



50

SMALL SIDED GAMES

DAN WRIGHT



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CAN WE PLAY A GAME?

How often do we hear this? Have you ever stopped to think why? Sometimes it is important to remember why players fall in love with the game. Footballers of all ages want to play. To experiment. To take risks. To fail and to improve.

Football is a complex, dynamic and random sport. For young players to learn the principles of the game and the skills and attributes needed to play, the players should always be playing football by '*perceiving-deciding-executing*'. The link to the game must always be apparent creating the relevance to the 'why'.

For the vast majority of children this game-related approach is the most enjoyable, logical and scientifically proven child centred way of learning to play football, enabling them to reach their personal potential and stay committed to the game for life.

The coach acts as the architect for this by designing practices that are representative of the game and challenging the individuals by manipulating things like:

- The number of opponents
- The number of team-mates
- The size and position of the goals/targets
- The size of the space to work in and pitch geography
- The objective of the practice and its link to the principles of play

These can be absent in isolated training. However, this is not to say that there is absolutely no place for isolated training. There are benefits to individual practices, but these could be done as individual homework, before practice or delivered in specific 1-to-1 sessions.

In every development session the following questions or checklist could be used;

- Is the game being played?
- Are there opportunities for a variety of football actions?
- Is football being experienced and enjoyed?
- Do the players understand the football purpose of the exercise? (implicit and explicit)
- Do the players recognise the game-related intention?
- Are the players challenged to improve both individually and as a team?

When delivering the practices in this book there are some key factors to consider;

Coaching style

Think about providing feedback in a variety of ways; perhaps in the drinks break, in the change of activities or on the fly by working with individuals. This keeps the game flowing and the ball rolling time high! Do you need to give feedback; to the group, the individual or will the consequences of the game provide this learning?

Scoring Mechanisms

You can increase or decrease the opportunities to score in a number of ways. For example, make the finish more difficult by restricting the action (1 touch, tighter scoring zone...etc). These alterations can be made quickly to keep the practice engaging, challenging and fun for all.

Area

If the coach chooses to alter the size or shape of the playing area, this will afford the players different opportunities for action. For example, a bigger pitch might allow for more time on the ball, this might lead to more touches or opportunities to run with the ball. Also be aware of the physical load that you are putting the player through and its relationship to the pitch size.

Numbers

In these games there are a mixture of practices where the teams are equal, overloaded or underloaded. You might tweak these numbers to suit your players and the desired outcomes. Think about the challenges this presents the players; physically, psychologically and tactically.

Game Rules

You could alter the rules to make the practice harder or easier, in a lot of these practices you might alter the conditions in certain areas, i.e. no tackling, minimum number of passes...etc.

Equipment

By varying the equipment used, i.e. bigger goals, smaller goals, more goals...etc you can increase or decrease the challenge for the players. This way you might see more of the desired outcomes...but be careful you don't make the practice too easy and unrealistic.

Inclusion

You can engage the players in modifying the practices, this encourages ownership, problem solving and autonomy. Questions like "What would you change about this game?" or "Do you want to make it more difficult?" are a great start.

Time

Each session has a time guide, but this is just a suggestion. You can reduce or extend the time to perform actions, which can make the practice more or less challenging, depending on the desired outcomes.

Thanks for downloading this eBook. This is a collection of small sided games that I find work with young players. Some I have designed myself, others have been adapted from other great coaches I have been fortunate to work with or observe.

I hope you and your players find these useful and I would love to hear any feedback that you have.

Thanks

Dan Wright
UEFA 'A' Licence Coach



USING THE PLANS

TITLE: Here you will find the name of the game.

SET UP: Here you will find tips around; number of players, offside, pitch dimensions and suggested times.

THE PLAYMAKER



4v4 upwards

Can be added

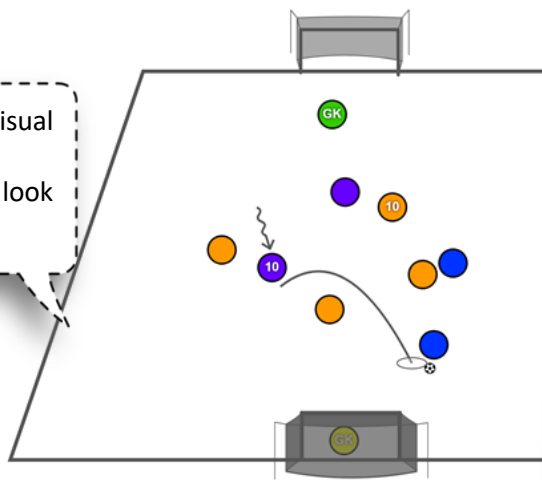


Regular



10 Minutes

DIAGRAM: A visual of what the practice might look like.



SESSION DETAILS: In this section you will find details around how the session is organised, what the objectives are, what you should look out for and some progressions to keep the players challenged.

ORGANISATION Players really enjoy this one! A normal 4v4 with each team assigning a 'playmaker'.

OBJECTIVE The playmaker must be involved in the play and score a goal to count.

OBSERVATION How do the team use the playmaker?
How does the playmaker play – simply or creatively?
How do the opposition stop the playmaker?

PROGRESSIONS This game can be played in 2 different versions. One where **only** the coach knows the two playmakers and the other is where all players know. It's quite fun to play the 'secret playmaker' and see if the opposition can work out who the danger man is!



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BUILDING FROM THE BACK



4v4 upwards

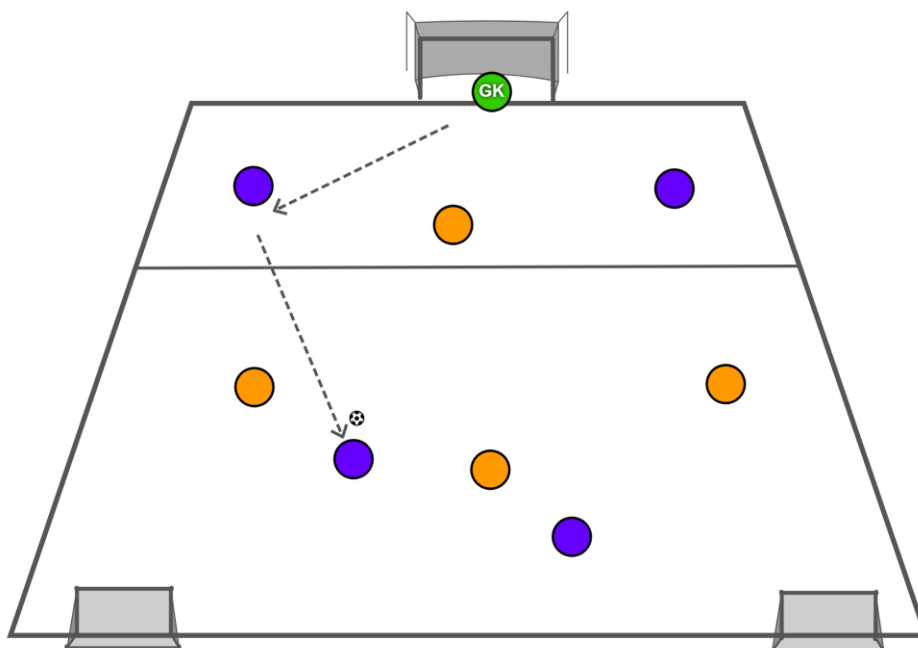
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Tight / Half pitch



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION This practice takes place on half a pitch, the Blues are playing out from the Goalkeeper into the target goals or gates. The Oranges look to intercept, counter and score in the large goal.

OBJECTIVE For the Blues there is lots of repetition of playing out from the back, with a 3v1 scenario into a 2v3 scenario, replicating limited pressure to high pressure. For the Oranges, intercepting the ball and attacking the big goal.

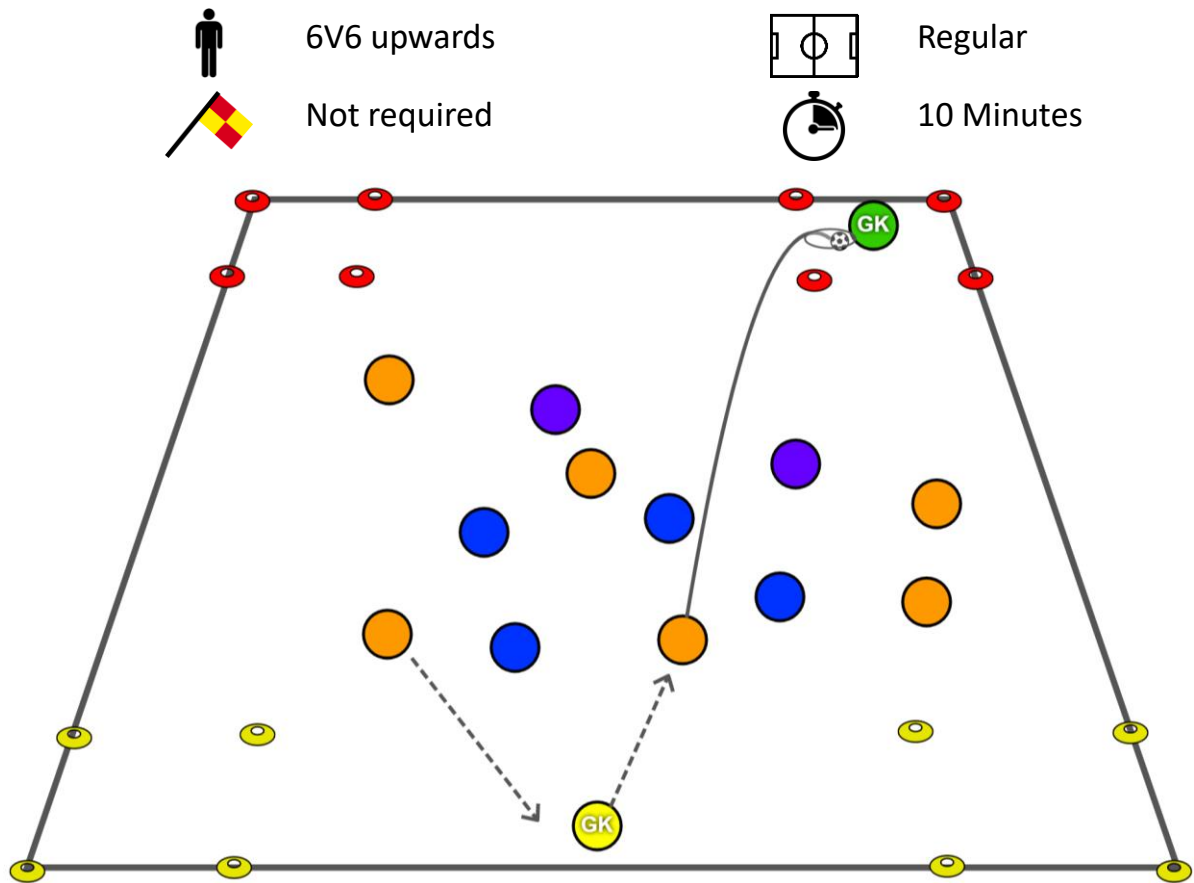
OBSERVATION

- Width to play from the Goalkeeper by 'splitting'.
- Patience to build up and pass forward at the right time.
- In midfield – playing on different lines, receiving to play forwards and when to combine.

PROGRESSIONS You can remove the zone to increase the instability and challenge for the Blues.

Adjust the numbers to suit your players and the formation you play in matches.

GOALKEEPER'S HAND OR FEET



ORGANISATION Use an area suitable for the number of players and their age/ability. There are two target areas marked out in the corners at each end, Yellow and Red in the diagram.

OBJECTIVE Goalkeepers support the team in possession using their feet between the target areas (Yellow GK). To score players must play the ball in the air to a goalkeeper who catches inside their target area (Green GK). Teams can score in either direction.

OBSERVATION

- The Goalkeepers supporting position behind the ball
- Distribution type and distance.
- Recognising the moment to support and score.

PROGRESSIONS Can make the game directional.

Can structure the scoring mechanism (type / distance).

PLAYING OUT USING THE GOALKEEPER



4v4 upwards

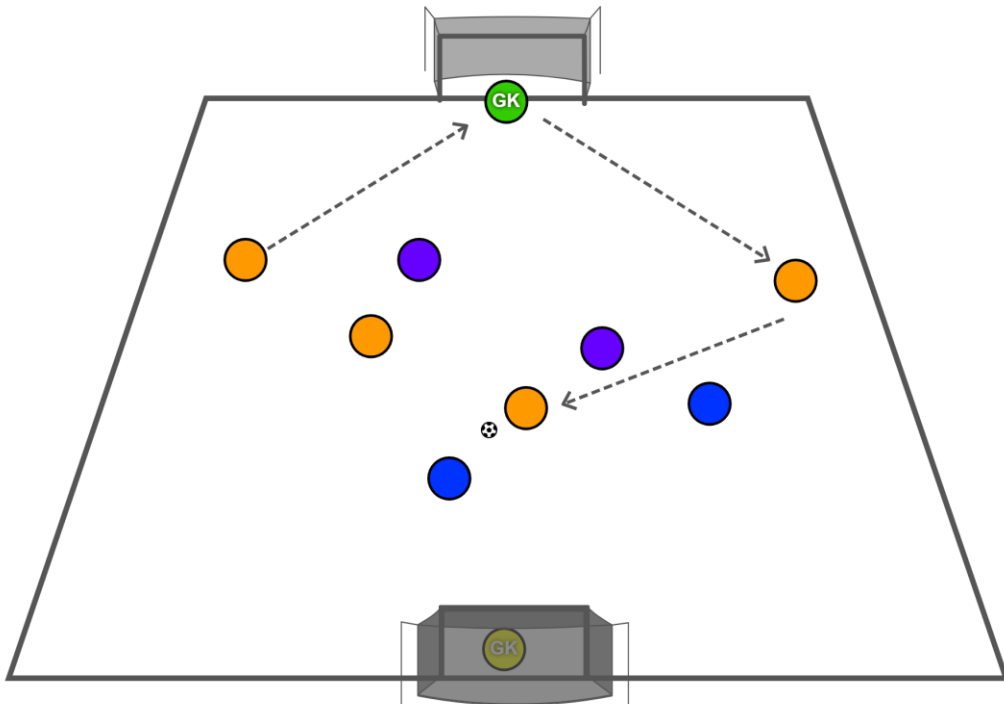
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Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, size according to the age and stage of the players. Don't make it too big, it can make it too easy for the Goalkeepers!

OBJECTIVE Either team can score in either goal, but before scoring they must 'visit' the Goalkeeper with a back pass. In the diagram, Orange play back to the Green Goalkeeper before attacking the Yellow Goalkeeper's goal.

OBSERVATION

- Goalkeepers supporting position behind the ball and distribution with feet.
- In possession; switching play, changing the tempo and finishing.
- Out of possession; securing possession and counter attacks.

PROGRESSIONS Visit both Goalkeepers before scoring!



PLAYING WITH WIDTH



4v4 upwards

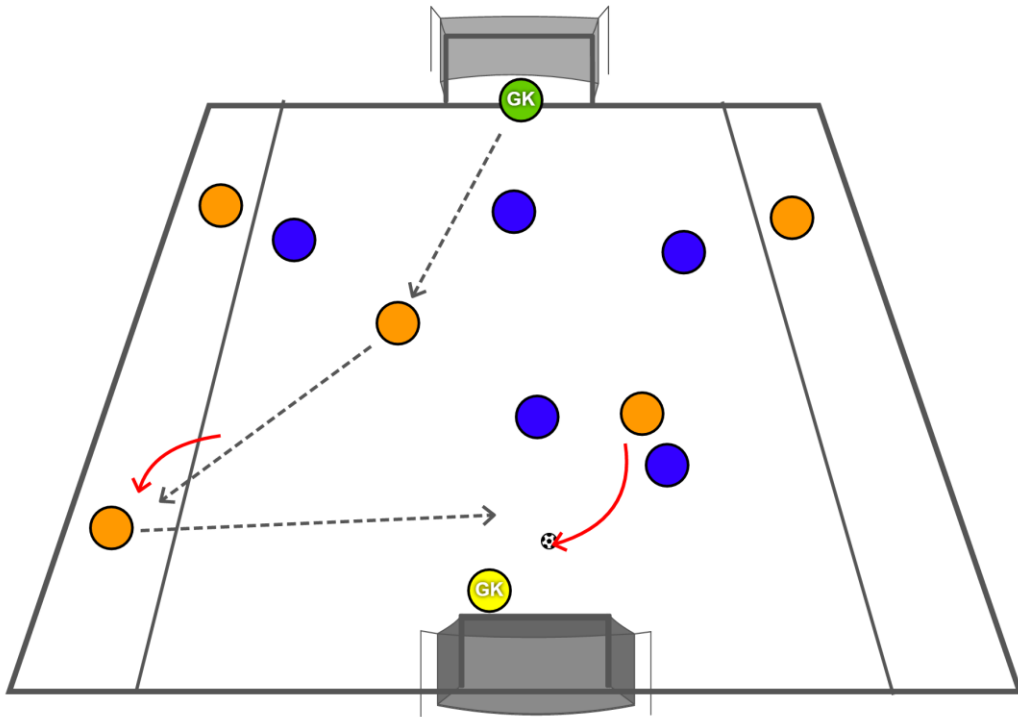
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Wide



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal pitch, with wide channels on either side. These areas can have conditions, such as; number of defenders allowed in, number of touches in possession. Etc as you see fit.

OBJECTIVE To encourage the team in possession to use the width of the pitch, the ball must visit a wide area before a goal can be scored.

OBSERVATION

- Dispersal – Have we got at least one person in each zone?
- Variety of pass to get the ball into the wide zone
- The relationships in wide areas (overlap / underlap).

PROGRESSIONS Remove the condition that the ball **'MUST'** go into the wide area and **reward** a goal scored if the ball goes wide with double or treble points!

Restrict / increase the number of defenders allowed in the wide zone.

SWITCHING PLAY



4v4 upwards

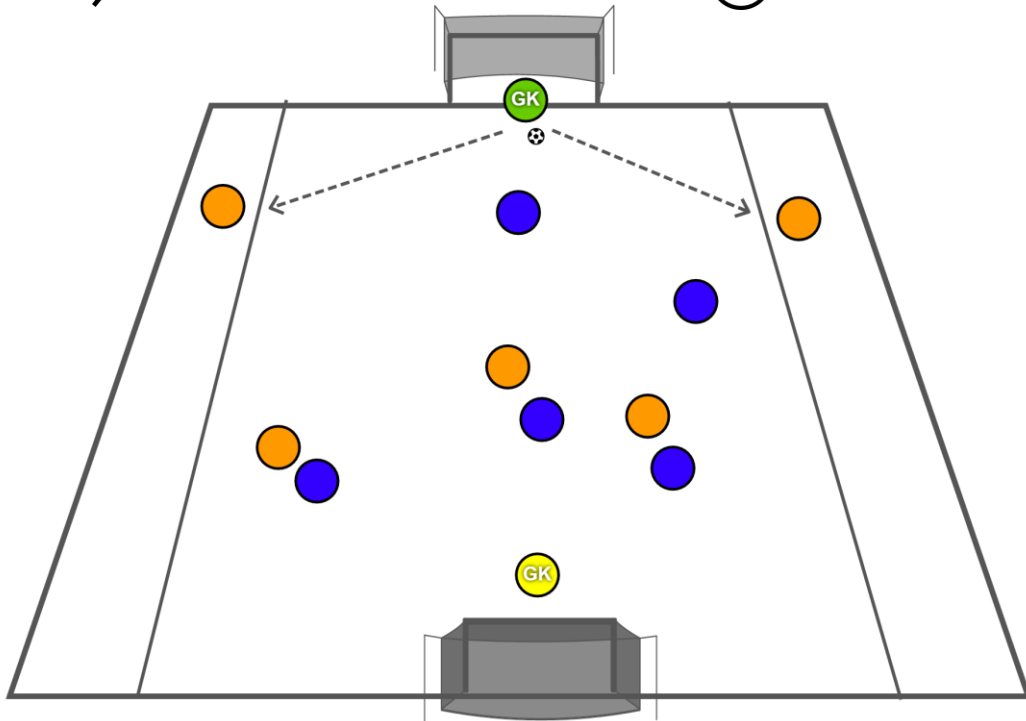
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Wide



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal pitch, with wide channels on either side. These areas can be conditioned by changing the following; number of defenders allowed in, number of touches in possession, etc as you see fit.

