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BELWEST FOXES SOCCER CLUB INC.

“INDIVIDUAL SKILLS”

Volleying, Bending the Ball, Shooting Practice, Running with the Ball and Turns

Junior players need very little motivation when it comes to learning individual skills. All youngsters seem to enjoy learning new tricks and techniques, particularly anything that involves fancy footwork or shooting at goal. However, youthful exuberance can be a destructive force too, and it is the job of the coach or parent to focus children's learning so that their energies are channelled into a structured learning programme that offers a consistent lever of progression.

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ENJOYMENT IS THE THING, NOT WINNING!

When children are training or playing games against other teams they need a fun environment where they can play without pressure. The game result, for younger players, should be irrelevant.

If the emphasis is on winning matches or the competition, the development process is doomed to failure and the fun of junior play is replaced by the pressures and frustrations of adult football.

A study of youth sport values showed that the most important values were:

- enjoyment
- personal achievement

The least important value was:

- winning

The junior coach must value, above all else, the individual development and welfare of every single player. Research has shown that the emphasis should be on the child experiencing fun and excitement. Children at this age are still sampling many sports and activities; football coaches can have an impact on which sport the child will choose.

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AGE-GROUP GUIDELINES

MAIN FOCUS	AGE GROUP & COMPETITION FORMAT	TEAM GUIDELINES	TIC EMPHASIS
Learning to master the ball	U/5-U/7 4v4	No formation / tactics consist of only very general instructions	Setting a 'TIC' for football
Learning to act with the ball purposefully	U/5-U/9 7v7	1-3-3 formation/basic tactical instructions/everyone plays all positions	TIC
Learning to play together purposefully	U/10-U/11 9v9	1-3-3-3 formation/limited tactical instructions/teant for specific positions more clear (but still flexible)	TIC
Learning the positions and basic tasks in 11 v 11	U/12-U/13 11v11	1-4-3-3 formation: Extending tactical instruction, explaining the positions and basic tasks	TIC
Learning how the basic tasks link together	U/14-U/15 11v11	1-4-3-3 formation: Choice/ specialising for a positions + corresponding tactical instruction	TIC
Learning how to play as a team	U/16-U/17 11v11	1-4-3-3 formation: Extending development on one position related to the team's output	TIC Football conditioning
Performing/winning as a team	U/18-U/19 11v11	1-4-3-3 formation: Perfection per position and as a team; result-oriented teamwork	TIC Football conditioning
T: Technique I: Insight C: Communication			

VOLLEYING

A ball in mid-flight, arriving at knee height, is a tempting prospect to the junior player. Instinctively, he thinks 'whack it hard', but invariably such an approach leads to no more than an embarrassing air shot or a hopelessly inaccurate strike. The job of the coach is to encourage players to make control rather than power the priority when volleying.

THE QUEST FOR POWER →

Junior players regard the volley as an opportunity to kick the ball hard. With the ball off the ground already, youngsters feel confident that they can strike it with a clean contact – just as a golfer does when hitting the ball from a tee peg. But all too often, the result is a wild swing, characterized by lots of extraneous body movement and followed by a swift look up to see where the ball has gone.

MAINLY A SHOT, SOMETIMES A CLEARANCE

The volley is occasionally used as a pass (see page 45 for more details), but more usually it is used as a shot when there is neither the time nor the space to control a ball in flight. Defenders may also be forced to volley the ball clear when faced with a similar situation and under pressure from opponents.

CHECKLIST

VOLLEY

Players must remember to:

1. Concentrate on control over power.
2. Look at the ball as they strike it.
3. Keep their head still and over the ball when shooting.



The key to a successful volley is to keep the head still and the eyes fixed on the ball.



A clean contact is more important than a powerful swing. Strike through the ball into a full follow-through.

VOLLEYING TECHNIQUE ↓

BALL ARRIVING STRAIGHT ON

The head should be kept steady, with the eyes looking down at the ball throughout. The non-kicking foot is positioned behind the ball – further back if the ball is to be played early in its flight. The ankle of the striking foot is extended and the knee raised as the ball approaches. Contact should be made with the instep, striking halfway down the back of the ball. The head remains down as the player completes a full, straight follow-through.

