

**SPECIAL TOPICS DIPLOMA**



National Soccer Coaches  
Association of America

# COMPLETE SOCCER COACHING CURRICULUM FOR 3-18 YEAR OLD PLAYERS VOLUME 1



**LEARN. PARTICIPATE. BELONG.**

# VOLUME 1 - ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



## **DAVID NEWBERY, EDITOR AND AUTHOR OF STAGE 1**

eLearning Coordinator, NSCAA

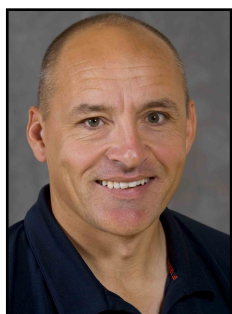
Since 1988, David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches and club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching. David oversees the NSCAA eLearning program and is Coordinator for NSCAA Club Standards Project. David developed the 5 Stage of Development Pathway used as a framework for this manual in 2007 (an adaptation of the LTAD model from Canada). He contributes articles regularly to soccer publications, has written books focusing on player and coach development and presents at national soccer events. In a volunteer capacity David operates a youth soccer program for player's age 3 to 11 in Connecticut and Rhode Island.



## **SARI ROSE, AUTHOR OF STAGE 2**

Assistant Technical Director for Coaching and Player Development, North Carolina Youth Soccer

Sari works full time in youth development and coach education. Soccer has been a significant part of Sari's life and has been involved as a player, coach and administrator. Rose had a stellar career at Wake Forest where she studied for bachelors degree in politics and religion. As a four-year varsity letter winner Sari was the starting goalkeeper for the first ever Wake Forest women's soccer team. Sari spent 7 years as an NCAA Division I College Assistant Coach and Recruiting Coordinator, taught English and social studies for two years at High School and traveled with the US State Department to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Palestine to promote youth sports. Amongst her numerous qualifications, Sari has achieved NSCAA Advanced Diploma, NSCAA Regional Goalkeeping, USSF National Youth License and USSF B License. Sari is the Youth Girls Representative on the NSCAA Board of Directors.



## **IAN BARKER, AUTHOR STAGE 3**

Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA

Ian has held leadership positions with US Youth Soccer and NSCAA and he has had extensive experience at youth and college levels. Ian coached for 21 seasons with the men's programs at the University of Wisconsin and Macalester College, before becoming NSCAA Director of Coaching Education in 2012. Ian was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Minnesota Youth Soccer Association for 10 years and is a Head Coach of Region II Boys Olympic Development Program. Ian has extensive international coaching experience, including: New Zealand, Brazil, Italy, Uganda, Spain, Argentina, Costa Rica and Germany. Ian's qualifications are extensive and he holds the USSF 'A' License, NSCAA Premier Diploma and NSCAA Master Coach Diploma. Ian graduated from University of Warwick with a Bachelors Degree in Philosophy and Literature and a Post Graduate Certificate of Education in English.



## **ROBERT PARR, AUTHOR OF STAGE 4**

Director of Coaching for the Arkansas State Soccer Association and NSCAA Club Standards Project Consultant

Robert Parr has spent 27 years in the game as a coach and program director at both the youth and adult levels. He holds a USSF A license, NSCAA Premier Diploma, and a USSF National Youth Coaching license. Previously, he served as the Director of Coaching and WPSL Head Coach for the Puerto Rico Capitals FC, the first international franchise to compete in the Women's Premier Soccer League. From 2003-2008, he was the Head Women's Soccer Coach at Georgia College & State University and also coached for the Georgia State Soccer Association Olympic Development Program. Previously, Robert was the Director of Training for the American Soccer Club "Eagles", South Texas Men's State Team Coach and a South Texas YSA State Staff Coach for both the Olympic Development Program and the Coaching Education Program. He is the co-creator of SoccerROM.com and he has helped author or edit 3 soccer-related books.



## **TONY ENGLUND, AUTHOR OF STAGE 5**

Assistant Director of Coaching at Sporting St. Croix Soccer Club and Academy

Tony has over twenty four years of high-level coaching experience. For over a decade, Tony has worked is a Director of Coaching capacity and is the Assistant Director of Coaching at Sporting St. Croix Soccer Club and Academy. Tony is the High School Boys Coach for Mahtomedi High School, leading then to the State Championship quarter finals in 2014. Tony has been An NSCAA Associate Staff Coach since 2001 and holds more than a dozen NSCAA coaching awards. He has a masters degree in diplomatic and military history from the University of Minnesota. He is a frequent presenter at symposiums and clinics in the Midwest, he is also the author of four popular soccer coaching books, including 'Style and Domination: A Tactical Analysis of FC Barcelona' that is sold in over 30 countries. Tony's most recent book is 'The Art of the Duel - Elite 1vs1 Training, focuses on a most critical aspect of the modern game, the importance of winning an 'battle 1v1 over an opponent.

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# VOLUME 1 - INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Coach,

On behalf of the National Soccer Coaches Association of America, we would like to thank you for purchasing this '**Complete Soccer Coaching Curriculum for 3-18 year old Players**'. Packed with 100 coaching activities, curriculum diagrams and an abundance of coaching tips, our approach to player development is constructed around a 5 Stage Model. This manual focuses on all 5 Stages, 3-18 year old players and is an excellent resource for an experienced and novice coach alike.

The manual supports NSCAA Player Development Curriculum Diploma Course Season 1, an eLearning program offered by National Soccer Coaches Association of America. To learn more about NSCAA eLearning, visit [www.NSCAA.com/eLearning](http://www.NSCAA.com/eLearning). NSCAA is committed to delivering coaching education in a variety of methods – methods that reflect different learning styles and interest levels of our members. Presenting vibrant and engaging content in a convenient and low cost elearning format to supplement and enhance existing NSCAA courses and events is a priority.

It is now possible for a coach, at their convenience, to participate in highly informative and tremendously interesting courses and presentations and receive formal recognition/credit for participation. Benefits of eLearning are considerable, both for the individual and NSCAA. Expect to see many more low cost opportunities in the near future to engage with top professional educators without the need to leave your home, office or local library.

There are 4 manuals now available to support NSCAA Player Development Curriculum Diploma Course Season 1:

1. **Soccer Coaching Curriculum for 3-8 year old Players – Volume 1:** with activity contributions from David Newbery, eLearning Coordinator, NSCAA and Sari Rose, Assistant Technical Director of Coaching and Player Development, North Carolina Youth Soccer.
2. **Soccer Coaching Curriculum for 6-11 year old Players – Volume 1:** with activity contributions from Sari Rose, Assistant Technical Director of Coaching and Player Development, North Carolina Youth Soccer and Ian Barker, Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA.
3. **Soccer Coaching Curriculum for 12-18 year old Players – Volume 1:** with activity contributions from Robert Parr, Director of Coaching, Arkansas State Soccer Association and Tony Englund, Author of FC Barcelona - Style and Domination.
4. **Complete Soccer Coaching Curriculum for 3-18 year old Players – Volume 1:** includes all 5 stages of development in one manual.

We hope you enjoy the manual. Please don't hesitate to provide us with feedback relating to the webinars, manual and discussions.

