

Soccer Source 360
Observations and Suggestions for
Coaching Improvement at the
U5 and U6 Level
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Observation: Many activities are static and players are not on task for long periods of time.

Suggestion:

- Make all activities dynamic by following the coaching manual's activities and progression each week. You may go back to successful activities when needed.
- Make mental notes to how long your team is not on task. Compare you groups activity level to other groups in the area.
- Have your assistant coach set up the next activity to avoid long transitions from one activity to the next.
- Encourage players to play at speed when possible. Attempt to incorporate the idea of full speed and half speed to allow for active rest.

Observation: More than a few coaches are spending time on passing. The characteristics of the age group show the players are not ready to share the ball. We need to spend this stage in their development working on dribbling and at times shooting.

Suggestions:

- Make sure all activities adhere to the characteristics of the age group. These characteristics are in the clinic coaches manual.
- When planning a session, start with the prescribed session in this manual.
- Vary the way players dribble the ball by encouraging different part of the foot such as inside, outside, shoelaces, and sole. This will be useful later when passing is introduced.
- When working on shooting make sure we eliminate lines and have all players on task while moving.

Observation: In warm up activities players run/move with their head down. Watch movement in all athletic events and you will notice that all athletes run with their head up and steady.

Suggestions:

- Encourage players to keep head up. Some players will look up in the sky as they move. In this case show them that the head up means they are looking at eye level to see where others are moving.
- Use passive opposition to force players to keep their head up. Passive opposition means that other players are performing the same activity in the same space. They are not attempting to impede others but this occurs naturally.
- Use coaching moments to highlight the players that perform the movement skills properly.
- Use coaching moments to address those that do not perform the movement skills properly.

Observation: Players use only one or two surfaces of the foot to dribble the ball.

Suggestions:

- Show the players that they have at least four surfaces of the foot to dribble the ball with. This includes the inside, outside, top(shoelaces or instep) and bottom(sole).
- Spend a minute on each surface where the players can only touch the ball with the given surface.
- Command the players to vary the surface each time they touch the ball. This can do this by touching the ball in a variety of sequences such as inside-outside, top-inside, bottom-outside.
- Let the players know that the top is used to go in a straight line, the inside and outside are used to change direction and the bottom is used to trick opponents.
- Encourage players to experiment with all surfaces throughout the practice and game.

Observation: The better players push the ball in front of them about 12 inches farther than the weaker players when dribbling. This allows for the player to move quicker as they can make larger steps and keep their head up as the ball can be seen with the head up.

Suggestions

- Highlight a player that dribbles at speed and with their head up.
- Use this demonstration to show your children that this player touches the ball out a distance and this allows for more speed and vision.
- Encourage all players to emulate this method of dribbling.
- Make coaching points to individual players that need to either touch the ball farther or move quicker after the ball.
- Show players the best distance when needed.

Observation: Many coaches stand inside the activity. This coaching position limits your ability to observe all players and the coach then loses opportunities to give positive feedback and make corrections to those players not in the sight line.

Suggestions:

- Pick a coaches position outside but close to the activity.
- Ask yourself the question: Can I see all of the participants and the entire field?
- When making corrections you can move into the activity but return to your coaching position quickly.

Suggestions: Show the players patterns they can do with the ball. These patterns can include: stops, starts, rolls, and different parts of the foot. Before ending ask the players to invent their own patterns.

Examples:

- Stop-go
- Inside of foot-outside of foot

- Forward-backward
- Right foot-left foot
- Straight-turn
- Roll-go

Suggestions: Highlight players that are doing unexpected skills with the ball. Create an environment where the unexpected is attempted. When you observe a player accomplish or attempt to accomplish something special have this player demonstrate the skill to the group. Then challenge the group to attempt the skill.

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