

The Critical Mistakes Most Youth Soccer Coaches Make When Coaching Soccer Drills And How To Make Sure You're Not One Of Them!

Hi... Andre Botelho Here.

I recently surveyed THOUSANDS of soccer coaches about their "coaching drills" problems. And then I spent countless hours investigating and digging under the hood to find out WHY these soccer coaches are facing these tough challenges.

And let me tell you I learned a lot. And most of it is NOT good. But you know me... I am a cheerful guy, so let's start with...

The Good News...

Based on my survey (and from talking to many of my students) I can say this... MOST soccer coaches already have a reasonable number of soccer drills to teach.

This is definitely good news – in fact it's downright critical, because of a recent post on the National Soccer Coaches Association of America's *Soccer Journal*:

"The major emphasis at most soccer conventions and workshops is the presentation of drills. Coaches collect drills like souvenirs, returning home with their new-found prizes..."

There is bad news however...

"...for many coaches the problem is that the newly-acquired drills do not work for their teams. What to do? How can drills be adjusted to the local situation or the specific team? Where does one begin?"

– NSCAA (*Soccer Journal*)

Bad News Item #1 – Not Knowing How To Keep Player's Interest, Focus And Attention In Practice...

This is something that every coach faces at some point. While all kids are interested in playing the game, getting them interested in practice drills can be a completely different story.

Children who are enthusiastic during a game can become moody and restless when they have to do drills, especially if they aren't much fun. This can lead to loss of interest and indiscipline during training sessions.

The best way to keep your practice sessions interesting is to have a plan. First of all, remember that the most attractive part of soccer for kids is the fun factor!

That means you need to make your drills as fun and creative as possible. Adding an element of make-believe can make a world of difference - for example, an ordinary dribbling drill can become all the more exciting when you tell the kids they have to dribble the ball past the swamp monsters!

Make things a little competitive as well - pitting small teams against each other in passing or dribbling drills makes the kids encourage each other and work as a team.

A reward system can also do wonders in kindling interest in soccer practice. The rewards themselves can be something pretty simple, like a patch or a sticker.

When you start giving these out as rewards for good behavior or good performance on the field, it encourages children to try to collect even more of these rewards.

Don't forget the discipline factor - a coach without a plan and no sense of discipline will also lose player interest pretty quick. Make sure you strictly follow a general practice plan that includes a warm-up, drills and small-sided games. Always remember to take attendance as well.

While discipline is important, make sure that your practice sessions don't turn into military training drills. If kids miss out on the fun factor, they'll start losing interest in soccer, altogether.

A good incentive for most children is to promise them some game time at the end of each practice session. Don't forget that your practice sessions aren't set in stone. If you find that a certain drill or set-up isn't working, don't hesitate to scrap it and try something new.

And by the way... here's an idea for "that" fun game at the end of practice:

Game: The Kicking Train (Level: Intermediate)

Age Information: 9 - 12

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Time Duration: 5 Minutes

If you are looking for a fun game to relieve the stress and pressure of your players, look no further than the Kicking Train.

The game is best suited for players within the age group of nine to twelve. The level of difficulty is intermediate. The time duration for the game is 5 minutes.

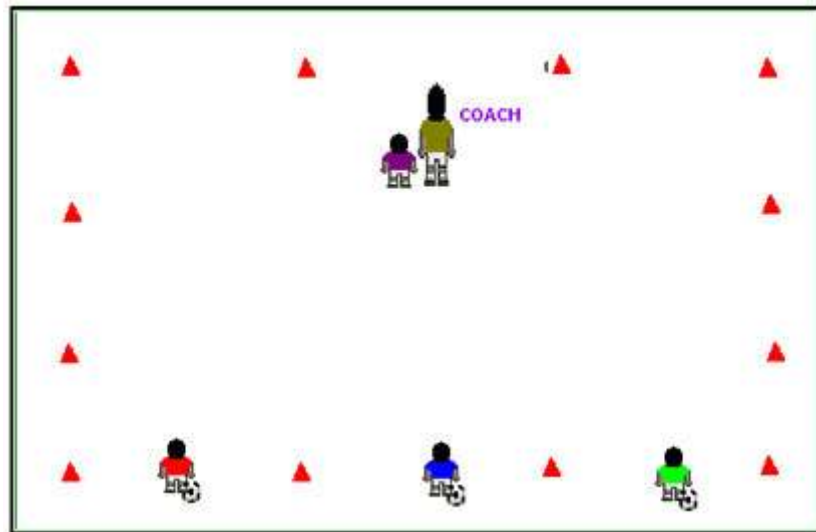
The time duration may vary depending upon the number of players participating in the game. You will need at least five players for this game.

