

“Power Tools”

Core Elements of True Soccer

The building blocks of *True Soccer* can be grouped into a series of three basic “progressions,” meaning three, progressively more challenging teaching sequences of related ideas. A fourth progression is offered for Goalkeepers. These are sequences within which ideas are built, from simple to complex; from easy to difficult; a growing accumulation of information. One idea relates to and serves as a foundation for the next.

The teaching of pure technique (the way the body plays the ball) must happen *within* these activities – not as a preliminary, isolated, static exercise.

These progressions are:

1. *Winning the ball*
2. *Advancing the ball*
3. *Finishing (goal scoring)*

Given all there is to learn about soccer – the sheer volume of information to impart, the countless combinations and sequences and levels of content, the lifelong learning that is possible, and the infinite variety of children – it is a bewildering exercise to try to suggest “just the right mix” of training activities. These can be suggested but remain for coaches to devise.

The Suggested Sequence

What to fix first!?

If we want to teach *and* win, right from the start, it’s tough to select an order in which to begin to teach all we want our players to learn. We can’t do it all at once.

The order of teaching recommended here is based on the premise that attacking play is harder to teach and learn than defending. Hence, fix the defense first, and leave the natural, raw athleticism of your players to get you goals in the early going.

Regardless of where we begin, it makes sense to work at a very superficial level through all the progressions, and then return to the “beginning” (or to your greatest deficit area) and create a richer, deeper understanding and learning. This will enable you to capture “teachable moments” no matter where they occur on the field because you will have introduced the related core concept. Players also will learn the essential verbal and conceptual vocabulary of *True Soccer*.

The goal is this: as you work your way through the season, you will have accumulated a tool kit full of solutions that your players will understand – when it comes time to remind them.

These are the concepts that become training session “headlines.” Small subsets of them become the essence of positional play (i.e., fullback, striker, etc.). “Role” players gain a command of only a few, and hence serve the team well, if in a limited way.

These elements are easy to recognize in top-level play ... but almost always have to be taught – delivered, like soccer Power Tools – to the occasional or beginning player.

Three Progressions

Three Progressions – Winning the Ball, Advancing the Ball, and Finishing – form an essential curriculum for young players in the course of a typical youth soccer season. Whether it lasts seven games and seven training sessions, or twenty training sessions and innumerable games, the Power Tools within these three progressions can form the scaffolding for a player's long-term growth in the game.

Those familiar with good soccer coaching will – hopefully – find these ideas familiar and comfortable. For seasoned coaches, this approach may offer little more than a new level of efficiency and perhaps some reinforcement of sound methods tested by time.

Typically, it could take as many as half a dozen training sessions to thoroughly introduce all three progressions. It is left to the coach to shape specific training sessions, but the order in which the concepts are introduced represents the difference between a “progression” and a series of disconnected training activities or practices.

Here is the premise of this approach: once a player has gained an intuitive as well as technical command of these concepts or tools, she is going to be thinking a sound game of soccer. Moreover, she will *prefer* to use these concepts because she will observe them to produce success. And of course, her coach will help this process along with positive, active reinforcement!