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# SOCCER COACHING

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E-MAGAZINE



# Marcelo Bielsa

Chilean national team

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## Welcome to the 43th issue of SoccerCoachingInternational Our seventh e-Magazine!

The past few months we have worked very hard to finish our latest feature our new and improved editor. We have called it MySoccerExercises.com. This online application was developed for soccer coaches and allows you to easily draw your own diagrams, make your own exercises and training session. You can archive them and most importantly save and print them. Sounds like the old one, but trust me its not. This new application is far more advanced and allows you to design your own templates and exercises with create ease.

I can go on to explain this new application, but I suggest you try it yourself. You can access the new editor by clicking on the start editor button below your profile. On the editor page of our website we have some instruction videos to get you acquainted with this new feature. All our subscribers will receive access to this editor free of charge and have been granted access.

Now on to this edition of our e-Magazine. This issue has a South American flavor to it, as we have articles from Chile, Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay. On top of our South American articles, we also have another articles by Anthony Hudson and of course our recurring feature Training sessions.

Please let me know if you need any assistance with our new editor, we will be available via email to answer your questions.

*I want to thank everyone for your patience and support, and of course for being part of the complete online soccer coaching experience!*

Yours in soccer,  
**Maaïke Denkers**  
Managing Editor SCI







MARCELO BIELSA, CHILEAN NATIONAL TEAM COACH:

# “In football there is no reason to be immobile”

7

*Chile impressed in group H of the World Cup last summer with their offensive playing style against Spain, Switzerland and Honduras. The Argentine coach of Chile, Marcelo Bielsa, is very keen on entertaining the fans. From his players he demands good conditioning, motivation and responsibility. The similarities with Louis van Gaal are apparent.*

*By: Paul van Veen*

In Augustus of 2009 the Chilean team travelled to Denmark for a friendly match against Morten Olsen's national squad. Denmark was flabbergasted; the two Chilean wingbacks dominated the flanks, their two wingers were positioned much wider than the Danish squad was used to, Chile had a constantly open number 10 and when in possession Bielsa's squad were always changing positions and had great movement off the ball.

On top of their great possession play the Chileans executed direct pressure on the Danes when they were in possession. The Danish squad had great difficulties with the visiting Chileans and lost 1-2, which could have easily been higher if it wasn't for the abundance of missed chances by Chile. Bielsa's reaction after the match was very van Gaal like: "I just saw a great match from my team. We played our own game, without any consideration for the opponent."

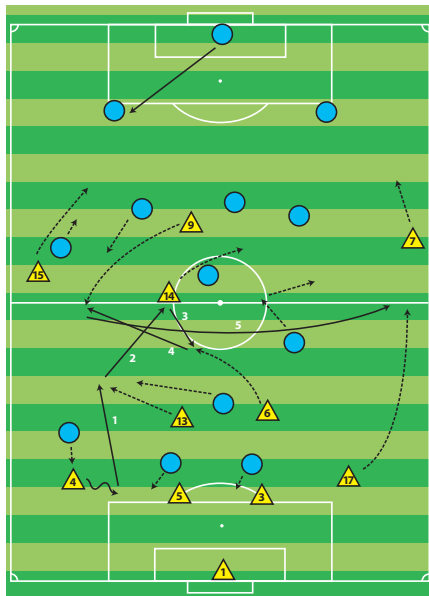
Marcela Bielsa coached the Argentinean national team from 1998 to 2004, which players like Gabriel Batistuta and Juan Sebastian Veron mark as the period in which Argentina played their best football.

### Ajax-school

"I am a big fan of the football Ajax played under Louis van Gaal," says Bielsa. "When executed properly, it is winning football and great for the fans, which is what we should all aspire to accomplish." An Argentine who gives a non-Argentinean example of great football is very rare in the proud South American country. As a coach in Argentina you should be a fan of Carlos Bilardo, World Champion with Argentina and countless clubs, not a Dutchman like Louis van Gaal. Due to his admiration for van Gaal, Bielsa was given the nickname El Loco (the crazy) in his home country.

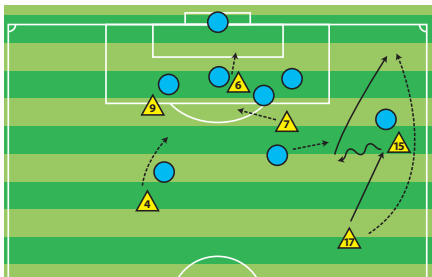
Argentina often played, much like Ajax in 1995, beautiful swinging football under Bielsa. Unfortunately they failed to dominate when it mattered most, like during the Copa America in 1999 and 2004 and the 2002 World Cup. This was largely attributed to injuries, but regardless of the reasons, Bielsa was asked to leave. He ended his reign of the Argentinean squad with a gold medal during the 2004 Olympics in Athens. Bielsa stopped working as a coach.

Fortunately for the game of football the offensive minded coach returned to professional football in 2007, where he took over as Chilean national team coach. The Chilean football federation convinced Bielsa to return to football and he easily guided Chile to qualify for the 2010 World Cup. Messi's Argentina was even more prospect less than the Danish (see diagrams 1, 2 and 3).

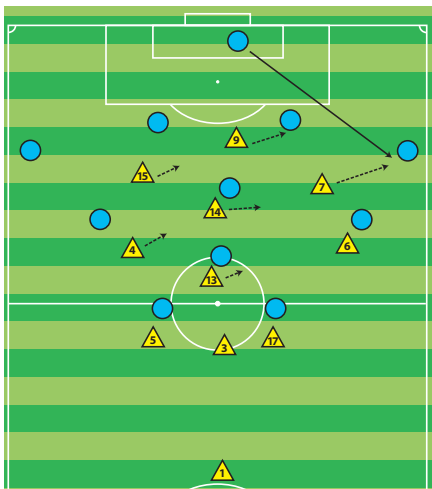


**Diagram 1:** Pay attention to the interaction between the striker (9) and the shadow striker (14), the overlapping by the right wingback (2) and the positioning of the player before the defense (13).





**Diagram 2:** The right half-winger (6) joins the attack, Chile creates an outnumbering situation and scores by dropping the ball back to the right winger (7).



**Diagram 3:** Possession Argentina, who play 1-4-4-2 with a diamond. The Chilean solution reminds me of Ajax in 1995. So no four player line defense, but wingbacks who defend the strikers and one free defender. Full pressure forward.





Bielsa proved that this football can still be played. "Ajax always played very flexible in opponent possession. The lines adapted to the opponent's playing style, but in possession the team plays its own game. Without consideration for the opponent and of course very offensive. We are trying to do the same."

The coach continues: "The aspect of Ajax's playing style under van Gaal I enjoyed most was probably the fact that the team played the ball back about 37 times per match. This may not seem attractive and fans generally dislike this, but it means nothing less than creating a new attempt at a great

attack." Chile played the same way up to the World Cup, always with 3 defenders and a real number ten.

### Order

The coach copied the Ajax-system (see diagrams 5 and 6), both in possession and opponent possession. Bielsa, however, does not want to refer to it as mechanizing his team. "The player, like any person who deals with great pressure, has what I call a 'temor escénico', a fear of failure. And how can you neutralize that? By mechanizing. By letting the player do something he is used to doing, something he practiced repeatedly, allowing for a very slim margin of error."

“The responsibility for the execution of something like this is for the coach. If the coach asks the players to do something, something they have been training on, but they are not yet able to execute it probably, then the changes of it going wrong in a match are present. A coach can only demand from a player to do something he is capable of doing.”

“This doesn't mean that if something is executed correctly during training that it is guaranteed to go well during matches. But who's fault is it then? No one really, sometimes things just go wrong. This is why I hate mechanization of a team, because it decreases the level of player responsibility. So I want a well organized team, but not a mechanized team. I want a team where certain positions are respected and communication is a norm.”

### Conditioning


Bielsa demands order in his team, which means he wants players to take their responsibility. A big responsibility he demanded from the Chilean team was their conditioning. The average Chilean player is not known for enjoying runs. Bielsa was able to turn that around in his squad.

“I always tell my guys that our playing style is about movement. A player should always be moving. You can come up with a reasons for every player in every position

and every circumstance, why he should be moving. In football there is no reason to be immobile.”

“I am a physical education teacher. I used to be a frustrated and average player. After a couple of matches at the Argentine premier league for Newell's Old Boys I realized I would never be a top player. That is why I want to be a top coach. In order to accomplish this I decided I needed to specialize in physiology, which is the specialized area when it comes to movement.”





“This is where the secret of football sits. I never aspired to become a teacher, I just majored in this area to learn about movement and guiding players. I graduated after a five year study and left knowing everything I needed to know about training the human body, even medically.”

