

# THE MLU YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

U6

# INTRODUCTION

The mission of the MLU Development Curriculum is to enhance the soccer experience of young players and coaches within our club. The game is the best teacher and learning revolves around both playing the game itself and watching top class players.

The following curriculum has been designed using qualified coaches and teachers from the United States and Europe. We have created a progression for the soccer player based on the four pillars of the game: technical, tactical, psychological and physical.

The MLU development team is dedicated to providing the absolute best personal service to all our players and coaches with whom we work.

## GOALS

There are four main pillars of soccer, which are evident at every level of the game – technical, tactical, psychological and physical.

Clearly there will be different emphasis placed on each one depending on the age and ability of the player in question.

The MLU Development series of curriculums for coaches will show a clear progression in each of those areas and define clear parameters on what coaches should be looking for in a particular age group.

**It is also important that a coach has clear goals for himself / herself and for his / her team prior to working with any age group.**

# Technical

## **Dribbling:**

- Ability to use both inside and outside of either foot
- Use small controlled steps and keep ball close
- Keep head up as much as possible

## **Running with the ball:**

- Push ball away from body
- Keep head up

## **Passing:**

- Keep on toes at all times
- Concentrate on striking middle of ball with either foot

## **Control:**

- Stay alert
- Get body behind line of ball

# Tactical

NONE!

Coaches need not concern themselves with tactical considerations when working with this age group. At this stage of their development players are very egocentric and are not ready to make decisions on the field other than knowing when they are thirsty, tired or need to go to the bathroom.

# Psychological

The main psychological goal for players at this stage of their development is to have fun. Coaches need to ensure that their players receive an exciting and positive introduction to the game of soccer to ensure future participation. The coach's goal will be to remain patient and enthusiastic at all times.

# Physical

Players at this age find it fun to be active. Any fitness that they receive should be as a result of playing the game of soccer. Use soccer games to improve balance and coordination.

## Note to Coaches

Always remember your main goal is to allow players to develop in a **SAFE, FUN** and **EDUCATIONAL** environment. Here are some simple steps to follow in order to run a successful and fun practice.

- 1.) Keep things brief and simple! Remember players at this level have a very short attention span.
- 2.) Make things fun! Your energy and enthusiasm needs to come through in every practice.
- 3.) Use your imagination! A successful coach with this age range is one who can make his/her session relate to how the young player views the world.
- 4.) **ALL** players should be given plenty of opportunities to succeed and there should be sufficient progression throughout the session to keep **ALL** players motivated and challenged.

Remember, to succeed in coaching players in this age range, you must have:

- **Patience** – they will not understand things right away.
- **Persistence** – sometimes minor changes are all that is needed.
- **Flexibility** – recognize when something is not working and change it.
- **A sense of humor** – laugh with your players.
- **A very positive attitude** – give generous praise often.
- **And lots and lots of energy** – participate in practice.

# How to Organize a Training Session

Training sessions should be one hour in length. Your session should be dynamic, fast moving and progressive with one main theme and should allow all players to touch the ball as often as possible. You will be more comfortable and confident with pacing a session as you gain experience. All activities should be geared towards fun.

## **Equipment:**

Have water available or make sure all players bring water bottles with them. Always bring a first aid kit to your training sessions.

**Balls** - All players should play with size 3 balls and try to have one ball per player. It is important that players at this age familiarize themselves and feel comfortable with the ball as much as possible

**Cones** - Try to have plenty of colored cones at your disposal and use them. Clearly mark out your areas– younger players' needs plenty of visual cues and constant reinforcement.

**Bibs** - Try to have several different colored bibs at your disposal. Differentiate teams clearly to avoid confusion.

**Field size** - should be approximately 30x20 for 3v3– smaller spaces will demand more touches on the ball. Check that the field is safe – no broken glass for example.

# Training Session Breakdown

## **1.) WARM-UP**

**10mins**

Begin with a fun and enjoyable activity. This should prepare the players mentally and physically for the rest of the practice. Slight changes to a game will make it different to players at this age.

## **2.) FUN SKILL GAMES**

**15mins**

These games are designed to be high energy, fun activities that reinforce the basic techniques.

