2020 – 2021

U12 CURRICULUM

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THE U12 PLAYER: **CONSIDERATIONS**

U12 PLAYER CONSIDERATIONS

1 **The U12 Player can sequence more thoughts and actions than younger players.**

Giving them more complex tasks will stimulate them mentally.

2 **The U12 Player has the ability to use abstract thought for problem solving.**

Allowing for creativity in their play is crucial.

3 **The U12 Player should have the ability to move, touch the ball, and think at the same time.**

Providing an environment to practice all three together is necessary.

U12 PLAYER CONSIDERATIONS

4 Consistency is not a strength.

Players must learn habits and routines will help them become more consistent. We must teach them that an 'off day' doesn't define their ability.

5 Visual tracking is much easier at this age.

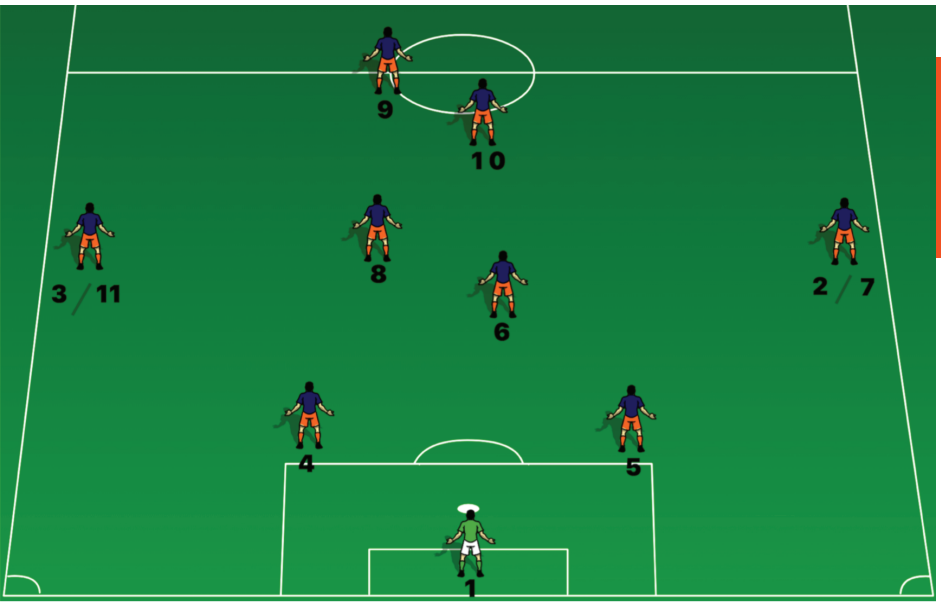
Controlling a bouncing ball can become second-nature. Heading technique should be thoroughly taught.

6 At this age, a players' self-esteem will be largely influenced by social popularity.

Coaches much create an atmosphere that:
- discourages cliques
- promotes a deeper understanding of who their teammates are
- only allows for positive teammate interactions.

THE 9-V-9 **FORMATION** (1-2-4-2)

THE 9-V-9 FORMATION



1-2-4-2

#1 – Goalkeeper.
The gk should learn to provide support to defenders in possession, how to distribute balls on the ground and how to stay connected with the team in possession

#4/5 – Center Backs.
CB's should learn how to support the midfield in possession, how to switch the point of attack and how to make the field larger in possession.

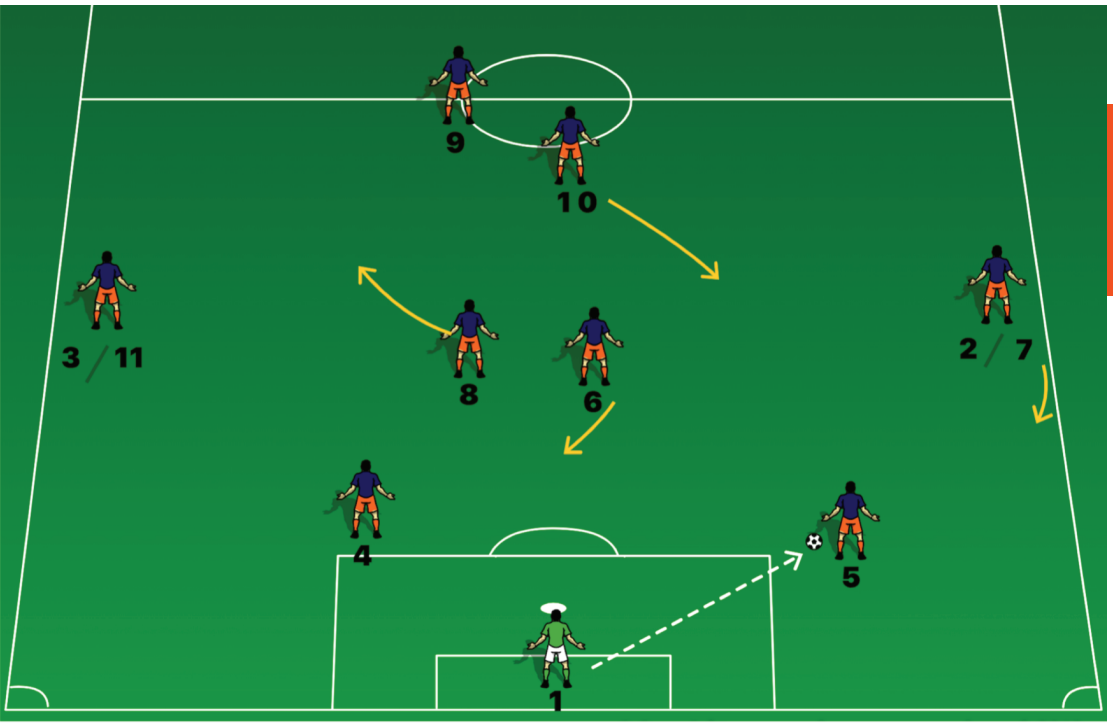
#2/7 & 3/11 – Wide players.
These players should learn how to create width in attack, penetration out wide and how to keep their body open to the field of play. They should know the concept of balance and the differences of playing on the weak-side and ball-side.

#6 & 8 – Center Midfielders.
The 6 and 8 should learn how to support the attacking players and how to provide good options to defenders in possession. Their positioning is contingent upon each other, and they should work as a pivot. As one checks to a back for the ball, the other stretches away.

#10 – Attacking Center Midfielder.
The 10 should be available for the ball from the backs and other midfielders. They provide support underneath the 9. They should learn about different types of penetrating passes and how to attack on the dribble.

#9 – Striker.
The striker should learn how to provide depth in attack, how to stay high and central and how to receive longer passes from the backs. Receiving balls sideways-on with the outside of the foot is a crucial technique.

THE 9-V-9 FORMATION



BASIC MOVEMENTS

FROM THE BACK

#1: Supports the ball at an angle.

#2/7: Creates width and plays sideways with body position open to the field.

