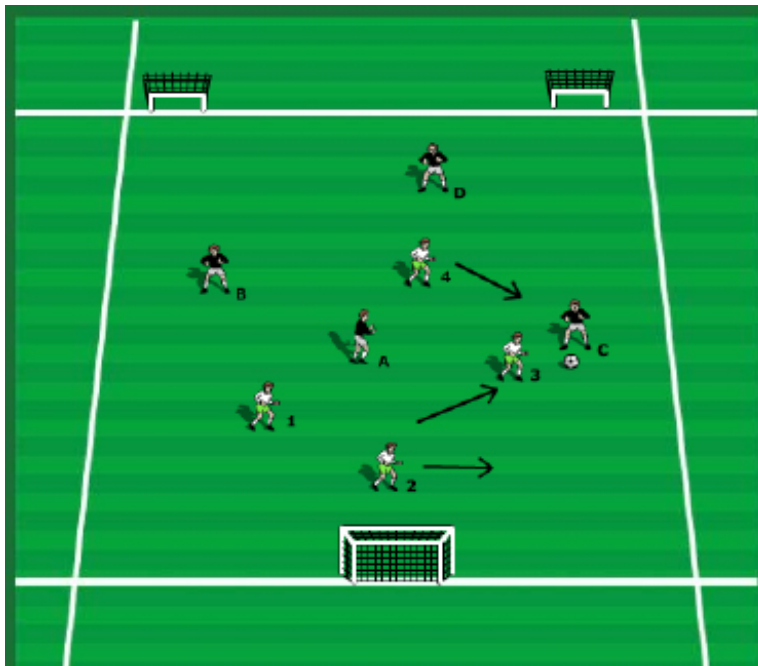


DEFENDING SMALL SIDED GAMES

Game 29: A Defending Game Teaching The Players To Show The Opponent One Way Or The Other



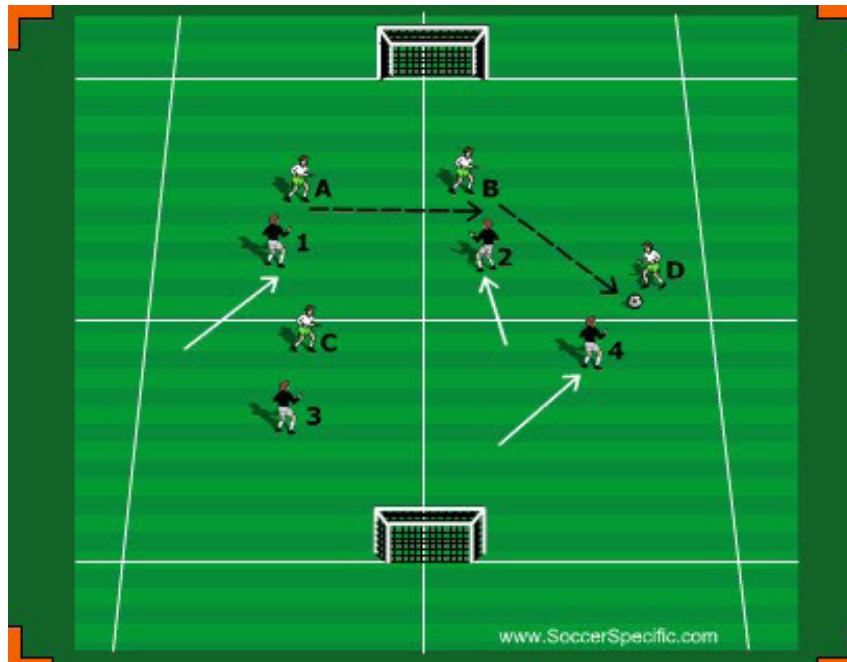
Here we have different set ups for goals, using two wide small goal on one side of the field and one bigger goal centrally on the other side. Defenders need to force players away from the goals so those defending the wide goals force the player on the ball inside, those defending the big goal force the players outside.

These conditions plant the seed in the Players' minds and make it easier for decision making. If a player behind coaches the pressing player advising them "inside" or "outside" then that is a bonus but do not expect it to happen at these young ages. Just to get the pressing player showing them one way or the other (through the set-up of the goals) is good enough for now.

