

Early Years Gaelic Football Games, Tips & Clips



Donaghmore GFC

For
Coaches
Of Nursery-
Go-Games
Groups



- Over 40 Games
- Coaching Cues/Tips
- Questions
- Progressions

QR Links to
Early Years
Video Clips

A Word from the Author



A chara,

Firstly, thank you so much for showing a willingness to add to your 'Coaching Toolkit'. I hope that you find a few nuggets within this resource which will enhance your young members' experience in Gaelic Games.

Is mise Michael Gerard Doherty and I am a proud member of Pádraig Sáirséil C.L.G in West Belfast. I have been coaching juvenile teams for over 24 years and held the role of Sports Co-ordinator as a primary school teacher of 15 years in Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh. I have been very privileged to have learnt alongside some incredible people, not least, the young players who I have had the pleasure of coaching.

This resource is based on games that players have really enjoyed over the years and that helped support their learning journey. The accompanying infographics are full of tips and suggestions for creating an environment based on inclusiveness where all members can thrive.

The overall aim is to provide opportunities for as many young people as possible to fall in love with Gaelic Games, to feel a sense of belonging and to believe in themselves.

CREID

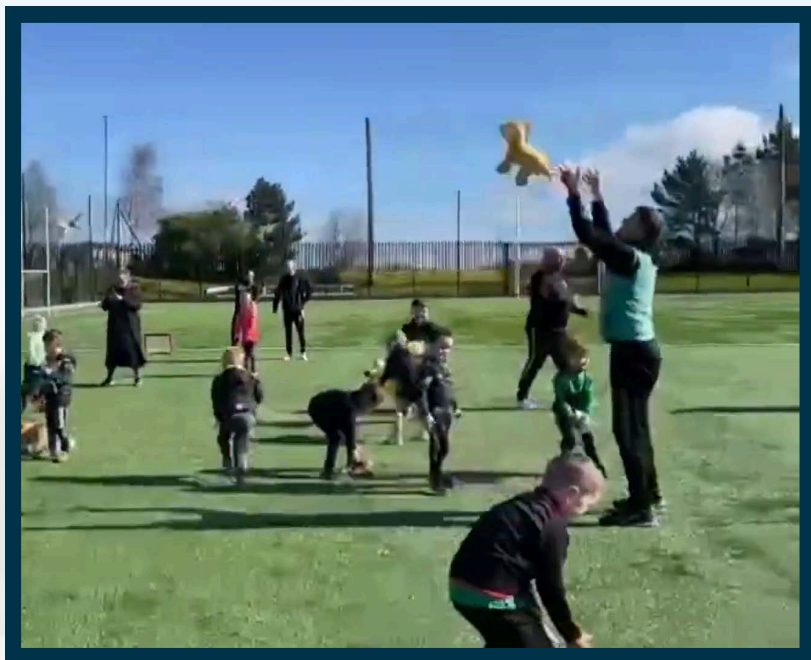
M.G. Doherty

Ready Teddy Go...FMS	Blast Off...Scan, DEF, KP, HP
Musical Movements...FMS	Passing Through Traffic...Scan, KP, HP
Mission Gaelic Games...COMM, MTS	Mega Net...Scan, ATT
Xs & Os...MTS	Skill Evolution: Pick-Up...PU
<i>Piece of Cake Coaching...Infographic</i>	Musical Dips...PU
Duck Duck Goose...FMS, Bounce	Zombie Pick-Ups...Scan, PU, EVS
Collect Sonic's Rings...FMS, HP, KP	Pick-Up Champions...PU, TP, DEF, EVS
The Very Hungry Caterpillar...MTS, TP	<i>Background Team Bingo...Infographic</i>
The Hoop Tunnel...MTS, EVS	Mirror Mirror on the Ball...Scan, DEF
<i>1st Class Background Team...Infographic</i>	Scan & Score...Scan, ATT, DEF
Progressing Evasion...EVS, Bounce, Solo	Beat the Traffic...ATT, EVS, DEF, Solo
Protect Your Dinosaur Egg...EVS	Octopuses & Fish...EVS, DEF, Solo
Bubble Trouble...MTS, TP	<i>Duals...Infographic</i>
<i>Super Hand/Fist Pass...Infographic</i>	Character Battles...MTS, DEF, ATT
Skill Evolution: Hand Pass...HP	Turbo Duals...MTS, DEF, ATT
Football Ice Cream...FMS, Solo, HP, EVS	Attack? Defend? React...TAC, ATT, DEF
Football Waiters/Waitresses...HP, EVS, DEF	Cowboy Showdown...TAC, ATT, DEF
Basketball Hand Passing...HP, ATT	Ball-dy...EVS, DEF, EVS
Rocket Hand Passing...HP, TP	<i>Retention...Infographic</i>
Trio Hoops...HP, ATT, DEF, EVS	Defending Pairs...COMM, TP, TAC, DEF
Ghostbusters...HP, ATT, DEF, EVS	Passes in the Bank...COMM, TP, TAC
Hand Passing in the Mud...HP, TP, DEF, COMM	Battle Royale...COMM, TP, TAC, MTS
<i>Whole Group v Stations...Infographic</i>	Easter Egg Hunters...COMM, TP, TAC
Skill Evolution: Solo...Solo	Protect the Queen...COMM, TP, TAC
Solo Stealers...Solo, Scan, DEF	<i>Speed Coaching...Infographic</i>
Spider Web Passing...TAC, KP, FP	

Key

FMS: Fundamental Movement Skills	EVS: Evasion
MTS: Multiple Technical Skills	Scan: Scanning
HP: Hand Passing	Bounce: Bouncing
KP: Kick Passing	Solo: Soloing (Hand-to-toe)
PU: Pick-Ups	COMM: Communication
ATT: Attacking	TP: Team Play
DEF: Defending	TAC: Tactical Play

Game: Ready Teddy Go



How It Works



- Players / Parents / Coaches throw teddies in the air & complete a high catch
- Progress to catching their teddy on the run at speed
- Hold teddy in one hand & use their other hand to try and get ball from parents
- Include a range of softer, larger and lighter footballs in activities

Equipment



- Teddy per player
- A range of soft, light, bouncy footballs



Watch Out For...



- Players closing eyes / turning head when trying to catch
- Examples of jumping to make the high catch
- Catching teddy at full speed during on the move games

Coaching Questions



- What parts of your body helped you catch?
- Show us how high you can catch your teddy?
- What is the same / is different when catching a high ball?



Progressions

- Players throwing teddies high & catching on the run
- Players throwing teddies to one another on the run with 'taggers' chasing

Game: Musical Movements



How It Works

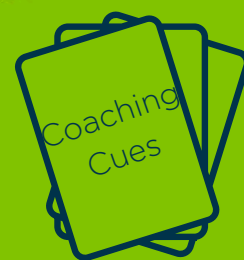


- Players practise a range of fundamental movement skills as the music plays
- They then 'Freeze' when the music stops
- Players then race to complete a range of fundamental movement skill based tasks before the music recommences

Equipment



- A speaker and a music player
- A number of:
 - Footballs
 - Bean bags
 - Hoops
 - Hurdles
 - Cones



Progressions

- Players set the tasks
- Multiple tasks movements to be completed
- Add a 'Tagger' to each group

Watch Out For...



