

## **First Touch Control**

Every time that our players make a poor first touch in a game we are likely to give the football away to the other team so it is important to keep on improving. The key to a good first touch is being relaxed and focused. If a young player thinks they will be told off for getting it wrong they will probably fail.

Provide practice regularly, little and often, and include work using both feet. Any unopposed short passing drill can be used with the emphasis on the touch rather than the pass. An example is shown below.

### **Coaching notes**

Explain and demonstrate the difference between cushion and wedge control and how to move the ball away from pressure into space on the first touch.

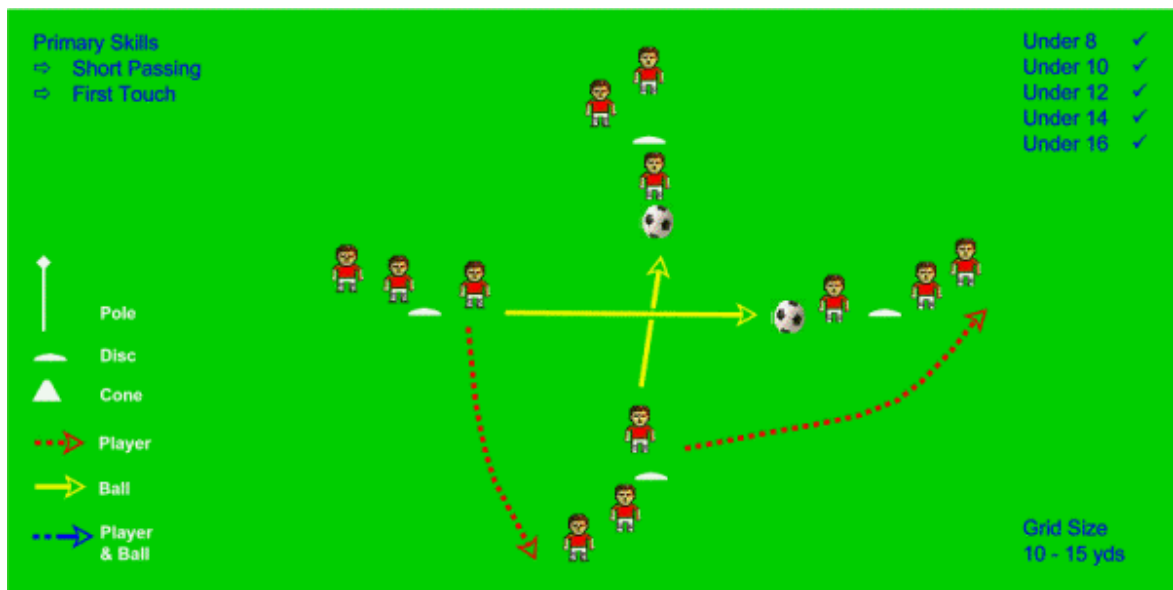
To coach control of long and high passes begin with easy serves and gradually increase the level of difficulty.

### **Coaching Points - Observe the Following Details**

- Is the player alert and playing on their toes, do they look ready to react to the movement of the ball?
- Does the player move into the line of the ball early? Any delay in reacting will make control more difficult
- They should get themselves right across the line of the ball and not end up chasing after it
- Concentration is vital; do they keep their head steady and watch the movement of the ball carefully?
- If the pass is under-hit do they move quickly down the line of the ball to meet it?
- To cushion the ball the foot needs to be off ground and withdrawn at the moment of contact "soft ankle"
- Check that they use the inside area, or top of outside of the foot to make a controlling touch on ground pass
- Contact should be with the horizontal mid-line of the ball or above to prevent it skipping up on 1st touch
- To wedge the ball sweep across the top of it with the inside or outside of the foot
- With a high ball the player should make an early decision on what surface they will use to control it
- Make sure they keep their eyes open and observe the flight of the ball
- Chest, thigh, instep & outside of foot - "relax" and withdraw surface on contact to cushion the ball
- The ball should not be allowed to bounce, move along line of ball to meet it as early as possible
- If under pressure does the player redirect ball into space on first touch and pass it on early?

## Criss Cross

A simple unopposed practice drill to improve the push pass and first touch. It allows the coach to work with a number of players in a fairly small area. Encourage players to aim for a high standard. Older players should be able to recognise and correct their own faults. It is essential all our players learn to pass consistently and receive a ball comfortably over short distances. Use this type of practice regularly for short periods at a time.



### Organisation

- Place four marker discs in cross pattern 10-15yds apart as shown
- One football at each of two adjacent cones
- Players pass - two touch - to opposite player and then run to disc on their right
- Don't have long queues, split larger groups into more than one grid
- Make it competitive - challenge two grids who can play for longest without losing control?