

# The Soccer South Coaching Manual



Spring Season 2011

Ages 5 - 12



## Introduction

As a Soccer South Soccer Club Coach, you have an important role in fostering the children's enjoyment and their development in the game of soccer. One of our goals of the coaching guide is to introduce parent/youth coaches to an approach to coaching youth players that 1) embraces the lessons that are found in the game itself, and 2) is player-centered rather than coach-centered.

The primary focus for the coach at the youth level (U-5 through U-12 age groups) is to provide an environment that comes close to simulating the game in fun ways, that allows them to play freely, develop their skills, and use them in a creative manner.

## Player Goals for Soccer South

- Every player has a positive experience playing the game of soccer
- Every player develops the skills that allows them to be comfortable with the ball
- Every player develops a general understanding of how to play the game as how the game is meant be played, free flowing and with skills. (Players not just kicking the ball up the field)

## Understanding Coaching Soccer

### What is Soccer?

Before beginning to coach it is important that coaches understand how the various elements of the game influence a player's behavior in training and competition. These game elements are found in all levels of soccer, from the beginning player to the seasoned professional. So, what is soccer?

- A. It is a competitive game – made difficult by the opponent
- B. It has an objective to achieve – to win the game
- C. It has rules to follow and a field to play on
- D. It is free flowing – no time outs or stoppages for coaching
- E. Players must solve the problems presented in the game – not the coach

### The Game is the Best Teacher

The best teacher is the game. Coaches who create a game-like environment during their training sessions have found a key to success. How do games help the coach to teach?

- A. The game presents the problems for the players
- B. Players must solve the problems
- C. Using games in training creates realism
- D. Players are motivated and challenged to learn through the game

### Using Small-Sided Games to Teach

The use of small-sided games creates the right environment for player development by allowing players to develop creatively by allowing them to respond to the problems presented by the game. Small-sided games





## What is Player Development?

The concept of player development is essential to the long-term growth and improvement of the player. Player development demands that “the player is central” to all decisions made regarding training and competition. The coach who believes in player development will ensure that the following objectives are met:

- A. Games and activities are used that players want to participate in because they are enjoyable.
- B. Every player has a ball for training.
- C. Games and activities are designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.
- D. Training sessions are designed to improve a player’s technical abilities and their tactical application.
- E. Competition is a main ingredient within the practice and helps to motivate and challenge the player.
- F. Educates players to develop an appreciation for the game, teammates, opponents, referees and coaches.

## Role of the Coach

Coaches take on many roles when leading a team. However, youth coaches need to understand their role within the overall player development process. Inexperienced coaches often identify with coaches of older aged teams where the priority and objectives for that age group may be different given the environment and demands. Coaches who understand the player development process and the differences that exist between age and ability characteristics are more likely to positively influence and effect the development of a player.

The role of the youth coach based upon principles of player development is:

- A. Serve as a Facilitator.
  - 1. Set up the conditions and environment for learning.
  - 2. Players need to have fun and receive positive feedback.
  - 3. The coach must be enthusiastic.
  - 4. Practice should be conducted in the spirit of enjoyment and learning.
  - 5. Activities need to be geared toward achieving success.
- B. Serve as a positive role model.
  - 1. Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators and opposing coaches.
  - 2. Demonstrate a responsibility to the game itself.
- C. Understands who they are coaching.
  - 1. Recognize that children/players are not defined by chronological age only. They mature and develop at their own pace. There are also growth differences between genders.
  - 2. Treat each person as an individual.
  - 3. Recognize that their needs are different and they participate for different reasons (at any level).





## Planning Your Coaching Session

### The U6 Coaching Session

- Session duration: 45 – 60 minutes
- All players must have a ball
- Necessary coaching equipment — Cones, pinnies, pump, extra Balls
- Session progression - Warm up, fun games, small-sided games
- Player equipment - Ball, cleats, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle

The developmental characteristics of U6 players will have a major impact on the design and content of your training session. The session should include fun activities that encourage children to explore their physical abilities as well as emphasizing exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning and bouncing qualities of the ball. There should be no activities where players wait in line to perform an activity or movement.

