

Marist Canberra Football Club Coaching Guide 2024



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Introduction

This guide has been developed to support you in your role as a coach with Marist College Canberra Football Club.

Whether you have been coaching for many years or have little experience, this booklet will help guide you on your journey as you develop your team and players within the understanding of the **Marist Football Way**.

Some clubs refer to this concept as their 'football philosophy'.

The Marist Football Way is more than a style of football. It is about how we behave, interact and support each other, on and off the field. It shapes the pathway we use to develop players.

The Marist Football Way should be considered as you embark on your coaching journey for the upcoming season.

Every coach is an individual with a unique skill set, personality, time constraint and set of ideals. For this reason, it is important to emphasise that the content herein is not a set of rules. Instead, it is a set of markers to help you navigate through the season.

This guide is an attempt to unify our broader aims as a club, whilst allowing you the freedom to enjoy your coaching role in a safe, inclusive and supportive manner.

If you would like to learn more about coaching and have not yet completed a coaching course, the **Skill Acquisition** (U10-U12/13) and **Game Training** (U13/14-U18) courses courses, offered by Capital Football, are highly recommended. They are usually run over a weekend.

Thank you for taking up the challenge and volunteering your time to coach the boys. Your role is essential and your contribution is valued by the club. We wish you a fun and memorable season with the beautiful game.

Main coaching aims

Mini-Roos – U10/13: Skill Acquisition Phase (SAP). To develop players for team football with a focus on core skills, using a mix of skills sessions and small-sided games, providing a well-rounded football education within a fun, inclusive and supportive environment.

U13/14-18: Game Training Phase (GTP). To develop enhanced game understanding and skills through game training sessions, preparing players for performance phase football, provided within a fun, inclusive and supportive environment.

18 First XI: Performance Phase. To provide an opportunity for players to exhibit their skills and game understanding, developed through the junior years, in a competitive environment with winning games as a focus, whilst striving for a fun and memorable team experience.

At all levels there should be an emphasis on fun, this is why we coach and it is why the boys play. We are not an NPL club. A fun, inclusive and supportive environment should supersede winning.

There is an overlap between the aims of SAP and GTP at age group U13, which is a developmental transition phase. Coaches of U12 and U13 Div 1 teams should begin to implement GTP understanding, while U13 Div 3 teams are encouraged to continue to focus mostly on SAP training sessions.

Training frequency and duration

Most training sessions should run for 60 to 90 mins

- Div 1 teams should train twice a week and potentially through the holidays.
- Div 2 teams should aim to train twice a week.
- Div 3 teams should train once a week, but may consider additional days.

Encourage your players to train with the same intensity they would have on game day. Lazy training is an attitude that cascades through player ranks. If one or two players drop their intensity, others will follow.

Training should mirror your team's game model, which includes player interactions, structure, principles of play and intensity.

Coach responsibilities

Training

- Arrive early to set up for your training sessions.
- Plan your sessions in advance.
- Ensure there is a sufficient supply of clean bibs for training sessions.
- Ensure all balls are adequately inflated. This is important for boys to improve and develop their passing and first touch skills.
- Bring sufficient cones/markers and other equipment.
- Keep a record of training attendance, which may be used to support your decisions in team management.
- Be positive, supportive and encouraging during your sessions. Be mindful of being overly critical. Players respond well to encouragement and can easily lose motivation if their coach is overly critical or criticises individual actions.
- Coach less, play more. Ensure your sessions allow for enough game play. Players learn by playing and should not spend lengthy periods being inactive or standing in queues, awaiting their turn.

Match day

Arrive early, locate your field and an area for your team warm up.

Players should arrive 30-60 min before kick-off (KO), depending on their age.

Plan for some warm-up activities before KO.

It is good practice to record notes during or after the match, include such things as player positions, injuries, problems recognised during the game, game time given to players, which players started, goal scorers and goal savers, assists, highlights and the score.

Have an encouraging team talk at half time regardless of the score, focus on what is working well, and what needs improvement. Pose questions on ways to solve problems and invite suggestions from the players. Conclude with your ideas.

End your match with a short debrief chat, focussing on highlights, moments that went well. Try not to place too much emphasis on goal scorers. Acknowledge players who made effort, assisted goals and were great team players. Talk very briefly, or not at all, about what did not go well - save this for the first few minutes of your next training session where you may use an aspect of what did not work well as a focus for your session.

(Tip: The words you use on game day will be remembered long after the score line is forgotten – choose your words wisely).

Pre-match activity schedules

Tailor your pre-match activities according to your team's age group, division, weather conditions and space availability. Examples are listed below.

Min to KO	U16 Div 1	Min to KO	U14 Div 2	Min to KO	U11 Div 2
60-45	Team chat, strategy and plan for match, starting line up, team and individual roles.	45-35	Team chat, strategy and plan for match, starting line up, team and individual roles.	30-25	Team chat, aims for match, starting line up, team roles.
45-25	Low intensity passing warm up, followed by dynamic stretches	35-23	Low intensity passing warm up, followed by dynamic stretches	25-18	Low intensity passing and running with the ball warm up.
25-13	High intensity possession games, two tight grids, maximum touches. GK exit for individual warm up	23-12	High intensity possession games, two grids, maximum touches. GK exit for individual warm up	18-11	High intensity possession game
13-4 Move to pitch	Mixed low intensity movement, time for individual needs or position specific warm ups, passing, long balls, free kicks, shooting as needed with GK.	12-4 Move to pitch	Mixed low intensity movement, time for individual needs or position specific warm ups, passing, long balls, free kicks, shooting as needed with GK.	11-4 Move to pitch	Low intensity activity including shooting and passing
4-0	Final words. Line up at halfway, issue bibs for substitutes	4-0	Final words. Line up at halfway, issue bibs for substitutes	4-0	Final words. Line up at halfway, issue bibs for substitutes
0	Kick off. Start stopwatch	0	Kick off. Start stopwatch	0	Kick off. Start stopwatch

Parents

Managing parents can be one of the biggest challenges as a coach. Parents may have inflated opinions of their son's abilities, and you may need to deal with issues around these opinions.

Set up a parent meeting at the start of the season and introduce yourself and your manager. Use this meeting to discuss your aims for the season.

This is a useful time to set some expectations for the players and for the parents around supporting their sons and the team. Present a picture of what a successful season may be, discuss the basic game principles you hope to develop, how you will be rotating players in different positions and how you will be managing match day and training sessions.

It is also important to agree on a preferred method of communication between you, or the manager, and the players and parents.

Success may mean different things to different people, but consider this; **if by the end of the season, your players enjoyed their football, achieved a sense of belonging, improved their skills and developed their game understanding, you will have by all accounts achieved success.** If you win some trophies along the way, consider this a bonus rather than a necessity.

Encourage parents to value your time, especially before matches and training sessions, when you will have a lot to think about. Beyond short check-ins and chats, ask parents to request a meeting through the manager if they have an issue or concern that needs to be discussed with you in detail. Try to have the manager present at any of these meetings. Invite parents to email you and/or your manager for issues relating to injuries, illness or absence.

There is benefit in having team talks restricted to players, coaches and management only. Parents and friends should not be in the technical area, and team talks for the “team” help to establish a team ethos. This will support your players in taking ownership of their sport, allowing them a chance to express themselves and make their own choices and decisions, away from their parents. This might be challenging for some parents who are overly enthusiastic and keen to listen in. It does not mean you should exclude parents completely. There is great benefit in having your parents understanding what you are trying to achieve, to avoid conflicting messages between home and the training field.

You might choose to involve parents, by offering occasional invites to team talks, or an open invitation to all post match talks if this suits your style. How you manage this is a personal choice, and may depend on the age of your players. Whatever you decide, establish your expectations at the pre-season parent session.

Match day should be regarded as an opportunity for players to implement what they have learnt, to display their skills and also to make the mistakes that will help develop them. Mistakes are the best way for players to learn and they should be allowed to make them. As difficult as it may be for parents, try to encourage them to only focus on positive aspects of the game - in the car, on the ride home. Many parents will feel knowledgeable about the game and may at times advise their boys from the sideline or at half time. You may want to discourage this to avoid conflicting advice. Parents should try to enjoy watching and just let them play.

Establish zero tolerance to abuse of referees, opposition teams and coaches. Referees are human, some of them will be children. They will make mistakes, and we should accept this and never abuse them. Is it ever acceptable to yell at someone in public when they make a mistake? Referees need to make decisions, often within seconds, under pressure and with many distractions.

Game time for players

This could be your biggest management challenge during the season. You will at times be torn between playing your strongest players to win a match, and playing your weaker players to give them equal game time, but lose the match.

As tough as it may be, you need to try to give players equal game time. We play in a community league, there is no prize money and no one will likely remember who won the premiership in your division, two years from today.

Do not lose focus on what we are trying to do within the Marist Football Way. Equity is more important than winning, and every player deserves the same respect and opportunity to play. Try to develop a team culture where the stronger players support and encourage the weaker players.

There are exceptions that can be made with regard to game time for players. Communicate your intentions clearly so that the players and parents understand your decisions.

- **Game time relevant to player position** - there are some player positions, especially in the older age groups, that are likely to receive a larger share of game time. In Mini-Roos, only the goal keeper should be given more match minutes. Goal keepers (GKs) are usually not substituted. Centre backs (CBs) are likely to be allowed more game time (they do less overall distance on the field and provide stability in defence). Players who play as wingers, attacking full backs or midfielders should be doing more running and are most likely the players to be substituted, resulting in less overall game time.
- **Player effort** should reflect game time. Players who work hard at training, arrive early and don't miss training may be considered for more game time than players who do not show effort or skip training sessions.
- **Players returning from injury or illness** should be played according to their rehabilitation progress.
- **During finals** some flexibility to game time may be considered. This may be a time to reward your strong and dedicated players.
- **Under 18 First XI** is the team the College will look toward for results, and this is the team where winning matches is more of a focus. Playing for the First XI is the culmination of years of development for these boys. In an attempt to be as competitive as possible, playing the strongest team to win on the day will have some priority over equal game time.

Along with match minutes, try to give every player an equal opportunity to be in the starting line-up. The starting line-up may be revealed after the week's final training session, before match day by email, or through another notification method. Or it could be revealed before kick off on match day.

Revealing the starting line-up early is useful to create certainty and anticipation within your team, but there is also some advantage to revealing the starting line-up on the day, by using it to encourage players to arrive on time.

Match minute allocation and the starting line-up is an important responsibility for you as a coach. Try to be transparent with your players and parents about how this will be managed during the season.

Player positions

In Mini-Roos, players should be rotated to play all the different positions. This rotation is even encouraged into U13 and U14.

Young players should not be pigeon-holed into specific positions too early. This might be tempting because of their style of play, their strengths or weaknesses, and what might appear to be best for a winning team.

However, player attributes, will change as they grow. The slow or weak boy in your team today may later develop to be strong and fast. It can be detrimental to his overall development and understanding of the game if he becomes position-bound too early.

It will be obvious that some players are better in attack and others are better in defence, but structuring your team to capitalise on this will not enhance your teams' overall long term development.

