Creative Mind

Development of free-thinking football players



Pawel Guziejko

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Pawel Guziejko



A Bright Pen Book

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3.4. “Negative stress occurs when the training process is carried out improperly: when inflated goals and expectations are placed on a child. A similar effect can be due to too early specialization and starting in competitions, where the level of the opponents far exceeds the child’s capabilities, and at the same time it feels pressurized to win by people of importance, such as a parent or coach” – Dariusz Nowicki

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FOREWORD

The modern game of soccer has evolved into a faster paced game that has put additional demands on its players and coaches. Defenders must have the technical and tactical ability to attack and attackers must have the technical and tactical abilities to defend. First touch on the ball, speed of play, speed of decision-making and speed of transition are the markers for the modern soccer player in the modern game. Players must be able to make spot-on decisions in less than a split second and then be able to carry out their assessments through effective technique and tactics. To that end, coaches must adapt their training methodology to provide the proper stimuli, environment, and exercises necessary to develop free-thinking problem-solving players who will not only compete in the current climate, but define it.

This innovative and all-inclusive book on soccer development addresses emerging problems facing today's youth coaches in successfully training, developing, and preparing soccer players for the rigors and demands posed in playing the modern game of soccer. All of the exercises (drills) presented in this book are geared to target the inherent strengths of players at various ages, taking into account their biological and physiological developmental stages, to achieve a comprehensive developmental progression that maximizes a players' abilities (decision-making, technique and tactics) and yields competitive performance at the speed of play that the modern game of soccer now demands.

Do very young players who play on winning teams develop into better soccer players than players who play on losing teams? How and why should you keep your training session fun, innovative, and challenging? At what ages are children best suited to work individually and most capable of grasping individual techniques? At what ages are children mentally ready to work with partners and when should they be introduced to small-team tactics? At what ages do you introduce whole-team tactics? What kind of exercises will facilitate the

development of free-thinking creative soccer players? How can you speed up and improve the quality of decision-making in your players and is it vital to do so? How can you, a dedicated soccer coach, make a positive and tangible difference in the developmental process of the soccer players you coach? These and other significant concerns are explored and resolved in the pages ahead.

As dedicated soccer educators, we owe it to the players we work with and to the actual game of soccer, to stay abreast of the latest most current trends in soccer education and training methodology. No matter what level we coach, we all play a major role in the lives of the players we train. Under our direction, players will thrive or fail, reach their potentials or flounder, continue to play or quit. We hold the ability to either destroy talented players or to help them reach their potentials. Players like Lionel Messi and teams like Barcelona do not just materialize. They are products of a well devised developmental training system and a strong training philosophy. Let us all bring fun and creativity into our training sessions and allow the beautiful game of soccer, to be our guide and teach our players….

Roman Hubach, Head Coach of Padua Franciscan Highschool

INTRODUCTION

Football has changed a lot in the last two decades. Modern medicine and the now very high level of cognitive techniques, setting new limits for players' physiological capabilities and resistance to stress, have imposed profound changes on this sport's training methods, their structure and control. The key to success has become playing technique and its detailed analysis, which has provided vital information and conclusions about how modern training should be carried out. Most of the coaches who have achieved significant successes have realized that the game itself is the best teacher. Introducing the principle "during training as in the game", they have led to a fresh look at all football aspects, except for one essential, namely football training for youth.

My experience from working in several countries, coaching various levels, inspired me to write a book about the modern training of children and youth. My motivation was an irresistible desire to point out training errors, but above all an interest in the proper development of young and talented footballers.

This publication contains information concerning physiology, anatomy, biomechanics, psychology, physical education, technique and tactics. It describes which training methods to select and where to use them. It provides a wealth of knowledge on the application of training loads at various stages of training. It provides an alternative choice of training program and examples of exercises. It examines training system issues, training structure and control of the same. It points up the errors that can be made and makes it possible to avoid these in the future. It constitutes primarily an in-depth analysis of modern training for children and youth and provides practical tips for their physical, technical and tactical, psychological and sociological preparation.

In order to lend the text some diversity and aid assimilation of its contents, this book is written in an unusual way, which should also

draw the reader's attention. Each chapter begins with a quote, while the messages and conclusions deriving from these fill the sections. For the ideas propounded I have tried to find a number of satisfying and comprehensive arguments that are not so much challenging as intelligent, and meet the reader's expectations. In addition, I wished to gain the attention of those who are generally interested in football and have the interests and development of young players at heart.

I. PHYSICAL PREPARATION

1.1 “A good warm-up allows for greater use of a player’s speed potential” - J. Bangsbo

Preparing young players to play at the highest level is a process that takes a lot of time and requires specialized knowledge, in order to draw necessary conclusions and analyze and correct errors in real time. It is no accident that I have begun with physical preparation. In the opinion of many coaches working at various stages and levels of training, it is this element that determines the career development of young football students. But can we be sure? Perhaps it’s just the opposite – it leads to numerous injuries, saps enthusiasm and reduces the pleasure and joy of playing football and finally, is more like athletic training than football? Many years of valuable experience have brought it home to me that in terms of physical preparation, the training of children and adolescents is far removed from the norms and standards of modern football. Above all, it differs fundamentally from the actual game. It makes no use of the information that our watching of a modern match provides. It lays little emphasis on development of a player’s speed potential and in particular, motor coordination, without which it is difficult to make any headway at all in this sport. In lessons of this type, dispensing with a ball is the rule rather than the exception. Imagine an athlete who aims to specialize in hurdles, but whose training doesn’t use them at all, or only to a modest extent. Will such an athlete be able to succeed in championship competition? In the case of football, we will probably soon see that any training without use of a football in the teaching process can only do harm and provides no incentive for proper development. We need to remember that training is to be a reflection of the game, including its physical aspects.

The quote offered at the beginning of the chapter emphasizes the

great importance of the warm-up, which is the foundation of physical preparation and should be carried out in conditions similar to the requirements of the modern game at each stage of training! Good preparation for physical effort will be the result of optimal stimulation of the central nervous system, which works closely with and has an impact on the general speed of players during the game. The nervous system is the coordinator of our actions and it is thanks to this that a player can perform motor functions more efficiently, faster, more accurately. In practice, warm-ups are unfortunately seen as a necessary evil and are limited to a few exercises with and without a football. This approach leads to numerous injuries as it totally fails to prepare young bodies for the necessary physical effort and has very little in common with today's football.

The modern warm-up should take into account:

- Age
- The motor co-ordination elements ensuing from the game
- Technical and tactical tasks arising from the game
- Environmental (atmospheric) conditions
- Exercises reducing the risk of injury

Should warm-ups be the same for 11 and 14 year olds? Are their psychomotor and physical development, technical and tactical progress at the same level? I address these questions to those who, despite age differences, make the mistake of using the same exercises with the same intensity for all age groups. We need to remember that the youngest children will most enjoy those warm-ups that are varied and meet the psychological needs of the child at this stage. We shouldn't avoid the use of a variety of games and activities that at the same time reflect the modern game of football. The use of coordination exercises (various forms of movement involving direction changes as frequently as possible), as well as those developing rapid response and quick thinking, teaching the art of quick decision, will gradually improve the skills of individual players. Warm-ups must also include elements of technique relating to the objective and subject of the training session. If the training's main aspect is dribbling with the ball, it is pointless not to include this in the preparatory exercises.

One of the most common mistakes made in preparatory programs among the under 13 – under 18 age groups is the lack of exercises

that are orientated in terms of the position, in which a player plays. I'm mainly thinking of pre-match warm-ups, where trainers completely ignore the specifics of the game at a given position on the pitch. Defenders are taught to play just like attackers or midfielders, and in consequence, this is not conducive to the specifics and conditions of the game in which players must later compete. Furthermore, I would say that an exception is the warm-up that takes into account players' motor skills resulting from the varied morphological structure of muscle cells. Young players with good stamina parameters require a longer and more intensive warm-up than those players with a predisposition for bursts of speed. The warm-up program, and in particular its duration, should also differ depending on the mental type of the players. Because as (J. Chmura 2003) says: "Every player has his optimal level of arousal, when he acts most effectively. Hence the duration of warm-ups for particular players or groups (with a similar or the same level of arousal), will differ. For football players with a low threshold of excitability (extroverts), warm-ups should be shorter, but longer for players with a high threshold of excitability (introverts). "True, football is a team game, however the body of each player is different and they should not all be measured by the same standard!

Since motor activities are repeated in cycles, are very intense and often change, warm-ups should include movements of a complex nature and specifically should help develop complex reactions. Today, a player in one single moment passes the ball, changes the direction of his movement or dribbles the ball and takes a shot at the goal. In general, single reactions practically never occur in a game, so what is the purpose of using them during exercises aimed at preparing for physical effort? Bearing in mind today's style of play, we should not be afraid to introduce short sprints (2-5 yards) to the warm-up program, with changes in direction of running and playing with a football, dribbling, etc.

This will improve coordination, speed of perception and thinking as well as the sense of movement. We shouldn't avoid the use of exercises involving the countering of opponents, which allows a player to quickly adapt to the conditions in the game and achieve the right rhythm from the very start of the match. We should carry out technical and tactical exercises in those areas of the pitch where such elements most often occur during a game. We should pay more attention to those muscles that are most used in the game. Legs with muscles,

ligaments and bones properly prepared to meet the requirements of training or a match will ensure that a player's movements will be more flexible and much more comprehensive in nature and this will also reduce the risk of injury. Finally, one should try to ensure that warm-up time frames are no shorter than 15 minutes and no longer than 30. "It should continue until optimal stimulation of the central nervous system is achieved. It is therefore unacceptable to introduce a new player to the game after a warm-up of only a few minutes" (J. Chmura 2003).

To summarize, coaches and trainers will find below ten practical tips for the modern warm-up, featuring particular stages of training:

Under 5s – Under 7s

- Warm-ups should be of a playful nature that meets children's psychological needs
- Selected games / exercises should include elements of coordination that are characteristic of football
- Exercises should be carried out with a football and help develop complex reactions
- Selected games / exercises should be simple, easily understood and as far as possible, mastered by all the players
- They should take into account the technical elements that constitute the content and theme of the training session
- The intensity and duration of exercises should take into account the age of players – a minimum 10-15 minutes
- One should use various kinds of warm-up: in pairs, in teams of three or four, or individually with footballs
- They should be focused on children's' biological and physiological development
- They should contain stretching and gymnastic exercises in order to reduce the chance of injuries
- Warm-ups should reflect the actual game and improve players' versatility

Under 7s – Under 10s

- Warm-ups should include elements of training creativity – fun and games that meet children's' psychological needs

- Use elements of coordination that are characteristic for football / exercises with a ball (elements of change in direction within a small space, footwork, body balance, reaction speed)
- Combine general and specialized elements
- Take into account the elements of technique featured in the main section of the training
- One should introduce a varied program to increase motivation
- Explain to players the advantages and positive effects on the body before commencing physical exercise
- Exercises should: be appropriate for the biological and physical development of young players
- Meet the requirements of modern training and football in terms of intensity and duration
- Focus on development of versatility especially with regard to the making of quick decisions
- Contain elements aimed at reducing the risk of injuries and leading to proper development of the child's muscles and bones.

Under 10s – Under 13s

- Warm-ups should teach players about the absolute necessity of a warm-up before each workout or match
- Combine the elements of coordination and technique occurring in the training content
- Improve the versatility of players
- Take into account biological and physical development and the associated changes that take place (in girls)
- Focus on the quality rather than the quantity of exercises
- Include preparatory exercises that reflect the requirements of modern training and games
- Include elements customized to the positions to which given players are assigned (Under 13s)
- Prepare the muscle groups that are most exercised during a game or training

- Combine general and specialized elements
- Use dynamic stretching as well as exercise elements to reduce the risk of injury

Under 13s – Under 16s

- Warm-ups should include elements of coordination characteristic of football involving complex reactions
- They should be customized to suit the specifics of the position to which a given player is assigned
- Customized in terms of the length and intensity of their duration
- Customized to suit the motor skills of individual players (high-speed or endurance types)
- Technical and tactical exercises should be aimed at those pitch zones, in which they most often prove useful
- They should combine aspects of physical preparation and technical co-ordination (for example: striking at the goal performed by attackers with simultaneous changes in the direction of movement on a 2-5 yard section)
- Place equal emphasis on defensive and offensive actions
- Use a broad range of exercises and dynamic stretching to reduce the risk of injury
- Increase internal body temperature to 38 degrees Celsius – the conditions under which energy is delivered to the working muscles more quickly, increasing their capacity and efficiency
- Use varied activities to increase motivation among players

Under 16s – Under 18s

- The intensity of exercises, especially before a game, should be high
- Technical and physical coordination aspects cannot be conducted separately and must be appropriate to the requirements posed by the modern game
- “The most effective stress load in warm-ups assumes a 50-70% HR maximum. Greatest psychomotor efficiency and at the same time, greatest central nervous system efficiency occurs when an

individual’s heart beat is in the area of 152 to 176 beats per minute “- (J. Chmura 2003).

- Customization of exercises to suit the specifics of the position on the pitch and the motor capabilities of players (especially before a match)
- Technical and tactical elements should be performed in constant motion and in those areas of the pitch where they most commonly occur
- Use exercises that reduce the risk of injury
- Use exercises that raise the internal body temperature to 38 degrees Celsius in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of muscles
- Engage those muscle groups of the body that will be subjected to the most effort during the game
- Exercises should be universal and varied, increasing motivation and improving the mental functions of players – their state of mind before the game

1.2 “The speed specific to football constitutes a comprehensive ability consisting of a variety of fragmentary mental and physical abilities – both cognitive and motor skills, which are closely related, or interdependent.” - J. Chmura

Due to biological factors, each stage in the development of children and adolescents has different instruments enabling one to learn, develop and properly shape speed capabilities. These include:

- Speed of decision
- Speed of prediction (anticipation)
- Speed of perception
- Speed of reaction
- Speed of movement without a football
- Speed of action with a football
- Speed of performance

Given the cited conditions, we may conclude that speed in the modern game is not only its locomotive aspect. Despite this fact, it is the measure most widely used in the speed preparation of young players. I have many times witnessed training sessions, where a young player (13-18 years old) had to run a 40-50 yard distance in the shortest possible time with a specified frequency and do so in a straight line. From the modern game perspective, is there any justification for such an exercise? How many times during a match does a player have occasion to run a 40-50 yard stretch? How often does he move in a straight line with and without a ball? The answer is: either not at all, or at most very rarely. So what is the point of such tasks in training sessions? This is the reason for a number of injuries, often serious and prematurely ending the career of talented young players. In the same vein, it has little in common with today’s football. It takes all the desire and pleasure out of playing football. Devoid of purely football

elements, it most certainly doesn't motivate anyone to physical exercise. So how do we develop among children and adolescents speed abilities appropriate for their age and biological development? According to Neil Sedgwick (1998), formation of speed elements can begin at any age, but the best time is at the age of 6-12. During this period, the child learns quickly and assimilates new, often physically complex elements. It more quickly sees and predicts situations arising from the game, an ability that reflects the development of the nervous and muscular systems. Information reaching the body from the outside is quickly analyzed and processed in the cerebral cortex. Nerve impulses send information to muscles more efficiently and thus the movements made are faster, more accurate and more efficient. This has a direct impact on the making of rapid and accurate decisions under the pressure of time and the opponent, as well on reaction times during action with and without the ball. Prediction and perception has a tremendous impact on the speed of decision on the pitch. In order to teach a young player to make quick, but above all the right decisions, the above mentioned capabilities must be formed at a sufficiently high level. The exercises applied should therefore contain elements that most frequently take place during a game such as: passing the ball with the instep, according to the principle: "during a game players see most rapidly what they know well and understand." (J. Chmura 2003). The content of exercises should be varied and focused on multiple solutions. In this way, the player will be able to see and quickly select those solutions that are the best for him and the team in a given situation on the pitch. We need to remember that in order to properly develop speed in young players; all of the above listed capabilities have to be formed comprehensively rather than separately. For this reason, I never understand why the vast majority of speed exercises used are without a football. Perhaps for some coaches the football is not present during the game!

Applying speed training for juniors (aged 13-18), we must consider its customized procedure. By this I mean the motor abilities of young players. Thanks to huge advances in sports medicine and physiology, we now know there are two types of players: endurance and high-speed. The first is characterized by muscle fibres that are red (oxygen) and slow to contract. While the vast majority of the other's muscle fibres are white (anaerobic) and contract rapidly. Because of this, the endurance type of player is predisposed to sustained effort, while the high-speed type is predisposed to short bursts of speed. This does not

mean however that those in the first category cannot improve their speed. However, this should be achieved through customized training and the use of other training loads (duration of rest stops, their frequency, etc.) as described in the example below, which I came across during my work in the United States.

A group of 18-year old players was given the task of running for a distance of 10 yards and playing the ball with the instep in the final phase of the run. Though the frequency of breaks taken was the same for all of the players, the time of their breaks varied depending on their motor skills. Endurance type players rested longer than their high-speed type colleagues. I was curious as to why that was. Their physical preparation coach claimed that the use of the same length of break for all players improved their high-speed potential and enabled a complete re-synthesis of phosphocreatine only for the high-speed type player. In the other type of player, this led to incomplete phosphocreatine re-synthesis. Repeating the exercise doubles muscle acidification and changes the training into one of endurance and high-speed. Another outward sign will be increased fatigue and a reduction in running speed and consequently the loss of a player's high-speed abilities.

The above example shows that the introduction of customization at this stage of training is very much justified. This allows training mistakes to be avoided and properly develops the high-speed potential of young players.

Another factor contributing to the speed of football players is undoubtedly footwork. During my time as a coach and my observation of various training systems (including work in the United States and England – a very developed country in terms of this game), I rarely came across any comprehensive training dedicated to footwork.

By this I mean training that reflects the game and not the senseless running through speed training ladders that I observed in many cases. During the modern game, a player receives a lot of information and reacts to various stimuli. He must quickly select those that in a given match situation are best for him and the team. Everything happens in a fraction of a second, within a small space and always takes the form of comprehensive (complex) reactions, for example: dribbling the ball with the instep and at the same time changing direction. So are footwork exercises using speed training ladders or other equipment in

a purely speed type formula the correct method? In my opinion, they are not. Firstly, because they help develop simple, not complex reactions. Secondly, they aren't a good reflection of the situations occurring in a match. Thirdly, they teach speed and foot coordination, but only in purely physical terms, separate from other speed abilities and technical and tactical elements. And yet in a match situation, footwork is connected with perception, prediction, reaction time and changes in direction as well as technical and tactical elements: trapping, passing, overlapping, etc. That is why efforts to improve the speed of footwork cannot be conducted independently of other typical football activities.

The fundamental element in improving speed is also motion itself (the various forms of running occurring on the field). How a child moves is essential for proper development. Most coaches do not pay much attention to this, sometimes due to their lacking the necessary knowledge and experience, but sometimes also through mere laziness. I take this opportunity to emphasize that incorrect motor habits are the main hindrance to the development of speed and coordination. Not only that, they are the major cause of injury in adolescence. They also form a barrier to a player entering the next level of football education, not to mention professional football. In his paper (1998) V. Gambetta wrote: "control of positioning the centre of gravity is the major objective of proper footwork. This consists of keeping the hips over the base of support if stability is desired, or shifting the centre of gravity outside the base of support to initiate movement". He continued: "remember, the objective of good footwork is to position the body to be more effective in performing the specific sport skill" Another author, A. Pearson (2007), emphasizes: "training to improve maximum speed requires a great deal of focus on correct running mechanics."

As a summary here are some practical tips for each stage of training. In addition, I present a set of exercises relating to comprehensive and modern speed training.

We need to remember that each of the following exercises should be tailored to the age, needs (physical, psychological and sociological) and the degree of technical and tactical sophistication of the players with whom we are working!!!

Under 5s – Under 7s

- Note any bad motor habits and, if possible, try to correct them
- Use exercises that form complex (comprehensive) reactions
- Develop speed abilities in ways that are consistent and dependent on each other
- Always try to combine football speed with elements of coordination and technique
- The priority should be speed of thought processes, perception and reaction
- Develop speed burst elements (2-5 yards) in games and motor activities that reflect the child's psychological needs

Example exercises:

15 markers are set out at any points whatsoever within a designated 20x20 yard sector of the pitch. The distance between the markers should not be greater than five yards. Each player dribbles a ball. At a signal he will stop the ball, make for a marker, touch it with his hand and then return to dribbling the ball - Fig. 1

Variations:

a) the players touch a marker of a specific colour

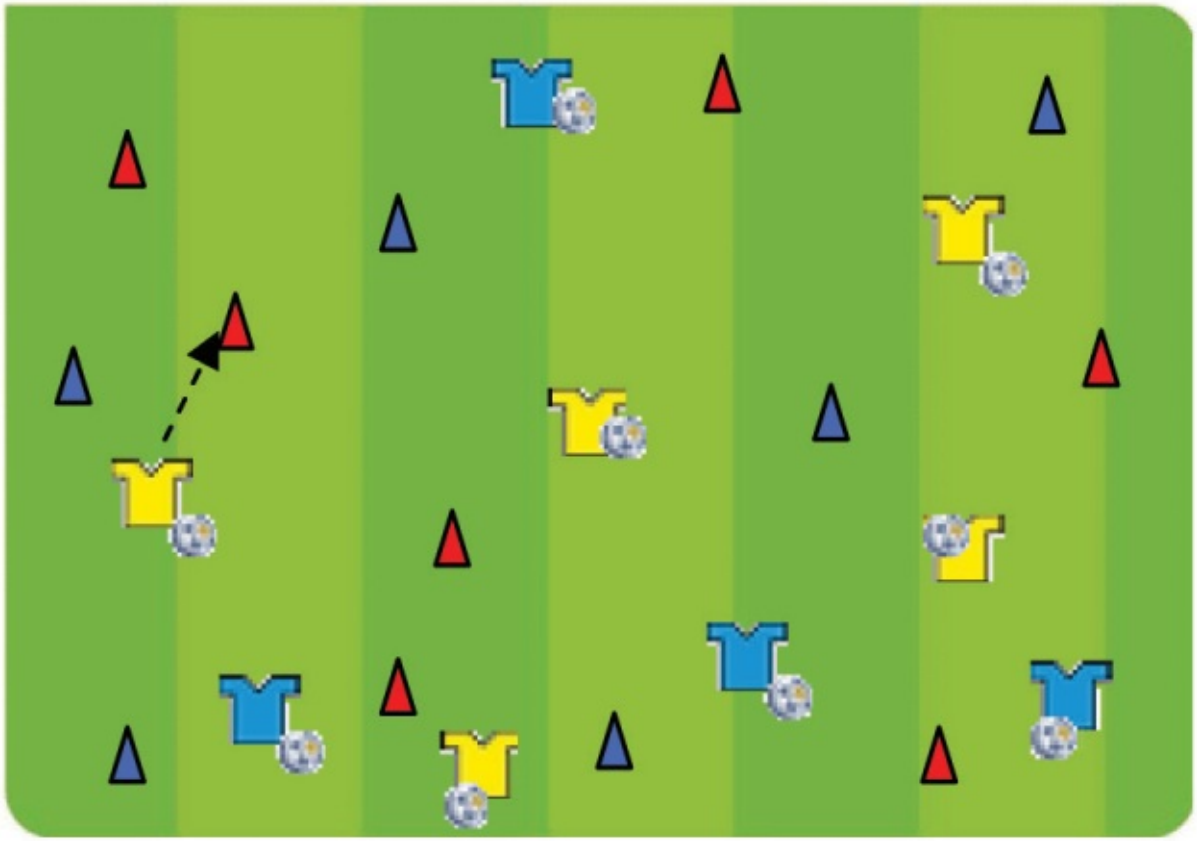
b) after touching a marker, they dribble the nearest ball

c) before and after touching the marker they dribble the ball using the technique selected by the team captain

The exercise's key objectives:

- increased speed of perception
- development of reaction speed
- increased speed of footwork while changing direction

Figure 1



1. Within a marked out area of 30x25 yards there are 12 small goals 2 yards wide. Players (in yellow) have the task of dribbling the ball to an empty goal. Players receive a point for every successful attempt. Blue players try to block the goals without tackling. A goal can be blocked up to a maximum three seconds - Fig. 2

Variations:

a) a player may not dribble a ball twice in a row through the same goal

b) a player receives 1 point for dribbling a ball through a goal using his better leg but 2 points for using his weaker leg

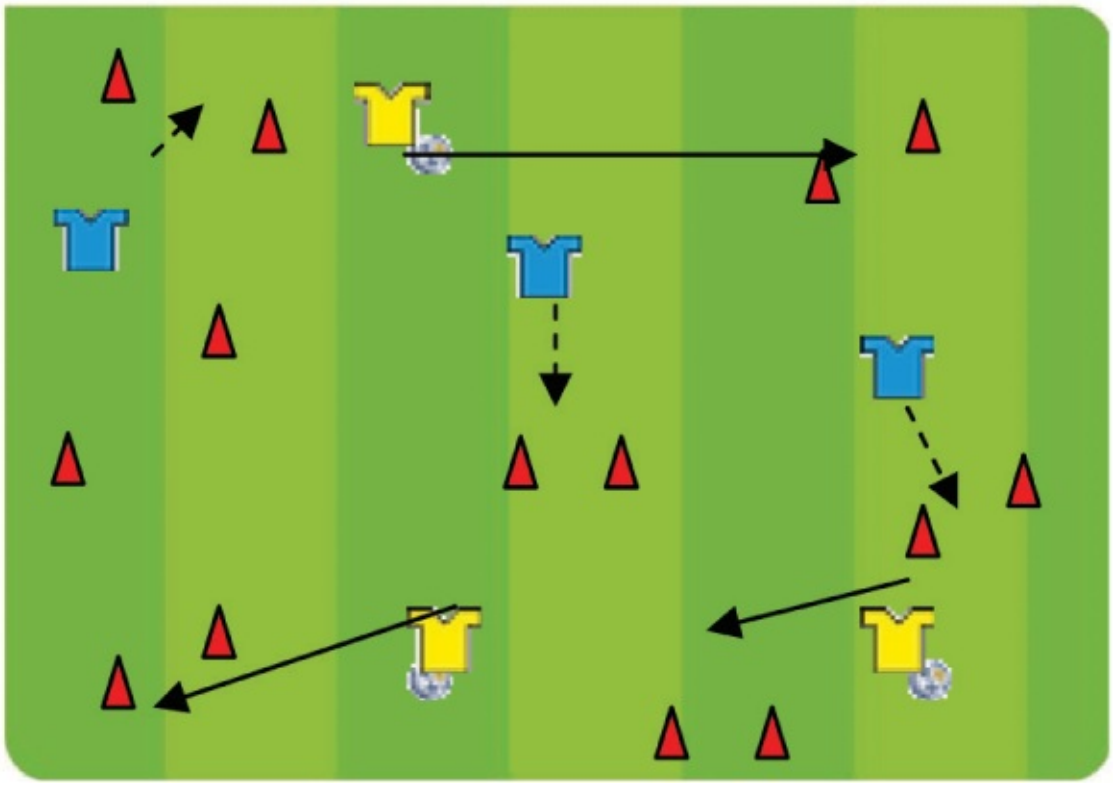
c) blocking players may tackle and take possession of the ball but only when the attacker is in front of the goal mouth

The exercise's key objectives:

- development of reaction speed
- increased speed of perception and peripheral vision
- improved speed of decision

- development of ball control

Figure 2



2. Four hoops are laid out in an area of 30x25 yards. Four teams compete against each other. The task is to take a ball from the hoop of another team and dribble it to one's own hoop. The winning team is that with the most balls after 2 minutes of play. Each player may dribble only one ball - Fig. 3

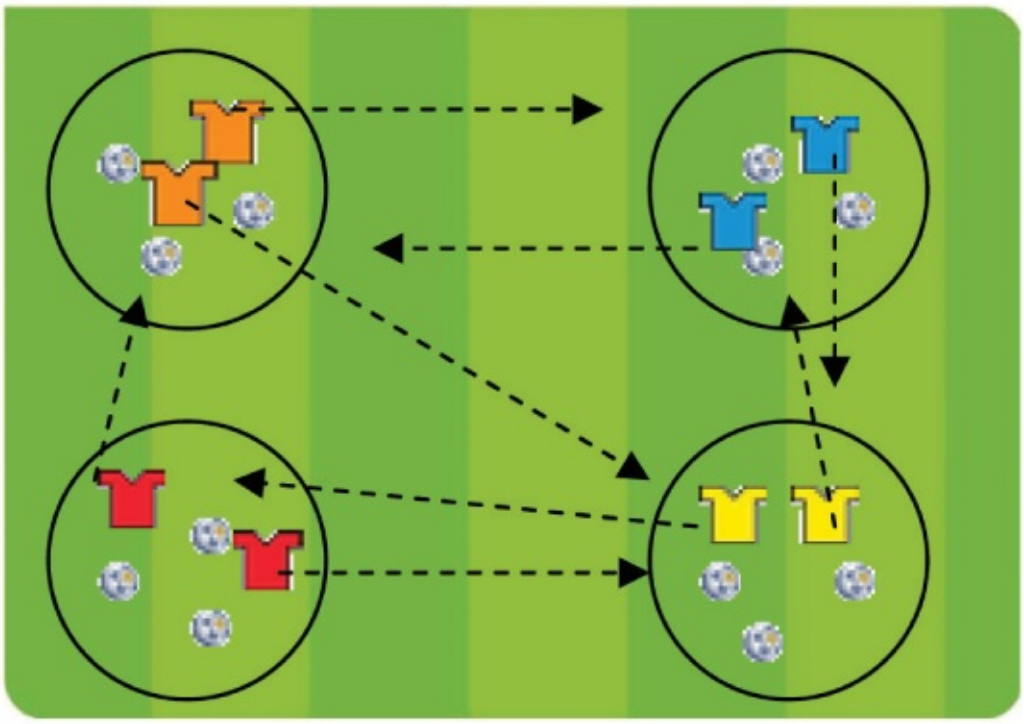
a) The blue team blocks the hoops for up to a maximum 3 seconds. If a hoop is blocked, a player can neither take possession nor dribble a ball to that hoop!

b) Four blocking players (one from each team). A player may not block the hoop of his own team!

The exercise's key objectives:

- Increasing the speed of thought processes (perception)
- Improved speed of decision
- Improving ball control

Figure 3



3. Players carry out ball control exercises. At the whistle they must as quickly as possible pick a marker up from the ground. The one who succeeds fastest is the fleeing player (dribbling a ball all the time), while his teammate is the chasing player (also dribbles a ball) for 10 seconds. The next exercise is performed the same way - Fig. 4

Variations:

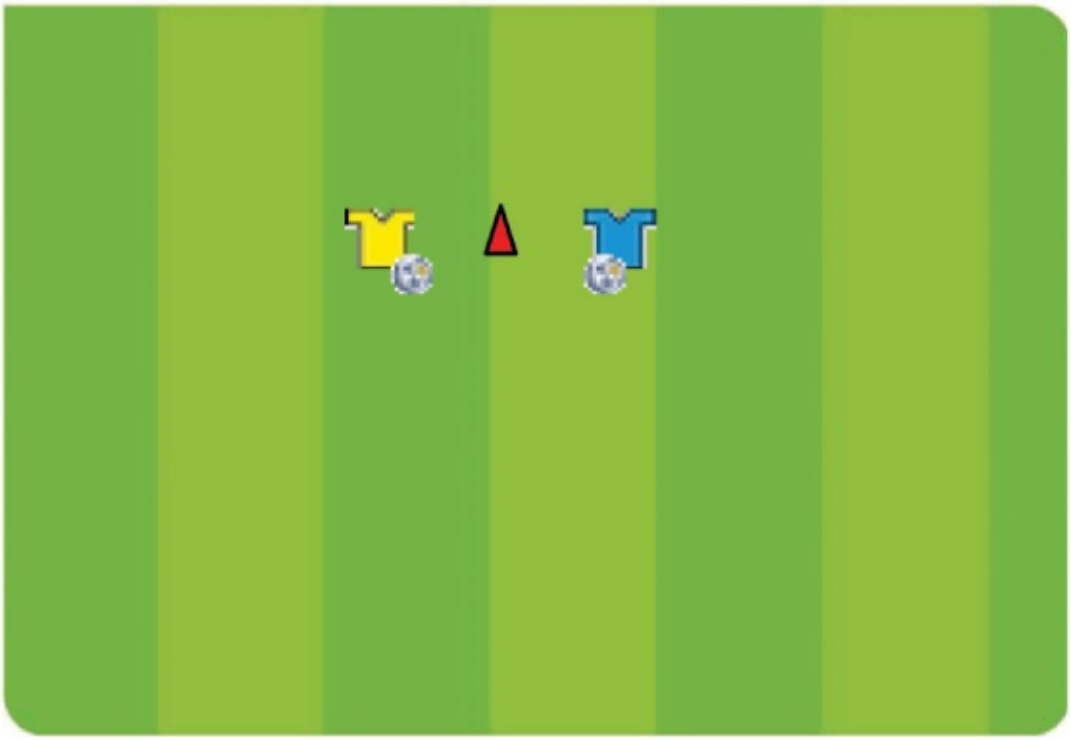
a) if the fleeing player is caught before the time is up, he demonstrates a ball control exercise and the chasing player imitates him

b) Players are numbered 1 and 2. At the signal “one” the player with that number is the chasing player and his teammate is the fleeing player

The exercise’s key objectives:

- improving speed of reaction
- teaching speed of footwork with the ball
- development of ball control

Figure 4



4. On a pitch measuring 25x25 yards, there are 6 small goals measuring 3 yards wide. Half the players have footballs, while the others line up in front of the goals. The task of the player with a football is to pass the ball through the goals. The player in goal can only tackle at the goal mouth. On taking possession of the ball, he performs the same exercise - Fig. 5

Variations:

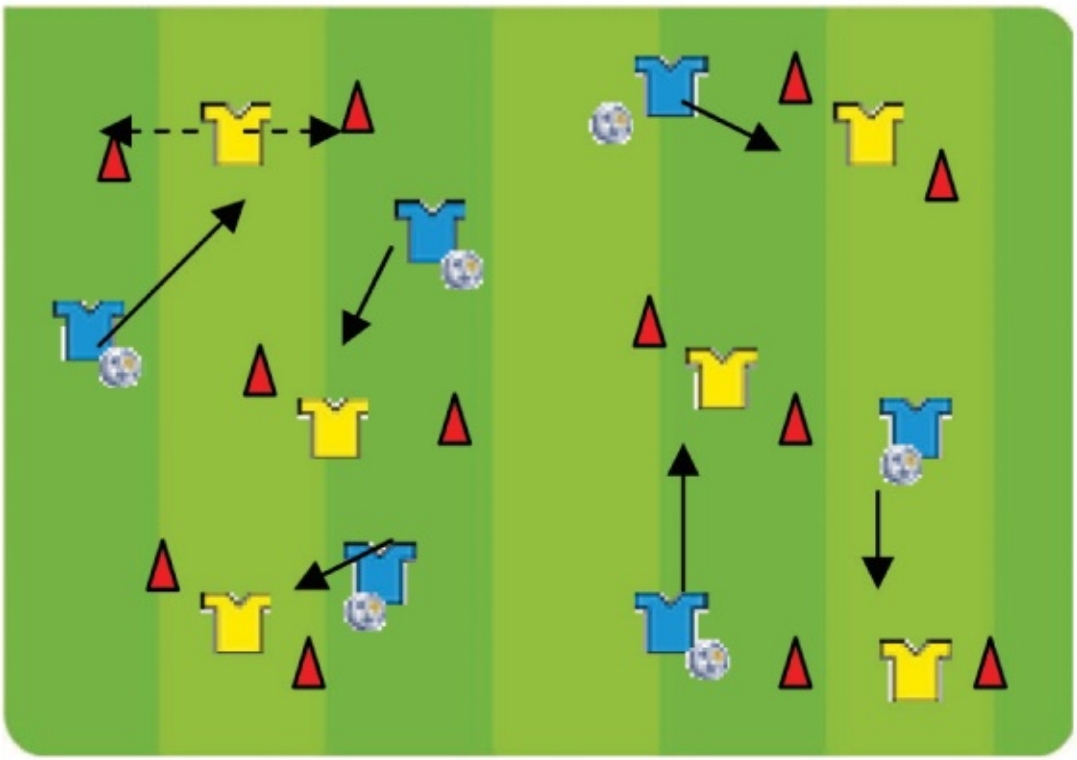
a) players may not pass a ball through the same goal twice in a row

b) competing in pairs (1v1). One pair uses only one goal

The exercise's key objectives:

- Increased reaction speed
- Developing speed of thought processes and perception
- teaching ball control
- developing speed of footwork

Figure 5



5. Hoops for speed training are placed anywhere on a marked out pitch measuring 20x20 yards. Players compete in two groups (yellows and blues). At the signal “blue”, players with this colour flee, while the others (in yellow) block the free hoops without footballs. The purpose of the fleeing players is to drive a football into any hoop before it is blocked. A free hoop can be blocked for at most 3 seconds. A player receives a point for every successful attempt – Fig 6

Variations:

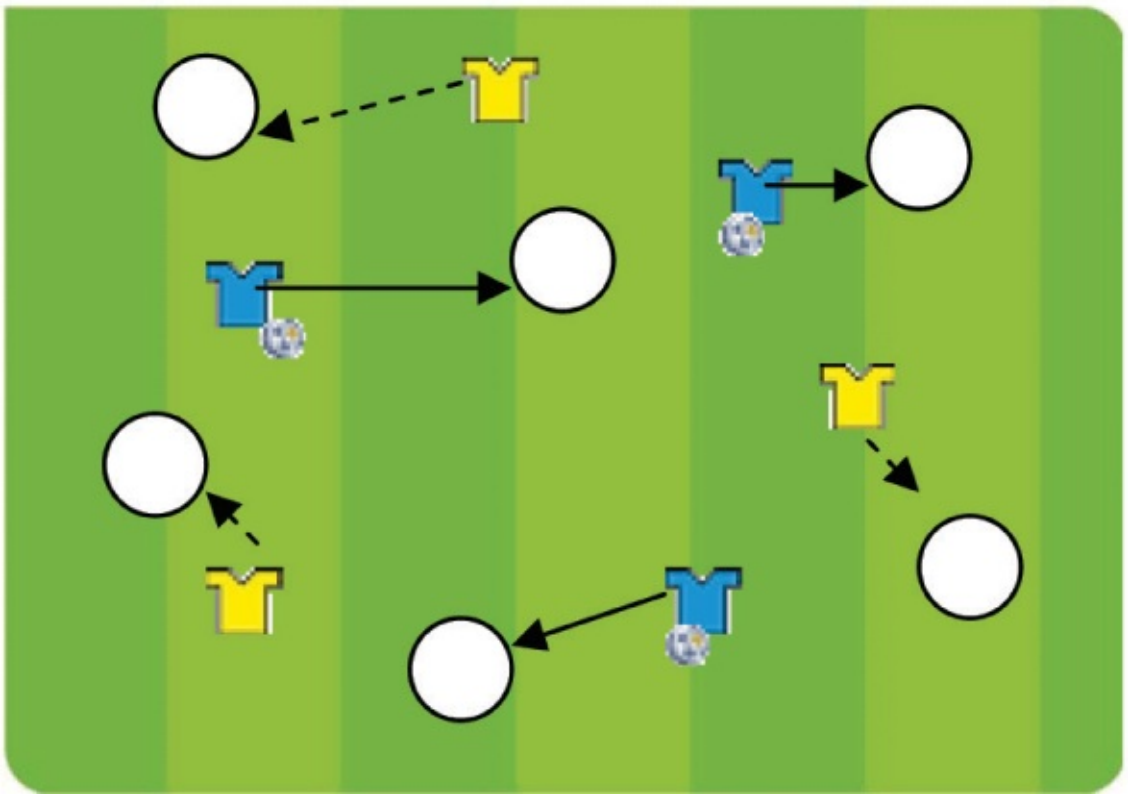
a) The player leaves the football in the hoop when he has dribbled it there and then looks for another hoop and repeats the exercise in the same way

b) The blocking players can catch players without footballs. The caught player practices ball control in the hoop

The exercise’s key objectives:

- teaching speed of decision
- increased speed of perception and prediction
- improved ball control

Figure 6



6. Various colour markers are arranged in a rectangle measuring 25x20 yards. Players dribble a football between the markers using any technique. When the coach raises a certain colour marker, the practicing player must perform ball control using a specific technique close to the marker, e.g.: in the case of a red marker – he dribbles the ball using his weaker leg - Fig. 7

Variations:

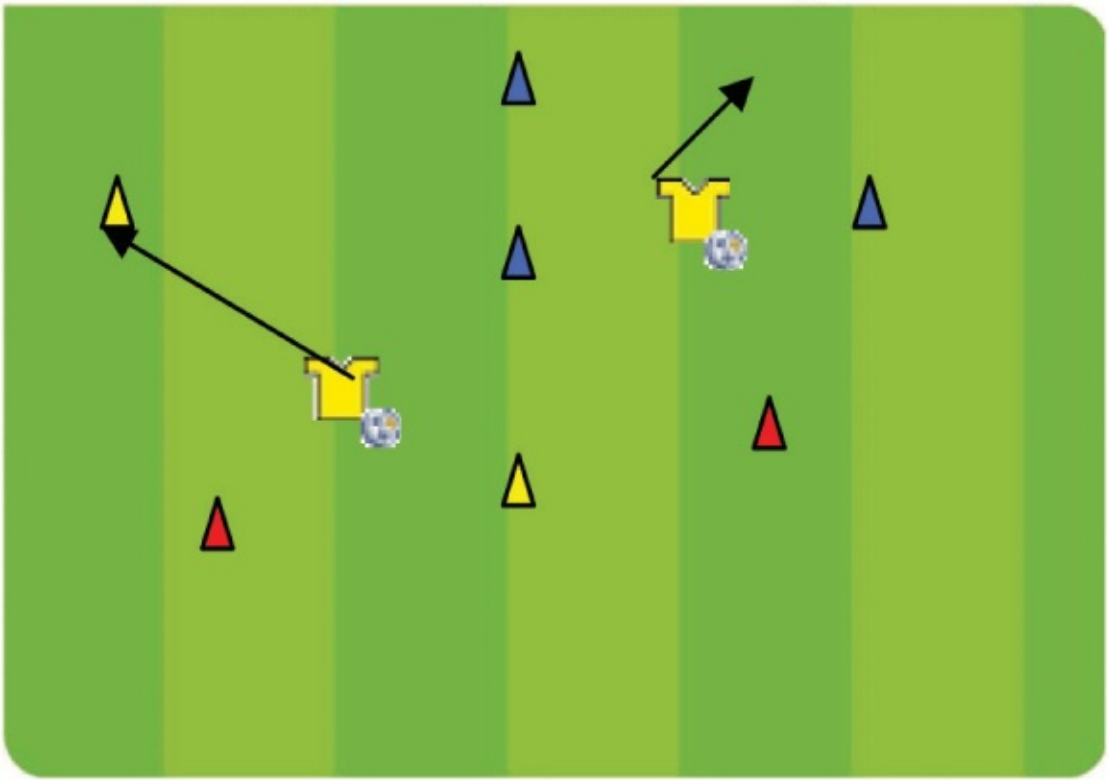
a) he stops the ball and touches a marker of a specified colour

b) he dribbles balls in the following order: red – blue

The exercise's key objectives:

- teaching speed of perception
- developing speed of comprehensive reaction
- Improved ball control
- development of peripheral vision

Figure 7



Under 7s – Under 10s

- Note any the bad motor habits and, if possible, try to correct them
- Use exercises involving complex reactions that usually occur during a game
- Keep in mind that biologically this is the best time to develop speed of thought, prediction, reaction and perception
- Develop individual ability to make quick and accurate decisions in exercises that provide various choices
- Develop speed capability universally and as often as possible in 1v1 game situations
- During training, develop coordinating motor skills, at the same time teaching speed and technical abilities
- Exercises should be fun and meet the child's psychological needs
- Use small games of 3v1/4v2/2v2 containing those elements of technique, speed and coordination that a player most often comes across and uses under football match conditions

Example exercises:

1. A 3v1 game is played on a rectangular pitch measuring 20x15 yards, divided into two sections. In one section, the team in possession of the ball passes it by hand. Training markers are arranged around the rectangle. After passing the football in each of the two sections, players must run round any marker and then resume participating in the game. At a signal, players must change the way they pass the ball. The team that passed the football by hand must now pass it along the ground and vice versa. One must use a sound signal often in order to improve their ability to react quickly. Players change roles when the football is lost by one of them to a player trying to take possession - Fig. 8

Variations:

a) a player may not pass the ball to a player from whom he has received a pass

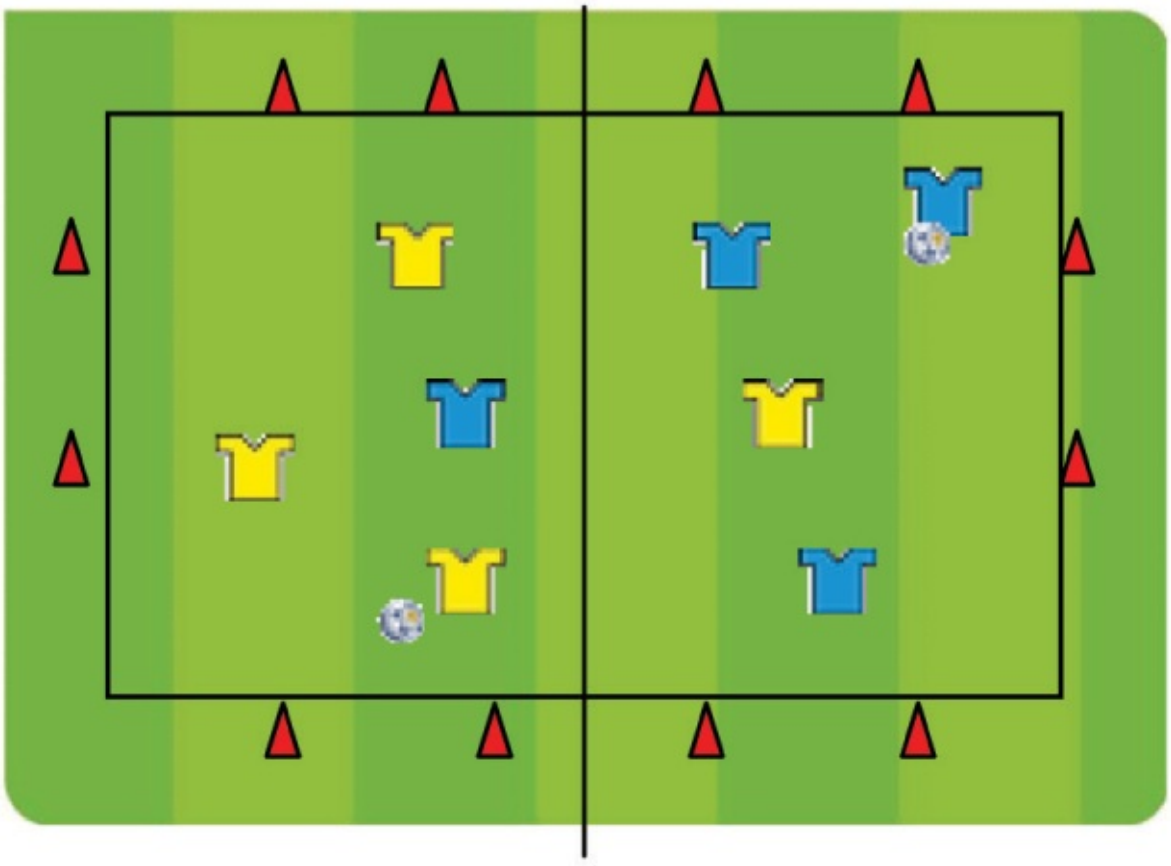
b) after passing, a player must touch the marker with his hand

c) if a player passes the ball with his left foot, he must touch the marker with his right hand

The exercise's key objectives:

- improving speed of reaction
- increased speed of perception
- increased speed of footwork with frequent changes in direction
- teaching the techniques of trapping and passing the ball

Figure 8



4 markers are placed anywhere in a square measuring 15x15 yards. Two players are on the outside and two on the inside of the square with footballs. While dribbling the balls, the outer players change direction, moving at any time as they wish. The rivalry between the pairs is as follows: at a signal the inner players must keep possession of their ball, touch any marker with their hand and dribble the ball to the outside of the square to a place where there are no outer players. However, the outer players must dribble their ball to the inside of the square and touch a marker not previously touched by any of the inner players. The victors are the pair who carry out the exercise the fastest and make the least mistakes - Fig. 9

Variations:

d) All players dribble balls into the middle of the square and at a signal touch a marker with their hand

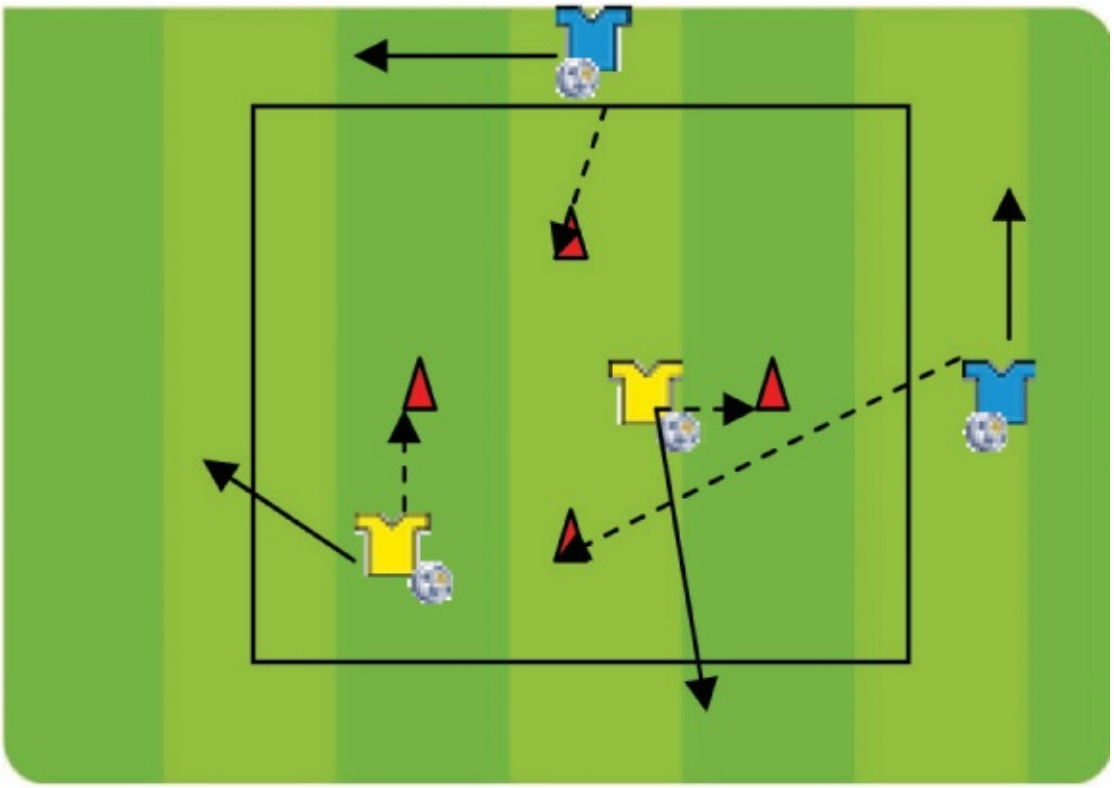
e) In a 3v1 game, after each pass, they must run around a marker. A change in defender occurs after he has taken possession of the

ball or an inaccurate pass

The exercise's key objectives:

- improving speed of reaction
- Increasing the speed of thought processes
- Increased speed of prediction
- Improved ball control
- Improved speed of decision

Figure 9



2. An exercise to be carried out in threes. A triangle-shaped pitch is marked out. Players compete in a 1v1 game in the middle of the pitch. A blue player dribbles the ball outside the triangle. At the whistle the players with footballs exchange roles. In this case, the yellow player dribbles the ball on the outside of the triangle while the blue starts a game of 1v1 - Fig. 10

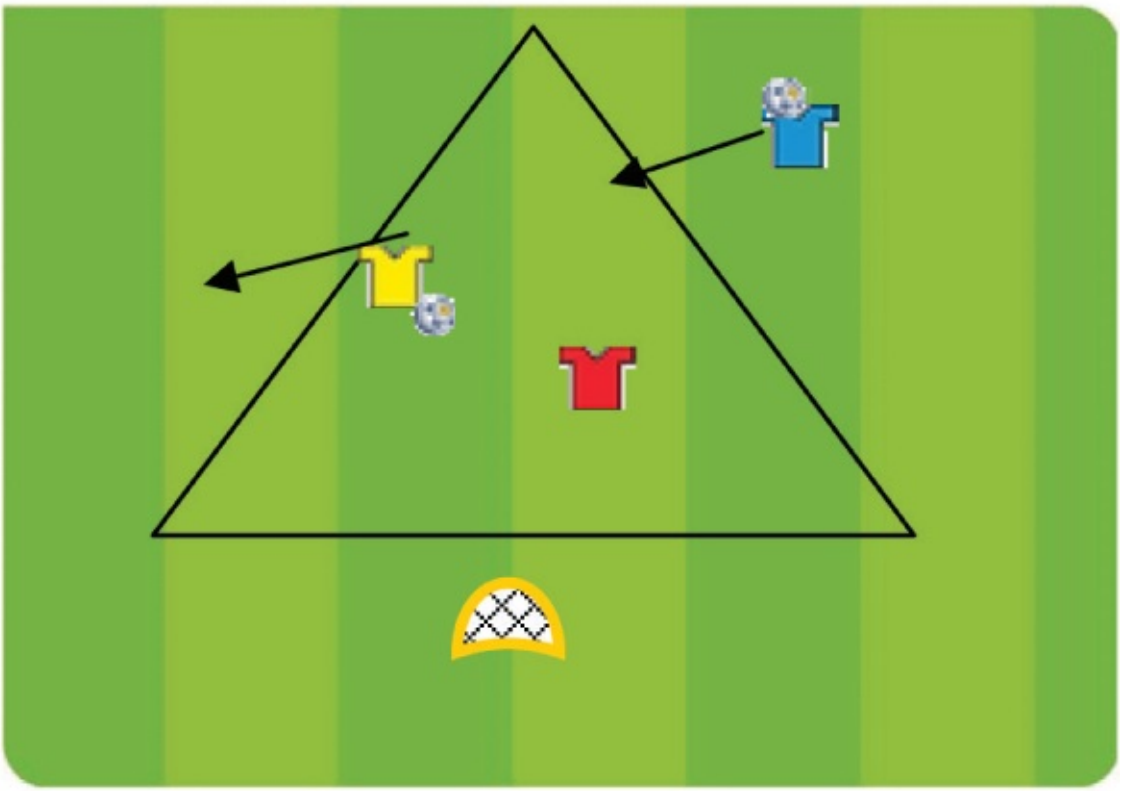
Variations:

a) The participants compete for the ball played outside the triangle. The player that finds himself next to the ball the soonest passes it back.

The exercise's key objectives:

- development of comprehensive reaction speed
- teaching speed of thought and prediction
- Improved speed of footwork during a game of 1v1
- increased speed of direction changes

Figure 10



3. A game of 1v1 is played on a 25x20 yard pitch with four outer areas marked out. Here the task is to dribble the ball to the opponent's goal line. The middle section contains training markers in three different colours such as red, blue and yellow. At a signal specifying a particular colour, the players must as quickly as possible touch the marker by hand in the central zone and return to the game of 1v1 in the outer zone. The player that does so the fastest automatically finds himself more quickly next to the football and tries to repeat dribbling it to his opponent's end line - Figure 11

Variations:

a) Players must touch markers that have the same colour as their own (blues-blue)

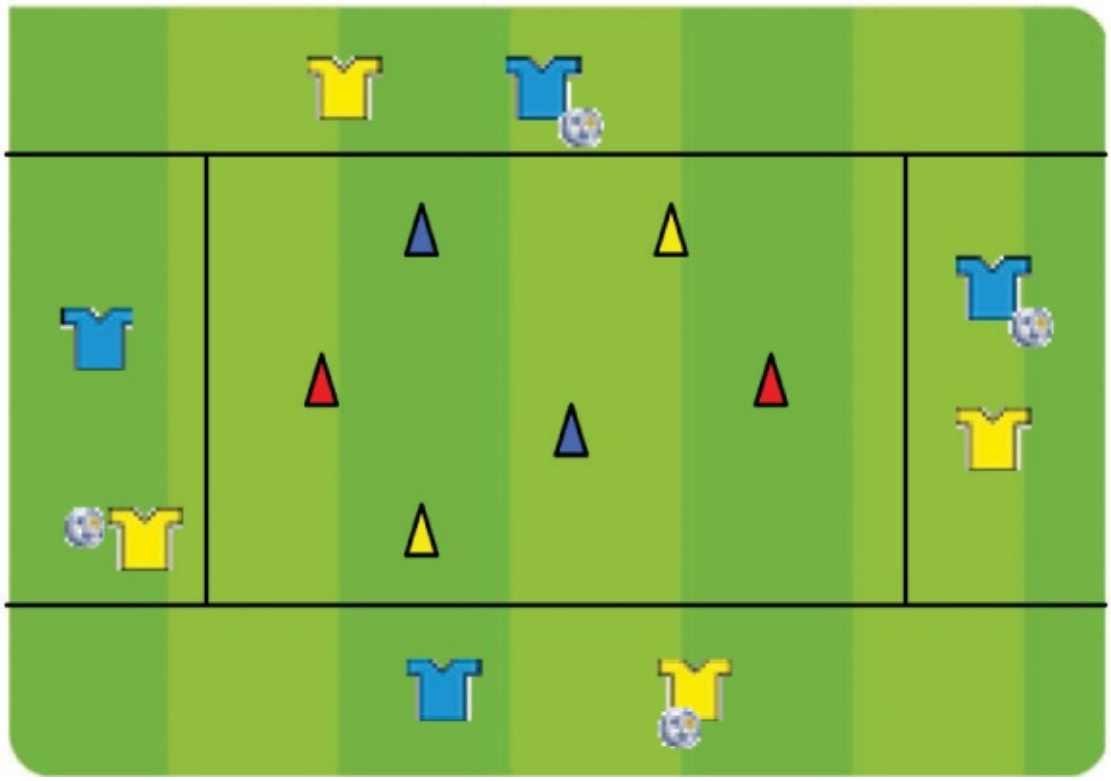
b) players play 1v1 and try to score goals

c) players without footballs touch a marker, players with footballs dribble through the centre to another zone. Players play against another teammate

The exercise's key objectives:

- development of reaction speed
- developing speed of perception
- teaching peripheral vision
- developing speed of footwork in a 1v1 situation
- increased speed of direction changes

Figure 11



4. Exercises are carried out in pairs. Each player is in a triangle shaped box. The triangle is marked with three markers of various colours such as red, yellow and blue. Both teammates have footballs. A red player copies the behaviour of the blue player with and without the football and vice versa. The task is for the copying player to not only mimic his teammate, but also move to the same colour marker in the triangle as his teammate. The markers around the triangle must be arranged as shown in figure 12.

Variations:

a) a change of triangle at the whistle

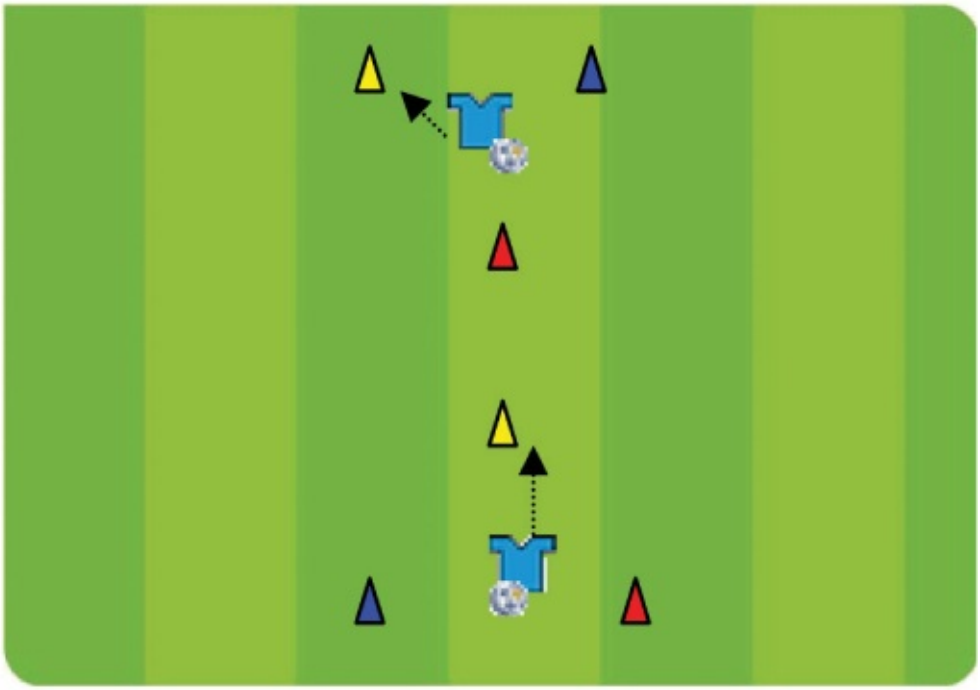
b) an exchange of passes at the whistle

c) a change in the way of moving

The exercise's key objectives:

- development of reaction speed
- development of perception speed
- improved ball control
- developing skills of quick prediction

Figure 12



5. A pitch measuring 20 x 25 yards with six small goals consisting of training markers, three red (or any other, but all the same colour), and another three not red. There are 12 players, 6 of which are positioned in the goals. The remaining 6 with footballs are positioned anywhere. The task is to pass the football to any player at the goal mouth and take his place. Players should be in constant motion - Fig. 13

Variations:

a) If a player has passed the ball to the blue goal, next time he should

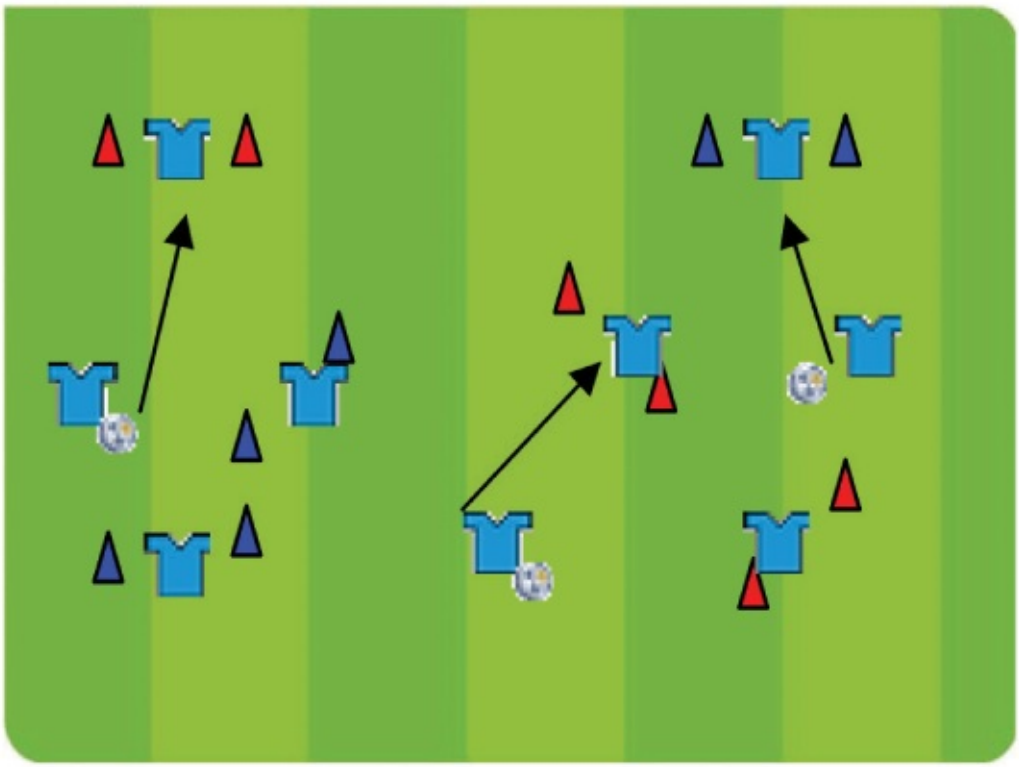
play the ball to the player positioned at the mouth of the red goal. The player receiving the ball carries out a similar exercise. If He receives the ball in the blue goal, he must pass it to the player positioned at the red goal

b) In a game of 2v1, the pair scores 2 points when they pass the ball through one of the goals. If the defender takes possession of the ball, he exchanges roles with the player who lost possession of the ball c) In a 2v1 game the ball may not be passed twice in a row through a goal of the same colour

The exercise's key objectives:

- Increased speed of perception
- Increased speed of prediction
- Improving trapping and passing techniques
- The ability to make quick decisions in a 2v1 game

Figure 13



Under 10s – Under 13s

- Eliminate bad motor habits that negatively affect motor coordination and hinder the development of a player's speed abilities

- Use an exercise that combines coordination and technique and develops perception and prediction abilities
- Use exercises that develop players universally
- Repeat motor and technique activities containing elements that shape speed abilities in 1v1/2v2/3v1/4v2 game situations in order to make these automatic
- The training of reaction and decision-making speeds needs to be focused on the game
- Teach speed of footwork in universal exercises – with a football and in 1v1 game situations
- Adjust exercises to the age as well as the anatomical and physiological development of the players
- Make use of improvements in abstract thinking and overall mental development in order to increase basic tactical abilities together with elements of technique and coordination and speed abilities (speed of reaction, thought and decision-making

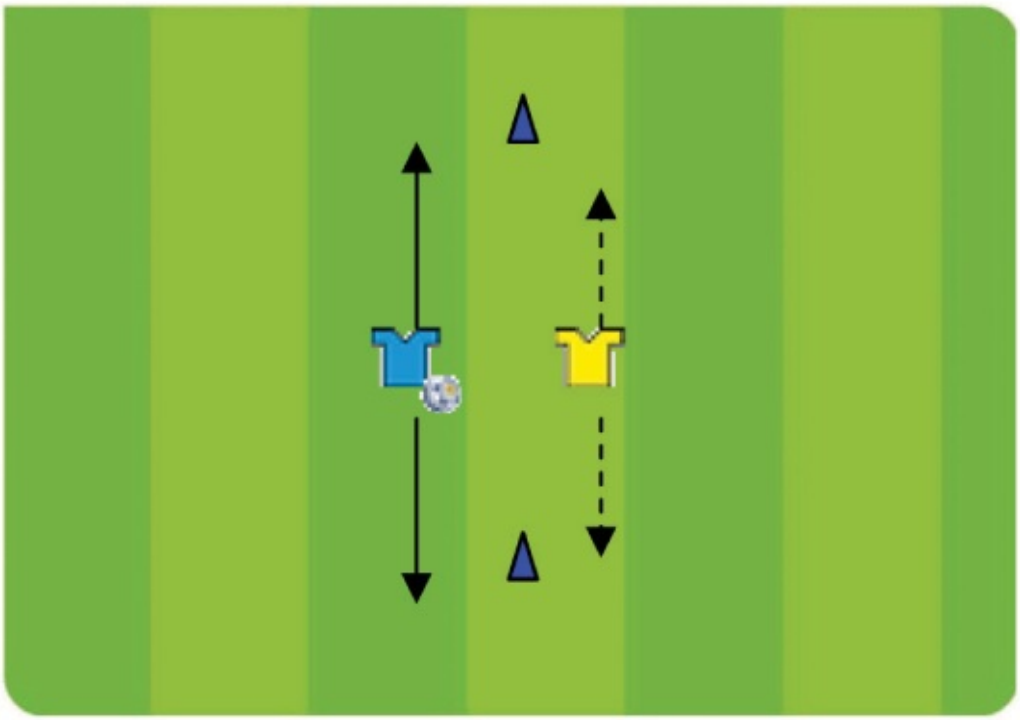
Example exercises:

6. Players compete on a 1v1 basis. A blue player is assigned to dribble the ball to one of two markers. If the blue player makes a mistake, his opponent scores a point. If the red player discovers his teammate's intentions and gets to the selected marker faster, he scores a point. Players must not go over the centre line connecting the two markers - Figure 14

Variations:

a) instead of markers the players compete for two small goals

Figure 14



The exercise's key objectives:

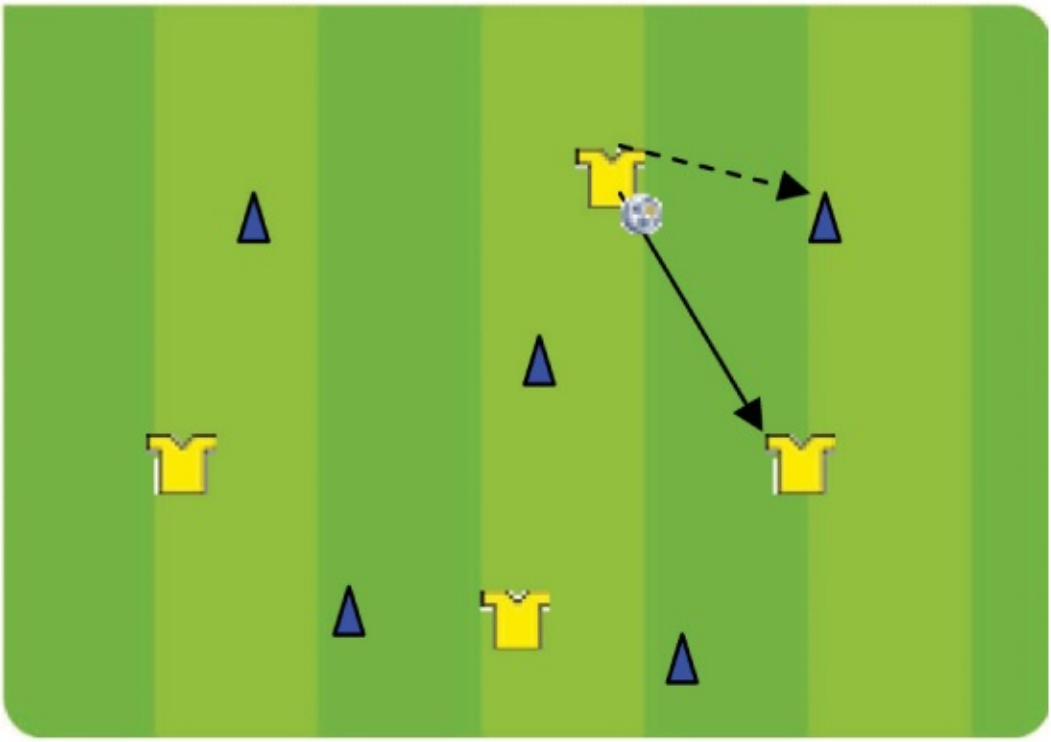
- Development of reaction speed while dribbling the ball
- Development of reaction speed while frequently changing direction
- Development of reaction speed in 1v1 situations

7. An exercise for groups of four performed in a small space measuring 10-15 yards. Players receive numbers from 1 to 4. The task is to pass the football in the following order: player 1 passes the ball to player 2, who then passes it to player 3, then player 3 to player 4. After passing the ball, each player runs round the training marker - Fig. 15

Variations:

a) In a 3v1 game, at the signal "one", the player with this number becomes a defender. After each pass, the other players touch the marker with their hand. If the defender takes possession of the ball, he becomes an attacking player and vice versa

Figure 15



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of thought processes (perception)
- Combining the teaching of speed abilities with motor coordination
- Development of techniques for short passes in conjunction with development of speed of thinking and decision-making

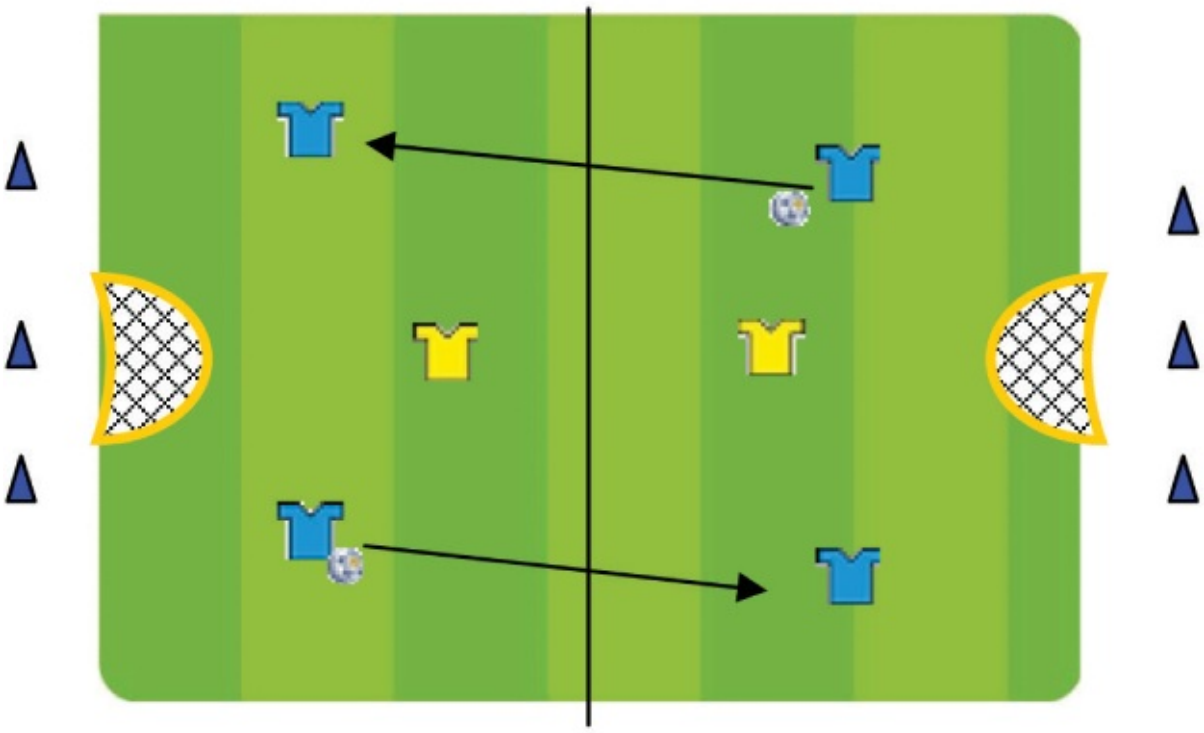
8. A small 4v2 game is played on a 10x10 yard pitch divided into two halves. A 2v1 game is played on each half. The task of the team playing in the numerically superior position is to keep two footballs in play. The team scores a point for each successful exchange of footballs, i.e. without interruption or the opponent taking possession of one of the balls. A player who loses a ball to an opponent must make a run between markers set behind the goals and then return to the game. At the same time, the opponent continues the 1v1 game and tries to score a goal – Fig. 16

Variations:

a) A 4v2 game is played on one half of the pitch. After making six passes, the game may be transferred to the other half. For every change of pitch, a team receives 2 points. The moment the defending team takes possession of the ball, it tries to score a goal.

b) A 3v3 game using a single ball. Only two of a team's players near the ball can be on the same half of the pitch.

