

Managing the Game
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This past July we witnessed Spain “pass” their way to a World Cup Trophy. Spain “manages” a match better than anyone as of late. What is meant by “managing the match”? Spain simply knows how to keep the ball better than any country, when to keep the ball, and where to keep the ball. In this past World Cup, Spain completed 87.41% of their passes. Most of these passes were short and in their own defending half. They completed 80% of their passes in the final third, which is equivalent to American football’s “Red Zone”. This means that even though they preferred short passes, when they got into the final third, they also played quickly and with precision. Their technical precision and ability to keep the ball even drove the Dutch to resort to another tactic of defending and playing physical. This is an unusual way for the Dutch as they also pride themselves on technical precision and craftiness.

This summer I led the ODP 98 Boy’s camp for Region 2. What I noticed with all of the players is that they have no idea how to “manage” the game. Most of it was due to their age (11-12) but some of it is due to the way they have been shown to play. They were playing as if they just stole something from a store and had to run to escape trouble. The speed of their play, not speed of play, was way too fast and they had no idea how to “slow” the game down. This is a common problem with many youth soccer games. Players often need subs because they don’t let the ball do the work for them, therefore running out of “gas” as the match endures. This leads to “mass” substitutions which also isn’t good for their overall development as a soccer player.

Another thought or theory as to why Spain is good technically is perhaps due to their youth playing format:

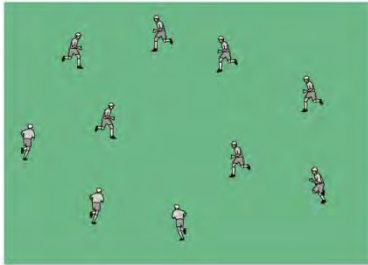
Fútbol 5--Soccer 5s (from age 7-10) Local Competition (grew out of Futbol Sala-- usually played on outdoor or indoor handball courts) 5 vs. 5 (4 + GK--all players rotate to play GK)(35 x 23 meters) #3 ball all rules same as FIFA except offside only in the penalty area. 2- 20 minute halves/10 minute rest


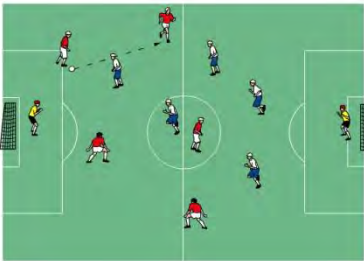
Futbol 7--Soccer 7s (from 11-13) Local League and Regional Championships 60-70 meters in length x 45-55 meters (Goal Size 6 meters x 2'10) #4 ball all FIFA rules --offside inside penalty area only (penalty spot 13 meters from the goal line) 7 vs. 7 (6 + GK) 2 -35 minute halves

Futbol 9--Soccer 9s (from 14-16) Regional and National Championships Field 70-75 meters x 55-60 (Goal size same as Futbol 7s) 9 vs. 9 (8 + GK) #5 ball all FIFA rules (lines inside field are same as 11 vs. 11 field) 2-40 minute halves 11v11 Regional and National Competition begins at age 17

The other factor is that they have a “culture”. Something that we (America) is just starting to develop in soccer.

The session below is one that I ran this past summer with some of the “better” ODP 98 Boys at Region 2 camp this past summer. As the session grew, they started to understand the importance of keeping the ball and what it means to treasure each possession. They also “slowed” down and built attacks as oppose to launching them. While it wasn’t a perfect session, the players found it enjoyable (something that should also be present in a training session) and valuable.

<p>Warm-up</p> <p>Bulldog</p> <p>Put the entire group inside a playing area. Two-Four players start off as the “bulldogs” and wear pennies/bibs and use one ball. Have balls around the area. The “bulldogs” try and work together to pass and “hit” a player below the knees. When a player gets hit, they join the</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing to correct foot • Decision to play feet or space • Accuracy and pace of passes • Receiving-vision • First touch • “Fast” passing • Don’t let the ball go out of bounds.
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<p>“bulldogs”. Play until half of the group has been hit then players switch roles. You can also play for time and switch the player’s roles so all have a chance to pass.</p>		
<p>1st Activity Timed Game</p> <p>Two teams of 4-6 players each. One team plays possession soccer and gets a point for 5 passes in succession. The other team goes a direction to goal. Teams play for 5 minute rounds and then switch roles.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the ball moving • “Hidden” passes (disguise) • “Fast” passing • 1 touch excellence • Managing the game-when to play fast, when to slow down. • Don’t give the ball away. • When to play forward, when to keep the ball to circulate.
<p>2nd Activity “No Turns Allowed”</p> <p>Two teams of 6-8. 1-2 targets on each end opposite of each other. Each team puts 4-5 players in middle and there are 1-2 neutral players. Rule:</p> <p>“Can’t physically turn With Ball”. If turn then other team gets the ball.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technically-Passing/Receiving • Thinking one pass ahead • Quality of first touch • Play the way you face • Preparation of body before receiving the pass. • Longer passes-keeping the foot “up”.
<p>Play 4v4-6v6 game</p>	