

4 - Possession

The ability of our team to work together to keep possession of the ball is the clearest measure of the progress we are making with our players. It combines many of the individual skills of short passing and first touch as well as the need for vision and awareness. The whole team need to keep switched on and move off the ball to support each other.

Every coaching session should include at least some time spent working on possession skills even if it is only part of the final game. Arrange things so the team in possession always have a numerical advantage and gradually increase the pressure in terms of numbers, playing area, number of touches allowed etc in keeping with their progress. Think about how you use players so that defenders can maintain a high work rate to keep the practice realistic and challenging.

Getting players to relax, play with their head up and be composed on the ball should be a central aim of our coaching programme.

Coaching Points - Observe the following details:

- ✓ Look at the eyes, the key to possession is playing with the head up and being able to “*see the picture*”
- ✓ Do they glance behind before receiving the ball to see if they are under pressure?
- ✓ How good is the first touch? If the ball bounces off feet we will not keep the ball, can they “*make it stick*”
- ✓ If they are being closed down fast can they move the ball away from pressure on the first touch?
- ✓ Do they let the ball come across their body to take it on the back foot so they are in an open body position?
- ✓ If being pressed from behind they need to receive the ball early on front foot and shield it
- ✓ Are players moving off the ball to support the player in possession? “*Get out the defender’s shadow*”
- ✓ Can players should be thinking two moves ahead to support the player who is about to receive the ball?
- ✓ Communication - Do they assist the player on the ball, “*man on*”, “*turn*”, “*time*”, call loudly if open for pass?
- ✓ Timing of the pass - It may have to go early while a pass is on or be held up to commit the defender first
- ✓ Did the player make the best decision about who to pass to? Forward if possible and away from pressure
- ✓ Accuracy of pass - good decisions to pass to feet or space depending on how receiver is being marked
- ✓ Pace of pass - Not under-hit, firm but not impossible to control
- ✓ Do players attempt to disguise passes? Pretend to pass but dummy, flick pass with outside of foot etc.

Useful Drills

19	Invasion	27	Five v Three	72	Blockade
20	Escalator	28	Three Teams		
21	My Space	29	End to End		
22	Triangles	30	Mixed Passing		
23	The Square	31	Quarters		
24	4x4	32	Beckham		
25	Nominate	33	Quads		
26	Vision	34	Knock-down		