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To-do:

Note: missing from curriculum:

- 1v1 defending
- Need better breakdown in passing

Missing from Phases

- Passing: Other ways of striking ball (chip, ping, shot). Add to Reference Material?

1. Foreward/Introduction	3
2. Curriculum per Age Group	5
2.1. Kindergarten	5
2.2. Grade 1	5
2.3. Grade 2	6
2.4. Grade 3/4	7
2.5. Grade 5/6	8
2.6. Grade 7/8 and Older	9
3. Practice Structure	11
3.1. Phases of a Good Practice	11
3.2. Rules of Thumb for Running a Good Practice	11
4. Practice Phases	12
4.1. Warm-Up Phase	12
4.1.1. “Beast Mode Soccer”	12
4.1.2. Dennis Mueller’s Daily Footwork Drill	12
4.2. Technical/Technique Phase	13
4.2.1. Dribbling	13
Cone Layouts	14
Training Exercises:	14
4.2.2. 1v1 Attacking	16
4.2.2.1. Simple, One-Touch-Only Moves	16
4.2.2.2. Standing-Start Moves	16
4.2.2.3. Two-Touch Moves	16
4.2.3. 1v1 Defending	17
4.2.4. Turns	19
4.2.4.1. 90-Degree Turns	19
4.2.4.2. 180-Degree (and Greater) Turns	19
4.2.5. Passing & Receiving	19
4.2.6. Controlling Balls on the Ground	20
4.2.7. Controlling Balls in the Air	21
4.3. Decision-Making Phase	22
4.3.1. Rondo	22
4.3.2. Pressure/Cover	23
4.3.3. Numbers Up, Equal, & Down	23
4.3.3.1. One Attacker vs Two Defenders (1v2)	23
4.3.3.2. Two Attackers vs One Defender (2v1)	24
4.3.3.3. Two Attackers vs Two Defenders (2v2)	24
4.3.3.4. Three Attackers vs Two Defenders (3v2)	25
4.3.3.5. Two Attackers vs Three Defenders (2v3)	25
4.3.3.6. Three Attackers vs Three Defenders (3v3)	25

4.3.4. Maintaining and Breaking Defensive Lines	25
4.4. Small-Sided Game (SSG) Phase	27
4.4.1. Directionless “Keep Away”	27
4.4.2. Directional to End-Zone	27
4.4.3. “Bank Points” to End-Zone	28
4.4.4. Add Goals (and Optionally Keepers)	28
5. Evaluation	29
5.1. Dribbling	29
5.2. 1v1 Attacking	29
5.3. Turns	29
5.4. Passing & Receiving	29
5.5. Controlling Balls on the Ground	29
5.6. Controlling Balls in the Air	29
5.7. Decision-Making	29
6. Reference Material	31
6.1. MYSA Physically Distanced Session Plans	31
6.2. FIFA 11+ ACL (and Other) Injury Prevention Program	31

1. Foreward/Introduction

You will get the most out of this curriculum if you have read & understood [this coaching presentation](#), which gives the narrative Big Picture to help you make sense of this bucket of soccer coaching information. But here is the summary:

- Mission: to train soccer that is winning, good, and FUN.
 - Winning is more fun than losing, and good soccer wins more often.
- **Big Idea #1:** “Negative Training” is a Real & Bad Thing. Recognize it. Avoid it.
 - “Negative training” is coaching that makes players WORSE rather than better.
 - It is NOT simply coaching of the form ‘Do NOT’ that makes players BETTER.
- **Big Idea #2:** Faster, better, complementary “OODA Loops” win team games like soccer.
 - “OODA Loops” = “Observe, Orient, Decide, & Act.”
- **Big Idea #3:** Ball possession wins soccer games. Pass to possess, shoot, & score.
 - Only the team with the ball can score. Passing successfully leads to shots & scoring.
 - Keeping and recovering the ball should be the focus of almost ALL of your training.
- **Big Idea #4:** Players learn by “not forgetting.”
 - Repetition is the only way, and “spaced repetition” is the best way.
- Putting all this together is good coaching.
 - Repeatedly train ball-possession oriented OODA loops, and your teams will win more often.

2. Curriculum per Age Group

A plus-sign (“+”) indicates something new to introduce during the year. All Kindergarten elements are new despite the lack of a plus-sign. The other elements lacking a plus-sign should have been taught to your players by their previous coaches.

2.1. [Kindergarten](#)

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)

[Passing & Receiving, yes, but specifically???](#)

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldo touch](#)

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)

2.2. [Grade 1](#)

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)
- [+ Forward, high speed](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)
- [+ Double lunge move](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)
- [+ Outside foot cut](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)
- [+ Stop turn](#)

[Passing & Receiving, yes, but specifically???](#)

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)
- [+ Inside foot drag](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldinho touch](#)
- + Inside foot drag

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)
- + [Rondo 3v1 \(rather than 5v1\)](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)

2.3. [Grade 2](#)

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)
- [Forward, high speed](#)
- + [R/L only](#)
- + [Inside cut-catch](#)
- + [Outsides](#)
- + [Roll-catch](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)
- [Double lunge move](#)
- + [Scissors](#)
- + [Scissors-drag](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)
- [Outside foot cut](#)
- + [Inside Xavi turn](#)
- + [Outside Xavi turn](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)
- [Stop turn](#)
- + [Rivelino stepover](#)

[Passing & Receiving: yes, but specifically???](#)

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)
- [Inside foot drag](#)
- + [Outside foot drag](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldinho touch](#)
- Inside foot drag
- + Outside foot drag

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)

- [+ Rondo 5v1](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)
- [+ 4v4 keep-away](#)

2.4. [Grade 3/4](#)

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)
- [Forward, high speed](#)
- [R/L only](#)
- [Inside cut-catch](#)
- [Outsides](#)
- [Roll-catch](#)
- [+ Inside/outside](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)
- [Double lunge move](#)
- [Scissors](#)
- [Scissors-drag](#)
- [+ Croqueta](#)
- [+ Rivelino](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)
- [Outside foot cut](#)
- [Inside Xavi turn](#)
- [Outside Xavi turn](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)
- [Stop turn](#)
- [Rivelino stepover](#)

[Passing & Receiving, yes, but specifically???](#)

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)
- [Inside foot drag](#)
- [Outside foot drag](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldinho touch](#)
- Inside foot drag
- Outside foot drag
- + Thigh

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)
- [Rondo 5v1](#)

- [+ Rondo 8v2](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)
- [4v4 keep-away](#)
- [+ 4v4 directional to end-zone](#)

2.5. [Grade 5/6](#)

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)
- [Forward, high speed](#)
- [R/L only](#)
- [Inside cut-catch](#)
- [Outsides](#)
- [Roll-catch](#)
- [Inside/outside](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)
- [Double lunge move](#)
- [Scissors](#)
- [Scissors-drag](#)
- [Croqueta](#)
- [Rivelino](#)
- [+ Elastico](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)
- [Outside foot cut](#)
- [Inside Xavi turn](#)
- [Outside Xavi turn](#)
- [+ Vee](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)
- [Stop turn](#)
- [Rivelino stepover](#)

[Passing & Receiving: yes, but specifically???](#)

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)
- [Inside foot drag](#)
- [Outside foot drag](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldinho touch](#)
- Inside foot drag
- Outside foot drag
- Thigh

- + Chest

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)
- [Rondo 5v1](#)
- [Rondo 8v2](#)
- [+ Rondo 12v3](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)
- [4v4 keep-away](#)
- [4v4 directional to end-zone](#)
- [+ 4v4 "Bank Point" to end-zone](#)

2.6. Grade 7/8 and Older

Dribble:

- [Forward, low speed](#)
- [Forward, high speed](#)
- [R/L only](#)
- [Inside cut-catch](#)
- [Outsides](#)
- [Roll-catch](#)
- [Inside/outside](#)

1v1:

- [Lunge move](#)
- [Double lunge move](#)
- [Scissors](#)
- [Scissors-drag](#)
- [Croqueta](#)
- [Rivelino](#)
- [Elastico](#)
- [+ Roulette](#)

Turns: 90 degree

- [Inside foot cut](#)
- [Outside foot cut](#)
- [Inside Xavi turn](#)
- [Outside Xavi turn](#)
- [Vee](#)

Turns: 180 degree

- [Drag pullback](#)
- [Stop turn](#)
- [Rivelino stepover](#)

Passing & Receiving, yes, but specifically???

