

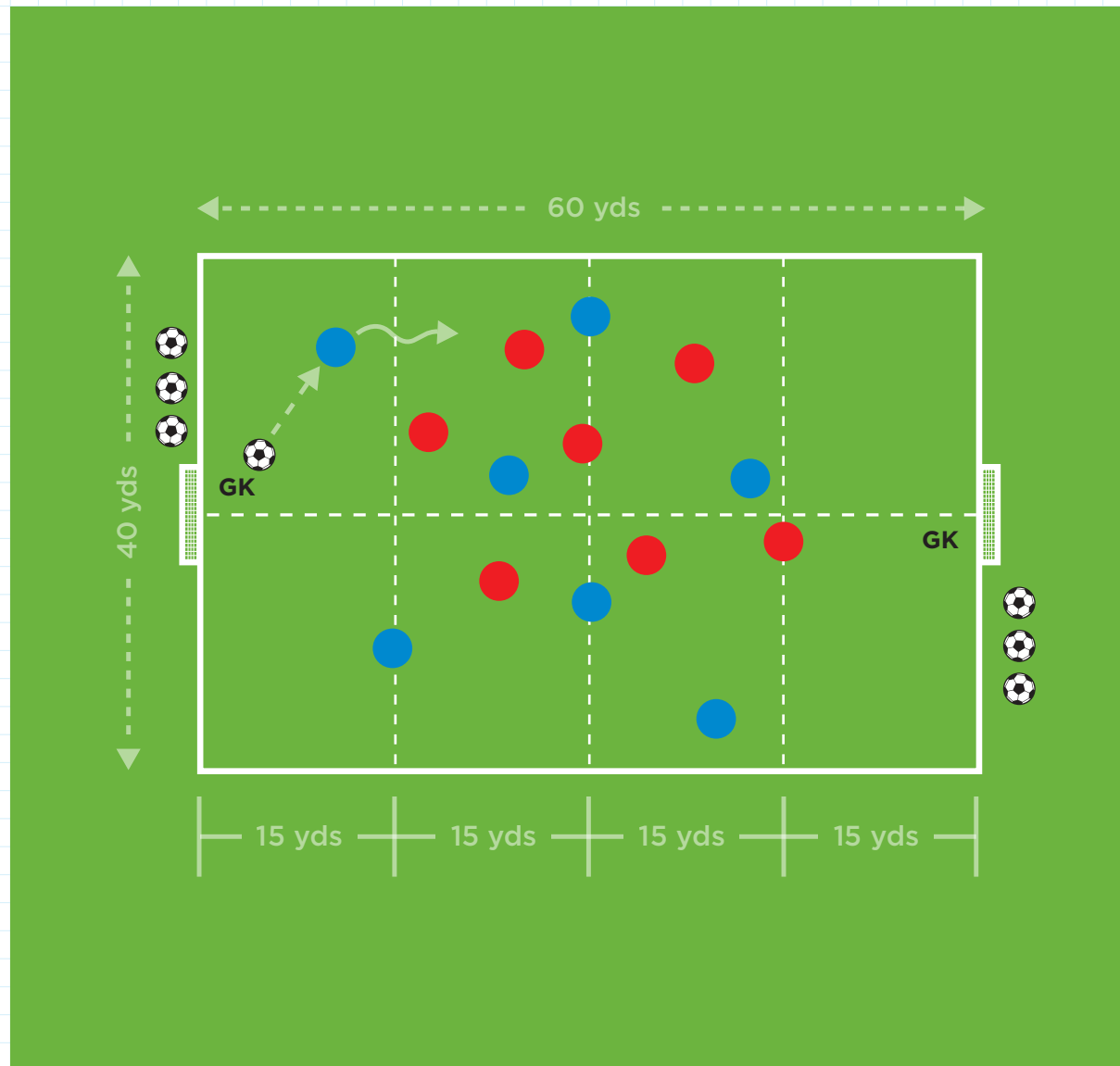
Compact defending in a small-sided game

Practice organisation

- Area 60x40yds, divided into 8 grids, each measuring 20x15yds with appropriate size goals at each end, as illustrated.
- 16 players (incl. 2GK's), arranged 7v7, as shown in the diagram.
- Supply of balls by each goal.
- Normal off-side rules apply over the halfway line.
- Practice starts with: ball rolled-out from GK.
- Team in possession, look to build play through good ball retention & controlled possession, with the objective of scoring a goal.
- Defending team look to counter-attack on gaining possession.
- Open play continues until ball goes dead: then practice recommences with initial arrangements.

Detail

- Main factor affecting decision to press ball is whether pressing player can affect player in possession & force error.
- Early recognition of possible opportunity by individuals to force errors & unsettle opponents seeking to gain composed possession.
- Understanding the need to remain compact as a team, sliding across, marking & covering when opposition are established in position.
- Simple progressions for this practice are:
 - If defending team gains possession: it has limited time (e.g. 7secs) to counter-attack & strike on goal.
 - Counter-attacking team limited to 5 passes before taking shot.



Key coaching points

- Defending team remain compact & concentrate numbers in area of field where ball, is with good spacing & appropriate depth.
- If defensive block is established: decision to press ball needs to be taken.
- If not involved in pressing: other D's mark, cover or balance.
- Communication between players, especially those from behind, who have a clearer picture of oppositions team arrangements.
- Understanding of transition from defending to breaking out to create width & attack.