

# Intensive endurance training

Using 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 and 3 v. 3 games to improve soccer-specific endurance

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All photos: Axel Heimken

Sure, the old season may not be over yet, and intensive endurance training isn't going to make a critical difference in your team's place in the standings. However, it could still be a wake-up call for some of your players.

More importantly, the end of one season is the beginning of another, as every soccer coach knows. In just a few weeks you'll be planning your next preseason, and that's where this article will come in handy, with tips, guidelines and exercises for play-oriented endurance training that will leave your players tired out but not wiped out.

## Exertion and regeneration

On the following pages you'll find exercises designed to train soccer-specific endurance in 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 and 3 v. 3 situations. Known as "intermittent training," the method involves a carefully calibrated mix of exertion and rest. The result is that the body learns to break down built-up lactate and take in the oxygen required for regeneration as soon as it gets a chance to rest.

Of course, the heart rate generally does not drop below 150, so players do eventually reach a state of fatigue in which the body can no longer deliver oxygen to the muscles fast enough to replace what's been used up. But as long as you stick to the repetition numbers and break lengths given in this article, you'll rapidly improve your players' soccer-specific endurance.

Lactate levels can temporarily become quite elevated with this method. If the breaks are too short, players' bodies will actually become

more lactate-tolerant—but their soccer-specific abilities will suffer. After all, we don't want 400-meter runners who cover the last 100 meters on willpower alone; we want soccer players who are capable of stepping it up over and over again, regardless of how hard they just pushed themselves a minute ago.

And this really is achievable, because the method is designed to increase players' maximum oxygen intake levels.

## Team competition for all players

Any of the small-sided games described in this article can be organized into a tournament. The procedure is the same whether it's 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3: Divide all players into two teams, blue and red. On each field, a red player (or team) plays against a blue one. After each set (see guidelines on facing page), the points scored by each color are added up. Scoring: three points per win, one per draw.

# AMATEUR ADULT

## 1 V. 1



### CHARACTERISTICS

#### Setup

- Field size: 25 x 20–30 x 20 yards
- Small or mini goals
- Two or three fields side by side, depending on number of players
- Eight players per field, i.e. four teams (A, B, C, D)
- At least one ball per player
- Two teams practice, two retrieve balls
- Teams do not change (constant level of exertion)

#### Pacing

- Exercise and break 90–120 seconds each
- One set = one round; 5–8 sets

#### Variation

- Exercise and break one minute each (two reps = one set)

### CHARACTERISTICS

#### Setup

- Multiple fields side by side, each 20 x 15–25 x 20 yards
- Small or mini goals
- Four players per field, at least one ball per player
- Two players practice, two retrieve balls and play them back in as needed (throw-in, corner kick)

#### Pacing

- Thirty seconds at maximum intensity, thirty-second break
- One set = 6–12 minutes; 2–4 sets
- Breaks between sets: 7–9 minutes (juggling, easy ball exercises)

#### Variation

- Exercise and break 15 seconds each

## 2 V. 2



### CHARACTERISTICS

#### Setup

- Field size: 35 x 20–40 x 20 yards
- Small or mini goals, possibly standard goals with keepers
- One field or two, depending on number of players
- Twelve players per field, i.e. four teams (A, B, C, D)
- At least one ball per player
- Two teams practice, two retrieve balls
- Teams do not change (constant level of exertion)

#### Pacing

- Exercise and break three minutes each
- One set = one round; 4–5 sets

#### Variations

- Exercise and break two minutes each (two reps = one set)
- Limited touches

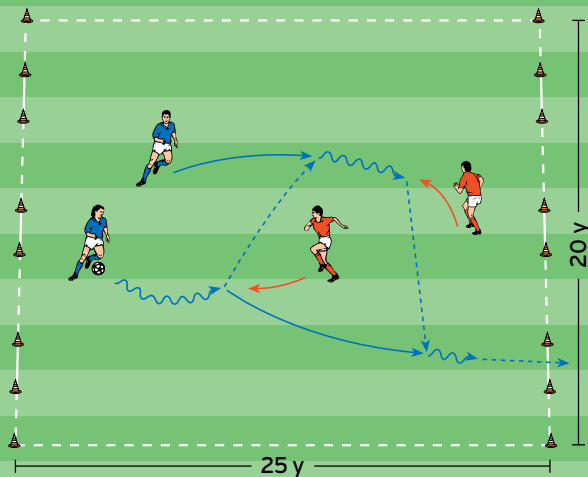
## 3 V. 3



## Intensive endurance training

### SIMPLE EXERCISES: 1 V. 1, 2 V. 2, 3 V. 3

#### Three-goal game



#### Setup and sequence

- Set up three small goals on each endline (maximum width two yards).
- Players/teams play 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3.