Kind Regards,

David Newbery and Ian Barker



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## INTRODUCTION - CURRICULUM DESIGN

The term 'Curriculum' is most commonly associated with teaching and school education. In general terms, an educational curriculum consists of everything that promotes intellectual, personal, social and physical development of the participants. When transferred to sport, the term curriculum is usually related to a book of activities and games organized in such a way to aid the coach plan for a practice session. Rarely do these curriculum books engage the reader in a rationale for selecting such activities, or describe how coaching methodology is as important as the activities themselves. Unfortunately this approach usually leads to very low adherence by the coaches – particularly if subsequent coaching sessions do not realize the outcomes suggested in the text.

In the context of youth soccer, learning is often left to chance. Clubs and coaches seem satisfied to accept the major benefits of participation as activity and having fun. Although these outcomes are very beneficial to the child, wider ranging results can also be realized through a structured and organized program – a 'true' curriculum. Soccer participation offers children experiences to

develop confidence, self esteem, knowledge, physical development and in some cases the opportunity to participate in elite level competition at High School and College.

The NSCAA Player Development Curriculum details the framework, aims, objectives and content that creates tremendous value and helps to raise standards, performance and expectations. The curriculum includes approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, quality of relationships between coach and the player and the values embodied by the club.

### NSCAA APPROACH TO CURRICULUM DESIGN

In partnership with practitioners and curriculum experts, NSCAA has developed an approach to curriculum design based upon three key elements:

1. Element 1: Curriculum Aims
2. Element 2: Curriculum Organization
3. Element 3: Curriculum Evaluation

## ELEMENT 1 WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

The NSCAA Player Development Curriculum provides an opportunity to create a relevant, coherent and engaging environment for all players, parents and coaches. Having clear purposes representing the club's hopes and desires for the players is an important starting point. Purposes not only provide a reference point for decision making but also a direction on how learning experiences are to be organized.

### Curriculum Purposes

The purposes of the NSCAA Player Development Curriculum are:

1. Establish an entitlement – for every child entering the program irrespective of social background, wealth, gender or differences in ability.
2. Establishes standards – at each stage of development so progress of players and coaches can be monitored, goals and improvement targets can be established and players can be selected for the appropriate development groups.
3. Promotes continuity and coherence – facilitates the transition of players between teams and phases of skill development, and provides a framework for coaches to adhere to.
4. Promotes understanding for parents and players – increases understanding and confidence in the player development philosophy and coaching team.

### Curriculum Aims

The NSCAA Player Development Curriculum aims to:

1. Provide attainment standards for measuring coach and player performance
2. Reflect best practice
3. Promote intellectual, social, personal and physical development
4. Establish high expectations for all constituents
5. Identifies outcomes relating to skills, knowledge and other performance criteria
6. Reflects the vision and mission of NSCAA
7. Provide equal opportunity for all players to learn and achieve

# THE BIG PICTURE CURRICULUM

## PURPOSE, AIMS AND OUTCOMES

1. What is the purpose of the curriculum?	<b>Aims</b>	Equality of Opportunity	Establishing standards	Continuity and coherence	Promotes understanding	Pathway (3-18+ year old players)
	<b>Outcomes</b>	Achieve soccer standards	Achieve academic, social and health aims	Commitment to learning	Confident learners	Individual and team success
	<b>Focus</b>		Skill development (individual and team)	Knowledge and understanding (e.g. identifying visual cues and tactical awareness)	Attitudes and attributes (e.g. sportsmanship, respect, and confidence)	
2. How is the curriculum structured?	<b>Content</b>	Fundamental movement skills	Tactical awareness and understanding	Physical and mental preparation	Academic and social responsibility	Fundamental soccer skills
	<b>Methodology</b>	Practical and theory	Individual and team assessment	Guided practice	Self-discovery	Directed and modeling
	<b>Supporting knowledge</b>	Cognitive development and mental acumen	Biological development, growth and maturation	Emotional development, confidence and self-esteem	Nutrition, balanced diet and hydration	Physical fitness, speed, agility, balance and coordination
	<b>Learning environment</b>	Team practices, positional instruction and optimal sessions	Street soccer and unstructured practice	Competition (e.g. 11 v 11 and small-sided games)	Tournaments and festivals	Indoor training and games
3. Are the aims being achieved?	<b>Evaluation</b>	Skill acquisition (Against performance standards)	Team selections (Tryout process combined with regular seasonal assessments)	Talent identification (Planning for exceptional talent)	Knowledge and understanding (Decision-making and tactical awareness)	360 Review (Parents, players, coaches, and administrators)

# COMPETENCY MATRIX

Stage of Development	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3			Stage 4			Stage 5			
Age in years	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<b>DRIBBLING SKILLS CONTINUED</b>																
Running with the ball				-			+									
Feints and dribble		-						+								
Beating an opponent			-					+								
Escaping an opponent			-					+								
<b>RECEIVING</b>																
Control - Foot			-							+						
Control - Thigh					-						+					
Control - Chest						-						+				
Control - Head						-						+				
<b>PASSING</b>																
Ground - Inside of foot - 5 yards				-				+								
Ground - Inside of foot - 10 yards					-				+							
Ground - Inside of foot - 20 yards						-					+					
Ground - Instep						-				+						
Long pass						-						+				
Chip/Lofted pass							-						+			
Swerve pass - inside of foot							-							+		
Swerve pass - outside of foot							-								+	
Crossing							-									+
<b>SHOOTING</b>																
Instep			-						+							
Half volley						-						+				
Volley						-							+			

Competency based coaching: this approach suggests performance improvements are acquired progressively - meaning, competency in basic skills/knowledge must be achieved before progressing to more complex skills and concepts. With this in mind, the Competency Matrix helps coaches to know when players should be 'Introduced' (-) to a skill/concept and when players should be expected to demonstrate 'Competency' (+).

# PLAYER DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM MODEL



Player Development Continuum: Development occurs on a continuum where development is more important than the chronological age of the player. Developmental differences between players of the same age are common place and can correlate to +/- 2 years of chronological age. Thus, in a mixed ability group of 10 year old players, it is feasible to have players performing at a level of an average 8 year old and an average 12 year old - a 4 year development range.

