

4 v 4 – A Way Forward for the 7 to 10 year olds?

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Being able to recognise the constantly changing nature of a game of football, being able to see the situation as it is developing, making the **right** decisions for the circumstances and **execute** the required skill or technique with precision is what makes the great players stand out.

I believe 4 v 4 allows players to practice all these elements of match play and as such is a vital tool in the process of learning to play football, especially in the 7-10 age band where **freedom** and **fun** should be the priority.

4 v 4 presents the players with innumerable football problems that have to be solved, but it also has a simple framework where the players can concentrate on their own game and learn how to cope and deal with the problems at their own pace without being pressurised.

If the players are presented with a problem they really cannot solve, the coach is there to help, guide and support their learning but not dominate it. The coach should aim to be inclusive and try to understand why players make the decisions they do. For example, ask why a player has made a certain decision. It may appear like an error of judgment to you but there could be a logical reason for the decision. The solution to the problem may just need modification and the player's basic idea may well be sound. In which case it should not be treated as a mistake.

4 v 4 comes closest to presenting the most match-like situations where the number of players is small enough to allow a high percentage of ball contacts while also encouraging width, depth and movement giving all the options necessary for playing forward or keeping the ball (ie options in all directions).

In 4 v 4 so many football-relevant situations appear in such a short time span that it is possible for players to problem-solve very quickly. Nothing ever happens twice in exactly the same way in a football match although many similar scenarios often repeat themselves and this is certainly true of 4 v 4.

This fact alone makes 4 v 4 vital to the process of learning to play a game which places a great emphasis on reading situations and coming up with the solutions to the problems these situations may present.

4 v 4 generates many match situations, involves all the players, with small numbers guaranteeing **repetition of opportunity to problem solve and learn** (ie see it, make a decision, execute a skill).

Above all 4 v 4 is a **GAME** and kids love a game.

So with the coaches there for guidance and support at the right time and in the right way we can definitely let the 4 v 4 game be **THE TEACHER**.

The components of 4 v 4 in the context of the three moments in the games are outlined below and as you can see have a direct correlation to 11 v 11 match play.

Team in Possession	Gaining Possession	Team not in possession
Shoot; dribble; turn; run with the ball; pass and move Receiving skills	Spread out; end to end and side to side	Stop play Forwards
Support the player with the ball in front and behind on a good angle and distance		Support the player challenging for the ball on a good angle and distance
Movement in front of the ball to receive the ball and to move defenders; consider the timing and angle of runs	Losing Possession Recover and be compact	Cover space and mark players; track runners

Problems to solve in 4 v 4

If you find yourself in the sweeper position with your own team in possession

Objectives

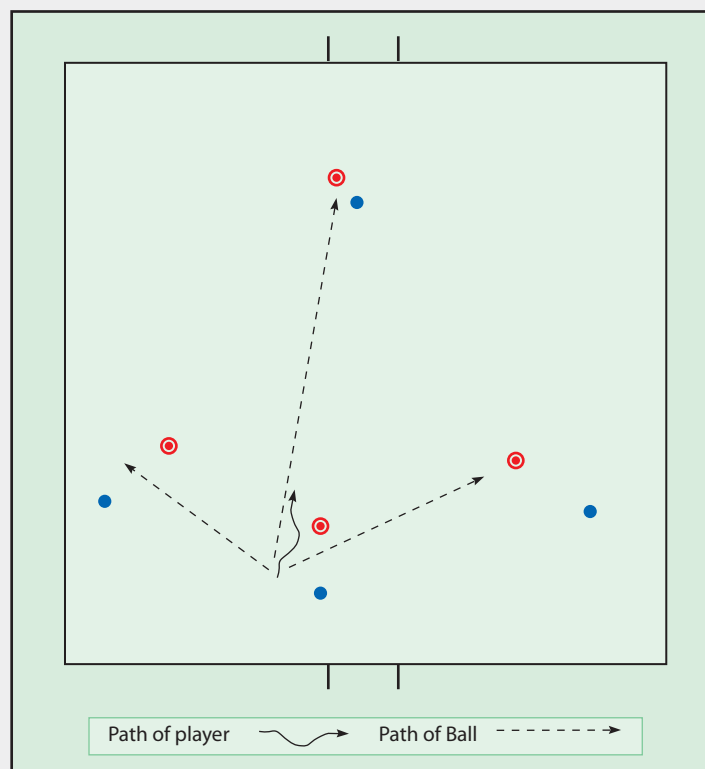
- Keep the ball
- Launch an attack
- Try to score
- Break out from the back

Skills involved

- Dribbling
- Turning
- Running with the ball
- Screening
- Passing
- Receiving
- Shooting

Understanding

- Angles and distances of support
- When to play forward
- When to play through midfield
- When to make a back pass possible so play can be switched
- When to keep the ball
- Read and recognise situations as they develop
- Communication – talk to an encourage your team mates with specific information (ie turn, man on, etc).



