



ENGLAND *DNA*
FOUNDATION PHASE

GETTING READY FOR THE NEW SEASON

UNDER 9-12
SESSION PLAN PACK



THE ENGLAND DNA

Every coach, parent and volunteer involved with the development of young players wants to do the best that they can.

As each new season approaches thoughts will turn to preparing the players for the season **or** even working with the young players for the very first time if they are a new team.

The pre-season period is **not** the same as the preparation an adult player might be involved in, so as you read the guidelines and advice that follows you should always remember:

- You are coaching children. Allow it to be enjoyable, exciting and very active (this is perfect preparation for any stage of the season).
- Get the children running, chasing, dodging, jumping, twisting and turning (the activities that follow will help you with this).
- Play lots of small-sided games of different numbers and on pitches of different sizes.
- Create something so special that the players cannot wait for the next session.



DNA FOCUS:

GETTING OUR YOUNG PLAYERS READY TO PLAY

When thinking about how we might prepare our young players for the coming season after returning from the summer break, there are a number of things to consider:

- At times during the first one or two weeks involve all the players as one big group (or two smaller groups) working in larger areas. This lowers the intensity at the start and eases the players back into action. Getting them playing matches is a great thing to include early on.
- Then, each week, think about how you can make it slightly harder for the players by increasing the time spent on the task (these are the building blocks). Smaller groups in smaller areas can begin to be introduced over the coming weeks.
- If you train more than once a week, try to vary the sessions, ie. try to change the theme so that the players aren't always undertaking the same repetitive actions.
- Look to include activities that are fun to be involved in. Include throwing and catching (tag rugby or dodgeball is a great warm-up). Get them laughing and out of breath.
- Warm-ups for our young players have to be engaging, enjoyable and active.
- Ensure they are introduced to a wide range of movements.
- All sessions should be **fun** so include a ball where possible.
- Play lots of matches of different numbers on different sizes of areas (as a rule of thumb remember: early on include some large numbers, large area activities— later on, smaller numbers, smaller areas, even it is just for parts of the session).
- Respect each child as an individual and adapt the session or challenge for them. Over the 6 weeks (and throughout the season) try to pair or group players together for different outcomes so that their individual needs are met more often.



WEEK 1

ENJOYMENT ACTIVITY FOOTBALL

*Children need the
freedom and time
to play. Play is not
a luxury. Play is
a necessity.*



DNA FOCUS:

PHYSICAL LITERACY



Organisation

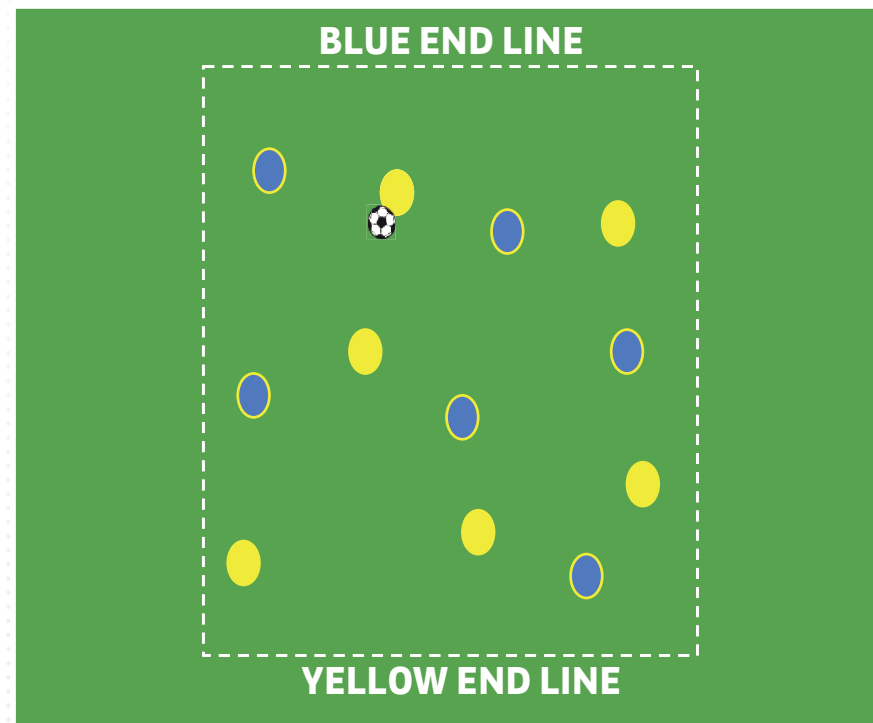
This game can accommodate lots of players and is a good physical warm-up for young players as it involves the ball in hand and lots of dodging, running, stopping and starting. The game shown is 6v6 but this can be altered depending on numbers.

Make the area appropriate so that it challenges the player's movement skills and keeps the game competitive.

How to Play

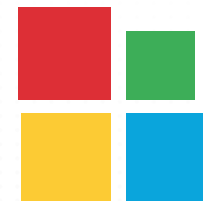
The yellow team starts with possession of the ball in their hands. The activity is a game of handball but with a difference – the ball has to be thrown over the head backwards until you are close enough to run over the line (you can catch and run over the line from 2m out).

Players can run for three or four steps with the ball when attacking, but then they must throw the ball backwards over their head. Hopefully, a teammate is there to catch it, repeat and move forwards towards the end line ready to score. If blues intercept they play to the same rules.



DNA FOCUS:

MASTER THE BALL



Organisation

There are two 5m zones at either end as in the diagram. One blue defender is placed in either end zone. There are three blue defenders placed in the middle zone. The yellow players at each end have a ball.

How to Play

In the end zones yellow players try to keep possession of the ball from the blue player until they see an opportunity to travel across to the other side of the grid.

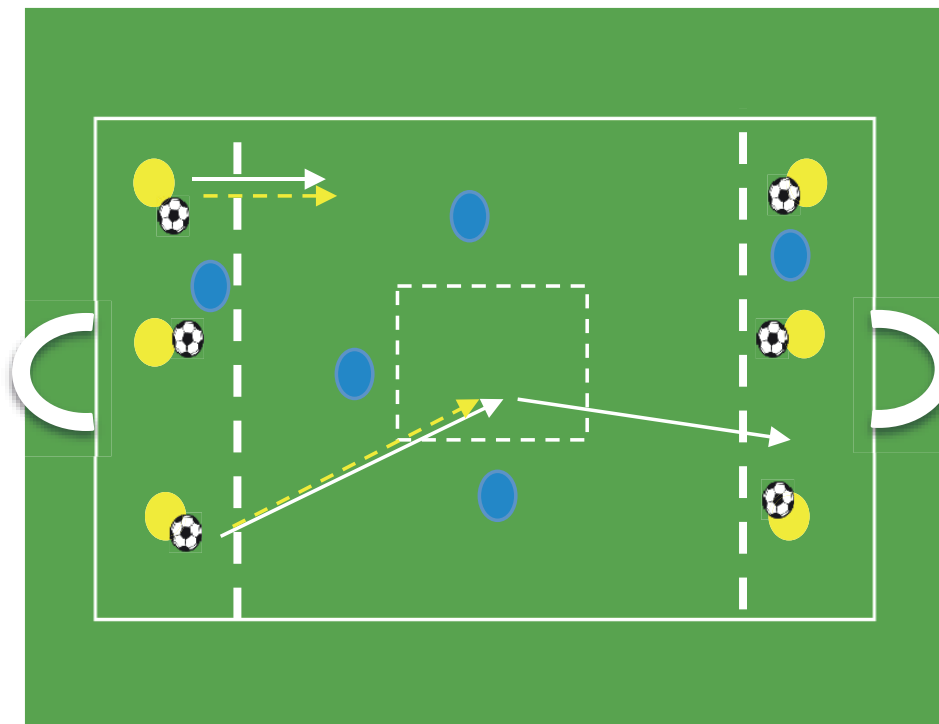
There are two ways to do this:

If the yellow player travels to the other side of the grid without losing the ball to a blue defender they gain a point for their team.

