

## TACTICAL THOUGHTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW 4 V 4; 7 V 7 AND 9 V 9 GAME SIZES

These are just “Suggestions / Guides” as to how I see these different size games being taught and also showing different systems of play that might be useful to you.

Run with them as you may and of course come up with your own solutions too as that is what coaching is all about. I have introduced the use of RONDOS to initially aid the development of players for the game situation.

The idea I am trying to cultivate is to find a pattern of development that goes from 4 v 4, to 7 v 7 to 9 v 9.

Not perfect by any means but a good starting point I think that will at least get you all thinking, elaborating; and ultimately further developing the ideas.

Even for 4 v 4 we are developing ideas on angles of support and playing in triangles and diamonds that will intimately translate into larger 7 v 7 and 9 v 9 games too..

4 v 4 particularly can even imitate small areas on the field of play that occur on the ultimate 11 v 11 game.

## The Roles and responsibilities of each player in the 4 v 4

### The role of the Bottom of the diamond player:

We want the player at the bottom of the diamond, the defensive end; to be able to play like a defender and like an attacker also. This player we want to play like a number (6) (defensive midfielder) in the 11 v 11 game, and we want to start that thought process at 4 v 4. This player is the catalyst of the game itself. Examples of this are Busquets of Barcelona, Alonso of Bayern Munich.

Following are descriptions of the attributes this player requires in my opinion. Of course the 4 v 4 game is for younger players so we can only expect so much of them at these younger ages but we should have a plan for them in their development to become the type of player we want to see at 11 v 11. We will look at each player in isolation and in respect to the team.

#### In Possession / Without Possession:

1. Technical
2. Tactical
3. Psychological
4. Physical
5. Skill

The number (6) is a vital player (perhaps THE main player) in the modern game; and the team often takes its shape around him or her. I personally think even at a young age we must try to CULTIVATE certain characteristics in a player playing this role. For me I want my center backs at 11 v 11 to be able to play like a number 6, and not play as a more traditional center back would play, which would be less technical, more physical, more defensively minded.

#### Technical Attributes:

1. Excellent first touch control: A Great passer - short medium and long passing, ability to play ONE TOUCH.
2. Speed of play with the ball in all disciplines

#### Tactical Attributes: On the ball

1. Control at Speed in tight situations; so a great first touch always moving the ball quickly when able.
2. Always in a position to receive the ball and always WANTING the ball.
3. Choice – preservation of the ball - change the direction of the game
4. Direct quick passing. Create and save the space and distance
5. Able to play with SIMPLICITY.

### Tactical Attributes: Off the ball

1. Understanding of Positioning according to the positioning of opponents; the ball and teammates
2. Communication - with their peers and with respect to the opponents, particularly those immediately close to him, center backs, central midfielders and fullbacks (a position on the field of great responsibility for communication)
3. Insight in when and where to apply pressure on the ball
4. Control of the different types of defending- between the lines, zoning, man marking, covering the passing lanes

### Psychological

1. Vocal leader and organizer.
2. Control over the pressure of the ball.
3. Disciplined and responsible - always in a position to receive the ball first safe place to pass to.
4. Self-confidence
5. Authority
6. Security for all the actions
7. Composure

### Physical

1. Speed - in short and medium distances.
2. Quick off the mark
3. Strength of passing
4. Coordination with and without the ball
5. Agility
6. Strength in the defensive 1 v 1 duel

He / she must first have an excellent understanding with the other 3 players in the team.

### Skill

1. All about Decision Making and developing the mind of the player. The "Skill Factor: is perhaps THE most important component to develop in a player.
2. Everything they do relates to this in terms of assessing options and what the right course of action to take both on and off the ball.

## **The Roles of the side players in the diamond (equivalent of 2 and 3 and 7 and 11 combined)**

I see these two positions as a cross between a fullback and a winger so we could say its like a wing back. You could say its numbers 2 or 3 in the team or numbers 7 and 11. Both have similar roles in the way we play, 2 and 3 being more defensively minded of course.