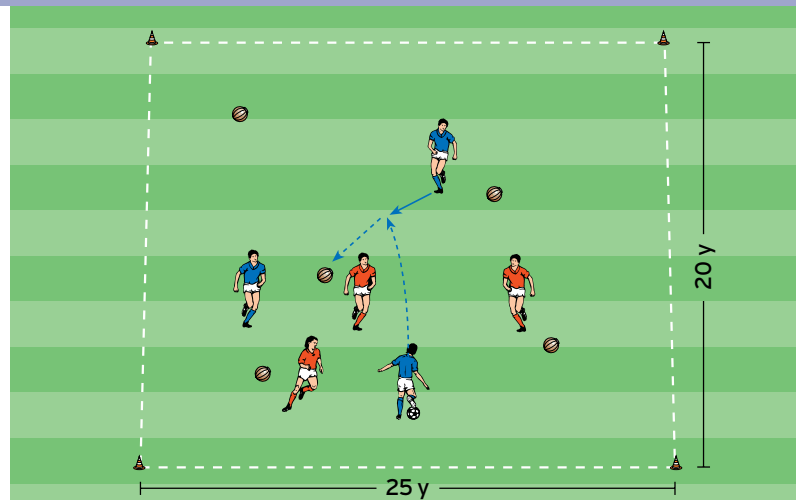
#### Variations

- Set up one or two goals on each endline.
- Mark out shooting zones in front of each goal to prevent long shots.
- Require players to dribble through the goals.

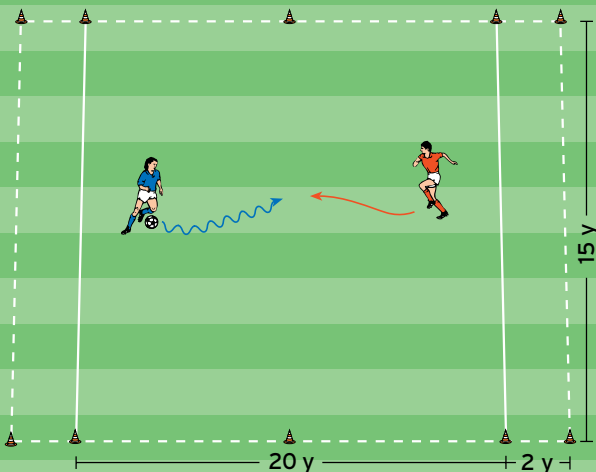
#### Medicine ball goals

##### Setup and sequence

- Scatter five medicine balls around the field (three are enough for 1 v. 1 play).
- Players/teams play 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3.
- Players score by shooting at the medicine balls.
- Players/teams are not allowed to score on the same ball twice in a row.
- Which player/team can score the most points in 30 seconds (1 v. 1), two minutes (2 v. 2) or three minutes (3 v. 3)?



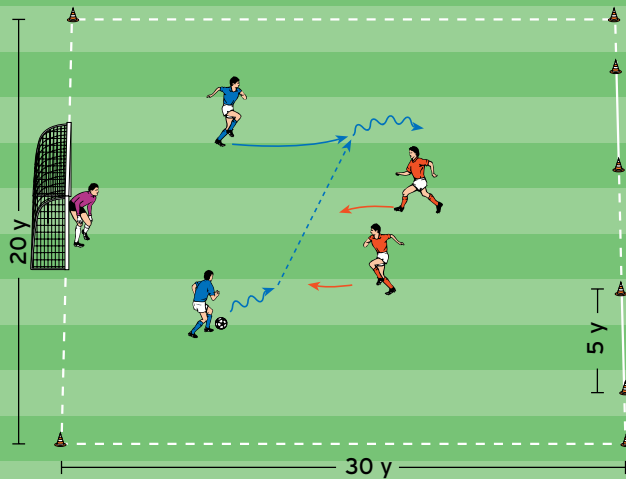
#### Dribbling across goal lines



#### Setup and sequence

- Mark each endline as a goal line.
- Behind each endline, mark out a two-yard-wide goal zone.
- Teams have no goalkeepers.
- Players have to dribble across the opposition's goal line to score.
- To make sure players dribble in a controlled fashion, they are required to take one last touch in the goal zone; otherwise the goal does not count.

