

## Progression 3:

# Finishing

Finishing – goal scoring – refers to what happens after the final pass; after the cross, the through pass, or run with the ball. For young children, this critical aspect of the game can be presented with just three simple elements. Countless more will be necessary to create world-class strikers, but here is an effective way to begin!

### 1. Short steps, non-kicking foot

Teach young players to alter their stride when approaching the goal; quick, short steps give them more control and better contact with the ball. Maintain top running speed, but shorten your steps. You're working to eliminate loping, sliding, crashing strides that rarely produce goals! And as they strike the ball, show and remind them how to plant their non-kicking foot aiming in the direction they want the ball to go (e.g., to the far post).

### 2. Outside of the foot for young feet

Teaching young children to strike a ball with their instep rather than their toe can be frustrating. Yet there's a relatively easy way to give young players a clear idea of what it feels like to properly strike a ball with the instep and just how much more powerful and controllable such a shot can be. The answer lies in asking them to strike a rolling or still ball with their instep – but do so *with their toe turned inward toward (and perpendicular to) their non-kicking foot* rather than outward in classic soccer style. Young bodies and feet find this comfortable and when they do it this way, it's almost impossible to hit the ball with anything but a solid instep! Progress to the traditional instep shot.

### 3. Low and to the far post

The single-most important habit to build in winning goal scorers is the idea that works *most* of the time: shoot low and to the far post. Power is secondary. Near-post goals surely happen. Screaming shots into the upper netting are fun. But prolific goal scorers find most of their success with a firmly struck ball placed where it's most difficult to reach by goalkeepers: "low and to the far post!" The key for youngsters: plant the non-kicking foot aimed directly at the far post.

Somewhat more technical than tactical, these simple finishing principles can be understood and applied by players at all levels. And when applied consistently, the goals will come!