### Technical Qualities:

1. Ability to play at speed with the ball
2. Control of the ball – excellent first touch control
3. Technique of the pass - short, medium and long distance
4. Crossing Technique

### Technical:

1. Speed with the ball
2. Control of the ball - first control – great first touch
3. Crossing Ability – cross with pace: on the ground, with a curve out of the reach of the goalkeeper and between the goalkeeper and defenders.
4. Also dribbling inside and outside to shoot at goal or to cross
5. Passing ability
6. Scoring - balls on the floor / in the air

### Tactical Qualities: ON the ball

1. Speed control - With the ball
2. Positioning- always in a position to receive, open stance, and facing towards the goal, and as open as possible
3. Know how to choose (when and where) - Cross, 1 to 1 dribble; when to pass, when to shoot.
4. Understanding of when and where to break outside to inside and inside to outside.

### Tactical: OFF the ball

1. Positioning / Movement off the ball determined by the ball, the opponent, teammates to attack - to defend
2. Communication - with their peers and with respect to the opponent
3. Attitude to close spaces as a team player
4. Ability to press and hold the position.
5. Retrieve balls

### Psychological

1. Disciplined and responsible - always with an attitude to receive the ball - first pass without risks – maintaining possession
2. Willingness to work for the team - in attack - defense
3. Confidence - Create actions for goals
4. Makes the field as large (and deep) as possible or short and tight as possible

### Physical

1. Speed and change of pace- In short, medium and long distance
2. Great endurance / stamina – covering the whole of the flank
3. Strong in the tackle
4. Agility and coordination

### Skill

1. Decision making – when, where and how to pass, run with the ball, cross the ball, dribble, shoot, when, where and how to defend and so on.
2. Understanding - when and where to attack; as a winger, when and where to defend as a wing back with defensive duties; he / she must have good decision making on this.

## **The Role of the Top of the Diamond Player: The Role of the Central Striker (9)**

### Technical

1. Speed with the ball
2. Control of the ball - first control – great first touch in all directions- Ability to keep the ball; dribbling ability; ability to hold the ball with their back to play
3. Ability to play Give and go's- pass to the side (left and right)
4. Passing, dribbling and Shooting ability

### Tactical: ON the ball

1. Speed - with ball - control without the ball
2. Positioning- without ball to receive it: always in position to receive 1 v 1, in depth and always in a position to receive –
3. With the ball: choose direct / indirect play, create chances for others or retain possession of the Ball

### Tactical: OFF the ball

1. Creative movement without the ball: Positional sense
2. Communication - with their peers and with respect to the opponents
3. Attitude to pressure as a team player

### Psychological

1. Strong and positive mentality.
2. With self-confidence - (to create AND SCORE goals)
3. Disciplined and responsible
4. Willingness to work for the team - in attack – defense
5. Self-belief to KEEP going back after missing chances

### Physical

1. Speed - in short (especially), distance - technical in speed (Great coordination and first touch control at pace)
2. Change of pace
3. Strength in 1 v 1 on the ground to keep the ball under control
4. Agility

### Skill

Decision Making: When, where and how to pass, run with the ball, cross the ball, dribble, shoot, when, where and how to defend and so on.

## Small Sided 4 v 4 Attacking Games

One way to teach the basic tactical game of the 4 v 4 is to offer many different ideas on actual game situation that focus on certain themes. This is what the following presentations do.

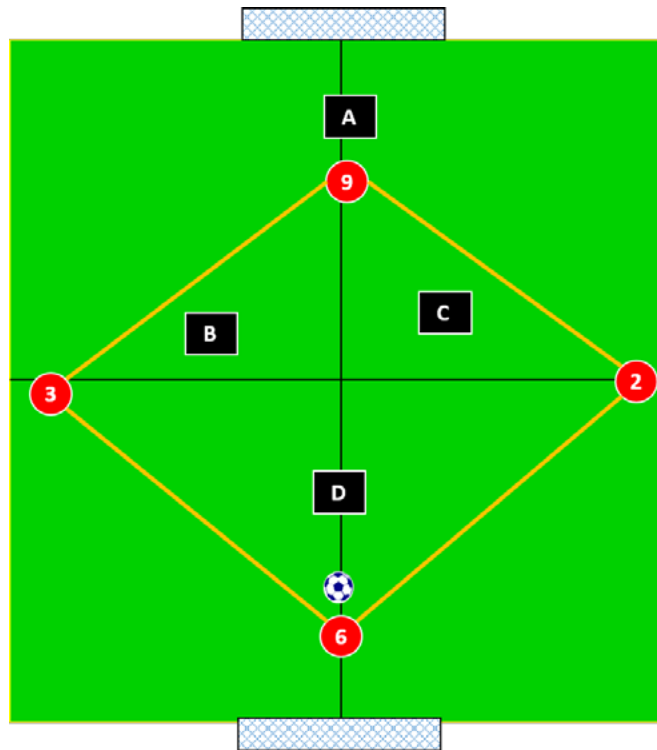
You cannot do better than put players into game situations to learn the game, we just take it one stage further by what we present here.