BALL ARRIVING FROM THE SIDE

The non-kicking foot faces the target in a position sideways on to the ball's line of flight. Eyes are fixed firmly on the ball and the head remains steady throughout. As the ball arrives, the leading shoulder drops away and the body rotates around the standing leg, which supports the player's weight. The kicking foot points outwards and is swung across the body, making contact halfway down the back of the ball.



1 A cushioned volley can be used to pass the ball over short distances.

2 The side of the foot is best used for this technique. Players must get into position early and strike the ball with the inside of the foot for maximum control.

3 A short follow-through is all that is required to send the ball to its target.



← VOLLEY PRACTICE

When practising volleying, it is essential that players have a target to aim at, and ideally this should be a goal. Set players at the edge of the penalty area and serve them the ball, alternating deliveries from the penalty spot and from a position to the side. Strikers must aim to hit the ball into the corners of the goal, while defenders must aim to clear the crossbar of the goal.



The art of bending the ball is one that cannot easily be taught and learned within the constraints of a group training session. Once the basic technique has been explained, it is down to the individual player to practise until a breakthrough is achieved. Some players seem to have an almost natural predisposition to curling the ball – approaching from a slight angle and clipping round the ball with the inside of the foot – others, however, struggle to master this technique without hours of practice.

BENDING THE BALL

TO SWERVE OR NOT TO SWERVE

Some footballers use the swerve pass as a matter of course, bending the ball irrespective of whether passing to a team-mate two or twenty yards (two or eighteen metres) away. When correctly judged, a swerving pass can play the ball neatly into the path of a forward-running team-mate. However, it is far simpler to judge the pace and angle of a ball played straight. Junior player should be advised to only bend the ball in attacking situations or when there is no other alternative.

The ability to swerve the ball can be invaluable in the attacking third of the pitch. Passes around defenders, curling free kicks and, best of all, bending shots, can all be extremely effective.

BENDING THE BALL – TECHNIQUE ↓

Whether shooting, crossing or simply passing to a team-mate, the basic technique for bending the ball remains the same. The standing foot is placed to the side of the ball and just behind it. Eyes remain fixed on the ball throughout, while the head points slightly downwards and is kept still. For a right-footed kick, the striking boot comes across the ball from left to right. The inside of the foot makes contact with the ball just to the right of centre, and the right leg continues on its inside-outside path into a full follow-through.

Bending the ball in the opposite direction, i.e. left to right for a right-footed player, uses the outside of the foot, and it is, therefore, a more difficult skill to master. Since a smaller striking area is used, it is difficult to generate both power and direction. This time, contact is made to the left of centre of the ball, and the striking foot moves on a path from outside to inside.



1 To bend the ball from right to left using his right foot, this player approaches the ball with his body open to the target.

2 The non-kicking foot is positioned to the side of the ball and just behind it, and the player leans back slightly to get the necessary elevation on the shot. His eyes remain fixed on the ball throughout.

3 The kicking foot makes contact with the ball just to the right of centre, and the right leg continues on an inside-to-outside path into a full follow-through.

TIPS

- Players must remember to graze across the ball rather than strike right through it.
- It is important that players do not quit on the shot – confidence and a clean contact are required.
- Encourage players to employ a full follow-through.

SHOOTING PRACTICE

SHOOTING DRILLS

Junior players are usually full of enthusiasm and energy when offered the chance to practise their shooting. As a general rule, any exercise that involves goals and footballs will have children captivated. However, to maintain their attention, you must make sure that each drill is well organised.



