

Festivals are a tool, not an isolated objective. After the players go through an introductory period of Festival play you can introduce different games and scenarios. Each one provides a new challenge and offers the players a chance to find a solution to a new problem.



Scenarios and ideas for Festival Training

1. “The high school or college easy practice day.”
 - o This can be a regular, ongoing part of a schools training regime.
 - i. Set the teams, men’s/women’s, varsity/JV in the player’s database. Create new Festivals or reopen an existing one and continually add new rounds to it.
2. “The Technical Director, Club directed Festival.”
 - o A Clubs Technical Director sets a schedule where an age group/s focuses on a specific small-sided game. For example, in October specific age group/s would be playing the six-goal game during a part of their practice. The coach focuses on making sure that the players are familiar with the game and the basic ideas behind it. His or her coaching is within the context of that game. At the end of the month the age group/s plays that game in a Festival. The clubs Technical Director can observe how well the players handle the responsibilities and understand the objectives. Do the kids “Get the game?” In November the emphasis is on a different game. The Technical Director uses the Festival as a carrot to help guide parent coaches through a set curriculum.
3. “This is our next level.”
 - o This provides clubs with “Tweeners,” (Players caught between two distinct levels) a way to meet their needs.
 - i. Offering Festivals on a regular basis can provide opportunities for a talented, but smaller player to compete against bigger, stronger and faster kids, i.e. at a higher level. Then, he or she can take what they have learned back to their ‘Real’ level and apply those lessons against less resistance.
 - ii. It can help delay the parents making the move to a more competitive level too soon.
 - iii. It provides a simple low cost way for the Tweeners to experience both “Survive” and “Thrive” soccer. It’s an approach that brings balance to these players.
4. “So you think you’re hot.”
 - o Find out just how good a player is.
 - i. Set up a Festival with different levels of talent. The player/s in question should not be in the top Tier.
 - ii. Put that player/s into the top Tier for one or more rounds. CNSFestival will figure them at the higher value and they will have to carry the extra weight during each of those rounds. In effect, they will have greater responsibility and the opportunity to demonstrate their value.
5. “It gets harder as you go.”
 - o Start a festival at 4v4. After two rounds make it 5v5. Finish with 6v6 or 7v7. Set one field to handle the odd number players.
 - i. How do the players handle the change? Who takes control of the individual games?
6. “A break in the camp schedule.”

- Soccer camps can make for very long days. Festivals, with an accumulated, running score can be a breath of fresh air. Start a Festival early in the week and save it. Reopen that Festival and continue to add new rounds.
 - It can also be the pay off for the entire camps curriculum. See the “The Technical Director Directed Festival” above. The camp director focuses on a basic game during the early part of the day/session and finishes with a Festival featuring that day’s game. You can observe exactly what the kids actually learned about the game. The Festival format shows what they would do outside of the camp setting.
7. “A bridge between clubs.”
- A Festival can be created and run with very little effort, cost or organization. Neighboring clubs can work together and host a Festival.
 - i. In the beginning, limit it to one or two age groups.
 - ii. Each club prepares their players independently.
8. “Tomorrows leaders.”
- Older teams can provide the resource of experience for young children.
 - i. Set up a festival with young players and mentor/coaches, i.e. u8 players and u12 mentor/coaches.
 - ii. Each field has two mentor/coaches. They stay at their goals and are not a part of the scoring or scrambles. They are, in essence, a part of the field.
 - iii. Set up the Festival software for one player less then you want to play. For example, if you want 4v4 set up the fields and players for 3v3. The mentor/coach makes up the extra player.
 - iv. The mentor/coaches lead, inspire and show the kids what can be done. They also follow the first two rules of street soccer.
 - 1. Don’t hurt the little kids.
 - 2. Make sure the little kids are a part of the game.
 - v. If there are not enough mentor/coaches available put one on each field as a neutral player.
9. “It gets harder as you go II.”
- Change a rule, the ball, the goals or the field between rounds.
 - i. Give 12 year olds a size three ball.
 - ii. Play one touch to score.
 - iii. Reduce the field or goal size.
10. “Building up, breaking down. The first and last third.”
- Use the big goal, two small goals game, starting with the goalkeeper for building up from the first third game. Use the same form but restart the game with a new ball between the two small goals to the team attacking the big goal for breaking down the opponents in the last third.
 - i. Like in Tomorrow leaders you can keep a permanent goalkeeper or each team can supply their own. (The latter changes the numbers of the field players and has an effect on the lesson.)
 - ii. These games will have one-minute halftime for the teams to switch roles.
 - iii. Total the goals from each ‘Half’ to get the final score.
11. “Tryouts.”
- No politics, no second-guessing the teams. Scramble and let them play.
 - i. For tryouts the individual score is meaningless.
12. “Off season drop in play.”

