

## THE ONLINE COACHING CLINIC

Drill: 1

Theme: Passing/Shooting

Focus: Teaching the Instep Kick

Age Category: U10 and older

The instep kick is the most powerful kick in the sport of soccer. Young players often have difficulty learning this skill for four reasons:

- 1) It requires a coordination of rapidly moving body parts
- 2) It requires accurate foot placement and body positioning
- 3) Players perceive previously learned “toe” kicking as initially more successful and are, therefore, reluctant to utilize the instep kick
- 4) Players are anxious about the possibility of an injury from kicking the ground instead of the ball

### **What is the instep?**

Most kids know where the sole, inside, and outside of the foot are, but many do not know what is meant by the instep. The instep is the region on top of the foot where the shoelaces are tied.

## **Phase I – Walk through the kick sequence**

A key factor in the success of any kick in soccer is the placement of the supporting foot (the non-kicking foot). For a right foot/leg kicker the support foot is the left. For the rest of the instruction I will relate everything to a right foot kicker. Using a stationary ball have the player walk through this kicking sequence:

- 1) Place the support foot (left) next to the ball with the toe pointing in the direction of the intended kick. There should be about six (6) inches of clearance between the left foot and the ball.
- 2) All of their weight should be on the support foot with the weight evenly distributed. They should not be back on their heels or leaning forward on their toes.
- 3) From this position the player can flex the hip and knee of their kicking leg (right) just enough for the extended foot to clear the ground during the leg swing.
- 4) The kicking foot (right) should have the toe pointed at the ground and the ankle locked.
- 5) From this position the only part of the kicking foot that can make contact with the ball is the shoelace area or instep.
- 6) At this point they should practice flexing and extending their knee to bring the kicking foot back and then forward to make contact with the ball. No kicking just yet, just practice the leg action and kicking foot position.

- 7) Coaching check points before moving to Phase II: does the player have a proper “feel” for the instep contact with the ball? Is the support foot properly positioned? Is their weight balanced on their support foot? Is the ankle locked when making contact with the ball?

## **Phase II – The Two (2) Step – Kick Sequence**

The next phase is to have the player step into the kick. The intent of this phase is not to teach forceful kicking, but to instruct in leg control, proper foot contact and proper body alignment. The player will start about two (2) steps behind the ball and walk up to the ball to execute an instep kick.

- ✓ Coaching check points before moving to Phase III: does the player have a proper “feel” for the instep contact with the ball? Is the support foot properly positioned? Is their weight balanced on their support foot?

## **Phase III – Independent Kicking – Angled Approach**

The final phase in this process is to teach an angled approach to the ball. When kicking with the right foot, the approach is made from behind and to the left of the ball. There are a couple of differences when making an angled approach:

- 1) The support foot (left) is planted farther from the ball, about 18 inches. But the plant foot is still positioned directly to the side of the ball and the toe is pointed in the direction of the intended kick.
- 2) The player should approach the ball from a starting position of about three (3) steps behind the ball and two (2) steps to the left of the ball.
- 3) The hips and knees of the kicking leg do not need to be flexed at impact with the ball in order for the extended foot to clear the ground. This is because the body leans away from the ball, providing a sufficient distance for the kicking leg to fully extend into impact.
- 4) The player must drive his kicking foot through the ball and not stop at impact.
- 5) Review the checkpoints from phase I and II. The order of events in the kicking leg, following hip extension, are:
  - a. Hip rotation
  - b. Forward swing of the thigh
  - c. Forward swing of the lower leg. Each of these movements helps to increase the overall velocity or speed of the kicking foot. The action of the leg should be like a whip “snapped” at the ball.

## **Diagnosing Performance Problems**

## CSYS COACHING TIPS

After the players are able to simulate the movements of the instep kick, a variety of control problems will be evident. The following is a list of frequent performance results and their probable causes:

- Ball kicked into the ground
  - This is probably caused by a placement of the support foot too far forward with respect to the ball. Contact was made with the instep, but it was on the downward swing of the kicking leg, resulting in the ball being compressed between the ground and foot. Coaching point: Check that the ankle of the support foot lines up with the centerline of the ball.
- Ball flight is too high
  - If the support foot is planted too far back from the ball, foot contact will be made on the upward swing of the leg. This may also be accompanied by a backward lean of the body away from the ball. Coaching point: Check that the ankle of the support foot lines up with the centerline of the ball. Also, check that the player's head is inline with the ball. A tip or hint to give players is when they make contact with the ball they should be looking at the top of the ball not at the back of the ball. Set the ball up with the logo on top and instruct the players to focus on the logo as they kick the ball.
- Excessive backspin on the ball
  - This usually occurs when contact has been made with the toe below the centerline of the ball. Coaching point: A key to diagnosing "toe" kicks is seeing the sole of the player's foot when observing the follow through from in front of the kick.
- Clockwise or counterclockwise ball spin ("curving or bending" the ball)
  - This may or may not be a desirable result. It depends upon the intent of the kick. One cause for lateral spin is off-center instep contact with the ball. A second cause of ball spin is a glancing kick.
- Lack of velocity on the kick
  - If the hip of the kicking leg is not fully extended prior to landing on the plant foot, the leg swing velocity will be reduced.
  - If the supporting leg flexes too much during foot plant, the velocity of the kicking leg will be reduced.
  - Improper coordination and sequencing of movements in the kick will reduce ball velocity.

Once the players are able to perform the angled approach kick, a variety of independent instep kicking drills can be incorporated into practice sessions in order to help the players perfect their performance of this skill.