

K-3rd Grade League



9 Week Practice Plan

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COMMON PRACTICE PROBLEMS

#1 Having an odd number of players at practice

- If you have an assistant or a spare parent, have them work with a goalkeeper
- When doing pair activities, make a triangle instead
- In small group activities, add a shadow defender with no tackling allowed
- Scrimmage 5v4 and have team with less players loaded with stronger players
- Scrimmage 5v4 and have team with more players attacking small goal
- Scrimmage 5v4 and have team with less players with goalie, other team without
- Use assistant, parent, brother/sister to even teams out
- Play yourself

#2 Picking teams for scrimmages

- Use your knowledge and judgment to evenly match up individuals
- Random Teams
 - Choose one player to give everyone a number. Turn away and pick random numbers for teams
 - Choose players by birthday month or day

#3 Increasing competition for more advance players

- In pairs, match up players according to ability
- If one exceptional player, match up against assistant or parent
- Reduce the space
- Limit number of touches

#4 In eliminating games players sit out for long periods of time

- In games like knockout players should do a skill activity that allows them back into the game. Rather than a single winner, count number of times required to do the skill activity. Least number wins. Skill activities could include dribbling to a distant cone and back, juggle the ball x times, do x jumping jacks, etc.

#5 Defenders always win the ball without offense gaining experience

- Have defense play as a shadow
- Restrict movement of defense by playing as a crab on all 4's
- Increase the playing area

***TIP: Change games so that the players are competing against the coaches. Kids love this challenge!**

STRETCHING EXERCISES

1. Arms/Neck

- Roll arms around in a 'windmill type' action. First rotate right arm forward 10 times, then switch to left arm. This can be done using both arms at the same time. Then, change to rotating arms backwards using the same sequence.
- Move head up and down holding each position for 8-10 seconds. Move head from side to side holding each position for 8-10 seconds.

2. Quadriceps

- These muscles are the big muscles that cover the front of your thigh. Use a goal post, a wall, or a teammate to balance. Stand straight. Bend one leg and hold your ankle or the top of your foot. Pull your bent leg until your heel is close to your bottom. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs. (*Diagram 1*)

3. Hamstrings

- These are the muscles at the back of your thigh. In a sitting position with your left leg straight, place the sole of your right foot against the inside of your left thigh. Bend your trunk toward your extended leg, keeping your knee straight and foot in a relaxed position. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs. (*Diagram 2*)

4. Groin (Butterfly stretch)

- In a sitting position with your back straight, bend your knees and place the bottoms of your feet together. Pull your feet towards your groin. Place your elbows on your knees and gently push the knees toward the floor. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat. (*Diagram 3*)

5. Calves

- In a sitting position with legs straight, place right heel on top of left toes. Pull right toes towards body with hands. Hold for 10 seconds. Switch legs.

Quadriceps



Diagram 1

Hamstrings



Diagram 2

Butterfly



Diagram 3

GOALKEEPER TRAINING

Ready Position:

- ✓ Shoulders squared to ball with feet shoulder-width apart
- ✓ Hands at waist level with palms forward and fingers pointing upward
- ✓ Head steady and eyes focused on the ball

Narrowing the Shooting Angle:

- ✓ Come off goal line toward the ball, as opponent is getting ready to shoot. This cuts down on the amount of goal the shooter has to score.

Gathering Ground Balls:

- ✓ Keep legs straight, with feet a few inches apart, and bend forward at the waist
- ✓ Reach arms down with palms forward and slightly cupped
- ✓ Allow the ball to roll up onto wrists and forearms

Gathering Air Balls:

(between ankles and waist)

- ✓ Bend forward at the waist
- ✓ Extend arms down with palms facing forward
- ✓ Receive the ball on the wrists and forearms and secure it against your chest
- ✓ For waist-height balls, jump backward a few inches to absorb the impact

(chest or head-high)

- ✓ As ball arrives, position hands in a diamond position with fingers spread and thumbs almost touching
- ✓ Extend arms, slightly flexed at the elbows
- ✓ Catch the ball with fingertips
- ✓ Withdraw arms to cushion the impact and secure the ball to chest

Diving to Save Shots:

- ✓ Step and push off the foot nearest to the ball in the direction you are going to dive (push off right foot to dive to right)
- ✓ Extend arms and hands toward ball
- ✓ Receive the ball on your fingertips and palms
- ✓ Pin the ball to the ground with upper hand
- ✓ Contact the ground with your side, not stomach

