

GSM International Football Education on Scoring Goals

“Sharpening Your Players Shooting Skills”

As a Coach, do you want your team to score more goals?

All the dribbling techniques at a high level of playing pace and technical skill in the world won't amount to much if when you go to score; your shooting technique isn't at 100%. Everything from your posture, to the angle of your foot, and your position in the field can affect your success in a multitude of ways.

Before you even start to practice your actual shooting skills, however, you'll need to have a firm understanding of when to shoot or pull that trigger and let it rip.

Look for a Window of Opportunity to Create and Score a Goal

Not only should you focus your body and your concentration on the ball, but you should also keep your eyes on the field. Learn to spot openings through which you can shoot. Sometimes these windows of opportunity come and go in a fraction of a second.

In particular, look for situations where you can bend the ball around the defender and into the corner of the net. You are using the defender as a shield so that the goalie doesn't get a good look at the ball and where it's going. You don't need to beat the defender to get a good shooting opportunity. Use the defender to your advantage to block the keeper's vision and take a quick shot.

There will be many times when your shot will end up being deflected by the opposing team and break through the crowd and slip into the goal. Or, a teammate may get a touch on the shot and throw off the keeper, with the ball going the other way completely, the keeper diving one way to save the shot, and the deflection is putting the ball into the opposite corner.

In general, you want the opposing team to be worried about whether or not you're going to take a shot. If there's a small opportunity or even a half chance, take it with confidence, even if it's a long range shot or a shot into a crowd. When the defense thinks you're going to shoot, they'll rush towards you, allowing you to make a pass to an open teammate. You can also set them up for a fake shot. If they're so used to you shooting, the mere impression that you're going to shoot or even just a subtle cut of the ball will put them off.

Placing the Ball in the Net

These are easy opportunities where you just redirect a cross or pass into the goal with the inside of your foot. As with playing a simple pass, you don't need to hit the ball with much power. Keep your ankle locked and almost re-direct the ball into the open space, low to the ground to the right or left of the keeper. Make sure you follow through. You don't have to hit the ball with power, but you want to make it a crisp shot and not a lazy powerless strike.

However, there are always exceptions to the rule. If you can pull it off and score, try new ways of shooting and putting the ball on goal. As a young player, don't be afraid to take chances, although you should build up your basic foundation of skills and do the simple things perfectly before trying to make heel passes or bending the ball with the outside of your foot.

Quick Shooting Exercise

Now that you know when to shoot the ball, here's how to get the job done.

1. Have a forward post up on the top of the box and from about twenty feet away from shooters. Have them play the ball into the forward, who lays the ball off to the right or left for his or her teammates to take a first time shot on goal. Then have the line move to the side, so you're hitting the ball with the inside and outside of your feet (both right and left) and move the line accordingly. That way, you're coming on to the ball from the side, and the forward may just be laying the ball back to the oncoming shooter.
2. Line players up along the side of the goal and then form another line at the top of the box. The players along the side of the goal play the ball with pace to the players at the top of the box, who then have three touches to get a shot off before the charging player closes them down.
3. Play combinations at the top of the box – overlapping runs, give and goes, and crosses that all lead to shots. Try to hit a moving ball and make the drills game-like. Much like with patterns set up a few short combinations that lead to shots.
4. Have a back play the ball to the shooter from behind, about ten yards away from the shooter. Then, once the defender plays the ball to the shooter, they close (chase) down the shooter. Putting pressure on the shooter, so they have to get the shot off quickly; in a game, there's very little time to think, know what you want to do with the ball before you receive it, take a quick touch of the ball ahead of you or to one side and pick your spot.
5. Throw or lob balls into the shooter are difficult balls to control. Set limits on the number of touches the shooter can take before he or she gets a shot off.

The Various Ways to Strike the Ball

Instep Drive

Use the top surface area of your shoe just before the laces begin. Do this when you want to strike the ball with power.

Side of the Foot Passing Shot

Strike with the flat portion of the inside of your shoe. Turn your body to the right or left, depending upon which foot you are kicking with. This is used more for accuracy and placement. Pass the ball into the net. Strike the ball low and to the corners.

Outside of the Foot

Use the outer surface of the front part of your foot. It's best used to bend the ball and strike through the ball.