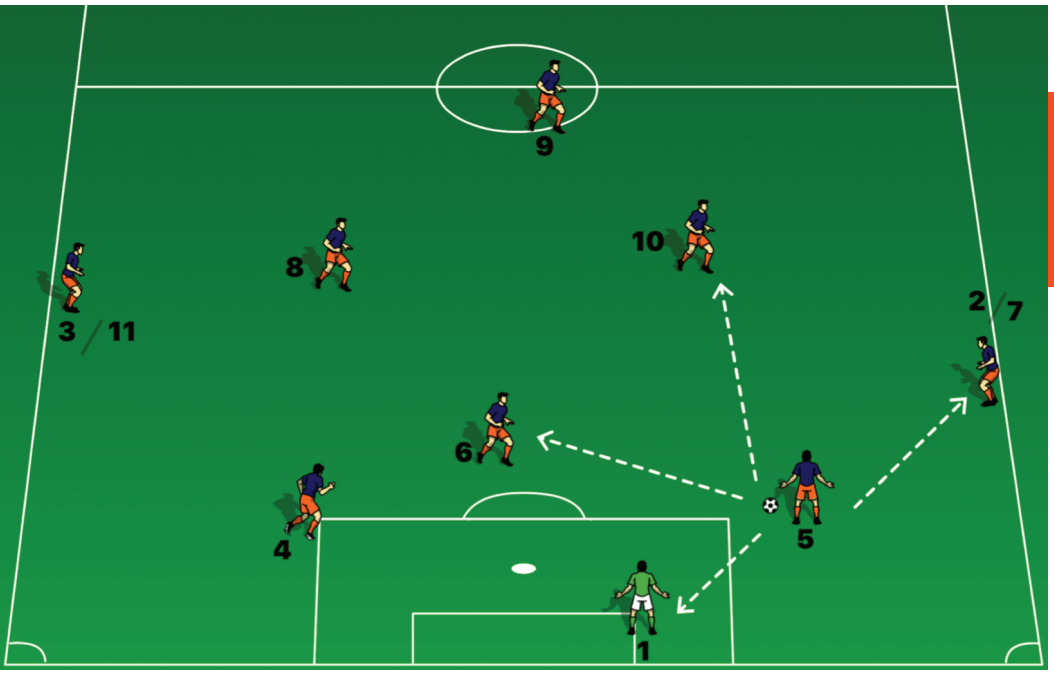
#4: Opens the field to potentially switch the point of attack.

#6: Takes a low angle the ball.

#8: Pivots away from the ball.

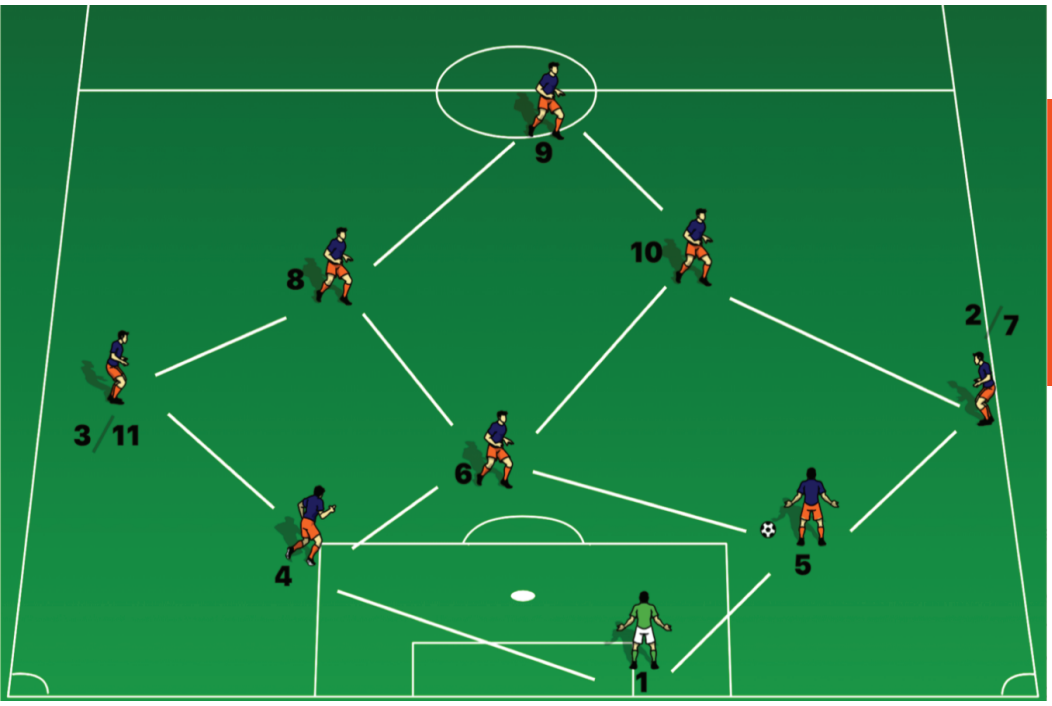
#10: Rotates toward the ball as higher option in middle.

THE 9-V-9 FORMATION



OPTIONS FROM 4/5

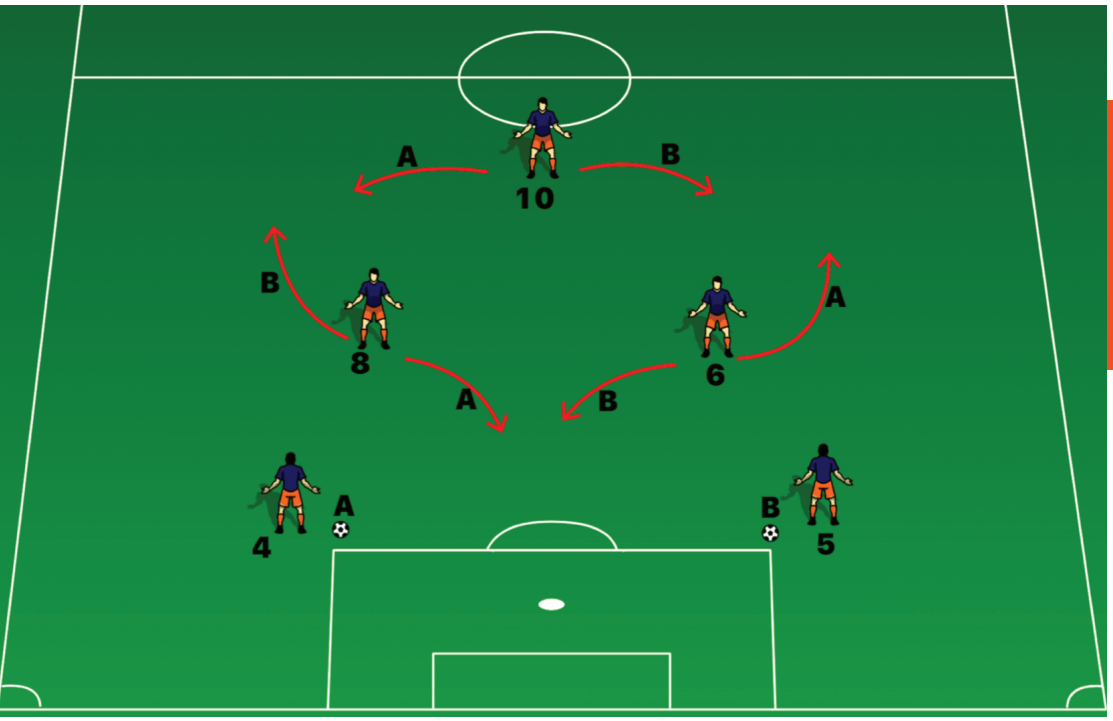
FROM THE BACK



BASIC SHAPES TO MAINTAIN

FROM THE BACK

THE 9-V-9 FORMATION



6/8/10 PIVOT MOVEMENT FROM 4/5

Players pivot clockwise from #5 (Ball B in Diagram.)

& pivot counter-clockwise from #4 (Ball A in Diagram.)

The arc nature of these movements are to create passing lanes earlier in the players' movements and are intended to be taught as illustrated in this diagram.

TRAINING **PHILOSOPHY**

TECHNICAL

THEORY

Players at this age need to complete techniques at both slow and fast speeds. Slower speeds will improve the nervous system and faster speeds will help muscle patterns.

