

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my summer thus far has been the opportunity to get to know players of all ages in our club. Our players are fun, nice, polite, energetic and inquisitive. I have had a lot of really good questions, which I love, and have met a lot of players who want to grow and improve as players, which is really exciting to me.

That aspect in particular got me thinking about our players and what they can do to get better on their own. Trainings are tremendously important for player development as coaches put our players in game like situations so they are comfortable, confident and successful when they play but so much growth can also take place from time spent on your own.

Below are FOUR Different Activities that players can do on their own to get better:

- 1) Use a wall to improve in different areas of your game. By far and away the most important of the four. A tennis ball hitting wall at your local tennis courts is by far the best wall to use. Walls are awesome, you strike the ball well and it comes right back to you. This is a tremendous way to get repetition and improvement. You can work on chipping the ball with both feet. Shooting with your laces with both feet. Passing with both feet as well as one touch passing and of course trapping with both feet. So much can be gained by spending time getting touches and striking the ball against a wall. Your ball may get a little beat up but it will be well worth it.
- 2) Juggle the soccer ball. Mainly using your feet but it never hurts to use your thighs and head as well. Always start with the ball on the ground and get very good at flicking the ball up and starting your juggling from the ground. Try to keep almost all of your touches with your feet low and under your knees. Use the tops/laces of your feet and try to get some back spin on each touch so that the ball comes back to you and you can get a nice rhythm. Remember, keep the ball low below the knee. The ability to juggle helps immensely on your touch!
- 3) Practice 1 v1 offensive moves on your own: To get great at going at players and beating them 1 v1 you need to first be comfortable with the moves and there is no better way to do this than on your own. Getting comfortable with the cutting, the pace, the timing and the acceleration after you put the move on. Keep it simple at first and then add more challenging moves to your repertoire. Make sure you practice moves for different situations. Have a couple of moves that you do when your running at a player facing them, a move that gives you more time on the ball and protects the ball at the same time as well as a move when you have your back to a defender. Once you have a move down get some repetition in running at an object that is a pretend defender. Remember not to put the move on too close to the object/defender. A two yard cushion is always good so that the defender cannot reach the ball.
- 4) Dribbling: A great skill to have is the ability to dribble through traffic, keep the ball close and escape danger when you have to. Dribble around anything. Cones, bottles, cans, any object. Maybe each object is 2-3 yards apart in a straight line at first. Dribble using both feet and keep your head up as much as possible. Stay in control while going as quickly as possible.

Have fun and See you soon!

Chuck