## **3.) SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

**30mins**

Each practice should conclude with a small-sided game. The size of the field should be about 30 x 20 and the teams should be 3 v 3.

# Small-sided Games – 3v3

Every practice should conclude with a small-sided game. Remember that the game is the best teacher of all. These games should be a positive experience for all with the emphasis placed on having fun. Your main aim is to create a **SAFE, FUN, EDUCATIONAL** environment in which your players can develop. This should be the largest portion of your practice – about thirty minutes in length.

## ORGANIZATION

- 1.) Field Size: 30 x 20yds
- 2.) Equipment: Use cones to clearly mark out the area of the field.
- 3.) Use upright cones or flags as goals and place them about 8 feet apart.
- 4.) Use bibs to avoid confusion amongst players.
- 5.) Play with a size 3 ball.
- 5.) Play 4-minute periods and then allow time for substitutions, water breaks, etc.  
Be flexible – your main aim is that all players have a positive experience.
- 7.) Teams are allowed, but not encouraged, to have a goalkeeper. However this player must also play on the field – try to create the notion of a “keeper sweeper”.

3v3 will promote players touching the ball and being involved as much as possible. Keep instructions clear and to a minimum and use your enthusiasm to keep all players motivated. Give the teams names and generate excitement without putting emphasis on outcome. Always stress the importance of fair play and sportsmanship and have the players shake hands/high five at the end of each game.

Initially the organization of the games will take a little longer but after a few weeks the players (and parents) should understand the set-up. You may then be able to add a little variety to these games by introducing some simple conditions:

- a) Play with a mini-ball
- b) All three players must cross halfway line for a goal to stand.

## Bank Robbery

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number of Players Required:** U5 / U6 Training Group

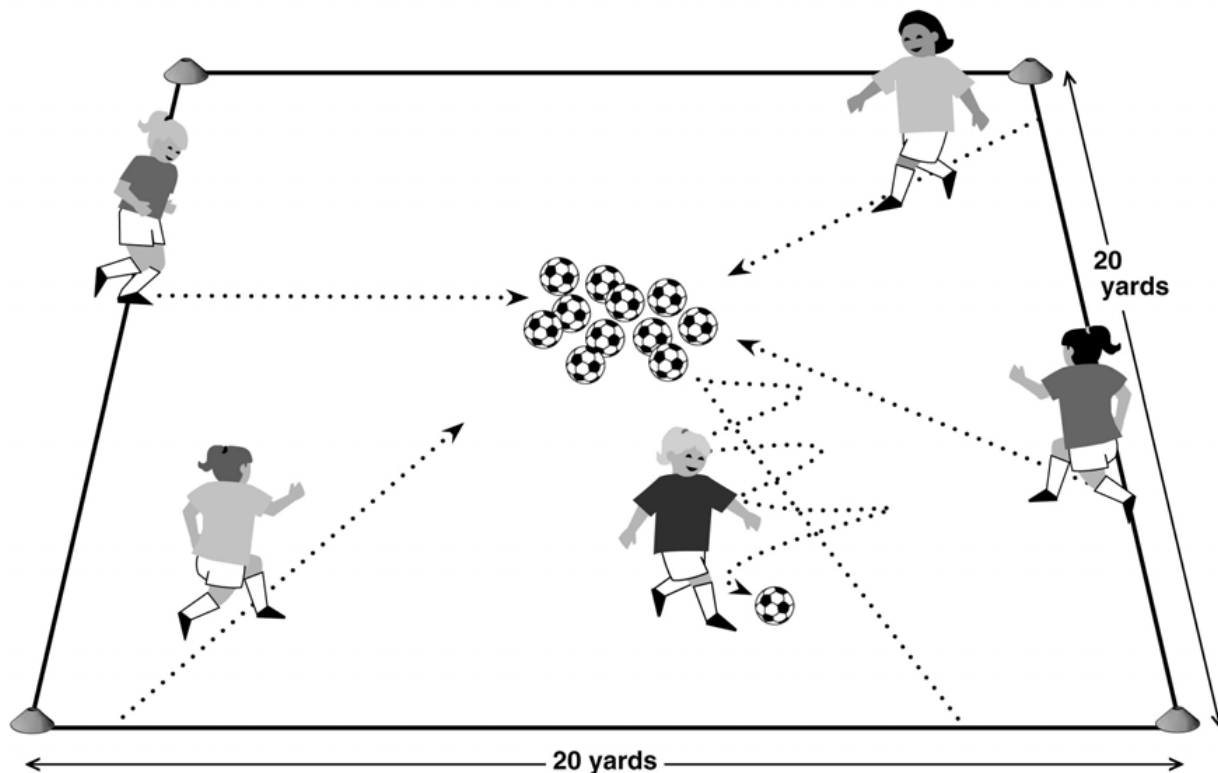
**Equipment:** 4 or more cones to mark grid, 10 to 12 soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid.

