



FTBL ACADEMY

FTBL Academy's Training Curriculum

Fundamental Practice Stages:

1. Technical Skill Learning Stage
 - Deceptive Dribbling
 - Shooting
2. 1 v 1 Stage
3. 2 v 2 Stage

The first technical priority is teaching the moves. This is because all release skills are dependent on the correct position and relationship between ball and body. The shooting stage of the curriculum follows closely behind learning of the moves. As players progress, both deceptive dribbling and shooting skills are refined and enhanced in the 1 v 1 stage of the FTBL Academy Training Program. Here the focus is on developing tremendous 1 v 1 dribbling and goal-scoring ability under close pressure from one opponent.

The added bonus is that because our players spend so much time in the 1 v 1 environment they develop the ability to stop even the most creative attackers from penetrating. As a consequence the FTBL Academy Training Program approach develops 5 skill areas, i.e. dribbling, shooting, receiving, passing, and defending/tackling for the time cost normally spent on just two of those areas in traditional methods. Deceptive dribbling creates defensive havoc by beating a player, while finishing achieves the ultimate objective of the game, i.e. scoring goals. Deceptive dribbling and shooting also demand great self-confidence and leadership. These are the two skills that the players love to practice and the skills that build the greatest self-esteem.

If you practice the FTBL Academy way your players will develop five skills for the time cost of two, plus high self-esteem and the ability to make the plays that win games.

Once the players have developed a very good understanding of all the desired 1 v 1 technical and tactical characteristics, the FTBL Academy focus progresses into 2 v 2 combination play. At this stage the FTBL Academy program believes wholeheartedly in 2 v 2 practice as the method of maximizing the clutch areas of a player's game.

Initially the FTBL Academy program develops the most complex individual clutch skills of deceptive dribbling and finishing. After these skills have been acquired to a satisfactory level the FTBL Academy program focuses on teaching players to exploit them tactically. This is achieved by escalating the complexity and repetition of ever more complex individual tactical equations in the 1 v1 situation. Eventually the program progresses to developing intuitive creative solutions in even more complex 2 v 2 tactical situations.

FTBL Academy Practice Structure Explained:

1. Warm up involves dynamic stretching at the younger ages (pre growth spurt) this is achieved by performing fast footwork, fakes and moves. During and post growth spurt warm ups should involve fast footwork, strength and plyometric exercises. Static stretching is discouraged as a precursor to dynamic competition because it inhibits subsequent muscle reaction and increases the risk of injury. However, static stretching is recommended at the other times to increase overall flexibility and range of joint motion.
2. Static Technique - Training technical practice requirements of the given skill, with limited balanced and rhythmic movement but no opposition.
3. Dynamic Technique - Training technical practice requirements of the given skill, with dynamic and powerful movement - without opposition.
4. Pressure Training - Training technical practice requirements of the given skill under the pressure of time limitations and/or fatigue. "When fatigue steps in skill steps out". Test and develop skills at speed as players tire.
5. Passive Skill Stage - Introduction of non-tackling opposition.
6. Active Skill Stage - Developing to a full and active defense.
7. Fun Game - At the younger ages split your session up with a skill related fun game. This stage is the only one that does not follow the numerical sequence. It should be inserted into the practice at approximately the halfway point to give the players a mental break and to get them in the right frame of mind for the hard work in the second half. The fun game should be selected to enhance the skill worked on. Note this is especially valuable when coaching very young players.
8. Conditioned Game - Small sided games with specific restrictions e.g. one touch, two touch, fake and move with two touches.
9. Real Game - A very short full-sided game.
10. Cool down and static stretch - Get rid of the chemical by-products of exercise.
11. Re-Cap - A quick briefing regarding the main points of the session.
12. Homework - Assignment of specific skills and drills to be practiced at home.

