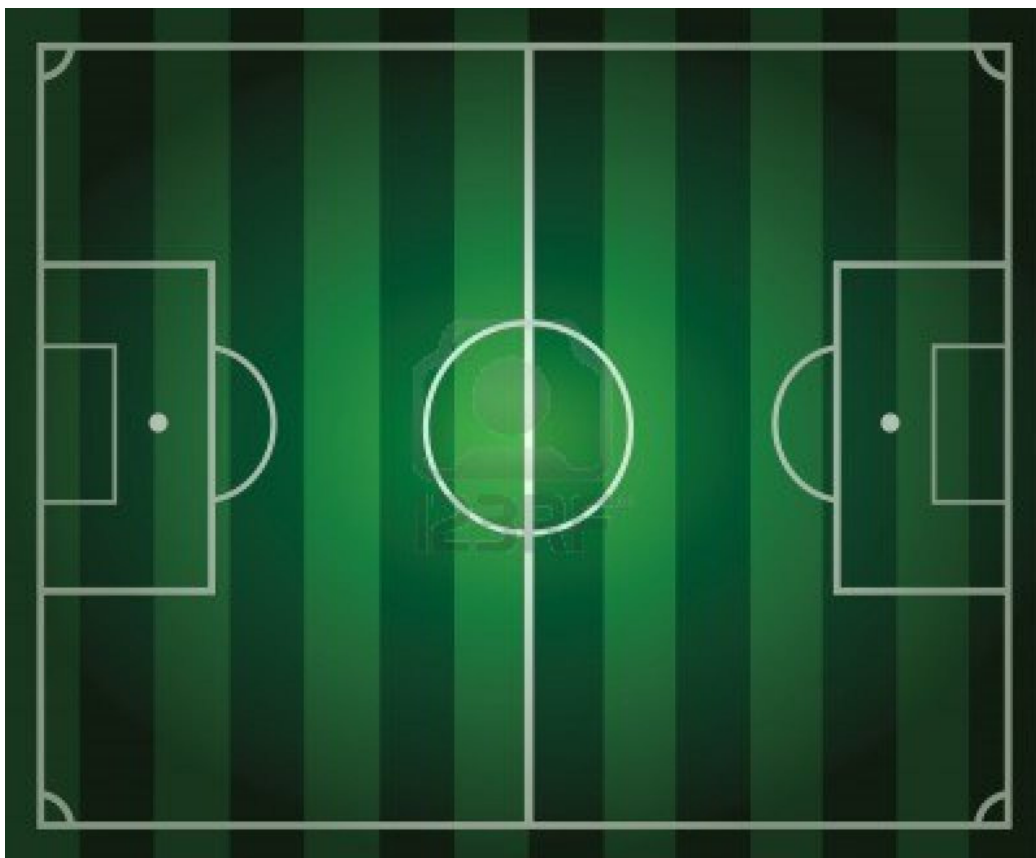


50 Training Games for Soccer

Games that encourage decision making



by Victor Satei

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50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 1 - Attack and Defend

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Possession - Small Sided Game - Attack and Defend

How to Play:

Make four teams, four players on each team. Inside a grid (40x30) two teams play 4v4, the other two teams stand on either end of the pitch and spread out. One team on one end and the other team on the opposite end. The goal of the game is for the team in possession (yellow) to try and play the ball to the team at the end (blue). Once the team at the end (blue) receives the ball they come on and attack the team that just played them the ball (yellow) while the team that was defending takes their place (white). The team that just came on (blue) now tries to get the ball to the opposite end (to the red team). The game continues like this and should be played at a high intensity.

Coaching points:

- Help players spot gaps in between the defense in order to play balls through to the end
- Players should look to play to the end whenever possible
- Make sure players are creating good supporting angles and are moving off the ball

Progression:

- Make it two touch
- Make players keep the ball on the ground, forcing them to play through balls



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 2 - End to End

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Possession - Small Sided Game - End to end

How to Play:

4v4 in the grid, players look to keep possession with the aim of playing the ball to their player on either end. When the ball is played to the player on the end then that player enters the grid while the player who played him the ball takes the support players spot. Once a team has successfully moved the ball to one end, they must immediately attack the opposite end. When a team can get the ball from one end to the other and back again without losing possession, they score a point.

Coaching Points:

- Make sure teammates are creating good supportive angles, using both width and depth
- Players should look to hit the target players on the outside of the grid whenever possible
- Movement off the ball should be consistent and players should work hard all the time

Progression:

- Make it two touch
- Add in a rover who always plays on the attacking team



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 3 - Short and Long Passing

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Short and long Possession - Small Sided Game

Set up:

4 Blue v 4 Red + 2 neutral players

Grid set up with 1 blue player and 1 red player on either end of the grid

Objective:

Players must make three short passes in the grid then look to play the ball to a support player at the end of the grid. When the support player receives the ball he must immediately switch play to the other support player on his team at the opposite end of the grid who receives the ball and plays it back into his team. When a team does this successfully they gain a point.

Coaching points:

- Make sure players stay moving into supportive positions
- Coach players to keep the ball until the passing lane becomes open before playing it to the outside support player
- Make use of the neutral players inside the grid, support should always be available

Progression:

- Make it two touch
- Players must make 5 short passes before playing the outside support
- Support player must switch the ball using one touch



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 4 - Rondo Variation (Awareness)

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Rondo Variation 1 - Awareness

Organization and Rules:

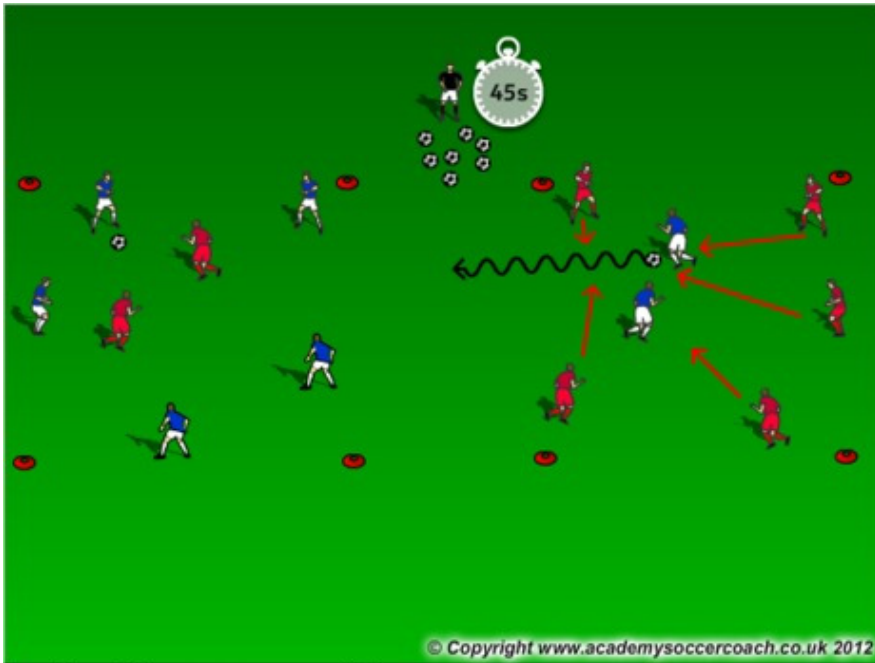
- Set up four grids, each grid is marked with a different colour (as shown above)
- Players start in one grid, keeping the ball away from the two defenders (red)
- When the coach raises his arm, he holds up a cone/bib matching the colour of another grid (i.e. yellow) and all players (blue) must try and keep possession while moving into the colour being shown by the coach.
- The coach should constantly move around, this will keep players heads up as they continue to look for which colour the coach will hold up next.
- Start with unlimited touches, as the players get the hang of it try and decrease the amount of touches on the ball. Can they play with one touch only?

