

Every week we will be giving some ideas for coaching games that you can try out during training sessions. If you are a player you can also try some of the games in your own time. We will try and feature a different skill every week. If you have a suggestion, please let us know or if you have any tips you would like to pass on we would be delighted to print them. Send your ideas to The Junior Weekly, Blackstaff Commercial Complex, 79 Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7AE

DEFENDING

Coach Craigers CORNER

Beat The Ball

Set up two flat cones, or shirts, etc. about 3 yards apart; the attacker with ball on one side of the cones, the defender who can't tackle on the other; as the attacker tries to touch either cone with the ball, the defender must get his foot to the cone just prior to the ball. This activity helps improve the side to side shuffling and staying balanced, ready to reverse movement.

Two Target 1v1

Set up two balls about 10 yards apart (can vary); play a 50-50 ball; whoever has the ball tries to touch his ball to one of the other two balls; play continues until one player wins or a adequate period of play is reached. The defender must not overcommit to either ball as the dribbler can fake going to one ball and reverse dribble to the other. There should be at least 6-10 players per group as this is an extremely fatiguing activity, if early scores are not realized. Be sure to have different opponents.

No Tackling 1v1

Defender from goalline plays ball out to attacker 30-40 yards out and closes down; attacker tries to score; defender cannot tackle, only contain and try to block shot attempt. I've found this activity the best at teaching a no-reach defense. Players begin to realize shots can be stopped without over committing.

Beating the Off-side Traps

First, I feel that the man with the ball has just as much responsibility for causing an off-side call as the player who is judged to be off-side. He must be aware of what the defense is doing,

and make appropriate decisions. If the

defense is compressing the field towards ball, it may be too late for a forward pass. In that case, continuing

to dribble or laying off a square or drop ball may be the best decision. However, a quick released through ball may find an attacker on-side due to a late stepping defender (the results would be goodness and worth a try from time to time).

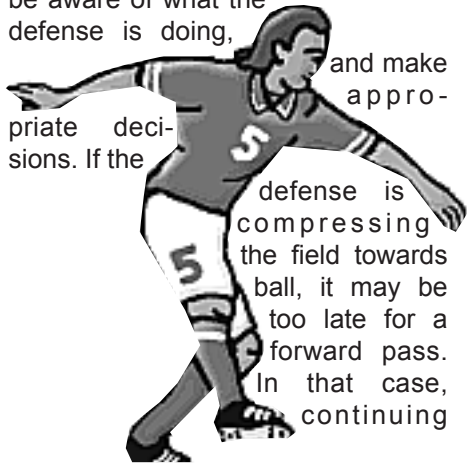
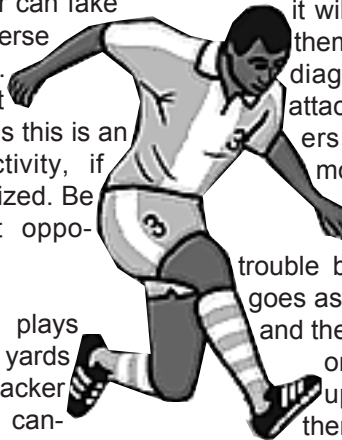
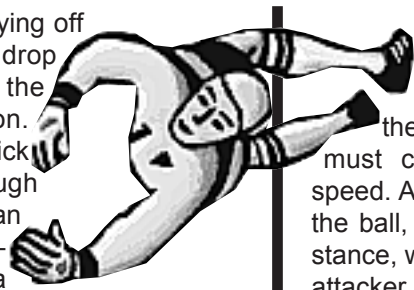
If we are talking a full fledge trap, then the defense is keying on the man with the ball. Their 'step up' is timed to be just before the pass is made. Now it is the attackers responsibility to be on-side.

We provide our forwards with two basic runs that effectively work against a tight compressing defense. The first is a check back to the ball, if the forward is going back to the ball, it will be very hard to catch them off. The other is the diagonal run. We train attackers to run at defenders. As the defender moves up, the diagonal run is adjusted.

