

Michel Hordijk, Technique coach FC Utrecht: “Differentiate during technique training”

Regardless of the level you coach, as a technique trainer you always have to deal with different types of football players, whom form a group together. The technical skill, the perception and the character differs per individual and for an optimal output is it important to differentiate, especially when it comes to coaching and approaching the players. In a later stadium, when the group has developed the basis qualities, the exercises will be, as much as possible, adapted to the shortcomings and the needs of the individual player. In that phase you, for example, look at the technical skill level a player needs to fulfill his role and position in the team to the best of his ability. At which age this phase will start is naturally partly dependent on the level at which a youth player is active, but generally this starts with the U13 age group, because players in the age of 13, 14 are capable of self-reflection and can assess what is expected from them within the team.

3 player categories

There are basically 3 categories of youth players which you as technique coach have to deal with. Firstly every team has a group of players who do not directly draw the attention with their technical skills. What I mean with this is that these players are often physical strong, but uncontrolled striker. Or an energetic midfielder who steals a lot of balls, but then quickly losses it again because of a lack in ball control or vision. I refer to players who have motor development problems, to players who portray great effort, power and speed (or a combination of these factors) and who, especially in the beginning, may have problems with the exercises given to them by the technique coach.

Stimuli

It is very important to keep on stimulating and motivating these kinds of players, because especially this type player can, because of his mentality which is characterized through work desire and perseverance, improve a lot in a relative short period of time. With a positive approach and enthusiastic encouragement you can prevent that a player loses his fun in the technical trainings and eventually drops out. As soon as he notices he is making progress and actions during 1 against 1 duels and possession plays are succeeding, he will want to work more and more on his skills, so he can get better. This kind of player may never become a Ronaldinho, but that is not necessary, because you also need Makalele's.

The dribbler

A second category player consists of magicians and persistent dribblers. These artists can do the most incredible things with a ball and on the streets and plazas they are the often referred to as the Panna (ricochet) king. However on the field it is difficult for them to functionally use their qualities and both teammates as well as themselves will get frustrated about the fact that a lot of their actions will conclude in endless dribbling, which 8 of the 10 times ends with unnecessary loss of possession.

Let them be?

There are people who believe you should let players dribble and hog the ball, so they can improve their individual action as best as possible. I only partly agree with this; I think you should allow players to do their thing to the U11s, but after that they must gradually try to learn other qualities. Vision, understanding and smarts will become more important for an in potential creative player in that phase executing trick for the sake of the trick. The simple reason for this being that you can't create openings by playing for yourself and dribbling blindly. Youth players should also be taught the art of less is more, a healthy dose of balance and making the right choices at the right moment. You also don't allow a free defender to play the long ball every time, just because he has a great kick.

Training

There are many ways to stimulate a ball-hog or dribbler to use his qualities in service of the team. One way is to give that player a limitation in ball contact, for example 2 touches. I am not a big supporter of this, because with a reason like this you take away the joy in the game and you prohibit him to do the things he is good at. Moreover direct play is not always the right decision. A more functional solution may be to tell this player that he is not allowed to go round more than 1 player per possession. This way he can do his thing and he is being stimulated to get the preferred result from an outnumbering situation.

Force

You can also force creative players to act quickly and execute result-minded actions in 1v1, 1v2 and 2v2 situation by implementing a relative short time limit to a goal scoring attempt. This extra resistance can help to motivate a creative player to stop executing superfluous movements. Receiving, speeding up, one good movement and scoring is the motto during such as exercise.

You can play 1 v 2 in a lot of different ways (big goals, small goals, with or without wall passers). During all these varieties the defender forces the player with the ball to make quick choices and to directly take advantage of goal scoring opportunities. The accent in this exercise is to play someone free and not to go round one ore more opponents.



Functionality

Although I want to emphasize that that it is eventually about functionality and results, am I against apposing or even prohibiting individual actions. A player like Julian Jenner from AZ would have never become the player he is now if he did not get the chance to develop his technical skills as a winger in his youth. Eventually this extent of freedom, after a long learning process of finding balance between playfulness and output, will lead to goals and assists.

Functional technique

There are very few technically talented players, who naturally use their qualities in an intelligent way. Examples of this kind of players from the recent history are; Zinedine Zidane, Wesley Sneijder and Redondo, the Argentinean stylist who had his best period at Real Madrid. Within the Dutch competition we have players like Kenneth Perez, Ismaël Aissati, and Saïd Boutahar, who are also players that link technique and functionality. I tell my youth players to look at players likes this and to analyze the actions they.

Results?

A lot of youth players are more focused on mastering irrelevant actions then with game technique. This is partly due to street football and the countless of football cards that are being handed out with the most far-fetched tricks. On itself I have no trouble with it, but I see plenty players who are capable of given great shows during the warm up, but incapable of receiving a ball during a match. That technique is associated with circustrick by most youth players becomes apparent because of the frequent questions I get from them on whether I can do a certain juggling act/move. I have a couple of tricks up my sleeve, but that is noting in comparison to the jugglers who have basically made a new sport out of it.