Players need repetition and a positive feedback loop. The right feedback at the right time is key.

Players need opportunities to produce their techniques in decision-making environments. This 'pressure' can be done with opposition, space, time, or a combination of all three.

A skill is the ability to choose the right technique at the right time, and is what we should aim for.

- **Passing**
  - High quality inside-foot with both feet
  - Accuracy with outside-foot on the move
  - Driving the ball with instep
  - Introducing playing balls in the air over opposition players

- **Bouncing Ball**
  - Mastering spinning balls
  - Judging and anticipating flighted balls

LESSONS

- **Receiving**
  - Inside-foot of both feet
  - Outside-foot sideways-on with both feet
  - Thigh and chest

- **Dribbling**
  - Fakes and movement deception with both feet
  - Turning and playing pass in two-touches

- **Finishing**
  - Different types of finishing (all parts of foot)
  - Introducing half-volley and volley
  - Bending shots

- **Throw-ins**
  - Mastering moving throw-in
  - Aiming throw to where player needs to receive

- **Heading**
  - To score goals (both jumping and standing)
  - To clear (both jumping and standing)
  - To pass to teammate

- **Crossing**
  - Near post space- low, drives
  - Lofting the ball
  - Balls cut back diagonally

TACTICAL

THEORY

Players at this age can see and analyze larger patterns in the game. They can understand
movements in groups of 4 and 5 now.

The role of 1st and 2nd attacker/defender should be focused on, and how to transition to this role as the ball moves from player to player.

Forming shapes on the field with groups of 3 and 4 should be shown and reinforced in many various exercises during training. While showing these shapes around the ball, shapes on the weak side of the field and "balance" can be also be taught.

Players need to understand all positions and not be pidgeon-holed into a set position yet. Rotation of players among the team both positionally and during the run of play is important.

• Principles of Defending
- Role of 1st and 2nd defender
- Condensing spaces on the fiel
- Introducing man to man defending

• Principles of Attack
- Role of 1st and 2nd attacker
- Creating larger spaces to play in
- Recognizing numbers-up situations

LESSONS

• Playing Together in Small Groups
- Triangle shape of 3 players
- Diamond Shape of 4 players

• Restarts
- Deciding if it's a goal-scoring opportunity or if team should maintain possession
- General work on all restarts
- Building a wall on near-post side

• Halftime Analysis
- What they did well/can improve on from first half
- Discuss what the other team is trying to do
- Any adjustments for second-half

• Communication
- Giving information on every pass "man-on" or "turn"
- Non-verbal- eye contact, showing where to play pass
- Defending cues "I have ball" and "I have cover"

• Combination Play
- Wall pass at various angles
- Overlapping runs

• Target Play
1. Play forward into player with back to goal
2. Support underneath at angle
3. Penetration pass or dribble

PHYSICAL

THEORY

Players at this age should now start to take pride in moving like an athlete rather than a little kid.

Strength and power increase rapidly at this age. Maintaining good movements in warm-up and cool down will set the tone for how they view “athleticism”.

Educating players and families about healthy nutrition options for school, home, and pre/post playing is extremely important. We want to help form these good habits as early as possible.

Core stability should be present and adding rotational stability work is crucial at this age.

LESSONS

• Endurance

- This should be done with a ball or in small-sided-games

• Speed and Direction

- Players should learn proper ways to change direction such as stopping and turning
- Coaches should give plenty of opportunity for players to change speed
- Agilities should be done where players need to change direction at full speed

• Body Resistance

- Higher volumes of body-weight exercises can be done
- Players should be competent in completing sets of 12 of the following:
  Push-ups, sit-ups, lunges, squats, bird-dogs, and rotational planks

• Warm-up

- Players should get in the routine of starting with a warm-up
- Introduce ‘plyometric’ type of activities such as jumping, hopping, bounding

• Post-Session and Homework

- Players should get in the habit of a cool down at this age
- Further stretching, foam rolling and exercises should be done each day at home

PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY

Players at this age are starting to take the game more seriously, but coaches must still create a fun atmosphere to foster an internal desire to improve.

This age player is learning to push and test boundaries in other parts of their life. Maintaining fair play, respect for referees/coaches/teammates is vital for positive team culture.

Emotional control needs to be addressed and assessed at all times. Players should develop strong discipline at this age and be continuing to work on handling stress.

LESSONS

• Emotional Discipline

- Teach the players about how "losing control" can affect both themselves and their team
- Give lots of praise for players who handle themselves well in tough situations

• Game Analysis

- Give halftime and post-game analysis of themselves and the opposition
- Reference game situations in the following practice sessions

• Communication

- Cue players to try and be positive leaders
- Allow for players to give a halftime speech or try to motivate the group in practice

• Atmosphere to Inspire

- Coaches must create an atmosphere that inspires players to improve
- Fostering a player's passion for the game is crucial to success as they get older

• Respect

- Coaches/ Teammates/ Referees/ Opponents
- The rules of the game. Fair play should be maintained

SESSION
OUTLINE

SESSION OUTLINE

PART 1
25 MINUTES

- Warm-up
- Club Rondo
- Technical work with ball

PART 2
30 MINUTES

- Small-sided games
- Directional activities
- Games to targets and zones

PART 3
30 MINUTES

- Scrimmage
- 9v9 including GKs
- 1-2-4-1 formation

PART 4
5 MINUTES

- Cool-down activity
- Debrief

PART 1
25 MINUTES

WARM-UP & RONDOS

Warm-up
To be done off the field (except agilities) and prior to the teams' scheduled training time.

- **Plank** – 4 x 10 sec hard squeezes
- **Push-ups** – 15 reps
- **Single Leg 1/4 Squats** – 2 x 15 per side
- **Lunges** – 2 x 15 per side
- **Agilities**

- Forward/backward/sideways movements at full speed
- Transitioning between each of those movements

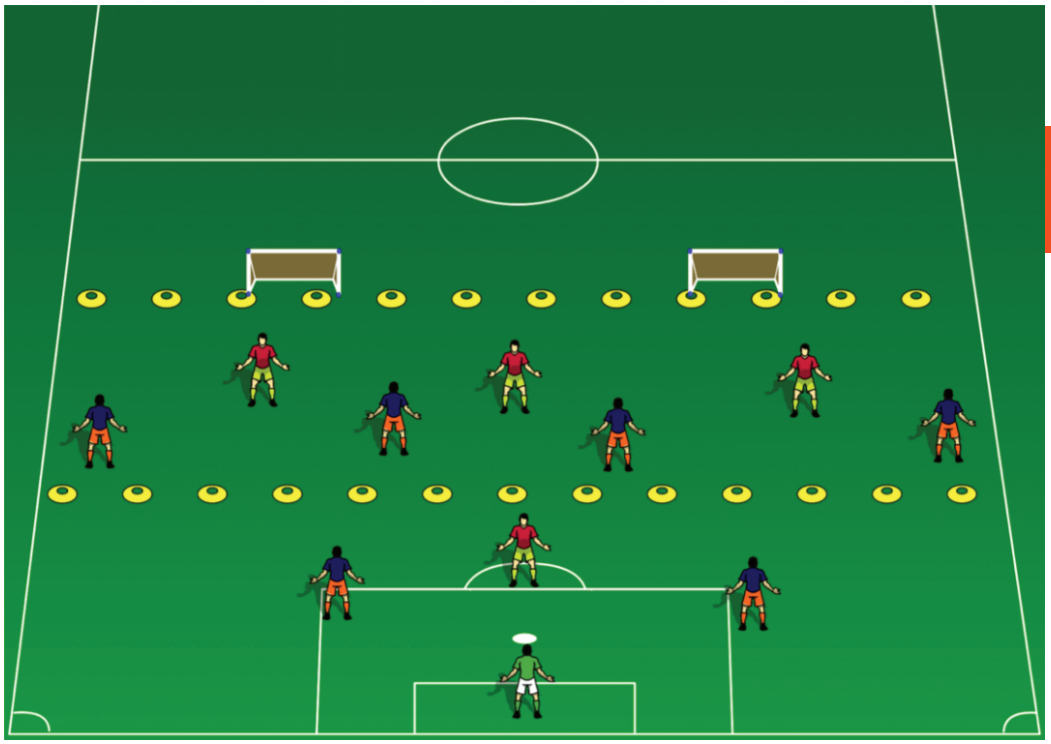
Club Rondos
To be done immediately after warm-up and during the first few minutes of each practice session. Coaches should limit the amount of touches on the ball to challenge players.

