

Organization of a Practice

As described in the sections above, each practice can be organized into distinct phases. NSCAA has defined these phases as:

- Warm Up
- Fundamental Phase
- Match Related Phase
- Match Condition Phase

Preparation

Before anything else though you need prior, proper preparation, sometimes known as the 3 P's.

Every practice should have a plan, even if you just scribble down some notes on a piece of paper about the things you want to work on. Always have more things planned for a practice than you can do in the time allotted. There will be drills that you think will work, that just will not. Instead of forcing the issue, be prepared to move on.

The coach should have definitive rules for practices. It is usually good to put these in writing at the beginning of the year. Have a definitive start and end time. Always be there 5 to 10 minutes before practice time. If your players and parents see that you are serious, they will tend to be that way also.

Always have your equipment with you, extra balls (great for shooting drills, not for players that forget theirs), pennies and cones.

If possible have an assistant. And don't be afraid to ask parents to stay and help you out. You are not a baby sitter. If possible get a player 2 to 3 years older than your charges to help demonstrate skills. There are a lot of travel players who would love to work with the younger ones if you would only ask them.

Warm Up

The warm up phase has been described in the age characteristic sections above. A good warm up phase should include exercises with the ball and, if practical, exercises that deal with the particular skill you are working on that day.

However some coaches like to warm up the same way no matter what the practice goal is for the day and that is all right also. Some coaches, such as Frank Schmidt of Sachem (LI Class A Champions 1997 and 1998) like to start out each practice with a 10-10-10 scenario. 10 minutes of foot skills, 10 minutes of coervers and 10 minutes on 1 v 1. This type of practice will be discussed in more detail further on in the manual.

Fundamental Phase

The fundamental phase which can be described as learning the basic skill. The basic skill can be broken down into different steps so that the player knows what to do from his “toes to his nose”. The basic skill can further be divided into segments so that there is a progression from the least difficult to the more difficult aspects of the skill.

Match Related Phase

The match related phase is training the skill to be used in a game situation. Again progression can be used. For example adding a passive defender to the drill simulates a game condition at the lowest level. Making that defender semi-active makes the skill being practiced a little harder. Adding an active defender makes the skill even harder still.

Match Condition Phase

Reiteration of the match related phase into a scrimmage like situation. Progression can again be used. For example, practicing team shape of a triangle with basic passing skills using 3 offense and one defense. Progressing up to 3 on 2 and finally 3 on 3. If passing and receiving was the basic skill award points for completed passing, combination passes, etc. not for goal scoring.

Teaching Technique

In a practice, especially with the younger levels, teaching proper technique is extremely important. The basic steps for teaching technique are as follows:

1. Introduction - Keep it short
2. Demonstration - Break down step by step, - “toes to nose”

3. Convincing and repeated demonstration. Don't let mistakes perpetuate.

There is a fine line between over-coaching and finding the correct time to make **coaching points**. You cannot stop a practice every time someone makes an error, however it is important that you do not let consistent mistakes go unremarked.

Remember..." Practice does not make perfect.....**Practice makes permanent.**"

4. Organization of groups
5. Time to practice - fundamental and match related
6. Individual and group correction – Summary
7. Perform under match conditions.- small sided game emphasizing the fundamental skill worked on in practice.

Economical Training

From time to time you will hear the term **Economical Training**. Simply put economical training is the concept of putting two or more training "ideas" together. For example, physical conditioning is important. But instead of just running wind sprints to build aerobic and anaerobic conditioning, combine them with ball handling drills so that this skill is worked at the same time as the conditioning.

A lot of coaches want to know why LIJSL does not advocate running laps for conditioning. After all if you have kids on a high school team you know that they are out running laps all of the time, right? Well it is simply a matter of time. A high school coach has the kids two to three hours a day, 5 days a week. For most of our teams, particularly intramurals, that is equivalent to a whole fall season of practices.

Another example of economical training would be to loosen up and or warm-up with the ball. For little kids this could be having them do a jig left and right foot on the ball, then progressing to a jig as they circle the ball. Have them draw back the ball and then sweep the ball left, right and behind. They loosen up and get multiple touches at the same time.