“I will never allow a player not to go for something. Players should fight for every ball during a match. De-organization or something going wrong during a match, those are acceptable mistakes, things like that just happen. But giving up or not fighting for a ball, that is unacceptable. Players who always fight for the team objective, deserve a spot in the squad.”

### **Hard**

His education makes him even more like van Gaal, but the similarity is also very

apparent when you watch him work during a training session. He passionately pays attention to every single details within the order of his team. Players who do not pay attention will not go unpunished. Arturo Vidal knows all about this. When the left wingback executed a weird move during a training session, Bielsa immediately stopped the sessions and told Vidal off:

“You sir, play at Bayer Leverkusen and you believe you are something else, don't you!?! But all you do is create chaos! If you wish to play for me, you will have to execute the basic tasks I demand from you. Not the tasks that you believe are necessary. We have enough so called heroes in football!” Vidal stood still for a few minutes, flabbergasted by what he was just told and was demoted to a spot on the bench for a while.

## The boss

Bielsa on this incident: "Communication is the most important factor for me. I need to be able to trust my players on their word. Communication is also closely linked to hierarchy. I believe a coach should have a unique aspect: he must be able to make his players feel they are not equal to him. The coach is the boss."

"What is a boss, or a leader? Someone who when he enters the dressing room the murmur turns to a pause of silence. When he speaks everyone else is quite and maybe most importantly someone who when he tells a joke everyone laughs, while nobody would laugh at the same joke if someone else told it."

"Leadership is most visible when you lose, a good leader is able to deal with the stress that comes with a loss. The best time to observe this is during stressful situations. Whether I am a leader? When I am asked to speak at a guest lecture the title of my presentation is usually: leadership, norms and values."

## Results

Bielsa was able to renew Chile with his approach. Like van Gaal he has the courage to select young talents. And with result! Never before were Chilean players sold to European top clubs for great amounts, as during the Bielsa era. At a congress he commented to Barcelona-coach Pep

Guardiola: "Everyone can recognize a good player. And everyone can recognize a bad player. A good coach is there to recognize the normal player, that he can turn into a great player."

## Media

Bielsa doesn't like comparisons, but I have 1 more for you: his relationship with the media. It is laborious to say the least, although his good results have made Bielsa very popular in Chile. "A journalist's weapon is the written word. My weapon is the spoken word. When I use fifty sentences to explain an idea and the journalist only uses ten, I get frustrated. Although this may also have to do with the fact that I am a poor writer."

"What I really hate is when journalists twist my words. I would rather not be known at all, then being known for the wrong me, because I am not represented or quoted correctly. This may be odd for a coach, but I care about what people think of me."

"This is why coaching is very difficult for me; it is a difficult occupation. As a coach you are a public figure and I am constantly in the picture. I don't like it when people hate me or don't understand me, because I am not being portrait correctly. That is why I always hope that whatever is published in an interview is also what I actually said. I don't mind it if people attack me on what I think. But I don't like it when people attack me on

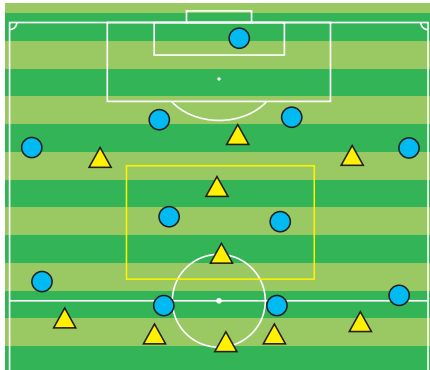
something I don't think or believe at all." In order to make it easier on himself Bielsa rarely agrees to an interview.

### World Cup

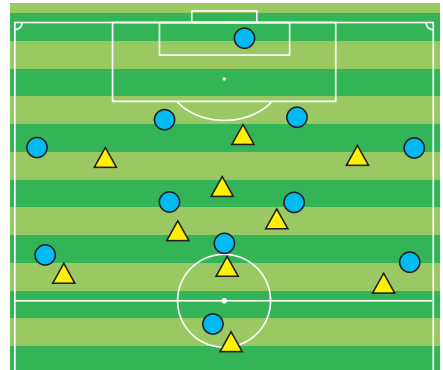
Prior to the World Cup Simon Kuper predicted that Chile would not do very well during the tournament. The author of famous football analytical books (such as Soccernomics) stated: "Bielsa plays the same way van Gaal played in 1995, with three defenders. In South America this may

work, but European football has evolved. Bielsa's football is too predictable for a World Cup. Van Gaal opted for a different style and has played 4:4:2 for quite some time now. Switzerland with Hitzfeld will be able to easily prepare for their match against Chile and I think they will win."

Contrary to Kupers expectations Bielsa opted for a different system of play against European opponents. Chile played a 1-4-2-3-1 (see diagrams 4 and 5).



**Diagram 4**



**Diagram 5**

*Chile is vulnerable against an opponent who plays 1:4:4:2 with deep wingers and deep wingbacks or against a 1:4:2:3:1 with deep wingers and wingback. Bielsa was also very aware of this and changed his system of play for the World Cup to a system with a four players defensive line. If Bielsa would play with his system against a 1:4:2:3:1 (and deep wingers) he would be faced with a 1v1 on every field position. The risk to pressure would then be too high, as it would allow for lots of space on his defensive end.*

*In the South American qualification Chile's opponents would rarely play with deep wingers, but European coaches do.*



Bielsa's new playing style during the World Cup was very similar to Bayern München. The main difference was the fact that Bielsa opted for a right-footed right winger, Alexis Sanchez, and a left-footed left winger, Mark Gonzalez or Jean Beausejour. Because of this there was a much lesser threat to come inside than the threat of Arjen Robben and Franck Ribéry on respectively Bayern's right and left wing. Bielsa's wingbacks also played a lot deeper than Bayern's. Another notable aspect of Chile's playing style was the fact that they continuously changed their system.

“I OPTED FOR WHAT I BELIEVED WAS THE BEST WAY TO PLAY AGAINST OUR OPPONENTS DURING THE WORLD CUP. THAT MEANT I HAD TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM. WE TRIED TO DICTATE THE MATCHES' PLAYING STYLE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, WHICH WE WERE ABLE TO EXECUTE QUITE WELL, EVEN AGAINST SPAIN FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE MATCH. I AM VERY PROUD OF THAT. WE JUST FAILED TO SCORE MORE AGAINST SWITZERLAND AND HONDURAS. LOOKING BACK THAT COST US THE FIRST PLACE IN THE GROUP.”



## MARCELO BIELSA

**Date of birth:** July 21, 1955 (Rosario)

**Clubs:**

1990-1992	F.C. Atlas A.C.
1992-1994	Newell's Old Boys
1995-1996	Club América
1997-1998	Vélez Sársfield
1998	Espanyol
1998-2004	Argentina
2007-2010	Chile





GUSTAVO BUENO, NACIONAL U16 AND U17 COACH:

# “Top players need to be able to beat their direct opponents”

17

*Gustavo Bueno was the youth coach of AFC Ajax forwards and Uruguay internationals Nicolas Lodeiro and Luis Suarez. On the training complex of Nacional, the oldest and most famous club of Uruguay, he explains why Suarez performs so well in The Netherlands. "A striker must dare to duel."*

*By: Jorrit Smink*

The Nacional complex looks like a Dutch amateur club complex who have a lack of volunteers. There are five fields, two of which are well maintained. The building look maintenance deprived and lack some paint. There is one main difference with a Dutch amateur club, there are palm trees around the fields.

This is the place where Suarez and Lodeiro made their first steps to professional football. Gustavo Bueno coaches them both. Lodeiro for two years and Suarez whenever he would not be selected for the first team. When Suarez made his debut in Uruguay he wasn't know as a goalgetter yet. "This meant he would regularly play with the U20s in the beginning", says Bueno.



Lodeiro was coached by the 47-year old Bueno for two years. "A great number ten," says the coach. "I think the world will hear more from him in the upcoming years. He is a great play-maker." Conditioning coach Julio Moreno adds: "Lodeiro is a real South American number 10, but there is one difference: he works really hard. In training he would always be at the front, whether is be in conditional exercises or with laps around the field. I never experienced that with a number ten."

### Pelé

Today I am also witnessing an U16-U17 training sessions. The teams train combined on Wednesdays because the national youth team trains at the same time and most of the first players are also part of the national youth team. "We came to an agreement with the national youth team coach that he would selected our players in a rotation system, because if he selects them all we would only be able to train with the reserves from Monday through Wednesday. "

Because of this agreement there are still 24 players on the field today, including four 'a prueba' (test) players. This means these players are allowed to train with the team for one session, to see if they are capable of playing at this level. They are being tested. Being 'a prueba' in South America is not as much fun as you may think. For a lot of players football is the

only hope for a better future. So players who are being tested are not viewed as a potential improvement for the team, but as a potential threat for the other players future. Test players, therefore rarely get the ball. Which is evident as soon as the training sessions starts.

