



UNIVERSIDADE D
COIMBRA

Sérgio Miguel Monteiro Marques

“METHODODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL FOR THE TACTICO-TECHNICAL LEARNING OF FOOTBALL BY
THE YOUNG FOOTBALLER THROUGH POSITIONAL PLAY”

Dissertação no âmbito do Mestrado em Treino Desportivo para Crianças e Jovens
orientada pelo Doutor António José Figueiredo e apresentada à Faculdade de Ciências do
Desporto e Educação Física de Coimbra.

Janeiro, 2020

Faculdade de Ciências do Desporto e Educação Física
da Universidade de Coimbra

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No término de mais uma etapa na vida académica todos os obrigados serão sempre insuficientes derivado ao largo número de intervenientes que de uma forma mais ou menos directa tiveram algum tipo de influência sobre a feitura da proposta.

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Abstract (PT)

Ao definir um plano de treino para um grupo de jogadores há que ter uma imensidão de aspectos em conta e para isso há que possuir um grande conhecimento não só prático, pedagógico e teórico do treino em si mas também conhecimento individual das características dos jogadores disponíveis, as suas expectativas, o seu conhecimento anteriormente adquirido, a sua condição física, entre imensos outros aspectos.

Nesta proposta metodológica, é proposta uma abordagem mais colectiva ao treino e isto requer um elevado grau de proficiência técnica aos jogadores. Esta será a principal responsabilidade oferecida a um treinador que opte por utilizar uma abordagem posicional como a que se propõe na presente proposta.

É óbvio que todos os jogadores passam por determinados estágios de desenvolvimento e nesta proposta os principais benefícios prendem-se com o ganho de conhecimentos tácticos e de posição. Para isto se dar, existe uma perda de tempo de contacto com a bola e esta será, indubitavelmente, a maior desvantagem da aplicação dos exercícios propostos.

A presente proposta metodológica tem como base uma extensa revisão bibliográfica. Através da aplicação dos exercícios propostos é esperado que os jogadores atinjam altos níveis de conhecimento táctico, técnica específica adaptada à posição ocupada e ainda será possível aos jogadores experienciarem exigências ao nível físico semelhantes ao jogo formal.

Concluindo, o objectivo principal é garantir que a transferabilidade entre o treino e o jogo seja otimizada ao máximo desenhando exercícios de uma forma a que os jogadores sejam expostos a situações que enfrentaram regularmente em jogo formal tanto em termos defensivos como ofensivos.

Abstract (ENG)

When defining a training plan for a group of players there is an enormity of aspects which have to be considered and in order to do that the coach should possess great knowledge at practical, pedagogical and theoretical levels. It is important to have be aware of the player's individual characteristics, their expectations, previously acquired knowledge, physical conditioning among a great number of other aspects.

Throughout this methodological proposal, football coaching will be approached through a collective view which requires a high level of technical proficiency from the players. It is the coach's responsibility to assess the technical level of the players at their disposition and evaluate whether to go through with a team focused approach.

All football players go through several stages of development and within this methodological proposal the main identified benefits are the gains in tactical awareness levels and spatial awareness. In order to achieve high levels of tactical and spatial awareness the focus on the individual will be somewhat limited and this is clearly the biggest drawback when applying the proposed activities as time on the ball will decrease.

The methodological proposal at hand is based on an extensive bibliographical revision which main intent is to create a proposal based on applicable theoretical fundamentals onto a practice in which the transferability between training and formal game is the main parameter to be respected. Through the application of the proposed activities it is expected that players reach high levels of tactical and spatial awareness as well as a high level of technical proficiency adapted to the position occupied on the pitch through repetition of collective movements. Players ae also expected to experience physical demands similar to the ones expected during a formal game.

As a conclusion, the main purpose of this methodological proposal is to guarantee a high level of transferability between the training of the formal game through the use of positional play by designing activities which will ultimately make players repeat tactical and technical movements and have players exposed to situations similar to the ones faced during formal games both in attacking and defending tasks.

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Introduction

The main objective in the making of this proposal is to demonstrate the use of positional play during trainings targeting young footballers is very beneficial in various ways such as tactical awareness and the sheer understanding of the game and its complexity due to being a team game in which players are inter dependant and whose positions are changeable. Coaching football to young footballers under the proposal of positional play also has its own downsides such as an inherent loss of individual time on the ball so coaches should be advised to make a thorough assessment and individual analysis of the players in order to make an educated decision. Players should present a good technical level in terms of their passing, receiving, individual ball control and processing speed. I wouldn't determine a minimum or ideal age to apply a positional play based approach. I would, instead, determine a minimum technical level. Coaches will take into account the maturation and growth levels, as well as all the functional and, obviously, technical proficiency and just then determine whether it is ideal for players to spend less time on the ball, individually, during training, and more time working in position and working off the ball which requires more focusing and ability to respect team movements and present a high level of tactical awareness.

In my opinion, it is important to remove innocuous parts of the training in which there is hardly any transferability to the actual formal game due to the dimensions, of the pitch, the numbers involved, technical actions required, among others, in a drill/game or even the positioning of players. I believe coaches should be focusing on the positional sense of players from the warm up activities to the main activity. These activities can perfectly be focused on the individual which will provide the players with more time on the ball and eventually improve on their individual technical level. Games, drills and activities during trainings should focus on repeating collective behaviours as well as individual technical actions which will be used and applied in formal matches more often than not.

My practical proposal for the introduction of positional play training for young footballers entails a lot of contact on the ball and includes exposing players to various situations which are relatable and transferable to the formal game. Trainings can be organized in several different ways as I will describe in more detail. Positional play does not and cannot mean static play as Football is a game of constant movement and in which positions of players are free to move within the area of play. This means players have to understand changes of positioning and unpredictability will always be present. It is important then, to clarify with players which movements are positional, which are determined by the characteristics of each play and which can't be controlled to the team is subjected to a great extent of unpredictable events to which the team has to adapt, such as the

opposition's attacking and defending organization. Players, then should be aware of the team's movements and feel comfortable in performing them as well as adapting quickly to whatever each play might ask from them and act accordingly.

Every player is an interpreter of a script which is written by the technical and managerial department during trainings. Players are undoubtedly the main performers, therefore the coach's job has to be the one of providing them with the best possible individual and collective tools for them to perform confidently and comfortably when involving in a formal game.

I. Physical characterization of the young footballer

I.1. Concepts of Maturation and Growth and Development

Maturation and growth are concepts which are inter connected although they, individually, refer to differing biological activities. Maturation is an individual process which follows a specific process and developmental stage. According to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), the maturational state at a specific development stage corresponds to its timing. Among all the investigations related, specifically, to studying the maturational, growth and the physical aptitude there are some very relevant ones such as (Peña Reyes, Cardenas, & Malina, 1994), (Coelho e Silva, Seleccção de jovens basquetebolistas – estudo univariado e multivariado no escalão dos 12 aos 14 anos de idade. , 1995), (Hansen , Bangsboo, Twisk, & Klausen, 1999), (Aroso & Ribeiro, 2000), (Reilly et al., 2000), (Figueiredo, 2001), (Seabra, Maia, & Garganta, 2001), (Horta, 2003). (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) have developed researches based on European footballers. (Malina & Beunen, Growth and biological maturation: relevance to athletic performance. The Child and Adolescent Athlete., 1996) have referred 2 footballers of the same height and stature can perfectly be presenting a different timing as a consequence of their diverging states of maturation. While one of them has reached 72% of his potential adult stature, the other can be only on 66%. (Roche A. , Bone Growth and Maturation. In Human Growth a Comprehensive Treatise. 2nd edition., 1986) and (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) state that maturation is the physical mechanism a person experiences until the maturation process is complete through alterations and the development from the embryonal phase to the adult stage. For (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), biological maturation is responsible for the introduction of a considerable variance in the morphology and the general body coordination necessary to practice sports at a high level. Growth concerns the

increase and the body dimensions from the moment of birth to the adult stage where changes are observable such as cellular modifications, namely hyperplasia, the increase in the number of cells and the DNA duplication. Hypertrophy, the increase on the size of cells and accretion, the increase of the intra and extra cellular substances (Roche A. , Bone Growth and Maturation. In Human Growth a Comprehensive Treatise. 2nd edition., 1986) (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004). Also according to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), all development entails a change from an undifferentiated state to a highly organized and specialized structure, presenting itself under two contexts: the biological, which occurs in the pre-natal stage which concerns to the differentiation and specialization of the muscular and bone tissues and behavioural which is linked to the development of competences at social, intellectual, cognitive and emotional levels and also has a direct or indirect connection to the cultural environment in which the individual is surrounded by. The physical performance of young athletes depends, then, from their growth, development and maturation. The regulation of these two processes is definitely complex, since there are several factors involved and are inter-linked between them from the moment of conception to the moment in which biological maturation is finally achieved (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004). Development refers to the acquisition of behavioural competence - the learning of appropriate behaviours expected by society. As children experience life at home, school, church, sports, recreation, and other community activities, they develop cognitively, socially, emotionally, morally, and so on. They are learning to behave in a culturally appropriate manner (Coelho e Silva, et al., 2010).

Table 1. Universal tasks of childhood and adolescence.

GROWTH:	MATURATION:	DEVELOPMENT:
Size	Skeletal	Cognitive
Proportions	Sexual	Emotional
Physique	Somatic	Social
Composition	Neuroendocrine	Motor
Systemic	Neuromuscular	Moral
	SELF-ESTEEM	
	BODY IMAGE	
	PERCEIVED COMPETENCE	

Adapted from Malina *et al.* (2004)

Summarising, the process of Maturation, Growth and Development interfere directly in motor skills, affective and social relationships of individuals. As a consequence, it is necessary to bring adequate stimulus and create the right environment taking all the factors into consideration and it is absolutely essential to clarify that Growth includes quantitative biological aspects (body dimensions), related to hypertrophy (the increase in size and volume of cells) and cellular

hyperplasia (the rise in the total number of cells). Maturation can be defined as a biological qualitative process phenomenon which is related to the maturing of the maturation of various internal organs and all the different body functions and systems (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, 2009), (Massa & Ré, 2010). Development is understood as the interaction between the individual biological characteristics (Growth and Maturation) and the social environment to which the individual is exposed throughout his life (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, 2009).

I.I.I. Growth

For (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), Growth is a process of increasing in size of the whole body or its specific parts. Different parts of the body grow at different speeds and in divergent moments and paces, a process which has implications in terms of the proportionality, composition and shape of the body and its various parts. According to (Roche & Sun, Book review of Human Growth: Assessment and Interpretation. , 2003), Growth is the increasing or the decreasing of the number of cells. Positive or Negative Growth concerns the enlargement of the body in size from the moment a person is born to the adult state and throughout the whole process there are cellular modifications: Hyperplasia, the rise in the number of cells and the duplication of DNA, Hypertrophy, the rise in the size of the cells and Accretion, the increase of the intra and extra cellular substances (Roche A. , Bone Growth and Maturation. In Human Growth a Comprehensive Treatise. 2nd edition., 1986), (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004). Also according to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), the stature, weight and remaining dimensional measurements grow at great speed during the early childhood, slowing down during the second childhood until the peak of the speed of growth is reached during puberty until it stabilizes and as the adult state is reached. So, Growth, in general, presents itself as being fast paced through the early childhood followed by a decreasing in speed until it goes through its peak of speed during puberty, slowing down after puberty and stabilizing when a person becomes an adult. As children grow, they become taller and heavier, they increase in lean and fat tissues, their organs increase in size, and so on. Heart volume and mass, for example, follow a growth pattern like that for body weight, while the lungs and lung functions grow proportionally to height. Different parts of the body grow at different rates and different times. This results in changes in body proportions - relationship of one part of the body to another. The legs, for example, grow faster than the trunk during childhood; hence, the child becomes relatively longer-legged for his or her height (Coelho e Silva, et al., 2010).

1.1.2. Maturation

“Biological process which determines the speed and the moment of growth which differs from individual to individual.” (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004)

Biological maturation is considered in the literature a more appropriate guide than chronological age in the prescription of a young athlete’s strength and conditioning programmes, primarily due to the variation on development within the same chronological age in young footballers (Vandendriessche, et al., 2012).

The methods of categorising the different stages of development in youth players is the pre pubertal growth spurt, pubertal growth spurt and post pubertal growth spurt (Lloyd & Oliver, 2012).

(Malina, Serratos, Chamorro, & Morate, 2007) define maturation as a moment in the cadence of a process which leads to the biologically mature state. This is an individualized process, just like (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) say, the individuals differ considerably in their maturation rates. Maturation is a directional process which has its beginning in the moment of conception and reaches its peak once the individual reaches the adult state. According to (Roche A. , Growth, Maturation, and Body Composition. The Fels Longitudinal Study., 1992), maturation is the process which leads to the “mature state” and refers to the developmental changes which allow all individuals to reach the final state. This is a process which demands time and marks the progress rate in the direction to the mature state. This whole continuous and complex process requires specialisation and differentiation from cells (Malina, Longitudinal perspectives on physical fitness during childhood and Youth., 1993). This individual process follows a specific timing which refers to the maturation rate of an individual during the maturational development. The maturational state at a specific time frame corresponds to the timing. Therefore, children with the same stature might present a different timing, which is a consequence of their different maturation timings. Maturation is usually assessed by the identification of major maturational indicators, which according to (Cameron, 2002) are happenings or discrete states which occur sequentially in a part or parts of the body and are characteristic of maturational progression, from a state of immaturity to the “mature state”. (Malina, Serratos, Chamorro, & Morate, 2007) define maturation as a moment in the cadence of a process which leads to the biologically mature state. This is an individualized process, just like (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) write, the individuals differ considerably in their maturation rates. Maturation is a directional process which has its beginning in the moment of conception and reaches its peak once the

individual reaches the adult state. According to (Roche A. , Growth, Maturation, and Body Composition. The Fels Longitudinal Study., 1992), maturation is the process which leads to the “mature state” and refers to the developmental changes which allow all individuals to reach the final state. This is a process which demands time and marks the progress rate in the direction to the mature state. This whole continuous and complex process requires specialisation and differentiation from cells (Malina, Longitudinal perspectives on physical fitness during childhood and Youth., 1993). This individual process follows a specific timing which refers to the maturation rate of an individual during the maturational development. The maturational state at a specific time frame corresponds to the timing. Therefore, children with the same stature might present a different timing, which is a consequence of their different maturation timings. Maturation is usually assessed by the identification of major maturational indicators, which according to (Cameron, 2002) are happenings or discrete states which occur sequentially in a part or parts of the body and are characteristic of maturational progression, from a state of immaturity to the “mature state”. All tissues, organs, and systems of the body mature. Maturation is process which should be viewed in two contexts - timing and tempo. Timing refers to when specific maturational events occur, e.g., age at the beginning of breast development in girls, the age at the appearance of pubic hair in boys and girls, or the age at maximum growth during the adolescent growth spurt. Tempo refers to the rate at which maturation progresses, e.g., how quickly or 18 19 slowly the youngster passes through the adolescent growth spurt. Timing and tempo vary considerably among individuals (Coelho e Silva, et al., 2010).

I.1.3. Development

The three processes, growth, maturation and development, occur at the same time and interact. They interact to influence the child's self-concept, self-esteem, body image, and perceived competence. Teachers and coaches (note, coaching is teaching) should be aware of these interactions. A mismatch between the demands of a sport and those of normal growth and maturation may be a source of stress among young athletes. How a youngster is coping with his/her sexual maturation or adolescent growth spurt, for example, may influence his/her behaviours, including sport-related behaviours and performance. (Coelho e Silva, et al., 2010)

According to (Fragoso & Vieira, 2000) the concept of normality is obtained from the moment a significant amount of data allows us to guarantee the physiological, biological and/or maturational age is identical to the chronological age in study and it used the bone age measurement to determine precisely this. Still, according to the same authors, the variations between bone age and chronological age may suffer variations of up 6 years. It is referred as well that variations are smaller within females as their growth period is somewhat shorter.

1.2. Maturational indicators

It is generically assumed by all that the most successful players are the ones who are closer to their full maturity state, anatomically and physiologically. Some studies, ((Bielicki, Koniarek, & Malina, 1984), (Malina & Beunen, Growth and biological maturation: relevance to athletic performance. The Child and Adolescent Athlete., 1996), (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004)), suggest that sexual, somatic and skeletal indicators, apart from being the most common, are positively related between them although no method of assessment can, by itself, determine a complete description of the maturation process. The assessment methods associated with vary in accordance to the biological system which is being considered but the sexual and somatic are constricted to the puberty and adolescence periods. The somatic maturation can be measured or assessed through the maturity offset and by the quantification of the percentage of the predicted stature when adult state is reached (Khamis & Roche, 1994). Sexual maturation has to do with the development the secondary sexual characters, this is the pubic hairiness and the actual development of the sexual organs. The skeletal maturation is the one which takes centre stage as the best maturational indicator as it is possible to be determined and quantified since an early age to the last year of adolescence by the assessment of the bone age through the radiography of the left hand and wrist.

1.2.1. Biological maturation

Biological maturation is responsible for the introduction of a considerable variation Force in the morphology and sports motor aptitude and general body coordination of an individual (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004).

According to (Helsen, Van Winckel, & Williams, 2005) many specialists believe the precocious success in football can be explained by the physical precociousness associated with the relative age. In a similar way (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) have made researches which suggest that, in younger age groups, footballers with in earlier or average stages of physical maturation are excluded in favour of individuals in a higher one. This creates a predisposition to precocious specialization.

