

Gilbert Youth Soccer Association



U5/U6

The Foundations Part I Coaching Manual

GILBERT YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

PHILOSOPHY OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The basic philosophy of the Gilbert Youth Soccer Association is based on total player development. This is only possible if the entire organization agrees to serve this aim. These coaching manuals present an organized and logical progression of teaching the techniques and tactics of the game of soccer that will prepare total soccer players by the time they have gone through our organization.

As an organization, we must always remember that soccer is a game that belongs to the players. Overbearing adults who try to micromanage how the kids play the game on the field are the enemy of player development. Instead of ruining the enjoyment of the game, as coaches we must harness their love of the game and encourage it. We should encourage our players to play as much as possible on their own, without coaching and parents who are yelling and screaming instructions to them. The rest of the world calls this “street soccer”, and it is the environment that many of the world’s best players were developed under.

In addition, we must understand that for the younger age groups (U6-U14) development and winning are often opposed to each other. Winning at these age groups often comes at the expense of our players learning the skills which will enable them to win at the older age groups, when it means a lot more. For instance, most U11 teams can win a lot of games because they have a defender who can boot the ball far up the field, and one or two big, fast kids who can go chase it and score goals. These tactics do not bring success at the older age groups, and we are doing our players a disservice if we over-emphasize winning at these young age groups. We guarantee that our players will value the championships won in high school or college much more than they will remember the tournament they won when they were ten years old.

As important as everything that has been mentioned is, we also must remember that soccer is just a game, not a matter of life and death. We must use the game to teach our kids how to deal with other matters that will be of more importance to them as they get older. We must use the game to teach lessons about personal responsibility, teamwork, unselfishness, sportsmanship, honesty, the value of hard work, and how to properly deal with success and failure.

These coaching manuals have been designed as a model for our players to develop throughout the recreational and travel teams in our organization. The philosophies and activities in these manuals have been proven to work throughout the world. There are very few soccer leagues in the United States that are organizations in the true sense of the word. They are just a collection of teams that happen to use the same name. We believe this manual will help our organization continue to be a true soccer organization. We hope you enjoy the manual, and see its ultimate resourcefulness.

GILBERT YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

U5/U6 RECREATIONAL SOCCER COACHING OVERVIEW

FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

U5/U6 Skill Priorities

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch

Although sometimes we may mistake 5-6 year-olds for little adults, they are clearly not little adults. They have many years of childhood and development to enjoy before they are able to look at life in a similar fashion to adults. The reason for this is that they need time to intellectually, emotionally, and physically develop. Although we do live in the same world, the world adults and children experience is quite different. In order to fully understand these wonderful children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U6 children.

Typical Characteristics of U5/U6 Players

- *Focused on themselves* – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel
- *Unable to see the world from another's perspective* – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic
- *Everything is in the here and now* – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- *Heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults* – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
- *Enjoying playing, not watching* – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
- *Limited attention span* (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds
- *Effort is synonymous with performance* – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
- *Active imaginations* – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- *Look for adult approval* – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- *Unable to think abstractly* – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic

- *Typically have 2 speeds -- extremely fast and stopped*
- *Usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way*
- *Often like to fall down just because it is fun – they are just children having fun ☺*
- *Often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right*

The U5/U6 Age Group

The fascination for the ball, the desire to master it and the thrill of scoring goals provides the launching pad into a lifetime of soccer participation. The joy and pleasure of the game are best nurtured by encouraging freedom of expression and organizing children’s play in small groups.

Role of the U5/U6 Coach

The role of the coach in the U6 age group is as facilitator, friendly helper, organizer, and motivator. The coach should be patient, enthusiastic, and imaginative. The coach should experiment with fun activities that include all players, if possible. The environment and the activities are more important than technical coaching is at this level.

The U5/U6 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Short attention span | • Tend to only one task at a time |
| • Individually oriented...egocentric | • Can process small bits of information |
| • Sensitive...Easily bruised psychologically | • Immature understanding of time and space relations |
| • Love to use their imagination...pretend | |

Physical (psychomotor)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| • Constantly in motion | • Can balance on good foot |
| • No sense of pace (full speed ahead) | • Catching skills are not developed |
| • Easily fatigued with rapid recovery | • Love to run, jump, fall and roll |
| • Eye/hand and eye/foot coordination is primitive | • About 36-40 inches in tall |
| | • Weigh between 30-50 pounds |

Socially (psychosocial)

- Love to show off
- Little or no real concern for team activities
- Tend to parallel play...play next to but not with a friend or teammate
- Influential person in their life is their MOM
- Like to mimic goofy actions

Boys and girls are quite similar psychologically and physically.

What to Teach U5/U6 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills):

- **Dribbling**
 - Keep the ball close (with toe and inside of foot).
- **Kicking**
 - Kicking the ball at the goal (with toe, inside of foot, and laces).
- **Catching**
 - Toss to self and catch.

Psychology (mental and social):

- Sharing
- Fair play
- Dealing with parental involvement (confusion)
- “How to play”
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education):

- Balance
- Running
- Jumping
- Rolling
- Hopping
- Skipping

Tactics (decisions):

- Where is the field
- Moving in the correct direction (which goal to kick at)
- Dealing with the ball rolling away
- Dealing with the ball rolling toward

GILBERT YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

U5/U6 RECREATIONAL SOCCER COACHING OVERVIEW FOR PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

Foundation

The training goals for this age group of rec players are pretty simple. First, we want to give them a positive experience with the game of soccer. They need to have fun at every practice and every game, and we hope that this enjoyment will start to build a lifelong passion for our wonderful game. Secondly, we want our young players at this age to be exposed to the ball as much as possible. They need to see the ball almost as a toy, one that they love to play with whenever possible. We will give them exposure to basic ball control, and some introductions to dribbling. That's really it. No team tactics, no set plays, not even specific attention to passing and shooting—that will all come in due time.

The best way to address these needs of our U5 & U6 rec players is through the games approach. All of the material in this coaching manual is based on the US Soccer Federation National Youth License. These methods have been proven to be the best introduction to our sport for young players. There are no drills, no running laps, and no activities where players are standing in lines for large periods of time. The key concept in this approach to coaching is that the game itself is the best teacher. The role of the coach is to be a facilitator, and the most important thing to keep in mind is **NOT TO OVERCOACH THESE PLAYERS!!** Players come to practice to play soccer, not to stand in line, run laps, or hear an adult talk.

As you will see, fun and ball contact are central to all activities presented in this manual. We are confident that if you use it to plan your season, the players will get a lot out of the season.



Organization of a Session/Practice

When planning a practice session for 1st and 2nd grade rec players, there is a definite progression that should be adhered to for each practice. Practices should last no longer than 60 minutes, twice a week. Here are the items that should be included in a training session for 1st and 2nd grade rec players:

1) Warm-Up/Body Movement Education Exercises (6-10 Minutes)

Children at this age do not yet fully understand all that their bodies are capable of. It is important that we aid in this development by giving our players the chance to realize the movements that they are able to perform. The best way to do this is through various tag type games. In addition, these games are fun, and gets the session going on the right track.

2) Individual and Small Group Activities (25-30 Minutes)

This is the time where our players begin to increase their level of comfort on the ball. We need to give them lots of opportunity to contact the ball, and begin to get a feel for it. The goal is that they can begin to master the ball instead the ball mastering them. Basic ball control and attention to the aspects of dribbling are important at this age. Avoid having the players wait in long lines. Play games of inclusion, instead of games where the “loser sits out”.

3) “The Game” (20-30 Minutes)

The biggest portion of a session needs to be unrestricted 3v3 games, or basic variations of 3v3. The approximate size of a 3v3 grid is 30 yds. by 20 yds. The key is to encourage our players to solve the problems of the game for themselves. Let the players play, and try to keep specific coaching to a minimum. To be honest, their developing soccer brains are probably not yet capable of comprehending anything but the most basic coaching suggestions.



Game Day Responsibilities

First and foremost, it must be understood that winning is not the most important goal of our teams at this age. Remember, our organization is about total player development. The things that allow younger teams to win a lot of games (booting the ball long from the back to a big fast kid up front) do not best serve our young players' development. For that reason, we need to encourage our players to work on the things that you address in practice (good control on the ball, creative dribbling). That must become our measure of success; not simply winning.

Soccer, unlike any other sport, is truly a game that belongs to the players. Again, players must be encouraged to make their own decisions on the field. As coaches, we cannot allow ourselves to constantly yell instructions to our players. That will only turn them into soccer robots, incapable of reading the game.

In addition, we must take our responsibility as adult role models seriously. We need to refrain from yelling at the referees and constantly questioning their calls. We cannot allow ourselves to get into confrontations with other coaches. And we need to encourage our parents to keep their composure. Remember, all of our actions ultimately reflect on our club and our town.

Master Practice Schedule

In the following pages, we have included a master practice schedule for you, the coach. The next page includes an overview of activities that should be done for each week of the season. We have left plenty of room for flexibility on your part within each session. Assuming one to two practices per week, there is a warm-up activity for each practice, 5 individual and small group activities to be used over the two practices in a week, and a final Game activity that should be played for the last 20-25 minutes of each practice.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us via email. Include your name and your age group.

