

## SMALL SIDED GAMES 3 V 3 AND 4 V 4

It is said the Game is the Best Teacher and that can be so in small sided games.

Rather than just have a scrimmage though here are some ideas on how changing the field set ups you can work on certain themes within a scrimmage and without much if any formal coaching going on and just letting the players play.

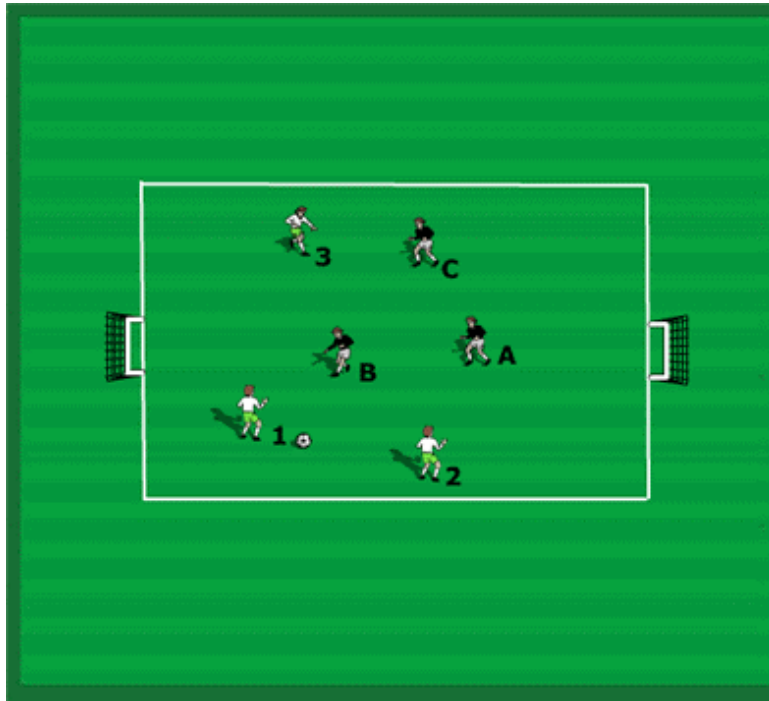
Show them the set up and ask them questions about each one and have them work out what they think the theme may be rather than telling them.

Here the game is the teacher, but also both the theme and conditions set are the teacher too.

### USE THE SMALL SIDED GAME PRINCIPLES IN ALL END OF SESSION SCRIMMAGES PLAYING A TWO v TWO PLUS ONE GAME

1. Try a 2 v 2 plus 1 to start with; maybe the coach can be the neutral player to help the players make the session work, especially with younger less experienced players. Or use a player to be the neutral player.
2. The neutral player plays for whichever team has the ball so is always attacking.
3. This can be used if it is difficult to get a game going with equal numbers on each side and is a perfect overload situation to begin with.
4. Maybe restrict the coach to one or two touches as we need the players to be touching and playing with the ball not the coach, who is there only to help get the game going successfully.
5. Once some success is gained then move on to the 3 v 3 games.

## A 3 v 3 Format For A Soccer Competition



### Street Soccer

1. It can be used for a 3 v 3 (or a 4 v 4). Players referee their own games. Each game lasts 4 minutes (you can vary this time).
2. Structure – Each player receives a number they keep for all the games.
3. Scoring System – Each player on the team receives a point for every goal their team scores in a particular game – up to a maximum of 3 points.
4. Each person on the team receives the following, for a win: 3 points, a draw: 1 point, a defeat: 0 points.
5. Example: 1, 4, 7 score 2 goals v 10, 2, 5 who score 3 goals therefore: 1, 4, 7 receive 2 points (for two goals, nothing for the defeat so score total of 2 points each player for the game). 10, 2, 5 receive 6 points (for 3 goals, plus 3 points for the win for total of 6 points each player for the game). Therefore a player can score a maximum of 6 points in any one game.
6. Play a number of games rotating the players each game and add up all the points for each player at the end of the contest. It can be done daily and have a different player win every day and / or for the week of the camp and have one overall winner.
7. Where substitutes are needed you can just say all the subs get 2 points each time they have to be one.

## **A 3 v 3 Festival Of Fun**

### **Creating A Game – Like Playing Environment**

Encouraging competitiveness in players in a small sided game environment and developing the best features of youth soccer as it used to be played in the parks, streets and back alleyways around the world, into the more formalized structure of the modern club soccer training program. It is about the technical and skills development of the younger player. These features include:

1. Lots of individual touches on the ball.
2. Trying new skills without fear of ridicule or recrimination.
3. Taking players on and challenging defenders.
4. Little or NO pressure from significant others (parents, coaches).
5. A vibrant creative and fun environment.

Parents need to be briefed as to the aims and the underlying philosophy of the small sided game concept.

### **PROGRAM**

The format is easily adapted and can accommodate many players, including goalkeepers, at very short notice.

### **TEAMS**

No player sits out a game unless there are substitutes due to hot weather conditions for example or total numbers dictate substitutes are needed.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

If a team has more than 3 players then substitutes are brought into the game on a “strict” rotational basis.

### **GAME DURATION / REFEREES**

Each game lasts for 8 minutes and there are no referees. By referring the game themselves, player’s co-operation is fostered and the young players consistently learn to take more responsibility for their own actions.

## SCORING / GOALS

Because so many goals are scored in the conditioned 4 v 4 games, scoring itself is de-emphasized and no scores are held. Except for the Goalkeepers Game, the use of cones instead of real goals and nets redirects the emphasis of the game back onto build – up play and technical execution.

## PLAYING TIME

Each player plays a minimum of 6 games and there is a minimum 2 minute break period between games for rest, re-hydration and games organization. This exercise-to-rest ratio increases energy levels and mental awareness during competitive play.

## COACHING

There is very little overt coaching performed during competitive matches – no raised voices, no disciplining, and no “playing – the – game – for - the – players” commentary from the sidelines. Instead, consistent encouragement and praise are given to players of both teams for brave attempts and creative decision making.

Players are repeatedly encouraged to make their own decisions in the games.

## CONCLUSION

It is our responsibility to provide the players with a secure, vibrant and challenging soccer environment for them to learn their technical skills.

Consistent practice in this small sided game format will go a long way to helping them develop these skills to their fullest potential.

As well as this type of festival, “All” regular training sessions should include at least one third of the time the session lasts, playing small sided competitive games where they “just play”!

## 3 v 3 Training Program



1. Mini soccer in three's is a great way for young players to learn how to play the game. Coaches try to teach the game where players support in triangles and in a team of three a natural triangle forms.
2. This is especially important to play this at the U8 and U9 age groups but is also important at ALL age groups.
3. It guarantees lots and lots of touches for each player and in the formative years especially it is vital for the players to work on their technical ability. Many opportunities for each player to pass, dribble, shoot, turn, tackle, only one ball between six players.
4. This is a great medium to start this development but also within a game situation.
5. When the player is on the ball they should always have two options of a pass.
6. One player can be the goalkeeper and also the last defender and can pick up the ball anywhere within the 5 yard line. You must encourage this player to move up and out of this zone to support their two team mates during the game when they gain possession. Or just play without goal keepers.

### **Progressions:**

**Team Compactness:** To avoid the one player standing in front of the goal all the time and thus leaving his teammates in a 2 v 3 situation when in possession of the ball all players must be over the half way line before their team can score a goal. This also teaches team shape moving up the field in possession, when they lose the ball the last player can drop back then to protect the goal.

**Touch Conditions:** Play 3 touch maximum in your own half and as many touches as you like in the attacking half thus encouraging players to get the ball forward quickly into the danger areas for opponents.

**Awareness and Transition:** Once a ball goes out of play throw another one into the game in another location thus getting players to react and show awareness in transition.

**Man marking:** have players man mark each other so only one person can pressure a player. This makes them work hard and also gives them a chance to try to use imagination in their movements to get away from their marker. It also teaches them quick transition in mind and body when possession changes.

## Inside Field Goals



1. Bringing the goals into the field of play ensures the ball is in play all the time and ensures players move off the ball to support. To score a goal from the triangular goals one player has to receive the ball on the other side. No one is allowed inside the triangle.
2. It guarantees lots and lots of touches for each player and in the formative years especially it is vital for the players to work on their technical ability. Many opportunities for each player to pass, dribble, shoot, turn, tackle, only one ball between six players.
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this zone to support their two team mates during the game when they gain possession. Or just play without goal keepers.

5. This game encourages players to run beyond the ball, by getting to the other side of the goal to receive a pass and score.

### **Rules:**

- A) Once they score they have to try to score in the other goal.
- B) If possession changes hands and the ball is regained then the team in possession can attack any goal until they score, then they must attack the other goal.
- C) When they get good, limit to fewer touches on the ball.

Here (1) passes through the triangular goal to (2) that has run into space to receive the pass. (3) has moved off the ball into space to receive the pass and attack the other goal. (1) Also is on the move to the other goal already.

With this being a game where each player is very physically actively involved, teams can be divided up into 4's so there is a substitute for each team to rotate into the game. Each player can take a periodic break from the action to recharge their batteries. Only do this if it is necessary, for example on a very hot day, if the players are capable of playing continuously then I think they should be encouraged to do so

### **An Introduction to Awareness Training:**

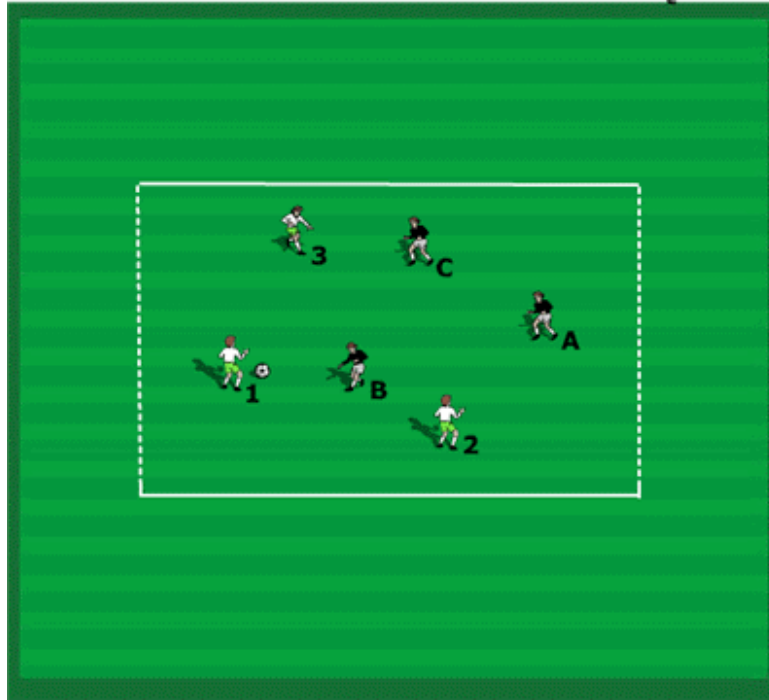
Playing 3 against 3 is a good way to introduce the players to awareness training in as much as they only have two options of support when they are on the ball. This means they need to view a small area of only two other players from their own team. By only having two options of a pass this ensures the players start to develop their awareness without too much going on around them, if they started with 6 v 6 games then there are in theory 5 options of passes and 5 other players positions that they need to be aware of so it is more complicated for them to develop the vision.

Once they get used to the idea of looking before receiving, viewing the positions of their two teammates they need to then include developing the capacity to view their opponents also.

This development of awareness can be done within the confines of your training then taking the concept into the 3 v 3 games.

Be patient with this as initially players at the U8 and younger age groups tend to chase the ball and not see the whole field or their teammates and opponents, more just focusing on the ball. This will change as you teach them the principles of Awareness.

## Game 1: 3 v 3 Small Sided Dribbling Game When Coaching A Dribbling Skills Session



No goals are used. To score, a player must dribble the ball under control over the goal line. Looking to encourage 1 v 1's, work on improving ball control with quick movement. Decision making is to improve when and where to dribble. This practice can be applied with the same principles with larger numbers of players such as a 6 v 6 etc.

