



# Drills and Techniques to Develop Soccer Players in Practices and Games



*To help our CYO Soccer coaches have ideas for practices and games, we gathered the following survey responses from our Soccer coaches. Feel free to grab any of these ideas and utilize them with your team moving forward.*

## **What are some specific ways (activities/drills) you maximize player development in practice, to help each athlete grow through their participation?**

- We tend to spend 30-45 min drills and the rest of the time on a game. For 1st graders you need to keep them into the practice. Each likes to have a ball all the time. Quick low skill drills keep them going.
- First of all it starts with a rally cry or cheer. We have a special St. Anthony cheer we use before and after practice. Get's the team motivated. Stretching as a team... We do all stretches. We have a good pass to your teammate drill. It shows the importance of a good pass and using your teammate.
- We emphasize team work. Every player has a role in the field and mutual respect is the only way to work as a group. The individual is important; however, the team is more. We go through drills that strengthen technical development and also use white boards to teach them tactical order.
- In first grade, with athletes who have never played soccer we do a lot of dribbling, passing drills, scrimmaging too.
- Try to teach moving without the ball in passing drills, and have players dribble a ball as they are moving most other times.
- We try to have a variety of drills that focus on individual skills and team skills. The individual skills give each athlete an opportunity to develop.
- We split the group out whenever possible to ensure full participation. We try to include many activities and discussion on likes/dislikes.
- Shine light on how each player improved, have "gates" for players to move through, each player rotating.
- I try to avoid scrimmages -- although the boys ask for them at every practice. I find that with scrimmages that the stronger players get the ball and the weaker ones are left standing around. If I control the play with 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 then the weaker players get more ball time. It also forces the stronger players to work on their passing skills and work harder to make the plays ~ being sure to get open, controlling the ball.
- Since players at the 3rd grade level have varying skill (and interest) levels, the best drills are those in which every player has a ball, making it fun for all. However, this

is also the level at which, they are beginning to understand how to find an "open" area for effective passing. We have found that playing "monster" in the middle (3 on 1) works well.

- Encouragement and positive emphasis when the player got any part of the drill correct.
- Drills are great but I find that at a young age, it's really important to engage the parents who can help break the team into smaller groups so you can focus more one-on-one with specific skills like dribbling, passing, playing defense and ball handling skills. The kids really like when the coaches/parents actually play with them. it's really about showing them how improving their skills afford them to have more fun with the sport.
- See notes on SoccerHelp.com. I generally use the Must Try drills. The Dribble Around a Cone and Pass is super for teaching aggressive receiving and self-passing to open space.
- Give + go drill let people see why they can't clump vs. just telling them.
- Work on fundamentals individually.
- I use drill plans I've received over the years from select and professional soccer programs, as well as my own experiences as a player.
- We focused on the basics first, then, we allowed the girls to use those skills on the field to create opportunities for the team.

**What are some specific ways (strategies/techniques) you maximize player development *during games*, to help each athlete grow through their participation?**

- We have teams of 4 that we rotate every 5 min. That gives enough time to play and rest and the time in between are short. We encourage passing and getting open for development. We work on getting back on defense and big kicks to get the ball up field.
- Every Player is sitting and cheering for the players on the field.
- During games I let them play. We use wrist bands of different colors to remind them where in the field they should be playing. Every player has role and it is important to respect every player's role. This makes the team stronger.
- Support them, help them understand the rules and strategy to the game they are just learning.
- Putting players in different positions and finding things that each player does well to compliment them on.
- Reduced team sizes through the micro levels. Having teams with more than 7-8 players is not useful in the development of youth players. Collectively we need to find a way to limit the size of teams to foster development.
- We try to allow every girl on the team an opportunity to play all of the different positions throughout the season.

- I outline teams in advance and try to stick to 5 minute playing rotation. It shifts each week to ensure equal play. I try to move players around to try different positions then ask for input.
- Coming off field highlight what went well, give them positive feedback for what to notice when they return to field. While players are on sidelines, remind them to watch the players, learn what is working, what is not working.
- We take it easy with development during the game, per the PLACT guidelines. Sure we try, but they are too focused to do much. We really try to develop during practices...where we discuss the game's strong points and where we can improve.
- I try to give each child a target thing to work on while they are on the field -- for some that's passing, others it's not over committing when they are defending, or looking for the open space, staying in position. When they come off the field I can specifically compliment and reinforce that skill one by one.
- During games, we stress playing positions through direction and positive reinforcement.
- By recapping what each player did that I felt had the most impact on the game. After we score I don't just congratulate the goal scorer but I tell each line what they did well and how important what they were doing was and how it allowed us to score that goal.
- Talking with them on and off the field and at half time. Taking what we were not good at in the game and working on it at practice.
- When they're not playing, for one of the coaches to point out where you need to be on the field and how the outcome would likely be.
- I tell the subs when I see something great happen on the field that they should try. I talk to players coming out of the game what I liked about their play and what they could improve -- always using very specific examples.
- Move players around during the game. If the other team has a strong left forward, that means my right fullback needs to be my better fullback. I'll switch players around so as to limit mismatches.
- I make sure that each player plays both on defense and on offense so they develop into a well rounded player. Both aspects of the game are important for a player's development.
- We allow each girl to try every/all positions. Since score doesn't matter and playing time is the most important part of the program, we encourage them to try new positions, different sides, put in different situations, to ensure we build confidence, ability and learn the strategies that make the game great.