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GILBERT YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION

MASTER PRACTICE SCHEDULE U5/U6

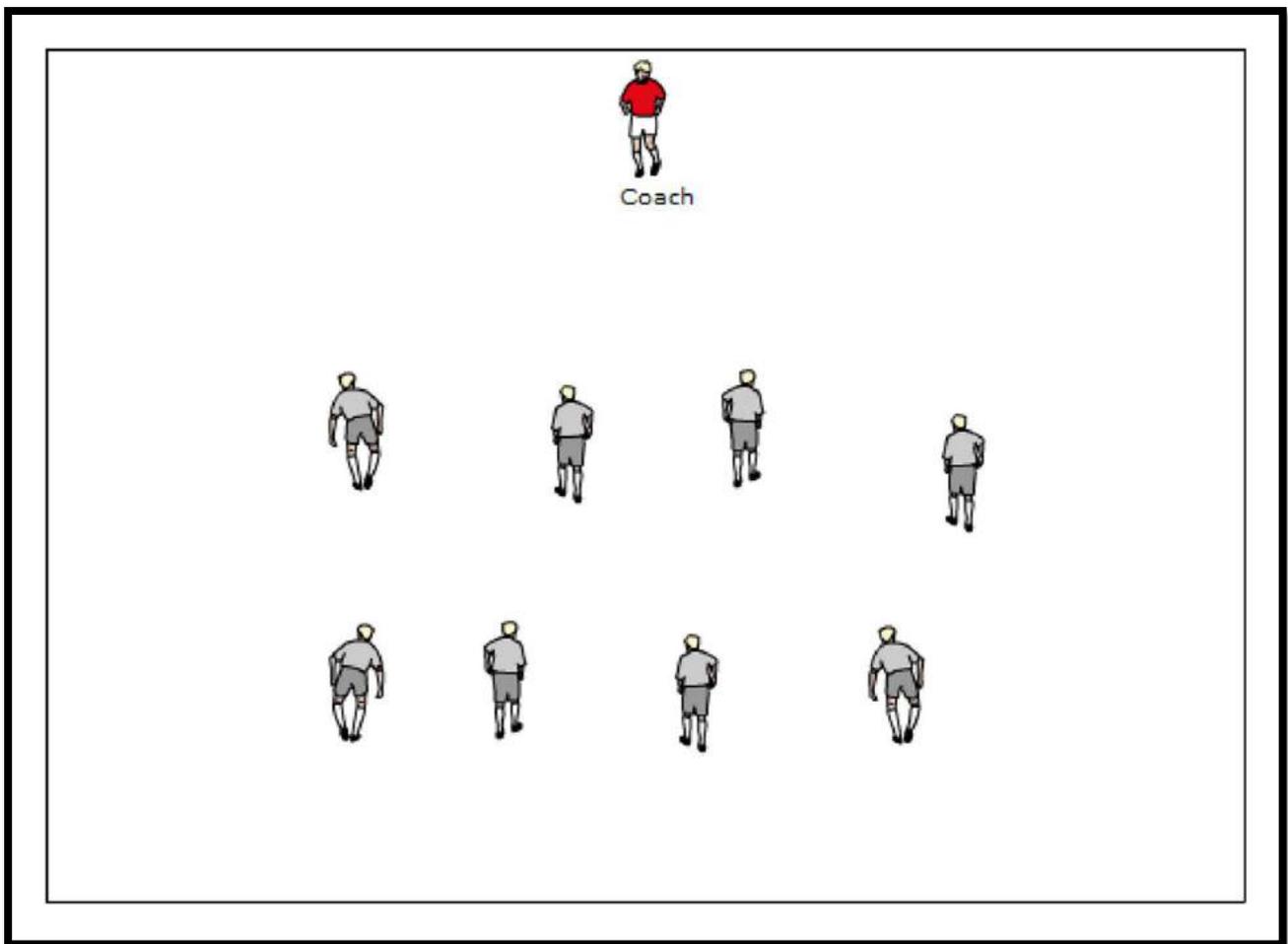
Week	Warm-Up Body Movement	Individual & Small Group	The Game
	8-10 Minutes	25-30 Minutes	20-25 Minutes
1	I can Do Something, Can You?	Controlled Juggling	3 v 3 to End Zones
	Body Part Dribble	Cliffhanger	
		Gates Dribbling	
2	Body Part Dribble	Soccer Marbles	3 v 3 to Central Goal
	Math Dribble	Dribbling Grid	
		Criss-Cross Dribbling	
3	Everybody's It (no ball)	Controlled Juggling	3 v 3 to End Zones
	Math Dribble	Red Light, Green Light	
		Gates Dribbling	
4	I can Do Something, Can You?	Gates Dribbling	3 v 3 Small Goals
	Follow the Leader (no ball)	Dribbling Grid	
		Cliffhanger	
5	Follow the Leader (no ball)	Controlled Juggling	3 v 3 to End zones
	Follow the Leader (with ball)	Gates Dribbling	
		Criss-Cross Dribbling	
6	Follow the Leader (with ball)	Gates Dribbling	3 v 3 to Central Goal
	Body Part Dribble	Dribble Relay	
		1 v 1 to End line	
7	Everybody's It (with ball)	Controlled Juggling	3 v 3 to End zones
	Follow the Leader (with ball)	Criss-Cross Dribbling	
		Dribble Relay	
8	Follow the Leader (with ball)	Controlled Juggling	3 v 3 to Small goals
	Math Dribble	Gates Dribbling	
		1 v 1 to Small Goals	

U5/U6

Warm-Up/Body Movement

Education Activities





I CAN DO SOMETHING, CAN YOU?

Organization:

- Open area, can be done with players with or without soccer balls

Procedure:

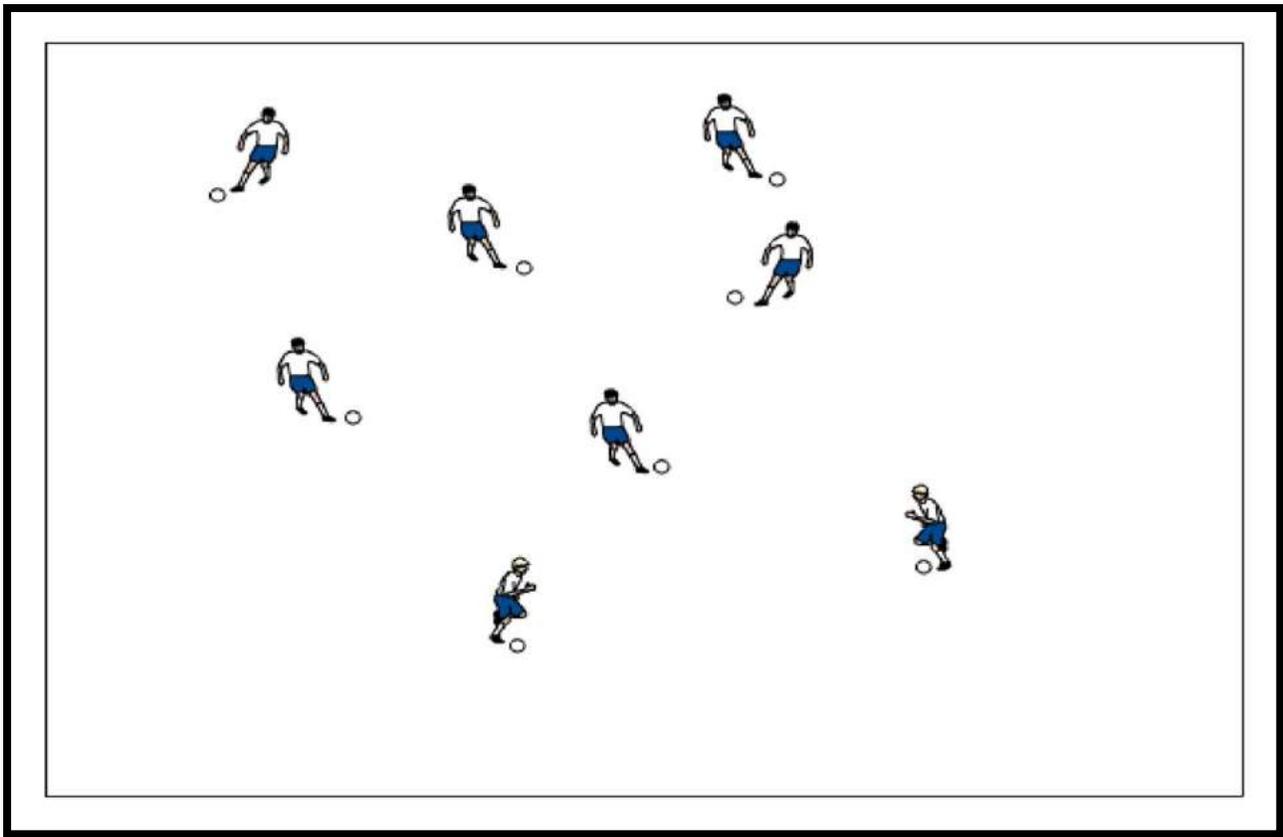
- The coach simply says, “I can do something, can you?”, and then demonstrates a movement with or without the ball for the players to try to perform.

Variations:

- Without the ball, ask players to skip, hop, walk or run backwards or sideways, run and clap, roll on the ground, etc.. Anything else that the coach can come up with.
- With the ball, ask players to juggle, do toe taps, perform quick side to side touches, lift the ball off the ground, etc, or anything else that the coach can come up with.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Body awareness and body movement education
- Ball control



BODY PART DRIBBLE

Organization:

- 15 x 15 yd. grid
- One ball per player

Procedure:

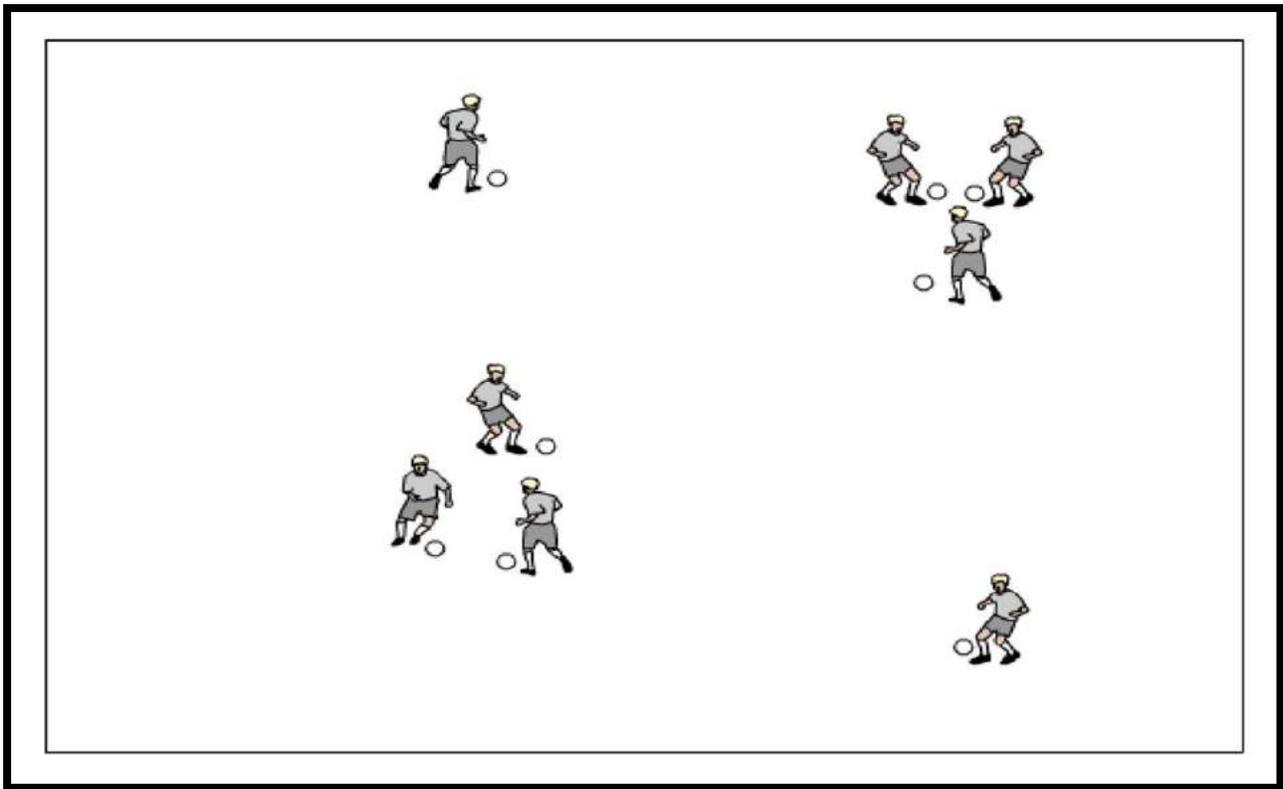
- All players in the grid with a ball. They dribble to keep control while avoiding other players. While they are dribbling, coach calls out a body part, and the players immediately stop the ball with that body part. Use all different body parts to make it fun: “right elbow”, “chin”, “left knee”, “butt”, etc.

