Youth Players Information Thread

Posted by STLCoach - 20 Mar 2009 09:01

When a long ball is played into the opponents defensive players and you aren't able to win the first ball (meaning, the opponent will get to the ball before you will), many players will realize that they can try to win the second ball. This simply means conceding that the opponent will make the first touch of the ball so you try to take advantage of what might be a bad first touch and you win the second touch.

For example, the red player plays a long ball because they are under pressure and it goes toward the red central defender. A yellow forward is laying back with the idea that they will be able to win the second ball.
The problem with this is that the yellow central defender isn't being put under any pressure at all and as a result of this, most likely will be able to receive the ball with the first touch and keep it under control and away from the red player.
In order to win the second touch, the first touch usually needs to be pressured. When possible, this would be done with a second player. Next example, The same ball is played in but now, instead of the red player staying back and hoping to win a second touch, he pressures the player and a second player on his team comes in to win the bad touch.
By pressuring the ball, it changes things from hoping for a bad touch to creating the bad touch by the opponent. This greatly increases the likelihood of you, or your teammate, winning the ball and creating a goal scoring opportunity.

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Youth Info Movement of 2v1

Posted by STLCoach - 14 May 2009 06:47

Recently, I received an email from a subscriber (Joe Richter) in which he explained how he teaches movement. The wording was so simple yet so effective it was something that needed to be shared.

"Move to make the defenders choose---to follow or to stay. If he follows, you've made space. If he stays. you're open"

As an example the first yellow player has the ball and the black player is marking him. There is another yellow player in support.

Even though this is a 2 v 1 situation, the reality is, the defender doesn't have to make a choice. He stays with the player with the ball. However, if the back makes an overlapping run, things change.

If the defender stays with the player with the ball, the player makes a pass to the runner who is then free.

If the defender goes with the runner, the player with the ball keeps it and goes forward with the dribble.

This is a great example of the runner making the defender choose. Try to make as many of your runs as possible force the defender to choose

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BARCALONAS APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Posted by STLCoach - 12 Jun 2009 03:51

THIS IS ALSO THE PHILOSOPHY OF FC ST LOUIS and coach APOSTOLI.
By Mike Woitalla
Two years ago, while visiting Spain, I looked into to its approach to youth development. Since then, Spain has won the 2008 European Championship and Barcelona won the 2009 UEFA Champions League.
Both teams won their titles playing attractive, attack-minded soccer in an era dominated by cautious, defensive play. As coaches have become ever more obsessed with strength and size, Barcelona and Spain's star players are notable for their skill and small stature.

Among those I spoke to were Jose Ramon Alexanco, the director of Barcelona's youth program, and Pep Guardiola, who at the time had just been named coach of Barcelona's reserve team. Guardiola, one of Barca's all-time great players, had come through the Barcelona youth system, which he joined in 1984 at age 13.
Guardiola was promoted to first-team head coach last summer, and proceeded to guide Barca to La Liga title and the Champions League crown, which it captured in Rome on Wednesday by marvelously outplaying Manchester United in a 2-0 win that featured several products of Barcelona's youth program, the cantera, including Lionel Messi, Victor Valdes, Carles Puyol, Xavi and Andres Iniesta.

"Our aim to is to help young players understand the game," Guardiola said when I spoke with him at Barcelona's training grounds. "Of course, there is the emphasis on the technical, where it all starts. But we want the players to learn how to think fast. We want them to learn how to run little, but run smart."
He echoed Johan Cruyff, the Dutchman who coached the great Barcelona teams that won the 1992 European Cup and four straight La Liga titles with Guardiola in midfield.
Said Cruyff: "All coaches talk too much about running a lot. I say it's not necessary to run so much. Soccer is a game that's played with the brain. You need to be in the right place at the right time, not too early, not too late."
Alexanco provided me with details on how Barcelona ran its youth teams.
"We don't demand that the youth teams win," said Alexanco. "We demand that they play good soccer. We don't use the word, 'winning.'"
Not until after the players reach age 16 is there fitness training.
"That's when we start to concentrate on the technical, tactical and physical requirements they need for the first team," Alexanco said. "Before that age we mainly play soccer. Everything is with the ball. We work on skills and some tactics."
The Barca program fields teams from age 10 up. The 10-year-olds - the Benjamins - practice four days a week, in 45-minute sessions, and play 7-v-7 games on the weekend. All of the older age groups play 11-v-11.
"They play the same system, in the 4-3-3 formation, used by first team," says Alexanco. "The developmental teams have to reflect the personality of the first team. That also means playing attacking, attractive soccer. That's what our fans demand and what we want to give them."
Through age 17, Barcelona fields two teams at each age group. Each player plays at least 45 percent of the games.
Choosing the right players for its youth program is the key to its success. Barcelona does not hold tryouts. They don't work, says Alexanco. Charged with finding the talent are the ojeadores, the scouts. The players they pick come in for trials before they are invited to join the cantera.
Barcelona employs 25 scouts throughout Spain, with at least one in each province. They convene twice a year at Barcelona, where the bosses reiterate the criteria and quality they're seeking in players.
Barcelona also works with about 30 youth clubs throughout Catalonia, with the aim of finding players

from the province it prides itself on representing, and it uses contacts throughout the world to find players.
"You have to have eyes everywhere," Alexanco says. "You need to see the kids who are playing soccer on the playground.
"We're looking for players who have technique and speed, and who look like players. And we're looking for players who offer something different."

(Mike Woitalla, who coaches youth soccer in Northern California, is the executive editor of Soccer America. His youth articles are archived at YouthSoccerFun.com.

