

## Manipulating the ball

This week Better Soccer Coaching is taken from Les Reed's *Soccer Coach Smart Sessions*. You only need six players to complete one of his sessions, though it can easily be expanded to meet your needs. With lots more players you could have a number of grids working at the same time.

Simply print the session and take it to training. It should take you less than five minutes to read the instructions, set up the session, and then you are ready to communicate what happens to your players.

### What you tell your players the session is about:

1. Improving ball familiarity and touch.
2. Developing turning and dribbling skills.

### What you tell your players to do:

1. Experiment with different body surfaces to control, move and pass the ball.
2. Juggle and shuffle the ball between different surfaces.
3. Move the ball around with different parts of the foot.
4. Try to combine movements like turning and passing.
5. Develop "feinting" movements to disguise your intentions.

### What to shout:

- "Faster" "slower" / "stop" "start".
- "don't look at the ball" / "flick it up" "get it down".
- "Turn" "shuffle".
- "Dribble" / "pass" "change balls".
- "keep it close".

### What to look for:

- Players allowing the ball out of their playing distance.
- Players repeating the same thing, get them to experiment.
- Getting too close to others, bumping each other.
- Not using all surfaces and especially both feet.
- Trying things which are impractical or too difficult.
- Good combinations, highlight them.

### What to think about:

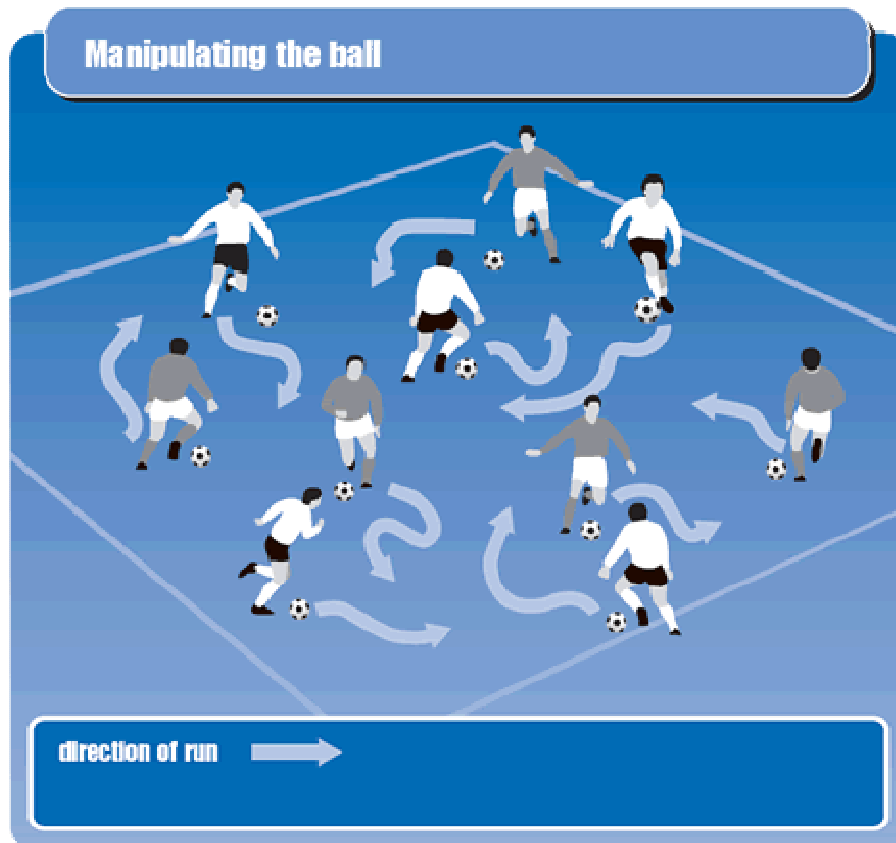
Where would they use these skills in the game? When would these skills come in handy in a match? Why would they do something clever in a game? Use the game to highlight these thoughts.

### What you get your players to do:

**Stage 1:** In a 20m x 20m grid give every player a ball (10-12 players). Instruct

them to move the ball around the grid without touching anyone else or leaving the grid. They must visit each corner and travel diagonally as well as side to side. The object is simply to keep control of the ball and travel using different surfaces of the foot to move it.

**Stage 2:** Players must meet the same objectives but now react to the calls of the coach as in "what to shout" give them a range of tasks and make up your own, get them to add some too. "Shuffle" means play the ball between alternate feet quickly on one touch. "Change" would mean each player stops the ball dead and runs to change to another. Encourage players to experiment and demonstrate ideas.



### Development

Have a competition, this is a safe way to introduce tackling too. A player may knock another's ball out of the square but only with their own ball under control. Last one in is the winner. Try it in teams (reds v blues).

### How would I put this into a game situation:

Play a 5v5 (6v6) game on a pitch 50m / 60m x 35m / 40m. Divide the pitch into thirds and restrict the players to zones. A player can move forward into the next zone by beating a player, turning with a clever move or a trick. Players in the final third can only score as a consequence of a clever move trick or turn then they can shoot.