Variations:

- Game can also be played in a “Simon Says” format

Coaching Points:

- Dribbling—Changes of direction and speed
- Touches with all parts of the body
- Body Movement Education



MATH DRIBBLE

Organization:

- Open area, 1 ball per player

Procedure:

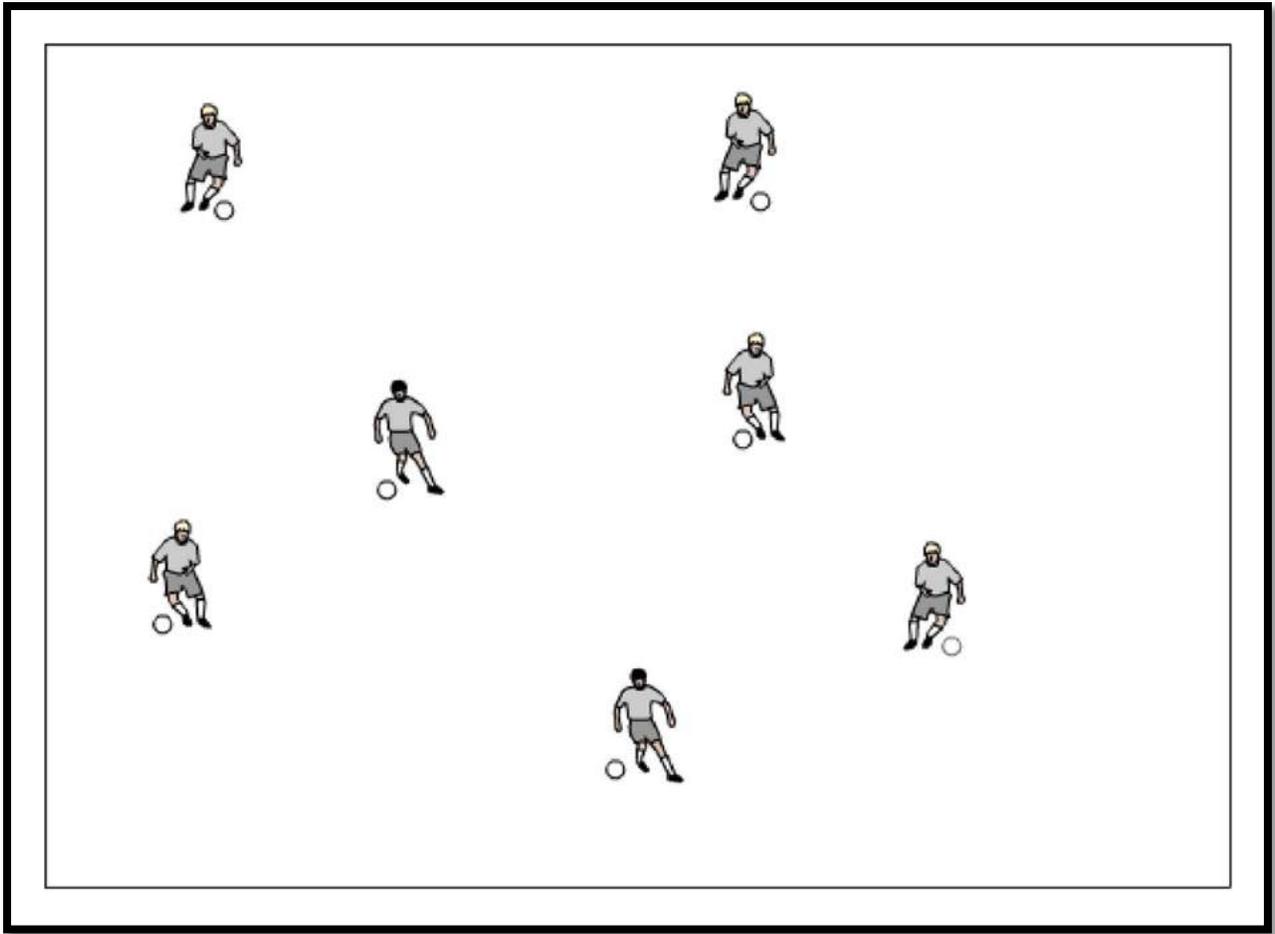
- All players dribble around in the area. The coach shouts out a number, and the players must **dribble** quickly to get into a group of that number. So, if the coach yells out, “Four”, the players get into groups of 4 as quickly as they can. If there are players that are not able to get into a group, give them some sort of fun activity (such as toe taps, juggles, etc.)

Variations:

- Consider giving them math problems to solve – make it educational and fun. Instead of calling out “Four”, say “Two plus Two”, or “Five minus One.”

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling Skills



EVERYBODY'S IT

Organization:

- 15 x 15 yd. grid, 1 ball per player

Procedure:

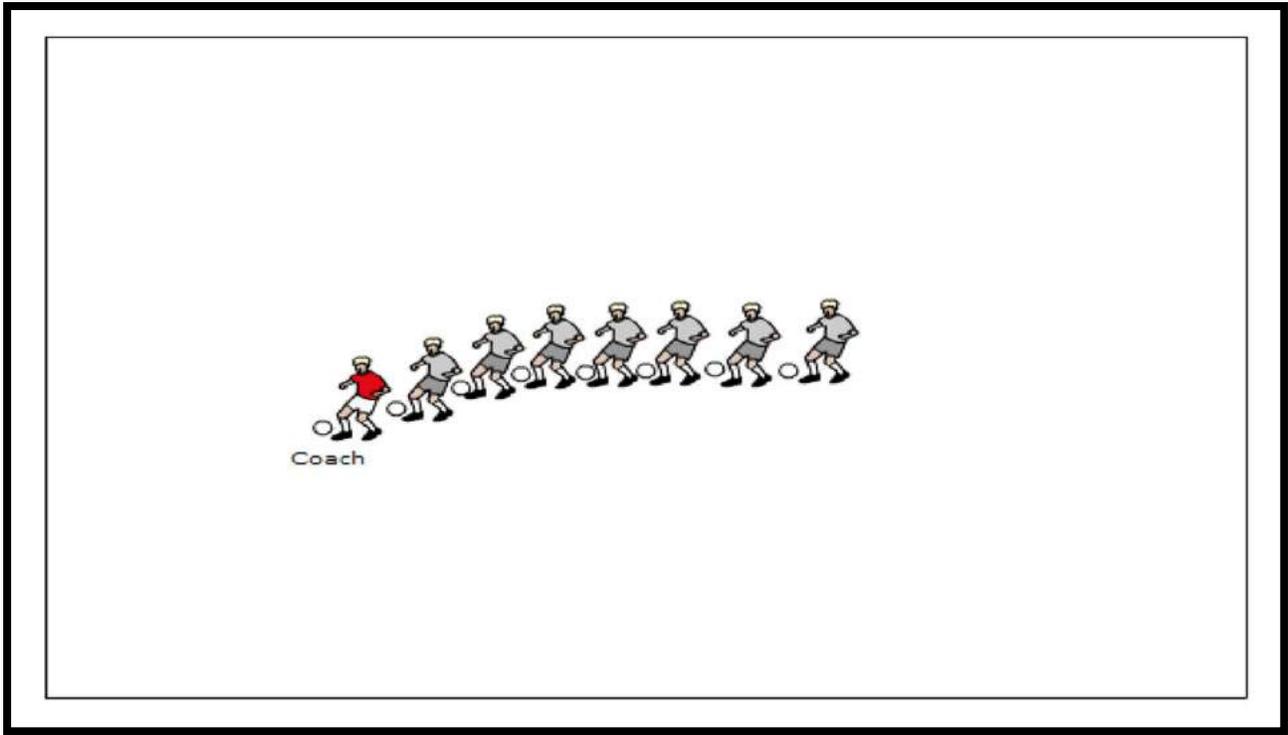
- All players in the grid with a ball. They dribble in the area while attempting to tag other players while maintaining control of the ball. Each time they tag someone they get a point.

