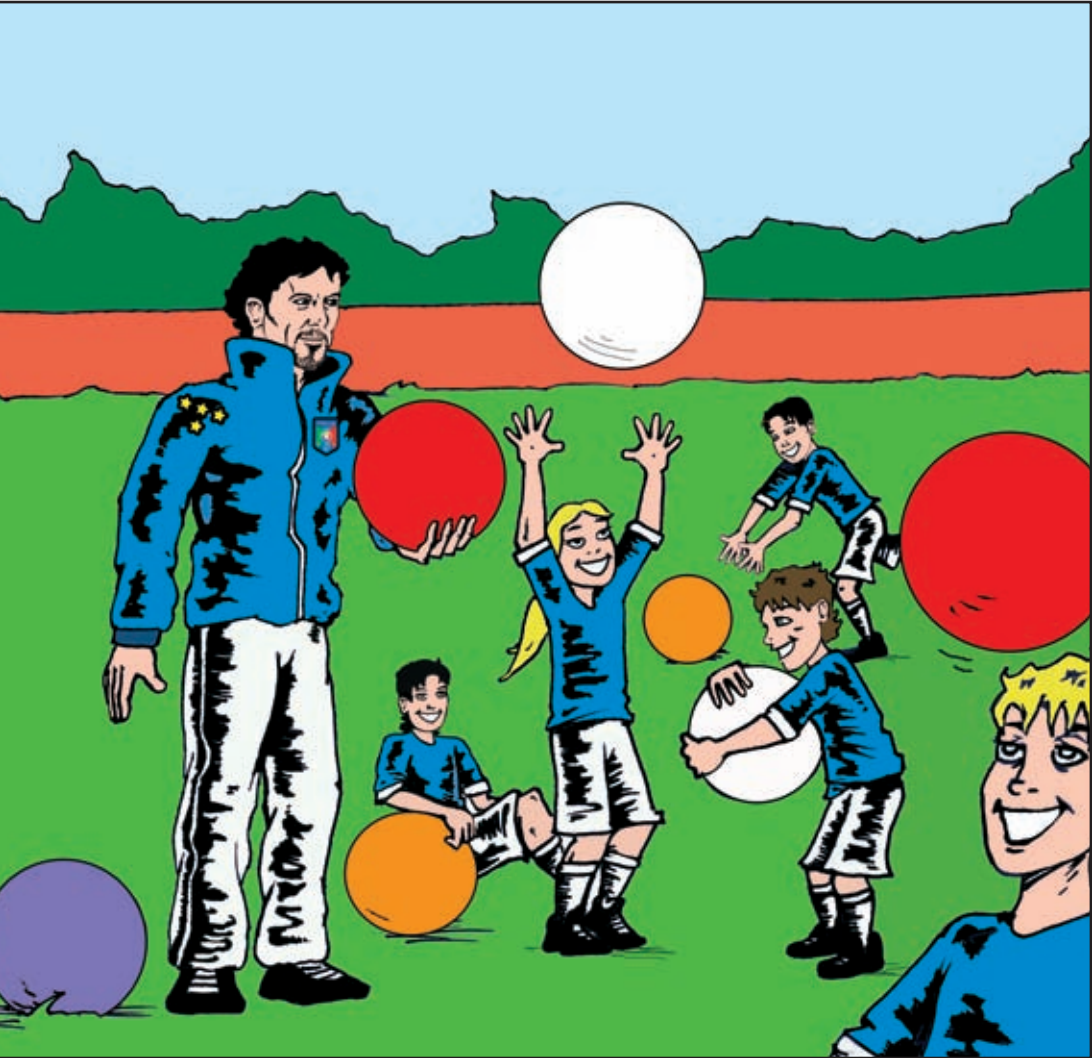




LITTLE FRIENDS CATEGORY



This denomination encloses a philosophy that emphasises a kind of activity that is evermore adapted to children, full of great locomotor, emotional and social experiences for a young boy who approaches football and that, through football, wants to know, learn and play.

6 THE PSYCHO-MOTOR PROFILE OF A 6-8 YEAR OLD CHILD AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS



4 9% of children from 6 to 10 years old and 10.3% of those in the class from 3 to 5 years play football continuously (Italian Statistical Institute 2002). This data indicates that at the beginning of elementary school children choose to practice this sport. It is therefore a great responsibility, that of the athletic workers that work in football, seeing that about half of Italian children enrol in one of their schools.

6.1 HOW 6-8 YEAR OLD CHILDREN THINK

Football requires a particular cognitive investment of the children and needs the ability to understand another person's point of view. The process of movement anticipation is based on the ability of anticipating the moves of our opponent but children of this age find it difficult to take on this point of view. Although on the other hand, the use of these abilities is necessary in a team sport that involves many players that need to act together, using a common strategy to respond to the opponents' actions.

The difficulties that face children up to 8 years old are evident to any observer at the border of the field, when one can see them all running after the ball, forgetting about the roles that have been assigned to them beforehand. Research has confirmed that the ability to understand someone else's perspective is completed between 8 and 10 years old. Regarding this ability, one possible reason for abandonment of football activity is presented in cases in which the coaches and parents expect more from children than they can give considering their cognitive development. In these kinds of situations the children can feel quite an amount of frustration and feel misunderstood and unappreciated by adults, who ask them to carry out tasks that exceed their actual capacity. Alternatively, parents and coaches should not worry if the children act like bees that chase the honey but should stimulate the enthusiasm of the children and the joy they get out of moving.

Another important cognitive aspect regards comprehension, of the children, of the causes of the results of actions. In other words to what they attribute, for example, the prevalence of one team on another or to what they attribute the higher skill of one team mate compared to another? As adults we are aware that successes/failures may derive from various different aspects (for



example, commitment, luck, personal ability, the difficulty of the task or other peoples' skills) but for children this way of thinking is a point of arrival that they do not possess in the first or second year of elementary school. Research has shown that until 10-12 years the young children do not know how to distinguish among these various factors, exactly which ones determined the success of their team or the quality of their performance in a single situation.

In fact, initially the children are attracted essentially by the excitement that practicing sport transmits and, only later, they develop a more complex concept of the game. In this regard, all we need to do is think that already from the age of 5 children begin to compare their abilities with those of their team mates but that almost until adolescence, the correlation between the perception that the children have of their skills and the evaluation carried out by the coaches is still quite low.

6.2 THE ROLE OF ADULTS



Adults therefore have a fundamental role in maintaining the interest of the children constant towards the game. Like in every other new situation, the initial phase of activities is important because it reveals the future organisation. Therefore, the activity needs to be so as to involve the children intensely, so as to satisfy their desire of movement, fun, of variety and to be with their team mates. We must not bore them with explanations that are too long on what they are allowed to do and what they should avoid. A few simple rules should be explained, simple and direct, and must be enforced firmly and calmly.

