

Weston AYSO Region 644



March 17, 2005

Happy St. Patrick's Day and welcome to the ninth edition of the AYSO Region 644 bi-weekly newsletter.

In this week's edition, Section 1 is designated as the AYSO Region 644 roundup which will highlight what has been going on in our region over the past two weeks and what is up-coming.

Section 2- - In "Evolution of Systems of Play, Part I" author John Bluem brings us back to the beginning of the game of soccer and gives some interesting insight as to how the game has evolved from a tactical, and often, a rules standpoint. If you are a student of the game of soccer you will love this article.

In Sections 3-6 we have four articles outlining different aspects and activities related to the game of youth soccer. In the Keepers Corner we discuss goalkeeper camps and what you should be looking for when it comes to choosing the correct one for your child. Section 4 is titled "Creating Standards For Yourself- Judging Beyond Wins and Losses". In this article we discuss how important it is to challenge within yourself and not focus on the wins and losses as the sole barometer of success. If you and your teams are able to raise your standards and disregard the standards of others, you will find you will be much more successful. Section 5 discusses a shooting activity that combines shooting, passing, receiving, timing runs, goalkeeping and a little bit of conditioning. Finally, Section 6, Playing the Ball in The Direction You Are Facing discussed getting into the habit of always looking first to play the ball in the direction you are facing and also getting your body into an early position so that you can attack with your first touch in the direction you are going. If you will do these two simple things, you will become a much better soccer player.

Section 7 is our Soccer News Articles From Around The Country. The first article from the Houston Chronicle "City Youths Reap Rewards of Teamwork" discusses how private-public partnerships can help enhance a new or fledgling youth recreational program through financial enhancements as well as help in securing field space. In the article "Chelsea Exposes Hypocrisy of Foes" from the International Herald Tribune, we explore the ruthless and somewhat guileless way that Chelsea demonstrates that every soccer player has his price and is beginning to destabilize the structure of international transfer trading. And finally the last article from the Cleveland Plain Dealer, "Youth Soccer Academy Planned In Lorain" announces the newest brainchild of international soccer goalie Brad Friedel, the country's first residential youth soccer academy.

Section 8- "Pumping Up To Keep Up" Children in middle school and younger turn to personal trainers to help them achieve in sports. Is this a healthy trend. You read and be the judge.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of the AYSO 644 Newsletter. Everything we do here in AYSO is ever evolving. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do not hesitate to email to me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com.



WESTON FURY SOCCER CLUB

A NIKE PREMIER SOCCER PROGRAM



JUST DO IT & COME HAVE FUN AT THE FURY SOCCER

The Fury Soccer Camp is about kids playing soccer. We will provide expert instruction from nationally certified instructors and then let the kids play. Our fun camp curriculum will provide multiple opportunities for the kids to play world cup, 1v1, 2v2, 4v4, girls vs. boys, and many street style soccer games.

MEET THE FURY CAMP STAFF

Dave Simeone

WFSC Technical Director
USSF National Staff & "A"
Licensed
Former US Women's Team Staff
Coach

Sandy Davison

WFSC Player Development
Director
ODP Region 3 Staff Coach
"A" Licensed Coach

Alan Foy

NSCAA Advanced National Coach
Former MLS Camps Director
Fury Coaching Staff

FURY CAMP PROGRAM INFORMATION

SCHEDULE & FEES

WEEK 1: MONDAY JULY 25TH – FRIDAY JULY 29TH

WEEK 2: MONDAY AUGUST 1ST – FRIDAY AUGUST 5TH

TIME: 8:30am -11:30am **Ages** 6 – 14 **Cost**

Sign up for both weeks and get a discount!! \$200 for two weeks

EVERY PLAYER RECEIVES

- Soccer Ball
- Camp T-Shirt
- Quality Instruction

LOCATION

**Weston Regional Park
Intersection of Saddle Club Road &
South Post Road**

EVERY PLAYER MUST BRING

Shinguards, Water & Sunscreen.

To register on line please visit www.westonsoccer.net and visit our Camp Page.
For more information, call Weston Fury Soccer Club at 954-389-3951

Section 1- AYSO 644 Roundup

Sunday March 13, 2005 was a very historic date in AYSO history here in South Florida. We held our first set of soccer friendlies in West Palm Beach with five AYSO regions and 34 teams taking part. It was a very successful day and emails continue to come in from all regions discussing how much fun it was. Each team played two games during the day, without playoffs or champions. The board of directors of AYSO Region 345 in West Palm Beach were very accommodating hosts and our hats go off to them. Next month we will be off to Boynton Beach for our next set of soccer friendlies. We will be announcing the date in our next bi-weekly newsletter set to be sent out on March 31, 2005.

Registration dates for the fall 2005 season have been set and as a subscriber to our bi-weekly newsletter, you are the first to receive word. Registrations are all at the Weston Regional Park at the soccer pavilion by soccer field #4. Dates and times are as follows: Saturday April 23, 2005 from 9am-12pm, Saturday May 7, 2005 from 9am-12pm, Wednesday May 11, 2005 from 6pm-8pm, Saturday May 14, 2005 from 9am-12pm, Tuesday May 17, 2005 from 6pm-8pm and Saturday May 21, 2005 from 9am-12pm. Other important dates are: First day of practices Monday August 29, 2005, Regular Season begins on Saturday September 24, 2005 and Picture Day is Sunday October 2, 2005.

Soccer Camp Comes To Weston!!!!!!! The Weston Fury Soccer Club is having a soccer camp this summer at the Weston Regional Park. You can view the information on page 2 of this newsletter and as subscribers to our newsletter you are the first to see this. Space is going to fill up fast so don't delay in signing up to what promises to be a couple of fun-filled weeks for your children.

AYSO Region 644 is proud to announce that in September 2005 we will be beginning our initial VIP program. AYSO VIP Program provides a quality soccer experience for children and adults whose physical or mental disabilities make it difficult to successfully participate on mainstream teams. VIP Teams may include those who are blind or visually impaired, amputees or conditions that impair mobility, mentally or emotionally challenged, autistic, downs syndrome and cerebral palsy. Kids with special needs are estimated to make up approximately 10% of the school-age population. Special schools and classrooms can isolate these children so the VIP Program has been structured to integrate the children into the rest of AYSO by using "buddies" to help the player both on and off the field. Our goals for every participating player are: 1) Have fun playing soccer, 2) Understand the fundamentals of the game, 3) Learn teamwork and fair play, 4) Increase positive self-esteem, 5) Become more physically fit, and 5) Meet and be comfortable with new people.