5 STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT MODEL																
Age in years	0-3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Bayli LTAD	Active start			Fundamentals			Learning to train			Training to train			Training to compete			
<b>Stage of Development</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>			<b>Stage 2</b>			<b>Stage 3</b>			<b>Stage 4</b>			<b>Stage 5</b>			
Age groups	U4-U6			U7-U9			U10-U12			U13-U15			U16-U19			
Soccer age (development)	2 years +/-			2 years +/-			2 years +/-			2 years +/-			2 years +/-			
Coaching time per year	40-90 hours			100-120 hours			150-320 hours			150-320 hours			150-540 hours			
Developmental focus	Social			Technical			Technical			Technical			Tactical			
	Physical			Social			Social			Tactical			Psychological			
	Technical			Physical			Tactical			Physical			Technical			
	Psychological			Tactical			Physical			Psychological			Physical			
	Tactical			Psychological			Psychological			Social			Social			
Specialist training	No positions			Attack and defend			Specialist positions			Groups and units			Whole team			
Players per session	12			12 to 15			12 to 18			12 to 18			18 to 22			
Length of session	30 to 45 mins			45 to 60 mins			60 to 90 mins			75 to 90 mins			75 to 90 mins			
Training to game ratio	Training only			4:1			3:1			3:1			2:1			
Training format	1v1 to 3v3			1v1 to 5v5			1v1 to 8v8			4v4 to 11v11			4v4 to 11v11			
Game format	Training only			3v3 to 5v5			5v5 to 8v8			7v7 to 11v11			11v11			
Player assessment frequency	Once per season			2 per year			3-4 per year			3-4 per year			4+ per year			
Coach certification	NSCAA L1-3			NSCAA L1-3			NSCAA L3-6			NSCAA National			NSCAA National +			



## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Physical and emotional changes that occur as people mature affect all aspects of life, including sport. A child centered coach needs to understand the different phases of development and how they can affect sports performance – particularly coaches of young athletes. Coaches need to consider not only the player’s physical needs but also their social, emotional and cognitive needs. Adapting teaching methodology and content to meet the player’s needs significantly improve their progress in soccer. Training, competition, and recovery programs should be designed to match the physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional development of each player. Ethics, fair play and character building should also be taught according to each child’s ability to understand these concepts at different ages.

Discussions about development center around two factors - Growth and Maturation: ‘Growth’ refers to measurable changes such as height, weight and fat percentage. ‘Maturation’ refers to more subtle qualitative adaptations, such as cartilage changing to bone. Noticeable and subtle changes in growth and maturation are referred to as development, and these include social, emotional, intellectual, and motor performance. There is also a distinction between chronological age (days and years since birth) and development age (the degree of physical, mental, cognitive, and emotional maturity). The development age of the player is of primary importance to the successful implementation of the NSCAA Player Development Curriculum. As a player’s developmental age can differ by as much as two years from their chronological age, it is important that all content and teaching methodologies are appropriate to development. For example, a player who is 12 calendar years old could be 10 to 14 in developmental age.

Knowing if a player is an early, average, or late developer is critically important in adopting an approach to coaching. This knowledge will provide the basis for determining the starting point and capacity of a player to absorb information and perform. Most importantly, appreciating where a player is situated along the Player Development Continuum allows for the coach to plan for individual needs. Failure to recognize development cues can contribute to several negative outcomes, including selecting teams based on size, strength and speed. Research has concluded that children born in the first third of the year (i.e. January to April for sports using the calendar year) have a statistically significant advantage over children born near the end of the year. However, research also concludes that children with late birthdays eventually draw alongside their older peers and in many cases surpass performance levels. Unfortunately, many average and late developers do not reach their full soccer potential when they are passed-over at age 10, 11 or 12 and don’t receive good coaching, patience and perseverance.

The development considerations for each stage in the curriculum are explored in the ‘Stage’ sections of this curriculum.

## CHILD CENTERED CURRICULUM

Central to the theme of Player Development is the concept of ‘Child-centered’ learning. The focus of the NSCAA Player Development Curriculum is the need of individual players (child) – first and foremost. The education environment is constructed to focus on the player’s, abilities, interests, and learning styles and the coach performs as the facilitator. At each stage of development the player should actively participate in creating learning experiences. Individual performance outcomes should largely direct coaching content and activities. Conversely, ‘Coach-centered’ approaches have the coach as the central director and players in a passive, receptive role.

A ‘Child-Centered Coach’ uses a variety of techniques to engage the players in thought and discussion. One technique used consistently is questioning. Questions give children an opportunity to solve a problem and typically players try hard to solve it. Solutions generated to address the issues are theirs and subsequently players take greater ownership than if they were told what to do, when to do it and how to do it. Solving problems through questioning enables players to explore, discover, create and generally experiment with a variety of techniques and tactical processes.

There are several approaches to help players reflect on their learning while practicing and playing games:

- + Skill questions develop purposeful feedback and skill awareness. Skill questions include what and where. For example, What happened to the ball when you lean back? Where did your head finish when you took that shot?
- + Tactical questions develop decision making and problem solving with respect to the strategies of the game/activity. Tactical questions include how and why. For example, how can you and your teammate work together to get into a position to score a goal? Why did you run faster this time?
- + Review questions develop thinking skills to help modify activities to make it more challenging, enjoyable and inclusive. For example, what did you enjoy about this activity? What would you change about this activity? What did you learn about this activity?

## STAGE 1 - EARLY CHILDHOOD (3-5 YEARS OLD)

The introduction to soccer stage coincides with the onset of independence from parents and increased self confidence in most children. Children also start to begin to play cooperatively with others. This does not mean however parents should fully pass the responsibility for learning to the club coach. The parent has a very important role in encouraging the child to play at home. Practice sessions should occur once or twice per week and players should be encouraged to play multiple sports and activities.

### DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

- + Players should learn the fundamental movement skills of running (forwards, backwards and sideways), jumping, turning, twisting and bending (lowering center of gravity to form a solid base).
- + The ball should be involved all the time.

#### KEY DEVELOPMENT POINTS FOR CHILDREN IN STAGE 1

Physically	Psychological/Social	Cognitive/Mental
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tires easily and recovers quickly.</li> <li>2. Learns best by being physically active.</li> <li>3. Needs to repeat activities that are well known and mastered.</li> <li>4. Mainly uses large muscle movement, fine motor skills developing, but more difficult to master.</li> <li>5. Basic motor skill developing, needs to combine skills in simple games.</li> <li>6. Boys and girls have equal ability.</li> <li>7. Center of gravity is higher, resulting in issues with balance.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Likes to play/work on their own, egocentric.</li> <li>2. Easily motivated.</li> <li>3. Enjoys initiating activities.</li> <li>4. Enjoys being praised for endeavors. Sensitive to criticism and does not enjoy failure.</li> <li>5. Developmentally advanced players start to become more independent and attempt to exercise more control over own environment.</li> <li>6. Limited attention span, 15-20 minutes.</li> <li>7. Frustration can come quickly.</li> <li>8. Has a strong desire for affection and attention from adults.</li> <li>9. Seeks social approval.</li> <li>10. Experimental, exploratory behavior is part of development.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increasingly able to use visual instructions (play them out of their mind), although observing demonstrations is more concrete.</li> <li>2. Beginning to take into account ideas and emotions of others.</li> <li>3. Inconsistent attention span.</li> <li>4. Moving from being adventurous to be cautious.</li> <li>5. Interests can be short and quick changing.</li> <li>6. Imaginative, spontaneous and creative.</li> </ol>

### DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS TRANSLATED TO COACHING PLAYERS IN STAGE 1

Child centered coaching requires a commitment on behalf of the coach/adult to embrace a natural starting point in development for each player. The coaches role is not to create parity (all players the same), but to nurture them to a level consistent with their individual commitment, attitude, enthusiasm and talent. To ensure participation in soccer is enjoyable for players, adults, parents and coaches of 4 and 5 year olds need to embrace and work with the development characteristics, and not against them.