**How the Game Is Played:** All players are standing on a line (imaginary boundary line that marks the grid) The coach will yell “Bank Robbery” at that time all players must sprint to the center of the grid collect a ball with her feet and return to the line as quickly as possible stop the ball on the line and return to the center to get another ball. When all the balls have been collected the player who has collected the most balls wins.

**Deviations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of R or L, or use inside of both feet. Add more balls to the center and enlarge the grid.



## Coach Says

**Skill:** Dribbling

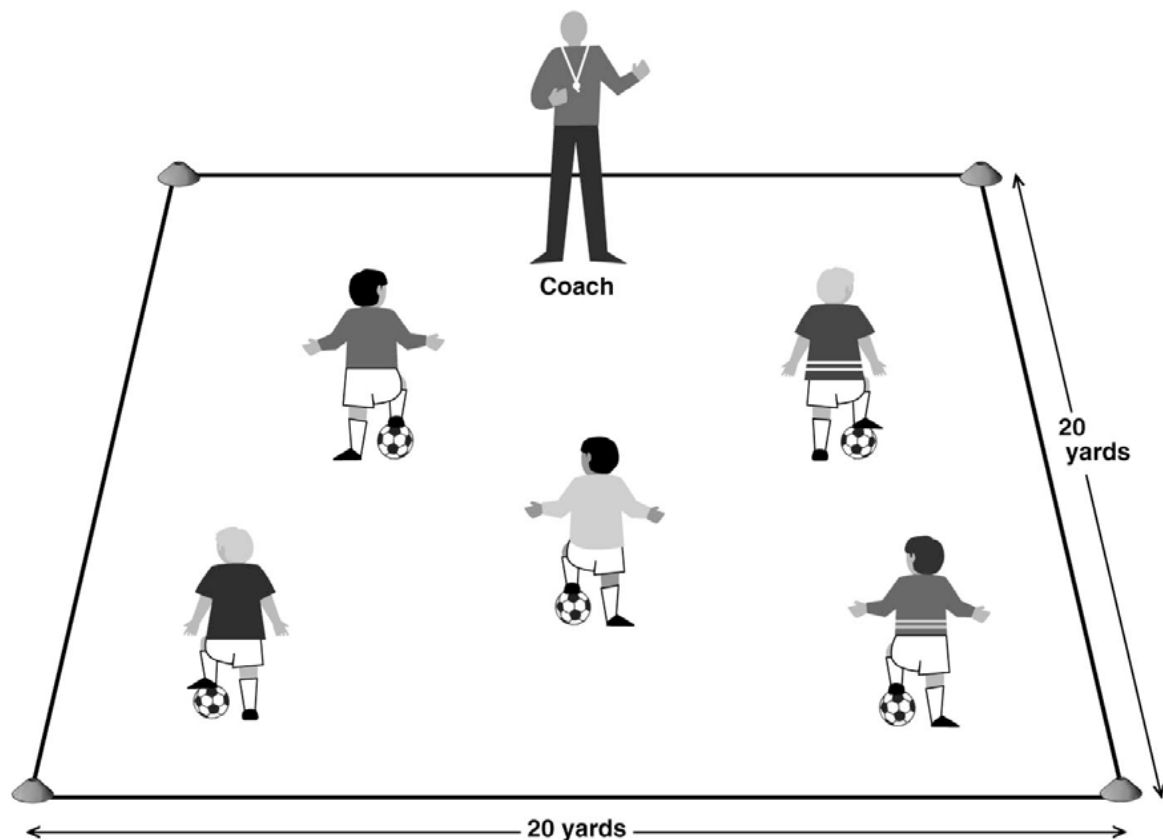
**Number of Players Required:** U5 / U6 Training Group

