

# Training the FC Köln way

## Part 3: Training tips and sample exercises for effective winter training

by Klaus Pabst, *Success in Soccer* associate editor

Like many other teams, 1. FC Köln's U15 players spend the winter practicing indoors. During this time they compete in a total of three indoor tournaments, including the unofficial German indoor championships in Detmold, where they are currently the reigning champions. Therefore their training program from December through February focuses on indoor soccer while continuing to emphasize the training objectives from their monthly plans.

### Winter training methods

The gym and soccer cage at FC. Köln's training facility in Geißbockheim are ideal for preparing players for indoor competition. During the winter, coaches Marcus Kühn and Martin Büllles rely mostly on practice games and game/exercise combinations to keep all the players moving and to make sure they don't get too cold. Intensive warm-up is key during winter as well.

### Combined technique training

Of course technique training continues uninterrupted throughout the winter, alternating each week between the concepts of dribbling/faking, passing and ball control. Exercises and practice games are combined to create complex activities with lots of double plays.

Players start out practicing the week's technique in isolation, with no opposition pressure, but they quickly transition to small-sided games (1 v. 1, 2 v. 2). These games on small fields simulate many aspects of indoor soccer.

### Precise corrections

Combined technique training means that multiple players are always in motion, so the entire team can take part. It also means that the head coach and assistant coach can both make corrections: One watches the players doing exercises while the other coaches the ones playing 1 v. 1 or 2 v. 2. While observing exercises, it's important to pay close attention to players' execution. During the game, corrections should focus on either offensive or defensive tactics.

If games are ending too soon, pass in another ball. Games on mini goals are great for motivation. If no mini goals are available, you can also use cones or poles.

### Intensive warm-up

To keep players from getting too cold, and to prevent injuries, intensive warm-up is a must. Divide players into two groups: One works on coordination (running, jumping or ball handling) while the other works on technique (dribbling/faking, passing or ball control).

## Fig. 2: Tactics for indoor soccer

### Rapid action

The small field means players have less time and space. To gain an advantage over opponents, they have to make every play as fast as possible. This requires both movement speed and game action speed.

### Direct combinations

To escape opposition pressure on a relatively small field and quickly get into position to shoot, players should build their attacks with combinations on the ground, taking minimal touches.

### Effective opening runs

Fast combination play is only possible if potential receivers get open

and clearly show for passes. Holes behind opponents and open spaces on the wings are good places to show. Passers should get open immediately after passing (give and go).

### Forward passes

Because space is limited, players should use controlled, carefully aimed forward passes on the ground to build their attacks. Avoid square passes, which increase opposition pressure.

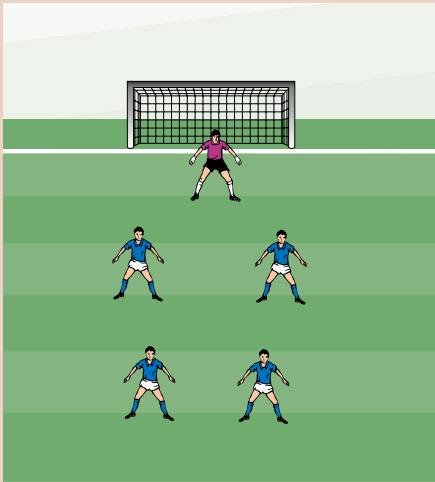
### Avoiding the corners

The walls around the field turn the corners into dead spaces that are easy for defenders to block off—attackers should stay away from them!

