

# thefa SOCCERSTAR CHALLENGE



## 1. What is the Soccer Star Challenge?

The challenge focus upon six essential soccer techniques

- [Running with the ball](#)
- [Turning with the ball](#)
- [Speed \(Changing direction without the ball\)](#)
- [Dribbling](#)
- [Heading](#)
- [Shooting](#)

The tests will reflect technical ability of the players in these techniques. A learning programme of practices and games with key coaching factors is provided for each technique.

## 2. For whom is the Soccer Star Challenge designed?

It is designed for the use of coaches and teachers, with boys and girls of any ability from 6 to 16 years of age.

## 3. What facilities and equipment are required?

The minimum area required would be approximately 40 x 30 yards, either outdoors or indoors, on any suitable surface. The tests are easy to organise, requiring only five soccer balls and a supply of markers or cones. A class of 12 can be tested on all the tests within one hour.

## 4. How does the challenge operate?

- Test the children through the six Soccer Star Challenges.
- Input the test scores into the appropriate page of this web-site.
- Print off The Football Association official F.A. Soccer Star Challenge Certificate.
- Present the certificates to the children.

## 5. What feedback is provided?

### For the player?

Free certificate to indicate the player's grading.

### For the coach?

A readout of the group's performance.

## 6. Validation

The Soccer Star tests have been validated by Professor Tim Holt of the Social Statistics Department of Southampton University, England following extensive research with over 10,000 children before the launch in 1988. They have been proven to display over 90% reliability and over 90% validity in being able to distinguish between young players in the following categories:

**A. Academy/Centre of Excellence players.**

**B. Players not selected for Academies but representing their town or country on 'all star' teams.**

**C. Players not selected for (A) or (B) but playing for their school or club team.**

**D. Players not registered with a club or school team.**

Six grades or stars are available to be awarded on the basis of the test scores of the child and the 'norms' for the child at that age. The 'norms' have been refined over the years since the launch in 1988 reflect the scores of the half a million children who have completed the tests in this period. The six star graded represents the top of players tested in any country to date.

**THE SOCCER STAR CHALLENGE, THEREFORE REPRESENTS THE LARGEST WORLDWIDE OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG PLAYERS TECHNICAL ABILITY**

The Football Association accept that the challenges do not predict or reflect playing ability as there are other factors (physical, mental understanding) related to **playing** ability but the challenges clearly do reflect personal **technical proficiency**.

## 7. Goal Setting

The Soccer Star Challenge allows children to set simple performance goals and view development in terms of personal improvement. Children who rely too heavily on favourable comparisons with other children in sport are in danger of being disappointed. Children who focus upon their own improvement are more likely to be motivated, enjoy their sport and maintain participation.

The Soccer Star Challenge provides simple opportunities for children to achieve success and improve their overall self-esteem by focusing upon their own performance not others. The reward and feedback provided in the challenges can be immediate and intrinsic.

## 8. Practice

The best introduction to the world's greatest game is mini-soccer ([click here](#))Playing small-sided games like Mini-Soccer has been proved to be most effective way to introduce children to soccer, enjoy the fun of playing and begin to understand the game. Small-sided games do provide the opportunity to practice some techniques- passing and control are for example best practised in small-sided games that allow for the realistic and dynamic movement of the ball and players.

Small sided games do not, however, provide the opportunity for other techniques to be practised: for example in a game of Mini-Soccer whilst there will be many opportunities to practice passing and ball control there will be limited opportunities and repetitive practice for turning, dribbling, heading and shooting. Indeed for many young players there is an over emphasis upon passing at the expense of dribbling and turning.

In these circumstance the Soccer Star Challenge has a value in focussing the players attention on personal goals, based on mastering the specific technique to gain more enjoyment.

## 9. Feedback

Research by The Football Association in 1993 showed that 76% of all Soccer Star coaches had access to a computer and so the provision of the Soccer Star Challenge on the Internet allows coaches anywhere in the world to obtain certificates and readouts to enhance the value of their soccer education programmes. The process of the star grading will allow coaches and their players to evaluate their own development

A review of England Under 21 players who have undertaken the Soccer Star Challenge and obtained the top six star grading.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Current team</b>	<b>Age when achieved</b>	<b>Soccer Star 6 star rate</b>
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Michael Carrick	Manchester United	10 years	
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Michael Bridges	Leeds United	11 years	
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Matthew Upson	West Ham	10 years	
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Jon Harley	Fulham	10 years	
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Jonathan Greening	West Brom	10 years	
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John Curtis	Blackburn Rovers	11 years	
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Matthew Etherington	West Ham	10 years	
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Paulo Vernazza	Watford	11 years	
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## Running with the ball