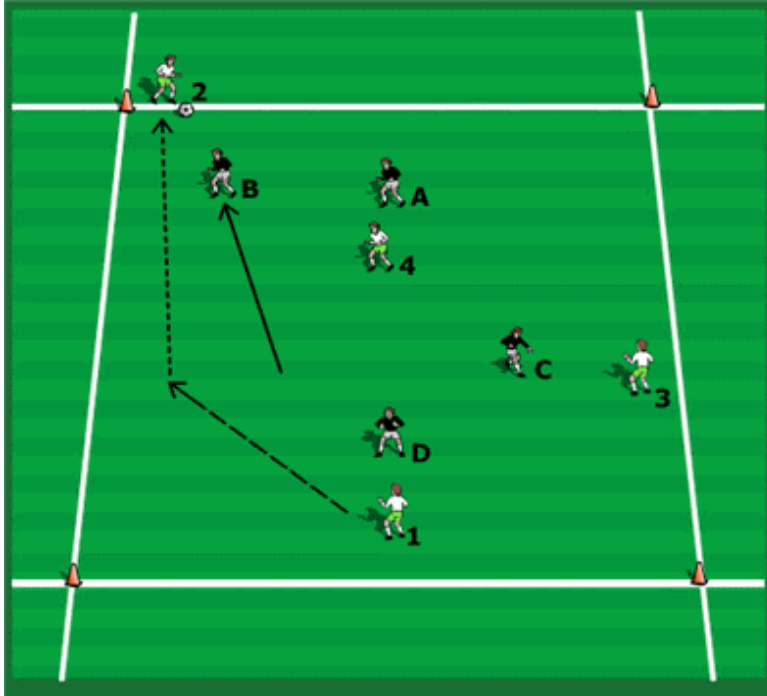
### Coaching Points:

1. Creating Space – For you to receive the ball.
2. Decision – When and where to dribble (less likely in the defending third, most likely in the attacking third).
3. Technique – Tight Close Control on receiving the ball, use of body to dummy an opponent, ability to change pace and direction, established dribbling skills, a positive attitude to beat the player.
4. Runs of Teammates – To support or to take opponents away to leave a 1 v 1 situation.
5. End Product – beating an opponent in a 1 v 1 situation.

Talk about safety and risk areas and identify where it is safe to attempt to beat a player 1 v 1 and where it is not. Have the players answer the questions don't tell them, let them work it out for themselves. Losing possession close to their own defensive line and thus the opponent scoring will tell the player that is not a good area to try to beat a player 1 v 1 just by the resulting action.

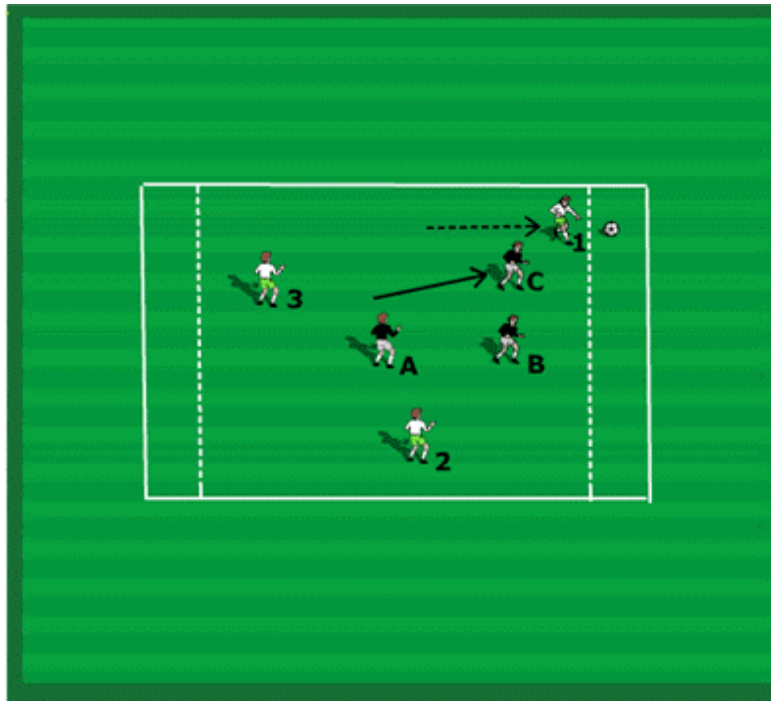


## Game 2: A 4 v 4 Dribbling Game



Whilst with the Awareness program I am encouraging players to make quick observations and quick decisions often resulting in a player passing the ball early to avoid being caught in possession it also helps players who are good at dribbling by enabling them to identify situations in advance to allow them to get in a good position to take a player on in a 1 v 1 situation. This could include opening the body up to receive and face up to an opponent, seeing the immediate opponent has no cover on so you can attack 1 v 1, seeing where the defender is early and identifying the best side to attack, seeing you have no support so have to attack 1 v 1 etc.

### Game 3: Running With The Ball In A Small Sided Game



Small sided game with the emphasis on running with the ball.

To score the player on the ball has to run the ball into the marked area. Here (1) runs the ball in chased by (C) then must look to pass to another player and attack the opposite way.

Once the team has scored they then keep possession and can attack the other end zone.

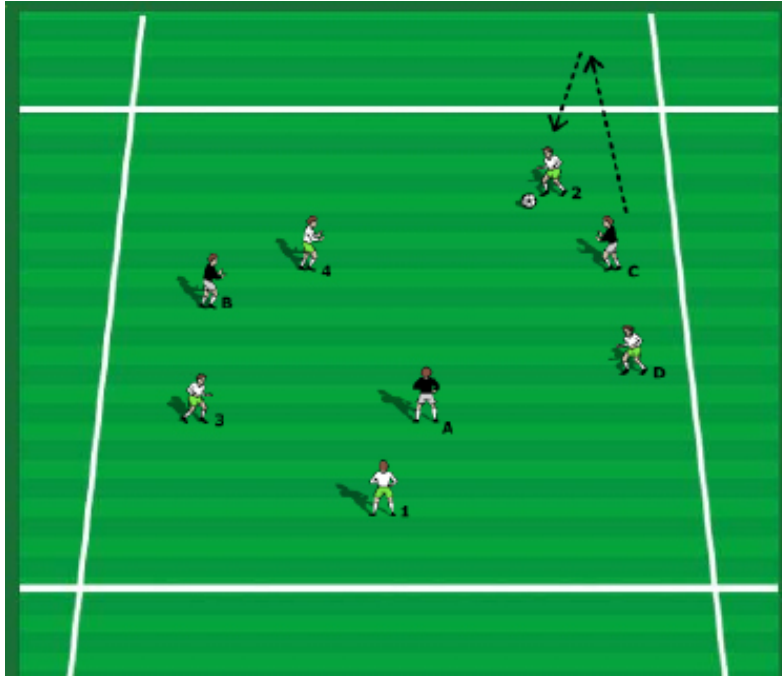
#### **Coaching Points:**

1. Run with the ball whenever possible
2. First touches to be forward.
3. Keep the ball moving
4. If you can't run with the ball look for a give and go and then run again
5. Have the positive attitude to run at them to score.

Build an overload into the game if necessary with an extra floating player if it is too difficult to get free with equal numbers making it a 4 v 3 in favor of the attacking team always.

If it is too difficult with young players to create a space where they can run with it freely then make it a 2 v 2 plus 1 game where it is always a 3 v 2 when attacking so more space may be available to make it happen.

## Game 4: Small Sided Game Encouraging Turning



Players need to dribble to the line and turn with the ball in the designated area at the end of each side of the field.

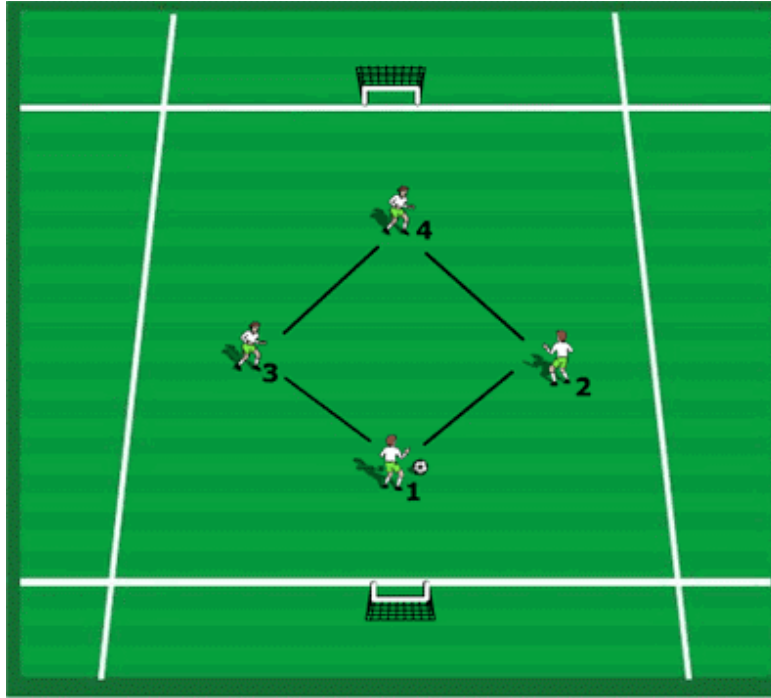
Defenders are not allowed into this area of the player on the ball has a chance to successfully turn without pressure. This is counted as a goal.

### Coaching Points:

1. Running and dribbling with the ball
2. Effecting a successful turn
3. Attacking the other goal
4. Combinations with other players

**Develop:** Coach may call change, so the player on the ball has to suddenly attack the opposite goal he or she is running to, and so effecting a turn from the player if it is on to do so.

## Game 5: 4 v 4: The Basic Diamond Shape



40 X 20 Area Approximately. There are no set positions but there is a positional theme to work from which is the diamond.

### Coaching Points:

1. Correct Positioning when attacking and Defending.
2. Maintaining Possession and dictating the direction of play by running with the ball, passing and dribbling.
3. Forward passing where possible but if not then positioning for back or sideway passing.
4. Movement as a team forward, backward, sideways left and right.
5. Communication – verbal and non-verbal (body language).

Techniques involved – Passing, receiving and turning, controlling the ball, dribbling, shielding and shooting. Defending.

All the above work requires anticipation and being able to read situations in advance (use of A.I.A. workout will help this to be achieved).

Field dimensions are generally above but can be changed according to the ages and abilities of the players involved.

## Coaching Points For 4 v 4:

1. Correct Positioning when Attacking and Defending.
2. Maintaining Possession and dictating the direction of play by running with the ball, passing and dribbling.
3. Forward passing but if not then positioning for back or sideways passing.
4. Movement as a team forward, backward, sideways left and right.
5. Communication – verbal and non-verbal (body language).
6. Techniques involved – Controlling and Passing, receiving and turning, dribbling, shielding and shooting. Defending.

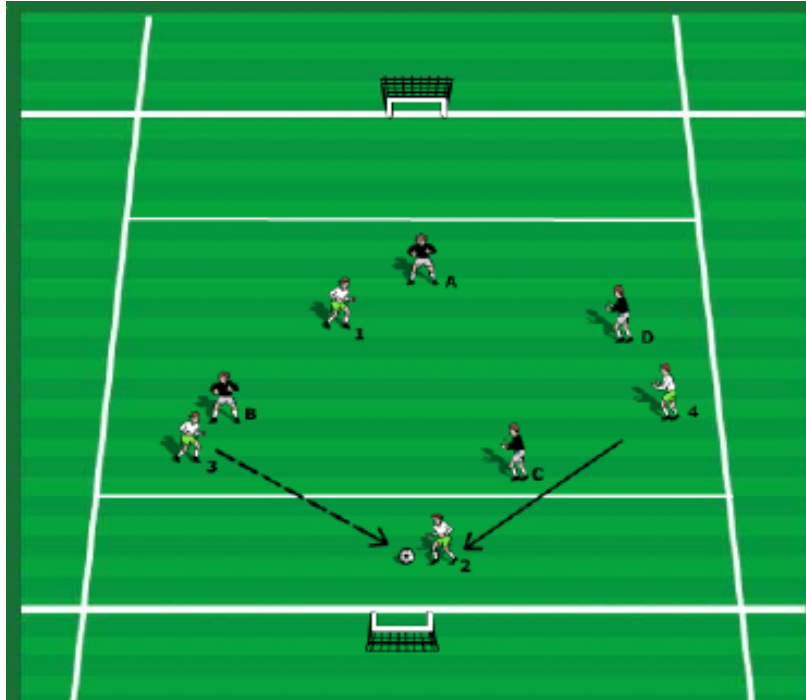


This is the set up for the eventual 4 v 4 (or 5 v 5 plus keepers) competitive game situation. The above coaching points are important to use as guidelines to what you are trying to achieve in this coaching practice.

The attacking four spread out as wide and long as they can to make it difficult for the defending team to mark them. Maintenance of a rough diamond shape ensures good angles and distances of support wherever the ball may be.

The use of the awareness principles is very important in the development of this game concept and you can ensure they are applied by conditioning the game for example making it one and two touch play to mention just one way.