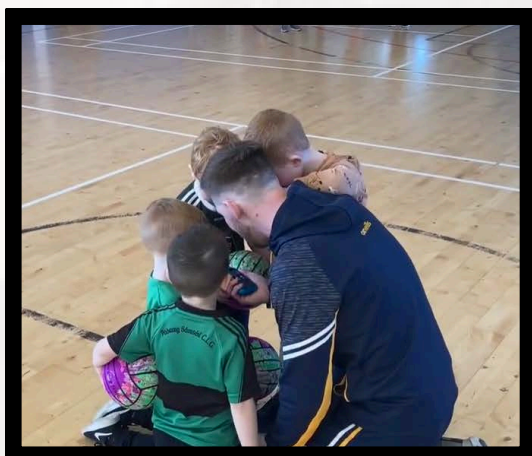
- FMS being used fluently by players and areas that will require a bit more practice / support
- How players follow instructions
- How quickly players can 'freeze'

Coaching Questions



- What animals did you move like?
- What's your favourite way to move?
- Were any of the movements a little bit tricky?

Game: Mission Gaelic Games



How It Works



- Players are divided into four equal teams who are in four different corners of the pitch / hall
- One coach stays in the centre of the pitch / hall while the other 'Agent Paddy' hides away from the group
- Both coaches have 'Walkie Talkies'
- Each team selects a player (rotated each game) to listen to Agent Paddy's Mission skills to be executed and communicate these instructions back to the group
- The first group, where all members have successfully completed the mission, are the winners

Equipment



- x2 Walkie Talkies (or mobile phones)
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- How players communicate messages to their team mates
- How team mates listen to their peers' instructions
- How teams work together to support every member

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to tell your team all about the mission?
- Do you think that you worked well as a team? Why?
- What sort of messages would you pass on to team mates in a match ?



Progressions

- Multiple instructions passed on by Agent
- Skills to be completed on both sides
- Add a defender to disrupt each group

Game: Xs and Os



How It Works

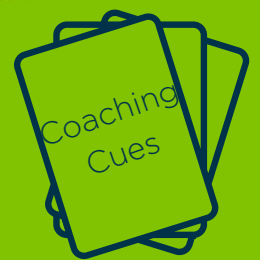


- Nine cones are set out in the middle resembling the shape of an Xs & Os grid
- Players divided into two teams, each with different coloured footballs (x5)
- Each team will have a coach putting in the footballs for each new turn
- Players must execute a skill before racing to place their football onto a cone in the grid. Then run back and tag a team mate to begin
- The first team to get three of their footballs in a row or place all five balls down is declared the winner

Equipment



- Tall cones x9
- Ball x10
(x5 white & x5 blue)



Watch Out For...



- Player reaction times
- How groups communicate
- Scanning to select the best cone to place ball
- How skills are executed under greater pressure

Coaching Questions



- What did your team do well? What can you improve?
- Did you have a plan for where to place your first few footballs?
- Could you use your skills any faster? How? What would help?



Progressions

- Multiple skills to be executed before placing ball down
- Include a defender on each side who applies pressure when skill is being executed

Piece of Cake Coaching



Forming meaningful & powerful relationships will be the cherry on top!

Game: Duck Duck Goose Football



How It Works

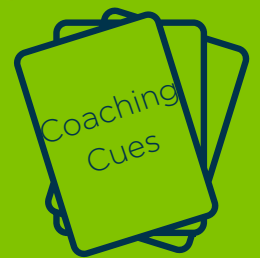


- Players sit in a large circle together
- Players have a football each
- Coach tags the first player, who has to run around the full circle with their football (encourage a bounce after every four steps) and make it back to their original seated position
- In the meantime, a second player is tagged. They chase the first player, trying to catch them before they return to their space

Equipment



- Ball per player



Watch Out For...



- Player reaction times when tagged
- Players hesitant to bounce when being chased
- How players select the best net to score into

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to win the race to your seat?
- Was it easier to bounce the ball with or without being chased? Why?
- What helped you to score in the net?



Progressions

- Coaches tag 4 players at the same time, race to score first
- Coaches tag attackers (trying to score in the nets) and defenders (trying to stop them)

Game: Collect Sonic's Rings



How It Works

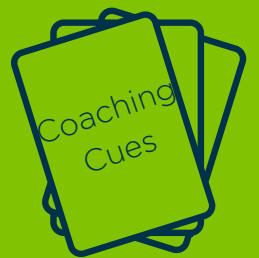


- Coaches hold Sonic rings (hoops) at four different rows in the hall / pitch
- Players have a football each and collect rings by completing tasks through the hoops at each level
- Level 1: Handpass
Level 2: Solo, then handpass
Level 3: Low Kick
Level 4: High Kick
- Player who collects the most rings in a minute is the winner

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Hula Hoop per coach



Watch Out For...



- Accuracy of players' handpassing & kick passing at each stage
- Players who pause when executing skills / execute skills at pace while approaching rings
- Players' toe position when kicking

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great handpass / kick on the run?
- Which stage did you find most comfortable / most difficult?
- How can you improve your score next time?



Progressions

- Use alternating hands / feet for skills
- Include other skills such as a pick-up on the other side of ring
- Add defenders to the playing area

Game: The Very Hungry Caterpillar



How It Works

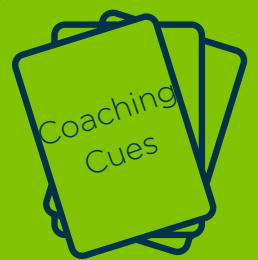


- Players divided into two teams
- Each team is assigned a caterpillar (coach) who is very hungry
- Players must execute the desired skill before they can collect a piece of caterpillar food (soft ball)
- The team who collects the most food for their caterpillar wins

Equipment



- Bag of soft balls
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players collecting food closest to their caterpillar
- Who executes skills statically/as they travel to collect food
- Players with their heads up scanning for food

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to find food quickly?
- Which skill do you think would be good for the team to practise?
- How could your team collect a greater amount of food next time?



Progressions

- Allow opposing teams to tackle one another while they are executing skills
- Players must execute a couple of skills before collecting food

Game: The Hoop Tunnel



How It Works



- Coaches/helpers stand at either side of the hall/pitch with a hoop each
- Coaches/helpers spin/roll hoops along the ground. Players try to throw, hand pass or kick their ball through the moving hoops.
- Progress to players evading moving hoops as they try to travel from one end of the hall/pitch to the other
- Players race to bounce/solo their ball inside five different stationary hoops

Equipment



- Hoop per coach/helper
- Ball per player



Watch Out For...



- Players' preferred method for getting their ball through a hoop
- How players time their kick/throw/pass when aiming for moving hoops
- Various forms of evasions when avoiding hoops

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to get your ball through a moving hoop?
- How did you avoid the moving hoops when trying to get to the other side?
- Name one thing you could do better?



