

YOUTH U10–U14

Decision training

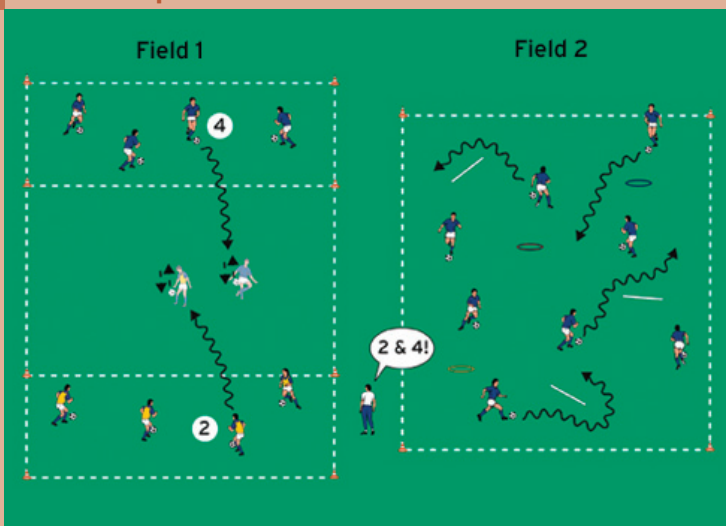
A sample practice session for ages U10–U14

by Stefan Böger, head coach, German U16 boys' national team

One of the marks of a good soccer player is the ability to instantly make the right decision in any game situation. “Decision training” is an integral part of the exercises in this article, alongside a number of technical/tactical coaching concepts. In each of the games and exercises that make up this session, players have to make decisions, and all of these decision situations involve weighing one risk against another. As a result, not only is this session a lot of fun for players, it also gives the coach valuable insight into his players' self-confidence and willingness to take risks.

WARM-UP

Warm-up 1: Face-off or forfeit 1



Setup

- Field 1: Mark out a field divided into three zones.
- Field 2: Scatter a number of poles and rings across a field.
- Divide players into two groups and assign one group to each of the fields.

Sequence: Field 1

- Divide players into two teams and assign one to each end zone.
- Number the players on each team. Each player has a ball.
- Players start out dribbling in their end zones.
- The coach calls out the numbers of two players, one from each team. The two players dribble into the center zone and face off for a juggling contest.
- The first player to juggle the ball 20 times in a row without dropping it scores 20 points for his team.
- However, either player can choose to forfeit the juggling contest by sitting on his ball. In that case, the other team scores one point.
- Which team ends up with more points?

Sequence: Field 2

- Players dribble around the field and try to use the various pieces of equipment as creatively as possible (e.g. hopping from ring to ring, chipping the ball over the poles, etc.).

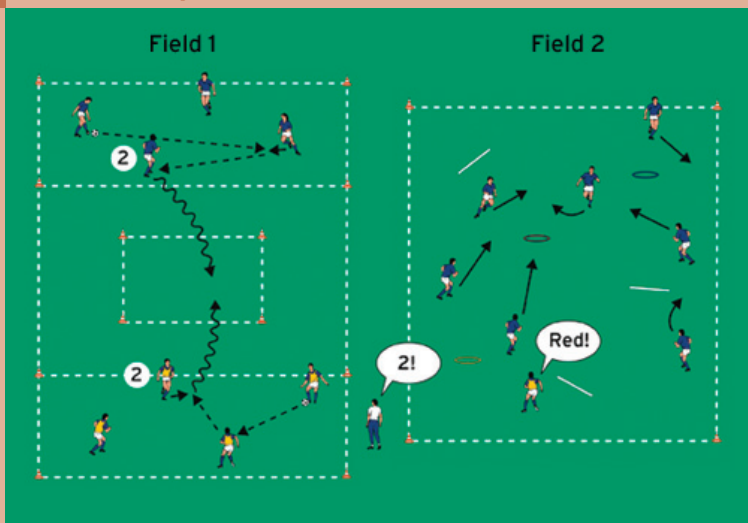
Tips and corrections

- Players need to decide: Am I feeling confident about the juggling contest, or should I just give the other team a point?
- When calling players, be sure the pairs are not always evenly matched.