Children at this age love to use their imagination when they play, therefore keep this in mind when designing your session. Activities should be short and simple as a U6 player's ability to stay focused is very limited. Give brief directions and repeat them when necessary. The main focus of every session should be individual activities with the ball, especially dribbling. A U6 player thinks about themselves 100% of the time and cannot conceptualize passing the ball or working with a teammate.

### The U8 Coaching Session

- Session Duration 60 minutes
- All players must have a ball
- Necessary coaching equipment — Cones, pinnies, pump, extra Balls
- Session progression - Warm up, fun games, small sided games
- Player equipment - Ball, cleats, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle

U8 players are still very young and although they can now remember what they tried at the last practice it is still very much about having fun.

The main emphasis of the session should be dribbling and shooting games that allow each player plenty of opportunity to experience the ball at his or her own pace. Games where there are multiple goals are perfect for this age group. Also encourage activities where there are multiple opportunities to change direction and to vary how fast the players run.





## The U10 Coaching Session

- Session duration: 60 – 75 minutes
- 2 session per week
- All players must have a ball
- Necessary coaching equipment — Cones, pinnies, pump, extra balls
- Session progression — Warm up, match related or small sided activity, the game.
- Player equipment — Ball, cleats, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle

Children in the U9 and U10 age group are entering the “golden age of learning”. They have the ability to remember complex instructions, which enables them to become better problem solvers, they also develop an ability to focus longer and stay on task. These factors need to be taken into consideration when designing your coaching session.

The improvements in a child’s cognitive and psychomotor abilities mean that coaches can, and should focus on teaching their players the key fundamental soccer techniques – dribbling, passing shooting, heading, tackling, receiving and place a special emphasis on 1 v 1 activities.

### Your coaching session can follow two paths:

1. Non-Themed Session: In a non-themed session you can pick a variety of activities to be included in your session but still follow a progression of warm up, match related or small-sided activity and game.
2. Themed Session: 60% of your sessions in the U10 age group should have a technical theme and you should try to include all the key fundamental techniques during the season. Your choice of a theme may also be determined by what happens on game day especially if there is an obvious weakness in your team’s play. You will still follow a progression of warm up, match related or small-sided activity and game.

## The U12 Coaching Session

- Session Duration 90 minutes
- 2 – 3 sessions per week
- Necessary coaching equipment — Cones, pinnies, pump, extra balls
- Session progression — Warm up, match related or small-sided activity
- Player equipment — Ball, cleats, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle

Children in the U11 and U12 age group are still in the “golden age of learning” and it is vital that technical development be maintained as the focus in the majority of your coaching sessions. Children in this age can follow complex instructions, have enhanced tactical understanding (compared to younger players) and more importantly they now have the ability to come up with their own ideas of how to solve problems within the game.

U12 players must be exposed to as many-game like situations as possible during training therefore, much of your coaching session should consist of small sided games with various playing or field conditions placed upon the players. Examples of playing conditions can include: two -touch, one - touch only, cannot pass forward, cannot pass backwards etc. Examples of field conditions can include: smaller training area to make players play faster, long and thin training area to encourage players to play longer balls, short wide training area to encourage players to use width.





## U10 and U12 Coaching Session — General Considerations

- The coach should arrive prior to the players and set up the practice area.
- Decide on a themed or general session.
- Ensure that you have a set coaching plan and know what you are trying to achieve in the session. Bring a cheat sheet of coaching points if necessary.
- Make sure the size of your training area is appropriate to the number of players at training and the physical capabilities of the players.
- Make sure you have pinnies, cones, ball pump, flags or larger cones for goals (or pop up goals), extra soccer balls, cell phone and a first aid kit.

Your session should end with a non conditioned game. The final game at U10 should be 4 v 4 without GKs or 5 v 5 with GKs. The final game at U12 should be 6 v 6 or 7 v 7 with GK s. U10s do not need to do plyometric or stretching movements during the warm-up, although it is beneficial to set good habits at such an early age. A warm-up for U12 players should include short stretches and lots of plyometric movement. Always end your U12 session with a cool down.

