FREMONT YOUTH SOCCER CLUB

ADVANCED PERFORMANCE

FOOTBALL COACHING

FREMONT

Session Plans: A Portfolio

Curriculum Design and Contemporary Approaches To Player Development

FREMONT

Introduction

With the continued growth of the sporting industry, and the importance of producing youth players to reach elite levels of their chosen sport, 'a more informed coach is now required to support the performer' (Robinson, 2015). The role of the coach is more recognized as "far from being 'merely technicians' engaged in transfer of knowledge, are practitioners who engage in a complex socio-cultural process that involves a myriad of interacting variables". (Cushion et al, 2010). The modern coach is therefore more aware of the theory that underpins practice and must be able to utilize a wide-ranging skill set to support the athlete in attaining elite performance. Jones (2000), furthers this appreciation of the complex nature of sports coaching, highlighting the social pressures around ideology, institutions, culture, and ethics. With this in mind; the player as a whole must me considered when structuring curriculum and session design, as ultimately, "coaching is creating a positive practice environment that allows the performer to learn skills effectively" (Robinson, 2015).

Football is dynamic, and the individual is a complex structure, and therefore a coach must demonstrate 'balance and comprehensiveness in all of the factors impinging on sport performance and the welfare of individual athletes' (Lyle, 2010). Holistic

player development addresses a player's overall needs, as a human being rather than just a player, where the four pillars of player development are collectively integrated into curriculum and session design, it is "characterized by comprehension of the parts of something as intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole." (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989).

Football is a complex system, the game itself is dynamic in nature, but with added complexity of the relationship between the players and the club, teammates, opponents, the coaches, and the environment. Planning is therefore critical in the effectiveness of a player development model, "planning the development of young players is like preparing for a journey. It's advisable to have a map (plan or model) to avoid getting lost and wasting time and energy" (Wein, 2007). A game model will allow for a clear pathway in the players development, it provides the playing identity of a club through playing principles, and a reference for the individual player development plan. Nesti and Sulley (2015), recognized that successful academies would work from an agreed upon philosophy which would inform and guide the process and practices throughout the entire club. This approach is a viewpoint from the top, the senior elite level, but worked upon from the bottom up. "The activities of the staff should be driven by the club's vision and philosophy regarding what type of players they need to develop and what they need to do to achieve it" (Nesti and Sulley, 2015). While the interactions as earlier mentioned are provided guidance by the game model, it cannot be overlooked that the individual player is a complex structure, made

up of separate interconnected structures. These structures provide the basis of our understanding of the pillars of development, and include the interactions between physical, psychological, technical/tactical, and social elements. Utilizing Individual Development Plans, the individual within the team environment can be developed when in reference to the game model, player profiles, and stages of learning.

Fremont Youth Soccer Club, has implemented a game model to support and guide the youth players long term development. To provide context for the curriculum design, further understanding of the environment is key to implementing a development framework. A clear framework will support the individual player from Foundation to Professional Development Stage, in its curriculum and session design.

Values and Philosophy

In creating a framework of player development, the identity of the club itself is key to the long-term success in guiding curriculum design. "Identity is so vital to the ongoing achievement of the best academies. This is usually something that is shared across the club at different levels and extends out of the club to the local community or region" (Nesti and Sulley, 2015). Through identifying what makes the local community, and the values and behaviors of the community, an identity can be created in which the game model

can be shaped. These core values shape the playing identity, and individual characteristic of the players. These values also serve in providing a shared philosophy throughout the club, A philosophy developing creative, empowered, decision makers, matches the social demands of the community. A club culture which draws upon the community culture, will support the players social development outside of the football club.

Figure 1, Core Values at Fremont Youth Soccer Club

- **Empathy, Community,** and **Inclusivity**
  - Fremont is a collection of 5 individual townships; Irvington, Niles, Centerville, Mission San Jose, and Warm Springs. Originally coming together through the Washington Township, Wally Pond in 1956 was the leader who brought the districts together to form the City of Fremont. Modern day Fremont is culturally diverse, and Fremont is the home to the largest concentration of Afghan Americans in the United States.
- **Creativity, Innovation,** and **Empowerment**
  - Fremont's Niles district became the earliest home to California's motion picture industry. Charlie Chaplin filmed several movies in the Fremont area, most notably The Tramp. In the late 1990's, there was a boom in Fremont's high-tech employment, especially in the Warm Springs District, linking Fremont to the famous Silicon Valley brand name. Apple's first Mac computer manufacturing plant was located in Fremont. Approximately 750 high tech companies opened their offices, headquarters or production facilities in Fremont. Tesla Motors is the largest employer in Fremont, and an innovator in Green Technology, making Fremont home to the future of clean tech.
- **Fun, Commitment,** and **Excellence**
  - 2018 – Fremont Named as America's Least Stressed City in 2018
  - 2018 – Fremont Ranks No. 1 in the Nation for Happiest Cities
  - 2018 – Fremont Ranks No. 1 Most Inclusive City by the Urban Institute
  - 2017 – Fremont Named Best Place To Raise A Family In California (5th Nationally)

The coaching philosophy is therefore determined by and influenced from the club's core values and behaviors. Having identified the values and behaviors, the coaches must deliver within this framework. Burton and Raedeke (2008) identified a coaching philosophy as a "set of beliefs and principles that guide your behavior", with this having a direct effect on the delivery of a session, as Lyle (1999) points out, "will characterize the coaches practice". Therefore, session design must consider the desired values and behaviors in its methodology and session structure, along with appropriate interventions. Cushion and Lyle (2010) highlight how there can be conflict arising from a disparity between a coach's philosophy and a club's philosophy, therefore during curriculum and session design, aligned with strong club philosophy, a club must provide and create a coaching environment which supports the expected behaviors, (Nesti and Sulley, 2015).

The philosophy embedded at Fremont YSC is to support the players in being creative, empowered decision makers, and engaging in fun play activates, which will shape the game model, determine pedagogical practices, and ultimately session design.

Game Model, Principles and Concepts

To provide context to curriculum and session design, the game model, principles, and concepts will provide the desired destination of team performance and individual player development, for which the curriculum and session design will then provide the pathway.

The game model is to provide specificity in a player's development, in respect of the game moments; we have the ball, they have the ball, they to we transition, and they to we transition. Through this attention to moments, all four pillars of a player's development can be optimized through session design, "every game action, regardless of the four moments of the game in which it might happen, involves a decision (tactical), an action (technical) that required a particular movement (physiological), and is dictated by volitional and emotional states (psychological)" (Oliviera, 2004). Therefore, "tactical, technical, physiological and psychological elements are never trained independently" (Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva, 2012). With a game model application for direction, it is then the role of the coach to design sessions to fit the game model. While it may at first appear to support a behaviorist approach to learning, Delgado-Bordonau, and Mendez-Villanueva (2012) stress that this shouldn't be misinterpreted as players becoming "robots", but instead, "reduces player uncertainty, which should give players more time to use their creativity". A constructivist theory in learning supports the

players ability to make decisions and become problem solvers through learning from past experiences and practicing in realistic game situations. With a top-down vision, and bottom-up pathway of individual player development, the game model and principles (Table 1) can be sub-divided into concepts (Table 2), and individual elements (Figure 1, and Figure 2) to offer specificity and age-appropriate curriculum design.

Table 1. Game Model and Principles

Phases	Principles
WE	Playing through the units Quick ball movement, create overloads in central corridors Attack 1v1 in wide positions
THEY	Desire to win the ball back Prevent split passes Protect the middle in front of goal Protect space between units
WE to THEY	React quickly Press immediately or protect on loss of the ball Force play into supporting defenders
THEY to WE	Verticle actions into open spaces Attack upon regaining possession of the ball Secure the first pass

With reference to a game model, the clarity in decision making is optimized as it limits the unknown, and therefore the session design of a coach must fit the game model (Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva, 2012). This is achieved through the athlete recalling previous experiences and selecting the appropriate action. McCrone (2002) identifies the benefit of a game model reference in session design as actions become a subconscious process, reducing decision and reaction times. Therefore, speed of play can increase along with

better decisions. As earlier explained, football is dynamic and consists of complex interactions between systems, Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva, (2012) summarize this importance of modeling in supporting player development and performance, "make intelligible the complexity of the interaction between the different elements of a system… decision making cannot be coincidental but has to be based on certain principles that follow an internal logic".

The Fremont YSC Principles of Play are influenced by experiences which include coach education (F.A.W.), educational material (Barca Universitas), international academy visits (Holland and Germany), and previous playing experiences. As a grassroots club in the U.S. structure, there is no clear Senior pathway, as Elite clubs are business franchise, rather than local men's and woman's clubs with academy structures and local scouting networks. From recognizing trends, a framework was constructed to be flexible for future adaptations to the game, but also consider current themes. Internally, the U19 age group is what we consider the destination for most of the players and acts as a reference in developing towards elite performance, but also preparing players for further ambition.

With this in mind it is important that we develop players with a range of attributes that can fit a variety of models and adapt to new environments. For players, "the game model has to highlight and enhance their best features and capabilities" (Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva 2012), with session design optimizing the individual player elements in reference to the game model. This is

referred to as the principle of specificity. "Specificity arises when there is a permanent relationship between all the dimensions of the game and the training exercises are specifically representative of the game model" (Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva, 2012), therefore players must understand what the objectives of the session are through the coaching framing the aims of practice and providing appropriate interventions. While session design will include variability in area size, shape, and player numbers (constraints), the session is always designed and delivered in reference to the game model where the principles are learned and performed in competition.

Table 2. Playing Concepts and Objectives

Playing Concepts	Playing Objectives	Playing Objectives
Create and Exploit Overloads	Understanding how to create triangulation in play to utilize the third person in central areas of the field.	Concentration, picking up free players from verticle runs.
Switch the Point of Attack	Recognition of spaces, using short passes and lateral body shapes to find 1v1 opportunities in wide positions.	Body movement and orientation to limit opponents' spaces, reduce the playing area for opponent, preventing the switch.
Passes through the Units	Recognize opportunities for vertical passes into players in spaces of mutual assistance and cooperation.	Position off the ball into space of cooperation in blocking passing channels
When to Pass and When to Dribble	Understanding of spaces , and utilizing ball manipulation to beat opponent in 1v1's	Reduce the opponent's space and time in possession, body positioning to affect decisions, support in mutual spaces.
Collective Approach to Successful Play	'WE' have possession, pass from good positions to open players.	Unit and team movement, collective action, reducing spaces with desire to regain possession.

The game model is complex, and therefore broken down into sub-principles/concepts, and individual player elements. This being more player centered with consideration for information overload, by reducing complexity and becoming more understandable, (Delgado-Bordonau and Mendez-Villenueva, 2012).

Figure 1. Individual Elements, Foundation Phase

Ability and confidence to take on an opponent in 1v1 situations

Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing

Variety of skills and tricks, comfort in performing these in game situations

Ball mastery to be comfortable in tight spaces

Head Up, taking information from the environment

Willingness and comfort to have possession of the ball

Exposed to multiple playing positions on the field

Figure 2. Individual Elements, Youth and Professional Development Phase

Repeat passes – attract opponents, disorientate opponents, adjust body shape

Limited touches to dictate speed of play

High level of ball manipulation for success in occupied spaces

Triangulation to create spare player

Laterality – Use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field

Pass to players in open spaces, from a well positioned player

- Read it
  o Take information from environment – look, observe, anticipate
- Act on it
  o Perform appropriate soccer action, feint to deceive opponent
- Develop It
  o Continue the play through runs and support at trajectory

Portfolio of Session Plans

The following sessions plans will demonstrate session design across the three different phases of development (foundation, youth development, and professional) to highlight pedagogical practices in age-appropriate curriculum and session design. Insight into the working environment at grassroots level will frame the practice structure while being supported by theory put into action. Session design will be in reference to the game model, while shaped by the values and philosophy of the club in supporting holistic player development, nurturing a player to be creative, an empowered decision maker, and importantly enjoying the process for long term participation while working towards elite levels of play. Individual development takes place within the team environment. For the purpose of the portfolio, we will be looking at the development pathway of a center midfielder.

Foundation Phase (Session 1 - 4)

The foundation phase is key to technical development and skill acquisition, and therefore will shape the sessions in skill-based activities with both unopposed and opposed practices. Throughout the worlds leading academies, it is found that the basis of curriculum design is to engage players in skilled based games, utilizing small-sided games to be able to relate to the game situation (Drust et al, 2009). The small sided games reflect a simplistic environment of 11 v. 11, while "enhancing technical skills, game craft, and

perceptual skills" (Nesti And Sulley, 2015).

Development Phase (Session 5 - 8)

The philosophy of developing players with an open mindset to failures and becoming creative decision makers requires support from the coach, and opportunities to assimilate previous experiences in mastering of skills in relation to real game situations. The principle of scaffolding allows for various levels of support of the individual, with freedom to make mistakes. A supportive environment to provide players an opportunity to compete at their level and beyond will help nurture the talented player (Orlick, 2000). The principle of scaffolding is described by Wood et al (1976) as, 'the process of helping learners in problem solving which would be beyond his unassisted efforts to achieve a learning goal".

