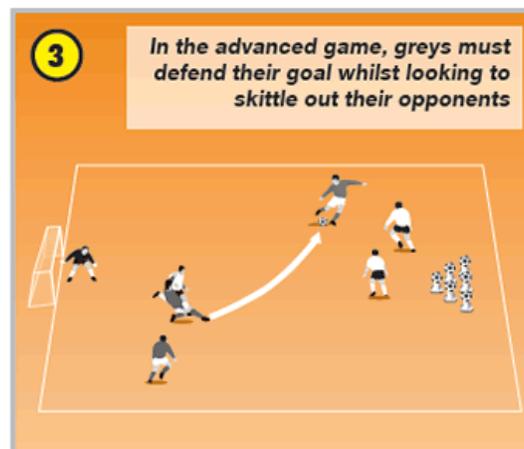
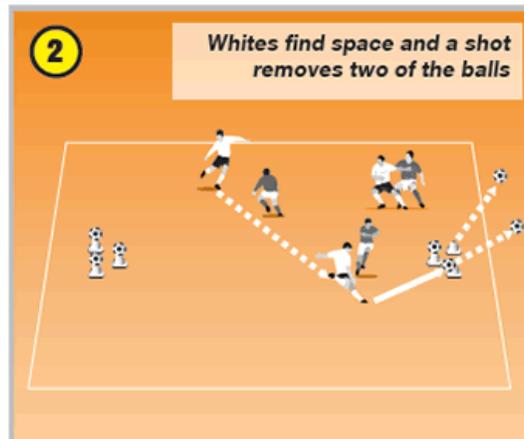
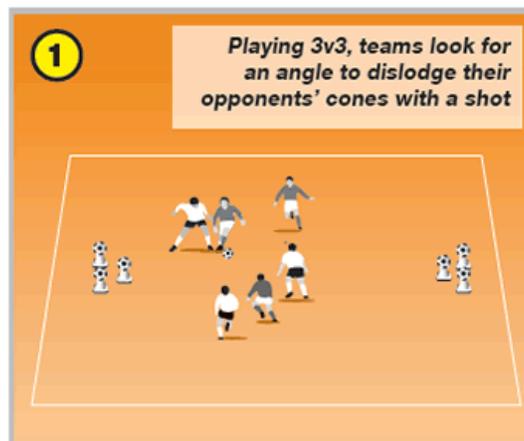


On strike! Shooting with accuracy

By David Clarke

How often do you watch your striker reach great attacking positions only to then delay his shot, offering enough time for defenders to get back and put in a tackle? It's a frustrating part of the game and something that's certainly not exclusive to youth football!

It's important to give players the confidence to shoot from all parts of the penalty area rather than them trying to walk the ball into the net. So below I've put together a great practice that, quite simply, encourages players to shoot at the earliest opportunity from all areas of the pitch.



How to set it up:

- You will need six target cones and seven balls, plus additional cones to mark out a pitch. You'll also require bibs and a goal.
- Create a pitch measuring 35x25 yards.
- Three yards in from each end touchline, and halfway up the area, place three cones in a triangular shape.
- Each cone has a ball placed on top of it.
- The game can be played either 3v3 or 4v4.

Getting started:

- One team starts on the left, one on the right. Each defends the cones as they would do a goal in a normal match, although there is no keeper.
- Players must try to knock the balls off the cones at their opponents' end of the pitch while defenders need to ensure their own cones do not come under threat.
- If a player shoots and gets a "strike" (knocks all three balls off with one shot) the team gets six points, otherwise it's one point scored for each ball.
- Should all three be dislodged, the balls are set up again before resuming.
- Play for three games of six minutes, ensuring that players are ambitious in their attacking play and do not hang back crowding around their cones as a defensive tactic.

Developing the session:

If you have three or four teams, play so that the side getting a strike knocks the opposing team out, and another comes into play. Teams waiting on the sidelines act as ball boys.

Note which teams are the best at winning a strike – undoubtedly this will be because of the frequency of shots and from all distances – and point out to the other teams why they are so successful.

How to advance it:

- Put a goal and a keeper at one end and set up a bowling alley-style group of six cones with balls on at the other end.
- This is a straight knock-out, with one team trying to knock all the balls off the cones and the other trying to score three times past the keeper. Which team will fulfil its task first?

Why this works:

The initial practice encourages players to shoot at targets from all areas of the pitch. Teams defending cones will also be pushing forward trying to attack, so the scoring options should be plentiful.

Direction and power are of course vital to a team's success, while the set-up ensures that players are aware of the need to shoot quickly and positively. Should they not, a tackle could see the other team attack and complete their task first.