Help your team play faster

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Help your team play faster with three classic games Many youth soccer coaches – not just the coaches of girls' teams – would like their players to move the ball faster, attack quicker and more directly as well as convert more close range chances into goals.

While the three classic coaching games I've described below will speed the development of these attributes, they won't do your players any good if they haven't mastered the basics of ball control and have developed a good first touch. They will just get frustrated by their lack of success.

By all means give Three-Touch, Follow Up and The Four Goal Game a try but if your players are struggling you might have to go back to basics for a week or two.

Three-Touch

I see a lot of drills and games that look hideously complicated to play and virtually impossible to explain to children. I expect you've seen them too – dotted lines, arrows all over the place, cones everywhere, little pictures of players in every corner...

If I see anything like that, I delete it or turn the page.

If I can't work out what's supposed to be happening, how will my players?

In my opinion, simplicity is the key to good soccer coaching and you can't get much simpler than Three-Touch.

All you have to do is split your players into small teams (ideally four or five but never more than six), put them on a pitch and let them play soccer with the condition that no player can have more then three consecutive touches.

If they do, it's a free kick to the other team.

Three-Touch forces young players to control the ball quickly, get their head up, play the simple pass, support each other and move into good supporting positions. When the game is played well, it's great fun for the players and satisfying for the coach who can just sit back and admire his players' skills.

But don't expect miracles the first time your players play Three-Touch. You need to play it regularly to reap the benefits.

My girls have 10 minutes playing Three-Touch in just about every one of my coaching sessions. It's either at the beginning (Three-Touch is a great warm-up), in the middle or just before they play a match at the end.

And they haven't got bored with it yet!

Follow Up

Another simple game (I told you I like simple things) is Follow Up.

And it's another small-sided game with one condition: goals only count if the shooter, or one of his team mates, touches the back of the net within five seconds of the ball crossing the line.

I combine Follow Up with Three-Touch – even with very young players – to get players moving fast, thinking quickly, scoring goals and attacking loose balls in the box.

The Four Goal Game

This is one my personal favourites.

Use the same playing area and the same teams as above but this time you need four goals – one in each corner of the pitch.

With very young players, play the simple version: you defend and attack two goals. This encourages them to look for an unguarded goal and switch play accordingly.

In the more advanced version of The Four Goal game, teams defend and attack all four goals.

This opens up even more opportunities to score and that's good for older players. It does, however, make the game too complex for six to 10-year-olds.

Tip: If goals are few and far between in any of the above games, make the pitch smaller or the goals

bigger.

Conclusion

There is a reason why classic games like Three-Touch, Follow Up and The Four Goal Game have been around so long.

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