

Key Points To Coaching Practices

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Theme each practice: Have a focus on a particular skill - Passing, dribbling, trapping, finishing, defending, using the weak foot, etc. The theme should be focused on throughout the entire practice.

Progression of practice: A practice should include 4-5 activities that are theme-based, and progress from a simple warm up to an even sided game. Example: Practice theme "passing with the inside of the foot"

1. Warm up: 1 ball between 2 players, passing back & forth. - discuss inside of the foot, why it's important, technique, heel down toe up, no standing "happy feet". 30 SECOND WATER BREAK (set up next drill)
2. Add teammate(s): Give and go drill. Pass and move to the end of the line. - discuss theme. Note technique. Make a competition. 30-60 SECOND WATER BREAK (set up next drill)
3. Add defense: Keep away game. - continue focus on the theme. Note technique. Make it competitive. 30-60 SECOND WATER BREAK (set up next drill)
4. Even sided scrimmage: If needed, add restrictions that encourages passing. Make sure to praise players who find success with the theme. Punish "non-winning" team (make them pick up all equipment). WATER BREAK
5. End with players sitting in front of you, static stretching, have a discussion about the theme of the day – "What did we focus on today? Why is it important? I can't wait to see you try it in tomorrow's game..."

Keep them moving: Note in the practice above SHORT water breaks. No sitting, chatting, long team discussions. Players have the attention span of about 30-60 seconds before their minds start wondering. When moving into your next activity, get them set up and use a group to demonstrate as you're explaining the drill/rules. If your practice ends before you expected, end with a relay race. Players love it.

Keep it competitive: Athletes will want competition. Practice will be fun when there's competition. We want to instill "friendly competition" in everything we do. Count accurate passes, make passing drills a race, keep score with everything, try to have a punishment for the "non-winning" group or person (pushups, star jumps, deck squats, pick up equipment, run around the field... get creative) Always keep challenging individuals – create restrictions for certain players or teams to keep each drill/game competitive and challenging.

Praise & identify players who exemplify the theme. END WITH A TEAM CHEER, HIGH FIVES, SHAKE HANDS... Build team unity.

Here are a few practice plan resources:

http://www.washingtonyouthsoccer.org/coaches/coaching_tools/age_appropriate_training_sessions/ <http://www.mnyouthsoccer.org/training-sessions>

http://www.utahyouthsoccer.net/coaching_education/coachs_training_archives/