There is no restriction when it comes to the maximum number of players. I have explained the game considering the number of players as six.

The best thing with this game is that even the coach needs to participate in it. The coach is the engine of the train in this game.

Step-by-step instructions:

- You can start with marking a grid of 15 yards X 15 yards in size. You can use cones to create the grid, as shown in the diagram.
- You will be standing in the middle of the grid without a ball. (See diagram)
- All the six players will be standing in a row along one side of the grid. Give a ball to each of these players.
- As soon as you blow the whistle, the players will start dribbling the ball at a fast pace across the grid.
- The objective is to try to dribble the ball successfully from one end of the grid to the other side. Meanwhile, you will be moving randomly in an attempt to kick a player's ball outside the grid.
- The player whose ball is kicked outside will join you by holding your hand. Now, the kicking engine has got a compartment and has become a small kicking train.
- Once the players have reached the other end of the grid while dribbling the ball, you will again blow the whistle and the players will start dribbling again towards their starting position.
- This time, both you and the player joining you will try to kick other players' balls out of the grid.
- The players who get their balls kicked outside the grid will join the mini train. The kicking train will thus become bigger and bigger with every passing round.
- The last player who manages to be there inside the grid with a ball at his/her feet is the winner.

Diagram:**Key Points:**

- Players need to keep complete control of the ball while keeping their heads up.
- The players do not need to dribble the ball always straight. They can dribble it anywhere as long as the ball is inside the grid. The objective is to dribble the ball away from the kicking train.
- The ball can be kicked outside the grid – any of the four sides.
- The strategy for the players in the kicking train should be to select a target first and then follow to kick his/her ball out. This is important, as it will increase the excitement level of the game.
- Do not make targets in just one side of the grid. It is better to cover the entire grid and rotate targeted players.
- You will need a larger sized grid if the number of players participating in the game is bigger than six.

Bad News Item #2 – Lack Of Motivation

It's a common problem not knowing how to motivate the players.

You would be surprised at how motivation can have a major impact on the performance of your players. Every player needs the motivation to succeed.

Soccer is a game that presents many challenges and it is important to stay motivated through good and bad times. You must also be cautious about players that are so hyped up that they may be too ready to take risks.

You need to strike the balance so that your team players work towards a common team goal by making their individual contributions.

Why do people take up soccer? There is a desire to vent out energy on the field that brings a sense of fulfillment and adventure. Some players want to gain recognition or win competitions.

There is a special high when playing with a huge crowd watching. Whatever the source of motivation, one feeling rules all. The hope to succeed - and the worry that they may fail.

As your players mature, the hope to succeed will keep the fire burning in them motivating them to give their best. Consistent hard work and commitment to the game is a given.

Some players simply take any difficulty as a challenge and have the maturity to understand that it is just a cue for more effort. Such players work through self-motivation.

If you are coaching youth soccer, however, a lot of external motivation is essential. You have to find ways to motivate them and build their self-confidence so that they actually believe they can succeed.

With players that are self-motivated, your main focus would be on the technical skills, strategy and fitness training. With children you need to lead them to believe in themselves, telling them that they can succeed through hard work.

That said, overall, please bear in mind the following:

- Make your training sessions interesting and fun.
- Set goals in advance. (both short term and long term)
- As the coach, show a positive attitude and be supportive.
- Show confidence in your players.
- Encourage your players often.
- Talk to each player regularly.
- Bring in a guest coach when possible for variation and fun.

