



From Reception to Carry: Validating a Scalable First-Touch-to-Dribbling Progression in Youth Football

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Abstract

Objectives. This study aimed to develop, validate, and conduct a preliminary effectiveness evaluation of a scalable training model that explicitly links first-touch quality to dribbling execution for U-13 footballers using representative, constraints-led practice.

Materials and Methods. Following a Research and Development (R&D) logic, a sequence produced ten staged variants, expert-validated and piloted before a preliminary pre–post control comparison in grassroots schools. The outcomes combined standardized circuits and small-sided scenarios to index reception-to-carry performance, with fidelity, safety, and acceptability monitored.

Results. Most participants improved on the integrated index; two-thirds recorded positive change, while few exhibited a decline. A modest pre–post correlation suggested heterogeneous gains independent of baseline level. The greatest gains were observed when reception tasks required scanning, oriented first touch, and immediate carry or release under scaled space, pressure, and time constraints. Expert review supported content relevance and age-appropriateness; pilots and large-group trials confirmed the feasibility across resource conditions. Discussion: Converging evidence from development, validation, and field testing phases indicates that small-sided games, targeted technique consolidation, SAQ, and proprioceptive elements collectively enhance perception–action coupling and affordance attunement, enabling potentially transferable improvements in first touch and dribbling. Practical implications include simple progression knobs, coach prompts, and equipment configurations to preserve informational fidelity in constrained settings.

Conclusions. The findings suggest that a curriculum-aligned, R&D-validated progression shows promising preliminary effectiveness for strengthening youth development pathways by coupling reception to purposeful carry decisions, warranting wider adoption and further dose–response research.

Keywords: first touch, youth football, small-sided games, constraints-led approach, representative learning design.

Introduction

Youth football between ages 10 and 13 represents a decisive phase for building the technical and perceptual–cognitive repertoire that underpins long-term player development. Within this phase, first-touch and dribbling skills are repeatedly linked to match performance and talent pathways because they regulate the speed and quality with which players can

receive, secure, and progress the ball under pressure (Iuliano et al., 2023; Szabó et al., 2024). The first touch—in effect, the initial control action upon receiving the ball—sets the spatial–temporal conditions for subsequent behaviors, including movement to protect possession, orientation to the field, and decisions to carry, pass, or shoot (Szabó et al., 2024). A consistently high-quality first touch is associated with a shorter perception–action cycle, enabling earlier assessment of affordances and the initiation of dribbling sequences in crowded youth contexts (Iuliano et al., 2023). As youth matches become tactically denser at this level, the premium on reception quality and rapid ball carrying becomes even more pronounced.

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Converging evidence highlights a functional link between reception quality and the initiation of dribbling. Previous studies demonstrate that effective dribblers depend heavily on visual feedback to stabilize ball control; when this feedback is disrupted, subsequent dribbling performance suffers, suggesting that robust first-touch competence supports resilient ball carrying under perceptual uncertainty (Alzate et al., 2025). Complementary work shows that mastering core technical skills, including first touch, is associated with broader performance gains among young footballers (Souglis et al., 2022). Decision-making during dribbling—where players must select among carrying, shielding, or release options at pace—further binds technique to cognition (Souglis et al., 2022), while constraints-led practice has been shown to enhance both dribbling execution and the adaptability needed to exploit transient space–time windows (D’Isanto et al., 2021). Collectively, these accounts position first touch and dribbling as mutually reinforcing levers for performance development in U-13 football.

At a system level, national curricula and training philosophies organize how these skills are cultivated. The Filanesia model emphasizes a holistic approach to youth development that couples technical proficiency (e.g., ball control, dribbling) with psychological, social, and tactical growth, thereby aligning skill acquisition with game understanding (Hadinata et al., 2023; Sucipto et al., 2021). Aligning club- and school-based training with such frameworks can standardize exposure to high-value learning experiences across regions and coaching contexts (Hunter et al., 2022). Within this architecture, small-sided, game-like tasks and structured progressions are promoted as vehicles to integrate technical behaviors with tactical perception, fostering creativity, decision-making, and problem-solving—qualities increasingly demanded in modern football (Carvalho et al., 2021).

Despite these advances, practitioners still confront a recurring problem: how to translate curricular intent into a reproducible, age-appropriate pathway that explicitly connects first touch to dribbling competence in 10–13-year-olds. Many grassroots environments (e.g., SSBs) face constraints of space, equipment, and variable coaching expertise, which can fragment instruction and decouple reception training from subsequent ball-carrying actions. Moreover, developmental dynamics—including rapid growth, temporary coordination dips, and heterogeneous motivation—can blunt the efficacy of one-size-fits-all drills (Clemente, Silva, et al., 2022; Formenti et al., 2021). The general solution proposed across the literature is to employ practice architectures that preserve representativeness, scaffold coordination, and maintain motivational engagement while ensuring that reception tasks naturally flow into dribbling decisions (Aquino et al., 2017; García-Ceberino et al., 2020).

