



**COACHING
SOCCER
WEEKLY** WITH
TOM MURA



Arrival Activities for All Age Groups



Presented by **WORLDCLASSCOACHING.com**

It's great to be back in the swing of things again after the holiday break. Watching the games last weekend it was great to see the players really understanding what it was that we were trying to do when attacking and defending. That doesn't mean that the players always executed perfectly but the intent was there.

In addition to continuing to work on ball skills and possession play we also added a couple of set pieces to our arsenal. Nothing too complicated, just one corner kick and one free kick play.

These set plays give the players a number of options from one setup so that they can read the situation and take what the defense is giving us. I also feel that organizing a few set plays inspires the players and gets them thinking creatively about these types of situations.

You might think that this time would be better spent on technical development but inspiring players to think creatively and find solutions can happen in many different ways. I think we need to expose our players to many different creative environments.



Last week I mentioned that this week I'd talk about scaling your session to fit the number of players that you have at a particular training session. Unfortunately I forgot that I already talked about that in [episode 83](#).

So instead, I'll answer a question from Matt about playing out of the back at the younger ages.

Matt says:

"I'm writing because lately there has been some debate among parents on one of my son's teams (U9) regarding the importance of trying to build out of the back when the goalie gains possession.

In your opinion, is it better to have the goalie play to the defenders every chance they get so that everyone becomes used to playing under pressure (as eventually opposing teams adjust by pushing up and pressing more), or is it better to teach kids to make judgement calls based on the positioning of the opposing team - play short when they can, but occasionally play long when the other team starts crowding your players on every goal kick?

It seems to me you would want to teach decision making first rather than having the defenders constantly play under pressure from goal kicks ("play smarter, not harder"), but I was curious what you thought was better for long term development? Obviously this can get the full/centerbacks involved more, but does having them play under constant pressure at the younger ages teach them something that they won't pick up in their teen years, as I've read some people suggest?"

I give my detailed answer in this episode and in the show notes available below.

This week I describe six different types of activities that I use to get my training sessions started while still waiting for everyone to arrive.

In my preseason meeting each summer I talk about the importance of having the players at practice on time. But that's just not always possible. I have some sessions that start at 4:30pm. The kids get out of school around 3pm, so they don't get home until 3:30pm and then they have to leave for practice by 4pm.

I don't want to start my session at 4:30pm because I'll have to explain what we're doing to each player as they arrive and change the organization to accommodate the extra players.

So when I arrive at the field the first thing I do is to setup an activity that the players can start doing as soon as they arrive.

I've found that my players look forward to getting to practice because they know something fun is waiting for them right at the start of the session.

This works with players of every age group and ability level. You just have to pick an activity that's appropriate for them.

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So when I arrive at the field the first thing I do is to setup an activity that the players can start doing as soon as they arrive. It's important that I choose something that can be done whether there are four players or 18. I also use activities that are quick to explain and easy to understand so that the kids can get right to playing

I've found that my players look forward to getting to practice because they know something fun is waiting for them right at the start of the session.

This works with players of every age group and ability level. You just have to pick an activity that's appropriate for them.

There are six different types of activities that I use with my teams:

1. Fun Games
2. Rondos
3. Progressive Games
4. Other Small-Sided Games
5. Technical work followed by games
6. Specific activities that relate to the session I've planned

Fun Games

There are many different fun games that you could use for arrival activities but there are two that I'll talk about today.



Knockout

This is a penalty kick competition. If the shooter scores they are safe when they go into goal. If they miss or the shot is saved then they have to save the next shot or they are out of the game.

This game can also be played with a certain number of 'lives' so that one miss does not know them out of the game.



Wembley

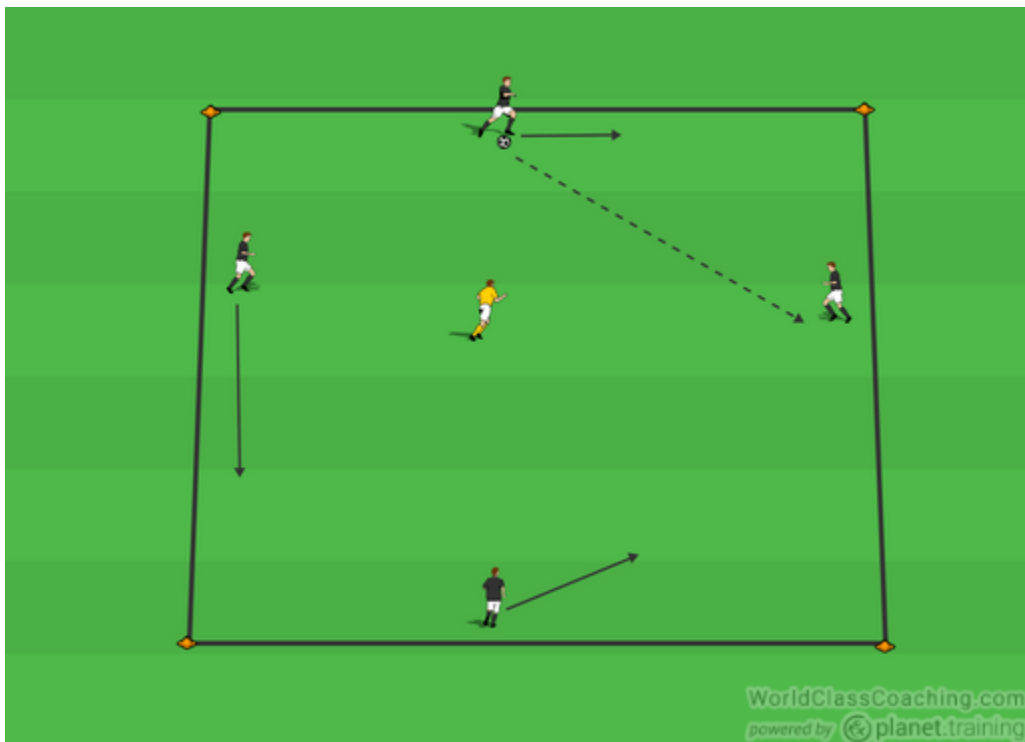
One player goes in goal while the others compete for one or two balls to score. If they score they change roles with the player in goal.