## Coaching Session Checklist

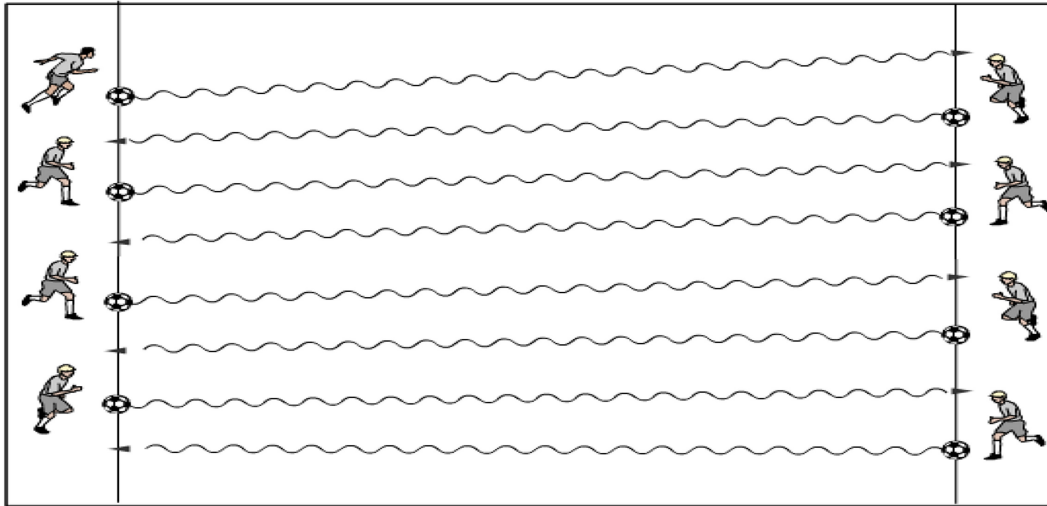
- *Are the activities fun?*
  - Players learn better in an enjoyable environment
- *Are the players involved in the activities?*
  - Players enjoy activities that present an achievable challenge. Activities that are too difficult will frustrate players and activities that are too easy will cause boredom. Players should be engaged at all times, and not waiting in lines to perform an activity.
- *Are the activities specific to the game?*
  - Sending the players to run around the field to warm up prior to the practice is not developmentally appropriate and, in addition, boring.
  - Warm up activities should include lots of movement and numerous touches on the ball.
- *Is the coach's feedback appropriate?*
  - It is important to encourage young players. Positive feedback will encourage players to continue to try.





