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INTRODUCTION

This book is about raising standards. It is about improving your level of coaching so that you are able to improve the level of your players. If the players are consistently improving and enjoying themselves at the same time then you are moving in the right direction!

As the title of the book suggests our main aim is to give clear, practical guidelines on how to provide the best possible learning experience for your players. With this in mind the book includes a series of session plans that you can deliver to your team over the course of a season. If time is greatly of a premium then you can simply use that part of the book where all the preparation is done for you. Each session is not only explained but important questions are answered:

- What are the main objectives of the session?
- Which coaching points should I stress during each activity?
- How can I develop a system of scoring to motivate the players and make it fun?
- How can I progress smoothly to the next activity?
- How can I make the activities more complex?

However, anyone involved in education will be able to tell you that teaching or coaching is not simply about session content. In soccer terms it is not simply about the X's and O's. An enormous factor in succeeding as a coach is the ability to relate to your students!

- If you can inspire and motivate them through your personality then you will instill a desire to achieve excellence.
- If you can employ methods of communication that challenge the players and ensure their focus and enthusiasm then your success will be almost guaranteed.
- If you show that you care about the players then they will 'move mountains' for you!
- If you can involve them actively in their own learning then huge potential can be realized!

This is a tremendous challenge for any coach. To combine thorough preparation with excellent motivational and communication skills requires a lot of work. Your efforts, however, will never be forgotten by the players, and in time they may follow in your footsteps!

ARE YOU READY FOR THIS CHALLENGE!?



1. CREATING A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- **Why Young Children Play Soccer**
- **Creating A Fun Learning Environment**
- **What To Expect From Children At This Age**
- **What Players Can Expect From Their Coach**

WHY YOUNG CHILDREN PLAY SOCCER

When coaching young children it is important to consider the reasons for their participation. It is equally important to look at our own motivating factors in choosing to coach, and to consider if they are appropriate for the age group we are working with. The vast majority of young children will participate for the following reasons:

- To Have Fun

There can be little doubt that even at this age the main aim for the child is to have fun. If they are having fun they will be motivated to listen and to learn. If they are not having fun they will simply not wish to be part of the program. This has clear implications for the style of session that we deliver for the children. Surely our primary aim is to keep the children interested for as many years as possible and to impart a love of the game. We do this through exciting, stimulating practices and realistic expectations.

- To Be With Friends

The social benefits of soccer cannot be overestimated. In the right environment the children make new friends and can develop their relationship with established friends through a common interest. Often the presence of friends and the opportunity to interact is more important than the game itself. This sometimes depends on the level of play that the players aspire to.

- The Excitement of Competition

There are many exciting activities in this book for the children to enjoy. There is an element of competition in each of them, which will without doubt motivate the children to participate enthusiastically. However, the coach will play a very important role in shaping the childrens' attitude towards competition. An important lesson for children to learn is how to cope with winning and losing. Therefore, the way the coach reacts to the winners and losers of different activities will be noticed and absorbed by the children.

- To Learn and Improve Skills

This might not be the initial factor that motivates the children to play. However, at this age some of the players may take enough interest to start practicing various skills at home. They will take pleasure in mastering skills that they have been taught so that they can show their family, coach and friends a level of competence.

- The Desire To Play At a Higher Level

Between the ages of eleven and fourteen the players will become more independent and some will develop ambitions to play at a higher level in the years to come. Their motivation will be more intrinsic and they will be more 'driven'.

It is crucial that the coach considers the above factors when working with a team. If the children are improving, having fun and keep coming back to play soccer then the coach must be succeeding.

So why do some children drop out of soccer? The answers to this question must be that the soccer program they are currently participating in is no longer satisfying their motivational needs. At this point they are:

- Not having fun
- Not being with their friends
- Not experiencing the excitement that healthy competition provides
- Failing to learn and improve new skills

As coaches we have a responsibility to ensure that this does not happen!

CREATING A FUN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Soccer is a great game, which should be fun for everyone who plays. When young children play soccer one can see the fun they are having by the energy and enthusiasm they put into their game. Unfortunately, the same energy and enthusiasm does not always carry over into practice. Too often children appear disinterested or unmotivated when working in practice situations, largely because they see the activities as pointless or boring.

There are a number of factors to consider when trying to create such an environment. The following 'Rules of Thumb' help to ensure that the children enjoy and look forward to their practices, and gain maximum benefits from them.

1. THE COACH MUST HAVE FUN

There is a saying: 'Enthusiasm is caught, not taught'. This is especially true of coaching. Children are quick to pick up on the coach's mood so your performance in practice will be reflected in the performance of your children. An enthusiastic, motivated coach will tend to have enthusiastic, motivated children to work with. The following are things to consider:

- a) Tone of voice: Much of your enthusiasm is conveyed by your tone of voice. Excitement is infectious, and if you sound enthused and energetic, your mood tends to be caught by the children.
- b) Share a joke: Children love to laugh and joke so encourage and instigate this at the right times. This way the children have fun, get the laughter out of their systems, and are ready to concentrate when you need their attention to make a coaching point.
- c) Join in: No matter how limited your soccer skills, the children love to see their coach join in (be careful not to hurt them or yourself!). It can be a useful way of increasing the intensity of the practice. It can also be a timely reminder of the difficulty of some of the skills you are asking them to perform!

2. ALWAYS GIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Making mistakes is an integral part of the learning process, providing that the child then receives positive feedback as to how to correct that mistake the next time. Therefore it is important that the children are willing to try things and have no fear of being incorrect. Criticism such as: 'That was a terrible shot' is not only very discouraging; it has no value in terms of learning. Avoid criticizing errors and instead begin with a positive statement before adding your coaching point, for example: 'you struck that ball well. If you can follow through with your foot you will get a lot more power. Keep up the good work.' This is known as the 'Feedback Sandwich' where the feedback is preceded and followed by positive statements.

3. AIM TO ENSURE SUCCESS

Whatever your practice, set targets and goals so that all the children can have initial success. For example:

- Shooting: There should initially be no pressure on the players thus allowing them to focus on their technique. The goal should be large enough to promote success and to make the practice realistic.
- Passing: Ensure that there are initially numbers up on one of the teams e.g. 4 v 2 keep away so that they are able to successfully keep possession. Gradually even up the teams during the session to increase pressure.
- Defending: Consider the size of area when running a 1 v 1 exercise. It should initially be quite small thus favoring the defender.

The child's initial reaction must be 'Hey, I can do this'. Children who successfully meet a given challenge will readily attack a tougher challenge, whereas children who immediately experience

failure will simply opt out. Once players have experienced success then the level of difficulty can be progressively increased so that the players are constantly challenged, yet not frustrated.

4. INTRODUCE COMPETITION

It is only natural that children want to compete with one another. Not only is competition exciting to children, it is a sure way of holding their attention. Even an activity such as keep away will be more fun if a certain number of passes equals one goal.

Similarly in a shooting activity you can ask:

- Who is the first to score five goals?
- Who can score the most goals in the next five minutes?

Inevitably, technique will break down a little given the element of competition, but more importantly you will have injected fun and excitement into the practice. You can always take time to go back over technique and reinforce coaching points without the competition, before returning to the game again.

5. MAINTAIN COMPETITION

It is important that each child or group has a feasible chance of winning if you are to maintain their enthusiasm. In some environments this will involve matching players or groups of players who are of similar ability. Thus the experience is differentiated. At a higher level the immersion in a 'competitive cauldron' will facilitate fierce competition in an effort to drive the players to their very limits. In this environment players/groups may be differentiated with regard to positions but not ability.

6. COACH THROUGH GAMES

Fun games and activities are a proven medium for ensuring maximum attention to a task. Repetitious drills at this age/level will turn the players off the game, especially if they are inactive for long periods of time. With this in mind, we can utilize dynamic, game type activities to teach valuable skills while the children are having fun. This ensures that motivational levels are high. With attention to the following points, you can ensure that the learning process continues at the same time:

- a) During the game, take individuals aside for a few seconds to give them specific feedback. The remainder of the players are still having fun and learning as they continue playing.
- b) Freeze the game to highlight important coaching points or to correct a mistake. It is important that the players stop in exactly the same positions as they were in, otherwise your coaching point will be inaccurate. Be firm with this! After stopping play, *recreate* it exactly as it happened, then *rehearse* the action to show good practice and finally *replay* thus allowing the players to have an opportunity to perform it successfully. The use of the three R's (**Recreate, Rehearse, Replay**) ensures that they 'see' exactly what you are saying! Remember 'a picture paints a thousand words.'
- c) Use scoring and time keeping to add to the excitement!
- d) Build up the children's' enthusiasm and interest by asking questions and issuing challenges:
'Which team will be the first to five goals?'
'Who will score the winning goal?'

WHAT A COACH CAN EXPECT FROM PLAYERS AT 11-14 YRS

Many players will go through considerable physical and emotional changes during this period. Players will begin to make their own decisions regarding how seriously they wish to take the game and at what level they aspire to play at. They will increasingly play as a team but the team will now put pressure on players who are not performing at the required level.

Approach to the game

- Children co-operate more readily as a team and have a more sophisticated understanding of a team concept
- They form more accurate assessments of their own performances, and that of their team
- They become more critical (mentally or verbally) of each other as well as themselves

Rules

- Players have a far better understanding of the rules of the game and may start to question refereeing decisions either internally or verbally

Possessing the Ball

- Children will be more patient in possession thus feeling less compelled to strike the ball immediately forward. Team-mates will provide support from behind and to the side in an effort to switch the ball away from pressure.
- Support players will develop more sophisticated scanning skills thus switching attention between the ball player, open space and opponents

Due to their improved peripheral vision players will move away from the player on the ball thus creating space to move back into. Other players will stay away in expectation of receiving the 'second pass' as opposed to the 'first pass'. In essence the players begin to plan ahead as they might do in a chess match. This is, however, a relatively new skill and will not be highly developed at this stage.

Defending

- Players will more accurately 'read' what the opposition are doing by picking up on visual cues
- Players are more developed in delaying the attacking player and timing the challenge more accurately
- Due to improved scanning skills the defender can mark more effectively because of his/her ability to switch attention between the ball, space and other attackers

Techniques

- Receiving The Ball: Players are more effective in receiving the ball in the direction that they wish to move the ball. They are also more comfortable in receiving the ball out of the air.
- Traveling with the ball: Players are more sophisticated in beating players in a one on one situation, relying on changes of direction not just a change in speed
- Sending the ball: Players are beginning to play accurate passes in the air as well as along the ground. A driven pass is still a difficult technique to master but there is increasing success with the 'lofted pass'. Players will increasingly attempt to head the ball but with varying quality of technique.

WHAT PLAYERS CAN EXPECT FROM THE COACH

Children can expect:

- Help, encouragement and support
- Not to be embarrassed by the adults watching them

Children can expect adults to:

- Remain positive in all interactions
- Praise effort and performance more than results
- Assess players accurately with their regard to their skills and attitudes
- Provide clear feedback designed to improve future performance
- Emphasize players first and winning second
- Display patience
- Demonstrate examples of excellent behavior
- Show consistency

Children can expect that coaches do not:

- Shout, argue, swear, become violent or use disparaging remarks
- Ignore children who need help
- Assess players by their incompetences
- Dictate to the players whilst they are playing

It is important that adults remain positive when interacting with children. Children find it difficult to understand negative instructions and easier to understand positive reinforcement. By playing down the result and playing up the performance the fear of failure and anxiety will decrease. Players do not mean to make mistakes in the same way that referees and coaches do not mean to make mistakes. Making mistakes are an integral part of the learning process for all of us.

It is important to remember what our role is, what our goals are and how we wish to be remembered by the players. A youth coach is an educator and is responsible for far more than simply winning soccer games.

Qualities of the Model Coach

- A caring demeanor
- Enthusiasm
- Integrity
- Patience
- A balanced perspective
- Knowledge
- Ability to inspire
- Good communication skills
- Precision of language
- Ability to correct mistakes
- Insists on and facilitates the achievement of high standards
- Persistence
- Pride in appearance and performance
- An open and inquiring mind

2. PLANNING FOR THE SEASON

- **Planning Methods**
- **The Four Components of Soccer**
- **Planning The Sequence of Sessions**
- **Customizing The Plan**

PLANNING METHODS

Season Planning or Trouble shooting?

Before the soccer season starts it is important to decide how you are going to plan your training sessions. There are two basic approaches, Season Planning and Troubleshooting. A third method, Flexible Season Planning can combine the benefits of the first two approaches.

- **Season Planning**

This is the method proposed for younger players who are inexperienced in all area of the game and whose soccer education needs to be well rounded. It is recommended that these young players follow a clearly defined curriculum (as they would in school) that is balanced, broad and flexible in its nature. This educational approach ensures that the emphasis is on player development for the future, not exclusively winning. The players may at some point wish to play on a select team, high school team etc. and will need a broad experience and understanding of the game to prepare them sufficiently.

A curriculum such as this should ensure continuity and progression within each session and across the season. Therefore, we always begin with simple concepts and progress to more complex game related themes. This is the most effective way for children at this stage to learn.

It may be tempting to 'remedy' their 'shooting' in a single session after a 0-0 tie and then return to your defending theme for the next session, however, this is confusing for young players. It also rarely works. If a theme (e.g. goal scoring) is deemed important for the age group then at least two consecutive sessions should be devoted to that theme. The flexibility of the curriculum, therefore, relates to the sequence and number of the sessions, not the content.

- **Trouble Shooting**

At an older age (high school) and/or a higher standard, 'troubleshooting' weaknesses identified in the previous game is more appropriate because the coach is fine-tuning. For example, the coach may wish to focus on the shape of the defense because they were constantly 'pulled' out of position in the previous game. Even at this age/ability, however, one training session is unlikely to remedy the perceived area of weakness.

- **Flexible Season Planning**

This approach combines the benefits of the above two and is the recommended method for the age group we are dealing with. A season long plan is drawn up whereby certain concepts and techniques are identified as essential to the development of the players. In addition to this a certain number of sessions are allocated for 'troubleshooting' perceived areas of weakness. This is a transitional stage between the more prescriptive, season long planning and the purely game related 'troubleshooting'.

THE FOUR COMPONENTS OF SOCCER

When planning the content of our season we need to be mindful of the age of the players and the essential components of the game that we should be addressing. There are actually four recognized 'components' of the game and they are:

- Technical
- Tactical
- Physical
- Psychological

Whilst all the components should be addressed, the relative emphasis depends on:

- Age
- Ability
- Experience
- Coaching environment e.g. recreational, travel, select, academy, international

Each player needs to consistently develop in these four key areas or 'components' and therefore the coach should integrate them into the sessions throughout the season. Of course, each player at every age group will have relative strengths and weaknesses and will therefore need to focus slightly differently on the four components. The skill of the coach is to determine which players need help in which areas and to provide that help. The importance of treating each player as an individual is paramount for their development.

a) Technical

The emphasis at the younger ages must be on technical development in an environment which promotes maximum activity and enjoyment. Technical practice is often synonymous with boring 'drills' but need not be if practice is linked to time trials, competition etc. As with musical instruments, however, technical practice incorporating repetition is essential if a high level of performance is to be achieved. The coaches' motivational skills and ability to vary the practice is key to success.

b) Tactical

The game of soccer includes a great deal of tactical thinking because of the number of players and the dynamic flow of the play. When people discuss tactics they often begin talking about complex formations and the respective benefits of each. The building block of the tactical game however, is the 1 v 1 situation and then progresses to 2 v 1, 2 v 2 etc. These foundations of the tactical game must be coached in a smooth progression if the children are to become 'intelligent' soccer players. Many coaches talk in terms which make little sense to the players. The children are, however, limited by their cognitive development and simply do not understand the coaches instructions or subsequent frustrations. Therefore, tactics are coached at every age group but should be related to individual and small-sided group situations at the younger ages. In this book, basic functional sessions are also included whereby the performance of a team unit such as the midfield is focused on. This is appropriate if the level of activity, and quality of instruction is ensured.

c) Physical

A good level of fitness is an essential part of being a good soccer player. The game is very physically demanding and because of its dynamic nature there is very little time to rest. To prepare players for the game situation fitness must be integrated into the training environment. Conditioning need not be synonymous with running laps around a field but can be developed effectively through intense activities such as 1 v 1, 2 v 2 and 3 v 3 games. The advantage with this form of fitness development is that it is relevant to the game in terms of its nature i.e. sprinting, jogging and walking. To maximize the conditioning, the breaks and discussions during the session should be short thus mirroring the physical demands of the game. As the players get older and more serious in their approach then they will need to engage in pre-season conditioning work on their own and with the team in order to play at that level. This may involve distance running, speed work (ladders, hurdles etc.), plyometrics and weight training. Between the ages of eleven and fourteen we do not recommend weight training or deep impact plyometrics as appropriate due to the inherent injury risks.

d) Psychological

This is probably the most complex of the four components because the psychological state of an individual, especially at a young age, is determined by so many factors unrelated to the training or game day environment. That is not to say, however, that coaches cannot influence this state. If a coach is organized, motivated, caring and inspirational at the same time this will have a huge psychological impact on the players. They will view soccer as a positive and enjoyable

experience. Within this nurturing environment the coach can then make certain demands and provide small strategies for players to perform at their very best. This might be as simple as ensuring that all players arrive on game day at a certain time so that a quality warm up routine may be conducted and a game plan disseminated. Once trust has been established and the players feel respected then the coach can 'move mountains' and over time a team culture will develop whereby the players are able to affect each others psychological state in an effort to achieve excellence on the field.