Coaching points:

- Make sure players have good body shape
- Don't allow players to be static, keep them moving, have them on their toes
- Encourage the defenders to work hard, when a defender wins the ball he switches with the player who lost possession
- Players should have their heads moving at all times, looking to react as soon as the coach holds up the coloured cone/bib

Additional rules (add these rules to make it more competitive):

- If the attacking team can make 10 passes, the 2 defenders must stay in again even after possession is lost
- If the defenders are split, they must stay in again even if the defending team wins the ball
- If a defender is nutmegged, he/she must stay in again after the attacking team loses possession



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 5 - Rondo Variation (Pass Completion)

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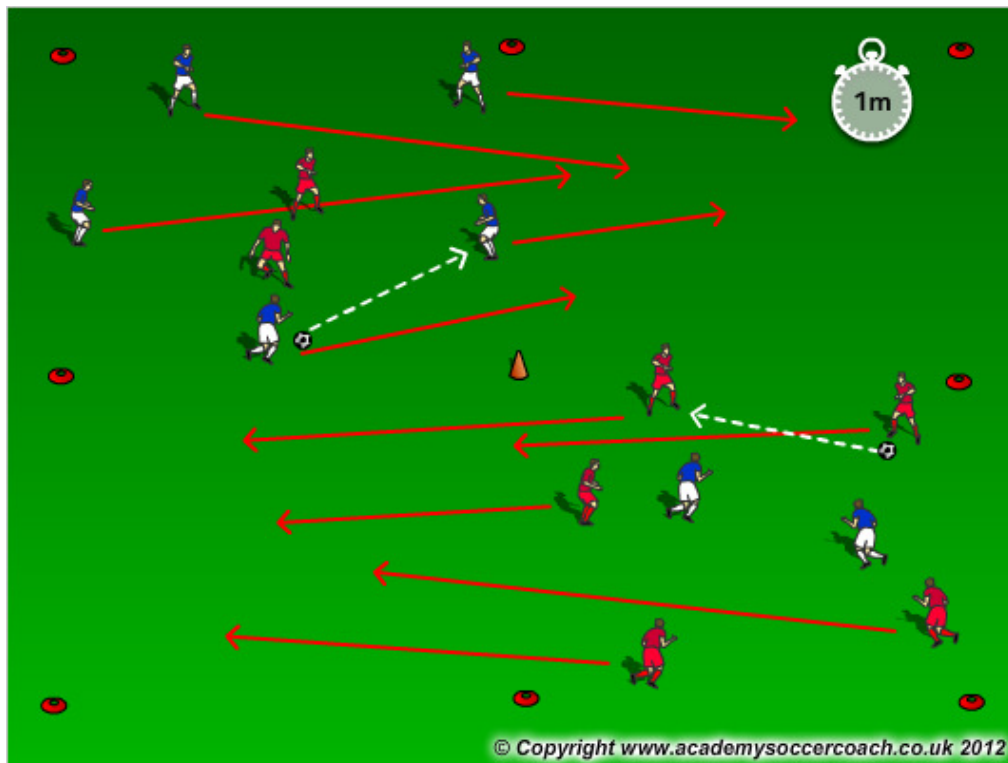
Rondo Variation 2 - Pass completion

Organization and Rules:

- Set up 2 grids and divide your group into two teams
- One team (blue) goes into one grid, while the other team goes into the other grid (red)
- The Coach stands between the grids with balls and a stop watch, as shown above
- The two teams now look to keep possession away from the 2 defenders, they have 45 seconds to put together as many passes as they can in a row.
- If the defending team wins the ball, they look to quickly dribble across into their own teams grid while the team that lost possession tries to regain it quickly.
- If the defending team can win the ball and dribble into their own grid, they gain 3 points for their team.
- After 45 seconds, the team that has put together more passes in a row gains 1 point
- Switch defenders after 45 seconds
- The first team to reach 10 points wins

Coaching points:

- Make sure players have good body shape
- Don't allow players to be static, keep them moving, have them on their toes
- Encourage the defenders to work hard, when a defender wins the ball encourage him/her to try and dribble to the other grid quickly
- When the team in possession loses the ball, encourage them to win it back as soon as they can in order to prevent them from giving up 3 points
- Time is ticking, encourage players to move the ball quickly



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 6 - Rondo Variation (Movement and Awareness)

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Rondo Variation 3 - Movement and Awareness

Organization and Rules:

- Set up four grids and split your team into two
- One team starts in one grid and the other team starts in another grid
- Each team sends in two defenders
- Teams begin to keep possession away from the two defenders
- On the coaches signal, each team has to try and successfully move into an empty grid without losing possession of the ball, if they can do so they gain 1 point
- When the defenders win the ball they look to keep it as long as they can before the attacking team wins it back
- Switch the two defenders every minute

Coaching points:

- Make sure players are on their toes and moving at all times
- Make sure they continue to keep good supporting angles
- Encourage the defenders to work hard to win the ball, and keep it once they have won, forcing the attacking team to win it back as quick as they can
- Ask players to keep their heads up when changing grids, they need to be aware of the other team and which grid they are moving into



50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 7 - Possession All Around

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Small Sided Game - Possession

Organization:

- Set up three teams of six
- Two teams play against each other while the team that's off provides support players (2 players on either end, each placed between the goal post and the corner flag, one player on either side who is able to move up and down the sideline). Support players have one touch.
- Have a goalkeeper in each goal

Coaching points:

- Encourage players to keep possession and not panic under pressure, after all they have six support players to help when they are in possession.
- Encourage players to use the depth and width provided by the support players when they have the ball.
- Make sure players continue to move off the ball, don't allow players to get lazy because of the support players that are available.

Time the games so that they are 4-6 minutes in length, when the game is over the team providing the support players enters the pitch while a team that was playing now provides the support.

50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 8 - 3 teams vs 1

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**SSG for Awareness - 3 teams vs 1****Setup and Rules:**

- Create an area that is suitable for the players that you are working with
- Divide 12 players into 4 teams of 3 players each
- Help keep the game flowing by surrounding the area with footballs

Rules:

- In this game 3 teams look to keep the ball away from 1 defending team, example above shows the Red, Green and Blue team that are keeping the ball away from the Yellow.
- If a team loses the ball, they now become the defending team. Example: If Red has a pass intercepted by the defending Yellow team, the Red team now becomes the defenders.
- Teams try to complete 7 passes, for every 7 passes completed they gain a point. At the end of the game the team that has the most points is the winner.

Coaching Points:

- Ask players to scan the field continuously by keeping their heads moving and always looking for teammates.
- Encourage players to move off the ball and use the entire area, this will help in keeping possession.
- Look for players to play the ball into areas that have the least amount of pressure/defenders, this will allow the player receiving the ball more time.

Variations/Progressions

- Players cannot play to teammates of the same colour, example: Red cannot play to another red
- Limit touches on the ball, see if you can get your players to play with one touch
- Do not allow the ball come off the ground, players must keep the ball on the ground at all times
- Weak foot only, ask players to use their weak foot only in this game

50 Small Sided Games

Possession Games

Game 9 - Corner to Corner

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SSG for Awareness - Corner to Corner

Setup and Organization:

- Divide 12 players into 4 colours (as shown above)
- One team is made up of two colours, above we have Red and Blue vs Yellow and Green
- In the area, make four corner zones, as shown above
- Place one player from each team in the zones, as shown above. Note that players from the same team are in opposite corners, Red and Blue are in opposite corners and Yellow and Green are in opposite corners

Rules:

- Red can only pass to blue and blue can only pass to red. Yellow can only pass to green and green can only pass yellow.
- Teams score by playing the ball to their man in the corner. Note that if red is playing the ball into the corner he can only play it to the blue corner and vice versa.
- After 3 minutes change the players in the corners.
- Once the ball is played into a corner, that player must play it back in to a player on his/her team of the opposite colour.

Coaching Points:

- Encourage players to play with their heads up and their eyes scanning the pitch all the time. Example: considering Red can only play the ball to Blue, it is important that the players in Red know where their teammates in Blue are at all times, this way they can play quickly if put under pressure.
- Make sure that players move well off the ball and make themselves available. Example: if Red has the ball, the Blue players should look to move into space where they can support the man on the ball quickly. They must look to create a passing lane in which they can make themselves available for the pass.

Variations/Progressions:

- Give players a time limit on the ball. Example: each player is only allowed 3 seconds with the ball.
- As players improve, limit touches on the ball.



(3v3 + 6) Combination Play Small Sided Game

How to set up:

- Extend the 18 yard box by 8-10 yards in length
- Make four teams of 3
- Use two full size goals plus goalkeepers in each goal
- 2 teams are inside the area playing 3v3 while the other two teams provide support players on the outside (between each post and corner and on each sideline)
- The support players on the end lines can use only one touch, the support players on the sidelines can dribble in to allow for overlap runs

How it works:

- Each game is 2 minutes in length
- The objective is to beat the opponents within those 2 minutes
- Either team should look to use the outside support players to make combination plays (wall passes, overlaps, crossovers, etc)

Coaching points:

- Coach players to build the play using their support, when a team has the ball it becomes 10 v 4 and there is no excuse not to find an available target.
- Show players combination plays that can be used to achieve attempts on goal, remember the players on the sidelines can dribble in, this allows great opportunity for overlap runs
- See the diagram for examples of combinations that can be used (A = wall pass, B = lay off, C = overlap), these combinations and others can be used
- Coach players to finish on goal whenever the opportunity presents itself

