



ENGLAND *DNA*
FOUNDATION PHASE

GETTING READY FOR THE NEW SEASON

UNDER 5-8
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 YOUNGEST 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:

- During the 'getting ready' period involve all the players as one big group (or two smaller groups) working in larger areas in the early stages. Playing matches is great.
- 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 area (as a rule of thumb remember: early on, large numbers, large areas – later on, smaller numbers, smaller areas).
- Respect each child as an individual and adapt the session or challenge for them. Try to pair or group players together for different outcomes so that their individual needs are met more often.



WEEK 1

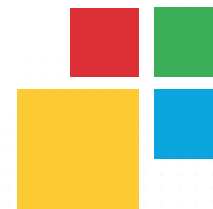
ENJOYMENT ACTIVITY FOOTBALL

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



DNA FOCUS:

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENT PATTERNS



Organisation

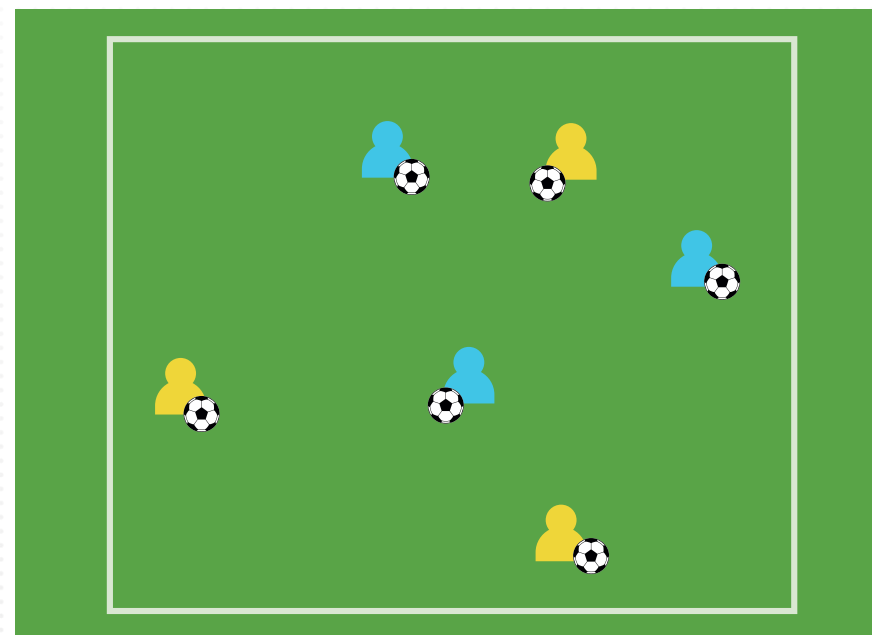
Players are in pairs, one dribbling the ball (yellow), whilst the other one is allowed to bounce it like a basketball (blue). They play 1v1 but there are three pairs in each area. (The diagram shows one area.) This is so that players have to dribble around other players making the chase and the tag more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

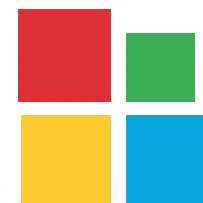
The player bouncing the ball must stay in contact with it (no leaving it and running after your opponent).

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 IN DIFFERENT WAYS TO KEEP POSSESSION AND BE POSITIVE



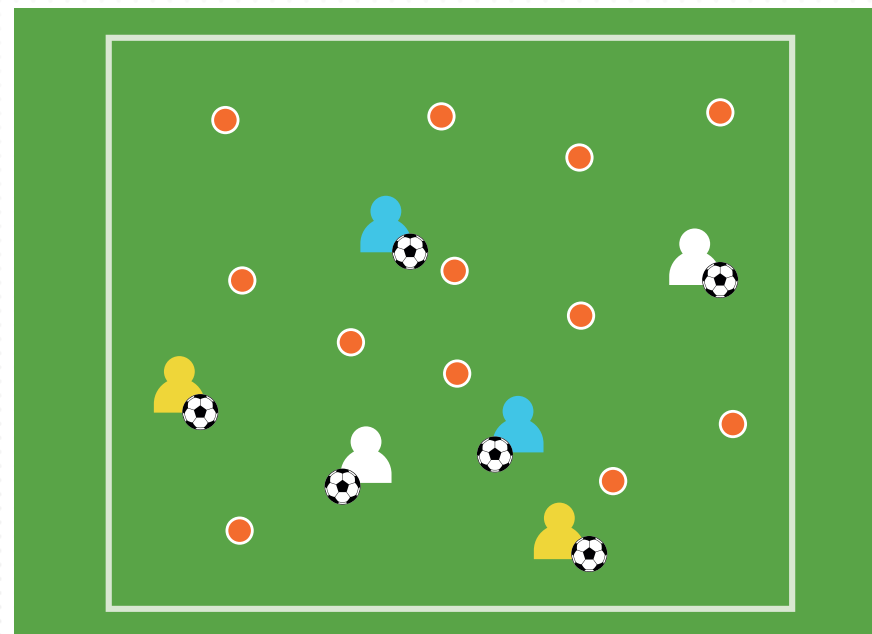
Organisation

This activity can be used with different numbers of players so is great if you are not sure how many players you might have. An area is set out to allow players time to dribble and experiment with the ball. Flat discs are placed randomly around the area different distances apart (this will allow for different changes of speed and direction).

How to Play

Players travel around the area, moving the ball using different parts of the foot. Each time they reach a flat disc they stop the ball on it and change direction. They need to move away from the disc within three seconds. Points are awarded every time a player stops the ball on a flat disc (they can't roll the ball on and off the same disc repeatedly).

