

## THREE AWESOMELY FUN PRACTICE-ENDING GAMES

by Marsha Lycan

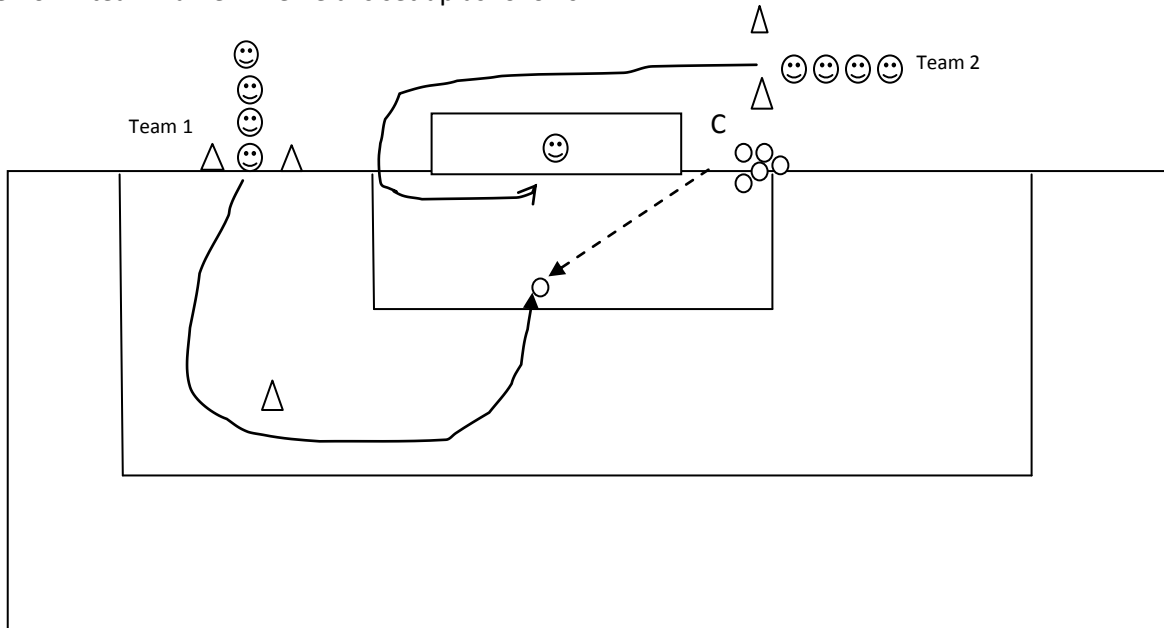
I have previously mentioned in my STAR methodology writing that particularly for the younger ages, I try to use fun and silly games at the end of training sessions as a reward for a focused, hard-working effort by the players. To maintain credibility, don't be afraid to hold this back if the children are not well behaved. It will serve as a great, positive reinforcement, and you will find them begging to play these games at the end of practice---and the incentive usually will motivate them to have great practice sessions.

**DEATH STAR:** one of the few times lines will exist in my practice, but the players will be so excited about this game that they remain interested and focused the entire time, even while waiting in line. The coach stands in the goal and all players start out in a line around the top of the Penalty Box. Also set up a small grid of cones (15 x 15 or so) near the edge of the PK box, off to the side of field, and out of the way---this is the dreaded "Death Star". All balls are in the goal with coach who rolls a ball out to the first player in line that must one time a shot. If the player scores, then they are 'safe' and return to the end of the line. If the player misses the shot he/she then gets a second chance to avoid being sentenced to the 'death star' by trying to catch a ball that the coach punts up into the air. If the player misses the shot, but makes the catch, he/she is still safe and stays in the game by going to end of line. If the player misses the shot AND the catch, then he/she must enter the 'death star'. Once there are players in the Death Star, they can all be saved by their teammates by having a player make the shot AND make the catch! By doing both, the entire death star is rescued and they all come cheering back to the line. The best thing about this game is that it can very easily be manipulated by the coach based on how good or bad your punts are, or how much effort you put into your GK skills! It's always fun to make it tough to score on them, then also give very difficult balls to catch so that the death star loads up and perhaps only 1 or 2 players are left...then you can then make it easier for them to rescue the entire team from the death star which always results in an enormous amount of cheering and celebrating. The U9/U10 kids absolutely love this game, and you can make it lots of fun with good commentating!

**POWER/FINESSE/HEAD:** There are many variations of this fun game. Players are divided equally into 2 teams who each line up by cones outside the 18 yd box, one to the left of goal, one to the right. GK is in the Goal and 2 coaches act as servers, one on each side of the goal outside the end line and each with a huge supply of balls. Coach 1 is serving balls to the team that is diagonal from him and Coach 2 is serving the team which is diagonal to him. Coach 1 begins by serving the first player in his line 3 balls in pretty fast succession...one very long one that will be around the top of the 18 yd box, then one shorter one which will be around the 10 yd line, then one in the air inside the 6 for a header. First shot is a long range POWER shot, second is more of a placement FINESSE shot and the last is a header out of the air. The key to this is the Coach serves the balls very quickly in about a 3 second span so the player is receiving each ball as he/she is running towards the goal without any wait or delay.

In order to stay in the game, the player must make one of the shots into the goal. If the player misses all three, then he/she is out of the game and behind the goal shagging balls. If a player makes any TWO of the shots then he/she is able to select one of his teammates (if any are out) to return to their team and play. If a player hits the trifecta and makes all the shots, then ALL players on that team are back into the game. The team with at least one last player standing when the other team loses all players is the winner.

**SUPER SHOOTOUT:** Another very popular games with the kids, who will beg to play this. Can be done at any age really, and the older kids love even more than the younger. Players are grouped into 2 teams, and must come up with their own team name. The field is set up as follows:



Team 1 lines up between 2 cones on end line, and Team 2 lines up between 2 cones positioned behind goal opposite of Team 1. Coach positions himself right next to goal on end line with large supply of balls, 15 plus if possible. Coach has stopwatch and yells very loudly “GO” ...on that command, the first person in Team 1 line sprints out and around a cone positioned almost to edge of box (depends on age and ability level of players), and the first player in Team 2 line sprints around back of goal and into goal to become GK. As Team 1 player is rounding cone, coach rolls ball out so that it comes outside the Six Yd box, and Team 1 player must hit first time shot. Team 2 player is hopefully positioned in Goal and acts as GK. Drill is run for 2 minutes and shooting Team must keep track of goals. This is meant to be a VERY fast moving game, so Coach will likely be yelling GO for the next players to start running at the same time or shortly after rolling previous ball. It will get a little hectic but it’s meant to. A couple of rules that make game run smoothly:

1. Shooting team is responsible for getting balls back to Coach. Each team’s turn last 2 min but make it clear that if Coach runs out of balls, then turn is over.
2. All shots are ONE TOUCH...no rebound goals or two touches or the point doesn’t count.
3. Stress that players need to be ready and pay attention since they will be hearing GO before the previous shooter has probably even shot...if Team 2 is not listening and doesn’t get player in Goal or is late getting into goal, point still counts
4. If teams are caught leaving before coach says GO (especially the GK’s) then there will be a 1 point penalty imposed.

This is also a game that can be somewhat manipulated by coach...it’s fun to have each team win a ‘round’ then have the third game tiebreaker.