



The art of flying

How to teach your players three spectacular moves: bicycle kick, side volley and diving header.

By **Peter Hyballa**, German A-license-holder

Illustr. 1 Prerequisites for learning the moves

Condition	Mentality	Skills and abilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● takeoff power ● mobility ● agility ● coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● courage ● self-confidence ● willpower ● concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● comfortable with "falling" ● enjoying spectacular moves ● enjoying "action"



PHOTO: FIRO SPORTPHOTO

Learning to fly

What is the attraction of soccer? Why do thousands of spectators flock to the stadiums to support and motivate their favorite teams? Clearly, it all comes down to the basic idea of the game, an idea that never ceases to fascinate: stopping shots and (more importantly) shooting. But is shooting the only source of fascination in the game of soccer? What about those other breathtaking moments that help make soccer so popular?

We can observe the phenomenon in other sports: For example, when Michael Jordan goes up ("lifts off" might be a

better way to put it) for a slam-dunk, or when Pete Sampras sprints to the net at Wimbledon, spectators sit stunned by these feats of athleticism. When they recover, they show their appreciation with thunderous applause.

Naturally, soccer has its own spectacular scenes. In Germany, for example, everyone remembers Klaus Fischer's famous bicycle kicks from the 70s, and Gerd Müller's amazing "flying" side volley at the 1970 World Cup.

Why are certain moves – the bicycle kick, side volley or diving header – so fascinating for soccer players, and especially for youth players? The answer is a combination of reasons.

YOUTH TRAINING

PHOTO: FIRO SPORTPHOTO

Keep your players motivated by making these spectacular moves a regular part of your training program.

For soccer players, these moves are their only opportunity to “fly”—that is, to leave the ground. They enable an ordinarily “restrained” player to show off acrobatic abilities that are not called upon in the usual course of practice and match play.

They also introduce a certain amount of uncertainty—like the bicycle kick, where players do

not know how they are going to hit the ground or whether the move will succeed.

Spectacular moves in youth soccer

When it comes to the bicycle kick, diving header or side volley, lots of youth soccer players overdo it. Instead of thinking about effectiveness, they just want to have fun, to get knocked around or enjoy a brief moment of “weightlessness.”

After all, testing and exploring your body’s limitations can be quite a thrill. And another attraction is that players usually execute these “acrobatic” moves intuitively.

Players and spectators alike are taken by surprise when a spectacular move suddenly results in a goal, clearance, or a dangerous situation in the goal box. Youth players may show more of a tendency to “shoot from the hip,” so to speak, due to the reasons mentioned above, but adults do it too.

Teaching the moves

● To repeat: Acrobatic moves like the bicycle kick, side volley and diving header are what

give the game its “spice.” However, without training, these breathtaking displays of skill can turn into comic disasters much more often than any player would like. This is why it is important to incorporate these specialties into your regular practice sessions every now and then, so players can learn and practice them.

● This is especially important for the youngest players, who need, in particular, to learn the right way to fall and to develop the necessary coordination.

● Because they are so difficult, all acrobatic moves require regular, age-appropriate and systematic training, including appropriate coordination training specially adapted to the move in question.

● These spectacular moves may not always be effective, but they are fascinating and fun to watch – part of the art of soccer.