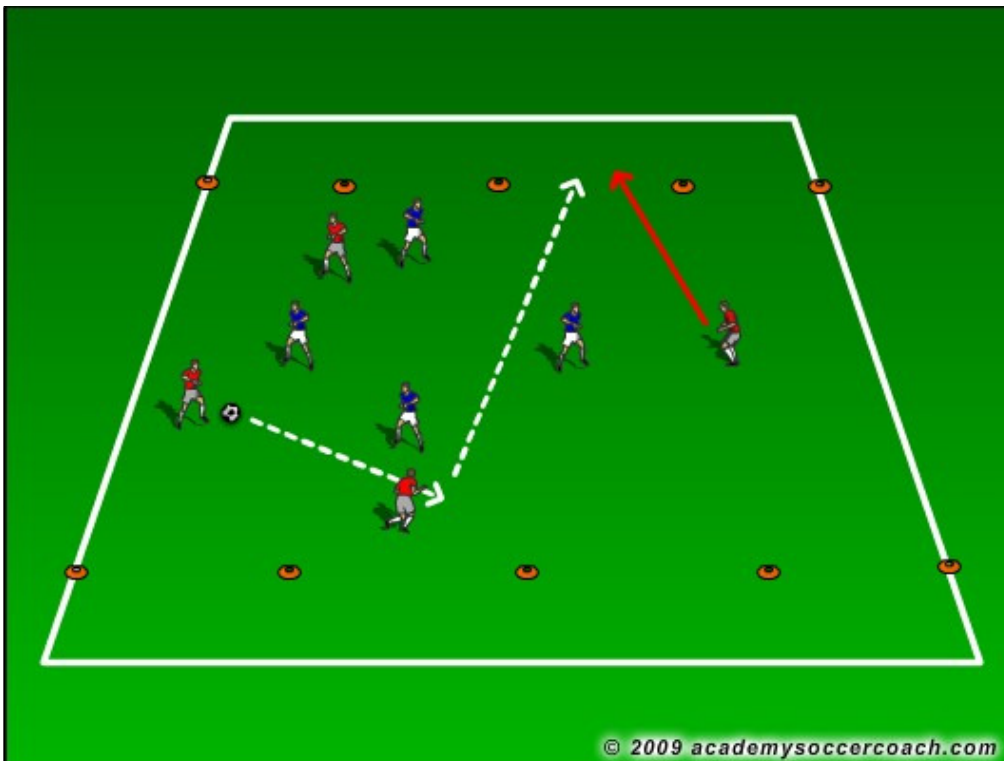
Make it a competition, keep points for the winning team and make it a small tournament

50 Small Sided Games

Games that encourage Combination Play

Game 10 - 3v3 + 6

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50 Small Sided Games

Games that encourage Combination Play

Game 11 - The Penetrating Pass

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Penetrating Passes - Small Sided Game

Organization:

4v4 or 5v5 in a grid

Teams try to maintain possession of the ball until they find an open passing lane in which they can play a teammate making a run into the end zone. In order to score the teammate must meet the ball in the end zone, once he receives the ball in the end zone he turns and the team now plays towards the end zone on the opposite side. A point is scored for every time a team can receive the ball in an end zone.

Coaching Points:

- Coach players to keep possession and not to force penetrating passes, they should wait to find the right moment to play the through ball for a teammate to run on to
- Coach players on how to spot the possible runs/penetrating pass

Progression:

- Make it two touch
- If players are having difficulty keeping the ball add in neutral players

50 Small Sided Games

Games that encourage Combination Play

Game 12 - The 3rd Man Run

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The 3rd man run - 4v4

Setup and Organization

- Create an area suitable for the players you are working with
- Make sure to create two zones on either end of the pitch, one which is considered the 'target man zone' and one which is the 'end zone', as shown above
- Create two teams of four players

Rules and Objectives

- The two teams play 4v4, one player from each team is placed in the 'target zone' and acts as the 'target player', he/she cannot leave this zone
- The objective of the game is to play the ball into the 'target player' who then looks to play the ball back to one of his/her teammates who will then look to play the ball onto the path of the '3rd man run' (see diagram above)
- The team that is defending is not allowed to defend in the zones
- A team scores by having a player meet the ball in the 'end zone' off of a '3rd man run', the players must time the pass and the run so that the ball meets the player as he/she enters the 'end zone'
- Make sure to change the player in the 'target man zone' every few minutes
- The 'target player' should take no more than two touches on the ball

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to keep possession until the passing lane into the 'target player' opens up
- Encourage players to play the 'target player' whenever the opportunity arises
- Once the ball is played into the 'target player', it should act as a signal to initiate the '3rd man run'
- Make sure one or two players offer support to the 'target player' once he/she receives the ball so that they can be available to deliver the pass for the '3rd man run'
- Players should focus on the weight of the pass, making sure it is passed at the right speed to meet the player running onto it as he/she runs into the 'end zone'
- Be patient, you will most likely deal with plenty of mistakes before the players begin to achieve success

Variations/Progressions

- Limit touches as players begin to gain success
- Add a 'neutral' player who assists the team in possession if the teams are struggling to do so
- Add players on the outside of either flank if they are finding it difficult to spread the opposition to create passing lanes



The 3rd man run - 6v6 + 1 Goalkeeper, Offence vs Defence

Setup and Organization

- Use nearly 2/3 of the pitch, as shown above
- Use two large cones/poles/markers on either side of the pitch to create an imaginary line that will mark off the attacking 3rd (as shown above)
- Create two teams of six players, in the above diagram the attacking team (red) has 3 midfielders and 3 forwards while the defending team (blue) uses 4 defenders and 2 midfielders (this allows the attacking team to outnumber the opposition in midfield, which helps to keep possession in this game)
- Place a goalkeeper in goal and on the other end create three gates which the defending team must pass/dribble through in order to score (as shown above)

Rules and Objectives

- Work with the attacking team, they look to score on goal, while the defending team looks to win the ball and either dribble/pass through one of the three gates
- The objective of the game is to have the attacking team (red) play the ball into one of the three forwards who will then look to play the ball back to one of the midfielders who will then look to play the ball onto the path of the '3rd man run' (see diagram above), they should then go on to score on goal
- The team that is defending is not allowed to drop into the attacking third, this space can only be used by the attacking team to run onto balls being played through
- A team can only score after successfully completing the '3rd man run' sequence by having a player meet the ball in the 'attacking third' off of a '3rd man run'
- Once the ball is met by the '3rd man run' in the attacking third, the attacking team has 4 seconds to score

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to keep possession until one of the passing lanes into a forward opens up
- Encourage players to play the ball forward into one of the three forwards whenever the opportunity arises
- Once the ball is played into one of the three forwards, it should act as a signal to initiate the '3rd man run'
- Make sure one or two players offer support to the 'target player' once he/she receives the ball so that they can be available to deliver the pass for the '3rd man run'
- Players should focus on the weight of the pass, making sure it is passed at the right speed to meet the player running onto it
- Be patient, you will most likely deal with plenty of mistakes before the players begin to achieve success
- After the '3rd man run' sequence has been done successfully, make sure players on the attacking team get forward into the attacking third quickly and complete the sequence with a finish on goal
- Encourage players to move the ball quickly so they do not slow the play down too much

Variations/Progressions

- Allow defenders to enter the attacking third and defend against the attack once the player making the '3rd man run' receives it
- Limit touches as players begin to gain success
- Add fullbacks on to the attacking team if they are struggling to maintain possession

50 Small Sided Games

Games that encourage Combination Play

Game 13 - The 3rd Man Run (6v6)

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50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 14 - 2+2 vs 2+2 to Improve Finishing with Strikers

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2+2 vs 2+2 Crossing and Finishing for Strikers - Small Sided Game

Setup and Rules:

- Using the 18 yard box, extend the 6 yard box using cones to create outside neutral zones, then split the neutral zones in half to create 2 zones on each side.
- Use 2 goals with goalkeepers
- The game is 2v2 (Blue vs Red), place a player in each of the neutral zones. Red neutral players can only be used by the red team and blue neutral players can only be used by the blue team.
- Neutral players have 2 touch and must look to supply the cross each time they get the ball.

Objectives and Coaching points:

- Encourage players to get the ball into the neutral players quickly, the attackers should then be looking to attack the cross.
- Ask players to attack the zones, near/central/far post.
- When goalkeepers win the ball, have them quickly play the attacking neutral player so the forwards can counter and get on the end of the cross quickly.
- Make sure crosses are delivered at a good height and with good pace
- Encourage strikers to be brave and attack the cross

Progression:

- Open the restriction so that players can score in open play as well, this will force the defending team to close down quickly and leave space behind them to attack after the ball is pushed wide for a cross.



50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 15 - 4v4 (2v2)

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4v4 (2v2) Crossing and Finishing

Setup and Organization

- 2 full size goals diagonally across from each other, a goalkeeper in each goal (as shown above).
- The field is split in half.
- 4v4, 2 players from each team are in each half (as shown above).

Rules and Objectives

- Players can only remain in their own half of the pitch, therefore playing 2v2.
- In the above diagram you can see that two players from the blue team defend the goal in the upper half and attack on the goal in the bottom half, the red do the same but in opposite halves.
- The objective of the game is to score off the cross which is created by the two players defending their goal. They must look to win the ball and cross it in to the other half where the two teammates look to attack the cross.
- If the attacking 2 players win the ball from the two defenders trying to supply the cross, they can go on to goal and look to finish.
- Switch attackers and defenders every 4 minutes.

Coaching Points

- Encourage the defenders to get the cross in whenever possible. There is nothing wrong with supplying an early cross.
- Work on the movement of the attackers, make sure they are looking to attack both the near and far post.
- Ask players to use a variation of crosses, driven, lofted, in to the front post, far post, on the ground, in the air, etc.