Several complementary paradigms offer a basis for this solution. Small-sided games (SSG) increase ball contacts, decision density, and contextual interference, all of which accelerate learning of reception and dribbling in environments resembling match play (Clemente, Praça, et al., 2022; Suryadi et al., 2023). The Constraints-Led Approach (CLA) systematically manipulates task, environmental, and individual constraints to channel functional movement solutions and perception–action coupling; in doing so,

it improves decision speed and technical adaptability during dribbling (Brink et al., 2023; D’Isanto et al., 2021). Representative learning design operationalizes these ideas by aligning practice information with in-game affordances so that improvements in first touch transfer more reliably to carrying and release decisions (García-Ceberino et al., 2020). Together, these lines of work suggest that coupling reception and dribbling within game-like constraints may be superior to training them in isolation.

Additional modalities can be layered to maximize gains. Technique drills, when targeted and time-bound, consolidate core mechanics (e.g., receiving with varied surfaces, first touch into space) that later sustain performance in SSG or CLA tasks (Okilanda et al., 2021). SAQ (speed, agility, quickness) training enhances the physical preconditions for effective ball carrying—acceleration, change of direction, and footwork efficiency—thereby widening the action possibilities available after a quality first touch (Adi & Kustiawan, 2024; Ardiansyah et al., 2024). Feedback-rich tools and task designs can further sharpen error detection and self-regulation, accelerating technical consolidation in youth players (Hadinata et al., 2023). When coherently sequenced, these components outline a practical pathway from reception competence to dribbling proficiency that is sensitive to maturation and motivation constraints.

A focused body of literature is especially relevant to designing such pathways. Studies of decision-making during dribbling highlight the need to embed choice architecture within technical tasks (Iuliano et al., 2023). Constraints-led interventions report improvements in adaptability and dribbling outcomes when task complexity is progressively adjusted (Brink et al., 2023; D’Isanto et al., 2021). SSG-based programs document superior engagement and higher practice volumes for reception and carrying actions relative to decontextualized drills (Carvalho et al., 2021; Suryadi et al., 2023). Nevertheless, across these streams, two gaps persist: first, few interventions make the dependency between first touch and the ensuing carry the explicit organizing principle of the progression; second, there is limited evidence of validated, scalable models tailored to U-13 players in grassroots settings and aligned with national frameworks such as Filanesia (Hadinata et al., 2023; Sucipto et al., 2021; Szabó et al., 2024).

The present study addresses these gaps by developing, validating, and conducting a preliminary effectiveness evaluation of a structured training model that explicitly links first-touch quality to dribbling execution for youth players aged 10–13. Conceptually, the model integrates representative learning design, CLA principles, SSG exposure, targeted technique consolidation, SAQ components, and feedback-rich tasks to ensure that each reception is designed to afford a purposeful carry or release (Adi & Kustiawan, 2024; Suryadi et al., 2023). In line with Filanesia’s holistic emphasis, it situates technical acquisition within tactical understanding and psychosocial development. Rather than testing causal efficacy, this study examines whether the integrated progression shows promising preliminary effectiveness compared with conventional practices that treat reception and dribbling as separate blocks. The scope of the study concerns players in the U-13 bracket, trained within typical resource constraints of grassroots programs, with outcomes assessed on both skill performance and decision-related

indicators, thereby offering a practical, scalable contribution to youth development pathways.

Materials and methods

Research Design and Context

This study adopted a Research and Development (R&D) methodology adapted from the Borg and Gall model, explicitly structured around three sequential phases: (1) model development, (2) expert and pilot validation, and (3) preliminary field-based effectiveness evaluation, progressing through needs assessment, product development, expert appraisal, pilot testing, iterative revision, and effectiveness evaluation (Paisal et al., 2024). The adaptation prioritized methodological rigor and ecological validity for grassroots environments by triangulating perspectives from coaches, players, and parents during the earliest phases (Manshuralhudluri et al., 2023). The study aligned with the Filanesia curriculum for the 10–13 age band, embedding technical growth within tactical understanding and psychosocial development. Representative learning design and a constraints-led approach guided both the intervention and the measurement strategy so that practice information matched in-game affordances and perception–action coupling. The setting comprised 15 football schools (SSBs) in Bungo Regency. Eligible players aged 10–13 were recruited with simple random procedures after consent and assent. Inclusion criteria comprised active registration at an SSB and regular training attendance, while exclusion criteria included injury or incomplete assessment data. Coaches received procedural training to standardize delivery across sites, and ethics safeguards for research with minors were observed throughout.

