**SOCCER: COACHING TECHNIQUE**

*The game will show you what the player needs to practice.*

n this manual the coach will find the basics of all ball skills. From this

core set of techniques the growing player will be able to add on many

variations and subtleties to the techniques. This fact most likely applies to

players fifteen years of age and older as they fully mature athletically and

come to understand how to use a variety of skills in varying game situations.

Do not let the developing player’s game become obsessed with frills or skills

that, while useful, are used rarely. Be competent in the basic orthodox

techniques first. But once that standard has been reached then embroider

the player’s skills with the less orthodox techniques as they are serious,

positive skills which will help the team and not just please spectators.

During the first fourteen years of a young player’s career the coaching

emphasis must be on technique. The actual execution of a movement is

always in the realm of technique. The challenge of “when and why” to use a

movement is one of tactics. In this manual the focus is the “how to”; that is

on technique. Technique is the body’s mechanical execution to affect the

ball; for example receiving, catching, shooting, dribbling, deflecting, etc. It

is one of the four components of the game and leads to ball skill. Skill is

being able to execute a technique under the pressure of opponents in tight

space and most likely on the move. Without ball skill a player cannot

execute tactics.

Some players will:

o be able to do a technique in an activity but fail to apply it as skill when

under pressure from opponents

o be competent with the ball but not outstanding

o be technical but not skillful, while others will be skillful but not

technical

o be capable of executing some skills against one level of opponent but

not another

Players gain more trust and respect for a coach who can help them improve

their technique. The result is confident use of new skills in matches.

Motivated players spend time working on their skills. Players will appreciate

the importance and thrill of learning new techniques and refining existing

ones if the coach creates the proper training environment. Then the players

begin to equate fun with improvement.

Novice coaches often find themselves in a Catch 22 at training sessions.

They can influence young players by helping them develop techniques, but

some coaches don’t know enough about the techniques they are teaching to

offer relevant advice.

The execution of a technique is broken down into three phases:

**PREPARATION** – the movements leading up to contact with the ball.

focus on the feet first as they will impact what happens with the rest of

the body and they must get the body to the ball

look at the distribution of body weight (body posture), the angle of the

approach to the ball, the position of the body and limbs in relation to

the ball, the position and steadiness of the head, the position and

shape of controlling surfaces and the rotation of the body into contact

with the ball

eyes on the ball

**CONTACT** – the placement of the feet and the posture of the body upon

contact with the ball.

look for the distribution of body weight and how it impacts balance

observe the hip and shoulder positions, the position of the supporting

leg(s), the contact point with the ball and the movement of the limbs

eyes on the ball

**FOLLOW THROUGH** – the movement occurring after contact with the ball.

again focus on the distribution of body weight and posture

is the follow through complete or halted too soon

eyes on the ball

Technique should be taught in a progressive manner throughout a player’s

career. Every technique coached at one age must be reinforced at the next

age. Techniques taught at U6 must be reinforced at U8, U10, U12 and U14.

What was learned at a previous age group or groups must be refined at the

next age group. During the childhood years of soccer the general

progression of the child’s experience with the ball is for the U6 age group ~

manipulating the ball, for the U8 age group ~ propelling the ball and for the

U10 age group ~ mastering the ball.1

**U6—** dribbling; shooting; balance; running; jumping; movement

education

**U8—** ball lifting & juggling; block tackle; receiving ground balls with the

inside & sole of the foot; shoot with inside of the foot; toe pass & shot;

introduce the push pass; throw-in; agility; eye-foot & eye-hand

coordination; movement education

**U10—** range of motion flexibility; running with the ball; passing; instep

drive; receiving ground balls with the instep & outside of foot; receiving

bouncing balls with the instep (cushion) and sole or inside or outside of

foot (wedge); fakes in dribbling; introduce heading & crossing. For

goalkeepers: ready stance; how to hold a ball after a save; diamond grip;

catching shots at the keeper; punting & introduction to goal kicks &

throwing

**U12—** feints with the ball; receiving bouncing & air balls with the thigh &

chest; heading to score goals & for clearances while standing or jumping;

outside of foot pass; bending shots; crossing to the near post space & the

penalty spot space; heel pass; flick pass; introduce chipping to pass;

introduce half volley & volley shooting; introduce slide tackle. For

goalkeepers: footwork; W grip; bowling; low dives & forward diving;

angle play; near post play; introduce deflecting & boxing; sidewinder kick

**U14—** chipping to pass; bending passes; crossing to the far post & top of

the penalty area; half volley & volley shooting; slide tackles; heading to

pass; diving headers; flick headers; receiving with outside of the instep;

outside of foot shot; receiving bouncing & air balls with the head; dummy

the ball; shoulder charge; introduce chipping to shoot.

**Motor Patterns and Motor Skills**

**Motor pattern** – basic movement involved in the performance of a task.

The emphasis is on the movement composing the task.

**Motor skill** – focuses on the proficiency of completing the task. Motor skill

looks at accuracy, precision and economy of the performance.

Athleticism and technique from one age group are utilized to build more

advanced skills later in the continuum. It is important to note that a deficit

in one stage of the development process will tend to influence acquisition of

more complex skills. Here are key motor skills to be emphasized:

▪ eyes on the ball

▪ appropriate joint locked

▪ smooth movement of the appropriate limb

▪ head steady

▪ balance

▪ muscle group control – when to tense and when to relax

▪ when to bend joints

▪ center of gravity

▪ contact surface of the body level with the ball contact surface area

In general when analyzing a player’s technique start with observing the feet

and work up to the head. Correct body mechanics increase the likelihood of

proper ball contact. Body posture plays a large role in skillful control of the

ball. The “position of readiness” cannot be overemphasized in its importance

to executing ball skills. The “position of readiness” is the preparation phase

mentioned previously. The body posture and alignment with the ball are

crucially important and often overlooked by coaches and players alike who

focus too much on the contact phase. The foundations to any “position of

readiness” are the non-locomotor and locomotor actions. They are balance,

agility, twisting, bending, along with stretching and eye-limb coordination

among others.

Before a player can be expected to learn ball skills the child must first be

under control of the body. This growth in athleticism, from gross motor skills

to fine motor skills, is a long term growth process. It is imperative for

children to acquire a base of general balance, coordination and agility before

soccer skills. How can coaches expect them to control the ball before they

can control their bodies? So it is essential that youngsters be exposed to

movement education. This requirement is of primary importance to the

youngest players and ball skills are of secondary importance. Running and

jumping are the two most often executed movements in soccer.

**Notes**