

LWYSA

Training Program

Book 3

U6 & U7 Training Program



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U6 and U7 Training Program

The LWYSA U6 and U7 training program has been designed to provide age appropriate practices for the beginning U7 players while at the same time preparing the younger U6 players for a smooth entry into the main program the following year. As a direct result of this program U6 players and their coaches will be introduced to the same rules, games and drills that the U7 players and their coaches are expected to use in their practices.

The popularity of soccer playing over the past number of years has resulted in a large number of parents and players who can't wait to enroll into the U7 program. Therefore we at LWYSA feel that we should do something to prepare these players and their parents by giving them an opportunity to pre-train for our U7 program by introducing the U6 players and their potential coaches to a condensed version of that program. As Coaching Director of the youth program I want to make sure that all of the beginning children will be steered in the right direction especially in the retention of their enthusiasm for the game and that the drills and games we subject them to in our program will enhance that enthusiasm.

Also it is important that this training program is based upon soccer principles and does not make soccer out to be a mixed collection of crazy games that do not relate to the real game. Yes the kids and their parents are there to have fun but the game of soccer has always been "serious" fun and the participants of this program need to know and accept this principal if they are ever going to embrace soccer as their sport.

My idea is to teach the kids age appropriate technical skills while introducing them to the 3v3 starting game that LWYSA has developed for its U7 program. Just as the 3v3 game was introduced to give the starting kids a better idea of the supporting triangular shapes needed in team play these technique practices will be based on my observations of the beginning players technical tendencies while they were scrimmaging.

The beginning players appeared to want to do several things with the ball.

First they want to get it, then they want to either run with it or to kick it hard and, last but not least, they want to shoot it at goal. It was also noticeable that even while playing 3v3 their natural instinct of going to the ball meant that they would bunch around the ball rather than try to create space to receive a pass. Even when a player broke away from the bunch in an attempt to create passing space, the idea of passing the ball to that player did not appear to cross the other players' minds.

I believe that to retain their enthusiasm for the game we must allow them to play the way that they want to while we attempt to teach them how to do these things in a technically correct way. If they want to win the ball we must encourage them to tackle properly for the ball and if they want to kick the ball hard we must introduce them to instep kicking. If they want to run with the ball we must teach them how to dribble the ball without losing control of it and if they want to shoot we must teach them to keep their shots low and accurate if they want to score goals.

When performing the dribbling and shooting drills I believe it would be more realistic if the coach were to bring a goal area defender into the equation so that the players would begin to recognize the importance of attacking and defending the goal. If our drills are performed using empty goals to score on then we are presenting these beginning kids with a false picture of the most important area of the soccer field.

Our kids need to know from the beginning that scoring goals and stopping goals from being scored are essential elements of the game and that if they are to become good soccer players they must recognize just how important they are.

The basic techniques are:

Defense

The Instep Clearance

The Block Tackle

Attack

Collecting the Ball

The Dribble Forward

The Shot

Fitness

The Relay Run

The Stutter Step

Setting up the Program

I believe that coaches should set up the training program so that the players know what to expect when they show up for practice. When the players show up for the game they should know how long the game will last, that they will compete on a marked soccer field with an opposing team and that the person in charge of the game will be the referee. They should also know that the opponents, referee and soccer field will change from week to week but the length of the game and the rules of the game will remain constant.

With this in mind I believe that we should set up the training program in a repetitive manner so that players know the types of games and drills they will be asked to perform and at what stage in the program they will be asked to do so.

Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Practice Routine

1) Warm-up Time-10mins

Jog and Stretch plus movement with the ball drill

2) 3v3 Game Time-10mins

3) Drill “with or without” opposition Time-10mins

4) Relay Races Time-10mins

5) 3v3 Game Time-10mins

1) The warm-up by jogging and stretching is a good habit for the players to pick up and it will help them in the future to avoid muscle injuries. Also, the movement with the ball drill will warm them up to ball handling and improve their touch and timing on the ball while introducing them to technical skills.

2) The game is what soccer is all about and the kids should be allowed to enjoy this segment of the practice with the coach

stepping in to emphasize any tackling situations that need to be addressed. The coach can also use these games to teach the kids the rules of the game by stopping the game when a rule has been broken and explaining that rule to the whole of the group.

