need to know this - or you will be beating your head against the wall in frustration.

In most cases, the vast majority of parents have no interest in coaching; are very grateful that you are doing the job; and will be supportive once they understand the problems which you face when players are tardy or absent. Often,

they can help to bring pressure to bear on the Club to provide another player to your team and/or help to locate an extra player. If this isn't possible, they may be able to help you to talk the Club into disbanding your team and placing the responsible kids on other teams. So, the chances are good that you will manage to work things out in a manner which suits the majority. However, if you are offered a job by the majority which you just don't want, don't be afraid to turn it down.

Dealing with "Overly-helpful" Parents

If parents have been acting as your assistants at practices, it is not uncommon for them to want to continue to participate during games. This is something which you need to watch closely, for several reasons. First, if other parents see a "non-coach" giving instructions to players on the field, they are going to be tempted to start doing this themselves. This will drive the kids crazy, because "too many cooks" really do spoil things. Secondly, most parents are going to be watching their own child - and giving most of their instructions to their own child. This can be very distracting to the child (even if the instructions are good) because it takes his attention away from the game and keeps him from using his own brain to figure things out for himself. Furthermore, many children simply want praise, praise and more praise from their parents - so any corrections will be viewed as a public statement of "Boy, you are so stupid, I hate having you as my kid." Finally, and often most importantly, the instructions being given by these "helpers" often tend to be completely wrong - and exactly opposite from what you have been working on at practice.

What to do? The key is tact - and a Preseason meeting. Explain to the parents that the kids need to be able to use the games as learning experiences - and too much criticism is going to feel to them that the parents view them as failures. Tell the parents that, on game day, the ONLY thing that you want to hear is some general praise ("Nice job; good shot; unlucky; good idea; etc."). Tell your assistants that you really appreciate their help, but you need them to sit in the stands on game day, because you are afraid that other parents will be tempted to start "helping" by shouting instructions - and this will drive the kids nuts!

Then, if you have some parent who starts to give instructions, nip this in the bud early. Each time that the parent does this, smile and say "Remember the Rule, please." Be good humored about it. Make a sign which proclaims the stands as a NO COACHING ZONE. Bring a gag. But, don't permit this parent to violate your rules.

The same goes for parents who want to yell at opposing players or referees - except that you MUST leap in hard to prevent this. A very firm "George, we don't yell at the Refs" - followed by "Sorry, Ref - It won't happen again" - makes it clear to everyone that you don't like this conduct. Ditto for yelling at opposing players, but be even more forceful. It is very scary for smaller players to deal with irate adults - and you need to stop this immediately. If the parent doesn't listen, tell him to go sit in his car. Even if this means abandoning the game, or going to get a Club official to help, it is your obligation to protect these other children - just as you would want the other coach to protect your little ones. Besides, if you do not move in quickly, the next thing that you know, you will have some irate Dad from the other side coming to see your parent - and all hell could break loose. So, do what you need to do - but don't tolerate this type of behavior.

Dealing with Parental Complaints

Almost every parent occasionally disagrees with your decisions as a coach (whether or not you hear about it). Usually, the parent is simply putting the interests of the child first - and seeing things from the child's point of view. Most parents don't complain, and are more likely to leave the team if they are unhappy with how things are handled. So, it is good to have parents who will bother to give you feedback (even if it can be painful to hear). Most of the time, this feedback is well-intentioned - and the parent simply wants an explanation for what has happened or wants to offer some suggestions about alternate ways to do things. Most of the time, this advice is well-intentioned (and the parent had no desire whatsoever to take over the team - or to try to order you around).

Most parents have 2 objectives when they sign the child up: for the child to succeed and for the child to be happy. If you praise the child in front of the parent, you can rest assured that the child will give you a big grin - and you earn points in both columns. Do this as often as you can - and you will keep gripes to a minimum. Any time that you start resenting the time that it takes to give this positive feedback, tell yourself that you could easily be spending double

this time - and a lot less happily - talking to just one upset parent! In short, a good coach makes the parents believe that they have wonderful, successful and happy offspring - which causes the parents to believe that the coach must be an absolutely brilliant judge of children.

But, of course, you cannot please all of the people all of the time - and you may end up with a complainer or advice-giver despite your best efforts. If this happens, listen briefly to find out what the problem is, then schedule a time to talk about it. NEVER discuss any serious problem right before a practice (or right before a game). You have work to do, and don't need the distractions (and certainly don't need to be upset yourself if any harsh things are said). Furthermore, if the parent is really upset, you don't want any confrontation to occur in front of your players or other parents. So, set the discussion for the end of practice - or schedule a time to call the parent later (if this is something where the child does not need to hear the conversation).

NEVER discuss any problems or complaints right after a game. If a parent comes to you with a complaint right after a game, make up any excuse that you can and get out of there. Usually, these complaints come after a hard game and a hard loss, when everyone is upset. Give everyone time to cool off - so that things are not said which are regretted later.

When you do talk to the parent, listen carefully to the parent's problem. Be calm. Try to get them to see things from your point of view. If at all possible, lavish some praise on the child during the meeting (remember parental objectives). Try to verify their reports that the child is unhappy (for instance, some parents want their child to be the goal-scoring star, while the child truly is happiest as a keeper or sweeper). Volunteer to have a meeting with them and the child to talk about the situation. If the child truly is upset (for instance, he wants to be a forward, while you have rotated him to the back because he sorely needs to develop some defensive skills), talk about why you think that this is best. Usually you will be able to resolve complaints by open communication, and a calm approach to the problem.

However, some parents simply will not be satisfied, no matter what you do. This happens quite commonly with parents who were athletes, and ended up with non-athletic children, where it is easier to cast blame than to face reality about the child's lack of talent. If it is clear that you are not getting anywhere, suggest that you set up a joint meeting with Club officials to talk about the problem. In the meantime, call the Club to give them a "heads-up" that they might hear from this parent, if it appears that the parent is truly irate.

If worse comes to worse, take heart that "parents-from-hell" tend to stick around for only a short time. Usually, you will find that they have been very unhappy with every coach whom their child has ever had - so they go back in the pool every season. In fact, don't be surprised if, when you call the Club, you hear a large sigh come out of the phone - along with a comment of "Oh, no. Not them again."

Updated 17 March 1999

Special Ideas for Your First Practice

Your first practice sets the tone for your upcoming season, and it is important to create a proper first impression. Often in a new coach's rush to get players out on the field, you might forget something as basic as introducing yourself and your assistants. Take a little extra time to prepare for this session, and be ready when the players arrive.

1. Establish Rules and Set Priorities

In general, the players and parents will know your specific team rules and policies because you've explained them during a pre-season meeting. If this is the case, simply provide a quick review to remind your players and any parents who stay what is expected.

For logistical reasons, many coaches prefer to hold their organizational meeting in conjunction with their first practice session. If you do this, remember two things: Meeting before the practice can leave young players bored and restless. Meeting after the practice could lead to problems with parents rushing off early without really listening.

2. Learn Everyone's Name

At the recreational level, it is common for coaches to know only a few of their players by name or face. The same is true for the players who will tend to cluster near the teammates they know and ignore the ones they don't know. Your goal is to get everyone to learn everyone's name as quickly as possible.

At the youngest age levels, you might want to bring stick-on name tags for players and coaches. Some teams have even made inexpensive scrimmage/practice shirts using plain cotton T's and fabric markers to draw on a name and number. At the very least, keep a 3x5 "cheat sheet" listing the player's name and 2-3 identifiers (e.g. Caitlin C./long blonde ponytail and orange shorts). Repeat the names as often as possible throughout the practice, and have your players do the same, switching partners and teammates for various activities. Repeat this process as necessary through the next several practices.

There are also several name games you can play.

3. What to Watch for

As you learn your players' names, you will also learn a little bit about their personalities, skill level, and knowledge of the game. Younger players (U-12 and below) should not be locked into set positions, so it's not as important to find out where they prefer to play. Please realize this is a frequent area of disagreement among coaches, and players vary considerably. For every shy pumpkin who freaks at the slightest change, there's a ferocious feline ready to take on any challenge. Adjust to your young players' needs to maximize their individual success.

With older teams, you might find certain players have definite preferences and strongly resist being put into unfamiliar positions. Recognizing these preferences early can help you plan ahead, whether you want to keep the player in a favorite position or help the player adjust to a new position.

You also need to make an early assessment of your team's overall abilities and each player's individual skill level. This will help you plan practices that are most effective at developing skills and an understanding of the game. The reality of most recreational teams is that you will find a wide range of interest, ability, and experience. You will need to challenge the talented while reaching out to the newbies as well. There are a number of ways to address mismatches without causing problems during practice.

4. Recruit Helpers

If you were unable to get volunteers to serve as assistants during your pre-season meeting, it's not too late. Parents of young players tend to stay at the practice field, and you should quickly round up 2-3 helpers from the crowd. These parents can tend to minor injuries, watch over discipline problems, help retrieve

balls, or serve as assistant coaches. Problems can occur when your assistants don't share your philosophy or focus only on their own child. If you're not sure you have the right folks for the job, wait a few practices before officially naming your assistants.

Last modified 12 March 1999.

Practice Plans to Teach the Basics

In this section of the manual, you'll find a set of practice plans designed to help you through your first season of coaching. We want to stress that these practices are not the "be all and the end all" by any means, and that there are as many ways to teach these basic skills as there are practising coaches. These are simply intended to help you get started. As you develop as a coach, you'll find that you begin to pick up more and more ideas about how to teach and improve your players' skills, and as your players improve you'll find that they increasingly challenge you to develop your coaching skills.

Here's what you'll find in this section:

Ball control

1. Straight-ahead dribbling and checking
2. A compilation of dribbling moves
3. Basic chop
4. Inside cut
5. Fakes & feints

Passing & receiving

1. Push pass
2. Passing & receiving
3. Receiving the ball
4. Chest traps
5. Juggling the ball and receiving the ball in the air with foot or thigh
6. Shielding
7. Introduction to heading
8. Heading

Kicking

1. Instep drive
2. Laces kick
3. Lofted kick

Defending

1. Standing tackle
2. Shoulder charge and side tackle
3. On-field communication (in another section of this Manual)
4. First defender and the defensive stance
5. Second defender
6. Marking an opponent

Attacking

1. Beginning take-on skills
2. 1 v 1 attacking skills
3. 2 v 1 attacking patterns (combined play)
4. On-field communication (in another section of this Manual)

Other

1. Throw-ins
2. Restarts
3. Tips on basic goalkeeper training
4. Stretching and a sample stretching routine

5. Teaching the Laws of the Game (LOTG)
6. Fun Games that Teach Skills
7. On-field communication (in another section of this Manual)

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Straight-Ahead Dribbling and Checking (Stopping) the Ball

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Start with some basic ball-control movements, such as rolls, vees, toe-taps. Do your stretches, interspersed with assorted ball control moves which you want to practice.

Individual Work

The first step in learning to dribble is learning how to "carry" the ball by dribbling it straight ahead. The technique is very important to get down correctly. Done properly, this technique allows a player to propel the ball forward by "feel", without needing to look down to see where the ball is. This technique should be practiced constantly.

The key coaching points are as follows:

1. The knee of the dribbling leg is bent and the toes are pointed downwards and slightly inwards, so that the front of the foot comes into contact with the ball.
2. Contact with the ball is made with the laces of the shoe, with the big bone of the arch slightly below the top of the ball at about the center of the ball.
3. The knee must be over the ball when contact is made, so that the gait itself is very similar to prancing.
4. As contact is made with the ball, the ball is dragged/pulled along by the dribbling foot, so that it comes to rest beside the dribbling foot when you step down again. Short steps are used, and the ball stays in front of the torso at all times.

After illustrating this move, allow the players to have some time to experiment by moving around in free space. When most have learned the correct foot position and are successfully dragging their balls around with them, distribute them on a line (like they were lined up for a race) and get them to dribble to the "finish" line and check the ball (checking should be taught in the practice before this one).

Start using a walking pace, then progress to a slow jog, then to a faster jog. It is doubtful that your players will be able to progress to full running speed using this technique until they have practices for several sessions. So, for your warm-ups for the next few practices, do a jog around the complex or your field to work on straight-ahead dribbling.

Once they have learned to dribble with their dominant foot, switch to the other foot. It is fine to drop back to walking speed (dribbling is tiring) to work on the technique. Your main objective is to get them to learn to dribble with the dominant foot - and at least occasionally be able to take some dribbling steps with the non-dominant foot when they need to do this to shield the ball. Some players will be naturally left-footed and others will have no strong foot preference. However, all players can learn to use both feet, if encouraged and prodded to do so.

How do you encourage them to do so? Ask them to guess whether a race is going to be won by a guy with 1 foot or 2 feet. They know that answer. So, if I am a defender, and I know that you can only turn in one direction, you have made it at least 50% easier to guard you - because you voluntarily have turned yourself into a 1-footed player.

Small Group Work

Divide the group into pairs, based upon size/speed (i.e., put bigger/faster players together). Set up 2 cones per pair, about 8 feet apart and widely spaced. Put one player between the cones, as a defender. Have the other player come directly at him (can come thru in either direction). If the defender put his hand up in a "Stop" gesture, the dribbler must check the ball and stop before the gate. If the defender signals "thumbs up", then the dribbler can go thru the gate unharmed as long as he keeps the ball in contact with his foot as he goes thru the gate. If dribbler tries to kick it thru, then he loses a point. After 10 attempts, the players switch places.

A contest should be held after both sides have had a turn. Possibilities include: pair with the greatest success wins; player with the most success wins; all players with X put in one group for a contest and all of the ones below X put in another group for their own contest.

Learning to Check (Stop) the Ball

Of course, if you are going to go forward at speed, you are going to need to learn to be able to stop the ball. This is a good time, after some experimentation with speedy straight-ahead dribbling, to introduce the basic check (aka "Magic Hop" in some Vogelsinger videos - which is a name kids really enjoy).

This is a very useful move to be able to do in order to keep the ball in bounds, or to do a quick turn when you are in a footrace with another player. In order to be able to learn this move, your players must be developmentally able to skip. Players who are younger than age 8 may not be able to skip - and, if so, will be too young to learn this move yet.

The key coaching points in teaching the check are as follows:

1. With the ball moving forward at a slow roll, put the plant foot (usually the non-dominant foot) beside the ball and do a quick hop on the plant foot as soon as it comes down.
2. While you are airborne with the hop, lightly tap the top of the ball with the opposite foot (which will naturally be coming over the ball in the normal stride). DO NOT put any weight on the tapping foot - a very slight tap on the ball will cause it to stop.
3. Continue forward to land on the tapping foot, then turn back to get the ball. Older players will be able to turn in the air and do a "rooster-tail" type of hockey stop (landing with the foot already turned sideways so that they can immediately push off in the opposite direction).

Teaching the Check

Put each player with a ball, and simply let them dribble around and work on stopping the ball with a check move. This move is not as hard as it sounds - and most players u8 and above can master it without real difficulty. Now, go back over a bit of your small group work - and let them incorporate the check into their work.

Large Group Work

Divide the group into 2-4 teams. Set up a series of cone "gates", complete with gatekeepers (note: make the number of gates equal to the number of players on a team). Have the players dribble thru the various gates. The gatekeeper is allowed to kick their ball away if it is not in contact with their foot as they come thru the gate. Switch out gatekeepers periodically. Once everyone has run the gates, you can have a race if you like - or a contest to see how many gates can be run successfully. Of course, if your ball is knocked away, you have to re-run the gate, and this slows you down.

Progression: Players may be required to look up to see the number of fingers which the gatekeeper is holding up, and call this number out correctly, as they go thru the gate.

Scrimmage

Play 2v1 in a mid-sized grid, which is divided into two parts, with a small cone goal at one end. Put 1 defender and 1 attacker in part near goal. Have other attacker at opposite end of the grid. Ball is passed to attacker at end of the grid, who dribbles towards goal end. Defender cannot come out of the defending end. Defender scores if he can kick ball back into no-man's land. Attackers score by making goal. Ball which goes over end line is a restart. Play to 5 points, and then switch roles. After playing 2v1 for awhile, you might try 4v2 and watch what happens.

Do not interfere or try to teach support decisions. Your team will not work on support roles until much later. For now, let the kids experiment with 2v1 decisions. The main idea at this point is just to get them used to carrying the ball in unopposed, and looking up to find a target player.

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A Compilation of Dribbling Moves

Some Beginning Moves to Develop Touch

There are many different moves to develop ball control and ball touch. Many of those listed below were popularized by Weil Coerver, a noted Dutch coach. Indeed, when you hear other coaches talking about "doing coervers", they are referring to assorted footwork drills designed to improve ball touch.

Hat-Dance (toe-tap)

Lightly tap the top of the ball using the front sole of the foot, alternating taps with either foot. Try to keep the ball from moving by tapping gently from the top. When the ball can be kept still, try "Around the World" by taking slightly larger steps as you come down from each tap so that you manage to circle the ball.

Inside roll

Roll the ball to the inside of your body, using the sole of one foot. Try to position the sole of the foot on the ball towards the outside edge, so that the ball rotates just enough to allow you to put your rolling foot down briefly so that you can keep moving in the same direction. Repeat, going in the opposite direction with the other foot.

Outside roll

Roll the ball towards the outside of your body, using the sole of one foot. Try to position the sole of the foot on the ball towards the inside edge, so that the ball rotates just enough to allow you to put your rolling foot down briefly so that you can keep moving in the same direction. Repeat, going in the opposite direction with the other foot.

Drag Back

Alternating feet and using a skipping-type step, pull the ball backwards with light touches.

Push Forward

Alternating feet and using a skipping type step, push the ball forward with light touches.

Tic-Toc (Boxing)

Using the inside front edges of the feet, knock the ball back and forth rapidly between the feet, so that the ball is in constant motion and the ball is redirected with every touch. Basically, the ball is being "boxed" from one side to the other, then back again.

Pull-Back/Push Forward

Use sole of foot to pull ball back, then immediately use front of same foot to push it forward. Alternate feet.

Vee

Make a V-shaped pattern, starting at the top of the V, pulling the ball down towards the center of the body, then pushing the ball back out to the other leg of the V. Variations include switching legs after each Vee, and alternating inside or outside start of the Vee.

Multi-Directional Roll

Assorted moves (often coach/player invented) in which the ball is rolled in various directions before being pulled or pushed or cut back behind the leg or tapped to the other foot for a repeat.

Inside/Outside Cuts (Snake)

Do a series of easy cuts/taps with the inside, then outside, of the same foot so that the ball "snakes" across the field as you move along. Repeat with opposite foot. As they progress, encourage the players to exaggerate the moves so that they must stretch and reach to cut the ball back.

Dribbling Moves for Beginning to Intermediate Players

There are hundreds of moves (some which vary only slightly from other moves). Some are basic and some very complex. Many are named for the player who "invented" the move or made it famous. Often, a move may have more than one name - so expect regional variations.

It is important to remember the function of a move is to move the ball away from the defender so that you can retain possession long enough to do something productive with the ball (i.e., get it to a teammate or shoot it into the net or wait until the defender makes a mistake so that you can go around him).

In general, expect that players will become more coordinated as they grow older. Players who are u8 often are uncoordinated, and cannot do moves which are simple for players just a few years older. Smaller players also may have trouble due to the relative size of the ball (e.g., if the ball comes almost to the knee, it is harder to step over it easily). In addition, when players are growing, they frequently have "clumsy" attacks where they lose their coordination until their brain has time to reprogram and learn where their hands/feet now end (Note: fast footwork exercises can speed the reprogramming). Patience and practice are keys to developing comfort on the ball.

As you demonstrate moves for your players, work with them on keeping the upper body relaxed and learning to bounce on the balls of their feet. Jumping rope is an excellent way to develop the muscles used in dribbling. So is any kind of dancing which involves faster footwork (such as tap dancing, Irish/Celtic dancing, and most folk dancing). Many coaches find that it helps to play music while working on ball touches.

Once players have developed their ball control skills (also commonly called "touch"), and have obtained a repertoire of basic dribbling moves, they will begin to learn some basic fakes which will trick a defender into believing that they are going one way - when they really intend to go somewhere else. Most of these fakes require that the player learn to let the upper body sway and go limp, so that they basically pull their torso in the new direction (starting with the hips). Practice of fakes/feints in front of a mirror is always helpful. However, even with much practice, younger players often will not be able to execute a fake as believably as an older player unless they are very limber.

Descriptions: The description of moves will include the mechanics and will always be described for use with the right foot. The default (N) will be the forward direction of the attacker's run. After the name of the turn, the defender's position will be noted (N, E, or W) Generally the attacker will be approaching a defender head-on (i.e., defender will be directly N) or protecting ball by placing body between the 2 of them (W or E).

All moves are best-executed with the knees bent, the buttocks down (to lower the center of gravity), and with the player perched on the balls of his feet and ready to explode in any direction quickly.

Check - a/k/a "Magic Hop" (Defender to W)

Do a slight skipping step on the left foot, while simultaneously tapping top of the ball with the sole of the right foot. DO NOT PUT any weight on right foot - a slight tap is all that is needed to stop/slow the ball. Allow right foot to continue through running motion, but turn right foot towards left as it is planted, so that you can immediately push off back to the S.

Pull-back (Defender to left or NW)

Place sole of right foot on ball. Pull/roll the ball behind you (S to SE).

Vee (Defender to N)

Put ball towards NW at an easy reach. Pull ball back towards center of body with the sole of the right foot (SE), then push ball back out to NE with sole of foot (making a V-shape by the path of the ball).

Vee II (Defender to N)

In some parts of the country, the Vee starts as above. However, when pulled back to the midline, the opposite leg of the V is made by a push-pass with the inside of the left foot or the outside of the right foot.

Inside of the Foot Cut (Defender to the NE)

Use inside of right foot to reach over ball which is on right foot and moving slightly towards right (directly towards defender), then swivel hips and cut ball back sharply to left (W) with the inside of right foot.

Outside of the Foot Cut (Defender to the W)

With ball travelling towards NW (directly towards defender), reach over the ball with the outside of the right foot and pull ball sharply back towards the E/SE.

Inside of the Foot Chop (Defender to the W)

With ball travelling forward at speed, do pivoting hop on plant foot while reaching over ball with inside of right foot; chop across path of ball with laces; and then pull ball back towards S with inside of right foot.

Matthews (Defender to N)

Execute a quick inside of the foot cut to the left (W), followed by an immediate cut back to the right (E) with the outside of the same foot - exploding as you go into the second cut.

Inside Circle Turn (Defender to NE)

With inside of the foot, cut ball to left (W), cut again to S, and then cut again so that you end up again heading towards the NE (Note: Newer/smaller players may require 1-2 additional touches to complete the circle). Get them to aim for as few touches as possible to keep control.

Beckenbauer -a/k/a Outside Circle Turn (Defender to N)

When approaching a defender, do outside cut to pull ball towards E, a second to turn S, and then a third to accelerate away forwards to the opposite side (NW) [Note: This is also called a outside circle turn in many circles].

Behind the Leg Cut (Defender to NE)

Put left foot to side and slightly ahead of ball. Tap ball back behind support leg and take away with outside of left foot.

Gascoigne (Defender to E)

Place tip of sole of left foot on top of ball to stop ball. As soon as defender bites or hesitates, explode quickly forward using front of left foot (or a quick toe poke). Modifications include using a slight roll-back, followed by a quick acceleration.

Step-over (Defender to NE)

Place right foot slightly behind the ball. Swing left foot in front of ball, putting weight on left foot as it comes to rest in front of right foot. Swing right foot around the left foot and the ball as far as you can comfortably reach towards the left side (W), so that you swivel around to the left and end up facing S to SW.

Barnes (single scissors) (Defender to NW)

Position ball on outside of left foot. Circle in front of ball with left foot, planting left foot beside the ball. Take ball away with outside of R foot.

Denilson (Defender to N)

Basically a triple scissors.

Fake shot (Defender to N)

Approach the defender as if you are going to shoot. As defender stops, cut ball sharply in front of body with the inside of right foot. (W or NW)

Beardsley (double hip swivel) (Defender to N)

When running with ball, quickly swivel hips to left, as if to pass with R foot. When defender bites, quickly swivel hips back to left, and take ball away with inside of L foot.

Double cut (Defender to N)

Similar to the Beardsley , but actually do execute two cuts - rather than faking the first cut.

Cruyff (Defender to W) (pronounced like St. Croix, with an f on the end)

Set-up in a passing position for a right foot pass. Right foot fakes a pass or kick, but circles around and in front of the ball (pointing at other toe at 90 degree angle). Using inside of the right foot, push the ball behind leg and spin off to left. Basically, a fake kick with a behind the leg cut.

Maradona (Defender to N)

Place left foot on ball, jump and rotate body about 180 while foot is still on top of ball, then pull back around another 180 degrees. Basically, a circle turn using a piroette to make _ of the turn and then a sole-drag to finish the turn. Note: In some areas, a Maradona starts as a Cruyff, with the piroette/drag as you spin off.

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Basic Chop

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Start with some basic ball-control movements, such as rolls, vees, toe-taps. Introduce tic-toc, if you have not already. Do your stretches, interspersed with assorted ball control moves which you want to practice.

Individual Work

The basic chop is a rapid downward cut across the forward face of the ball as the ball is going forward, in order to stop the ball quickly. It is an effective way to quickly reverse direction while your opponent is already moving at speed in the original direction.

The basic mechanics of a chop (which is a sharp inside of the foot cut angled across the front face of the ball) can be illustrated while standing still. However, as quickly as possible, get the players moving so that they can learn the body mechanics necessary for the change of direction.

The key coaching points of the chop are:

1. As you prepare to do a chop, the body is going to be turned almost perpendicular to the direction of the ball, with the knee of the plant foot sharply bent inward and the weight transferred almost entirely to the plant leg. To achieve the rapid change in direction, it is helpful to do a quick hop as you come down on the plant foot, which allows the plant foot/body to turn more easily.
2. Reach around the outside front of the ball with the chopping foot, with the foot/ankle turned inward (heel is towards the outside), and the knee/hip slightly bent inward.
4. Bring the chop foot down sharply, so that the laces skim across the front surface of the ball. The stance at the moment of the chop is almost knock-kneed.
5. As quickly as possible after contact is made with the ball, drag it back across the body towards the plant foot. With significant forward momentum, it may be necessary to briefly put weight on the chopping foot in order to reverse direction. At lesser speeds, weight can remain on the plant foot as the turn is made.

Work on dribbling the ball in one direction, and then chopping it back in the other. Begin by working with the dominant foot as the chopping foot, then progress to using the non-dominant foot. Encourage the kids to use an exaggerated hip swivel as they execute the chop, so that they appear to be heading in one direction and then quickly hop/chop to bring the ball in the other direction.

For Coerver devotees, you can create a ballet-type session where you tap the ball slightly ahead of you; chop quickly back; let the ball roll back in the other direction, while you do a cross-over step to reverse direction, then chop back, and repeat. Sounds weird, but fairly effective. Watch a Coerver video like Soccer FUNDamentals to get the idea.

Small Group Work

If you have somewhat older players (or already have used the Coerver setup with two defenders and two attackers in a square), use this approach. With younger players, or if you are unfamiliar with the Coerver-square, then:

Set up 3 cones in a row, about 7-8 feet apart. Stack your rows so that you can turn into grids later. Put a player on each of the end cones, each with a ball. Have them dribble towards the central cone, chop back, dribble back towards their end cone, and then chop back. This will allow them to simulate using a chop against an opponent, without actually having to deal with a true opponent at this stage. Have an extra player. No big deal. Just add an extra cone at one end, and have him delay his run so that he is chopping at about the same time as the other player is returning to the end cone.

Progression: Combine adjacent rows and remove middle cone. Leave three players with balls (each on a corner of the square) and turn the fourth into an anchored defender in the center of the square. Have players dribble towards central defender, and then cut back towards their "home" cone. Tell defender to keep one foot anchored, but to lunge/dive at players as they come towards him, and try to knock their balls away.

Alternate activity: Create 2-3 slalom courses of staggered cones; divide team into competing groups; and have a race to see which team can complete the slalom course the fastest by doing cuts at each of the cones. Allow a practice run before holding the race.

Large Group Work

Play Freeze Tag in a large grid, using 2-3 defenders. Start the defenders at walking speed. Require players to get away from defenders **ONLY** by using a chop. Progress to allowing defenders to go at 1/2 speed, and then at full speed. Switch out defenders after they have managed to freeze 5 players. Any frozen player can be unfrozen by having his hand tapped by an unfrozen player.

Scrimmage

Play 2v2 or 3v3 to maximize the number of ball touches. If you have a ball hog, restrict touches to 5-7 before passing to avoid an automatic turnover to the other side. Praise any attempts to use chops in the game.

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Inside Cut

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Start with some basic ball-control movements, such as rolls, vees, toe-taps, and simple sideways taps. Do your stretches, interspersed with assorted ball control moves which you want to practice.

Individual Work

The inside-of-the-foot cut is one of the easiest basic soccer moves to learn. All there is to it is to use the inside of the foot (around the arch), put the foot beside the ball and drag the ball so that it will go in the opposite direction, then transfer the ball to the other foot as you put your weight on the cutting foot.

Start by dribbling straight ahead, then lightly dragging/pulling the ball so that it travels in front of the player to land in the vicinity of his other foot, then dribble forward for a few touches with the other foot, and drag/pull it with the inside of the other foot so that the ball zags back in the other direction. The transfer of the ball to the other foot is an important step. As weight is placed on the cutting foot, the ball will continue to be carried to the side with the outside/front of the former plant foot. Why? Because the whole object of the move is to get the ball quickly to the opposite side so that you can shield it from an incoming opponent.

Work on using very light touches, and on dragging the ball instead of tapping it. Most young players want to whack the ball, instead of stroking it, so it is good to get them used to the idea of gently pulling/dragging the ball along with them in order to keep the ball within playing distance of the feet.

Initially, all that you want to do is to get the player familiar with how it feels to drag/pull the ball along with him as he moves from side to side. The foot position is hooked slightly inward; the ball contact is below the middle of the ball; and the knees are slightly bent with the weight on the balls of the feet. Concentrate on this aspect first, and then worry about the transfer of the ball to the opposite foot. For young players, the transfer may need to wait for another day, depending on how quickly they grasp the idea.

Coerver devotees likely will want to work on the Coerver ballet-type move to practice these cuts, so that you do the cut and pull the ball back across; do two crossover steps in the other direction; then cut with the opposite foot. Those who don't want to bother with learning the Coerver footwork can let the kids experiment in a big open space. Because there is a natural zig-zag pattern in these cuts, cones will need to be staggered if you have them practice with cone defenders.

Once they have mastered the basics (which should not take long), you can put everyone in a long line, and have them play follow the leader as they dribble around the field. Alternatively, you can put them in a long line, and simply shout "cut right" or "cut left". It is a good idea to get their heads up quickly. By dragging the ball across, they should be able to "feel for the ball" without putting their heads down. Encourage them to try to dribble as much as possible without looking down.

If your players are ready, you can add the element of "faking" or "feinting" to the move. Basically, what you want to do is to swivel the hips sharply as the cut is made, so that you give the impression that you are going in one direction, then suddenly veer off to the opposite side.

Small Group Work

Put one defender (a parent works nicely) in the center of a circle, space out about 8 feet, and put down about 4-5 cones around the outside edge of the circle (like spokes coming out of the center spot). Put a player with a ball on each cone, and have them practice coming into the defender; cutting; then going back out to their cone and cutting again; then going back. Have the defender whirl around and make lunges/fakes as if he will steal their balls. The idea is to give them some experience going at a defender, but to restrict the defender so that they get early success.

Progression: Create 2-3 slalom courses of staggered cones; divide team into competing groups; and have a race to see which team can complete the slalom course the fastest by doing cuts at each of the cones. Allow a practice run before holding the race. A fun variation is to set up the lines in front of the goal, and permit a shot on goal after going around the last cone.

Large Group Work

Play Freeze Tag in a large grid, using 1-2 defenders. Start the defenders at walking speed. Require players to get away from defenders ONLY by using cuts. Progress to allowing defenders to go at 1/2 speed, and then at full speed. Switch out defenders after they have managed to freeze 5 players. Any frozen player can be unfrozen by having his hand tapped by an unfrozen player.

Sharks is also a fun game to work on cuts. Have 1-2 "sharks" who try to kick the balls of the Minnows out of the center circle. Switch defenders after they have kicked out X balls. Allow anyone whose ball was kicked out to return to the circle after running a quick slalom course on the side (which allows some quick individual remedial work on cuts).

Scrimmage

Play 3v3. Make a requirement that every player on the team must touch the ball for at least 3 touches before passing - and every player on the team must have touched the ball (interceptions start the count over again) before their team can score. These restrictions are very important, as they force each player to hold onto the ball - and require the less confident dribblers to use their skills. The less-confident dribblers also will learn that, if they go to open space, they will get more time to handle the ball - and they will start automatically looking for "safe" space. In addition, these restrictions require them to start talking - which is an essential ingredient in any team sport.

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Fakes and Feints

Players: Age 6+; Materials: Cones, pinnies, balls; Players: 4+

The art of feinting is delightful, and even young players can get a kick out of getting an opponent to "bite" on a good fake. Over the course of the season, the coach should introduce a new fake/feint every 6 weeks or so as a part of normal take-on work. Players should be encouraged to try these new feints, and some warm-up time should be devoted to learning the new feints. Coaches should not be discouraged if it takes players a while to actually use their feints in practice or in games. It takes time for a player to learn to "sell" the fake, and to remember to try it when under pressure. And, not every player will want to adopt a particular feint into his personal bag of tricks. Virtually all players, including top level stars, have some 4 or 5 basic feints that they use most of the time with great success. So, don't be surprised that players show decided personal preferences on which moves to adopt and which to discard.

Warm-up

In feinting work, the muscles which are used are those which allow the hips to swivel from side to side (and the shoulders/arms to get in on the action of swaying about). These are the same muscles which are used in the more fluid kinds of modern dancing, so it can be fun to use music as a part of the warm-up. Start with some fast footwork drills to get the blood pumping, then do some stretches (focusing particularly on the muscles running along the flanks which allow twisting and swivelling movements of the hips). Also work on stretches of the quads, as part of any feint will include very quick acceleration moves. Along the way, do some rhythmic swaying, then add some push-off jumping from side to side.

Individual Work

In order to work on feints/fakes, your players will need to have learned basic take-on skills and how to explode by carrying the ball forward with the outside of the foot. If you have not covered this, you should do the practice on beginning take-on skills before holding this practice session.

Probably the easiest feint to learn is a simple step-fake. To do this, the player has the ball on the front of the right foot; takes an exaggerated step to the R as if intending to do a sharp cut toward the R with the inside of his L foot; then immediately explodes to the left, dragging the ball with him on the outside of his L foot. This fake obviously also can be done (and should be practiced) going to the L and then exploding to the right. In their beginning take-on work, players learned to imagine that they are exploding through an open doorway to escape the monster, and then they are cutting back to slam the door on the monster. Initially, you may want to eliminate the slamming door phase so that they can concentrate on the feint itself. However, as soon as possible, you will want to remind them to slam the door on the monster.

This move is very easy, and can be mastered by even very small players. To avoid having players running into one another as they explode, try putting them in a line (queue) or widely space them so that they each are facing a cone (which serves as a defender). Then, simply allow them to experiment on learning to fake one way and then explode to the other. Encourage them to turn their shoulders/hips in the faked direction, which will help to "sell" the fake. After working on step-fakes in one direction, switch feet and work on going in the opposite direction.

After the step-fake, one of the easiest feints to learn is one involving the use of a single scissors (Barnes) move. This next move should be added after doing some individual and small group work with the first move. Particularly with younger kids, you want to give plenty of time for the first move to "set" into their brains and muscles before adding a new move, so don't rush things too quickly. Besides, it is no big deal to wait for another practice to introduce the next move.

In the single scissors, the player comes directly at the attacker, moves his left foot around the front of the ball and plants it to the side of (and slightly behind the ball), while swiveling his hips as if he plans to take the ball to the left with the inside of his right foot. As soon as his right foot is moving over to the ball, he quickly brings his right foot behind the ball (so that he can carry the ball on the outside of his right foot), then explodes forward to the right while dragging the ball on the outside of his R foot. The primary difference between this feint and the simple step-fake is the movement of the faking foot to go in front of the ball before being planted. This is an important difference (both because it protects the ball better and because it confuses the defender more).

For younger players, it may work best to show them the move, and then start working on the motions involved without using any ball. Simply bring the L foot forward in a semi-circle (toe pointed down) and take a big step to the left (bending the knee sharply - as the left leg will give the acceleration). While transferring the weight to the L leg, exaggerate the appearance of a cut to the left side. Then, as soon as the weight is transferred, explode right. Note that some small players may have trouble bringing the foot in front of the ball with any speed (due to the relative size of the ball to their short little legs). It is fine for them to lift the L foot over the ball if this is easier. Once they have the move down, add a ball and allow the players to experiment with doing the move. Encourage them to keep their upper bodies relaxed (almost limp), so that they can fluidly switch directions.

Small Group Work

Put an anchored defender (one foot must remain on a cone and the other leg should be waving to make it clear which leg is "dead") in the center between two cones which are about 15 feet apart. Have the attacker come directly at the defender; feint towards the side of the waving leg; and explode past the outside of the "dead" leg. As soon as he is around the defender, he must slam the door by cutting back behind him. Have him turn around and then come back from the other direction. Tell the anchored defender to alternate which leg is waved, so that the defender must decide the direction in which to start his feint. Let the attacker have about 4-5 tries, then switch places with the defender. It is important for players to learn to recognize this type of opportunity - and which way to go - because this type of situation occurs often in a game (for instance, a defender who is trying to back-pedal without galloping quite often will be "dead" or getting ready to go "dead" on a leg when the attacker chooses to explode into a move).

Next, instruct the defender to stay anchored without waving a leg, and to simply "bite" by lunging in the direction of the fake as soon as it is made. Illustrate to the players that, when the defender's body and weight are moving in the wrong direction, an attacker can go around the non-lunging leg because it is "dead" due to the lunge - and, in fact, is "more dead" on the side of outstretched leg (the one with no weight) than the leg where all of the weight has been placed. Why? Because it is very easy for the defender to pull his outstretched leg over and transfer his weight onto this other leg fairly quickly - but, due to his momentum, it takes a lot longer to recover and go back the opposite way. It is important for new attackers to understand that, when the defender is standing fairly straight, the "dead" leg of the attacker is the one with all of the weight on it. However, when already moving, the most "dead" leg is the non-weight-bearing leg.

After allowing both players to work on feints against a defender who is lunging to the side, add the final most common defensive error - which is to dive forward from a sideways-on posture. In this situation, the player is completely "dead" on the front foot - and essentially dead on the back foot, so the attacker has the ideal choice of going by him in either direction. Most commonly, the attacker will want to go around the defender's back in order to cut in centrally - and this approach causes the defender the most difficulty because the quickest way to turn is to keep going forward (but, to do this, he has to turn his back on the attacker, which is very high risk because he will not know where his mark is). As a result, practice on rolling off the back of the defender - but point out that the attacker always has the option of going down the line if this makes more sense.

Coaching Note: As you progress in teaching more take-on skills to your players, you will begin to teach them how to "show" the ball to the defender to try to provoke a lunge or stab, so that they can accelerate around him - and illustrate which moves tend to be best to cause defenders to "bite" in various circumstances.

Large Group Work

Next, recruit some parents or assistants to become defenders in a "Tunnel of Death." Create the tunnel by putting 3-4 cone grids (each about 15x20 feet) in a row, with a defender standing at the top line of each grid so that he is between the 2 cones forming the top side of the grid. If you have a large number of players, you may wish to set up several of these stacked grids to reduce lines. If you do not have enough parents for players, you can rotate players through these slots - or start by using flags or cones for defenders.

Now, have the first player take-on the first defender and beat him, cut back to recover, then head directly at the second defender, and so forth. Tell your defenders to be very sloppy and to dive in the direction of the feint. Obviously, you are setting up conditions to get success. As soon as the first runner has beaten second defender (and is entering the final box), start the next runner.

After running the Tunnel a few times, you can give more freedom to the defenders. However, with young players, you will need to relax restrictions very slowly in order to give them time to develop confidence in their take-on abilities.

Scrimmage

The very best scrimmage for take-on work is 1 v 1. So, put players in pairs based upon their ability (i.e., skilled with skilled), and put each in a grid (you can reuse the Tunnel grids). Put one player on one side of the grid with the ball, and put the other player on the other side. As soon as the on-ball player starts into the grid, the opposite player can enter the grid and start to close him down. The on-ball player must take-on the defender and try to get around him sufficiently to be able to pass the ball across the opposing endline. However, he cannot pass until he is at least even with the defender. If he does this successfully, he scores 1 point. Alternate who is the attacker, and play until someone has 5 points (or for X minutes).

Now, find out the points scored by each player. Put the players who scored 5 against others who scored 5, and put the ones who scored 1 against the others who scored 1. Play again.

The final game uses a real goal (if one is available). Divide the players into two equal groups, and give each team numbers from 1 to X. Put players on goalline, with teams on opposite sides of the net. Now, as you serve a ball out into the field, call out "Number 5" - and both players who are No. 5 race out and try to win the ball, then score on the goal. There are lots of variations on how to do this (including elimination and non-elimination games, and games where you call out several numbers at once - or number the players sequentially, so that you call out 5 and 2, then 7 and 1, and so forth).

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Push Pass

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones/balls/pinnies; Players: 12+

Warm-up

Basic keepaway, with 1-2 defenders and remaining players in large grid, with rule that outside players must keep moving at slow jog. Defenders get 1 pt. if they steal ball, and outside players get 1 pt. if they can get 5 passes in a row. Outside players limited to 3 touches, then must pass or defenders win a point. Play to 5 points, then switch defenders out. Do stretches at each switch. Play for about 5-10 mins.

Individual Work

Illustrate the basic push pass.

Coaching Points:

1. Lock ankle of pass foot and turn foot outward;
2. Step beside the ball, keeping knee of plant leg slightly bent, with toe of plant foot pointed where you want the ball to go;
3. Strike middle of ball with pass foot and follow through;
4. Stay loose and on your toes as the ball is approaching, so that you can adjust body position easily.

If possible, find a wall where each player can pass against the wall, or find flat bench (like for picnic table) to use as wall. Have players work on passing to specific spots (such as chalk marks) on the wall. Suggest to players that they can use wall or steps or garage door at home to work on passing.

If no walls available, then divide players into pairs, and put in small grids (about 20'x 10'). Put extra cones at the corners of the grids (will be used later). Have them pass to one another. Circulate to make corrections. When most have success, then add a contest where team which makes 20 good passes in a row wins the game. Hint: If you have an odd number of players, put 3 in a triangle in one grid.

Then, put cone in center of grid, and require players to stand at the ends. Have a timed contest to see which player can hit the cone the most times in 2 mins. from his endline. Can use 1 ball or give ball to each player, allowing them to take closest ball back to endline for another pass at the cone.

Small Group Work

Set up series of small cone goals/gates in a large grid. Start 2-3 teams of players at any cone goal in the grid. Object is to pass thru all gates (either direction) to partner and then be first to exit by passing ball thru gate by coach. Must redo gate if ball not received by partner. Use extra players on sides to monitor that each team makes all gates. Swap out teams and run exercise with next group. Let each group run course 3 times, then do run-off of winners from each group. Hint: If you have an odd number of players, have 1 player play on two teams.