# YOUTH U14–U18

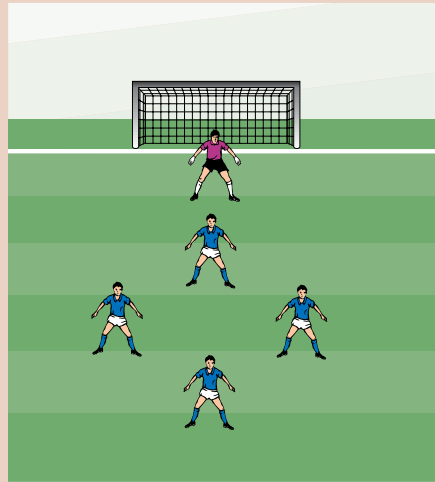
**Fig. 1: Game formations for indoor soccer**

For indoor soccer, German U15 teams play 4 v. 4 plus goalkeepers, giving them the following formations to choose from:



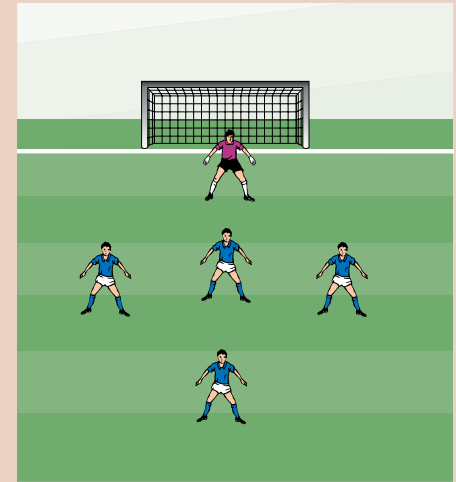
## 2–2 formation

- Roles are clearly divided between defenders and attackers.
- Defenders should be good at defending and attack-building, while attackers should be good at dribbling and shooting.
- All players should be ready to run a lot and transition quickly between defense and offense.
- On defense, all players follow the ball.



## 1–2–1 formation

- The player in the back coordinates the defense and covers teammates.
- The midfielders are the most active, setting up plays and constantly switching between defense and offense.
- They try to play forward passes to the striker, who can either turn and shoot or lay the ball off for a teammate to shoot.



## 3–1 formation

- With a block of three defenders, this is the most defense-oriented formation.
- On defense, the defenders form a compact unit that continuously closes down the spaces created as opponents form triangles.
- On offense, this formation is very versatile, since defenders have lots of options for joining the attack.

Each segment of the warm-up program should last about 10 minutes. Have players do active stretching exercises either between exercises at each station or while switching to the next station. This ensures that

the muscles are activated immediately after being stretched. Conclude the warm-up program with competitive sprints from various starting positions.

## Following up on solo plays

Solo plays are essential for outnumbering opponents in front of the goal. However, they should always be followed immediately by another play (pass, shot, etc.). Long dribbling runs are only effective if they move the ball forward; otherwise opponents can follow the ball carrier and attack the ball again.

## Moving as a group

When players lose the ball, they need to get into defensive positions behind it as fast as they can to avoid being outnumbered. When they win it, they should spread out in all directions in front of it and show for passes (without going offsides!).

## Ball-oriented defense

Ball-oriented defense is ideal for the tight spaces of indoor soccer. Defenders should stop the ball carrier and attack the ball. Meanwhile, their teammates try to anticipate and intercept passes, trading potential receivers as necessary. All players should block long-range shots and keep attackers from getting behind them.

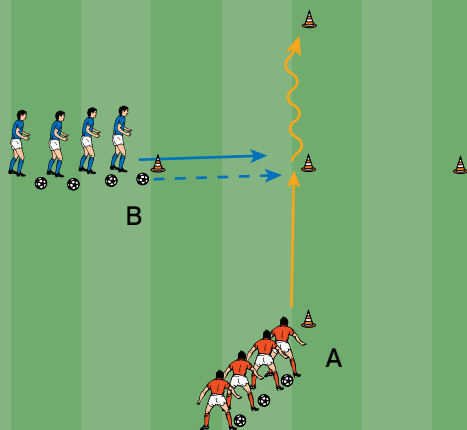
## Pressing

Active pressing works well indoors. When the attacking team plays back passes, opponents should move up and attack the ball carrier as a group while marking any nearby attackers.