3a) The drill using opposition can be selected from the ones in this booklet and should be varied at each practice session.

3b) The drills without opposition are also important because they allow the kids to practice their technique while under less pressure. This type of practice can be done at home and the kids should be encouraged to spend at least some time doing home practice.

4) Relay races are an important part of the players' development and I would strongly recommend that the run without the ball, the run holding the ball and passing it over to a teammate and the run while dribbling the ball are part of every practice

5) Finishing the session with another 3v3 game will send them home happy because after all they did sign up to play soccer and we want them to love this game.

If the coach feels that the time allotted to the practice will not allow the amount of games and drills that I have suggested, then the coach should select the drills and games that can fit into the session from the list above.

We should always remember that the main object of this exercise is to combine the soccer learning with the enjoyment of playing the game.

A team's greatest asset is the enthusiasm of its players.

Warm up Drill

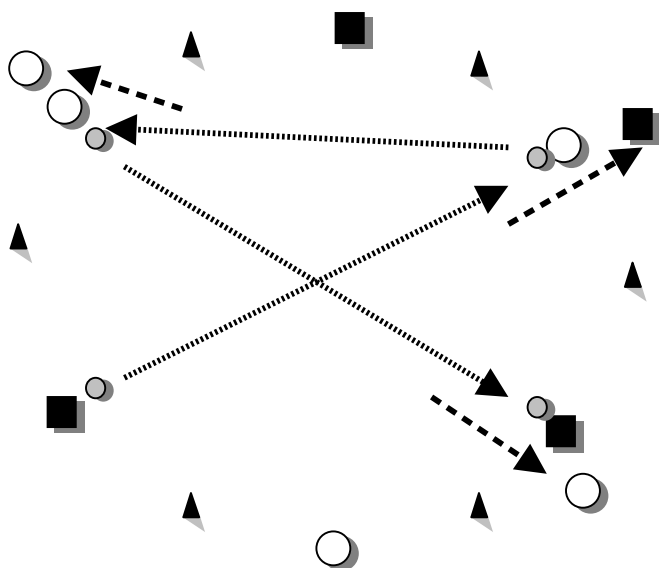
The best warm up drill for younger players is to mark out a circle of cones and place the players around the circle.

One player is given a ball and the coach asks the player to dribble the ball across the circle towards a teammate on the other side.

The player dribbling the ball allows the ball to run through to his teammate and the new ball carrier runs the ball into the center of the circle while the first player takes up the space vacated by the new ball carrier.

This type of drill can be used to introduce turning with the ball, putting a dribbling move or head fakes on the ball.

It could also be used to introduce the players to simple passing by allowing them to pass the ball to a teammate from the center of the circle and then changing places with that receiver.



The Perfect Drill

With the recognition of the beginning players technical preferences comes the desire to provide them with the perfect drill. My choice of the perfect drill for those beginners would be this.

A long instep clearance from a defender that is collected by an attacker, dribbled forward and past the challenging defender setting up a shot on goal that either scores, misses the target or is cleared off the line by a second defender who is stationed inside the goal area.

The reason that this drill is perfect is because it involves all of the natural instinctive plays that beginning players attempt to make.

The defender wants to clear the ball up the field so he hits a long clearance with his instep.

The attacker gathers the ball and advances it by dribbling it towards his opponent's goal.

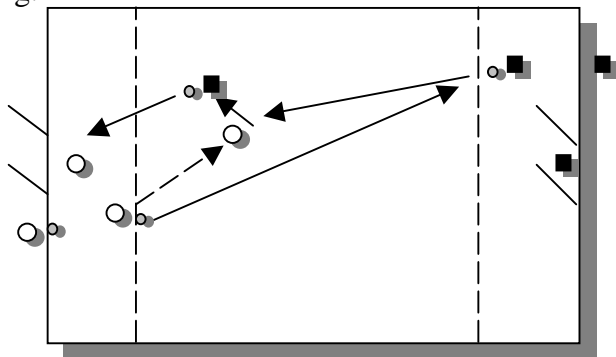
The defender runs towards the attacker in an attempt to regain possession of the ball.

The attacker dribbles the ball past the defender and shoots on goal.