Set up new teams of 3 players each. Repeat exercise, and allow players to discover for themselves how much better they do with communication and an advanced runner. Say nothing for first 5 mins, except to correct passing techniques. Then, mention that the teams which are doing better are the ones which are talking and planning ahead on which goal to use next. If there is time, do another run-off of the winners.

Large Group Work

Pick up cone goals inside large grid. Put most players in large circle inside grid, with 2-3 target players inside circle. Each of the outside players starts with a ball. Inside players must call for the ball, then pass to the feet of an outside player who does not have a ball, and go to another outside player to ask for another ball. Run for about 10 good passes/inside player, then swap them out. Now, add "shadow" for each of the inside players, who does not try to steal ball, but just shadows the receiver to add some pressure. Run exercise again, swapping shadows with passers after 10 good passes, then swapping in outside players for them. Finally, allow shadows to become active and try to win ball. Hint: If you have only 8 or fewer players, reduce the number of inside players to allow at least 5 outside players.

Ending game

Play keepaway again inside large grid. See how many passes the group can now make in a row without interception by defender. Should have much better accuracy, as well as vision and communications.

Coaching Tip: This practice can be repeated for the next practice, to work on using the non-dominant foot. It also can be used to work on the quality of receiving the ball. Other passing games can be substituted for the sake of variety.

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Passing and Receiving

U-10/U-12 team of 14 players, 90 Minutes Total

Equipment: 7 red and 7 yellow pinnies; 16 disk cones; 1 ball per player; 1/2 field.

Coach arrives at least 15 min. early and lays out two lines of cones 5 yards apart, 8 cones per line, with 5 yards between lines yielding 7 5*5 grids. Players arriving early to juggle and loosen up.

15 min.: Warm up. Each player with a ball in 1/2 of the penalty area. Dribble with both feet, go at angles, change direction, moving slowly for 2-3 minutes. Stretch. 1/2 of players put their balls outside of area and spread out around area with feet spread apart. Remaining players dribble ball around area and, on command "start", begin to score points by passing ball between legs of stationary players. Can score on each stationary player once before moving on to next. Emphasize head up, avoid traffic and congested "goals", proper pace of pass so that it a) gets through but b) doesn't end up in the next county. Time for 1 minute and switch roles. Stretch. Now players with ball must dribble around area and on command "start" make eye contact with a stationary player, call their name, pass ball to them, and move to get a return pass. Time for 1 minute, score a point for each pass completed, switch and repeat. Emphasize head up, communication before pass, proper pace on pass.

15 min: Players in pairs with one ball per pair, one pair in each 5*5 yd. grid. Coach demonstrates Inside of Foot pass. Players pass inside their own grid for 5 min. Emphasize toe up, heel down, ankle locked, turn foot out sideways; plant foot faces direction pass is to go; kicking leg bent slightly. Hit through the ball slightly above center, contacting the ball with inside of foot between ball of foot and heel.

After 5 min., coach demonstrates simple foot reception and players both pass and receive for 5 min. additional. Emphasize on reception don't stop ball, just cushion it and push it out to the side a bit; use same part of foot used for passing, step into ball for next pass.

After about 10 minutes, have players keep kicking foot raised for a few moments after kick. If they've done it correctly, they'll be facing receiver and easily balanced on one foot.

Look to correct: for pass: Leg playing the ball stiff/straight; plant leg too far away from ball; kicking too hard/soft; hitting ball too low (goes up in air) or too high (bounces).

Look to correct: for reception: Ball stopped dead instead of cushioned and pushed out; ball pushed out too far/close; receiving surface "hard" rather than "soft"; receiving with wrong part of foot.

[Note: There those who shudder at the thought of mixing two concepts, e.g. passing and receiving, in the same exercise and they are certainly welcome to their opinion. It is the writer's opinion, however, that in the case of passing exercises, proper reception makes the ensuing pass easier in that the player is stepping into a slowly moving ball.]

10 min.--Groups of three (grab an assistant coach, parent, sibling, etc. or put 4 in a group and add another cone to that area), each group with a ball, 1st group standing on 3 of cones in first grid, next group on second group of 4 cones, etc. Player with ball starts with pass to either of other two players and runs to empty cone. Receiver repeats. Move from unlimited touch to two-touch to one-touch over course of season. Emphasize and correct same points as in prior section. After they get the idea, time and see how many completed passes in 1 minute.

5 min.-- Drink break and socializing. (All players dribble their ball to you before heading off). Coach re-sets cones to mark off two 20*25 yd fields with 4 yd. cone goals at the diagonal ends of the long sides of the rectangle.

25 min.-- 5v2 progression as follows. Technical points for all same as in first section. Emphasize also how much easier the game is for the attackers if they keep the space big, use the whole field, move after passing, & play away from pressure. (This can START off as 6v1 and move to 5v2 as players become more skilled.)

1. 5 players pass the ball around. Defenders simply give ball back if they intercept or kick out of area. No points scored. Change roles frequently.
2. Repeat 1 but every 5 consecutive passes is a goal (recruit assistant, parent, sibling, etc. to count passes). If defenders win, they score by dribbling to any side of the rectangle and stop it by stepping on it. Any ball going out of bounds, whether kicked or dribbled, goes back to attackers. Keep score out loud. Stop in few minutes and switch roles.
3. Same but defenders can score by inside foot pass through either of small goals.

5 min.-- Drink and socializing. Coach re-sets field to 35*50, 5-6 yard goals.

10 min.-- Scrimmage. Coach observes ONLY.

5 min.--Warm-down, players pick up all equipment, shag balls, get reminded where and when next practice/game is, etc.

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Receiving the Ball

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Introduce some very basic ball control movements, such as hat dance, ball rolls, and forward/backward moves. Do stretches as you switch from one move to another.

Individual Work

The most critical skill which a soccer player can possess is the ability to get the ball under control on his first touch. Without a good first touch, the player is vulnerable to losing possession and is distracted from his task of deciding where to go next (because he has no idea where the ball might go after he touches it for the first time).

This lesson plan deals with very basic receiving and stopping of the ball which is coming toward the player on the ground. Over time, the player will need to learn to control balls which are bouncing or which are coming out of the air. To develop those skills, it is essential that the player learn to juggle the ball. Later practice plans deal with teaching juggling and air-ball receiving.

Two basic skills will be taught in this lesson, because these skills are all fairly easy to learn. As the skills get harder, you will want to devote an entire practice to just 1 or 2 skills.

The skills are: the **wedge trap** and the **outside of the foot trap**.

1. Wedge Trap

The first trap which you will introduce is the wedge trap (which can be used to stop the ball or push it inward to be played by the opposite foot). This trap is easiest to perform when the player is moving at slower speeds or is standing.

Coaching Points:

1. Plant foot is turned slightly outward, with knee bent;
2. Receiving leg is bent and foot is turned sharply outward with heel dropped down, so that lower leg/foot makes an "L" shape;
3. Lift receiving foot off of the ground about 4-5 inches, so that contact with the incoming ball is made just below the top of the ball.
4. Relax the foot/leg as the ball makes contact, so that the ball is cushioned to a stop.

Teaching the Wedge Trap

Set up a line of small grids, about 2 yards square. Divide players into pairs. Put one player on one side of the grid, with 2 balls. Put the other player on the opposite side of the grid. The player who has the balls will gently roll a ball towards the opposing player, who traps the ball with a wedge trap. Once the ball is stopped, he passes the ball back to the roller (don't worry about passing technique at this stage - you will work on passing later). Have the receiver do 10 wedge traps, and then swap turns with the roller.

The players will discover that, if their foot is set at the proper height, the ball will wedge under the foot and will come to a stop. However, most of the time in soccer, you do not want the ball to come to a full stop -because you become a sitting duck for an attacker.

So, once the players each have had a turn, do a second round in which the player tries to just catch the ball enough to slow it down and then taps it to the inside (if right-footed, tap to left) so that he can pass back to the roller with his left foot. Again, don't worry about proper passing technique (although you can use it in your demos). Right now, we are worrying about learning how to catch the ball and lay it up to the inside for a pass by the opposite foot.

Outside of the Foot Trap

The next trap which will be taught is the outside of the foot trap. This is the most often used trap in soccer, because it can be used quite effectively when moving. Basically, the object of this trap is to simply slow the ball down, and then redirect it.

Coaching Points:

1. Point the toe down and roll the foot over so that the outter edge is pointing toward the ground, bending the knee and pulling the foot towards the opposite side of the body. Experiment so that you can turn the front of the foot into as flat a surface as possible to receive the ball.
2. Turn slightly away from the ball, so that the knee of your receiving leg can point towards the incoming path of the ball.
3. Make contact with the ball, catching the ball so that the middle of the foot is vertically centered on the ball and the foot basically wraps around the ball (with the toes at the loweredge and the heel at the upper opposite edge of the ball).
4. As the ball meets the foot, relax the knee so that the lower leg can swing freely inward ("give"), which allows you to take speed off the ball and allows the ankle to aid in trapping the ball as your leg "gives" backward.

Teaching the Outside of the Foot Trap

Use the same procedure as before, with a roller at one end of the grid and a receiver at the other. Have the receiver move toward the ball to catch it with the outside of the foot, redirect the ball to the side and then pass it back to the roller. Again, do not worry about passing technique - although it is okay to simply use good technique (kids often will mimic you - even without specific direction). What you want to do is develop the ability to catch the ball with the foot - and then lay it off to the outside for a pass with the same foot.

At your next practice, you will work on passing. However, spend the necessary time to work on receiving first. Receiving technique is the basic foundation for almost all other soccer skills - and it is essential that theplayers learn to do this task correctly before moving on.

The absolute best way to perfect receiving technique (so that it becomes automatic) is to find a wall and use it as a backstop (like a tennis backstop) and pass/receive repeatedly against the wall. Good players may spend as much as 30 minutes or more each day on basic wall work. Encourage your players to do this while watching TV or talking on the phone. Because the ball stays on the floor, many mothers can be convinced to allow the child to practice indoors - using stairs or the side of a chair or even an interior wall as the backstop. If Mom prefers that a smaller or lighter ball be used, this is fine. Indeed, the Brazilian National Team reportedly used tennis balls in their hotel rooms for precisely this purpose- and the basic technique and development of eye/foot coordination is the same.

Small Group Work

Now that you have the basic receiving technique down, you want to start learning how to use this technique in game situations. The general Rule of Thumb (ROT) of receiving is that you always receive the ball in a way which will allow you to take the ball into space and away from pressure.

In this work, you will put 3 players in a medium grid (about 15' x 20'). One will be the server, who stands at the end of the grid; one will be the receiver, who will be inside the grid; and the other will be a shadow defender to apply mostly psychological pressure (i.e., he doesn't try to steal the ball at this stage).

The three most common ways in which a player will receive the ball are: with a defender at his back; with a defender standing to one side; and with a defender coming in hard from the front. You will introduce how to receive the ball in order to handle each of these 3 situations.

Start with the defender behind the receiver; have the receiver come towards the ball to receive it in order to briefly shake the defender off his back (which is a technique known as "checking to the ball"); and then pass the ball to the server. Switch positions after 5 serves and let the other players try this.

Next, have the defender stand to one side of the receiver; have the receiver take the ball with the outside of the far foot (the foot which is farther away from the D) in order to carry the ball even farther away from the defender; and then pass back to the server. After 5 tries, switch positions until everyone has tried this.

Now, put the defender at the upper corner of the grid (by the server) and have him start walking towards the receiver as soon as the ball is served. Have the receiver check to the ball at an angle to cut off the defender; receive the ball with the outside of the foot (turning his body to protect the ball as much as possible); and then pass back quickly. After 5 tries, rotate positions.

Coaching Note: You will need to repeat these drills (or some variations) quite frequently as you train your players. Obviously, you will need to get your players to game speed - as their defenders are unlikely to be passive in trying to win the ball. You are slowing things down just to get the ideas across - and to allow success while the receiving skills are still very new. Keep using restrictions and/or extra space to give time for these skills to develop. Ultimately, you will want players who can receive, shield and play the ball back with a single touch in very tight quarters. This will not happen in one day, one week, or even one season of work. However, if you continue to emphasize these basic concepts, and develop the underlying skills needed to make the concepts work, your players will develop very nicely over time.

Large Group Work

Play 2v2+2, as follows. Combine the adjoining grids, so that you have 4 players inside the grid (2 for each team - use pinnies to identify them) and another teammate for each team who is on the outside of the grid. Have 3-4 balls at the side of the grid, to keep things moving.

Have one of the outside players start, by rolling a ball into a teammate - who must receive it and pass it back - or pass it to the other teammate inside the grid before the opponents can touch it. A successful reception & pass is worth 1 point. The ball is then rolled out to the opposing team's outside player (if it was kicked away, use a new ball), and he tries to get the ball to his teammates inside the grid. Continue the contest until one team has 5 points, then swap the outside players with inside players and repeat.

Scrimmage

Put small cone goals at the end of each grid, and play 3v3 without restrictions. After this much technical and tactical work, the players need a rest - so just let them play and try out the new skills.

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Chest Traps

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Players will be working in pairs for much of this practice, so do a warm-up which requires pairs. A nice version is to have partners link arms (with hand of outside arm on hip to form an extra link). Create two rovers who can replace one of the partners by linking his/her arm thru the available outside arm. When the rover has "adopted" a new partner, the old partner becomes the rover and must go find another partner. This develops into a fun game of chase, and gets the heart rates up. Intersperse stretches with this game.

Individual Work

It is a good idea to cover chest traps and heading in consecutive sessions. Why? Because, when an air ball is coming in around chin high, the player usually has 2 options. One is to back up (or jump up) and chest it down - and the other is to bend the knees slightly and head it. Often, just a slight change in positioning (under 1 yd or so) will be all that is needed to switch the surface being used to control the ball.

This type of receiving should be taught after some work on basic gallops and cross-over running (covered in the section on 1st defender skills). This footwork is important, because the player has to be able to move into position to receive the ball while keeping his eye on the ball - so he has to be able to be confident in his footwork. So, if you haven't worked on the footwork, do it as a part of your warm-up.

Chest traps are pretty easy to learn to do, and most players can get moderate success in just one session.

Coaching points:

1. Put the feet about shoulder width apart or a bit wider, knees bent, pull arms/elbows back to flatten the chest as the ball arrives.
2. The chest is quickly collapsed inward to make a tunnel by bringing the arms forward quickly - which causes the ball to channel down to the feet.
3. As the channel is made, take a step forward with one foot which will help to redirect the remaining momentum of the ball in the new direction.

Variation 1: You also can trap the ball with your chest (which is a type of trap which is often not taught - and should be). Often, a player can "catch" the ball with his chest and simply walk it into the goal, which is a very nice way to score (even if not spectacular).

Variation 2: More advanced players may want the ball to pop back up/out in order to volley or juggle it (but, of course, it is pointless to try to learn this skill until you know how to juggle). They do so by simply keep the chest flat, although they give slightly to take some steam off the ball, which allows the ball to pop off the chest; and look to play the ball with a volley of some type.

After demonstrating the basic channel-type chest trap, scatter the pairs of players around the field, and have them gently toss balls to one another to practice the technique. Then, once they have got the idea down, put them in mid-sized grids; station the receiver on one line and the tosser on the other end; and require the receiver to have to move into position to manage the trap (as this is the realistic situation in games).

Small Group Work

Split up every other pair, so that you now have 3 players in one group. Assign the 3rd player to act as a shadow defender, who simply lurks along behind the receiver. Now, put the shadow player about 3 yards to the front and side of the receiver, and allow the shadow to close in as soon as the ball is served. The shadow is not trying to steal the ball - just to illustrate the point that this chest trap takes TONS of time, so they need to be careful about when/where to use this technique.

In general, chest traps are okay outside of your final third of the field, and are quite useful if the D is behind you or you are unpressured. However, because chest traps take so long, they may not be a good idea in your final defensive third if an attacker is close by. The better decision may be to head the ball farther upfield (or towards the sidelines).

Large Group Work

Put 8 players around the edges of a large circle, each one with a ball, and put the rest inside of the circle. The outside players will toss a ball into the inside player, who chest traps it and passes it to any outside player who doesn't have a ball. Once the concept is down, add a shadow behind each receiver, who just follows to add some pressure. Progress to half-pressure and then full-pressure (in which the shadow can become the new receiver if he wins the ball). Tip: Use plenty of space -- you want success.

Scrimmage

End with a regular 3v3 scrimmage - but award an extra point to a team if their players do a successful chest trap (i.e., you can score a goal the regular way - or by doing a good chest trap from either a throw-in or a lofted ball).

Teaching the Run-Thru Chest Trap and Turning Chest Trap

The running thru trap works nicely with bouncing balls. Simply have the partner throw a ball at the ground hard enough that it will bounce up, and practice running thru the ball and controlling it with the chest and/or trunk of the body. Take care to keep the lower arms/hands well away from the ball - as it is easy to get a handball call otherwise.

The turning chest trap is a variant of the running thru trap, but is a bit harder to learn because of the timing. Just as the ball is making contact with the chest, a quick step is made to turn the body sideways by stepping into the path which the ball has just taken, and redirecting the ball to the side and down by using the angle of the chest and by continuing to move in the new direction with the ball. This turning trap can be useful when there is heavy pressure on one side, but plenty of space into which the ball can be directed (and an available support player to whom the ball can be dropped as soon as it is controlled). Once again, care must be taken to get the arms out of the way to avoid a handball call.

Updated 3 April 1999

Juggling the Ball and Receiving the Ball in the Air with Foot or Thigh

Ages:7+; Materials: Cones, pinnies; Players: 4+

In order to develop a quality first touch on the ball, it is essential that players learn to be able to control (basically, to "catch" and redirect) a ball coming in from the air. Two of the key body surfaces which they will use to catch air balls are the foot or with the thigh. In other practice sessions, you will teach them how to "catch" the ball with the chest and how to redirect the ball with the head. At about age 12+, you also can start to teach players to juggle with their heads (so that, eventually, they can "catch" a ball with their heads), but this requires more coordination than most younger players will possess.

Warm-up

To start players on learning to juggle with the feet, have them sit on the ground with the ball. Have them toss the ball up over one foot, then try to gently catch it with the foot and then toss it back up in the air with the catching foot. Allow them to catch the ball with their hands after each try. The key to catching the ball with the foot is to turn the knee of the receiving foot inward a bit so that the foot is flattened and allow the thigh to "give" as the ball comes in so that the foot is catching the ball and then tossing it back up. Tell the players to be sure to use the thigh/hip for movement and to leave the lower leg still. After a few successes in doing this, have them try for two touches on the ball before catching it with their hands. Once they can get to 3 touches in a row, have them switch and try to use the other foot.

After a few tries with the non-dominant foot, have the players stand up. Now, have them toss the ball up high so that it bounces in front of them, and then try to catch the ball on the foot and toss it back up in the air. The trick to doing this while standing is to keep the foot flattened; to keep the foot itself still (with all motion coming from the hip and upper thigh); and to make sure that the hip of the catching leg is allowed to go loose so that it "gives" when it catches the ball. Initially, allow a bounce between each catch with the foot, then try to progress to the point where they can do 2 or 3 touches in a row. Now, ask the players to use the non-dominant foot for catching the ball. After some more experimenting, have them work on alternating touches of the feet (players who are under age 8 may have trouble with balance/coordination, so don't push this if most are having trouble).

Coaching Note: As players gain more experience and ball control, you will want to encourage more and more juggling skills (see "Additional Juggling Ideas" below).

After working on juggling with the feet, you can progress to working on juggling with the thighs (which is the preamble to learning thigh traps) - or you can spend some time working on elevator traps before coming back to work on thigh juggling. With newer players, you might even decide to handle thigh traps in another session altogether. If you wish to introduce thigh juggling, here is how to do it:

Juggling with the thighs is very similar to juggling with the feet. The player is simply trying to catch the ball on the surface of the thigh and toss it back up. Once again, the knee will need to be turned inward to flatten the surface of the thigh, and the work will be done entirely with the hip. The object is to catch and cushion the ball - not to let the ball hit the thigh and bounce back up. Work on the idea of having the thigh come to meet the ball and then drop down a bit to cushion it before tossing the ball back up again. It is fine to allow the players to catch the ball with the hands after each attempt, although you will want to have them try to progress to 2-3 touches after they get the hang of this. Once again, after working with one leg, try to work with the other leg. Because thigh juggling is a bit harder in terms of balance, save work on alternating thighs for a later date - or for practice at home (with prizes for the most in a row).

Individual Work

The first thing which you will work on is **elevator traps**. This is nothing more than catching the ball with the top of the foot and then lowering it to the ground in front of you. The trick is that, if the ball is coming in at a high arc (and will have lots of speed), it is going to need a lot of cushioning to take this speed away - so you need to lift the leg/knee fairly high to make the first contact and then let the thigh go almost limp to cushion the ball to the ground.

To do this, put the players in pairs and have them work on gently tossing a ball high into the air for their partner to catch. The partner then reciprocates. Show them that it is easier to catch the ball if they are standing slightly sideways to the direction in which the ball is coming in, with the catching leg to the inside. To increase the difficulty, you can move them farther apart, so that they have to move around more to calculate when/where to catch the ball. For players who show a real knack for this, have them try to catch the ball and, instead of putting it on the ground, flick it up over the head of the defender and run around him. This is one cool trick to use in games - and little boys love it!

Another trap which is related to the elevator trap is the **instep trap**. This trap is used to catch balls which are coming in at a flatter angle (or somewhat ahead of the player) so that it will be impossible to catch on the foot. Thus, the player puts the foot out to block the ball - and permits some slight give in the leg so that he can drop the ball at his feet. This technique may be a bit hard for young players, but can be introduced (even if not extensively practiced) at this stage simply to show players another option to deal with balls which are not catchable otherwise.

The next trap to introduce is the **thigh trap**. In this trap, the player simply catches the ball on the thigh (as in juggling with the thigh), but immediately lets the thigh collapse so that the ball falls to his feet. This is a very nice trap to use for awkward balls coming in a bit below waist level, so rather low to try a chest trap (even with really bent knees), but too high to do an elevator and perhaps a bit too straight on to allow a instep trap.

Once again, put the players in pairs and have them toss balls to one another, making sure that the ball takes a nice arc so that the player can get underneath it. The key is to bring the thigh up to make contact with the ball and to relax the hip as soon as contact is made so that the ball is cushioned to drop at the feet. When the players have achieved some success in this technique, then go to the group game.

Small Group Work

Put two players inside the grid, with two servers outside who alternate service into the grid. Have the server send a high ball into the grid. The player with the best ability to receive the ball shouts "I've got it". This shout requires that the other player back off and let him try to receive the ball with the foot or the thigh. He gets a point for each good trap. Play until one inside player has 3 points, then rotate with the outside players.

When both sides have had a turn inside the grid, then allow the server to become a slow-motion defender - which means that he starts to walk toward the receiver as soon as he has played the ball into the grid (but does not aggressively defend). With the addition of pressure incoming from the front, the receiver must adjust his body position to try to shield the ball as it comes in and quickly pass it to his teammate. Take some time in working on the need of the off-ball attacker to talk to the receiver; warn him of the incomer; and get into a position where he can accept the ball immediately upon reception.

You then can progress to active defending, by telling the server that he cannot enter the grid until the ball touches the foot or thigh of the receiver. In other words, he is rushing in to rattle the defender as he receives the ball and pressure him as he tries to get rid of it. Watch to make sure that you are getting success, and place more restrictions on the defender if necessary to achieve it.

Large Group Work

Obviously, you will want to play a game which involves reception of lots of air balls. Presumably, you already have covered chest traps & heading, so the players will have a large set of tools to receive air balls. Here is one fun drill which provides such options.

Make a large rectangular grid, with small cone goals on each end. Put a moat in the middle, with narrow alleys on the sides and about 30 feet of space on each end in front of the goal (the grid will look like a large box, with a smaller box in the middle). The ball can be served over the moat or dribbled/passed in the alleys. If it falls in the moat, then the other side gets a throw-in. A team scores 2 points for a successful elevator or thigh trap (ball under control and kept in bounds), 1 point for a good chest trap or header, and 5 points for a goal. This game is fun for 4v4 or greater numbers.

Variation: For smaller players who do not do lofted kicks well, another option to get more high balls is to put 2 moat-keepers in the moat and allow the first one who gets to any ball which drops into the moat to pick it up and punt it to his team. Of course, no goals can be scored directly from the punt - but can be scored from headers. For the safety of both keepers in the moat, be sure to set some rules against contesting for any ball once the keeper is getting down to pick it up. Of course, it is fine for the moat-keepers to trap the ball to score a point and then pick it up to punt it.

Scrimmage

Remove the moats and play a regular scrimmage, but continue to award extra points for good traps (you can make regular goals worth 5 points, and goals off headers or flicks from an elevator trap worth 10 points). This can be a fun game, even for older players, as they will quickly see that they can score lots more points by some really fancy juggling work or by doing some delicate flicks in front of the goal, so this will encourage them to try all sorts of tricks which they ultimately may find to be very helpful in games.

Additional Juggling Ideas

As players progress, here are some additional juggling ideas:

- Drop to left foot, kick up with shoe laces, catch. Then, try to do this with right foot, left foot, and then catch.
- Drop onto right thigh, then catch. Now, drop on left thigh, and catch. Then try to drop on both thighs before catching. Have contests to see how can get the most touches in a row. Then, start adding patterns, such as 2 left, 1 right, 1 left, 2 right, etc. You also can play variations of the game "Simon Says" or variations of the electronic Simon (where one player does something, the next player repeats and adds a new thing, then the next one does all 3, etc.).
- When players can reach 10 juggles with either thigh and either foot, then start them on trying to do "Around the World", which is to get the ball on one foot, then to the thigh of the same leg, then to the head, then to a chest trap, then to the thigh of the other leg, then to the foot of that leg.
- Introduce juggling with the inside of the foot, starting with simply catching the ball on the side of the shoe, and progressing to being able to juggle from the inside of one foot to the inside of the other foot.
- Introduce juggling with the outside of the foot, starting with trying to just catch/settle the ball with the outside of the foot. Most players will have lots of trouble with this, as it requires real flexibility. However, some can manage to juggle from the outside of one foot to the outside of the opposite foot. Illustrations of this juggling are shown in Vogelsinger's "Power Soccer Basics" Video.
- Add group juggling to your warm-ups when the players have reached around 10 juggles on their own. Allow 2-3 touches and then require that the ball be passed to the next player. If the ball is served poorly,

then the server has to sprint around the circle X times before returning. If the receiver blows the catch, then the receiver must do the sprints.

- At around age 12, introduce juggling with the head. This is fairly hard to learn - so make a big deal out of anyone who can manage to get to 5 in a row.

Consider making some certificates, so that you will award the a certificate to players at the end of a game if their parents certify that they got a certain number of consecutive juggles. Use different colored certificates for 5 in a row, 10 in a row, 15 in a row, 20 in a row, 50 in a row, and 100 in a row. If you make a big deal of this, with a public issuance of the award, you will guarantee that the kids will try very hard to get these certificates.

Updated 3 April 1999

Shielding

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Do some basic ball control moves, along with your stretches. Introduce rolls, pullbacks, and circle turns, if you have not done so, as these techniques will be used in this session. Then, to fully warm up the players, put the players in pairs so that their arms are linked and they are leaning against one another, and have them try to roll the ball around with their outside foot. Have pairs switch sides periodically, so that they can work with both feet. Have a "sack-race" kind of activity, where the pairs try to walk/hop from one line to another, while controlling the ball with the outside foot. Have one race going forward; one going backward; and two going sideways (left-to-right and right-to-left).

One of the first skills which young players will need is the ability to shield the ball in order to keep a nearby opponent from stealing it. Confidence in the ability to shield the ball is critical to later success as a player - because a player who does not believe that he can hang onto the ball usually will get his head down, get flustered, and just blindly kick the ball away ("hot potato" clearance).

When should you shield the ball?

Common reasons to decide to shield the ball instead of trying to take the defender on by dribbling are that your opponent is bigger/faster or there is so much traffic past him that it doesn't make sense to keep going ahead (so you need to stop and find one of your teammates who is facing less traffic) or you are in your defensive third where it is too risky to dribble when you could lose possession.

How do you shield the ball?

By using various techniques to put your body between the opponent and the ball, so that you can gain time to give the ball to a teammate or take advantage of a mistake by the defender to get past him.

What are the basic rules of shielding?

The first rule of shielding is to avoid turning your back on the incoming defender if at all possible. It is much harder to hang onto the ball if you cannot see what your opponent is doing - so try to keep one shoulder pointed at the defender at all times. About the only time that you want to turn your back on an opponent is when you know that you have back support and you will be able to play the ball back to a teammate very quickly.

The second rule of shielding is to take control of the situation yourself. If the opponent is coming in hard, it is generally a good idea to be the one to make the first contact.

The third rule of shielding is to be aggressive in holding onto the ball. It is okay in soccer to use your arms, shoulders, body and legs to keep an opponent from getting the ball (you just cannot push with your hands or kick/push with your feet), so don't be afraid to hold your ground or to use your body to push the opponent away.

Individual Work

There are four basic shielding moves which you will cover in this session. They are the simple step across; the roll; the pull-back; and the circle turn (Note: younger players may have trouble with the circle turn, but it is a good idea to introduce it anyway - and, for older players, it may be possible to add pull-back/taps behind the support leg and the stepover).

Put the players into pairs, and put each pair in a long/narrow grid with one ball (one player on one end and one at the other). The player with the ball will serve the ball to the other player, then act as the defender. This same grid will be used to teach each of these moves. Put the spare ball at one end of the grid.

Step Across

This is the most basic shielding move - but is amazingly useful. The player simply steps over the ball to put either one or both legs between the ball and an incoming opponent.

There is a trick to it, however. In stepping across the ball, the player usually wants to end up being positioned to face the direction where there is the best chance of finding support players (i.e., toward the open field- not the touchline). In general, the only time that you want to turn towards the touchline is when it makes sense to kick the ball off of the opponent's shin guards to get a throw-in.

Obviously, the direction that the player will end up facing will depend on which foot is used to lead off. Let's say that the open field is to his left. He will want to step across the ball in the direction of the defender, starting with his right foot - and then lifting his left foot so that it rests on the ball or comes over beside his right foot. Some coaches recommend that the player get in the habit of swinging the lead foot around the face of the ball, instead of stepping directly over the ball, so that the ball is shielded at all times. However, this may be an extra complication for young players (who can get confused with multiple decision), so you can leave this for later if it seems like a good idea.

After learning the basic step across, the player needs to know when/how to use the move. However, give the players some time to experiment on actually doing the move before you get into this.

Put two players at opposite ends of a small grid. Have one player pass to the other player, then walk towards the receiver to start shutting him down. Have the receiver step across the ball to put himself between the opponent and the ball - and end up with his back foot (the foot farthest from the opponent) resting on top of the ball. Once they have this basic idea down - and have learned the mechanics, it is time for the next step - which is to make actual contact with the opponent.

The basic shielding posture is:

- Knees bent and bottom down to lower center of gravity;
- Body in a fencer's or boxer's stance (turned sideways with weight balanced on both feet);
- Arm/elbow of side which will make contact tucked well in to protect ribs;
- Other arm spread out for balance;
- Time the step-across so that shoulder aggressively makes contact with opponent (bump him slightly), transferring weight to front foot so that back foot is free to pass/control ball.

Now, return to the grid and allow players to practice making the shoulder-to-shoulder contact (or getting their shoulder into the opponent's chest, depending on the angle). The idea is to aggressively hold the opponent on one shoulder while you get your head up to find a teammate to give the ball to. In the warm-up, the players experimented with moving the ball while leaning into the partner, so they should have some ideas of their own which they should be allowed to explore.

Rolls

When in the basic shielding position, the ball is moved around either with the side of the foot or the sole of the free foot. The way to move it with the sole of the foot is by rolling the ball back and forth, periodically putting the foot down to movement of the plant foot.

There is a knack to doing this successfully, which is only gained by practice. Allow the players some time to work on this in the grid - and also suggest to players that they can work on this at home by pushing one shoulder against a wall, and simply rolling the ball back and forth to move in a circular fashion. After some experimentation, play a game where the defender gets 1 point if he can steal the ball or kick it away before the count of 5, while the attacker gets 1 point if he can hold the ball to the count of 5. Increase the holding time to 7 or 9 as you get success.

Pull-Back

The pullback move is used when an opponent is coming in so quickly that it will be hard to step across the ball in time to shield it, so the ball is basically snatched to one side using the sole of the foot. Once the ball is snatched back, the basic shielding posture is used to lean into the opponent - but the player will need to be more braced for the contact, as he likely will not have time to initiate the contact himself.

After illustrating this move, have the receiver move up into the middle of the grid (which will reduce the time needed for the server to get to him), and work on using the pull-back to get ready to shield the ball. Play the same game of points for holding the ball or stealing it.

Circle Turn

There are two types of circle turns - one by using the inside of the foot and one by using the outside of the foot. The latter is the one which is most commonly used - although both can be practiced. In an outside circle turn, the foot used to turn the ball is cocked outwards and somewhat back, and the ball is tapped 3-4 times to allow the player to make a complete circle.

Usually, a circle turn will be used in a pressure situation to spin off of an opponent and explode away on the last tap. Therefore, when practicing circle turns, add an explosion to the last tap so that the ball is pulled with the foot in the new direction. Note that it is fine to do partial circles (and, in games, most "circle" turns actually are about $\frac{1}{2}$ of a full circle). The key to using circle turns well is to be able to look up as the taps are being made, so that the ball can be laid off to a teammate if close support is available - as the ball almost always should be laid off in such situations, since the natural position of the first player will serve to obstruct the opponent. When you observe a player actively obstructing the opponent, however, you need to bring up the difference between just holding your ground (which is legal) and active movement to prevent the opponent from getting to your teammate with the ball (which is a foul).

Return to the same grid to work on the circle turn. Put the receiver on the back end line (to give him more time to control the ball once received, and allow him to initiate the circle turn as soon as the opponent gets within contact range. Instruct the server to act more like a shadow, just slightly crowding the receiver from the rear as he makes the circle - but not really make an effort to steal the ball. Remember: you are just introducing the idea of this move at this stage. Young players are unlikely to be able to execute this move under full pressure until they have spent more time working on dribbling (especially on explosions), so simply encourage effort.

Small Group Work

Split up every other pair, so that you now have 3 players in a grid. Leave the server at one end, put the receiver in the middle, and put the other player on the far end of the grid (he will serve as the support player). Then, serve the ball into the receiver; allow the defender to close him down; and, as soon as the defender is on him, have the support player start counting slowly to X (which is the amount of time that most of your players could successfully hold off an opponent by shielding). Once the count is reached, the support player then can move in to accept a drop pass and the team then can try to dribble across the opponent's endline.

After 3 tries, swap out roles. Then, play a game of 2v1 - encouraging the inside player to hold the ball and wait for support unless the defender makes a clear goof which will allow him to get by.

Large Group Work

Station a line of players at the midline, and a line of players on both sides of the goal. When you serve a ball into the middle, the first players on the goalline can start for the ball. The midline player starts after the count of 3 and acts as a support player for whichever goalline player wins possession. The player who wins possession may try to score himself, or can hold the ball and lay the ball off for the incomer (going 2v1). Defender scores by dispossession, and attackers score by getting a goal. You will want this game to move quickly, so use two goals if you have more than 9 players, as you don't want more than 2-3 in line. Have players move to a different station after their turn.

Scrimmage

You can play a regular scrimmage, or can continue to play with lopsided teams (creating various restrictions to provide for arrival of late support). Regardless of your decision, praise all efforts to shield the ball and look for support. Encourage teammates to talk to one another, and to call for the ball if available. Remind them that, when under heavy pressure, players may be afraid to look up - so they will need to YELL and get close to offer any meaningful help.

Updated 8 February 1999

Introduction to Heading

NOTE: I would NOT do an entire practice on heading at any level as, truthfully, too many repetitions can begin to hurt! I would, rather, run through the basic steps in 1-5 below as a part of practice over the course of a few weeks. I would then move to the more "advanced games", which incorporate not only the basics but tactics and service of the ball, as much as necessary to be sure all is going well. Everything through item #9 below is appropriate for players U-10 and above. #10 is more for U-12 while # 11 is definitely for older players, primarily because of the difficulty in getting good service from the wings. While the basics of heading should be introduced early, be aware that the ball simply does not get up into the air enough to require heading until somewhere around the U-12--U-14 age groups.

The basic guidelines are:

1. Eyes OPEN!
2. Mouth CLOSED!
3. Hit ball with the forehead area between hairline and eyebrows.
4. Tense the neck muscles.
5. HIT the BALL! Don't let it hit YOU!
6. Power comes from your hips and back, NOT your neck.

The two basic types of headers are defensive and offensive. As a general rule, defensive headers should go HIGH, WIDE, and FAR while offensive headers should be aimed towards ground.

To start with a group of 12 U-12's, every player should have a ball and gather around the coach.

1. Everyone holds ball in front of face in two hands and gently taps ball against forehead a few times. Concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed. [Note: eyes WILL reflexively blink when ball is struck but should be open up until that point.
2. Everyone now "heads" the ball out of their hands and catches it. Ball should start being held against player's forehead. Player then pulls head/upper body BACK while holding ball stationary and then STRIKES ball. Again concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed, hit with proper part of forehead.
3. Everyone get a partner, 1 ball per pair, stand about 5 yards apart. Player 1 heads ball to partner using technique described in #2 above. Partner catches and heads back. Again, coach repeats eyes open, mouth closed, strike through the ball.
4. Player's now all drop balls and face coach in a basic "boxer's stance", e.g. one foot forward, one back, well balanced. (To get players in this stance, coach asks players to bounce around on toes pretending to be boxers, throwing imaginary jabs, etc. On "Freeze", players simply hold their stance and will be in proper position.) Coach: "Now look at that big iron bar right in front of you and reach out and grab onto it with both hands about shoulder width apart. Like this (coach demo). Feel it? Big and solid. Now hold on to the bar and lean your upper body back like this (coach demo). Then use the bar to PULL your body forward. Repeat this a few times and toss in blood-chilling karate scream ("yaaaaggggghhhh!") when body comes forward. Correct those who don't get their arms out far enough, those that don't get a good lean backwards, those that merely drop their hands to their sides when their body comes forward.
5. Everyone get a partner. Working player assumes proper stance, gets backward lean, and partner tosses underhand lob to be headed back. Repeat 5 times and switch. Coach circulates and corrects eyes open, mouth closed; hit with forehead; being sure that working player stretches arms FORWARD, leans upper torso BACK, and uses arms to PULL upper body through ball.

End basics. A few additional exercises for varying skill levels follow:

1. Set up in threes, two balls per trio, players in a triangle with about 3-5 yards between them. Working player receives underhand lobs alternately from partners. Lobs from partner A must be headed up to partner's head; lobs from partner B must be headed to partner's feet. Run for a minute and switch working player. Coach corrects the basics as above; emphasizes also good serve.
2. Same formation, 5-7 yards between players, one ball per trio. A serves underhand lob to B who heads to C. C serves A who heads to B, and so on. The difference here is that players are getting a ball coming from one direction and heading it in a different direction as opposed to the simple back-and-forth in the basic work. Emphasize moving entire body to enable powerful headers struck with forehead.
3. Groups of four with two balls, players in a diamond with approx. 5 yards between players. Single working player receives underhand lob serve, locates player without ball (other than server), and heads to him. Next lob comes immediately. This results in the working player having to deal with balls from a variety of angles, identify a target, and perform header. As players improve, increase distance and allow non-working players to move around.
4. 6 players plus coach and assistant (or a couple of parents), each with a ball set up on the outside of an area about 20*20. Working players set up in center of area. On "start", working players make eye contact with outside player and check to them, receive underhand lob for [coaches choice: attacking header, defensive header, leaping header, diving header for more advanced players], then continue on around outside of server and re-enter grid to look for another server with ball. Run for a minute and then have players switch roles.
5. In a field 30*40 yards with small cone goals, divide into two teams of 6 with different color pinnies and play "toss-head-catch" as follows: Sequence MUST be a "toss" followed by a "head" followed by a "catch". Object is to move down field and score on header. Ball turns over to other team if player goes out of sequence.
6. Put 4 servers with ball pool on right touch line about 25 yards out from goal, coach stands about 20 yards out and 5 yards infield from same line. Put two cones goal-width apart on center line, 1 about 10 yards in from left touch and 1 about 15 yards in. Remaining players line up, 4 on each cone. Server executes wall pass with coach and continues on down touch line towards goal line and chips ball to center. Point of aim is center of goal and between 6 and 12 yards out from goal line (the "second 6"). First two players on center cones time their runs to meet ball and finish with header into goal with player nearest server making a looping far post run and player furthest from server making a straight near post run. Adjust field width as necessary to allow for crosses to reach target area. Further adjustment with coach serving balls or even initially tossing balls in is also possible. As proficiency is achieved, add a third attacker making a delayed center run.

Updated 8 February 1999

Heading

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls, several old pair of pantyhose; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Any type of warm-up activity can be used which will get the players working. An extended warm-up game is advisable for younger players, as heading work tends to be more sedentary and younger kids pay attention better if a bit tired.

Individual Work

Start by letting some air out of several balls to make them a bit soft. Take an old pair of pantyhose, and tie a ball in the crotch area, then tie the ball to the top of the goal with the legs. Put up several balls at varying heights.

As players arrive, give them a quick illustration of the basics of heading and then let them experiment with the hanging balls.

The key coaching points for heading are:

- Put feet in a wide fencer or boxer stance, with knees bent and weight centered evenly (see a good description below on teaching this stance)
- Keep the neck stiff, and use the waist/back to move the head toward the ball.
- Eyes OPEN!
- Mouth CLOSED!
- Hit ball with the forehead area between hairline and eyebrows.
- If you hit the ball on its bottom half, the ball will go up.
- If you hit the ball on the upper half, the ball will go down.

As a general rule, defensive headers should go HIGH, WIDE, and FAR, while offensive headers should be aimed towards ground (as ground balls are harder for keepers to handle). So, defenders usually will aim for the bottom half of the ball, while attackers usually will aim for the top half. Initially, of course, what you really want is the courage to try the technique, so don't get too concerned about where the ball is hit.

If you don't have any pantyhose available, another option is to do the following:

1. Everyone holds ball in front of face in two hands and gently taps ball against forehead a few times. Concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed. [Note: eyes WILL reflexively blink when ball is struck but should be open up until that point.
2. Everyone now "heads" the ball out of their hands and catches it. Ball should start being held against player's forehead. Player then pulls head/upper body BACK while holding ball stationary and then STRIKES ball. Again concentrate on eyes open, mouth closed, hit with proper part of forehead.
3. Everyone get a partner, 1 ball per pair, stand about 5 yards apart. Player 1 heads ball to partner using technique described in #2 above. Partner catches and heads back. Again, coach repeats eyes open, mouth closed, strike through the ball.
4. Players now all drop balls and face coach in a basic "boxer's stance", e.g. one foot forward, one back, well balanced. (To get players in this stance, coach asks players to bounce around on toes pretending to be

boxers, throwing imaginary jabs, etc. On "Freeze", players simply hold their stance and will be in proper position).

