

# REACH FORTH

*Sports played. Lives changed.*

## **U8 DIVISION (Ages 7-8)**

This practice manual is setup for teams to work on specific skill areas for 2-3 weeks in a row to allow coaches adequate practice time to teach the skill fundamentals. With each skill set, example drills have been suggested. Many of these have been provided through the Byte Size Coaching resource and have been effective for coaches in the past. This manual is intended to provide a guideline for coaches when planning practices over the course of the summer. Teams may vary on the drills they use or the focus of their practice however we hope this resource provides some consistency within this age group and provides a starting point for coaches to work from.

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### General Tips for JR Practices/Games:

- Coaches should use consistent encouragement and name repetition to help players be aggressive, stay in the game, and not stand around or get distracted
  - Kids need to be constantly moving and playing as much as possible, minimize downtime and keep things moving
  - There might be a few players that are more dominant than the majority. If they score a few goals in the game, challenge/encourage them to begin setting up their teammates
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## **Weeks 1-3**

### **Dribbling/Ball Control and Throw In Focus**

#### 1.) Dribbling/Ball Control

A.) Rules and Technique: This is a skill that requires a significant amount of practice time dedicated to it. It is important for players to spend sufficient practice time with the ball at their feet to develop dribbling skills. Begin to have players get a feel for using the inside, outside, and bottom of their feet to maintain control of the ball.

#### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Square Dance
- Carl's Keep Away

#### 2.) Throw Ins

A.) Rules and Technique: At this age, throw-in is a skill that should be enforced in practice. Instruction and skill development should be done in practice so that in the game situation, incorrect throws can be corrected at first and then called by the referee and possession changed. Players need to know the proper technique that begins with two hands on the ball behind the head, keeping both feet on the ground at all times, not twisting the arms or ball as it is being thrown.

B.) Practice (Drills)

- Have team line up (side by side) facing the coach. Each child should have a ball. Coach moves along the length of the line (from in front and away) and indicates to each child to throw in the ball. Quickly go along the line having each child throw-in right after one another, correct incorrect techniques. After all players have thrown, they retrieve balls and return to the line (repeat multiple times) - Have players divide into pairs and stand "throwing distance" apart. Players alternately take turns throwing the ball to their partner with proper technique.

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## **Weeks 4-6**

### **Passing and Shooting Focus**

1.) Passing

A.) Rules and Technique: Coaches should work with players to ensure passes are being made using the inside of the foot rather than the toe. Also emphasis the importance of following the play once they complete a pass (not stopping and standing still). For receiving a pass, coaches should work with players on how to cushion the ball, not letting it bounce off the foot or leg.

B.) Practice (Drills):

- Soccer Golf

- Divide kids into groups of 3. Two kids stand on one side with the 3rd child facing them approx. 20 feet away. The side with two children starts with the ball. Child 1 passes the ball to child 3 and then continues running to stand behind child 3. Then child 3 passes the ball to child 2 and continues running to stand behind child 2. Repeat.

2.) Shooting

A.) Rules and Technique:

Begin to teach players the proper shooting technique:

- Step beside the ball with the non-kicking foot

- Toes of the shooting foot should be pointed down (not out) with ankle locked

- Contact ball with top of foot/laces

- Knee and chest over the ball When teaching the proper shooting technique, ensure that kids understand the concept of kicking the ball with the side of their foot and not the toe. Players should practice the technique of lining up their body to the target they want to shoot at and step into the kick.

B.) Practice (Drills)

- Penalty shot competitions
  - Players pass the ball to the coach who has their back to the net. The coach will then pass the ball to one side or the other and the player has to run up and shoot the ball at the net
  - Shots with a goalie in net
  - Soccer Golf
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## **Weeks 7-8**

### **Defending, Goal Keeping, and Positioning Focus**

#### 1.) Defending

A.) Rules and Technique: This will likely be new instruction for the players at this level and it may take some time to establish this skill. It is important that players begin to understand how to position themselves as defenders. Coaches should work with players to practice jockeying opposing players while defending rather than lunging for them and attempting to steal the ball. When working on drills and in game situations, encourage defenders to position themselves so that they are between the net and the ball.

#### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Simple 3 on 3 or 3 on 2 drills are effective for teaching this important positioning skill
- 2 on 1 Rush
- same concept as drill above (2 forwards and 1 defender) but this time add a goalie
- Soccer Golf with Defenders
- Cat and Mouse
- Cow Dogs
- Catch the Coach

#### 2.) Goal Keeping

A.) Rules and Technique: Players should be encouraged to always keep their focus on the ball in play. When positioning in the net, always have the player take one big step out from the line rather than having them stand on the line between the two posts. Work with goalies to understand how to properly block the ball with their body (going down on one knee and keeping their hands spread out to make as big of a wall as possible). When in reception of the ball to throw/kick back into the game, create awareness by helping them scope the field and kick/throw where there are no players, unless to those on their own team.

#### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Penalty kicks on net
- Players take turns shooting on the goalie
- King's Court
- This Way That Way

#### 3.) Positioning

A.) Rules and Technique: Focus more teaching and attention on spreading out while on the field (not just following the ball) than on specifics such as offsides. Help players understand the various roles in each position (defenders should move up to half when the ball is in the other end, forwards be the first up the field and remember to play to your side- left, right, or middle etc). This skill requires consistent repetition in practice and in game situations.

B.) Practice (Drills)

- Small scrimmages can help coaches work with players in a game situation to remain in their position on the field

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## **Weeks 9-10**

### **Dribbling/Ball Control and Throw In Focus**

1.) Dribbling/Ball Control

A.) Rules and Technique: This is a skill that requires a significant amount of practice time dedicated to it. It is important for players to spend sufficient practice time with the ball at their feet to develop dribbling skills. Begin to have players get a feel for using the inside, outside, and bottom of their feet to maintain control of the ball. Continue to spend practice time on this skill, working with players to develop their ability and confidence in ball control.

B.) Practice (Drills)

- Square Dance  
- Carl's Keep Away

2.) Throw Ins

A.) Rules and Technique: As the skill develops, move away from correcting improper throw-ins during a game situation. Players should understand the important parts of a proper throw-in after this point in the season.

B.) Practice (Drills)

- Have team line up (side by side) facing the coach. Each child should have a ball. Coach moves along the length of the line (from in front and away) and indicates to each child to throw in the ball. Quickly go along the line having each child throw-in right after one another, correct incorrect techniques. After all players have thrown, they retrieve balls and return to the line (repeat multiple times).

- Have players divide into pairs and stand "throwing distance" apart. Players alternately take turns throwing the ball to their partner with proper technique.

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## Weeks 11-12

### Passing and Shooting Focus

#### 1.) Passing

A.) Rules and Technique: Review proper kicking technique for a pass and the importance of following the play after completing a pass. Return to drills as needed.

#### B.) Practice (Drills):

- Soccer Golf

- Divide kids into groups of 3. Two kids stand on one side with the 3rd child facing them approx. 20 feet away. The side with two children starts with the ball. Child 1 passes the ball to child 3 and then continues running to stand behind child 3. Then child 3 passes the ball to child 2 and continues running to stand behind child 2. Repeat.

#### 2.) Shooting

A.) Rules and Technique: Continue to work on the proper shooting technique ensuring that all players understand the skill and are getting more comfortable (watch especially for toe-kicks and work to eliminate them). Return to drills as needed.

#### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Penalty shot competitions- players pass the ball to the coach who has their back to the net.

The coach will then pass the ball to one side or the other and the player has to run up and shoot the ball at the net

- Shots with a goalie in net- line up players single file or side by side and practice taking shots on the goalie

- Soccer Golf

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## Weeks 13

### Defending, Goal Keeping, and Positioning Focus

#### 1.) Defending

A.) Rules and Technique: Continue to work with players to practice jockeying opposing players while defending rather than lunging for them and attempting to steal the ball. When working on drills and in game situations, encourage defenders to position themselves so that they are between the net and the ball. At this point in the season, also begin to instruct defenders to keep the forwards to the outside of the field if at all possible.

#### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Simple 3 on 3 or 3 on 2 drills are effective for teaching this important positioning skill

- 2 on 1 Rush

- same concept as drill above (2 forwards and 1 defender) but this time add a goalie

- Soccer Golf with Defenders

- Cat and Mouse
- Cow Dogs
- Catch the Coach

## 2.) Goal Keeping

A.) Rules and Technique: Continue to work with goalies on the specific skills noted earlier in the season. Take time to review instructions with them, and provide them with opportunities to develop these skills in practice.

### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Penalty kicks on net
- players take turns shooting on the goalie
- King's Court
- This Way That Way

## 3.) Positioning

A.) Rules and Technique: Coaches should constantly be reviewing the importance of staying spread out on the field and playing proper positions. By this point in the season, players should be showing signs of development in this area and beginning to look for open spaces on the field rather than following the ball around.

### B.) Practice (Drills)

- Small scrimmages can help coaches work with players in a game situation to remain in their position on the field
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## **Drills and Games**

### **Carl's Keep Away**

#### **Organization:**

- Mark a grid 15 x 15 yards depending on numbers.
- Assuming there are 10 to 12 players split group in half, say two groups of 6.
- Use pinnies to distinguish the two groups.
- One group of 6 goes into the square and just one of the other group also goes into the square. The rest wait in line for their turn.
- The 6 players try to keep the ball away from the one defender.
- When the defender wins the ball or forces the ball to be played out of the area he/she changes with the next defender. This goes on until every defender has been through and they then change with the other team.
- The team that keeps the ball for the longest time (stop watch out) is the winner.
- If a team is doing so well the defender cannot get the ball after 30 seconds shout, "Change!"

and the next defender replaces the one in the middle.

- The coach keeps a supply of balls handy so after an interception or a ball is kicked out of play he/she kicks or rolls another ball in. Teaching:
- Coach must assess whether the playing area is too big or too small and make adjustments if necessary.
- For the first few minutes allow the players to play in a non-competitive way so that when a mistake is made, the coach can recreate the situation and then ask the player who made the mistake what the alternatives are. Praise him or her for coming up with the answers (as they surely will). If they can see what should be done they will learn more quickly to do it when the ball is in play.
- After a few minutes go into the stopwatch competition described above without any interventions by the coach other than putting the ball back in play.
- This practice should be used on a regular basis and progressed when the children are ready. The ways to progress are-
- Make the space smaller
- Reduce the numbers attackers, e.g., 5 vs. 1 and then 4 vs. 1
- Or increase the number of defenders, e.g., 6 vs. 2
- Condition the attackers, e.g., no more than two touches (control and pass).
- Although the defender is outnumbered encourage them to look for the misplaced or miscontrolled pass to pounce on the ball.

Target:

- To keep the ball for the longest time; for the defender to win the ball as soon as possible.
- (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

**Cat and Mouse** This game is similar to British Bulldog. Choose one player to be the "Cat" and all other players are the "Mice." The mice have to cross a certain area on the field and when they do the "Cat".

attempts to take away the ball from each of the "Mice." If he/she is able to steal a ball, that "Mouse" becomes a "Cat" for the next crossing.

**Catch the Coach** This has been a favourite for many Tyke players. Always preempt the drill with the reminder to get the ball away from the coach and no grabbing the coach – without this reminder, kids have a tendency to try and tackle the coach vs. developing the skill to get the ball. Start off by explaining the rules and then have them all line up, with the coach being 20 paces away – blow the whistle to start and run away from the team with the ball, as they try and get the ball from you. Let them get close and then move away quick, doing fast turns and dodges, and finally allowing the pack to get the ball away from you. Once this is done, you can reverse it and try to get the ball from the pack. Signal with the whistle when complete.

## **Cow Dogs(keep)**

Organization:

- Mark an area 30 yards by 20 yards.
- Players at one end with the ball must try to dribble to the other end without their ball being kicked out of the area by the Cow Dogs in the middle (Graphic A).
- If a player's ball is kicked out they become a "Cow Patty" and have to sit or kneel in the area (Graphic A).
- The "Cow Patties" can also kick the balls out, but only from a kneeling or better still, a "crab" position (Graphic B).
- The one or two "winners" have the choice of whether they become a Cow Dog or not. The previous Cow Dogs become dribblers. Teaching:
- Dribblers must pick their time to make their runs forward and must use fakes, changes of pace and screening to retain possession.
- Cow Dogs should "hunt" in pairs.

