

# Coaching Drills & Games

Here are some notes from the July 2007, 2008 & 2009 Coaching Clinics, given by the Challenger British Soccer Camp. Hopefully, these notes will be a good reminder to those that were able to attend and offer some insight to those that weren't. The main goal at the recreation levels is to keep things fun. All of the below drills and games are teaching important game skills. You want to keep the kids involved and touching the ball, as much as possible (avoid drills that require the majority of the team to stand in line). If you'd like more information, check out other links on our website: [www.clarkesoccer.org](http://www.clarkesoccer.org) or reserve a coaching book/video from our library.

**Effective Coaching Techniques** – Here are a few of the techniques the Challenger coaches used that were very effective with the camp players:

1. Ask lots and lots of questions to reinforce ideas, keep them listening and involved. As we opened the clinic, the kids were all grouped together chatting and the coach walked up... He said "When I'm talking, you're what?" Kids answered "listening" and he suddenly had their undivided attention. When setting up cones for a drill or game, the guys were always asking/not telling. What kind of touches do we want to use? Kids answer "small". Right, small, why? Kids answer "to keep control of the ball"... We are going to work on Feints, what is a feint? Kids answer (or maybe they don't know, so Coach answers or coach assistant answers) – a move to trick the defender and make them think you are going one way when you are going another. So, I'll put a cone here, this cone is??? Kids answer "a defender", etc.... constant interaction between coach and team – no lectures, a full conversation
2. Don't be afraid to stop a drill or scrimmage to bring home a point/explain something. First have a phrase you're players know means stop whatever you are doing – Freeze – whistle blow, whatever. Don't point out mistakes – give the player another chance to look at the situation and ask "what could you have done differently?" Even reposition the players and let them see the situation again and make a better choice. Make sure that you occasionally stop play to praise a good move/decision, as well.
3. Positive reward system. The Challenger coaches use "World cup points"... You earn points for nailing a skill or drill, or anything really. You'd be surprised what the kids would do for a couple of "World cup points" ☺ At the end of the session, a simple "who can collect the most cones?" had the kids scattering to get the most & cleanup.

**Warm-Up Drills** – laps or races are always a great warm up & of course the standard stretching and lunges or here's a fun drill:

Teach team the number and the drill name. Coach calls out # and team calls out drill. This keeps the kids involved and vocal. May want to teach younger players the first few and then add one on every other practice.

1. On the Run – dribble the ball - use both feet, no long kicks, keep control and never use toes (even at U6)
2. On the Shoe – roll foot over ball
3. On the Knee – knee stop (kneel on ball)
4. On the Floor – for young kids, touch ball with head/pushup position – for older kids this could be keeping the ball on the ground between their feet
5. Staying Alive – toe touches with the song, if you like ☺
6. Show Me Tricks – any – bounce ball off knees, feet, fancy kicks, etc
7. Up to Heaven – Throw or kick ball straight up in air and practice stop/drop for play (with chest, knee, foot). For young kids this could just be kicking up and catching.

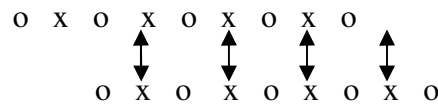
8. Switch with a Mate – passing and stopping ball with a teammate – can increase challenge level by using both inside and outside of foot
9. All Mine – Defend your ball while kicking other’s out of bounds.
10. Do it Again

### Team Communication Drill

1. The point of this one is to teach the team to talk to each other when they are on the field. Cone off a square grid or use ½ field. Number your players (1 to ?) and use 1 ball. The kids must continually move around in the grid and pass the ball in ascending order, by calling out to each other and motioning. #1 “where’s #2”, #2 waves his arm and responds” 2 here”, Then one passes to 2 and 2 finds 3, etc. If you find the kids aren’t moving, have them run around a boundary cone after passing the ball off (and a different cone each time). Up the level of concentration required by adding a second ball.