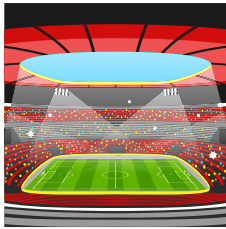
Progressions

- Vary the skills to be executed in the stationary hoops
- Add a defender who tries to dispossess players as they make their way through the hoop tunnel

WITHIN EVERY UNDERAGE TEAM...

...THERE'S POTENTIAL FOR A FIRST CLASS BACKGROUND TEAM

Which parents / family / club members come to mind when considering the following roles?



County / Professional Sports Background Team



Underage Squad Mentors / Helpers

-Physio
-Team Doctor

-Comforter when young players have bumps/falls
-First Aider

-Nutritionist

-Bring fruit & water to sessions
-Prepare recovery drinks/protein etc. for players

-Sports Psychologist

-Encourage ALL players
-Be a great listener & questioner
-Support through challenges

-Strength & Conditioning Coach

-At youngest ages: chase/be chased
-Assist with stretches/warm-up then body weight exercises

-Statistics & Analysis

-Keep scores in mini-games or at stations/individual challenges
-A sharp eye on team/player traits

-Attacking Coach
-Defensive Coach

-Act as a give & go for scorer & retrieve balls
-Be tackled/apply token pressure

-Head of Logistics

-Helping with transport to & from practices/games

-Training Camp Organiser
-Team Culture Coach

-Summer/Cúl Camp organisers
-Organisers of team/club social events e.g. Halloween/xmas parties

Game: Progressing Evasion



How It Works

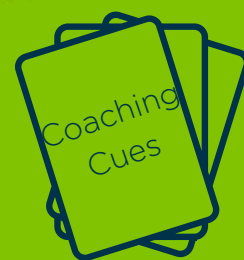


- Play Sharks and Fishes: Player(s) with bib tucked down their back try to evade the shark(s) who is (are) trying to get their fish tail (bib)
- Progress to Beanbag Tag: Players try to tag other players' feet by throwing their beanbag. Gain two points each time you hit another player's foot but lose a point if your own foot is hit
- Then play Bumper Cars: Player(s) travel with the ball whilst evading the remote controlled car

Equipment



- Beanbag for most of group
- Bib for most of group
- Remote Controlled Car
- Ball per player



Watch Out For...



- Players scanning for threats
- Varying examples of evasion
- Examples of good spatial awareness

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to avoid others / tackles?
- How / when did you catch most fishes?
- When would you use these movements / skills in a match?



Progressions

- Fish have timed safe zones in Sharks & Fishes Game
- A group of team mates must pass the ball around whilst evading the car

Game: Protect Your Dinosaur Egg



How It Works

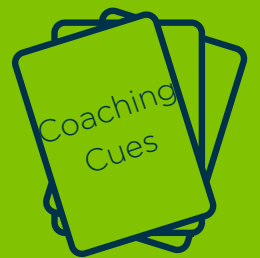


- Players have a dinosaur egg (football) each to protect
- They must hold their egg tight and keep them safe from 'The Scary Monsters' who are trying to crack their fragile dinosaur eggs
- Players then progress to protect their penguin egg as they gain experience in controlling the football with their feet

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Body position when protecting egg
- Varying forms of evasion
- How players change direction
- Players use of space

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to get away from the monsters?
- How did you protect your egg?
- When did you get caught the most?



Progressions

- Dinosaur eggs have to be carried to Antarctica (coned area) without being cracked
- Make a bounce every 4secs to strengthen your dinosaur egg

Game: Bubble Trouble



How It Works

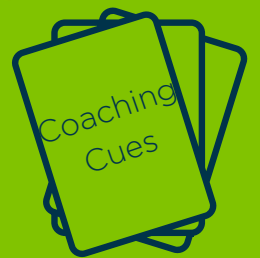


- Players divided into three or more teams that suit numbers
- Each team has a coach who is blowing bubbles for five-ten seconds
- Players work together as a team to burst all their bubbles first using a range of skills: bounce bursts, hand-pass bursts, pick-up bursts, solo bursts
- First team to burst all of their bubbles are the winners

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Bubble mix per coach



Watch Out For...



- Skill accuracy when aiming for moving targets
- How groups communicate
- Examples of effective scanning when finding bubbles and space

Coaching Questions



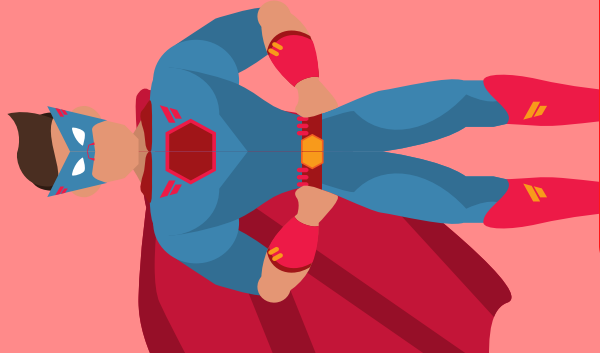
- What helped you to burst the bubbles quickly?
- How did you work as a time to try and burst all of your bubbles first?
- Which skill did you find most challenging to burst bubbles with?



Progressions

- Use alternating sides when executing skills
- Introduce 'Passing Bursts' where players must burst bubbles while making hand and kick passes

**USE SUPERMAN /
SUPERWOMAN
LASER VISION TO
SPOT TARGET
FOR PASS**



Superman / Woman

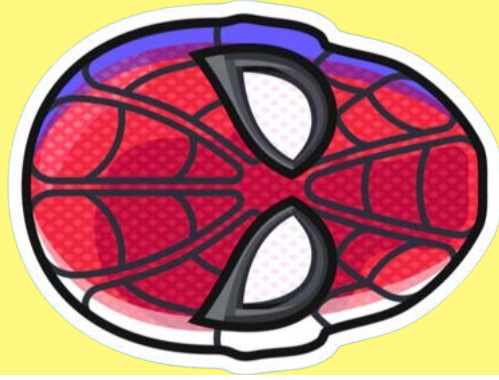
**AIM FOR
TARGET'S CHEST
(IRON MAN'S POWER
CORE)**



Iron Man

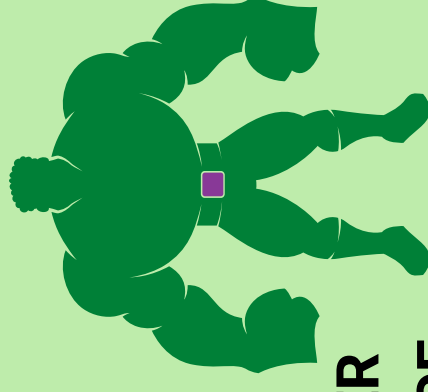
SUPER HAND / FIST PASS

Spiderman



**STRIKE THROUGH
THE BALL LIKE
SPIDERMAN
SHOOTING HIS WEB**

Hulk



**STRIKE BALL
WITH A HULK
FIST FOR GREATER
POWER / DISTANCE**



Skill Evolution

The Hand Pass



- Balloon Hand Strikes: Promotes good hand-eye co-ordination and a nice introduction to striking with your hands
- Underarm Bib, Beanbag, Ball Throws: Good opportunities to focus on the swinging nature of the striking side. Progress to make underarm throws on both sides on the move
- Target Practice: Aim underarm throws at an intended target e.g. hoops or to a team mate. Point your wrist at your target like Spider Man shooting his web
- Balance Ball like a Waiter/Waitress: Becoming familiar with holding a ball in one hand away from your body. Balance the ball whilst adjusting to changes in pace and then under pressure from others trying to dispossess
- Combine Balance Hand & Striking Hand: Practise on both sides through a range of games under increasing levels of pressure promoting a wide range of decision making opportunities

Watch & Support Players who...