50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 16 - 4v4 + 4

victorsatei.blogspot.ca**4v4 with 4 neutrals - Crossing and Finishing - Small Sided Game****Setup and Rules:**

- 4 (red) vs 4 (blue) with 4 (yellow) neutrals
- A corner zone marked off in each corner, these are for neutral players only
- Goalkeeper in each goal
- Neutral players have 2 touch only
- Both teams play as they would in a regular match, however they can use the neutral players in the corners for support. When attacking the neutral players should be used to supply crosses.
- Goals can only be scored off the cross

Objectives and Coaching Points:

- Coach players to quickly push the ball wide into the corners for the neutral players, once they have done so encourage them to get forward quickly and attack the cross. We want as many crosses as we can get in this game as we are focused on scoring off the cross.
- Players should look to attack the zones when crosses are coming in, near/central/far post.
- Encourage players to be brave and attack the crosses.

Progression:

- Open up play so that goals can be scored off the cross or in regular play.
- Make it 2 touch all around.



50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 17 - Phase of Play

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Crossing and Finishing - Phase of Play/Small Sided Game

How to Play:

Set up using just less than half the pitch. The attacking team has 6 players, 2 central midfielders, 2 wide midfielders and 2 strikers (The two wide midfielders must stay in the outside crossing zone). The defending team has 2 centre backs and one central midfielder, they can score by shooting on the small goals placed near the half. The goal of the game is to get the ball wide and work on attacking crosses from the flank players. Defenders are not allowed to enter the wide zone, they should focus on defending against the strikers. Strikers must score off a cross.

Coaching Points:

- Get your central players to play the ball onto the wide midfielders run
- Work on different types of crosses
- Focus on timing of the strikers runs
- Focus on the positioning of the central midfielders when the cross comes in, they should be just outside the box ready for the ball when it is cleared out. One midfielder can also get in the box to attack the cross as well.

Progression:

- Add in fullbacks (who can enter the crossing zone) and allow the wide players to combine with others to create crossing chances or allow him to go 1v1 and then cross
- Allow players to score from free play



Crossing and finishing - Using Width to Penetrate - 7v7 (Ages 13+)

Set Up and Rules:

- A goalkeeper, back four plus 2 in midfield for defending team
- A centre back, 2 central midfielders, 2 strikers and 2 wide midfielders for attacking team
- Game takes place using full half of the pitch, mark outside neutral lanes for wide midfielders
- 3 gates should be set up at the half for defending team to attack through, they score by dribbling through one of the gates
- Attacking team scores in full size goal
- Coach stands in centre circle with plenty of footballs, any time the ball goes out the coach plays the ball back in to one of the central midfielders to restart play
- Defenders cannot move into outside neutral lanes

Aim of the session:

- Coach the attacking team to use the entire width of the field by using the outside midfielders. Balls should be played into feet when showing short, or played through/over the top when the run is on.
- Look to have your strikers draw out defenders by showing for the ball, once they have done so midfielders can use them for the lay off pass, allowing the ball to then be played back for the through ball/diagonal ball to the wide player making the run.
- Wide players should look to take their first touch towards goal and then supplying crosses for strikers who should look to make runs into the box.
- Ask your midfielders to also get up the pitch quickly and cover the top of the box for any rebounds or ball that come out to the top.
- Coach the strikers to anticipate and make their runs to the near/central/far post.
- Wide midfielders should be limited to 2/3 touches and should not delay swinging in the cross.
- This game is very much about crossing and finishing, the more crosses we can get into the box the better.
- If the defending team wins the ball, they should look to play out of the back and dribbling through one of the gates. The attacking team should look to prevent them from getting through any of the gates, if the ball is won back by the attacking team they should look to exploit space and attack.
- Goals can only be scored off the cross.

Progression:

- Remove the outside neutral lanes and open play, see if the team can use the width and provide crosses

50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 18 - Using width to penetrate

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50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 19 - Improving Heading #1

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Session 1 of 3 - Improving Heading - 4v4 + 4 + 2 goalkeepers

Setup and Organization

- Create a small pitch suitable for your players, place a goal on either end
- Create three teams of four players and place a goalkeeper in each goal
- Two teams play 4v4 on the pitch while the other team of 4 provide support players on either side of each goal (as shown above by the blue team)

Rules and Objectives

- Players use their hands to pass/throw the ball to each other
- When in possession, players cannot run with the ball and are only allowed to pivot on one foot until they find a pass
- A player only has 3 seconds with the ball before he/she must pass it
- The support players become useful because they can receive a pass and then toss the ball across goal for an oncoming header
- Goals can only be scored with the head
- If the ball is dropped possession goes to the opposing team from where it was dropped
- After 4 minutes the team who scored more goals wins and remains on the pitch while the team who loses must switch with the support players

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to move the ball quickly and get forward
- They should be encouraged to make use of the support players who can throw the ball for the oncoming header
- Teach players how to properly head the ball with good technique and encourage players to head the ball on goal any time the opportunity presents itself

Progression - see session 2



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Session 2 of 3 - Improving Heading - 4v4 + 4 + 2 goalkeepers

Setup and Organization

- See Session 1 of 3

Rules and Objectives

- Players now put the ball down and use their feet to play a regular 4v4 football match, they must use the support players to provide service for the header
- The support players must now chip/pop/dink the ball using their feet across the goal for the oncoming players to head the ball. This should be done first time off the pass.
- Goals can only be scored with the head
- After 4 minutes the team who scored more goals wins and remains on the pitch while the team who loses must switch with the support players

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to move the ball quickly and get forward
- They should be encouraged to make use of the support players who are the only ones who can provide service for the headers
- Teach players how to properly head the ball with good technique and encourage players to head the ball on goal any time the opportunity presents itself

Progression - see session 3

50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 20 - Improving Heading #2

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50 Small Sided Games

Games to improve Crossing and Finishing

Game 21 - Improving Heading #3

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- Same setup as Session 1 and 2 of 3, however now the support players are placed on the flanks on either of the halves (as shown above by the blue players)

Rules and Objectives

- Players play a regular 4v4 football match, they must now use the support players to provide crosses for the header
- The support players must now cross the ball for the oncoming players to head. Support players should only use two touch, one to control and set the ball, second touch to cross
- Goals can only be scored with the head off of a cross
- When defending only two players from the defending team are allowed to enter the defensive half. This gives a 4v2 advantage to the attacking team at all times.
- After 4 minutes the team who scored more goals wins and remains on the pitch while the team who loses must switch with the support players

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to push the ball wide quickly and get forward to attack the three zones (first post, far post, and centre)
- Coach players to attack the cross and not get in too early. They should time their runs accordingly and make sure all three zones are being attacked.
- Players providing the cross should be looking to aim for one of the three zones.



1v1 Defending - End Zone Challenge

Set up an area with various 30 x 10 yard alleys with end zones. You will need a few balls - try and get one for each player.

How to play:

The attackers attempt to dribble past the defender to the opposite end of the alley. If successful they wait and join the line coming in the opposite direction.

However, if they are tackled then the roles are reversed with the defender joining the line and attacker becoming the new defender.

Coaching Points:

- Keep pressure away from end zones
- Force the play to one side
- Be patient, don't over commit
- Keep your eye on the ball, stay low and jockey the attacker

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Games to improve Defending

Game 22 - 1v1 End Zone Challenge

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Games to improve Defending

Game 23 - Communication Boxes

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Small Sided Game - Defending Communication Boxes

Set up and Organization

- Make two teams of 7 (6+1 goalkeeper)
- Set up a field that is suitable for the age group you are working with, split the field into 6 grids/boxes.
- One player from each team is placed into each box.
- A goalkeeper defends each of the goals.

Rules and Objectives

- Only 2 players from one team are allowed in one box at a time.
- A player cannot move into another box unless he is called into the box by his teammate who was originally placed in that box.
- If a player moves into another box without being called into that box by his/her teammate a direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team.
- The coach should monitor the match and make sure that players are communicating with one another before moving into a new box.

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to call in that 2nd defender when they defending 1v1.
- Make sure the 2nd defender communicates with the 1st defender so they can defend accordingly vs the attacker.
- Make sure the 2nd defender calls for the 3rd defender to slide across so there is not too much space left between the lines.
- You should also encourage your goalkeeper to communicate with your players, allow the goalkeeper to encourage players to move into new boxes.



Defending with the Back 4 in the Defensive 3rd - 4v4

Setup and Organization:

- In the defensive 3rd of the pitch set up as shown above. Full size goal with goalkeeper, four defenders which defend the goal and four gates set at the top of the 3rd (see above).
- The back four scores by winning the ball off the four attackers and then playing the ball through one of the four gates into the next wave of attackers. The next wave of attackers wait between each of the gates (as shown above). Once the ball is received by one of the four attackers, the first player between each gate begin their attack on goal (therefore always attacking in four)

Goals and Objectives:

- The back 4 try and prevent any goals from being scored. They gain a point every time they can win the ball and play it into one of the attackers waiting between the gates.
- The back 4 also gain a point if the attacking team cannot score within 30 seconds. Once 30 seconds is up the next wave of attackers should commence their attack.
- The attackers score by finishing on goal.