Remember: A player does not care what you know until they know that you care!

As the players mature the coach can provide them with specific strategies such as positive self-talk, visualization and goal setting in order to elevate their performance. The psychological component becomes increasingly important as the players advance and especially when they play at a level such as college or professional.

e) Prioritizing The Four Components

At this young age the players are relatively deficient in every area of the game. The main focus for the coach, however, is undoubtedly technical and skill based and should involve activities that maximize contact with the ball and promote enjoyment. It is not appropriate to spend time on complex formations and rigid positions, though at this age we do begin to focus on basic tactics. Small sided games which incorporate 1 v 1, 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 3 and 4 v 4 will develop technique and encourage small scale tactical thinking on the part of the players. At this age we also incorporate basic functional sessions where players practice in their regular positions within their respective units. It is important, however, that the tactical expectations and discussions are relevant to the age group.

PLANNING THE SEQUENCE OF SESSIONS

Which theme should I coach first?

A recommended season coaching plan is included in this book, however, different coaches have their own preferences as to which unit should be coached first e.g. some coaches would rather begin the season by coaching defending. The plan recommended below basically includes units on:

- Possession (individual and group)
- Attacking
- Defending

Sessions on team specifics such as corners, throw ins and free kicks can be included at the coach's discretion. Team specifics would also include areas of the game that the coach believes need further attention.

The length of each unit will depend on factors such as how many coaching sessions the team has each week. If there is one training session a week and the season is for ten weeks then the coach would be unlikely to conduct eight consecutive weeks of possession training, as this would leave only two weeks for defending and attacking play.

The curriculum outlined below can be repeated the following year with variations as needed.

CUSTOMIZING THE PLAN

Which Sessions Should I Use For My Team?

Some of the sessions in this book are far more complex than others, thus ensuring that there is a sufficient range to cover the 11-14 year old group. Therefore, it is important to select the sessions that are most suited to your players. Some of the sessions will definitely be more suited to the more advanced thirteen and fourteen year old players rather than the eleven and twelve year olds. At this older age the players are generally physically stronger, more experienced and have a better tactical awareness. It should be noted that this is not always the case. Ultimately it comes down to the ability of the group rather than the specific age. The remainder of the sessions are suitable for all ages in this book and can be adapted to suit much older youth players. For example 1 v 1 activities are great training for any player.

The range of complexity has clear implications for planning your season and your individual sessions. It is well worth spending some time putting together the most appropriate curriculum for your team thus maximizing the benefit of your training.

	Session 1	Session 2		Session 1	Session 2
Week 1	Receiving 1	Receiving 2	Week 13	Defending 1	Defending 2
Week 2	Long Passing	Team Specifics	Week 14	Defending 3	Team Specifics
Week 3	Transition 1	Transition 2	Week 15	Transition 1	Transition 2
Week 4	Defending 1	Defending 2	Week 16	Switching Play 1	Long Passing
Week 5	Defending 3	Team Specifics	Week 17	Receiving 3	Team Specifics
Week 6	Switching Play 1	Receiving 3	Week 18	Shooting 1	Shooting 2
Week 7	Switching Play 2	Team Specifics	Week 19	Crossing and Finishing	Team Specifics
Week 8	Shooting 1	Shooting 2	Week 20	Midfield Shape	Attacking Play 2
Week 9	Breakaways	Attacking Play 1	Week 21	Attacking Play 3	Attacking Play 4
Week 10	Crossing and Finishing	Team Specifics	Week 22	Defending 1	Defending 2
Week 11	Midfield Shape	Attacking Play 2	Week 23	Defending 3	Team Specifics
Week 12	Attacking Play 3	Attacking Play 4	Week 24	Team Specifics	Team Specifics

PHWM Soccer

Our Season Plan

	Session 1	Session 2		Session 1	Session 2
Week 1			Week 13		
Week 2			Week 14		
Week 3			Week 15		
Week 4			Week 16		
Week 5			Week 17		
Week 6			Week 18		
Week 7			Week 19		
Week 8			Week 20		
Week 9			Week 21		
Week 10			Week 22		
Week 11			Week 23		
Week 12			Week 24		

Enter Your Coaching Themes in The Plan Above

3. THE COACHING CYCLE

- **Overview of the Coaching Cycle**
- **Coaching the Game**
- **Game Analysis**
- **Planning the Sessions**
- **Delivering the Session**
- **Game Day Revisited**

THE COACHING CYCLE

The weekend soccer game at the youth level should be viewed as an integral part of training, not as an independent entity. It is a wonderful opportunity to observe how effective our training sessions have been up to that point, specifically those that have been delivered in the previous week. For example, if we have been working on passing and movement in training but see no evidence of it during the game then we know that we need to reinforce and supplement our work in this area and will probably need to address this in the following week's training. Thus our primary consideration is *continual development*.

As previously mentioned, the long-term development of the players requires that the coach produce a flexible, season long plan which ensures sharply focused training sessions and *continuity* between sessions. Each practice should build on the previous ones - reinforcing what has already been covered - and the game should be an integral part of that '*coaching unit*' e.g. keeping possession.

The coaches' analysis of the game each weekend should also play a part in determining the content of the sessions the following week. This may require an extension of the '*coaching unit*' currently being worked on (in our example, keeping possession) or may involve beginning a new '*coaching unit*' in the area of most need. The subsequent training sessions should then affect the performance (not necessarily the result!) in the following game. This process can be illustrated as a cycle whereby the effective analysis of one game may provide the basis for improvement in the next.

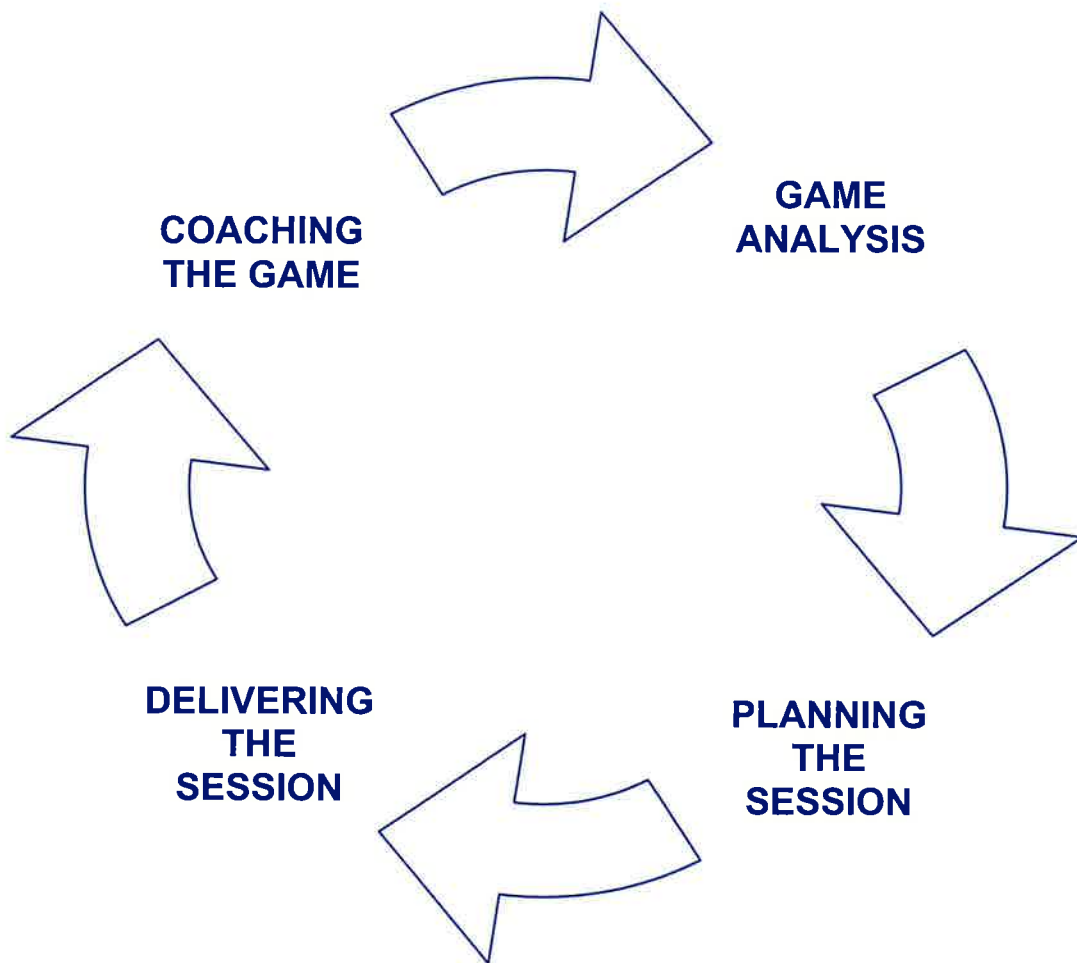


Diagram: The Coaching Cycle

COACHING THE GAME

There is a temptation to coach everything on game day. However, if the coach does not remain focused on what was practiced that week then why should the players? If the players do not focus on the previous week's practice then how can we assess learning?

Unfortunately, within the frenzied excitement of game-day it is all too easy to be caught up in the thrill of winning. The coach (even at this age) sometimes feels judged on his/her record of wins and losses and this can undoubtedly affect their approach towards the game. This often manifests itself in a risk-free 'kick the ball hard and chase' philosophy which may be supported by an unknowledgeable parent audience. Worse still one may see the hysterical berating of young children which so often accompanies a result driven approach. Of course, this strategy may win games in the short term but it will surely hinder the longer-term development and enjoyment of the players.

Game day is an exciting experience for everyone concerned but it is about the children! Parents should have a simple but important role to play; they should constantly encourage and cheer for their team. Their role is to support, not coach the players! This should be made clear from the start of the season otherwise the children are exposed to too much conflicting and varied instruction.

The Warm-Up

On game day the players should arrive at a set time period before kick off so that they can prepare physically and mentally for the game. The coach should find a suitable area – preferably free of distractions - and have the players perform some activities with a ball before they stretch a little. At this age it is not necessary to spend a great deal of time stretching but a basic routine will educate them in good habits. Some teams like to have a set warm up structure which includes some passing and shooting whilst others would prefer to tailor their warm up to the theme of the week which may be aspects of defending, passing, shooting etc. Either way the routine should increase in intensity, as game time gets closer. During this time the coach should also take the opportunity to talk to individuals as necessary with respect to their role for that game.

Pre game Instruction

Before the game begins it is important to take five minutes to deliver clear, simple pre-game instructions.

During this time the players are notified of the starting line up and are given *three key points* as to what the team will attempt to do. Any more than this will overload the young players. They should also be told to go out and enjoy the game, and to do the best for their team.

Let The Children Play!

Once the game has started the temptation for most youth coaches is to over-coach thus giving the players way too much information to assimilate. They are simply too involved. This is particularly the case when the player in possession of the ball is being coached. The coach should never address this player or be making their decisions for them (though it can be tempting). For instance, there is no educational value in shouting 'Pass! Pass!' to a player dribbling up the field. If he or she passes after our dictate what does that tell us about the learning process? We will be more effective by speaking calmly and concisely to players who are not immediately involved in the play or after they have just made a play. It can also be good practice to instruct players when the ball is out of play. In this way they are listening to you and understanding you rather than making every single play based on your demands.

Throughout the game it is essential that the coach remains positive with the players despite any frustrations. The children are at a sensitive age and seek the approval of adults. Negative, disparaging comments will adversely affect their level of enjoyment and probably performance. This is not appropriate. Neither is it appropriate for the coach to direct negative comments

towards the officials. The coach is without doubt a role model for the children whether he/she likes it or not. The choice is whether to be a positive or negative role model. Whichever way, the children will begin to emulate the coach's behavior.

Coaching The Game

As mentioned the first ten minutes of the game should be used to observe as much as possible. Let the children play and "get into the flow of the game". If you are over-coaching and too involved at this point then you will not be objective in your observation. Points to consider during this observation:

- Are the players attempting to carry out your instructions with relation to the theme of the week?
- Are they maintaining their basic shape as a team as they move up and down the field?

At this age the main factors for winning are typically not tactical but are more linked to athleticism (speed and strength) and the basic skills and technique of the individual players. With this in mind if a match up between two players is clearly biased in the opposition's favor then you may consider a positional change. A player often develops quickly when playing against someone who is of similar ability, but loses confidence against someone clearly superior.

At a more advanced level you would also be looking at your opponents' formation, style of play, strengths and weaknesses. To do this effectively it is important that the coach is able to spend the first ten to fifteen minutes analyzing the 'bigger picture' and identifying trends/patterns of play. By dividing the area of the field into thirds (defensive, midfield and offensive) it can help us with our analysis. Questions can be asked such as:

- Who are the oppositions' key players?
- Are the individual match ups working?
- In what areas of the field are the opposition dominating?
- In what areas of the field are the opposition weak?
- How is our defense coping with their offense?
- Are we outnumbered in midfield?
- Do we have enough players in the offensive third of the field to provide a threat to their goal?

Making Changes

Once these questions have been asked then the coach can consider a tactical or personnel change that he/she thinks will affect the game in a positive way. For example this may involve:

- Asking a central midfielder to play deeper thus countering the threat of their three man forward line or
- Pushing a central midfielder further forward to provide support for the two forwards who are being overwhelmed by four defenders

Decisions should be considered carefully and the players must be very clear as to what the coach wants. If the players are not clear then there will be great confusion and their fear of making mistakes will be amplified. Expecting the team to function smoothly with three forwards when they have always played with two forwards is unrealistic. These adjustments should be covered in training sessions during the course of the season so that players are more comfortable with change.

Substituting Players

At this age the players should all be receiving playing time and should also at some point during the season have opportunities to start the game. This ensures that the weaker players have the necessary time to develop and retain a healthy degree of confidence. When substituting players

ensure that those going into the game have been warmed up and spoken to regarding their role and how it relates to the team's objectives. Those coming out should also be spoken to regarding their performance. This is best done after they have taken a drink and have composed themselves. Begin with a positive statement, give them feedback as to what they may have done better, and then end with an encouraging comment. This form of communication has been termed the '*feedback sandwich*'. It is designed to improve the player while keeping their self-esteem and confidence intact. When considering a substitution policy it should be remembered that it takes time to adjust to a position. Playing two positions during a game may give the player an opportunity to develop their all round game. However, to place the player in more than two positions during one game can be very confusing at this age, or indeed at any age.

Half Time Instruction

At halftime it is important to give the players a couple of minutes to take a drink, rest and compose themselves before speaking to them. Your instructions can be a combination of what the team is doing well and what the team should look to improve upon. At this point you may also choose to address some of the opponent's strengths and weaknesses – with a view to encouraging problem solving. Again, be careful not to overload the players. Individual coaching can take place immediately before the players enter the field for the second half. Send the players out with a positive, motivational statement not an ultimatum. Remember, they should be playing for enjoyment and development.

Post-Game Comments

After the players have shaken hands with the opposition sit them down and allow them to compose themselves and take a drink. Take this opportunity to address the successes and weaknesses of the game, especially relating to the theme of the week. Most of all send the players away with some positive comments and a smile on their faces. Enjoyment is paramount!

Conclusion: The most effective youth coaches:

Do...

Remain positive
Guide players
Have a substitution policy
Speak to substituted players
Vary positions
Coach players without the ball
Respect opponents
Accept decisions calmly
Enjoy themselves
Keep things in perspective

Do Not...