Coach: "Now look at that big iron bar right in front of you and reach out and grab onto it with both hands about shoulder width apart. Like this (coach demo). Feel it? Big and solid. Now hold on to the bar and lean your upper body back like this (coach demo). Then use the bar to PULL your body forward. Repeat this a few times and toss in blood-chilling karate scream ("yaaaagggghhhh!") when body comes forward."

Correct those who don't get their arms out far enough, those that don't get a good lean backwards, those that merely drop their hands to their sides when their body comes forward.

Everyone get a partner. Working player assumes proper stance, gets backward lean, and partner tosses underhand lob to be headed back. Repeat 5 times and switch. Coach circulates and corrects eyes open, mouth closed; hit with forehead; being sure that working player stretches arms FORWARD, leans upper torso BACK, and uses arms to PULL upper body through ball.

Small Group Work

When the players have had several minutes to experiment with heading, put them in pairs, with one partner between a set of flat cones about 3 yards apart and the other outside. Have the "keeper" toss the ball to the outside player, who then tries to head the ball back across the line. Let them try to score on the "keeper", as this turns the drill into a game, and the partners can have a contest over who can score the most out of 5 tosses.

Once good success has been achieved, divide the pairs up so that you have groups of 3. Use the extra player as a shadow defender, who just stands behind the receiver. Rotate players around after 5 headers. Now, introduce the idea of getting your arms up to shield your face and head from another player who may be trying to get the ball too. Allow the shadow to start jostling and trying for the ball (but only at about half speed). Continue with rotations.

Progression 1: Set up in threes, two balls per trio, players in a triangle with about 3-5 yards between them. Working player receives underhand lob alternately from partners. Lobs from partner A must be headed up to partner's head; lobs from partner B must be headed to partner's feet. Run for a minute and switch working player. Coach corrects the basics as above; emphasizes also good serve. This progression may be too advanced for younger players, who tend to do better by learning one specific skill at a time (e.g., heading downward).

Progression 2: Move players farther apart (about 5-7 yards), and put one ball down. Player A serves underhand lob to B who heads to C. Player C serves A who heads to B, and so on. The difference here is that players are getting a ball coming from one direction and heading it in a different direction as opposed to the simple back-and-forth in the basic work. Emphasize moving entire body to enable powerful headers struck with forehead. This progression, and the progressions which follow, probably will be too difficult for players under about age 10-11.

Progression 3: Groups of four with two balls, players in a diamond with approx. 5 yards between players. Single working player receives underhand lob serve, locates player without ball (other than server), and heads to him. Next lob comes immediately. This results in the working player having to deal with balls from a variety of angles, identify a target, and perform header. As players improve, increase distance and allow non-working players to move around.

Progression 4: 6 players plus coach and assistant (or a couple of parents), each with a ball set up on the outside of an area about 20*20. Working players set up in center of area. On "start", working players make eye contact with outside player and check to them, receive underhand lob for [coaches choice: attacking header, defensive header, leaping header, diving header for more advanced players], then continue on around outside of server and re-enter grid to look for another server with ball. Run for a minute and then have players switch roles.

Large Group Work

Option 1: Put several players around the edges of a large circle, with about 2-3 players inside circle. All of outside players have balls. Inside player asks for service, then heads ball back to server, and moves to another server. Swap out inside players after 5-6 headers. Then, add shadow players who tag along, and then gradually allow increased pressure from shadows (but allowing receiver to cut back or break to get serve). Jump in quickly if you see any player not getting arms up for protection, as serious facial injuries can occur in head collisions.

Option 2 (for more advanced players only): Put 4 servers with ball pool on right touch line about 25 yards out from goal, coach stands about 20 yards out and 5 yards infield from same line. Put two cones goal-width apart on center line, 1 about 10 yards in from left touch and 1 about 15 yards in. Remaining players line up, 4 on each cone. Server executes wall pass with coach and continues on down touch line towards goal line and chips ball to center. Point of aim is center of goal and between 6 and 12 yards out from goal line (the "second 6"). First two players on center cones time their runs to meet ball and finish with header into goal with player nearest server making a looping far post run and player furthest from server making a straight near post run. Adjust field width as necessary to allow for crosses to reach target area. Further adjustment with coach serving balls or even initially tossing balls in is also possible. As proficiency is achieved, add a third attacker making a delayed center run.

Scrimmage

Option 1 (for younger players): Allow a regular scrimmage, but count any goals off of headers as 2 points. Alternatively, count ANY header as a 1 point. If you taught headers and chest traps consecutively, you might count either a chest trap or header as a goal.

Option 2 (for players 11+): Set up a field 30x40 yards with small cone goals, divide into two teams with different color pinnies and play "toss-head-catch" as follows: Sequence MUST be a "toss" followed by a "head" followed by a "catch". Object is to move down field and score on header. Ball turns over to other team if player goes out of sequence or ball is not caught off of the header or header is not done correctly. Variation: If you combine the teaching of heading/chest traps into one session, or did consecutive sessions, you can modify the rules to allow either header or chest trap. For older players, you can add flat chest trap, followed by flick-up of ball for header by another player, into the sequence.

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Instep Drive

When a player wants to kick a ball with optimum power, the instep drive is the technique that is most often used. On the center top of the foot, towards the inside is a hard bone. This is the primary contact point for the instep drive. Because of the proximity on this point to the shoe laces, some refer to this as the "laces" kick which may be a good reference point for young players, even though the contact point may be just inside of the laces.

If a player wants to keep the ball low, toe of the foot must be pointed at a downward angle when contact is made. The upper leg (thigh) must be the prime muscle group moving the lower leg through the ball on this kick.

Some of the key technical points for the instep drive are:

- support foot beside the ball and pointed at the target
- kicking foot pointed down and locked throughout the shot and follow through
- body weight is moving forward and through the shot, landing on the kicking foot

Instep Drive Training

The following exercises are submitted not as one or two training sessions, but as examples of exercises that can be used in a training session, based upon the age and skill development of the players.

Warm-up

- two man pass and move.
- stretch the ankles by rotating them while standing on one foot; then press the toes into the ground and try to drive the front of the foot forward and down with the upper leg; this should give the player a sense of driving the lower leg with the upper.
- by standing sideways to and grabbing onto a stationary object, swing a leg slowly until maximum swing is reached; switch legs; stress the leg swing being driven with the upper leg.

Technical Exercises

- have the players pass back and forth in the two man groups using the instep; move through the technical points above, individually focusing on each one; the players should not one-touch their kicks at this point; increase the power of the pass and distance between the players gradually
- have one player hand serve the ball to an area below her partner's knee; this is to reinforce the foot-down kicking position throughout the kick
- ghost kicking--to reinforce the support foot beside the ball, place a ball in front of a goal and have the players plant their foot just wide of the ball and pretend to kick an imaginary ball just beside it; the coach should watch that the plant foot is in the proper position, i.e. neither too far behind nor too far ahead of the ball; that the kicking foot is pointed down; and that the follow through is well forward. In some areas, coaches emphasize that the player should land on the kicking foot and keep moving towards the target, which helps with a proper follow-through.
- shoot and tend goal--set up cones 6-8 yards apart, with groups of 3-5 players; one player is between the cones facing another player with ball; the player with ball dribbles a step or two and takes a shot; the shooter then trades places with the goalkeeper as the player on the other side of the goal collects the ball and shoots on the new goalkeeper, becoming the next goalkeeper after his shot
- close-in shooting--on a goal, have the players take a short dribble and shoot from about 6 yards out with "some" power; the purpose is to develop some confidence of hitting the goal during the learning phase; the coach should stop all bad habits that start to form as the players try to increase their power; stress keeping the ball low through proper placement of the plant foot and by getting the body over the ball; gradually increase the distance of the shot on goal

- pass and shoot--set two cones about 20 yards out from each post; divide the team into two groups, one on each post; one player starts his run from a post to around the cone in front of him; the player at the far post passes to the player as he rounds the cone; after receiving the pass, the player sets up his shot with as few touches as possible and shoots; the shooter collects his shot and goes to the other line and the original passer starts his run around his cone to receive a pass from the other post player.

Tactical Exercises

- off the dribble--half the players are dribbling a ball in an area above the penalty area; each player has a number, starting with one; the other half are behind the goal collecting balls; they are numbered as well, starting with one; when the coach calls out a number, that player quickly dribbles the ball into the penalty area and shoots; the player behind the goal with the shooter's number collects a ball and switches with the shooter
- back angles--have a player dribble to the goal line then pass the ball to a player running in on goal
- through ball--player A has ball just wide of one goal post about 35 yards out from the goal line and passes the ball to player B who is making a run towards the opposite post from about 35 yards out; B is to shoot on the second touch
- wall pass--one player is 25 yards out from the goal line between two groups of players who are 35 yards out, the first player of group one dribbles and plays a wall pass (i.e. "give and go") combination with the middle player and shoots the return pass; immediately after the wall pass the first player in the second group plays a wall pass combination with the middle player on the other side; after a series of passes, the middle player is switched out

Match Related Exercises or Games

- **Keep Your Yard Clean**
Set up two parallel lines of cones far enough apart so that it will take a reasonable shot to get across. The area between the cones is "no mans land". Divide the team in two groups, one group on either side of "no mans land", each player with a ball. Instruct the players to get rid of all the balls on their side by kicking them as hard as they can to the other team's side. No one can go into "no mans land". Play for 3 minutes. Whoever has the least number of balls on their side wins. Watch for kids backing up, and lining up the ball like a goal kick. Stress getting rid of the ball as quickly as possible. You may need to even up teams if it seems unbalanced.
- **4v4 Shooting Game**
Move two goals about 20 yards apart; play teams of 3 or 4 with goal keepers. Start with all balls in the goals, evenly divided between the two either keeper starts play by tossing a ball on the field. When a ball goes out of play, the nearest goal keeper puts another ball in play as soon as possible; players are urged to shoot on their attacking goal as often and as they can.
- **5v5 on One Goal**
10 players in the penalty area, remaining players on outside as servers with multiple balls. Servers toss balls into the area where players contest possession and shoot as often as possible. Emphasize need for players that gain possession of the ball to quickly turn and shoot.

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Laces Kick

Ages: 6+; Materials: Cones, Pinnies; Players: 4+

The laces kick (a.k.a. instep drive) and the driven pass are very similar in terms of technique. The primary difference is that, in the driven pass, the player typically will want to keep an eye on play and has less of a need for added power on the pass. As a result, the player usually will not run through the pass or add any type of snap to the pass.

On the other hand, when a player wants to take a very hard low, shot like a penalty kick, additional power is needed. Also, smaller players will often need to add a significant follow-through to most shots in order to get enough power. Some coaches opt to teach the laces kick and the driven pass in the same practice. This is fine, as long as you have enough time and as long as you are careful to distinguish for players when each technique will be most useful.

Individual Work

Start with players, each with a ball, seated on the ground. Point out the big bone that runs along the inside laces of the foot. This is the hardest surface of the foot, and is the area which they will use to make a laces kick. Have them toss the ball up in the air, and try to hit the ball solidly in the center with the big bone of the foot.

Now, put them in pairs. One player will bend over and hold the ball with the hands, while the other player works on the foot position needed to make the big bone of the foot come into contact with the center of the ball. Players with big feet often have to turn the foot sharply to the side and turn the knee inward to get this optimal contact. Furthermore, as they continue to grow, they may need to periodically redo this exercise to find the correct foot position, so coaches should not overlook the need to do this if a player suddenly becomes unable to do a low shot after having prior success.

Next, work on the correct distance for the plant foot. One of the most common problems with young players is a tendency to put the foot too close to the ball, which makes it almost impossible to make good contact with the ball. Tell the players to leave plenty of room for their hips to swing, because they will get power from the swing of the hips/legs.

Finally, work on the proper approach to the ball. Put the player at an angle to the side of the ball, usually around 35 degrees, and back at a distance that he will need to take 3 steps to reach the ball. Note that a right-footed player will step L, R, and then put his L foot beside the ball. As the non-kicking foot is planted, the kicking leg is drawn back; the ankle of the kicking foot is locked with the toe down; and the knees of BOTH legs are bent so that the knee of the kicking foot comes over the ball as contact is made with the ball.

Coaching Note: Do not skip the phase of checking out the proper foot positioning. It is critical that the players be allowed to experiment with the positioning which feels "best" to them and they will automatically feel when they are making solid contact. The coach can make the rounds and to check each player while they are experimenting with their foot position.

Once both partners have tried this basic positioning, put partners across from one another at a distance of about 30 feet, each player with a ball, lining up the partners so you have two lines of players who are facing one another. Get some parents/assistants to shag errant balls and let the players work on their kicks. To maximize touches, allow both players to go at the same time and allow players on one side to use any ball which comes their way. While they are working on these skills, walk around and correct technique as necessary.

Common problems are:

- Erratic shots caused by failure to lock the ankle/foot.

- Tip: to get players to lock the ankle with the foot in the 'down' position, encourage them to curl their toes into the bottom of their boot.
- Shot not staying low, caused by foot position too low on the ball or by putting the plant foot too far behind the ball.
- No power on the shot, caused by poor leg swing or improper position of plant foot.
- Stubbed toe, caused by poor run angle and/or failure to bend leg of kicking foot and/or failure improper foot angle.
- Tip: cut the bottom off of a styrofoam cup and use the use the inverted upper half as a kicking tee); shorten the tee as the player improves
- Lifting the head, which causes the ball to become air-borne or the shot to be erratic.
- Tip: get the players to focus on a particular panel of the ball and "watch their foot hit the ball".

Once the players have learned the basic mechanics of the shot itself, they are ready for the next stage, which is to teach the follow-through. In order to impart the maximum power to the ball, the player must continue to run through the shot, ending in a high-kick worthy of a can-can dancer, with his head/nose almost coming into contact with his kicking leg. To do this, it is easiest to practice the move without the ball. Simply put the players on the field and tell them to select a spot which represents the ball such as a mound of grass or a spot marked on the dirt. Have them start their run so that their foot will go over the spot; and then practice leaping through the contact with the ball so that they go over the spot and land on their kicking foot.

Coaching Note: Some players who are worried about stubbing their toes may be afraid of an exaggerated follow-through. For these players, it is sufficient initially if you can get them to run through the kick and land on their kicking foot.

Now, put the players back into their two lines. Because of the increased power, and the need to run forward, have the two lines alternate on doing these kicks and leave plenty of space so that nobody gets hit by a shot, Let the players see how much extra power is achieved by the follow-through.

Small Group Work

Of course, in an actual game, there will be very few situations where the player actually can take the time to place the ball and then take a careful run-up. As a result, players need to learn to control and shoot balls that are coming in from the front, from the side, or from behind them.

Divide the players into groups of 3, and put players in a long grid about 30 feet by 40 feet. Make two narrow cone goals at one end to imitate the corners of the net with a "keeper" stationed several yards behind the goals so that he can more easily shag balls which come through the goals. Have one player as a shooter and one with 3-4 balls as a server. Start with service of a ball coming from behind the shooter by having the server about 15 feet to one side and slightly deeper than the shooter. Server rolls the ball so that it will cross the path of the incoming shooter about midway to the goals. The shooter must take one touch to control the ball and then take a laces shot at either of the cone goals. After 3-4 shots, the players rotate positions.

Repeat, with balls coming in square by putting server about 20 feet wide of the shooter and about midway to the goals, and have him roll the ball out as the shooter starts his run. Again, the shooter tries to control with one touch and put the ball into position to make a laces shot with his second touch. Rotate after 3-4 shots.

Repeat, with balls coming in from the front by putting put server about 20 feet wide of the goals on the goal-line and have him roll the ball so that it intersects his path about midway to the goals. Rotate after 3-4 shots.

Now, repeat the entire exercise again with the server becoming a lazy defender who just jogs slowly towards the shooter to add a bit of extra pressure on him after the serve. Rotate players after each sequence of balls (back, side, front) has been completed. Finally, end with shooters dribbling their own balls in, and the extra player acting as a lazy defender to apply some minimal pressure.

Coaching Note: If players are having difficulty, the coach may opt to delay square and front-coming balls for a later date. This is especially true of younger players, who may not have the ability to accurately judge or time these balls, either from the service or shooting sides of the equation. If you run into this problem, limit your initial drill to balls passed in from behind recruit parents to help as servers when you are going to work on other types of service at a future practice. When the slight-pressure rotations have been completed, turn the drill into a contest. To prevent sabotage by poor service, have the contest between the shooter and the keeper. Then put the servers into their own groups for their own contest, using the others as shaggers and servers. See how many goals can be scored in X tries, perhaps around 9-10 each, divided into the types that you've practiced.

Now, divide the groups up so that the top scorers are in one group; the middle ones in another; and the lower ones in the last group. Run the contests again, making a mental note of strength levels of the various shooters.

Large Group Work

Divide the players into 2-4 evenly balanced teams (good/average/poor shooters) and run some relay races or have some contests. Use your imagination about conditions. Ideas include:

- Put players in 2 lines about 40 feet out from goal. On your shout of "go", first player dribbles and shoots with laces kick. If he misses, and shooting high counts as a miss, he must run and tag the goalpost before running back to tag hand of next player on team. If his shot goes in, he can run back and tag hand of next teammate in line. If you do not have even numbers, let one member of the team run twice. First team to finish wins.
- Create distance lanes, and see which team has the most balls that land in the farthest lane out.
- Have a penalty kick contest.
- Play for points. Teams are in two lines, about 40 feet out from goal, and will alternate shooting. Coach has all balls, and teams take turns in shooting on balls served by coach. Team with most points wins.
- Similar to last drill, except players have balls. Coach stands in between the groups; players serve balls into coach, who lays them back out to the incoming player for a shot.

Scrimmage

Because you've already made balanced teams, you can proceed to a regular scrimmage at the end of the contests. Alternatively, you can allow the winning team to decide how to end the practice, and let them choose the ending game. Periodically, repeat this practice during the seasons to continue to work on shooting balls which are coming in from various angles. Almost all players enjoy shooting work, so these sessions are good to include after several hard practices.

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Lofted Kick

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Kicking work is fairly sedentary, so have a vigorous warm-up that will spend some energy and work on fitness.

Individual Work

The lofted kick is very useful, especially for defenders. Although it's slightly more difficult to learn than a laces kick, it can be mastered by most players. Very tiny and light players sometimes have difficulty getting good air, because they have so little mass that it is hard to get the "oomph" necessary to get the ball off of the ground. Encourage them to keep trying, as it will only be a matter of time before they can accomplish this.

Coaching Note: It's possible to get air with a laces kick by setting the plant foot well behind the ball, causing the body to lean back slightly since the player will be "reaching" a bit for the ball with the kicking foot. This causes the ball to be struck more on its underside which lifts it up. Be aware, however, that it might be better to reserve laces kicks for low shots in order to get kids used to the idea of keeping the knee over the ball and keeping the head down to keep the ball low.

Coaching Points:

- Plant foot to the side and slightly behind the ball with knee slightly bent;
- Kicking foot turned outward and locked so that the foot forms a shovel;
- Strike the ball so that the big bone on the inside of the foot will hit on the lower half of the ball which causes the shovel to come under the ball and fling it upwards.

The position of the foot will vary somewhat, depending on the size of the player's foot in relation to the ball. Players with large feet, especially tall boys at the end of U-12s who may be trying to hit a size 4 ball with a size 11 foot, will need to cock the foot outward and rotate the entire foot inward to get the proper ball contact. The only way to figure out the proper foot position is by experimenting a bit until it "feels" right.

Put the kids in pairs, with one kneeling and holding the ball and one striking at the ball to get the proper feel of where to kick it. The bigger the foot, the more of an angle will be needed to be able to strike it properly. Go around and check to see that the foot angle is correct and that the foot/ankle is properly locked. Reverse, and have the others do the same thing.

Then, put the kids into two lines some distance apart, and have them shoot the ball to their partner on the other side. Watch and check on mechanics. Each kid will have to experiment a bit on foot position, so you will need to make adjustments as you work with them. Most common errors are putting the plant foot too close to the ball, so that the hips cannot swing through; getting too far behind the ball to generate enough power; not locking the foot into position; and not following through.

Small Group Work

Now, divide your team by size into about 3 groups and have a shooting contest between the members of each group. This allows the tiny ones to compete among themselves rather than with folks who have twice the size/power. Allow each player to have 3 shots, and take the one with the most distance. Next, have a contest to see who can get the most height. Finally, have a contest to see who can get the most height and distance.

Large Group Work

Put a moat in the middle of the field, with some defenders/attackers on each side of the moat. To get the ball to your teammates on the other side, you have to loft the ball across the moat. If the ball goes in the moat, then the other side gets the ball and can do an uncontested shot over the moat. Make the moat fairly narrow at first since you want success and then gradually widen it. Rotate which kid on the team does the shot across the moat. Switch so that the attackers become defenders and do the lofted shots.

Scrimmage

Any type of regular scrimmage will be fine. Kids take naturally to lofted shots and will be trying them without much encouragement, so simply praise the efforts that you see.

Updated 14 April 1999

Standing Tackle

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Warm-up

Play basic keepaway, requiring the attacker to become a defender when the ball is stolen from him. Use enough defenders so that the players are forced to move around quickly.

Individual Work

In soccer, the term "tackling" is used to describe any effort to steal the ball or knock it out. Thus, in soccer, a tackle can be on the ground (a slide tackle). It also can be done upright, either by knocking the ball out as you run along one side of the attacker or done from the front by blocking him from dribbling the ball forward. Unlike American football, a tackle really is not supposed to bring the opponent crashing to the turf. Indeed, in many cases, the tackle will be judged as a foul if you do so. As a result, your first job as a coach will be to explain the terminology to your players and make the point that the player is tackling the BALL ITSELF and not the opponent. Alternatively, you can simply use a term like "ball-stealing", so that they don't have the idea that they will playing American-style tackle football with a pointy pigskin instead of a soccer ball.

Knock-Out

The easiest tackle to learn is the knock-out tackle, which is used to hit the ball away when the attacker gets the ball too far in front. Teaching tackling is usually begun right after basic work on First Defender skills and the defensive stance.

Use the same grid and follow the same ideas of patience and delay, but give permission to go in for the ball when the attacker allows it to get out too far in front of him. In this exercise, the defender gets a point for sending the ball out of the grid in any direction while the attacker gets a point by dribbling over the opposing end-line. This tackle is used when you want to buy time for your teammates to get back and is particularly popular with wing defenders.

Bump

The next tackle, which is also very easy to learn, is the bump. To do this, quickly move into the attacker from a slight angle, lifting your lead foot over the ball so that your lead foot will end up between his legs. At the same time, turn into him with your shoulder/hips so that you can bump the him off the ball with your backside and take the ball away with the outside foot.

Once you commit, the key is to pounce aggressively and go in hard. The lead foot comes across the ball just when your shoulder/hips are firmly against the attacker. Try to time the move in so that the attacker is momentarily looking down at the ball and is standing on his dribble foot so that he is temporarily frozen. This exercise also can be done in the same grid, using the same procedure as before. One point for stealing the ball and one point if the attacker can get around the defender and dribble across the opposing end-line.

Block Tackle

The next tackle is the front, or "block", tackle. The purpose is to block the ball into the attacker's foot, then to drag/lift the ball over the attacker's foot. Body weight must be over the ball to prevent the attacker from getting any leverage.

Key coaching points are: ankle of blocking foot locked, to make foot into an L-shape (hoe-shape) to use as a drag; keep body weight over ball; put support foot well to the outside.

Put the pairs back into their grid, one ball per pair. Have the attacker stop, with the ball just to the inside of his right foot. Now, have the defender step in so that his shoulder presses into the attacker just as his right foot blocks the ball into the attacker's right foot so that the ball cannot go forward. As soon as the block is made, the defender will try to lift the ball to the outside and bring it over the toes of the attacker by getting his locked foot under the ball and lifting/rolling it over. Note that the support leg must be sufficiently wide of the attacker to allow the blocking leg/foot and the ball to come across.

This is a more difficult tackle to learn, so give the players ample time to experiment. Most young players can block the ball easily but have trouble with the technique of dragging it over. Some will try to put the outside leg too far forward, and bump knees and/or give the attacker room to push the ball through their legs. Others will try to put the outside foot too far to the back so that they have no leverage to use against the attacker. It takes some time to figure out the best place to put the plant foot so that the ball is quickly blocked, and then lifted across. Once some success is achieved by both players, start with some very slow dribbling and let the players try to do just a block. When most have made a good block, then let them try to lift the ball across.

Now, simply let the players play 1 v 1 in their grids, as follows. The players stand at opposite ends of the grid, taking turns on who is the server. After serving the ball to the opponent, they close him down defensively and try to tackle the ball. Play until the defender has made 3 successful tackles, then switch. Do two full rotations.

Match-Related Work

Next, play a game in which each successful tackle is worth 1 point. The attacker scores 1 point if he can dribble across the opposing end-line without having the ball tackled away. Play until one player reaches 5 points, then switch roles. Note: Be sure to watch carefully to make sure that you are getting success. Reassign partners; or place restrictions on above-average players; or make the grids narrower if necessary in order to be sure that the defenders win more often.

Now, combine the kids in adjacent grids, and make a hexagon with some cones. Put a player between the cones at every other leg of the hexagon meaning that they will be in basically a triangle. Put the last player in the middle of the triangle, and play keepaway with the outside players restricted to movement only between their cones. This makes their movement more predictable for the defender. Play until the defender kicks the ball out 3-5 times, then switch. Counsel the defender to use patience when he sets an angle to bottle somebody up as his success is guaranteed by the placement of the outside players once he sets his angle properly.

Match Condition Work

Play keepaway in a small grid, with 1-2 defenders and about 4-5 attackers (the small space will favor the defenders). Give a point to the defenders for each time that they tackle the ball away or steal it and pass it to the other defender. Give a point to the attackers for each time that all of them can touch the ball without an intervening tackle by the defender. Play to 5 points and switch.

Updated 26 March 1999

Shoulder Charge and Side Tackle

Ages: 6+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Shoulder Charge

The shoulder charge is one of the most useful skills which a defender can have in his arsenal - and all young players should be able to learn this without difficulty. All that there is to a shoulder charge is to place your shoulder squarely against the shoulder of the opponent, and push against him. To start off, make sure that everyone's elbows are tucked in and pair kids by size/aggressiveness when to avoid injury. Simply allow the players to walk around without a ball, while pushing into one another with their shoulders. Show them that they can push very hard, even against the Coach, if they get their weight down and use their far leg to give additional power.

Next, have one player start to slowly jog, and have the other player close down on him until he is running side-by-side with the opponent. When coming onto another player to do a shoulder charge, it is VERY important to be sure to jog/run alongside for a few steps, so that your speed is matched with his. If you don't match speeds, it's easy to come in too hard and send the opponent flying which is a foul (and also not a good idea). Once you have made sure that your speed is matched, move over to make shoulder contact and start trying to push the other player away. To avoid sending the opponent flying, it is better to wait to start the contact until he is standing on his near foot (the foot closest to you), so that a push causes him to catch himself with his far foot. If started when he is on his far foot, it is much easier to knock him over and makes it more likely that the Ref will call a foul.

One of the main uses of shoulder charges is to legally push the opponent into touch. Be aware that shoulder charges are permitted only when the ball is in playing distance. For example, you cannot just push an opponent into touch just to slow him down so that he won't be able to run towards the goal to help his on-ball teammate. Shoulder charges can also be used in the middle of the field to steer an opponent towards one touch-line or simply tie him up so that it is harder for him to get off a pass. As players get older, they can learn how to spin off a shoulder charge in midfield, so it tends to become less useful over time when the opponent has space to spring away. Therefore, the primary focus should be on training the players for use of the shoulder charge when near a touch-line.

At first, have players work on shoulder charges without a ball, by simply running along a touch-line and trying to force each other across the line with a legal shoulder charge. Then, give one player a ball to dribble (it feels weird to try to dribble when somebody is pushing you from one side), and let them experiment. Be sure to have them switch roles periodically.

Next, have the dribbler start jogging down the line with a ball, and have the defender catch him; jog right beside him for several steps to be sure that speeds are matched; and then move in for a shoulder charge and try to steer him across the line. After several tries, switch places.

Once the players have learned to do a shoulder charge properly, they are ready to learn how to do a standing side tackle. There are two ways to do this.

One is with the outside of the foot that is nearest to the ball. This tackle works best if you can slightly ahead of the dribbler (so that your inside hip/leg will be free), then come in and nudge him slightly in front of his shoulder as you step in to knock the ball away with the outside of the foot. Time your run so that you push him just before he puts his weight on his outside (far) foot. This will force him to come down on his far foot too quickly as he tries to keep his balance which will make his dribble foot come down too wide and too far behind the ball for him to keep control.

The other is with the inside of the foot that is farthest away from the dribbler. As you come in for the shoulder charge, time your run so that you can step into the dribbler just as he has put his weight on his near foot. This will

keep his leg out of the way as you swing your leg across your body to knock the ball out. Note that there is a slight difference in the timing of this tackle.

Have the partners try these tackles at a very slow jog, so that they will not get hurt if they get tangled up with one another. If done properly, the shoulder will push the dribbler over just enough to allow the ball to be knocked away, while both players can continue jogging. However, if not timed well, the tackler easily can trip the dribbler - so it is important to do this in slow motion. Essentially, the defender is timing his charge to take advantage of natural weight shifts which occur in running as the weight is transferred from one leg to the other, and helping to push the dribbler a bit off-balance so that he can get to the ball more easily. Because the dribbler is going to be somewhat off-balance naturally, it does not take much force to send him flying - so tacklers must be cautioned to be careful - and to go for a light bump only.

The final step is to try to actually win the ball instead of just knocking it out. This step probably is not advisable until players get to about U-10, because there is a good likelihood of some hard physical contact as the players fight for the ball. Until the players are mentally ready for such contact, this can be too intimidating. Moreover, until players learn to judge the size/strength of their opponents and gain some experience in lowering their centers of gravity, there is an unacceptable risk of injury. This is especially true if little David makes a mistake as he tries to take on Goliath and winds up in front of, or under, a steamroller instead.

Small Group Work

Divide into groups of 4. Put 3 players slowly jogging around a circle (one after another). Add a defender, who must use a shoulder charge or side tackle to get all of the balls out of the circle. Have various size players in the circle but stay alert to caution big players when charging small dribblers. All knocked-out players to get their balls and go back into the circle but turn it into a contest by counting how many dribblers the defender can get knocked out in 2 minutes.

Large Group Work

Play 4v4, with a forbidden zone in the middle of the field leaving about 20 feet of full field in front of each goal. The forbidden zone forces play to the wings which increases the opportunities for shoulder charges. Only the ball can go through the forbidden zone. Simply let the kids play for awhile to get used to the setup and praise any shoulder charges that you see.

Now, tell the kids that the area beyond the touch-lines is full of Moat Monsters and that anyone pushed into the Moat by a legal shoulder charge will be held by the Moat Monsters until the count of 10 while his team has to play short briefly. However, if the coach considers the shoulder charge to be too rough, the charging player will be held by the Moat Monster for 20 seconds.

Scrimmage

Remove the forbidden zone, and play a regular game. Praise any successful shoulder charges, but allow the players to play normally. Because shoulder charges are fairly easy to learn, it is likely that you will see these in the game. Side tackles are harder, so players are more likely to reserve them for times when the ball is fairly far ahead of the dribbler (and often will simply decide to dart ahead to win the ball instead). Find a chance to talk briefly about decisions to either hold the ball or kick it ball out and when it is a good idea to consider this during the course of the game. For example, if you're in your defensive half, have no other defenders nearby for support, and are faced with other attackers around to gang up on you, put it out! Conversely, if you're near their goal with most of your players available and plenty of space to stop a counterattack, hold! Do not spend much time on this - just introduce the idea and get them thinking about it.

Updated 16 February 1999

First Defender and the Defensive Stance

Ages: 8+; Equipment: cones/balls/scrimmage vests; Players 12+

Warm-up

1. Set up cones to mark the start and finish of the race which ends the warm-up. The distance apart will vary with the age of the players. For example, 25 m (25-30 yds) is a good distance for most U10s.
2. With your players facing you, demonstrate the **defensive stance**. Stress the "L" shape and proper balance. While you back up, have them advance, while you advance, have them back up.
3. Increase speed to the forward and backward "**gallop**".
4. Move them side to side with a **shuffle step** keeping the stance. Then progress to a **crossover** step.
5. Finish with a race forward from the beginning line to the finish line you had set up. Then race back -- backwards.

Individual Work

Circle Game

Set up a large circle with all but two players around its circumference. The other two players are defenders within the circle. The players outside the circle pass to one another through the circle. The defenders must stay within the grid and use proper defensive stance to cut down the passer's options. When the defender intercepts he gives the ball to the intended receiver and continues. Same if the defender clears it. 3 points for an interception, 2 for a clear, 1 for a FORCED bad pass. Either rotate everyone quickly through the defender role or else just rotate some through.

Coaching points:

- Side-on, front foot points defender, back foot points to the side (make an "L").
- Shade to one side of the passer. Cut down his options.
- Patience! You cannot stop every pass, but you can deny the easy one.

Hints:

1. Keep the passers moving. Tell them to receive and then pass right away. Don't let them "tee up" their passes or this will take forever. You can limit the touches to three, then two or one to help keep the flow going
2. Recruit parents to shag errant passes and clears have spare balls ready to keep the exercise moving.
3. Coach the technique, not the drill. If a pass doesn't go through the circle or the defender moves a little outside, make a quick correction and get on with it
4. You will see lots of things you want to correct as the outside players pass & receive, but keep focussed on the defender and draw the attention of the others to what the defender is doing.

MIG Alley

Set up cones for 4x10 m (5x10 yd) "alleys" for 1 v 1 play. In each alley, put a defender at one end and an attacker at the other. Game starts with the defender serving the attacker the ball and then moving to shut him down. The defender counts "1-alligator, 2-alligator" etc. to 7. If the defender keeps the attacker from crossing the end-line, he gets a point. If not, the attacker gets a point. Play till someone gets 5 points and then switch roles. Variation for an odd number: In one alley have 2 players at one end and 1 at the other. After each match-up, the players in the alley go to the end opposite the end at which they started. The player going to the end where the "odd" player is gets in line behind him.

Coaching Points:

- Close down the opponent as fast and as close as possible. Advance by big steps when farther away shortening the stride as you get closer.
- Use body position to force the attacker to the sideline.
- Keep the ball in sight and keep backing up so you can stay between the ball and the end-line.
- Watch for someone who is doing just what you are looking for, or even something close, AND PRAISE IT! Be positive and don't always look for the negative. We do not want the kids to stop trying because they don't want to risk failing.

Hints:

1. An alternative to calling out numbers is to change roles every minute or so, or to reverse roles each time.
2. Be alert for mismatches. This game works best with players of equal ability facing each other. Be prepared to swap partners.
3. If you see the same mistake being made by several players, call a halt and BRIEFLY correct it. Then resume.
4. Common mistakes:
 - Trying immediately for a steal. Encourage using body position for this game.
 - Flatfootedness. Keep them balanced and on their toes.
 - Clumsy backward gallop.
 - Getting faked out because they were watching the attacker, not the ball.

Small Group Work

Numbers (a.k.a. Steal the Bacon)

Set up by moving the cones in the set of alleys to make a large grid with goals. Put half the players in scrimmage vests to create two teams. Assign numbers 1-6 to the team members. Place teams along opposite end-lines. Game starts with the coach serving a ball in, closer to one side than the other, and calling a number. Players with that number enter the grid. Then call a second number. Players with that number enter as second attacker and second defender. Continue play until a goal is scored, the ball goes out, or you as coach call "Back". Players then return to the line. Continue, varying attackers and defenders and combinations of players. Some hints are listed below.

Coaching points:

- Reinforce stance points (they tend to forget once they are in a more open field.).
- Call "Ball", or another word/phase that everyone agrees on, when you are taking responsibility for the player with the ball.

Hints:

1. Younger players will tend to zoom in on the ball, even the second attacker and second defender. Be prepared to offer advice to the second attacker to avoid "the clump."
2. Be patient if they clump up anyway. Keep showing and explaining.
3. Praise the defenders liberally if they delay the attack.
4. If the attackers tend to run to the ball and try for long shot right away, change the rule so that they must dribble it over the end line to score.
5. Discourage the second defender from appointing himself goalkeeper.

Larger Group Work / Scrimmage

Expand the field to accommodate 6v6 and let them play. Watch the defenders, but save the comments for the end.

Techniques

Stance

1. Side-on, front foot points defender, back foot points to the side. This is sometimes called "making an "L". Do not take this too literally. The point is not to have the feet at right angles, but to achieve a balanced stance.
2. Often compared to a fencing stance, a boxing stance, or a martial-arts "fighting stance".
3. Weight is kept low.
4. Be up "on your toes" (on the balls of your feet) and balanced (watch you don't get all your weight on your front foot).
5. Set up at an angle to force the attacker to the nearest sideline or towards a supporting defender.

Gallop

1. Maintain the fencing stance.
2. Going forward, push off rear foot and step forward with front foot. Rear foot moves up to regain stance.
3. Going backward is the reverse.
4. Defender's stride is shorter but steps are quicker than attacker's.

Shuffle

1. Used to move laterally when very close to defender.
2. Feet do NOT cross over.

Crossover

1. Used to move laterally when it is necessary to stay facing the ball, but not when close to the attacker.
2. Foot away from direction to travel crosses over in front of other foot.
3. Other foot then crosses over behind it.

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Second Defender

Ages: 8+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Defensively, the main players involved are the First Defender ("Pressure player") and the backup supporting player (called the Second Defender or the "cover" player). The job of the Cover player is critical to the success of the team from a defensive standpoint. Only when Cover arrives and is in proper backup position is it possible for the Pressure player to move in to win the ball. Why? Because the backup player is available to instantly become the Pressure player if the first player is beaten. Of course, this means that the beaten player must loop around and become the new Cover player, so it is extremely important to work on this transition.

Warm-up

Start with some basic ball-control movements, such as rolls, vees, toe-taps. Introduce tic-toc, if you have not already. Do your stretches, interspersed with assorted ball control moves that you want to practice.

Small Group Work

To illustrate the concepts of proper cover, put all of the players in a large circle, except for 2 players (coach can be one player for illustration). Outside players try to pass ball around, while Pressure player goes in and sets an angle to try to contain, and Cover player moves in to shut off more outlets.

Coaching Points:

1. Cover player must sprint into position with a looping run to the outside of the direction in which the Pressure player is steering the attacker, and then shout "Cover" very loudly once in place, but not before.
2. Appropriate cover must be a distance of about 6-8 feet.
3. The outside of the Covering player's shoulder should be aligned with the inside of the shoulder of the Pressure player so that the attacker sees a wall of two players in his way. Basically, the two defenders are trying to create a funnel that locks the attacker at the touch-line.
4. Cover player's stance will be slightly more square, as he must be prepared to leap quickly to outside side if the attacker tries to spin around the outside of the Pressure player.

It is the Pressure player's job to watch the ball and the Cover player's job to watch the attacker and to give directions to the Pressure player. After showing the basic principles by using the circle, divide players into groups of 3. Make long/narrow grids (about 10' by 25'). Put an attacker inside the grid and a defender at both ends, one with a ball. Have the on-ball defender play the ball into the attacker and immediately come in to close him down (he is the Pressure player). Then, have the Cover player (i.e. the defender at the other end) make a looping run to get into position to cover. Do 4 reps with the same player as the Cover player, then switch off.

As soon as he is in position, he must shout "Cover", which is the Pressure player's key to start closing down and/or jockeying the player to the nearest touch-line. The Cover player's job is to give helpful instructions, including "Not yet" or "Don't dive in" if the attacker hasn't been pushed close enough to the touch-line to use the touch-line as an extra defender and "Now" or "Take him" when it is time to close in. It also can be useful for the Cover player to shout "Hold Him" or "Contain" as he is making the circle around, so that the Pressure player knows that help is on the way.

Note that the kids seldom talk if they are too busy concentrating on what to do, so you have made progress if you can get them to simply announce "Cover." Additionally, younger children seldom can learn more than 1-2 things at once, so you will have to judge your group. You may want to just work on the positioning, while leave training on

communications for another practice if you are giving them too much to think about. Older players, or ones with more experience, may be able to handle additional training on communications.

As soon as you are getting good positioning and some communication, start working on the recovery process. To work on recovery, tell the Pressure player to dive in just before the Cover player gets into position, which will force the Cover player to become the new Pressure player. The former Pressure player then must make a proper covering run.

Large Group Work

Play 5v2 keepaway in a narrow grid to encourage use of the touch-lines as an additional defender. Give the defenders a point for every successful steal, and give the attackers a point for 6 consecutive passes. Adjust the size of the grid to keep work-rates high. If the attackers can never be successful, the grid is too narrow while if they always seem to be successful, it is too big. Play to 3 points by either side, and then switch out defenders.

Scrimmage

Play 2v2 in a narrow grid with small cone goals at each end, with 2 extra players waiting on the sides. Rotate one fresh player to each side in after 2 minutes; play another 2 minutes; and rotate the resting players in to replace the 2 remaining players. Let the players experiment with providing defensive support versus marking.

Coaching Note: You will repeat some variation of this practice several times per year, both to refresh memories and to add additional concepts. You will find further information on fundamentals of **2v2 defensive support** elsewhere in the manual .

Defensive Tips for More Advanced Players

1. Speed of movement
Sprint! Be moving a split second after the ball is lost!
2. Angle of run
Run on a curved line that will bring you within a few strides goal-side of your pressure man and then close down on a goal-side line to the ball.
3. How close to get
Close enough to help choke off dangerous passing lanes on your side of the ball. Close enough for the challenger to hear and feel your support. Close enough to apply pressure immediately if the challenger is beaten.
4. Why communication is so important
Your position gives you a wider picture, so you can make better decisions. When the Pressure player knows his support is in place, he can work without seeing you, as long as he hears you. Continue giving encouragement and quick, clear, confident instructions. As a general rule of thumb, say nothing unless you are in position to back it up! Your teammate doesn't just need support; he needs to KNOW that he has it. If he tackles and is beaten and you're not in position to cover, you're both beaten and out of the game until you can recover from behind the ball. Let the Pressure player know when he is Covered. Announce your arrival loud and clear.
5. Giving directions
 - One of the most common directions that the Cover player will give is "Take him wide" or "Line, line". This instruction means that the Pressure player is being instructed to steer the attacker towards the nearest touch-line. He does this by showing him more space to the outside. The Cover player will be goal-side of the ball, and also goal-side of the Pressure player, so that he can quickly move to provide Pressure if the attacker manages to cut inside of the Pressure player. He is dropped down

about 2 yards, so that he also is available to close down the touch-line run if the attacker accelerates past the Pressure player.

- Another popular instruction, used mostly by older players, is "Turn him in", meaning turn him towards the center area of the field. If you see you cannot cover effectively if play goes wide, or you realize the defense is being stretched across the field, tell the challenger to show the inside path where cover can more easily be provided and the defense can retain depth and compactness. Take position a few strides closer to goal than the challenger, inside him in the direction you want play to go.
6. **When to encourage the steal**
As soon as you have steered the attacker within about 1-2 feet of the touch-line, it is time to consider a counter-attack. In addition, if the attacker appears to be losing courage and is considering turning his back on your group, it is time to shout "Go in!" or "Close" or "Take him". When your Pressure player is on the counterattack, the Cover player must stay balanced, alert, and ready to close down and pressurize if the tackle fails.
 7. **What if the opponent succeeds in making a pass**
If the ball carrier manages to make a pass, your response will depend on whether the pass is forward, square or back. With the changed situation, you must decide whether your job is now to pressure, support, track down, mark, or destroy opponent's support.