If the yellow attacker travels through the central zone and out to the other side they gain five team points because it is harder.

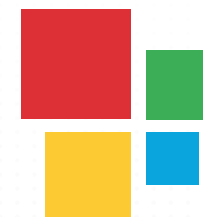
If the blue player steals possession of the ball they can dribble into an end zone and score in a goal. The yellow player can try to get the ball back before this happens. If the blue defender scores they gain a point for their team and the yellow player retrieves their ball to start again.

Swap players around to give a chance to play with a ball and without.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

5v5 on mini-pitches but large enough to be able to spend time on the ball.

How to Play

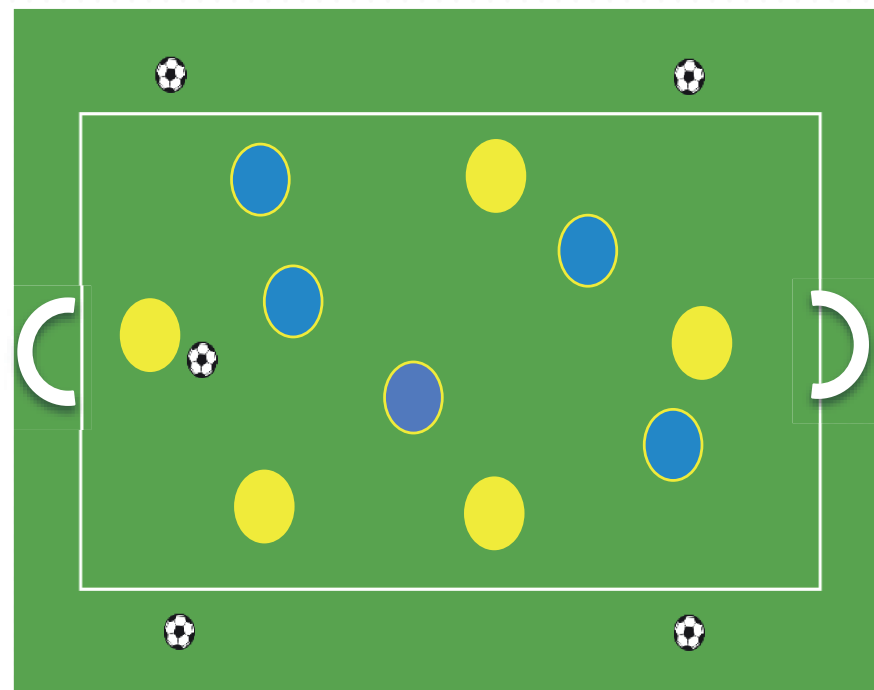
Play 5v5 trying to score. If the ball goes out players can dribble or pass in to restart the game. Play is continuous, so have several balls placed around the outside.

Encourage players to experiment and try different ways to be creative:

Challenge 1 - Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward.

Challenge 2 - Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team.

This game can be played with or without GKs.



AFTER A MOVEMENT WARM-UP AND SOME INDIVIDUAL FUN WITH THE BALL, GET THE PLAYERS INTO MATCHES. THE LAST ACTIVITY WAS A LARGER NUMBERED GAME, SO YOU MIGHT JUST CONTINUE WITH THIS IN THE FIRST WEEK BACK.

REMEMBER:

AT THIS STAGE IN WEEK ONE INCLUDE SOME LARGER NUMBER GAMES AND LARGER AREAS (BUT NOT BIGGER THAN THEY WOULD NORMALLY PLAY ON) AT SOME POINT TO EASE PLAYERS BACK INTO THE ROUTINE.

PLAY IS THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE!

WEEK 2

***MORE ENJOYMENT
MORE ACTIVITY
MORE FOOTBALL***

*Play is our brain's
favourite way
of learning.*



DNA FOCUS:

DEVELOP WAYS TO CHANGE SPEED, DIRECTION, DODGE, TWIST AND TURN



Organisation

The game is set up as shown but this can be adapted depending upon numbers. Here the yellows are 6v3 against the blues. The yellows get two attempts, which means the blues can swap turns with their three resting players.

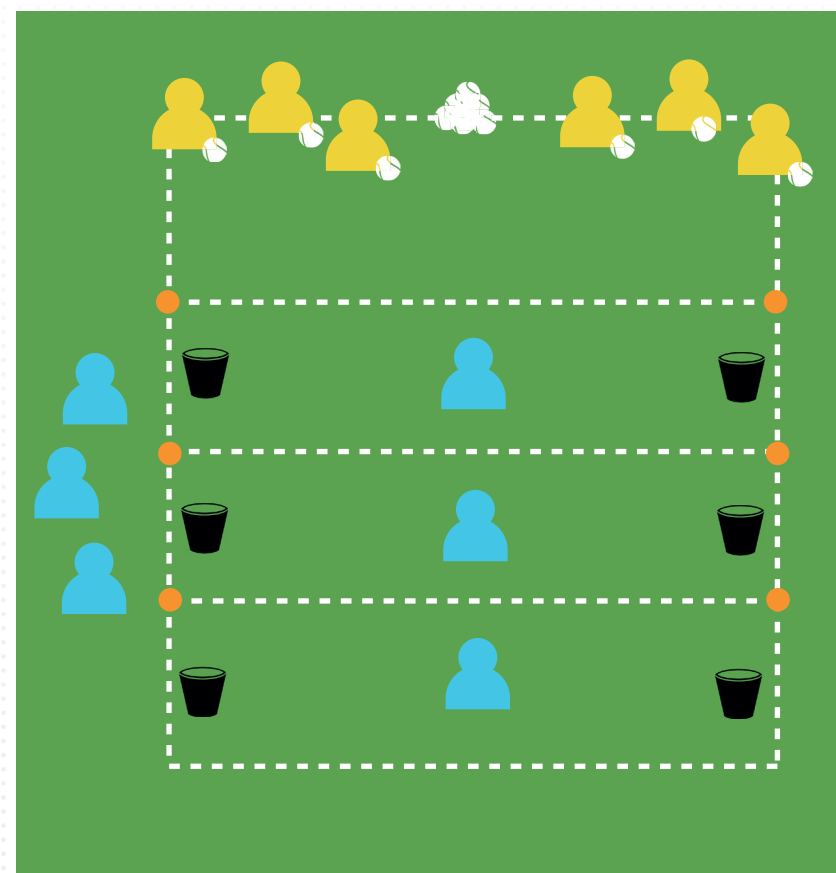
How to Play

The yellow team have a huge supply of tennis balls (or bean bags) and they pick them up one at a time. They run to put the ball into any of the buckets but obviously there is a blue guard for every two buckets. The blue guards are locked into the area marked by the cones.