#### TRANSLATED TO PLAYER DEVELOPMENT THIS MEANS

1. Significant emphasis on fundamental movement skills – running, jumping, skipping, throwing etc
2. Focusing on ball familiarization and dribbling skills – one ball per child.
3. Sessions that are simple, fun, have variety and use large muscle.
4. Selecting activities that do not place undue stress on the muscles, bones and energy systems of the body.
5. Repeating activities regularly – constant change and insufficient reinforcement negatively affects learning.
6. Including activities that take a short time to complete (5-10 minutes), due to short attention span.
7. Camouflaging and concealing technical information by using names, characters and stories.
8. Encouraging trial and error, keeping instruction to a minimum.
9. Using equipment and props to increase complexity but continue to make the sessions fun – hurdles, hoops, ladders, bean bags, etc.
10. Include competitive games, but emphasize successes other than just winning (i.e. effort).
11. Providing considerable encouragement.
12. Keep instruction to a minimum and activity regular.
13. Include ‘games and matches’ in every session – no need for a separate day for games.
14. Avoiding temptations to place players in specialist positions (i.e. full back, forward or goal keeper).
15. Continually reinforce effort and constantly praise players.

# SPIDERS WEB

## STAGES COVERED BY ACTIVITY

Stages 1, 2 & 3 - 3-11 year old players

## THEMES & COMPETENCIES

### Theme:

- + 1v1 attacking and defending
- + Dribbling
- + Ball mastery.

### Competencies:

- + Turns and feints- basic
- + Dribbling basics
- + Fundamental movement skills
- + Beating and escaping an opponent
- + Attacking as an individual
- + Confidence and concentration
- + Defending as an individual.

## WHY USE IT

Spider's Web introduces young players to the concept of dribbling to space within a confined area. As more players join the 'web', less open space is available - an excellent teaching moment for the coach to discuss head up, looking for space and changing direction to avoid pressure.

## SET UP

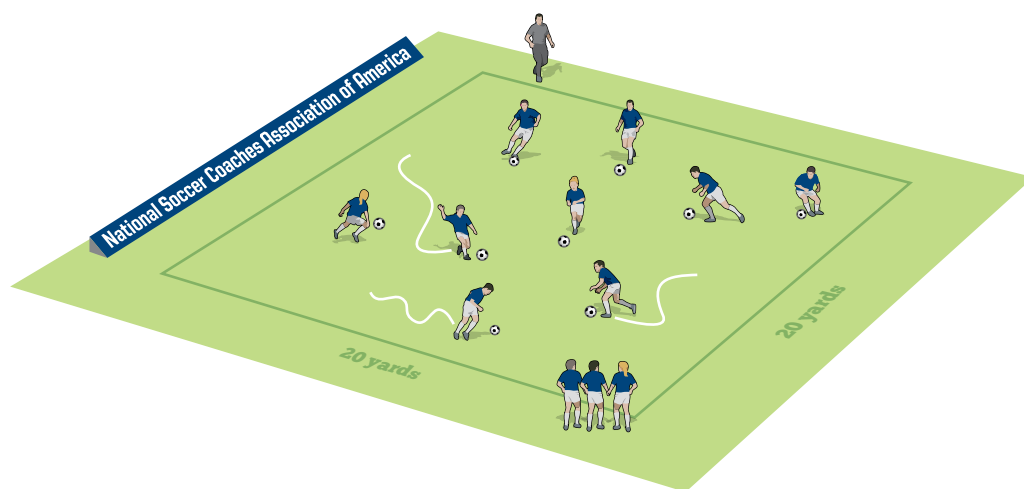
20 x 20 yard square. 9 players each have a ball and can dribble anywhere within the square. 3 players start the web by linking arms and the 'web' can move anywhere in the square as long as arms are linked together.

## HOW TO PLAY

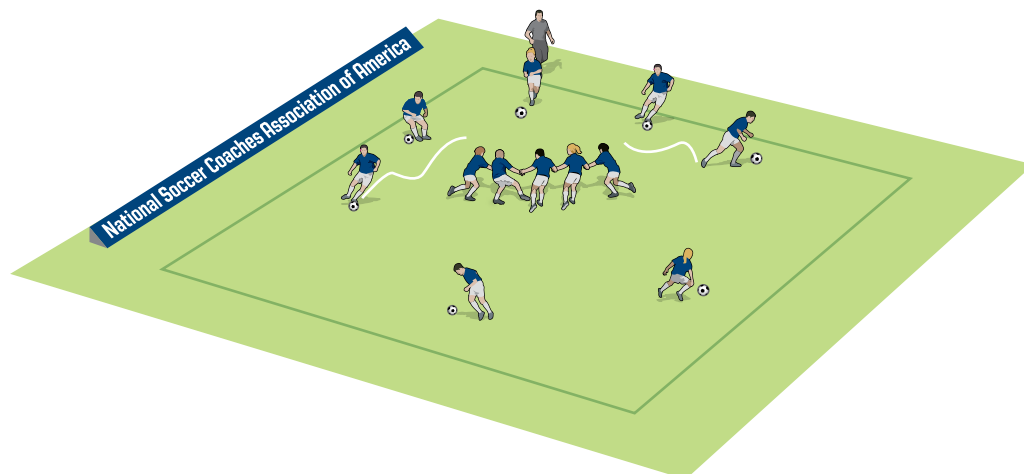
Story: The players are on safari in the dangerous Amazon jungle. Huge spiders have made a massive web and are hoping to capture all the players. On the command of 'GO', the web starts to move around the jungle (square). If any part of the web touches the player's ball, the player must join the web and kick their ball out of the area. The game continues until all the players are caught in the web.

## COACHING NOTES

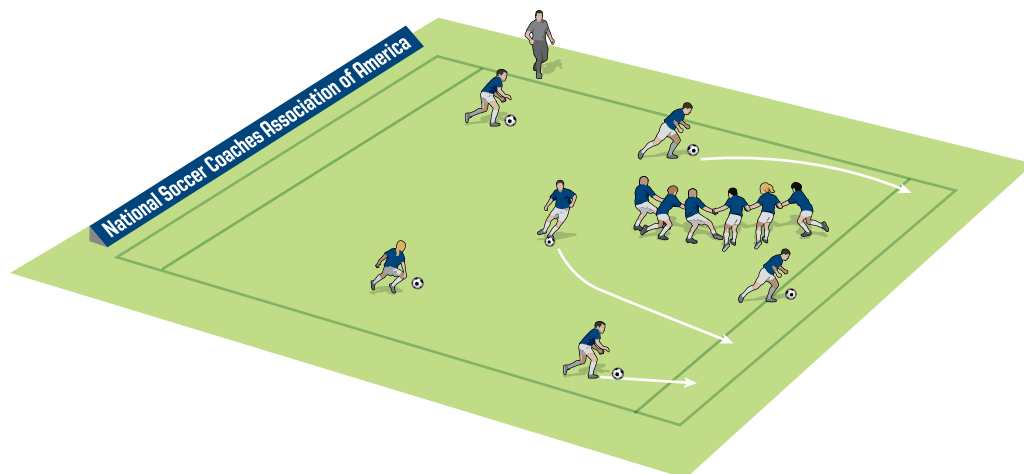
- + Coaching objectives - players dribbling with the laces and 'raise their heads' to see where space exists.
- + Coaching tip - Set a touch-target. My goal for Stage 1 is 10 touches per minute per player - 300 touches in 30 minutes
- + Adaptations - make the game a direction activity, by adding a safety zone at each end of the jungle.