Figure 16



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of thought processes and perception of pitch situations
- Development of techniques for passing in an actual game
- Teaching speed of thought processes, combined with elements of motor coordination specific to football
- Improving reaction speed
- Increased speed of prediction

9. A small 2v2 game is played on a pitch measuring 15x10 yards with two small goals and 4 speed training ladders. The speed training ladders are placed on either side of the goals. Players execute runs through the speed training ladders. Then they pass the ball one touch to players positioned on the side sectors of the pitch and then race for the ball played by the coach and compete in a 2v2 game. A change of players takes place at the moment of scoring a goal or when the ball leaves the field of play. Pairs competing on the pitch change over with the players positioned on the side

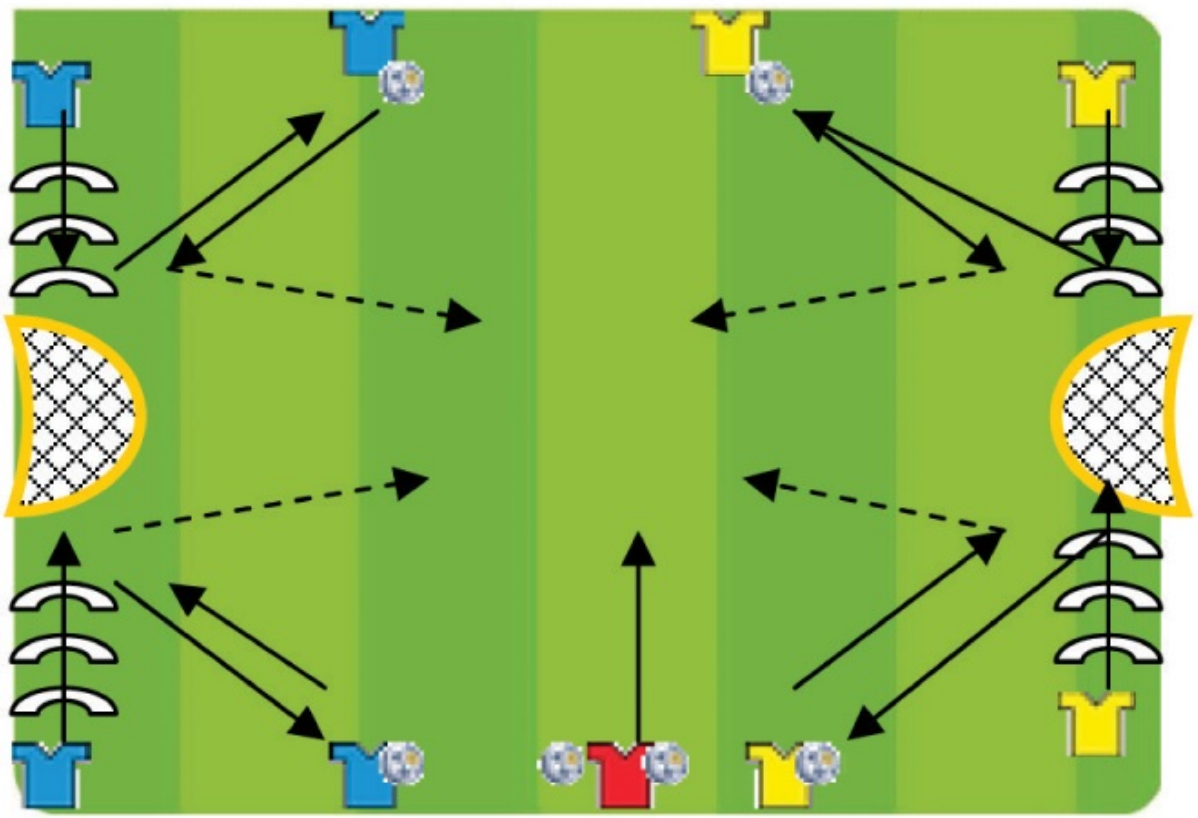
sectors of the pitch – Fig. 17

Variations:

a) both teams can decide on the number of players beginning the game (e.g. 1v1/2v2/2v1)

b) the captain selects how the team is to navigate through the speed training ladders

Figure 17



The exercise's key objectives:

- Development of co-ordination and speed of footwork, combined with improvement of passing techniques
- Development of quick response to changing situations on the pitch
- Teaching speed of thought processes and perception
- Improved speed of decision making after taking possession of the ball

10. An exercise is carried out in teams of four on a pitch measuring

15x15 yards, divided into two equal halves. Two players from each team are positioned on opposite halves of the pitch. Each team begins practicing with one ball. Their task involves exchanging passes between players of the same team while in motion and without the presence of any opponents. Both teams are to exchange passes and may not move from one half of the pitch to the other – Fig. 18

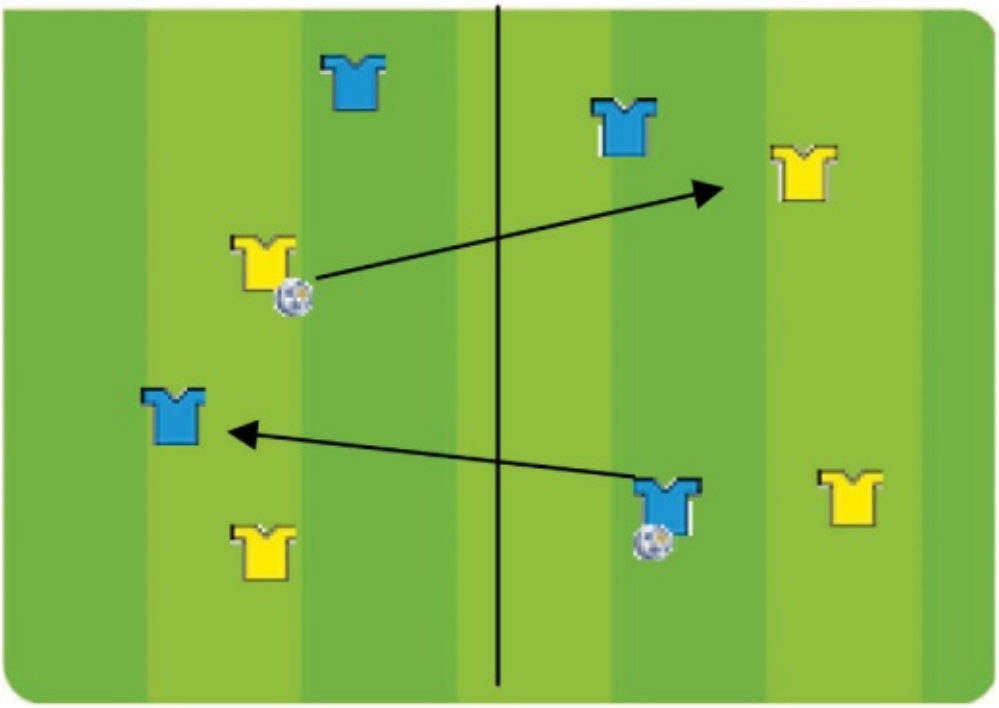
Variations:

a) each team has two footballs

b) players may change halves, but only so that two players of the same team are on the same half

c) a 3v1 game using two balls

Figure 18



The exercise's key objectives:

- Developing speed of prediction and perception
- Teaching speed of decision in combination with improving passing and trapping techniques
- Development of creative thinking in combination with development of individual tactical behaviour such as (unmarked) free field perception, movement in areas free of opponents and teammates,

supporting a teammate with the ball by continuously changing positions

- Increasing reaction and prediction speed

11. An exercise carried out in a triangle that has 4 markers in the middle. Three players pass the ball to each other while moving down the middle of the triangle in such a way that the ball does not touch any marker. Players must be in constant motion and exchange positions. Players begin the exercise with any number of taps of the ball – Fig. 19

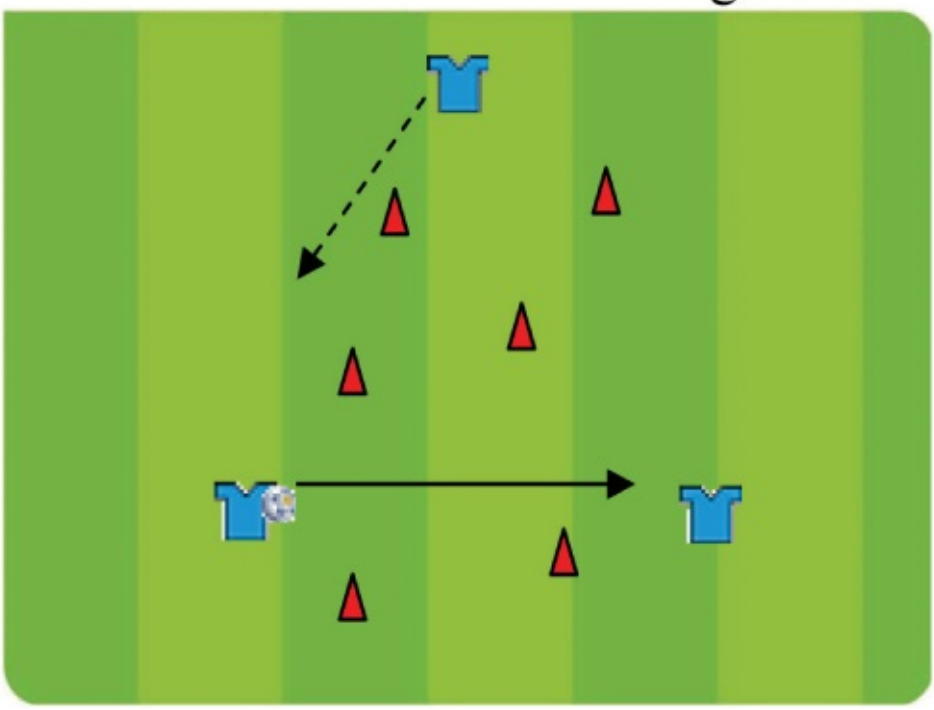
Variations:

a) a player decides when he can or should play one or two touches

b) a 2v1 game, where if the ball touches a marker, the player responsible becomes a defender

c) a 2v1 game with the use of goals. After carrying out six passes, attacking players may score a goal

Figure 19



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of thought processes and perception of playing field situations while developing passing and trapping techniques
- Improving speed of movement without a football while changing

positions within a small space

- Improving the speed of interpreting situations in the game (prediction)

12. An exercise carried out in fours on a square measuring 10x10 yards, which is divided into four equal sections. On the outside of the square are 8 markers. This is a small 3v1 game. The task of the players playing in the numerically superior position is to continuously move to those sections of the square that are closest to the player with the ball. Once a player has passed the ball, he must run round the marker located in the section from which the pass was made. The moment a defender takes possession of the ball, he changes roles with the player who lost possession of the ball - Fig. 20

Variations:

a) a 3v2 game

b) a 3x3 game

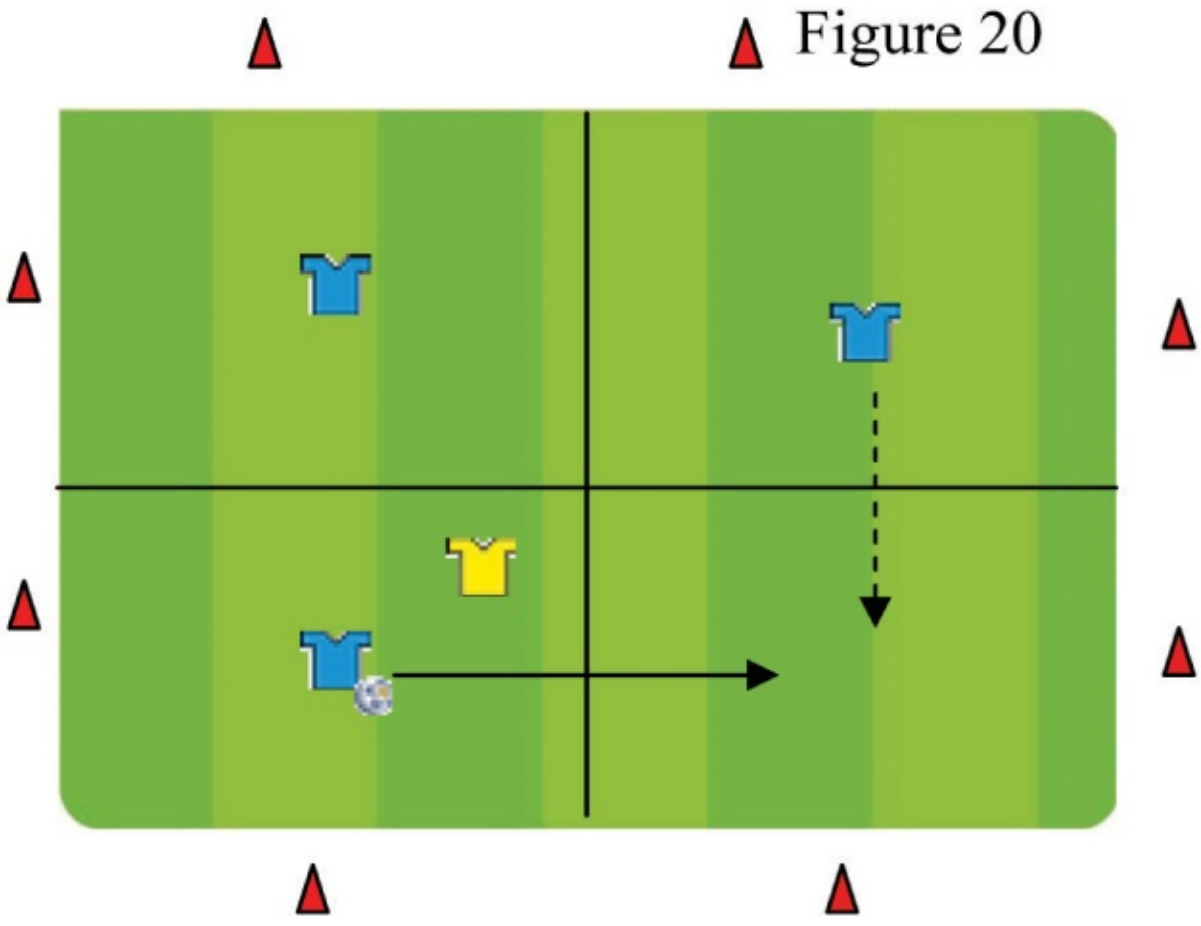


Figure 20

The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed without a ball with changes in direction
- Teaching speed of thinking and decision-making
- Improvement of passing and trapping techniques during an actual game
- Developing speed of footwork while changing direction

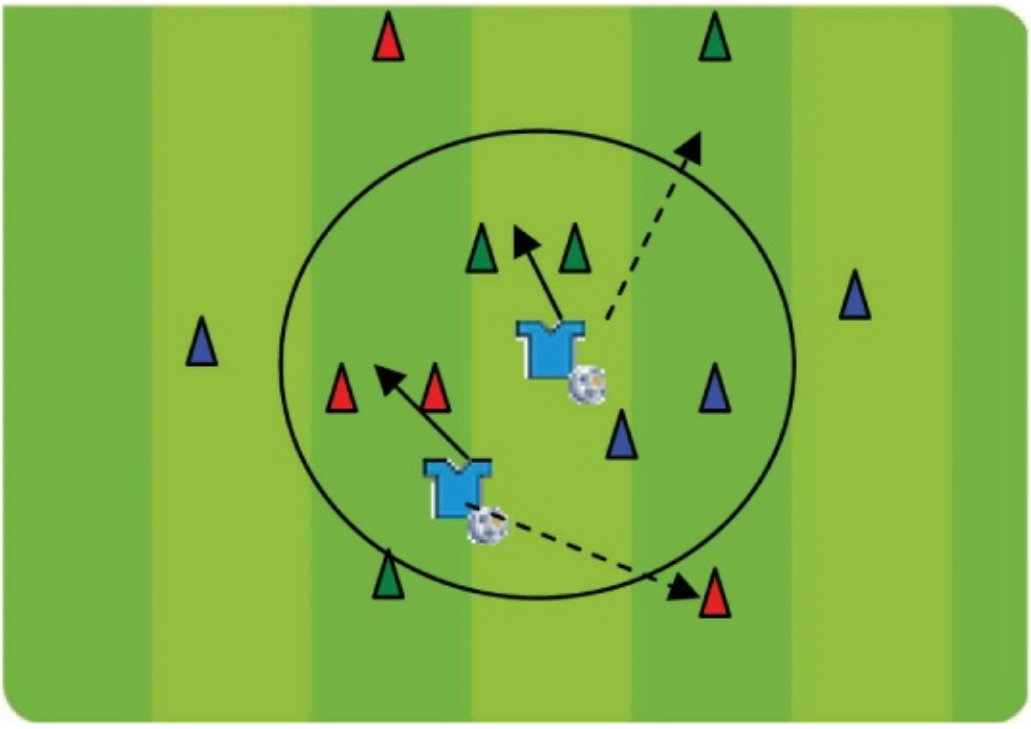
13. An exercise carried out in a circle, in which are located small goals 1 yard in width and of various colours (3 red, 3 blue, 3 green). On the outside of the circle are markers in colours identical to the goals. Players dribble through the middle of any goals. When the whistle blows, they must stop the ball and touch the marker located outside the circle. The marker touched must be the same colour as the last goal, through which the player dribbled the ball - Fig. 21.

Variations:

a) players react to the colour of the marker raised by the coach

b) players change the leg used in dribbling the ball into a goal of a specific colour

Figure 21



The exercise's key objectives:

- Developing bursts of speed with changes in direction
- Improving speed of perception while developing skills of dribbling and running with the ball

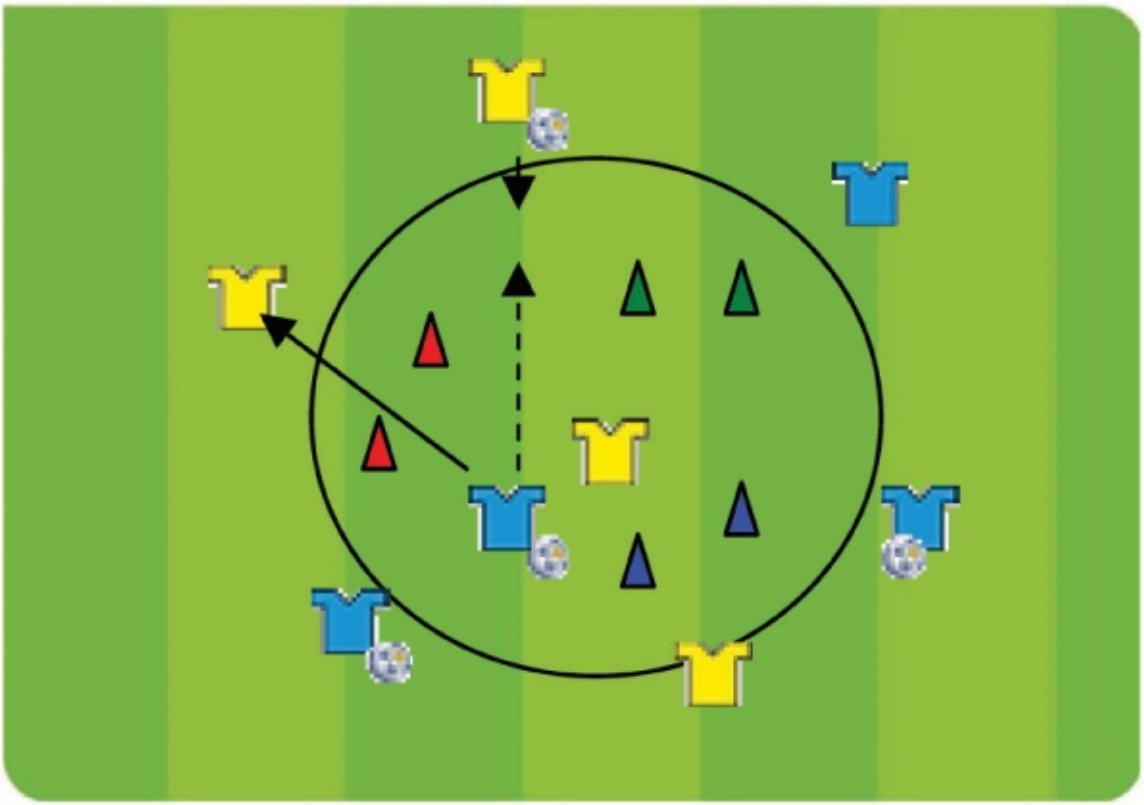
14. The organization of this exercise should be as above. 4 pairs play 1v1 games In the middle of the circle. There are 8 players on the outside of the circle (half of them with footballs). The inner players dribble their footballs through the goals marked out and then pass to a player outside the circle without a ball and receive a pass from an outer player (who has had a ball from the beginning of the exercise). Upon loss of the ball, there is an exchange of roles. - Fig. 22

Variations:

a) players may not dribble through the same colour goal twice in a row

b) a 2v2 game in the middle of the circle (without goals). A team receives two points for every exchange of balls with the outer players

Figure 22



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of perception and decision-making (prediction)
- Developing passing techniques as well as creativity and versatility in 1v1 games, combined with increasing speed abilities
- Increasing speed of thought processes for the most common situations that occur in a (1v1) game with and without the ball
- Improving reaction times and bursts of speed while in motion without the ball

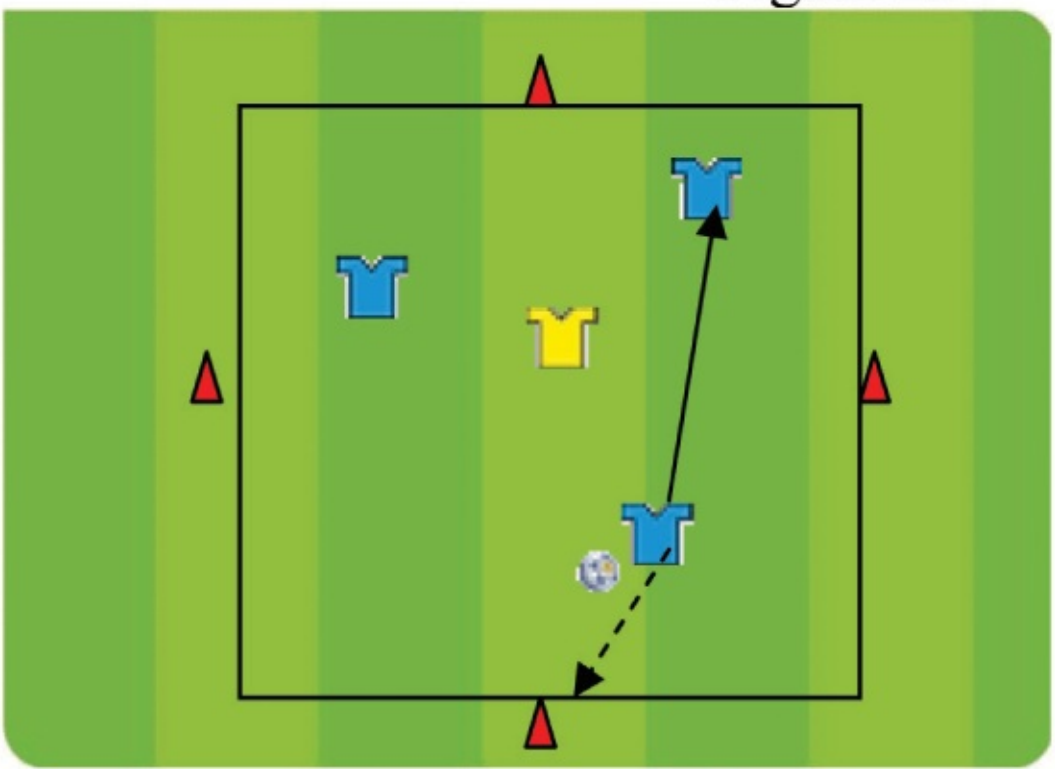
15. A small 3v1 game is played in a square measuring 10x10 yards. A marker is placed on each side of the square. After playing the ball, each player of the team playing in the numerically superior position must run in the direction of a marker, touch it with his hand and return to the game. The moment possession of the ball is lost, players change places. - Fig. 23

Variations:

a) the ball may not be played to the player from whom one received the pass

b) the two players can use only their weaker leg

Figure 23



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching bursts of speed
- Improving passing and trapping techniques, combined with improvement of reaction speed
- Developing speed of thinking and decision-making under game conditions
- Developing skills of quick prediction

Under 13s-Under 16s

- Avoid using the same training loads for all players
- Customize speed training to the motor type of players (endurance or high-speed)
- Develop players' speed capabilities in combination with technical and tactical elements and motor coordination exercises
- As frequently as possible use exercises with a football, as this has a positive impact, improving concentration and the ability of divided attention, and increases motivation
- Exercises selected should be adapted to the age and abilities of the players
- Avoid exercises that do not reflect the modern game of football

16. A pitch measuring 15x10 yards is divided into four sections: two smaller and two larger. On the outside of the two larger sections are speed training ladders, while the two smaller sections have three markers set half a yard apart. Players play a 6v2 game. The team playing in the numerically superior position tries to keep possession of the ball as long as possible. Any player of that team who has changed zones may not return to the previous zone until the ball is played into the new zone. After playing the ball, each player must perform one of the following, depending on the area in which he finds himself at that moment – Fig. 24

a) run zigzagging without the ball between the markers set up outside the smaller zones

b) run through the speed training ladders located on the outside of the larger zones

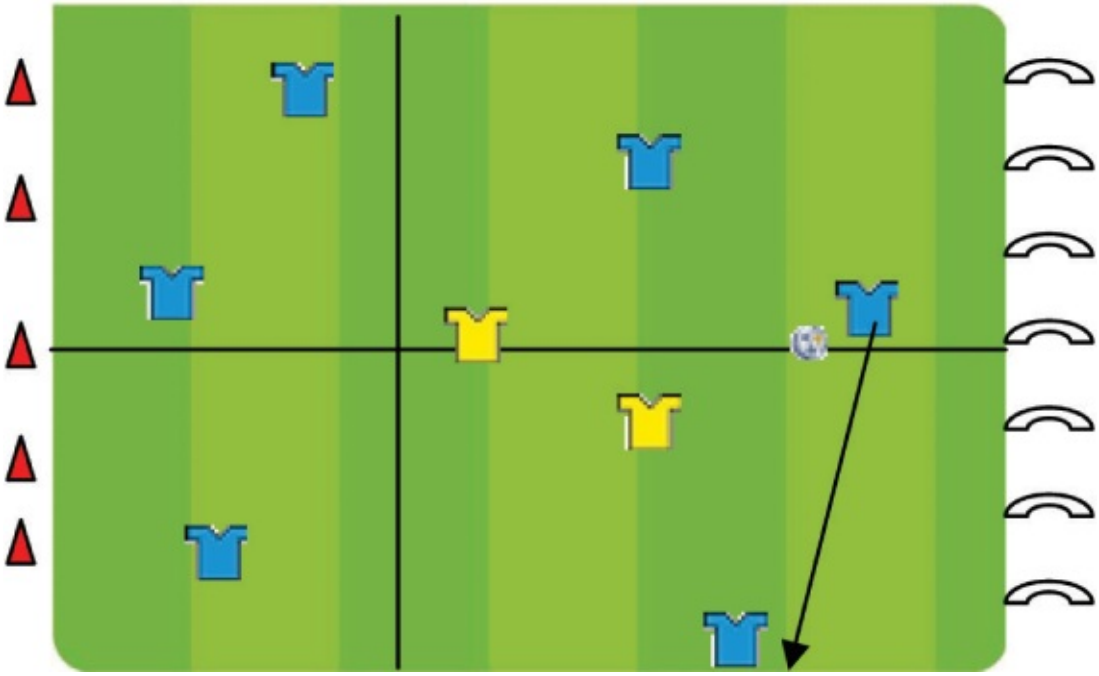
Variations:

a) only two attacking players may be in the same zone at any time

b) a player may not play the ball to the teammate from whom he received the pass

c) 3 of the 6 attacking players may only touch the ball twice at the most

Figure 24



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving the ability to maintain possession of the ball in combination with shaping reaction speed and speed of thought processes
- Improving speed of individual decision-making in the ever-changing conditions of a game
- Improving bursts of speed and footwork speed in a game

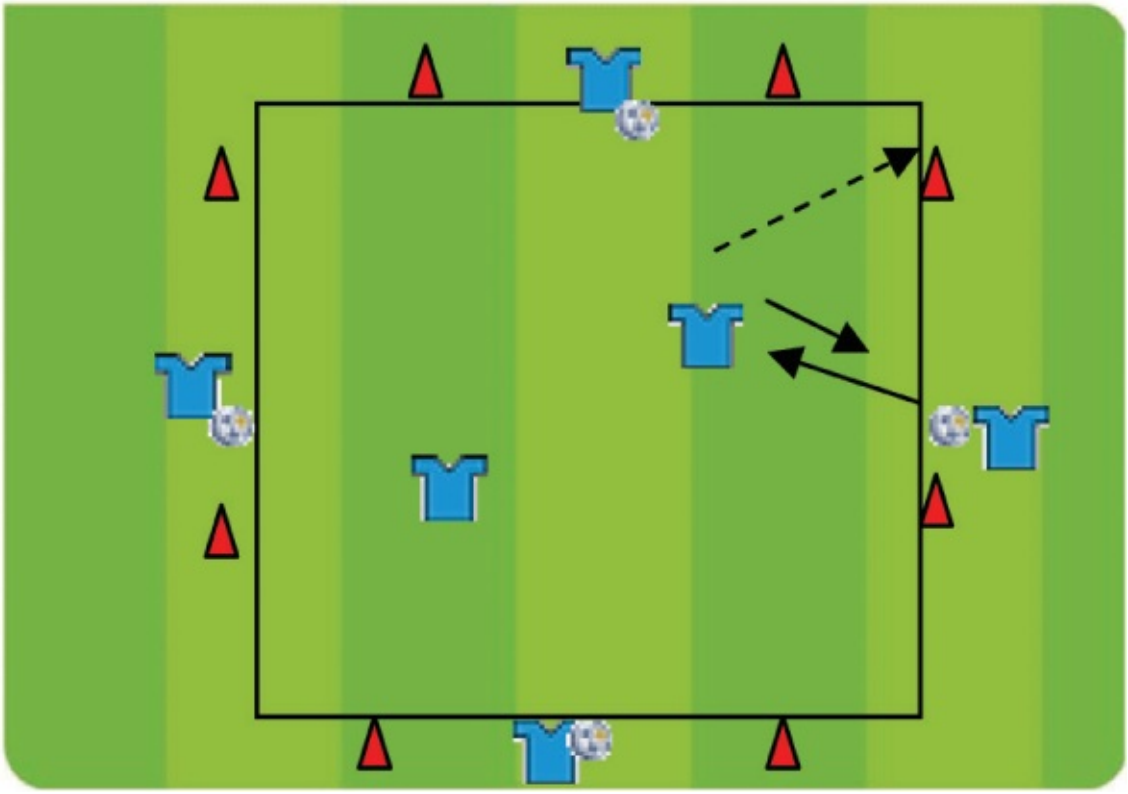
17. An exercise to be practiced in groups of six. Two players take up positions in a square measuring 15x15 yards. The rest of the players remain outside the square. The inner players commence the exercise. Their objective is to pass the ball one touch to the outer players and after passing, to touch one of the markers indicating the square. An inner player may not play a ball to the same player twice in a row or to an outer teammate to whom he

has previously passed the ball back. The second inner player practices – Fig. 25

Variations:

a) after a pass the players change places (inner players with outer)

Figure 25



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of perception with simultaneous improvement in passing techniques
- Development of speed surges with frequent changes in direction
- Improving the ability to independently interpret the game (prediction). Rapid recognition of free, unmarked areas on the pitch and moving across to an empty area

18. A pitch measuring 15x10 yards is divided into two equal halves, with one goal. Players play a 3v2 game. The two defenders start the game by passing the ball to the opponent's half of the pitch and apply pressure to their rival's half. The purpose of the attacking team is to score goals. The moment the rivals take possession of the ball, they try to score a goal in one of the two small goals set

up in their opponents' half – Fig. 26

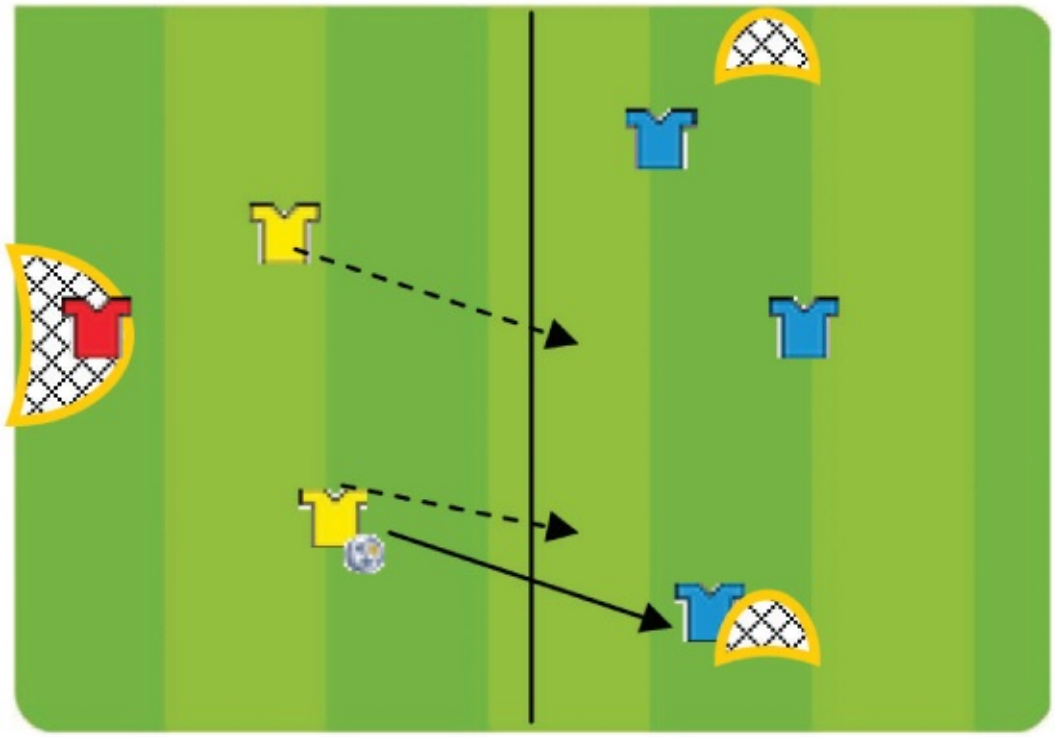
Variations:

a) only two attacking players may be in the opponents' half

b) each of the attacking players should have contact with the ball before it can be played onto the opponents' half of the pitch

c) one of the attackers must touch the ball a certain number of times, e.g.: three times

Figure 26



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of decision-making while playing in a numerically superior position
- shaping speed of perception while being pressed by an opponent
- Improving the speed of predicting situations while playing in the numerically superior position
- Developing reaction speed
- Developing speed of passing and the pace of one's game
- Developing speed of movements and complex reactions

19. 12 players are divided into 4 groups and play on a pitch measuring

25x20 yards. Each team wears a different colour bib. The players take up positions anywhere on the pitch, but spread out over the entire area. Four players begin practicing with balls. The task of each player is to pass a ball to any other player. Players may only pass to teammates marked with the same colour - Fig.27

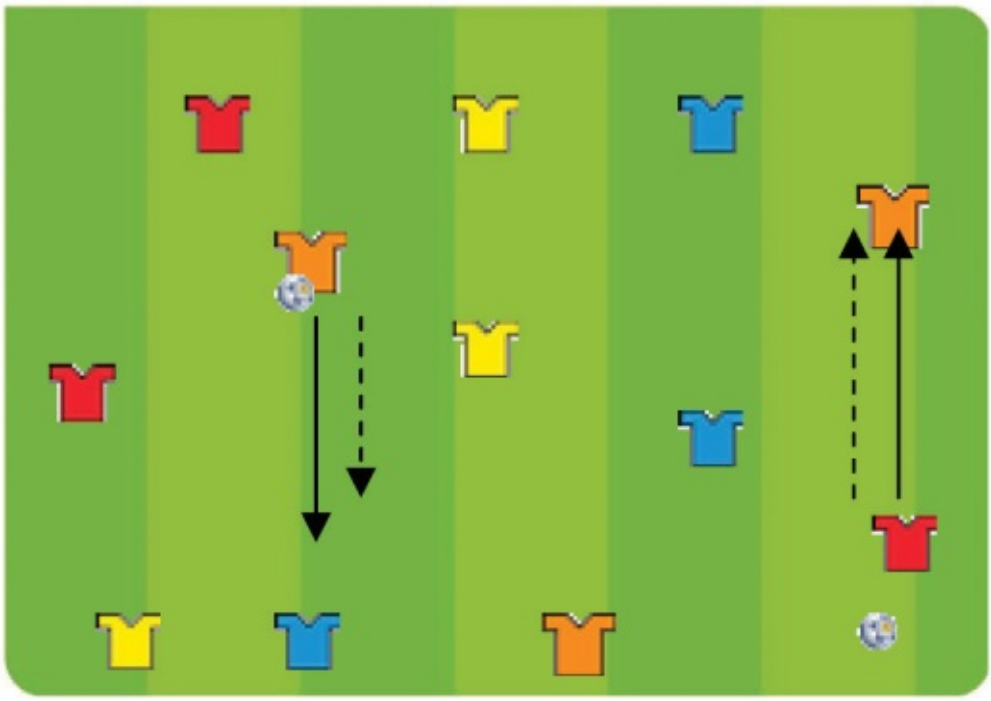
Variations:

a) players may not pass balls to players of the same colour

b) before the football is received, the player must specify the colour, to which he will direct the pass

c) the player passing the ball specifies the colour of the player to whom the player trapping the ball must in turn pass it

Figure 27



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed in creation and adaptation
- Improving speed of perception, together with passing techniques
- Improving reaction times
- Increasing speed of perception and peripheral vision
- Teaching speed of decision-making

20. A 3v1 game is played on each of four squares measuring 15x15

yards. Speed hoops are laid out in the centre. After every fourth pass without loss of the ball, the player who passed the ball for the fourth time from each square must leave his area of play and carry out footwork exercise in the hoops. He then returns to any square, other than the one he left, to continue the game. When anyone leaves the area of play, the game continues on a 2v1 basis until joined by another player who has performed the exercise in the hoops. Defending players are changed after any attacking player lose possession of the ball. – Fig. 28

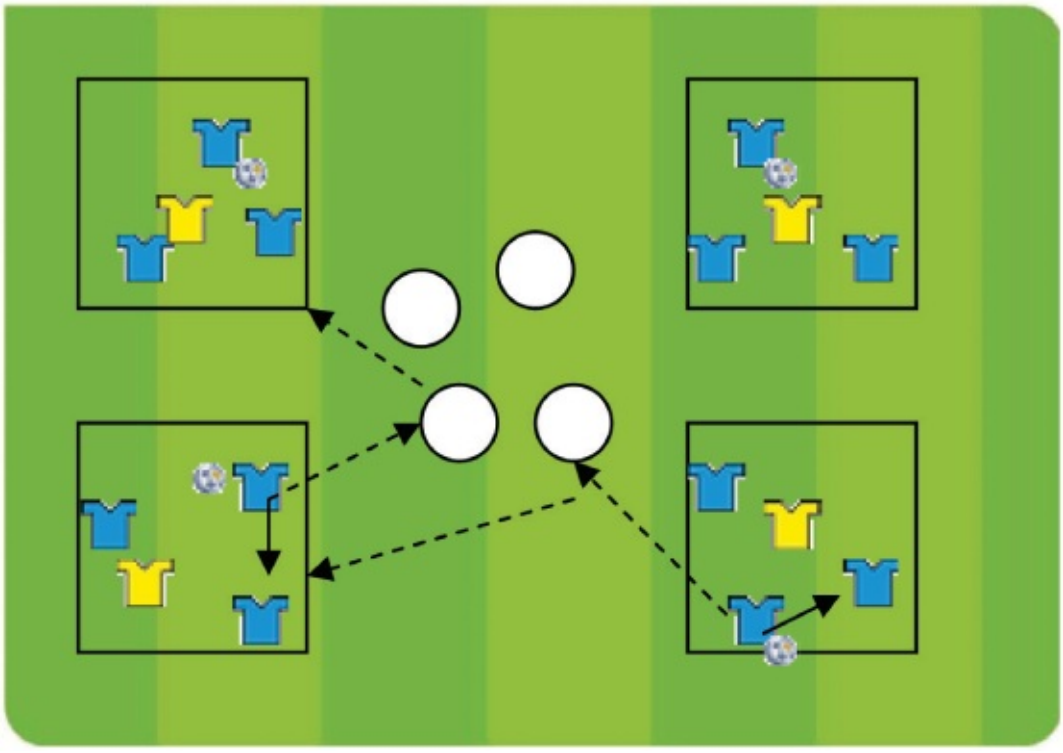
Exercises in hoops:

a) two steps inside and two outside a hoop

b) moving clockwise or anti-clockwise round the outside of the hoop

c) moving backwards and forwards in sequence, one step inside and one outside the hoop

Figure 28



Variations:

a) players are numbered 1-4. At the signal “one” the player so numbered becomes a defender.