All players need to understand the individual tasks and roles of each position and players should get the opportunity to play in all positions. This is essential in the younger age groups, U10 and U11.

You are likely to get some resistance from players and parents in this regard. You will very likely need to justify your decisions, and you might explain; for an attacking player to be able to make good decisions, play his role effectively, he will need to understand the role of a defender and vice versa.

As an example, an attacking player put in the back line will gain understanding of which actions taken by attackers are easy to defend against, and which are difficult to defend against, ultimately making him a better attacking player. Good decisions made by defenders rely on them gaining understanding of the roles of other positions, and it is beneficial for them to get some time playing up front and in the midfield.

Another important point to support position rotation is that in the performance phase of football, players will be required to rotate positions during game moments. Attacking players need to be able to drop and defend, and defensive players need to know how to attack when the moment dictates this.

Finally, remind your players that there are many examples of top professional players who have had to change their positions in their careers, to meet the needs of teams, or to play alongside players who have been favoured over them in their preferred positions.

Growth and development of boys

Numerous studies have been conducted on the development of young athletes pointing to the effect of peak growth rates in children on sport performance. Boys reach their peak growth rate between 13 and 15 years of age. During this time, they will grow on average eight to 10cm per year and gain nine to 10kg per year.

The most important understanding for coaches is that this period of growth is reached at different times for different boys. The rate will vary – there are early and late developers.

The peak growth period can bring on physical challenges and conditions for some boys. Osgood-Schlatter and Severs disease are common growth related issues.

Osgood-Schlatter disease is a condition that causes pain and swelling below the knee joint. Severs is a pain experienced in the heel. These conditions can hamper the development of players.

Along with a general awkwardness as the muscular system catches up to the skeletal system, these temporary periods of growth difficulties need to be recognised by coaches and taken into consideration when supporting the overall development of players.

A second understanding that is important for coaches is the Relative Age Effect (RAE). This is a bias that exists in the selection process of athletes based on how close their birthdate is to the age cut off. This bias may lead to older players receiving more development opportunities than younger players.

In youth football, players who are on the older side of their age group will be physically bigger, stronger and faster than their peers. They are often the stand-out players and may be favoured by coaches for selection or for specific positions. The younger players may be over-looked and not given equal opportunities.

Coaches should consider the RAE and use this knowledge to recognise true potential and to support younger players who might only shine in later years.

Coaching from the sideline

Over-coaching, or continuously yelling instructions from the sideline, is counter-productive to development.

Boys need the freedom to play, to develop their football intelligence and learn to love the game. They need to be allowed to solve their own football problems for future success and development.

The game requires vision and an ability to read the play. Players need to experiment and figure out what does and does not work. They need to make mistakes on their own.

Herein lies the problem of trying to coach every single action, it takes away their responsibility and does not allow for the players to make mistakes and learn from them.

Most players do not hear much if their coach is consistently shouting from the sidelines. The more a coach yells, the less the players hear. It becomes white noise. Yelling can destroy player confidence. When you yell a command to a player, you take away their focus. You distract them.

While every coach will approach match day with a different level of passion and intensity, try to remember the 100-10-1 rule. When a player is 100 metres away, use hand signals and gestures. When they are 10 metres away, use single words or short phrases and questions. When they are one metre away, use a calm, soft voice, pose questions, elicit responses, talk strategy.

How much or how little you say will depend on your coaching style, but don't be afraid to sit back and watch the boys play.

Parents mostly like winning, and many will feel that a good coach is one who controls the game through loud and consistent yelling. This may help to win matches, but does little to develop game intelligence among your players.

Save your advice and coaching cues for team talks and training sessions, which parents will most likely not see. Explain your sideline coaching style at your pre-season meeting.

Managing fitness

Should fitness be a priority for our Marist teams? In short, no. Fitness is a temporary attribute. Skill is permanent.

We aim to develop players first, and then we try to win matches. We do not have multiple sessions in a week where we can dedicate time to fitness.

This is not to say you should allow your team to become unfit. Fitness should come from playing competitive matches on the weekend and high intensity training sessions during the week.

As a coach, you are able to drive the intensity of your sessions. Avoiding isolated practices of individual skills or sessions that result in limited running and touches of the ball.

Timing your drills within sessions can help drive intensity. Give the team a task, set a time limit and then stop and reset. Pose questions, have a water break, swap sides or opposition players. This is better than a long, lazy game.

Game play during training should be intense. If your team has had a period of inactivity due to byes, holidays or cancellations, try to manage fitness through your sessions.

1v1, 2v2 and running with the ball sessions offer high intensity fitness sessions disguised as skills sessions.

It is useful to have a record of the Rate Of Exertion (ROE), which is simply a rating of the physical intensity of a session, through your perception or by asking players to rate a session's intensity.

Warm ups to prevent injury

An essential practice, warm ups should be done at every age, with increasing intensity and duration with progression upward through the age groups. U16 and U18 teams should dedicate at least 15 minutes to warming up before every training session and match. These minutes may include ball work and passing.

Dynamic warm ups are better than static warm ups. Adding ball work into your warm up is recommended.

U10 to U12 may do all of their warm ups with the ball. Older age groups may need a mix of dynamic stretches without the ball (refer to the FIFA 11+ warm up exercises) and some ball work warm ups.

It is useful to mix up your warm ups to prevent laziness and boredom. Select a mix of preferred exercises to suite your team, session, and time allowance.

Download the full FIFA 11+ warm up manual: [FIFA 11+ manual](#)

Download the FIFA 11+ warm up chart (Part 1 and Part 3 are most useful):

[FIFA 11+ chart](#)

Training sessions

General tips

- Plan your sessions
- Have a focus of learning/improvement for every session. “Today we are going to improve our ability to...”
- Adjust or change your sessions on the fly if necessary.
- Don't stress if a session does not work as planned. Change it, or set up a mini game while you fix it.
- Incorporate the ball in every session.
- Make your sessions fun.
- Start on time, end on time.
- Young players do not need to do a lengthy warm up with dynamic stretches.
- Always end your session with a game, or a fun competitive activity.
- Develop skills in game situations rather than through repetitive isolated skill sessions.
- Avoid long lines and any processes that involve queueing or limited touches of the ball.
- Talk less, play more.
- Do not train fitness on its own, incorporate it into your sessions.
- Incorporate technical skills with the ball in your warm up.
- Ask questions to allow players to solve their problems rather than telling them what to do.
- Interventions should be less than 30 seconds.
- Allow players to make mistakes, do not over-coach.
- Do not try to fix every football problem you see.
- Use goals in your training games, they allow for direction and purpose.
- Mini games allow for more touches, more repetition.
- Rondos are awesome for developing play in tight spaces, but how can you make them more interesting? Perhaps a ball placed on a cone in the centre of the square for the larger 'attacking' team to knock off and the smaller 'defending' team to defend.
- 4v4 is the ideal mini game. It allows for the most touches and is the smallest manifestation of real football.
- Set up overloads (one team with more players, offering more chance of success) by having neutral players, aka jokers or magic men, who play for the team in possession. Do this if you have an odd number and want to play a mini game eg. 4v4+1
- Keep a record of your sessions or develop a periodisation schedule to ensure you cover all areas of skill and game training adequately.
- If things go wrong, or you have had no time to plan your session, set up a rectangular field with goals and simply let them play.

U10-U12/13 (SAP) Sessions

SAP (Skill Acquisition Phase)

Sessions focus on developing the four core skills: striking the ball, first touch, 1v1, and running with the ball. Most of the development of the skills should be done within game situations.

It is important to break down skills to the basic level to coach them. Gradually introduce basic concepts of game play, ball possession (BP), ball possession opposition (BPO), depth, width, build up, support, penetration, recovery, delay, pressure and compactness.

Session plans should follow the GIG (Game-Intervention-Game) method – link provided hereunder. Or you can use the older but simpler format which is structured in three parts below:

- **Skill introduction**
Introduce one of the four skills (or an aspect of one of the four skills) through a fun activity, allowing plenty of opportunity to practise the skill: 15-20 min
- **Skill training**
Provide a game, structured in a manner that allows for and encourages repetition of the chosen skill. Use this game to intervene and coach individual technique of the skill through modelling by self and / or other players and role models within the team: 20-25 min
- **Skill game**
Set up a free play game with a structure that allows for demonstration and repetition of the skill. Use this time to assess learning and evaluate yourself. No interventions, just encouragement and praise: 20-25 min

The alternative - GIG Methodology

The GIG methodology has been implemented by Football Australia to replace the above SAP three-part structure **Skill introduction / Skill training / Skill game**. It is summarised hereunder, and explained in detail in the full SAP manual.

Download the full SAP manual with model GIG sessions with this link. Printable Model Training Session can be found on page 76-94:

[Skill Acquisition Manual](#)

GAME-INTERVENTION-GAME (GIG) METHODOLOGY



Step 1: FUNctional Activity (linked to Core Skill)

Begin the session with a fun activity with lots of football specific movements in the first five to 10 minutes of the practical session.

This fun activity should involve all players, encouraging the children to perform core skills at a high speed and set the tone for the remainder of the session.

The focus of this activity is to develop fundamental movement actions at high speed, and can include games, circuits or juggling tasks that are both fun and linked to a core skill.

Step 2: Game (recognition phase)

This is a free game without restrictions which adheres to the general rules of a football game.

After five minutes where players are encouraged to showcase freedom of expression, the coach can introduce an incentive to encourage certain actions. For example, awarding three points to a player who can beat an opponent in a 1v1 duel.

This encourages players to engage in more 1v1 duels but still allows them to make decisions appropriate to the situation for themselves as a goal scored in any other way is still worth one point.

Step 3: Mini-games application

This is where a session breaks down into working on the sub-phases of football focused around repeatedly practicing a core skill.

These mini-games should ideally be organised between two to four players to maximise practice attempts, and require a scoring objective for all players (including goalkeepers), and closely resemble the conditions of the real game.

Step 4: Intervention (skill breakdown)

When children are engaged in the mini-games and refining their core skills, coaches have the opportunity to break down these core skills between games to develop or refine technical competence.

Demonstrations by the coach or a model player are encouraged to support learning functional, technical skills.

Step 5: Free game (evaluation phase)

The children return to playing a free game without restrictions in the fifth phase.

In this phase, the coach creates a game free of any specific conditions or incentives, to measure rate of learning and understanding.

Coaches are advised to coach on the run by offering praise and encouragement for the desired actions of the session, without stopping the game.

Coaches can measure the rate of learning and understanding by analysing whether the children are applying the core skill that was focused on throughout the session.

Step 6: Home-skill

The final stage of the SAP GIG methodology is providing children the opportunity to practice at home, to work on improving their functional skills.

This step is about encouraging kids who want to expand their game to work on particular skills on their own. This will help them when it comes to playing games and training, because they've got more skills in their back pocket.

U13/14-U18 (GTP) Sessions

Sessions should focus on developing game understanding, utilising and developing the four core skills.

The Game Training Phase has two main objectives:

- Prepare players for senior football by teaching them to apply functional game skills in a team setting using 1-4-3-3 as the preferred formation.
- Develop tactical awareness, perception and decision-making through a game-related approach to training.