- + 3 players link arms to start the spiders web.
- + Remaining players dribble a ball in the jungle.



- + The spider's web grows in size if a ball is touched.
- + Players must dribble into space.
- + Players in web must keep arms linked.



- + Add 2 safety zones to make the game more 'directional'.
- + Play becomes more predictable.

# ISLAND DRIBBLING

## STAGES COVERED BY ACTIVITY

Stages 2 & 3 - 6-11 year old players

## THEMES & COMPETENCIES

### Theme:

- + Dribbling and turns.
- + Attacking as an individual.
- + Defending as an individual.

### Competencies:

- + Dribbling basics.
- + Turning basics.
- + Feints and dribble.
- + Beating an opponent.
- + Escaping an opponent.

## WHY USE IT

This activity develops player's confidence - using moves to beat a defender and improving player's vision

## SET UP

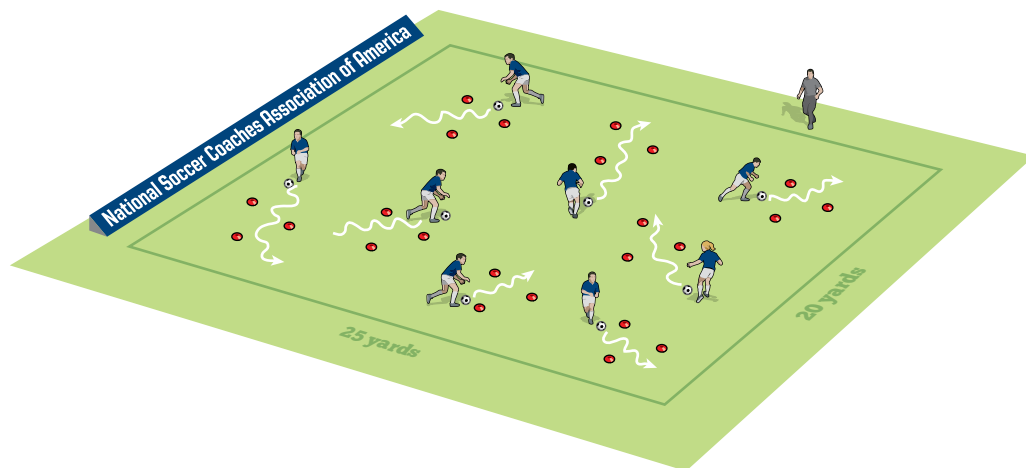
20x25 playing area marked with cones in the corners. Use three cones to make a triangle or island and create 8 islands in the grid. Each player will start with a ball.

## HOW TO PLAY

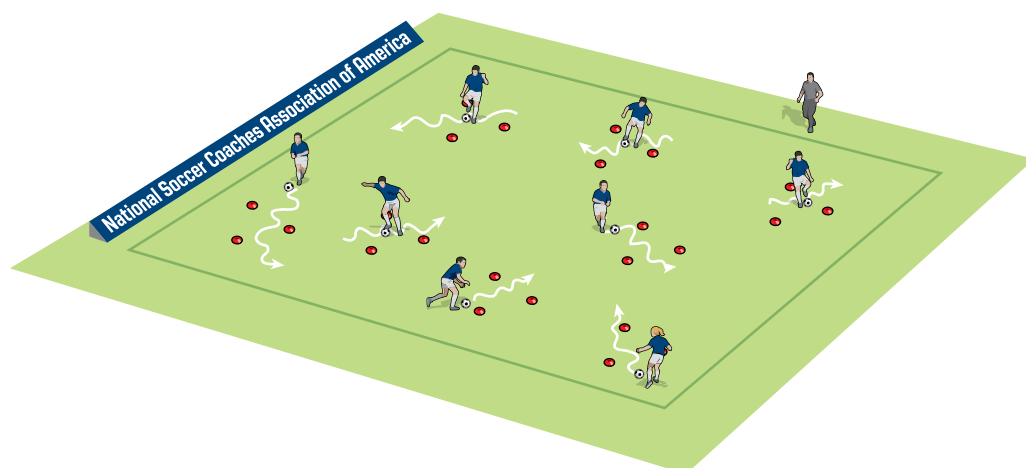
The first few rounds of play the players will try to dribble through as many islands as possible in 45 seconds. In subsequent rounds player will have to perform a move to beat or escape a defender in the center of the island: such as inside cut, scissor, step over, etc.

## COACHING NOTES

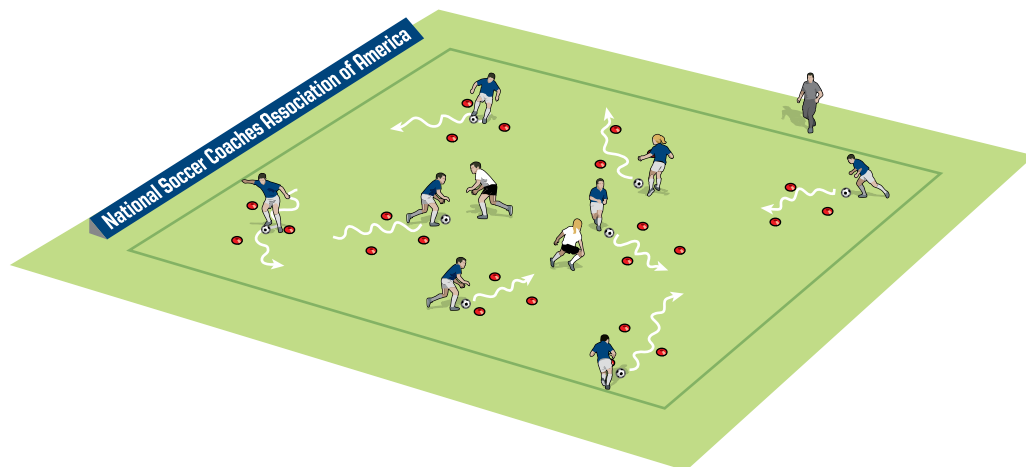
- + Main coaching objectives - develop confidence on the ball and quickness when performing moves.
- + Coaching tips - the triangle/island encourages players to dribble in one side and out another side. Emphasize that players should accelerate after the move.
- + Adaptations - add two 'taggers' in the final stage to increase difficulty



- + Players look to dribble through islands as fast as possible in 45 seconds.
- + Can players improve on their last score?



- + Players now need to perform a move in the center of the island.
- + Coach can tell them the first few moves and then ask the players to come up with their own moves.



- + Have two players try to win the ball from those that are dribbling.
- + Once they win the ball they drop the training vest.
- + Players may stop on an island and are safe for 5 seconds from taggers.