Become negative
Command players without explanation
Substitute without thought or reason
Presume players know how they performed
"Pigeon hole" players
Coach players in possession
Berate officials or players
Look to blame anyone for events on the field
Let frustrations show
Measure achievement solely by results

It is essential that we understand that in soccer, particularly, the game is the best teacher. We, the coaches and trainers, are facilitators whose *main* work is predominantly done in practice and certainly before the game begins. The perfect team performance that we strive for will rarely occur so let's be realistic and celebrate the smaller successes as they unfold regardless of the final result.

GAME ANALYSIS

We analyze a game for two different reasons:

- **To Achieve Immediate Success**

Our ability to analyze a game quickly and accurately may enable us to affect its outcome. We can do this by seeing which players are 'on form' that particular day, which match ups are working in our favor, and in what areas of the field are we being outnumbered or outplayed. Some of our strengths and weaknesses during a game will relate to the particular team that we are playing against on that particular day. We could play the same team the following week and the performance and/or outcome could be totally different (especially at this age!).

- **Player and Team Development**

On the other hand a coach at this age should also be aware of more enduring strengths and weaknesses that seem to have been consistent over a period of time. Some of these areas of weakness may be more difficult to remedy during the course of a game e.g. transitioning from the midfield area. These areas are generally more complex and require more detailed analysis and therefore need to be addressed in training where specific responsibilities can be focused on.

Recording Our Observations

To effectively analyze a game and to accurately identify trends it is important that the coach takes written notes to refer to at a later time. Research has proven that we lose a lot of information that we think we will remember and that our memories can become very blurred, very quickly. With this in mind a coach may use (or delegate an associate to use) a quantitative game analysis form that allows specific information to be noted such as number of crosses into the box, number of shots taken, percentage of successful passes etc. In addition, the coach may record on a qualitative game analysis form (see below). Three approaches have been included below:

1. The coach may take note of the teams shape and functioning when:

- His/her team is in possession,
- The other team is in possession
- Transitioning to offense
- Transitioning to defense

The analysis will probably highlight the fact that the players are making a lot of technical mistakes at this age. This is to be expected and will probably be the main reason for the high number of turn overs in possession. However, the distance and angle of support players plus the number of support players will also have a bearing on the ability to maintain possession.

2. The coach may analyze the game with relation to:

- His/her team on defense
- His/her team in possession
- His/her team on attack

3. The coach may analyze the team's functioning in:

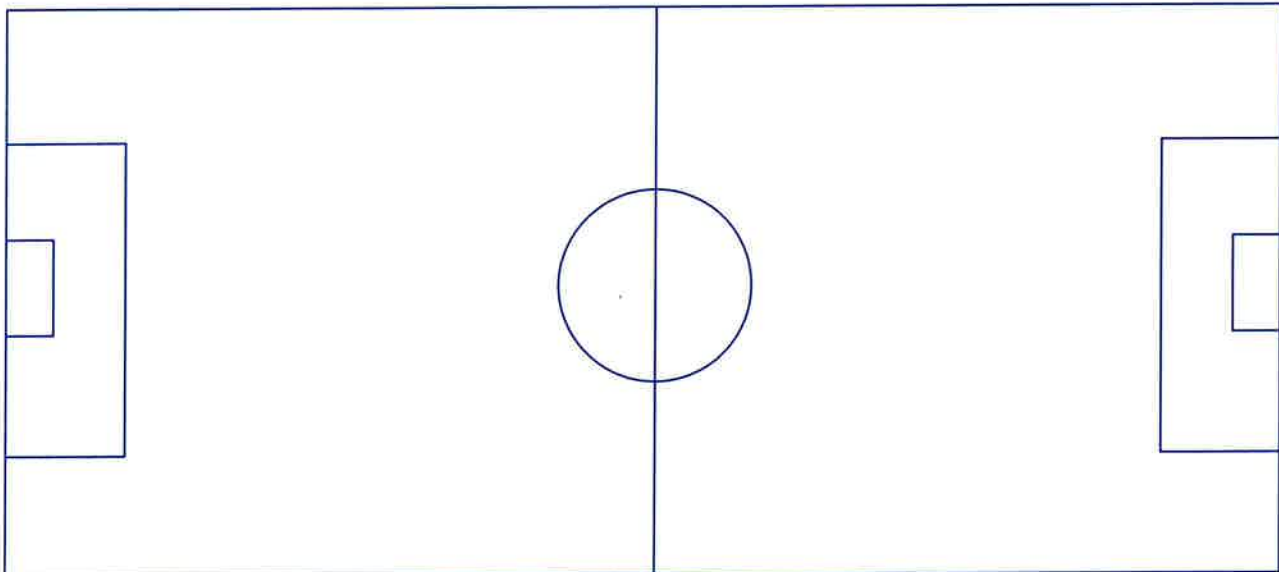
- The defensive third of the field
- The midfield third of the field
- The offensive third of the field

The important thing is to select a method whereby you have an accurate analysis of the teams' performance. From this an area can be identified which requires work and is integral to our season long plan i.e. age and ability appropriate.

PHWM Soccer

GAME ANALYSIS

Date	vs	Score
	_____ vs _____	



Notes

Defense:

Midfield:

Offense:

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING OUR TRAINING SESSIONS

Careful attention must be paid to the following factors to ensure that you get the most from your practice:

1. EQUIPMENT

In order to meet the aims and objectives of your practice, you need to have the appropriate equipment available to you.

- a) **Balls:** The more time children spend with a ball at their feet, the more comfortable and confident they will feel with it. Having plenty of balls allows even warm up activities to enhance the players' soccer skills. For example why run laps of the field when passing and moving in small groups serves the same physical warm up purposes and simultaneously improves ball control. A warm up with the ball has the added psychological benefit of focusing the children on the tasks to come. In addition, the number and the positioning of the balls during a session is also key to the flow of the activities. For example, during shooting exercises players should not be spending all their energy chasing one or two balls. Fifteen balls would increase the fun and number of shots for each player.
- b) **Cones:** These are extremely useful for marking out your practice areas. Large cones can be useful for making extra goals, making targets, marking corners of areas etc. While small cones are useful for sub-dividing fields and areas
- c) **Pinnies /Scrimmage Vests:** These are useful not only for scrimmaging but for any activity involving opposition e.g. 4 v 2 Keepaway
- d) **Flags:** Are useful for marking the corners of the working area and can also be utilized as goals

2. THEME

Try to select one theme for your practice. This allows the players to concentrate and focus their attention on what is being taught. Trying to cover too much in one session (an inevitable temptation!) tends to result in confusion and a lack of retention on the children's part. For example, a theme for your practice may be 'Possession in Midfield'. It could progress as follows:

- Warm up: Passing activity with no/limited pressure
- Passing activities with pressure e.g. 4 v 4 to target players
- Functional Activity to reinforce the theme e.g. Linking midfield and forwards
- Scrimmage

During the entire session avoid making comments or coaching points related to anything other than the theme, unless it is essential. This enables the children to stay focused throughout.

3. AREA

Time taken to plan and mark out areas with cones or other markers is well spent. Children find it difficult to visualize area and space without physical boundaries. The appropriate size of the areas is also very important and will markedly affect the success of the activity. For example, if we are working on midfield shape and the area is too small then the players will have difficulties in maintaining possession of the ball. It is important to be aware of the possible need to adjust the size of the area. In the example above the lack of success of the players may indicate the need to make the area larger. In game related/functional practices (increasingly common at this age!) it is important that the area simulates the game situation as much as possible e.g. 'Possession in The Midfield' should not be practiced in a 15 by 15 yard square.

4. ADAPTABILITY

It is inevitable that some practices or games that you plan will be pitched at a level which is too high or too low for your players. Similarly, within a practice some individuals will master a skill or technique far quicker than others. Therefore, it is important that you are able to adapt. Be prepared to move on or increase the difficulty of the task for groups or individuals who are no longer challenged. At the same time a step backward may be needed if a task proves too much of a challenge and success is not being achieved.

5. MAXIMUM ACTIVITY

Children must receive maximum exposure to a task (without boring them!) if they are to master it. Therefore, always try to create an environment where children have as many attempts at a task as possible, ensuring the constant repetition of the desired technique. This can be achieved by:

- a) Avoiding long lines. Why have a line of twelve children, all waiting to shoot into one goal? Why not instead set up two extra goals using cones or flags, and have three groups of four, maximizing each child's contact with the ball.
- b) Avoid long lectures. The players 'switch off' after a period of time, as their attention span is relatively short, especially on a school day! Keep all interventions and explanations short and simple (K.I.S.S) and make your coaching as visual as possible.
- c) Use all of the techniques discussed earlier to make your practice enjoyable. This will ensure that the children want to be active throughout the practice. Without doubt, children learn most effectively during activities that they enjoy doing.

6. RELEVANCE OF THE TRAINING SESSION

Once an area for further development has been highlighted then a session or series of sessions should be designed to achieve this aim. This is the nature of our job. This requires great thought and organization on the part of the coach and should be committed to a written plan before the session takes place. The session should then be intense, focused and demanding whilst still maintaining an element of fun. Quality activities and meaningful feedback are paramount! In this environment, players can be spoken to individually (and constructively!) with relation to their game day performance and will most likely respond in a more positive manner than during the emotional aftermath of the post game environment. The session is thus clearly linked to the past game and to the forthcoming game, thus highlighting the cyclical nature of this educational process. This connection should be clear in the minds of the players. Unfortunately, they often see the training session as completely divorced from the game and this sometimes results in a lack of commitment in training.

7. PLANNING WITH THE END IN MIND

The way we measure the improvement and the relative success of our session is through the scrimmage at the end. *If there is no improvement in the way the players scrimmage then we have not been immediately successful in achieving our aims and objectives.*

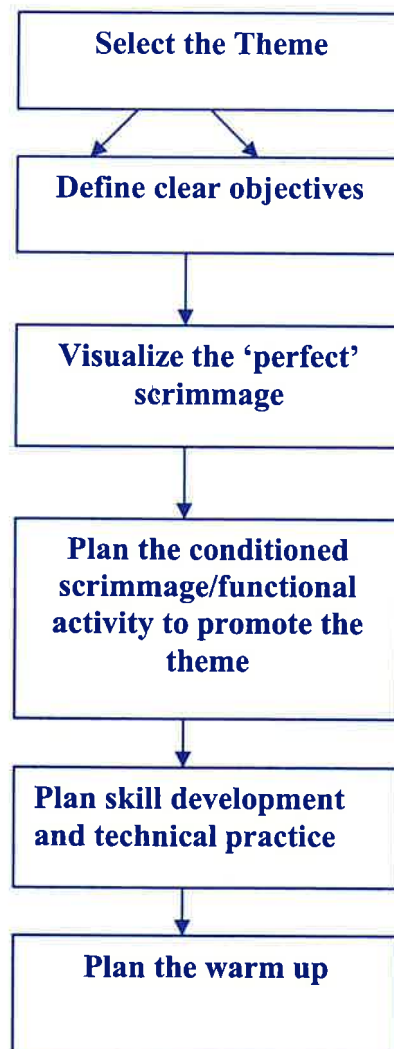
The following guidelines propose a method of session planning where the coach works backwards from the scrimmage to the warm up. The idea is that we are always working towards a clearly defined goal.

As previously mentioned the coach should have a very clear idea of what aspect of the teams' play he or she wishes to improve in training and should then visualize them successfully performing that skill in the scrimmage at the end of the next session. The coach can literally play a perfect videotape in his/her 'mind's eye'! Improved performance in the scrimmage / game is the main goal and should be the measuring tool for successful coaching. This goal should be shared with the players at the beginning of the session thus involving them more actively in their own learning.

The penultimate activity will normally take the form of a conditioned (restricted) game or functional activity which will maximize the opportunity to reinforce the theme of the day in a game like setting e.g. movement of the front two attackers. The nature of this activity will depend on the age and ability level of the players but should lead smoothly into the scrimmage as a bridging activity. Its relevance to the game must be apparent to the players. It may involve organizing the field area (in terms of size, placement of goals, number of goals, channels etc.) to facilitate the repetition of a particular theme, or it may involve placing the players in specific roles relating to team formation. This is an important part of the session which is often overlooked because other activities have over-run. It should be remembered that 'everything goes back to the game'.

The preceding technical / tactical activities should ensure maximum activity, and quality feedback from the coach. This feedback should be specific to individuals whenever possible but to the whole group if relevant. *As with the later stages of the session the players need to be exposed to quality demonstrations so that they take away a very clear, visual imprint of the correct techniques.* This is far more important than what you say to them! Remember, 'a picture paints a thousand words'.

In this model the final aspect of planning will be the warm up and this should be designed to lead into the technical/tactical practice and should introduce the first couple of coaching points. By planning the session with a clear end in mind, (defined by performance in the game situation) there will be pace and a clear purpose to each activity. It will also be easier to evaluate the success of a session clinically. *Simply put, if there is no improvement in the scrimmage then we have not been immediately effective in realizing our objectives and our planning for the next session will need to reflect this.*



THE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF OUR TRAINING SESSION

“Progression is the key!”

Equally important as the planning of your practice is the progression or development once it is underway. Your practice should follow a logical pattern or sequence, which allows the children to learn and develop skills in a cumulative fashion, through tasks, which become increasingly demanding. This section is aimed at demonstrating exactly how to develop your practice in this manner.

1. CONDUCTING THE WARM UP

A warm-up can be defined as ‘any activity which prepares the body and mind for further exertion’. There are no hard and fast rules as to what should be included, only the common sense rule of beginning slowly and gently, and gradually increasing the intensity of a given activity.

The warm up activities in this book are all theme related and are thus designed to prepare the players physically and psychologically for the remainder of the session. For example, if the session is on defending then we may warm up with a 4 v 2 keep away activity in a relatively small area. Despite the temptation to coach the passers the coach will instead focus on the relative positions (pressure and cover) and communication of the two defenders.

The warm up should also include some stretching, which may be of a static or dynamic nature. The traditional stretches ‘on the spot’ are known as static, whereas dynamic stretching includes skipping, side stepping etc. After all these years, research is still divided over the benefits of static stretching in relation to injury prevention. Indeed some research has actually indicated that static stretching may impair initial performance. Many professional clubs now focus on dynamic stretching exercises where the movement relates more closely to that in the game. Examples include:

- Skipping
- Skipping with wide knees
- Skipping backwards
- Sidestepping
- Carioca
- Deep lunge walk
- Butt kicks-Heels brought up high at the back whilst running
- High knees- Knees brought up high whilst running

Most practice sessions run from between 1-1.5 hours in length, and therefore the warm up should extend for no more than fifteen minutes. If the warm up over-runs (and the session starts five minutes late!) then a third of the practice time may have already lapsed. The timing of the session is very important and we should be aware of this if we are to meet our learning objectives. This timing will be different, however, if the players are practicing the day after a game or during an intense pre-season training week. This will obviously require a gentler, more extended warm up.

It is important that the session begins punctually when the first player arrives. That player can be given a juggling challenge or a new move to perfect. This rewards the players who arrive on time and sets the tone for the players that follow. If lateness is an issue then the parents of the team should be alerted to this and the subsequent effect it has on the practice. Players arriving late (as with coaches who arrive late!) cannot be in a good ‘state of mind’ to perform at their best and its effect is disruptive on the group. This is the same for practice sessions and games.

Having all our players present at the start of the practice allows the coach to share the objectives for the session e.g. ‘today our objective is to improve our shape in defense’. The players should then see the relevance of the following activities and participate with a clear focus on their goals. Getting the players to ‘buy in’ to your session and take some ‘ownership’ is an important and integral part of the learning process!

2. CONDUCTING THE TECHNICAL PRACTICE / SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This part of the session focuses on the basic techniques integral to the game of soccer such as shooting, passing, dribbling, defending and shielding. It is very important to develop these at this young age. In the past the idea of technical training conjured up the notion of boring, repetitive drills with children standing in lines. This is often based on the personal experience of the coach. However, the art of coaching has progressed since then and whilst a degree of repetition is still essential to perfect a technique, other elements are also important:

- Variety
- Competition
- Relevance
- Intensity

If a player becomes bored during the practice then they will not execute the technique to the best of their ability and as we know 'practice makes permanent' and not necessarily perfect! This is often the problem with technical work that is completely isolated from the game.

