

# YOUTH FOOTBALL



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**NB:** In this manual, any terms referring to persons are applicable to both genders.



## WELCOME MESSAGE

Football can be described as a school of life through which valuable skills can be taught, such as teamwork, dedication, perseverance and healthy lifestyles. A special focus on youth training is therefore important to FIFA, in order to harness the power of football to secure the future strength and success of the game.

This training manual is just one example of FIFA's commitment to its member associations to create more opportunities for youth football, by providing a global training framework. FIFA remains committed to promoting youth football competitions so we can bridge the gap between grassroots and the elite.

This manual will enable you to set realistic youth football objectives, including organising youth competitions, improving professional structures or providing appropriate training and guidance for youth football instructors.

To propel FIFA's youth football development projects forward, FIFA needs your support. Use and adapt this manual according to the needs of your region and club. Your support is vital to give youth football a platform to grow.

# INTRODUCTION



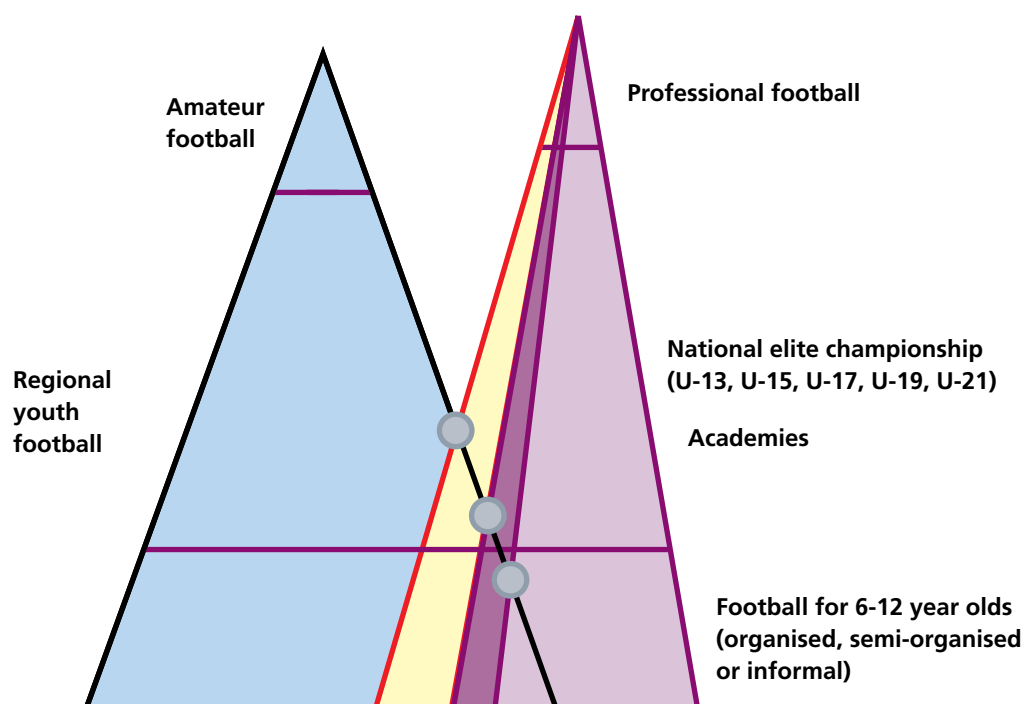


## INTRODUCTION

Training young players is essential for the future of national and international football. Member associations and their clubs therefore have a huge responsibility to develop football in their regions, by creating a training philosophy that is adapted to the characteristics of each country. To support them in this important role, FIFA has created a development programme dedicated to youth football.

This new publication provides an educational tool for all those responsible for football development in their country to use in their approach to the training of young players, in particular with a view to enabling the member associations' technical teams to establish a long-term concept for youth training.

Member associations' development plans should include all levels of football, as the following pyramid shows:



The two pyramids are dependent on each other. On one side, we have elite youth football providing high-level training for young professionals and international players of tomorrow, and the quality of this professional football is what attracts and inspires young players. On the other side, football as a leisure activity, which is usually run by volunteers, gives opportunities to people of all ages to play football. Clubs and local communities create opportunities to play football – whether organised or informal – by providing the infrastructure such as pitches, equipment and changing facilities for training sessions and matches.

It should also be mentioned that at the youth level, the move from amateur status to elite may happen at different ages depending on the continent and country. The primary focus of this manual targets elite youth training.

Analyses of recent international competitions are used to discover the current trends in the game. [Chapter 1](#) will examine the various studies that have been carried out. The analyses of these competitions represent the end result of training and allow us to shape the future. The subsequent chapters, based on the final result of the player's development,

form the core of this publication.

In [chapter 2](#), we look at the football player's character, and how personal development fits into an overall training plan, in which different stages are identified based in particular on the intrinsic qualities of the young player. The specific stages of development are basic training (13-15 years old), intermediate training (16-18 years old), and advanced training, taking into account the character, physical development and environment of each player in order to plan his possible future career.

There are numerous requirements to be taken into account in the training of young players, which will be explored in [chapter 3](#). The instructor is both a trainer and a coach, both a teacher and a trusted confidant for young players. He understands modern football and the current trends, and he knows what to do to make his training sessions effective. He is aware of how important competition is for young people and adapts his training exercises accordingly. Lastly, he is a role model for young players and also encourages their psychological and social development.

The chapters on technical training ([chapter 4](#)), strategic approach ([chapter 5](#)) and physical preparation ([chapter 6](#)) form the base, but always with an eye towards the ultimate objective of the training. [Chapter 7](#) looks at psychological preparation and discusses the pedagogical aspects of training, while [chapter 8](#) is concerned with the importance of training games.

[Chapter 9](#) covers training for young goalkeepers – the roles and specifics for training goalkeepers in modern football has not yet been entirely understood and should be promoted.

To achieve the set objectives, having a training plan ([chapter 10](#)), whether medium or long term, forms the indispensable foundation for all technical and pedagogical activities.

The closing chapters of the manual deal with more practical planning matters. It is not possible to train elite players without giving them the opportunity to take part in age-appropriate national and international competitions ([chapter 11](#)). The young player must regularly have the chance to put into practice what he has learnt during the weeks, months and years of training by playing against other players of the same level and comparing his performance. By

then systematically evaluating his match performance, the player and the coach can see the results and progress of the work done in training. It is therefore essential for the development of young players who aspire to the elite level to have access to age-appropriate competitions and suitable management by the coach.

The quality of youth training is getting better and better, often thanks to national or regional academies ([chapter 12](#)).

Academies should perform an assisting role for the other training structures that exist for the international players of the future, and should meet certain quality criteria defined by the member association in relation to the football needs of the particular country.



# 1

## Current trends in football

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## 1 – CURRENT TRENDS IN FOOTBALL

Humans possess the ability to adapt, and development programmes must also adapt in order to continue to deliver results and keep up with the changes in football.

Nowadays, it sometimes seems like football has been taken over by scientific research and analysis, but nevertheless creativity must remain at the nucleus of youth development.

Of course, some of the conclusions of said research may be helpful in developing projects and merit consideration. For this reason, all of the suggestions presented should be adapted to the reality of the situation and to the qualities of the players.

### **Clear but flexible systems**

All teams at the top level are well organised and adapt to the individual qualities of their players. The system of play forms the basic structure from which a team can evolve. However, systems are applied flexibly so that players can flourish and fulfil their potential. The best teams find the perfect balance between having clearly recognisable systems and strategies and allowing players a certain amount of freedom to take individual initiative and display creativity.

The ability of a team to act with intelligence and flexibility by modifying tactics depending on the situation in the game, added to a positive aggression and the technical qualities of the players, are all key elements of success.

## Different types of behaviour

### Zonal system

The system of zonal defending focuses on the player in possession. This system is characterised by the compactness of the team. After losing possession, the players immediately put pressure on the player in possession, in order to enable the team to regroup. Thus, the players very quickly get back into position. Often, a few seconds after losing possession, nine outfield players are repositioned between the ball and their goal. The distances between the different lines of players are so short that the defending team generally outnumbered the attacking team around the player

in possession and keeps up pressure on the opponent until he commits an error. While an attacker impedes the opponent's counter-attack, five players are busy closing down space in the midfield, while the four defenders anticipate deep passes while remaining compact in their defensive positions in order to leave as little space as possible between the defence and the midfield.

The differences are particularly seen in the zones where it is more likely that possession will be regained.

### Defensive game

The majority of teams, with some exceptions, move in zones with a four-man defence, in order to cover as best as possible the width of the pitch while at the same time using the attacking advantages offered by this system. The goalkeeper plays an important role in all teams, being positioned behind the line of four defenders like a sweeper in order to anticipate the long balls behind his defence, and is responsible for launching attacks when possession has been regained. In front of the four-man defence is a central defensive midfielder (sometimes two), supported by two players on the wings. If possession is lost, a compact defensive block of nine players is formed with the aim of preventing the opponent from building an attack. Some teams may organise themselves around a three-man central defence, but only for certain matches or in a particular situation during a match, hence this system is not often considered for a basic tactical formation.

The differences are seen in the zones where it is more likely that possession will be regained:

#### **Defensive third pressing**

When playing against technically-skilled teams, the defensive block tends to move back a bit and is only able to exert pressure between the edge of the penalty area and the centre of the pitch.

Often positioned very deep, these extremely compact defences allow few spaces or opportunities for the opponent to play or penetrate.

The whole team then regroups in its own half in order to close down space and force the opponent to make a mistake.

As soon as they have regained possession, they move forward very quickly.

Often implemented with two defensive midfielders, this formation has proved to be more effective if the block is solid, with little space between the players, both in the width and the depth.

#### **Pressing in midfield**

Teams that put pressure on the opponents in midfield are able to close down space around the halfway line and put pressure on the opponent when the ball enters that area of the field.

The aim is to immediately press the opponent as soon as possession is lost and at the same time maintain a high defensive

line. Maintaining this intense pressure on the opponent requires excellent fitness, controlled aggression and great determination. In all cases, the player in possession is subjected to active and aggressive pressing.

### **Variation in the midfield game**

The majority of teams play with five midfielders. They have two defensive central midfielders and three attacking midfielders behind a single striker in a 4-2-3-1 formation.

This very flexible formation can be transformed as the game situation requires into 4-1-4-1 or 4-1-2-3, or even 4-2-4.

Other teams deploy four midfielders – in a flat or diamond formation – behind two attackers in the more traditional 4-4-2, while yet another preference is for a 4-3-3 formation with three central midfielders and three attackers.

It should also be noted that, whatever formation is chosen, the full-backs regularly create a numerical advantage in the midfield, or even further forward, in overlapping positions.

The following trends have been observed in general for all teams:

- When a team plays with only one striker, he is supported by a central playmaker positioned behind him
- The wings are always occupied by two players in the channels, with the full-backs regularly supporting attacks
- When a team plays with two strikers, these two players generally have complementary characteristics (tall and athletic v. small, lively and quick)

### **High pressure in attacking third**

The team presses very high up the pitch to systematically try to regain possession in the opponents' half.

Even after losing possession, the team does not allow the opponent to build an attack and tries to regain the ball as quickly as possible by rapidly interrupting the opponents' counter-attack.

This is known as "high pressing".

## Attacking game

Broadly speaking, there are two main trends:

- An attacking game based mainly on ball possession
- An attacking game based mainly on counter-attacks

The best teams, however, are able to switch between gradual build-up play and fast attacks.

Attacks gradually built up from recovering possession of the ball in midfield and then playing a succession of (five to seven) short passes at pace while looking for gaps in order to catch the opponents off balance.

The build-up generally covers the whole pitch, starting with a triangular move between the players in the centre of the pitch between the opponents' lines and in the gaps before switching the attack to the free wing either with a cross or by outnumbering the opponents down the channels.

In this style of game based primarily on possession and circulating the ball, the following basic principles have been observed:

- Firstly, the use of a single "defensive" midfielder, an essential player who continually rebalances the team
- In front of him, two players with excellent technique and high energy levels, positioned to the left and to the right to form a triangle
- Two wide players very close to the touch line to provide width and to exploit opportunities for the overlap
- Finally, to complete the unit, a centre forward, generally good with his back to the goal and in the air, acting as a support player and a target player for build-up play

One constant is the permanent desire to be in possession of the ball.

Average ball possession is around 60% or more, which is extremely significant in terms of collective technique on the ball, which requires great individual technical qualities.

Several types of moves are possible to speed up the game from the zone where possession has been regained:

- Classic fast attacks or counter-attacks after the team wins the ball back deep in their own half and plays a long ball or a cross into the other half of the pitch towards one or two players
- Fast team attacks after the team wins the ball back in the middle of the pitch and pushes forward quickly in a group of three to five players playing quickly with one or two touches using one-two passes to throw the opponents off balance in a classic process (playing forward and looking for a player ahead of the ball; laying the ball off straight away to a player who is facing the goal and immediately looking to get behind the defender)
- Individual actions by a player who makes the difference with a burst of acceleration to find the gap and put the opponents off balance

### Transition – a key moment

The effectiveness of rapid attacks always depends on the team's speed of reaction after regaining possession. Rapid transitions from defence to attack and attack to defence depend on the first few seconds after winning back the ball or losing possession of the ball. Good teams exploit this short window of opportunity before any team organisation can take place.

In terms of gradual attacks, it is the break in the passing game – by sudden acceleration or by a deep pass in a gap and between the lines – that creates the danger and the goalscoring opportunities. It is also important to note that the best teams have two or three outstanding individuals who can make a difference.

#### **Effective defence/attack transitions**

Being able to move quickly from defence into attack is key to success. Moving quickly from the middle of the pitch as well as the timing and precision of the last pass are decisive in building a successful counter-attack.

Teams need to be able to get past the opposition defence by using flowing and rapid sequences.

Another decisive factor is the ability of a team, after losing possession, to put pressure on the player in possession, causing him to lose the ball, being both caught off guard and blocked in his attempts to attack.