- **4 Players** – 3v1
- **5 Players** – 4v1
- **6 Players** – 5v1
- **7 Players** – 5v2
- **8 Players** – 3v1 x2

Once you get to 8+ players, start two and three groups of the same games above.

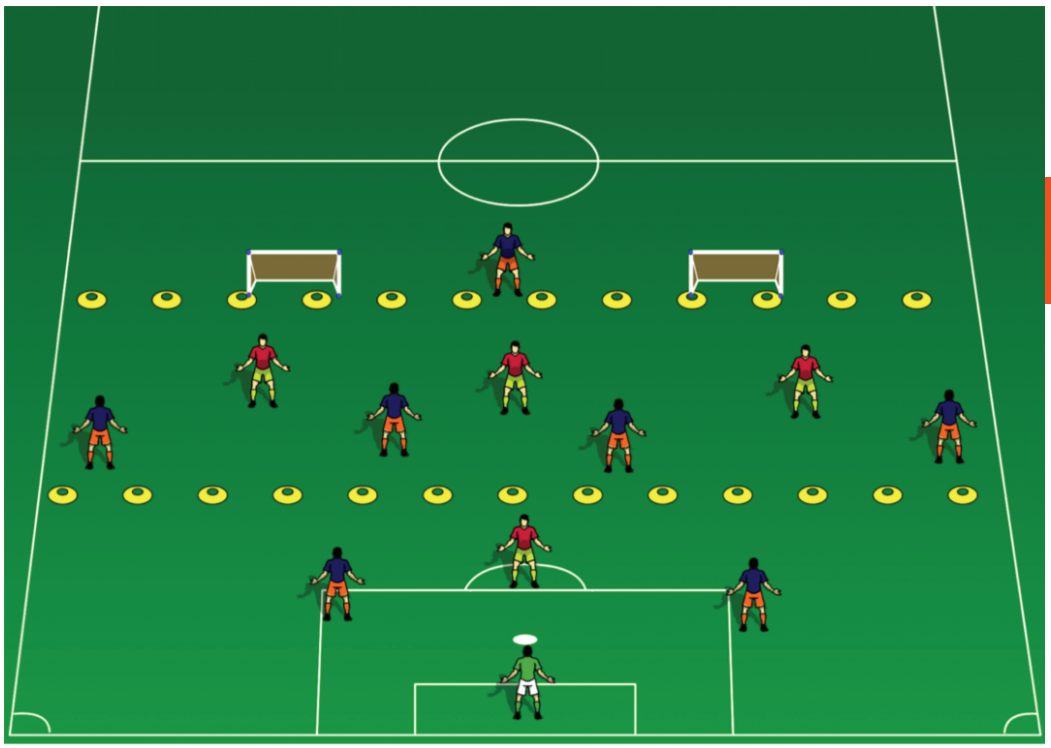
PART 2
30 MINUTES

SMALL SIDED GAMES



7v4

OUT OF THE BACK

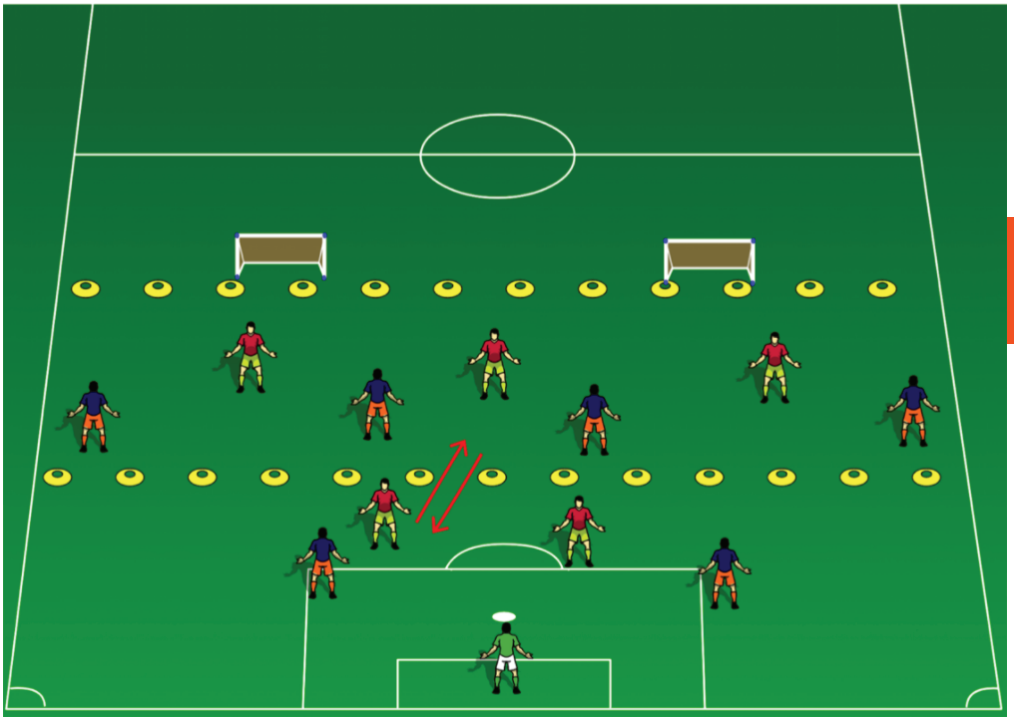


8v4

OUT OF THE BACK

PART 2
30 MINUTES

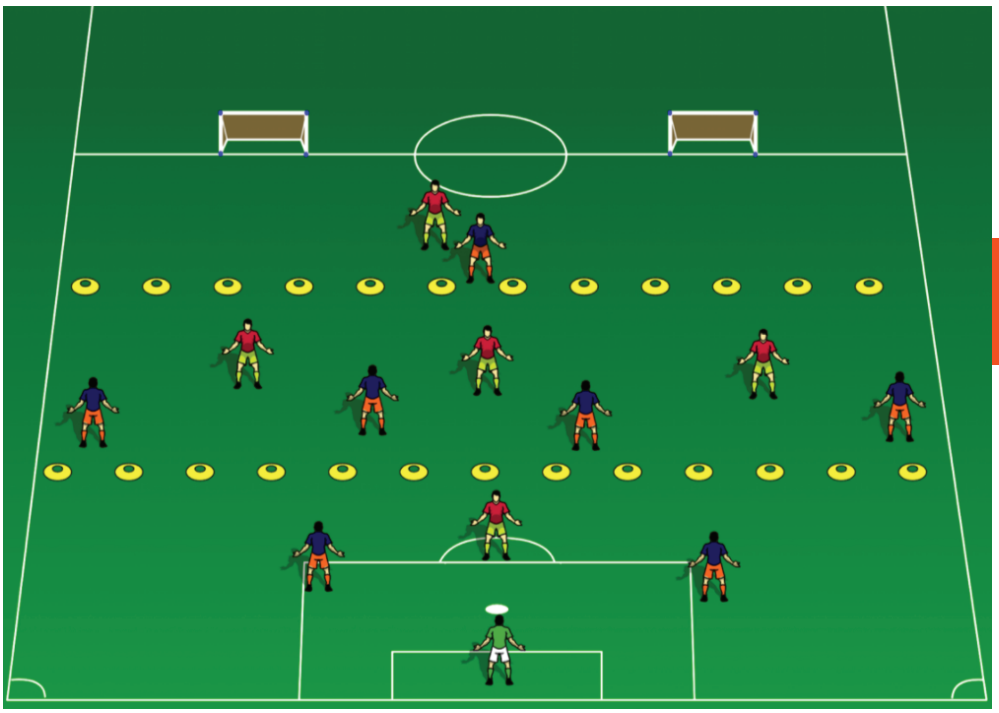
SMALL SIDED GAMES



(MORE PRESSURE)