## Game 6: A Comfort Zone Game

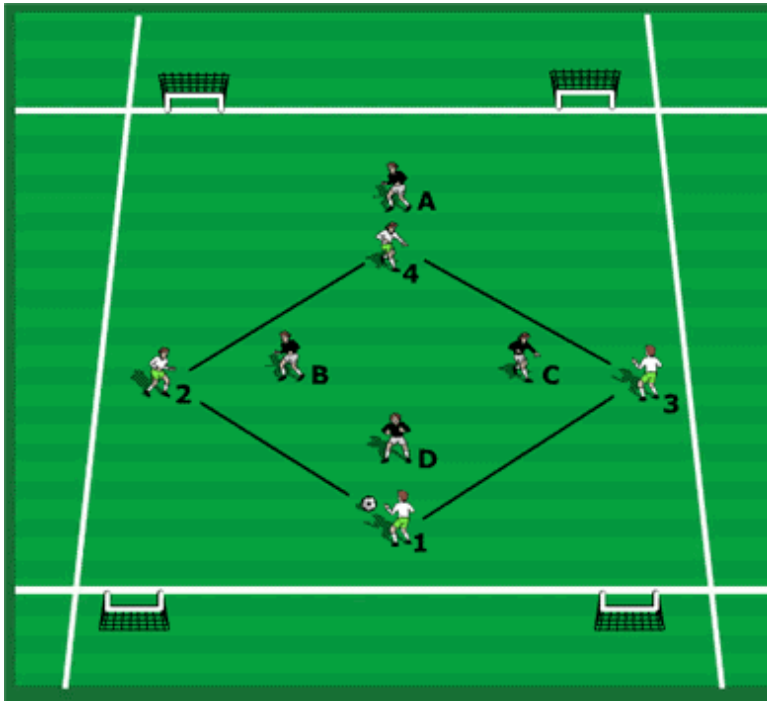


Using the same set up to allow players to be composed on the ball at the back and build up play from there, the above zones act as comfort zones where players can drop back into those zones and opponents cannot enter them to try to win the ball back. This gives that player time on the ball to develop the play.

Here player (2) drops back into the comfort zone where they can have time to compose themselves and not be pressured. Other players around this player can then work to get free to receive the next pass and so on.

You can use comfort zones on the sides of the field also.

## Game 7: Switching Play Game



The length of field is now 25 yards and the width 35 yards.

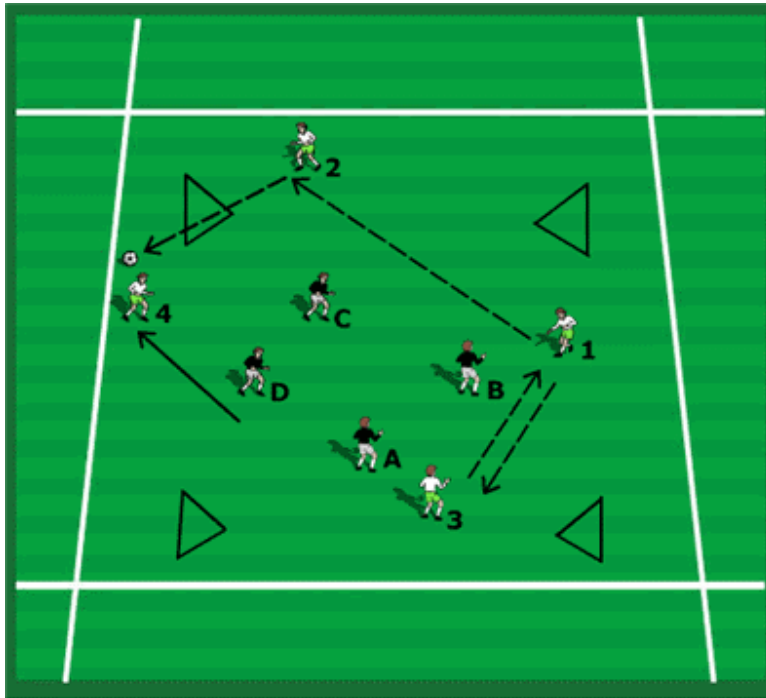
You can start as in other practices with two teams playing through each other with a ball each practicing switching play, attacking each goal in turn. Limit it to two touches to ensure quick decisions both from the player on the ball and the players off the ball who need to get in support positions early.

Using two wide positioned goals for each team to attack. This is designed to encourage players to spread out when they attack and switch play; changing direction if one route is blocked. It also encourages players on the ball to look around more, as there are two areas to attack. Looking for quick transition and movement off the ball to create space but attacking the space when it is on to do so. The first thought of the player on the ball should still be “Can I run or pass the ball forward”.

### Coaching Points:

1. Creating Space – for yourself and your teammates.
2. Decision – When, Where and How to pass the ball.
3. Technique – The Quality of the pass (Accuracy, Weight, Angle).
4. Support Positions of teammates (Angle, Distance and Communication). Players are supporting in front of the ball, to the side and behind the ball.
5. Switching Play using width in attack.
6. Combination Plays incorporating over laps, take over's, give and go's.

## Game 8: Passing Support And Combination Work Game Plan



To score players can pass through the goal or dribble through it. Same idea as the last set up but now the ball stays in play and movement off the ball to support the player in it to score becomes more important.

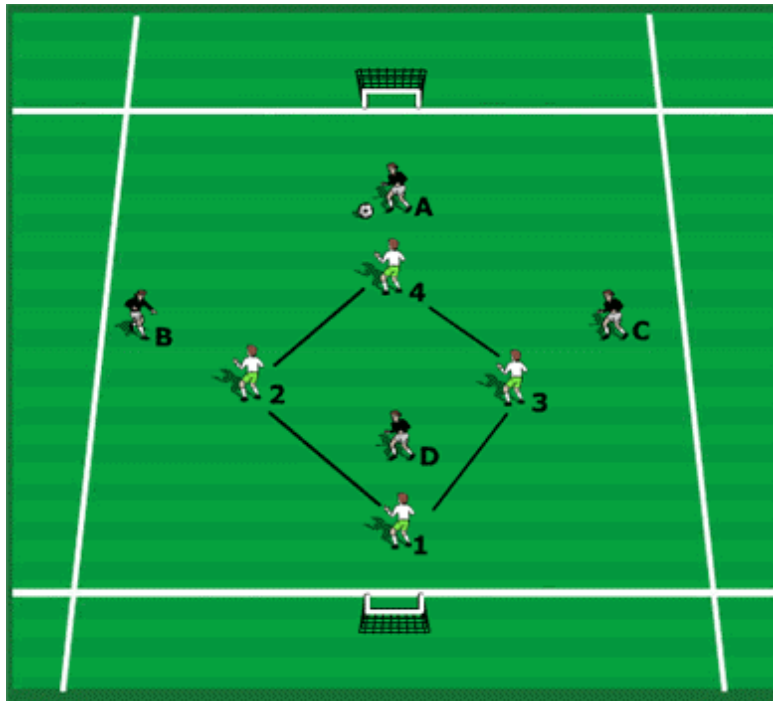
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### Coaching Points:

1. Creating Space – for yourself and your teammates.
2. Decision – When, Where and How to pass the ball.
3. Technique – The Quality of the pass (Accuracy, Weight, Angle).
4. Support Positions of teammates (Angle, Distance and Communication). Supporting in front and behind
5. Switching Play using width in attack, drawing defenders to one side of the field then switching the play quickly to attack the other open side to score. Here the ball is played to (3) from (1), the defending team is drawn towards defending their right side goal. The attacking team stay spread out and this situation shows how a pass back to (1) then quickly across to (2) can open up an attack to the other left side goal.



## Game 9: Defending Game Plan (4 v 4 – A Basic Diamond Shape)



The main idea here is for the defending team to condense the area the ball can be played into the defending team become a diamond within the opponents attacking diamond. (4) Forces (A) one way and the rest of the team adjust their positions off this. (3) Protects the space inside but can close down (C) if the ball is passed, (2) and (1) is the same scenario and this results in the diamond being shorter and tighter.

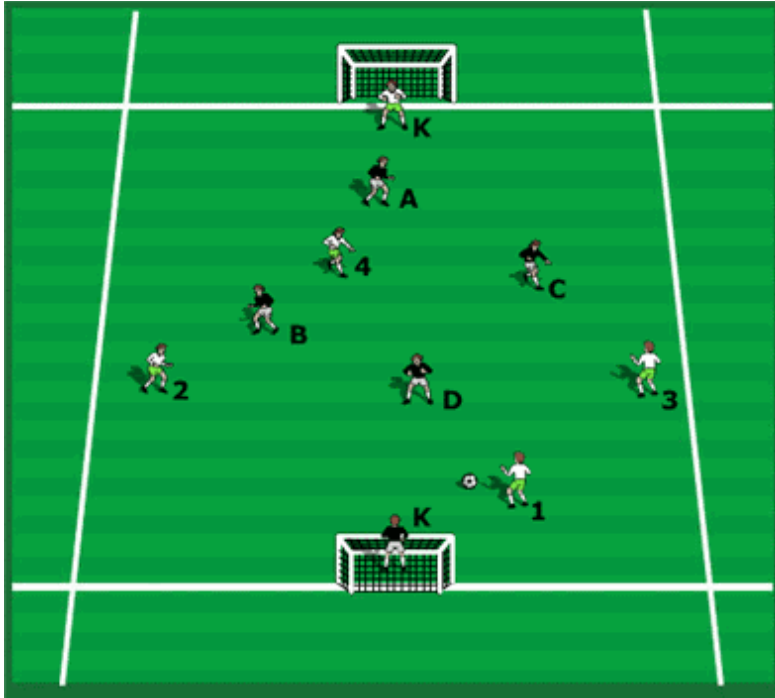
As the opponents move the defending team must move to compensate. Also if any pass is played behind (1), (2) or (3); they should be first to the ball.

### Coaching Points:

1. Pressure – 1 v 1 defending to win the ball, delay or force a bad pass.
2. Support – position of immediate teammate (angle, distance and communication).
3. Cover – positions of teammates beyond the supporting player.
4. Recovering and Tracking should the ball go past our position, recovery run to goal side of the ball and tracking the run of a player.
5. Double-Teaming – (A) passes to (C), (3) closes (C) down from in front, (4) follows along the path of the ball to close down from behind or slightly to the side. (4) Closes in such a way as to obstruct a pass back to (A).
6. Regaining Possession and creating Compactness from the back (pushing up as a unit).

The objectives of defending are to disrupt the other teams build up, make play predictable, prevent forward passes and ultimately regain possession of the ball. Techniques include – pressuring, marking, tackling and winning the ball.

## Game 10: Shooting Game Plan With Keepers



Two large goals to shoot at to encourage success by scoring goals. Shorter field so lots of shots on goal because players are nearly always in shooting positions. Initially have the two team / two balls set up so no opposition to enable players working both ways to get lots of shots in. Once a team has worked a position to shoot and has done so that team's keeper sets up another attack.

Progress it to the competitive even sided game.

### Coaching Points:

1. Quick shooting.
2. Rebounds.
3. Transitions.
4. Quick break counter attack.

Players must be particularly aware of where teammates are, where the opposition are, the keepers position because the space to work in is small and the time they have on the ball is short.

Hence development of the mental side of the game in terms of the Awareness program, i.e. seeing situations quickly and acting upon them is very important to the player to help him or her have success by scoring goals. The shorter and sharper the practice then the less time the players have to make the correct decisions to be successful, the more important it is to train them to be able to cope with these pressure situations.

## Game 11: Big Goal And Small Goals



Bring in a keeper to play in the big goal and have a 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 game going. One team focuses on shooting and the other focuses on developing passing and support and changing the point of attack.

Lots of opportunity to get both themes in with only three players per team. Have both teams take a turn at playing using both themes alternatively. As you can see above, natural triangles form on the field between the three players and they learn to move off each other and adjust their positions according to the needs of the game.

### Coaching Points:

1. Affect the attitude of the players to shoot (when and where)
2. Shot selection (driven with laces, swerved, chipped, passed, side footed)
3. Accuracy before power, achieving both is best (hit the target)
4. Rebounds; follow shots in for a 2nd ball of the keeper

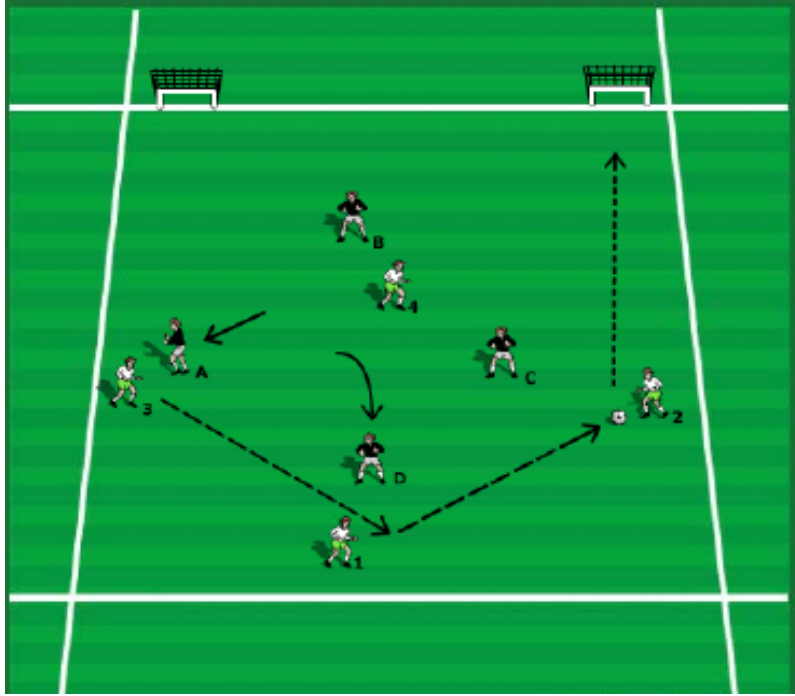
It can be a 2 v 2 plus 1 with keepers a 3 v 3 with keepers or a 4 v 4 with keepers. Focus is on shooting and wherever the ball is they have an opportunity to shoot as the fields size allows this.

