



Johnston - Urbandale
Soccer Club
U8

Coaching Curriculum

JUSC U8 Theme:



Look After the Ball.

U8 Topic Finder

Click topic and jump there.

Coaching Overview

#1 Dribbling to Keep Possession

#2 Dribbling to Keep Possession

#3 Dribbling – Running with the Ball

#4 Dribbling – Running with the Ball

#5 Shooting and Ball Striking with the Inside of the Foot

#6 Shooting and Ball Striking with the Inside of the Foot

#7 Dribbling to Keep Possession

#8 Dribbling to Keep Possession, Create Space

#9 Shooting and Ball Striking with the Instep

#10 Shooting and Ball Striking with the Instep

#11 Dribbling to Beat a Player

#12 Dribbling to Beat a Player

U8 Coaching Overview

Characteristics of U8 Players:

- Tend to play well in pairs – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- Are now able to take another's perspective – they now have a sense of how others are feeling
- Still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient
- Heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- Still much prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- Have an understanding of time and sequence – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”
- Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible
- Extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently
- Seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age
- Begin to become aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player
- Some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age
- Beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements
- Less active imaginations than U6 players – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year-olds allowed will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imagination; just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

Practice Thoughts Coaching Philosophy

Introduction.

The Under 8 program is very important in the development of young soccer players. With that in mind it is very important that we focus upon making practices and games a fun and enjoyable experience. The training program is a 12 week plan that can help take you through the season.

The key theme at U8 is “ looking after the ball “

Everything we do in this age group should reflect this theme.

The key areas of focus are as follows:

- Dribbling.
 - Running with the ball, dribbling in space.
 - Dribbling to keep possession.
 - Dribbling to beat a player.
- Shooting and Ballstriking.
 - Using the instep.
 - **Using the inside of the foot.**

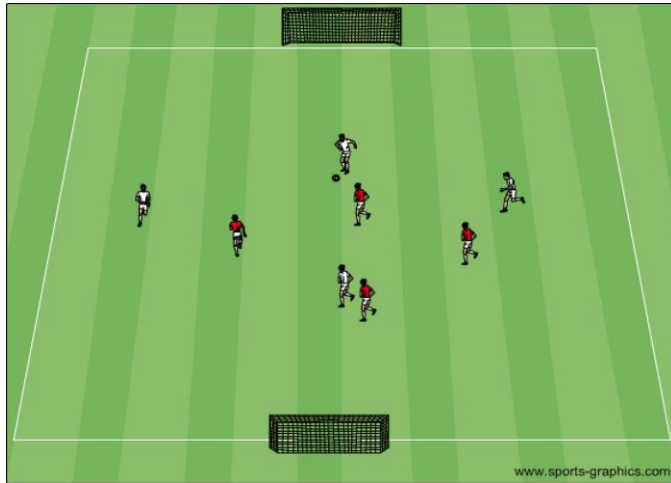
There is an emphasis on the 4v4 game itself and some simple ideas on how the team should be organized. I have also included a number of 4 v 4 games with multiple goals to encourage players to play with more patience.

It is also important that you encourage your players to take two or more touches every time they have possession of the ball so they are encouraged to dribble with the ball and take a touch even when they are under pressure.

Game Thoughts

The 4 v 4 Game:

1. How do I set up my team ?



Please understand that this is just a guide for your players and it is unrealistic to expect them to fully understand the team concept. Young players want to dribble and shoot and should be encouraged to do so.

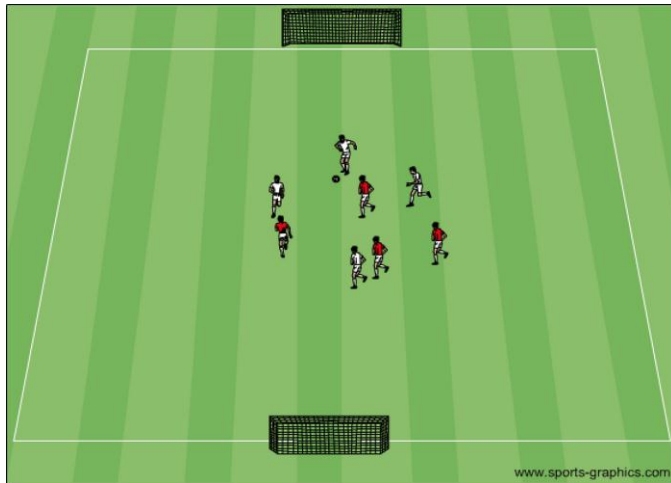
Do not tell players to “play their position“, but rather encourage them to spread out when their team has the ball. Below are two teams lined up at a kick-off. You will notice that they are set up in a diamond shape. **Please understand that they will not look like this very often during the game as I will outline in the following pages.**

2. Why should the players spread out?



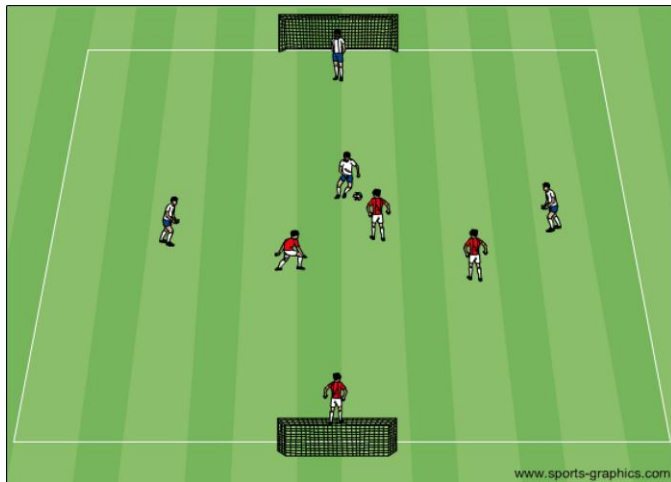
In the following example the white team has possession. The white team has spread out wide and long in a diamond shape which leaves 1 v 1 situations all over the field and encourages players to dribble.