Perhaps the most important point to be made about the sequential progression is that all the above stages should not be part of one single coaching session. Instead each training session progression is part of a long-term plan or model that covers several years. The stages of the progression chosen in each practice should optimize the speed of development. Selection of the mix, content and duration of the sequential progression stages will determine whether player development is maximized. As abilities in each technical stage improve, the amount of practice time devoted to that stage diminishes. This constantly changing allocation of practice time should reflect the current performance and needs of the players when evaluated against the long-term plan.

Weekly 2 v 2 Games Are Essential

The FTBL Academy philosophy is unique in many positive ways. One of the unique attributes is the 2 v 2 game session we hold every Saturday morning for all our players.

Saturday morning 2 v 2's are vital to the development of the highly skilled team leader because they provide the essential bridge between creative individual dribbling and shooting development we focus on during the mid-week practices and the league games on the weekends. Without a 2 v 2 "bridge" our players have a much tougher time utilizing the FTBL Academy dribbling fakes and shooting skills in the big game situation. With the 2 v 2 bridge practice, the extremely difficult dribbling and shooting skills we emphasize so enthusiastically, transfer much more quickly and effectively into the real game situation.

The FTBL Academy approach to playing soccer builds on the theme that every player is the team's quarterback when in possession of the ball. The mid-week practices focus intensely upon developing the individual techniques and skills that a great "soccer quarterback" will need in the game situation.

The benefits of Saturday morning 2 v 2's are as follows:

- It provides the essential bridge between practices and the "big game".
- It accelerates the essential development of the skill and vision under pressure necessary to be a "soccer quarterback".
- The 25% ball ratios provide a significant degree of guaranteed possession and far greater individual skill development than traditional small-sided games with higher numbers.
- It creates the ideal environment for learning to combine with teammates while also enjoying a high ratio of ball possession and developing great individualism.
- There are no substitutions so every moment is a learning opportunity and games are more fun.
- It provides maximal preparation for the game later that weekend. This leads to greater confidence and willingness to take creative and positive development risks under pressure.

The 12 FTBL Academy Moves

Fake Shot

- Best game situations for the use of this move:
 - When opponent is approaching
 - Immediately prior to such moves as the Puskas, Pullback, and Maradona to add an extra degree of perception.

Fake Shot and Pullback & Play with Outside of the Foot (Puskas)

- Best game situations for the use of this move:
 - Moving diagonally across the field at a slower pace with some separation from the recovering defender.
 - In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.

Fake Shot, Pullback and Play Behind Leg

- Best game situations for the use of this move:
 - Moving diagonally across the field at a slower pace with a defender in close proximity.
 - In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.

Fake Shot and Maradona Turn

- Best game situations for the use of this move:
 - Moving diagonally across field at a medium pace with a slight separation from a recovering defender. Most effective with a fake shot or pass.
 - Attacking one side of a defender at speed to force a commitment before performing a move.
 - In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.
 - Standing still with a “bait” touch to one side of the defender to get defender to commit.

Fake Shot and Stop, Hop & Play

- Best game situations for the use of this move:
 - Moving in a straight line with a chasing or pressurizing defender to the side.
 - Can be effective to create space when moving in any direction.

Fake Pass and Inside Step Over (Rivelino)

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Moving diagonally across field at a slower pace with some separation from a recovering defender.

Fake Pass and Swivel Step Over

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- From the static shield position with side to defender.
- Moving with back to defender across or slightly down the field.

Fake Pass and Cruyff Turn

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Reversing play when moving square across the field.
- Reversing direction in the attacking third when trying to beat a man to penetrate.

Fake Pass and Spin Cruyff

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Moving across the field from a shield position.

Scissors or Outside Step Over

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Attacking a defender head on.

Touch and Hop/Outside Step Over (Matthews/Scissors)

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Attacking defender head on.

Swivel/Swivel (Beardsley)

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Best used moving square across the field with a shield position on the defender.

Tap and Play Behind the Standing Leg

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- From a static shield position with side to defender.

Reverse Matthews (Ronaldinho)

Best game situations for the use of this move:

- Attacking a defender head on.