Or the defender tackles the ball away from the attacker and attempts to score on his opponent's goal.

The next players in line repeat the process and the drill continues.

The coach should change the goal area defender after each drill so that all the players get the chance to do some goal area defending.

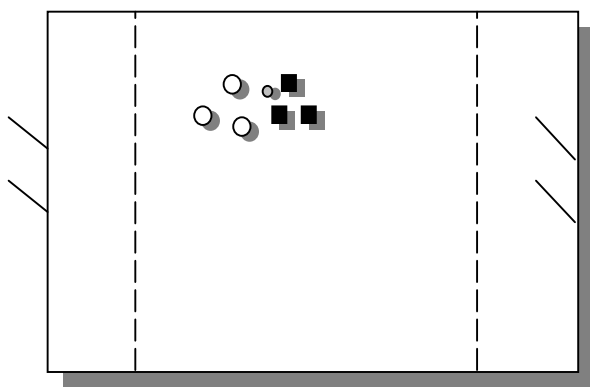


The Perfect Game

The perfect game for these players is the “swarm” game because it involves all of the natural technical challenges that the players’ enthusiasm for the game confronts them with.

The 3v3 game was invented to encourage the kids to understand the importance of the triangular shapes involved in full field 11-a-side soccer but all it has created is a smaller swarm. However the beauty of the 3v3 game lies in the increased number of touches that each player gets because of the smaller team numbers. The more touches a player gets the more important the player feels to his/her team and that is good for the individual player’s self esteem.

It is also useful in spotting the more talented players who might break clear of the smaller swarm in order to score but would have a much more difficult task to break through the larger swarm of the 11v11-team game.



Other Games and Drills for U6 and U7 Training

The Numbers Game

In this game the coach splits his players into two teams giving each player a number. If there are three players in each team then each team has a player numbered one, two and three.

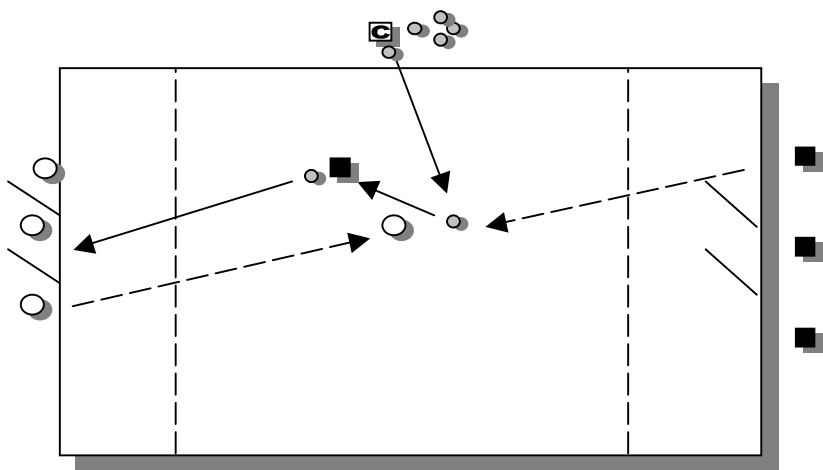
Both teams are lined up at opposite ends of the field with the coach positioned around the half way mark.

The game starts with the coach throwing the ball onto the field and calling out a number.

The kid on each team whose number is called runs to the ball and attempts to dribble around his opponent to shoot on goal.

The rules can be changed to allow each team a goal area defender or to allow the players whose numbers are not called to block the shots on the goal line.

The coach can also call two numbers so that the game becomes a 2v2 competition.



Dribble and Shoot

Drill One

The players are divided into two teams made up of three players

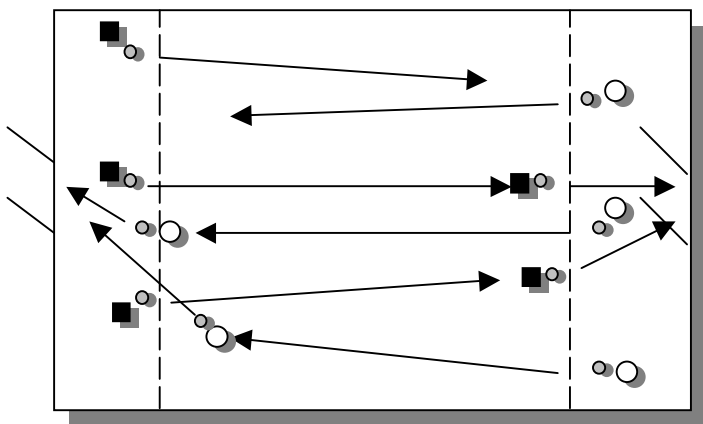
Each player has a ball that he dribbles inside his own penalty area