Performance Phase (Session 9 - 10)

Position specific sessions to support individual development within the team context. With continued reference to the game model, the player through past experiences aims to become autonomous in performance. Through game situation practices, the player benefits from the pedagogical practices of previous phases, "games-based approach incorporating elements of both complex and nonlinear pedagogies can be used to frame and enhance student learning of movement skills in a more holistic manner" (Chow and Atencio, 2014).

The weekly training schedules consist of 3 sessions throughout the week in each phase (dictated by facility availability), with the weekly structure changing through the age phases. Table 3, 4, and 5, demonstrate the changes in weekly planning, from multisport opportunities in foundation phase to tactical development in performance phase. The increase in specialization from early sampling suggests long term player investment, and a great chance of lifelong physical fitness, and supports potential for elite participation, (Brener, 2016). The training weeks are in isolation of training cycles and are a snapshot within a periodized training block. Table 6 shows a talent identification plan for all four pillars of development, in reference to the game model, but also through age-appropriate phases of learning.

Table 3. Foundation Phase Weekly Structure

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	Game Day	Off	Session 1 (IDP)	Session 2 (SSG)	Off	Multi-Sport	Off	Game Day
Week 2	Game Day	Off	Session 3 (IDP)	Session 4 (SSG)	Off	Multi-Sport	Off	Game Day

Table 4. Youth Development Phase Weekly Structure

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	Game Day	Off	Session 5 (IDP)	Session 6 (PBL)	Off	Deliberate Play	Off	Game Day
Week 2	Game Day	Off	Session 7 (IDP)	Session 8 (PBL)	Off	Deliberate Play	Off	Game Day

Table 5. Professional Phase Weekly Structure

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	Game Day	Off	Recovery	Session 9 (PBL)	Off	Session 10 (TAC)	Off	Game Day

Table 6. Talent Identification, Player Elements

COMPONENT	STRUCTURE	ELEMENT	LEARNING STAGE	VALUE 1 to 5
Action	Coordination	1 v 1 Confrontations	F	
		Variety of Striking Techniques	F	
		Ball Manipulation	F	
		Receiving	F	
		Ability with Both Feet	F	
Behavior	Emotional Volitional	Confidence	F	
		Communication	F	
		Control	YD	
		Commitment	YD	
		Concentration	P	
Conditioning	Conditioning	Agility	F	
		Speed, Acceleration	F	
		Speed Endurance	YD	
		Power	YD	
		Aerobic Conditioning	P	
Decision Making	Cognitive	When to Dribble or Pass	F	
		Laterality	F	
		Creation of Space	YD	
		Support in Spaces	YD	
		Anticipation	P	

Scale: 1 - High Potential 3 - Developing 5 - Early Stages

The talent identification model aligns with the club game model and supports player development through framing expectations of players through development phases. It offers guidance in potential of a player, as development is a long term, non-linear pathway, therefore patience is needed, "various traits slowly appear and differentiate over time" (Simonton, 2001). The scale offers flexibility and understanding of non-linear development, and positions sessions to achieve objectives in reference to the game model.

Session 1
Passing

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Technical – Unopposed Practice
Activity 3
Skill Acquisition - Opposed

Player Elements
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Willingness and comfort to have possession of the ball
- Head Up, taking information from the environment

Objectives
- Optimize technical performance of the pass
- Develop use of both feet in performing the pass
- Optimize body movement and positioning

Psychological Skills
- Communication

Physiological Conditioning
- Agility

Mechanical Breakdown
1. Look at target
2. Eye on ball
3. Angle of approach
4. Non-kicking foot alongside ball in a comfortable position, knee bent
5. Strike Centre of ball with inside / outside of foot (Identified area of the ball)
6. Firm ankle
7. Follow through towards target

Coaching Points
- Accuracy of the pass
- Weight of the pass
- Type of pass, surface used
- Communication, movement of supporting teammates, and spaces affected by opponent's movement. Verbal and non-verbal
- Decision making, pass or dribble
- Disguise action to off balance advancing opponent when receiving

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 12 players 36 x 36. Central playing area 12 x 12. Agility sticks placed between resting players and active area.
- 3 sets, 4 reps per set, 1 minute rest in-between sets. Players active in area for 20 seconds.
- On call, players sprint into area through agility poles. Last player in becomes the 'tagger', upon being tagged the roles change. Competition – at end of minute all teams get one point, except for player who is 'tagger'.

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 12 players 36 x 36. Central playing area 12 x 12.
- 90 sec active, 30 sec rest. 12 minutes total.
- 6 players in central area with a ball, 6 receivers outside. Inside players must leave the central area and make short pass to an open outside player. Upon receiving the players switch roles. Player dribbles through central area and repeats. **Progressions** – 1. Player in possession to pass from inside central area. 2. Player in possession to use non-dominant foot. 3. Player in possession to be creative in use of different surfaces. **Competition** – After each round set individual challenge to make more successful passes than the previous round.

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 12 players 36 x 36. Central playing area 12 x 12.
- 3 minutes active, 1 minute recovery. 4 Sets.
- 4 players in central area as defenders, 4 players starting with a ball, 4 receivers outside. Inside players to make successful pass to outside supporting player, defenders must stay within central area, players with the ball must dribble into central area before making the pass. If losing possession of the ball, in transition the player must work immediately to get the ball back in the 1 v 1. **Progressions** – 1. Defenders can now leave the central area to apply pressure or intercept the pass. 2. Player in possession can make decision as to whether to switch with outside player. 3. **Competition** – Point is scored for every successful entry to central area with successful pass to team mate completed
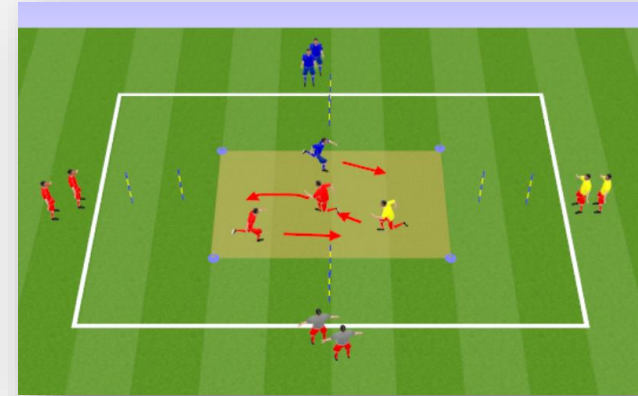
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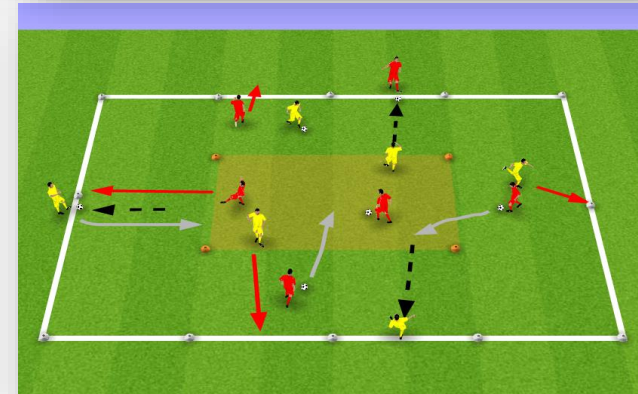
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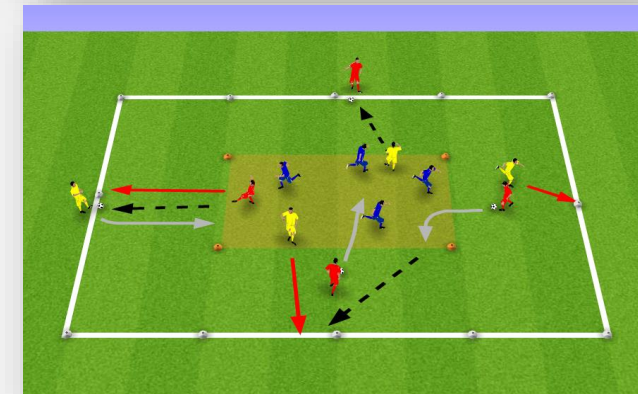
16 min

Session 2
Small Sided Games: Breaking the Lines

Activity 1
Small Sided Game
Activity 2
Small Sided Game

Player Elements
- Head Up, taking information from the environment
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Willingness and comfort to have possession of the ball

Objectives
- Recognition of spaces in intervention and mutual assistance
- Recognize when to pass, or when to dribble
- Selection of pass dependent on situation

Psychological Skills
- Communication

Physiological Conditioning
- Agility
- Balance and Co-ordination

Mechanical Breakdown
1. Look at target
2. Eye on ball
3. Angle of approach
4. Non-kicking foot alongside ball in a comfortable position, knee bent
5. Strike Centre of ball with inside / outside of foot (Identified area of the ball)
6. Firm ankle
7. Follow through towards target

Coaching Points
- Decision Making – recognition of spaces and player movement. Game insight with specific game situations.
- Movement – body positioning and movement to communicate intentions. Movement off the ball in attack and defense in support.
- Technique – use of both legs to control, strike and finish.
- Agility – body shape and movement in supporting and receiving.

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 24 x 24. Central target area, triangular, 4 x 4 x 4. 4 players in possession in main playing area, one opposition player in central target area.
- 4 sets, 4 minute game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets.
- Team in possession to create and find space to play a successful pass through the central target area. 1 point for a successful pass. If central opponent intercepts, they find successful pass out and leave the area, switching with an opponent. If, defender outside of target area gains possession, they must, with support of their teammates if needed, find a pass to central player, where they dribble out and switch with opponent. **Progression/Constraint** – team in possession have a collective number of touches to find successful pass. This resets on successful pass, or change over of possession if beyond allowed number of touches.

Activity 2-Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 24 x 24. Central target area, triangular, 4 x 4 x 4. 4 players in possession in main playing area, one opposition player in central target area. Four outside target goals placed one on each touchline.
- 4 sets, 4 minute game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets.
- Team in possession to create and find space to play a successful pass through the central target area. 1 point for a successful pass. If central opponent intercepts, they break to main area and attempt to score in any one of the four goals. They may use teammates in changing direction of attack to create the goal scoring opportunity. Points are scored for successful pass through target area, and for transitioning team in scoring a goal. If no goal is scored teams switch roles, play restarts from any point on the touchline. **Progression/ Constraint** – one player from each team is limited to two touches.
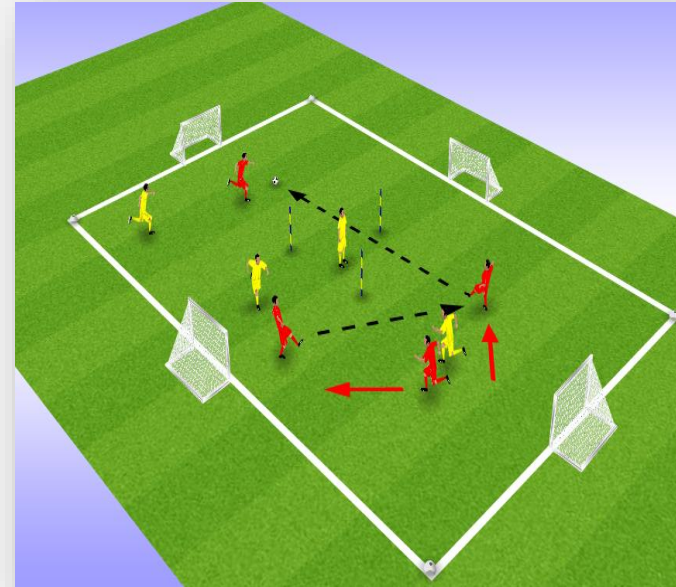
20 min
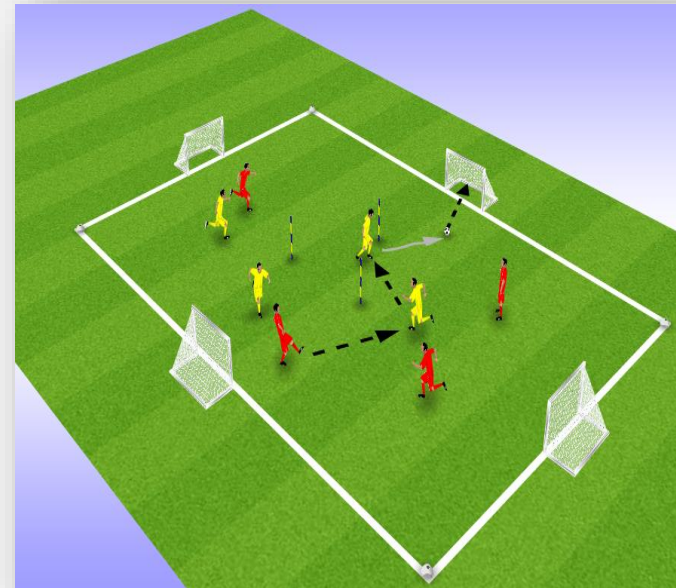
20 min

Session 3
Laterality in Passing and Turning

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Technical – Unopposed Practice
Activity 3
Skill Acquisition - Opposed

Player Elements
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Head Up, taking information from the environment
- Ball mastery to be comfortable in tight spaces

Objectives
- Optimize use of both feet in lateral movements
- Optimize body shape when receiving the ball to support next action
- Recognizing moments to play across the body to open spaces

Psychological Skills
- Communication

Physiological Conditioning
- Agility
- Balance and Co-ordination

Mechanical Breakdown
1. On toes
2. Eye on the ball
3. Get in line with ball
4. Decide and present surface towards ball
5. Relax on impact

Coaching Points
- Decision Making – head up, take in the information from playing area, best surface to use to receive. Checking shoulder to see next action ahead of receiving the ball.
- Communication – verbal and nonverbal – body shape, direction of pass to communicate with teammate. Direction of first touch.
- Movement – into a position to limit touches when turning. Get out of defender's shadow to provide angles of support, body position to open hips to field.
- Technique – use of both legs to receive.
- Continue the play after receiving and releasing.