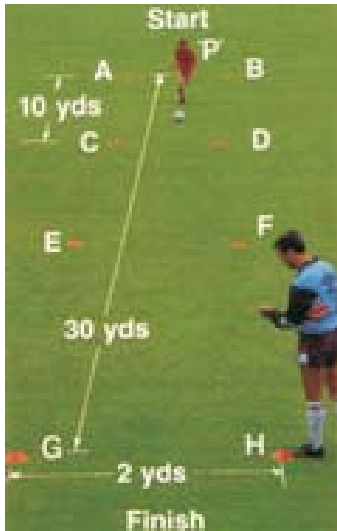
### THE TASK - THE TEST

The purpose of the test is to run the ball as quickly as possible from the starting line until the ball crosses the finishing line.

### ORGANISATION

#### 1. Area

The area is marked out as shown in the photograph below, with the use of lines or markers.



#### 2. Start

The player 'P' begins the test by crossing the line A/B with the ball. The time begins when the ball crosses the line.

#### 3. Finish

The test finishes when the ball crosses the line G/H between the markers G/H no more than 2 feet above ground level. The player may either pass or run the ball over this line. The player must not pass the ball until the ball has passed over the line E/F.

#### 4. Timing

Time the test to 1/10th of a second from Start to Finish.

#### 5. If The Player

i) passes the ball before the line E/F and does not touch the ball again,

**OR**

ii) fails to pass the ball through the finishing line at the required height,

**OR**

iii) slips or falls over

then the test should be repeated, up to a maximum of two attempts. If the player has not achieved a score after two attempts, then no score is recorded against the player for this test. Players should be aware that two failures will result in no score being recorded.

### FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:

#### Organising a group to take the test

Please Note:

- i) Five balls required
- ii) Time - 15 players: 10 minutes.

#### Recording:

1. Record the times on the Score Sheet under the appropriate column.
2. On completion of the Test, together with each player, set new targets for the player to strive for when next tested.

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## Turning

### THE TASK - THE TEST

The purpose of the test is to complete 9 turns with the ball, as quickly as possible, with three different methods of turning:



### Organisation

The area is marked out as shown in the photograph above.

#### 1. Area

- (a) Two lines are marked five yards apart (A and B).
- (b) Two gates are marked five yards apart.

#### 2. Start

When the player crosses the start line (A), the examiner starts the clock.

#### 3. Timing

The player must run the ball over the line B, five yards away between the gates marked. The player must then return to the line A and run the ball over the line between the gates marked.

The player then returns to run the ball over the line B and returns to cross the line A before putting the foot on the ball to stop the ball. Time to 1/10th of a second.

#### 4. Finish

The player finishes the attempt of the test by crossing line A and putting the foot on the ball to stop the ball.

#### 5. Scoring

(a) The player will therefore complete three turning movements all of which must be the same movement, e.g.:-

- i) hooking the ball with the inside of the foot.
- ii) hooking the ball with the outside of the foot.
- iii) step over turn.
- iv) drag back turn.
- v) stop/turn.
- vi) 'Cruyff' turn.

The movement must therefore be the same but the player can use either right or left foot to execute the movement. Providing the type of movement is the same then the player can alternate between right and left feet.

(b) The test is repeated twice more to produce in total three attempts of the test. During the second attempt the player must use a turning movement different to that used in the first attempt. Again, within the second attempt each turn must be the same.

(c) During the third attempt the player must use a turning movement different to that used in the first and second attempts of the test. Again, within the second attempt each turn must be the same.

(d) Add up the three attempts of the test on the score sheet to produce a total time for the test. within each attempt.

(e) The player therefore completes three attempts of the test when, he or she has executed three different turning movements on three separate attempts whilst performing the same turning movement

(f) If the player during the test:

i) fails to cross the lines A or B when executing a turn, OR

ii) fails to stop the ball on completion of an attempt beyond the line A, OR

iii) falls, trips or slips over, OR

iv) changes the type of movement on an attempt, OR

v) repeats a type of movement on another attempt.

the player should be re-tested once for **that particular movement** up to a maximum of two attempts for each movement. If the player has not achieved a score after two attempts, then no score is recorded against the player for this movement. Players should be aware of the danger of failing to record a score if they do not concentrate.