**Equipment:** 4 or more cones to mark grid, 1 ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How the Game Is Played:** The coach will explain that he or she will tell the players exactly what he would like the players to do. Like: STOP, START, SIT DOWN, SIT ON BALL, ONE FOOT ON BALL, SPED UP, SLOW DOWN, ELBOW ON BALL, and so on, but they must only react if the direction is preceded by "Coach Says," players should continue old activity if direction was not preceded by "Coach Says."



## Big Bad Coach

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number of Players Required:** U5 Training Group

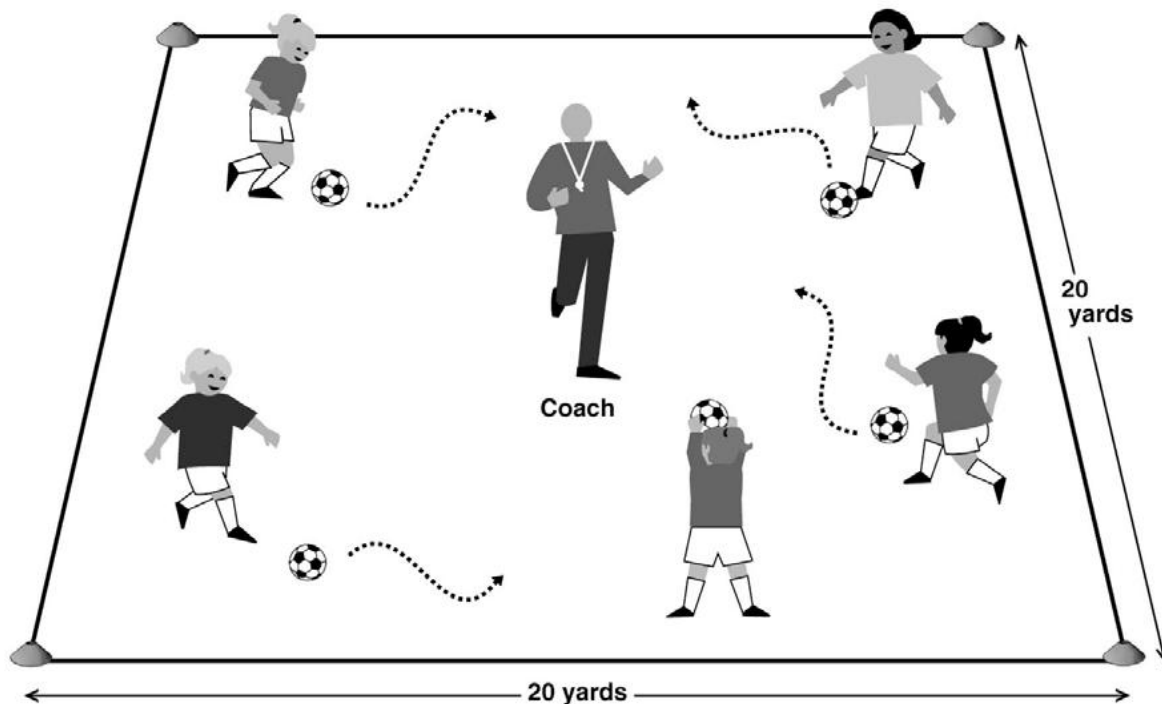
**Equipment:** 4 or more cones to mark grid, 1 ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How the Game Is Played:** The player's dribble around the area. The coach must attempt to kick the player's ball out of the grid. Once a player has had her ball kicked out of the grid or has dribbled outside of the grid, she must bring it back into the area and stand with the ball above her head with her legs apart in a stationary position. The player can get back into the game only when a teammate dribbles her ball through their legs.

**Deviations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of R or L, or use inside of both feet. Coach should play at 20% speed. Increase the speed of play as the players become more comfortable with the game.