Controlling Balls on the Ground:

- [Step-on roll](#)

- [Inside foot drag](#)
- [Outside foot drag](#)

Controlling Balls in the Air:

- [Ronaldinho touch](#)
- Inside foot drag
- Outside foot drag
- Thigh
- + Chest

Decision-Making:

- [Rondo 5v0](#)
- [Rondo 5v1](#)
- [Rondo 8v2](#)
- [Rondo 12v3](#)
- [+ Moving Rondo](#)

SSGs:

- [3v3 keep-away](#)
- [4v4 keep-away](#)
- [4v4 directional to end-zone](#)
- [4v4 "Bank Point" to end-zone](#)
- [+ 4v4 Adding goals](#)

3. Practice Structure

3.1. Phases of a Good Practice

1. Warm-Ups (10 minutes)
2. Technical (20 minutes)
3. Decision-Making (20 minutes)
4. Small-Sided Games (remainder)

3.2. Rules of Thumb for Running a Good Practice

- DO NOT have players waste time doing fitness/warm-ups without a ball.
- DO NOT have players waste time by talking & fidgeting.
 - When you talk, insist all players put a foot on a stopped ball.
- DO NOT have players waste time in long lines. Make more, shorter lines.
- DO NOT have players waste time chasing out-of-play balls.
 - Have assistant coach or CORled individuals fetch & serve balls.
 - Pre-position replacement balls at edges of play area(s). Round up later.
- DO NOT let players practice bad habits to permanence, and become worse players.
- DO NOT “over coach” or “joystick” players.
 - Teaching players to wait for your yelling is NEGATIVE TRAINING.
 - Instead of “pass to Susie!” use “where is your help?”
 - If no help, use “help her!”
 - If players make wrong decisions, that OODA loop needs to be (re?) trained.
- DO NOT do full-field or full-team scrimmages beyond introducing the formation.
 - Players not near the ball will be “spectators,” not running OODA loops.
 - That is NEGATIVE TRAINING (and more wasted time).
 - Use Small-Sided Games instead (4v4 max) - COVID-permitting.
- DO know what OODA Loops you’re trying to teach in the decision-making phase..
 - Observe your team’s performances closely to see what needs work.
 - Remember to use “The Five Whys” to get to the root cause(s).
 - Train correct root causes OODA loops each week until the problem goes away.
- DO strip out every distraction that isn’t part of the given OODA loop.
 - Help players observe and orient successfully (by avoiding sensory overload).
- DO have a progression in mind for the OODA Loop.
- DO reinforce the technical & decision-making elements of the technical & decision-making phases in the SSGs
 - Award points, etc., only for what you want to see.

4. Practice Phases

4.1. Warm-Up Phase

Objective: Master the ball for the “Act” phase of OODA Loops (Observe, Orient, Decide, & Act). Aim for 500 ball-touches at a minimum.

Time Allotment: Limit to 10 minutes.

Whichever of the two (2) footwork programs you pick, introduce one new element per week (right after your team has run through the ones they already know so they’re a little gassed).

4.1.1. “Beast Mode Soccer”

- 6 minutes, 600 touches. Designed for small grid. Ideal for physical/social distancing.
- [YouTube video](#)

4.1.2. Dennis Mueller’s Daily Footwork Drill

- 7 minutes, 575 touches.
- Includes turns & 1v1 moves - those are difficult in small grid squares.
- [Text breakdown](#)
- [YouTube playlist](#)

4.2. Technical/Technique Phase

Objective: Prepare for Act phase of OODA Loops.

Time Allotment: 20 minutes, or 25% of your session.

4.2.1. [Dribbling](#)

All our players must know how to dribble properly, and it looks like [this](#). Coaching points:

1. ball very close to feet,
2. delicate, frequent, and simple touches,
3. all surfaces of his foot used,
4. good body posture (center of gravity low, ready to explode away),
5. simple body feints rather than tricky ball movements to unbalance defenders, and
6. eyes not solely focused on the ball, but on the defender and the space beyond.

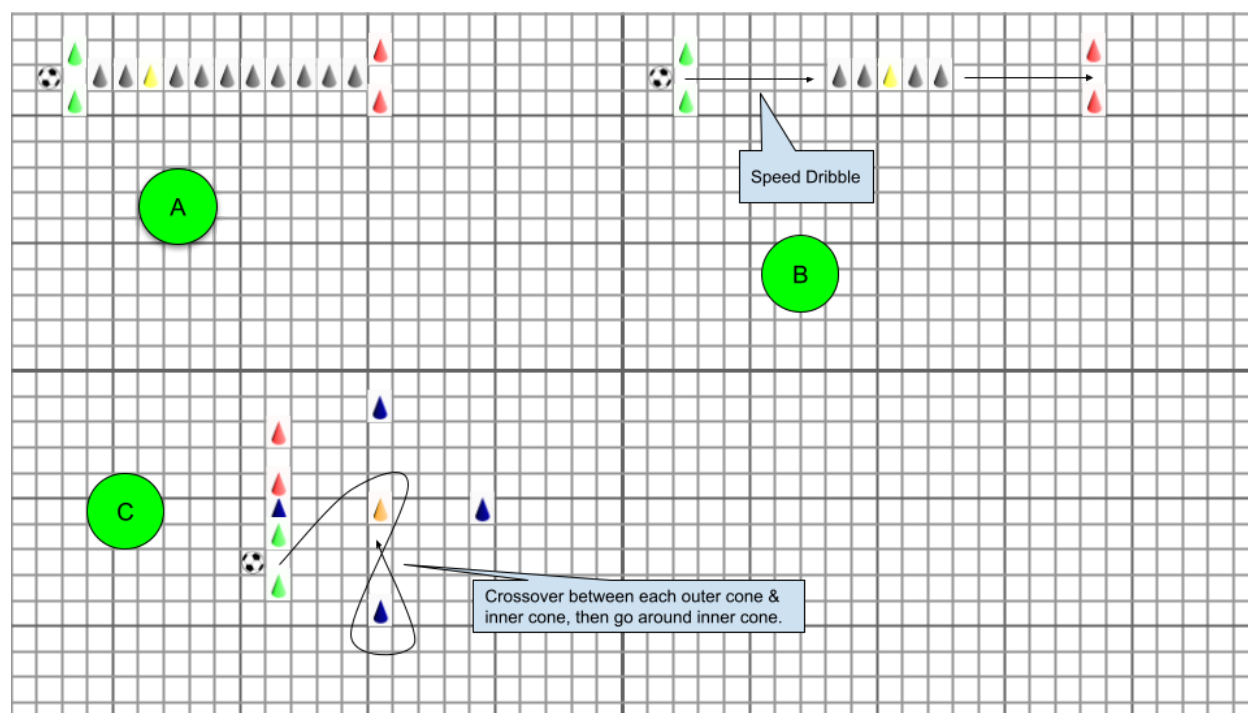
Using BOTH feet with proper technique:

1. [This “how to teach” forward, low-speed dribbling video](#) is gold. It shows how to teach good technique, and also the most common mistakes players make (and how to correct them). This is the first row in the following skill matrix.
2. [This high-speed dribbling follow-on](#) from the same source uses the same technique. Second row in the skill matrix.
3. For older players, teach [the dribbling techniques of the first half of this drill](#), eventually doing them at speed. Each technique from the video is listed in order in rows three through seven of the skill matrix.