If you find yourself in a midfield position with your own team in possession

Objectives

- Carry on the momentum of an attack
- Look to play forward and support
- Look to support in a third man move
- Keep the ball
- Switch the focus of attack if needed
- Try to score

Skills involved

- Dribbling
- Turning
- Running with the ball
- Screening
- Passing
- Receiving
- Shooting
- Combination play

Understanding

- Angles and distance of support
- When to play forward
- When to play back
- When to keep the ball
- When to switch the focus of attack
- Talk to and encourage your team mates with specific information (eg turn, man on, etc)
- Govern the tempo.

If you find yourself in the striker position with your own team in possession

Objectives

- Scoring
- Moving your opponent
- Linking the play
- Finding space

Skills involved

- Receiving
- Creating and finding space
- Dummy runs to create space
- Beating your opponent 1 v 1
- Shooting
- Dribbling
- Turning
- Rebounding
- Screening
- Passing and moving

Understanding

- Create space (for yourself and others)
- Play on the back shoulder
- Early movement (anticipate, gamble)
- Late movement as defenders ball watch
- Pull of the defenders
- Get across the front of defenders
- Combine and link your play
- Holding up play.

If you find yourself in the sweeper position with your opponents in possession

Objectives

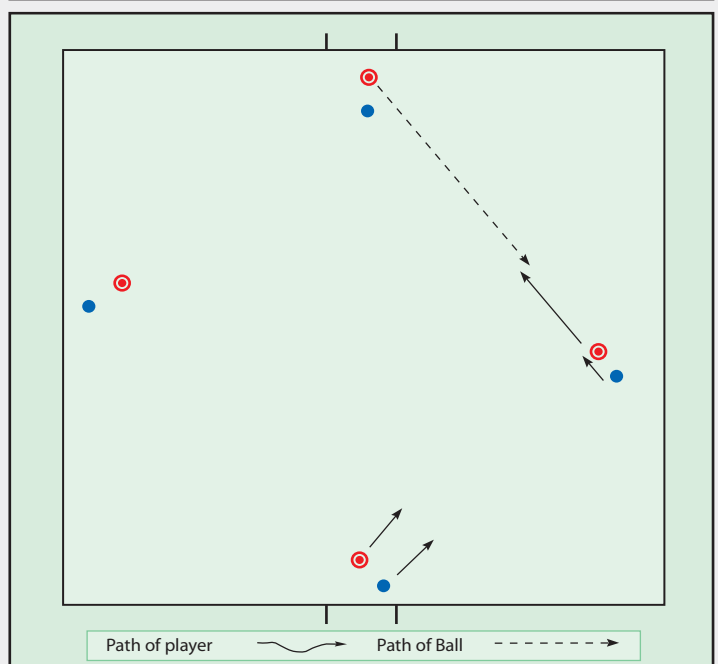
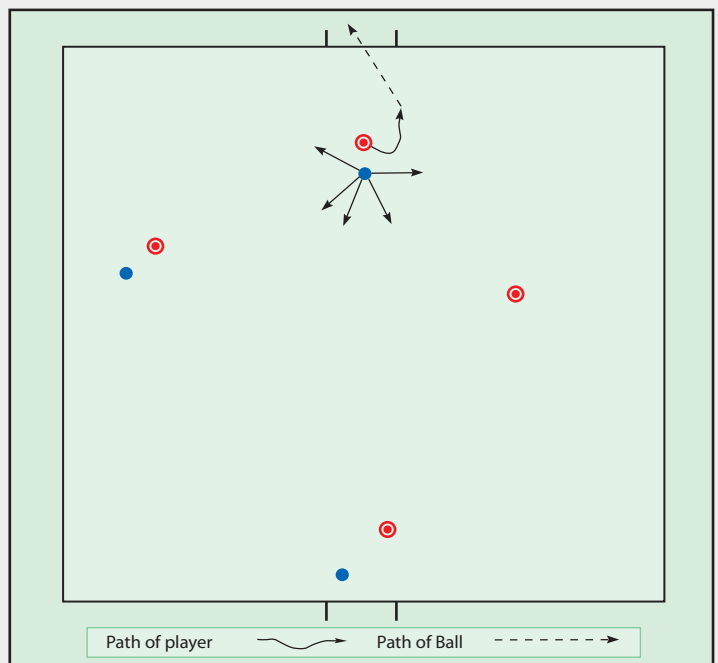
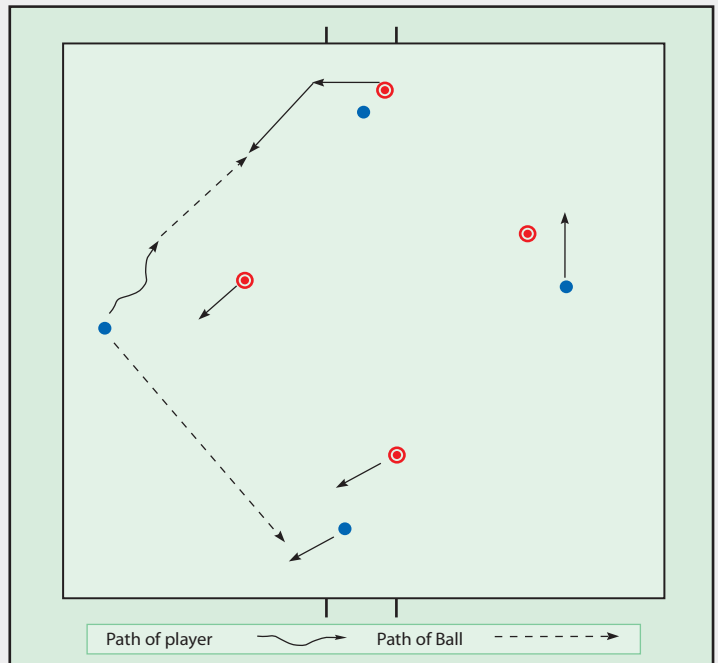
- Do not concede a goal
- Mark your opponent effectively
- Win the ball

