

A close-up photograph of a person's hands interacting with a tactical diagram on a whiteboard. The diagram shows a football pitch with various colored markers (blue, red, yellow) placed on it, representing player positions. A hand is pointing to a red marker near the top left, while another hand with a gold ring is positioned near the bottom right. The background is dark and out of focus.

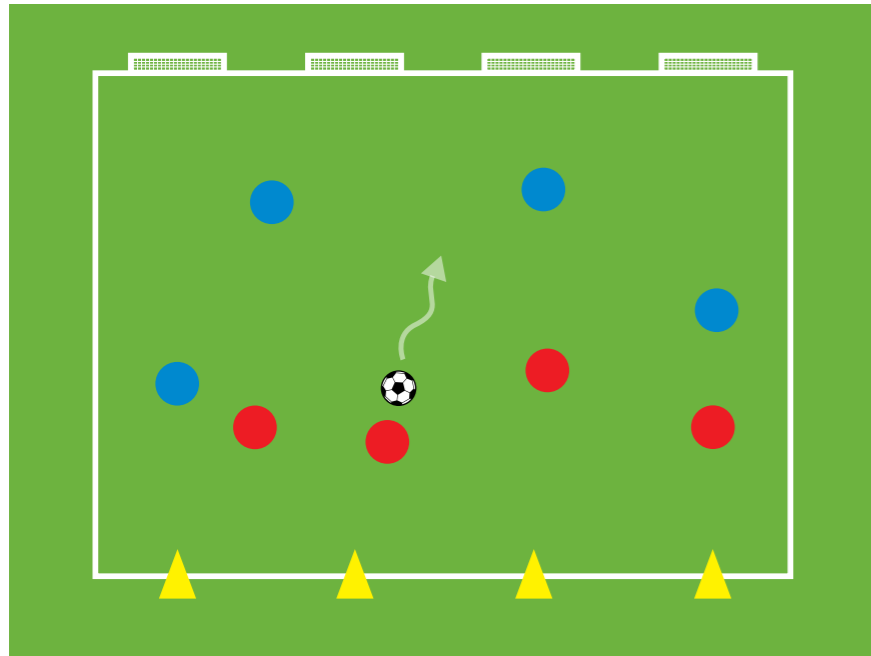
DESIGNING PRACTICE

AN INTRODUCTION

As outlined in other articles in this issue, the guiding principle for an effective coaching practice should be the game of football itself. In forthcoming editions of Insight we will be looking in more depth at the key ingredients for designing effective practice. One of the ingredients we will be focusing on in more detail is the 'need' for practice.

Once you have identified an area of the game your team 'need' to practise, you can begin to look at designing a game or practice which recreates the demands of this situation. Here are two practice frameworks which aim to recreate game like situations. The first, 'The four goal game', is set up to encourage players to switch the play, and the second session, 'Back to Goal', encourages players to improve their receiving skills around the penalty box.

The Four Goal Game
Focus: Switching play



Top Tips

- Be patient, keep possession and recognise the right time to attack.
- Try and switch the play and to create opportunities for 1v1's.
- Preparation to receive (awareness/scanning, body shape, one touch and no touch turns).
- Be confident in wide areas to take on players in 1v1 situations (close control, change of direction, using fakes to unbalance the defender).

Developing Understanding

Have you ever tried to use a practice you have seen another coach deliver, only to find it doesn't work with your group of players?

Collecting practices may be a way of gaining potential session frameworks, but effective practice design should consider the individual needs of the group of players you are working with. Amongst many other considerations, it may mean: making the practice area bigger or smaller, adding or taking away players/pressure, and developing individual challenges.

The practices outlined here have been used with the following age groups; 'Four Goal Game' - U11s Grassroots Club 'Back To Goal' - U13s Grassroots Club

- Are there any aspects of the sessions you would use with your own group of players?
- What aspects of the sessions would you change to make them more individual for your group?
- What progressions could you add?

Please send any suggestions to: insightjournal@thefa.com

Organisation

Pitch size: 'short and wide' (pitch dimensions should be changed in line with the age of players/ number of players taking part in the practice) (players can experiment playing the game on different sized/ shaped areas).

4 small goals are arranged at one side of the pitch and four stand-up cones arranged opposite.