Let your team understand that they win and lose as a team.

Bad News Item #3 – Coaching Players At Different Skill Levels On The Same Team

This can be a very tricky situation to deal with. Ideally, we should form a team out of those players who are of the same skill levels. But when dealing with children, this isn't always the case.

Not only do you have a mixed bag of skill sets, these kids need to be taught how to work together as a team as well.

The first thing you need to do as a coach is watch the practice sessions carefully. Make a note of how each player performs- some might be more agile on their feet; others might have stronger defensive tactics.

This might not be openly obvious- for instance; smaller children might display creative ball techniques differently from the more mature players.

It's important to recognize the potential in each and every player. This can sometimes seem like a daunting task but remember every player *does* have something to contribute.

When there are varying skill sets in a single team, it's extremely important to ensure that no player feels they are better or stronger than the rest. Don't single out the stronger players for simple coaching tasks or make an example of them.

This can breed discontent among the players and make it difficult for them to work as a team. Here what you can do is break the team off into different groups and make them work on different drills.

Don't assign the same drill to all of them with varying degrees of difficulty, as this can also cultivate a feeling of inferiority among players. Having them all work on different drills will make it clear that different players are good at different things.

It's also important for the team to learn how to play *with* each other. Sometimes smaller players will feel intimidated by the larger ones or some might feel they aren't as fast as the others.

Make it clear to your players that they need to work together, as a team. No player is better or worse than the other- each player has his own strengths.

The best way is to throw the players in together and make them play- the less aggressive ones will learn how to cope with aggressive players. Dominant ones will learn that they need the help of others to sink that goal.

Remember that a successful soccer team has different players playing different positions- all these players work together and that's what makes the winning difference.

Bad News Item #4 – Not Making Training FUN!

This is probably rule #1 for successful coaches. If your players have fun playing and feel a sense of achievement while they are going back home, they will look forward to coming back.

As you start with a young team, the fun aspect needs to be built in. Remember that any coach who ridicules his players cannot get them to enjoy the game and automatically divides the players into an 'us vs. coach' situation. Players hate being ticked off, so you will need to find ways to do this without hurting egos.

With the younger players especially, do not be in a hurry to implement team shapes rigidly. The players are still experimenting with the game and tying them down to defined roles and areas gets boring very soon.

Yet another way to keep training fun and avoid boredom is to ensure that players get adequate possession of the ball. How can you do that?

Simply keep fewer players to a side and keep your fields small. This ensures that the ball is shared between fewer players and everyone stays involved.

When such a player goes back, he re-lives every moment of the time when he had the ball. If you can give him more such moments, you have got a head start in keeping your players interested.

Did you find going around the field to warm up boring when you were learning soccer? I bet you did. So do your players. Find ways of making your players warm up without making it sound like a military drill. Maybe you could have short dribbling sessions around the cones or make them play a light game of catch instead.

A good way to measure your own effectiveness in providing adequate fun for your players is to see how many of them return the next season. If your record is better than 80%, then you are doing something right.

If not, then you should examine your own techniques. You must also ask the players themselves and see if they have enjoyed the game. Are they chattering happily as they go back?

Parents have an important role too. There will always be the odd parent who is living out his soccer fantasies. Such parents put extreme pressure on their kids and are their greatest critics.

As coach, you must tell these parents to take things easy. Any child struggles to raise his game when he knows a parent is around. Get your players to look at the game as a game and not as war.

Here's an example of a fun soccer drill...

Game: Gladiators (Level: Intermediate)

Age Information: 9 - 12

Level of Difficulty: Intermediate

Time Duration: 10 Minutes

“Gladiators” is an ultimate fun soccer game. It is like a war where the players struggle to get into power. The game is best suited for players within the age group of nine to twelve.

The level of difficulty is intermediate. The minimum number of players required for this drill is twelve. You can have as many as eighteen players for this game.

