



### **Coaching-Throw-Ins** **Rick Meana, NJYS Director of Coaching**

Apart from the importance placed on passing and shooting, Coaches rarely emphasize the technique of the throw-in during practice. Yet, it is a basic method utilized in the game of soccer. This is especially true in the youth game, where because of the technical deficiency of the players, the ball frequently goes out of play resulting in a throw-in. And, 99% of the time, the throw-in ends up going to the opponent. I strongly feel that the throw-in is not necessary for U6-U8 game play.

On any given weekend, I have watched numerous games where feeble attempts are made by U6-U8 coaches to "mold" the bodies of their players, hold down their feet, demonstrate, and explain their version of a proper throw-in. Incidentally, it is done incorrectly as the player either drops the ball in front of them, or in an effort to bring it back over their head, they drop it, throw it to the other team, or fire at the face of the nearest victim-sometimes this just happens to be the coach. And worst of all, when patience has run out, the game is allowed to continue and the player is allowed to re-enter the field with a "slight nudge" by the coach, having learned an improper throw-in.

All this should indicate to the coach that something needs to be fixed. It indicates to me that too much time is spent in the games trying to deal with this phenomenon, when this is something that needs to be practiced outside the game first. So much time is spent; that I have estimated over 25% of the game time is wasted trying to deal with this. That's 15-20 minutes less the players are in contact with the ball. Less contact with the ball means downtime, downtime results in boredom and disinterest.

A solution to this problem would require modifying the rules of U6 and U8 play. Coaches should emphasize the importance on the technical application of the throw-in during practice.

For U6 and U8 play, I strongly recommend that when the ball goes "into touch" or outside the sidelines, the ball is put back into play by the player choosing to either dribble or pass. Also several balls should be placed around the outside of the field, so that when a ball goes out of bounds, time is not spent trying to chase it down. The nearest ball is played in, being careful that no stray balls roll onto the field.

Since the hands of a U6-U8 player are not properly developed for the proper execution of the throw-in, more emphasis needs to be placed on providing the players with more opportunities to manipulate the ball with the foot. Not to mention, throws that result in someone getting a ball to the face can also be avoided - the pass or the dribble - is a safer alternative while maximizing chances to play the ball with the foot.

To learn the proper technique, and technical application, the following should be stressed. First, coaches at any level should teach their players how to correctly hold the ball. For U6-U8 coaches, this can be done to teach the habit of securing the ball, which later on can be used to teach proper technique for catching in goal keeping as well.

#### **Coaching Implications**

1. Secure the ball with both hands; ensure that the index fingers and thumbs are as close as possible (almost forming a "W" or "u" shape with fingers on the ball).
2. Bring the ball over the head just behind the ears with your arms loose and elbows bent and flared out.

3. Stand with your feet a little more than shoulder-width apart with one foot in front of the other (start at a standstill first, then add 1 step, then 2, and so on).

4. Face the field.

5. Bring your head, neck, shoulders and trunk back, bending at the knees.

6. Thrust the ball forward resulting in your entire body going forward.

7. Release the ball as it just goes past the head.

The throw-in is a pass; so therefore, it should have all the characteristics of a pass, i.e. played to a teammate with the proper pace so that it can be controlled easily and possession can be maintained.