### Passing Drills – pass with inside of the foot (have them point to their foot to confirm)

1. **Short passing Drill in place** - line players up opposite another with one ball between them (o=cone, x= player)



- a) Control and pass back and forth with inside of foot – point for each pass to opponent that stays in your cone lane – lose all points (back to zero) if ball goes out of lane.
- b) Control with one foot and pass with other (stop with left, left foot passes to your right foot and right foot passes to teammate – or vice versa) – why? Teaches players how to keep a pass from a defender.
- c) 1 touch pass (no stop) – pass distance needs to be more precise – can up skill level by putting a smaller cone gate in the middle of the lane that the ball must pass through
2. **Short Passing Drill w/ motion:** 2 people. Jack passes and approaches Jane. Jane stops ball and dribbles around Jack (essentially switching positions). Then Jane passes, and so on.
3. **Short Passing Drill:** Monkey in the Middle (with or without Monkey) – Station 3 players in a triangle with or without a monkey (defender) in the middle. Player with ball passes to one of the other 2 on the triangle (i.e. has 2 passing options). Triangle team players move in to accept the pass, don’t just stand in position allowing defender to steal.
4. **Long Passing Drill for power (Lofted Pass):** 2 people – Kicker: a) approaches ball from an angle, b) places non-kicking foot next to and in line with direction of the ball, c) leans back, gets foot under the ball and strikes with the laces/top of foot, stopping under the ball (chip shot). Ball will spin backwards when done correctly. Player 2 stops the lofted pass with their chest, knee or hands. Then, they loft it back to original passer.
5. **Long Passing Drill for speed (Driven Pass):** 2 people – Kicker: a) approaches ball from an angle, b) places non-kicking foot next to and in line with direction of the ball, c) leans forward (knee over ball), points toe down and strikes with the laces, following through on the kick. Ball should stay on or low to the ground.
6. **Swerving Pass:** Follow first 2 long pass steps, but increase your angle of approach. Contact bottom right of the ball (if right foot dominate) and strike with the side of your foot. Ball should spin sideways. And, if kicker, defender and receiver are all in one line, ball will swerve around middle defender. Can do the drill with the defender in the middle.

## Games

These are mostly for U6/U8, but some variations may still be fun for older age groups. Youngest players may find Mud monsters or gorillas scary, so change to “Freeze tag” or “Silly monkey”. Dribbling means little touches/under control. Defensive dribbling – how do you keep the ball away from an opponent? Insert your body between the ball and the opponent!

1. **In the Mud/Freeze tag (teaches dribbling, team play and aim)-** Coach is a mud monster. Kids dribble the ball around the field. If coach catches a player, the kid must pick up his ball and hold it over his head with his legs spread, yelling “Help, I’m stuck in the mud”. Another kid has to dribble their ball over to the stuck player and pass the ball through their legs to free them.
2. **King of the Ring** – All players have their own ball and try to maintain controlled dribbling, while kicking other players balls from the ring. If down to a couple of players &/or getting too intense, add a player that went out early to help kick the balls out.
3. **Driving cars/Noisy trains (teaches dribbling)–** Dribbling around may be more fun for kids if they act like cars or trains, with sound effects. You can have them speed up and race around the track, as well.
4. **Gorilla Attack (teaches defensive dribbling)–** Coach or one player is a gorilla. When the gorilla steals a ball from a dribbling player, that player becomes a gorilla too. Keep playing until all players are turned into gorillas. Ask kids how to keep Gorilla away from their ball – Answer: keep your body between your ball and the gorilla!
5. **Street Light** – Green means “go” (dribble), Yellow means “get ready” (toe touches), Red means “Stop”
6. **Robin Hood (teaches accuracy)–** Shoot your arrow (ball) at (or through) the trees (cones). If you miss, you must sprint to the ball. If you topple a cone, you keep it or get a point, etc.
7. **What’s the Time Mr. Wolf?** – Wolf is down field with back to players. Players ask, “What’s the time Mr. Wolf?”. The Wolf calls out a time (ex. 4 o’clock). The players then dribble forward 4 steps. If the wolf answers “Dinner-time”, he chases the kids and they have to dribble back to the starting line without getting eaten.

