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OVERVIEW

This book contains 20 practice designs. Practices 1-12 are meant to be used in chronological order. Practices 13-20 are topic specific, and should be used as you see, either to fill in between practices or after you have already run the first 12. The topical practices cover such topics as passing/possession, shooting, defending, and others by repeating drills from previous practices that highlight whatever theme is being emphasized, with exciting new variations. This package also contains a separate drill bible that lists every drill from the 20 practices, plus multiple variations of each.

These pre-planned are designed to be fun, but also to be instructive. Without repetition, your players are unlikely to improve their skills. These practices are structured to give your players a chance to work on skills, enjoy soccer and hopefully develop a love for the game.

From the coach's perspective, these practices are very adaptive to your situation. Each practice is designed to take between an hour to an hour and a half, which will leave time to scrimmage, repeat drills and work in some of your own drills as you see fit. Still, if you chose to use this practices just the way they are you will be in great shape! Your team will learn, enjoy soccer, and you will look like a great coach.

SUITED TO YOUR SITUATION

The core of these practices will work for any team, and there are enough drills to keep your team busy for the entire season.

The drills are primarily about building ball skills and understanding of the game. Each practice has elements of skills such as dribbling, trapping, passing, and a scrimmage-like game element to go along with it. Your players will enjoy the game in a relatively unfettered sort of way.

The drill bible and variations have been included to give you the ability to speed up or slow down the pace as you see fit. Each essential skill, for example dribbling and trapping, is covered in basic and complex fashion, and you will have enough drills to alter the direction as necessary.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

Mandatory

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Soccer Balls: Make sure every player on your team brings a ball to practice. Some of these drills require every player to have their own soccer ball and if someone doesn't have a ball they would be left out. Use the opportunity to teach them a lesson about responsibility. As the coach, bring a few extras because kids are only human and will still forget, but teach them not to.

Cones: 20-30 cones should be enough

Jerseys: You will need a supply of pennies. Have at least 2 different colors, but 4 colors would be better. I suggest 8 of color A/B and 4 of colors C/D. This will give you a good mix for any situation.

Sense of Humor: Dealing with kids can be stressful and rewarding all in one. Always remember the game is all about the kids and their enjoyment of the game! Sit back and let them play. I can't stand coaches that never shut up the entire game. In my estimations, nothing has ever been solved by yelling across the field to one of your players during the game. If you have to tell a player or your team something so bad, talk to your captain or pull the player out for a quick substitution.

Patience: Not every child has the same abilities. There is no use getting angry with a player for issues related to athleticism. If it is disciplinary issues you are dealing with an entirely different situation. If it were me I would simple talk to the player once, talk to the player twice, and then talk to the parent.

Optional

Access to a soccer goal: Some drills, most specifically the shooting drills would benefit from the use of a real goal because it makes players familiar with the actual size. If this isn't possible no big deal, but a goal definitely makes practice more fun!

GENERAL PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Timing

Rather than tell you how much time each individual drill should take, I will give you broad margins for timing. Each practice should take between an hour and an hour and a half.

I will recommend that you spend at least 20 minutes in the final game element drill because this is what your players will most enjoy and what should be the most beneficial for bringing together the concepts taught during the earlier part of practice.

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Run then Stretch

Start each practice with a run and then a stretch. Make sure players stretch well and are good and limber before the first drill of the day. End each practice with a short run or sprints, followed by a quick cool down stretch.

Grouping Players into Teams and Numbers Issues

When you split your players into groups for drills that feature two opposing teams, decide which players play on which team to make sure each team is even strength.

Some drills will require different numbers of players at different times; for example, 3v3 and 5v2. Often times you will have odd numbers of kids at practice. A few suggestions for extra players include adding an extra man to each team or just the offense. You could have them play permanent offense, going with whatever team passes the ball.

If there are 12 kids at practice and were running 3v3 you would have exactly enough for two games, or with 13 you could add a player on one field on permanent offense to one game. If you had 14, you could play two games, both with a permanent offense player, or make one game 4v4. Never have players sit out or sub in, practice is about getting as many touches on the ball as possible.

Goalies

I have tried to put a few drills in each practice that can feature a goaltender, but it will be up to you to decide how to work out your goalie and get them into game shape. Many fulltime goalies have their own training regimen so talk with them and see how they would like to proceed.