Variations:

- Run the same activity, but players do not have a ball

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Body Movement Education
- Ball control
- Dribbling



FOLLOW THE LEADER

Organization:

- Open area, 1 ball per player (and one ball for the coach)

Procedure:

- Players follow the coach while they dribble around the field, and mirror the movements of the coach

Variations:

- With a ball, introduce dribbling and stopping with different parts of the foot. Introduce moves and changes of direction.
- Play without a ball. Coach can hop on one leg, skip, run backwards, jump, sprint, walk, etc.
- After a while, allow players to take turns as the leaders

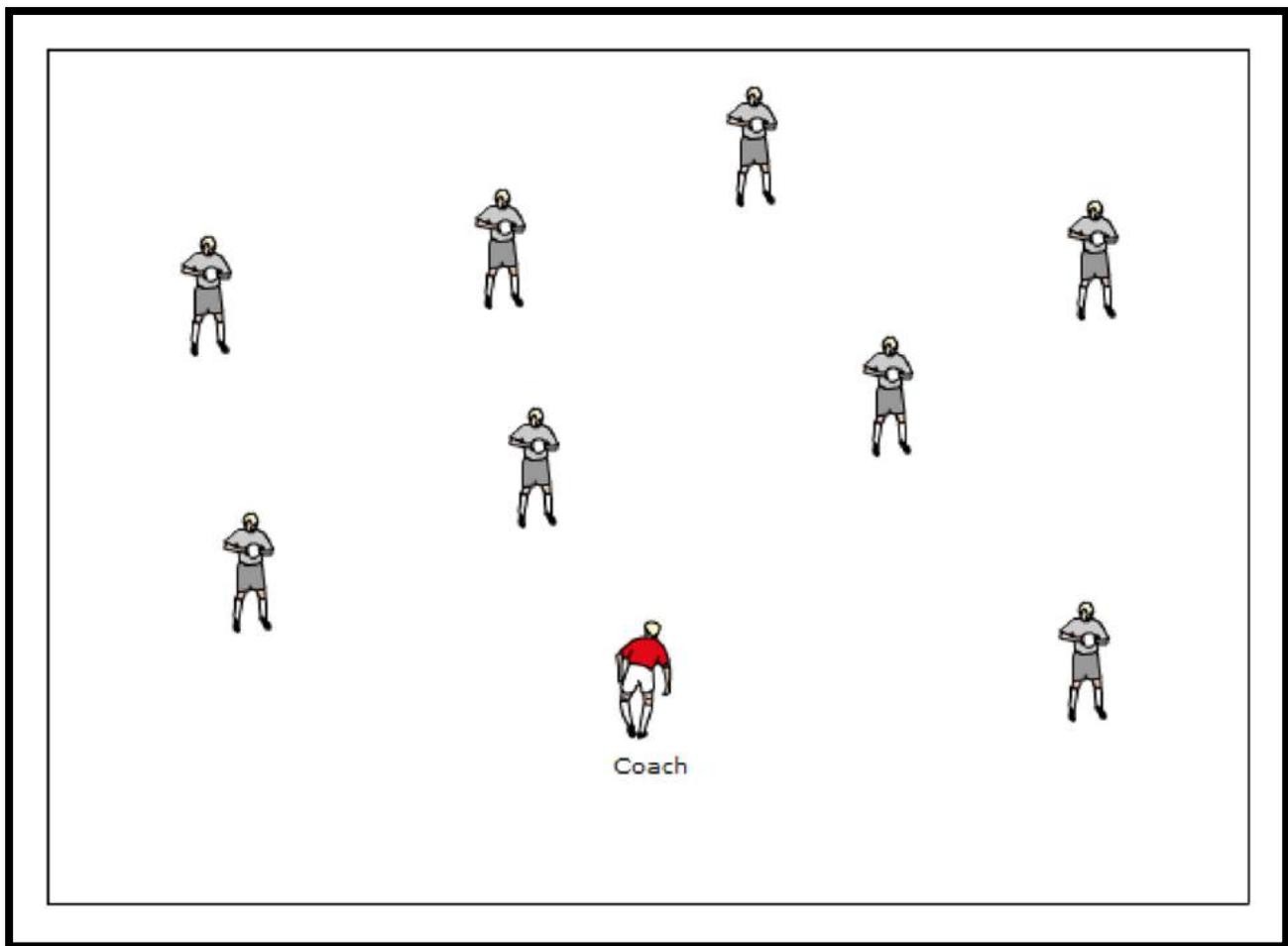
Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Body Movement Education
- Ball Control
- Dribbling

U5/U6

Individual and Small Group Activities





CONTROLLED JUGGLING

Organization:

- Open Area, 1 ball per player

Procedure:

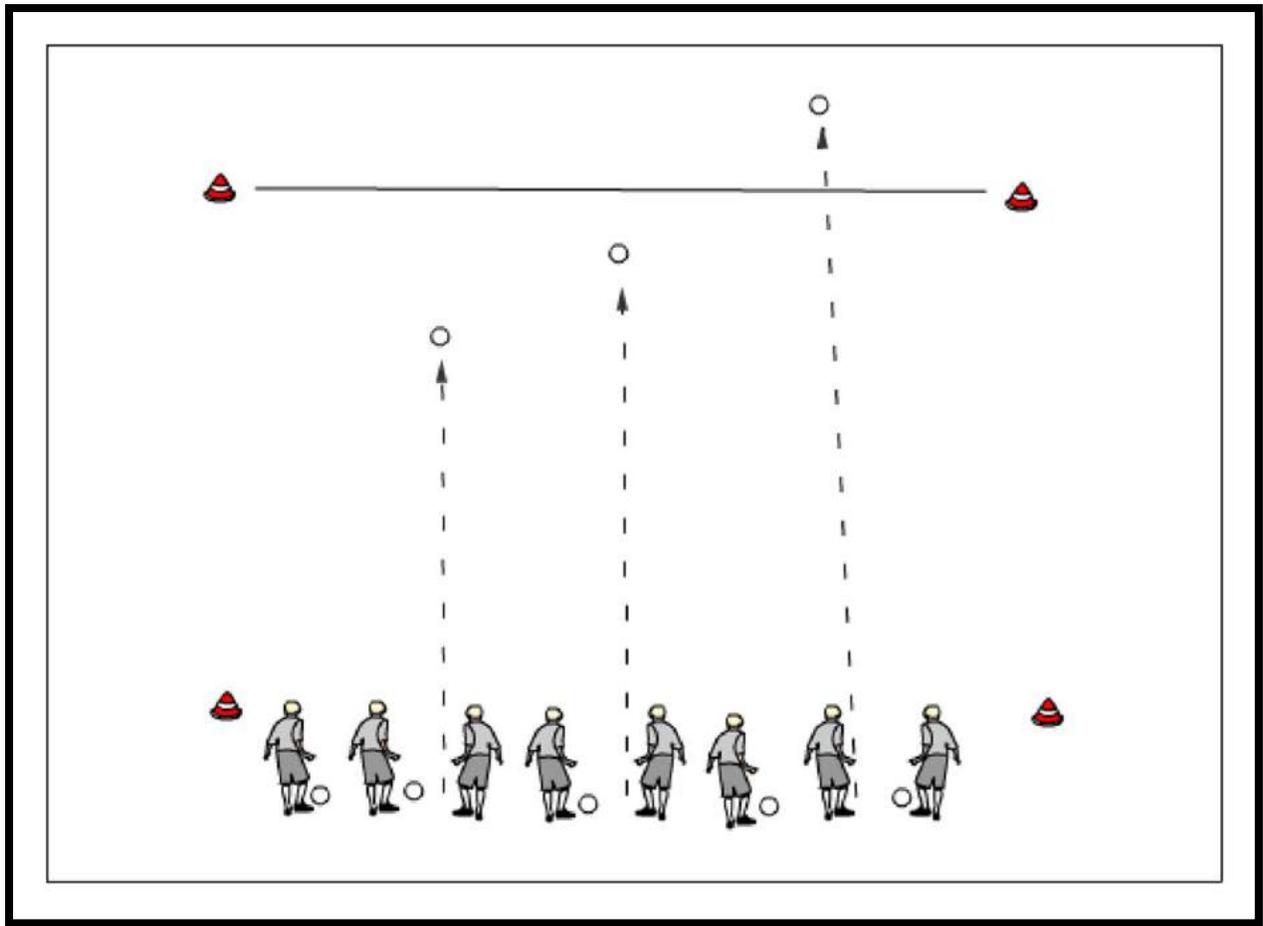
- Players begin with the ball in their hands. They drop the ball to their foot or thigh, and try to catch it. As they improve, the coach can suggest many combinations (just make sure they are reasonable for this age group)

Variations:

- Foot-catch; Thigh-catch, Foot-foot catch; Thigh-thigh catch; Thigh-foot-catch, etc.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Hand-eye coordination



CLIFFHANGER

Organization:

- Two lines made of cones, 10-15 yds. apart
- 1 ball per player

Procedure:

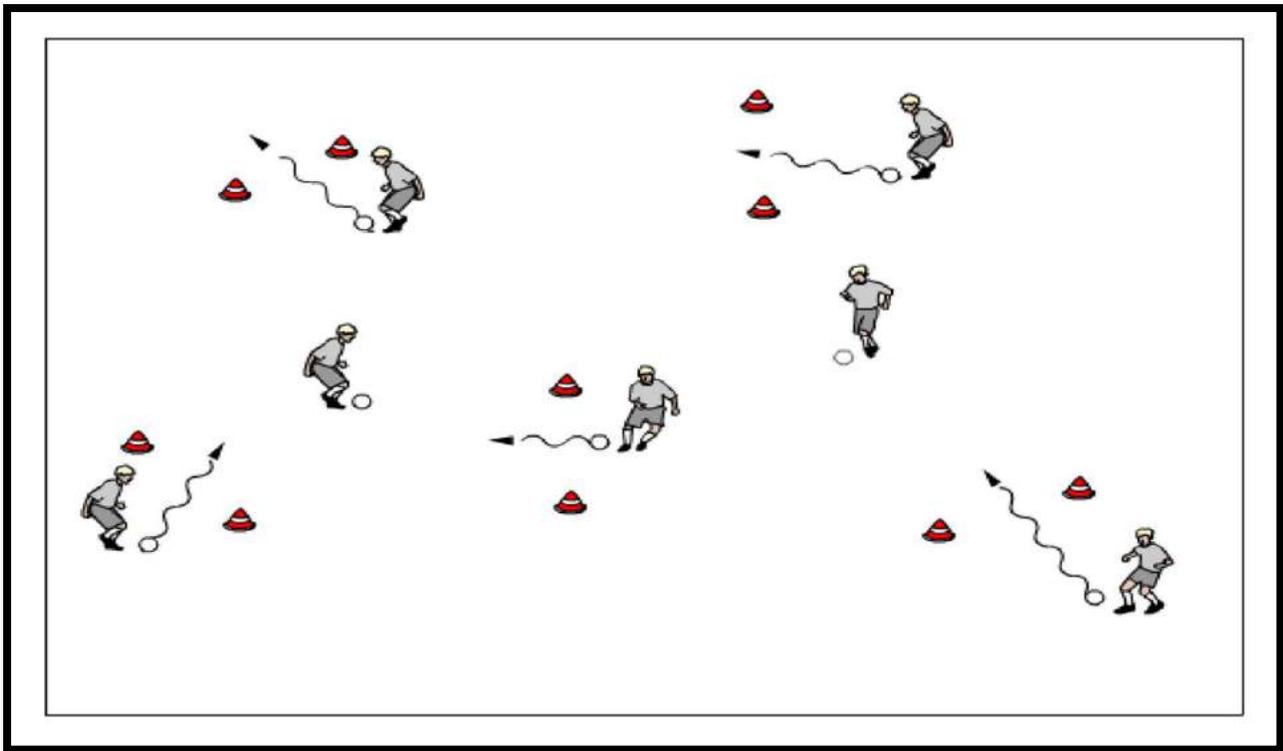
- All players line up behind one of the lines of cones with a ball. The coach calls out players one at a time to kick the ball to the other line. The goal is to kick the ball as close to the other line as possible without crossing over the line ("Falling off the Cliff")