In this age group children tend to consider athletic ability as a result of their commitment and often children do not commit because they know that they are not able. For all the adults that are in contact with these very young players, it is above all important to reinforce their commitment. This is also because most children are enthusiastic to play with other team mates and like to run after the ball, this passion for the game has to be sustained and appreciated. In this positive climate even the most insecure and less open children tend to acquire faith in their instructor, they want to imitate the other more extroverted team mates, who know that they can have more fun and they know that they will not be criticised because of a technical error. Therefore even the shy ones, even if more timidly, will take some initiatives in a gradual way whereas others, may give the impression of having exploded and to not know how to regulate their

physical energy, which they will gradually learn how to control. In this context the coach will have to praise improvements, make the appropriate technical corrections and reinforce the commitment, whereas the other adults from the chaperone to the parents will have to essentially provide emotional support to the children. They will not have to go into the technical issues, but transmit to the children the fact that they are happy because they are having fun, because they play outdoors, because they are meeting new friends. Vice versa, they will have to worry if their children are not having fun or if they do not want to go back the next time. Especially when watching from the edge of the pitch, they will not have to stop and look if their child makes mistakes or is doing well, but if he interacts with his friends, if he listens to the instructor when he is talking, if he shows energy and runs, if he isolates himself or if he mixes with the others and so on. It is normal that in athletic clubs the parents participate in the life of this organisation, often some play the role of chaperones. This role should allow them to get to know the children better and to improve relations between the group of parents and the instructor. Therefore the chaperone, being in more contact with the children compared to the other parents, should be a person who is able to perceive the mood of the group and of its single components, should enforce the rules outside the field, should be a person that transmits good humour and enthusiasm. The chaperon should just be a willing person who is available to be a driver, in this function he has the role of educator and should behave accordingly. Therefore, the club should explicitly say what they expect from whoever covers this role and what the person should not do, for example, intervene on technical aspects of the activity, which are in the jurisdiction of the coach.

Dealing with relatively small children (6-7 years old) and that are maybe carrying out for the first time an extra-scholastic activity or one without their parents, there are some aspects of athletic life that demand special attention compared to older young boys. For example, in the changing room, must they be alone, or alone with the instructor, or with their parents?

The issue is linked to their level of personal independence (the incredible chaos that is created if a numerous group of children undresses to change, or must they shower by themselves or helped by an adult?). Normally, children of this age are not alone: in elementary school the children eat in the presence of their teachers. In the changing room there should be their parents present in order to teach them how to get dressed rapidly, to

shower and pack their gear into their bags. If this is not possible, the solution could be to have the instructor initially follow the children and 2-3 parents helping him, for example to dry the children's hair or for other things. This would be useful to reassure the parents that the changing room is a healthy environment. The objective is however to teach the children to be alone.

Finally we would like to dedicate some words to little girls, there are still very few in our country, whereas in others there are millions. How can we get them closer to football, maybe to begin with all we should do is talk about it at school and to the parents of boys who play football. It is certainly not the girls who do not want to play football, it is the adults who do not allow it.

1 PLAY AS A FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT OF DISCOVERY OF A NEW WORLD



To run after a ball, to free ones exuberance of motion, to play and confront oneself with one's team mates, with out restrictions, as well as being the favourite activities of children, represent goals and objectives of every football school. To favour a healthy psycho-motory development, the model of activities to propose should be conceived by privileging play, confrontation and exploration activities.

A rolling ball, that bounces bizarrely has always captured the imagination of children and represents, in their world, something magical, fascinating. The explosion of enthusiasm that we observe when a group of children are playing, running after one another to capture the ball in the laborious and never ending fight to get to the goal, satisfies the instincts and natural needs of the human race.

Starting from this consideration, the activities that we will organise for this particular age group will have play as a dominant theme.

One consideration that must be made, regards the insufficient repertoire of movements of the new generations that are beginning athletic activities for children. In the era of information technology, video games, in the impossibility of accessing open spaces and to stimulate the cortical areas of movement, our children begin to play football without an appropriate base of motor skills on which to build future athletic abilities.

In order to compensate the deficit of movement and manage to create stable structures on which to build future athletic abilities, the football school instructor is faced with the methodological difficulty between choosing an activity that is exclusively oriented

towards the game/match, or, always privileging the use of the ball, choosing an activity that is enriched with multilateral and polyvalent proposals, in order to solicit the un-stimulated or little-stimulated areas of motricity. The proposals that we will begin to build, illustrate an itinerary, which if on the one hand attempt to a partial recovery of movement deficit, on the other hand satisfies the child's natural desire to widen his knowledge, to activate new sensations, to satisfy his curiosity and to communicate with the external environment using the ball.

7.1 AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRAMMING IN THE LITTLE FRIENDS CATEGORY

The example of programming that we will show you is part of the model of activities that is structured at the Football School of the F.I.G.C. of Rome destined for Little Friends at 1st level, 6-7 years old.

The exercises/games proposed in the 1st cycle of annual activities (October-November-December) will have to include activities that are aimed at perfecting the movement pattern of running. (TABLE 1) Some of the proposed activities (TABLE 2) allow the gradual transfer of the motor behaviour of running to a concept of ability (technical fundamental: control of the ball) developed in a prevalently playful form, through an exploratory, imitative, trial and error, procedure.



- Fast/slow running
- Running in slalom
- Running with a big/small ball
- Running through the overs
- Combining movements of running with other basic movement patterns (motor circuits)
- Running with frequent stops and changes of direction
- Guiding the ball in a free form exploring the space

TABLE 1 - Activities proposed for the development of the basic movement pattern "Running"

- Guiding the ball on simple geometrical figure; around a square, taking position on the longer or shorter side of a rectangle or of a trapezium, etc.;
- Race of parallel slaloms
- Guiding a ball in a maze
- 4 coloured goals (FIGURE 1)
- Mine field (FIGURE 2)
- Steal the Ball (FIGURE 3)

TABLE 2 - Proposed activities: from the movement conduct (running) to the technical ability (guiding the ball)



“A GROUP OF LITTLE FRIENDS AT WORK WITH THE TEACHING MATERIAL DEDICATED TO FOOTBALL SCHOOLS”

In this way they will have an adequate understanding of the assigned technical task (guiding the ball); the absence of interventions of external feed-back (the instructor that corrects the badly executed move) that is too technical, will favour the appropriate internalisation of the movement task for that age. Often we justify immediate correction of the technical move, for fear of possible wrong automatisms that will be difficult to remove later on, forgetting that the child is in an explorative phase, that he needs to understand and adapt an object, which, even if it is

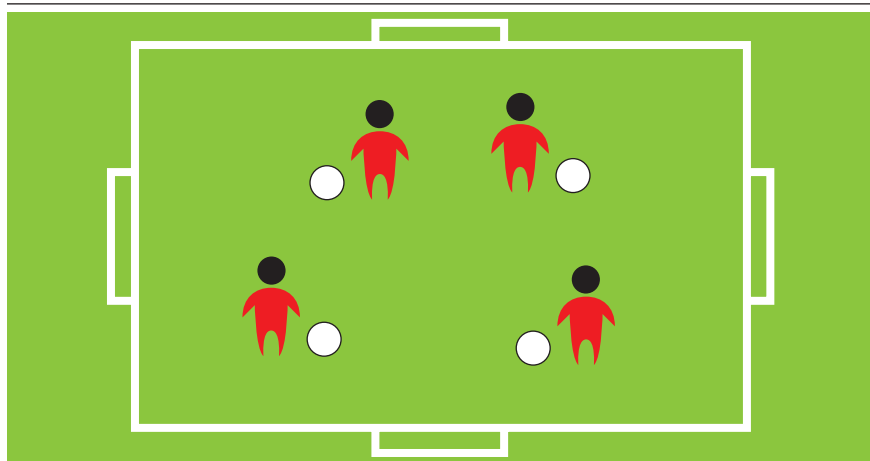


FIGURE 1 - Game of 4 coloured goals: upon the coloured signal of the instructor, the 4 players in a field of 20x15 metres will try and guide the ball into the small coloured 3metre goals placed at the centre of each side.

