

World Cup

Age Group: U10 & up

Focus of Drill: Finishing

Here is one of the simplest and most commonly played games by coaches of youth teams. However, if the coach and the players don't understand what they can get from this game, it doesn't accomplish a whole lot.

The four most commonly heard questions at training sessions for young teams are:

1. Can we get a drink?
2. Is practice almost over?
3. Can we scrimmage?
4. Can we play World Cup?

Today's subject will deal with #4 "Can we play World Cup?"

For those of you who don't know what World Cup is, it's a game where a group of players will break off into a bunch of teams of two players each. So, if you have a team of 15 players, you would have 7 teams of 2 players each plus one keeper. The server (usually the coach) plays a ball into the middle of the teams and each team tries to get the ball and score on the one goal (with a keeper in it).

There are a lot of variations to this game. Some people play it where each team picks a country that they represent and each time they score a goal, the team who scored must call out the name of the country they represent (so if the Brazilian team scores, they would yell "Brazil"). This could be a game where the first team to score steps off the field and each subsequent team to score steps off. The last team on the field loses. Or, you could do it where the first team to score 5 goals wins (remember, for each ball that is out there it's basically 2 v 12 plus a keeper because whichever team has the ball, all of the others are trying to stop them from scoring). Other variations would be to allow more than one ball on the field at a time. Or, you could have the balls served in from different angles (for example, have the ball served in like a corner kick).

Most kids have a blast playing this but the problem is, they usually don't see how this game relates to the game of soccer.

The reason I chose this game to write about was the tendency I have seen of players to simply be afraid to shoot the ball. They have an opportunity to hit a shot but instead are looking for the perfect shot and as a result, they ended up not getting any shot hit at all. Playing World Cup encourages players to look to take a chance and hit a shot because the likelihood of getting a perfect shot in that type of game is very slim so kids are willing to hit a shot the first opportunity they get. The willingness to hit a shot is one of the qualities that separates the true goal scorer from the rest so playing games that encourage this trait will help to develop goal scorers. However, most kids don't see this game as working on developing the habits of a true goal scorer. The best thing to do is let kids play World Cup (or other games like this) and afterwards ask them if they hit any shots in these games that they wouldn't hit in a real soccer game. Almost every one of them will

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say they did. Emphasize that there are very few "bad" shots in soccer and the only way to score goals is to take shots. Then, have them go out and play it again. Follow this up with a regular scrimmage and encourage them to take as many shots as they can. Use games like World Cup to develop the goal scorers mentality. Then do everything you can to take this attitude that is developed in these training games and transfer it onto full sided games.