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Disguising the Pass

Recently, I have been assisting a long established youth soccer club here in Vancouver, Cliff Avenue United.

I am working with them as their temporary technical director and will assist them in finding a permanent TD. Tony Fonseca, the previous TD, was wooed away by the Canadian Soccer Association to join the national coaching staff.

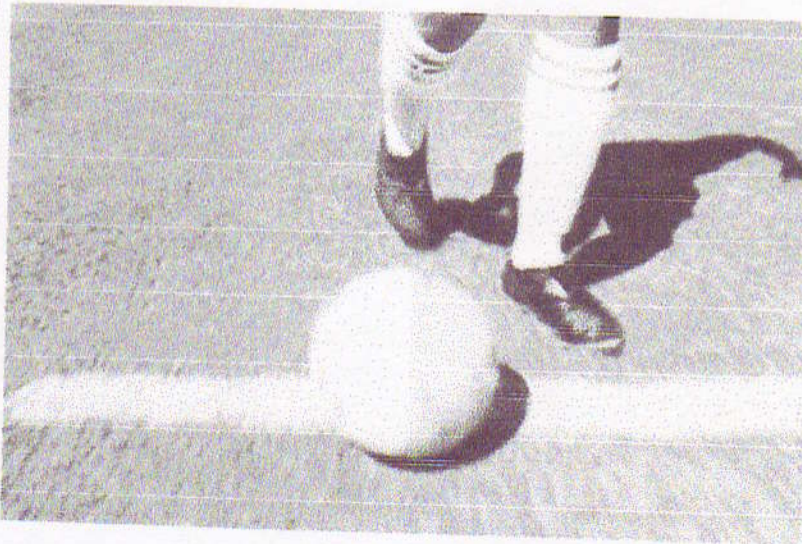
The Cliff Avenue United club, as the "united" name would suggest, has British connections going way back to when the club was founded over 50 years ago. But you wouldn't know it today as the makeup of the club has a strong Italian influence and partly because of that, has some of the best volunteer coaches in Canada.

This brings me to this month's practice session. At Cliff Avenue I've been working with a young coach and former professional player, Johnny Sulentic, who is looking after the spring program for the 6- to 10-year-old players.

Johnny's family came from Croatia and this is reflected in the way he played and now coaches. Not surprisingly, he was a technically excellent player and coaches in the same vein. Johnny played for the Vancouver Whitecaps and also played in Croatia and in Germany.

In one session, two weeks ago, Johnny did something that we rarely practice and it really made me think. Working in pairs he asked the players for a short period of time to pass with the outside of the foot.

So what? Players do it all the time in games. Yes, they do! But do we practice it? And I'm going to suggest the answer is, "No!"



So looking at the photograph, what we are showing is the player in the picture about to pass the ball with his right foot. We've highlighted the area (in red) of the foot that will make the major contact with the ball. And we've also shown (again in red) that the ball is struck on the on the inside half.

There are a number of advantages of this type of pass:

It can be executed as a player is moving without breaking stride.

The body shape requires little modification as the pass is made in the flow of the running movement.

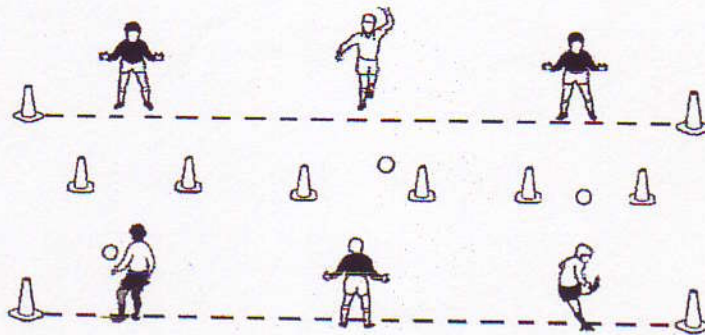
So there is no tell-tale sign of what the player is going to do with the ball and therefore, there is an element of surprise.

And it all adds up to disguise - hopefully for the opposition and not ones own team-mates.

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So I suggest that we go back to last month's practice section where we were talking about the King's Court method of beefing up what could be a relatively static, drill-like practice.

[Click here to See King's Court/ Queen's Court Methodology](#)



In changing the conditions for the King's Court passing practice we could ask the pairs to use alternate feet - left & right - and maybe also insist on two-touch where the ball must be controlled by the outside of the foot.

For teenage players the above conditions would be good, but with younger players you may have to start by just striking a static ball - until they get the idea and are being relatively successful.

With the older players you could definitely use the two-touch rule and insist that the pass can only be made when the ball is moving.

And in no time your players will become the "Masters of Disguise."

Thank you, Johnny Sulentic.

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