7v5

OUT OF THE BACK



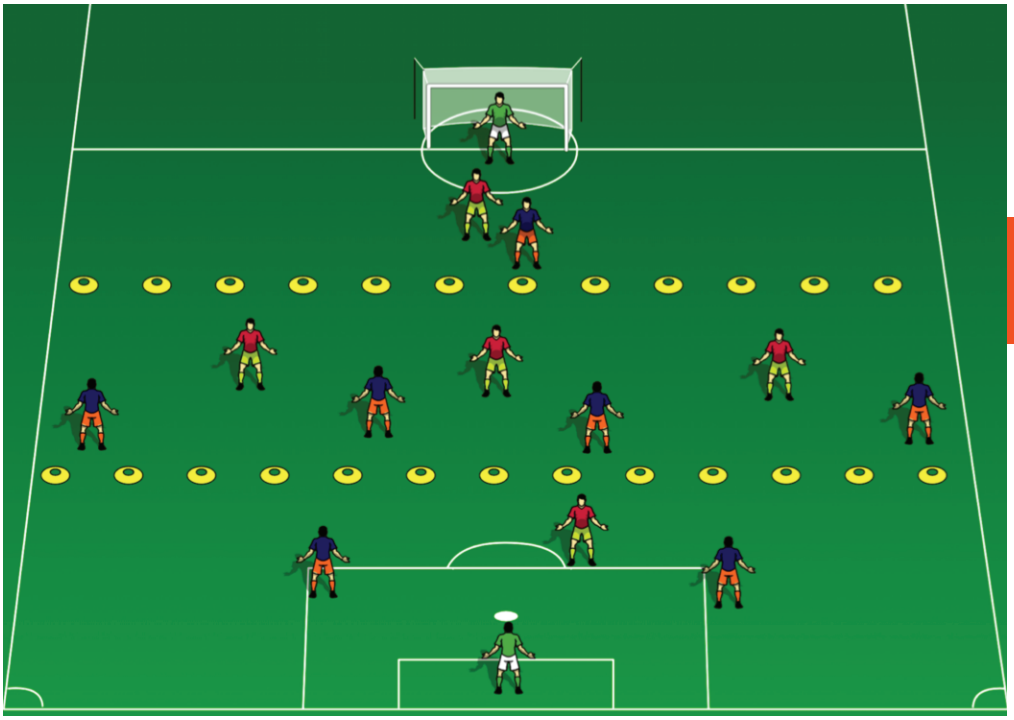
(MORE PRESSURE)

