



CYO Athletics Soccer – Keeping It Fun

Games

- Playing games/fun drills can make it fun by increasing players' ball time and touches vs. full scrimmages. At the same time, full scrimmages from time to time can help them put it all together and acclimate them to what they will experience on game day
- Sharks vs. Minnows (K-3)
 - Minnows dribble ball from one end to the other with the ball
 - 1 or 2 sharks try to kick out minnows ball
 - Minnows who lose their ball become sharks until no one is left
 - Use the whole field
 - VARIATION: ball must be kicked out of bounds not just taken away
- Shoot the Coach – warmup
 - 20 x 20 or 10 x 10 square (depending on number of kids)
 - Kids on the outside of the square with the ball
 - Coach on inside of square
 - When coach blows the whistle, kids dribble and try to “shoot the coach” (hit the coach with their ball)
 - Coach jogs around the square
 - Kids get a point for hits
 - VARIATION: use the entire field and the coach is not restricted to the box which also works on dribbling for players
- Freeze Tag
 - Dribble the ball in specific area (depending on number of kids)
 - The “it” player tries to tap the ball with their foot
 - If tapped, player is frozen and holds ball over head
 - Unfrozen players try to stay that way and unfreeze other players by dribbling between their legs
- Keep Away
 - Square with 4 players
 - 3 on corners and 1 in middle
 - Players move on each pass – no passes across the middle
- Fox and Hounds
 - Selected player is the fox and is given a head start to start dribbling in a pre-determined area
 - Rest of the team are hounds and dribble/chase and try to hit the ball of the fox
- What number are you?

- Split team into 2 and put teams on opposite sides with 2 small goals (indicate which team is defending which goal).
- VARIATION: If you have a bigger team, and want to work with small field versus the big field you can split into 3 or 4 smaller teams which increase the number of players involved and increase activity. If you have 3 teams, create a triangle. If 4 teams, create a square. Once again, indicate which team is defending which goal.
- Number off player on each team from 1 to how ever many you have on each team.
- Coach throws/kicks the ball in the middle while calling out numbers – can call out as many numbers as you like – sometimes going for a one on one, or 2 on 2, 3 on 3, etc. Play continues until a goal is scored upon which players return to their teams.
- Players run to the ball, try to win it and score a goal in the other teams goal.
- VARIATION: Can add players to the mix after initial start. Keeps players focused on what is going on.
- Scrimmages
 - Limit touches (i.e. 2) to increase passing
 - Do smaller teams in smaller area to increase activity
 - Place constraints on passing (i.e. one touch or two touch only are allowed)
 - Let players choose their positions or play players out of “normal” positions to diversify skill set
 - Let less skilled players choose positioning
 - Involve parents in scrimmaging or do a special practice that will include parents (communicate ahead of time)

Drills

- Cone weave and shoot on goal – players dribble through cones and finish with a shot on goal
- Accuracy and targeting – striking a cone with the ball, passing the ball to the stationary coach through cones, passing the ball to moving coach through cones, etc.
- One on one –
 - Everyone plays with small goals
 - Rotate players in “speed dating” style
- 3 on 2
 - 3 offense vs. 1 defender and goalie.
 - Rotate teams of 3 in and switch defender/goalie from time to time – productive drill for game time experience
 - Offensive team must pass the ball 3 times before shooting. If defenders touch the ball, the passes reset to 0 (i.e. the offense must pass 3 additional times in order to shoot)
 - VARIATION: 3 on 2, 2 on 1. Once the defense stops the offense, they go back the other way (shortened distance between goals) to attack the offense who only have one player who continues on defense.