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PRESSURING KEEPER

Posted by STLCoach - 18 Jun 2009 05:02

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One of the decisions forwards must make in the course of the game is when a ball is played back to the opposing keeper and the keeper isn't able to use his hands (either because it was passed back by a teammate with their feet or because they are outside the 18) is whether the forward should pressure the keeper or not.

Looking at the diagram below, if the yellow player is defending the top goal and he passes the ball back to the keeper. The question that comes up in the game is should the black player (or players) pressure the keeper?

First, it's important to understand, there isn't a right or wrong answer, each situation is going to be different and it's always going to be a matter of opinion.

On the one hand if the forward runs after the keeper to pressure him, if other players don't step up with him, makes it easy for the keeper to pass the ball around him to another back. It also, puts the player in an offside position if the ball is cleared and his team wins the ball.

On the other hand, if he doesn't pressure the keeper has time to settle the ball and dribble up 30 yards or so to get the ball upfield further.

The general rule I use is if you are able to put pressure on the keeper then do so. If, on the other hand, the keeper would have time to settle the ball and take a few touches before you could get anywhere close to the ball, save your energy and hold back.

Too often players feel they can't intercept the pass back so they don't pressure the keeper but what they don't realize is by not pressuring the keeper, it allows him unlimited time and space to work with. When in doubt, I believe the forward should take the chance, use a bit of energy and see if he can force the keeper to play the ball quicker than he wants to, or from a different spot or from a different angle.

If you watch many professional games, you will see that even top level keepers will shank the occasional clearance when pressured so if you are anywhere near close enough to put pressure on the keeper, take the chance and do so. It's only when you are so far away that it's the keeper has enough time to get a few touches on the ball before you could get close enough to pressure that you should stay back.

Just my opinion.

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FACING YOUR FIELD

Posted by STLCoach - 16 Jul 2009 04:52

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I have written about this in the past but it's such a simple yet important concept that I can't emphasize this enough to young players (and players of all ages).

When you are preparing to receive the ball, whenever possible, you want to receive the ball with your body opened to the field.

Below you see an example of a player being open and having the ball passed to him but because he is facing the wrong direction, he can't see what is available to him and it will take a couple of touches to get the ball turned and face the right direction.

By the time the receiving player is able to get the ball and his body turned, the defender is able to step up and apply pressure.

If the receiving player receives the ball with his body opened up to the field, he can see everything in front of him and attack with his first touch so instead of the defender being able to pressure the ball, it's the attacking player providing the pressure.

While opening your body up to the field can make a HUGE difference in your game, it requires very little effort or energy, usually just an extra step or two.

BY FACING YOUR FIELD YOO CAN SEE

THE PASSER

MOST OF THE PLAYERS ON THE PITCH

THE GOAL YOU ARE ATTACKING

THE DEFENDER

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NOT HAVING TO TURN

Posted by STLCoach - 27 Aug 2009 05:52

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Many players, especially young players, will receive a ball with a defender on their back and do everything they can to turn with the ball. At worst, they lose the ball right away, at best, they are turning

into pressure and are exposing the ball to the defender. Some are good enough to do this and get away with it. Most aren't.

When you receive the ball with your back to goal (or even side on) and there is a defender tightly marking you making it difficult to turn, if you aren't able to create space to turn into, be patient and take one of the other two options.

The first option is to find a teammate to play the ball back to. In the diagram below, the black player is side on and has a player pressuring him between him and the goal. Rather than turning into the defender, he takes the safer approach and plays the ball back to a teammate.

While some might think it's more "macho" to fight to get this turn in, the truth is, playing the ball back, in this situation will frequently result in a much better scoring opportunity.

The second option is to hold onto the ball. This option would be taken if there isn't a player available to play the ball back to.

If you can't turn and you can't play the ball back to someone, you are going to want to get low, be strong and hold onto the ball, doing everything you can to keep your body between the ball and the defender. While holding onto the ball, you are trying to buy time. The longer you hold the ball, the greater the opportunity for a teammate to get into a supporting position. You are also buying time waiting for the defender to get impatient. Many defenders will start off in a good solid defensive position but in a relatively short period of time, will get impatient, reach in or get off balance and then you have created an opportunity to get a turn and a shot.

So, when you get the ball in a position with your back to the goal, a defender right on you, if you can't turn quickly, look to knock the ball back to a teammate or be strong and hold the ball while buying time for something good to happen.

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DRIBBLE WITH SPEED

Posted by STLCoach - 14 Sep 2009 02:56

Today's topic deals with using your body while speed dribbling.
REMEMBER TO DRIBBLE WITH SPEED MEANS TOES DOWN USING TOP OF FOOT TO PUSH BALL AHEAD WITH 6-10 STRIDES BETWEEN TOUCHES TO RUN AT FULL SPEED WITH CONTROL.

Many players think of shielding as something to be done while dribbling in confined spaces and under pressure. An example can be seen below. The black player is using his body to shield the ball from the yellow defender.

However, it's also important to use your body to "shield" while speed dribbling. The difference with speed dribbling is you are simply trying to get the defender to be directly behind you so that the only way for them to get to the ball is to foul you or go around you.

Too often, young players will beat their defender and then try to dribble on an angle away from the chasing defender

The problem is, unless the defender is significantly slower than the dribbler, it's faster to run without the ball than with it so this gives the defender a good opportunity to recover.

The alternative is to cut the defender off so that they must run further than you in order to get to the ball (or foul you).

Doing this small thing will increase your likelyhood of getting all the way to goal, or getting fouled, as opposed to being overtaken and losing the ball on a tackle.

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