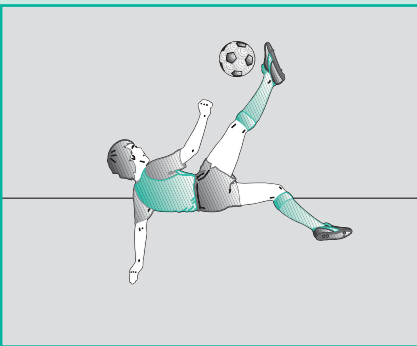
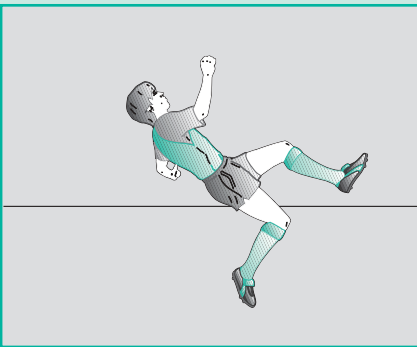
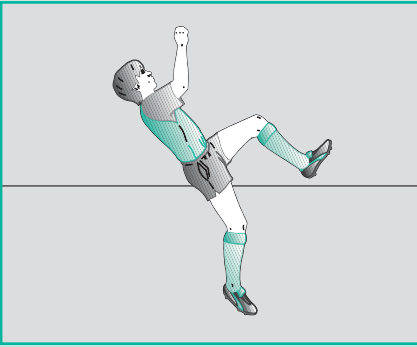
● To simplify this art for players so they can learn and improve their skills, we also need more effective methods and exercises. Even though spectacular moves are usually executed intuitively, they need to be a regular part of the training program so that they ultimately become second nature to players.

The following exercises demonstrate how you can improve individual moves with training that is both systematic and attractive.

Illustr. 2 Spectacular moves: an overview

1

Bicycle kick

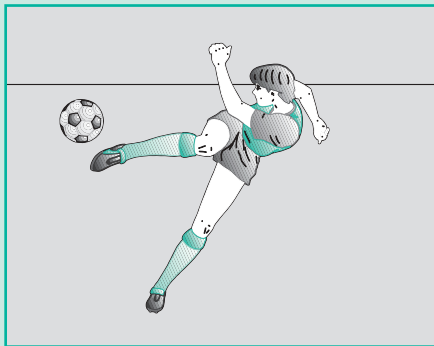
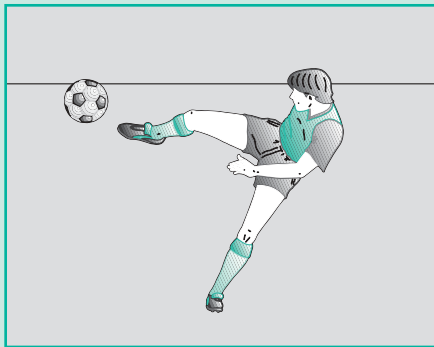
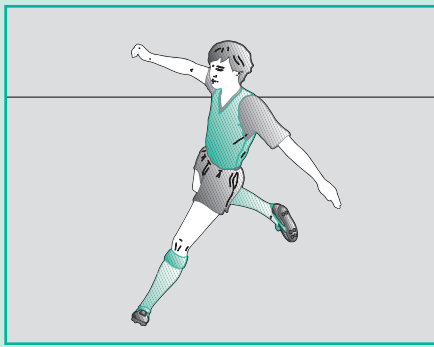


Corrections

- As you wind up with the kicking leg, bring your upper body diagonally backwards over your standing leg, which is slightly bent.
- Turn on the ball of your foot.
- Swing the kicking leg through, either diagonally upwards or parallel to the ground.
- Kick the center of the ball hard with your full instep.