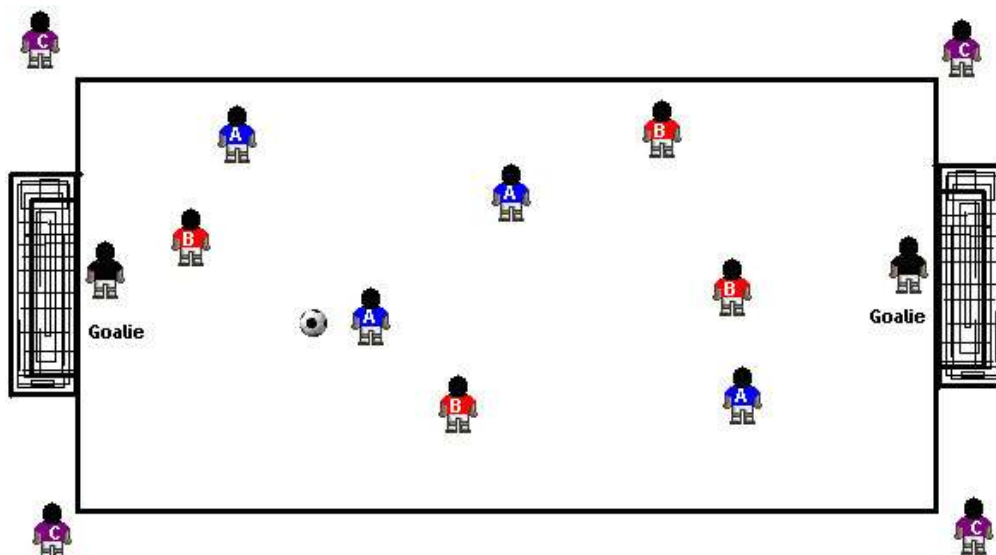
The time duration for this game will depend upon several factors, such as the number of players participating in the game and the size of the grid. In general, the game should take approximately fifteen minutes.

Step-by-step instructions:

- Mark a grid of 30 yards X 50 yards.
- Place two goals on each side of the grid, as shown in the diagram.
- Divide your players in three small teams of four players each. One team will stay outside the grid. It is the supporting team whose task is to cheer their favorite team. If a ball is kicked outside the grid, the players of the supporting team will gather the same and send it back inside the field.
- The other two teams will be scattered inside the grid. Name these teams as A and B, while the team outside the grid could be team C.
- Place a ball at the center of the grid.

- Place a keeper on each goal. These are neutral keepers, as both the teams can score a goal in any of the goalposts. The goalies will try to defend all the goals.
- The game will start at the blow of the whistle.
- As soon as you blow the whistle, the players will run towards the ball to win the same.
- After winning the ball, the team will move towards one of the goals. They can pass the ball to their teammates in order to create opportunities for scoring goals. The other team will try to steal the ball from the attacking team.
- If the attacking team manages to score a goal, they will again get another ball from the supporting players and will instantly move towards another goalpost in order to score another goal.
- The game has to be fast and continuous.
- The game stops after the allotted time duration has been reached.
- In the end, the team with the maximum number of goals wins.

Diagram:



Key Points:

- You are recommended to play several rounds of this game. In the next round, you should switch team C (the outside team) with the losing team. The losing team will go outside the grid and will act as support players.
- After scoring a goal, the attackers need to be very quick in moving towards the other goal so that the defending team is unable to organize properly when it would come to defending the ball.
- Encourage the attackers to pass the ball to each other while moving.
- It is also a team game, and the team who plays in close co-operation with each other has a better chance to win.

Bad News Item #5 – Not Building Teamwork And Playing As A Team!

I remember my first year as a coach when whatever I planned did not turn out how I expected it to. It was quite frustrating. What do you do when you dream of the ideal team and reality is far from it?

I know how it feels when things don't pan out as well as you expect on the field. I got enough and more advice than I could handle. Well, I did figure out what I needed to do quickly enough.

My first aim was to come up with activities that helped at team building. I realized I must get to know each player on my team. I built rapport.

I worked at knowing their strengths and shortcomings – and not just the physical ones. As a coach, you also need to be aware of the mental strength of each player.

One of the best ways to do this is to have a team meeting before your training and get everyone to comment on the previous match.

