



Northville Soccer Association

U4, U5 & U6

Recreational Coaches Manual

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Introduction

The Northville Soccer Association would like to thank you for volunteering to coach a soccer team. We usually have two kinds of volunteer coaches, the first is the coach who volunteered when they signed their child up to play, the second is the reluctant volunteer who received the famous soccer club phone call, which usually goes "Mrs. Jones, we have 7 players, including your son, who will not be able to play unless we find a coach. Do you know anyone who might be interested?" Rest assured that we are not the only soccer club in the United States who make this call. We realize that not every volunteer coach has had any experience of playing or coaching soccer, but we believe that with a little help you can do a great job and make a difference in every one of your players soccer development.

In order to make your coaching experience a positive one, and help you in the areas required to develop your players, we have put this coach's booklet together. This booklet will cover every facet of coaching a U4, U5 or U6 soccer team from how to put a practice plan together, fun activities to include in your practice plans and how to coaching in a game situation. It will also cover other aspects of coaching at the club such as holding a parent meeting and answering some frequently asked questions.

As we mentioned above we hope this manual covers every aspect of coaching but if you do have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact Northville Soccer Association for further help.

Throughout every chapter of this booklet, coaching a U4, U5 or U6 team comes down to one important element, FUN! If you can make sure that every aspect of your player's soccer experience is FUN then they will come back and play over and over again. Also, if you can communicate this aspect to the parents and reiterate, and make them understand that soccer at this age is not about winning but about FUN you will have a great coaching experience.

Northville Soccer Association Philosophy

The Northville Soccer Association strives to make every member's soccer experience positive. We are here for the children and their development as soccer players. Every team member must play at least 50% of every game. We also stress to U4 to U6 coaches that they try to make everything fun based from practice sessions to games.

Success: At these ages do not try to measure your success on the results of your games but how many of your players return to play soccer the following season. In fact, at Northville we are not concerned with results and no score or record should be taken at this age group. If your team is dominating another please try to rotate players to stop your team running up a large score.

We recommend that this philosophy, as well as your personal coaching philosophy is emphasized to your parents before the season starts. We recommend that before your first practice session, hold a team meeting and explain to parents your goals for the season as well as the soccer clubs beliefs.

Practice should take place once a week and last for at least forty-five minutes but no more than one hour. This should be enough time to hold practice; it will enable you to keep the concentration of your players and focus on a specific activity. If you plan correctly the time allotted should allow for a warm up, at least two drills and a small-sided game (see coaches organization).

Q: How does a novice coach know how to implement the club philosophies?

A: This is only done through coaching education! Please refer to the U4 to U6 Coaching Badge section of this manual.

Understanding Your Players

The first important aspect of coaching any team at any ages is to understand your players. In order to maximize a player's learning experience and performance we need to understand the make up of our players. Why are they playing soccer? What are the physical differences between players? What are their physical boundaries? What are their psychological differences? What are their cognitive limits?

Why a U5 or U6 child plays soccer?

There are usually a few reasons why a child plays soccer at these ages. These are:

Soccer is fun.

An older sibling plays.

Friends are playing.

Parents sign them up without their knowledge.

Whatever the reason for playing all children are looking for the same outcome. They want to play games (activities) that are FUN, have success in these activities, possibly make new friends and finally show their parents what they can do.

Psychomotor Characteristics

At these ages children are very similar in both size and weight, obviously with a few exceptions. This age is marked with a slow but steady increase in height and weight, which aids their ability to learn how to use and grow into their bodies. They are in the fundamental movement phase of life, where locomotive activities such as running and jumping, as well as stabilizing activities such as one-foot balancing and stopping can be achieved (please refer to the ? section to find out what soccer skills are recommended for these ages).

Players at this age have a high energy level but only for short periods of time. Breaks in games and activities should be given often but for short periods so they can continue at the same high energy level. Take care not to overstress them as too much stress can hinder proper growth.

How do you recognize when players need a break? There are a few characteristics you can look for, such as shortness of breath, profuse perspiration, players are off task (more than usual) and finally they ask. Recognize the changes in weather, warm compared to cool days. Give breaks for one to two minutes and then get them back into the activities. Hopefully this will keep the energy level of your practices high, which makes it more enjoyable for the players.

Cognitive Characteristics

A child's thinking and perception at this age is limited and is characterized as 'concrete'. Their main focus is usually on themselves or tied into one concrete object, for instance the soccer ball. Characteristics of a U5 to U6 player are:

Children at this age have difficulty sharing; they want the ball for themselves.

No concerns for team concepts.

Short attention spans.

Prefer playing to watching.

Parents have the biggest influence.

Need lots of positive reinforcement and praise.

Taking these characteristics and referring them to soccer, there does not seem to be a great match. Soccer is a sport that requires players to concentrate on numerous tasks, cues and stimuli at the same time. For instance, a player dribbling should have their head up, weighting up the situation while making a decision about which is the best option. At the U4, U5 and U6 level this is too complex and so our expectations need to be simplified. Thus coaches at these age groups should focus on simple, fun based activities where every player has a ball and can find success. Please refer to the coaching philosophy section of the booklet for more detail.

Psycho Emotional Characteristics

This aspect concerns the relationships children at these ages can build. As mention above they are 'ME' orientated, which means that they have difficulty sharing, no concerns for team and are prone to exaggerate their own needs. Give players plenty of positive reinforcement and praise. Keep them moving and give them lots of space to move in, see the activities section.

Coaching a U4, U5 or U6 Recreational Soccer Team

What implications does this information have when coaching a team at these ages?

Soccer Parents

Parents have the biggest influence on whether players play soccer or not. Communication is key. Always keep parents updated about practice and game times, changes to schedules, Northville Soccer Associations philosophy for these ages as well as your personal coaching philosophy.

Remembering that parents have a huge influence on their child's development we must make sure that the feedback parents give to players, referees and coaches during and after the game is positive. To ensure this is the case, please share these thoughts with your parents at your first coaches meeting:

1. Support your child: Remember to encourage your child and the whole team. Encourage your children to work hard in order to improve skills as well as emphasizing good sportsmanship. Implement a philosophy that hard work and enjoyment is more important than victory.
2. Always be positive: It is important to become not only just a role model but a positive role model. Always try to applaud good play from both teams.
3. Remember children just want to have fun: It is your child that is playing soccer and not you. Encourage your child to create their own goals and support them throughout. Try not to impose your own standards and goals on them, let them play the game for themselves. Did you know that 72% of children would rather play for a losing team than ride the bench for a winning team.
4. Reinforce positive behavior: Nobody likes to make mistakes and if your child does remember it is all part of learning. Always encourage your child's efforts and only point out the good things that your child has accomplished.