2

Side volley

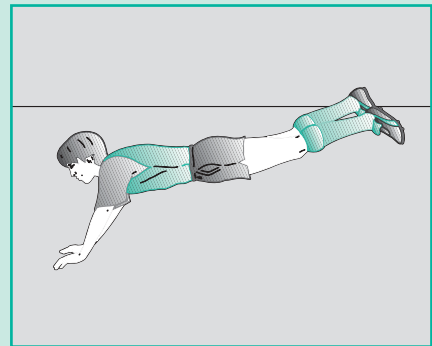
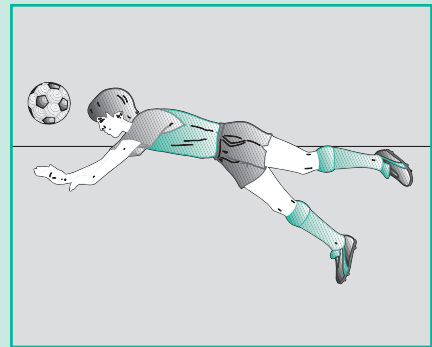
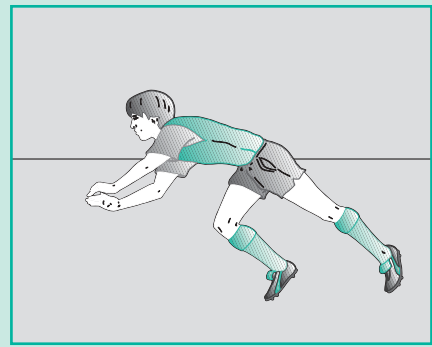


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- Turn on the ball of your foot.
- Swing the kicking leg through, either diagonally upwards or parallel to the ground.
- Kick the center of the ball hard with your full instep.

3

Diving header



Corrections

- Get a good running start, lower your upper body and take off with one leg.
- During the dive, position your head so that you can watch the ball and hit it with your forehead.
- Flex your entire body.
- Extend your arms forward (slightly bent) to absorb your body's momentum at the end of the dive.



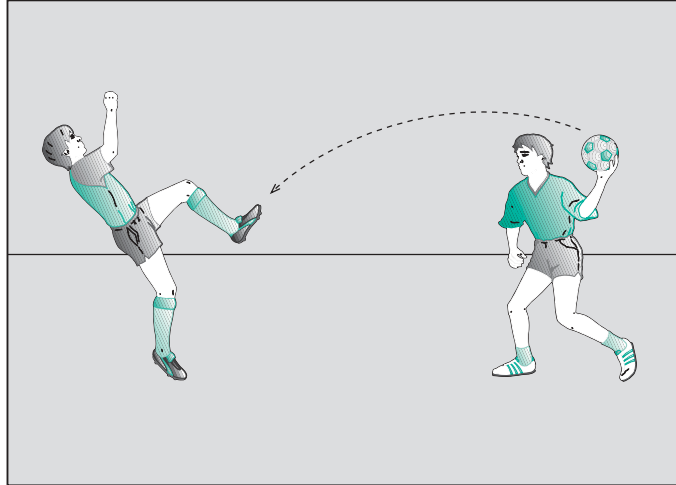
EXERCISES



BICYCLE KICK

1 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- Two players stand two yards apart.
- B stands facing away from the goal.
- A throws to B, and B kicks the ball while falling backwards.



TRAINING TIPS

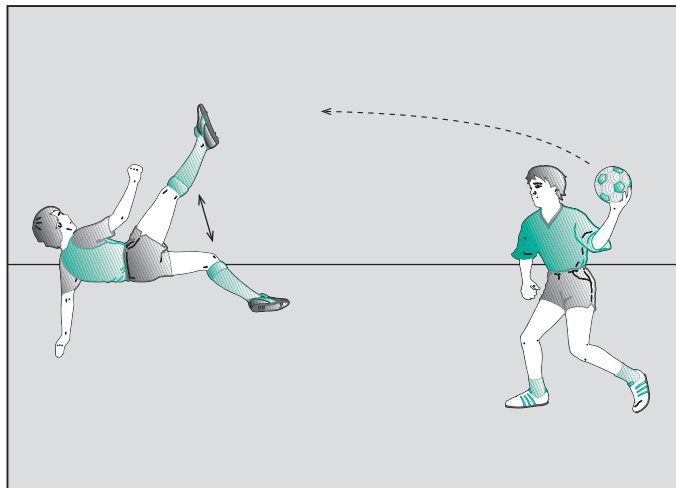
- ▶ Players always practice in pairs.
- ▶ A should throw the ball in a high arc, so that it comes straight down toward B.