Skill	K	1	2	3&4	5&6	7&8	HS
Forward Low Speed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Forward High Speed		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R or L Only			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inside Cut-Catch Croqueta			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Outsides Only			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Roll-Catch			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inside + Outside				✓	✓	✓	✓

4.2.1.2 Cone Layouts



4.2.1.3 Training Exercises

- “Foul / No-Foul”: Players in pairs with one ball. [This video](#) gives some quick coaching points, and shows why it is critical to develop this skill. Player in possession screens and shields ball from opponent. Count losses of possession in (say) 30 seconds. For U-Littles, use [this video](#) (no fouling at all, ever). [This video](#) gives the coaching points in more detail. For more advanced stuff, including some dubious techniques that are nevertheless widespread, see [this video](#). Whatever you do, caution players not to hurt each other or rip shirts or kick from behind. Progression:
 - No foul
 - Defender can push
 - Defender can pull
 - Defender can push & pull
 - Back to no foul

- “Knock-out by Coach”: Players dribble own balls in confined area (smaller is tougher). Coach knocks out a given player’s ball, and then that player is “out” and must leave area. ONLY knock out ball NOT under tight control of any given player (penalize bad dribbling, not good dribbling). Helps if you carry on like a lunatic. Progression:
 - No knocking out - just get in their way
 - Start knocking out balls
 - After you’ve shown 1v1 moves, require them to be thrown on command
 - Require players to throw moves to beat coach (can’t just turn and run)
- “Mud Monster” (courtesy of R Deeks): Use half the field. The kids have to stay within the lines. One player (without a ball) is designated the 'mud monster'. The others have to dribble round the half field. The mud monster has to tackle the dribbling players and kick their ball away. If that happens, the player is 'stuck', and has to stand with their legs apart and their arms wide. Other players have to free any 'stuck' players by kicking their ball through the stuck player’s legs. The freed player can then retrieve their ball and carry on the game. The game is over when all the players are stuck, or when the mud monster is clearly having no impact. Best to start off with one mud monster, but you can start increasing it to 2 or 3, depending. You can also have the coach act as a mud monster at first, and they can control the speed of the game and whether the kids are 'winning' or not. There are also a couple of alternatives:
 - the mud-monsters also have balls and they just have to 'tag' (touch) a player to get them stuck.
 - You could also have the mud monster with a ball but they have to tag a player by hitting them with the ball. We’re still figuring it out! The kids seem to like it though as it incorporates tag plus tackling.
- “Monkey Tail”: Players each with own ball in confined area, plus a pinnie hanging out of the back of their shorts like monkey tails. Players try to collect as many monkey tails as possible WITHOUT losing their own (at which point they are out). Play continues until only one player left. Player with most monkey tails wins (not necessarily the surviving player!).
- Drill “A” at top top left¹: Use as many cones as seem useful. Player waits to start until player in front of him/her reaches yellow “caution” cone. Two repeats: first for form; second for speed.
 - Right/Left
 - Outsides only
 - Insides “croqueta” or “cut-catch”
 - Insides roll-catch
 - “Inside-outside”
 - “Vee” turn
 - Backwards (ball crossed over behind standing leg)
 - Sideways roll with trailing leg, then alternating push/pull with leading leg
- Drill “B” at top right “Speed Dribble”: Odd number of cones ensures speed dribbles use same foot. First speed dribble forces “reeling ball in” for tight turns. Second gives

¹ From Jeff Lamy at Mill City FC.

opportunity to explode away. Two repeats: form and then speed. As “A” above, EXCEPT no: “vee,” backwards, or sideways.

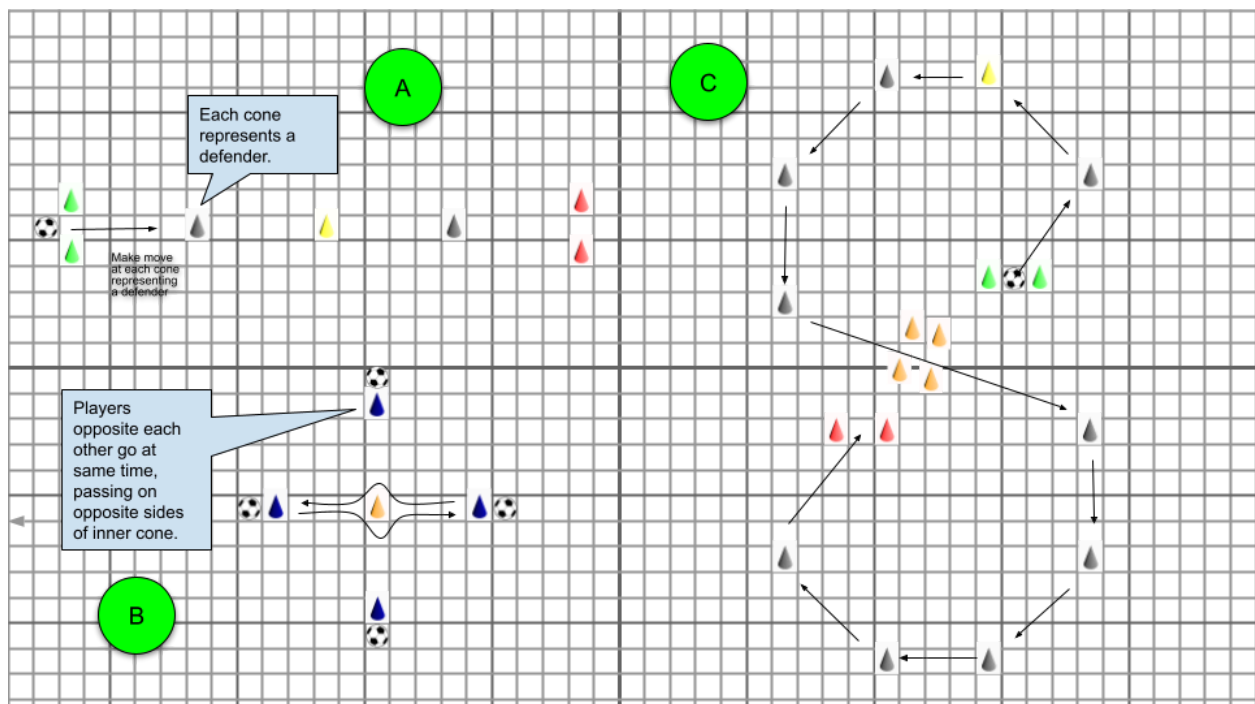
- Drill “C” at bottom: Players cross over between each exterior cone and the interior cone, and then round that interior cone. One player at a time.
 - R/L
 - Inside only
 - Outside only

4.2.2. 1v1 [Attacking](#)

To the best of my knowledge [this](#) video, starting [here](#), is the only one in existence that uses cameras and eye-trackers to REALLY show how a world-class dribbler (Cristiano Ronaldo) subconsciously analyzes his opponent’s body posture in order to win 1v1 duels. Winning these duels is sometimes the only way to break down an organized defense. You can see the skills that need to be developed, even if to a much more rudimentary level than Ronaldo’s:

- such comfort with the ball the dribbler doesn’t need to look at it
- such comfort with the ball the dribbler can focus on the defender and the space behind
- all surfaces of foot used
- ball kept close
- fast feet

Cone Layouts



Drill “A” at top left: dark/yellow cones represent defenders. Advantages: few cones, so can make two lines (and thus intra-squad races); compact space-wise; easily supervised. Disadvantages: no real change of direction; only one player moving at a time (fewer total team repetitions per unit time).