## Defender Drills –

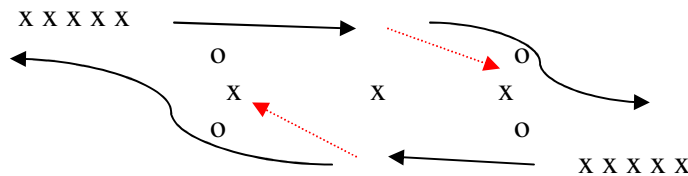
Earliest exposure to defending – no ball – have each player mark a teammate. Have them run around for 10 seconds and then freeze. Are they within arms length?

Key to defending: Defend side on, not facing opponent. This position gives the defender the ability to push the attacker in one direction & toward the sideline. Push toward opponent's weaker foot. Have defender take a surfer pose: sideways with knees bent and weight forward. If you defend front on, the attacker can go any direction, if you are side on, they are much more limited.

For teams of two

1. Jack dribbles and protects ball (rotating and controlling ball with small touches). Jill shadows Jack, trying to stay as close as possible (waiting for mistake). Level 2, Jill tries to steal ball. Players switch roles.
2. Both players start standing in between 2 cones (simulating close goals), facing one another. Jack drives ball (one shot) at Jill's goal, and moves forward. Jill stops ball. If too big of a stop, Jack may get second shot at goal. If a good, controlled stop, Jill will be able to make her shot at Jack's goal and Jack is now the defender.

For Whole team: (o = cones/goal, x = players)



Split team in half, 1 player stationed as goalie on each side and coach stands in middle. Rest of team is numbered off and lines up to one side of the goal. Coach calls a number and that team member runs to mid field and receives the pass from the coach. One touch stop and shoot for opposing goal, then run around outside of goal to back of other line. Coach then turns and does the same for the other side. Goalies pass ball back to coach. Switch line up to other side of goal & drill the other foot.

**Shooting Drills** – point toe and sweep the floor, use laces to strike the ball – toe, knee, chest and head in line with the ball and you step up - swing like a golf swing (a little to the side to gain power, not straight on) – Strike through the middle of the ball and get your head over the ball – don't lean back – watch the ball as you strike!

1. If facing goal, Coach stands center field, just to left of the goal. Half the team (Jack's team) lines up behind the goal line on the left of the goal. Other half (Jill's team) lines up center field, to right of goal. 1<sup>st</sup> "Go" from coach, sends Jack dribbling through cones up to coach. On 2<sup>nd</sup> "Go" from coach, Jack passes the ball to the coach and runs around him and up center field. Meanwhile, Jill runs to goal to defend. Coach sets ball to Jack and he takes a single shot at the goal. Jill defends. Jill then moves to back of Jack's team's line and Jack's lines up behind her team (switching positions for next time).
2. **Lightning** – Everybody lines up centerfield. Coach is on field with a big pile of balls. On go, first player runs to goal to defend and second receives pass from coach and makes one shot at goal. If the defender is scored on, they are out of the game and must wait behind the goal. If they catch a ball lofted over the goal, they may return to the line. If the defender is not scored on, he returns to the back of line. Shooter then becomes defender for next shooter in line. Very fast paced game, and pace increases as # of players in game decreases.
3. **Goal Aim** – Teach the kids to shoot for the corners of a goal, by instituting a point system. 1 pt for scoring, 2 for bottom corner score and 3 for top corner score. Or put cones in the way, one point for between the cones (center) 2 points for outside the cones (corners).

## Training your Strikers/Forwards

How do you get around a defender? Challenger coaches recommended training in 3 stages:

- 1) Unopposed – learning the skill with nothing/no one in their path
- 2) Semi-opposed – practicing the new skill with a defender standing still or maybe with one foot planted, so they have limited range
- 3) Opposed – full defender interaction

This may seem obvious, but having watching many a younger player just boot the ball down the field aimlessly.... It is important to point out that you are either dribbling, passing or shooting – you should not just be “kicking”.