Inside of the Foot

Wrap your foot around the ball by using the inner surface of your foot. This move is also used to bend the ball, as above, except with the inner part of your shoe and the upper portion of your foot.

The Volleys and Side Volleys

This is striking the ball out of the air. Keep your ankle locked and drive through the ball. However, when striking the ball in the air, make sure you are in a balanced position, and you are not reaching out too far to meet the ball. Otherwise, the ball will not go straight, and in the direction, you want it to. Try to have your hips square to the ball and follow through

Half Volleys

Meet the ball just after it bounces, just as it's rising from the ground. Or, meet the ball on the run and strike through.

Bicycle or Over Head Kicks

Keep your back to the target and your eyes on the ball. Bring the knee of your non-kicking leg toward your chest followed immediately with the same motion of your kicking leg. The movement of your legs will appear as if you're pedaling a bicycle backward. Extend both arms and your palms facing the ground behind you to brace yourself when you land.

Half Chances

Follow your shots. You never know when the goalkeeper is going to drop the ball. As a forward or attacking midfielder, always be ready to follow up all shots and pounce on shots that the goalie drops.

As a forward, try to read the game and take risks when the ball is punted by the opposing goalie. See if you can read the play and see where the second ball will end up. Try to understand where your teammate will redirect or flick the ball on to you. Often, the other team will miss hit or redirect the ball towards their goal. Be ready to jump on those opportunities.

Match Like Patterns of Play

While you can't predict the twists, and turns that every soccer game brings, the team can and should practice game-like patterns to simulate live playing conditions. Essentially, it's like setting up a dress rehearsal—except that instead of wearing the team uniforms, you wear the mentality and the effort you hope to create during the actual game.

For example, have a defender, who is positioned on the right side, play a forty-yard ball towards the top of the box. There, a forward is checking back to receive the ball. This runs back by the forward can be just a five to ten-yard run, first dragging the defender towards the goal and away from where he wants to receive the ball, and as a result creating the space he wants to check into. The forward then lays the ball back to a center midfielder, who plays the ball down the line to the defender who has made an overlapping run and then crosses the ball into the box. The midfielder and forward make near and far post runs, and the defender picks one of them out with a cross.

Have each of these players rotate into the next position. The forward becomes the defender, the midfielder becomes the forward, and the defender becomes the midfielder.

Next, develop and create your patterns. For instance, a defender plays the ball into the midfielder, who plays it back to him and then serves the ball into the forward. The forward lays the ball back to the midfielder, who then plays the defender down the line. Then the defender crosses the ball (picking out a player with the cross). Vary the passes, make all the passes in the air, keep all pass one touch, add in a cross-over exchange (players dribble at a teammate and then transfers the ball), and make it, so all passes are played with your weak foot. Make the passes sharp and play them away from where the defender would be. Add more players and increase the number of passes that are made before a cross or a shot is taken on goal. Have a player overlap the defender and serve the ball in for a cross; have the midfield begin the play with a pass to the defender who then plays it to the forward and back to the midfielder. Has the ball played down the line to the defender, who swings in the cross?

Always try to finish with a shot on goal after running through a few patterns. Also, make sure every player or position gets a touch on the ball before a shot or cross is taken.

Make the patterns game-like by playing the ball with pace and making all of your touches sharp, as if you are under pressure. Start out walking through these patterns and then build up speed as your team becomes accustomed to the runs (patterns). When you are beginning to move through the patterns at a faster pace, make sure the angles of the passes are sharp, and the runs are at a game-like pace.

All the players should try to check back to the ball as if they have a defender on them and make angled runs back to the ball. These runs don't have to be long - even just two or three yards (quick cuts). Again, the overall idea is to concentrate and make these patterns game-like, turning them almost into exact set plays, to the point where your team could run through them in their sleep.

Now that we've discussed the importance of running through game-like patterns on the previous page, here are some handy drills, patterns, and tips you can put into practice.

Full Field (11 players):

Have the keeper throw or punt the ball to the forward, who controls the ball and plays back to a defender. Developing a passing pattern, where each player on the field gets a touch on the ball, and a series of a wall passes, dribble exchanges overlaps, and a long switch, are included in the routine.