Session Outline

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 9 players 30 x 30 large area, separated into 3 individual 30 x 10 areas. Two target players, one at each end of the playing area, one central receiver.
- 1 minute active, 2 minute active rest. 4 sets, 1 reps per set. 1 minute rest between sets.
- Central player receives the pass centrally in the area, turning to play the pass out to the opposite target player. **Progression/Constraints** – Central player changes receiving angle along the central line within the area. 2. Central player follows to receive short, dribble to half point and release the pass. 3. Central player follows the pass to receive short, turn, and play the pass over a longer distance. 4. Variation of previous movements, but must now use non-dominant foot.
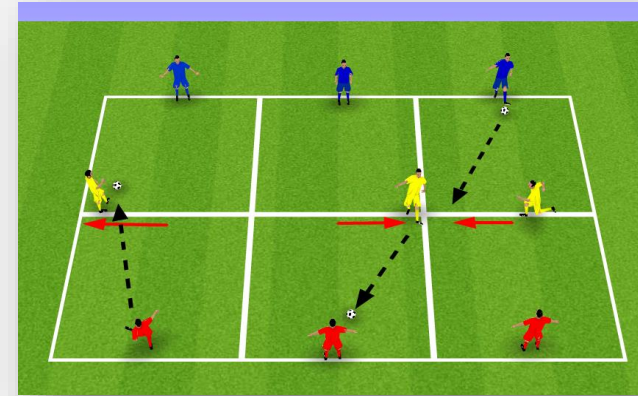
15 min

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 9 players 30 x 30 large area. Two target players around the outside, one active player centrally.
- 1 minute active, 2 minute active rest. 4 sets, 1 reps per set. 1 minute rest between sets.
- Central player receives the pass from outside target. Central player must now make the pass out, recognize the moment and action dependent on the movement of others in the shared area. Supporting angle and distance to change upon situation. Outside players to move along their touchline. **Progression** – 1. central players limited to number of touches. 2. passes must be played through the air. **Competition** – competing against others in the area, 1 point for every successful connection between target players through central player.
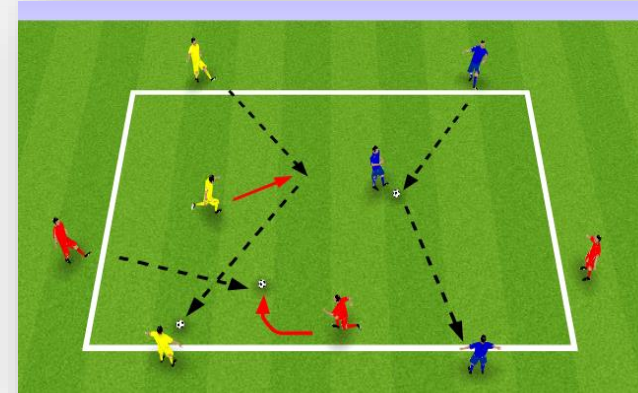
15 min

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 9 players 30 x 30 large area. 2 v 2 + 1 centrally, two outside targets at opposite sides of playing area.
- 4 sets, 4 minute game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets. Four goals around the outside, one goal per touchline.
- Switching the point of attack from one side of the area to the other. Upon gaining possession of the ball, opponents attack any of the 4 goals to reset the practice starting with possession. **Progression** – 1, neutral player must touch the ball before it can be played out to opposite target. 2. limited number of group touches. 3. All players are active in the active playing area, with any player receiving a pass on the touchline.
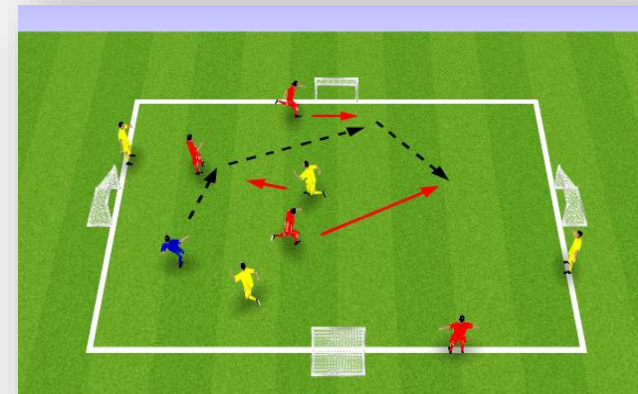
Session 4
Small Sided Games: Switching the Point of Attack

Activity 1
Small Sided Game
Activity 2
Small Sided Game

Player Elements
- Head Up, taking information from the environment
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Willingness and comfort to have possession of the ball

Objectives
- Utilize a variety of different passing techniques
- Recognition open spaces in wide positions
- Decision making and creativity performed by players

Psychological Skills
- Communication

Physiological Conditioning
- Agility
- Balance and Co-ordination

Mechanical Breakdown
1. Look at target
2. Eye on ball
3. Angle of approach
4. Non-kicking foot alongside ball in a comfortable position, knee bent
5. Strike Centre of ball with inside / outside of foot (Identified area of the ball)
6. Firm ankle
7. Follow through towards target

Coaching Points
- Decision Making – recognition of spaces and player movement. Compactness and balance of opponents.
- Movement – body positioning and movement to communicate intentions. Movement off the ball in attack and defense in support.
- Technique – use of both legs to control, kick and finish.
- Agility – body shape and movement in supporting and receiving. Turning to connect wide targets

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 15 x 35 for greater width than depth. Two wide target goals along one touch line, one central goal on opposite touchline. Teams change attacking direction after every set
- 4 sets, 4 minute 30 second game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets.
- Team attacking touchline with two wide targets to create opportunities to attack wide, opponents to attack centrally to single goal. **Progressions/Constraints** – 1. Opponents must score within 6 seconds of gaining possession. 2. Elected player limited to 2 touches when in possession for team attacking the wide targets.

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 15 x 35 for greater width than depth. Two wide target goals along one touch line, one central goal on opposite touchline. Mannequins added in central and wide areas respectively for additional scoring targets and realism. Teams change attacking direction after every set
- 4 sets, 4 minute 30 second game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets.
- Teams continue with the attacking themes of width to create changes in point of attack, and attacking intentions with transitional moment in regaining possession. Mannequins added to support specificity in the attack through additional target, points scored for accurate pass into mannequin. Both teams have central and wide targets as attacking options. **Progression/Constraint** - goals are worth 3 points, mannequins worth 1 point.
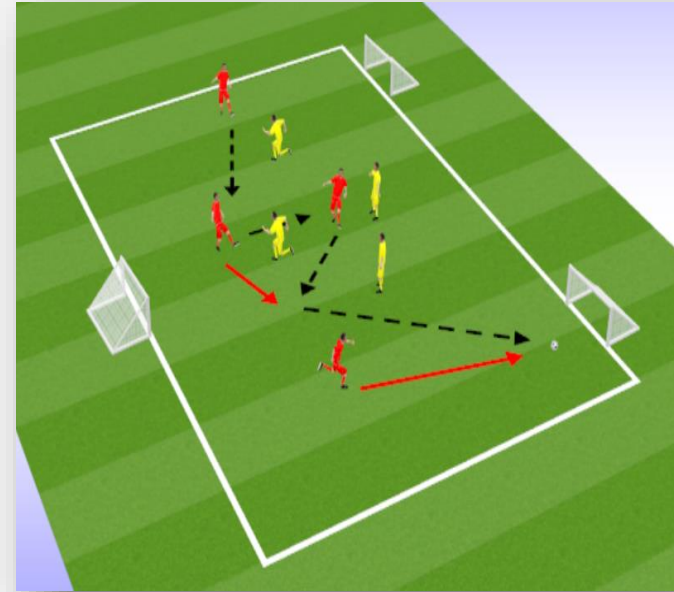
22 min
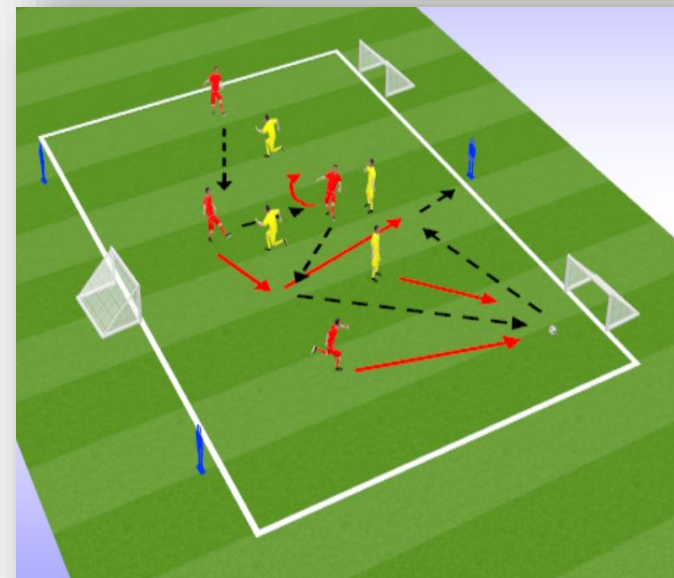
22 min

Session Summary

The level of complexity is adjusted based on the desired outcome, and closely aligns with the level of decision making, complexity represents the difficulty that a training practice involves (Bompa, 1999). Mallo (2014) identifies the four levels of complexity, and how each of these levels contain the previous one. Conditional, technical, tactical, and competition represent the four levels, and provide a framework for which each session is designed. Each session will have its own objectives, but are not trained exclusively at any one level, but will prioritize based on phase of learning, and individual focus. Technical focus will have more repetition with less complexity, but always trained in context, so decision making is never excluded (S1, S3, S5, S7) while more tactical sessions will increase decision making at the expense of repetition, but again, never trained in isolation.

Figure 3. Session 1 and Session 3 Breakdown
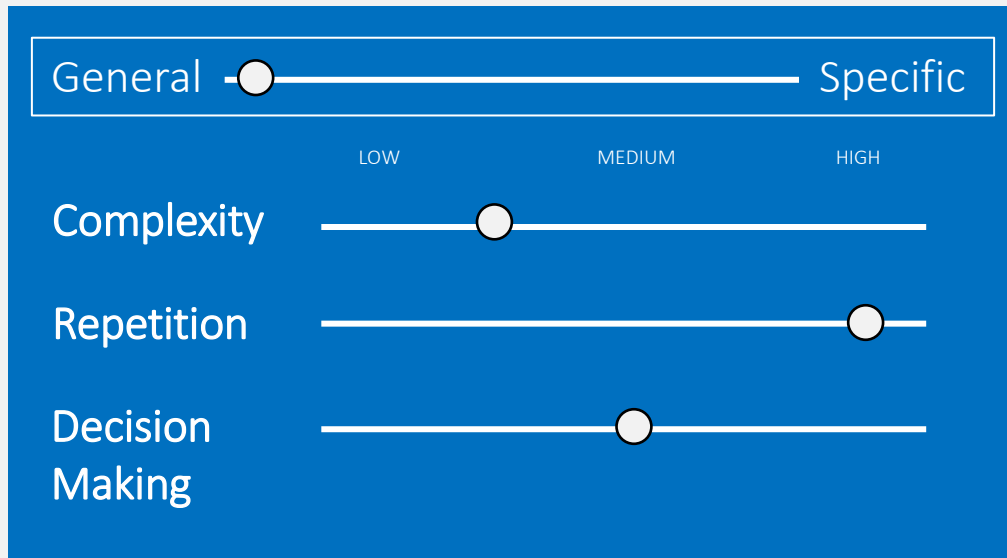
Session Summary

Figure 4. Session 1 and Session 3 Breakdown

General — ○ ——————— Specific

LOW   MEDIUM   HIGH

Complexity ——————○——————

Repetition ——————○——————

Decision Making ——————————○——

General sessions with players not in specific set positions. Slight increase in complexity between IDP skill acquisition sessions to the following small-sided game session with small numbers in competition. Repetition of actions slight reduces, but maintains a good amount due to small-sided game characteristic, with an increase in decision making from small-sided games provider more realistic game based scenarios.

