

## Toddler Soccer – a winning idea for little dribblers



Dribbling is something most toddlers can do in style – but it's usually down the front of their t-shirt when they are eating a bowl of spaghetti!

But now thanks to a fantastic, innovative idea by a dedicated local football coach, your toddler can be an expert at dribbling - passing, tackling and even scoring goals!

ToddlerSoccer.Org is the brainchild of Tim Wareing.

Tim's love of football goes right back to his own childhood and has led him to a very successful career in the game. He holds his UEFA European A licence and has over 10 years of coaching experience. He has held many roles throughout the local game, his latest being with Irish Premier League side, Lisburn Distillery where he implemented a very successful academy.

It was through his time working with older children that Tim realised there was potential to bring aspects of the game to very young children.

"Parents used to bring their little toddlers along to games to watch their older brothers and sisters train and they seemed to really love

it. You could see how interested they were and how they wanted to be involved," explained Tim.

"I also felt that toddlers in Northern Ireland have not got a great range of organised, fun, sporting activities. That is why TWSports.Org launched ToddlerSoccer.Org. We now offer a varied programme of coaching and games aimed at children from the age of two and a half."

Although there is some structure to the training sessions, which are all carried out by fully qualified and experienced trainers, the emphasis is definitely on fun: "We didn't want to be strict or bossy with younger children – we really just wanted to create an atmosphere where they could feel free to enjoy themselves. Mum or dad stay for the session (which lasts 45 minutes) so are always there in the background if they feel they want a little bit of help. We encourage the children to do things without mum or dad, but always include some fun time with them too."

Believe it or not, Tim and his team of coaches have actually succeeded in developing some of the basic, essential footballing skills in these tiny tots: "It's all about how you communicate with them. We really get down to their level – which means the coaches have to lose any inhibitions too! You should be a fly on the wall at one of our training sessions for the coaches! A room full of grown men all running about pretending to be Roary the Racing Car!



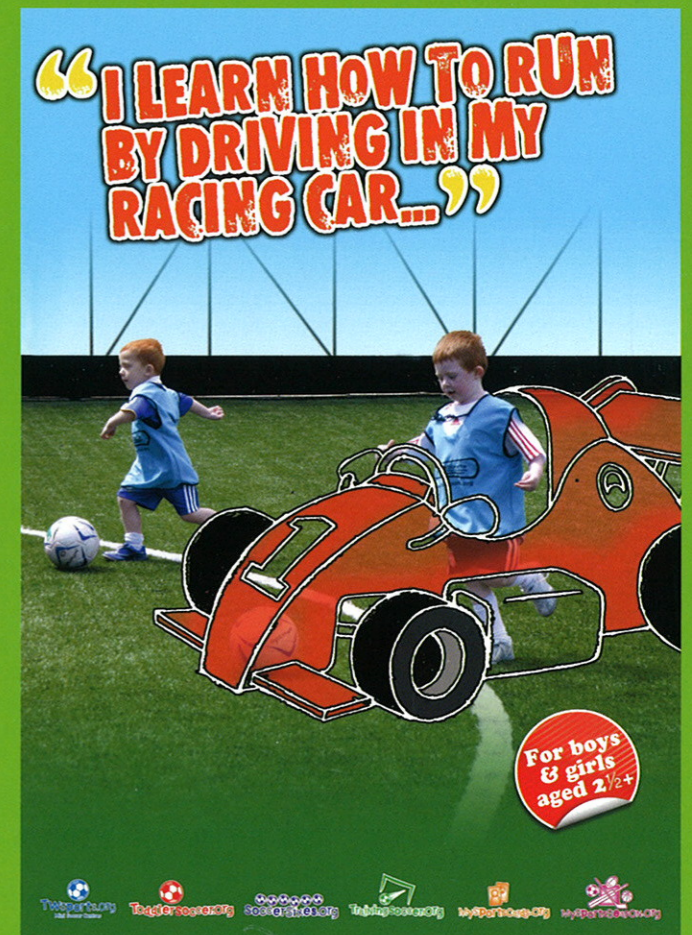
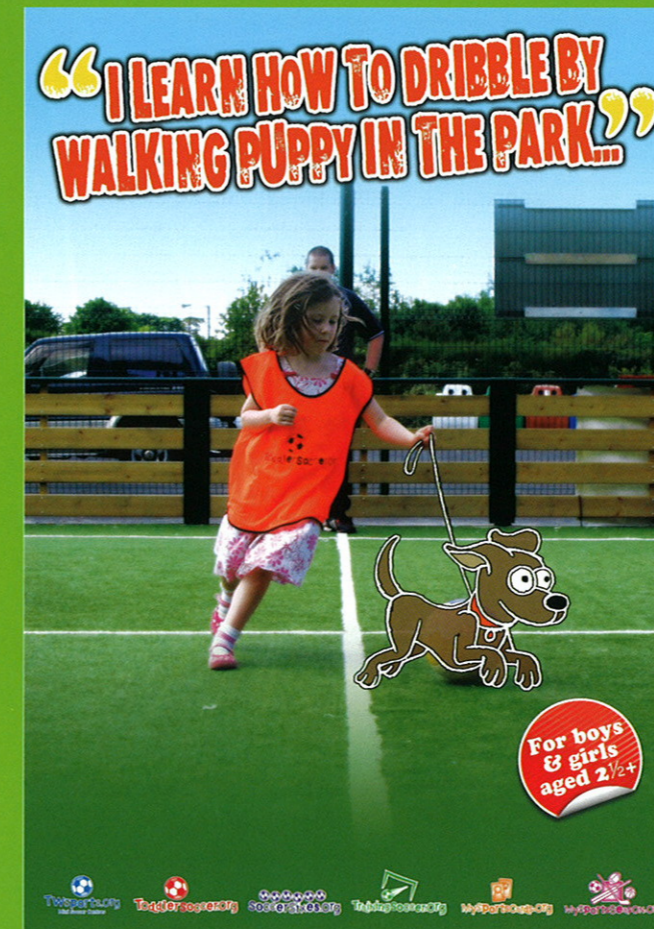
"We really get the children to use their imaginations and use popular characters like Roary to really get them motivated," enthused Tim.

