

Notes from Tom Turner's U6/8 soccer coaching clinic at Avon 8/23/03
------(by Focco van den Akker)-----

1) Arrive a bit early for practice and set-up a small-sided soccer field with 2x2 flags as goals. As players trickle in, hand them colored practice shirts and let them scrimmage. This will reward the kids who arrive on time or a bit early with what they like to do most (better than threatening them with laps around the field if they arrive too late). As more and more players arrive, increase the size of the field.

As the kids are now already divided into two colored teams (say blue and red), this will help tremendously to increase the kids efforts during the training since the training will have a strong competitive flavor (both individually and scores summed up per team color).

2) Even a simple exercise such as passing to each other one-on-one becomes competitive which Tom demonstrated nicely. Rules are, for example, 2-touch only, if pass does not land in feet of other player, you lose a point. After 45-60 seconds, the passing game is stopped and kids are asked who had more points. Then the number of red vs blue winners is counted to arrive at a winner of this exercise. Then rotate the kids such that they have new opponents and repeat.

3) Focus of U6/8 training should be on dribbling, passing is a good second focus, tactical stuff comes later.

4) Sandwich approach recommended: scrimmage-type exercises (3v3, or 1v1) sandwiched with more fun-type games/drills.

5) Fun-type of games (still deliberately dribbling focused):

"Freeze Tag Game" All players in square (~10x10 yards, or relative to numbers), red has ball and tries to kick ball against blue team members below the knee. If hit, blue player freezes but can be "unfrozen" by a teammate leap-frogging/jumping over or crawling under his legs.

"Alligator Alley Game" Rectangular field with a 10-yard zone in the middle. This zone contains ~5 "alligators." The purpose is to dribble the ball across this alley and back without losing the ball to the alligators. Each counts its number of times across the alley.

"Multiple Goal Game" A big square is filled with small goals each made up of two cones spaced about 1.5 yards apart. Kids need to dribble through them for 45-60 seconds and count the number of goals scored.

Variation 1: Only the reds have the balls and two or three blues try to kick the ball out of the square (60 seconds). Again each person counts the number of goals dribbled through

or the number of balls kicked out. Balls now to blue and repeat.

Variation 2: Only reds have the balls, but the blues will try to get the ball from them and dribble through cones as well (60 seconds). Balls now to blue and repeat.

6) Soccer Ladder Game

1vs or 1vs2 or 2vs2: Depending on the number of kids, have many small fields with just 2x2 cones as goals spread out in a regular fashion (no side lines), example of 4 little fields with just the goals/cones and players:

```
  x x      x x
   R       R
   B       B
  x x      x x
```

```
  x x      x x
   B       B
   R       R
  x x      x x
```

Put in each little field one red and one blue team member (or 2 depending on the numbers). Have them play against each other for 1 minute. Count the number of reds who won their little match vs the number of blue who won. Rotate the blues counter clockwise and keep the reds fixed and repeat until everyone has played each member of the other team.

7) Finish practice with a 3v3, or possibly 4v4, with the length of the field around 35-30 yards (Tom mentioned that the field should be not too big and that the goals should be quite wide to stimulate shooting). Coach can play on the field in a support position behind the person that has position of the ball.

8) Additional ideas for scrimmage:

Add four goals instead of two goals; each team defends and attacks two goals.

Put goals along the width of the field instead of the usual length.

Dribble the ball over the long side or over the short side to score

Use target players (better if adults) along the long side or along the short side.

9) Goalie training (Note that kids should not be dedicated goalie at this age):

Set up two 4-6 yard wide goals about 6-10 yards apart. One red player and one blue player is in front of their goal. Red tries to kick the ball past the blue goalkeeper to score. Change from striker to goalkeeper every other shot.

Practice long kicking and controlling: spread the two goals now much further apart (20-25 yards, depending on the age). Rule: 2-touch only, red player will kick ball as far possible to other blue player who only has two touches to prevent the ball from going in his goal and to return the ball to score in the other goal.

10) Nice way to end the practice: kids all line up hand in hand and slowly bow to their parents who will give them a well deserved applause.

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