Motivating the Players

The initial technical stage of the session encourages practice with minimal pressure from opponents. The pressure is imparted through scoring systems and time constraints as required. These can be used to motivate the players in activities that might otherwise seem bland, thus ensuring a high performance level. The key here is knowing your players. If they are highly motivated players then they will probably be more enthusiastic in participating in 'closed skill' practice (i.e. the repetition of an isolated skill) than your purely recreational player. For the recreational player it will probably need to take the form of some sort of game. Either way it is important to ensure that this part of the practice is intense and is conducted at as fast a pace as the players can sustain but without compromising quality! Breaks should be frequent and short. Scoring systems and a highly enthusiastic coach are essential factors ensuring that the players are so focused that there is no time for boredom!

Demonstrations Are Key!

Quality technical training requires that the coach clearly show what he/she wants. Each new activity should be clearly demonstrated for the players with a concise explanation of the rules. The aim is to have the players practicing as soon as possible. The technical demonstrations throughout these activities should give the players a clear visual imprint to imitate, though the final result may be slightly different. Remember 'a picture paints a thousand words'. Once the players begin to practice it is important that the coach observes them carefully. This is not a passive exercise but one that requires great concentration if the coach is to improve the players. For example, during a 3 v1 keep away activity the coach may stop the whole group to make a comment which is relevant to all the players or may take an individual aside to provide *specific* feedback e.g. 'I like that your first touch was close to your body, Kate, but next time aim to direct it away from your opponent. Keep up the good work'. This 'individual coaching' is a vital aspect of technical training but is often neglected.

Technical v Skill Training

A 'technique' and a 'skill' have slightly different meanings in the context of sports, though the terms are often used interchangeably. A technique is regarded as an action performed in isolation whilst a skill involves the performance of a technique, at the right time, in a more game like setting. In the session plans in this book we are less concerned with rigid definitions but always ensure a clear progression from the 'technical practice' to the 'skill development' thus the activities move from simple to more complex. The same coaching philosophies apply; however, there will be more in the way of small-scale tactics to consider in the 'skill development' section.

3. CONDUCTING THE FUNCTIONAL PRACTICE

What is a Functional Practice?

A functional practice or activity is one in which a coach focuses on improving a specific function of an individual or a particular group of players. An example might be to improve the attacking effectiveness of our midfield and forwards. The functional practice could also simply focus on the attacking function of our two central midfielders, or on the organizational responsibilities of the sweeper. These sessions are very specific and game related in their nature. Their suitability for your team must be considered carefully with relation to the level of group activity, the tactical demands of the concept and the coaching environment i.e. recreation, travel, select, academy.

Coaching an effective functional practice is a true test for any coach! This form of session with the players practicing in their game day positions can undoubtedly improve technical and tactical skills. In addition, the players see the obvious relevance of the functional activity to the competitive games they play on a weekend. This certainly facilitates the educational process of learning to play the game. For example, you may wish to focus on your diamond midfield shape because in the last game the players remained 'flat'. Other examples of functional practices may be:

- Playing out of defense into midfield
- The movement of the front two
- Defending in the defensive third
- Defending in the midfield third
- Attacking with width

Practices which involve *whole team units interacting together* are also known as 'Phase of Play' practices.

The Process of Functional Training

Functional practices 'sometimes' (but not always) begin with one third of the field (the defending, midfield or attacking third) being isolated depending on what the focus is. The relevant players are then put in their game day positions and the opposition is selected. The opposition may initially be fewer in numbers to promote success. Both teams or groups of players should have clear goals to achieve so that the activity is competitive.

If two thirds of the field are involved then restrictions/conditions may be initially applied to movement. This allows the coach to isolate the players he wishes to coach and observe. Gradually as the coaching points are made, the restrictions should be lifted so that the activity becomes even more game related. To restrict play without reason will hinder the practice rather than facilitating it. The ultimate aim is to lift all the restrictions so we have a game situation within which we can assess whether effective learning has taken place.

When delivering a functional session the coach must be careful not to over-coach. If this happens then the practice will become very static and the players will become bored thus affecting the quality of play. We can initially encourage flow and continuity by allowing the players to play for five minutes or so without interruption (despite any mistakes!) After the initial five minutes the coach may then begin to make his/her coaching points intermittently in order to further improve this area of play. Again be very careful not to stop play too often. If the players become frustrated they will not focus on performing well. Enjoyment is key! There are a number of other key factors that will further influence the flow and success of the functional practice:

- **Balls.** The balls should be placed at the designated starting point for the activity e.g. with the coach who is 'feeding' the ball into the midfield four that he/she is focusing on

- **Restarting.** Restarting the activity quickly after an attempt on goal is important to maintain 'flow'. This will involve players quickly resuming their starting positions
- **Starting position.** The starting position itself is worthy of consideration. It should allow the functional practice to be as realistic as possible. For example, the most difficult attack to defend is the counterattack where your defenders and midfield are often out of position. Yet, how many defending sessions are set up in such a way to deal with this threat? Most involve a ball being fed into an offensive team with the defensive line already in perfect position.
- **'Goals'.** Giving the attacking and defending team clear goals, and keeping the score, will definitely add interest and excitement to the practice. The size and type of goal should enhance the training objective. By playing for a set period of time or until one of the teams has scored a pre-determined number of goals also defines a clear end to the activity. This always affects the quality and intensity of play.
- **Players.** The rotation of players in different positions should be pre-planned and efficiently executed. This ensures that the players who play more than one position have an opportunity to practice there. It also ensures that we do not only focus on the 'starting' players. This is important for the morale of the players and the team as a whole.
- **Coaching position.** The position of the coach during the practice is an important factor. The coach should be able to see clearly and yet not interfere. This should depend on the area of play that the coach is focusing on but generally requires that you are observing from somewhere on the periphery of the area.
- **Defining The area.** Cones and flags can be used to define the area. Careful thought and attention should be given to the size of the area with relation to the training objectives. The area should simulate the game situation in dimension, so that spacing is realistic.

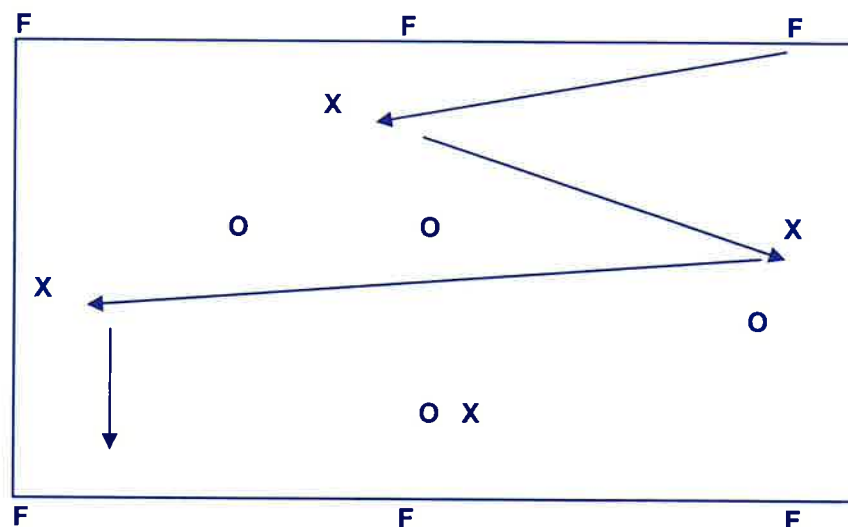


Diagram 1: A functional activity focused on improving the attacking function of the midfield

To deliver an effective functional session it is essential that all the players are in attendance or at least those that you are focusing on specifically. If players do not attend and have not informed you then it can make the practice redundant. This has implications for your 'attendance' policy which the team parents should be fully aware of at the start of the season.

4. CONDUCTING THE CONDITIONED GAMES AND SCRIMMAGE

The Conditioned Scrimmage as a Bridging Activity

In the past a youth training session has often comprised a warm up, a series of drills or activities (often unrelated and not progressive!) followed by a regular game. Even when the earlier activities have been related to a coherent theme there has often been little transference of those skills to the real game itself. The former activities lacked relevance in the eyes of the players and were seen as something to endure before playing a 'proper' game. At this point the players would revert to old habits and very little improvement and learning, in relation to the theme, would be witnessed in the game. The conditioned game as a 'bridging activity' provides this vital missing link.

Selecting the Condition

There are a variety of conditions that can be placed on any game depending on the aim of the practice. These can include:

- Limited touches
- Man to man marking
- Extra goal
- A modified playing area
- Extra balls
- The use of zones to encourage or restrict movement

Each condition is used to 'force' the players to repeat certain skills/patterns of movement (which they do not currently use appropriately) over and over again in a game like setting. The skill of the coach is in selecting which conditions to apply and then to adapt them if they are not working. If done successfully the coach will create many perfect opportunities to coach the theme of the day. It's as if he or she has 'fixed' the game to enable the coaching points to be made clearly in context.

Game Related Equals Fun

As well as being game related these activities are fun. The players are active, easily engaged and enthusiastic which means they are better able to learn and progress. In fact, a whole session can be conducted through the use of several conditioned games. This can be a useful strategy if you are working with a group of players who are attending practice for reasons other than a burning passion for the game of soccer.

The Importance of The Scrimmage

It is important that the concluding game of the session is a regular scrimmage with 'free' play so that the tactical (decision making) aspect is focused on. This is the part of the session that allows us, as coaches, to assess learning and to see if the players are now executing the skill/pattern correctly and at the right time. At this point some players will revert to old habits in contrast to their performance in the earlier activities of the session. Others will adhere rigidly to the recently enforced skill/pattern even when it is an inappropriate option. This is where effective coaching takes place. The interventions should be timely and considered, as stopping the game too often will prevent flow and is sometimes unnecessary. Some errors are of an individual nature and should be addressed with a quiet word. An effective test of our coaching skills could simply be to observe the results of our work (simply put, are the players demonstrating the theme correctly and appropriately?).

5. SELECTING THE COACHABLE MOMENT

At this point it is important to remember that the aim of coaching in any field is to make an individual and/or group better at performing a particular skill. Therefore the questions we should ask ourselves after each coaching session are:

- a) Have the players made a clear improvement during the session?
- b) How do I know they have improved?
- c) Did the players enjoy the session?

Ensuring Progress

As previously mentioned we employ a number of strategies to ensure there is improvement. These include:

- a) Planning and organizing a series of activities that focus on a specific area of development.
- b) The effective delivery of age appropriate activities that ensure maximum activity and get progressively more challenging during the session.
- c) Identifying successes and mistakes and then intervening to provide *meaningful* feedback.

Selective Observation

Once the players have demonstrated that they understand the rules of any given activity then we should be active in our coaching. This is particularly important in the early part of the session where there may be more individual and small group work. This will involve:

- a) Speaking with individuals
- b) 'Freezing' play to make a coaching point to a group of players
- c) Questions which encourage thought on the part of the players

When there are a number of groups working simultaneously the coach should focus carefully on one at a time (whilst the other groups are still in view!) and should pay strict attention to the theme of the session. In very little time the 'coachable moment' will present itself because the players are continually making mistakes. This is when we should make our intervention. Once the intervention has been made it is then important to observe progress in that group before moving to the next. This skill of selective observation is essential if our coaching is to be effective.

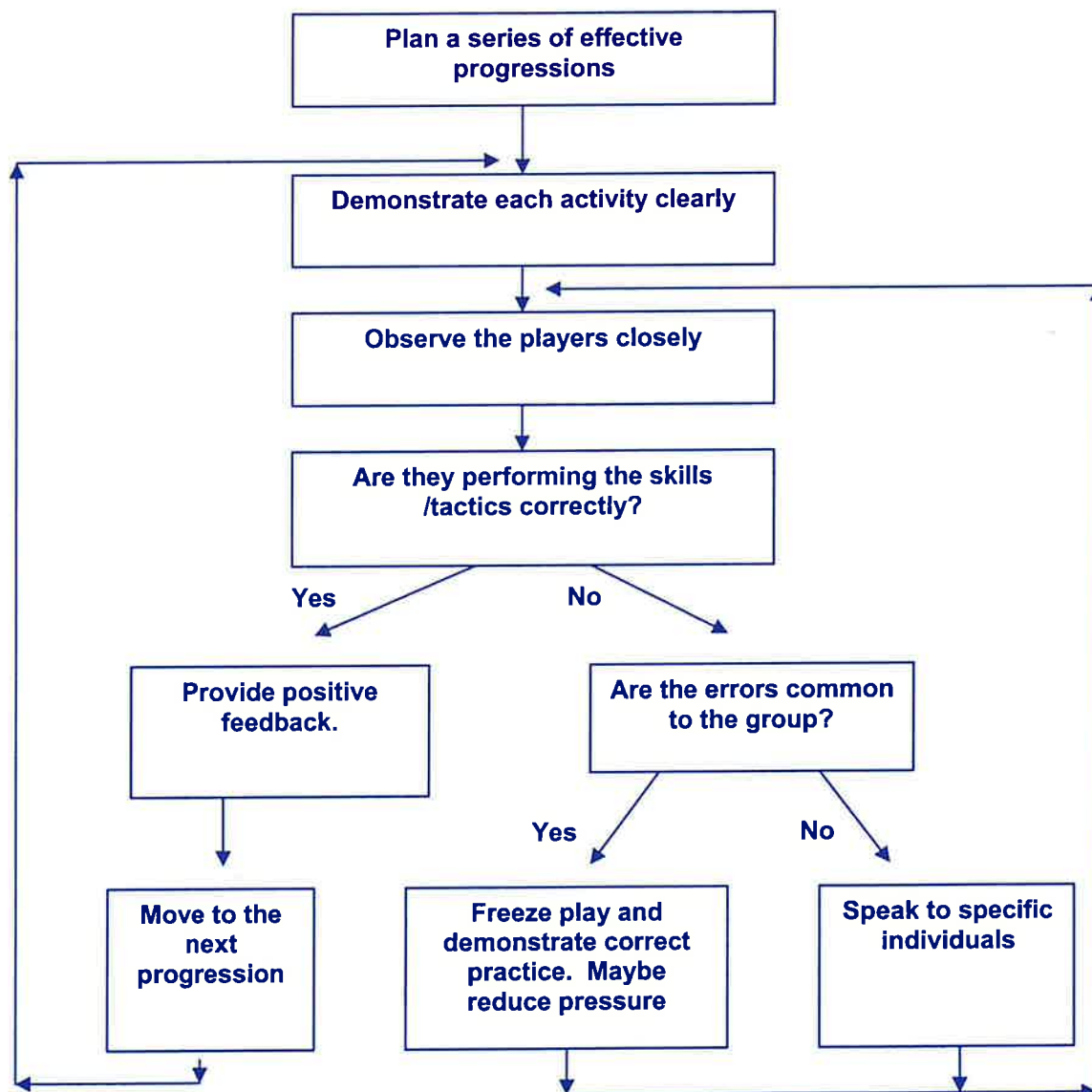
These simple but prophetic words of Charles Darwin seem very relevant here: *'I think I am superior to the common run of men in noticing things which easily escape attention, and in observing them carefully'*. This is not possible, however, if we are over-coaching and excessively involved.

This ability as a coach to identify the essential 'coachable moments' will be greatly enhanced by visualizing the activities when initially planning our session. If we 'play the video' in our 'minds eye' we are likely to anticipate many of the potential mistakes before they actually occur. This is the true art of preparation.

As the session progresses it is important to increasingly step back, calm the mind and truly observe the group. The coach can then see if the players are correctly applying the skills that have been taught. It also allows the players to work things out for themselves thus encouraging initiative and reflection. This detachment is especially important during the scrimmage at the end!

Effective Intervention

There is a fine balance between coaching and over-coaching. If the intervention is short (30 seconds), topic related and will definitely improve the player(s) then it is worth making-concise!



GAME DAY REVISITED

If the session does not clearly improve the players then there is unlikely to be an improvement on game day. This is self evident but we, as coaches are often bemused by the fact that the team are not playing better. Granted there are a number of factors which influence a teams' performance on any particular day but we should take responsibility wherever possible.

When the next game arrives the coach should focus the team's attention primarily on what has been worked on that week. If the players have clearly improved then we have been successful in our objectives regardless of whether the team wins or loses. Over time this approach will develop the players to be the best that they can be and the different elements of the game will start to come together in cohesive performances. This takes time and patience but will ultimately prepare your players to realize their potential.

