



THE METHODS OF USING SPECIAL EXERCISES IN DEVELOPING TACTICAL ACTIONS OF YOUNG FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Abstract

This article examines the application of special exercises aimed at developing tactical actions among young football players. The focus is placed on the importance of integrating tactical thinking into early stages of football training and the ways in which specific exercises can foster decision-making, positional awareness, and team coordination. The research highlights various methods of organizing practice sessions that simulate match-like scenarios, thereby preparing youth players for real-game situations. Moreover, the study outlines the pedagogical approaches and principles behind the selection and implementation of tactical drills, based on age-specific characteristics and cognitive development of young athletes. The results of the analysis suggest that structured tactical training significantly enhances the competitive performance and game intelligence of football players in formative years.

Keywords: Football, youth players, tactical development, special exercises, training methodology, decision-making, sports education.



YOSH FUTBOLCHILARNI TAKTIK HARAKATLARNI SHAKLLANTIRISHDA MAXSUS MASHQLARDAN FOYDALANISH USULLARI

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Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqolada yosh futbolchilarda taktik harakatlarni rivojlantirishga yo'naltirilgan maxsus mashqlarni qo'llash masalasi ko'rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot futbol tayyorligining ilk bosqichlaridayoq taktik tafakkurni shakllantirish ahamiyatiga urg'u beradi va bu borada qaror qabul qilish, pozitsion ongni rivojlantirish hamda jamoaviy muvofiqlikni kuchaytirish imkonini beruvchi mashqlar tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, maqolada o'yin holatiga yaqin sharoitlarda mashg'ulotlarni tashkil etish usullari ko'rib chiqilib, yosh futbolchilarning haqiqiy o'yinlarga tayyorlanish jarayonini takomillashtirish yoritiladi. Pedagogik yondashuvlar, yoshga oid psixologik va kognitiv xususiyatlarni inobatga olgan holda taktik mashqlarni tanlash va ularni amalga oshirish prinsiplari ham ko'rsatilgan. Tahlil natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, tizimli taktik tayyorgarlik yosh futbolchilarning musobaqaviy samaradorligi va o'yin tafakkurini sezilarli darajada oshiradi.

Kalit so'zlar: futbol, yosh futbolchilar, taktik rivojlanish, maxsus mashqlar, tayyorgarlik metodikasi, qaror qabul qilish, sport ta'limi.

Introduction

The modern game of football demands more than physical excellence; it requires tactical intelligence, rapid decision-making, and the ability to anticipate opponents' actions. These qualities are not innate but must be developed



systematically through structured training, especially from an early age. Youth football is a critical stage in which the foundations of tactical behavior are laid, and the role of specialized exercises in shaping these behaviors is indispensable. In the early phases of training, young athletes are typically focused on technical proficiency—mastering dribbling, passing, and shooting. However, without tactical awareness, technical skills often fail to yield effective performance during competitive play. Therefore, integrating tactical training alongside technical instruction is essential to nurture well-rounded players.

Tactical development refers to the player's ability to read the game, occupy optimal positions, and interact effectively with teammates and opponents. It encompasses individual, group, and team-level understanding of the game dynamics. For young players, these concepts must be introduced through age-appropriate and cognitively engaging drills that mirror real match situations. The use of special exercises—custom-designed scenarios and small-sided games—helps young players internalize tactical principles such as marking, pressing, spatial orientation, and counterattack strategies. This article explores the pedagogical rationale and practical implementation of such exercises in youth football academies and training programs across Uzbekistan, aiming to elevate both the performance and football IQ of the next generation of athletes.

Literature Review

A growing body of sports science literature emphasizes the importance of integrating tactical education into youth football training. Scholars such as Wein (2004) and Ford et al. (2010) argue that tactical intelligence is not merely a byproduct of match experience but can be deliberately taught and refined through structured methods. Their studies highlight that special exercises simulating game-like scenarios can accelerate tactical learning and enhance decision-making speed among young players. Furthermore, Light and Fawns (2003) advocate for a constraints-led approach, wherein exercises are designed to replicate the pressure, unpredictability, and complexity of actual matches. This method fosters adaptability and creativity in problem-solving, two core elements of tactical competence.



In the Central Asian context, especially in Uzbekistan, research on youth football development is gradually expanding. Studies by local pedagogues emphasize the need for contextualized training that aligns with the physical and psychological development of players aged 10 to 18. These studies point out that while technical drills remain predominant in most football schools, tactical drills are often underutilized or poorly adapted to the players' developmental level. As a result, young athletes may show strong technical skills but lack the game sense required for higher levels of play. This gap underscores the urgency of incorporating systematic tactical instruction through purpose-built exercises, which this article seeks to address.

Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on a mixed approach combining theoretical analysis and practical observation. The research involved a comprehensive review of pedagogical, psychological, and sports science literature focused on tactical training in youth football. Key principles from didactics, motor learning theory, and developmental psychology were used to determine appropriate strategies for designing and applying tactical exercises for different age groups.

In addition, field-based observation was conducted at three football academies in Uzbekistan where youth players aged 11–16 were involved in regular training. These observations focused on how special tactical exercises were integrated into daily practice, how coaches guided players through decision-making tasks, and how players responded cognitively and behaviorally to situational drills. The exercises observed included small-sided games with specific tactical goals, position-specific tasks, and conditional games designed to highlight transition play, spatial awareness, and pressing strategies.