Coaching Points:

- The focus is the back four, therefore you will be looking for the following
 1. Pressure from the closest defender
 2. Cover and support provided by the second and third defender
 3. Balance provided by the fourth defender (or defender furthest from the ball)
- It is imperative that all four defenders stay compact, however they must keep a reasonable distance that will not allow the attacking team to switch play and exploit space.
- Delay and concentration must be encouraged. The attackers have 30 seconds to score, therefore it is important that defenders look to delay the attack and stay focused for the full 30 seconds at a time.
- Patience when defending, encourage players not to dive in to tackles. If a defender does get beat, he should look to make a recovery run goalside immediately while the next closest defender comes to apply pressure. The remaining defenders should slide over to cover the gaps.
- Once the defenders win the ball they should look to remain composed, and find a way to play through the four attackers and through one of the gates. Do not encourage kicking the ball out or 'clearing' the ball, encourage them to keep possession until they can play in through a gate.
- Make sure the back four stay together, communication is important and the fullbacks should remain slightly ahead of the centre backs making sure that your back four remains a unit at all times.

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Games to improve Defending

Game 24 - Defending with back 4 in defensive 3rd

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Games to improve Defending

Game 25 - High Pressure team defending

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High Pressure Team Defending, Small Sided Game

Set up:

- On a reduced size pitch set up a 7v7 (6+1 keeper) game.
- Each team plays a 3 - 3 formation.
- Behind each goal line there should be two zones (Zone A and Zone B)
- The coach should stand to the side of the field with a bunch of soccer balls.

How to play:

- The game is played as a regular match of football.
- If a team scores they must quickly run back to their goal and everyone must move into Zone A before returning to the pitch. The team that concedes the goal must quickly run towards their own goal and enter Zone B before returning onto the pitch. Therefore the team that concedes the goal must run further.
- The first team to re-enter the field receives a new ball that is played in by the coach and they can immediately attack the opposition, forcing the opposition to get back and defend as quickly as possible.

Coaching points:

- The defending principles should be coached throughout the game, make sure there is immediate pressure on the ball and all other players are providing cover, support and balance.
- The game is meant to be high pressure so players should press at all times.
- Make sure after a goal is scored players sprint to get into their zone and back onto the pitch as quickly as possible.



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Games to improve Defending

Game 26 - Pressure and Defending

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Pressure and Defending, Small Sided Game

How to play:

- On a reduced pitch set up two end zones.
- The objective for each team is to prevent the opposition to dribble or receive a pass in your end zone.
- The game should be played 4v4, and the defending principles should be applied. Offside can be used.
- If a team scores by dribbling or receiving a pass in the oppositions end zone, they leave the ball and quickly sprint back to their own end zone before setting up to defend. The team that is scored on collects the ball and quickly attacks.

Coaching points:

- Coach the session as if you are working with a back four or midfield four. Make sure to touch on the defending principles.
- The game should be played with high pressure and the man on the ball should always be put under immediate pressure. Other players should be providing cover, support and balance.
- Look for certain opportunities to make your coaching points (i.e. if the attacking team does a wall pass, coach how to properly defend against the wall pass).
- After a team scores encourage them to get back into their zone as quickly as possible and then get ready to defend. This is done to encourage players to quickly transition between attack and defense.



50 Small Sided Games

Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 27 - 2v2 + 6

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2v2 + 6 with 2 goalkeepers for finishing

Setup and Organization

- Create five teams of 2 players
- Using the 18 yard box and 2 full size goals, setup as shown above (extend the edges of the 6 yard box to create two lanes on either sides of the goals)
- Two teams play 2v2 in the area while two teams place a player on either side of each goal (as shown above by the yellow and green teams) and place one player from the remaining team in each of the outside lanes (as shown above by the orange team)
- Place a goalkeeper in each goal
- The two teams playing 2v2 can use the outside players to provide crosses (either in the air or on the ground) and they can also use the players placed on either side of the goals to provide lay offs for shots
- Games should last two minutes and should be played at high intensity

Rules and Objectives

- The objective is to outscore the opponent within those 2 minutes, the team with the most goals at the end of the 2 minutes wins and gets to remain on the pitch while the losing team switches with one of the teams providing support
- If a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the game starts again quickly from the goalkeeper of the opposing team
- This should be a constant 2 minutes played at high intensity
- Support players only have one touch

Coaching points

- Encourage players to take scoring opportunities whenever they have the chance
- Keep the tempo high, make sure the defending team is applying pressure
- Encourage players to use the support players, remind them that the 2v2 situation is actually a 9 v 2 situation for the team with the ball when you include support players and the goalkeeper

Variations

- Limit touches
- Allow players to only finish using one touch
- Have outside players only play the ball back in the air, forcing your players to finish using their head or a volley



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4v4 + 4 with 4 Goalkeepers for finishing

Set up and Organization

- Create four teams of four players
- Set up an area that is suitable for your players
- Put a goal in each corner of the pitch
- Two teams play 4v4 on the pitch, while one team provides support players between the goals (as shown above by the yellow team) and the other team puts a player to act as goalkeeper in each goal (as shown by the orange team above)

Rules and Objectives

- 4v4 game with the objective of scoring on any of the four goals
- After a goal is scored or a save is made on one of the goals, the coach plays a new ball in
- Games should last 4 minutes, change teams around after every game

Coaching points

- Encourage players to switch points of attack and attack the goal with the least amount of defenders
- Players should look to use the support players on the outside to relieve pressure, remind them that the team in possession have a four man advantage
- Players should be encouraged to finish whenever the opportunity presents itself

Variations

- Limit touches on the ball
- Have players finish with one touch only

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 28 - 4v4 + 4 + 4 GK's

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4v4 + 4 with a Goalkeeper - 5 Point Football

Set Up and Organization:

- Create three teams of 4 players
- Create a pitch suitable for your age group
- Create a zone in each corner of the pitch, as shown above, a player should be placed in each zone
- Create a centre box, in this box you will place the goalkeeper

Rules:

- The objective of the game is to score as many points as you can. Every time you play a player in the corner and he/she can play it back into your team you gain 1 point, if you can play the ball through the centre zone to a teammate, without the ball touching the goalkeeper, you score 5 points
- Games should last 3 minutes, after 3 minutes the team with the most points wins. The team that loses takes the place of the players in the corner zones, while they come on to play

Coaching Points:

- Make sure players are spreading the opposition by using all four corners of the pitch
- When they have spread the opposition they should look to score by playing through the centre zone
- Make sure players are not forcing the ball through the centre zone, remind them that it is important to spread the opposition and create space before going for the big points
- Encourage players to keep the ball moving and continuously support the man on the ball

Variations:

- If the players are finding it easy, make it two touch

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 29 - 5 point football

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 30 - 4v4 + 4 + 4 GK's

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4v4 + 4 with 4 Goalkeepers - Finishing

Set up and Organization:

- Create 4 teams of 4 players each
- Two teams vs each other in the middle, while 1 team supplies goalkeepers and the other supplies a support player in each corner (as shown above)
- Use four goals, each placed between the corners (as shown above)

Rules:

- The two teams in the middle play 4v4, they can use the support players to create the 8v4 situation
- Scoring can take place on any of the goals
- Support players only have 2 touch and must play it back in to the team that gave them the ball
- When a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the coach should immediately introduce a new ball
- Games should last no longer than 4 minutes, and teams should continue to rotate between roles
- You can make it more competitive by allowing the winning team to remain in the middle

Variations:

- 5 consecutive passes must be made before a team can score
- Make it 2 touch for everyone
- Have one team attack the goals on the North/South ends while the other team attacks the goals facing East/West
- A goal cannot be scored until all four support players have touched the ball



50 Small Sided Games

Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 31 - Attacking and Finishing

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Attacking and finishing - Small sided game

How to play:

- Make three teams of five
- 2 full size goals on a reduced size pitch
- The team that is off provides a support player on the field and four support players who are each positioned between each goal post and corner flag.
- The team in possession is allowed to use the support players, the support players have a limit of two touch
- The two teams on the field play 4v4 and use the fifth man as a keeper

Coaching points:

- Players should be encouraged to attack, get the ball forward whenever possible
- Players should look to use the support players, especially those positioned on the attacking goal line between the posts and corner flags. These players can be used as lay off men for shooting or also to provide crosses.
- Coach players to shoot whenever possible and make wise choices with their decisions in attack

50 Small Sided Games

Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 32 - 3v3v3 + 3 GK's

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Small Sided Game - 3v3v3 + 3 Goalkeepers

Rules:

Make four teams of three, one team of three occupies the three goals as goalkeepers. The other three teams take to the field of play. This is a 3v3v3 game where each team can score on any of the three goals. Use cones to make the field boundaries from goal to goal, this keeps players from running away from goal with the ball and forces them to try and cut inside towards goal.

When a goalkeeper gets the ball he simply tosses it back into play for the three teams to continue playing. When the ball goes out of play, play should restart from the nearest goalkeeper.

Coaching points:

Encourage players to shoot whenever they see the opportunity become available. Allow players the freedom to be creative and look to finish whenever possible. Players should look to switch the point of attack considering there are three goals to score on.