Drill “B” at bottom left: Some variants have players go not to the opposite cone (origin of the other moving player), but to the side cones (90 degree turns). Advantages: harder for players, as they don’t want to run into each other. Disadvantage: harder to supervise (two players moving); importantly, if a player is having trouble s/he cannot throw the move several times in a row to “get it.”

Drill “C” at right: Players make 5 left turns in a row, then dribble through the orange cone chute, and then do 5 right turns in a row. Advantages: players seem to learn the move more quickly if they can try 5 times in quick succession (they usually “get it” by the 5th turn); and seem to turn the opposite way more quickly by simply reversing the first way. Disadvantages: space-intensive, cone-intensive, and takes a while to lay out before practice. But it seems to work better than other methods.

4.2.2.1. Simple, One-Touch-Only Moves

To get started, here are a few simple moves requiring only ONE touch on the ball. These moves are best taught in pairs (“mirror moves”) so that the player can go either left or right using the same basic move. Introduce them over the course of the next few weeks, whether one at a time or in their mirror move pairings, at the rate your team can successfully learn them.

Please also note that 3 out of 4 are using the OUTSIDE of the foot for that single ball touch, and that the ball must be close to the dribbler’s feet – two “proper dribbling technique” points from above which you should constantly correct in your players’ dribbling.

- The “single lunge,” or “plant-push,” or the “side step fake”: How to teach it [here](#).
- The “double lunge” mirror move: [here](#).
- The “scissors” and its mirror move, the “scissors drag”: [here](#).

4.2.2.2. Standing-Start Moves

- [Rivelino/Stepover](#) (can be used as [180 degree turn](#))
- Elastico - how to teach it [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)

4.2.2.3. Two-Touch Moves

- [Croqueta](#)
- Zidane/Maradona “[Roulette](#)”

Skill	K	1	2	3&4	5&6	7&8	HS
Lunge	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Double Lunge		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scissors			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scissors Drag			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rivelino				✓	✓	✓	✓
Elastico					✓	✓	✓
Croqueta				✓	✓	✓	✓
Roulette						✓	✓

4.2.3. [1v1 Defending](#)

By now, your players should be able to dribble properly and perform some 1v1 moves. So now we have some 1v1 offensive skills against which we can defend. But first, a question almost no-one answers correctly the first time:

Q: Why do we defend?

A: No, not to prevent the other team from scoring - but to GET THE BALL BACK.

Briefly:

- Every moment you have the ball, you can score and the opponent cannot.
- You will inevitably, repeatedly lose the ball, so you must learn to win it back quickly.
- To win the ball back, individual players must first master 1v1 defending, and later master group defending (by pressing, and by layering on zonal defending – more on this later).

Recognize good & bad 1v1 defending: Bad 1v1 defending looks like the [1st part](#) of [this video](#), & good 1v1 defending looks like the [2nd part](#). Even better are the [England U-21s](#).

Use these resources to teach good 1v1 defending:

[American International Matt Besler](#). Selected coaching points:

- Approach fast & arrive slow (and low)
- Pressure (“threaten possession”)
- Posture (side-on and LOW)
- Patience (“wait for a mistake”)

[German International Holger Badstuber](#). Selected coaching points:

- Time your steps to be ready to block a shot
- Vary your strategy based upon the pace of your opponent
- Don't boot the ball away, but win it back under control if you can

[Belgian International Vincent Kompany](#). Selected coaching points:

- Use quick feet & time your steps to block shots
- "Show" the attacker the side you want him to go to

[Former LA Galaxy Coach Dave Sarachan](#). Selected coaching points:

- "Everybody attacks & everybody defends"
- Note carefully the "drop step" the defender makes when having to change lateral direction – very important and seldom taught at all

Former Manchester United Coach David Moyes' "[Pressing Masterclass](#)." Selected coaching points:

- Do not let the opponent "face up" (look downfield past you towards the goal you're defending) and thus "play forward" (pass or dribble towards the goal you're defending).
- If the attacker is facing his own goal, keep him going that way. "See the ball" at all times.
- "Put the brakes on & don't be beaten."
- Attackers, too, must learn to press to recover the ball deep in the opposition half.

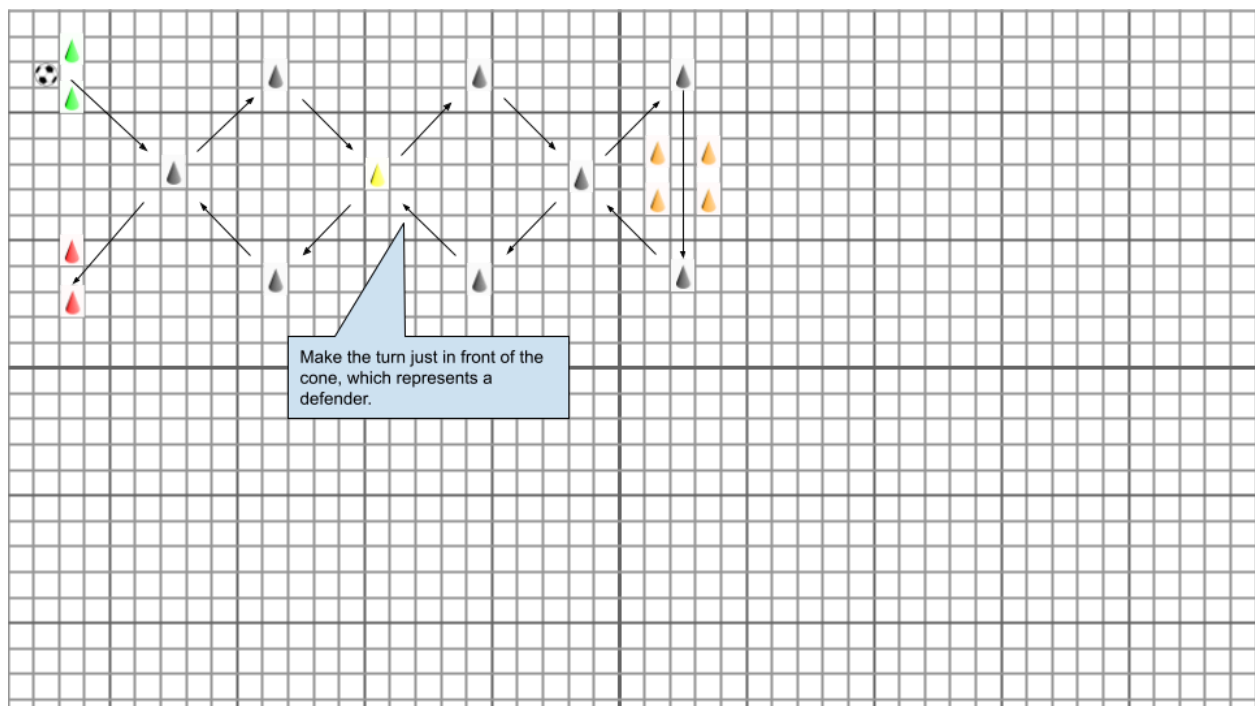
Training exercises:

1. "1v1 to four Puggs": Four Puggs facing out (two pairs, each Pugg about 5m apart, and each pair pointing 180 degrees from the other pair) near center of 15m by 25m grid. Two lines of players lined up at one of the short edges. Coach stands between the lines of players, with all the balls to be played in. Coach rolls a ball in, and first player to get to the ball becomes attacker, and can score in ANY Pugg. If ball is recovered by defender, he becomes attacker. Continue until somebody scores, or until coach thinks progress has stopped. Players will learn to pick their head up, change direction, keep the ball away from the defender, and master their favorite 1v1 moves. Progression:
 - a. Smooth roll to middle
 - b. Bouncing balls (must be taken out of the air)
 - c. Requiring 1v1 move-du-jour before scoring.
 - d. Player gets additional points for each move thrown before scoring.
2. "1v1 to goals": Players line up behind endline, facing field, one line on each side of goal. Coach rolls ball onto field, players compete to win ball, turn back towards goal, and score. Either player may score. Don't be afraid to start with TWO goals so that players can change direction, and defenders cannot defend a single goal. Progress to requiring a move.
3. "1v1 to Puggs": 5m by 20m lanes with Puggs at opposite ends. Players lined up next to Puggs at opposite ends. Progression:

- One line of which attackers with ball. When they take their first touch towards the opposite Pugg, a defender leaves that Pugg, and they duel 1v1. Upon losing the ball, next two players go.
- When ball is lost, recovering player attempts to score at opposite end.
- All players with a ball (both lines have them). When either player scores, s/he becomes the defender, and the waiting player near that becomes the attacker. Works on quick transition.
- Require a move to be thrown for each of the above

4.2.4. Turns

Cone Layouts



4.2.4.1. 90-Degree Turns

- [Inside-foot cut](#)
- [Outside-foot cut](#)
- [Vee turn](#)

4.2.4.2. 180-Degree (and Greater) Turns

- [Pullback or "drag back" turn](#) (turn either way according to preference), also [here](#)
- [Stop turn](#) (turn either way according to preference)
- [Inside Xavi turn](#) (and [why](#))
- [Outside Xavi turn](#)

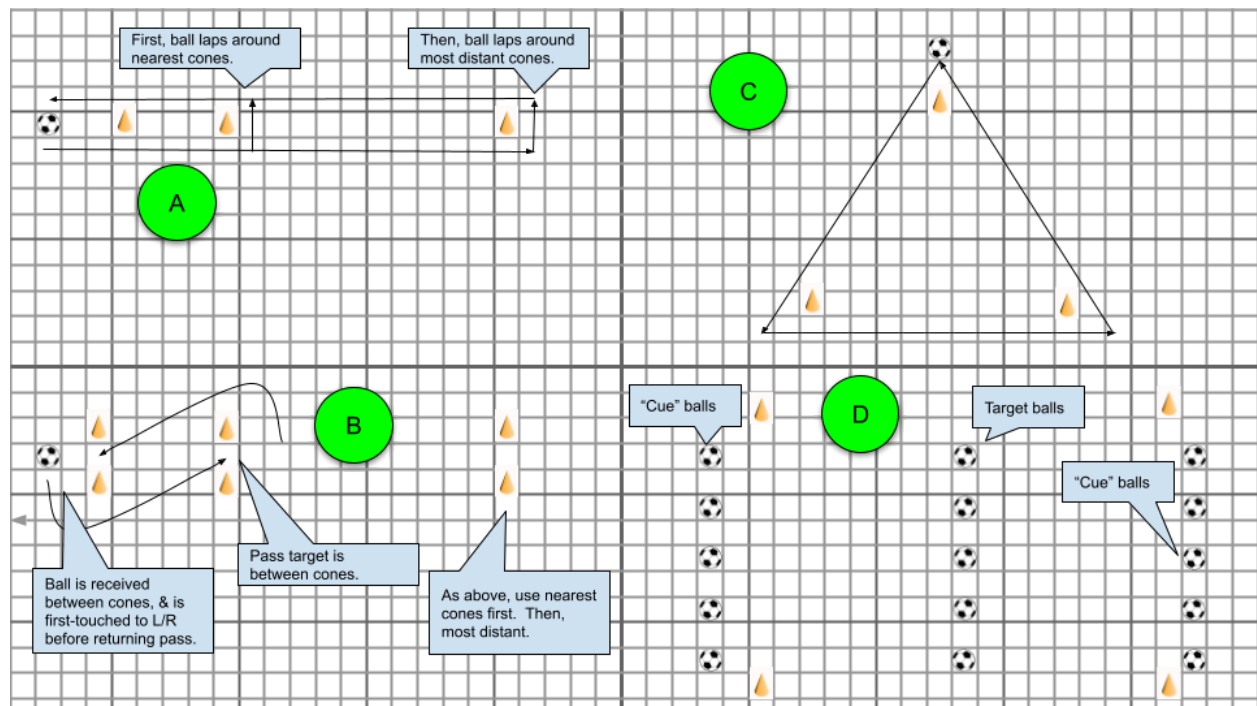
Skill	K	1	2	3&4	5&6	7&8	HS
Inside Foot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outside Foot		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vee					✓	✓	✓
Pullback	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stop		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Inside Xavi			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outside Xavi			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.2.5. [Passing & Receiving](#)

Introducing:

1. Proper form with [coaching points explicitly called out](#)
2. [Pass mechanics](#), focus on teaching plant and approach to U-Littles
3. [Proper form](#), and also [here](#)
4. [Pass to front foot, receive across the body](#), check over shoulder

Cone Layouts



Training Exercises

- "SenseBall" or other ball-on-a-string. See [this](#), [this](#) - see YouTube for endorsements (I have no financial interest in this product except as a customer)
- Socially-distanced "Soccer Bocce" to focus on pace and direction - also [here](#)
- "Soccer Bowling": One player, one ball, plus target ball sitting on a cone 3-15m away. Player attempts to pass own ball and knock target ball off cone. Can have another player behind target cone to return ball (saving time), or have passing player have to fetch errant passed ball (losing time). First to 10, or most "strikes" in one minute (etc.).
- Jen Borba's "Clear the Area" or "Soccer Billiards" (Layout D at bottom right): Rectangle big enough for half team on opposite long sides. Each player with his/her own "cue" ball. Several, distinct, "target" balls in the middle. Players attempt to knock target ball over opposing team's line using only their "cue" balls - players may not strike target balls with anything other than "cue" balls. Balls knocked over short sides replaced into area by coach(es). Play ends when all target balls are over one or the other long team sides. Team with most target balls sent to far side wins.
- Drill 'A' at top left: Players attempt to make the ball take laps around the cones in specified clockwise or counter-clockwise direction. Ball is received on one side of the cone, moved across the body, and returned via the other. First, the near cones, then the far cones. Use age-appropriate distances; progress from near to far cones; and progress from easier receiving moves across the body (e.g., sole roll) to harder (inside foot drag, then outside foot drag). For races, if ball crosses between cones, lap does not count. Advantages: space and cone efficient. Disadvantages: target not well-bounded.
- Socially-distanced first two passing drills in [this video](#) (Layout B) - COVID-friendly

- [Dutch Triangles](#) ([Layout C](#)): (for younger players, and for COVID-friendly use, just have 3 players work on receiving across the body, and then see how fast they can move the ball around the triangle without following the pass, or doing wall-pass/give-and-go).
- 3v1 (for COVID, 3v0): 2 attackers at opposite sides of 15x15 grid, with 1 attacker inside grid. Ball passed from one outside attacker to the other via the central attacker.
Coaching points are:
 - Central attacker approaches ball side-on
 - Central attacker open to field, checking over shoulder
 - Outside attackers pass to front foot, and call “turn” or “no turn.” If “turn,” central attacker takes a controlling touch and passes the ball on. If “no turn,” central attacker closes body and plays ball right back (one touch) to original passer, who then sends ball straight across to other outside attacker (“ABAC” passing pattern). Resume from other side.
- Progress to having target outside attacker hold up colored pinnie to indicate whether central attacker should “turn” or not.
- Progress to adding defender to shadow central attacker (not COVID friendly).
- Progress to real pressure from defender.