Theory in Action

The club's pedagogical philosophy shapes both curriculum and session design, it is the role of the coach to shape sessions into a conscious activity designed to enhance learning in another (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999), and therefore an optimal learning environment is one in which the knowledge being taught is within context (Cassidy, 2000). Sessions 1 to 4 (S1 to S4), demonstrate a training cycle in which the pass is the focus of the players IDP, but always in context through dynamic movements, and S2 and S4 in small-sided game formats for game conditions in reference to the club game model (S2, vertical passes to break lines, S4, switching point of attack). Piaget (1976) Stages of Cognitive Development suggest an age range of 7-11 as the period when the individual takes a concrete situation and can apply it to moments of time and space. The use of small-sided games supports Piaget's theory in application to practice and is also supported by what is referred to as 'the golden age', for psychomotor skills. Nesti and Sulley (2014) explain how the use of small-sided games provides direction and competition in realistic environments, which stimulates the brain in the development on neural pathways. Piaget (1976) theory is applied through session design where the schemata (the pass) is progressed from a simple action into a more complex action, from a straight pass, to variable distances and angles (S1 to S3). Within a single session, S1, A1 to A3, takes the pass from a basic element, into an activity where time and space is constrained through opponents and playing area size constraints. S4 manipulates the playing area design with a wider area to encourage long

and short passes with multiple directions, ultimately challenging technique and decision. Vygotsky (1978) theory of social constructivism enhances learning through social interactions. Through group tasks in games where problem solving is a collaboration with others, and the coach's guidance as a more capable peer. Learning from these previous experiences from support of others is referred to as scaffolding, where levels of structure, support, and challenge are applied (Jones and Thomas, 2015). S3 provides skill acquisition through high repetition deliberate practice, then assimilates the action into a game situation through small sided games (S4), with the collection of teammates working together to find solutions to the scoring objectives of wide goals, all in reference to the desired player elements and game concepts.

Throughout the development phases in the session design (S1 to S10), scaffolding is consistent in its level of structure, Bruner (1961), from who scaffolding developed, had a clear vision of learning, "purpose of education is not to impart knowledge, but instead to facilitate a child's thinking and problem-solving skills which can be transferred to a range of situations". Through the long-term reference to a game plan, scaffolding is possible in a larger context, with presented opportunities framed to an idea (long and short passing (S3) framed to the big picture of switching the point of attack (S9), and vertical passes breaking multiple lines (S10)), and the coach can provide challenge to the player at an opportunity outside of chronological age. Consequently, curriculum and session design enhances the players abilities to master uncontextualized information that is related to micro-objectives and then asks them to produce knowledge (Maclaren, 2003), constructing knowledge from previous experiences to where the individual creates solutions to problems autonomously from their own cognitive development.

At micro level, S1 introduces passing, through 3 activities where complexity increases, and support is high. Coaching interventions take place in rest breaks throughout an activity in reinforcing the group on technical mechanics, and individual player interactions between activity transitions, with further review at the end of session.

My own learning came from an early experience with strict adherence to traditional, 'stop, standstill' interventions, where a player lost confidence and ultimately stopped playing. This led me to reflect and address my intervention strategies where an individual would not feel isolated and singled out in front of his peers.

The continued scaffolding is demonstrated in macro between S1 and S2, where small-sided games place the pass into game situations, and the player is learning in context, with others, and with coaching support to step in between games where discovery questions are offered for guidance. The scaffolding concept is applied in games through progressions and challenges; numerical advantages for increase in time and space, limited touches for challenge in time, this applies "increase control when students fail, and decrease control when students succeed" (van del Pol and Elbers, 2013). Jones and Thomas (2015) make sense of this applied theory as scaffolding "confirms the relationship between contingency, challenge, teacher response, and student learning".

The sessions designed in sequence are in line with the club philosophy of creativity, and fun for all players, and addresses the importance of long-term player participation. S2 and S4 are the second session in a weekly cycle which is always small-sided games, and not

shown are the third sessions of the week, which are free play. This offers a ratio of 1:2 in favor of play activities over deliberate practice. "Skill specific experiences are needed although careful consideration of the appropriateness of this experience is the vital element." (MacNamara et al, 2015). MacNamara et al (2014) found that deliberate practice did not largely affect performance but did note that it should not be totally overlooked as it is an important piece, but one of many. Within the same study it is noted that deliberate practice is associated with high performance, but "it may not contribute to performance differences at highest level of skill. This supports how game realistic situations can better support the players development, in a non-linear context where situations are forever changing, and therefore interaction with others is vital. Utilizing deliberate play through small-sided games (S2 and S4) and free play "is crucial to normal development and attainment of elite status" (Brener, 2016).

Deliberate play is more engaging for the youth player, and with many added benefits. Deliberate play fosters intrinsic motivation, which in turn allows for longer participation in sport, and also supports empowerment of the individual player, and creativity through freedom of decision making (Cote et al, 2016). With the constraints placed on the activities of S2 and S4, skill acquisition is supported in a fun environment. The constraints added to deliberate play in small-sided games is fundamental in the mutuality of the performer and the environment (Renshaw et al, 2019), and therefore skill acquisition is developed through the functional relationship between the performer and the environment (Zelaznik, 2014).

The use of deliberate play is also key to the players development of agility, balance, and co-ordination. Early years are important for the development of the individual's physical literacy (MacNamara et al, 2015; Brener, 2016;), where "development of fundamental movement skills starts at birth and may continue until 11 – 12 years" (Ford et al, 2011). This development provides confidence in a child's ability to perform a wide range of physical ability in sport situations.

Agility is prioritized in foundation phase and is trained earlier in the week. Activity 1 in S1 and S3, are with the ball for context, but to also perform multiple changes in direction. Owen (2016) draws attention to a study where changes in direction in pre-planned activities improved agility, but also added specificity may also provide superior results. The design of small-sided games also shows a greater increase in agility testing. Throughout the four sessions, and within each activity, changes of direction are a constant characteristic of the activities, and supports the improvement in a player's agility, balance, and co-ordination. Short term intensive training (3 – 4-minute activities) will provide for high volume of speed acceleration and repeated actions, and by using small-sided games a high repetition of changes of direction can be performed (Owen, 2016).

Session 5
Long and Short Passes in Changing Point of Attack

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Rondo
Activity 3
Game Situation

Player Elements
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Head Up, taking information from the environment
- Limited touches to dictate speed of play

Objectives
- Optimize use of both feet in lateral movements
- Optimize body shape when receiving the ball to support next action
- Using short and long passes to attract and then find 1 v 1 situations in wide positions

Psychological Skills
- Control

Physiological Conditioning
- Speed Endurance
- Agility

Key Technical/Tactical Coaching Points
- Decision Making – head up, take in the information from playing area. Checking shoulder to see next action ahead of receiving the ball. Recognition of compactness and balance of opponents playing units.
- Communication, verbal and nonverbal – body shape, direction of pass to communicate with teammate. Passive movements into unoccupied spaces. Direction of first touch.
- Movement – into a position to limit touches when turning. Get out of defender's shadow to provide angles of support, body position to open hips to field. Create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation.
- Technique – use of both legs to receive and pass. Quality of pass, weight and accuracy, communication with player movement.
- Ball Circulation, decrease time on ball, increase space to play in. attract and disorientate opponents. Disguise action with feints to unbalance opponent.

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 12 players 36 x 36 large area, separated into two individual 12 x 36 areas. Two target players, one at each end of the playing area, two supporting players on nearest touchline.
- 2 minute active, 2 minute rest. 4 sets. Repeated short and long bursts within each set.
- Repeat pass between the target player and supporting side player, upon driving the ball over distance, short sprint to location of supporting side player. Supporting player moves to become the next target player. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Use of non-dominant foot. 2. Explosive sprint to second group of supporting players. 3. Explosive sprint in following the pass

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players 30 x 30 large area. 10 x 10 central area. 4 v 2, + 4 on outside of large playing area.
- 2 minutes, 5 sets, 1 minute rest between sets.
- Central four players to complete 3 successful passes, with the fourth pass being played into a wide area with supporting player. Playing passing out wide sprints to take receviers position, receiver dribbles to centre, passing to team of 4. Longest active player as defender joins the remaining 3 players in keeping possession. If defender wins possession, switch roles with player the ball was won from. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. must play a split pass before being able to play the ball out to supporting player. 2. central players limited to number of touches. 3. passes must be played through the air.

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area full width of pitch, touchline brought to edge of 18 yard area. 4 v 3 in central area, 20 x 20. 2 target players in wide positions in attacking half, with mannequin in corners for 1 v 1 unopposed in wide areas.
- 4 sets, 4 minute game for 1 set, 1 minute rest in-between sets.
- 4 v 3 in central playing area, team out of possession drops one player out to concede numbers. Team in possession to make 3 successful passes before playing wide to target player. On the pass, 2 players break from central playing area and support in a 3v1 going to goal, scoring from a cross. **Progression/Constraints – 1.** outside opponent to make recovery run to prevent cross. 2. 4 v 4 in central area, wide player to make recovery run from own half to prevent cross, creating 3 v 2 in attack.
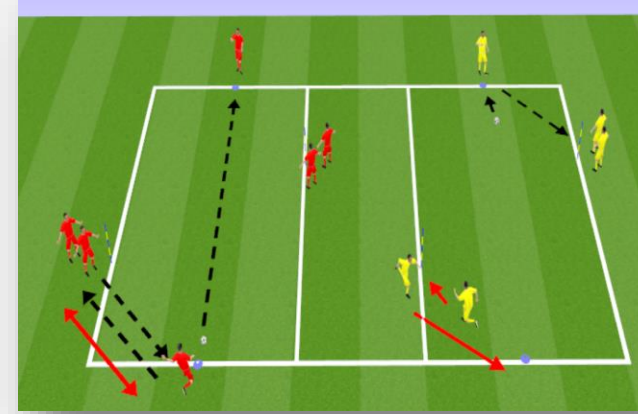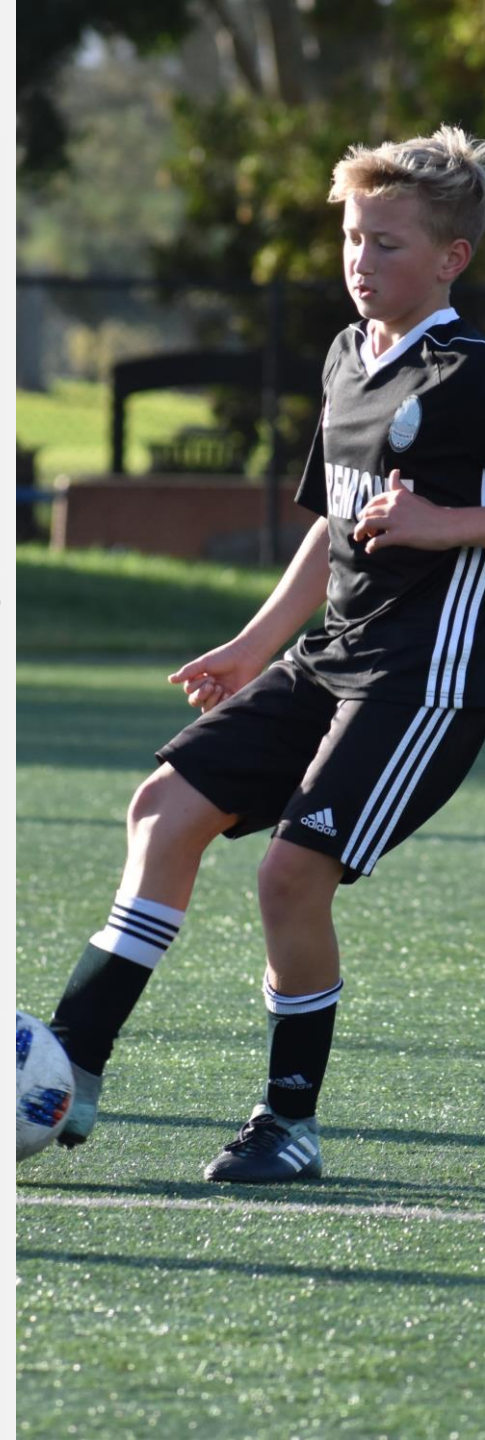

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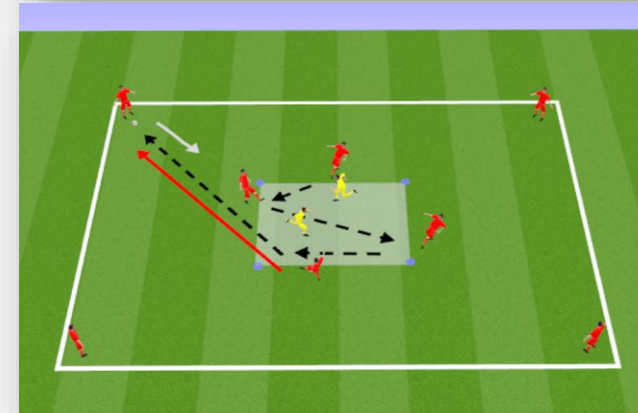
15 min

