

COACHING YOUTH PLAYERS

Dribbling and Thinking On The Move

By Fran Kulas, Director of Coach and Player Development, Kentucky Youth Soccer Association

For youth players, participation and 100% inclusion of all players, each with a ball, serves well for both player retention and player development. Ball familiarity is the most essential building block in individual player development and this session aims to improve the following aspects of the ball-player relationship:

- 1 – introduce the ball to the various surfaces of the player’s foot in no pressure, light pressure, and full pressure environments
- 2 – empowering players with the tools and courage to maintain possession of the ball or penetrate with the ball while under pressure
- 3 – expose players to situations where they must decide when it is appropriate to take larger touches for distance versus smaller touches for possession
- 4 – spinning out of pressure to change direction
- 5 – making appropriate decisions in game like situations as to when is most advantageous to dribbling to either penetrate or to possess

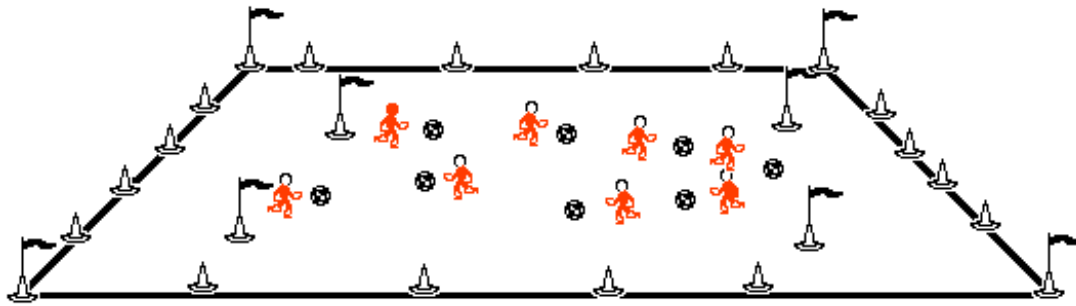
The overall and common objective of this presentation is to improve players’ abilities to make quicker decisions with the ball at their feet.

Note to coaches – you should not attempt to conquer all of the activities provided in this presentation in a single 90-minute training session. It is recommended that you as a coach choose the activities, coaching points, and variations that best suit your age group, team needs, and length of your training session. You may want to break this presentation into two or three different training sessions throughout the course of your season, or you may want to revisit the session at different stages of your season. Also you are encouraged to modify some of the numbers that are mentioned in each activity, based on the number of players on your team, or available field space.

Warm- Up / Fundamental

Stage #1

Set-up – one box , 25 x 25 yards, inside a larger box, 50 x 50 yards. Areas should be lined with cones every 5 yards, with flags on each corner, of each box.



Explanation – all players dribble a ball in the center box. Coach instructs players to use the following varied restrictions in the following progression:

- No restrictions – ball and player should not stop moving
- Dribble with left foot only
- Dribble with right foot only
- Dribble with insides of left and right foot only
- Dribble with outsides of left and right foot only
- No restrictions – ball and player should not stop moving

Coaching Points - players should be encouraged to keep their ball close, while being aware of their environment as follows:

- Avoid going out of area
- Avoid other players
- Avoid other balls

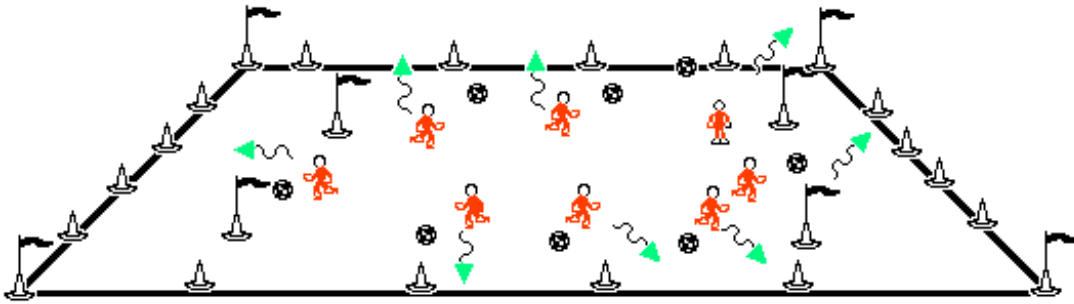
Variations

- Coach may instruct player to stop the ball with the sole of their foot on his/her designated signal
- Coach may instruct players to watch him/her as he/she periodically holds up any number of fingers to count

*Can the players dribble with their heads up and quickly verbalize the number of fingers the coach is holding up?