5. Don't be a sideline coach or referee: Coaches and referees are usually parents like you or children like your son or daughter. Coaches at the club are volunteers who take time out of their busy schedules to help make your children's soccer experience a positive one. Most of the referees at the club are boys and girls that play or have played at the club; they need as much support as children. Therefore we ask you to refrain from coaching or refereeing from the sidelines.

Goals as a U4, U5 or U6 Recreational Coach

The soccer club is striving to create continuity throughout the Recreational program as well as make sure that all its members have a positive soccer experience. A great way to start this procedure is to make sure that all our players are receiving good coaching on topics that are age appropriate. Below are the areas we have identified as topics that are appropriate to your age groups, given the physiological and psychological state of the players:

- **Coordination**
- **Balance**
- **Ball Mastery**
- **Dribbling Technique**
- **Stopping and Turning**

These fundamental techniques were identified because they will introduce your players to the essential techniques required to play soccer. Without mastering these fundamentals more advanced soccer skills, such as advanced techniques and tactics, cannot be learned properly. In order to introduce, and indirectly teach, these fundamentals we have enclosed a number of fun activities that you can incorporate into your practices. Please see the activities section.

Practice / Game Day Preparation & Organization

Practice / Game Day organization is one of the most important attributes of a successful coach. This aspect can make or break a season in the eyes of a player and a parent. A coach's ability to move through well thought out and fun activities without players standing around is a very important attribute at U4, U5 and U6 ages. It reduces the amount of time young players have to misbehave or lose focus. Follow the suggested progression below to get the best results. As you become more experienced this aspect of coaching will become easier and easier.

Session Topic

Every training session should have a theme. For instance, 'Balance & Coordination'. This should be your first decision when planning a training session. Focusing every practice on a specific theme is a great habit to get into and this aspect will become more and more important as your children get older. Try to change the focus of your sessions weekly, it will keep practice fresh and your players will get more from the season if they are challenged (indirectly) with new skills.

Choosing Activities

- Choose activities that will focus on your session's theme. Well thought out activities will indirectly teach your players the session's theme.
- Choose activities that will allow for the ratio 1 player to 1 ball. These types of activities will make sure that your players get a lot of touches on the ball. NO LINE DRILLS!!!
- Activities: Please refer to the activities section of this manual when planning your sessions.

Session Plan

Once you have activities put them into a practice plan (see practice plan example section). When placing your activities in your plan make sure that they follow each other in a smooth progression, from easy to most difficult, starting with a warm up and ending in your 3 v 3 game day scrimmage.

Arriving at the field

Be there first! Being the first person at the field sets a great example to your parents and players. Be there to welcome them to the game.

Practice Session

- 30 Minutes to Game Time: As soon as your players arrive at the field start them in the planned warm up. As players arrive have them join in the activity and keep everyone moving.
- 20 Minutes to Game Time: Once all your players have arrived and are involved in the warm up look to move into your first activity. Without giving your players a break move into your first activity.
- 13 Minutes to Game Time: Players have been constantly moving for at least 15 minutes and it should be time for a break. Give your players a water break and prepare for your next activity.
- 10 Minutes to Game Time: Finish the water break and begin your last activity.
- 4 Minutes to Game Time: Finish your last activity, have your question and answer session about the activities and prepare for the game, allowing your players to have a brief water break in between.

Player Rotation

Before every game have an idea of which players are going to start the game as substitutes. Keep a record of who has started on and off the field for future reference. Rotate these players every week and make sure that all your players started a game on the field.

After the game

Make sure you congratulate your players after every game, win or lose.

Coaching Styles & Guidelines

Coaching players of these ages is very unique and so the guidelines we give on how to coach are very different than at other age groups.

Coaching style refers to the philosophy that a coach uses in game situations and during practice. Coaches very rarely think about the style they use to coach, let alone the impact this has on the players they are coaching. Whatever style you chose or feel comfortable with it is important to remember that the needs of the players are what we are here to serve and not our own agenda. We believe that the coach should adopt and implement a coaching style, both in games and during practice that is player centered.

Read through this section and evaluate your own coaching style. Identify if in fact you are coaching in the correct manner and fulfilling the emotional needs of the players.

Practice Coaching

Coaching during practice at these ages is a difficult undertaking, you are dealing with young children who have very short attention spans and that are only concerned with themselves. Trying to teach these children simple soccer techniques or keeping them spread out during scrimmages are almost impossible tasks. Our responsibilities at these age groups are limited to teaching basic motor skills (with soccer skills thrown in), such as running, stopping and turning. In order to teach these skills we must introduce techniques and motor skills in a very indirect manner, through fun activities. We must keep all activities and scrimmages fun, if soccer isn't fun for these children why would they come back to play again.

When coaching during practice there are certain guidelines you can follow to ensure you have a successful practice:

1. Introducing Activities

This aspect is very important. Introducing activities should be done through an explanation and demonstration. Explanation of activities should be done as quickly as possible, for example have all players sit on their soccer balls (soccer chickens) while you explain the activity quickly and precisely. The only aspects that should be explained while players are

sitting are the boundaries and the general rules, anything more than this and you will lose players' attentions. The majority of activities should be explained through demonstration, most players at this age learn better by doing rather than listening. Place players in their start positions for the activity then actually demonstrate the movements, actions or rules of the game. After the demonstration let the players try the activity, if they are doing the activity incorrectly stop them and explain the activity again while demonstrating what you want them to do.

2. Making Coaching Points.

At this age it is important that the activity you are playing do most of the teaching, indirect learning. When stopping players and make coaching points at this age do it in the form of a question; try to avoid stopping players, barking instruction or giving long lectures. Questions involve the players in the process and will distract them from getting bored while you talk.

For example, introducing dribbling technique:

- Which parts of the foot can we use to dribble? Inside or Laces.
- When we dribble should we take big touches or little touches? Little touches.
- When we dribble should we always look down at the ball or should we try to lift our head up? Head up.

When asking questions, be sure to keep them simple and short. Also, make sure that all players know the answer. I suggest making all the players scream the answer together.

3. Positive Reinforcement.

Keep everything you say to players positive. Make sure to praise everything that the player's do related to soccer, encourage good passing, dribbling, turning, stopping, etc. Players at these ages consider themselves 'successful' if they are giving their best effort and become physically exhausted.

4. Crowd Control.

Always try to have an assistant with you when you practice. This way one person can be coaching and the other can be controlling players who are having difficulty with the activities or boundaries.

5. Water Breaks.

Remember players at these ages are very explosive, they have very high energy levels but only for a short periods of time. Give players short water breaks often throughout your training sessions. Also take into consideration the weather, hot days take more breaks and cold days try to keep players moving for longer periods.

6. Final Remarks.

At the end of every practice finish with your final words. Have all the players sit on their soccer balls (soccer chickens) and answer questions on the day's activities. While they answer the questions you demonstrate the technique. For example, when we pass the ball which part of the foot should we use? Inside. When the players answer this question you should activity demonstrate an inside of the foot pass.