Mastering the counter-attack has become an art form, and the time when teams would stall upon regaining possession is long gone. In modern football, teams try to find their attackers as quickly

as possible when they have regained possession, in order to exploit the gaps left by their opponents. To be effective in counter-attack, players must have good intuition and be able to read the game quickly. Rapid transitions from defence to attack are one of the most important characteristics that have been observed in high-level football.

Teams have to quickly reorganise themselves in defence when they have lost the ball and surprise the opponents by playing rapidly as soon as they have regained possession. The first movement, pass or dribble taken after regaining possession is critical and may enable a dangerous counter-attack to be launched. The majority of counter-attacks are launched by long deep passes, by rapid passing sequences or by a player dribbling at high speed, with the aim of reaching the opposite goal as quickly as possible.

## Animation and effectiveness of play

### Use of the channels and the importance of wing play

Using the wings has proven to be essential to success. Compact defensive blocks focussing on the centre often fail to use the wings effectively.

To develop their wing game effectively, teams need to occupy the pitch in attack using the support of the full-backs and playing rapidly and directly (in particular with one-twos) in order to get back into a favourable position to play one-on-ones or to make precise crosses and particularly backpasses.

The quantity, quality and variety of crosses are nowadays key elements of the attacking game, and a cross is the most effective method of throwing off balance teams who are defending deep. The best teams use the whole width of the pitch in order to create spaces in the opposition's defence. Players switching positions, rapid dribbles, effective one-on-ones, combinations on the wings and in particular overlapping of the full-backs as well as passes between defenders or behind them represent essential factors in this type of organisation.

### Passing sequences and looking for depth

The number of goals arising out of accurate balls in behind is particularly impressive. The decisive pass is often the culmination of a precise passing game, executed with perfect technique.

On average, teams make 400 passes per match, with the best teams greatly exceeding this number. The technical quality enables players, even when under pressure, to control the ball and pass it to a team-mate. This is one of the deciding factors of success at the highest level. But passing just for the sake of it is pointless – pushing the ball around is of no value or effectiveness without looking for depth and playing into the gaps and between the lines. Knowing how to use the width and depth of the pitch is an excellent skill provided that at a certain moment, teams are able to interrupt the rhythm and suddenly accelerate the pace.

By positioning themselves between the opponents' defensive line and the line

of midfielders, players pose numerous problems for the defence.

The attack therefore depends on playing reliable passes even when under pressure, powerful wing play, rapid transitions between defence and attack, and excellent movement off the ball.

The quality of attacks depends on the technical and tactical abilities of the players, the team's style, the score, the situation and of course the standard of the opponents.

The best teams keep the ball on the ground and move it around rapidly with direct and precise passes, limiting the number of touches in defence and in the middle of the pitch, and trying to play in triangles. The excellent individual qualities of some players are even more apparent in some aspects of technique and tactics, such as the first touch of the ball and the first pass. The best teams begin their attacks by circulating the ball rapidly, benefiting from excellent movement off the ball by players to create various passing options. When a rapid attack is not possible, these teams continue to patiently keep possession.

In the transition to attack after regaining possession, the first pass of the counter-attack is crucial, and the simplest option is often the best.

That is why we are seeing more and more central defenders who have great technical skill, which enables them to make correct and accurate passes; this task now falls much more frequently to the playmaker, and the player who initiates the attacking moves positions himself quite low down the pitch, often in a defensive midfielder position, from which he has the whole width to direct the team's attack.

**Variations after recovering possession**

Good teams practise the two following variations depending on the game situation:

- Wait in their own half and use the surprise element by performing a rapid counter-attack
- Press the player in possession aggressively in the opponents' half – or at least up to the halfway line – with the aim of disrupting the opponents early on in the build-up of their attacks and not allowing them time to organise themselves

## Individual qualities

Individual qualities permanently influence the results of matches at various levels. In modern football, it is more and more difficult to get past the defensive lines because they are very compact, often with eight or nine players behind the ball. It is therefore essential to have players who know how to win duels with the quality of their dribbles, whether in the centre or along the wings, in order to get closer to the opponents' goal line.

Players with individual initiative are able to create the space which is lacking in the centre in the modern game. What usually happens in this situation is that the player manages, with an aerial cross or with a pass along the ground into the space behind the defence, to find a team-mate ready to attempt a shot.

Another essential factor for success is having strikers who are quick, skilled and decisive finishers and capable of making the difference.

**Effective attacking play**

Numerous goals and goalscoring opportunities are generated by passes in the gaps played from the middle of the pitch, as well as by creative play down the wings, which is a valuable way of creating space and thus goalscoring opportunities. Teams also need players who are capable of keeping the ball and dribbling as far as the goal line in order to then cross the ball back to a player who is running into the space. Because of the high number of players in the penalty area, the quality of crosses is critical, and the finishing even more so. The essential qualities of high-level strikers are the following: correct positioning to receive the crosses, taking control of the ball while moving, the rapid sequence of controlling and then shooting, laying the ball off with one touch, heading

the ball, but above all the ability to shoot on target.

**Compact defensive lines**

The position of goalkeeper is adapted according to a system. His first task is to monitor the space behind his four defenders and anticipate long balls when necessary.

Nowadays, the majority of defensive lines are compact, with a strategy oriented towards zone marking combined with individual marking depending on the game situation and proximity to the goal.

This tendency is generally observed in international competitions.

The best teams try above all not to leave any space for the opponents and are characterised by having excellent defenders who are comfortable in one-on-one situations and are supported by midfielders pressing the opposition.

It is also particularly noticeable that the best teams commit no or very few fouls near their own penalty area, thus not conceding any free kicks that are dangerous at this distance.

**Goalkeepers**

The quality, speed and trajectory of shots on goal means that the goalkeeper position has become more and more difficult, and at a high level a tall goalkeeper is vital. Being in control of their penalty area, communicating with other players, watching out for long shots, reacting to shots taken from inside the goal area, predicting aerial trajectories and quickly coming off their line into the feet of attackers are the defining qualities of great goalkeepers, who are often strong and spirited characters.

The ability of goalkeepers to constantly raise their level during matches is a gauge of the team's success.



**Set pieces**

The importance of set pieces is clearly demonstrated by the statistic that they lead to 30% of all goals.

The key aspects for the effectiveness of set pieces are the quality of their execution, predefined runs, feints and other combinations, without forgetting of course the opposition defence.

While some teams use a zonal system when they defend corner kicks or wide free kicks, others use a system that combines zonal defence and individual marking.

## Playing systems and tactical flexibility

Good teams stand out with their flexibility and game intelligence.

They are capable of adapting their game according to the opponent and the score, and of making changes when necessary. The best teams demonstrate this ability to act with flexibility not just in different matches, but also within a match according to the situation, but always starting from the same basic system.

This flexibility, added to controlled aggression and the technical quality of the players, is one of the key factors of success. It is also clear that a game that is based too much on passing sequences without looking for depth can lead to a loss of aggression.

Most often based on a four-man defence and zonal system, teams favour traditional formations based on 4-4-2 with two lines of four and two strikers, with one slightly behind the other. However, this flexible system can be adapted or modified based on the game situation or the quality of the players.

A 4-4-2 formation, which was used by nine teams during the last FIFA U-17 World Cup, can offer different variations with a diamond-shaped formation in midfield, or flat with two defensive midfielders and two wide midfielders who return to the centre depending on the situation to open up space for the full-backs coming forward.

A 4-3-3 formation with a central defensive midfielder in front of a four-man defence, supported on the wings by two good passers. When possession is lost, the wingers rejoin the three midfielders and thus form a compact defensive block of nine players whose objective is to prevent the opponent from building an attack.

Another system favoured by coaches is 4-2-3-1. Eight teams adopted this system at the last FIFA U-17 World Cup, as it offers several variants:

- An attacking line of three players placed behind a striker
- On the wings, the two wide players can convert into wingers to form a line of three with the striker, and sometimes move forward to allow overlapping and inside runs
- Greater flexibility to move into a 4-1-4-1, a 4-2-4 or even a 2-3-1-4 formation in an intense attacking situation

Attacks are very varied, marked by numerous permutations or even changes of system, changing from a 5-2-3 in defence to a 3-2-5 in attack, from a 4-2-3-1 in defence to a 3-4-3 in attack, from a 4-1-4-1 in defence to a 4-1-2-3 in attack, etc.

The best teams remain loyal to their original basic tactical system but are constantly adapting depending on the situation within a game or between one match and another, and modifying their system while sticking to the same general principles.

The following tendencies and principles have been observed frequently in the majority of teams:

- When a team plays with only one striker, he is supported by a central playmaker positioned behind him
- There are always two wing players, with the full-backs regularly joining the attacks
- When a team uses two strikers, these two players have complementary profiles (one of them tall and athletic, the other one small, lively and quick for example)

### Decisive details

Minor errors or lapses of attention can tip the balance of a match.

Teams must be wary of a lack of or loss of concentration and of letting their guard down:

- How many matches are won or lost during stoppage time?
- How many unforced errors lead to goals?

While most players are able to contain themselves in one-on-one situations by keeping a handle on their aggression but still winning the duels, the behaviour of some is regularly at the edge of acceptability and they approach duels recklessly and with a lack of control, committing numerous fouls and receiving yellow and red cards.

There are a certain number of factors which may have a positive or negative impact on the result of a match:

- Mental and physical freshness
- Pressure
  - Players require the ability to manage the high or even exaggerated expectations placed on them, which may cause anxiety in many players
  - Being able to handle pressure is an essential quality at the highest level
- Strategies
  - It is imperative that a team comes into the match with a clear strategy and the ability to react depending on the situation in order to avoid losing the thread of the match in case of unforeseen situations
  - When faced with an unusual situation, players sometimes find it difficult to find solutions and therefore are unable to manage the pressure generated by the obligation they feel to win
- The importance of the first goal
  - In the majority of matches, the team that opens the scoring goes on to win the match
  - This psychological aspect of the first goal certainly also explains why teams try above all not to concede a goal by playing an essentially defensive game, even though this provides no guarantees
  - The team in front feels confident and capable of maintaining the game's rhythm

Opening the scoring = opening the door to victory. The statistics concerning the final result obtained in major competitions by teams who scored first are revealing:

- 70% won the match
- 16% drew the match
- 14% lost the match

The results speak for themselves: opening the scoring gives the team an 86% chance of winning or at least drawing the match.

Mentally preparing for a competition is without doubt an essential element and will be fundamental to the development of top-tier football in the years ahead.

# 2

## The player in training

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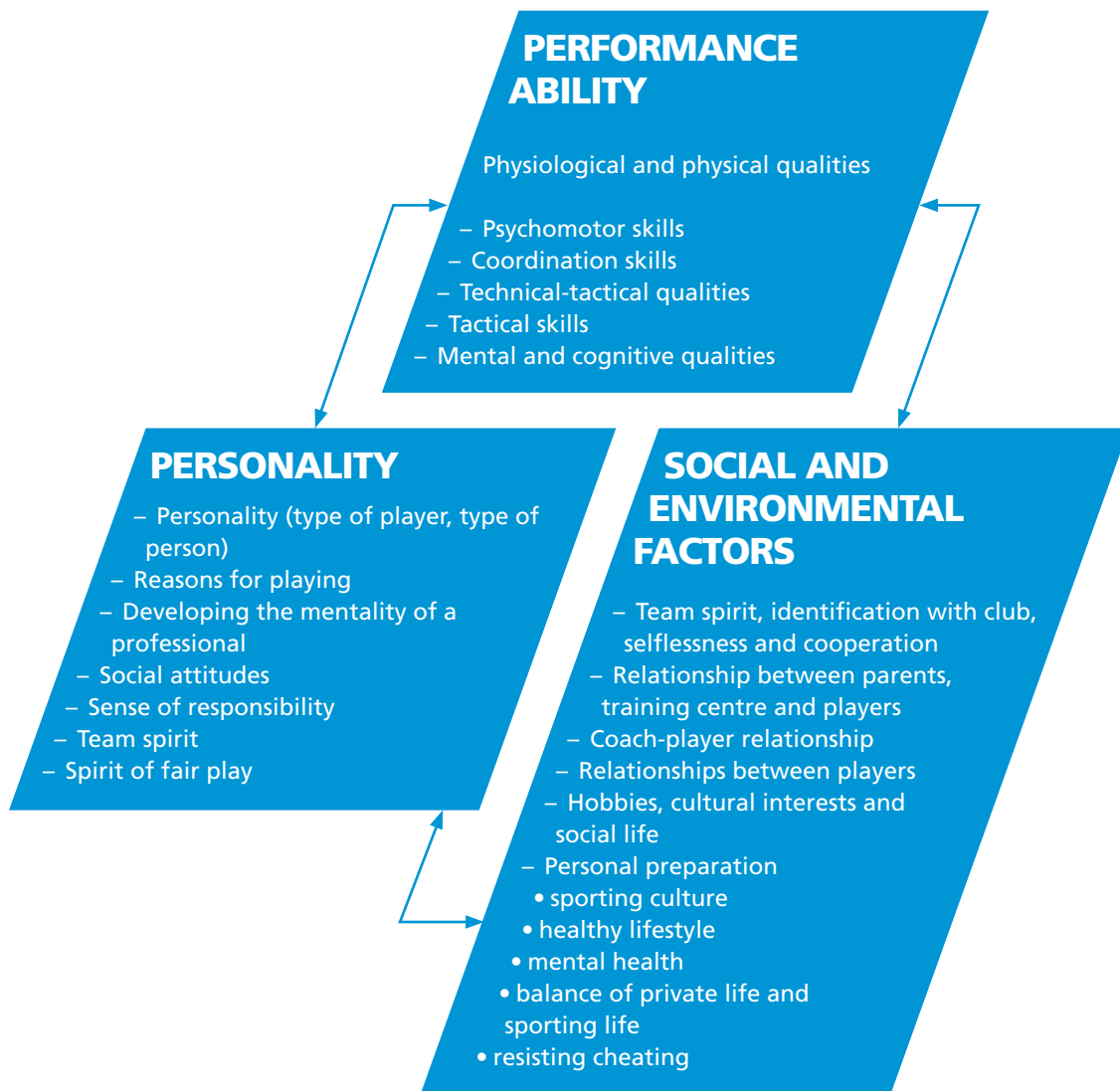




## 2 – THE PLAYER IN TRAINING

The analysis of current trends has shown that while it is vital to address the psychological aspects in order to reach the highest level of football, basic football training must not be neglected. Sport in general and football in particular today play an important educational role through the process of training youngsters.