Distributing the Ball:

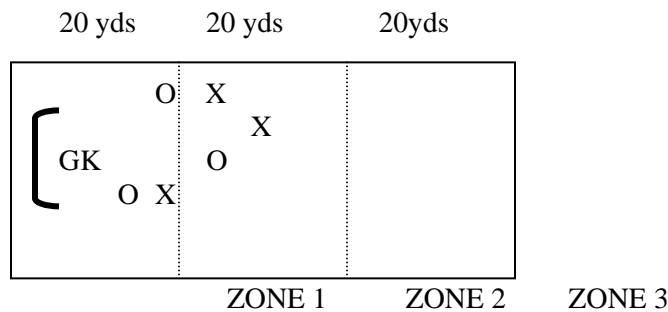
- ✓ Rolling the ball-release the ball with a bowling-type motion at ground level so it doesn't bounce
- ✓ Throwing the ball-hold the ball in the palm of the hand, step toward target and use overhand throw similar to baseball
- ✓ Kicking the ball-hold the ball in the palm of the hand opposite the kicking foot. Step forward with non-kicking foot, release the ball and kick with instep.

GOALKEEPING GAMES

Over the Top (to distribute the ball)

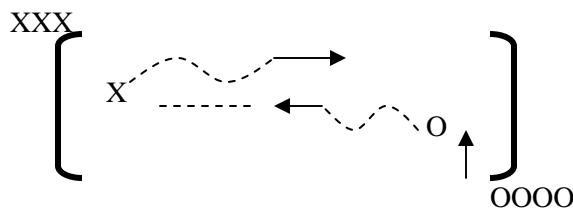
Play 3v3 in a 20x60 yard area. Use cones to mark three 20-yard zones within the length of the field (distances can be changed according to ability). Three players on offense attack the goal. The three on defense including goalkeeper defend the goal. The defense scores in this manner

- ✓ 1 point for a shot stopped and successfully distributed by goalie by *rolling* ball into first zone
 - ✓ 2 points for a shot stopped and successfully distributed by goalie by *throwing* ball into second zone
 - ✓ 3 points for a shot stopped and successfully distributed by goalie by *punting* ball into third zone
 - ✓ 1 additional point for any ball controlled by one of the goalie's teammates
- Once defense controls the ball from the goalkeeper, play begins with the offense.



Shoot and Save (goalie training for entire team)

Bring goals 30 yards apart with goalie in each goal. Other players should be in line outside of left posts of each goal. Balls in both goals. Player takes ball, dribbles towards goal and shoots. He then goes to end of other line. Goalie now becomes forward and dribbles and shoots at other goal. Front of the line replaces in goal each time. Players in line can assist collecting balls. Continue repeating rotation.



***Any shooting game or game that goes to goal can be used for goalie training as well.**

BASIC PRACTICE PLAN

- Warm-up/Stretch...5-10 minutes
 - This section will get the players moving (with or without the ball) to warm up their muscles prior to stretching. This warm-up may be as simple as tag or a review game from prior practices.
 - Be sure to stretch every practice...the earlier in life the players get in the habit of stretching, the better! See attached sheet on major stretches to be done.
- Skill of the Day Instruction...10-15 minutes
 - This section will be where you teach the players the proper way to dribble, pass, shoot, etc. It will also include a short drill to practice technique. Take this time to give one-on-one instruction and correct any mistakes.
- Practice activities/games...15-20 minutes
 - This section will involve games that will further develop the skill of the day.
- Water Break/Recap/Game Prep...5 minutes
 - Use this time to give the players a rest, recap the practice and organize for the scrimmage.
- Small/Full-Sided Scrimmages...15-20 minutes
 - This is often the most fun part of practice, for players and coaches! Small-sided scrimmages (teams of 2-4 each) are great because each player gets plenty of touches on the ball and less aggressive players do not get lost in the shuffle of a game. Large scrimmages are a great place to teach positions and to warn against bunching.

***Times are approximate and should be adjusted according to your team's needs.**

PRACTICE #1 SKILL: **Dribbling**

10 Minutes: Warm-up

1. **Traffic Jam**-Mark off a 25x25 yard box (or a suitable size for number of kids). All players start in the box with a ball dribbling at a jogging pace. Have each player pick his or her favorite car to pretend to be (encourage using horns and wipers!). All players must dribble in the designated area.