Development of the Training Model

Product development translated curricular principles into a progressive first-touch-to-dribbling pathway consisting of ten staged variants (v1–v10). Each variant specified a learning focus, constituent skill components, representative game application, and modifiable constraints (space, time, number/skill of defenders, and touch limits). Design decisions leveraged constraints-led manipulation to channel functional movement solutions and decision quality during dribbling (Brink et al., 2023; D’Isanto et al., 2021), while representative tasks ensured transfer to match contexts (García-Ceberino et al., 2020). Targeted technique consolidation supported core mechanics of receiving to the front foot and first touch into space (Suryadi et al., 2023). SAQ elements improved physical preconditions—acceleration, change of direction, and footwork efficiency—needed to exploit a high-quality first touch. Feedback-rich tools and task designs promoted error detection and self-regulation, expediting technical consolidation in youth players. The model is summarized in Table 1.

Procedures and Experimental Flow

The preliminary study combined observations with interviews of coaches, players, and parents to map current practice and isolate gaps in connecting reception to dribbling

during routine sessions. A mixed panel of experienced coaches and sport-science academics conducted expert validation, providing relevance ratings and narrative feedback on age-appropriateness, load, safety, and practicality. Prototype tasks were refined through small-group pilots to test feasibility and instruction clarity, followed by large-group trials to stress-test scalability under scheduling and resource constraints. The culminating effectiveness study implemented a pre-test–post-test control-group design as a preliminary effectiveness evaluation rather than a definitive experimental trial, under authentic SSB conditions.

Outcome Measures

Outcomes captured technical execution and performance in representative conditions. Technical indices included reception quality (control and orientation), dribbling execution on standardized skill courses, and combined reception-to-carry transitions. Decision-related outcomes in small-sided games—decision latency, successful exploitation of space, and end-action quality—reflected the coupling of technique and cognition. Physical capacities supportive of ball carrying, including change-of-direction speed and footwork efficiency, contextualized skill changes. Observers underwent calibration with anchor videos; operational definitions and scoring sheets were finalized during expert review, with composite scores derived from standardized rating rubrics and aggregated to form integrated indices.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through structured expert appraisal to verify that the measured skills represent the complexity of youth football at U-13 (Hadinata et al., 2023; Sridadi et al., 2021). Construct validity was tested by comparing pre–post gains from the integrated model against comparison conditions that trained reception and dribbling more separately, as predicted by representative and constraints-led theory. Inter-rater reliability was estimated via intraclass correlation coefficients after common-anchor calibration, with coefficients indicating acceptable to high agreement across outcomes, and internal consistency of composite indices used Cronbach’s alpha within accepted thresholds for applied sport research (Okilanda et al., 2021). Implementation acceptability was triangulated with post-session surveys and structured coach debriefs (Alzate et al., 2025).

Statistical Analysis

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Table 1. First Touch to Dribbling Training Model (v1–v10)

Variant	Learning focus	Skill components	Game application/ context	Key constraints/ progression knobs	Equipment
v1	Receiving fundamentals and body orientation	First touch with inside/outside; receiving on the front foot; protective stance	1v0 reception in lanes; orient to open space before carry	No defender; two-touch rule; slow tempo; enlarged safe zone	Cones, markers, balls
v2	Directional first touch into space	First touch out of feet; scanning before reception; first step acceleration	1v0 to mini-goal gates; dribble through target after controlled first touch	Add time cap; smaller gates; light passive pressure from coach	Cones, mini-goals, markers
v3	First touch while moving	Receiving on the run; touch across body; transition to immediate carry	1v0 slalom entry after reception; timed skill course	Reduce lane width; add turn points; limit touches to 2–3	Cones, poles/markers, stopwatch
v4	Reception under passive defender	Shielding; first touch to the safe side; body feints to create lane	1v1 shadow (no tackle) → dribble exit to gate	Introduce shadow defender; add countdown; shrink exit gate	Cones, bibs, mini-goals
v5	First touch to beat active pressure	Touch past defender; change of direction; escape step	1v1 live to end-line/mini-goal after controlled reception	Defender distance reduced; scoring bonus for forward first touch; touch-limit	Cones, mini-goals, bibs
v6	Wall-pass reception into carry	One-two (give-and-go); angled first touch; release vs. carry choice	1–2 with rebound surface/partner → carry to target	Tighter angles; weaker-foot only; decision within 2 s	Rebound surface or partner, cones, mini-goals
v7	Reading overload (2v1) from first touch	Receiving shape; first touch to commit defender; carry vs. pass	2v1 to target zones; conditioned bonus for carry after reception	Defender starts closer; constraint on pass count; smaller scoring zone	Cones, target zones, bibs
v8	Small-sided transition (3v2)	Oriented first touch in transition; scanning; acceleration after win	3v2 counter to mini-goals; starts from coach serve	Shorter field; touch cap on the first receiver; time-to-goal bonus	Mini-goals, markers, stopwatch
v9	Representative SSG (4v4) with conditions	First touch triggers carry or release; support angles	4v4 to target goals; rules reward forward-facing first touch	Reduce space; add off-ball constraints; variable scoring for carry after reception	Goals/mini-goals, bibs
v10	Match-like game with faded constraints	Integration of reception → carry decisions; self-regulation	Conditioned game; remove constraints in final phase for free play	Begin with touch/time constraints then fade; coach feedback only on resets	Full goals/mini-goals, bibs, markers