Football training should not only offer the opportunity to develop the skills necessary for the game itself, but should take a holistic approach, also developing young people's personal and social skills.



## Training adapted to the stages of learning

Football schools, academies and other types of training centres run by the clubs and associations should build their training programmes around the concept of holistic training and educational activity, as well as respecting the stages of development and

their respective learning objectives. Some aspects of training for young footballers can in some respects mirror the stages of traditional school and university education.

Primary school	Secondary school	Sixth form	University
Introductory stage (U-12)	Basic training (U-16)	Intermediate training (U-19)	Advanced training (U-21)

### The stages of learning

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Introduction	Basic training	Intermediate training	Advanced training
age 6 to 12	age 13 to 15	age 16 to 18	age 19 to 21
Psychomotor development Enjoyment	Technique Emotional development	Tactics Emotional development	Specific Individual
Laying foundations for physical fitness		Building athleticism and physique	

These stages form the four pillars of youth football training.

#### Learning objectives

It is essential to establish objectives to be achieved in each of the stages, taking into account the players' age and size, psychological development, puberty, muscular and physical development, learning speed and level of natural potential already achieved.

In the initial stage when children are being introduced to football (age 6-12), the young player's love of football is awakened and deepened through playing the game and he discovers the need to master a certain number of techniques; he will also find his position on the pitch and understand the need to interact with his team-mates to be able to beat the opponents. Coordination exercises, exercises to develop agility and suppleness as well as games based on reactions and changes of direction are also part of training for this age group.

In the period of consolidation (basic training, age 13-15), the focus should be on development and education. Basic training forms a key step in the success of the overall training.

It is the golden age for the development of technical qualities and laying the technical-tactical and psychological foundations. At this age, players work on basic technical skills, individual tactical awareness and basic principles of the game, as well as starting to look at mental attitudes such as concentration, self-confidence, perseverance, will, etc. The focus is on learning, practising and transposing the technical skills mastered to real games. Learning the principles of the game in order to improve players' reading of the game, practising collective technique on the ball and additional physical training devoted specifically to developing aerobic capacity and speed, as well as exercises for suppleness, coordination and movement, complete the training programme.

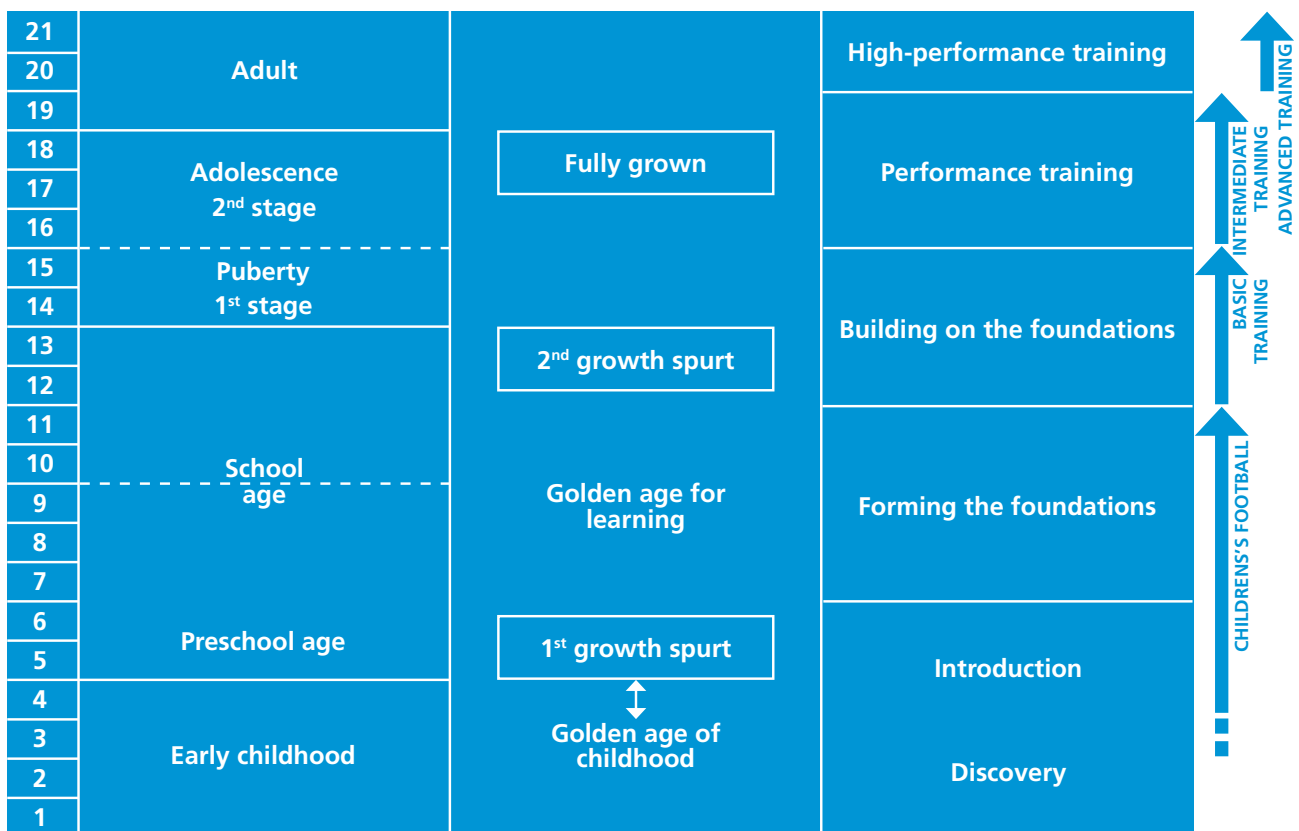
The intermediate training stage (age 16-18) is the time to reinforce the qualities already acquired to enable the player to improve performance. It is also the opportunity to work both qualitatively and quantitatively on the key technical, tactical, physical and mental factors:

- Focusing on teaching techniques specific to the player's position and techniques while moving, at the same time as continuing to work on basic techniques
- Mastering different formations and organisation (attacking and defensive) and adapting to different systems of play
- Reinforcing the athletic and physical qualities already acquired, continuing the work started in the younger age group, introducing power exercises (MAP), stabilising and increasing muscle groups through muscle-strengthening exercises
- Gaining control over mental attitudes, such as concentration, self-confidence, perseverance and will

These components along with the mental qualities form the basic requirements of high-level football. The great footballing countries have all introduced specific development programmes for this stage of training.

At the highest level, it would seem that nowadays a stage of advanced training is also necessary to continue and complete the training of the most promising players. These players aged 19 to 21 years, who are playing regularly or occasionally with a club's first team (amateurs or professionals), are in a tricky situation. It is often the case that these young players have not yet completely finished their training development and there are some gaps, in particular in terms of physical condition (for example muscle strength), technique (for example heading the ball) and mental attitudes (for example perseverance), which can hinder a player's progress to the ranks of the elite if not properly developed.

**The stages of development**



As these players have to train with the professionals during training sessions that are essentially focused on the team as a whole and the competition, they are unfortunately no longer able to regularly keep up their specific training based on individual skills, and therefore cannot maintain the rhythm of their development. To alleviate this situation, it is recommended that training sessions specifically and individually tailored to the needs of these players be organised. Training future professional players

involves preparing them to meet the highest level of competition. Football should be a school of life in the widest sense – its purpose is not just to train professional players, but also to contribute to the holistic development of young people (intelligence, culture, social skills etc.). With this in mind, it is essential to place even more emphasis on the individual's development, using methods and exercises that are age-appropriate and take into account growth spurts, the pace of learning and the natural potential of the individual.

## Advice for the training of young players

Regarding the different stages of development and the changes observed by the Technical Study Groups at the various FIFA U-17 and U-20 World Cups, a certain number of essential lessons can be drawn that apply to the training and education of young players.

### Training adapted to the stages of learning

<b>BUILDING ON THE FOUNDATIONS</b> Basic football training: age 13-15	<b>REINFORCEMENT AND CONSOLIDATION</b> Intermediate football training: age 16 to 18	<b>PERFORMANCE</b> Advanced football training: age 19 to 21
<b>Cementing – Assimilating</b>	<b>Stabilisation – Automatisation</b>	<b>Performance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puberty</li> <li>• Mastering control of the body</li> <li>• Difficult time psychologically</li> <li>• Training in basic techniques</li> <li>• Technical-tactical skills</li> <li>• Individual ball control “under pressure”</li> <li>• Individual and collective tactical awareness (cognitive skills)</li> <li>• Learning the principles of the game</li> <li>• Responsibility in the game</li> <li>• Basic mental attitudes formed through experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adolescence in the final stages of growing</li> <li>• Specific athleticism and physical training</li> <li>• Age of making definitive choices; becoming a young adult; period of “truth”</li> <li>• Technique of team and individual positions “under pressure”</li> <li>• Complex technical-tactical skills “under pressure”</li> <li>• Individual specific game technique</li> <li>• Collective tactical awareness</li> <li>• Defensive and attacking tactical behaviour in the game concept (organisation and playing systems)</li> <li>• Specific tactical behaviour</li> <li>• Mental attitudes affecting performance, through specific training or other techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maturity (establishing the personality)</li> <li>• Optimum physical preparation</li> <li>• Mental attitude to performance (winning mentality)</li> <li>• Appropriate technical responses to specific match situations</li> <li>• Tactical culture (flexibility and adaptability to different tactical situations)</li> <li>• Game strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Coordination – Basic endurance</b> <b>Muscle training – Speed</b>	<b>Strength-power – Speed –</b> <b>Specific endurance</b>	<b>Rhythm of play – Speed of execution –</b> <b>Break</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Game – Exercises with the ball – Game</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group and specific (individual) training</li> <li>• Game format – Technical and technical-tactical exercises – Game</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tactical training</li> <li>• Tactical versatility in the game</li> <li>• Game format – Match transition – Strategies for dead-ball situations</li> </ul>



## Technical aspects

In top-level football, in which all teams are properly prepared physically and work as a well-organised unit, technical quality has become more and more important to a team's chances of success. The best teams all have strong individuals who are capable of making the difference and unlocking matches.

In addition to the traditional roles of goalscorers and playmakers, there are now a number of players who combine the two skills – creating chances but also capable of finishing.

It is no longer enough just to work on technique in training, players need to very quickly have exposure to real-life game situations. Technique itself is no longer the be-all and end-all as players also need determination and efficiency.

Therefore, free play should be prioritised during training sessions because this generates creativity and risk-taking.

Encouraging initiative, risk-taking and dribbling from a very young age prepares talented players to make the difference later on because, at the end of the day, in the majority of cases, it is an individual who changes the course of a match.

The traditional approach is no longer appropriate in the training of youngsters,

and training should strike a balance between specific exercise-based work and allowing creativity to come to the forefront in free play.

The main technical elements to work on include mastering the art of controlling the ball in tight spaces, the ability to individually elude an opponent with the first touch of the ball, and the ability to retain possession with one's back to the goal even when under pressure from an opponent.

The importance of wing play (which leads to about 50% of all goals), means that the quality of passes (diagonal balls, balls played in behind the defence, balls played into gaps, etc.) and the variety and accuracy of crosses (pull-backs, to the far post, bending crosses, fired across goal, etc.) must be worked on.

Faced with packed defences that leave less and less space, exercises to improve the speed of short, sharp penetrating passes in behind the opponent's defence or through gaps need to be prioritised in training youngsters as this principle, together with dribbling, is the only way to catch defences off balance.

As a result, work on individual technique in young players is a must, starting from a younger and younger age.

## Tactical aspects

Alongside technique, the tactical aspect and game awareness have proved to be decisive factors for good team performance.

This means that it is important to develop a culture of tactical thinking from a young age, for example:

- Awareness of playing zones
- Principles of zonal play
- Occupying the pitch appropriately
- Finding a balance in the team between attack and defence
- The idea of transition: immediate reorganisation in defence after loss of possession and quickly launching attacks when possession is regained
- Optimal use of the width of the pitch
- Optimising wing play
- Ability to effectively put pressure on the player in possession

But also:

- The ability to keep the ball, even under pressure, by short passes with a minimum number of touches of the ball and in reduced space
- Switching rapidly from zonal marking to a one-on-one situation
- The ability to change formation during the course of a match

In order to do this, the coach needs to:

- Propose a game plan
- Define the tactical principles depending on whether the team has possession or not
- Continually refer to these principles in every training session, both with simple exercises and repetitive drills or by practical application in different training games

Tactics should be taught based on the zonal play that dominates football today.

In terms of defensive play, defending zonally as a team with two or three tight lines that move around and follow the ball is a key tactic to develop when training youngsters.

Training should therefore focus on how to recover possession as a team.

In the modern game, defensive play is more about the number of players (three or four) who surround the man in possession to block the attack, rather than individual defensive actions.

Learning how to defend as a team in a deep position, in the middle of the pitch or in the opponents' half will help young players to develop an understanding of tactical systems.

Tied in with this idea of defending as a team is the need for attackers to act as "the first line of defence" by immediately pressurising the opponent in the area in which possession is lost, not only to prevent the opponents from launching an attack immediately, but also to allow their teammates to regroup in defence.

Finally, while zonal defending is predominant, the best defenders stand out with their ability to individually win duels in the air and on the ground.

### **Success starts with zonal defending and ends with a one-on-one**

With regard to attacking play, the two main points to concentrate on in training are learning to vary the type of attacks with both build-up play and rapid attacks, and knowing how to control the speed of transitions (between attack and defence and vice versa).

These two basic situations require concentration and quick analysis and reaction time at the right moment: keep the ball and stall for time, advance and play deep, create a numerical advantage or choose individual action.

Well-planned training sessions and experience of real-game situations will, little by little, enable young players to make progress in these essential areas.

Playing the ball forward at pace still leads too often to an immediate loss of possession, either as the move has not been thought out, or because the players do not have the necessary technique yet.