Progression: Make it two touch. Players must score with one touch only.



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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 33 - 4v4 + 4

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4v4 + 4, for Finishing

Rules: Set up an area with two goals on opposite ends and a goalkeeper in each goal. Make three teams of four, two teams will be on the pitch playing 4v4 while the team that is off provides support. Each support player places himself between the post and the corner flag. The support players can only use two touch and are used by the team in possession to create goal scoring opportunities.

Coaching points: The team in possession should be encouraged to get the ball forward whenever possible considering they have two support players that are readily available between the oppositions corners and goalposts. The support players can be used for crosses, give and go's, setting up shots, etc. It is important to encourage players to get forward as quickly as possible after playing the ball to the support players and getting into goal scoring positions. Players should be encouraged to be composed in front of goal and take good care of their opportunities.

Variations: Make it two touch. Players can only score with one touch. Players can only score with their head. Players can only score off a volley.

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 34 - In and Around

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Small Sided Game - 4v4, In and Around

Set up:

- 2 goals in the middle of the area that are placed back to back
- A square made with 4 cones placed around the 2 goals
- 2 teams of four
- 2 goalkeepers, 1 in each goal

In this 4v4 game players must look to score from outside the box around the two goals. Each team looks to create opportunities by moving the ball and creating shooting opportunities. The game is used to encourage shooting from distance.

Coaching Points:

Coach players to shoot at any opportunity they get, allow them to try striking the ball with various surfaces. They may need to curve the ball around a defender with the inside of the boot, or try a shot from an angle using the outside of the boot. In this game players should also be encouraged to switch the point of attack considering there are two goals.

Variation: A variation to this game is to switch the rule so that players can now only score from inside the box. This now encourages players to knock balls in front of goal to teammates and works on finishing from close range. You can also add a second ball in this game and even make it 6v6 with older players.



The 3rd man run - 4v4 with finishing

Setup and Organization

- Create an area suitable for the players you are working with
- Create two zones, these are considered the 'target man zones' as shown above
- Create two teams of four players
- Place goals on either end and include a goalkeeper in each goal

Rules and Objectives

- The two teams play 4v4, one player from each team is placed in the 'target man zones' and acts as the 'target player', he/she cannot leave this zone
- The objective of the game is to play the ball into the 'target player' who then looks to play the ball back to one of his/her teammates who will then look to play the ball onto the path of the '3rd man run' (see diagram above)
- The team that is defending is not allowed to defend in the zones
- A team can only score after successfully completing the '3rd man run' sequence by having a player meet the ball in the 'end zone' off of a '3rd man run'
- Make sure to change the player in the 'target man zone' every few minutes
- The 'target player' should take no more than two touches on the ball

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to keep possession until the passing lane into the 'target player' opens up
- Encourage players to play the 'target player' whenever the opportunity arises
- Once the ball is played into the 'target player', it should act as a signal to initiate the '3rd man run'
- Make sure one or two players offer support to the 'target player' once he/she receives the ball so that they can be available to deliver the pass for the '3rd man run'
- Players should focus on the weight of the pass, making sure it is passed at the right speed to meet the player running onto it
- Be patient, you will most likely deal with plenty of mistakes before the players begin to achieve success
- After the '3rd man run' sequence has been done successfully, make sure players get forward and complete the sequence with a cross/shot to attack the goal

Variations/Progressions

- Limit touches as players begin to gain success
- Add a 'neutral' player who assists the team in possession if the teams are struggling to do so
- Add players on the outside of either flank if they are finding it difficult to spread the opposition to create passing lanes
- After the 'target player' releases the ball to his/her teammate, they can spin out to attack the goal

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 35 - The 3rd man run

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4v4 + 2 with Goalkeepers - Shooting from distance

Setup and Organization

- Set an area that is suitable for the age you are working with
- Mark an area in front of each goal where players are not permitted to enter (12 to 18 yards away from goal, depending on age)
- Set two teams of four and place goalkeepers in each goal
- 2 players should be set as neutral players, these players play with the team in possession of the ball.

Rules and Objectives

- Teams play 4v4 (plus 2 neutral players) and can only score from outside the marked area in front of each goal.
- Players cannot enter the zone in front of the goals unless it is for a rebound.
- When the goalkeeper has the ball he should distribute it back to one of his teammates immediately.
- A goal from a shot outside the area is worth 3 points, a goal scored off a rebound inside the area is worth 1 point.

Coaching Points

- Encourage players to shoot whenever the opportunity presents itself
- Ask players not to rush into shooting, they should look to keep possession until a shooting opportunity presents itself.
- Make sure players quickly follow up on any shots for possible rebounds.

Progressions and Variations

- Scoring can only come from a one time finish
- Limit touches
- Shooting can only be done with the players weaker foot

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 36 - Shooting from Distance

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Games that improve shooting and finishing

Game 37 - Creating the shot

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Shooting - Creating the shot

Set up:

2 full size goals

18 yard box extended by 5 - 10 yards

12 players plus 2 goalkeepers (2 teams)

Getting Started:

- Make two teams of 7, 4 players play in the defensive zone and 2 players play as strikers, each team has a goalkeeper
- The field should be divided in two zones, defensive half and offensive half

Rules:

- Strikers cannot move into the defensive zone and defenders cannot move into the offensive zone
- Defenders move the ball between the four of them while trying to create a shot, the strikers can look to win the ball
- Defenders are the only ones who can shoot, strikers can score off of rebounds only
- When the ball goes out of play the game is restarted by the opposing goalkeeper

Coaching points:

- Quick movement of the ball by defenders, switching of play should be encouraged in order to create space to shoot
- Encourage defenders to create supporting angles for each other
- Players should be encouraged to shoot whenever the opportunity arises
- Strikers should check and show for the ball as they can be used to move the ball from one defender to the next
- Strikers should be encouraged to attack the goal for rebounds after a shot is taken
- Strikers should look to channel the opposition and close down the passing lanes in order to try and win the ball back

Progression:

Allow the strikers to shoot. Defenders can now play the strikers the ball and they can look to shoot. Defenders can also play balls in for strikers to finish, example a ball played in for the striker to head or volley. Strikers should be encouraged to move off the ball and get open.



50 Small Sided Games

Games that improve communication

Game 38 - Communication in possession

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4v4 (2v2) - Communication in Possession

Set up and Organization

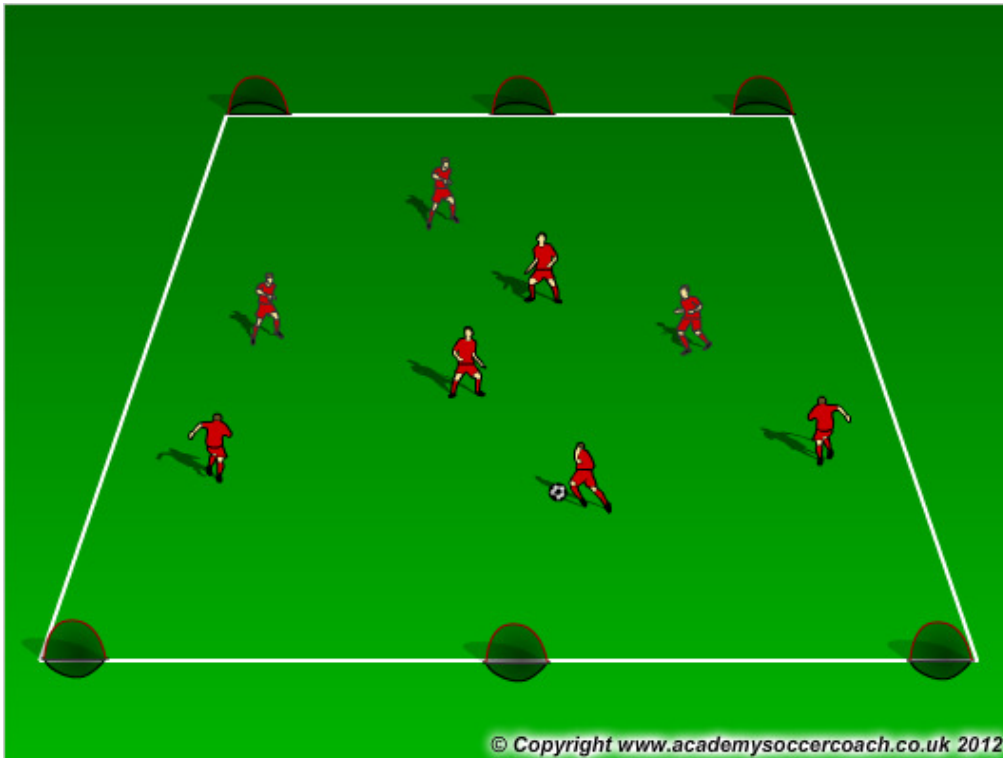
- Create a grid that suits your players
- Make two teams of 4, 2 players from each team play inside the grid while 2 players from each team are on either end. One team on the North and South ends and one team on the East and West ends.