The buckets at the far end are worth more points but obviously involve more risk.

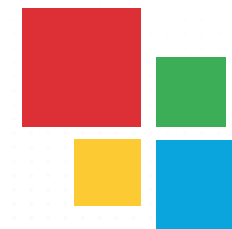
Place the ball in the bucket to score and then return to get another one. If you are tagged you lose the ball and have to go back to the start and try again.

Play for a short time then change the players over and total up the scores.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

Pitch size related to your team's format in their age group, 5v5, 6v6 etc. If the ball goes out, players can dribble or pass the ball into a teammate to restart.

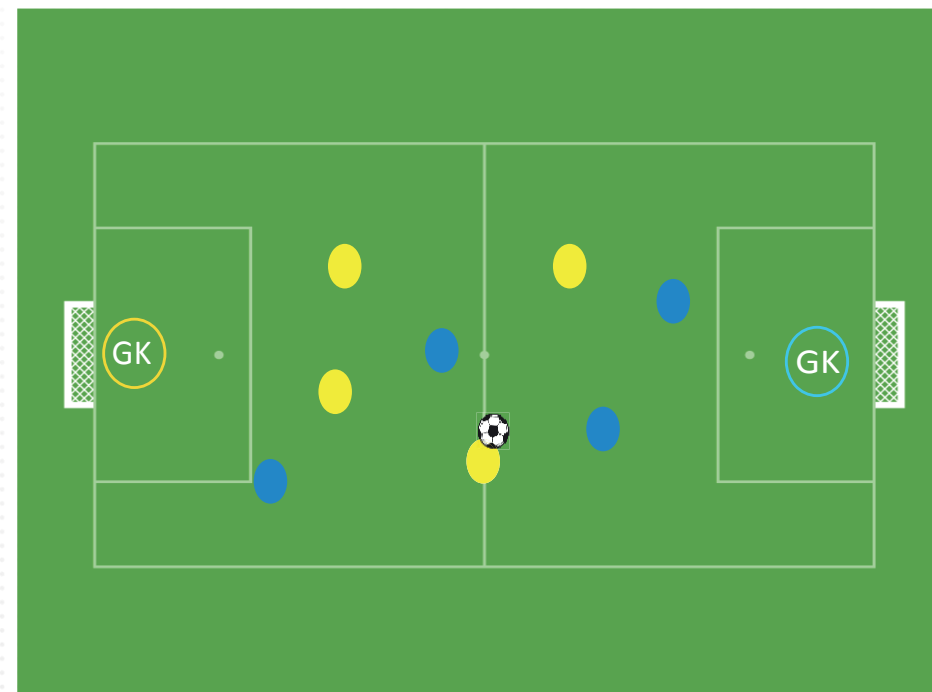
How to Play

Give related challenges in relation to the topics:

Challenge 1 – Try to score without using a teammate.

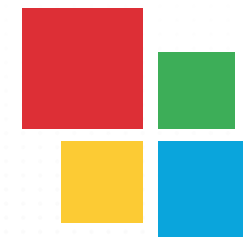
Challenge 2 – Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward.

Challenge 3 – Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team.



DNA FOCUS:

DEVELOPING AND REFINING AGILITY, SPEED AND AWARENESS OF SPACE



Organisation

Suitable squares are marked out with cones. Three players start on the outside of the square with bibs placed in the **side** of their shorts like a tail.

How to Play

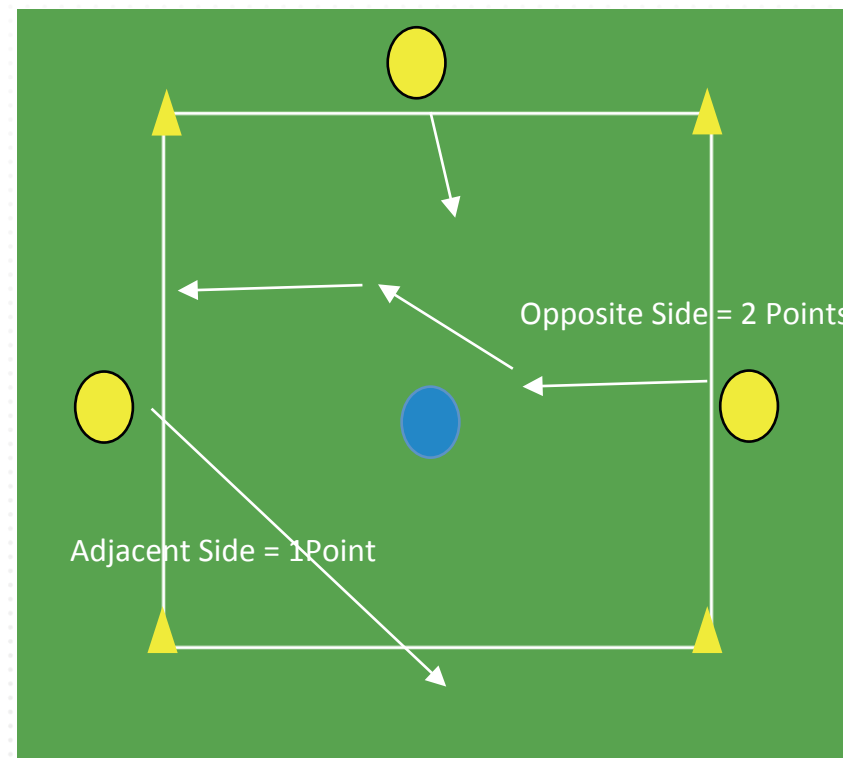
The middle player tries to steal the bib as players travel across the square to get to different sides. Team points are given for successful runs across the area (the higher the risk – the higher the points). If the middle player steals the bib, players change places and roles.

Points:

- Running to an adjacent side without losing the bib gives one point.
- Running to the opposite side without losing the bib gives two points.
- The middle 'tagger' can change with a player on the outside when they have stolen the bib.

Add a ball...

- For all players.
- For just players on the outside (tagger is 'live').



AFTER A DIFFERENT MOVEMENT WARM-UP AND SOME OTHER INDIVIDUAL FUN WITH THE BALL, GET THE PLAYERS INTO MATCHES AGAIN.

REMEMBER:

THIS IS ONLY WEEK TWO SO STILL LARGER NUMBER GAMES, LARGER AREAS (BUT NOT BIGGER THAN THEY WOULD NORMALLY PLAY ON).

HELP THEM FIND OUT WHAT THE GAME IS ALL ABOUT AND THE PART THEY MIGHT PLAY IN IT. FOR SOME PLAYERS THE NUMBER OF GAMES THEY HAVE PLAYED MIGHT BE SMALL. THEY NEED PRACTICE AS THIS IS WHAT OUR TRAINING PREPARES THEM FOR.