Game training sessions should be divided into four sections:

- Warm up
- Positioning game
- Game training
- Training game

Warm up

Following dynamic stretches, the starting points for the warm up are:

- Passing practices
- If possible 'theme related', including a level of decision-making. Avoid warm-ups that are more like long conditioning sessions.

Positioning games

The main conditions for quality positioning play are:

- Maximal use of space in order to create more time on the ball (stretching the opponent)
- Triangles (no players in straight lines)
- Support play to create options for the player on the ball
- Anticipation and communication (verbal and non-verbal).
- These basic principles form the foundation for proactive, possession-based football, explaining the importance of the positioning games in training practices. Through positioning games young players:
 - Learn to always create at least three options for the player on the ball (through proper positioning).
 - Improve their decision-making (by learning to choose the right option)
 - Increase their handling speed (less space and time forces quicker thinking and acting)
 - Improve their technique (passing and first touch are essential technical skills)
 - Learn to communicate both verbally (e.g. calling for the ball) and non-verbally (e.g. through ball speed and ball direction).

This is the reason positioning games are on the menu of every Game Training Phase and Performance Phase session.

The game training component

This is the part of the session where conscious teaching and learning of the designated Team Task takes place. For a proper Game Training practice, the coach must:

- Create the proper scenario (organise the practice in such a way that the focus is on the designated Team Task);
- Organise the practice in the right area of the field (where this particular situation takes place during the real game) and with the appropriate dimensions
- Create the proper level of resistance (too easy = no development; too difficult = no success)
- Make effective interventions and provide quality (specific) feedback
- Ask smart questions to develop player understanding and enhance learning

Training game

This is the traditional game at the end of a session.

In our approach, however, it should not just be a 'free' game. The definition of a Training Game in the context of a Game Training Phase session is:

- A game at the end of the session that contains all the elements of the real game but with rules and restraints that see to it that the designated Team Task is emphasised.
- During a Training Game the players are playing and the coach is observing if learning has taken place (little or no stop-start coaching but preferably coaching 'on the run').

Download the full Game Training Manual with the link below. Printable Model Training Sessions can be found on pages 18-65

[Game Training Manual](#)

Technical and tactical – Marist style of play

U10-U11 Coaches, read this section only if you have read the full SAP Manual or completed the SAP coaching course, and you feel you are ready to implement some technical game understanding with your team.

One of the goals for all coaches should be to develop and inspire young players to ultimately play for the Marist First XI.

For this reason, it is important to implement some understanding of the First XI playing style and structure of play.

Formation

The 4-3-3 formation (correctly named a 1-4-3-3 formation) is the formation that resonates with the Marist Football Way due to its ability to support an attacking, possession-based style of play.

The formation offers a structure with a multitude of triangle passing options. It is the formation recommended by Football Australia and used most frequently by the world's top ranked clubs.

The 4-3-3 can be played with the three midfielders forming a triangle with a point facing backward, as in Figure 1 below, or with a point facing forward, utilising two central defensive midfielders (CDMs) and one central attacking midfielder (CAM). This is not too different from the popular 4-2-3-1 used by some top professional clubs.

The 4-3-3 with one CDM or holding midfielder is mostly used by the First XI. It is a more attacking formation, but relies on a CDM with excellent composure, high level of passing accuracy and zonal discipline.

On occasion, the First XI will use two CDMs, similar to the 4-2-3-1. This is favoured when a more defensive structure is required.

It must be understood that the 4-3-3 formation must be fluid, it changes to a 4-1-4-1 in BPO with the two wingers dropping into the midfield as indicated by the arrows in Figure 1.

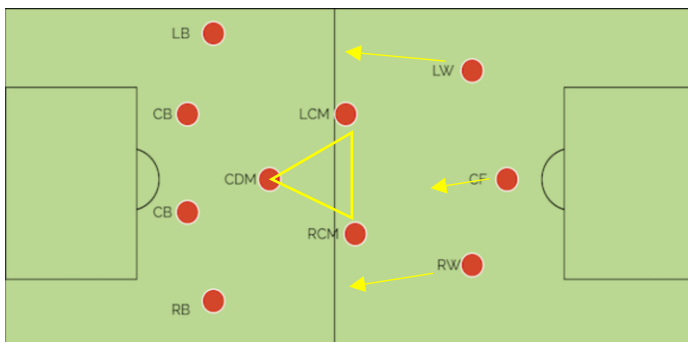


Figure 1. Showing the 4-3-3 formation with one CDM and the movement of the wingers in BPO, creating a 4-1-4-1

In attack, the 4-3-3 formation allows for one of the CMs to be a more attacking player or a “creator”, and the other to be a more box-to-box midfielder or a “controller”.

The creator is a player who provides penetrative passes, linking with the forwards, assisting goals or scoring himself. He is also one of the players that needs to get in the box when we attack down one of the outside channels.

The “controller” is a midfielder who runs the tempo of the attack, moving the ball patiently from side to side, switching the attack. Although the midfielders may have these main roles, they interchange whenever a moment dictates, and they should be able to cover for each other.

The LB and RB should be looking to attack up the wide channel. Their role is supporting the midfield and overlapping wing players to get into crossing / cut back positions, all the while being disciplined enough to handle their defensive responsibilities. Only one of them should be supporting the attack high at any time.

While introducing your team to this formation, try to encourage your LB and RB to move high and wide in BP and not remain flat with the two CBs unless in BPO.

If your team does not have a CF(9) who is excellent at finishing, able to strike volleys and headers, able to bury crosses from the wingers getting themselves in 1v1s in the wide areas, you may want to play him as a false 9. Or at least mix up his movement so that he, at times, drops deep to help start an attack and combine with the attacking midfielder.

By doing this, he will leave space behind him for the wingers to invert or one of the midfielders to push forward. If you play with a false 9, you may want to put a right-footed player at LW and a left-footed player at RW, especially if they have the ability to score goals. This allows both wingers to cut inside towards the goal and shoot with their strong foot.

The Striker in this strategy still looks to receive the ball in the box and score, but he can also defer the goal scoring responsibility to the LW and RW. This is something that may be changed during a match, depending on how successful your forwards have been. It also creates moments of unpredictability for the opposition.

Statistically, most goals are scored from inside the box, but they originate from the central zone outside the D. This is sometimes called zone 14. This the zone that is very dangerous when defending and very fortuitous in attack.

Zone 14 is shown in figure 3. The name is derived from numbering grid zones on the pitch, starting from the defensive side. Very few goals are scored from crosses from wide areas. With this understanding, patient build up should be aimed at zone 14, followed by lay-offs into the box.

This does not mean your team should never try to create scoring opportunities from wide areas. If your opposition sets a compact block in zone 14 and your team is not able to progress from zone 14, go to the wide areas.

Penetrative passes for runs into the box, behind the defence, with short, quick one-two passes, are favoured over long shots from outside the box. Similarly, low cut

backs from players who have driven into wide attacking spaces are favoured over long crosses from outside the box.

Another advantage of the 4-3-3 formation is it provides excellent options for playing out from the back. For this to be successful, the GK should be confident playing with his feet and contribute to forming a diamond between the CDM and the two CBs. The LB and RB can push high and wide to stretch the opposition, build the attack and play through a press.

To maximise the use of triangular passing lanes in the 4-3-3 formation during BP, it is useful to divide the field up into vertical and horizontal channels, players should position themselves so that no more than two are ever in the same vertical channel and no more than three in the same horizontal channel. The names of the vertical channels may be used in your coaching and are shown in figure 4.

One of the main struggles junior teams have with building an attack in the outside channel occurs when the winger moves high and the full back tries to deliver a ball over his head or around his side, while he is running forward and facing away from the ball. This seldom results in success and should only be attempted if the full back is able to drive forward and draw the opposite full back, or notices that he is not following the target winger. If this is not possible, or the full back trying to play the winger is pressured, the winger should drop to receive short and try to use the CM, with an option of an angled ball forward.

Another way to overcome this problem is for the winger to invert. Dragging his opposite full back, the CF moves outside to receive from the RB, see Figure 2 below.

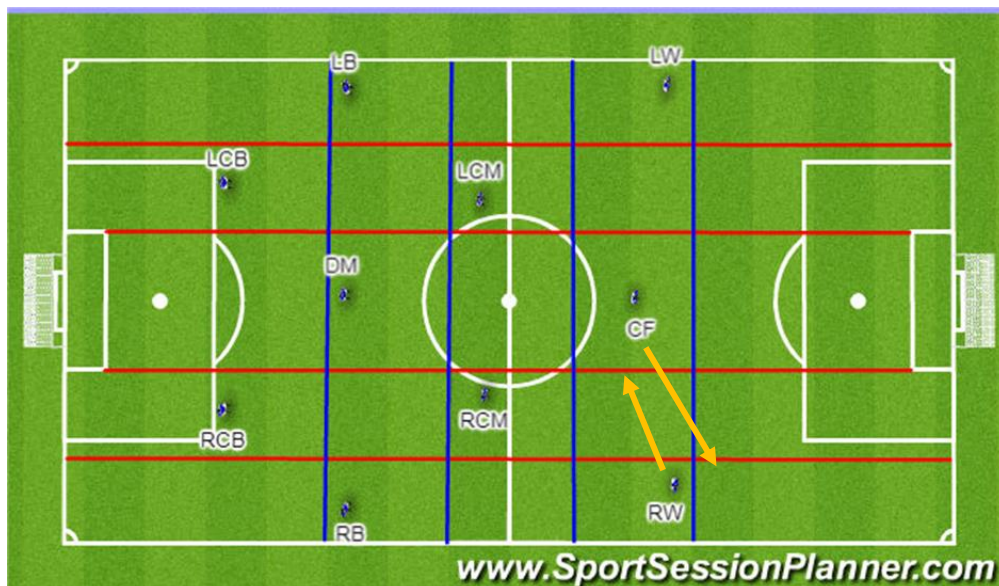


Figure 2. Switching of RW and CF to disorganise the opposition defenders.

Alternatively, creative movement between the outside and half space channels could be practised. As an example, rotation between the RB, RCM and RW, the RW drops and inverts to the R half space, the RB pushes up high and the RCM drops and goes into the R outside channel. This type of movement needs to be trained and organised, but can result in opposition confusion, dragging them out of structure as seen in Figure 4.

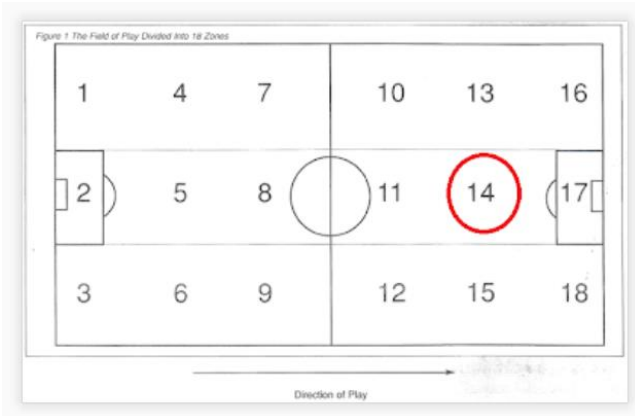


Figure 3. Dividing the pitch into grids, zone 14 is the area from which most goals scoring opportunities originate.

