

Soccer Conditioning – What Youth Soccer Coaches Need To Know

If you are a soccer parent or youth soccer coach you need to understand both the energy, muscular and neurological (nerves) demands of the body of a young footballer that occur through out a soccer match.

In the past and even still now in the present both parents and coaches alike are sending their children and players out for a twenty to thirty minute conditioning run. In the past that may have been fine; however as soccer has evolved into a power and speed game this type of training is outdated. Not only is out dated it leads to players becoming slower, weaker and prone to overuse injuries.

Soccer is a game of short bursts of energy with recovery. A steady jog keeps the player at a steady pace without stopping, starting, changing direction or accelerating. These are the key components that a soccer player needs to masters to be effective on the field.

In a solid conditioning program for this sport contains three key components:

- 1) Sprints
- 2) Repeat sprints for a specific amount time with recovery (intervals)
- 3) Acceleration

If we break down a soccer game very closely we see these actions on a consistent basis. Take for example when an attacking team sends ball into open space down the wings. A striker or an attacking defender need to make a sprint to get to the ball.

A soccer player also needs to have the ability to defend after an attack. In this case they need to have the energy to make the initial attacking run and then return at speed to defend.

Finally a player needs to shift gears / pace in order to get by a defender. It is for these reasons that young soccer players need to condition this way.

Here are three simple drills that you can do to help with your sprints, repeated sprints and acceleration.

1. Sprint distances of 10m, 20m and 30m – for every ten meters you sprint rest one minute before you sprint again. You need maximum recovery to get the most out of your sprints. You can do five to ten of these.

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2. Next measure to 20 or thirty meter distance and have your child or team sprint back and forth for thirty seconds and recover for thirty seconds. You can work up to fifteen to twenty minutes three times a week. This is considered interval training.
3. Next you may have your child walk for ten meters, then jog for ten meters and finally sprint for 10 meters. If your child or team are fourteen years of age or older you can use distances of twenty to thirty meters. This type of drills teaches change of speed and acceleration.

These young soccer players can do these drills on a field sprinting back and forth in linear fashion. If you have the space set up square that is either 10m by 10 meters or 20m -20m or 30m by 30m . This will force the players to properly slow down and change direction.

This causes the three systems in the body (energy, muscular and neurological) to work together for success.

As you know there are many stops and starts with change of direction in the game. Doing box drills will help with specific soccer conditioning.

These drills may be done with or without a soccer ball.

It is important that your child or team avoid distance runs for conditioning.

Now that you have information it is up to you introduce this to your child or team.

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