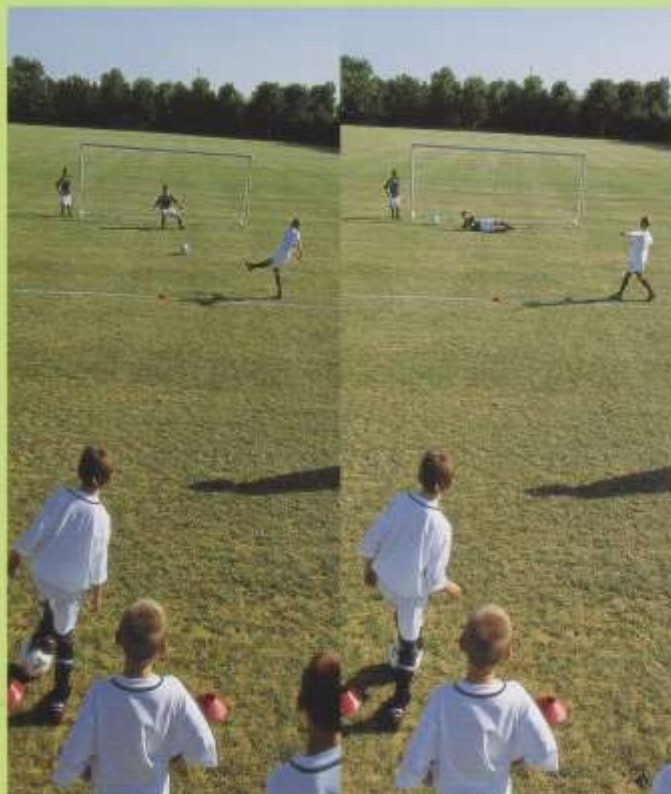
← USE CONES TO FOCUS ATTENTION

The aim with any shooting exercise should be for players to direct their shots into the corners of the goal. If a shot is placed in any of the four corners, the goalkeeper will struggle to save it. The very best goalscorers develop the ability to ignore the 'keeper, seeing only the spaces around him or her and, invariably, guiding their shots into the four places where a shot-stopper has no chance of making a save. With junior players, the best way to get them focussing on finding the corners of the goal is to set cones on the goal-line just inside the posts. The players can then aim to guide their shots between cones and post.

1 Accuracy is everything when it comes to shooting practice, and the presence of a goalkeeper can often divert players from their main aim of putting the ball in the corner of the goal.

2 On this occasion the player has been asked by his coach to guide the ball into the bottom right corner.

Players can hone their aim and build their confidence by shooting into the corners of an unguarded net. A cone placed in each corner will encourage them to work on their accuracy.



1 Players stand in a line and take turns to run at the goal. A cone is positioned on the edge of the penalty area, and as each player reaches it the coach calls out left or right. The player must then move to the appropriate side of the cone and shoot for the farthest corner of the goal.

2 In this case, the player has been told to go to the right, and his shot has been directed successfully inside the left-hand post.

← SHOOTING UNOPPOSED

Whenever possible, strikers should try to send their shots angling across the goalkeeper and in toward the far post. The theory behind this approach is that if the 'keeper gets a hand on the ball, he or she is just as likely to push it back into the path of an onrushing attacker. The drill illustrated on these pages involves players simply running onto either a static ball or a pass from a server (usually the coach) and directing the ball into the far corner of the goal. Players should switch sides after two or three turns, so that by the end of the session each of them has struck a shot from left to right and one from right to left.

