



MORE THAN JUST A MATCH

Why watching Premier League football can be a special part of a soccer tour to England

For many young players, watching a Premier League match live can be one of the highlights of a soccer tour to England. The crowds, the songs, the atmosphere, the players walking out and the chance to watch some of the world's best players up close creates an experience television simply cannot replicate.

On their recent **TFE Soccer Tour**, Mount Pearl Soccer Association experienced Manchester United at Old Trafford as players, coaches and families. The final score may eventually be forgotten. The experience of being there probably won't be. ⚽ Could your team be next?



ARE WE COACHING THE PLAYER OR JUST THE TEAM?

Youth coaching naturally focuses on the team: shape, tactics, organisation and match performance. But within every team are individual players, each with different strengths and areas for improvement. While coaches regularly give instructions to the group, how much individual feedback does each player actually receive?

Does every player understand what they are doing well and what they need to work on next? Are we setting individual development goals alongside our objectives for the team?

Individual feedback doesn't need lengthy one-to-one meetings. A few specific, constructive observations can help a young player better understand their game and take greater ownership of their development. The challenge for grassroots coaches is often finding the time to provide personalised feedback consistently.

Technology can help. Tools such as **Feedz** allow coaches to record observations by voice and use AI to turn them into structured individual player feedback, making the process quicker and easier to manage. Developing the team is important, but we shouldn't lose sight of the individuals within it.

Improve the player and you can improve the team.

ACTIVITIES TO GET MORE TOUCHES

Here are four simple activities young players can practise almost anywhere to develop greater familiarity, control and confidence with the ball. These are just four of the activities included within the wider **1000 Touches programme**, designed to encourage players to spend more purposeful time with a ball at their feet.



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT | AGES 8-12

Activity 5 of 20

ONE-TOUCH WALL

One player • One football • 50 touches

1. WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DEVELOPS

- ★ First touch
- ★ Passing
- ★ Quick decisions
- ★ Two-footed control
- ★ Rhythm & coordination

3. COACHING POINTS

- Use the inside of the foot for passing and receiving
- Play the ball early
- Keep your touches soft and accurate
- Stay on your toes
- Head up when possible



2. HOW TO DO IT

- 1 Stand 2-3 metres from the wall with the ball.
- 2 Pass the ball against the wall using the inside of your foot.
- 3 Receive the ball with the inside of your foot on the return.
- 4 Pass it back with one touch.
- 5 Keep the rhythm going using one touch for passing and one touch for receiving.
- 6 Continue until you complete 50 touches.

4. TOUCH TARGET

COMPLETE 50 TOUCHES
25 with right foot
25 with left foot

FOCUS: Play early, keep the ball moving and stay in rhythm. Quality over speed.

A structured individual training programme designed to develop touch, control, coordination, balance and two-footed confidence.



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT | AGES 8-12

Activity 7 of 20

CONTROL, TURN & GO

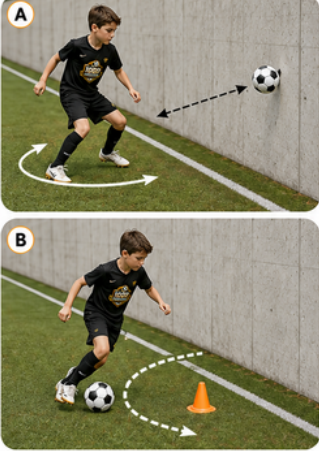
One player • One football • 50 touches

1. WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DEVELOPS

- ★ First touch
- ★ Turning
- ★ Close control
- ★ Change of direction
- ★ Agility & balance

3. COACHING POINTS

- Move towards the ball
- Keep the first touch soft
- Turn tightly
- Keep the ball close to your body
- Use both feet



2. HOW TO DO IT

- 1 Stand 2-3 metres from the wall with a cone behind you.
- 2 Pass the ball firmly against the wall.
- 3 As the ball comes back, control it with one touch.
- 4 Turn 180 degrees and keep the ball close.
- 5 Move away from the wall and go around the cone.
- 6 Return to the starting position and repeat.