On the coach's shout or signal the players dribble the ball towards their opponent's penalty area and shoot the ball into the goal

The players are not allowed to defend their goal, as this is a test of speed dribbling and accurate finishing

The team that scores the most goals wins

Or, the first team to score with all their shots wins



Dribble and Shoot

Drill Two

The coach sets up the drill by placing two gates made up of two cones set some three yards apart on each side of the half way line

The players' line up in front of the gates one team going to one goal and the second team headed towards the other

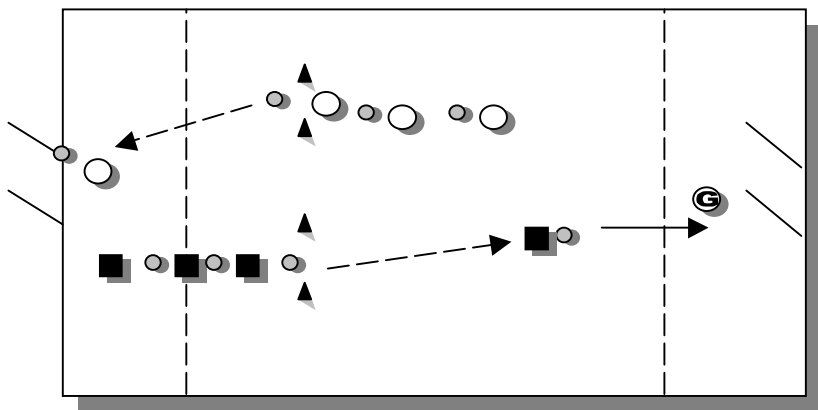
On the coaches signal the first player from each team dribbles the ball through the gate and shoots at the goal

When the goal area is cleared the second player dribbles through the gate and shoots

Once the player has shot he must collect his ball and return to the gate he dribbled through

The drill continues in this manner until the coach stops it to either rest the players or to change the goal area defenders who are marked in the diagram with the letter "G"

The team that scores the most goals wins the game



Dribble and Shoot

Drill Three

This shooting drill requires the players to dribble the ball through a set of cones before trying to shoot it past the attempted block of the goal area defender

On either side of the field a number of cones are spaced out about two yards apart from each other

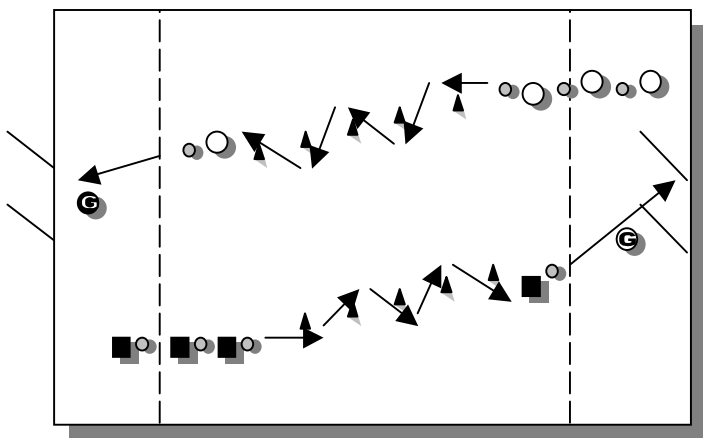
Each team lines up behind their set of cones with a ball each

The first player from each team dribbles the ball through the cones and when he passes the last one he shoots on goal

After the player shoots he should collect his ball and return to the back of his line

Once the area is cleared the second player can start his dribbling run through the cones

The coach will decide when the drill should end



The Kick Dribble and Shoot Drill

This drill is a simple one but it does fit in all the technique that players of this age group like to demonstrate when in possession of the ball