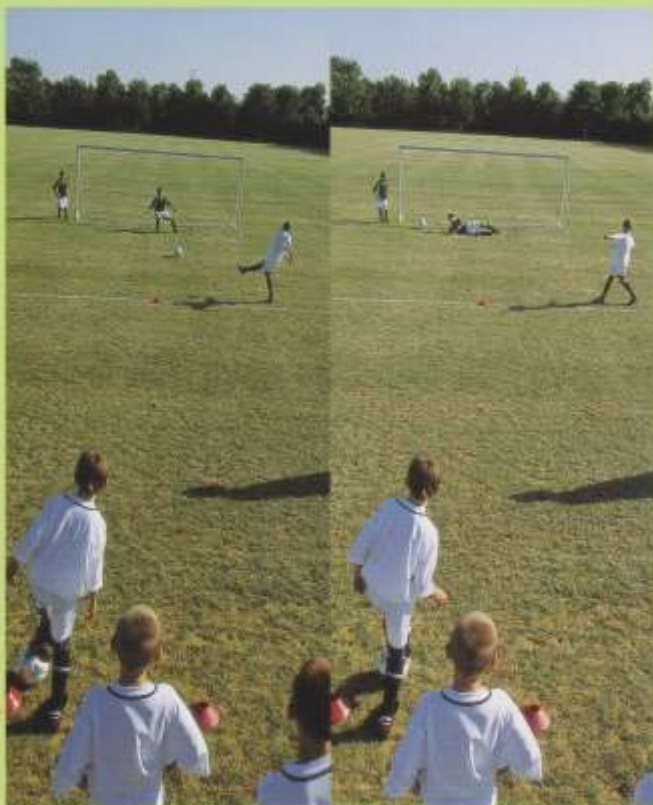
DRILL DETAIL

- Coach sets up with a stack of balls just outside the semi-circle on the edge of the penalty area.
- Players can either run with the ball or they can exchange passes with the server before shooting.
- Cones are placed in the goal to define the key target areas.



← PROGRESSION

- Strong foot shooting, hitting a static ball.
- Strong foot shooting, moving ball.
- Weaker foot shooting, hitting a static ball.
- Weaker foot shooting, moving ball.



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- Strong foot shooting, hitting a static ball.
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1 Both players line up shoulder to shoulder and with their backs to goal, 25m (27yds) out. The coach acts as server and stands facing the two players.

2 After a count of three, the coach throws the ball over the two players' heads and in the direction of goal.

3 The players turn and contest the bouncing ball with the aim of winning possession and shooting for goal.

4 The player in white wins the ball and shoots at goal under pressure from his opponent, who inadvertently acts as a defender.

↑ EVERYBODY WANTS TO BE A STRIKER

During a typical training session, you will invariably find that most players want to be centre-forwards, while nobody wants to be a defender. The good thing about the training exercise illustrated on this page, however, is that everybody can play the role of striker. The basic principle is simple: two players compete for a bouncing ball in the penalty area and whoever wins the ball shoots for goal. Both players are told they are strikers, but inadvertently they act as defenders too, putting pressure on the ball and challenging one another as they vie for possession.

DRILL DETAIL

- Set two players 25m (27yds) from goal.
- Tell both players they are 'strikers'.
- After a count of three, throw the ball over the players' heads for them to contest.
- Position cones in the goal as an additional target.
- Remind children that it is a training exercise and that foul play can lead to injuries.

PROGRESSION

- Three players contesting the ball.
- Increase the number of players contesting the ball to a maximum of four.



RUNNING WITH THE BALL

Junior coaches spend much of their time discouraging players from running with the ball, but nobody wants a team of robots who always go for the 'safe' option. Fortunately, young players can never entirely resist the temptation to run with the ball and take on their opponents. As a result, the entertaining sight of an attacker dribbling past a marker remains a common feature of the junior game. However, dribbling is more than just ineffective showmanship, and a flash of individual skill can often be the only way to overcome a packed defence.

← DRIBBLING ESSENTIALS

To beat an opponent with dribbling skills, players must learn the key arts of:

1. Close control – the ball should never be closer to an opponent than to the attacker in possession.
2. Changing direction or pace – to get past an opponent, a swift and unexpected change of pace and direction is required.
3. Disguise – whether using a change of pace, a Cruyff turn or a step-over, players must learn to disguise their true intentions.



← MIND THE CONES

The best way for junior players to learn the importance of keeping the ball close to their feet is by dribbling through cones. It is an old routine, but it works. Cones are set up in a straight line with a gate at each end, and players must simply dribble their way around each cone. If players begin to run too wide, a line of boundary cones can be put on either side.

Players should be encouraged to look at the ball but also to look up regularly and check the position of the cones. Both feet should be used and players should also practise using both the inside and the outside of the foot.