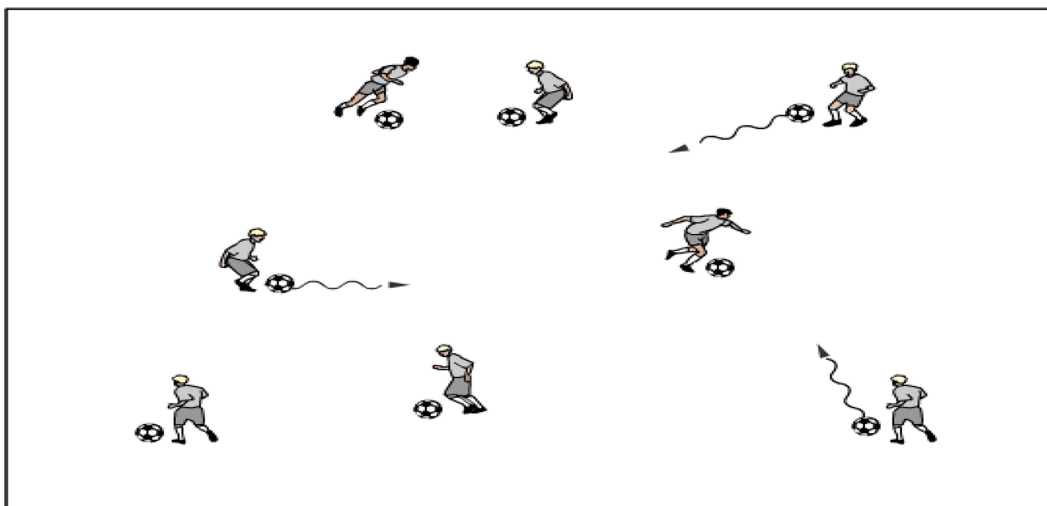
## Soccer South Favorite Practices

### Braveheart



**Organization:** Divide players into two equal teams. All players have a ball and start on opposite end lines. When the coach shouts “charge,” they each dribble towards each other and try to get to the opposite end line and stop the ball on the line. The team that has 3 players on the line first gets a point. Start by walking with the ball, then progress to running with the ball.

### Everybody’s It

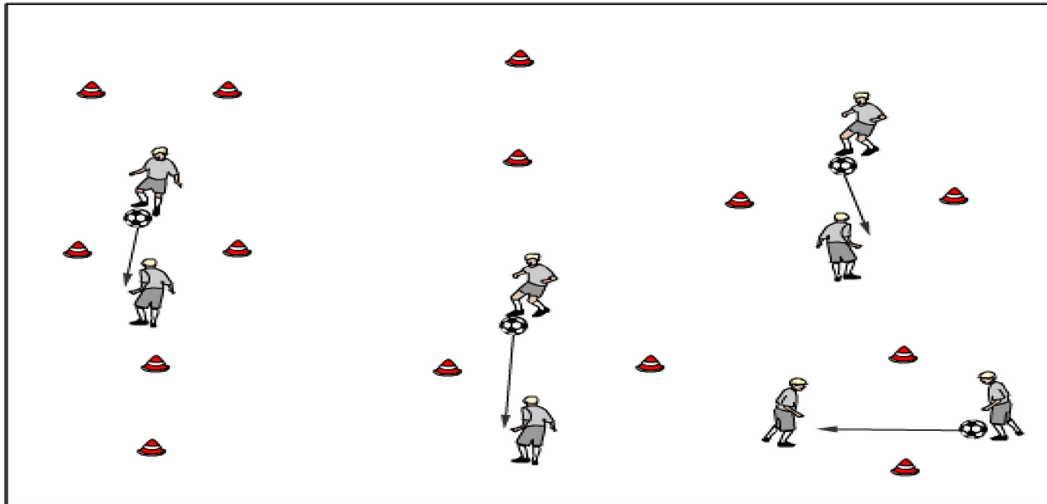


**Organization:** Each player has a ball. Players dribble around trying to tag as many people as possible while maintaining control of their own ball. Players get a point for each time they tag another player. Play each game for 30 seconds.