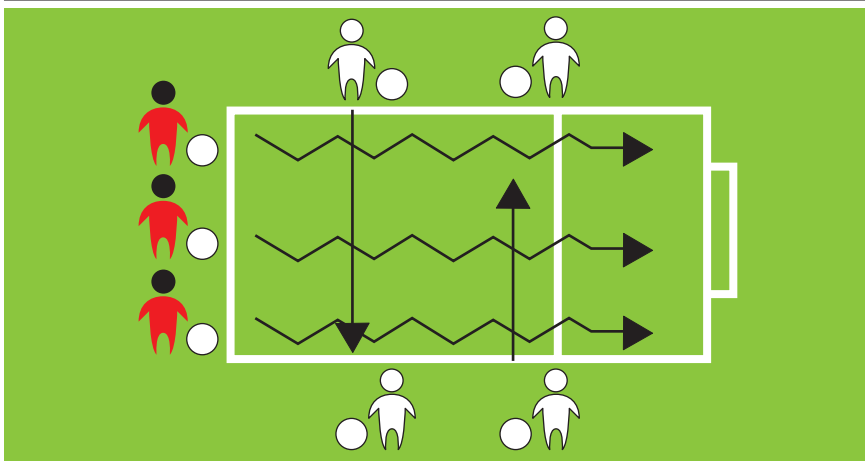


FIGURE 2 - Mine field: in field of 25x15 metres, the children in red tunics will try to guide the ball until a shooting line placed at 8 metres from a goal of 3metres, placed at the centre of the smaller side. On the larger sides, 2 on each side, 4 opponent players will take position and one in front of the other will kick the ball trying to hit the strikers that will have to go back to the beginning if they are hit. The team that scores more goals at the end wins.

fascinating, is alien to him by shape and physical qualities, to his body's dynamism, and in any case he will suffer some form of "analytical" corrective input, but he will not understand it (have we forgotten that he is only 6?), thereby inhibiting him from acquiring and from learning new forms of movement.

Another aspect to insert in the training process is linked to the applicative expression of the guiding element; always maintaining

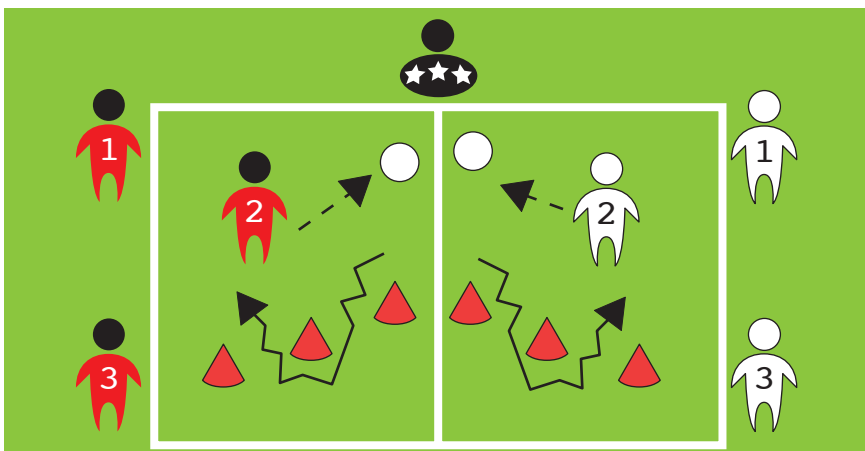


FIGURE 3 - Steal the Ball: Two teams of pupils, numbered in progressive order, are placed one in front of the other about 10 metres apart with two balls placed in the middle (one per team). Upon the instructor's or a child's signal, who will call a number, the corresponding children (one per team) will run and try and conquer the ball first, guide it in an obstacle course and bring it back to the starting line. The team that reaches the maximum score established by the instructor wins. **VARIANTS:** scoring goals in a small goal; movement circuits before conquering the ball; use of one ball only.

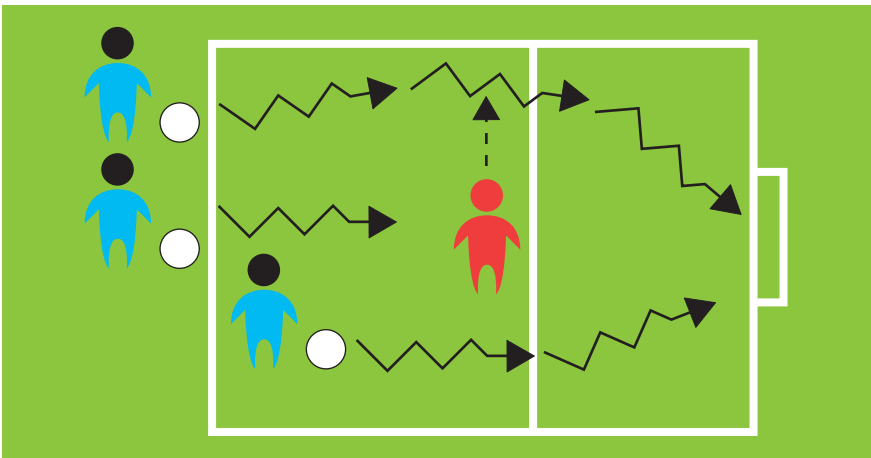


FIGURE 4 - The customs officer

the unitary relationship with the ball alive and unaltered, the management of the ball in an uncertain environment produces some adaptations on a coordinative level. The proposed exercise defined on a situational level is the game called the “customs officer” (FIGURE 4) where 3 or more players in ball possession try and cross a line (the frontier), defended by a player that must intercept/touch the ball of the opposing team. It will be the role of the instructor to find in the children's behaviour those significant nuances that will bring him to change the area and number of players in order to make the game more or less difficult, more or less complex depending on the degree of acquired abilities.

