



“Making friends with the ball”

A set of 18 basic skills and exercises which will assist young players to better enjoy the game.

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10. BALL CONTROL. IN THE AIR

THE CHALLENGE: 30 attempts in succession (10 with chest, 10 with thigh, 10 with the instep of the foot)
Recommended distance: Level 1 - Beginners, Level 2 - 2 metres, Level 3 - 4 metres, Level 4 - 6 metres, Level 5 - 8 metres.

A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE
“Soccer is a game of decisions. It is the coach's role to teach players to make the right one.”

Reasons for learning this skill
 Not all balls that come to the player are on the ground. If the ball comes in the air, the ball must be controlled by a part of the body in the air and brought to the ground as quickly as possible to set the player up for his/her second touch. The player must get behind the flight of the ball as quickly as possible, and be as relaxed as much as possible when contact is made to cushion the ball and direct it in the desired direction. The player could use the chest, the thigh or the instep of the foot. Other options for the player are to head the ball straight to a team mate or to head for goal. The skill used will depend on the pressure exerted by the opposition. The more time that a player has the easier it is to control the ball.



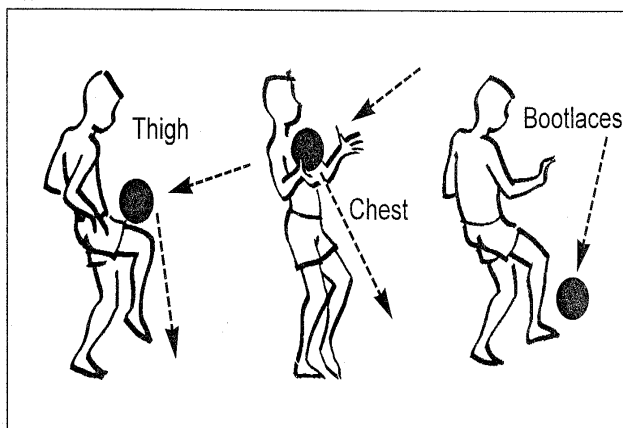
Organisation by coach or parent
 N.B. To avoid injury, players should warm up and stretch properly, before starting any exercises.
 Two players, one ball, 2 cones, one tape measure.

Task to practice - the challenge
 Control, using the selected different parts of the body, a ball thrown in the air and play it back to the server, positioned at a set distance (metres), on the 2nd touch - 10 times for each (a) thigh, (b) chest, (c) instep.

- withdraw the receiving surface when the ball makes contact so the ball can be cushioned onto the receiving part of the body and will fall to the player's feet;
- the first touch should set up the player for the second touch;
- the eyes are focused on the ball throughout.

- Additional skills practice**
- Shooting
 - Control along the ground
 - Volleying in the air

Progressive training practice
 Set up a small game. Players who control the ball in the air score a point and goals can only be scored after it has been controlled in the air.
 Set up a small game of soccer net ball with the first touch of the ball to be controlled in the air then caught by the same player. Each successful execution is worth a point. Soccer tennis also enhances control in the air. Two touches a prerequisite.
 Use different coloured bibs for the teams.



Coaching hints - things to look for
 When receiving the ball:

- position in the line with the movement of the ball as quickly as possible;
- decide which part of the body should be used;
- let the weight of the body rest entirely on the non receiving leg;
- adopt a relaxed and balanced position before the receiving surface is exposed to the ball;

