



DECISION MAKING - PERCEPTION

(Courtesy of Success In Soccer)

Decision Making – Perception

Perception is the act of apprehending or understanding by means of the senses or of the mind (cognition).

Perceptual Speed

Rapid perception is essential for rapid action. Players must “Think Fast to Act Fast”. Players who have rapid perception or awareness and understanding of specific situations in the game of soccer have more time to act and can usually act faster because of this awareness or perception. General perception may be okay if you are merely a spectator. However, players must stay focused so that they can not only perceive what is happening but also act accordingly by making the right decision based on this awareness. To see is one thing but to see and act accordingly is another and highly desired in all athletes.

The Effects of Perception on Decision making in Soccer:

A soccer player’s ability to make good decisions is based on his or her ability to:

- Absorb or take in information from the flow of the game.
- Process this information quickly.
- Act upon this information in a positive manner technically and tactically.

THEREFORE, a player’s perception of the game situation as it unfolds is critical to making successful decisions. Players can only make decisions based on the information they perceive and process.

Decision Making Problems in Soccer

Decision making problems in soccer may be either technical or tactical:

Technical: What type of pass to do I make? Long, short, low or lofted, swerved or straight, etc.?

Tactical: A defender facing several attackers will have to decide when to act and how. Do I pressure the player with the ball or drop to cover passing options? If I pressure now will it be too soon? If I wait, will it be too late.

The constantly changing nature of the game presents a constant challenge to players. While processing information from one situation a player can quickly be faced with a new situation as the game evolves (a second attacker joins the attack, a second defender makes a recovery run etc.) The game is constantly changing and requires information to be processed at the same rate or faster than the situation to ensure correct decisions are made.

Improving Player Perception & Decision Making

The following games will improve the perception and decision making speed of players if the training is constant over a period six to eight weeks. This kind of training can be integrated into regular team training.

The following Perceptual Skills will be trained using these games/drills:

- P1:** Sensory system (ability to absorb and filter information)
- P2:** Perceptions of the Ball, Teammates and Opponents (ability to identify positions in Time & Space more rapidly)
- P3:** Concentration
- P4:** Memory
- P5:** Visual Performance (Narrowing and Widening Field of Vision at the right moments)

The following Decision-Making Skills will also be trained using these games/drills

- D1:** Selective Redirection of Attention (to sudden and unexpected signals)
- D2:** Transition from Perception to Action (shifting gears)
- D3:** Internalization of Individual Actions (freeing up perceptual and decision-making capacities that would otherwise be blocked)
- D4:** Precision of Movement under Pressure (coping with increased demands on perceptual and decision-making abilities)

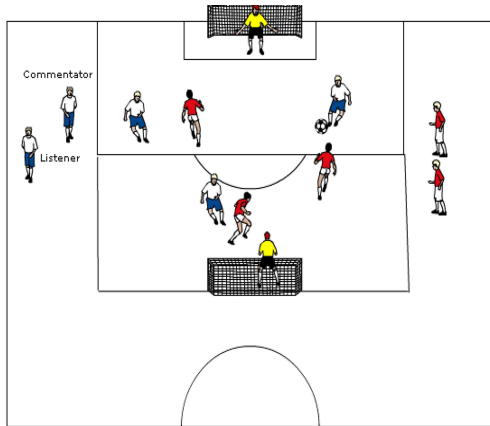
NOTE!

- A. Decision-making must be trained along with the Perceptual skills.
- B. However Decision-making can be very independent of perception whereby players ignore any signals or variables.
- C. There is a recommended age for each drill but coaches can still use these drills for younger players but with less demands. Players with superior Perception and Decision-making skills will be quickly identified.

Guidelines for Training

1. Players can improve their perception & Decision-making (game action speed) at any age
2. However, learning new skills and abilities takes time
3. Players vary in their ability to refine skills already learned
4. Variation is important
5. Feedback is essential
6. New skills and abilities must be regularly in games & training to minimize differences between the two
7. Being overwhelmed, fatigued or not challenged may affect learning and even lead to regression

Radio Communicator (P1 through P5) - Recommended for players 14 years and up OR after experience in Perception Training



Set Up

- Team play a 3v3, 4v4 or 5v5 in an area the size of a double penalty box.
- Each round lasts 2-3 minutes
- 2 players from team A sit out as “observers” and 2 players from team B also sit out.
- The Observers may walk around or stand still.
- One of the observers narrates the game like a radio announcer to his/her partner who is blindfolded.
- The listener has to rely on his other senses and the information from the radio commentator.

