

Spreading play in a small-sided game

Practice organisation

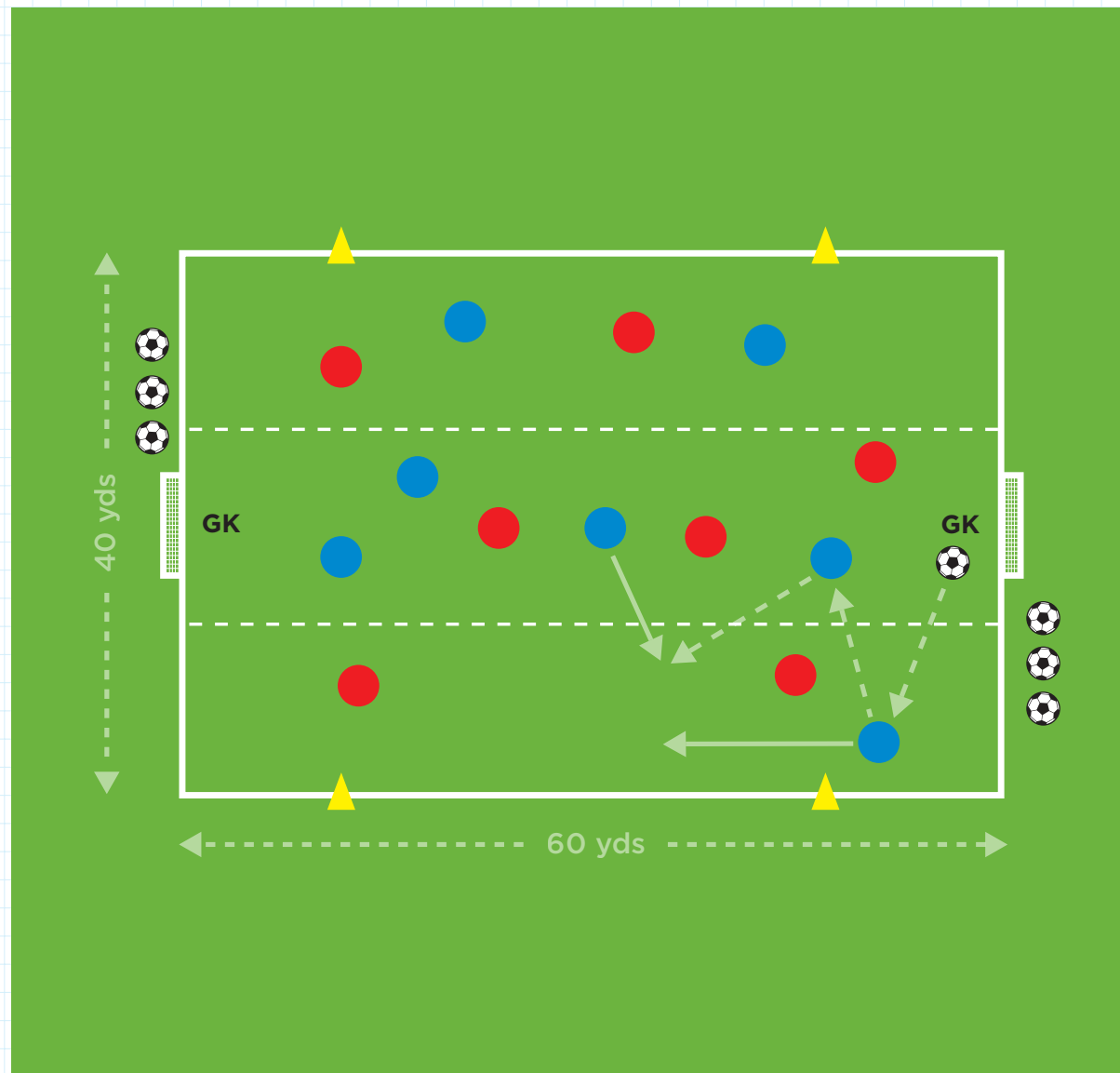
- Area 60x40yds, divided into 3 channels of equal width marked the length of pitch & appropriate size goals at each end, as illustrated.
- 16 players (incl. 2 GK's), arranged 8v8, as shown in the diagram.
- Supply of balls by each goal.
- Off-side lines are marked with cones at the side of pitch.
- Practice starts with the ball being rolled-out by GK to the attacking team.
- The 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 the ball goes dead, the practice then recommences with initial set-up arrangements.

Detail

- Challenge: Try to use spreading-out into wide areas as an opportunity to exploit space created in central areas to attack goal.
- Quick passing, to eliminate pressure.
- Drawing D's to create weak side to switch play.
- Supporting play from behind to ensure defensive safety from potential counter-attack & provide outlet passing option.
- Recognition of when to slow-down play to secure possession.
- Simple progressions for this practice are:
 - Mark 5yd wide channels along each touch line that wingers/full-backs can attack through, unopposed.
 - Switch play & early crossing into central areas with attackers arriving quickly into space.

Key coaching points

- Stretch opponents from end-to-end & side-to-side.
- A's determine whether to attack centrally or wide depending on strength of defensive numbers.
- Team out of possession look to remain compact & cover 2 of the 3 channels.
- A's look to switch play when faced with defensive numbers & exploit weak side (empty channel).



- Switching play is dependent on quick, accurate & precise passing & awareness of space available.
- A's on opposite side must remain aware of potential to make forward runs to receive diagonal passes, whilst ensuring defensive security (against a potential counter-attack).

Attacking when opponents are 'in balance'

Age group
12-16 years