Gustavo Bueno comments: "this is very South American and impossible to change. Because of this mentality clubs frequently miss great talents. Diego Forlan, for example, was tested by Peñarol and some other smaller clubs in Uruguay, but didn't make the cut. His father took him to Argentina, where he quickly made a name for himself. Now he is earning millions at Atletico Madrid and winner of the Golden Ball. Nacional is Peñarol's biggest rival, so we always laugh at this situation, but I know it will happen to us as well sooner or later."

"This doesn't only happen in Uruguay", says Bueno, "I played for Noroeste Bauru in Brazil. They don't play very high, but they are famous as they are the club who rejected Pelé. They tested him but the trainer didn't think he was good enough. Pelé went to Santos and they gladly accepted him and are very proud of that."

### Training

The field is dry, unequal and the grass is too long, at most places up to 20 centimeters.

"In Uruguay you have to deal with the circumstances you are given," says Bueno. "Take today's training sessions for example, we are only allowed to use six balls." These balls are all different makes and models and two of them are so hard it is a miracle the players don't break their neck when they head them.

This doesn't effect the seriousness and effort with which the players train. The new Suarez's and Lodeiros' are ready to show what they can do. Gustavo 'Zorro' Bueno is also very present. During the training session he continuously tells the forwards to seek the 1v1 and beat their opponent.

The strikers are having a blast, despite the bad field conditions, as they constantly beat the wingbacks in the 1v1 duels. Everything a winger is in 1v1 situation and opts to play the ball back to a midfielder, Bueno stops the game. "You are at 70 or 80 meters from your own goal! When you lose the ball there, nobody will say a word. If you beat your opponent you will either create a chance or your opponent will commit a foul. So take the risk!"

The wingers seem to understand and after a few tactical tips from Bueno the wingbacks don't stand a chance anymore. "Unfortunately I have to tell him this everything time," Bueno tells me after the session. "He needs to be able to do this without coaching by now. Like the striker."

## Amor Propio

Bueno: "Top players need to be able to beat their direct opponents. In order to reach that level you need to practice this repeatedly. So we do this on a daily basis. Players need to be able to recognize when they are faced with a 1v1 and how they can beat that opponent. Suarez is a huge example for these players. He is an example of what you can accomplish. Suarez even talked to these players once, to tell them this in person. I really like that about him."

Bueno points out that this is a different method than European clubs use. "When I watch the Dutch national team or some Dutch clubs there is something South American about them. They have the will to make something beautiful out of it. And the players are capable of great things. Just look at Arjen Robben, Robin van Persie or Wesley Sneijder. You don't see this as much in other European countries. In those countries it is more about strength and defense."

"The difference with South Americans is that we have amor propio (inner love) to win and to score. We therefore want that players who are around the penalty area take the risk they would have taken as an eight year old. You want to score, so score. That is the key of the success Luis Suarez and Diego Forlan have."



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# TRAINING SESSIONS



*This edition of 'Training sessions' consists of 15 great exercises. We start with 6 small sided games by Paul Cooper. These six games are great for youth players and adults alike. They provide a fun way for kids to practise with a ball in a learning by doing manner. These exercises help kids to develop technique, football insight and communication, as children naturally learn match situations by constant repetition and frequent ball contact. These small sided games maximise involvement in real football situations, provide freedom to fail, creativity and spontaneity.*

*The next six exercises are a great combination of technical and tactical exercises in various settings. They are designed for the older youth, U15 and older, and for adults. Like the small sided games they provide the players with frequent ball contacts and each exercise is designed to practice both the technical skills as well as tactical insights.*

*The last three exercises were designed by Dutch amateur coach Ömer Kaya. These 3 effective and fun games are designed for the older youth, U15 and older, and for adults as well. Like the previous six exercises in this edition of Training Sessions they provide the players with a setting to practice both the technical skills as well as tactical insights.*



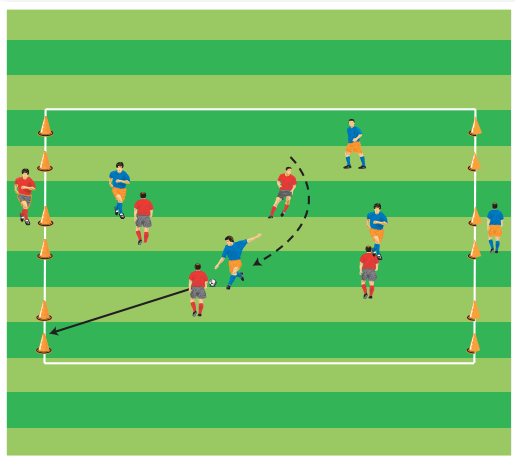


## 1

## THE VISION GAME

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

24



## ORGANIZATION

- Age Group – U9s to adults
- Pitch size 20 x 40 - or at the discretion of the coach but must be wider than it is long
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 3 for each side made from either traffic or marker cones 1-2 metres apart depending on age group and ability. The younger and less technically able, the bigger the goal.

## PROGRESSION

I play this game normally 4v4 but I have played it with up to 8 a side for U18s. The idea is for the teams to score in any of the three goals, however behind the goals there is one extra person. They do not touch the ball but run behind the line of the three goals. If they are standing behind a specific goal, the other team can't score into that goal. For the younger players we use coaches behind the goals as the kids love to work them by making them run and run as play is switched from side to side. Basically the better the game is played the more the coaches have to run and sweat, much to the amusement of the kids. If the ball goes out of play it can either be dribbled, passed or thrown onto the pitch. For the younger age groups we dribble the ball on and for the older age groups we usually pass the ball on.

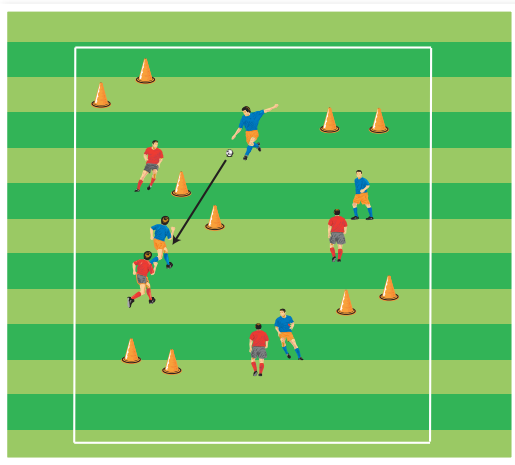
More than any other small sided game you really get to see who are the players with vision and insight by the way they look up, switch play, sell dummies to confuse the opposition as to which goal they are going for. These are the players that see the whole picture. The only condition I occasionally use is that players can only score in the opponents half as sometimes there is a tendency for players to always shoot and not build up play. I usually play both ways and change it during a game.



## 2

## THE PARMA GAME

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A-



25

## ORGANIZATION

- Age Group U10s to adults
- Pitch sizes 40 x 20– or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – are two small traffic cones. You need one more goal than there are players for one team. So for 4v4 you have 5 goals (10 cones) and for 6v6 you have 7 goals (14 cones). You can add extra goals for the younger age groups. The goals should be about 2-3 feet apart (depending on age and ability) and should be distributed around the pitch.

## PROGRESSION

To score a goal, a player from one team has to pass the ball through the goal, where a player from his team controls the ball on the other side without any of the opposition touching it first. (You can score in either side of the goal.) You then have to score through a different goal before you can return to the one you have just scored in, unless the opposition get the ball. Players need to get their heads up to see the full picture, pass accurately and have good movement off the ball. This is also a game about vision.

With older players, they can score goals by passing accurately through the cones at some distance, occasionally the better players can even pass through two goals at a time. It is a very taxing game but also very rewarding.

A variation of this for younger children is to have just one cone for a goal and they simply need to knock this over with the ball to score. We have found this more suitable at the U8s and U9s level.



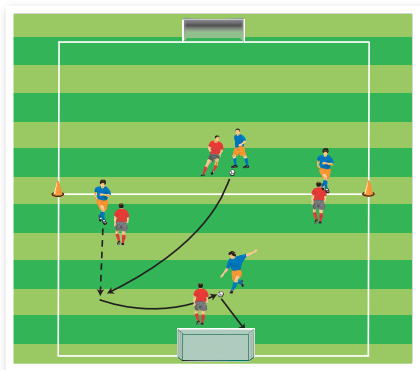
## 3 THE PRESSING GAME

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

- Age Group – U8s to adults
- Pitch Size 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch, with a half way line marking. (you can use two traffic cones at each side of the pitch)
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

ORGANIZATION

The game is played as a standard small sided game with one condition. If a team wins the ball in the oppositions half and then goes on to score before the ball has left that half, they are awarded two goals. A goal scored any other way counts as just one goal. Very popular with the players and evokes good team spirit. The attacking team need to work as a unit and both press and close down defenders.



