



## **New Ball Method – Introduction 2019**

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 and corner kicks and keeps the ball in play continuously. Restarts might be important to the game results at other levels of play, but they have no relevance or developmental benefits at the U4 level. Since the objective of the program is to teach players to dribble, 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 throws a new ball into play. Experiments with this method, conducted at Richmond Hill Soccer Association in Georgia in 2001/02, found that the players caught on to the method very quickly and loved it. The parents and coaches at Richmond Hill embraced the concept as soon as they witnessed it firsthand. The experiments also proved that, on average, players' ball touches increased two and threefold.

This was determined by counting the number of touches per player under the traditional rules and comparing to the number of touches under the 'new ball method'. 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 almost 100% of the time under the 'new ball method'.

To implement the 'new ball method', use either one coach, or two coaches, to throw the balls. If using two coaches, each coach should be in charge of half a field. The coach(s) should hold a number of balls, ready to be thrown, one at a time.

- When a ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells "new ball!" and throws a new one in. 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 too high 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 throwing 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 throwing the ball accordingly.
- This method can also be used to break up a 'beehive'. If all the players are bunched up around the ball, shout "new ball" and throw one into the open space.
- Remember to always praise the players for every attempt. Keep them excited and motivated.

This method will speed up the game, will produce more goals and more excitement.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Why use the New Ball Method?

- More touches on the ball: This method doubled or tripled the number of touches by each player in a study conducted in 2001/2002 by the Richmond Hill SA in Georgia. More touches means faster skill development and increased enjoyment of the game.
- More playing time: Indiana Youth Soccer studied the effect of the New Ball Method and found that in a 7 minute quarter, the ball was in play for 4 minutes using traditional rules, and about 6 minutes and 30 seconds using the New Ball Method.
- This method will speed up the game; produce more goals and more excitement, while at the same time de-emphasizing the importance of scoring and emphasizing play and fun.
- This method can be used to get non-assertive players involved by rolling the new ball to those players; and can be used to even the playing field in a lop-sided game. At this age, score is not kept, there is no win/loss record, and the emphasis is on playing, having fun and sportsmanship, not winning.
- Unlike at the higher levels, at this age, goal kicks, corner kicks, and kick-ins do not provide the tactical advantage for the kicking team, and can often be a disadvantage. Consequently, re-starts substantially slow the game with no benefit to the player or spectator.
- The "New Ball Method" has proven to be a great success with clubs around the country that have adopted it.

Since there is not be a referee who calls the fouls?

- Fouls at this age are almost always innocent, and result from a lack of coordination rather than malicious intent, so fouls should almost never be called--a player can be substituted and instructed on the rules of play when that player comes off the field.
- Players are rarely seriously hurt (other than hurt feelings) by a foul at this age, and since score is not kept and records are not important, any tactical advantage obtained by a foul is meaningless, and can be corrected with the next "new ball."
- If necessary, one coach can be assigned to each half of the game to call only the most blatant fouls.

Who keeps time?

- ORC will have a staff member present to keep time. However, the coaches can keep time (alternating quarters), or a volunteer parent can be assigned to keep time.
- Time limits should be adhered to in order to prevent fatigue injuries from occurring.
- Coaches and parents should familiarize themselves with the rules of play for this age group.
- Note that the rules of play are much simpler with the 'New Ball Method'.