We continue by teaching Attacking principles in a 4 v 4 game situation so several thoughts on different set ups to teach it individually and collectively as team players..

The set ups of the game situation will dictate what theme we get out of it.

Here are some ideas.

## 4 v 4 a Basic Diamond Shape for Attacking



### 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.

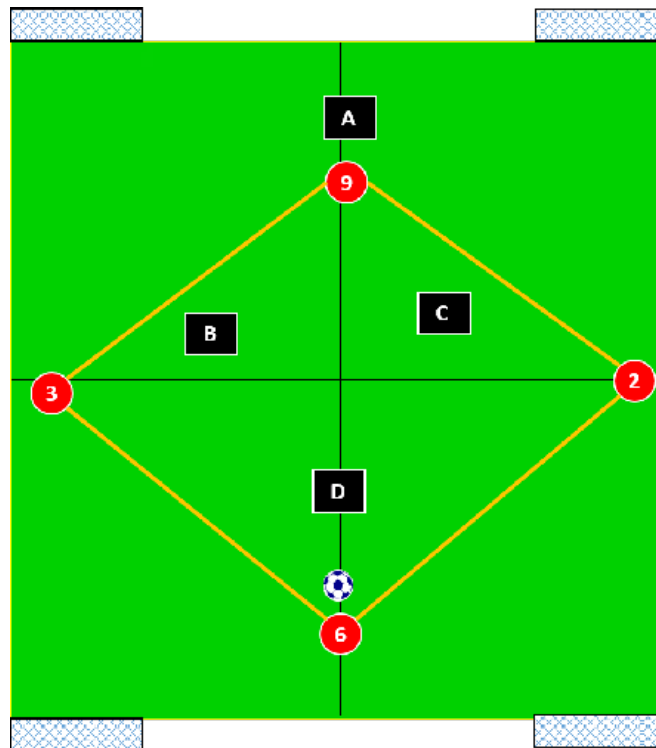
This is the set up for the eventual 4 v 4 (or 5 v 5 plus keepers) competitive game situation. The above coaching points are important to use as guidelines to what you are trying to achieve in this coaching practice.

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.



## A Switching Play Game

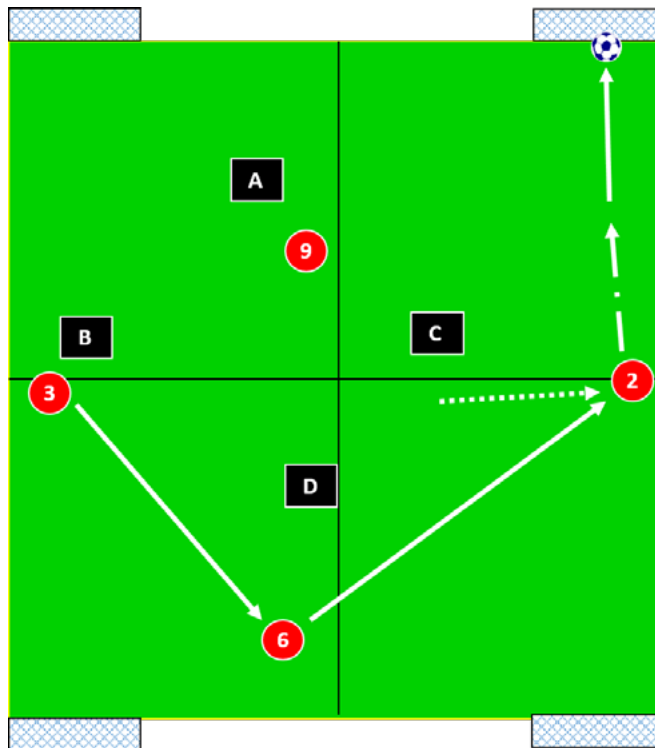


1. You can start as in other practices with two teams playing through each other with a ball each practicing switching play, attacking each goal in turn. Limit it to two touches to ensure quick decisions both from the player on the ball and the players off the ball who need to get in support positions early.
2. 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.
3. 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.