4. SELECTING A FORMATION

- **The 4-3-3**
- **The 3-4-3**
- **The 4-4-2**
- **The 3-5-2**

Systems of Play

Debates abound regarding the perfect tactical formation for a soccer team. Many are a result of a new system that has proven effective at a major tournament such as a World Cup or a European Championship and has therefore received much media attention. It should be remembered, however, in these situations we are talking about the very top-level players with high levels of fitness and great technical and tactical skills. They also spend a lot of time perfecting a system of play with their coaches in training camps prior to the tournaments. The numbers ascribed to a particular *formation* can be very misleading, as the formation will often change depending on whether the team is on offense or defense. The *basic formation* is developed into a *system of play* which is very fluid with full backs moving into midfield, midfielders dropping into defense and wingers stepping inside to create space etc. The system is more important than the formation.

Youth players do not spend this amount of time with their coaches and do not possess the fitness and technical-tactical expertise. It is therefore important to select a system that will be relatively simple to understand in terms of team shape and individual roles within that shape. For the youth coach the most appropriate question should be do you adopt a system to suit the players or do you adapt the players to play the system?

Points to consider:

Age of players
Technical ability of players
Physical attributes of the players
Vision and transitional qualities
Expectation of the group
The playing environment e.g. Is it an academy team?

The answer is based around the philosophy of the soccer club or the coach. Some clubs have a preferred formation which they require all their academy teams to adhere to. The best known for this is probably the Dutch clubs such as Ajax which invariably use a 4.3.3. The majority of local youth clubs around the world, however, will allow their coaches to make independent decisions. The coach should bear in mind the following factors:

- Players at the youth level should be familiar with all the positions on the field whilst still having favorable or specialized roles
- Good players should be flexible and can play in many positions
- Players natural strengths should be incorporated
- Players have limited tactical understanding at all youth age groups and therefore the individual roles should be clear for each player

At times the coach may change the formation of a team during the game to ensure a certain result. This may include adding another forward to score a goal or withdrawing a midfield player to shore up the defense. If the coach is likely to change the formation during a game or for different games then the players need to be coached in the alternative formation. This should not be a random event and the players should not be expected to understand the nuances of a new formation just because the coach explained it on the day of a game.

Whilst one could write reams on the relative benefits of the formations I will include the potential strengths and potential weaknesses inherent within each. The potential being realized depends on the ability of the players and the organization of the coach. Put simply, we as coaches are attempting to ensure that we have more players (when on defense and when on offense) around the ball at any given time than the opposition. To some coaches the emphasis will be more heavily weighted towards numbers up on defense whilst others, who are more attack oriented, will emphasize numbers up in offensive areas. The ideal is to implement a fluid system, with a team well organized in transition that can achieve defensive and offensive dominance.

Formations

4-3-3

Implement a flat or diamond back four

Positives

Easily creates triangles for support all over the field

There are greater numbers in the defensive third making it harder for the opposition to break it down

Three forwards afford the opportunity to play a long early pass as they cover a wide target area

Three forwards can apply very high pressure on the opposition defenders when in possession

Playing three forwards can force the opposition to adjust their formation in their back third

Negatives

The back four need to have a clear system for marking two forwards

A three-man midfield will most often be outnumbered by the opposition midfield

The role of the central midfielder can be difficult, especially if the other two midfielders get pulled wide

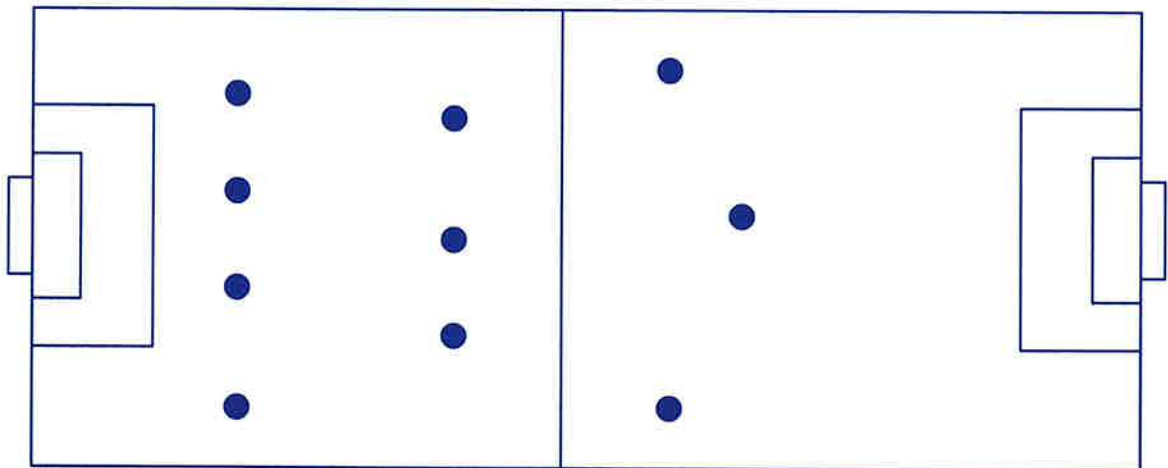
Three forwards can limit the space for other team-mates to join the attack

The three forwards can be played out of the game with one forward pass

Development From The 8-a side game

The 4-3-3 is a natural development from the 3-2-2 formation. The potential strengths and weaknesses are very similar, however to achieve a smooth transition certain aspects of the formation should be focused on in training:

- Coach the back four to operate with a sweeper and marking backs, or as a flat back four
- Encourage a direct style of play
- Coach the fullbacks to step into the midfield on the weak side of the field thus creating a four player midfield and enabling a switch of play when their team is in possession
- Coach the fullbacks to step into midfield and put pressure on the opponent's wide midfield players
- Coach the three central midfielders to play as a triangle, inverted triangle or flat. Give clear transitional roles to these players when the ball has been played into the strikers.
- Coach the front three to play together. The simplest form would be to have two wide wingers and one central striker but other variations are possible.



3-4-3

Implement a flat or diamond midfield

Positives

Easily creates triangles for support all over the field
Equal numbers in midfield (against the majority of teams!)
Greater overall numbers committed to attack
Same advantages as the three attackers in the 4-3-3

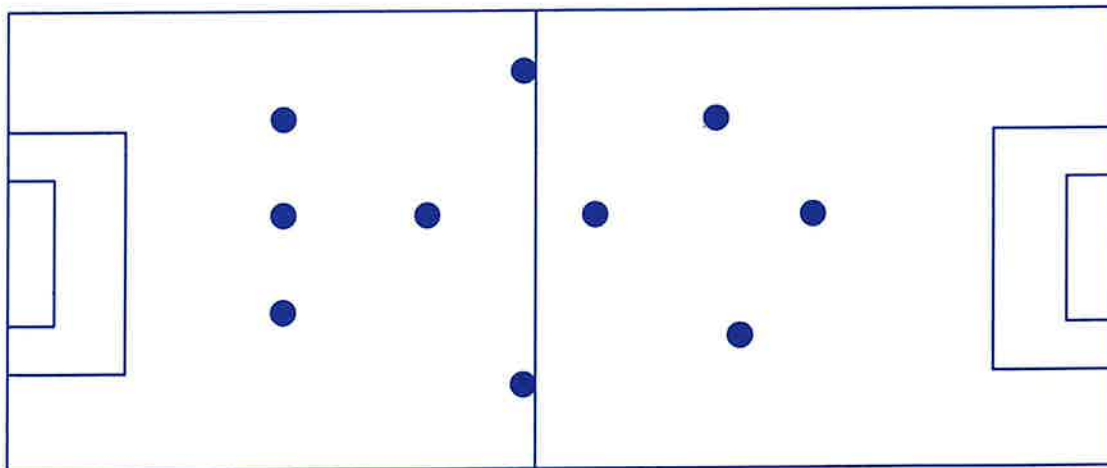
Negatives

Three at the back can expose slow/weak outside full backs
Vulnerable to diagonal balls
How to cope with three opposition forwards
Attacking two thirds of the field can get crowded

Development From The 8-a side game

The 3-4-3 is a natural development from the 2-3-2 formation. The potential strengths and weaknesses are very similar, however to achieve a smooth transition certain aspects of the formation should be focused on in training:

- The defensive three can play as a flat three or with marking defenders and a sweeper. It is important that they are clear about their responsibilities
- Coach the two central midfield players to work and communicate together playing side to side or with one playing an attacking role and one playing a defensive role
- The wide midfield players should be clear about offensive and especially defensive roles with the weak side midfielder tracking back to join the defense
- Coach the front three to play together. The simplest form would be to have two wide wingers and one central striker but other variations are possible.



4-4-2

Flat or diamond defense

Positives

Very symmetrical so difficult to unbalance
Easily creates diamonds all over the field for support
Eight defenders committed to defense when losing possession
Full backs can join the attack without sacrificing the integrity of the defensive unit
Provides width so easy to change the point of attack
Two forwards have space to move in

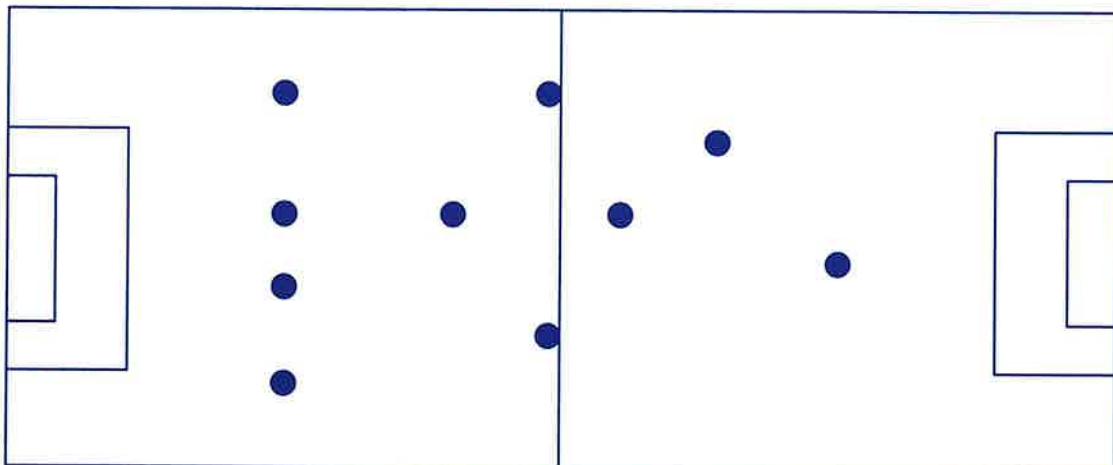
Negatives

Fewer players committed to attack
The back four need to have a clear system for marking two forwards
Outside midfield players need to support attack and cover defense
Team can be exposed if both central midfielders attack at the same time
Difficult for two attackers when marked by four defenders, especially if they lack speed

Development From The 8-a side game

The 4-4-2 is a natural development from the 3-3-1 formation in the 8 a side game. The potential strengths and weaknesses are very similar, however, to achieve a smooth transition certain aspects of the formation should be focused on in training:

- Coach the four defenders to play as a zonal flat four or with a sweeper plus marking backs
- Coach the two central midfield players to work and communicate together playing side to side or with one playing an attacking role and one playing a defensive role
- Coach the front two to work together, probably with the first as a high target player and the second either foraging beneath or making runs into the wide channels



3-5-2

Combines the principles of three defenders and two attackers described above

Positive

Five in midfield will outnumber the opposition in that area

Flexibility that three central midfielders can provide offensively and defensively

Possible combinations in center midfield are:

Two defensive and one attacking midfield

Two attacking and one defensive midfield

One attacking, one defensive and one 'free' playing midfield

Negatives

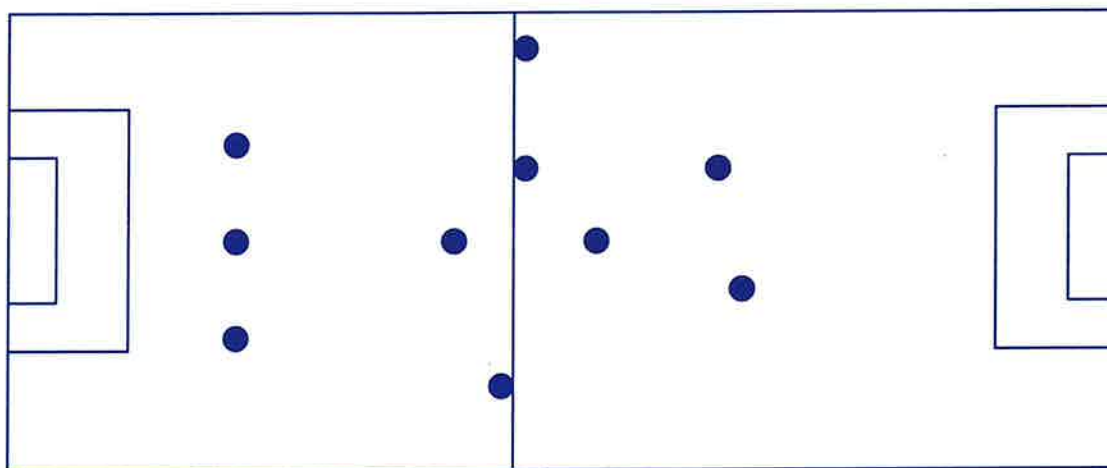
The three in the central midfield area may condense their own space in possession if they are unable to stick to their roles and remain flexible at the same time

Same disadvantage as the three defenders in a 3-4-3

Development From The 8-a side game

The 3-5-2 does not have a direct equivalent in the 8 a side game but is most closely related to the 2-3-2. The focus should initially be focused on:

- The defensive three can play as a flat three or with marking defenders and a sweeper. It is important that they are clear about their responsibilities
- Coaching the responsibilities within the 5-man midfield is key to the success of this formation. The central three must be particularly clear about their roles otherwise they will impede each other's effectiveness. With only two forwards and three defenders the wide midfielders must be quick to transition forwards and backwards.
- Coach the front two to work together, probably with the first as a high target player and the second either foraging beneath or making runs into the wide channels



5. PRACTICE SESSIONS

- **Possession 1**
- **Defending**
- **Possession 2**
- **Attacking**

PRACTICE SESSIONS

THEME	PAGE
Possession 1	40
Defending	45
Possession 2	48
Attacking Play	51

KEY TO DIAGRAMS



Cone



Defined areas



Dribbling with a ball



Running without the ball



Passing the ball



Shooting the ball

GK

Goalkeeper

F

Feeder

T

Target Player

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Soccer

SESSION PLAN

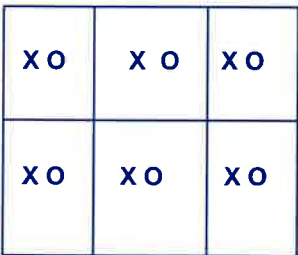
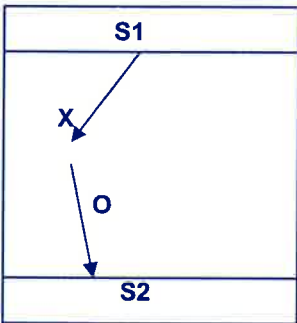
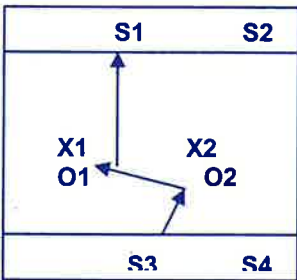
Session Title

Receiving 1

Objectives

To Maintain Close Control Of The Ball

To Maintain Possession in Crowded Areas

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up a) X attempts to shield ball from O. O attempts to touch the ball. O gains a point each time he touches the ball or forces X out. Switch. b) Player can steal the ball from opponent. Player in possession at end of minute receives point. If ball goes out then other player resumes play in possession of the ball.		15%	Coach Technique Use body to shield ball from opponent Keep ball on furthest foot (preferably on the outside) Turn away from pressure Awareness by looking up Wide stance 'Feel the ball, see the defender!'
2. Technical Practice Players begin each time on half way line and defender should stay as tight as possible to attacker. S1 passes to X who shields ball to keep possession. Condition (at the beginning): Defender cannot step in front of attacker. Score by passing ball to S2. S2 then restarts by playing ball into O. Progression: Player in possession can pass back and switch with the support player.		20%	Intensity & Pace Communication: Turn or hold Movement to receive ball Decision: Get sideways on and receive ball on furthest foot from the defender if defender is tight
3. Skill Development As above but with two players in the middle and two support players who can also pass to each other to switch play. Players in the centre can pass to each other or back to support player. Progression: Can pass back and switch with a support player		20%	Movement of players to create space to receive pass Find a new space if ball is not passed Awareness of defenders and teammate
4. Conditioned Scrimmage Play with man-to-man marking. If ball goes out of play the coach passes into a player under pressure!		20%	Look over shoulder to see the field.
5. Regular Scrimmage		25%	Try to receive the ball facing the field.