The VIP program helps more than just the players. Buddies and other volunteers increase their appreciation and understanding of individuals with special needs. They find their lives greatly enriched by their involvement with their new VIP friends. For parents thinking that they would never see their children playing a sport or making new friends, VIP gives them joy and hope. They are able to relax and enjoy watching their children having fun like other kids, perhaps for the first time.

It is our goal to make this program free of charge beginning in September, 2005. We will be looking for sponsors to offset the costs of the VIP program. Please contact our AYSO Region 644 hotline for further details and sponsorship opportunities. Our hotline number is 954-349-9786 and ask for Valeska.

Coaches, do you want to lock in your practice times and days? Avoid the long lines for picking your practice days at the coaches meetings and don't get locked out of coaching next year by not getting your volunteer application in on time by just emailing me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com . Please indicate your child's name, birthdate and the days and times you would like to schedule practices for. I will email back to you a confirmation of the time and field location, and you are all set. It is that easy.

Our region has grown to an amazing 2,475 players. But with this growth is a need for more volunteers. If you have the time or can make the time available and want to help the children in our community, please contact me at Strikersoccer1@aol.com and we will get you on the road to the most satisfying thing you can do in your life....volunteering.

Finally, we are always looking for sponsors. Our sponsors help defray the cost of running the program. Everyone in our region is a volunteer, however there are a lot of costs such as instructional books, uniforms, trophies, medals, city fees, etc. Please consider being a sponsor. Sponsorship packages can be sent to you if you are interested. It is great exposure for your business and the 3,000 children and families from AYSO and Weston Soccer Club that will see your banners, website listings, t-shirts, newsletter designations will greatly appreciate it.

Section 2- Evolution of Systems of Play, Part I

Evolution of Systems of Play, Part I

In the first of three articles, John Bluem reviews how systems of play have evolved from 1890 to the 1950 World Cup

By John Bluem

In this series of articles, we will trace the development and evolution of the game of soccer through the growth of systems of play. Today's modern game clearly can be traced back to the late 1800s.

Why study the development of systems of play? Perhaps NSCAA president and Academy staff coach Barry Gorman says it best: "If you don't know where you have been, how do you know where you are going?"

Well, here we go, back to the 1860s.

The dribbling game

On Oct. 26, 1863, representatives from a group of clubs met at the Freemason's Tavern in England to draw up the first official rules. The rules were accepted on Dec. 18, 1863.

Rule 6 stated that "when a player has kicked the ball, any one of the same side who is nearer to the opponent's goal line is out of play" (offside!). The lifeblood of the early games was the skill of dribbling. The forward pass was banned. Rule 6 was changed in 1866 to permit advanced players to receive a pass, providing there were at least three opponents between themselves and the goal line.

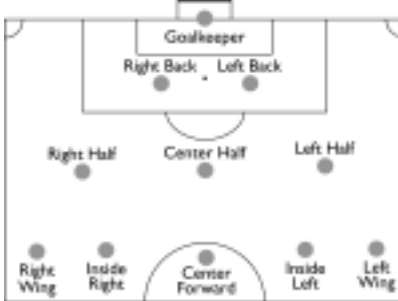
There still was little difference in the way the game was played. In the 1870s, soccer pundit C.W. Alcock wrote about "the grand and essential principle of backing up." This first recognized principle of play was understood to mean the following closely of a fellow player in case possession was lost. There was no mention of passing.

The first international match saw Scotland play England in Glasgow, where the English played a 1-2-7 and the Scots a 2-2-6. It was the Scots who realized the potential of the 1866 rule change and began to employ the short pass. Despite the large number of forwards in the game, the result was a 0-0 tie.

Players now had to think about their positional play due to the new weapon, the pass. By the 1883 Football Association Cup final, the English had developed the long passing game. Blackburn won the finale easily, using the long pass to change the point of attack from wing to wing.

By this time, new skills had been introduced to the game — the ability to hit a long ball and the skills necessary to receive, intercept or clear long passes. Heading, chest trapping, receiving on the run and volleying were skills now emphasized.

The pyramid system



By 1890 the favored system of play in England had evolved to the 2-3-5 formation. A pyramid shape was described, as one would draw lines from the two wings on either side of the field back to the goalkeeper. The key player was the center halfback, who was supposed to come forward on attack and also serve to organize the five-person defense (versus the five attackers of the opponents). Note that the system utilized only two defending backs.

The W-M formation

The offside law was amended in 1925. From then on, attackers needed only two opponents between themselves and the goal line at the moment the ball was played. If justification for the rule change was needed, it emerged from the matches themselves. The number of goals in the English First Division shot up 40 percent, from 1,192 in 1925 to 1,703 in 1926.

Defenses had to be strengthened, and Arsenal coach Herbert Chapman, who had taken over the London club in 1925, drew up a new tactical plan.

The most attacking damage in the game was being done by the center forward, so Chapman dropped the center half to the position of fullback to mark him. This position became known as the "stopper" and represented the birth of the modern man-to-man marker style. Defensive responsibilities were now reassigned, with the original fullbacks moving wide to mark the wingers and the wing halves assigned to look after the inside forwards.

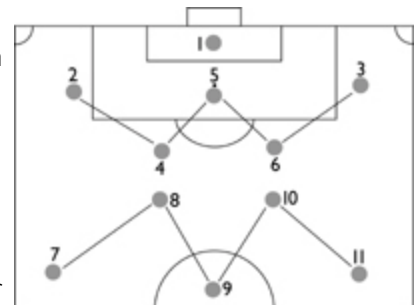
For the next 25 years, the game was dominated by the new center back or "stopper" and the pivot of the other backs to provide cover and balance. Basically, if the ball was with a winger, the outside back marked that player, the center back provided cover and the weak side back was concerned with balancing things.