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Make sure the takeoff is timed properly.
- ▶ Kick the ball with the full instep.
- ▶ Your body should already be flexed before you start falling backwards.
- ▶ Always keep your eyes on the ball

2 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- Setup is the same as in Exercise 1.
- At the right moment, B takes off with the kicking leg.
- B executes a scissors kick while falling backwards.



TRAINING TIPS

- ▶ Players should practice kicking with both legs.
- ▶ To soften the impact, practice in sand or lay out a soft mat.

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Kick the ball with the full instep.
- ▶ Keep your body flexed and try to "lie" horizontally in the air.
- ▶ Do a fast scissors kick.



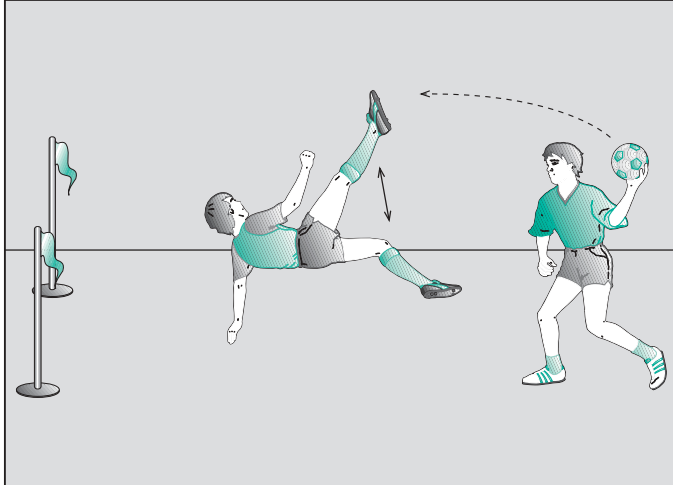
EXERCISES



BICYCLE KICK

3 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- Setup is the same as in Exercise 1.
- Set up a small goal (e.g. two poles, with or without goalkeeper) behind B.
- A throws to B, who finishes with a bicycle kick at the goal.



TRAINING TIPS

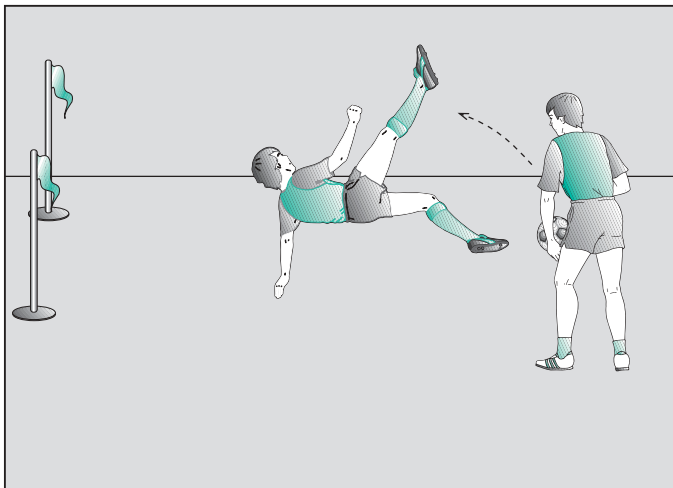
- ▶ Players should practice kicking with both legs.
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CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Kick the ball with the full instep.
- ▶ Keep your body flexed and try to "lie" horizontally in the air.
- ▶ Do a fast scissors kick.

4 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A stands next to B and throws the ball from the side.
- B shoots at the goal.



VARIATIONS

- ▶ A alternates sides on the throws.
- ▶ Add passive opponents.
- ▶ A passes on the ground; B bounces the ball up for the bicycle kick (for advanced players).

CORRECTION

- ▶ Turn your hips slightly.