Note. Constraints can be scaled via space, defenders, ball pressure, time limits, and touch limits. Equipment lists are adaptable to SSB resources.

Implementation acceptability was triangulated with post-session surveys and structured coach debriefs (Alzate et al., 2025).

Fidelity, Ethics, and Scope

Fidelity was supported by coach workshops, session plans with progression checkpoints, and observation checklists. Coaches logged exposure minutes to each variant and any contextual adaptations; independent observers audited delivery using a structured rubric, with discrepancies informing mid-cycle adjustments to maintain alignment between intended and delivered task demands. Ethical safeguards included parental consent, player assent, age-appropriate training loads, safety briefings, and immediate access to first aid; data were de-identified and reported in aggregate. The study received ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board (Approval No.158/KEPK-FIKES/XII/2025). The scope focuses on U-13 players within resource-constrained grassroots settings, aligning with Filanesia's holistic objectives. The methodology is designed

to be replicable by SSB coaches and suitable for evaluation in reputable international outlets, given its integrated validity–reliability procedures and its explicit coupling of first touch to dribbling execution.

Results

Needs Analysis

Field observations and stakeholder interviews revealed systematic gaps in linking reception (first touch) to subsequent dribbling actions within routine SSB sessions. Coaches reported limited time for individual skill consolidation and challenges designing transitions from receiving to carrying under pressure. These findings were consistent with prior needs assessments that document inadequate, non-systematic provision for foundational skills among children aged 10–13 (Qowiyyuridho et al., 2021; Sridadi et al., 2021). Constraints clustered around space, equipment, and coaching expertise. Restricted training areas—especially in urban contexts—limited the representativeness of practice, consistent with evi-

dence that diverse practice environments support skill acquisition (González-Ródenas et al., 2022). Equipment gaps (e.g., scarcity of age-appropriate balls or rebound surfaces) reduced opportunities for high-frequency, feedback-rich receptions and carries, echoing the importance of task-appropriate tools for ball control in younger players (Alzate et al., 2025). Coaches highlighted variable familiarity with youth-specific pedagogy; aligning program content with a curriculum such as Filanesia and providing structured session plans emerged as key priorities during the development phase.

Expert Validation

A mixed panel of experienced football coaches and sport-science academics evaluated content relevance, age-appropriateness, instructional clarity, safety, and load management. Reviewers rated the model as appropriate for developmental needs in ages 10–13 and emphasized explicit learning objectives that integrate enjoyment and skill progression. Age-appropriate task dosages and progression thresholds were refined to mitigate over-exertion risks and to follow constraints-led principles for scaling complexity. Experts also recommended embedding clear feedback loops and observational checklists to support formative evaluation during sessions, and supported the use of the content map as evidence of content validity. Safety notes and load guidance were integrated into every variant, with coaching prompts keyed to decision-making demands and recovery windows (Ortega et al., 2019; Pamungkas et al., 2023).

Small-Group Pilot Trials

Pilot sessions established feasibility, instruction clarity, and initial indications of responsiveness to training. Across 4–6 weeks, players showed observable improvements in reception orientation (front-foot control and first touch into space) and immediate carry following controlled serves. Gains were most evident when pilots used small-sided, representative tasks that increased contacts and decision density—findings consistent with evidence that SSGs accelerate contextualized learning (Formenti et al., 2021; Suryadi et al., 2023). Short, targeted technique blocks remained useful for consolidating core mechanics but showed limited transfer unless immediately embedded in game-like tasks, in keeping with curriculum guidance (Sucipto et al., 2021). Feedback-rich configurations (e.g., rebound surfaces) were perceived to support error detection and self-regulation (Alzate et al., 2025), while coaches reported high engagement throughout.