Playing quickly is commendable, but too many young players still confuse speed

with haste. Thus counter-attacks should be practised, starting from a long pass or an individual action, but also, and what is much more difficult, with rapid attacks coming from a small group of three, four or five players moving forward, which leads to fast-paced passes with one or two touches of the ball to throw the opponent off balance.

Young players still find it difficult to master controlled build-up play based on ball possession, mainly because they do not yet have the necessary individual technique, because they are not patient enough, or because they are too quick to try to play the ball deep.

Particular attention should be paid to teaching the movement of the ball throughout the team, either by using triangles and taking as few touches as possible, by outnumbering opponents down a wing, or by using the whole width of the pitch by switching play with cross-field passes.

Training for this type of situation consists in teaching players to circulate the ball as quickly as possible while staying patient when confronted with a compact defensive unit. Teams will be able to find gaps and catch opponents off guard if they play a string of passes as quickly as possible, but also if they use movement around the man in possession and use the whole width of the pitch.

Finally, individual skills and the ability of certain players to take the initiative will always be a key tactical weapon.

All the best teams have one player who is capable of unlocking a game on his own. It is said in this regard: "if tactics are applied technique, technique is tactics in practice".

Coaches should pay particular attention to this type of player, especially at youth level, within an organised team, and give these players a certain level of freedom to use their initiative and express their creativity for the good of the team.

The two tables below provide a summary of the training objectives:

### Focus and aims of training sessions: technical and tactical aspect

TECHNICAL ASPECT	TECHNICAL-TACTICAL ASPECT	COLLECTIVE TACTICAL ASPECT
<b>Individual ball control</b>	<b>Technical actions in game situations</b>	<b>Integrating the player into the team</b>
<p><b>Develop and improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Repertoire of technical moves and confidence on the ball</li> <li>– Coordination</li> <li>– Ball control skills: under pressure, at high speed, when tired, under threat from the opponent</li> <li>– Technical skills when moving               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taking the ball, controlling the first pass</li> <li>• dribbles, feints; various types of crosses</li> <li>• follow-up (head, feet) and finishing</li> <li>• direct play (one or two touches)</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Speed of execution of move (making the right choice quickly)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop and improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The technical qualities of defence and attack in a game situation</li> <li>– Cognitive skills (tactical awareness), individual tactical behaviour</li> <li>– Rapid transitions from defence to attack and vice versa</li> <li>– Change in pace</li> <li>– The tactical relationship between the players and the lines</li> <li>– Playing in zones, based on tactical understanding</li> <li>– Being able to read the game and the culture of the game</li> </ul>	<p><b>Develop and improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Tactical behaviour in terms of the game, system and tactical organisation</li> <li>– Tactical versatility in the game, in the lines (attack, midfield, defence) and in the transition from attack to defence or vice versa</li> <li>– Versatility in zonal play, in mixed formations</li> <li>– Switching tactics, systems and formations</li> <li>– Set pieces (dead-ball situations): techniques and tactics</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Player with the ball in a one-on-one duel</li> <li>– Exercises first performed alone, then with a partner as technical support</li> <li>– Variations on simple exercises, using dynamic movement, rhythm, and progressively getting up to optimum speed</li> <li>– Coordination skills and technical moves using all the contact surfaces (legs, chest, head)</li> <li>– Player with ball, aiming for efficiency and creativity</li> <li>– Training through progressive exercises; by drills, circuits, technical exercises and playing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Training methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Real games of 2v1, 4v4, 5v4 and 9v9</li> <li>– Real-game situations and actions, with change of pace</li> <li>– Exercises with varied game situations to improve concentration and cognitive qualities</li> <li>– Progressive repetitive exercises without an opponent or with a passive opponent, then active or semi-active with match intensity; try to increase speed of execution</li> <li>– Game, exercise, game format</li> <li>– Vary size of pitch for the same formation</li> <li>– Games with numerical advantage or disadvantage</li> <li>– Boost players' confidence, promote risk-taking</li> </ul>	<p><b>Training methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Line by line towards the idea of defending as a team: from 7v6, or 4v11 to 9v9 or 11v11</li> <li>– Game format and tactical exercises with formations</li> <li>– Attack versus defence or vice versa</li> <li>For example:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• six defenders against seven or eight attackers</li> <li>• game training with teams of 11</li> <li>• playing against a defence of six players</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Playing a game with or without instructions</li> <li>– Improve understanding and make tactical thinking come automatically</li> <li>– Use of video recordings for match analysis</li> </ul>

### Focus and aims of training sessions: physical aspect

ATHLETIC AND PHYSICAL ASPECT	
Psychomotor and athletic skills	
<p><b>Develop and improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Optimal physical preparation</li> <li>– General and specific athletic and physical foundations</li> <li>– Injury prevention</li> <li>– Monitoring the performance level</li> <li>Taking into account the physical development and age</li> </ul>	<p><b>Training methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Basic physical factors: aerobic endurance, muscle strength, suppleness, coordination and speed, from the age of ten</li> <li>– Specific factors, aerobic endurance (aerobic power), muscle strength and reflexes, acyclic and arrhythmic speed, age 15 to 18</li> <li>– Training sessions with multiple objectives:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordination + technique and endurance</li> <li>• strength and speed coordination and technique</li> <li>• aerobic-anaerobic endurance and technical-tactical aspect</li> <li>• aerobic power and speed-strength and technique</li> <li>• speed + coordination and suppleness</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Integrated training with the ball</li> <li>– Isolated training and complementary sports</li> </ul>

## Athletic aspects

Top-level players must be able to cope with a very high level of repetitive effort given the ever-increasing length of actual playing time:

- Rigorous base-level work (aerobic) will improve the players' physiological capacities and thus increase the length of time they can play for
- Regular coordination and stability exercises are likely to enable an improvement in individual technique and physical control
- Speed and agility are unquestionably among the indispensable qualities required of the modern player, and over and above the development of these two qualities on a purely athletic level, work on speed with the ball specifically tailored to football should be undertaken as early as possible

Alternating between high speed and low speed exercises during training sessions will prepare players for the fundamental requirements of the modern game based on changes of pace.

To summarise, increasing the pace and the ability to maintain it are the two areas in which it is vital that the players progress in order to reduce the number of technical or even tactical errors they make that are caused by tiredness, and thus to improve individual performance as well as the collective performance of the team.

It is important therefore to continue to work on these essential elements: agility, explosiveness, speed and power.

The modern footballer needs pace and the ability to change gears, and training methods must take this into account.

Training should always be based on endurance, but work on pace should include high-speed and low-speed exercises.

Including sequences of three or four exercises at fast pace in tactical sessions (for example build-up play, counter-attack with defensive regrouping each time) will enable young players to cope with the demands of top-level football.

Finally, as we know that speed is without doubt the most indispensable quality required of footballers today, it is thus necessary when training young players and during specific training sessions, to develop and work on speed in all its forms:

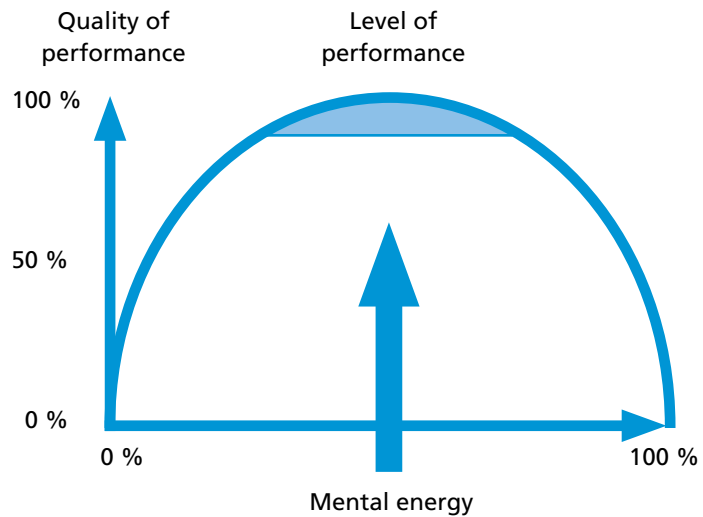
- Speed of reaction
- Running speed
- Agility
- Speed of execution (taking out the opponent with the first touch of the ball)
- Tactical speed (increasing the speed of transition between attack and defence)

Psychological and educational aspects

Analysis of current trends has shown us the importance of psychological strength as a key quality in a footballer. The difference between great players and average players is often in their mastery of the mental aspect. Working on this aspect has therefore become the fourth pillar in the training of young players.

Development of psychological strength in young players is, like technique, tactics and physical condition, the result of systematic and logical training and must be integrated into the planning and organisation of training sessions and matches.

The first objective of psychological development is to achieve the ideal performance state: an "individual energetic state".



Focus and aims of training sessions: psychological and educational aspects

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MENTAL ASPECT	LEARNING
<b>Mental attitudes to performance</b>	<b>Ideas for education and training</b>
<p><b>Improve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Players’ mental preparation</li> <li>– Awareness of the psychological factors that influence performance</li> <li>– Training of mental aptitudes on the pitch:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration, attention, self-confidence, will, perseverance, aggression, controlling emotions, determination, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>– The means to improve players’ mental strength</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learn and improve</b></p> <p>a) Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Players’ personal preparation:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• healthy lifestyle and nutrition</li> <li>• looking after one’s body</li> <li>• recovery and regeneration</li> <li>• preparing for performance</li> <li>• combining the demands of school and sport</li> <li>• general culture and sporting culture</li> <li>• understanding the Laws of the Game</li> <li>• fair play/sporting behaviour</li> <li>• the issue of doping</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>b) Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individual training in small groups (two to eight players)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic technique                                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For attackers, midfielders, defenders</li> <li>Coordination, running training</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>– Make training more individually tailored</li> <li>– Optimise the quality of training, feedback and the coach-player relationship</li> <li>– Find ways to make up for lack of infrastructure or equipment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Training games and exercises that regularly include mental aspects</li> <li>– Introduce objectives of a psychological nature into training activities                             <p>For example: one-on-one duel – concentration, perseverance, aggression, cognitive qualities (perception/anticipation)</p> </li> <li>– Tactical games with instructions or games to develop qualities of perception (anticipation, analysis, decision-making)</li> <li>– Exercises or game format under pressure and when tired</li> <li>– Always identify with the player the psychological factor(s) behind the success or lack of success</li> <li>– Other training techniques:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visualisation, communication (talking to oneself)</li> <li>• self-evaluation of performances</li> <li>• relaxation</li> <li>• personal preparation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



# 3

## The instructor

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## 3 – THE INSTRUCTOR

There are many demands in terms of providing youngsters with all-round training to prepare them for the football of tomorrow. An instructor has to fulfil several roles: he is a trainer, an educator, a coach and, as a person of trust, he is also a confidant for the players and those close to them. In comparison to a coach of a professional team, an instructor is more responsible for the progress of each player rather than for the team's results.

As an instructor-educator, he has to know the character of his young players. By building up a confidential relationship between the trainer and the player and by using educational support, the instructor can act as a guide and participate in the development of the youngsters' personalities and mental strength.

As an instructor-trainer, he must know modern football and its trends, and choose the technical, tactical and physical fitness basics that will enable players to reach the top. He must know the principles of learning as well as the methods need to make sure training sessions are as effective as possible.

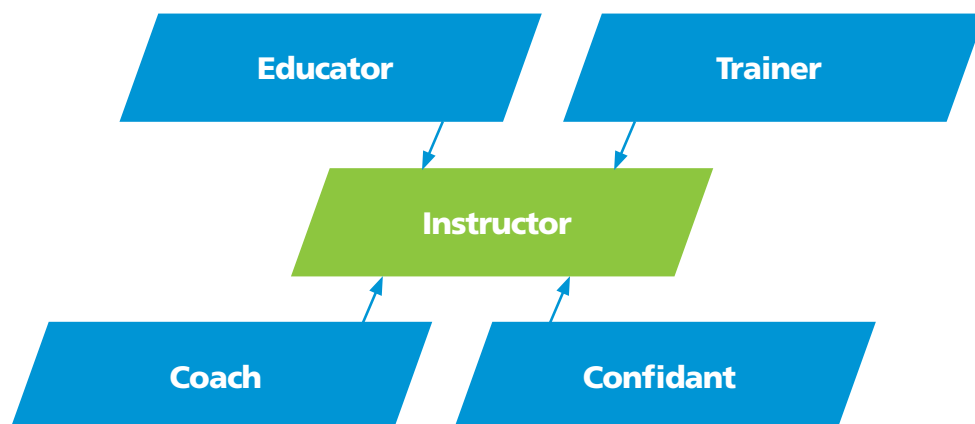
As an instructor-coach, he has to be fully aware of the importance of competition and give advice accordingly, but he should

never prioritise the competitive aspect to the detriment of training and the development of each young player's skills.

*"Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn."  
(Benjamin Franklin)*

As an instructor-confidant, he has to set an example and assume responsibility for the psychological and social management of his young players. He can only advise them if he has human qualities that are recognised and accepted by the youngsters. To that end, he has to maintain the trust of the players' family and school circles, without which no career can ever be built upon solid foundations.

The key skills of the instructor are focused on each youngster's progress. The importance of the instructor's various roles will change as training progresses: at basic training level, he mainly needs to be an educator, and at intermediate training level he needs to be more of a trainer and a coach, all for the good of the youngsters.



## The instructor-educator

The instructor is primarily an educator. For many instructors of children and youngsters, this is an extremely demanding role. Instructors are (also) members of our society and subject to the instability of its values, which are not always in line with the values we would like to protect by providing young footballers with all-round training. Today, more than ever, instructors need to have an ethical orientation.