Talk about both the good and lacking aspects and call for solutions. This way everyone has a sense of contribution to the team and make your players communicative.

Before the first ever practice of the season, spend some time setting goals that can be achieved by your team. This goal must be constantly monitored and discussed when you have your team meeting.

This can be highly inspiring to your players, getting them to work harder. Success is fun and when your team can see where they are going, they will willingly make the effort. Don't pressurize them though, as that can become negative.

For every mini goal that is accomplished, do not forget to reward your players. It will tell them that you care about how they are doing.

Depending on the age group being coached by you, you can be as creative as you want with the rewards.

A short trip at the end of your season can be something to really look forward to. The togetherness promotes team spirit.

When you go on these camping trips, it can be great if you can organize a friendly soccer match with a local team. This keeps your players busy and builds their self-confidence.

Bad News Item #6 – Not Developing Passing Skills

Passing is a fundamental skill in soccer and you must come up with a variety of drills in your training sessions to make sure every player in your team becomes expert at passing. Passing involves the creation of space to receive the ball.

The player must put himself in a position to make the pass while keeping an eye on the target. The right passing technique must be used, by approaching the ball from the right angle. The ball must then be kicked with the appropriate part of the foot.

Here are a couple of examples of passing drills that you can test:

Passing Drill 1: Trio Treat

Aim: Practice passing into space

Level: Beginners/Intermediate

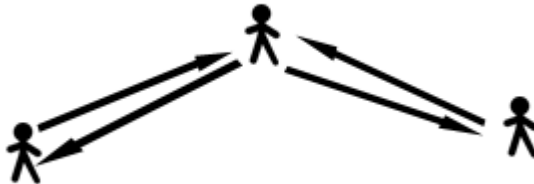
Age – Under 12

Time: 15 minutes

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Divide players into groups of three. Two will serve the ball standing about 20 meters apart. Third player is positioned between them.
2. Player 3 is given a pass by the two players that he must return with one touch.
3. Players are switched changing positions.

Diagram:



Key points:

Get your players to pass at an angle instead of directly at the player in the middle. This will help practice passing into space. Variations can be in random directions to make it challenging.

Passing Drill 2: Two-Four passing drill

Aim: Improve Passing, agility and fitness

Level: Beginner/Intermediate

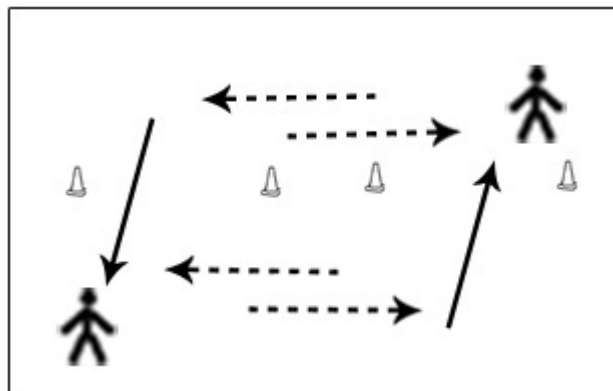
Age: Under 10

Time: 15 minutes

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Pick two players and four cones.
2. One player runs from left to right and makes a square pass to the other player opposite him.
3. the second player runs from right to left and passes to the first player.
4. the players must coordinate to receive and pass at the same pace.
5. players move continuously practicing first touch and passing.

Diagram:



Dotted line = run arrows = pass

Key points:

- The first touch is crucial along with a good inside foot pass. Players follow the sequence of run, pass, receive, control pass. This is a great drill that simulates a game situation.
- Vary by combining skills and fitness. Allow ten touches and ask players to jog to the 18-yard line. Who returns to position first? Players compete while building fitness and passing skills.

Bad News Item #7 –Difficulty In Understanding And Teaching The Drills

Another big problem that coaches face is making drills simple so that the players understand it easily.

For example, in order to make things much easier for you, I have explained every drill example so far through simple step-by-step instructions, diagrams key points, age group and skill level.

Even if you are a beginner or a coach who is going to run a soccer coaching session for the first time, you will not have much difficulty in understanding the different procedures and taking it to the kids.