## Game 12: Two Themes In One Game - Shooting Theme And Dribbling Theme



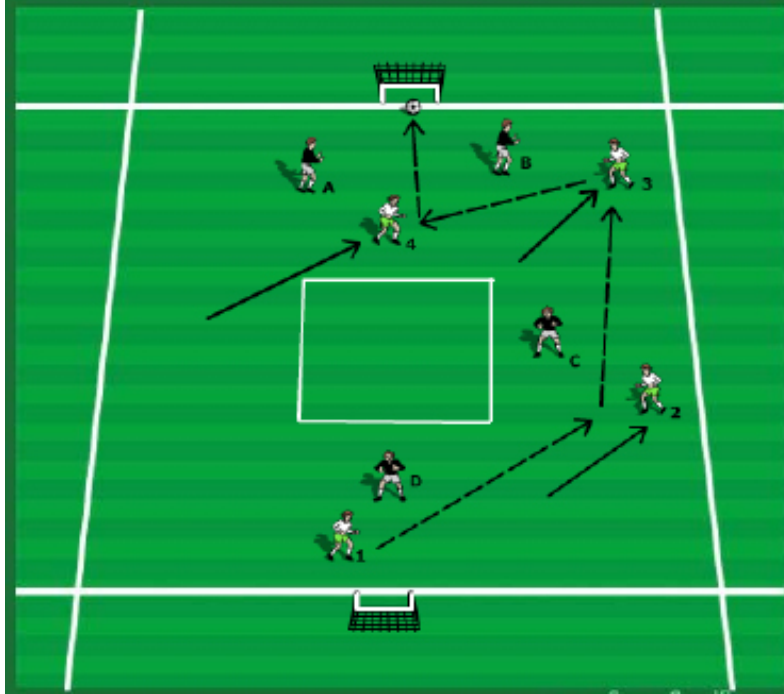
The lettered teams theme is shooting on goal; the numbered teams theme is dribbling and beating players 1 v 1. Here player (2) beats player (C) with a good dribbling move and scores a goal by stopping the ball on the line.

## Game 13: Switching The Point Of Attack And Dribbling Themes



Here the letters teams theme is dribbling the numbered teams theme is switching the point of attack and spreading the play. (3) is pressured and passes to (1) who is pressured who then passes to (2) who is free in a wide area on the opposite side of the field and can dribble to goal and score.

## Game 14: No Go Middle Zone



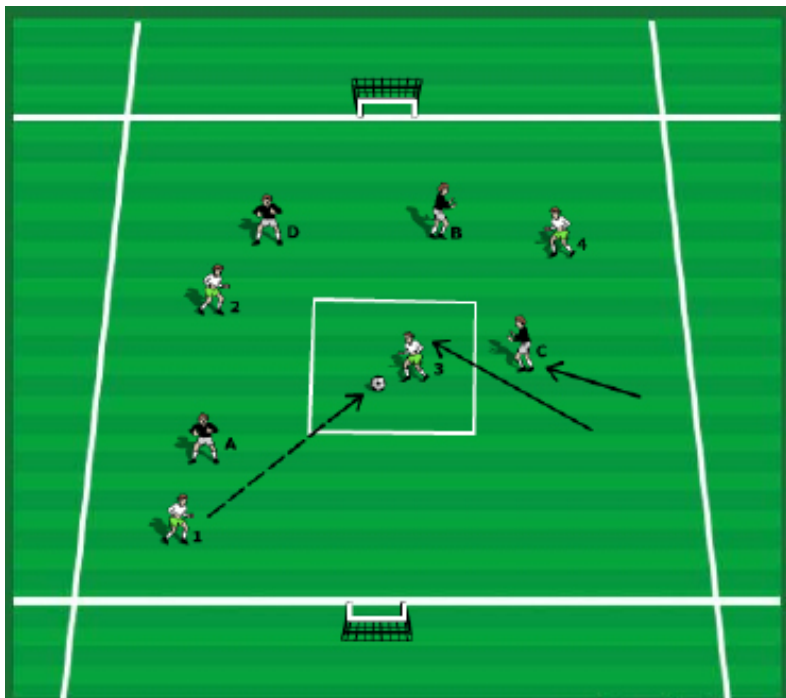
Here there is a no go zone in the middle of the field where the ball cannot be passed through and the players cannot enter. This is designed to get the players to play with width in their game and not just play straight up and down the field.

Here (2) breaks wide into space to receive a pass from (1). Beyond (2) player (3) makes a wide run into space to receive the next pass to get in position to cross the ball for (4) running towards goal to get a finish and score a goal.

Alternatively have this as a SAFE ZONE that players on the team in possession can enter and cannot be tackled as opponents can't go in there.

Can condition it to two touches in there, because you don't want players dwelling on the ball too long, or even a time limit of a couple of seconds to keep the ball moving.

## Game 15: Safe Zone Game



Here the attacking player can make a run and the zone allows them to lose their marker.

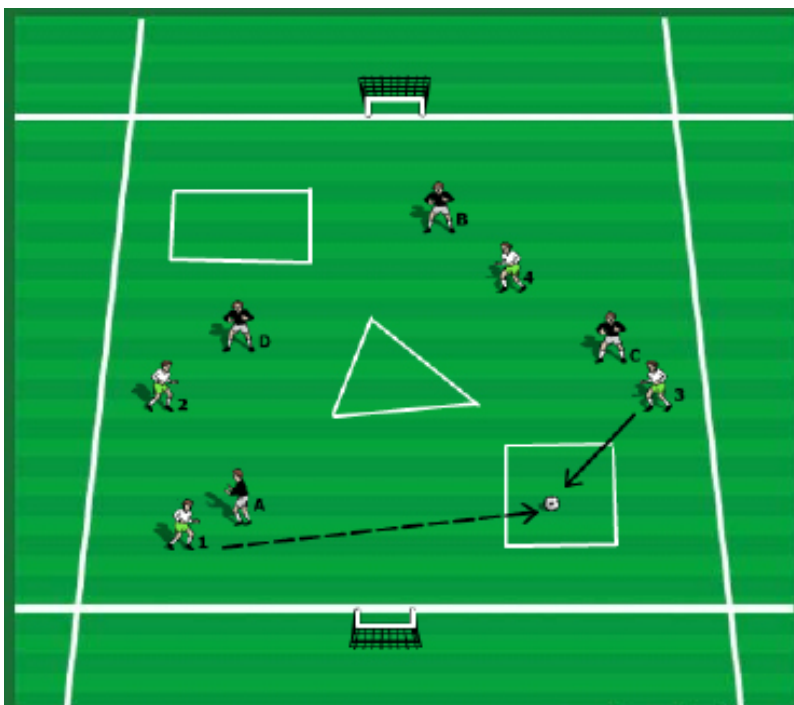
If players struggle to keep possession in a small sided game this is one way to help them and thus have them relax on the ball, knowing they cannot be tackled.

Insist on good timing of the run to coincide with the ball entering the safe zone so players do not go in there and stand still and wait, as this would not happen in a game.

It can be several safe zones and can be different shapes and sizes of zone. Vary the rules as you see fit.

Take the goals away and just have it as a possession game.

Include an overload where there is a free player or even two free players so it is always a 3 v 2 or 4 v 2 with the team in possession of the ball. This will help maintain possession of the ball and to go with the free zones this should make it easier to be successful in keeping the ball.



**Progressions:** Only the free players can enter the free zones, only the regular team players can enter the free zones, the free players can't, or all the players on the attacking team can enter the free zones. You can play around with this idea. You can vary the number of touches of certain players so some have to play faster. Have it free play, as many touches as you like but reward them for a successful one or two touch pass. This means when they need to dribble or turn with the ball they can, but also they are rewarded for quicker thinking and decision making by playing quickly with one and two touch play.

## Game 16: Scoring And Possession Game



For defending have the free player always on the defending team so it is an overload the other way.

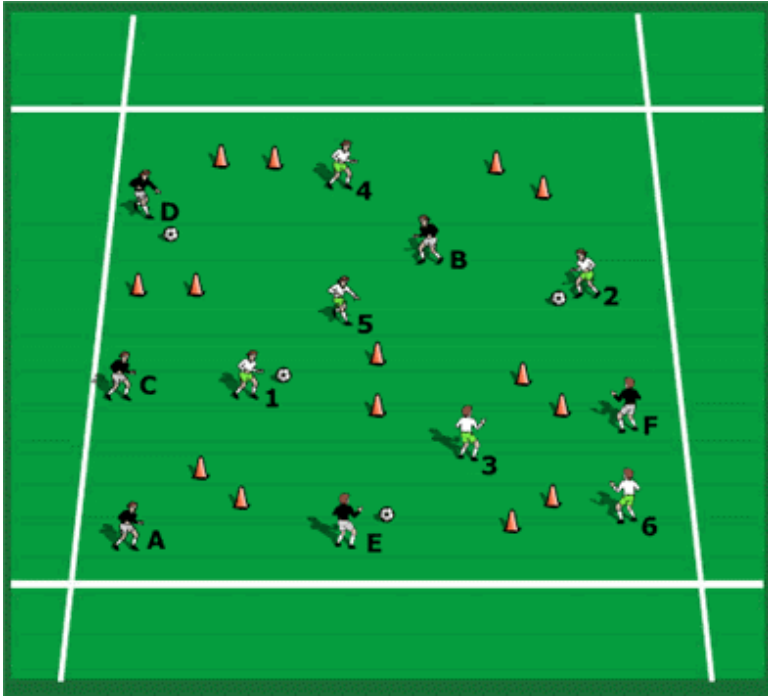
Here when one team scores they then cannot score again but instead must try to prevent the opponents scoring and also try to maintain possession of the ball.

So for the team 1-0 down they are trying to score, for the team winning 1-0 then need to use this as a possession game. Time it to see how long they can last even set a time for them to reach it could be one minute for example.

They attempt to defend well by keeping possession of the ball.



## Game 17: Several Goals To Score Through Game



The goals are spread out and act as a reference to help the players spread out, switch play, pass and support each other. They must make their passes through the goal. This condition forces the players to find a goal (and space) to pass and to receive through. Once they receive the ball they must then find someone else to pass to. The support players spread out to receive by moving into space (where the other goals are).

Two teams working in the same area means congestion so decisions have to be quick on where, when and how to pass and receive. Move into an overload situation so there is opposition to increase the pressure on the players. Have an 8 v 4 in the above workout still using the goals as points of reference for support positions. Count the number of passes made through the goals. Develop – score a goal by dribbling through the goal also.

Eventually have equal sides and make it competitive counting passes through the goals as a goal and perhaps have the first team to ten goals will be the winner. All your previous work trying to teach them how to play in less pressurized situations (over a long period of time) to relax them, ultimately leads to you testing them in full scale match play. The progression to this must be gradual.

### Coaching Points:

1. Look before you receive – where are team mates / other team's players.
2. Open body stance – side on to where the ball is coming from.
3. Check towards the ball – a dummy to fool the defender in a game situation.
4. If time and space available, let the ball run across the body – switching play without needing to touch the ball. If the space is covered move the ball in another direction with a good first touch.
5. Pace of the pass – must be such that the player receiving the pass can let the ball run across them and maintain possession of it.
6. Change direction – switching from one side to the other.

## Game 18: No Pinnies Game

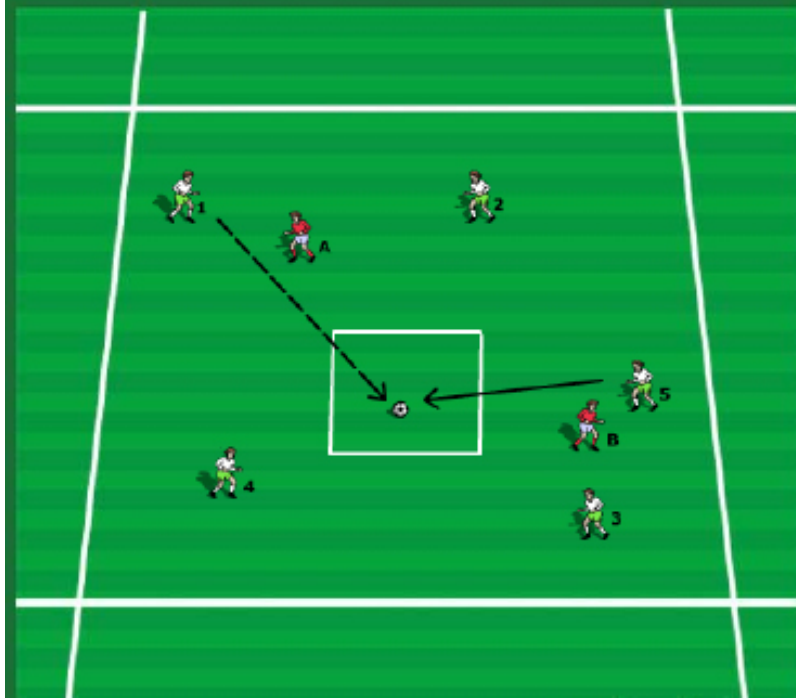


Here the players have no pinnies and so no color coordination to help them identify their teammates so must rely on good communication and observation.

