



Soccer Conditioning Monthly

Produced for the world's most innovative soccer coaches

Issue 2 Quick Feet and Touches



Free Email Newsletter at worldclasscoaching.com

If you are not Stephen Fortino please destroy this copy and contact WORLD CLASS COACHING.

Quick Feet and Foundational, Rhythmic Agility Patterns:

In tight spaces, we have noticed that some players, although they have a high level of confidence and touch on the ball, can lack the quickness or body control to take advantage of their skill in game situations. In the drills below, the primary focus is usually on how quickly the players can get the feet can get off the ground while maintaining rhythm and control. We will break this progression section down into 2 subsections.

1. **Quick Feet** (stationary hopping and simple ladder or box drill patterns)
2. **Crossover Patterns** (cone or line crossover – stepover patterns)



The goal is to always be in a position from which we can accelerate, receive a pass or react to another player. If we don't make this point with our players as we are doing these drills, many of them may not see the drills as ways to improve their skill on the field.

With our younger players in the 8-12 age groups we stay primarily in these 2 sections for the entire season in regards to speed and agility. These patterns reinforce strong and decisive movements that show up immediately in competitive situations, as the players seem to move with more confidence and coordination on the field. This is the goal for the younger age groups, and it is an essential starting point or warm up of the U12 to U14 age groups.

Quick Feet

We start with a focus on quick feet from a stationary perspective (feet move up and down landing in the same place). The drills involve a rapid chopping the feet as quickly as possible (almost a vibration like movement) where the foot doesn't get very high off the ground at all, and the player stays locked in place except for the rapid movement of the feet (typically referred to as our "Rapid Response Drills"). We progress this by moving the feet in short, pattern based movements where we are trying to keep the torso stationary while the feet move in quick forward, backward, lateral and diagonal patterns.

(View Quick Feet Commentary Video)

As we progress to the ladder drills the goal is to control the body position as the torso will move slightly and the feet move outside the center of gravity along a linear or lateral path. Finally we transition into the crossover drills where we are moving with quick feet in linear, lateral and diagonal paths followed by a run out in an opposite direction. This is critical as it helps the transition to sport. Our athletes don't get faster by doing ladder drills. Instead they use the ladder drills to focus on improving footwork, body position and rhythmic coordination. In the next few weeks we will combine quick feet drills with the plyometric program and the linear speed program to set the foundation for sports speed.

Here is a list of quick feet exercises that we work on using a ladder. It is always nice to progress along this continuum to keep things simple and gradually increase complexity from

2 SoccerFIT Speed & Agility Program

stationary to moving. The players start off focusing on getting the feet off the ground quicker and then progress to drills that focus on getting the feet to land in exactly the right spot (angled quick feet pattern drills). Next the players will focus on moving linearly and laterally with quick feet, landing in exactly the right spot in the rhythmic ladder patterns. And finally the players increase complexity as they start to move more athletically with more freedom of choice in the diagonal crossover steps and sprint outs.

Stationary Quick Feet Drills:

- 2L Quick Feet (rapid response)
- 1L Line Hops (rapid response)

Stationary, Angled Quick Feet Pattern Drills:

- Box – 2 Feet Zigzag
- Box – 1 Foot Zigzag
- Box – Alternating Hop Scotch
- Box – 2 Feet 4 Corners
- Box – 1 Foot 4 Corners

Moving Quick Feet Pattern Drills:

- Ladder - 1 In a Hole (alt legs fwd)
- Ladder - 2 In a Hole (alt legs fwd)
- Ladder - 2 In a Hole (alt legs R/L)
- Ladder - 2 In 1 Out (fwd)
- Ladder - 2 In 2 Out (fwd)
- Ladder - 2 In 2 Out (lat R/L)
- Ladder - 1L Down 2, Back 1 (fwd R/L)
- Ladder - 1L Down 2, Back 1 (lat R/L)
- Ladder - Crossover 1 In 2 Out (alt legs fwd)
- Ladder – 1 in 2 in Quarter Turn Jumps

Foot quickness is an essential quality of agility and it is also probably the most commonly known and prescribed category of agility exercises. However, foot quickness is more than just how fast your player's feet can go through a set pattern (box and ladder drills). Foot quickness also refers to how fast your players can react and reposition their feet under their body to quickly change direction and separate from a defender. Make sure you change the pattern, order, distance or sequence when going through these drills. Stimulate your player's development by adding variety so that they never get used to a stereotyped pattern. And be sure to coach the footwork so that the player is focused on landing exactly where they want (foot position pointed in the right direction). This will be a very important point as we progress the agility.