Stage #2

Set-Up – same as above.



Explanation – stage #2 is conducted exactly the same as stage #1 only now, on the coach's signal, the player must dribble out of the inside box and around one of the cones bordering the outside box and back into the center box as soon as possible.

Coaching Points

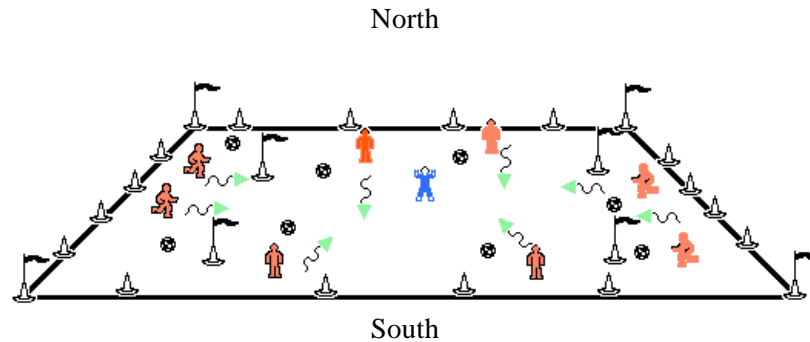
- Players should take bigger touches that cover more distance as they look to explode out of inside box in pursuit of a cone bordering the outside box
- Players should use small, efficient touch around the cones when they are turning
- Overall – big touches to cover distance, little touches to cut and turn
- Coach should determine winner – 1st player to get back into central box after dribbling around a cone bordering the outside box

Variations

- Players must dribble around a different cone each time
- Players must dribble around a different cone, on a different side of the outer box each time

Low-Pressure Activity

Set up – Same as above.



Explanation – all players, each with a ball, dribbling in the area surrounding the inside box. One player is designated as the “monster”, and is limited to the center box. On the coach’s signal, players must immediately penetrate, or go through, the inside box, all the while, attempting to avoid the “monster.” One point is awarded each time players get the ball across the square. *Note*-players may not dribble from North to East, South to West, etc. Players in a North position must penetrate the inside box and exit the inside box on the South end and vice versa. If a player is tagged by the “monster,” they now become the “monster” and give their ball to the former “monster.” Once a player has entered the inside box, they may not turn around and exit via the same side they entered. Once players have penetrated, they must attempt to continue to the other side. A point will be awarded to each player each time they successfully penetrate the central box and come out on the opposite side.

Coaching Points

- Instilling courage in players to take players on in one vs. one situations. Watch which players directly confront defenders versus those who avoid defenders and try to sneak across.
- Players must make good decisions as how to penetrate i.e. looking for “it” and choosing the appropriate times to go faster or slower based on other players and the activity of the “monster”

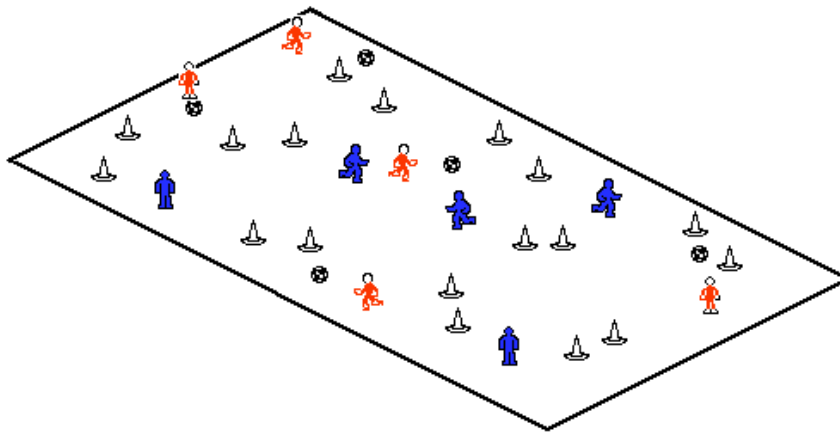
Variations

- Allow players to decide when they would like to penetrate the central box. This may be done as frequently or infrequently as they choose. Coach will count ask players for their total amount of points after a 90 second time period.
- Use visual cues to signal players to cross through the central box. For example, when John starts across all players must go. This is player controlled and other players will have to keep their eyes up and off the ball to look for John.
- Add another player to give two “monsters” in the central box
- Work your defenders as a group: They stay in until they collectively win the ball five times. Assign a new group after they achieve a predetermined amount.

