

NEW BALL METHOD

The idea behind the “new ball method” is to keep the flow of the game constant and increase the number of ball touches by all the players. The “new ball method” eliminates restarts such as throw-ins, goal kicks, and corner kicks and keeps the ball in play continuously. Restarts might be important to the game at the highest level of play, but they have no relevance or developmental benefits at the 6U and under level.

Since the objective at this age is to teach players to dribble and gain comfort on the ball, every aspect of the traditional game that reduces the opportunity to dribble is removed. The basic principle of this method is that, when a ball goes out of bounds, the coach adds a new ball into play. Experiments with this method found that players caught on to the method very quickly and loved it. Key learnings from evaluating proved that players touch the ball up to three times more during the course of the match versus a standard method of play with corner kicks, goal kicks, and throw-ins.

In tracking the amount of actual playing time revealed that the ball was in play for only 45% of the time under the traditional rules, and upwards of 90% of the time under the “new ball method”.

To implement the “new ball method,” use two coaches, to add the new ball back into play with each coaching introducing the new ball at their defensive half of the field. The coach(s) should hold a number of balls, as to be ready to add a new ball when needed.

- When a ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “new ball!” and adds a new ball into play. The players will learn quickly to react to the new ball.
 - Always throw the ball into the unoccupied space. Players will learn to move towards the ball. Do not throw the ball in the air since the players are not yet skilled enough to control a bouncing ball.
 - Coaches can also use this method to get the non-assertive players involved, by rolling the ball towards them. This will help bring them out of their shell. If the players are really shy, simply place the ball at their feet.
 - If one team is dominating the game, the advantage can be shifted to the other team by adding the ball in an advantageous position to the team that is significantly losing.
 - This method can also be used to break up a ‘beehive’.
 - Remember to always praise the players for every attempt. Keep them excited and motivated.
- This method will speed up the game and will produce more goals and more excitement.