



Soccer Coaches Newsletter

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Coaching Directors Area: I hope by now all coaches have held a parent meeting taking the time to introduce yourself to the team and the parents. As fall begins to roll in, it is also a good time to set up your indoor practices, not only finding a site but also developing a training plan. Each session should have a topic specific to your teams needs. If you need help with topic or training sessions, let me know. As always I am free to come and work a session if you would like.

Coaching contracts are being worked on right now. I will be sending you a contract that you will need to sign and return.

We need to get our bio's online completed. Please go to <http://eteamz.active.com/gblightningsc/news/index.cfm?cat=51364>

Send me your info and I will get it published on the web. Remember to keep a date free in February for our annual coaches meeting.

All for soccer
Bob

Coaching Corner: Making Soccer Drills Work By Alan Maher

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. 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?

The solution is to consider the basic elements of a drill. Any drill for any sport. There are common elements for all. Knowing and understanding the common elements will help a coach adjust a drill to work in the local situation or at least help make it work.

Let's examine the common elements of all drills in some detail.

No. 1 - TIME

There are two aspects to time. How long does the drill last and how often should the coach use it? In soccer any situation creates two basic questions. How long can one group of players hold and control the ball? One minute? Two minutes? Or can they hold it longer? The other aspect is, how many passes in a row can one team make before losing possession of the ball? Ten? More? Time is a basic element of any drill.

No. 2 - VELOCITY

This also has two aspects. First, how hard do you want the ball passed? A soft pass to space or a hard pass to feet? The harder the ball is struck, the harder it is for the receiving player to control it. The second question is, how hard does the player run? Run hard? Jog, then change pace? Jog? Keep moving, even if only walking? Jog in place? Standing is not an option on a soccer field. The Dutch say, "move now; rest later."

No. 3 - HEIGHT OF THE PASS

Do you want the ball delivered on the ground? Under the armpits? Over the heads of the opponents? Three choices, all of which are critical. The players must decide which is best.

No. 4 - DIRECTION

Where is the ball to go? To feet? To space? This is related to the velocity of the ball. A hard pass to feet or soft to space? Each pass has a different degree of difficulty. What degree of difficulty does the coach want and need in the drill?

No. 5 - SPACE

What is the size of the space to be used? Large or small? Small space is more demanding, as players must pass more accurately and react more rapidly to the pace of the drill. A large space gives more time to react and conceals passing errors. There is more time to run after a bad pass in a big space. Also, is the space to be wide or long? Along, narrow space forces long axis passes, while a wide space forces more square and back passes. Both kinds of space serve a purpose, but what is the purpose of the drill?

No. 6 - DISTANCE

Short passes need to be more accurate, as the time for a player to get into a position to receive the ball is also short. Long passes give the receiving player more time to get in the path of the ball. Short passes often transfer pressure from one player to the next, while long passes deliver the ball to a place where there is less pressure.

No. 7 - RULES

What are the rules to be observed? Two-touch passing? Ignore the offside law? Wall pass before shooting? What are the rules? And change the rules if they are not working. Rules should be simple and few in number.

As the coach begins a training session, there are three basic rules to keep in mind. First, from the beginning the coach must make it work. Whatever it is that the coach wants out of the drill must be the outcome. Give a clear statement of what is to be done, why it is important and show how it should be done. Give concrete examples and proceed in small steps that all can follow and understand. But make it work. If it is not working, the coach can manipulate the elements mentioned above to make it work. For example, the coach can add more time or more space if needed.

Second, the coach must make it better by making it harder for the players. This can be done in a variety of ways. Limit the touches on the ball. Go from unlimited touches to two touches of the ball. Then try one-touch passing. Then back off and change the rules again. Try one touch or three touches, no two-touch. What does this teach? How? And why?

Maybe the coach can reduce the amount of space that the players can use. This will put more demands on both passing and running off the ball, much more demanding of all concerned. Adding players will fill up the space and put more demands on the passing and running off the ball. Does everyone know what to do? Where to go? How to help? Try it. Finally, introduce opposition. This is a simple change that should come as the last step, not the first. Players must develop confidence and courage in what they do before they face opposition on the field of play. One opponent even just walking around causes players to lower their heads and focus on the ball, not on the field of play. The level of passing is lowered. Players feel pressure, real or imagined.

So only at this point should opposition be considered. Also, the opposition should be at a ratio of two attackers to one defender if the players with the ball are expected to execute tactical options with their heads up, viewing the field of play. Thus, two on one is acceptable; two on two is not. Keep the two-to-one ratio at all times. Include three on one, four on two and five on two. This can be increased to include six on three or eight on four.

To review: Any drill, if done correctly, might help any team, but only if it is worked correctly from the beginning. Knowing and understanding how to manipulate the basic elements of drills can help a coach to make proper adjustments to assure success. In addition, the coach should be aware of three simple steps for training.