Conditioning

Conditioning is a vital aspect of soccer, and I have built drills that will keep your players constantly moving about, helping their conditioning in the process. I have also suggested longer runs in certain practices, and if you want to do more or less it will be up to you to decide.

Positioning

A nice place to start might be to pass out a questionnaire asking players what they might have played in the past and what they might like to play. Of

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course you are the coach and it will be up to you to decide who plays where. Always take into account people's abilities and where they feel most comfortable to come to an optimal solution for the team and player.

Game Day Warm-Ups

The Before the 1st Game Practice we will do a quick run through of game day warm ups, among other things.

Practice 1

Dribbling- An Overview

Turning your team into adequate dribblers should be a major objective of your practice plan. Ultimately, the drills you do in practice should help your players to become more comfortable when they are carrying and possessing the ball.

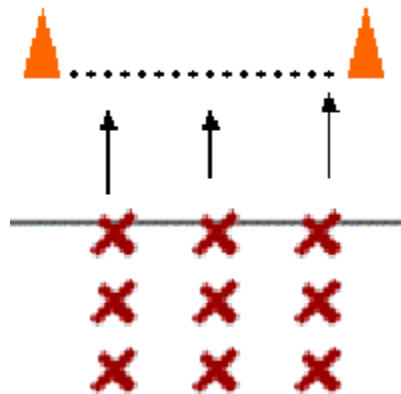
Make sure each player participates in each drill to the fullest, rather than standing around waiting for a "turn" to participate. Getting touches on the ball is at the very core of what being comfortable with the ball is all about. If players are waiting on the sidelines they are obviously not getting touches.

When players do have to wait on the outside, have them juggle.

A FEW MOVES

Overview: This is a very simple drill highlighting dribbling, and more specifically changing direction. Given the fact that most of your players probably haven't touched a soccer ball in a long time, this is a nice easy drill to warm things up after a short run and stretch.

These moves are the most basic changes of direction and all of your players should be able to perform each of them with relative ease.



Set-up

Divide your team into groups of 3. Line each group up on the touchline. Place a cone roughly 6 yards away from the front of the lines. Each group should have 1 ball.

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1. Players dribble up to the cone line, and perform each of the *changes of directions listed below.
2. After the move, players are to gather the ball within one touch, and pass it back to the front of the line.
3. Next player traps the ball, and performs the same move. First player goes to the back of the line. Repeat.

***Note:** Repeat each of these moves 8 times per person before moving onto the next one.

- **180-degree turn:** Dribble up to the cone, step on the ball and rotate their body 180 degrees and continue dribbling in the opposite direction. The motion should be fluid.
- **In-step cut:** Dribble up to the cone and cut back with the instep of the foot, and play the ball back to the front of the line.
4 right / 4 left.
- **Out-step cut:** Cut back with out-step of the foot, and play the ball back.
4 right /4 left.

Coaching Points

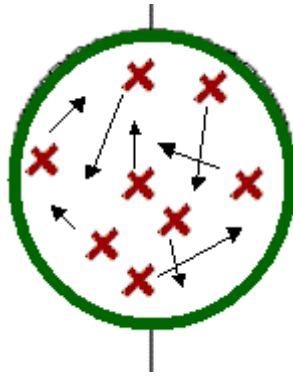
-Make sure your players learn the difference between in-step and out-step of their foot.

-Gather and release quickly: Once players change direction they should control the ball and pass it back to the front accurately, and with as few touches as possible.

CIRCLE DRIBBLERS

Overview: These moves will add to your player's arsenal of ways to escape pressure and beat defenders. I realize that some of these jukes may be a little difficult for some players to execute at this point in the season. Still these moves benefit their workout by emphasizing general body coordination and repetition of body movement.

Another reason I like this drill is because it gives your players lots of touches on the ball, which should hopefully make them more comfortable in game situations. Make sure player keep moving constantly and in a non-static direction.



Set-up

Use the center circle for a play space, or create a circle with cones that is near the same size. Each player should have a ball.

1. Players dribble using the space of the circle. Players must move in a non-static pattern, and change direction frequently.