The exercise’s key objectives:

- Development of coordination and speed of footwork
- Improving speed of thinking and decision-making while playing in the numerically superior position: 3v1, 2v1
- Improving passing techniques
- Improving reaction speed
- Increasing the speed of adjusting to new 3v1/2v1pitch situations
- Developing speed of adaptation from defence to attack and vice versa

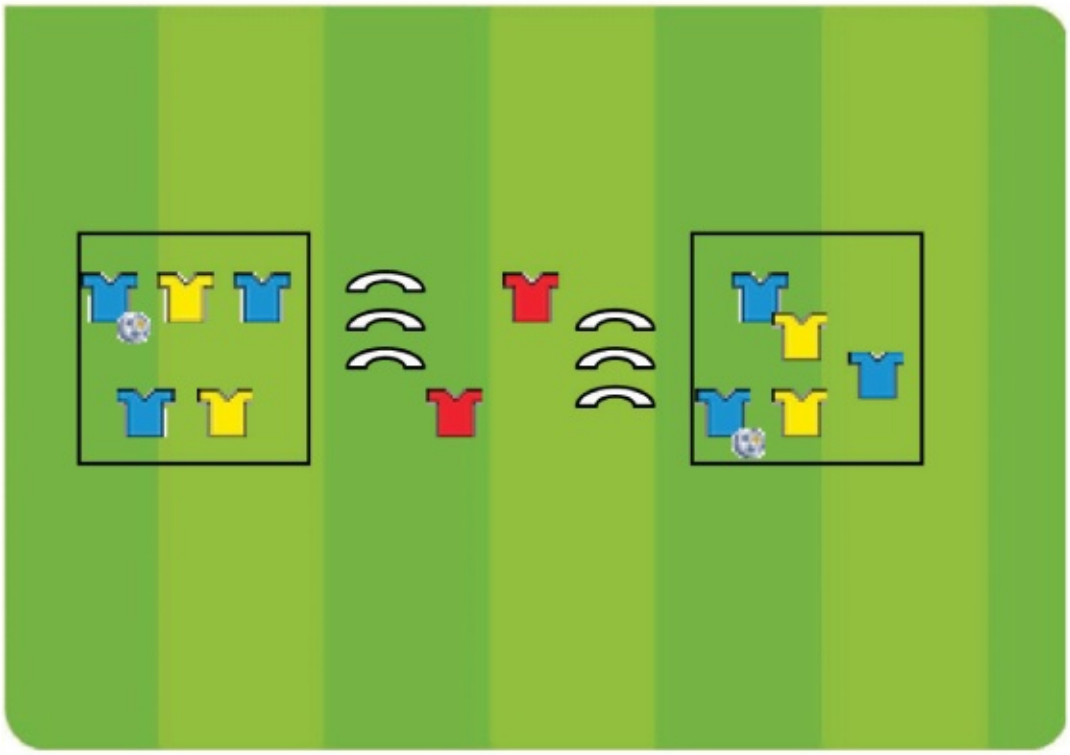
21. A 3v2 game is played on two pitches measuring 15x15 yards. Two speed training ladders are laid out between the two pitches, and in the same area two players are positioned to support the team playing in the numerically superior position. The objective is to keep possession of the ball in the indicated pitch. At the start of the game, the support players perform footwork exercises using the speed training ladders. Each team receives a point when its player exchanges the ball with any support player and changes places with him. Passing may only be carried out when:

a) a supporting player has carried out the exercise in the ladder and is ready to receive a pass (but until he receives a pass continues the ladder exercise)

b) the two players are not on the same side of the ladders

The moment the defending team takes possession of the ball, the supporting players rest until the attacking team retakes possession of the ball. After playing the ball, defenders try to perform a minimum of three passes between each other to obtain a point. – Fig. 29

Figure 29



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improved reaction times combined with high-speed footwork
- Developing speed and diversity in decision-making
- Improving passing techniques
- Improving the 1v1 game in combination with improved perception and prediction
- Improving the ability to maintain possession of the ball under conditions of continuous pressing
- Improvement in playing without a ball

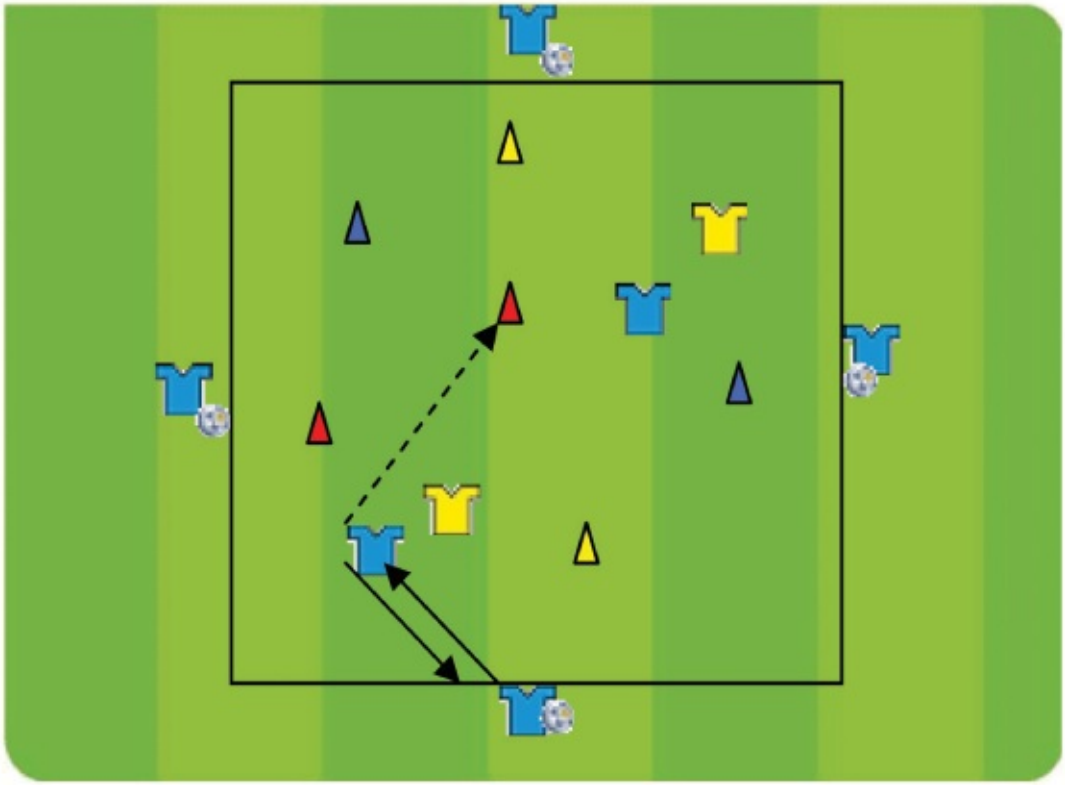
22. Training markers of various colours are arranged in the middle of a square pitch measuring 15x15 yards. This exercise involves eight players, four of which are positioned on the outside with balls and 4 inside the square. The inner players form pairs (defender-attacker) and compete on a 1v1 basis. The task of the attacker (blue) is to:

a) pass the ball one touch

b) touch the marker of that colour indicated by the teammate on the outside, to whom the return pass was directed

After receiving a return pass, the player practicing on the outside changes places, running without the ball, with any player from the outside (while changing places, players may not move through the centre of the square). The moment a defender wins possession of the ball, he performs the same action as the attacker. The winner of the pair is the player who has made the greatest number of return passes to teammates on the outside - Fig. 30

Figure 30



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving speed of perception under pressure from an opponent and time pressure in a 1v1 game situation
- Improving reaction speed
- Improving passing techniques

23. A game of 8v4 is played on a pitch measuring 20x20 yards, divided into 4 zones (a 2v1 game being played in each zone). The eight players try to keep possession of two balls. None of the players from either team may change zones. A team scores a point when both balls are dribbled through each of the zones. Two balls may not be in the same zone at any one time. The moment a defender

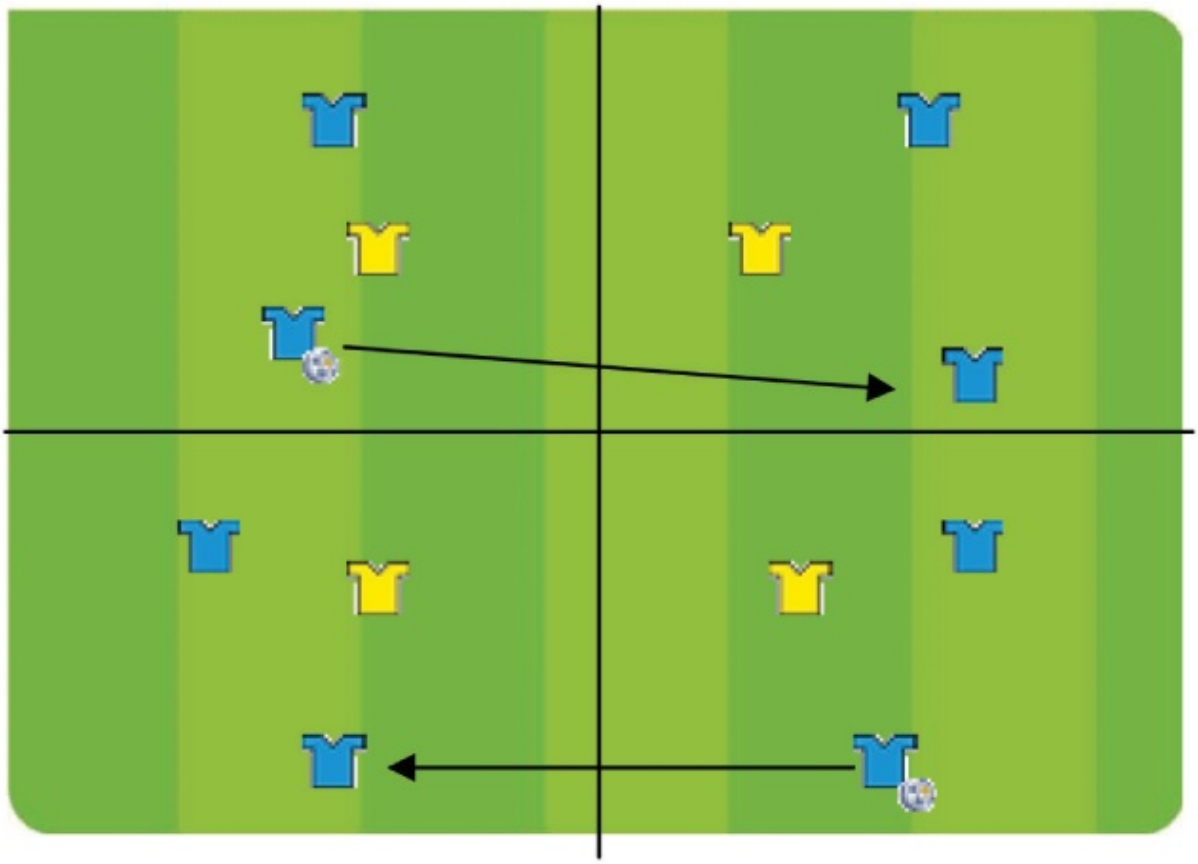
wins possession of the ball, he tries to dribble the ball to any area. If the attempt is successful, without loss of the ball in the zone where the pass was received, the defenders win a point and the game starts from the beginning - Fig. 31

Variations:

a) Players may change zones but no more than three attackers may be in one zone at any time

b) a 4v2 game is played in two zones using two balls

Figure 31



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving speed of perception
- Teaching speed of decision-making in situations with potentially many solutions
- Improving passing techniques while playing in a numerically superior position
- The ability to assess a situation (speed of interpreting the game – prediction) and make the right decision

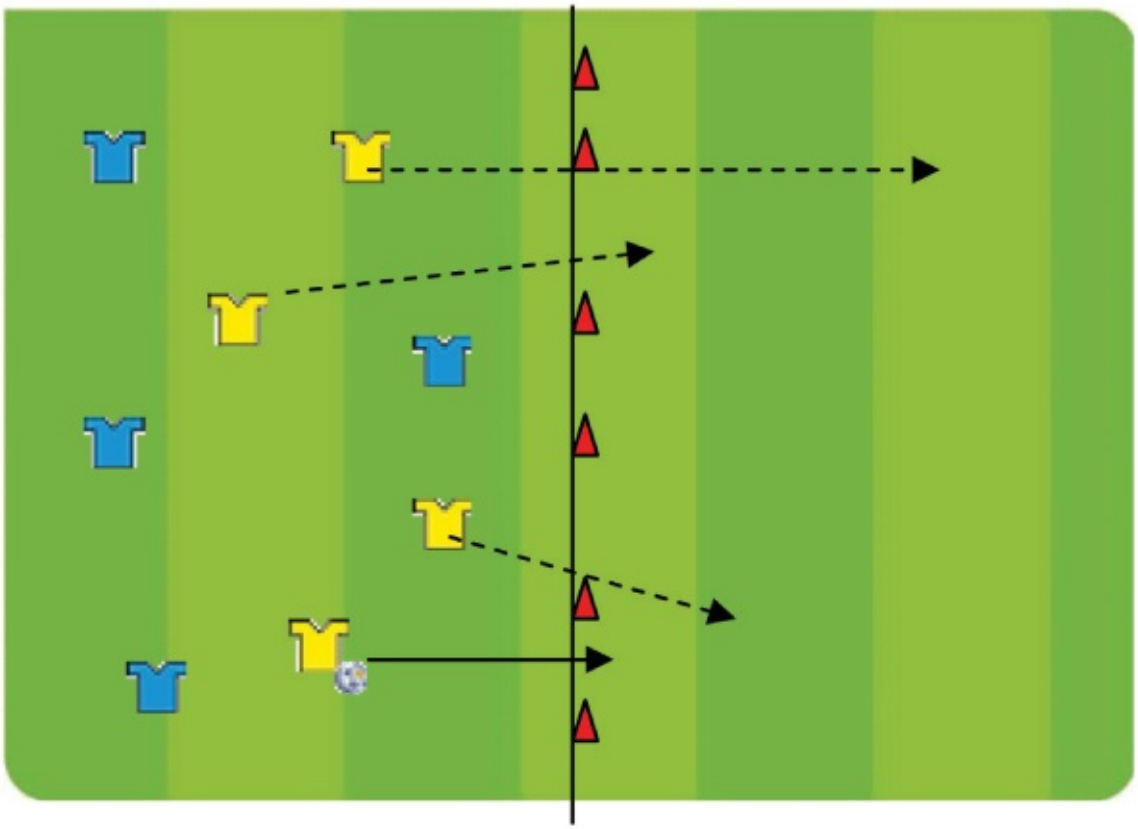
- Teaching speed of prediction
- Improving the ability to quickly adjust to new situations on the pitch

24. A pitch is divided into two zones, with 3 small goals marked out in the middle. A game of 4v4 is played in one half. To shift the weight of the game to the second zone, the team with the ball must make a pass through one of the goals set up in the middle of the pitch. Only two players of the team with the ball can be in the second zone at the same time to intercept a pass. When a pass is not made, they must immediately return to the first zone and continue the game. When a pass is successful, all the players continue playing in the zone to which the pass was made. A team receives a point for each zone change. The moment possession of the ball is lost, the teams exchange roles. – Fig. 32

Variations:

a) a game of 3v3 in one zone and 1v1 in the other. Following the passing of the ball into the second zone, the players must change zones, so that the 3v3 game is continued in the second zone and the 1v1 game in the first. A team receives two points for each zone change.

Figure 32



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving speed of perception and thinking
- Developing decision-making skills
- Developing creativity and versatility of thinking, along with improved passing techniques
- Developing speed of predicting situations on the pitch
- Teaching speed of locomotion during zone changes

Under 16s-Under 18s

- use customized training loads
- help develop speed according to the motor type of the player (other loads, intensity and duration of rest breaks according to the type – i.e. endurance or high-speed)
- develop speed capabilities appropriate for the specific position to which players are assigned
- help develop speed surges that are versatile relative to the

conditions of the game

- use exercises with a ball on the principle of rivalry
- help develop speed abilities together with motor coordination and technique
- develop speed together with formation of the complex reactions that always occur in the game

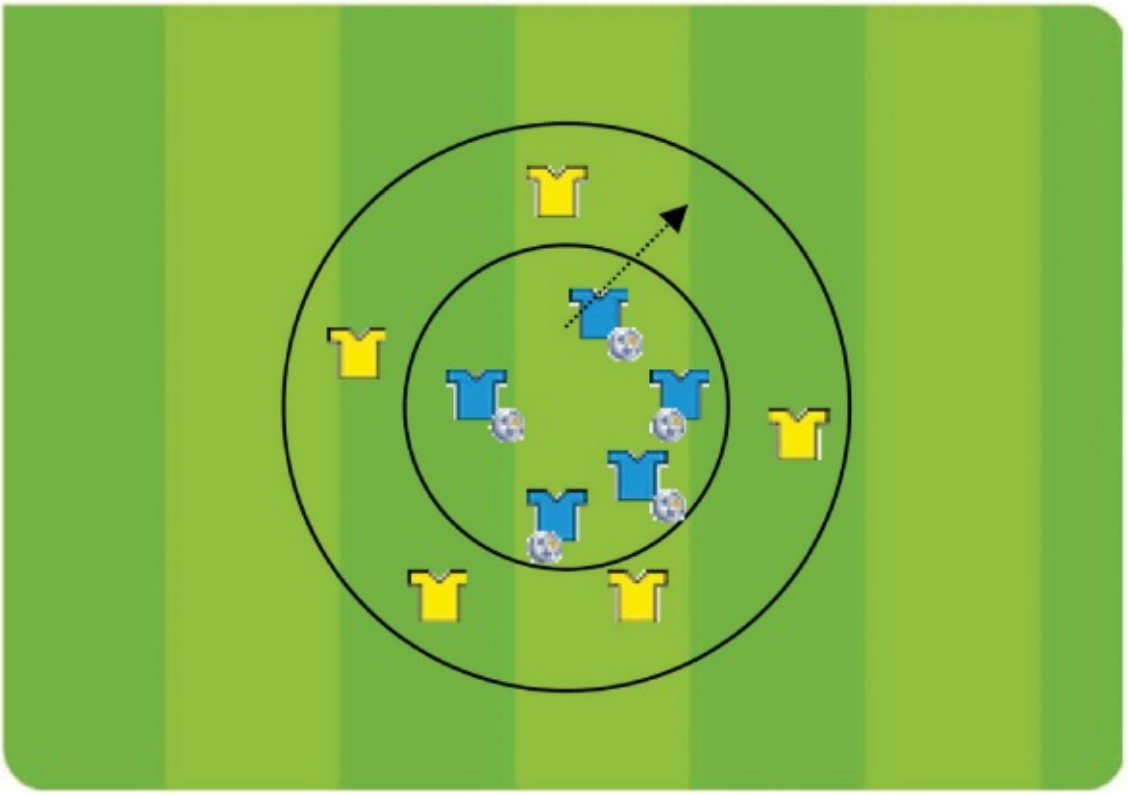
1. Players are divided into two teams of eight. The players of one team (the attackers) are positioned within a small circle. The defending team's players are in an area between the circumference of the inner circle and an outer circle. At the whistle, the attacking players dribble the balls and have the task of reaching the edge of the outer circle within a fixed time e.g. 10 seconds. The defending team tries to stop them. A point is won by the player of the attacking team that reaches the edge of the outer circle within the specified time without loss of the ball – Fig.33

Variations:

a) Dribbling the ball using only the weaker leg

b) Dribbling balls of various sizes

Figure 33



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving reaction speed under individual 1v1 game conditions
- Improving speed of action with the ball (identifying free, unmarked space, dribbling)
- Improving speed of perception

2. An exercise is carried out involving four defenders positioned in a line and four attacking players. The attacking players try to score a goal. The game takes place only in the middle zone. The task of the defending players is:

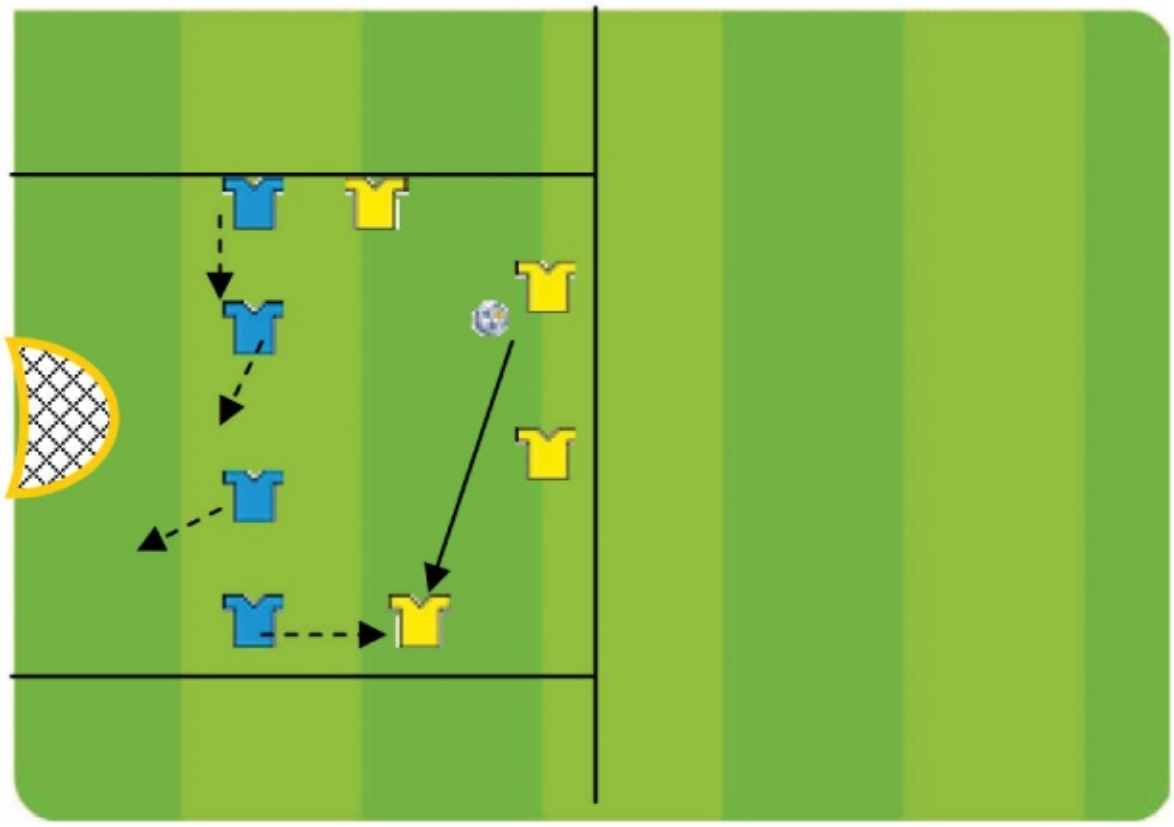
a) to press the attacking player with the ball before he can pass (sprint with maximum intensity)

b) after recovering the ball, to dribble it through the centre line of the pitch - Fig. 34

Variations:

a) after regaining possession of the ball, that team also attacks the goal

Figure 34



The exercise's key objectives:

- teaching speed of reaction and decision-making
- teaching speed of locomotion
- improving tactical elements during a game of four in defence (press-cover)
- a specialized exercise for defenders

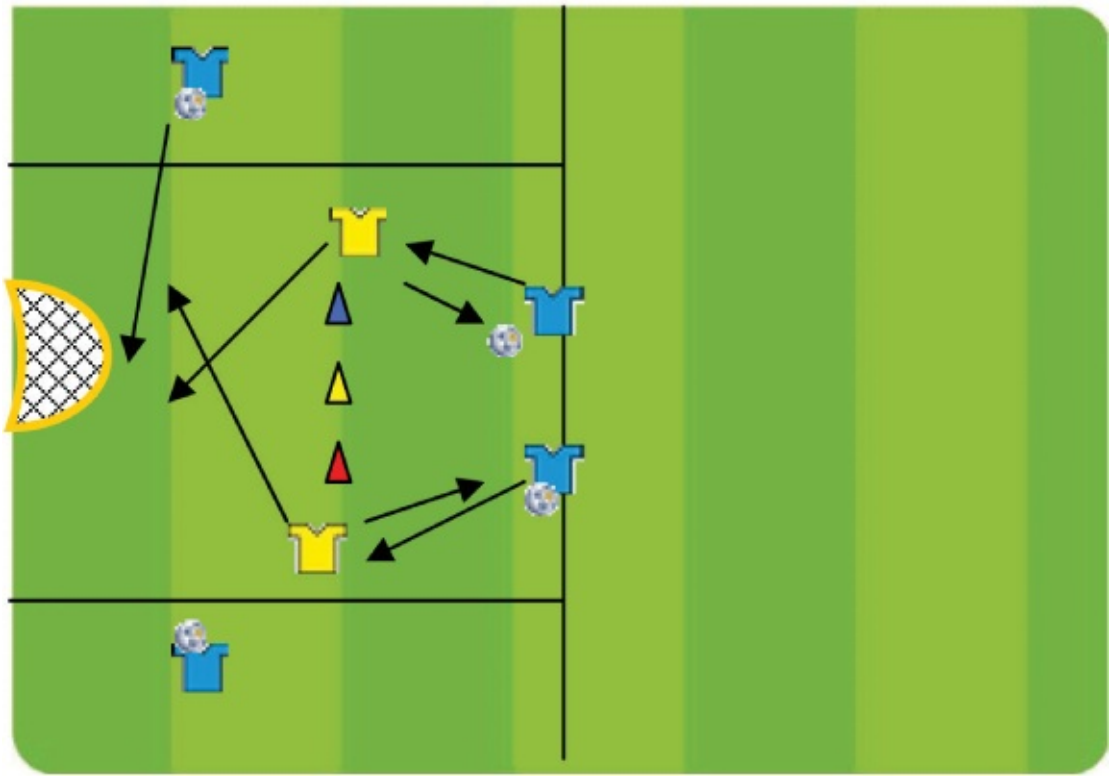
3. An exercise involving six players: two attackers standing with their backs to each other at a distance of 7 yards and two players to centre the ball and two others to pass. Three different colour markers are set up between the attackers. The players perform the following consecutive steps: - Fig. 35

a) passing the ball one touch while touching a marker of a specific colour (the colour of the marker is selected by the player passing the ball) until the whistle blows

b) then a zigzag run ending in a shot at the goal following a centre kick

c) the number of repetitions and sets depends on the age and motor type of the player

Figure 35



The exercise's key objectives:

- improving reaction speed combined with the teaching of passing techniques
- development of locomotion speed
- developing speed of prediction and perception
- improving the tactical element, cross runs in combination with the above speed abilities
- a specialist exercise for attackers

4. An area measuring 20x15 yards is marked out in the middle of the pitch. Then this is divided into three equal sections. 6 midfielders are divided into 3 teams of two, (one team to be defenders - in red, and two to play together against them). This makes a 4v2 game. The task of the team with the ball is to maintain their initial formation (square, diamond, etc., depending on the team's agreed on tactical arrangement and style of play) and the distance between them while changing position in each of the three sections of the marked out playing field. The game may begin in any section. A team receives a point for changing zones but only if, once the ball has been played, all the players change zone, maintaining the initial formation and the distance between them. Movement without the ball must be carried out with maximum speed during:

a) zone changes

b) position changes

The moment the player of a given pair loses possession of the ball, that pair becomes the defending team and the defending team now becomes the attacker, without the need to stop the game. - Fig. 36

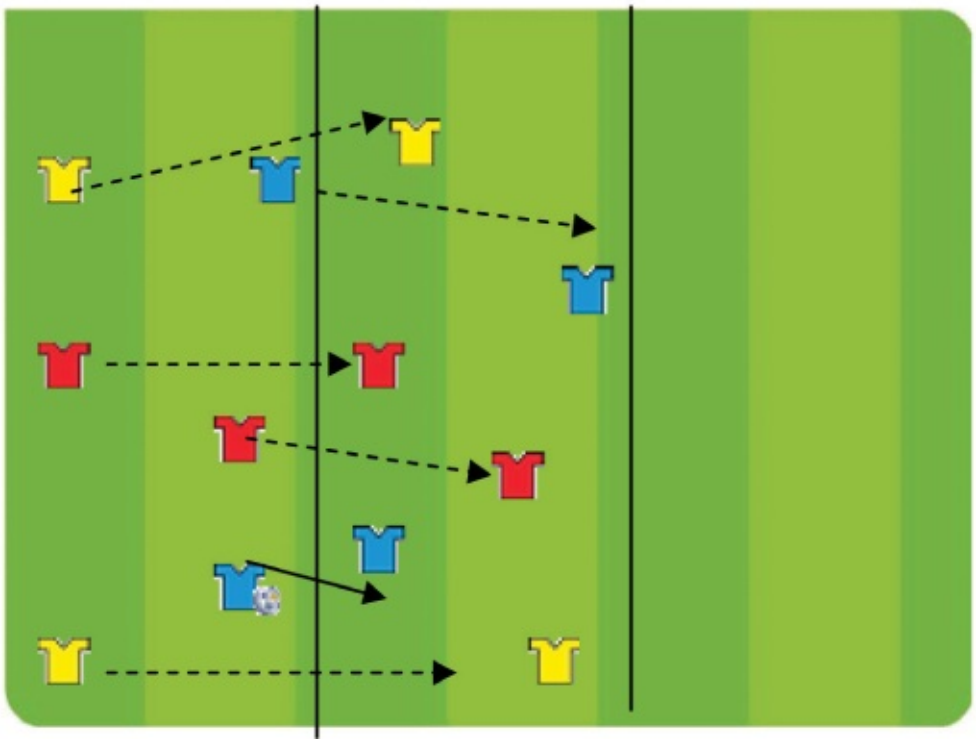
Variations:

a) players have to perform a specific number of passes, e.g. 10 before changing zones

b) two players have a specified number of contacts with the ball, e.g. two

c) players decide on their formation: diamond, square etc …

Figure 36



The exercise's key objectives:

- improving reaction times
- improved speed of thought processes and perception of situations on the pitch
- development of locomotion speed when moving without the ball
- a specialist exercise for mid-fielders
- improving passing techniques while teaching the above speed capabilities
- teaching tactical elements for midfielders (keeping possession of the ball, changes in position as well as seeking and creating free, unmarked areas while maintaining formation and the distance between each other)

5. Training markers are arranged on a penalty area divided into 8 zones. One attacker is positioned in each of two out of these eight zones. 5 players, each with two balls, are positioned in front of the penalty area. The objective of the attackers is to make for any marker (touching it by hand) and then receive the passed ball and take a shot at the goal. Attackers may not be in the same zone as

each other at any time during the exercise. Nor may they begin another attempt from the same zone. Furthermore, the maximum number of contacts with the ball is two. Players take five shots at the goal in any one set. Every start towards a marker and then receiving of the ball has to be performed at maximum speed. The players passing the ball are positioned one yard behind the line defining the penalty area. - Fig. 37

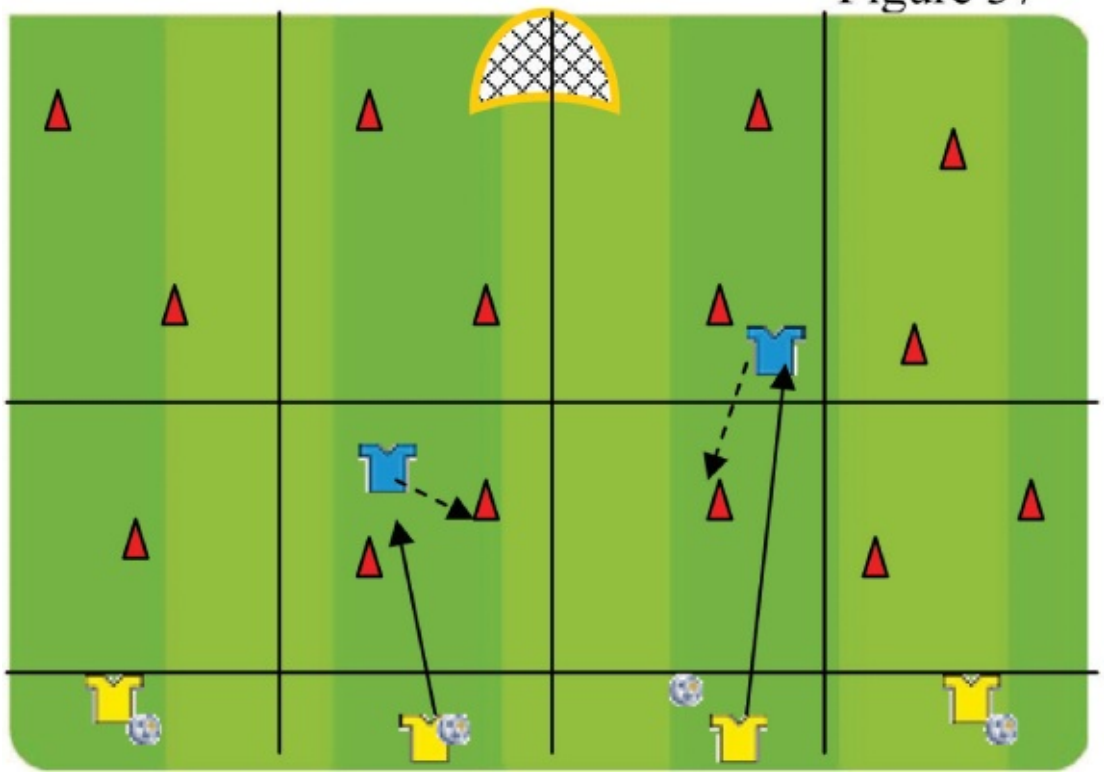
Variations:

a) attackers perform the exercise only in the four central zones

b) the attackers play against a single defender

c) the attackers play against two defenders

Figure 37



The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of perception
- Teaching speed surges with direction changes, combined with improvement of receiving and striking techniques
- Improvement of attackers' movements without the ball in the penalty box (seeking or creating free, unmarked areas of the pitch)
- Developing speed of comprehensive reactions