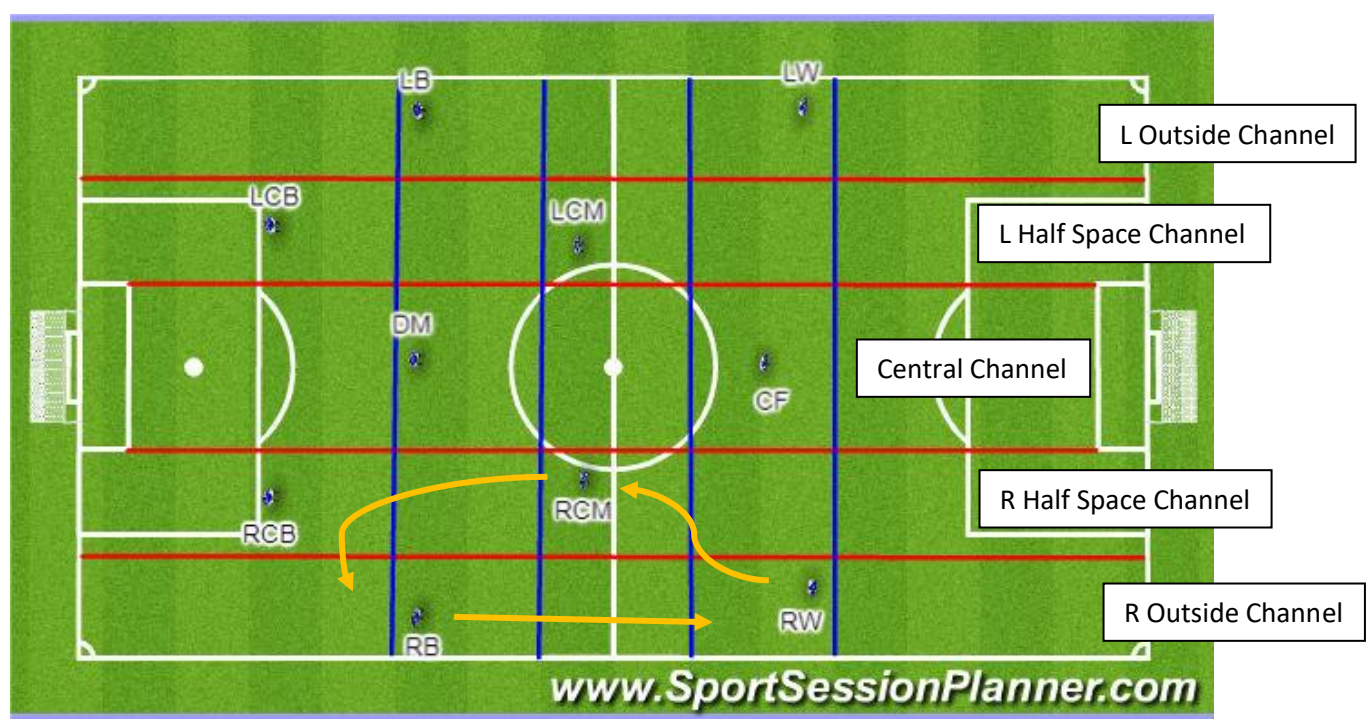


Figure 4. Showing vertical and horizontal channels, and optional creative rotation of players in the right channels.

A third creative way of advancing the ball in the outside channel is by having your winger drop when playing out from the back and having your full back invert and advance into the space left by the winger. This creative movement often results in the opposition full back following the winger, vacating his zone. See Figure 5 below.

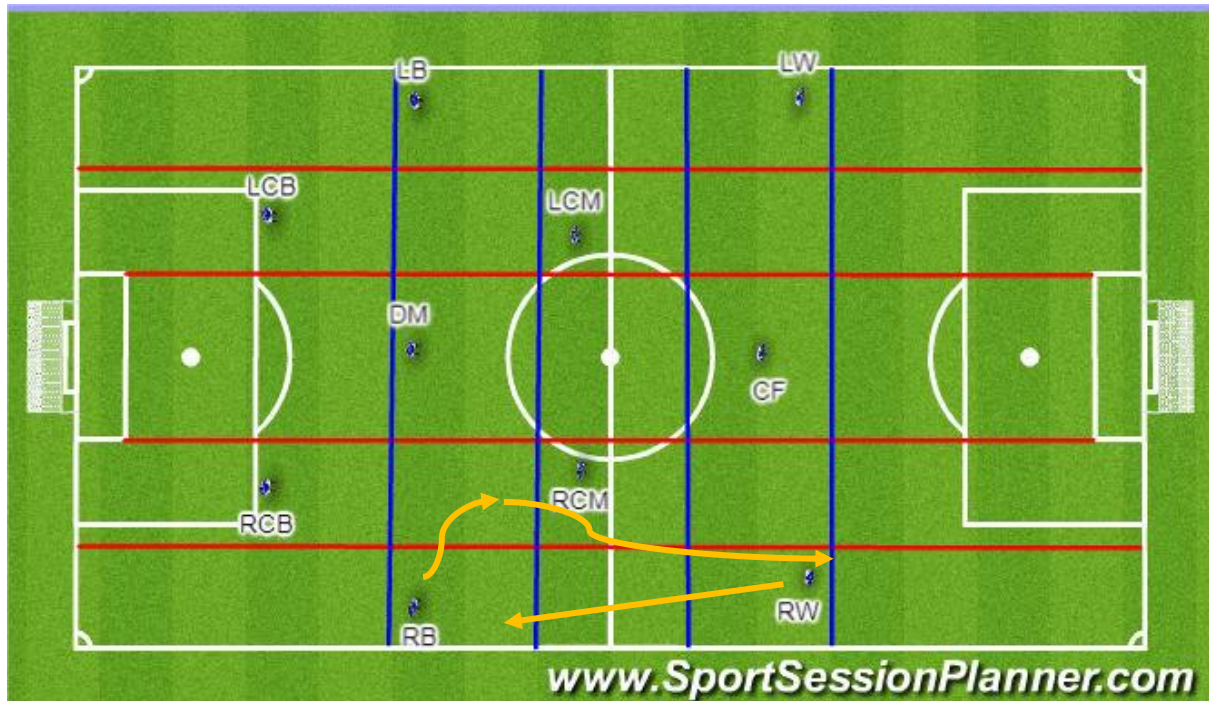


Figure 5. Rotation of RW and RB to play up the outside channel when ball is played to the RCB, playing out from the back.

Disadvantages of the 4-3-3

This formation, if played in an attacking manner, utilises full backs left and right to move high up the pitch in attack, leaving wide defensive areas open, creating vulnerability in the BP-BPO transition moment. This vulnerability can be reduced by having only one full back advancing at a time and having a holding midfielder (central defensive midfielder) able to provide cover for a full back high and out of position.

Another disadvantage is that at a junior level, wingers tend to not recover to help defend in the midfield or deep wide areas when their team is in BPO. So much time is spent coaching wingers to get high and wide, that these players tend to neglect their defensive duties. Their defensive duties require them to be the fittest players on the field.

Style of play

There are two main styles of play in football:

Attacking play is when a team applies a lot of pressure on the opposition to win balls as quickly and as high up the field as possible. It comes with some defensive risk. The aim of this style is to score more goals than your opposition.

Defensive play is when a team focusses on defending and preventing the opposition from scoring goals. It is done by defending as a compact unit in their own half, allowing the opposition a lot of possession and then making counter attacks when gaining possession.

There can be a mix of these two styles of play, and the style of play may change depending on the opposition and the score line at any point in a game. If a team is up in the score line and wish to lock in a win, it may be decided to change from an attacking style to a defensive style.

Within our Marist Football Way, we aim for an **attacking style of play**. It is a more exciting, fighting spirited and fun style of play that suits our aim of making football fun.

An attacking style of play may be achieved through two different methods. **Direct (or vertical) play** and **Possession based play**.

Direct (or vertical) play incorporates playing forward with long balls as often as possible to put the opposition under pressure. It relies on an element of luck, winning second balls, and it requires some players with aerial and physical power and pace up front to receive and chase long balls struck over or through the opposition back line. Whilst this method of play may result in success on the scoreboard, it should be discouraged in the years below U18, because it does not allow for the development of all players equally, to improve first touch, and to learn passing and combination playing skills. It does not allow an opportunity for players to learn how to play with possession.

Direct play is not commonly used by the most successful professional teams. Try to discourage the “big kick”. You might gently explain this to parents who encourage this style of play. Professional players may hit long balls over to wingers and forwards who control aerial balls and then initiate an attack. This type of skill is not easily emulated by amateur players and mostly results in loss of possession.

Possession based play is the Marist style of play and should be encouraged. This style requires progressive build up, short passes to feet, through the lines or around the opposition by switching play through players working together. It involves moving off the ball, creating spaces and combining quick passes. In the words of Pep Guardiola. “Take the ball, pass the ball”. Keep it simple. Be patient and ask your team to be patient, encourage playing out from the back. Playing out from the back need not be done all the time, but should be encouraged even if it results in turn over and goals conceded. They will learn from their mistakes and become better players.

In trying to encourage possession based play, one core skill may appear to conflict with this style - 1v1 attacking play. Players who do not often pass, and try to dribble forward at every opportunity are evident in most teams. It is important to remember that there is a place for this in possession based football. The place for 1v1s is in the attacking third of the field and in the wide areas. Players should be encouraged to take on the opposition, 1v1, in these areas because if successful, this can result in creating a scoring opportunity. 1v1s in the defensive or middle third of the pitch should be discouraged because the risk of losing possession is greater than the reward.

Players who too often try to dribble forward should not always be reprimanded, especially in the junior years, create awareness of where and when this should be done. Messi did not become the great player he is today by being told by his junior

coaches to pass the ball every time he received it. Players need to practice this skill and should be allowed some freedom to do this. Some players pass too regularly and at times need to be prompted to go on their own. Balance your encouragement of this skill in your coaching, let players understand that sometimes we need to take on players and sometimes it is better to pass the ball.

In conclusion, the Marist Football Way includes a football style that is **attacking and possession based**.

Principles of play

Principles of play is the term used for what a team needs to do to achieve a playing style to score goals and prevent the opposition from scoring goals. This is done through players performing individual tasks, as well as contributing toward team tasks, through actions and decisions, positioning, structure and communication. The principles of play will differ depending on the main moment of the game. There are four main moments:

- BP – **B**all **P**ossession. When your team has possession of the ball, aka 'In Possession'
- BPO – **B**all **P**ossession **O**pposition. When the opposition has possession of the ball, aka 'Out of Possession'
- Transition BP – BPO. The three to five seconds immediately after losing possession.
- Transition BPO – BP. The three to five seconds immediately after gaining possession.

Communication is essential for players to execute the principles of play. Signalling, calling and scanning should be encouraged during drills and game training. It is useful to use common terms and signals for clarity. See p 39.