4. TOUCH TARGET

COMPLETE 50 TOUCHES
25 with right foot
25 with left foot

FOCUS: Control cleanly, turn sharply and move away with confidence. Tight turns create better control.

A structured individual training programme designed to develop touch, control, coordination, balance and two-footed confidence.



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT | AGES 8-12

Activity 2 of 20

TURN & DRIBBLE

One player • One football • 50 touches

1. WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DEVELOPS

- ★ First touch
- ★ Turning
- ★ Close control
- ★ Change of direction
- ★ Agility & balance

3. COACHING POINTS

- Attack the ball quickly
- Take a good first touch
- Keep the ball close
- Stay on your toes
- Head up after the turn



2. HOW TO DO IT

- 1 Stand 2-3 metres from the wall with the ball in front of you.
- 2 Pass the ball firmly against the wall.
- 3 As the ball comes back, move towards it and take your first touch to turn 90 degrees.
- 4 Dribble for 3-5 metres at a controlled pace.
- 5 Dribble back to your starting position.
- 6 Repeat.

4. TOUCH TARGET

COMPLETE 50 TOUCHES
25 with right foot
25 with left foot

FOCUS: Quick first touch and smooth turn. Quality movement creates better control.

A structured individual training programme designed to develop touch, control, coordination, balance and two-footed confidence.



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT | AGES 8-12

Activity 1 of 20

WALL PASS CONTROL

One player • One size 4 football • 50 touches

1. WHAT THIS ACTIVITY DEVELOPS

- ★ First touch
- ★ Passing technique
- ★ Balance
- ★ Two-foot confidence

3. COACHING POINTS

- Cushion the first touch
- Stay balanced
- Aim for one spot on the wall
- Use both feet



2. HOW TO DO IT

- 1 Stand 3-5 yards from a wall.
- 2 Pass the ball against the wall and control the rebound with one clean touch.
- 3 Keep a steady rhythm and try to use both feet.

4. TOUCH TARGET

COMPLETE 50 TOUCHES
Try 5 sets of 10 or 2 sets of 25

“Clean touches build confident players.”

A structured individual training programme designed to develop touch, control, coordination, balance and two-footed confidence.

1,000 is the target. More touches is the principle

ARE YOUR PARENTS PART OF THE TEAM?

Parents play a huge role in youth soccer. They provide transport, pay fees, support from the sidelines and make countless sacrifices to give their children the opportunity to play. Building a positive relationship between coaches and parents can therefore help create a better environment for everyone, particularly the players.

1. SET EXPECTATIONS EARLY - Explain your approach to development, communication, playing time and matchday behaviour at the beginning of the season.

2. COMMUNICATE REGULARLY - Don't only speak to parents when there's a problem. Regular updates can prevent misunderstandings before they happen.

3. EXPLAIN THE WHY - Parents may not always agree with a coaching decision, but understanding the reasoning behind it can make a big difference.

4. ENCOURAGE POSITIVE SUPPORT - Ask parents to encourage rather than coach from the sidelines. Too many instructions can confuse young players who are already trying to process the game.

5. REMEMBER THE COMMON GOAL - Coaches and parents may see things differently, but ultimately both should want the same thing: a positive environment where young players can enjoy, learn and develop.

BETTER COMMUNICATION. BETTER RELATIONSHIPS. A BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR PLAYERS.



ONE QUESTION TO ASK YOUR PLAYERS

At the end of your next training session, instead of immediately telling players what they did well or what they need to improve, ask them one simple question:

“What did you learn today?”

Their answers can provide a valuable insight into how they understood the session. Did they recognise its purpose? Did they discover a new solution? Did they learn something about their own game?

You may even find that what your players learned isn't always what you thought you were teaching. Encouraging players to reflect can help develop understanding, independence and greater ownership of their development.

Good coaching isn't just about what we teach. It's about what players learn.

“The ball is the most important thing.”