Decision training

WARM-UP

Warm-up 2: Face-off or forfeit 2



Setup

- Groups and basic setup are the same as above.
- In Field 1, there is a small box in the middle of the center zone.

Sequence: Field 1

- Basic sequence is the same as above, except that now players

start out passing to each other (in any order).

- As above, the coach calls two players, who dribble into the center zone.
- They face off inside the box and try to knock each other's balls out.
- The winner of the contest scores two points for his team.
- As above, either player can choose to forfeit the contest, in which case the other team scores one point.

Sequence: Field 2

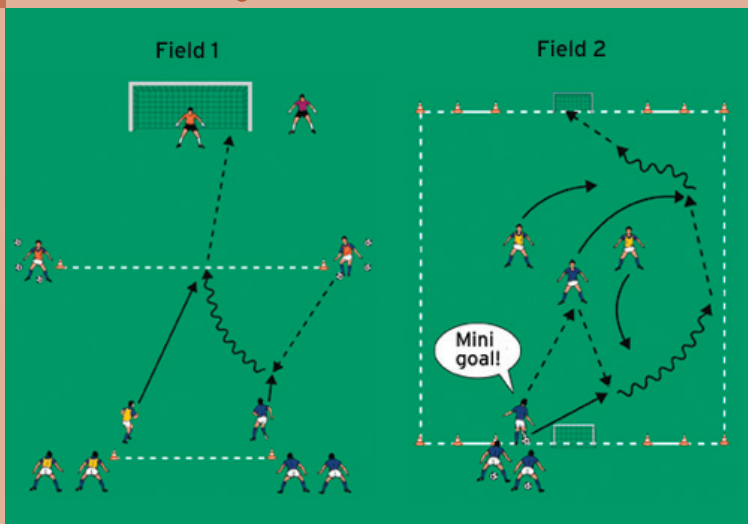
- Designate one player to be the "tagger" for 30 seconds.
- The rest of the players spread out across the field (without soccer balls).
- The tagger chooses one ring to be "base" for the other players, then starts the game.
- The tagger scores one point for each player he tags.
- After 30 seconds, choose a new tagger and start the next round.

Tips and variations

- On Field 1, try making the contest harder: Players have to do fakes on the way to the box, are limited to two touches, etc.
- The contest on Field 1 should never go on longer than 20 seconds.
- To make the contest more interesting, add a penalty exercise for the losing team.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Main activity 1: Quick decisions 1



Setup

- Field 1: Mark out a shooting line and a starting line in front of a standard goal with goalkeeper.
- Field 2: Mark out a field with one mini goal on one endline and two goal lines on the other.
- Divide players into two groups and assign one to each field.

Sequence: Field 1

- Two neutral players stand at the ends of the shooting line, each with several soccer balls. The remaining players line up at the ends of the starting line. Teams take turns playing offense and defense.
- One of the neutral players passes to the first attacker.
- The attacker can either play a wall pass with the neutral player and then finish without interference (one point if successful) or play 1 v. 1 against the defender to finish (two points).
- On the next round, the other neutral player passes to the first player from the other team.

Sequence: Field 2

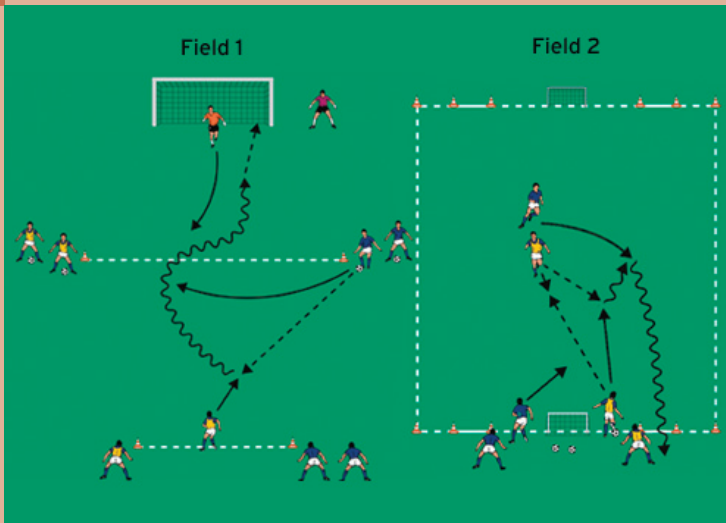
- Two teams take turns playing offense and defense.
- One attacker and two defenders take the field. The second attacker starts the game with a pass to his teammate from the endline.
- As he plays the pass, he also announces which goal he and his teammate will attack: either the mini goal (two points if successful) or the goal lines (one point).