Rules and Objectives

- Each team tries to move the ball to their teammates from end to end, each time they do so successfully they gain a point.
- The players on the outside can use 2 touches only to get the ball back in to one of their teammates.
- Switch players on the inside with those on the outside every 2 minutes.

Coaching Points

- Encourage players on the outside to communicate with those on the inside when they play the ball. They should give out instruction such as 'man on', 'turn', 'time', 'turn inside', 'turn outside', etc.
- If a player does not communicate when he plays the ball to his teammate, possession goes to the other team.
- Also encourage players to use other forms of communication such as visual cues. A player can look to where he wants his pass to go, or he can simply use his body language to show whether he wants the ball played on his front or back foot. These are all important steps when communicating.



50 Small Sided Games

Games that improve communication

Game 39 - The Same Colour game

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4v4 - The Same Colour Game, for communication

Set up, Organization, Rules and Objectives

- This is a simple 4v4 game where one team of four attacks 3 small goals on one end of the small pitch and the other team of four attacks the 3 small goals on the opposite end.
- All players wear the same colour. This is to force players to get their heads up and communicate with each other when playing, considering it becomes more difficult to identify the players on your team.

Coaching Points

- Make sure players are talking, they should communicate with each other when in possession and when not in possession. It is important as they will find it difficult to identify each other without the use of verbal and visual communication.
- If players are finding it too easy, limit the touches they have with the ball so they are forced to make decision faster.



4v4 + 2 with 2 Goalkeepers - Playing through the Central Midfielders

Set up and Organization:

- Create two teams of four, plus two neutral players (make these your central midfield players) and 2 goalkeepers
- Set your pitch to a size that fits your age group
- Using cones, plot out your three zones, attacking 1/3, midfield 1/3, defensive 1/3. In the midfield 1/3 create a box, this box is where you will ask your two 'neutral' centre midfielders to play

Rules:

- Played as a regular 4v4 match, however, the team attacking is only allowed to have the two 'neutral' centre midfielders in the centre zone. The team defending can send only one player to defend in this zone, therefore allowing a 2v1 advantage to the central midfielders at all times
- A goal can only be scored after the ball is played through one/both central midfielders in the centre zone, this forces your players to use the central midfielders all the time, that is our focus in this game.
- The two 'neutral' centre midfielders can only use two touch

Coaching Points:

- Ask your players to play into the central midfielders anytime the opportunity arises
- Make sure your two central midfielders continue to rotate while showing for the ball, don't allow them to become static. One shows, if he/she doesn't get the ball have him/her get out and allow the other centre midfielder to show.
- Make sure all players are moving, ask your players to advance quickly once the ball is played into the centre midfield, ask them to be creative with their movement and not be afraid to get forward. We want our central midfielders to create and focus on executing.
- Central midfielders should show in a 'side on' position so that they don't have their backs to the oppositions goal. Make sure they continuously scan the pitch by moving their heads all the time.

Variations:

- Use only one neutral centre midfielder
- Allow two players from the defending team to enter the centre zone
- Make it two touch for everyone

50 Small Sided Games

Playing through the zones

Game 40 - Playing through the central midfielder

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Playing out from the back through the central midfielder, 5v5 + 1 + 1 GK - SSG

Setup and Organization

- Use just over half the pitch, as shown above
- Create a 'Neutral Box' in the centre of the pitch on the defensive half, as shown above
- Create 2 teams of five (a back four and a midfielder for the red, and a midfielder 3 and 2 strikers for the blue)
- Have an extra player designated as the 'neutral' player, this player will act as an extra midfielder and play with the team in possession
- The 'neutral' player is only allowed to play within the 'neutral box'
- The central midfielder is the only one on each team that is allowed to enter the 'neutral box' along with the 'neutral' player (this will create a 2v1 in the 'neutral box' at all times for the team in possession)
- Place a goal on the end and use a goalkeeper, as shown above
- Place three small goals just over the half (about 10 yards), as shown above
- Whenever the ball goes out of play, the game restarts from the Goalkeeper

Rules and Objectives

- The objective is to have the defending team (Red team) work their way out from the back and look to get over the half to score on one of the three small goals
- The Blue team must try and stop the Red team from coming out of the back and they must look to score on the goal with the goalkeeper
- Goals for the Red team can only be scored after the ball has been played through at least one of the central midfielders in the 'Neutral Box'
- The Red Team looks to play out from the back and into the 'Neutral Box' when the pass becomes available, once the ball is played into the 'Neutral Box' the 'midfielders' should then look to play the ball forward while the fullbacks look to make forward runs
- After the ball has been played through the 'neutral box' the team can go on to try and score in one of the three small target goals

Coaching Points

- Considering the 'neutral box' will always present a 2v1 situation for the team in possession, the Red team should look to play into the open midfielder inside the box whenever possible
- After playing the ball into one of the midfielders in the box, the fullbacks should look to get forward quickly and the midfielder should look to play the pass onto the fullbacks run. If the forward pass is not available they can they use the centre backs to reset and try again.
- The centre backs should look to spread and offer support in behind the midfielders.
- Encourage the midfielders inside the box to show for the ball, if one midfielder is being marked then he/she should get away and allow the other midfielder to show for the ball
- Encourage the 'neutral' player and the midfielder to take advantage of the 2v1 situation and play off of each other
- After the ball has been played out from the box, encourage the midfielder to get involved in the attack and help his/her team, remember the 'neutral' player must always stay in the box
- Encourage the midfielders to scan the field continuously so they can see where teammates are and what passing lanes/options are available
- Remember, you are working with the Red team on coming out from the back, focus on their movement and their ability to pass their way out of pressure

Variations/Progressions

- Limit touches to make the game quicker and more difficult
- Have the midfielders play off of 1 touch
- Add an extra midfielder to each team who is allowed to enter the 'neutral box', this will then make it a 3v2 situation in midfield for the team in possession

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Playing through the zones

Game 41 - Playing out from the back through the CM

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50 Small Sided Games

Playing through the zones

Game 42 - Playing through the central midfielder #2

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Playing through the central midfielder, 5v5 + 1 + 2 GK's - SSG

Setup and Organization

- Create a pitch that is a suitable size for your players
- Create a 'Neutral Box' in the centre of the pitch, as shown above
- Create 2 teams of five and have an extra player designated as the 'neutral' player, this player will act as an extra midfielder and play with the team in possession
- The 'neutral' player is only allowed to play within the 'neutral box'
- Designate one player from each team to be the central midfielder, this player is the only one on each team that is allowed to enter the 'neutral box' (this will create a 2v1 in the 'neutral box' at all times for the team in possession)
- Place a goal on either end and have a goalkeeper in each goal

Rules and Objectives

- Goals can only be scored after the ball has been played through at least one of the central midfielders in the 'Neutral Box'
- Teams look to play out from the back and into the 'Neutral Box' when the pass becomes available, once the ball is played into the 'Neutral Box' the 'midfielders' should then look to play the ball forward while teammates look to make forward runs
- After the ball has been played through the 'neutral box' the team can go on to try and score
- Games should be played in 5 minute intervals with the team to score more goals declared the winner

Coaching Points

- Considering the 'neutral box' will always present a 2v1 situation for the team in possession, players should look to play into the open midfielder inside the box whenever possible
- After playing the ball into one of the midfielders in the box, teammates should look to get forward quickly and the midfielder should look to play the pass onto a teammates run
- Encourage the midfielders inside the box to show for the ball, if one midfielder is being marked then he/she should get away and allow the other midfielder to show for the ball
- Encourage the 'neutral' player and the midfielder to take advantage of the 2v1 situation and play off of each other
- After the ball has been played out from the box, encourage the midfielder to get involved in the attack and help his/her team, remember the 'neutral' player must always stay in the box
- Encourage the midfielders to scan the field continuously so they can see where teammates are and what passing lanes/options are available

Variations/Progressions

- Limit touches to make the game quicker and more difficult
- Have the midfielders play off of 1 touch
- Allow any one player from each to enter the 'neutral box' rather than the designated player only



50 Small Sided Games

Playing through the zones

Game 43 - Zonal Overload #1

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Small Sided Game - Zonal Overload

How to Play:

Create a field (60x40, or bigger depending on skill level of players). Divide it into three zones (defensive third, midfield third and attacking third). Each team lines up with a goalkeeper, 2 defenders, 3 midfielders, and 2 strikers. Players cannot move out of their zone unless they have played the ball into the next zone (i.e. if a midfielder plays the ball into the striker that midfielder can move into the attacking third, this now causes a 3v2 overload)

Coaching Points:

- In the defending and midfield thirds players should be encouraged to move the ball forward and into the next zone as quick as possible
- The player who plays the ball should quickly move into the next zone to cause the overload
- In the attacking third players should look to create scoring opportunities and finish quickly and effectively
- Make sure players make supporting angles and runs throughout the game

Progression:

- Allow more than one to move into the next zone once the ball is played in, this will overload the zones with even more players however if the ball is lost it will leave the previous zone with few or no defenders



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Zonal Overload - 7v7

Set up and Organization:

- Make 2 teams of 7 players (6 + 1 goalkeeper)
- Split your field into three zones (attacking 1/3, midfield 1/3, defending 1/3)
- A goal on either end of the pitch

Rules:

- Each team designates a goalkeeper, two defenders, two midfielders and two forwards
- When not in possession, the defending team must have their defenders in the defensive 1/3, midfielders in the midfield 1/3 and forwards in the attacking 1/3, these players can only defend those zones
- The team in possession can move players into zones freely. Meaning they can overload a zone in order to assist in keeping possession. Players can move forward and back into zones as they wish, as long as they maintain possession.

