



JUNIOR FOOTBALL PROGRAM



“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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16. HEADING TO A TARGET

THE CHALLENGE : 10 attempts in succession

Recommended distance: Level 1- Beginners, Level 2 - 2 metres. Level 3 - 3 metres. Level 4 - 4 metres. Level 5 - 5 metres

Reasons for learning this skill

Once a player has the confidence of heading the ball to oneself he/she should progress to heading the ball to another person or target. As you would hit a tennis ball with a racquet with back swing and follow through so too does the player when he/she heads the ball. The head must be brought back to create the back swing then pushed through the oncoming ball to the target with follow through. Some players have difficulty with this concept and don't actually head the ball but let the ball hit their head. The player may have some success with poor technique but he/she will not be able to propel the ball harder than it is travelling unless there is forward thrust through the ball towards the target. To get maximum power from heading the technique has to be correct. Heading can not be under rated. All players whether they are defending or attacking will be required to challenge for the ball in the air generally from high and long. A player must prepared to force him/herself into the flight of the ball against opposition players. Heading is usually performed under pressure so practice should progress to that stage as soon as the player has mastered the correct technique. It should be noted that a good player, when the situation warrants, will bring the ball down under control if he/she has the time and space rather than head 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 size 3 ball, 2 cones, one tape measure.

Task to practice - the challenge

Self throw and head the ball on the full to a partner, positioned at a set distance (metres) - repeat 10 times in succession.

Coaching hints - things to look for

When heading:

- feet apart, one slightly ahead of the other pointing toward the target;
- body weight on the soles, the majority being on the back foot;
- knees bent slightly;
- body leaning slightly back (arching back from the hips is in fact our back swing);
- arms forward and towards the ball;
- head steady;
- appreciate flight and get as much of the body behind the ball, eyes focused on ball;
- keep the eyes open, watch ball on to head, keep the tongue in the mouth;
- gently push through the ball with the head, contact the ball though the forehead not the top of the head or the nose area;
- head through the top half of the ball to head down;
- head through the bottom half of the ball to head up;
- the neck muscles are flexed;
- the head continues to move toward the target after striking the ball.

Additional skills practice

- In threes to create an angle
- Soccer tennis
- Head tennis

A COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

"The ultimate experience of any coach is to have a significant contribution to the development of a player who one day plays for his/her Country."

Progressive training practice

Set up grids where players can head for goal. The service is important so if the players can not provide quality service arrange for someone to throw the ball.

