

Chapter 6. Playing Rules

The following are a set of coaching rules that are tried and true. You will not find them in the FIFA Rule Book. They are a system of play. Explain one at every practice. Use your clipboard to draw the concept. Use the concept in your practice. Ask them to explain the rule at your next practice. Make the rule sticks in your player's mind.

1. "Never, ever kick the ball across the face of the goal!"

Never, ever, under any circumstance, kick the ball across the face of the goal when you are defending. This puts you in harms way. An opposing forward can take possession and strike at the goal. By clearing the ball away from the goal, you will not be scored on.

2. "Never, ever kick the ball down the center of the field!"

Never, ever kick the ball down the center of the field on a goal kick or a clearing kick. An opposing forward can steal the ball and kick it right at the goal. Always kick towards the touch line.

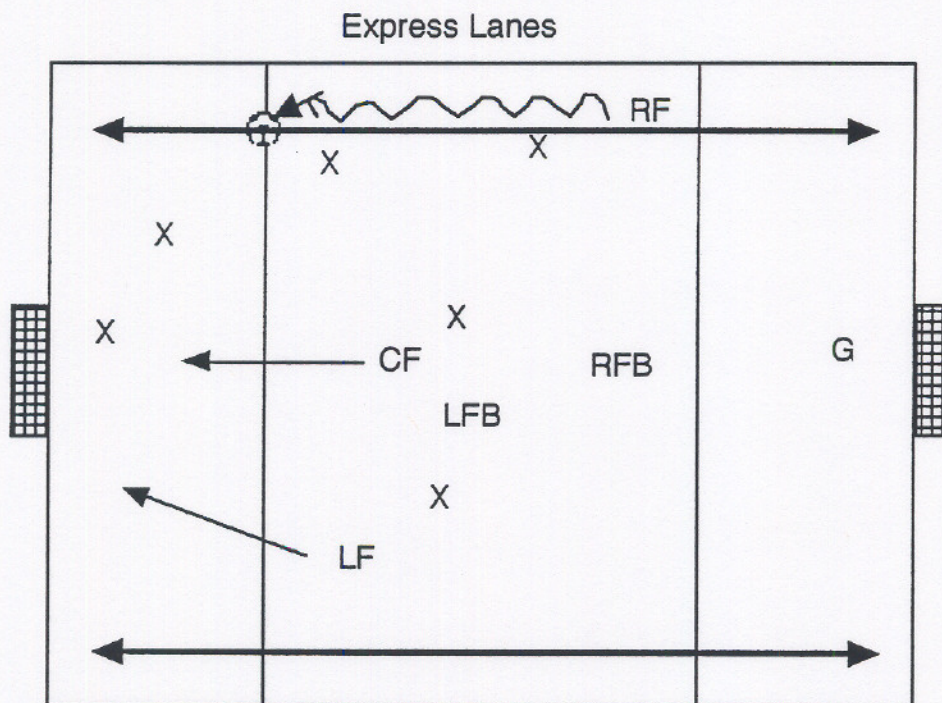
3. "The side line is your best friend."

When you dribble down the field, use the sideline. There are no defenders on the outside of the field. There are only two players to beat, the forward and fullback. Once you beat the forward, you only have to beat the fullback to get into the 'attacking 1/3.'

If the fullback blocks you and the other team closes in, kick the ball at the legs of the fullback so that it bounces out of bounds. The fullback on your side, who should be right behind you picks up the ball and throws it in. Many times the other team will kick it out. Repeat the process until you are in the 'attacking 1/3.' The sideline is your friend.

4. "Use the Express Lane."

The Express Lane is the area next to the side line. It's the fastest way down the field. Whenever possible, use the side line to take the ball down the field. The middle of the field is where all the opposing defenders and forwards are. You can be attacked from both left and right. If you use the side line, you only have to beat the forward and fullback to attack the goal.



Express Lane Tactic: There are less players to challenge on the side line. Beat the opposing forward and you only have one fullback to beat. As soon as you start down the express lane, the forwards must be taught to make a "run at goal." This will create confusion as you now have three forwards in the Attacking 1/3. The opposing team has a goalie and a fullback. The forward with the ball "plays to the weak side" with a long pass across the face of the goal.

5. "Always attack the ball."

When your team has possession of the ball, attack the goal. When you lose possession, attack the ball. This tactic includes forwards and fullbacks. Fullbacks should never wait for the opposing player with the ball to reach them. They should immediately move to the player with the ball. Never give up the controlling 1/3 by waiting. Attack the ball.