Any system of play stands or falls with the men who put it into practice. Arsenal's W-M prevailed because of the genius of Chapman in finding the right players to fill the roles he had established. The key to the attacking success of Arsenal was in the playmaking abilities of one of the withdrawn inside forwards, Scotsman Alex James.

Chapman died in 1934, but between 1927 and 1938 the team that he built won the league championship five times and the FA Cup twice. By the late 1930s the W-M was the standard formation of every English club.

Outside of the English game, the attacking center half continued to flourish, particularly in Hungary, Austria and South America. In the first World Cup in 1930, both finalists, Argentina and Uruguay, utilized the 2-3-5 pyramid formation.

Artistry was the essence of the South American game, which often emphasized individual talent to decide games while collective tactics were minimized. Asked about the role of coaching in those days, Uruguayan left back Ernesto Mascheroni replied, "What are the coaches for? Only the player can solve the problems on the field. What does a player do when he meets



another who makes a fool of him? Ask the coach?"

The Uruguayans won the first Cup by the score of 4-2, and opinions were expressed that they were a better-organized team. With the score 3-2 and with Argentina doing all the attacking, Uruguay laid back and then used a quick counter to score on a breakaway. This type of play now would become a tactic for some teams.

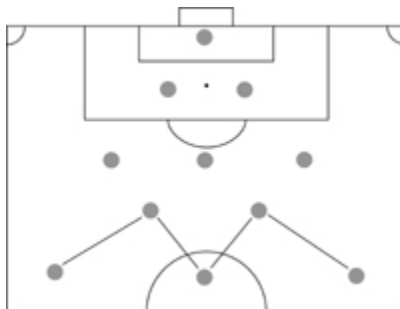
The Italian *metodo*

In Italy, the national team was coached by Vittorio Pozzo, an undistinguished player who as a coach had a great interest in tactics. For the 1934 Italian World Cup team, he devised a scheme based on the classic 2-3-5 as played by the Austrians, Czechs and Hungarians, the so-called Danubian school of soccer.

The Danubian school had emerged from the Scottish short-passing game brought to central Europe by a remarkable Englishman named Jimmy Hogan. His philosophy was that soccer was a game in which the ball belonged on the ground, and he used the phrase "keep it on the carpet" to describe how he wanted the ball to be passed.

The Danubian style, based on the 2-3-5, was faithful to Hogan's artistic approach to the game. By 1934, the Austrians had raised the style to its pinnacle under national coach Hugo Meisl. The Austrian "wunderteam" was considered the strongest in continental Europe.

Pozzo could not simply copy the Danubian model because he lacked the player to fill the vital playmaking center half role. This role was taken over by two players, the inside forwards, who were withdrawn into midfield. Thus Pozzo's *metodo*, as it was called, retained elements of the 2-3-5 (particularly the marking assignments under which the fullbacks guarded the penalty area and the wing halves marked the opposing wingers), but used the M formation for the forward line.



The *metodo* proved ideally suited to the Italian player. It stressed methodical defense and gave birth to the lightning counterattack, which was to be the basis of the Italian game for a long time. As one journalist put it, "The other team does all the attacking, but Italy wins the game."

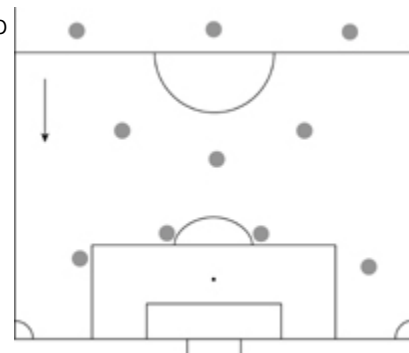
In the 1934 World Cup final, the *metodo* triumphed over the Danubian 2-3-5 of the Czechs. However the general feeling was that it was Italian strength, stamina and ruthlessness that actually determined the 2-1 outcome. The 1938 final resulted in a similar match-up, the Italian *metodo* against the Hungarian 2-3-5. It was an easy 4-2 win by the Italians, whose system proved itself capable of accommodating a new, faster, more athletic type of game.

The 2-3-5 was stagnating and the tactics of its defensive system were about to be exposed. As the world prepared for war, there were three systems of play throughout the world: The W-M, the standard formation in England; the Italian *metodo*, part W-M, part 2-3-5; and the 2-3-5, the Pyramid, still favored in South America, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria.

The "Swissbolt"

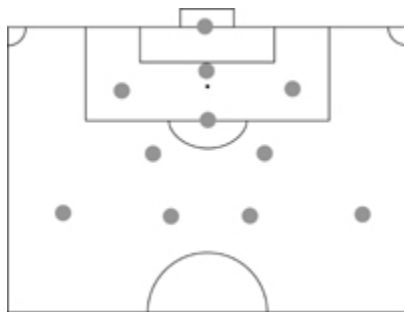
Within the various systems, soccer had become a game for specialist players, each with certain rather limited functions (i.e., wingers). There was one system that went against this trend, a system that at the time didn't receive the study it deserved. In part this was because it was developed in Switzerland, which was not considered a bastion of soccer thought, and in part because it was a difficult theory to put into practice.

Karl Rappan, a former Austrian international who from 1931 on coached club soccer in Switzerland, concocted the system. The aim of the "bolt" system was to create a team that would outnumber opponents in both attack and defense. On attack, the bolt had a 3-3-4 shape complete with an attacking center half, with all the players, including the three-man fullback line, moving well upfield.



When ball possession was lost, all 10 players retreated. The function of the four forwards was to harass the opponents and slow down the attack. The other six players raced deep into their own defensive half of the field. The attacking center half now became the center back, while the former center back retreated to an ultra-deep position behind everyone else. From this deep position, that player could move laterally across the field, covering the other three backs and functioning as the sliding "bolt" to lock out opposing forwards.

The bolt system required great fitness from its players. They had to be capable of high-speed running and have the ability to function both as attackers and defenders. The system was not widely utilized, but it did introduce the two ideas: a retreating defense and the lone fullback playing deep. Its attacking and defending shapes are shown in Diagrams 4 and 5.