- Teaching speed of direction changes

6. This exercise is carried out on a pitch measuring 20x15 yards. Nine players are divided into three groups of three. Each team wears a different colour bib, for example: red, blue and yellow. Each team is in possession of a ball. This exercise involves passing the ball in a specific order: red-blue-yellow-red. Players are required to:

a) remain in motion the whole time

b) perform a short, 3-5 yard sprint after passing the ball

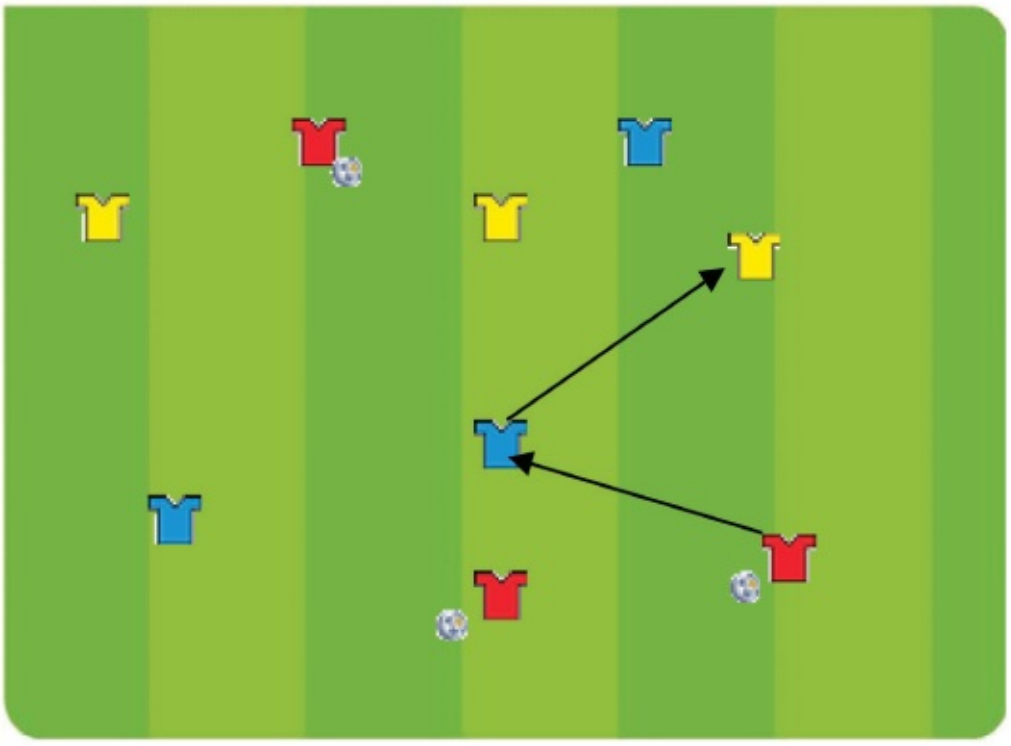
Variations:

a) instead of passing In the above order, players must call out the bib colour of the teammate from whom they receive a pass and that of the teammate to whom they in turn mean to pass the ball

b) a 6v3 game with the same rules as in paragraph a). The moment the defending team takes possession of the ball, it becomes the attacking team

c) players indicated by colour try to perform the following: reds – wall pass, blues – overlap, yellows – takeover

Figure 38

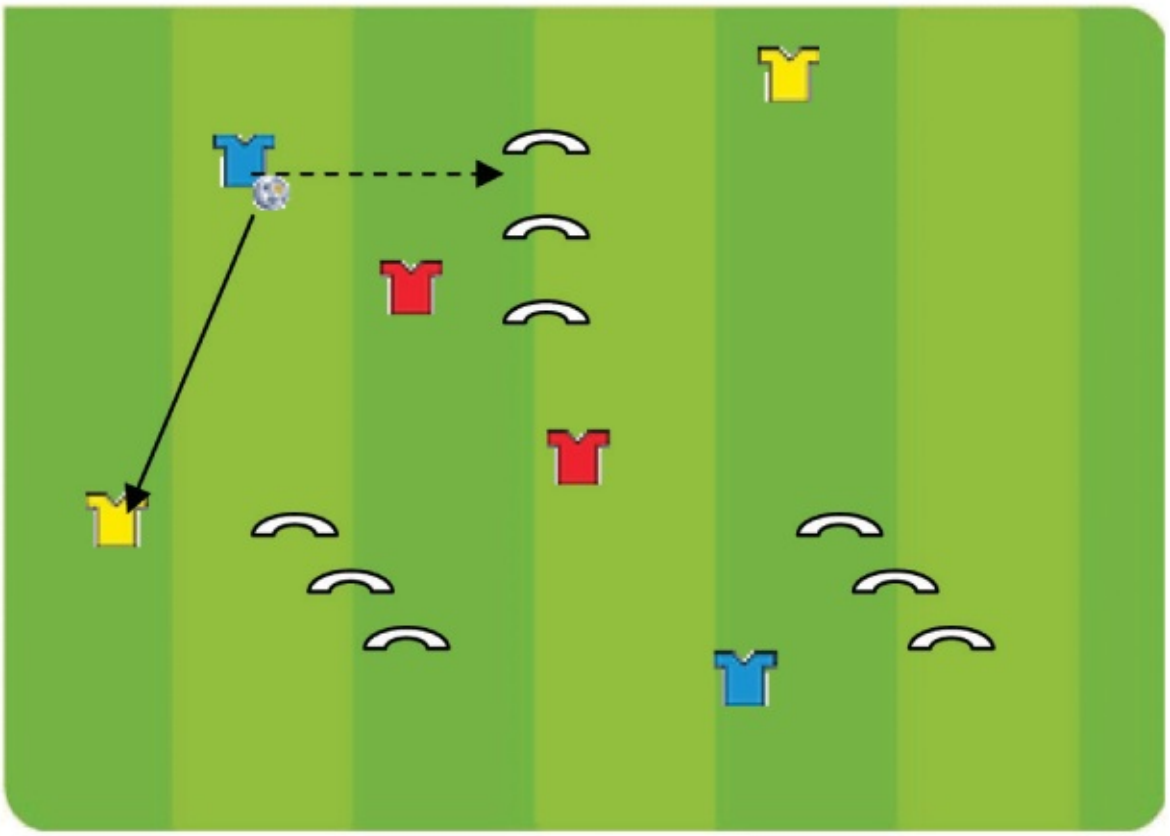


The exercise's key objectives:

- Teaching speed of action with the ball
- Improving speed of prediction and perception (anticipation)
- Improving speed of decision-making
- Improving reaction speed
- Improvement of passing and trapping techniques together with tactical elements: creating a free, unmarked area of the pitch and maintaining possession of the ball
- Teaching speed surges

7. This exercise is carried out on a pitch measuring 15x15 yards. Four speed training ladders are placed anywhere in the middle of this area. This is a 4v2 game (two players wear a different colour bib: 2 reds, yellows or blues). After each pass, players must perform footwork (the technique to be selected by the coach) and then return to the game. If the ball is lost by a player in a blue bib, the two blue players automatically become the defenders, etc. The task of the team playing in the numerically superior position is to keep possession of the ball, while each player is allowed a maximum two contacts with the ball - Fig. 39

Figure 39



The exercise's key objectives:

- Improvement of passing techniques in combination with speed of footwork
- Teaching speed of decision-making
- Developing speed of prediction and perception
- Increased speed of peripheral vision
- Developing complex reactions in combination with the development of speed abilities under game conditions

1.3 “Coordination, maybe, but strength and stamina are not the problems of children and young people” – Joan Vila Bosh (FC Barcelona youth coach)

All of us who are fit, healthy and in the prime of life are able to improve the above motor skills (strength and stamina), and that includes football players. But can we improve the coordination and technical capabilities specific to the game of football? If a player cannot receive a ball in motion, will we be able to teach him to make the right decisions in terms of tactics? If his general and specific coordination is at a low level, will a player be able to compete in athletic sports at a high level? The answer to these questions lies in the above quote by one of the most distinguished coaches for youth, working at the FC Barcelona football school. Turning this quote around, one might claim that: the problem of children and adolescents isn’t strength and stamina, but the excessive and uncontrolled teaching of these features at such a young age during training sessions. The consequence of such actions may be serious risks impeding and hindering the normal development of young players.

These include:

a. anatomical risks

- negative impact on the development of muscles, ligaments and bones (remember, **bones grow faster than muscles!**)
- disruption of homeostasis (the body’s internal balance in a growing adolescent)
- the occurrence of overload due to endurance or endurance and speed training (**the latter type of training being beneficial only for world class players!**)
- Lack of appropriate and full recovery after exercise, which leads to the process of fatigue in a young body (**where recuperation may take several months!**)
- lack of the proper balance between work-fatigue-rest leads to

biological burnout

- the risk of irreversible effects (micro damage to ligaments, bones, etc …) leading to the occurrence of numerous injuries in adulthood
- the stifling of natural abilities and aptitudes resulting from individual anatomic and motor conditions (talent)
- negative impact on physical and sexual diversity

b. psychological risks

- the dampening of the enthusiasm, joy and pleasure of playing football
- lack of motivation to exercise and play
- the creation of negative associations, feelings and ideas concerning football training
- no rational understanding of exercises or training sessions of this type
- **giving up the game of football!**

c. risks affecting the LTPD (Long Term Player Development) process

- failure to ensure coordination and technical preparation
- failure to devote sufficient time to effectively develop the basic motor forms specific to football
- failure to develop speed of thinking and decision-making
- failure to use customized training loads during junior years
- the use of physical tests in children aged 7-12! (“Training should be fun, exciting and should encourage in children a love of football. Physical preparation needs to be treated as a secondary issue. Definitely the most important aspect is a young player’s imagination and technique” – Joan Villa Bosh

Excessive exploitation of a young body may have irreversible consequences. That is why development of the above-mentioned features in its strict form should be eliminated (ages 6-13), or reduced to a minimum and strictly controlled (ages 14-18). I refer to all the kinds of programs focused on the duration of the exercise and the number of sets and repetitions. Specific endurance and strength

exercises should not take place during training classes. One may however develop endurance (aerobic) by using a broad range of games and fun activities. These should reflect the specifics of football. The degree of difficulty should be appropriate to the child's psychological needs. A child needs to get some joy and pleasure out of the motor actions performed. The games used should be changed frequently to avoid monotony and boredom. If possible, a football should always be used in activities of this type. The next stages in physical and biological development (the first and second stage of maturing) should be characterized by games aimed at improving aerobic capabilities. Because, as Bischops and Gerards wrote (2002), "If in this period we fail to take proper care to develop aerobic capabilities, we will not achieve the degree of endurance in adulthood that is biologically possible." At this point, we must remember the differences resulting from physical and biological development and their effects on the bodies of young players. The most important are:

- varied and individual physical development
- biological age does not always go hand in hand with physical development (which is why among any group of 16-year old players there will always be those who look like 13 year olds and are developing physically at a slower rate. This does not mean however that in the future they will not be good players. There are also those who, despite their 16 years, physically remind us of 18-year olds and are growing faster)
- young players should not be treated like adults!!!

To summarize, when planning lessons one must always take into account differences in the physical development of young players. The introduction of customized training loads and monitoring of the same will reduce the risk of injury and above all, ensure normal development of muscles, ligaments and bones. However, professional monitoring of training for strength and aerobic endurance in the form of football games and exercises will increase the chances of developing real football talents. Also this reduces the risk of young players being eliminated from teams and increases their motivation. The exercises and games selected should involve rivalry. That way one can increase the technical and tactical attributes resulting from the game in combination with aerobic endurance. Another benefit such lessons provide is the development of football versatility. So sufficient stimulus

for development of overall physical fitness will be found in the mere participation in games, as opposed to some specific fitness training program is.

Young football players cannot /may not be treated like adults. In competitive sport, however, there is the danger of activity levels being set to high as adults get wrapped in the match. Problems arise when children are mistakenly treated like “a mini adult” The expectations of the coach and some parents, become unrealistic and the match, training and the way that the children are treated and spoken to reflect adult sport rather than an environment of support and development. This should be avoided at all cost. The main reason for such thinking lies in the physiological differences between adults and maturing teenagers. It is worth mentioning a few of those differences here:

- Children breathe faster than adults
- Children have smaller hearts and lungs in relation to body size
- A child’s heart pumps less blood
- A child’s heart beats faster both at rest and during exercise
- Children have a higher body temperature
- development of the skeletal system is not completed until the age of 18-20 and in some cases as late as 25
- 95% of neurological development is completed before the age of 10

The planning of training programs must take these differences into account. This way we can avoid mistakes and have a positive impact on the development of young players, not only as a group, but also each individual. Below I present 10 games and activities that universally develop motor abilities, combined with football techniques.

13. Four players are positioned in each of 4 squares measuring 7x7 yards. One holds a ball in his hands while trying to take balls from the other three, who are dribbling balls. To avoid losing the ball the player dribbling a ball has the right to sit on the ball at any time, but for no longer than 3 seconds. A player who loses a ball automatically becomes the defender. When the whistle blows, the players must change squares. Players must move to the square chosen by their team captain (with captains being selected at the beginning of the game). Neither the captain nor his team may

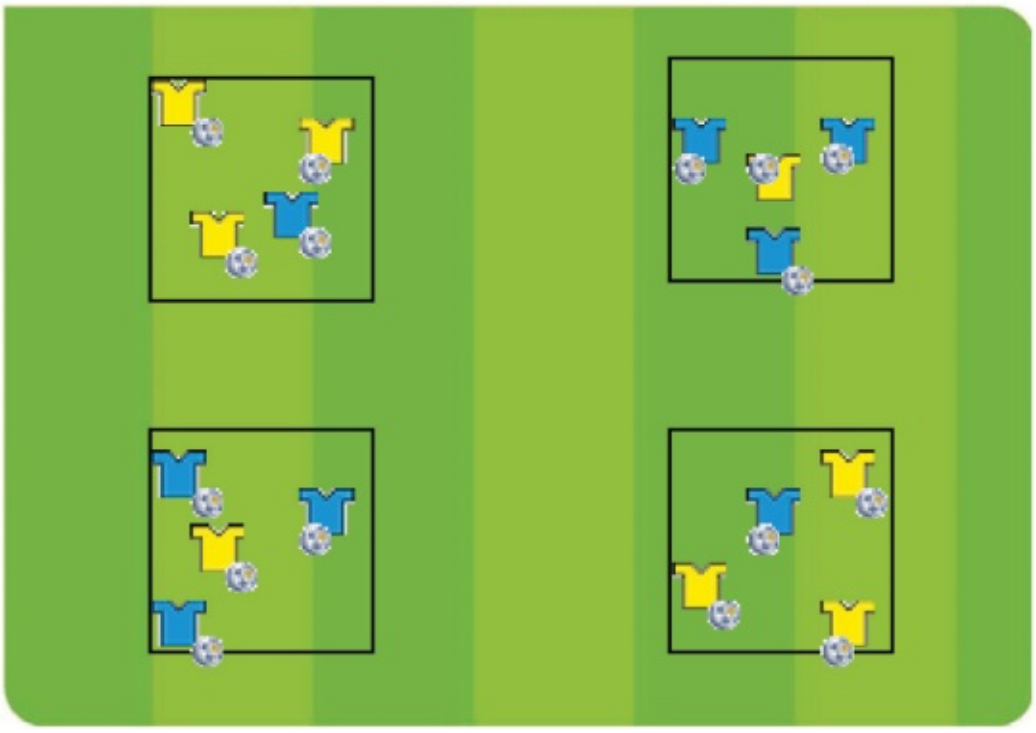
choose a square that was previously occupied by another team. The players with balls in their hands remain in the same squares till the end of the game. Team captains and defenders must be regularly rotated. The team whose members lose possession of the ball the least number of times is the winner. - Figure 40

Variations:

a) all the players dribble the ball and are numbered from 1 to 4. At the signal “one” the player with that number becomes the defender and tries to take the balls from the others

b) the attacking players have and try to keep possession of only two balls

Figure 40



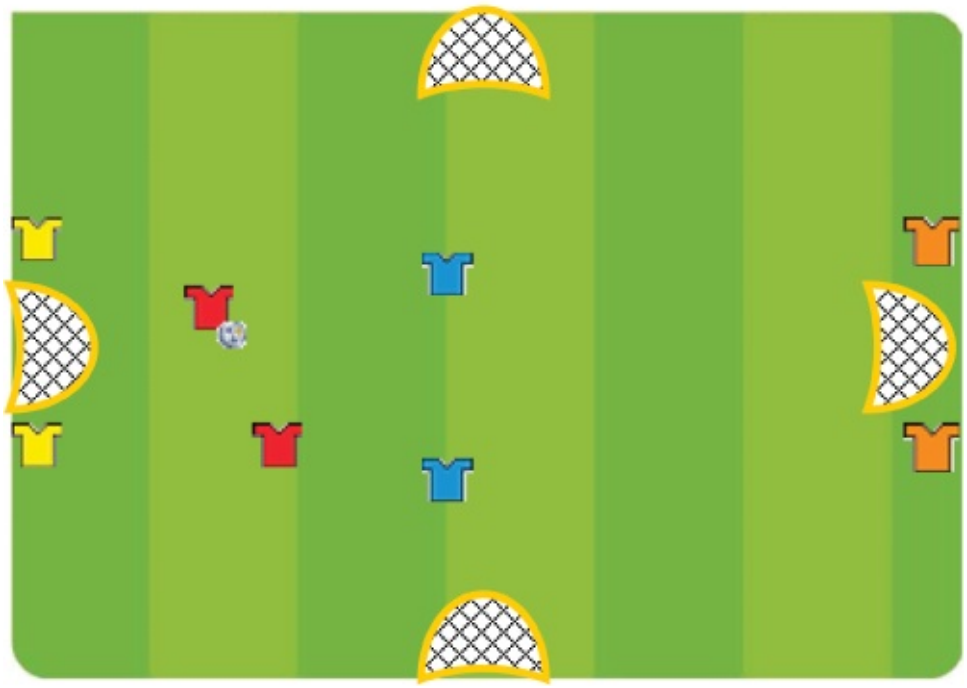
The exercise’s key objectives:

- Development of aerobic fitness by means of a game
- Development of dribbling abilities in 1v1 game situations
- Developing perception
- Developing overall physical fitness by means of a game

14. On a pitch measuring 15x10 yards, four small goals are marked

out on each of the boundary lines. Behind two of the four goals are positioned a maximum two teams consisting of two players each. At the moment a goal is scored in one of the goals (a team having possession of the ball may not attack the goal from behind which it began the game), the team behind the goal into which it was shot, enters the game. The winning team remains on the pitch. However, if after about 5 minutes the winning team is still on the pitch, teams should be rotated so they can regenerate and rest. A team is awarded two points when scoring a goal after one contact with the ball. One point is awarded for playing against an opponent in a 1v1 situation and then scoring a goal. Three points can be won by a team action that ends with a goal being scored –Fig. 41

Figure 41



The exercise's key objectives:

- Developing aerobic capabilities by means of a game
- Developing creativity and versatility
- Developing dribbling and passing techniques

15. A pitch measuring 25x20 yards is divided into three equal zones. A game of 6v6 is played (2v2 in each zone plus 1 ball). The team beginning the game is in possession of three balls (one in each zone). In the outer zones the ball is thrown in by hand. A team receives a point when:

a. it changes zones without loss of the ball (at the moment it changes, the number of players in each zone may not change)

b. the players of that same team (in both zones where the change takes place) were in possession of the ball at the moment of changing zones

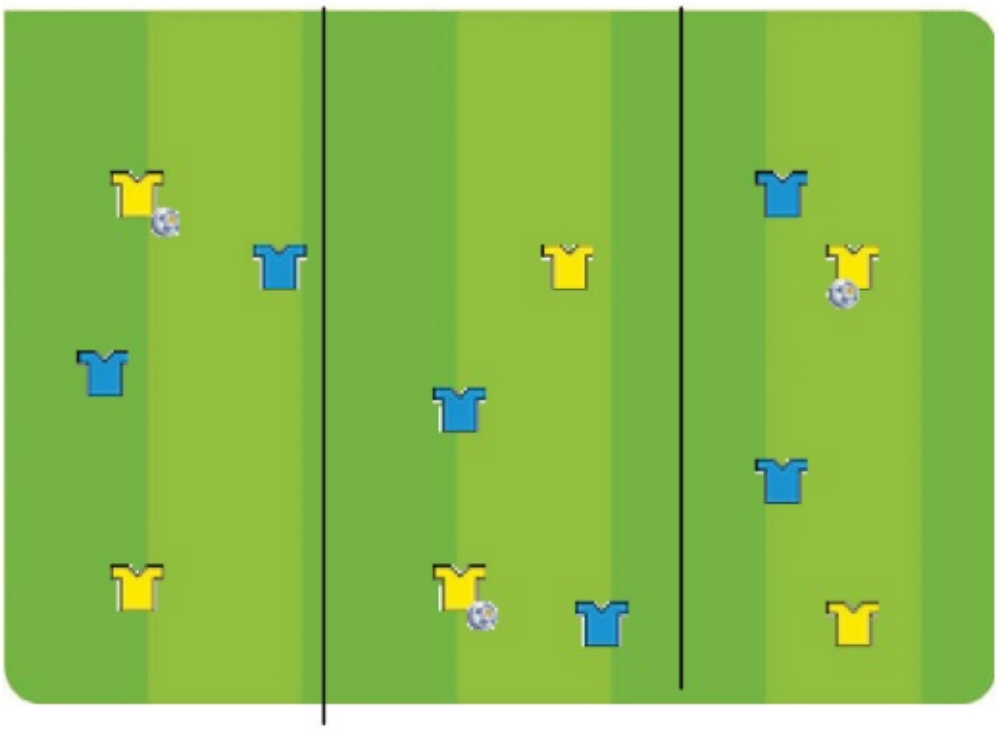
c. where a change is made from a centre to an outer zone and vice versa, the method of passing the ball automatically changes (in outer zones passed by hand and in the central zone - a small game of 2v2 using feet - Fig. 42

Variations:

a) A game using only the feet in each of the zones

b) Players in the central zone (or just selected players) may use only their weaker foot

Figure 42



The exercise's key objectives:

- Developing aerobic endurance in a low intensity game
- Improving perception abilities
- Developing decision-making abilities

- Improvement of passing techniques by means of a game

16. A pitch measuring 25x20 yards is divided into three zones. 16 players are divided into two teams. Two games of 4v4 take place in the two outer zones. Each team has one ball. A team must maintain possession of its own ball while trying to take the ball from its opponents.

a. a team scores a point when one of the teams outside of the zones will be in possession of two balls

b. a team scores two points when it is in possession of four balls (two balls in each of the two outer zones)

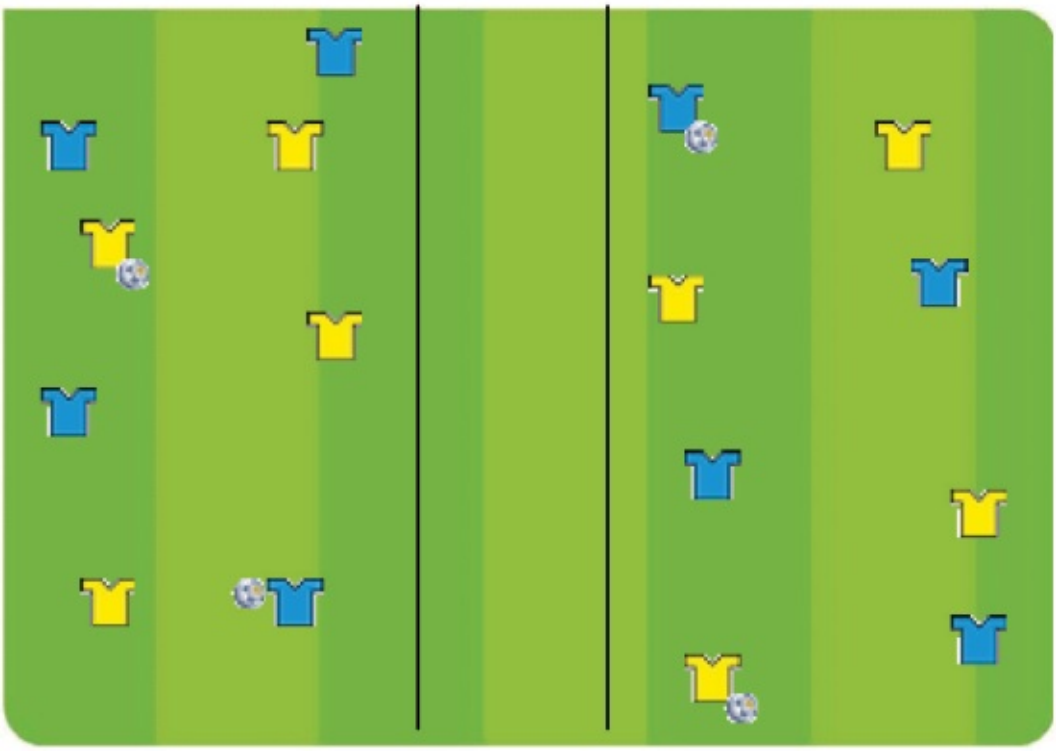
c. a team scores three points when balls are exchanged between zones without losing them to opponents (although this can take place only at the moment one team has possession of four balls, two in each outer zone - Fig. 43

Variations:

a) a 4v4 game in the two outer zones, using one ball in each zone

b) a 4v4 game with two goals in each of the outer zones using one ball in each of them

Figure 43

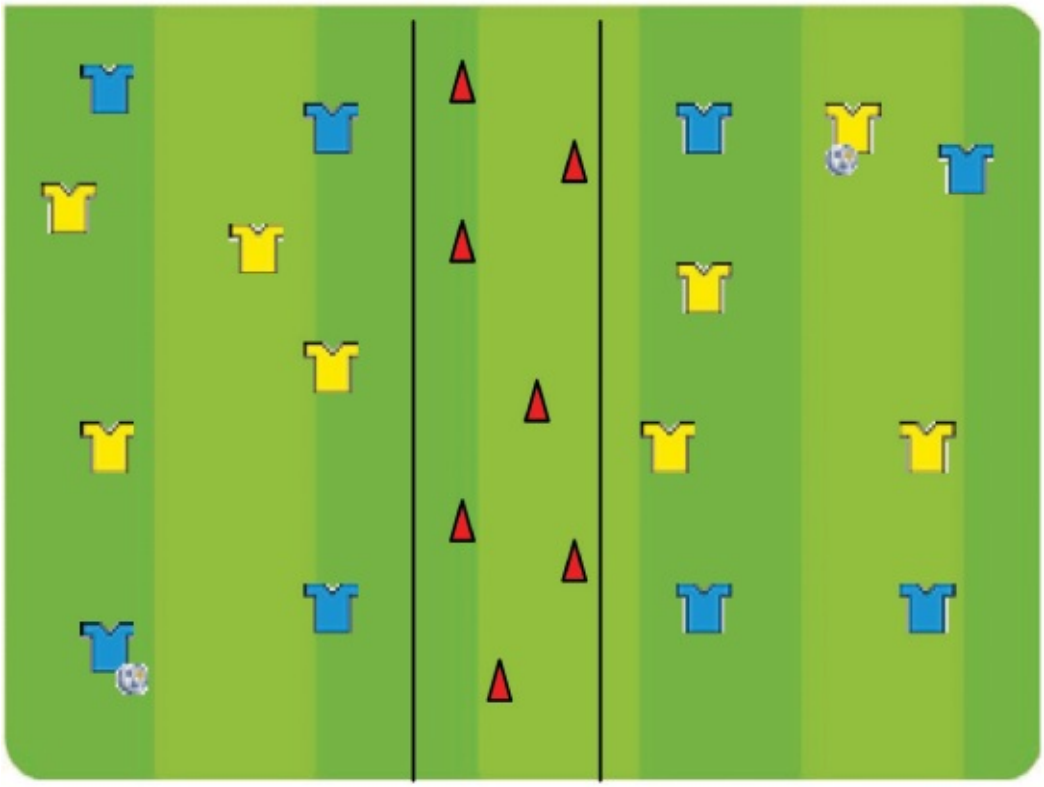


The exercise's key objectives:

- Developing aerobic capabilities
- Developing creativity and versatility
- Teaching speed of decision-making
- Developing perception
- Improvement in maintaining possession of the ball and passing techniques

17. This game is organised on the same basis as above. A minimum of 12 cones are placed in the central zone. A 4v4 game is played with one ball in each outer zone. A team must exchange six passes without loss of the ball. The player from the team that performs the 7th pass runs to the central zone and takes one cone away from it and places it behind one of the boundary lines of the pitch. Then he returns to the game. The winning team is the one that gathers the most cones during 5 minutes of play. The player is required to return a cone to the central zone if his team loses the ball while the cone is being moved - Fig. 44

Figure 44



The exercise's key objectives:

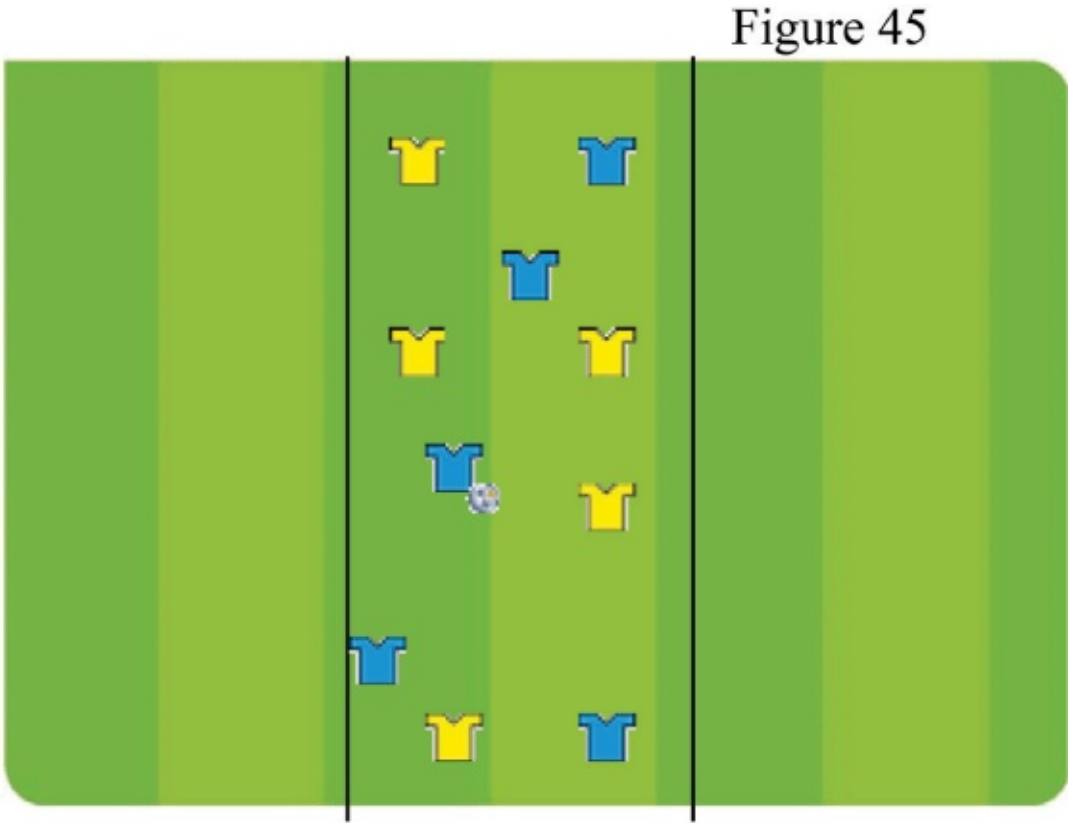
- Developing aerobic endurance by means of a low intensity game
- Improvement of passing techniques and the ability to maintain possession of the ball
- Improving overall physical fitness by means of a game
- Developing speed of action with the ball and decision-making
- Developing perception

18. A square measuring 15x15 yards is divided into three sections. A 5v5 game begins in the central section. A team must exchange five passes without loss of the ball and then change sections. In section 1, players can only pass the ball in the air, in section 2 – along the ground, in section 3 – using their hands, but the player receiving the pass must head the ball. Teams exchange roles when the defending team takes possession of the ball. A team scores a point when:

a. it changes sections without loss of the ball

b. two points are awarded when a team has been in each section -

Fig. 45



The exercise’s key objectives:

- Developing aerobic endurance by means of a low intensity game
- Improvement of pass and receiving techniques
- Improving heading techniques
- Improvement in maintaining possession of the ball
- Teaching speed of perception and decision-making

II. TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL PREPARATION

2.1 “You must train so that a footballer not only can imagine the best solution to a game situation, but also has the necessary technique to carry it out.” – Joan Villa Bosh (youth coach of FC Barcelona)

It is no secret that every tactical element relating to individual players, formations and the organization of a team’s play in attack and defence is difficult or even impossible to achieve without adequate technical preparation. The opinion expressed above is difficult to challenge and should not be subject to discussion. My own experience, however, has led me to list several other very important elements -Fig. 46

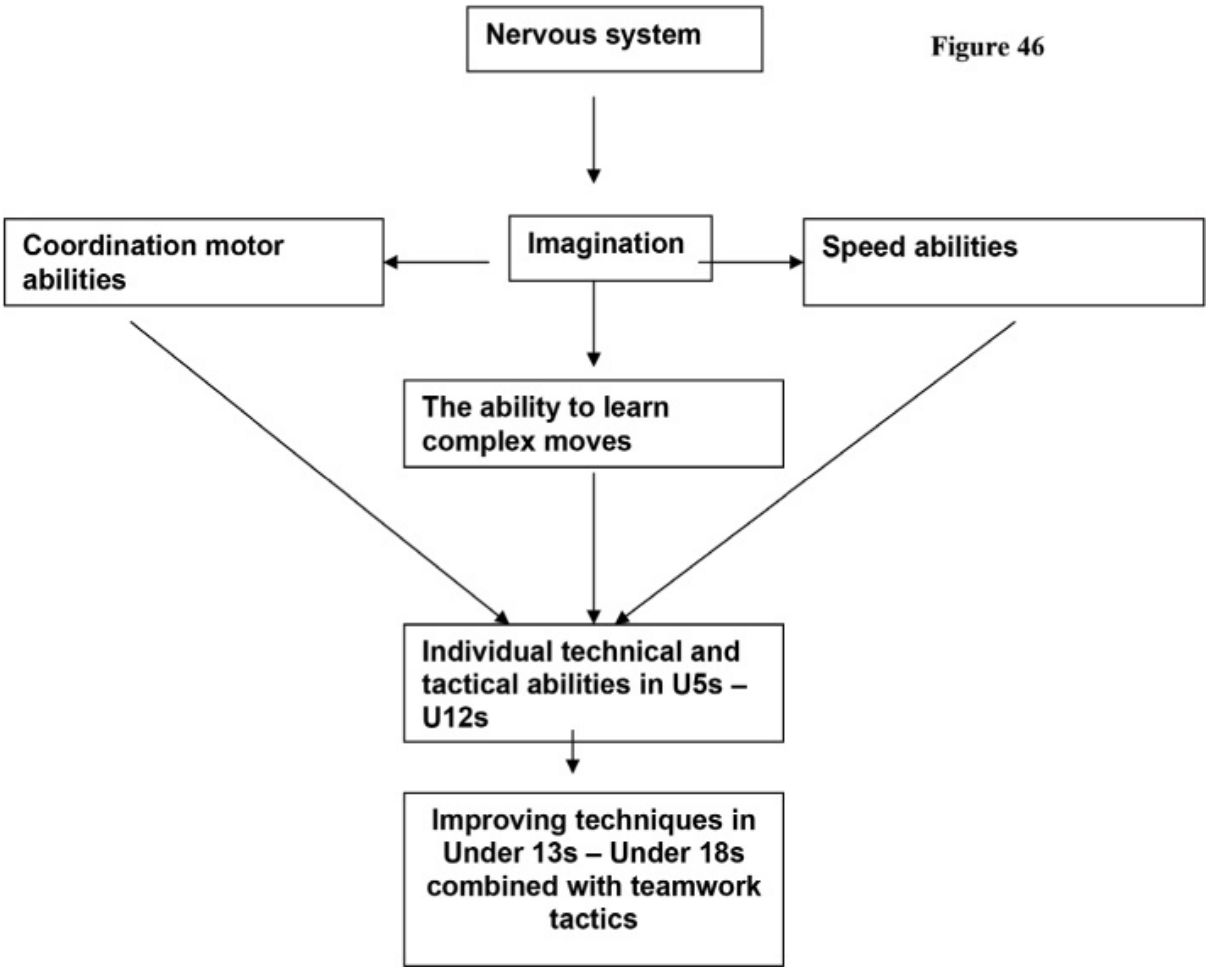
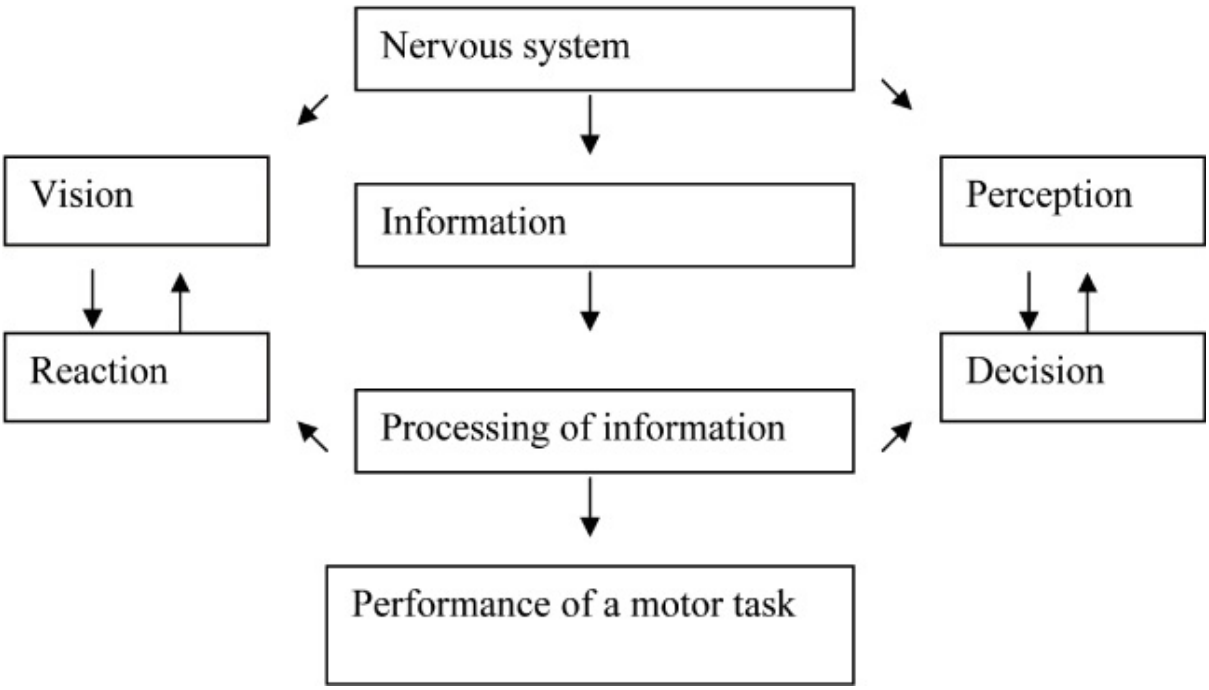


Figure 46

The diagram presented above draws attention to the importance of flexibility in the teaching of technical skills. Continuing in the same vein as Joan Villa Bosh, we stimulate the child's nervous system (and his imagination) by focusing on a training program for technical skills that is varied, creative and appropriate to the child's psychological needs and age. The applied games or exercises should not be selective and focused exclusively on teaching and improving a given technical element. On the contrary, they must be combined into a single chain of activities aimed at teaching and improving technical abilities, as well as those of speed and coordination. For example: there were two groups of 8-year old players and the objective was to develop the ability to pass the ball using the instep. Both groups were divided into pairs. The first team passed the ball between players of the same pair while moving forward. The players of the other team had to additionally touch a training marker of a pre-defined colour called out by a teammate. The exercise had to be carried out after playing the ball. Players in the first group developed an element of technique selectively. The exercise performed did indeed improve the quality of their technique, but on the other hand did not stimulate the nervous

system, failed to stimulate the imagination and thus did not force them to think creatively (decision-making) and perceive pitch situations (perception). Nor did it significantly improve a player's speed abilities (reaction speed, decision-making speed … etc). The second group, although their objective was similar, not only improved a technical element, but at the same time developed coordination and speed capabilities. At this point, many might ask: How come? Simply because the selection of the training method took full advantage of the players' neurological potential. In other words, the exercise carried out developed their technical talents to a degree that was appropriate for their neurological capabilities. Technique was developed universally, in accordance with the requirements of the modern game. In addition to technique, players at the same time developed: speed of reaction, perception and decision-making. The conclusion is this: the exercise selected must provide an opportunity to evaluate and stimulate speed and coordination capabilities at the same time as the technical potential of the players being trained. The above features cannot operate independently of activities carried out with the ball, because they are closely associated with the nervous system - Fig. 47



The progress achieved in sports medicine and physiology in recent years has provided important new knowledge concerning the development of the nervous system. Today we know that the neurological system is already 95% developed before the age of ten. The possibilities for learning and improving complex movements are at

the highest level in this age group (5 – 10 years old). At this age, a child learns more quickly to perceive, react, make decisions and then seamlessly combine these skills with technique. Ian Stafford has made some interesting observations on this subject: “The critical period for accelerated adaptation to motor skills and the development of coordination is called **peak motor coordination velocity.** It is generally agreed that, for boys, this period occurs between the ages of 9 and 12 (see: diagram) and for girls from 8 to 11. It is important to note that, if fundamental and basic sport-specific skills are not developed sufficiently by about 11 or 12 years, young players are unlikely to reach their optimal potential” – Ian Stafford, 2005. The expertise used (I must repeat) in the planning of training sessions will ensure universal development of the most important skills that a player uses most often in the game. Skills learned will also allow them to be easily improved and combined with tactical elements in later stages of training.