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SESSION PLAN

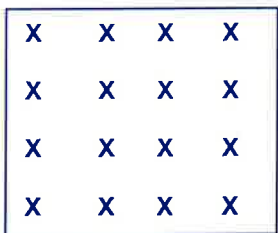
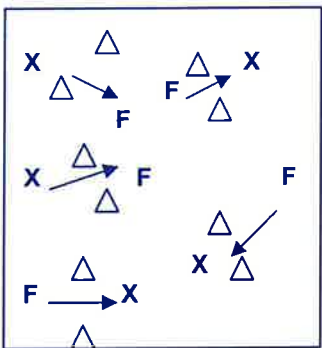
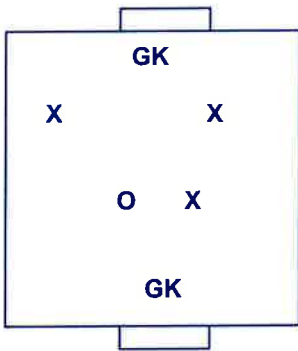
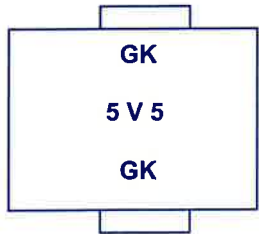
Session Title

Receiving 2

Objectives

To Direct The Ball Away From Pressure

To Receive High Balls Close to The body

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up Players dribble around area performing a range of turns and moves. Incorporate the players throwing the ball in the air and controlling (cushioning) with their laces and thighs.		15%	Head up Close control Laces: Bend knee with toes pointing up Cushion the ball
2. Technical Practice F throws the ball (underarm) to X who controls it and passes back to F. X then runs to a different feeder and repeats the above. Practice before competition. The first player to visit five gates is the winner. Progression: X's must receive the ball from the feeder and pass to a different feeder. Receive the same ball and repeat the process. First player to five gates is the winner.		20%	Horizontal movement to get in line with the ball Cushion the ball Vertical movement to take the ball out of the air Select and present surface
3. Skill Development 3 v 1 or 4 v 2 (+GK's). The X's keep the ball away from O and must make 4 passes before shooting on either goal. If O wins the ball he/she can shoot immediately. X's possess by alternating a pass along the ground with a ball thrown in the air to a teammate. If the ball in the air is not controlled then it does not count as a pass.		20%	Quick movement towards point of control Settle yourself before presenting surface Body shape on receiving the ball Call for the ball Control towards 'open' goal
4. Conditioned Scrimmage The coach stands within the area with soccer balls and each time the ball goes out of play feeds a new ball in the air to one of the players who must control it. If not, then there is a turn over.		20%	Awareness of defenders Receive ball away from pressure and towards goal if possible Communication between players
5. Regular Scrimmage		25%	

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SESSION PLAN

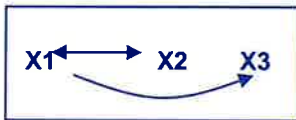
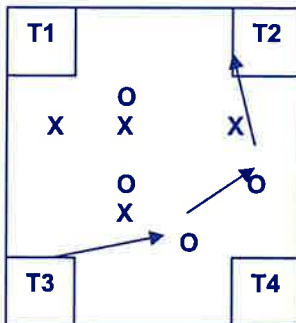
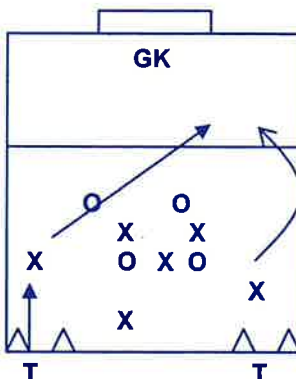
Session Title

Long Passing

Objectives

To Develop The Technique Of The Long Pass

To Decide When To Possess v Penetrate

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm Up</p> <p>Players pass and move with a ball between three players.</p> <p>Progression: X1 plays a double pass with X2, touches the ball out of the feet and plays a long pass to X3 who repeats the process with X2. X2 should move to the player rather than standing still in the middle.</p>		15%	<p>Strike with laces and ankle locked.</p> <p>Step into the ball and follow through in the direction of the target</p> <p>Non kicking foot alongside the ball but not too close</p>
<p>2. Skill Development : 4 v 4 (Can do 5 v 3)</p> <p>Players possess the ball within their team by passing and moving. Teams score by passing the ball to any one of the four neutral, corner players. The ball is then passed back into the same team who must attack a different corner.</p> <p>Rotate teams.</p> <p>Variation: If there are larger numbers then you can have one player from each team in the corners who cannot challenge each other but play back into their own team.</p> <p>Progression: Add direction so O's score by playing to T1 and T2, X's play to T3 and T4.</p>		15%	<p>Awareness of defender</p> <p>Awareness of space</p> <p>Importance of the 1st touch</p> <p>Head up on 1st touch</p> <p>Shape</p> <p>Can the long ball be played early to score?</p>
<p>3. Functional Practice: Penetration</p> <p>6 v 4 in midfield area. Attacking team (Four midfielders and two forwards) look for the opportunity to pass the ball into the final third for on running players. Defending team score by passing through the two wide goals.</p> <p>No player is allowed in the final third until the ball has been played in.</p>		30%	<p>Look to penetrate early</p> <p>If the opposition 'drop deep' to defend the long ball then play short passes forward to 'draw' the defenders out!</p>
<p>4. Regular Scrimmage</p>		25%	<p>Diagonal ball is usually most effective</p> <p>Runs from forwards and midfield</p>

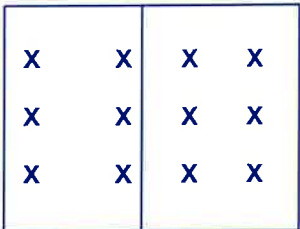
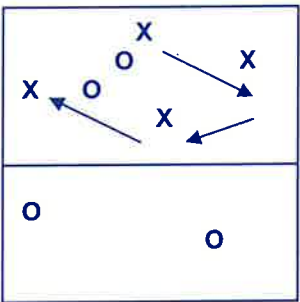
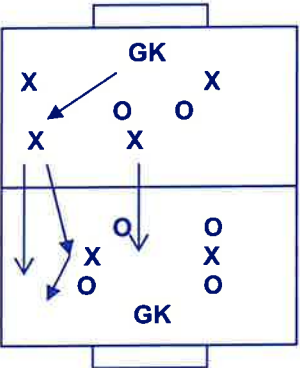
PHWM Soccer

SESSION PLAN

Session Title Transition 1

Objectives To Maintain Possession

To Improve Support Runs

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm up</p> <p>Players pass and move in their half of the field with two balls between six players (or three between eight).</p> <p>Progression 1: As above but must use both halves of the field thus teams mingle.</p> <p>Progression 2: Teams try to maintain possession of their balls whilst trying to steal the oppositions.</p>		15%	<p>Head Up</p> <p>Controlled close to the body and towards next player</p> <p>Quality of the pass</p> <p>Distance and angle of support</p>
<p>2. Skill Development: 4 v 2 (+2) or 6 v 3(+3)</p> <p>4X's v 2O's in one half of the field. 2O's in the other half of the field. X's attempt to keep possession whilst O's try to steal the ball. Once O's steal the ball they pass into their team mates and follow the pass to make a group of four. Two X's can go after the ball to try and win it back.</p> <p>Progression: After five passes another defender can go to help the other two.</p> <p>Progression 2: Limit touches to 2/3</p>		25%	<p>Quick transition on winning ball</p> <p>Look for early pass into the other zone.</p> <p>Speed and angle of support run</p> <p>Positioning of two support players to receive the ball in space-provide length</p>
<p>3. Conditioned Scrimmage</p> <p>Each team has four players in the defensive half of the field and two in the offensive half. The attacking team has free movement whilst the defending team must remain in their zones. If the ball is lost, any penetrating player must recover to their own zone.</p>		30%	<p>Decision: Who penetrates and when</p> <p>Quick transition on winning / losing ball</p> <p>Support angles</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Exploit open spaces</p>
<p>4. Regular Scrimmage</p>		30%	

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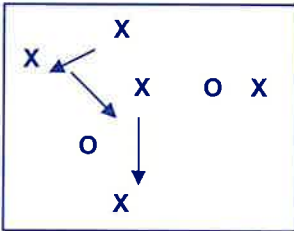
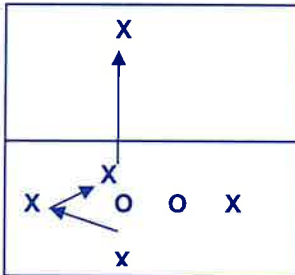
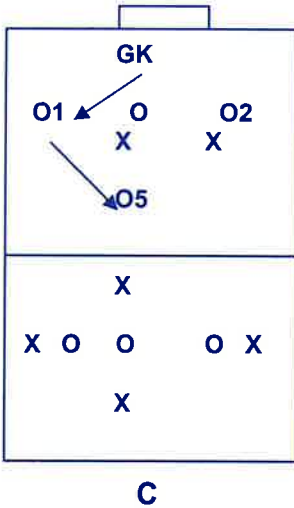
Soccer

SESSION PLAN

Session Title Transition 2

Objectives To Improve Decision Making on Transition

To Exploit Spaces When The Opposition Loses Shape

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up 5 v 2 keep away. The two defenders carry a pinnie in their hands. Whichever player give away possession takes the pinnie and becomes a defender in the middle. Progression 1: Limit touches Progression 2: 4 v 3		15%	Quality of passing Shape: Width, depth and length Communication
2. Skill Development 4 v 2 (defenders carry pinnies) keep away. After five passes the ball is passed to the lone support player. Four of the players plus the defenders move into the other half of the field. If possession is lost then the player who made the mistake switches with the defender. Progression: Limit touches Progression 2: Lone target player has one receiving touch		25%	Position of lone forward Speed and angle of support Body shape on receiving the ball Communication
3. Functional Practice The activity begins with GK passing to an unopposed fullback O1 or O2 who plays into O5. All players begin in designated zone. On O5's first touch the game is 'live' and there is free movement. X's score on the goal. O's score by dribbling across the endline. C then plays straight into X's!! Progression: For teams to score every player must be in opposition half. Progression 2: Limit the number of touches that X's can make thus promoting speed of play.		30%	Focus on X team Stay mentally alert Look for fast break on winning the ball Play the ball away from pressure early Decision making of forwards: Turn or pass back to the midfield Angle and distance of support
4. Regular Scrimmage The teams line up with four midfield players and two forwards. Can add a sweeper / stopper if there are more players.		30%	As above

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SESSION PLAN

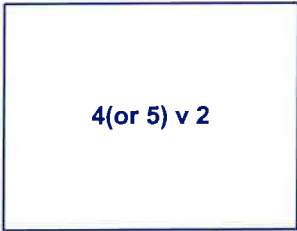
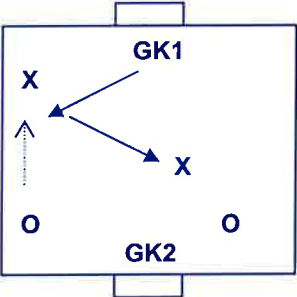
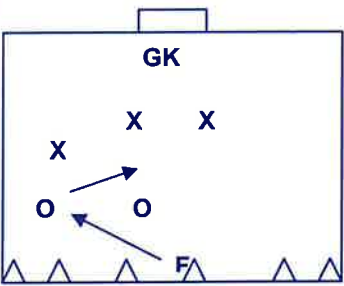
Session Title

Defending 1

Objectives

To Develop Organization in Defence

To Improve Communication

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up 5 v 2 keep away. Five attackers possess the ball whilst two defenders try to steal it. The defensive players switch after three minutes. <i>Scoring: Each time the attackers make five passes they get a goal. Defenders score by stealing and making three passes.</i>		15%	Pressure 'Surf' position Small steps and bent knees Communication Work together
2. Skill Development Play begins when GK1 passes to X's who are then looking to score on GK2. If ball goes out of play then start by dribbling or passing in from where it went out. Reset after an attempt on goal. Alternate which team starts with the ball. Variation: Can initially play 2 v 1 (1 rests) Play five minutes and then go against a different team.		25%	'Surfing stance' Pressure from 1 st defender Direct opponent away from goal. Patience Angle and distance of cover from 2 nd defender Recovery runs
3. Functional Practice Feeder plays ball into the two forwards who attempt to score on goal. The defenders aim to win the ball and pass back to the feeder to score. Variation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defenders must dribble through the goals F can join in with the attackers 		25%	Balance: Position of 3 rd defender Communication
4. Regular scrimmage Have the teams play in a 3.3.1 or 3.2.2 formation thus focusing on the back 3.		35%	

PHWM Soccer

SESSION PLAN

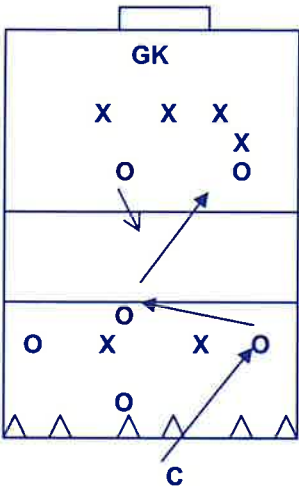
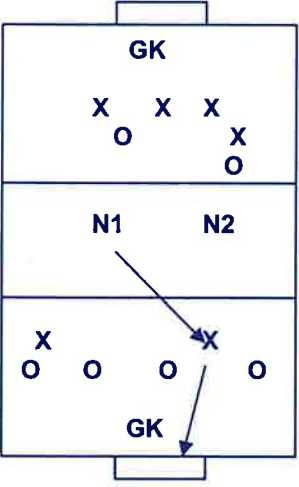
Session Title

Defending 2

Objectives

To Ensure Pressure, Cover and Balance

To Improve Communication

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm up: 5 V 3</p> <p>Five attackers keep the ball away from three defenders. Attackers score by making four passes. Defenders score by stealing the ball and making two passes</p> <p>2. Functional Practice</p> <p>Start with players in their zones and the coach playing the ball in to the offensive (numbers up) midfield (O's). They work the ball and pass into the attackers (who are allowed to drop into the midfield zone) who attempt to score on the goal. Free movement ensues. If the defenders win the ball then they have ten seconds to play forward into the coach or they lose possession. Restart the activity with players in their zones.</p> <p>Progression 1: The attacking midfield are allowed to pass OR dribble into the midfield zone. Once the ball enters that zone there is free movement for the both teams.</p> <p>Progression 2: Take out the zones.</p> <p>3. Conditioned Scrimmage</p> <p>The coach plays the ball into N1 or N2 (neutral players) who play the ball into the forward X's. O's (defenders) attempt to win the ball and play into N1 or N2 who then pass into O's (forwards). After an attempt on goal the coach feeds another ball in.</p> <p>Progression: N1 or N2 can penetrate by dribbling into final third (creating a 4 v 3). On N's 1st touch the defenders can leave their zone</p> <p>Progression 2: Restart by GK playing into the 4 defenders. Take out zones.</p> <p>4. Regular Scrimmage</p>	 	<p>15%</p> <p>30%</p> <p>30%</p> <p>25%</p>	<p>Pressure 1st defender force the attacker towards the 2nd defender 2nd defender adjusts to 1st defenders position Communication</p> <p>Coach the back four 1st defender-Pressure 2nd defender –Cover for 1st defender 3rd and 4th Defenders-Balance (no large spaces)</p> <p>Intercept pass if possible</p> <p>Ensure that the marking is organized Don't allow the shot</p> <p>Move as a unit. Don't allow any large spaces.</p> <p>Push up to condense space Communication when pushing up</p>

PHWM Soccer

SESSION PLAN

Session Title

Defending 3

Objectives

Combining Units in Defence

To Make Attacking Play Predicable For Defence

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up 4X's v 3 O's. The game begins with N passing into the X's who score by dribbling across O's endline. O's attempt to win the ball and score by passing the ball to N.		15%	Communication Attempt to force attack in one direction Slide Condense space
2. Conditioned Game 4 v 4. The teams score by dribbling across the endline in the central zone. Condition: If the ball is in one of the wide zones then all of the opposition must be in that wide zone or the central zone, none in the far zone. If the ball is in the central zone then all of the opposition players should be in the central zone.		25%	Defence shifts across the field as a mobile unit If there is pressure on the ball the defence can 'close in'. Patience of the 1 st defender
3. Functional Practice 8X's (+GK) v 5O's (+2 F's). Begin with the F's + C passing to each other along the endline. After three or four passes they may play the ball into any O who attacks goal. X's score by passing into the F's on the Endline. Progression 1: F's become fullbacks for the O team and can penetrate. X's must score within ten seconds of receiving the ball and must all be in the O's half. If X's score then the coach immediately feeds a ball into O's. Can have an assistant who can feed in from a different angle and more advanced position Progression 2: Begin with GK playing the ball out to X's. The throw and the first pass are 'free'.		30%	Compact vertically and horizontally Defence slides as ball moves across the field Communication Defence pushes up as the ball is moving forward thus condensing space and leaving forwards offside Quick transition Intercept passes if possible
4. Regular Scrimmage		30%	