***Note:** Allow them to dribble for 1:00 to 1:30 minutes freely, then run through each of the variation listed below.

- **All right foot:** Players should use only their right foot.
- **All left foot:** Same, only left.
- **180:** Foot on ball and change direction to go the opposite direction.
- **Step Over:** Player steps around the ball with one foot and uses the outside of the opposite foot to continue the dribble.

Coaching Points

- Encourage your players to sell the moves, as if they were really trying to beat a defender. After a change of direction, players should explode into the open space.
- Dribbling in a small confined space with lots of traffic forces players to pay attention to where they are going. They should have their heads up and avoid running into other players and their balls.
- Make sure players continue moving the entire time, staying in the circle and changing direction constantly.

ELIMINATORS

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Overview: Now it is time to add some pressure from a defender into this previously tranquil drill.

Set-up:

Stay in the Circle. Each player still should have a ball.

1. Players dribble around the circle, same as the previous drill with one exception: They now can kick other people's balls out of the circle.
2. If a ball leaves the circle, that player is eliminated. They can juggle on the outside until the round is over.

Note: Play as many rounds as you can pack into 10 minutes.

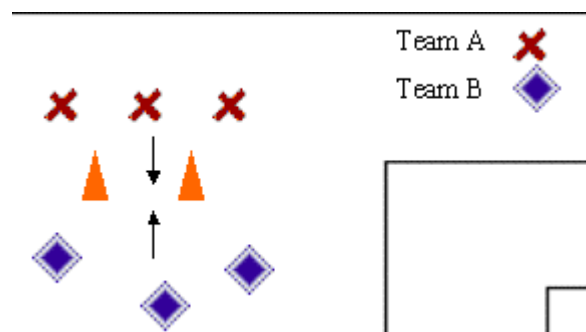
Coaching Points

-Dribbling correctly means keeping the ball close to your feet, and your head up to measure incoming threats from defenders.

-Protecting the ball: Keep the ball close to your body because it makes it harder to steal. Shielding the ball with your body is a good way to keep defenders away and force them to go after easier prey.

3V3 ONE GOAL

Overview: A very simple and active drill for your players. This one will have them passing, shooting, and playing defense.



Set-up

Form your team into groups of three players. Host as many games as you must, as always depending on how many people showed up to practice. If you need to, have a game of 4v4 or have an extra player play permanent offense.

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1. Make a small goal, roughly 3 feet.
2. One of the team scores from one side of the goal, the other team scores from the other direction.
3. Play for 7 minutes and then switch which teams play each other.

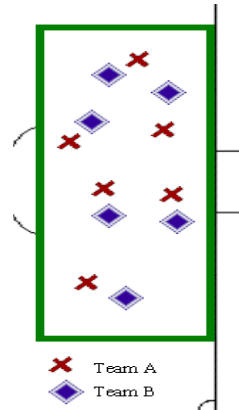
Coaching Points

-Passing Basics: Wall passes are an effective way to move around the defense, especially in this drill.

-Spread the field: Move around and get open to make the defense more exploitable. If everyone is crowded in front of the goal, it will be difficult to score.

KEEP AWAY

Overview: Possession of the ball is something that we will work on time and time again. It is one of the most important aspects of soccer because if you control the ball, you essentially control the game. Possession drills are about establishing solid passing skills, and this is a simple drill to work on this concept.



Set-up

Divide the Team into two even groups and play in the penalty box. If there is no penalty box on your practice field, make a box with cones, roughly the same size. More long than wide.

1. Players play keep away, trying to avoid losing the ball to the other team.
2. The only objective is to maintain possession of the ball.

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Note: Play keep-away for at least 15 minutes. If you have time, put a small goal on each touchline and scrimmage after you have played keep-away.

Coaching Points

-Use what they have learned: Make sure players have their heads up when they have the ball.

-Playing Hard: Make sure your players are actively moving around. This means getting open when their team has the ball, and trying to steal the ball when they don't have it.

End the Practice with a cool down stretch before letting your players go.

