

Hello,

Thanks again for attending the clinic on Saturday. Hopefully you enjoyed yourself as much as I did.

Attached are diagrams of the set-ups we used for the practices. These are formatted as the standard set up I would use but depending on age, ability and exactly what you want to get out of your practice – you can change the dimensions and number of players as we discussed.

The warm up and fun game was run purely in a 30x30 yard square. The key considerations were;

- Every player had a ball. And got hundreds of touches.
- Physically very active between the ball tasks (specific juggling or dribbling) and dynamic movements which are used for preventing injury but also to improve coordination in younger players.
- Mentally engaging (no player was stood around or talking!) due to the quick and rapid fire nature of changing from task to task.
- As I 'told' the group what I would like them to do, I also 'showed' them what to do. Very important and meant that I could explain everything in 3-4 seconds and not disrupt the flow of the exercise.

The technical passing exercise included;

- 'Pass and follow'. Performed running around the outside cone so that players were not in the way of the next pass and also to subconsciously add the creation of an angle after passing. This was all performed as 2 touch passing, concentrating on the basic technical factors of – Non kicking foot next to ball. Kicking foot toe turned out. Toe higher than the heel. Knee slightly flexed. Follow through going up and towards target.
- Added a double pass to now play 'up, back and through'. More challenging mentally and also added the extra technical difficulty of varying angles of pass. We still focused on technique.
- 'Up, back and switch.' Playing diagonally.
- 'Give and go'. Making sure the first pass went to feet and the second pass went to space. The weight of the pass becomes more important and again is more challenging. When players master all of these movements, simply increasing the speed by playing 1 touch will challenge them – but make sure not to take this step too early.

The finishing exercise started with;

- Dribble and shoot. Give and go, then shoot. Cross and shoot.
- We then added the wrinkle of a defender and it became – dribble and shoot. Give and go, then shoot. Play 2v1 against the defender to goal. Which bought out decision making with regards to when to attack goal by yourself, when to make the pass etc.
- This exercise increases the amount of chances on goal every player will have and exposes them to different goal scoring challenges they will face. As opposed to one line of players waiting around for 5 minutes before getting a chance to shoot. I would also hope this set up will inspire you to think of other similar exercises you can create for your players by adding a cone, dropping one, starting in various positions on the field etc.

The 6 goal game;

- A very useful tool to use as it provides realistic rewards for players who can think laterally as well as vertically. As discussed I personally love 6 goal games and play them fairly regularly with

my players as the last thing they do before going in to a regular, full scrimmage to big goals with goal keepers.

- My coaching in the game was minimal. As a coach, you must consistently evaluate. I used the first 4 minutes of the game play to let the players play (that's what they enjoy) and let me evaluate if the work we had done in the practice was starting to show in their play.

Some of the other things we discussed;

- Remember that children are not mini adults.
- "WHY" questions promote defensiveness and players will shut down. Use appropriate communication to help them find answers.
- Be positive, praise good habits. Praise good attempts and players who are trying to do the right thing even if the outcome is unsuccessful. Eventually it will work!
- Player development is far more important and more rewarding in the long run than winning.
- Be patient. You will not create a soccer superstar in one practice (it's not possible) but you could lose a soccer superstar in one practice if you kill their love for the game and they stop playing!
- Be enthusiastic! I hope this was evident in the way I conducted myself on the field – and with kids it is contagious. I once heard a great quote that said, "enthusiasm often outweighs ability. The special people have both!" This is youth soccer and is one of the most dynamic and fun games to play which is why it is 'the worlds game' so lets encourage that fun and not stifle players by over coaching them to be robots.
- Keep things simple until the players are ready to move on. Each of the exercises we did, could be made very simple and easy to follow for the youngest players. But within the same exercise we could increase the difficulty when wanted to the point that they would challenge good, older players.
- Stay on topic. If you are working on improving passing, don't confuse players by coaching them and giving them information on defending!

Thanks again for your work on the field and I wish you all the best in your soccer endeavors.

Regards,

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