6. "The team that makes the most mistakes loses."

Games are not won, they are lost. The team that makes the most mistakes loses. Here are errors that lose games : failure to mark a player in the 'defending 1/3', failure to clear a ball correctly, allowing a player to have an open shot at goal, failure of not coming back to defend, blocking your own goalie's view, creating a 'penalty shot' due to a 'hand ball' or 'tripping foul.' Games are lost in your 'defending 1/3.' If your team plays error free in the 'defending 1/3', then your team's chance of success are dramatically increased. Force the opposing team to make errors.

7. "The game must be won on the field, not in your head."

Sometimes your team will win a few consecutive games and become enamored with their ability to win. Bring them back to Earth. The game must be won on the playing field.

8. "The team that comes to play, wins."

The team that you coached last week and won will not necessarily appear this week. Half of your team had sleep-overs, others went to a baseball game last night and some stayed up late the night before.

The opposing team experienced all that last week. They showed up to play soccer. A team that is mentally and physically prepared to play will win against a team that just shows up. Make sure your team is always ready and able to play.

9. "If you control the ball, you control the game."

Possession of the ball means control of the game. Every loose ball must be contested. Teach your team to fight for every possession. "Win the ball, win the game."

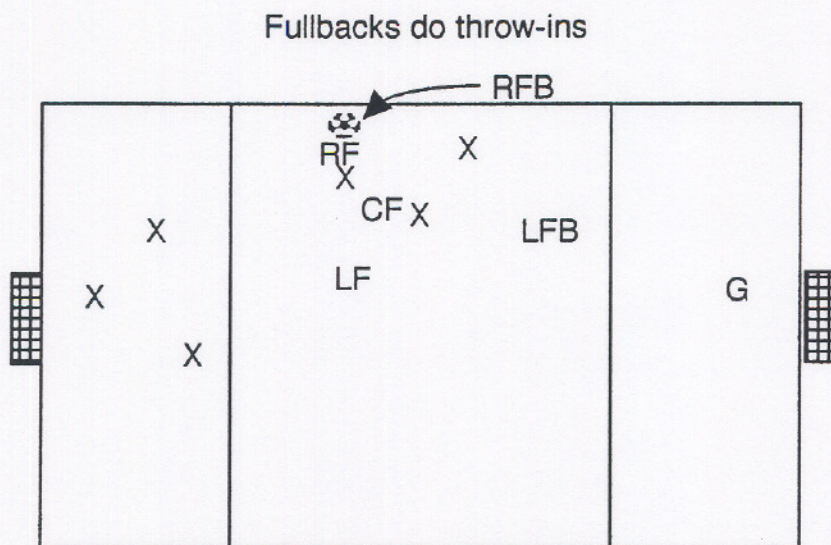
10. "Defend your goal."

After losing a game, do not dwell on the loss. At your next practice, point out that the team did not defend the goal. There are five players in front of the goalie. What happened to them? They didn't show up to defend. You cannot win games if you can not defend your goal.

Everyone must get back to defend. Otherwise, you give the attacking team too many chances to score. Always mark a player, and never, ever let an attacking player have an open shot at goal. Make the attacking team frustrated by blocking, marking and clearing balls. The team must get back to help in the 'defending 1/3.' Defend your goal.

11. "Full backs do throw ins."

You have six players on the field. One is a goalie, leaving five field players. Since this is a game of numbers, you want to have forwards receive the ball. If the fullback throws the ball in, then you have three forwards who can win the ball and make the next play.



The fullback can throw to Right Forward or Center Forward.
Left Forward should hold their position in case ball is won.

12. "Throw the ball down the side line"

Throw the ball down the line. Players tend to group together, leaving the touch line empty. Teach your players to throw the ball down the line, not to a player who is marked by the the opposing team.

13. "Everyone must be marked on their throw ins. ."

Teach your players to mark an opposing player on throw-ins, just like guarding someone in basketball. Deny the opposing team an easy throw-in. Make their throw-in a 50-50 ball.

14. "Everyone attacks. everyone defends."

Drill this into the minds of your players, "Everyone attacks, everyone defends."
Every player must know the names of the six positions on the field. Too often they will say, "Coach, I want to play defense, or Coach, I want to play forward." Make the player state the position. Right Forward, Left fullback, etc. Then explain that everyone defends, everyone attacks. Fullbacks go down the field when your team is controlling the ball.