Variations:

- Specify that players kick the ball with their weaker foot.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Passing weight and accuracy



GATES DRIBBLING

Organization:

- In an open area, set up 6-8 “gates” with cones. Gates should be about 1-2 yds. wide. Set them up in a random fashion around the area.
- 1 ball per player

Procedure:

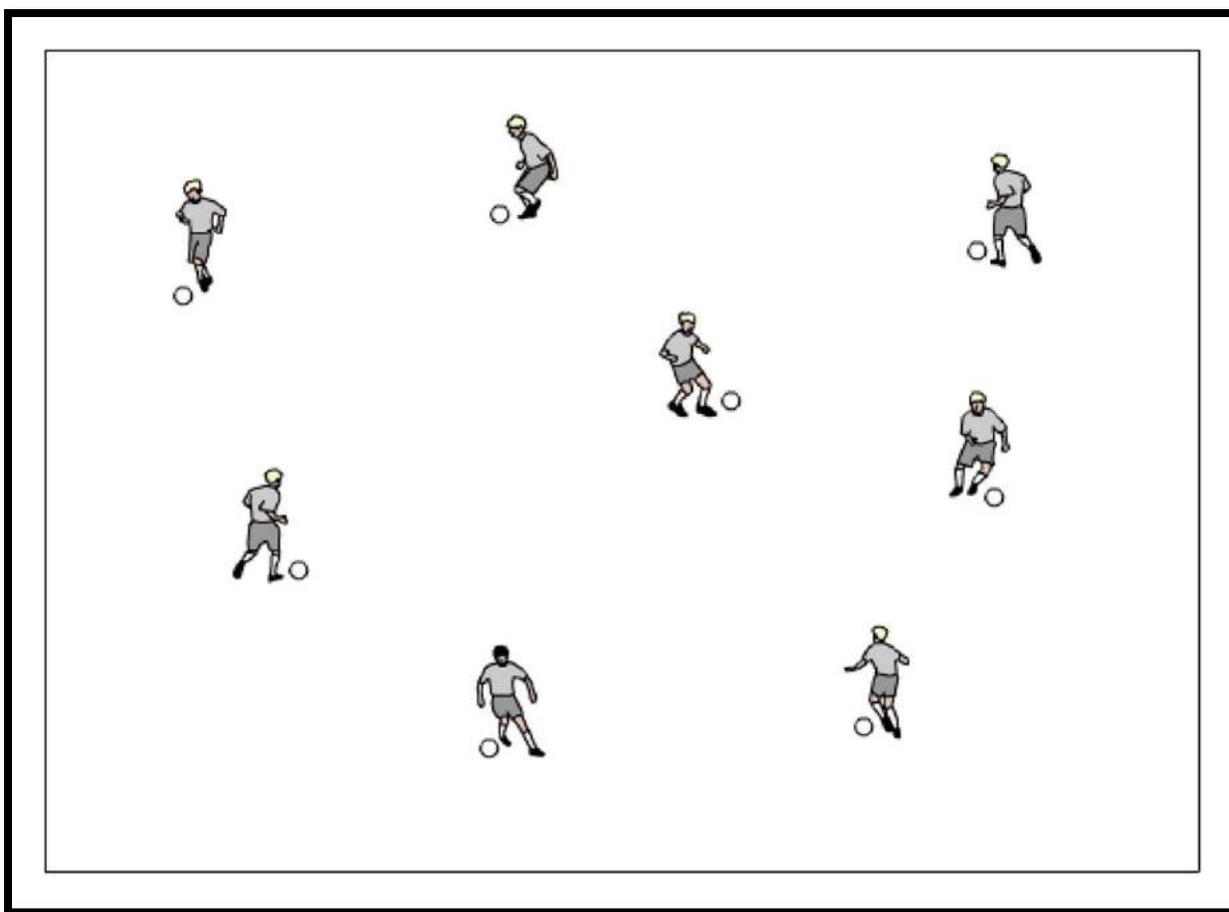
- All players are in the area with a ball. They try to dribble through the gates from one to another.

Variations:

- Specify that players only dribble with their right or left foot.
- Time the activity. See how many gates each player can get through in a 60 or 90 second time period. Let them do it again to see if they can beat their first score.
- Have players go back through the gate they came through. This is a good way to introduce different turns and change of direction moves.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Body Movement Education
- Ball control
- Dribbling



DRIBBLING GRID

Organization:

- 15 X 15 to 20 X 20 yd. grid, based on the number of players at practice
- 1 ball per player

Procedure:

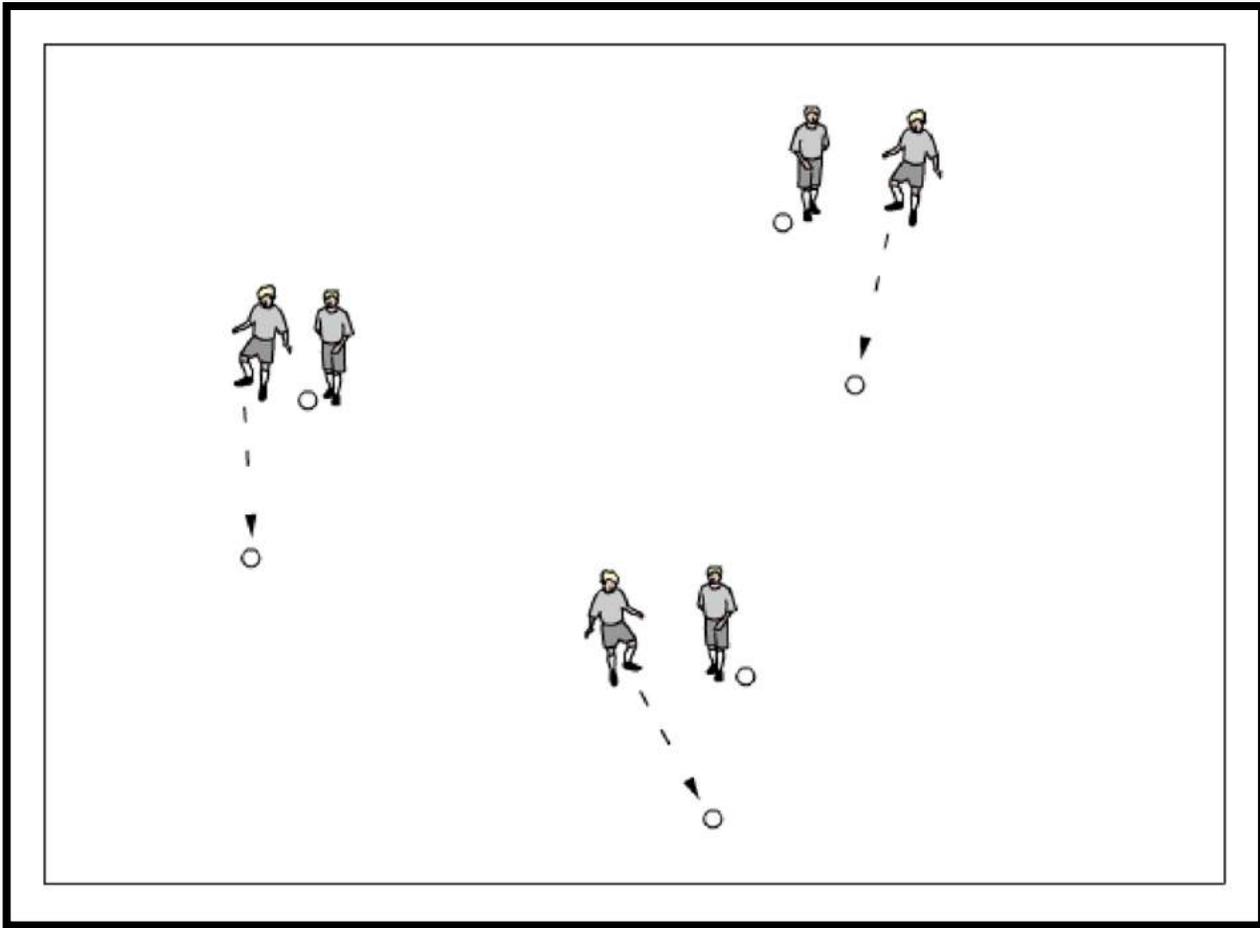
- Each player has a ball and dribbles inside the grid. This is a very basic set-up from which many dribbling skills and moves can be taught.

Variations:

- Work on change of speed. Have players change their speed to a sprint with the ball at the command of “Go”. Have them stop the ball immediately on the command of “Stop”.
- Work on change of direction. Teach players different change of direction moves, and have them do one move at the command of “Change”.