(Malina, Longitudinal perspectives on physical fitness during childhood and Youth., 1993) has observed in the same way that young individuals in advanced maturational states have been more successful in than young individuals who take longer periods of time to reach a higher state of physical maturation. This is due to the time played in matches just like referred before, these players tend to have more time given to them on the pitch during matches. This all leads to more experience being garnered by these players which, ultimately leads to a higher rate of development.

Same study has shown maturational differences between the positions on the pitch with midfielders in attackers reaching their physical maturational peaks faster than goalkeepers and full backs. (Peña Reyes, Cardenas, & Malina, 1994) suggests that young footballers with an advanced sexual and skeletal maturation tend to be more successful in the practice of football during their property. (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) has also suggested young footballers who resent an advanced biological maturation tend to be high achievers in terms of their performance. Still according to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), the biological maturation of a young footballer presents an enormous individual variability and doesn't always match their chronological age. Each individual has a biological clock which regulates the progress through the maturational states. Biological maturation is related to the individual's biological clock. Despite this, the maturational progress rate doesn't match the chronological age as referred before.

Concluding, within a group of young footballers of the same age there will always be a great variation in the biological age, the biological states and, ultimately, in the biological maturity. There will always be individuals in advanced maturational stages and others presenting a delay in their biological maturational development.

It is also acknowledged that biological maturation influences physical performance, largely owing to alterations in hormonal profiles, increases in lean body mass, myelination of motor neurons and enhanced inter and intramuscular coordination (Faigenbaum, Lloyd, & Myer, 2013), (Lloyd & Oliver, 2012)

Perceptual sexual alterations have a deep impact in adolescents in regards to the social and cultural dimensions of their lives. The development of secondary sexual characteristics during pubertal years whether these develop earlier or later in life, appear to have great influence in group dynamics and on the perception the adolescents have about themselves. (Sherar, Cumming, Eisenmann, Baxter-Jones, & Malina, 2010)

1.2.2. Skeletal maturation

Skeletal maturation or bone maturation, as it is also called, is the most common used biological maturational indicator. According to (Tanner, Healy, Goldstein, & Cameron, 2001), it is widely recognized as the best and more accurate indicator of biological maturation. The bone and skeletal development always follows the same maturational process and order, its ossification occurs in a way which doesn't get affected by mal nutrition, illnesses, social or ethnic reasons which means it assumes a universal validity. The dimensions and/or measurements of the bone, muscle and fat

obtained through radiographies and the upper limb and the lower limb seem to be bigger in males experiencing an advanced maturational state and the correlations between skeletal age, muscle mass, fat and bone mass indicate an increment of these from an early age all the way to adolescence and the variability is far more visible in males rather than on females (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004).

I.2.3. Somatic maturation

Whilst the limitations of somatic measures are noted, they do offer a non-invasive and more realistic approach to determining maturity status, especially within field-based environments (Malina, Cumming, Coelho e Silva, & Figueiredo, 2015)

Somatic maturation can be assessed/measured through body measurements. Despite this, according to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), the body measurements require longitudinal data in order to become maturational indicators. The age at peak high velocity (APHV) is the most used and recognized somatic maturational indicator in longitudinal studies on adolescents. The APHV is obtained through the graphical representation of the growth curves or mathematically calculated through the individual progress in height. Besides this, this procedure allows us to estimate the speed of growth in height, the age it will take off and the quantify the height gained during adolescence (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004). According to (Cruz, 2003), apart from height, it is also possible to quantify and predict with very high certainty other body measurements and sizes such as the growth of lower limbs, seating height, shoulder breadth, body weight, among others. The percentage of adult stature is another indicator of somatic maturation. When parental stature is available it is possible to predict with even more exactitude the predicted adult stature and this is usually the most common situation. This means that a child who is at 80% of their predicted adult stature is considered to be more mature, at that moment in time, than a child who is at 70%. The moment in which the APHV occurs is also considered to be a maturational indicator, (Malina, Growth and Maturation: Normal Variation and Effect of Training. , 1989), (Malina & Beunen, Growth and biological maturation: relevance to athletic performance. The Child and Adolescent Athlete., 1996), (Roche & Sun, Book review of Human Growth: Assessment and Interpretation. , 2003). The puberty growth spurt in males has its beginning around the age of 12, reaching its peak around the age of 14 and has its end by the age of 18. (Malina & Beunen, Growth and biological maturation: relevance to athletic performance. The Child and Adolescent Athlete., 1996) say all of these considerations must be interpreted under the light of an extremely high inter-individual variability.

As crianças/adolescentes com a mesma idade cronológica apresentam variações consideráveis na idade biológica e as diferenças individuais maturacionais influenciam o crescimento somático, especialmente na adolescência. A acumulação de gordura durante a adolescência, relacionada ou não com o sobrepeso e obesidade (Malina et al., 2004; Teles et al., 2009) está associada a avanços maturacionais (Schuster., 2009).

Young individuals presenting the same chronological age might be experiencing considerable variations regarding their biological age and the individual maturational differences have great influence on somatic maturation, especially during adolescence (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical activity, 2009). The accumulation of fat during adolescence, directly related to obesity or not, has an association with maturational advances (Schuster, 2009)

I.2.4. Sexual maturation

The assessment/measurement of sexual maturation is based on the development of the secondary sexual characters and the most studied body parts are pubic hairiness, mammary glands, the genitalia developmental stage, the development of the penis and testicles in males, armpit hairiness, (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), facial hairiness and voice changes during puberty in boys. The study of the developmental states of the secondary sexual characters allows quick and easy naked eye observation although it clearly presents some limitations such as the constriction to puberty and adolescence years and obviously the fact that it interferes with the individual's privacy which might spark discontent and discomfort. The gathering of information and data can be made by using pictures and images although it is important to keep in mind the natural and obvious limitations to this process (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004). (Matsudo & Matsudo, 1994) have made a study in young Brazilian footballers between the ages of 6 and 26 and have concluded that it exists a moderate percentage of concordance (60 to 70%) between maturational self-perception and the real maturational state, registering, however, a higher concordance for the perception of the sexual maturational levels mainly when used the assessment of pubic hairiness than when the use of the genitalia development as criteria for the assessment was in place.

2. Fundamental physical skills

2.1. Strength

According to (Wisloff & Helgerud, 1998), high levels of muscle strength in the inferior limbs constitutes itself as an essential element of individual improvement in football performance, regardless of positioning in the pitch. High levels of strength also act as injury prevention as all motor skills are reinforced and strengthened. Another study by the same authors has shown there is a direct correlation between the strength in inferior limbs and the aerobic capacity and general physical performance. (Kraemer & Ratamess, 2004) suggest resistant force training leads to reinforced and improved muscle power, localized applied muscle power, speed, flexibility, general body coordination and balance as well as explosiveness and faster changes of direction. Testosterone levels are directly correlated with the performance of isometric force, as elite players present a greater tendency to develop strength, independently of the testosterone levels. When compared to inferior standard players, young elite footballers have presented higher levels of strength in the inferior limbs, indicating that football interferes directly in the development of strength (Hansen , Bangsboo, Twisk, & Klausen, 1999). Strength specific work has been clearly gaining its own space and importance in young footballers training sessions and a precocious solicitation has been essential to a higher level of training through preventing injuries and improving essential skills such as the ones referred previously (improved muscle power, localized applied muscle power, speed, flexibility, general body coordination and balance as well as explosiveness and faster changes of direction). Muscular strength is presented as the main factor which will help determining the sports performance of an individual between the ages of 11 and 14 years old and also represents an important role in the development of human general motor skills since the early learning stages of development (Manno, 1994). When it comes to explosive force, (Malina et al., 2004) refers that until 13 years old there are linear gains in male performers where it is verifiable a gaining in performance which might eventually make it possible to predict the puberty growth spurt. Still according to (Malina et al., 2004), the difference between individuals in divergent maturity states are fundamentally evident due to body size and dimensions and the muscular mass.

“Muscular strength is an fundamental physical skill regarding the sports mechanics and execution which makes skeletal muscle a preponderant function when it comes to the obtainment of high performances” (Soares, 2005)

“Strength is all that has the ability to cause modifications to the still state of a body and is translated by a vector” (Castelo, 2002)

2.2. Speed

In Football, high intensity actions and actions which are dependent from the metabolic anaerobic component which are completed in a positive and satisfying are clearly dominant. Between 8 and 18% of motor patterns taking part in a football game occur at high speed and, obviously, there is a linear correlation between the standard of the game played and the speed at which this is played. According to (Manso, Valdivielso, & Caballero, 1996), speed represents the ability for an individual to perform physical motor actions in the minimum time possible and with maximum efficacy and defines speed as a physical capacity which is manifested completely in motor actions where maximum performance is reached not being limited by tiredness. Still according to the same author, speed is a hybrid physical skill which means speed is conditioned by other skills involved in physical actions such as strength, resistance, stamina and the specific technical execution of the player. According to (Bompa, 2002), a great deal of the ability to accelerate and speed up actions is determined genetically. The higher the concentration and proportion of fast contraction fibres in relation to slow contraction fibres, the higher will be the ability of the organism to perform fast contraction actions and promote explosiveness into physical actions. Despite this, genetics are not a determining or limiting factor. Athletes can and should develop speed ability with training and over time. Among the factors which affect positively speed ability, neural aspects come up as some of the most precociously related to the development of physical performance in pre-puberty, puberty and throughout the middle adolescence years. According to (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004), individuals in advanced maturational states tend to be taller, heavier and, simultaneously, are able to obtain better results in strength, speed and muscular power focused activities when compared to individuals still experiencing delayed maturational states. Reaction time, acceleration and full flight sprinting are all essential for a player who sprints during matches (Jeffreys, 2009).

2.3. Resistance

Several authors have defined Football as a sport which requires intermittent and acyclic periods of physical activity and in which is easily verified the constant shift between high, medium and low intensity in which high intensity periods are shorter and low intensity periods usually last longer. In high standard adult football players run between 9 and 14 km per match where 88% of the actions are aerobic activities and the remaining 12% are anaerobic (lactic and alactic) and high intensity (Reilly, 1997). (Leger, Bosquet, & Legros, 2002) defines aerobic capacity as the ability an individual has to endure a prolonged motor activity. By improving the players' physiological response, coaches are influencing positively on their resistance (stamina and endurance), perceptive capacities, decision making mechanisms, decreasing bad decisions made

while playing fatigued and, ultimately improving their tactico-technical performance during matches. Considering, what was referred previously regarding the increase in high intensity and pace during matches it becomes even more apparent the importance of the aerobic capacity for players to reach higher standards of performance in their practice of Football regardless of their age or maturational state. (Malina & Bouchard, Growth, Maturation, and Physical Activity. , 1991) indicate maturely advanced males present, in average, a higher VO₂max in absolute terms than males in earlier maturational stages. (Beunen, Rogers, Woynarowska, & Malina, 1995) has also observed high correlations between maturational states and high VO₂max. Despite this, when put into relative terms and into perspective, the correlations have almost disappeared and have not been taken as significant.

2.4. Agility

Agility refers to the ability of an athlete to change direction in a fast and accurate way in order to move swiftly throughout the pitch and mechanically produce all movements required to play football at a high standard of practice. Agility is the movement of the body through space, this is, movements which include changes of direction (Bompa, 2002). (Malina, Bouchard, & Bar-Or, Growth, Maturation and Physical Activity 2nd edition, 2004) refers the period between 5 and 8 years of age as the one in which this physical skill suffers the biggest increment, progressing at a slower but steady rate until the individual turns 18. Agility is a fantastic skill for any player to possess and to work on during training sessions as agility is a skill which comes into action in all moments of the game. Players will be able to react faster when defending and attacking, controlling opposition in defensive set pieces or overtake this in offensive set pieces, for example. Agility is also dependent on body size, height, weight and maturational stage and different positions on the pitch might require players to rely more or less in their agility skills. For example, Goal Keepers will rely on their agility numerous times during a match whether it is actually saving shots from opposition or reacting to ball passed back to them by their own team mates and nowadays GK's are taking more and more part on the building up. Field players have to be more agile as the standard of the football they play. Defenders might present lower levels of agility when compared to midfielders or attackers due to their roles in the pitch and the fact that, usually, their body size, weight and height might have a negative impact on their agility which might be, then, compensated by their strength and body dimensions.

2.5. Coordination

General body coordination skills are intrinsically linked to the practice of Football regardless of the age, gender or standard of practice. Individual technique is gained and improved through the specialization of general coordination skills and the football specialization along with all the previously referred skills, strength, speed, resistance and agility. The four previously referred physical skills are without a doubt the foundation on which all sports performances are based but general body coordination must be seen as the pre requisite for the learning and perfecting of specific motor abilities (Bompa, 2002). The development of coordination has the pre puberty period as its most marking and important stage as it is during this stage the child reveals and experiences a great range and diversity of motor stimulus. During puberty, the time for the body readjustments due to the allometric physical growth makes it so that general body coordination skills suffers some level of decreasing (Reilly et al., 2000). This period of coordinative readjustment has implications when it comes to young footballers' performance where the individuals in a more advanced maturational state might be in advantage due to having the edge in other parameters such as strength, speed and resistance.

It has been clearly noted that the necessity of movement proficiency for safe and effective long term physical development and performance in youth athletes is of the utmost importance (Lloyd & Oliver, 2012).

3. Key performance indicators (KPI's) in football

It is essential for me to present some research on key performance indicators as the players' performance will always depend on a variety of actions and, mainly, on the way each player coordinate themselves at every moment not just within themselves through their decision making at all moments but also in the way they coordinate themselves with his peers on the pitch either in trainings or matches.

I will describe what physical, tactical and technical indicators are and in what ways coaches can manage and observe these in order to take full potential. It is essential, when playing a positional play based style of football that players make the best decisions at all moments and are able to manage themselves within a very complex tactical structure in all moments of the game. Performance indicators are also essential for coaches to have present in order to provide accurate feedback to players in the sense that many times the assessment of these indicators is made by coaches on a naked eye basis and remarks are made on the moment of training without recurring to any other means of information other than their own perspective and naked eye observations and the players' actions whether these are physical, technical or tactical.

KPI's need to be considered with regards to several situational variables (such as quality of opponent, location of match, type of competition and game period). In addition, first goal and in general score-line and dismissals will also have an effect on performance. As a result, key performance indicators can change during the game. It seems teams need to develop a specific performance index (such as how to enter the attacking third, when to press high/low, etc...) for a specific opponent, at a specific location, in a specific type of competition for a specific time during the match.

Furthermore, the performance index might be individual to specific positions as the technical and physical demands differ. For example, target strikers have different movements (amount and intensity), different technical skills (such as ball possession) compared to central midfielders. However, their shots on goal will be more crucial as they are usually positioned closer to the goal and therefore have greater chances to score.

Generally, efficacy seems to be key offensively (goals per shots) as well as defensively (gaining re-possession quickly or delaying a counter attack).

3.1. Physical and physiological indicators

Physical preparation has been a rising priority for all football teams at whatever level these teams might play. Nowadays, the sports phenomenon in general and football in particular is characterized by its competitiveness with young players specializing sooner and sooner with their greatest dream being the professionalization within a certain number of years. Football is a sport where the early specialization has been on the rise as the pressure to win matches even at very early stages of the players' development and this is clearly due to the growing number of specialized football schools and development centres which compete with each other to retain the talent and to, obviously attract talented players. Football is characterized by being a predominantly aerobic sport. Despite this, players rely on anaerobic sources of energy to be successful in extremely competitive conditions (Bangsbo, 1994) and as players progress into later stages of development anaerobic sources of energy become the most predominant. Despite this previously referred predominance, it is easily verifiable players have to possess a large range of physical skills and capabilities such as physical resistance, speed, agility and strength. With this said, it is important to determine which of these skills are essential for each position on the pitch as different positions on the pitch and on the team's tactical system will demand different skillset from players and these will present varied physiological characteristics (Barbanti, 1997). Considering (Reilly et al., 2000) it becomes evident that the physiological solicitations can vary with the work rate and effort put by players in different tasks inherent to different positions on the pitch.

3.2. Technical indicators

Technical indicators can clearly be divided into defensive and attacking individual indicators as players perform both actions several times per match and a player changes role (attacker to defender and vice-versa) a large number of times during a football match regardless of the type of football and the level of ability of the player. It is important then, for the coach to assess and define indicators which will help assessing a performance on a very particular aspect whether the player is applying defending or attacking techniques at any given moment.

The analytical training of individual football technique has always been paramount for any club and any player and it is a fundamental tool in youth football. The great valorisation of individual technique in football comes from the fact that it is essential for a player to be well developed technically so the other aspects of football training can be applicable and this is where I would position positional play focused training which requires a high level of understanding of the game and a higher level of individual skill. This technique will allow the player to progress into a more complex set of tasks when involved in a formal football match such as dragging opponents, make fake runs, show themselves in space or release the ball on the right time among many other complex movements. (Marques & Oliveira, 2001) refer that the efficiency of the technical indicators is, in its primary phase, related to the self-regulation of a player and their motor control as there is a great degree of conditioning applied by outside factors such as standardized technical movements.

The control of the technical performance allows us to assess the extent of the individual and ultimately collective efficacy involved in football and this is absolutely key for coaches to make the decision between the type of training applied to a certain group of players. This decision should always be made taking into account solely the technical indicators. In most situations, a higher technical level as a direct co-relation to a higher physical outcome when involved in competition as players have a better understanding of the game and the decision making is faster and more assertive.