Introduce no talking and communication also, in order to really test their awareness and peripheral vision.

They now must really LOOK to see their teammates and positions and those of their opponents.

## Game 19: Creating Safe Zones In Small Sided Games For Help Maintain Possession Of The Ball



Have a SAFE ZONE that players on the team in possession can enter and cannot be tackled as opponents can't go in there. Can condition it to two touches in there, because you don't want players dwelling on the ball too long, or even a time limit of a couple of seconds to keep the ball moving.

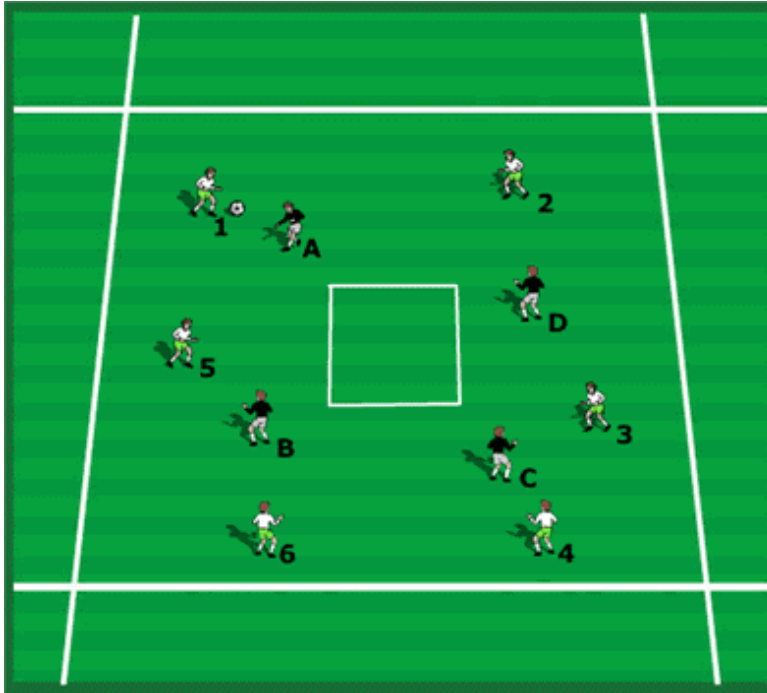
Keep away, with a 5 v 2 overload and a safe zone to run into.

Timing of the pass, pace and accuracy of the pass, timing of the run to arrive as the ball arrives; and not before or after

Any Off the ball players can arrive in the square to receive the ball (can be a circle, anything you like)

Receive the ball; play out of the safe zone, move out of the safe zone.

## Game 20: A 6 V 4 Possession, Passing And Dribbling Game

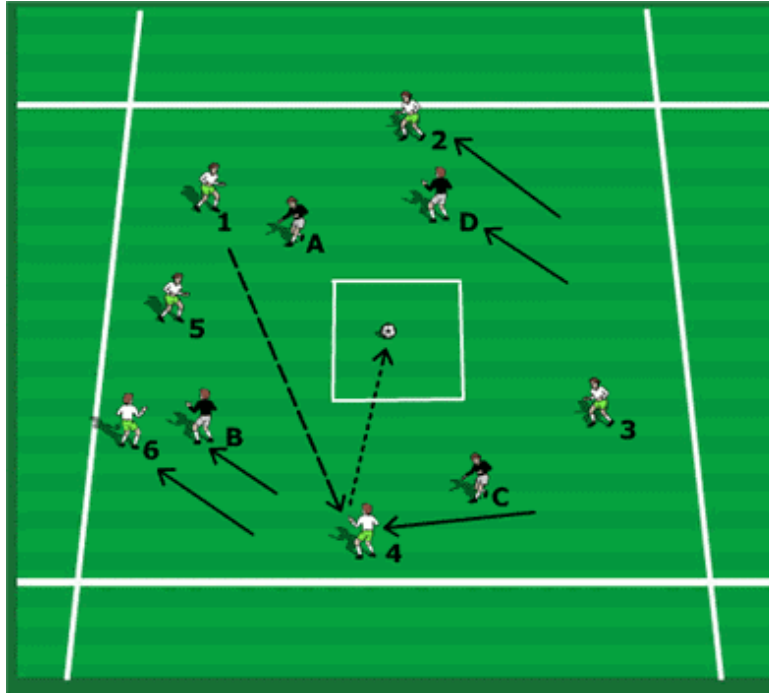


It is a 6 v 4 overload game. 6 attack and 4 defend the square. No one is allowed inside the square except an attacking player on the team of 6 dribbling the ball and in possession. Attacking team keep possession and score by a player dribbling the ball into the square. Try to get a player free to dribble.

Attacking team can also score a goal by making 5 consecutive passes. This prevents the defending team just guarding the square and not trying to make any tackles and win the ball. The defending team score by winning possession and dribbling the ball outside the big square.

### Coaching Points for Attackers:

1. Creating Space (spreading out, using all the space available)
2. Individual dribbling skills
3. Quality quick Passing
4. Support: Movement off the ball to find space to receive or create space for other team mates
5. Maintaining Possession



### Coaching Points for Defenders:

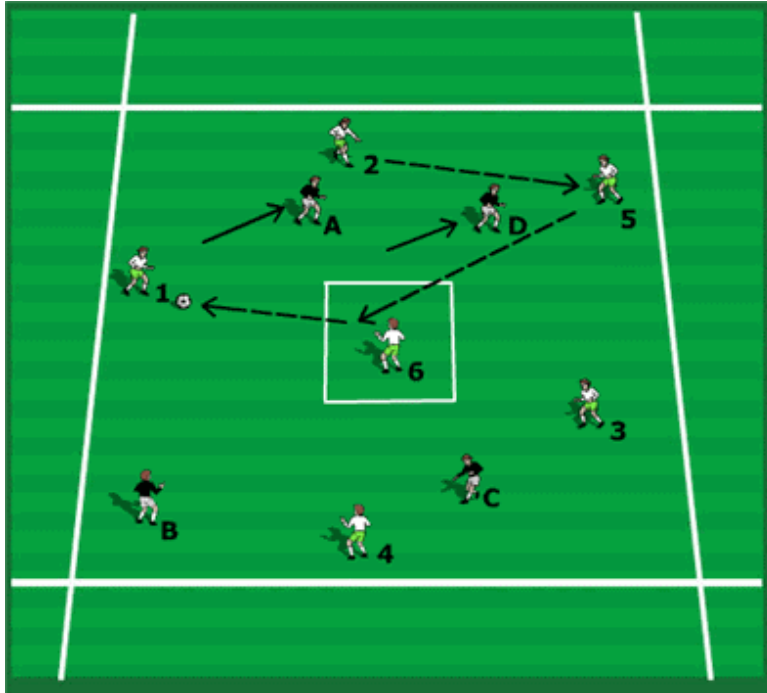
1. Quick individual player pressure
2. Working in pairs to force mistakes or win the ball quickly
3. Collective team Defending where possible (numbers around the ball) boxing players in.

(4) moves into space to open up the angle for a pass from (1). (4) Can now dribble into the scoring square in the middle.

Likewise (6) and (2) move and open up the angle for a pass but defenders (D) and (B) anticipate this and track the runs by (2) and (6).

What (6)'s movement does though is open up a passing lane for (4) to receive, so (6)'s movement was not only to receive a pass themselves if this player got free, but also to help a pass to (4).

This type of movement from an attacking point of view is so important in soccer because players need to learn how to make movements for team mates in an unselfish way.



### Develop:

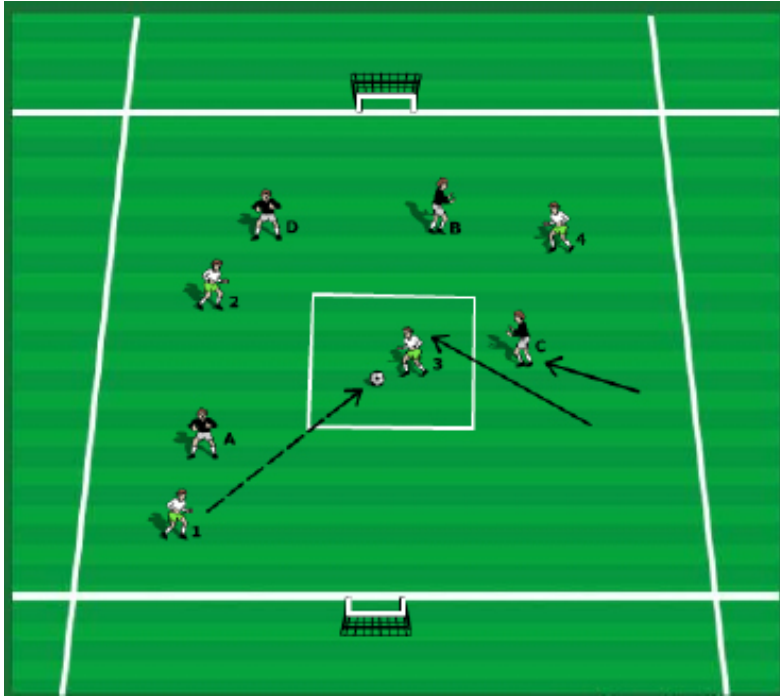
1. Have an attacking player stationed in the middle all the time and use this player as a link player, scoring a point every time a pass is made to them by the attacking team.
2. To score a player has to arrive in the square as the ball arrives. If they don't get the ball they move out again for someone else to fill the space and receive the pass the next time.
3. Change it to a keeper in the square to give the keeper some handling work. Every time the keeper catches the ball it is a goal.

Defending team still scores by running the ball outside the big square.

**Progression:** Make it an equal numbers game so both teams can attack and can use the keeper to pass to or have an outfield player in the middle to pass to for both teams.

Condition the game to one and two touch (one touch only when it is on to do so). Hence timing of the pass and timing of the run in a) and b) are especially important when the player only has one or two touches.

## Game 21: A 4 v 4 Safe Zone Game

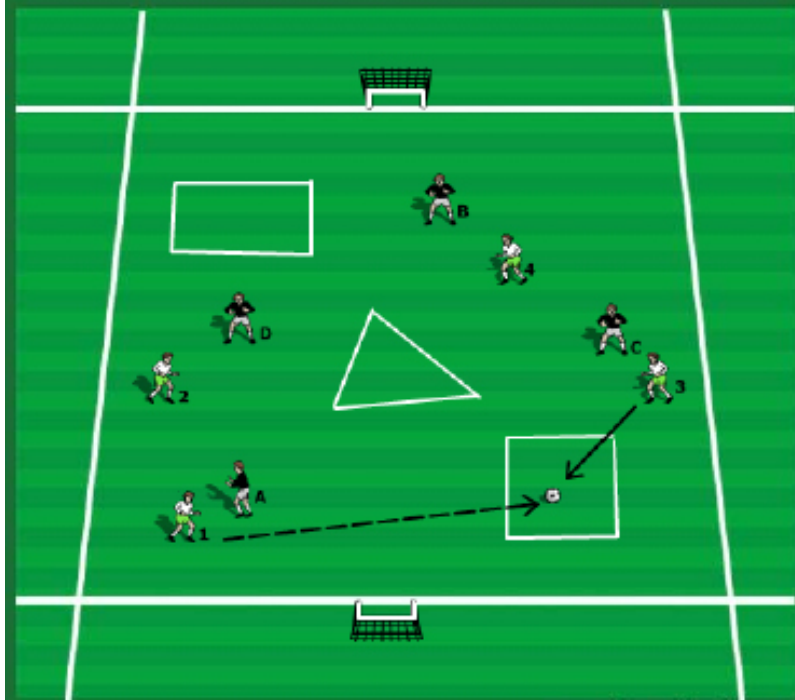


Here the attacking player can make a run and the zone allows them to lose their marker. If players struggle to keep possession in a small sided game this is one way to help them and thus have them relax on the ball, knowing they cannot be tackled.

Insist on good timing of the run to coincide with the ball entering the safe zone so players do not go in there and stand still and wait, as this would not happen in a game.

**Develop:** Man marking so the only real way to guarantee to be free if the defending is really good is to get into the free zone.

## Several Safe Zones



It can be several safe zones and can be different shapes and sizes of zone. Vary the rules as you see fit. Take the goals away and just have it as a possession game. Include an overload (as previously shown) where there is a free player or even two free players so it is always a 3 v 2 or 4 v 2 with the team in possession of the ball.

This will help maintain possession of the ball and to go with the free zones this should make it easier to be successful in keeping the ball AND THUS GIVE THE PLAYERS MORE CONFIDENCE.