8v5

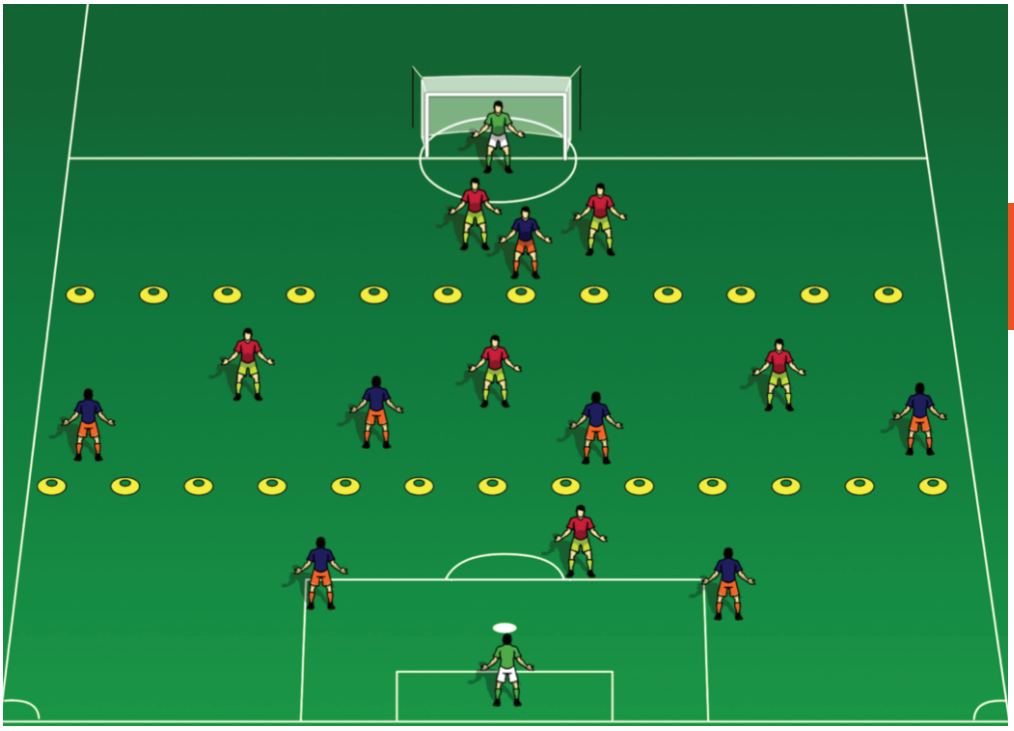
OUT OF THE BACK

PART 2
30 MINUTES

SMALL SIDED GAMES



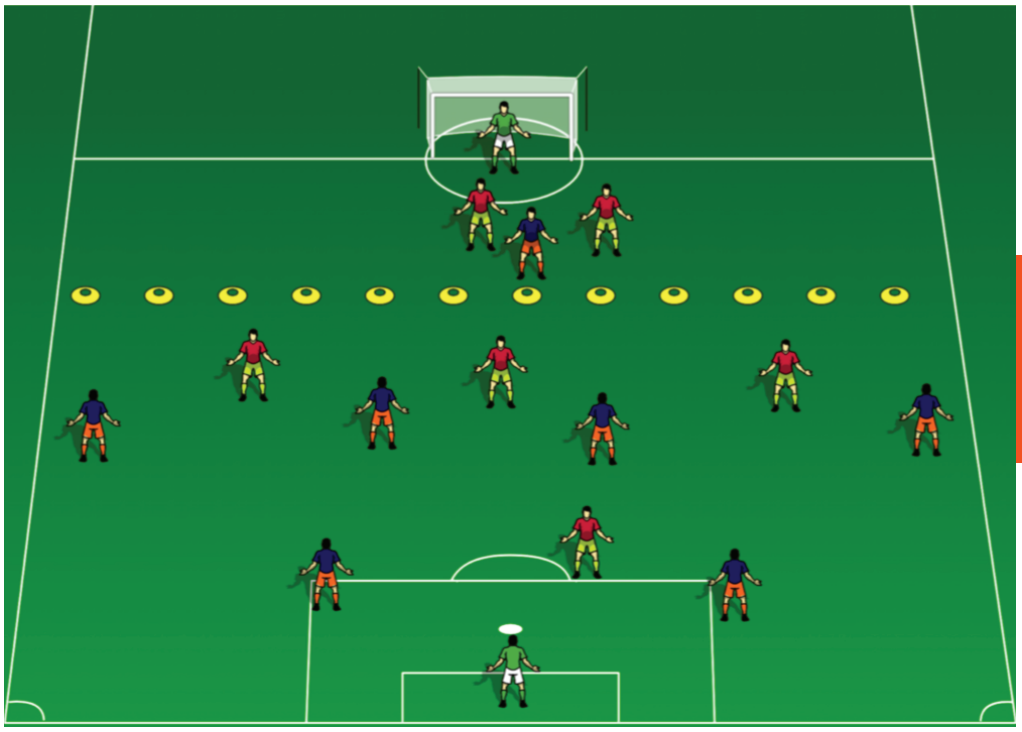
8v5
GOING TO GOAL



8v6
GOING TO GOAL

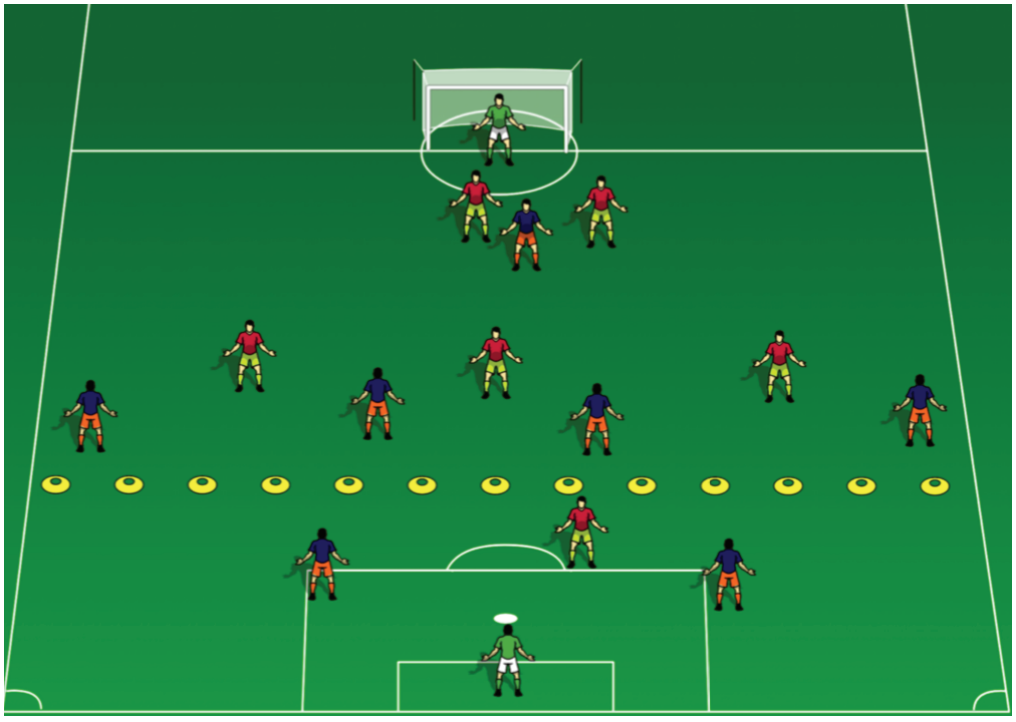
PART 2
30 MINUTES

SMALL SIDED GAMES



REMOVING BARRIERS

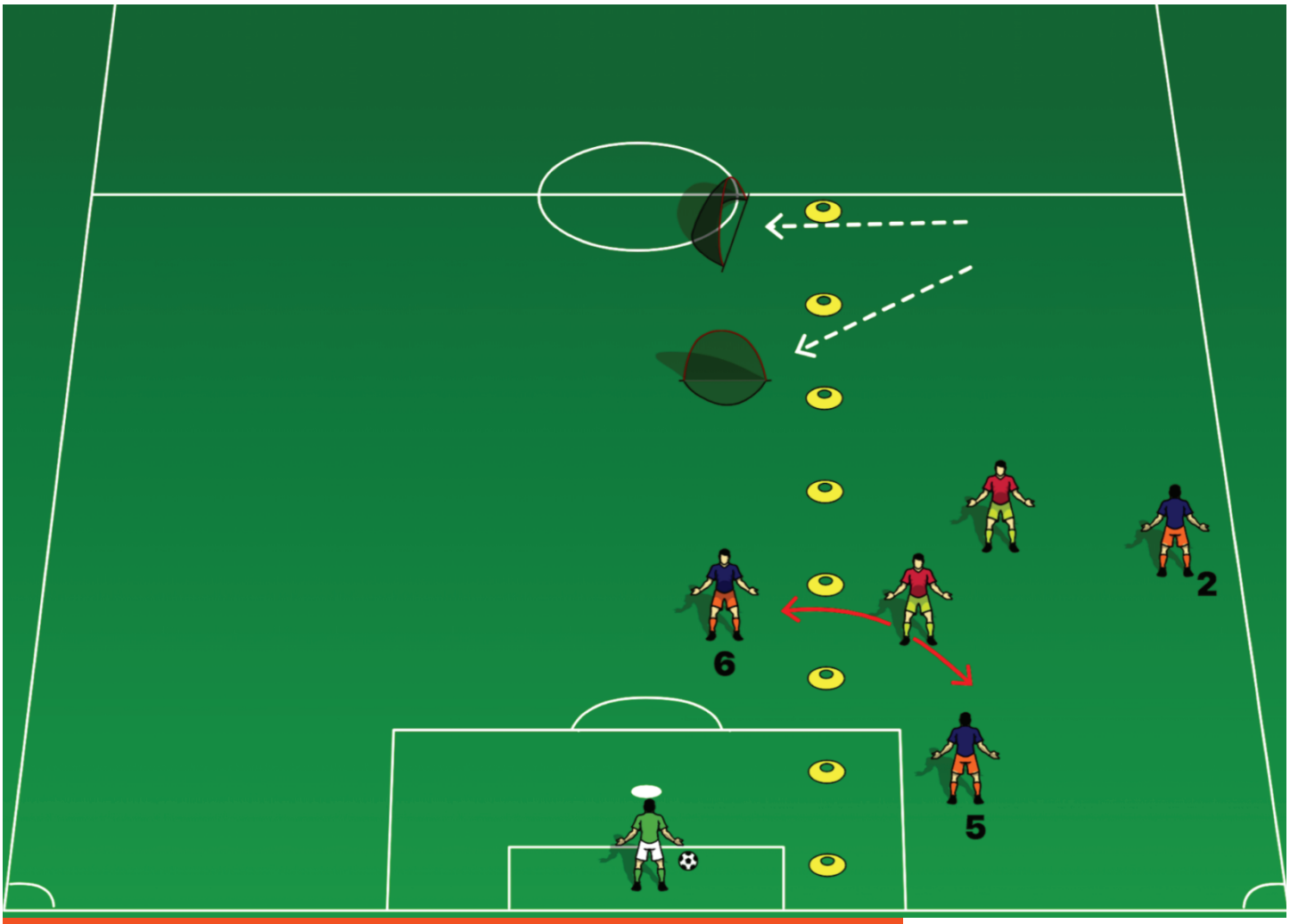
Remove the attacking zone and/or defending zone and allow free play in those areas.



See if the players have understood their roles and have spatial awareness.