**CHILDREN LEARN AS THEY PLAY.
MOST IMPORTANTLY, IN PLAY
CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO LEARN.**

WEEK 3

***MORE ENJOYMENT
MORE ACTIVITY
MORE FOOTBALL***

*Almost all
creativity involves
purposeful play.*



DNA FOCUS:

INSTINCTIVE DECISION-MAKING



Organisation

Set up as shown. Six players (yellow) are placed around the outside of the area (more players can be used if required).

How to Play

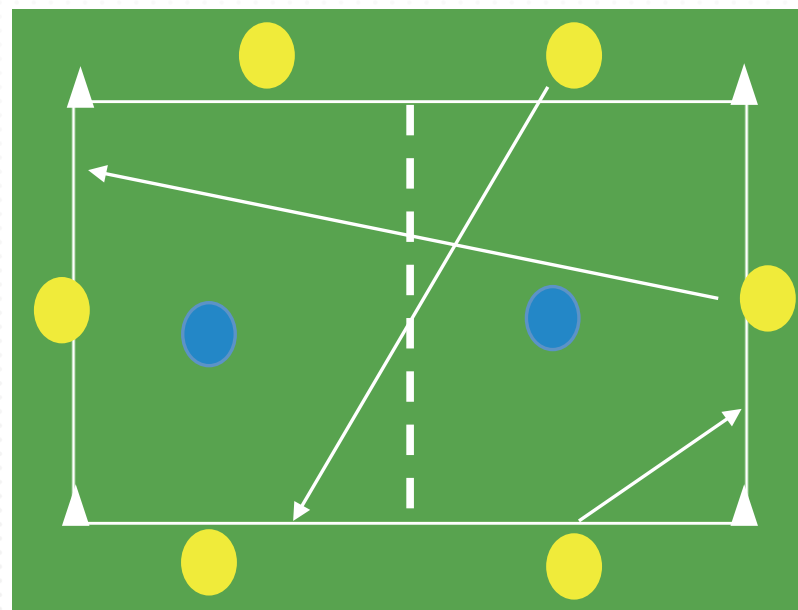
Yellow players place a bib in the **side** of their shorts and attempt to travel the longest distance across the area without a blue defender stealing their bib. If this happens the players change roles.

Help players understand about risk v reward. The opposite side is a long way away and they must avoid being tagged by the two blue 'taggers'. When is a good time to run?

Challenge: Try to make the longest run you can by staying in the area for as long as possible.

Progression: Add a ball for the players on the outside (taggers are 'live'). Taggers **must** take the ball off one of the players as they travel across. If the ball is kicked out they stay as a tagger.

If a tagger cleanly gets possession of a ball **and** can dribble out of the area with the ball under control then they can change places with the player on the outside.



DNA FOCUS:

INTELLIGENT DEFENDING



Organisation

Mini-pitch with goals ensuring the pitch is big enough for players to have time to spend on the ball.

How to Play

Normal game (with or without GKs) and players can dribble or pass in when the ball goes out of play.

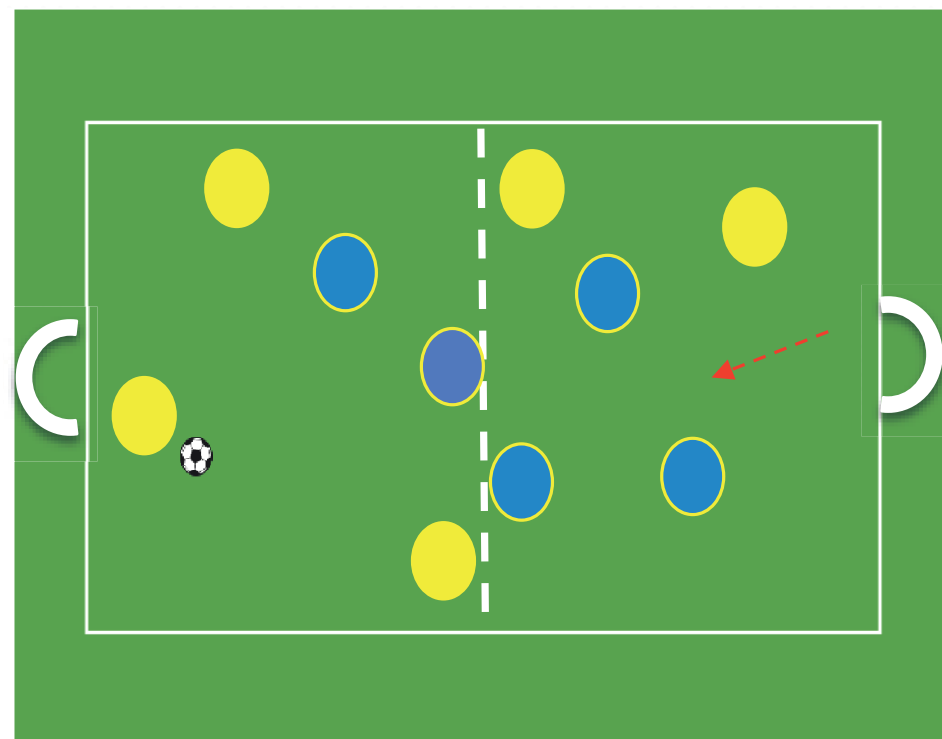
We want to encourage intelligent defending and winning the ball back cleanly so:

- One point for scoring normally.
- Three points if you win possession back in the opposition's half and your team goes on to score.

However:

If you're beaten easily when you're pressing in the opponent's half and they get round you, you're 'locked in' to that half and can't recover to help your team defend until your team regains possession. Once this happens, you can go anywhere again.

Challenge 1 - Try to cleanly win the ball back close to the opponent's goal (kicking the ball out is a last resort).



Challenge 2 - Try to choose the best time to win the ball back for your team.

Note: For older age groups consider placing an offside line into the session.

DNA FOCUS:

INTELLIGENT DEFENDING



Organisation

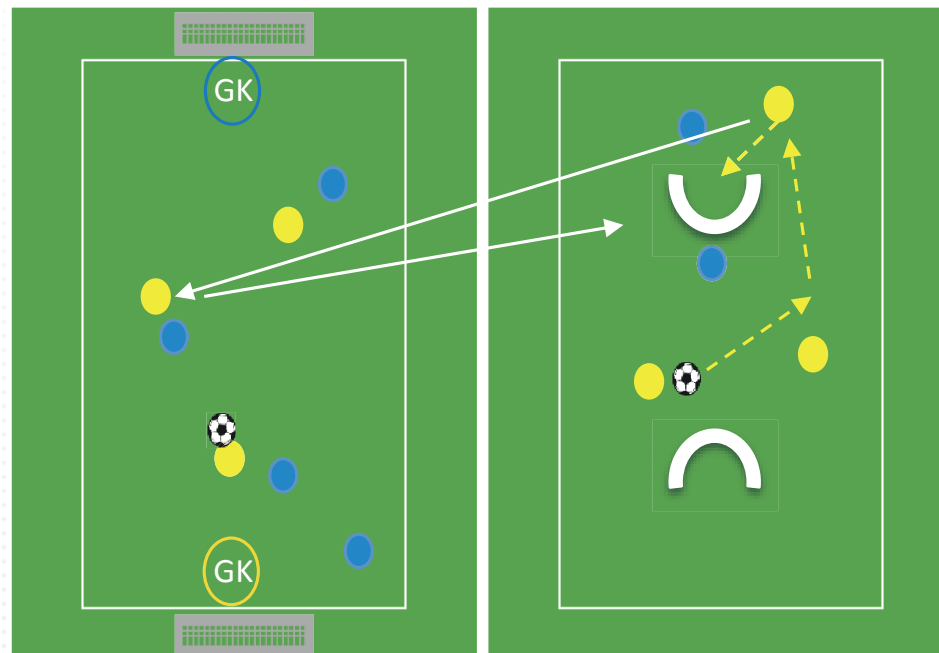
Two mini-pitches are set up side by side. On one pitch the goals are in the normal position and on the other one they're facing away from the playing area.