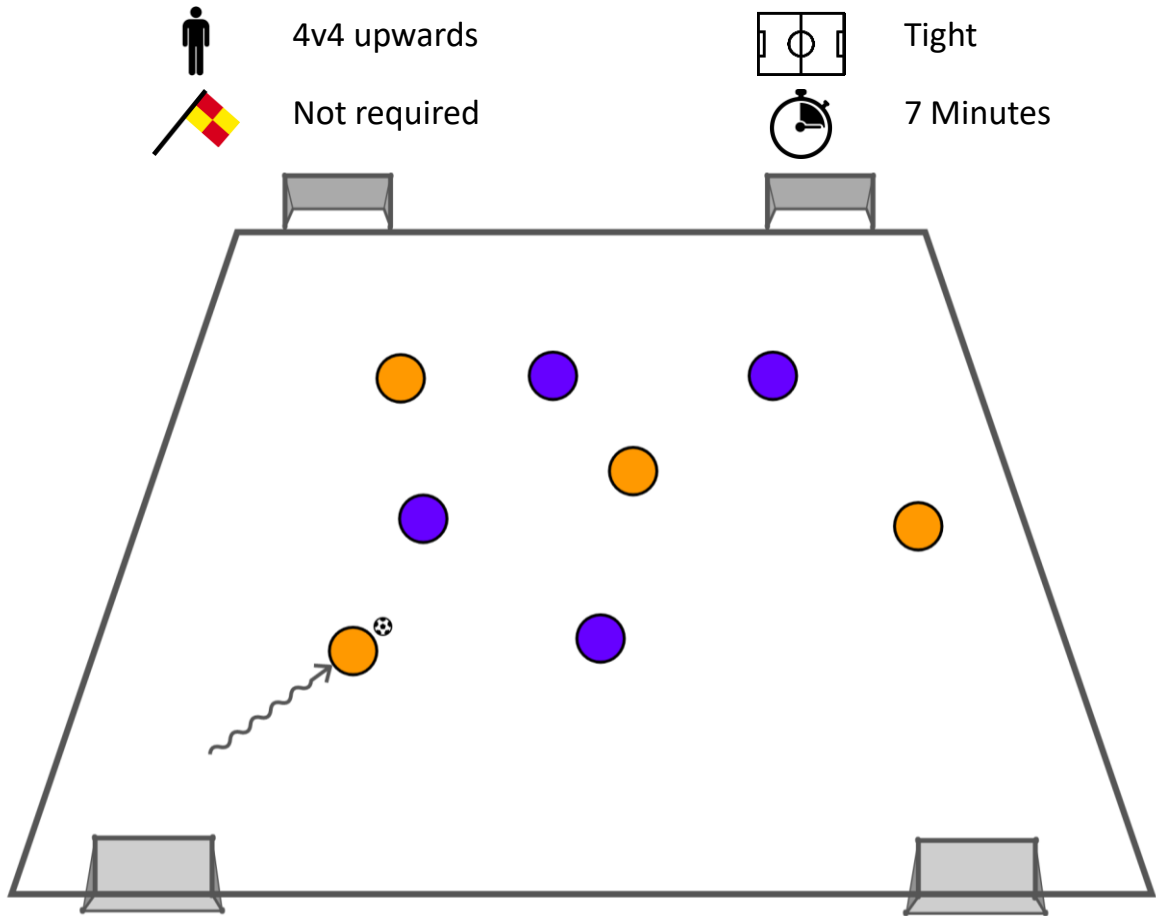
OBJECTIVE To encourage the team in possession to switch play, the ball must visit **BOTH** wide areas before a goal can be scored.

OBSERVATION Dispersal – Have we got at least one person in each zone?
Using a pivot player to link the sides – GK? DCM?

PROGRESSIONS Remove '**MUST**' and reward the team if a goal scored when the ball goes wide; 1 zone = 2 points, both zones = 5 points.

If the team wins possession high up the pitch there is no need to switch play, to increase realism.

FOUR GOAL GAME



ORGANISATION A 4 goal pitch, often this game works better if target goals are used to make scoring more challenging.

OBJECTIVE Each team defends 2 goals and scores in 2 goals. Great set up to encourage; dispersal and switching play. Out of possession a good one for defending as a team, which goal to cut off?

OBSERVATION In possession

- Disperse and use the full width of the pitch
- Have the ability to switch play through a 'pivot' player in the centre
- Recognise when to switch from a highly concentrated area to a low area

Out of possession

- Dictating the area the attackers can play into
- Defending in 1v1 / 2v2 around the goal
- Emergency defending to block and stop shots

PROGRESSIONS Can add scoring zones or 1 touch finish, to add more challenge

Use gates and play with 1 target player for each team, he then has to anticipate and receive a pass in the correct gate for the goal to stand.

BACK TO BACK



4v4 upwards

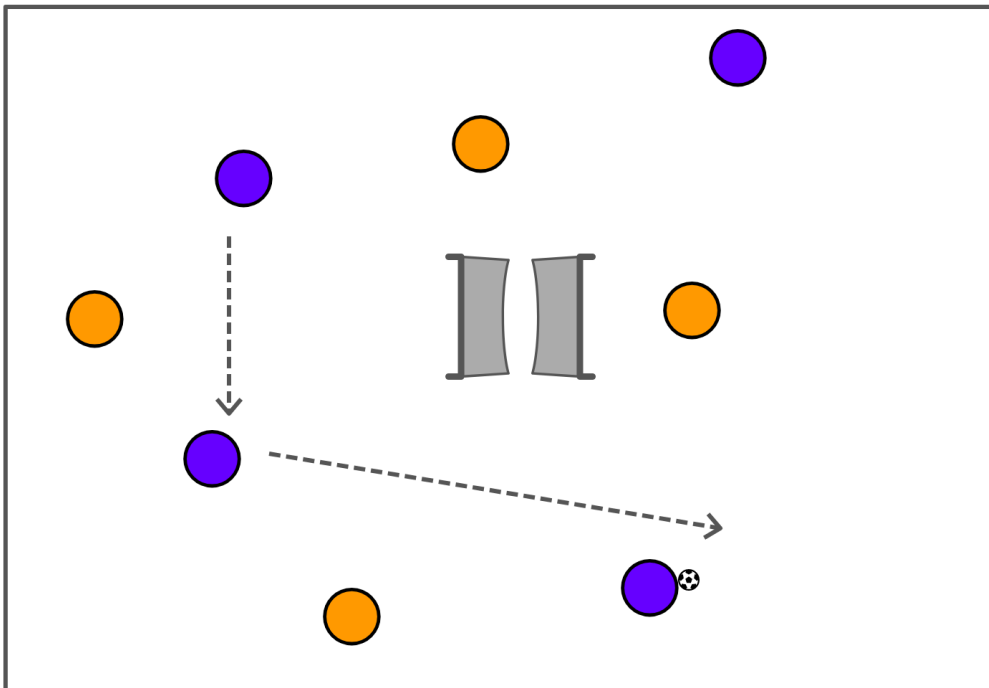
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Tight



7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, but with goals back-to-back in the centre of the field. This game can be played with target goals and Goalkeepers are optional.

OBJECTIVE Each team can score in either goal, on the turnover of possession you can tweak the rules to suit your players. Either; score straight away, have to complete 'x' number of passes or have to dribble to the edge before they can attack.

OBSERVATION This is a great game for switching play and support (on, around or away) from the ball carrier.

PROGRESSIONS Think about;

- Scoring mechanisms as above
- The size of goals
- Adding Goalkeeper(s)

SWITCH PLAY OR COUNTER ATTACK



4v4 upwards

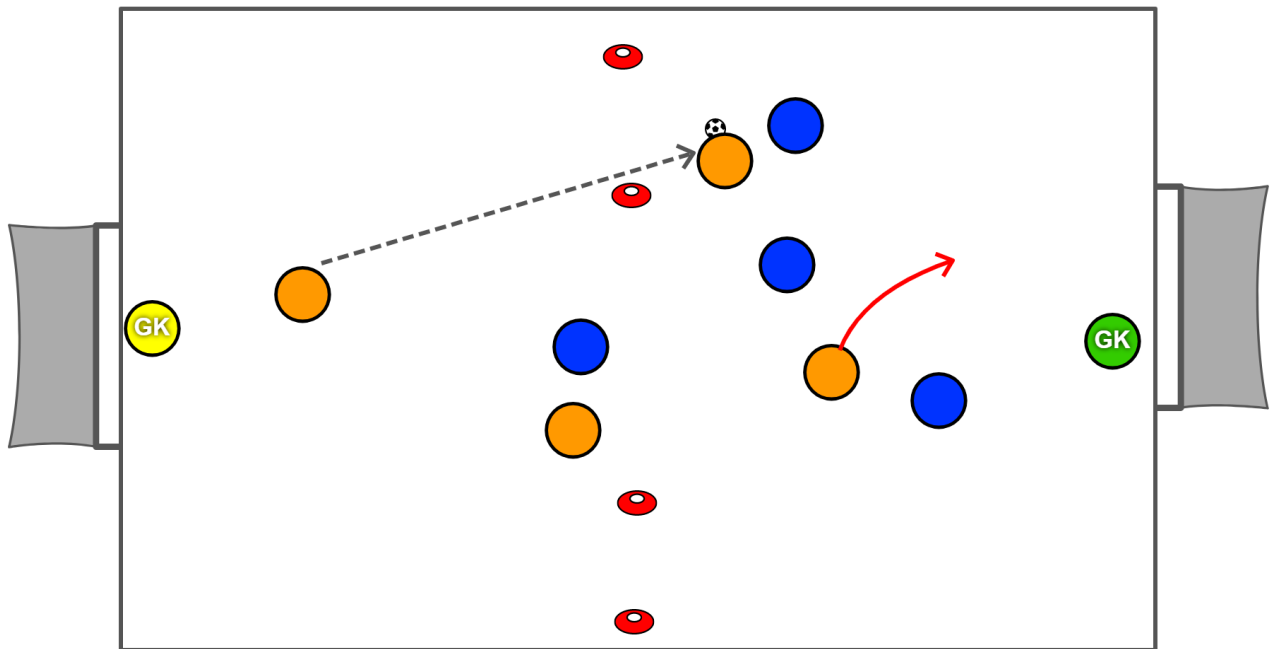
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Regular



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch with 2 gates (coned, markers or poles) on the halfway line.

OBJECTIVE One team (Blues) look to press the opposition, win the ball and score in either goal past the Goalkeeper. The Oranges will focus on switch play through either gate, by dribbling or pass through, before scoring in either goal. Rotate roles at half time.

OBSERVATION For the Blue team;

- Pressing together
- Countering quickly (early pass, dribble, forward runners!)

For the Orange team;

- Do they have depth and width to retain possession and switch appropriately?
- In possession do they use the goalkeepers to build effectively?

COMBINATION CORRIDOR



4v4 upwards

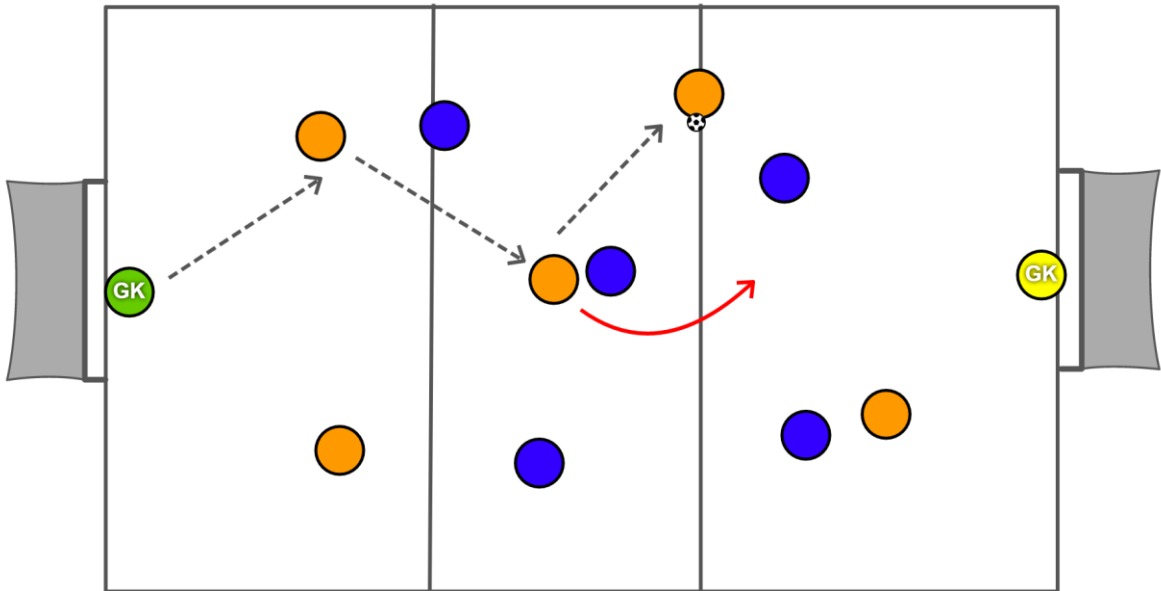
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Tight



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION Regular 2 goal pitch with the middle zone designated as the “combination corridor”. Within the middle zone the coach restricts the players touch (1 or 2) to encourage clever and quick combinations. No conditions on end zones, where players can dribble and control the tempo.

OBJECTIVE Teams look to play through the thirds and score, they might need to combine in the central area.

OBSERVATION I really like this practice for a number of reasons, things to observe here include;

- The players scanning habits especially in the central areas, are they aware of the space / teammates / opposition and their next move?
- The individuals ability to play off 1 or 2 touch and adapt their ideas to what is emerging in front of them.
- The groups movement and support to allow combination play in the central third.
- The teams strategies to build up to play through the corridor, will they play slowly or quickly? How many passes?

PROGRESSIONS Alter width of the middle zone.
Increase / decrease number of touches.
Remove the condition and check the transfer to the real game.



NO BACKWARDS PASS



4v4 upwards

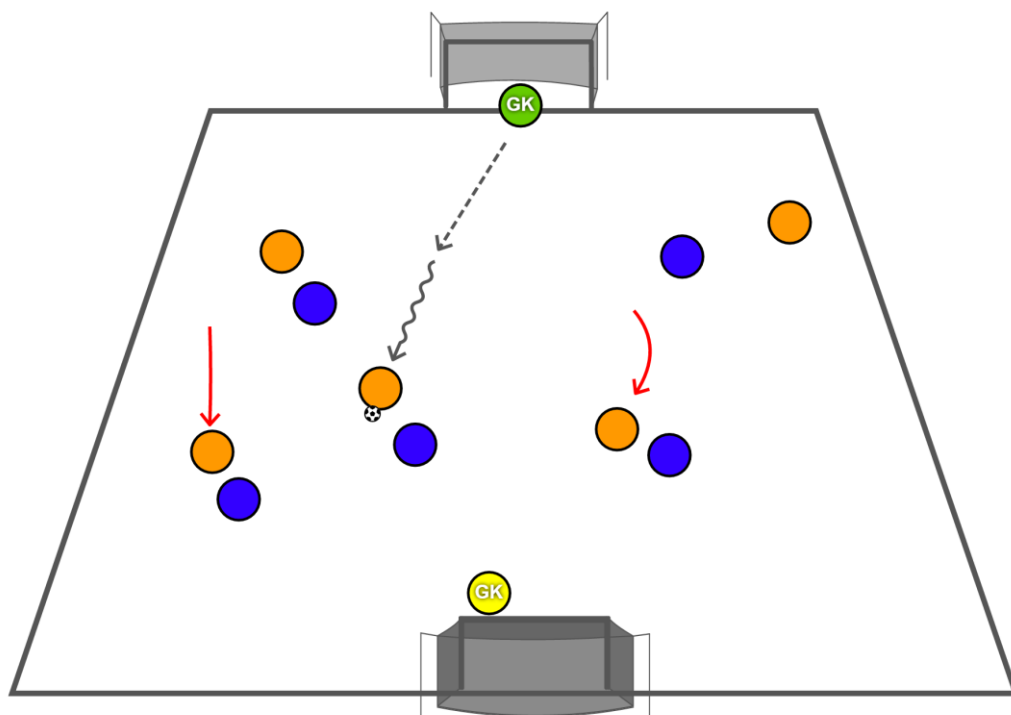
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Regular



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION For this game a regular 2 goal pitch is used, the constraint on the game is that once your team is in possession they can not pass the ball backwards.

OBJECTIVE This constraint will encourage forward play; passing, running and individual possession

OBSERVATION For this game look out for the following;

- The players ability to play as an individual when needed and combine effectively
- In possession the dispersal of the players to make the pitch wide and long. Do they have a structure to play out and forward?
- The support ahead of the ball for the player in possession

PROGRESSIONS Some progressions for this game could include;

- If the group are finding it too difficult allow 1 backwards pass per possession
- Remove the condition and can the players recognise when to play positively and when to recycle

ONE-TWO TO SCORE



4v4 upwards

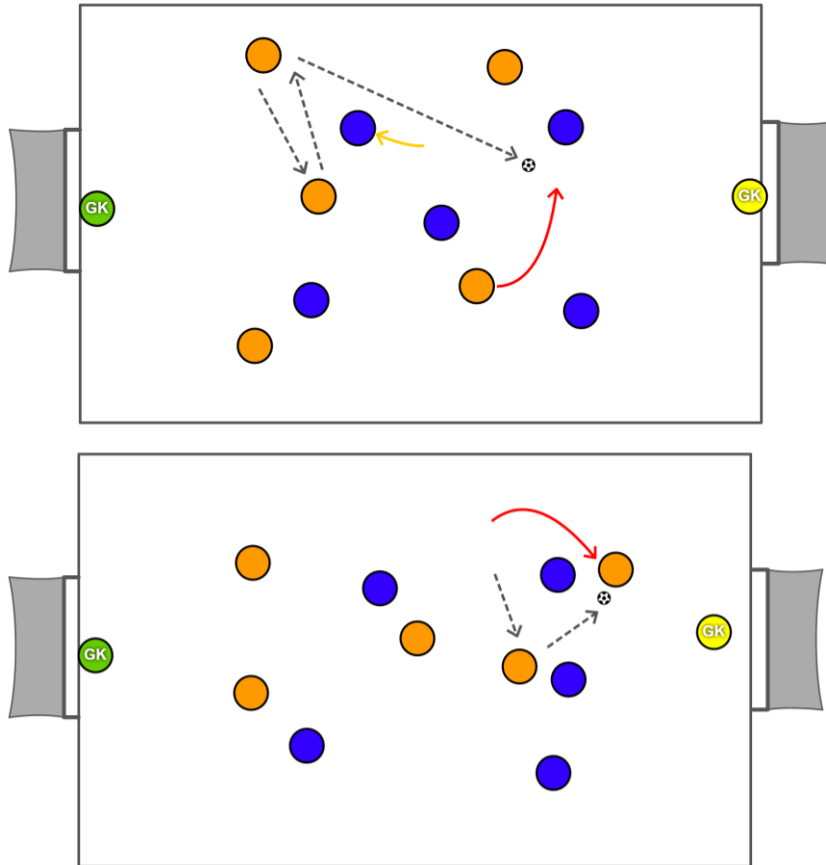
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Tight



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION This is one of my favourites! A tight 2 goal pitch is used, might get more outcomes with a long/thin pitch. The constraint here is you must perform a one-two / wall pass to score.

OBJECTIVE In my eyes there are two types of one-two;

- To tease (top); to draw the opposition out of position to allow a forward pass
- The classic "wall-pass" to play around and eliminate the defender (bottom).

OBSERVATION Recognising when to change the tempo. (Slow - fast)
Eliminating the opposition with clever combination play.
Lots of forward runs / support to break lines

PROGRESSIONS Progressions for this one could include;

- Split the pitch into thirds, can the team perform the one-two in the final third
- Remove '**MUST**' and reward a goal scored after a one-two, with double or treble points!