Practice 2

LONG RUN

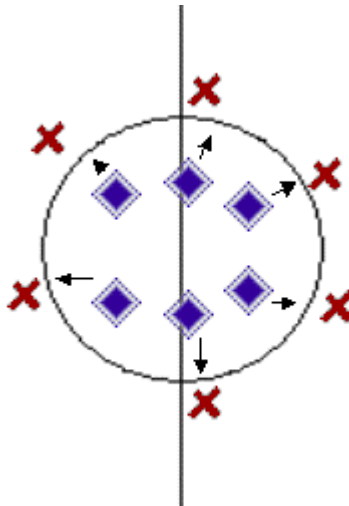
Note: Today send your players on a long run. Make them run for at least 7 minutes. Have them run laps around the field or even the park where you play. Just make sure they run for the stated amount of time.

Coaching Points

-Conditioning is vital aspect of soccer training. Although I have tried to work in plenty of running and exercise into my practice designs, it wouldn't hurt to force your players to do a little more, especially if your team plays in a more competitive league. This will be up for you to decide.

CIRCLE PASSES, VOLLEYS, AND HEADERS

Overview: Passing accurately is emphasized in this drill, and we will introduce volleys and headers.



Set-up

Divide your team into two groups. Play in the half field circle. One group spread around the outside of the field with balls (servers). The other players should be on the inside (receivers).

1. Inside players are to move about the circle, calling for passes from outside players.
2. Outside players serve a pass and inside players *pass/trap the ball and play it back to the server's feet.

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3. Inside players continue moving about the circle, calling for passes from the outside.

***Note:** Run each variation for a minute and a half and then switch inside/outside players. Do each variation once and move onto the next.

- **2 Touch Pass:** Ball on the ground. Server passes to receiver, who traps it and plays it back to the server's feet in two touches.
- **1 Touch Pass:** Ball on the ground. No extra touch for trapping.
- **Volley:** Ball in server's hands. Server throws the ball low to the inside players feet, and inside player volleys it back with the instep of the foot.
- **Headers:** Ball in server's hands. Server throws a pass in the air, and receiver heads the ball back to the server, using the front of the forehead and not with the top of the head.

Coaching Points

-Good, crisp passes from both servers and receivers: This drill only works if players can accurately pass and serve the ball to the inside players.

-Striking the ball properly: The correct way to strike a soccer ball depends on what you are trying to do with it.

Passing: If you are trying to pass it to an open teammate that is close by an instep pass would be most proper because it allows for the most control. However if you are trying to move the ball a long distance, for example crossing it into the box or switching the field, a nice hard boot with the laces would be your best option.

Shooting: When shooting, you usually want to get a little something behind it along with some movement. Straight flat shots get picked off easily by the goalkeeper. Therefore, the laces or out-step of the foot are preferable because you can strike the ball hardest and in the case of an out-step shot the ball will break away from the goalkeeper.

Trapping: The instep is the easiest place to trap the ball using your foot and allows for the most control.

Volleys: Instep or laces can both be used, just make sure you make good contact with the ball, rather than having it deflect weakly of your foot. Square your body and feet to the ball, and strike it with authority.

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In-step- Trapping or passing, the easiest way to control the ball.



Laces- Striking the ball in this fashion would elevate it.



Out-step- Notice how the toe is down. This shot would go straight or break to the outside.

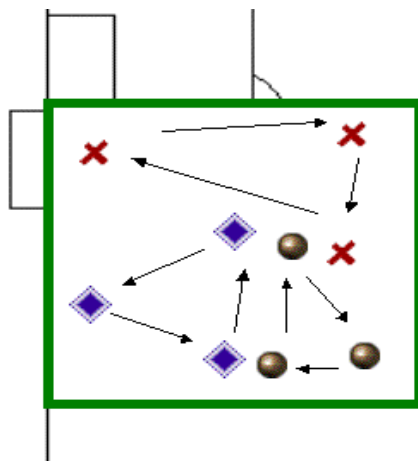
3 PLAYER PASSES

Overview: Dribbling and accurate passing, once again in tight quarters and with traffic. This drill will force your players to work on the most important aspects of passing: communication and execution.

Set-up

Play in a grid sized at roughly 10X10 yards. Split your team into groups of three players. One-ball per group. Left over player(s) form groups of 4.

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1. Assign each player in the group a letter. Player A passes to B who passes to C, who passes back to A.
2. All players play in the same grid. Players must keep moving. No stopping!
3. Groups continue to move about, passing the ball from A to B to C and back to A.

Note: Allow your players a minute or two to work out the drill, and then follow through with each variation.