How to Play

The teams on both pitches are trying to score. If a player scores on one pitch, they run over to the other pitch and high-five a teammate who moves to the pitch they came from. Play continues. If the ball goes out, players can dribble or pass it into a teammate.

When a player leaves their pitch after a goal, there is a brief period of overload to the other team. How should they defend now?

Note: For older age groups, there could be an offside line used.



*WELL DONE FOR USING A DIFFERENT MOVEMENT WARM-UP
AND SOME OTHER FUN-WITH-THE-BALL ACTIVITIES.
NOW GET THE PLAYERS INTO MATCHES AGAIN.*

REMEMBER: *AT WEEK THREE YOU CAN LOOK AT SLIGHTLY
SMALLER-SIDED GAMES. 4V4 WOULD BE PERFECT AT
THIS STAGE (PARTICULARLY IF FOR THE PREVIOUS
TWO WEEKS YOU HAVE PLAYED 6V6 OR EVEN 7V7).*

*GIVE SMALL AMOUNTS OF CLEAR AND SIMPLE
HELP AND ADVICE, FOLLOWED BY LOTS OF
PRACTICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.*

***NECESSITY MAY BE THE MOTHER OF
INVENTION, BUT PLAY IS CERTAINLY THE FATHER.***



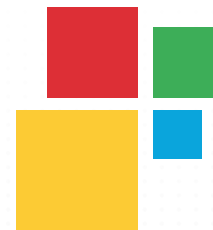
WEEK 4

***MORE ENJOYMENT
MORE ACTIVITY
MORE FOOTBALL***

*This is the real
secret of life - to be
completely engaged
with what you are
doing in the here
and now. And instead
of calling it work,
realise it is play.*

DNA FOCUS:

PHYSICAL LITERACY 9-12



Organisation

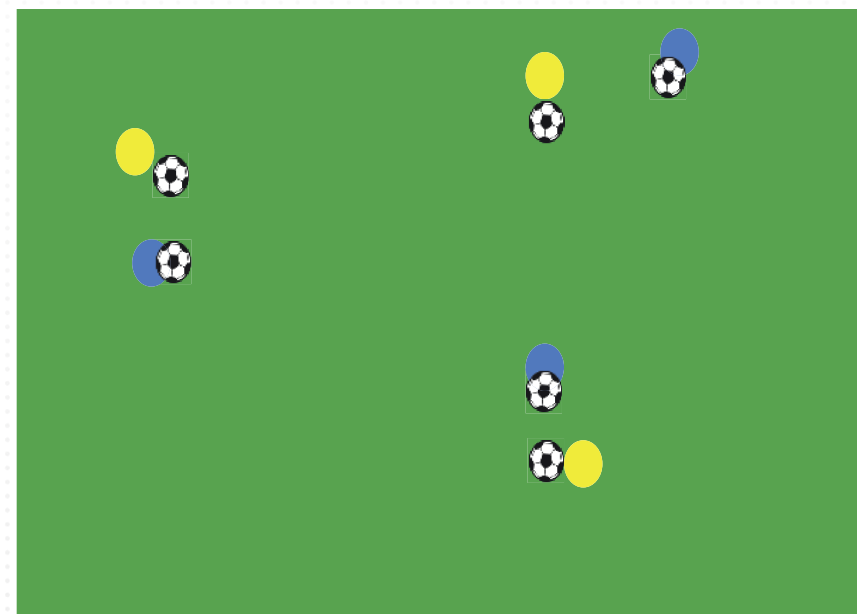
Players are in pairs, one dribbling the ball (yellow), whilst the other one is allowed to bounce it like a basketball (blue). They play 1v1 but there are three pairs in each area. (The diagram shows one area.) This is so that players have to dribble around other players making the chase and the tag more difficult.

How to Play

The player bouncing the ball must try to tag the player dribbling the ball (but only their opponent). If successful, they change over and repeat.

The player bouncing the ball must stay in contact with it (no leaving it and running after your opponent).

Play for a set time and add up the number of tags for each group of three players so that although you only have one opponent, you are contributing to a team total.



DNA FOCUS:

MASTER THE BALL 1



Organisation

Play on a pitch that relates to the format your age group plays, eg. 5v5 / 6v6 / 7v7 etc.

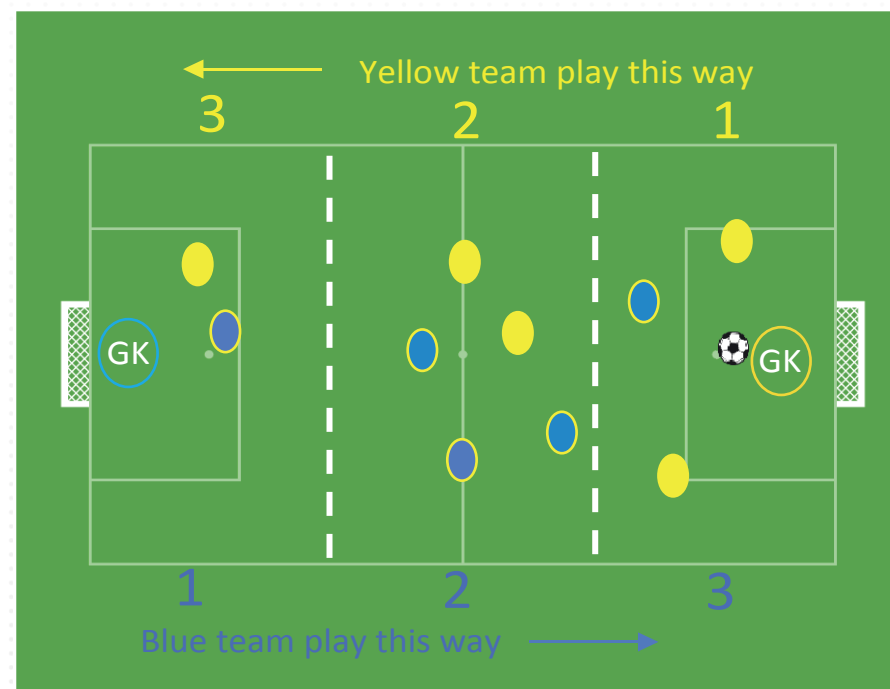
How to Play

If the team in possession can play out from their GK (zone 1) and through the other zones by dribbling or passing and then scoring, that goal counts as three points. If the attack starts from zone 2 it counts as two points and from zone 3 as one.