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SESSION PLAN

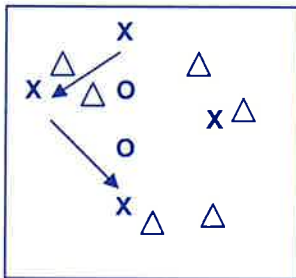
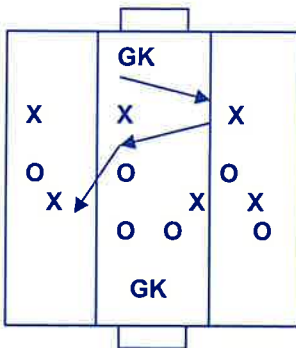
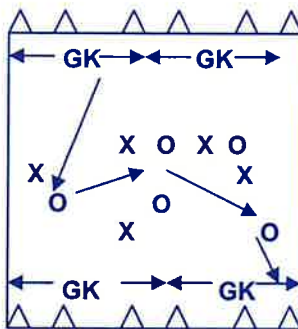
Session Title

Switching The Play 1

Objectives

To Switch The Ball Away From Pressure

To Maintain Width and Depth In Possession

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm Up: 4 v 2 (or 5 v 3)</p> <p>4 v 2 Keepaway. The team of four score each time they pass the ball through one of the gates to a receiving player. The defenders score by stealing the ball and maintaining possession for five seconds. Set the activity up twice for twelve players. If players are struggling then take cones out or change numbers.</p> <p>2. Conditioned Scrimmage 1</p> <p>Regular scrimmage but the ball must enter each of the vertical zones before your team can shoot on goal.</p> <p>Variations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play numbers up on one team and they attack in both directions Must have at least one player in each zone Limit touches <p><i>Note: Fields Should Be Short But Wide</i></p> <p>3. Conditioned Scrimmage 2</p> <p>Regular scrimmage except teams can score in any one of the three goals. Two GK's protect three goals.</p> <p>Variation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play numbers up on one team and restart with them each time. Use two wide goals only and take out central goals Use support players instead of GK's <p><i>Note: Fields Should Be Short But Wide</i></p> <p>4. Regular Scrimmage</p>	  	<p>15%</p> <p>30%</p> <p>30%</p> <p>25%</p>	<p>Open up body to turn away.</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Movement to open area</p> <p>Awareness of other players</p> <p>Width and Depth</p> <p>Awareness of opponents and teammates</p> <p>Movement of support players to create angles ahead of and behind ball.</p> <p>Keep ball moving away from pressure</p> <p>Look diagonally before attacking down channel</p> <p>Distance and angles of support</p> <p>Width and depth in possession.</p>

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SESSION PLAN

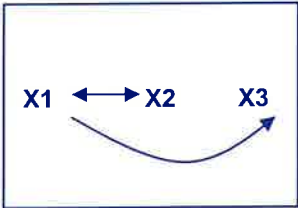
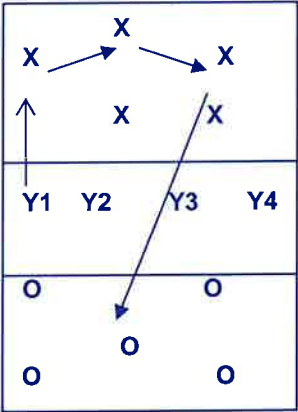
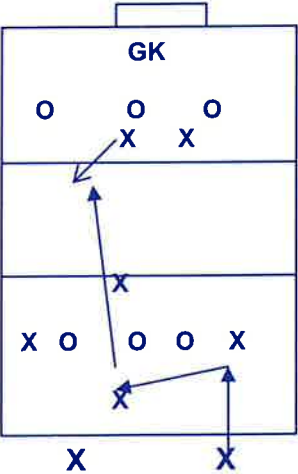
Session Title

Receiving A Long Pass

Objectives

To Receive Long Passes Out Of The Air

To Direct The Ball Away From Pressure

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up Players pass and move in groups of three, varying the distance of the pass. Progression: X1 plays a double pass with X2, touches the ball out of the feet and plays a long pass to X3 who repeats the process with X2. X2 should move to the player rather than standing still in the middle.		15%	Move in line with the ball Select the surface with which to receive the ball Cushion the ball
2. Skill Development The coach plays the ball into the X's who possess the ball until which time they can play a long ball across the zone into the O's. One Y (Y1) can move into X's zone to steal the ball. If the ball reaches the O's a new Y (Y2) moves into that zone whilst Y1 recovers to the central zone. Whoever gives away possession of the ball switches position with the player who stole it. The Y's carry a pinnie in their hand and pass it to any player they switch with. Variation: If players are struggling then have one central player take a knee		30%	Communication Get in line with the ball Prepare to cushion the ball Take touch away from pressure and towards teammate
3. Functional Practice The ball is passed into the midfield four X's with two full backs in support. The six X's must possess the ball until they can deliver a long pass into the two forwards. The forwards are allowed to drop into the central zone to receive the longer ball. The O defenders can only go into the central zone if an X has already dropped in. Once the ball has been played into the two forwards then free play ensues. O's score by playing into the X's on the endline		30%	Check over shoulder before moving to the ball Set your body before receiving the long ball Strength
4. Regular Scrimmage		25%	Receiving touch-Turn or set towards midfield

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SESSION PLAN

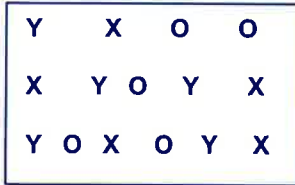
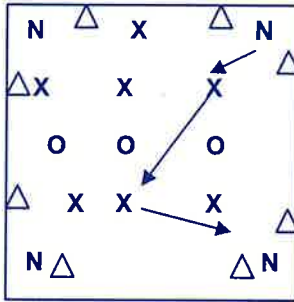
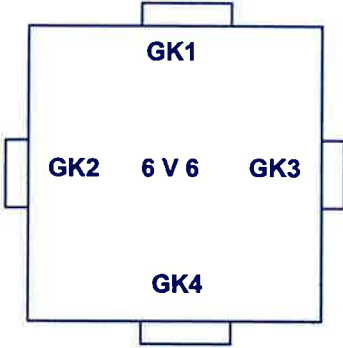
Session Title

Switching Play 2

Objectives

To Open Up To The Field

To Change Angle Of Attack

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up Players pass and move in their groups of five. Progress to mingling with the other groups and still keep possession. Progression: X's pass to O's who pass to Y's who pass to X's.		15%	Vision Movement wide to create space Quality of pass Quality of 1 st touch
2. Skill Development 7 V 3 (various combinations). X's score by passing the ball through any one of the four gates to a N player. O's score by making 3 passes. Play is continuous. Rotate defenders regularly. <i>Variation:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team must make a certain number of passes before scoring. On receiving the ball N dribbles on and switches with player that passes in. Progression 1: As above but now play with equal numbers in the centre. Score each time the ball is played to one of the neutral players Progression 2: With equal numbers score by getting the ball to one of your players who has moved behind one of the gates i.e. no neutrals!		30%	Maintain width, depth and length Quality of pass Open up to field on receiving the ball Distance and angles of support Movement of T players to receive the ball Maintain shape Head up on receiving the pass
3. Conditioned Scrimmage 6 v 6. Team X attacks Goal 1 or 2 and if they score they then attack the opposite 1 or 2 etc. Team O attacks Goals 3 and 4. The first pass from the GK is free. Rotate GK's after each five minutes. Progression: Limit touches		30%	Maintain width, depth and length.
4. Regular Scrimmage		25%	Communication Play away from pressure Speed of play

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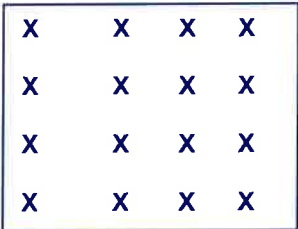
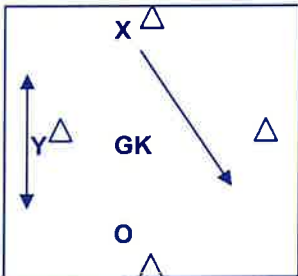
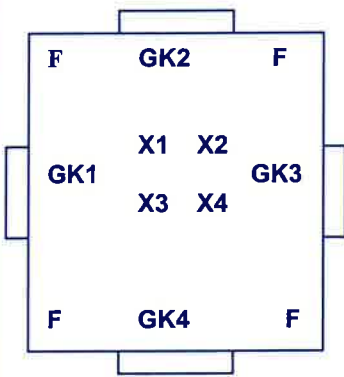
Session Title

Shooting 1

Objectives

To Improve Shooting Technique

To Improve Decision Making Near Goal

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm up</p> <p>Pass and move with one ball between three players. Add conditions for the passes e.g. Two touch, short passing, short-short-long passing, long passing.</p>		15%	<p>Head Up Balance Use of both feet and different surfaces Close control</p>
<p>2. Technical Practice</p> <p>X and O's take it in turns to take shots on goal. Alternate left and right feet. Ensure the player controls the ball and then looks to take the shot quickly. Rotate GK every two minutes.</p> <p>Progression: On receiving the ball the X takes the ball around the rear cone combines with Y and shoots. Y then moves to combine with X.</p> <p>Scoring: How many goals did X and O score as a team?</p>		20%	<p>Strike the ball with the laces and ankle locked</p> <p>Strike the centre of the back of the ball</p> <p>Approach at an angle</p> <p>Non-kicking foot to the side of the ball and pointing towards target</p> <p>Weight over the ball</p>
<p>3. Skill Development</p> <p>X's start in the central area. F's pass into X's who moves towards the pass and receive towards goal and shoot. They then go to a different F and repeat. Rotate Goalkeepers.</p> <p>Scoring: How many goals can Team X score in one minute? Rotate roles.</p> <p>Progression 1: X1 and X2 play as a pair. X3 and X4 play as a pair. X1 receives a ball and plays a combination with X2 before shooting. Then X2 receives the ball and plays the combination etc.</p>		20%	<p>4 A's</p> <p>Accuracy</p> <p>Aggression</p> <p>Attitude: Positive</p> <p>Awareness of GK position</p> <p>Quality of pass from F's</p> <p>Quality of receiving touch</p>
<p>4. Conditioned Scrimmage</p> <p>6 v 6. X's score on GK1 and GK2. O's score on GK3 and GK4. Can play with two balls.</p>		20%	
<p>5. Regular Scrimmage</p>		25%	

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SESSION PLAN

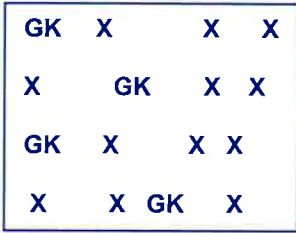
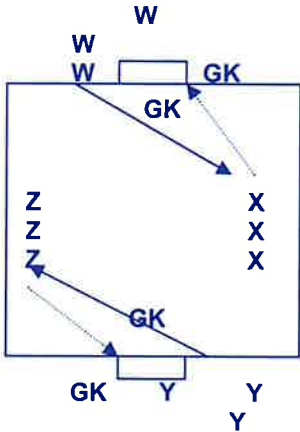
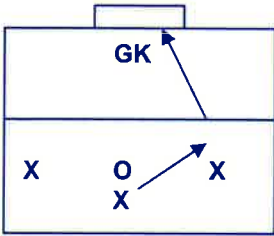
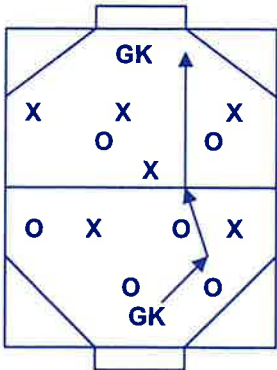
Session Title

Shooting 2

Objectives

To Develop Technique Of The Long Shot

To Develop a Positive Attitude To Shooting

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up Players pass and move around the area-five balls between twelve players. Progress to players passing in area and then shooting at a GK when he/she calls for it. The GK then distributes to a player and continues as before.		15%	Close control Head up Awareness of other players Accuracy of pass
2. Technical Practice W plays to X who shoots on goal and they rotate positions. At the same time Y passes to Z and they rotate. Progression: Y plays to X who shoots on GK1 and W plays to Z who shoots on GK2. The rotation is from X to W to Z to Y etc. Include retrievers in the rotation.		20%	Strike with laces and ankle locked. Touch the ball forward and to the side to allow a run up Step into the ball and follow through in the direction of the target Non kicking foot alongside the ball but not too close Point towards target
3. Skill Development Three attackers work in their zone to create a shooting opportunity. The shooter can only take two touches, even if this means touching into the endzone. Defender steals and counters to the endline. Attackers can follow shot in and score from rebounds.		20%	Awareness of defenders Awareness of space Importance of the 1 st touch Shape Be positive towards goal. Follow shot in
4. Conditioned Scrimmage 4(or 3) v 2 in each half of the field. The four attackers try to work a shooting opportunity (cannot pass to front two). Players must remain in their designated zone of field. If the teams in possession are struggling then have one defender take a knee or defenders in attacking half are passive.		20%	As above
5. Regular Scrimmage		25%	

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Soccer

SESSION PLAN

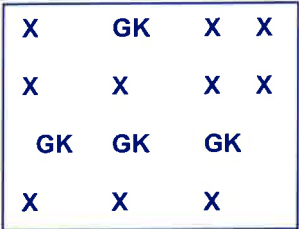
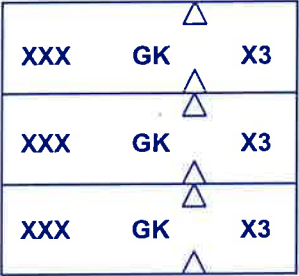
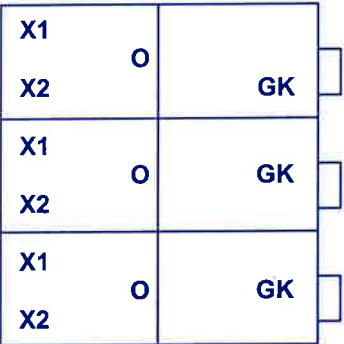

Session Title

Breakaways

Objectives

To Remain Composed When 1 v 1 With The GK

To Remain Aware Of GK and Defenders Position

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up Players dribble around the area with a ball each practising their Elite Feet move e.g. Scissors. Players now attempt to dribble towards a GK and beat him/her. GK tries to steal the ball by diving on it.		15%	Head up Close control Use of move to beat the GK
2. Technical Practice Players attack one of the four goals and shoot, become a retriever (X3) whilst the next player shoots and then joins the back of the line. Progression: Add a recovering defender to add pressure to the breakaway forward. Variation: Have two GK's per goal who alternate the responsibility of GK.		20%	1 st touch out of feet Awareness of GK in relation to goal If GK comes forward then beat with a move If GK stays near line then shoot to the corners
3. Skill Development X1 and X2 attack O (can do 3 v 1) and attempt to break into the end zone to score. O tries to steal the ball and counter to the endline. Variation: Have two GK's per goal taking it in turns. Rotate positions of attackers and defenders. Initially the defender must try to win the ball in the starting half and is not allowed into the endzone unless as a recovery run. Ensure offside rule is enforced.		20%	Awareness of defender Decision making to beat defender Shoot before GK is set Positive attitude to goal
4. Conditioned Game The coach feeds the ball into 6 v 6 who play in the central zone. Players combine to break into the endzone to score on goal. No defender is allowed in the endzone until the ball has entered it. Can include two balls to promote frequency of practice.		20%	All the above
5. Regular Scrimmage		25%	