3. What happens when the team does not spread out?



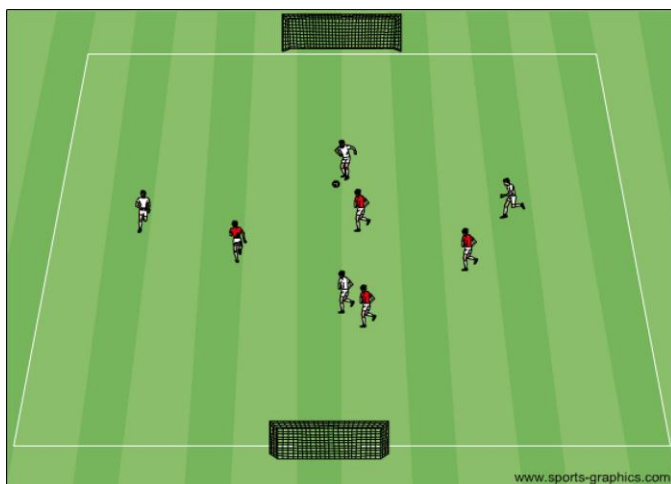
The team in possession has not spread out and the player in possession has very limited space to play in and few options in possession. You will find that players particularly those new to the game will move towards to ball. It is important that you are very patient in this area of the player's development.

4. Can I keep a defender back?



The short answer is No. If coaches do this we are putting the result of the game ahead of the player's individual development and enjoyment. **Ask yourself how many touches these players will have during a game if they stay in this position.**

5. Where do I play my back player?



It is important that we encourage the back player to get forward into attacking situations when they have the opportunity. I would also encourage you to continue to rotate players in different positions.

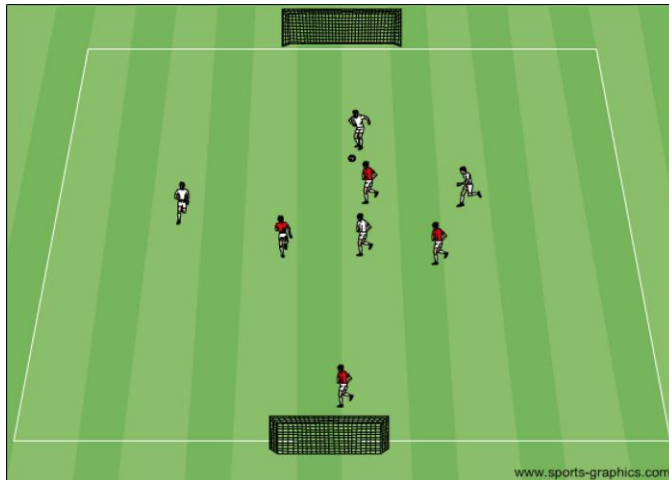
U8 Training Session 1.

Dribbling to Keep Possession.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control
- Keep your head up
- Change direction
- Change speed
- Look for the players to maintain possession in one v one situations

Phase #1 Scrimmage 35 x 25. { 15 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more.** They are not allowed to take one touch unless they are shooting at goal or trying to win the ball from an opponent. Restart the game by the players dribbling the ball into play. If you have 4 – 6 players at the start of practice begin by playing 2v2 or 3v3.

Phase #2 Technical Practice. Field 25 x 20 { 5 minutes }



Technique: Stop turn.

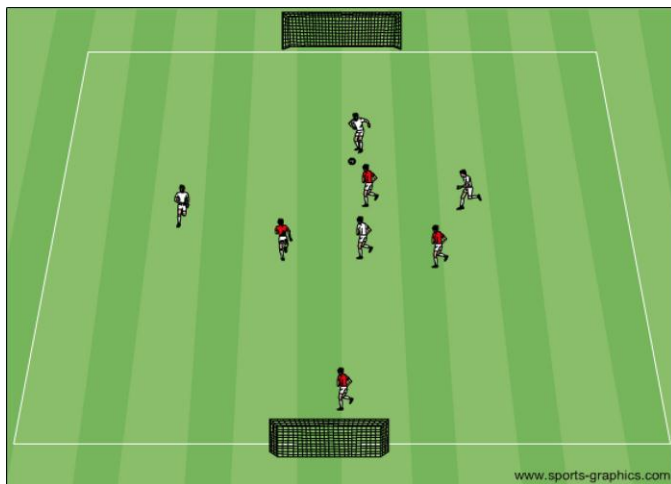
The players dribble around the field. The players stop the ball with the sole of the foot, turn and dribble through one of the small goals before moving onto another goal.

Phase #3 Dribble Defend Relay. Field 25 x 20 { 10–15 minutes }



The players are in two teams. The players on one team have a ball each with the other team lined up on the outside of the field. As the game starts the defending team in teams of two run onto the field and aim to kick three balls out of play. If a player's ball is kicked out of play they bring it back on to the field and continue dribbling. The defending players when they have finished, tag the next two players in line. The coach times the game and stops the watch when the last group have finished. The teams switch roles with the team dribbling the ball the longest winning the game. Repeat a number of times.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25. { 30 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more. Restart the game by passing the ball into play with the inside of the foot.**

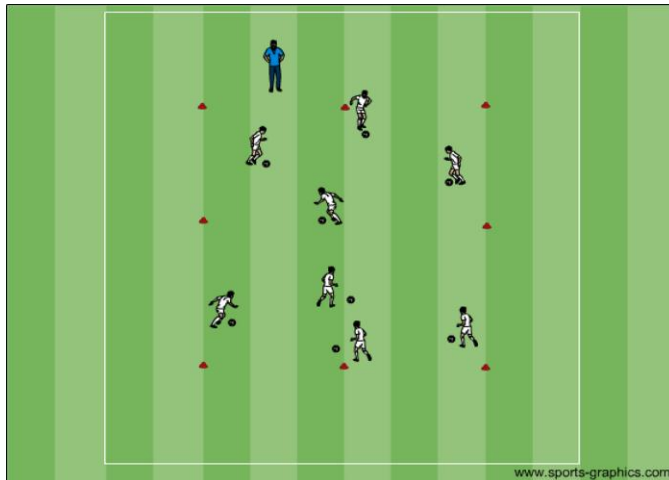
U8 Training Session 2.

Dribbling to Keep Possession.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control
- 2.Keep your head up
- Change direction
- Change speed
- Look for the players to maintain possession in one v one situations

Phase #1 King of the Jungle. Field 20 x 20 { 10–15 minutes }



The players all have a ball and dribble the ball around the field. When the coach shouts “Go”, the players continue to dribble while aiming to kick the other players balls out of play. If a player’s ball goes out of play they must retrieve it as quickly as possible. Each time a player’s ball goes out of play they lose a life. Play for a minute with the player losing the least number of lives winning the game. Repeat a number of times.

