



Youth Soccer Coaching Themes & Pointers
by Jeff Vennell



Heading

Key General Coaching Points

1. Fear of hitting a soccer ball with your head is an emotion that coaches need to be cognizant of when introducing heading to players.
2. Therefore:
 - a. Use lighter ball – nerf ball, etc.
 - b. Reduce the air pressure in the ball.
 - c. Progress slowly – only when players are ready.

Coaching Progressions

1. Self-heading

- a. Player holds ball against correct heading position with the forehead (hairline) with both hands.
- b. Player taps the ball against the 'magic spot'.
- c. Player heads ball out of their hands.
- d. Payer heads ball from a low self-toss.

2. Partner Tosses - Sitting

- a. Heading player sits on the ground with legs in front of their body.
- b. Arms are out to the sides.
- c. Short distance low toss underhanded.
- d. Head is recoiled back with the chin down and near the back of the neck.
- e. The action of the neck propelling the head into the ball is horizontal NOT up and down
- f. Contact the center of the ball in front of chest with center of forehead.
- g. Follow through with the chin up and in the direction of the target.

3. Partner Tosses - Kneeling

- a. Heading player with knees together kneels on the ground with their hips extended - not kneeling on their heels.
- b. Arms are out to the sides.
- c. Short distance low distance underhand.
- d. Head is recoiled back with the chin down and near the back of the neck.
- e. The torso is arched – chest back, hips forward.
- f. The action of the neck propelling the head into the ball is horizontal NOT up and down.
- g. Contact ball with center of forehead
- h. Extend the chest forward.
- i. Contact the center of the ball in front of chest.
- j. Follow through onto the hands.



Youth Soccer Coaching Themes & Pointers
by Jeff Vennell



4. Partner Tosses – Standing

- a. Stand with feet staggered.
- b. Repeat head and hip positioning.
- c. Use legs as the power base.
- d. Repeat contact point and follow through.
- e. Contact the bottom half of the ball to head up; bottom half to head down.

5. Heading – Changing Direction; Ground or Air

- a. Assume same body position with neck and torso.
- b. For heading in the air, jump with lower legs bending back toward upper legs – arches the back.
- c. Rotate torso and head toward the change of direction, heading the ball with the center of the forehead.

6. Heading in the Air - Jumping

- a. Defensive Heading
 - i. Leave late to attack the ball.
 - ii. One-foot take off from run.
 - iii. Attempt to jump first.
 - iv. Generally head through the bottom half of the ball.
 - v. Goal: Head high, wide, distance, accuracy.
- b. Heading to Goal
 - i. Attempt to bend run to the side of the field opposite the ball.
 - ii. Leave late to attack ball.
 - iii. One foot take-off from run.
 - iv. Attempt to jump first.
 - v. Generally head through the top half of the ball.
 - vi. Target is aiming for the goal line.