The body will reposition itself above the foot. If the foot gets out of position or is slow to react, the body is sure to be out of position and slow to react as well. This also puts a great deal of stress on the joints as they pivot and twist. This is a major cause of knee, ankle, groin and hip region injuries. ***In the picture**, the player with the ball was moving to her right, then cut back to the left and is preparing to perform a change of direction move. Notice her feet pointed straight ahead and her body lean to the left. This reduces rotational stress on the knees and puts her into a position to accelerate out of the move quickly. It all starts with footwork.*



We almost always begin agility programs with some of the following exercises. A "rapid response" intent, quickly chopping the feet, will warm up your hips, stimulate them mentally and physically wire their body to perform the next series with maximal intent and effort. Next, we will progress them into "short response" intent where the feet don't move quite as quickly, but there is more distance covered (setting the stage for very forceful, powerful contractions and speed).

Crossover Patterns

We progress to a crossover movement where the player repetitively steps over the line or cone, focusing on keeping the toes pointed straight down the line, controlling knee tracking and posture with quick feet and rhythm. We also want to focus on simple change of direction aspects in terms of body position and intent to separate from a defender.

Here is a simple progression / digression chart for developing the cone crossover patterns which lead into the emphasis on confident change of direction mechanics. We draw from some of the quick foot drills mentioned in the last section as a warm up to our crossover patterns. These drills can be worked into simple cone drills where every player has their own cones and can also be integrated into our gate passing drills as a warm up (which we will be covering in weeks to come).



Progressing the Cone/Line Crossover:

We start with one cone (or a line on the field) and progress to 2 cones and then again to a series of gates (2 cones gates lined up 2-4 yds apart down the field). In the "tight" drills we want to focus on quick feet, as in the warm up drills, but in the "wide" drill we want to get as much separation from the cone as possible, and still be able to make it back across the cone. In the run in progression drills we are going to accelerate towards the 2-cone gate and perform the desired cone crossover drill and then accelerate up to the next gate and repeat. This will lead us into our cone passing / receiving drills that we will discuss in later weeks.

- Quick Feet 1 Cone/Line Crossover
- Cone/Line Crossover (tight/wide)
- Cone/Line Crossover (react to partner)
- 2 Cone Crossover

These crossover patterns will very soon be progressed into our defensive footwork patterns and our passing and receiving drills. We use this pattern to set up quick separation steps and change of direction technique. In the next section we will look at how the player uses this footwork to quickly change direction in a soccer specific setting. Here are some quick feet drills that we use in our programs:

(View Quick Feet Highlights Video)

Workout – Quick Feet and Rhythmic Agility Movement Patterns:

15-20minutes

The speed / agility section of today's training session is also a warm up for many of our speed, agility and conditioning sessions in a full curriculum. We will break it up into several sub-sections that progress from quick feet, to crossover footwork, to change of pace and change of direction (agility) patterns.

1. Quick Feet: 2-3 minutes

- a. Stationary Rapid Response Chops
- b. Stationary 1 Leg Rapid Response Hops Over a Line (left/right and fwd/back)

2. Angled Patterns and Moving Patterns – 5 minutes

- a. 2 Leg and 1 Leg Zigzag's – moving across the ladder
- b. 2 Leg and 1 Leg 4 Corners (right and left, staying inside the box)
- c. 2 in a Hole (forward and lateral)
- d. 2 in 2 out (forward and lateral, sometimes chop feet outside ladder)

3. Cone / Line Crossovers – 5 minutes

- a. 1 Cone/Line Crossover (with quick feet)
- b. 1 Cone/Line Crossover (react to partner)
- c. 2 Cone Crossovers (crossover run pattern)

Portions of this program are used as a warm up for our more advanced players. We do these types of drills before we begin our ball skills training, as it prepares the player to be light on their feet, ready to react and in a better position to move quickly with the ball.