Skills involved

- Stay in between your opponent and your goal
- Read the play
- Spoil
- Intercept
- Tackle
- Stop Turns
- Delay

Understanding

- Force play
- Stop forward passes
- Apply pressure
- Close as the ball travels
- Press or drop
- 'Read' situations and attempt interceptions
- Do not get detached from the team and exposed.



If you find yourself in the striker position with your opponents in possession

Objectives

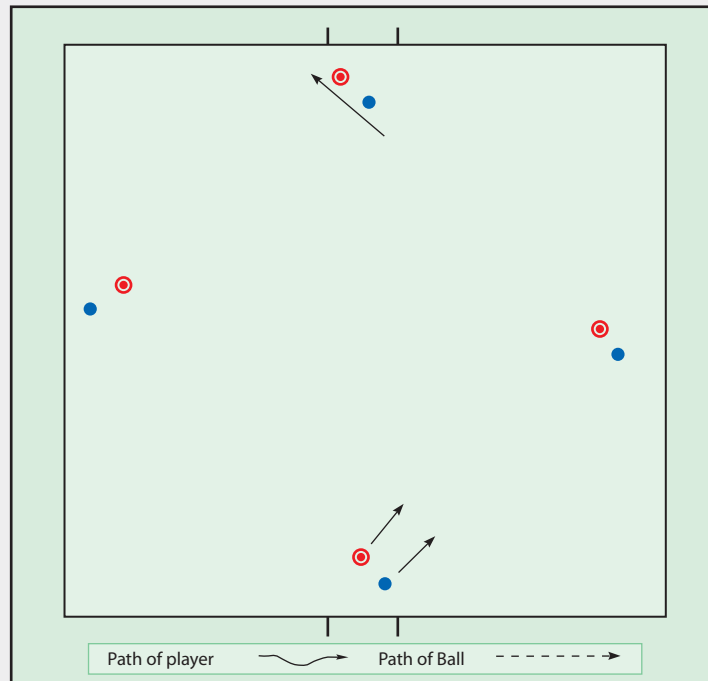
- Spoil opponents' build up play
- Prevent long forward passes
- Delay opponents
- Force play in one direction

Understanding

- Force play
- Stop forward passes
- Apply pressure
- Close as the ball travels
- Press or drop
- 'Read' situations and attempt interceptions
- Do not get detached from the team and get exposed.

