

Laps Not Required!

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As I travel the state and work with players I often observe other coaches while I am waiting to work with a group of players. While most sessions I observe have young players moving around with the ball, there are still too many sessions that I see and hear about where young players are moving without the ball. They are running laps and sprints when it really isn't necessary.

Recently I received a Garmin GPS watch as a gift. It is a watch that can track your duration, pace (mine is pretty slow), and total mileage. It is better than a pedometer and actually locates a satellite before you run. I had an idea of putting these on a couple of players at different ages to see how far they actually do run in a normal practice. My purpose of putting this watch on the players was to see how far they actually go with a ball and in a normal length of time training session.

Endurance training without a ball really doesn't make too much sense for players' ages 6-12 years of age. One reason is that Peak Height Velocity (PHV) isn't effective until 13 years-6 months for boys and 11 years-6 months for girls. Below are a couple of training sessions that I did with both a U12 girl's team and also a U8 girl's team. I think you may find the results of how far they actually moved surprising. The two players I put my watch on were I would say "average to above average" players for this age.

Session: U8's

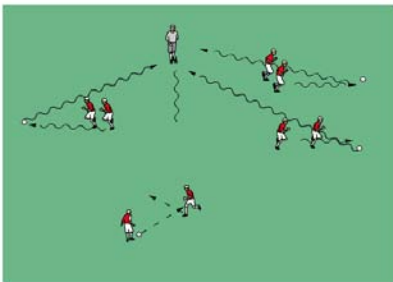
Theme: Cooperation-Passing

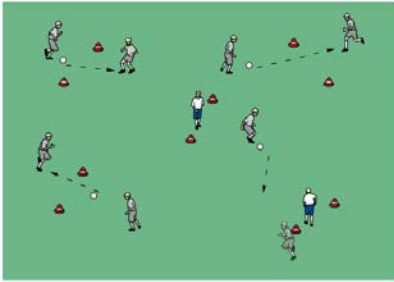
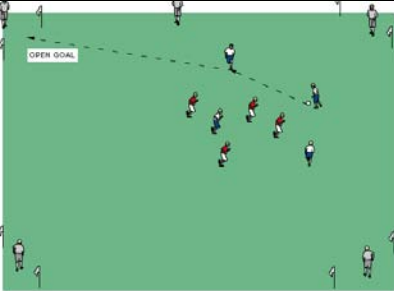
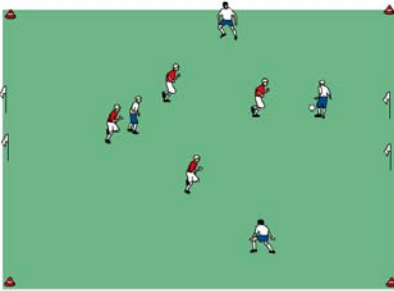
Duration of training: 50:23

Space of field used: a normal 4v4 size field (40 L x 30 W)

Distance covered by 7 year old girl: 1.3 miles

All of these activities for this session can be viewed on the Indiana Youth Soccer's website (www.indianayouthsoccer.org). To view them go to Coaching then select "Player Development Videos".

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
<p>1</p> <p>Warm-Up</p> <p>"Retrieval in Pairs"</p>	<p>Players pair up with a partner. The coach throws out a ball and has each pair bring the ball back in a variety of ways:</p> <p>1) all four hands on ball; 2) 3 hands and an elbow; 3) back-back; 4) with the feet (passing); 5) give them a certain number of passes that they have to do to get the ball back to you.</p> <p>Coach moves to another spot after throwing.</p>		<p>Heads Up!</p> <p>"How can you get the ball back quicker"?</p>

<p>2nd Activity (Maze activity) “Gates”</p>	<p>Players partner up and try to pass the ball between the gates to each other. Time them and see how many they can get.</p> <p>Build into having parent(s) and coach walk around and stand in a gate. If an adult is in a gate, they can't go through it. This introduces a defender.</p>		<p>Coaching Points:</p> <p>Guided Discovery Question:</p> <p>“What part of the foot can you use to pass the ball? (toes, side, maybe outside)</p> <p>“How can you and your partner pass the ball between two gates quicker”? (not stop the ball after receiving a pass, pass sooner)</p>
<p>3rd Activity 4 Gate/Goal Game</p>	<p>Divide into two teams of 3-4 players each. Make a goal with flags, cones, etc in the corners of the field, but they are diagonal. Coach has a supply of balls in order to keep the game flowing. The coach gets 4 volunteer parents to stand in the goals. When the ball is played in, the coach points to one of the adults standing in one of the four goals. When that happens, the parent steps back leaving the goal open. The coach can then tell the parent/adult to step back in and then points to another gate to open up that goal. The object is to find the goal that is open and score through it.</p>		<p>Guided Discovery Questions:</p> <p>“Where should your head be?” (up!)</p> <p>“What happens when a goal is closed”? (need to find the open goal/space).</p> <p>“How can you and your teammates work together”? (passing the ball)</p>
<p>4th Activity 4v4 game with no goalkeepers.</p>	<p>Play 4v4 game with no goalkeepers</p>		<p>LET THEM PLAY!</p>