Diagrams

Another great feature that is essential when coaching soccer drills is that all the drills have also been explained through easy-to-understand interactive graphics and diagrams.

Age Group

If you want to teach the drills correctly, it's important that the exercises are targeted to the age group of your players. That's why I've separated the drills into three categories: *4-8, 9-12 and 13-Adult* years old.

Skill Level (Beginner / Intermediate / Advanced)

Regarding the level of difficulty of each drill, it's important for you to understand that some exercises may require for better techniques that are out of the range for some players. That is why I have categorized the drills in three groups based on the level of difficulty – *beginners, intermediate, and advanced*.

Key Points and Variations

I have already suggested a variety of variations in every drill that you can use to make the drills more interesting as well as more productive for the players.

However, I recommend that you must come up with your own creativity and imagination while having your players practice these drills.

Time Duration

I have also mentioned the time duration required for the productive practice of the drills. I think this will help you plan your coaching session accordingly.

Now let me show you an example from my new and “unreleased” soccer drills system:

“Back And Forth” Drill (Crossing And Goalkeeping)

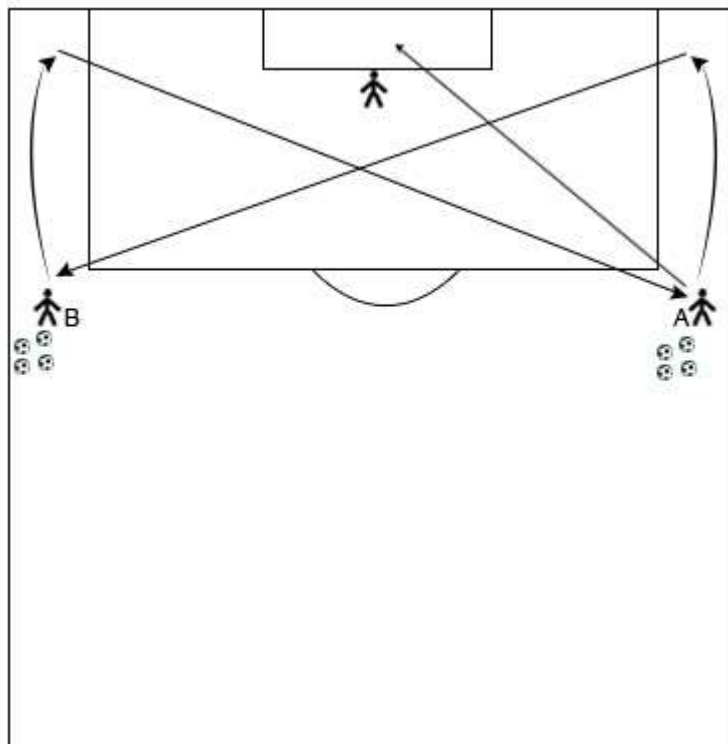
Level: Advanced

Age Group: 8-12

Time Duration: 15 Minutes

Set Up: You'll need two players, a collection of balls and a goalie in place.

Diagram:



Step-by-step Instructions:

Step 1 - Player A puts a ball in play. If the goalie isn't ready, player A can try and score a goal.

Step 2 - If the goalie is prepared, player A can dribble the ball down and make a cross shot to B.

Step 3 - B can make a shot at the goal or dribble down and make a cross shot back to A.

Step 4 - Players A and B may also go for a break away at any time.

Key Points:

This drill focuses on both crossing and the goalkeeping skills. Since it involves just 3 players, the drill is intensive and forces the players to think quickly on their feet. The field players will learn how to make decisions about when to shoot and when not to shoot. As a coach, you should keep an eye on players who seem to hesitate too long and those who shoot without thinking.

Bad News Item #8 – Poor Finishing Skills

Do you remember any games where everything goes right all the way up to the final shot from 15 yards into a goal with just the goalkeeper in sight? Chances are if the players haven't been taught right, this is the point where it all comes apart.

Your ace takes a shot, the goalie intercepts, by the time the attacker is able to do anything to the ball a second time, the entire team is in the box and there is a melee.