As in most drills the players have a ball each and line up behind each other at their defensive end of the field

The first player on each team kicks the ball onto the field to start the drill

He then runs after the ball and dribbles it towards the opponents goal

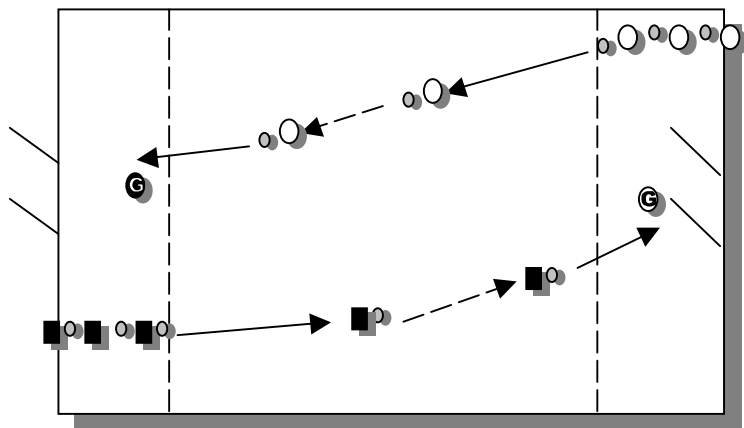
Before he enters the goal area he must shoot for goal

The goal area defender will try to block the shot without using his arms or hands to do so

Once he has taken his shot the attacker collects his ball and returns to the back of his line

The second player in line will then be free to make his kick, dribble and shoot

Each team should count their goals to see which team wins



Throw-in, Gather, Dribble and Shoot Drill

Each player has his own soccer ball

The players line up behind each other facing one of the goals

The first player in the group comes to the near touch line and makes himself available to receive a pass from his teammate

The lead player passes the ball to that player on the touchline and moves forward to receive a throw-in pass

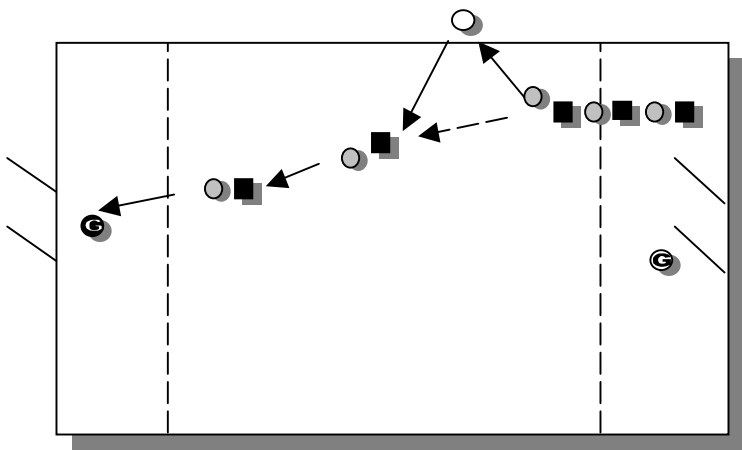
The receiving player gathers the ball and moves in on goal for a shot

The goal area defender attempts to block the shot without the use of his hands or arms

The next player in line passes the ball to the outside player and the drill is repeated

When each player has completed the drill they start afresh from the other end of the field using another player to take the throw-ins

The drill continues in this manner until the coach decides to move on



Relay Races With and Without the Ball

These races are run around and in and out of cones

The coach starts the proceedings by setting up the course and dividing the team into two separate groups

The course is made up of a starting line, four turning cones and a tag cone

The object of the exercise is to get the players running as fast as they can through the turning cones, touch the tag cone with their hand and return by once again going in and out of the turning cones

The players are asked to run the course without the ball and to hand tag their teammates to release them to run

The players can also run the course while carrying the ball.

They release the next runner by handing the ball to them

The players are then asked to run the course by dribbling the ball in and out of the cones and releasing the next runner by passing the ball to him once the hurdles have been negotiated

These exercises are great for teaching the player how to control his body and the ball while changing direction because it introduces the players to the “stutter step”

Stutter steps are the short strides that keep the player balanced while preparing to change direction and learning how to “stutter step” is essential to quicker movement while playing soccer