Rotate the teams so both sets of players get the chance to show inside and outside. Here the team defending the big central goal forces the opponents "outside" and away from the goal; the team defending the two small wide goals forces the opponents "inside" and away from the two goals and towards the middle of the field between them.

The goals and field set up determine the condition and make it easier for the players to learn how to show a player one way or the other, from a defensive perspective. Conditioning like this can be a great help to players making sure the theme you are working on actually happens on a consistent basis due to the condition set.

Game 30: Quick Pressing Game



This game is an excellent example of how a small change to the structure of a standard game changes the game to allow a specific skill or topic you want to work on. You don't need to say anything; the explanation is in the game.

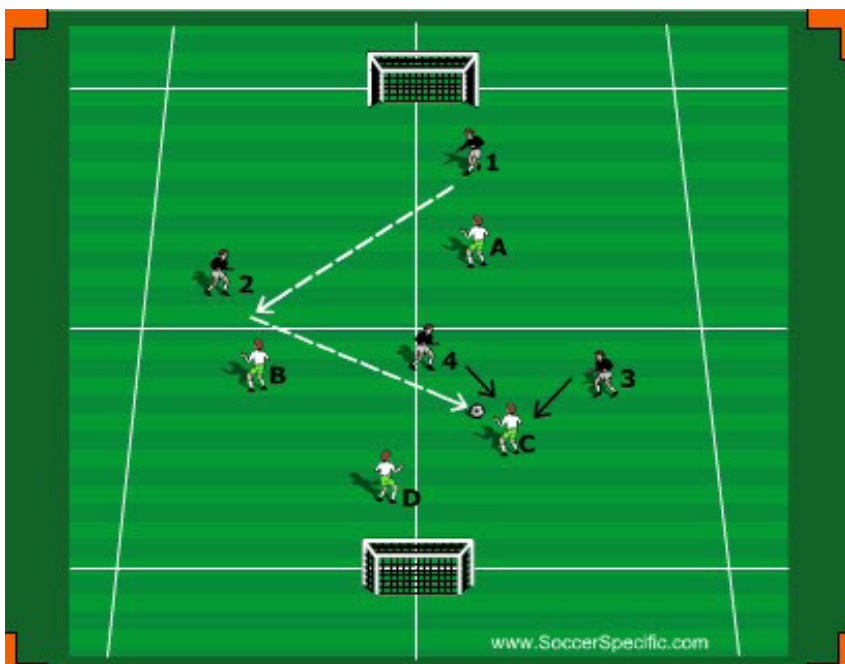
Organization:

- Age Group U10s to adults
- Pitch sizes 30/40 x 20– or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – full size adult goals or made with cones

Progression:

This is a standard small sided game but with big goals and no keepers. Players can score from anywhere on the pitch. It is very easy to score a goal in this game, so players quickly understand they have to put pressure on the ball and not allow players to shoot. They must close quickly. Players need to concentrate as a poor defensive position will ultimately lead to conceding a goal. Alternatively you can add a keeper in each goal and the players have to JUST pass the ball to the opposing keeper to score.

Game 31: The 6 Second Transition Game



Organization:

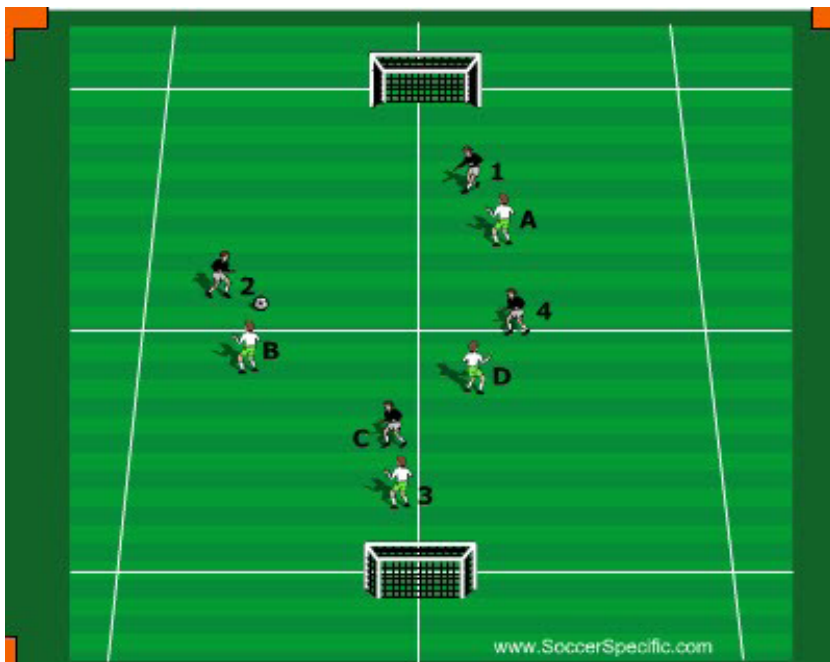
- Age Group U12s to adults
- Pitch sizes 30/40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Teams are at their most vulnerable in terms of losing the ball, in the first few seconds after gaining possession. It is this transition period that we are looking at, both in terms of winning the ball back quickly and then keeping it. The key is the first six seconds after losing the ball. This period is when the opposition has not yet switched from defensive to possession mode. The other key period is those six seconds after you have won the ball back and the need to maintain possession during that critical period when your team is changing shape and finding space (going wide and deep).

Progression: In this game when a team loses possession they have 6 seconds to win the ball back (the coach counts this out).

If they win it back in that time they are awarded a point (a goal). The idea is to double team and work frantically to get the ball back in the allotted time frame. If they fail to achieve this they must then go to the center and make sure they close all the gaps and limit the space for the opposition. If they do win the ball back within 6 seconds, if they are high up the pitch they must look for an immediate goal scoring opportunity. If they are in a more crowded midfield area they must look for an 'outman' who can get hold of the ball and maintain possession through the crucial 6 second period. This may well be a sideways pass or a backwards pass to a player in plenty of space. In the excellent book by Patrick Barclay, 'Mourinho, Anatomy of a Winner', Jose talks about doing a lot of work on 'keep ball'. This was based on Mourinho's theory of possession for possession's sake. All teams need rest periods, and it is much better to do this when your team has possession. Other than the 6 second condition the rest of the game is a standard small sided game. Goals can also be scored in the normal way.

Game 32: The Man-Marking Game



Organization:

- Pitch sizes 40 x 20 –or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 4-6 players (+ keepers)
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Organization Progression:

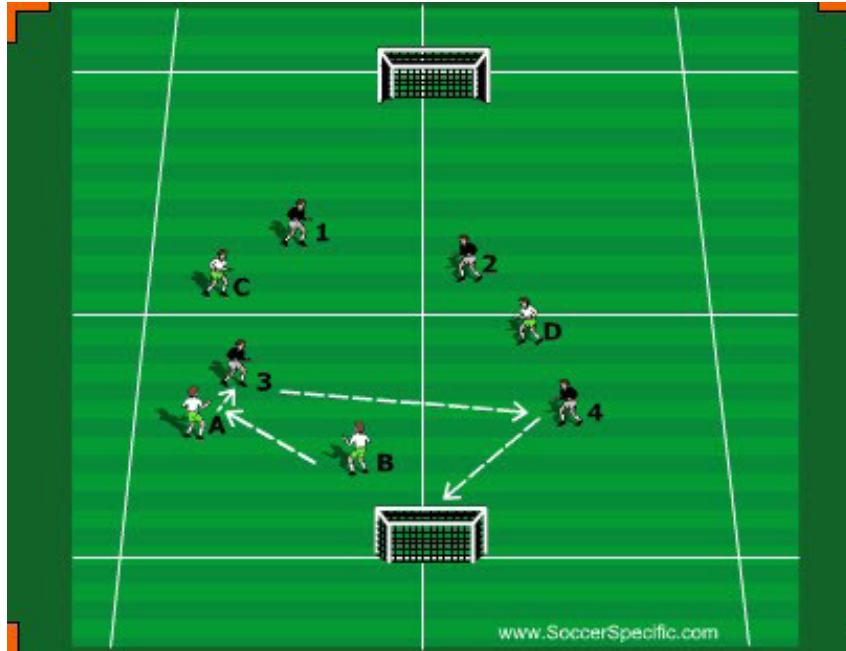
I restrict this game to the older age groups as it is exhausting, but rewarding all the same. Most teams play a zonal game these days when defending. But it is a useful exercising in keeping with your man and tracking back.