Common Mistakes

1. The decision to provide cover is made too late.
2. Player doesn't work hard enough to achieve effective covering position and supports from too far away - which is no support at all.
3. Covering player doesn't tell the challenger he is in position, or tells him that he is covered while still too far away.
4. Covering player doesn't encourage the challenge.
5. Covering player doesn't maintain concentration and fails to react quickly to the play.

Updated 26 March 1999

Marking an Opponent

Ages: 7+: Materials: Cones, balls, pinnies: Players: 4+

One of the most important defensive skills which players will learn is how to properly mark an opponent so that he does not appear "open" to his teammate. This is a difficult skill for beginning players to learn, because they tend to watch the ball instead of their marks. Furthermore, because it is only necessary to mark your man when your team doesn't have the ball, younger players can get confused about when to mark and when to get away. As a result, it is necessary to break these skills down into manageable steps, starting with just staying with your man and teaching some tricks on how to do this.

The first basic rules of marking are to be stay within 2-3 feet of your man. Start by putting players in pairs, with one player in each pair as the attacker. It is the job of the attacker to try to get away from his marker, and the job of the marker to stay with his attacker. Do not bother using a ball. Just put the players in a grid and play it like tag. When you blow the whistle, everyone must freeze and any defender who is not within 3 feet of his mark must do a "special exercise". Pick silly special exercises, like doing a duck walk for 3 steps, quacking "mark, mark, mark", etc.). Play for several minutes, then switch roles between defenders and attackers. Reinforce the idea that those who are sticking with the opponent are "defenders" and that attackers can go anywhere and should try to lose their marks.

Now, introduce the idea of transition which means the switch from offense to defense when possession is lost. Put pinnies on one member of each pair and give them a team name. Also give a team name to the kids without pinnies.

Put them back in the grid, and periodically shout out a team name for the kids who are to act as defenders. Require that they find their marks and get within 3 feet of their marks by the count of 2 which requires them to always have a good idea of where their marks are, even when trying to lose them). Once again, use a silly "exercise" for those who do not quickly switch off.

Now, introduce a ball and make the team without the ball the defenders. Put small cone goals at the ends of the grid so that each team has a goal to defend. At this point, things will fall apart with new players, as they will start watching the ball and stop watching their marks. Expect this. It is normal. Let them play for 2-3 minutes, and find the kids who have gotten the concept down. These are the kids whom you will name as captains.

Blow your whistle; stop the game; and assign captains for each side. Their jobs are to yell "Rockets, mark" or "Rockets, attack", depending on whether or not their team has the ball. Always try to have 2 captains for each side, as somebody will get tied up in the excitement and forget to shout instructions.

Play the game again, and watch the transitions. Don't interfere, just let things sort out for 3-4 minutes. Then, announce a new game, where the entire team has to do a "special exercise" if, when you blow the whistle, they are not marking properly. The use of a team special exercise is important, as you want the entire team to learn to look out for somebody who is not marking his man. This will be crucial in games when, for instance, a defender falls down and it is essential that another player pick up his mark, so get them used to the idea of watching each other.

Let them play for about 1 minute, then blow your whistle. Resume, and blow again when the other side should be marking. Now, play a game where a goal counts for 1 point, and good marking counts for 2 points. Be sure that you give equal chances as you blow your whistle for both sides to get 2 points. At this stage, do not give out any "special exercises" as the loss of the chance for 2 is quite sufficient to get the point across. Additionally, and you don't want to do anything more to single out the poor kid who messed up.

For younger players, this may be as much as you can handle in one session. However, for older players, you can proceed to the next step, which is learning where to stand in relation to your opponent, assuming that teams are equal in numbers. In general, the safest place for a defender to stand is goal-side AND ball-side of his mark. In the

side if he does not believe that he can stay ball-side on a run towards goal. The outside defender, on the other hand, will generally try to stay ball-side because he knows that the outside player is just a relay person who will try to cross the ball in quickly if he ever gets possession.

After quickly discussing these ways in which marking decisions change as you add a third person, let the players experiment. The game is truly the best teacher for these concepts, as the kids will learn much more quickly from trial and error than by any extended lecture. So, just stand back and watch for at least 5 minutes. Praise good marking decisions and good interceptions, and overlook the poor decisions. To mark well is a skill that will take many years to develop properly, as there are a number of very complex variables that enter into the equation in a split second. Errors are common and the kids can see for themselves when they make an error so give lots of reassurance and encouragement.

Scrimmage

Add an alley on both sides of the field; put a pair of opponents in each alley; and put the rest in the middle. Require that a team must use one set of alley players before scoring and that goals count double if they use both alleys. Then, sit back and enjoy yourself, as the players go about teaching themselves the reasons why good marking is so important.

Updated 9 February 1999

Beginning Take-On Skills

Ages: 6+; Materials: Balls, Cones, Pinnies; Players: 4+

In this practice plan, players will learn the beginning principles of attacking by use of acceleration and a simple outside cut, followed by an inside cut.

Warm-up

As a warm-up, you may want to work on doing the "snake", as well as doing some work on basic outside of the foot cuts and straight-ahead dribbling. Don't overdo the warm-up, however, as they will get lots of work today. Pay lots of attention to stretches of the quads and hamstrings, as it is easy to injure quads when doing acceleration work if the muscle has not been warmed and stretched properly.

Individual Work

There are 4 basic steps involved in learning to take-on a defender. The first is to aim directly at him, so that he is forced to commit to you. The second is to shorten your stride, pull the ball into close control so that the knee is over the ball with dribbling step, and to lower your center of gravity so that you can explode in any direction. As you enter this phase, the player automatically will start to take mincing steps, almost like he is prancing. The third step is to explode into the move selected like you are leaping through a door into safety, and the final step is to slam the door on the defender by cutting back into his path. Smaller kids can enjoy the idea that they are exploding to get away from the ball-eating monster, and then slamming the door on the it.

For younger players, it may work well to practice on some explosions without the ball so that they aim at a cone defender, come at him, come at him, come at him, then explode past, take 1-2 control steps and cutback in. Older players may be able to begin with a ball. In either event, use the following illustration and coaching points:

- Get the ball on the front of the foot and start closing on the defender
- As you get within about 10 feet, get your weight down and start prancing
- When you are within 5-7 feet of the defender, plan the side where you are going to explode and get the ball on that foot
- Keep your head up and control the ball by touch
- When you are almost within the reach of the defender, move your weight onto your exploding leg quickly
- Keep going at the defender: **DO NOT STOP**
- As you are ready to explode, move your dribbling foot to the inside of the ball and, as you explode, pull the ball with you so that the ball never leaves your foot
- After you get past the defender, cut inside as quickly as you can, usually as soon as you have put your weight on the exploding foot and can drag the ball over with the inside of the dribbling foot

Many players need to go through these steps in slow motion in order to get the footwork down. This is often useful and should be encouraged. Some will want to keep their heads down to watch the ball. Do your best to discourage this habit as it is easy to acquire and hard to break. They need to "see" the ball with their feet. If they take short prancing steps, keep the knee over the ball, and explode by pulling the ball with them, there is no need whatsoever to look at the ball. Their eyes belong on the defender's face, particularly on his eyes, because the defender usually will signal what he intends to do with his eyes.

Common errors of beginners are:

- to look down at the ball;
- to fail to explode quickly enough or with enough power;
- to try to kick the ball instead of pulling it;

- when making the cutback, to bring the exploding foot up too far so that it is difficult to pull the ball across with the inside of the dribbling foot.

All of these mistakes are curable with practice and most of the players should have the basic mechanics down after one practice although it will take years and years to perfect the art of dribbling. Dribbling is like ballet; the basic pirouette probably can be "learned" in 5 minutes, but to do this move with the grace and timing of a professional dancer will take years. So, don't be discouraged as a coach that your players have little grace when first learning these moves. Time and practice will make great improvements in their skill, once you provide them with the proper foundation and learn to keep on nagging them to pay attention to the basics like keeping their heads up and slamming the door on the monster.

Initially, have each player working with a cone defender so that they get maximum touches on the ball. Do not add a real defender too early. They must have the basic ideas and footwork down, or they will never be successful. Of course, this practice assumes that the players have learned cuts and straight-ahead dribbling and also have done some basic ball touch work. These skills are essential to take-on work, so make sure to practice on those skills before attempting this practice.

Small Group Work

Once the basics are down, divide the players into pairs and put them in a medium grid. Remember that space favors attackers, so don't make the grid too small or narrow. Initially, put one player in the middle of the grid, along with a cone that will serve as his anchor. Have the other player come directly at him, take him on, explode by him and cut back. Once at the end of the grid, the dribbler comes back the other way and repeats the sequence. The defender must keep one foot anchored on the cone, but should try to kick the ball away if the attacker comes too close. Because the defender is not a normal defender, he does not have to keep his eyes on the ball so use him as an extra coach to watch the eyes of the attacker and to shout "head up" if the attacker puts his head down. This also helps you as a coach to hear where you are having problems. After both have tried, you can make a game out of this by giving points to the defender if the defender kicks the ball away or catches the attacker not looking at him during the take-on and giving points to the attacker if he does the take-on successfully.

Next, put the defender at the end of the grid with the ball, have him play the ball to the attacker and then start to close him down at walking speed. If your defenders are reluctant to cooperate, make them crawl or duck-walk, as the whole idea is very low pressure defense. Repeat the exercise, rotating positions after about 4-5 tries.

Coaching Note: Depending on the age of your players, you may want to start to introduce the concepts of dead-leg to your players. For more information, see the practice plan on Fakes or the discussions in Principles of Individual Attacking. Most players are ready for these concepts by around age 9 and some players can learn the ideas as early as age 7. Continue to allow more freedom for the defenders as the attackers gain confidence. However, it is likely that most players will not be ready for full-pressure defense after their first session on take-on work, so keep as many restrictions as necessary to get success and build confidence.

Large Group Work

You will now create a Tunnel of Death (a.k.a Ladder of Death), which is a series of 3-4 medium grids in a row, one directly after the other. Remember this drill because you will use it many times for all sorts of lessons on attacking.

At the top of each section of the Tunnel, put a defender who is anchored to a cone. If at all possible, use parents as the defenders so that you can free up players to work on these skills. And, if you have lots of players, make 2 or 3 sets of Tunnels so that the lines are very short.

The object is to take on the first defender, cut back and then immediately take on the next defender, and so forth. You can stagger the defenders to mimic actual game situations. Allow the defenders to be silly and to stab/lunge but keep them anchored to make things easy.

Then, start the players on going through the Tunnel. As soon as one player has cleared the second grid in the Tunnel, the next player can start down the Tunnel. Try to have only about 4 players in line, so that you have 2 in the Tunnel, one jogging back and one ready to go at any given time. If you need to use players as defenders, switch them out after the first group has run the Tunnel about 3 times.

Now, permit the defenders to move along the top line of their grids at a slow walk, and repeat. If you are still getting good success, allow the defenders to actually start to defend- but keep them restricted to the top line of the grids. Show your attackers that, if they attack at speed and then quickly explode into a cut, they can get by these defenders quite easily. In your first practice, it is doubtful that you will be able to permit the defenders to defend anywhere in their grids. However, eventually, you will want to get your players to the point where they can run the Tunnel against fairly stiff opposition and regularly beat 3 defenders.

Scrimmage

If the exercises have gone well, the players may be too tired for a regular scrimmage (although it is fine to play 3v3 or 2v2 to encourage lots of take-on tries, if they are still ready to go). If the players seem tired, then consider holding some take-on contests at the end.

You can start with some 1 v 1 work, still using the grids from the Tunnel. Put one player on one side of the grid with the ball, and put the other player on the other side. As soon as the on-ball player starts into the grid, the opposite player can enter the grid and start to close the attacker down. In this game, the on-ball player must take-on the defender, but only has to be able to get around him sufficiently to be able to pass the ball through a small goal on the opposing end-line. However, he cannot pass until he is at least even with the defender. If he does this successfully, he scores 1 point. Alternate roles, and play until someone has 5 points (or play for X minutes). Find out the points scored by each player. Put the players who scored 5 against others who scored 5, and put the ones who scored 1 against the others who scored 1. Play again.

The final game uses a real goal if one is available. Divide the players into two equal groups, and give each team numbers from 1 to X. Put players on goal-line, with teams on opposite sides of the net. Now, as you serve a ball out into the field, call out a number and both players with that number race out and try to win the ball, then score on the goal. You can use a keeper or play on the open goal or allow goals only to the corners. As a coach, be sure to try to pair the better players against the better ones to keep things even and give the less athletic players better chances to feel like a success.

There are lots of variations on how to play this game, including elimination and non-elimination games, and games where you call out several numbers at once. In all truth, the kids simply enjoy a contest, so it is fine to ask their opinions or to let them help make the rules.

Updated 26 March 1999

1 v 1 Attacking Skills

Ages 7+; Materials: Cones, balls, pinnies; Players: 4+

The minimum number of cones needed to adequately mark the exercises is two for each player (preferably the flat kind). However, the markings are more ideal if four cones per player are available, with the extra two preferably, though not essentially, of the short upright triangular kind. The main exercises require one ball for every two players. However, the preliminary warm-up exercises require one ball for each player to be done properly. It is strongly desirable to have pinnies available for at least half the players for the end-of-practice scrimmage.

Introduction

This practice focuses on developing the essential skills that an on-ball player needs to get past a defender who is trying to keep him away from the goal. To build success, the practice gives the attacker ample time to control the ball and face the defender, rather than exposing the beginning attacker to more intense pressure when the ball is received.

Efficient Field Pre-Setup

This practice lends itself well to an initial setup that minimizes the amount of cones that must be moved to set up each succeeding exercise. For most of the exercises, your players will be divided into groups of either four (ideal) or three (ok), as needed to make the numbers work.

Each group works in its own grid. A minimal setup requires 8 cones per group; for 3 player- groups this means two cones per player is not quite enough, and you need two more. In an optimal setup, each group would have 14 cones. The symbols used are: (o) flat cone strongly preferred so that players can step on it without injury; (x) flat cone is preferred; an upright triangular one will do OK; (X) upright triangular cone is preferred, a flat cone will do OK.

Grids are made as follows (if 8 cones are used):

(o)	(o)
(X)	(X)
(X)	(X)
(x)	(x)

The middle cones on each side are set to divide the grid into thirds.

Warm-up

Suggested Games: Keep-Away: One person is the defender until they make a control touch on the ball with the sole of their foot, or the ball goes out of the grid off another player. Person responsible for either losing the ball out or to the defender becomes the next defender. For this practice, add the limitation that players must hold the ball for at least two touches, to encourage players to control the first touch. This will give them the idea of possibly beating

the defender themselves, rather than immediately being able to pass responsibility off to someone else. Another option is modified Keep-Away in which every player but one or two has a ball, and tries to stay in the grid without having their ball stolen by one of the players momentarily without a ball. Defender has to make a legitimate takeaway to convert the other player into the new defender.

Directed Warm-up Phase

Send everyone the length of the available practice field and back two or three times, with each player to go as fast as they can with the limitation that they must touch the ball at least every third step. Use standard straight-ahead dribbling technique. Do stretches, then play Red Light/Green Light, with the coach asking for cuts to right or left with inside or outside of the foot. Stretch again. Now, work on the following moves:

- a. Hook the ball to the right or left with the instep of the foot, and pull it along in the other direction;
- b. Do magic hop (check), then push ball behind support leg with checking foot.
- c. Pull ball under the body with the sole of that foot, pivoting on the other foot.
- d. Do quick acceleration cut with the outside of the foot, pulling ball along so that it remains in contact with the dribble foot.

Space players along the field with plenty of room between players, and have players head towards a row of cones, trying to make a 180 degree turn as close to the line as they can and still do maintain control. Stretch again. Now, on your command, have players execute a sharp cut to the outside, followed by a sharp cut to the inside, then a sharp cut to the inside, followed by a sharp cut to the outside. Make sure to keep them widely-spaced to avoid collisions.

Individual Work

Divide those present into groups of 4 (preferred) or 3 (ok), and assign each group to their own grid. If you really have to, make one group of 5, but this sometimes will cause one player to sit out some of the time in that group.

First Exercise

Taking defenders straight on and cutting around them (10-15 min).

Divide each group in half, sending one half a few yards beyond the end of a grid 12 yds.*25 yds., and the other a few yards beyond the other end, so they are 25 yards apart facing each other. While you don't have to use the cone grids or divide players into groups for this exercise, it helps. You need one ball per group.

P1 and P2 are at the end of the grid, while P3 and P4 are at the opposite end. P2 passes the ball to P3 and begins immediately trotting straight toward P3, who receives the ball and begins dribbling straight at P2. P3 must dribble straight for P2, and waits until P2 is just out of reach of the ball to make a sharp 90 degree cut to either side, and then a quick 90 degree cut back to go around P2. P3 then passes to the ball to P1, and P4 becomes the new defender while P3 continues on to the end of the grid left by P1 and P2 goes to the other end to get in line to be a defender.

Ideally, the players should pace/space themselves so the cut-around occurs about a third of the way across, i.e. about where the respective middle cones are, and be on guard against the lines creeping together (which kills the space needed for this exercise to work). This exercise moves quickly, giving each player lots of chances to experiment with choosing the right moment to make the cut, and making the cut itself under nominal pressure.

Coaching Points:

1. The cuts must each be made to *sharp* angles, particularly the first one, which must be laterally across to minimize exposing the ball to the defender. Use either the inside of the left foot or the outside of the right foot to make a cut right, and vice-versa.
2. The closer the attacker can safely come to the defender before making the cut and still be out of range of the defender's tackle, the better, because that minimizes the defender's time to react and turn or attempt a

tackle. This is something an attacker has to experiment with to find the closest distance they can still succeed at which should be approximately two yards in front.

3. It's easier to beat a defender who is in a position to pressure an attacker trying to get by them, if the attacker approaches the defender straight on then cuts sharply around them. It's harder to beat the defender by trying to avoid them at an oblique angle, because the defender can get turned and match the attacker's momentum rather than having to guess which way the attacker will go. A defender rushing at an attacker too quickly head-on is the easiest of all to beat, which is exactly the favorable condition this exercise attempts to set up for the attacker.
4. The attacker should try to watch for the defender getting caught directly facing them or with their weight mostly on one foot, particularly if it's the front foot, and take advantage of it by making the cut in that direction.
5. With or immediately following the second cut, the attacker should take a couple of steps to accelerate by the defender, ideally moving toward the space directly behind the defender. This effectively "shuts the door" on the defender, making it more difficult for them to recover and pursue.

Second Exercise

Taking defenders straight on and cutting around them, with defender restricted in movement, but free to attempt tackle (10-15 min).

This exercise has all the same aims and coaching points as the first exercise, but introduces more opportunities for the defender to pressure the attacker while still restricting the defender's pursuit with conditions that favor success for the attacker.

If you have set the grids up so that they are side-by-side, then you can use the same grids for this exercise. You will need about 3-4 grids, which form a chain of boxes to create a Tunnel of Death. A defender is placed at the top of each box in the Tunnel.

Attackers take turns going through the Tunnel, taking on each defender in succession. Defenders are free to tackle for the ball, BUT must always keep at least one foot touching the cone. They can switch feet, but this slows them down which is the whole point of the restriction, in addition to limiting their ability to pursue the attacker. Switch attackers and defenders periodically.

Coaching Points: The coaching points are identical to those in the previous exercise. However, the object here is to give attackers a chance to experiment with defenders who offer some realistic pressure, but in an amount the attacker can control by how close they dare come before making their cuts.

1. The main point of emphasis is to discourage attackers from taking the lazy way out by going by wide of where defenders can possibly reach and still touch their cone.
2. Attackers must keep moving forward, and not dally indecisively just out of reach of each defender trying to get courage/thinking up a way to go by. Just do it, and if it doesn't work, try something else, but try something each time, quickly, and keep moving! There is no time to stop and think in a game.
3. The attacker should be discouraged from simply blasting the ball by D1 so hard it can be gathered or simply whizzes past the next defender as well, without being gathered in-between under the control of the attacker. This is about learning to beat a defender under control, not kickball or blast-and-outrun, which is totally inadequate to rely on in games.

Continue this exercise, but give the defenders increasing freedom by allowing them to roam freely on the line. For more advanced players, you might allow the defenders to defend at walking speed in their own box. Ultimately, you will want to allow the defenders to defend at full speed, but it will take a lot of practice before your players will reach this stage.

Scrimmage

Take a short break, and set up the field for an end-of-practice scrimmage. Instead of goals, however, initially set up two opposite, shallow zones at each respective end, but otherwise make the field a small normal size suitable for the number of players.

Divide players into two teams, with goals being scored by making a controlled touch on the ball in your own shallow goal zone (which encourages ball control, and not kickball or blasting it unthinkingly). Start play with restriction that each player cannot pass it to another player before the second touch to encourage thinking about taking on a defender rather than immediately kicking it off to another player's responsibility. Eventually, add a pair of cones at either end as goals and end with an unrestricted scrimmage to goals but still encouraging players to take defenders on 1 v 1.

Updated 11 April 1999

2 v 1 Attacking Patterns (Combined Play)

Ages: 8+; Materials: Cones, Balls, Pinnies; Players: 4+

There are a number of different ways in which an off-ball player can provide support for an on-ball attacker in order to provide increased chances to beat a defender and ultimately put the ball in the back of the net. In this practice, we will discuss the 4 basic passing combinations which can be used by two attackers to "beat" a defender.

The four combinations are:

1. **slotted or through pass:** a deep pass into space in front of the supporting player;
2. **overlap pass:** a pass to space to the side of the on-ball player but in front of the off-ball player;
3. **wall pass or give-and-go:** a pass to the feet of a support player positioned ahead of the on-ball player and to one side of the defender;
4. **drop or heel pass:** a pass played behind the ball-carrier, to a supporting player.

It isn't be feasible to introduce on all of these passing combinations in a single session. However, if you have an assistant who can help you to demonstrate these various options, it may be worthwhile to give a quick overview as you begin this segment of training. These various options are only combined in this plan because the same basic format can be used to teach all of these combinations of passes.

Coaching Note: Before conducting this practice, players should have learned basic take-on skills, basic receiving and basic passing. If this has not been covered, or players are unable to get more than 3-4 passes in a row when playing keepaway, they need more work on their individual skills. It is not uncommon for new players to need two seasons or more of work on individual skills before they are truly ready to spend time on combination attacking. Therefore, don't try to force things by introducing practice sessions which will fall apart because the basic passing or receiving skills are not there yet. Also, physical maturity plays a role in when they are ready. Many players who are U-9 may have difficulty with the footwork needed to do square passes, while most U-10s can handle the footwork easily. Likewise, young players often will not "see" space, because their brains have not yet learned to think abstractly or in 3 dimensions. So, be prepared with a backup practice plan if your players appear to be baffled by the concepts or appear to lack the skills to carry out the task.

Warm-up

Put the players into pairs with one ball per pair and then send them to jog around the field while passing to one another. Try to put players together who will play close together on the field, so that they can get used to the speed of their partner and can develop a sense of timing. This timing is crucial when passing to a moving player requires the ability to estimate accurately where that player is going to be when the ball arrives. The easiest 2-man attacking combo is the through ball, using either the inside or outside of the foot, so it is fine to just use simple leading passes to warm up for this work. As you get ready to work on overlaps and walls, you probably will want to use a weaving pattern for this inter-passing.

Individual Work

After explaining and illustrating the basic principles of the particular pass in question, give each set of passing partners a cone (or 2 cones, if applicable) and send them off to work on giving passes to one another, using the cone(s) as imaginary defender(s). Give them ample time to work on the timing of their passes and on their positioning while you rotate around to make corrections. Both partners should have at least 10-15 tries as an on-ball and off-ball attacker.

Slotted or Through Pass

There are only a few things to remember in using a slotted pass to beat a defender. These basic coaching points are as follows:

1. The on-ball player must take-on the defender by heading directly at him, because this forces the defender to have to focus his attention on the ball since that player always has the choice of beating the defender himself.
2. The supporting player should be about 3-4 yards wide of the on-ball attacker, and about 1-2 steps to his rear. If he is even with the on-ball attacker, he will clog up the passing lanes and greatly increase the chance that the ball will come behind him.
3. When the on-ball attacker gets to within about 5 feet of the defender, he should slot the ball into space behind the defender where the supporting attacker can run onto it.
4. Both attackers should approach the defender at a steady speed, without slowing down.
5. As soon as the pass is made, the prior on-ball attacker should circle around the back of the defender to receive a return pass and/or to become the support player for the other attacker.

This type of pass is most useful when there is considerable open space behind the defender, and there is relatively little risk that an opponent will be able to get to the ball before the supporting attacker. Very often, slotted passes are used by incoming midfielders to set up scoring runs for forwards when the defense is pushed up fairly far and flat so that the keeper cannot get to the ball. It is also frequently used by forwards to send the ball to the corner flags so that a wing can cross the ball into the box while the forward gets into position to receive the return pass.

Overlap Pass

In the basic overlap, the object is for the on-ball attacker to pull the defender away from desirable space by aiming towards the opposite space. He then makes a **square pass** into the space just vacated by the defender so that the ball can be picked up by a trailing (overlapping) support player. This type of pass is used in tighter spaces where there is more traffic, so a square pass is more commonly used because such a pass leaves the ball unattended only briefly, reducing the chances of it being stolen. Quite often, this technique is used to "tee the ball up" for a shot on goal by a teammate, but it also is used prior to getting into scoring range in situations where a defender is blocking the path into which a scoring or serving run will be made. For example, it is often used by a forward to pull a wing defender towards the center of the field in order to create space on the wings which can be used by an incoming wing mid to get behind the defense and serve a ball into the goal area.

The main coaching points for this type of pass are as follows:

1. The on-ball player goes towards the defender on a diagonal, in order to aim at the space into which he wishes to pull the defender. Typically, if not in scoring range, he will try to pull the defender inside, in order to open space on the wings. If in scoring range, he will try to pull the defender away from the goal to open space for a shot.
2. The on-ball player may slow down somewhat and roll the ball inward if necessary to give the off-ball supporting player time to get into position or to pull the defender over sufficiently.
3. The on-ball attacker must convince the defender that he is going to try to beat him on the side to which the defender is being pulled. As a result, if possible, the off-ball attacker should not shout or announce his presence at all, and any call for the ball must be held until the last possible second. Once players are familiar with this technique and when it should be used, they will automatically know when an on-ball attacker is looking for an overlap. With experience, they will then make the run so that the on-ball attacker can make the pass "blind" with the confidence that somebody will be there to use the space.
4. Timing of the supporting run is very important. Typically, the runner will position himself to the rear of the attacker and far enough away that he can get into the desired space at the same instant that the ball arrives. For small windows of space, the runner must be closer and/or moving at greater speed. For bigger windows of space, the runner can be wider and move more slowly. Initially, practice overlaps where the ball is being served into space about 3-4 yards away from the on-ball attacker. As technique develops, work on timing of little flicks into space which is only 2 yards or less to the side of the attacker.

5. The usual technique for a square pass is to make a stutter step and quickly pass the ball with the inside of the inside foot (i.e., the foot farthest away from the space). The stutter step is crucial, because it allows the attacker to slow and put his weight on the plant foot at an angle that allows the ball to be passed horizontally (or square). In general, especially with younger players, passes with the inside of the foot can be made with greater weight and accuracy than other surfaces of the foot. However, when the pass needs to be made over a short distance into a small window of space, the stutter step will telegraph the pass to the defender. In this instance, most players will opt to use a simple little flick-on pass with the outside of the outside foot instead, as this provides ample momentum and accuracy for a ball which is going only a short distance.

Start by using partners who simply work on the mechanics of timing of the runs, by giving the players two cones. Put one cone down and put the other cone down about 5-6 yards to one side and about 2-3 yards back from the first cone. The first cone represents where the defender is at the beginning and the second cone represents where the defender should be after being pulled inside. Have one attacker aim to the side of the first cone, then do some ball rolls to take the ball inward towards the second cone. As soon as the attacker is almost ready to reach the second cone, have him do a slight feint inside and make an immediate square pass to the outside. As soon as the runner sees the feint, he should start heading towards the first cone and shout "Now" to ask for the pass, which should be made instantly. Work on timing and the weight of the pass so that runner and pass arrive in the space at the same time. Each partner should have at least 10-15 tries as an on-ball and off-ball attacker.

Wall Pass (a.k.a. Give-and-Go)

This is a pass that uses an off-ball attacker like a wall to simply relay the ball back to the passer. It is a great way to get around defenders in medium traffic, especially where defenders tend to follow the ball instead of staying with a particular mark.

In this pass, the off-ball attacker is ahead of the ball instead of behind it. The off-ball attacker gets about 2-3 yards to the side of the defender and stands parallel to the defender (sideways) so that he can see more of the field. When he is in the sideways stance and open to the field, especially if he is near the touch-line, this is a clear signal to the on-ball attacker to use him as a wall. How does the on-ball attacker accomplish this?

1. The on-ball attacker comes at the defender with speed (as this option works best at jogging speed or better).
2. As soon as the on-ball attacker gets within about 5 feet of the defender, he quickly passes the ball to the front foot of the wall player, and runs around the backside of the defender. The pass must be crisp, with sufficient force that it will rebound off of the foot of the wall player without any real added effort by the wall player. The pass normally will be made with the inside of the inside foot, i.e. the foot farthest away from the wall player.
3. The wall player turns the receiving foot so that it is almost flat, but has just enough angle to allow the ball to rebound to the space behind the defender. If the foot is angled too much, the ball will not rebound but will instead travel into his other leg. If it's too flat, the ball may not rebound at a sharp enough angle to get past the defender. Some experimentation will be required for the players to learn the correct angle.

Coaching Note: Another option is to receive the ball with the outside of the near or far foot. Some older players prefer to use the outside of the foot, as they believe that it gives them greater immediate freedom to continue running down the field after serving as the wall. Some younger players who have difficulty with inside of the foot reception do fine using the outside of the foot, so this is worth trying if they are getting little success otherwise.

Once the players get the hang of this technique, you can introduce them to running walls (give-and-goes) where the wall player is facing forward instead of sideways to the field; gets to the side of the defender to receive the pass; and, depending on the weight of the pass and on the speed of the incoming passer, may immediately return it or carry it for brief instant before returning it to the server. In general, it is better to send the return pass early and deep than to run the risk that the defender will close down the passing lane.

To do the initial work on the stationary wall pass, put the wall player on a cone that is about 3 yards wide of the cone representing the defender. Have the on-ball attacker take-on the cone defender, then execute the wall pass when about 4-5 feet in front of the defender, and run around the back side of the cone to accept the return. In the meantime, send the wall player to another cone that is set up about 3 yards on the opposite side of the cone defender, so that the on-ball attacker can come back using the same foot (and the wall can practice with his same foot). Allow around 10 tries before switching places. Once each player has tried with his dominant foot, then try with the non-dominant foot.

To do give-and-goes, have the supporting player jogging about 3 yards wide of the on-ball attacker and about even with him. As the on-ball attacker gets within 4-5 feet of the cone, he passes to the moving wall player, who is coming into the space to the side of the defender as the ball arrives. The moving wall player receives the ball with the inside of his far foot or outside of his near foot, and immediately passes it back into space behind the defender. This is one-touch passing, so he must control and redirect the ball in a single touch. Young players may have trouble with this technique and may require more than one touch to control the ball. If this is the case, then they are not ready for give-and-go work yet. Instead, spend some time on 1-touch keepaway games until their proficiency improves enough to make this practice productive.

Drop or Heel Pass

The final type of pass is the **drop pass**. The most spectacular use of the drop pass is when the on-ball attacker lures the defender towards the end-line to give his supporting player time to get into a central position in front of the goal, and then passes the ball back across the penalty mark so that the runner can put the ball into the net at the far post. This is one of the nicest methods for 2-man attacking combos, and has one of the highest percentages of success in upper level games. This same pass also can be used at any time when the on-ball attacker must turn his back toward goal which may be necessary to receive the ball if being pressured hard from an incoming defender. If he cannot turn easily, it is often better for him to honor the Rule of Thumb to "Play The Way You Are Facing" and drop the ball to an incoming attacker in order to relieve pressure. This might also allow him to make a run which will pull his defender over enough to allow a shot by the support player or allow the support player to send a slotted pass for him to finish.

The key ingredients for a drop ball are timing, timing and timing. First, the runner usually must hold his run until the pass is being made or the pass has a high likelihood of going behind him. This means that he must wait until he sees the head of the server go down to make the pass which is his signal to run. Secondly, the server must time the ball to arrive at the proper angle at the proper time. If his pass is too hard, the runner may overrun it or have to pullout too wide. If his pass is too soft, the opponents will have too much time to intercept the pass. Finally, at least in finishing these balls, the runner should time his footwork/steps so that he can receive the ball on the inside of his near foot, like in a wall pass, and neatly deflect the ball to the far post. Have the on-ball attacker feint as if he is going to try to bring the ball down the end-line, then quickly send the dropped pass to the onrushing teammate with the inside of the far foot.

It takes plenty of practice to get this timing down. However, when the timing is learned properly, the goals are terrific. Good examples of these goals can be seen in tapes of the 1998 WC Quarter-Final between Germany and Croatia, and the Third Place game between Croatia and Holland.

Small Group Work

Divide players into groups of 3. Put one player as defender who is anchored on a cone, and practice the pass that is being taught, rotating the players to a different position after around 10 tries. Use coaching points noted above.

Then, create medium grids (about 20 feet by 30 feet) with a cone goal at one end. In each of these exercises, the defender must be VERY passive initially. Ideas to restrict the defender include having him hop on one foot; making him defend backwards; or having him crawl around. As the players improve, gradually permit the defender to become more active.

For overlaps and through passes, put a player at each end of the grid, and put one in the middle. Designate one of the end players as the defender, and give him a ball. Defender plays the ball into the attacker, and starts to close him down at walking speed. Supporting attacker then comes to assist, and the pass is made. Coach can use the points noted above to make corrections here. In each case, the original on-ball player comes around the back of the defender to provide another scoring option for the other attacker who can shoot on goal or send to the support player, depending on what the defender does.

For wall passes, put the off-ball attacker on the end-line with the defender and have him come up with the defender, staying to the side of the grid to create the wall. For give-and-goes, put the off-ball attacker on the opposing end-line and have him sprint to get into position to provide the return pass. For drop passes, have the on-ball attacker take the ball and the defender to the end-line and then drop the ball back to the trailing attacker for a shot on goal.

Large Group Work

Create a Tunnel of Death (which is a series of grids that are stacked on top of one another). About 2-4 stacked grids should be used. Put a cone goal at the end of the last grid. Then, put a restricted defender at the top of each of the grids (Note: parents are great to use for these defenders). Send pairs of attackers through the Tunnel, so that they have to beat several defenders to take a shot on goal. Allow about 3 tries, then reduce the restrictions on the defenders and go again. Then, if players have been used as defenders, rotate the defenders out for their turns. **Coaching Note:** If players have been used as defenders, create even numbers of grids so that you can rotate partners out together. Also, if you have a large group, create two Tunnels to reduce lines.

From a coaching standpoint, you will want to adjust the defensive pressure to get considerable success but you do not want it to be too easy. It is fine to adjust pressure from grid to grid (i.e., one grid is easy, followed by one which is more difficult), and to adjust from group to group (i.e., if one pair is consistently running the grid without problems, allow the defenders to be more active). Ultimately, you are hoping to get to the point where your defenders can defend at full pressure within their particular grids, while your attackers can still run the grids with reasonable success. Along the way, you can have contests among the pairs (e.g. greatest number of goals out of X number of tries; most number of grids completed in X tries; etc.).

Scrimmage

Play 4v4, by combining pairs from the prior exercises. Any goals scored by use of the combo pass of the day will count triple, while use of any of the other combos will count double.

Updated 11 April 1999

Throw-Ins

Ages: 6+; Equipment: Cones, balls; Players: 4+

Young players are notorious for losing possession on throw-ins, even after they have learned how to keep possession momentarily by doing a legal throw. Therefore, this lesson plan will cover the basics of a legal throw, as well as some ways to teach the players how to retain possession. Before holding this practice, it is a good idea to do some beginning work on chest-traps, as well as on receiving air-balls with the feet.

Warm-up

Start with some basic ball-control movements, such as rolls, vees, toe-taps. Do your stretches, interspersed with assorted ball control moves that you want to practice.

Individual Work

To do a legal throw-in, the ball must come back over the head (refs usually look to see if the ball goes back past the ears) before being thrown forward; both feet must be on the ground when the ball is released; and both feet must be behind or on the touch-line.

There are two basic ways to do a legal throw-in. One is to step forward with one foot in the direction of the throw, and drag the toe of the trailing foot as the ball is thrown. The other is to simply stand with both feet firmly planted and throw the ball in. Which style is used is a matter of player preference. Both ways are effective so let your players use the one that works for them.

The most common error in throw-ins is lifting the foot. This error almost always occurs because the player is trying to throw the ball too hard and almost always occurs in players who use the first method and are lifting the trailing foot in an unconscious effort to get more power on the ball. Therefore, if you notice that a player is lifting the foot repeatedly, switch them to doing throws by standing with feet together and tell them that their main job is just to get the ball on the field. By taking the pressure to set distance records off, your chances of a good throw are greatly improved.

After demonstrating the two styles of throw-ins, divide the players into pairs. Create two long touch-lines with a space of about 5-7 yards between them. Have one partner stand at or behind his touch-line and throw to the other partner, who catches the ball and throws it back. Watch for proper technique and make necessary corrections.

A fun game, which gives lots of repetitions, is to play "housekeeping" by putting one or more players in the "house" (center circle works well) with a supply of balls. Put the rest of the players around the circle. Objective is to clean house by throwing balls out using proper throw in technique. Foul throws are penalized with a five-second no-throw penalty for everyone in the house, which means that the house can get full of balls again. Outfield players retrieve balls, and then must dribble them back into the house. House players work for one to two minutes or until they clean up, whichever comes first. By varying the number of balls, you can make it more or less difficult to succeed. You also can place conditions on the outfielders to slow down the refilling of the house. When you call "time", you can count the number of balls in the house and record this for the "team". At the end, hold a "clean-off" contest between the two teams with the cleanest house.

Small Group Work

Return to the touch-lines, and divide players into groups of 3. One will be the thrower, the second will be the receiver, and the third will be a shadow defender who plays behind the receiver. Start by having the receiver side-by-side with the shadow and have him break in towards the server, then sharply cut back down the line. As soon as

he makes the reverse cut, have the server throw the ball down the line into the space where he will be running. In general, it is easiest for players to collect a ball which is already moving in the desired direction, so this is a good choice for a throw. Switch roles after 3-5 throws. The key to this throw is timing, so that the throw is made as soon as the player reverses direction.

The second option is to have the shadow defender on the back of the attacker, so that he cannot turn easily. Have the server throw in a gentle ball to the receiver's chest, which is immediately passed back to the server as he steps in bounds. Once again, rotate the 3 players through all roles.

The last throw-in option is to throw the ball to the feet of a player who is standing downfield. This is almost always the best choice for young players and, unfortunately, rarely used because all of the players are expecting the ball to go up-field and never mark the back players. Practice this option by having the shadow stand up-field and the receiver stand some distance downfield. The thrower initially sets up to throw up-field in the direction of the shadow, then quickly turns and throws the ball back to the open receiver.

Large Group Work

Put 3 attackers on the field, along with 2 defenders. Put a thrower on the touch-line. Now, explain to the attackers that the thrower always must have a front target, a middle target and a back target player. You might also want to take time to explain what positions would serve this function in your lineup. In general, your wing defenders will take all throws outside of your defensive third. Wing midfielders will take your throws in the defensive third, because you want your defenders available in case possession is lost.

Start with shadow defenders, and work on movement of your players to get themselves open for a throw, except for your back player who should remain quiet and just slip back to become available. After 2 throws per attacker, allow the defenders to become active, and play a game where the attackers must have 3 touches on the ball to score and the defenders score if they can intercept the ball before these 3 touches. Play until all attackers have done 2 throws apiece, then switch 2 of the attackers with the defenders and repeat.

Scrimmage

Play a regular game with the full team. Focus on good quality throw-ins from a technique standpoint, and look for target players to get open to offer options to the thrower. It will take several years for the players to develop the ability to break well, and to develop the judgement about when/where/why to throw a ball to a particular player. It also will take some time to develop air-ball receiving skills. As a result, your main objective is to get legal throws, and to get a beginning awareness of the tactics.

Updated 26 March 1999

Restarts

In soccer, there are four basic restarts of play (other than by throw-ins). These are **free kicks, goal kicks, corner kicks, and kickoffs**. Most coaches choose to practice these restarts as a normal part of end-of-practice scrimmages or in a single session devoted to learning soccer rules. The biggest initial concern is defending these restarts, so it is not a bad idea to concentrate on coaching the defensive side of these various kicks. However, do not be surprised if your players pick up some attacking tips anyway (thinking to themselves when you describe or demonstrate common attacking strategies that this might be a good idea when they have the ball).

Free Kicks

Players need to know the following things about free kicks, in order to be able to decide upon the best defensive strategy.

1. Is the spot of the kick within scoring range?
2. If inside scoring range, how many players should be in the wall?
3. Is the kick direct or indirect?
4. How far do you want them to drop back?

If the ball is outside of scoring range, then the only thing that you need to worry about is how far the players should drop back. See the discussion below on this topic.

If the kick is being taken within scoring range, then the defending team will want to build a "wall", by putting 1-4 players between the ball and the goal. Under the soccer laws, the wall must be placed at least 10 yards from the spot of the free kick. Attackers are NOT required to give the defenders time to build the wall, so defenders must be alert to a fast restart. Under the laws, all that is required is that the ball be placed at the spot indicated by the Ref, then kicked to a teammate. On occasions, the Ref will tell the attackers to hold the ball to allow him/her to get into position. This request is usually made by telling the attackers to "wait for my whistle". These requests must be honored.

How big should the wall be? Basically, you want to put enough players in the wall so that, when looking from the angle of the attacker, the goal is filled with your players and your goalkeeper. So, if the angle is very acute, then only one player usually would be placed in the wall. For somewhat sharp angles, 2-3 players will be in the wall. If the kick is being taken centrally, e.g. the ball is placed so that it is clear of both goalposts, then the team will want to put 4-5 players in the wall. However, all of the players should NOT be placed in the wall, because it is necessary to mark the off-ball opponents who are standing to the sides. As a result, especially on dangerous central kicks, the forwards will need to drop back to help defend. Often, it is helpful to have a forward stand 10 yards on the far side of the wall to help the keeper to decide on both the placement and composition of the wall by communicating with hand signals.

Free kicks are either **direct** or **indirect**. An **indirect** kick can result in a goal only if touched by someone besides the kicker before it goes in the net. Refs will signal when a kick is indirect by holding one arm straight up in the air. If the players are not sure if the kick is direct or indirect, they should learn to ask the Ref ("excuse me, Referee. Is it direct or indirect?"). This is important to the attackers in terms of how to set up the kick, and also is important to the defenders in terms of who to mark and what to look for.

