



**JUNIOR FOOTBALL PROGRAM**



# “Making friends with the ball”

A set of 18 basic skills and exercises which will assist young players to better enjoy the game.

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## 13. SPRINTING

### **THE CHALLENGE 1 :**

**Recommended time:**

**The average of 3 attempts in succession**

Level 1 - Beginners, Level 2 - 4.50 secs, Level 3 - 4.20 secs, Level 4 - 4.00 secs, Level 5 - 3.75 secs.

### **THE CHALLENGE 2:**

**Recommended time:**

**The average of 2 attempts in succession**

Level 1 - Beginners, Level 2 - 14 secs, Level 3 - 13 secs, Level 4 - 12 secs, Level 5 - 11 secs.

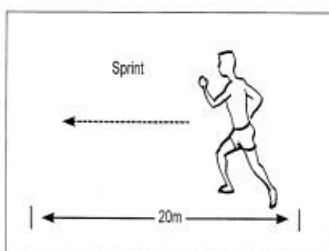
### **Reasons for learning this skill**

No matter what position the player plays extra speed will be an advantage. No matter how fast a player is there will always be another who is faster. The number of occasions that a player is required to sprint in a game will depend on his/her understanding of the game and the desire to get involved which will be ultimately be dependant on the fitness of the player. Soccer has developed over the years into a fast technical game where speed particularly over the first 5 metres is critical. The first player to the ball wins the ball. Fitness also plays a part and players must be fit to perform at their peak for the duration of the game. A big percentage of sprinting will be done off the ball. A player will be required to sprint for 12% of the game with all positional players approximately the same intensity in the modern game. When one compares that percentage with an average of 2% that a player touches the ball it is obvious that attention be made to this skill. Improving speed should not be ignored as it is one of the three main characteristics of a good player, i.e. speed of movement, speed of thought, speed of control.

### **Organisation by coach or parent**

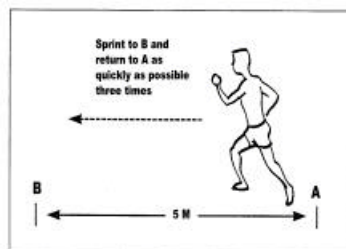
N.B. To avoid injury, players should warm up and stretch properly, before starting any exercises.

Two players, 2 cones, one tape measure, one stop watch.



### **Task to practice - the challenge**

1. Sprint without the ball from a standing start over 20 metres. Times to be kept for three successive attempts.
2. Sprint without the ball from a standing start over 5 metres and back to start 3 times as quick as possible. Place your foot next to and touch a cone on the ground at each turn. Timing to be kept for two successive attempts.



### **Coaching hints - things to look for**

When coaching runners you should note:

- technique should be introduced very early in a runner's career and emphasised regularly - but not forced;
- many runners have an eccentric or ungraceful style, but on analysis are applying force efficiently;
- the upper body carriage should be very slightly forward or upright, but never back as this causes a deceleration component;
- the head is held relaxed, straight and still;
- the arms are a major component in the creation of balanced forward motion and should move from the shoulders without causing body sway;
- the angle of the elbows should be 90 degrees approximately with the hands held slightly clenched;
- the magnitude of the swing depends on the speed of the runner, but should never be overdone as stride cadence is affected and energy wasted;

- in the arm swing the hands move from just behind the hips to chest height at the very most and swinging across the body is to be avoided;
- the ball of the foot should land momentarily ahead of the heel. When sprinting the foot plant is higher on the ball and toward the toes, but the heel will still strike the ground in the support of the foot in its lateral and linear plant position;
- the lateral extent is limited to a straight line which the feet touch, but do not cross each others path. A cross over gait creates excessive hip movement, while a spreading of the feet affects the line of applied force, thus reducing forward velocity;
- the linear position of the foot dictates the stride length, an important part of a runner's ability to develop efficient forward motion;
- over extension creates a waste of energy and there appears to be a direct relationship between oxygen intake and stride length;
- under striding is also less efficient, but is not so detrimental as an overly long stride.

### **Additional skills practice**

- With the ball.
- Defending back.
- Shooting when breaking away.

### **Progressive training practice**

Sprint exercise should be incorporated into every training session with the emphasis on technique. Things to emphasise are: knees up, heels up, arms 90 degrees and straight ahead, leg stride that does not cross.