20 min

Session 6
Creating Width in Attack

Activity 1
Activation Warm Up - Rondo
Activity 2
Positional Game
Activity 3
Small Sided Game - Constraints

Player Elements
- Variety of striking techniques for disguised passes and finishing
- Repeat passes - attract opponents, disorientate opponents, adjust body shape
- Laterality, use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field

Objectives
- Recognize moments to create with from compactness and balance of opponents
- Use of body movement and shape in communicating moment to create width.
- Use of both feet and disguised passes to disorientate opponents

Psychological Skills
- Control

Physiological Conditioning
- Speed Endurance
- Agility

Key Technical/Tactical Points:
- Communication, verbal and non-verbal. Body shape to provide cues of intentions. Passes played to spaces around receiving player to support decision making.
- Body movement, Movement off the ball to create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation.
- Body shape, open to field for spacial awareness, communication with supporting players. Near and far options around the ball.
- Decision Making, awareness of space and pressure, checking shoulder for 360-degree view.
- Quality of pass, weight, accuracy and selection of pass type; communication with player movement, anticipation of next action and game scenario.
- Ball Circulation, decrease time on ball, increase space to play in through repeat passes, attract and disorientate opponents.
- Disguise action with feints to unbalance opponent.
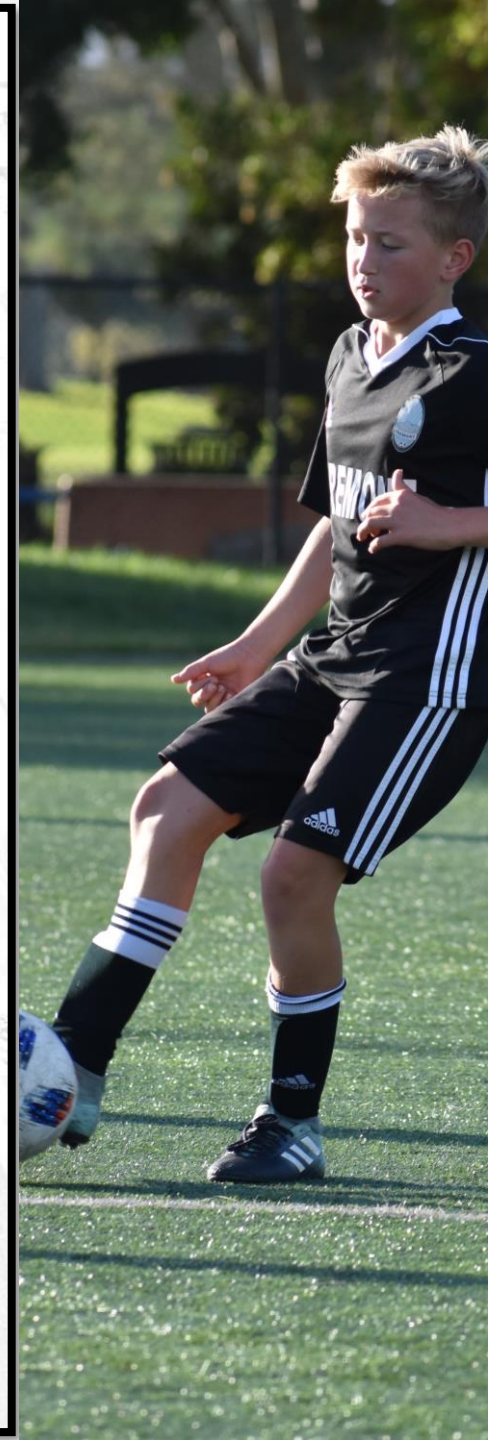
Session Outline

Activity 1 -Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players active (4 v 4 + 4), 20 x 30 area for width. 4 neutral players on the outside of the playing area.
- 3 minute active, 2 minute rest. 3 sets.
- Maintain possession of the ball in a central 4 v 4 game, 4 neutral players on the outside. Ball movement to attract centrally to open space for wide neutral targets. Upon losing possession switch with outside neutrals, outside players become active in central area as defenders.

Activity 2 -Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players active (5 v 5 + 2), 20 x 40 area for width. 2 neutral players on the outside of the playing area in wide positions.
- 4 minute active, 1 minute rest. 3 sets.
- Maintain possession of the ball in a central 5 v 5 game, 2 neutral players on the outside. Ball movement to attract centrally to open space for wide neutral targets. Upon losing possession immediately work to regain possession, organize to prevent the switch of play and deny opponents width. **Progressions/Constraints** – 1. a. Individual player selected to be pivot – limited to 2 touches. b. must receive a pass before switch can be completed.

Activity 3 -Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 14 players active, full width with length between half way lone and edge of opponents 18 yard area. 3 separate areas within playing area lengthwise, 2 wide channels with of touchline to 18 yard area, 3 target goals across width of the field for both teams.
- 7 minutes active, 1 minute rest. 2 sets.
- Maintain possession of the ball in central channel. Ball movement to attract centrally to open space for wide player to move into channel but only once the pass is being made, only one opponent can enter channel to regain possession. **Progressions/Constraints** – 1. Individual player selected from both teams to act as pivot. 2. Ball must leave wide channel and either switch to opposite channel or return to channel before scoring. 3. Central goals worth same amount of points to create further realism and remove bias towards defending only wide areas.
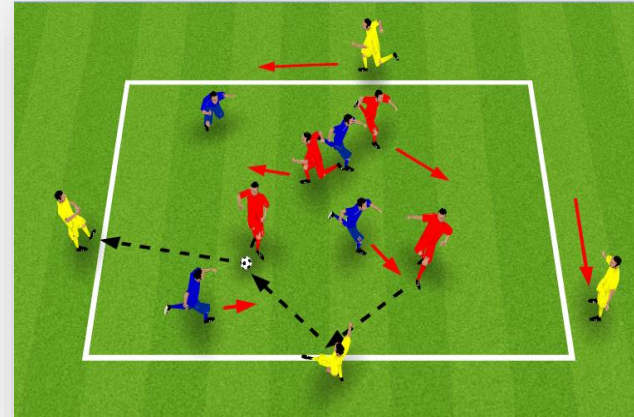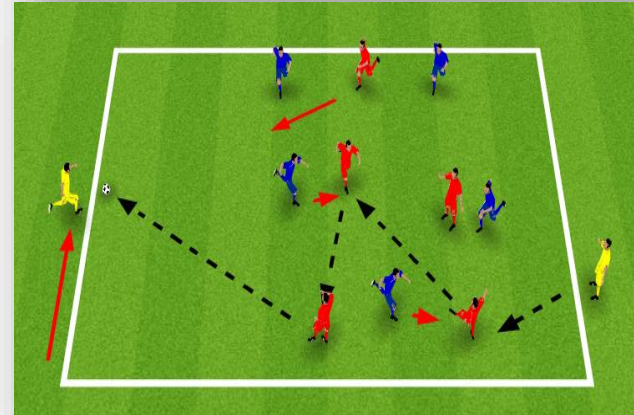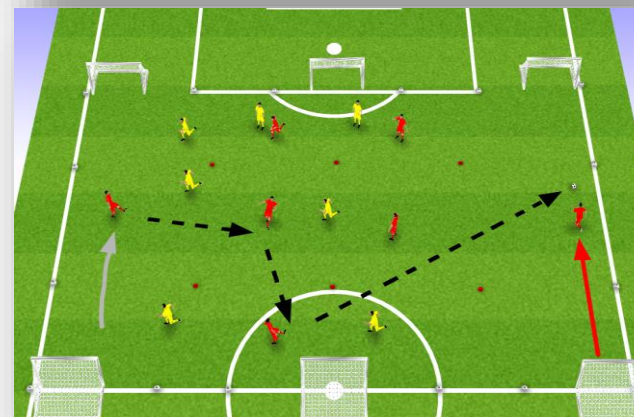

15 min

15 min

16 min

Session 7
Player Movement and Body Shape

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Technical Unopposed Practice
Activity 3
Skill Acquisition Opposed

Player Elements
- Laterality, use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field
- Limited touches to dictate speed of play
- Triangulation to create spare player

Objectives
- Optimize use of both feet in lateral movements
- Optimize body shape when receiving the ball to support next action
- Utilize active and passive movements to create triangulation

Psychological Skills
- Control

Physiological Conditioning
- Agility
- Speed Acceleration

Key Technical/Tactical Coaching Points
- Decision Making – angle and pressure from opponents in selecting direction and pass type to supporting player. Recognize teammates movements in creating spaces to occupy to create triangulation and overloads.
- Communication, verbal and nonverbal – body shape, direction of pass to communicate with teammate. Passive and active movements into unoccupied spaces. Direction of first touch.
- Movement – into a position to limit touches when turning - orientating body to see at least 3 corners of playing area. Get out of defender's shadow to provide angles of support, passive and active movements to create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation.
- Technique – use of both legs to receive and pass. Quality of pass, weight and accuracy, communication with player movement. Selection of pass type, driven, lofted, bend.
- Ball Circulation, decrease time on ball, increase space to play in. attract and disorientate opponents. Disguise action with feints to unbalance opponent.

Session Outline

**Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description**

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players 30 x 30 large area, 15 x 15 central area. Starting position of players halfway along touchline to create diamond.
- 1 minute active, 1 minute rest. 6 sets. Repeated short and long bursts within each set.
- Working in one direction, make the pass to receiving player, sprint to follow the pass. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Switch groups each minute between the shorter and longer distance. 2. Change direction to use other foot. 3. Add second ball to reduce rest period and stretch physical component

**Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description**

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players 30 x 30 area. Target at either end of the playing area, 3 players centrally in possession.
- 3 minutes active, 1 minute rest. 4 sets.
- Target players at opposite sides of the playing area, three central players in possession unopposed. Ball movement from one target player to the other. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Each central pass must split two players from the other team. 2. Limit collective touches in passes between the two targets.

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players 30 x 30 area. Target at either end of the playing area, 3 players centrally in possession.
- 4 minutes active, 1 minute rest. 4 sets.
- 3 v 3 + 2, passing the ball from one target player to the other. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Point scored for every pass that splits opponents. 2. One player selected as pivot who must be involved in each transfer between targets 3. Reduce area size to increase pressure and limit time, increasing number of football actions.
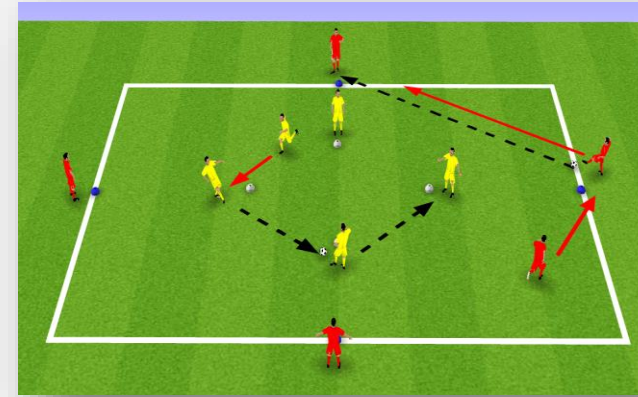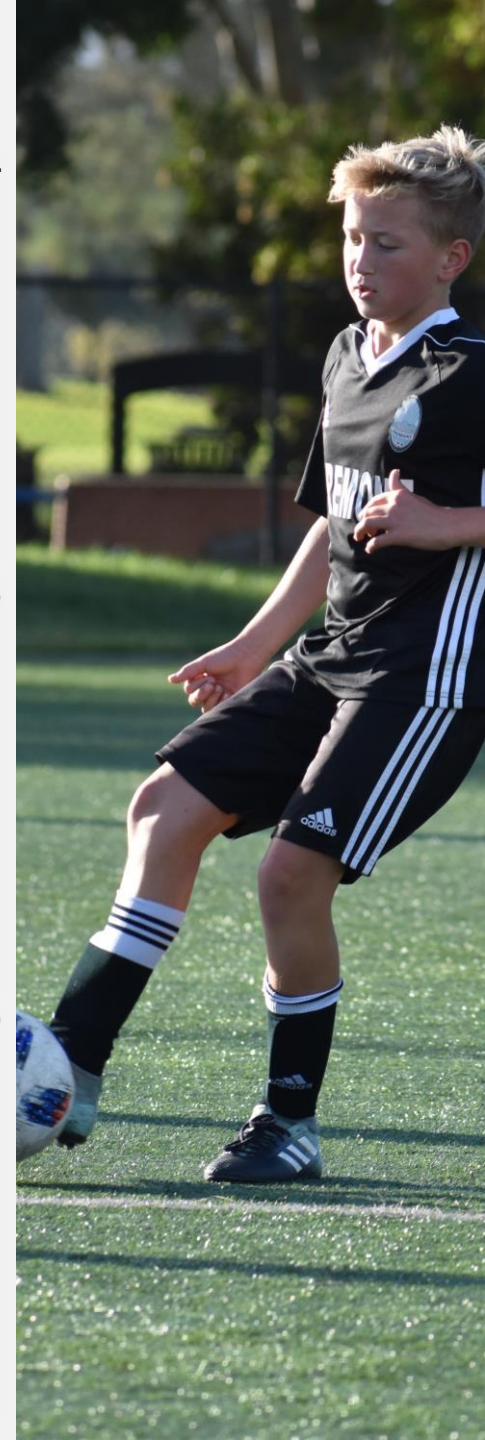