Key Points:

1. Head up-eyes on the field
2. Use both feet
3. Dribbling into space (No car crashes!)

*Coach can switch things up by allowing left foot only, right foot only, holding up fingers for players to call out, etc.

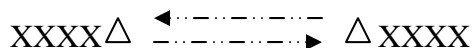
Stretch: *SEE ATTACHED SHEET

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Dribbling**

Key Points:

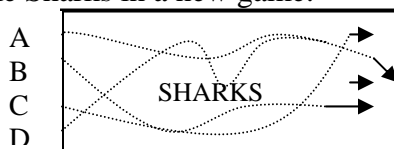
1. You can use both feet and ALL surfaces (inside, outside, laces, and sole)
2. Keep the ball close to your feet. If it is too far ahead, other players can steal it
3. Head up-eyes on the field

Skill Drill: Divide players into two lines facing each other approximately 10 yards away. Player one dribbles towards the second line, giving the ball to the first player in that line. The cycle continues back and forth.

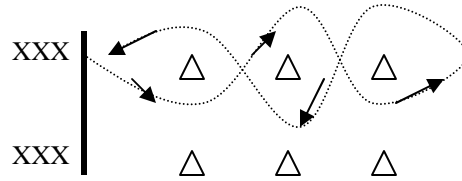


20 Minutes: Dribbling Games

1. **Sharks and Minnows**-Cone off a rectangular area. Designate two Sharks to be in the middle of the “ocean” without a ball. All other players (the Minnows) have a ball at one end. On the coach’s signal the Minnows attempt to cross the “ocean” by dribbling without losing their ball. The Sharks try to kick everyone’s ball out of the “ocean.” If a Minnow loses his/her ball then he/she becomes a shark. Minnows cross on coach’s signal each time. The last two Minnows surviving become Sharks in a new game.



2. **Relay Race**-Set up cones in 2 straight lines (far enough apart for the dribbling level of the players). Divide team in half. Players have to dribble the ball between the cones (slalom-style) down and back and then tag the next person in line. After each player has gone, the first team to sit is the winner.



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Small-Sided Scrimmage

Divide team into smaller teams of 3 or 4 players and play mini-games.
Play short games so every team gets to play each other.

PRACTICE #2 SKILL:

Positions on the field

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

1. **Tap Dance**-The ball should not move in this drill. Each player has a ball and they start with one foot on the ball and one foot on the ground. On the coach's signal, they start switching feet, "tapping" the top of the ball with each foot. Coach can hold up fingers and the players have to yell out the number he is holding.
2. **Happy Feet**-The player puts the ball between their feet. The ball is knocked back and forth from the left to right in a continuous motion. The knees should be slightly bent and the ball should be hitting the area above the ball of the foot.

*These two drills are used for fast footwork and to get the players comfortable with the ball. The goal is for each player to stay under control and be comfortable *not staring* at the ball.

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Positions on the field**

1. Forward- Primarily an attacking player whose responsibility is to create and score goals.
2. Midfielder-Both an offensive and defensive player who is primarily responsible for linking forwards and the defenders.
3. Defender-Primarily a defensive player who assists the goalkeeper in protecting the goal.
4. Goalkeeper-The last line of defense. The only player who can use his/her hands within the field of play. The goalkeeper is limited to using his/her hands within the penalty area.

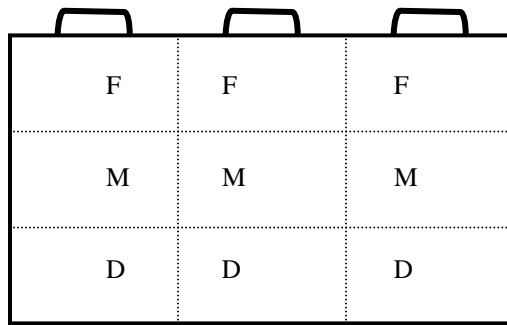
Skill Drill: Begin by lining the players on the field in position. Explain where each position should be and their responsibilities.

20 Minutes: Positional Game

1. **Alley Cat** (see diagram on next page)-Set up cones in 3 "alleys" (horizontally and vertically) on the field (see diagram on next page). Set a player in each zone (one forward, one midfielder and one defender). Ball starts with the defender. They must pass one ball to each other down the field and shoot a goal. Players may not crossover into each other's alley.