"I have spent a couple of years developing the programme and tweaking with it to offer toddlers the best in fun, development and to encourage them to be creative. We encourage our coaches to throw out the coaching manual and become entertainers during each session! It is fantastic; we have two year olds performing drag-backs and step-overs but we dress it up to help toddlers understand, perform and more importantly have fun! In a way we have thrown away the boring mould and had some fun ourselves."

By getting the children to imagine they are 'walking the dog' or being Roary racing through the cones, or even a cheeky monkey swinging through the jungle, they can teach children about how to control the ball – and learn coordination without them even realising!

"We do let them have a go at kicking the ball into the goal too – but rather than being competitive, throw in a couple of balls so everyone gets a chance - so there may be a couple of balls the go at the one time," added Tim. "At the end of the session we will have a fun mini soccer match, which the kids just love. It is a great way to teach them about teamwork. It's also great preparation for nursery school as they learn how to play and be active with other children. Although we are developing their football skills, it is about much more than that. It helps to develop their coordination, their balance, their social skills and of course, their confidence."

The sessions have proved as popular with girls as they have with boys and parents needn't worry – they don't need to be budding Beckhams or Healys themselves! Toddler soccer is open to children of any ability aged two and a half to five, with sessions all over Northern Ireland. It is without doubt one of the most innovative and exciting toddler activities available at present.



Tim, soon to be a dad for the third time himself, has not only attracted interest from people throughout Northern Ireland, he has had interest from all over the UK, Holland, USA and Canada: "It's been pretty cool. I received an email from a lady in Canada wanting me to produce a Toddler Soccer programme for children in her region! Within an hour of contact she registered to my online coaching resource website, TrainingSoccer.Org. On a recent trip to Holland I visited Ajax, PSV Eindhoven and some top amateur clubs. One coach in particular was very interested in the whole concept and spoke with me during one of our organised club seminars."

Tim's passion for sport is obvious and his desire to share his knowledge and skills with little stars of the future has surely added to Toddler Soccer's success.

Toddler Soccer is also a great way to get your toddler active which is something Tim is very passionate about: "It's so easy just to sit down in front of the TV with your kids – but it can be just as easy to get them up and doing something active."

Tim will be guest writing a special TOTS fitness column in each following edition, giving advice and fun ideas on how to keep your little one fit and active.

Toddler Soccer offers weekly sessions in centres across Northern Ireland, including Belvoir Activity Centre, Cregagh Community Centre, Eddie Irvine's Bangor, Moneyreagh Community Centre and new classes in the Bridge Centre Killyleagh to name but a few.

To find out more, see where your nearest class is or to enrol your own little dribbler log onto [www.toddlersoccer.org](http://www.toddlersoccer.org), email [info@toddlersoccer.org](mailto:info@toddlersoccer.org) or call Tim Wareing on 077 40120788.