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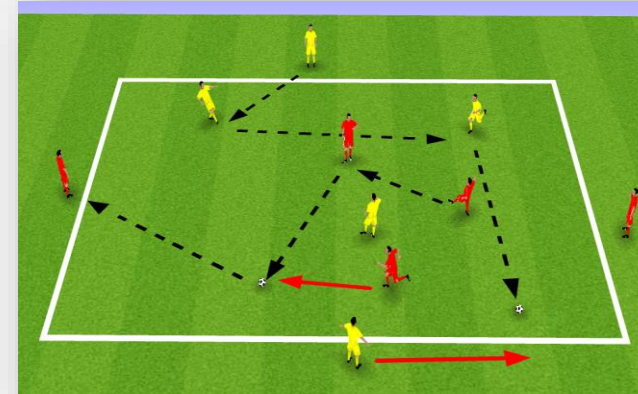
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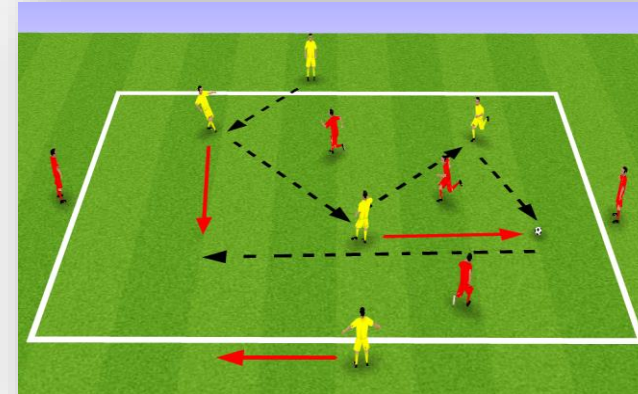
20 min

Session 8
Creating Width in Attack

Activity 1
Activation Warm Up - Rondo
Activity 2
Positional Game
Activity 3
Multidirectional Game

Player Elements
- Head Up, taking information from the environment
- Laterality, use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field
- Pass to players in open spaces, from well positioned player

Objectives
- Optimize awareness of opponent's compactness.
- When to utilize short passes to attract, and long pass to open players.
- Use of body shape and movement with limited touches to find open players

Psychological Skills
- Control

Physiological Conditioning
- Speed Acceleration
- Agility

Key Technical/Tactical Points:
- Communication, verbal and non-verbal.
- Body movement, Movement off the ball to create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation.
- Body shape, open to for special awareness, communication with supporting players. Near and far options around the ball.
- Use both feet with open body orientation to the field.
- Decision Making, awareness of space and pressure.
- Technical quality of pass, weight and accuracy, communication with player movement, anticipation of next action and game scenario.
- Disguise action with feints to unbalance opponent.
- Repeat passes to attract and disorientate opponents, while positioning body.
- Feints upon receiving the pass to unbalance opponent. After the pass, continue play and provide supporting trajectories.
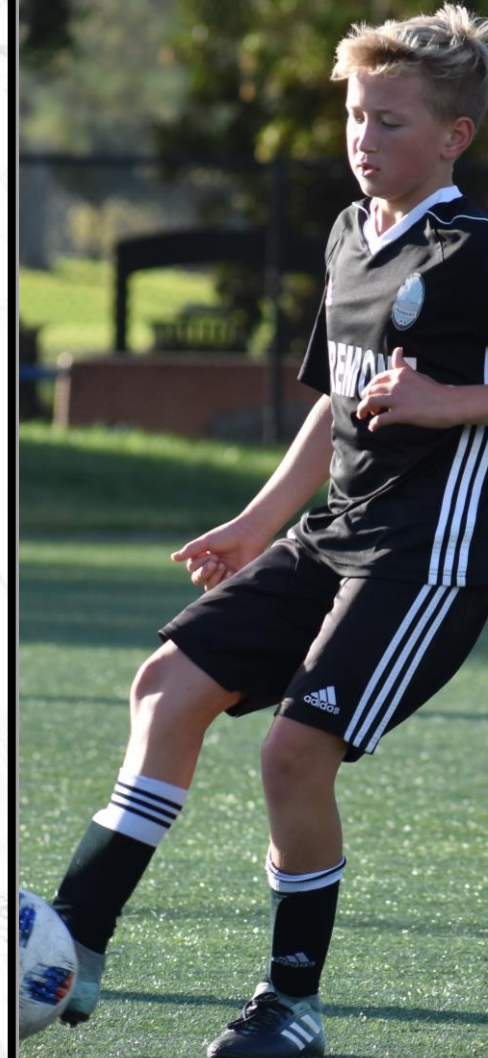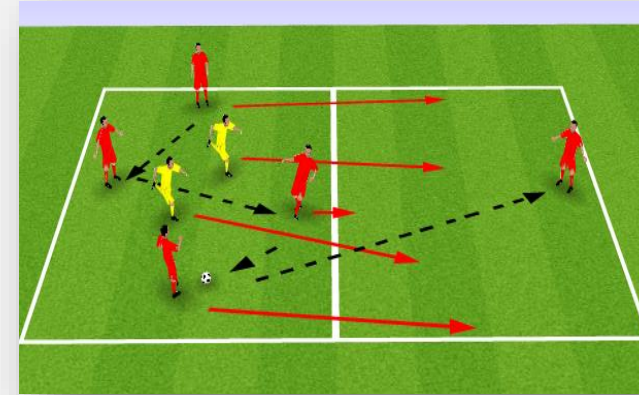
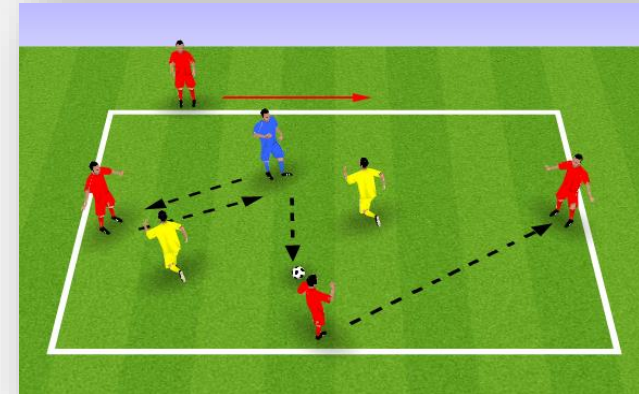**Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description**
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 7 players 30 x 10 large area, 2 areas of 15 x 10. 4 v 2 in one grid, target player on touchline of opposite grid. Central player acts as a pivot.
- 2 minute active, 1 minute rest. 6 sets.
- Possession game in one small area, 4 v 2, maintain possession for minimum of 3 passes before playing into next grid over. Central pivot stays, two attackers and two defenders move across and continue the game. If winning possession, defender switches roles with the player possession wass won from. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Must split the seam of the two defenders before switching grids. 2. Limit on total team touches to switch the point of attack. 3. Pass into target player can only come following a repeat pass with pivot player.

15 min

**Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description**
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 7 players 30 x 10 large area. All players active within the playing area. 4 v 2 (+1).
- 2 minute active, 2 minute rest. 5 sets.
- One player highlighted as the central pivot. Possession game with the target of one wide player receiving the ball on the touchline. Role of pivot is attract opponents centrally freeing up space in wide areas through repeat passes centrally. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Pivot must receive a pass though the seam before either passing or combining to play the pass wide. 2. Limit placed on pivots number of touches, 1 or 2 touch to challenge movement, body positioning, and special awareness.

20 min

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description
- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 10 players 40 x 20 large area, 2 wide channels 20 x 3, 15 x 10 central target area. Pitch geography central in the field. 3 v 3 (+4).
- 6 minute active, 2 minute rest. 3 sets.
- 3 v 3 in central playing area, with nominated pivot player. Central player must receive the pass within the target area before a switch can be completed. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. *Regression* – the two nominated pivots can play unopposed in target area if initial challenge is too high. 2. Repeat pass must be played with either support from in front or behind outside target before switch can be completed. 3. Increase number to 4 v 4 (+2), with opponent allowed to prevent switch by marking wide player in channel.
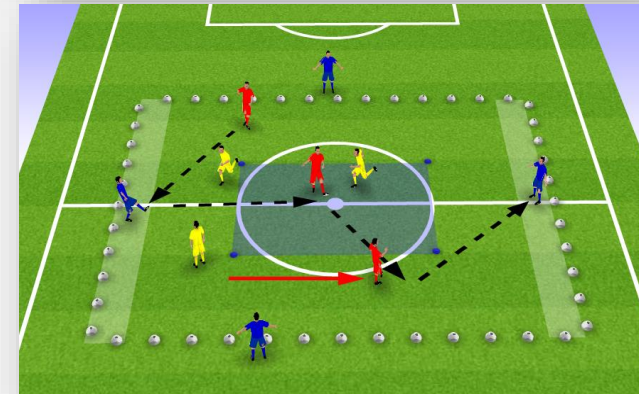
20 min

Session 9
Optimizing Possession Through the Playing Zones

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Tactical Game
Activity 3
Small Sided Game

Player Elements
- Read it, act on it, develop it
- Pass to players in open spaces, from well positioned player
- Laterality, use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field

Objectives
- Recognize opportunities for vertical passes into players in spaces of mutual assistance centrally.
- Initiate play from own goal, use of goalkeeper to start play.
- Utilize laterality in finding a wat around opponents when compact and unbalanced.

Psychological Skills
- Concentration

Physiological Conditioning
- Aerobic Conditioning

Key Technical/Tactical Points:
- Body movement, Movement off the ball to create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation. Movement between seams to create passing channels.
- Triangulation for multiple supporting options.
- Body shape, open for special awareness, communication with supporting players. Near and far options around the ball.
- Use both feet with open body orientation to the field.
- Decision Making, awareness of time, space and pressure.
- Quality of pass, weight and accuracy, communication with player movement, anticipation of next action and game scenario.
- Awareness of angles of pressure before receiving the pass, weight and direction of pass for secure possession to player in open space, movement after the pass be available in support.
- Repeat passes to attract and disorientate opponents, while positioning body.

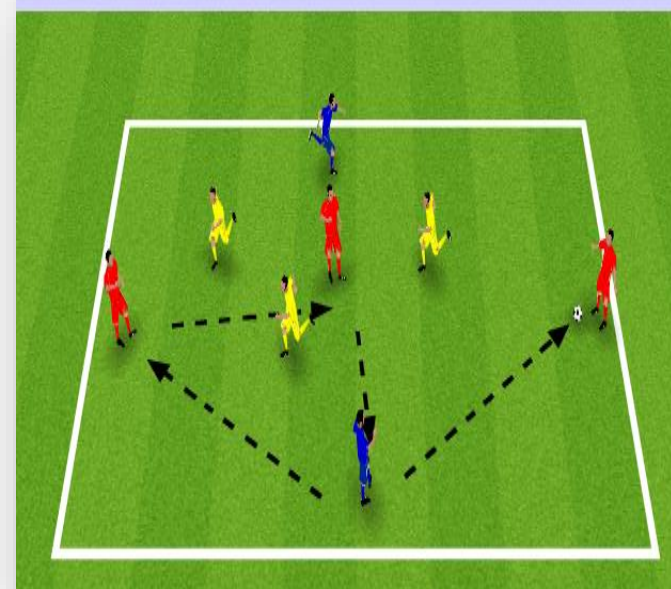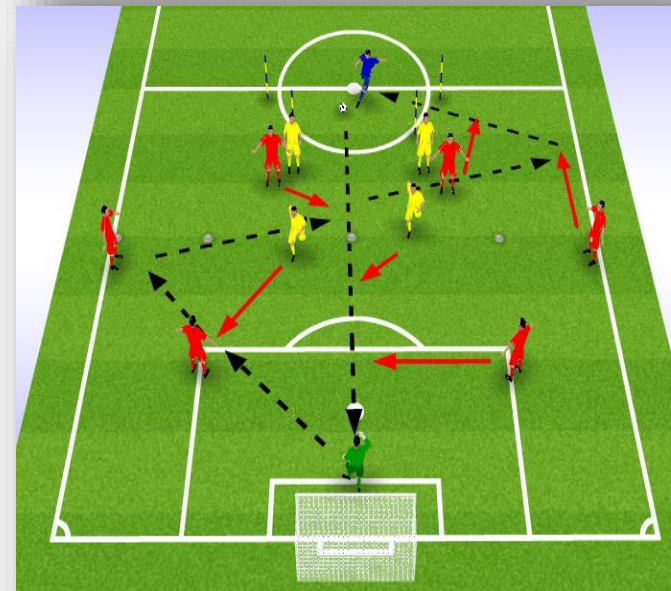## Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 35 x 15 area. 3 v 3 (+2), 3 in possession use the width playing through the middle of the playing area as shown. Two neutrals across top and bottom touchline.
- 2 minute active, 1 minute rest. 4 sets.
- Possession game trying to achieve play through the middle between neutrals and CM, or by going into wide areas. Upon transition, immediate press to regain possession by pressing the ball and reducing spaces. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. CM restricted to 1-2 touch in possession. 2. On the regain of possession first pass must be positive towards either one of the two neutrals, securing the first pass and showing positive attacking action.