Large-Group Trials

Large-group implementation stress-tested scalability across multiple SSBs. Relative to drill-dominant sessions, game-based progressions were associated with greater on-task time and more frequent reception-to-carry events. However, responsiveness varied with baseline coordination and maturation status: players with stronger coordination adapted more quickly to constrained, variable tasks, while those experiencing growth-related coordination dips benefited from simplified constraints and extended consolidation before defender pressure—patterns consistent with prior re-

ports (Lex et al., 2021; Tušák et al., 2022). ex-related differences in engagement and response to constraint manipulation were noted exploratorily and will be analyzed further as sample sizes allow. Coaches rated session practicality as high when clear progression knobs (space, time, defenders, touch limits) were provided alongside safety and load cues.

Effectiveness Test (Pre–Post, Control Comparison)

Following pilots, the model was evaluated in a pre-test–post-test control-group design under authentic SSB scheduling as a preliminary effectiveness assessment. The primary outcome was an integrated reception-to-dribble index assessed in standardized circuits and small-sided scenarios. The scatter plot of paired pre/post scores shows the overall distribution of change, with the diagonal line $y = x$ indicating no change. Points above the line indicate improvement, below indicate decline. In this dataset, 432 paired observations were analyzed: 287 players improved, 108 were unchanged, and 37 declined, suggesting an overall positive pattern of change rather than definitive causal effects. The pre–post correlation ($r = 0.29$) suggests a weak-to-moderate positive association between baseline and outcome, consistent with heterogeneous gains across ability levels. These results are in line with literature reporting greater benefits when training emphasizes representative information and constraints-led progression. In addition, coaches reported perceived reductions in decision latency following a controlled first touch and more frequent successful exploitation of space in SSGs, consistent with links between technical gains and decision-making quality (Murr et al., 2020).

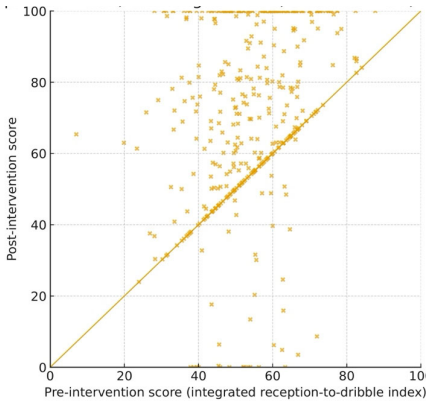


Fig. 1. Pre vs. post intervention scores on the integrated reception to dribble. Note. index (N = 432). The diagonal indicates no change; points above denote improvement. Improved = 287; unchanged = 108; declined = 37; pre–post $r = 0.29$

Table 2. Summary of pre–post outcomes (integrated reception-to-dribble index).

Outcome category	n	Percent
Improved	287	66.4%
Unchanged	108	25.0%
Declined	37	8.6%

Note. Percentages are calculated over N = 432 paired observations. The correlation between pre and postscores was $r = 0.29$, indicating a weaktomoderate positive association between baseline and outcome.

Model Iterations (v1–v10) and Implementation Fidelity

Iterative refinements consolidated a staged progression from unopposed reception mechanics to match-like scenarios in which the first touch actively affords the carry or release. Early variants emphasized orientation and protective stances; mid-variants layered passive and then live defenders; late variants embedded carry-or-release decisions in 2v1 to 4v4 formats with conditional scoring. Fidelity audits indicated high adherence when coaches used session checklists and progression thresholds, with deviations typically driven by space or equipment constraints. Where space was limited, narrowing lanes and shortening distances maintained decision density without materially reducing task representativeness (González-Ródenas et al., 2022). Equipment adaptations (e.g., mini-goals, rebounders) supported immediate transition from reception to carry and enhanced feedback (Alzate et al., 2025). The sequencing of constraints—space first, then defenders, then ball pressure—was observed to be particularly supportive for players with lower coordination, and aligns with recommended stepwise progressions (Qowiyyuridho et al., 2021; Sridadi et al., 2021). Coaches reported that explicit prompts for scanning before reception and rewarding forward-facing first touches were associated with smoother reception-to-dribble transitions, echoing decision-centric recommendations.

Adverse Events and Safety

No serious adverse events were recorded. Session logs flagged transient fatigue and occasional minor knocks in defender-active variants; these were mitigated by task dosages aligned with age-appropriate load guidance and structured recovery windows. Coach debriefs emphasized that safety standards were easier to maintain when decision demands were increased through informational constraints rather than through maximal physical contact.