# MICRO SOCCER

## STAGES COVERED BY ACTIVITY

Stages 3, 4 & 5 - 9-18 year old players

## THEMES & COMPETENCIES

### Theme:

- + Passing combinations.
- + Attacking transition.
- + Defending in pairs and groups.
- + Shooting

### Competencies:

- + Short passing along the ground (5-15 yards).
- + Receiving using the feet.
- + Mobility on and off the ball.
- + Attacking and defending as an individual.
- + Attacking and defending in pairs and small groups.
- + Attacking support.
- + Shooting technique

## WHY USE IT

The activity encourages speed of play and positive transitions to attack.

## SET UP

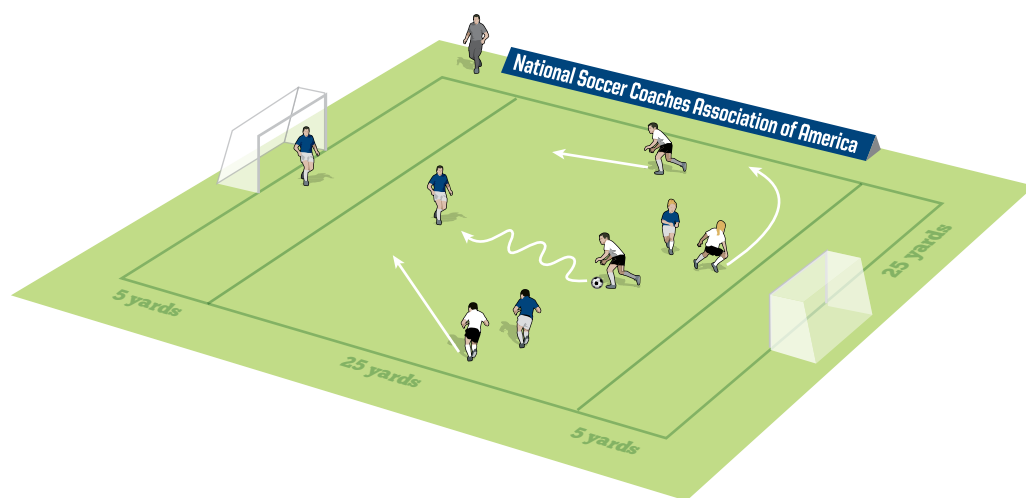
35x25 yard field with 5 yard end zones and small goals. Play is 4v4.

## HOW TO PLAY

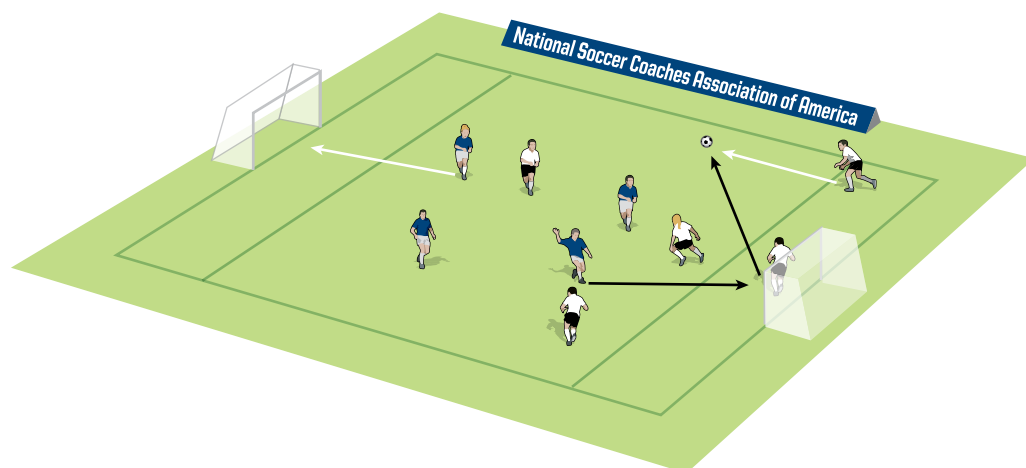
The game commences with the coach passing to one of the teams of 4. The defending team must drop one player back into the end zone, to leave 3 defenders against 4 attackers. When the ball is turned over, the team losing possession must drop a player into the defensive zone and the attacking team can attack at full strength - 4v3.

## COACHING NOTES

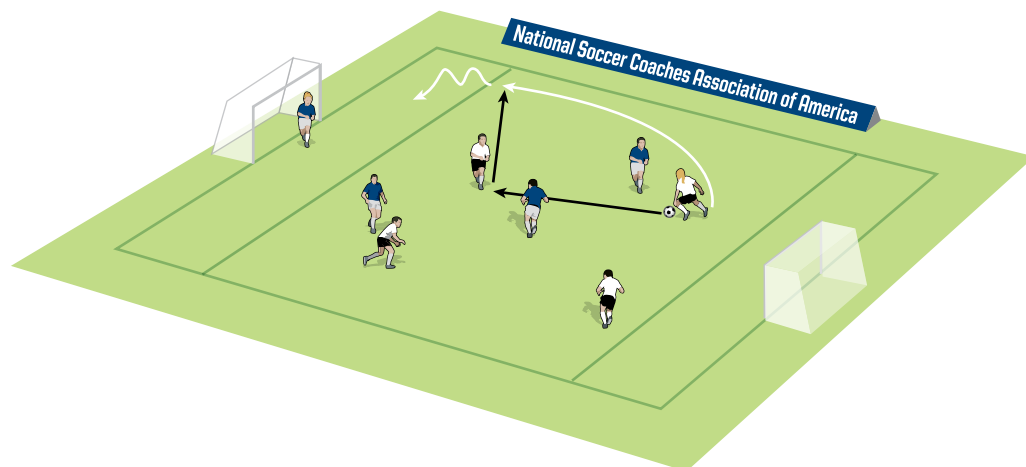
- + Coaching objectives - to get players to play fast and positive in attacking transition.
- + Coaching tip - have a good supply of balls so play is continuous and fast paced.
- + Adaptations - allow the attacking team to penetrate the end zone on the dribble.



- + The player with the ball commits the opponent on the dribble.
- + The other 3 attacking players move wide and with good movement get open.
- + 4 white players establish a shape to stretch the 3 blue players.



- + The blue team's strike at goal is saved.
- + White team quickly transition with an outlet pass.
- + Simultaneously, one of the blue players immediately recovers to the goal.



- + The white team breaks down the well-organized defense.
- + A give and go eliminates a blue opponent allowing the white player to get into the space behind.

# HALF FIELD BARRIER SCRIMMAGE

## STAGES COVERED BY ACTIVITY

Stages 3, 4 & 5 - 9-18 year old players

## THEMES & COMPETENCIES

### Theme:

- + Transition and attacking rhythm
- + Switching the point of attack
- + Counter attacking and finishing breakaways

### Competencies:

- + Short and medium passing
- + Receiving using different surfaces of the body.
- + Mobility on and off the ball.
- + Attacking in pairs and small groups.
- + Defending in pairs and small groups.
- + Shooting technique

## WHY USE IT

This match-related game requires teams to attack down the wings, and also challenges players to recognize the right moments to change the point of attack.