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e., 11 players full width x 30 area, lined off for second playing area. Game starts/restarts with neutral inside half circle, playing through ball into keeper, starting point for all players inside second playing area. Neutral also acts as target for attacking team.
- 3-minute active, 2-minute rest. 4 sets.
- Build up play from a transitional moment with through ball to keeper. Recognizing from build up play moments to play centrally or recognizing balance and compactness of opponents to go wide. In transitional moments counterattack only get 8 seconds to get an attempt at goal. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Point of attack cannot be switched more than once. 2. CM on restricted touches to dictate rhythm of the game. 3. In transition, FB are frozen, CM must track their players and protect the middle in a 4 v 4 counterattack to goal.
- **What**: building up play through the zones. **Who:** GK, DF unit, MF unit, pivot roles within the unit. **How:** Triangulation to overcome opponents, decision making before, during, and after release of the pass, laterality to find wide spaces **When:** high press from opponents. **Where:** Zone A and B

12 min

20 min

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area full width and length from goal line to edge of opponents 18-yard area (3 playing zones). 9 v 9, 1-4-3-1 v. 1-3-3-2. Restarts direct from keeper, varied with through balls played in from coaches on the touchline 10 yards into own half. Attacking striker and opposition defensive line to stay in marked out area, allowing for objectives to be presented in game scenarios realistic to the game context. Time restriction on oppositions attack, 10 seconds to score
- 12-minute active, 3-minute rest. 2 sets.
- Small sided game trying to achieve play through the middle between defensive unit and CDM, or by going into wide areas. Upon transition, immediate press to regain possession by pressing the ball and reducing spaces.
- **What**: building up play through the zones. **Who:** GK, DF unit, MF unit, pivot roles within the unit. **How:** Triangulation to overcome opponents, decision making before, during, and after release of the pass. **When:** high press from opponents. **Where:** Zone A and B. **Why**: Reference to game model in principles of play in Zone A - Play through the units. Recognize opportunities for vertical passes into players in spaces of mutual assistance and cooperation. Initiate play from own goal, use of goalkeeper to start play. Laterality. Individual and collective concepts
- **Progression/Constraints – Individual Development of Player (CM)** – 1. CM restricted to 1-2 touch in possession. 2. No two passes in a row can go backwards.

30 min

Key Technical/Tactical Points

- **Problem 1**: Yellow high press compact and balanced on to the strong side of the field. Solution: Repeat passes with team mate to attract opponents into the central corridor, movement off the ball in mutual spaces to create triangulation with GK, DF unit and MF unit, laterality to move ball quickly to opposite wide corridor to create forward spaces into Zone B. **What if**: CF cuts off the return pass to CB teammate? Triangulation with GK, CB, and CDM, to create passing channel into Zone B.
- **Problem 2:** Yellow high press in MF man to man onto CDM. **Solution:** Laterality and orientation of body to see advanced spaces, onto the lateral corridor creating space in central corridor for CB to advance and create numerical advantage. **What if:** Yellow high press onto FB? Use variation of short and long pass to attract opponents, allowing advanced spaces in cooperation spaces to play longer vertical pass.
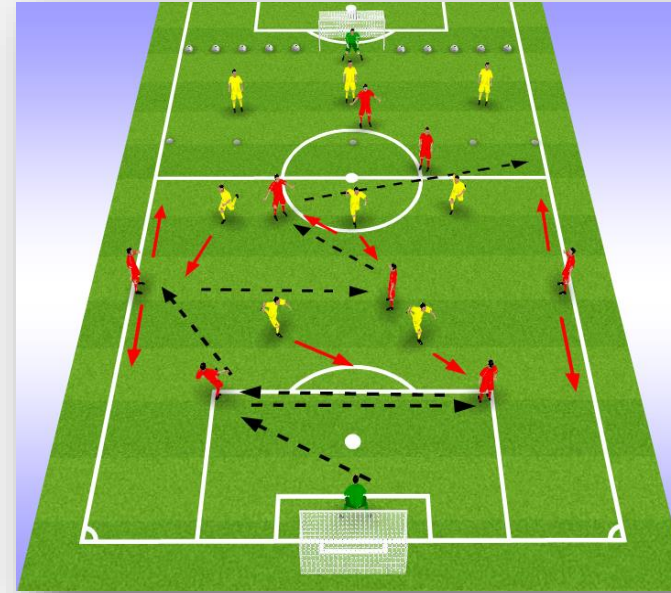
Session 10
Overcoming the Last Opponents

Activity 1
Physiological Conditioning
Activity 2
Tactical Game
Activity 3
Small Sided Game

Player Elements
- Triangulation to create spare player
- Limited touches to dictate speed of play
- Laterality, use of both feet, open body orientation to see most of the field

Objectives
- Create central overloads through movement to create spare player
- Recognize the moment to use vertical passes to go beyond opponents
- When to use short and long passes to inorganize opponents

Psychological Skills
- Concentration

Physiological Conditioning
- Aerobic Conditioning

Key Technical/Tactical Points:
- Body movement, mobility off the ball to create space to receive, and movement off the release to create options and triangulation. Movement between seams to create passing channels.
- Triangulation for inside passes to compact opponents centrally and free up lateral corridors.
- Use of footwork in 1v1 situations in shared spaces.
- Body shape, open for special awareness, communication with supporting players. Near and far options around the ball.
- Use both feet with open body orientation to the field.
- Decision Making, awareness of space and pressure, type of pass for different outcomes.
- Quality of pass, weight and accuracy, communication with player movement, anticipation of next action and game scenario. Repeat passes to attract and disorientate opponents, while positioning body.
- Quick 1-2 touches of the ball to set the pace of the game in Zone C.

Session Outline

Activity 1 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players (3 x 3 yards per player, i.e. 8 players 35 x 15 area, length greater than width. 6 v 2, 6 players in possession with 2 defenders pressing the 4 in one half.
- 4 minute active, 1 minute rest. 3 sets.
- Possession game in a 4 v 2 with 2 further players in vertical spaces of support. The 4 players use repeat passes and triangular movements of ball rotation to open up vertical passing channels. On the long pass the central pair drop to touchline and end pair step into central area, defenders follow. On transition immediate press to regain possession, opponents take area vacated continuing the ball rotation. **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Limited touches for the central pair. 2. Pair regaining possession must make the first pass positive to furthest pair.

Activity 2 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area appropriate for the number of players, full width and length of one playing half, 8 v 7 in the central two vertical channels. FB's and WF to create width by occupying wide channels at the right moment. CDM initiates play by collecting ball at halfway.
- 8-minute active, 2-minute rest. 2 sets.
- Full midfield and attacking units with support from FB's, playing against a back four and MF twin screen. Opponents upon winning possession to make 5 successful passes around the high press.
- **What:** Overcoming last opponents. **Who:** Midfielders and forwards combining. **How:** Ball and player movement to create overloads in central channels, through triangulation. **When:** In possession stage during control. **Where:** Zone C into Zone D.
- **Progression/Constraints** – 1. Change starting point, with coaches playing a pass behind from a starting point at edge of Zone C/D. 2. CDM limited in number of touches. 3. Team touches limited in different zones.
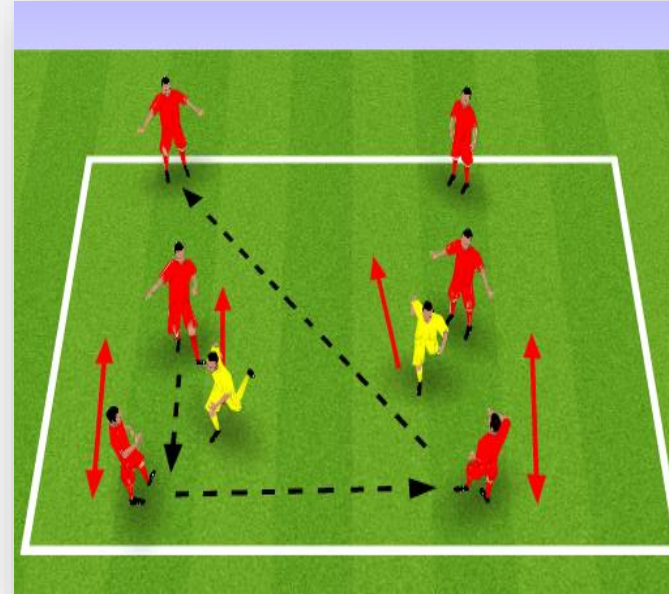
15 min

20 min

Activity 3 –Organisation, Practice Layout and Description

- Playing area full width and length from opponent's goal line to edge of own 18-yard area (3 playing zones). 9 v 9, 1-3-2-3 v. 1-4-3-1. Restarts direct from keeper, varied with through balls played in from coaches on the touchline 10 yards into opponent's half. Opponents' striker not to drop out of Zone C . Time restriction on oppositions attack, 10 seconds to score
- 13-minute active, 3-minute rest. 2 sets.
- Small sided game trying to inorganize a compact defensive opponent. Recognizing moments to create triangulation and overloads centrally or attract opponents to free up space in wide areas. Upon transition, immediate press to regain possession by pressing the ball and reducing spaces, opponents restricted to 10 seconds to play on the counterattack.
- **What:** Overcoming last opponents. **Who:** Midfielders and forwards combining. **How:** Ball and player movement to create superiority in central channels, through triangulation. **When:** In possession stage during control, into definition. **Where:** Zone C into Zone D. **Why**: Reference to game model in principles of play in Zone C/D – quick ball movement with triangulation to create overloads and open up vertical pass opportunities. Recognize when central area too compact to pass wide into open areas for 1v0, 1v1.
- **Progression/Constraints – Individual Development of Player (CDM)** – 1. CDM restricted in touches. 2. Challenge to get forward and combine with CF in creating central overload. 3. Opponents upon transition must play within 3 passes a ball in behind to striker, CDM to recognize moment and cut off the passing channel.

Key Technical/Tactical Points

- **Problem 1** – Compact lines of opposition, balanced between the 2 central corridors. **Solution:** Use repeat passes with inside player to attract the DF unit onto the CF. Mobility from support in cooperation spaces into spaces made from CF and MF passive movements to create triangulation and passing channels behind DF unit. **What if** – DF doesn't follow movement of CF into space between units? Support in lateral corridors to receive pass in open space to play against opponent in shared space with footwork to get behind DF unit. **Problem 2** – Balanced opposition through the corridors, preventing width on the flank. **Solution:** Utilize inside players and create triangulation of support for increased passing channels to disorganize opponents. **What if** – central compactness remains and passing channels closed? Use alternating passes of short and long, short into central playing area to commit compactness, with long angle pass in behind the open FB position.
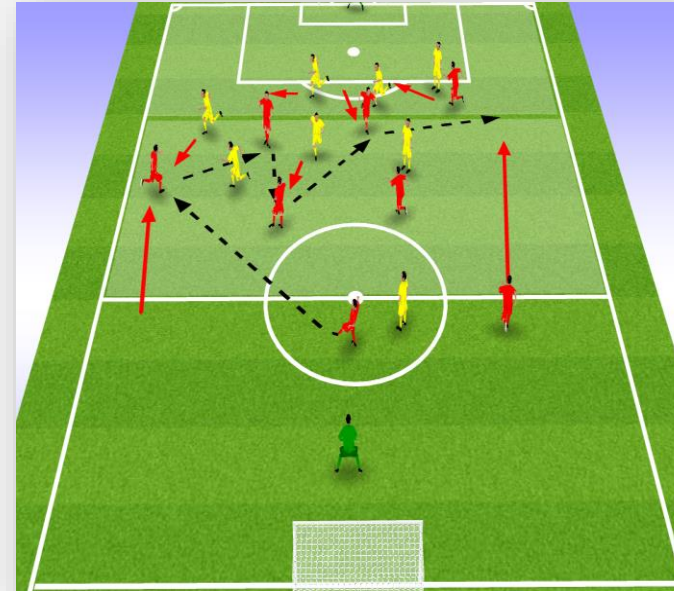
32 min