## Find the #

**Skill:** Dribbling

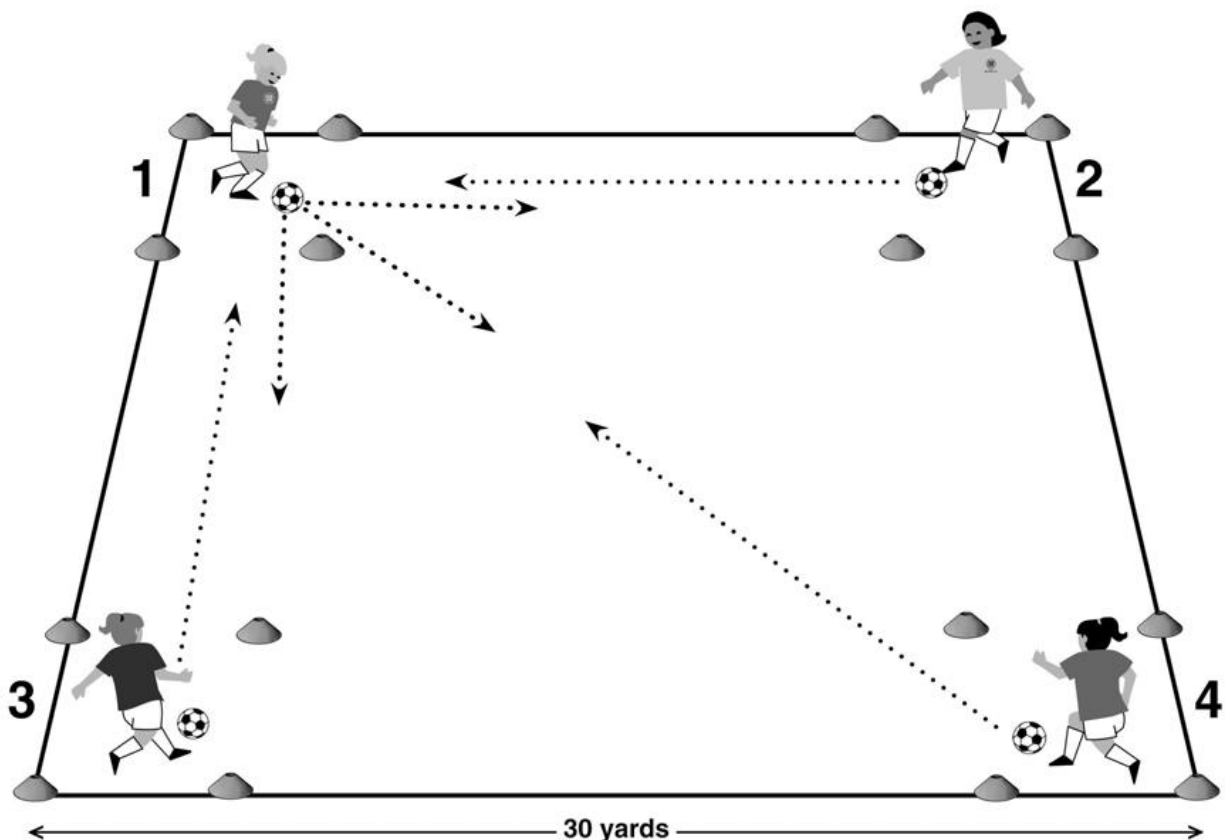
**Number of Players Required:** U5 / U6 Training Group

**Equipment:** 12 or more cones to mark a grid and 1 soccer ball per player.

**Grid Requirement:** A 30 X 30 yard grid with 5 X 5 yard grids in each corner of the large grid.

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 30 X 30 yard grid with 5 X 5 yard grids in each corner of the large grid. Place one or two players (depending on the # of players you have at practice) in one of the corner grids, each with a soccer ball.

**How the Game Is Played:** The coach will designate a number 1 – 4 for each of the small grids. Each small grid will have at least one player who will be randomly dribbling within the grid. The coach will yell a number 1-4 and all players will dribble as fast as they can to the grid # that was called. The player who was playing in the grid that was called must dribble to any one of the three grids that are now empty. First player to the new grid wins.



