

The U12/U14 Soccer Player



Characteristics

Players need to warm up and stretch... muscle pulls are common.
Players love to solve problems.
Players need constant re-enforcement on proper technique.
They can now understand tactics.
They appreciate small-sided games.

Exercises

Grab the Tail

On a field of 25 yards by 20 yards, players tuck a scrimmage vest into the back of their shorts. On the coach's signal, all players try to grab each other's tail and throw it to the ground. All players continue to play even if they have lost their tail. Play until only one player has a tail. Add a ball for each player and let them dribble while doing the same activity. This warm-up should be followed by some sort of stretching exercises.

Barrel Ball

Use up to half the field with a barrel (or some such object) in the middle. This is a very simple game...two teams play against each other and score a goal when they hit the barrel. The last player who touches the ball before it hits the barrel receives the goal. Players are not permitted to touch the barrel or stand within a three-yard radius of the barrel. This is a fun small-sided game that can be used to end practice. It utilizes all the skills and tactics of the game.

Touch the Cones

This is a small-sided game with two equal teams and one ball. Distribute 10-12 cones evenly around the perimeter of a half field. Play a normal game to goals. Each time a player passes the ball they must run and touch a cone and then return and play. It can be the closest cone or the furthest. This is a great game for reducing the beehive effect.

One Target Game

Play 6v6 soccer. Each team has five field players and one target player. The target player may run the entire length of the goal line opposite the field players of his/her own color. Scoring is accomplished by passing to the hands or feet of the target player. The target then distributes the ball to the opposite color who try to play the ball to their own target. This game encourages accuracy and pace of passes, movement away from the ball, communication, and proper defending technique. Coaches should praise players for imaginative play.

Four Goal Game

Utilize a 40-yard by 30-yard area, two equal teams, and one ball. Place goals in each of the four corners. Each team attacks two goals and defends two goals. Use no goalkeepers, two goalkeepers, or one goalkeeper to defend two goals. Play a normal small-sided game. This game encourages width and changing the point of attack. Players should become able to identify the most vulnerable goal to attack.

Summary

TECHNICAL EMPHASIS: Proper dribbling, passing, and receiving, shooting with power and/or accuracy, ability to make longer accurate passes, and heading.

TACTICAL EMPHASIS: Communication, receiving the ball in space and away from pressure, combination play, proper 2v2 roles, and an introduction of proper 3v3 roles.

Players have very sensitive egos... ALWAYS BE POSITIVE.
Practices can now be lengthened to ninety minutes.
Encourage creativity and risk taking.