### **FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:**

Organising a group to take the test

#### **Please Note:**

i) The players should be in pairs, e.g. A and B. Whilst A makes his/her first attempt B waits: B then makes his/her first attempt whilst A rests. This procedure allows the players to get adequate rest. After A and B have both completed their 3 attempts another pair make their attempts.

ii) The players must demonstrate to the examiner the intended turn before attempting the test. The examiner should be able to identify each method of turning.

iii) Total time for each player to complete three attempts: one minute.

#### **Recording:**

1. Record the times on the Score Sheet under the appropriate column.

2. On completion of the Test, together with each player, set new targets for the player to strive for when next tested.

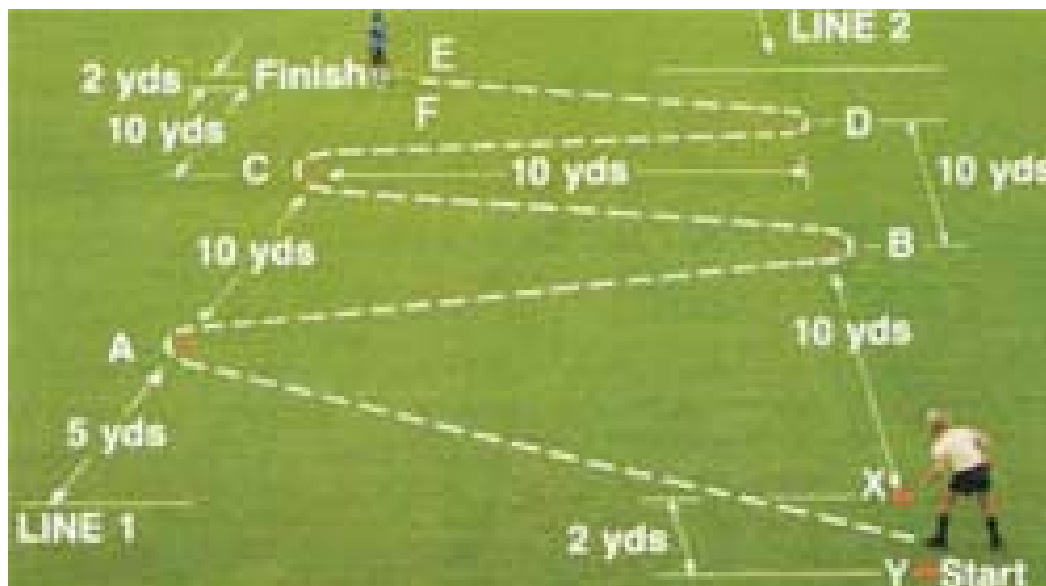
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## Turning

### THE TASK - THE TEST

The purpose of the test is to run as quickly as possible AROUND the markers from start to finish.



### TEST

1. The area is laid out as shown in the photograph above.
2. The player starts behind the line between the starting cones/ markers (X/Y).
3. No ball is required - this is a test for speed and mobility.
4. On the command 'ready - go' the player runs around the cones/ markers A, B, C, D to finish across the line between cones E and F.
5. Time the test to 1/10th of a second from start to finish.
6. If during the test the player:

i) fails to run around any of the cones, OR ii) falls, trips or slips over

then the player should be re-tested. If either of these situations i) to ii) above occurs, the player should be re-tested once, up to a maximum of two attempts. If the player has not achieved a score after two attempts, then no score is recorded against the player for this test. Re-test players should go to the end of the line to allow a maximum rest period.

### FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:

Organising a group to take the test:

- i) The test is completed very quickly with total time for testing 10-15 players less than 5 minutes.

### Recording:

- i) Record the times on the Score Sheet under the appropriate column.
- ii) On completion of the Test, together with each player, set new targets for the player to strive for when next tested.

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## Dribbling

### FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:

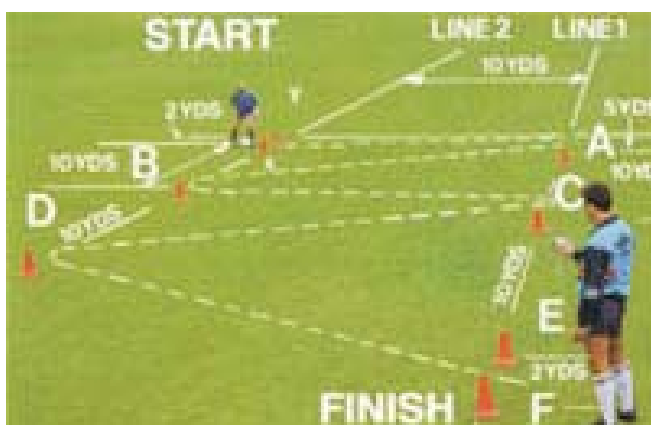
Organising a group to take the test:

See photographs of a group being tested.