Phase #2 Technical Activity. { 5 minutes }



Technique. Stop turn

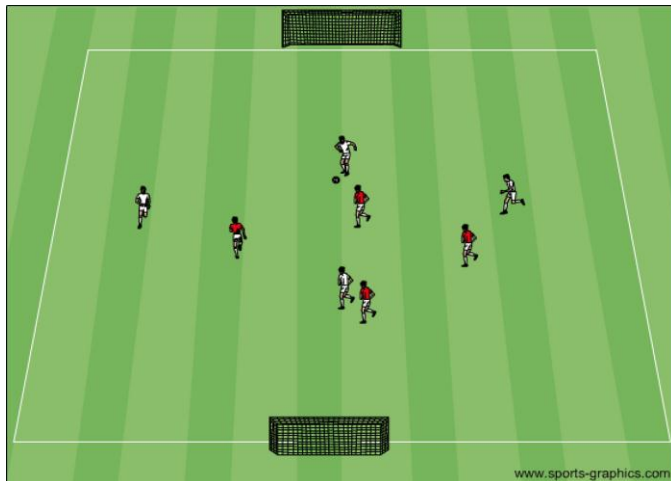
The players have a ball each and practice the stop turn. They dribble forward and stop the ball with the sole of the foot before turning and dribbling in a different direction. Encourage the players to dribble at a steady pace and accelerate out of the turn.

Phase #3 Game Protectors. { 15 – 20 minutes }



The players are in two teams and pair up with an opposition player with one ball between them. On the coaches instruction the players compete for the ball and aim to maintain possession. If the ball goes out of play the player who kicked the ball out must collect and return it to their opponent. The player in possession at the end of the game is the winner and wins a point for their team. The team with the most points is the winner. Play each game for 10 – 20 seconds and repeat a number of times.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25 { 20 - 25 minutes }



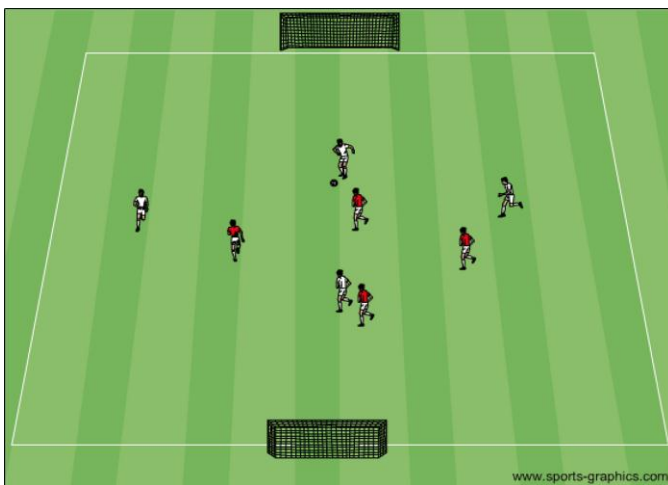
The players play 4 v 4 **and have to take two touches or more in possession.** Restart the game by **passing the ball into play with the inside of the foot.**

U8 Training Session 3.

Dribbling - Running with the Ball.

- Coaching points
- Keep your body over the ball
- Make sure the toe is pointed down
- Make contact with the laces
- Play with your head up
- Maintain control of the ball
- Look for players to take longer touches when they have space in front of them and smaller touches when space is limited

Phase #1 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25 { 15 minutes }



Teams play 4 v 4. **The players are conditioned to take two touches or more every time they are in possession.** Encourage players to dribble the ball into space when they have the chance. Restart play by dribbling the ball into play.

Phase #2 Dribbling Race. Field 35 x 25 { 10 minutes }



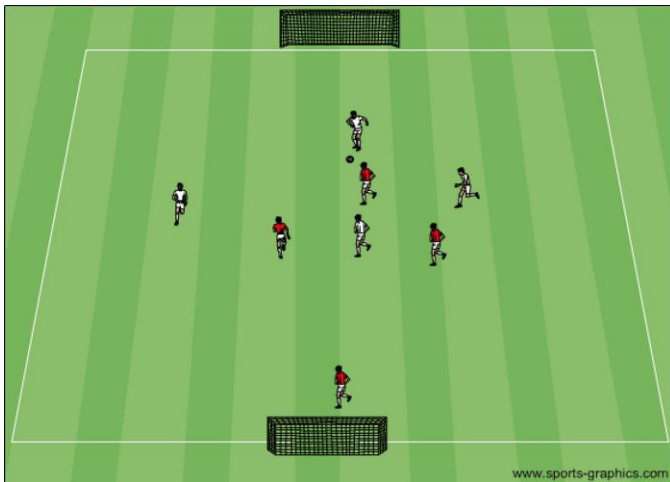
The players are in three teams with each player lined up at one end of the field with a ball. The first player in line has to dribble the ball up to and around a cone 25 yards away before returning to the line. The players must take a minimum of 3 touches towards the cone and back again. Repeat with the next group of players.

Phase #3 Bulldogs Field 35 x 25 { 15-20 minutes }



The players line up on one side of the field with a ball each. The coach or a selected player stands in the middle of the field. The players aim to dribble the ball past them and across the line opposite where they put their foot on the ball. If the player in the middle kicks a players ball out of play that player joins them in the center. The last player to be eliminated wins the game.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25 { 30 minutes }



Teams play 4 v 4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more.** They are not allowed to take one touch unless they are shooting at goal or trying to win the ball from an opponent. **When the ball goes out of play all restarts must be played with the inside of the foot.**

U8 Training Session 4.

Dribbling - Running with the Ball.

- Coaching points
- Keep your body over the ball
- Make sure the toe is pointed down
- Make contact with the laces
- Play with your head up
- Maintain control of the ball
- Look for players to take longer touches when they have space in front of them and smaller touches when space is limited

Phase #1 Dribbling Relay. Field 30 x 20 { 10-15 minutes }



The players are in two teams with each team lined up at one end of the field with a ball each. The first player in line has to dribble the ball up to and around a cone 20 yards away before returning to the line. Once the player has completed the run the next player in line can go. The first team to complete the course wins the game. Repeat a number of times.

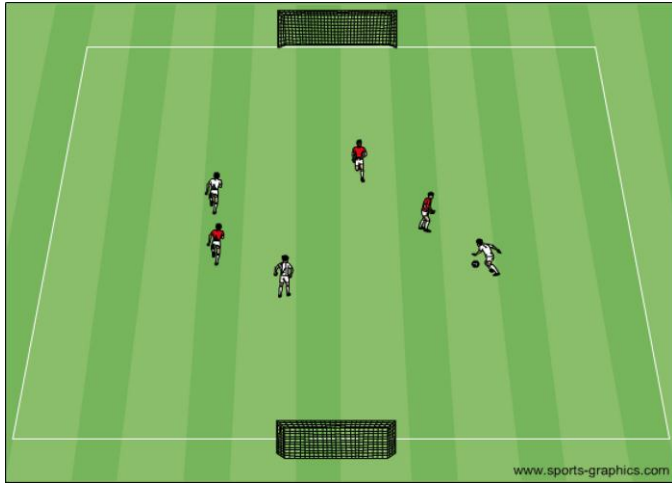
Phase #2. 1 2 3 Go. Field 30 x 20. { 15-20 minutes }



The players are in two teams with each player given the same number as a player on the opposite team. The coach calls out a number and the respective players come out and play one on one until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. After 5 minutes start calling out numbers at intervals so you have games going on at the same time.

