

TOUCHES ON THE BALL A COMPARISON BETWEEN 11 V 11 AND 4 V 4

U 11 Girls coach Tom Mellem had an idea to compare how many touches on the ball a player has in an eleven a side game as opposed to a four a side game. He recorded touches on the ball of an average player and these are the results he came up with:

11 v 11 friendly games, 22 touches in 60 minutes,
(0.37 touches on the ball per minute).

4 v 4 games (Wings), 205 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 256)
(4.3 touches on the ball per minute).

4 v 4 games (Tonka), 217 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 271)
(4.5 touches on the ball per minute).

As regards the Tonka results the player involved touched the ball 12.31 more times in the 4 v 4 games over the same time period as in the 11 v 11 game.

Tom intends to follow these results up with more research with other players in the team covering a range of ability to reinforce the above results.

The reason to implement small- sided games into the program was to increase the time and amount of touches a player had on the ball and these results clearly back this up. It would be useful if other coaches tried the same experiment and showed the results to anyone who just simply doesn't understand why we do it and why it is important.

I have heard it said by someone who falls into the above category that yes they get more touches on the ball but they aren't all quality touches? Of course they aren't all quality touches because if every touch was a quality touch then our players would all be great players now with nothing to learn and we know it doesn't work like that even the best players in the world have non – quality touches on the ball. Lets say for arguments sake 50% of touches were “Quality” touches, then in the 11 a side game that player got 11 quality touches and in the 4 a side games the same player got 135 quality touches. Players learn from doing it right but also from doing it wrong. I believe players must make mistakes to help them learn how to do things correctly as well as learning from doing it correctly in the first place so from the 135 non - quality touches they will have gained valuable experience of what not to do e.g. a first touch was bad and the ball went to the opposition so next time that player concentrates on making a good first touch and so on. In comparison in the 11 a side game the same player hardly touched the ball making only 11 quality touches but also only 11 non – quality touches meaning very little opportunity to learn from quality work and non – quality work.

My experience in the game has taught me this is an important way to help players develop their technique and improve their game and Toms' results act as confirmation of this. I am sure this presentation goes some way to show how important it is to continue to use this type of developmental work as a part of our overall coaching program.

Wayne Harrison (Eden Prairie Director of Coach and Player Development).