

## **Possession Soccer – Turning the Ball**

### **Introduction**

The previous section discussed ways for individuals, and then small groups, to achieve possession of the ball and then to maintain it by effective shielding. This section amplifies on this skill to explain the team concept of possessing the ball.

The first order of business is to increase the technical skill level of our players. We must get them comfortable in playing with their back to the goal in middle and attacking thirds of the field. In order to do this we will progress through a series of exercises where they are exposed to constantly increasing levels of pressure until they can perform the footskill and first touch techniques automatically.

If you watch soccer at the higher levels, the Woman's National Team being a particularly good example, you will notice that many times players are situated with their back to the goal, i.e. coming forward towards their teammate to receive the ball or with their back to the goal at the top of the 18. The US Women's team in the 2-0, 1999 World Cup win over Brazil was constantly splitting two defenders with passes to players coming back at the ball. The receiving player then either **turned** with the ball towards her goal, or laid it off to a teammate making a run toward the goal.

***Players turn the ball against pressure to create time and space to pass, shoot, or dribble.***

Players who can receive and turn the ball against intense pressure and in tight space, and who can then take on defenders to go to goal, are extremely valuable to their teams. Such players have the ability to compete and contribute at the most competitive levels.

Going back to the US Women's Team example, during the Brazil game the US was very successful in coming back at the ball and turning. Conversely, in the championship final the intense pressure put on the Americans by the Chinese National Team prevented the US from effectively turning in this game. The result... a much tighter defensive battle that as we know ended in a 0-0 draw after 120 minutes. If you have tapes of the game watch them back to back and you'll see the difference a little more pressure makes on how your team performs.