

5 SIMPLE RULES

for

*young
midfielders*

SoccerCoach 

...and their coaches

midfielders' rule no. 1

CREATE OR DISRUPT

**CREATE YOUR
CHANCES**

OR DISRUPT THEIRS

Coaches' Notes



what to say to your players

- “You have to support your attack and protect your defence. You have to be able to create and disrupt”
- “Midfielders need to be multi-functional. Strong in the tackle, but with great vision, and the ability to take on and beat players. As well as scoring the odd goal”
- “No doubt about it, midfield is where the action is. The midfield is the heart-beat of the team”
- “It’s the engine-room that powers the team’s performance”



what to think about

- Without an attacking midfield, your strikers will have fewer opportunities to score.
- Without a defensive and disruptive midfield, your defence will be overstretched and, at times, overrun.
- Apart from their tactical and playing skills, midfielders have to have a good engine of their own.
- So make sure they have plenty of stamina, as well as speed.
- All that creation, and all that disruption, is hard work.

midfielders' rule no. 2

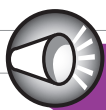
KEEP CREATION

SIMPLE

JUST CHIP

AND RUN

Coaches' Notes



what to say to your players

- "Don't over-complicate things"
- "Just look for the space between their goalkeeper and their last defender"
- "Then chip the ball over the defender into that space"
- "This will give you, or your attacker, the chance to run onto the chip pass, while their defender has to turn and then run"
- "If you're really lucky, the defender will turn and panic. And who knows what that will lead to?"



what to think about

- Introduce your players to the idea of "percentage football".
- Help them understand that sometimes they can hurry defenders into giving away a throw-in or a corner with a simple "chip and run".
- The subsequent throw-in, or corner, will then give the team a stronger platform to launch a well-supported attack.
- If your players can't chip or "loft" a ball, teach them.
- Or just get them to play the ball on the deck – the principle is still the same.

midfielders' rule no. 3

SECOND-GUESS AND DISRUPT THEIR MIDFIELD MOVES

Coaches' Notes



what to say to your players

- “Out of four midfield players – there’s usually only one or two playmakers”
- “Your job is to find out who they are. And then starve them of possession”
- “That won’t necessarily be easy – but it can be extremely effective”
- “Remember all players are not born equal – and that includes their midfielders”



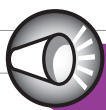
what to think about

- At the highest level, every player has to be watched and accounted for.
- But in lots of young teams, it’s true that some players can “safely” be ignored. For most of the time.
- Which gives your players the chance to “double-up”, when necessary, on their most threatening midfielders or strikers.

midfielders' rule no. 4

**ALWAYS MOVE
INTO THE
AVAILABLE SPACE
IT'S FREE OF CHARGE**

Coaches' Notes



what to say to your players

- “Don’t ignore any free gifts”
- “If the opposition have backed off, or gone to sleep – that’s their problem – and your opportunity”
- “Just walk, jog or sprint into the space they’ve made available”
- “Use the space to strike the sweetest pass or fiercest shot you’re capable of. While they just stand and watch”



what to think about

- The key to finding space is awareness.
- Encourage your players to keep their eyes and ears open to everything around them on the pitch.
- Whenever young players have time and space, encourage them to use it.
- Explain to them how they can use that space and time to quickly turn up the pressure on the other team.

midfielders' rule no. 5

**THE BALL NEVER
GETS TIRED
LET IT DO THE WORK
WHEN YOU CAN'T**

Coaches' Notes



what to say to your players

- “It’s only natural to get tired towards the end of a hard game, so it makes sense to let the ball do the running”
- “What this means is that your remaining energy and concentration should be focused on hitting the ball sweetly”
- “Crisp, accurate, passing that helps your team keep possession, while the opposition run long and hard just trying to get the ball back”



what to think about

- Like all football skills, different players have different levels of natural ability when it comes to passing the ball in a competitive game.
- But for most young players, especially when they’re tired, or under pressure, bad passing comes from taking their eye off the ball.
- The majority of scuffed and missed passes come from players looking anywhere but at the ball they’re about to hit.