Half Field or small Sided Game (6-9 players):

The left defender plays the ball to the center midfielder, who then plays it to the right back (switching the field). Right back plays the ball to the right midfielder who plays again to the right back. From there, the ball is served into the forward who is checking back. The forward lays the ball back to the center midfielder – who plays the ball to the right or left back, with both overlapping on the outside. The

forward and center midfielder make near and far post runs, and the midfielders crash the box for a ball that might pop back to them.

Small Space (top of the box; 3 players):

Begin the drill on the far corner of the top of the box. Right midfielder does a dribble exchange with the center midfielder, who takes the ball down the line and whips in a cross to the forward and right midfielder. Incorporate the wall pass and overlap into this pattern. Vary the passes. Play the ball short, so the player has to come back to the ball. Play the ball sharply, so they have to play one touch, and then when playing the ball to the player for the cross, play the ball hard to their feet and down the line, so they have to run on to the ball.

Elements to Focus on When Shooting:

- Communicate. Say man on or turn, dictating how the pattern will evolve. If someone says 'turn,' then the ball or pattern will need to go forward. If someone says 'man on,' then the ball will come back again before it goes forward.
- Move in your position's sphere. Make short, angled runs back to receive the ball or cuts into space.
- Every player should get a touch before a cross or shot is taken.
- Add in a few defenders as the drill progresses.
- Vary the passes: all in the air, on the ground, or chipped (lofted passes). All passes with right or left foot.
- Play driven balls.
- Require the players to score with their heads.
- Insert one long switch before you can go to goal (switch must be in the air).

More Finishing Exercises:

1. This is a good warm-up and also good to do once a week: In pairs about five yards away from one another, one player tosses the ball in the air to his or her teammate's right and left inside of the foot, top of the foot, thigh, chest, and head. Go through the cycle about ten times each – ten times on the left inside of the foot and instep and so on. Keep your ankle locked and hit sharp passes back to your teammate.
2. Keep away in a tight square, starting out without restrictions, and then go to two touches, then one touch or time on the ball such as three seconds. Towards the end, make it a competition where the team who completes ten passes first wins.
3. Follow your pass (groups of three). This is a good warm-up drill as well as good for improving and maintaining your technique. Remember always to play crisp and sharp passes. You can set this up at various distances to work on both short and long passes.

Start out ten to twenty yards apart and simply pass the ball to your teammate who then passes the ball to the next player in rotation; you get a good warm-up by following your pass. Start this drill using only two touches and then move on to one touch. Have the player who is making the initial pass close down the player who is receiving the pass, acting as a defender - force the player to go one direction. Make them control the ball to one side or the other with just two touches, one for control and the other to make the pass. Make one neat touch to the side and then make the pass.

Next, you can spread out to thirty or forty yards away and play the ball in the air, trying to maintain the rotation and sharpness of the exercise with two touch and driving the ball into your teammates. A lofted pass is easy for the defense to intercept and gives them time to close your teammate down. You can practice all types of passes - chips, bending the ball, half-volleys, and low driven balls.

4. It is a good idea to finish a day of practice with some crossing and finishing. Have your backs and midfielders serve the ball into the forwards who make near and far post runs.

When doing a crossing drill or any drill, try not to hit a ball that is still. Have a teammate play the ball into the players who are crossing the ball - either a crisp pass into their feet or play a ball ahead of them. It is not a game-like situation if the ball is dead and not moving. The next player in line plays the ball to the person who is crossing the ball. Use a crisp pass to start the play. Forwards line up at the top of the box - making near and far post runs, midfielders and defenders out wide.

The team that creates more scoring opportunities usually wins the match. However, it is important for the coach to have shot in every training session. Once players are grasping various methods of shooting to finish (ball in the back of the net), coaches need to provide match conditions through small side games, and functional training exercises. This is where shooting under matches condition at top speed is being coached). Players who can score a goal under match pressure are ready to move to a higher level

and are sort after. Get all you players learning to create and score goals. Even the keepers like to get involved in small side game once in a while.

The scoring goal is what the game of Football is about. Allot of efforts goes into bringing the football down the field and into a position where shots are taken. These shots are to be finished as much as possible. They only come through a training session that produces match like condition through a tremendous amount of repetition work in your week's training session. Go for the goal.