- 1) **Passing**. In the transition years of U8 & U10 especially, players need to learn to play as a team, and not just rely on their speed. It is okay to let them drill with the ball in their hands to learn passing (learn to keep your head up and look around) – often hard to learn to keep your head up, while dribbling. Use some basketball type drills (transferable skills). You can also use a sight object for a dribbling with your head up game. When you hold up a cone or your hand, players should stop dribbling and when you lower it start dribbling.... This requires them to be head up and watching you.
- 2) **Feints** – deceiving the defender about your direction
  - a. **Drop your shoulder** – this is easy and very effective – ex. Drop your left shoulder (indicating your going left) and then go right with the outside of your right foot (or vice versa)
  - b. **Step out & go opposite** – ex. Step out with your left foot and then take off with the outside of your right foot (and vice versa). Can also jump to the left of the ball and then knock it to the right with the outside of your right foot.
  - c. **Over the top** – Take your kicking foot (right for this example) towards your plant (left) foot and over the ball. Then plant the right foot and kick with the outside of the left.

Set up some cones as defenders and have multiple team members approaching and practicing a feint on the “defender” at the same time (note: they should feint when about 3 feet from the defender, not right on top of it). Challenger Coaches has a 4 corners marked on a big square and 4 corners on a smaller interior square. Kids stood at outside corners and approached inside corners as the defenders.

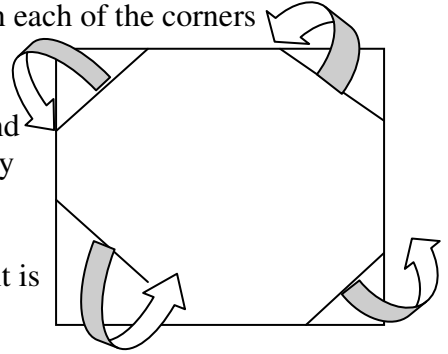
## Goalie Pointers

- Goalie should position their hands in a W (palms out, thumbs touching) most surface area for touching/stopping the ball.
- If the ball is coming at your legs, don’t try to scoop it up with your legs wide. Close them for a secondary block).
- Goalie needs to come out of the goal. When the ball is on opponent’s side, goalie should be shifted forward, just as defenders and mid-fielders are. When defending, against one striker, goalie should approach (it limits the amount of visible goal) – have a goalie stand 20 feet from an attacker – how much of the goal can they see? Have them stand 10 feet – now how much? 5 feet? The attacker has less to shoot for, when the goalie approaches. Also, the goalie should spread their arms and make themselves big in the goal/on approach.
- When kicking away, goalie should shoot long & wide and your team forwards should know this and head long & wide (though they shouldn’t turn their back on the ball).

## Scrimmages

- Have a few dominant players – rule that everyone on team must touch the ball before anyone can shoot. Or, encourage passes & positional playing, by limiting touches on the ball – 3 touches per time, 2 for dribbling and pass on third.
- Teach kids a key word for common errors, like bunching around the ball – Bananas – Just call out bananas whenever you see the kids swarming (or Bees for swarming) 😊
- **World's fastest scrimmage** – cone off a square and set a goal in each of the corners

Play 5 v 5 or 6 v 6 – players can score through any goal and come right Back into the square by circling one of the goal cones. You can assign Players an opponent to keep them more spread out. Players will also find If they are being defended 1 on 1 that moving away from the action, may Actually help their teammates by opening up space/lanes.



- **Amazing Fast paced game!** I don't know what to call this, but it is Perfect for U10 and up. Split your team into 2 equal groups – number Players from 1 to X, in each group (trying to make sure that the #1s are Evenly matched, as are the #2s, etc. Line each group up on opposite corners and set a ball in the middle. Call out a number - #3. Then the #3 kids 😊😊😊😊 race down the sideline (note this is just a coned off box, no real field/goal) and through their goal, trying to be the first to the ball. First one there becomes the attacker and second the defender. Play continues until the ball goes out of bounds or someone scores. We had a rule that you couldn't shoot on your first touch. Then, when the kids have it down, call 2 numbers and require a pass before shooting, now you have a fast paced 2 on 2.