4.2.6. Controlling Balls on the Ground

All described in [this video](#)

- [Inside foot drag](#) (across body, with or without feint)
- [Outside foot drag](#) (away from body, with or without feint)
- [Step-on roll](#) (inside, outside, backwards, forwards - all with or without feint)

ti4.2.7. [Controlling Balls in the Air](#)

Here is an overview of [timing and decision-making](#) of when/where/how to control ball out of the air in-game.

Training Exercises

- COVID-friendly [throw-ball-to-self drills](#) for controlling against ground with both
 - inside and
 - outside of foot
- [Brief COVID-friendly throw-ball-to-self warm-up](#), adds two-touch techniques, & defensive pressure
- [Additionally](#), without using ground, [inside-foot](#), [outside-foot](#), [laces \(the "Ronaldinho trap" - see below\)](#), [thigh](#), & [chest](#) techniques
- “[Ronaldinho trap](#)” - just-so-so video [here](#), but really good not-for-kids video [here](#) (Dimitar Berbatov is not only crazy good, but also just plain crazy)
- “Bucket Ball”: Target bucket about 15-30m from starting line. Players in groups of (say) three collectively juggle a single ball from the starting line into the bucket. Progression:
 1. Two bounces permitted between touches
 2. One bounce permitted
 3. No bounces permitted

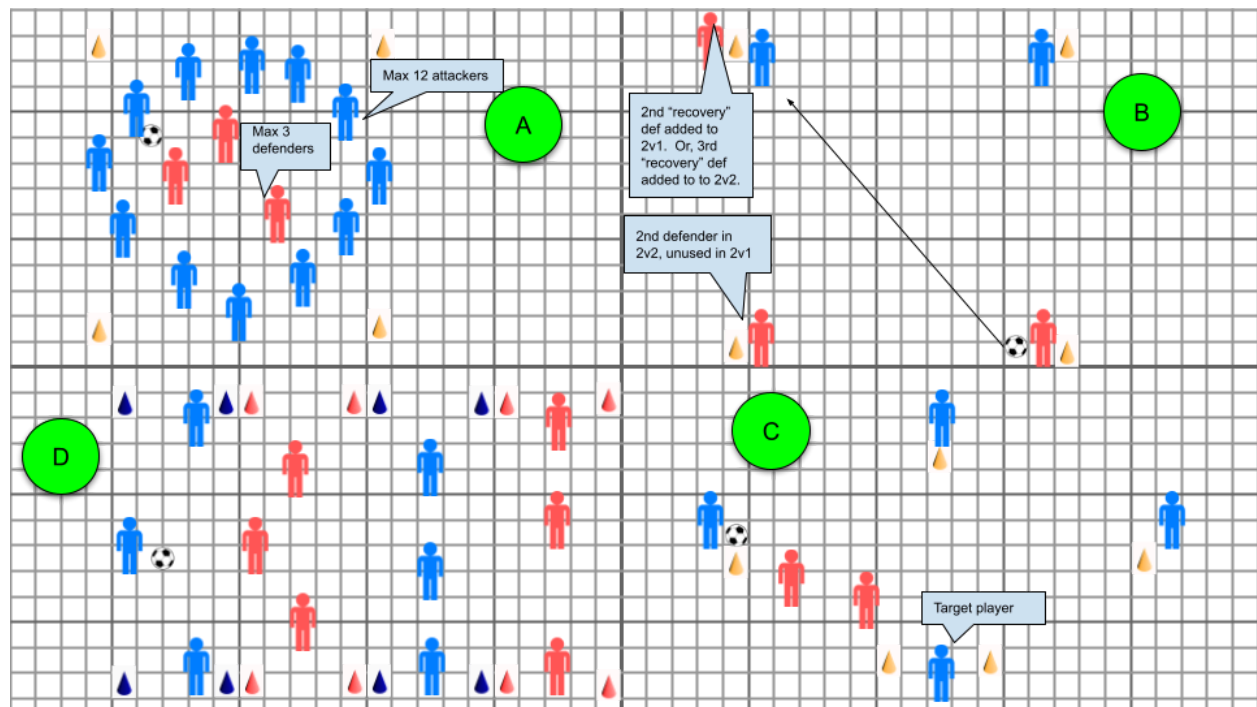
4. Slightly larger groups (say 8) hold hands forming a circle, and attempt the above 3 progressions.
- Jeff Lamy's "Make it Rain": Team stands with (say) 5m spacing in a target area big enough to contain them. Coach and ball collector stand from 15-50m away. Coach punts balls into the area, and the ball must NOT touch the ground without being played/controlled by one of the team. Balls that hit the ground require some sort of burpee or push-up or something else (the more humorous, the better). Ball is to be returned to ball collector via either a good pass or precise first touch of ball. Collector hands ball to coach for punting. Caution: heading by youth players is dangerous, so they must instead play the ball with chest, thigh, or feet; beware of flinging a ball towards them if they are not looking (in the middle of a push-up or a burpee). If you have the luxury of a progression:
 1. "Trap" ball against ground (left, right, etc.) - two touches
 2. "Ronaldinho touch" to cushion ball - two touches
 3. Chest to feet - two to three touches
 4. Thigh to feet - two to three touches
 5. One touch back

4.3. Decision-Making Phase

Objective: In order to train a particular OODA loop, you must present a training set of situations for players to observe, so that when they correctly orient themselves to it (i.e., they recognize what tactical situation they are observing), they make a tactically sound decision, and then act on it.

Time allotment: 20 minutes, or 25% of your session.

Cone Layouts



4.3.1. [Rondo](#)

Objective: Introduction to several different OODA loops which occur hundreds of times per game. Attackers focus on retaining possession under intense time pressure in tight spaces, and defenders focus on regaining possession.

Note: The rondo deserves its own book. [Here](#) is a compilation of many Barcelona practice rondos. If it is [good enough for Messi](#), and it is [good enough for Bayern](#), it is good enough for you. [People show up to games early to watch](#). It enables [this kind of possession soccer](#). (Use [Layout A.](#)) Rondos teach almost everything players need:

- correct balance,
- open stance (towards the ball)
- preference for push-pass
- good first (and sometimes ONLY) touch,
- high speed and accuracy of the short passes
- speed of thought (you had better know where to one-touch the ball BEFORE it arrives),
- 1v1 defending (timing steps, etc.), and
- 2-man double-pivot or pressure/cover defending (and 3-man pressure/cover/balance in the big 15v3 rondo)

In either addition to, or instead of [these progressions](#) (demonstrated by youth players), you can:

1. 5v0: Start with 5-ish attackers, no defenders. Coaching points: “ready” stance; players without ball turning to face ball; correct passing technique.