The FTBL Academy Shooting Techniques

Shooting - Coaching Tips

- Adopt the correct attitude. Be brave and courageous.
- Be selfish. Take every reasonable opportunity to shoot.
- Utilize the correct technique.
- Low shots are more difficult to save than those in the air.
- Shots along the ground can stick, bump, or skid causing problems for goalkeepers.
- Shots away from the goalkeepers to the far post are more difficult to save and create more secondary scoring opportunities.
- Gauge the goalkeeper's position and aim the least protected area of the goal.
- Always strike through the middle or top half of the ball unless chipping the goalkeeper or volleying.
- Utilize maximum possible power while retaining accuracy.
- Keep eyes on the ball after deciding the direction of the shot.
- Pick the area of the ball where contact is desired and concentrate on that point.
- Use your arms for balance.
- Lock the ankle of the kicking foot.
- Disguise the shot if possible.

Shooting with the Laces - "The Low Drive or Power Shot"

- This method of shooting can be used from close in but is more necessary when shooting from distance for power and accuracy.

Shooting with the Outside of the Foot - "The Flick Shot"

- This method of striking the ball is used for quick deceptive fishing from within 18 yards of goal.

Shooting with the Inside of the Foot - "The Push Shot"

- This method of striking the ball is used for maximum accuracy when fishing from within 18 yards of the goal.

Bending the Ball with Outside of Foot - "The Banana Shot"

- This method of striking the ball is used for swerving the ball around defenders or for deceiving the goalkeeper.

Bending the Ball with Inside of the Foot - "The Banana Shot"

- This method of shooting can be used from close in but is more necessary when shooting from distance for power and accuracy.

Shooting with the Upper Toe - "The Chip Shot"

- This method is very effective in beating a goalkeeper who has advanced off his line leaving extra space behind for a well placed chip.

Shooting with the Inside of the Foot - "The Volley"

- This method is used for striking a dropping ball from closer to goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn't allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

Shooting with the Laces of the Foot - "The Volley"

- This method is used for striking a dropping ball from closer to goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn't allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

Shooting with the Laces of the Foot (Instep) - "The Side Volley"

- This method is used for striking a dropping ball from closer to goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn't allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

Shooting with the Laces of the Foot - "The Half Volley"

- This method is used for striking a dropping ball from closer to goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn't allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

FTBL Academy Homework

The setting of homework establishes priorities for task orientation, completion and achievement. However, while setting homework is a good start, the difference between good and great is in structuring the environment and follow up. Expect what you inspect so keep a homework record and check up on who is doing their daily assignments at each practice.

The FTBL Academy approach sets a homework target of 600 fakes/moves or 200 shots per day. However, each player is not limited to these targets and should attempt to surpass extrinsic goals with more challenging targets of their own. This is the essence of self-motivation and it should be emphasized that the program homework target is a minimum not optimum goal.

“My generation learnt to play soccer in the street. Our skill levels greatly improved because of the lack of space and the fact that there were few of us meant that we were always involved in the game. The street was our soccer school. Players like Pele, Beckenbauer, Platini, Di Stefano and myself all started by kicking a football, tin cans, rubber ball or even rags in the street against guys who would fight to get the ‘ball’ off of you. You had to rely on your quick thinking and your skill when playing against these guys, because not only are they bigger than you, but space was tight and you were often under great pressure. During those games I’d use walls, my teammates and even the curb of the pavement. My favorite move was to kick the ball against a wall and control the rebound whilst running at speed, as this split second was often the crucial difference between a great goal and loss of possession.

Youngsters need to develop a close personal relationship with the ball. They need to get to know it and love it as quality is only achieved through many hours of lonely practice. When I played for Ajax juniors, each boy had a football with his name on it. In Spain, at the grass roots level often there is only one ball for the whole team. At Ajax my ball “Cruyff” was my friend and I had lots of affection for it.”

- Johan Cruyff