26

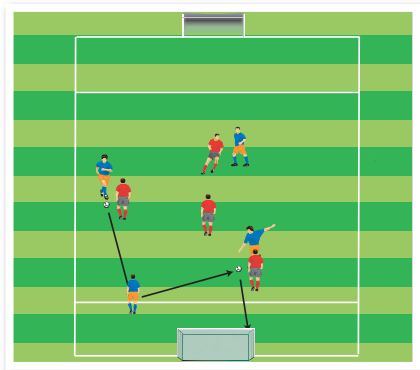
## 4 THE SHOOTING GAME WITH SNIFFER

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

- Age Group U12s to adults
- Pitch sizes 50 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach – a zone of about 10 metres from each goal should be marked out with a line or marker cones
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 6-8 players (including keepers)
- Bibs optional
- Goals – mini soccer goals for children and full size goals for older kids and adults.

ORGANIZATION

The game is a standard small sided game but with a zone in front of each goal. In this zone are the keeper and an opposition forward (sniffer). Players can only shoot outside of this zone and can use the sniffer to set up play. The sniffer however is not allowed to shoot at goal unless it is a rebound off of the keeper, goal post or bar. There are no goal kicks or corners and the keeper can only throw the ball out. This is great shooting practice at distance. It is also good to work on setting up shots and reacting to rebounds.



The game is also an excellent workout for keepers as they have to be alert and on their toes, should they spill the ball or the ball rebounds from the post or bar to the sniffer. It is a good idea to have a plentiful supply of ball in each goal to keep the game moving.





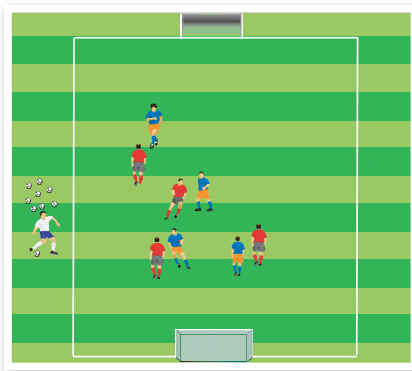
## 5 THE 2<sup>ND</sup> BALL GAME

- Age Group U15s to adults
- Pitch sizes 40 x 20 or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

ORGANIZATION

The coach has a number of balls and stands on the side of the pitch. He starts the game by throwing or drop kicking the ball onto the pitch so that players have to challenge in the air to win the ball. The two main issues are winning the aerial challenge and reacting to the knock down or 2nd ball. Every time the ball goes out of play whether for a throw in, goal kick or corner, the coach starts proceedings again. Play for a set time or until the balls have all been used and then free play for 5 minutes. It is a good game to help players become more confident at challenging for high balls.

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A



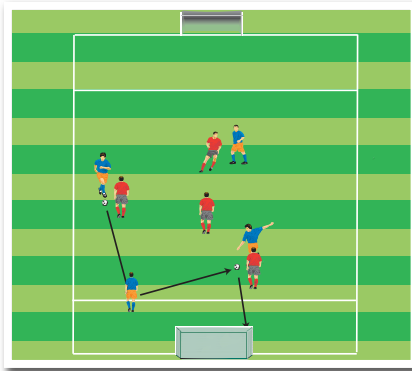
## 6 LINE SOCCER

- Age Group – U8s to adults
- Pitch Size 20 x 40 – or at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch, this can however be played in either portrait or landscape format.
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Either a line across the pitch or cones at the side indicating an end line.

ORGANIZATION

The main difference with this game is that there are no goals as such. The players score by running with the ball over the opponent's end line and put their foot on the ball. For the older children and adults you can also stipulate that they have to do a trick such as a Maradona turn as they go over the line. The game brings out many skills such as running with the ball, beating players, passing short and long as well as switching play. It is also a good game for decision making.

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A





7

CIRCLE WARM-UP

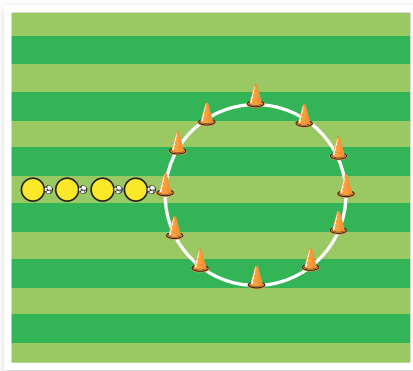
ORGANIZATION

- Setup 12 cones on the middle circle
- Players line up, each with a ball
- Duration: 5-10 minutes

PROGRESSION

- Players dribble around the cones
- Next player start when player in front of him reaches the fourth cones

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A



8

5V5 IN 5 AREAS

ORGANIZATION

- Pitch size: 20x20m
- 5 areas
  - 4 equal areas in the corner
  - 1 circle in the middle
- Play 5v5
- 1 player of each team in 1 of the 5 areas
- Duration: 10-15 minutes

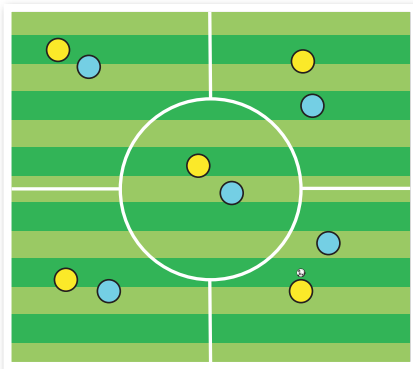
PROGRESSION

- Team in possession passes the ball from 1 area to another
- No back passing to the player you received the ball from
- 2 touch maximum

VARIATION

- 1 touch
- Free play
- Bigger or smaller area

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A





## 9 TECHNICAL/TACTICAL EXERCISE WITHOUT FINISH (1)

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

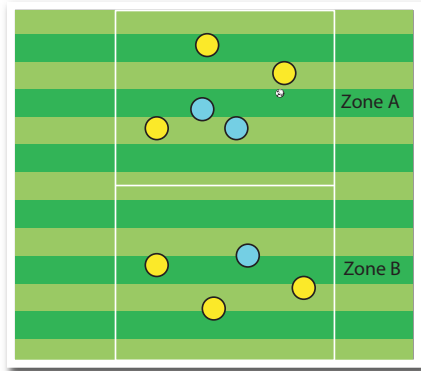
- Pitch size: 30x20m
- 2 zones
  - 3v2 in 1 zone
  - 1 zone = 15x10m
- Duration: 10-15 minutes

PROGRESSION

- Team in possession must pass the ball around to players in their own zone (A) before they can pass to their teammates in the other zone (B)
- When the ball is passed to zone B one of the defenders from zone A moves to zone B to create another 3v2 situation

VARIATION

- 1 touch
- 2 touch
- Bigger or smaller area



## 10 TECHNICAL/TACTICAL EXERCISE WITHOUT FINISH (2)

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

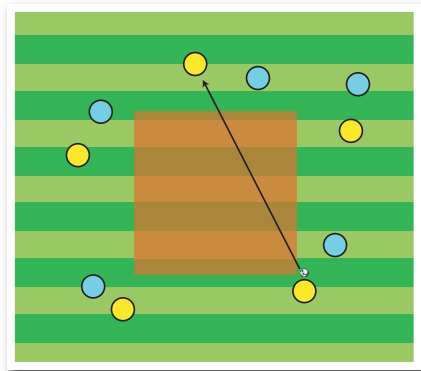
- Pitch size: 20x20m
- 5v5 with 2 neutrals
- Red zone in the middle (5x5m)
- Duration: 10-15 minutes

PROGRESSION

- Team in possession passes the ball around, while the defending team tries to steal it
- Players are not allowed to enter the red zone
- Ball may be passed across the red zone to a player on the other side

VARIATION

- 1 touch
- 2 touch
- Bigger or smaller area





## 11 CIRCUIT PASSING WITH FINISH (1)

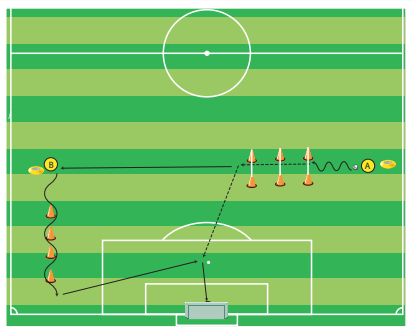
U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- Pitch size: width of field x 30m
- 6 players, 1 goalkeeper
- 3 hurdles, 4 cones, 2 starting discs
- Duration: 15 minutes