2. 3v1 to 5v1: Progress to one defender. OODA loops:
 - a. Attackers without ball orient upon defender's location and motion to decide where to pass;
 - b. Defender orients upon attackers, ball location, and passing preparation of receiver to decide own step timing (to block/recover pass) and decide where to move (to cut down available passing options).
3. 8v2: Progress to 8 attackers & 2 defenders. Additional OODA loops:
 - a. Attackers orient on defenders' locations & movements to decide where to pass. "Split" or "third-line" pass is best if available. "Second-line" pass, getting ball around and behind the defenders, is next best. "First line" pass, across and in front of the defenders, is least desirable.
 - b. Defenders orient on own locations & ball location to decide pressure & cover responsibilities, & decide how to take away passing options.
 - c. Defenders "tease the third-line (split) pass" - encourage split pass & intercept it.
4. 12v3: Progress to 12 attackers & 3 defenders. Additional OODA:
 - a. Defenders decide pressure, cover, & balance.
5. Moving Rondo: Progress to two sets of 3-5 attackers vs 1 defender in two of four available grid squares, where after (say) 3 consecutive successful passes, a set of attacker and defender can move to an unoccupied grid square. Additional OODA:
 - a. Attackers must orient on: number of consecutive passes made; available free space within the current grid; available free grid squares; and each other to move AS A UNIT to another grid square.
 - b. Defender orients upon geometry to try to deny ball movement to moving attackers.

4.3.2. [Pressure/Cover](#)

Objective: Train defenders to recognize situations which require double-pivot, pressure/cover delay of ball. Train defenders to maintain pressure-cover despite ball and then player movement. (Layout C above.)

1. Four attackers, stationary in diamond shape, wider than deep. Two defenders in the middle of the diamond in pressure/cover or futsal "tuck and press." Attackers attempt to play ball into feet of most-forward attacker (who can slide a little bit). Defenders attempt to stay goal-side of three non-target attackers AND ball, but sliding and pivoting (classic "double pivot"), attempting to prevent ball into most-forward attacker's feet.
2. You can use a rondo with 2 defenders to train this.
3. Progress to [this drill](#)

4.3.3. [Numbers Up, Equal, & Down](#)

Objective: Train players to observe and orient to (i.e., recognize) overload situations, both offensive and defensive. Present them with possible actions to decide amongst. Next, train them to both produce overloads (for offensive purposes) and recover from overloads (for defensive purposes). (Layout B above.)

4.3.3.1. [One Attacker vs Two Defenders \(1v2\)](#)

Objective: Train attacker to retain possession against defenders in pressure/cover posture. Train defenders to use pressure/cover to recover ball possession from single attacker by forcing ball to either covering defender or sideline. Train attacker to (at a minimum) not get forced to the sideline.

Use the second exercise in this video, starting [here](#). 15m grid square. Attacker at top-left, defenders at bottom corners. Defender plays ball diagonally from bottom-right defender to attacker. Near (bottom-left) defender quickly closes ("Nike" run), and far defender takes cover position. If attacker stays near left sideline, pressuring defender forces ball to sideline, and covering defender closes. Else, pressuring defender shows attacker to covering defender.

4.3.3.2. [Two Attackers vs One Defender \(2v1\)](#)

Objective: Train defender to recognize 2v1 threat & delay the advance of the ball (in anticipation of help arriving) by:

- staying goal-side of both attackers AND ball;
- closing off "help" passing lane (don't forget initial "Nike" run); and
- trading space for time.

Train attackers to recognize 2v1 opportunity for penetration, adding moves in progression below to their decision-making.

Use [the first exercise in this video](#). Alternatively, use [this exercise](#) in [this video](#) (watch the beginning for coaching points). 15m grid. Attackers at top corners, & defender at bottom right. Defender plays ball diagonally across square. Progression via introduction of following attacking moves:

1. [Direct dribble](#) if defender prevents pass.
2. Underlap or bent/diagonal run-in behind by attacker without ball if defender prevents dribble
3. [Overlap](#) by attacker without ball
4. [Takeover](#) by attacker without ball
5. [Wall-pass](#) (a.k.a., "give and go") by 1st attacker (to move defender) followed by underlap run in behind defender for pass.
6. [Double-pass](#) by attackers (to move defender) followed by underlap bent/diagonal run in behind.

4.3.3.3. [Two Attackers vs Two Defenders \(2v2\)](#)

Objective: Train attackers to:

- keep width to make difficult defenders' jobs to help (provide cover) for each other;
- move the ball quickly to move defenders - hopefully moving ball faster than defenders can move.

Train defenders to:

- pass off to each other both horizontal runs & ball movement (switching pressure & cover roles);
- track themselves vertical runs;

- show ball to help or sideline;
- Recognize 2v1 and turn it into 2v2.

Use exercise in [this video](#).

1. Same grid. Attackers at top corners, & defenders at bottom corners. One defender plays the ball diagonally.
2. Same grid, but this time one of the defenders starts at the opposite corner from the other, ball-serving defender (i.e., he is co-located with one of the attackers). Ball is again served diagonally, but the non-ball-serving defender must wait until the receiving attacker touches the ball, and only then can s/he round the other top corner and join the other defender (most likely in the covering role).

4.3.3.4. Three Attackers vs Two Defenders (3v2)

Objective: Teach attackers to cooperate in order to break the line of 2 defenders. Train defenders to use double-pivot pressure/cover to deny advance of ball, handing off horizontal ball movement and runs, and tracking vertical runs.

Use the drill in [this video](#), EXCEPT do NOT have the third defender make a recovery run to make it 3v3 - leave it at 3 attackers vs 2 defenders. Progress:

1. Light pressure, with defenders reacting to ball movement and runs.
2. Full pressure.

4.3.3.5. Two Attackers vs Three Defenders (2v3)

Objective: Teach attackers to recognize numbers-down, and retain possession. Teach defenders pressure, cover, and balance roles to regain possession. Teach defenders to recognize 2v2 and turn it into 2v3 ASAP.

Same grid, same [drill](#), EXCEPT limit to 2 attackers, with 3rd defender making recovery run. Progression:

1. Light pressure only, with defenders reacting to ball movement.
2. Full pressure to recover the ball.
3. Make one of the defenders start at the opposite corner from the ball-serving defender, wait until the receiving attacker receives the ball, and then round the other top corner and join the two other defenders (most likely either cover or balance roles, depending upon ball location).

4.3.3.6. Three Attackers vs Three Defenders (3v3)

Objective: Train attackers and defenders to turn numbers-down situations into at least numbers-even situations.

Use the full drill in the [video](#): Make the defender do a recovery run to join two defenders (turn 3v2 into 3v3).

4.3.4. Maintaining and Breaking Defensive Lines

Objective: Teach attackers to:

- use “cup shape” to enable passes between any two of them at any time
- open up to the ball and field, and pass to front foot

Teach defenders to:

- slide collectively to deny split passes, and
- use pressure/cover/balance to pressure the ball to deny its advance.

