

TRAINING U10/U12 PLAYERS – THE DAWN OF TACTICS

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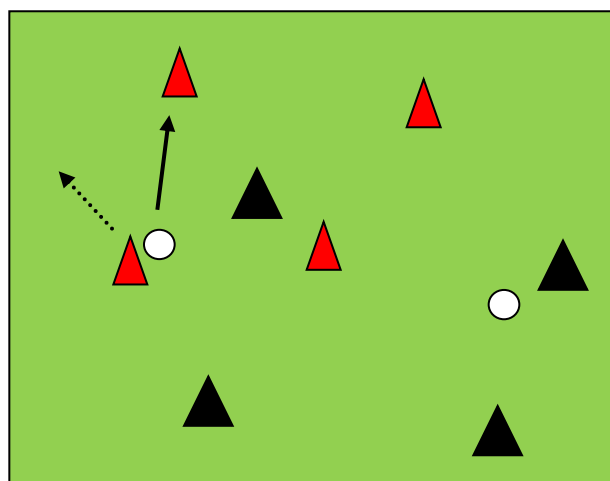
Players of this age are beginning to think logically and absorb abstract concepts. They are making the transition from *'doing the first thing that comes to their mind'* to 'weighing the options in each situation and choosing the best option'.

They will not always choose the right option as they learn from trial and error, but the process of reading the visual cues and selecting the best option has now started in earnest. Coaches should harness this new ability to solve problems by planning practice activities that provide high volume of problem solving opportunities. The best way to do that is through small-sided activities in small groups of 2, 3 or 4 players who are challenged to make quick decisions in small grids with game-like objectives. 2v1, 2v2, 2v2+1, 3v2, 4v2, etc, are the best activities for 9-12 year olds since they provide repetition without line ups and are also fun and game-like.

Players in these ages love to compete, so every activity should incorporate some sort of a contest, such as "which group can pass the most passes in a set time", or "which group can score the most", etc. Below is an example of a practice plan with such activities:

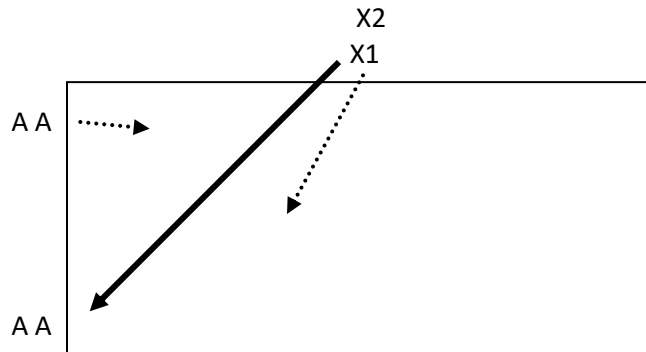
WARM UP: KEEP THE SHAPE

Players in groups of 4. Each group has a ball. Players pass the ball within their group with the condition that they cannot stand still, must pass and move but **MUST ALWAYS KEEP A DISTANCE OF ABOUT 10 YARDS BETWEEN THEM**. Progress by allowing players to steal the ball from other groups and retain more than one ball at the same time. Coach stops activity every 30-60 seconds and each team gets 1 point for each ball they possess and restarts again. Team that gets 10 points first is the winner.



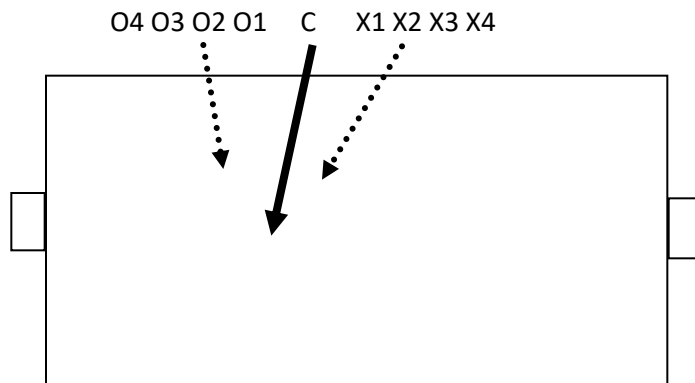
2v1 TO END LINE

Groups of 6-8 players per grid. Grid about 10 yards wide and 15 yards long. Players lined up as shown. X is defenders line and X1 starts by passing the ball to one of the attackers and goes into grid to defend. Two attackers try to bring the ball across the end line under control. If defender wins the ball he can counterattack by dribbling the ball across the attackers' end line. If attackers succeed, they each get a point. If defender wins the ball and dribbles across the other end line, he gets 2 points. If the ball goes out of bounds, no one gets any points. The player who gets 10 points first is the winner. Players rotate positions clockwise after each try.



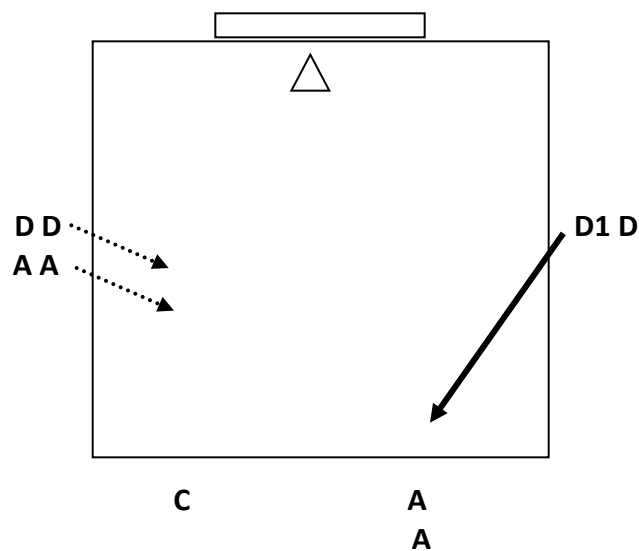
NUMBERS GAME

Team split into two groups and each player in a group gets a number so that each group has a player assigned number 1, 2, etc. Coach kicks a ball into the grid and calls out a number. The player assigned that number from each team sprints into grid to win the ball and score a goal. Progress to shouting 2 numbers at a time to create a 2v2 scenario and then call 3 numbers to create 3v3, etc. When its 2v2 or 3v3, each player must touch ball at least once before his/her team can score.



2v2 COMBINATION PLAYS TO GOAL

Groups of 8 players plus keeper in grid with a large goal as shown. Defender D1 starts by serving ball to Attacker and steps into grid to defend. One defender and one attacker join in from the other sideline to make it 2v2. Attackers try to score on large goal and get a point for hitting the frame and forcing the keeper to make a save or 5 points for scoring. Defenders get 2 points if they can win the ball and play it to Coach. No one gets any points if the ball goes out of bounds. Players return to their original position until the first team to get 10 points is the winner. Change roles with attacking team becoming defending team and play again. Coach attacking team to support each other and separate the defenders so that a split pass can be made. Attackers need to read the visual cues when to do a wall pass, when to make a split pass when to dribble and when to do an overlap. Use an off-side line so that attackers learn to time their runs.



CANNOT PASS FORWARD

Two teams play 5v5 to 8v8 with a keeper. Players cannot pass the ball forward. Players can dribble forward and pass it only sideways or backwards, but not forward. They can shoot on goal. The only player who can pass forward is the keeper. When the ball goes out of bounds, players can pass it in or dribble it in but cannot pass it forward. This game encourages players to switch the point of attack, to use the keeper as the first line of attack and to dribble out of pressure and be deceptive.