Uruguay's 2-1 victory over Brazil in the 1950 World Cup final remains the most astonishing upset in World Cup history. The Brazilians produced an attack-oriented version of the W-M that they called the diagonal system to start the tournament and dismissed Mexico, 4-0. They then were held to a 2-2 tie by Switzerland, which frustrated them with their bolt system. Changing to a more traditional W-M, the Brazilians regrouped and defeated Yugoslavia, 2-0, Sweden, 7-1, and Spain, 6-1.

Meanwhile, the Uruguayans were plodding along with their version of the *metodo*. In the final the Uruguayans utilized a deep-lying fullback and tight man marking everywhere on the field. In reality, the team looked more like the 4-3-3 of the future than the *metodo*. Although the Uruguayans trailed 1-0 at halftime, their counterattacks exposed the fragility of the Brazilian defense to capture the Cup. The Uruguayans, an Italian journalist commented, had become the world champions of marking.



Editor's note: John Bluem is men's coach at Ohio State University and a member of the NSCAA National Academy staff. He is the men's college representative on the NSCAA Board of Directors.

Section 3- Keepers Corner

I would like to start off by writing about what a keeper should look for in choosing a camp. I believe that the first factor in this decision is the age of the keeper. If she is High School aged and has plans to play college soccer, there are two things to consider. First, does she have an idea of what College or University she would like to attend? If she does then it would be an excellent idea for her to attend the camp of that college's coach. This will give her an excellent opportunity to be seen by the head coach and the staff as well as give the keeper an opportunity to experience the staff's coaching style. It's one thing to hear about a coach's style but another thing to see it and experience it up close and personally. For example, if I was a junior in high school and I was interested in attending Marshall University (self-serving example but you get the idea) I would try to attend a Marshall University Soccer Camp. If they did not provide adequate keeper training, or were disorganized in the running of the camp, then I would have to give a great deal of thought to whether that was the type of organization I want to be associated with (of course there are a lot of other factors regarding the college selection but that is a totally different newsletter).

If you are selecting a camp without regard for college exposure and experience the most important factor to consider is the training you will receive at the camp. Pretty facilities and swimming pools and things like that are nice but they will not affect the training at all. Most of what it comes down to is who is doing the training and what exactly are they teaching. I have been to some big well known soccer camps where the keeper training

was completely inadequate because it was based on how much yelling the coaches can do and how hard they can have you work. The first day of camp, I have observed keepers diving over each other to show their ability to extend on dives when these keepers didn't know how to catch a ball properly. The uneducated observer might think it was pretty cool to see the keepers doing that but I believe it's borderline negligence. If the coaches don't coach within the capabilities of the campers then they are not doing their job. In choosing a camp, check out the keeper coaches. Are they qualified? Are they simply college players with no background in coaching who are following a schedule without regard for the level of the campers? Are they capable of coaching different players at different levels at the same time? Unfortunately, none of these are easy questions to answer. What makes a coach qualified? Certainly not coaching licenses since there are too many coaches running around with A licenses who don't know a damned thing about keepers (or about field players for that matter). I guess the best indicator is history. Has the keeper coach successfully coached quality keepers in the past? In using history as an indicator, there is always the qualifier that is used in investments "prior success does not guarantee future success" but it is probably the best determination. If at all possible, check out the keeper coaches in a training situation prior to signing up for a camp. I realize this is difficult to do but it's the best thing I can think of at the present time.

One of the difficulties with some of the big camps out there is that the "name" coach doesn't show up often or doesn't do any of the coaching. This does not mean it's a bad camp but rather it just means that you have to do more research to find out who will be doing the training and find out about them. If you contact a camp to find out who will be doing the training and the camp won't tell you then in my opinion; this speaks volumes about the camp.

There are a lot of arguments for and against isolated keeper camps vs. keeper camps connected to field player camps. Rather than getting into it here, I will simply say that you need to determine what is best for you. I have worked at both and think both types can be very effective if done properly.

Section 4- Creating Standards For Yourself- Judging Beyond Wins and Losses

Many teams, whether they be high school, college or club, have just recently ended their fall season and either have experienced some success or failure. The question now is, where do you go from here? If your team experienced success in the beginning, it is real easy to get complacent and to think that everything is great. If your team was unsuccessful, then it's easy to put your head down and think you are no good and things are hopeless. It's very important to realize that you are probably not as good as you think you are nor as bad as you think you are.

The problem with "rating yourself" based on your won-loss record or tournament results is that this means you are not looking at what you are capable of but rather simply comparing yourself to the level of others. What if you play against an extremely bad team and win easily. Does this mean you are a great team or player? Of course not but it is easy to delude yourself into thinking this way. Likewise, it is easy to think you are no good if you happened to play against a great team. If you beat a bad team, it is necessary to simply look at that game and ask yourself whether you played the best you were capable of playing or simply well enough to beat the opponent. If you only played good enough to beat the opponent (even if you beat them easily) then you are a failure. If you played the absolute best you are capable of playing and still lost the match then you are a success. Too often when a team loses a match, the coach uses the old cliché that it doesn't matter whether you win or lose, it's how to play the game. However, these same coaches tend to talk about the importance of getting the win after all of their wins. Isn't this hypocritical?

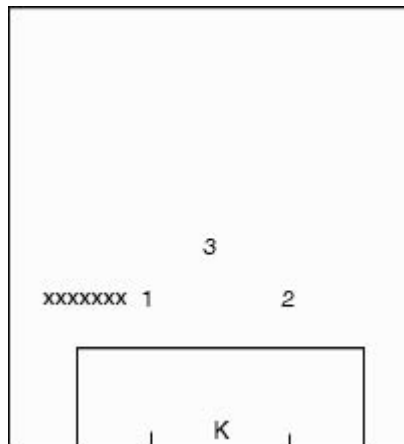
I have found that as I changed my priorities and started to concentrate more on helping teams to get better and less on winning that an interesting thing has happened. Not only did the individual players begin to get better at a quicker rate but also the teams I have been coaching winning percentages have gone up. At first this seemed weird that the less I emphasized winning, the more I won but after giving it more thought, it makes a great deal of sense. The less I compared myself to others the better I have done. The reason for this is quite simply that I have established much greater standards than do my "opposition". When I was concentrating on beating

opponents, I wasn't always pushing my players to a higher level because if they started at a higher level, there wasn't much need to improve since the primary objective was to win. My teams occasionally became stagnant because they were able to maintain a certain level of mediocrity and still be successful at the level they were playing. Once I de-emphasized winning and raised the level of expectations, the players weren't able to be complacent and allow themselves to stagnate because of the lower level of expectations of others. If you and your teams are able to raise your standards and disregard the standards of others, you will find you will be much more successful.