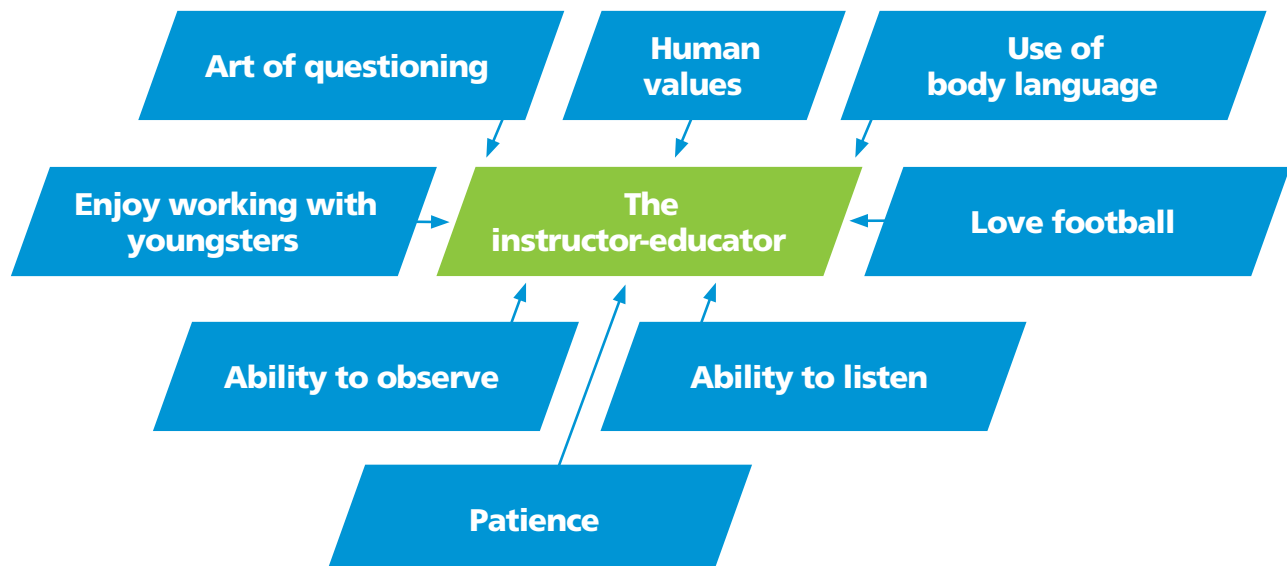
The basic principle of education is to create a climate in which people can be instructed and educated.

- The instructor-educator has to create a spirit of mutual trust between himself and his players;
- He should not say “you have to go there”; instead, he should tell his players where they need to go to, how they can get there, and with whom;
- The instructor-educator has to set educational goals. In his work, he accepts the notion of sportsmanship and the confidence of youth, two things he should never lose sight of. Fair play is not stupidity, and a lack of fair play is not intelligence but rather mediocrity;
- The instructor-educator has to provoke or recognise the possibilities of teaching and education, for example, in delicate conflict situations or disputes between players during matches or training sessions.
- He must always be aware of the fact that he is setting an example for his players, that he is someone for them to learn from. For them, he is – whether he likes it or not – a role model, which means that he must always be in control of his behaviour (verbal or non-verbal). For example, his reactions to a mistake by his players, to a poor decision by a referee, to unsporting behaviour by parents among the spectators, or even his own choice of words during sessions with the team.

*“With youngsters, it is not the technique but rather the spirit of the game, the development of the game, the maturity of the game, of competition and the joy of playing that have to be the focus of the coach.”*

*(Rinus Michels)*

### The key skills of an instructor-educator



### Instructor-educator: what to do, what to avoid

#### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF THE INSTRUCTOR- EDUCATOR

1. Enjoy working with youngsters
2. Know them well
3. Set an example
4. Be demanding but tolerant
5. Be able to listen
6. Communicate properly with all of the players
7. Support them
8. Give them freedom
9. Give them confidence and reassurance
10. Consider them as partners

#### WHAT TO AVOID

1. Shouting all the time, being too aggressive
2. Trying to coach them and make them play as if they were adults
3. Forgetting the youngsters' main motivation: playing
4. Forgetting the basic techniques
5. Setting objectives that are inappropriate for their age
6. Holding repetitive sessions
7. Staying on the same exercise too long
8. Presenting or explaining in too much depth; interrupting sessions too much
9. Criticising a player in front of the group
10. Accepting a deterioration in the teaching or sporting environment



# The instructor-trainer

## The methodology of training

Training on the pitch, planning, coaching and evaluation are the main parts of the time that the instructor spends with his players.

During training sessions, the pitch can resemble a stage in a theatre, with actors preparing for their roles. The pitch is therefore a place of intense work where the players learn the football skills they need to develop.

Training sessions are part of the education process: training means learning to exert and correct oneself, regardless of the player's level or experience, as there are always educational training phases (new technical and tactical skills, new tactical situations depending on the opponents).

This is why it is important to stay as effective as possible thanks to:

- Written preparation of the content and organisation of the session
- Transmission of methodological principles
- The relationship between the coach, the individual players and the team
- The coach's animation
- The quality of the instructions/coaching

### **Preparation and organisation of a session:**

- The objectives of training
- The choice of session type (focus on technique / technique and tactics / physical fitness, etc.)
- The structure of the session (three phases)
- The choice of educational methods (global, analytical) and training methods (continuous, interval, circuit, etc.)
- Finding the ideal balance between effort and recuperation
- Individualisation
- The choice of materials and equipment
- The organisation and preparation of the pitch
- Evaluation and testing of skills

### **Animation of session**

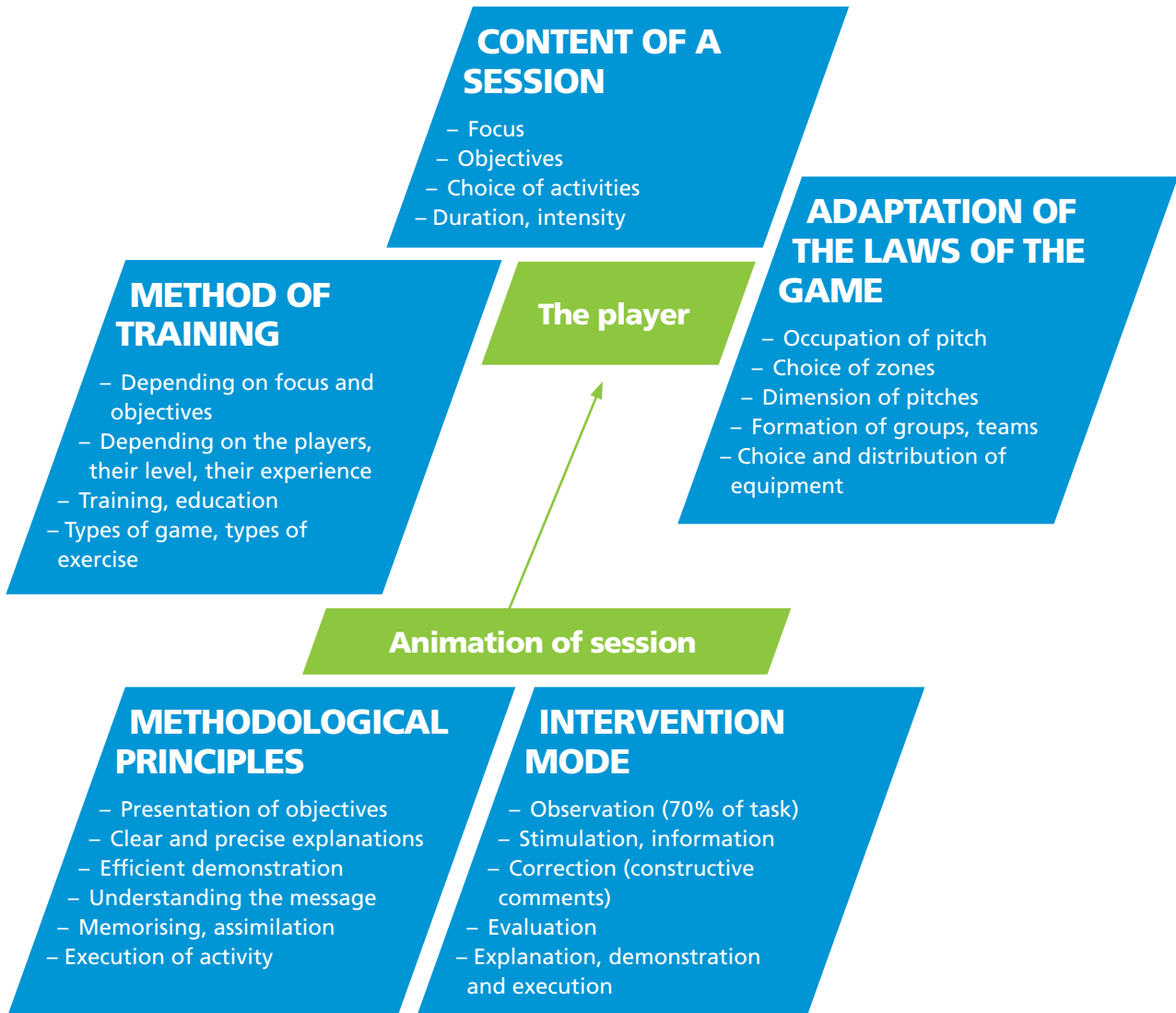
This depends on the coach's delivery style and his manner of intervention. The role of a coach is similar to that of a director, who observes, directs, advises, listens, demonstrates, reinforces, decides, etc.

### **The educational objective of a session**

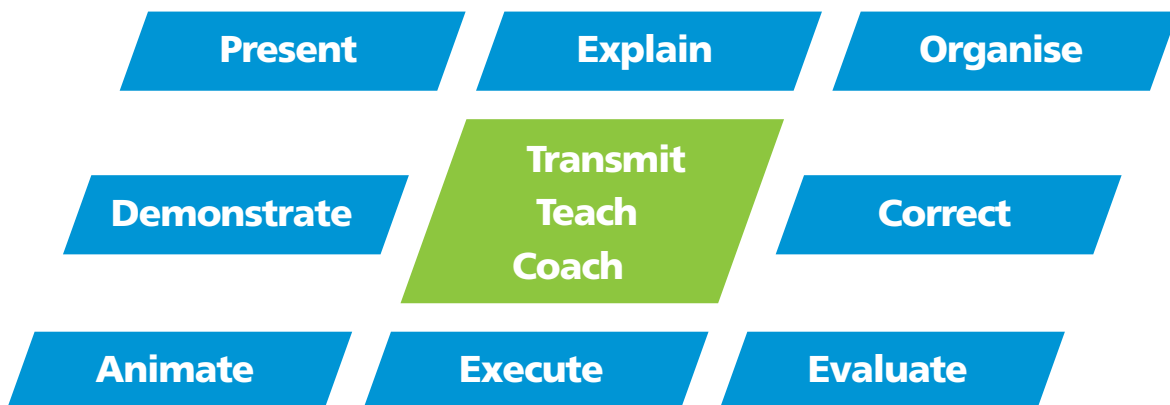
In each exercise and in each match situation, the players have to be effective from both a mental and physical perspective.

Example: a move involving three players, with overlaps and a cross, can only be successful if the cross is accurate.

**Conducting a session**



**Methodology of instructor-trainer**



## No progress without feedback

### Behaviour of the coach:

- Pay attention
- Stay true to the selected objectives (if the objective is to work on defensive play, the trainer comments on the defensive work)
- Move around the pitch (range of actions)
- Animate the action, motivate the players
- Observe
- Stimulate
- Correct

### Interventions of the coach:

- When and how to intervene? (global vision of action, then specific vision)
- When to correct? (immediately, after observation time?)
- What means of correction?
  - words
  - gestures
  - direct engagement
- Involve the player(s):
  - recall the stated objective
  - focus on the problem(s)
  - question the player(s), listen to them
  - encourage cooperation

- Repeat the explanation, demonstration and execution of the training activity (combination, game, exercise)

### Correction:

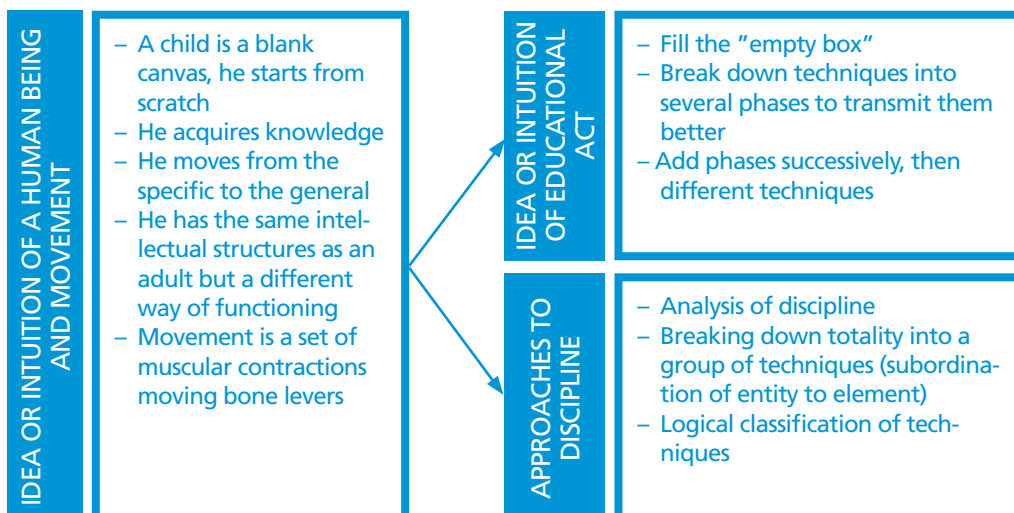
- Do not focus on too many mistakes at the same time
- Focus on the essential (which can lead to immediate success)
- Do not be too aggressive, especially in exercises focusing on psychomotor skills
- Address the whole team or the player(s) concerned
- Be convincing, fair and precise
- Reinforce positively
- Give confidence while being persuasive
- Vary the tone of voice in comments
- Encourage players to evaluate themselves

Every intervention calls for improvisation, imagination.