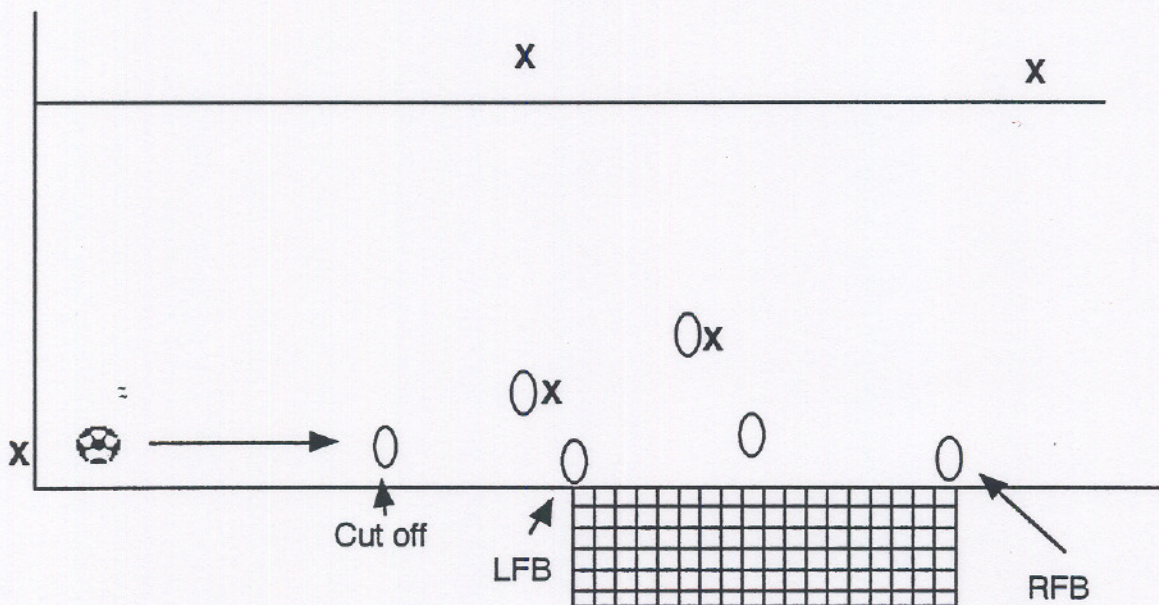
Likewise, Forwards must fall back to the 'defending 1/3' when your team is under attack. There is no such thing as a forward staying in the 'attacking 1/3' when the opposing team is in your 'defending 1/3.' Nor should a Fullback be in the 'defending 1/3' when your Forwards are in the 'attacking 1/3.' The team moves as a unit up and down the field. Always explain the airplane analogy.

15. "When in doubt, kick it out."

When your fullbacks are under extreme pressure, teach them to kick the ball out, preferably across the touch line. This gives your team the chance to recover. Play is stopped long enough so the team can reorganize. Players down field can get back and mark the opposing team. "When in doubt, kick it out."

16. "Full backs defend the goal posts on corner kicks."

The left and right fullback defend the goal posts on corner kicks. It prevents balls from crossing the face of the goal. It also put three players (goalie included) in the throat of the goal.



Fullbacks should be sideways to the goal. Their heel and shoulder should be touching the goal post, not their back. They should be facing the player making the corner kick.

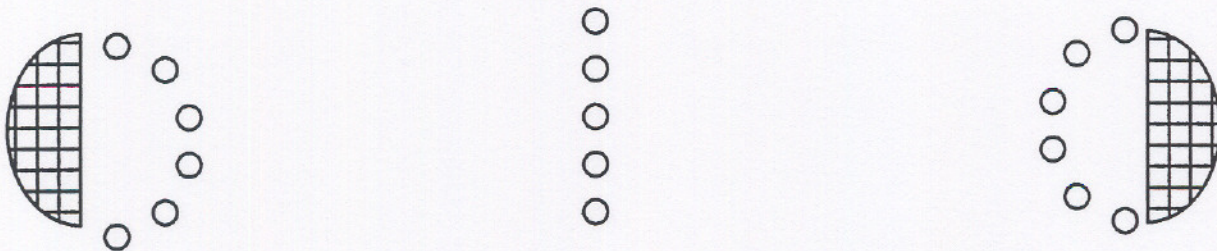
Chapter Seven - "All attack, All defend" Practice

Before any practice drill or game, explain to your players the concept of the practice and what you expect the drill to accomplish. After the drill, review what experience they should have learned.