To progress the session split the group into three or four teams. A team is selected to guard the flat discs (blue in the diagram), this is done by dribbling the ball to a flat disc and stopping there for five seconds (blocking any player from rolling their ball onto it) then you dribble to block at another disc. The other teams (white/yellow) dribble around with the ball and still attempt to collect



points by stopping their ball on a flat disc that is not blocked by a (blue) guard. Count up the points each team scores in a set amount of time and then change the guards.

Think of other ways to adapt the session to increase the level of difficulty and outcome.

DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

This game is played on a 3v3 mini-pitch, but it should be large enough to allow the players to practise staying on the ball.

How to Play

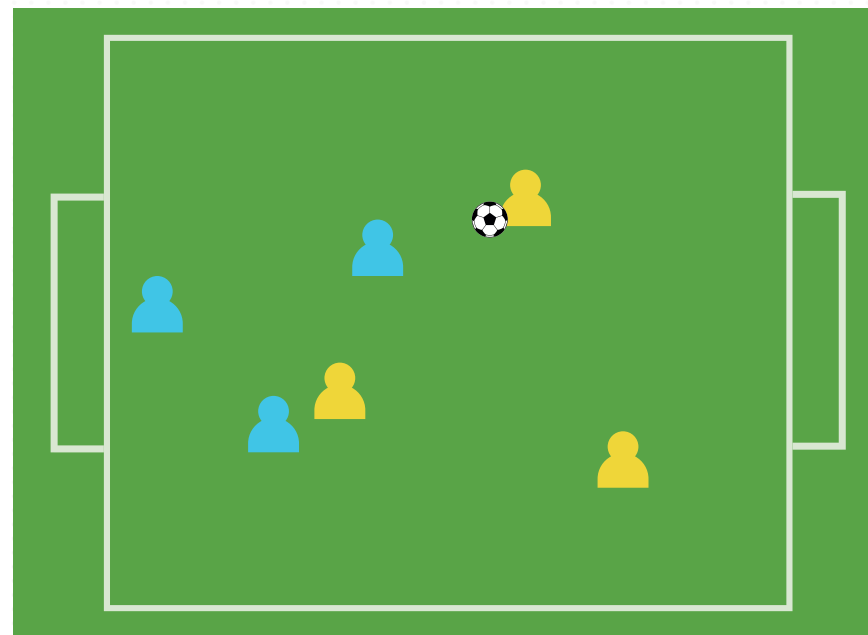
Play a normal game. If the ball goes out of play, players can dribble or pass into teammates to restart the game. Play is continuous.

The coach now adds these challenges as appropriate in order to try and increase creativity on the ball. This may be messy to begin with, but with players this young it's important for the coach to be patient and positive.

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

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

The game can be played with or without GKs. If you play without you might consider putting a scoring zone in to avoid aimless shots into an empty goal.



AFTER A MOVEMENT WARM-UP AND SOME INDIVIDUAL FUN, GET THE PLAYERS INTO MATCHES.

REMEMBER:

AT THIS STAGE IN WEEK ONE - LARGER NUMBER GAMES AND LARGER AREAS (BUT NOT BIGGER THAN THEY WOULD NORMALLY PLAY ON).

THINK OF OTHER WAYS TO ADAPT THE SESSION TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY AND OUTCOME.

WEEK 2

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

*Play is our brains
favourite way
of learning.*



DNA FOCUS:

PHYSICAL LITERACY. TAG AND CHASE GAMES



Organisation

The game is set up as shown and the area can be adjusted to suit the age and ability of the players.

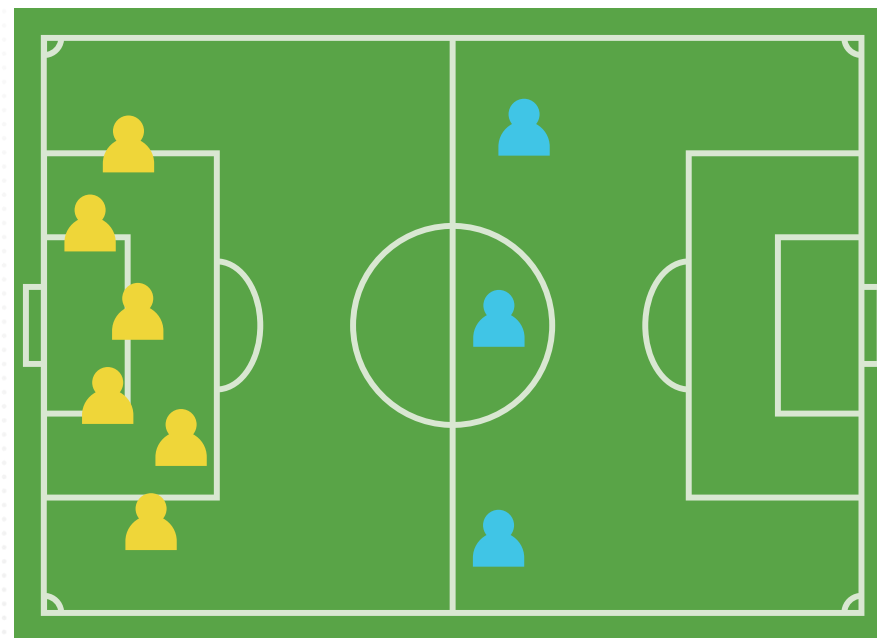
Each of the yellow players has a bib in their hand and one in the side of their shorts.

How to Play

On 'go' the yellow players attempt to run, dodge and evade the blue 'taggers' and throw the bib in their hand into the goal at the far end. If successful they pick the bib up again and run the opposite way (the coach can wait for all yellow players to be ready at one end or let players go individually).

If a blue player can grab the bib in the side of the shorts, they run and throw it in the goal for a point to them.

This game is a classic 'British Bulldog' game and is a great way to get young players dodging, changing direction and running at different speeds.