Section 5- Soccer Activities

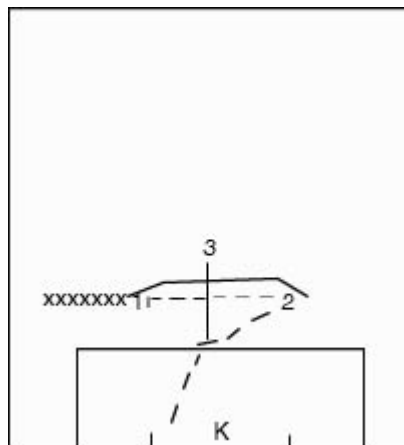
This is a simple shooting drill that includes shooting, passing, receiving, timing runs, goalkeeping and a little bit of conditioning.

Put three cones down in a position as is shown in the diagram below:



One player is at cone 2 and one is at cone 3. Everyone else is at cone 1 with balls. The first person in line passes across to the player at cone 2 and then sprints directly behind her. The player at cone 2 one touches the ball toward the 18 and then goes to cone 3. The person at cone three receives the ball and finishes it first time. Everything is done at full speed and one touch.

You can see the movement in the diagram below:



Dotted lines are the path of the ball and solid lines are the path of the players.

Some of the keys to this drill is to require a full speed sprint after each pass and shot. Also emphasize that the first pass has to be hit with pace. Do NOT let the first pass run around cone 3 to get to cone 2. This is one of things that slows the drill down.

As soon as player 2 touches the ball, the next person in line 1 should be ready to go. This is a very fast paced drill and after the player shoots, she must follow the shot and then quickly get to the back of the line.

If you have enough players (say 16 or so), you can turn this into a competition where there are two teams. The first team does this drill for 3 minutes while the other team retrieves balls. After 3 minutes, they switch roles. Whichever team scores the most goals in this time period wins. If, at any time, the shooting team doesn't have a ball, they get credit for a goal since the other team didn't get the balls back in time.

This is a fast paced drill that has a lot of positives and no negatives. Give it a try.

Section 6- Playing the Ball in the Direction You Are Facing

Today's subject will deal with playing the ball in the direction you are facing.

This is a very simple concept to explain but much more difficult to actually do for some reason. Players who pick up this way of playing will find that their game will improve significantly.

The basic idea behind playing the ball in the direction that you are facing is that it allows you to see exactly what the situation that you are playing the ball into. Plus, it is much easier to play the ball forward (meaning in the direction you are facing) rather than behind you or across your body.

By playing the ball in the direction you are facing, it will allow your team to maintain possession a great deal more and also to find better scoring opportunities.

What are the alternatives to playing the ball in the direction you are facing? The first one is to receive a ball and to try to turn and go in the other direction. An example of this would be a player checking back to the ball, receiving a good pass, and turning and going to goal. Unfortunately, many players don't know when to turn or how to turn and this results in them turning directly into the defender and losing possession of the ball. Instead of doing this, you can check back to the ball, receive the same pass, and now play the ball back on an angle and then spin off and receive the next pass going toward goal. By doing this, you have maintained possession; played the ball in the direction you are facing and still get to go to goal.

The key to playing the ball in the direction you are facing is that you and your teammates must support at proper angles. Since most players LOVE the opportunity to go to goal, playing this way would require the players to support with their bodies opened up so that they can attack the goal with their first touch and still play in the direction you are facing. This requires both getting your body into a proper position as well as receiving a proper pass hit to the correct foot

Teams that normally play in the direction they are facing are frequently the most successful teams although they may not be the most flashy (they rarely flick balls on or use back heels) but rather they play the simple ball to the correct person.

If you want to be more successful as a soccer player, get into the habit of always looking first to play the ball in the direction you are facing and also get into the habit of getting your body into an early position so that you can attack with your first touch in the direction you are going. If you will do these two simple things, you will become a much better soccer player.

Section 7- News From Around The Country

City youths reap rewards of teamwork

By JOHN P. LOPEZ

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While it might be true that you cannot fight city hall, there are ways that Houston's youth could see fresh chalk lines on neighborhood sports fields by bypassing red tape.

Some inner-city youth sports programs have more difficulty promoting athletics and scholarship opportunities than others. Sports fields often are leased yearly with no promises about tomorrow.

Some teams share time with middle and high schools, often running into scheduling problems. Some practice on vacant lots.

They need help. They need facilities, specifically soccer fields, where Houston lags in the number of fields it provides for its inner-city youth. According to a 2001 master-plan study, Houston currently provides only one-third of the number of soccer fields it should for residents living inside Beltway 8.

A bustling new program

While the city of Houston struggles to find sufficient park space for youth programs, some teams have turned to corporate sponsorships, much like professional sports organizations.

The East End Eagles, a youth football program inside the Beltway, did not exist last Christmas.

But last Saturday, thanks to creative planning and a little Luck, as in Houston Sports Authority chief executive officer Oliver Luck, the 150-member East End Eagles celebrated a season-ending banquet for their members, 92 percent of whom are Hispanic.

"It's a matter of putting your money where your mouth is," said Mark Medina, a Gulf War veteran and former Marine staff sergeant enlisted, so to speak, by Luck to run the start-up program that serves much of the Second Ward.

"Anyone can say, 'Oh, we're for the kids.' But unless there's positive action that goes with it, then it's just empty words and promises," Medina said.

Innovative funding

Tell it to city hall. The Eagles, however, are among the first programs inside the Beltway to take advantage of another aspect of inner-city youth sports where Houston lags far behind other cities — public-private partnerships.

The Dallas parks department's public-private relationship with youth programs reports a waiting list for organizations willing to pay up to \$50,000 for maintenance in return for park space.



