

First Touch

Objective: To provide coaches with an understanding of the importance of a player's first touch on the ball, and some activities to assist in developing this crucial technical skill.

Discussion:

In Soccer, to be in control of the ball is of great importance to every level of player. The ability to control an awkward bouncing ball quickly and effectively gives the player with the ball the immediate advantage. First touch is often the difference between success and failure in most situations during the match.

As players get older, the game gets faster, and demands more speed. At this level, there is a greater need for first-time passes and a precise first touch on the ball. Often, players cannot always play a first-time ball; therefore, they must trap the ball, or may have to dribble if no teammates are in position to receive a first-time pass. Time and space go hand-in-hand in soccer. The less time a player takes to do something, the more time they will have to take advantage of it. Typically when controlling a ball, a player will do one of three things after controlling the ball: shield the ball by putting their body between the ball and the opponent, pass (or shoot) the ball; or they will dribble the ball. The space and time they have to do these things will depend on how good the player's first touch is when receiving the ball. Players MUST develop a feel for the ball. Feel means touch, and a fine touch requires a player to be comfortable touching the ball with all parts of the foot. Players must practice controlling balls on the ground as well as balls out of the air. Remember, that good control is the ability to take the ball with one touch in such a way that you can play the ball with your next movement without having to chase or reach for it. The ability to control the ball with the feet is a basic element of soccer. A good touch is very instinctive to some players, but harder for others. Whatever the level of your players, practice will always help improve their first touch on the ball.

Suggested Drills:

Juggle, juggle, juggle. Juggling teaches a player to use the various parts of their body to control the ball, and to set up their next touch.

First touch awareness and impact can show in any activity. I love to use 2v2. Here's the activity:

- ~ 25 x 15 space to 2 small goals,
- ~ the two players for each team enter their respective end line,
- ~ the ball is played in from the coach who is at the middle of the field on one side, and rolled to one player (adjust pace and flight of ball to challenge first touch)
- ~ the player and teammate that receive the rolled ball from the coach become the attackers, and the other two the defenders.
- ~ once the ball goes out of bounds, or a goal is scored, then that game is over and the coach rolls another ball to the next teams entering

Here are some other activities:

Exercise 1

Setup

A 10- by 10- yards area.

Group of three players.

One ball to each group.

Two players with the ball are positioned on one side of the square.

The third player faces them on the other side.

Action

The player with the ball passes to the third player on the opposite lane who receives with the inside of the foot and takes the ball a couple of yards to the side in one action.

On his next touch he passes the ball back across the square with his other foot.

The pair opposite switch places and repeat the action.

Tips

Remind players that it's important to give a good pass so it is easier for their teammates to receive the ball and control it away with their first touch.

Allow two touches to start before limiting players to one touch.

Remind the receiving player to move toward the ball.

Exercise 2

Setup

A 10- by 10- yards area.

Players in groups of three with a ball to each group.

Two players with the ball on one side of the square face the third player on the opposite side.

Action

The first player passes to the opposite player and sprints around him/her.

The receiving player taps the ball to the side, first touch, as the sprinting player comes around him/her.

The sprinting player passes first touch to the next player facing him/her who repeats the action.

The end player changes after several sequences.

Tips

Receiving players can start with two touches to make the pass. Once this becomes easy, limit players to one- touch passes.

Exercise 3

Set up

A 10-by 10-yard to 15-by 15-yard area.

Groups of up to four players at each corner.

One group starts with a ball.

Action

Players pass counterclockwise to the first player in the next group and follow their passes.

The receiving player taps the ball softly by the incoming passer, runs around him to the ball and passes to the first player in the next group.

Tips

Have players cushion the impact of a received ball by drawing back their foot as the ball arrives.

Remind receiving players to move to the ball.

To increase difficulty, introduce another ball. Have two groups diagonally across from one another start with balls.

Exercise 4

Set up

A 10-by 10-yard area

Two small 2-yard gates on either side of the square as shown.

Two passers, each with a ball, at opposite corners and facing their respective gates.

Two receivers in the gates.

Action

The passers pass to their receivers.

Receivers take the ball to the opposite side of the square with their first touch and pass to the next corner player.

The receiver then returns to his/her first gate to receive the next pass from a corner player and the sequence continues.

Passers and receivers switch after eight repetitions.

Tips

Allow players three touches at first: one to receive, one to turn and one to pass. After players are comfortable, tell them to try turning with the ball on their first touch.

A good first touch gives a player more time and space during a game.

Receiving players should try to play the ball in the direction they want to go – without stopping the ball.

Take aways:

Coaches should understand the importance of first touch to the success of a player's interaction with the ball.

Coaches should emphasize the importance of first touch to the players in training and matches.

Players should grow to take the appropriate first touch for what the game calls for at the time they receive the ball.

Websites

used: [http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/first touch and receiving the ball.htm#](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/first_touch_and_receiving_the_ball.htm#)
<http://www.soccerxpert.com/soccertips/id1209.aspx>