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 goes, which means the blues can swap turns with their three resting players.

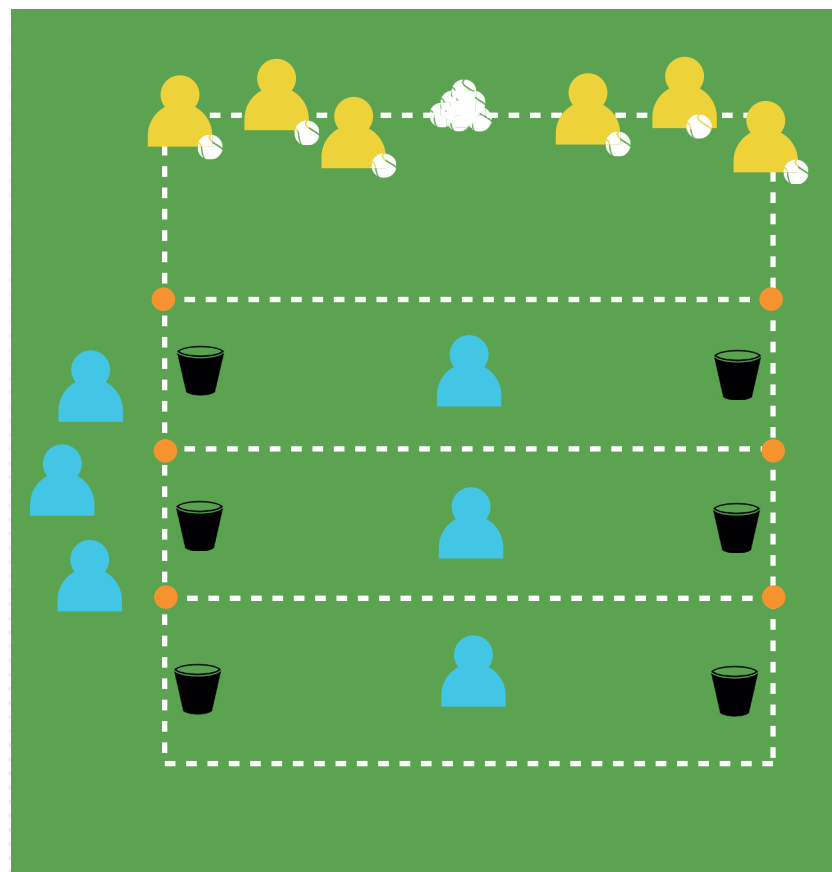
How to Play

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.

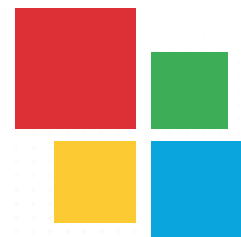
Place the ball in the bucket to score and then return to get another one. If you are tagged you lose the ball and have to go back to the start and try again.

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



DNA FOCUS:

STAY ON THE BALL



Organisation

The game is set up as shown, but this can be adapted depending on numbers. Use mini-pitches with the goals turned around. Ensure the pitch is big enough for players to have time to spend on the ball. Each team tries to score in the opponent's goal.

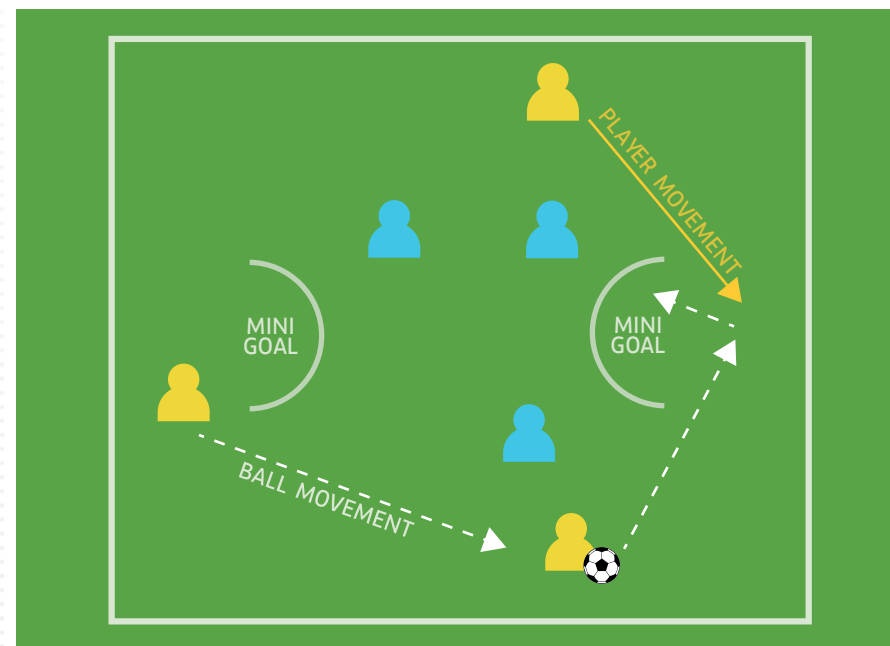
How to Play

The game starts in the normal way and players can dribble or pass into team mates when the ball goes out of play.

This is another game to encourage creativity and an individual connection with the ball. Be patient as players are developing their ability on the ball. Encourage them to try things and to be brave enough to stay on the ball for a little while longer.

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

Challenge 2 - Try to have more touches on the ball but still keep the ball for your team.



AFTER A DIFFERENT MOVEMENT WARM-UP AND SOME OTHER INDIVIDUAL FUN WITH THE BALL, GET THE PLAYERS INTO MATCHES. REMEMBER: THIS IS ONLY WEEK TWO, SO STILL USE LARGER NUMBER GAMES AND 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 IT COULD BE THE FIRST TIME THEY HAVE EVER PLAYED FOOTBALL OR BEEN PART OF A TEAM.