Using Pugg Nets or cones set apart four feet for a goal, create a small semicircle with non-protruding cones in-front of the goal. Set the goals about 40 yards apart and layout a half line. See example below.

The game: "All attack, all defend."

Divide your team in half. This can be played as a 3v3, 4v4, 5v5 or 6v6. Simply make the field bigger with larger numbers. There is no goalie.



□ Pugg Nets and Flat cones

Field not drawn to scale

The Rule of the game:

Defenders or Attackers cannot step into or block a shot within the cones in front of the goal. If the ball rolls in, but does not go into the net, do a drop ball in front of the cones.

A goal can only be scored if the entire team is across the line attacking. If someone is behind the mid field line, the goal does not count.

What does this teach?

Every player on the team must move down the field to attack the opposing goal. Likewise, if the defending team does not come back to defend, it will quickly be outnumbered by attackers. Forwards learn to make 'runs at the goal'. Fullbacks quickly learn that they are involved in the attack, set up the forwards by sending cleared

balls right back into play, and they can also score.

The game can be played with no boundaries, making the game continuous and creative. This set-up will build endurance. You will see how creative your players can get when there is no out-of-bounds.

The game can be played with borders. It will teach players to control passes, make throw-ins and use the field by creating space.

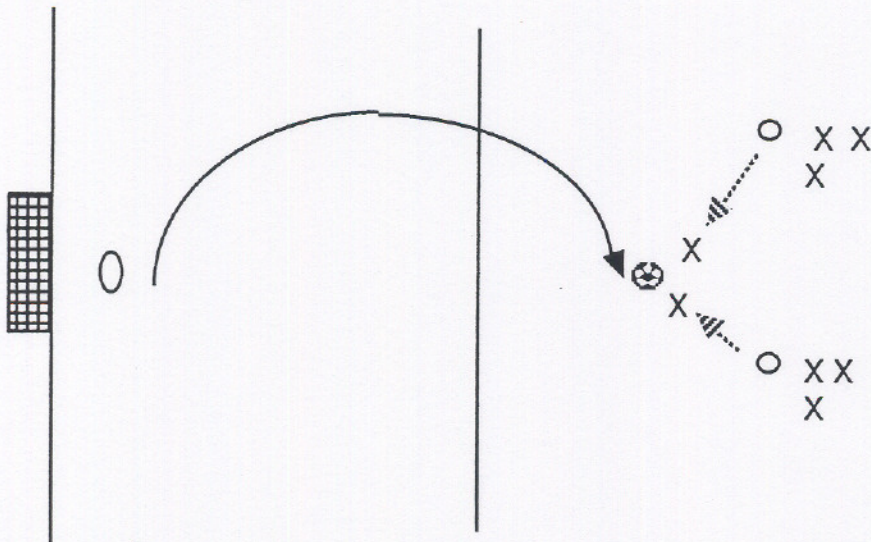
The All Attack, All Defend game should be built into your regular practices. You can make the game 10, 15 or 20 minutes long.

Chapter Eight. A Transition Practice

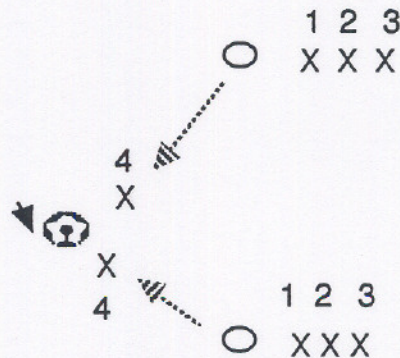
This is a warm up exercise prior to games or can be used for a quick 10 minute drill. Make two lines of players about 20 ' apart, beyond the penalty line. The goalie, several steps from the goal and throws the ball , hopefully in between the two players.

Object: Win the ball and score against the goalie. If you lose the ball, win it back or try to stop the other player from scoring.

What they learn: In order to score, you must win the ball. If you don't have the ball, you must win it back by blocking the attacking player. This drill teaches the quick transition from attacking the goal to defending the goal to attacking the goal.



Variation:



Give the players mirror sets of numbers. Throw the ball out and call a series of numbers. "two and three". Instead of having a one on one, you now have a 2 v 2. You can vary the numbers so that you can have any combination.

