

## How to Get Your Youth Soccer Team to Leave Practice as Better Players



A Tired and Well-Practiced Soccer Team - (Photo: Photoree.com)

Youth soccer is all about development. While many skills that translate to the game are best learned during a game, and in a game, practice is a huge part of a child's soccer learning. As a coach, it is your responsibility to help all the players of the team get better each and every practice in some manner. So many practices in youth soccer often feel like a waste and that the team is simply just going through the motions, but if you can help improve the players during this time, you will help them develop and probably will see great improvements during games as well. Here are some practice tips to energize your squad:

Keep practice moving! A youth soccer practice is typically just one hour long. That is not very much time, especially if your team takes twenty minutes to figure out what they are supposed to do in a drill. Or likewise, if your team is waiting for direction after warm-ups and stretches for five minutes before you set up a drill, that's five minutes of training missed. You need to have a dedicated plan for every practice and try to stick to it as best as you can. This way there is no dead time and everyone is playing a lot.

Make practices tough! Having players line up and pass the ball to a partner for ten minutes doesn't really capture a live game experience. With no movement and pressure, you can probably pass the ball back and forth a thousand times and not really learn anything about the game. Devise a passing drill where players have to run to space and get open, or institute a keep-away drill where defenders are present to disrupt passes. This brings a "in-game" element of training to your practice and helps the players develop in areas they will actually experience during a game.

This idea is also held true for shooting drills. Practicing PK's is fun and players will enjoy it, but how often to penalty kicks actually occur in a game? Maybe once? Most shots players take in a game occur when the striker is at full sprint, and defenders and goalie are bearing down upon them! Try to re-create this experience in practice. Not only do drills like this help your forwards and players perfect shooting and passing, but it greatly improves the defensive skills of your players in these situations as well. Additionally, your goalie can learn how to pressure strikers which is a skill they must master to dominate their goal.

Basically, the idea here is to create drills that make players feel like they are in a real game situation. Also, with heavy pressure and intensity, players will have to use a lot more energy and will probably go home tired after practice. That is exactly what you want! Your team shouldn't be relaxing and simply having fun while training! Although you want the sport to be fun, much of that comes with the attitude you parlay onto the team. Instead of barking at players during these drills, praise their accomplishments and carry a jovial spirit around the team. Hopefully, this will help you create some new and invigorating drills for your soccer team's practice.