Coaching Points:

- You should focus on the team with possession
- Encourage them to overload zones quickly when maintaining possession, explain to players how it is easier to keep possession when you have 'numbers up'
- Make sure they do not crowd the space, encourage them to use the full width of the pitch and make sure players are using a good sense of depth
- Look for players to progress up the pitch and through each zone whenever possible
- Do not rush, ask players to be patient and move forward when the opportunity presents itself
- Remind players that they are creating a 'numbers up' situation and therefore they should not panic, be patient in possession and create good angles to support the player on the ball
- Once in the attacking 1/3 make sure players look to set up a goal scoring opportunity, again there is no need to rush, remember the whole point of the game is to allow players the opportunity to realize the importance of creating 'numbers up' situations to keep the ball

50 Small Sided Games

Playing through the zones

Game 44 - Zonal Overload #2

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50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 45 - Switching Play

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3v3 + 2 - Switching Play**Organization and Set up:**

- Set up a field, make sure it is wider than it is long, and make sure it is a suitable size for your age group
- Set three small goals on either end, as shown above
- Make two teams of three, plus two neutral players who stay on the outside (wide areas of the pitch), these players can move up and down the line

Rules:

- Played as a regular game, however each team can score on either one of the three goals they are attacking
- The outside neutral players only have two touch and cannot score

Coaching Points:

- Ask players to use both sides of the field, they should look for opportunities to switch play and spread the opposition whenever possible
- Players should create good angles to support the man on the ball, make sure your outside neutral players are always moving
- When a player has the opportunity to move forward through a 'hole' in the oppositions defence, make sure he/she does so

Variations:

- Make it two touch for everyone
- Allow the outside neutral players to dribble inside and the inside players to occupy the neutral players position on the outside
- When a team scores, reward them by quickly allowing them possession again and having them attack the opposite way



SSG for Awareness - Moving Gates

Setup and Organization:

- Create 3 teams of 4 players each.
- On either side of the area create 6 gates along the touchline, as shown above.
- 2 teams play 4v4, while the other team places a player in 4 of the 6 gates, as shown above.

Rules:

- The two teams on the pitch attack opposite ends. A goal is scored when the ball is passed through an open gate. An open gate is the one gate that does not have a player standing between it, see above.
- The players that are guarding the gates are allowed to move between them, forcing the team with the ball to continuously look for the open gate.
- Switch the team guarding the gates after 4 minutes.

Coaching Points:

- Encourage players to get their heads up and have a look as often as possible. They will not only need to stay aware of their teammates and opponents but also the open gate!
- Look for players to move the ball laterally and switch play often, this will help them move around the players that are blocking the gates and allow goal scoring opportunity.

Variations/Progressions:

- Players must dribble through the open gate
- Limit touches
- Goals can only be scored using one touch

50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 46 - Moving Gates

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50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 47 - Width and Depth #1

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5 v 3 (+2) Numbers Up - Using width and depth to attack

Set up and how to play:

Lay out a field (40x30) with two teams of five. Set up four goals, one in each corner of the field. Either team attacks two of the goals on one end. The attacking team attacks using all five players, while the team that is defending drops two players into their goals (one in each goal). Once possession is lost the team that now defends quickly drops two players into the goals and defends with three players only. Therefore this creates a 5v3 scenario at all times.

Coaching Points:

- coach players to use the entire width and depth of the pitch in order to create more space, this allows them to keep possession and move off the ball easier.
 - instruct the player on the ball to be patient and not force passes, keep possession until an opportunity to attack one of the goals opens up.
 - look to have players switch play, causing the defending 3 players to shift from side to side.
- Allowing the attacking team to find possible holes to attack from and also gain space up the pitch as the ball is moved quickly across.
- Have players finish with authority, missed opportunities can cost you in games.

Progression:

See next page



50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 48 - Width and Depth #2

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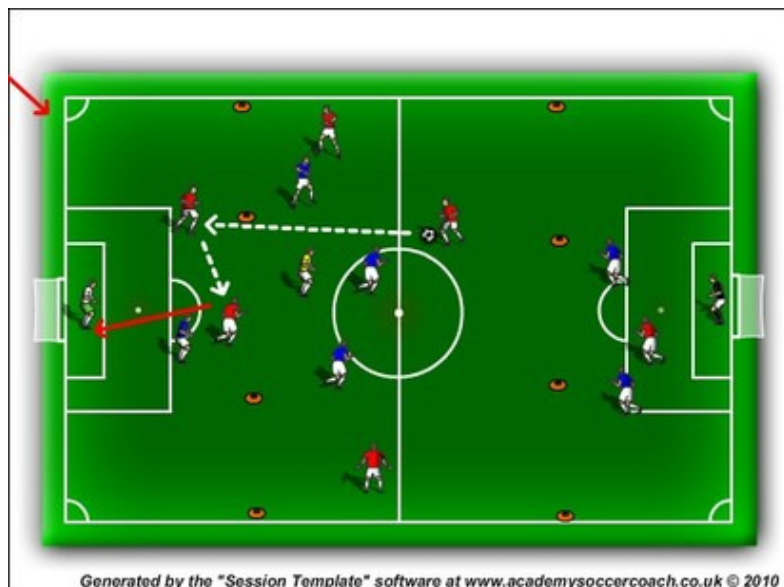
5 v 4 (+1) Numbers Up - Using width and depth to attack

Progression of 5 v 3 (+2) Numbers Up - Using width and depth to attack

Progression - the game is played the exact same way that 5 v 3 (+2) Numbers Up game is played however this time there is only one goal set up on either end and the defending team only needs to drop one player into goal. Therefore causing a 5v4 situation at all times.

Coaching points:

- The coaching points also remain the same however this time there is more pressure to deal with considering there is a 4th defender, and therefore players must be quicker with their decisions and movement on and off the ball.



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Attacking and using depth - Small sided game

Set up and rules:

- On a reduced size pitch, set up an end zone and a goal on either end
- Set up a 7v7 (6+1 keeper) match, one player from each team places themselves in the defending end zone, and two players place themselves in the attacking end zone as target men. Therefore each end zone should have 2 target men and 1 defender.
- The target men can move in the end zone however they cannot move out of the end zone. Same with the defender in each end zone.
- The objective of the game is to play the ball into one of the target men who then should lay the ball off to an oncoming teammate or the other target man who can then shoot on goal using one touch only
- Make sure to change the target men and defender on each team every three or four minutes
- The midfield area of the pitch should contain the other three players from each team, also use a neutral player to help the team in possession if necessary.
- Midfield players can move into the attacking zone once the ball reaches a target player and they can also enter the defensive zone to collect the ball from their defender or goalkeeper.

Coaching points:

- Make sure players spread wide and use the width of the pitch, this allows space between defenders to become available in order to hit the target man.
- There should always be one target man open, considering they outnumber the defender 2v1. Encourage target men to get deep, this allows them to move into the space in front of them in order to receive the ball.
- Once the ball is played into a target man players should quickly look to make forward runs so that the target man can lay the ball off immediately and allow them to shoot (target man should only need one touch to lay off the ball to a team mate)
- Make sure the target men continue to move in order to keep themselves positioned in ways that they can always receive the ball, they should never become static
- Players should look to shoot once the ball is layed off to them

Progress:

- The target men should have one touch only to lay the ball off
- The team in possession must make three passes before playing the target men
- Make the game two touch (except for target men who have only one touch)

50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 49 - Using Depth

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Small Sided Game - 4v4 + 4 wide supports (Using width in attack)

In this game two teams play 4v4 while the team of four that is off provides support on the outside. Here the field is split in half, the two defenders of either team must stay in their defensive halves while the attackers must remain in the attacking halves. Each support player must position himself between the centre line and the touch line so that there is one support player on each of the four sides. Support players may only use two touch and must play the ball back to the team that they received it from.

Objective:

Considering each team will have a support player on either side when in possession of the ball, it will always create a 4v2 advantage for the team in possession. The team in possession must use the wide support players to maintain hold of the ball and create goal scoring opportunities.

Coaching Points:

Emphasize that players use the numerical advantage when in possession and do not rush to get rid of the ball. Players should be encouraged to switch and open play by using the wide support players. It is important that the 2 strikers continue to move become available. The game should provide plenty of goal scoring opportunities, teach strikers to be calm in front of goal and to finish opportunities.

Progression:

Make the game 2 touch. Open the game up so that defenders and attackers can now move anywhere on the pitch.

50 Small Sided Games

Improving Awareness

Game 50 - Using Width

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