- Throw the ball up and try to strike
- Hold the ball too closely to their body when trying to strike
- Use a wild swinging arm with no control over power / direction when striking ball

Coaching Questions & Tips

- Step into your hand pass
- How can the different parts of your hand, palm, fingers, wrist etc. affect the direction / power of your hand pass
- What do you notice about your feet position when making a hand pass?

Game: Football Ice Cream



How It Works

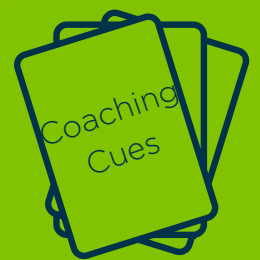


- Players solo their ice cream (football) then deliver to a team mate who exchanges for an ice-cream cone
- Progress to players with cones protecting their ice-cream from the ice cream stealers (players soloing)
- If ice cream stealers knock an ice cream (football) off a cone they then take that cone for their own ice cream and the roles reverse

Equipment



- Tall cone per pair
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players making swift exchanges between footballs & tall cones
- How players protected their ice creams
- Players using a near-hand & stepping across when dispossessing

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to solo the ball? Tell me about your hand, toe & foot.
- How did you avoid the ice cream stealers?
- What helped you to steal ice cream from others?



Progressions

- Use more ice cream stealers than carriers
- Compete with other teams for high score
- Ice cream carriers can change cone from hand to hand

Game: Football Waiters/Waitresses



How It Works



- Waiters (players) have a plate of dinner (football) each that they carry in one hand away from their body
- When whistle is blown waiters must deliver the dinners as quickly as they can (this could be to a coach on the other side of the pitch / hall etc.)
- When comfortable with greater pace waiter must now knock over others' dinners whilst protecting their own

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- How players protect their own ball while trying to dispossess others
- Use of a near hand when dispossessing
- How players adapt to balancing the ball when moving at speed

Coaching Questions



- Could you balance the ball well with each hand?
- Where did you hold your ball when you were trying to knock down others?
- When might you balance the ball like this in Gaelic Football?



Progressions

- Use alternating hands each new round
- Last Waiter Standing: Dropped dinner = Out of the game
- Teams of Waiters

Game: Basketball Handpassing



How It Works

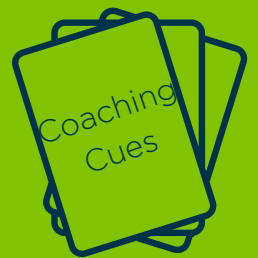


- Coaches hold hoops like a basketball net with their belly & chest acting as a backboard
- Players compete against one another in a race to make ten successful hand passes through a range of hoops
- Progress to include further skills between each completed hand pass e.g. must make a bounce / solo before scoring in the next hoop

Equipment



- Ball per player
- A number of hula-hoops



Watch Out For...



- Holding hand on same side as front foot with back leg stepping forward to match swinging arm
- Scanning for best available hoop (less traffic etc.)

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great hand pass?
- Where did you aim your foot at when making the hand pass?
- How do you use your feet when making a hand pass?



Progressions

- Use alternating hands when hand passing
- Compete with other teams for high score
- Coaches move with hoops at speed
- Include defenders

Game: Rocket Hand Passing



How It Works



- Players in teams of 3/4
- Everyone counts down 3,2,1...and shout BLAST OFF
- Coach / Player launches air rocket
- Teams must make as many hand passes as possible before the rocket lands

Equipment



- Air Rocket
- Ball per group



Progressions

- Use alternating hands with hand passing
- Compete with other teams for high score
- Add a defender to each group

Watch Out For...



- Body position when passing & receiving
- How groups communicate
- How players react to 'faster' passing

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great hand pass?
- What's the best distance to pass / receive the ball?
- How can your team improve their score?

Game: Trio Hoops



How It Works

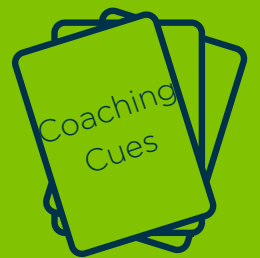


- Players in groups of 3
- Player A = Scorer, Player B = Defender, Player C = Hoop Holder
- Players spend 30sec each fulfilling every role
- Player A is trying to hand-pass their ball into as many different hoops as possible while Player B tries to dispossess / prevent them scoring
- Player who gets the most scores within their trio is the winner

Equipment



- Ball per trio
- Hoop per trio



Watch Out For...



- Body position when handpassing under pressure
- Scanning to find hoops in the best space
- Defenders getting on the hip of opponents when making near hand tackle

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great handpass?
- What was the best tackle/score that you made?
- How could you improve your score next time?



Progressions

- Use alternating hands with handpassing
- Compete with other teams for high score
- Add a defender to each group

Game: Ghostbusters



How It Works



- Coaches walk with ghosts (bibs)
- Players pair up: One Ghostbuster and One Ghost Protector
- Ghostbusters must hand-pass their ball at the ghosts (bibs) to catch them
- Ghost Protectors will be tracking them trying to block hand-passes
- Ghostbusters have one minute to catch as many ghosts as they can
- After a minute, swap roles

Equipment



- Bib per pair plus extra for coaches
- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- How players balance the ball when hand-passing on the move
- Who finds space well to make hand-pass
- How players adjust striking hand for higher hand-passes

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to hand pass on the move?
- How did you catch the higher ghosts?
- Would hand passing on both sides be helpful? Explain why



Progressions

- Faster moving ghosts
- Use High Flying Ghosts (bibs in the air)
- Add additional Ghost Protectors

Game: Hand Passing In The Mud



How It Works



- Players (pigs) hand pass the ball to one another whilst avoiding being 'tagged' by the chasers' (farmers) swimming noodles (pitch forks)
- If players are tagged they become stuck in the mud and must receive a hand-pass before moving again
- Player (pig) who makes the most successful hand passes within a minute wins

Equipment



- x3 swimming noodles
- Ball per x3 players
- Cones to mark out playing area



Progressions

- You become 'tagger' if caught
- Players cannot be caught if in possession of ball
- Add an extra 'tagger'

Watch Out For...



- Communicating when in need of support
- Examples of evasion
- How / Where 'taggers' catch most players
- Scanning for threats / to support 'stuck' team mates

Coaching Questions



- How did you get away from the taggers?
- How did you let your team mates know that you needed help?
- Could the taggers work together to catch more players?

WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITIES / GAMES

VERSUS

STATION-BASED ACTIVITIES / GAMES

There are many benefits with both approaches.
Can you merge the best of both in your sessions?