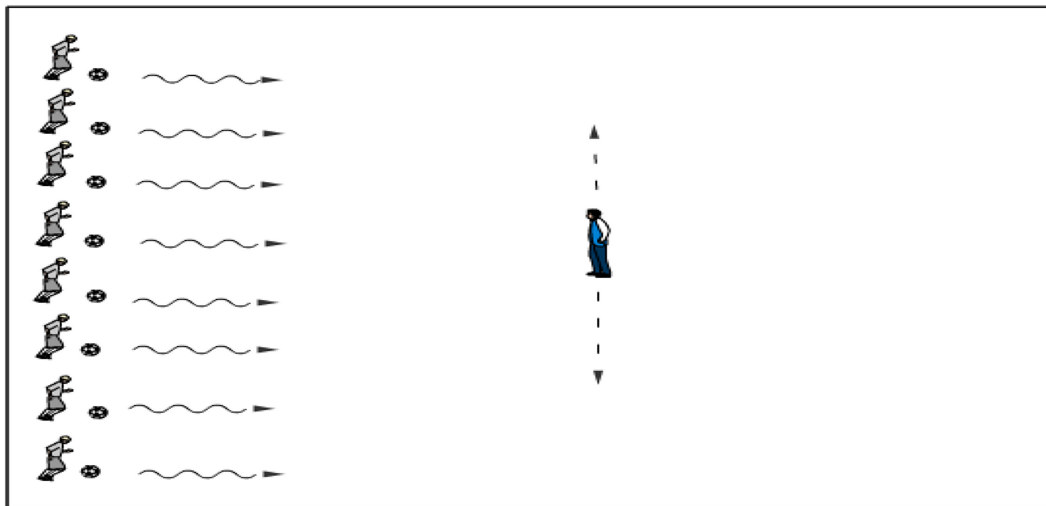


## Multi Goal Dribbling and Passing



**Organization:** Set up random goals (cones 2-3 yards apart). Divide players into pairs with one ball between each pair. On the coach's command the players try and score as many goals as possible by passing the ball through the goals to their partner and then moving to another goal. Play 30-60 seconds each round. Players lose a point if they knock over a cone. Add conditions to the game such as pass with right foot only, outside of foot only, etc.

## Bulldog

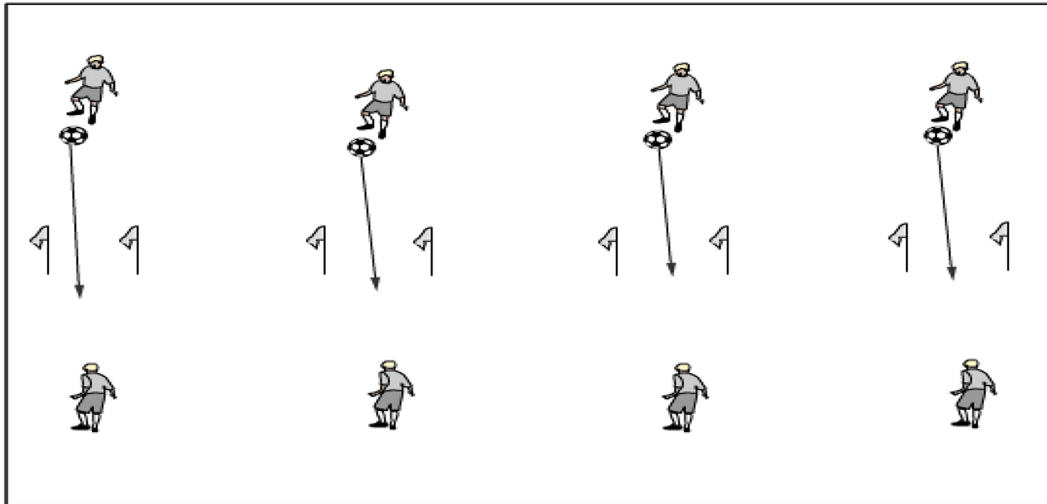


**Organization:** The coach starts as the bulldog in the middle of the playing area. All the players are at one end of the playing area with a ball. On the coach's command of "go bulldogs" the players must get to the opposite side of the playing area without their ball being kicked out by the coach. If a player's ball is kicked out they become a bulldog. The last player with a ball wins the game and becomes the bulldog for the next game.



