

The Name Game II

The first exercise can be done with the young ones. It is a progression of the Name Game described in the Passing Chapter. At U9 you'll see that they have trouble with the thinking ahead part of this drill. They do not appear at first to be able to select a player, and trap the ball at the same time. Stick with it though. They'll get it after a few practices and it helps immensely if they can think even one step ahead.

Set the players up in a circle, the diameter of which is determined by how well they can pass. Start with one ball. Pass goes from player to player. The only criteria here is that the player **receiving** the pass must call out the name of the person she is going to pass to **before** she receives the ball. And then of course she must complete this pass. No fair passing to the person who passed to you.

What does this do? Well like all speed of play drills it simply gets them to start thinking one step ahead, which is an essential ingredient to increasing the speed of play. It also helps with their field vision and communication.

Force at least two touch on the ball. First touch to prepare, second touch to pass.

Progression of the Name Game II

You can then make a simple progression of this game. If the player fails to call the name out before she receives the pass, or mis-passes it or if the receiver does not handle it cleanly, they are "Out". Have them do a particular skill outside the circle to get back in.

What does this do? Well it adds the complexity of not only thinking a step ahead but of having to pick their head up to see who is still in the circle.

The Name Game III – More Complex

Spread the players evenly and randomly in a large grid. Coach serves the ball to any player to begin play.

As with the basic game, you must call (**VERY LOUDLY**) the name of the teammate you will pass to **BEFORE** you make your first touch on reception.

What is different is this game is random and you may not stand still. Many teams will automatically one-touch pass but this is not the point as much as vision in passing, making eye contact, and having an option in mind as you receive the ball. If they begin to try to one touch, add the rule that they **MUST** 3 touch minimum. This will not hurt their vision since the next receiver's name has

already been called aloud (you hope). This game (as with all great passing) is very much more mental than physical. Make sure they keep moving. A simple progression of this drill is to add more balls to the mix.

Progression of the Name Game III

Designate one defender (wear a different color) or two depending on the size of space to try to close the open spaces. Do not pressure the ball yet. Receiving with the first touch should be to move the ball to a safe angle away from the challenging defender.

As the players become proficient, add more defenders who only mark one-on-one (again with different colors). Now multiple options must be seen and they change more quickly. Ball pressure is also now added. Players must always keep looking to find their open space and moving teammates for the next pass. Name calling proves to them the proper order of events: **LOOK then RECEIVE with control** and **PASS with accuracy** and proper weight. **NOT receive, look, pass.**

Coaching Points:

- Accuracy when passing, move to the ball when receiving.
- Point out how a pass to someone too close makes it difficult for the receiver to do anything intelligent with the ball. (This will help the bunching problem.)
- Notice that sometimes the best pass is not in the direction of the goal.