(Reilly et al., 2000) refer that the control of technical performance and its indicators allows us to assess the extent of the individual influence a player might have when involved in a football match and can also be key in the detection of talent. Now, more than ever technique is fundamental as football is becoming faster and more complex with its intricate tactics and complex set of interactions between players. This requires a higher level of skill as players tend to play in less and less space as defensive collective systems are taking many times centre stage in team's preparations for matches.

3.3. Tactical indicators

Tactical performance indicators are a fantastic tool for coaches although these can be extremely subjective as these are dependent from the tactical approach decided and implemented by the coach during trainings like (Garganta, Maia, & Pinto, 1997) have suggested by referring the almost inexistence of studies on tactical indicators due to its subjectivity and due to the difficulties faced when describing tactical movements or moments. Tactical performance indicators are the ones which present the least studies made to them despite being the one which sparks the most heated empirical discussions and this happens precisely because of the subjectivity when it comes the moment to make decisions on what performance indicators should be considered. (Costa, Garganta, Fonseca, & Botelho, 2002) suggest that athletes who present a high level of performance in formal game situations will certainly possess a high level cognitive processing in a way which will allow them to attain information and use that information in a faster and more precise way getting better results and this speed of processing is definitely what makes a difference between a player who has great potential and one who doesn't. Both these and other authors have compared players from distinct levels of ability and from very different competitive backgrounds and this has shown more experienced players competing at higher levels make are clearly more assertive with their decisions making and present a more developed tactical sense and this will, ultimately, help with their decision making which is, basically, the key for any team's progress into higher levels of performance. The tactical demands which the athlete faces are intrinsically related to the technical and physical indicators as these are always present during a football match. The tactical positions taken by the athlete during a match are a result of a massive range of previous experiences the player went through and the quality of this positioning during a match is defined by the ability of the player to process all the information he is taking from the game and use it wisely.

“All of the footage is filmed with a wide angle, so that they can judge the player and his work in terms of the tactical work of the team, not just how he does individually and technically.” Carles Planchart – Head scout for Pep Guardiola's teams since 2007 –

3.4. Practical applicability of KPI's football

After describing the 3 Key Performance indicators above, I will now link these indicators with the training itself and link the theory with practice. The indicators should be present in trainings plans in a way to clearly state the expectations in terms of the performance from players. The performance indicators can and should be shared with players in an appropriate language according to the age of the players and to the general and average ability of the group to process the amount of information provided.

After performance indicators for each position are assertively decided and clearly defined by the coach it is imperative the operationalization of training is done specifically with the objective of attaining the indicators for each position. The focus on the positioning is key and players should be made aware of expectations and performance indicators in each position.

The measurement of performance will then be made in various ways taking into account the performance of players under different conditions both in training and involved in formal matches. These performance indicators should then be used to plan following training sessions in order to provide players and coaches with a plan of progress.

Regarding the operationalization of training, transferability has to be a major concern, from my point of view. Drills, activities or games have to be set up and organized in a way which lets players experience conditions which make them repeat and improve physical, technical and tactical actions which are as game related as possible. Positionally, players should repeat actions which are similar to the ones happening in matches and which will occur repeatedly in that specific tactical position, whether they are Goal keepers, defenders, midfielders or attackers, they play on the wings or in the centre of the pitch... The more these actions are repeated the more comfortable players will be performing them. Repetition, however, shouldn't be analytical to the point technical actions get disconnected from the tactical and positional aspects of the game.

There are a number of studies on performance indicators which focus on the after match indicators of performance. These studies all have as a purpose to demonstrate ways in which coaches can adapt trainings in such a way that teams focus on the most dominant indicators of positive performance.

(Bush, Barnes, Archer, Hogg, & Bradley, 2014) have come to the conclusion, after extensively analysing the performance indicators in EPL's matches, that players in wide and attacking positions have increased the distance covered at high-intensity and sprinting to a greater extent than central defenders and central midfielders between 2006–07 and 2012–13. In contrast, central players were found to have increased the number of passes and pass completion rates over the same period. These evolutionary trends could be attributed to tactical modifications. These findings provide benchmark requirements of modern EPL players in each position and can therefore assist in player recruitment and development of positions specific training.

(Lago-Ballesteros & Lago-Penas, 2010) have analysed all the 380 games of the Spanish Soccer League in three groups: goals scored (goals for, goals against, total shots, shots on goal, shooting accuracy, shots for a goal), offense (assists, crosses, off sides committed, fouls received, corners, ball possession) and defence (crosses against, off sides received, fouls committed, corners against, yellow cards, red cards). Significant differences across sections of the league table were found for the following pitch actions: goals for, total shots, shots on goal, shots for a goal, assists and

ball possession. The main findings of this study suggest that top teams had a higher average of goals for, total shots and shots on goal than middle and bottom teams ($p < 0.05$). In conclusion, this paper presents values that can be used as normative data to design and evaluate practices and competitions for peak performance soccer teams in a collective way.

(Castellano, Casamichana, & Lago, 2012) have also made a brilliant study which has concluded that two main variables of performance were somewhat a discriminative parameters which separate successful from unsuccessful soccer teams: the comparative analysis over time of the performance profiles associated with winning teams may not only reveal how playing styles evolve or new trends emerge, but also identify those variables (such as ball possession or shots on target) which are considered the most important in soccer today. This study has analysed match statistics related to the attacking and defensive play of winning, drawing and losing teams in three World Cup tournaments. It has also examined how the performance profile of winning teams changes over time, and has sought to identify the performance indicators that best discriminate between successful and unsuccessful teams. Perhaps, the prediction for the WC in Brazil is that possession of the ball and pass proficiency remain key issues for successful team performance. The results may be of use to coaches in terms of designing their training programmes, providing them with information about what attacking players need to achieve, and what needs to be avoided defensively, if a team is to increase its chances of winning. In this sense, the game models based on indirect styles seem to have more chance of success in the near future. The effectiveness of attacking play (in terms of shots on target) and ball possession appear to be the performance indicators that constitute the keys to success in today's soccer.

These and a great number of other studies related to the matter have been showing a greater number of performance indicators which clearly separate top teams from bottom teams. Coach's role is, now, to filter all this information and relate this to the managed teams and assess in which ways training sessions can be adapted in order to provide the team with the right tools at all levels to be successful.

With this I wanted to state the practical applicability at the professional level which can be transported and transferred to youth soccer in the form of simpler and naked eye analyses mainly in terms of the individual technical performance indicators as when players individually progress, the collective will benefit, ultimately.

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4. The communication and leadership skills

4.1. Communication

Communication is becoming a tool with growing importance in it comes to integration processes, instructions and mutual exchanges of knowledge. From an epistemological point of view, communication comes from the Latin “communicare” which means sharing and/or transmitting information with other individuals. Communication is, then, an inherent phenomenon to the social relationship of all individuals who engage on social interaction and work in a group environment. When we consider all the tasks a coach has to take upon himself, in the vast majority of them communication is a key point in which coaches have to focus great attention to detail so the communicational impact a coach provokes has can have a number of positive or negative repercussions for himself and for listeners.

The coach as a character and a decisive individual within an organization has on him the focus of a varied public such as athletes, parents, other fellow coaches, management among others. The will, then, be various moments in which the coach will be judged by what he says and does. It is essential coaches have this perception and prepare themselves appropriately for the pressure which is having to communicate constantly not just through words but also through body language, the gestures a coach makes, the individual or group conversations, all of this passes on a message and all of this has to be consonant with the general message a coach is trying to pass on so it is consistent, thorough and understandable. I would say that any behaviour in public is communication, might be subconscious or conscious but it is, ultimately, communication.

For a coach to become an effective communicator, there are a few aspects which have to be taken into consideration (Lança, 2013):

- Be clear, concise and concrete
- Must talk about own team and opponent, blocking anything else
- Provide collective information during short moments of instruction and have individual talks on the longer ones

- Be fundamentally positive in the communicational approach
- Short bursts of information, reinforcing later in needed

The process of communicating consists in the interaction of various elements where the main actors are the communicator which is creating and passing on a message and a receiver or receivers who are receiving the message. The message should be appropriately adjusted to the receivers so the information is processed and acquired by the receivers and there is an effect of change.

In the communicating of a message between coaches and athletes these are the main actors and factors involved (Lança, 2013):

Communicator (Coach): Has to possess the competences to be clear, concise and concrete, adapt the message to his audience as well as the channels of communication, create empathy, provide feedback to receivers and to the process itself through understandable signs.

Message (during training, pre-match, post-match, etc...): The burst of information, according to the characteristics of the receivers (age, gender, maturational status, social environment, etc...) which should be adjusted, not changed so that the level of noise is the least possible between communicator and receivers.

Receivers (Athletes): These are the elements which will be receiving, acquiring and, eventually, use and apply all the information provided. An active listening is required so that information is all taken, processed and applied with the least possible hiatus.

Noise (language, technical terms, past experiences, etc...): Should be avoided throughout all the communication and the possibility of eventual noise should be predicted by the communicator. There might be behavioural, cultural, technical noise and there should be provoked a natural predisposition of all elements to avoid it. It's all the unnecessary elements which might corrupt the message.

Channels (audio-visual, tactical board, videos, pictures, etc...): The means which can be used to pass on a message. Channels should be chosen wisely to avoid any eventual noise and avoid any loss of information between communicator and receivers. This is what will allow that more and better information to be passed on without the loss of significance and impact.

Active listening: A great deal of attitudes and behaviours such empathy created between communicator and receivers, focus, assertiveness, importance of the message, dedication and passion are all elements in the chain of communicating any given message that will have an impact on how much active listening is happening from the receivers' side. It has to be the communicator's job and purpose to create this by preparing, adapting and communicating information appropriately according to all facts referred before.

4.2. Leadership

It is requested to a coach to be a great communicator but it is also requested from the coach to be a competent leader when it comes to demanding and leading players, practices and matches. Individuals who get themselves into the place of importance which is the place of coach should lead by example so their demands make justice to their actions and it is conceivable to players to follow their specific instructions.

(Dasil, 2004) considers the phenomenon of leadership the one which worries coaches the most due to all the implications this process possesses in itself when it comes to obtaining sports success and how essential and decisive it is. With this said, there are a lot more questions such as: What is really a leader? What are the leader's qualities? What exactly makes a leader effective? What kind of leadership should a coach apply? What will actually influence the leadership process?

Several authors state leadership is related to the influencing process a coach has over his players and all other structures which float around the teams managed such as parents, club management, etc. All concepts regarding leadership can be addressed independently and under a number of perspectives as well as perceptions as all individuals will react differently to leaders and all individuals have a different perception of what leadership actually is. It is up to the leader, then, to assess this and to adapt (Mendo & Ortiz, 2003). (Weinberg & Gould, 1995) have highlighted the importance of this influence to be applied taking into account predetermined commonly established objectives. (Leitão, Serpa, & Bartolo, 1995) and (Alves, 2000) consider that the best definition for leadership applied to sports is the one provided by (Barrow, 1977): "The behavioural process of influencing individuals and groups towards set goals".

There is, however, great debate, within the psychology fields whether this capacity is innate or acquired (Dasil, 2004). Being a leader might be a significant part of an individual's personality traits as it might be in part a consequence of the external environment in which an individual is experiencing that had the ability to convert the individual.

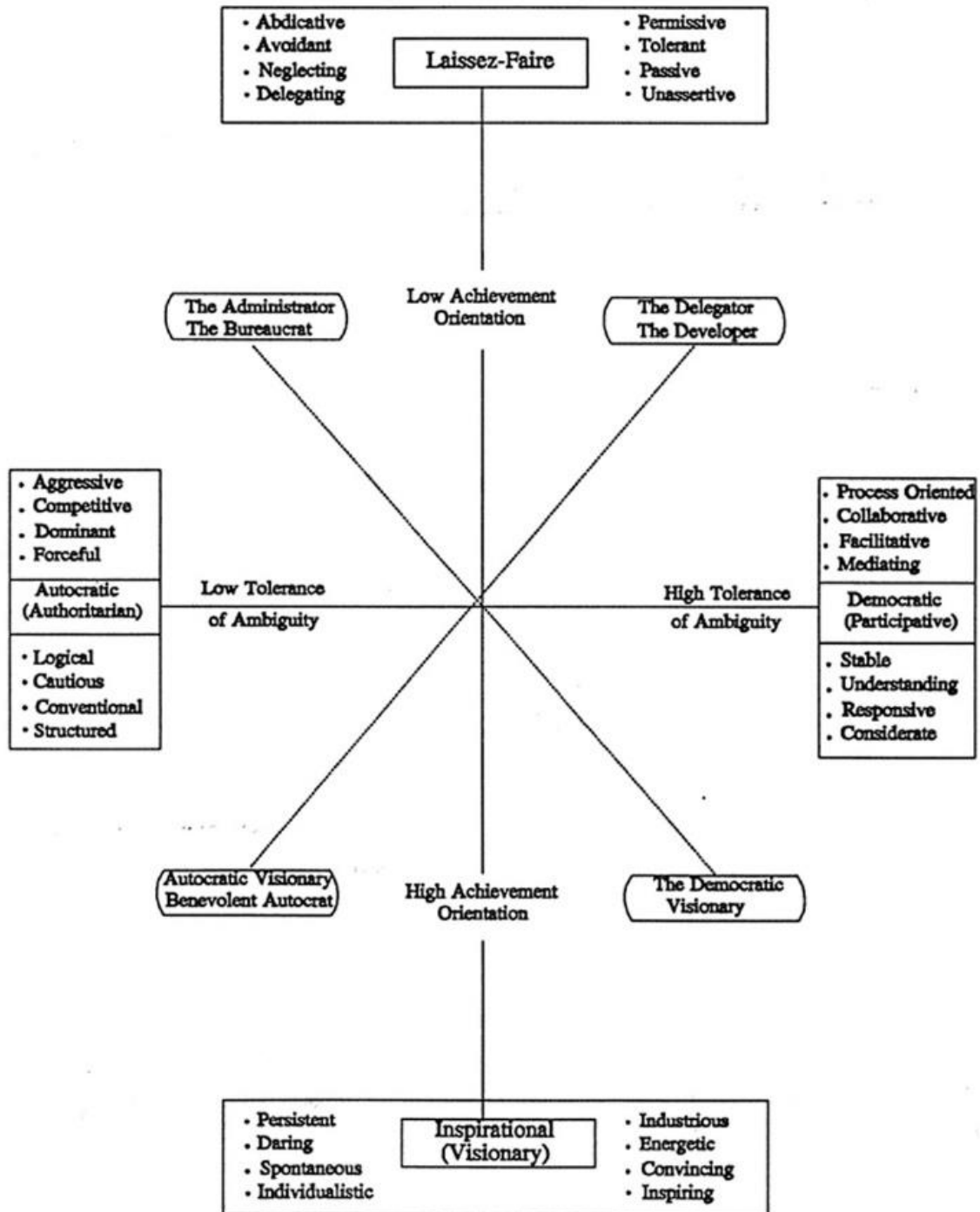
The qualities of a leader: (Martens, 1987) states the fundamental qualities of a leader: Intelligence, firmness, optimism, intrinsic motivation, empathy, communication skills, self-control, ability to trust others, persistence, flexibility, commitment, dedication, responsibility, care about others well-being, selfless and ability to solve problems. It is absolutely utopic for someone to be able to fulfil all these requirements although this serves as a framework of mind to potential leaders to refer to and to drink some of the previously acquired knowledge required by other leaders to succeed and to be effective and comprehensive leaders.

Leadership styles: (Alves, 2000) states leaders of excellence use very individualized styles of leadership in order to take the most of the group they lead so objectives and goals are ultimately achieved. Strategies are adapted to each situation and even styles of leadership are adapted by

leaders of excellence in order to achieve different objectives and goals in different fields (Mendo & Ortiz, 2003). (Martens, 1987) and (Weinberg & Gould, 1995) classify the most used styles of leadership like this:

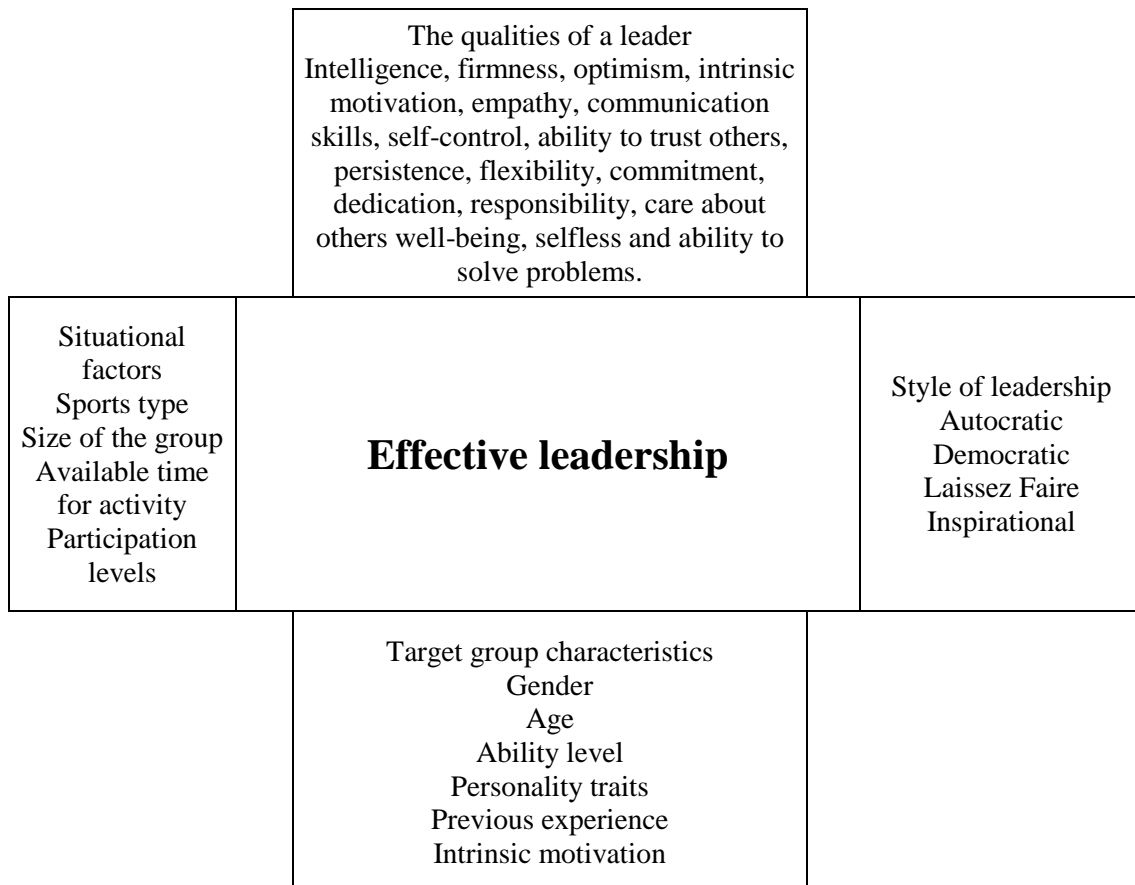
- Autocratic: Direct command style, centred in victory and task oriented
- Democratic: Cooperative style, centred on the athlete and individual oriented

More recently there was a significant study by (Hunt, 2010) and the following graph is pretty self-explanatory.