Session Summary

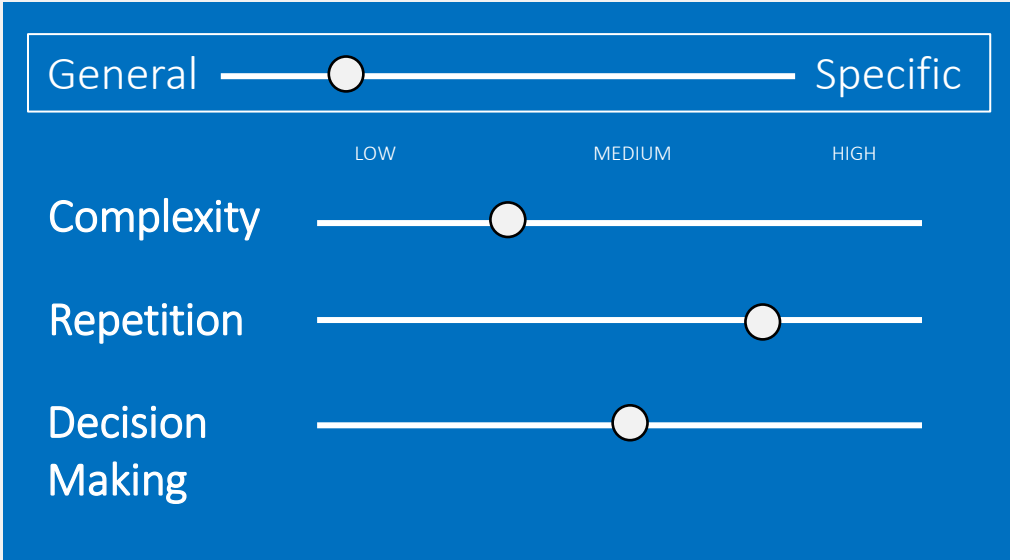**Figure 5 Session 5 and Session 7 Breakdown**

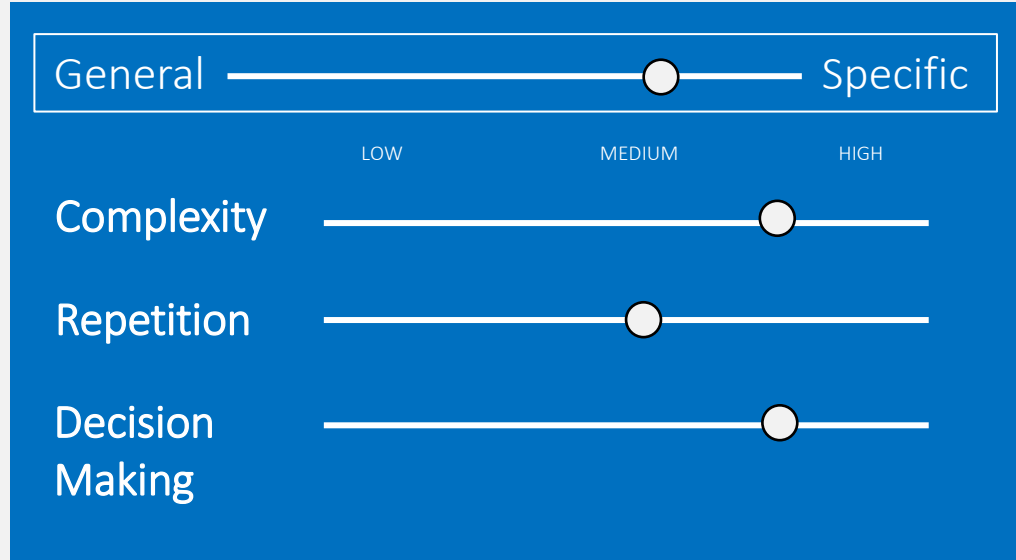**Figure 6. Session 6 and Session 8 Breakdown**

Figure 7. Session 9 and Session 10 Breakdown
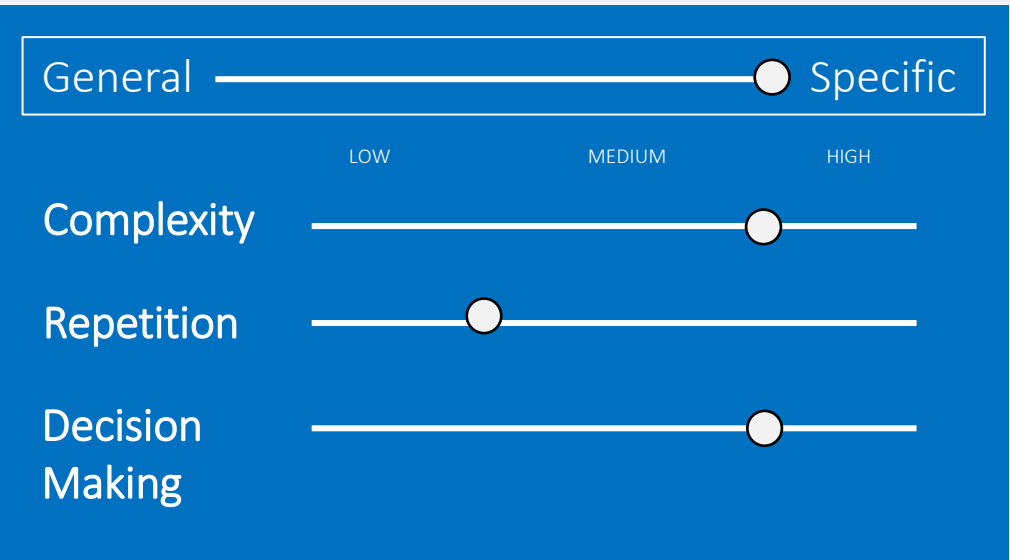
Youth development phase balances individual within a team training with fairly general skill acquisition, with a follow up session with individual challenges placed on specific position to increase specificity. This increases complexity and decision making through game-based scenarios, with a slight drop off in repetition, but small sided games allows for greater repetition than large sided games. Professional phase very specific in unit communication and individual constraints in set positions. Fewer specific technical repetitions, but greater opportunity for decision making in more complex situations.

Individual player development in fundamental phase is focused on the squad learning individual elements as part of an IDP (S1 to S4), where the youth development phase has designed sessions and activities for the individual within the team (S5 to S10). Mallo (2014) offers guidance on this for the importance on the individual being needing to be integrated into the team structure, as out of context learning will not improve the players footballing qualities. The individual is a key element in a complex structure (team), and therefore session design while in a team context will support individual player development, "through the interaction of the three core categories of constraints – task, environment, and individual – a learner will self organize in attempts to generate effective movement solutions" (Renshaw et al, 2010). Constraints and progressions are placed on the unit (S5, S6, S9, and S10), and specific individual traits (S6, S7, S8, and S10).

To successfully implement a constraints led approach, it is important for the detail to be specific, i.e. taking in information of angle, distance, speed, of opponents and teammates, "in a constraints led approach, to ensure that practice tasks specify performance environments, highly specific simulations need to be high in representative design", (Renshaw et al, 2010). Pitch geography (S5, S6, S8, S9, S10), area size, and constraints which lead to repetition of the desired objective in the game model must be designed. Limiting a teams collective touches (S5, S8, S10) will demand players to move off the ball and scan early for quicker decisions, and adjust body shape to be open to see as much of the

field as possible to take in relevant information and perform quicker actions that can communicate intentions to teammates. For increased decision making and greater complexity of task, this is also applied to the individual to support their individual development within a role (throughout multiple activities to challenge space and time).

Decision making is key to elite performance. As already stated, deliberate practice, characterized by highly structured activities, specialized in one area, and with focus on outcome (Cote et al, 2009), does not provide the desired decision-making environment to support development towards high performance. To elicit decision making there must be alternate options to a problem, and with solution to a particular activity with other people (Proios et al., 2007). Proios et al (2007) identify two types of decisions, one in which consequences are considered, and the other by "applying a socially defined template", in a sports context a game model. To optimize decision making both must be considered, "most decisions in sport are taken under a great amount of pressure", and "decisions should be made after considering what will happen next" (Proios et al., 2007). In tactical session design this needs to address the 'who, where, what, when, and why', but also the 'what if', and be trained with consequence with transitional moments (S9, S10). This is supported by Roca and Ford (2020), where decision making activities optimize "perceptual, cognitive, and motor skills under transfer-appropriate conditions", and carefully structured activities which include, time, space, performer, and environment, which "will recreate situations from competition in which players have match like decisions with two or more options". This will affect the coach's interventions, where framing of the task must still leave players with options, but review is key in guided

questions, to see if players can recall and understand the reason for their decisions and use these experiences for further development.

Throughout literature it's widely recognized that decision making in sports requires multiple elements which interact with each other, and communicate within dynamic environments (Proios et al, 2007; Roca and Ford, 2020; Richards et al, 2017; and Chow and Atencio, 2014), and therefore session design to be in context of game-based situations (S5 to S10) to support high level of performance. Richards et al (2017) highlight three key factors coaches must implement; context to tactical plans, philosophy and game model; shaping of player actions towards objectives in decision making; and layering on and off field action and reflection. Each session (S1 to S10) is framed through a session sheet of playing elements, objectives, and in consideration of the four pillars, with small-sided activities to provide an on field dynamic context, with coach interventions during water breaks and post session to reflect on performance.

Small-sided games are an excellent coaching methodology which combines skill, tactics, and physical elements, "used extensively to improve physical fitness levels and also technical and tactical performance" (Aguiar et al, 2012). Their effectiveness is supported as "maximum benefits are achieved when the training stimuli are similar to competitive demands" (Bompa, 1999). Throughout the session design (S2, S4, S5 to S10) various small-sided games are utilized. Constraints are placed upon the practices for desired responses in reference to game model and session objectives, which includes "number of players involved, the size and shape of the pitch, the duration of exercise and rest periods, the rules of the game, coach encouragement, the availability of balls, or by the way of scoring" (Aguiar et al, 2012).

Small-sided games supports the club's constructivist pedagogy as a players learning is non-linear and emerges through complex and dynamic environment (Chow and Atencio, 2014), and provides efficiency in training methods with only 4.5 hours available throughout the week, and is therefore, "an optimal task to optimize training time" (Aguiar et al, 2012). While each session is designed around small-sided games, the technical activities (S5, S7), are reduced in numbers, 2 to 6 players, as these reduced numbers provide an effective technical training environment with a greater number of technical actions (Jones and Drust, 2007). Skill acquisition is achieved through utilizing small-sided games, as the technical repetition constraints exposes the player to game-based scenarios, as Richards et al (2016) explains, "complex and dynamic integration of several elements and process, which simultaneously and dynamically interact", will develop decision making. Roca and Ford (2020) also support this with their findings that exposing youth players to greater levels of decision-making activity (game-based activities) increased development, and therefore practice activities must be "carefully constructed to maintain the relationship between key sources of information". However, the detriment to a player's development is in the lack of specificity, as with a lack of information, decisions will be of a lower quality (Fishoff, 1992). Activity design within the sessions (S5 to S10) increases specificity in reference to the development learning phase and game model objectives, achieve specificity, as "highly specific simulations need to be high in representative design", (Renshaw et al, 2019).

The physiological load of sessions is representative of the weekly training cycle. The foundation and youth development phases are less periodized around the physiological load, due to the youth player players shorter recovery needs, and priority towards technical development

and skill acquisition in reference to the game model.

In contract, physical consideration within weekly periodization is important for recovery both physically and cognitively, but also for injury prevention. Professional phase get day off and recovery session, as seen in Table 3., with S9 and S10 representative of the development phase of a cycle.

Sessions (S9 and S10) aim to increase the players capacity holistically, therefore physical and cognitive high demands, "practices should be focused towards features of the team organization adopted to a specific dynamic" (Mallo, 2014). Due to practice frequency restraints, Fridays are off, and offer tapering down and recovery from a high midweek load. "Final stage must guarantee the assimilation, recovery, and supercompensation of the week which has been carried out" (Mallo, 2014). To address this, activation is possible on a Friday through off field interventions through review taking place in the form of meetings and presentations.

The session design, just like tactical work, must be in context, and Owen (2016) identifies a games characteristics as acyclic, with no set speed, volume, or intensity structure. The structure of small-sided games represents the characteristics in that the short distances are covered at a variety of speeds, but covering an overall substantial distance, and therefore the players experience similar situations in small-sided games that they would encounter in competitive matches (Owen et al, 2004). Hill-Hass et al (2009) points to small-sided games as offering increased motivation to train over generic running activities, in which both would achieve the same desired effect. However, small-sided games

cannot be relied upon solely, as Owen (2016) identifies the different workloads between small-sided games, and large-sided games (8 v 8 to 11 v 11). While small-sided games provide more short explosive actions, the large-sided games will provide more high intensity sprints.

Both Owen (2016) and Aguiar et al (2012) noted small-sided games generated higher HR and from a player's perspective a greater R.P.E. than large-sided games, which is a result from the high level of muscular demand in speed acceleration, and changes of direction, with Aguiar et al (2012) pointing out higher number of sprint actions performed in intermittent small-sided games. Verheijen (2014) recommends that for the activities with fewer players in possession games, use of 2 – 3 minutes with 1 minute rest for up to 4 sets. This keeps the number of soccer actions high, and performed with high quality, as this ensures the players do not reach exhaustion. Owen (2016) explains the large-sided structure while offering more high-speed sprints elicits less cardiac stress, taking the activity to more aerobic conditioning. For this, Verheijen (2014) recommends due to the lower intensity, fewer repeated actions, volume needs to be increased for 8 v 8 to 11 v 11, through playing in larger blocks of 10 – 15 minutes with 2 minutes between blocks.

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