

The U8 Soccer Player



Characteristics

Can work in pairs....the concept of passing can be introduced.

Greatly prefer playing to watching... no long lines.

Limited attention span... 15-20 seconds for listening, 15-20 minutes for an activity.

Can now incorporate 3 or 4 speeds into their play...not just all out.

Straight runs up and down the field are the norm...don't expect much movement off the ball... be patient.

Exercises

Ball Retrieval in Pairs

Work with one ball for two players. Using a large area, start from the middle of the field. One pair of players hands their ball to the coach who tosses it away and calls out a number from 2-10. Each pair of players must return the ball to the coach by passing the ball with their feet in exactly the asked for number of touches. The players will decide how to solve the problem. Coaches can move to a different area after the ball has been tossed so that players must be aware of where they are going. Coach should rapidly toss balls to keep the activity flowing. This exercise encourages working in pairs, passing at the right pace, playing to a target, and keeping heads up.

Gates Game in Pairs

In a defined area, coaches should construct 8-12 randomly spaced goals about 3 yards apart. Each pair of players has one ball. Coach gives a signal, and each pair of players attempts to pass to each other through the gates as many times as they can in 60 seconds. Players cannot play through the same gates with consecutive passes. Players should keep their score. Repeat and see if they can beat their score. This activity encourages proper passing, receiving, movement, changing direction, and cooperation.

Math Dribble

In a confined area, each player dribbles with their own ball....keeping control and avoiding others. Coach calls out a math problem, such as 1 plus 2 or 4 minus 1. Players immediately solve the problem by forming an appropriately sized group. This activity encourages dribbling in a small area, changing direction, and changing speeds.

Pac Man

In a 20 yard by 20 yard area, all players have their own ball. All but two place their ball on the outside of the area. The two with their balls are the Pac Men. Pac Men dribble their ball and try to hit other players **BELOW THE KNEE** with a pass. Players try to avoid being hit by running, jumping, and dodging. Once a player is hit, they become a Pac Man and retrieve their own ball. This activity teaches dribbling, passing, changing direction, and passing to a moving target.

Boss of Balls

This is a small-sided game of 4v4 to two small goals. Use an area of 20 yards by 30 yards. Coach stands at the midline with all the balls. Ball one is played in by the coach and the game begins. When a goal is scored or the ball leaves the field, another ball is played in. When all the balls have been played, the PLAYERS run and collect them and return them to the coach. The game begins again. A small-sided scrimmage is a great way to end practice.

Summary

Use pairs and teamwork in practices.

Recognize that U8 players are extremely aware of your approval... keep reactions positive.

Incorporate repetition with fundamental technical skills (mostly dribbling and passing).

There is a wide range of abilities at this age....challenge each accordingly.

Competitive nature becomes apparent in some. Winning and losing should still NOT be stressed.

Limit practice to about 60 minutes.