**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:

DEVELOP WAYS OF COMBINING CHANGING SPEED AND DIRECTION TO LOSE AND EVADE DEFENDERS



Organisation

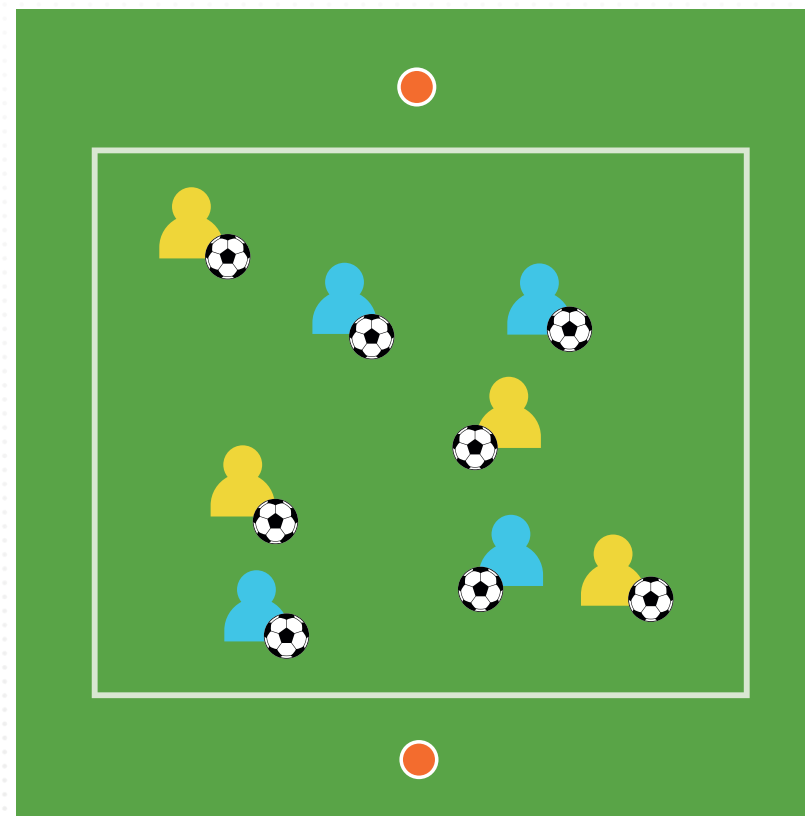
There are two even teams (the game shows 4v4 but it could be any other number) and the area should reflect the numbers used but be big enough for players to run and dodge. Two cones are placed on either side and this distance can vary depending on how far you want players to run.

How to Play

One team is dribbling, the other team hold a ball each. On 'go' the dribblers have to avoid having their ball touched by the opposition players. If it's touched, they have to pick up the ball and run around a cone and come back into the area. The team holding the ball wins if they can get every dribbler out of the area running around cones.

Try to set the cones at a distance that makes the game competitive.

To develop this game, consider one team having a ball held under their arm. The defenders attempt to tag the ball with their hand. If they succeed, the player with the ball places it on the floor for the defender to pick up, while they run around the cone. On return to the area the player now has to tag a player of the opposite team with a ball. After a set time, see how many balls each team have – the one with the most wins (ensure the ball is placed under the arm and held, it can be either right or left arm).



DNA FOCUS:

DEVELOP WAYS OF COMBINING CHANGING SPEED AND DIRECTION TO LOSE AND EVADE DEFENDERS



Organisation

Set out a rectangle made up of two halves and with a defender in each half. Six yellow attackers are placed around the outside of the area. (More players can be used if required).

How to Play

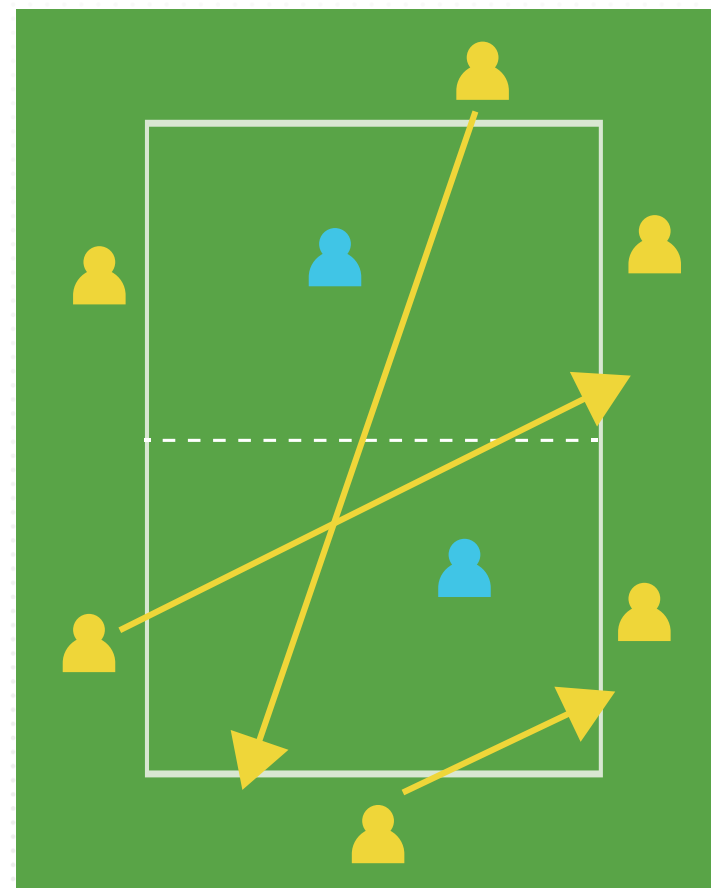
Yellow attackers place a bib in the side of their shorts and attempt to travel the longest distance possible across the area without a blue defender stealing their bib. If this happens, the two players change roles.