Execution of a technical element (passing, trapping, dribbling the ball, etc …) is dependent on the properties of the nervous system. Perception, reaction and decision-making have a strong impact on the effectiveness of technique. They also directly affect a player’s behaviour in a specific situation during a match. Positive development of and impact on the imagination (vision perception in a given situation) will improve the effectiveness of ball play.

Selection of solutions for situations on the pitch will also be more accurate (a player will select the more effective solutions during a match). The final conclusion, which Critchell, Bosma and Granger presented, may serve as a summary of this chapter: “The nervous system receives an enormous amount of stimuli continuously. The information is processed and the nervous system programs reactions. Mostly these reactions involve movements. By training reactions to certain stimuli, the brain can learn patterns and create new patterns or maps for future use. This principle can be applied to soccer (team sports) training.” – (Critchell, Bosma, Granger, 2009).

2.2. “Teach the appropriate technique for the area on the pitch in which such a technique is most often needed.” – J. Chmura

The requirements of the modern game must be reflected in the planning of training for children and adolescents. In my opinion, the coach’s best teacher is the match. The most important aspect are the details that will not only decide the outcome of sporting rivalry on the pitch, but set the direction for modern teaching of technical and tactical elements. One of these is matching a suitable technique to that area of the pitch, in which it is most commonly going to be used. If, for example, heading the ball most often occurs in the penalty area, it seems only right to teach and improve this element in that area of the playing field. The benefits for development of a player’s technique will be as follows:

- Proper technique
- Development of the proper motor habits closely associated with a given technical component (positioning oneself, direction of execution; movement)
- Co-ordination and (reaction, perception, decision) speed capabilities will be used appropriately for situations occurring in a game (area of the pitch)
- The exercises carried out will relate to real behaviour and events occurring during a match.

The above mentioned aspects contribute to a better comprehension of a given situation on the pitch and more importantly, to the making of better decisions during the game. They will be the result of consistent teaching and improvement of technical elements under conditions that truly reflect the game. One should not of course forget about the individual predispositions of players: age, gender, physical and biological development and their psychological and social needs. For the exercises performed to bring about the desired effect, they must develop creativity and not stifle the versatility of children and

adolescents. That is why, especially in the younger age groups (5-12 years old), they should above all be a pleasure and involve the joy of playing football. Skills, knowledge and experience gained in this way will be used in a more efficient manner during the game. This will improve the elements of technique and their combination with the elements of tactics in further stages of football education. This will enable one to better assess the suitability and skills of young football players during their selection for the next level. It will perhaps also make children physically capable and talented in terms of football.

2.3. “The game teaches time coordination, feel and control of the ball, helps shape individual technique, stimulates creativity and fantasies, and motivates” – Gerhard Frank

The game itself has always presented guidelines for the development and planning of training and, more importantly, the teaching of players in physical, technical and tactical terms. It is no different today. The modern image of the match provides us with much valuable information about technique, its teaching and use in effective ways during sporting events. Thus the German coach’s opinion is correct, but incomplete. This is because it applies to practical application in training and points out the benefits of this form of activity. I would like to draw attention to an underlying question. To what degree is training of technique dependent on the modern game? Does today’s image of the match set directions for teaching and developing technique? A good coach should be an excellent observer. Careful observation of the game at the highest level should be the dominant factor in his choice of the means and methods of training, because such observation:

- Points out directions for universal development of technique (the combining of its execution with elements of coordination and speed abilities)
- Shows how it should be used (pitch area, and ways of moving on the spot or while in motion)
- Presents the type of techniques most commonly used in the game
- Provides ways of combining technique with tactical elements
- Shows the most common ways of combining the technical activities that occur during a match (receiving-passing)
- Defines the most effective and most widely used form of dribbling, (which doesn’t mean that a child should not be given

the chance to try other forms)

- Shows the most commonly used elements of technique used by the players of particular formations (young players 14-18 years of age)
- If we take this into consideration, the modern teaching and improving of elements of technique should reflect the game. Training of technique should therefore be varied, thanks to the following factors:
- Each technical element should be carried out with the player in motion
- The exercise or game must be varied with elements of coordination (perception, reaction) and must force the player to make a decision while it is being carried out
- The teaching or perfecting of a technique should be performed on that area of the pitch on which it is most commonly required
- Developing technique should be carried out in small spaces and in a variety of configurations: squares, triangles, rectangles
- The 1v1 game should be a fixed point of any training program and should always be perfected with players in motion
- Small games taking place with one side numerically superior or both sides balanced (2v1, 3v2, 4v2 etc …) should be carried out in small spaces and those sectors of the pitch, in which such rivalry usually occurs during a match
- Technique should be taught thoroughly, (which is not to suggest teaching two other elements at the same time, only the combining of technique with the motor coordination skills and speed abilities occurring during a game)
- The teaching of technique or its improvement should be characterized by the simplicity of the exercises and consistency in teaching (a change in an exercise or game should not alter the ultimate sense of the training)
- Every exercise should stimulate the imagination of the practicing players and thus develop creativity and imagination, and consistently teach decision-making

The above factors are aimed to help in the effective teaching and

perfection of technique in children and adolescents. Effectively, this means adequately to the demands put on them by the modern game of football. Of course, in the choice of exercises one should always keep in mind age, gender, differences in physical and biological development (the stages of development in the young body) as well as psychological needs and differences. This will greatly facilitate one's work and ensure serious errors, which can have a negative impact on the development of young players, are avoided.

The success achieved will thus be measured not only by the individual training of particular players, but above all, by the full use of the information gained from the modern game.

Another interesting issue concerns the technical programs closely related to the training structure and system in a given country. In my opinion such a program will only be effective if:

- It is characterized by systematic continuity in the work with young players
- It meets the demands of children and adolescents (will be appropriate to their needs, age and physical, biological and psychological development)
- It meets the requirements of the modern game (teaching technique in a comprehensive fashion)
- It stimulates the imagination of young players in such a way that the creativity, imagination and freedom of the exercises performed is never disrupted

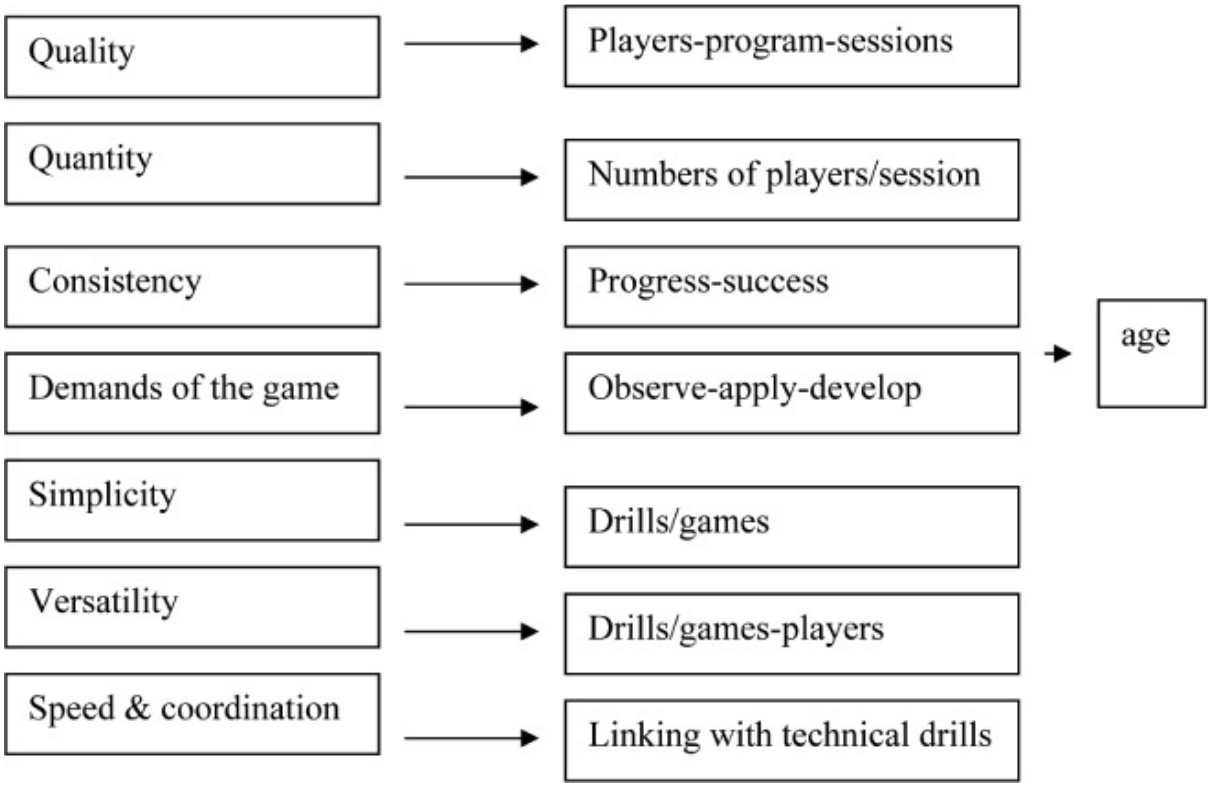
My experience gained while working in several countries allows me to conclude that there are no better or worse technical programs, only poorly chosen ones. For instance, programs that are not adapted to the age of the players and their neurological abilities, such as memory capabilities, development of imagination, peripheral perception, assimilation of complex reactions and many more. Therefore, programs prepared for teaching a technique may not be the same for 7 and 10 year olds. True, from a physiological point of view, the learning of new motor habits will be more or less at the same level. However, when we take into account the experience gained during training lessons and games, the 10-year-old will be at a higher level. The individual needs of players must determine the sense and value of such a program. Seven-year-olds are egotistical and will always be

interested in their own pleasure from a game. That is why for that age group, the program should be geared to teaching individual play. Since the 10-year-old child's psychology is more developed, it is easier for him to understand why he has to pass the ball to a teammate. So as long as we don't forget about systematic teaching and continuity, we will always be teaching individual game moves, but during actual games.

The example quoted refers only to a narrow age group and so it should be borne in mind that each age involves different circumstances. That is why customization should be a fixed point of, and at the same time the criterion for any assessment of technical programs.

A carefully selected technical program should take into account the elements presented in Figure 48.

Figure 48



To make this clearer, I include below a more detailed example of such a program in Figure 49.

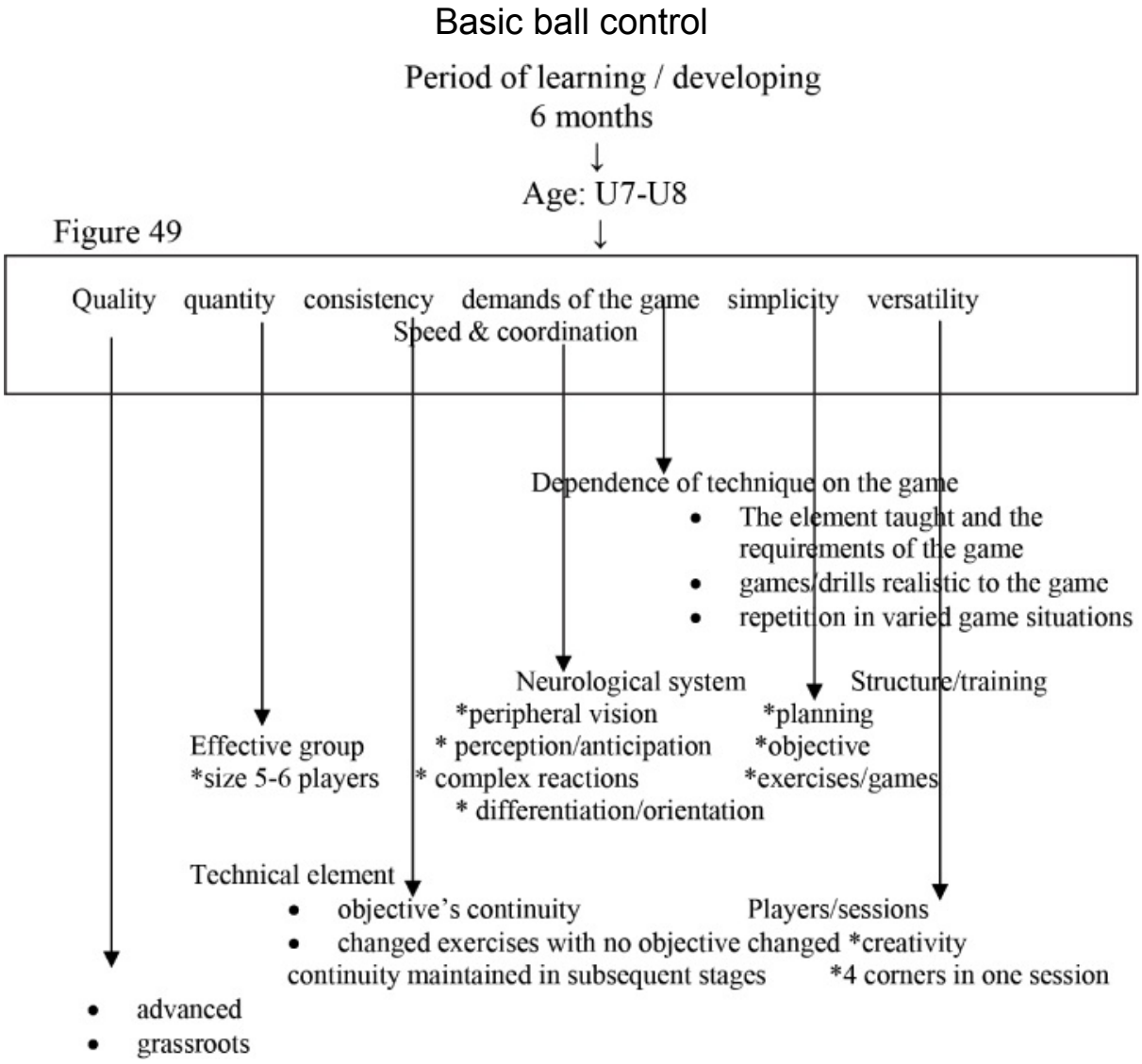
Period covered: 3-6 months

Objective: to develop individual technical skills

Assumptions: customization of lessons based on age, biological and

physical development and psychological needs, motor type of players and position on the pitch (the last applies to players aged 15-18); the efficient use of the information provided by the modern game (selection of training methods); the systematic development of all-round players

Figure 49



The example quoted shows the detailed selection of the methods and means necessary to conduct a long-term technical plan. These should vary in accordance with the age, ability and individual needs of players. The (physical, psychological, social, technical and tactical) aspects of the game must also be appropriate to the above mentioned factors. One should remember that this is just an example referring to a narrow age group. It is worth adding that every plan is really determined by the working conditions. But these should not alter the primary objective, namely the long-term development of a young player (LTPD)

2.4. “Playing unsupervised – a great method to develop skills” – Jim Brown

The individual technical training and overall physical coordination of players from South America, Latin America and Africa has always been at the highest level. On the one hand, Brazil and Argentina are nations in which, according to age-old theories, football aces are simply born talents. But there is also another side to the coin. Pervasive poverty means that parents can’t afford to send their youngsters to professional clubs. So the young footballer simply learns this wonderful game on an everyday back yard, playing with his friends from dawn to dusk. The same is true in the poor countries of Africa and Latin America. The so-called “street soccer” that once dominated Europe still exists, is developing and continues to produce a mass of talent on the above mentioned continents.

In Europe, this has been replaced by training structure and plans, which do not always reflect the needs of children, who simply want to play football. Today we very rarely if ever find teenagers in European countries chasing balls in parks, backyards, etc. On the one hand, this is due to the computer and computer games era in which we live and on the other, the lack of adequate infrastructure for this type of activity. Today, it is better to build another supermarket than a playground. But that is a whole new issue and not one to dwell on here. In view of the above, the only available means to develop sporting talent is the football club. There however, a child encounters people who try to influence his development, but not always in a positive way. They exert pressures, determine the directions for his development, introduce various prohibitions and injunctions to the child’s environment and yet all the time that child only wants one thing: **TO JUST PLAY FOOTBALL!!!** This does not mean that a coach is unnecessary; however, he should be the least noticeable factor during the training sessions. He should be able to determine the boundary between self-learning and teaching. This is a difficult skill that allows children to learn from mistakes they have made and prior experience.

Jim Brown's quote is thus risky, but perfectly accurate. Risky, because he claims a child is able to learn more without having a trainer around. Accurate, as it points the directions for modern teaching of football technique.

The presented point of view also applies to training structures and systems. The World Cup Finals in South Africa confirmed that in South America or Africa, football's popularity is growing apace. Not only that, but the number of world-class players is increasing from year to year and plenty of players are being imported by the top European Leagues. This raises a question: Are the rich European countries no longer able to educate their own football players? Can the reason for this state of affairs be a rather rigid training structure that lags behind the norms prevailing in modern football? It seems to me that the answer should be sought in another question. I will venture to say that a player cannot fully develop his talent if he is treated like a robot, where the margin of error is reduced to a minimum. Thrown into one sack at the age of five and, at best, tipped out of the same bag at the age of 18, he must, like a Formula One racing driver, speed away, a slave to the rules prevailing in a given training system.

But football is not the same discipline at all and in this case, it doesn't matter who gets to the finish line first, who wins the race. What counts here is creativity, creative thinking, freedom in decision-making, improvisation, learning from one's mistakes, the varied selection of exercises and games, the preparation of players for the game and in my opinion most importantly, the ensuring that they love football, so that it becomes a part of their lives in the future. After all, not everyone is going to be a professional football player! Are all these elements actually contained in the structure and system of operations, to which a young player is subjected over his early years? Who gave us the right to decide what is good and what is bad for the development of a young player? Who gave us the right to issue such opinions as "you're too weak, your time is up"? Can none of us understand that in so doing, we take away the child's or young person's willingness and motivation to continue working on himself and the motivation to constantly improve his skills and strive to be better? The domino effect applies not only to young players but also coaches, who can only think in a predetermined manner, one that will satisfy those who govern the structure. They can't look out the window and see what is on the outside. They are afraid that perhaps something is changing, that there

is someone out there smarter, more intelligent, articulate, with greater knowledge. What does that matter? The sun doesn't shine the whole time, right? Trainers who are able and willing to think differently usually leave the structure. They are able to think autonomously and independently. Autonomy and independence are concepts alien to the operations of the strictly directed system. There is no room for them in such operations. They tend to be not merely good, but prominent trainers. There also tend to be outstanding players who were taught to play football, where strict structure is a myth and the young footballer has a broad range of possibilities without risking the consequences of being discharged or expelled from the structure. Let's consider how much space the structure devotes to the informal game, free of prohibitions, orders etc? Putting it another way, will the young player derive pleasure from the game and be impatient to commence the next workout? Will the coach who may not do other than what the program requires and therefore cannot be creative and forward thinking, allow the child or young football player to think like that and develop his talent? The answer is a simple no, regardless of whom he works with (their age), or where and how he works (training means). In countries where the structure is weak, the child learns from his own mistakes. He develops in the social sense (environment), the psychological sense (learning responsibility at least with regard to preparation of the playing field, gaining confidence through independent decision-making), the technical and tactical sense (a bad decision or choice means learning from one's mistakes, a good decision enables his nervous system to automatically remember certain game situations) and the physical sense (increasing fatigue will cause him to stop playing and take a break, the reasonable length of which the young player himself regulates: "I don't want to play, I'm too tired to play." In this way also, he can rest completely from football and has time for other activities that are no less important in the lives of children and adolescents. So is the structure wrong? No, but it should take diversity into account, should leave freedom of action and independence appropriate for a child's age, a child's needs and its psychological and biological development. The structure has to be focused on the autonomy of decision-making and allow a choice of creative training means that will ensure the possibility of choosing a specific action in a given match situation. The coach must understand and know the needs ensuing from the age and emotional and psychological maturity of the children and adolescents under his guidance. He must give

them the opportunity to think creatively and look at a problem from different angles, not just the one, which seems to us the best. Only if they fulfil the conditions listed here, do structure and system have a raison d'être. Only in a varied and not autocratic approach, does a child have the opportunity to develop not only in terms of sports, but also emotionally and personally. Only in a system where the coach has the capability of making totally independent decisions tailored to the skills, age, gender and psychological development of the young football player, will that player be able to thrive in a creative and flexible way best suited to the demands of the modern game. Putting it another way, if a system's or program's content is only isolated drills, then everyone without exception will surrender to this, without paying special attention to the needs of the children and adolescents with whom they must work every day. They blindly follow and copy everything that the structure or system presents, unfortunately forgetting that which is the most important: YOUNG FOOTBALLERS! In this way, one cannot hope to bring up European or World class players. We must remember the differences that shape every young player: the social (the environment, from which given players originate), the psychological (personality type), the technical and tactical (technical progress resulting from previously acquired experience, some having more than others), and the physical (somatic type, early or late maturing players, biological development.) Each structure must take these differences into account and adapt its program to the capabilities and needs of the individual. So the type of training and its content (choice of training means) should be characterized by creativity, the ability to correct differences (social, psychological, physical, technical and tactical), and a high degree of autonomy. The smile on a child's face and the pleasure from the type of classes offered will be proof that we are heading in the right direction. The structure and system are necessary, but they will fulfil their role only if they leave the coach the choice to adapt his training to the needs and abilities of the young players

2.5. “A player may only use such tactics as his mastery of technique allows” - Raoul Clery

Progress in the teaching of tactical elements to young players is achieved if we take into account several important factors such as:

- age
- level of training
- psychological development (intellect)
- experience gained from the game and training
- Individual differences
- character
- skills of quick perception
- training conducive to and enabling decision-making (speed of thinking and decision-making)
- communication
- observation
- adaptation
- conditions for training
- the type of tactics (individual, team)
- versatility

Age is an important factor in the choice of means and methods of training. Lack of knowledge at the appropriate level commensurate with the age of the young players can have very negative consequences for their further development. One must remember that work with children and young footballers requires patience and dedication. The long-term development of the player able and prepared to compete at a professional level should be the first goal. This includes talented players. Working with the less physically gifted should be based on increasing the level of individual training. One’s

success will be measured thus:

- the number of players playing at a professional level (the first team in the club, national team, etc.) – talented players
- the number of players who have improved their skills to the next level, such as: passing the ball using the inside part of the foot

Have you ever wondered how a child assimilates an action that is difficult in terms of his age, namely the ability to walk? Does he begin to walk shortly after birth? Or is it a process in which the dominant role is played by self-esteem and self-learning? Usually he first discovers and tries much easier activities such as sitting, crawling, standing, walking while being held and eventually, walking without assistance. Before reaching success, he learns along the way other necessary activities that help achieve the objective and are appropriate to the child's age. A child learns simple steps first and then moves to the more complex ones, requiring coordinated body movements. The example described perfectly reflects the words of Raoul Clery. Technique is an essential element to ensure that a player can successfully learn both individual and team tactics. Particular care should be extended to children aged 5-12 years. Technique and individual elements should always take first place, though more or less from 9-12 years of age, children should be taught them during the game. This does not mean, however, that children aged 5-8 years should not play.

On the contrary, they should be playing, because the game gives them the most happiness and pleasure. We cannot, however seek to forcefully make a seven-year old understand that he should pass the ball to his teammates. Passing the ball between teammates is already part of team tactics, and the child of that age not only does not understand such matters, but also does not draw any satisfaction from them. Children around this age are characterized by egotism and such an approach is shown during the game. Simply put, the little fellow with the ball sees only the goalkeeper and the goal posts and aims to beat the goalie as soon as possible. Psychological development is also of importance, along with improvisation, imagination and mental creativity, which are all used to great effect at this age. The role of the coach is therefore close observation and consistent improvement of the elements of technique that cause players the most problems. We need to remember not to start teaching 1v1 games in a situation where

a player is having trouble with basic ball control. The mind and nervous system in players of this age are developing very quickly. They are characterized by tolerance for the simplicity of the motor tasks to be carried out and poor adaptation to the acceptance of large amounts of information at a time. With this in mind, onw should try to avoid motor exercises and games with too many options and choices. This does not mean that we should free a child from the need to think and make decisions. A 2v2 game perfectly fits the needs of the child's psychology. Both with and without a ball, the player will not have to choose from a whole mass of information. This will also affect proper technical and tactical development. If, however, we use a 6v6 game, we will soon realize that:

- the player in possession of the ball does not quite know what to do with it
- each of his teammates will want the player to pass the ball back to him (too much information!!)
- any one player has only a small number of contacts with the ball
- there is insufficient continuity in the repeating of a taught technical element (not enough repetitions during the game)
- lack of achievement, completion of the objective intended by the coach

So I emphasize again that for a player to properly perform an individual tactical element, he must have a technique that will allow him to do so. Therefore our requirements should be based on realistic assumptions appropriate to the level of training and the age of the child. Incorrect assessment of the skills of a player or group of players and unrealistic expectations will cause a player to cease attending training classes. The consequences will also be the long-time loss of the pleasure from playing football, or a total lack of interest in the sport.

Intellect and individual differences have the least impact on learning and the development of individual tactical skills such as the elements previously mentioned. The first is a part of psychological development and determines the ability to learn. The second is connected with psychological and physical development. If a child has a high degree of intelligence, this will be reflected in his learning of new individual tactical elements. Such a player quickly understands and assimilates

knowledge conveyed. It will be seen during the game, where decisions are in most cases good and appropriate to the situation on the pitch. He will also be characterized by above average perception and speed of decision-making. If during the game, an 8 year old player makes some good passes without explicit pressure from the coach, then we may be dealing with a gifted child. Few children aged 8 will want to let go of the ball!

For example, working with a group of players aged 9, we must be aware of their individual differences. In addition to age, noticeable differences will be psychological, sociological, physical, technical and tactical. We should not therefore, treat them all the same and lump them all together in one bag, even if we're dealing with talented players. For the learning process to be a success we should take into account:

- differences in physical development (even if the same age, some are maturing earlier then others. That is why in a group of nine-year old players we may find ones that look like eleven-year olds)
- differences in psychological development (the ability to learn, with some learning faster than others. We should spend the same amount of time on both, but apply different games or exercises)
- differences in technical and tactical development (the experience gained in previous years of playing and training can be quite varied, especially when we are dealing with a group selected from different regions
- differences in sociological development (family, community, friends, background, opportunities to improve skills)
- differences in adaptive abilities (some adapt more quickly, while others have trouble adjusting to new rules, expectations, coaches, classmates, clubs or environments
- differences in communication skills (some are visual and some learn faster if someone shows them something, while still others are good listeners)
- differences in character (reaction to external stimuli, various types of motivation, self-confidence, shyness, etc.)

The player thoroughly trained in the modern game of football is more often the rule than the exception. The strength of not only each individual player, but also a given formation and a whole team depends on the ability to play in defence and attack. The abilities to change functions and positions are special features and evidence of creative perceptive thinking. The ability to easily adapt to roles on the pitch other than one's nominal position will be a reflection of a player's overall tactical preparation. Achieving a high degree of adaptability in terms of tactics will to a large extent depend on the quality of the coaching and training activities. Overall tactical development will proceed correctly if the following conditions are met:

- avoid early specialization of playing one position (ages 5-12)
- avoid the use of complex tactical tasks (i.e. team tactics, ages 5-12)
- communication and the nature of the information passed should be simple and understandable (for children aged 5-12)
- avoid imposing (offensive or defensive) tasks during a game – let the players play football and learn from their own mistakes
- try to avoid explaining to young players that today we are playing for instance a 1-2-3-1 or 1-2-1 tactical system. Consider whether a child is capable of understanding this type of information?
- teach elements of team tactics in a logical way and by easy stages (ages 13-18)
- keep in mind that continuity must be maintained in teaching according to the following order: individual-formation-team
- try to avoid teaching the game in a single system, especially when it comes to midfield and attack formations. Modern football requires players to be mobile and creative, easily adapting to playing in various systems.
- one should use customized classes (ages 13-18)
- the teaching of team tactics, especially playing in attack, should involve the ability to play in a variety of configurations (triangle, square, etc.) and change positions.
- tactical classes should be combined with improving technical elements and physical parameters. Consider whether during the

game, players perform these activities independently of each other.

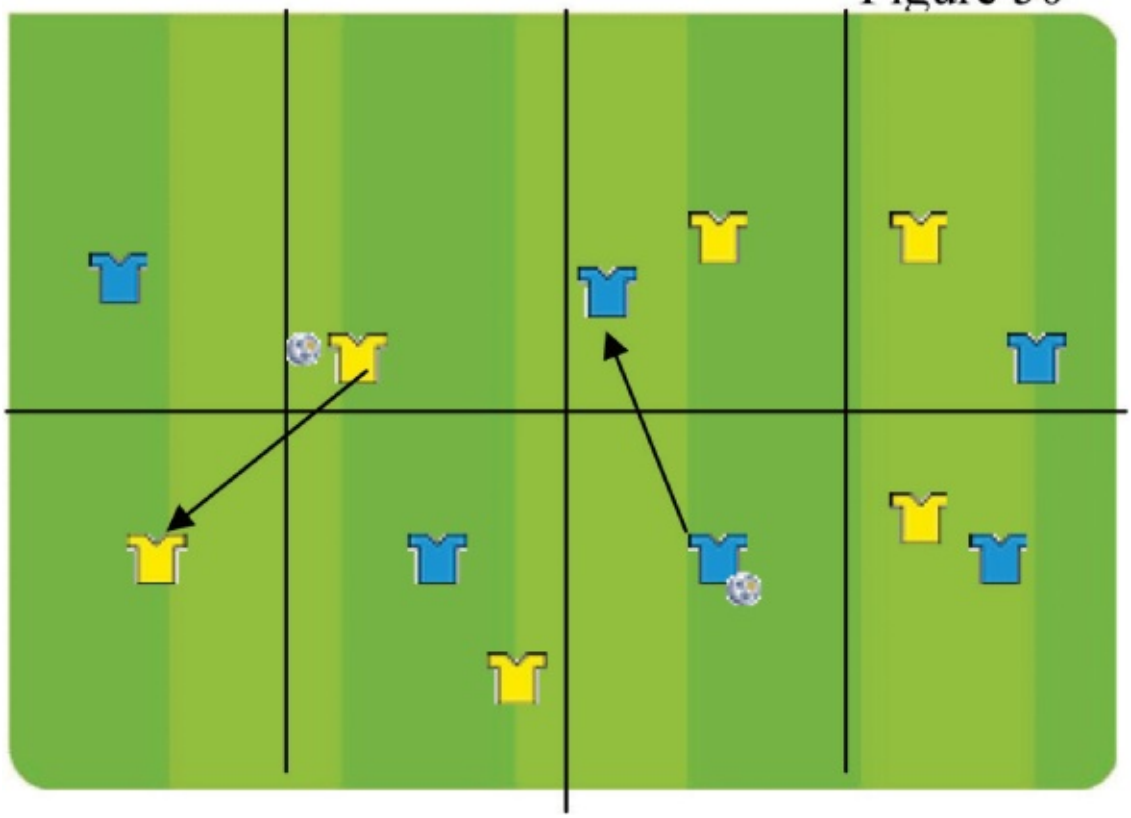
- exercises perfecting the broadly termed issues of perception and peripheral vision should be an integral element of improving individual and team tactics
- exercises should always involve possibilities for choice and decision-making
- the 1v1 game, both in attack and defence, should be an integral part of our teaching tactics

Example exercises:

We need to remember that each of the following exercises should be tailored to the age, needs (physical, psychological and sociological) and the degree of technical and tactical sophistication of the players with whom we work!

1. A marked out pitch is divided into eight squares (measuring 6x6 yards). 12 players are divided into pairs, with one ball per pair. Each pair of players passes the ball to each other and traps it while in constant motion. During this exercise, players of the same pair may not be in the same square together - Fig. 50

Figure 50



Variations:

a) a maximum two players can be in one square during training, but may not be from the same pair

b) instead of pairs use colours (in this case, yellow and blue). The ball may not be passed between players of the same colour. The ball may not be passed to the same square, in which the receiving player took the pass

c) a 4v2 game on four squares. A maximum of one attacking player can be in any one square. The moment the ball is passed, a player making the pass must change squares.

