Soccer Player’s Guide to Medicine Ball Training - Part 2
Soccer Specific Program

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Introduction
Part 1 of this series addressed the benefits of medicine balls, equipment, safety and fundamental exercises to introduce the many aspects of medicine ball training for soccer. Medicine balls have an unlimited variety of uses in the preparation of athletes of all ages and abilities (youth to pro athletes). This article highlights keys to creating a successful program, phases of a medicine ball session and specific exercises.

Keys to a Successful Program

WARM-UP COOL DOWN - Training should be preceded and followed by flexibility and warm-up/cool down exercises. Stretching and general warmup exercises prepare muscles for the session. Stretching and cooling down after sessions helps prevent post training soreness and allows the heart rate to return to normal.

UNDERSTAND MED BALL SAFETY - Players must be aware of and comfortable with the weighted ball, know not to head or kick medicine balls, and be alert during their use.

USE APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT - Part 1 of this series explained the differences in size, weight and texture of balls.

AGE / ABILITY - The age and stage of player development must be considered when selecting equipment and a training program.

PROPER BALANCE OF EXERCISES - Use a combination of individual, partner and group exercises to isolate certain muscle groups or involve all muscle groups. Follow these steps when designing your medicine ball program, then choose from the menu of exercises provided.

STEP 1: Know and review the keys to a successful program.

KEYS TO A PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Equipment</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Exercises</th>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

STEP 2: Choose a variety of exercises from each general category.

GENERAL CATEGORIES

| Individual | Partner | Group |

Step 3: Target the area you wish to develop. Don’t try to develop all of them at once!

TARGETED AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

| Flexibility | Coordination | Mobility | Strength/Power | Agility/Footwork |

Step 4: Be sure your training session contains each of the components.

COMPONENTS OF A SESSION

| Warm-up activity | Stretching/flexibility | Target/core exercises | Abdominal work |
| Stretching/flexibility | Cooldown activity |
Step 5: Use the training chart to design your specific program

TRAINING CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Mid</th>
<th>Heavy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>8-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16- and over</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>8-10</td>
<td>12-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIZE

- Tennis ball: 5 to 2 lbs.
- Softball: 1 to 8 lbs.
- Volleyball: ----
- Basketball: ----
- Medicine ball: 20 to 40 lbs.

WEIGHT for Speed-Strength Development

- Light: 4 to 6 pounds volleyball size
- Medium: 8 to 10 pounds basketball size
- Heavy: 12 to 16 pounds basketball size

EXERCISE CATEGORIES

- Upper Body
- Lower Body: legs, hips
- Abdominals
- Agility/Footwork

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Step 6:

A. Select exercises from the menu of exercises presented. Start with a few and add as time permits.

B. Perform 2 to 3 sets of 10 repetitions (for abdominals you may choose to do more repetitions).

C. Do exercises in circuit fashion, working for 20 seconds and progressing to 60 seconds per set followed by 30 seconds to one minute rest after each set and exercise.

D. Heavier balls and a longer rest may be used to increase strength. Lighter balls with shorter rest periods may be used to increase endurance. Power or speed-strength is increased by using mid-weight balls with longer rest periods.

F. When considering the above consider individual needs of the players and their specific positions.

G. Practice can start right after a medicine ball circuit and can be designed to build on the training objective of the medicine program.

Conclusion

Medicine ball training is a great tool for developing and maintaining general and specific soccer fitness. The medicine ball has an unlimited variety of uses in the preparation of players of all ages and abilities (youth to high performance athletes). Medicine balls are an alternative to higher cost and sometimes inconvenient or unaccessible gyms or health clubs with strength machines. Many teams and players do not have access to such amenities. Medicine ball training, on the other hand, will help develop flexibility,
mobility/coordination, strength/power, and agility without physically leaving the soccer field. Incorporate medicine balls into your training sessions and start seeing the results.

**Menu of Exercises**

**UPPER BODY**
- Truck Rotations *(Figure 1)*
- Front Raise (Hold for three seconds at the top) *(Figure 2)*
- Slow motion overhead juggle (Hold for three seconds at the top) *(Figure 3)*
- Figure eights *(Figure 4)*
  a. above head
  b. at chest arms extended
- Pairs- partners attempt to wrestle ball from each other. *(Figure 5)*
- Pairs- partners back to back and hold ball between back. Walk left, right, squat, stand up, rotate in a circle. Do not drop the ball. *(Figure 6)*
- Pairs- partners with ball head to head. Walk left, right, squat, stand up, rotate in a circle. Do not drop the ball. *(Figure 7)*
- Partners back to back pass ball in figure eight. *(Figure 8)*
- Partners back to back pass ball over and under. *(Figure 9)*
- Scramble-ups- Partners A passes ball to partners who scrambles up from kneeling position. *(Figure 10)* Repeat from push-up position. *(Figure 11)*
- Partner ball push- arch back push, catch ball. *(Figure 12)*
LOWER BODY

- Ball Bounce- with ball at chest squat down and bounce ball with hands. In squat position bound the hops forward three times then back.
- Straddle Stance "Good Morning"- knees slightly bent bend at waist ball should be behind neck, overhead, and chest. (Figure 13)
- Lateral Lunges-step right, then left. Knee over toes squat to position of top of thighs parallel to the ground. (Figure 14)
- Squats- back flat chest out feet on the ground at all times, squat to position of top of thighs parallel to the ground. Ball positions: extended from chest, overhead behind neck, behind lower back.

- Squat- bounce tree times leap frog style drive up on third bounce. (Figure 15)
  (Advanced: option arms extended)
- Leg Swing- backwards then forwards in kicking motion alternating legs. (Figure 16)

ABDOMINALS / LOWER BACK

- Curl ups- Partner holding ankles, lift shoulder blades off ground return. (Advanced: option arms extended overhead.) (Figure 17)
- Seated touches-alternate legs, back flat. (Figure 18)
- Sit-ups- alternating ball hand offs. (Figure 19)
- Twists alternating left to right. (Figure 20)
- Seated leg raises- beach chair position, ball between ankles. (Figure 21)
- Seated leg raises lateral movement- beach chair position, ball between ankles, move legs side-to-side. (Figure 22)
AGILITY / FOOTWORK

- Ankle hops- over cone/box with ball between ankles. (Figure 25)
- Double ankle hops- with partner sitting legs spread, ball between ankles. (Figure 26)
- Lateral jumps-over three cones/boxes 18” apart. Ball positions: overhead, chest, arm extended at chest, between knees, between ankles. (Figure 27)
- Lateral shuffle- between cones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance Between Cones</th>
<th>Body Position</th>
<th>Ball Position</th>
<th>Work Intervals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 yds</td>
<td>standing</td>
<td>above head</td>
<td>10 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 yds</td>
<td>squatting</td>
<td>behind neck</td>
<td>15 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 yds</td>
<td>chest</td>
<td>chest</td>
<td>20 sec.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chest</td>
<td>arms extended</td>
<td>30 sec.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can be done individual or with partner facing each other between cones. See who can touch the most cones in the time allowed.

- Group Exercises- Competitions and relays
- Competition- Players start on a line with 10-30 yards distance to next line.

Options:
- Running with balls in hand various positions overhead, at chest, at chest extended behind head.
- One-two legged hops with ball in hand as above.
- Crawling with ball between ankles.
- Dragging ball with feet (DO NOT KICK THE BALL!).

Relays
10-30 yards distance athletes stand in a row passing ball in relay sequence.
- overhead
- alternate overhead and between legs
- under legs
- twisting left to right