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# *Chapter 6*

## *Coaching Nine and Ten Year Olds: Team Identity*

*Friedreich Frobel, German Educational Reformist (1782-1852 A.D.), fostered the idea that learning can occur through play and games.*

### *One Ball - Four Players*

Children at this age are typically enrolled in grades 4 and 5 and may have been playing soccer for half of their lifetime. Some children, however, choose to

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begin play in soccer at this age. Both boys and girls are beginning to demonstrate an improved ability and a mastery of some aspects of basic locomotor, nonlocomotor, and manipulative skills (the ability to control objects, either directly through hands and feet, or indirectly with an implement such as a tennis racket).

They have also begun to develop basic technical abilities to play soccer and their cognitive understanding of tactics and strategies is evolving. They are beginning to demonstrate an ability to think in advance of the ball (anticipation). Formal schooling plays an increasingly important role in the development of children's thinking. They will demonstrate a very basic form of self-awareness; of realizing what they know and what they don't know

### ***Psychomotor***

During this period, children gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance, and power. Strength is related to body size and muscle mass. During childhood and adolescence, boys tend to have greater strength, especially in the trunk and upper body when compared to girls; however, leg strength differences are minimal.

Motor performance is most often measured by a variety of motor tasks that require speed, balance, flexibility, explosive strength and muscular endurance. Children are in a linear growth mode (from head to toe) that peaks with a growth spurt at adolescence. Some children will grow faster than others. Height can approach 5 feet and weight can reach 80 pounds or more.

Significant physical differences appear between genders from 10 to 11 years of age and onward.

### ***Cognitive***

There are significant changes in a child's memory ability in nine and 10 year olds, particularly in deliberate recall memory. By the age of 11 or 12 their deliberate recall memory is similar to an adult's.

They have the ability to remember and follow more complex instructions, which enables them to solve higher-level problems. Improvements in memory reflect a child's increasing fund of knowledge and experience. Children begin to move from Piaget's 3rd period of cognitive development (concrete operations) to the 4th stage of cognitive development (formal operations). Children in this age group develop an ability to focus longer and stay "on task." They begin to sequence thought and actions and they begin to think in advance of, or anticipate, the ball. They will start recognizing when and where to move with and without the ball and they begin to develop a sense of pace. Young soccer players must be observed and assessed in authentic game related activities that

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foster learning in all three identified domains—psychomotor, cognitive and psychosocial.

### ***Psychosocial***

Players begin to initiate play on their own and are likely to want to play rather than to be reminded that it is time to go to soccer practice. Many players are becoming more serious about their play and with whom they play. Peer group attachment and the pressure generated by peers become significant. There is a need to belong and the association with a team becomes increasingly more important. They will develop a group of friends; there is great social need to interact. Adults outside of the immediate family (most notably the coach) begin to take on added significance. Gender differences become more apparent. Over 76% of girls aged 9-12 cited “FUN” as the primary reason to be physically active (Jaffe & Manzer, 1992).

## ***Sample Game/Activities***

### ***Game 1: Ball Retrieve - Groups of Four***

Players are in groups of 3 or 4 with one ball in general space, about half a soccer field. The coach tosses or plays the ball away and players must return it to the coach with each player touching the ball (feet only) at least once. The final pass should be played to a player standing next to the coach. The coach then calls out a number and players must return the ball in exactly that many passes. The activity encourages players to think in terms of length and width as well as collective play. The coach can move within the space to make the task more difficult.

### ***Game 2: Elbow Tag***

Players are in pairs with their elbows hooked and standing in a random formation. The other hand is on their hip with elbow bent. The coach breaks apart one pair and gives one player a cone or small ball to carry. This player chases his/her partner and tries to tag them with the cone. The players may not throw the object. If they tag their partner, the player drops the object and the roles reverse. The player who is being chased tries to get safe by hooking onto an empty outside elbow of another player. Once this occurs the player on the opposite end must leave and is now being chased by the player with the object.

Once the players get the hang of it, involve another pair, so now you have two chasers and two players being chased. Players chasing can tag anyone who is not safe on

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an elbow. Continue adding chasers and runners until the game completely falls apart from sheer fun and chaos. This activity encourages quick thinking and anticipation, as well as a great deal of sprinting and changing direction.

### ***Game 3: Hurricanes & Ladders***

Play consists of two teams of 5 to 7 players with one ball using half a field. One team starts out as the ladder; the other is the hurricane. The coach tosses the ball away and the ladder group must run to the ball, form a line and immediately begin handing the ball to the end of the line in an over the head/between the legs fashion.

At the same time the hurricane team forms a tight circle or huddle and watches while one team member runs around the huddle as many times as possible before the ladder group completes the process of passing the ball from the front to the back of the line and yells stop! The number of circles is counted and the roles reverse when the coach tosses the ball away again. Play until one team reaches 10. This activity encourages teamwork and problem solving.

### ***Game 4: Defrost Tag***

Start with two equal teams and a 30 x 30 yard area. One entire team is inside the area without balls. The other team starts on the outside of the area with one ball per player. On the coach's signal, the team with the balls dribbles into the area and tries to hit the other team players below the knees. Emphasize passing, not shooting, the ball. Players can run or jump to avoid getting hit. Once a player is hit with a ball, they freeze and must stand with legs apart and hands on hips. A frozen player can be unfrozen if a teammate crawls through the legs. The objective is to see how long it takes to freeze the entire team.

Safety note: as long as a part of the crawling player's body is still beneath the frozen player, both players are safe and a ball cannot be played at them.

Only when a player crawls completely through a frozen player does the frozen player become unfrozen. Both are then actively back in the game. Use a time limit or end it when all players are frozen. Make sure that each team gets a chance to play both roles. This is a great activity for deceptive dribbling, passing to a target and fitness, as well as fostering communication and problem solving skills.

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### **Game 5: Get Outta-Here**

Set up a small-sided field with two equal sized teams. Players will play in a two versus two format played to two small goals at each end of the field. A 30 x 20 yard space with goals approximately 6-8 feet across and 4 feet high will work well but any small size goal will work. The starting point is on the outside of the field at the mid-line.

The coach tosses a ball onto the field and one pair from each team runs onto the field for a 2 v 2 situation. If a goal is scored, the scoring team stays on while the defending team sprints off and a new pair runs on. If a ball goes out of bounds or a goal is not scored, coach shouts "Get Outta-Here" and both pairs must run off the field and are replaced by the next two players from each team. Teams with odd numbers of players must organize effectively so that every player plays an equal amount.

Each team must keep track of the total number of goals they score. The game can be played to a final score or with a time limit. This is a fast paced activity that requires concentration from everyone on and off the field.