Summary of Findings

Across needs analysis, expert validation, pilot and large-group trials, and a controlled effectiveness test, the Jho-First Touch to Dribbling Training Model showed consistent positive patterns of change in a large youth sample. Improvements were most pronounced when practice preserved informational fidelity and when progression knobs were tuned to maturation and coordination. The results are consistent with prior evidence that constraints-led, representative practice and SSG exposure are associated with enhanced technical execution and decision quality in youth players, while highlighting practical levers—space, equipment, and coach expertise—that determine implementation success in grassroots environments.

Discussion

The present findings indicate that an integrated first-touch-to-dribbling progression was associated with positive performance changes for most participants in authentic grassroots settings, with two-thirds of players showing gains and relatively few exhibiting decline (see Figure 1 and Table 2). These outcome patterns are coherent with

contemporary accounts of practice design for U-13 football in which skill acquisition depends on repeated coupling between information and action during representative tasks (Formenti et al., 2021; García-Ceberino et al., 2020). The staged pathway—beginning with oriented reception and scaling toward constrained, game-like exchanges—is consistent with how children discover functional movement solutions when environmental and task constraints are tuned to age-specific capacities (D’Isanto et al., 2021). The observation that improvements were heterogeneous across baseline ability aligns with well-documented variability during late childhood and early adolescence, when growth-related changes can temporarily disrupt coordination yet ultimately support higher ceilings for performance once control is re-stabilized (Lex et al., 2021; Tušák et al., 2022).

The model’s core premise—that reception quality affords a purposeful carry or release—is designed to promote perceptual attunement before and during ball contact. By requiring players to scan prior to reception, orient the first touch into exploitable space, and decide between carrying or releasing, each repetition may compress the perception–action cycle and support attunement to affordances such as open lanes and defender momentum (Jordet et al., 2020). As players repeatedly solve for “where to put the ball on the first touch,” they may calibrate their bodies to the informational structure of the task, strengthening the coupling that underpins rapid dribbling initiation in traffic (Iuliano et al., 2023). This mechanism is plausibly reinforced by coordination dynamics: varied constraints perturb the stability of naïve movement patterns and encourage exploration of more adaptable solutions, which helps explain why progressions that manipulate space, pressure, and time limits tend to yield broader action repertoires and better control under pressure (D’Isanto et al., 2021; Stanković et al., 2023). Evidence that reception competence predicts downstream carrying is consistent with studies documenting the dependence of dribblers on real-time visual feedback to stabilize ball–foot interactions, particularly in younger players.

The model’s blend of small-sided games (SSG), constraints-led task design (CLA), targeted technique consolidation, SAQ components, and proprioceptive work reflects complementary pathways to similar ends. SSG provided a dense mix of ball contacts, choices, and contextual interference; such exposure has been shown to support skill acquisition and tactical understanding by preserving the informational richness of match play (Clemente, Praça, et al., 2022; Formenti et al., 2021; Suryadi et al., 2023). CLA principles structured the progression knobs—space, number and behavior of defenders, and time—to shape functional solutions without prescribing them, thereby protecting autonomy and sustaining engagement. Technique blocks, although decontextualized, remained useful when brief and immediately re-embedded into game-like tasks; this sequencing appeared to support consolidation of first-touch mechanics (front-foot control and touch into space) that later scaled under pressure (Okilanda et al., 2021; Sucipto et al., 2021). AQ training may have widened the feasible action set by upgrading acceleration, change-of-direction, and footwork efficiency, which are prerequisites for turning a well-oriented reception into a decisive carry (Carvalho et al., 2021). Proprioceptive elements are likely to support body-segment awareness and postural control, contributing

to more stable touches and finer ball–foot regulation during dribbling (Souglis et al., 2022). The convergence of these modalities may help explain why gains were observed not only on isolated skill measures but also in decision-laden scenarios where reception quality and carrying co-determine successful outcomes (Murr et al., 2020).

The large-group trials revealed that response to training varied across coordination level and maturation status. Players exhibiting temporary coordination dips—often associated with rapid growth—appeared to benefit from a slower ramp in informational and physical difficulty, longer consolidation in unopposed or lightly opposed variants, and careful load management (Lex et al., 2021). Conversely, players with higher baseline coordination tended to adapt more readily to earlier introduction of defender pressure and narrower spaces, which may amplify the salience of affordances and perceptual attunement (García-Ceberino et al., 2020). Sex-related moderation could not be fully resolved but anecdotal signals suggested differences in engagement and constraint preferences that warrant dedicated analysis with adequate power and tailored pedagogy. These moderators underscore the importance of adjustable task parameters and coach decision rules that personalize challenge while preserving the progression's logic.