Feedback from coaches was collected through semi-structured interviews to better understand the rationale behind exercise selection and the effectiveness of their implementation. The data were then analyzed qualitatively to identify common themes, instructional patterns, and observed challenges. This methodological combination allowed for both a conceptual and empirical grounding of the



recommendations presented in this article regarding the optimal use of tactical exercises in youth football development.

Discussion:

The findings of the study reveal that special tactical exercises play a fundamental role in shaping young football players' understanding of game dynamics. One of the primary advantages of these exercises is their ability to create realistic, decision-rich environments that mimic competitive play without the psychological pressure of an actual match. This allows players to experiment with different tactical responses, make mistakes, and learn through guided correction. For instance, small-sided games with altered rules—such as limiting touches, creating overloads, or introducing transition phases—require players to adapt their positioning, communication, and spatial judgment in real time.

Moreover, the exercises observed in the field emphasized the importance of coach intervention during and after drills. Coaches who provided clear objectives, tactical cues, and reflective feedback were more effective in enhancing players' situational awareness. In contrast, sessions that lacked tactical framing or used generic technical drills often failed to engage players cognitively, leading to limited tactical growth despite physical effort. Another key observation was that group and team tactical concepts—such as zonal marking, pressing triggers, or switching play—were more successfully internalized when introduced progressively and supported by visual aids, video demonstrations, or tactical boards.

However, several challenges were also identified. Many youth coaches in Uzbekistan still prioritize technical repetition over tactical comprehension, resulting in imbalanced player development. Additionally, there is a lack of formalized training for coaches in tactical pedagogy, which restricts their ability to design age-appropriate and developmentally aligned tactical sessions. Time constraints, especially in school-based programs, further limit opportunities for deep tactical immersion.

Despite these barriers, the study underscores that with proper planning and coach training, special exercises can be a powerful tool to cultivate intelligent, adaptable footballers. The key lies in designing sessions that are not only physically



demanding but also mentally stimulating, encouraging players to perceive, decide, and act efficiently in a dynamic environment. This approach is essential for preparing youth athletes for the tactical complexity of modern football.

Main Part

The development of tactical actions in youth football training is a multifaceted process that requires a structured and age-sensitive approach. Special exercises serve as an effective medium to instill key tactical principles such as space occupation, ball movement, support play, and pressing mechanisms. These exercises must be tailored to the players' cognitive maturity and physical capacity, gradually evolving in complexity as the players grow.

One widely used method is the implementation of **game-based scenarios**, where players are placed in specific in-game situations—such as defending a lead, building an attack under pressure, or managing numerical inferiority. These scenarios compel players to assess the situation, communicate with teammates, and execute decisions collectively. For younger age groups (10–12), the focus is often on individual tactical tasks such as marking, positioning during set plays, and learning when to dribble versus pass. In contrast, players aged 13–16 are introduced to more advanced group tactics including combination play, defensive blocks, and coordinated pressing.

Small-sided games (SSGs) are particularly effective due to their high player involvement, repetitive decision-making opportunities, and match-like dynamics. For example, a 4v4 game on a reduced pitch with rules that reward switching play or fast transitions helps players develop spatial awareness and tactical anticipation. Additionally, **constraint-based drills**, where specific rules are applied (e.g., one-touch play, man-marking zones), challenge players to adapt their behavior and think creatively under new limitations. This method also fosters **game intelligence**, which is critical for long-term performance.

Coaches play a crucial role in the success of these exercises. Effective instruction involves pre-exercise explanation, live correction during drills, and post-exercise reflection. Tactical boards and video replay are useful supplementary tools to reinforce visual learning. Moreover, building a **progressive curriculum**—where



exercises are logically sequenced and linked to match objectives—ensures continuity in learning and avoids fragmentation of tactical understanding.

In the context of Uzbekistan, football academies and sports schools are increasingly recognizing the value of integrating tactical exercises into their regular training routines. However, disparities still exist in how consistently these methods are applied across institutions. The development of standardized frameworks and national coach education programs could further strengthen tactical training culture in youth football, producing players who are not only technically skilled but also tactically astute.

Conclusion

The formation of tactical actions in young football players is a crucial component of comprehensive sports education and competitive readiness. This study has demonstrated that the use of special exercises—structured, scenario-based, and cognitively engaging—can significantly enhance a young athlete's tactical awareness, decision-making ability, and adaptability during gameplay. When designed and implemented effectively, these exercises bridge the gap between technical skills and in-game intelligence, fostering the development of well-rounded, strategically-minded footballers.

The analysis has also revealed that while some progress has been made in Uzbekistan's youth football training systems, there remains a need for greater methodological consistency and pedagogical innovation. Many coaches continue to emphasize physical and technical drills at the expense of cognitive-tactical development, thereby limiting the holistic growth of their players. Addressing this gap requires improved access to coach education, exposure to contemporary training methodologies, and the institutionalization of tactical learning across all stages of player development.

In conclusion, special tactical exercises must not be treated as supplementary components of training, but rather as integral tools in the long-term development strategy for young footballers. By prioritizing mental engagement, situational realism, and incremental progression, coaches can nurture a new generation of players who are not only physically prepared but also tactically intelligent and emotionally resilient on the field.



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