Getting to practice & play
with your entire group of
team mates



Small groups getting
to focus on particular
games / skills

Great way to have
many parents /
helpers involved in
the session at the
same time

Can set up
equipment
beforehand and have
activities ready to go

The entire group can
enjoy the same
experience together
and join in the fun

Helps when planning
a range of games /
activities to keep a
closer eye on smaller
groups and how
players are
progressing / feeling

Skill Evolution

The Solo



- Beachball/Balloon Drop & Kick: Hold a beachball / balloon (delayed fall) and drop. Then kick as it reaches your foot.
- Cone to Hand: Set a cone on your foot and bring up to your hand. Develop those foot to hand connections on both sides
- Seated Kicks: Sit down and use a small space between arms and feet to kick the ball back to yourself.
- Step-Drop-Kick Bibs: On the move. Step forward with pivot foot, drop bib and kick with the foot on the same side, trying to get bib back towards you for a catch.
- Toes-To-Nose & Spin: Try pointing your toes to your nose and spinning the ball back towards you when making a hand-to-toe. Using a large beachball can be a great learning tool due to its light nature. The greater size of the beachball will also reduce the distance between players' hands and feet when dropping, kicking and catching the ball.
- A variation of Balls: Practise the steps above using a wide range of balls of varying weights and sizes. Practise both sides.
- Speed & Pressure: Progress to execute the solo (hand-to-toe) at growing speed through races and under growing pressure from equipment, players and game scenarios

Watch & Support Players who...👁️

- Throw the ball up and try to kick
- Struggle with balance when kicking the ball (look at position of planted foot)
- Kicking ball with their shin or the inside of their foot (where are arms extended to when dropping the ball?)
- Ball kicked away from body. (look at toe shape and part of foot connecting with ball)

Coaching Questions & Tips 🗨️

- Why do you think the solo is also called the Hand-to-Toe?
- Point your toe where you want the ball to go
- What is the best part of your foot to kick the ball with when doing a hand-to-toe?
- The solo is like passing the ball back to yourself. What helps you to do this on the run?

Game: Solo Stealers



How It Works



- Players each have a bib tucked down their side / back
- Players mindful of their steps as they solo their footballs
- Try to steal other players' bibs whilst evading others to protect their own bib
- Player who steals the most bibs / or is the last to have their bib wins

Equipment



- Bib per player
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Did anyone stop soloing when being chased?
- Good use of body to shield & protect their bib
- Who has a sharp eye for identifying threats & when best to strike?

Coaching Questions



- When is the best time to try to take the bib from others?
- How did you use your body to protect your own bib?
- How did you find soloing when chased?



Progressions

- Players can continue to take bibs having been dispossessed
- Split into teams to promote teamwork & greater strategy

Game: Spider Web Passing



How It Works

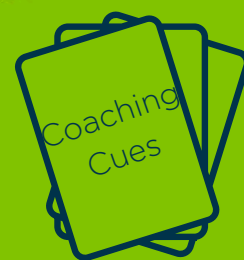


- Players are paired up either side of the spider webs in the middle
- Coaches (spiders) wave spider webs (swimming noodles) as distractions / obstacles
- Pairs try to pass their ball to one another without striking the spiders or their webs
- Players earn one point for successfully gaining possession of the ball or two points if they make a clean catch
- If ball hits spiders / webs their score returns to zero
- First pair to ten wins

Equipment



- Ball per pair
- A number of swimming noodles
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players' timing their passes well & delaying when necessary
- How pairs communicate
- Players' movement when passing and receiving the ball

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to avoid the spiders / webs when passing?
- How did you and your partner work as a team?
- Did you make more successful hand passes or kick passes? Why?



Progressions

- Use alternating hands / feet when hand passing / kick passing
- Spiders and players can move freely around the hall / pitch

Game: Blast Off



How It Works



- Players are divided into groups of four
- Three players hand-pass the ball to one another at pace while a fourth player stands around 20 metres away awaiting a kick-pass
- After a few seconds of passing the coach will begin the countdown 3..2..1..
- When the coach shouts 'Blast Off' the player in possession of the ball at that point has to make a kick pass to their team mate who is standing on the other side. Meanwhile the two players out of possession try to stop them

Equipment



- Ball per four
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Body position & timing when making kick pass
- How defenders work together to put pressure on the kicker
- How the ball receiver communicates

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great kick pass?
- What's the best distance to pass / receive the ball?
- Was there a time when it would have been best to kick with your left/right side?



Progressions

- Make kickpass to a moving target (team mate on the move on opposite side)
- Increase group sizes, therefore increasing the no. of defenders

Game: Passing Through Traffic



How It Works



- Playing area divided into three zones
- A middle zone and x2 wide zones (think over the river)
- Players in the middle zone are constantly on the move (creating traffic) and hand passing to one another
- Other players are in pairs in opposite wide zones
- They must scan through the traffic in the middle zone for space, then kick pass the ball to their partner

Equipment



- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out x3 playing zones



Watch Out For...



- Communication between players, both verbal & non-verbal, showing where & when they want the ball
- Delaying the kick until space emerges for a successful pass

Coaching Questions



- How did you spot your partner through the traffic?
- What type of kick worked best for you?
- What did you do when there was no space to make the kick pass?



Progressions

- Use alternating sides when passing
- Bonus points for a clean high catch
- Add a defender to each zone

Game: Mega Net



How It Works



- Use an entire wall / fence as a 'Mega Net' with a number of coaches / parents as goalkeepers at each end of the hall / pitch
- Half of the players trying to score goals past the goalkeepers at one end of the hall / pitch with the other half trying to score goals past the keepers at the opposite end
- First team to score ten goals wins

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players not dropping the ball from the same hand to the same foot
- Have players their chest pointed to target or are they crouched over as they kick?

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to make a great kick?
- How did you use your foot to help you to kick the ball where you wanted it to go?
- Where was the best place to score a goal against the keepers?



Progressions

- Players have to score from a further distance
- Add a greater number of goalkeepers
- Alternate kicking foot each time

Skill Evolution

The Pick-Up



- Elephant Stomps: Early opportunities to practise using a pivot / planted foot for balance by making elephant stomps at the side of each cone. Progress to use (trunk) arms to pick up cones while making the stomps
- Tickle the Grass: Encouraging players to tickle the grass will help them become familiar with getting their hands down low
- Run and Scoop: Run, step beside ball and scoop up to body
- Bib Pick-Ups: Use a mixture of bibs and footballs to emphasise the use of your toe and getting underneath the ball for the pick-up. Progress to add greater pressure / distraction
- Moving Footballs: Progress to execute the pick-up initially with the football rolling towards you then really emphasise the use of the planted/pivot when picking up a ball moving away from you
- Tacklers and Duals: Practice 'Rolling Towards' and 'Rolling Away' pick-ups under pressure from tacklers in the form of duals

Watch & Support Players who...

- Hands not close enough to the ground or hands too far apart
- Not getting toe underneath the ball
- Stopping a rolling ball with hands before picking up. Get planted/pivot foot ahead of or to the side of the ball first

Coaching Questions & Tips

- Step beside the ball and feel the grass
- What part of your foot helps to get the ball up from the ground?
- How do you pick up a ball moving towards you at speed?
- What helps you to pick up a ball that is rolling away from you?