## LA Freeway

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number of Players Required:** U5 / U6 Training Group

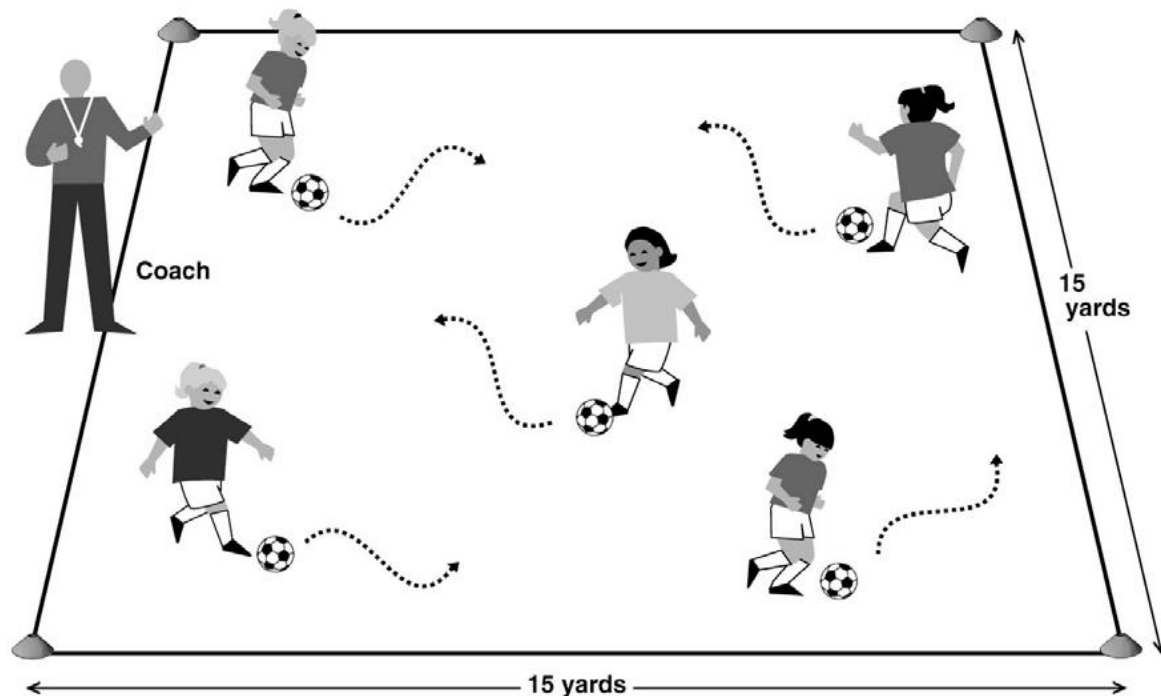
**Equipment:** 4 or more cones to mark grid, 1 ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How the Game Is Played:** All players dribble around in the grid. They must react to the following directions given by the LAPD (the coach). "Green" is go, "Yellow" slow down, "Red" is stop with foot on the ball for 3 seconds, "Crash" all must fall to the ground, and "Runaway Speeder" the coach runs in the grid and kicks the balls out of the grid.

**Deviations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of R or L, or use inside of both feet. Coach play nicely, they are children.



## My Ball

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number of Players Required:** U5 / U6 Training Group