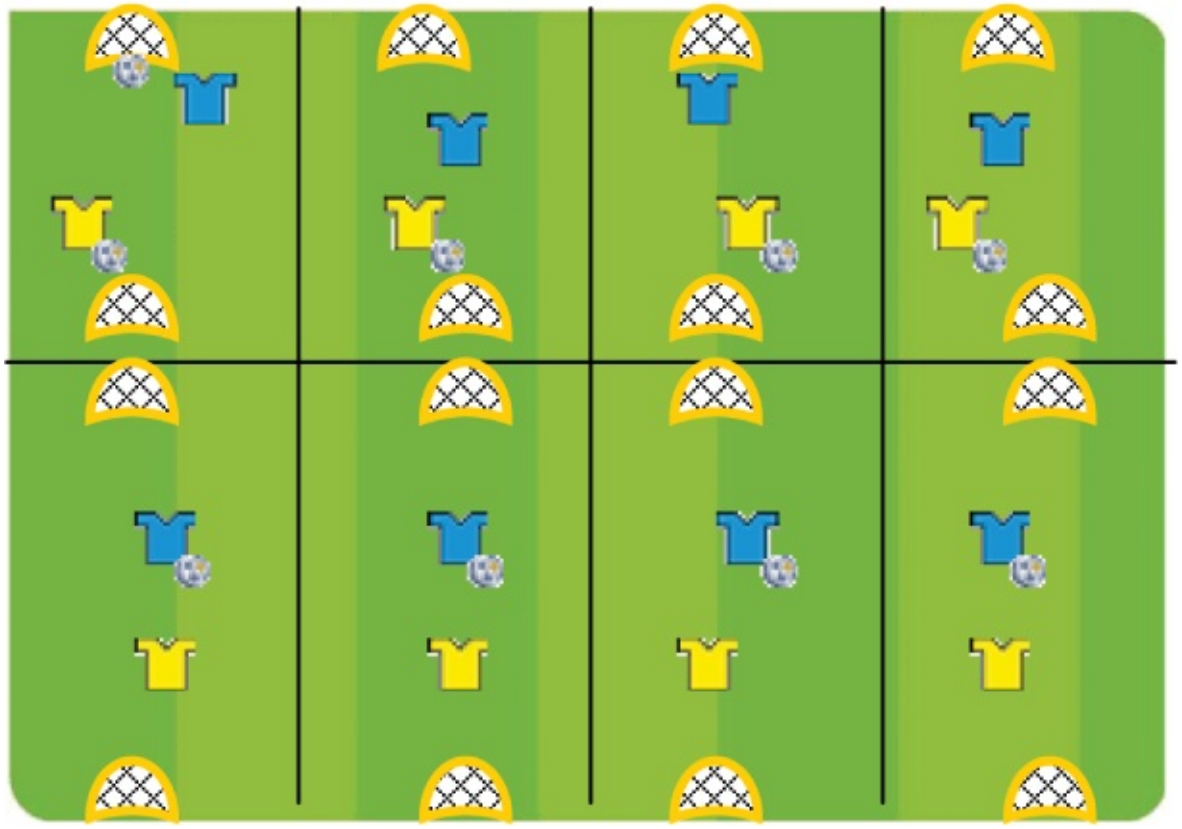
d) A 6v6 game with two goals. A maximum 2 players of the offensive team can be in the same square together

The exercise's key objectives:

- Improvement in passing and trapping while in constant motion
- Developing perception abilities while creating a free, unmarked playing area
- Improving the ability to play without the ball

2. A marked out pitch measuring 24x12 yards is divided into eight sections with a designated central area 2 yards wide and 16 small goals, positioned as in Figure 36. 16 players divided into pairs play a 1v1 game in each of the eight sections - Fig. 51

Figure 51



Variations:

a) players of the same colour can move between adjoining squares, but only when both are in possession of the ball in their square

b) the playing of a 2v2 game on 2 squares (players defend and attack two goals). The players from the attacking team may not be in the same square together

c) a 4v4 game (the goals closest to the central area are removed). Players defend and attack two goals. A maximum of two offensive players can be in any one square.

The exercise's key objectives:

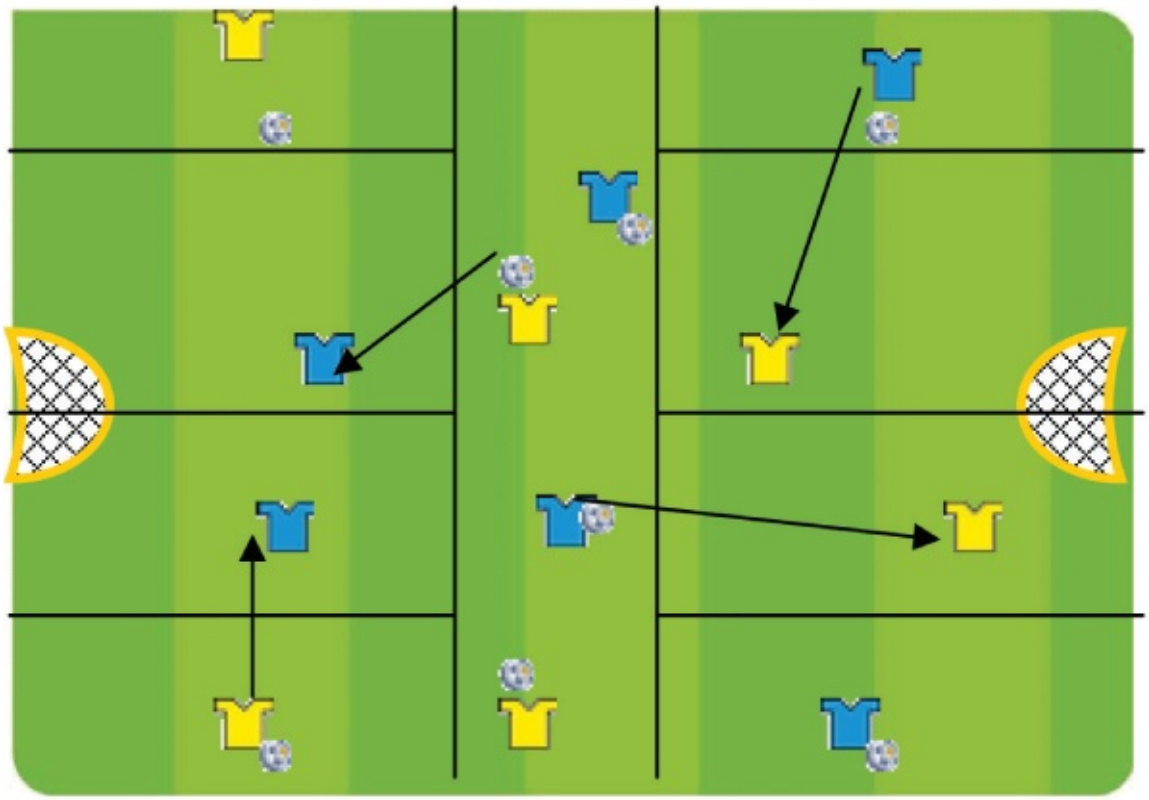
- To improve dribbling in a 1v1 game
- The ability to assess a situation in a game of 1v1 (from which side does the defender attack and try to win the ball and at what

distance is the defender)

- An exercise developing individual attack and defence tactics

3. An extended penalty area measuring 36x16 yards is divided into eight sections and a central area 2 yards wide. Two full-size goals are set at opposite ends. 14 players (including two goalkeepers) are arranged as in Figure 52. The exercise is begun by the outer players or those who are in the central area. They pass the ball to the attackers arranged in the central area, who shoot at the goal. Attackers may not be at any time in the same section together. After each pass, outer players and those in the central area change places (they must be in constant motion)

Figure 52



Variations:

a) Attackers may not shoot at the goal twice in a row from the same area. The players passing the ball change places with those dribbling the ball.

b) Attackers are to kick the ball with the right or left leg in predetermined areas of the pitch.

c) Attackers play the ball one touch to the same player, from whom they received the pass and then look for a pass from another player and take a shot at the goal

d) A 2v1 game. The attackers receive the ball from a central zone player. At the moment the ball is passed, one of the outer players becomes a defender. Attackers may not be in the same area together and may not pass the ball back into the same area.

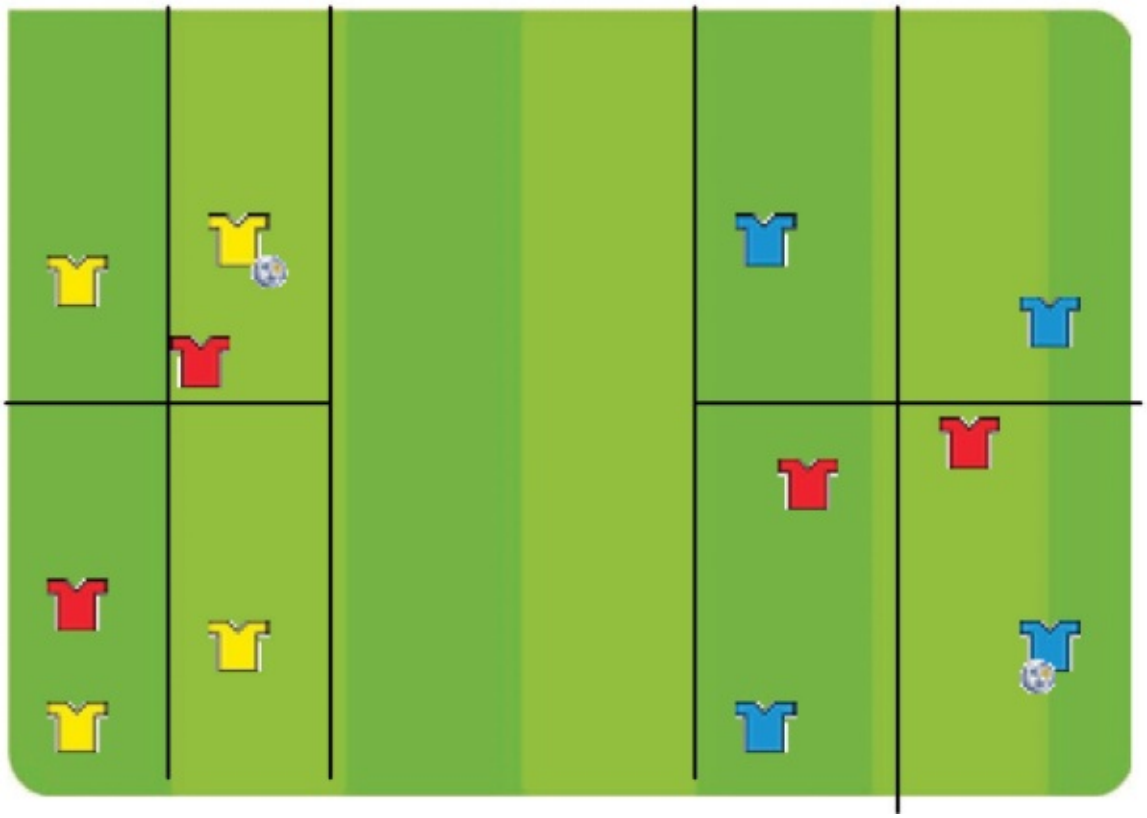
e) A 2v2 game + 2 outer players supporting the attackers. Outer players can only play outside the play area and have a maximum two contacts with the ball. After taking possession of the ball, the defending team scores a point after dribbling the ball into the central zone without support from other players.

The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving shots at goal while developing speed of perception and thinking
- The ability to move around and look for a free, unmarked area of pitch in the opponent's defence area, in which to take a shot at goal
- The ability of two attackers to co-operate in a 2v1 game or a 4v2 game

4. A pitch measuring 24 x 15 yards is divided into three zones, where the central area is half the size of the outer zones. Additionally the outer zones are subdivided into four sections. 12 players are divided into three teams of four. Players are lined up as in Figure 53. The exercise begins with a game of 4v2 in the two outer zones. The moment they take possession, the players of the defending team try to dribble it to the central zone. The attacking team scores a point, if it makes 10 consecutive passes without loss of the ball.

Figure 53



Variations:

a) Players of the attacking team may not be at any time together in the same square in the outer zones.

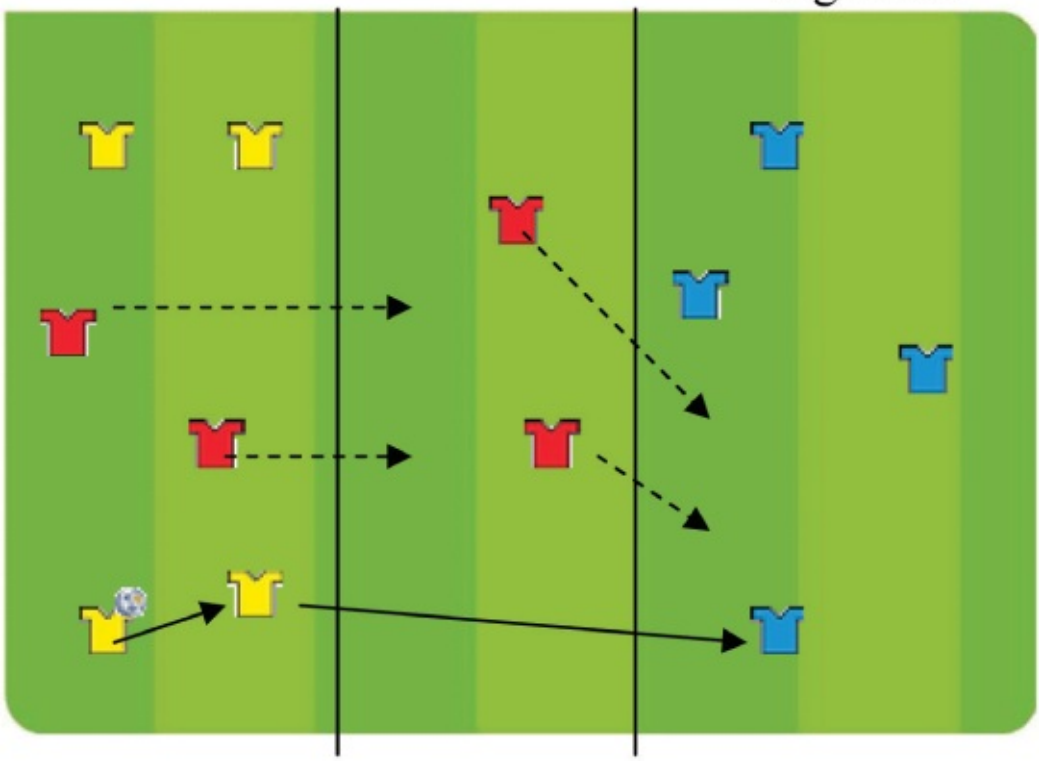
b) A player from the attacking team may not pass the ball to the teammate, from whom he received it.

5. Three teams, each in one zone. The team from the central area is divided into two pairs. One pair is positioned in the outer area and tries to take possession of the ball. The second pair is in the central zone. The game begins in the right-hand outer zone. The objective of the attacking team is to take the ball to the left-hand outer zone. When this occurs, the pair from the central area moves to the left-hand outer zone and tries to take possession of the ball. However the pair from the right-hand outer zone moves to the central area. When the defending team wins possession, it exchanges roles with the team that lost the ball, without having to stop the game - Fig. 54.

The exercise's key objectives:

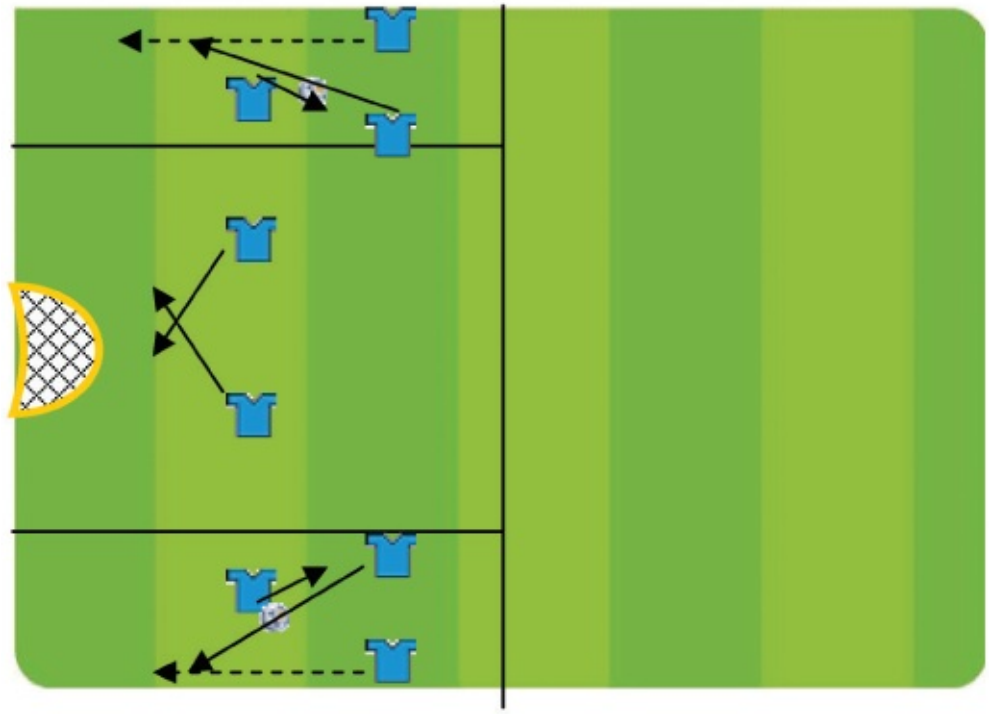
- Improving passing techniques and maintaining possession
- Improving speed of action with the ball while maintaining possession
- Developing perception / speed of thought processes during the game in order to maintain possession of the ball
- Recognition of free, unmarked areas of the pitch and the ability to move without the ball in order to be available to the teammate who is in possession
- A game improving the ability to quickly move from defence to attack and vice versa

Figure 54



5. An extended penalty area measuring 32 x 16 yards, with marked out side zones 10 yards wide. 16 players are divided into 3 groups: 2 groups of six and 1 of four players - Fig. 55. The exercise is begun by a trio of players from the left zone passing the ball into a triangle with an overlap ending with the ball being centered to two attackers performing cross runs, ending with a shot at the goal.

Figure 55



Variations:

a) The same organization as above, except that the side zones of the pitch are divided into two parts, A and B. A game of 6v4 is played. Players are positioned as in Figure 56. The game is begun by the central midfielder playing the ball to the central attacker, who dribbles the ball into side sector A. At the same time, the right-hand defender moves to the same sector. A 2v1 game is played in the side sector. If the attacking team is able to get into side sector B without loss of the ball, it tries to make a cross to teammates running into the sector. If the defending team takes possession of the ball, it tries to take the ball over the centre line.

b) Two teams of 6 players (two 3v3 games) plus two wing midfielders and one goalie for each team. The two wing midfielders of each team play the whole time in the side sectors of the pitch in the opponent's defence area. No other player on the pitch may play in the side sectors of the pitch. Players playing 3v3 change places after one minute of play. A goal scored following a cross earns a double score.

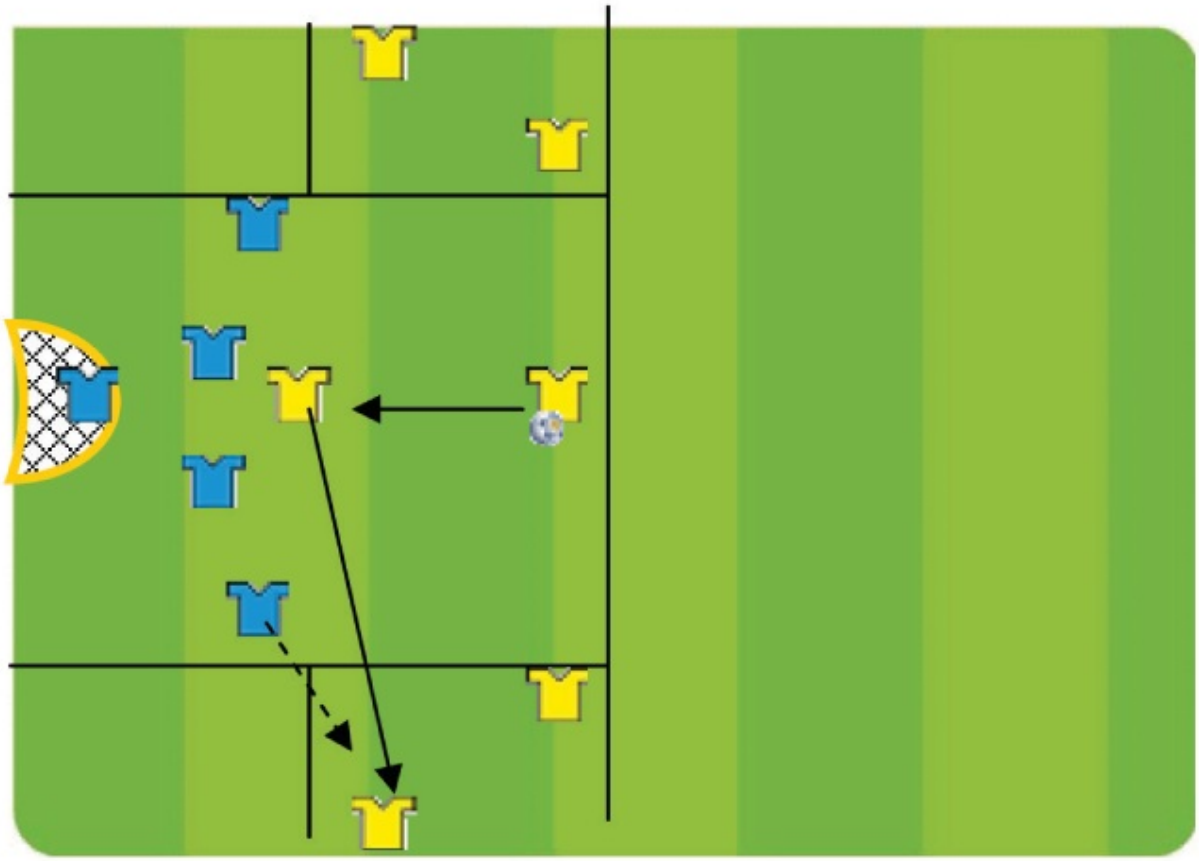
c) As above, but wing midfielders can move the entire length and width of the side sector of the pitch

d) As above, but played without assigned wing midfielders in the side sectors of the pitch

The exercise's key objectives:

- Improvement in cross kicks to the centre and the ending of actions following a cross kick
- Skilful exiting in time and playing in time during an overlap and cross change of the players ending the actions
- The ability to use an advantage in a side sector of the pitch in a 2v1 situation
- The ability to create situations favourable for cross kicking the ball to the centre and into the penalty area

B A Figure 56



B A

6. A pitch measuring 45 x 35 yards is divided into four triangles with two full-sized goals. A game of 6v4 is played (2v1 in two triangles

and a 1v1 game in the other two) with two goalkeepers. The attacking team is in possession of two balls. Two games are simultaneously begun in two adjacent triangles. The attacking player from a triangle (2v1) can change triangles only after passing the ball to his teammate from the triangle (1v1). The attacking team receives a point for every change in triangle without loss of the ball. At the moment of taking possession of the ball, the defending team attacks the large goal and tries to score – Fig. 57

Variations:

a) Only a player who has not passed the ball may change triangles,

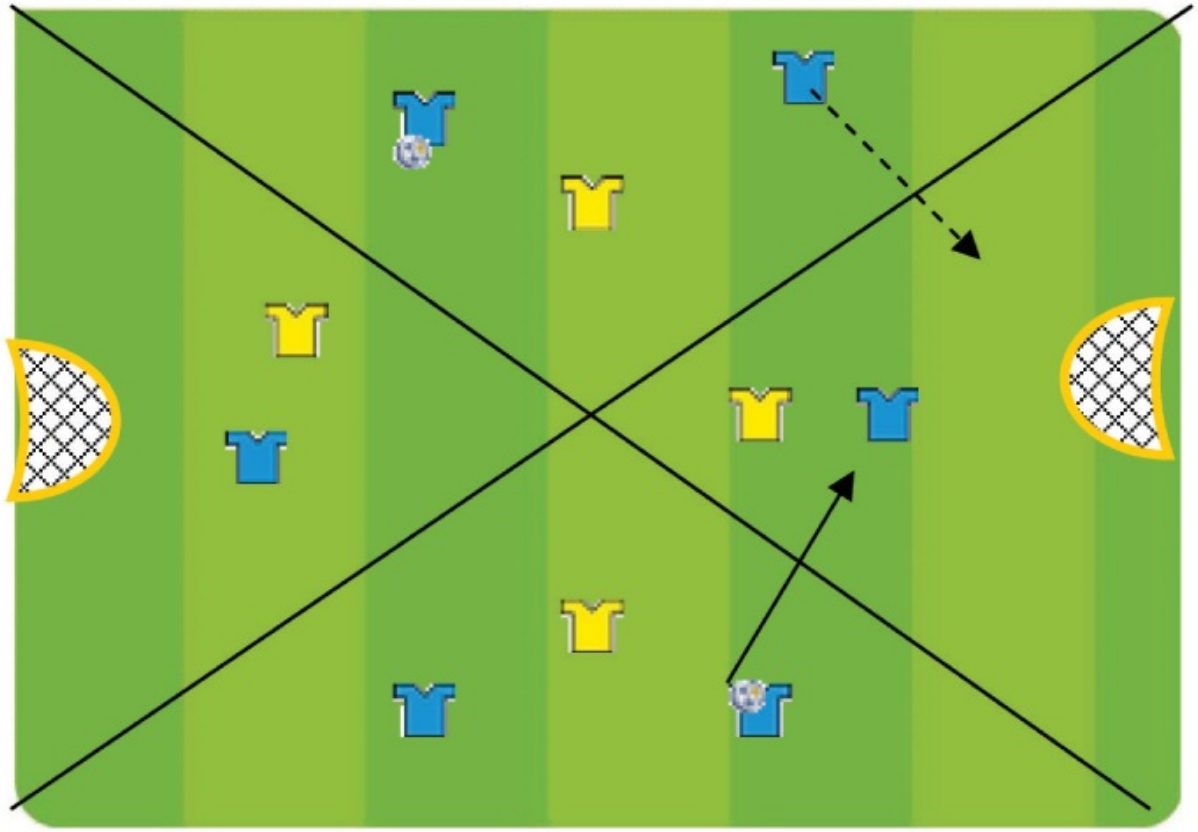
b) A game of 6v6 (2v2 in two triangles and 1v1 games in the other two)

c) A game of 6v6 (2v2 in two triangles and 1v1 games in the other two) using one ball. Teams attack and defend only one goal.

The exercise's key objectives:

- supporting a player with the ball (support play)
- supporting a player with the ball in order to create a numerical advantage
- support in front of and behind the ball line
- The ability to play without the ball and create a free, unmarked area on the pitch
- improving the 1v1 game

Figure 57



7. A pitch measuring 25x20 yards is divided into four sections with a marked out circle in the centre. A game of 5v5 is played (1v1 in each section and the central circle). The attacking team scores one point for every time it manages to play the ball to a teammate in the centre circle without loss of the ball. Players from both teams must remain in their sections during the game – Fig. 58

Variations:

a) the player who played the ball to a teammate from the circle changes places with him

b) players from both teams may change areas, but no more than two attackers may be in one area at the same time

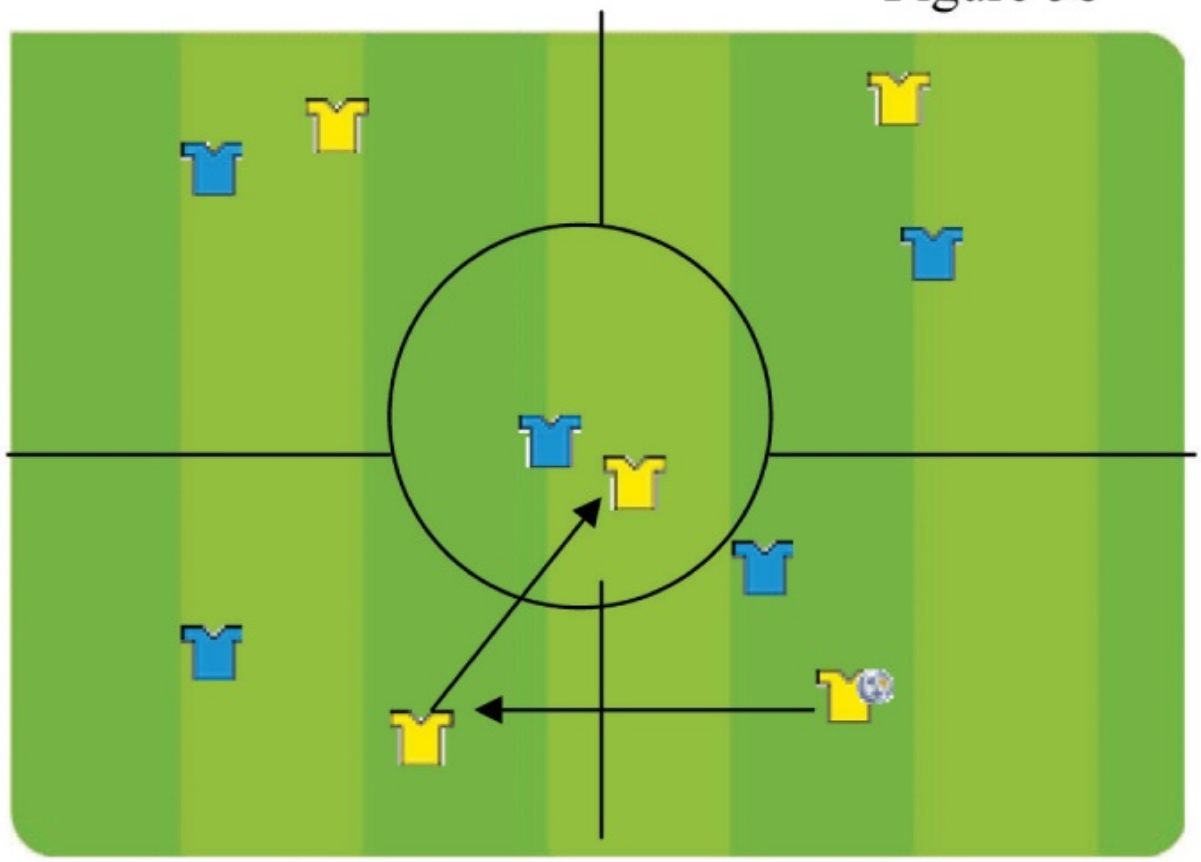
c) if a player from the attacking team passes to a teammate in another area, he may move to that area to create a superiority of numbers 2v1, while the defending player must remain in his area

The exercise's key objectives:

- improvement of individual play in a 1v1 situation
- improved dribbling

- improvement in maintaining possession of the ball

Figure 58



8. A pitch measuring approximately 45x35 yards, with two full-sized goals. A 4v4 game is played plus another four players from each team positioned as in Fig. 59. The moment a goal is scored, or when a shot at goal misses, the four defending players immediately change with the four teammates waiting outside the field of play and begin to attack the opponent's goal, whereas the team that attacked becomes the defending team.

Variations:

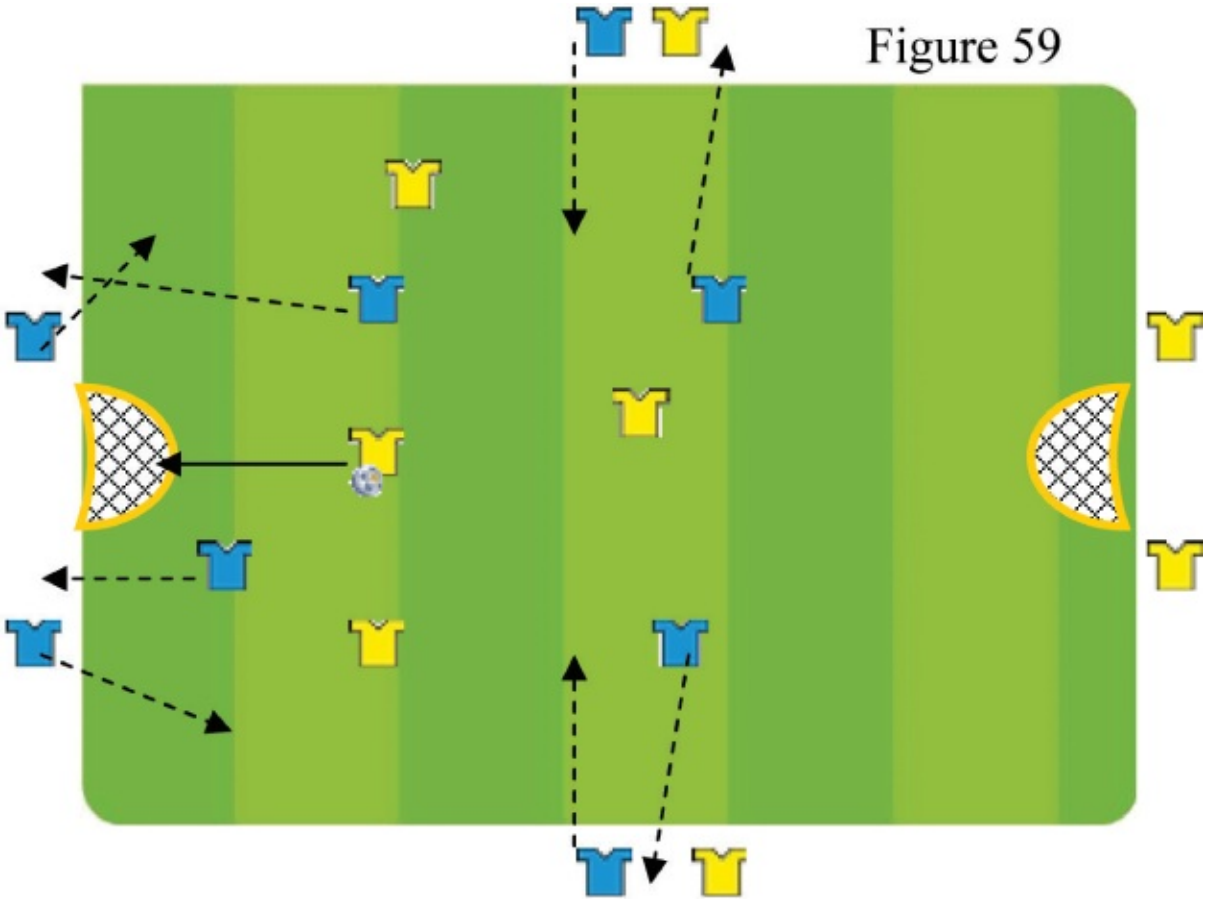
a) the attacking team's players have a specified amount of contact with the ball

b) a goal counts twice if it is scored after first time finish c) The moment the defending team takes possession of the ball, the attacking team players must change places with their teammates waiting outside the area of play

The exercise's key objectives:

- quick transitions from defence to attack and vice versa

- Increasing the pace and speed of the game while reducing the number of contacts with the ball by the attacking team's players


Figure 59

9. A circle is marked out in the centre of the pitch. 10 players (6 attackers and 4 defenders) are positioned as in Figure 60. Players of the attacking team win a point after each pass to one of the two teammates positioned in the central circle. The task of the defending team is to play the zone, i.e. when the ball is passed through the central line and outside the central circle, two defenders from that side of the pitch should move to their own half of the central circle, while the next two should be outside the central circle – see Figure 60. The moment the defenders win possession of the ball, they play a 4v2 game in the central circle.