- i) 1 is being tested.
- ii) 2 - 7 are waiting to be tested.
- iii) 8 and 9 are 'spotters' to ensure the ball of the player being tested crosses the line.
- iv) 10 collects the ball.
- v) Time: one minute per player.
- vi) 3 balls required.
- vii) It is advisable to use cones for A B C and D. They can be more easily seen by the player than markers.
- viii) Emphasize to the players that the cones should be looked upon as 'stationary' defenders - therefore change direction in front of them.

### Recording:

1. Record the scores on the score sheet under the appropriate column.
2. On completion of the Test together with each player, set new targets for the players to strive for when next tested.



### THE TASK - THE TEST

Imagine the markers are defenders and the purpose of the test is to dribble the ball as quickly as possible in front and away from the markers, A, B, C, and D from the start of the course to the finish.

Area: The area is marked out as shown in the photograph with lines, cones or markers.

**1. The player stands with one foot on the ball behind the starting line.**

**2. The time begins when the player crosses the starting line.**

**3. The ball must:**

- i) cross the line 1 in front of the cones/markers at A and C.
- ii) cross the line 2 in front of the cones/markers at B and D.
- iii) not touch the cones/markers (the players are allowed to touch the cones/markers with their feet).

**4. The player must:**

- i) dribble in front of the cones/markers A, B, C and D.
- ii) stop the ball beyond the finishing line between the two cones/markers (E and F) indicating the finishing gate.

5. The test ends with the player with one foot on the ball past the finishing line between the width of the finishing gate markers.

6. Time the dribbling test to 1/10th of a second from start to finish.

7. If the whole of the ball during the test:

i) fails to cross the line in front of any of the marker cones (A, B, C, D), OR If the player during the test:

ii) dribbles behind any of the marker cones (A, B, C, D) or the cones marking the finishing gate, OR

iii) dribbles the ball to touch any of the marker cones (A, B, C, D) or the cones marking the finishing gate, OR

iv) fails to stop the ball beyond the finishing line, OR

v) falls, trips or slips over

then the player should be re-tested. If any of the situations i) to v) above occur, up to a maximum of two attempts. If the player has not achieved a score after two attempts, then no score is recorded against the player for this test. Re-test players should go to the end of the line to allow a maximum rest period.

Players need to concentrate and be aware of the possibility of failing to record a score if they do not concentrate.



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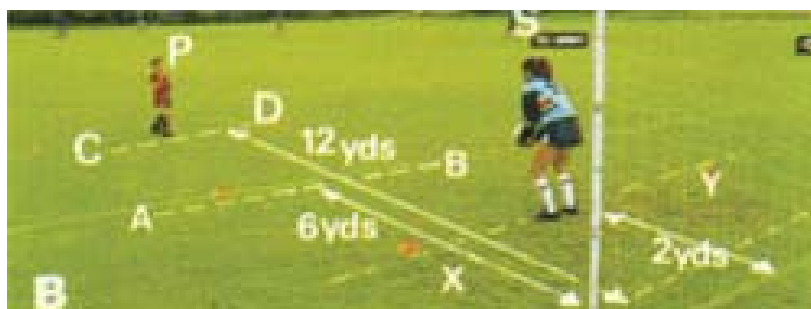
## Heading

The purpose of the test is to head the ball over the goal line into the goal with, at the most, only one bounce.

### Organisation



**1.** The area is marked out with the use of a goal, goal line, and markers or cones as shown in the photographs. The goal should be standard (8 yards x 8 feet). Posts, cones or markers may be used instead of a goal but must be placed 8 yards apart: the examiner would then need to judge whether a header would have entered the goal below the crossbar had it been there.



**2.** The player - 'P' stands behind the line C/D.



**3.** The server 'S' - stands behind the line X/Y with a ball and throws under arm serve at around head height so that if the ball came to ground it would land between the line A/B and the line C/D. The quality of service is crucial: the examiner should serve to enable 'P' to have the best possible service to score. If the service is not to the satisfaction of the examiner then the service should be repeated.

### 4. To score:

'P' judges the service, moves forward to head the ball and makes contact before the line A/B. If 'P' first makes contact with the ball after crossing the line A/B then that header cannot score. The ball may go straight into the goal without bouncing on the ground or it may bounce once on the ground before crossing the line. The ball to score must not bounce twice on the ground before crossing the goal line.

## 5. Attempts:

'P' receives - 3 serves

The examiner to record each goal as one point and failure to score as 0 (zero).