Principles of play for BP – Ball Possession

- Structured build up from the back
- Controlled possession in the middle third
- Combination play in the attacking third
- Patient build up in possession
- Create scoring chances
- Convert scoring chances

Principles of play for BPO – Ball Possession Opposition

- Win the ball back as quickly as possible
- Win the ball back as high up on the field as possible
- Deny the opponents time and space to build up
- Limit the opponents' ability to create scoring chances (pressure, cover and balance)

Principles of play for transition BPO to BP

- Immediately move into possession structure
- Make the field as big as possible (spread out, mostly wide and high)
- Quick forward passing
- Quick forward movement

Principles of play for transition BP to BPO

- Immediately move into a defensive structure
- Make the field as small as possible (get compact and central)
- Press the ball carrier
- Limit opposition passing options

Applying the principles of play

BPO (Defending play)

The aim is to deny the opposition time to advance and create opportunities to get the ball into dangerous areas. Defenders should apply **pressure, cover and balance**, as shown in Figure 6 below. 4 red – pressures the ball carrier, 3 red – provides cover in and behind 4 in case 4 gets beaten, 5 and 2 red - provide balance, close to the action, behind the ball and compact, able to defend the central area. Midfield players (not shown) should also provide balance by dropping and getting inside to support and limit passing options.

Note that the wide opposition player 11, is left unmarked, as he does not pose an immediate threat. The back four are relatively flat to create an off-side line.

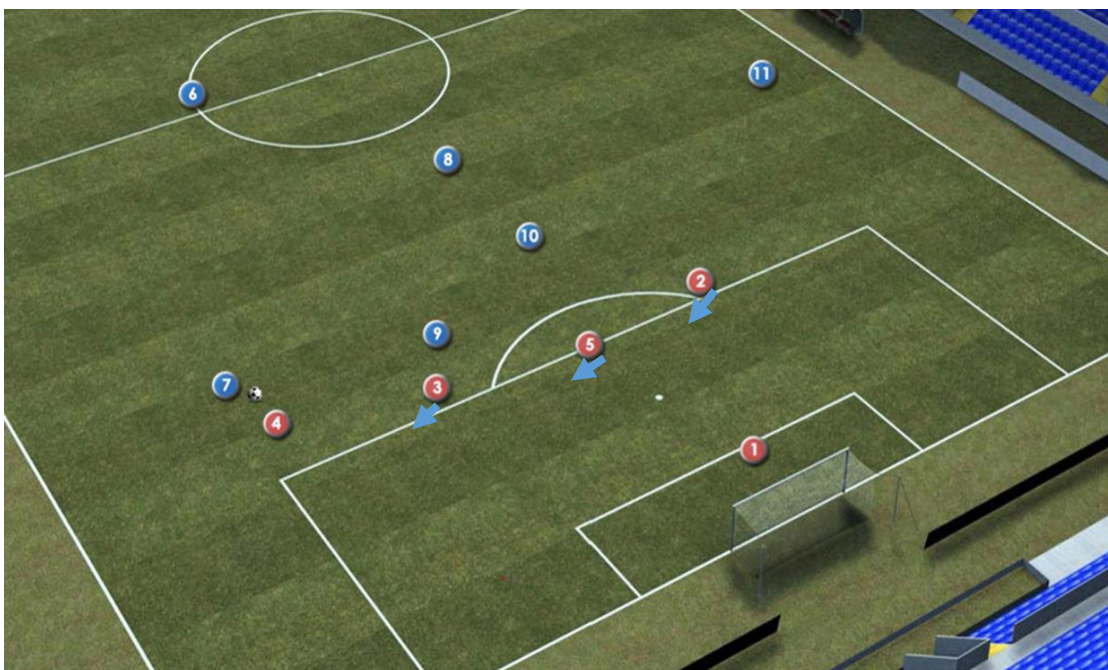


Figure 6. Showing movement to apply the defensive principles of pressure, cover, and balance.

When the ball is switched by the opposition, the entire back four players should “slide” over as shown in Figure 7. The idea is to slide as a unit, 2 red slides and pressures 11 blue, the ball carrier, 5 red slides and provides cover in and behind 2 in case he gets beaten, 3 and 4 red slide and provide balance, compact and able to defend the central area.

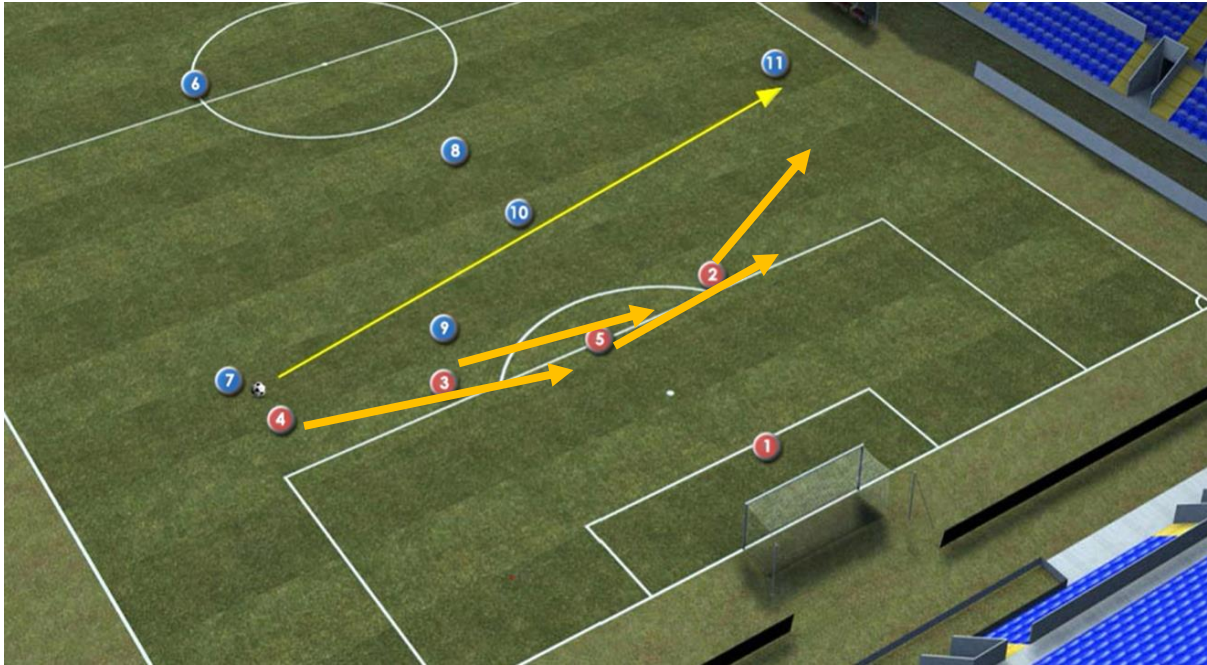


Figure 7. Showing the slide and movement of defensive players when the ball is switched by the opposition to blue 11.

Discipline in the defensive structure is essential, this means each player has to move quickly to create the compact defensive structure. In Figure 8, players 5 and 2 red have not been disciplined enough to slide over to provide balance. This has resulted in two large holes in the defensive line, making the defensive unit vulnerable to penetration if either blue 9 or 10 receive the ball.

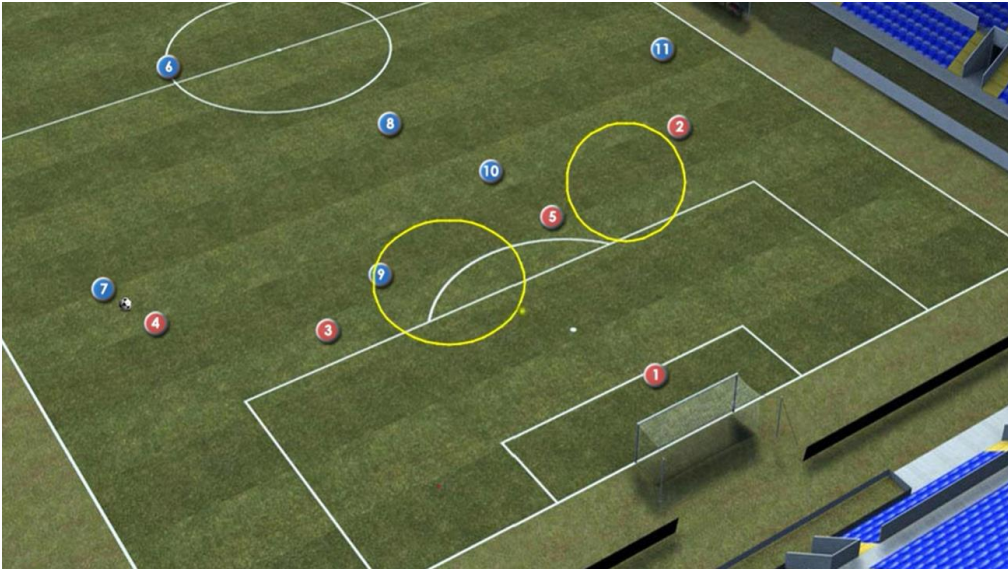


Figure 8. Shows the vulnerable holes created through poor discipline in structure of the back line.

To provide balance and support in defending, midfielders and wingers should drop to assist in defence. This allows the back four to remain compact. Figure 9 shows the required movement of players to form a compact defensive structure. Red 3 pressures the ball carrier, 4 and 5 provide cover, 2 provides balance in the back line and 6 and 8 provide additional balance, support the effort of 3 and block passing lines. Wingers 7 and 11 drop to balance and support defending in the wide areas.

One of the most important defenders is the goalkeeper, playing the sweeper keeper role by protecting the space behind the back defenders. The GK should position himself as high up the field as he judges to be safe. While doing this, he should be constantly analysing whether the player on the ball can score? Is he likely to shoot? Can the goalkeeper get to the ball first if it is played into the space behind the back four?