## Training the FC Köln way

### WARM-UP EXERCISES

#### Technique-oriented warm-up



#### Setup and sequence

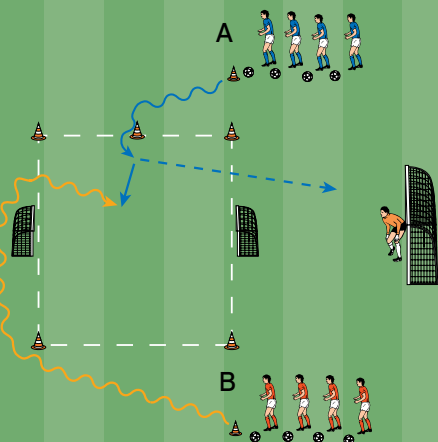
- Mark out a 20 x 20-yard diamond with a fifth cone in the center.
- Players line up at two adjacent outside cones. Each one has a ball, except for the first player from Team A.
- Player A runs to the center cone, shows for a ground ball from B, receives and controls it and takes it to one of the other two cones.
- B runs in to the middle and shows for a ground ball from the next player on Team A, and so on.

#### Variations

- Players carry balls and throw or volley to each other.
- One team throws the ball; the other passes on the ground.
- After taking the ball to one cone, the receiver turns and dribbles to the other cone.

### COMBINED TECHNIQUE TRAINING

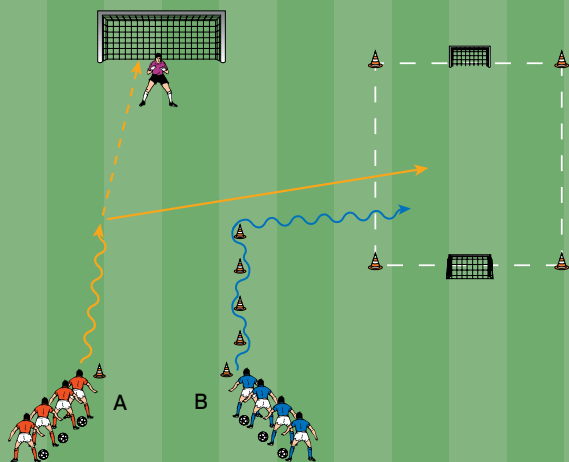
#### Dribbling and shooting 1



#### Setup and sequence

- Fifteen yards in front of a goal with goalkeeper, mark out a 10 x 20-yard field with mini goals on its long sides.
- Place a starting cone 10 yards away from each sideline.
- Place an additional cone in the middle of one sideline.
- Players line up at the starting cones with one ball each.
- The first two players start dribbling toward the field.
- Player A dribbles around the cone, shoots at the standard goal from inside the field and turns to defend the inside mini goal.
- B dribbles around the outside mini goal and then plays 1 v. 1 to score against A.
- Each 1 v. 1 continues until a goal is scored or the ball goes out.
- Players switch roles and positions after each round.

#### Dribbling and shooting 2



#### Setup and sequence

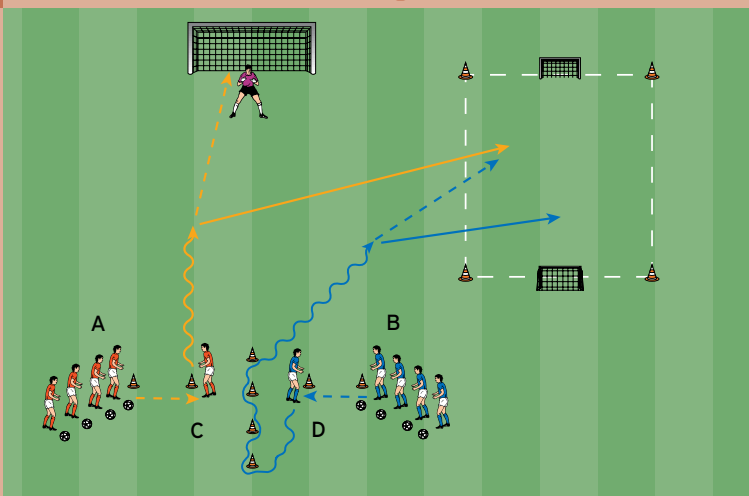
- Set up two starting cones 20 yards in front of a goal with keeper.
- Use four more cones to mark out a slalom course in front of one of the starting cones.
- Beside the goal, mark out a 10 x 20-yard field with two mini goals.
- Players line up at the starting cones with one ball each.
- The first two players start dribbling toward the goal.
- Player A dribbles rapidly forward, shoots at the standard goal and runs onto the field to defend the outside mini goal.
- B takes the ball through the slalom course, dribbles onto the field and then plays 1 v. 1 to score against A.
- Each 1 v. 1 continues until a goal is scored or the ball goes out.
- Players switch roles and positions after each round.