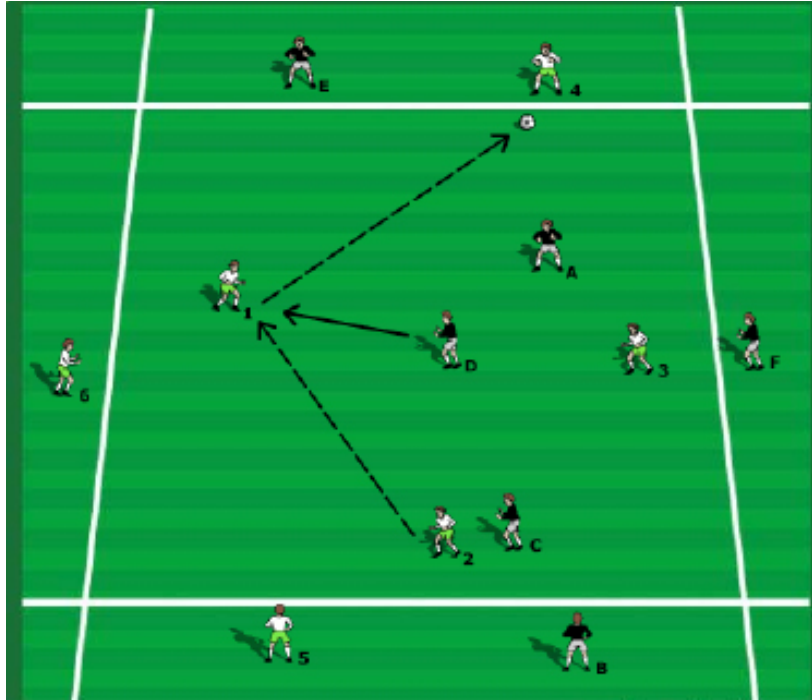
### Progressions:

Only the free players can enter the free zones, only the regular team players can enter the free zones, OR the free players can't, OR all the players on the attacking team can enter the free zones. You can play around with this idea. You can vary the number of touches of certain players so some have to play faster.

OR: Have it free play, as many touches as you like; but reward them for a successful one or two touch pass. This means when they need to dribble or turn with the ball they can, but also they are rewarded for quicker thinking and decision making by playing quickly with one and two touch play.



## Game 22: End Zone Game With Targets



A simple target game with a 3 v 3 in the middle

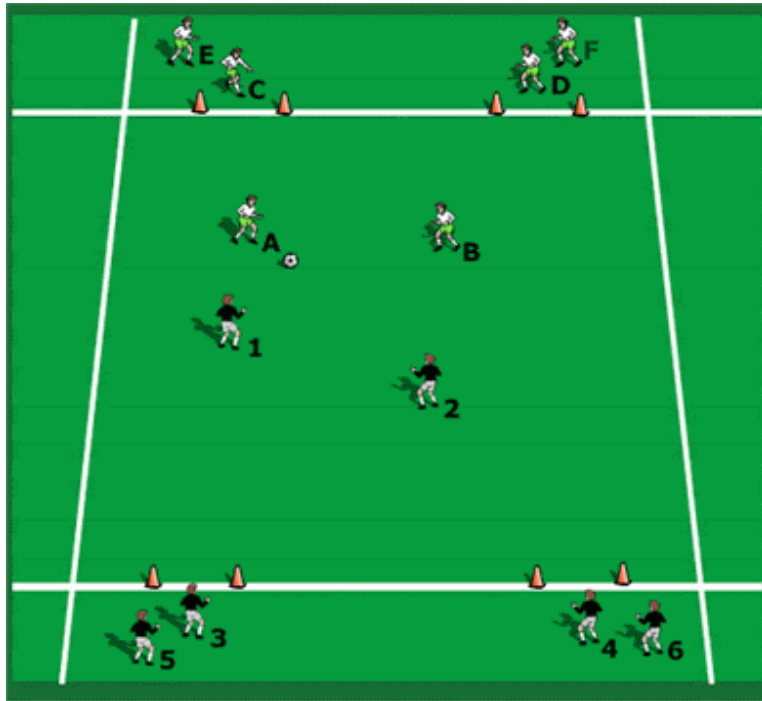
Six players on the outside with two target players at each end for each team and one support player on the outside

When a team has possession they technically have a 6 v 3 advantage.

To score each team has to get a pass into a target player then they have to attack the other way to their other target. They can use the outside player as support.

This is a good game with constant transition from attack to defense and defense to attack.

## Game 23: Quick Break Transition 2 v 2 Game

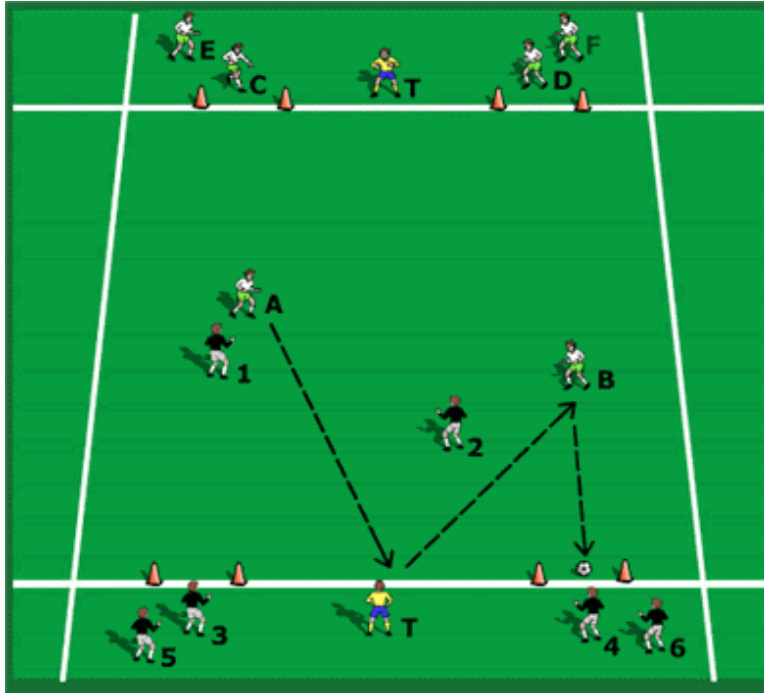


A 2 v 2 game going to 4 goals. The team who scores stays on and must quickly defend the 2 new players coming in (one from each goal that the opposition defends). Instant transition with the same ball that the opponents scored with, here (3) and (4) are positioned to immediately bring the ball the opponents' may score with out to attack. The other two players (1) and (2) must get off the field ASAP.

The 1st thought of the player on the ball has to be "Can I score?"

The 1st thought of the 1st defender is can I stop them scoring, win possession immediately, and score myself.

First team to 10 goals wins, keeping the competitive element. If the ball goes out of play the coach can provide another one to keep things going quickly.



Introduce a target player (can be coaches or players). Now it can be a 3 v 2 effectively. Players can use the target to play give and goes with each other or with their immediate teammates.

Here B scores and (4) stops the ball and brings it out to form a new attack with (3). (1) And (2) get off the field quickly. (4)'s first thought as the ball is traveling to him or her is "where are the opponents weakest, where are we strongest?" This will dictate which direction the first touch of the ball is taken. Looking to create give and go situations.

(A) and (B) stay on and defend trying to win the ball back and score again.

You can do it with a 3 v 3 depending on numbers and using three goals each side.

Liken passing into the goal as a midfielder passing into a striker so they get the ball in there as quickly as possible or a defender into a midfielder. Players must get between opponents and open up passing lanes into the goal (that represents the target).

Can work on quick break but also quick pressing defensively after scoring (liken to regaining possession in the attacking third).

Also with the wide goals we are looking to change the play and switch direction that fits in with the theme of changing direction with the first touch.

### **Coaching Points Attacking:**

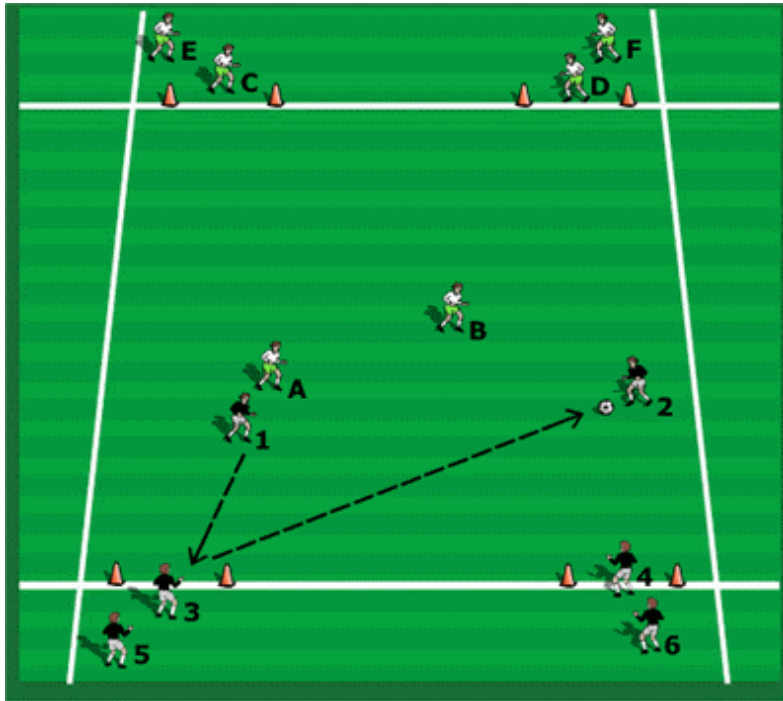
1. Quick Break and counter attack
2. Switching the point of attack if another goal is more open
3. Quick one and two touch passing
4. Positioning to open up passing lanes and getting between defenders to pass the ball in early
5. Creating 2 v 1 situations from a 2 v 2 set up and setting up a give and go.

### **Coaching Points Defending:**

1. Instant pressure as possession changes (transition after scoring going from being an attacker to being a defender)
2. Regaining possession at the front with a scoring reward
3. Getting in front of the passing lanes to prevent the quick pass into the goal.
4. Working together with pressure and support, the support player supporting the first defender, stepping across and covering the passing lane to the second goal and also keeping an eye on the 2nd attacker.

**Transition Coaching Points:** Immediately the team that has been in possession of the ball and has scored then they must switch on mentally to being defenders and high pressuring the new attacking team to try to win the ball back and score again.

**Mixed gender practice:** You have for example 4 boys and 4 girls you could have a 2 v 2 game with the girls and when 1 goal is scored both teams come off and both boys teams come on, or if you had different levels of players and did not want to mix them up in the practice you can do this too.



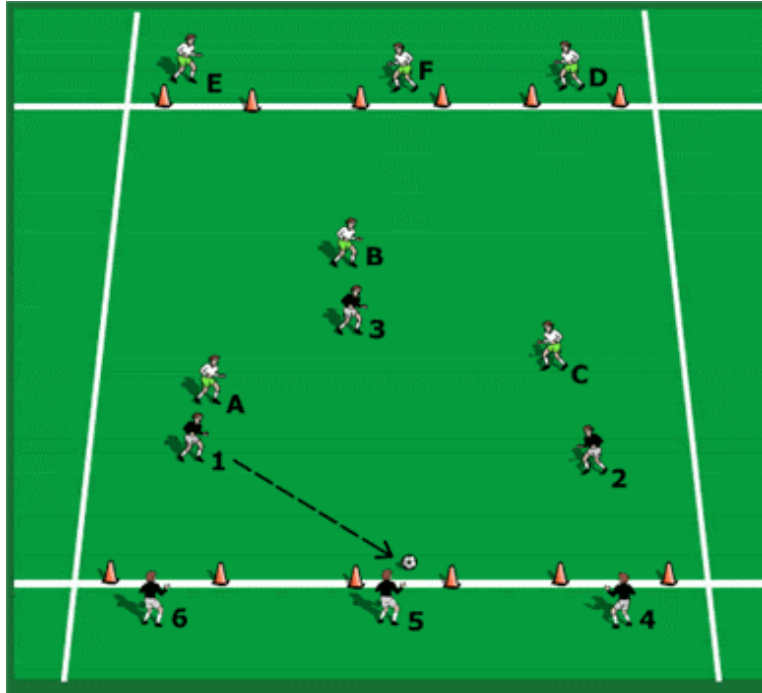
### Develop:

Allow back passes to the players in their own goal so they can support the two (or three) attacking players on the ball.

Allow them only one touch so they have to pass it quickly, make a quick decision and players receiving all need to get open to help them.

Vary the number of touches on the ball depending on the age and level of the players and their ability to perform.