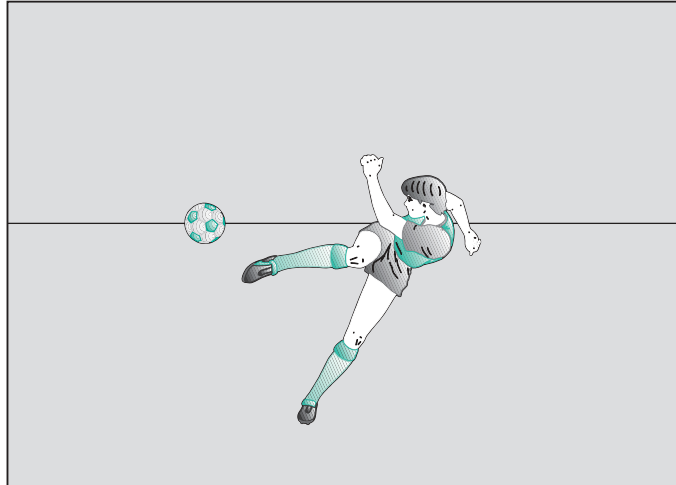
EXERCISES



SIDE VOLLEY

1 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A and B stand three yards apart.
- A throws the ball up and to one side, lets it bounce once and uses a side volley to kick a low pass in the air to B.
- B catches the ball and passes back to A the same way.



VARIATION

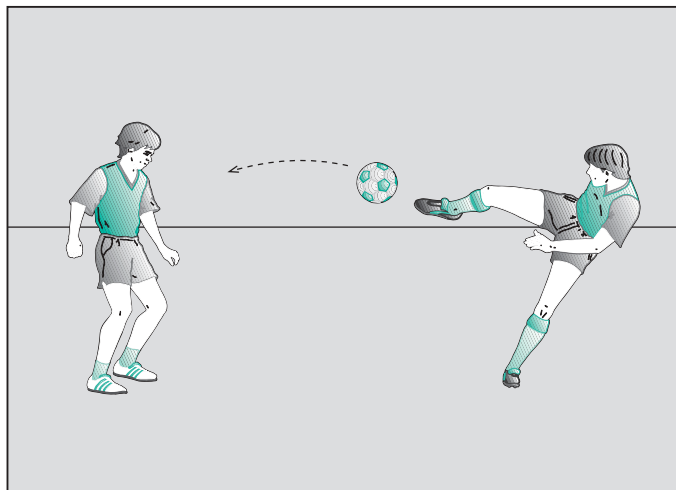
- ▶ Instead of letting the ball bounce, A throws it up and kicks directly to B.

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ As you wind up with the kicking leg, bring your upper body diagonally backwards over your plant leg, which is slightly bent.
- ▶ Be sure you turn on the ball of your foot.
- ▶ Kick the center of the ball hard with your full instep and with a slight "snap" from the hips.

2 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A and B stand facing one another, each on a three-yard-wide goal.
- They take turns throwing the ball up and to the side and using side volleys to shoot at each other's goals.



VARIATIONS

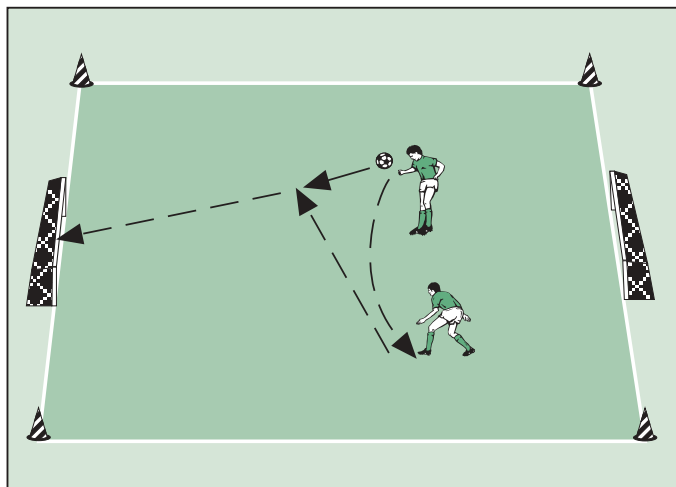
- ▶ Instead of letting the ball bounce, players throw it up and kick directly.
- ▶ Players switch feet after each kick.
- ▶ Competition: Who can score more goals?