Variations:

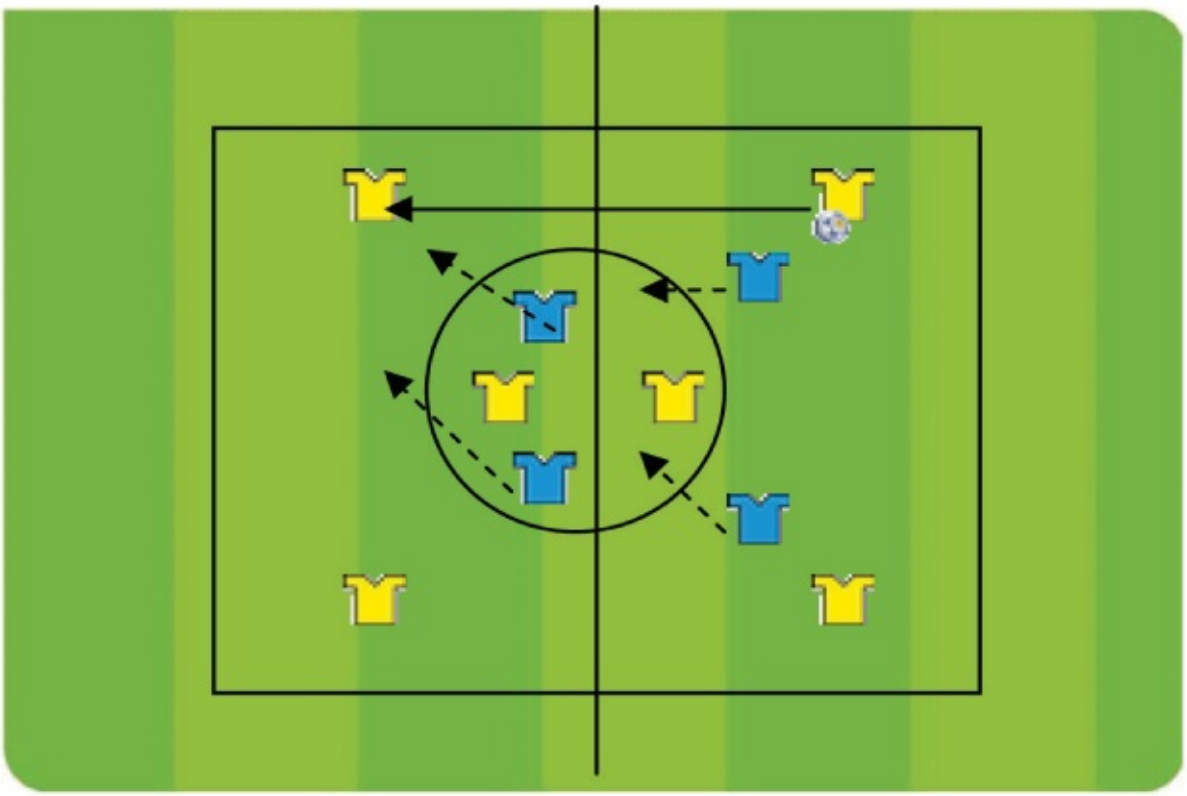
a) Attacking team players have a limited number of contacts with the ball

b) The moment the defenders win possession of the ball, they play a 4v3 game in the central circle

The exercise's key objectives:

- Improving defensive play in a zone
- The ability to move around while playing zonal defence
- Transition from playing defence to attack and vice versa
- The ability to keep possession of the ball

Figure 60



10. A 5v5 game is played on an extended penalty area divided into two parts (1 and 2). Each team has its own section, in which it must keep possession of the ball as long as possible. If the defending team wins the ball, it can go to its own section only at the moment of playing: takeover, wall pass or overlap. A team scores a point when it executes 10 passes without loss of the ball. If after winning possession of the ball, a team performs one of the combination elements, it scores two additional points - Fig. 61

Variations:

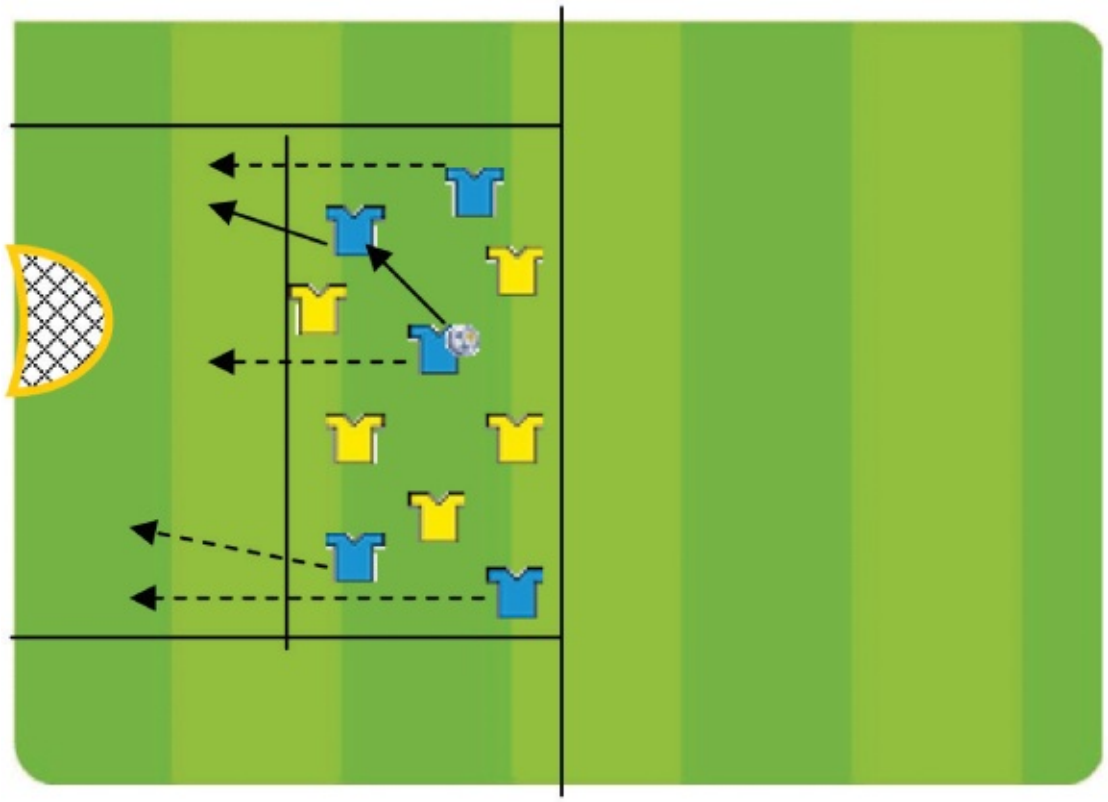
a) only one of the elements of combination play can be played in attack, e.g. takeover

b) on receipt of the ball, a team must perform at least two elements of combination play before it moves into its section

The exercise’s key objectives:

- improving combination play in attack
- Improved ability to maintain possession of the ball
- Seeking combination play enabling a change in a game’s elements
- quick transition from defence to attack (change of pace)
- improving vision and speed of perception

Figure 61



III.PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION

3.1 “The coach, who knows only football, really knows nothing about it” - Jose Mourinho

I am convinced that each of us tries to take advantage of his psychological potential (personality traits, character) in everyday life. We use our psychological characteristics depending on the situation. We show off our strengths when we want something or care about something. We hide our weaknesses, for example, from a new acquaintance. We try to make our potential recognized and our emotional and psychological needs taken into account in work, partnerships, etc. The grownup world puts the human psyche to frequent tests, which we do not always pass. It is no different in sports, especially football. The desire to be the best, earn huge amounts of money and remain on the pedestal; the need to win and the constant rivalry require mental preparation of players and coaches – sometimes the most important element for achieving success. Today, physical, technical and tactical preparation is on a similar level. That is why success or failure now often depends on details related to the psychology of the players as well as something directly related to this, namely player-coach and coach-player communication.

The world of children and adolescents, however, differs substantially from the adult world. It is perceived in different colours and there is no mirror reflection. This is associated with the stages of psychological and emotional development of young players. Developing Jose Mourinho’s thoughts further, one might ask: Is it possible to conduct a good workout without knowing the psychological needs of the participants? Or in other words: Will an exercise completely at variance with the psychological needs of for instance a 9-year old child be a source of joy and satisfaction for him and ensure his sports development? Let this situation, to which I was witness,

serve as an example and I hope it will answer the questions posed.

In the late autumn of 2010 I had the pleasure of observing training activities at the academy of a professional club. Classes were held with a group of 9-year-old boys. While playing, many of the young boys played individually (normal at this stage of development), but one boy in particular stood out from the rest. At some point, this player found himself alone with the goalkeeper and instead of passing to a teammate (who was in an unmarked position) tried to dodge the goalkeeper. Unfortunately, the attempt failed. Guess the coach's reaction. He was very angry with the child for not passing the ball to a teammate and even more for failing to score a goal in a situation where he was one on one with the goalkeeper. The young player was utterly embarrassed and could not understand what the coach was on about. Rather than being angry with the child for failing to take advantage of the situation, the coach should have taught the boy how to beat the goalkeeper when the opportunity next arose. With regard to passing, the coach failed completely to understand the psychological needs of a child at this age and the fact that they demonstrate excessive egotism during a game. The development of social perception (perception of the world) is different at each stage of emotional maturity. It is subject to qualitative and quantitative change. Children aged 6-10 are characterized by egotism and self-centeredness. Their perception of the world is only from their own point of view, without the ability to perceive reality through the eyes of other people. That is why in nine out of ten situations, the child will always try to dribble the ball past the goalkeeper. Not only because it will afford him great pleasure and fun, but also because it will be relevant to his mental and physical development.

Following on from social perception, it is only around the age of 12 that a child learns to interact with other people. A player begins to feel the satisfaction of team play and his emotional development enables him to understand why he needs to pass the ball to a teammate. With this in mind, a valuable guideline would be that this is the age at which you can begin to teach the elements of team tactics. Cooperation with other people takes on a more permanent nature during the period of adolescence. The young player learns to lead others, occupy a specific position in the team, influence others and take responsibility.

Broad knowledge of psychological development will not only be of theoretical importance, but it will be the basis for practical action (e.g.

can facilitate the planning of training activities). Knowledge of the psyche and personality has a significant impact on adaptation of training to the needs of the practicing players. It increases opportunities to address behaviour problems. Contact at the trainer-child level and vice versa will be facilitated. The bond and trust built up in this way will produce benefits in the event of both victories and defeats. The negative effects of failures experienced by children and adolescents will be appropriately mitigated. On the other hand, the level of aspiration and any exorbitant ambition will be properly toned down. This will develop the sporting instincts of one's charges. Among the most able however, it will prepare them for athletic competition or rivalry at the highest level, but not at the cost of their health.

3.2. “Success is peace of mind, which is the direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you have made the effort to become the best of which you are capable” – John Wooden, former UCLA Basketball coach

*“You cannot find a player who ever played for me at UCLA who can tell you that he ever heard me mention ‘winning’ a basketball game. He might say I inferred a little here and there, but I never mentioned winning. The last thing that I told my players, just prior to tipoff, before we would go on the floor was, ‘When the game is over, I want your head up and I know of only one way for your head to be up. That’s for you to know that you did your best. No one can do more…You made that effort.’” —**John Wooden**, Basketball Hall of Fame coach*

Between the years 1964-1975, John Wooden won the NCAA basketball championship with various teams some 10 times. The most fascinating fact is that in the world’s best basketball academic league, successes came to a man whose professed philosophy was quite different from that of many trainers working at the same level. After all, the pressure with regard to results and the desire to win is there no less than in the professional NBA and NFL league. A purely paradoxical situation or a coaching genius with a great psychological predisposition and a balanced philosophy arising from a considerable indifference to the final result of the match? The second part of the question is also the answer. The coach knew the personality and psyche of his players really well. In addition, each of them knew they were in an environment in which errors made now will constitute future lessons to be learned. Whatever the outcome, they will always have support and positive understanding; as long as they play the best they can in each successive game. The coach’s attention was focused on assessment of technical and tactical elements both individually and as a team and not on the outcome of the game.

Through careful observation, the coach increased his knowledge concerning what to work on and how to go about it, and what to improve, so that each player, and the team as a whole, played a better

game in the future. Removing the pressure of winning resulted in the negative impact of stress being greatly reduced. The philosophy of conducting a team made the players strive for excellence at every practice and every match. Thanks to this approach, it was easier to achieve ultimate success in the game (matches won). This created a so-called “positive team culture” where everyone, regardless of their ability, felt important and appreciated.

Knowledge of psychological development in combination with the professed philosophy gave an excellent end result in the shape of many successful matches.

In beginning this chapter with the above quotation, I aimed to draw attention to the positive effects of thinking other than just ‘winning at all costs’, especially in working with children and adolescents. The other side of the coin is no less important. This shows the negative effects of pursuing success (winning the game) in work with young footballers. First and foremost, a child’s psychology is very sensitive to such questions as victory and defeat. Many negative emotions are associated with the fact that during a game or training, the margin of error must be reduced to almost zero. Verbal information provided by the coach, such as “we must win”, “only the best get to play, because we must win” or “We must do EVERYTHING to win” and so on, imply that:

- There is no room for error
- This is no time for play
- This is no place for learning from one’s mistakes
- This is not the place to show off one’s potential in full

It should be remembered that during training and games, a child always gives his all. During a match, he tries as best as he can and as far as his skills allow, to use the knowledge absorbed during the course of his training. The pressure to win will increase stress and will contain a lot of negative emotions associated with the desire of winning at all costs, namely:

a) from the psychological perspective:

- Lack of self-confidence (the child will never feel comfortable in a situation where every mistake may be criticized by a coach or parent

- The development of ego-oriented incentives, which is to say the trainer focusing his attention only on the talented players in the group, and so those who have the greatest influence on the OUTCOME OF THE GAME!!!
- Lack of motivation among less talented players to work on their skills
- Lack of equal treatment for all players can lead to visible divisions and negative behaviour in the team's interpersonal relations
- Lack of objective self-esteem relative to the situation, especially important in adolescence, because it involves responsibility for oneself, one's behaviour, etc.
- Increased aggressive behaviour as an extreme manifestation of the desire to win at all costs, for example the coach's and players' behaviour during and after the match in the event of losing
- Deterioration of the system of values

b) from the point of view of a young player's / person's development:

- No real and proper assessment of the progress shown by young players
- Training sessions and the match are subordinated to winning at the next meeting, and not to an accurate and reliable analysis of the progress shown by children and adolescents in terms of technique, tactics and physical coordination and their preparation
- Success being measured by the number of games won and not the number of players educated to a professional level
- No logical plan for the preparation and education of young players in the sporting spirit in accordance with their aspirations, objectives and skills
- The delayed and uneven development of the young footballers in every aspect: physical, psychological, technical and tactical and sociological

c) from a sociological point of view:

- Abandoning the game of football and sport in general

- Reluctance to make any effort with regard to sports, ensuing from bad experiences in the past, for example – in many youth teams where the coach puts results first, the less talented players usually do not get to play or experience the game only to a very small degree. Subjected to constant criticism from the coach and his peers, such players decide on a drastic step, which is to give up playing football altogether. Is this really how things should be?
- Often, due to lack of other interests, they fall into bad company, drugs, etc.
- The environment and surroundings often prefer the better, more talented players and do not treat everyone equally

3.3. “Would you as a parent, go in your backyard and cheer for your youngsters while they are playing a game of tag with their neighbourhood friends? Would you tell them where to hide in a game of hide-and-seek? Since you wouldn’t, why do you do it during their team’s soccer game?” – Frank Kulas, Director of coaching and player development for the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association

Making the right decisions is the most important detail in modern football. Choosing the right solutions under constantly changing game conditions often decides whether or not one wins the match. This is of particular importance during the rapid transition from playing defence to attack and vice versa. Under conditions of disorganization and chaos, the well chosen option in many cases results in the winning of a goal or at least the shifting of pressure to the opponent’s defence zone. Teaching and learning proper decision-making is closely related to the psychomotor development of children and youth, their technical and tactical skills, as well as their physical development. The young player will be able to make the correct decision only when external conditions (environment, training, training play and individual skills) will be appropriate to his needs, age and psychological development. Allowing the player to make mistakes and learn from them will have a positive impact on the quality and number of correct decisions. And so, to develop further the above quote, I will use two examples:

Example One: Two groups of five-year old children – A and B. In group A, the basic aspect of play was ball control and running with the ball in any fashion. In Group B, the basic aspect was trapping and passing the ball. In group A, the players must perform a simple action appropriate to their age and psychological development. The children were allowed to dribble the ball any direction and thus explore new techniques and what is more, learn from their mistakes and copy the correct behaviour of other participants. In Group B, the action performed was by nature complex and was neither appropriate to the

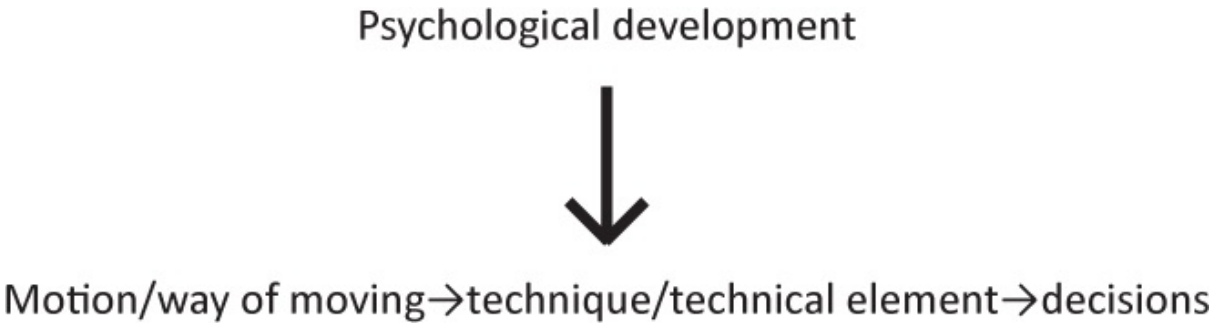
psychological development of the child nor, in my opinion, his age.

Players found it hard to learn from their mistakes because of the complexity of the exercises and because their coordination and motor abilities were still at the infancy stage. In both these cases, the decision-making process proceeded equally and was based on two aspects: what decision the child has to make (what action must he take?) and the decision on how this action must be taken? In other words, what part of the foot to use in passing the ball: i.e. the outside or inside of the foot. How to control the ball using different surface of the foot. Which group do you think was able to make more informed decisions in the process of learning motor functions at the purely technical level?

Just as the performed motor functions should not occur in complete isolation from each other, so also the associated decisions need to be combined into one. This should occur at an early stage in football education. Nevertheless, the performed elements of technique should be appropriate to the psychological and physical development of a 5-year old child. That is why the children in group A were able to make more informed decisions, repeat them properly and integrate them in their neurological systems (remembering). This was thanks to the simplicity of the performed motor task, which was free-style dribbling of balls, a task appropriate for such a child's psyche. The child was able to imagine the correct movement and carry it out. This made it much easier to combine two decisions: what to do and how, into a single whole. This was also thanks to the freedom they were given in decision-making and learning from their mistakes and copying others. In Group B on the other hand, the players were not capable of making the right decisions. First, the motor task was complex and inappropriate for the child's psychological development and his age. Secondly the psyche of the young football player was unable to take in so much information at one time and thus make the correct decisions. Thirdly, because the child was unable to perform complex tasks, the more so as it could not combine decisions (what to do and how?) into one whole. Fourthly, the players could not learn from their mistakes, because the motor activities were complex and too difficult to perform.

The conclusion is that correct decision-making is dependent on the performed technique, action, and especially psychomotor development. Development of the psyche has a huge impact on decision-making. Simplicity of the action and a technique appropriate

to the child's psychological needs in terms of recognition and understanding will help in making the right decisions. Complex motor tasks applied too early will make it extremely difficult to make any kind of decision. That is why in the process of teaching, and players learning decision-making, one should always take into account psychological development, which will have an impact on the following elements-Fig. 64



Example Two: Two groups of 10 year old players. Group A was given the task of not only keeping possession of the ball, but also of making the right decision for the situation on the pitch: passing to a teammate or dribbling in a game of 3v3. Group B had the same task in a game of 5v5. During the course of the training, in group A the coach merely observed and sometimes without interrupting class, instructed individual players. In Group B however, the coach dominated the situation and the players waited to see what he would show them or say in a given situation on the pitch. The players of which group were able to make the greater number of correct decisions?

Well, the young players in Group A made more right decisions. This was mainly due to the number of choices and options that the player with the ball had. The situation was indeed complex, but sufficiently appropriate to the players' psychological development and social perception (perception and recognition of a situation). Since the game was characterized by only a small number of choices, the players were able in most cases to choose the proper decision. Good choices remained in the memory. In this way these could be used properly in the game. The coach himself also facilitated their task (see quote), as he merely watched and allowed the players to learn from their own mistakes. In other words, if a player made a wrong choice, he could find that out for himself and in the next, similar situation choose a better option.

Since the game was appropriate to their psychological

development, a player not only improved his decision-making, but also developed speed of perception and prediction. Thanks to this, when a player found himself in a similar situation while playing a game with a larger number of choices, he was more likely to make the right decision. In group B however, the players were subjected to a more complex situation. In this case, the player in possession of the ball had several options to choose from and a large amount of information. The young player's brain and neurological system were unable to find the correct solution to such large amounts of information and options. From a psychological point of view, the player was not adequately prepared to understand the situation and make the right decision. Nor did the coach help, as he was thinking and making decisions for the players, often shouting and giving instructions on what to do in a given situation. In this way the child cannot make any independent decisions and if its decision was a good one, it could not remember it later, and if wrong, could not learn from his own mistake.

The conclusion is that we need to take the psychological development and age of players into account when planning a game. We need to remember that the more choices the player will be given in the initial stage of learning, the harder it will be to make the right decision and remember it. The type of decisions and their choice is closely related to the psychological and emotional intelligence of the practicing players. If we strongly influence the choices made by players, they will rarely be able to understand situations during a game and choose the right option. If we allow a child to make decisions while playing "hide-and-seek", let's permit him do the same during a football game. This applies not only to parents, but also to coaches who work with children and adolescents.

3.4. “Negative stress occurs when the training process is carried out improperly: when inflated goals and expectations are placed on a child. A similar effect can be due to too early specialization and starting in competitions, where the level of the opponents far exceeds the child’s capabilities, and at the same time it feels pressurized to win by people of importance, such as a parent or coach” – Dariusz Nowicki

Mark was a 9-year old boy when he came to train the first time. I was amazed at his talent and pitch intelligence, which were far superior to those of his peers. He was always bursting with energy and good humour. The boy changed beyond recognition during matches. He was shy, nervous and afraid to make decisions on the pitch. I tried to find out and understand why this was so, trying various methods until one day by accident I witnessed a conversation between Mark and his dad. This discussion took place just before a game. His dad talked the whole time about winning, increasing the stress and pressure on the young player, who was in no way able to resist the vision drawn by his father. The child’s negative emotions began to increase, such as crying or aggression, which were the result of his parent’s inflated expectations and sick ambitions. My priority has always been the good of the child, so I decided to talk to his parent alone. In the short run, this had the desired effect. When my team started to lose match after match, Mark’s father came to me and told me that his son must play in a team that wins, because that was the best way for his son to develop. I was sorry for the talented youngster, but in that situation, I could do nothing. I could only hope that the father would allow his child to enjoy the game of playing football. That was 7 years ago and as fate would have it, I met Mark later as a teenager. Unfortunately, the once talented 9-year old boy no longer even plays recreationally and as he says himself, it was his own father with those overblown ambitions that took away his desire to play.

I think there are plenty of other examples out there, but not all end in this way. It seems to me that few coaches and parents know how much harm they do to their child or player by acting so. Such behaviour with respect to players causes the phenomenon of “negative stress”. This has a very bad effect on the psyche and physical development and also creates problems in learning the game of football. It also leads to disturbance of the body’s homeostasis. The consequences of stress on children and young players are as follows:

- Lack of positive thinking in the future (a child can learn this only when training and the match bring him joy)
- Reduced self-confidence to the point that the player no longer believes in himself
- An excessively high degree of arousal of the whole body, leading to negative emotional states, particularly in children aged 5-12, who are not able to control such feelings as fear, anger, frustration and anxiety
- learning and other disorders leading to psychomotor problems
- disturbances in the normal functioning of the body

We need to remember, therefore, to ensure that the objectives and tasks set young players are not only appropriate to their technical and tactical skills and physical abilities, but above all to their psychological needs and requirements. A relative assessment of these factors, as well as skilful and positive communication with young footballers helps in adaptation, increases motivation and self-confidence, removes onerous pressures, and enables the child to show its full abilities.

IV.SOCIAL PREPARATION

4.1 “Youth sports are also an important social activity in which children can make new friends and acquaintances and became a part of an ever expanding social network. Finally of course, youth sports are (or should be) just plain fun!” – Robert E. Smith (author of “Way to go, coach!”)

Social factors largely determine why youngsters want to play and get involved in sports. Right from birth, a young person builds a social environment around itself (family, school, etc …), in which he feels safe, secure and can develop his talents. He develops his sociometric position around peers, whom he knows appreciates and likes to be with. He selects the environment in which he has a good time and feels safe.

In order to better understand the social foundations, thanks to which children begin to play football and participate in classes, I conducted a survey in which I asked one question with three possible answers provided, from which the respondent had to select one (the question and answers below).

1. Why do you play football?
    a. because it’s good fun
    b. because my friends also play
    c. because I want to learn and do better

The survey’s respondents were girls and boys aged 7-12. It was conducted among 100 respondents. The results are shown in Table 1

Age of respondents and result as a percentage	7-9 years	10-12 years

a) because it's good fun	55%	52 %
b) because my friends also play	24%	22%
c) because I want to learn and do better	21 %	26%

An analysis of the results confirms the words of Robert E. Smith. The most important sociological factors attracting youngsters to ball games are: fun and the opportunity to be with friends. Far down the list is the opportunity to develop and learn the game. Another interesting finding is that both seven and twelve year olds give the same answers despite their significant differences, especially in psychological development. I think the survey's results are interesting for trainers working with this age group. The organisation of training and the adaptation of its content to the sociological needs of young players will be a milestone that will instil a passion for football and ensure children learn to appreciate this wonderful sport. With the above knowledge at his disposal, the aim of every coach should be the selection of an appropriate training program covering not only the technical and tactical aspects of the game, but also the sociometric elements.

It is also good to know something of the child's closest social environment (family, school, etc). The conditions under which a young player operates outside the training program and matches directly impinge on his behaviour during the course of a training program. If a lot of negative emotions are aroused in the immediate social environment, namely the family, in training young players will look for distraction from the problems that have a negative impact on their psyche. The players I refer to in this case are teenagers (aged 13-18). For them, the role of the coach is not only to plan interesting activities, but to make the players feel needed, important and able to count on his support and trust. We are talking about positive sociological support and the positive impact of the sports environment, which should balance the negative emotions that intensify in the immediate vicinity of the player.

Another interesting sociological phenomenon that must be taken into account in the training and development of young players are interpersonal relationships. To better introduce this issue, I include below research that I conducted on a group of players 14 and 16 years old. The analysis concerned interpersonal relationships in the study

groups (formations) of players. Sociometric position in the team is an empirical indicator of the interpersonal relationships prevailing. Analysis of the sociometric test results shows that in one as in the other team, there are some players who are isolated and others that are popular in the group (tables 25-26).

Table 25 Sociometric test of 14-year olds

Selected Selecting L.p.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1.K.J p				2					3					1		
2.Z.R o													1			3
3.K.T p				2	3	1										
4.K.J p	1					2								3		
5.K.R p	1		3											3		
6.N.D n									1				3		2	
7.F.K n	1	3				2										
8.B.D p		2														
9.S.K o								1			2					3
10.B.A b		1												2		3
11.S.T o							3		1	2						
12.B.J o					1	3					2					
13.M.G n				2		1						3				
14.N.K o						1	3									2
15.Ż.M p							1					2	3			
16.N.T o														3	1	
Total Points	3	6	3	6	4	10	7	1	5	2	4	5	7	12	3	11
Number of times selected	3	3	1	3	2	6	3	1	3	1	2	2	3	5	2	4

Table 26 Sociometric test of 16-year olds

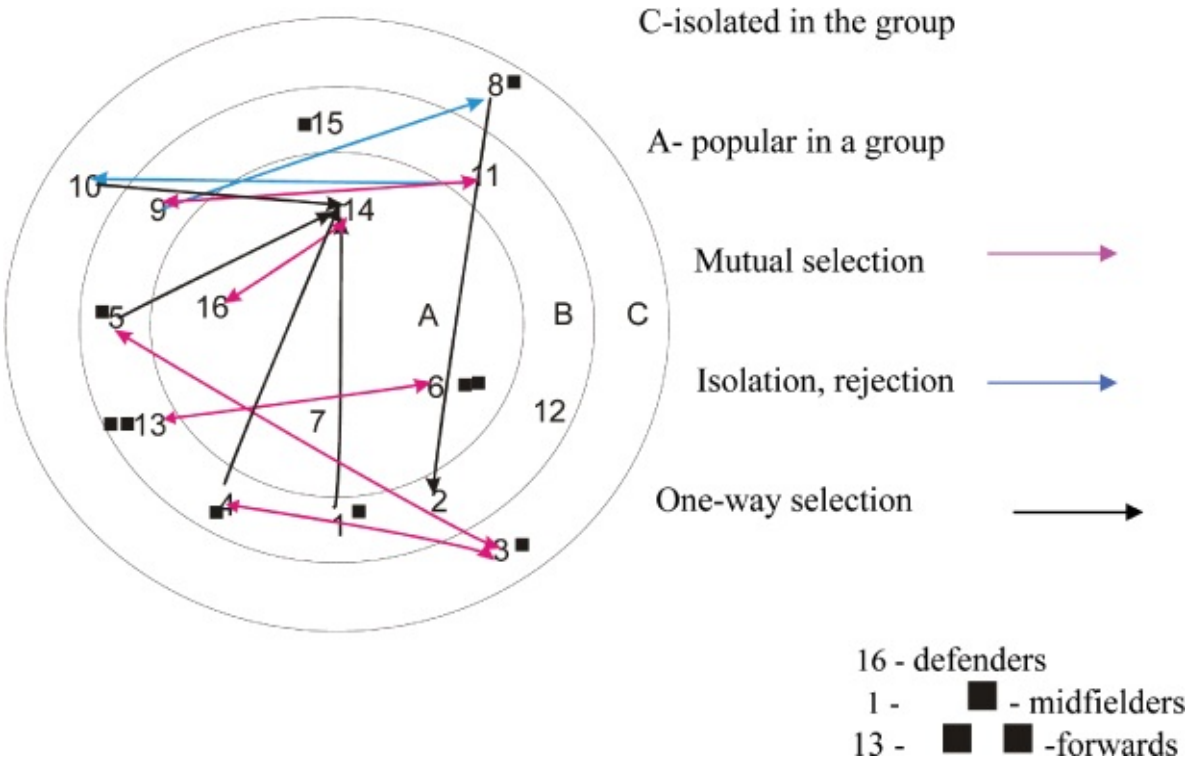
Selected / Selecting L.p.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1.F.F n		2														3
2.S.K p											1		2		3	
3.G.K n		1					2		3							
4.C.A o								2			1			3		
5.K.G n				3				2	1							
6.G.G p			3		2					1						
7.S.P o						1			2							2
8.F.K p							3				1					2
9. M.M o	3	1						2								
10.P.K p									1			3				
11.T.Ł o							2			1			3			
12.B.G n	3					1					2					
13 Ż.P n	1											3		2		
14.F.M n									2	1						3
15.B.Ł o							2						3			
16.W.A n	1													2	3	
Total Points	8	4	3	3	2	2	9	6	9	3	5	6	8	7	6	10
Number of times selected	4	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	4

The data from tables 25 and 26 shows who are the least popular

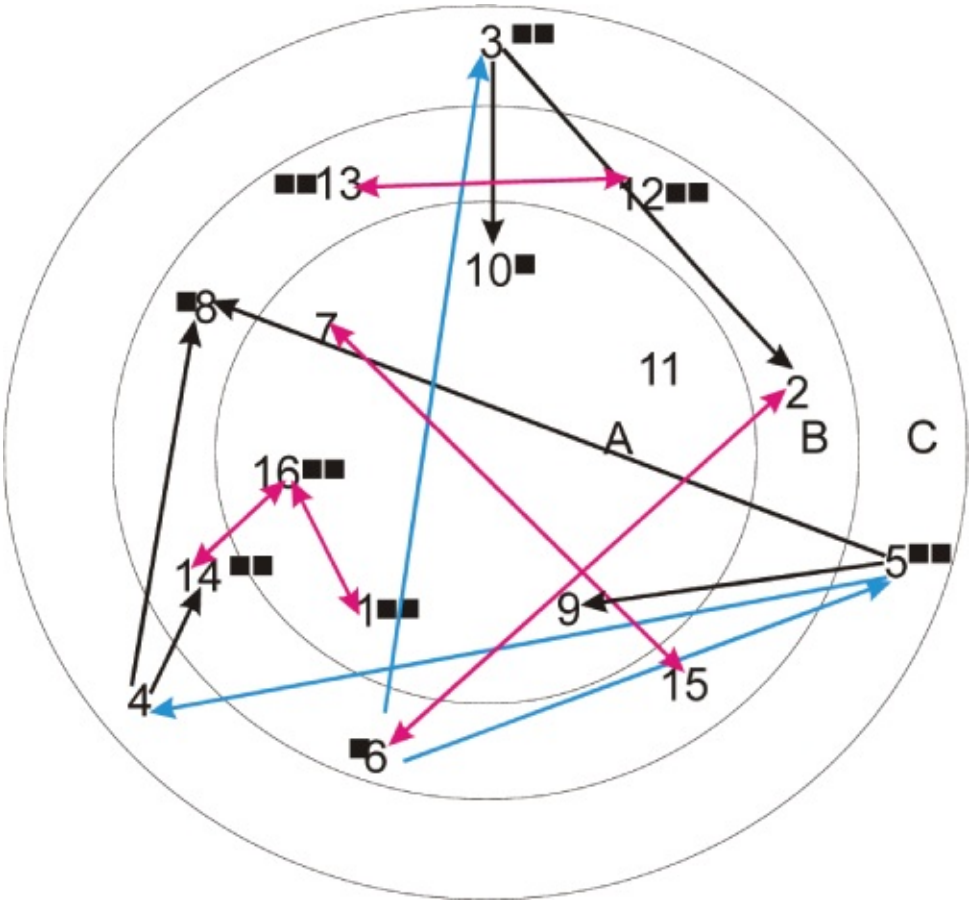
players in their groups, i.e. they are the least number of times selected and have the least amount of points, for example: GK - 3 points, number of times selected - 1, CH.A - 3 points, number of times selected - 1 and KG - 2 points, number of times selected - 1 in the 16-year old junior group. However, the most popular are for example: WA - 10 points, number of times selected – 4 and SP - 9 points, number of times selected - 4.

In the group of 14-year olds the most isolated are KT - 2 points, number of times selected - 1 and BD - 1 point, number of times selected - 1. Highly respected among the group were ND - 10 points, number of times selected - 6 and NK - 12 points, number of times selected - 6.

These tables are the basis for further analysis and interpretation in order to obtain an insight into the group's internal structures (e.g. for each formation). Based on this tabular listing, a pie shaped sociogram was prepared for both groups, which provides an image of their internal structure (Figures 1 and 2).



A pie shaped sociogram showing the inner structure of the junior team at the age of 14 - (Diagram)



A pie shaped sociogram showing the internal structure of the junior team at the age of 16 - (Diagram)

Both diagrams show the internal structure of the study groups, their interpersonal relationships. They demonstrate the hierarchical diversity in the group, i.e. (from stars, through the moderately popular to the lonely members of the group). This diversity is evident in both groups, with circle A - popular in the group, circle C – isolated and alone, and circle B – moderately popular within the group.

In addition, the two diagrams enable us to see the mutual selections of individual players (including various formations). In the group of juniors - 14 years old, we see this in Nos. 14 and 16, 3 and 4, 9 and 11, with these players preferring to cooperate on the pitch together in that formation in which they occur. This demonstrates the strong interpersonal relationships in particular formations. In the junior group of 16-year olds there are also characteristic combinations, such as 7 and 15, 16 and 14 and 16 and 1.

It should also be noted that particular players mutually selected each other in those circles to which they both belonged, e.g. 1 and 4 in circle B in the juniors group of 14 year olds and 16 year olds and 1 –

circle A in the juniors group of 16 year olds. This demonstrates the strong friendly ties that exist between these players, and the fact that it was with these players they would prefer to train in pairs during classes or meet up with after training.

V. CONCLUSION

I believe that the contents of this book will help the reader better understand the training of children and adolescents and the main aspects of the same. I hope that the exercises suggested in this publication will be a source of inspiration for coaches to conduct interesting training sessions that are also appropriate to the age and capabilities of players. I think that the conclusions from the research and analysis will allow us to look at the mental and sociological aspects of training from a more detailed perspective. These will bring about changes in the preparation and conducting of training programs. They will result in changes of attitude and better training of young footballers.

My greatest hope is that the information contained in this book will help to change the thinking of those for whom results are more important than the development of young players. The smile on a child's face, regardless of his ability level, will be an unspoken sign of happiness and the fact that he is having fun. I wish this philosophy was the norm and not just the occasional exception.

Finally, I trust that the most important elements of training will occur together, rather than separately and independently of each other. Because such are the requirements imposed by the modern game. Conducting a training program that deviates from what commonly takes place during a match makes no sense. The innovative solutions and methods of physical, technical, psychological and sociological development suggested by this book will help trainers to keep one step ahead. I believe coaches will benefit from the ideas propounded and that they will adapt them to the needs of the players with whom they work. If they use their imagination and show a little creativity, they can also use these ideas in other directions in accordance with their own philosophy.

Since all the key factors of a player's development are closely related, I hope that the proposed exercises will positively affect the

personal development of young players. What's more, they will help to better understand the game and make the right decisions in complex situations on the pitch. In order to achieve this objective, I have improved the games and exercises by adding the elements of perception, prediction and peripheral vision, and combined this with physical, technical and tactical aspects. The whole is based on a psychological and social foundation relative to the age of the players. I firmly believe that the future of football lies in the development of pitch intelligence. For this to be carried out correctly, the player needs to find the right solution in various match situations. To achieve this, what are needed are exercises and games that contain combined elements: physical, technical and mental. Thanks to this, the player will develop imagination and creativity, which will not only result in his making better decisions, but also in his remembering them. The more he repeats these, the more his technique will be perfected. Elements of rivalry will foster psychological development. For those who already have their own philosophy and considerable experience, I believe that this book will provide new ideas and solutions. As for those who are just beginning their adventure with football, I hope that it indicates a path to be followed in the training of children and youth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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Key to diagrams:



- pitch

- players

- goal

- ball

- markers

- training hoops

- training ladders

Ball movement

Moving without the ball

dribbling

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After completing a Masters degree in sport science at Academy of Physical Education in Warsaw, Pawel has focussed on football coaching. Polish national travelled to United States where he has been coach to numerous clubs and schools. He has worked as an Assistant Coaching Director for Spectrum Soccer Schools. Since his return to the Europe (United Kingdom) in 2009, he started work in football industry there. This gave him the opportunity to analyse football training in community and academy settings. Based upon the observations, he introduced to more challenging and creative ways of training that took into account children's development. From here, his interest in cognitive sport psychology and fundamental movements for young players developed. He introduced conclusions in his first book: "Coordination In Soccer. A New Road for Successful Coaching"