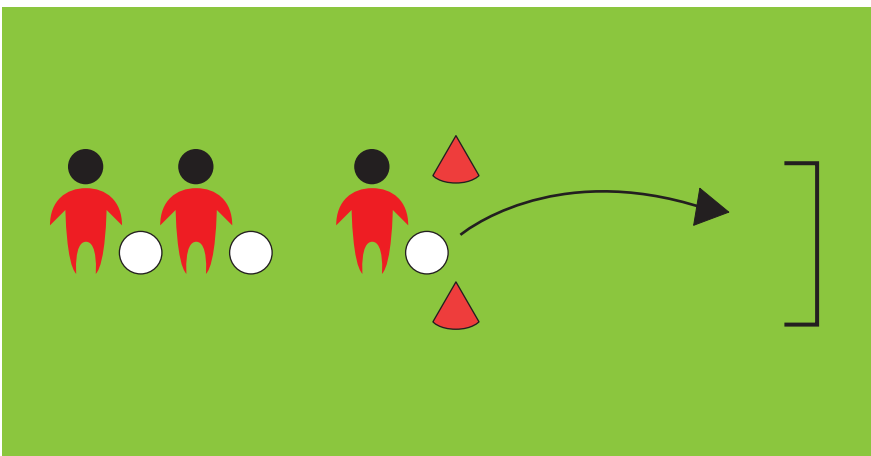


FIGURE 5 - King of Penalties: the children will carry out a series of penalty shots from a pre-established distance. The child or the children that at the end of a series of shots will have scored more goals will be nominated “the KING of penalties”. **VARIANT:** the game can be carried out, afterwards, using a goalkeeper, a role that all the children will cover taking turns.

The combination of the running action and shooting into a goal that is initially unattended and later defended by a goal keeper, are the ingredients that make up the game "King of Penalties" (FIGURE 5), where initially and on different levels we will be able to notice executive difficulties, due to an imperfect and clumsy control of the movement that is solved in a "shabby" way (which must not be followed by a direct correction: do it this way) that will gradually improve and become more and more efficient and economical. Movement conduct, dominating theme in the 2nd cycle of annual activities (December - January - February) is linked to the action of hitting/throwing the ball, which will be solicited through a series of exercises (TABLE 3), which will favour a gradual functional development of the perceptive and coordinative channels, which we must not forget must always be solicited through movement circuits.

The use of colours makes activities very stimulating and favours significant solicitations for the optical analyser, a system that is dedicated to code visual input:

- Bowling games using hands as well as feet
- Lawn bowling
- Golf
- Simple ball control with lighter and larger balls
- Hitting targets (FIGURE 6)

TABLE 3 - Proposed activities for the movement behaviour "Hitting/Throwing"

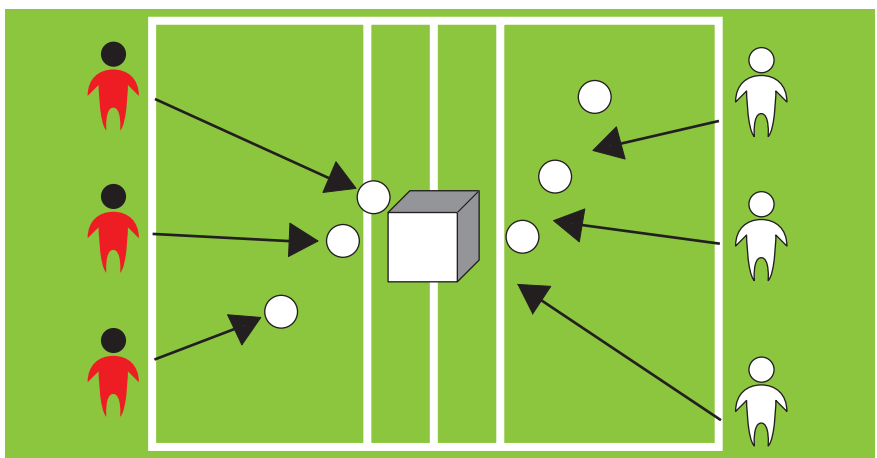


FIGURE 6 - Hitting the target: the children, placed on the far boundaries of the field will have to hit the target (a box or another large target); the team that manages to push the target into the opponent's field wins. The balls that stop in the team's half of the field can be recovered, brought back to the boundary line and kicked. More than one target can be used or children can try and hit the target by throwing the ball with their hands.

- alternating throws to kicks according to coloured targets,
- using different coloured balls,
- kicking coloured balls into dens/goals of the same colour.

It remains understood that in this second cycle of activities running exercises must not be abandoned, dominating theme of the preceding cycle, for example the 1vs1 actions of the custom's officer game, the instructor will change the structure of the game for example by decreasing the number of strikers.

One may look for functional combinations between the moves running/guiding and hitting/shooting:

- auto-pass and shoot to goal;
- run and shoot;
- guide and shoot.

The exercise/game that in this period is part of the situational basket is represented by 1vs1 games with the possibility of using team mates to jump the opponent placed on a line. The small-sided games proposed will be structured on a 3vs framework with small goals, with numerical dominance 2vs1 in the attacking area to favour the development of a collective action (this is still not the main objective) and in any case allow the child in ball possession, to get familiar with the basics of collective play, to make the individual properties ever more functional and pertinent. The child of 6-7 years old, has, as the exclusive objective of his behaviour, that of gaining possession of the ball, a great number of his movements are organised to move and gain possession. It seems obvious, and at cognitive level, all the pertinent information the child processes is the one relating to the "ball space". His behaviour is a situation of non-possession, he begins to appreciate, if induced by the exercise (defender on the line in the "customs officer" exercise, a specific competence referred to the movements of cover and obstacles to the action of crossing the line. In the 3rd cycle of activities (February-March - April) moving in a space will always be favoured by the 1vs1 ratio with the ball, in a condition that will vary from moving to gain possession and moving to intercept/obstacle. In TABLE 4 we mention some games where the

- The scalp game (FIGURE 7)
- Lightning strike
- Three corners (FIGURE 8)
- Run and take the ball home (FIGURE 9)
- The party pooper (FIGURE 10)
- The customs officer
- Score and play (FIGURE 11)

TABLE 4 - Proposed activities for the movement behaviour "Moving"

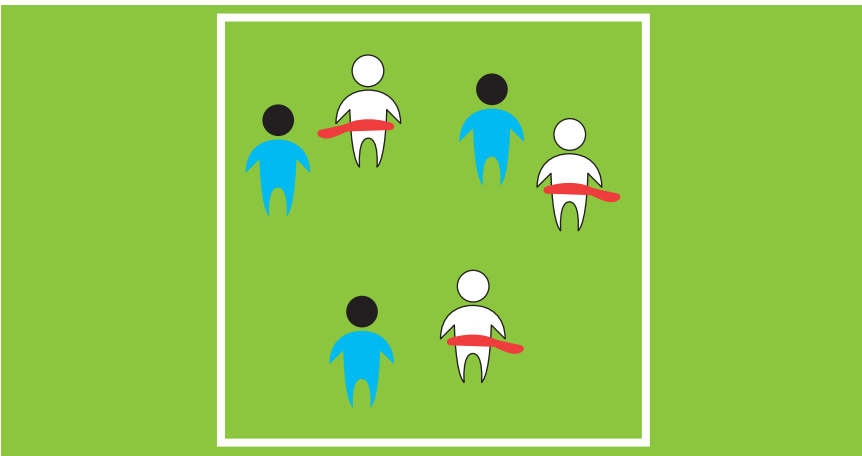


FIGURE 7 - The Scalp: Two groups of children face each other in a 15metre square on each side. One group will wear a coloured handkerchief or bandage around their waist (scalp). The children without the scalp will have to remove it from the others that are wearing it. At the end of the game (2 minutes) the teams will swap roles. The team that has removed the most scalps wins the game. Variants: each of the teams can wear a scalp (with different colours; only one child is without a scalp, that is replaced by the child that has been “captured”).