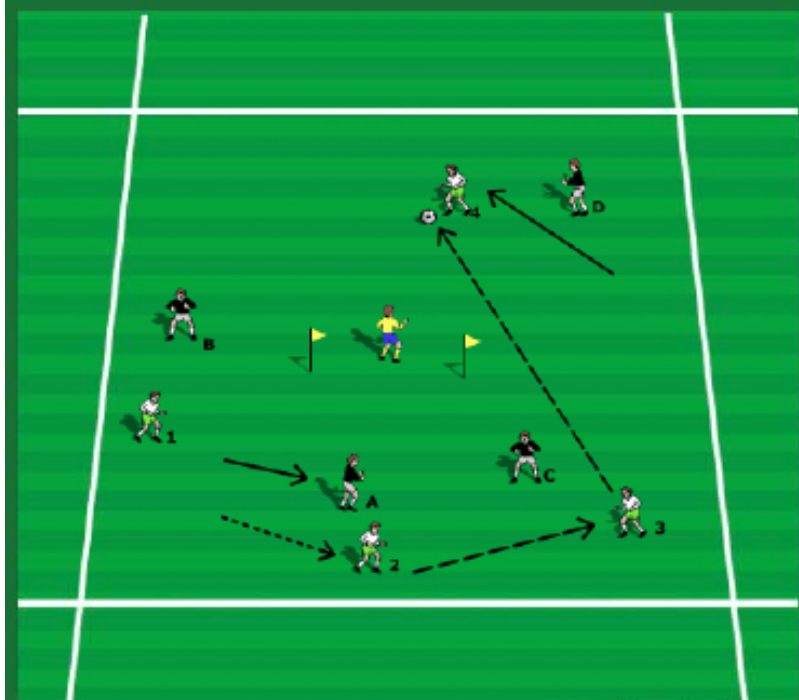
## Quick Transition 3 Against 3



Do the same set up but with three goals either side of the field and 3 v 3 games.

It offers more options of passes in the field of play and starts to get the players thinking about triangular support or diamond support if the ball is with a supporting player off the field. A diamond set up above.

## Game 24: Central Goal Game

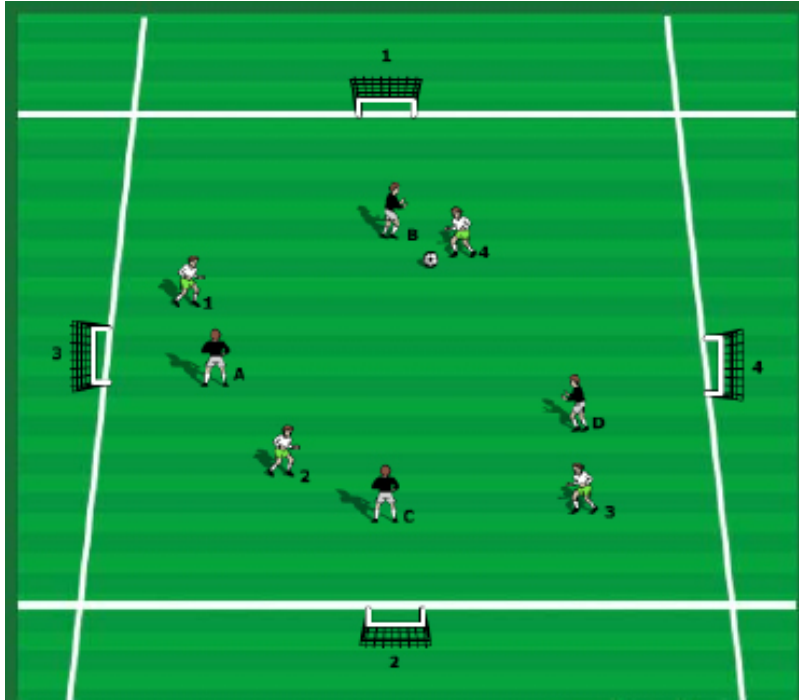


We have a goal in the middle of the field. Here (2) tries to shoot but is blocked by (A) so passes to (3) who is equally blocked by (C). (3) Passes to (4) on the other side of the goal who gets free of marker (D) and gets in a good position to shoot from the other side of the goal.

Both teams try to score in the goal against the one keeper and they can both score from either side so players spread out either side of the goal.

This encourages players to run beyond the ball.

## Game 25: Changing The Point Of Attack Through The Directional Four Goal Switching Play Game



40 x 40

Use this for small sided games also using 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 set ups.

Two teams passing and moving with a ball each team. Initially have one team attacking goal (1) and the other team goal (2). Coach calls “switch” and they attack different goals.

**Progression One:** Team (1) to (4) passes trying to score in goal (1) then (2). Team (A) to (D) passes trying to score in goal (3) then (4). Still playing through each other but going in different directions. Next each team can attack two goals (opposite goals) at once.

Looking to switch play attacking two goals, players decide when to switch the ball, and which goal to attack. Have a one or two touch shooting condition so the timing of the passing and the timing of the movement into position to shoot are correct.

### Progression Two:

1. Use two balls per team so they can attack two goals at once if necessary.
2. Introduce goalkeepers in each of the four goals to make it more competitive. Have a constant supply of soccer balls to keep the game moving.

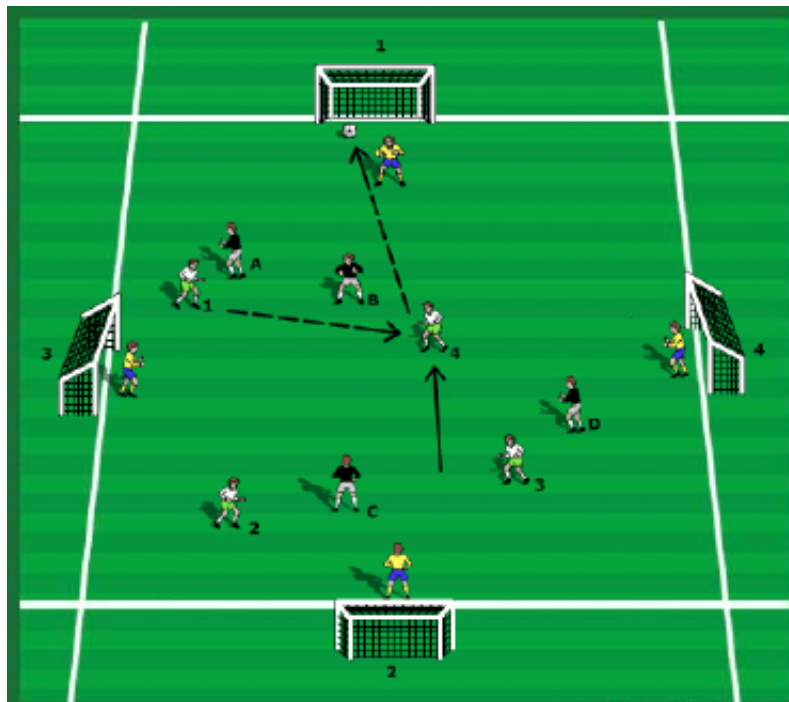
We are looking to include all the main coaching points in this awareness session. Call “switch” as they are playing so they attack the opposite two goals. We are developing



quick thinking, decision-makers. Ultimately have a competitive game between the two teams using the various rules and conditions above.

### Coaching Points:

1. Two directions to attack so quick decisions needed as to which one to go in
2. Awareness of space in front and behind (if the player needs to change the direction of attack)
3. Quick transition having scored in one goal now needing to change direction to score in the other goal
4. On gaining possession there is a choice of going to either goal so quick decisions on which one to attack.



**Progression:** Have two games going at the same time but across each other so players have to be aware of their team mate's positions, their opponent's positions and also the positions of the other two team's players, helps their peripheral vision development. It can be two 2 v 2 games here.

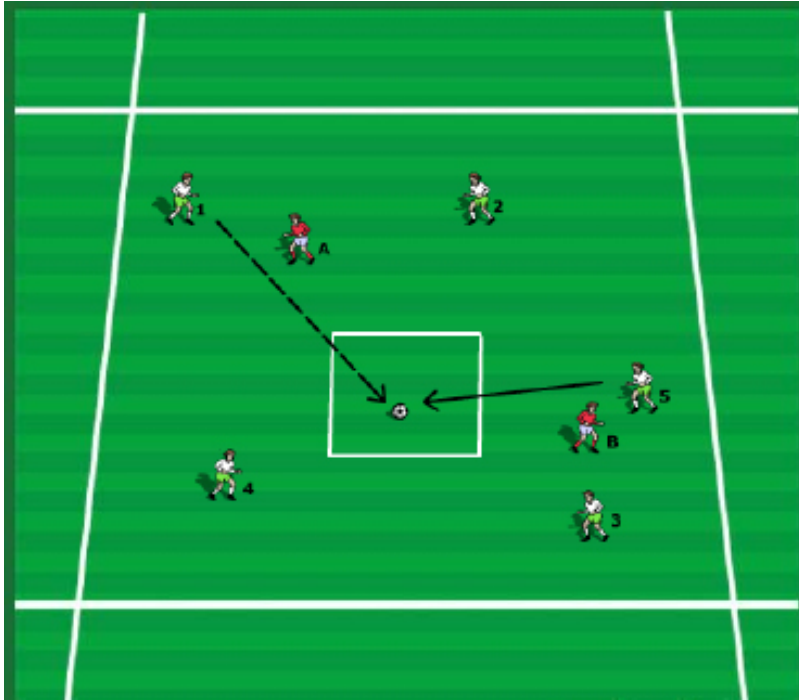


It can be two games then, where (A) and (B) are against (C) and (D) attacking both goals 1 and 2 and players (1) and (2) playing against (3) and (4), attacking goals 3 and 4.

Or have each team attack one goal only, though they have to be opposite each other.

Players need to be able to identify where their teammate is to support them, where their immediate opponents are, and also where the players on the other two teams are so they do not get in the way; this is a great way to develop peripheral vision and ensure players play with their heads up always looking to see where players and space are.

## Game 26: 5 v 2



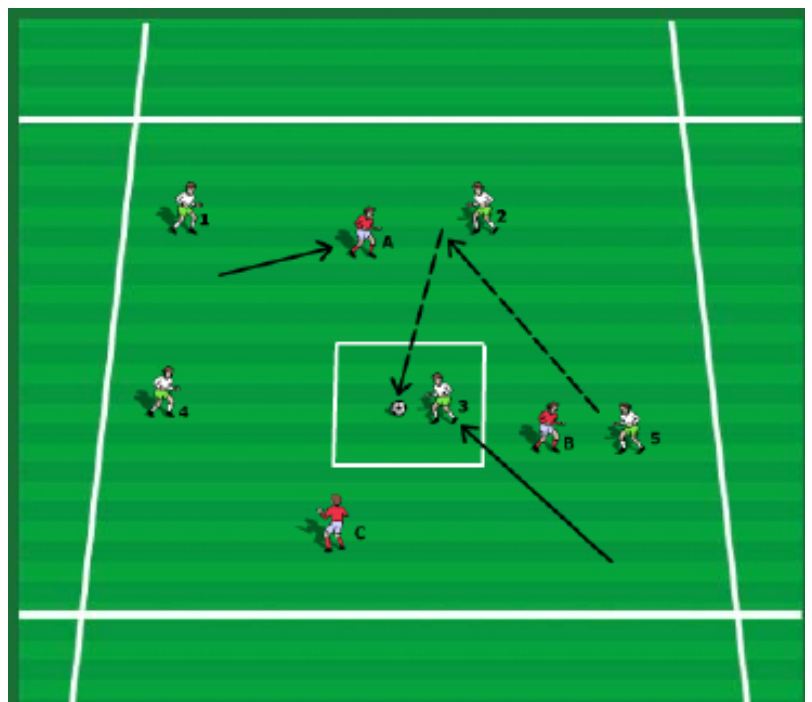
Keep away, with a 5 v 2 overload and a safe zone to run into. Timing of the pass, pace and accuracy of the pass, timing of the run to arrive as the ball arrives; and not before or after.

Any Off the ball players can arrive in the square to receive the ball (can be a circle, anything you like)

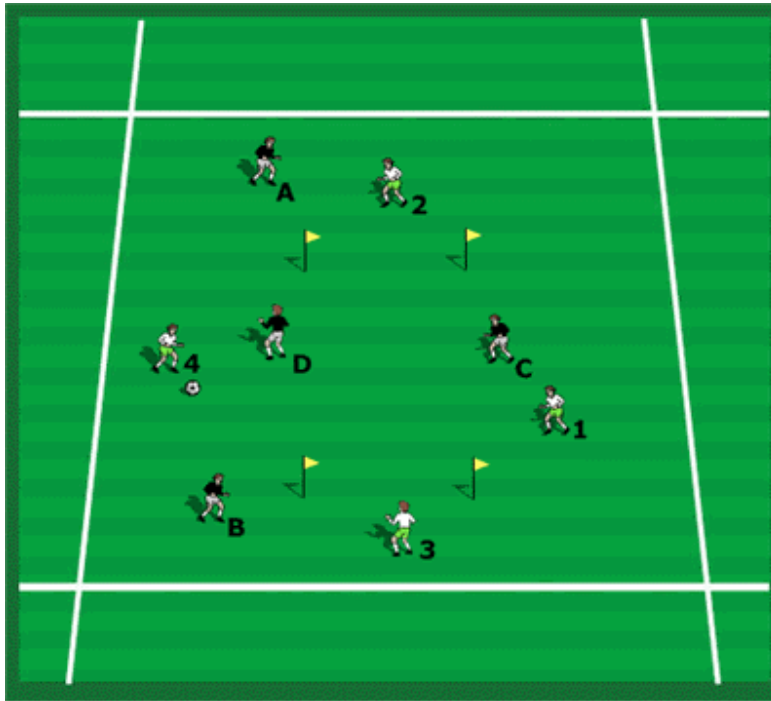
Receive the ball; play out of the safe zone, move out of the safe zone.