COMBINE TO SCORE



4v4 upwards

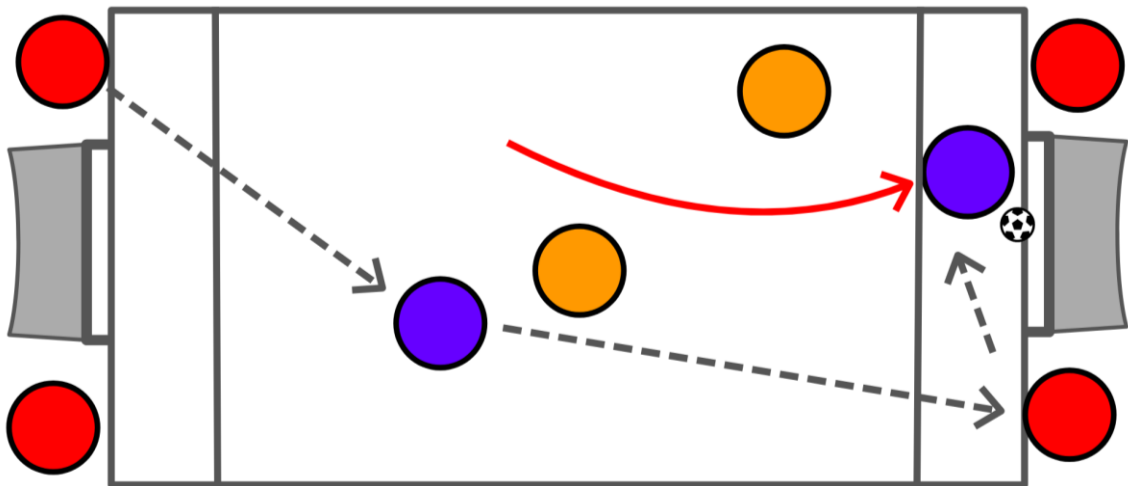
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Very tight

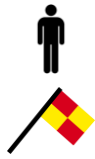


2 Minutes



- ORGANISATION** A great game for quick and clever combination play. This practice use a tight 2 goal pitch, with a 2v2 or 3v3 with bounce players (Red) either side of a goal. The bounce players play off 2 touch when 'building' and 1 touch if 'assisting'. Goals must be scored with 1 touch inside the scoring zone.
- OBJECTIVE** The pair on the pitch must work together to combine and score within the zone, can use the outside players if needed.
- OBSERVATION** This game will give the players lots of repetition of;
- Clever and quick combination play with limited touches
 - Eliminating the opposition by playing through, around or over
 - Lots of forward runs to support the attack or break lines
 - Finishing with variety (inside, outside, headed, volley..etc)
- PROGRESSIONS** To add variety the bounce players (Red) can play from one end to the other and miss out the midfield, be aware this might lead to more direct play and less combination, but is good for recognition of movements away from the ball.

MIDFIELD ROTATION



14 upwards

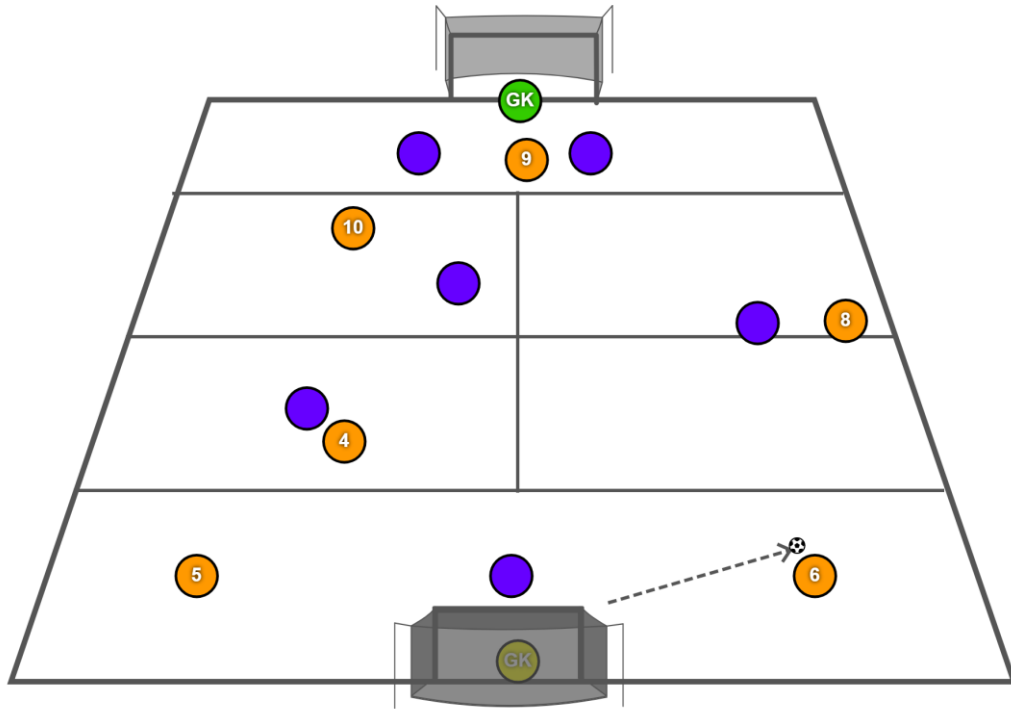
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Regular



2x7 Minutes



ORGANISATION This game takes place on a 2 goal pitch, split into thirds, with the middle third split into 4 quarters, as per the diagram. The end third represents “attackers vs defenders” (#9 vs #5/#6), the central areas are replicating the Midfield in a 4-3-3 so is 3v3.

OBJECTIVE In possession midfield 3 look to occupy different spaces use the 4 grids so that they play on different lines and create different passing lines for the ball carrier.

OBSERVATION In this practice I would look for;

- The movement/rotation and relationship between the 3.
- Playing in different spaces and different lines.
- When playing from the Goalkeeper, use the 3v1 to build with patience and support once the ball is played forward.
- When the ball is in advanced areas running forward, whilst maintaining ‘balance’.

PROGRESSIONS Start this game with players ‘locked in’ zones, but progress as you see fit;

- Can move up/down 1 zone in possession
- Pass forward / run forward to create a 2v2 in the end zone
- Out of possession, midfielders can track their runner
- Remove the zones for complete freedom!

PLAYING THROUGH MIDFIELD



9 upwards

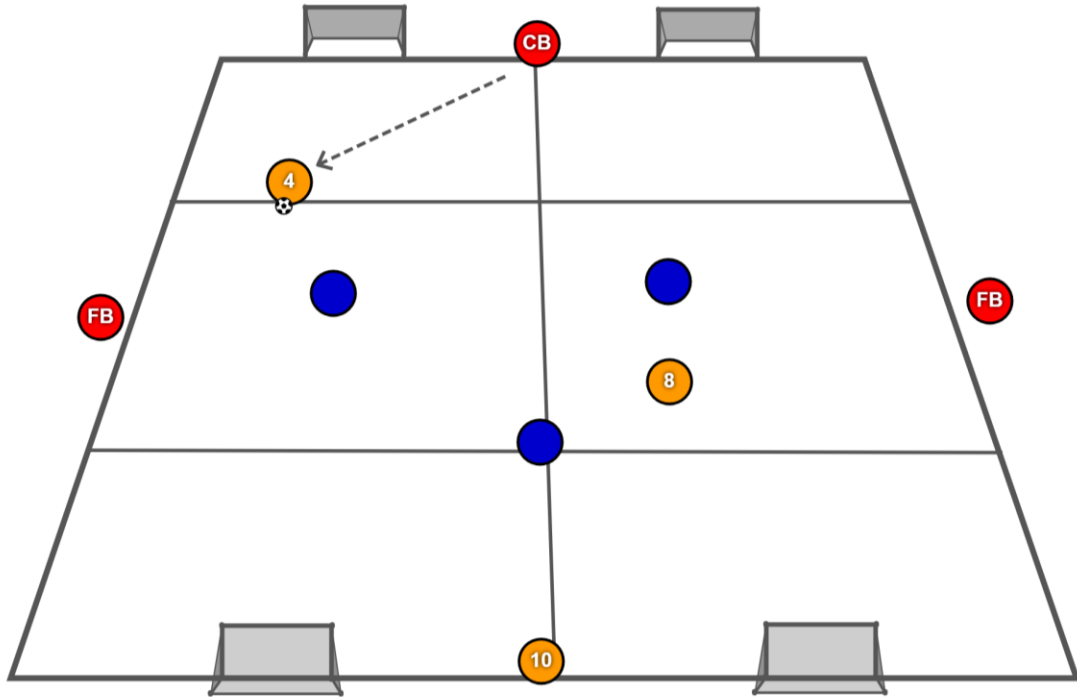
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Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A practice set up in a small tight area, with 4 target goals. The Red players, who play for the team in possession, play on the outside to replicate a central defender or Goalkeeper and Full Backs on either side.

OBJECTIVE The objective for the Orange team is to receive the ball and play forward to the target goals. The blues look to deny them and if they steal possession, counter into the target goals at the opposite end.

OBSERVATION

For the Reds

- Supporting the midfielders allowing them to switch play.
- Full backs using the grids to play on different lines.

For the Oranges

- Movement and rotation to receive the ball (using the grids).
- When to retain, when to switch and when to play forwards.
- Role of the 10, play behind the pressure or drop into the midfield.

For the Blues

- Screening forward passes.
- Intercepting passes.
- How do they mark? (zonal or man).

MIDFIELD OVERLOAD



11 Upwards

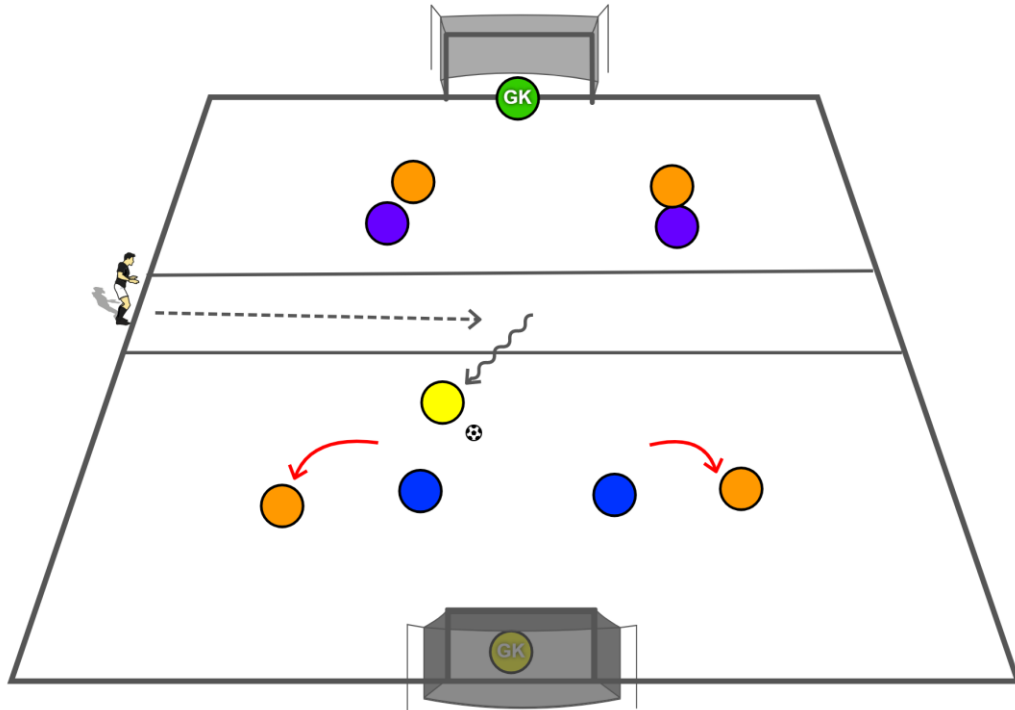
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Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, with a central zone 3-5m wide. The game starts with a ball into the Yellow player (CM) from the coach. This players starts an attack with a pass or dribble to immediately create a 3v2 scenario.

OBJECTIVE The midfielder's (Yellow) role is to create an attacking overload 3v2 scenario to assist the 2 strikers. This game can be good for transition (defence to attack) when the defenders dispose the attackers and counter.

OBSERVATION This game allows for repetition of attacking and finishing with numerical superiority (overload). For the defenders there is lots of emergency defending; blocks, tackles. Etc to prevent efforts on goal. If the defenders win possession they can counter to the attackers in the opposite half.

PROGRESSION At the start only the Yellow player can play in both halves, to progress, on the turnover you could allow the defender to drive into the opposite half to create a 4v2.

UNLOCK THE MIDFIELDER



6V6 upwards

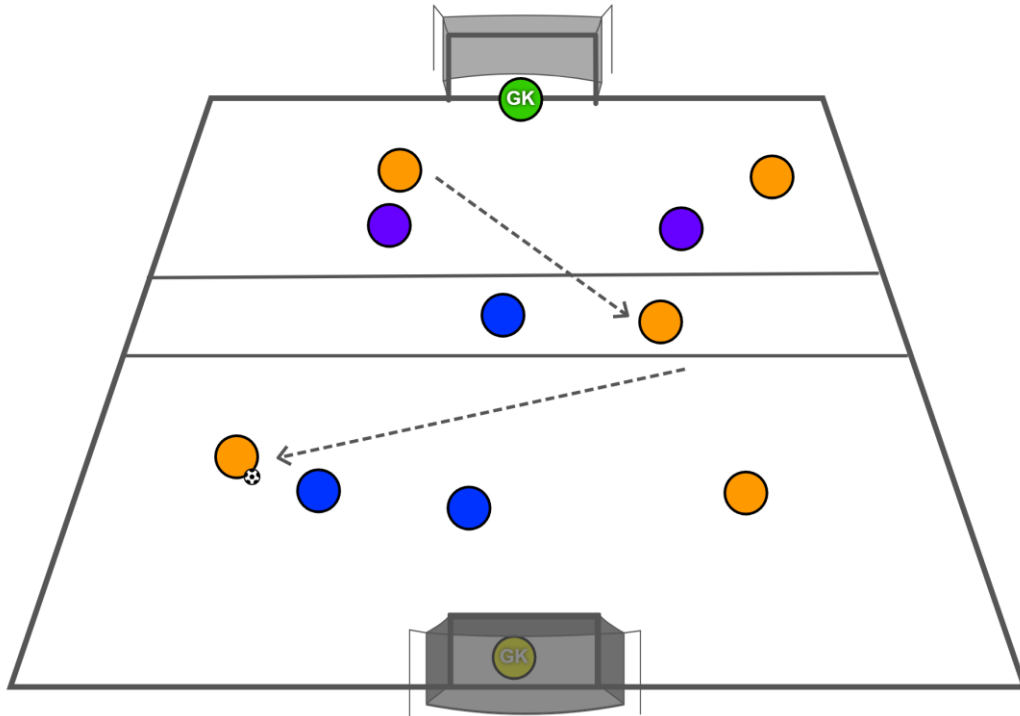
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Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, with a central zone 3-5m wide. Teams are set up in a GK-2-1-2 formation, although this game can be adapted to suit other numbers. The Central Midfielders start the practice locked in to the central zone.

OBJECTIVE Both teams look to build up patiently using the goalkeeper (3v2) and choose the right moment to play into the CM bypass them and playing into their forwards.

OBSERVATION This game will encourage a few things;

- Goalkeeper and Defenders playing out from the back.
- The Central Midfielder will have to 'outplay' his opponent.
- The Forwards will look to work together, combine (if needed) and finish under pressure.

PROGRESSION You can increase the realism of this game by removing the restrictions in the zones;

- Allow CM to drop into his own half.
- Allow CM to dribble/RWTB into the opposition's half.
- Allow CF to drop into the central area.
- Play a 2v2 in the central zone.
- Add a neutral player to create a 2v1 in the central zone.

MIDFIELD BREAK OUT



22

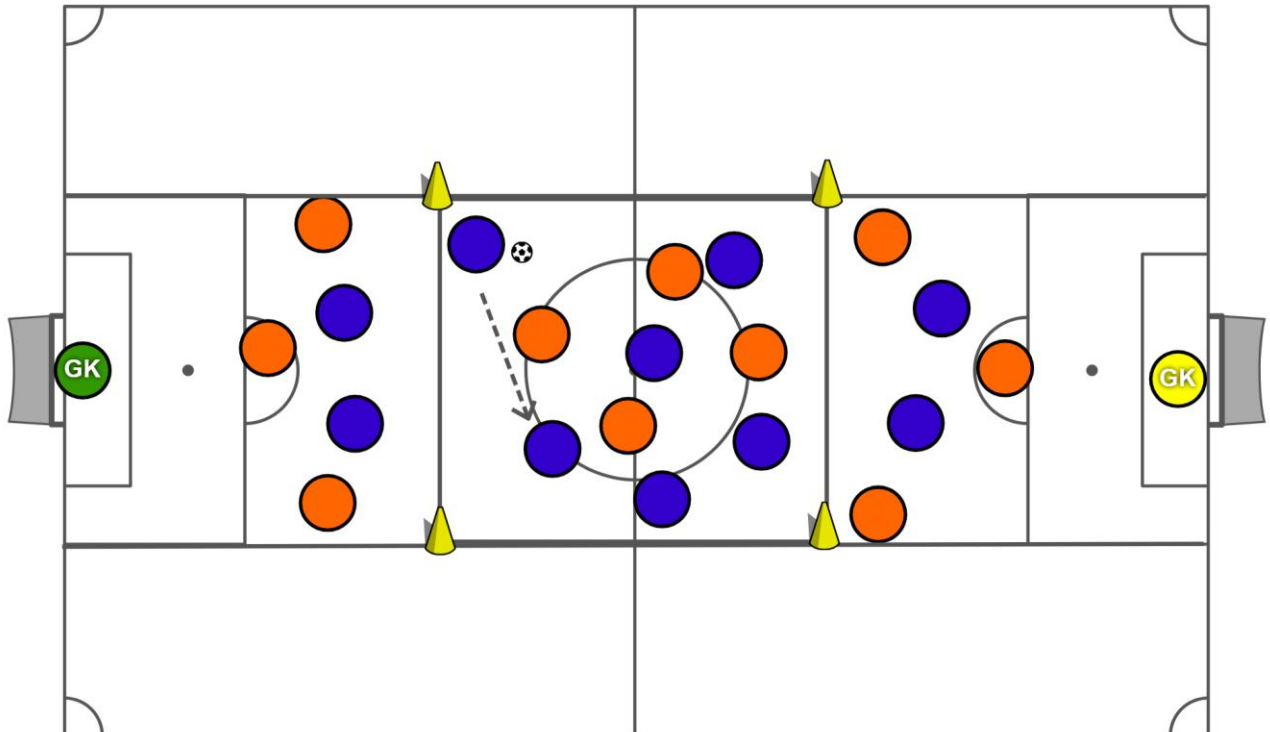
Yes beyond
yellow cones



Full Pitch



2x 15 Minutes



ORGANISATION A full pitch practice looking at the Midfielders role in a 11v11

OBJECTIVE The Blues look to maintain possession in the central area, once they've made 5 passes they can release the 2 strikers in either end zone, as a progression midfielders can join to make it a 3v3 or even a 4v3.

OBSERVATION In possession;

- The Blues are looking to retain possession and supply the forwards with a through ball.
- Away from the ball the Midfielders must look to support quickly to draw defenders out of position and create a goal scoring opportunity.
- For the Forwards, the focus is around finishing. They must choose to create a chance alone or combine with a teammate to be clinical in the box.

Out of possession;

- Preventing forward passes from the central area.
- Emergency Defending to prevent shots on target.