## SET UP

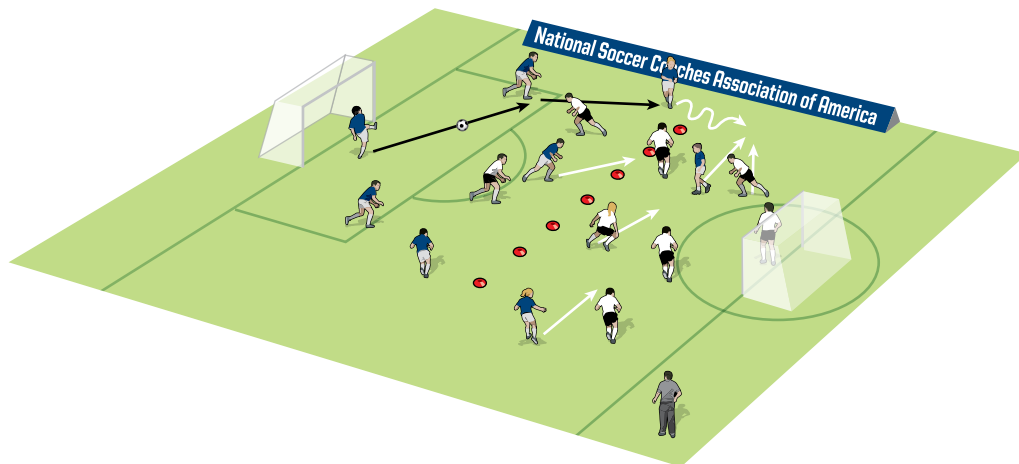
A goal on the halfway line and another goal opposite on the goal line. Cone off a 40-yard-wide barrier midway between the goals. Divide players into 2 teams and play 8v8 in the half field - a goalkeeper in each goal. One goalkeeper has a ball.

## HOW TO PLAY

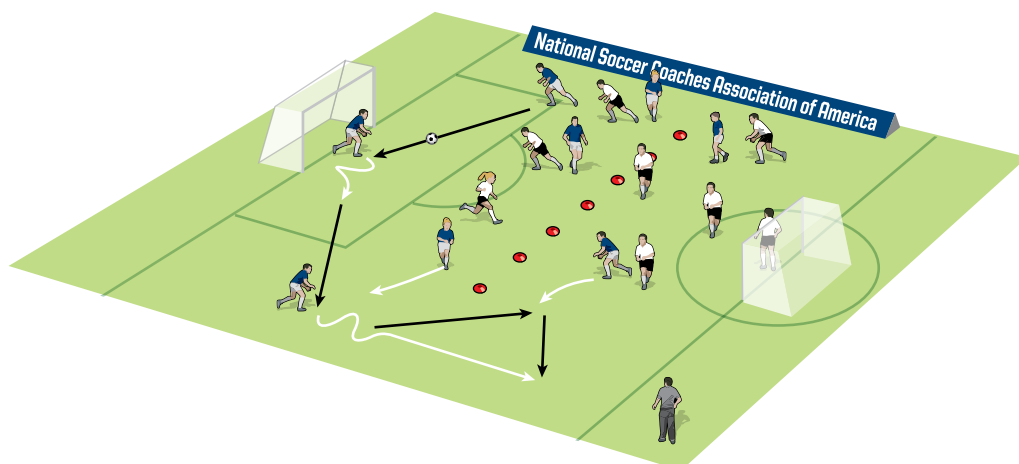
Goalkeeper starts. Players can travel through the barrier but the ball must go around it. Goalkeepers can distribute the ball only by throwing it. If the ball crosses over or through the barrier, then play is restarted at the spot where the ball was last touched by a player on the opposing team. Play within the marked touchline and goal line boundaries, and enforce the offside law in each team's attacking half.

## COACHING NOTES

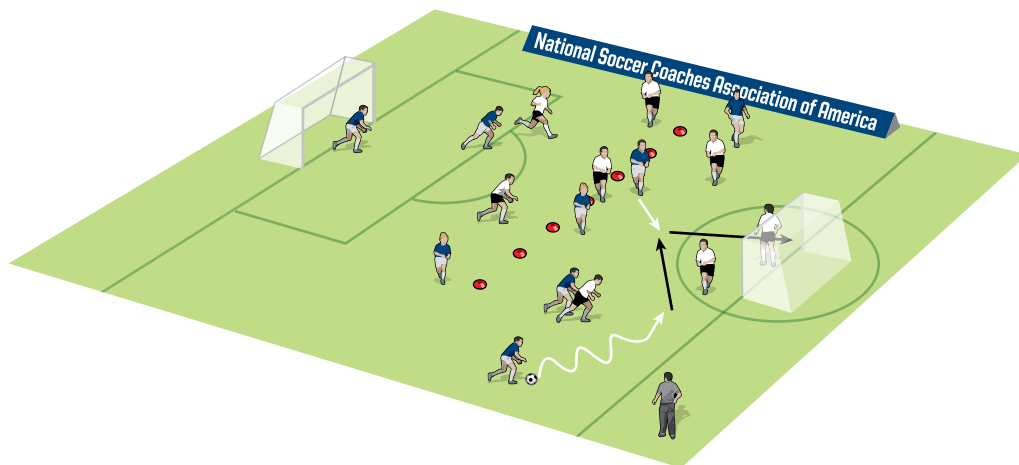
- + Coaching objectives - Look for players to play through 4 tactical lines (GK/D/MF/F) while also using the full width of the field to maximize the available attacking space.
- + Coaching tip - Require 2 forwards to stay in the attacking half so that teams can't "pack the box" defensively and have distribution outlets when they win the ball
- + Adaptations - You can open a small hole in the center of the barrier to give a third attacking option down the middle of the field.



- + The keeper initiates action with a throw.
- + Attackers look to get the ball wide, then forward.



- + When one wing is closed down, switch the point of attack quickly through the backs.



- + Get deep to the goal line to set up drop-back passes
- + A trailing teammate should finish from a good shooting angle and distance

# FLANKENSPIEL

## STAGES COVERED BY ACTIVITY

Stages 3, 4 & 5 - 9-18 year old players

## THEMES & COMPETENCIES

### Theme:

- + Group and team defending.
- + Crossing and finishing.

### Competencies:

- + Receiving.
- + Passing over medium and long distances.
- + Passing techniques - chip, lofted, driven and swerve.
- + Mobility on and off the ball.
- + Mental conditioning - decision making and speed of play.
- + Support with and without the ball.
- + Defending a cross.

## WHY USE IT

Efficient, fun and realistic cross and finish exercise.