Game Day Coaching

As I mentioned earlier coaching at this age is very unique. At the U4, U5 and U6 age groups you will be acting as a referee and coach at the same time. Your role during a game environment can be defined in two words 'facilitator' & 'motivator'. You are their too guide your players through the game but not give any real instruction of what you want players to do. For example:

DON'TS: 'Billy get the ball and pass it to Andrew'. Too much information; players at this cannot process this type of instruction nor do they have the ability to complete the skill required.

DO'S: Encourage players through the game with positive words like 'good job', 'well done', 'great shot', etc.

As a motivator you are there to try and keep players engaged in the game. Always start and finish games with a team chant or cheer. As you are refereeing the game encourage wherever possible. Do not concentrate solely on the better more gifted athletes who are having success but also on peripheral players who need that extra encouragement to get involved in the game.

As a coach a big part of your responsibility on game day is to enforce the rules of soccer; boundaries, throw-in's, corners, free kicks, etc.

On restarts (kick-ins, corner, goal-kick, free kicks and penalty kicks) I am a big proponent of the one pass rule. The one pass rule allows the player with the ball to complete the restart and no player from the opposing team is allowed to move until it has been completed. The restart is completed once a player, from the same team touches the ball. This is not a rule enforced by NSA but it allows the player taking the corner or throw-in to have success. Success is very important in soccer, it build's confidence and also allows for enjoyment. Before the game both coaches must agree on this rule and enforce it through the game.

Boundaries: Is the ball in or out? I would use common sense's on this aspect of the game. If the ball is just over the line I would let play continue. If the ball is 2 yards or more over the line I would re-start play. In the U4, U5 and U6 game there will be no contentious decisions, the ball will be either 10-yards out of play with all the players following it OR it will be on the field.

Free-Kicks, etc: Will there be any rough play at this age? At these ages players should not maliciously foul another player. Players will get hurt during a game of soccer but 99% of the time it will be because a child is uncoordinated and bumps or accidentally kicks another player. Let play go as mush as possible, obviously if there is a players hurt take the necessary action. The way I would handle it, is to allow the coach of that team attend to the player while the other coach referee's that game. If more than one player is hurt, stop the game and attend to the players.

Remember, have fun with game – if you're having fun coach then your players will be having fun playing. This is a good measure of whether your players are having fun or not.

Practice & Game Tips

You will encounter many difficulties and problems when coaching a U4, U5 or U6 team. Below are just a few of the problems you may encounter and some possible solutions:

PROBLEM: Probably the most difficult aspect of coaching a U4, U5 or U6 team is trying to keep the children's attention during games and training sessions.

SOLUTION: Understanding your players, this is the key to the problem. As mentioned earlier children at this age like to do activities rather than watching and prefer short explanations rather than long detailed discussions. Be prepared before games and practices, have your activities set and ready to go before your players get there. Also, make sure all your activities include every player has a ball and it is fun based. Then as soon as your players show up put them straight into your first activity without a long explanation and make changes, to rules and boundaries, during the game but only if required.

PROBLEM: Another challenge will be trying to stop players bunching during games.

SOLUTION: Try not to worry about this aspect of coaching; at this age trying to Keep your player's from bunching is impossible. Again look at your players, their focus is on themselves and a concrete object (the ball) trying to keep them separated and playing positions at this age group takes away from their fun.

PROBLEM: Players do not like the new activities you have tried to introduce and want to play the same games over and over again.

SOLUTION: Playing the same game over and over is OK but repetition will get tiresome for yourself and eventually your players. To solve this problem try to incorporate new skills or rules into the same game. Also, always have a list of activities on hand just in case players do not react well to anything new.

PROBLEM: Players do not play as a team.

SOLUTION: Again know your players, at this age they are focused on themselves and they are trying to impress to people who mean most to them, their parents. Do not have great expectations of your team playing together as a team. This aspect will not come into affect until U9 and above.

PROBLEM: 'Billy' seems like he does not want to play, he picks daisies during practice & games.

SOLUTION: During practice activities there is a simple solution, only do activities where every player has a ball. During your scrimmage at the end of practice throw two or three soccer balls in, this way all players have a better chance of touching the ball. Games at the weekend, this is a little trickier, try to have 'Billy' take throw-ins or dead ball kicks, or just try some extra encouragement.

PROBLEM: You do not have enough soccer balls at practice.

SOLUTION: This is a difficult situation but one that can be easily resolved. When working on dribbling activities use pairs, these players take it in turn to use the soccer ball. Good for relay races and / or tagging games. If you only have 1 or 2 soccer balls, use small-sided games for practice. It is not the best situation for practice but it solves the problem.

PROBLEM: How to pick who starts the game.

SOLUTION: At these ages you should not always look to field your best team, players should get an equal amount of playing time and should have a chance to start the game. Keep a record of which players you have started and make sure all players are given this opportunity.

When experiencing these problems, or others you may encounter, remember that all players are different. Some players are more advanced than others are both physically and mentally. Every player you coach will be different so don't expect all players to react and learn in the same way.

Remember as long as your players are enjoying their soccer experience and having fun then you have done a great job. A great way of evaluating your coaching is to watch how many of your players return the next season to play soccer.

Activities Section



In this section of the manual you find multiple activities that you can use to plan your training sessions. Each activity is labeled with the soccer topic it will concentrate on. Make sure you check out the NSA web-site for additional activities and session plan examples.

Coaching Points

As mentioned earlier in the manual when making coaching points at this age they should be given in question form. Below are some coaching points and examples of how to phrase these points in question form.

What surface should players dribble the ball with?

- To dribble in a straight line players should use the outside of their laces to touch the ball.
- To change direction while dribbling players should use the inside of the foot, outside of the foot or sole of the foot.

Q: What part of the foot should we use to dribble in a straight line? A: Laces.

How do we keep the ball close when dribbling?

- It is essential that the ball remain close, every time a player takes a step they should be able to touch the ball. Tempo should be touch / step, touch / step, etc.

Q: Should we take big touches or little touches when we dribble? A: Little.

Idea: Ask players to imagine tying a short piece of string around the ball and their foot. Now players must dribble without breaking the string.

What surfaces can we use to stop the soccer ball?

Players can use most surfaces of the foot to stop the ball, including inside, outside and sole of the foot. The simplest surface to stop the ball for each age group is:

- U4 Player = Sole of the foot.
- U5 Player = Sole of the foot.
- U6 Player = Sole & Inside.

When players stop their ball they must be balanced and have control of their body mechanics. The more practice stopping and starting with the ball the better this will become.

How do we stay balanced when dribbling?

- When dribbling keep your knees slightly bent with your body weight over the ball.

Q: When we dribble should we have straight legs or our knees bent?

A: Knees bent.

How do look up when dribbling?