Coaching Points:

- Ball control
- Dribbling
- Body Movement Education



SOCCKER MARBLES

Organization:

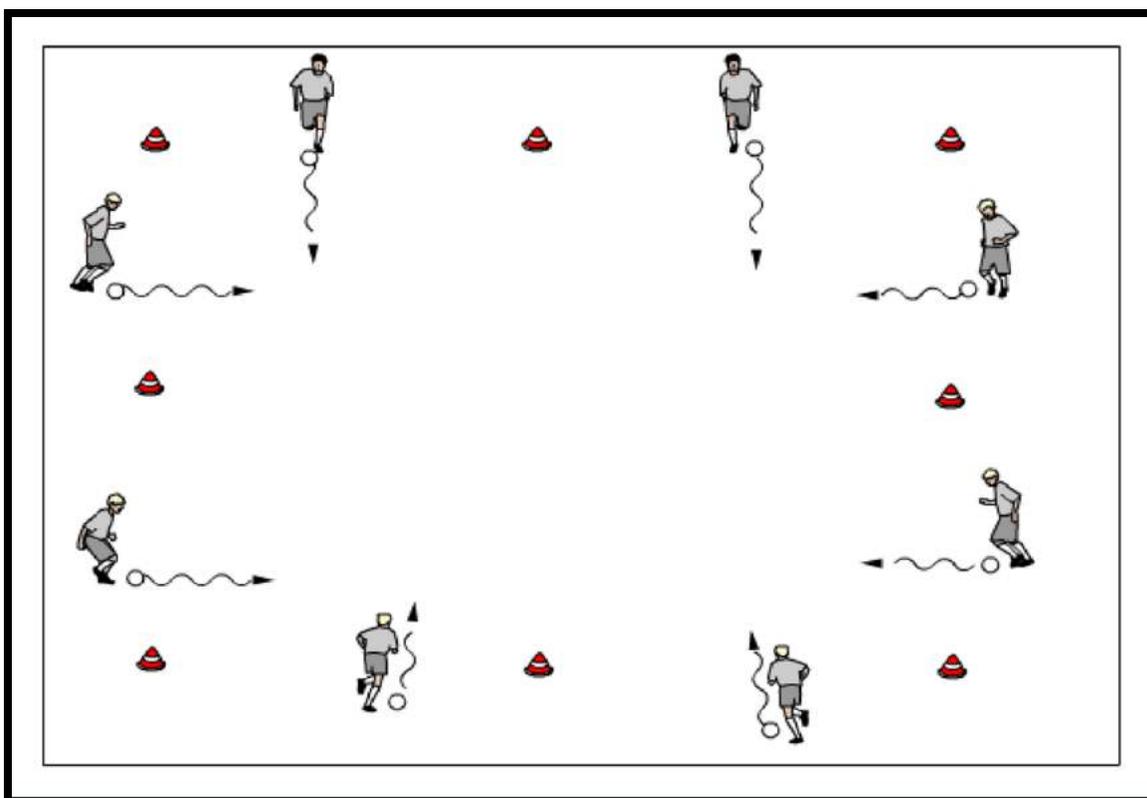
- Open area, 1 ball per player
- Players organized into pairs

Procedure:

- Place players into groups of two, each with a ball. One player in each pair passes his ball 5 to 10 yds. away in any direction. The second player tries to hit the first player's ball by passing his own ball in the same direction. If he hits it, he gets a point. Players collect their balls and switch roles after every attempt.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Introduction to passing, especially passing weight and accuracy.



CRISS – CROSS DRIBBLING

Organization:

- 15 X 15 yd. grid
- 1 ball per player

Procedure:

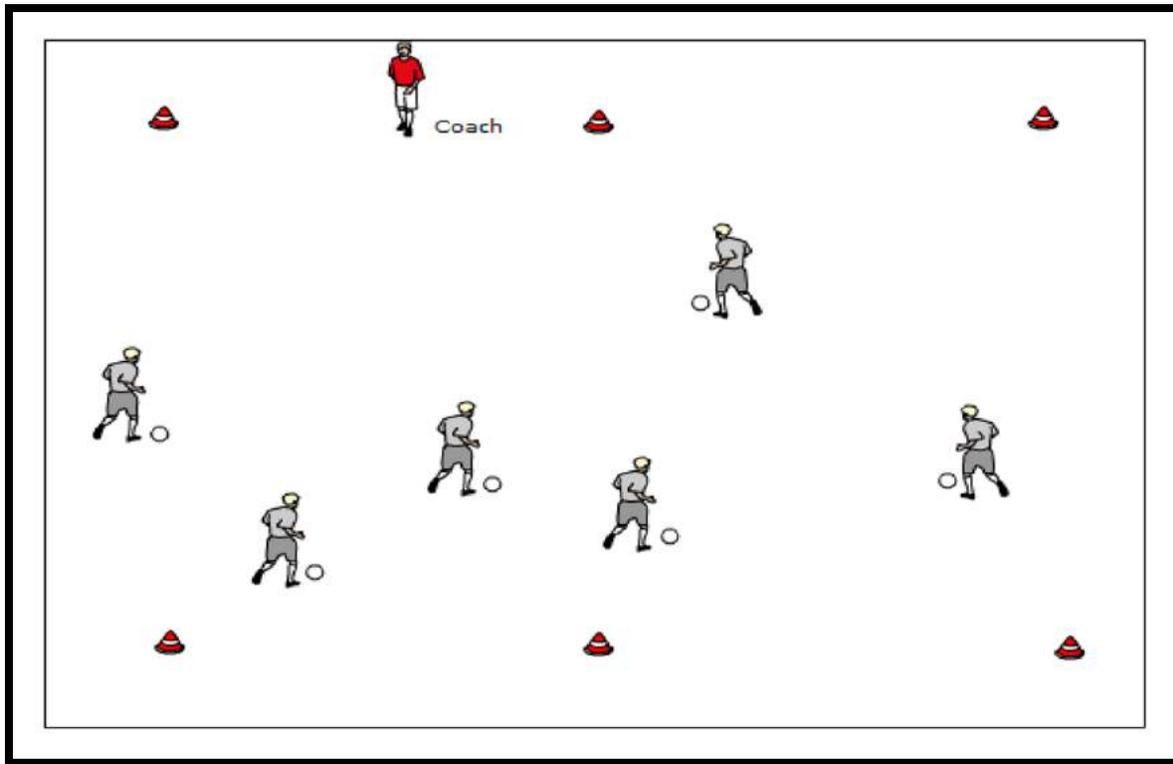
- Set up players around the outside of the grid. At the coach's command, all players dribble through the grid to the opposite side. When they reach the opposite side, they turn and dribble back to their original spot.

Variations:

- After the players reach the other side of the grid, have them return to a different spot than that which they started.
- Time the activity – See how often the players can criss-cross in 30, 60, or 90 seconds.
- As the players dribble, the coach can act as a "shark" and try to kick their balls out of the grid. If a player gets their ball kicked out, they also become a "shark".

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling



RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Organization:

- Make two lines of cones 20-30 yds. apart
- 1 ball per player

Procedure:

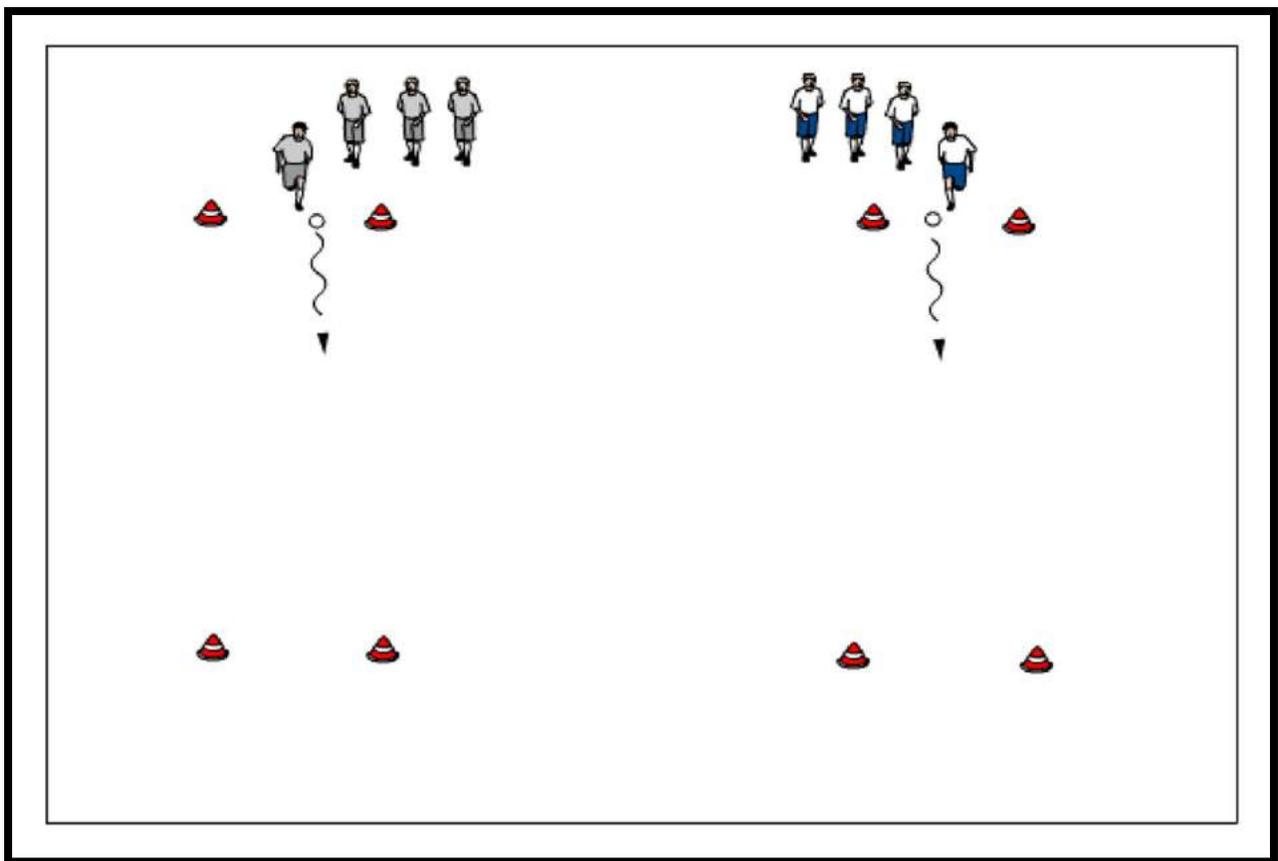
- All players start with a ball, side by side, behind one of the lines of cones. The coach is positioned at the other line of cones. The coach yells out, "Green light", and all players dribble towards the opposite line. When the coach calls out, "Red light", all players must stop the ball immediately by placing their foot on the ball. If a player does not do this, they are sent back to the starting line. Call out "Green light" again, to get the players to begin dribbling toward the line again. The first player across the line, in control, is the winner.