Phase #3 Scrimmage. Field 30 x 20

{ 25-30 minutes }



Teams play 3 v 3. The players are conditioned to take two touches or more every time they are in possession. Encourage players to dribble the ball into space when they have the opportunity. If you have additional players rotate them in every 4-5 minutes.

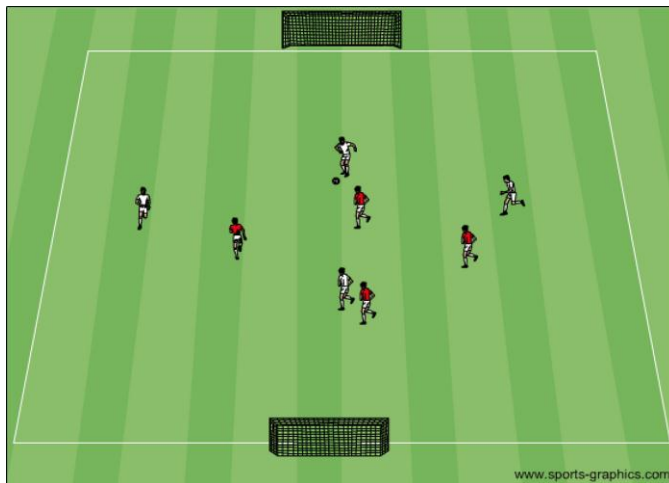
U8 Training Session 5.

Shooting and Ball Striking with the Inside of the Foot

Coaching Points:

- Approach the ball from an angle
- Place the non-kicking foot next to the ball
- Make contact with the inside of the foot
- Keep the ankle locked
- Strike through the center of the ball
- Encourage the players to shoot at every opportunity with either foot

Phase #1 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25 { 10 – 15 minutes }



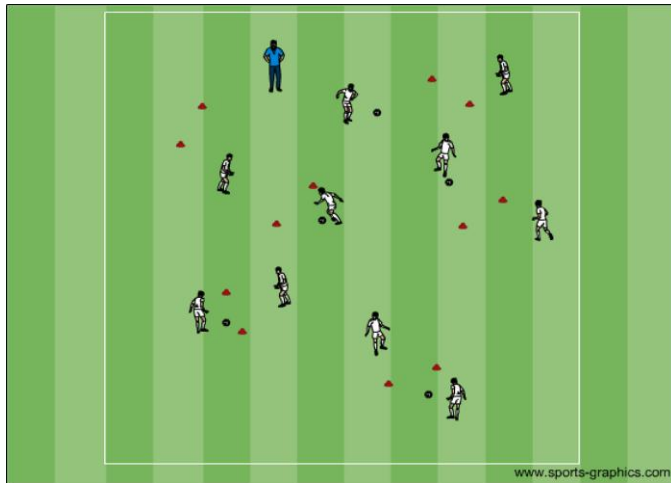
Teams play 4v4. If you have more players play two games of 3v3 on a slightly smaller field. **The players are conditioned to take 2 touches or more to encourage them to make better decisions in possession. Restart the game by passing the ball in with the inside of the foot.**

Phase #2 Battleships. Field 25 x 20. { 10-15 minutes }



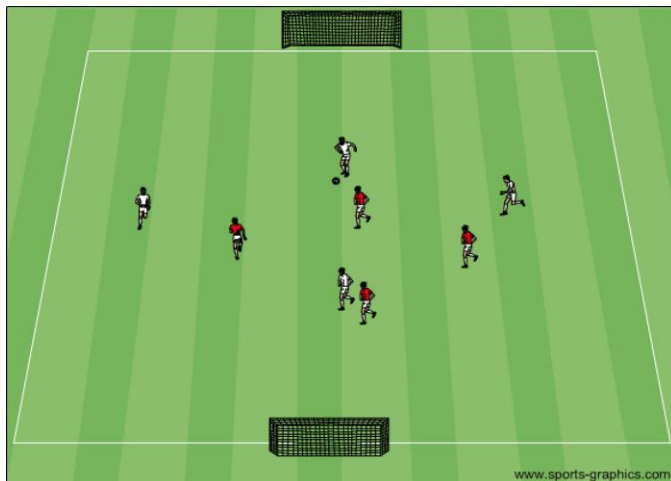
The players have a ball each with the field set up with 15 – 20 cones that represent battleships. The players play for 45 - 60 seconds and get a point each time they pass the ball with the inside of the foot and knock over a battleship. The player with the most points wins the game. For variation the coach or a selected player can dribble after the players and if a player ball is hit their score goes back to zero.

Phase #3 Passing Gate Race. Field 35 x 25. { 10 – 15 minutes }



Set up 5-6 small cone goals { 2-3 yards wide } on the field. The players are in teams of two and play with one ball. The players must pass the ball to their partner through each of the small goals without knocking over the cones. If a player knocks over the cone they must pass the ball through the goal again before they continue. The first team to complete the course wins the game. As a variation you might want to start with the players passing the ball through the same goal. The first team to complete 10 passes wins the game.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25. { 15 - 20 minutes }



Teams play 4v4. If you have more players play two games of 3v3 on a slightly smaller field. **The players are conditioned to take 2 touches or more to encourage them to make better decisions in possession. Restart the game by passing the ball in with the inside of the foot.**

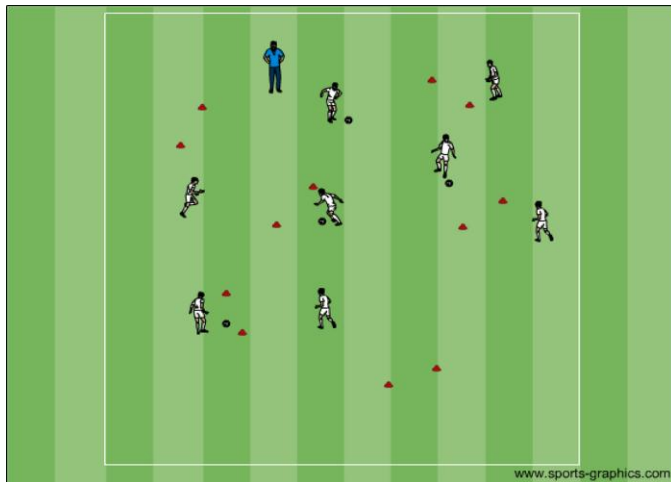
U8 Training Session 6.

