

## PSV players will touch the ball nearly 1 million more times than the American player

By Greg Thompson

This article is a must read written by Gregg Thompson who was a 1984 U.S. Olympian, 1985-86 U.S. National Team (12 caps), and is now a Placer United Coach.

I brought 4 boys from our club to a soccer camp featuring Pepijn Lijnders from PSV Eindhoven, one of the premier developers of youth talent in the world. After the final day of camp, I discussed with him why Europeans are so much more comfortable with the ball than Americans. The answer was simple...touches on the ball. He said at the younger ages, the top American players are fairly even with the European players but as time goes on, the Americans fall further and further behind.

Once I got home, I did some quick calculations on my calculator and Pepijn's point really hit home. I approximated the touches the players received at the soccer camp during Pepijn's 90 minute session and compared them to the number of touches players receive at a "typical" 90 minute soccer practice I see every day of the week.

In 90 minutes, Pepijn's practice consisted of approximately:

15 minutes: Individual fast foot work warm up - 900 touches

15 minutes: Fast foot work with passive defender - 500 touches

20 minutes: 1 vs 1 competition - 400 touches

20 minutes: 2 vs 2 competition - 200 touches

20 minutes: 3 vs 3 competition - 100 touches

Total number of touches in 90 minutes = 2,100

In 90 minutes, a "typical" practice:

15 minutes: Running/stretching without the ball - 0 touches

15 minutes: Running around the field with a partner and passing the ball - 150 touches

20 minutes: Shooting drill / 2 lines toward a big goal - 125 touches

20 minutes: Shooting / Crossing drill...1 player crossing, 2 players attacking goal - 100 touches

20 minutes: 7 vs 7 scrimmage - 50 touches

Total number of touches in 90 minutes = 425 touches

Assuming 3 training sessions per week and a 9 month season:

Number of touches

per week

PSV team: 6,300

Typical American player: 1,275

per month

PSV team: 25,200

Typical American player: 5,100

per season

PSV team: 226,800

Typical American player: 45,900

In just 5 years, the PSV player or similarly coached players will touch the ball nearly 1 million more times than the American player. Tough to argue with those numbers!

Granted most coaches don't have the knowledge of a PSV coach; however, if volunteer coaches at the rec/select/competitive levels just focused on touches on the ball, our players would be way ahead. To take a step back and ask our coaches not to worry about drills and to just play games of 1 vs 1, 2 vs 2, 3 vs 3 and 5 vs 5 at practice with little instruction, there would be a tremendous increase in number of touches and a corresponding increase in player development. The small sided competitions unintentionally/naturally teach the game to the players with little input from coaches.