

KEY CONCEPTS OF PLAY

There are fundamental concepts that all players must learn in order to play soccer.

These concepts must be introduced to players at a young age and emphasized throughout development.

These concepts of play are just as important as technique for young players.

These concepts will take root if coaches emphasize these principles continually, in all practices and

games, regardless of whatever the theme of the day may be.

LEVEL 1 RULES

- **PURPOSEFUL PLAY - NO AIMLESS KICKING**

- o every touch is either for the benefit of oneself or a teammate

- **PLAY CANNOT ALWAYS BE FORWARD**

- o many situations require going backward to go forward

- **ONLY ONE PLAYER ON THE BALL AT A TIME**

- o commitment, communication, separation & support

LEVEL 2 RULES

- **POSITIVE TOUCHES**

- o no "trapping" allowed, ball must always go somewhere

- o directional control

- **PLAY THE WAY YOU FACE**

- o essential to maintain possession and to link players together

- o win the ball to space/teammate in the directions you face

- **TARGET PLAY**

- o play through forward target(s) to combine with midfield in a way to bring the team into attack rather than go it alone

- o typically requires more players behind the ball than in advance of the ball

- **MAINTAIN TEAM SHAPE**

- o shape that allows transition from attacking to defending, and defending to attacking

- o we should be able to simply say "get your shape" and players know what this means and fix their shape on the field

- o even 2 players have "shape"

- **PLAY AT ANGLES**

- o no square or vertical passes, play balls that maintain vision and shape

- o no square or vertical support, support to maintain vision and shape

- **COMMIT DEFENDERS**

- o commit defenders to make space for self and/or teammates

- o all penetrating opportunities stem from committing defenders to the ball: 1v1, wallpass, overlap, double-pass, etc.

- **MAKE OPPONENTS FACE THEIR OWN GOAL**

- o touches or passes in behind opponents makes them face their own goal

- o balls in behind opponents create attacking advantage AND advantage transitioning to defending

- **HIGH PERCENTAGE/LOW PERCENTAGE**

- o players need to understand there are high and low percentage decisions

- o players must make high percentage decisions the majority of the time

- **PLAY THE SECOND/THIRD PASS**

- o players must be encouraged to move into positions to receive the ball following the pattern of play

- o encourage players to make runs and moves into space in anticipation of receiving the ball