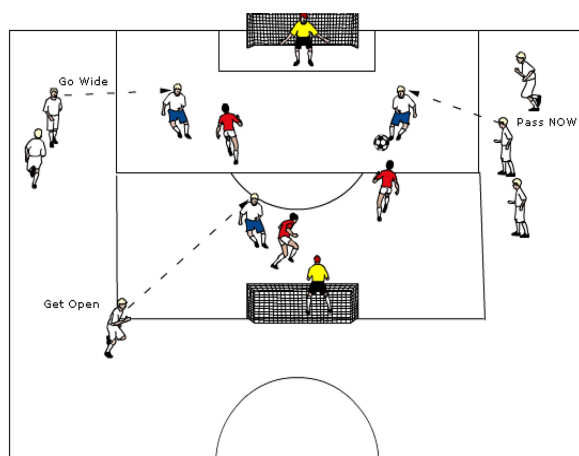
Sequence

1. On coach’s command the game FREEZES
2. Blinded player has to describe the exact location and of ball and ball carrier
3. If accurate then his/her team gets penalty shot but if wrong then the other team gets a penalty shot.
4. Switch roles
5. Observers from team B get to be observer/listener

Variation

- A. Both teams are active at the same time with 2 commentators & listeners
- B. Commentators must jog to keep up with the play holding the hand of the listener
- C. Enlarge the field and number players

Remote Control (P1, P2, & P3 for Controllers) (P1 & P3 for Vehicles) – Recommended for U14 & up or after some experience with perception training)



Set Up

- Team play 3v3 to 5v5 in an area twice the size of the penalty box which facilitates easy communication
- Players form pairs with one Vehicle who is a player on the field and one Controller who is a player on the sidelines (dashed line designates partners)
- Play 3-5 minutes depending on the age of the players and players switch roles

Sequence

- Controllers move their Vehicles around the field by giving commands
- Controllers can move anywhere on the sidelines
- Vehicles can “ONLY” move when commanded to do so by the Controller.
- “Independent Action In Not Permitted” = PK

Variations

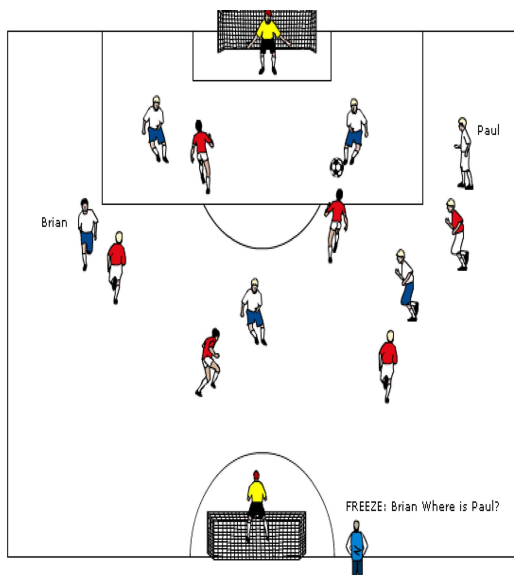
Simplify by:

- A. Assigning Controllers to the defending team only
- B. Then assigning Controllers to the attacking team only

Increase Difficulty by:

- A. Enlarging field and number of players
- B. Partners switch roles on the fly
- C. Award PK against team for failing to follow instructions

Soccer GPS (P1 through P5) - Recommended for U10 and up



Set Up

- Two teams of 5v5 to 11v11 in an area of appropriate size for the number of players

Sequence

- During the run of play the coaches call out a player's name.
- The game FREEZES and the named player has to CLOSE his eyes and turn away from the game
- The player then attempts to answer the coach's questions about positions of teammates and opponents as requested by the coach. NOTE! Go back to the same player more than once to ensure all players stay focused on their surroundings
- Restart with a Free Kick (no wall), PK etc depending on how well the player answers.

DO NOT STOP PLAY MORE THAN EVERY 2 Or 3 Minutes to Keep Players Focused and Interested In the Game

Variations

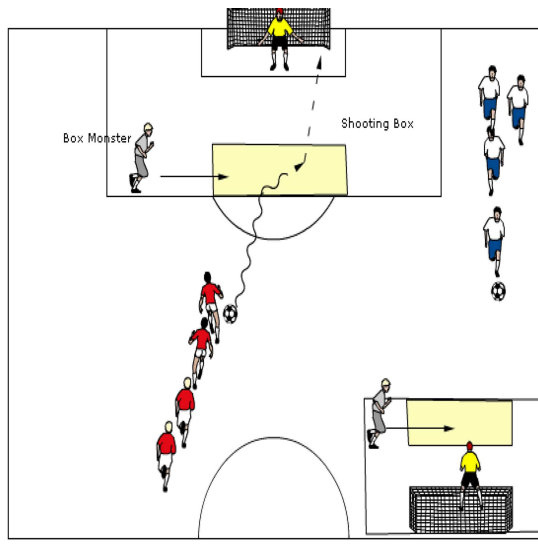
Simplify by:

- A. Starting with 3 questions
 - a. Where is (name)?
 - b. Who is marking (same name)?
 - c. Where is the ball?