Variations:

- Choose a player to take on the role of "Traffic Warden", to call out "Red light" and "Green light".

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling
- Body Movement Education



DRIBBLE RELAY

Organization:

- Players in groups of 3-5, one ball per group. Set up 2-4 total groups
- Sets of cones 15-20 yds. apart, 1 set-up per group

Procedure:

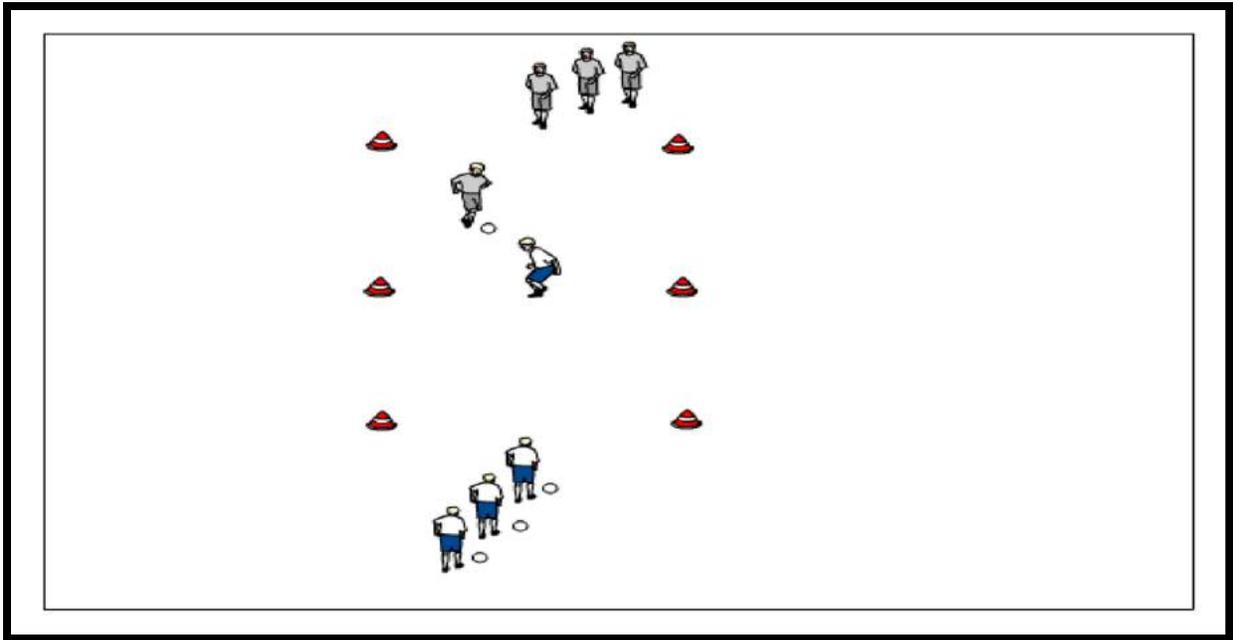
- At the coach's command, the first player in each group dribbles toward the opposite set of cones. They then turn quickly with the ball and dribble back toward their teammates. When they get back, the next player in line takes the ball and continues on his dribbling journey. The first team to get all players through the activity wins.

Variations:

- Instead of dribbling, have players bounce the ball, or run backwards (without a ball).

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling, especially with speed
- Turning and change of direction



1 V 1 TO ENDLINE

Organization:

- A 15 X 10 yd. grid
- Divide the players into two teams

Procedure:

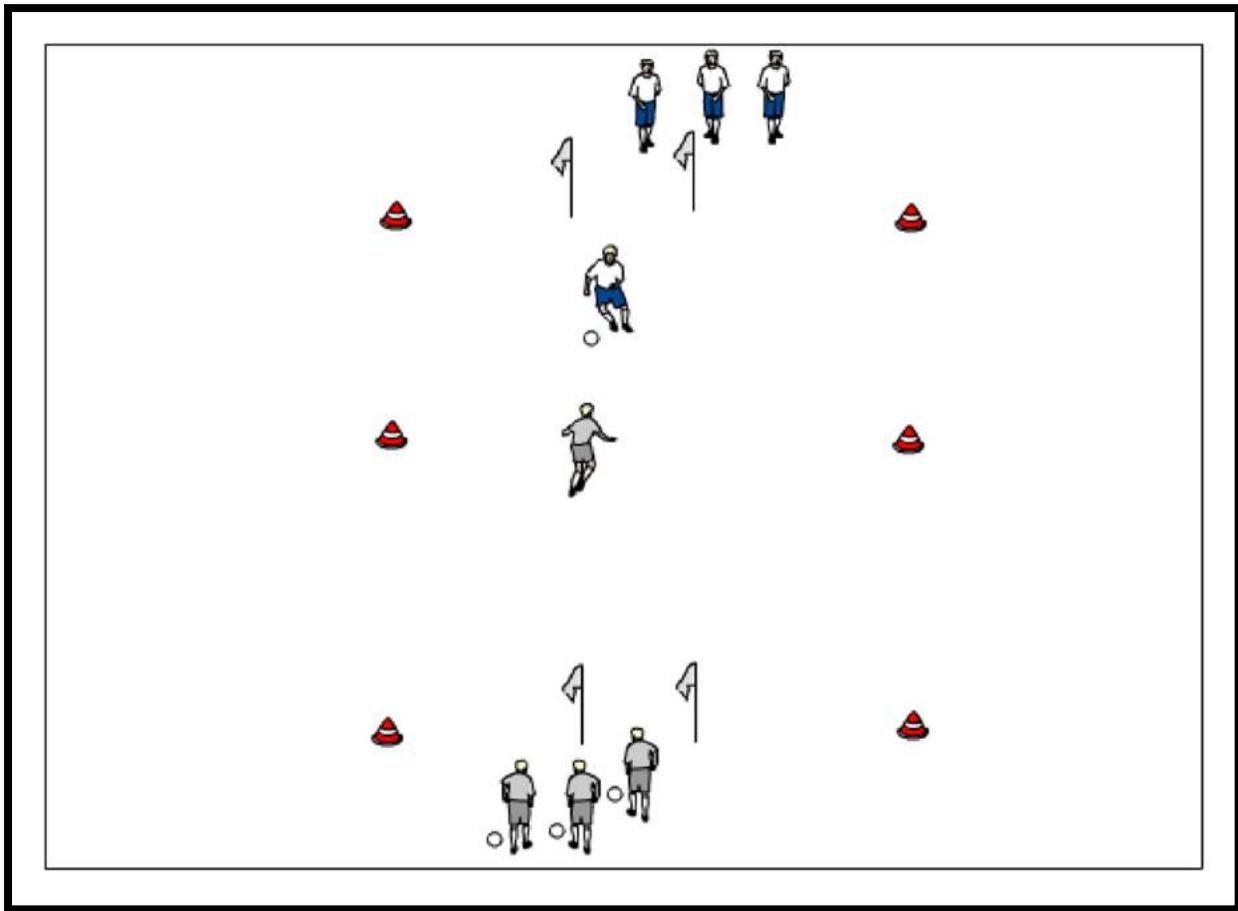
- Place the teams on opposite ends of the grid. Give the balls to the players on one team. The first player in that line kicks a ball across the grid to the first player in the other team, and goes to defend that player. The player receives the pass and tries to dribble past the defender. They get a point for their team if they can dribble the ball past the defender's end line. If the defender wins the ball, they can dribble to try to get the ball over the opponent's end line. Switch "defending" teams after a few minutes so each team gets to attack.
- Just be aware of how big the teams and the lines are. **If there are more than 2-3 players per team waiting to play, set up a second grid so there is less down time between each time a player is active.**

Variations:

- The coach can take all the balls to the side of the grid and serve to one of the players, so that each time a different team is defending and attacking.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling, 1 V 1 skills, comprehension, to beat an opponent



1 V 1 TO SMALL GOALS

Organization:

- A 15 X 10 yd. grid with small goals (2-3 yds. wide – pop-ups) on each end line
- Divide the players into two teams

Procedure:

- Each team lines up behind one of the small goals. Give one team all the balls. The first player in that team serves (passes) a ball to the first player on the opposite line, and they then play 1 v 1 trying to score on the other team's goal. Play can continue whenever a goal is scored, or whenever the ball goes out of bounds; then the next two players play. Players switch lines after their turn is over.
- If the lines are too long, be sure to set up a second grid so players are not standing in line and losing interest in the activity.

Coaching Points:

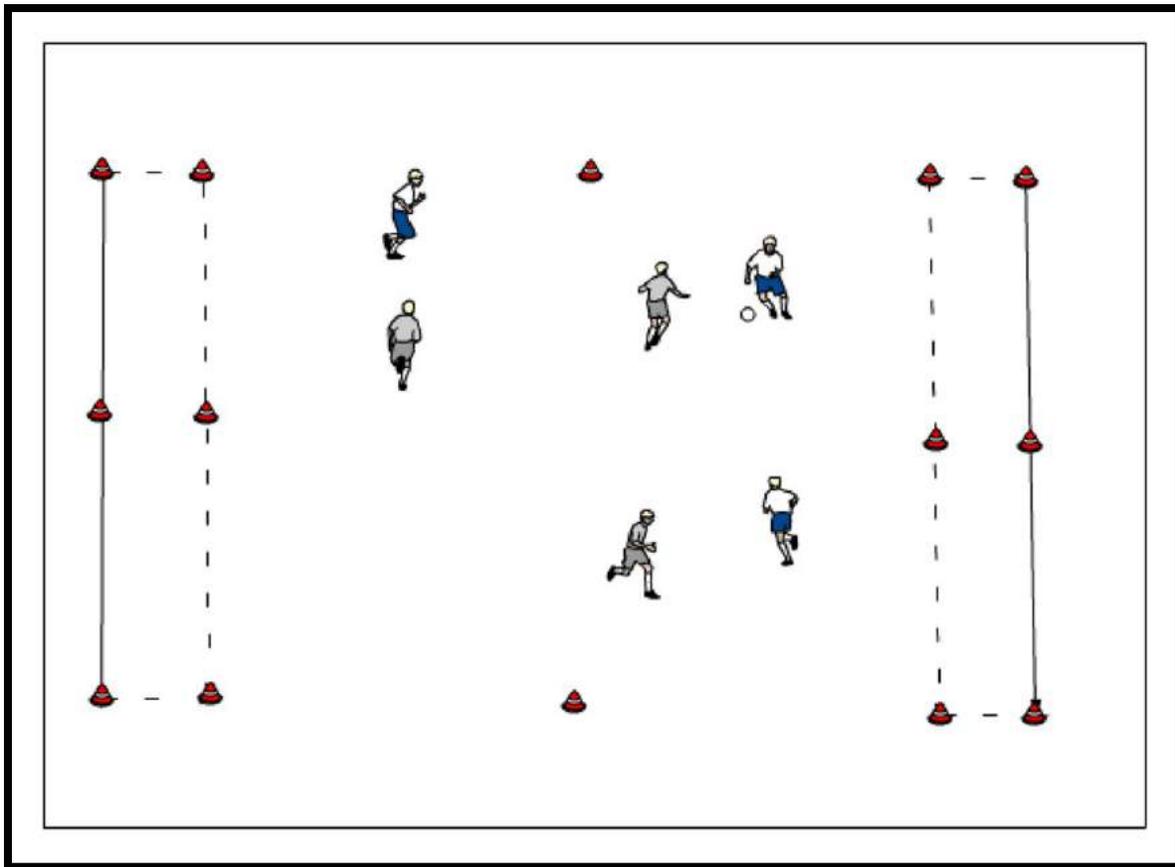
- Fun
- Ball control
- Dribbling, especially 1 V 1 skills, comprehension, to beat an opponent