Total up at the end of the test.

## 6. If the ball:

i) bounces twice on the ground before crossing the goal line - no score.

ii) hits the crossbar, one or both posts and crosses the goal line without bouncing twice on the ground - score one point.

iii) hits the crossbar, one or both posts, bounces twice on the ground and crosses the goal line - no score.

7. Changes for ages:

As shown on the photographs above.

A : Under 9's

B : Under 11's

C : Over 11's e.g. Under 12's, 13's, 14's, 15's and 16's

## FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:

### Organising a group to take the test

#### Please Note:



i) 1 being tested

2/3/4/5/6 - waiting to be tested

7 - recording marks; constant for 11 players.

Number 7 is tested last.

8/9 - supplying examiner with balls.

10/11/12 - 'retrievers'; give balls to 8 or 9.

ii) Numbers 1 - 6 have one attempt then go the back of the line until all six have had three attempts.

Numbers 1 - 6 then change with numbers 8 -12. Number 7 is tested last.

#### Recording:

1. Record the scores on the score sheet under the appropriate column.

2. On completion of the Test together with each player set new targets for the player to strive for when next tested.

## HOW TO MASTER THE TECHNIQUES AND SCORE HIGHLY ON THE TEST:

Start by throwing the ball on to your head to head to a partner 5 yards away.



7. If the ball hits the crossbar

- and goes over the bar: score 0 points.

- and rebounds into the penalty area: score 0 points.

- and goes into the goal: score 2 or 3 points depending on which area of the goal the ball crosses the line to enter the goal.

8. If the ball hits the near post

- and goes wide of the goal at the near post: score 0 points.

- and goes into the goal: score 2 or 3 points depending on which area of the goal, the ball crossed the line.

- and goes wide of the goal at the far post: score 0 points.

- and goes over the bar: score 0 points.

9. If the ball hits the far post

- and goes into the goal: score 2 or 3 points depending on the area in which the ball first crosses the line.

10. If the ball hits the far post and rebounds into the penalty area or rebounds wide of the goal at the far or near post, or goes over the crossbar: score 1 point.

The test remains unchanged for players under 7, 8 and 9 years of age.

### **FOR THE COACH/ TEACHER/ PARENT/ YOUTH LEADER:**

Organising a group to take the test

See below for a group being tested.

Please Note:

i) Test all on right foot, then all on left foot. Balls relayed in the same direction as foot, i.e. test right foot; passed to the right and test left foot; passed to the left.

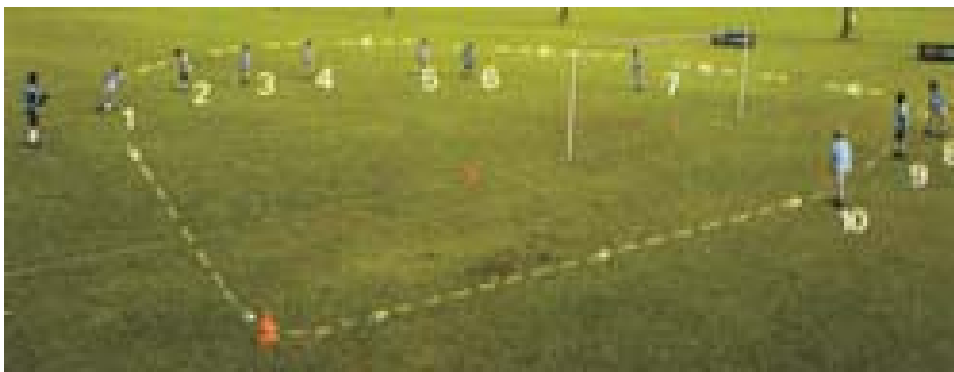
ii) Use only 5 balls otherwise a 'shooting gallery' results.

iii) If testing 15 players allow for more players in the 'chain'.

iv) Time: 1 minute for right foot, 1 minute for left foot. 1 minute to re-organise. Total time: 3 minutes for each player.

v) Examiners should use their discretion where tests are taking place in either a Sports Hall or where there is insufficient clearance behind the goals for a 'power' line. In these circumstances the examiner can judge whether the ball was struck sufficiently hard enough that in the examiner's option it would have crossed over the power lines had they been there.

vi) Wherever possible use full-size goals but if this proves difficult to organise then use markers, cones or corner flags, 8 yards apart: the examiner would then decide whether a ball would have gone over the crossbar had it been there.



### **Recording:**

1. Record the points on the score sheet under the appropriate column.

2. On completion of the Test together with each player set new targets for the player to strive for when next tested.