This is slightly more competitive with an extra defender in now.

Same principles apply.



## Game 27: A Small Sided Conditioning Game



Divide the players into 4 v 4 small sided game situations so everyone is working. The goals are inside the field of play now so players can work behind the goals and still be in the game. The area can be 40 by 30 yards in size to begin.

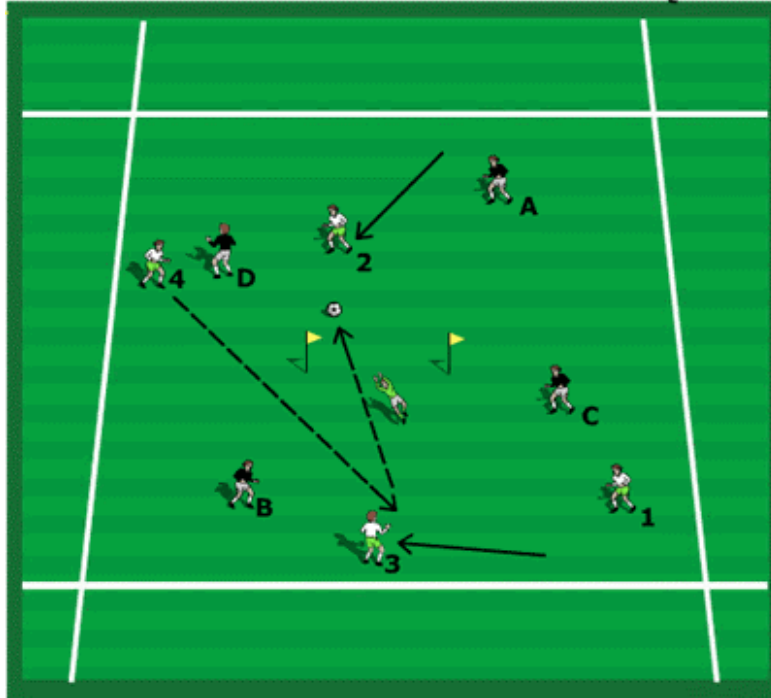
Both teams can score through both goals alternatively.

This helps the ball stay in play longer as to score normally if the game is on an open field for example, if it only cones they are scoring through the game stops after the goal has been scored, this way the game is relatively continuous.

Increase the size of the field as the numbers of players increase.

If you want real conditioning to get out of this then make the fields very big so they have a big area to play in and lots of ground to cover.

You can use keepers also.



One goal only to score through either side.

You can use a keeper for this who will get lots of practice with both teams shooting at them.

Players can pass from one side of the goal to the other side to try to catch out the other team but also the keeper.

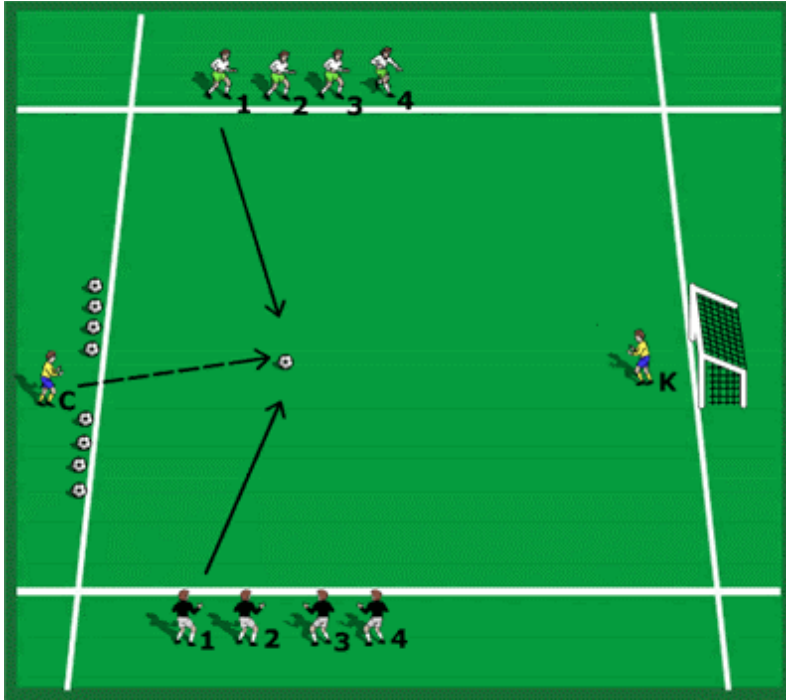
Here (3) moves and get in a position to receive a pass from (4) to get a shot in. On the other side player (2) anticipates where the shot is going to regain possession after (3) has scored.

Once the keeper catches the ball the ball then goes to the other team.

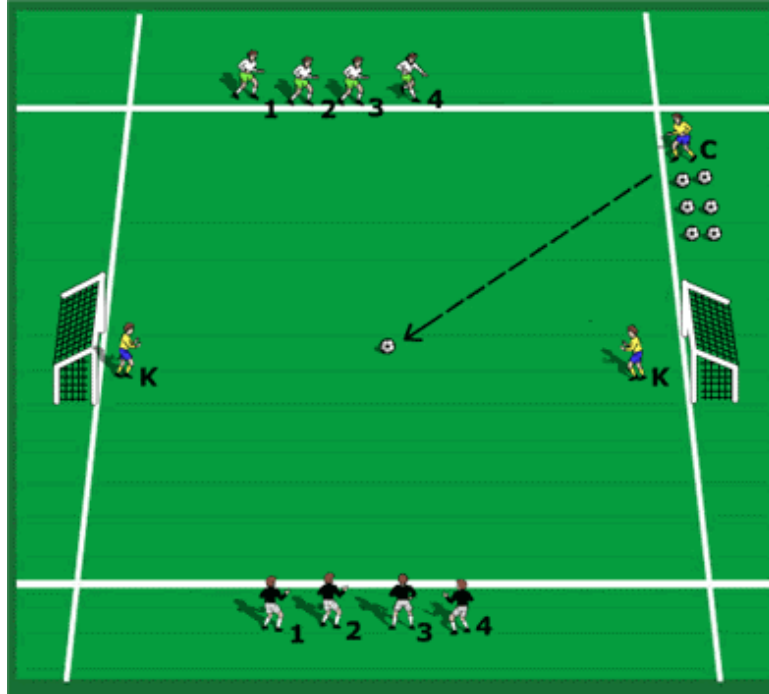
This can be very intensive conditioning work if the players “commit themselves” to doing it properly.

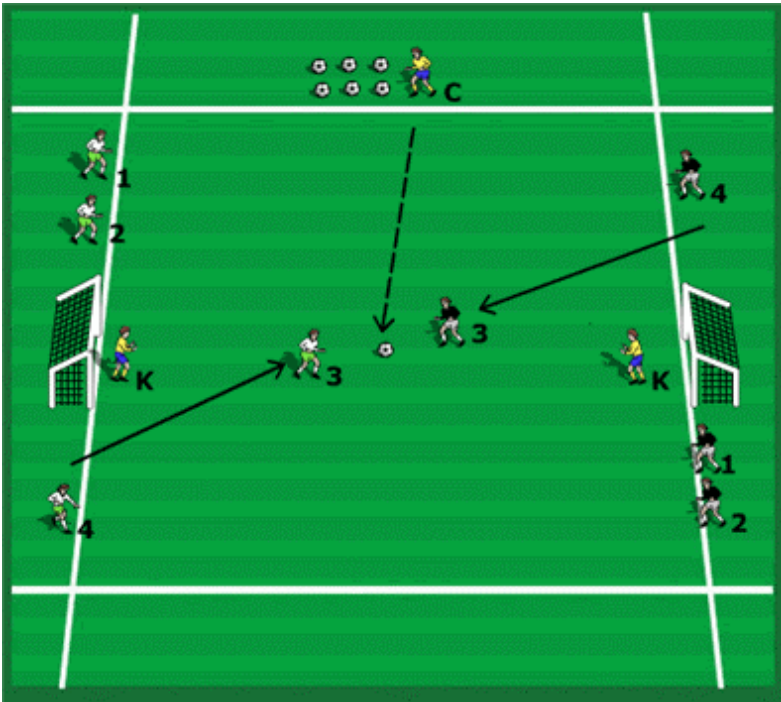
Again the size of area can vary as to the amount of work you want the players to perform.

## Game 28: Small Sided Numbers Shooting Game



Warm Up: As always with a ball each and stretching.





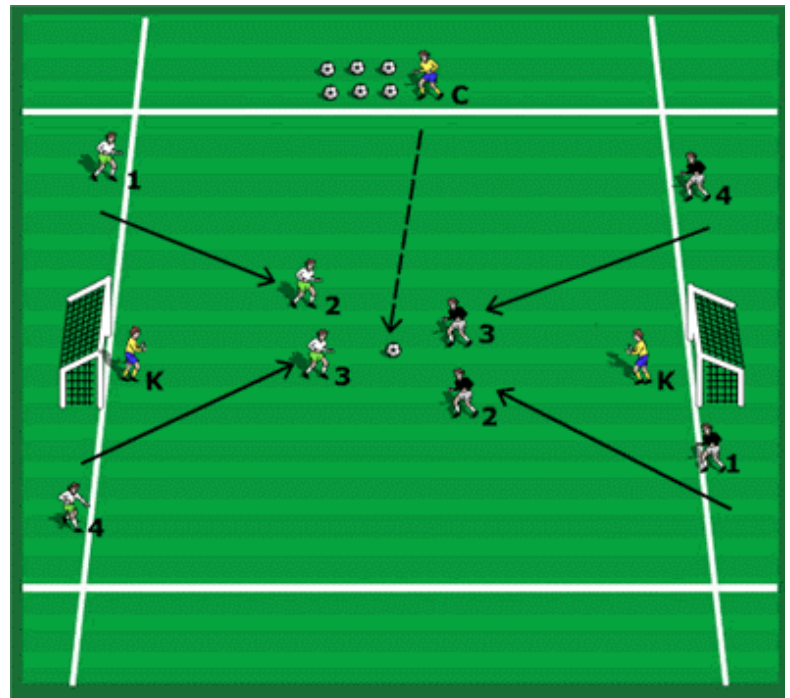
Number players off and have a competitive game with two teams. Calling numbers out to create 1 v 1's, 2 v 2's, 3 v 3's etc.

Make it competitive by keeping score, the coach can be the keeper and serve the ball calling the number (have plenty of balls handy so it's fairly continuous).

Ensure players keep behind each line to start.

If you have two coaches use both goals and have each team attacking a different goal as in a game.

You can have a couple of games such as the first team to score five goals is the winner.



Build the exercise eventually into a 4 v 4 games if that is the numbers of players you are working with.



## Touches On The Ball: A Comparison Between 11 v 11 And 4 v 4

We had an idea to compare how many touches on the ball a player has in an eleven a side game as opposed to a four a side game. We recorded touches on the ball of an average player and these are the results he came up with:

- 11 v 11 friendly games, 22 touches in 60 minutes, (0.37 touches on the ball per minute).
- 4 v 4 games (Wings), 205 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 256) / (4.3 touches on the ball per minute)
- 4 v 4 games (Tonka), 217 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 271) / (4.5 touches on the ball per minute)

As regards to the Tonka results the player involved touched the ball 12.31 more times in the 4 v 4 games over the same time period as in the 11 v 11 game.

The reason to implement small- sided games into the program was to increase the time and amount of touches a player had on the ball and these results clearly back this up. It would be useful if other coaches tried the same experiment and showed the results to anyone who just simply doesn't understand why we do it and why it is important.

I have heard it said by someone who falls into the above category that yes they get more touches on the ball but they aren't all quality touches? Of course they aren't all quality touches because if every touch was a quality touch then our players would all be great players now with nothing to learn and we know it doesn't work like that even the best players in the world have non – quality touches on the ball. Let's say for arguments sake 50% of touches were "Quality" touches, then in the 11 a side game that player got 11 quality touches and in the 4 a side games the same player got 135 quality touches. Players learn from doing it right but also from doing it wrong.

I believe players must make mistakes to help them learn how to do things correctly as well as learning from doing it correctly in the first place so from the 135 non - quality touches they will have gained valuable experience of what not to do e.g. a first touch was bad and the ball went to the opposition so next time that player concentrates on making a good first touch and so on. In comparison in the 11 a side game the same player hardly touched the ball making only 11 quality touches but also only 11 non – quality touches meaning very little opportunity to learn from quality work and non – quality work.

My experience in the game has taught me this is an important way to help players develop their technique and improve their game and Toms' results act as confirmation of this. I am sure this presentation goes some way to show how important it is to continue to use this type of developmental work as a part of our overall coaching program.