PROGRESSION

- A passes to B
- A runs jumping over the hurdles and takes position around the penalty spot
- At the same time B receives the ball dribble through the cones to the endline and crosses the ball into the penalty area
- A finishes on goal
- B retrieves the ball
- A joins the back of the B queue
- B joins the back of the A queue



VARIATION

- Add 1 defender in the penalty area
- Add 2 defenders, 1 in the penalty area, 1 near the endline

## 12 CIRCUIT PASSING WITH FINISH (2)

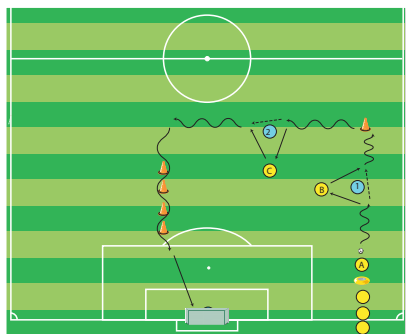
U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- Pitch size: width of field x 30m
- 6 attackers, 2 defenders, 1 goalkeeper
- 5 cones
- Duration: 15 minutes

PROGRESSION

- A dribbles towards defender 1 and passes to B
- A runs passed the defender and receives the ball back from B
- A dribbles around cone 1 towards defender 2, passes to C, runs passes defender 2 and receives the ball back from C
- A dribble towards and through the cones to the edge of the penalty area and finishes on goal



VARIATION

- Gradually increase resistance from defenders
- Add 1 defender in the penalty area

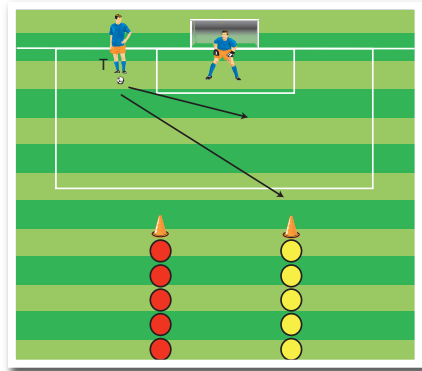


### 13 'KAYAKABALSKI'

ORGANIZATION

- Two rows of players are position just outside the penalty area, with a neutral goalkeeper on goal (you may also opt to use 2 goalkeepers, 1 from each team)
- The coach plays 2 balls to the same player. The ball must be shot on goal immediately
- If one of the two balls is scored the player will join the back of the line
- If the player doesn't score he is out of the game
- When the players scores both balls he wins back a player from his own team or he may dare a player from the other team to score 2 balls. If this player doesn't score both balls he is out. If he does score both balls the player who dared him is out
- The team who has no players left loses

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

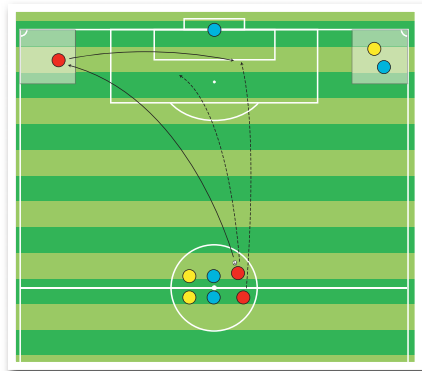


### 14 'COFFEE GRINDER'

ORGANIZATION

- Half a field
- Play in groups of 3 players
- 2 of the 3 players are positioned in the middle circle. The third player is position in one of the two corner areas
- One of the players lobs the ball from the middle circle to the player in the corner area. If the ball does not reach the area, they lose their turn. If the ball reaches the area the player must pass the ball, with two touches (ball must remain in motion), to one of the two players
- These players may only start after the ball has been passed
- The following scores apply:
  - Score with feet = 1 point
  - Score with head = 2 points
  - Volley = 3 points
  - Bicycle kick = 4 points
- The group with most points after 10 minutes wins the game

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A



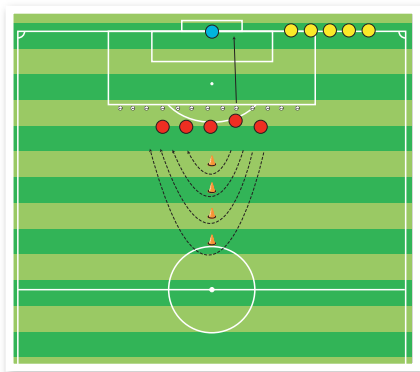


# 15 FINISHING WITH TIME

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- Half a field
- Play with 2 teams with a neutral goalkeeper on goal (you may also opt to use 2 goalkeepers, 1 from each team)
- The balls are all positioned on the edge of the penalty area. The red team has 2 minutes to shoot on goal one player at the time
- When the ball is over or next to the goal, the entire red team must sprint around the first cone before they may continue
- When another player misses the goal, the sprint around the second cone, etc.
- After two minutes the yellow team starts
- The team with the most goals scored wins



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WLADIMIR BRAGA, PHYSICAL TRAINER ATLETICO-MG U17S

# Proactive behavior, leadership and constant communication

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*The Atletico-MG youth academy is regarded as one of the best in the country. They are praised for their integrated working method with the department of professional football, especially with regard to educating youth players and preparing them for the first team. The academy is known for their cooperation with the other members of the club's technical committees.*

*Specialist in sports training and a post-graduate in Business Administration and Marketing, Wladimir Braga is responsible for the physical preparation of the under-17 team. He has the duty to design physical training exercises in combination with tactical elements that correspond to the team's system of play. This is especially important with the U17 age group, as they are at a critical age when it comes to high performance sport.*

*By: Universidade do Futebol (Bruno Camarão and Artur Capuani)*



Braga has been working at the club for nearly a decade and ensures that coaches have the ability and motivation to stimulate and encourage the players. They should be proactive when it comes to solving the game's strategic variations. Leadership and constant communication play in vital role in achieving this.

### Daily work

"The youth category, in my view, is the most difficult and most the important age group when it comes to training football players. Having said this, I do want to point out that this doesn't mean the other youth age groups aren't important. The U17s are, however, the first youth age group that is capable of training with the first team. It is therefore crucial that they are ready to withstand the pace of play that comes with the first team, coordination and strength wise. Thus, I believe that in order to develop youth training a hypertrophy (in weight) as well as work power (traction) allows the player to increase his strength and ability to improve cyclic and acyclic speed, and to withstand the constant shock of game and eventually prevent muscle injuries."

### Integration between departments

"There is a deep understanding of the relationship between the youth and professional departments when it comes to the attention paid to the development of players, the workload they are submitted to,

as well as an exchange of information between members of technical commissions. I believe this to be the most important aspect in the work environment of a big club. And we have access to all evaluations and equipment used by professional category, with results in our youth players being constantly observed by physiologists."

### Scouting

"Within the known criteria (technical, tactical, physical and psychological), Atletico-MG looks for players with the best technical and tactical intelligence when scouting youth players. We, as a club monitor these criteria and develop the physical and psychological components while they are here. More than numerical values of rating the players on the above mentioned criteria (which are also relevant), we believe in the relationship between the components to design the player's profile."

### Pre-season preparation in Brazil.

#### How do you change this?

"In Brazil there is a lack of pre-season training and preparation. "Changing this reality is the responsibility of the CBF (Brazilian Football Confederation) and the state federations. I think by merely changing our playing schedule to the European format we will be able to solve this problem for the most part. Soccer is a tactical sport and should be understood as such. The fitness function is to assist in training and

we think that before you participate in a race, you should be able to run very well. Therefore, physical trainers must adjust their work according to the demands of football, then the coach and then the system of play, and not vice versa. At no time should we deny the importance of understanding the physical potential of a player in the process of preparing him for the first team."

### Youth planning

"In the youth department it is usually easier to plan the training content by means of a year plan for each age group. This may sound like something long term, as some mistakenly think, but it does also bring immediate results. The planning of training content in the youth categories allows professionals to gradually apply the tactical, technical and physical aspects that are fundamental in developing a player's competitive profile.



## CONCEPT OF A WELL-TRAINED PLAYER

*A well-trained player has the following characteristics:*

- *Good predisposition for work*
- *Easily recovers between training sessions and games*
- *Physically fit and not prone to injury; muscular, joint or shock*
- *Has tactical intelligence*
- *Will not lose focus on the goals and objectives*
- *Believes in team play*
- *Has the emotional, cognitive, and physical techniques to overcome adversity*





## WLADIMIR BRAGA

### Education:

Physical Education at the Federal University of Viçosa-MG in 1996

### Specialization:

Athletic Training at the Federal University of Minas Gerais

### Clubs:

América-MG and Atlético-MG (U-15 and U-17)



## Importance of passing

"In order to fully understand the principles of the game of football, a good understanding of passing is a must. A player needs experience in situations of making decision with pressure coupled with the knowledge of the various systems of play, but in order to effectively apply this knowledge players need to master passing. Furthermore, players need a broad knowledge of the concept of systems and the functions within each system, including the specific characteristics of their positions. These components, both in practice and theory, can provide the player with the opportunity to understand the game and its competitive reality."

