



A play session for beginners

Modern Youth Training: A guide for everyone who coaches kids

by **Gerd Bode**, German club coach

Coaches of very young players do more than just organize matches and practice sessions. At their team's "play sessions," they have to do it all: console players when they fail, praise them when they succeed,

give a sympathetic ear to their stories and desires, and much more. By joining in the fun, they share their enthusiasm for the game. And of course there are the little "services" they provide, like tying shoes.

The activities they plan must be age-appropriate: movement training, unstructured play packaged in exciting stories—these are the tools of the children's coach.

SAMPLE PLAY SESSION

1 Playtime and welcome



Sequence

- Children get one ball each and play any way they want.
- After five minutes, the coach asks, "How fast can you shoot all the balls into the goal?"
- Welcome and introduction to the "Trip to Africa": "What do you know about Africa? What kind of animals live there?"

2 Comprehensive movement training 1



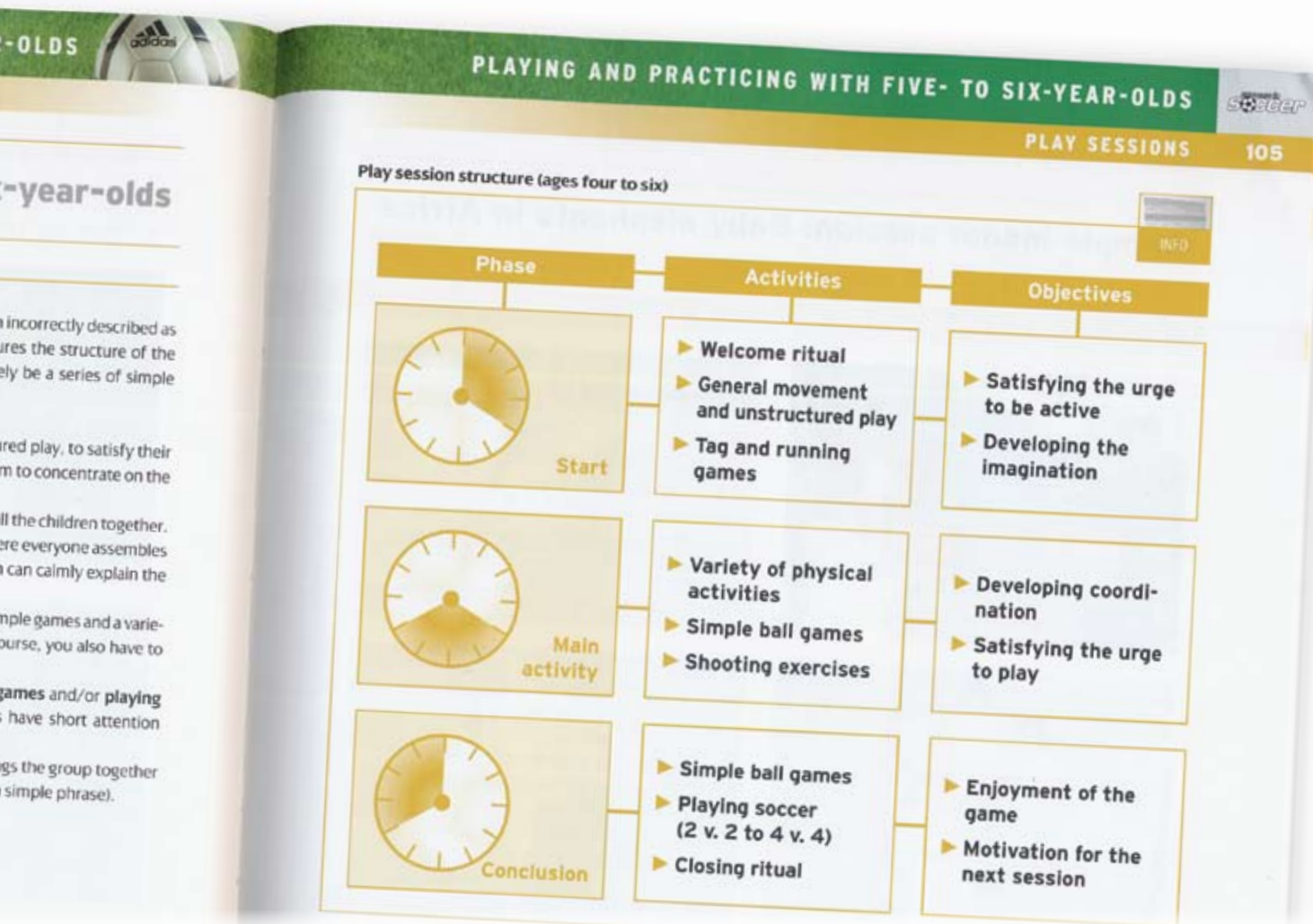
How do African animals move?

Children imitate the movements of animals they might see on a trip to Africa:

- Crawl like a crocodile.
- Slither and hiss like a python.
- Plod on all fours like an elephant.
- Stalk and pounce like a leopard.
- Lie on your back and stretch like a sleepy lion.
- Roll around and do somersaults like baby monkeys playing (transition to playtime).



The play session shown here has been created with the help of *Modern Youth Training*. Success in Soccer's manual for youth coaches. It follows the session structure shown on the right-hand page below.