## A Switching Play Game

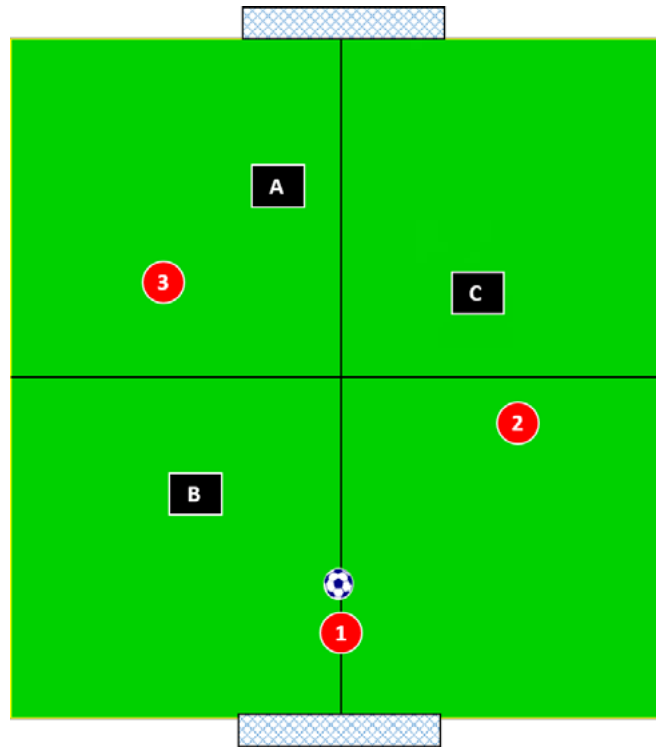


Here is the classic example of using the FULL WIDTH of the field to exploit all the space. (3) cannot attack the left goal due to good defending by the opponents so passes quickly to (2) on the other side of the field before (C) can close down and (2) then runs and scores in the right side opposite goal.

Here we see as the ball is being passed from (3) to (6), player (2) breaks wide quickly and away from defender (C).

This game is great for teaching spacing and how important it is to make the field as BIG as possible.

## A 3 v 3 Format for Street Soccer



### 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 Or 4 v 4 Festival Of Fun**

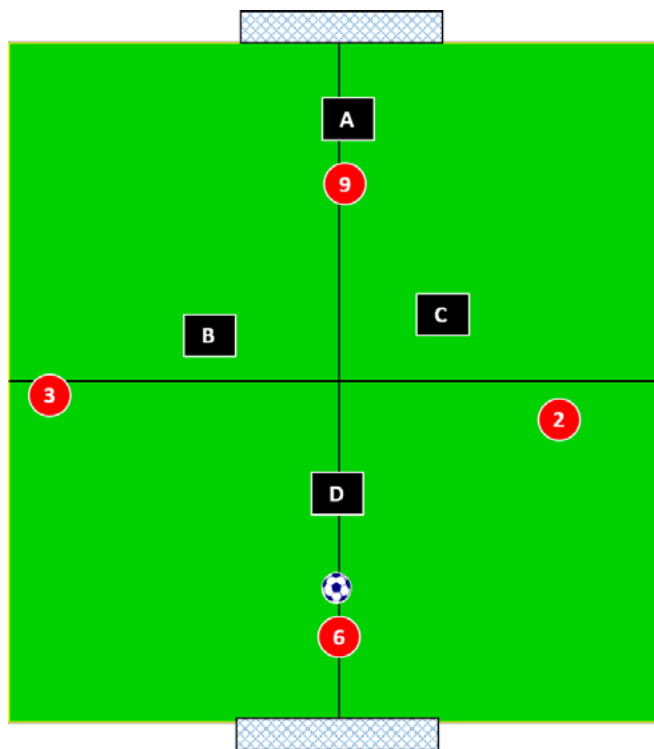
### **Creating A Game – Like Playing Environment**

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.