Some teams at the youth level will try to aim direct kicks at the heads of the players in the wall, in the expectation that the wall players will duck. Some coaches also may instruct their kickers to kick hard shots right at the wall on the first free kick, in the hopes that the wall players will move away on the next occasion. These tactics, although legal, are not very sporting to employ with small players who already are somewhat afraid of the ball. Nonetheless, because some coaches do opt to do this, players will need to be taught how to respond.

To protect the chest/abdomen (and male genitals), one arm should be angled across the body with the hand touching the top of the opposing thigh. Shoulders should be scrunched up and the neck tucked in with neck muscles tightened. The other hand should grab the elbow of the next player in the wall, to help the wall to stick together the link also helps to support the teammate if he gets hit. However, arms should not be "linked". After taking a hard hit in a wall, the coach must be sure to praise the player for his courage and offer to excuse him from more "wall" duty in the game if the player feels too shaken to take more risk. Also, coaches should be aware that the sense of self-preservation is quite high in young players and many will duck involuntarily. If this happens, it is best to let it go. Indeed, if an opponent has a player with a very hard shot, and this player likes to take pot-shots at the wall, it may be wise to abandon the use of a wall rather than risk possible concussion to your small little charges. This is especially true for very young players, whose brains/necks may not be developed to the point where hard balls to the head can be tolerated with more safety.

Although older players may aim at the wall on indirect kicks in the hopes that the ball will hit an opponent on the way into the net, younger teams usually will pass the ball to a teammate. The defenders should realize that, once the initial touch on the ball has been taken, they are free to charge the attackers to try to win the ball. In indirect kicks, the primary purpose of the wall is to protect the keeper from a hard direct shot on goal by the original kicker since the goal would count if the keeper touches the ball before it goes in. Therefore, the non-wall defenders should look around to find the possible targets for the pass and mark them if outside the 10-yard dead zone. If the attacker is inside the dead zone, then the marker should stand perpendicular to the target and charge towards the target just as soon as the ball is touched by the first attacker.

Defenders also should know that the attacker who puts the ball into play cannot touch the ball again until someone else from either team has touched the ball. This means that the kicker cannot choose to simply dribble the ball, or touch it to one side and then kick it. However, the passing target has no such restrictions. As a result, it is not uncommon to see experienced teams pass the ball to target players on both direct and indirect kicks, in the hopes of getting the ball around the wall quickly.

The Offside rule applies to all free kicks. Once the ball has been hit, however, the attackers can run towards goal so many attackers will try to float a high ball over the defenders in the hopes of winning a footrace to goal. As a result, the players must balance the risk of holding the offside line against the risk of losing the footrace. The ability of the keeper to quickly come off of his line is a large factor in this decision. In general, with youth players, the best approach for a free kick in their own half is to "Hold the 18" which means to drop back no farther than the penalty box. This leaves a nice buffer zone that allows the keeper to see the ball coming in, but leaves a fairly small amount of space behind the defenders for the attackers to collect and control the ball. For free kicks taken from the opposing half, the defenders usually will not wish to drop off any farther than the estimated distance that the kick will travel and, if their team has speedy defenders, they may wish to hold at the center line or at the 10-yard mark, whichever is farther.

Penalty kicks are simply direct free kicks that are taken from the penalty mark. The only difference is that ALL players from both teams must be 10 yards or more away from the ball AND behind it. This means that they must be outside of both the penalty area (the "box") and the penalty arc if stationed centrally. Once the ball is struck, all players can charge into the box and ANY player can play the ball except that the kicker cannot play it again until it has touched another player from either team. That means that the kicker cannot play a rebound directly from the post but CAN play a ball which is touched by the keeper. Defenders will want to mark up on attackers and run in with them to try to prevent another shot if the keeper managed to save the initial kick. The only object of the defenders at this point is to get the ball out and the safest thing to do is usually to kick it over the nearest end-line. They should not worry about conceding a corner kick at this point.

Corner Kicks

Corner kicks are treated like a form of free kick, so the 10-yard rule and 2-touch rule apply to these kicks. Players below age 10 often do not have the leg strength to get an accurate ball to goal, and the receiving players often do not have the heading or chest-trapping expertise to get the ball into the net if an air ball is sent in. As a result, until these abilities are developed, coaches often rely on the "short corner". A short corner is accomplished by having the player

who is taking the corner kick to pass the ball to a teammate who is inside the 10-yard limit. This player may relay the ball to another teammate standing at the top of the box, or may try to dribble the ball in towards the upper edge of the box in order to take a shot.

There are 2 ways to defend against the short corner. The first is to put a defender parallel to the target player, and to have the defender rush the target as soon as the ball is passed. The second, which is often employed together with the first, is to have the other defenders push up (i.e., move towards the opponents goal) as soon as the ball is passed. The hope is that, by pushing up and pressuring the ball, the target player will panic and pass the ball back to the original kicker who will be offside.

Of course, many teams will elect to send a lofted ball into the box, even with minimal skill at air ball receiving, in the hopes that they will get a garbage score in the resulting confusion in front of the goal. To reduce this confusion, it is useful to assign specific duties to the defending players. The wing defenders typically will be assigned to stand inside the goal posts in order to narrow the goal and clear any balls coming to the corners. The center defender and sweeper, if used, typically will take the central area. The near-side wing mid (the wing mid on whose side the kick is being taken) will cover the short corner and mis-kicks, while the far-side wing will collect balls which go completely across the goal. Depending on the number of players on the field, and the numbers sent up by the opponents, the forwards may come in to help defend the corner. If at all possible, however, at least one forward should be positioned about midway between the goal and the midline to serve as an outlet if your team gets the ball. It is even nicer to have another forward who is wide of the last defender, to whom your outlet player can make a quick relay. But, of course, it is often best to err on the side of caution, so this ideal situation is not always possible.

As teams gain experience in handling air balls, the attackers will start to congregate players towards the far side of the box and then rush the goal as the ball is being played in. This makes it harder for the defenders to mark them, and also makes it easier to time a run to connect with the incoming ball. In order to defend against these tactics, the wing defenders and wing midfielders continue in their coverage assignments, while teammates mark the incoming attackers either ball-side (meaning between the ball and the attacker) or ball-side/goal-side (slightly ahead of the attacker, but stationed between him and the goal). This type of marking will help to prevent the attackers from getting possession of the ball inside the critical central area of the goal and/or restrict the angle of any shot due to the presence of the defender.

When practicing corner kicks, it is important to practice from both sides regardless of the age of the players since things "feel" differently on different sides. Additionally, younger players are very literal and can't make the mental adjustment to simply "mirror" your instructions for the other side. This literal-mindedness will be seen in many other contexts also. For example, an instruction for defenders to stay behind the midline may result in a defender who allows a ball to come to rest just inches from his feet, but will not play it because it is over the midline and in "forbidden" territory. It does not mean that the players are stupid or playing dumb out of spite; just that their brains are still developing, so they do not think like adults.

Goal Kicks

A goal kick is taken whenever the ball goes over the end-line after being last touched by an opponent. The ball is placed anywhere inside the goal area. To be in play, the ball must go completely outside of the penalty area before it is touched by any player. If the attackers play the ball before it has left the PA, the kick will have to be retaken. If they "score", it is too bad because the ball was never in play, so the "goal" will not count.

Of course, if the ball just barely clears the PA, it is in play. This means that, if the kick is not very hard and there are lots of attackers camped at the edge of the PA, an easy goal can be scored. In most games at the upper levels, the keeper takes the goal kick. However, at the younger levels, the coach might want to have his best kicker take the kick. Furthermore, a defender should be placed in front of each attacker who is near the PA, so that they can intercept a poorly-hit ball and kick it into touch before an attacker can get to it.

If the team does not have any good kickers available who can get a ball up into the air and send it well past the PA, then the team has two immediate choices. One choice is to kick the ball directly out of bounds, usually towards the

touch-line, but even towards the end-line if the other team is terrible on corner kicks or your team has nobody who can kick well. By getting the ball out of bounds, the defending team may have a much better chance of regaining possession and clearing the ball up-field. The other choice is to pass the ball to a waiting player who is stationed near the touch-line along the side of the PA and then to have this player dribble, pass or kick the ball farther up-field. While this option has considerable merit, opposing teams tend to figure out very quickly that this approach will be taken, and will try to mark the target player in the hopes of intercepting the pass. Once the target is marked, the kicker should pick another option as the risk of interception is too high to send a ball to the target player under these circumstances.

Before holding a special practice devoted to ways to get around the lack of good kickers, the coach might be better advised to devote a practice to lofted kicks. Usually, at least 2 players can be trained to do decent lofted kicks by the end of just one practice session, so this is clearly the best use of time in most instances. Besides, if the session produces no success, you can still tell your keeper to kick all goal kicks across the nearest unguarded touch-line and, if the touch-lines end up being guarded after he does this for the first kick, then to simply kick the ball across the end-line for a corner. While not ideal, this is still better than giving up a sure goal by passing the ball to opponents who are right in front of your goal - and may be the best temporary patch available.

Kick-offs

A kick-off is taken from the center circle at the start of each half, and after a goal is scored. The kick-off is treated like a form of free kick, which means that the 10-yard rule and 2-touch rule apply. As a result, members of the opposing team must stay outside of the center circle and in their own half until the first touch on the ball, after which they are free to try to win the ball.

There are three ways to handle the kick-off. One very common approach in youth games is to boot the ball as far downfield as possible with a hard kick, then to rush after it and try to regain possession. This approach tends to work for only a very brief period of time before the opposing team learns to boot it back the other way. However, in the short term, it can be rather effective although it produces rather ugly soccer and does nothing to develop good soccer habits.

The second way to handle the kick-off is to follow the approach used by older teams, and to play the ball back to your teammates. By doing this, the opponents are pulled into your end of the field, which creates more space into which your attackers can move because it clears out quite a few opposing players. However, this approach requires several ingredients to be successful, including reasonably good passing and receiving ability, as well as reasonably good composure under pressure. While those skills are being developed, young players may be tempted to take the bootball approach, especially if this is an approach used by a prior coach. It's better, however to have them work on making deeper passes to the back if they need more time to play the ball and to explain/show to them how the use of back-passes helps to clear out the end that you want to attack.

The third way to handle a kick-off is in between simply booting the ball and making a back pass. In this method, the kicker kicks at a 45 degree angle with the hope that an onrushing winger will be able to quickly penetrate the defense. This is particularly effective in 4v4 games where the forwards for the defending team stand together along the top of the center circle.

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Tips on Basic Goalkeeper Training

NB: This document presents a few hints on keeper training for young players. This is not presented as a practice plan, because an entire practice on keeper training is not appropriate for this age group, and because all players should be exposed to these basics.

First let's define the age group as U-9 or U-10 and younger. A player this young should not be forced to play goalkeeper full time. All the players should get some keeper training. This training should include the rules for keepers including where they can use their hands and how they may get rid of the ball. Pay special attention to the latter since it varies widely at the lower levels. For example a local recreational league allows the keepers to run to the top of the area and get rid of the ball, whereas another league enforces the 4 step rule.

Specific training should be aimed at teaching proper catching technique. Forget diving and all the advanced stuff. For the upper limit of the age group (U-9) you can begin to teach positioning. Stress importance of protecting near post, cutting down angle, and moving across the goal mouth as the ball moves across the field. You can teach them to come off the line for free balls in the area where they can handle the ball beginning at the U-7 level.

Spend time also on what to do after the keeper gets the ball. Teach the kids not to panic. Lots of kids in this age (and older too) want to get rid of the ball as soon as possible. Teach them to catch the ball, take a deep breath, let the traffic clear, and then distribute the ball. U-8 and younger you probably want to kick, throw, or whatever the ball as far up field as possible. When you reach U-9, you can probably start adding other options, if the field players have sufficient skill to retain control of the ball after the keeper gets it to them. If the field players lack skill, then its still best to blast the ball up-field.

The team should buy a couple of junior keeper gloves (2 sizes so that all the kids can use them) that are form fitting and provide a dimpled surface. These gloves cost under \$10/pair at your local department store. Avoid the big gloves. As anyone who has coached young kids baseball can tell you, young kids can barely control their bare hands. So don't even think about any of the large modern gloves.

At U-8 or so, you may find a kid who is more serious about being a keeper and will come to practice with a pair of big gloves, just like the big kids use. I suggest you don't let him use them because of the kid's inability to control them. Talk to the parents and explain why you're not using the big gloves. Better yet have a meeting before the \$ is spent.

Assuming that practice time is limited, some suggested few sessions are as follows:

1. For the whole team go over the rules for keepers.
2. For the whole team demonstrate proper catching. Divide the team into pairs and let them practice catching. Walk around and make necessary corrections.
3. Above is probably 5 to 10 minutes.
4. Set up shooting/keeper drills and rotate all kids into the goal. Keeper teaching points are catching technique and what to do after the ball is caught.
5. During scrimmages, place emphasis on what the keeper should do with ball after the save.

There are three key points for training young keepers:

1. Don't blame keepers for giving up a goal.
2. The coach **MUST** stay calm when the keeper has the ball. Too many coaches panic and start screaming "GET RID OF THE BALL." If the coach panics, there is no way to expect the kids to stay calm.
3. Remember that young kids have a short attention span and may be studying the bugs on the field while the ball is headed for the back of the net. Don't let this bother you.

Technique Training Exercises

During most warm-ups the coach can include some GK work with the field player's workout. Some suggestions are:

- All players are dribbling in an area. The designated GKs are jogging around and call for a ball from a dribbler. The dribbler makes a ground pass to the GK who runs through the pickup and returns the ball to the dribbler. The coach could make this a team-wide exercise--the GK that picks up the ball now is a dribbler and the passer becomes the GK. As the skill level increase, the dribbler can "shoot" a catchable ball at the GK.
- All players are passing and moving in pairs. The designated GK calls for the ball from a dribbler who passes to his partner, who "shoots" a catchable ball at the GK. The GK distributes back to one of the players and finds another pair to receive a shot; or the GK distributes to and pairs up with the original dribbler as the shooter becomes the new GK.

The above exercises could be where only the GK has the ball and distributes to a player for a one-touch return or a pass over to his partner for a shot on the GK.

GK play can be incorporated into passing warm-ups and exercises. For example, in pass and change lines, the GK can use this exercise to pick up ground passes. At times, the passer may "shoot" a ball off the ground for the GK to catch.

Specific training for youth GKs should start with basic catching technique. Coaching points include:

- hands move together, both behind the ball; the thumbs should be close, the index fingers slightly turned towards each other.
- elbows are in front of the torso and close together
- hands are forward and fingers high on the ball
- the GK should constantly be bouncing on the balls of the feet and moving the body behind any balls to the side
- the hands move together for all catches; if the ball is below the chest, the hands should be extended and turned to where the little fingers and sides of the palm are touching; the elbows especially should be very close on this catch
- on a ground pickup, the GK should step one foot beside the ball, lower one knee close to but not touching the ground behind the ball and scoop the pickup, continuing in a forward run after the pickup (this is called running through the pickup)

Sample exercises include:

- 2-man pass and catch
- short ball serve, followed by a high ball; the GK should be made to move forward, then backwards
- 2-man pass and catch with moving side to side or forwards and backwards
- GK in the middle with 2 servers alternating
- GK forward pickup with server moving backwards laying ground passes off at different angles
- GK sit-ups with ball, coach kicks ball as GK brings it forward; this is to teach proper hand position and give the GK confidence in his grip

Footwork is the next area of GK training. Sideways shuffling between cones or quick steps forward and backwards between cones is the first part. The youth GK should be taught to move from post to post in an arc that extends about 2-3 yards out from the center of the goal. This can be taught with two servers that are positioned several yards out, say at the top of the penalty area and wide of each post. As they pass the ball back and forth, the GK moves on his arc.

Forward movement can be taught with a gate several yards in front of the GKs arc. Balls are played from some distance so that the GK can pickup the serves before they reach the gate. If you have a couple of GKs, a fun exercise is to have a "goal-line" that is as wide as a goal. Place two gates a couple of yards shorter than the goal width about 3-4 yards in front and back of the goal-line. The GKs take "shots", beginning with ground balls, from the servers in front of each gate. After each "shot," the GKs trade sides and catch the next serve before it passes through the gate.

Another footwork exercise is to have a server on the side deliver a low ball to the near post; immediately after the GK makes the save, they move back to the far post for a high serve.

While diving is not appropriate for the younger age groups, we'll take a quick look at it anyway. Teaching basic diving technique starts with the GK sitting on the ground. The GK should hold the ball and fall to one side and plant the ball. One hand should be behind the ball, the other hand on top of the ball. The elbow and forearm should not be touching the ground.

The next step is to fall from a squatting position. If the GK continues to land on the elbow and forearm, then have the player put his hands together in a praying position and fall. Then have the player fall holding and planting a ball. The ball, the hip and the shoulder should be the only areas that touch the ground. The ball should be planted first, followed by the hip and shoulder almost together.

From a standing position, the player should squat and fall. This teaches the knee bend required. From here, the player should take an angled step with the near foot, lowering the near hip and then falling, planting the ball. At each of the above stages, move from the GK holding the ball to the GK catching a served ball.

Once the dive mechanics are understood, the GK must be shown the final position to protect the body. The ball and forearms should be in front of the face. The top knee should be driven forward to almost touching the top elbow, this will protect the torso. The bottom leg should be extended and raised slightly.

When comfortable enough, have the GK make consecutive dives to one side on served balls across the goal mouth and then zigzag dives forward from the goal mouth to the top of the penalty area.

Finally, the GK should be taught distribution. Though last in this list, distribution can be taught early on. When playing catch, have the GK do 3/4 overhead tosses. The GK must cup the ball in one hand (which is difficult for some of the younger players to do). The ball should be delivered just lower than straight above the head and the body and head should be as tall as possible.

Another distribution technique is the volley kick (or punt). The initial stages can again begin with playing catch. Have the GKs serve the balls with short volley kicks. The closer to the ground they can kick the ball the better. This moves to the full volley kick where the GK should drop (not toss in the air) the ball with the hand opposite the kicking foot.

A young GK may not be mature enough to understand the angles involved with playing the GK position. However, the coach can start to reinforce the idea with a 100-150 foot rope tied to each goal post. As the apex of the rope moves, the GK will be given a visual layout of the path of a shot to either post.

A drawn arc out from each post to a couple of yards from the goal center will show the GK, the path he should travel when the ball moves from one post to the other. The point is to get the GK off the line a little bit when the ball is in the center and to cover the near post when the ball is on the side.

Coming out to pick up a ball or close down the angle is a skill that requires lots of experience. Playing balls into the area with an attacker running on but well within the GK's capability of getting to them will help establish the GK mentality of coming out. Playing balls to an attacker where the GK cannot get there first will hopefully train the GK that there are balls he must stay back on. The coach must work with his GK to establish his range. This training should include kicking the ball away if the GK has to play it out of the penalty area.

The rule of thumb for coming out is, if you are sure you can get to the ball first, then go for it, else, hang back and look for the next touch by the attacker to be your ball.

Updated 11 April 1999

Stretching

See A Sample Stretching Routine next section.

Stretching is almost universally advocated but there is considerable confusion about who should stretch, how long to stretch for, what muscles should be stretched, and how to perform a stretch. Rather than attempt to offer an exhaustive review of the subject here, this section will only offer suggestions and a review of frequently asked questions.

Stretching, like all physical activity, should be approached with an appropriate amount of care and understanding of the individual problems that a player may have. Some children have medical conditions or anatomic problems that prevent certain stretches. Additionally, some coaches like to stretch with the team prior to demonstrating activities. It is very important that the coaches warm up and stretch properly since their risk of injury is greater, in general, than the youngsters they are coaching. As a rule of thumb, if there is marked pain associated with a stretch, you should back off and either try an alternate stretch or decrease the degree of stretch.

Who should stretch?

The easy answer is everyone but, of course, easy isn't always correct. Most young, pre-pubertal children have enough flexibility that it is debatable whether stretching is effective or useful. Indeed, if improper technique is used, there is a real risk of injury. However, it is important that young children develop good habits on the soccer field and it is for this reason that all age groups should perform some stretching routine.

When should I stretch?

To be most effective, the muscle should be warmed up prior to stretching. Most coaches will incorporate intermittent stretching during their warm-up activities (i.e. start an activity, stretch, begin a new phase of activity, stretch, and so on). In addition, studies suggest that stretching during the cool down after training helps in clearing lactic acid from the muscles and speeds muscle recovery.

What muscles should I stretch?

Again, the easy answer is all of them, but, realistically, this is not possible and may not be essential. Besides the general, large muscle groups, some coaches like to stretch muscles that will be specifically involved in that sport. For example, soccer coaches will often specifically stretch the calves, hamstrings, and quadriceps while not specifically working on arms or forearms. Most stretching programs begin with the back, then stretch the upper body, and finish with the legs starting with the buttocks and progressing down to the calves.

How do I stretch?

There are many different forms of stretching, each with advantages and disadvantages. It is generally agreed, however, that the old ballistic stretching that many of us did in physical education classes long ago is not useful. This type of stretching has the individual bouncing into a stretch (remember gently bouncing up and down in an effort to touch your toes?). Passive stretching is where the muscle is stretched and held by some other force (another body part, a partner, the floor, etc.). Isometric stretching is similar to passive stretching, but now the muscle is contracted against the other force (e.g. pushing against a wall while attempting to lower the heel). This form of stretching, while very effective, is only recommended when the contractions and stretches are performed in the submaximal, pain-free range of movement (pain during contractions is a precursor to damaged tendons and ligaments).

How long do I stretch?

There truly is no easy answer to this question. Little research has been done to investigate the time it takes to adequately stretch most muscle groups. It is known, however, that hamstrings take a minimum of 15 seconds to achieve benefit from stretching. Other muscle groups make take as long as 30 seconds. As a general rule of thumb, therefore, stretches should be held for between 15 and 30 seconds.

Should I stretch if I have been injured?

Most rehabilitation programs include some form of stretching. However the degree and frequency are best decided by your doctor and physical therapist, not your average youth soccer coach.

Are there stretches that I shouldn't do?

While most young children have no problem performing a variety of stretches, coaches who try to stretch with their team should be warned. Straight leg toe touches compress the disc spaces in the back and can cause severe pain. Similarly, lying on the ground and trying to put your feet over your head compresses the discs. The 'hurdler's' stretch (sitting down with one or both legs bent so the foot is next to the hip while you lean back) can cause damage to the medial collateral ligaments (the ligaments on the inside of the knee), compress the medial meniscus (the cartilage that separates the bones that form the knee joint), and may cause dislocation of the patella (the knee cap). In summary, stretching is an activity that should be done by all age groups after warming up and during the cool down after practice or games. Developing the habit and proper technique at an early age will pay great dividends later in life.

Updated 17 March 1999

A Sample Stretching Routine

Stretches are most effective (and less likely to cause injury) when the muscles are already warmed-up. An increase in core body temperature increases the pliability of muscles and tendons. It takes about 5 minutes of moderate exercise to raise the core body temperature. Therefore, before you begin the stretching routine, let the players do a pass-and-move type exercise or some other soccer drill of moderate intensity involving continuous motion.

The reason to stretch pre-adolescent athletes is to begin good training habits. Therefore, emphasis should be placed upon developing a consistent routine, rather than which individual stretches are performed. Although the order of stretching is probably not very important, establishing a consistent routine (i.e., doing the same stretches in the same order each practice) is important.

Joint Rotations (3 minutes)

Begin the routine with some simple, slow joint rotations:

- **Ankles and Knees:** hands on knees; knees bent; rotate knees in a circle in one direction 5 times; repeat in the opposite direction
- **Hips:** stand straight; hands on hips; rotate hips in exaggerated fashion in a circle in one direction 5 times; repeat in the opposite direction
- **Torso:** stand straight; lock hands in front of body; bring hands forward so they touch the chest; use arms to twist body in one direction (try to look at something behind you and hold the position for 5 seconds); repeat in the opposite direction;
- **Shoulders:** stand straight; Right arm extended straight up and Left arm at side; rotate arm in a circle in one direction 5 times; then repeat in the opposite direction; repeat for Left arm/shoulder
- **Neck:** stand straight; rotate head in exaggerated fashion in a circle in one direction 5 times; then repeat in the opposite direction

Lower Extremities (5 minutes)

Since it is the muscles of the lower extremities that are more commonly injured in soccer, focus the remainder of the stretches on the following leg muscles: calf, thigh (quadriceps, adductors and hamstrings), and the hips. All of the muscles can be stretched while in a standing position (there is no need, therefore, for players to get on the ground). Players should be instructed to bend only to a point where they feel their muscle being stretched (if the stretch becomes painful, they have bent too far).

- **Lunge** (stretches calf muscles of the front leg and the quads of the rear leg)
Stand straight up and extend (lunge) the right foot forward as far as possible. The toes of both feet need to be pointed forward. Bend the right knee slightly while keeping the trunk upright. The left heel needs to stay on the ground. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat with left foot extended.
- **Toe Touch** (stretches hamstrings)
Stand straight up with feet shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Bend forward and touch toes (if a player cannot touch her toes with the knees unbent, let her bend her knees first and then slowly straighten her legs as much as possible). Hold for 15 seconds.
Stand straight up with feet **double** shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Bend forward and touch the ground between the legs. Hold for 15 seconds.
Stand straight up with feet **double** shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Bend to the right and try to touch the right foot with both hands. Hold for 15 seconds. Straighten up. Repeat for left side.
- **Groin Stretch** (stretches adductors and quads)
Stand straight up with feet **double** shoulder width apart and the toes of both feet pointed forward. Keeping the right leg straight, bend the left knee and try to sit on the left heel. Hold for 15 seconds. Straighten up. Repeat for left side.

- **Standing Quad Stretch** (stretches quads)
Stand straight up. Put left hand on a partner's shoulder. Grab the right ankle with the right hand (**NB:** many people prefer to teach players to use the **opposite** hand, which is more likely to keep the player's knees together and avoid stressing the knee joint) and pull upwards toward the buttock, keeping the knees together, the hips rotated forward, the trunk fully upright and the standing foot pointed forward. Hold for 15 seconds. Repeat for left side.

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Teaching the Laws of the Game (LOTG)

First, you should see the summary “**The Laws of Soccer**” that is part of this manual. That discusses the major points that relate to young players. Second, get hold of a copy of the laws themselves, any local rules specific to your competition, and one of the summaries mentioned below. Third, don't attempt to teach the laws to the players and their parents all at once. Instead, discuss events that happen in your games where people raise questions. Over the course of a season, you will cover most of the laws. Here are a few tips and points that might otherwise be overlooked.

1. Before starting, determine whether your competition will be using modified laws, or not using all of them. For example, young players often play in small numbers, without goalkeepers, direct free kicks or penalty kicks, on smaller fields with only a subset of the normal markings, and with special substitution or playing time rules.
2. Involve the parents. They can help you considerably in teaching the laws to their kids. You might want to distribute a copy of the laws or commentary on the laws to them. Suggestions include this group's summary of questions about the laws, the booklet, "The Rules of Soccer Simplified", or the booklet, "The Laws of the Game for Coaches." (the booklets are available from Youth Sports Publishing).
3. Take the players and parents on a tour of the field. Discuss what the markings are for. For example: Why is this little arc here at the corner? What play takes place here? When does a corner kick occur? How does it work? What's the goal area for? When is the 6-yard line important? (When the defenders give up an indirect free kick in the goal area, the ball is placed on the 6-yard line.) If covering the whole field all at once is too much for the players' attention span, do it over a few practices.
4. What counts is what the referee thinks about the laws and the game, not what you believe you saw. Right or wrong, the referee's opinion is the one that matters, and loudly criticizing a bad referee will just make the situation worse.
5. The ball is in play until it goes completely out beyond the outer edge of a boundary line, or the ref blows the whistle. Therefore, play to the whistle -- keep playing until the whistle blows, and remember that the referee may not always be able to see when the ball goes out.
6. The fouls are quite simple. The main rules are: don't push, hold, trip or kick opponents (and don't even try to); don't use your hands on the ball; play the ball, not the man, and be careful of the safety of all the players. The goalkeeper has a few special rules which you should explain if they apply in your league.
7. For a goal, throw-in, goal kick or corner kick to be awarded, the ball must pass completely over the line, either in the air or on the ground. A throw-in is in play when the smallest sliver of the ball "breaks the plane" of the outer edge of the touch line.
8. On goal kicks, the attackers must be entirely outside the penalty area, and nobody can touch the ball until it entirely leaves the area. The ball can be placed anywhere in the goal area or on the line -- it doesn't have to be placed in the hole at the corner.
9. On free kicks, the defenders can form a wall between the ball and their goal (but they must be 10 yards from the ball), while the attacking team can take the kick quickly, before the wall is set up (unless the referee instructs them to wait). Both teams should watch the referee -- if he's holding an arm in the air, it's an indirect kick, otherwise direct. Just touching the ball with a foot will be considered by most referees to be the same as kicking it, and the ball will then be in play.
10. A corner kick is simply a direct free kick from the corner arc; in other words, a goal can be scored directly from a corner kick.
11. A few laws apply specifically to the penalty area. On a goal kick or free kick taken by the defenders from within their own penalty area, the attackers must vacate the area, and the ball isn't in play until it has entirely left the area. If your team commits a "penal foul" (see Law 12's list of direct free kick fouls) within your own penalty area, the opponents get a penalty kick.
12. To teach offside, set up some situations on the field. Because a soccer ball can be a distraction, get a parent to be "the ball." When you get to the stage of using drills to reinforce the points you've made, 3v2 situations with a single fullback and a keeper can be very useful.

13. Soccer games often run a little beyond the scheduled length. The referee is supposed to add time to allow for time lost through substitutions, injuries and other unusual situations.

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Fun Games that Teach Skills

NOTE: Several of the games listed are "knock out" games where the losers are knocked out and the last player left is the winner. Since the first ones knocked out are often the ones who need the most practice, those knocked out should be required to do something to either get back into the game or to keep them working on their ball skills until the game is over. One possibility is to set up a parallel game for those knocked out to participate in.

Dribbling

Explode

Every kid has a ball. You get them all around you dribbling their balls as close as they can get. Make sure they begin their dribbling using the insides of both feet...no toe balls at the first practice! Make them keep control of the ball....always within one step....and do not let them run into one another or dribble their ball into another ball or another player. Keep telling them to get their heads up and see the open spaces. Yell "Explode!" at which point they all run away (dribbling their balls) as fast as they can. First one to get to a boundary or cone "wins".

Flags

Players start with a ball and 2 flags. A flag is a cloth strip about 2 inches wide and a foot long. Flags are stuck into the waistband of the players' pants at each side. A player is eliminated when he/she loses both flags and his/her ball. A ball is lost when it is kicked out of bounds (by another player with a ball) or stolen (by a player with at least one flag but no ball). You can only take someone's flag away when you have a ball. The first flag usually goes pretty quick. The real fun comes when they learn to protect both the ball and the remaining flag by using the flagless side to shield.

Dribble Relay

Set up an 'obstacle-course' with cones as 'gates' - and team 'A' races team 'B'-they have to go out and back - if they lose control and miss a gate, they have to regain control and go through the gate. A variation is to have a small 'square' at the end. They have to stop the ball in the square, then sprint back and high-five the next player before he/she can take off. Another variation is to have several parents positioned at different places along the 'course' and have a different one hold up a number of fingers at random times during the race - and award points to the player that sees it and correctly yells out the number first. This gets the players heads up.

Freeze Tag

Set up a large rectangle with cones and have the players dribble in the rectangle. After a short time, take the ball away from one or two players who then become "it." Any player whose ball is touched by an "it" player becomes frozen and has to stop dribbling, spread his legs apart, and hold his ball above his head. He is frozen in this position until another player dribbles his ball between the frozen players legs. Switch the "it" players often and make it a contest to see who can freeze the most at one time.

Red Light/Green Light

Each player with a ball lines up at one end of the penalty area. A coach stands at the other end and yells, "Green light," and turns his back to the players. The kids race across the penalty area to see who can reach the coach first. After a few seconds, the coach yells, "Red light." At that command, the players must stop and put a foot on top of the ball. The coach turns back around and looks for players whose ball is still moving. Those players must move a certain distance back to the starting line. Repeat calling red light/green light until someone wins the race. This game encourages fast dribbling while keeping the ball close.

Simon Says

Just like the common children's game, the coach gives instructions like "Simon says dribble with your left foot" or "Simon says switch balls with someone." The players only follow the instructions if they begin with "Simon says..." Anyone following instructions that do not start with "Simon says..." are knocked out. But the knocked out players should be doing something with the ball, not just watching the game continue. Continue the game until one player is left.

Follow the Leader

Pick a leader and have him dribble anywhere on the field, encouraging him to make lots of turns, changing speed, etc. All other players have to follow the leader and do whatever that player does. Switch leaders often.

Get 'em

All players must stay within a grid. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard. Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other; use the outside of the foot. Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

Dribbler's Alley

Four or more players needed. Set up one less pair of cones (gates) than the number of players you have in a line. Each gate should be about 6 feet wide and have about 10 feet between each gate. Every player guards a gate and the remaining player tries to dribble through the gates.

Last Man Out

Two players or more needed. All players stand at a cone about 20 feet from a group of balls. There is one less ball than the number of players. On the coach's command, the players run to the balls, get one and begin dribbling. The player who didn't get a ball tries to steal one from the others. The coach keeps time and after a preset period has passed, the coach stops the game. The player who, at that time does not have a ball, is out. Remove one ball from the group and repeat until there is only one person with a ball.

Tag

This drill is based on the common kids' game of tag. Mark off a grid or circle. Everybody needs a ball. Whoever is "it" must dribble to another player and tag him. The other player avoids being tagged by dribbling away from "it." If the player being chased loses his ball outside the grid, dribbles out of the grid, or is tagged, he is "it" and the game continues.

Ball Tag

Everyone has a ball and dribbles in a confined area. The player who is "it" must pass his ball so that it hits another player's ball. The player whose ball was hit then becomes "it."

Hat Tag

Bring a half dozen baseball caps to practice. Then, in a slight variation of ball tag, we assigned hats to the "taggers," gave everyone a ball and had them dribble within a grid about the size of the penalty area. Whoever got tagged, got the hat and went off in search of someone else to tag.

Bumper Car Dribble

The whole team does this in a small grid. Try and match players of similar height. Have one player dribbling while another partner is trying to nudge them off the ball shoulder to shoulder. This teaches them to dribble under physical pressure and teaches the players that contact is a good and fun thing. Before games I have 2 players inside a circle formed by the rest of the team playing for possession of a ball, gets the players in the mode of fighting for the ball on the field (30 sec).

Musical Chairs

One less ball than the number of players in the drill. Players run around in goal areas in a scramble until whistle is blown. Players race to get ball from center circle and dribble to score on goal. Player without ball help get balls to center, repeating this until only one player left. Make sure to keep things moving along, don't wait very long to blow the whistle. Once players have concept start adding in defenders. One more that may work for you is using a ball as the goal. Have players match up by ability. Throw one ball out as the goal. Throw a second out that the two players will try and possess and score. First player to ball is attacker, second defends goal (ball) and tries to gain possession of ball. If successful, roles reverse. Only run this for 30-45 sec depending on effort of the players. I usually have 2-3 pairs doing this at once each with their own goal (ball) and playing ball.

Egg Hunt

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. (If you have an unusual colored ball --make it the Golden Egg or something special.) At the other end of the field is a goal. I use a portable goal and call it the "basket." Blow the whistle, or whatever, and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. I like to time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

Snake

Players are grouped into threes (preferred) or fours. First player is the "head" of the snake, and does not have a ball. She's essentially the leader in a follow-the-leader game. Second player has a ball at her feet, and must follow the head of the snake, dribbling wherever she goes. Third player is the "rattle". No ball, just following. Emphasize to the "heads" to vary their lead -- some fast, some slow, some sideways, some stopping, etc. I let one lead for about 20 seconds or so. Then, on a whistle from a coach, #2 drops the ball to #3 and becomes the head of the snake. The rattle (#3) becomes the dribbler and the former head circles around to become the rattle.

Line Soccer

Start with two lines of players facing one another. Give each player a number and a "matching" player in the other line. Kick the ball between the two lines and call out a number. The two players with the corresponding number will play one on one while trying to kick the ball through the opposing line. This game teaches the players in the line not to chase after the ball since they have to defend their line in a limited area.

Circle Game

Set up a 20x40 yard grid, make a center circle, and split players into teams that can be identified by a color. Have all the kids dribble their balls in the center circle. Call out a color. That team dribbles toward their goal. The other team leaves their ball and runs to slow the attackers down trying to get them to a sideline and to dribble out-of-bounds, or not get to their goal line before the coach counts to 7 or else award 1 point for each out-of-bounds and 1 point for each player "held" for the coach's count. Attackers get 1 point for each "goal". Play to 10 points.

Sharks and Minnows

Start with a defined area marked, adjusted for size depending on the age of the players. Half the players have balls and are Minnows. The rest do not have balls and are the Sharks. The Minnows start at one end of the area and must dribble across the area and across the opposite goal line without losing possession of their ball. The Sharks defend the area, trying to kick the Minnows' balls out of the defined area. Minnows who retain possession turn around and go back for round two. A Minnow who loses their ball join the Sharks for round two. The last successful Minnow is the Grand Champion.

Variations of Sharks and Minnows

- Sharks steal ball and go to a goal instead of just kicking the ball out.
- Instead of eliminating players until only one is left, give points to the sharks for kicking out balls but let everyone stay in the game. Everyone gets a turn as a shark.
- Sharks who take possession of a ball immediately become Minnows; Minnows who lose the ball become Sharks.
- Players are not knocked out, but must perform some task before getting back into the game. (Such as ball dance.)
- Minnows must control the ball in a goal area to encourage good ball control instead of just kicking the ball over the end line if a Shark gets close.

Death Square

Everyone dribbles around trying to keep their own ball and kick out everyone else's ball. If a player's ball is kicked out, he must retrieve it, then dance on the ball for 10 touches before getting back in. A player gets a point for every ball he kicks out (so if you spend time outside dancing on your ball, you have less time to win points).

Under Pressure

Get all the kids dribbling around in a square area and then remove one, two, or three balls, depending on how much pressure needed. Then announce that whoever has possession of a ball after 1 minute is a winner. If they can chase someone out of bounds they automatically win that ball. Count down the last 10 seconds real loud to increase the activity. Kids without a ball have to do some token penance; a couple of pushups, make a weird face for the others, nothing real negative.

1 v 1 to Goal

Divide players into two teams of 4 or 5 each + one goal and a supply of balls. Station each team at a corner post of the goal, standing off, but facing the field. Place a GK in goal facing the field. Coach/assistant stands behind the center of the goal with a supply of balls. Coach tosses a ball over the crossbar to about the penalty spot. A player from each team both sprint to the ball and attempt to control it, turn, and get a shot off. The second to the ball defends (if he then wins the ball, then he tries to shoot). When there is a score, save, or ball goes out of play, restart the same way with a different pair of players.

Treasure Chest and Trolls

This is a three-team, three-goal game. Play with 1-3 balls to keep everyone moving and looking up. Three players on each team play, while a sub is kept locked in "troll prison." Each team has three pieces of gold behind the goal they have to defend. Small disc cones, water jugs, etc. can be used. Whenever a team scores in the opponent's goal, they get to claim a piece of treasure for their treasure chest. The trolls, older kids or parents, had their own treasure chest and would occasionally run randomly within the field of play. If you hit the troll with the ball, you could claim a piece of troll treasure OR free a teammate from troll prison. (decision-making!) The grand finale is the "breakout" from troll prison. Let each of the prisoners escape with a ball and head for the goal while the trolls run wild on the field for a final, furious minute of play.

Passing

The Name Game

4 or more players needed. Players stand in a circle and pass the ball to one another, but they must call out the name of the person they are passing to. This is great at the beginning of the season, so they learn everyone's names. If the players are doing well and you have enough players, add additional balls.

Battle Field

Any number of players can be used. All players line up on one end line and try to run to the other end without being hit with a ball kicked by a coach. Those who are hit join the firing squad. The game ends when everyone has been hit.

Gotcha!

Each player will need a ball. Player 'A' is "It" and is the only player to start with a ball. All the other players are around the outside of the gridded space. Player 'A' dribbles and tries to hit the other players below the waist with the ball. When hit, that player gets a ball and joins player 'A'. The game is over when all of the players have been caught. The last player caught starts with the ball for the next game. If you think the task will be too difficult for the one player to get another at the start of the game, start with 2 players being "It". Encourage quick movements and sudden changes of direction to catch players off guard. Encourage deceptive passing of the ball: look one-way and pass the other, use the outside of the foot. Players not caught should run, jump, and use zig-zag movements.

Monkey in the Middle

The players make a circle with one player (the monkey) in the center. The players try to pass the ball around and the monkey tries to intercept it. When the monkey gets the ball he joins the circle and whoever made the "fatal" pass becomes the monkey. This game can be modified by increasing the number of monkeys and/or balls that are used.

Marbles

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines.

Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble. Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts I don't require them to use their own ball. If they lose theirs, they are free to use any other ball they can find.

Who's Open

Four or Five players in circle formation about 15 yards in diameter (adjust for age). All players except one have a ball at feet. Two players inside circle with one designated as attacker and the other defender. To start, attacking player moves and calls name of player he wants to serve him a ball. He must control ball and return to the open player who did not have a ball at start of exercise (you can't give it back to the player who served it). Attacker then asks for another ball (calling name and making appropriate run) and repeats the exchange. Defender tries to dispossess attacker.

Juggling

P-E-L-E

Play with two players. First player juggles one, second player has to match. First player then juggles two and second player matches. First player then juggles three and so on. When a player misses, the other player gets a letter - first P

then E then L then E. After awarding a letter, the players start out at one again. The first player to spell PELE is the winner. This can be played thighs only, feet only, head only or any combination.

Black Jack (21)

Play with two or more players. First player juggles as many touches as they can and keeps track of count. Second player goes after first misses. After second player misses, first player goes again starting count where they missed in first turn. For example if player got five touches in first turn, they would start second turn at six. First player to Black Jack (21) wins. This game can also be made more challenging by restricting it to certain body parts.

Combinations

Work to get "called" combinations. For example "Around the World" would be left foot, left thigh, head, right thigh, right foot.

Juggling with Movement

Start at one spot and walk/jog/run while juggling the ball. See how far you can go without dropping the ball. One variation of this is to start at the outside of the penalty area on the field, juggle up to the goal area and shoot/volley the ball into the net without letting it hit the ground.

Timed Juggles

See how many touches the player can get in a certain amount of time. We do a three minute timed contest. They don't have to be consecutive without a miss. This works great for getting the players focused and working hard for a certain time period and is great for aerobic fitness.

Team Juggling Contest

Have each player juggle and see how many touches they can get. Add the total touches for the whole team and create a team record. If they beat their team record, the coaches run a lap around the field. If they don't beat their record, the players run a lap around the field. When the kids are not very good jugglers, it doesn't take very long. I have seen huge improvements in my teams' juggling skills by doing nothing more than this in practice. It's just enough focus to get them working on their own.

Goal Keeping

Keeper Wars

Using four cones create two goal about 5-10 yards apart (depending on age, ability, etc). The width of the goals should be just beyond the armspan of the keepers. The keepers sit just in front of the cones facing each other. Each attempt to score goals on the other by throwing the ball through the goal. The ball must be kept below their shoulders.

Updated 16 March 1999

Guidelines for Game Day

Many of issues come up on game day. How do you prepare your team? How should your team warm up before the game? How should you make adjustments during the game? What's the best way to get your subs on and off the field? Answering these sorts of question is the purpose of this section of the manual.