- Head up when dribbling – this should be done so players can see attacking options around the field & defenders. Rhythm; touch ball, look up, touch ball, look up.

Q: When dribbling should we always look at the ball or try to get our heads up and look around?

A: Head Up.

NOTE: Do not expect miracles from your players. Players at these ages will not be able to execute all the coaching points given. Although players will not be able to execute the technique they can learn the correct answers to the questions. How will this help? This is called 'imprinting', it will help these players as they grow older and gain control of their body mechanics.

Coaching Topics

Dribbling

This is the technique used by players to maneuver the ball through tight areas where defenders could, and are trying to steal the ball. When dribbling players should keep the ball very close so they have total control and if required could stop the ball, turn with the ball, pass the ball, shoot the ball or do a move with the ball. Without total control players cannot execute any of these actions.

Ball Mastery

Ball Mastery is a player's skill with the ball. It includes ball manipulation with all surfaces of the feet; sole, inside, outside and laces. This topic is encompassing. With improved ball work your players will find it easier and easier to deal with the ball. With continued work, players will gradually become better and better, which will enable them to accomplish more advanced skills at older age groups.

Balance & Coordination

These aspects are very important to a soccer player. The more work a player does with a soccer player the better these aspects will become; again, indirect learning through repetition and fun games.

Stopping and Starting

A player's ability to start and stop the ball at will is important because it improves control over the ball and a player's body mechanics. Will a player use this in a game? Not at U4, U5 & U6 but it will help work on other aspects of the game, such as dribbling technique, ball mastery and balance & coordination.

All of these topics intermingle with each other, focusing and working on one topic will indirectly improve another. Working on dribbling will improve balance & coordination, and stopping & starting. Ball mastery work will improve balance & coordination, and dribbling technique.

Remember these topics are very important for your players and it is essential that you stick to these topics throughout these age groups. These are soccer topics that will allow your players to have success. If a player has success it will keep them motivated and interested. If you stray from these topics and introduce topics that are too advanced for these age groups then your players will lose interest and stop having fun!

Variety is also very important and a key element in keeping practice Fun. There are a number of activities in this section but they will not be enough for 6 seasons of soccer coaching! How do I find more activities? Check out our web-site, here you find links to new activities and session plans that will enable you to vary your practice plans.



Activity Description

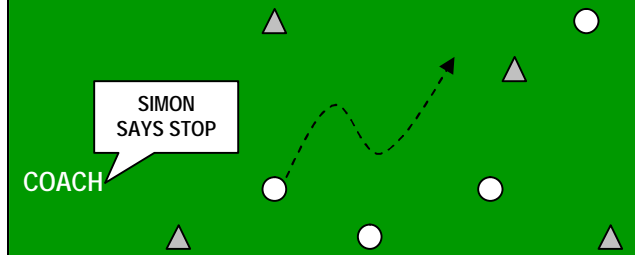
Simon Says – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Activity: Players dribble around the area and react to the coaches commands. Players should only react to the commands that the coach starts by saying 'Simon Says'. For Instance, don't react to 'Stop the Ball', react to 'Simon Says Stop the Ball'!!

Make sure to be creative with the commands that you give, for example: head on the ball, elbow on the ball, sit on the ball, dribble with one foot, slow down, go full speed, etc, etc, etc. Make commands up as you go along.

Diagram

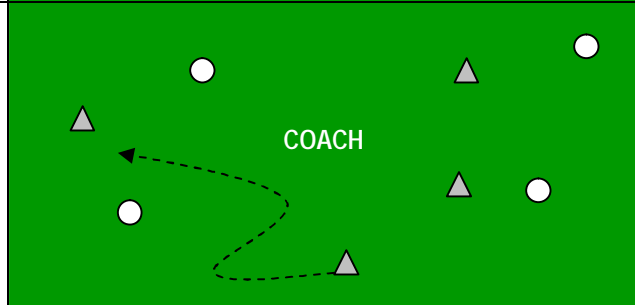


Old MacDonald – Dribbling & Ball Mastery

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Activity: Players should start by dribbling around the area. The coach should lead them in a chorus of 'Old McDonald had a farm', when they get to 'on that farm they had some', the coach should come up with an animal. When he says the animal all the players should do an animal impersonation!

Animal Impersonations – Chicken: players sit on the ball. Frogs: Players put the ball between their legs and jump up and down. Pigs: players should get on their hands and knees and push the ball with their noses. Kangaroo: Players should put their ball under their shirt and jump around.

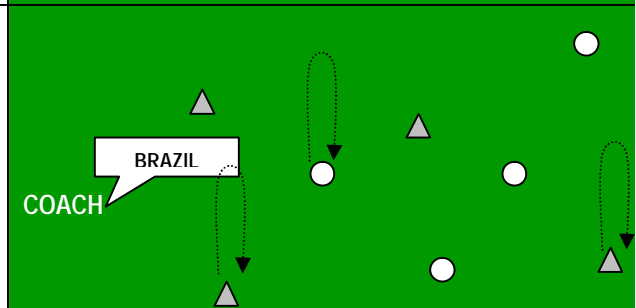


World Cup – Dribbling & Ball Mastery

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a soccer ball.

Activity: Players should start the game by dribbling around the area. When the coach shouts the name of a country the players should react as quickly as possible and do the movement designated to that country. Commands could include Argentina – players continue to dribble, Brazil – players should throw the ball in the air and catch it, USA – players should pretend they know a trick move and complete it, England – players should bounce the ball off their forehead, Spain – players should do toe taps on the ball, etc.

Again be creative with what skills you would like players to do.

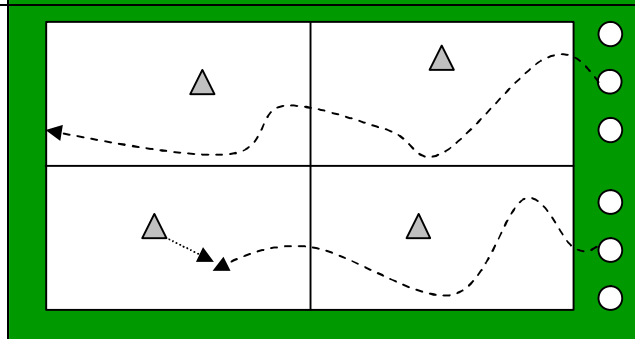


Gauntlet – Dribbling and Balance & Coordination

Area: 20 x 20-yards in 10-yard grids.

Organization: Place a player, without a ball into each grid. These players should be on their hands and feet, like a crab! Place the other players, at least two, with soccer balls on the end line.

Activity: The players with the soccer balls are trying to dribble through the crab players to the opposite end line. When a crab player touches their soccer ball, they become a crab. Continue until no players remain. Continue with another game but make sure to use new crab players.



