

Ground impact in soccer

Techniques for preventing injury by Clifford Boardman, founder of Game Fall, the world's first company dedicated solely to ground impact skills and research

Falling techniques

When falling, people change their body positions in anticipation of ground impact. The body reacts fast as it falls, shifting into one of the five following shapes:

- Drop fall techniques: hip fall, point fall, chest fall, sitting fall
 - Rolling technique: barrel fall
- Resistance falling is driven by an instinct to keep the head as far from the ground as possible in a fall. It drives us to brace for the fall and try to land on just a few body points.

Falling in soccer

A study conducted by Game Fall produced the following results:

- The average rate of falls in a youth soccer match is slightly more than one player a minute (ages 12 to 18) or slightly less than two players a minute (ages eight to 11).
- 40-50% of all falls in a game are hard-impact falls.
- 40% of game falls are caused by tackles.
- On average, one out of every ten falls in each game involves a head strike to the

ground. 50% of these strikes are "significant," causing a minor head bruise or neck muscle injury, and 25% are "substantial," causing a noticeable head bruise and/or neck muscle injury.

Preventing head injuries

Ground impact skills instruction:

Just as players are taught other skills they need on the field, they should also learn ground impact skills. Correct errors in their resistance falling techniques, and add dynamic falling or other low-impact falling techniques. Incorporate falling techniques into training (e.g. coordination exercises).

Monitoring/inspecting head ground strikes:

Instruct players to notice and report head strikes. Players should understand that reporting hard impacts is not the same as complaining about them. Instruct parents that they are to immediately report to you and a medical provider any signs of a head impact (head bruise, unusual headache, neck or upper back pain). Watch for head strikes when players fall. Observe any delay in a player's recovery after a fall (momentary disorientation, stumbling, other signs of confusion). Examine any player suspected of having suffered a head strike.

Reducing shove tackles

Instruct players to refrain from shoving when tackling, even when they believe referees would miss the illegal contact. Monitor your players for shove tackles. Note any players on your team or on opposing teams that appear to shove tackle repeatedly, and speak with your player or the other team's coach about the conduct, as well as with referees.

Visit the Game Fall website at www.gamefall.com for more information.



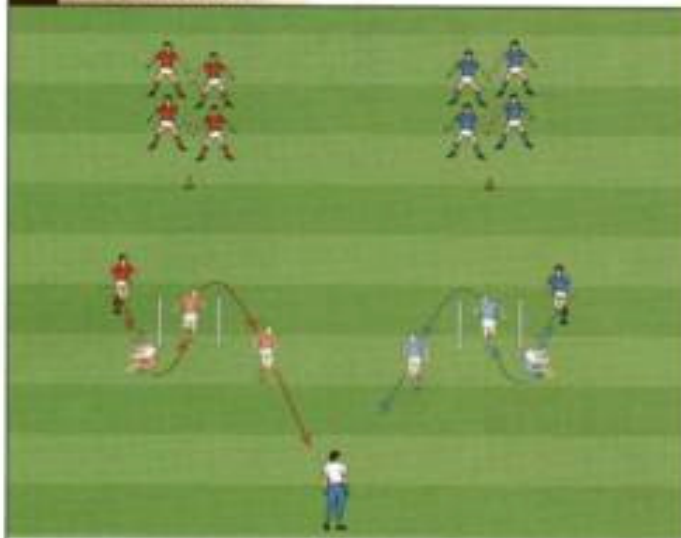
As young people become less and less physically active, it's more important than ever to play games that teach proper falling techniques.

PH: Getty Images

SAMPLE EXERCISES

GROUND IMPACT SKILLS

Coordination



Setup

- Place two starting cones about 10 yards apart.
- In front of each cone, lay out two poles about one yard apart.
- The coach stands in the middle, 10 yards beyond the poles.
- Players line up in two groups of equal size, one at each cone.

Exercise 1

- The first player from each group stands on the outside, next to the poles.
- At the coach's signal (visual or audible), the first two players do forward rolls, run backwards between the poles and then sprint forwards toward the coach on the inside of the poles.
- Which player can tag the coach first?

Exercise 2

- Same as Exercise 1, except now the players do sideways rolls from a standing position.



Exercise 3

- The first player from each group lies face-down on the outside of the poles.
- At the coach's signal (visual or audible), the first two players roll to the poles, stand up, run backwards between the poles and then sprint forwards toward the coach on the inside of the poles.
- Which player can tag the coach first?

Exercise 4

- Same as Exercise 3, except now the players start out lying on their backs.

Coaching points

- These exercises should only be done on grass or artificial turf.
- Combine rolling exercises with coordination runs between poles.
- Combine rolling exercises with dribbling between poles.
- Combine rolling exercises with shooting.
- Make rolling exercises a regular part of practice.



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