CORRECTION

- ▶ As you wind up with the kicking leg, bring your upper body diagonally backwards over your plant leg, which is slightly bent.

3 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A and B head the ball back and forth as they run toward a goal.
- At the appropriate distance away from the goal, one of them receives the ball and uses a side volley to shoot.



VARIATIONS

- ▶ Players finish with spectacular side volleys.
- ▶ At the right moment, the coach calls out a player's name; that player shoots.

CORRECTION

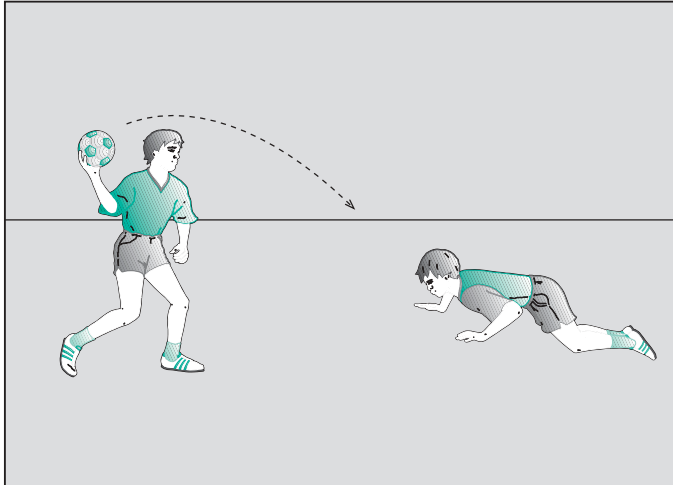
- ▶ As you wind up with the kicking leg, bring your upper body diagonally backwards over your plant leg, which is slightly bent.

▶▶▶ EXERCISES

▶▶ DIVING HEADER

1 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A stands facing B, who is kneeling, and throws the ball.
- B heads the ball back to A, who catches it, and falls to the ground.



VARIATIONS

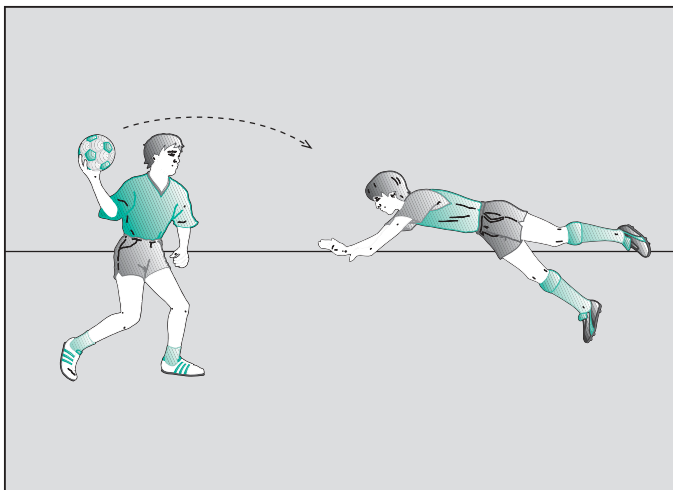
- ▶ B jumps from a squatting position.
- ▶ Practice in sand.
- ▶ Practice with a tetherball (individual practice)

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Hit the ball with your forehead.
- ▶ Don't just flop down; swing forward.

2 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- A stands facing B and throws the ball.
- B jumps forward and heads it back.