Game: Musical Dips



How It Works

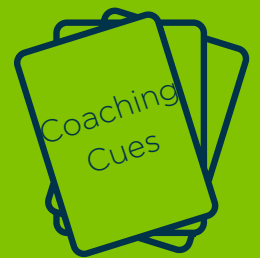


- Playing zone marked out with less footballs than players in the middle
- As music is played, players must travel around the perimeter of the zone
- A variation of Fundamental Movement Skills are used as means of travel
- When the music stops, players must pick up one of the footballs
- Players who do not manage to pick up a ball are out of the game & practise their pick-up skills
- Balls are taken out of the zone until only one player remains

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area
- Speaker & music player



Watch Out For...



- Player reaction times
- Players comfortable / uncomfortable picking footballs up at pace
- How players use their body to shield footballs for pick-up

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to pick up a football at speed?
- Where is the best place to put your hands / feet when making a pick-up
- How can you protect the ball from opponents before picking it up



Progressions

- Add neutral defenders to the zone
- Players must solo after picking ball up
- Greatly reduce the number of footballs

Game: Zombie Pick-Ups



How It Works

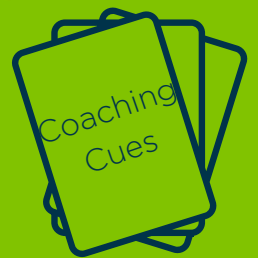


- The coaches are now zombies trying to tag the players with their zombie arms (swimming noodles)
- Players try to make 10 successful pick-ups while evading zombie arms
- If tagged by blue zombie, pick-up score returns to zero
- If tagged by red zombie, players must go to zombie's lair (red hoop) and perform a pick-up before returning to the game

Equipment



- A number of bibs
- Ball per two players
- Up to three swimming noodles
- Up to three Hoops



Watch Out For...



- Planting foot position when picking up
- Players scanning for threats to choose when & what ball/bib to pick up
- How quickly players get their head up having made the pick-up

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to pick up at speed?
- When was the best time to pick up the football / bib? Explain why
- What did you do after you picked up the ball / bib?

Progressions



- Use alternating sides when picking up
- Pick up a variation of footballs and bibs
- Players becoming zombies with different powers

Game: Pick-Up Champions



How It Works

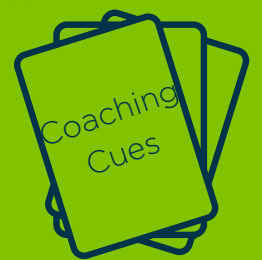


- Divide the group into two teams (bibs v jerseys)
- Each group selects a 'Catcher'
- Players earn a point for each pick-up made until they are tagged by The Catcher
- Team with the most points are 'The Pick-Up Champions'

Equipment



- Swimming noodle per Catcher
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players scanning for threats before/after picking up a football
- examples of good decision-making when selecting the best football to pick-up at any given time

Coaching Questions



- What helps you to pick the ball up at speed?
- When / Where were most players 'caught'?
- What helped you to stay away from The Catchers?



Progressions

- Each team has two 'Catchers'
- Smaller playing area / less footballs
- Alternate foot for each pick-up

Backroom Team Bingo



Parents / Mentors can you help with any of the following roles to support our young players & teams?

First Aider



Transport for players / parents



Bring fruit / water for players



Organise tea / coffee for parents



Lead an Activity Station



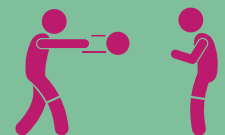
Retrieve balls



Manage a player dual



Pass balls to players to take scores



Be a goalkeeper for some games



Create games with your child at home



Manage / Store equipment



Welcome players & parents to sessions



Chase / Be chased by players



Support players during challenges



Oversee Small-Sided game



Ask self explorative questions



Game: Mirror Mirror On The Ball



How It Works



- Players get paired up
- They must shadow their partner's movements and replicate any skills that they execute
- Partners then swap roles when coach blows the whistle
- Players to pay really close attention to their partner's movements in order to mirror their actions as quickly as possible

Equipment



- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Player reaction times
- Players who can anticipate whether their partner will bounce / solo quickly
- How players keep an eye on their partner whilst executing skills at the same time

Coaching Questions



- How did you know when your partner was moving left or right?
- What clues did you use to work out if your partner was going to solo or bounce?



Progressions

- Opposites: Copy your partner's movements / skills using the opposite side
- Reduce the playing area to increase traffic

Game: Scan & Score



How It Works

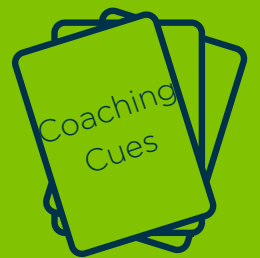


- Set up small sided pitches as required
- Players play 5 v 5 possession game
- Assign a colour to each set of nets (yellow & orange in this example)
- Players keep possession of the ball among their team mates until the whistle is blown and the coach holds up one of the coloured cones. teams try to score in the corresponding net as quickly as possible

Equipment



- Mini Goals for the desired no. of matches
- Bibs for 5 v 5s
- Ball per pitch
- Cones to mark out playing area & for coach



Watch Out For...



- Players with their head up scanning for threats, team mates & signal
- Team/player movement when cone signal is given by coach
- How fast players react to signals & what role they take on

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to see the cone signal early?
- How would you want your team to react to:
A. Having the ball when signal is given
B. Not having the ball when signal is given



Progressions

- Coach holds cone above his head without blowing whistle
- Create an overload for particular teams 6 v 4 etc.

Game: Beat The Traffic



How It Works



- Players have to make their way through the x3 forms of traffic before trying to score at the opposite end
- Traffic includes: Wardens (tagging with swimming noodles) Remote Controlled Car & a series of Tacklers
- If players are tagged by the warden or the car / dispossessed by the tacklers, they must return to the start
- Highest scorer after 3 minutes has 'beat the traffic' and is the winner

Equipment



- Swimming Noodle x3
- Ball for most players
- Remote Controlled Car



Watch Out For...



- Various examples of evasion
- Scanning to find space / avoid traffic
- How players protect ball from tacklers

Coaching Questions



- What/Who was the toughest form of traffic?
- Who felt that they avoided the traffic well?
- Did anything really help you to beat the traffic?



Progressions

- Add more traffic (extra wardens etc.)
- Reduce the width of the playing area
- Points/Goals only as scores at end of road

Game: Octopuses & Fish



How It Works

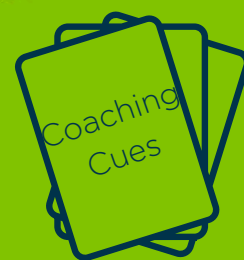


- Playing area divided into three zones
- Octopuses (coaches) in each zone
- Fish (players) try to travel through all three zones while avoiding the octopuses' tentacles (swimming noodles)
- Octopuses start off in static positions before progressing to moving anywhere in their zone
- The fish who travels across the sea safely the most times wins

Equipment



- Swimming noodle per coach
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Various examples of how fish evaded the octopuses
- When players bounce/ solo their football
- Fish traveling with their head up scanning for octopuses

Coaching Questions



- How did you avoid the octopuses' tentacles?
- When was the best time to bounce / solo your football?
- How did you use your feet to go past the octopuses?