- Various functions of the monster, for example, the monster must win the ball from the dribbler, versus simply tagging him/her, and must touch it “x” amount of times in order to be free of monster duties and changing to a dribbler

Full-Pressure Activity

Set-up – several small gates placed in a 70 x 60 yard field. There should be 4 more gates, than attacking players.



Explanation – one team attacks, one team defends. Each player on the attacking team has a ball each. The defending players do not have balls. In a minute’s time, the attacking team must attempt to penetrate, or dribble through, as many goals/gates as possible. Defenders should attempt to hold or shield the ball for as long as possible, should they be fortunate enough to win a ball from the attackers. After one minute’s time, the players on the attacking team should add together each individual team member’s point/goal total to arrive at a team total. Roles reverse, and the prior defending team now attacks, and must try to collectively beat the prior attacking team’s previous total. An attacking player may not attempt to dribble through a gate/goal that is currently under pursuit.

Coaching Points

- Attacking players should keep their heads up to be aware of defenders and to scan the area to look for possible goal scoring opportunities
- Attacking players should try to score as many points/goals in the time allotted
- Step-overs and spin-outs will help to get away from pressure and to find other open goals

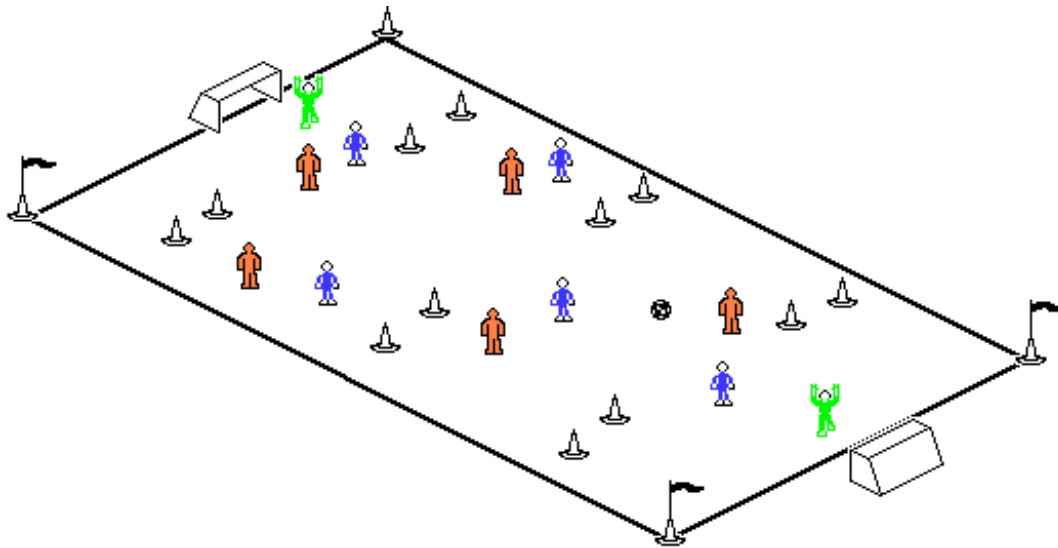
Variations

- Attacking players can score only inside-out on each gate
- Attacking players can score only outside-in on each gate
- Attacking players can score inside-out or outside-in on each gate

- Players may not score in the same gate twice until they have scored in each of the others

Final Game

Set-Up – 75 x 65 yard field, with 6 small gates, and two full-sized goals. Game is played with direction, dark colored shirts defend one goal and attack the other, light colored shirts defend one goal and attack the other.



Explanation – players may score one of two ways:

- 1- dribbling through a small gate
- 2- scoring in a full sized goal

Coaching Points

- make good decisions as to when it is appropriate to go to goal vs. when it is appropriate to attack the space, i.e. the small gates

Variations

- Award different point values to the different means of goal scoring: 2 points for penetrating or dribbling through a small gate, 1 point for scoring in the full-sized goal or vice versa (will depend on how much coach would like to emphasize, or over emphasize this aspect)
- Mandate that the team in possession must penetrate or dribble through a small gate in the same possession, before being permitted to shoot on the full-sized goal
- Players may only be awarded points, or be permitted to attack full-sized goal if they dribble through small gate in the attacking direction (dribbling through a small gate in the direction of a player's own goal will not be accepted)
- Above condition, but vice versa

- Alternate the position of the small gates so that they are parallel to the touch lines, versus the displayed set-up which is parallel to the goal lines

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