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### COMBINED TECHNIQUE TRAINING

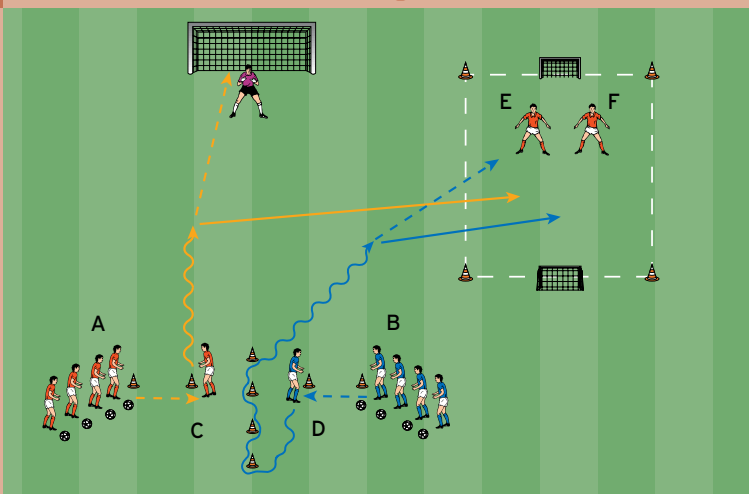
#### Ball control and shooting 1



#### Setup and sequence

- Set up two starting cones facing one another, 20 yards in front of a goal with goalkeeper.
- Place another cone five yards inside each starting cone.
- Mark out a slalom course between the inside cones.
- Beside the goal, mark out a 10 x 20-yard field with mini goals.
- Position two players (C and D) at the inside cones.
- All other players line up at the starting cones with one ball each.
- At the coach's signal, A and B pass to C and D.
- C dribbles toward the goal, shoots and runs onto the field to attack.
- D takes the ball through the slalom course, dribbles onto the field, passes to C and becomes a defender.
- C and D play 1 v. 1 until a goal is scored or the ball goes out.

#### Ball control and shooting 2



#### Setup and sequence

- Setup is the same as above, except there are two attackers (E and F) on the field.
- At the coach's signal, A and B pass to C and D.
- C dribbles toward the goal, shoots and runs onto the field to defend.
- D takes the ball through the slalom course, dribbles onto the field, passes to E and F and becomes a second defender.
- Teams play 2 v. 2 until a goal is scored or the ball goes out.
- After each round, A and B move to the inside cones, C and D stay on the field to defend, and E and F join the lines at the starting cones.

#### Variations

- Players A and B throw or volley to C and D.
- Player A throws or volleys the ball; B passes on the ground.

## Training the fundamentals

In a game as complex as soccer, with so many different techniques, strategies and tactical options, basic training is crucial, especially for junior and senior high school players, upper-level recreation leagues and off-season camp instructors. Each book in the "Soccer Method" series is full of technical and tactical exercises aimed at improving a specific aspect of play, as well as detailed lesson plans that can be customized to fit any coach's situation.

In *Build-Up Play*, the focus is on attack-building. Typically when a team recovers possession in the defensive end, players begin the process of switching from a defensive to an offensive stance to get into position to score. Dutch teams are famous for their skillful counterattacks, and this book illustrates that well. *Build-Up Play* is an excellent resource for any coach or player interested in mastering this skill. Includes 80 color diagrams to illustrate training methods.

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