- **3 touch:** Trap, Dribble, Pass.
- **2 touch:** Trap, Pass
- **1 touch:** First touch must be a pass.

Coaching Points

-Once, again players must dribble with their heads up, with their eye on the ball and their constantly moving teammates. Having each group playing in the small grid at the time grid further reinforces this.

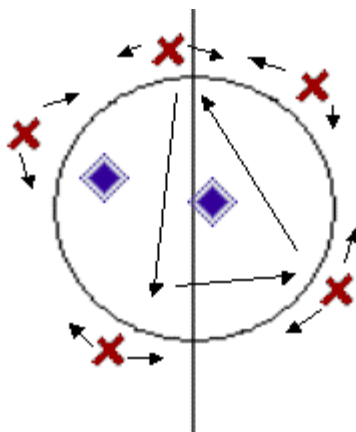
-Think ahead: Know what you are going to do with the ball before it arrives. Changing the amount of touches makes the drill more difficult and makes thinking ahead more important as players have less touches to work with.

-Leading Passes: Time the pass to meet the run of the person you are passing to, rather than forcing them to redirect their run to meet the ball.

5V2

Overview: This drill is the perfect drill to emphasis passing under defensive pressure and good decision-making.

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Set-up

Split the team into two groups. Try to observe this ratio as closely as possible given that you will have different numbers of kids at practice.

1. 5 players on the outside of the circle. 2 Defenders in the middle of the circle.
2. Outside players pass ball amongst each other. Inside players try to steal the ball.
3. When the ball is stolen, the player turning the ball over goes into the middle, and the player in the center longest goes to the outside.

Note: Let the game run for 15 minutes, allowing everyone to cycle through on offense and defense multiple times.

Video Clip

[How not to get open:](#) This video shows a great individual effort by the soon to be legendary Freddy Adu. This shot was actually ruled a goal by the center Ref. The reason I am showing you this clip is not because of Adu's effort, but because of the lack of effort by his teammates to get open. Notice at the beginning of the clip, most of them are standing around watching him dribble and are stuck behind defenders, where they are unable to receive the ball.

Coaching Points

Offensive players must practice on controlling the ball after it is passed taking note not to let it get too far away where a defender can easily steal it. Also, players should try to get open, taking note not get trapped behind a defender where it is impossible to receive the ball.

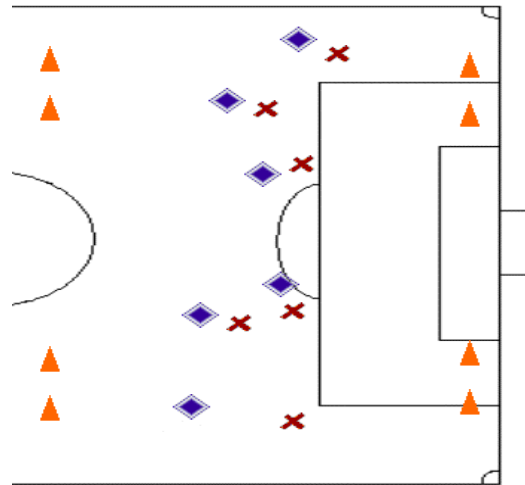
Notice the triangular arrows on the diagram. Any time a player has the ball on the outside, the other plays should slide around the circle to open up for a pass from the ball carrier. The key to passing is always having at least 2

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good passing options. Essentially, the player with the ball and two open teammates form a triangle around the defensive player.

3V3 OR 4V4

Overview: Small sided games are excellent for practice because they give players lots of touches on the ball. 3v3 is fun for players and allows them to play under intense defensive pressure from the other team.



(two separate games are pictured)

Set-up

Set up a small field with small goals. Host as many fields as you require given the amount of players you have at practice. Two fields are pictured on the diagram.

1. 3v3 Scrimmage. Switch the teams every once in awhile, so each time plays different opponents.
2. No Goal Tending!

Coaching Points

-Maintaining possession: When you have the ball concentrate on not losing it. Turning the ball over gives the other team, too easy a chance to score, considering the small size of the field and the lack of goalies.

-Let them play: This drill is a fun way to wind down practice and let your players play. Don't over-coach them. Let them do their thing.

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You should do a cool down stretch after every practice.

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