

leg up, jog in-between and then pull their other leg up. This is called dynamic stretching; it's stretching as they are moving. In soccer we are getting away from just standing still and stretching so this is a way to incorporate stretching but also keep the guys moving. Next, we'll do straight lunges. They take a big step out as far as they can, go straight down, keep their back straight, and then come up. Have players try to keep their heel out farther than their knee. The last one we do is have them pull their knee into their chest and jog; and on the way back skip as high as they can. That's a great way to use some soccer-specific movements to get the guys moving and ready for practice.

CHAPTER 3 - DRIBBLING

STEVE COX: Coaches, we are going to do a basic dribbling activity right now. We start with each player dribbling their ball inside the designated area. We're going to emphasize three different skills: toe touches, inside of the foot and a pull back. Anytime you talk about dribbling one of the main things you want to emphasize is using both feet as we're doing these skills. Now, as they are dribbling, when you say "1" they will do toe touches; "2" will be inside of their foot; and "3" is going to be a pullback. When you say "1" have them do five toe touches and then keep moving again. On "2" do five touches again and then keep moving; and then do "3."

Now in a game, what happens? We sprint and we go slow, so as you're doing the movements let's change our pace. If we see some space on the soccer field, let's accelerate and attack that. When players see space, encourage them to dribble into it. Another point you want to emphasize coaches is that players pick their head up. The tendency is to look at the ball the whole time but they want to pick their head up so they know where space is, where their teammates are and where an opponent may be. That was a basic dribbling activity and there are lots of different skills you can incorporate into that. It's great because all the kids have a ball and they are all moving.



CHAPTER 4 - PASSING AND RECEIVING

DAVID COSTA: Coaches, when it comes to passing and receiving we're looking for a couple things. First, we are looking for quality of pass and pace of the pass. It doesn't do any good to knock a ball too hard or it's bouncing into our teammate who now has trouble taking it down and can't get it to the next teammate. So we're looking for controlled action. So when we pass we want the right pace to allow that player to receive it and now play to another teammate.

Have the kids knock the ball across to each other, using two-touch. Players rotate every other one and stay with their passes. If the player plays with his right foot, it will be receive with the right foot and play with the right. Only the inside of the foot; always trying to control it, close to the body. You don't want it far out in front of you; playing up and down the channels so it is under control. Everything is inside of the foot right now and it's either right-right or left-left.

As you can see, these players are using proper technique. They are planting their plant leg, their toes are pointed in the direction they want to make the pass and the ball is not bouncing around, it is always on the ground. It is at a good pace where the player can receive it and control it and play back in two touches.



Now we're going to play receive with the right and play with the left; or receive with the left and play with the right. So they are receiving across their body. Always focus on good technique on every rep. It doesn't do any good to do a rep five times poorly. You want them to do it as well as they can. Now, when they play down, what you want them to do is to try and take a positive touch. So when he plays down to me my touch wants to take me forward and then play across and then follow my pass. So forward and across – I'm trying to penetrate with my first touch. It's controlling me and I'm deciding where I want to go with the ball. So two touches and follow your pass. While taking penetrating touches and controlling the ball forward it allows us to run with the ball and allows us to decide if we want to dribble or pass. It makes teams that are defending us adjust to what we are doing as a team. We're trying to penetrate forward and play. Soccer is a game of movement so we're always trying to stay moving. We focus a lot on the inside of the foot passing and receiving because it's the largest surface to play with and it allows us to control the ball the best.

Now the change we are going to make is to play with the outside of the foot. So when you play down to me now I'll play with the outside of my foot so I'll push the ball across and play. The ball is always out in front of me and always close to my body and the pass is always the right way. We want players to play down the channel and under control. As you're watching your players it usually makes sense if the ball is on the left side of their body they play with the outside of their right foot because you're dragging it across. This touch allows you to create space from an opponent. You want them always in control and pushing the ball in the direction they want to play.

Watching this group of players they are pretty technically sound but sometimes they want to play too quick. So if he plays me a ball down it doesn't do me any good to rush it and be off balance and swipe at it and go far away from my teammates. So we're focusing on technique now. Even if I have a bad first touch I'd rather take an extra step and make sure my pass is good to my

teammate and now that allows him to play. Whenever you train technical exercises you are trying to make sure you are creating good habits, good technique, good communication and habits that will carry into the game.

The last receiving we'll do is just with the sole of our foot. When he plays in I'll use the sole of my foot to control the ball. It's still set up for me to play right away and make a good pass back across, always accurate. You can receive rolling the ball, you can do it with the bottom of your foot, so there are several different things you can do with the sole of your foot now to control the ball and wedge it against the ground. So focus on the sole of your foot and just controlling it. When players are looking to receive the ball they never want to stop it dead because now it allows defending teams to close on them. Pushing it to where they want to play allows them to break pressure and now move the ball quickly.

CHAPTER 5 – ONE-TOUCH PASSING

DAVID COSTA: Another technique with passing and receiving is the ability to play one-touch passes – to have a controlled enough touch to be able to receive and pass in the same touch. Now you've played it to your teammate right away. It allows your team to play quicker and move the ball quicker to break down defenses. Right now our players are doing a simple one-touch passing drill where they are following their pass, always moving forward. It gets them in the habit of moving after they play. We said soccer is a game of movement so we don't ever want our players standing. So the guys on the outside waiting are always on their toes, using a nice, controlled touch, just always simple. Usually our passes are about five yards. We really don't want anything under five yards for a pass because it doesn't allow you to play around any defenders. Most passes in soccer games are 5 to 15 yards. You see how the players come to the ball and they are on their toes. They never wait on it so they get there right away and play. It is ok to occasionally take two touches so everyone is still playing in control. You've got players now calling for the ball so that's creating good habits to play. We have them playing in a channel right now to show them the spacing where they want to play; it narrows their vision, and has them look at that one player right now to simplify it.



CHAPTER 6 – TRAPPING THE BALL

DAVID COSTA: Another way to receive the ball is with your feet out of the air. So there are wedge traps, you can use the sole of your feet, and you can use the outside and inside. So wedge