CHANGING DIRECTION

Experienced wingers and strikers will usually have a host of tricks that they use to jink past defenders. We have chosen two such techniques that can be mastered by the junior player.

← THE MATTHEWS

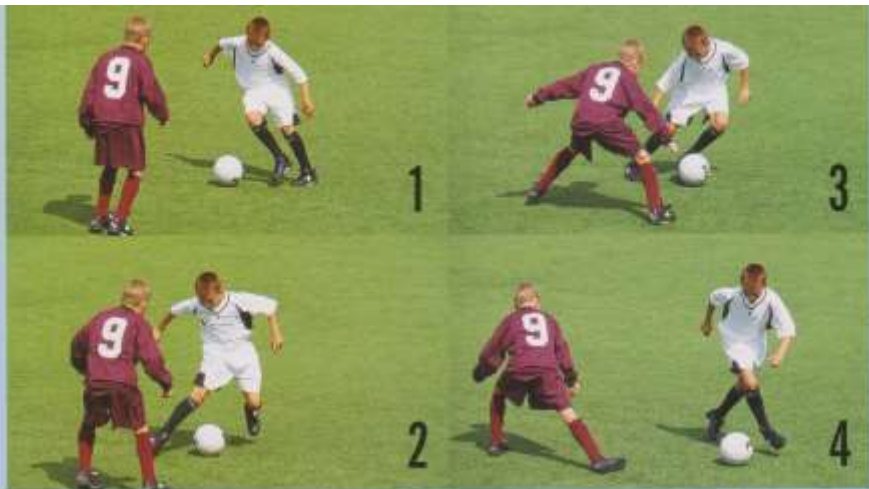
The simplest way to trick past a defender is to use a dummy, or as it is commonly known 'The Matthews' move. The attacking player, whom we assume to be right-footed, advances toward his opponent and shapes to move to the left. He puts his weight onto his left foot and drops the corresponding shoulder. His right foot begins to move toward the ball as though he is going to strike it across his body; however, at the last moment he switches his weight to the right side and pushes the ball away with the outside of the boot. The defender should be suitably deceived and, having followed the initial movement, will have no chance of readjusting in time to stop the attacker's run.

1 The attacker moves forward and signals his intention to take on the defender who blocks his path forward.

2 By lowering his shoulder and shifting his weight onto his left-hand side, the attacker suggests he is planning to take on the defender down the left.

3 The defender reads the attacker's body movement and begins to move to his right, but he has been deceived and, using the outside of his right boot, the attacker quickly switches direction.

4 The defender has no time to adjust his body position, as the attacker knocks the ball past him on the right and moves into space.



↑ THE STEP-OVER

The step-over works in the same way as The Matthews, and is intended to dupe defenders into committing themselves to moving in the wrong direction. There are two types of step-over that have become popular in the modern game. The first requires the use of just one foot and is a step over the ball from outside to inside, followed by a flick away using the outside of the same foot.

The second type of step-over is for players who are both confident and competent with both feet, as it requires a right-foot approach followed by a left-footed take away (or vice versa).

- 1 Step-overs require balance, deception and a swift change of direction. You must also be confident that you have both the skill and pace to make the move work.
- 2 The idea is to make the defender believe that you intend to attack down the right-hand side, but by stepping over and round the ball from inside to out, you give yourself the opportunity to take the ball away with your left foot down the opposite side.
- 3 As the attacker pushes the ball away with his left foot, the defender is thrown off balance, thus giving the attacker vital seconds in which to get away.
- 4 The move is a success and the attacker heads off into space while the defender has to turn and go after him.



← PRACTISING DUMMIES AND STEP-OVERS

Set up a square 20m x 20m (22yds x 22yds) and place one player with a ball in each corner. Players at opposite corners run toward the middle of the square, which is marked with a cone, but before they reach the centre, they perform a dummy or step-over and switch direction. Players then accelerate to the relevant marker and the next two players repeat. The exercise continues until all players have attempted the move from each corner. Note: this exercise should not be attempted by young players who might fail to make the turn and thereby run into one another.