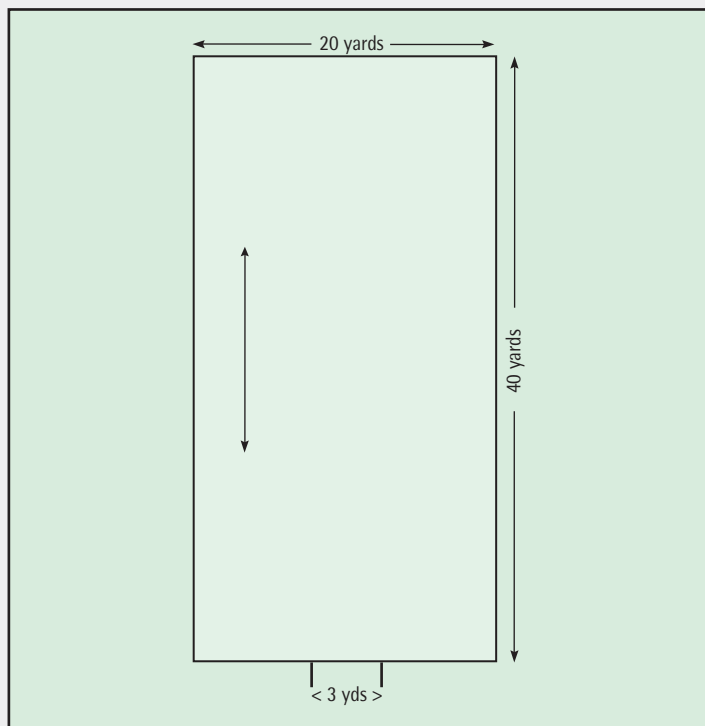
Skills Involved

- Effective angles of approach
- Spoil
- Intercept
- Tackle

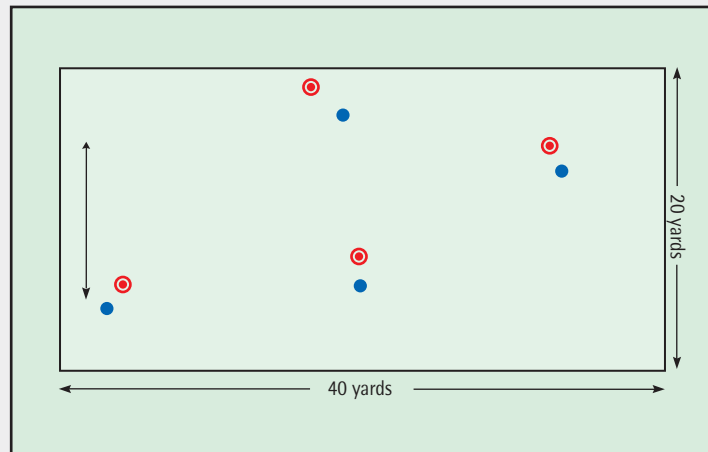


Modify the pitch to change the emphasis

(Normal) 4 v 4

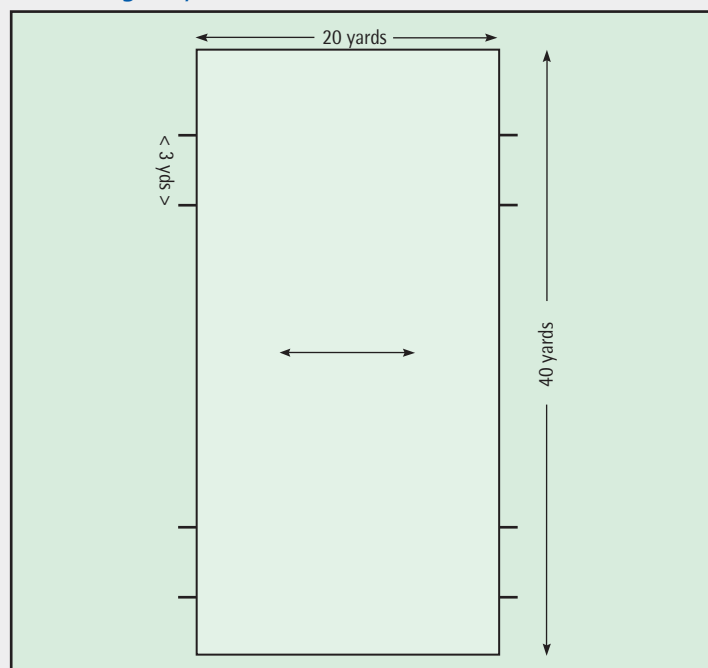


(1 v 1) 4 v 4

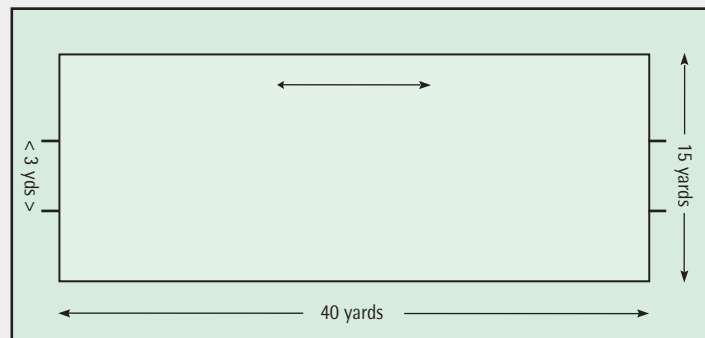


Score a goal by dribbling over your opponents line

(Switching Play) 4 v 4



(Narrow) 4 v 4



Condition (one touch or at least three)