"The problem isn't finding the kids who want to play. It's not finding adults who are willing to volunteer their time and are responsible enough to help. It's finding a place to practice and play."
-- Oliver Luck, Houston Sports Authority chief executive officer

Through the Sports Authority, Houston's East End Eagles were formed and earned a \$100,000 grant from the NFL Youth Fund. The group practices at Austin High School and plays games at Chavez High and is helping pay for 60-acre Tony Marron Park, much of which will be converted to football and soccer fields.

The group literally began without so much as a helmet. Thanks to the NFL Youth Fund, flyers were put up at area elementary schools, equipment was purchased, a board of directors was formed, uniforms were purchased and scholarships for less-privileged players were established.

Making it possible

Only two of the 150 members of the program had participated in organized football before joining the Eagles. Last Saturday, a banquet room at a hotel near Hobby Airport bustled with parents, players, cheerleaders and drill squad members proudly receiving awards as Luck congratulated them for making the program work.

"For a lot of people, it was a big shock when they heard how this all happened," Medina said. "You get the reaction, 'Are you serious? The NFL cares about us?'"

Not every inner-city organization, of course, can get \$100,000 from the NFL or funds from the Astros or Rockets, both of whom also have gone to great lengths developing programs. But for so much dragging of feet in the city regarding space for youth programs, corporate arm-twisting might prod leaders into action.

"When you look at these programs, the problem isn't finding the kids who want to play," Luck said. "It's not finding adults who are willing to volunteer their time and are responsible enough to help. It's finding a place to practice and play. This city just doesn't have what it needs."

Harris County Precinct Two Commissioner Sylvia Garcia referred to thinking outside the box. Like the NFL. And the East End Eagles.

Garcia — who grew up with five brothers, played sports as a youth and has long viewed sports programs as a means for underprivileged youth to pursue college opportunities — referred to a recent study on her precinct. At the top of the list of constituents' favorite sports were soccer and football.

She, too, viewed public-private partnerships as a mechanism the city and county should develop.

"We're painfully aware that there is a growing need for programs," Garcia said. "There's no way we can do everything the public demands of us, but we do need to partner more. We need to answer the needs of what our city has become."

"Pasadena used to be the Ku Klux Klan capital of Texas way back when. Now it's 60 percent Hispanic. We've got to change the way we think to reflect what our constituents want."

Starting with the city government, there should be more people thinking of ideas like Garcia's and Luck's — sharing parks between programs, building fields, converting a golf course such as Wortham Park into youth facilities and partnering more with corporations.

Money shouldn't be issue

Too many kids inside the Beltway crave the most basic of necessities — a place to play.

"No kid should not participate just because they don't have the money to live somewhere else," Medina said. "Once we got this program going, other kids saw us practicing, and they just started hanging around the field. I had kids on bikes come up and say, 'Can I play?'"

"I would ask them if they wanted to join the team and they'd say, 'I don't have the money.' I told them, 'That's not what I asked you.' Without the NFL Youth Fund, none of this would have happened. A lot of these kids would just be out getting in trouble. Every large corporation should come out and see these kids."

Chelsea exposes hypocrisy of foes

Rob Hughes International Herald Tribune

Tuesday, February 8, 2005

LONDON The ruthless and somewhat guileless way that Chelsea demonstrates that every soccer player has his price is beginning to destabilize the structure of international transfer trading.

Lawyers for the English Premier League are examining reports that Chelsea's chief executive, its team manager and its Israeli agent broke the rules by meeting and trying to induce Ashley Cole, the left back of London rival Arsenal, to triple his salary by breaking his contract.

The Chelsea hierarchy apparently met Cole and his agent in a London hotel in such a brazen manner that working out what was going on would barely fill five minutes of an Agatha Christie whodunit.

What Chelsea, using money extracted from Russia by its the club's owner Roman Abramovich, is accused of doing has been basic soccer fare for more than half a century.

Those with wealth, from whatever source, use it to buy, bribe or beguile players from whoever has them on contract - as Cole is to Arsenal until 2007.

This underhand transfer dealing has gone since well before the celebrated case of Alfredo di Stéfano. The Argentine did deals with both Barcelona and Real Madrid in the early 1950s. The political power of Madrid won that human tug of war.

Money and politics remain entwined in many of these deals. Real Madrid's president, Florentino Pérez, was voted into his office by the club's members after publicly declaring that he would buy Lujs Figo, who was at the time under contract to Barcelona.

Pérez did that. He later added Zinédine Zidane, Ronaldo, David Beckham and Michael Owen year by year. Other big clubs "owned" all of them, but Madrid's purse was the biggest in soccer. Or it was, until Abramovich bought Chelsea.

Arsenal, now crying to the league that its rights are being infringed by Chelsea's "illegal" attempts to entice Cole, is itself notorious in France and Spain for siphoning off teenage talent with a mixture of promises to the families, riches for the boys, and a holistic approach to training and education that, it boasts, is better than the environment at whatever club discovered and nurtured the youngster.

Di Stéfano, like Diego Maradona 30 years later, left Buenos Aires to play for big money in Europe.

Today, Europe's clubs scour almost every community in Brazil and indeed every part of the world, particularly those sources of cheap labor, Africa and Eastern Europe for ever younger players. The developing talents are lured by the money offered by western European clubs.

Yet Chelsea's alleged, and scarcely denied, presumptions to seek Cole from Arsenal, and perhaps midfielder Steven Gerrard soon from Liverpool, endanger the system of trading human beings.

It is the law of the soccer jungle, no different to head-hunting in business except that sport pretends to be about something more than simple asset stripping.

Where Chelsea - known as Chelski since Abramovich bought the club in July 2003 - break the mold is that debt is of no consequence.

Peter Kenyon, the chief executive enticed to break his own contract with Manchester United to join Chelsea, has just announced that the club lost £87.7 million, or \$163 million, in the financial year to mid-2004.

Chelsea has bought out its merchandising deal with the English company Umbro, to sign a more lucrative deal with Adidas. It is negotiating for a new sponsor, probably a mobile phone company, to replace Emirates, the airline emblazoned on Chelsea's colors.