Many teams run into trouble because their front line goes as far forward as possible and then wait for the halfbacks or fullbacks to play a ball up to them. They are then caught stationary and looking backwards, easy meat for a defense to trap. Forward players should NEVER be caught "killing the grass" by standing looking back over their shoulder.

We run many 3 man combo activities that require checking back. We use the following setup to reinforce the run at a defender:

Player dribbling ball towards defender, second attacker making a run at the defender, the pass is made to the opposite side of the defender from the second attacker, so the second attacker can run onto the ball (finish with a shot?!). Initially the defender is stationary, then moving forward, then forward and backward, so the attacker has to readjust his run several times before reaching the defender. If the player gets to the defender before the pass is made, then he is to check to the ball or 'recycle' by dropping back and letting another player move up into his space.



DEFENCE

A pass is made to an attacker, the defender 10 to 15 yards away must close down the attacker with speed. As the attacker prepares to touch the ball, the defender go into a side-on stance, while quick stepping towards the attacker, the defender is actually leaning away, ready to go backwards on the attackers move. The defender must attempt to get within an arms length

Basic Marking

Ages: 7+: Materials: Cones, balls, pinnies: Players: 4+

One of the most important defensive skills which players will learn is how to properly mark an opponent so that he does not appear "open" to his teammate. This is a difficult skill for beginning players to learn, because they tend to watch the ball instead of their marks. Furthermore, because it is only necessary to mark your man when your team doesn't have the ball, younger players can get confused about when to mark and when to get away. As a result, it is necessary to break these skills down into manageable steps, starting with just staying with your man and teaching some tricks on how to do this.

The first basic rules of marking are to be stay within 2-3 feet of your man. Start by putting players in pairs, with one player in each pair as the attacker. It is the job of the attacker to try to get away from his marker, and the job of the marker to stay with his attacker. Do not bother using a ball. Just put the players in a grid and play it like tag. When you blow the whistle, everyone must freeze and any defender who is not within 3 feet of his mark must do a "special exercise". Pick silly special exercises, like doing a duck walk for 3 steps, quacking "mark, mark, mark", etc.). Play for several minutes, then switch roles between defenders and attackers. Reinforce the idea that those who are sticking with the opponent are "defenders" and that attackers can go anywhere and should try to lose their marks.

Now, introduce the idea of transition which means the switch from offense to defense when possession is lost. Put pinnies on one member of each pair and give them a team name. Also give a team name to the kids without pinnies.

Put them back in the grid, and periodically shout out a team name for the kids who

(give or take an elbow length) of the attacker with quick short shuffle steps. If the defender runs at (not side-on) an adept attacker, the attacker will beat the defender most every time. We tell our players to assume the attacker is going to try to beat them on every touch and be prepared to go back with them.

Coaching Point--be sure players have lowered their center of gravity by bending their knees and not just bending at the waist.

are to act as defenders. Require that they find their marks and get within 3 feet of their marks by the count of 2 which requires them to always have a good idea of where their marks are, even when trying to lose them). Once again, use a silly "exercise" for those who do not quickly switch off.

Now, introduce a ball and make the team without the ball the defenders. Put small cone goals at the ends of the grid so that each team has a goal to defend. At this point, things will fall apart with new players, as they will start watching the ball and stop watching their marks. Expect this. It is normal. Let them play for 2-3 minutes, and find the kids who have gotten the concept down. These are the kids whom you will name as captains.

Blow your whistle; stop the game; and assign captains for each side. Their jobs are to yell "Rockets, mark" or "Rockets, attack", depending on whether or not their team has the ball. Always try to have 2 captains for each side, as somebody will get tied up in the excitement and forget to shout instructions.

Play the game again, and watch the transitions. Don't interfere, just let things sort out for 3-4 minutes. Then, announce a new game, where the entire team has to do a "special exercise" if, when you blow the whistle, they are not marking properly. The use of a team special exercise is important, as you want the entire team to learn to look out for somebody who is not marking his man. This will be crucial in games when, for instance, a defender falls down and it is essential that another player pick up his mark, so get them used to the idea of watching each other.

Let them play for about 1 minute, then blow your whistle. Resume, and blow again when the other side should be marking