PART 2
30 MINUTES

SMALL SIDED GAMES



FLANK PLAY & CROSSING

Variations:

- The 6 may also cross the cone line to help wide.
- One of the defending players must stay central to play against the 6, and giving an easier 2v1 out wide.
- Cue the 5 to over lap when the 2 has come inside slightly and can face forward.

PART 2
30 MINUTES

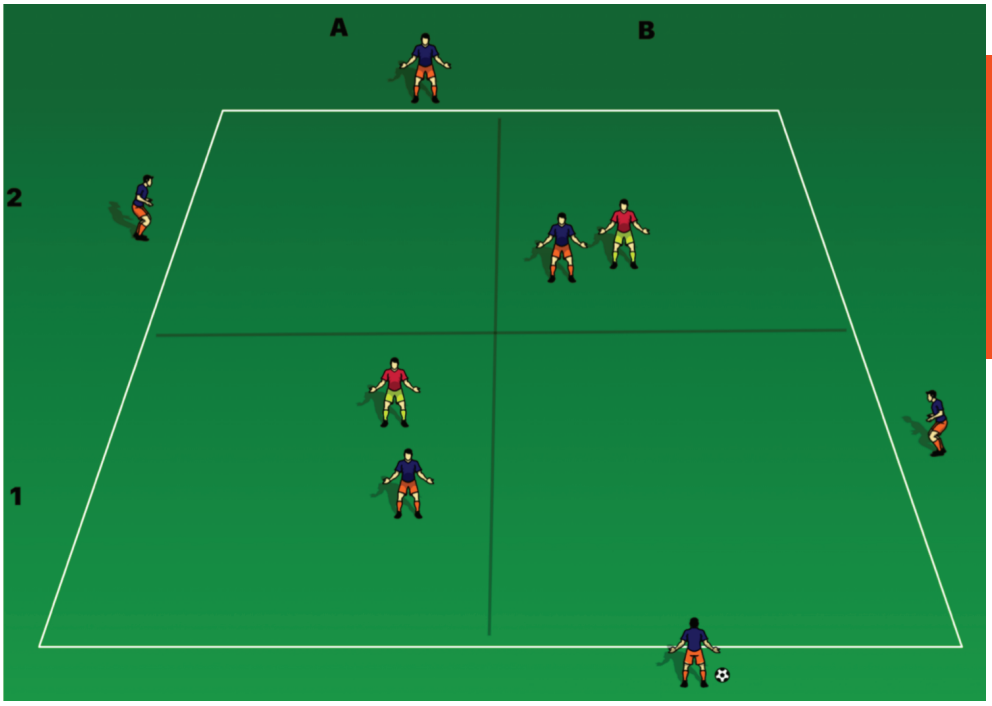
SMALL SIDED GAMES

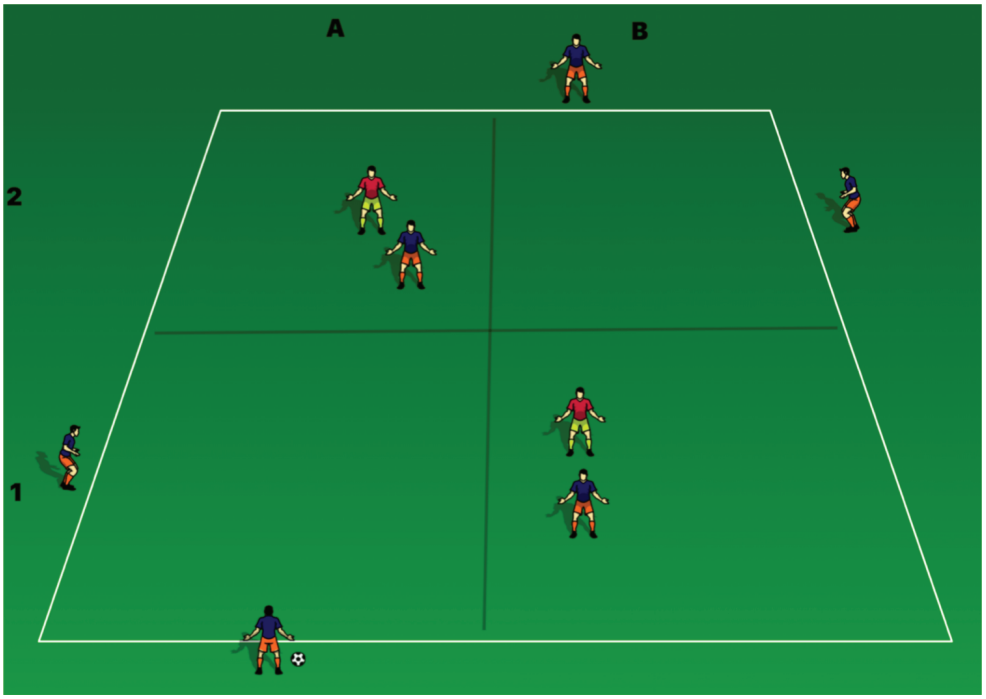
FLANK PLAY & CROSSING

As a progression to the previous game, players now try to find runners in the box to score.

Coaching points:
- Timing of runs in the box to match timing of cross
- Looking for visual cues to overlap wide (5 around the 2)
- Looking for visual cues to underlap (6 diagonal towards corner)

SMALL SIDED GAMES





MIDFIELD MOVEMENTS IN GRID

The game is a possession game with a 2v2 in the middle and 4 neutral players on the sides of a box.

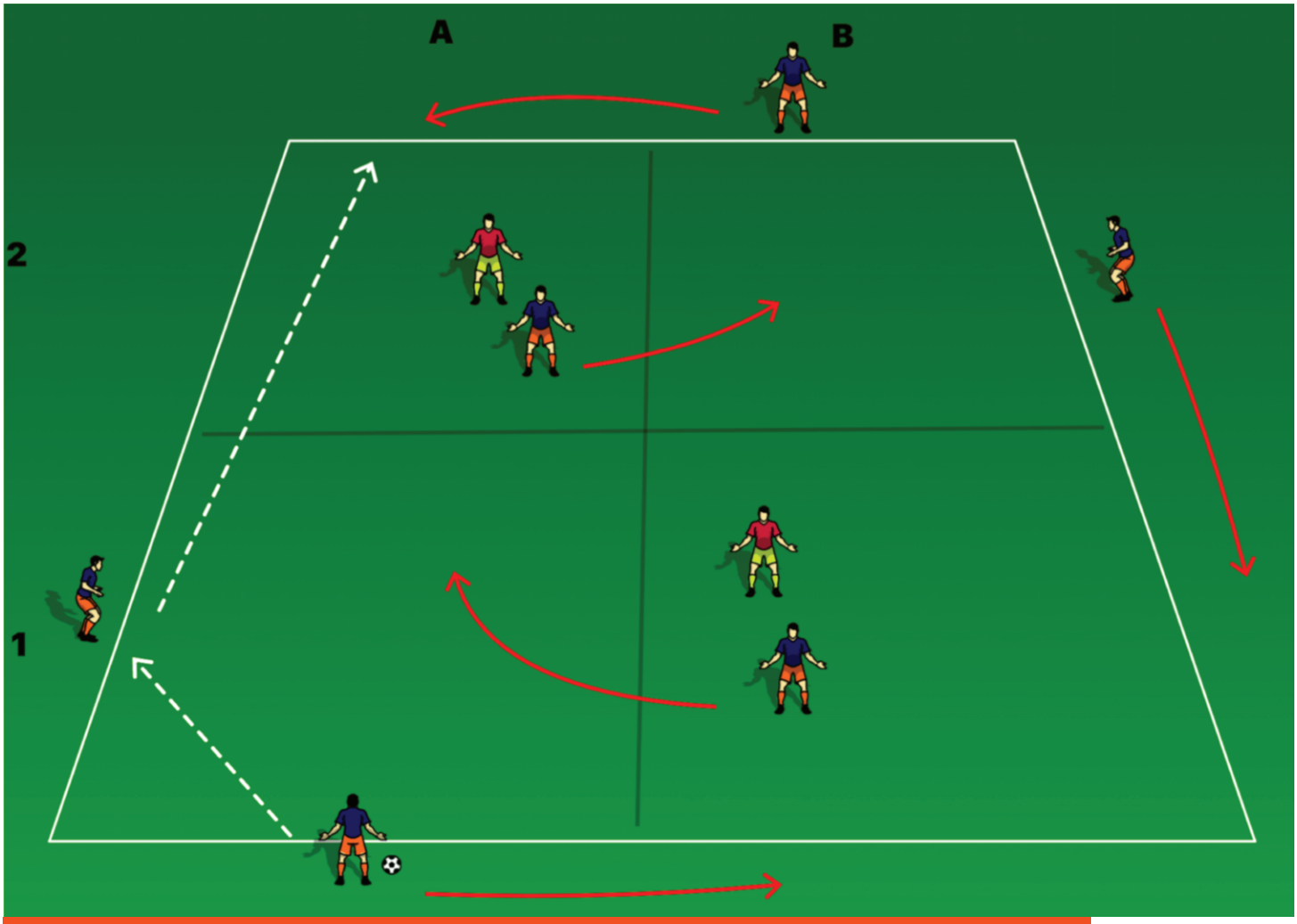
Spacing should be roughly 25x25 yard grid.