## A 4 v 4 Format for Street Soccer



**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, players 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”!

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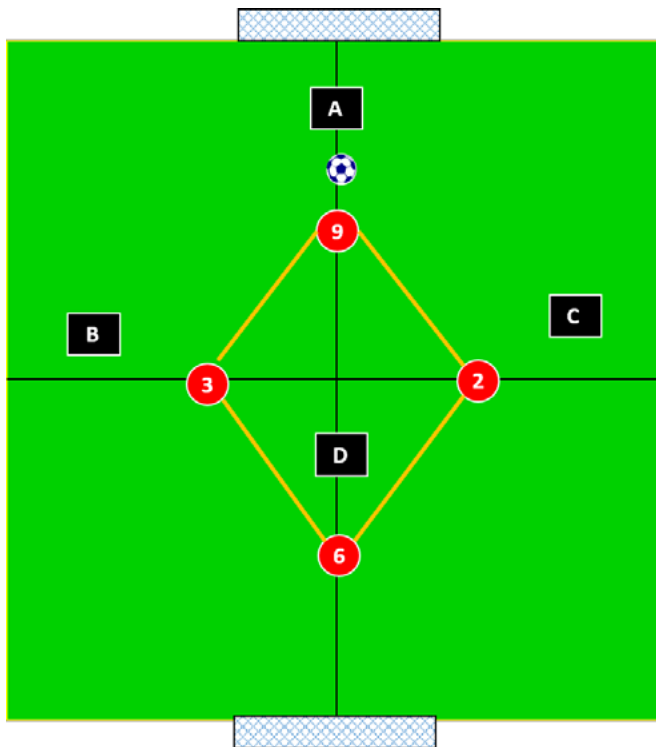
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We begin by teaching defending principles in a 4 v 4 game situation so several thoughts on different set ups to teach it individually and collectively as team players.

## 4 v 4 a Basic Diamond Shape for Defending



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. (9) Forces (A) one way and the rest of the team adjust their positions off this. (3) Protects the space inside but can close down (B) if the ball is passed, (2) and (6) 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 (2), (3) or (6) they should be first to the ball.

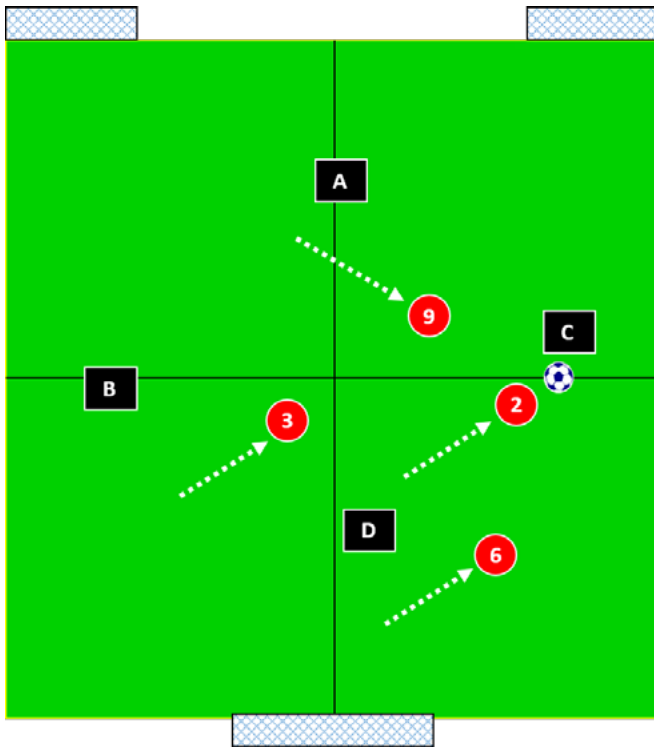
### Coaching Points:

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), (2) closes (C) down from in front, (9) follows along the path of the ball to close down from behind or slightly to the side. (9) Closes in such a way as to obstruct a back pass 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.