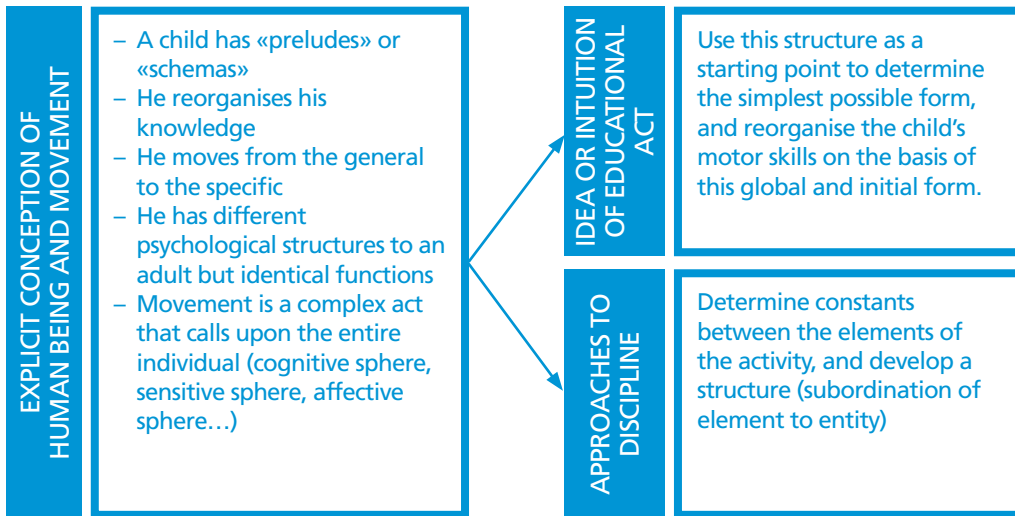
## Main educational methods

To make training sessions effective, the instructor has to know the key principles of education and select the appropriate methodology.

### Intuitive methods (analytical method)



**Synthetic methods (global method)**



**Artificial methods (the global method)**

Football is based around links between attack and defence that are only understandable when one is viewed alongside the other. Using this as a starting point, it is possible to present a two-part structure, with their internal contradictions, in a circular pattern.



**Summary**

Analytical (or fragmented) education tries to break down the final movement that is to be learned as part of the task. The difficulty of this education lies in breaking down the task to be learned into sub-tasks. The problem is that the sum of these sub-tasks does not lead to the technical skill in its environment, and visual, tactile, audio and kinaesthetic signals have to be taken into consideration.

Extra education is needed to ensure that the subject is able to bring all of these sub-tasks together.

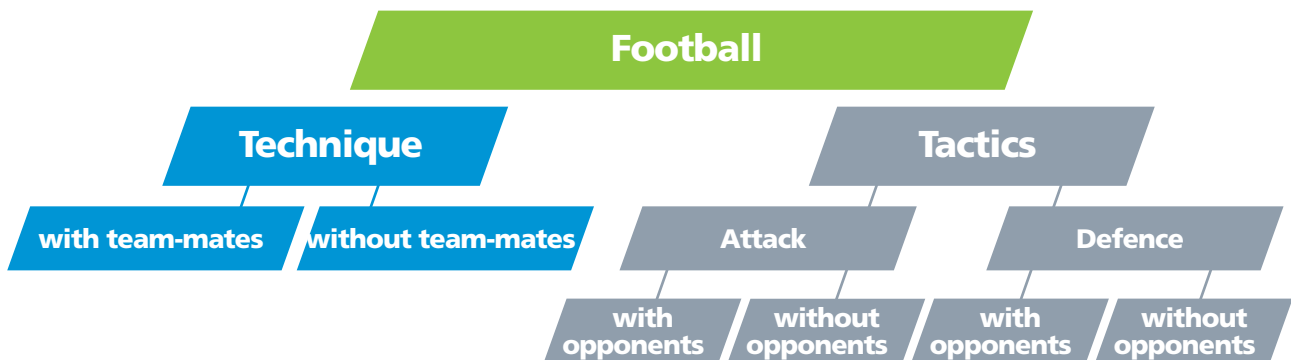
Each sub-task can also be divided into parts. Training in this manner ensures that players returning from injury can simply work on one part of a skill or just one muscle group, or to focus on one joint so that they can avoid injury as part of a targeted training programme.

Using analytical education in football ensures that players can work on the most difficult or technical skills (shooting at goal) so that they can all be brought together later.

The global method is the opposite of the analytical method: the former involves placing the subject in the final situation. In other words, it is an education of discovery. The same holds true for education based on reading, as the global method takes the image of the entire word into account before the syllables (sounds).

There is no stereotypical response to this education as each child can act as he likes. Hébertisme (aerial obstacle courses) is another example of global learning, as it involves using just one trail in a forest course consisting of tests and challenges designed to develop specific physical skills such as balance, muscular strength, etc.

## Intuitive methods (analytical)

**Conclusion**

The advantage of the global method is that it places the subject in the situation. The activity is performed freely, and problems linked to the sport can be posed. It is often used at the very beginning, when the environment plays a key role.

As the level increases, the technical skills, a more in-depth study of the task and the specialisation of responses lead to an analytical fragmentation that is more and more detailed.

Consequently, the coach has to switch between the global and analytical methods in his plans.

The global method helps to ensure that players stay motivated, whereas the analytical method can lead to a lack of motivation because it is so repetitive.

The approach chosen by the coach has to bring both methods together; the global-analytical-global method is one possible solution.

### Repetition as a fundamental principle of learning

#### Value and limits of repetition in terms of energy

The same technical route or the same game situation with the same speed of execution (one form of training) will never improve performances due to physical as well as psychological habituation. Motivation is destroyed by uniformity, and if there is no true desire to perform the activity, there will only be minimal progress. The physiological principle of progressive load has to be respected.

#### Value and limits of repetition in terms of structure

Exercises and game situations have to be varied so that a beginner is able to resolve different game problems.

Repetition therefore has to respect the principles of load (intensity) and variety of situations.



## Educational approach of the global-analytical-global method

Even if the global method appears to be more interesting, the analytical method still plays a key role in the educational process. It is therefore advisable to use the two methods.

This quote explains the reasons behind the global-analytical-global method, closer to matches in its global approach, more accurate in its corrections due to the

analytical approach, and yet not preventing the child from expressing himself creatively. Consequently, the global-analytical-global method simply uses the global method in the training process, followed after a certain length of time by the analytical method to correct or rectify the players' work in training (while giving them some time to adapt) before finally returning to the global method.

## The instructor-coach

A coach needs to know how to give instructions and advice, and know how to direct and manage a team so that the work done in training is used correctly during a match.

### **An instructor-coach must strive to:**

- **listen:**
  - show an interest in others, listen to the players' personal and psychological problems
  - be at ease in the role of «social assistant»
- **be open-minded:**
  - do not fear change or innovation
  - question oneself after a run of defeats or in the event of disputes
  - be receptive to any constructive suggestions

### - **manage time:**

- do not be pre-occupied with football
- find time to work on own shortcomings
- find time for oneself

### - **give encouragement:**

- encourage and pay compliments (particularly youngsters)
- make positive comments
- do not generalise too much

## Match coaching

- **Pre-match:**
  - Plan the match preparations
  - Organise any team travel and accommodation
  - Know the personal situation (physical and psychological) of the players (individual discussions)
  - Pick the team while taking everything into account
  - Analyse the opponents (video)
  - Pay attention to team spirit
  
- **The day of the match:**
  - Bring the team together (place; time; duration; participants)
    - remind the players of individual and collective instructions
    - announce the team line-up
    - briefly present the opponents: their strengths, their weaknesses (this presentation may have been done during the week)
    - pay attention to the climatic conditions and the state of the pitch
    - motivate the team, particularly specific players
    - remind the players of the importance of getting ready (ideal state of performance)
  - It is now very common to organise another session on the morning of the match to prepare the players physically and mentally
  - It is important to state that the objective of the pre-match meeting is not to bombard the players with words, but to give the players accurate and concise instructions. Too much talking can be detrimental
  - Always remember: «the shorter, the better».

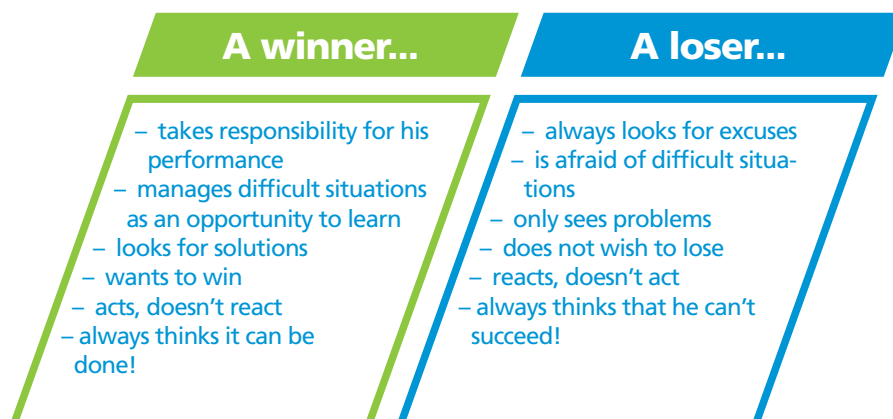
### – During the match

**General attitude: positive, encouraging, motivating, patient, exemplary and correct**

A match is simply a test of the effectiveness of training and education, which means that progress over the longer term is more important than one result in a competition. A match creates real-life situations that have been practised during training sessions.

- The instructor observes the match and his players according to the same objectives that were followed during training sessions in the week leading up to the match
- The advice and instructions are identical to those given in training
- The instructor watches his players' actions attentively and calmly
- His coaching anticipates actions and solutions
- The players are 100% responsible for their performances
- The instructor observes the performance and progress of each player, and not the result
- A match allows players to experience new situations and to learn how to find solutions
- The instructor comments on the progress of each player and the team
- The instructor sets an example with his behaviour towards the referee, the opponents and his players

During a match, the conduct of an instructor-coach and his players reflects their attitude and mental strength.



- **At half-time:**
  - Ensure that players calm down and recuperate
  - Sum up the important points to be changed or corrected on the basis of the notes written during the first half, particularly in relation to tactics and any individual errors
  - Do not focus on what happened during the first half (“what’s done is done”), but if necessary:
    - change certain tactics
    - change the gameplan
    - change the team by substituting a player
    - give simple, clear, short and precise instructions
    - focus on the positive
    - spur the players on and boost their confidence
    - encourage and motivate
    - demand more discipline
  - Address players by their first name
  - Make sure that every player feels involved, including substitutes
  - Be confident, reassuring and convincing
- **N.B.:**
  - As half-time is very short, focus on the essential. The players have to be able to return to the pitch, fully aware of what they need to do, and not asking themselves questions.
  - Every tactical situation planned for the match – including organisational changes that may be made at half-time – needs to be practised during training sessions before matches.
- **After the match:**
  - Do not make many comments straight after the match: do not organise a team meeting (players are too tired, nervous, full of emotion)
  - Speak in a positive manner
  - If the team has lost, stay in control of the situation, ask assistants for help before addressing the media or the directors. Do not look for excuses, do not criticise the players, the referee, the fans
  - Accept your responsibilities
- **Debriefing:**  
(the next day):
  - Organise a meeting with all of the players, in a calm and, if possible, neutral place
    - convey impressions, verdict
    - encourage the players to reflect on their own performances
    - draw conclusions and look for solutions
    - ask for the players’ opinions (encourage them to take responsibility)
  - At the end of the meeting, which should be full of constructive criticism, the players should know:
    - the key points and objectives to improve on both an individual and team level (mental work, technique/ tactics) and the practical ways to make those improvements
    - what they can do to improve
  - Using videos to analyse the match is strongly recommended as it is a great help for the players
  - Depending on the importance of the points on the agenda, and if the match has been lost, there can be a second post-match meeting:
    - the day after the match: coach’s impressions, and possibly any steps to be taken to resolve any problems
    - two days after the match: how do we approach the next match?
  - If individual criticism is needed (in private), talk about the player, not the person. This can be done, if necessary, with the team

An instructor has a major influence over his young players. As he spends a lot of time with them, his own conduct and behaviour will shape his players’ attitudes. A good instructor is fully aware of this. He cannot be regarded simply as a coach, but also as a guide and someone whose example is to be followed.

He should always have a positive and exemplary attitude, both towards physical matters (fitness and a healthy lifestyle) and towards his social and emotional behaviour during matches.