MIDFIELD RELATIONSHIPS



16 Upwards

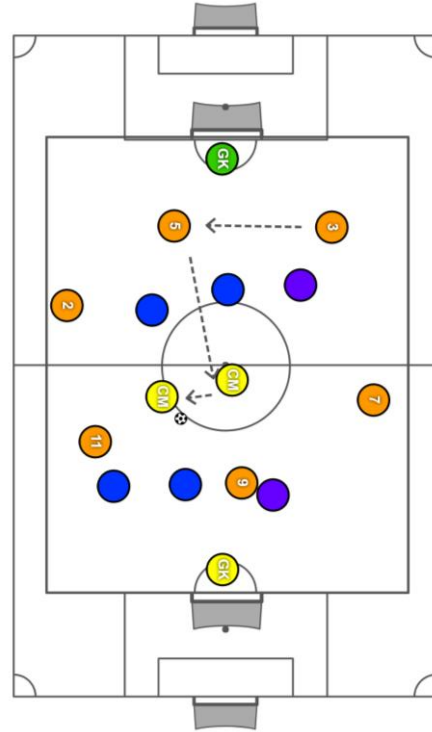
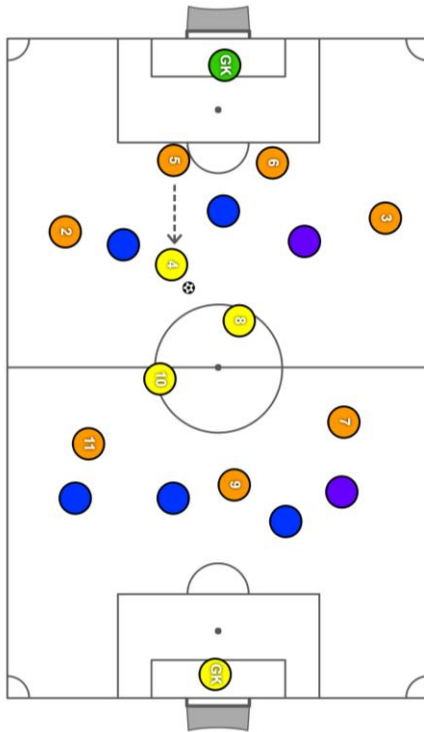
Yes



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal pitch suitable for the age and stage of your players. The diagram on the left shows a 11v11 example, the diagram on the right shows how it can be adapted for 9-a-side.

OBJECTIVE A regular game, except that the midfield unit (Yellow) play for the team in possession. This creates a constant attacking overload, for more success and lots of repetition of midfielders receiving the ball and making decisions.

OBSERVATION Things to look out for in this game are;

- The distances and relationship between the Midfielders in Yellow.
- When do the Midfielders retain possession and when do they risk progression?
- Intent and execution of killer passes and assists
- For the team defending, lots of repetition of defending outnumbered

PROGRESSIONS Restrict the Yellows...They **'MUST'** combine before the team can score
Reward the Yellows...if they combine the goal is worth double

TARGET MAN



4v4 upwards

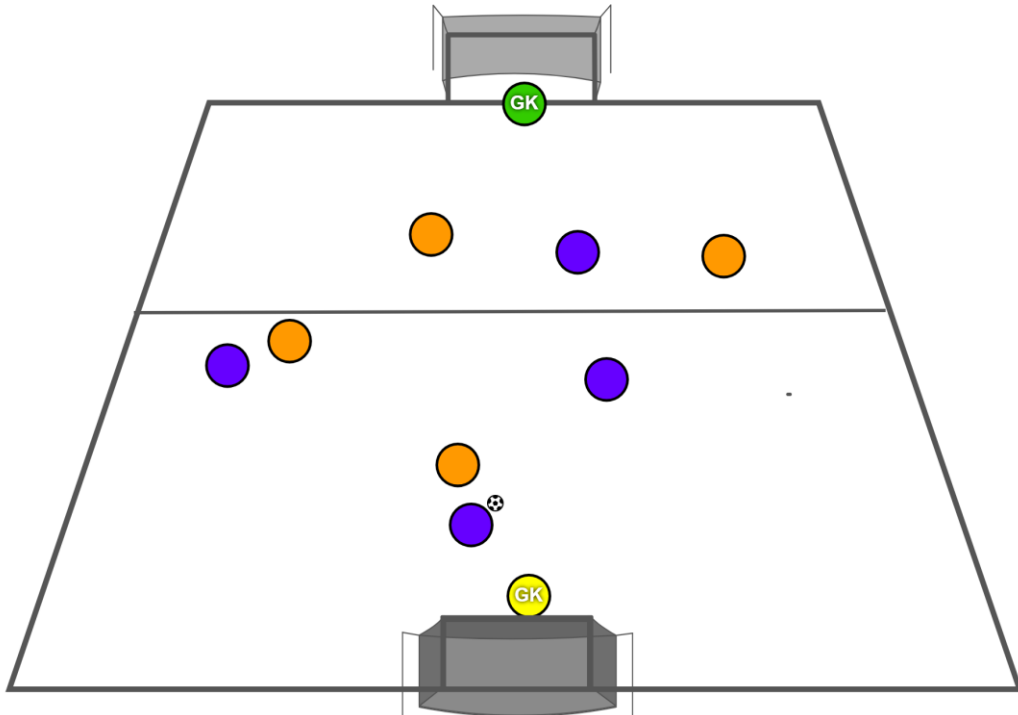
Not required



Regular



1 Goal and off!



ORGANISATION A normal 2 goal pitch, split in half using cones or flat markers. In this game each team must keep 1 player (The Target Man) in the opposition half at all times.

OBJECTIVE The objective is to win the game. In possession the players will have opportunity to use the target man for forward passes, to counter attack..etc.

OBSERVATION Observations for this game include;

- How does the group decide, who the target man is?
- Is there a strategy to use the target man? A style of play?
- There will be lots of defending outnumbered- as the teams are forced to leave one player up
- This may lead to counter attacks on the regain – Pass, Run with the ball..etc

PROGRESSIONS You can play this game with each team having a fixed target man, that has to play in the opposition half, or alternatively you can rotate this player within the flow of the game. Add a consequence if this condition is broken, I like to use a penalty!

KILLER PASS



4v4 upwards

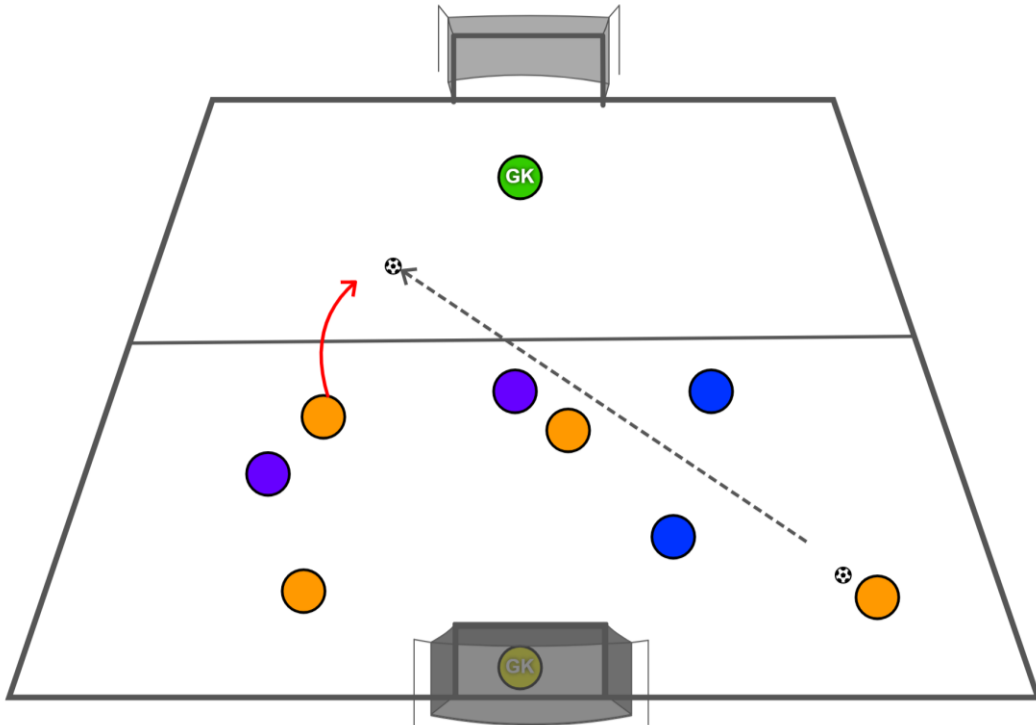
Yes



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION This game takes place on a 2 goal pitch, with a halfway line with flat markers or cones.

OBJECTIVE All outfield players play in one half, so in this diagram the Blues are looking to press high and score, whilst the Oranges are looking to play a 'killer pass', into the oppositions half breaking the press and creating a goal scoring opportunity.

OBSERVATION In this game the following things might emerge;

- A variety of forward passes; curled, driven, stabbed, lofted, fast/slow..etc.
- The types and timing of forward runs; Blindside, curved, clever, late..etc.
- Playing and retaining under pressure when playing out (Orange).
- Pressing with a plan (Blues).

PROGRESSIONS Allow the defenders to recover and track the runner.

1 TOUCH ASSIST



4v4 upwards

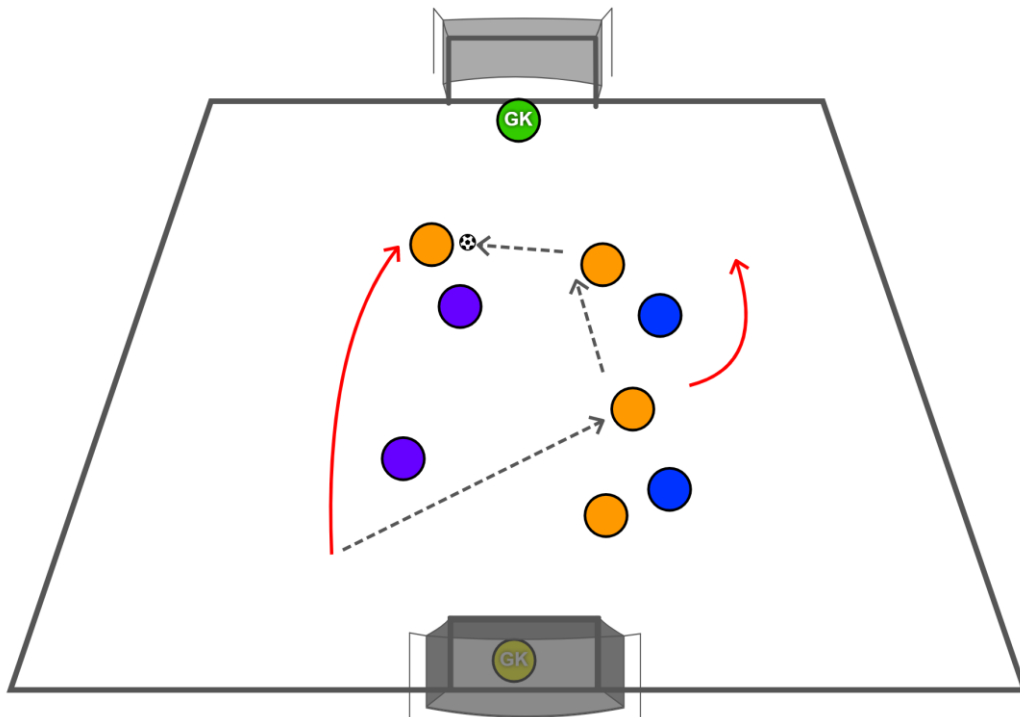
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION This game takes place on a pitch with 2 goals suitable for the age/stage of the players. With more able players you might want to make this pitch tighter, to restrict the space and time available.

OBJECTIVE A twist on a classic, teams must score using a 1 touch assist. The finish is not restricted in anyway.

OBSERVATION Things to look out for in this game might include;

- This is a great game for combination play; One-two's, third man runs, overlaps/ underlaps. Etc
- Support play is vital in this one (on, around and away)
- Recognising the moment to change the tempo; are we looking to score or are we looking to keep possession?

PROGRESSIONS This game is already quite challenging, but to increase the difficulty you could;

- Add 1 touch finish, so the move is 1 touch assist and 1 touch finish, this is really tough!
- Add an area where the assist comes from E.g. (Zone 14, Wide areas..etc)

THE PLAYMAKER



4v4 upwards

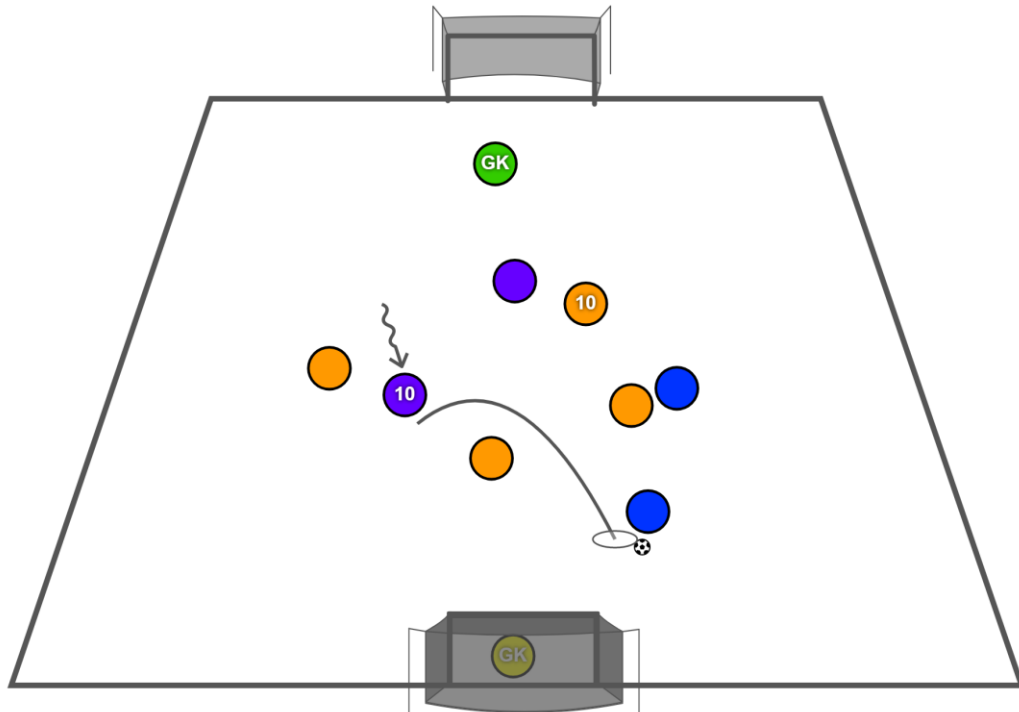
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION I find players really enjoy this one! A normal 2 goal game, with each team assigning a 'playmaker'.

OBJECTIVE The playmaker must be involved in the possession for a goal to count.

OBSERVATION Observations to look out for;

- How do the team use the playmaker?
- How does the playmaker play – simple and safe or right in the middle of the game?
- How do the opposition stop the playmaker?

PROGRESSIONS This game can be played in 2 different versions. One where **only** the coach knows the two playmakers and the other is where all players are aware. Its quite fun to play the 'secret playmaker' and see if the opposition can work out who the danger man is!

FOX IN THE BOX



3 teams of 4

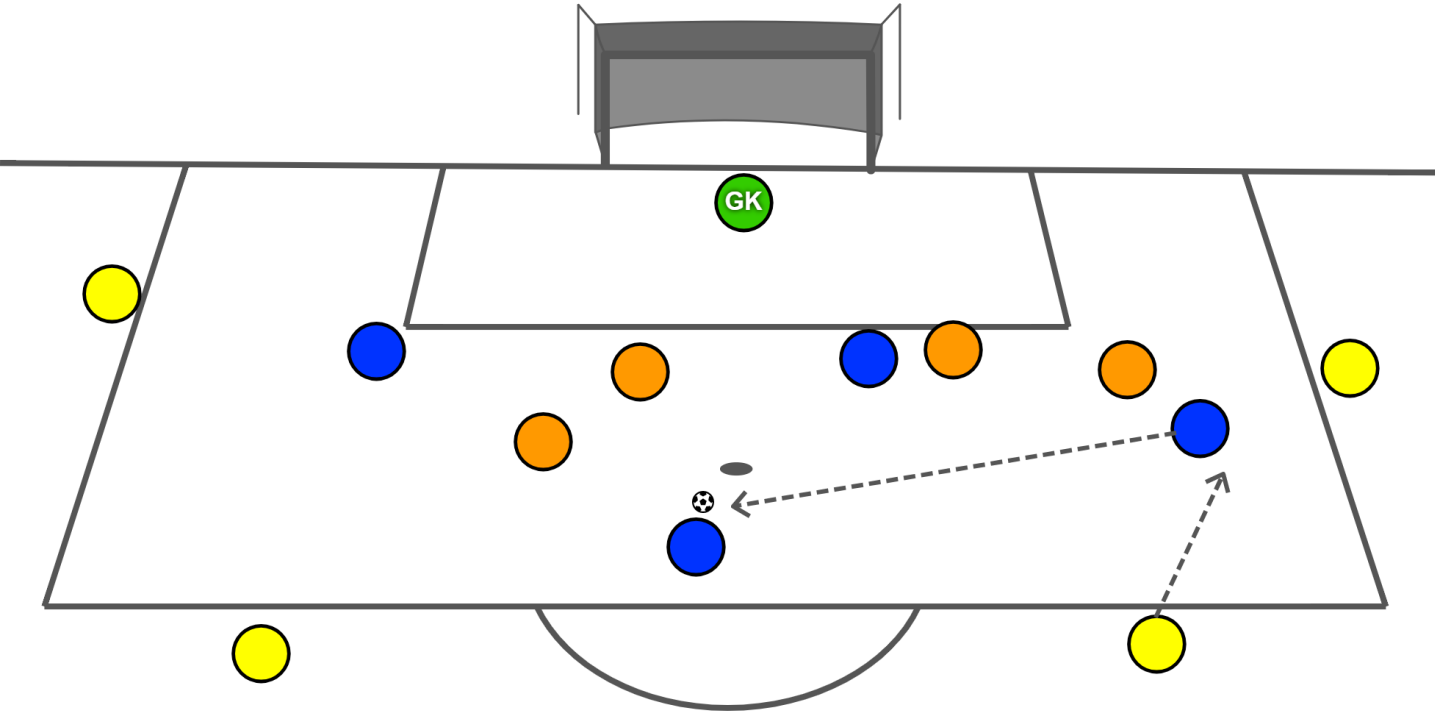
Not required



Penalty Box



3 goals and off



ORGANISATION A fun game which is great for improving finishing, players will need to be instinctive and must be able to adapt their ideas quickly. This practice takes place in a penalty box, two teams play inside (Blues and Oranges) with one on the outside as support players (Yellows).

OBJECTIVE This game is tight and frantic, players need to perceive and execute quickly to be successful. First team to score 3 goals wins, then rotate roles to change the outside team.

OBSERVATION This game is about;

- Deciding early whether to shoot or assist.
- Utilise the outside support players to create an overload and create an assist.
- Variety of finishes – wont always be what you want!

PROGRESSIONS To increase the challenge:

- Restrict the touches the outside players can take
- Inside players must score with a “first time” finish, to encourage quick thinking – assist or shoot!

FORWARD RUN

FORWARD PASS



4v4 upwards

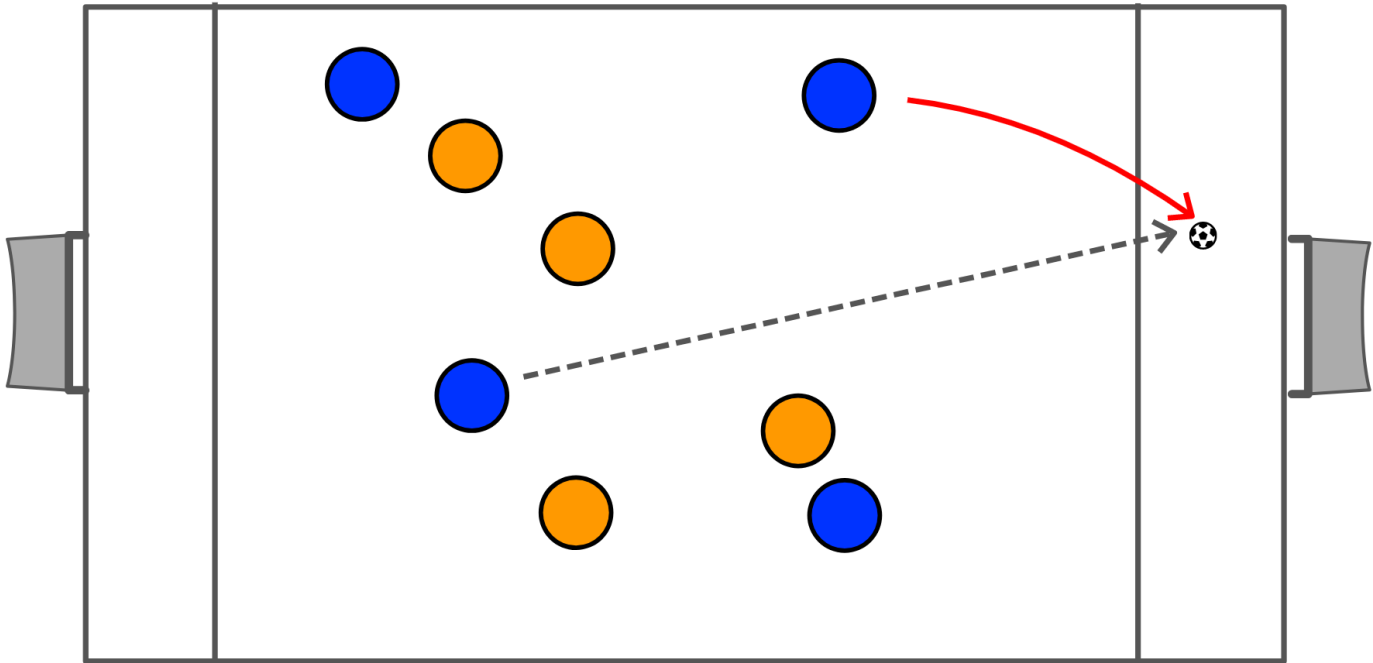
Yes – in end zone



Small / Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A small pitch with 2 end zones near the goals. This can be played with target goals or with goalkeepers in larger goals.