## 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.

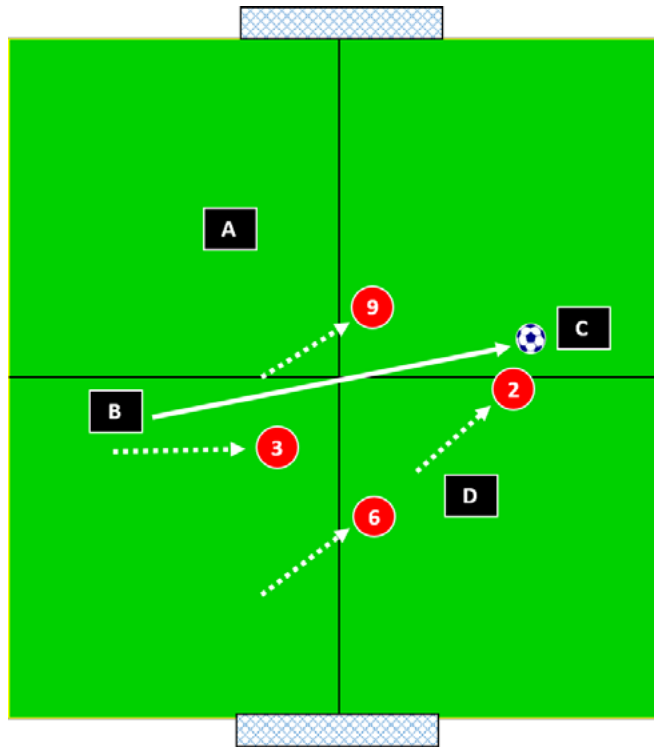
Here the team defending the big central goal forces the opponents "outside" and away from the goal; the team defending the two small wide goals forces the opponents "inside" and away from the two goals and towards the middle of the field between them.

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.



## A Pressing Game

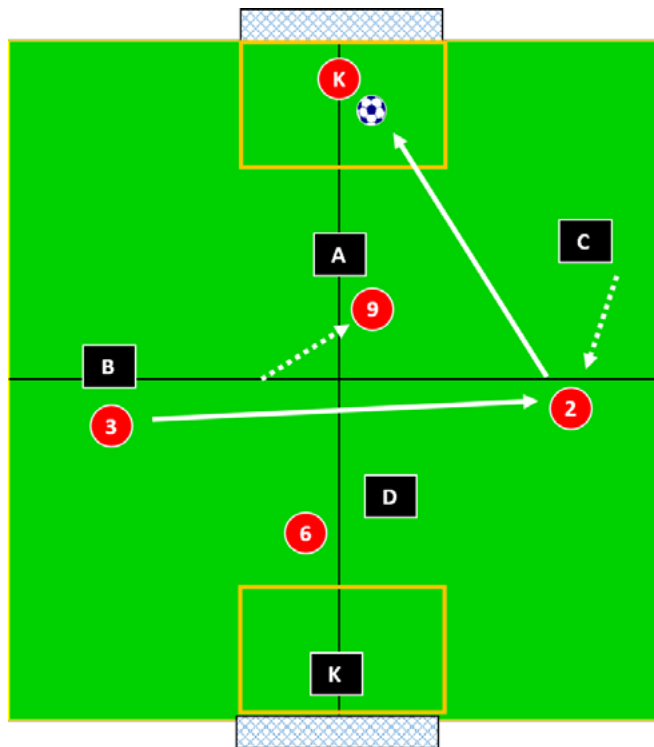


The ball is transferred from (B) to (C) and our players move as the ball moves.

Still maintaining a diamond shape, (2) presses the ball with (C), (6) covers but is close to (D) also, (9) positions to stop the pass to (A) and (3) fills the space inside but at the same time is aware of (B)'s position should the point of attack change.

Add keepers to bring in correct finishing techniques as a reward for getting free of tight marking.

## A Pressing Target Game



In this game to score a goal each team must get the ball to their keeper.

Vary the service for difficulty, it has to be a chip without touching the ground, a pass on the ground, a swerved pass, and so on.

Have an area in front of the keeper where the opponents cannot encroach to stop them standing in front of the keeper which would make it unrealistic if they did this.

They can score a goal from anywhere just by getting it to their keeper so opponents **MUST PRESS** very fast to stop this delivery.

This is a high speed and a very physically challenging game.

**Man Marking:** Make it man marking so if your immediate opponent scores you do 2 push ups.