Session: U12's


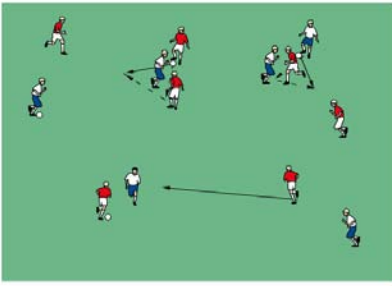
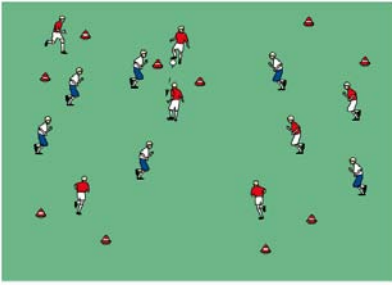
Theme: Movement without the ball

Duration of training: 1:25

Space of field used: Half of a normal 8v8 field

Distance covered by 11 year old girl: 2.84 miles

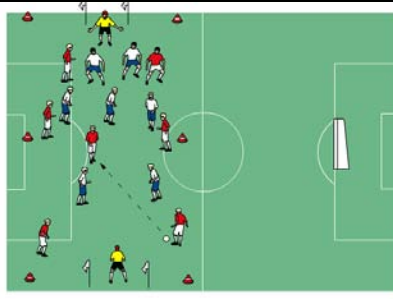
Several of these activities can also be viewed under the Player Development section of the Indiana Youth Soccer website.

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Purpose/Coaching Points
1			
<p>Warm-Up</p> <p>“Checkout” passing</p>	<p>Players get in pairs. They pass and move in an area. After they pass a ball they run around a cone. When they come around a cone, their teammate passes them the ball. After they pass they then run around a cone but on a different side.</p> <p>Progress to giving two players a bib/vest and they are “it”. They try to tag someone that has a ball. They can only “tag” not steal the ball. This will force the player checking out to go faster and the player with the ball to move quicker. When a pair tags someone with a ball then he/she is it along with their partner.</p>		<p>Quality of pass.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Eye contact. -movement quickly after ball is passed.
<p>2nd Activity</p> <p>Wall Pass Game</p>	<p>Split group into two teams. Use 4-5 balls. The object is to wall pass around someone from the other team. Each team counts up how many successful wall passes they had around someone from another team. Teams can steal the ball away.</p> <p>This is an abstract game. Need to be patient and show them ways to get the task done.</p>		<p>Coaching Points:</p> <p>“If you don’t have the ball what can you be doing”? (Looking to go and help a teammate with a ball so we can wall pass around someone)</p> <p>“How do you know your teammate needs your help”?</p> <p>Show technique of a wall pass and that it is two diagonal balls.</p>
<p>3rd Activity</p> <p>Multiple Gate Game</p>	<p>Divide into two teams. One ball is used although you could add a second ball if needed. A point is scored every time a team passes the ball through a gate and it is received on the other side by their teammate. Play for points or for a period of time.</p>		<p>“How many players need to be around the player with the ball”? (at least 2).</p> <p>“How can you play faster”? (take less touches on the ball)</p>

4th Activity
8v8 game
with
goalkeepers.

At first, play "Silent Soccer". They can't make ANY noise while they play or it results in the other team getting the ball. This will force them to play with their head up and also move without the ball. Go for 5 minutes, then allow them to talk.

Play 8v8 game with goalkeepers



LET THEM PLAY!

I remember telling the group of U8 parents that stayed and watched how much distance was covered by one player, which means that pretty much all of them did, they were very surprised. It was good to see their reaction and that they appreciated the fact that their children were putting forth an effort. Maybe now they will think when they yell out "Go faster", "Get moving", "You are not running enough". I hear the latter statement quite a bit when in earshot of a U6-U12 match. They are moving!!

I plan on putting my watch on some more players of all ages to see if this data is consistent for training. I am curious to see how far a 5 year old runs, 10 year old, and eventually older ages in a training session. So LOSE the laps, LOSE the sprint tests. Have players active in training and they will get the fitness level eventually that they require to play a match.! They are getting FIT! They just don't know it. Anytime you can get young players to work on something without them even knowing that they are working on it is a bonus!! Plus they will have more fun!