Because the area is a rectangle there will be a long run and a shorter one.

Challenge: Try to make the longest run you can (don't forget this does not have to be in a straight line, you could keep dodging the taggers and run for much longer before deciding on a side to go to where you can rest).

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

If a tagger gains 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.



*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:

STAY ON THE BALL AND MASTER THE BALL



Organisation

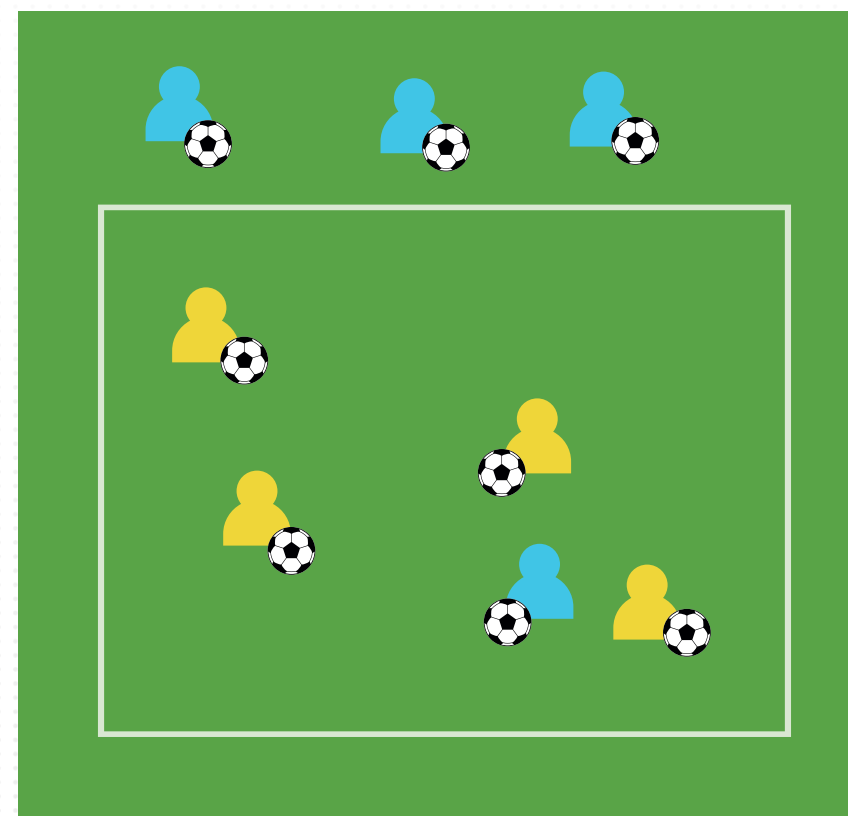
There are two even teams (the game shows 4v4 but it could be any other number). Four players are inside the area with a ball at their feet (yellow), four players are on the outside with a ball in their hands waiting to go in one at a time (the diagram shows the first blue player having gone in). The idea is to empty the area of players as fast as possible.

How to Play

On 'go' the first player with the ball in hands goes in to try and touch their ball against any of the balls being dribbled. When successful, the player runs out to let the next player go in. The tagged player also goes out. Repeat until all players have been caught, with the coach recording the time. Swap over and try to beat the time.

Keep the area quite small to speed up the chasers and the tagging or use a larger area for different types of movements.

Having cones placed at different distances outside the area for players who have been tagged to run around before coming back into the area is a great way to introduce sprinting and running at different speeds.



DNA FOCUS:

STAY ON THE BALL AND MASTER THE BALL



Organisation

A rectangle area with a 1v1 in the middle and a teammate on the outside of the area. This player can support in many different ways.

How to Play

Yellow 1 tries to stay on the ball for as long as possible against blue 1. If yellow 1 thinks they are in danger of losing the ball, they can choose to pass out to their teammate yellow 2 in order to keep possession.

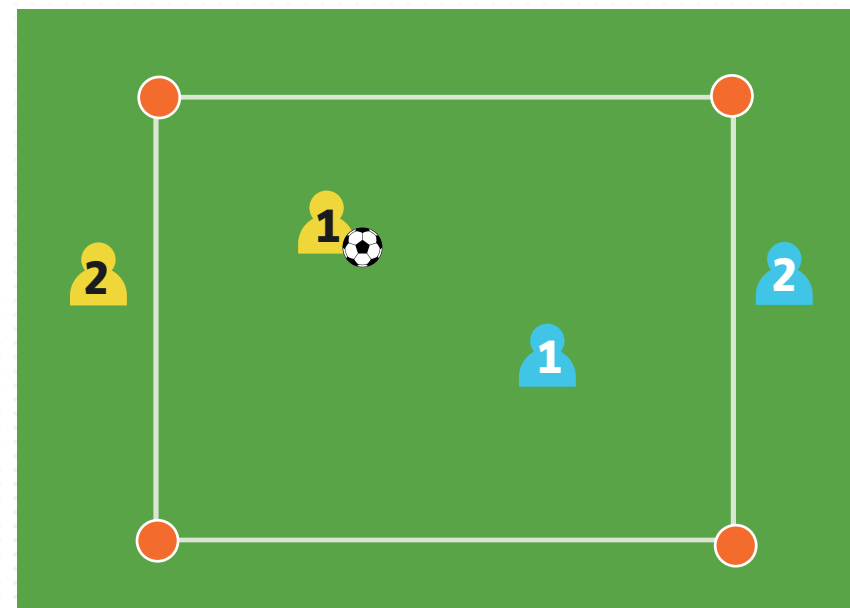
The blue 1 player **must** gain possession and pass it out to their waiting teammate in order for them to gain control of the game as the team in possession.

