



# Receiving - Lofted Balls

by Laura Ray, Mass Youth Soccer Development Coach

**Objectives:** To improve the technique of receiving soccer balls played in the air. To help players practice using different surfaces when receiving lofted balls (feet, thighs, chest).

## 1) Dutch Circle (Warm-up – 15 minutes):

Half of the players (servers) create a 25-35 yd outer circle and have soccer balls in their hands. These players must always be alert and on their toes. The other half of the players (receivers) are in the middle of this circle and do not have soccer balls. The receivers check to the servers to receive a ball out of the air from them. They receive the ball with feet, thighs or chest and then play the ball to any server on the outer circle who does not have a ball (except the player who tossed it to them). They then check to another server on the outside that has a ball and repeat the process for about 2-3 minutes until coach switches players on outside and inside. Focus on both feet, receiving with the top of foot and then turning with it; the thigh, taking it in the direction they want to go; the chest.

### Coaching Points:

- on toes and get body behind ball
- move to the ball, do not wait for it
- try to drop the ball a bit in front of your body using one touch so the ball is in your control but not under you

### Thigh:

- lift thigh up to meet ball and once ball touches thigh drop your leg down to cushion the ball
- torso should be leaning forward
- make sure you push ball slightly in front of you so you can handle it easily
- ball should not pop up as you cushion it
- point of contact on leg is the bottom of the quadriceps muscle

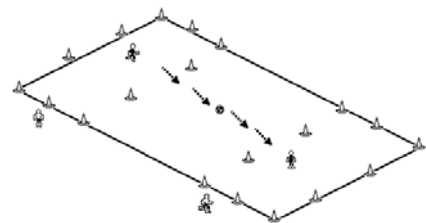
### Chest:

- bend knees with feet staggered
- slightly arch back while using arms for balance
- cushion ball (collapse chest) as it hits your chest and guide it just in front of your feet
- do not push out chest to pop the ball out too far in front of you
- ball should droop down, not pop up
- once contact is made move forward to stay over the ball and protect it

## 2) Box to Box (15-20 minutes):

Two players per team. Two boxes are made approximately 20-30 yards apart. There is a player from each team in one box. One team starts the game. When the ball is *lofted* to the other box, the attacking team gets the opportunity to get the first touch. Then they have to dribble outside of the box (square) to receive a point. The defending player is outside the box and has to wait until the attacking player gets the first touch. The defending player tries to win the ball after the first touch has been made.

If the attacking player is successful in bringing the ball down and dribbling outside of the square then they keep it. If the defending player wins the ball after the first touch, then they become the attacking team. Coach may allow the serving players to toss the ball in the air or punt it in the air to the opposite box.

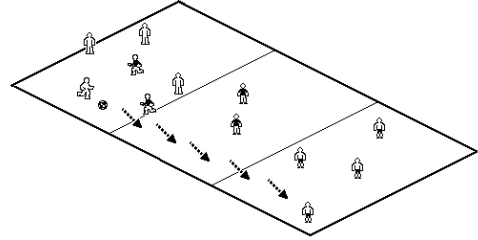


### **Coaching Points:**

- reinforce coaching points listed in activity #1
- first touch and importance of cushioning ball
- get in line with the ball
- select controlling surface early
- relax body part at impact
- take first touch away from where pressure is coming from

### **3) Arsenal Drill (15-20 minutes):**

Split grid into three even zones (zone 1, 2 and 3). Split team into three even teams (can have 3 to 6 players in each zone). If have three teams of 4, then Team in Zone 1 is trying to possess the ball (can ask them to have 2 to 4 passes before they can play the ball down) and then play it in the air to team in Zone 3. Meanwhile, team in Zone 2 sends two defenders into Zone 1 to try and win the ball. If they win the ball, they turn, play it down to Zone 3 and then switch zones with team in Zone 1 (team in Zone 1 then has to then send two defenders into Zone 3 and try to win the ball back). If team in Zone 1 is able to play it down to team in Zone 3, they get a point. That means the other two players waiting in Zone 2 are entering into Zone 3 to win the ball back. Team that gets to 5 points first, wins. *Variation:* Make a restriction that the ball played into other zone has to be in the air.



### **Coaching Points:**

- reinforce the coaching points listed in activity #1 and #2
- first touch and importance of cushioning ball
- get in line with the ball
- select controlling surface early
- relax body part at impact
- take first touch away from where pressure is coming from

### **4) 6v6 Scrimmage (25-30 minutes)**

Play a regular game with goalkeepers.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in activity #1 and #2
- Highlight the technique of receiving the ball in the air
- Reinforce positive decision making opportunities (what surface they use to receive it, where their first touch goes, body positioning, etc.)

### **5) Cool-down (10 minutes):**

Groups of 3. One player is the server and has the ball in their hands and the other two are ready to juggle. Server says 2 and 2 which means the server tosses the ball to the first player who has to juggle the ball two times before getting it to the next player who has to juggle the ball twice and get it back to the server (ball should not touch the ground). Server can change numbers of juggles to 1 and 1, 1 and 5, 3 and 4, 4 and 2, etc.