Chapter Nine - The Goalie is Captain

The goalie and the team must be taught that the Keeper is Captain of the 'defending 1/3.' When your goal is under attack, the Keeper must be in control and direct other players. When the goalie feels he or she can get the ball, then the goalie yells out "Keeper" and the team lets the goalie take command of the play. Many times, even the attacking team will back down when the goalie yells "keeper" at the top of their lungs.

The following practice teaches the team to listen to the goalie when they yell for the ball. This drill will make all players respect the word "Keeper."

Have all your players line up at the penalty line. Each has a ball. The goalie takes a position on the goal line. The goalie yells "keeper" as loud as they can. The first player in line throws the ball directly at the keeper's chest. The goalie tries to stop the ball. If the ball goes into the net, leave it there. The goalie turns to the next player in line and yells "Keeper" and that player throws the ball at the goalie.

This is done until every one has thrown the ball. Then another player becomes goalie and the process is repeated until everyone has played goalie and yelled "Keeper."

What do they learn? That when the Keeper yells for the ball, do not get in the Keepers way. That the goalie commands the 'defending 1/3' by taking control. That when the goalie calls for the ball, let the Keeper have it.

Chapter Ten - 'The law of numbers'

The Lanchester Law of Numbers

Lanchester was an English scientist who discovered many of the laws of aerodynamics in the early 1900's. He was instrumental in forming the Royal Air Force in WWI and developed situational laws of combat that are taught in military colleges throughout the world today. Lanchester's laws can be applied to soccer.

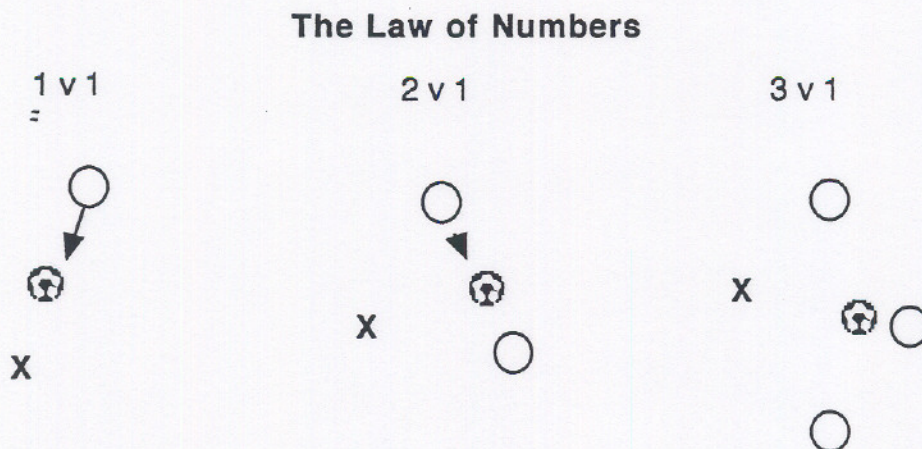
The Law of Single Combat

In soccer, one on one situations are the norm. The player with the ball has the tactical advantage. That player can feint, speed past the defender or power past the defender using the body.

The defender can block the ball handlers movement by stealing the ball, kicking it away or back pedaling to slow down the attacker. It is a one on one contest.

The Law of Numbers

Lanchester stated that in one on one combat, the only way to achieve dominance is through numerical superiority by a factor of three. In soccer, you gain the advantage by changing the 'one on one' to 'two on one' and 'three on one'. See chart "The law of Numbers"



1 v 1 contest is equal. Its a 50/50 as to who wins. 2 v 1 improves the odds as there are more options; passing, give and go. 3 v 1 provides numerical superiority. Teach your players to always try to gain the Law of Threes. The defender can not stop three players. The attacking options are too great; passing, give and go and keep away as they move down the field.

There are many drills that help players learn the law of numbers. Here are a few that are easy and emphasize the principle of two on one.