The Game

- One team attacks the four goals.
- One team attacks the four stand-up cones (attempting to knock them over with an accurate pass or shot)

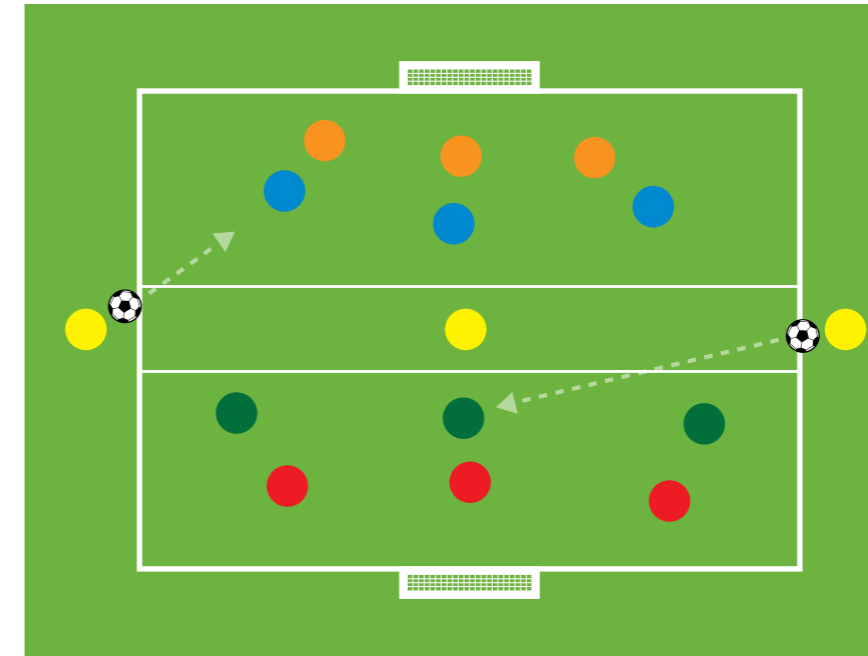
Swap ends after 3/4 minutes or after

a specified number of goals. Players can score from anywhere on the pitch. Players are allowed unlimited touches.

Progressions

- Goals scored in the two 'wide' goals are worth double.
- Add a floating player that plays for the team in possession.
- Take out the two central goals/ cones and players can only score in the wide goals.
- Experiment with the role of the goalkeeper.
- Goalkeeper as an outfield player?
- 2 goalkeepers for the four goals?
- Let the players decide! (one touch finishes, score with weaker foot etc).

Back to Goal
Focus: Receiving/Turning under pressure



Top Tips

- Individual techniques for protecting the ball from the defender (Distribution of body weight/use of arms).
- Use the position of the defender to turn/roll/spin your marker.
- Keep the ball on the 'safe side' of the defender: experiment receiving the ball with the outside of the foot.
- Try and let the ball run down the side of your body to create an opportunity to shoot.
- Highlight the importance of reacting quickly to rebounds .
- Encourage different types of finishing - shooting early, the stab shot, chipping the goalkeeper, volleys, headers etc; encourage the players to be creative with their finishing in the penalty box.
- encourage a variety of passes from the servers- Aerial passes, passes to space/feet etc.

Area

- Two areas are marked out as penalty boxes - with a channel 3/4 yards wide in between them.
- Goals are positioned at either sides of the penalty box. (Use goals/pitch sizes which are relative to the age of the players undertaking the practice).

Teams

- Split squad into 5 groups of 3 (this can be changed depending on the number of players available)
- One team positions themselves in the central area (yellow team), these players all have a supply of balls and are given a number 1 -3.
- if goalkeepers are available use them

The practice

- The coach shouts out two numbers. The first number shouted plays the ball into penalty area 1, and the second number plays into penalty box 2.

Play for 3/ 4 minutes or until one team has scored 3 goals and then change over the roles of all the teams/servers.

Progressions

- Player's receive the next ball from the servers as soon as an attack breaks down. (The coach doesn't shout any numbers.)
- Both goalkeepers have a supply of balls in the back of the net. Goalkeeper can play into any of the three servers who receive and play into the penalty box.
- Take out the serving players and let goalkeepers serve directly into the opposite area. Both goalkeepers can serve at the same time.
- Take out the 'lines' and play a game.