Situational factors: A leader must have the ability to adjust to various contexts so it must be sensitive to the specifics of the situation and the external environment in which the leader is involved (Weinberg & Gould, 1995). (Alves, 2000) states as well the effective leader is the one who uses a style which is appropriate to any given situation.

In summary, the following should provide coaches with a good understanding of what effective leaders should be concerned about when planning sessions, communications and objectives for groups.



Adapted from (Dasil, 2004)

5. Small-sided Games

In order to teach positional play to young footballers we have to take into account a large number of variables such as the maturational status, age, time and space available for practice among various others. I will try to contextualize all the previous parts as well as providing my own view in terms of how training should be planned and operationalized. The most common style of training used will clearly be Small-Sided and Conditioned Games (SSCG's) so before advancing to the SSCG's per se I will offer a brief overview regarding a number of studies which have taken

place focusing on the specifics of SSCG's, its characteristics, physiological and tactical advantages, eventual disadvantages, among others. There will be other training styles used which I will then split between SSCG'sInt (Small-Sided and Conditioned Games Intermittent) and SSCG'sCont (Small-Sided Games Continuous). I will include the training in form of waves where phases of play are trained in a more specific way inside the SSCG'sInt form of training. Training phases of play within SSCG's will be the main focus although these can be worked analytically if necessary although the stop and start nature of these styles might not be adaptable to all groups. In the other hand it might be exactly what works better with some specific groups which in general present shorter spans of attention.

According to (Sarmiento, et al., 2017) some relevant data could provide valuable information for coaches to design specific training situations that can improve the effectiveness of the offensive process. (1) regaining possession in more offensive zones through pressing; (2) regaining possession in an interactional context of numerical equality; (3) winning a second ball after a long pass (4) using short/medium distance passing; (5) utilizing crossing as the preferable technique before the finalization of the offensive sequence; (6) offensive sequences that are short and sharp (quick with a low number of passes).

5.1. What are Small-Sided Games

In order to improve individual performance and collective behaviour, small-sided games are a widely used training format. Small-sided games are derived from the match with manipulations in number of players, pitch size, and playing rules (Hill-Haas, Dawson, Impellizzeri, & Coutts, 2011). Two teams compete in order to score a goal and, unlike isolated training drills, performance in the physical, technical, and tactical domain are simultaneously stressed (Dellal, et al., 2012) (Rampinini, et al., 2007). This oppositional relationship produces goal-directed behaviour that goes back and forth in a predominantly goal-to-goal direction of the pitch (Frencken, Lemmink, Delleman, & Visshcher, 2011); (Grehaigne, Bouthier, & David, 1997); (McGarry, Anderson, Wallace, Hughes, & Franks, 2002). Small-sided games are easy to implement in any training program, regardless of playing level or age, because this format can be adapted to the number of available players and space. Along with specific manipulations, this format can emphasize specific match situations to reach a particular training outcome. Small-sided games can promote creative, exploratory, and tactically repeatable behaviour (Santos, et al., Behavior in Soccer.) For these reasons, small-sided games are widely appreciated as a training tool to improve performance (Dellal, et al., 2012) and optimize collective behaviour (Davids, Araújo, Correia, & Vilar, 2013); (Davids, Araújo, Hristovski, Passos, & Chow, 2012). In order to enhance the learning process, coaches manipulate small-sided games to emphasize and mimic match situations. This produces an infinity of small-sided

game designs, in contrast to the fixed regulations of the official match.

5.2. Managing pitch size in SSG's

Coaches generally tend to reduce pitch size and number of players to create a situation in which players need to act quickly under the pressure of time. Besides their aim to enhance the decision-making skills by reducing the number of options (Davids, Araújo, Correia, & Vilar, 2013) manipulating these task constraints also affects physical and technical performance (Glazier & Robins, 2013). smaller pitch sizes or a decrease in player number result in less distance covered in total and at high intensity, and number of sprints (physical domain), and more individual ball involvements, interceptions, duels and tackles, but also less accurate passing (technical domain) (Aguiar, Botelho, Lago-Peñas, Maçãs, & Sampaio, 2012) ; (Hill-Haas, Dawson, Impellizzeri, & Coutts, 2011). Over the years, football coaches have gotten used to apply a typical small pitch for the number of players. These manipulations in pitch size and number of players influence a player's actions in small-sided games. However, the scientific literature lacks consistency in manipulations used in the designs of the small-sided games, which limits generalizability of the effects. Manipulating small-sided games surely influences individual performance and these changes have an impact on the tactical behaviour of players and teams. (Frencken, Van der Plaats, Visscher, & Lemmink, 2013) and (Folgado, Lemmink, Frencken, & Sampaio, 2014) revealed that different pitch sizes and number of players, respectively, changed player dispersion and interaction patterns. Progress has been made in recent years to overcome the difficulty of capturing tactical behaviour as this is a much more subjective matter as it is related to each team's game plan and tactical behaviour is the result of the sum of all the individual actions. This has resulted in the need for access to accurate tracking systems (Frencken, Lemmink, & Delleman, Soccer-specific accuracy and validity of the local position measurement (LPM) system., 2010) ; (Ogris, et al., 2012), big data, and (elite) football. In addition, the dynamic systems theory has become more accepted in football science to explore collective behaviour. Both progressions facilitate football scientists and enthusiasts of football training to further investigate the effects of manipulations in small-sided games.

Small-sided games played on a match-derived relative pitch area enhance the representation of a formal game. In such formats, the official playing rules can be applied. Players demonstrate similar team tactical behaviour as the match and the physical demands mimic the match demands. Yet, the influence of number of players, age, and match pressure on the degree of representation have to be present when coaches plan training sessions. The following facts should be taken into account 1) a reduction in number of players enable teams to maintain a preferable team organization, 2) the relation with the match is different per age group, and 3) a small-sided game

lacks match pressure for an optimal representation. Given the fact that these small-sided games possess features of the match, the conclusion can be made that it is all in the game (Olthof, 2019). (Davids, Araújo, Correia, & Vilar, 2013) have made an experimental and observational research on team games which has helped practitioners to better understand how emergent behaviours can be constrained through design and manipulation of constraints in SSCG. Small-sided and conditioned games can be used to help learners gain experience in picking up specifying (functionally relevant) information for continuously regulating interpersonal interactions with teammates and defenders during performance. In training, subtasks of the games can be simulated by using SSCG because this method involves manipulating key constraints to facilitate rapid discovery of functional movement behaviours (Chow, Davids, Shuttleworth, Renshaw, & Araújo, 2007).

Regarding not only pitch size but also other restrictions, (Clemente & Rocha, 2013) stated training exercises must be complex, emulating sub-phases of play, so that in the game, the team can react more quickly to stimuli perceived. What you're looking at the bottom, is to increase the competitive ability as a team, through increased perception of each player face the reality of the game. In short,

if the goal is the best game of the team, possibly a good way to do this is by training the game and its context reality.

5.3. Effects of pitch size on SSG's

(Casamichana & Castellano, 2011) have come to the conclusion, during their study, that there were variations in effective playing time according to the different small-sided game formats. As pitch size was reduced, there was a concomitant decrease in the effective playing time. (Casamichana & Castellano, 2011) have also got to the conclusion that small-sided games can be used to develop soccer players' endurance in a specific way. In this respect, the individual playing area is a variable that coaches should not overlook when designing training drills, as it enables the intensity of all aspects of soccer to be modulated. Larger pitches can be used to increase task intensity and smaller ones to reduce it. Moreover, effective playing time might influence the workload achieved by players and this can be determined by pitch size. In addition, greater attention needs to be paid to the effects on play itself (i.e. a focus on players' motor responses). The main aim of soccer drills is to enable players to increase their technical and tactical options. When designing drills and when deciding on sizes of areas of play, individual playing areas should be taken into account when designing training drills because it affects the physical, physiological, and motor responses of players. (Kelly & Drust, 2008), in relation to the pitch size, have concluded that pitch dimensions are not a primary factor affecting the heart rate responses to

small-sided games unless they are combined with other important factors such as player number. This would indicate that a single pitch size (within the limits of those in the current investigation) is suitable for the delivery of an appropriate physical training stimulus for similar groups of players. (Kelly & Drust, 2008) also stated that pitch size should only be carefully considered by coaches in their organisation of practice if the drill is required to combine a physical training stimulus with technical work on shooting or if reducing physical contact within training is important.

All this is extremely useful for coaches as it provides an insight into how pitch sizes affect small-sided games. The space in which a small sided-game is played should be related to the game format in order to reinforce transferability at all levels (tactical, technical and physiological).

5.4. Effects of scoring mode

According to (Sarmiento, et al., 2018), data suggests that using small goals and different types of scoring may significantly increase the physiological impact in comparison with traditional formats of goal and goalkeeper. As such, goal type and the use of a goalkeeper can be utilised by coaches to manipulate the physiological demands of a SSG training session. Another study has tested 2 scoring methods, stop the ball versus small-goal rules and observed that the stop-ball significantly increased player heart rates and blood lactate concentrations (Halouani, Chtourou, Dellal, Chaouachi, & Chamari, 2014).

Significantly greater heart rates, blood lactate concentrations, ratings of perceived exertion, and distances covered at different speeds were observed without a goalkeeper, thus suggesting that the use of small-goals may be a more appropriate method if the aim is to increase the acute physiological impact and physical demands of the game (Köklü et al., 2015).

Some examples of studies which provide a simple insight into the variables of small-sided games and the scoring methods applied by coaches. These should be taken into account when designing drills and activities during trainings and, depending on the objectives of each training/coach the appropriate and adequate scoring method should be applied. From my personal point of view, the scoring method should be adapted to the phase of play which is being trained and technical transferability should always be present so players can reinforce technical actions which will have predominance within a specific area of the pitch and with the player's specific position within the general tactical plan defined by the coach.

5.5. Applicable restrictions and constraints to SSG's

There is a large number of restrictions and constraints which can be applicable to SSG's. The restriction, however should always have a clear and purposeful objective so players can clearly observe the relationship between the training and the formal game so the transferability happens is objective and meaningful improving not only the team's collective game but also the players' tactical awareness and knowledge.

Constraining the number of consecutive touches on the ball, the type of defensive marking, or the specific tactical setup may lead to different player decisions and performances. As such, rule modifications are typically used by coaches (Aguiar, Botelho, Lago-Peñas, Maçãs, & Sampaio, 2012). Limiting ball touches per possession aims to increase the speed of the game and ball circulation between teammates (Casamichana, Suarez-Arrones, Castellano, & San Roman-Quintana, 2014) (Dellal, et al., 2012).

It has been suggested that limiting consecutive number of touches instead using free-play with unlimited number of touches significantly increases the acute physiological responses, with increased heart rate, blood lactate concentrations and rating of perceived exertion (Dellal, Hill-Haas, Lago-Penas, & Chamari, 2011); (San Roman-Quintana, et al., 2013).

According to (Sarmiento, et al., 2018), different rule modifications may lead to differential responses during sided-games. A limited number of touches and instructions to mark man-to-man are concurrent conditions that increase the acute physiological load and the physical demands of the match, whilst leading to an increase in the execution of individual technical actions during the matches.

5.6. Coach's encouragement

Coach's encouragement during trainings is advised as it provides players with an external factor of motivation. Coach's encouragement should be focused on the task at hand, concise and concrete so players can quickly acquire and apply information and/or feedback. Feedback as encouragement is a wonderful tool which coaches should definitely use, from my point of view, as it provides the player with an immediate assessment of his actions. There might be, however, reasons for coaches not to encourage players verbally and this might have to do with independence skills, self-management or an assessment of intrinsic motivation by the coach towards the player. A study conducted using 3 vs. 3, 4 vs. 4, 5 vs. 5 and 6 vs. 6 SSGs tested the influence of using or not using coaches' verbal encouragement (Rampinini, et al., 2007). The authors observed significant higher values of heart rate, blood lactate concentrations and perceived exertion on the conditions played with coaches' verbal encouragement (Rampinini, et al., 2007). Despite the few available studies, encouragement should be used during SSGs that are designed to elicit high-demanding efforts, otherwise it is not strictly necessary (Sarmiento, et al., 2018).

6. Methodological Proposal of Practice

I will use the previous part to frame the training plans I will be proposing and for that matter I will present some indicators which should be easy to assess so coaches and players have a concrete sight of what's expected for each activity in training and, also, for the results to be visible and clearly assessed on the spot so the feedback from coaches is also made on the spot and on the actual moment feedback is the most efficient which is on the moment when the player's action is made and regardless of this being positive or negative it will have a greater impact. It is essential as well to understand the stages by which players go through, in this case, Growth and Maturation and this is essential for the reason that coaches who work with young footballers have to put into perspective the fact that different players go through different stages of development at different speeds and in different chronological ages. It is essential to understand, above all the maturational aspects and stages young footballers go through in order to help players progressing not only technically and tactically but also, and perhaps, mainly socially and emotionally.

During the next part I will go through the reasons why I believe teaching football through a tactical perspective and make players acquire an acute sense of position. I will call this perspective Positional Play although this is clearly the most subjective part of all my work as it is referred before, the tactical performance indicators are subjective. For the greatest part it will be my vision of training and it will be my input towards a way of organizing training and, ultimately, operationalizing theoretical ideas into practice so that tactical principles can be worked on through Small Sided Games (SSGs), Waves or through working analytically on specific phases of play. The organizational aspects of training itself are an essential aspect related to all the operationalization and I will be focusing on the matter later on.

6.1. Definition of Positional Play

Positional Play is a collective philosophy which entails an extremely large number individual and team principles and these can be constituted by pre-determined collectively based patterns and by purposeful combinations based on individual creativity but the fundamental one is the search for superiority mainly from the build-up as this is the first area of the pitch where opponents can be drawn to in order to create space within opposition's defensive lines of pressure. There are numerous ways to gain superiority and three main types of superiority can be achieved. Through training, players will have a great understanding of the team general tactical plan, team mates' positioning and will be aware of the areas where superiority (any of the 3 types of superiority) can be achieved. Once superiority is achieved the team can use the created situation to dominate the game either by quick and short combinations or playing into areas where individual players

can engage on aggressive offensive actions towards the final objective which is penetrating into finishing positions. All other principles stem from this whole complex idea.

6.2. Characteristics of Positional Play – main principles

Positional Play doesn't consist on passing the ball horizontally, but something which is much more demanding: it consists on generating superiorities behind each line of pressure but in order to drag opposition to where it becomes more beneficial for our team might demand a great deal of patience and accurate decision making from players. It can be done slowly or quickly, horizontally or vertically, in an individualized or grouped form but the only thing that should be maintained at all times is the pursuit of superiority in certain areas of the pitch, this is looking for the higher ground. Putting it in other words: Get free players (unmarked) between the lines.

Positional Play is a model of constructed play from the build up with the Goal Keeper or defenders and the reason for this is exactly the search for superiority. By starting the play so deep in the field the advantages are enormous, counting our team is ready and technically equipped to take advantage of it both individually and collectively. In case opponents apply high pressure the space behind lines is created and can be explored but if opponents don't commit many players to the pressing, defenders can progress with the ball to the areas in which the team will achieve superiority. It is a premeditated style of play until a certain point becoming unpremeditated when players have to resort to their individual technical attributes to come out of a situation and this can happen anywhere on the pitch. This is the main reason why I defend not all teams are ready to be challenged with this style of play. All players should be technically proficient and capable of solving complex phases of play. Regarding training, all phases of play should be thought about, studied and worked out in detail and then repeated although this repetition should be based on small sided game situations as I will be explaining.

The interpreters of this style of play have to know in detail the various possibilities that can occur during the game and also what their roles should be at all times, on and off the ball, close or further away from where the ball is being played. Naturally, there are better and worse interpretations and the reasons behind the success or failure can be numerous and it is the coach's duty to get behind this. There are also players that never manage to adapt to this model of play, extremely proficient players who just can't discipline themselves enough tactically to be focused on the collective movements and therefore, all tactics become compromised as positional play is based on collective movements which have to be precise. This becomes more evident as the standard or the level of football is played and the main reason is, more often than not, the tactical and technical quality of the opponents which will definitely cause more problems and put the

team under a more severe pressure from the build-up, there will, then, be less time for players to make decisions and less space for players to act.