OBJECTIVE To score players must release their teammate with a forward pass into the end zone, teammates must time their run and score.

OBSERVATION Things to observe here;

- Variety of forward pass – split, scooped, curled, driven. Etc.
- Variety of forward run – straight, curved, double movement, blindside. Etc.

PROGRESSIONS To increase the challenge you can add in an additional pass in the end zone, so now the attacker needs a supporting run to square the ball to apply the finish.

MIDFIELD CREATE AND SUPPORT



12 Upwards

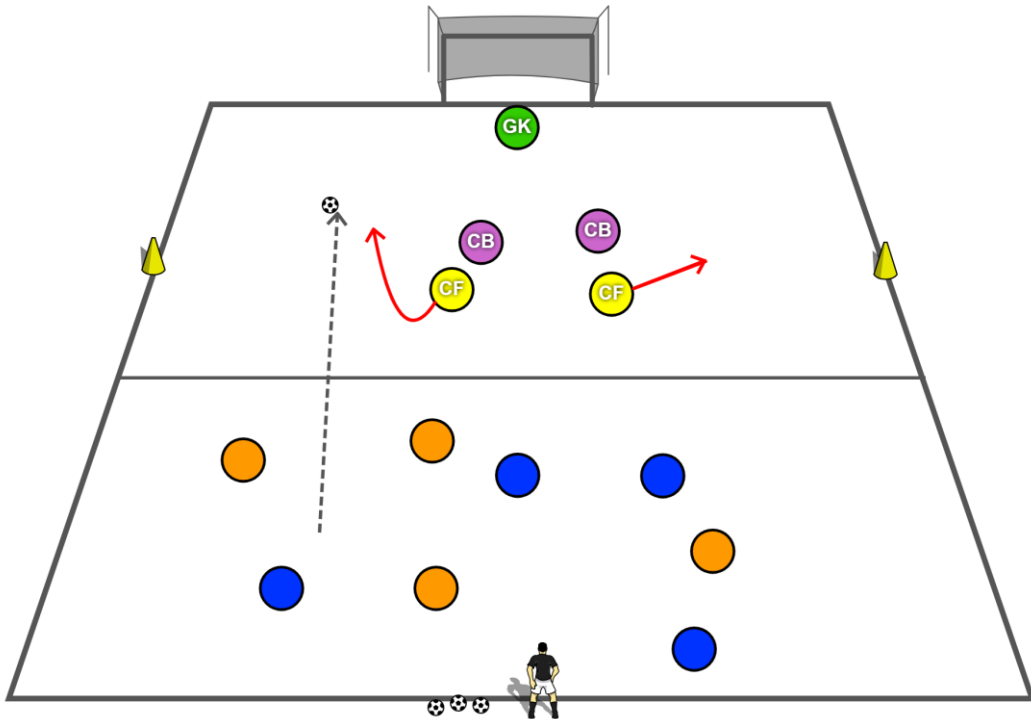
After the yellow
cones



Half Pitch



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION For this practice the area is split up into 2 main sections. Near the goal there is a Goalkeeper and 2 Central Defenders (Purple) playing up against 2 strikers (Yellows). In the area at the top of the practice there are a group of midfielders playing a 4v4 or similar.

OBJECTIVE The Oranges and Blues look to feed the Strikers (yellow) who play a 2v2 looking to finish in the large goal.

OBSERVATION In possession midfielders must develop recognition of what is around them and the moment to play forwards. For the Strikers (Yellow) it is about working as a pair, ideas such as; one short – one long, combinations, moving the defenders to create 1v1..etc

PROGRESSIONS Some ideas for progressions could include;

- Allow a Midfielder runner to form a 3v2.
- Allow the Midfielder to make a tracking run to make a 3v3 in the end zone.
- Midfielder must keep possession for 'x' number of passes before playing forwards into the Strikers.

BETWEEN THE LINES



10 Upwards

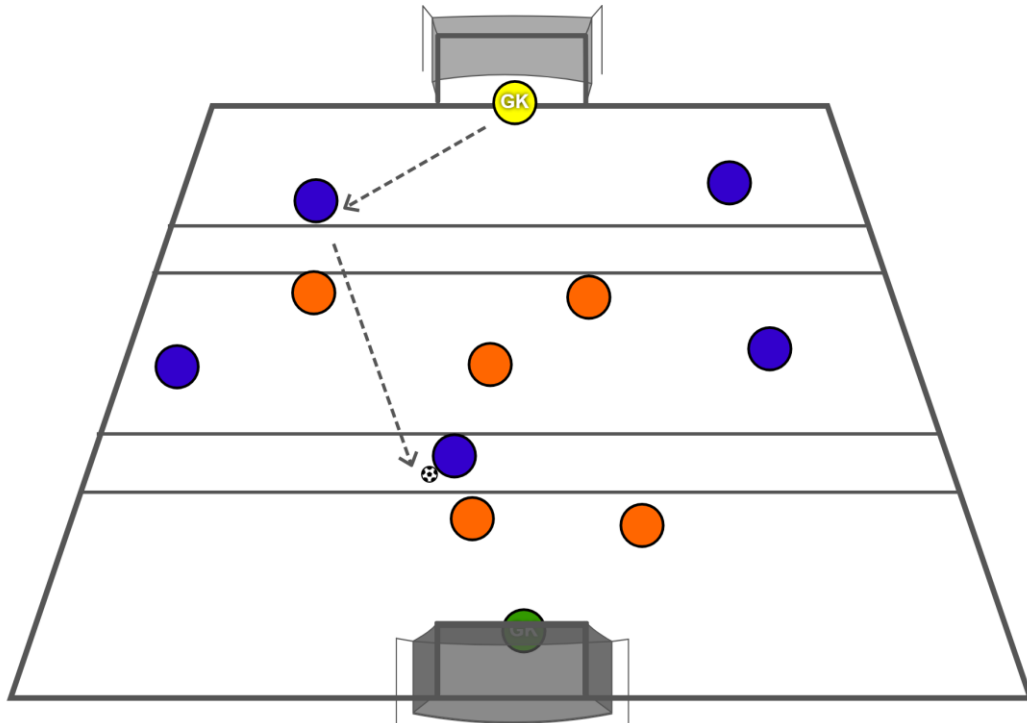
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch with 2 'free' zones (3-5m) on each third of the pitch. Players are free to play anywhere on the pitch, however you can not be tackled in the zones, to encourage players receiving "Between the lines"

OBJECTIVE Players looking to receive the ball to get out, play forwards and create!

OBSERVATION

- How do the players utilise the 'free' zone?
- Awareness / Scanning to get in, receive and play forwards

PROGRESSIONS A few progressions for this one;

- Allow defenders in the zone upon the attackers first touch
- Allow 1 defender in (full contact)
- Remove the zone completely

COUNTER ATTACK GAME



4v4 upwards

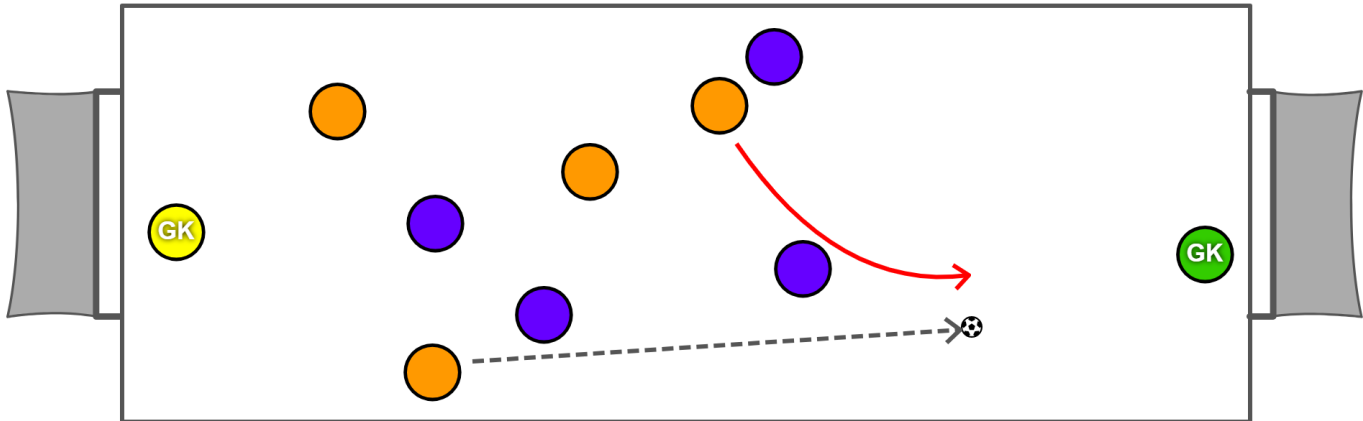
Better with
offsides



Long / thin



7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, to encourage the principle of attacking quickly this works best on a long thin pitch, as per the diagram.

OBJECTIVE This is a regular game with lack of space encouraging the principle of attacking quickly, here we will see lots of forward passes and transitional moments.

OBSERVATION Things to watch out for on this game;

- The variety of forward pass, to feet? To space?
- At times the ability to RWTB quickly to utilise the space.
- Away from the ball we will see forward running to support the attack.
- For the Goalkeepers distribution on the regain.

PROGRESSIONS You can add a timer in possession, E.g must score within 8 seconds or number of passes to encourage quick play.

TRANSITION GAME



3 teams of 3 or 4

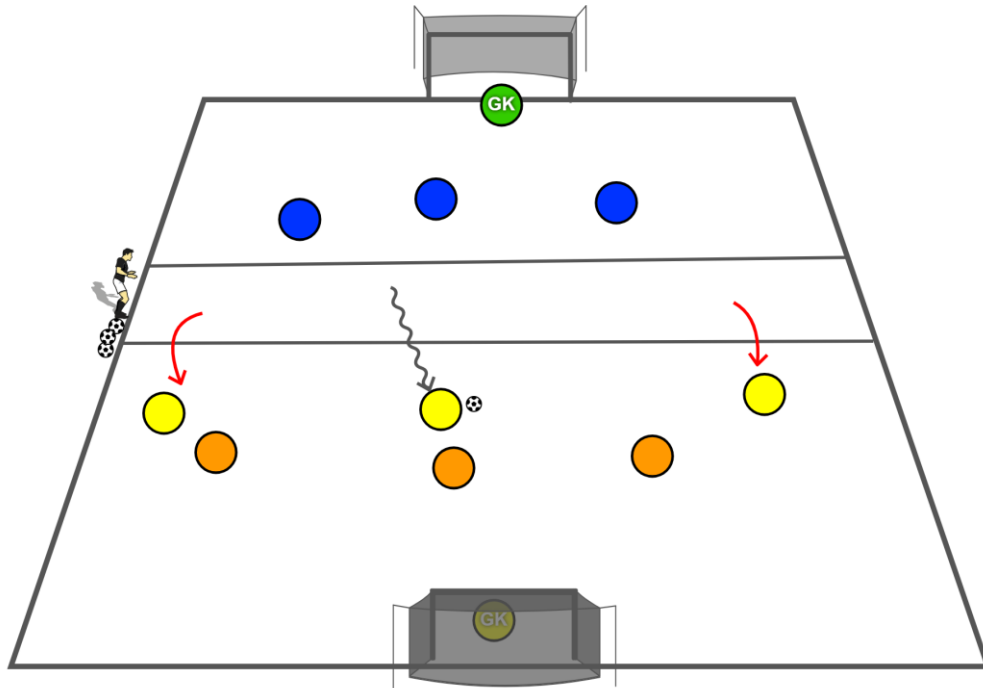
Can be added



Regular



7 Minutes



ORGANISATION This game works with 3 equal teams on a 2 goal pitch, with a central 'free' zone across the centre. This game works best with Goalkeepers, as they improve the quality of the finish, but more importantly they allow quick attackers once they gained possession.

OBJECTIVE The coach feeds the ball into Yellows who attack the Oranges. If they score they turn, receive a new ball and attack the Blues at the opposite end. If they are unsuccessful or the ball turns over the Orange would carry the ball into the opposite half and take on the blues.

OBSERVATION This game is all about transition; attack to defence and defence to attack. In possession look for the players understanding of changing the tempo; are they building, retaining or creating?

PROGRESSIONS As the yellows attack, the Blues defend, if the ball is turned over you can allow the Yellows to counter press to regain immediately.

You can play this ball with a 'x' attempts rather than turning over the attackers on each outcome.

PRESS HIGH = DOUBLE GOALS



4v4 upwards

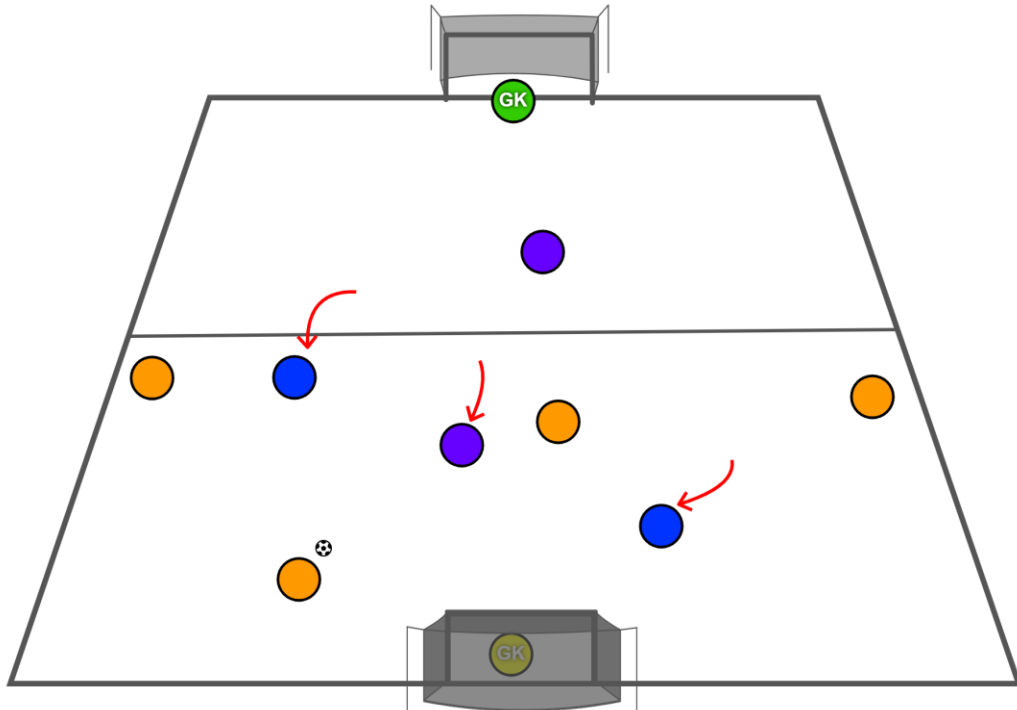
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION This game works on a pitch with 2 goals with a halfway line marked out with flat markers or cones.

OBJECTIVE A simple task constraint to reward proactive pressing, if you win possession of the ball in the opposition half and score, its worth **DOUBLE** goals!

OBSERVATION In this game look out for;

- How do the team press together?
- What are the triggers to press?
- What happens if you get the press wrong?

THINK ABOUT... Think about how you want the players to press on matchdays – will it be focused around areas of the pitch, individuals errors, pressing with high numbers...etc.

Don't forget the goalkeeper, his positioning as a sweeper keeper is important to anticipate longer passes.

DEFENDERS

vs ATTACKERS



8 upwards

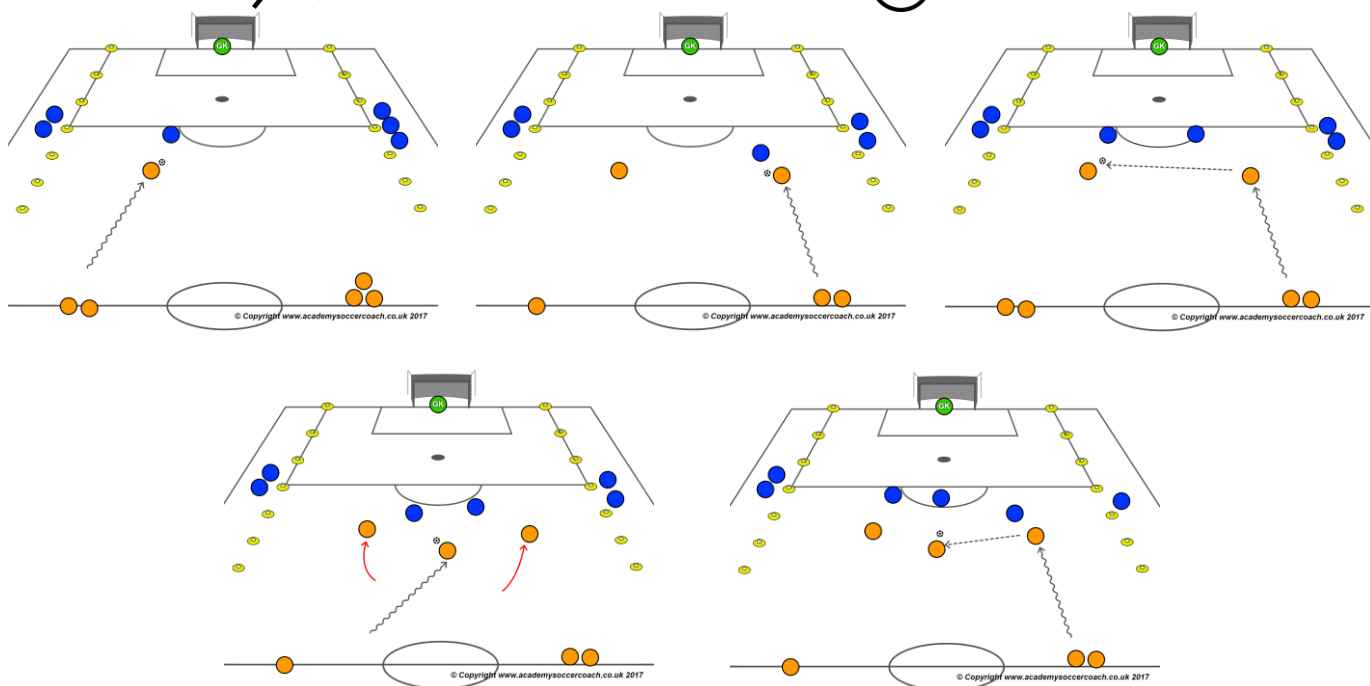
Not required



Half Pitch



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION

This practice takes place on half a pitch. The Defenders (Blues) look to protect the large goal and the Attackers (Oranges) are looking to score past the Goalkeeper. The practice works in “sets” as follows;

- Set one: 1v1 every attacker gets 3 attempts left and right (top left).
- Set two: 2v1 attackers get 10 attempts (top centre).
- Set three: 2v2 attackers get 10 attempts (top right).
- Set four: 3v2 attackers get 10 attempts (bottom left).
- Set five: 3v3 attackers get 10 attempts or see progression.

OBJECTIVE

Lots of repetition of attacking and defending in 1v1, 2v1, 3v2 and 3v3 scenarios. This gives variety of underload and overload experiences for both the Attackers and the Defenders.

