

Basic Shooting Drills

After the kids have gotten some familiarity with the proper shooting techniques it is time to move on to some "game situation" type shooting drills. Except for penalty kicks and re-starts, (direct free kicks and indirect free kicks) most shooting is done with the player moving and the ball coming to her.

The following are a variety of shooting drills that have a few basic things in common. 1) there is always movement off the ball, 2) the ball is always coming to the player, 3) the shooter must first control the pass and then take the shot

Flag Shooting

The first exercise was suggested by Chris Mohr, a colleague on the soccer-coach-I mailing list. It is a simple exercise for younger players.

This simple but effective exercise emphasizes finishing on goal, and also efficiently incorporates complementary receiving skills. The exercise moves along so fast that although there is a "line" aspect to its structure, the wait per player is very short (in some cases almost not long enough, since it's a pretty vigorous exercise and they need to get back to the starting position in time for their next turn).

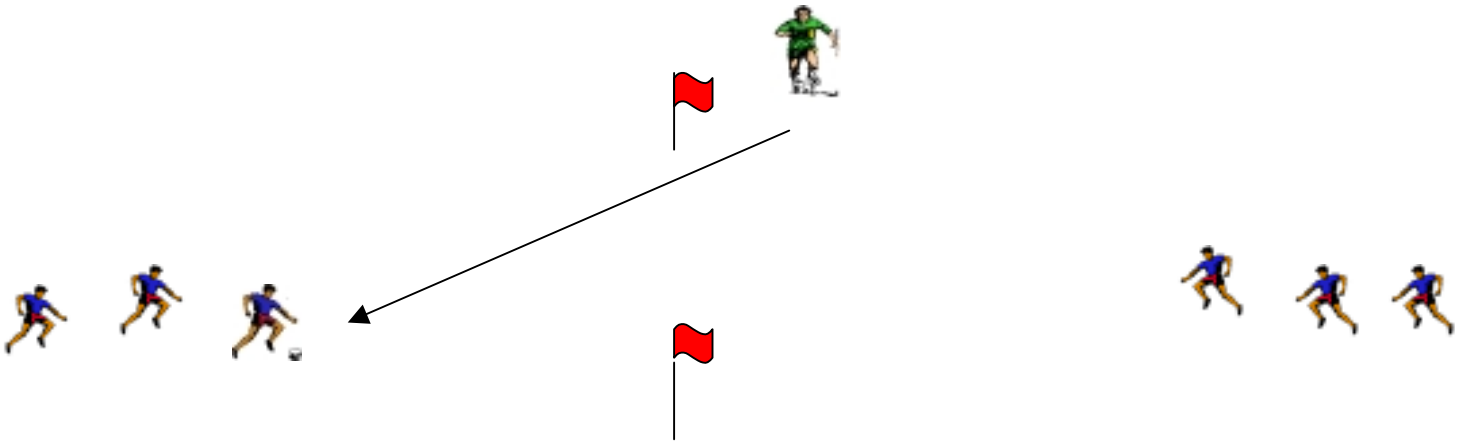
Set Up and Execution

For every six to eight players, you will need:

- a pair of bicycle flags to serve as the goal;
- a pile of extra balls;
- a coach (or knowledgeable parent) to supervise / feed the extra balls when necessary.

Two flags are placed about a goal-width apart. Two lines of 3-4 players each are formed, the start of each line roughly centered about 20 yards out from the flag "goal" (F = flag, X = player in line 1, Y = player in line 2, C = coach, o = ball(s).

For some groups, a couple of cones to mark about where players should start from may be useful aids, but they're not essential to the exercise.



The coach initially serves a rolling or bouncing ball toward the first player. The player has N# of touches to receive and get a shot off (ideally, $N = 2$ or even sometimes 1). Player "shot" will of course continue past the flags toward line 2.

The first player from the front of line 2 moves to receive the ball, two (or one) touches and returns a shot back through the goal, which is in turn received and shot by the next player in line.

If a shot or attempt at receiving it goes awkwardly astray, or is so poorly mis-hit so it doesn't effectively roll through the flags, the coach immediately serves another ball to the next player up to go after instead.

Coaching Points

- Use your receiving first touch to direct the ball to the side a bit in front of you to set up your shot, ideally on the very next touch.
- Use good striking and receiving technique, BUT equally or more important is to receive and get a shot off QUICKLY!
- Emphasize that in a game, fussy extra touches to try to set up a ball perfectly = lost opportunity to get the shot off before the defense recovers (and also allows the GK to better cut off the angle and get set).
- Set the plant foot a little past the ball so it is in the correct position beside the ball when the ball is struck.
- We want the shot on the ground or low if possible (must at least come in under the flags to count). Without enforcing this condition, players will fail to ingrain the technique habits necessary to avoid skying the ball over the crossbar. (Let 'em learn chip shots over the GK in another exercise, another day)

- It's better to try for accuracy and smooth firmness than to deliberately try to swing at the ball hard.
- After awhile, you can direct (if the receiving angle is suitable) that the shot must be with the non-dominant foot (usually the left)...so try to set up the receiving touch that way if possible!