CRUYFF TURN →

The Cruyff turn, which was named after the famous Dutch player of the 1970s, is a move that most junior players are eager to learn. The player shapes to strike the ball, but instead of making contact with the instep, flicks the ball behind his standing foot using the inside of the boot, and moves it onto the opposite foot. The player should now have space either to make a pass or run with the ball. Players should not overuse the Cruyff turn. The move can become predictable and easy to read if it is used too often. Ideally, players should be able to employ this technique with either foot.



1 Deception is the key to this skill. Players must convince their opponents that they are about to strike the ball.

2 The standing foot should be planted next to the ball and the corresponding arm should be thrown out, mimicking the set-up for a shot or cross.

URNS

DRAG BACK →

The drag-back turn is used to help players manoeuvre their way out of tight situations. The player can either use the turn to change the angle of attack or, alternatively, to turn through 180 degrees. The latter is particularly useful to strikers trying to turn a marker in the penalty area. In both cases, the technique remains the same. However, this skill should never be used when defending, and players must be careful not to push the ball too close to their marker when luring him into a tackle.



The attacker nudges the ball forwards to induce a lunge from his unwitting opponent.



3 The striking foot is checked at the last moment and the ball is flicked behind the player's standing foot.

4 The defender is committed and the attacker now has space in which to manoeuvre.

5 The attacker's successful Cruyff turn has wobbled him to pick out a team-mate with a measured cross rather than a hopeful punt.

In tight situations, for example in and around the penalty area, attacking players will often need to make space for themselves so that they can cross the ball or get in a shot. In most cases, they will also need to change direction so that they can direct the ball forward or into a team-mate. However, 'turning' under pressure requires close control, balance and sufficient skill to deceive an opponent.



2 The defender duly obliges, committing himself to a tackle, and the forward places a foot on top of the ball and drags it back.

3 The defender's momentum carries him forward, leaving the attacker to move away from danger.

4 The defender is committed, and the attacker pushes the ball past his stranded marker.

INSIDE ↓

**INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE HOOKS →**

Hooking the ball with the inside or outside of the foot is the most straightforward way to turn a defender. For a right-footed player, the inside hook takes the ball across the body and to the left, while the outside hook moves it away from the body and to the right. The technique for both is the same. The boot curls, or hooks, around the ball and guides it around as the standing leg pivots to push the player forward. When using the inside and outside hooks, an attacker can gain valuable advantage over a marker by dropping his shoulder in the opposite direction of the intended turn.



OUTSIDE ↓

1 Players must aim to keep the ball close to their foot as they move around. If the ball moves too far away from the foot then the turn will be wide and, in a match situation, defenders would have a better chance of stealing the ball.



2 The player curls his foot around the ball, hooking it with the inside to bring it across his body and using the outside to take it away from his body.



3 The standing leg pivots to push the player in the direction of the ball. This skill requires both balance and fast feet, so it should be practised regularly until players feel confident turning in a relatively confined area.



STOP TURN ↓

The stop turn can be extremely effective but it can also end in embarrassment. It is used to switch directions suddenly, and often when running at full speed. Players should be careful when placing their foot on top of the moving ball... slip-ups are not only embarrassing but also painful. The stop-turn is not recommended in wet or greasy conditions.



1 Without warning, the attacker simply puts a foot on top of the rolling ball to stop it.

2 The element of surprise, means that the defender continues on for longer on the original path, giving the attacker time to turn around and collect the stationary ball.

3 When stepping over the ball, players often get their legs tangled up because they try and turn too sharply.

4 Having successfully completed the stop-turn, the player moves off with the ball under control.

PRACTISING TURNS →

Any turn can be practised in one of two ways. The simplest method is to get players lined up shoulder to shoulder on the six-yard box in readiness for your whistle. When the whistle is blown, players must run toward the edge of the penalty area, when they reach the 18-yard line, they must turn sharply and run back to the six-yard box, where they turn again. The exercise can be repeated until each turn has been practised.