OBSERVATION

For defenders

- Body shape on approach
- Showing the attacker away from goal and restraint to block or tackle
- Defending as a pair or 3, introducing the idea of cover and balance

For the attackers

- Clinical in and around the box
- To shoot or assist
- Runs to move the defenders

PROGRESSIONS

A great way to finish a this practice, Attackers start 20-0 up, with the objective of “first to 30”. Attackers get a point for a goal or shot on target, Defenders score by intercepting, tackling or spoiling an attack. No points for a shot off target. This gets super competitive!

MAN MARKING



4v4 upwards

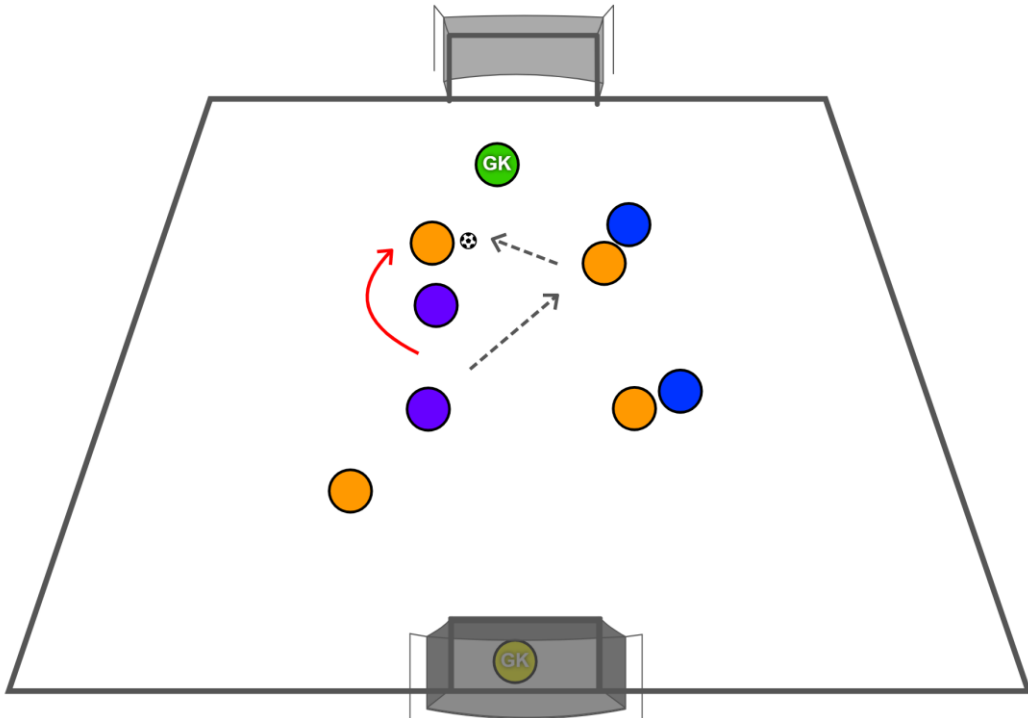
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Regular



10 Minutes



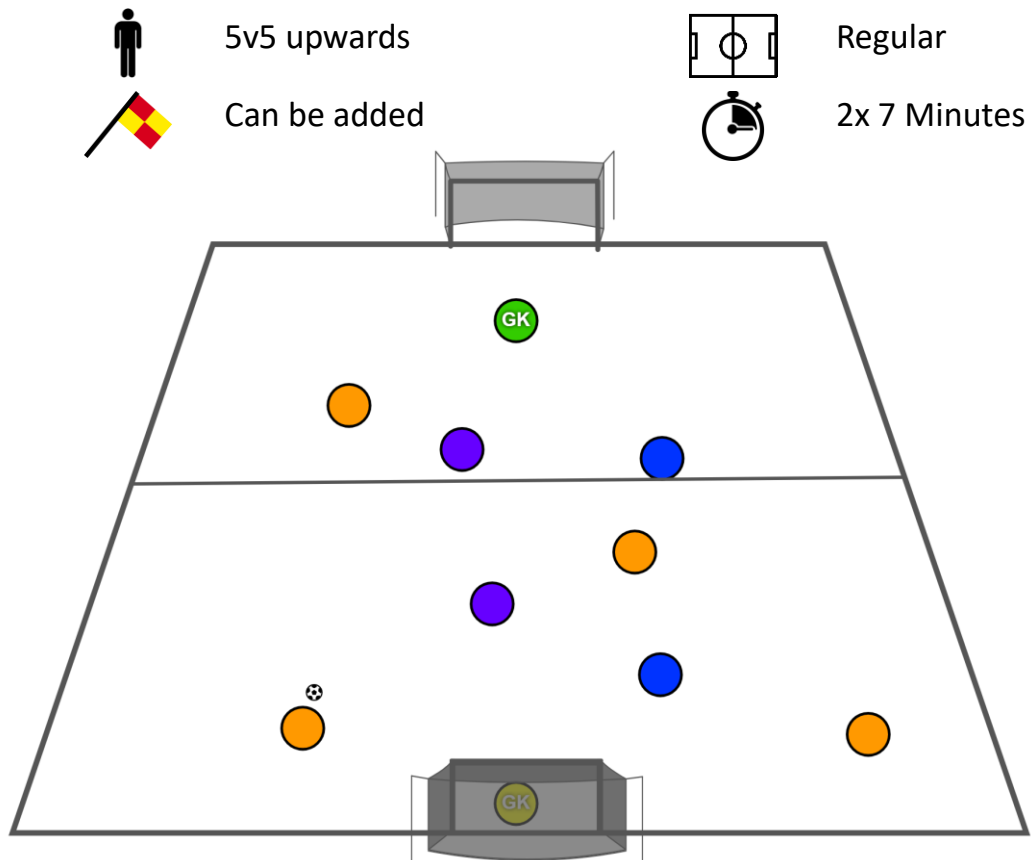
ORGANISATION 2 goal game, with each player given a man marker. If your player scores you are out of the game for 60 seconds.

OBJECTIVE Players are paired up so you can only tackle the person you are man marking.

OBSERVATION How do players track their opponent and still effect the game in possession?
Can players know where the opponent is AND intercept passes?
When a player is removed, how do you play outnumbered?

PROGRESSIONS To challenge the players further, and promote awareness play the game in silence for a period.

OUR HOUSE



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal pitch, split in half using cones or flat markers

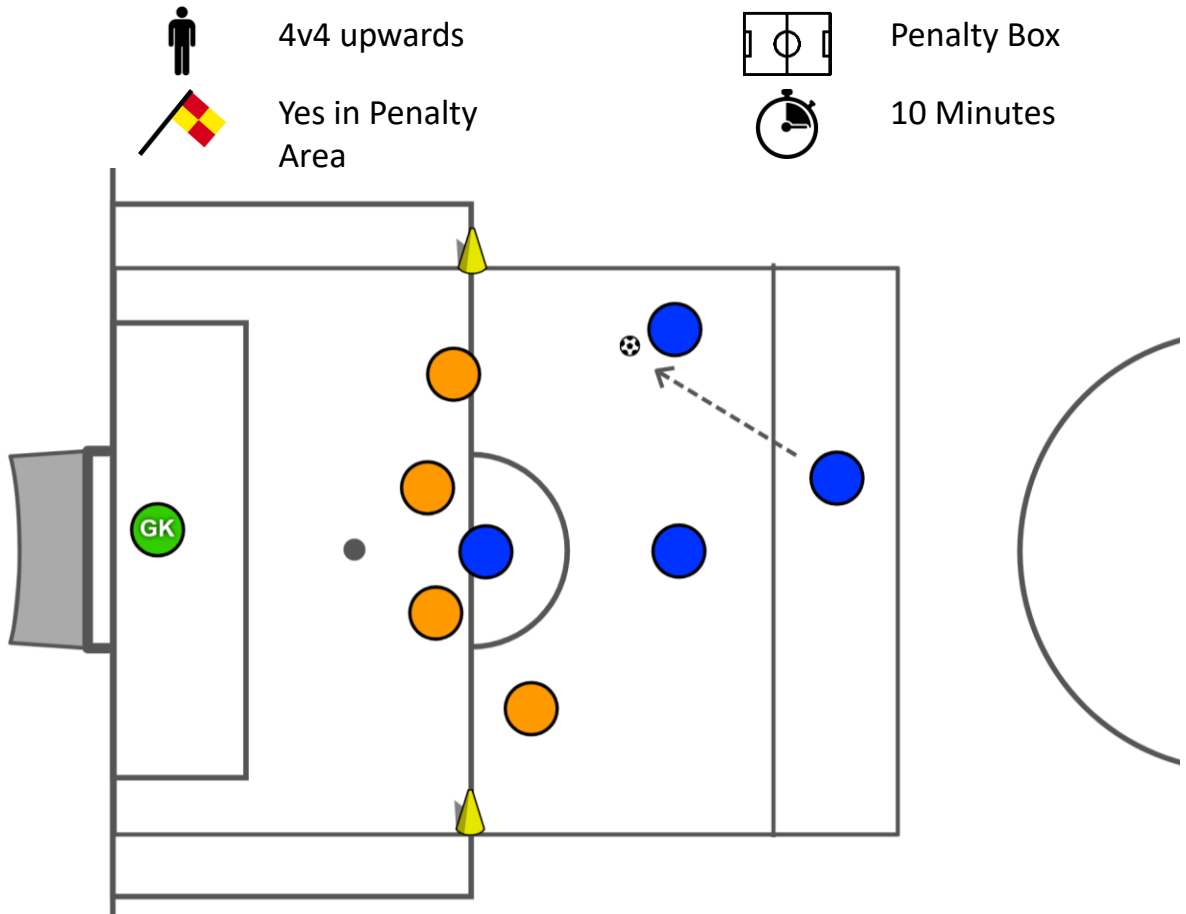
OBJECTIVE Each team must choose a half for their '**house**', its not a problem if they both want the same half. In their '**house**' they can tackle (normal rules), in the half they didn't select they can only intercept, so no tackling.

OBSERVATION Do they choose to press high? (reward)
How do they defend when they can't tackle?
Do they tackle near their goal (risk?) or tackle high?

PROGRESSIONS This is a great game if you want to coach pressing, how do we as a group block passing lines..etc. It also works well if you trying to avoid rash decisions and giving away fouls near your own goal / penalty box.

Allow players to discuss; why did they choose that half? Why not the other?

DEFENCE vs ATTACK



ORGANISATION Using the space of 2 penalty boxes with a free zone at one end. Offside applies inside the penalty area.

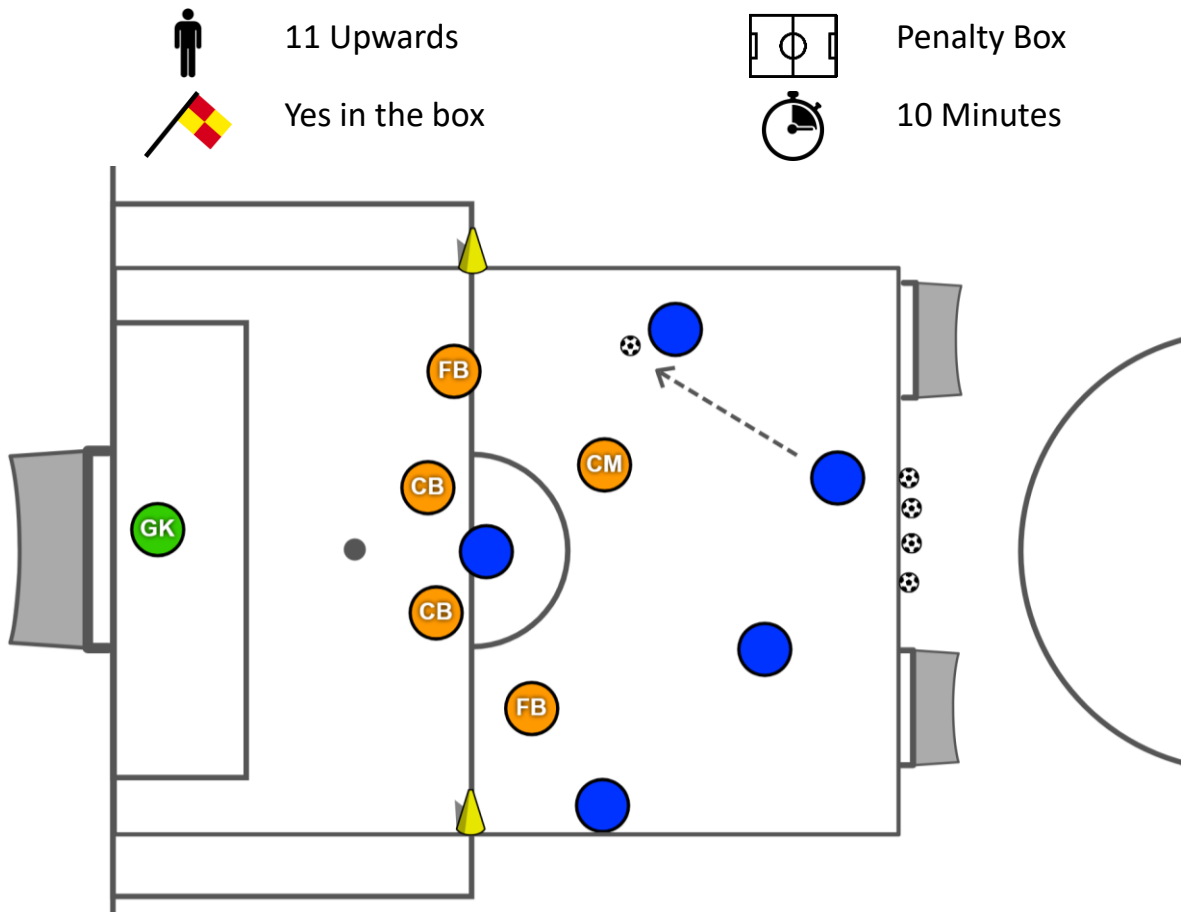
OBJECTIVE The objective for the attackers (Blues) is to score in the big goal, for the Oranges defending in and around the box. The free zone allows the blues to “start again..” and recycle possession. If the Oranges win possession and dribble the ball into the free zone, the roles swap over.

OBSERVATION In possession; Retaining possession in advanced areas, choosing the right time to penetrate and score. Out of possession; Defending as an individual and as part of unit – cover and balance.

PROGRESSIONS You can adjust the numbers to suit your players, be mindful of making it too easy to score – it will be hard in matches!

BUILDING A BLOCK

BREAKING A BLOCK



ORGANISATION The area used for this one is 2 penalty boxes. The game can be played in a few formats, for example; defenders protect a lead, time limit or number of attempts/balls

OBJECTIVE One team attacks the large goal, the other defends and looks to score in the target goals.

OBSERVATION In possession;

- Width (play around or create 1v1).
- Forward passing and forward running.
- Creativity – Individual or collaborative.

Out of possession;

- Delay – stop forward passes and penetration.
- Deny - block shots and crosses.
- Compact distances between the lines (vertical and horizontal).

SLIDE & SCREEN



9 Upwards

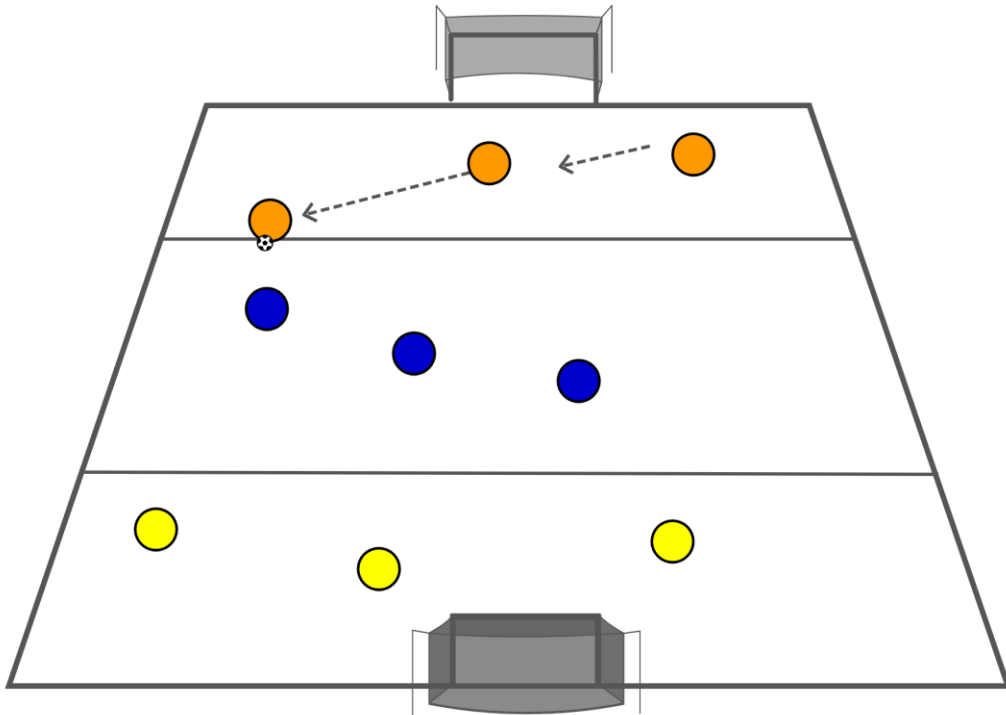
Not required



Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A twist on a classic defending practice. A small tight pitch split into three thirds, Yellows and Oranges work together trying to pass through or around the Blues who defend the middle third.

OBJECTIVE When the Blue team win possession they can score in either goal, the other team must react quickly and protect their goal. If the Blues score, they swap places with the team they scored against.

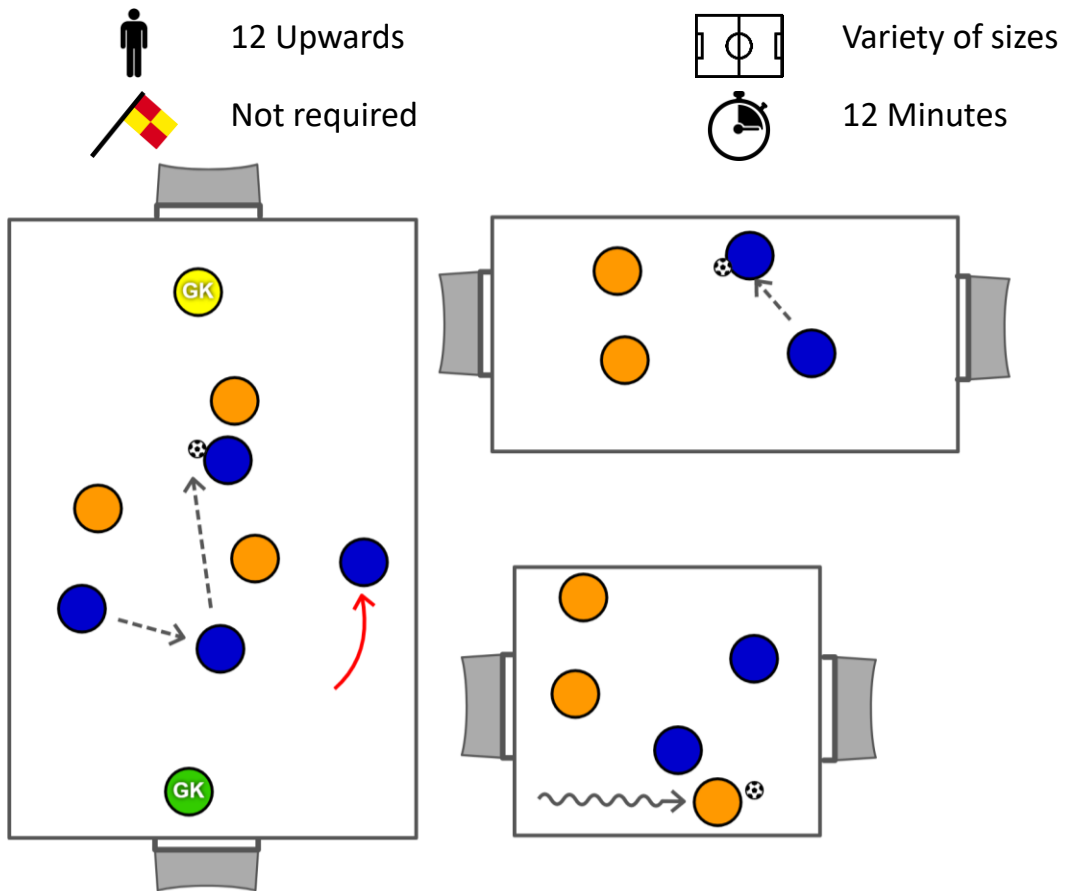
OBSERVATION Blues must get compact with correct distances from the ball and each other to prevent passes.