## Decision-making

"At Atletico-MG all coaches should conduct, stimulate and encourage proactive behavior, leadership and constant communication. This in turn allows players to develop their decision-making capabilities on the field. In time, they should be able to act immediately on changes that the game presents. So to make the plan a reality, every coach within the club assumes the responsibility to discuss, explain and provide the tools that players need in order to make decisions on the field. I believe that by clearly defining our learning objectives and allowing players to express their doubts and difficulties you can establish a confident relationship between the player





and his coaches. When an understanding of the game and the system, along with its principles and sub principles, is established the player will be able to make effective decisions on the field."

### **Technical method and integrated training model**

"Fear of the unknown is part of human nature. When it comes to technical training methods we are faced some big obstacles in Brazil. Unfortunately in our country, people do not respect good work and development, they only thing that counts are the results and by results I mean titles. The Brazilian football school is very conservative and still hides behind a five time world championship achieved, but it is in need of new knowledge and methodologies."

"In Brazil we do not have something like a integrated training model. Which is due to the traditional and fragmented model in which we see football. Although we are faced with many barriers, there are some changes taking places. But even with the next generation of coaches, who are highly competent professionals, we won't see someone developing this kind of work nationwide."



**This article is a  
contribution from  
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There are lots of programs like this available and most are designed to make diagrams, but they often lack the flexibility in adding text. This program has been designed to allow you to make complete exercises and training sessions. You are not bound to a fixed template, you can design your layout any way you want. Whether you want to make a single diagram, a complete exercise or an entire training session, this program allows you to do so. Whether you want to print 1, 2, 3 or 4 exercises on 1 page, include 1 or 2 diagrams in 1 exercise or add lots of text or little text? Anything is possible with MySoccerExercises.com. You design your own templates, so the choice is yours? Furthermore, all your diagrams, exercises, training sessions and templates are saved online, which allows you to access your own library from anywhere. MySoccerExercises.com takes care of all storage and back-ups, so no more worries about a computer crash.

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- Easily make your diagrams with 'real' players or symbols (in various colours)
  - Add text anywhere on the diagram, i.e. player names and numbers or pitch sizes. Wide variety of text colours, sizes and fonts to choose from
  - Easily undo mistakes with the undo and redo function\
  - Zoom in to work more accurately or zoom out to get a better view of the entire diagram
- Use a grid or ruler to work more accurately
  - Export diagram in JPG or GIF format

### Important features in exercise editor:

- Choose the area of your paper you wish to use; 1/4, 1/3, 1/2 or the entire page
- Create you own exercise layout with text boxes, colours, diagram area, etc.
- Save your layout
- Easily place a diagram in a diagram-box, you can zoom to show only part of the diagram
- Save your exercises in folder (you can make new folders)

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### Questions?

Please contact Maaïke Denkers  
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LUIS ACOSTA, OLIMPIA U14 COACH:

# Heading is a not to be underestimated weapon

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*Olimpia is one of the biggest club in Paraguay and has an excellent youth academy. The academy supplies youth talent for the first on a regular basis. The biggest talents generally make their debut in the European competition within a year of being discovered. Youth coach Luis Acosta of the U14 team explains one of the keys for the success of Paraguay's biggest academy: "Paraguayans distinguish themselves with their heading power."*

*By: Jorrit Smink*







Heading and Paraguay are synonymous. Striker Roque Santa Cruz (Manchester City, former Bayern Munich and educated by Olimpia) is viewed as one of the best headers in the world, but there isn't a Paraguayan player who can't head. "In Paraguay all academies pay a lot of attention to heading, especially in my age group, the U14s. In this age groups players already master the ball, so you can start to work on the fine-tuning," says Luis Acosta.

### Youth plan

Contrary to most youth academies in Paraguay, Olimpia works with a structured youth plan. "Every day of the year, for every age group has been worked out. I enter the

training field with my plan and know exactly what I am going to do and say."

### Winning

"We are different from most other Paraguayan club, but also from most South American clubs when it comes to winning. We are focused on educating, not on match results. Other clubs focus on winning, even with the U14s."

### Ball

Acosta's team trains four times a week. "We do everything with the ball, even the physical training sessions. We integrate aerobic exercise with tactical and technical exercises. This is done by our physical trainer. For me as a coach most attention is

paid to starting to develop the tactical game and heading. Heading can really be developed into a weapon, when you can master it. A lot of coaches and players underestimate this. Heading is much more than touch the ball with your head, just like there is a fine technique for shooting the ball.”

### Offense

“Take offensive heading for example. We train this repeatedly. First without an opponent, then with an opponent (see exercises 2 and 3). Usually we do this in the same session. The reason we start without an opponent is so the players can master the technique first. When you immediately include an opponent, a player will deal with this opponent using the skills he already knows and masters. But a youth player should learn to do things he hasn't mastered yet or improve the skills he has partly mastered. This works more effectively when you start without an opponent.”

### Jumping

“An important aspect of heading is the jump. Players usually use their strong leg to jump. Paraguayans have to be able to jump with both legs. We start with this in the warm-up (see exercise 1). This way players will learn to head better when, for example they are jumping backwards. The posture of the back is another important aspect. Heading comes from your back,

if you want to head with power. If you are more interested in placement, then the power, very little, comes more from your head and neck. In our age group it is important that players learn to diagonally approach the ball and look at the goal and the ball when heading offensively. A lot of players at this age close their eyes when heading the ball. We gradually progress this and eventually reach exercise 4. This includes a cross from an upcoming wingback and the forwards have to score with the head, while being defended. This simulates a real match situation when it comes to heading technique.”

### Defensive

“Defensive heading asks for a different technique than offensive heading. With defensive heading you jump with both legs at the same time from stance or while walking backwards. We also pay a lot of attention to this in our training sessions (see exercise 5). Usually we do this in combination with tactical exercises, such as shifting and sagging. You clearly see this when you watch the Paraguay national team. They are deadly when it comes to heading. Their heading technique is phenomenal, because of the attention paid to this aspect in their academies. On top of the education, most Paraguayan players can jump very high. Logical, their muscles have been trained for this from an early age.”



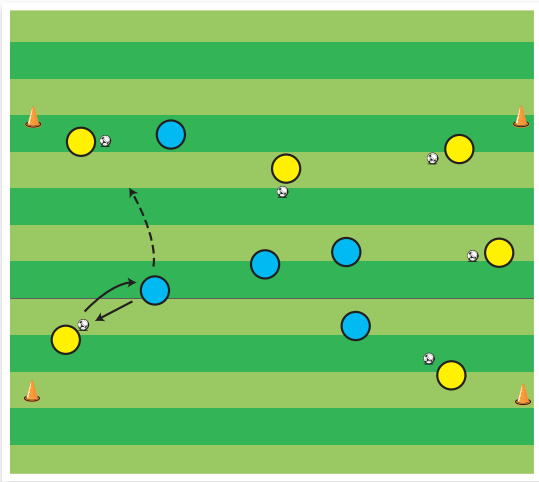
## 1

### IMPROVE HEADING IN A CLOSED OFF AREA

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

#### ORGANIZATION

- 6 players (yellow) have a ball in their hands, the blue players do not have a ball
- The blue players are moving through the area and ask for the ball for the six yellow players
- The yellow players throw the ball to the blue players, who head the ball back
- The blue players must pay attention to their jump. They must interchangeably jump with left, right and both legs.