Sounds familiar? It need not if the players are taught well.

The important thing to be taught to your players is that the first or the second shot is not important, it is the shot that is converted into a goal that is important and till the whistle blows, your players have got to keep attacking.

Different coaches have different methods of driving this point home. Here are a few ways of teaching your players how to finish an attack on the goal successfully...

Finishing Drill 1: Shooting Out of the box

Aim: Practice and develop finishing skills and confidence

Level: Intermediate/Advanced

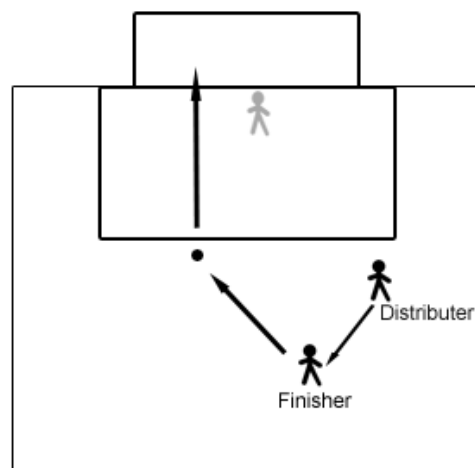
Age: U17

Time: 15 minutes

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Start the drill with the player who takes the shot controlling the ball.
2. When players are at ease doing this, they finish with one touch.
3. Players practice shooting techniques and move to one touch.
4. Players finish from outside penalty box.
5. Sequence is finisher passing the ball to distributor who arranges the finish.
6. Each player gets a chance to practice finishing.

Diagram:



Key points:

Strike ball outside the penalty box. Players progress from technique practice to developing composure while playing.

Finishing Drill 2: The 3v2 confrontation

Aim: Practice and develop finishing and direct attacking skills and confidence

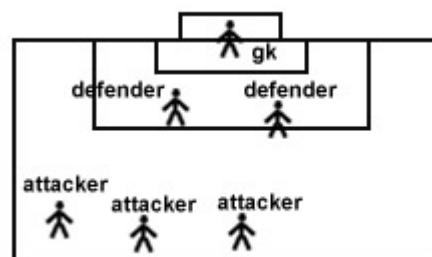
Level: Intermediate/Advanced

Age: U17

Time: 15 minutes

Step-by-step instructions:

1. Three Attackers stand in line at different points – the wing, twenty yards inward and at the middle of the pitch.
2. Two defender fullbacks start at the edge and corner of penalty box.
3. Player in the center has the ball.
4. Player with ball gives it to the left defender who lays it to the outside attacker.
5. Now the fullbacks start trying to clear the ball to the opposite side of the pitch.
6. Attackers try to score/finish within three touches per player.

Diagram:

Key points:

The first pass is crucial in the interaction of attackers and fullbacks. Encourage attackers to finish in less than three touches and defenders to clear the ball.

They play with composure rather than hurry. If you add a winger you can encourage strategic playing, particularly where play includes crossing skills.

Remember, it is not enough to shoot – it is important to follow it up with finishing the game! We want that ball inside the goal!

Now... let's face it!

You Need A NEW Drills System!

I think by now you are pretty clear on the system that you need. You need a new drills system that can solve all these problems forever, and if the drills you're using right now don't address all those items above, you're not coaching the right way... and you and your players are suffering from it.

Your Two Choices...

But if you're like me and you're always looking for new ways to improve your coaching skills, let's look at what you need to do:

First: You need to implement a new drills system that is appropriate to the age group you're coaching and that you can adapt to the different skill levels of each player. This system must also allow you to improve your players' skills and keep their attention, focus and interest during the training sessions. All the drills should be designed in a "make it fun" way so that your players feel motivated and you can get 100% out of them.

Second. You need to set up a system so you can teach the drills properly. With that in mind, all drills must be presented with easy-to-understand diagrams, step-by-step instructions, key points, skill level, age group and time duration information.

If you already have this system in place, I want to congratulate you.

If you don't, wait for the free videos I'll be sending you in the next days...

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"See" you soon...

Yours in soccer,



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