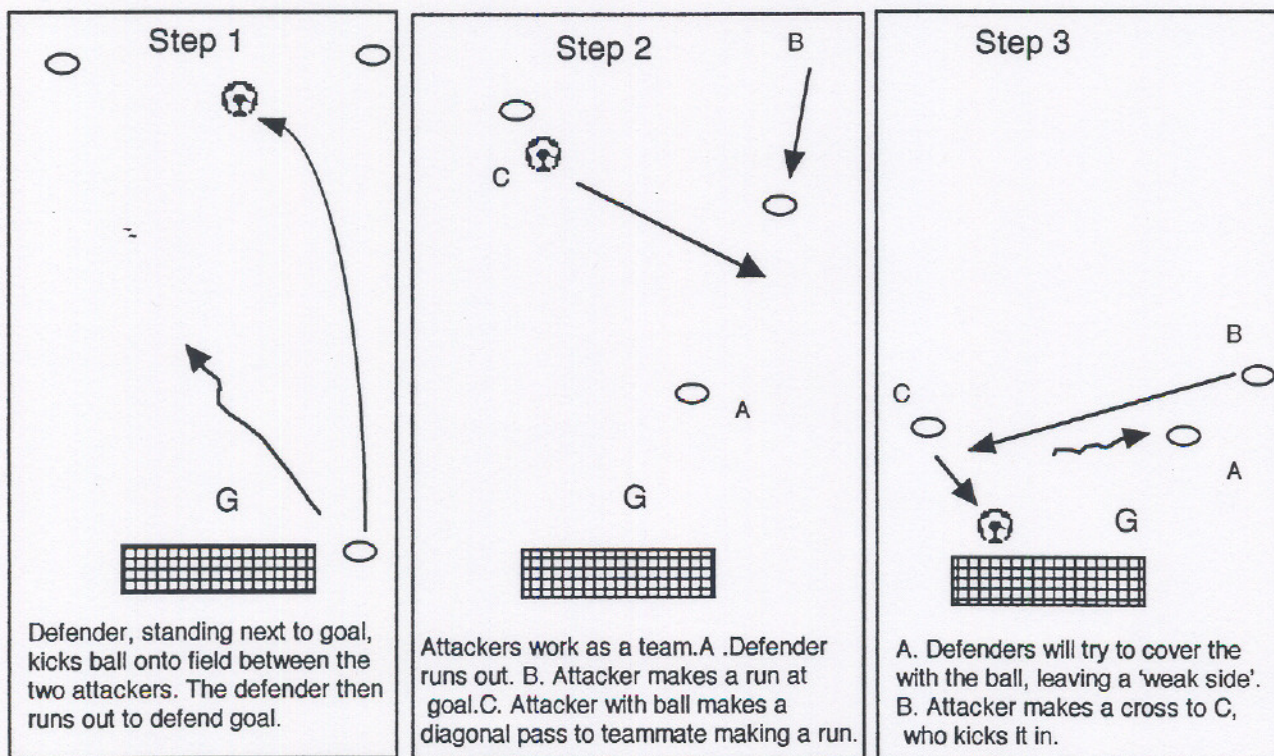
I. "Monkey in the middle"

Two players against one. The two players pass the ball between themselves while the third tries to take possession. The player without the ball has to create a turn over in order to take possession. The player who loses the ball becomes the "monkey in the middle."

The player without the ball must get open by moving. The player with the ball must maintain possession until their teammate is open. Do not make bad passes. The player without the ball must attack the ball. Force the turnover or bad pass, then chase the ball down to take possession. This can be an exhausting drill. Change the dynamics by switching players among the the groups. Do not let this turn into a sloppy exercise.

2. Two v One with goalie.

A defender kicks the ball out to two attackers. The two attackers attempt to score. They must first beat the defender and then score against the goalie.



Chapter 11 - Advice on coaching successful soccer.

1. Soccer is won incrementally, one confrontation at a time.

There is no one single play that wins or losses a game. Soccer is a series of individual, one on one contests for the ball.

2. Always explain your expectation in a drill.

Coaching is like preaching. Tell them what they will be doing. Explain the drill. Tell them what you hope they will learn or accomplish. After the drill, recap how the drill was executed. Ask what principle or skill they learned. If you need to explain what they should have learned. Repeat the drill at a later practice.

3. Lose with Pride, Win with dignity.

In every sporting event, there are innumerable individual contests on the field of play. Someone must win the ball, someone must lose the ball. That is sport. Your job as coach is to teach your players that there is no shame in losing an individual contest if they do their best. You can be proud you gave it your all and in that instance, the other player came out on top. Shame only comes when you give up the fight. You can lose with honor. Always gave it your best shot.