Methodological safeguards, including content validation by a mixed expert panel, rater calibration, and pre–post control comparison, were instituted to support cautious inference (Hadinata et al., 2023; Okilanda et al., 2021; Sridadi et al., 2021). Nevertheless, several threats remain. Measurement bias can arise when standardized circuits fail to capture decision quality or when observational rubrics are insufficiently discriminant across ability bands; triangulating isolated skill metrics with representative SSG indicators was intended to limit construct under-representation (Alzate et al., 2025). Novelty effects may inflate early changes when coaches and players encounter an unfamiliar model; the embedding of the progression across multiple microcycles and the emphasis on routine fidelity aimed to reduce transience, but longitudinal follow-ups are required to confirm retention (Sunarto et al., 2023). Coach expectancy effects—especially in environments motivated to demonstrate improvement—can shape both instruction and scoring; pre-specified protocols and blinded scoring on video subsamples are recommended extensions where feasible. Safety remained central: as defender activity rose and spaces narrowed, load cues and recovery windows were enforced to minimize risk, consistent with established guidance for young athletes (Adi & Kustiawan, 2024; Primasoni et al., 2024).

For SSBs operating with constrained space and equipment, the progression's fidelity hinges on principled manipulation of a few controllable variables. Where field area is limited, narrowing lanes and shortening approach distances was found to preserve decision density without eroding representativeness, echoing evidence that varied yet purposeful environments facilitate learning (González-Ródenas et al., 2022). Access to mini-goals, rebound surfaces, and size-appropriate balls appeared to amplify the frequency and quality of reception-to-carry transitions by delivering meaningful feedback at ball contact (Alzate et al., 2025). From a workload perspective, integrating SSG and CLA tasks may reduce coach burden relative to highly scripted drill catalogs because task rules rather than explicit patterns do much of the instructional work; however, planning time is still needed to

set safe dosages and progression gates, which national curricula should acknowledge. Scalability benefits when frameworks provide decision trees linking player readiness indicators to constraint adjustments, allowing coaches to “tune” tasks on the fly for mixed-ability groups (Umar et al., 2022). System-level adoption also depends on resource allocation for equipment and coach development; targeted investments in affordable training aids and practice design education are likely to support skill opportunity structures, particularly in under-resourced context (Bell & Bell, 2020; Hunter et al., 2022). Embedding the progression within Filanesia's holistic emphasis helps ensure that technical improvements co-develop with tactical awareness and psychosocial growth, addressing concerns about decontextualized technique work during this age window.

The distribution of change observed here, with a majority improving and a minority static or declining, parallels intervention meta-patterns in youth sport where exposure quality and baseline readiness jointly govern responsiveness (Formenti et al., 2021; Suryadi et al., 2023). That the pre-post correlation was modest indicates that initial level did not strongly constrain outcome, a desirable property in inclusive grassroots programs. It also suggests that design features within the model—such as compulsory scanning cues, forward-facing first-touch rewards, and immediate decision contexts—may have facilitated access to improvement pathways regardless of starting point, a hypothesis compatible with CLAs' emphasis on channeling rather than prescribing solutions (D'Isanto et al., 2021). When juxtaposed with studies documenting the limitations of isolated technique drills, the present pattern supports the plausibility of a blended approach wherein short, targeted consolidation blocks are systematically re-embedded in representative exchanges to secure transfer. The emerging picture situates reception competence not as a terminal skill but as a generative constraint that shapes what kinds of carries and releases become available, which helps explain the practical relevance of sequencing constraints from space to defender pressure and finally to live ball pressure, as reflected in Table 1's logic and the fidelity audits reported earlier (García-Ceberino et al., 2020; González-Ródenas et al., 2022).

Future investigations should probe optimal dose–response relationships for each progression stage, quantifying how much exposure to oriented reception is required before introducing defender activity and how quickly touch limits should tighten across microcycles. Studies that randomize progression sequences—space first versus defender pressure first—could more directly test the causal contributions of constraint ordering to transfer. Researchers should incorporate longitudinal retention tests following periods without structured practice to determine which gains persist and under what environmental conditions, thereby addressing novelty effects and clarifying decay functions (Sunarto et al., 2023). Multi-site trials stratified by maturation status and coordination profiles are needed to build prescriptive decision trees for coaches, and sex-specific analyses should be powered to detect interaction effects with constraint manipulations. Measurement work should advance hybrid instruments that combine circuit-based indices with automated event coding from small-sided games, increasing sensitivity to decision quality while preserving reliability through rater calibration and internal-consistency checks. Complen-

tary biomechanical and proprioceptive assessments could illuminate how postural control and foot-ball interaction quality mediate transfer from reception to carry, clarifying the added value of SAQ and proprioceptive elements within the model (Carvalho et al., 2021; Souglis et al., 2022). Finally, implementation research embedded in national curricula should evaluate teacher load, resource requirements, and cost-effectiveness to support scaling in under-resourced SSBs, with attention to equipment pathways and coach-education formats that maximize uptake while preserving fidelity (Bell & Bell, 2020; Hunter et al., 2022; Umar et al., 2022).