In this section, you'll find the following topics:

1. Dealing with the Referee
2. Game Day Tips
3. Effective Ways to Handle Subs
4. Adjusting to Your Opponent

Dealing with the Referee

The referee is a central part of the game, although ideally you will hardly notice him, like the grass on the field. As well as making matter-of-fact decisions, most refs use what they observe to develop and refine a mental model of how the game is and should be going. If you give the ref suitable positive feedback, you will find that sometimes it is possible to influence his mental model, possibly to the benefit of your team or both teams.

What you think are mistakes or missed calls might just be legitimate differences of interpretation. The law is clear that handling must be deliberate to be called, for instance, even though many observers think it's a foul every time the ball and an arm come in contact. On the other hand, if the referee isn't calling shirt-pulling, heel-clipping or other "sneaky" fouls, it might be that he doesn't realize they are occurring.

If you think the referee is missing certain calls, you may be able to constructively assist him. Having your captain or players politely tell the ref that specific players on the other team are using bad language or pulling on shirts, for instance, may cause the ref to pay more attention to those particular matters. If you would rather tell him yourself, then be at your most charming and phrase it as, "Ref, can you please pay more attention to number 8, who's doing such-and-such when you're not looking" rather than as a criticism. Another way to convey this information is to have a quiet word to the Assistant Referee on your touchline just before half-time. For another view, see "Reading the Referee" (<http://www.ccio.com/soccer/reading.html>).

You have limited options if you believe the referee is really dreadful. Rule No. 1 is never argue with a bad referee, since you expose yourself to the real chance of getting tossed out for dissent and, even if you get away with arguing, you probably will just make the referee worse. A new referee who is already nervous will make even more mistakes if you yell, and few will re-read the rules just because of your griping.

You might ask politely for clarification: "Sorry, ref, I wasn't watching; what was the call, please?" In general, adopt an approach of providing information the referee seems to be unaware of about how the game is going, rather than giving opinions about his judgments. If you try something more aggressive, you'd better have a charming personality.

You can complain or appeal to league or tournament authorities after the game about referees who appear to be in over their head at your team's level, but remember: the referee is final judge of facts, and you won't win arguments about factual interpretations. Provide an objective report, not simply a list of complaints, and it will carry more weight if you are the winning team.

Application of the Laws

If the referee is making systematic errors, such as not knowing this year's law changes, you can factor that in to your team's tactics. If the referee or linesman seem to interpret the offside law in a way different from what you have taught your team, you should probably avoid the offside trap, and be sure to defend all the way to the goal line, and play to the whistle. Some apparent inconsistency can arise when special rules used in only one competition, such as high school, are applied to other games by mistake. Examples include restarting with an indirect free kick (US high school) instead of a dropped ball (FIFA) after an injury stoppage, and some substitution procedures.

Even if the referee's badge is for the current year, not all referees attend clinics as part of their recertification, and they don't all read or remember the lawbook. (USSF referee badges have the rank above the shield, such as "Referee" or "State Referee," and the current year at the bottom; a badge with just the USSF shield is not a referee badge.) Remember too that a few referees simply don't agree with some recent law changes or official interpretations and are reluctant to enforce them strictly. For more discussion, see the FAQ on Law 5 in the LOTG web pages (<http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/lotg/law05.html>).

Extreme Danger

If things are so bad that your players are being injured or the conditions are extremely dangerous (e.g., lightning in the immediate vicinity, or extreme heat and humidity) you might have to do more. This is a very difficult issue. First, it helps if you haven't been whining all along to the ref about every instance of your players being charged or tackled -- soccer is a contact sport. Second, it will help if the opposing coach feels the same way; send an emissary (unless perhaps the rough stuff by the other team appears a deliberate strategy encouraged by their coach). Third, this is one time you may have a duty to speak up to the referee that you are concerned for the safety of the players on both teams -- he may be a competent ref who is simply applying an inappropriate standard of physical play, and will understand your position. Fourth, you can try having your team deliberately kick the ball out of play very often to slow the game down for a while. Fifth, send someone to get the referee assignor or a league official over to observe what's going on, if possible. Sixth, if all else fails, you have a tough decision: is this bad enough that in good conscience, you really must pull your team off the field for their safety? If so, quickly poll your players' parents about what they want to do (get them on record as behind you), and know that this is a major decision, falling on your sword for the good of everyone involved. NOTE: There's probably a league rule suspending coaches who pull their teams out of games, so be aware that pulling your team off the field may have serious consequences for you personally.

Appealing Referee Decisions

The referee's decisions on matters of fact are not subject to appeal. If he says it was or wasn't a foul or a goal, then it was or wasn't. And even if there is an error of law, in many leagues and tournaments appeals are not permitted for the practical reason that there is no way to replay games. In recreational leagues, another consideration is that win-loss records are not considered so important, and the level of refereeing may be just a fact of life, especially if the refs are unpaid volunteers.

However, some clubs or leagues have avenues of appeal for the rare cases where a misapplication of the laws determines a game's outcome. Here are some examples (assume a tie score near the end of the game):

- a. Awarding the attacking team a direct free kick at the spot of a foul within the opponents' penalty area -- it must be either a penalty kick (from the penalty mark) or an indirect free kick from the spot of the foul, depending on the foul;
- b. Awarding a penalty kick when the goalkeeper handles a throw-in or kicked pass from a teammate within her own penalty area -- a goalkeeper can never commit the handling offense within her own penalty area; this is a technical infraction for which the proper restart is an indirect free kick;
- c. Allowing a goal when a penalty kicker misses initially but gets the rebound off the goal post and scores -- he may not play the ball a second time until another player touches it.

Most cases like these involve a judgment of fact that is final (that a foul occurred at a certain location, for example), followed by a decision to restart play in an incorrect manner. This points up an inherent difficulty of any appeal -- it can be hard to prove that the outcome would have been different following a different restart.

Even a successful appeal will at best only get you a replay with a new referee -- results cannot be awarded by an appeal board. This means there's no point in appealing a single error in a lopsided game. But, if all the conditions are met and you still feel you must appeal, then be sure to make notes while the event is still fresh in your mind, and be prepared to put down a non-refundable fee, complete some forms, write a factual report on exactly what happened in the game (and who said what and in what sequence, if applicable), and attend a meeting.

Dealing with referees successfully is a black art. The very best coaches manage to get their point across while radiating little, if any sense of anger and outrage, and with a minimalism that is a skilled art unto itself. They can often, with very little said, none of it harsh, as much subtle gestures as words, get a conscientious referee to be alert for potential hints of unfairness in the way the game is being called for their team. However, the R-E-S-P-E-C-T approach has one limitation: it requires that the referee is the kind of person who is conscientious and considerate, and at least minimally competent. Coaches need to know how to deal with the other kind, too, which sometimes unfortunately means that if none of the things you listed work, they have to shut up and shudder, requesting later to the league that they not get that referee again.

Updated 1 April 1999

Game Day Tips

Pre-game

It is possible to begin a game with players running from the parking lot onto the playing field just before the whistle blows. It is also possible to be on the short side of a 1 - 0 score within a few minutes of kickoff because your team wasn't ready to play, physically or mentally. Showing up to a game on time means being on time for all warm-up activities. A coach can encourage punctuality by preparing a routine and making sure that every player and parent understands its purpose. The team's printed schedule should include arrival time for pre-game warm-up in bigger print than the kickoff time.

Older youth teams may spend 45 minutes to an hour preparing for a game. For preteens, a routine that takes 20 - 30 minutes should be adequate. Teams playing at an unfamiliar field should allow extra time for traffic and vague directions.

T - 30	The first players and parents to arrive can socialize, watch the previous game, and make sure they are properly dressed - shinguards, cleats, an extra layer or two in cold weather, etc..
T - 25	As players arrive, take the time to have a brief word with each one. "How is your sore knee?" "How did your piano recital go?" "Try to get out wide when we win the ball." Since the playing field will often be in use, find an area where they can pass a ball around in groups of threes. Encourage a variety of touches: one, two, juggle, dribble and turn, in the air, on the ground. Each group should intermix with the other groups using the entire area. Keep them moving. You can also play a keepaway game; 2/1 offense/defense ratio. Socializing is over now, it's time to play soccer!
T - 20	Assign a new player every week to lead dynamic stretching. All at an easy jog pace: Jog, Backwards, Side-to-Side shuffle to the left, to the right, Hit your outstretched hands with your knees, Kick your open hands (which cover your rear end) with your heels, Carioca (alternate sideways crossover/cross behind) to the left, to the right, Jump up off your Left foot, off your Right foot, off Both feet, bend down Touch the Ground w/Left hand, w/Right hand, w/Both hands.
T - 15	Everyone get a drink of water. Organize them for static stretching, more to develop the habit rather than out of necessity as they approach their teens. Announce lineup. Resist the urge to change it when stragglers show up a few minutes before kick-off. From your notes, offer an offensive and a defensive pointer to the GK, backs, midfielders, and strikers. Try to keep your remarks to under two minutes.
T - 10	Note how many minutes until the final whistle of the previous game so you'll be ready to make the best use of the time between games. Organize a shooting drill that keeps balls and players moving. Make arrangements to have an assistant warm up the GK separately! With YOU in goal, put Player "A" just outside the penalty area even with the right goal post, player "B" next to him even with the left post. The rest of the players form two lines on either side of the goal posts just off the playing field. First player in the line plays the ball diagonally to "A" who shoots. Passer runs around "B" to take his place. "A" goes to the back of near line after the shot. First player in the other line passes to "B" who shoots while passer runs around other shooter to take "B"s place. Limit the shooting distance and number of touches before the shot according to age and skill. Encourage low shots on target; put away rebounds. Parents can help collect

T	missed shots or kids have to chase their own high and wide ones. Keep the lines moving.
5	Captains are called out for the coin toss by the referee. When they return, bring the team together for a very brief pep talk. A big cheer, and starters take their positions on the field. There should be a minute or two to warm up the keeper in the goal area you will be defending and to pass a few balls among the players who are in their positions. When the other team is ready to play, kick the nongame balls off the field, and you're ready to kick

Half-time

The amount of time available at the half will be extremely variable. At times it seems each league, each tournament, and even each referee will add or subtract time. The rules state that half-time should be a minimum of 5 minutes but that can be eliminated at some tournaments. This can be a valuable moment for a coach in a game and should be used wisely.

Planning begins before the half is over. Pick a spot where you can assemble the team, preferably away from distractions (parents, friends, siblings, etc.). Depending on the weather you may want to select a sheltered area out of the wind and sun. Send your team in that direction while you briefly talk with your assistants to confirm your opinions or get more suggestions.

Try and get the team to face you with no distractions behind you. They should be drinking or enjoying half time refreshments by now and your thoughts should be organized, perhaps on paper. Some players (particularly in the older age groups) may need to stretch or move to keep the muscles limber. Make sure that everyone has adequate fluids (note: adequate-don't drink till you slosh).

Step 1: Check for injuries- now is the time to note blisters, twisted ankles, etc. that may affect your line ups for the second half.

Step 2: Check for fun. In the younger age groups this is paramount. If they are not having fun, why are they there?

Step 3: Praise - be brief and complimentary.

Step 4: Announce line ups for second half.

Step 5: Make your points. They may just be a repeat of the topics you mentioned at the start of the game or a brief description of some problems you or the assistants noted. It should be limited to 2 or 3 points for U-10, just one point for U-8 and younger. More than that and you will run out of time or they will cease to hear you. Some coaches like to ask for players' opinions. This may best be left for older age groups since some immature teams will unleash a disruptive chorus of comments or complaints.

Step 6: Praise and encourage again.

Step 7: Send them out for warm ups/ start of the half (whichever there is time for). If there is time for warm-ups you may want to bring the team in just before the half starts for a huddle, very brief reminder of your points, and a team cheer. Be prepared to announce the line ups again since most younger age groups will have forgotten their position by now. Count the players on the field before the whistle.

Step 8: Have a seat and enjoy the game!

Post-game

Two or three long blasts of the whistle signal the end of the game, but don't send your players home just yet. Watch your players for possible unsporting behavior on the field and nip it in the bud. (You can expect the referee(s) to check as well). Before the traditional walk-by handshakes, have your players come together quickly away from everyone else and make the following points.

1. Regardless of the outcome of the game and opponents' attitude, tell them 'Good Game', look them in the eye, and mean it.
2. "This means you have to feel as good as possible about yourself, so forgive yourself for mistakes, and don't get too swell headed about your good plays. Line up." Check the line for good sportsmanship. Thank the ref and the coach. (You will likely see them both again, perhaps many times.) Pay attention to local customs regarding postgame rituals. Applause by your parents or players for your team or opponents or running through parent formed arches should be performed only if you can enhance the enjoyment of all the participants without making the losers feel worse. Anything that resembles gloating is not only poor sportsmanship, but will likely come back to haunt you as the losers gear up for the inevitable return match. Don't give them a reason to work harder to beat you.

If you lost, you may want to attend to egos by making sure that no one accepts or places blame, by saying things like "It's just a game.", or "Everyone has a bad game sometimes.", or "They had to get through ten of you before they beat the keeper, so don't blame him/her." These little homilies may help ease the pain. Don't go into a long technical analysis of what went wrong. Consult with the manager, assistant coach, or other volunteer for any announcements. Avoid serious team meetings after a game, especially after a loss.

Take the team out for a treat if you like. Maybe save it for a special second-half effort against a strong team, not as a reward for a win. If you're driving home with your son or daughter, keep the conversation light. "Did you enjoy the game? I did." Suggest that other parents avoid long technical discussions on the way home. A blame session often results which can breed dissension in the team.

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Effective Ways to Handle Subs

If you have a lot of players on your roster, it can be a nightmare to organize who is going in when. In addition, you can be constantly interrupted with questions about "when do I do in, coach?", which will distract your attention from the game. With all of these distractions, you can forget to put a player in - or lose track of the time to sub. This is a sure-fire way to get lots of players and parents upset with you.

What works? One of the easiest ways to handle subs is to get a dry-erase board (about \$10 at your local Walmart or equivalent) and a wind-up kitchen timer.

Put all of your positions (G, SW, RD, CD, etc.) on the board, in the formation that you intend to use. Then, divide the game into sub-in periods. Your league automatically may divide the game into quarters - and only allow subs at quarters (except for injury). As players get older, subs usually can be made during throw-ins in your favor, or on goal kicks or kickoffs.

For teams that are playing 11 v 11, it works well to divide the game into 6 sub-in periods (players may tend to call them "quarters" anyway, so you may have 6 "quarters"). This means that you have 66 available time slots. Divide this by the number of players on your roster, and you will find out the number of periods that each player can play (assuming equal playing time). With 18 on your roster, you would end up with everyone playing 3 time slots - and 12 players getting to play 4 ($18 \times 3 = 54 + 12 = 66$). You know that, at any given time, you will need to have 7 folks sitting out, right?

Next, put the names of the players - and the period in which they will be playing - by each position shown on the board. Then, at the bottom, put down who is out for each (this acts as a check on your positioning - as you will be over/short if you have somebody in 2 spots at once, etc.). Generally, you will want to have your strongest players in at the start and end of each half, so this likely will play a large factor in your list of ins-outs.

The list of "ins/outs" serves as a good balance to double-check that you don't have one player in two slots at the same time. It also serves as a good check to make sure that you have not shorted anyone on intended playing time. Even players as young as U-9s can be trained to use this system. It has lots of benefits, as they can see at a glance that others have to sit out (or get rotated into positions which they don't always like). In addition, because they know where they will be playing next, they can get warmed up and ready to play - and can watch the area where they will be playing to size up the opposition.

If you have unlimited subs, you will need to set your wind-up timer for about 1 minute less than full time for the quarter (to allow for problems in getting subs in), then put the timer on the bench where the players can see it. With 7 on the bench, somebody is going to be telling you/them when it is 2 minutes or so until time - and getting everyone ready. The list of "ins/outs" makes it easy to call off your players who are subbing out - and to count noses to see if you have 7 on the bench.

You will want to adopt a rule to get a player who is replacing somebody who is staying on the field - but moving to a new slot - to remember to look for where that guy is going so that he can tell him when he replaces him. In addition, you will want to try to always have a reasonably good player on the bench during any sub-in period (so that you can make a rapid substitution in a critical slot if you have an injury). This list of available players can prove to be very handy, as players have been known to awaken at 7:00 a.m. with a high fever when your team has an 8:00 a.m. game - and it becomes pretty easy to change the board at the last minute by dividing up the available extra slots among those in the "bench pool".

Many coaches put their lineups on regular notebook paper and keep them in a 3-ring binder - and this can prove to be a useful resource for times when the coach has some personal crisis, and needs to grab a quick line-up at the last minute. It also can be useful to go back and look at lineups which worked, and those which didn't, to see which players seem to work best together and to spot areas where a particular player may need more development. Even if

you choose not to publicize your lineup in advance, for fear of hurting feelings if you need to make mid-game adjustments, this method of filling slots is still useful - and the windup timer is lots easier to set (and keep track of) than a watch.

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Adjusting to Your Opponent

Game time - but you don't know anything about your opponents (or, when you scouted them, it turns out that 2 of their best players were missing, so it looks like you may have goofed in your assessment of them). What do you do now? If you are an experienced coach, you might want to go to the Checklist for a list of factors which you will want to assess in the first 5-10 minutes of any match. If you have less experience, keep reading for some more detail about what to look for and why.

When you don't know anything about your opponents, you normally will decide to play somewhat defensively at first. Start with your better players towards the middle/back in order to get a feeling about the relative strength of the opposition before getting burned with an early goal which might demoralize your kids. If it turns out that you thought that they were weaker than they are and you miscalculated, then you will need to make some rapid adjustments early. You will probably need to rotate 1 or more of your stronger players to the back line which will buy some time while you analyze the attack more closely.

In general, the order in which you are going to want to assess the teams are as follows: first, assess your own defense. Because the whole point of the game is to score more goals than the opposition, you don't want to give up lots of easy goals, so looking at your own defense is always the best idea. Secondly, look at your own offense, and see if there are any obvious weaknesses in their attacks. Third, check your opponent's defense for weaknesses that you can exploit. Fourth, check your opponent's offense for weaknesses that may help your team defend against them. Fifth, assess the referee team to see if they will be a negative factor in the game. For example, you probably will not want to use an off-side trap if you do not have quality ARs - or have no ARs at all.

A. How is my team holding up defensively?

You need to assess which team is dominating the game. By this, we mean which team seems to always have possession of the ball (either constantly or by regaining possession very quickly). In particular, pay attention to whether your opponent is getting constant attacks on your goal in the opening minutes, as this is a clear signal that adjustments may be needed.

If your team is on the ropes defensively, this is usually due to one or more of the following factors:

1. Your defense is trying to play too flat against opponents with very good speed, and is coming close to losing some footraces because of lack of depth.
2. There are some individual mismatches (size/speed/skill) within your defensive group, so that there is a "hole" in your defense.
3. Your defenders are not marking well, and are allowing attackers to gain possession and turn towards goal without pressure.
4. Your opponents are marking very tightly, and playing very high-pressure defense to try to win the ball back immediately if lost, which is rattling your players.
5. Your opponents have one player who has spectacular ball skills, and he seems able to out-dribble at least half of your defense when he gets the ball.
6. You have a player who is "off his feed" for some reason, and is making silly errors which were not expected.
7. You have put a new player into your defensive group, who is not doing well.
8. Your defenders are diving in and using very poor defensive technique, even though they know better.
9. Your defenders are doing fine, but your midfielders are not getting back, so that the defensive group is constantly defending from numbers-down positions.
10. Defenders and midfielders are doing fine, but the keeper is having problems.

Some quick-fix ideas

If your team is on the ropes, you need to act quickly and decisively before situation gets beyond repair. So, if the opponents have already scored, or had some scary scoring runs, don't hesitate to make rapid adjustments to try to fix the defensive problems.

Sometimes, of course, the situation will be utterly hopeless - because you are facing a team which is entirely composed of the younger brothers or cousins of Pele, Ronaldo, Denilson and the rest of the Brazilian National Team's top stars. If this happens, and keep in mind that it happens to every youth coach at least once or twice, the absolute best fall-back plan is to praise your opponents to the skies. Tell the kids that, if they work hard, they can get as good as these guys. Admire the shots; admire the great ball work; admire their awesome dribbling/passing skills; and promise the kids that you will work very hard to get them to be as good as these guys, but it is going to take awhile. Reassure your players that the only problem is lack of experience and training. Heck, if these other guys have been playing soccer for 5 years, and your kids started just 3 weeks ago, there SHOULD be a big difference. Admit it - and give your kids some way to rationalize their "failure". Tell them that, against a team which is this good, you will be pleased if you get 1 shot on goal per quarter (or limit the score to 3 goals per quarter).

And, if the reason that you are getting beaten is because your team is tiny or young compared to the other guys ,which often happens where clubs use 2-year age breaks, point this out. Tell them that you are sure that they will do much better next year, when they are the older players. In short, reassure constantly; praise individual good effort; try to find some goal that is achievable; and reassure yourself (and your parents) that kids have very short memories and will be ready to play again within a day or less. Turning to the immediate fixes, here are some instant cures that can help:

1. Weak goalie - put several strong defenders in front of him until you can sub him out. If necessary, pull your entire front line back to help out even if this means that most of your team is playing defense.
2. One awesome player - put a tenacious player who listens well on this player and tell him that his only job is to stay with him and get in his way, so that he cannot get the ball. This dedicated marker does not have to be your best player. Anyone who has enough of an attention span to never lose his mark will work fine and even a below-average player can work well in this role. If he is truly spectacular, consider putting 2 players on him to be sure that he doesn't get the ball. Often, teams that over-rely on one superstar become helpless if they cannot get the ball to him.
3. Size/speed mismatches are easy to fix assuming that you have somebody available who is comparable. If you do not, then put a tiny tenacious player on a big player - as refs will over-call fouls on big players in size mismatches, which should work in your favor.
4. If you have a new player in your defensive group who is doing poorly, consider moving him to the opposite side of the field before rotating him up. In general, most attacks will come down the left side of your defense, meaning to the left of your keeper when facing upfield, so new defenders normally belong on the right. Sometimes, of course, you will find a team with a very strong left-footed player who will come down your right side, so you have to adjust.
5. If your midfielders are not getting back, carefully try rotating them (one at a time) with your defenders. Usually, if a player knows that he is a fulltime defender, he will stay back - and the more defensive-minded players who enjoy defense anyway will automatically look to go back, so this cure works in many cases. If you have a defender who is straying too far forward, you often can appoint your CD or sweeper to watch out for him and call him back. Also, in order to give time for the midfielders to recover, tell your defenders to opt to kick the ball out of bounds (even for a corner) in order to give extra time for their teammates to catch up.
6. If your defense is pushing up too far, or playing too flat to be able to contain a speedster on the opposition, you have the choice of switching to the use of a deeper sweeper or putting your own speedster on him.
7. If your defenders are diving in, or not marking well, you can do some gentle reminders from the bench ("Don't Dive" or "Contain", or "Find Your Marks" and "Mark Up"). For kids who are more easily distracted than the average, it can help to tell them that they have to count and look (1-2-3-Look, 1-2-3-Look) in order to keep track of their marks while still doing some ball-watching. You can even do this counting for them from the sidelines until you see their lips moving, and see them starting to count. However, remember that

kids are easily distracted by nature, so do not have expectations that are too high. This is a very hard task for them and it takes awhile for them to remember to do this.

8. If you are on the ropes because the opponent is using very high pressure defense to try to win the ball before your players have time to settle it, your best option is to tell your kids to follow the motto: "When in doubt, kick it out." While this will concede a throw-in to the opponent, your team then has the chance of turning the tables and applying hard pressure as well. Also, remember that high-pressure defense requires quite a bit of energy, so these teams often tire in the last quarter. Help to tire them out by sending some long balls up-field which they have to race to get. Consider rotating kids forward who will be out in the last quarter anyway, and use them to wear out the best players of the opposing side. Ultimately, of course, you will want to train your kids to play a good 1-touch short passing game. However, as this takes at least a season or two to get well-developed, there is no way that you are going to be able to fix this mid-game. Instead, if your players are rattled by pressure, use this knowledge to plan some shielding and ball-possession practices for the next few sessions.

B. How is our team doing offensively?

Once you are satisfied that your team is holding up against challenges well, then it is time to focus on how you are doing offensively. You will want to take a look at three areas: what you are doing immediately after you get the ball; how quickly the attack is being mounted; and what approach is having the most success.

It is very important to look at what your defenders and/or midfielders are doing with the ball when they regain possession - because you need to maintain possession for a reasonable amount of time in order to mount a successful scoring drive. Are they blindly whacking it up-field, or are they taking enough time to find a target? When they look for a target, is anyone bothering to get open - and call for the ball? Are they carrying the ball themselves if no pressure is applied? If a defender is carrying the ball, is his supporting mid dropping back to cover?

You also need to look at how quickly the attack is being mounted. Often, young players want to streak off towards goal as soon as they get the ball and this means that the forwards and defenders are ending up in footraces. Unfortunately, there are going to be lots of times when the other team will have players who are as fast or faster than yours or will stay deeper than yours, so they have a head start. In general, it's foolish to base any attacking strategy entirely around winning footraces unless you have an exceptional speedster. Even then, you should be careful to avoid over-reliance on one player (as smart coaches can figure out ways to shut him down. In order to build an attack, however, it is necessary to slowdown the attack to give the midfielders time to recover - and to give the defenders time to push up and support the attack. One of the best ways to get this extra time is to pass the ball to the sides, or to pass back to another player who can switch the point of attack to the other side.

In addition, you need to look at whether your team is varying its approach if their initial efforts are not working (i.e., taking the ball down the opposite side or going down the middle if one side seems to have an exceptionally strong opponent). If they are not, you need to suggest this at your earliest chance (but, obviously, do this quietly). If your team has varied its attacks, which ones seem to be the most productive?

C. How is their team doing defensively?

After looking at your own defense and fixing any problems, and then looking at your offense (and making adjustments needed), it is time to look at the weaknesses of the opposition. Experienced coaches may be able to do this while making their assessment of their own players - but newer coaches may find that it is more productive to look at their own team's weaknesses first, then look at those of the other team.

Obviously, the first thing that you want to find out is whether they have any obvious holes in their defense. Has the opposing coach put a slow-poke or lazy player on defense? Which side does he play on? Do their mids bother to recover or just watch from the midline? Is the keeper clumsy (drops balls frequently)? Does the keeper have particular problems with certain types of shots (ground balls or air balls)? Does the defense play anyone deep, so that you might be able to capitalize on offside? Does the defense push up too far? How is the defensive speed when

compared to your offensive speed? Do any of their defenders tackle well? What do their defenders do when beaten (just stand/watch or keep hustling)?

Based upon your observation of the weaknesses of the opposing defensive group, you will be able to make suggestions to your players about where and how to mount attacks that will have a higher probability of paying off.

D. What are the offensive weaknesses of the opponent?

After looking at these other factors, you will want to assess any obvious weaknesses in the attack of the opponents. Look for predictability. Who are their obvious "go-to" players? Who are the obvious ball-servers? Do their attacks always come down one side of the field? What type of support is provided to the attackers? How many attackers are usually being sent forward?

This information can be very helpful to you in deciding if you need to tell certain midfielders to mark X more tightly, or if you need to move your defenders around to take advantage of attacking weaknesses. Be sure to look at what the attackers do when your team is on a scoring run. Do they come far back into their defensive half to try to get the ball? Do they leave anybody at the midline? If all of their forwards drop back, you will want to drop your defenders with them - and maybe just leave one player near the midline to apply immediate pressure if any balls start heading back out. By allowing your defenders to guard the opposing forwards deep in their defensive half, you substantially increase your chances of winning the ball back in scoring distance of their goal - which is usually worth the risk if your defenders are trustworthy (and will stay with their marks).

Match Analysis for the Intermediate/Advanced Coach

As a beginning coach, you learned to do a quick analysis of the game during the first few minutes, starting at the back and working forward to see if you had any glaring weaknesses. You then went back and looked for areas where your opponent was clearly weak and/or your team was clearly superior. Here is a checklist of questions that you may wish to ask yourself, as you go through this analysis.

A. Which team is establishing overall control of the game?

1. Is it territorial (i.e., control primarily limited to one part of the field)?
2. Which team has greater ball possession?
3. Which team has had the better chances?
4. Are there any glaring technical defensive issues (marking or diving problems)?
5. Are there any glaring size/skill mismatches?
6. Is either team making significant unforced errors? Where? Why?

B. What are the tactical problems of our team/their team?

1. To what extent are the principles of play being applied?
2. Is there depth and compactness offensively and defensively?
3. Does the attack show variation?
4. What is the apparent attitude of the teams towards regaining possession?

C. Is either team committing common tactical mistakes?

1. Are defenders failing to compact and support midfield and front players?
2. Are attackers failing to retain compactness with midfield and defenders (rushing in on attack)?
3. Are attackers running away from man with the ball?
4. Are defenders retreating too soon and too quickly?
5. Is immediate pressure being placed on ball?

6. What is the work rate of the team and key individual players?
7. What is the tactical pattern of the team?
 - a. Who are principal feeders?
 - b. When do they get the ball?
 - c. Who are the main receivers?
 - d. Where do they move in order to get the ball?
8. If opponent is dominating, is this through team rhythm and effort? Can we disturb them?
9. Is dominant side being given too much time or space, or both?
10. Which players receive tight marking?
11. Which players fail to contain? Why?
12. Where does team try to penetrate from?
13. What method is used in the penalty area?
14. Is the penalty area attacked late or early?
15. Do they attack a wide front?
16. What are the strengths and weaknesses of individual players?

D. To what extent are the referees a factor?

1. Can the ARs and CR keep up with play?
2. Are we having any problems with offside calls?
3. What is the attitude of the CR towards fouling?
4. What type of control is the CR taking of the game?
5. Are there any problems which need to be called to the CR's attention? How quickly?
(See also "Dealing with the Referee".)

Updated 1 April 1999

Coaching the Very Young (U6s)

Very young children below the age of about six pose a set of special problems for the coach. This section of the manual is devoted to techniques designed to help you with those "young 'uns".

- Training the Very Young Child
- Coaching the Swarm
- Games for Very Young Children
- More Games for Very Young Children
- Dennis Mueller's Kindergarten Soccer Games

For a Web-based coaching manual which also includes week-by-week practice plans, see [Gavin Spooner's U6/U8 Coaching manual](#).

Updated 12 February 1999

Training the Very Young Child

Contents

1. Overview
2. Organization
3. Practices
4. Games for Very Young Children
5. Game Day Tips

1. Overview

Coaching children under six years of age presents some additional challenges due to their immaturity, short attention span, and less developed muscles. You will also need to deal with a great variation between personalities, physical size, and abilities. Your objective should be for all of the kids to have fun, make friends, and learn some soccer skills that will help them should they decide to continue to the next level. You should not expect to win all of your games or expect everyone to listen to long lectures. Your goal is to introduce them to basic concepts like dribbling and kicking and make it enough fun that they want to keep playing as their bodies and minds mature. Go down to their level of thinking. Don't try to bring them up to yours. What was fun when you were four years old? The kid who is watching seagulls will tell you were the greatest coach in the world if he had fun. He will have fun when he kicks the ball or at least when he makes an attempt and gets praise instead of criticism.

Here are some good principles to follow:

- Keep practices and matches fun. Play "games" that cause kids to learn skills, not "drills." If practice is fun, the kids will want to attend. If it is not fun, their parents will sometimes have to force them to attend and a potential star may drop out.
- Maximize touches on the ball per player in practice. Avoid lines - the kids won't behave well while waiting for their turn to play the ball.
- Minimize lecturing - they have very short attention spans. You have maybe ten seconds to make your point.
- Play lots of small-sided games. 3 v 3 is ideal for this age. Why doesn't 7 v 7 or 11 v 11 work at this age? Imagine putting 14 or 22 six-year-olds on the field to share one toy. When Billie finally gets the ball, will he pass it? No, because he knows he won't get it back! And shy Freddie may play a whole game and get only two touches on the ball.
- Concentrate on improving individual skills, i.e., dribbling, trapping, shielding the ball, shooting, getting around an opponent, etc. You will develop more skillful players this way and win more games in the process. Some passing will develop naturally if you play small-sided games, but you will get frustrated if you try to force it. Do not let anyone on your sideline yell, "Pass the ball!" during games.
- Don't keep standings or statistics. The kids will be having fun playing something else an hour after the game, win or lose. Only the parents and coaches will still be replaying the goals and mistakes in their minds the next day!

2. Organization

It's important to make sure parents understand what you are trying to accomplish and how you will be going about it. So, explain the objectives to the parents at the beginning of the season and get agreement. Some of the parents will be new to soccer, so (In addition to following the guidelines on the pre-season meeting; see "The Pre-Season Meeting") give the parents a written summary containing the following:

- safety rules (e.g. shoes and shinguards required at games and practices),
- the names of all children on the roster (this will help the kids get to know each other),
- the coach's rules or the additional guidelines that you ask the parents to commit to.

Some that are appropriate for wee ones are:

- bring water,
- need to make sure kids go to the bathroom just before leaving the house,
- you should have one ball for each child plus one for yourself. You should ask the kids to bring their own balls as most associations only give out a ball for every two kids. At this age group, it is more important than ever to get a couple or more parents to help with the practice. Believe me, you will need extra help to chase balls, tie shoes, and wipe noses to allow you to move among the kids to ensure they are practicing what you instructed. Ideally, you will have at most two or three kids per parent/coach.

3. Practices

Keep things moving quickly. Participate in all of the warm-ups and drills -in fact; exaggerate your motions to illustrate the proper procedure. Do the actions at the same time as you are explaining a stretch or a drill (not after).

Do the same warm-ups and stretches each practice. It is less important to do a lot of stretches with U7s. A warm-up regime may consist of 5 each of inside right, inside left, outside right, outside left passes and 5 gentle chest traps.

Encourage 15 min of practice at home on the days we do not practice. You may encourage the parents to participate in the warm-up exercises with their own child. This allows the coach to teach the proper technique to the parents, too, so that if they work with their child, they will reinforce proper technique. The coach may give the parents other suggestions for at home practice, i.e. dribbling and passing (working on leading your partner).

Have the kids hold a ball for the stretches where it is appropriate. This increases the fun and familiarizes them with the ball so they won't be alarmed when the ball comes their way on game day.

Avoid drills with line-ups. Try to incorporate skill development into soccer related games. They each should have the ball at their feet almost all of the time. Success is related to the attempt not the outcome. As a coach you must get excited about the attempt, not the outcome (if the attempt is genuine the outcomes will continually get better). This is difficult, because we as coaches (and parents) are conditioned to see the end results. Emphasize technique rather than speed.

At this age, there is less emphasis on progression than with older groups because they are too young to put several moves together successfully and they will get bored if there is not much variation between drills. For example, you may progress a drill to do it with the other foot, or complete a drill and then take a shot on net, but much more than this will bore them. However, a new drill or soccer related game can work on the same type of skill. An example might be:

1. Dribble across the field.
2. Dribble through some pylons.
3. Play "Pirate", all the kids dribble the ball in a marked area and the coach tries to kick a ball out.

Skills should be broken down into smaller components. For example, passing may be learned by one kid rolling the ball to a passer, who tries to pass it back. Then have the kids slowly push the balls with the inside of their feet and finally have them pass it back and forth at regular speed.

4. Games for Very Young Children

Games which emphasize skills for small children must be tailored to their abilities and promote the development of individual skills rather than team skills, which will come later. We've included a short collection of good soccer-related games for children under 6. Dennis Mueller has also allowed us to use some suggestions for games and activities. You can find these in the section after "Coaching the Swarm".

5. Game Day Tips

Ensure you are familiar with your association rules for matches.

Some of the kids may lose their concentration as soon as the game starts. The short attention span of children this age is why kindergarten programs are generally for a half day. Kids lose focus if they do not get to handle the ball enough. Smaller rosters and smaller sides help solve this problem. If your association rules call for a large number of players, say 7 or more, per side, try to get agreement from the other coach to play fewer players to allow all players more opportunity to handle to ball. To accomplish this, you will need some help from other coaches and parents. An ideal set-up for U5 is 4 vs 4 with no goalkeepers.

Put any difficult children in at the start of the game. That way, as they start to lose focus they can come off and you can put in more mature children who will be focused for the duration of the game. There should be unlimited substitutions at this age. Have the parents help with substitutions so you can concentrate on the game.

Depending on your local club rules, at this age both coaches may be on the field for games. Note this is an exception to normal guideline of no coaches on the field. For the first couple of games you will have to give some direction ("the goal is the other way, Johnny") but you should reduce this as soon as possible to allow the kids to find their own. At the beginning, to get them to actively participate you may only need to point at the ball or tell them to "go get it".

However remember that it is not your game! Avoid active coaching on the field as it only encourages the kind of shouting that continues on into older age groups. If the coach does the thinking for them, they will never learn to do it for themselves. Same principle applies for doing the talking for them.

As the adults on the field, both coaches should assist kids on both teams. Each coach should cover one half of the field. Try to rotate throw-ins and free kicks among all of the kids, and give the ball to a nearby kid to reduce the time wasted. It serves no purpose at this level to call most fouls as they would be called at higher levels. Allowing the play to continue keeps the kids interested and provides a much better learning experience than for the players whistling down every foul and lining up for free kicks. At this level, the idea of "keep it safe, keep it fair, keep it moving" generally applies.

Don't spend too much time setting up formations at the beginning of the game or set plays. A simple "spread out" or "give five big steps for the free kick" is enough. At this age there is a universal tendency for the kids to bunch-up around the ball. You will see a swarm of kids move around with the ball popping out occasionally. This is normal and there is nothing you can do to prevent it, so don't worry about it or try to correct it. You may assign some kids to defensive duties but they are likely to make a run for the ball like the rest when they see it.

Some advice on how to "coach the bunch" is found in the section on teaching basic positional play ("A Basic Guide to Formations and Positional Training").

Under 5 (3 or 4 years old) is generally too young to expect any teamwork. Even Under 6 is pushing it! If you see a pass, it is more likely than not an errant shot on goal. The USYSA mandates no keepers for up through U8. Where goalies are used, the selection of a goalkeeper may create some competition among the kids. In general, let every kid have a chance in practice. For games, putting a kid who is not capable in goal may hurt their confidence and cause resentment from the other players. Tell the players that goalie is an important position and you will watch them playing and select the kid who you believe is trying the hardest. If you chance the goalie, tell him or her they did well in net and now you want them to help the team by scoring some goals. Remember the objective: **HAVE FUN!**

Updated 12 February 1999

Coaching the Swarm

If you decide to follow the swarm approach, you can permit most of the players to be a part of the swarm (i.e., to play like midfielders), and choose one or two to stay a bit ahead of the swarm ("Lead Bee" - or forward) and one or two to follow behind the swarm ("Ball Eater" or defender). Because the regular Bees tend to do the most running, you need to give them the right to switch out with the front/rear players if they get tired. Additionally, you need to give the front/back players the right to require a switch if they notice that somebody is getting tired. By adopting these rules, you introduce the idea of automatic observation and support for teammates - which is always a good idea. Of course, you need to watch that you don't have one player who is always trying to be the back or front player (and, if needed, you may need to make a rule that everyone else must get a turn before he can go back - or place some other limits which require that the bulk of playing time be spent in midfield).

Until you develop good passers, most of your goals are likely to come from individual efforts or a simple short lateral pass to a teammate. So, when a Ball Eater gets the ball, it is usually best to simply allow him to try to dribble it upfield (although you can ask him to try to pass the ball to the Lead Bee if he thinks that this will work). Of course, once a Ball Eater has gone ahead of the swarm, you need to have someone else become a Ball Eater until he can get back. Often, the best approach is to find a reliable observant player to act as Captain, and have this player keep a lookout for when someone else needs to take this job (either by doing it himself or asking someone else to do this).

Updated 12 December 1998

Games for Very Young Children

Tip: Keep team numbers reasonable (avoid long boring lines), for example use two goals for two different groups so lines are half as long.

Run and shoot

Have the players in two lines by the centre circle. Have a player from one line start moving towards the net and feed him/her a ball from beside the net. They have to dribble toward the net and shoot. Normally avoid any drills with line-ups, however this one works because the kids move quickly through the line. You should have lots of parents to help collect balls and keep kids moving through the lines.

Cone soccer

Play 1 v 1 with one player against one player, each has a cone as a goal. This is every player; nobody stands and watches. The object is to hit the cone; there are no boundary lines, etc. This is nothing but 1 v 1 dribbling with a little bit of long passing/shooting, etc. They figure out very quickly that they have to beat their man and nothing else will do. After about five minutes, everybody switches to somebody they haven't played yet. This way nobody is hopelessly outmatched against the same player for very long. They hate to stop doing this until about forty minutes or so when their tongues are hanging to the ground (it's also a good conditioner). This also teaches individual initiative - nobody else is going to stop the opponent; nobody else is going to score the goal.

Strong sides

The team concept is best taught with unbalanced drills (i.e., 2 v 1, and 3 v 2, etc.)-- this is true for players of all ages, but especially with younger players. This will make the benefit of team play obvious and it will "let the game be the teacher". Start with 2 v 1 drills, then when the players clearly recognize the value of combining to beat one player-- either to beat and score or to maintain possession-- consider a move to 3 v 2 (vary the amount of space the drills are carried out in-- space is almost another subject).

Striker!

Divide players into two teams. Station each team at a corner post of the goal, standing off, but facing the field. Place a keeper in goal facing the field. Coach/assistant stands behind the center of the goal with a supply of balls. Coach tosses a ball over the crossbar to about the penalty spot. A player from each team both sprint to the ball and attempt to control it, turn, and get a shot off. The second to the ball defends (if he then wins the ball, then he tries to shoot). When there is a score, save, or ball goes out of play, restart the same way with a different pair of players. May want to limit amount of time each pair has to attempt to score as some kids will dribble all over the field if you let them and everyone else gets bored. Limit the area that the combatants can "fight" in to the penalty area.

Possession

Picture a square about 20 yards to a side. Coach is at one corner. Two teams are at each of two corners to immediate right and left of coach. Coach serves balls between the two teams first players in line from each team attempt to receive ball and turn and pass to their own team. Second player to the ball attempts to defend, prevent turn, or gain possession and turn and pass to his team. Score one point for turning and passing and successful reception. This keeps the two players in line and the second players in line who are the receivers into the game. Receivers cannot enter field but can adjust position along a line to receive pass. Coach can vary the service to handicap one player or another, serve hard, soft, air balls, or into the space beyond the two lines, etc. Coach controls time and with cones lays out the space for play (if no one can turn and pass within a few seconds, no points and the next players are up; dribble out of bounds and the same thing-- get back in line and coach serves another ball).

Line drills

Although you should limit the number of line drills, the following drills are very helpful in teaching younger players important fundamental aspects of the game (all these are on a field stepped off to regulation size, preferably with a regulation goal).