Blues should look for triggers to press in the end third; longer passes, poor touch, lack of support..etc

Communication and connection to work as a team.



SCORE & MOVE!



ORGANISATION In this game the two teams (Orange and Blue) play 3 matches across 3 pitches, every time a goal is scored the goal-scorer must “move” to a new pitch, creating uneven teams and constant overload/underload situations.

OBJECTIVE The scores across the 3 pitches are added up to see which team is the winner.

OBSERVATION Strategies to win;

- How many players will each team start with on each pitch?
- Which pitch does the goal scorer move to?
- How do the players deal with playing with numbers up or down
- Social side, how do they communicate with their teammates quickly and effectively
- Reflection; What would the players change for next time, what went well?

PENETRATE THE SQUARE



12 Upwards



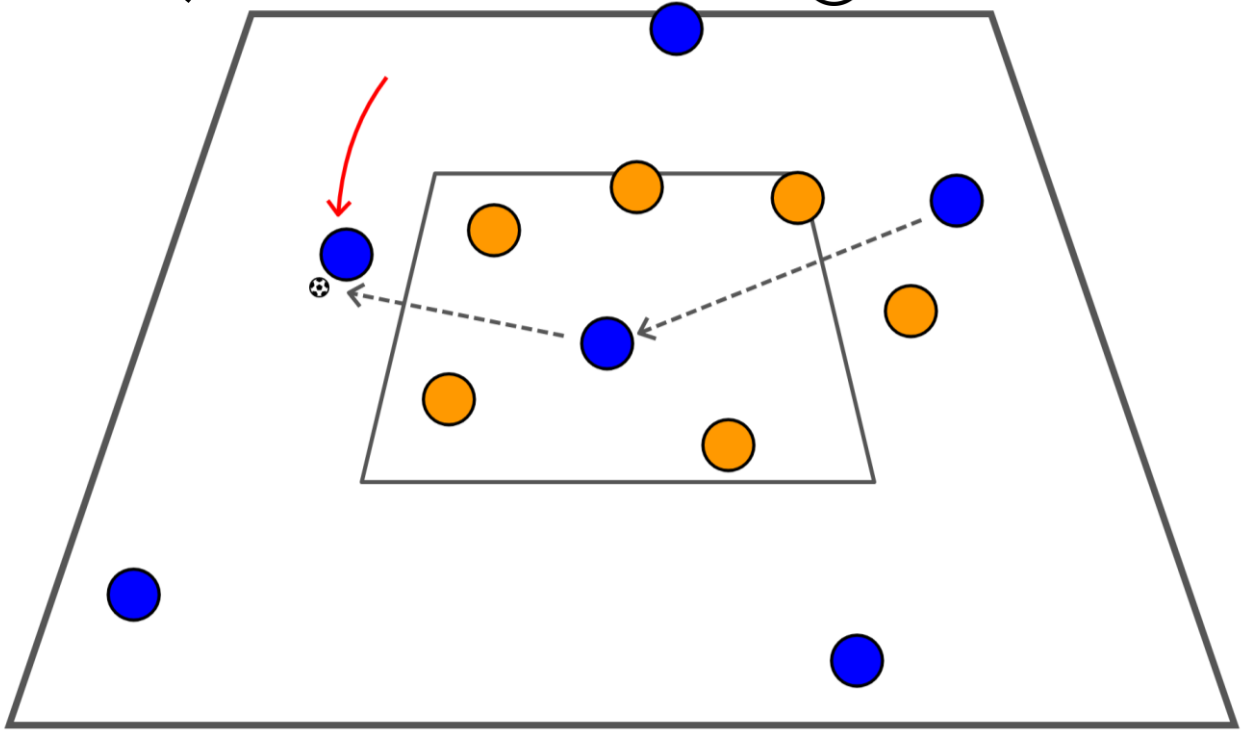
Not required



30x30



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 30x30m square with a 8x8m central square inside, adjust the size depending on the age and ability.

OBJECTIVE To score a goal the team in possession must pass through or receive inside the central square. Defending team looks to win possession then the roles swap over. Either; score straight away, have to complete a 'x' number of passes or have to dribble to the edge before they can attack.

OBSERVATION In possession; Dispersal to allow the team to play around and create gaps inside. Support to create structure to play around or through. Out of possession; balance between screening to protect the central areas and pressing organisation to win back the ball.

PROGRESSION Limit the number of defender allowed outside the central grid

Limit the number of touches attacker are allowed in the central grid i.e. play out with 1 touch



LINE BALL



4v4 upwards

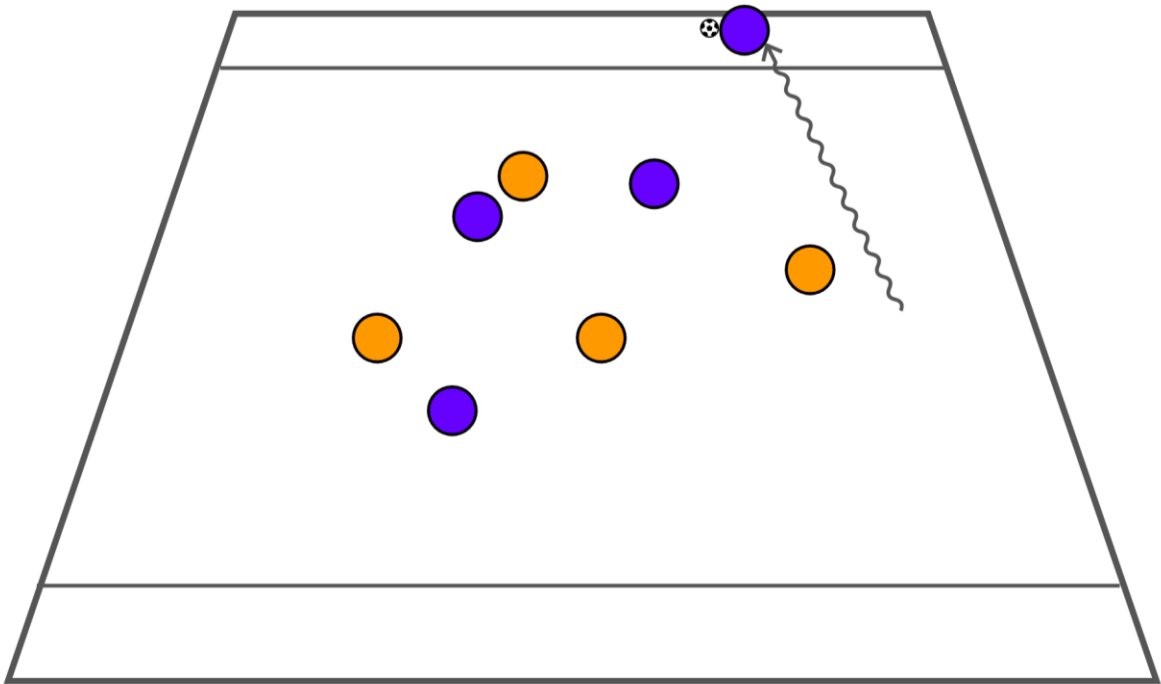
Not required



Regular (no goals)



7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A pitch size to suit number of players and age/stage. This game needs no goals, so great for an arrival activity or if you are struggling for equipment.

OBJECTIVE The aim of the game is for the Attacker to penetrate the end zone, by running with the ball or receiving a pass inside. The ball must be under control inside the end zone for the goal to count!

OBSERVATION In this game, some of the following may emerge;

- The balancing of running with the ball and passing to score
- Recognising the space available to carry the ball into
- Drawing in opponents to release a team mate

PROGRESSIONS Space is interesting variation with this practice, if it is large in tends to encourage individuals driving into the space, running with the ball taking larger touches.

If tighter combination play can emerge, as players utilise team mates when needed.

ONE GOAL ...AND OFF



4v4 upwards

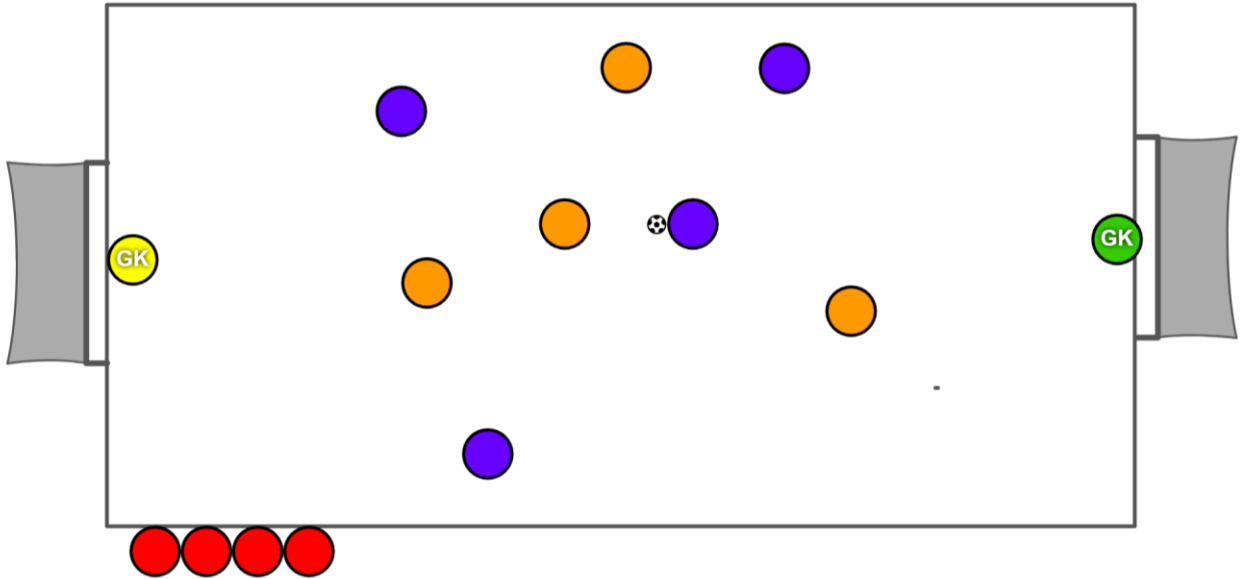
Not required



Regular (no goals)



1 Goal and off!



ORGANISATION This one is a players favourite. A good game if you are struggling for space, tends to get very competitive! A 2 goal pitch with 3 teams, one of which (Reds) is waiting to come on.

OBJECTIVE The team that scores first wins the game 1-0 and the next opponent enters the field.

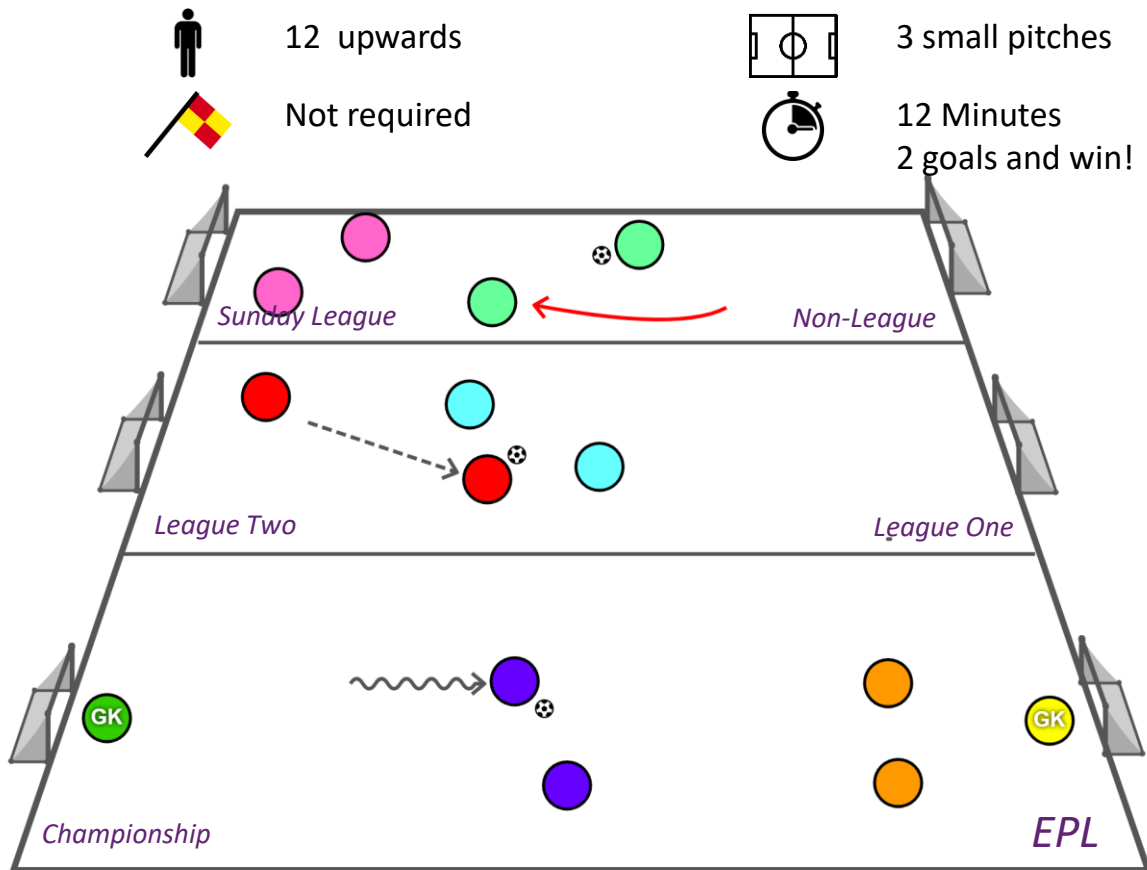
OBSERVATION In this game you might see;

- Strategies to win!
- Clinical finishes in a game context
- Playing under pressure

PROGRESSIONS I like to play for a set period, say 10 minutes and keep track of the number of wins within that period.

You can choose to start each new game formally, with kick offs, but I like to start with the goalkeepers...to increase difficulty winners always start!

PROMOTION RELEGATION



ORGANISATION At least 3 mini pitches, with equal teams on each pitch. You can play this game with any number of players per team, it will still work 1v1.

OBJECTIVE The aim of the game is to be the team in the EPL when the coach finishes the session. When one team scores 2 goals (2-0 or 2-1) they automatically win that game and get promoted, moving up a goal regardless of the state of the game above them. Equally the team that lost gets relegated, i.e From EPL to Championship. Note: If you win sometimes it will involve swapping sides, other times it will mean moving pitches.

OBSERVATION This game is super competitive you will see;

- Player devising strategies to win
- Lots of 'social corner' interaction – communication between teammates and teams
- This can be testing psychologically, how do the players deal with adversity?

PROGRESSIONS I choose not to referee this game, allowing the players to take more control and solve any differences between them.

WIN BY ONE



4v4 upwards

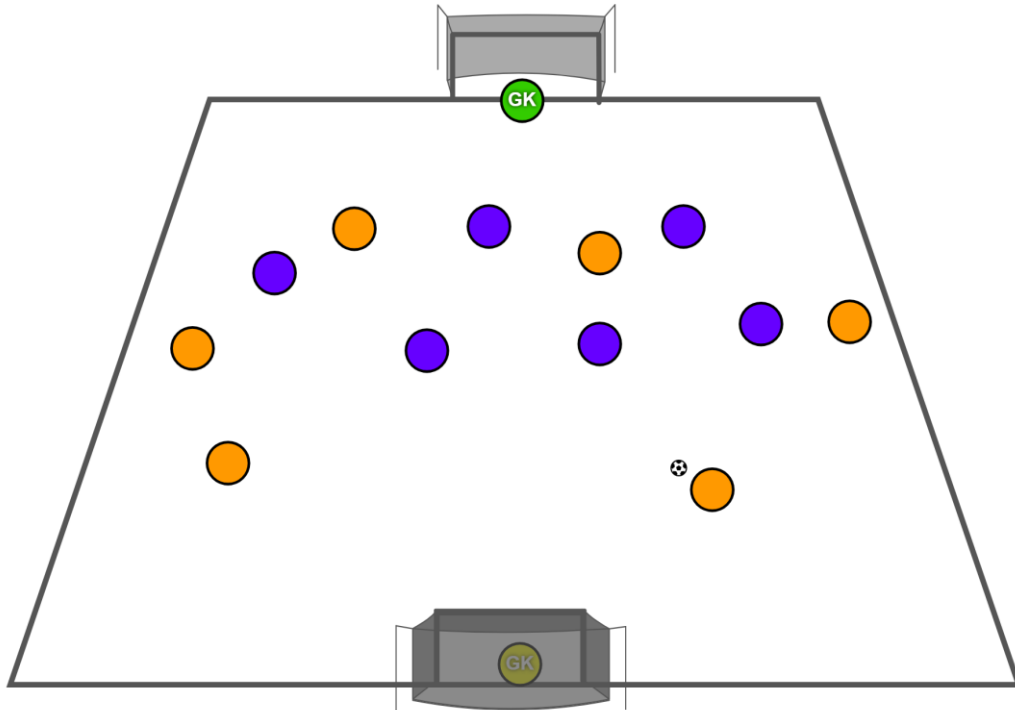
Can be added



Regular



2x 7 Minutes

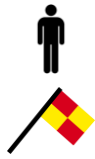


ORGANISATION This game takes place on a regular 2 goal pitch, suitable for the number of players and the age/ability.

OBJECTIVE In this game when a team scores they lead 1-0 but can not score a second, they must look to keep possession and run down the clock. However, if the opposition equalise to make it 1-1, both teams are free to win the game 2-1. You can only ever win the game by one!

OBSERVATION In this practice I would be looking at the psychological and social interactions between teammates. How they build a strategy and adapt it based on the state of the game.

MESSY FOOTBALL



8 upwards

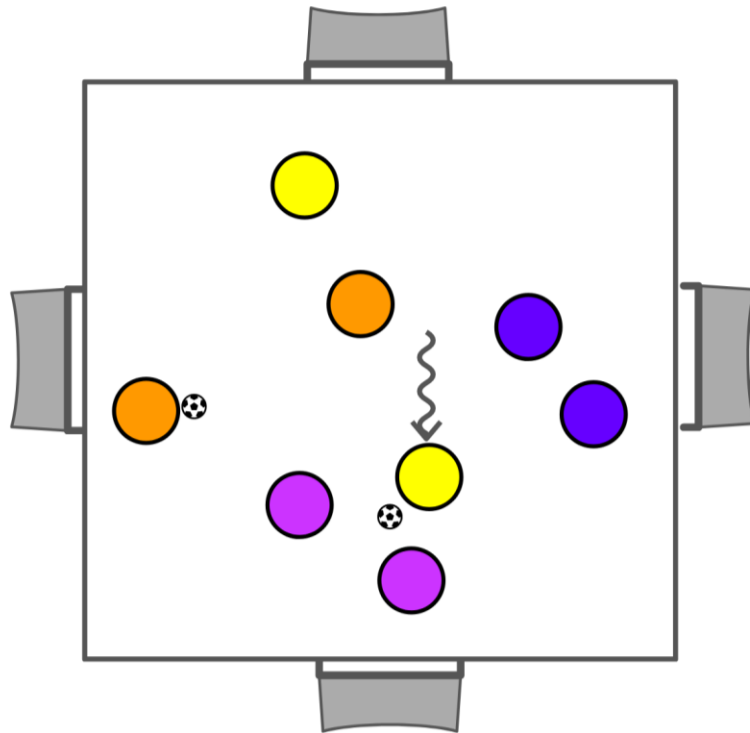
Not required



Square / Tight



8 Minutes



ORGANISATION A small tight square pitch, with 4 target goals or coned goals. I tend to play without goalkeepers for this one. This works well as an arrival activity.

OBJECTIVE This is a basic 2v2, with 2 games going on simultaneously on the same pitch. The interference and chaos from the other game allows players to dribble and pass under no, some and full pressure.

OBSERVATION Observations for this one;

- When to play as an individual when to combine?
- Playing with your head up (awareness)
- 1v1 / 2v2 / 2v1 playing with a underload and overload

PROGRESSIONS You can play each game with a time limit or “*first to...* ”..