This can also be played in pairs. The first team to score a set number of goals wins.

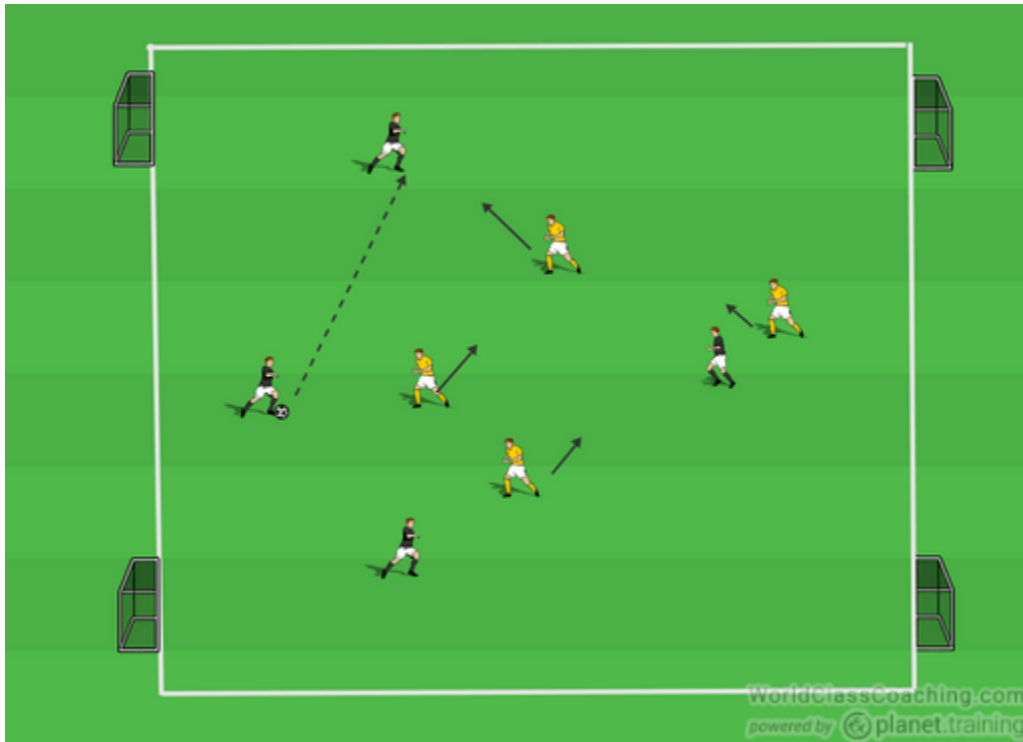
You can also play it as an elimination game where each team scores leaves the field and the remaining team is out of the game. This continues until the last three teams play in the final.

Rondos

These are keep away games that can be played as 3 v 1, 4 v 1, 4 v 2 or 5 v 2.



Progressive Game



I call this a progressive game because it builds from a small number of players to 8v8 or 9v9 depending on the number of players on my team.

I always have a different color vest available for when we have an odd number of players.

When we only have a few players we use just one of the goals on each end. As more arrive we start to use all four of the goals.

Other Small-Sided Games



You can use almost any small-sided game as an arrival activity. The game above is an example of a five-goal game that I often use.

A goal can be scored by dribbling through or passing through to a teammate on the other side. The goals are placed inside the area of the field so that a goal can be scored from either side.

Technical Skills and Game

You can have your players perform any technical exercise before joining in on a small-sided game like the ones described above.

This gives older players an opportunity to warm-up and prepare rather than jumping right into a game.

Specific activities that relate to the session



You can organize specific activities that are connected to session that you're planning.

For example, if you're doing a crossing and finishing session you can have the players compete in a 'cross bar challenge'. Each player is trying to loft the ball over the goal for one point or hitting the crossbar for three points. The first player to 10 points wins.

I think that planning some type of arrival activity makes sense for coaches at every level. Make sure it fits the age, interests and ability level of the team. You can have a go-to activity or change it up to keep it fresh and exciting for the players. This will help you make the most of the limited training time you have with your team and give the players a reason to get to your training sessions as soon as they can.