Progression:

You will need to have equal numbers in this game. The players are all put in pairs, one half of the pair from each time. That is your marker for the game and vice versa. No one else is allowed to tackle you, other than the selected player from the other team. So if you are up the other end of the pitch to your marker and your team loses possession you need to work hard to get back. At the coach's discretion a player can hold up a player, but not tackle. For the team in possession you must use all the skills and trickery you can muster to try and lose your man marker. To make it more fun and also more competitive we have established forfeits for Players whose partner on the opposite team has been allowed to score a goal or goals. This could mean of course a number of players earning forfeits.

An easy one is if your player scores then you must do 5 pushups.

Game 33: Pressing Game



Organization:

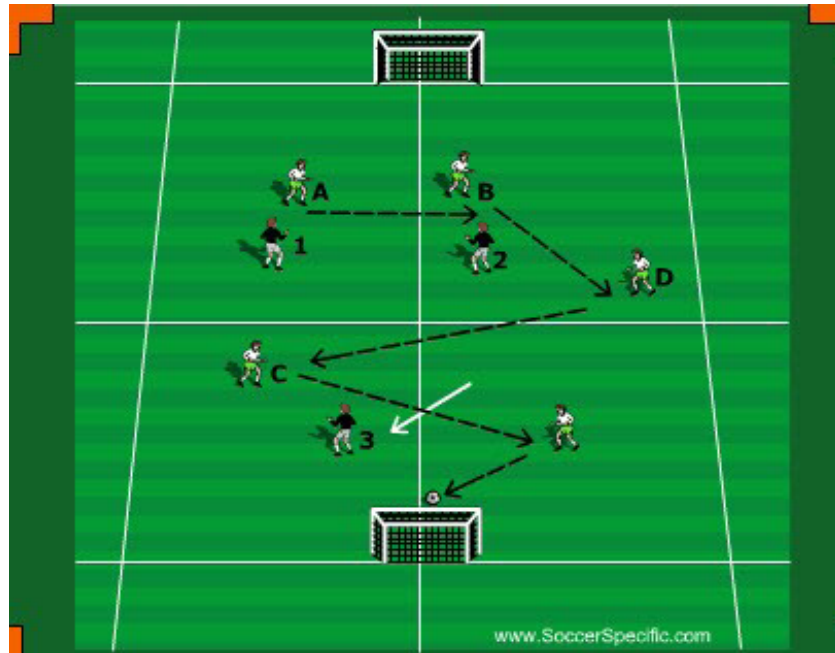
- Pitch Size 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch, with a half way line marking. (You can use two traffic cones at each side of the pitch)
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Progression:

The game is played as a standard small sided game with one condition. If a team wins the ball in the oppositions half and then goes on to score before the ball has left that half, they are awarded two goals. A goal scored any other way counts as just one goal.

Very popular with the players and evokes good team spirit. The attacking team needs to work as a unit and both press and close down defenders.

Game 34: One Touch Pass And Movement Game



“A good player with the ball should have the vision to spot three options.”

Organization:

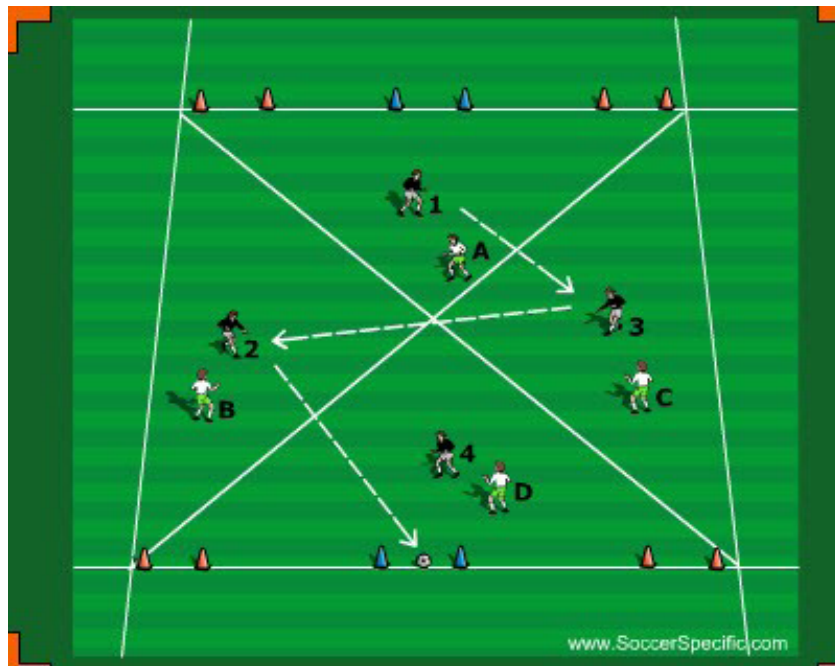
- Pitch sizes 40 x 20– or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes (one team of three and another team of 5)
- Bibs optional
- Goals – standard 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Progression:

You can play around with the numbers for this game but a good ratio is 3 to 5. The three players have as many touches as they like, while the five players are restricted to one touch only. If players are struggling with this go to two touch only. The team of five has to move as soon as they have passed the ball into space.

Change the teams so everyone has a go at playing in the team restricted to one touch only.

Game 35: Passing And Movement Game



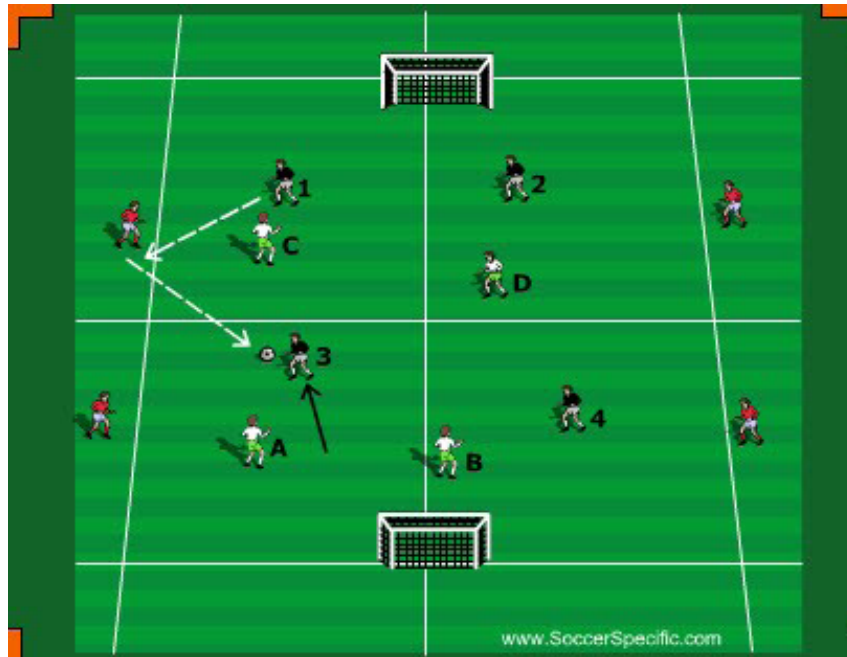
Organization:

- Pitch sizes 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach. The pitch is divided with cones to make four triangles. From above it is a giant X.
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4 (no keeper)
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 3 small goals of about a meter made with traffic cones, at both ends

Progression:

The players can only pass the ball once in a triangle; therefore they need to move to another triangle if they want to receive the ball. They score one point for a two touch finish (controlling the ball then finishing) and two points for a one touch finish. The game is similar to the Liverpool, pass and move game with the added advantage that the pitch lay out designates where a player can move too.

Game 36: The Arsenal Game



This game was based on how you would structure a small sided game in the style that the present Arsenal side would play. Their play is made up of lots of quick short passing with plenty of movement off the ball. They use give and goes a lot (wall passes) which I have highlighted in the game.

Organization:

- Pitch size – 40 x 20 or at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch
- Number of teams – 3
- Team sizes 4 players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Progression:

I play this game as a 4 v 4 with keepers. I also have four additional players, two on each side (who are neutral and play with the team in possession). The game is a standard 4 v 4 game, except that the neutral players on each side can be used. The neutral players have one touch only (younger players and less technical players may require two touches) and play with the team that have possession. They take any throw-ins or kick-ins from their side. Having the neutral players encourages plenty of give and goes. The players should also be encouraged to play at a fast tempo. Change the four neutral players (one team) with one of the teams on the pitch every few minutes.

