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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Re:Youth Players Information Thread

Posted by STLCoach - 11 Mar 2010 06:39

Today's topic deals with defending as a forward.

Hopefully, anyone who has been reading these newsletters for any length of time will know I believe everyone on the field attacks and everyone defends.
DEFENSE IS NOT A POSITION!!!!

However, there are different points of emphasis on defending depending upon position and location on field. For example, when defending just outside your defensive 18, your first priority is to deny penetration and your second priority is to delay and then force the ball away from the goal.

On the other hand, if you are a forward and are defending in your attacking half of the field, you have different priorities. First, if you get the opportunity, be willing to take a chance on a tackle. This doesn't mean to be reckless but do realize if you go for the ball and miss, the opponent still has at least half the field to go and you have most of your teammates behind the ball to provide support. If you take this same approach near your defensive 18 and take a chance and miss, this will probably result in a goal scoring opportunity for the opponent.

If you don't have the opportunity to tackle, it's more important to force the opponents attack in a general direction than it is to stop penetration. In the diagram below, the yellow back has the ball and the black forward is on defense. Using the positioning shown below, the yellow player has the option of attacking

to either side and therefore the black teammates don't know which way to prepare to defend.

By changing the positioning of the black forward it will force the yellow back in one direction.

By doing this, the black teammates can adapt since they know the yellow attacker will be going to their right.

It's not uncommon for the forward to actually ENCOURAGE penetration by the back provide it forces the attacker into additional pressure

Sometimes the forward will want to push the back to the outside (this takes the back away from the goal and also toward the sideline which can be thought of as an additional defender) and other times the forward will want to force the back toward the middle (usually if there is a center midfielder positioned to step up into a double team). The key is to remember that either way, the forward MUST force the back in one direction or the other and can't let the back dictate direction.

Any questions, comments or suggestions should be sent to STL COACH SCOTT AT AIINGTII@HOTMAIL.COM

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Receiving a ball for a shot

Posted by STLCoach - 22 Apr 2010 06:17

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Today's topic deals with receiving a ball for a shot.

When you are in a goal scoring situation and receive a ball while marked being able to read the situation and react accordingly will help tremendously.

In the diagram below, black 1 has the ball and is going to play the ball on the ground back to black 2.

Because the defender (yellow 2) is marking tightly, black 2 should look to receive the ball with the near foot (in this case the right foot) and take a touch toward the passer to hit the quick shot.

On the other hand, if the defender is further back it's better to receive the ball with the far foot (in this case the left foot) and receive the ball across your body

By letting the ball roll across your body, it opens up more of a shooting angle plus will more likely wrong foot the keeper.

The thing to remember is this decision is based on where the defender is located and not solely on what the attacking person wants to do.

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Youth Players seeing the ball

Posted by STLCoach - 20 May 2010 04:42

Today's topic deals with seeing the ball at all times.

Whether you are on attack or are defending, you must see the ball at all times. If you can't see the ball it means you don't know what is happening at that given time. Somehow, you must find a way to position your body to see the ball (and if on defense the player you are marking as well) at all times.

The problem isn't that players don't understand the importance of seeing the ball but rather, they don't realize how often they don't see the ball.

The next time you are in a scrimmage (or a game for that matter) really concentrate on making sure you can see the ball at all times. If possible, have someone watch you the whole game (either a teammate who isn't playing, a coach, a friend or a parent) and keep track of how many times you don't see the ball. Even better, see if you can get someone to video you throughout an entire game. They must shoot the video from a distance so the ball and you are in the shot at all times and after wards, you can track how often you lose sight of the ball in a game.

My guess is, most players will be surprised by how often this happens in a game.

Give it a try.

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Four ways to improve 'weak' players

Posted by STLCoach - 10 Jun 2010 05:52

Four ways to improve 'weak' players

1. Keep it simple

Many young players are pushed too hard, too soon. All too often they are made to practise complicated moves and tactics before they can pass the ball accurately. This failure to embed the basics can produce players who always seem to struggle to control, receive and pass - the so-called 'weak' players.