Variations:

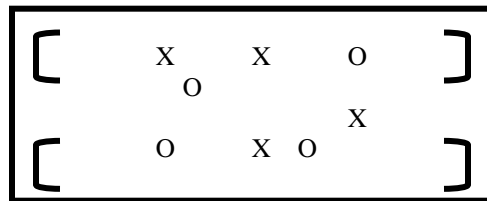
1. Relay race between "alleys". Which alley can get all their balls into the goal the quickest?
2. Have only one goal and everyone on the same team. Set number of passes that must be made before a shot can be taken.
3. Add a defender or two who can roam anywhere and/or goalkeepers to increase difficulty



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: **2-Goal Scrimmage**-Set up 2 goals at *each* end of the field, closer to the sideline than to each other. Attackers need to look up and decide which goal to attack (which one is more open).

* Bunching is very apparent at this age. When players are bunched-stop the play and explain why everyone can't race to the ball. Point out where the open space is. This concept may take a while to catch on but pretty soon they will know immediately why you stopped the play.



PRACTICE #3 SKILL:

Passing

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

1. **Review Footwork: Tap Dance/Happy Feet**
2. **Dribble Knock-Out**-Cone off an area large enough for all players to fit in. Each player has a ball and must dribble in the area. When the coach yells “KNOCK OUT!” each player tries to knock out another player’s ball from the area while keeping his own ball under control. If a player’s ball leaves the area, that player is out. Play until one player is left.

***See “Common Practice Problems” for alternatives in elimination games.**

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Passing**

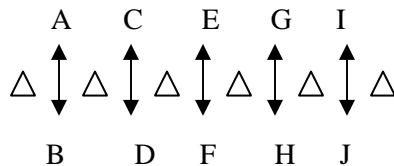
Key Points:

1. Use inside of feet
2. Strike through the middle of the ball
3. Plant non-kicking foot next to the ball, pointing towards target

Skill Drill: Thread the Needle-Each player needs a partner and they stand facing each other about 7-10 yards apart. Two cones are placed in the middle about 4 yards apart. Players must pass to each other by having the ball go between the cones.

VARIATIONS:

1. Only left foot/right foot
2. Most passes in a minute
3. After each successful pass, take one step backwards.

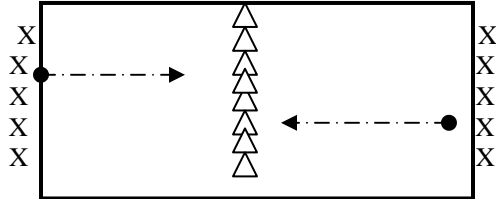


20 Minutes: Passing Games

1. **Force Challenge**-Players stand approximately five yards from the sideline. Ask players to kick the ball so that it stops on the line. Repeat several times before switching. Partners retrieve balls. Whose ball lands closest?
2. **Storm the Castle**-Divide team in half. Each team lines up 20 yards apart facing each other (distance may be increased/decreased). Set cones up in a centerline between teams (10 yards away from each team). Each player tries to knock down the cones by passing the ball into them. When cone is knocked over, that player runs into middle

zone and tries to bring cone to own end line before other team hits player with a passed ball (waist or lower).

- Each team must stay behind own line, unless retrieving a cone.
- Only one player allowed to retrieve a cone at a time.
- First team with all the cones wins OR team with most cones at end of time limit.



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Small (3v3,4v4) and/or Full-Sided Scrimmage. Encourage passing!

PRACTICE #4 SKILL: **Trapping**

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

1. **Review Footwork: Tap Dance/Happy Feet**
2. **Review Dribbling: Dribble Knock-Out**

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Trapping**

1. **Review Passing Key Points**

Trapping Key Points:

1. Cushion the ball as it comes to you (like catching an egg)
2. Keep body loose-the ball should not bounce off of you
3. Can use all body parts (except hands and arms), but the feet and thigh are the most common
4. Feet traps can be with all surfaces and/or by stopping the ball with the foot on top.

Skill Drill: Coach in the Middle-The players form a circle around the coach (or two circles if there are two coaches). The coach rolls the ball to each player and they must trap it with their feet, and then pass it back. Coach can work on one-on-one instruction to correct problems immediately. Secondly, work on trapping with the thigh. Coach tosses the ball lightly to each player. They should trap the ball with the meaty part of the thigh, staying loose so the ball drops softly and does not bounce away.