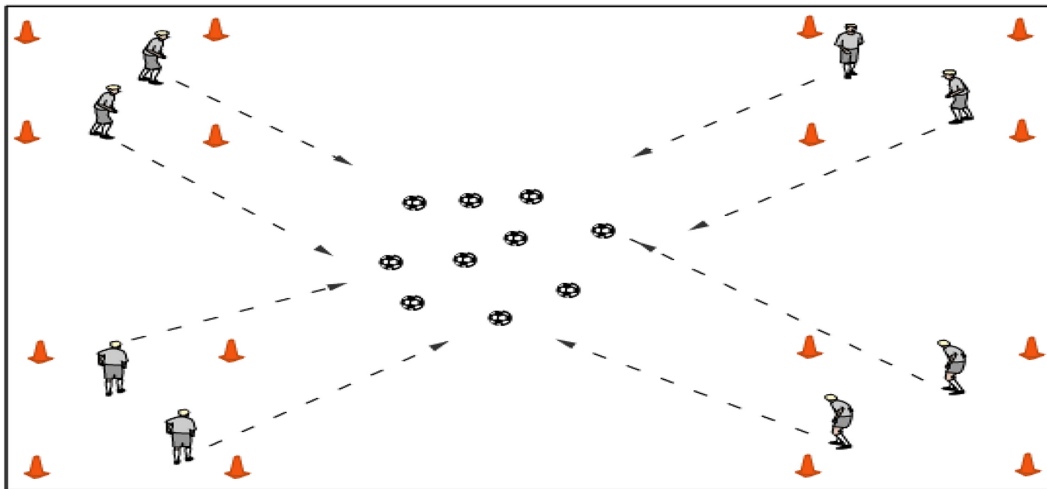


## Pong



**Organization:** Although passing should not be focus at U8, Pong is a fun way to introduce passing to your team. Two players play against each other and share a ball. They place two cones anywhere from 2-8 yards apart. They choose! Players pass back and forth to each other. The rules are the ball must never stop, it must always stay on the ground, and it must go through the two cones without touching them. Whenever this is violated the other person receives a point. Because of the rule that the ball must never stop, players have to play 1 or 2 touch. The closer the two cones are, the closer the pairs are probably going to be. The farther apart they are, the more they will have to move laterally and look more like the old arcade “Pong” game. Play and see who can become the PONG Champ!

## Four Corners

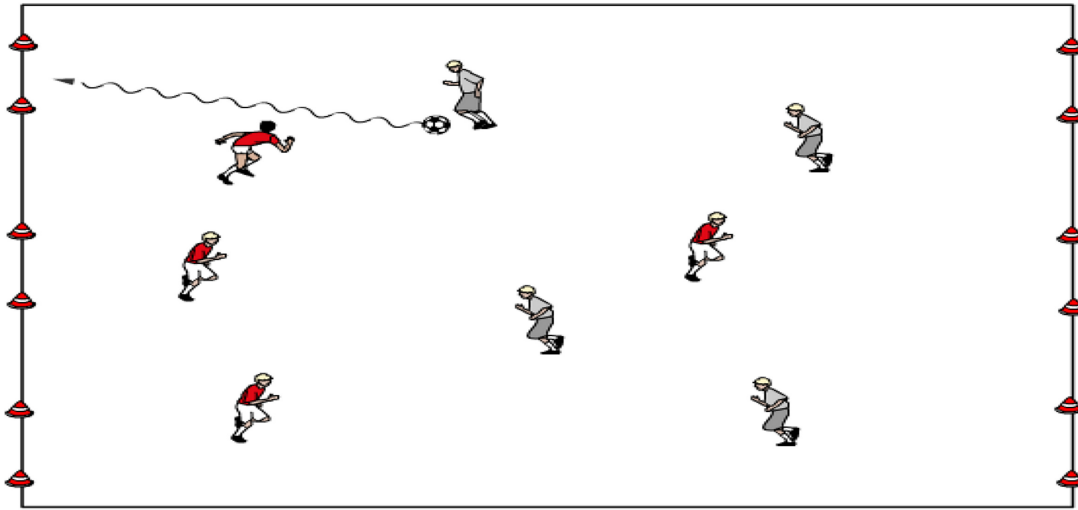


**Organization:** Divide the team into 4 groups of 2. Each group of two starts in their own corner. Eight balls are placed in the center of the training area. On the coach’s command players run to the middle and dribble one ball back to their own corner. Players cannot defend their corner or tackle other players. After all the balls are gone from the middle, players can then raid the corners of the other teams. After a set time period the team with the most balls in their corner wins the game.





## Multi Goal End Line Game



**Organization:** Divide players into two equal teams. Place three goals on each end of the training area. Players score by dribbling through one of the multiple goals on the opponent's end line.