Shooting and Ball Striking with the Inside of the Foot

Coaching Points:

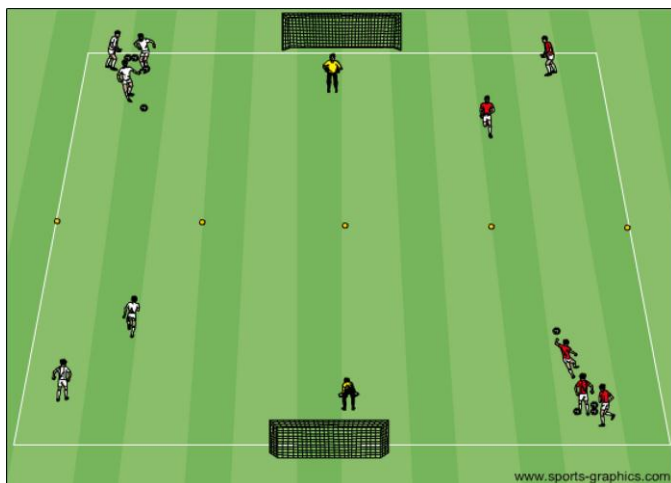
- Approach the ball from an angle
 - Place the non-kicking foot next to the ball
 - Make contact with the inside of the foot
 - Keep the ankle locked
 - Strike through the center of the ball
 - Encourage the players to shoot at every opportunity with either foot
-

Phase #1. Passing gate race. Field 35 x 25. { 10 – 15 minutes }



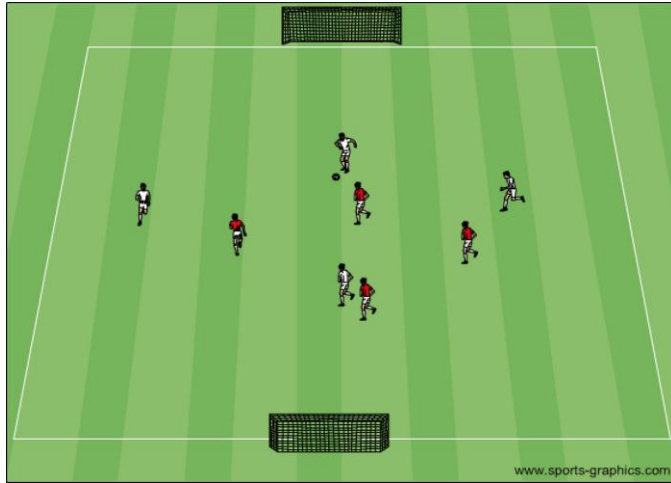
Set up 5-6 small cone goals { 2-3 yards wide } on the field. The players are in teams of two and play with one ball. The players must pass the ball to their partner through each of the small goals without knocking over the cones. If a player knocks over the cone they must pass the ball through the goal again before they continue. The first team to complete the course wins the game. As a variation you might want to start with the players passing the ball through the same goal. The first team to complete 10 passes wins the game.

Phase #2. Passing at goal. Field 20 x 30. { 10-15 minutes }



The players are in groups of three with one player at each end of the field 20 yards apart. The goalkeeper stands in the center in a small goal { 5-6 yards wide }. The players take it in turns to shoot at goal using the inside of the foot. Change the goalkeepers every 2-3 minutes. Encourage the players to use both feet. Also look for the better players to hit a moving ball when they are shooting.

Phase #3 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25. { 25 - 30 minutes }



Teams play 4v4. If you have more players play two games of 3v3 on a slightly smaller field. **The players are conditioned to take 2 touches or more to encourage them to make better decisions in possession. Restart the game by passing the ball in with the inside of the foot.**

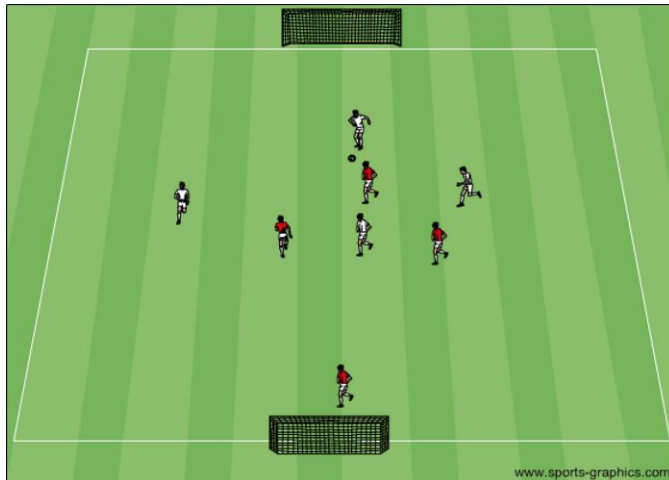
U8 Training Session 7.

Dribbling to Keep Possession.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control
- Keep your head up
- Change direction
- Change speed
- Look for the players to maintain possession in one v one situations

Phase #1 Scrimmage 35 x 25. { 15 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more.** They are not allowed to take one touch unless they are shooting at goal or trying to win the ball from an opponent. Restart the game by the players dribbling the ball into play. If you have 4 – 6 players at the start of practice begin by playing 2v2 or 3v3.

Phase #2 Technical practice. Field 25 x 20 { 5 minutes }



Technique: Dragback turn.

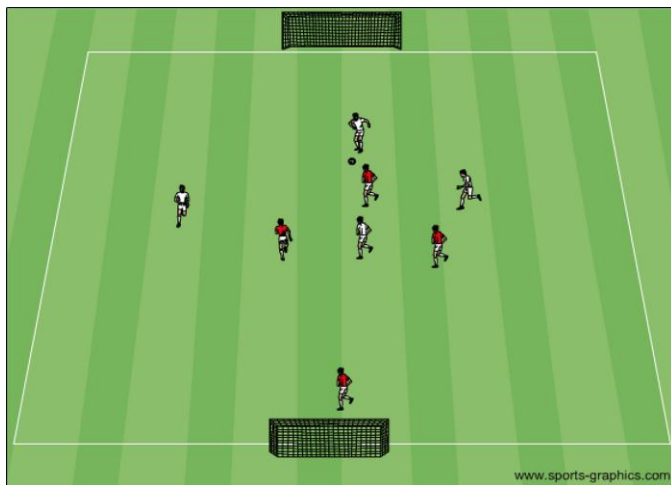
The players dribble around the field. The players drag the ball back with the sole of the foot, turn and dribble through one of the small goals before moving onto another goal.