Challenge 1 – Try to score without using a teammate.

Challenge 2 – Try to stay on the ball until you can pass forward.

Challenge 3 – Try to have as many touches as you can whilst keeping the ball for your team.



WE HOPE YOU'RE BEGINNING TO GET YOUR OWN WARM-UP IDEAS BY NOW, BUT IF NOT IT'S GREAT THAT YOU'RE USING THESE DIFFERENT MOVEMENT GAMES AND ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE LOTS OF BALL CONTACT.

NOW IT'S TIME TO PLAY, BUT WE'RE REDUCING THE NUMBERS AGAIN. WE'RE NOW AT WEEK FOUR, SO ONCE AGAIN: LOOK AT SLIGHTLY SMALLER-SIDED GAMES. 3V3 WOULD BE GREAT TO FOLLOW ON FROM YOUR PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES. YOU CAN PLAY WITH OR WITHOUT GKs.

AGAIN, GIVE SMALL AMOUNTS OF CLEAR AND SIMPLE HELP AND ADVICE, FOLLOWED BY LOTS OF PRACTICE AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

LIFE IS MORE FUN IF YOU PLAY GAMES.



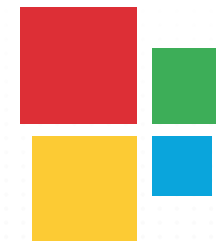
WEEK 5

PLAYERS NOW READY FOR MORE GAMES

*Do not keep children
to their studies
by compulsion
but by play.*

DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

This is week five so the numbers are smaller and the intensity higher. The area used provides enough space for players to shoot quickly and combine creatively. There is a goal/cones at each end. The game shown is 2v2 plus GKs but can be played to the line without GKs.

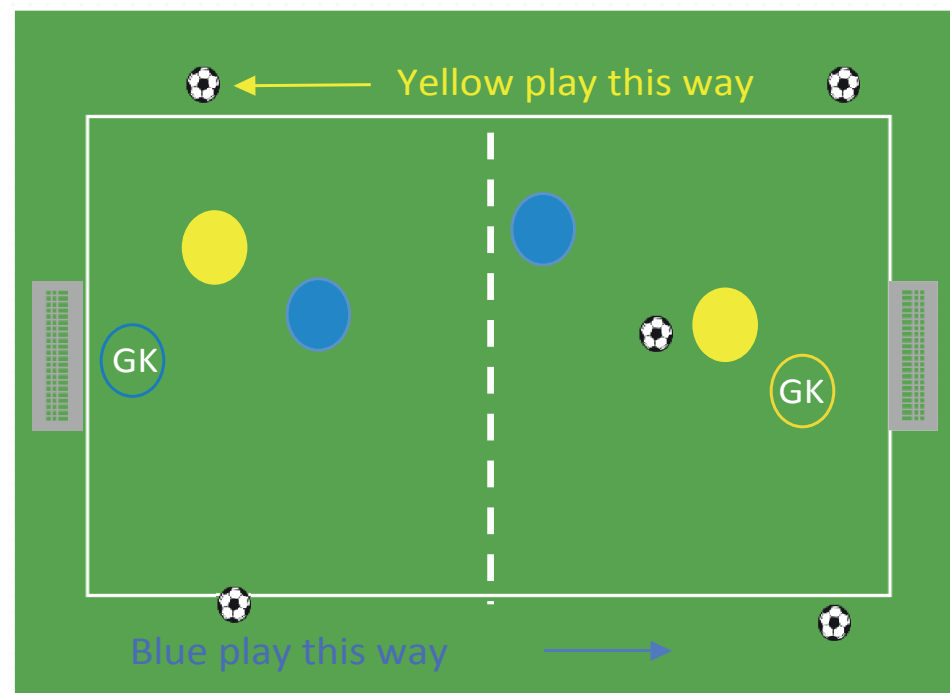
How to Play

Each team is trying to score using their individual ability or by cleverly combining. Reinforce the kind of play you want.

Challenges:

- Try to score by yourself.
- Try to do something that surprises your opponent.
- Try to score by combining with your teammates.

Have spare balls around if possible to keep the play at a high tempo.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

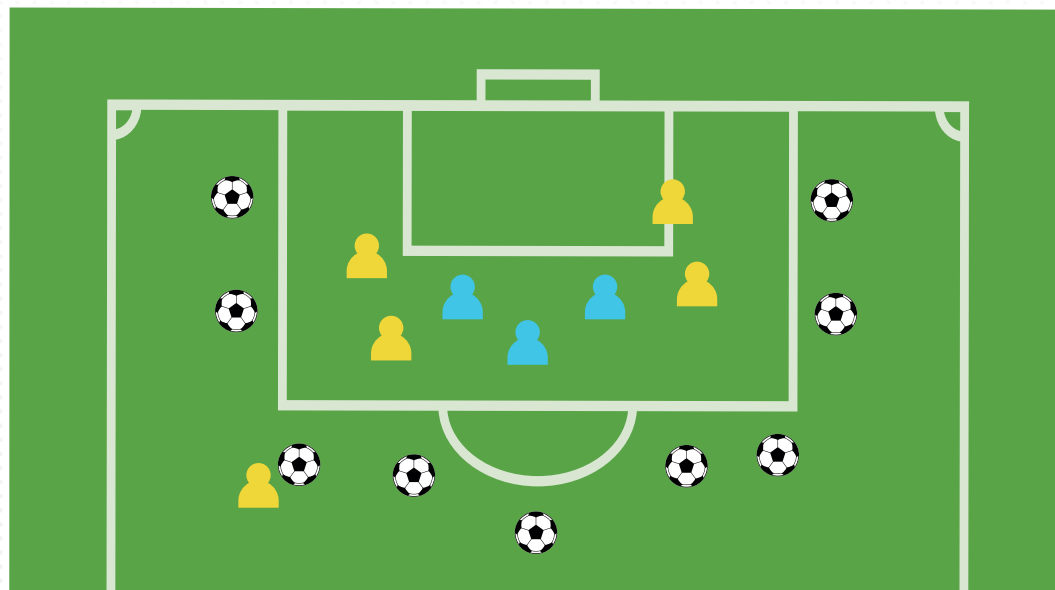
The game is set up around the penalty area of the pitch. Balls are placed around the area so that the game can restart quickly.

How to Play

Five yellow attackers play against three blue defenders and a GK. Yellows start the first attack and try to score a goal. If they score, a yellow player runs to collect another ball to restart the game from outside the area.

If the attack finishes with a miss or a save, the blue team start the next attack with another ball. If the blue team steal possession of the ball, they can try to score in the goal. If they succeed, they get to go again and the game continues.

The team to score always start the next attack.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

The game is set up as shown. Decide how big to make the pitch because the size will affect the returns you get and the movements and decisions the players will have to make.