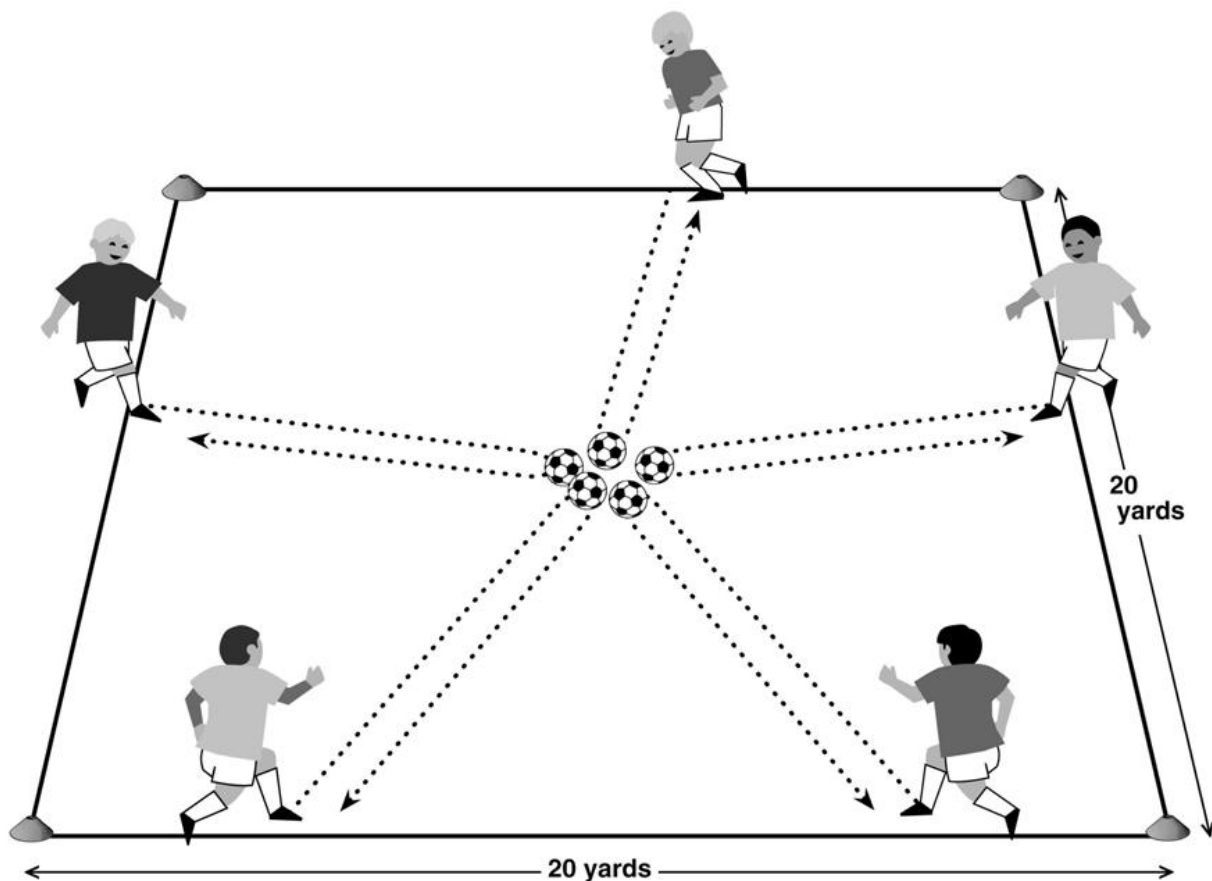
**Equipment:** 4 or more cones to mark grid, 1 ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How the Game Is Played:** All players are standing on a line (imaginary boundary line that marks the grid) The coach will call out a player's name, that player must sprint to the center of the grid collect a ball with her feet and return to the line as quickly as possible. The fastest player wins.

**Deviations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of R or L, or use inside of both feet. The coach can call two or three names at a time. Just have some fun with the game.



# **SAMPLE SEASON PLANNER**

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Theme</b>              | <b>Warm-up</b> | <b>Skill Builder</b> | <b>Skill Game</b>     | <b>Small Sided Game</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Week 1      | Dribbling/<br>Turning     | My Ball        | Four Corners         | Gate Keeper           | 4v4                     |
| Week 2      | Passing                   | LA Freeway     | 3 Way<br>Passing     | Team Tackle           | 4v4                     |
| Week 3      | Shooting/<br>Finishing    | Knock Down     | Accurate Shot        | Shoot or Miss         | 4v4                     |
| Week 4      | Ball Control              | Body Parts     | Zigzag Ball          | Quick off the<br>Mark | 5v5                     |
| Week 5      | Receiving/<br>First Touch | Find the #     | Square<br>Passing    | 3v1                   | 5v5                     |
| Week 6      | Defending<br>1v1          | Catch Me       | Tag                  | 1v1 to Cones          | 6v6                     |
| Week 7      | Attacking 1v1             | Big Bad Coach  | Going to Goal        | Superman-<br>1v1      | 6v6                     |
| Week 8      | Passing/<br>Movement      | Gates          | Coach Says           | My Ball               | 6v6                     |