

GlenEd Soccer - Coaching Concepts

Topic 5: Set Pieces & Restarts *Trust players to read the game & make decisions.*

As a coach we should be developing players to grow in the sport and take ownership for their involvement in every game. Coaches know players strengths and weaknesses. One way we can see progress in our players and truly reward them for the time they invest in practices is to let them "take over" during games.

We can "let go" and empower players to make decisions at key moments in the games - especially during restarts. Restarts are numerous and if executed effectively determine momentum, pace of play, and often can impact the result of a game.

Types of restarts:

- Direct Kicks
- Indirect Kicks
- Throw Ins
- Corner Kicks
- Goal Kicks
- Kickoffs to start half and after goals

Conditions that impact restarts:

- Score of the match
- Strength of the opponent
- Importance of the game (tourney final)
- Third of the field the restart occurs
- Time of the game the restart occurs
- Weather, field conditions

Actual strategy needs to be team specific and leverage the talent you have on your team. If you have a player with a hard accurate shot, or a tall player who is good winning head balls - you obviously will want to use their strengths to your advantage. Here are a few factors to consider helping your team maintain ball control and control the pace of the game.

DIRECT or INDIRECT KICKS (attacking)

Based on the players at the game and on the field it would be a benefit to have a right-footed kicking option and a left-footed one on the field at all times - so regardless of the side of the field the foul occurs on you have a plan. Other factors to weigh are location on the field, direction wind is blowing, skill of the shooters, height and skill of the GK, number of players in the wall, how organized the defense is, and field conditions. Most of these are determined ahead of time... if the kick is on the right side of the field (the left-footed shooter is preferred) if on the left side (the right-footed shooter) takes the kicks. If you want more control, or until players are more comfortable making these decisions have them look to the bench and using hand-signals let them know your preference. This will eliminate the confusion of yelling and pointing, etc. The advantage of having predetermined kickers is they are prepared when the foul occurs and are already assessing best options. If you wait until the last minute or change things up on a hunch then the player has to not only prepare to take the kick, but also decide how and where to place the ball. Having a backup for the right and left footed kickers is advised in the event the primary players are not on the field at the time of the foul or were injured as a result of the foul. Just because it is a DIRECT kick does not mean a shot has to be taken, players could still decide to touch the ball to the side of a wall for a shot, or pass the ball to a teammate closer to the goal. Have at

least 2 set piece options players know that are easy to remember and are well orchestrated. You can always hold up 1 arm for a more direct shot option and 2 arms for a slower building pass play. The key is to make it something easy to understand and something the players remember so they can focus on executing and not on remembering what to do.

Key Players: both right and left footed option players must be ready to assess, communicate, and execute and target player if a passer is needed.

All the same factors weigh into an indirect kick. If the foul occurred close to the penalty box a shot is the desired play. It is better to have fewer passes as you are close to the goal to reduce the chance of something happening that negates the advantage of the foul. You also have the option of a short quick kick to get the ball back into play immediately and take advantage of a disorganized opponent.

DIRECT or INDIRECT KICKS (defending)

ASAP - build a wall and have the GK align the near post player and let the rest of the wall slide over. The near post player can turn and face the GK making the communication easier /quicker with hand signals while they are making eye contact. The other players in the wall are assessing shooting options and covering until the near post is set. The GK then moves into position and the wall is ready. The far post player in the wall could be used as a runner charging the ball on an indirect kick and rushing the shot or impeding it. Other players quickly return on defense to mark man-to-man. Sometimes jumping in unison helps grow the height of the wall - but make sure to always face the ball.

THROW INS

These are great opportunities to catch the opponent off-guard. It is essential that "a plan" exists so the person throwing the ball in can quickly assess the options and get the ball back into play fast or wait for key players and move more methodically. The throw needs to be targeted to either the head or foot of the player receiving the ball, or into space in front of the player allowing them the ability to run with speed. Too often the mistake is made by bouncing the ball to a teammate or to a teammate that is covered making it difficult to keep possession. Timing is critical as defense reacts to movement.

Key players: All players providing options to the player throwing the ball in are critical to maintaining possession.

CORNER KICKS (attacking)

Short corners or driven balls - the decision can be easily communicated by the coach with a hand signal - then relayed onto the players by the kicker. On windy days or with kicks on opposite side of the field non-verbal communication is essential. Short corners - a second player added out by the kicker can create an advantage by getting a better angle for a cross to goal as well as the advantage of kicking a moving ball rather than a still ball with a corner flag impeding leg swing. It sometimes provides the advantage of taking on a defender in a 2v1 situation that again stretches the defense and creates passing alleys or angles to shoot. Driven balls - should be aimed at spots on the field either near post, penalty spot, or far post. This too can be based on predetermined set pieces worked on at practice. In either case a target player is "predetermined" and he/she must make their way to the spot the kicker is aiming. Balls to the near post are typically driven hard and on a line about head height while balls sent

to the penalty spot and far post are lofted and a lot of times have spin either towards or away from goal. Coaches should have players pre-selected based on desire for an inswinging or outswinging cross.

Key Players: Person taking the corner kick needs to communicate with teammates letting them know where the ball will be played. The players attacking the goal and the ones sealing the box are critical.

- Right footed and left footed kicker to allow kicks to be swung toward or away from the goal.
- Good dribbler that would join the kicker for a short corner.
- A taller player or someone aggressive to be the target for the ball to be played.
- Two players at the top of the box the width of the posts to stop the opponent from clearing the area (called sealing the box).

CORNER KICKS (defending)

Players should be assigned the duty to guard the near post and far post... by standing on the inside helping the GK in the event the GK leaves his/her line or a shot is directed to the corner. These players stay positioned until immediate danger is avoided. There should also be someone 10yds from the ball close to the goal line to block or obstruct a low driven ball. The GK should direct the action of teammates and be very vocal letting teammates know to get the ball or leave it for them. In the event the opposing team plays a short corner - defensively we need a second player ready to join the teammate 10yds away making it a 2v2 in the corner - so we don't get beaten with a dribble or pass.

Key Players: GK is essential for communication and directing teammates. Players on each post need to know when to pull out and defend. Defenders in the landing zone need to be aggressive and defend strong. Whether you choose to mark man-to-man or zonally - be aggressive and do not let the ball hit the ground. Your number one objective is to clear it away from the center of the field.

KICKOFFS

Teams typically play the ball back to allow time to get the forwards and wide players in an advanced position to receive passes. Because the opponent typically pressures the first set of passes, the center midfielder receiving the ball is put immediately under pressure. Some more confident teams then decide to send a deeper drop pass to a defender to allow more time to connect passes. Predictable isn't bad, but these drop passes makes "a plan" more helpful to beat the initial pressure you will face. The primary goal of this restart is to establish pace and confidence to off-balance a team that is set and ready to defend. If that can be accomplished by moving forward then if you lose possession you will have more room to recover. If you are successful, you have less ground to win going to goal.

Key players: The player receiving the initial pass and the target player you are looking for with the outlet pass.

GOAL KICKS

Depending of field conditions and leg strength of kicker, have players from the weak side of the field join the strong side on the kick flooding that side with numbers moving into the landing area. Be mindful not to get caught in an unbalanced situation if you lose possession but adding numbers you will increase your chances of winning the ball or at a minimum putting immediate pressure on the opponent. Too often we fail to head the ball or get under it and the opponent gains an advantage by hemming us in our

defensive third. Movement towards the landing area increases the chance that our angle of approach provides a better look at the kick and will provide us at least for a moment an advantage that we can capitalize.

Key Players: Players in the landing zone of the kick being taken. Like a throw in this includes people moving into the space looking to provide support.