The shadow lines in the diagrams are just to show quadrants for movement.

Players should learn to maintain 3 (but no more than 3) players in both lanes A and B, as well as lanes 1 and 2.

PART 2
30 MINUTES

SMALL SIDED GAMES



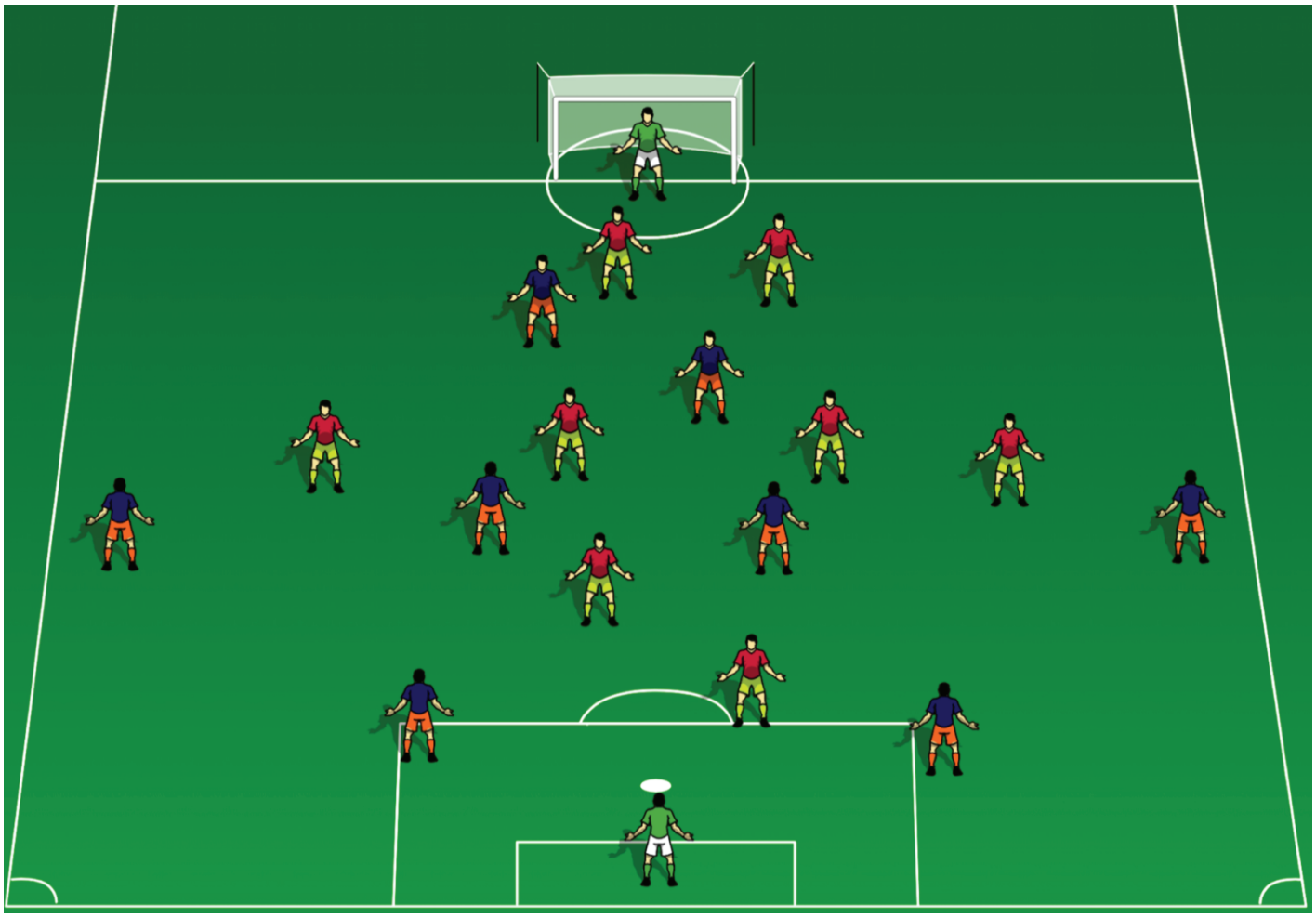
MIDFIELD MOVEMENTS IN GRID

As players get the ball in new spaces, movements around the entire game should be coordinated to maintain:

- Three players in lanes 1 and 2, and A and B
- The 2 players in the middle maintaining a diagonal to each other
- Support of the ball closest on the strong side

PART 3
30 MINUTES

SCRIMMAGE



Scrimmage

- **9v9**
- 30 minutes

PART 4
5 MINUTES

COOL DOWN & DEBRIEF

Cool Down

- **Static Stretching of Hamstrings and Quads**
- Seated Figure-4 hamstring stretch
- Laying on side quad stretch

- **1/2 Kneeling HF Stretch with Twist**
- Hands in front of body
- Twist upper torso toward knee that's up

- **1/2 Kneeling HF Stretch with Diagonal Reach**
- Hand reaches across/up and in front of face
- Reach with opposite hand of knee that's up

- **Ankle Rolls**
- While standing, roll one ankle out and feel the 'stretch' on outside of foot

Debrief

- **Ask:**
- What did you learn?
- What did we do well?
- What can we improve on?

- **Positive Recap**
- Individual & Group

- **Encore Effect**
- Leave them wanting more!
- Team Cheer

GAME DAY
CONSIDERATIONS

GAME DAY CONSIDERATIONS

- ALL players should play ALL field positions.

- All players who are confident with trying goalkeeping should be given the opportunity and chance.

- No player should always be the goalkeeper, at this age they should all still be identified as 'soccer players' and not as 'positions.'

- Playing time should be as close to equal as possible.

- Opportunities and rosters should rotate equally and evenly based on team numbers.

- Coaches should aim to interact with parents on a weekly basis. Informing them of what the kids are learning, what to look for and praise during games, and what the focus is in the upcoming weeks. It is crucial to have parents who are well informed and educated in the development process of their son/daughter.