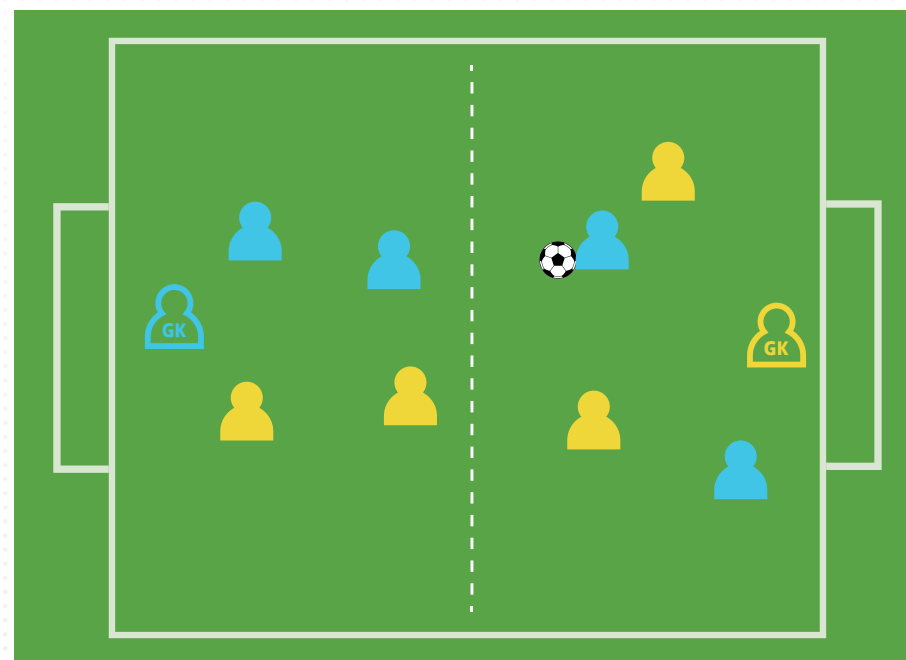
How to Play

The game is 4v4 plus GKs. Look to consolidate some of the key DNA messages about staying on the ball, making things happen and being willing to share when it is best for the team.

The game restarts from the side with a dribble or pass into a teammate.

Challenges:

- Try to score by yourself as a priority.
- Try to do something that surprises your opponent.
- Try to score by combining with your team mates.



THE WEEKS ARE FLYING BY AND WE HOPE THAT YOU AND YOUR YOUNG PLAYERS ARE HAVING A GREAT TIME GETTING READY TO PLAY FOR THE NEW SEASON.

WEEK FIVE GIVES YOU SOME MORE WARM-UP AND SMALL NUMBER IDEAS, BUT AT THIS POINT THERE NEEDS TO BE A REAL FOCUS ON HELPING THE PLAYERS UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENS DURING A MATCH.

THIS WEEK CAN BE DEDICATED TO PLAYING LOTS OF DIFFERENT FORMATS AND GIVES A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO REVISIT AND CONSOLIDATE YOUR KEY MESSAGES TO THE PLAYERS. PLAY 6V6, 3V3, 1V1 AND 4V4. MIX IT UP AND HELP THE PLAYERS COPE WITH THE DEMANDS OF EACH GAME.

***WHOEVER WANTS TO UNDERSTAND MUCH,
MUST PLAY MUCH.***

WEEK 6

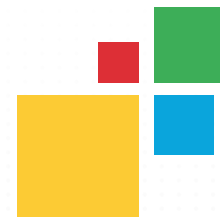
PLAYERS NEED EVEN MORE GAMES

*Deep meaning lies
often in childish play.*



DNA FOCUS:

INSTINCTIVE DECISION-MAKING



Organisation

Each yellow player has a bib tucked into the side of their shorts as a tail. There are four blue players in the middle and the game is set up as shown. A smaller area creates more dodging and turning whilst a larger area promotes more sprinting and fast running.

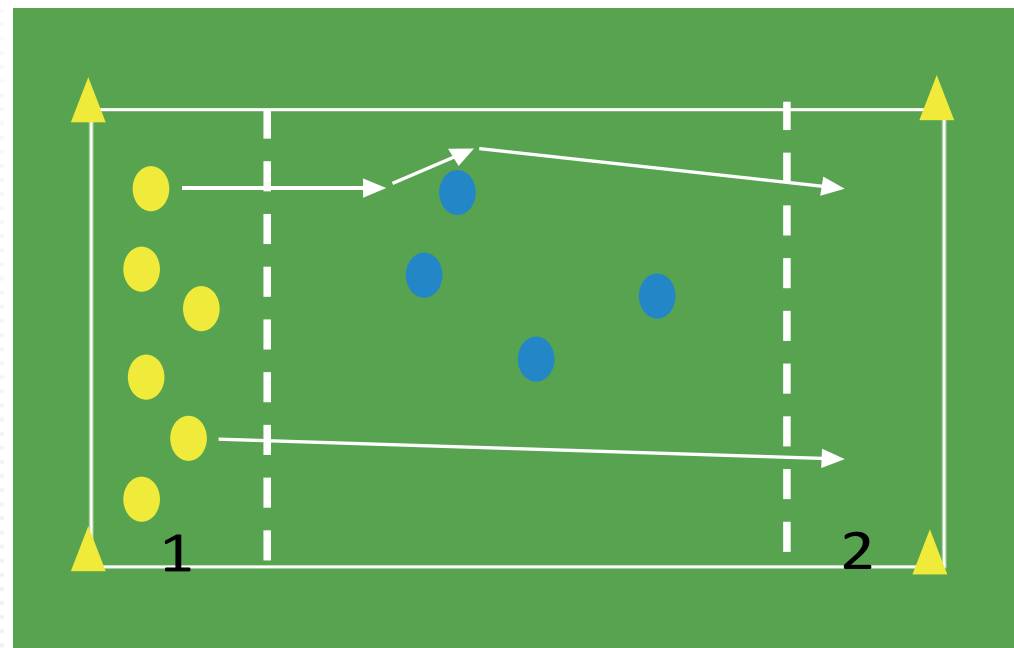
How to Play

The yellows try to get from one side to the other without having the bib taken from them by the blue players.

If a blue player steals a bib they must try to get into either end zone before getting tagged by the yellow player. If successful, the team gets a point.

Progress the session by allowing **any** yellow player to tag a blue defender who has stolen a bib and is trying to get into the end zone.

Progress the session by giving each yellow player two bibs, one in each side of their shorts.