## The instructor-confidant

An instructor should also try and build up a respectful relationship with the players' family and school circles, and increasingly with players' agents. Without such mutual respect, it is difficult or nigh on impossible to plan a solid career both inside and outside of the game. The instructor therefore has a responsibility to act as a confidant and develop healthy relationships with the people surrounding his young players. Here is some career-planning advice:

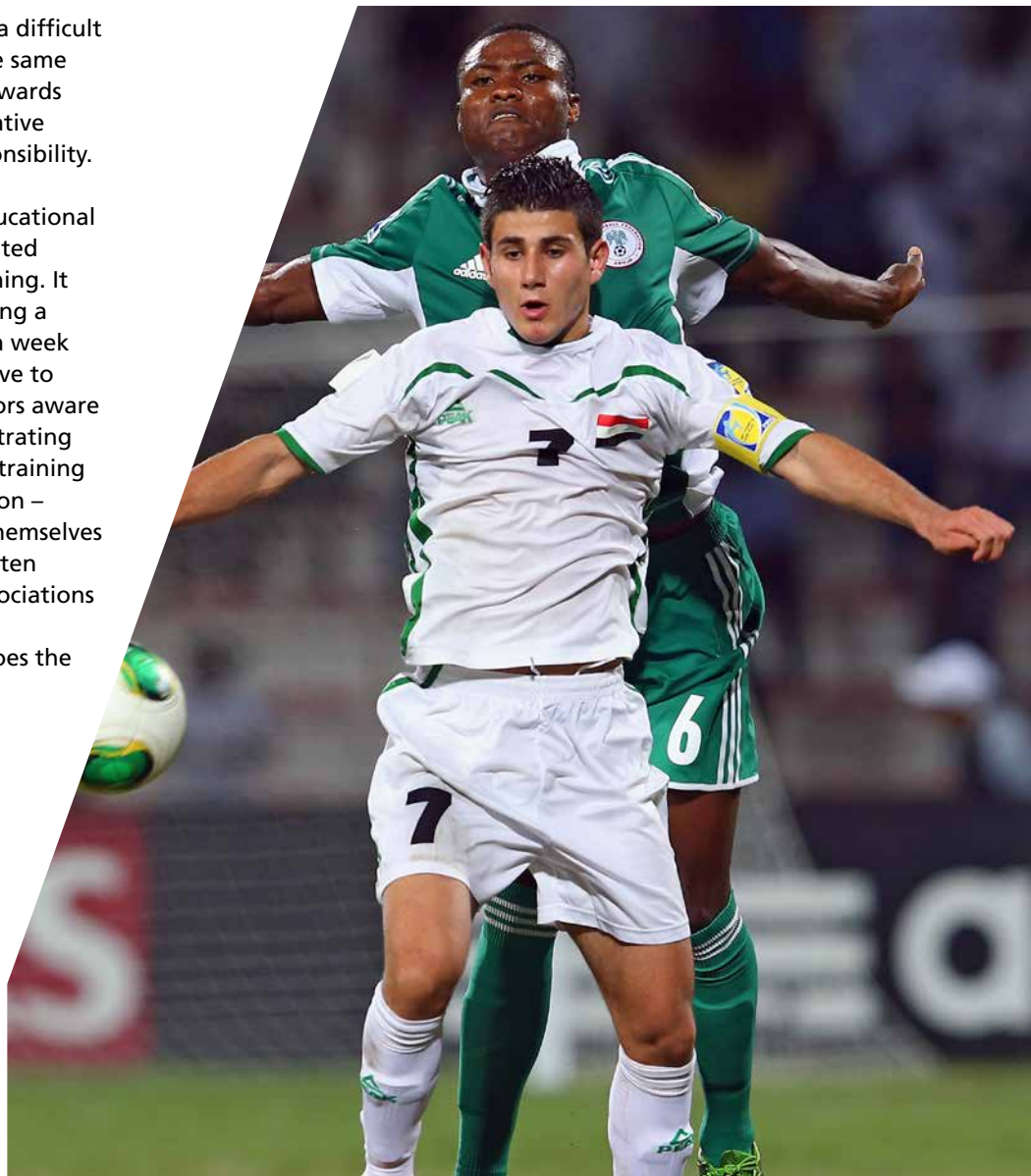
- Always communicate with the families and schools of players
- Organise regular meetings with the people close to the players, and possibly

- with their agents (at least twice per season) to analyse and examine the objectives; possibly adapt the personal plans for the medium- or long-term
- Ask a specialist to establish a genuine career plan within the association or club (planning of studies, negotiations with schools, universities or companies, time management, complementary programmes, etc.)
- Retrain as soon as professional career has finished

## The instructor's ongoing education

Being an instructor for the elite is a difficult and complex profession, but at the same time it is captivating and rich in rewards thanks to the educational and creative actions that comes with such responsibility.

Coaches have relatively limited educational possibilities, mainly due to the limited amount of time available for teaching. It is impossible to do everything during a training course that only lasts for a week or a few days. Nevertheless, we have to and can do more. Making instructors aware of their responsibility and demonstrating the educational potential of basic training is important, and ongoing education – whether by the players teaching themselves or by the instructor himself, but often organised and provided by the associations – ensures that instructors progress systematically, and as a result so does the next generation of players.



# 4

## Technique

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## 4 – TECHNIQUE

Technique is what creates the content of the game and facilitates all the tactical moves required for a team to work well together.

To learn good technique, a player requires good coordination, which is a psychomotor function. Children's psychomotor functions reach maturity between the ages of 12 and 15, at the same time as they enter puberty, while the qualities affecting functional performance (speed, reflexes and stamina) do not reach maturity until around the age of 16 to 18.

Psychomotor activity precedes execution of movement: it is the origination of movement in conscious mental activity, the invisible component. A coach who neglects this aspect will achieve limited success. It is therefore necessary from an early age to encourage and activate the mental mechanisms that precede execution of movements, especially in the basic training stage. To improve individual technical skills in modern football, it is essential to optimise coordination abilities.

Good technique is based primarily on developing a good relationship between the body and the ball, with the ball being

at the service of the player and not the reverse.

Work on basic techniques is therefore essential during the stages of learning discussed elsewhere in this manual:

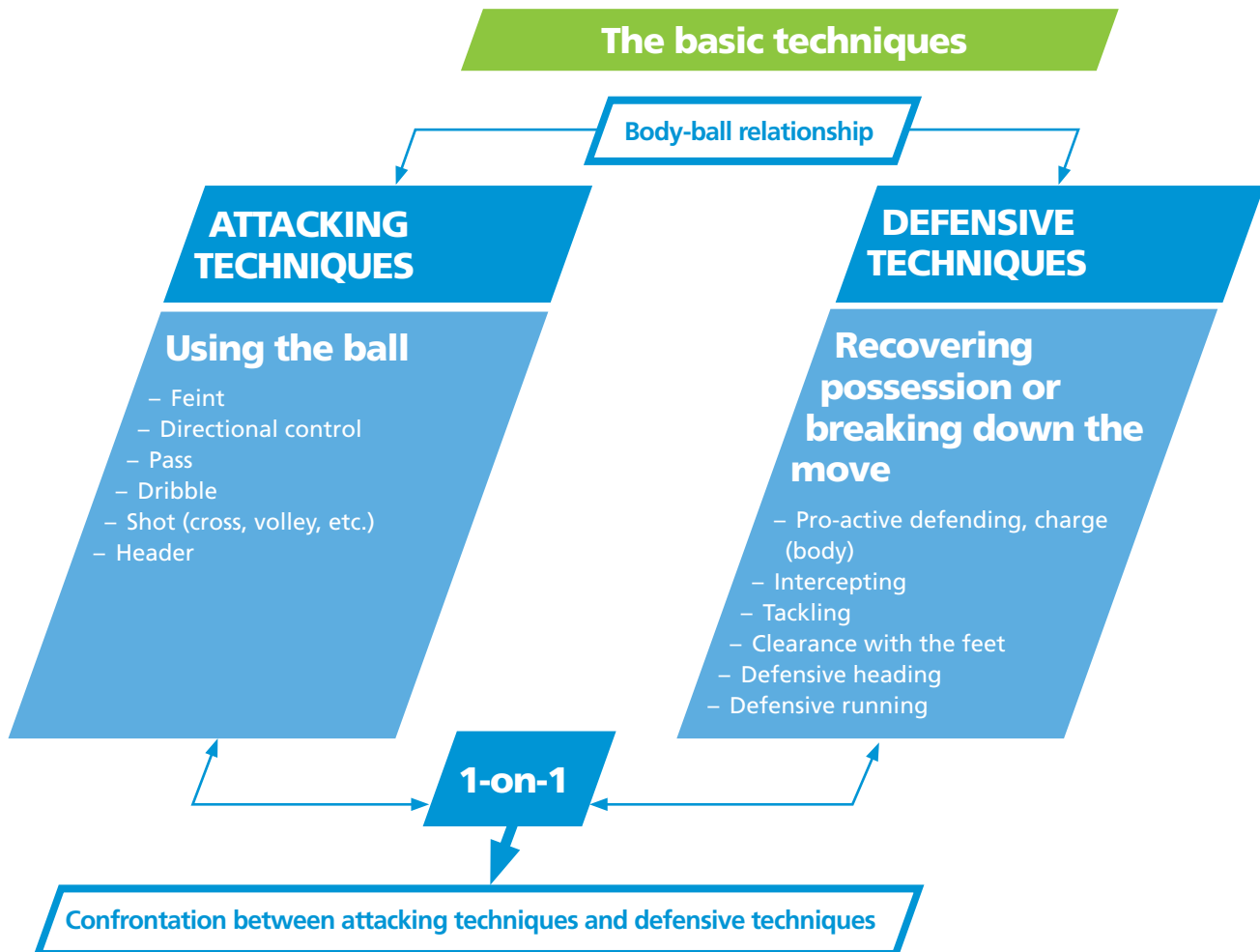
- Basic techniques
- Improving technique in the basic training stage
- Training and reinforcing technique in the intermediate training stage
- Having specific sessions devoted to technique as part of training

The difficulty involved in performing different technical movements increases according to the game conditions, and it is essential to adapt the level of training in order to improve technical skills.

*“Tactics determine where the ball should go, but technique determines whether it gets there.”*

*(Johan Cruyff)*

## Aspects of technique



**NB: In addition to one-on-ones, there are other game formats:**

- From the simplest:
  - Very few players in a small area (2v1, 2v2, 3v2, etc.)
- To the more complex:
  - Lots of players, larger area (4v4, 7v5, 8v8, etc.)
- Building up to the confrontation between two full blocks (11v11) with the ultimate aim: to win the match

These game formats open the door to attacking and defensive actions in which tactics also play a part. Thus we move from pure technique to the area of technical-tactical principles.



## The basic techniques

Whether a player is new or seasoned, a footballer must practise his drills at the beginning of each training session, in the same way as a musician has to practise scales.

The pianist's fingers are his point of contact with his instrument, while for the footballer it is his feet when the ball is on the ground, and his thighs, head or chest when it is in the air.

Below we will explore how to practise using all the contact points:

- Ball on the ground directed by the player
- Ball in the air controlled by the player
- Ball on the ground coming from a team-mate
- Ball in the air coming from a team-mate

Always start with the simplest scenario (one contact point) and build up to the most complicated scenario (mixing two contact points with just one foot, then with both feet).

### Controlling the ball on the ground:

- **One contact point:**
  - Surfaces used:
    - Inner foot
    - Outer foot
    - Instep
    - Sole
    - Tip of the toes
    - Heel

For example:

jogging with the ball using only one contact point at a time and keeping the ball close to the feet.

- **Two contact points (with the same foot)**  
Examples:  
Inner foot - inner foot  
Inner foot - outer foot  
Sole - outer foot

Do not forget to change direction and vary the pace because sudden changes of pace and direction will throw off the opponent.

- **Two contact points** (with both feet)

Examples:

- Inner foot - inner foot
- Outer foot - outer foot
- Sole - inner foot

Practising with the outer foot in this manner is good preparation for performing feints when dribbling.

### Controlling the ball in the air

For example:

- Juggling with right foot only, 100 times
- Juggling with left foot only, 100 times
- Juggling alternating between right foot and left foot, 200 times
- Juggling using the head, 50 times

The exercise can be made more difficult by combining different contact points.

For example:

- Left foot
  - Left thigh
  - Head
  - Right thigh
  - Right foot, etc.
- not forgetting to use the chest.

### Controlling the return of the ball in the air to the ground

This involves directional control (using both feet)

For example:

- Inner foot (in front of the supporting leg)
- Outer foot
- Inner foot (behind the supporting leg)

### Controlling the ball arriving on the ground (pass from a team-mate)

This type of ball control can be "for protection" or "for elimination" (using all possible contact points on the feet as well as the upper body, guarding against contact with the arms).

NB: it is possible to use the feint before taking possession of the ball.

### Controlling the ball arriving in the air (pass from a team-mate)

As above, using the head, chest, thighs, etc.

NB: it is possible to use the feint after taking possession of the ball.

**To conclude**

Learning to use all the different contact points with the ball is a fundamental skill, not only in terms of controlling the ball but also to protect it with the aim of then executing an attacking technique such as passing, shooting, crossing, volleying or dribbling.

In matches, there are other parameters to consider:

– **Athleticism**

Ball control and use has a high energy demand (raised heart rate):

- Average heart rate during a football match is 170-175 beats per minute

– **Psychology**

Presence of opponent

It is well known that some players who perform very well in training do not

perform well in matches. The coach's job therefore includes introducing match conditions as soon as possible, of course taking into account the readiness of each player during training, with:

- Athletic exercises (speed of execution)
- The psychological component (the pressure stemming from the opponent, the team-mates, the venue or even the spectators)

**When working on basic techniques, making sure that players get used to training under pressure will smooth the transition to game formats that include tactical analysis.**

## Attacking techniques

**Definition of an attacking movement:**

An attacking movement is a movement that facilitates the progression of the ball towards the opposition goal as part of an attack by the whole team.

The player in possession wants to achieve the following:

- Progression of the ball (controlling, dribbling)
- Beating the opponent
- Transmission of the ball (passing, crossing)
- Finishing (kicking, heading)

The technical movement depends on:

- The player's technical toolkit
- The game situation

The aim is to execute the technical movement that is ideally suited to the situation.

**The following are attacking movements or individual attacking techniques:**

– **Moving with the ball and dribbling**

Moving with the ball and dribbling must be practised regularly.

Different types of dribbles to be practised are:

- Dribbling to get past the opponent
- Dribbling to keep possession
- Dribbling to escape the opponent

It is important to remember that the ball will always move quicker than the player.

– **The feint**

(no change in direction of the ball: the ball is not touched)

It makes the defender uncertain where the ball is going and gives time and space to the attacker. There is no limit to the feints that can be done (head, chest, legs, feet, etc.).

– **Passing**

A basic element of the team game, passing is more than simply a technical movement as it involves a relationship between the players. Players must know how to use all the possible points of contact on both feet in order to vary the trajectories.

– **The first pass**

The first pass determines what type of attack will be launched and how – build-up play or rapid transition – and its quality largely determines the success of the attack.

– **The final pass**

The last pass before shooting allows the team-mate to follow up with a decisive technical movement in the finishing zone.

– **Directional control (ball preparation)**

Directional control means combining in one movement receiving the ball and moving it in a particular direction. It can sometimes be combined with a dribble, but with just one touch of the ball (player's back to the opponent or facing him). It is often preceded by a feint to confuse the defender. This type of play brings speed to the game.

– **The shot**

The shot is the final point of attacking play. It is necessary to be able to use all the points of contact in order to be able to vary the trajectories.

Shooting takes courage, confidence, a touch of egoism and a dose of imagination.

– **Playing with the head or the body**

Indispensable techniques that provide an effective complement to playing with the feet.

**Tips for teaching attacking techniques:**

- **Adapt the technical exercise according to the level of the players**
- **Define the number of repetitions necessary for their progression**
- **Aim for quality**

## Defensive techniques

**Definition of a defensive movement**

Defending involves interrupting or even stopping the ball's progress by using a movement (technical aspect) or position (tactical aspect), the aim being, whether possession is regained or not, to gain possession of the ball and to launch a counter-attack towards the opposition's goal.