Target:

- Not to be caught by the Cow Dogs. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

## **King's Court**

**Organization:**

- Set out as many goals (3-yards apart) as there are players (goalkeepers).
- Two goalkeepers per area, one with a ball, both kneeling up facing one another four yards apart.
- Important that the players kneel in an upright position and not sit back on their heels. Feet/toes should be on the imaginary goal line.
- Balls must be rolled along the ground to the side of each keeper, not straight, but not so far to the side that the receiver cannot roll over and collect the ball.
- After receiving the ball the keeper should roll back to the kneeling position. Teaching:
- Hands and arms should be pushed reach forward, palms towards ball, to stop ball in front of body.
- Hands and arms should relax into a "crooked" position as the pace is taken off the ball.
- Upper knee should be drawn in comfortably across the body as the ball is received.
- Lower leg should remain loosely trailing.
- Head and upper shoulder should be drawn over and above the height of the ball.
- "W" hand position is employed, but with ball "trapped" by the upper hand on top of the ball and lower hand behind the ball and so use the ground as the so-called "Third Hand." (See graphic above) Target:

- To start with, everyone is practicing the side dive technique and there is no pressure.
- Then the "battle" begins. The top field is designated the King's Court (coach decides the top and bottom).
- Ball must be rolled, not thrown.
- Goals only count if they are "clean" (must not touch the cone).
- Service must be from a position where the attacker has his/her feet touching the goal line.
- Each "round" goes for 2- to 3-minutes and a winner is declared (coach needs a tie breaking method - "paper, scissors, stone") and the changes are made as follows: The winner in the King's Court retains the #1 position. The loser goes all the way to the bottom court. The other winners move up one place. The battle recommences.
- With large groups have two or three King's Courts with 3 or 4 fields per sub-group. Keep it fun and therefore downplay the "winning at all costs" attitude. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

### **Soccer Golf**

Description: setup pylons around the practice field and have kids take turns attempting to knock over the pylons with passes. Form two teams and keep track of which team can knock over the most.

### **Square Dance**

#### **Organization:**

- Mark a square approximately 15 yards by 15 yards, depending on numbers.
- Each player should have a ball.
- If not, use the "Change Soccer" principle: half the players inside the square, each with a ball, the remaining half outside the square, without a ball. Trade places when coach shouts "Change!"
- Players can dribble around anywhere within the square, but should not walk.
- Three instructions are given to the players inside the square:
  - "STOP" - Put foot on top of ball quickly and freeze like a statue.
  - "GO" - Move right or left with the ball, fast, for three or four yards.
  - "TURN" - Quickly turn 180 degrees with the ball, moving three or four yards. Teaching:
- Encourage players to keep the ball close to their feet.
- Occasionally insist on using left foot only or right foot only.
- See how many different ways they can turn with the ball.
- To avoid giving players too much information at once, introduce instructions one at a time and incorporate practice time between.
- Later, incorporate your own ideas.

**Target:**

- Stay in the area with the ball and make no contact with other players or other balls. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

**This Way That Way**

## Organization:

- Set out the practice as shown in Graphic A.
- If sufficient balls (one per player) work in pairs (Graphic A).
- Try to keep groups as small as possible for greater repetitions.
- Player facing the goal initiates the practiced by pointing to the ball "This Way" or "That Way."
- In Graphic B the coach demonstrates by pointing to one ball.
- You can see the good technique of the keeper in Graphic B.
- However, it is Graphic C where we see the full drill:
- Goalkeeper (at the front of the file) comes out and dives at the ball simulating the requirement in a real game.
- The Pointer having pointed, runs to the ball indicated, but does not try to kick the ball.
- The players then change.
- Or if more than two players, move to end of file and wait their next turn.
- Don't keep the activity going for too long, as it is basically a drill - a very important one nevertheless. Teaching:
- You can see the good technique of the keeper in Graphic B.
- Hands must always lead, as they are the "protectors" and well as the "collectors."
- Hands and head cover the near post and the body and legs cover the middle off the goal and the far post (in case they have to make a block in later years).
- Goalkeepers have to come on a line inside the ball to enable them to dive outwards on their side - otherwise they are diving headfirst.
- They must go down early and slide on their side into the collecting/blocking position.
- If they go down late their legs will swing round and they may dive over the ball.
- Watch for the player who "corkscrews" and swings around to dive on the wrong side of the ball, i.e., that the body and legs are outside the line of the near post. Target:
- To learn the correct way of diving at an incoming player's feet that will protect the goal, but also protect the goalkeeper. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)