Activity Description

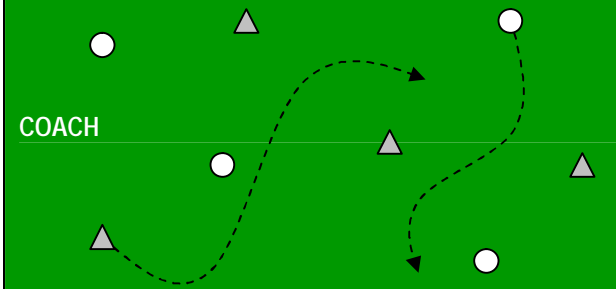
Red Light / Green Light – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each Player has a ball and finds a space inside the grid. When the coach shouts 'GREEN LIGHT' players begin to dribble around the area. When the coach shouts 'RED LIGHT' players stop the ball using the sole of the foot, then keep this foot on the ball and put their arms out to the side for balance. Continue.

Fun Progressions:

- 'YELLOW LIGHT' players do another command, be creative! For instance, players must put both knees on the ball.
- 'BLUE LIGHT' players pick the ball up, hold it on their heads and run around making as much noise as possible. Like a police siren!!
- 'MONSTER TRUCK' when the coach shouts "here comes the monster truck", he/she pretends to steal players soccer balls!!

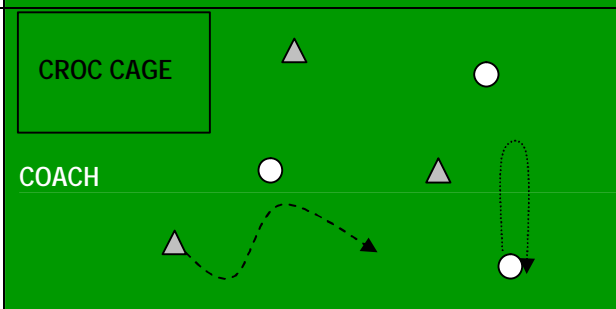
Diagram



Captain Hook – Dribbling & Ball Mastery

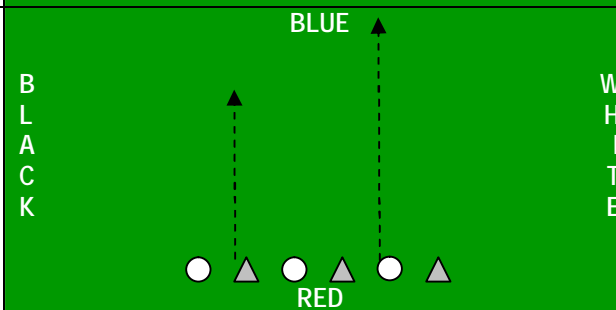
Area: 20 x 20-yards with a 5 x 5-yard space in one corner, CROCODILE CAGE. Each player has a ball and finds a space inside the grid. To start the game the coach gives simple instructions to the players, such as 'START' & 'STOP'. To progress the game the game add these commands:

- 'SCRUB THE DECK' players move the ball back and forth with the sole of the foot.
- 'HOIST THE MAIN SAIL' players pick the ball up, throw it into the air, catch it and then continue to dribble.
- 'CROC ATTACK' coach pretends to steal players soccer balls; in order to get away the players must dribble into the CROC CAGE.



Power Rangers – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Label each side line with a Power Rangers name. Each player has a soccer ball. Players start on one line, when the coach shouts another power rangers name the player dribble and stop the ball on that line. Introduce the lines one by one, this way the players can learn the lines easily. Once players learn the lines, the coach can shout multiple lines and the players must follow the commands. Other command – 'Morphin Time' – players extend arms shout 'Its MorphinTime", then place the ball on their heads and run around making as much noise as possible.



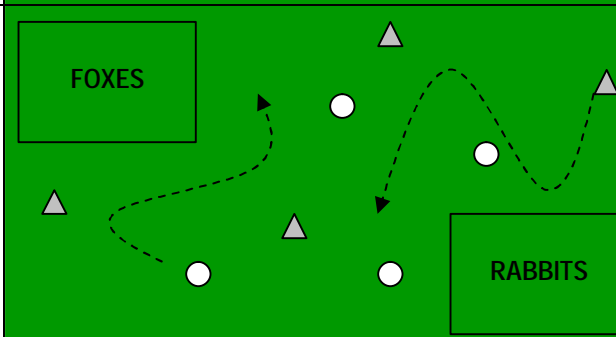
Foxes & Rabbits – Dribbling and Balance & Coordination

Area: 20 x 20-yards with two 5 x 5-yard areas – on opposite sides of the grid, label one foxes and the other rabbits. Split players into two teams, name one the foxes and the other the rabbits.

Activity 1: Players begin the game by dribbling around the area, when the coach shouts 'GO' teams must dribble into their area and stop the ball. The team who gets into the area first is the winner and gains 1000 points.

Activity 2: This time the coach shouts either 'foxes get the rabbits' or 'rabbits get the foxes', when this happens the players from one team try to tag the player from the opposite team before they can dribble into their areas and to safety. When a player is tagged they join the other team.

NOTE: Before declaring a winner in any game, stop and move onto the next activity or give a water break.



Activity Description

Cops & Robbers – Dribbling and Balance & Coordination

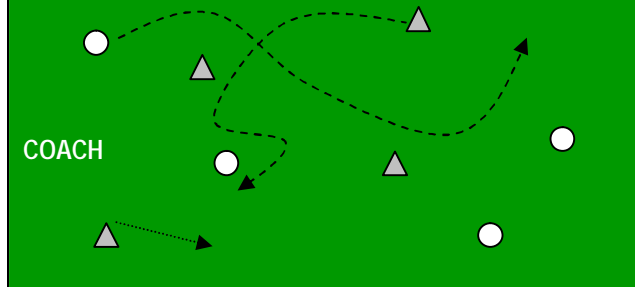
Area: 15 x 15-yards. Each player needs a bib and a soccer ball. Players should tuck their bib in the side of their shorts. Players with a bib are called 'Robbers' and the coach is the 'Cop'.

Activity: Players begin by dribbling around the area. The Cop is then released, start the Cop without a soccer ball. The Cops job is to grab the Robbers bib. Once this happens the Robber becomes a Cop and helps the coach steal bibs.

After all the Robbers have been caught the coach chooses one of the players to start of as the Cop. Continue.

IDEA: Play the game initially without soccer balls, so the players get used to the game. Once players are used to the game add soccer balls.

Diagram

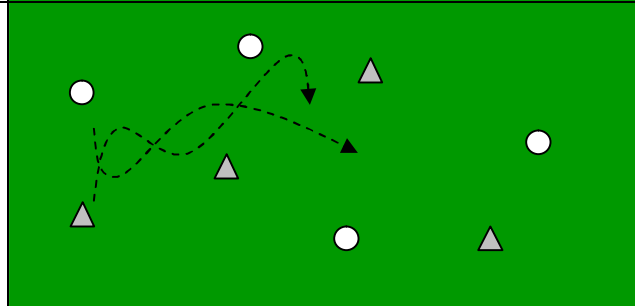


Freeze Tag - Dribbling

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Split players into two teams. Start game without soccer balls.