As long as Abramovich has the ambition and money to pump into a hole as black as oil, even players at clubs which ruled the roost before Chelsea are envious.

Manchester United and Arsenal had dominated the Premier League. But United's major shareholders are Irish and American - and right now Malcolm Glazer, the U.S. tycoon, is attempting a renewed £800 million bid to control United.

Arsenal is building a £357 million stadium named "Emirates Stadium" after the sponsor that has found a new home. And while the stadium grows more impressive by the month, it is leaving Arsenal short of cash and some star players grow restless about salaries. Thierry Henry, Sol Campbell and Patrick Vieira - whose form has been depressed from this season after his wished for defection to Real Madrid fell through in the summer - are on around £70,000 per week.

Edu, the Brazilian, and Cole received less than half that. Arsène Wenger, the team manager, admitted on Saturday that negotiations to keep players were "harsh, very harsh." This manager, whose forte is team spirit, is trying to balance the bottom line and the desire to stay competitive.

He knows it is "illogical" for an opposing club to shrug off an £87 million loss and still covet other team's stars. Wenger talks to Cole about allegiance, to a club which recruited him at nine years of age.

But if he looks for sympathy abroad he will find little in his homeland. Some five years ago Jean Fournet-Fayard, one of France's leading soccer administrators, raged at a convention of UEFA, the European soccer ruling body, that "the English are ruining football."

By English, he meant Arsenal. Wenger used his knowledge of French youth potential, and exploited French labor laws to take gifted youngsters to Arsenal.

Now Arsenal complains that its contracts are being usurped by Chelsea. The biter is bit.

Asked last week about its strategy to counteract such abuses, a spokesman for FIFA, the governing body of world soccer, replied that he had nothing to say about individual players' or clubs contractual disputes.

The authorities need to think of something because the acrimony surrounding this alleged poaching might make the European Union challenge, again, the restrictions surrounding the movement of soccer players between employers. When it thrashed out the business of transfer fees, following the European Court ruling in the Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman case 10 years ago, the EU felt that buying and selling of player contracts was against the spirit of free movement of employees within the Community.

It was persuaded by FIFA and UEFA that clubs small and large depended on fees as compensation for the development of players. That is why, if Chelsea wants to hire Cole, it will have to pay Arsenal upwards of £22 million.

There is talk of deducting league points from Chelsea, but that would set a dangerous precedent in a sport in which Arsenal, Manchester United, and all who have the power and the glamour, buy what they want, when they want, and always have done.

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Youth soccer academy planned in Lorain

Tuesday, February 08, 2005

Molly Kavanaugh

Plain Dealer Reporter

Lorain

-- International soccer star Brad Friedel plans to open what he called the country's first residential youth soccer academy on Ohio 58.

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It will be on 22 acres now used for the Emerald Valley Golf Course. The academy will train 50 high school teens from around the world to become professional athletes.

The students, ages 13 to 18, will compete against teams from South Africa, Chile and elsewhere. They will attend a private school or Marion Steele High School in Amherst and train before and after classes.

"There are youth academies across the world but none in the United States," said Friedel, a Bay Village native, at a news conference Monday in Cleveland.

Unlike schools where athletes pay their way into a program, Friedel's non-profit Premier Soccer Academies will select students and foot the bill, estimated at \$15,000 to \$20,000 per student annually. The center is slated to open in fall 2006.

Ohio residents will be able to attend clinics and camps free of charge.

The 33-year-old goalie, who plays in England and talks with a bit of a British accent, said soccer enthusiasts tried to persuade him to build the academy in Florida, California, even Mexico or Costa Rica.

"I've said no to all of them. I'm from here," said Friedel, who sponsors summer soccer camps in Northeast Ohio and initially considered building the academy in Avon. The academy, with indoor and outdoor fields, gyms, lecture rooms and comfortable living space, will cost \$6 million to build.

The staff will include soccer greats from all over the world and eventually will employ about 100 people.

Major sponsors include Adidas, Underarmor and Sunrise Coffee Co., and a fund-raising campaign is under way. Close to \$100,000 was pledged Monday, spokesman Doug Bennis said.

The first benefit will be a star-studded match of Friedel and other world-class soccer players against the Columbus Crew, June 17 at Bay High School, Friedel's alma mater.

For Lorain, which is struggling to replace steel and factory jobs, Friedel's announcement is doubly welcome.

"This will add a new image to the city of Lorain," said Craig Miller, safety-service director. The academy also will attract tourist dollars, stirring business for restaurants, entertainment, shopping and services, he said.

The property will have to be rezoned, but Miller expects City Council support.

Friedel, who is married and has a daughter, has just bought a house in Bay Village and plans to spend about half of his time in the area. He also has homes in California and England.

Friedel's father, Len Friedel, who lives in Avon Lake, said he took the family to England when his son was about 11 years old, and they attended a soccer match at London's Wembley Stadium.

"He experienced the thrill of soccer at that level and said, 'I'd like to do that.' "

Section 8- Pumping Up To Keep Up

Pumping up to keep up

Children in middle school and younger turn to personal trainers to help them achieve in sports.

By Scott Puryear

News-Leader

Shortly after middle school classes have dismissed for the day, the HealthTracks Sports Training Center in Springfield is bustling with teens working up a sweat.

Some lift weights. Others run agility drills or toss medicine balls.

All are here in search of that extra edge that might help them make their middle school or high school sports team and, perhaps, someday land a college scholarship. They are among middle school age — and younger — kids who are going beyond the traditional P.E. classes and seeking more personalized attention.

Thirteen-year-old Taylor McQueary has come to HealthTracks to add muscle to his 6-foot, 200-pound frame before he plays football at Kickapoo High School next season.

"I'm hoping to get stronger ... a lot stronger," he says.

Katie Inmon, 13, is here to build upper-body strength to help her perform stunts as a cheerleader and improve her speed for track on her Immaculate Conception team. She plans to stay with the program "at least into high school."

Emily Ortega, 11, wants to get faster so she can become one of the top players on her soccer team.

"This is my fourth week, and I've noticed I'm getting a lot quicker," Emily said. "I can just feel it."