SAMPLE PLAY SESSION

3 Comprehensive movement training 2



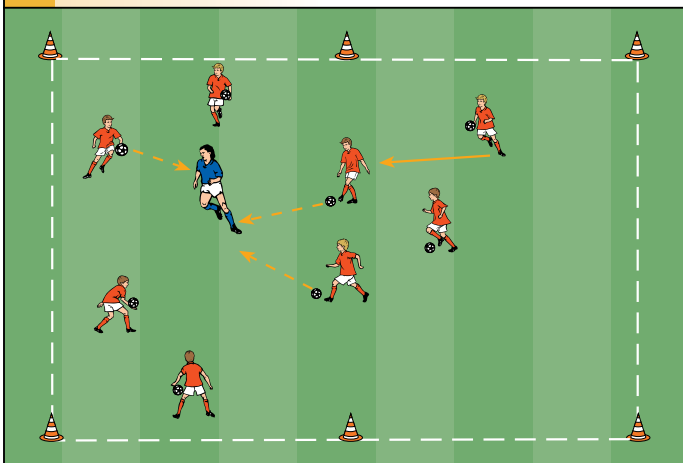
Elephant gymnastics

- While marching through the savannah, the baby elephants copy everything the big elephant (coach) does.
- Do basic movements without the ball, e.g. walking on all fours, taking long strides with arms and legs.
- Additional exercises:
 - Elephant trunk: Touch your nose with your left hand, then pass your right arm through the crook of your left elbow to make a "trunk." Repeat on the opposite side.
 - Stick your trunk between your legs and "drink from a puddle."
 - Stand on one foot, touch the ground with your trunk and "eat a leaf," then switch sides.
 - Standing on hands and feet, raise and lower your left arm. Repeat with your right arm and both legs.



SAMPLE PLAY SESSION

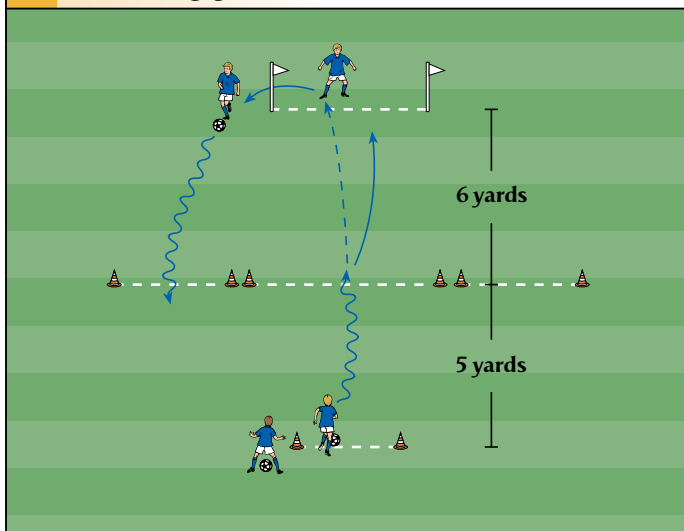
4 Small-sided game with ball



Lions hunt the zebra

- Adjust field size to fit the stamina of the zebra (coach).
- The lions (children) have one ball each.
- The lions hunt the zebra.
- To win, they have to throw or kick the ball at him and hit him 10 to 15 times.
- The zebra yells “ouch!” in a loud, pained voice each time he’s hit.

5 Shooting game



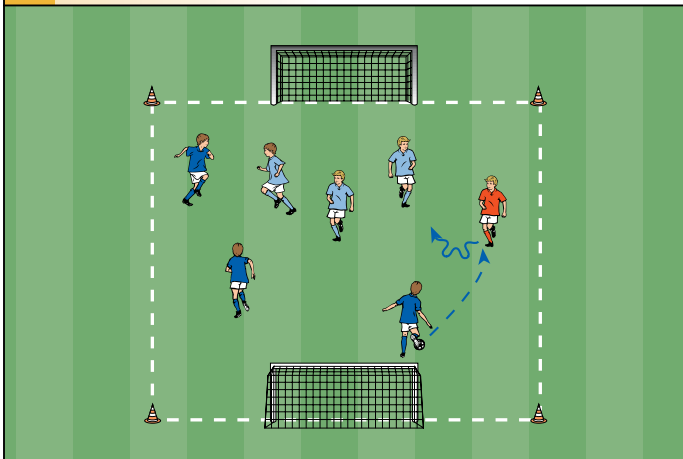
Setup

- Set up a number of shooting stations as shown at left. The goal lines on the ends of the shooting line are each three yards long.
- Assign four players to each station: one behind the goal to retrieve balls, one with a ball beside it, and two at the starting line with one ball each.

Sequence

- The first player runs to the shooting line and shoots.
- The player beside the goal dribbles across either goal line and calls the name of the next shooter, who then moves up for the next shot.
- Rotation: The shooter moves behind the goal, the player behind the goal retrieves the ball, and the player beside the goal dribbles across the goal line, calls the next shooter’s name and dribbles to the starting line.
- Practice first so players become familiar with the sequence.
- Then hold a competition: Who can score five goals first? Which station can score 10 goals first?

6 Soccer king



Setup and sequence

- Mark out a 15 x 15-yard field.
- Divide players into two teams of seven.
- The game is 4 v. 3, but the teams change: The “soccer king” plays for whichever team has the ball.
- As soon as one team scores three goals, a different player becomes soccer king.
- Use multiple fields for bigger groups.
- Make sure every child gets to be soccer king once!

Conclusion

- At the end of the game, have the group gather up the materials and shoot the balls into the goal as at the beginning, then do a closing ritual.