Activity: Designate one team as a tagging team and the other as dribblers. Players on the tagging team are trying to tag the dribbling players below the knee. Once a player has been tagged they stand still with their legs open and holding the ball above their heads. In order to be freed a teammate must crawl through their legs. When all players have been tagged the game is over. Switch roles.

Once players are used to the game add the soccer balls.

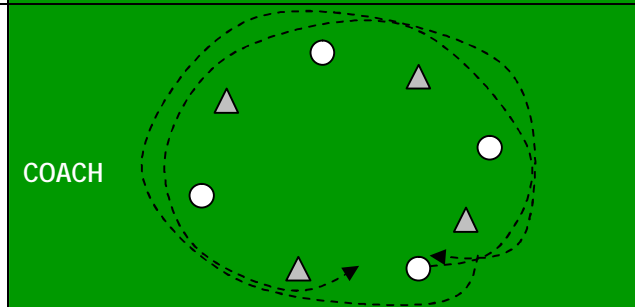


Circle of Doom – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: Circle.

Activity: Players sit in the circle with their soccer balls. One player is chosen to be the dribbler. The dribbler walks around the circle dribbling the ball, when he tags one of the players sitting down it starts the race. The two players race in opposite directions around the outside of the area, the first player back to the open spot sits down. The player without a spot continues the game.

Again, start without the soccer ball to introduce the game.



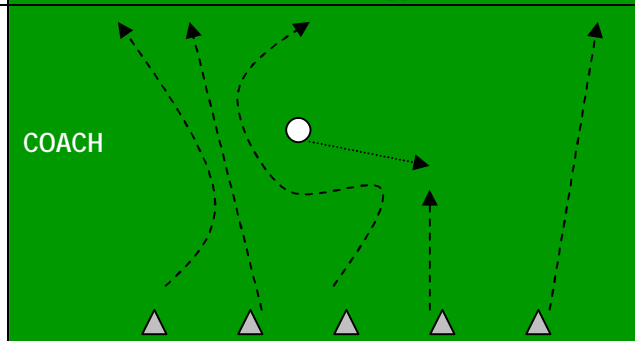
British Bulldog - Dribbling

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a soccer ball.

Activity: Players line up on one end line with their soccer balls, these players are 'POST MEN'. The BULLDOG starts in the center of the area. Upon the shout 'POST MEN ARE YOU READY' the game starts. The post men are trying to dribble to the opposite end line without being tagged. The 'BULLDOG' is playing with out a soccer ball and is trying to tag players before the reach the other side. Once a player has been tagged they become another bulldog.

Activity Progression: In order to catch the post men the bulldog has to steal a player's soccer ball and kick it out of the area.

NOTE: If a player dribbles out of the area they become a bulldog.



Activity Description

Coach Says! – Dribbling, Ball Mastery and Balance & Coordination.

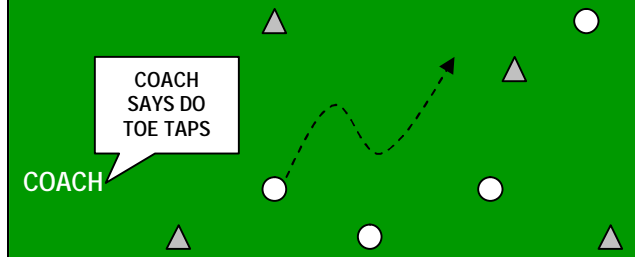
Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Activity: Same game as 'Simon Says' but the coach adds 'Coach Says' before players have to complete an action. For Instance, don't react to 'Stop the Ball', react to 'Coach Says Stop the Ball'!!

Make sure to focus on ball mastery actions when giving commands:

- U4 players: Stopping the ball with sole of the foot, toe taps on the ball with both feet and knocking the ball between feet with insides.
- U5 players: Same as above. Expect players to do these actions a little faster.
- U6 players: Same as above. Include stopping the ball with the inside of the foot.

Diagram



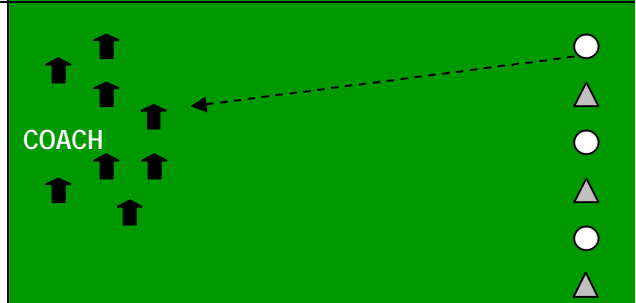
Black Beards Treasure – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting.

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Organization: Coach stands on one end line with his back to the players, surrounded by cones (this could also be water bottles, bags, etc). Players are spread along the opposite end line with soccer balls.

Activity: It's the player's job to dribble down the area and steal a piece of Black Beards Treasure. Players can only dribble when Black Beard has his back to them. As soon as Black Beard turns around, all players must freeze with their foot on top of the soccer ball. If a player is still dribbling when Black Beard turns around they must do a fun punishment and then restart from the beginning.

FUN PUNISHMENT: 'Australian Push Up' – Players lie on their backs while pushing their arms and legs in the air!

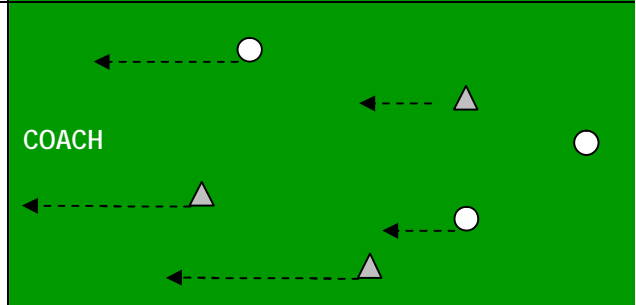


How Long's Left Coach – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a soccer ball.

Organization: Coach stands on one end line with his back to the players, surrounded by cones (this could also be water bottles, bags, etc). Players are spread along the opposite end line with soccer balls.

Activity: The players shout 'How Long's Left Coach'. The coach gives them a time, for instance 3 minutes! The coach shouts out a loud 1 – 2 – 3 and turns around to face the players. The players must have the ball stopped with their sole of the foot before the coach turns around. If, when the coach turns around, there are players still in motion the coach should make them do a fun punishment and send them back to the start. Players are trying to get past the coach and to the opposite end line.