## SET UP

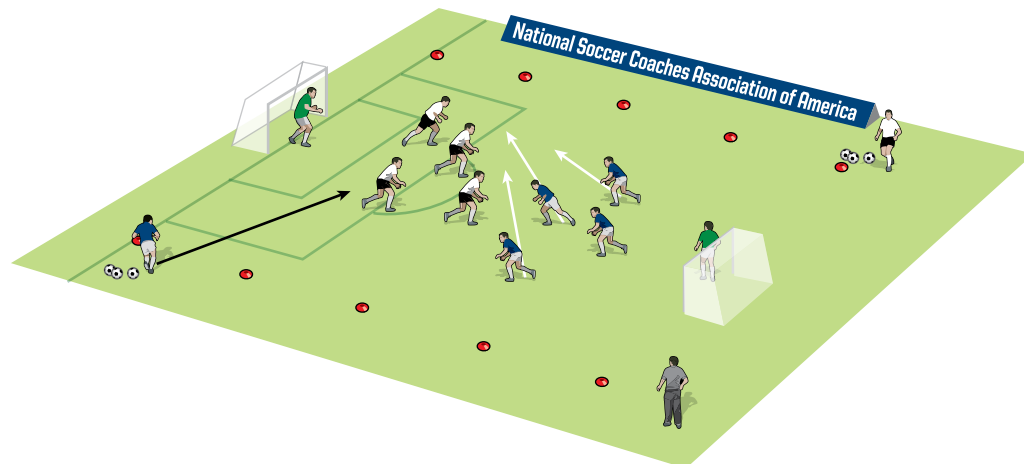
3<sup>rd</sup> field, 50 yards wide and 40 yards deep. 2 full-sized goals and a large ball supply. 2 teams of 4-5 and a server for each team in one of their attacking corners.

## HOW TO PLAY

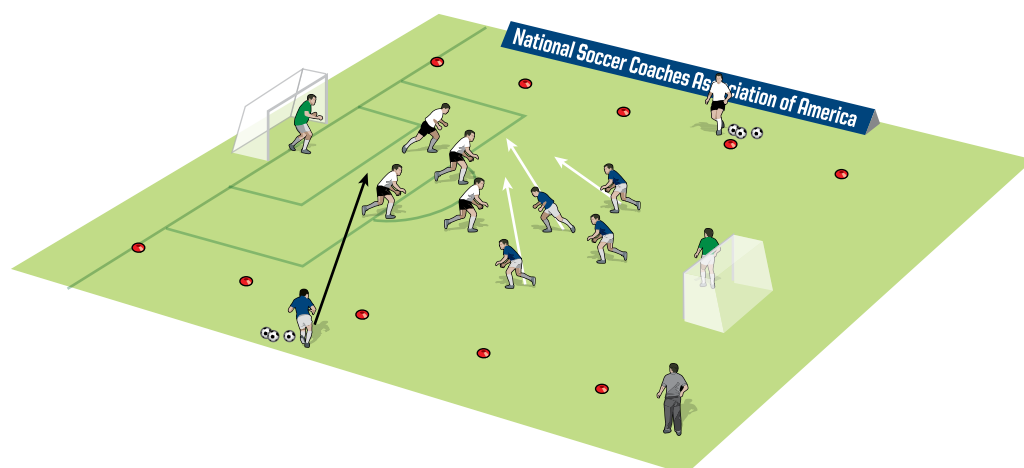
A regular game is played, but all restarts initiate a cross. A goalkeeper designated by the coach starts the game - rolling the ball to a teammate. If the ball goes out of play or a foul is committed, the player in the corner crosses the ball. The server from the corner should vary serves and the coach should emphasize the importance of quality runs into the box. Award 1 point for a goal for normal play and 2 points for a goal from a cross. When the goalkeeper gets the ball, it is dead and play starts with a cross. Play to 8 points and then change servers.

## COACHING NOTES

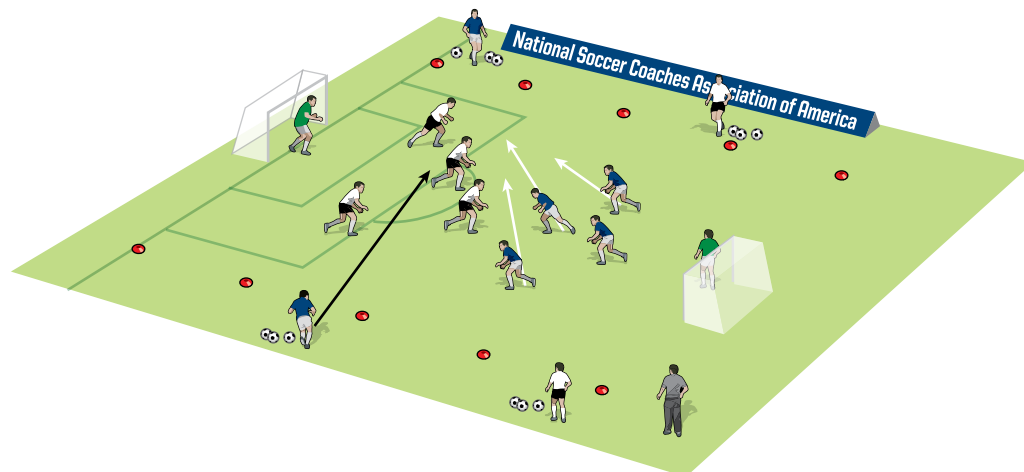
- + Objectives: Improve quality of angles and timing of runs and also technical finishing in a pressure game environment.
- + Tip: Discuss with the players the concept of 'framing the goal' - by the players not directly involved in the play moving in line with the goal posts.
- + Adaptations: Move servers up the touch line to initiate early crosses. Add recycling runs by limiting touches to finish and adding a server for each team on the opposite side.



- + Start with a regular game.
- + All restarts initiate a delivery from the corner.
- + Coach determines which team restarts and players must adjust quickly.



- + Bring the crossing position 10-20 yards from the touchline
- + Players must adjust runs and timing accordingly.



- + Add a server for each team on both sides of the field.
- + Central players must recycle runs and prepare for a second cross from the other side of the field
- + Limit finishing to 3 touches.



## **Small Sided Games (Stage 4)**

An 8v8 format – 7v7 on the field with a goal keeper is appropriate for players 11, 12, 13 and 14 years old. Smaller playing numbers such as 4v4 and 6v6 will also benefit these players. A 2-3-2 formation is recommended. A midfield line is now introduced as 2 more field players have been added to the team. Several formations are possible, but any formation used must make it easy for the players to execute the principles of play. 2-3-2, produces many triangles and places great focus on transitioning from attack to defense and defense to attack. Many tactics can now be introduced

## **Full Sided Games (Stage 5)**

11v11 format. Choosing to move from one format of the game to the next should not be a question of age, but one of readiness. Many players are not ready to make the transition to 11v11 soccer at age 13 or 14. The tactical and decision making complexities are significant – too much for some players. To this end, don't spend an inordinate amount of time trying to fix 11v11 performance issues in your team practices. Instead, find ways to focus on the developmental needs of the players and continue to reinforce simpler tactics. Remember in the modern game of soccer, defensive players often find themselves with opportunities to attack and score and should thus spend training time working with a balance between defensive and attacking practices. Equally, attacking players should be encouraged to track the opposing defenders as they make their forward runs, so a good appreciation of defensive responsibilities is important.

## **Summary of Principles and Systems**

Regardless of system or style of play, the principles will always remain the same. Successful soccer at all levels determined by one factor - 'technique'. The execution of technique and tactics are highly correlated. Limited technical abilities of the players results in limited tactical opportunities.

As a guide, use the principles of attack and defense as your blueprint for coaching youth soccer. Start with a strong individual technical focus and use the competency matrix to direct you on what is and what is not appropriate. Acquiring the fundamental building blocks of soccer is critical to the development of the player.

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