Phase #3 1v1 Turn and Dribble through the Goal. { 15 – 20 minutes }



Setup a field with the goals 20 yards apart. The coach plays the ball in and the players play one v one. The player who wins possession aims to score by dribbling through either one of the two goals. Encourage the players to turn and change direction to lose the defending player. Play for 15-20 seconds or until a goal is scored and then repeat with the next two players in line.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25. { 30 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more. Restart the game by passing the ball into play with the inside of the foot.**

U8 Training Session 8.

Dribbling to Keep Possession, Create Space.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control
- Keep your head up
- Change direction
- Change speed
- Look for the players to maintain possession in one v one situations

Phase #1 Technical practice. Field 25 x 20 { 5 minutes }



Technique: Stop turn.

The players dribble around the field. The players stop the ball with the sole of the foot, turn and dribble through one of the small goals before moving onto another goal.

Phase #2 Game Protectors. { 10-15 minutes }



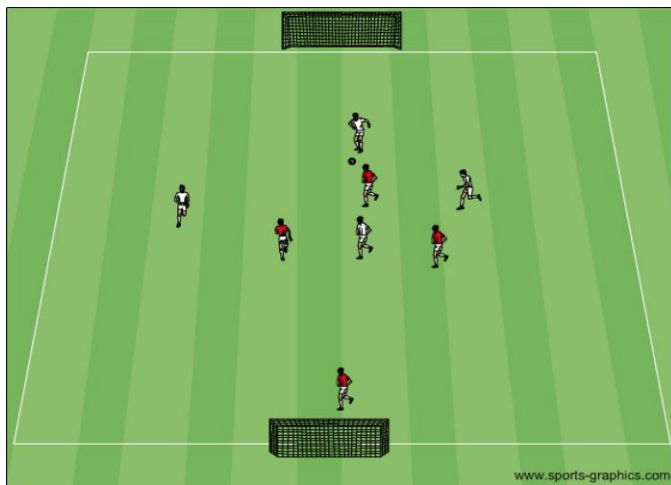
The players are in three groups with one group defending. On the coaches instruction the players compete for the ball and aim to maintain possession. If the ball goes out of play it is out of the game. Any player in possession at the end of the game wins a point. Switch the defenders each game and play for 10 – 20 seconds. The player with the most points at 5-6 games is the winner.

Phase #3 1 v 1 Turn and Dribble through the Goal. { 15–20 minutes }



Setup a field with the goals 20 yards apart. The coach plays the ball in and the players play one v one. The player who wins possession aims to score by dribbling through either one of the two goals. Encourage the players to turn and change direction to lose the defending player. Play for 15-20 seconds or until a goal is scored and then repeat with the next two players in line.

Phase #4 Scrimmage. Field 35 x 25. { 20-25 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The players are conditioned to play 2 touches or more. Restart the game by passing the ball into play with the inside of the foot.**

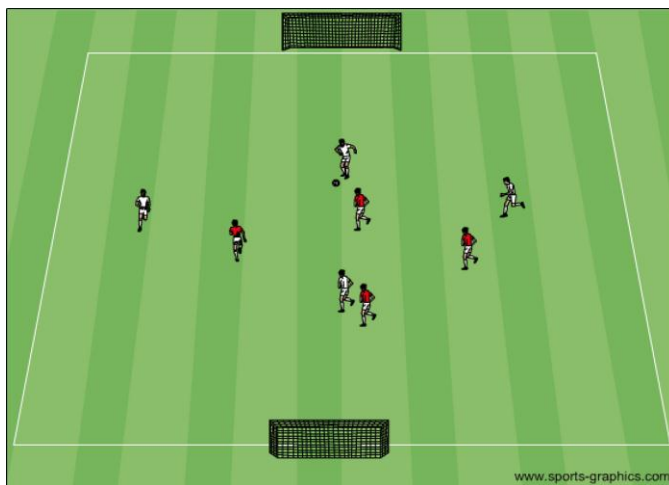
U8 Training Session 9.

Shooting and Ball Striking with the Instep.

Coaching Points:

- Approach the ball from an angle
- Place the non-kicking foot next to the ball
- Make contact with the laces
- Keep the ankle locked
- Strike through the center of the ball and keep the knee over the ball
- Encourage the players to shoot at every opportunity with both feet

Phase #1 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 10 - 15 minutes }



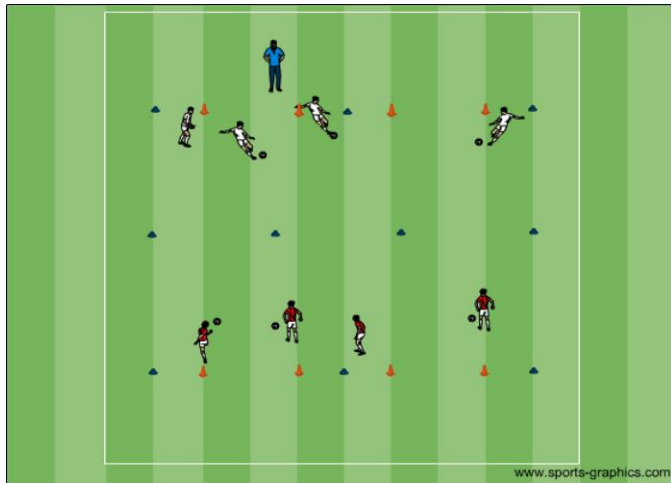
Teams play 4v4. **The players are conditioned to play a minimum of two touches when they have possession.** Players can take one touch when they are shooting or if they are trying to win possession.

Phase #2 Technical Activity. Field 20 x 30. { 10-15 minutes }



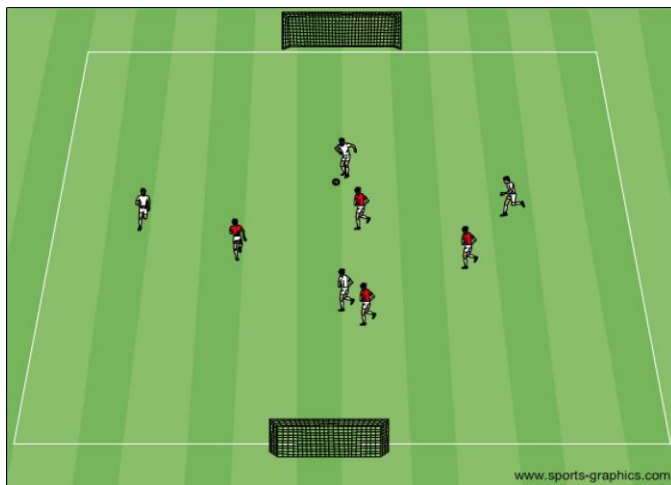
The players are in groups of three with one player at each end of the field 20 yards apart. The goalkeeper stands in the center in a small goal { 5-6 yards wide }. The players take it in turns to shoot at goal. Change the goalkeepers every 2-3 minutes. Encourage the players to use both feet and the laces or the inside of the foot to strike the ball. Also look for the better players to hit a moving ball when they are shooting.