In general, the interpreters of this model need to know the range of team movements which have to be executed in depth. As in any other style of play or even any other team sport, every play opens up to many possible and different interpretations from players: faster, slower, more or less harmonious, more or less concrete but what should be kept in any case is that the team has to have common goals and objectives when on the pitch and these should be known by all of them. Positional Play is a game within the game played by each team who practice it at their own pace where the essential is to generate superiorities behind each line of the opponent pressure.

Superiority in positioning is essential in order to penetrate opponents' defensive lines whether these are pressing or covering lines. Move the ball efficiently, this is, moving the ball with a common purpose is an absolute necessity in order to have stability in possession and this stability is, again, necessary whether the team is starting the build-up or already on the final movement, attacking opposition's goal. Stability is provided by correct positioning from players and from the technical proficiency of players as referred before. One form of superiority is numerical superiority where numbers are higher than opposition in a certain area although, in my opinion, the biggest problem coaches face is not actually achieving a numerical superiority as this can even happen in a random way, the biggest problem is to have players recognizing the superiority and quickly position themselves in a way which makes them take advantage of that. Having a numbers advantage means the team has a free player and players should know what to do when this is achieved. The goal is to find the free or unmarked player by moving the ball on a specific and pre-determined way until a certain point, correct positioning and player movement on and off the ball. The free player in your attack has the best situation on the field and is extremely valuable. One of the coach's biggest and most important jobs is to instil an altruist attitude into players so this free player is used efficiently and in a recurring way. The men between the lines, called interiors, dominate Positional Play principles of ball possession and present a higher standard of decision making. They are in between their opponents and this separation from their opponents is precisely what causes the gathering of opponents in specific areas. Players within opposition's lines of pressure have to be extremely proficient technically and able to make quick and accurate decisions, playing, more often than not, in a small number of touches in order to prevent opponents from getting too close and press. By playing quickly, space available is privileged to time on the ball and this is probably the hardest task on the pitch as it requires an extremely mature and altruistic way of acting. The players positioned in between the opponent's lines should move constantly in order to have open passing lines between them and the ball, or between them and a player who has an open passing lane in relation to the ball. The movement of the ball and the players is how signals are communicated in football, so if a player gets into a

space to receive a ball, defenders might observe this intensity and follow the player, leaving a free space to be exploited, or a free player which is the ideal situation for the team attacking. The fullbacks or wingers are usually very wide and open on the side-lines of the pitch. They stretch opposition's defence and create spaces for interiors and passing lanes. The opening of these spaces provides a better environment for the interiors and creates superiorities and free players in the most strategically important area of the field the centre. Defenders build the game from defence and should determine the beginning of the attack. If opponents are forming a lower and compact block and opposition's highest lines of pressure aren't pressuring it is the job of the defenders to move towards the opponent and attack them in order to disorganize them by committing opponents and freeing up team mates which can then receive the ball between lines and keep following the play forward towards finishing areas.

6.3. Overloaded and Under-loaded areas

While overloaded areas play an essential part when it comes to the ball possession, the immediate passing options and the combination short plays, the under loaded play a not much less important part. A long pass, for example, generates pressure for the receiver at its destination as it gives opposition more time to read the ball trajectory as well as more time to arrive and apply pressure on the ball carrier and to position in a defensive shape providing all covers. So, once a long pass escapes pressure and the pressure gathers near the destination of the pass the ball can be laid off to another teammate but this can only happen if players are aware of the necessary movements and positioning required. This allows the ball to be given to a player who now has a better view of the field (facing attacking side) and much less pressure around him than the player who played the layoff pass. Another main reason why it is important to provide long passing options is the fact that the passing option is there to be made and this makes that the opposition just can't disregard that option and, therefore, cover those areas as well. This will have the consequence of diminishing the amount of pressure on the over loaded areas and on the ball carrier. The wide players (when far from the ball) have to perform a great range of movements off the ball dragging opponents and make themselves available to receive the long pass whether this would be in space by making diagonal runs behind defence or just with the intent of creating space for team mates.

6.4. Triangles and Diamonds

It is as important to form pre-determined shapes such as triangles or diamonds as it is to know what to do when these are formed. In Football triangles and diamonds are formed naturally even if a team has no intent of forming them, it can happen in a perfectly random way and still work as a way to come out of pressure although the biggest challenge here is to form triangles and diamonds with the intent of escaping pressure in an organized and pre-programmed way almost mechanically. Training, obviously plays a pivotal role on this although, again, training might be preparing players so they can technically be able to come out from pressure or they can get players ready to, collectively, solve problems. This is, players form shapes on the pitch with a collective intention of using a specific channel to attack opposition or to drag opposition into tactical traps with the most common being the quick change of area when opposition has been committed and dragged enough that enough space was created somewhere else. This can work in depth by dragging opposition up and high on the pitch to play through passes or long passes into space behind lines of pressure or in width, by dragging and committing opposition to one of the sides of the pitch so space is created on the opposite side where there might be numerical or qualitative superiority. If a system has natural triangles in its design than it is that much easier for the players to form triangles in possession. This is one of the many reasons we see formations with variations like 4-3-3 or 3-4-3 being used in teams who play this way. Every player is connected to one another and they move like chains throughout the field in order to have the best structure in possession and support their teammates and the ball.

6.5. Numerical superiority when attacking

It has to be considered that whenever a team is in possession, it is attacking, whatever the area where the ball is won, the team has to have as an objective to attack. With this in mind it is logical that numerical superiority will be more common to be achieved during the build-up phase in the defensive and middle thirds. Numerical superiority will be achieved if the team's tactical plan is set to achieve just that and a team which has positional play as their first and primary objective will have to absolutely guarantee this when building up as the main objective is to get players between lines in order to be able to progress in a sustained and pre-determined way, creating the necessary micro-dynamics in order to be in a position to, not only guarantee ball possession but also to be in a favourable position when the ball is lost by keeping distances short between players and provide cover to the players pressing higher. Positional superiority can lead a team to achieve numerical superiority in the attacking third as well, by overloading attacking areas in an organized and pre-determined form, with players aware of the possible ways out from an overloaded area as it can be dangerous defensively in case the ball is lost as another area will, certainly, be severely

under loaded and opposition can use that space to make attacking movements and be in clear numerical superiority.

6.6. Qualitative Superiority when attacking

Another form of superiority is one of qualitative superiority which can be achieved in any area of the pitch although it is more common to be searched in deciding areas such as the attacking third or when the crucial collective movements towards a finishing situation are the objective and the main reason is the fact that achieving numerical superiority on the attacking third is uncommon due to defensive systems overloading defensively when not in possession. This is an idea that is well known and it is the ultimate objective of all teams, to have the most technically proficient and deciding players in attacking positions experiencing an advantage in terms of technical and/or physical advantage being able to decide with decisive movements either by finishing or assisting team mates. Searching for 1 vs. 1's, 2 vs. 2's, or higher numbers with the most technically and tactically decisive players against direct opponents over whom these players have a clear advantage is becoming an increasingly common tactical strategy in football.

6.7. Positional superiority when attacking

There is another form of superiority besides the 2 aforementioned mentioned. This can be described as being a superiority of space or positional superiority. In this form of play the players are arranged at various heights and depths in a pre-determined way. This staggering creates interior spaces and passing lanes within opposition's formation. There is a prominent focus on the spaces which occur "in between the lines" whether these lines are drawn along the pitch or across it, meaning the players can be positioned lower or higher along the pitch, more to the left or to the right across the pitch. Players look to position themselves in areas between the opponent's horizontal and vertical lines of pressure.

There are specific zones that must be occupied by players in specific moments according to pre-determined triggers. The specific zones or positions that must be occupied depend on numerous circumstances. A player decides where they will move to by referencing the position of the ball, their teammates, the opponents, and space as well as the conception of what the next collective movement might be.

There's numerical, positional and qualitative superiority. Not all 1 vs. 1's are a situation of equality

Paco Seiru-lo

6.8. Defensive positioning

Just like when attacking, teams constantly search for superiorities, mainly numerical superiorities when closer to own defensive areas or positional superiorities when pressing higher on the pitch as players who press high will position themselves in areas where they can influence opposition's options which makes that teams can lead opposition into playing into a specific channel or area where there will then be numerical or qualitative advantage. When higher on the pitch teams can apply counter pressing which is an isolated and individual function designated to the player who's closer to the ball. Team mates should start positioning themselves to provide cover to the player pressing, control depth searching passes by opposition and maintaining distances between each other as well as controlling off side line in case.

6.9. Positional superiority when defending

Counter pressing is usually applied by the player who's closer to the opponent who's in possession and this action has 2 main purposes: trying to recover the ball as possible as well as delaying opponent's ability to make assertive and quick decisions to provide time for the rest of the team to assume defensive positioning. Counter pressing is more efficient when the time of arrival to the ball carrier is shorter and this is another reason why positional play is important when defending as maintaining positions effectively and respecting distances will make that pressing, cover, and depth control are all covered quickly and in an organized and, again, pre-determined way.

6.10. Qualitative superiority when defending

Teams believe they will have some qualitative superiority in some areas of the pitch so it is possible that by positioning themselves and pressing in pre-determined ways which will make opposition play into certain areas where individually there might be some form of qualitative superiority. This might be translated, for example, into making opposition make longer passes into areas where the defending team has an advantage in the form of players who are comfortable winning balls in the air. There are, however numerous ways in which qualitative superiority can be used also due to the numerous ways in which a player can be superior to another.

6.11. Numerical superiority when defending

Numerical superiority is achieved, mainly, when in defensive areas as it is not common or advisable for teams to commit a large number of players into pressing areas as in these areas positional superiority is applied but in defensive areas it is the most common situation, there will

be more defenders than attackers, in principle. Despite this, the previously referred defensive areas can vary as teams might want to have those areas of numerical superiority higher or lower on the pitch and this will have a tremendous influence on the space left between the last line of defence and the Goal Keeper. This will link with the qualitative superiority in the sense that this area can be defined higher on the pitch if defenders are physically able to cope with the space behind their line. The numerical superiority area might be set lower playing in what's called, normally, a "low block". This "low block" might be defined due to the lack of physical skills by defenders to cover more space behind their back. In the end, numerical superiority will be achieved, mainly, in the middle and defensive third.

"Our players had four reference points: the ball, the space, the opponent, and their own teammates. Every movement had to happen in relation to these reference points. Each player had to decide which of these reference points should determine his movements."

Arrigo Sacchi

6.12. Intra and Inter team dynamics

6.12.1. Micro-dynamics

Players can perform specific movements in relation to each other and become inter dependent applying specific movements in different areas of the pitch. These include but are not limited to: overlapping runs, diagonal inside runs, and providing a back pass option. There are general movements and counter movements within these methods of structuring the player's positioning in relation to the ball as well as the peers with whom the payer in interacting. These do not have to be followed strictly but are recommended to provide continuity and flow to the game in order to provide a continuity to the attacking play.

During trainings intra team dynamics should be worked on extensively as these are the dynamics which will, ultimately, compose the whole set of collective movements required to defend and attack with a collective purpose. *These non-linear relationships between different levels of analysis demonstrate the functional role of (micro)variability in (macro)system dynamics (Davids et al., 2005, 2008).*

In general, players should always choose passes that provide continuity to the game and they should always look to secure the passes by supporting them. For example, if the opponent is compact the orientation of the game should be changed with longer passes. If the opponent is not compact, then it is better to combine in short movements to exploit these spaces quickly.

Both types of passes should be used flexibly though. The players will look to move the ball as quickly as possible so that the opponent cannot react in time and so that the forwards have the edge in game rhythm. In terms of positioning, standing between the lines attracts the attention of more than just one player, which can be beneficial to others.

(Gonçalves, et al., 2017) have concluded that a lower passing dependency for a given player and higher intra-team well-connected passing relations may optimize team performance and the overall groups' outcome is strongly related with the interdependence from teammates and the way they dynamically co-adapt their task-roles.

“Every action implies the subsequent action for receiving the ball.”

– *Oscar Cano*

6.12.2. Macro-dynamics

We have looked at the principles of Positional Play and strategical examples of the principles, but it is also important to look at how this philosophy relates to the specific movements and ideas of its players. The ball can move via the passing regardless of distance. A player must master **when** and **how** to do any of these movements in order to create an advantageous situation for the team. Triggers are essential in order to orchestrate the intra-team dynamics and be successful by following a specific game plan which explores the players' full potential. All players should be aware of the attacking and defending triggers in order to apply the correct tactic-technical action. Triggers are, usually a work in progress for coaches as triggers might change depending on external factors such as the opposition, the pitch, the weather, the players available on the match among another numerous reasons and players should be tactical aware and knowledgeable in order to adapt to a whole different set of triggers in each occasion. The more experiences the players go through, whether in training or match format, the readier and aware of triggers they will be.

When defending, inter-team systems come into place by applying the correct tactic-technical actions according to the position of the ball, opponents and team mates. This all happens regardless of position each player occupies on the pitch. Every movement will affect and have a repercussion on opposition as well as on team mates so it is important to respect the general tactical system which is the script all players are aware of and will, ultimately, follow.

Competing teams are composed of different individuals interacting together to achieve performance goals. In order to succeed, individual teammates develop cooperative relations to

achieve common goals and competitive relations to prevent opposing players from achieving theirs. These relations usually underlie emergent collective team behaviours that go beyond the sum of individual performances per se (Duarte, Araújo, Correia, & Davids, 2012; Sumpter, 2006).

“The principle idea of Positional Play is that players pass the ball to each other in close spaces to be able to pass to a wide open man.”

– Juan Manuel Lillo

6.13. Free player concept

The free man is an extremely important character in terms of manipulating the opponent and also, providing a free passing line for team mates. This is achieved mainly through switching the ball to an area of the field and create a numerical superiority so passing lines will surge naturally through coordinated movement from players, basically creating a micro-dynamic system which will, ultimately serve the purpose of the macro dynamic or the general tactical system. Usually the free man is not just a consequence of numerical superiority or even a consequence of the overload. It is a consequence of coordinated and constant movement as adjusting from players with the final objective of receiving the ball in a favourable position to face opposition usually receiving the ball between opposition's lines of pressure. Positional Play based tactical systems determine which spaces teams want to attack, overload and underload based on the general tactical system and then use a distraction which comes in the form of controlled and coordinated ball possession in an area before playing into the desired area where will then be numerical, positional or qualitative superiority.

6.14. Decision making

The less pressure the player on the ball has on him from opposition, greater is the opportunity that he will make a good decision for the team. The more pressure the player on the ball has, greater is the possibility that he'll play through the opponent's lines but also a great chance that he will lose the ball. Furthermore, there is no value in playing a teammate who doesn't have an advantage of receiving the ball. In those situations, you should attract the opponents by dribbling close to them to do combinations or just switch the play. The overall quality of the decision making is absolutely essential as players have to constantly make decisions and as football is progressing and tactical systems are getting more complex players have to make decisions at a growing number of levels. It is important, then, that coaches put players through a great range of experiences during training and expose players to most situations players might be facing during

formal matches. It is important, then, for coaches to work on and, eventually, repeat tactic-technical movements, offensive and defensive situations, behaviours and collective dynamics so players can make decisions accurately, swiftly and act in a pre-determined way due to previous experience and repetition.

Contextualization to the practical activities

Next, I will present 21 proposals which take into account some the most fundamental parameter in my opinion which is transferability. It is impossible to guarantee beforehand if there will be a high or low transferability rate between training and the formal game because if there was every coach would apply exactly the same formula.

This is, then, my take on what's ideal to promote a high transferability of both individual and collective behaviours as all activities proposed are group activities in which players are inter dependant in order to achieve the most varied goals and objectives within each one of them.

Individually, players will be facing many of the same difficulties and technical challenges as they will ultimately face within the formal format of football. Collectively, players will understand that each of their movements will affect the team and the outcome of each play.

The transferability, in my opinion, is guaranteed by the repetition of certain patterns which can and should adapted by each coach to their own game plans and tactical schemes in order to get players to repeat tactico-technical actions in training so players feel comfortable and confident repeating them when involved in a competitive formal format of the game.

Within each block of 3 games there will be 3 levels, Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced and the what makes them different and separate from each other is the level of complexity, the ratios of defenders for attackers or the scoring mode.

Another essential parts to any of the following games or similar based on positional play is the fact that the reaction to the loss of possession has to be immediate so there must always be a trigger and a collective way to react to the eventual loss of possession at any moment during the build-up. Intensity is also a key factor in my opinion and something I try to include in all parts of training.

Coach's feedback throughout the application of the following games should be focused on the decision making of the players, positioning on the pitch and on the repercussions which each individual movement of players will have on the collective.