It is better to keep this exercise simple and uncluttered, by NOT attempting to have the players switch lines...but rather have move quickly out of the way after their shot passes the flags, and move back to the end of their line in time for their next turn (which is coming up very quickly! That's in part because there's inherently no rebound to "follow" by the nature of this exercise (the ball passes through the flags)...and you want the action to flow immediately, without interruption, to the next player in the opposite line. This is a technical exercise to ingrain the proper instincts for receiving and shooting rather than a competitive small-sided game

Progression of Flag Shooting

Of course, it would also be a good (but very different and small sided take-on rather than technical shooting) exercise to have the player from line 1 continue through the flags to be a facing oncoming "defender" against the next player up from line 2 to try to receive and shoot against, and so on. Here's a variation I would use first, to get players used to executing good receiving touch and shot with composure under stress and pressure. You can assign one player, or better yet (if you're strong-winded) yourself to give chase closely behind each player in one of the lines, starting immediately upon their first touch. Use the pause while the opposite line has its momentary turn to get back in place to give a controlled amount of harassment to the next player in line.

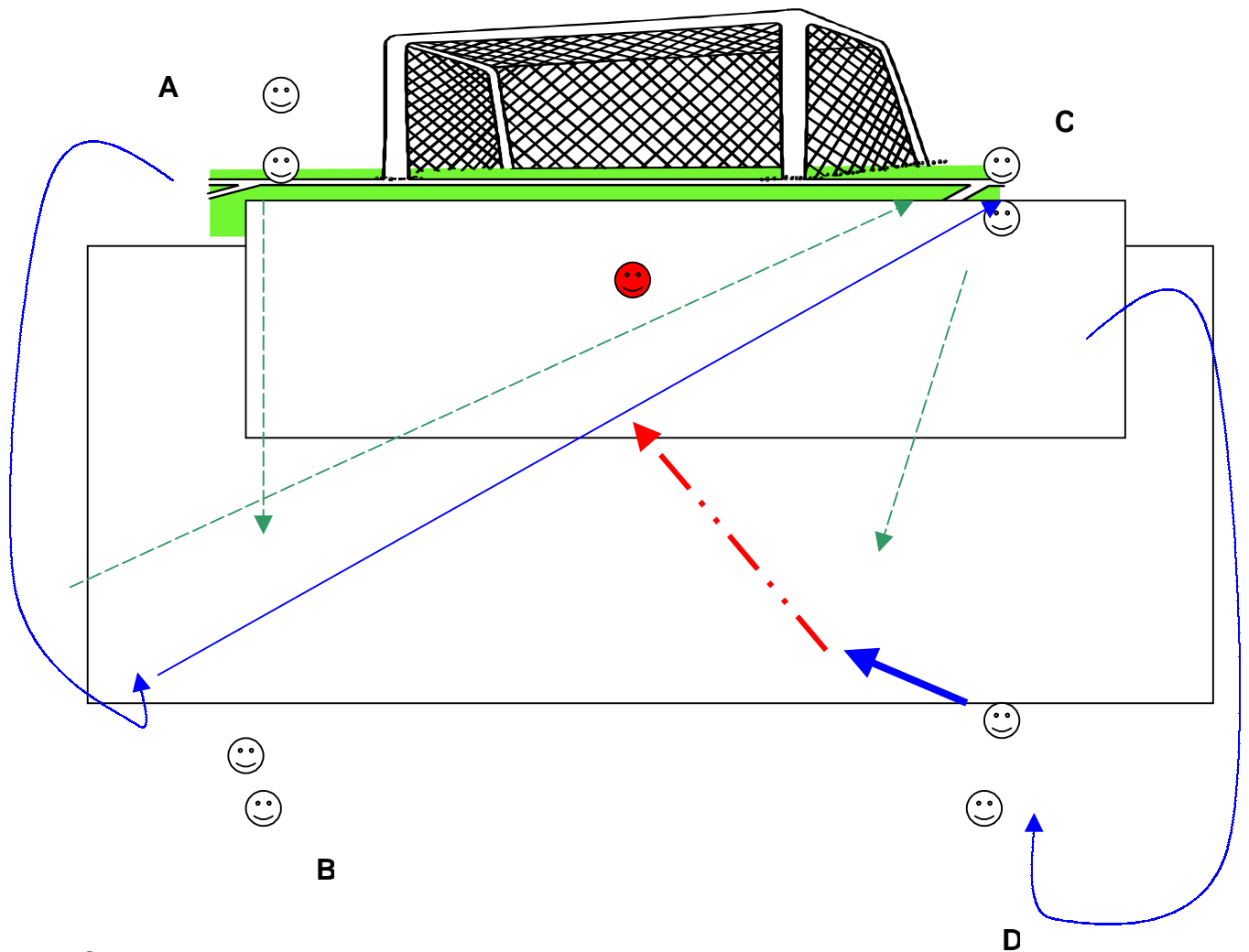
You can also do this slightly differently by having , each player have a ball, and when a player takes a shot, they must follow it to the goal to become GK for the opponent's shot. Then retrieve a ball and go back to your group.

Near Post – Far Post

This is a favorite drill of coaches because it incorporates passing, movement and setting up a shot. It can and is used at the travel level as a basic warm up drill.

Set the players up on the 18 yard box corners. The line at the far right goal line corner has a set of balls. The passing sequence is shown as A to B to C to D who shoots.

All players sprint after their pass and join the line where their pass has gone.



Coaching Points

1. Make sure they sprint after their pass
2. Two-Touch in the box.
3. This isn't target practice on the keeper. Don't let them get too close
4. Player B A and Player D sprint across the penalty box providing additional distraction for the keeper
5. Have them play the ball outside their footprints.
6. Ball and themselves should always be moving forward
7. Progress to one touch passing and shooting