DNA FOCUS:

INSTINCTIVE ATTACKING DECISION-MAKING



Organisation

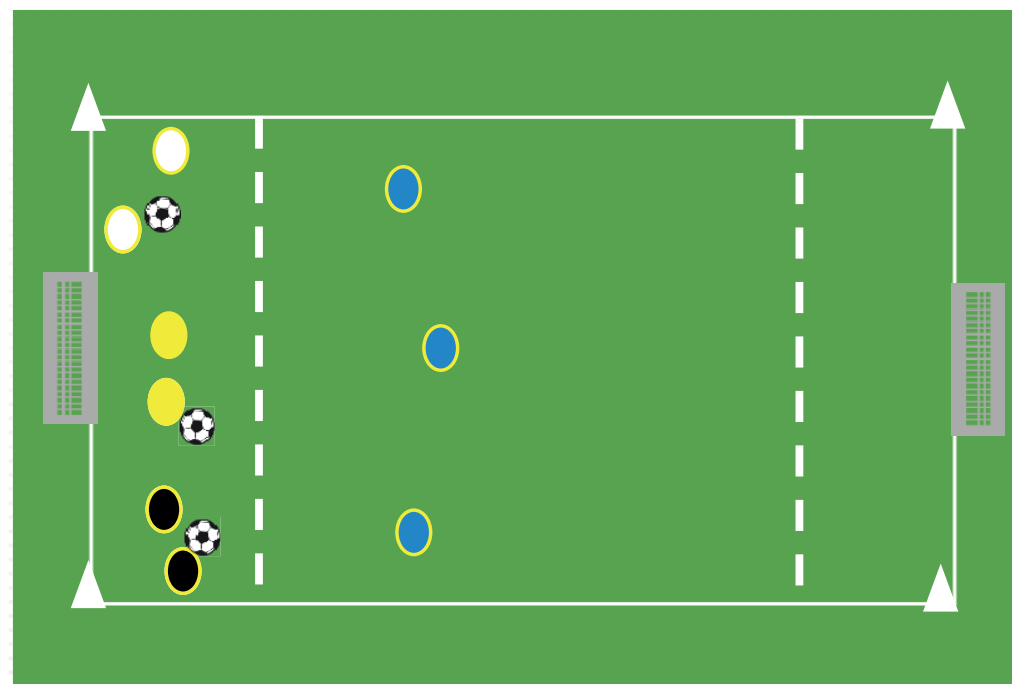
This game is a series of 2v1 battles. There are three pairs (white, yellow and black) playing against one blue in the same area.

How to Play

The pairs try to get from one end zone to the other without having the ball taken from them by the one defender (blue). If successful either of the pair can score in the goal when they get into the end zone (not from outside).

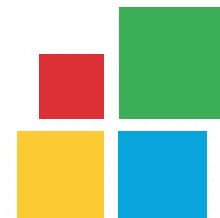
If the blue defender steals the ball, they can try to score in the goal furthest away. The two players who lost possession will have to recover quickly and try to win the ball back to attack again.

A progression could be to play a number of 3v2 games instead of 2v1 with the same rules.



DNA FOCUS:

INSTINCTIVE DEFENSIVE DECISION-MAKING



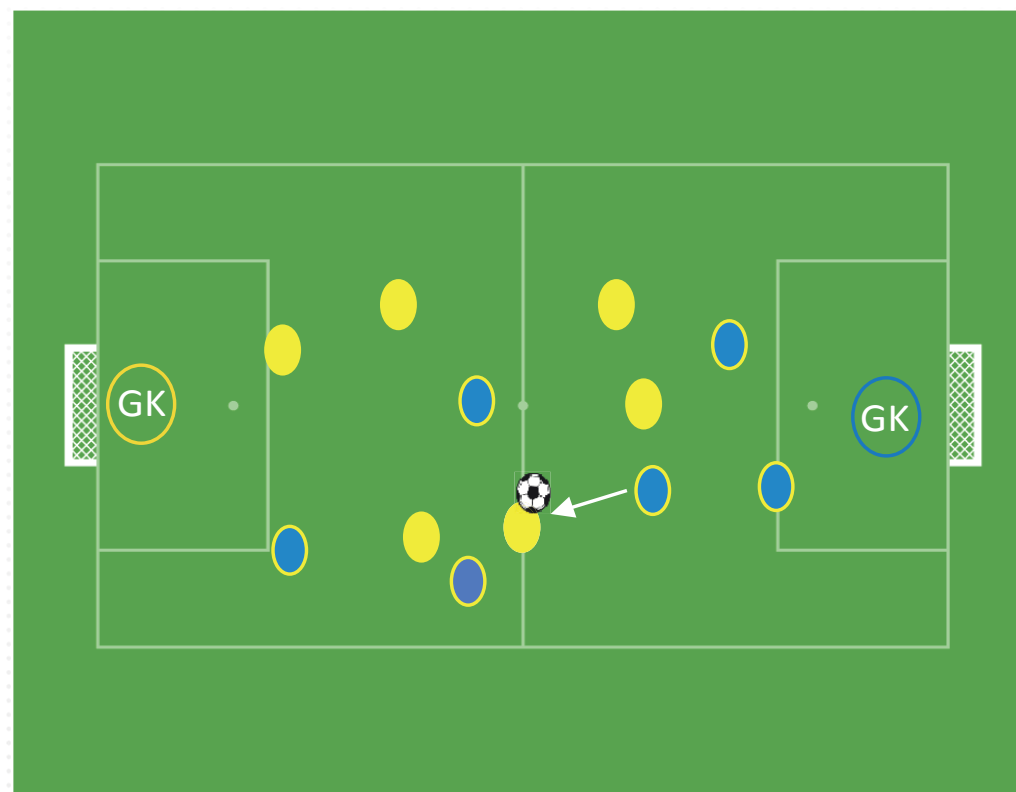
Organisation

Pitch size related to the format for your age group:
5v5, 6v6, 7v7 etc. If the ball goes out, dribble or pass
into a teammate to restart the game.

How to Play

End to end game:

- Challenge 1** – When possession is lost, the nearest player must put the opponent under immediate pressure.
- Challenge 2** – When possession is lost, the nearest player must try to stop the opponent passing or travelling forward.
- Challenge 3** – When possession is lost, the nearest player must try to get between the ball and the goal they're defending.



THE 'GETTING READY TO PLAY' PHASE IS INTO WEEK SIX ALREADY AND WE HOPE THAT YOU AND YOUR YOUNG PLAYERS ARE STILL HAVING A GREAT TIME AS THE NEW SEASON APPROACHES.

THIS LAST WEEK CONTINUES TO OFFER MORE SUGGESTED MOVEMENT AND SMALL NUMBER ACTIVITIES FOR YOU TO TRY, BUT ONCE AGAIN TO HELP THESE YOUNG PLAYERS PREPARE FULLY WE HAVE TO CONTINUE THE VERY IMPORTANT THEMES OF PLAY, ENJOYMENT AND FOOTBALL. PLAYING GAMES IN TRAINING IS VITAL, SO GET THEM INTO MORE SMALL-SIDED GAMES.

IF YOU HAVE FOLLOWED THE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SUGGESTED, WE BELIEVE YOU AND YOUR PLAYERS WILL HAVE HAD A GREAT TIME AND THE PLAYERS' LOVE OF FOOTBALL WILL NOW BE EVEN STRONGER.

WELL DONE.

PLAY PROVIDES A CONTINUATION DESIRE. WE DESIRE TO KEEP DOING IT, AND THE PLEASURE OF THE EXPERIENCE DRIVES THAT DESIRE. WE FIND WAYS TO KEEP IT GOING. WHOEVER WANTS TO UNDERSTAND MUCH, MUST PLAY MUCH.



FOR ALL

[TheFA.com/learning](https://www.thefa.com/learning)