Phase #2 Goals Galore. Field 20 x 30. { 15 - 20 minutes }



The field is divided in half with two goals { 5-6 yards wide } at each end. The players are in two teams and must remain in their own half. They have a ball each and can score in any of the opposition's goals. All the players can be goalkeepers and can strike any of the balls in their own half or behind the goals. Encourage the players to hit a moving ball. The first team to score 7 goals wins the game. Repeat several times.

Phase #3 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 15 - 20 minutes }



Teams play 4v4. If you have more players play two games of 3v3 on a slightly smaller field. **The players are conditioned to play a minimum of two touches when they have possession.** Players can take one touch when they are shooting or if they are trying to win possession.

U8 Training Session 10.

Shooting and Ball Striking with the Instep.

Coaching Points:

- Approach the ball from an angle
- Place the non-kicking foot next to the ball
- Make contact with the laces
- Keep the ankle locked
- Strike through the center of the ball and keep the knee over the ball
- Encourage the players to shoot at every opportunity with both feet

Phase #1 Technical Activity. Field 20 x 30. { 10-15 minutes }



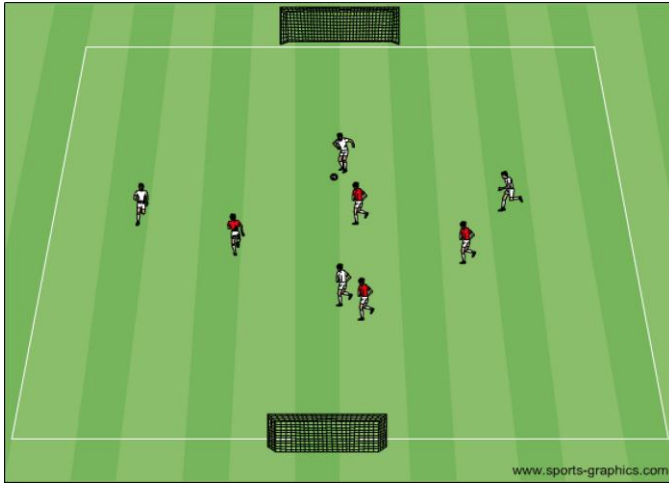
The players are in groups of three with one player at each end of the field 20 yards apart. The goalkeeper stands in the center in a small goal { 5-6 yards wide }. The players take it in turns to shoot at goal. Change the goalkeepers every 2-3 minutes. Encourage the players to use both feet and the laces or the inside of the foot to strike the ball. Also look for the better players to hit a moving ball when they are shooting.

Phase #2 Goals Galore. Field 20 x 30. { 20 – 25 minutes }



The field is divided in half with two goals { 5-6 yards wide } at each end. The players are in two teams and must remain in their own half. They have a ball each and can score in any of the opposition's goals. All the players can be goalkeepers and can strike any of the balls in their own half or behind the goals. Encourage the players to hit a moving ball. The first team to score 7 goals wins the game. Repeat several times.

Phase #3 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 20 - 25 minutes }



Teams play 4v4. **The players are conditioned to play a minimum of two touches when they have possession.** Players can take one touch when they are shooting or if they are trying to win possession.

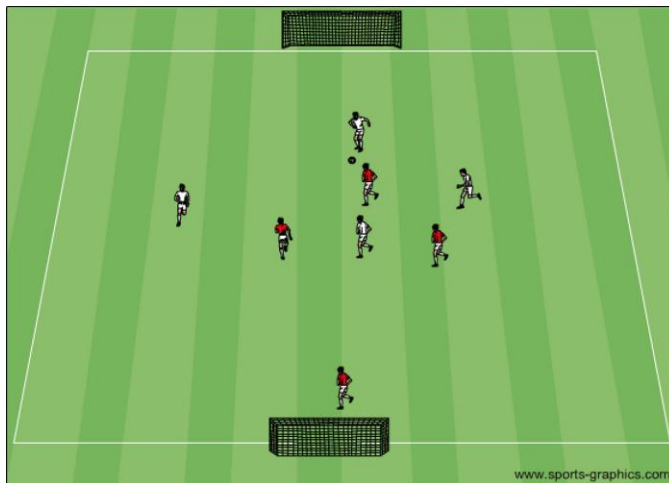
U8 Training Session 11.

Dribbling to Beat a Player.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control of the ball
- Keep your head up
- Change direction, just out of tackling range
- Acceleration, get into a low body position
- Always encourage players to dribble in one v one situations

Phase #1 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 15-20 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The last defender becomes the goalkeeper. The players are conditioned to play a minimum of two touches when they have possession.** Players can take one touch when they are shooting or if they are trying to win possession. **Players restart the game by dribbling the ball into play.**

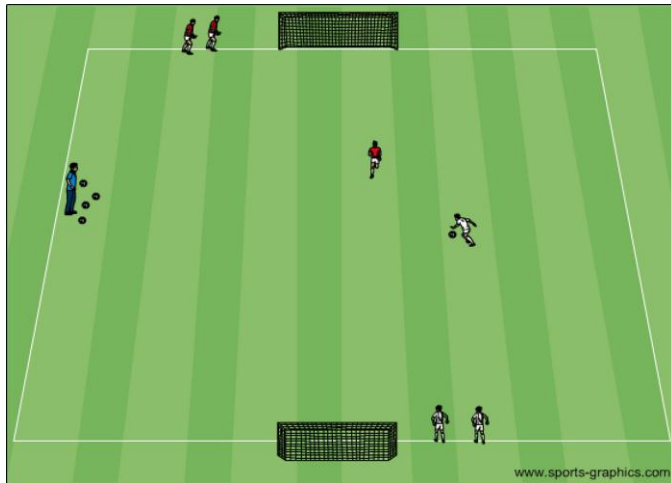
Phase #2 Technical practice. Field 35 x 25. { 5 minutes }



Technique. Inside cut.