Specific technique coach

If you want to differentiate optimally having a separate technique trainer is no superfluous luxury. Of course not every club can permit a technical coach, but for a part I think it is a question of being creative. Almost every club has a player or trainer inside the club, who is technical clever and can work with youth players. I know some examples of U19s who train the younger youth players at their club. And it works. It is important that the club foresees the starting technique trainer of enough materials (books, DVD's, magazines, etc.), so that the starting coach has an idea of how he can effectively and efficiently build up the training session.



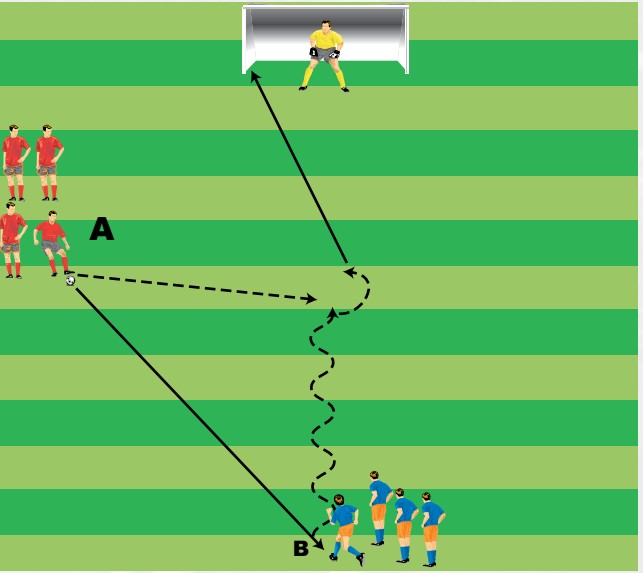
Individual attention

With a specific technique trainer you create the possibility to work in small groups of players. Then you can separate the teams, with half of the team training on technical skills and the other half training with the coach on position plays or possession games. This way individual attention for the player is guaranteed and you can work very specifically.

Next time

On aspect that is frequently underdeveloped with a lot of players is the use of the 'weak foot'. Because there is so much to tell about this subject I will dedicate my next article in this series on the topic.

1v1 On a big goal with a long lime limit



Organization:

- 8 players and 1 goalkeeper
- 4 players start with a ball and 4 players without a ball
- Player A passes to player B who seeks the 1v1 duel and tries to score
- Change positions after every goal scoring opportunity

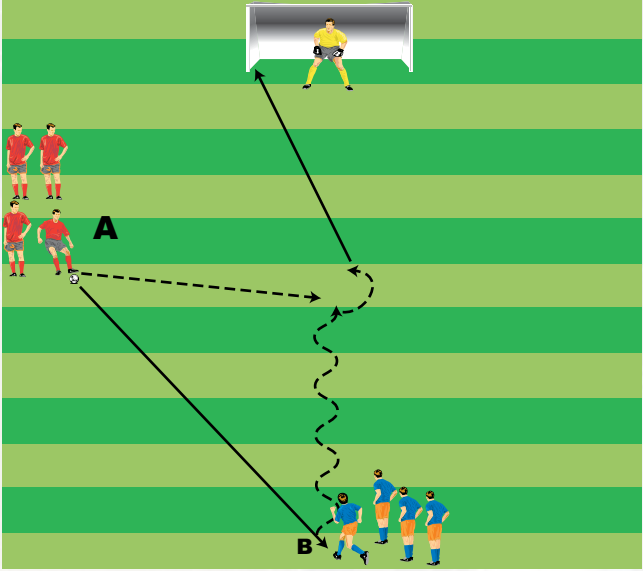
Coaching:

- Receiving
- Speed
- Take advantage of a goal scoring opportunity as quickly as possible

Variation:

- Only change position when a goal wasn't scored

1v1 on 2 big goals



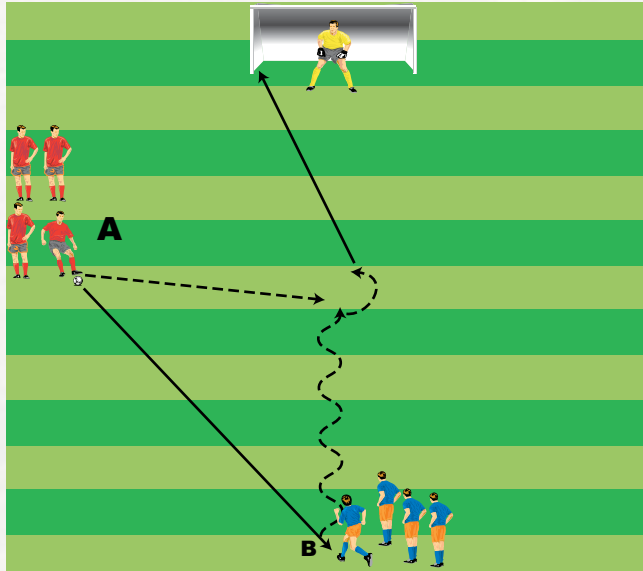
Organization:

- 8 players and 2 goalkeeper
- 3 players start with a ball and 3 players without a ball
- 2 defenders who 1 by 1 help the first defender
- Player A passes to player B and tries to steal the ball back with player C
- Player B tries to score on 1 of the 2 goals

Coaching:

- Receiving (sideways) and handling speed
- Effectivity and scoring

1v1 on 2 small goals



Organization:

- 10 players
- The players of group A play against the players of group B
- The player who started as a attacker will become a defender

Coaching:

- Speed
- Use both goals