You should also teach your players how to win with dignity. In youth sports the emphasize should be placed on sportsmanship. My team once played its last game against an undefeated team. We were good, they were better. When we lined up to shake hands, after the game, each player thanked us for a good game. There was no "good game, good game" as we normally experience. It was "thank you, thank you." They were not only a better team, they were division champions who won with class. Their poise and maturity were outstanding. They had been coached extremely well.

4. Its the little things that make the big difference.

Coach your team as a whole. You will have a mix of weak, average, good and excellent players. Focus on skill development; trappings, handling, heading, footwork, passing, positioning and team play. Make the weak player average, make average player good, make the good player excellent and help the excellent player become great.

Do not make the mistake of spending time making good players better and ignore the development of weaker players. As your team matures, you need contributions from all players. You want your team to play at a consistent level. That will only happen if all players are capable of contributing at a basic level. If you can raise the ability level one niche in all players, then the level of play will exponentially.

5. The Law of Multiples.

We'll place numerical values on players. Weak = 1, Average = 2, Good = 3, Excellent = 4, Superb = 5. You have 10 players on the team. We'll multiple the rating times the number of players on your team to determine strength.

In this hypothetical situation, you rate your team now and after player development.

Your team now

<u>Players</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Strength</u>
Superb	0	0
Excellent	2	8
Good	4	12
Average	2	4
Weak	2	2
	10	26

Your team: One incremental increase

<u>Players</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Strength</u>
Superb	2	10
Excellent	4	16
Good	2	6
Average	2	4
Weak	0	0
	10	36

By raising the playing ability one increment in each player, the team is now 38% stronger than it was before. Small increases in ability mean big gains in strength.

You will quickly discover that its easier to raise the playing level of weaker and average players than good and excellent players. So let's look at another example and see how that influences the strength of your team.

Your team now

<u>Players</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Strength</u>
Superb	0	0
Excellent	2	8
Good	4	12
Average	2	4
Weak	2	2
	10	26

Your team after skill building

<u>Players</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Strength</u>
Superb	0	0
Excellent	2	8
Good	5	15
Average	3	6
Weak	0	0
	10	29

If you can make two weak players average, and one average player good, your team strength will increase by 12%.

Keep this model in mind when you practice. By raising the level of play by one in each player, your team will experience exponential strength. This translates to increasing competence in the team's playing ability.

6. Speed is the balance of power.

All things being equal, the team that is fastest will control the game.

7. Prepare your team to play.

All practices should have some element of competition built into the drills. Preparation demands mental and physical conditioning, and conscious planning on your part. A player who is just ready and not totally prepared is a liability to the team.

8. Reward the assist. praise the goal.

Emphasize that a goal can not be scored without an assist. Reward the first assist with some sort of token prize, such as tournament patches, trading cards, soccer pins, etc. The person who scores the goal gets credit for the goal. The player who sets up the goal gets the prize.

After several games, players will come to understand that their coach values the assist. After winning a few games, players will see that scoring usually happens when players set up other players.

9. Practice like you play. play like you practice

There is simply no substitute for hard work. Your practices should not be easy. A skill must be learned at every practice. Start with simple drills that teach a skill. Move to harder drills that build on that skill.

A juggling exercise will illustrate the point. Have your team juggle the ball off their thigh as a warm up exercise. As they master three juggles off of one thigh, have them alternate legs to make it more complicated. Then have them drop the ball to their foot after a thigh juggles and kick it up so they can head the ball. From the head ball back to the thigh. The sequence becomes, thigh, foot, head. This an example of moving from the simple to the complex over a period of a season.

What do they learn? That basic exercises are the building blocks to skill development. That you as a coach will challenge them every week to do more than the previous week. When they come to practice and ask, "Coach, what are we doing today?" You will know that you have succeeded in teaching that hard work pays off.

10. Winning and losing

Youth soccer is such that your team will win one week and lose the next. This is entirely normal for children. As your team ages and it becomes a veteran group, they will win more than they lose. Your team might even approach having an undefeated season and then lose a final game. Undefeated seasons are rare. Winning is more important to adults than children. Soccer is a game. Never lose sight of that.

However, as children mature, playing well becomes important. Your job as coach is to keep them motivated for every game they play. The mark of a truly exceptional team is their ability to play head and shoulders above their opponent, each and every week. That come from practice, poise, and knowledge that they are prepared. What they did last week has no bearing on how they play this week.

11. If you can dream it, you can do it.

If your players can visualize a move, a kick, a fake, then they can make it happen. All it takes is commitment on their part and a coach who can show them how.