Johan Cruyff

FUEL THE GAME - A Simple Matchday Food & Drink Guide for Players Aged 8–12

Most children's soccer matches take place in the morning, so good matchday nutrition doesn't need to mean special meals or getting up four hours before kick-off. For young players, the aim is simple: have some breakfast, arrive hydrated, drink during the game and eat again afterwards.

BEFORE THE MATCH

If kick-off is early, encourage your child to have a light, familiar breakfast that they know sits comfortably in their stomach. Good options include:

- Cereal with milk and a banana
- Porridge with fruit or honey
- Toast with jam or honey
- Toast with scrambled egg
- Yoghurt with fruit and cereal
- A banana and a slice of toast

There is no need to force a large breakfast immediately before playing. If your child has very little appetite in the morning, something small is better than nothing. Try to avoid very greasy or heavy breakfasts immediately before football.

DON'T FORGET THE WATER

Hydration doesn't start when the referee blows the whistle. Encourage children to drink water when they wake up and with breakfast, then take their own water bottle to the game. They don't need to drink huge amounts at once. Regular small drinks before and during the match are a much better habit.

DURING THE MATCH

For most junior soccer matches, water is all that is needed. Encourage players to drink during natural breaks and at half-time, particularly on warm days. Sports drinks are generally unnecessary for an ordinary junior match, and energy drinks are not appropriate for children.

AFTER THE FINAL WHISTLE

After playing, the body needs to replace fluids and replenish some of the energy it has used. This doesn't need to involve specialist recovery products. Simple options include:

- A banana and milk
- Yoghurt and fruit
- A sandwich or wrap
- Cereal and milk
- Toast and eggs
- A normal lunch or family meal

Ideally, include some carbohydrate for energy and protein to support recovery, together with water to help replace fluids.

A simple rule to remember:

WAKE UP → WATER → BREAKFAST → PLAY → WATER → REFUEL

Young players don't need complicated sports nutrition. Developing simple habits around breakfast, hydration and recovery can give them a great foundation as they grow and their football becomes more demanding.

**Important: This article provides general information for children aged approximately 8–12 and is not individual medical or nutritional advice. Every child is different. Parents or guardians should seek advice from an appropriate healthcare professional or registered dietitian if their child has specific dietary, medical or hydration requirements.*

“I try to drink as much water as I can throughout the day. It is something I do for sure to help with training and the games.”

Harry Kane

FREE RESOURCES AND PARTNER LINKS

A FREE 6-Week Soccer Coaching Session Planner (Weeks 1–6)

This resource covers Weeks 1–6 of a wider 36-week coaching framework and is designed to be used as a standalone planning guide. It provides a clear structure for early-season planning while remaining fully adaptable to your players and coaching philosophy.

What's included

- An adaptable 6-week session planning framework
- Guidance to help organize sessions and progression
- Flexible structure suitable for different age groups and ability levels
- A format that can be adjusted week to week

<https://www.totalfootballexperience.com/soccer-training-session-planner>



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Feedz is an AI-powered platform designed to make player feedback fast, personalized, and impactful. Coaches simply record a quick voice note, and Feedz instantly converts it into a structured, professional report for players and parents, saving hours each week while improving engagement and performance. Harry Maguire of Manchester United & England is an Investor & Co-Founder.

www.feedz.club/



REC & PARENT SOCCER COACH GUIDES

This FREE guide is written for rec and parent soccer coaches who care more about the experience than the score. They focus on the environment adults create around the game, including behavior, communication, and enjoyment. Each guide offers perspective and practical language to support coaches working with kids ages 4 to 8, without drills, tactics, or instruction.

www.totalfootballexperience.com/rec-soccer-coach-guides



THE FINAL WHISTLE

Thanks for reading this issue of Wider Game FC.

The aim is to share useful ideas, practical advice and opportunities for everyone involved in youth soccer — from players and parents to coaches, referees and club officials.

If you found something useful, please feel free to share the newsletter with someone else in the game.

Wider Game FC — Ideas, insight and opportunities from across the wider game.