20 Minutes: Trapping Games

1. **Thread the Needle**-Same as last week. Players must stop the ball first before passing. Emphasize trapping.
2. **3 Person Trap Drill**- Divide players into groups of three. Players 1 and 2 are spread about 20 yards apart with balls and Player 3 will be moving in the middle. Player 3 will run towards Player 1, who passes them the ball. Player 3 will trap the ball and pass it back. Then Player 3 will run to the Player 2 and do the same. Continue for 30 secs-1 minute, and then rotate players. Emphasize using both feet to trap and pass.

1_o ← 3 → 2_o

Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Scrimmage. Encourage good traps and passes.

Shooting

PRACTICE #5 SKILL:

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

1. **Freeze tag, Tail tag, Cartoon tag, TV tag...**get the kids running and laughing
2. Stretch the legs well today for shooting!

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Shooting**

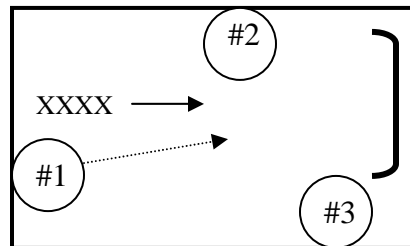
Key Points:

1. Plant non-kicking foot next to ball
2. Point toe down, lock ankle, use laces,
3. Lean slightly forward
4. Follow-through; land on shooting foot

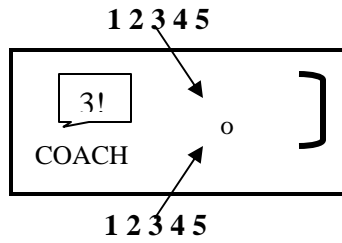
Skill Drill: Have coach or another adult anchor ball with foot while each player slowly walks up to the ball going through the shooting motion. Start slow so each player can see and feel the correct motion. Then have players start jogging through the motions. Focus on technique; the ball should not be kicked loose from coach's foot.

20 Minutes: Shooting Games

1. Line players 10-20 yards away from goal. The coach will pass the ball from spot #1 to first player in line for a shot. Each player should retrieve own ball after shot and go back in line. After a few rounds for each player, switch to spot #2 and then #3.



2. **Steal the Bacon** (see diagram on next page)-Divide team in half and position each team on opposite sides of the area. Give each player on both teams a number (Each team will have a player #1, 2, 3, etc.). Coach rolls a ball into the middle of the area and calls out a number. Player from each team with the called number runs out to the ball and tries to score on goal. Play continues until a goal is scored or ball goes out of play. Coach may call more than one number at a time.



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Scrimmage-Large or Small...Your Call! Make the goals bigger today to encourage goal scoring and taking shots.

PRACTICE #6 SKILL: Defense

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

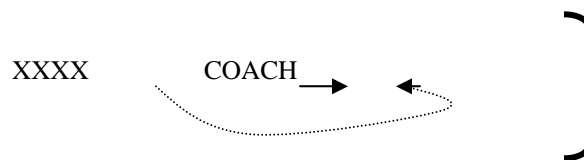
1. **Box Drill**-Same set up as **Traffic Jam** from Practice #1. All players dribble in the designated area. Coach calls out a body part and each player must stop the ball with that part. For example, Coach yells “Nose!” Each player must stop the ball from rolling with his/her nose. Be creative and fun!

10 Minutes: Skill of the Day Instruction: **Defense**

Key Points:

1. Get between opponent and goal as quickly as possible
2. Keep body low-eyes on the ball
3. Clear balls out of goal mouth to the outside as quickly as possible

Skill Drill: All players in a line 5 yards behind the coach. Coach starts dribbling towards the goal. Player must hustle around the coach and stop his/her path to the goal and clear the ball to the outside of the field.



20 Minutes: Defense Games

1. **Cat and Mouse**-Everybody partners up, one being the Cat and one being the Mouse. The Cat chases the Mouse. The Mouse tries to lose the Cat. Switch partners and roles.
2. **Monkey in the Middle**-Divide into groups of three. Two players are on offense with the ball. The defender tries to steal the ball. Cone off area that all players must stay in.

Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Small-Sided Scrimmage (3v3 or 4v4). Encourage good defense!