- Can determine who that player is in various ways. Can be the offensive player who last touches the ball or it can be the offensive player in “back” position, etc. This player is a defender and not a goalie.
- Can create passing requirements so the counterattack does not simply become a game of shooting at the open net
- The other two offensive players in the initial attack stay on as the goalie/defender for the next attack in the 3 on 2.
- Once the counterattack is defended. The next group of 3 jumps in and heads the other way to initiate the next 3 on 2.
- Off the post
 - Lineup several players on each goal post with a goalie in goal. One line is defenders and one line is offensive players.
 - Ball starts at midfield center circle with 3 offensive players stationed at left, middle and right. Middle player initiates the drill by dribbling toward the goal, looking to pass to offensive player coming off post at the top of penalty area
 - When offensive player comes off the post, defender comes off the post to play defense.
 - As offense accumulates touches (predetermined by coach, 3-5 touches), additional defenders come off the post to help defend.
 - Drill ends when goalie gets the ball and restart, rotate lines.
- Touch and Go
 - 3 players in a square with one ball
 - Player passes to either teammate and moves to the open corner
 - Can utilize one or two touch passes
 - On coaches whistle, go from dominant foot to non-dominant foot
 - VARIATION: player passes to the open corner as a pre-determined player moves to the open space (simply set up a rotation)

Miscellaneous

- Joke of the day – rotate through players to bring a joke at each practice/game
- Free time – 15 minutes at the beginning of practice for kids to have free time – encourage them to work on different skills – individual juggle, team juggle, shots on goal (wall), etc.
- Pre-practice organization is critical – avoid kids being in lines, standing around. Break team up into “stations”, keep kids moving and active with chance to touch the ball (avoid having 2 kids in a drill with 15 standing in line)
- Come up with a team cheer that is done at each practice/games to develop a sense of team enthusiasm
- Break up routines by doing a fun drill that is not soccer related, just fun. Even with older kids, tapping into games they played when they were younger that can be fun and a source of conditioning.
- Good to build in time for practice (pre or post depending on practice time) that is not field related so that you are utilizing field time most efficiently but have time to do team talk, non-soccer drills, calisthenics, etc.
- Change activities before stagnation hits. This depends on age group but 10-15 minutes is a good range for a drill or activity from start to finish.

- Positive. Positive. Positive. Focus on what they do well and praise it. Once they engage, then begin to make corrections to technique, positioning, energy/commitment, etc.
- Games/drills that have individual success and skill progression
- Experienced soccer coaches in parish/school mentor new coaches by meeting and sharing how to run a practice and teach different skills/drills, etc.

Game Day

- Reward practice effort, attendance and good participation = starting lineup
- Don't try to coach during the game unless something is going horribly wrong! They can't hear you anyway. Wait until the player is subbed out and then give them 1-on-1 coaching. Let them play! Save your voice and enhance your reputation.
- Partner strong and weak players. I.e. strong midfielder with new forward to back them up and set up scoring opportunities.
- "kids will track fairness" – I write down every lineup for all the games so that I can track who started the last game and rotate each week. Everyone gets to start and more importantly, even the "stars" will have to not start a game.
- Make sure that all players get to play all of the positions – being organized and creating a schedule is essential to making this happen – and is important in communicating to players and parents that this is going to happen and they can see how it will happen

Calisthenics/conditioning

- Instruct players in the stretch routine and then let them lead it with your supervision and support
- Australian Pushups – pushups on their back instead of regular push ups, sure to get a laugh, especially if the coach demonstrates first
- Crab walk or bear crawl races can develop fitness and be a change of pace – add a soccer ball with the crab walk to make it competitive
- Leap frog – split players into teams and do races
- Have a penalty shot if scored that ends conditioning
- Warm up – "team run" – jog together in single file. Last in line sprints to front while other players clap, yell encouragement. Repeat until all players have sprinted to the front.
- Competitive Run – split into two equal teams
 - All players run from the 18 yard line to the end line.
 - Count one point for each player that tags the end line.
 - Everyone keeps running until the whistle.
 - The team with the lower score runs a set of lines.
 - Winner runs from the 19 yard line to the end line in the next set. Repeat