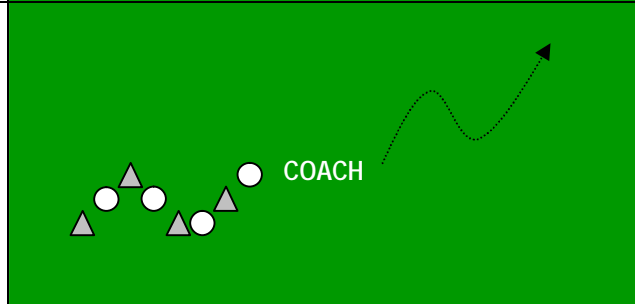


Follow the Leader! – Dribbling, Ball Mastery and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards with cones spread randomly around the area. Each player needs a soccer ball.

Organization: Players should start behind the coach in a long line.

Activity: Players must try to follow in a line behind the coach and copy what the coach is doing. The coach should start with basic's, the progress to more difficult skills and also through in some fun aspects. For example; coach walks with the ball around the cones; coach dribbles in a circle around different cones; coach picks up the ball, throws it in the air and catches it; coach shoots at a goal; coach does a forward role with the ball; etc.



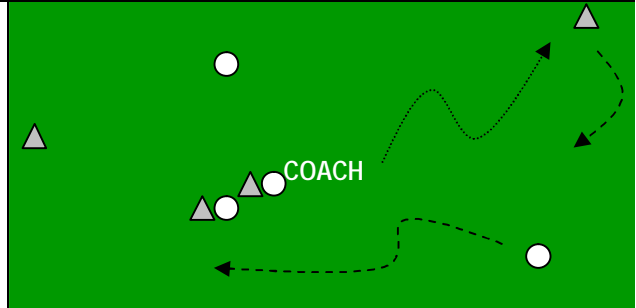
Activity Description

Link Tag – Dribbling and Stopping & Turning

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Activity: Players start by dribbling around the area. The coach is 'it!' It's the coach's job to tag players as they dribble around the area. If the coach tags a player or a player dribbles out of the area, that player has to link the coach's arm and they work together to tag the other players. The coach should not look to tag the weakest player but must vary who he tags first. Continue. The game ends when only one player remains.

Diagram



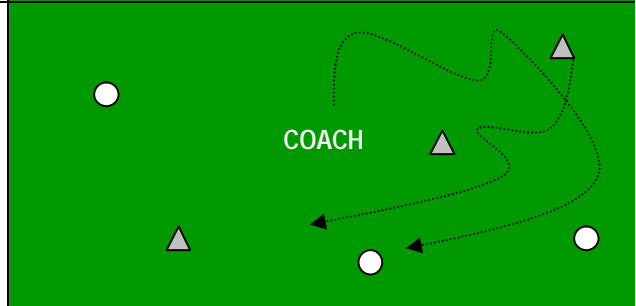
Pac Man – Dribbling and Ball Mastery

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a ball.

Organization: Players place their ball just outside the area. The coach starts as Pac Man with his soccer ball.

Activity: Pac Man is trying to tag players. Once a player has been tagged they retrieve their soccer ball and help Pac Man catch the other players. Continue until only one player remains.

NOTE: To make the game easier reduce the size of the grid.

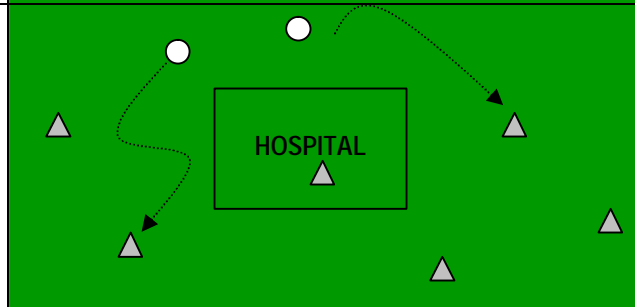


Hospital Tag – Dribbling and Stopping & Starting

Area: 20 x 20-yards with a 5 x 5-yard box in the center. Each player needs a ball.

Organization: The square in the center of the grid is the hospital. The coach is the doctor and stands inside the hospital. Choose two players to be tagger's and the rest of the players should spread out within the area.

Activity: The tagger's are trying to tag players who are dribbling around the area. Players who are tagged must hold that body part as they dribble around the area. For instance, a player is tagged on the knee, that player must hold their knee while dribbling around the area. In order to be healed a player must dribble inside the hospital to see the doctor, the doctor can either choose to cure the ailment or not! The game gets amusing when players have been tagged multiple times.



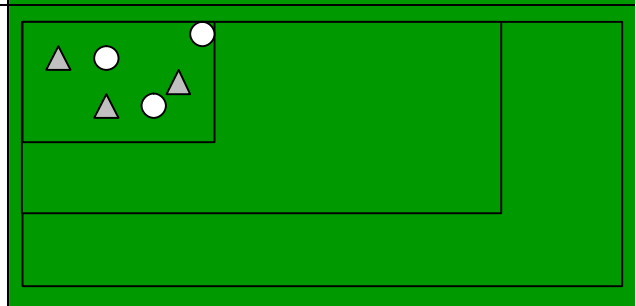
Hee Bee Dee Gee Bees – Balance & Coordination and Dribbling

Area: 20 x 20-yards, with a 10 x 10-yards and 5 x 5 yard square placed inside. As shown.

Activity:

- 5 x 5-yard area: No ball! Players start by walking around without bumping into each other. Progress to jogging.
- 10 x 10-yard area: No ball. Players start by jogging around the area without bumping into each other. Progress to full speed.
- 20 x 20-yard area: Players are given a soccer ball. Start with walking, then jogging and finally full speed. No collisions allowed.

In the smaller areas add other movements. For example; hopping around the area, jumping around the area, skipping around the area, etc.



Activity Description

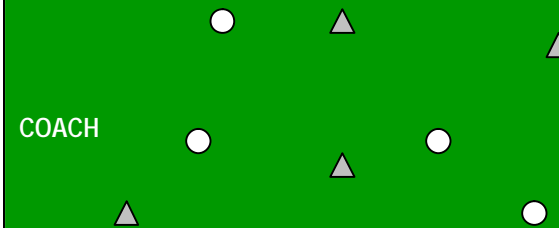
Zen Master – Balance & Coordination with Ball Mastery

Area: 20 x 20-yards with cones randomly spread around the area. Each player needs a ball.

Activity: Each player finds a cone. Players copy everything the coach does. The coach does a skill and the players complete it for 10 seconds at their cone. As soon as they are done they dribble to another cone. The coach then does another skill, continue..... Skills:

- Toe Taps: Players touch the top of the soccer ball with the sole of one foot and then the other. Continue. Treat the ball like an egg, touch as light as possible.
- Pendulum: Players touch the ball between their feet using the inside of the foot.
- Throw in fun moves such as butt traps, head on the ball, etc.

