



Mass Youth Soccer Skills Academy

U12 Week 4 – Heading & Receiving in the Air

Main Coaching Points (heading):

- keep eyes open and focused on the ball, mouth closed
- strike the ball, do not let the ball strike you
- surface of contact should be upper half of forehead, NOT TOP OF HEAD
- upper body and neck must be flexed and tight
- players should snap neck and torso through ball for maximum power
- use arms for balance, protection and to create space

1) Heading Introduction---Each player has a ball and practices heading juggling. *Version 2:* Players pair up. They serve to themselves and head the ball to their partner. Their partner catches the ball and performs the same exercise. *Version 3:* Players pair up and serve to each other. One player serves to their partner...the partner heads the ball back to the server. (repeat 10 times each) *Version 4:* split players into groups of 2 or 3 and challenge them to get a certain number of headers to each other in a row. Then have a timed challenge to see how many times the group can keep the ball up in the air. **(10 minutes)**

Main Coaching Points (receiving in air):

General:

- be on balls of feet and get body behind ball
- move to the ball (do not wait for it)
- try to drop ball in front of body so it is in your control but not under you

Laces:

- when using laces, lift foot up to meet the ball
- as ball is about to make contact, drop foot down and cushion ball on top of foot (laces) to the ground

Thigh:

- when using thigh (not knee), lift thigh up to meet ball
- once ball touches thigh, drop leg down to cushion the ball
- make sure you push ball slightly in front of you so you can handle it easily
- ball should not pop up as you cushion it
- make sure players use middle of thigh to cushion balls

Chest:

- when using chest, bend knees with feet staggered and slightly arch back while using arms for balance
- cushion ball (collapse chest) as it hits chest and guide it to feet
- do not push out chest to pop the ball out too far in front of you

2) Groups of 2---Partners face each other approximately 5-10 yards apart. One of the players (server) tosses the ball underhand at different heights to the other player (receiver). The receiver uses their instep (laces), thigh, or chest to receive the ball before it touches the ground. The receiver then passes the ball back to the server on the ground. *Version 2:* Receiver can volley the ball back after they receive it off their instep, thigh and/or chest. **(10 minutes)**

3) **Team Handball**---2 teams play by tossing ball (with hands) to teammates to work the ball up field. Players cannot take more than 3 steps with the ball and have to receive the ball with another part of their body (chest, thigh, foot) before they can use their hands to catch the ball. *(10 minutes)*

4) **Small Sided Scrimmage**---Create fields based on playing numbers and size of area. Reinforce receiving & heading technique. *(25 minutes)*

5) **Cool Down and Review**---Ask players to teach you the technical coaching points to insure complete understanding in the group. *(5 minutes)*

Mass Youth Soccer Skills Academy - Instructor's Guide

Optional Activity:

1) **Dutch Circle**---half of the players create a 25-35 yd outer circle and have soccer balls. These players must always be alert and on their toes. The other half of the players are in the middle of this circle and do not have soccer balls. The inner players check to players on the outside to receive a pass from them. The players on the outside toss the ball in the air to the players on the inside. The players on the inside receive with different surfaces and then turn and find another player on the outside. **Variation 2:** top of foot, thigh, chest, any of the three. **Variation 3:** add in a 'dummy' defender to put pressure on player receiving ball in the air. Have one group go for about 1 minute with one surface, then switch players on outside and inside. Repeat until all surfaces are covered and variations completed (if possible). Focus on receiving with the thigh, chest and laces. **Variation 4:** Outside players serve lofted balls to inside players. Inside players head the ball back to the outside players.