- Clubs can offer Festivals during the off-season. Players can come and go and accumulate points for showing up. The more Festivals that a kid plays in the more points he or she can accumulate.
13. “Sharing the field.”
- When two or more coaches have to share a field for practice a Festival is a great way to bring everyone together. By splitting the responsibilities and sharing the resources they serve as an example of teamwork for the players.
14. “Remember where you came from.”
- When kids leave the rec. programs for select soccer they rarely look back. A Festival that combines both recreational and select players helps both parties. The former can learn some new tricks and skills while the later can repay their debt to the program that gave them their start. It’s also a chance for kids to keep up friendships from the bygone days and serves as a way that the select players parents can measure, through observation, how their child is doing. It’s a way to evaluate the return on investment of select soccer.
15. “A quick look at the other side of the fence.”
- The other side of ‘Remember where you came from’ is that lower level players get to experience first hand the demands and world of higher level play. For some this can be an inspiration, for others a wake-up call. Parents who want a low cost look at where their child is developmentally can attend a Festival with the travel side and gauge for themselves.
16. “They want how much?”
- Clubs need to be aware of the return on their investment in their training programs. Festivals provide many of the benefits that Professional Coaching services offer at a fraction of the price. New skills, fitness training, tactical lessons, teambuilding opportunities and much more are available for the price of a few volunteers, some field space and time. Used in conjunction with professional guidance it’s an unbeatable combination.
17. “Development over competition.”
- There is no more divisive argument in a club then defining what is best for the children. Invariably, two camps spring up each one sure that their way is right and the other is wrong. One group believes that more and harder competition is the key. The other believes that developing skills and a love of the game comes first. Festivals offer a highly competitive environment where the developmental goals can be closely monitored by the club. The Club can set the agenda, the game format. By tracking individual scores it’s more then a scrimmage. Players want to win, even as an individual. By splitting up the teams the emphasis is on each individual making the greatest contribution they can. No one or two star players can carry everyone else to victory every game. They will be here this game and gone the next.
18. “Go in for...”
- Unlimited substitutions present a real challenge towards developing teamwork. When they occur the rhythm and understanding that existed in the team disappears and has to be established all over again. With the frequent scrambling of players this one element is practiced every round without any consequences to the “Teams” record. No one flinches when “Slow Willie” takes the field.
 - i. Set up the Festival software for 5v5 games but have the actual games be 4v4. Each team uses the extra player as a substitute. Every 2-3 minutes the

composition of the teams changes and adjustments must be made.

19. "Matching resources to the problems."

- If left on their own children will build their team without any regard to the opponents and sometimes their own teammates. (The dominant individuals organize things to meet their needs.) What works on paper, or for the individual, might not work when confronted by the opposition. In a Festival the 'Team' has only a few minutes to understand their collective resources, analyze the opponent and match those resources to the situation. It's Teambuilding by consensus with the objective of winning. For the dominant players, satisfying their own agenda doesn't count for much when the team loses.

20. "One problem, lot's of solutions."

- Players choose how they want to contribute to the team and usually focus on their strengths. In their regular team these strengths don't change much. But in a Festival with continually changing teams that same player may find new and different opportunities to express him or herself. Their abilities have changed because the team around them has changed. "The slow one now shall later be fast."

21. "Exit policy, safety net."

- There is an inevitable exit of players out of the higher, more 'Competitive' levels of the game. Few clubs have a mechanism for dealing with this down and outward migration. Many kids moving back into less competitive forms of the game find the transition difficult and drop out of the sport entirely. By offering a Festival program, especially for 9 to 14 year olds, clubs can offer an option to children who are caught in this situation.
 - i. A series of drop-in Festivals can be scheduled with a simplified registration process. Using the software's Player database maybe enough to keep track of these kids.

22. "Loosening the grip of the dominant coach."

- Some coaches exert too great an influence on their kids and the parents. They become the master of all options, the single source of information for the team and parents. Festivals provide a non-threatening way to engage kids and their parents. They offer a bigger view of the club and what it offers. They can provide access to the parent base for the club to present its philosophy.

23. "No super teams, no blow outs."

- The Festival format doesn't have teams, in the classic sense, so there can't be any super-dominate teams. There are no drafts, no stacked roster in the age group. And how many blowouts can you have in a ten-minute game? When they do happen everything gets fixed in the next round. Festivals provide clubs with a way to address these loaded questions proactively.

24. "A great way to practice that new move."