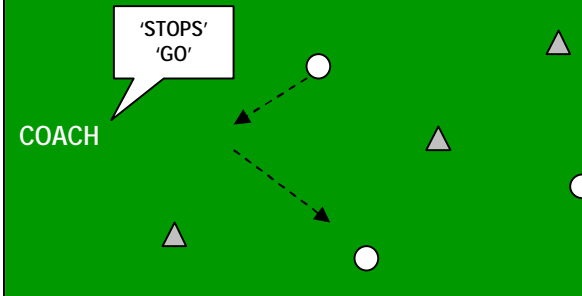
Diagram



Goofy Go and Stop – Stopping & Starting and Dribbling

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a soccer ball.

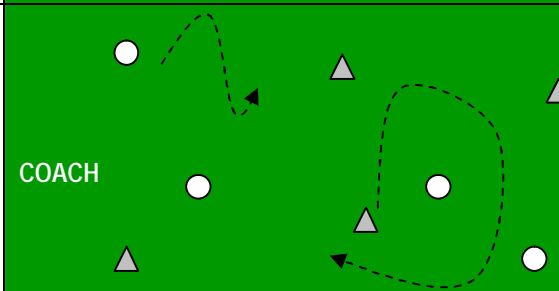
Activity: Players dribble around the area, when the coach shouts 'STOP' players must freeze in a funny position. Coach shouts 'GO', players should continue to dribble. Continue.....



Body Part Soccer – Stopping & Starting, Balance & Coordination and Dribbling

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player needs a soccer ball.

Activity: Players dribble around the area. When the coach shouts a body part the players should stop the ball and touch that body part on the soccer ball. For instance, 'head' players should stop the ball and find a way to place their head on the soccer ball. Continue.



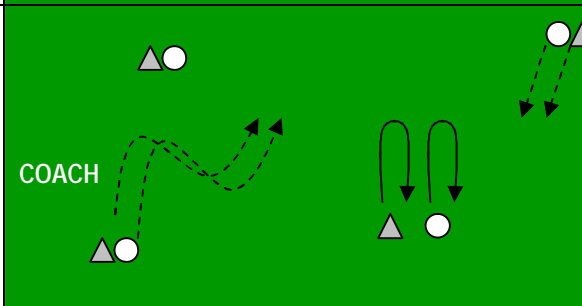
Follow the Leader – Dribbling, Stopping & Starting, Ball Mastery and Balance & Coordination

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player has a ball.

Organization: Space random cones around the area. Players should get into pairs; designate one to be the leader. Rotate after every game.

Activity: Players should follow their leader. Leaders can dribble in any way they want and their partners must follow doing the same action. When the leader gets to a cone, they can do a fun activity or skill.

NOTE: Start this game without the ball.



Example Section



In this Section you will find a completed Goal Setting Form, Season Plan & Session Plan

Example Goal Setting Form

When completing this form I referenced the advice given in the 'Coach a U4, U5 or U6 team section'. From there I chose the aspects of the game I thought my players could cope with and placed them into the goals section. The next step was to put a time line on the skills. I did this by thinking about the difficulty of the skill.

COACH: Paul Thomas	
TEAM: U5 NORTHVILLE STING	
DATE: 01.01.2006	
GOALS	TIME FRAME
Improve each players balance when dribbling the soccer ball	6.1.2006
Teach players how to stop the ball with the sole of the foot	5.13.2006
Improve each players knowledge on Dribbling Technique	5.13.2006
Improve players ability to perform toe-taps	1.6.2006
Teach players how to change direction of the ball with the inside of foot	1.6.2006
Make sure players have FUN at practice	Throughout

This should be a flexible document that changes with your players. You may go to your first session and realize that your players are to advance for the skills or not advanced enough to complete the skills. Change the goals accordingly.

Example Season Plan

When making a season plan you should make sure that you work off the goals you have set for yourself and your players. Plan the season so you and your players can gain success with learning the skills outlined. The example given below is based on the goals I set for my team, written above.

WEEK NUMBER	PRACTICE TOPIC
1	Stopping & Starting with Dribbling
2	Stopping & Starting with Dribbling
3	Dribbling
4	Ball Mastery with Balance & Coordination
5	Ball Mastery with Balance & Coordination
6	Dribbling, Ball Mastery with Balance & Coordination

As with goal setting this plan should be a flexible document and should be adapted to any changes you make to the goals set for your team.

Session Plan Example

The session plan included on the next page is a good example of what a session plan at this age should look like and the time that should be given to activities. Remember always take a copy of your practice plan to the training session and read through it before the start of the session. This will refresh your memory before you hold the session. Also, don't be afraid to deviate from the planned session if it is not running smoothly or the children are not enjoying the activities.

NOTE: The details on how to plan a training session is in the coach's organization section of the manual. This section is to give you an idea of what a practice plan should look like. It also gives you a simple way of filling out your log book.

Warm Up	Hee Bee Dee Gee Bees – Dribbling & Ball Mastery – 9 minutes (3 minutes on each area)
Main Body Activity	Zen Master – Ball Mastery – 8 minutes
Main Body Progression	Follow the Leader – Ball Mastery & Dribbling – 8 minutes
Small-Sided Game	3 v 3 Scrimmage

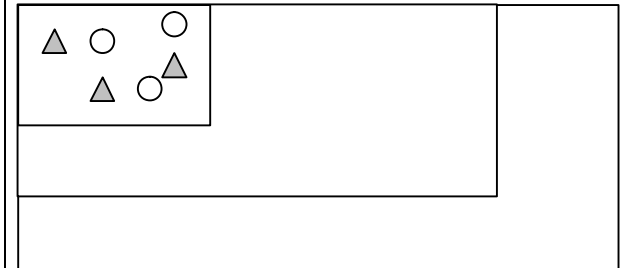
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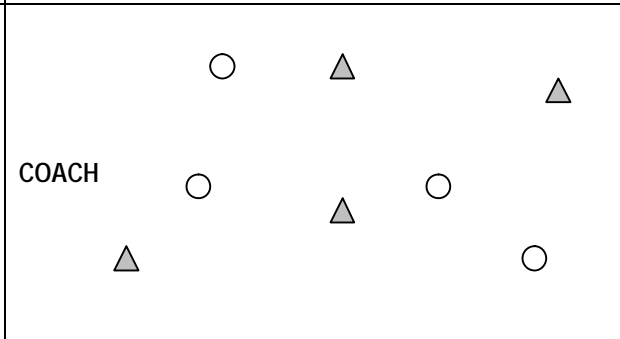


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- Throw in fun moves such as butt traps, head on the ball, etc.



Follow the Leader – Dribbling, Stopping & Starting, Ball Mastery and Balance & Coordination

Area: 20 x 20-yards. Each player has a ball.

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Activity: Players should follow their leader. Leaders can dribble in any way they want and their partners must follow doing the same action. When the leader gets to a cone, they can do a fun activity or skill.

NOTE: Start this game without the ball.