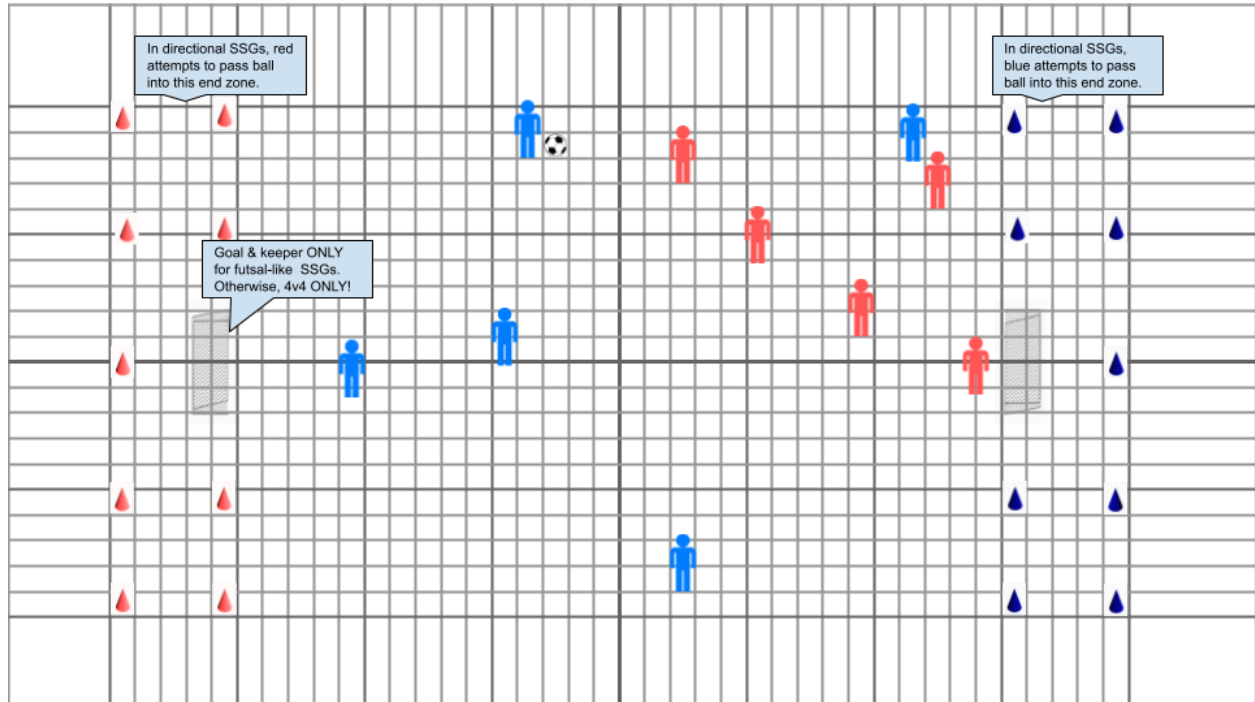
Liverpool “Through the Lines” [here called "Defending the Lines 1"](#). (Layout D above.) Use the first drill in [this video](#), starting [here](#). Ensure good: defensive pressure, cover, balance; defensive sliding as a unit; cup-shaped offensive line so that each attacker can reach each other in his/her line without obstruction; good passing to front foot to enable one-touch; and rapid ball movement to destabilize and/or be quicker than defensive line. If your team absolutely “gets it” (the basic defend-in-a-line, and the basic static attacking in a “cup shape”), then you can progress to the [following parts](#).

“Bring a Rope” (yes, that’s kind of morbid): A single line of defenders (three or four, depending upon the line width in your chosen system) holds a rope (to enforce spacing). A group of attackers tries to play balls either through them (split or “3rd line” pass) or around them (“2nd line” pass) to a smaller number of forwards. Ensure pressuring defender near ball actually closes and pressures. The rope should drag the covering defenders in. The rope should also enforce absence of gaps/rips in the defensive line during slides, and should also keep defenders in line for offsides traps.

4.4. Small-Sided Game (SSG) Phase

All these games should ideally be 4v4 field players, with the last optionally adding keepers to make it 5v5. Any larger numbers should be avoided, as a number larger than four:

- Enables “hiding” from the ball
- Enables “spectating” (OODA loops switched off)
- Reduces touches per player per minute
- Increases complexity in observing & orienting upon the situations described above.



4.4.1. Directionless “Keep Away”

Objective: Teaches how to retain the ball. Specifically via:

- good dribbling technique (don’t get caught in possession)
- good passing & receiving technique
- movement off the ball (observe space reachable by pass from player with the ball)
- positional rotation to escape defenders
- quick transitions to offense
- Can also be used to train 1v1 moves (“Focus on 1v1” progression below)

Rectangular grid, sized aged-appropriately for your team. (Probably much less than 20m by 40m). Progression:

- Focus on passing: Team with the longest pass string wins (make them count out loud). Smaller spaces are actually more difficult, so start big and shrink it.

- Focus on 1v1: Alternatively and/or additionally, award points for the 1v1 move(s) thrown even in the absence of a pressuring defender (especially good for younger players). Progress to requiring a defender.

4.4.2. [Directional to End-Zone](#)

Objective: Teaches attackers:

- how to not just find, but create space in desired areas
- How to exploit width to create space
- How to “unlock a defense” when defense is compact
- The importance of quick counter-attack when winning ball
- The danger of losing the ball

Teaches defenders:

- In recommended 2-2 “box” system, teaches “pressure, cover, & balance”
- How to be compact (not played through)
- Teaches modern zonal defending with man-marking
- The importance of quickly reorganizing when losing ball

Teaches both sides:

- Everybody attacks, and everybody defends.

As above, but there should be a 5m-deep “end zone” running the width of the field. The ball must be passed (not dribbled) into the end-zone to score a point. Teams attack opposite ends (i.e., this is directional).

4.4.3. “Bank Points” to End-Zone

Objective: Teaches attackers:

- Patience and composure
- How to “go backwards to go forwards”
- How to switch the point of attack
- How important it is to possess the ball (the more they pass it, the more points it represents if they score)

Teaches defenders patience.

Progress to end-zone pass score equal to length of pass string (instead of just one point).

4.4.4. Add Goals (and Optionally Keepers)

Objective: Teach “finishing.” E.g., runs to far past, shots behind keeper, etc.

Progress to adding keepers (if you have two). If not, use small Pugg nets (and beware of shots from too far out to be useful - do not be afraid to say shots on unattended nets must be from less than 5m).

5. Evaluation

Only in the absence of outside evaluators...

5.1. Dribbling

1. "Shuttle Run" evaluation. L/R. Must stop on line. Must use good form. Must touch every step with dribbling foot. Bonus points for pace.
2. Cone dribbling. L, R. cut-catch, outsides, inside+outside, roll-catch, maybe Vee. Points for each move, include points for single-foot L/R.

5.2. 1v1 Attacking

1. X-shaped. (moves as above) 1 point for mastery of each move, for each foot. Bonus points for pace.
2. For moves that aren't 90 degrees, maybe straight path, or go to OPPOSITE (vs adjacent) cone in the X shape. Again, 1 point for mastery of each move, for each foot. Bonus points for pace.

5.3. Turns

1. Zig-zag pattern. Points for each of the four (4) turns, for each foot. Bonus points for pace.

5.4. Passing & Receiving

1. Perhaps successful passes through one to two-meter wide pair of cones, at increasing distance for increasing age. Problem is how many instructors we'll need.
2. Perhaps 2v1 (maybe 3v1) inside grid square. Points for offering by movement off-the-ball. Points maybe for communication.

5.5. Controlling Balls on the Ground

Point for mastery of each surface of each foot for each of the collection methods above.

Perhaps ball played into small grid square to be played in one of the four obvious directions.

Perhaps must do 3 in a row in 10 tries?

5.6. Controlling Balls in the Air

Point for mastery of each surface for each method above. Perhaps ball tossed into small grid square to be controlled. Perhaps must do 3 in a row in 10 tries?

5.7. Decision-Making

Perhaps evaluate in 3v3 or 4v4 setting.

6. Reference Material

6.1. MYSA Physically Distanced Session Plans

[PDFs here](#)

6.2. FIFA 11+ ACL (and Other) Injury Prevention Program

The FIFA 11+ program has been shown to reduce soccer injuries:

- to the dreaded ACL by 76%,
- of ALL types to the knee by 58%, and
- injuries off ALL types by 46%.

Useful links for the entire program:

- [Starting point for programs for adults, kids, & referees](#)
- A presentation giving the above statistics is [here](#)

Useful links for U-Littles:

- [The long-ish program document for kids](#)
- [A short poster with all the exercises for kids \(U-Littles\)](#)

Useful links for U14+:

- [A single-page PDF handout for U14+](#)
- [YouTube Playlist for ages 14+](#)