- When a ten year old is learning some new dribbling moves or trick, what better way to practice them then on a bunch of eight year olds? By controlling who is at the Festival you can make sure that one group of kids gets plenty of opportunities to work on a new idea against less, but real resistance. The older kids agenda is to work on their new move, not to run up the score. With older players on both teams the younger ones stay in the game and their interest remains high. It's a more equitable form then an older team simply scrimmaging a younger one.

25. "King of the hill."

- Champions Mode.

- i. After the first or second round make a few fields Champions Fields. The kids will know who is on the Champions Field and who isn't. Each round 40-50% of the kids switch places between the fields.
- ii. Progressively reduce the number of Champions Fields. Like musical chairs, each round eliminate one Champions Field until the last round only has one.

26. "Winners Stay"

- o In the second round set up a single Champions Field and see who can stay on it the longest.

27. "Getting ready for different teams."

- o A benchmark in development is being able to play with different players. What happens when players tryout out for high school, college or ODP? They need to be comfortable in a variety of settings, with a variety of players.
 - i. Players can become too comfortable with their teammates. Festivals require flexibility. Independence, thinking for yourself and self reliance are key-learning objectives.

28. "Players like to win."

- o Of course you could do any of these scenarios without using the individual scoring format. The advantage of using the individual winner method is that it appeals to the player's sense of competition. For some mixing teams is Okay but there is no connection between the different games. The results from game one have no relation to game five. With individual scoring every game has meaning in the larger context of the Festival. Players want to know where they stack up in the larger context.

29. "Multiple winners."

- o Festivals can have more than one winner. When different age/ability groups, Tiers, are used you can find a champion in each one. Example, in a high school Festival there can be a men's varsity, men's junior varsity, women's varsity and women's junior varsity champion. Each level has it's own winner.

30. "So you play baseball."

- o Drop in Festivals allow a club a tool to reach out to children in different sports. They make soccer accessible on a short term, one time basis for kids to come out and try. With their player centered approach they are appealing to adolescents who are either unable or uninterested in committing to an organized team but who would like to occasionally come out for a kick around. Septembers Festival trail might be April's newest player.

31. "How fast do you want to play?"

- o You can control the speed of a Festival game through the number of balls available to play. One ball at a field requires that the players retrieve it every time it goes out of play. This slows the game down. Having extra balls near by, i.e. between the fields or next to the goals can make for a faster game. The players don't have to wait for the ball to be retrieved; they grab a new one and quickly restart the game. (This is good for developing concentration.)
 - i. For young or inexperienced players start with only one ball until they are familiar with the game and rotation. They can use the down time to regroup.

32. "Uneven numbers."

- o Some games and problems require that the teams play with different numbers with one team getting the lesson while the other gives it, i.e. 5v3 possession soccer. To insure that every player has the chance to play on both sides of the equation designate the extra

players and consider them to be a part of the field. In the case of 5v3, two players, usually older/better ones stay at each field. The scramble is based on a 3v3 game. When the scrambled kids reach the field one team plays with the extra players, they become the five against the three. Play a 5-6 minute 'half' and the two teams switch roles. After the second half combine the scores so that you have a result. Only the scrambled players figure in the Festival scoring system.

33. "Travel, not at these prices!"

- One reason that parents, coaches and players want to travel for games is that they are in search of more competition. This happens because the team, not the players in it, sets the measure for the competition. With Festival play a team is a pool of individuals, not a self-contained body. There is no need for the comparison between players inside the team itself. The players can travel shorter distances and find new challenges. Even their teammates can be figured in as opposition*. Mix up a few other kids and the face of the competition changes dramatically right in your own back yard.

*Scottie Pippen became one of the best defenders in the NBA after Michael Jordan rejoined the Chicago Bulls. Having to face Jordan one-on-one in practice helped Pippen forge his defensive skills against the best offensive player in the league. Pippen's education was conducted at the Bulls practices, not in the competitive NBA games.

34. "Half full or half empty."

- Another problem with seeing the individual only in the context of their team is that coaches and parents can become preoccupied with what the child can't do and miss what they can do. Everyone is compared to the top players because they set the top standard. The basic measurement for a player is what they contribute to the game. This asks, "What are you bringing?" to the effort, not "What do you need to work on?" You evaluate the children based on their strengths and how they use them as opposed to their weaknesses and how they are exposed. Festivals allow children to explore their individual qualities in a competitive environment without the fear of letting the team down. Parents and coaches can also learn to observe and value what the children can do and not to obsess with what they can't.

35. "Showdown."

- After a number of Rounds and there are some clear front runners announce, "This is the last game." You can set up a Champions Field and scramble the teams until the top two players are on the opposite teams. Make sure that the two know what's at stake and let them determine the final champion. (You can also set the final game up on paper and mix the teams anyway you like. For example, the top two can play with the bottom 6 in a 4v4.)