If the ball is passed out, two things can happen to the game (coach decides depending on the focus of the session):

- The teammates swap places with yellow 2 coming in to continue 1v1 against the blue player.

OR

- Yellow 2 brings the ball into the area and the two yellow players have to keep the ball for a set number of passes or time in a 2v1 against the blue player.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITING AND POSITIVE IN POSSESSION



Organisation

3v3, 4v4 or 5v5 mini pitches. The diagram shows 3v3 without GKs.

How to Play

The game starts in the normal way (centre kick off).

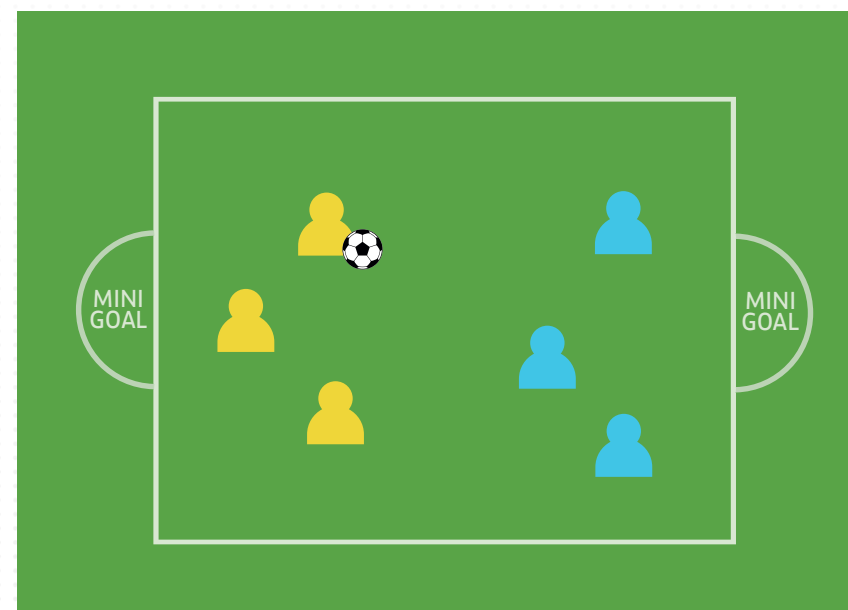
If the ball goes out of play, the game can be restarted by a player dribbling the ball in or passing it into a teammate.

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.

The game can be played with or without GKs. If they are not used consider putting in a scoring zone to avoid aimless shots.



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 CONTACTS.

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:

DEVELOP FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS WHEN REACTING TO A STIMULUS



Organisation

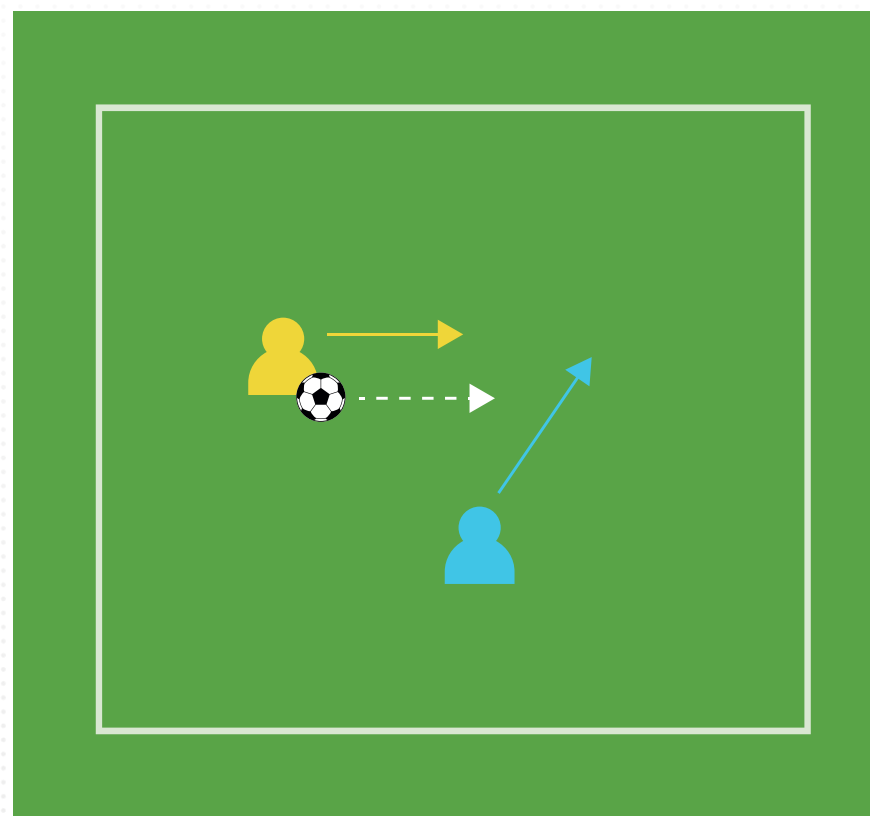
Mark out a square big enough for the number of players who will play in it.
The diagram shows the 1v1 game.

How to Play

Yellow player starts with the ball in hands and can move around the square freely carrying the ball.

The ball is then thrown over head-height at any time and must bounce before the blue player can catch it. Once the blue player has caught it, after the bounce, they move around the square with the ball and throw it above head-height, trying to catch the yellow player out. If the ball bounces more than once, a point is awarded to the thrower.

For a different challenge play 2v2, 3v3 or even 3v2 or 2v1.