12. Soccer is a game of conditioning.

Fatigue stops players from executing basic skills. Prepare them to play.

13. The moment of truth.

In every game there comes a time that separates winning from losing. Every player will know their limit. Teach your team that the mark of a truly great player is to go one more step, to defend one more time, to make one more run at goal and to never give up.

14. Create commitment every practice.

Explain to your players that you are the coach. They are the players. You are master of the practice field. They are the kings and queens of the playing field. "I train, you play. If you choose not to listen or cooperate, then sit on the side of the field. All those players who want to train to be better players, step across that line."

15. On good teams, players know their roles.

On great teams, player know their own roles and everyone else's role too. The more a player knows about how a teammate plays their position, the better you'll play your own position.

16. The defense is like a door.

Bust it open. If it doesn't break with a blow to the right side, then try the middle. If that doesn't work, try the left. If that doesn't work, bring up a fullback to attack. If that doesn't work, bring up both fullbacks. Keep firing away till you break the door down.

17. The easiest person to defend.

The player who never moves. Teach your forwards to make runs at the goal. Statues are easy to defend.

18. The counter attack is your worst nightmare and best friend.

When you counter attack, the other team is out of position. When they counter attack, you are out of position. Teach your players to go through transition, from attacking to defending to attacking as quickly as possible.

19. The game is the best teacher.

Let the kids play small sided games in practice. In fact, your practices should be a series of drills hidden within games. The use of small goals is highly recommended for all practices. Divide your team up and play as much small sided soccer as possible. Join in where you are needed. The coach and assistant should be on the field playing with the kids.

Shooting at a small net encourages accuracy. Small Pugg nets teach ball control, passing, trapping and in fact every field skill you can think of. They do not teach goal tending skills.

20. What is the most important thing on the field?

Not the coach, nor the referee, not the player, nor the pass. Not the goal or the lines on the field. The most important thing on the field is the ball! The game does not exist without the ball.

21. What is the most important play you can make?

Not the pass. Not the breakaway or the goalie save. Not the slide tackle, nor the steal or shot at goal. Not even the save. The most important play you can make is the 'next play.' Teach players to maintain possession of the ball and look for the next play. After a series of plays, your team will be in the attacking 1/3 of the field.

22. Who is the Quarterback of the team?

The player with the ball! Every time a player has possession, that player is quarterback. The quarterback can pass, dribble, or shoot the ball. The player with the ball sets up 'the next play.'

Chapter 12 - International Play

Make your practices interesting by adding an international flavor. Try one every other week. The kids love them.

South American practice

Barrio children in South America learn to play soccer in bare feet. It teaches excellent ball control, trapping and shooting.

"No cleat game." Make the players take off their cleats and play in socks or bare feet. Explain that anyone who kicks the ball with the toe will hurt their toe. Bare feet forces players to use the instep for kicking and the inside of the foot for trapping. After a while, players quickly forget about shoes and are passing, trapping and kicking correctly.

The Dutch practice

The Dutch are known for excellent ball control in Europe.

Dutch children will typically touch the ball 500 times in a practice. Divide the team into sets of two. Each twosome kicks the ball back and forth between them. Warm them up with contests. How many touches can you make with the right foot in one minute? How many with the left? Who can be first to touch the ball 50 times?

Have them touch the ball 50 times with the right instep, inside and outside of the foot. Repeat with the left foot. Change partners. Count how many times they have touched the ball and ask them if they want to go to 500?

The Brazilian practice

Brazilian teams possess the ball. They do not turn the ball over unless they are pressing for a shot on goal. Brazilian teams will bring a ball down the field and turn back with the ball because they don't see an opening.

Divide the team into two and play small sided keep-away soccer. The object is to keep possession of the ball until your team scores. If team A loses possession, the ball is turned over to team B who kicks it to their Goalie. The team B goalie puts the ball into play. If the ball is lost, the ball is turned over to the team A goalie.

Your team learns that possession is 90% of the game. You can't score if you don't have the ball.

The Italian practice

Italian soccer players are very passionate. They love to express their emotions on the playing field.

Give an Italian name to each player before your scrimmage. They can only call each other with their Italian name. As coach, you also must use the Italian name. The children have fun assuming a different name. Tell them to express themselves if they make a good pass, or save or trap, or header, or anything that seems purposeful. This is a practice where anyone can say "Mama mia, look at me!"