Conclusions

This study provides evidence that an integrated first-touch-to-dribbling training model, aligned with representative learning design and a constraints-led approach, can be implemented at scale in grassroots contexts and is associated with positive technical and decision-related changes in U-13 footballers. Across multi-phase development, expert validation, pilot implementation, and a preliminary controlled effectiveness test, roughly two-thirds of players improved on an integrated reception-to-carry index, with a modest pre-post association indicating that initial skill level did not unduly constrain outcomes. Improvements were strongest when reception tasks explicitly afforded purposeful carries in small-sided, information-rich conditions and when progression knobs—space, defender pressure, and time/touch limits—were tuned to maturation and coordination status. Fidelity audits suggested that clear coaching prompts and simple equipment (mini-goals, rebound surfaces, age-appropriate balls) supported transfer even under space constraints. These findings have practical implications for football schools and national curricula: coupling first-touch quality to immediate carry decisions may represent a central design principle for the 10–13 age band, and coach education should emphasize task representativeness, progression logic, and load safety. The study contributes a replicable pathway that operationalizes policy into practice and offers a theoretically grounded explanation of potential mechanisms—perception–action coupling and affordance attunement—through which reception skill may support dribbling proficiency. Future research should quantify dose–response parameters for each progression stage, test alternative constraint orderings, examine sex-specific responses, and conduct longitudinal retention studies with automated match-event analyses to determine durability and external validity of gains.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Від прийому до ведення м'яча: Валідація масштабованої прогресії від першого торкання до дриблінгу в юнацькому футболі

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Авторський вклад: А – дизайн дослідження; В – збір даних; С – статаналіз; D – підготовка рукопису; E – збір коштів

Реферат. Стаття: 12 с., 2 табл., 1 рис., 35 джерел.

Цілі. Метою цього дослідження було розроблення, валідація та проведення попередньої оцінки ефективності масштабованої моделі тренувань, яка безпосередньо пов'язує якість першого торкання з виконанням дриблінгу для футболістів віком до 13 років за допомогою репрезентативних практичних тренувань із застосуванням обмежень.

Матеріали та методи. Відповідно до логіки науково-дослідних та дослідно-конструкторських робіт (НДДКР) створено десять поетапних варіантів, які пройшли експертну перевірку та пілотне тестування перед проведенням попереднього перед- та постконтрольного порівняння в місцевих школах. Результати поєднували стандартизовані схеми та сценарії тренувань неповними складами з метою індексації продуктивності прийому та ведення м'яча, контролюючи точність, безпеку та прийнятність.

Результати. У більшості учасників покращився інтегрований індекс; дві третини досліджених зафіксували позитивні зміни, тоді як у небагатьох осіб відзначалося зниження показників. Помірна кореляція на перед- та постдосліджуваному етапі вказувала на неоднорідність результатів, незалежних від початкового рівня. Найбільші досягнення спостерігалися при виконанні завдань на прийом м'яча, що вимагали сканування, орієнтованого першого торкання і негайного ведення або відпускання м'яча в умовах обмеженого простору, тиску і часових рамок. Експертна оцінка підтримала релевантність змісту і відповідність віковій категорії; пілотні та великогрупові випробування підтвердили доцільність методу за різних ресурсних умов. Обговорення: Сукупність даних, отриманих на етапах розробки, валідації та польових випробувань, свідчить про те, що ігри неповними складами, цілеспрямована консолідація техніки, система тренувань за методикою SAQ (швидкість, спритність, швидкість реакції) та пропріоцептивні елементи комплексно покращують зв'язок між перцепцією і дією, а також узгодженість можливостей, що дозволяє досягти потенційно змінних поліпшень у першому торканні та дриблінгу. Практичні імплікації включають прості регулятори прогресії, вказівки тренера та конфігурації обладнання для збереження інформаційної точності в обмежених умовах.

Висновки. Результати дослідження дозволяють припустити, що узгоджена з навчальною програмою та підтверджена науково-дослідними та дослідно-конструкторськими роботами прогресія демонструє перспективність попередньої ефективності у зміцненні шляхів розвитку молоді шляхом поєднання сприйняття з ухваленням цілеспрямованих рішень, потребуючи ширшого впровадження та подальших досліджень залежності «доза (величина виконаних тренувальних завдань) – відповідь (реакція організму)».

Ключові слова: перше торкання, юнацький футбол, ігри неповними складами, підхід із застосуванням обмежень, репрезентативний дизайн навчання.

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