Proposed practical Activities

- **Unopposed passing patterns**
- **Positional Rondos**
- **Play from the back**
- **Ball possession**
- **Vertical through pass**
- **Positional attack vs Counter attack**
- **Transitioning through pass**

Unopposed passing patterns - Beginner

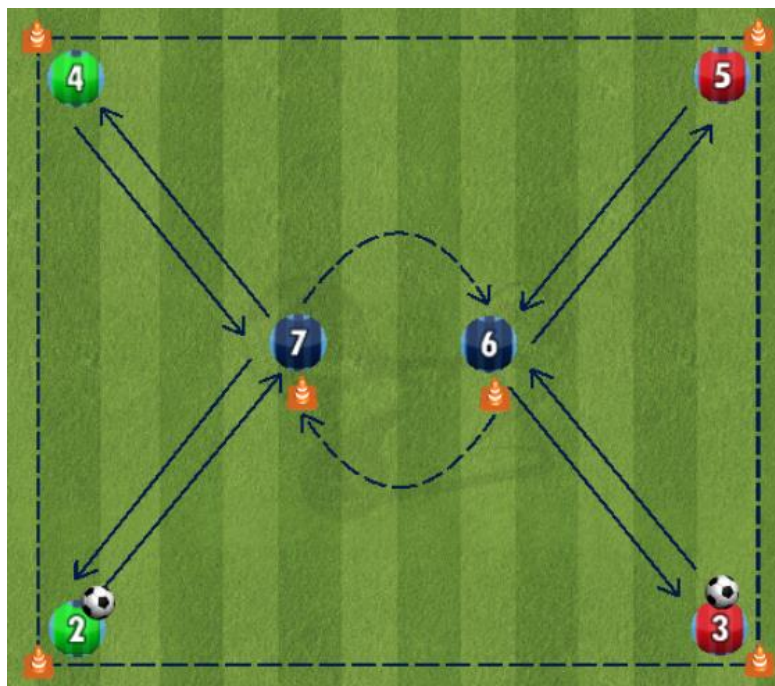
Structure	Tactical intent
6 players (2+2+2)	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Manage ball movement Perform quick and accurate technical actions

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation	20m width x 20m length

General objectives
Using two balls simultaneously, players perform a triangle shape passing pattern repeatedly in a shape and distance between players which will occur profusely in formal matches

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Constant monitoring of the pitch Identify free players – Receive with back foot – Watch body shape and balance

Spatial organization



Description

On each side of the square a triangle is formed between players of the same side and the player in the middle. Regarding the formal match, this corresponds on the essential movement of the ball between defender, centre midfielder and attacker of the same side. After every pass both blue players switch sides and form another triangle with the players on the opposite side of the square. Players in the centre of the square should use just 1 touch whenever possible. Maximum 2 touches allowed to all players.

Unopposed passing patterns - Intermediate

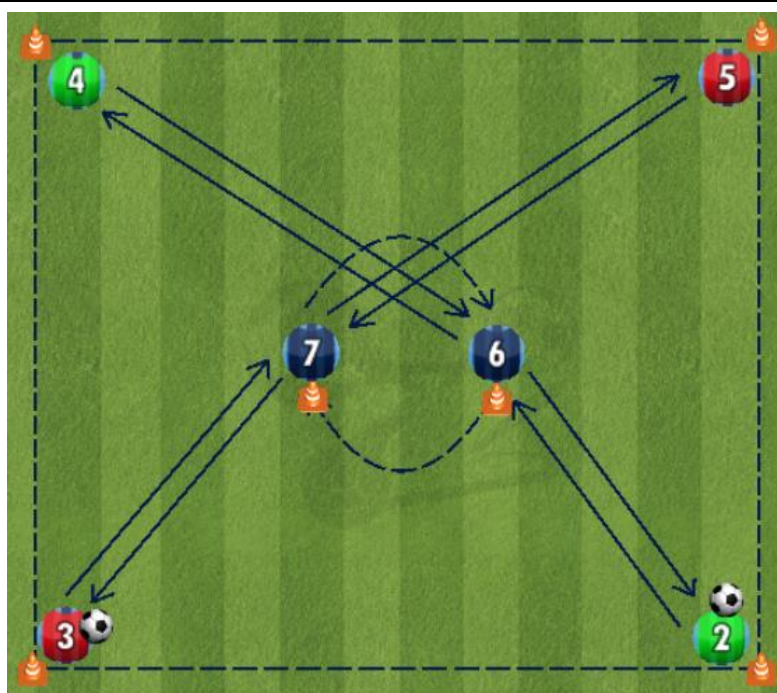
Structure	Tactical intent
6 players (2+2+2)	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Manage ball movement Perform quick and accurate technical actions

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation	25m width x 25m length

General objectives
Using two balls simultaneously, players switch sides diagonally, using the minimum number of touches possible.

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Receive with back foot – Watch body shape and balance – Receive with back foot

Spatial organization



Description

Players in the centre of the square move the ball through pass between opposite corners and switch sides every pass made in order to physically adapt body shape and move the ball to opposite sides. This will make players repeat and reorganize their body to different sides of the pitch. Regarding the transferability, this activity will mimic the movement teams make in order to switch sides and play across in order to come out of pressure pockets. Each pair plays each role alternatively and can be done in a tournament style and creating, therefore, a competitive environment.

Unopposed passing patterns - Advanced

Structure	Tactical intent
5 players	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Manage ball movement Perform quick and accurate technical actions

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation	20m width x 20m length

General objectives
Using two balls simultaneously, players keep position in the corners of square and maintain unopposed possession passing randomly

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Constant monitoring of the pitch Identify free players – Receive with back foot

Spatial organization



Description

Players pass 2 balls simultaneously between them repeating passing patterns which occur in the formal game of football. There is no opposition so the pressure is in the fact that there are 2 balls going through the pitch simultaneously which makes that the passer has to assess if the receivers are free. This can be done in the form of tournament, having 2 or 3 groups at the same time gaining points for a certain number of passes. The time spent on this activity shouldn't be too long as it should be done at high intensity and after some time there is the risk of the intensity going down.

Positional “Rondos” - Beginner

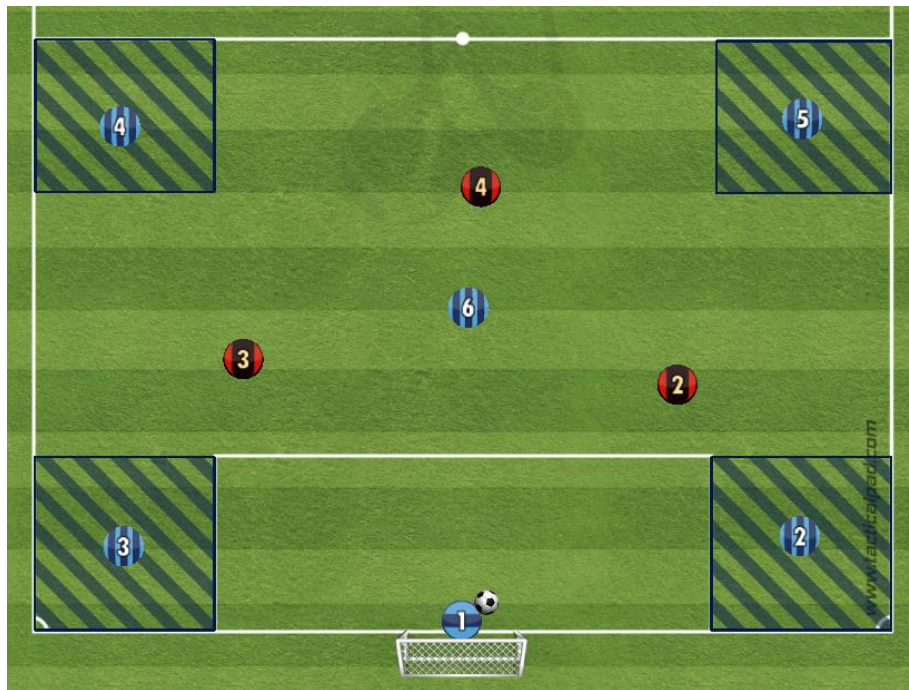
Structure	Tactical intent
6 (GK + 5) vs 3	Identify passing lines Switch side of play Play wide when in ball possession Close down (Low block) when possession is lost

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting - Intercepting	30m width x 25m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain ball possession while retaining positioning Red team: Continuous intense pressing and scoring when ball is won

Instructions
Intense pressure when defending – Commit opponents prior to passing Identify free players – Anticipate decisions

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team maintains positioning within individual areas and keeps the ball under possession for as long as possible. Blue team can come out of individual areas when possession is lost for the red team, blocking passes or shots to their goal and try to regain ball possession as quickly as possible. When ball possession is regained players return to their original positioning. Blue player number 6 acts as an interior and moves freely to create superiority. Red team has, as their main objective, to pressurize the blue team and score in the goal as quickly as possible.

Positional “Rondos” - Intermediate

Structure	Tactical intent
7 vs 4	Identify passing lines Play between lines Maintain position Quick reaction to loss of possession

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing - Receiving – Intercepting - Pressing	15m width x 25m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain ball possession while retaining positioning Red team: Continuous intense pressing within designated areas and covering

Instructions
Intense pressure when defending – Commit opponents prior to passing Identify free players – Anticipate decisions

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team keep positioning next to the reference (orange cone) and quickly identify the closest free player. Main objective is to make the ball go from third to third without being intercepted by the red team. Number 8 (Centre midfielder) can move freely within the middle third either to provide passing options or to drag the marking and create space. Red team press within each designated third. Red team scores a point when, after the ball is recovered, this player makes a pass to another red team’s player. This will make that the blue team has to apply pressure on the ball straight away after the loss of possession.

Positional “Rondos” - Advanced

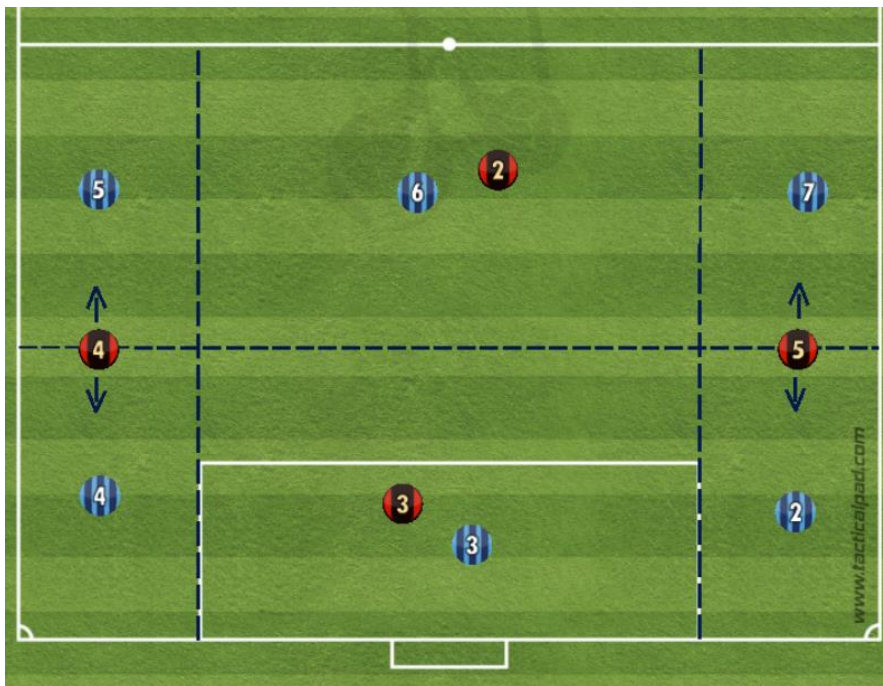
Structure	Tactical intent
6 vs 4	Identify passing lines Play between lines Maintain position Close down (Low block) when possession is lost

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing - Receiving – Intercepting - Pressing	30m width x 25m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain ball possession while retaining positioning Red team: Continuous intense pressing within designated areas and covering

Instructions
Intense pressure on ball carrier – Use numerical advantage on lateral areas (2v1) Identify free players – switch side of play whenever possible

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team maintains ball possession while positioned inside designated areas. There is a constant numerical advantage on lateral areas. Numerical equality in both the central areas of the pitch so players have to be quite creative and physically available to provide constant passing lines and ways out of the pressure from the red team. Red team has to keep pressing and use zonal marking in the central areas to intercept passes. Red players on the lateral areas can apply pressure on both areas as indicated by the arrows. Red team scores a point when, after the ball is recovered, a pass to another red team’s player is made.

Play from the back - Beginner

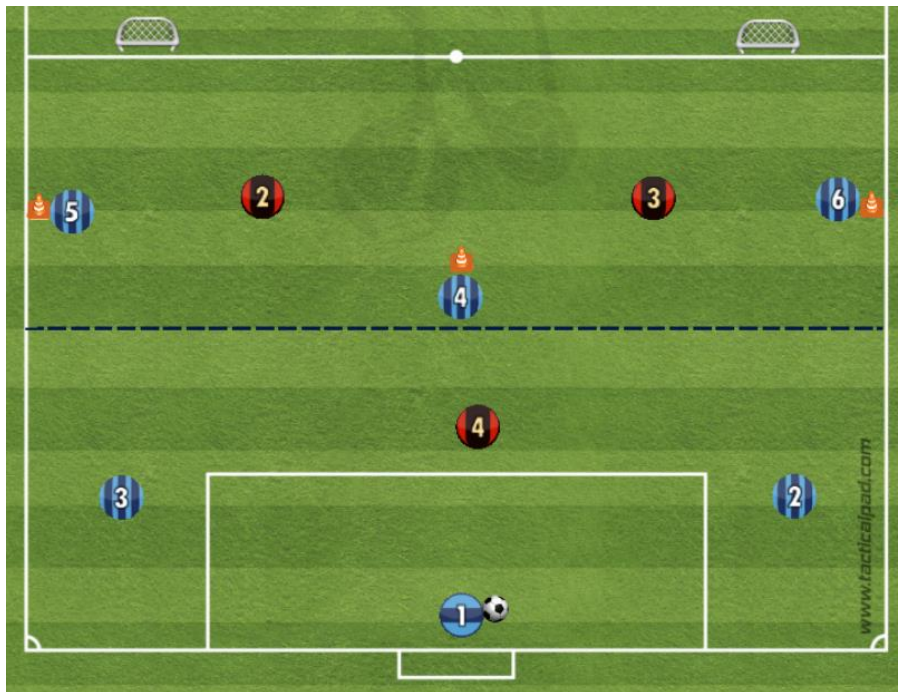
Structure	Tactical intent
GR + 5 vs 3	Maintain possession in defensive area Maintain position Block passing lines and marking Switch side of play

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting - Tackling	25m width x 20m length

General objectives
Play the ball into numbers 4, 5 or 6 which are positioned next to a marker -

Instructions
Intense pressure when defending – Commit opponents before passing Use numerical superiority

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team start playing in the defensive half 3vs 1 and keep possession until there is an open passing line into the attacking half where the blue team will still be in numerical superiority 3 vs 2. On the attacking half players will have the chance of attacking 2 goals placed on each side of the pitch in order to switch side of play and explore numerical, qualitative and positional superiority. Players in the defensive half keep on providing passing lines for attacking players. Red team pressurizes with 1 player on their attacking half and 2 in the defensive. As soon as the ball is recovered by the red team, all red players can invade attacking half and score while blue team’s players can’t cross midfield line.

Play from the back - Intermediate

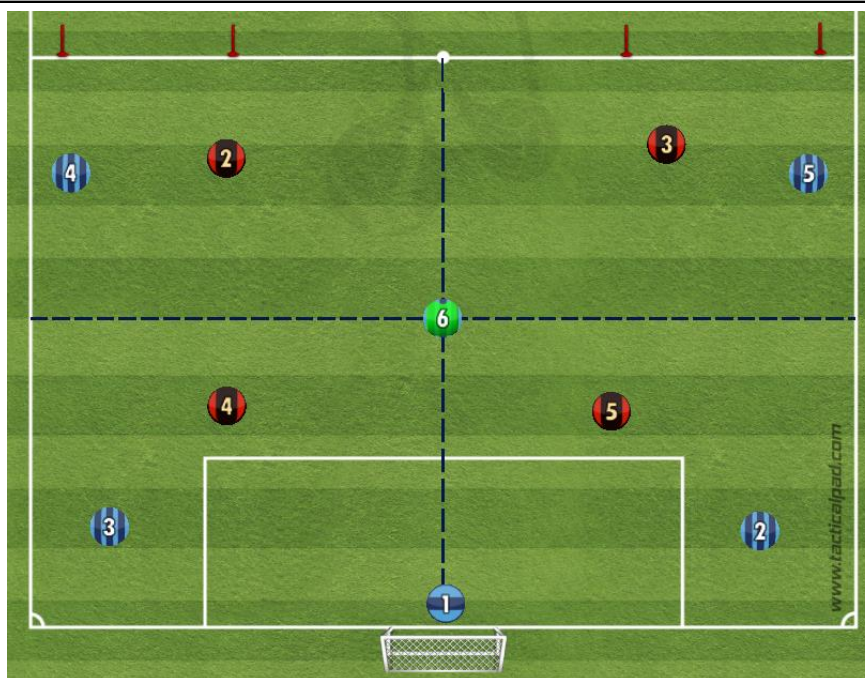
Structure	Tactical intent
GR + 4 + 1 vs 4	Use numerical superiority in each square Zonal marking Block passing lines and marking Switch side of play

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting - Tackling	25m width x 20m length 12.5m width x 10 m length (per square)

General objectives
Identify passing lines which provide superiority in each one of the quarters

Instructions
Zonal marking within each individual area – Recognize moments to accelerate - Use numerical superiority within each area – Continue to provide passing lines inside own area – Blue team to try to finish as soon as recovering the ball

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team starts playing from the GK and uses their players number 6 (Central midfielder) to create the numerical advantage in each one of the areas. This player (nr 6) can go into all areas to attack or to defend. All other players can only be in their own area apart from the moment in which the red team recovers the ball. Whenever the red team is in possession, all players in red can invade other areas. This will make that the red team will make ball possession or a quick attack towards the blue team's goal. Blue team has to cross the gates placed on the midfield line with the ball under control.

