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InsideSOCCER

Informing and Entertaining the Canadian Soccer Community



**Taking Those First Vital, Tender Steps
Why Parents Tend to Get Carried Away
Standing Tall for Club and Country
Be Aware... Hydration is No Laughing Matter
The 8 Winning Practices for Parenting Athletes**

**Parent's
Guide to
Soccer
Edition**

How to Improve Your Child's Performance in Just a Few Weeks!

By Richard Bucciarelli

In soccer, as is the case in all competitive sports, strength is a major predictor of performance. Players who are stronger are, in general, more likely to be successful on the field. In fact, a recent study of Men's Division I soccer players in the United States indicated that the starting players were significantly stronger, in both upper and lower body measures, than the reserves.

Exactly what, then, constitutes a strong soccer player? Furthermore, how can a player improve strength specific to soccer in this country, with such a limited amount of practice time available in an already overcrowded schedule?

The best way to define strength specific to soccer is to look at the actual movements, or techniques, that a soccer player does which involve muscular strength – that is, the instances in which strength is applied to a specific soccer technique in a game.

The main techniques involving strength in soccer are:

- kicking/throwing strength
- tackling strength
- shielding strength

Strength training for soccer players should involve practicing these techniques in as realistic a way as possible. Since, in an actual game, these techniques involve resistance coming from either the ball (kicking/throwing strength) or from another player (tackling and shielding strength), then these are the forms of resistance that should be used in training as well.

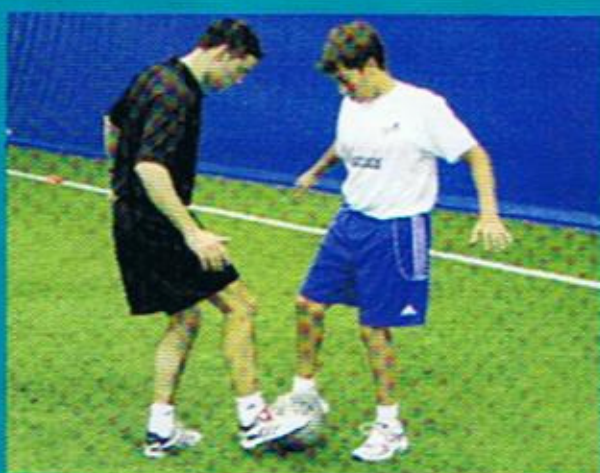
Following are examples of simple exercises you can perform with your child, every other day, in the park, backyard, or in the comfort of your own home. If done correctly, these exercises will have an incredible impact on your child's performance on the field.



Exercise 1: Line-Drives:

Focus: Developing kicking strength

Developing shooting accuracy and power
Stand 10-15 metres away from your child, with a small 1 metre goal in front of you. Play a slow, rolling pass on the ground to child. Child uses the laces and drives the ball low and hard, on the ground, through the target goal. Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions with each leg, resting 1 minute between sets.



Exercise 2: Block Tackle:

Focus: Developing tackling strength

Stand about 1 metre from a ball, facing your child, who is also 1 metre away from the ball (2 metres away from you). At the count of three, you and your child simultaneously take a step and strike the ball as hard as possible, using the inside of the foot (if done correctly, the ball should not move). Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions with each leg, resting 1 minute between sets.

Some of the many benefits of soccer-specific strength training are:

- improved ability to send accurate long passes, and strike a ball with power and control
- enhanced ability to win challenges for the ball – both on the ground and in the air
- increased ability to maintain possession of the ball under pressure and in tight spaces
- significantly decreased risk of sustaining injuries during all of the above

Richard Bucciarelli is the owner of RJI Sport, a company that provides soccer-specific strength and conditioning training. For more information, visit www.rjigroup.com, and click on RJI Sport.

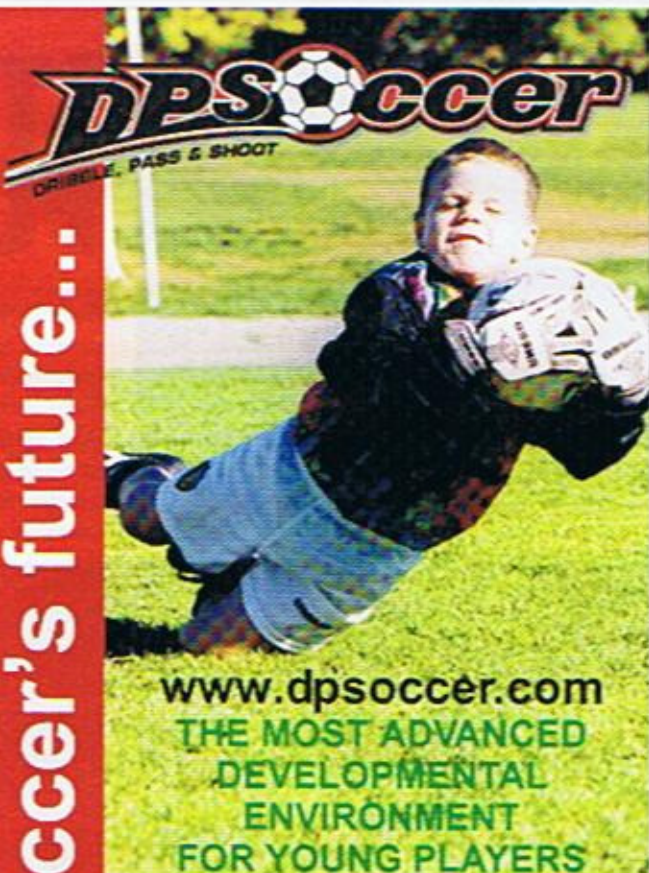


Exercise 3: Squat-Shield:

Focus: Developing shielding strength

Stand back-to-back with your child, inside a 1 metre x 1 metre shielding zone, squatting so that both you and your child have thighs parallel to the ground. Have your child push backwards with the legs, trying to move you back and outside of the shielding zone. Push back only enough to meet child's resistance. Perform 3 repetitions of 20 seconds each, resting 1 minute between repetitions.

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