Progressions

- Increase the number of octopuses
- Fish swim in pairs & work together to get their ball to the other side safely



DUALS



WHAT COULD DUALS / 2V2s ADD TO YOUR COACHING SESSIONS?

PLAYERS

- Everyone active
- Get to know a team mate better as a person and as a player
- Maximise matchups: friends, physically similar, age, skill



DUAL VARIATIONS

Ball Delivery

- Throw / Pass / Hold / Kick in at Chest Height, High, Low

Ball Return

- Catch / Dip / Dispossess opponent then throw, hand pass, kick pass back to coach
- Perform skill before returning ball to static / moving coach
- Try to score a point / goal / hit a target after winning ball

2 v 2s

- Practise the above with the added pressure of an extra opponent but with the support of an extra team mate

COACHES / HELPERS

- Great way to get parents / coaches / helpers from all levels of experience involved
- Get to know players really well with such a high player / coach ratio



RICH GAME-BASED LEARNING

- Maximise decision making
- Maximise ball contacts
- Maximise opportunities to defend & attack
- Maximise scoring opportunities
- Perform skills in an environment representative of the game



Game: Character Battles



How It Works

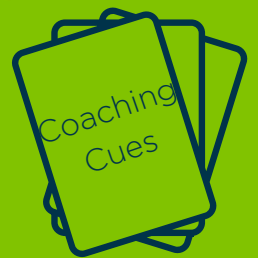


- Players in groups of 3: two involved in a dual and one receiver waiting on a pass
- Duals battle against one another and try to work the football to the group's third player
- Players choose their favourite character
- Coaches holds football between dual players and shouts aloud one of their character names
- This character must take the ball first then it's game on as they try to make a pass to their team mate whilst the opposing character tries to prevent them from doing so
- Then rotate roles

Equipment



- Ball per three
- Cones to balance starting footballs



Watch Out For...



- Body position & methods of separation when game begins
- How characters create / block off space
- Tackles made when ball carrying character bounces / solos

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to get free from an opponent?
- Who stopped the starting character from making a pass? How?
- What was the biggest thing that helped your character to score?



Progressions

- Coach throws ball in between characters
- Third player, who is waiting to receive the football, is constantly on the move

Game: Turbo Duals



How It Works

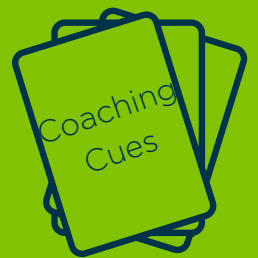


- Players stand facing one another in pairs with a cone placed in the middle
- A football is placed on top of the cone
- Coach shouts random 'T' words but when the pairs hear 'Turbo' aloud they must try to lift the ball before their partner and carry at turbo speed towards the goals
- Meanwhile their partner tries to prevent them from scoring / dispossess them and take a score of their own

Equipment



- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Players' reaction times
- Who bursts & takes 4 long strides before bouncing / soloing
- Players trying to tackle from behind / players getting on the opponent's hip before tackling

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to react quickly?
- How would a turbo burst help you in a match?
- When was the best time to tackle your partner?



Progressions

- Lengthen the distance to the goals
- Each pair has a bib versus a non-bib with the collective total scores put together

Game: Attack? Defend? React!



How It Works

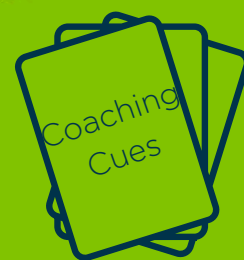


- Playing area is divided into three zones
Zone A & B either end of a middle zone
- Players paired up and pass the ball to one another until the whistle is blown
- The player in possession at that point becomes the attacker and must get the ball to the opposite zone
- Their partner becomes the defender and tries to dispossess the attacker before they reach the opposite zone

Equipment



- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out x3 zones



Watch Out For...



- Players scanning for space when attacking
- How fast players react to their role
- Players who can deny space well when defending

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to get the ball to the other zone?
- Were any defenders difficult to play against? Why?
- Did you learn anything that will help you in future matches?



Progressions

- Make the middle zone longer / more narrow
- Add defenders to the middle zone
- Introduce additional end zones

Game: Cowboy Showdown



How It Works

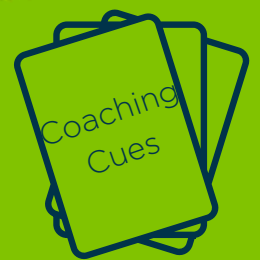


- Players pair up with a Cowboy/girl who they feel would make for a good battle. They then stand facing one another either side of line markings
- Cowboys/girls have a 'Walkdown'
- Take 1...2...3... steps back each then 'Draw' (hand pass the ball to your partner)
- Ball receiver tries to break the line while the ball passer defends
- Then swap roles

Equipment



- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Good examples of the x3 Ds in Defending: Delay, Deny, Dispossess
- Various forms of evasion
- Defenders diving into the tackle & those who use attacker as a springboard

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to get past your partner?
- How did you try to stop your partner crossing the line?
- How did you use your feet & hands to delay your partner & to deny them space?



Progressions

- Increase the passing distance to give the ball receiver more space/time
- Play as a whole group & see which ball carrier passes the line first

Game: Ball-dy



How It Works

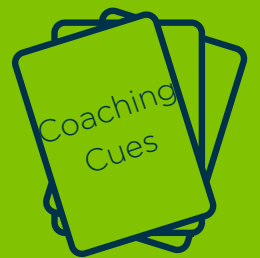


- Players get into pairs
- One has a 'Baldy Head' (football) and the other has 'Hair' (a cone)
- Player with football tries to keep it away from their partner who tries to dispossess them and place their cone (hair) on the ball (baldy head)
- Then players swap roles

Equipment



- Cone per pair
- Ball per pair



Watch Out For...



- How players shield the football & evade threats
- Good examples of near-hand tackles
- Players who can deny the ball carrier's space well

Coaching Questions



- How did you protect the football?
- What helped you to get the ball out of your partner's hands?
- What top tackling tip would you share with your team mates?



Progressions

- Two players with hair (cones) chasing
- Full group activity where player with the last remaining baldy football wins

RETENTION

Helping to keep water bottles (players) warmer (playing) for longer

**Because MY
Coaches / Family**

Players

I FEEL

~~Cared For~~ ~~Excited~~ ~~Valued~~

~~Like I'm Having Fun~~

~~Confidence is Flourishing~~

~~A sense of Self-Belief~~

~~Supported~~

~~Special~~

~~Growing Self-esteem~~

Are here for ME

Listen to me

Treat me as equal

Challenge me

Trust & Respect me

**Gave me time &
full attention**

Game: Defending Pairs



How It Works

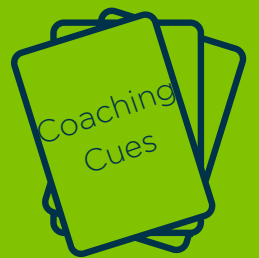


- Select a few defending pairs who must hold either side of the swimming noodle as they try to tag other players
- All other players bounce and solo their footballs as they try to evade the defending pairs
- If tagged by the defending pairs' swimming noodles, players must complete a task before returning to the game e.g. make x3 high catches
- The pair who tags the most players will be crowned as the winners

Equipment



- A number of swimming noodles
- Ball per player
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Pairs moving together well / pairs pulling noodle apart
- How defending pairs communicate
- Defending pairs using corners / sides to trap ball carriers

Coaching Questions



- What helped you & your partner to tag the other players?
- Where / when were most players tagged?
- What would a defending pair who work together well look like?