Alternatively, a square 20m x 20m (22yds x 22yds) is marked out and up to ten players are introduced to the square with a ball each. The players dribble around the square until they hear the coaches whistle or shout, at which point they must turn using the required technique. The advantage of this method is that players must avoid bumping into one another, just as they will have to avoid other players when turning in a crowded penalty area.



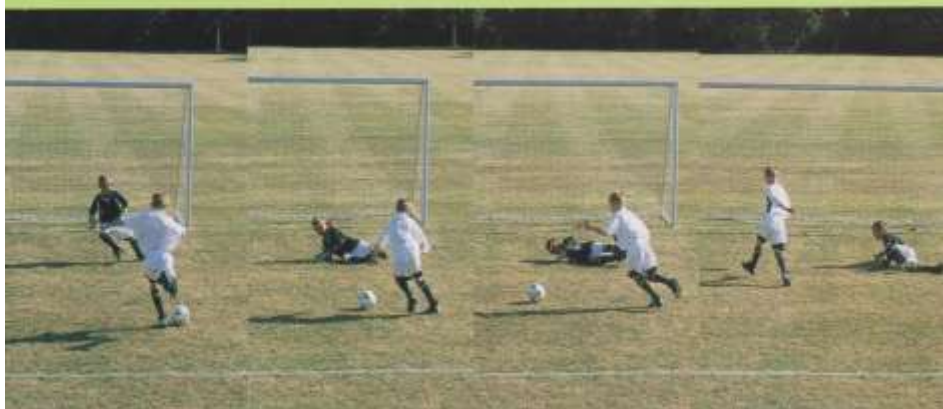
FINISHING ONE-VERSUS-ONE

There is no more enjoyable training exercise for junior players than a one-versus-one session with the goalkeeper. The 'keeper will enjoy the chance to take on his or her outfield team-mates, while everybody else revels in the opportunity to score goals. From the coaches' point of view it is also a session that consolidates the lessons of earlier training drills, particularly those concerning dribbling and finishing skills.

DRILL ORGANIZATION

To make this drill run smoothly, the coach must ensure that the penalty area never gets clogged up by players. A gate should be used as a queuing point for all players waiting their turn, and once players have completed the drill they should follow a path around the edge of the pitch back to the gate. Balls should be returned from the goal by the goalkeeper if on target, or collected by the striker if they miss. Players must also wait for the coach to give a signal before taking their turn.

The attacker begins to shoot and sends the goalkeeper to ground, leaving him free to move the ball onto his left foot and fire into the unguarded half of the goal.





As the goalkeeper comes off his line, the attacker shapes to move left but dummies over the ball and comes back into his right side. The keeper, however, is already committed and is left on the ground.



TAKING ON THE 'KEEPER

The attacker is set on a mark around 25m (27yds) from goal and must run forward to take on the 'keeper using any skill or trick before shooting for goal. The 'keeper can move forward from the goal-line and close the shooting angle, thereby adding match realism. From an attacking point of view, the aim should be to induce the 'keeper to commit to a challenge, making it simple to go around him or her and shoot into the net.



FREESTYLE OR SPECIFIC SKILL

The coach can set this drill as either freestyle, i.e. the attacking player can use any skill to beat the 'keeper, or alternatively he or she can request that the outfield players use a particular move to go around the 'keeper, if the coach opts for the latter, the specified move should be communicated to the player without the 'keeper hearing, otherwise the goalkeeper will have an unrealistic advantage.



TRICKS USED TO COMMIT A GOALKEEPER

- Feigning to shoot. The player shapes to shoot, but instead of striking the ball, cuts it to the side and around the 'keeper.
- Rolling foot over the ball. The attacker deceives the goalie into anticipating a shot by shaping to strike the ball but rolling a foot over the top of it instead. The 'keeper dives and the striker chips into the unguarded net.
- Step-over. By running the ball right up to the 'keeper, a player can use the step-over move to cut a path to goal. The 'keeper commits to the dummy and goes to ground, leaving the attacker to guide the ball forward to goal.

NOTES