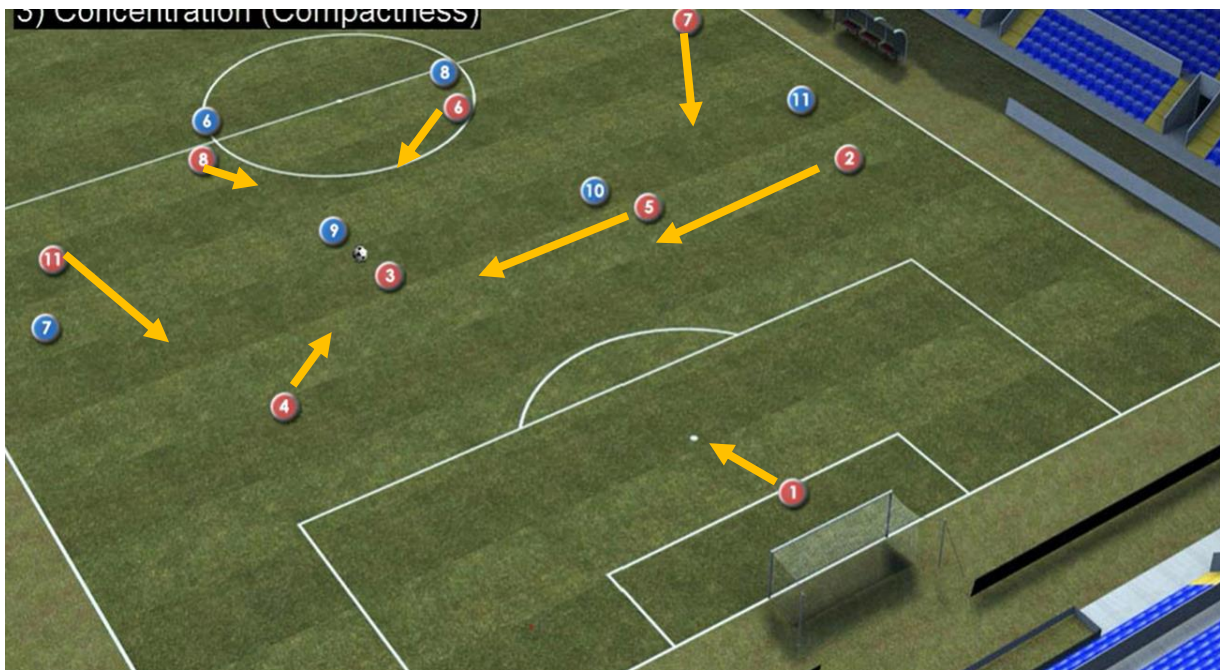


Figure 9. Showing required player movement to provide a compact defensive structure, with cover and balance.

Discipline and patience (control and restraint) are needed in defending, especially in the defensive third. Players often make poorly timed or off-balanced attempts to win the ball. Players should play “under control” when challenging for the ball. In addition, they should refrain from tackling unless confident they will win the ball. Explain this to players, “do not rush in”. The common old school term used is “jockey” or “shepherding”, this is delaying, waiting for support or waiting for the error.

The defending technique should be side on, knees bent, not too close, ready to advance on a poor touch or retreat if the attacker tries to move past. The delay principle is essential in the defensive third, less so in the middle and not in the attacking third. Coach the traffic light analogy for defending: Red, Yellow and Green Zone. Red zone (defensive 3rd), don't rush in, the risk of being beaten is high, the reward if winning the ball is low, Yellow zone (middle 3rd), moderate risk and reward, Green zone (attacking 3rd), low risk, high reward. A good defender can play an entire match without making a tackle.

Zonal defending. This is the opposite of man-marking. Man-marking is a method of defending where players identify an opposite number and they mark them closely in BPO even if the player moves out of their regular zone or position. This type of defending can lead to a breakdown of structure and organisation. Zonal defending is the Marist preferred type of defending. In zonal defending, players should try to recover during the BP-BPO transition, as fast as possible, to their defending zone. All players need to recognise that at any moment a player may be drawn out of their zone and their team mates should restore balance by rotating positions until such time as the zonal defending structure is attained. The ability for all players to play in all positions should be encouraged in the junior years for this reason. The Dutch coined the term ‘Total Football’, where any outfield player can take over the role of any other player in a team. Examples include when a full back makes an overlapping

or an attacking run, a central defending midfielder should be ready to drop into the back line to create balance if the attack fails and the opposition start a counter attack.

An optional implementation of man marking can be applied within the two-CB pair is encouraged. The CB with superior aerial and interception strength should stay on the side of the striker with. The other, called the 'stopper', should be on the opposite side. They're not acting as a conventional sweeper, but instead as a second CB zoned horizontally, not picking up the striker. This would mean that the two CBs need to communicate and rotate instead of playing in either the left or right CB zone.

Pressing in the attacking third

The reason for the press is to win the ball high up, and to take advantage of the opposition being out of their defensive formation. Winning the ball from a high press is a most favourable transition moment, it can easily result in a goal and needs to be capitalized on quickly, with precise execution.

When pressing in the attacking third, it is vital that the press is done through collective effort, which needs to be compact and organized. The system is dependent on high levels of fitness and communication. The distances between pressing units (back line, midfield and attackers) need to be small enough to prevent horizontal spaces that the opposition can easily play through.

Pressing is done by the whole team. The back four need to squeeze up too. If they fail to do this they will allow the opposition to simply play over and into the space between the back line and the midfield line.

The press needs to be carried out with high intensity. Without intensity, the opposition will play through the press.

While pressing, the forwards become the most important defenders for the team. They must concentrate on how they may close down the player with the ball to prevent passes into certain areas of the field. They must lock them in to one side where the pressing team has good numbers.

As an example, while pressing a goal kick, the 9 or 10 may press a centre back ball carrier, with an arced run to prevent them switching the ball to the other side. See Figure 10, showing an aggressive pressing setup, and the progression of pressing if the ball is played to the right CB is shown in Figure 11. Note that because the attacking midfielder red 10, has pushed up to press, red 5 RB OR CB, has pushed forward to the midfield to create balance. The press pins the opposition in to one of the deep sides of the pitch and attempts to cut off passing lines.

By committing the 10 to the front of the press, you need to limit the back line to 3, if this leaves the team too vulnerable at the back, and you wish to press but retain defensive structure if the press fails, use only the 9 as the sole pressing central forward, setting up in the D on the penalty area. This will allow the team to retain four

players at the back. (Note that the D is for penalties only and during a goal kick, attacking players are allowed in the D).

Should a team always apply the press? No. Decision making and knowing when to press is important. There may be times when your team may choose not to press.

If pressing is not working against opposition successfully playing out, it may be better to not press. Pressing involves high intensity, it can be exhausting and should not be over-used or used at all if it is not successful or is not done collectively.

At times the team may not be balanced, having recovered from an attack, it may be better to hold back and keep a deeper defensive structure. Choosing not to press, but to defend more deeply, may be the best option to hold onto a winning margin, and this may depend on the age of the team and the team focus.

Triggers to press should be discussed and planned. It may be decided that the team presses the first one or two goal kicks played short, to apply intense pressure early and to unsettle the opposition.

Triggers mostly include mistakes by the opposition, a poor back pass to a defender or GK, a ball played behind a defending player, too hard, too high. Triggers may be when the ball is played out from the back to a side with an identified weaker player, a back pass to the GK identified as weak at playing with his feet, or whenever your team needs to pressure and destabilise the opposition. The press must be communicated, the 9 may call for the press, and wave for support as he pushes forward, or it may be that the midfielders see the moment, push up and call the press for the attackers.

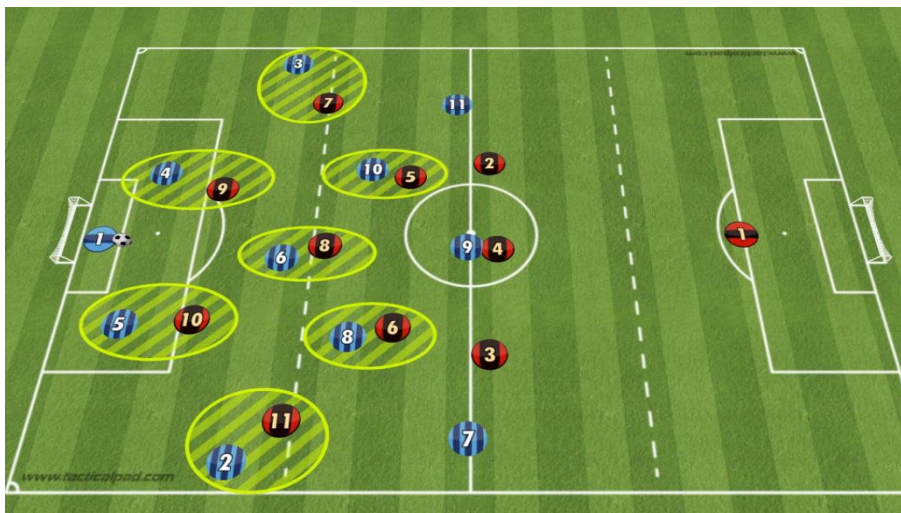


Figure 10. Showing a set up for an aggressive press on a goal kick.

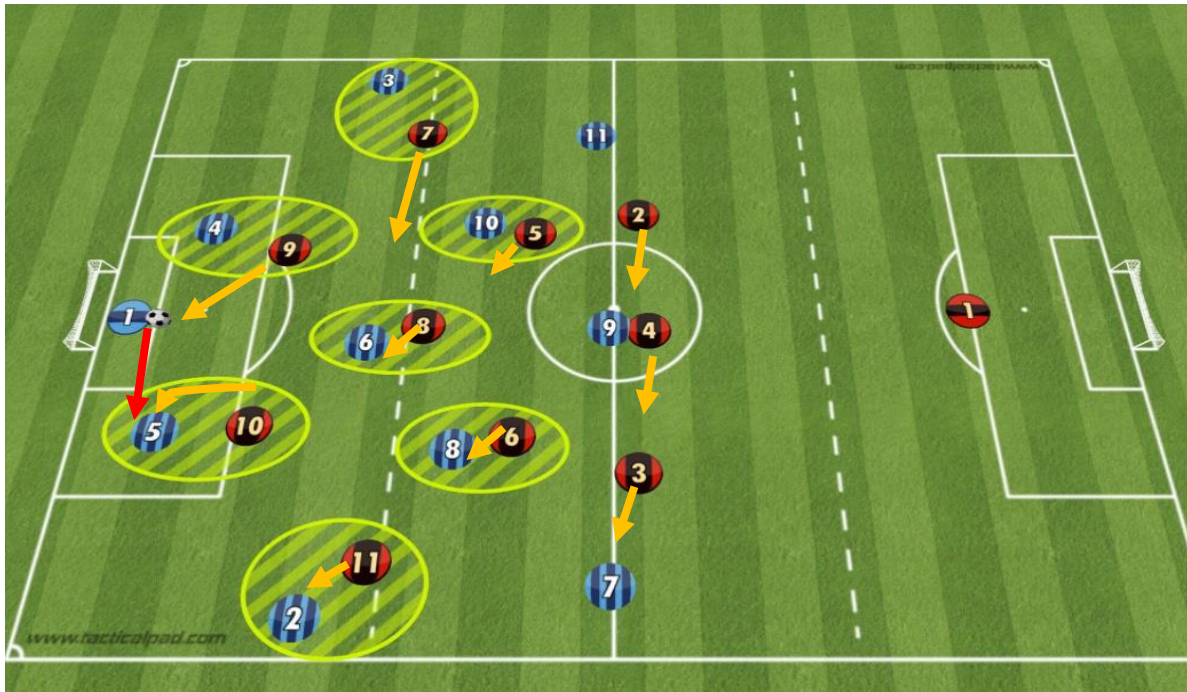


Figure 11. Shows player movement to pin the opposition. Note the player pressing the ball carrier (opposition RCB), arcs his run. Opposition 3 and 11 are left unmarked.

Defending corners

There are four types of corner kicks

- The far post
- The near post
- The penalty spot
- The short lay off

Identifying which type of kick will be used can be done by watching the opposition players, tall good headers of the ball are usually target players. Watch where they position themselves to determine the expected delivery. The short lay off is easily recognised by more than one opposition player setting up in the corner. Most corners are delivered to the penalty spot.