child moves according to the analysis of an extremely simplified situation, aimed at the development of more defined spatial-temporal coordinates. To request rapid and simple movement responses to visual and acoustic signals, represents a form of game that is very appreciated by children: the instructor that shakes a coloured cone or tunic to solicit certain behaviours, for example at a green signal shoot to goal, at a red signal sit on the ball, at a

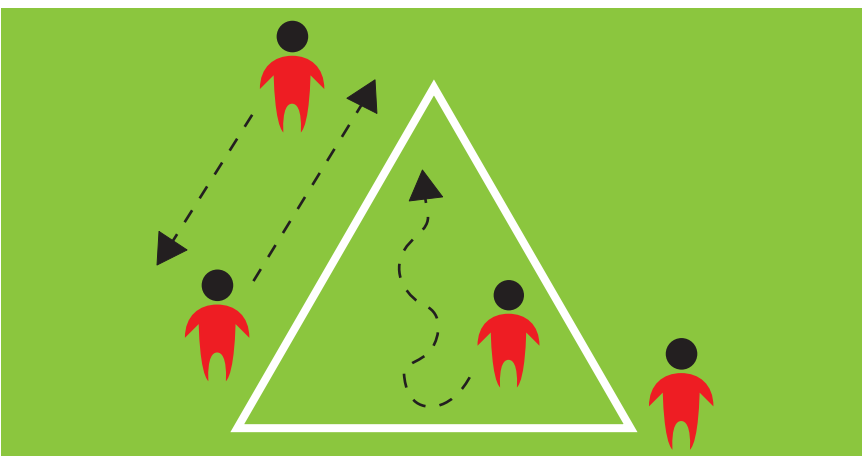


FIGURE 8 - Three Corners: In a triangle of 8 metres for each side, three children are placed one in each corner. A fourth child is placed in the middle of the triangle and he tries to occupy the angle left free by the other three, who try to change places. After 10 attempts we count the number of points.

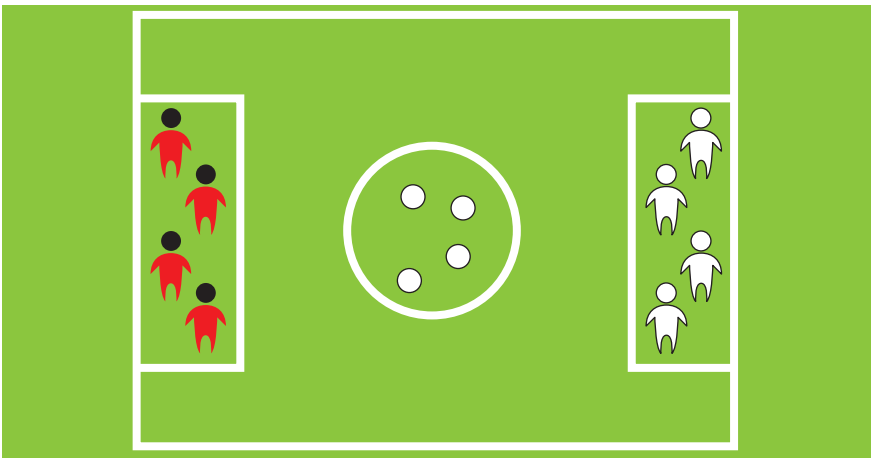


FIGURE 9 - Run and bring the ball home: in an area at the centre of a 20x15 metres, we place a number of balls equal to the number of the components of a team. At the word "go" both the teams will run towards the centre trying to gain possession of the balls and conduct them to their respective "homes". During the guiding of the ball process they can tackle and conquer the ball, thereby creating 1on1 situations. The team that brings the most balls home wins the game.

yellow signal stop the ball with the foot etc., solicits the ability to react to a visual stimulus represented by various colours. In a more specific way, even the ball can be used to determine a selection of information and a more selective movement response.

To move to help, as we have already seen, is a concept that is still not a part of the child's behaviour, the proposed exercise (FIGURE 11),

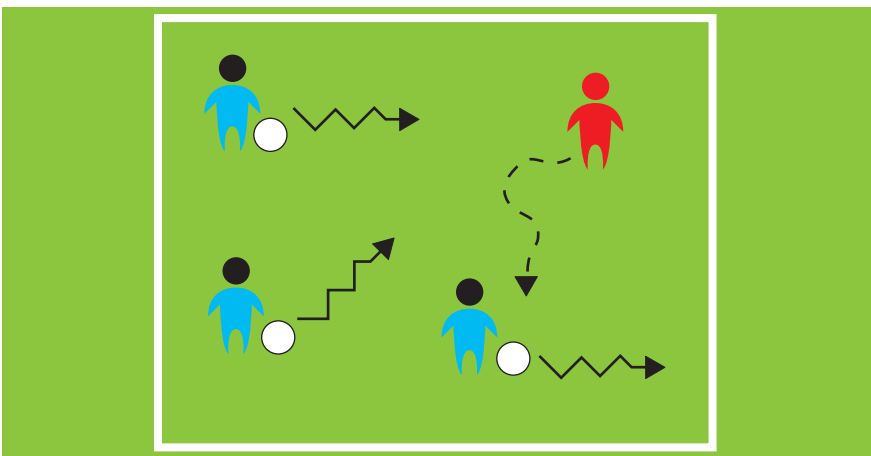


FIGURE 10 - the Party-pooper: In a limited space a group of children guides the ball with their feet; one boy, without the ball, will try and kick the ball away from the others by using his feet. Seeing as they will take turns in being the "party-pooper", the one that manages to kick the most balls outside of the boundaries in a pre-established time (for example 30 seconds).