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SESSION PLAN

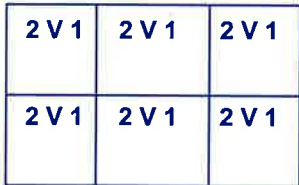
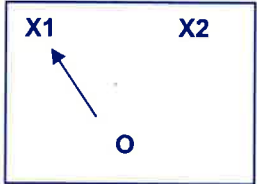
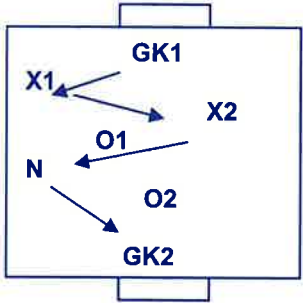
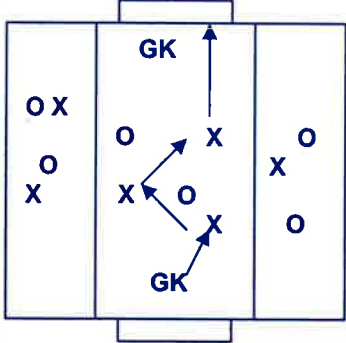
Session Title

Attacking Play 1

Objectives

To Develop Decision Making When Numbers Up

To Attempt To Create Numbers Up Situations

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up The players pass and move within their area in groups of three. Progression 1: 2 v 1 keep away in each square. With four players have one of the defenders 'take a knee' thus always making a 2 v 1		15%	Timing of pass Distance and angle of support
2. Technical Practice O plays the ball out to X's who attack the endline. O attempts to steal the ball and attack X's endline. Rotate positions. Variation: X1 passes into X2 who is in the centre of the square and marked closely by O. Can add a goal with GK.		20%	Decision: Pass or dribble Attack at speed and commit the defender Timing of the pass Angle and distance of support
3. Skill Development GK1 feeds X's (+ neutral player) who attack O's. If O's steal the ball then N joins with them to make a 3 v 2 going in the other direction. After an attempt on goal GK plays a free pass and the defenders must start at the halfway.		20%	Possible combinations: Wall pass Give and Go Overlap Take over Look to exploit numerical advantage
4. Conditioned Scrimmage X's can move freely between zones whilst O's must remain in their zones. This gives X's the opportunity to create 2 v 1 and 3 v 2 situations. After 5 minutes then switch roles of X's and O's so O's now have free movement.		25%	As above
5. Regular Scrimmage			

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SESSION PLAN

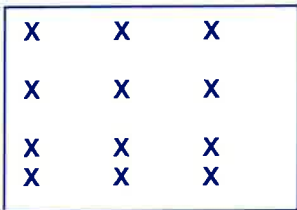
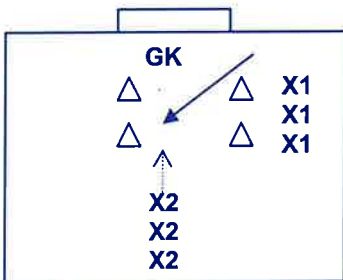
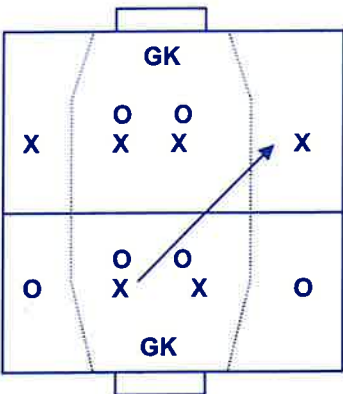
Session Title

Crossing and Finishing

Objectives

To Deliver An Accurate Cross

To Improve The Timing and Angle of Runs

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up Six balls between fifteen players. Pass and move in area. Encourage players to move wide to receive the ball and stretch the field. Condition to pass with left/right foot, inside/outside of feet. Progression: Encourage longest pass available		15%	Quality of pass Head up Communication Vision
2. Technical Practice X1 takes a touch inside and crosses to the target box for X2 to finish. X1 joins the X2 line and X2 joins the X1 line so players are practising crossing and finishing. Set this activity up twice if numbers require it. Progression: As above but with two forwards attacking the near and the far post. Have crosses from left side and right side with crosser taking a couple of touches. Progression 2: Add a defender positioned in the target box.		15%	Get hips around the ball to ensure it goes into target area-away from the GK Timing of the run to arrive at pace as the ball arrives
3. Conditioned Scrimmage 2x's v 2O's in each half. On winning the ball the two defenders pass to their forwards or to their wingers to cross the ball. The wingers cannot be challenged but have only three touches at a time. They cross the ball to the two forwards plus the winger on the opposite side who is allowed to attack the back post. Variation: A goal must be scored from a cross i.e. not directly through the middle Progression: Defenders can move into wide channel to challenge defenders Note: The field should be short and wide.		30%	Strike with the inside of the foot Curve the far post run away from goal initially. Find spaces between/behind defenders Attack space with speed Initially angle run away from your target area e.g. far post, middle, near post
4. Regular Scrimmage		25%	

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SESSION PLAN

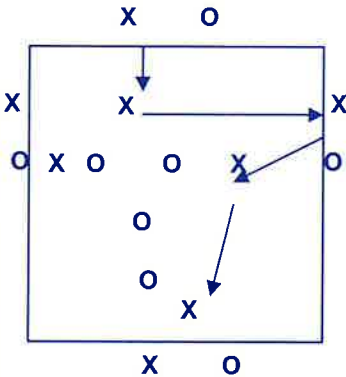
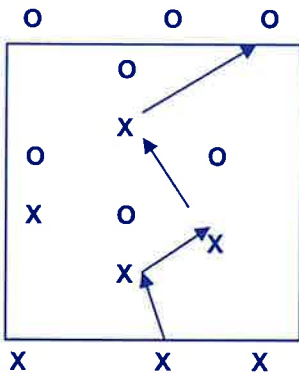
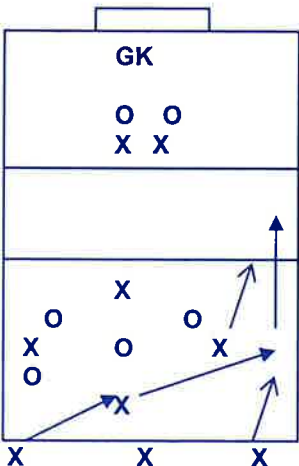

Session Title

Midfield Shape

Objectives

To Penetrate Through The Midfield

To Push Fullbacks Into The Line

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
<p>1. Warm up</p> <p>4x's v 4O's in the centre with support players on the outside with limited touches. The players on the outside cannot be challenged.</p> <p>Progression 1: Limit the touches on the inside.</p> <p>Progression 2: Any central player can switch with an outside player (who receives the ball) when an outside pass is made from their team.</p>		20%	<p>Constant movement Keep the ball moving</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Quality of first touch</p> <p>Shape providing length, width and depth</p>
<p>2. Functional Practice 1</p> <p>4 X's v 4 O's in the midfield area, supported by two full backs and a central defender. The aim is to penetrate the opposition midfield by passing into the support players on the opposite side. The ball is then passed into the opposite team!</p> <p>Progression 1: One of the three fullbacks is allowed to join the midfield to create 'numbers up'. This would normally be on the weak side allowing a switch of play. On transition that fullback must drop back to the support position.</p>		25%	<p>Fluidity in midfield</p> <p>Awareness of the movement of other players</p> <p>Turn to face goal if possible. Drop ball back or inside if marked tightly.</p> <p>Full backs look to exploit space by pushing midfielder forward or overlapping wide midfielder.</p>
<p>3. Functional Practice 2</p> <p>The fullbacks (on endline) play the ball into the X's midfield and they attempt to penetrate.</p> <p>One full back may join the midfield attack at any one time. One of the forward X's can drop into the central zone to receive the ball. The defenders can follow the forward in.</p> <p>Progression: Allow the fullbacks and central back to join the attack at will. Push one of the O's into the midfield to support the other four.</p>		30%	<p>Decision: Penetrate wide or centrally.</p> <p>Patience in possession but first option is to penetrate.</p> <p>Timing of forward runs.</p> <p>Shape</p>
<p>4. Regular Scrimmage</p>		25%	

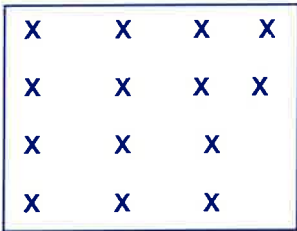
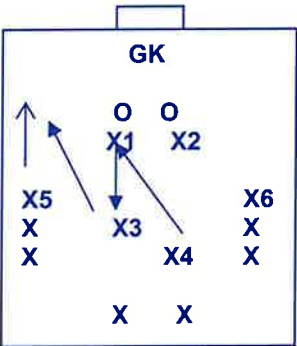
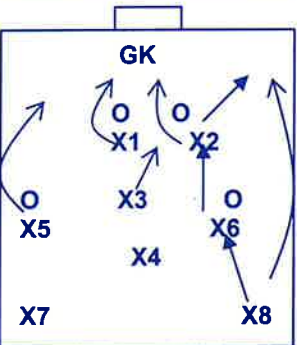
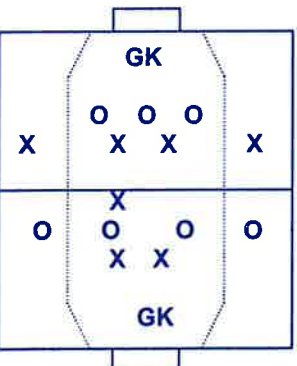
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SESSION PLAN

Session Title **Attacking Play 2**

Objectives **To Attack With Width**

To Deliver Quality Crosses Into The Goal Area

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm up Players pass and move with 7 balls between 14 players. Progression: Half the group have a soccer ball and the other half (playing two touch) make themselves open for give and go's, wall passes and take-overs.		15%	Communication Quality of passing Speed of play
2. Technical Practice: a) Follow pattern as shown with ball passed into forwards, back to CM (X3 or X4) and then to either wide midfielder who crosses. The two forwards and weak sided midfielder attack the three parts of the goal with the nearest central midfielder on edge of the area. Begin with next set of players. Variation: CM passes to wide midfield who completes a give and go (or wall pass) with nearest forward before crossing the ball. b) Full back passes to wide midfield player who either passes to the overlapping fullback or plays into the forward. The forward 'feeds' the fullback. One CM (X3/X4) attacks goal!	a)  b) 	30%	Accuracy, pace and timing of passes Movement of front two Angle of pass Quality of cross Quality of runs into the box
3. Conditioned Scrimmage The wide players must initially stay in their exclusive zone in the offensive half of the field and are limited to three consecutive touches. Before a goal can be scored the ball must have visited an outside zone. Progression: An attempt must be made on goal within ten seconds of the restart. Progression 2: Once the ball has gone into a wide zone there is free movement of all O's and X's.		30%	Communication Wide midfielders attempt to get behind the defence Aggressive runs to attack ball in the box.
4. Regular Scrimmage		25%	

PHWM Soccer

SESSION PLAN

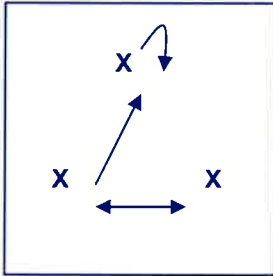
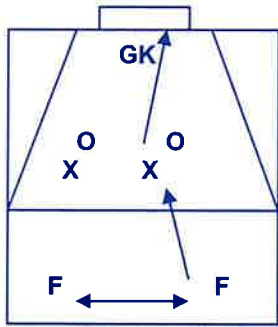
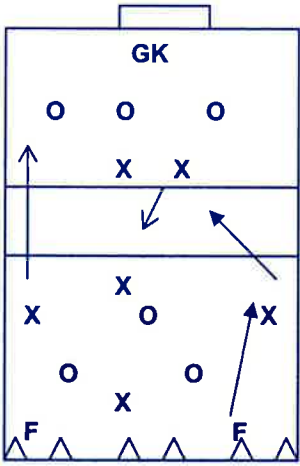

Session Title

Attacking Play 3

Objectives

To Improve The Quality of Forward Runs

To Combine Midfield and Forwards

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up In groups of three. X1 and X2 exchange short passes until X3 checks back to receive the ball. Play ball in quickly, then X3 passes back. Repeat a few times then rotate positions. Progression: Each group creates its own three-pass combination in order to penetrate imaginary opposition.		15%	X3 moves away and checks back at speed. X3 calls for ball when he/she wants it delivered. X3 receives ball on outside of foot (furthest from imaginary defender) X1 and X2 are aware of X3's movement whilst they pass.
2. Functional Practice 1 2 v 2 (+GK) to goal. Feeder(s) pass the ball to each other and play ball into strikers when they find space. Strikers attempt to get a shot on goal. Defenders score by stealing the ball and playing it back to Feeder(s). Vary the number of defenders (and feeders) depending on ability and available numbers. Can set activity up twice if enough players. Progression: Can pass back to F and move to new space. Progression 2: F can join attack		20%	Attackers check away to create space then check back. Work together i.e. not isolated. Attackers check back out to a new space if ball is not played. Bend runs to remain onside. Be decisive in showing for the ball.
3. Functional Practice 2 Play numbers up (4 v 3) in midfield into numbers down in final third. Feeders play into attacking midfield who combine with forwards. Once forwards drop into 'buffer' zone then defenders can also enter to defend. Once the ball has been played into the forwards then there is free movement. Reset after shot on goal. Defenders score by passing/dribbling through the gates. Rotate positions.		40%	Communication. Crossover runs. Timing of runs
4. Regular Scrimmage		25%	Combination with midfield.

PHWM Soccer

SESSION PLAN

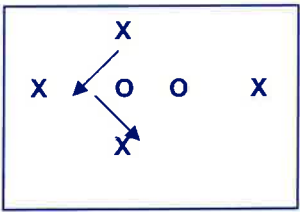
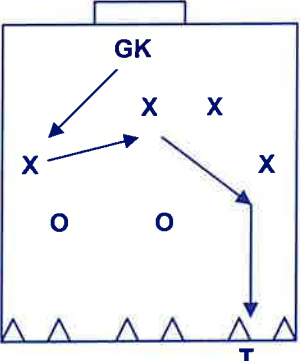
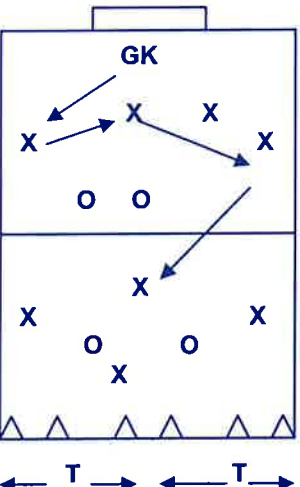

Session Title

Attacking Play 4

Objectives

To Transition Quickly Through The GK

To Combine Defence and Midfield

PHASE & ACTIVITY	DIAGRAM	TIME	COACHING POINTS
1. Warm Up: 4 v 2 Four players keep ball away from two defenders. Each pass counts as a point, a split pass counts as two points. Switch defenders.		15%	Width and Depth Play split pass if possible
2. Functional Practice 1 Strikers start centrally and begin activity by playing the ball into the GK's hands. GK then feeds one of the defenders who must combine to play ball into midfield target players. Alternatively the defenders must dribble through one of the gates. If forwards win the ball they shoot immediately on goal. Restart. Rotate players as necessary.		20%	Unit stretches long and wide Full backs pull wide and deep Receive ball facing forward Central defender provides option in middle Play forward if possible else switch attack Coach central defenders dependent on whether team plays with sweeper or not
3. Functional Practice 2 As above but now attempt to dribble or pass the ball into the midfield area. Initially play numbers up in midfield (e.g. 4 v2 or 3) to encourage success and shape. Score by passing the ball to front two players who move freely along EndZone but must receive the pass through one of three gates. Restart the activity. Players must remain in their zone until the ball enters the midfield area by which time there is free movement.		40%	Defenders provide depth Support midfielder after pass Timing of runs to receive ball when marked Receiving and shielding Wide midfielders pull to touchline and face inward
4. Regular Scrimmage Players in regular positions		25%	One central midfielder pushes forward into space whilst other drops deep to receive ball

6. TEAM MANAGEMENT

- **Roster**
- **Attendance**
- **Game Day Line Up**
- **Playing Time**
- **Game Details**
- **Injury Log**

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Soccer

Roster

Name	Date of Birth	Address	City	Phone Number	E-Mail

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Attendance At Training Sessions

[illegible]

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Game Day Line Up

Game	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Name																

Enter Position of Player:

F= Forward
M= Midfield
D= Defense
S= Substitute

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Playing Time

[illegible]

Enter The Playing Time For Each Player

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Game Details

Date	Opponent	HT Score	FT Score	Scorer	Assist

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Soccer

Injury Log

Date	Name	Nature of Injury	Treatment	Parent Follow Up