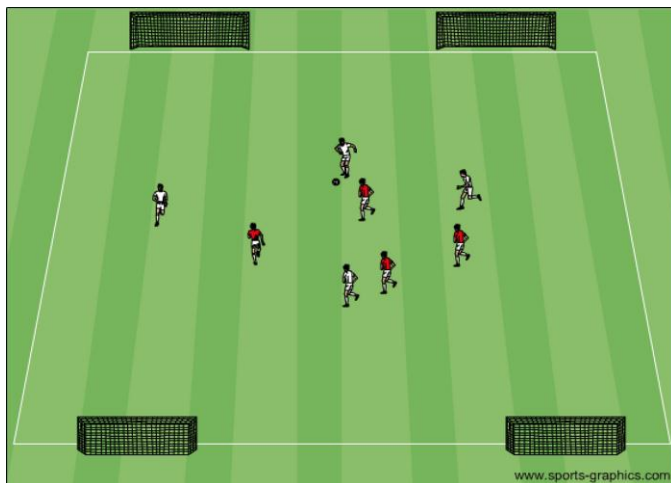
The players have a ball each and practice the inside cut. They dribble forward and play/cut the ball with the inside of the foot at an angle to beat a defender. Encourage the players to dribble at a steady pace and accelerate out of the move.

Phase #3 Game 1 – 2 – 3 Go. Field 30 x 20 with a small goals { 15–20 minutes }



Divide the players into two teams who line up on opposite corners of the field. Each player is given a number with a player on the opposite team having a corresponding number. The coach calls out a number and the respective players come out and play one on one until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. After 5 minutes start calling out numbers at intervals so you have two or three games going on at the same time. The first team to score 5 goals wins the game.

Phase #4 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 10 - 15 minutes }



The teams play 4v4. The players can score in either one of the two goals opposite although they must be in the opponents half to score. Encourage the players to look for the open goal. **Players must take a minimum of two touches in possession. To restart the game allow players to dribble the ball into play.**

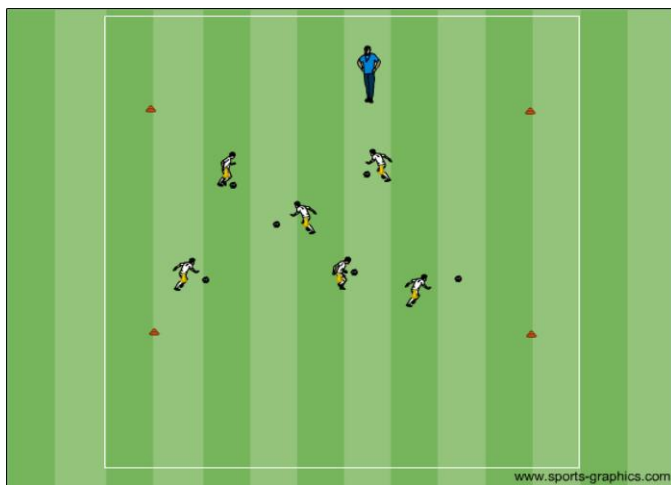
U8 Training Session 12.

Dribbling to Beat a Player.

Coaching Points:

- Maintain close control of the ball
- Keep your head up
- Change direction, just out of tackling range
- Acceleration, get into a low body position
- Always encourage players to dribble in one v one situations

Phase #1 Flag Soccer. Field 20 x 15. { 10 – 15 minutes }



The players have a flag attached “football style” and a ball each. The players dribble their ball and try and pull out the opponents flag. If a player loses a flag or their ball goes out of play they lose a life. The player losing the fewest lives wins the game. Play each game for 1-2 minutes.

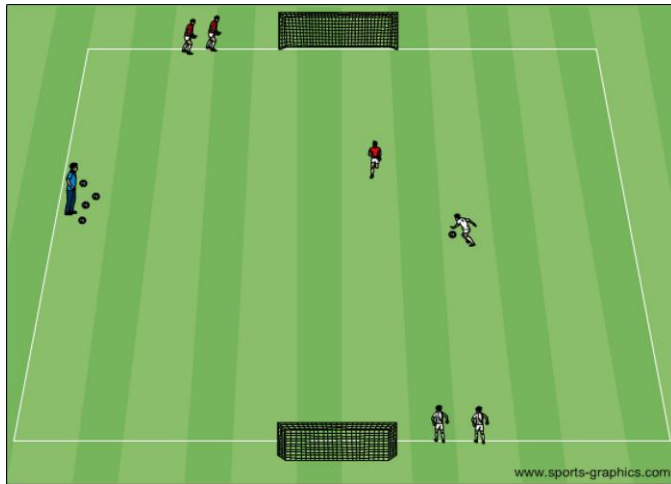
Phase #2 Technical practice. Field 35 x 25. { 5 minutes }



Technique. Inside cut.

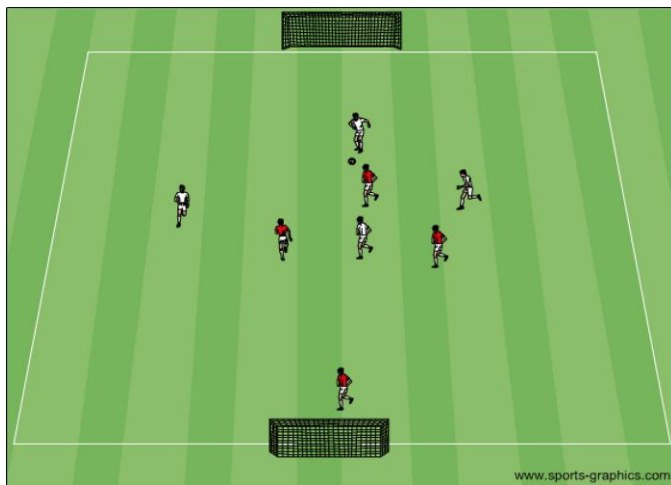
The players have a ball each and practice the inside cut. They dribble forward and play/cut the ball with the inside of the foot at an angle to beat a defender. Encourage the players to dribble at a steady pace and accelerate out of the move.

Phase #3 Game 1 – 2 – 3 Go. Field 30 x 20 with a small goals { 15–20 minutes }



Divide the players into two teams who line up on opposite corners of the field. Each player is given a number with a player on the opposite team having a corresponding number. The coach calls out a number and the respective players come out and play one on one until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. After 5 minutes start calling out numbers at intervals so you have two or three games going on at the same time. The first team to score 5 goals wins the game.

Phase #4 Scrimmage Field 35 x 25 { 15-20 minutes }



Teams play 4v4 with a floating goalkeeper. **The last defender becomes the goalkeeper. The players are conditioned to play a minimum of two touches when they have possession.** Players can take one touch when they are shooting or if they are trying to win possession. **Players restart the game by dribbling the ball into play.**