PRACTICE #7 SKILLS: **Dribbling and Shooting**

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

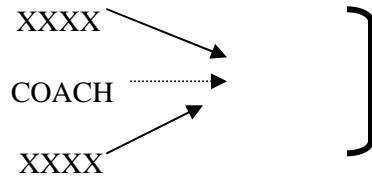
1. **Tap Dance/Happy Feet**-You should continue to do these footwork drills for a few minutes. Players should be showing improvement by getting more comfortable with the ball and being able to move faster.
2. **Freeze Tag**-Everyone has a ball except two players who are 'IT.' The two players who are IT try to tag everyone else. When you are tagged you must pick up your ball and stand with your legs spread apart and FREEZE! To be unfrozen another player passes or dribbles his/her ball between your legs. Game continues until all players are frozen or until the coach decides to switch the people who are IT.

10 Minutes: **Review Dribbling and Shooting Key Points**

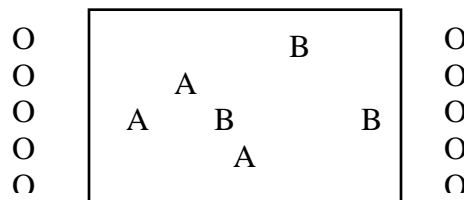
Skill Drill: Divide players into two lines. Set up 3-4 cones for each line leading to the goal. Players must dribble through cones (slalom-style) and then take a shot on goal. Retrieve ball and return to line.

20 Minutes: Dribbling and Shooting Games

1. **Breakaway**- Set players up in two lines. Coach yells, "Go!" and rolls a ball between the two lines. The first two players go after the ball. The first one to reach it tries to score a goal, the second plays defense. This works on controlling the ball and shooting under pressure.



2. **Sitting Duck**-Cone off a 30x40 yard area. On the end lines place 4-5 balls, evenly spread out. Divide players into two teams. Start scrimmaging with another ball inside the area. The object is to hit one of the balls on the end line of your opponent. A goal is scored by hitting one of the other team's balls. Use same rules as scrimmage.



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: **Soccer Baseball**-Arrange a field with home-plate, bases, and out-of-bounds lines. Divide teams evenly and “play ball!” Have pitchers roll the ball to batters (or Coach pitches for quicker play). Batters kick the ball and attempt to reach first base before being touched by the ball, before the ball reaches the base, or before the ball gets passed back to the pitcher. Fielders must play the ball with their feet (no hands!). Keep players interested by not keeping track of outs. Have each team “bat” until each player kicks.

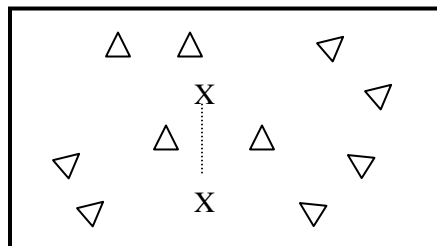
PRACTICE #8 SKILL: **Passing and Trapping**

10 Minutes: Warm-up/Stretch

1. **Tap Dance/Happy Feet**
2. Choose the kid's favorite tag game!

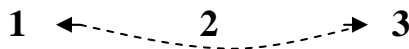
10 Minutes: **Review Passing and Trapping Key Points**

Skill Drill: Partner players up with one ball per group. Set-up field as shown below. The object of this drill is to score as many goals as possible by passing the ball between two cones to your partner. A pair cannot score two goals in a row at the same goal. Play for a minute, then rest. Make a game out of it and see who can score the most goals in a minute.



20 Minutes: Passing and Trapping Games

1. **Circle Passing**-Players form a circle (or two depending on size) and pass to each other. They can pass to any team member *except* to the players immediately next to them. Quickly move onto the following variations:
 1. *Pressure Passing*-One person is in the middle trying to intercept the passes.
 2. *Pass Around*-One player in the middle passes around the circle to each player.
2. **Nutmeg Passing**- Divide players into groups of three. Line them up facing each other approximately 5 yards apart from each other. Player 1 passes through Player 2's legs to Player 3. Player 3 passes back to Player 1, through Player 2's legs. Repeat several times, and then switch players in the middle.



Water Break/Recap

20 Minutes: Small-Sided Scrimmage and/or Two-Goal Scrimmage

PRACTICE #9

Player's Practice!

Let the players run the practice! Pick their favorite drills, activities and games.