Players rotate positions:

- Simple cut back move: 1 line. Have players start at midfield and dribble half way down sideline with coach providing minimal pressure. When coach says 'cut' the player cuts the ball toward the middle and then finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure.
- Reverse move (U6s can begin to do this; U7s ought to be able to do it): 1 line. Players and coach stand on endline next to goal. Coach passes ball ahead. Player has to run and reverse ball, then turn and shoot (or dribble back and shoot).
- Pass to partner: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. Same as above, but this time, when coach says pass, the player passes to the wide-open teammate. The teammate must be yelling 'pass it to me.' The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. Also, this is the foundation for 2 v 1 or 3 v 1...As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a pass.
- Throw-in play: 2 lines: one along sideline and another toward the center of the field. The coach (standing on the field 4-5 feet in front of players on the sidelines) has a ball and rolls it out of bounds. He tells the first player in line along the sideline to 'go get it and throw it in.' The coach points to where it went out of bounds and tells the player to throw it in from there, encouraging the player to hurry and watching for proper technique. The throw in goes to the teammate who is yelling 'pass it to me.' The throw in made in front of the waiting teammate. After the throw is made, both players run to the goal. The play finishes with a shot. As season progresses, coach adds more pressure. This can be done with 3 v 1. As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal a throw-in.
- Goal kick play: 3 lines: one taking goal kick and 2 lines 10 yards ahead of kicker. Kicker kicks to one of the players who, with other teammate, runs and takes a shot. Coach is lightly covering one of the targets. As season progresses, a defender is added and is coached on how to intercept/steal the kick and score an easy goal. This might be done with a dad kicking to another dad. The players are shown how to run and intercept for an easy shot.
- Kick Off - Offense and Defense -Position the players the way they will be in the game. Defenders touch finger tips, offensive players positioned around their half of center circle. Teach center forward to pass at 45 degree angle to partner who starts run as soon as ball is kicked. Emphasize not kicking straight ahead. Teach defenders how to handle kicks straight at them and kicks off to the side.

The material found in the section "Teaching the Basics: Introduction", though intended for older children, will often work with younger children with a few minor modifications.

Additional material is contained in the sections "Dennis Mueller's Kindergarten Games for Soccer Coaches" and "Gavin Spooner's Season Plan for U6 and U8" web site.

Updated 8 October 1998

More Games for Very Young Children

Wee ones love the idea of a "new" game, so it is a good idea to change the rules of the game or change the game every 10 minutes to keep interest. Instructions have to be broken into little steps and kept very brief. If you can not do it and show it in about 20 seconds, then do it in stages, demo part 1, then expand to part 2 etc.

The key to little kids soccer drills is for every player to have a ball and a variety of 'games', and drills that include every player. After playing soccer related games, pick one aspect of the game (dribbling, or shooting, or passing) and build the rest of your practice session around that.

Numbers

The exercise is good for 1 vs 1 dribbling skills. It is especially good on a hot day as the kids defending can rest a bit. Divide the kids into 2 groups. If you have ten kids, say, assign each kid a number between one and five. So each team has a number one, a number two, etc. Try to make sure the kids with the same number are evenly matched. Set up two very wide "goals" with pylons. Spread the five kids on each side across each goal line. Call out one or more numbers, and those kids come out to play 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, etc. and the rest of the kids stay spread across the goal line as defenders. Throw a ball from the sideline into the centre and let them play it until a goal is scored, the defenders stop it, or it goes out of bounds.

Variation: Colours. Use two each of different coloured pinnies, armbands, or stickers to place on shirts, as younger kids will have trouble remembering numbers.

Monkey in the Middle

All players form a circle and choose someone (the "Monkey") to be in its center. The players forming the circle pass one ball among them while the person in the center tries to gain control of the ball. When this happens, the person in the circle who last touched the ball goes to the center. Some level of competitiveness develops but never on an individual basis and the "losers" quickly gets a chance to redeem themselves.

Ice Monster

Mark off an area for the game to be played and select one kid to be the "Monster". Have the rest of the kids (each with a ball) dribble around within the area. The "Ice Monster" attempts to touch each player's ball, at which point that player "freezes" with their foot on the ball. If a player's ball goes out of bounds, they also freeze. The last remaining unfrozen player gets to be the new Ice Monster for the next round.

Cops and Robbers

Have the kids (each with a ball) line up on one side of the field. These guys are the "Robbers". Have two more kids (the Cops) facing the Robbers somewhere near halfway to the other side. The object is for the Robbers to dribble to the other side without having a Cop tackle the ball away. If a robber loses his ball to a cop, he goes to jail (designate a small area off to the side or use a Goal structure.) Have the Robbers repeat the crossings until there are only 2 left. Make these guys the new cops, pull everyone out of jail and start over.

Pirate (or Monster)

A keepaway game. Coaching points: concentrate on the player's close dribbling and screening techniques. Everybody inside a circle (center circle is fine) with a ball. One player without a ball is the Pirate. Everybody starts dribbling around. The Pirate player tries to steal a ball from any player and pass it out of the circle - now, the two players are Pirates and go after the others.....then three, then four. Finally only one player is left with a ball. He/she becomes the Pirate the next game.

Variation: Bomber. Just like above except the "IT" player has a ball and tries to roll/throw it at the other player's and knock their ball out of the circle.

Kick out

Everyone dribbles and shields their ball within a circle while trying to kick everyone else's ball out, and simultaneously to protect their own. You can't kick someone else's ball out if your ball isn't in the circle. If your ball goes out you have to leave the circle it gets down to two kids in a duel. The coach may participate to keep the game from becoming too competitive, as the ones eliminated early may feel bad.

Give and go

This one is good for getting the kids to move after they make a pass. It is appropriate for kids a little older, who pass the ball but like to stop and really admire their better passes. Everyone spaces themselves around the center circle. Give the ball to one person and they call out someone's name and pass to them. They then run to the receiver's position in the circle. The receiver upon hearing their name called steps forward to receive the pass and yells "I got it!" The sequence is then repeated. Several things are accomplished besides getting them used to movement. The "I got it!" yell addresses the problem of nobody playing the ball in a game because they thought the other was going to play it. We all learn each other's names quickly.

Invariably, someone is always left out so start a countdown from 10 to 0 and they have to figure out who has been left out (the left out person should be quiet). They start yelling among themselves to figure out who it is and this fosters communication on the field. (It's pretty humorous too).

After a few practices, they get it down so they look pretty sharp. Then you toss in another ball. They love it! Now they have to think a bit because people are moving and two are busy with the other ball.

Egg Hunt

Have more balls than players. Have the players line-up across one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket". Blow the whistle and turn them loose. The object of the game is to get all the "eggs" in the basket as quickly as possible. They are all on the same team, and aren't allowed to take a ball away from another player. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task.

The kids really like this game. The more balls (eggs) the better. You should see them score, and turn right around and go back for more balls.

Marbles

Split your team into two groups and line them up behind two opposing lines. Each player should have a ball. Place an unusual color (or size) ball in the middle. This is the marble (a #2 ball works well). Have them try to move the marble across the other team's line by striking it with a ball. After the game starts, don't require them to use their own ball, they are free to use any other ball they can find.

At first the players may get really excited and kick the marble. If this happens, call time-out and put it back.

Variation: eliminate the teams and play it in a circle. The game is over when the ball exits the circle.

Teach the parents

During the last practice of the season have a scrimmage between the parents and the players (with the coaches helping the players). This serves a couple of purposes. The kids love this game. They get a chance to show their

parents what they can do and they enjoy beating their parents. (The parents never win, the coaches make sure of that....) Also, since many of the parents have never played soccer it shows them how difficult the game really is. The hope is that a parent may now think twice before "yelling" at a child for missing and "easy" shot in a game. Everybody seems to enjoy this scrimmage.

Just plain GAMES!

For warm-ups, play games which are not soccer related, but promote physical activity and are a lot of fun. Simon says, freeze tag, team tag, take-away, etc. Remember that the kids aren't showing up to play soccer, they're showing up to have fun. Have fun with them.

Shark and minnows

Teaches kids with the ball to shield it from an opponent and teaches kids without the ball how to take it away from an opponent. Use pylons to create a 15-yard square. One player, the shark, starts outside the square without a ball. All other players, the minnows, start inside the square with a ball. When the coach yells, "Shark's getting hungry!" the shark starts running around the outside of the square and the fish start dribbling around inside the square. When the coach yells, "Shark attack!" the shark enters the square and has 30 seconds to send as many balls as possible outside the square. When a ball leaves the square for any reason, the corresponding fish must leave the square and stay out until the coach gives the "Stop!" command at the end of the 30 seconds. A fish has done well if still alive. The shark has done well if few fish survived. Choose a new shark and play another round until every player has been the shark once.

Camp Town Races

Line up all the players on one end of the field. They each have a ball. On the whistle, they all dribble to opposite end, shoot ball into goal, get ball out of goal, and run back and finish with a shot on opposite goal. The first one to finish is the winner. Ask them "Who is going to win the race?" They all learn to say "The player who can dribble it the straightest!" A variation is to start half at one end and half on the other. This really teaches them to try to do it fast while maintaining possession. This drill really helps players deal with the balls that pop out of the bunch.

Updated 16 March 1999

Dennis Mueller's Kindergarten Soccer Games

I have had a request about what to do with kindergarten kids. Here are things I've done that seem to work.

Rule #1: be nice and have fun.

Rule #2: if things aren't working give it a minute then move on.

Rule #3: when more than one kid loses focus, change activity

Dribbling

Every player with a ball.

Rules

- Every player must keep moving and not run into anyone else.
- When coach says "one" they must stop and put their right foot on the ball (never mind that most cannot yet tell right from left just tell the lefties to use their other right foot).

Ask what part of your foot you should use when dribbling, get lots of answers. Correct one is all parts (trick question). Show how to pull ball back with sole of foot. Ask them to try it after you say start. When they are dribbling around, say "ONE"; once they are all stopped, tell them that now when you say "TWO" they are to stop and sit on the ball. "START", "TWO", Now show some other dribbling technique, for instance cutting the ball across with the inside of the foot. "START", "ONE", Tell them to move faster and to keep their heads up. "START", "TWO". If they did go faster, they probably had some collisions. Ask them how to avoid them. (Right answer is just like cars on Route 1, go slower in traffic and speed up when no one is around and always pay attention to what the other drivers are doing.)

Tell them when you say "THREE" to stop and put their nose on the ball. "START", "THREE", START, encourage them to find space on the field, help them say "there's space over here", "now it's over in the other corner". etc. Do several of the stops and starts to get them a little silly and maybe introduce another dribbling move. Other things "Four" - elbow, "FIVE" - left ear, etc.

Sharks and Minnows

Need a moderate space with boundaries (about the dimensions of one long, for these guys, kick). All but one player (the shark) has a ball. The shark tries to kick the minnows' balls out of the area when the coach says to start. First let the minnows retrieve their ball and continue, then play poison where the minnows become sharks after they lose their ball and continue play until all the balls are gone. Retrieve the balls and go again.

Use a few cones to make a 10 to 15 yard square. Have all players with ball inside area. Tell them to try and kick each other's ball out, but to keep their ball in. If their ball is kicked out, they must sprint after it and bring it back inside as quickly as possible. Stop them, ask them to count how many times they can kick someone else's ball out. Start up again. Stop and ask who had more than 2,4,.... Now ask them to count how many times their ball is kicked out. Start and stop again, forget to ask for total.

Another game is to give 1/2 the players balls and tell the others to take a ball away and try to keep it. Players with a ball after 1 minute win. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

Arrange them in pairs. If you have an odd number, have one play with you. Play 1 v 1 keepaway for 1 minute. Player in possession after 1 minute is winner. Rearrange the pairs and go again for a total of 3 or 4 times.

Passing

Have them find a partner, one ball per pair. This will take a little while so you might tell them to come back from the break with a partner and a ball before you dismiss them.

First have them pass the ball back and forth while standing about 3 yards apart. They will look hopeless.

Stop them and ask what part of foot to use for short accurate passes on the ground. (Answer is inside of foot, show them what you mean; that part of the foot between the heel and ball of foot.) Have them resume. Point out that a pass is no good if it can't be received by their teammate. Ask what that means (answers on ground, within reach, not too hard, not too soft, when it is expected, for example it does no good to pass to a teammate's back, or to one picking dandelions)

Stop them ask them how to receive the ball (answer: cushion the ball so it slows and is left in front of you so you can step forward to pass it, Don't let them stop the ball under their foot, or so close that the ball is stuck between their feet and must be moved before it can be kicked, tell them the ball should be kept moving) Now you will also have to tell them to back up after they pass the ball or else, they will end up too close together. Resume

Stop and tell them to do two-touch passing (you probably will have to ask what Two-touch is and find a correct respondent). Resume

Stop tell them that you want to count the number of passes in a minute and to start on your command. Start and time for one minute. Ask each pair how many passes, repeat.

Tell them to do one-touch passing. Time them for one minute while they count. Offer praise, "that's very good", "That's better than I thought a bunch of 6-year-olds would do", etc.

Now tell them to pass and move after they pass. Tell them to keep track of their partner, to avoid the other players (It's harder than it looks), and not to dribble (two- or three -touch).

If you have an even number break them up into equal groups. 2v2 or 3 v3 is good, but 4v4 is confusing and will need a good neutral player or two to work, if you have an odd number pair yourself, or an older sibling with the obviously weakest player.

If you do pairs, have them play keep-away for one minute. Encourage the player without the ball to move to get open and the defenders to challenge for the ball and to deny passing lanes. Team with the ball after one minute wins. Go again. Go again. Keep reinforcing the idea of getting open on the attack (in a position where your teammate with the ball can see you, where you are not too close, but close enough and where the other team can't intercept the pass).

If you do 3v3, consider using a neutral player to help the team with the ball. Again, reinforce the need to move to get open. Point out what happens if you hold the ball too long before passing (you get ganged-up on). Keep such observations very brief and generally make them in the form of a question (to which you will likely get lots of wrong answers, just say "no, that's not what I'm looking for" or "that's it!" when you get the right answer) If the neutral player is reasonably talented, have them ask the players to get open whenever there is no good target. The neutral player needs to move to be a good receiving position all the time. The better the neutral player, the more players that can be involved. Tell the players with the ball to make the longest pass they are capable of to a teammate who is open. (Not the longest kick, but the longest pass to the teammate farthest away from the other team's players; Same comments about passes as before, within reach, on ground, not too hard, not too soft).

Shooting

Players love to shoot and score. Almost anything that gets lots of shots in a short time is fine. With 6 or fewer, a simple line taking turns and retrieving the balls works fine. Have them stay out of the way of each others shots.

For more than 6, you need to keep the "standers" occupied some way. Having them serve a ball to the shooter, then move to the shooting line and the shooters retrieve ball and move to serving line.

Easiest serves are those coming from behind and slightly to the side of the shooter, also ball must be on ground and in front of shooter. Shooter should be facing sideways so he can see both the ball coming and the goal at which she will shoot. Next easiest are serves coming from the goal on the ground back to the shooter who is facing the goal; hardest serves are those coming across the field from either side.

If a larger goal is available, a parent as keeper (preferably a totally inept keeper) is lots of fun.

The youngest will be lousy servers and you will have to decide if it is "working" when you have them serve. If not simply change the activity.

One version of the setup: Line in front of goal about 15 yards out. First player in line has no ball. Second player in line pushes the ball from behind to in front of the first player so that the ball is rolling towards the goal. The first player catches up to the ball and takes a first time shot. First player retrieves ball and goes to end of line, second player moves to front of line ... (You will have to instruct them about passing the ball slowly enough that the first player can reach it, but hard enough that it does get in front of him. One way to begin this is to have the first player facing the goal with his legs spread and the second player passes between the first players legs. That at least puts the ball between the player and the goal and as long as the pass is not too hard, the first player should be able to get a shot off.)

Other

1 v 1: Have the players find someone of comparable ability. Use two pairs. Have one pair serve as "goals" standing with their legs spread apart and the other two compete to score. Tell them the goals must be scored by shooting on the ground. After one minute goals and players switch.

If you have an odd number of pairs, use parents as "goals" .

Scrimmage

Encourage the team with the ball (attackers) to spread out and to move to get open. Encourage the defenders (team without ball) to get between the ball and the goal (goal-side) (or between an attacker who is "up front" and the goal).

Don't worry about the finer points of throw-ins, offsides, etc. Do prohibit sliding tackles, encourage the attackers to shoot, defenders to get back as soon as they lose the ball.

Defenders are everyone on the team that doesn't have the ball. Attackers are everyone on the team that does have the ball. When no one has the ball, deciding whether you should act like a defender or an attacker is hard to determine, but the team that gets it right most often usually wins the game.

The scrimmage will likely look like a swarm around the ball. If the coach must engage in some tactical instruction, have one player play behind the swarm to collect any balls coming to him and play the ball forward to space in front of and to the side of the swarm. Later introduce players to the sides of the swarm to collect any balls to the side or passes from behind and then dribble forward and shoot or pass to the middle. Finally, add a player in front of the swarm to serve as a target. Now with 4 players outside the swarm, the remaining few players are just midfielders, the others are just in good supporting positions. Encourage the swarm to pass to any teammate outside the swarm, yes a pass back is good and should be tolerated, even if it is a bit risky for K-3s. The players outside the swarm should be rotated frequently.

It will take K's all fall to get to the point where more than a couple will play outside the swarm. (except, for those who are really not playing at all and just standing with no clue as to what is going on, encourage those to get into the swarm. and get involved)

Do not relegate the only kid with a booming kick to stay back all the time. The point here is to learn and not to restrict the chances to learn in an effort to win or avoid an embarrassing loss.

Of course, there are lots of variations on all of these and you probably have your own favorite. With these guys silly games are not a bad idea. Just remember these little ones have trouble staying focussed on one activity for too long, so make lots of changes. If something isn't working, change after a very short time, especially if you don't have a clear way to make it easier or more fun to do.

[by Dennis Mueller; Reused with permission]

Updated 8 October 1998

Additional Coaching Resources

Soccer Videos

Resources

1. North American (NTSC) format
 - a. Eurosport: Has large list of soccer videos, including most listed below. Contact them at <http://www.soccer.com/sport/category.html?cat=v>
 - b. Reedswain: Large selection of videos, including most mentioned below. Contact them at: <http://www.reedswain.com/>
 - c. Soccer Learning Systems: Publishes International Tactics series. Also carries diCicco and Machnik goalkeeper tapes, as well as Coerver 1-2-3-Goal. Contact them at: <http://www.soccervideos.com/>
 - d. Audio-Video Store - Carries Vogelsinger series and several others. Contact them at: http://www.olworld.com/olworld/mall/mall_us/c_audvid/m_avideostore/soccer.html
2. European (PAL) Format
 - a. UK Soccer Books Has multiple highlights and greatest goal tapes, principally of English Premier League. Contact them at: <http://www.soccer-books.co.uk/document/videos.htm>

Soccer Video Favorites

The Soccer Coaches List has held several discussions of the personal favorites of various list members, which may be found in the archives. Some of the personal favorites of longtime list members Bruce Brownlee, Dan Roudebush and Connie Matthies are:

1. Beginning Coaches:
Power Soccer Basics and Dribbling/Feinting by Vogelsinger; Teaching Soccer Fundamentals by Wiel Coerver (especially Tape 2- which illustrates slide tackles), first tape in goalkeeping sets by Machnik and DiCicco (which show beginning keeper skills). They also like Coerver's 1.2.3 - Goal series, but prefer the Fundamentals set.
2. Intermediate to Advanced Coaches:
International Tactics Series (Dan only likes the tapes of Individual Skills, but Bruce and Connie like the whole set); FA Tactics & Skills series (especially the tapes on Attacking and Creating space); Zico's Brazilian Soccer tape; Coerver Drills Series; Plyometrics and Soccer Aerobics; Dutch Soccer School; Van Bolkum's "On The Attack"; and the remaining tapes in the Vogelsinger Video Coach series.
Of course, none of these coaches has seen every video on the market, so this is just a sampling of favorites of these particular coaches.

Soccer Videos - NTSC Format

This is an overview of videos which have been seen by a number of list members, and are viewed as good additions to the coaching library. Note that many clubs and state associations have video libraries which may contain these videos, or others which are equally as good. Tapes usually can be rented for a small charge, so that you can decide if the video is one which you wish to add to your permanent collection.

1. International Tactics Series

One of the more popular coaching series on tactics and strategies. For intermediate-level coach and above (although newer coaches may find the individual tactics series to be helpful). Five tapes in the series (may be purchased separately):

Tape 1 - Individual Attacking

This video focuses on the decisions and choices of the player in possession of the ball. It presents concepts in a simple, logically consistent manner. The following areas are covered: Shooting, Dribbling, Passing to penetrate, Problems, Attacking excellence, Dribbling & passing to relieve pressure

Tape 2 - Individual Defending

This video focuses on the decisions and choices of the defender closest to the ball. It presents 143 concepts in a simple, logically consistent manner. The following areas are covered: Tackling, Denying the turn, Interception, Defending Excellence, Defending zones, Defending in the three thirds of the field

Tape 3 - Group Attacking

This video focuses on the roles played by supporting attackers in all phases of attacking play: 2v1, 2v2, Combination play, Role of the third attacker, Finishing central attacks, Finishing attack from the flanks

Tape 4 - Group Defending

This video focuses on the roles played by supporting defenders in all phases of defending. The following areas are covered: Covering, Marking, Tracking, Double teaming, Defending combination play, Balance, Compactness.

Tape 5 - Methods of Training

The training methods presented here, in combination with the concepts presented in the first four tapes in this series, will improve a teams level of play by increasing the effectiveness of training sessions. The following areas are covered: The nature of training, Correction, Tactical Training, Problems, Key factors, Flow, Organization of tactical training

2. 1.2.3 Goal, The Coerver Moves, by Wiel Coerver (3 Tape Series, plus coach's tape)
Tape 1: Covers the foundation of the Coerver method: ball touch and control, skills training
Tape 2: Covers 1 v 1 moves; moves to get past and beat an opponent
Tape 3: Covers putting it all together: creating and converting goal scoring chances
Tape 4: (Companion tape to set of 3): Discusses the moves of the world's legendary players: the official "study at home" Coerver method training.
3. Coerver Coaching Drill Series (3 tape series)
Tape 1 - Builds on drills to teach basic skills contained in "1.2.3 Goal & Coerver Coaching" series
Tape 2 - Shows more advanced drills to focus on footwork, as well as passing exercises
Tape 3 - Shows even more advanced/complex drills to focus on basic passing/receiving skills, including lots of work with lofted balls.
4. Plyometrics, by Don Chu
An excellent tape for the advanced/high school level coach. Illustrates ways to build speed and explosiveness through jumping & stretching exercises
5. Power Soccer Basics, by Hubert Vogelsinger
A step-by-step guide to kicking, juggling, heading, passing, and trapping. Excellent tape for beginning coach who has not played soccer. Illustrates proper form for most standard soccer skills (other than dribbling); shows common errors and corrections.
6. Soccer Aerobics, by Walt Chyzowych
Shows exercises you can do with a soccer ball in your home or as a part of practice warm-ups to build endurance, agility, and flexibility.

7. Soccer Fundamentals with Wiel Coerver (2 Tape Series)
 - Tape 1 - introduction, basic techniques, suppleness & fast footwork, feinting
 - Tape 2 - beating an opponent, sliding tackles, group games, kicking techniques

8. FA Soccer Tactics and Skills (7 Tape Series), produced by Charles Hughes for BBC
 - Excellent series for the intermediate to advanced coach.
 - Tape 1 - Passing and support
 - Tape 2 - Creating space
 - Tape 3 - Goalkeeping
 - Tape 4 - The Attack
 - Tape 5 - Set Plays
 - Tape 6 - Shooting
 - Tape 7 - Defending

9. Video Coaching - Vogelsinger (5 Tape Series)
 - Tape 1 - Soccerobics: exercises with the ball combine soccer skills, aerobic conditioning, & physical development
 - Tape 2 - Kicking: scoring goals, passing and interpassing
 - Tape 3 - Dribbling & feinting: basic & sophisticated combinations
 - Tape 4 - Ball control: receiving on ground, trapping, controlling in air
 - Tape 5 - More advanced skills, including heading: chip passes, banana shots, side volleys, overhead scissor volleys

10. Frans van Balkom's On the Attack (3-tape set)
 - Tapes show principles of individual attacking particularly well, including feinting. Moves usually shown at least two different camera angles, at full speed and slow motion. Most of the moves are seen with different players as well.

11. The Dutch Soccer School
 - Shows common attacking patterns to finish to goal, with two, three, four, or more players. Many of the sequences numbered so you can transcribe easily. Filmed from two different angles, one high behind the goal, so you can see the development of each exercise. You can develop movement off the ball, combination play, crossing attack, finishing, and 1 v 1 attacking stuff from this tape, and the goalkeeper gets a lot of work as well.

12. Brazilian Soccer: Skills and Tactics with Zico (3 Tape Set)
 - Shows multiple moves to receive and trap balls, and to move the ball in tighter spaces. Probably a tape for advanced players, or coaches of the same.

13. Joe Machnik's No. 1 Goalkeeper (3 Tape Set)
 - Excellent series on training goalkeepers. Nice illustrations of ways to show keepers how to set angles; proper hand position; proper footwork; diving saves; parries; etc.

14. Tony DiCicco's Training the Goalkeeper (3 Tape Set)
 - Tape 1 deals with beginning keeper training;
 - Tape 2 involves more detailed training;
 - Tape 3 focuses on training the keeper as a part of the team.

Updated 1 April 1999

Web Pages of Interest to Coaches



NB: Pages are marked with an “X” are especially recommended.

National/International Organizations

FIFA	The official web site of the FÈdÈration Internationale de Football Association
Coaching Association of Canada	The web site of the CAC. Furthermore, there are some useful technical articles and soccer coaching tips.
United States Soccer Federation	The United States Soccer Federation
The National Soccer Coaches Association of America	Official site.
US Youth Soccer Association	Official site. Contains links to state associations
American Youth Soccer Organization	Official site.

Drills, Drills, Drills

X	Jeff Pill's Online Drills	A big collection of drills.
	Soccerdoc's	A couple of drills.
	Planet Soccer - Coach Info	Offense, defense and conditioning drills.
	Fremont Youth Soccer League	Unofficial web site containing some drills.
	Alex's Coaching Corner	A couple of defending and conditioning drills.
	Fairfield Heat - Drills	A selection of drills.
	NJO Soccer - Coaches' corner	A selection of drills.
	Drills for Youth Soccer Teams	Lots of useful drills for youth soccer teams.
	Sports Hardware	Many useful drills on this page. Company also has soccer uniforms.
	Internet Soccer Clinics	Drills and much more.
	SoccerROM	An online resource for soccer coaches. On this site you'll find a collection of exercises. Each month, six exercises will be highlighted for free. If you want to view all the exercises you have to subscribe (and pay a small fee.)

Articles/Advice/Coaching Manuals

X	Exercises of the Day by Gary Rue	Advice, drills, practice tips and much more.
X	Gavin Spooner's U6/U8 Coaching manual	Coaching manual for U6 and U8 coaches complete with practice plans.
X	Wheatons Wings - Coaches	The page for Soccer coaches on the internet site of Wheatons Wings. There are, for example, a lot of articles on this page.
	Tophat soccer club - Coaching Guide	A coaching guide with for example NSCAA clinic reports.

Bill Lindsay' Coaches Page	A soccer coaching page with for example a U6 Practice & Sample Game Schedule.
Coaching Perspective by Steve Sampson	Article "United States soccer federation national identification and development focus" by Steve Sampson
Ohio South Youth Soccer Association	The Ohio South Youth Soccer Association coaching information page
Oregon Youth Soccer Association	The Oregon Youth Soccer Association. Contains a coaching Manual.
Easton Youth Soccer, inc. - Coaches Corner	A few nice articles and some coaching pointers.
The Harvard Jedi Soccer Site	A couple of pictures with drills and soccer tips.
Coerver Coaching Web Site	A page about Coerver Coaching. Coerver Coaching is based on the premise that team performance ultimately depends upon the individual players' capabilities and performance.
The youth-soccer.com Homepage	A site devoted to information and literature on youth issues.
Jay's soccer page	Some information about books, some drills and other stuff.
The Needham Soccer Club Coaching	The NCS Coach's Corner includes some principles of coaching and some notes from NSC Coaching Clinics.

Goalkeeping

Summit Goalkeeping	A page with articles about goalkeeping.
Tracy and Chris Ducar's Goalkeeper Articles	Various articles about training and coaching the goalkeeper.
Carolina United U18Ladies Soccer Team	A good goalkeeping site and various information about training and nutrition
Keepers Corner	Articles and drills for keepers

Various information for Soccer Coaches

X	The Soccer Coach Mailing List	THE Mailing List for Soccer Coaches.
X	Internet Soccer Clinics	Various information for the soccer coach.
X	Colorado Soccer Net - Coaches Corner	A lot of information for the soccer coach.
X	On the touchlines with coach Brownlee	Lots of helpful material for the soccer coach.
	SoccerClub!	From the makers of SoccerCoach! Currently it has no contents.
	Langley United Youth Soccer Association	Nice information in the coaches corner. For example solutions for the most common tactical problems.
	The Soccer Fan	Source of youth soccer information for players, parents, coaches novice or expert.
	Oceanside Revolution	Contains an online soccer magazine 'Play Hard...Play Smart' and a player evaluation form.
	North Texas Soccer	The North Texas Soccer Association. Has a nice article about the game 4 vs. 4
	A best page for soccer coaches networking on the net	A listing of Soccer Coaches. This list can be used to contact soccer coach colleagues.
	Complete Soccer Academy	Complete soccer academy supports player development, coaching education, and equipment sales.

Ric Miller's: The Game Behind The Game	A very good site for soccer coaches. Unfortunately it is no longer updated. But still a good site.
The Soccer Academy	Has some coaching tips.
Decatur sports page	Drills, activities and other useful information for soccer coaches.
Soccerconnection	SoccerConnection is the Internet first all FREE online community connecting for example soccer coaches.
Schools Football Initiative	An on-line coaching pack covering over 60 practices (if you register) from warm-up to competitive games.
Space City Soccer	An online soccer magazine dedicated to youth soccer and all those directly involved with the sport.
PC Leagues - Scott's Soccer Clinic	Monthly soccer training articles by Scott Zettlemoyer. On this site you can also download PC Leagues Administrator software.
Coaching Science Abstracts	Abstracts of research articles on sports science.

Laws/Rules of the Game

Laws of the Game	Official Laws of the Game from FIFA
Laws of the Game Q&A	Official supplement to FIFA Laws of the Game
Coaches' FAQ on the Laws of the game	Collective effort by a group of soccer coaches to answer frequently asked questions about the Laws of the Game
Summit Soccer Shootout Rules	Abbreviated rules for 3v3 tournaments
Goal Oriented 3v3 and 4v4 Rules	Full set of rules for small sided games
The Official U.S. Youth Soccer 4v4 Program under eight.	see title.

Health and Safety

The Hydration Page	Facts concerning the water intake needs of athletes.
Articles on Soccer in Medical Literature	A listing of citations to articles in the medical literature dealing with various aspects of soccer. However, if you want to read the article you have to order it.
Carolina United	Has articles on nutrition and dealing with hot and cold weather.

Soccer News

ESPN Soccer News	Web site for cable television network. International, MLS, etc.
Soccer Times	International, MLS, and NCAA news
Soccer America Online	Soccer in the US: national team, MLS, club, etc.
Canada Kicks	Mainly but not exclusively about soccer in Canada.

Soccer Equipment/Books / Videos / Cards

TSI Soccer	Soccer equipment, uniforms, books, videos, etc.
Reedswain	Soccer video, books and software.
Soccer Learning Systems	Books on soccer.
Soccer Learning	Videos & CD-ROMs on soccer

[Systems](#)

[Just for Kicks](#)

[Eurosport](#)

Soccer equipment, uniforms, etc.

[Soccer Village](#)

Soccer equipment, uniforms, etc.

[Soccer Madness](#)

Soccer equipment, uniforms, etc.

[Coaching Cards for Soccer](#)

This company offers practice drills on pocket-size cards.

[Sport Development Publications](#)

Books with complete soccer practices and games for the beginning, novice or advanced soccer coach.

[Coach's Edge](#)

Software for (soccer) coaches. For example Assistant Coach '98 and Coach's Edge.

[All-Pro Software](#)

StatTrak for Soccer is a soccer statistics management system for league, tournament, and individual teams.

[Axia Knowledge Products](#)

Know Your Soccer is a way to have fun on your computer and learn the soccer moves you need to know from the pros.

[All stats soccer coach](#)

ALL STATS Soccer Coach for Windows is designed to reduce the amount of time managers and coaches spend making up schedules, phone lists, rosters and so on.

[Playmaker](#)

PlayMaker is a combination of a coach's clipboard, gameboard and file folder.

[A Colorful Sports Book Series](#)

Instructional Coloring Books for Children, Parents & Coaches.

[Kwik Goal](#)

Goal of many sizes, training equipment, tips.

[Goal Oriented, Inc](#)

Small sided portable goals, training equipment

Magazines

[Direct Kick](#)

Monthly newsletter for soccer coaches. Every month they display a free 'play of the month' on their site.

[Success in Soccer](#)

The primary goal of SiS is to enhance American and International soccer players knowledge and ability to master the game by educating their coaches.

[The Soccer Coaching Pages](#)

On-line coaching magazine edited by Dutch coach Paul van Veen.

Tournaments

[USA Cup](#)

[Atlanta Cup](#)

["Robbie" Tournament](#)

[USYSA Sanctioned Tournament List](#)

[IYSA Sanctioned Tournaments](#)

[Bethesda Dragons Tournament Page](#)

[Wisconsin Youth Soccer Association Tournaments](#)

Pages with links to other sites

[Ron Tremper's Internet](#)

Links to a variety of coaching resources

[Resources for Coaches
Newfoundland Soccer
Association Coaching
Links](#)

Links to a variety of soccer web sites

Non-English Soccer Coaching Sites

[De Trainer/Coach
Homepage](#)

Paul van Veen's Page for Coaches (in Dutch)

Updated 1 April 1999

Index of Book Reviews

Beginning

Title	Author/Editor
Good 'N Fun Soccer Stuff	Mark G. Catlin, MD
Fundamental Soccer Practice	Karl Dewazien
Fundamental Soccer Goalkeeping	Karl Dewazien
Fundamental Soccer Parents	Karl Dewazien
Fundamental Soccer Tactics	Karl Dewazien
Skills and Strategies for Coaching Soccer	Alan Hargreaves
Coaching the Team Player	Bobby Howe
Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds	Bobby Howe and Tony Waiters
Fun Games for Soccer Training	Joseph A. Luxbacher
20 Easy to Follow Practices for Coaching 5, 6 & 7 Year Olds	Gordon Miller
20 Easy to Follow Practices and Games for Coaching 8,9,10 & 11 Year Olds	Gordon Miller
Coaching Soccer	Tim Schum
The Soccer Games Book	J. Malcolm Simon and John A. Reeves
Coaching the Goalkeeper	Tony Waiters
Coaching 6, 7 and 8 Year Olds	Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
The Complete Book of Coaching Youth Soccer	Simon Whitehead

Intermediate

Title	Author/Editor
Soccer Coaching Development and Tactics	Andrew Caruso
Zonal Defending	Jack Detchon
Coaching Soccer The Progressive Way	Mike Ditchfield and Walter Bahr
Soccer Tactics and Skills	Charles Hughes
Dutch Soccer Drills: Individual Skills	Richard Kentwell
Dutch Soccer Drills: Game Action Drills	Richard Kentwell
Soccer Drills for Individual and Team Play	James P. McGettigan
Soccer Restart Plays	J. Malcolm Simon and John A. Reeves
Umbro Conditioning for Football	Staff from John Moores University
Teaching Offside	Tony Waiters and Bob Evans

Advanced

Title	Author/Editor
Soccer Winning Through Techniques and Tactics	Richard Alagich
The Soccer Coaching Handbook	Gerhard Bauer
Soccer Techniques, Tactics & Teamwork	Martin Bidzinski
The Art of Soccer	Mark G. Catlin, MD
Jumping Into Plyometrics	Donald A. Chu
Soccer Coaching and Team Management	Malcolm Cook
Training Soccer Champions	Anson Dorrance
Playing Out Of Your Mind	Alan Goldberg
The Winning Formula	Charles Hughes
Soccer Tactics and Teamwork	Charles Hughes
Coaching Soccer Successfully	Roy Rees and Cor Van Der Meer
Coaching Soccer: The Official Coaching Book of the Dutch	Bert van Lingen

Updated 16 December 1998

Reviews of Coaching Books

Title: 20 Easy to Follow Practices and Games for Coaching 8,9,10 & 11 Year Olds
Author: Gordon Miller
Publisher: Sports Development Publications
Published: 1995
ISBN: ?
Pages: 56
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Philosophy
Fair Play Code for the Coach
Small Sided Soccer
Fun Games
Control I
Passing I
Shoot & Finish I
Dribbling I
Heading I
Goal Keeping I
Defending I
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Passing II
Shoot & Finish II
Dribbling II
Heading II
Goal Keeping II
Defending II
2v1
2v2
3v2
3v3
4v3
4v4

REVIEW BY Eric Blommer:

The title of this work is also its best summary. It starts out with a listing of 20 fun games that cover the topics of Dribbling, Passing and Shooting. This is the sort of stuff you find in most coaching books. The games can be useful, but all too often the beginning coach has no idea how to organize the games into a coherent practice. That is what separates this book from so many of the others. The remainder of this book lays out 20 complete practices on the topics listed in the Table of Contents above. The practices flow from one to the other and get harder towards the end of the book. All of the practices start with a warm-up activity, include 2 or 3 skill related exercises and end with a small sided game. Each plan includes an explanation of the organization, the key coaching points to look for and a suggested amount of time to spend on the activity.

This would be an excellent book for a beginning coach who has just "volunteered" to coach any team of 8-11 year olds. You could simply follow the practices one after the other straight from the book and look like a genius. Or you could combine these exercises with ones from other sources while maintaining the basic structure of the practices. Either way, the book is a very good buy and leagues might considering buying a copy for each of their recreation coaches. Gordon also has a similar book for coaching 5, 6 & 7 year olds.

Title: Dutch Soccer Drills: Individual Skills
Author: Richard Kentwell
Publisher: Masters Press
Published: 1996
ISBN: 1-57028-106-8
Pages: 223
Price (USD): \$13
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

Dribbling
Passing
Shooting
Heading
Restart Plays
Goalkeeping
Conditioning

Review by Eric Blommer

This work contains 180 drills for teaching the various aspects of soccer. It lists the drills one per page arranged by topic. Each drill has a Title, Objective, Number of Players, Area, Time, Equipment, Diagram, Organization, Instructions, Coaching Points and Variations. Since the drills are presented by topic it is easy to decide on the theme for your practice and then pick a selection of drills to work that theme.

The drills are well presented although plagued by numerous typographical errors. The drills are more elaborate than what you find in a lot of coaching books. They are really geared towards teaching patterns of play in addition to the basic skills that the chapter is emphasizing. I feel this is an excellent approach since the only reason to teach a specific technique is if it is useful for some tactical purpose. I would recommend this book mostly for coaches of players 12 and older.

Title: Dutch Soccer Drills: Game Action Drills
Author: Richard Kentwell
Publisher: Masters Press
Published: 1997
ISBN: 1-57028-116-5
Pages: 260
Price (USD): \$13
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

Combination Plays
Small Sided Games

Review by Eric Blommer

This work contains 180 drills for teaching tactical concepts. It lists the drills one per page arranged by either combination plays or small sided games. Each drill has a Title, Objective, Number of Players, Area, Time, Equipment, Diagram, Organization, Instructions, Coaching Points and Variations. Since the drills are presented in only two rather broad categories it is difficult to decide on the theme for your practice and then pick a selection of drills to work that theme. However, the drills are well presented although plagued by numerous typographical errors. This is the second book in a two book series. The other book is on individual skills. The drills are more elaborate than what you find in a lot of coaching books. They are really geared towards teaching patterns of play. I would

recommend this book mostly for coaches of players 12 and older. It is a very good book for finding drills that can be used to teach tactics.

Title: Fun Games for Soccer Training
Author: Joseph A. Luxbacher
Publisher: Leisure Press
Published: 1987
ISBN: 0-88011-283-2
Pages: 128
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

76 Games for Field Player Training
6 Games for Goalkeeper Training

Review by Eric Blommer

This work contains 82 games for teaching some aspect of soccer. It simply lists the games one after the other without much thought to page breaks. Each game has a Title, Objectives, Equipment, Organization, Directions and Coaching Points. This is the sort of stuff you find in most coaching books. The games can be useful, and are certainly fun, but all too often the beginning coach has no idea how to organize the games into a coherent practice. This book does not help in the organizing department at all. The games seem to be included in a purely random order. I would rather see the games grouped by the technique, tactic or fitness component they emphasize. Or, at least, provide a cross referencing index with this information.

Having said all that, however, I do like this book. The games are very well presented and the many I have used over the years have certainly been well liked by the youngsters. I feel that if a coach is uncertain about their coaching ability they should conduct their practices as a sequence of games and let the game be the teacher. It would be best, though, if all the games in one practice related to the same topic. There are enough games in this book that this objective could be easily met with a little effort from the coach. The bottom line is that I recommend this book as a second book for new coaches and for any coach looking for some fun ideas to liven up their practices. Even High School age players have enjoyed some of these games.

Title: Fundamental Soccer Practice
Author: Karl Dewazien
Publisher: Fun Soccer Enterprises
Published: 1992
ISBN: 0-9619139-0-8
Pages: 131
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Know Your Players
Eight Steps of Learning
Ten Steps of Teaching
Planning Considerations
Organizing the Practice
Dribbling
Using the Instep for Shooting
Ground Passing

Wall Pass
Controlling Ground Ball
Controlling Flighted Ball
Throw-In
Small Sided Games

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is written in comic book format which can drive you crazy but seems to be comforting to new coaches. It is probably the best book I know for a brand new "volunteer" to use to get started. It covers all the basics of starting and running a team. Background information and complete practices are included. My old league used to get this book for all its new coaches. This is the first book in a series of four, the others cover tactics, goalkeeping and parents. There is also a companion video that I think is still available.

Title:	Coaching Soccer
Author:	Tim Schum
Publisher:	Masters Press
Published:	1996
ISBN:	1-57028-094-0
Pages:	427
Price (USD):	\$23
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

Our Beginnings: a Brief History of Soccer and the NSCAA
The Theory of Soccer
Developing a Soccer Coaching Philosophy
Teaching Soccer Technique: The Building Blocks of the Game
Goalkeeping
Developing Individual and Team Tactics: An Action Plan for the Game
Restarts
Preparing Players for the Physical Demands of Soccer
Sports Psychology
Coaching Women's Soccer
Getting Organized to Coach Youth Soccer
Coaching Indoor Soccer
Team Management

Review by Eric Blommer

If you are an advanced coach, or want to be one, or want to know what they think, or if you are going to take a national level license; you must have this book. This book is a collection of articles from "Soccer Journal" which is the magazine of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA). It touches on almost every aspect of soccer coaching. The list of contributors reads like a who's who in American soccer.

The downside of the book is that it is a collection of stand-alone articles. This means that the style and quality vary quite a bit. There was apparently no effort made to clean up the original errors and typos in the articles. But the depth of knowledge is so great that the mistakes can easily be forgiven. This is really the first place I turn whenever there is a question about soccer coaching. I recommend this book very highly to anyone beyond the beginning stage of coaching. It will be a resource that you will turn to year after year.