Game 37: Overload Neutral Player Possession Game



Organization:

- Pitch size – 30 x 30 or at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 3 players per team plus two neutral players
- Bibs optional
- Goals – No goals

Progression:

3 v 3 plus 2 overload pure possession game.

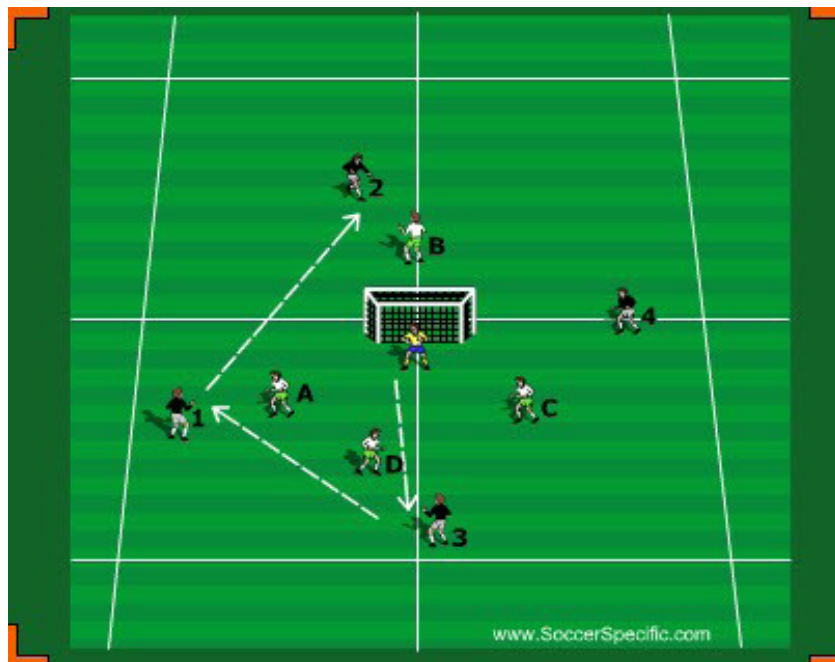
Neutral players have only 2 touches / 1 touch.

Scoring: 4 consecutive passes / a successful one touch pass (a goal)

Play:

- a) Free
- b) 3 touch
- c) 2 touch
- d) 1 touch only when it is on to do so otherwise 2 touches

Game 39: Central Goal Game



Organization:

- Pitch sizes 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4-6
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

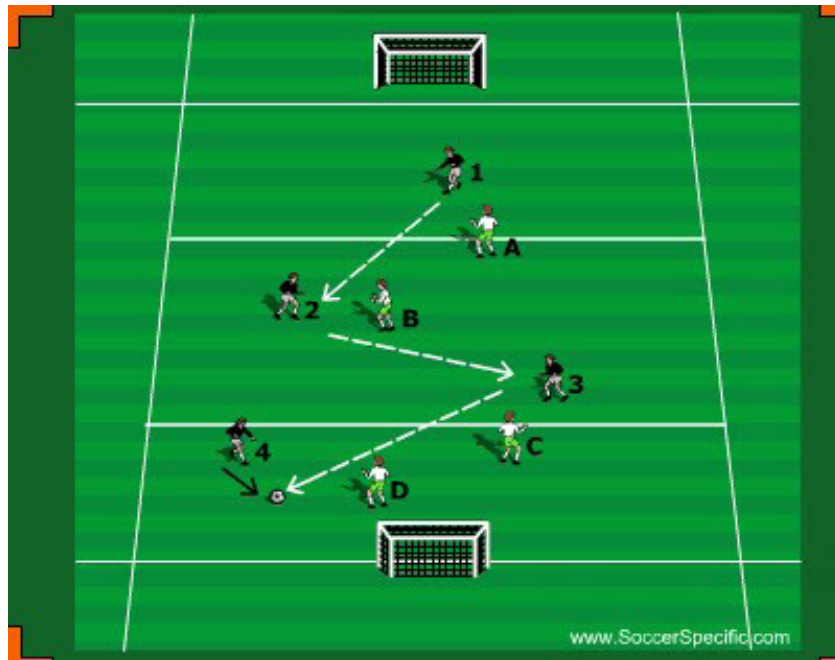
Progression:

The big difference with this game is that the goals are positioned in the center of the pitch, back to back.