## Big and small goals



### Setup and sequence

- Set up a goal with goalkeeper on one endline and two five-yard-wide goals on the other.
- Players/teams play 1 v. 1, 2 v. 2 or 3 v. 3.

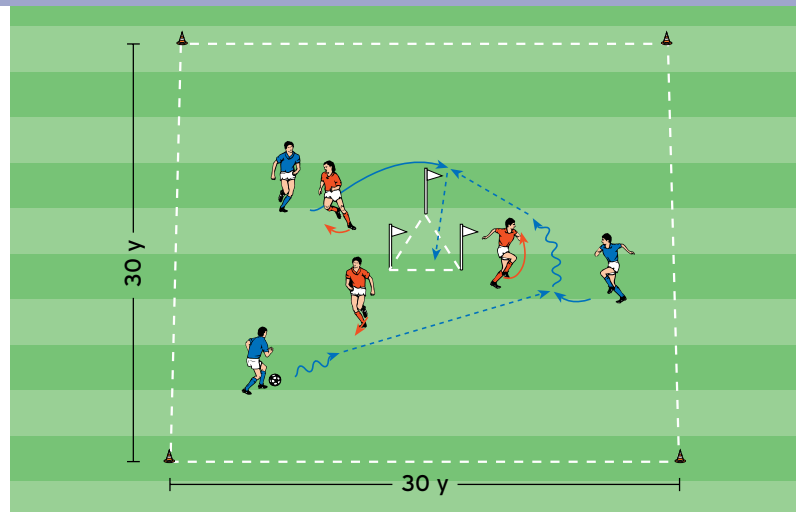
### Tip

- When the goalkeeper stops a shot, he is not allowed to put the ball back into play until all opponents are back at the center-line. This keeps defenders from hanging back and waiting for a chance to score instead of chasing after their opponents.

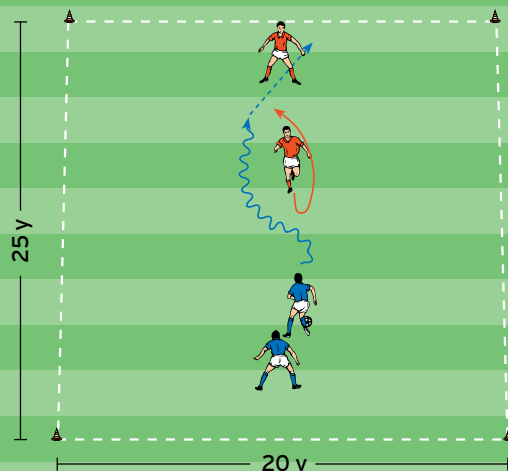
## Triangular goal (not for 1 v. 1)

### Setup and sequence

- Two teams play on a triangular goal marked with cones or poles in the center of the field.
- Each side of the triangle is two to three yards long.
- To score, players have to shoot the ball into the goal on any side, and the shot has to be below knee level.
- Any player can score on any side of the goal.
- If the attacking team regains possession after a goal or blocked shot, it must try its next attack on a different side.



## Tunnel goals



### Setup and sequence: 1 v. 1 (see diagram)

- Two pairs of players practice on each field.
- Two players stand on the field with legs apart (tunnel goals).
- The other two play 1 v. 1 on one tunnel goal each.

### Setup and sequence: 2 v. 2

- Four pairs of players practice on each field.
- Two pairs stand on the field with legs apart (tunnel goals) in a more or less symmetrical configuration: They can take the "classic" goal positions, or stand diagonally opposite, or stand at right angles to each other by the sidelines.
- The other two pairs play 2 v. 2 on two tunnel goals each.