DNA FOCUS:

EXCITE WITH THE BALL AND SEEK CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



Organisation

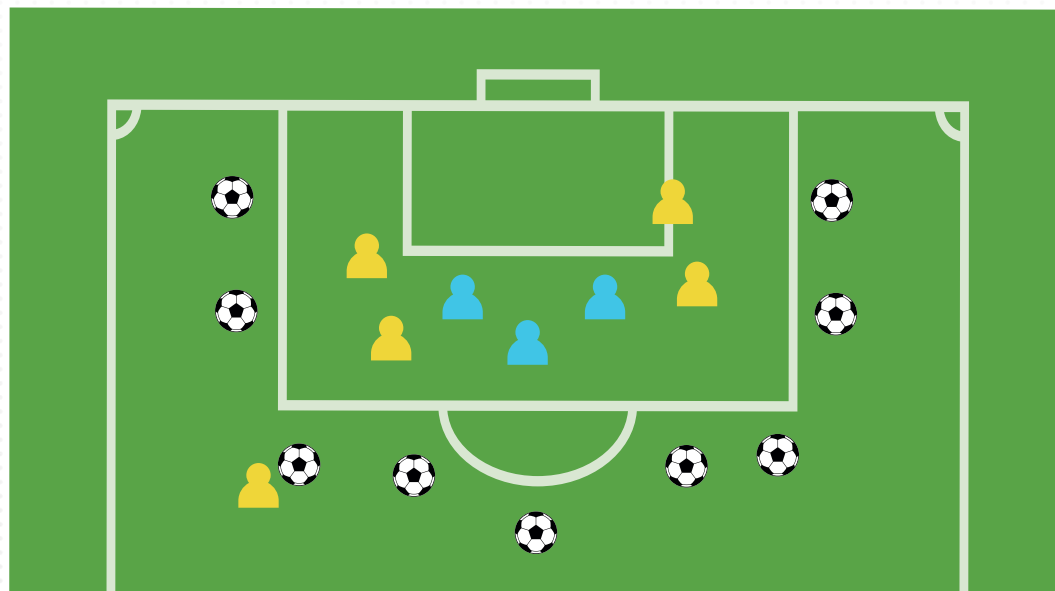
The game is set up around the penalty area of the pitch. Balls are placed around the area so that the game can restart quickly. Two smaller goals are set up, one on each side of the area.

How to Play

Five yellow players against a GK and three blue players. Yellows get the first ball to attack and try to score a goal. If successful, any yellow player can run to collect the next ball from outside of the box and the game continues. If the yellows shoot and miss, they get the next ball and try again.

If a shot is saved by the GK, a goal is awarded to the blue team. If the blue team gain possession of the ball at any point, they can try to score in any of the two goals on the sides.

Once all the balls have been used, add up the score to see if three can really beat five!



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.

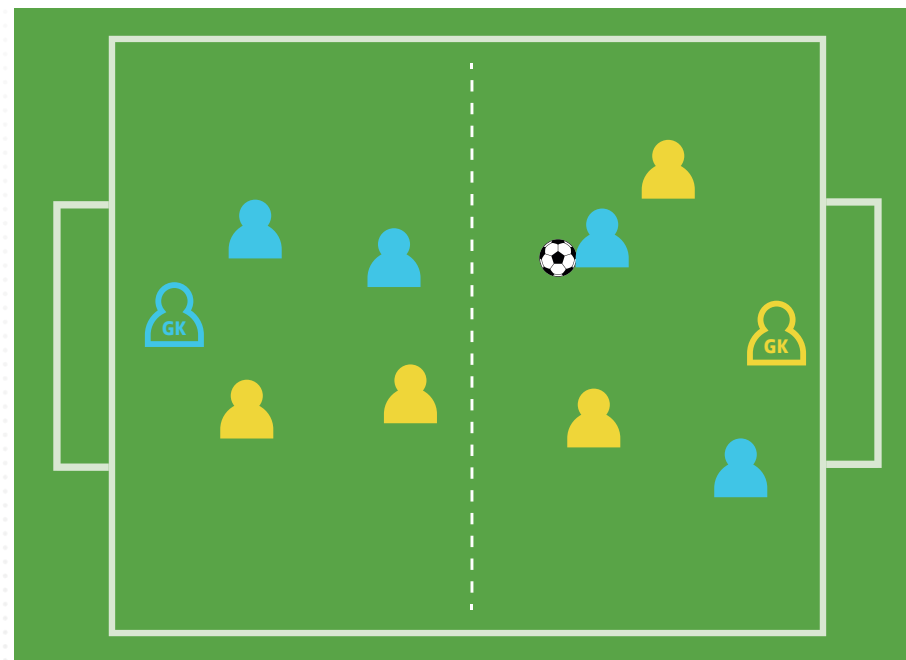
How to Play

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 teammates.



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, WITH 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:

REFINE AND DEVELOP FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS



Organisation

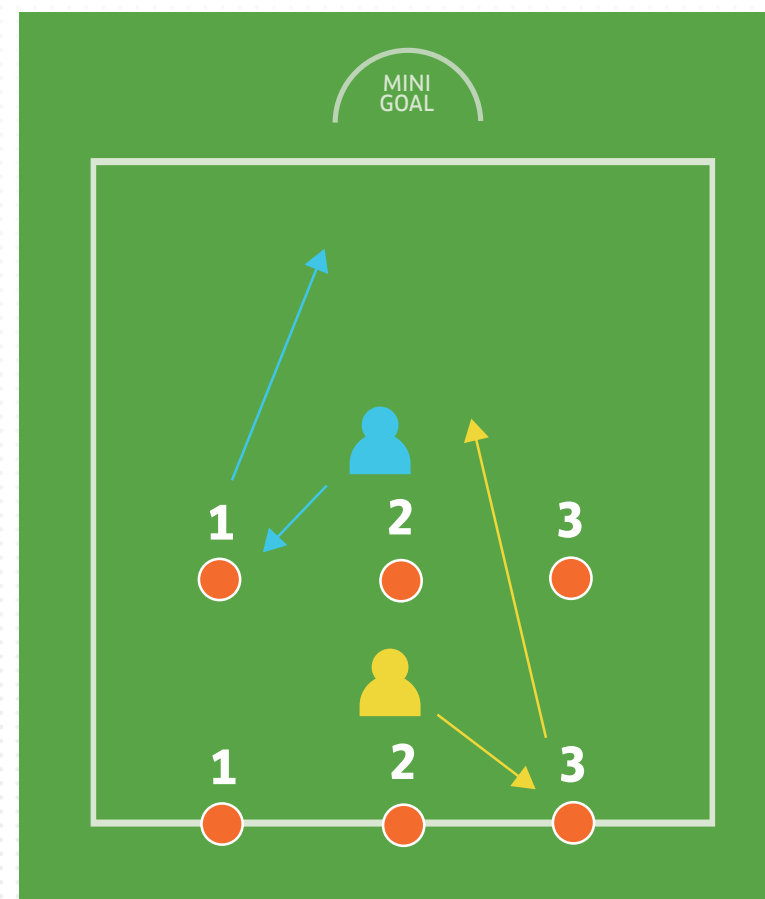
The game is set up as shown with two rows of flat cones, each given a number (for young players put 1, 2 or 3 spot cones in each position to help them remember).

How to Play

Yellow player holds a bib in their hand and places another bib in the side of their shorts. The game begins with the coach telling each player which cone to run to on the command 'go' (1, 2 or 3).

On 'go', yellow and blue players must run quickly to the designated cone before the yellow player tries to travel past the blue player and throw the bib into the goal to score. If the blue player steals the bib in the side of yellow's shorts, roles are changed and the game restarts with the coach giving the next two players the number of the cone they must visit before the chase begins again.

The numbered cones can be placed in different positions to offer different challenges. Try to make the games between each player competitive by adjusting the position of the cones.



DNA FOCUS:

DEALING WITH BEING MATCHED UP, UNDER OR OVERLOADED IN A GAME



Organisation

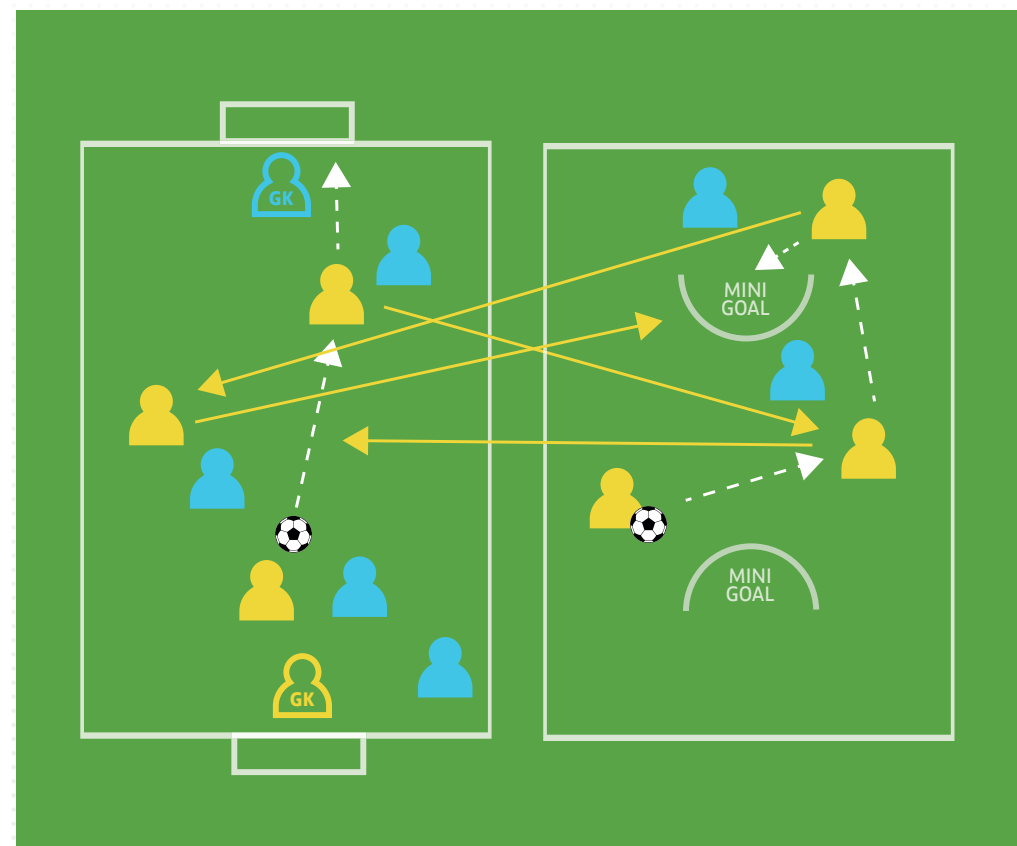
Two mini-pitches set up side by side. On one pitch the goals face forward (as normal) and on the other pitch the goals face away from the playing area.

How to Play

Both teams are trying to score in their opponent's goal. If a player scores they run over to the other pitch, high-five a friend and join the same colour team on the other pitch. This will create an overload until another goal is scored.

If the ball goes out of play, players can dribble in or pass into a teammate.

The diagram shows players in a 6v6 scenario plus GKs (split over two pitches) but equal teams of any number can be used. The important point is that overloads are constantly created as goals are scored.



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'VE FOLLOWED THE ADVICE AND GUIDANCE SUGGESTED, WE BELIEVE THAT YOU AND YOUR PLAYERS WILL HAVE HAD A GREAT TIME AND THAT 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

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