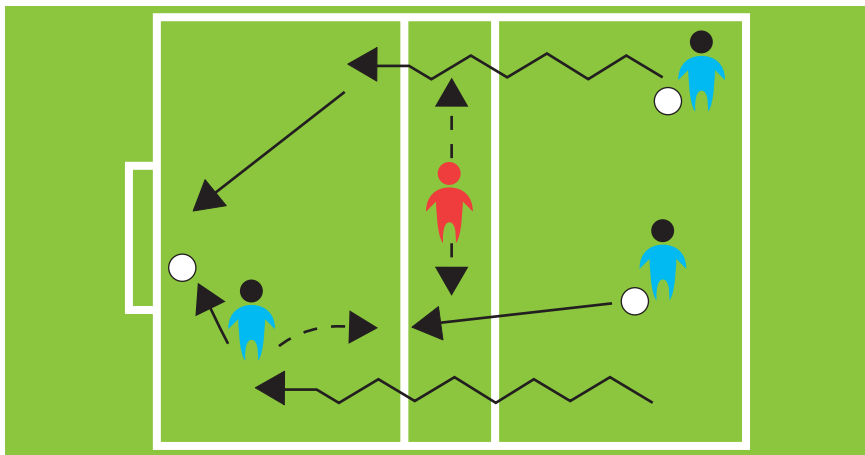


FIGURE 11 - Score and play: 3 children with one ball each and one without, in an area of 15x10 metres. The children with the ball start from the goal line and once they have jumped the opponent, who is placed in a limited space of 2metres wide at the centre of the field, can shoot to goal. Each of them, once they have scored, can go and help their team mate that still needs to jump the opponent.

“score and play”, will in any case put him in the situation of approaching a sort of cooperation. In other words, even if we recognise an obvious egocentricity in the child, the situational exercises will begin to include simple forms of collective play.

Competitions in form of relays, movement circuits that solicit coordinative aspects linked to rapidity, are content that will enrich the didactical proposals in this period.

In the last period of the year, the child begins to acquire more competence, that derives from a greater familiarity with the ball on the one hand, and on the other from a cognitive continuation which, beginning from his own body, begins to consider other points of reference in space.

The reception of the ball will have to be considered more as a moment of perceptive solicitation, more than a training phase of a technical behaviour (stops).

The exercises proposed (TABLE 5) illustrate some activities that, in the form of a game, put the child in the position and an attitude relating to the incoming ball.

- Stop the ball (FIGURE 12)
- Relaunch ball
- Hand ball
- Ball to the prisoner (FIGURE 13)
- Ball to the captain (FIGURE 14)
- Unmarking square (FIGURE 15)

TABLE 5 - Proposed activities for the movement behaviour “Receiving”

The use of the hands will favour a more adequate control and will allow the child to pay more attention to the surrounding environment and game space.

In this phase of the year we will propose small-sided games 2vs2, 3vs3, and privilege numerical prevalence in attack with a mobile goalkeeper or structuring rigid situations of 2vs1 in attack.

The game of the custom's officer will undergo a further evolution, with the addition of a second line where another defender will be positioned, and can favour the development of a cooperative form of defence. In the month of June as a final party, you could organise an activity where the content (TABLE 6) will be selected among the games that the children have learned during the year. The parents can participate and play with their children, and enhance, if needed, an atmosphere where football shows all its "spirit".

BEHAVIOURS	RUNNING	HITTING	MOVING	RECEIVING	3vs3 GAME	TOTAL POINTS
	MINE FIELD	HIT THE TARGET	RUN AND BRING THE BALL HOME	BALL TO THE PRISONER		
Squirrels	12	3	15	5	3	38
Mice	8	7	12	6	1	34
Wolf cubs	10	9	3	2	4	28
Lion cubs	6	12	4	7	3	32
Deer	9	10	6	6	2	33
Teddy bears	10	11	9	3	1	34

TABLE 6 - Notice board of games and scores for the final party

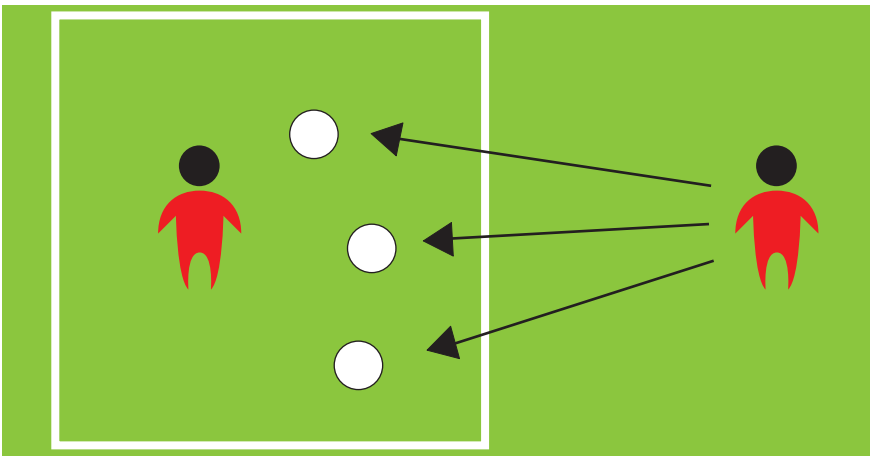


FIGURE 12 - Stop the ball: A player placed inside a square with 6metre sides needs to stop the balls kicked by another player, from a distance of 8 metres, into the square. After five attempts we count the number of effectively stopped balls.

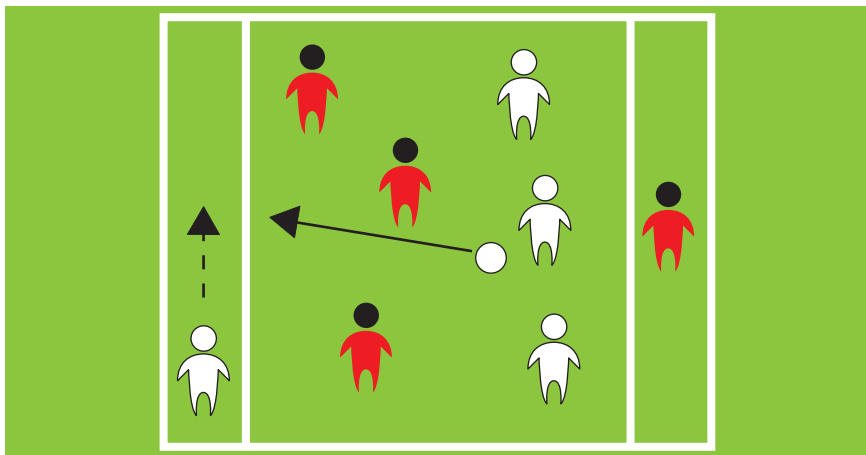


FIGURE 13 - Ball to the prisoner: the pupils all start playing within the game area. Two pupils (one per team) are placed on the outside, behind a line. The team that manages to pass the ball the most times to its prisoner wins. The prisoners can be changed by taking turns or for every point obtained.

8 THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL...FOOTBALL SCHOOL: THE APPROACH TO THE RULES

It is the first day of school, football school. It is the first approach to a wonderful world, made of games, the need to cheer, of new experiences. There is a lot of desire to score a goal and to block a penalty, but also the fear of facing a new environment, of messing up a very easy goal or of missing the ball. A mix of strong sensations that we adults can imagine only if we remember that we, also, once upon a time, were children. The first approach of the Instructor and the Manager, as well and the Secretariat, with which the Parents and the children will effectively have their first contact with the Club, in which, presumably, they will spend the most important years of their lives, becomes important, we dare to say fundamental. It is therefore clear that in this phase it will be important to go along with the children's needs that begin this game, not to become great champions, but simply to play, learn and measure themselves against their peers.

