

Defending & counter-attacking

Practice organisation

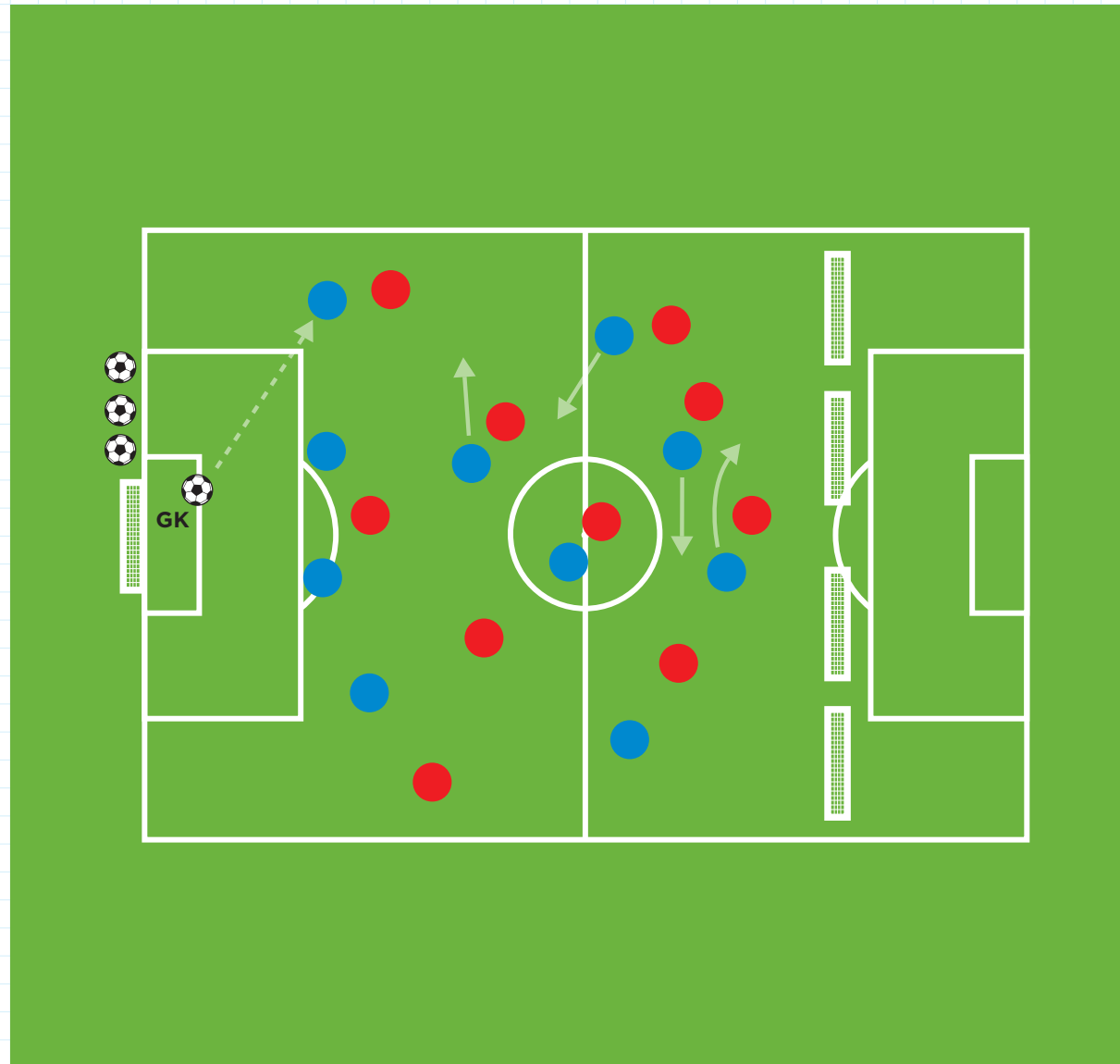
- Full pitch, restricted in length with appropriate size goal at one end & 4 small goals across pitch, as illustrated.
- 21 players (incl. GK), arranged 11v10 in teams structured 4-3-3 (counter-attacking team) & 4-4-2 (team attacking 4 goals), as shown.
- Practice starts with: GK rolls ball-out to Attacking team.
- A's look to build-up play & score in any of the 4 goals.
- D's are looking to gain possession & quickly counter-attack to single goal with GK.
- After conclusion of an attack: practice restarts from GK.
- Roles of teams can be reversed after a defined period of play or number of restarts.

Detail

- D's work ethic getting back behind ball to defend.
- D's to defend realistically at all times, tracking runs & challenging.
- Quick reaction to adjust position & depth of defensive line in relation to ball movement.
- Engaging player on ball swiftly to delay & deny forward passing.
- Sliding across as a unit, remaining compact & leaving furthest attacker away from ball.
- Ensure a quick tempo in passing & movement from team in possession.
- Encourage creative & clever play in advanced areas.
- Emphasis on individual techniques & precise execution of passing, receiving dribbling & running with the ball skills.
- Simple progressions for this practice are:
 - Replace 4 goals with one & GK, to develop full game.
 - Teams to develop own counter-attacking style in 4-4-2 & 4-3-3 formations.

Key coaching points

- Players ahead of ball to recover at pace to establish defensive block, behind ball.
- Once goal-side: adjust from pressing to cover & balance in relation to ball & defensive line.



- Coordination of pressing & spoiling effort from D's.
- Engage player on ball (if possible) on recovery run.
- Early recognition of supporting strikers to 'show' for ball on regains of possession.
- Quick reaction to movement of players to initiate counter-attack.

- Quick change of defending to attacking attitude from players (& vice versa).
- Looking for timely runs & well-placed passes to quickly penetrate opposition on counter-attack.
- Concentration & assessment of build-up play in advanced positions to receive break-out passes from MF & counter-attack areas of pitch.

Defensive play whilst
'out of balance'

Age group
12-16 years