Play from the back - Advanced

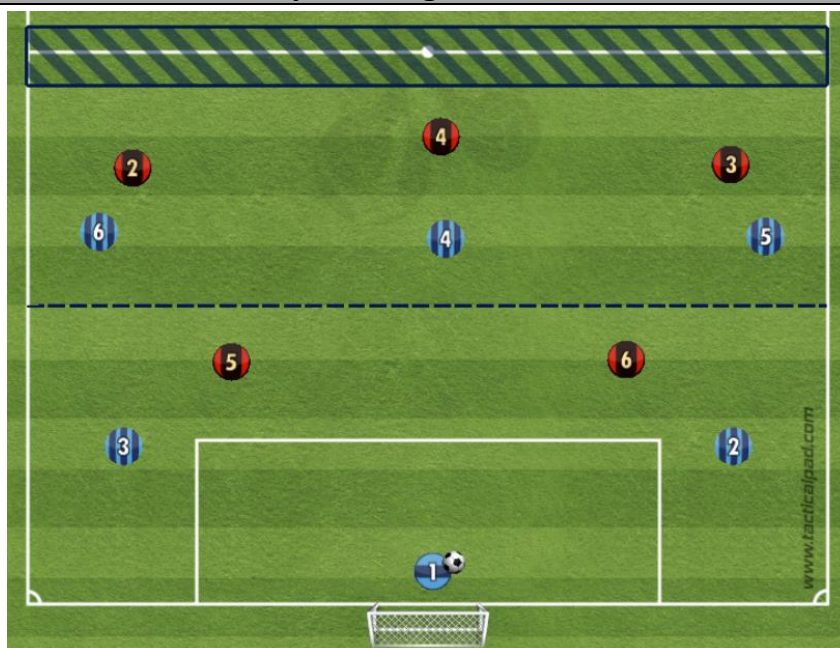
Structure	Tactical intent
GR + 4 + 1 vs 4	Use numerical superiority in each square Zonal marking Block passing lines and marking Switch side of play

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting - Tackling	25m width x 20m length 12.5m width x 10 m length (per square)

General objectives
Identify passing lines which provide superiority in each one of the halves

Instructions
Zonal marking within each individual area – Recognize moments to accelerate - Use numerical superiority within each area – Continue to provide passing lines inside own area – Blue team to try to finish as soon as recovering the ball

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team has numerical advantage in its defensive half and equality in the attacking half. The purpose is for the blue team to maintain ball possession until a good passing option is created to pass forward into the attacking half. Blue defenders can progress with the ball across into attacking half creating numerical advantage. Red team has to prevent forward passes between blue defenders and runs made by blue team's defenders as these will create numerical advantages for the blue team. Blue team scores by having a player receiving the ball in the painted area. Blue players can't drive the ball into the painted area. The red team will score in the normal goal placed in the blue team's defensive area and will try to score as quickly as the ball is recovered.

Ball possession - Beginner

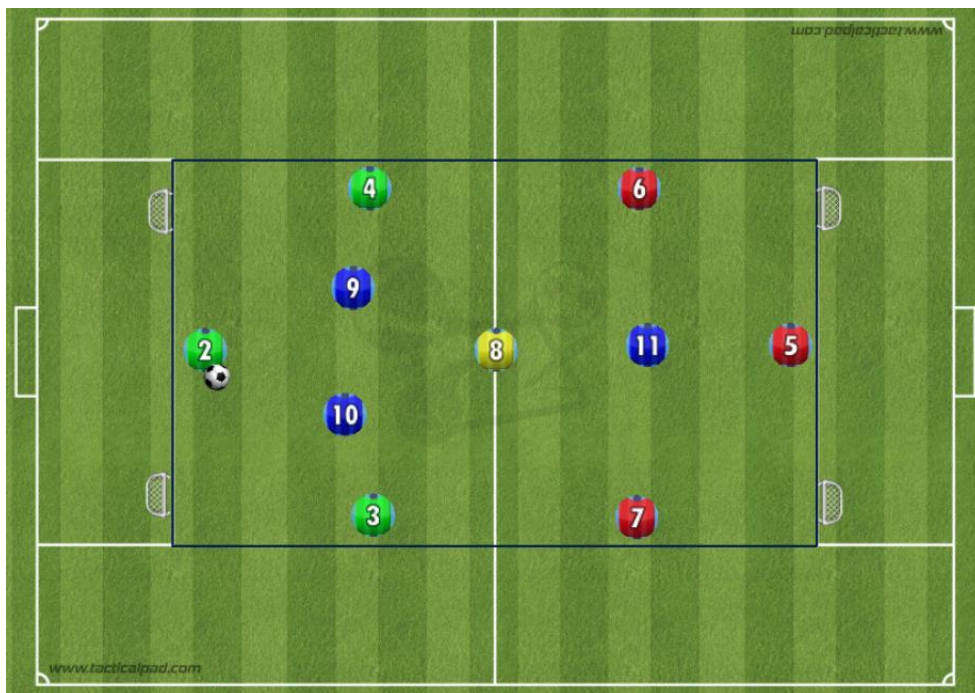
Structure	Tactical intent
10 players (6 vs 3) + 1	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Identify free players Anticipate next available passing option

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation - Tackling	20m width x 30m length

General objectives
Red and Green teams: Maintain ball possession within own half in numerical advantage (4 vs 2) for a minimum number of passes. Quick reaction to loss of possession. Blue team: Continuous and intense pressure, scoring whenever possession is gained.

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Constant monitoring of the pitch Identify free players – Quick reaction to loss of possession

Spatial organization



Description

Green and Red teams will keep possession within own half along with the Yellow player who will provide numerical superiority of 4 vs 2 in each half. Yellow player can't pass the other half. A minimum number of passes is required for the ball to be played to the other half where a Blue player will be covering receivers. This player will then be joined by another Blue player once the transition is made. Blue players score in the small goals whenever possession is gained and on the goals of the half where the possession is gained.

Ball possession - Intermediate

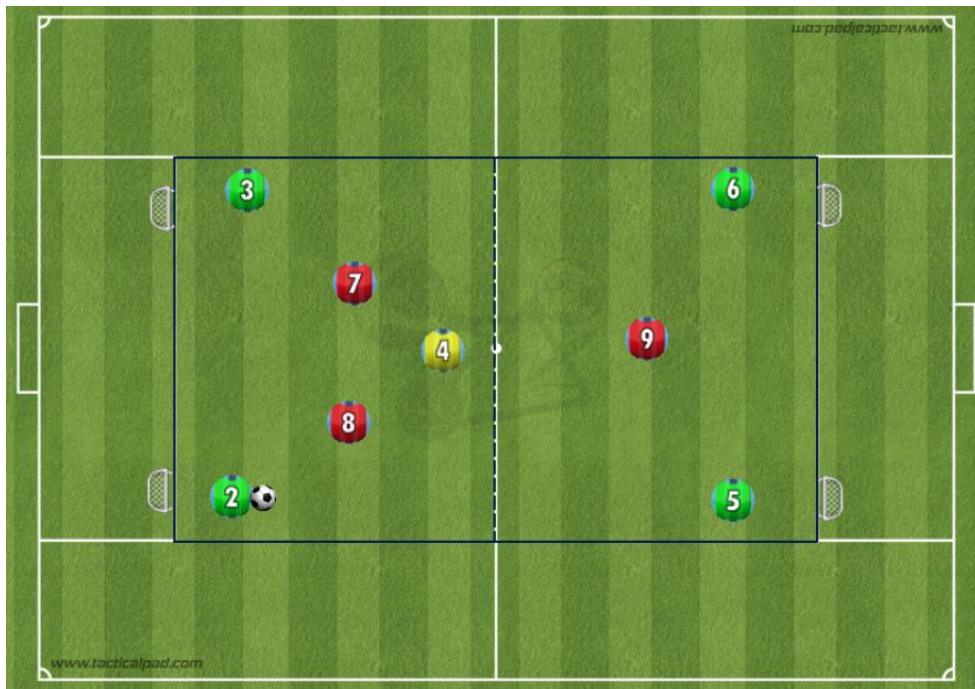
Structure	Tactical intent
8 players (4 vs 3) + 1	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Identify free player Anticipate next available passing option

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation - Tackling	20m width x 30m length

General objectives
Green team will maintain ball possession for a minimum number of passes within each midfield in numerical superiority provided by the Yellow player.
Red team: apply continuous and intense pressure, scoring in the small goals whenever in possession

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Constant monitoring of the pitch Identify free players – Quick reaction to loss of possession

Spatial organization



Description

Green team will keep possession in each half of the playing area for a minimum number of passes while in numerical superiority of 3 vs 2. After a certain number of passes a transition is made into the next midfield where another Red player will join and make up another 3 vs 2 situation. Whenever possession is gained by the Red team, these will try to score in either one of the goals placed by the end of the midfield where the ball is recovered. Yellow player plays with whichever team is in possession of the ball.

Ball possession - Advanced

Structure	Tactical intent
11 players (6 vs 4) + 1	Passing and Receiving in position Perceive distance between players Manage ball movement Perform quick and accurate technical actions

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Body orientation - Tackling	25m width x 40m length

General objectives
Using two balls simultaneously, players keep position in the corners of square and maintain unopposed possession passing randomly

Instructions
Correct body positioning related to the next receiver – Constant monitoring of the pitch Identify free players – Quick reaction to loss of possession

Spatial organization



Description

Green team will maintain ball possession in numerical superiority (4 vs 2) for a minimum number of passes within each midfield before transitioning into the other midfield while maintaining the shape (diamond). Whenever the ball possession is gained by the Red team these have to be able to cross into the finishing area (last quarter on each end of the pitch) and score in the goal. Yellow player creates passing options to whichever team is in the possession of the ball. It is essential the reaction to the loss of possession is quick and pressure on the ball carrier is applied right after the moment of the loss with team mates covering.

Through pass - Beginner

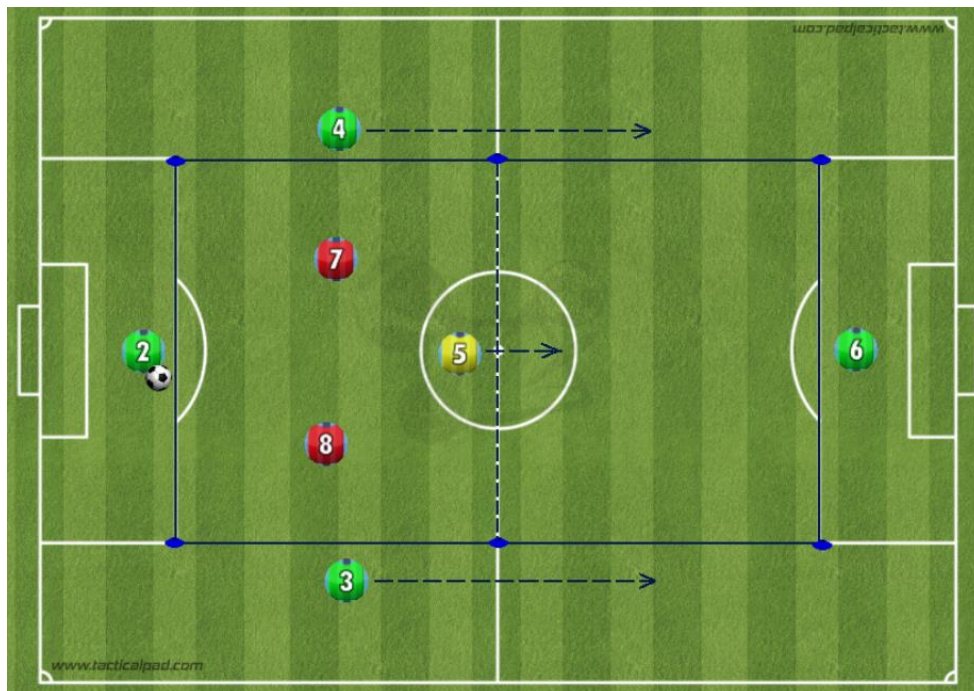
Structure	Tactical intent
7 players (4 + 1) vs 2	Passing and Receiving in position Play between and behind lines Identify free players Perform vertical passes on correct timing

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Intercepting	20m width x 30m length

General objectives
Green team: Maintain ball possession within one half and transition with vertical pass. Red team: maintain continuous and intense pressure on active midfield, transitioning to other half Yellow player: transitions with the ball and makes the 4 th player within each area.

Instructions for players
Identify free player and position body correctly – Use minimum number of touches possible – Quick reaction to ball possession – Identify correct timing for vertical pass

Spatial organization



Description

Green team will keep possession between them using the Yellow player as the player within the playing area. All green players are out of the area and use a maximum of 2 touches. Green players on the lateral of the pitch will transition with the ball to opposite half as well as the red players. A minimum number of passes should be required before a vertical pass to the other end is made, making the Red team, players on the lateral sides and the Yellow player transition with it and quickly adapt to ball possession in another area.

Through pass - Intermediate

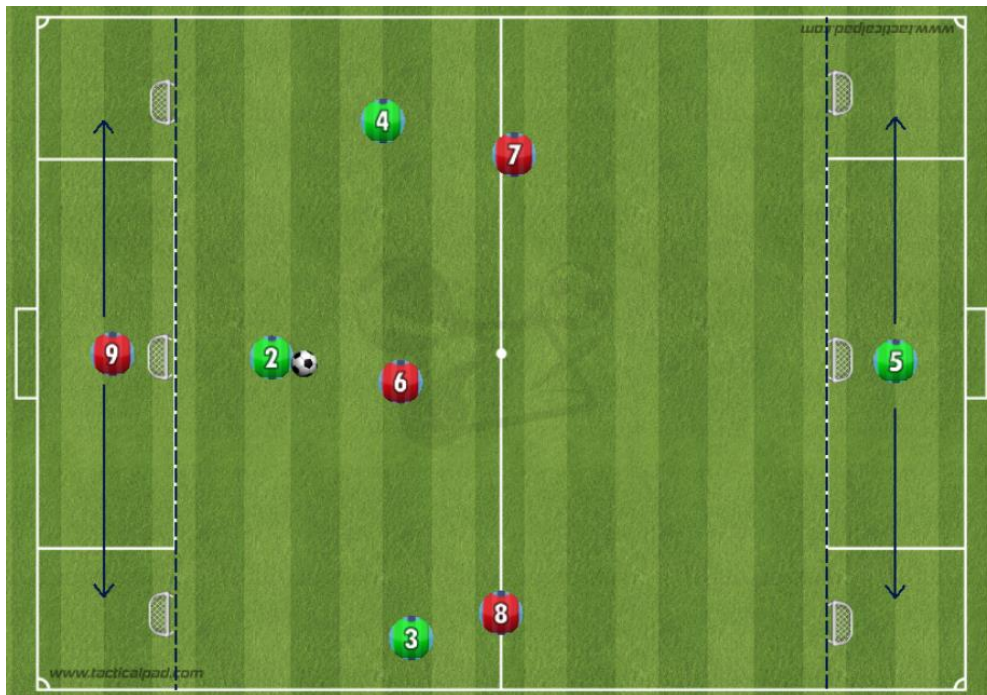
Structure	Tactical intent
8 players (3+1) vs (3+1)	Passing and Receiving in position Play between and behind lines Identify free players Perform vertical passes on correct timing

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Intercepting – Lay off	25m width x 40m length

General objectives
In numerical equality within the playing area, Green and Red teams will have as main objective to score goals either by scoring with first touch or perform vertical through passes to the target player with the ball being laid off back into the playing area where players can score with any touch

Instructions for players
Use vertical passing whenever available – Constant movement to create passing lines and disposition opponents – Identify superiorities (numerical, qualitative, positional)

Spatial organization



Description

In numerical equality, Green and Red teams will verse each other with the objective of playing with their target player while this lays off the ball back into the playing area. It would be advisable that both Red and Green teams had 2 ways of scoring so opposition has to cover both of them and process faster creating a faster reaction time to changes within opponents' intents. In order for this to happen, Red and Green teams can either score on any touch after the ball has been laid off by the target player or at any given point if it is finished on first touch.

Through pass - Advanced

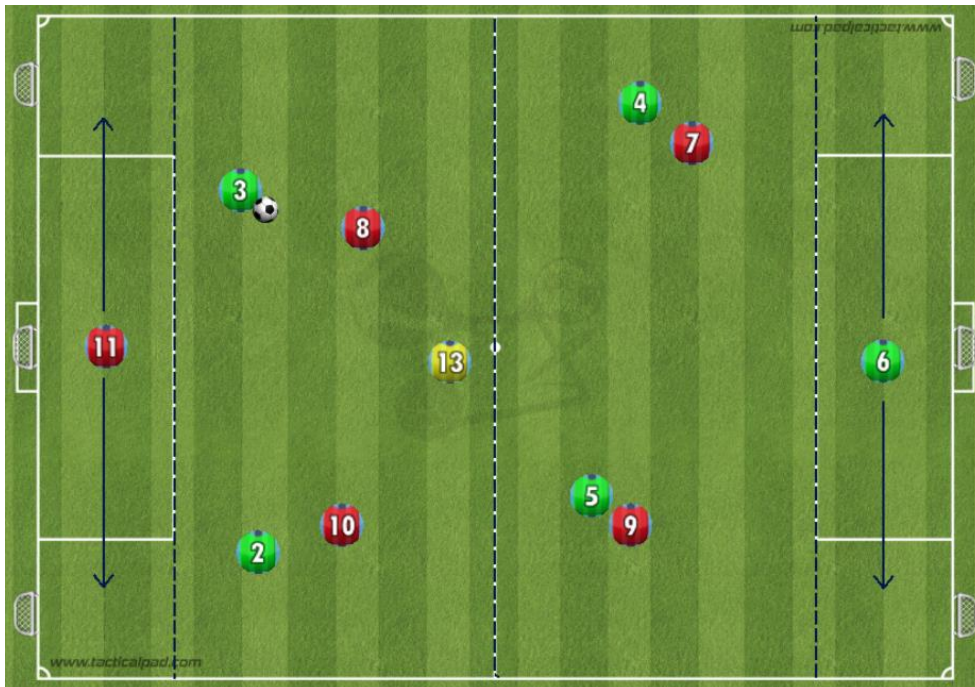
Structure	Tactical intent
11 players (5 vs 5) + 1	Passing and Receiving in position Play between and behind lines Identify free players Perform vertical passes on correct timing

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Intercepting – Finishing	30m width x 50m length

General objectives
In numerical equality within the playing area, Green and Red teams will have as main objective to score goals by playing the ball into the scoring area where the target player will be. This player will then either score or lay off, assisting team mates.