Progress to:

- A. More detailed questions such as "Which teammates are open (unmarked)?"
- B. Specifying a certain number of touches to speed up the game.

Box Monster (Attacking Players D1, D2, D3 & D4. Box Monsters (D2) – Recommended for all ages but especially under 10 years)



Set Up

- Divide into 2 groups and run using 2 goals at the same time
- Players line up about 30 yards from goal
- Mark out a shooting area the width of the goal box (6 yard box) between the penalty spot (12 yards) and the top of the 18 yard box). Adjust the size accordingly for mini-soccer
- One defender is designated as the BOX MONSTER who stands outside of the shooting box

Sequence

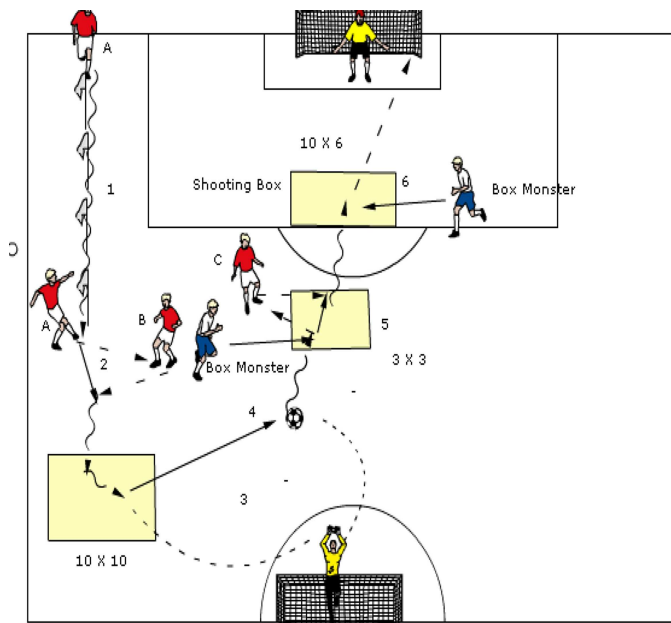
- Attackers attack the goal by dribbling into the shooting box and shooting at goal
- The Box Monster stands outside of the Monster Box but can attack the shooter at any time
- For younger players the Box Monster should come from a designated side at a time and NOT attempt to win the ball
- Start with attackers having to shoot with the second touch after entering the Shooting Box
- Start with the Box Monster only entering from the right side of the box
- Switch Box Monsters after 3 or 4 shooters

Variation/Progressions

- A. Instruct the Box Monster to wait until the last minute to enter the box which will give the shooter less time to react
- B. Permit the Box Monster to attack from any angle
- C. Permit the Box monster to try to win the ball thereby encouraging evasive “fakes & feints” by the attacker

TIP: Ensure the Box Monster comes at the attacker from various angles (right corner, left corner, left side of the box, right side of the box, front center etc.)

Parcourse (Attacking Players D1, D2, D3 &D4) (Box Monsters D2) – Recommended for 14 years of age and older.



Set Up

- Set up a parcourse for players to dribble through
- Change the activities frequently to avoid boredom
- Use only 8-10 players and rotate through another activity such as shooting etc.

Sequence

- Player A dribbles at speed through the slalom course of poles or cones placed at 3 yard intervals (1)
- The first Box Monster may appear just after the last pole/cone. If so, Player A may play a rebound pass (or more advanced players a Wall Pass) with Player B (2)
- Then A immediately dribbles into the 10x10 yard crossing box where he/she plays a lofted ball into the GK (3)
- He/she then runs toward a 3 yard wide box where he/she receives a throw from the KG (4)
- Next he/she dribbles through the goal into the next 10X6 yard box where he/she must play a rebound pass or Wall Pass with Player C. However the second Box Monster may attempt to force him/her to the right (5)
- Finally he/she has to shoot from the finishing box where a third Box Monster may force him/her to execute another evasive “fake or feint:’ before shooting (6)