HealthTracks now has some 275 to 300 middle school athletes using their facility for training that ranges from agility drills to strength training to simply learning how to run with the proper form.

That's quite an increase from a program that had roughly a third of that number just five years ago, and started in 1990 with 20 young athletes.

"Never in my wildest dreams would I have anticipated it would have grown as much as it has," said Jim Raynor, former director of HealthTracks and now a personal trainer who works with selected athletes on a contract basis.

Another local fitness group, Cross Training Inc., is expanding its business to include speed and agility camps for kids at The Courts, the basketball facility in northeast Springfield.

"We fully expect to get to the point at The Courts where we have 100 to 200 kids in that program in the next six months or so," said Kirk Bouse, who will run the Elite Sports Training camps and lessons.

Why do it?

Most middle school programs still offer some form of fitness training, whether it's before- or after-school workouts or as part of physical education classes.

But for some kids and their parents, working out with 30 to 40 athletes with one coach supervising in a weight room, or simply running sprints in the gym, isn't the preferred route to a breakout over others in their level of fitness.

"Every parent is looking for the advantage for their kids," said Bob McBride, owner of The Courts and father of two young athletes who've had personalized training.

"In the middle school and high school programs, kids are getting cut as they scale down to one team, and then only the elite players make it. And I think every parent wants their kid to be a part of the high school experience."

Said Springfield parent Sheila Ortega: "When we grew up, nobody did this stuff till high school. Now, if you don't have your kid in soccer by kindergarten, something is wrong with you. Parents all want their kids to do great things."

Which leads many of them to opt for their kids to work out under the watchful eye of a trainer who usually prescribes a specific regimen based on an evaluation.

"Because most of them are involved in athletics, the initial evaluation involves more performance-based testing like vertical jump, speed testing and a general strength test," said Brandon Ezzell, exercise science coordinator with HealthTracks. "From there, we'll set up a program for them more or less based on foundation principles."

And if they are training for a particular sport, the trainer can adjust the routine accordingly.

Eric McIntyre, a 13-year-old football player at Cherokee Middle School, participates in the school's fitness programs but wanted that something extra.

"I wanted to get stronger and faster, and get ready for football," he said. He has attended two 10-week sessions at HealthTracks.

"I could tell a difference in my body, in my muscles and everything," McIntyre said.

McIntyre received one-on-one training outside of the school, a key reason his mother, Kathy, also has enrolled sixth-grade daughter Rachel in the program.

"As opposed to going to the YMCA and letting them roam free, it's a program that's somewhat supervised," Kathy McIntyre said. "They make sure the kids are doing what they're supposed to be doing."

The athletes must be willing to work. This isn't play time.

"These kids know if they want to compete when they get older ... it takes that little edge," Bouse said. "The speed and agility work can make all the difference in the world."

"If I see a kid for 12 weeks and teach him the basic stuff, we can increase a 12-year-old boy's vertical jump two to five inches, and improve his 40-yard dash time by half a second. That's the difference between giving up a layup, or getting over there and stopping it."

Potential drawbacks

Finding a trainer willing to work with a teen or pre-teen isn't as difficult as it was five years ago.

And that might be a problem.

"It's all because the market is demanding it now," says Brian Grasso, a nationally recognized youth fitness trainer. "So personal trainers at every Joe Schmo fitness club in the country are working with kids, and few of them know how to do it properly."

"Any trainer can take on youth clients, and it's just not right."

Grasso says for parents to make sure the trainer or facility they are about to entrust with their kids is properly certified through a reputable national organization.

What might work for an 18-year-old might damage a young teen's still developing body — especially when weight-lifting is involved.

"The No. 1 mistake young boys get into is they get into a weight room, nobody shows them how to do it properly and what do they do? They want to see how much they can lift," Bouse said. "That's when you can rip tendons, ligaments ... it can really do some damage."

Of course, there is a cost factor that might prohibit some from seeking specialized training.

HealthTracks, for example, charges clients a \$200 fee for 30 one-hour sessions, spread out over 10 weeks (programs are available for low-income families).

Grasso's Chicago-based Sports Academy Northwest charges a flat fee of \$1,000 per year or \$250 per three months, "and we've got some 200 to 300 (athletes) in here a week," he said.

Bouse receives \$99 per month for twice-weekly meetings in a group session of five to 10 kids, or \$40 per hour for one-on-one work.

With every check written by a parent comes expectations of results — but no promises.

"There are absolutely no guarantees," Raynor said. "There are too many variables. We can only build on what God-given ability is there. We're not going to create an athlete, but can we improve them? Yes."

Accepted by coaches

Where once acceptance of outside programs by school coaches was harder to come by — and perceived as a commentary on their ability to train — many coaches now recommend it to their athletes.

Said Kickapoo High School football coach Kurt Thompson: "It bothers me sometimes that parents have to pay for services we should and could be providing, but it's a matter of facilities and manpower. But really, any work they're putting in to try to better themselves as athletes has got to be good."

When to begin

The right age to begin specialized training depends on the child and the program.

Bouse, for example, will accept students for speed and agility camps as young as 8, where the focus is on drills to enhance balance and footwork rather than to build muscles through weight lifting.

"I have parents that have come to me and say, 'I have a six-year-old and we think he or she is going to be really good ... is there stuff we can do?' " Bouse said.

"I tell them they need to wait a couple of years and don't need to go overboard right now. Research shows it's just healthy for a young, young child to do that."

But for strength training with weights, most fitness trainers will base an athlete's readiness on the level of physical maturity, said Dr. Brian Mahaffey, director of sports medicine for SMS.

"With weight training and those things, there's really not a set age that we talk about," Mahaffey said. "When they start showing signs of maturing, when their voice starts to deepen, they start getting body hair, those types of things for both males and females ... that's when you can start seeing improvements not only with muscle mass, but the ability of muscle to train and get stronger."

Some parents try to get their young athletes enrolled in strength programs as early as 9 or 10 years old but are often told to come back later.

And for those who want to get an athletic jump on their elementary school competitors?

"Our advice to kids in that age bracket: Go out and play," said Dr. Bernard Griesemer, director of HealthTracks and a Springfield pediatrician. "Get off the couch, turn off the TV, put away the video games and just go out and play."