Apply zonal marking for corners, nine outfield players in the penalty area, each with a defensive zone. Defensive zones will overlap meaning two or three players may attempt to defend the ball at the same time. The best three aerial defenders should position on the six-yard box. One defender should be on the side of the six-yard box to block a low near-post kick, but positioned to allow the GK a line of sight of the ball. Another defender may need to protect the GK if he is being pinned by an opposition player. Two defenders, inside the near and far posts (this may vary depending on age and ability of GK). Three defenders marking on a horizontal line at the penalty spot. The 9 is the outlet and should be positioned outside the box toward the corner kick side. He has a dual role, to be the outlet player for a counter attack and to press any ball that rebounds to an opposition player. If a short layoff is set up, one shorter player from the penalty area should be tasked to move to the corner. See Figure 12, for basic corner set up.

This set up may change depending on your team and the objective based on the match and score line. Defending a narrow lead may require the 9 to also be in the penalty area, whilst chasing for a lead could mean you want less players defending in the penalty area and more outside waiting to counter. If an opposition team has one or more tall, dangerous headers of the ball, assign strong defenders to man mark. If your GK is confident in defending corners, you can opt to not have a player defending the far post.

Individual tasks

- Position goal side of any opposition player
- Get a first touch on the ball
- Prevent a first touch by the opposition
- Try to clear the ball to the 9
- Try to not clear the ball to the central channel

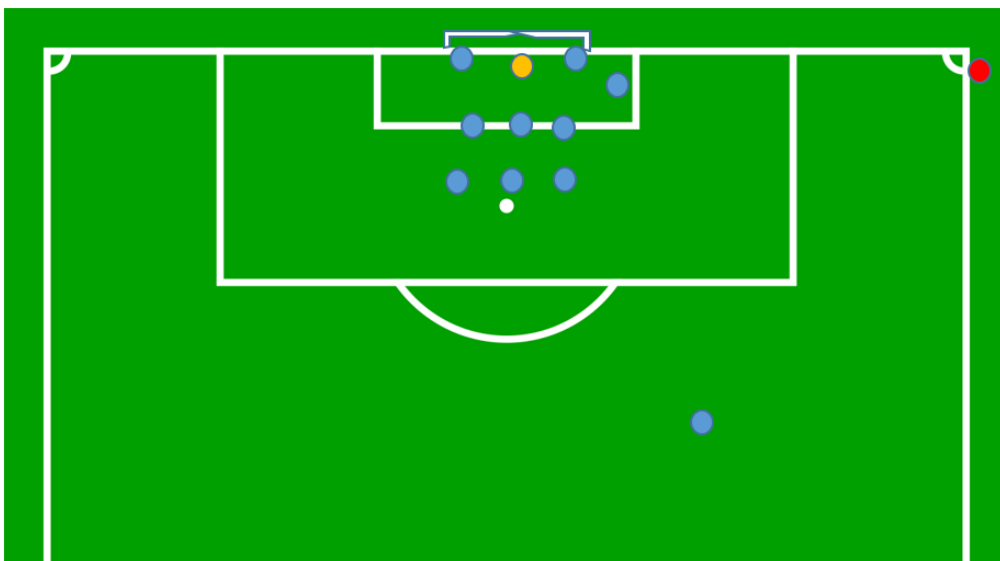


Figure 12. Defending corners basic set up.

Defending free kicks

Free kicks in your defensive half require between one and five players to form a wall. The closer the kick is to the D, the more players should be placed in the wall, refer to Figure 13. Wall players should be tall and brave and should not duck or turn their backs to the ball. The wall should be communicated and positioned by shuffling left or right, following instructions from the GK to the wall player (anchor) on the side of the near post. The anchor should be efficient and organised, facing the GK while setting up. The wall should always cover the near post so that the GK can defend the other side. If the kick is central, set the wall up covering the GK's left side (assuming a right footed kicker). Assign one player near the wall, not obstructing the GK's line of sight as a bullet player to react to any trick pass or short lay off. The wall should immediately react and respond as soon as the kick has been taken.

For indirect free kicks in the penalty area, as rare as they are, position every player in the team as close to the kick as possible defending the goal, it may be that you are all on the goal line. The tallest players central. Two designated bullet players should immediately advance from the central position when the ball is initially moved.



Figure 13. Showing number of players that should be in the wall, depending on the position of the kick. Note: the grid shows where the kick is taken, not where the wall should be set. As an example, a kick from the edge of the D will require a four or five man wall in the penalty area.

Long free kicks – It is important to set up a high enough line to give your GK space behind the line to defend. See Figure 14. If this is not done, the GK will have a difficult time seeing the ball, negotiating through defenders and attackers as he comes out for a ball lobbed into the penalty area. This is a common mistake made by teams who have not practised defending free kicks, usually this mistake occurs if they are ill-prepared and have not communicated quickly enough.

Always have at least one or two players close to the free kick (10 yards), these players should prevent any short lay off or advancement of the ball if it is not taken long.



Figure 14. Showing a high line defending a free kick, this allows the GK space to advance onto a ball lobbed over the defensive line into the penalty area. Note the one man block and player off the D are also ready to press a short lay-off.

BP (Attacking play)

Possession simply means keeping the ball and not giving it away cheaply by simply kicking it up field. Players need confidence to retain possession. To be involved in keeping possession they need to want to receive the ball. Too often players feel they need to do something amazing with the ball, dribble, long ball, killer pass or shot. There is a time and place for amazing, but players need to be taught when and where. It is usually better to move the ball around quickly as a team, to build up, pull the opposition out of shape and then to use the space to penetrate and create more obvious scoring chances.

Build-up play needs to be done with controlled possession, using the width and depth of the field, communication and fast smart movement off the ball. As they build up, they need to be able to combine and attempt to set the opposition off balance, through fast movement to draw defenders out of position, unlock the defensive structure and then penetrate to set up a goal scoring opportunity for themselves or a team mate.

Too often players make the decision to shoot when they are not in a good shooting position. They do this when they are far from goals, have defenders in the way, are at a very narrow angle, or when they are off balance or have the ball under their feet. It is often better to pass the ball to another player who may be in a better position to score, or who can create a better scoring position. One of the most difficult areas from which to score is high up in wide space. Players should be coached to cut the

ball back to someone in the box rather than attempting a “shot-cross” that usually gets picked up by the keeper, or ends up in the side netting.

Goal scoring opportunities come from creative solutions in the attacking third. Converting these opportunities into goals from different areas needs to be practised. Scoring goals should be an easy aspect to coach as it is heaps of fun for boys of all ages. Try to always design your sessions, especially the last part, the game, with goals for players to practise scoring.

If you are an U10 – U12 coach and are about to read the next section on setting up to take free kicks, corners and throw-ins, the technical points may not be appropriate for the age of your teams.

Junior teams should take restarts in a way that develops a possession based style of play. Players should try to make a pass from all free kicks that are not within shooting range. They should do the same with corner kicks. Encourage them to play a short lay-off and develop their creative play rather than hope for a lucky knock in.

Headers. You don't want very young boys heading the ball, it is widely regarded as unsafe at junior level and is banned at certain ages in many countries. Headers should not be trained until the boys have better muscle strength in their necks. Naturally, you will get some boys heading the ball, but reducing repetitive opportunities should be a priority.

Throw-ins

Throw-ins should be conducted with possession in mind. Players should be discouraged from throwing long and far if this results in loss of possession. Try to coach them to throw in so they can keep the ball.

Quick / Clever / Long

Quick throw-ins, can often catch the opposition off balance and out of position and should be considered as soon as the ball goes out. Anyone who fetches the ball should consider a quick throw-in, even if they are not the usual thrower. Quick throw-ins can lead to an attack on the opposition and a goal-scoring opportunity.

Clever throw-ins should be practised. Players throw to feet to a player in space. Space is found by clever player movement to drag opposition defenders away, making dummy runs or vee runs (quick change of direction) to create space for a player to receive the ball. The receiving player may be able to play forward or if not, should have enough time to play back to the thrower.

Long throw-ins should be done when it is felt a long ball can make its way over or past the opposition defenders. Long balls in your own half are risky as they can lead to loss of possession. Long throws are most suited for use in the attacking half of the field, or when a long ball can be taken quickly and is recognised as a good alternative to a clever throw.

Any player can take a throw in, but the LB or RB is in the most suitably positioned player for taking throw-ins.

(Note: A player cannot be off-side when receiving a ball from a throw-in)

Corner kicks. Most goals from corner kicks come from a ball delivered to an area just in front of the penalty spot. Teams should mix up their corner kicks, to the middle, to the far post, to the near post, low to the near post and some clever short lay-offs. In reality, if your corner kick taker always aims for the penalty spot, he is likely to over hit some, under hit some and put some low, and this could inadvertently be your team's variation for corner kicks.

If you do have a consistent kick taker you can practice hand signals to indicate where he is intending to deliver the ball. You may also consider placing a haggler on the opposition GK to try to block the GK's vision and path to advance on the ball. Figure 15, shows a set up to attack a corner kick delivered to the penalty spot area. Teams should practice different set ups depending on the planned delivery and also depending on the opposition set up.

It is important to be ready for opposition counter attacks from corners and your team should always have one player overload in defence. It is also wise to set up your best headers of the ball for corners, which may require switching player roles for the corner kick.

(Note: A player cannot be off-side when receiving a ball from a corner kick.)

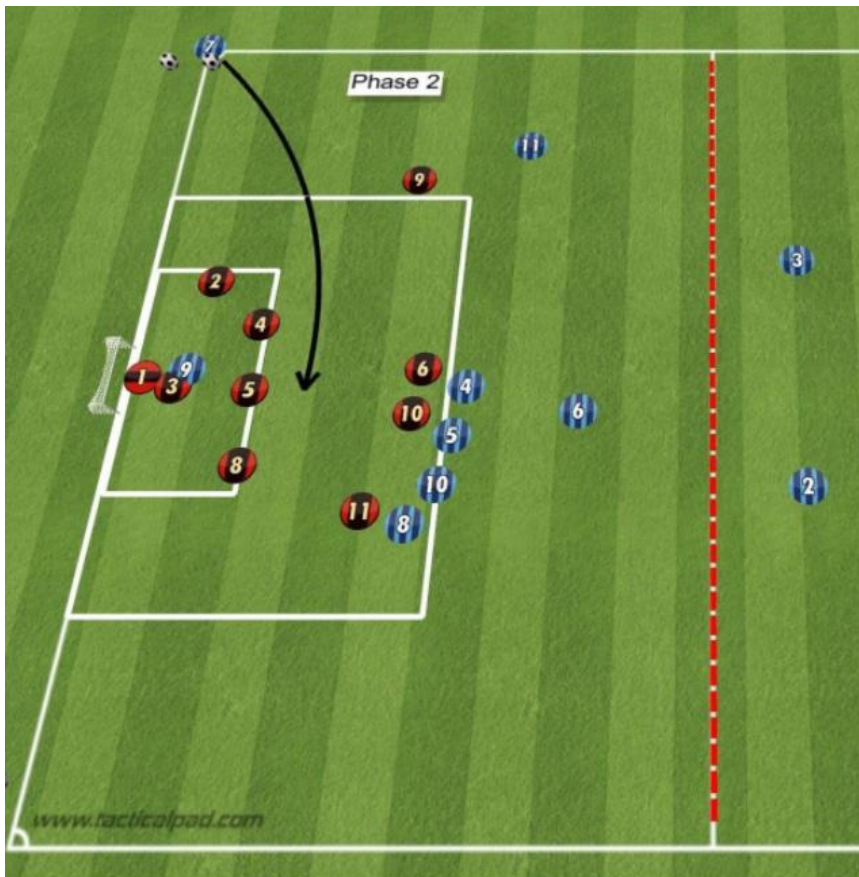


Figure 15. Set up for a team attacking a corner delivered to the penalty spot.