VARIATION

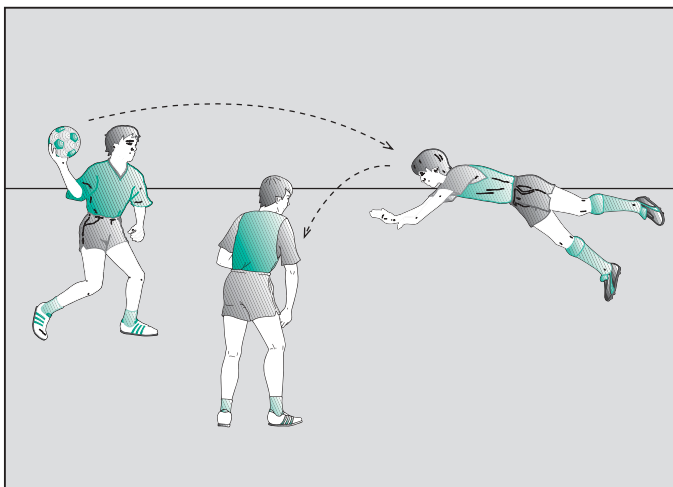
- ▶ Do headers to the left and right in addition to frontal headers.

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Get a good running start, lower your upper body and take off with one leg.
- ▶ Flex your entire body.
- ▶ Extend your arms forward (slightly bent) to absorb your body's momentum at the end of the dive.

3 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- Three players form a triangle and do turning diving headers.
- A throws the ball to B, who turns and does a diving header at hip level to C. C catches the ball and throws it to A, etc.



VARIATION

- ▶ Each player guards a small goal: Who can score the most goals?

CORRECTIONS

- ▶ Put your whole body into the sideways turn (not just your head).
- ▶ Wait for the ball in a relaxed position.



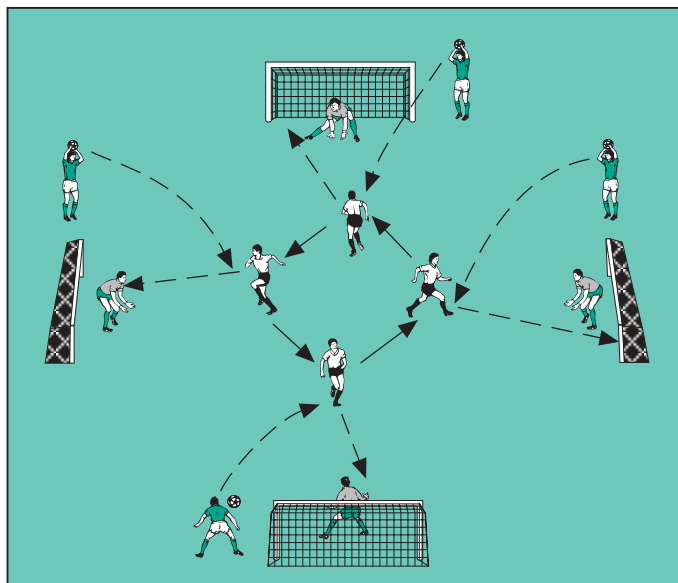
EXERCISES



"ACROBATIC RELAY"

1 SETUP AND SEQUENCE

- Set up several goals with goalkeepers in a circle.
- A thrower, with several balls, stands next to each goal.
- Players have to finish a different way at each goal, e.g.
 - Goal 1: bicycle kick
 - Goal 2: side volley
 - Goal 3: diving header
- The remaining players space themselves evenly and run from goal to goal, shooting as required at each one.



VARIATIONS

- ▶ Throwers and shooters switch roles after three to five minutes.
- ▶ Shooters switch directions.
- ▶ Shooting techniques change from round to round (instead of from goal to goal).
- ▶ Competition: Who can score the most goals?

OPTIONAL COOL-DOWN GAME: "AEROBIC SOCCER"

- ▶ Two teams play inside a marked field on two goals with goalkeepers.
- ▶ Players throw the ball to pass. Dribbling by hand is not allowed, so players are forced to pass quickly.
- ▶ Players can only score with bicycle kicks, diving headers or side volleys.