



# National Soccer Coaches Association of America

## Fun Games For Under 8s (Part 1)

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**by Lee Mitchell**

NSCAA Coaching Academy Staff

Several of these games are "knock-out" games where the losers are knocked out and the last player left is the winner. Since the first ones out are often the ones who need the most practice, the ones knocked out should be required to do something to either get back into the game or to keep them working on their ball skills until the game is over.

### **Simon Says**

*Purpose of the Game:* To encourage children to run with the ball, keeping it close to their feet.

*Area Needed:* 20m x 20m.

*Story:* Simon is the King of Knotty Ash. In Knotty Ash all of the people are children. When King Simon says, "foot, knee, sit, elbow, head on the ball," you must do it immediately. The coach can integrate commands such as "change direction," "go faster," and so on into the game. If King Simon does not issue the command or a child responds slowly, he or she receives a "Gotcha." However, children should not be eliminated from the game.

*Equipment:* Eight cones to mark the area and one ball per child.

*Organization:* Mark out a 20m x 20m area using the cones. Ask each child to dribble around Knotty Ash (the area) with the ball remaining close to the foot (tell the children to imagine that the ball is connected to their feet by a short piece of elastic). The coach calls out a command to which the child should follow only when preceded by "Simon Says..."

The drill/game encourages children to move with the ball under close control. They now have begun the process of dribbling. The next progression would be to encourage the children to use their peripheral vision. The following game, Tigers in the Jungle, will create an environment to enhance this process.

## **Tigers in the Jungle**

*Purpose of the Game:* To encourage children to look up while dribbling.

*Area Needed:* 20m x 20m.

*Story:* Each child chooses to be a type of animal that lives in the jungle and makes the sound of that animal. Only tigers are not allowed. The tiger is the most feared animal in the jungle and is going to attempt to kick the other animals' soccer balls into the surrounding alligator-infested swamp. If the tiger kicks the ball into the swamp, the child can dodge the alligators and bring the ball back into the jungle again. The child then stands with legs apart and the ball in the air making the animal's noise. When another animal/child dribbles the ball through this child's legs, they are free to continue the game. Beware of the Tiger!

*Equipment:* Eight cones and one ball per child, except the "tiger."

*Organization:* Mark out a 20m x 20m area using the cones. Ask the animals to dribble around the jungle without dribbling into each other or the swamp (the area outside the grid). The tiger (a child without the ball) will prowl around the grid and, on the coach's command, will enter the jungle and attempt to kick as many balls as possible into the swamp. Remind the children of safety points regarding challenging for the ball. All players may re-enter the grid once they have retrieved their ball from the swamp.

A drill such as Tigers in the Jungle encourages children to dribble the ball at speed while using their peripheral vision in a controlled, pressurized and fun situation.

## **Crabs on the Beach**

*Purpose of the Game:* To encourage children to dribble with the ball and change speed and direction to beat an opponent. The art of feinting a dummy can be introduced at this stage.

*Area Needed:* 30m x 20m grid.

*Story:* Each child assumes the name of a sea creature except the crab. Each creature has to run from the beach to the sea with a ball, avoiding the crabs who are trying to "pinch" the balls. A child whose ball is pinched then becomes a crab.

*Equipment:* Ten cones to mark the area and one ball per child except the "crab."

*Organization:* Mark out a 20m x 30m area using the cones. Make one 30m line the sea and the other 30m line the beach. Ask the children (sea creatures) to stand on the beach line, each with a foot on the ball. Place a child (the crab) in the middle of the area in a crab-like position (on all fours with tummy upwards). On your command tell the creatures to dribble their ball from the beach to the sea while avoiding the crab. When they reach the sea line, they must wait with a foot on the ball until all players have crossed the beach. The crab must aim to kick each child's ball out of the grid via the 20m side lines. Any creatures losing their balls become crabs. The game continues on the coach's command with players now returning from the sea back to the beach. The last three children dribbling with their soccer balls become "Sea Champs."