

The Importance Of Speed In Soccer

By Andre Botelho - "The Expert Soccer Coach"

Speed is very crucial to the game of soccer. An effective speed training program would be based on the realistic aspects of the game. When soccer players play on the field there are a couple of aspects such as reflexes, tactical anticipation, and agility that influence their speed.

Now let's imagine that each of your players has the speed of a *race car*...



Remember that in soccer, a player is not just sprinting all the time. A soccer player needs to practice gaining speed with the ball and practice changing directions rapidly - this is what good soccer performance involves.

Factors Influencing Speed...

Before I give you tips on how to improve the speed of your players, I feel it is important to discuss a few crucial points about speed. There are mainly four factors that would affect the speed of a soccer player.

1. **Physical attributes:** Here I am referring to the strength of the player's muscles. If the muscles are weak, you cannot expect the player to run fast. So you need to work on building muscle strength in him/her to improve his/her speed levels.
2. **Technique:** How you run affects your speed. Proper sprinting technique requires that the player touches the ground with the toes. Moreover, the player's upper body should be slightly bent forward and the arms should be on the sides of the body.
3. **Nutrition:** Poor nutritional habits and body fat would impede your speed. So if you want your players to gain speed, you must first ensure that they follow good nutritional habits and those with fat baggage, work at shedding it.
4. **Flexibility:** A good flexible body will have greater speed. It is as simple as that.

Combining Soccer Speed & Acceleration With Agility

Speed and agility are two very important elements of soccer. Speed refers to the ability of the player to reach a high velocity of movement, which could be running, cycling, swimming, and any other locomotive movement.

Agility refers to the player's ability to suddenly brake, change direction and then accelerate again. So, a soccer speed training program should focus on both speed and agility.

- **Soccer Speed Drills**

Soccer requires both anaerobic and aerobic fitness. However, it has been frequently noted that most soccer training programs focus more on endurance training and neglect the speed aspect. It is true that distance running is required in soccer and for that coaches need to provide endurance training. But speed is also needed in soccer.

Acceleration is a very important part of speed training. Soccer players need to accelerate quickly and powerfully. In soccer, players are required to break away from the opponent, get possession of the ball first, and then chase down the opponent. All these skills require players to suddenly accelerate their speed.

After gaining acceleration, players would need to gain maximum velocity. Besides acceleration and maximum velocity, soccer players also have to have speed endurance training. In soccer games, players have to maintain speed even if they are fatigued.

So, incorporating speed training drills in your soccer fitness program will help players develop their overall soccer fitness and skills. Now, let me tell about a soccer speed drill that your players will have fun doing...

Soccer SPEED Drill: Lateral Agility Drill

This is a very good drill to develop player's sideways agility, which is very necessary in soccer.

Age: 13 - Adult

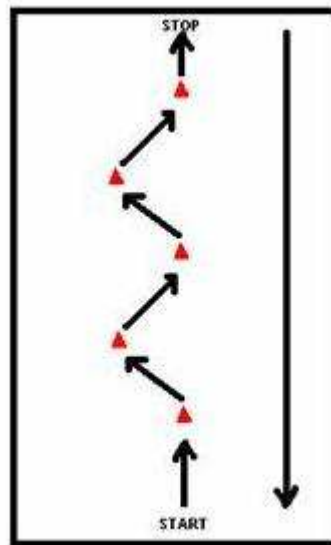
Level: Advanced

Time: 10-15 minutes

Step By Step Instructions:

- **Step 1:** Four cones should be placed in straight line with 3 yards/meters apart.
- **Step 2:** 3 yards/meters to the left of each pair of cones; place another cone in between them.
- **Step 3:** Players should sprint from one cone to the next and should touch each cone with their hands.
- **Step 4:** Players should take quick side steps rather than turning to face the marker and then running straight.

Diagram:



Key Points:

- Do three to five sets.
- This drill can be performed any time during the week.

Now go out there and test it out at your next group coaching session...

Ok, that's it for today!...



Dedicated to improving your coaching skills,

Andre Botelho
"The Expert Soccer Coach"

www.SoccerDrillsTips.com

P.S. If you would like to view the soccer coaching resources and tools discussed in this Newsletter please visit <http://www.soccerdrillstips.com>