The activity of football, can in fact begin from the sixth year of age, which almost always coincides with the beginning of elementary school. Nowadays almost all children at this age have already been to kindergarten and therefore have already normally faced the problem of relating with a group and the rules that this entails. Now the rules become more and more important and always more specific, guiding the child, through his needs and specific



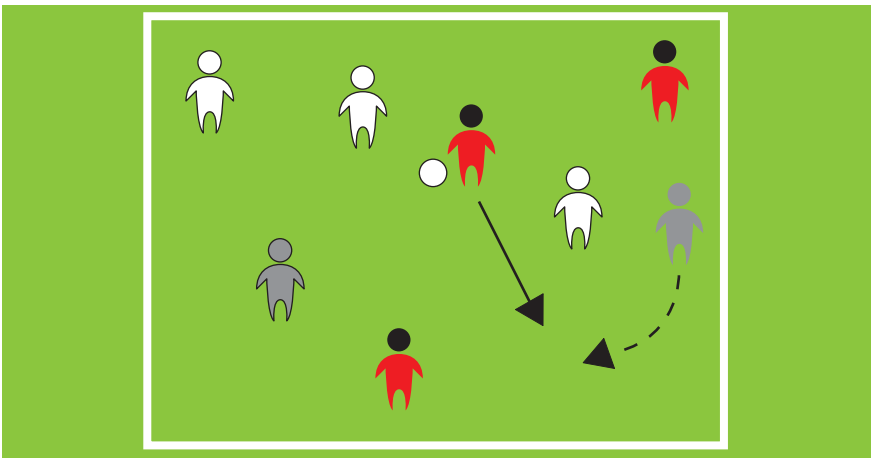


FIGURE 14 - Ball to the captain: Two groups of children play among themselves with one ball, in a wide, limited space. Taking turns, each member of each group gets to be captain. The team that reaches a certain pre-established score first wins, considering that every pass to the captain is worth one point. The team that is not in ball possession at the time will have to try and recover the ball to carry out passes to its captain.

character, through the discovery of the surrounding world until the gradual cooperation with his team mates that will happen at the end of the egocentric phase. The instructor will therefore have to be sensitive in formulating games and rules: the children are on the field to play and have fun. It is advisable to listen and perceive their expectations and, respecting the desired objectives to obtain, make possible changes that will facilitate the task of the instructor in proposing exercises, that will consequently make the activity more stimulating for the Little Friends that are having fun, and

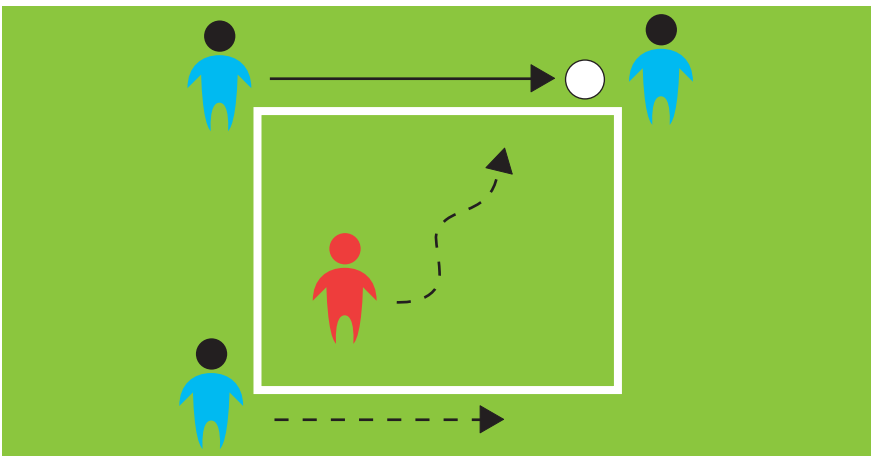


FIGURE 15 - The unmarking square: the three players pass the ball to one another, and the player in ball possession always has 2 lateral passing solutions. The player that receives the ball, once he gains control, will pass it to one of his two team mates, then a defender is inserted.

above all they are learning, by playing football (and not only). The games and activities that are proposed will have to give the possibility to the children to learn by playing and to understand the main rules that determine the dynamics of the group.

The child, who is at first disoriented and in a completely new world, will need to accustom himself and for this purpose he will have to have the possibility of expressing himself and getting to know the others. Simple games, with few and necessary rules, facilitate this first approach. The instructor will have to make the games and the rules understood in a simple and catchy, entertaining and dynamic manner, in which the attention towards the rules should never prevail over the will to compete and to play. The children should never get bored. It is therefore extremely important, for example, to let the children decide and discover the rules (always under the guidance of the instructor). It is just as important, however, to give the children the appropriate explanations of the main rules that determine the activity. To know how and why certain rules apply makes the awareness of what they are doing grow, and consequently their greater responsibility which facilitates, later on, the realisation of the tasks that are assigned to them from time to time (as it happens, for example, in the circuits, which, particularly at this age have a greater space in the didactical plan). The instructor will therefore have to be more of an educator than a coach, much more than the other technical coaches that deal with basic categories.

8.1 OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES OF LITTLE FRIENDS

It is on these principles that the activities and encounters that involve Little Friends are based. Official activities entail, in fact, that the series of encounters go on, in each territory, for at least three months, in which in each encounter three, four, six or more clubs are preferably involved, independently from the number of children that each have insured with the insurance card of the FIGC (or through the CONI if the Club is recognised as a Centre for Beginner Sports). During these competitions the children face each other in various games: football games, popular games, athletic games, but above all they have the possibility of being together, proposing, in each of these moments, a day of feast in which the main characters are definitely the children, but also the parents, which are often asked to participate in some specific activities with their children. An example of such an activity is “Let’s play together”.



“Let’s play together” is an activity that for some years has been providing essential food for thought for those who operate in this category. The clubs have the opportunity to propose games and activities according to the abilities, the needs and the number of children involved. There will be more or less simple games, with or without opponents etc. Certainly there will not be an exclusion of games of 3, 4 or 5 players per team, as the game will certainly be the activity that the children are looking forward to the most. All the activities will have to be, in any case and necessarily, be proposed in an elastic way by the instructors that certainly know the children more directly, their weaknesses and their psycho-social abilities. The official encounters become an important phase of training for the little pupils, who for the first time face and measure themselves against children from other clubs, experiencing other organisational and social contexts. In this context the Juvenile and Scholastic sector hopes that these contexts can be an occasion for various groups to socialise, in which parties can be organised or in any case welcoming for “friends” who come to visit us at home on Sunday... Utopia? Absolutely not! In fact, many clubs behave just like that, they invite various clubs at the same time, organising independent encounters (the so-called friendly matches) and on occasion they inform the managers of the other groups that participate, and at the end of the matches there is a small buffet, a sort of picnic, in which each parent is free to bring what he/she wants, food or beverages.