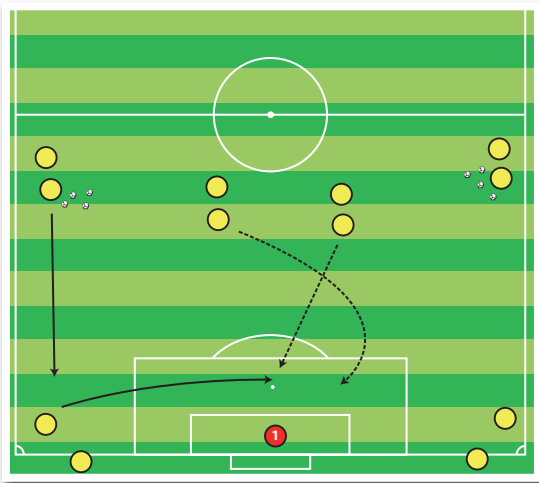
## 2

### OFFENSIVE HEADING WITHOUT RESISTANCE

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

#### ORGANIZATION

- The ball is passed from the side to the player in the corner
- This player receives the ball and crosses into the two incoming strikers
- These players head to ball on goal, without resistance from a defender
- Players stay in their positions



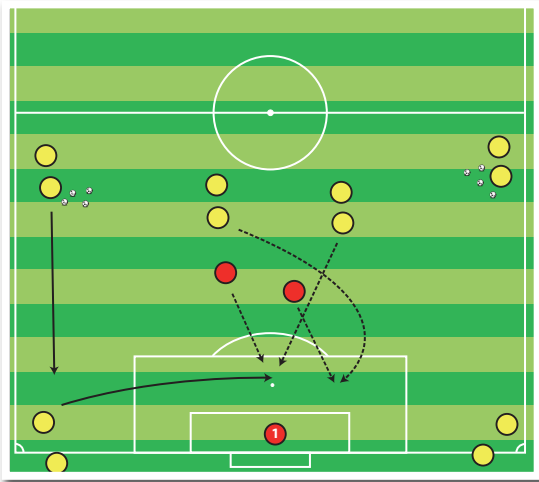


### 3 OFFENSIVE HEADING WITH RESISTANCE

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- The ball is passed from the side to the player in the corner
- This player receives the ball and crosses into the two incoming strikers
- These players head to ball on goal, with resistance from a defender



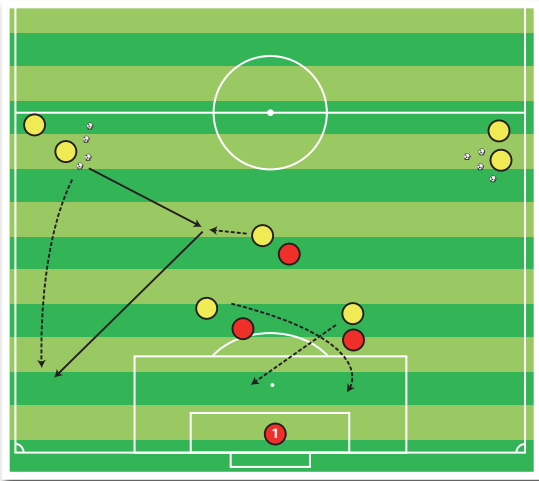
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### 4 ATTACK ALONG THE FLANKS WITH A CROSS

U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- On half a playing field the shadow striker receives the ball, interchangeably from the left and the right side (play 1:4:4:2). The half winger or wingback runs along the flank to the corner flag and receives the ball back
- He crosses into the penalty area
- Two defenders try to prevent the attackers by heading the ball away





5

# IMPROVE DEFENSIVE HEADING WHILE WALKING BACKWARDS

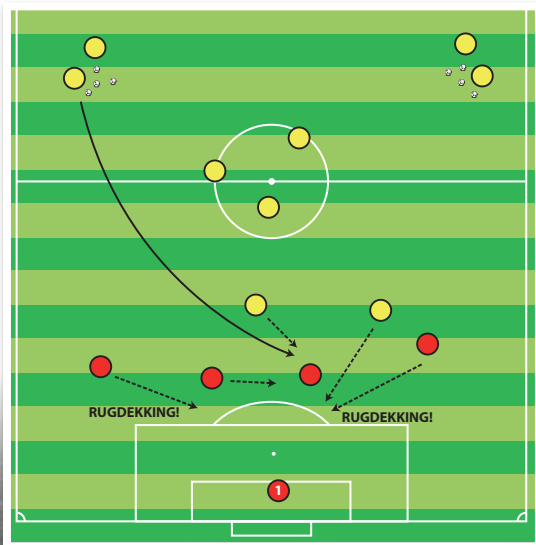
U9 U11 U13 U15 U17 U19 A

ORGANIZATION

- The ball is passed long from the flanks to the two strikers
- The central defender tries to head the ball away (by walking backwards and heading defensively)
- The wingback provide cover
- Play continues on the ground until the attack is finished

VARIATION

- Also training against 3 strikers





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## SCOLARI MAY SCOUT FOREIGN YOUTH PLAYERS TO REINFORCE THE PALMEIRAS YOUTH ACADEMY

"People can get angry, but there are no options to be utilized in our clubs youth academy." The critical tone of the statement in Luiz Felipe Scolari voice sounded like a reality check for Palmeiras fans and representatives, who are eager to see results from the clubs youth teams. But that will not occur on the short term.

"To play the Brazilian Championship, you need much more than technical capabilities," noted the coach, referring to the example of the skilled Ramos, one of the highlights of the team that reached the

semifinals of this year's Copa São Paulo de Futebol Junior (a famous youth championship in Brazil). "He has been injured for 114 days. He trained with us once and got another 30 days without training".

Because of this lack, Scolari is looking for reinforcements from smaller clubs. In addition, the former coach of the Brazilian and Portuguese national teams has even admitted that he may resort to scouting foreign players.





## BOCA JUNIORS DEVELOPS FOOTBALL SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL

Boca Juniors has opened their first school in Brazil. The initiative is part of a franchising program that Argentines began to develop about a year ago, which already has seven other units throughout the American continent.

The focus of the project in the neighboring country is to spread the image of the team “xeneize”. Therefore, all schools will need to use a standardized model of brand exposure and approach to the boys, who pay monthly fees between U\$\$ 50 and U\$\$ 70.

Boca Juniors school director Andrés Lillini was excited about the school’s opening in Brazil. “It is a great moment for Boca Juniors. Our mission is to help support this club with the resources as well as with the ideology behind the club,” said Lillini.

“The opening of a school, its planning, training, methodology all have to follow a set methodology on how Boca Juniors want

to see it done”, said Andres Lillini Compare, technical coordinator and creator of the Argentine project.

The development of the education program will be followed with monthly evaluations and periodic visits from Boca Juniors to the board of each unit. The team will have special attention to teachers and mentors of children to standardize the work globally.



## SPECIAL TREATMENT TO THE UNDER-20 SELECTION

Mano Menezes always made it clear he would like to have a professional responsible for coordinating the youth categories of Brazilian national team. The choice for the position was revealed: Ney Franco, former coach of Coritiba.

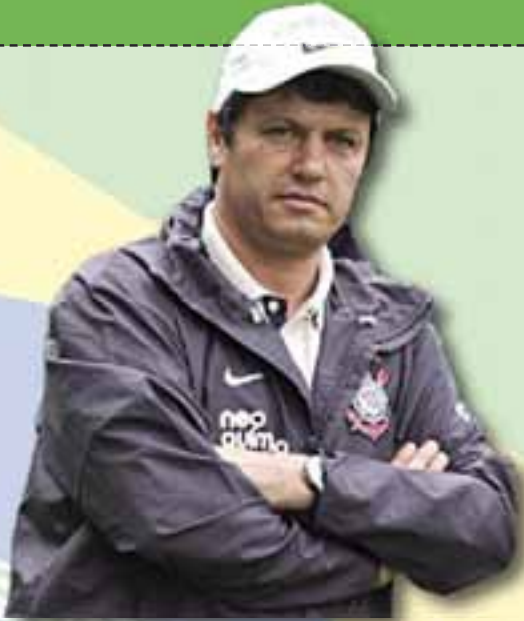
Graduated in Physical Education from the National University of Viçosa in 1992, Franco took the first steps in the sport as a player of LUVÉ (UFV Academic Athletic Association), and later as coach of Viçosa Cup BH Football Junior, one of the most important competitions in Brazilian youth football. After completing his coaching license he began to coach the U15 team of Atlético Mineiro, a function he held 1992 to 1995.

After that, he received the invitation to work as coach of the Cruzeiro Youth team. In nearly a decade at the club, Ney went through all the categories of the youth academy, winning national and international state titles.



In the final stretch of the Brazilian Championship in 2004, he was invited to direct the professional team. In 2005, Cruzeiro established a partnership with Ipatinga Futebol Clube, enabling Ney Franco his first big break in professional football.

"With Ney, we want to show that, from now, the U20s will receive special treatment. The clubs need to understand that releasing a player for the U20 team is not prejudice. It's the opposite. It will only enhance the player. We wanted a coach with the necessary experience and ability to deal with players who are already competing at this top level in their age group", explained Mano, chief coach of Brazil's professional team.



## SPEED IS SYMBOLIC FOR ADILSON BATISTA AT CORINTHIANS

Batista was never a big admirer of the work Mano Menezes did at Corinthians. With the departure of Menezes, who has left to take charge of the Brazilian national team, the new commander, Batista, immediately began making some changes to the Corinthians playing style.