Tips and corrections

- On Field 1, attackers also have to decide whether to shoot from the shooting line or play 1 v. 1 against the goalkeeper to score.
- Neutral players rotate every two rounds.

MAIN ACTIVITY

Main session 2: Quick decisions 2



Setup

- Setup and teams are the same as above.

Sequence: Field 1

- One defender (with soccer balls) and one attacker (without) stand at the ends of the shooting line.

- The defender passes to the first attacker at the starting line.
- The attacker can drop the ball directly back to the defender, who then sets him up to finish on the goal (one point if successful). Or he can try to dribble past the defender and across the shooting line, then play 1 v. 1 against the keeper to score (two points).
- Which team ends up with more points?

Sequence: Field 2

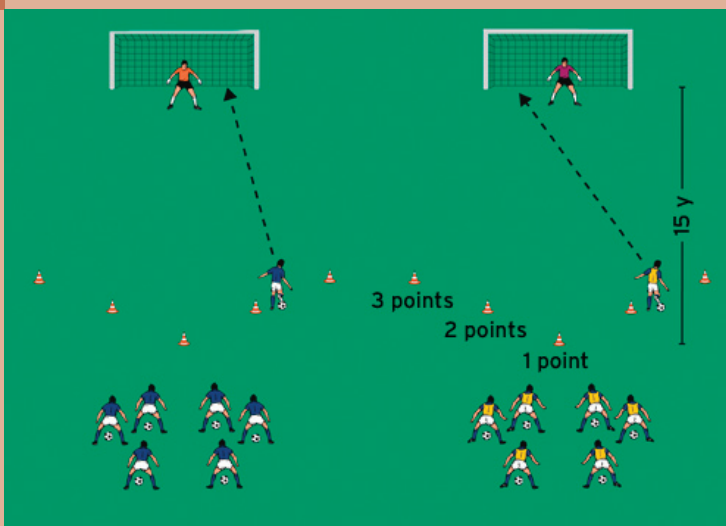
- One attacker and one defender take the field.
- The rest of the players line up on the endline beside the mini goal.
- The first attacker passes to his teammate on the field, who can either play 1 v. 1 to score on any goal (two points) or drop the ball back. In the second case, the passer and a second defender move onto the field, and the attackers play 2 v. 2 to score (one point).
- If the defenders win the ball, they can counterattack on any goal, scoring one point on the goal lines or two on the mini goal.

Tips and corrections

- Teams switch roles after each the completion of each round.
- On Field 2, the 1 v. 1s and 2 v. 2s should never go on longer than 30 seconds.
- If the ball goes out, the round ends and the next set of players starts a new round.

CONCLUSION

6 v. 6



Setup

- Set up two standard goals with goalkeepers side by side.
- Mark out six shooting positions in front of each goal. Assign points to each position according to difficulty.
- Divide players into two teams and assign one to each goal.

Sequence

- The first two players shoot at the same time.
- Before shooting, they choose their position, thereby choosing the number of points they stand to score for the team.
- Which team ends up with more points?

Variations

- If one shooter scores more than other, his team scores a bonus point.
- Shots played with the weak foot count double.
- Players volley at the goal.
- Players juggle the ball three times, then volley at the goal.

Tips and corrections

- After each round, both teams reshuffle their lineups so players have a chance to shoot against different opponents. The team in the lead announces its lineup first.
- Shooters should clearly announce their shooting positions before setting up their shots; no changes are allowed afterward.