You can keep score of games won, draw and lost...or just play for fun!

UNDERLOAD OVERLOAD



8v5 upwards

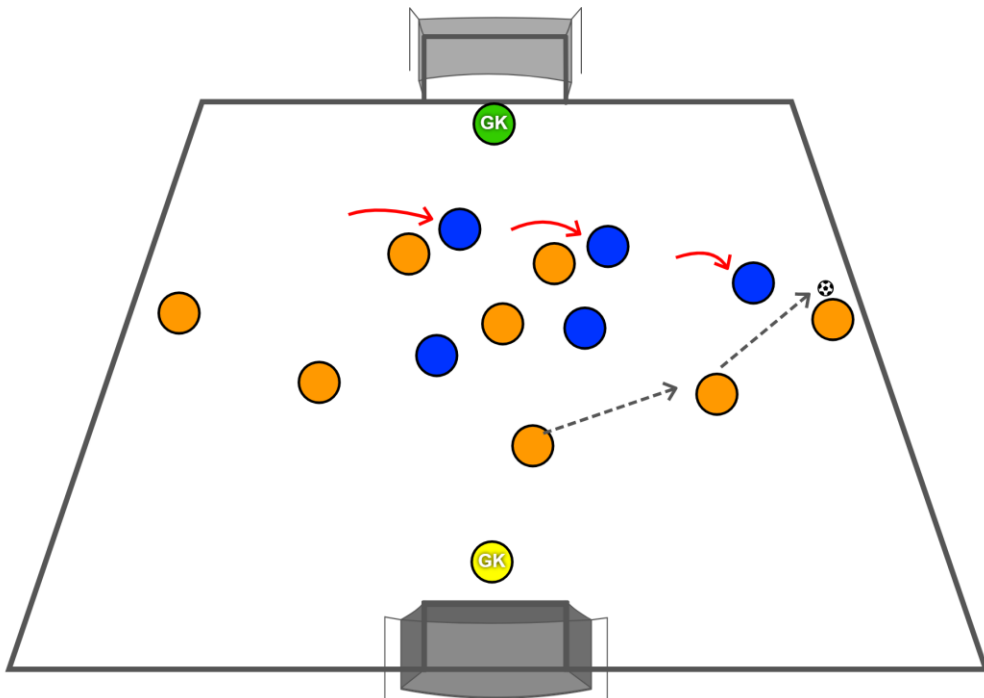
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION 2 goal pitch with uneven teams, depending on the age and ability of your players.

OBJECTIVE A normal game, but one team plays numbers up the other is numbers down.

OBSERVATION These games tend to set up a defence vs attack scenario, in possession the team will look to build and maintain attacks finding the spare man by stretching out the opposition. The team that is outnumbered, will get repetition of defending (compact / cover / balance) and countering quickly on regain.

PROGRESSIONS Some suggested numbers;
 11 v 6 (GK-Back four – DCM) for 11-a-side
 9 v 5 (GK-Back four) for 9 or 11-a-side
 7 v 4 (GK-2xDF – CM) for 7-a-side
 5 v 3 for mini-soccer

TEAM BINGO!



4v4 upwards
Can be added



Regular
Until there is a
winner!

	Team 1	Team 2	Team 3
Win a game and keep a clean sheet	✓		
Score after a dribble		✓	
Score a goal after a one-two		✓	
Keep possession for 10 passes or more!	✓	✓	
Score from a goalkeeper's possession	✓		
Win a game, playing with a player less	✓		✓
Score with a header or volley			✓

- ORGANISATION** A regular 2 goal game, with a white board or piece of paper to keep track of each team's progress.
- OBJECTIVE** Football but with a bingo twist, each team is looking to complete the challenges and be the first to achieve a "Full house".
- OBSERVATION** I really like this SSG, if you are creative with the challenges you can really test the group across the 4 corners; Technically, Physically, Psychologically and Socially.
- PROGRESSIONS** Think about how you can link the challenges to themes you have been working on, so that they consolidate learning.

INDIVIDUAL BINGO!



4v4 upwards
Can be added



Regular
Until there is a winner!

	Nick	Kairo	Luca	Brandon	Samuel	Saul	Max	Rafiq
Involved in a 1-2 that scores a goal								
1 touch finish								
Deep run; Goal or assist								
Score outside the 'D'								
Every player on the team is involved								
Score or assist from your own half								

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE



- ORGANISATION** A normal 2 goal game, with a white board or piece of paper to keep track of individuals progress.
- OBJECTIVE** Football but with a bingo twist, for an individual to 'win' he/she must be the first to complete all the challenges and earn a 'full house'.
- OBSERVATION** This works really well in a tournament or 3 team scenario, so when 1 group is off individuals can see their challenges. If you think this through individual challenges will need team outcomes – so lots of social corner work!
- PROGRESSIONS** Think about how you challenge all the players in the group, what will be easy for some might be hard for others. With mixed ability you could blank out some challenges.

DIAMOND PITCH



4v4 upwards

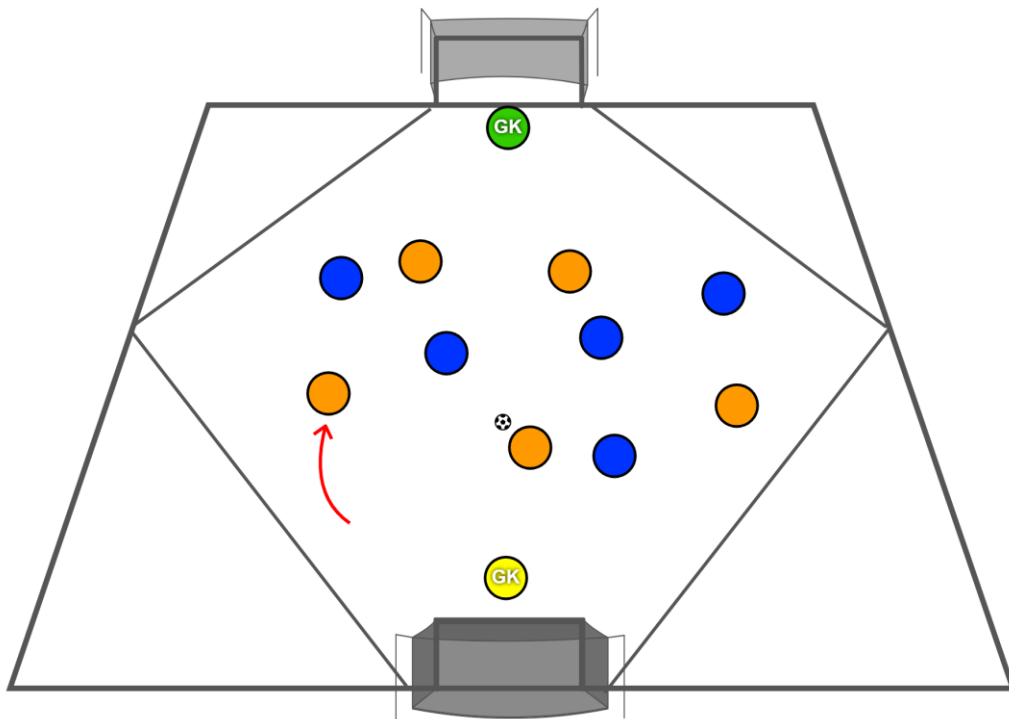
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A 2 goal pitch, but marked out in a diamond. The pitch shape encourages the players to play forwards into the midfield quickly and finish.

OBJECTIVE Regular game except for the pitch shape and dimensions.

OBSERVATION The Goalkeeper / defenders looking to play into the midfield third quickly, as limited space near their goal.

Maintain possession in the widest point of the pitch.

Creative and aggressive play in the final third, due to the lack of space.

4v4 PLUS 4



12

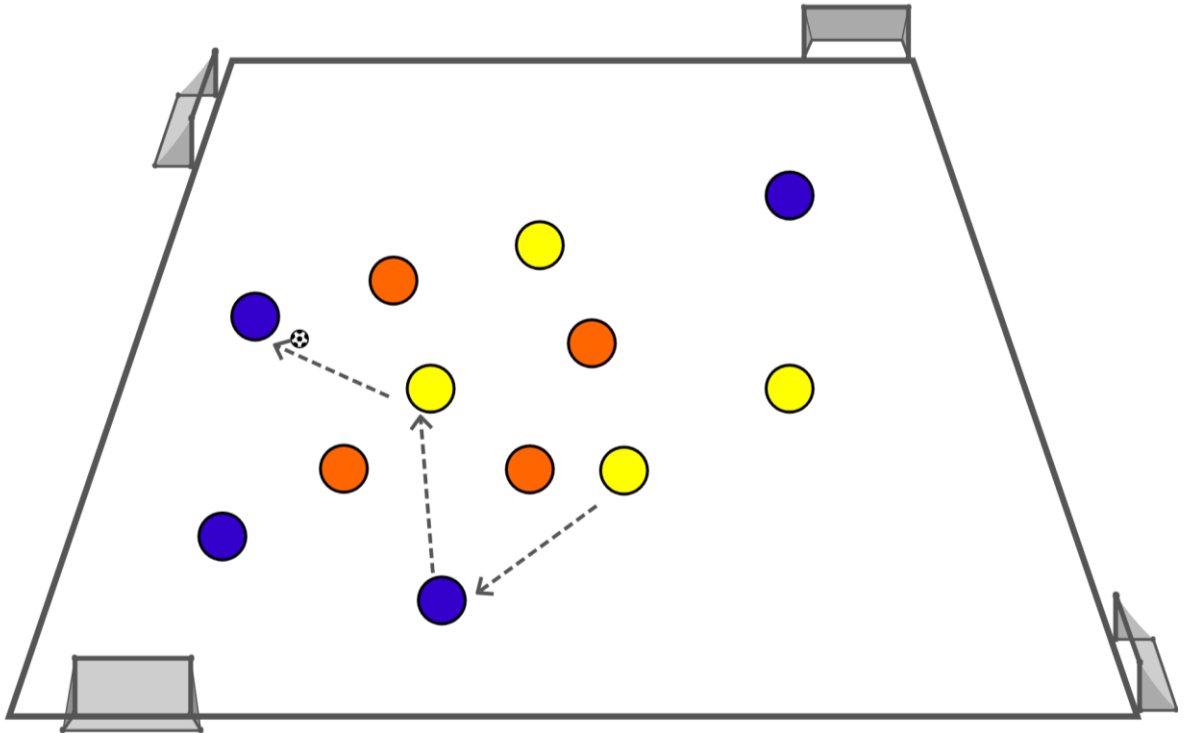
Not required



Square / Tight



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION This practice takes place on a square pitch with 4 target goals or coned gates. Blues vs Oranges with 4 neutral Yellow players to make the game 8v4 in possession.

OBJECTIVE The team in possession must make 10 passes, using Yellows if needed before scoring in any target goal. The neutral players (Yellows) can not score, only assist. Rotate roles regularly.

OBSERVATION The purpose of the game is for the players to be comfortable maintaining possession and creating a goal scoring opportunity after a good spell of possession. Support (angles/distances) will be key!

PROGRESSIONS This practice can be linked to your game model and formation with some planning. If you plan the teams skillfully, you can get players playing in the positions to offer width and depth related to the match day experience.

Can add one touch finish if needed.

LOCK IT IN



10 Upwards

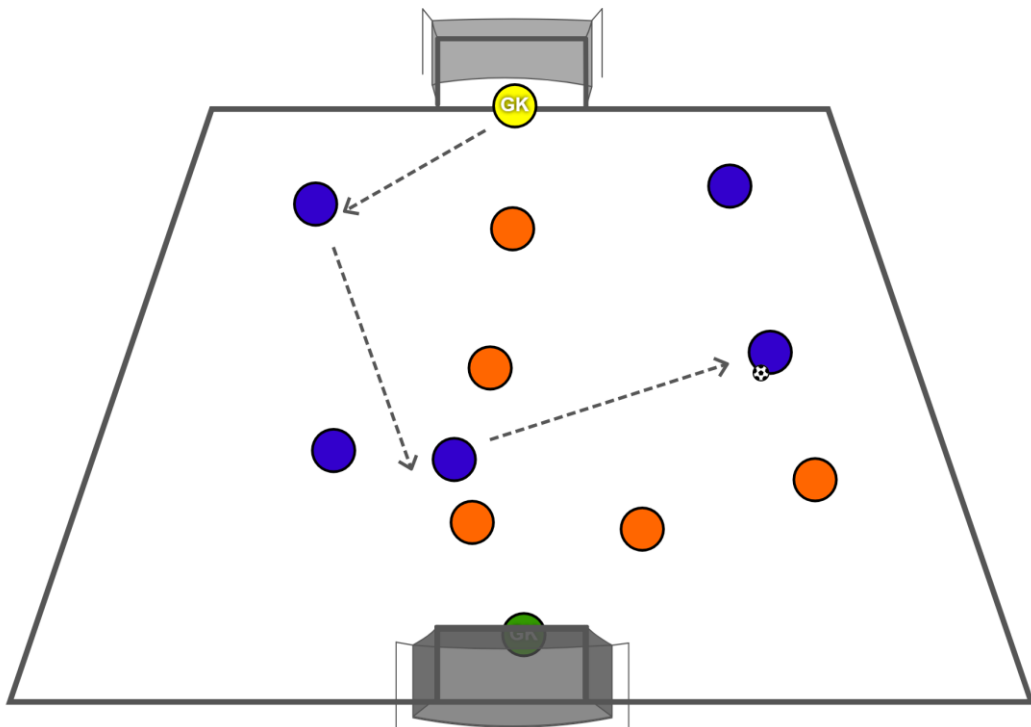
Can be added



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A normal 2 goal pitch, suitable for the age and ability of your group. Once a team score, they restart with the ball but must keep the ball for 30 seconds for the goal to count. This time can obviously be altered to suit your group.

OBJECTIVE This condition serves a few purposes;

- Keeping possession under pressure
- Keeping possession to kill the momentum
- Pressing after conceding

OBSERVATION Where do they look to keep possession – does it matter? What are the risks and rewards?

2-0 UP 0-2 DOWN



4v4 upwards

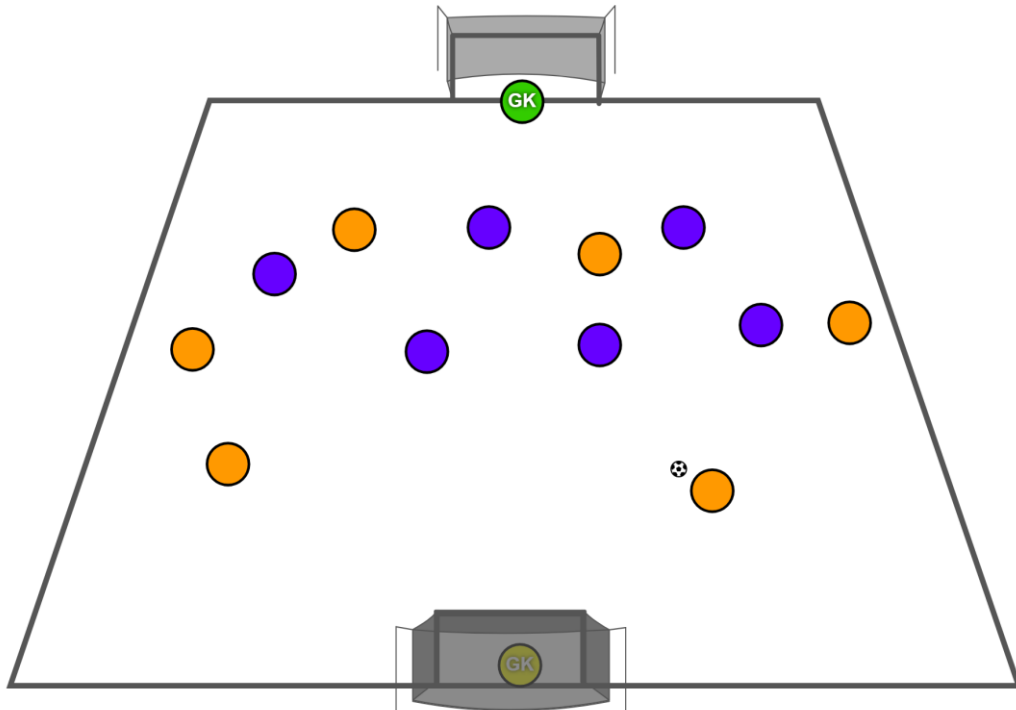
Can be added



Regular



2x 7 Minutes



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal game, but one team starts with a 2 goal lead.

OBJECTIVE At 2-0 up, do they protect and counter or go for a third? If you are 0-2 down, what is your strategy to get back into the game?

Make sure you flip the condition so players experience both sides of this scenario.

OBSERVATION There will be lots of social interaction to discuss and implement a strategy to get back in the game or maintain your lead. Psychologically the players will need the ability to follow or adapt the strategy depending on the state of the game. This constraint means players are playing under pressure or in the context of a 'game' immediately.

PROGRESSIONS To add realism and excitement, use the players favourite teams, so for example Barcelona are 0-2 down against PSG. This works well with Champions League Semi-Finals and aggregate scores.

To assist you can add some "Bias Ref" (P57) to assist the team trying to pull back the deficit.

BIAS REF!



4v4 upwards

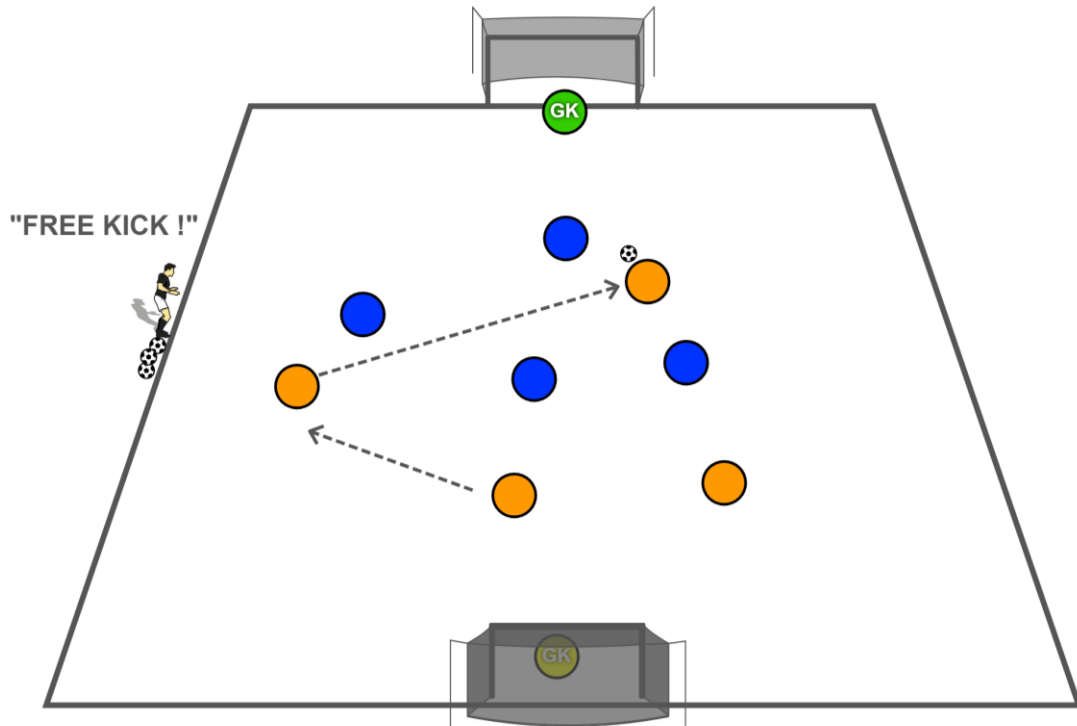
If needed!



Regular



10 Minutes



ORGANISATION A regular 2 goal pitch, with equal teams. I don't introduce this condition, just say *"we are going to play a game"*...then let the fun begin!

OBJECTIVE / OBSERVATION In this SSG the coach referees unfairly to test one side psychologically . This might mean giving decisions the wrong way like throw-ins, corner kicks, free-kicks...or even a some penalties! In this game, the opposition will start to find coping strategies and strive to win despite the referee. This is great preparation for match days when decisions don't always go your way!