Title:	The Soccer Games Book
Author:	J. Malcolm Simon and John A. Reeves

Publisher: Leisure Press
Published: 1982
ISBN: 0-88011-064-3
Pages: 176
Price (USD): \$15
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Index of Games
Index of Primary Emphases
Index of Primary and Secondary Emphases
Index of Contributing Authors
Games #1-160

Review by Eric Blommer

This work contains 160 games for teaching some aspect of soccer. It lists the games one per page in alphabetical order. Each game has a Title, Area of Primary and Secondary Emphasis, Number of Players, Equipment, Formation and Procedure along with a diagram. This is the sort of stuff you find in most coaching books, but all too often the beginning coach has no idea how to organize the games into a coherent practice. This book tries to help in the organizing department by providing a cross referencing index with information about the primary and secondary focus of the game at hand.

The games are well presented although I would like to see a section listing the coaching points to look for. Most of the games are drills that have been recast as games. This is a very important quality. Even though drills are not especially motivating, the numerous repetitions are important for solidifying a skill. Thus, if one can take a drill and turn it into a game you can create a situation that is productive but also self motivating. Furthermore, I feel that if a coach is uncertain about their coaching ability they should conduct their practices as a sequence of games and let the game be the teacher. It would be best, though, if all the games in one practice related to the same topic. There are enough games in this book that this objective could be easily met by using the cross referencing index. I would recommend this book mostly for coaches of players 12 and up although younger teams could use most of the games without harm. Basically it is a good book for any coach looking for some fun ideas to liven up their routine drills.

Title: Umbro Conditioning for Football
Author: Staff from John Moores University
Publisher: TSL Publishing Limited
Published: 1997
ISBN: 0-09-185405-9
Pages: 127
Price (USD): \$40
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

Aerobic and Anaerobic Conditioning
Strength Conditioning
Flexibility Conditioning
Goal Setting and Conditioning
Planning Your Conditioning Programme
Diet and Nutrition
Mental Preparation for Performance

Review by Eric Blommer

One of my frustrations with the USSF licensing program is that they never really deal with the subject of conditioning in an adequate way. Furthermore, they don't even touch on the mental aspects of the game. I thought

surely at the B level they would, but they didn't in the course I took. Thus I have been looking for books to help me. This one, from a British University that specializes in studying soccer, is pretty good at the intermediate coaching level.

From the Table of Contents you can see that they cover all the basic material. They give a moderate amount of detail and the whys and wherefores for each facet of conditioning. They give enough tables, facts and figures that you could put together a serviceable conditioning program with this book alone. Then they tie it all together into goal setting and defining a year round training program. I was particularly pleased to see the last chapter on mental preparation since that is really what separates the players at the highest levels.

My main complaint about the book is the cost. The publishers filled the book with zillions of color photographs that really don't contribute much to your knowledge but certainly drive the cost upwards. Overall, though, the book is a good introduction to an important aspect of the game for coaches of post-pubescent players. It would also be appropriate for reading by older players who might even enjoy the photographs.

Title:	The Winning Formula
Author:	Charles Hughes
Publisher:	William Collins Sons & Co Limited
Published:	1990
ISBN:	0-00-191160-0
Pages:	192
Price (USD):	\$27
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

- Passing and Support Play
- Forward Runs
- Dribbling
- Crosses
- Heading for Goal
- Shooting
- Creating Space
- Winning the Ball in the Attacking Third
- Attacking from Set Plays
- Key Factors in Defending
- Defending at Set Plays
- Goalkeeping
- The Winning Formula
- Direct Play - the Analysis

Review by Eric Blommer

You either love this book or hate it, I have done both. The main source of contention is the philosophies of the author. Charles Hughes was the F.A. Director of Coaching and Education. He did a video study of 109 international matches to determine how the 240 goals were scored. From the study he developed a game strategy he calls "Direct Play." His detractors claim he simply advocates "Kick and Run," although he specifically denies this in the book. His primary statistical conclusion was that most goals (87%) came after five consecutive passes or less. From this he developed a strategy he calls "The Winning Formula." This formula spells out the best strategies to adopt on attack and defense as follows: "In attack this means going forward as quickly as possible - direct play - and in defence it means attempting to win back the ball as soon as possible and as near as possible to the opponents' goal." The book takes this formula as its guiding principle and then works out the tactical implications. Hughes looks at each tactic needed to support direct play and then discusses the techniques needed to support the tactic. The result is a book that covers all aspects of teaching the game in a very unified fashion. Techniques and tactics are not taught as isolated circus acts but become part of the bigger picture of winning games. I feel that this is the strongest part of the book. You will not find specific practices, which is why I said the book is for advanced coaches. However, the book

will help you understand the teaching of the game as a coherent whole. You don't have to subscribe to his total philosophy to find the book helpful and even enjoyable.

Title: 20 Easy to Follow Practices for Coaching 5, 6 & 7 Year Olds
Author: Gordon Miller
Publisher: Sports Development Publications
Published: 1994
ISBN: ?
Pages: 56
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Introduction
Philosophy
Modified Soccer
Sports Medicine
Organizing a Practice
A Good Coach
Goal Setting
Motivation and the Soccer Coach
Parental Involvement
Stretching
Dribbling
Passing
Shooting
Control
1 v 1
Dribbling II
Shooting II
Passing II
Control II
1 v 1 II
Dribbling III
2 v 1
Passing III
Shooting III
Control III
1 v 1 III
Dribbling IV
2 v 2
3 v 3
Shooting IV

Review by Eric Blommer

The title of this work is also its best summary. It starts out with some general information that is important to a new coach such as how to organize a practice and how to get parental involvement. The heart of the book lays out 20 complete practices on the topics listed in the Table of Contents above. The practices flow from one to the other and get harder towards the end of the book. All of the practices start with a warm-up activity, include 2 or 3 skill related exercises and end with a small sided game. Each plan includes an explanation of the organization, the key coaching points to look for and a suggested amount of time to spend on the activity.

This would be an excellent book for a beginning coach who has just "volunteered" to coach any team of 5-7 year olds. You could simply follow the practices one after the other straight from the book and look like a genius. Or you

could combine these exercises with ones from other sources while maintaining the basic structure of the practices. Either way, the book is a very good buy and leagues might considering buying a copy for each of their recreation coaches. Gordon also has a similar book for coaching 8, 9, 10 & 11 year olds.

Title: Coaching 6, 7 and 8 Year Olds
Author: Tony Waiters and Bobby Howe
Publisher: World of Soccer
Published: 1989
ISBN: ?
Pages: 64
Price (USD): \$12
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Introduction
The Waiters Way
Roles of Participants
The Tactics
The Howe Way
Appendix

Review by Eric Blommer

This is the book that defined Micro Soccer (3v3). The first of the book justifies the use of 3v3 by describing the characteristics of 6, 7 and 8 year olds. Then the actual rules of 3v3 are presented. The meat of the book's first half is a detailed description of 10 practice activities for teaching Micro Soccer. There is even an eight week practice schedule laid out using the 10 activities. The first half finishes with a discussion of the roles of the three players on the field and a general discussion of basic team tactics. The second half of the book contains 10 fun games that can be used with this age group even if you are not playing Micro Soccer.

This is a good book if you are coaching the targeted age group. Many leagues give it to all their coaches as their basic coaching manual. If you are a new "volunteer" and have no idea what to do, this is an excellent place to start.

Title: Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds
Author: Bobby Howe and Tony Waiters
Publisher: World of Soccer
Published: 1989
ISBN: 0-920417-03-5
Pages: 64
Price (USD): \$12
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Introduction
The Howe Way
Mastering Techniques
The Waiters Way
The Age of Skill
Simple Defending
Appendix

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is a continuation of the first book in the series that defined Micro Soccer (3v3). The first half of the book illustrates Howe's concept that "the game is the teacher." After discussing methods of coaching and the rationale for playing 3v3, he fully describes 10 fun games for learning basic technical and tactical concepts. The second half of the book describes some games by Waiters that also teach basic techniques and tactics.

This is a good book if you are a beginning coach in the targeted age group. I think it may be too simplistic if you are coaching a competition team, although you can certainly use the activities to good effect. However, if you are a new "volunteer" and have no idea what to do, this is an excellent place to start.

Title:	Training Soccer Champions
Author:	Anson Dorrance
Publisher:	JTC Sports Inc.
Published:	1996
ISBN:	1-887791-01-9
Pages:	159
Price (USD):	\$33
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

- Team Organization
- Greater Expectations
- The Balancing Act
- The Competitive Cauldron
- Understanding How and Why
- Respecting Opponents
- Having An Effect
- Training
- It's Okay to Compete
- The Off-Season
- Fit For Life
- Player Management
- Leading Women Athletes
- Your Role With The Reserves
- Organizing Team Chemistry
- Protecting the Take-On Artist
- Tactics
- The Value of the Three Front
- Field Organization
- Appendix
- Manager's Stat Pack
- Computer Analysis
- Recommended Reading List

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is not full of drills and games but it is essential reading if you are coaching women's soccer. This book relates Dorrance's philosophy on how to create great teams. He talks about how women play differently from men and how this effects your coaching. We very rarely see discussions of the psychological side of the game (for either men or women) and I think that is one of our biggest weaknesses in our training programs. This book goes a long ways towards curing that deficiency. The other nice thing about this book is that each chapter is written almost as a stand alone article so the book is very easy to read in bits and pieces such as at a tournament. But once you get started you will probably find, as I did, that you can't put the book down.

Title: The Art of Soccer
Author: Mark G. Catlin, MD
Publisher: Soccer Books
Published: 1990
ISBN: 0-9626834-6-9
Pages: 207
Price (USD): \$16
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Space: The Central Concept
Organizing the Attack
The Individual Attacker
Team Tactics
Defending at the Ball
Organizing the Defense
Defensive Team Tactics
Introduction to Set Plays
Goalkeeping Basics
Basic Soccer Skills

Review by Eric Blommer

This is a coaching book different from any other coaching book you have read. There are no practice plans full of Xs and Os. Instead the book tries to present the theory of soccer. Catlin's contention is that Space is the central concept for understanding the game. Attackers try to create and use space, while defenders try to deny space. From this basis the book develops offensive and defensive tactics. The result is a system that does not involve playing players in fixed positions. Rather, everyone must be aware of the principles of the game and adjust their positions continuously. This could lead to a beautiful flowing game that epitomizes the Dutch concept of Total Soccer. This is a book I try to review about every two months just to remind me of where I am trying to take my team. The only thing I would like to see in this book is a series of practices that would implement the system, but that would probably triple the size of the book. Or maybe there is a sequel in the works? A bonus feature in this book is that it is interspersed with quotes from the ancient Chinese general Sun Tzu taken from his book "The Art of War." Such gems as "Defend when you are weak and attack when you are strong" liven up the book and spur numerous discussions of soccer strategies. If your faded and jaded from too many years of coaching, try this book for getting the creative juices flowing again.

Title: Coaching the Goalkeeper
Author: Tony Waiters
Publisher: World of Soccer
Published: 1992
ISBN: 0-920417-07-8
Pages: 104
Price (USD): \$12
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Introduction
The Key Considerations
The Practices
Putting it all Together

Some Finer Points

Review by Eric Blommer

If you have a goalkeeper on your team, you need this book. This is one of the most straight forward books I have seen on goalkeeping. Most of us really aren't sure what to do with our keepers. This book first discusses the age specific characteristics of keepers. Then it presents the 12 key considerations for keeping. Having covered the theory in a very easy to understand manner, Waiters then presents a series of practices. He starts with basic skills then moves to combined skills and finally decision making situations. Yes, there are books with a lot more detail, but this one hits all the essential points in a simple manner that gives us coaches enough confidence to actually go out and work with out keepers instead of just throwing them in goal to be shot at.

Title:	Fundamental Soccer Goalkeeping
Author:	Karl Dewazien
Publisher:	Fred Feathers Publishing Co.
Published:	1986
ISBN:	?
Pages:	127
Price (USD):	\$10
Level:	Beginning

Table of Contents

- General Goalkeeping Information
- Organizing the Practice - Seven Steps
- Necessities for a Good Practice Session
- Goalkeeping - Seven Step Approach
- Ready Position
- Semi-Kneel Save
- Standing Save
- Below Waist Save
- Above Waist Save
- Securing
- Distribution
- Modern Training Ideas
- Bonus: Modified Laws of the Game

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is written in comic book format which can drive you crazy but seems to be comforting to new coaches. It is the third of a four book series on FUNdamental soccer. It is probably the best series I know for a brand new "volunteer" to use to get started. It covers all the basic concepts for goalkeeping. Complete practices are included for each of the goalkeeping techniques. The book is targeted at young children but if you know nothing about training keepers it is useful even if you coach an older team.

Title:	Fundamental Soccer Parents
Author:	Karl Dewazien
Publisher:	Fred Feathers Publishing Co.
Published:	1989
ISBN:	0-9619139-3-2
Pages:	128
Price (USD):	\$10
Level:	Beginning

Table of Contents

Your Child and Soccer
You, Your Child and the League/Club
How Safe is Soccer
The Parents Role
The Leagues' (Clubs') Role
The Coach
The Manager
The Referee
Understanding the Game
Learning Soccer Together
Playing the Game
Before, During and After...The Game
Modified Laws

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is written in comic book format which can drive you crazy but seems to be comforting to new coaches. It is the fourth of a four book series on FUNdamental soccer. It is probably the best series I know for a brand new "volunteer" to use to get started. This book is a little different than the others in this series in that it is addressed to the parents of young soccer players. It assumes they know nothing about the game and tries to teach the basics. I found it useful for preparing information for my first meeting with parents at the beginning of a new team. You might wish that all parents had to read this book in order to sign their kid up, but it ain't gonna happen. So, you read the book and pass the information on at parents meetings and in newsletters. You might carry the book with you to games to lend to some of the more "helpful" parents. I should note that I think this book has been reprinted with the title "Fundamental Soccer Guide."

Title:	Fundamental Soccer Tactics
Author:	Karl Dewazien
Publisher:	Fred Feathers Publishing Co.
Published:	1987
ISBN:	?
Pages:	128
Price (USD):	\$10
Level:	Beginning

Table of Contents

General Tactics
Action Plan for Attack
Action Plan for Defense
Bonus: Modified Laws of the Game

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is written in comic book format which can drive you crazy but seems to be comforting to new coaches. It is the second of a four book series on FUNdamental soccer. It is probably the best series I know for a brand new "volunteer" to use to get started. It covers very basic tactical ideas for both individual and team play. No complete practices are included but critical concepts are well described so that you can pass them on to your team with confidence. It is best used by beginning coaches with young teams. More experienced coaches and teams will need something more advanced. I especially recommend this book to coaches who have never played the game themselves.

Title:	Teaching Offside
Author:	Tony Waiters and Bob Evans
Publisher:	World of Soccer
Published:	1989
ISBN:	?
Pages:	24
Price (USD):	\$5
Level:	Intermediate

Table of Contents

The Offside Law
 Do We Need Offside?
 Teaching Offside
 Tactical Use of Offside
 Conduct
 Linesmen

Review by Eric Blommer

If this is the first year your team has to play with the offside law then this book will get you started fast. The book explains the offside law and then shows you how to teach it to your players in a progression from 2 v 2 to 11 v 11. The book also discusses some of the tactical considerations of the offside law.

Title:	Coaching Soccer The Progressive Way
Author:	Mike Ditchfield and Walter Bahr
Publisher:	Prentice Hall
Published:	1988
ISBN:	0-13-139288-3
PAGES:	238
Price (USD):	\$16
Level:	Intermediate

Table of Contents

Elements of Effective Coaching
 Progressive Coaching
 1st Man Offense Player with the Ball: Control
 1st Man Offense Player with the Ball: Passing
 1st Man Offense Player with the Ball: Shooting
 1st Man Offense Player with the Ball: Dribbling
 1st Man Offense Player with the Ball: Heading
 1st Man Defense Player Delaying the Ball: Denying the Point of Attack
 2nd Man Offense: Player Supporting the 1st Man Offense
 2nd Man Defense: Player Supporting the 1st Man Defense
 3rd Man Offense: Players Creating and Utilizing Space
 3rd Man Defense: Players Denying Space
 Goalkeeping: The Specialist Position
 Set Plays

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is different from your run of the mill coaching book. This book tries to present the coaching of soccer in a unified framework. The authors call it the ripple system because it radiates out from the ball. The player on the ball is the first attacker and all ball skills are taught relative to this position. The Closest player helping out is the second attacker. He is usually behind and to the side of the first attacker. His job is called support. All the other players on

the attacking team are called third attackers and their role is to create and use space. On the defensive side of the ball, the player closest to the ball is the first defender. His job is to pressure the ball handler. The defender backing him up is the second defender and his job is to provide support. All the other defenders are third defenders. Their job is to deny space to the attacking.

For each of these positions the authors provide a training progression. The progression goes from: No Opposition, Passive Opposition, Positive Opposition, Small-Sided Game to Team Tactics. For each exercise key coaching points are given. I found this book to be an excellent aid not only for developing practices but also for understanding how the game should be played. The beauty of this system is that it teaches technique within the context of tactics so that both make a lot more sense. While I think this book may be a little too deep for beginning coaches, the concepts in it are essential if you are going to advance to the next level.

Title:	Skills and Strategies for Coaching Soccer
Author:	Alan Hargreaves
Publisher:	Leisure Press
Published:	1990
ISBN:	0-88011-328-6
PAGES:	365
Price (USD):	\$20
Level:	Beginning

Table of Contents

- Preparing to Coach
- Ethics and Coaching Philosophy
- Individual Coaching Strategies
- Group Coaching Strategies
- Skills and Techniques
- Coaching Collecting and Controlling
- Coaching Passing
- Passing Games
- Coaching Dribbling
- Coaching Tackling and Defensive Skills
- Coaching Kicking
- Coaching Shooting
- Coaching Heading
- Coaching Goalkeeping
- Coaching the Throw-In
- Tactics and Teamwork
- Understanding Team Play
- Team Formations and Systems of Play
- Tactics at Corners and Free Kicks
- Coaching Tactics and Teamwork - Methods
- Coaching Tactics and Teamwork - Practice Situations
- Team Management
- Physical and Mental Preparation for Games
- Handling Problem Players
- Fitness for Soccer

Review by Eric Blommer

If your serious about coaching, and are at the beginning or intermediate level, then this is the book for you. This book covers the whole range of coaching challenges from developing a coaching philosophy to dealing with problem players. But it is not just theory. Along with the big picture Hargreaves presents complete practices for each of the basic techniques. The neat thing about the practices is that he gives examples for beginning, intermediate and

advanced players. This is a nice change from the one size fits all approach of most coaching books. This book, combined with a book of drills, could get you through your entire youth coaching career. However, the book is so well written that after you are done you want to keep learning. Highly recommended.

Title: Coaching Soccer Successfully
Author: Roy Rees and Cor Van Der Meer
Publisher: Human Kinetics
Published: 1997
ISBN: 0-87322-444-2
PAGES: 227
Price (USD): \$20
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Coaching Foundation
Coaching Plans
Coaching Defense
Coaching Offense
Coaching Matches
Coaching Evaluation

Review by Eric Blommer

If you coach High School age or older teams, you need this book. This is one of the best new coaching books to come out recently. It covers everything involved in building a complete soccer program that will remain in the community for a long time. Yes, it has its share of Xs and Os but everything is presented at a higher level than most books. The chapters on offensive and defensive tactics were especially helpful to me when I was taking my B license. Highly recommended.

Title: Coaching the Team Player
Author: Bobby Howe
Publisher: World of Soccer
Published: 1992
ISBN: 0-920417-11-6
PAGES: 64
Price (USD): \$12
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Introduction
Roles of the Team Player
The Coach and the Methodology
The Practices
Additional Games
Appendix

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is geared towards teams that play 11 aside but it is still good reading for other coaches that want to understand the duties of different positions. Rereading this book for the review I was struck by how close this book follows the instruction given in the USSF B license. The difference is that this book makes the concepts really easy to understand.

The book starts by discussing the general qualities of a good player. Then it takes each position and discusses the offensive and defensive duties in each third of the field. This is great information for helping your players understand their role in the team. It also makes it a lot more fun to watch games when you can focus on a certain position and see how they react to different situations. Once you understand the roles of the players the book shows you how to set up practices to improve the needed skills. I think this is one of the better books for a coach making the transition from recreation to competitive soccer.

Title: The Complete Book of Coaching Youth Soccer
Author: Simon Whitehead
Publisher: Contemporary Books
Published: 1991
ISBN: 0-8092-4072-6
PAGES: 136
Price (USD): \$13
Level: Beginning

Table of Contents

Aims, Objectives and Teaching Hints
Organizational Tips
Juggling and Warm-Ups
Passing and Control
Ball Handling: Dribbling
Heading
Shooting and Volleying
Goalkeeping
Ball Winning and Defense
Throw-Ins, Goal Kicks, Corners, and Free Kicks
Game Drills and Positional Play
Team Formations
Summing Up
Appendix I: Basic Laws of Soccer
Appendix II: Successful Soccer
Appendix III: Ten-Week Season Plans

Review by Eric Blommer

OK, your kid really wanted to play soccer; sure they didn't have a coach; but why, oh why did you say you would coach? You and hundreds of "volunteers" across the country are now asking themselves what are they going to do. Start by getting this book. This book contains the essence of everything you need to know to have a successful season. If you are truly desperate, the final appendix contains 10 week practice plans for the age groups: 7-10, 11-14 and 15-19. Pick the right one and go for it. Hopefully, though, the book will get you excited enough and confident enough to want to really learn all the material in the book. You too, can and should, get on the field and try the exercises in this book. They really are simple enough that a fat, forty year old can learn them and have fun in the process. I sure did. This book is not as deep as Hargreaves' book philosophically, but it contains all the practical material you need.

Title: Zonal Defending
Author: Jack Detchon
Publisher: World of Soccer
Published: 1996
ISBN: 1-896466-11-7

PAGES: 48
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

Introduction
Man to Man or Zone
Defining the Zones
Defender's Responsibilities - Marking
Defender's Responsibilities - Marking and Covering
Defender's Responsibilities - Marking, Covering and Balancing
The Complete Back Four
The Flat Back Four - Or Is It?
Appendix

Review by Eric Blommer

In the US coaching ranks zonal defending has become a hot topic. This book is an attempt to give a simple explanation of the concept, at least as it applies to the back defenders. With a lot of illustrations and a bit of text, Detchon explains the zonal concept and builds it up from 1 v 1 through 3 v 3 and finally to a flat back four zonal system. If you have never seen these ideas before this is a good introduction. If you want more detail, including the role of the midfield and forwards, you should try the book "Coaching The Italian 4:4:2."

Title: Playing Out Of Your Mind
Author: Alan Goldberg
Publisher: Reeds wain Inc.
Published: 1997
ISBN: 1-890946-01-X
PAGES: 75
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Introduction
The Mind Body Connection
Five Steps to Becoming a Champion
Handling the Pressure of Competition
Developing Championship Concentration
Thinking Like a Winner Developing a Positive Attitude
Developing Self-Confidence
Big Game Preparation: Using Mental Rehearsal for Peak Performance
The Principles of Peak Performance
Conclusion

Review by Eric Blommer

One of my pet peeves with the USSF licensing program is that they pay almost no attention to the psychological side of the game. Yes, they always list it as one of the four pillars of soccer, but then they ignore it altogether. Even at the B level, I was very surprised to see that nothing was really said about training mental toughness. This book will tell you what they don't. Furthermore, this is one of the first books I have found on mental toughness that directly addresses soccer. I have others that are very similar but all their examples are from tennis or they try to be generic. With its focus on soccer, this book is much easier for us and our players to relate to. So what does the book do? First the book convinces you that the psychological side of the game is just as important as the physical side. Then it convinces you that mental toughness can be learned and developed. Finally it lays out

step by step procedures for developing "the mind of a champion." I know it sounds like a bunch of puffery. In fact, while reading the book there were times I just wanted to gag as the sugar was poured on so deep. But that is the nature of the psych business. The trick seems to be to get the nay-sayer out of your head and start acting like a winner even before you are one. Listen to your inner voices while you coach or play and I think you will be surprised how hard you are on yourself. Certainly developing a positive inner voice will make you feel better even if you don't win more games.

I have yet to try the methods in the book with a whole team. What I have done is give copies to individual players and let them decide how much they want to use. Those who have actually started practicing the methods seem to be improving their mental toughness noticeably. With my next team I may try to get everybody doing the exercises. I should mention that there are also some audio tapes available that cover the same material, but I prefer the book.

Title:	Good 'N Fun Soccer Stuff
Author:	Mark G. Catlin, MD
Publisher:	Soccer Books
Published:	1990
ISBN:	0-9626834-8-5
PAGES:	91
Price (USD):	\$12
Level:	Beginning

Table of Contents

Rules
Running a Preseason Meeting
Helpful Tips for the First Time Coach
Coach's Tough Task: Medical Emergencies
Common Soccer Injuries
Introduction to Soccer Tactics
Approach to Practices
Soccer Stretches
Basic Soccer Skills
General Purpose Games
Games to Teach Trapping
Games to Teach Headers and Throw-ins
Games to Teach Shooting
Games to Teach Passing
Dribbling Skills
Games to Teach Individual Tactics
Games to Teach Position Play
Goalkeeping Basics
Goalkeeping Games and Drills
Set Plays
Development Stages and Coaching
Game Analysis
Roster

Review by Eric Blommer

Catlin wrote another book called [The Art of Soccer](#) that I really like. That book is a theoretical treatment of soccer without any practices in it. This book is full of games and drills, although I think they are at a simpler level than the theory in the other book. The exercises are grouped by topic. For each one Catlin lists: recommended age, purpose, number of players, playing area, duration, procedure and variations. The book also contains supplemental information as detailed in the table of contents.

I like this book as a handout for a league to give its coaches. In fact, judging by the tag line at the bottom of each page I think the Minnesota Soccer Association uses it for exactly that purpose. Used in conjunction with a basic coaches clinic this would satisfy any league's requirement to provide training to their coaches. The only thing that could be improved would be to provide at least a few complete practices so that new coaches could see how a practice progresses from warm-up to scrimmage while staying focused on one theme.

Title: Jumping Into Plyometrics
Author: Donald A. Chu
Publisher: Leisure Press
Published: 1992
ISBN: 0-88011-443-6
PAGES: 80
Price (USD): \$14
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Understanding Plyometrics
The Basics of Plyometric Training
Designing a Plyometric Training Program
Plyometric Exercises
Sport-Specific Drills

Review by Eric Blommer

Plyometrics are exercises aimed at linking strength with speed of movement to produce power. It became very big in the track and field sports and is now spreading to other sports at their highest levels. At its simplest, it is a series of jumping exercises. This book explains the physiology of the method then describes numerous specific exercises. Finally it lists a program for specific sports including soccer. I have never used this as a complete program but I have incorporated some of the jumps into my normal conditioning program. If you have heard about the method and are curious this is supposed to be one of the best introductory books on the subject. Please read it carefully before proceeding, especially the section dealing with the necessary prior strength training. For highly competitive, older teams, this may be the physical edge you have been looking for.

Title: Soccer Tactics and Teamwork
Author: Charles Hughes
Publisher: EP Publishing Limited
Published: 1973
ISBN: 0-7158-0174-0
PAGES: 160
Price (USD): \$10
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Systems of Play
Why Goals are Scored
Pressurising
Key Factors in Defensive Play
Creating Space
Support in Attack
Attacking Opponents With and Without the Ball
The Do's and Don'ts of Passing

Shooting
Defending at Set Plays
Attacking at Set Plays
Goalkeeping
Fitness for Association Football

Review by Eric Blommer

This is the first book I have by the colorful but controversial British author Charles Hughes. At the time of writing this book he had been coaching the England Amateur Team for nine years. This book tries to sum up what he learned during this period about the proper coaching of soccer. The nice part about this book is that it is organized around what he identifies as the five reasons for goals being scored:

8. Lack of pressure on the man with the ball.
9. Lack of support for the challenging player.
10. Failure to track players down.
11. Giving the ball away.
12. Set Plays.

Hughes develops the rest of the book based on the implications of these five primal causes. It turns out to be a good organizing principle. This book is very good at helping you understand soccer tactics both on offense and defense. No it is probably not the very best book on soccer tactics but it is clearly written and has merit even as an historical document. I like it. If you read it in a sequence with his other two books, Soccer Tactics and Skills and The Winning Formula, you can see how his thinking evolved over a twenty year span. Maybe I'm just weird for finding this interesting.

Title:	Soccer Drills for Individual and Team Play
Author:	James P. McGettigan
Publisher:	Parker Publishing Company Inc.
Published:	1987
ISBN:	0-13-815309-4
Pages:	222
Cost (USD):	\$20
Level:	Intermediate

Table of Contents

Skill Drills
Passing, Receiving, and Controlling
Heading
Dribbling, Feinting, Screening, Rhythm Changes, and Dribbling Tricks
Shooting
Defense and Tackling
Goalkeeping
Basic Patterns
Moving Passing
Small Group Passing
Special Situations
Corner Crossing and Corner Kicks
Throw-in
Direct and Indirect Free Kicks
Training Games
Small-Sided Games and Team Games

Review by Eric Blommer

True, this is a drill book but it is not simply a random collection of drills and games with cute names. Rather it is a carefully chosen selection of drills that strive to refine players existing techniques and put them into the context of game situations. Because of this higher level focus I rate this book as better suited to intermediate or advanced coaches working with players 12 or older. The author is a college coach and the subtle sophistication of the drills reflects this. At first glance the drills seem fairly simple and common. Upon closer inspection you realize that they are actually combining multiple skills into patterns of play that are very useful in developing a team style of play. The whole concept of patterns is worth a short diversion here. It is true that soccer is not like basketball or football where the coach devises a playbook that the players memorize. However, the play of high level teams is not purely random. If you study carefully, you will notice that certain passing and moving sequences occur repeatedly. These movements are known as patterns of play. The theory here is that if you extract these patterns and teach them to your players they will raise their play to a higher level. The point being, that these patterns provide good solutions to common situations.

That said, we now return to the book. This book presents its drills as basic patterns. So the players not only refine their skills but also develop good habits of movement. I know drills have developed a bad reputation in current coaching circles but they do serve a valuable purpose. The purpose is to provide numerous quality repetitions to the point that the actions become automatic. The modern game is too fast to allow a lot of time for thinking. The author clearly states that the drills should not consume more than a quarter of your practice time. If this rule is followed the collection of drills in this book can really help take your team to the next level.

Title:	Soccer Coaching Development and Tactics
Author:	Andrew Caruso
Publisher:	Soccer Coaching Press
Published:	1989
ISBN:	?
Pages:	190
Cost (USD):	\$15
Level:	Intermediate

Table of Contents

- The Principles of Player Roles in Soccer
- Dribbling and Development of the First Attacker
- Passing & Receiving and Development of the First & Second Attacker
- Creating Space and Development of the Third Attacker
- Principles of Attack and Functional Training in the Defensive Third
- Functional Training in Midfield
- The Strike and Functional Training in the Attack Third
- Principles of Defense
- Keeper Instruction - Techniques and Decision-Making
- Special Situations
- Team Tactics Coaching
- Short-Sided League Games & Indoor Training
- Continuing Growth in Developing Soccer in the United States
- The Prepared Coach
- Finishing Activities Using the Two-Sided Goal
- Using the Medicine Ball in Developing Technique
- A Plan for a Soccer Training Complex
- Suggestions for a Typical Effective Practice
- Match Behavior & Analysis
- Bibliography of Recommended Books, Journals, & Tapes

Review by Eric Blommer

This book is a first introduction to soccer tactics. It is similar to the book by Ditchfield and Bahr but concentrates mostly on tactical concepts with little on technique. This book presents the coaching of soccer within the unified framework of first, second, third attacker and first, second, third defender. The player on the ball is the first attacker and his role is to penetrate. The closest player helping out is the second attacker. He is usually behind and to the side of the first attacker. His job is called support. All the other players on the attacking team are called third attackers and their role is to create and use space. On the defensive side of the ball, the player closest to the ball is the first defender. His job is to pressure the ball handler. The defender backing him up is the second defender and his job is to provide support. All the other defenders are third defenders. Their job is to deny space to the attacking team. For each of the attacking positions there is a separate chapter. The main functions of the role are discussed and some practice exercises are presented. Then attacking team tactics are discussed for the different thirds of the field. Defending is only given one chapter in the belief that attacking needs to be emphasized when working with youth teams. Then there is a chapter on basic goalkeeper decision making, followed by one on set play situations. After this the book has small sections on a variety of topics.

Overall, this book is a very good introduction to tactics. If you have not been exposed to tactical concepts before, this is a great place to start. I don't think it covers everything, especially defending, but it will prepare you for a more advanced book like Ditchfield and Bahr's. Also, if you are preparing for a licensing class, this book gives you a good head start.

Title:	Soccer Winning Through Techniques and Tactics
Author:	Richard Alagich
Publisher:	McGraw-Hill
Published:	1995
ISBN:	0-07-470228-9
Pages:	469
Cost (USD):	\$30
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

Introduction
Level 1: 5 to 8 Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Level 2: 9 to 10 Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Level 3: 11 to 12 Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Level 4: 13 to 14 Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Level 5: 15 to 16 Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Level 6: 17+ Years - Technical-Tactical Development Program
Soccer Development Program

Review by Eric Blommer

This is a book I really want to like, but just can't. The author's concept is excellent. He sets out to present an entire coaching program progressing from age 5 to 18. The program he developed is quite good but the book needs some serious editing. I think the length could be cut in half if all the silly white space was removed along with the redundant text and figures. The diagrams also need some attention. Some of them are so full of lines and arrows and squiggles that I really can't figure out how the drill is supposed to work. Some of the picture sequences are even out of order.

So do I hate this book? No, actually. If you have the patience to dig through it there are some real gems to be mined. Complete practices are presented for each topic covered, of which there are 56. I can't recommend the book to a general audience. However, if your club is trying to design a complete program to advance the players from beginners to pros, this is the best place I know to get started. I hope a second edition is produced after extensive editing because this guy is definitely on the right track.

Title: The Soccer Coaching Handbook
Author: Martin Bidzinski
Publisher: The Crowood Press
Published: 1996
ISBN: 1-85223-973-5
Pages: 224
Cost (USD): \$20
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

Introduction
Preparing for Fitness Training
Warming Up
The Training Programme
Reaction Training
The First Touch
Passing and Ball Control
Introducing the Team
Defending
Playing Systems
Defining Roles - The Sweeper
Set Plays
Modern Attacking Skills
Ball Control and Possession
Further Attacking Skills
Play Within the Shape
Finishing
Offsides and the Half-Field Format
The Goalkeeper

Review by Eric Blommer

I can't really do justice to this book. I just finished reading it and am still trying to sort it out. The author has some rather different ideas on how soccer should be taught and played. The book covers a lot of ground from philosophy to complete practice sessions. The author is very big on drills involving patterned play through cones. Team play centers on the use of a 1-4-4-1 formation. It's hard to say what level the book is aimed at: numerous photographs show young kids playing but the text seems more appropriate for high school and older players. Maybe after a second or third reading I will be able to write a more precise review. For now I would have to say that the book can be recommended for those who are looking for some new ideas to think about.

Title: Soccer Restart Plays
Author: J. Malcolm Simon and John A. Reeves
Publisher: Human Kinetics
Published: 1994
ISBN: 0-87322-521-X
Pages: 139
Cost (USD): \$14
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

- Free Kick Tactics
- Free Kick Plays
- Corner Kick Tactics
- Corner Kick Plays
- Throw-In and Kickoff Tactics
- Throw-In and Kickoff Plays

Review by Eric Blommer

Yes, the entire book is filled with restart plays, 116 of them. Sooner or later someone was going to take their notebook of favorite plays and get it published. If you want some new ideas you are bound to find some in here. Or at least, it will trigger the creative juices and you will come up with some clever variation.

Title: Score! Soccer Tactics & Techniques for a Better Offense
Author: Wiel Coerver with Alfred Galustian
Publisher: Sterling Publishing Co.
Published: 1995
ISBN: 0-8069-0976-5
Pages: 190
Cost (USD): \$17
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

- Coaching for the Future
- Ball Control
- Ball Feeling
- Fast Footwork
- Basic Movements
- Feinting Movements
- One-on-One Moves
- Dominating in One-on-One Situations
- Kicking Technique
- Passing, Receiving, and Playing the Ball into Space
- Combination Play
- Overlapping
- Small Games
- Creating Chances and Finishing
- Heading
- Shooting
- Offense: Techniques and Application
- Games
- Technique: The Foundation of Soccer
- The Future of Soccer
- Summary

Review by Eric Blommer

This is the second book by Coerver and the better of the two. Coerver is a Dutch coach that developed a system of coaching that is centered around learning a zillion movements with the ball. His contention is that superb ball skills are necessary to play attractive, attacking soccer. His first book was almost completely filled with intricate solo movements with a ball. The choreography rivaled some ballets. As a consequence, some people have condemned the program as not being relevant to the real game. Even the Dutch soccer association tries to distance themselves from

this method with the argument that soccer is best learned by playing soccer. In this book, Coerver tries to show how his footwork exercises can be built up into actual game situations. At the very least, his exercises make very good warm-up drills.

Putting politics aside, what is in this book? Basically it is the script for his three videos called "1-2-3 Goal." The book is about 90% pictures that try to show the various moves and drills. In my opinion, you should buy the videos. I cannot figure out a lot of the moves from the book. On the tape you can use slow motion to get things exactly right. The book might be useful if you have already watched the videos and simply need to refresh a particular sequence in your mind. Don't judge the method just by looking through this book. You have to see one of the videos to really understand how amazing some players can become after practicing this program.

Title:	Soccer Coaching and Team Management
Author:	Malcolm Cook
Publisher:	EP Publishing Limited
Published:	1982
ISBN:	0-7158-0795-1
Pages:	140
Cost (USD):	\$11
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

- Club Organisation
- Team Management
- The Partnership of Coach and Team Manager
- Coaching
- Soccer Skill Learning
- Motivation
- Communication
- Team Spirit
- Individual and Team Performance Analysis

Review by Eric Blommer

This is not your typical coaching book. It is a professional level work focused on management issues as opposed to coaching issues. It is one of the few coaching books that deal with the "soft" issues like motivation, communication and team spirit. Because it addresses professional teams, it does not appear to be real useful to the youth coach at first glance. However, teams are teams. Professional or youth they all require motivation, communication and team spirit. I would not recommend that this be the first book on coaching you read. But after you have things moving you may want to read this book to see how to keep the team progressing as they get older.

Title: Soccer Tactics and Skills
Author: Charles Hughes
Publisher: Queen Anne Press
Published: 1987
ISBN: 0-356-15169-7
Pages: 236
Cost (USD): \$30
Level: Intermediate

Table of Contents

Systems of Play
Principles of Learning and Coaching
Creating Space (1) as an Individual
Creating Space (2) as a Team
Passing and Support
Attacking (1) Flank and Diagonal Crosses
Attacking (2) Central Positions
Shooting (1) Attitude, Technique and Skill
Shooting (2) Speed, Skill and Combined Play
Goalkeeping (1) Shot Stopping and Supporting the Defence
Goalkeeping (2) Crosses and Distribution
Defending (1) as an Individual
Defending (2) as a Team
Set Plays (1) Defending
Set Plays (2) Attacking

Review by Eric Blommer

This is the second book (of three) I have by the sometimes controversial British author Charles Hughes. It is the most practical of the three in that it is full of practice plans. What I like best is that it teaches techniques within the context of tactical purposes. After all, we are training soccer players not circus performers. Thus, the practices Hughes describes are created by taking a little piece out of the game, developing and perfecting it, then working it back into the full game. The approach is most appropriate for players twelve and older. There is also an excellent set of video tapes produced by the BBC that correspond to the book. Be sure not to confuse these tapes with the "Winning Formula" tapes.

Title: Soccer Techniques, Tactics & Teamwork
Author: Gerhard Bauer
Publisher: Sterling Publishing Co.
Published: 1993
ISBN: 0-8069-8730-8
Pages: 159
Cost (USD): \$15
Level: Advanced

Table of Contents

The Game of Soccer
Attractions of the Game
Game Characteristics
The Team
The Player
Soccer Training

- Definitions and Principles
- Type of Training
- Different Phases of the Training Process
- Guiding the Training Load
- Dividing Training Schedule into Periods
- Interaction of Techniques, Tactics and Physical Fitness
- Techniques and Training
- Soccer Specific Techniques
- Technique Training
- Physical Fitness and Fitness Training
- Power and Power Training
- Speed and Speed Training
- Endurance and Endurance Training
- Flexibility and Flexibility Training
- Co-ordination and Co-ordination Training
- Tactics and Tactical Training
- Influence of Tactics
- Tactical Maneuvering Tactical Skills
- Tactical Training
- Team Tactics
- Group Tactics
- Individual Tactics
- Game Position and Tactics
- Tactics of a Standard Situation
- Tactics for the Day
- System of Play
- Style
- Equipment and Accessories
- Training Equipment
- Accessories
- Preparation for Competition
- Nutrition
- Motivation
- Overcoming Pre-Game Stress
- Warm-up and Cool Down

Review by Eric Blommer

If you are a rocket scientist like me you will probably like this book, otherwise well..., it might be pretty thick going. The author is a university professor and this book seems to be written as a textbook for teaching soccer to physical education majors. The book is full of charts and tables, even lots of process models! The book is written with typical German thoroughness. If you are willing to study it, there is some excellent information. Certainly not a beginners book, but good for the serious coach.

Review by Bill Ault

A real buffet style of a book -- a little of everything but written in an infuriating (to me in any case) point form style. It sits here on my shelf and I pull it out and try to digest it in tiny morsels and then I find it's full of tiny morsels -- just when I really get interested in a point the section ends. A very intellectual approach -- maybe I'm just not an intellectual -- it's a fascinating book but a frustrating read -- I think that's what I'm trying to say. I must also add it was an excellent help during my Level III Theory course. It's worth having on the shelf...

Title: Coaching Soccer: The Official Coaching Book of the Dutch

Soccer Association

Author:	Bert van Lingen
Publisher:	Reedswain Inc.
Published:	1997
ISBN:	1-890946-04-4
Pages:	219
Cost (USD):	\$15
Level:	Advanced

Table of Contents

What is Soccer?
Youth Soccer Players
Learning How to Play Soccer
Coaching Young Soccer Players
Reading the Game
Soccer Training - A Question of Plays
Technique in Soccer
4 Against 4 / Better Soccer, More Fun
Why 7 Against 7
Goalkeeper Training
Conditioning is Soccer Training - Soccer Training is Conditioning
Tasks and Functions
Youth Players Within the Soccer Club
Didactics and Methodology in Youth Soccer Training

Review by Eric Blommer

This is another one of those coaching books that benefits from a thorough study. As the level of coaching in the U.S. has improved, so has the sophistication of the coaching books. No more do we get the comic books with the "aw shucks, anyone can teach this stuff" attitudes. This is a serious book for serious youth coaches. The book is an official publication of the Dutch soccer association and presumably reflects their view of the game. Their emphasis for the last few years has been on using 4v4 as the primary basis for training. This book has very good sections on how to play 4v4 and how to modify it for various coaching topics. It is not easy to read the book all at once. But taking it one chapter at a time and really thinking about what they are trying to do can be very rewarding. I think maybe this book is meant to be used in conjunction with a coaching course. At any rate, if you are a more experienced coach, you may find this book to be an interesting look at how another country sets up their youth training program.

Updated 16 December 1998