Instructions for players
Use vertical passing whenever available – Constant movement to create passing lines and disposition opponents – Identify superiorities (numerical, qualitative, positional)

Spatial organization



Description

Red and Green teams will verse each other in numerical superiority within each midfield provided by the Yellow player who plays for whichever team has the possession at any given time. Both teams have to connect a successful pass between field players and the target player who can move just along the designated area as the picture shows. Once a successful pass is made and the target player is in possession the team can score from anywhere in the playing area.

Positional attack vs Counter Attack - Beginner

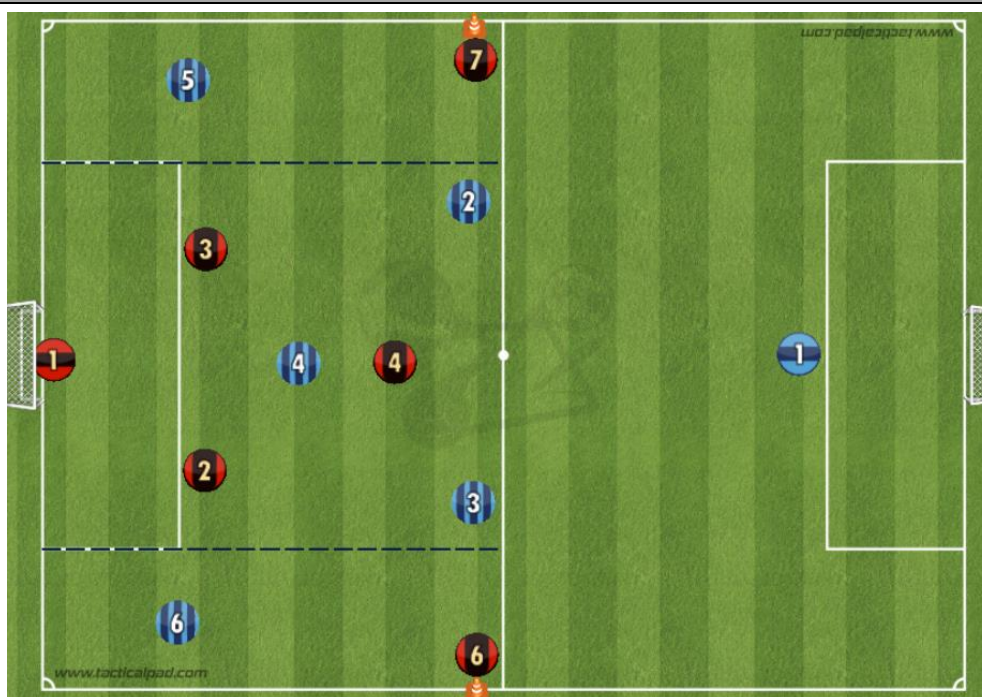
Structure	Tactical intent
6 vs 6	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Switch side of play Play wide when in ball possession Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting – Finishing	30m width x 50m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain ball possession while looking for finishing situations Red team: Continuous intense pressing and launch counter when possession is gained

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Look for unopposed finishing Identify free players – Receive behind opposition's defensive line

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team maintains ball possession on attacking midfield while looking for unopposed finishing situations. When ball on centre backs both wings should be occupying the side areas to provide width. Red team's players are free to press and should do so intensely with the intention of gaining possession quickly. Once possession is won the wings positioned by the orange cones will be launched forward with long passes. This makes that the blue team has to apply intense pressure as soon as the ball is lost. Preparation for the loss of possession is essential. Red team has a set limit of time to finish the counter attack (e.g. 5 seconds).

Positional attack vs Counter attack - Intermediate

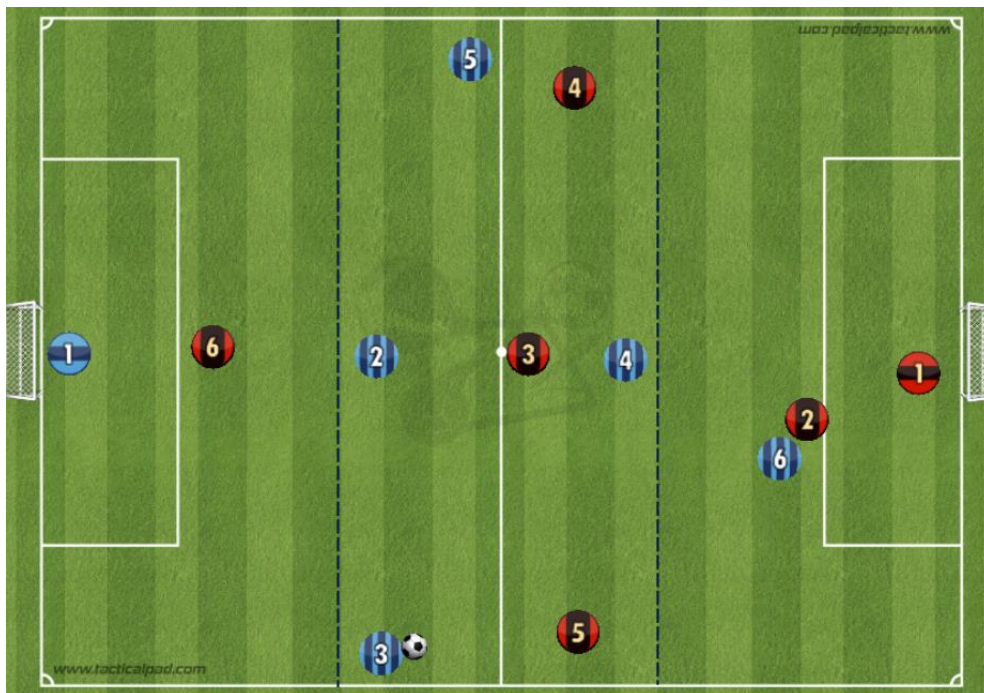
Structure	Tactical intent
6 vs 6	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Vertical pass to break lines of pressure Use numerical superiority in midfield Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting – Finishing	30m width x 50m length

General objectives
Maintain ball possession while looking for passing options into attack third with the centre back providing numerical superiority in midfield (4 v 3).

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Look for unopposed finishing Identify free player – Receive behind opposition's defensive line – Positional marking in midfield and individual marking in last third

Spatial organization



Description

Both teams will face the same restrictions. When in possession, centre back come into middle third and creates numerical superiority while strikers never leave the attacking thirds constantly providing passing options when own team is in possession. When ball is recovered first option is to look for a pass into the attacking third immediately as the striker must be in positional superiority due to the positioning of the centre back in the middle third. When vertical pass into attacking third not available, ball possession in middle third and in superiority is applied.

Positional attack vs Counter attack - Advanced

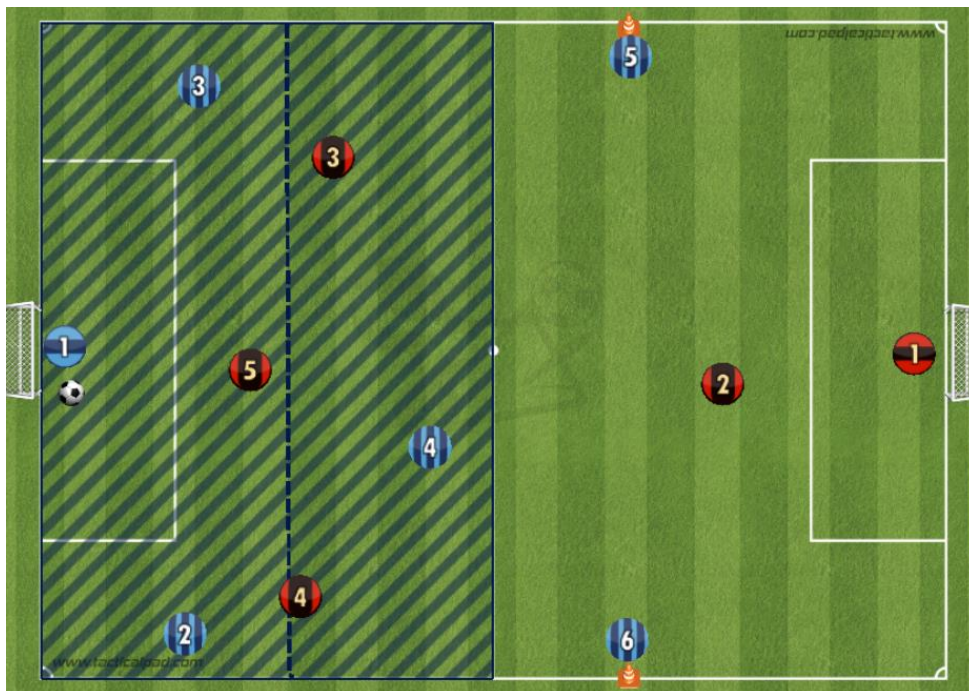
Structure	Tactical intent
6 vs 5	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Counter attack with from lateral areas Use numerical superiority in defensive midfield Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Shooting – Finishing	30m width x 50m length

General objectives
Blue team: Complete a minimum of 5 passes in defensive midfield and launch fast attack Red team: Apply intense and continuous pressure within attacking midfield and score when possession is recovered

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Look for unopposed finishing situations - Identify free player – Identify numerical superiorities

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team plays from the defensive midfield in numerical superiority (4 v 3) and has to complete a minimum of 5 passes between them. After this, both wings will be available to receive the ball on the attacking midfield and counter attack (2 v 1+GK). Blue team's midfielder (number 4) can only move within the second quarter of the pitch in order to provide depth within the defensive midfield. Red team applies intense and continuous pressure in the attacking midfield and has no restriction, this means Red team will finish at any point whenever possession is gained.

Transitioning through pass - Beginner

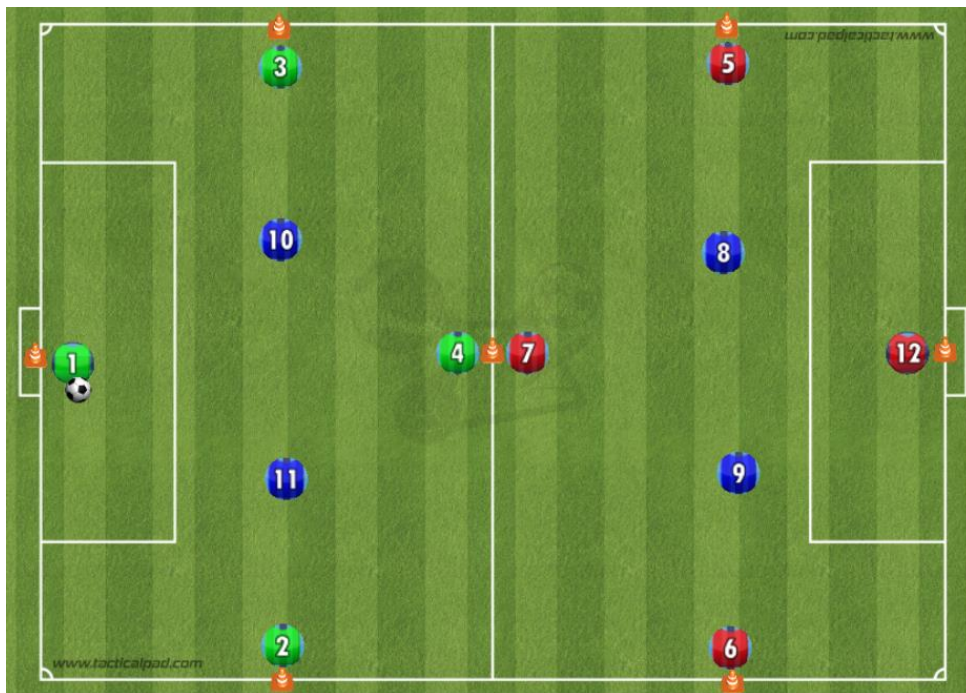
Structure	Tactical intent
(4 vs 2) + (4 vs 2)	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Identify free player Transition successfully between halves Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Dribbling - Tackling	25m width x 40m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain constant and intense pressure on each midfield Red and green teams: Maintain ball possession for a pre-determined number of passes in shape (diamond) and quick reaction to loss of possession.

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Maintain shape (diamond) Identify free players – Anticipate opponents movement

Spatial organization



Description

Both green and red teams will maintain possession in their midfield for a pre-determined number of passes while the blue team in each midfield (2 blues per midfield) will apply intense and continuous pressure in order to recover ball possession. Once ball is recovered by the blue team they score by passing another blue player. This will make both green and red teams to react immediately to the loss of possession and avoid a pass between 2 blue players. A tournament style organization is ideal.

Transitioning through pass - Intermediate

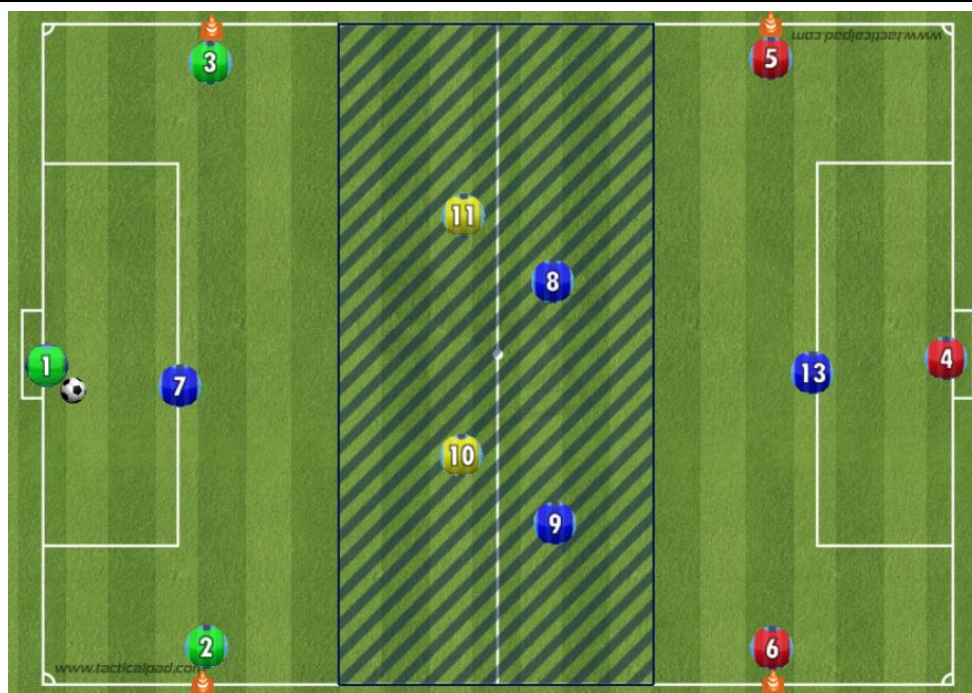
Structure	Tactical intent
12 players (3 vs 1) + (2 vs 2) + (3 vs 1)	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Identify free player Transition successfully between thirds Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Dribbling - Tackling	25m width x 40m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain continuous and intense pressure on own third passing each other to score Red and green teams: Maintain ball possession while in numerical superiority and make transition Yellow team: Create continuous passing options to make transitions between thirds.

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Maintain positioning Identify free players – Anticipate opponents movement

Spatial organization



Description

Both Red and Green teams maintain possession within their own thirds in numerical superiority (3 vs 1) and make the ball transition between thirds by passing and not carrying identifying the free players in the other sections taking into account there is numerical equality within the painted middle sections. Yellow team plays within the middle section and creates the links between other thirds by continuously providing passing lines. Blue team applies continuous and intense pressure on the ball carrier and covers passing lines.

Transitioning through pass - Advanced

Structure	Tactical intent
12 players (3 vs 2) + (2 vs 1) + (3 vs 2)	Quick reaction to the loss of possession Identify free player Transition successfully between thirds Build up under pressure

Essential technical actions	Area
Passing – Receiving – Dribbling - Tackling	25m width x 40m length

General objectives
Blue team: Maintain continuous pressure on own third and pass each other to score Red and green teams: Maintain ball possession while in numerical superiority and make transition Yellow team: Create continuous passing options to make transitions between thirds.

Instructions
Intense and immediate pressure when not in possession – Maintain positioning Identify free players – Anticipate opponents movement

Spatial organization



Description

Blue team applies continuous and immediate pressure within own third trying to recover ball possession and scoring points by passing another blue player. Green and Red teams maintain possession for as long as needed in own third transitioning whenever possible always using the yellow team (midfielders) to make transition between thirds. Yellow team is in numerical superiority in the painted middle section so it is mandatory that transition between thirds is made by the Yellow team.

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