1. Make it work.
2. Make it better/harder.

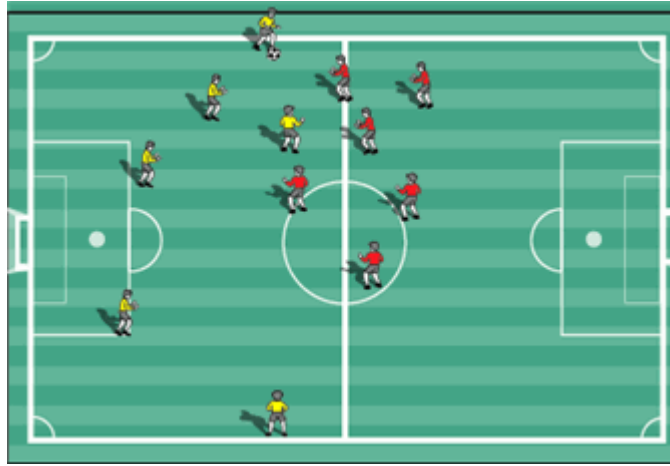
It is important to add that when Step 3 fails, go back to Step 1. The first rule of soccer is simple: make it work!

Editor's note: Alan Maher, a long-time high school coach on Long Island, took a team to Holland one year and fell in love with Dutch soccer. Since then, he has been a proponent of soccer the Dutch way. A longtime Soccer Journal contributor, he is the author of "The Soccer Handbook."

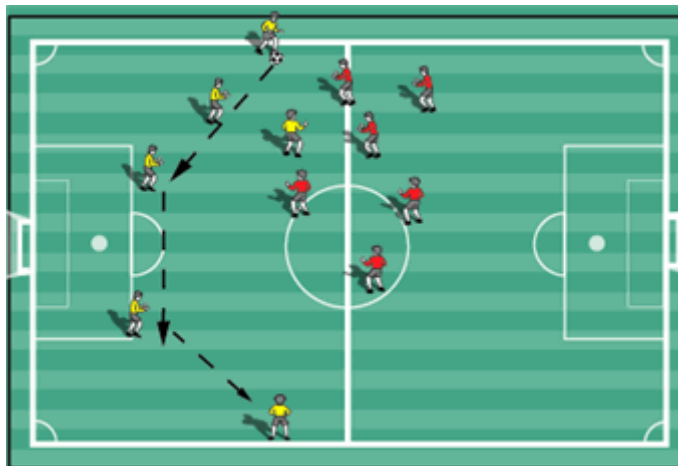
Featured Activity: Today's topic deals with the importance of playing a long ball.

When people think of hitting a 30,40, 50 or even 60 yard pass they think of teams that just play "kick ball" or very direct play. However, not all long balls need to go vertically (north-south) but they can also be played horizontally (east/west) with great results.

An example would be when there have been a series of short passes, on one side of the field which draws the defense to that side which opens up a lot of space on the far side to attack.



The way many teams switch the field in this situation is to play the ball around the back for safety.



The problem with switching the field with this many passes is that it takes too long which allows the opponent to shift and take away this space.

The alternative, if you are capable of hitting a long, accurate pass, you can switch the field quickly with one pass.



Being able to play a ball across the field is an extremely valuable skill (as is the ability to receive the long driven ball) but it requires a great deal of practice to be able to play the ball the distance you want with accuracy.

Keeper Activity: Today's topic deals with working on the first step.

This activity works best in groups of twos. It's a series of 5 yard sprints. Start with two keepers on a line with a cone 5 yards in front of them



First the keepers start with both feet on the line and when they hear “go” they start to fall forward. The idea is to keep their bodies in a straight plane and too fall as far as they are willing to fall before catching themselves with their right foot and sprinting past the cone. They then walk back to the line. This is done a total of 6 times, catching themselves with their right foot three times and with their left foot three times. This is not a race because it's more important to be willing to fall further than to cut the fall short.

Next, the keepers take a big step backward with a drop step and then sprint forward past the cone. Again, this is done a total of 6 times with 3 times taking the drop step with the right foot and three times taking the drop step with the left foot. This one is also not a race.

Next the keepers sit down on the line and on “go” get up, without using their hands or arms and sprint past the cone. Some will use finesse to get up quickly and others will use power but this one is a race so they try to get up as quickly as possible. Keepers can use any technique they want to get up.

Next the keepers get down in a push up position (low part but NOT lying on the ground) and on “go” they sprint past the cone. This one is a race.

Next each keeper puts a ball next to their left foot. On “go” they jump sideways over the ball and then sprint past the cone. This is done three times then the ball is placed next to the right foot and do the same thing.



Next the balls are placed directly in front of the keeper, they hop, two footed, over the ball and then sprint past the cone.



Next the keepers start two feet away from each other. On “go” they jump up and into each other (similar to a legal shoulder charge) and then upon landing they sprint past the cone. The keepers do this three times and then switch sides.

Doing this series on a regular basis, and at top speed, will help with a keeper's first step and explosiveness.