U5/U6

“The Game”

Activities





3 V 3 TO ENDZONES

Organization:

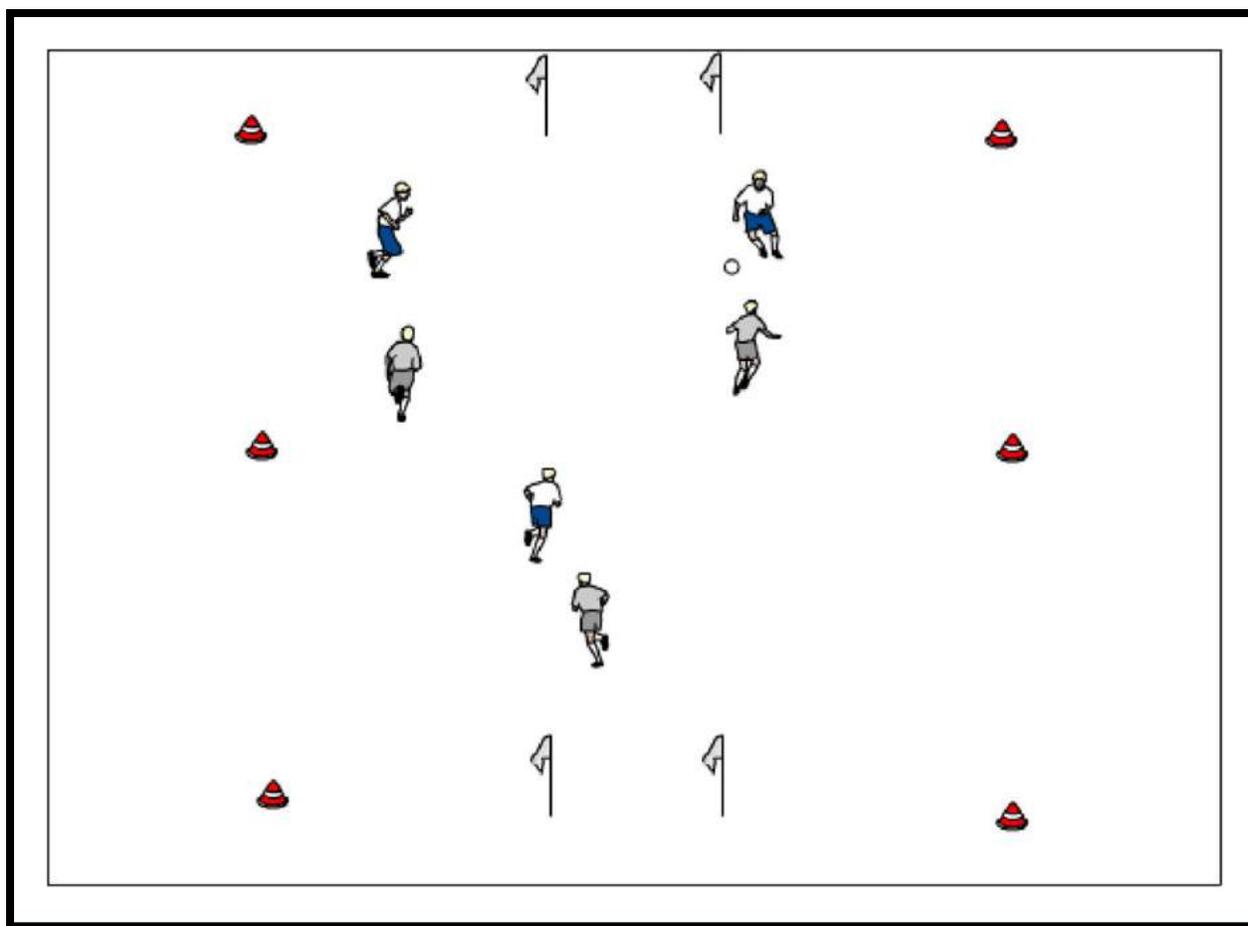
- Set up a 30 x 20 yd. grid, with 3 yd. end zones on each end line.
- Two teams of three players each

Procedure:

- This is a variation on the basic 3v3 game. The objective for each team is to get the ball into their opponent's end zone, and stop the ball in that end zone.
- Have extra players serve as substitutes for each team, or have them comprise a third team, that comes on to replace the team that gives up a goal.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control and dribbling
- Passing
- Understanding very basic tactical concepts, such as spacing and support
- Teamwork



3 V 3 TO SMALL GOALS

Organization:

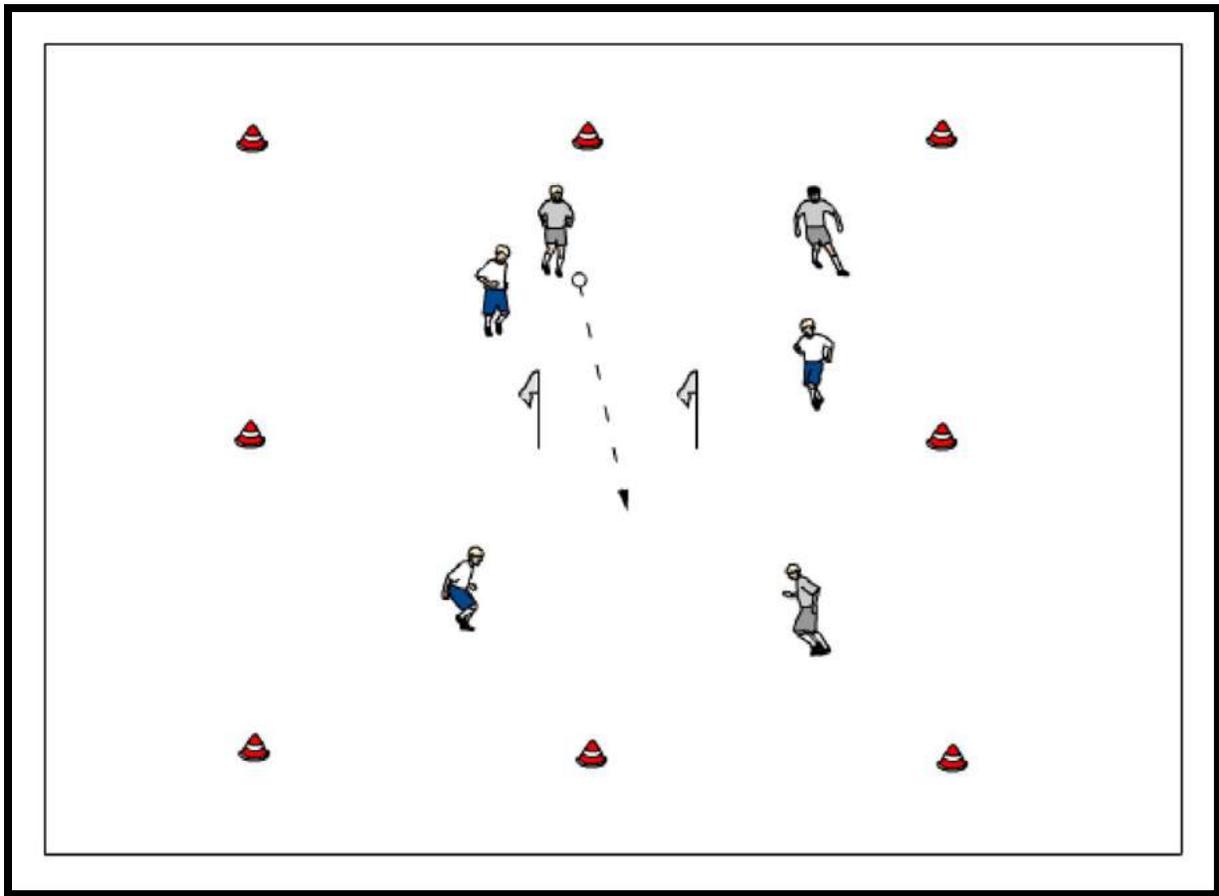
- Set up a 30 x 20 yd. grid, with small goals (approximately 3 yds. wide) on each end line.
- Two teams of three players each

Procedure:

- This is your basic small sided game. Each team plays 3 v 3, and the goal is to try to score into the opponent's small goal.
- Have extra players serve as substitutes for each team, or have them comprise a third team, that comes on to replace the team that gives up a goal.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control and dribbling
- Passing
- Understanding basic tactical concepts, such as spacing and support
- Teamwork



3 V 3 TO CENTRAL GOAL

Organization:

- Set up a 30 x 20 yd. grid, with a small goal made of flags or cones (2-3 yds. wide) in the center of the grid.
- Two teams of three players each

Procedure:

- This is another variation of the basic 3v3 game. Each team plays 3v3, and the goal is to try to score through the central goal, from either side.
- Have extra players serve as substitutes for each team, or have them comprise a third team, that comes on to replace the team that gives up a goal.

Coaching Points:

- Fun
- Ball control and dribbling
- Passing
- Understanding very basic tactical concepts, such as spacing and support
- Teamwork