Progressions

- Increase the number of defending pairs
- Players who have been tagged have to execute a number of skills before returning

Game: Passes In The Bank



How It Works

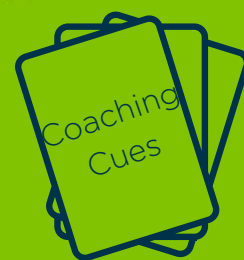


- Teams earn a point for every pass made but points are only 'banked' when they finish with a score
- If dispossessed before taking a score, points reset to zero
- Players must consider the risk of over passing whilst also providing good support for the ball carrier when necessary

Equipment



- Bibs for x2 teams
- Ball & nets/poles
- Cones to mark out playing area



Watch Out For...



- Passing on the move v static passing
- How groups communicate
- Why & when passes are being overdone
- Positioning when defending

Coaching Questions



- What helped you to find a pass?
- What was your favourite score? Why?
- When was the best time to score?



Progressions

- Passes can only go forward
- Can only receive a pass if on the move
- Scoring options - kicked goals / fisted point / knock down pole

Game: Battle Royale



How It Works



- Players divided into two teams of equal numbers, Red Team & Blue Team (Between 4-6 players per team)
- Four footballs in the middle: Two on blue cones and two on red cones
- The Red Team are trying to score into the red goals opposite them with The Blue Team doing the same into the blue goals
- Teams communicate how they will balance attacking v defending
- Footballs only become 'live' when a member from that coloured team lifts them i.e. Red Team player must lift ball on red cone before it is 'in-play'
- Team who scores the most wins

Equipment



- Bib per player (half blue / half red)
- Footballs x4
- Cones x2 Red & Blue
- Nets x2



Watch Out For...



- How teams find a balance between attack & defence
- How teams communicate with one another
- Specific role-setting & how teams organise themselves positionally

Coaching Questions



- What plan did you put in place to score against the other team?
- What plan did you put in place to stop the opposition scoring?
- What worked well & what would you like to improve? How?



Progressions

- Players are allowed to start in opposition half
- Add a bonus ball or two at the end of play
- Both teams start with x3 footballs

Game: Easter Egg Hunters



How It Works

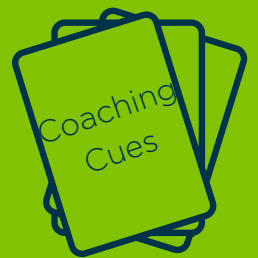


- Three groups: Orange Easter Bunny Helpers with orange eggs (orange footballs) White Easter Bunny Helpers with white eggs (white footballs) Blue Easter Bunny Helpers with blue eggs (blue footballs)
- Orange Helpers have to deliver their eggs (balls) to the orange nest, white to white nest & blue to blue nest
- Three Egg Hunter Teams: orange, white & blue try to stop their corresponding egg colours from making it to the nest
- First team to deliver all their eggs to their coloured nest win

Equipment



- A number of orange, white & blue footballs
- A number of orange, white & blue cones



Watch Out For...



- Players scanning for space
- How attacking & defending groups communicate
- How teams work together to maximise scores / dispossessions

Coaching Questions



- Did any team of helpers / hunters have a plan?
- What helped you to deliver eggs and avoid the hunters?
- Where did hunters feel was the best place to take the eggs from the helpers?



Progressions

- Increase the number of Easter Egg Hunters
- Increase the distance between the Easter Bunny Helpers and the Easter nests

Game: Protect The Queen



How It Works

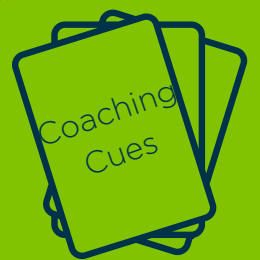


- Players split into two teams: The Queen's Army and The Capturers (teams of no more than 6 would be advised)
- The Queen's Army try to get the queen from one end to the other
- The Capturers have a football each and their aim is to tag The Queen with a ball in order to capture her
- The Army must protect their queen by dispossessing The Capturers and creating a safe passage for the queen to make it to the other side of the land

Equipment



- Queen Teddy (could be anything)
- Ball per pair
- Cones to mark out two end zones



Watch Out For...



- How the army protect the queen
- How the army create space for the queen
- How groups communicate
- How both teams tactically set up

Coaching Questions

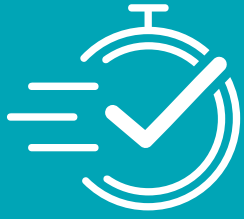


- What plan did you have to protect the queen?
- What plan did you have to capture the queen?
- What helped you to work as a team?
- What did you learn?



Progressions

- Increase the number of capturers
- Make a more narrow zone to be travelled through
- Add two queens



~~SPEED DATING~~ COACHING



COACHING TABLES

- Tables numbered by age groups
- Coaches visit other tables to share coaching conversations
- Particular focus being paid to the age group that precedes and follows them



COACHING OVERVIEW

- After coaching table sessions one coach from each age group (in order: Nursery, u6, u7, u8...) will address the entire room
- They will share a one minute coaching overview of their year
- This may include:-The movements, games, skills, teamplays etc. that they focused on -Their biggest takeaway & what they will focus on with their group next year.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSIONS

Team Overview

- Squad size & numbers at practice
- Typical session structure
- Use of facilities / equipment needs

Age Group Overview

- Movements, skills, teamplay that stood out at this age group
- Changes to players' lifestyles, maturity, needs at this age
- What was the biggest progression, in playing terms, from the previous age group?
- Was there any particular games / activities that you felt the group really gained a lot from?
- Any particular areas of focus in matches that worked well?

Season Learnings

- Where did team progress best?
- Where could they improve most?
- If you could hit reset & replay the season what would you do differently?



POTENTIAL BENEFITS

- Can help to support more cohesive coaching structures within the club as opposed to a more isolated and disjointed approach
- Coaches can gain valuable insights for following season & enhance relationships through peer learning.
- Will highlight progressions / pitfalls and help direct future coaching discussions, workshops etc.



Go Raibh Maith Agat



Best of luck during this latest stage of your coaching journey.

Your young members are so lucky to have volunteers like yourself striving to create an environment through Gaelic Games where they can grow to reach their full potential as people and players.

Hopefully this is the start of their life long connection with their club and community. Where challenges can be faced together and celebrations can be shared together. Most importantly...being around people who CARE about them! Never underestimate the positive impact you can make during every session.

On their behalf, I'd like to say a massive...Thank You!

CREID

M.G. Doherty