The defensive midfielder Elias, for example, now has more freedom to attack and has



developed into one of the gunners at Corinthians. "What changed in my position is that Adilson gives me more freedom. Mano used to favor tactical positioning, but Adilson gives us the freedom to play", said the player.

Elias said that the speed in which the team play has made a big difference, both for the team as a whole as well as for his own development. Besides applying pressure on the opponent as soon as possible, players seek to take advantage of the gaps in opponent's defense by faster response.

Adilson trains to ensure that midfielders and strikers quickly build and finish their attacks. In certain activities the coach actually times how long it takes for the team to reach the opponent's goal.



**The Brazilian corner is a contribution from Universidade do Futebol**

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By: Anthony Hudson

COACHING LESSONS TOUGH TIMES

# Shaping Great Managers

PART 1

## Sir Alex Ferguson

Whenever we hear of Alex Ferguson, one of footballs all time great managers, it's mostly in the context of his accomplishments, the silver ware he has won and of course the huge amount of pleasure his teams have given so many people in so many places over the years. It's almost impossible to speak of anything else, as his success in the game is that immense. But, there's a side to this great manager that not everyone sees or hears about. There are parts of his story that are overshadowed by the success. Experiences that he's gone through, that most others on the same path have gone through but have slowly faded out of the picture and out of the profession. And the reason we're fortunate enough to be able to read and learn from him, is that he was

strong enough to 'stay in the game' and he has that quality of perseverance that he so often speaks about. We don't hear about the others as they didn't last. They lacked mental toughness and they lacked perseverance. And it could be said that a lot of these tough experiences played such a large role in the shaping of such a great manager.

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***'He had come from the shipyards of Govan and he wasn't going back there without a fight. And fight he did - with anyone, any authority, anything that stood between him and success.'***

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*Andy Melvin,  
former Aberdeen journalist*







### Perseverance

Sir Alex became manager of Aberdeen in 1978 after being 'sacked' by St Mirren, only his second job as a young manager. And shortly after joining his new club, an industrial tribunal hung over his head and publicly labeled him, what now seems to be the most ludicrous statement in the history of the game; they deemed his as 'possessing neither by experience nor talent, any managerial ability at all'. Say no

more! It goes to show how very dangerous opinions can be, especially if not questioned and ignorance takes over. Thank goodness Sir Alex took absolutely no notice - another quality that has served him so well. To look back at this situation from where we are now is very easy, but it can't have been that easy for a young manager, unproven, having just been fired and now walking in to a brand new, very 'large' managerial position.

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**'I'M NOT A CONFIDENT PERSON AT ALL. I WORRY LIKE HELL ABOUT ALL SORTS OF THINGS. TEAM TALKS, FOR INSTANCE.'**

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*Alex Ferguson, 1983*

And it didn't get too much easier. His first season of trying to bed in his own philosophy, and get this crop of extremely talented young Scottish players to do things his way; was not as plain sailing as history may suggest - from all the triumph's that we see in the record books.

'It was a shattering experience,' he later confessed. 'For the first time in my life I couldn't wait for the season to end. The players resented the way I wanted to change certain ideas. They were suspicious of my intentions.' By his own account, he had a troubled time at the start of his Aberdeen managerial career. Even the players noticed a sense of unease and uncertainty in there new manager, 'he came fairly quiet among us at first.' said Gordon Strachan. 'It seems at times some of our older lads were trying to run the training sessions, dictating how the free kicks should be taken and so on.' And during such a tough beginning to his time at Aberdeen, the results didn't go in his favor either.

However, Ferguson took on Aberdeen with his whole life, stuck to his beliefs, persevered and went on to win the Scottish Premier League (three Times), the Scottish Cup (four times), the League Cup, the UEFA Super Cup and of course the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup against the mighty Real Madrid – making this one of the greatest periods in the club's history.

'What he did at Aberdeen was almost miraculous.' stated journalist Hugh McIlvanny.

There are many lessons throughout his career, but what a fantastic example for coaches and managers making there way in the game – if you don't have PERSERVERENCE, you may as well give up now.

### Sacrifice

Sacrifice is another quality that is so evident and strong in his life, especially as a young manager. He had and still has an appetite for the game that is so intense in quality. And sacrifice is a word not just for Sir Alex but also it seems for the Ferguson family, who over the years have had to adjust, cope and really manage being the family of one of the games top men.

Back in Scotland, at St Mirren (his second role as manager), he used to be the first one in, and 'he'd still be there until eight or nine,' said Harold Currie, his chairman. Even on the training field, Bob McCulley recalls, 'Time didn't matter to him, he never wore a watch. If he wanted something done, he'd stay as late as it took, or come in early.' And Ferguson's dedication is all the more remarkable given he was working part time and still running his pub, Fergie's.

'I had that burning desire to change the world' he stated.





‘Day or night he’d be totally running St Mirren. And with that attitude, all the players and all the people at the club could see that example to follow, and this is where you get the leadership. He was building a club, not just a team.’ Said former captain Tony Fitzpatrick.

Ferguson speaks of his early days and how he and his assistant would never go a week without going to watch at least one game to look at players, to keep up and stay ahead of everyone else. If they missed one game, ‘then they knew they’d miss another, then another, and eventually they’d stop going’ – a thought too devastating to even contemplate.

‘My assistant and I would drive six hours to watch one and a half hours football, and then be up for training in the morning. There wasn’t time for anything else.’ Ferguson remembers.

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***‘He was so wound up. He’d come in and kick the half-time tea tray all over the place because we weren’t playing.’***

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*Centre forward, Jim Meakin*

### **Mind games and high standards**

Ferguson has a reputation of having the ability to be extremely volatile and I don’t think there are too many people that would

try and cross him, and get away with it. It seems that his early years were a little more colorful than they are now and the way in which he got players to respond, some may say, was either extremely clever or just straightforward and ruthless.

Regardless of what we perceive; one thing’s for sure, it was entirely motivated by a burning desire to win and be successful – and it worked.

Coaches and managers have different styles and ways of motivating their players. And it’s fantastic to hear some of Ferguson’s comments and beliefs, as it gives you a very strong idea of how he operated and where he came from, ‘there’s only way for me – or anybody associated with me, and that’s winning. I’m not in this game to be a middle of the road manager, or a ‘nearly’ manager. I’m in it to win everything. And the players are bred that way.’ And breed players he did.

Now thousands of books have been written on subjects such as psychology and mind games. Many people talk about it, but very few have lived it. And very few have been brave enough to try new things, apply them and come out truly successful, in the face of such consistent adversity. I think mind games is an appropriate term for how Fergie dealt (maybe still deals) with his players, or should I say, played with them. He kept them on their

toes, for some, constantly guessing what he's going to do, wary that he may 'dig' into them next. Others loved him and wanted to fight and play for him. And then there was the players' that loathed him and wanted to prove him wrong. He cleverly exploited these personalities for the benefit of performing to their maximum for his team. He tested and probed and found out who he could count on, to stand up to the real big challenges of being successful against the very best in the world.

'Fergie put the fear of death in players,' said Gordon Strachan 'and used it as motivation. But if you weren't the victim, he might give you a crafty wink as he left the dressing room.'

And as surprising as Fergie's confession on lacking confidence, especially with team talks, is how it's been recalled that he used to plan and premeditate the famous 'hair dryer' treatment. 'Ferguson often thought carefully about what affect he wanted his words to have on his players. On one occasion he was found rehearsing one of his outburst in advance, enquiring of a listener, 'Does that sound ok?'" Fantastic!

Results speak for themselves, and he certainly got the desired response from his players. 'He motivated every player in a different way,' Willie Miller once said. 'Some he'd leave alone, some he'd make play by making them dislike him.'

And he set such high standards for himself and his players, which give us a magnificent insight into a completely different standard that most people hold themselves and there players to.

'I thought we'd played well, but he felt our passing was awful and he let us know it. I was silly enough to say, 'what the f@ck are you looking for? We won 5-0. Are you not happy?'" He came over and gave me a Fergie special. He told me in no uncertain terms that he was the manager and it was his standards that counted. It makes you look at it. Even though you won 5-0, there's still room for improvement.' Tony Fitzpatrick, St Mirren captain. What I love about Ferguson, about his story and his approach, is the fact as a coach you can hear this and learn so very much. And at the age of 68, his appetite for the game only seems to have got bigger!

### Coaching lessons:

1. **Tough Times Shape Great Coaches – If You Persevere!**
2. **Sacrifice – Be Willing To Give Everything You Have**
3. **Set High Standards for Yourself and Your Players**
4. **Man Management – Are You Brave To Affect Your Players in Different Ways?**

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