8.2 FUN FOOTBALL: FOOTBALL THAT ENTERTAINS



As a testimony of this kind of organisation, and with the purpose of conveying a message to every Football School the Juvenile and Scholastic Sector has organised in the past several years a weekend dedicated exclusively to Little Friends: it is the national day of “FUN FOOTBALL”.

During this day each Regional Committee organises one or more regional fairs that are carried out at the same time in the whole country. The largest number of Football Schools possible that have activities for Little Friends are invited, with their children that meet in the fields or in the areas made available by the Committees, by the Municipalities or by the Clubs themselves. Therefore a proper “GLOBAL VILLAGE” is set up, in which maximum entertainment for the children and adults must be guaranteed.

The organised activities involve various playing areas: from the picture gallery to the restaurant points, from open-air cinema to

fancy dress, from funfairs to itinerating entertainment (clowns, mimes etc.), a competition dedicated to FUN FOOTBALL (shooting into small goals, control competitions with inflatable balls or of different dimensions, basket shooting, etc.), from tug of war, to the scalp game, from playing with mum and dad to animated pathways (on the basis of a cartoon, for example Peter Pan, Harry Potter, etc.). At the end of the party all the children, which in the meantime will have competed in football games, 3 a side or 4 a side or 5 a side, popular games of various kinds, placed in stations on the playing field, will be given a prize. In some of these occasions they have managed to organise another final show in a theatre, evidently adapted for children in this age group, giving the event a greater cultural significance. Therefore it is appropriate for the fairs to be followed and directing by the instructors of the groups (which are not proper referees that will have the possibility of intervening at a proper time to liaise with the children and perceive the difficulties that they encounter along the way. They will also have the possibility to explain the rules or the possible committed infractions. That is right! Because they do not always notice that they have done something wrong: they discover it only in those moments... Slowly the children will grow, they will always have a greater need for moments of confrontation with their peers, to measure the growth of their abilities. The comparisons will gradually have more and more football characteristics, maintaining a fun

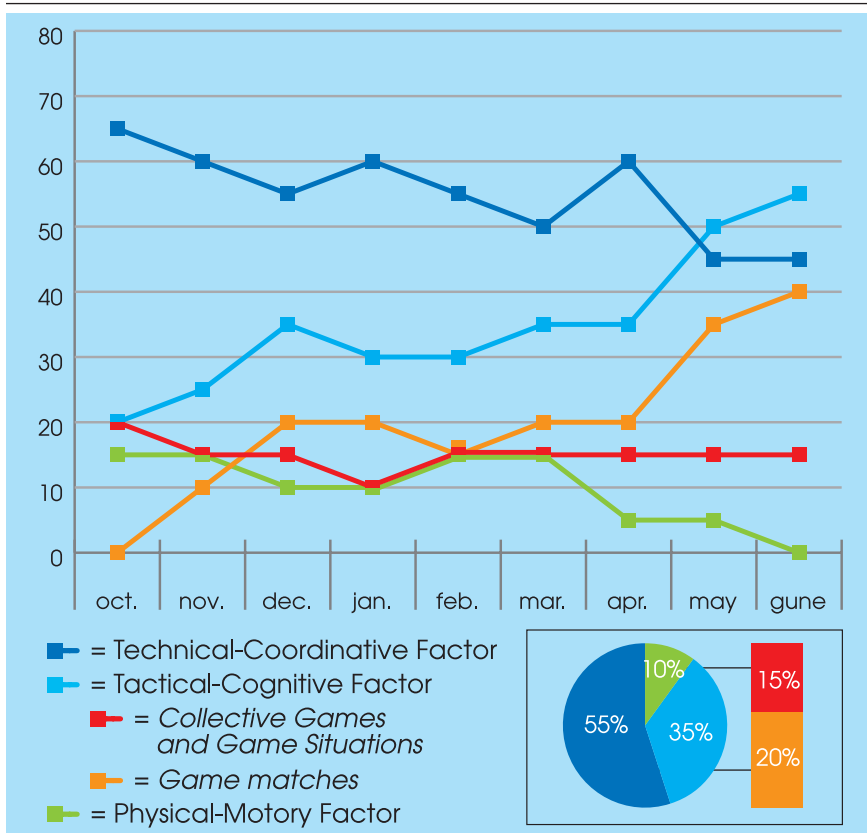


“THE FREQUENCY COORDINATOR BECOMES A PRECISION NET OR A NET FOR TENNIS-FOOTBALL”

- From the preparatory phase (perceived body) to the phase of concrete operation (represented body);
- Cognitive development: egocentric and syncretised (global) thought
- Phase of centralisation: limited attention; projection of self in the environment;
- Synthetic solutions of the movement task;
- Mainly senso-motor control (internal attention);
- Spatial-temporal organisation of experience (non-mental);
- Phase of comprehension of the task and general coordination;
- Instinctive and irrational movements;
- Little availability towards others;
- Understanding of simple rules.

TABLE 7 - Psychomotor profile and general characteristics - Little Friends category

structure that must characterise this phase of approach to club sporting activities. These various kinds of athletic games and competitions will have to be present to then proceed, in a natural learning and training process of the young player, in the activities that we have prepared for the Cubs of the first year (8 years old), characterised by competitions between 5 players per team.



GRAPH 1 - Annual didactical programme - Little Friends category

	Technical-Coordination Factor	Tactical-Cognitive Factor	Physical-Motory Factor
Obiettivi Generali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development and consolidation of basic movement patterns; Training and development of coordination abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing how to relate in 3vs3 Use and management of space: ability to solve movement problems individually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psycho-sensory-motor control
Obiettivi Specifici	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running: differentiation and general sensor-motory control; Reaching of directional objectives Ability to control the ball under pressure; Hit, throw or kick towards a target with a still ball and in movement; Hitting and receiving: frontal passing and receiving with a low ball; Moving: tackling the opponent ball possessor; Moving to intercept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concept of far-near; narrow-large; Ability to jump the opponent in simplified game situations Analysis and synthetic solutions of movement task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of general motricity; Solicitation of abilities of rapidity and reaction
Contenuti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unitary relation between the child and the ball; Games of familiarisation with the ball; Knowledge of technical fundamentals; Activity in limited spaces and accentuated numerical prevalence; Shooting games with balls and targets of various dimensions (starting with the biggest); Technical-movement circuits and management of technical move. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Games and activities in teams in reduced spaces (1vs1, 2vs2, 3vs3) with hands and feet; Action of crossing lines with strong numerical prevalence (ball/attacker ratio 1:1); 1vs1 with defender in an area or on a line; Popular games with simplified rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Games and competitions in rapid form, from steal the ball to relays; Movement circuits and solicitation of basic movement patterns (going under, over, balance, rolling, etc.); Simple Pre-acrobatic activity (dives, rolling, summersaults, etc.)

TABLE 8 - General and specific content to pursue in the didactical annual programme of the Little Friend category.