So make their skill foundations really strong. Take however long you need to get all your players passing comfortably and accurately with either foot. Make sure they know how to shield the ball and receive it softly before you move on to more complicated skills.

2. Motivate, motivate, motivate

Youngsters who are struggling know they are struggling. They don't need you to tell them they aren't as good as their friends.

What they do need from you is praise. Quiet congratulation for effort - not necessarily achievement - works wonders. You can even consider awarding motivation patches to reward your players as they improve. It's often all a child needs to make their day and make them try harder in the future.

But praise has to be genuine. Children aren't stupid - they know when it's deserved and when it isn't. So

don't go overboard.

3. Players need to play

None of your players will improve if they don't get the opportunity to practise their skills on match day.

If you keep your 'weak' players on the subs bench week after week, you shouldn't be surprised that they don't improve. Ideally, you should have an equal playing time policy - all players play for the same length of time on match day, regardless of the match situation.

But that's a difficult position to defend when you start losing games you know you could have won. To make this policy succeed requires good communication with parents and, sometimes, a thick skin.

So if you do decide you need to win matches and can't risk putting on certain players if the game is tight, fine. But don't kid yourself that you have the best interests of all your players at heart. It will be kinder to release the players you know won't get much of a game rather than keep them on the bench.

4. Improve yourself first

I know you want to be a good coach. You're reading this newsletter now in the hope that you might pick up a tip or two to help you become even better.

But it's important to take every opportunity to learn. Watch other coaches - you will benefit as much by noting and avoiding mistakes as from watching good practice - read widely, join forums and go on courses. Invite feedback from players and their parents and change the way you coach if you have to.

If you do all of these things, you will be in a better position to help all your players to be the best they can - not just the 'natural' soccer players in your squad.

Remember, all children deserve the opportunity to experience success. But success is relative. For a child with poor co-ordination, one accurate pass is success. For a child who struggles to make friends, just being in the team is success.

You have the power to make all your players - including the 'weak' ones - feel special. It's a big responsibility, and one we must all try to live up to.

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Players Information Thread Defensive headERS

Posted by STLCoach - 28 Jun 2010 02:46

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Today's topic deals with practicing defensive headers.

When heading for goal, you frequently will want to head the ball down toward the goal line (this makes it more difficult for the keeper to make the save). On the other other hand, when defending in back, you frequently will want to head the ball up and away. The reason for this is to get it over the head of the first line of attackers.

In order to practice this, it's best to work in groups of 3's. One person is the server, one is the header and one is the target. In the diagram below, the black player is the header. The red player is the server and the yellow player is the target.

The red player tosses the ball up toward the black player and the black player jumps up to head the ball.

The black player tries to head the ball OVER the server to the yellow player.

The heading player wants to go up to meet the ball and make contact on the top part of the forehead. The header would like to keep their eyes open while heading and make good contact with the ball. Each player would do this a few times.

Next do the same thing but now have the server go further away. This will force the header to judge the flight of the ball, move their feet to get behind the ball and make even better contact.

Emphasize doing this right each time as opposed to doing this a lot of times.

This is a great way to get used to defensive headers.

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PLAYERS: WHEN TO FINISH

Posted by STLCoach - 05 Aug 2010 08:56

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In the diagram below, the black player has the ball on the end line and sees his teammate open around 12 yards from goal.

If the ball is played back to this open player on the ground, in most cases, this player should use the inside of his foot to finish as he simply needs to redirect the ball into an open area.

Too often, the player in this situation tries to use their shoe laces and strike the ball as hard as they can and the ball ends up sailing over the goal.

When you are within 12 yards or so of the goal, especially when the ball is rolling toward you, consider putting a greater emphasis on placement by using the inside of the foot to redirect the ball into the goal, rather than trying to hit the ball as hard as you can with the instep and hoping for the best. It might not always look as impressive but you will score more goals and they all count the same.

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