## Corner Gates

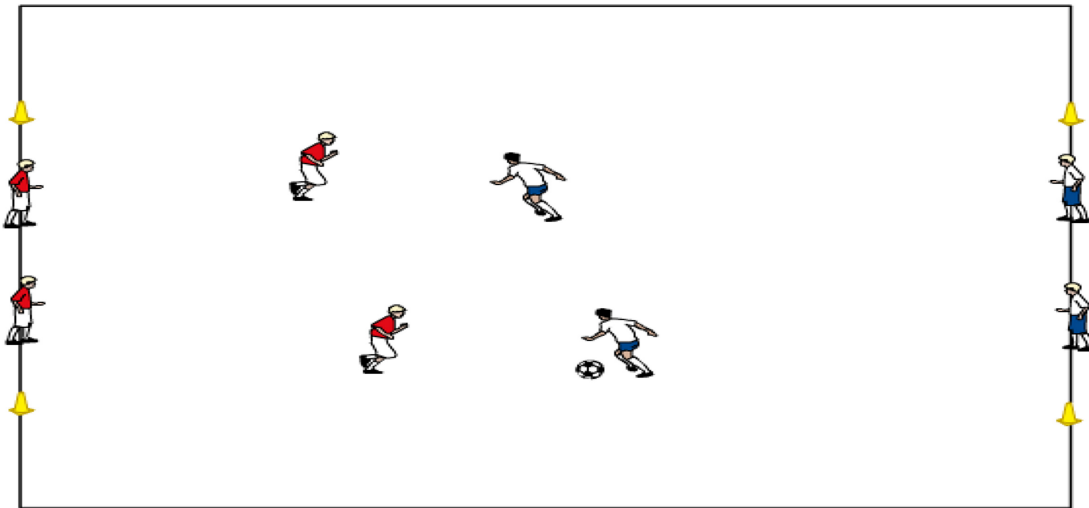


**Organization:** Divide players into two equal teams. Make diagonal goals with flags or cones in each corner of the field. When a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds, the coach plays in a new ball to keep the game flowing. The object of the game is to score through any of the 4 corner goals by passing or shooting. **Progression:** Assign each team two goals to attack and two goals to defend.



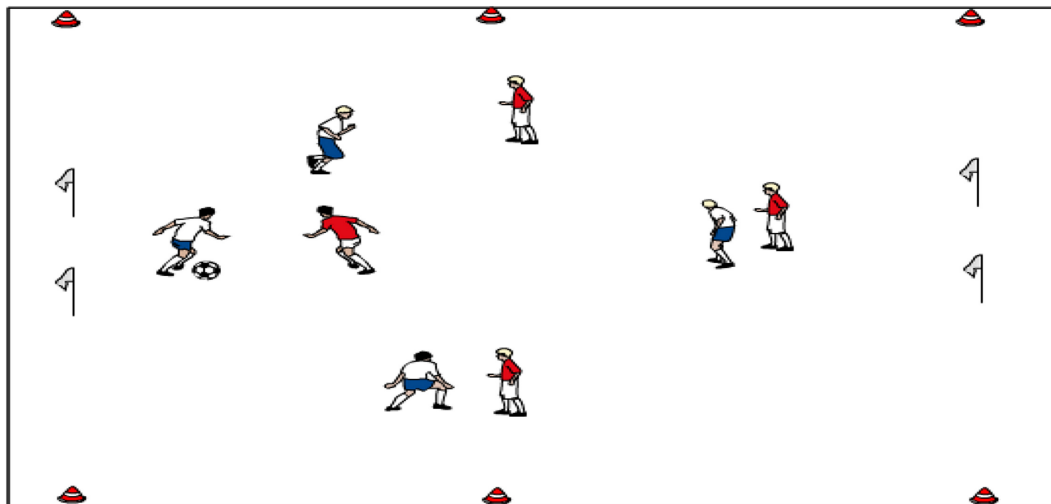


## Change Game



**Organization:** Divide players into two equal teams. Create two goals on each end line. Two players from each team play out on the field, the other 2 players go into a goal. Play like a normal game. When the coach yells “Change” the players who are on the field switch with the players who are in goal. The players simply leave the ball where it is when the coach yells “Change”. Goals must be scored below shoulder height. The goalkeepers cannot use their hands to stop the ball, cannot step off of the goal-line and cannot score.

## The Game



**Organization:** Divide players into two equal teams. Play a regular 4 v 4 game with no conditions. No goalkeepers.