One team defends the goal that is facing south and score in the goal facing north. The other team does the opposite. You must have at least one player in each half at all times and you can't kick the ball over the goals into the other half. The ball must be played around the goals. The game encourages players to take up wide positions so as to get around the goals. Players naturally form into a diamond shape with two players going wide, one attacking and one playing out of the back.

The game also encourages playing from the back as the keeper can't kick it long over the goals. Because of the unusual pitch lay out and goal positions it really makes the players think.

Game 40: Developing Play Through The Team Small Sided Game



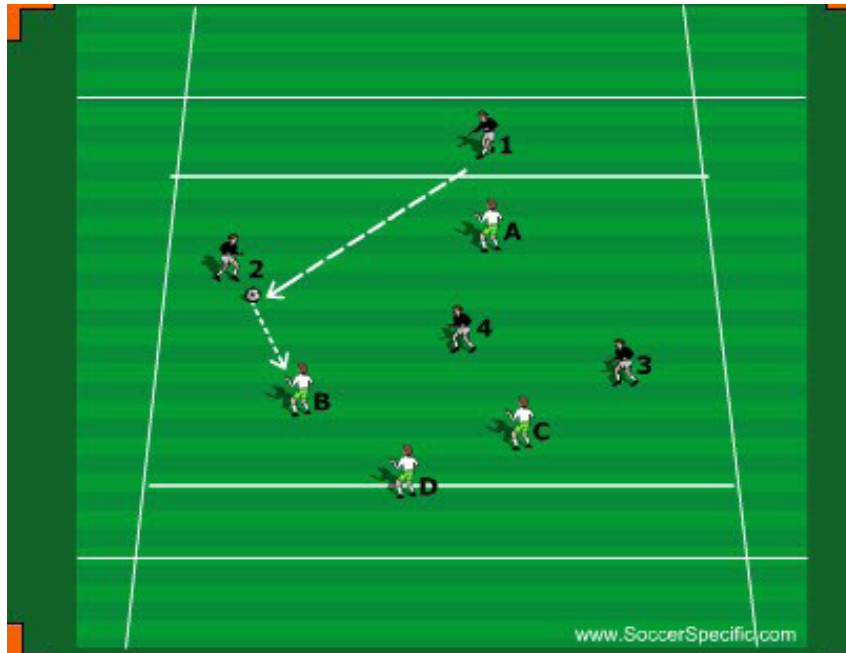
Organization:

- Pitch sizes 40 x 20 – or at the discretion of the coach, but with a marked off midfield zone of approximately 20 yards
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes 4v4 (+ optional neutral player)
- Bibs optional
- Goals – 5 a side or mini soccer goals

Progression:

A striker and defender from each team are in the end zones. The middle zone is 2v2 or 3v2 if you use a neutral player. When the ball enters the midfield zone all the players must touch the ball before it can be played in to the last third. The player that is the last person to touch the ball in the midfield zone can either pass it to the attacker or dribble the ball into the area and make a 2v1 situation. The opposition midfield players can't track him.

Game 41: Dribbling Game



The art of dribbling the ball is fast becoming a dying art as teams pass the ball like robots, scared to death of making a mistake. With space at a premium in the modern game, dribbling and running with the ball can open up space and terrorize defenses. The game is conditioned so that you can only dribble the ball in two thirds of the pitch. The game is very tiring and should be kept to 5-10 minute games.

Organization:

- Age Group – U12s to adults
- Pitch Size 40 x 20– at the discretion of the coach, but basically a standard 4 v 4 pitch, this can however be played in either portrait or landscape format.
- Markers are placed at either end of the pitch to indicate an area of about 10 yards.
- Number of teams – 2
- Team sizes – 4 players
- Bibs optional

Progression:

Either a line across the pitch or cones at the side indicating an end line. The same as line soccer except that there is a 10 yard area in front of each goal where the defending team can pass the ball. In all other areas players can only dribble the ball. Team mates are allowed to do a 'take over'.