Free kicks and penalty kicks

These should be practised. Takers of these kicks should be agreed upon before matches. There are many different ways to take free kicks and the best choice may depend on the likelihood of scoring, the strength of the opposition GK and the kick taker. As a general rule, left-footed players are more easily able to curve a ball from the right side of the goal, and the opposite is true for right-footed players, however, every free kick scenario may present different options which may require different decisions.

A decoy player who steps over the ball can distract defenders and in particular the GK. Players who stand just forward of, and to the side of the wall (1m allowed), are useful to block the view of the GK - they will need to duck or vacate just before the ball passes them. It is also useful to consider a lay-off to the side of the wall if the opposition is not covering the space on the side. If the score line is not important, it can be in good spirit to “share the love” and give a free kick or penalty kick to a player who normally would not take the kick.

Free kicks from your own half can be taken long or short. This will depend on your team’s game plan and the score line.

Remember that when given a free kick, your team is entitled to take it quickly without the opposition setting up a wall, this is sometimes a clever option. If the moment is not seized quickly and the referee begins to set up the 10 yards to the wall, a short take will not be allowed and your team will need to wait for the whistle. If your team wishes to take it quickly, it is best to quickly tell the referee your intention, especially if he is close to the kick spot.

Goal kicks

Playing out from the back with a short lay-off from a goal kick should be encouraged at all levels. It is especially important when playing out from the back forms part of your team’s game plan - building up with possession. Every team should be coached on how to play out from the back, even if they make mistakes and concede in the process. It is also useful to use playing out from the back to draw the opposition into your half if they are consistently sitting back with a deep defensive block.

Do you need to always play out from the back? No. It is useful to mix it up and test your opposition by taking some long, and some quick goal kicks, especially if your GK has a long range kick. The basic set up for playing out from the back with a goal kick is shown in Figure 16 below. For long goal kicks, a ball placed to one side of the small box will indicate the kicker will be going to that side and it is useful to overload that side. If the kicker positions the ball in the middle of the small box, it allows your team to disguise which side the kick is targeting.

(Note: A player cannot be off-side when receiving a ball from a goal kick.)



Figure 16. Showing the set up for playing out from the back from a goal kick.

Release from GK

The moment your GK gets his hands on the ball, your team is in a transition moment and capitalizing on this must be trained. Your GK should know when to deliver a ball quickly by kicking, rolling or throwing a ball to / through / onto or over to a player who can start an attack. Not all balls released from your GK should be long and high, over the top. Your GK should try playing out from the back, judging your opposition and making decisions based on what has been working and what your team is trying to do.

It is important to recognise that as coaches you will not have a lot of time to devote to defending and attacking set pieces. Do not spend large amounts of time coaching these, they quickly become boring for players not involved in the taking or attacking of the set piece. Try to incorporate set piece taking during a training game, but not every training game, stop, coach and practice it three or four times and then move on with your session. Alternatively, use only the key players if they are available to stay after a session to train set piece taking.

Transition moments

Transition occurs in most sessions and is a hidden learning during all sessions which incorporate opposition players. For this reason, within the junior teams, it may be that you do not specifically need to have as many transition sessions as you will have BP and BPO sessions.

There are some excellent ways to plan sessions to train and coach transition. Both transition moments need effective communication and these should be coached with reference to the principals below.

The transition moment lasts three to five seconds. The appropriate actions taken by players in these seconds can win matches. It is a tactic of some teams to sit back, defend, wait and then hit on the counter with pace when they win the ball.

The best players can recognise when a transition moment is likely to happen, when the ball may be won or lost. They begin scan, adjust, react and decide what to do before the ball is turned over. Having a clear picture of the changing arrangement of players and space may allow decisions to be made instantly and immediately rather than reactively. You don't want players to win the ball back and then think: 'what am I going to do now?'.

How your players react to a transition moment can be a useful exercise.

- When your team loses the ball, do all the players make an attempt to return to a defensive shape behind the ball?
- Do they make recovery runs which shut down space and provide cover and support to their teammates?
- Depending on the style of play, do the players immediately near to the ball press to win it back? If not, what do they do?
- Likewise, on winning the ball back, does your team look to penetrate the opposition quickly and with accuracy?
- Do your attacking players make forward runs behind the opposition to allow the player on the ball to play a forward pass? If they can't play forward or run with the ball, what is the next best option?
- Does the player on the ball know what options they have before the ball arrives or do they have to look up once the ball has been controlled? What is the danger if this is the case?

Effective questions to use during a transition session:

- "If we win it back now – who is the player furthest forward that I can play to effectively?"
- "Where are my passing options or space to run into if I intercept the next pass. Do I know?"
- "If this pass fails, where will I have to go to block a forward pass that the opposition may play?"
- "If the next pass in this move fails, what will I have to do to prevent the opposition from hurting us?"

Ideas for training games that promote transition moments include:

1. Ask one team to play with a deep-lying block and one team to try and pick their way through. Provide the deep-lying team a set of two or three small goals up the field in which to score after winning possession. After a given time period swap the teams over.
2. Play small sided games with outside players who are “joker players” who play for the team in possession. Jokers can be a third team spread on the outside or both on the outside and goal line. This session allows for the team that wins the ball to have an overload of forward players. Swap jokers after a given period.
3. Play a small sided game, rewarding triple points for goals scored within six seconds of winning possession.

Tasks - Transition BP to BPO

Players should immediately move into defensive positions and shape.

The nearest player to the opposition ball carrier presses immediately.

Surrounding players try to screen and limit passing options.

All players get compact, “make the field as small as possible”

Player tasks will require pressing, marking, intercepting, tackling, recovery and getting inside and goal-side of attackers

Tasks - Transition BPO to BP

Players should immediately move into attacking positions and structure.

“Make the field as big as possible”

Do not crowd the player with the ball.

Seek depth and width.

Some players may need to drop. For example, a CB may drop when another defender wins the ball, to provide an option to play back if needed.

The player who wins the ball should try to play forward, as high as possible without risking losing possession.

Supporting players should move forward as quickly as possible.

Play the ball forward as quickly as possible

Player tasks will involve quality passing and first touch, running with the ball, 1v1 attacking and finishing. The transition moments need effective communication.

Common terms and signals

Player terms

“Yes” / “Yip” – a simple command to let a player know you are looking for the ball.

“Time” – used to let a player know they have time with the ball and do not need to rush a decision.

“Man on” – an opposition player is pressing from behind or blind side.

“Turn” – used to let a player, facing their own goal, know they have space or time to receive a ball and turn to play forward.

“Come to” – move to the ball, a player is approaching.

“Cut” / “Cut back” – a pass cut backwards, usually from near the opposition goal line, away from the goal to a player within shooting range.

“Square” – you are looking for a horizontal pass.

“One, two” – you are looking to receive the ball and give it back to the passer who should move to an advanced position.

“Set” – you are looking to run on and shoot and require the ball to be set up for you to take a shot.

“Up” – move up.

“Step” / “Step up” – defenders move up or step up collectively.

“Out” – get ball out.

“Line” – move to or play to line.

“High” – advanced position toward opposition goal.

“Get back” – players should retreat.

“Cover” - a defensive term used to come close in and behind a player pressing an attacking player in possession. Also used to instruct a player to take the defensive position of a player who is advanced or out of his usual zonal defensive position.

“Hold” – used to ask players not to rush forward and break a defensive structure.

“Turn out” – turn with ball towards outside of pitch, away from central channel.

“Tuck in” – come inside, get compact.

“Slide” – shift sideways, usually involves a defensive unit.

“Go wide” – go outside toward outside channel.

“Hold the line” – keep a definite line in defence as an offside line, usually for defending a free kick in the defensive half.

“No turn” – apply pressure to an opposition player in possession with his back to your goal.

“No bounce” – attempt to get a first touch on a high ball to prevent opposition possession in defensive half.

“Left / right shoulder” – in defence, there is an opposition player incoming on one of your blind sides, the player needs tracking or marking.

“Second ball “– get ready for a touch on a rebounding high ball incoming.

“No shot” – advance toward and block the shooting line of an opposition player in possession, within shooting range.

“Press” – used when your team is out of possession, for players to advance on the opposition’s ball carrier and other surrounding players who are likely to be passing options. Can be used for one player to move to the ball carrier of the opposition or for a collective effort on the opposition in the attacking third.

“If you need” – you are within passing range to provide support to a team mate with the ball.

Signals

Team mate off the ball suddenly moves with pace – this is the best indicator that a player is looking for the ball, accompanied with a hand pointing forward. An essential signal for penetrating and attacking in the final third

Hand pointing forward – looking for a ball forward to run on to.

Hand flat and down toward foot – play to feet or specific foot

Hand up in air – available for long ball or ball over top

Hand horizontal forward, palm up – don’t pass / give ball

Arm waving from back, pulling forward – players behind to pull up / press

Finger point under chin – discrete signal for throw-in, asking for throw over head

Coaching terms

“Drop” – move toward your own goal.

“Deep” – position back toward your own goal.

“High” – position forward toward the attacking goal.

“Wide” – toward the outside of the pitch.

“Penetrate” – get in behind the defence.

“Release” – pass the ball.

“Block” – stop a shot or pass from reaching target.

“Check your shoulder” – look around, scan. Where are the opposition /team mates/spaces? Don't ball watch.

“Show the line” – steer opposition outward toward sideline.

“Recover” – get back / return to defending position.

“Combine” or “Link” – players support each other allowing inter-passing.

“Compact” – players get close.

“Low block” – a deep defensive line, compact and central.

“Overload” – more numbers than the opposition.

“BP” (Ball Possession) - In possession.

“BPO” (Ball Possession Opposition) - Out of possession.

“Transition” – the three to five second period when the moment changes from BP to BPO, or BPO to BP.

“High line” or “Off-side trap” - the defensive players push and hold in unison to maintain a high defensive line, forcing the opposition to retreat or be off-side.

“CDM” / “6” / “holding midfielder” – central defensive midfielder.

“Striker” / “9” / “CF” – centre forward.

“CAM” / “10” - central attacking midfielder.

“RW” & “LW” / “7 & 11” – right and left wingers.

“CM” / “8” – central midfielder, can be left or right, also box to box midfielder.