The coach must not neglect defensive moves in training, as play starts on recovery of the ball (with the quality of the first pass).

**The following factors may influence the defender's behaviour:**

- **The opponent has the ball**
  - Far from the goal: prevent the speed from picking up (e.g. overlapping):
    - In front, alongside, behind
  - Near the goal: impede the shot:
    - In front, alongside, behind
- **The opponent is trying to:**
  - Progress the ball (controlling, dribbling)
  - Switch the ball (passing, crossing)
  - Finish (shooting)

– **The opponent does not have the ball but is calling for it:**

- To the feet
- Behind the defender
- Between two defenders
- Between two lines

– **The opponent wants the ball:**

- Towards the goal
- To one side
- To be played backwards

– **Interception zones for the defender:**

- In the penalty area (centre, wing)
- Outside the penalty area (centre, wing)
- Far from the goal (centre, wing)

**Defensive movements or individual defensive techniques:**

– **The tackle (not necessarily a sliding tackle):**

- Facing the opponent
- Next to him (dribble, overlap)
- Never from behind and never with both feet off the ground

The right moment for the tackle is when the opponent is receiving the ball as his eyes are still on the ball, but watch out for directional control, and feints.

Only attempt a tackle if you have cover, otherwise...

- Clearance with the feet:
  - To clear the danger
  - To launch a counter-attack (if the rebound is accurate)

– **The defensive header:**

- To launch a counter-attack (accuracy)
- To clear the danger

– **Obstruction**

The defender uses his body to block a pass, a cross or a shot.

Watch out for feints to shoot.

– **Charging**

Charging is using the body (only the shoulder however, in accordance with the Laws of the Game) to get into a favourable position to play the ball or to protect it. The force of the charge must be modified depending on the situation and the opponent.

– **Intercepting the ball**

This can be done with any part of the body permitted according to the Laws of the Game, during a pass, a cross or a throw-in.

– **Defensive running**

This can have tactical significance:

- Do not always run towards the attacker
- Sometimes run into the space the attacker is running towards to prevent acceleration, intercept crosses, etc.

NB: Never commit totally to one direction so that you are able to react to feints.

**Tips for teaching defensive techniques:**

These defensive techniques should be included in the general technical education of young footballers, particularly in the basic training stage. They can then be practised more specifically according to players' positions (e.g. specifically for defenders).

## The duel

This is one of the most frequently occurring basic actions during matches. It can often be decisive, especially in the finishing zone.

Confrontation between:

- Attacking techniques
- Defensive techniques

A football match is a collection of battles:

- Between two blocks of players
- Between defence and attack
- Between midfielders to control the game
- Between two players in a one-on-one

The duel is won:

- Mentally (tenacity, courage, confidence)
- Physically (resisting the opponent)
- Technically (for one player shaking off the opponent, for the other taking possession of the ball)
- Tactically (placement, reading the game)

NB: Coming out of a one-on-one, with the intervention of other players, means moving into a technical-tactical form (defensive or attacking actions).

In this chapter, we will look at exercises to practise the pure duel, i.e. one-on-one confrontations that are planned, but by progressively modifying the aims of each exercise in order to challenge both the player in possession and the defender, in such a way that the appropriate responses according to the different objectives of the exercises are obtained.

## Developing technique

Learning how to control and use the ball forms the foundation for developing technique. Thus, the systems and the tools put at the disposal of the young player will be crucial factors for long-term progression. It is therefore imperative to begin working on individual technique with young players as early as possible.

However, all these purely technical elements are not done in isolation – as young players must quickly learn to use them within a game. Small-sided football games can be a good way to quickly acquire this fundamental skill.

Of course, if the player is also in good physical condition, he will feel comfortable on the pitch in terms of his movements, and thus technique will become an even more significant element for success.

### Ways to encourage development

Encouraging initiative, risk-taking and dribbling from a very young age prepares talented players to make the difference later on because, at the end of the day, in the majority of cases, it is an individual who changes the course of a match.

The football of the future demands faster and faster technical movements in less space and time.

It is worth spending time on learning technical movements right up until the age of 20 as progress is visible and therefore encouraging.

Subsequently, it is very important to maintain the nerve connections that coordinate the muscle contractions for

each technical movement as the nerve connections weaken over time if they are not regularly used. Moreover, certain neurons may even disappear altogether (which is normal), and it is the neurons that are no longer used that disappear first. That is why it is so important to maintain those connections during training by practising technical movements that are not very common in order to avoid players' technical abilities diminishing and thus the number of mistakes they make increasing.

### Work on technique should thus be one of the top priorities in training.

Even if a player has exceptional vision and good physical potential and is playing in a rational formation with appropriate tactics, the fact of the matter is, if the player's level of technique is limited, it will be impossible for him to do what the coach and the game require.

In modern football, defences are compact, lines are tight and space and time are reduced, so technical accomplishment is crucial.

The periods of basic training and intermediate training are two parts of a whole, but the two stages should be treated distinctly, with different priorities and training standards set in order to increase the efficacy of both stages.

### Technique in basic training

This is the best period for learning technique (age 13 to 15).

Basic training is a key step in the successful training of a future elite footballer. It is the age in which the basic football-specific functional skills are learnt, basics which children used to encounter through playing in physical education lessons, on the street or in kick-about on makeshift pitches

(this is still true today of players in many developing countries).

At this age, which may be called the golden age for motor development, training is thus oriented towards the technical aspect in order to develop firm foundations by working on the basics.

As this is the prime learning age for decisively forming skill and dexterity with the ball, the teaching and practising of technical movements and their use in the game should be prioritised.

Knowing how to control, dribble, pass and shoot are the keys to unlocking the game.

Training sessions should therefore work on technique for 60% of the time. The enthusiasm for playing and the quality of practice in this age group are palpable. It is therefore essential to harness this

enthusiasm by intensively practising, repeating and perfecting the basic techniques, striving for excellent quality movements.

Young players should also be given the opportunity to express their creativity and take risks during games (free sequences of technical movements), which can often make the difference in a game or can unlock situations.

### Technique in intermediate training

At the technical level, intermediate training completes basic training with a period of improvement and practice, training the players of the future to meet the high-level requirements of elite football.

This period will determine the future level of the player and give him the resources to make his mark in the long term.

This approach to training enables players to reach new heights by gaining more competitive techniques thanks to training done under match-like conditions.

During this period, quantity (training load) and quality (appropriate content,

individualised sessions) of training are important.

Training should start to focus more on technique specific to the player's position and under game conditions, at the same time as continuing to work on and refining basic technique.

Players must learn to make their movements purposeful and effective as required by the game.

### Technique in the advanced training stage

The importance of individualised training in football, both on the physical level and on the tactical and psychological level, is today unanimously acknowledged by coaches. On the technical level, personalised training enables the player to improve his individual ability, without which it would be impossible to perform well at the highest level, where requirements are becoming ever more specialised.

#### Definition:

- Adapting appropriate technique and training methods to the specific characteristics of each player

In other words, training must be specifically tailored to the abilities and needs of the individual players in order to improve the attainment of specific training objectives, such as development of strength.

Individualised training is of particular importance for specific training for a position, for the teaching of technical movements and for tactical aspects (for example, specific training for strikers on meeting crosses and shooting).

Within a training concept that prioritises the individual development of each player, tailoring the training through specific individualised sessions has become a necessity to achieve two basic aims of training for young footballers: to reinforce their strong points and to correct their weak points.

**Individual development within group training:**

- Working in groups, split by the type of drill and position, with exercises that are specific to each type of player
- One or more assistant coaches will be required for this type of activity

Example: one group practises technical-tactical exercises while the other plays in different game formats, then the groups switch.

**Individual development in a separate session:**

- Additional training session tailored to the player (improving strong points, correcting an element of tactical behaviour, etc.)
- Session organised as part of a weekly programme, either on the same day as the group session at a different time, or on another day
- As part of the daily routine either before or after the regular training session, depending on the needs and motivation of the players

Example:

- Individual session working on strength (upper body) before the group session
- Training on specific technical movements at the end of the session (e.g. finishing for attackers)

**A specific individualised session:**

- Training session in small groups of up to four to six players
- Special session depending on the type of training with a specific objective
- Session in addition to the overall training plan or to replace a group session

Example:

- Specific session for one group or for attackers only: training on set pieces
- Examples of specific sessions:

- Technical training (individual practice)
- Coordination training (running)
- Training for specific positions (goalkeepers, attackers, etc.)
- Training on playing in blocks (defensive blocks, midfielders, etc.)
- Training of muscular strength (individualised programme)
- Training to regain fitness (injured players, players performing under par, etc.)

- Mental training (individual training for concentration, confidence, determination, etc.)

The coach will direct the session by focusing on precise points and specific choices depending on the player or players, progressively introducing variables such as number of repetitions, speed of execution, increase in difficulty, putting on pressure or introducing particular actions.

The learning period is thus optimised thanks to increased contact with the ball, continuous presence of the coach, more human contact, more individual and therefore more precise corrections, direct feedback with positive reinforcement and finally boosted confidence and thus increased motivation of the player.

In the session on technique for specific positions, as the quality of execution is pivotal, the coach may ask a player from the first team to assist (model of behaviour and technical skill).

Example: session for attackers with the main striker from the professional team.

Example of a specific training session (duration 60 minutes).

<b>Objectives:</b>	Perfecting basic techniques: emphasis placed on directional control and passing (short and long)	
<b>Number of players:</b>	6 (midfielders and full-backs)	
<b>Contents:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Warm-up based on separate and integrated coordination exercises</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stability work, pace</li> <li>• receiving the ball and passing sequences with two players</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>20 mins</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Exercises on technique for three players</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• directional control and passing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>15 mins</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Game situation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• switching play and finishing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>15 mins</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Individual juggling challenge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of keepie-uppies (left and right feet) in 2 mins</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>5 mins</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <b>Stretching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• led by a player</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>5 mins</b>

This training session can be included in a weekly training programme with one or two sessions a week, depending on the type of training, the level of the players and the training programme itself.

## How to improve technique

Each player's participation is key to the game, and training sessions must be organised with specific objectives in mind. Technique is first and foremost the player-ball relationship. It is the way in which the player uses the ball under normal game conditions – with partners and opponents – but it is also and in particular playing while moving.

Technique is determined by the ball and the points of contact. The ball is an elastic sphere with which contact can be made and which can have rebounds.

There are two factors affecting points of contact: precision increases with the size of the surface area of the contact point; the smaller the surface the greater the speed of the ball.

The possible points of contact are the feet (instep, inside of the foot, outside of the foot, tips of the toes, heel, sole, bridge of

the foot), the knees, the thighs, the chest and the head.

Factors for success of a technical movement:

- Good placement: anticipate the trajectory and feel its intensity
- Make sure the foot you are standing on is solid, use the arms for balance
- Contact point properly angled and flexed (relaxed when controlling the ball, tensed when kicking it)
- At the moment of making the movement, keep your eye on the ball

If the coach is only concerned with improving the performance of the team as a whole, he will soon realise that the individual level of the players is not improving. If they receive individual attention from the coach, players' levels will greatly increase.

### Methods for teaching technique

#### **Repetition is key**

The planned exercise must give all the players the opportunity to repeat the movement being worked on several times. How many shots can the player take in one minute?

In order for the repetition to work, the coach, when preparing the exercise, needs to think about the number of players, the number of balls, the source of the balls, the direction of rotation of the players during the exercises, the return of the balls after shots, etc.:

- It is preferable to repeat the same movement several times than to run through the full panoply of the young players' repertoire in one session
- Repetition enables coordination to be reinforced

A key element in learning technique is the opportunity to have lots of contact with the ball, therefore having queues of players waiting to perform exercises must be avoided.

#### **Demand quality**

The quantity of technical training sessions is important, but the quality of the sessions

is equally so, particularly in the basic training stage.

The coach must demand that the players concentrate and apply themselves for each movement. A high-quality movement is achieved by emphasising control, precision and the right touch of the ball rather than power. This striving for quality should begin with the warm-up and last for the whole session. However, the coach must also accept that the player will make mistakes: trial and error are a necessary part of progression.

In the training period, it is preferable to work on technical movements at a speed that is as close as possible to the actual speed of execution in a match. Optimal coordination must be combined with speed of movement.

In order for the practice to be effective, coaches should introduce elements encountered in real games: speed, passing sequences, presence of opponents and partners, fear of playing badly, fear of failure, etc. Those elements that make football difficult should be introduced at an early stage in the session, as good technique combined with tactics can change a game.



*When technique is practised only in isolation, it is very likely that the player will not manage to use what he has learnt in a match as he will not recognise the appropriate situation.*

### **Demonstration**

A good demonstration at the start of a technical exercise is essential as it is much easier to explain by demonstrating than by giving a lengthy description, and in addition because some players will have a visual memory (they remember better something they have seen). The demonstration will therefore serve as a model to be copied.

The demonstration must be done correctly either by the coach himself or by a player and the coach should point out the key elements to performing the exercise effectively. The demonstration may take place at the start of the exercise, or the players may be given a certain amount of time to try to find their own solutions first.

### **Execution**

Execution of movement involves perception and coordination and it quickly becomes automatic.

The best advice to achieve quality of movements is as follows:

- Learn to find the best position with orientation exercises:
  - If a player has difficulty controlling the ball, he should not position himself too close to his opponents. The player should clear himself by dribbling the ball back to open space and try open up to facing the field.
  - The coach should first try to adapt the manner of playing rather than immediately modifying the movement
- Learn to simplify play:
  - The coach must teach players to play at their level, using the knowledge and skills they have and not overestimating themselves

### **Correcting and encouraging**

What distinguishes experienced coaches from those starting out is the use of encouragement in their teaching and the quality of the corrections they impart to their players.

When the player does something wrong, the coach should give him the resources to be able to stay positive by:

- Correcting his position, balance or attitude with a remark or a quiet word aside, then encouraging him to try again
- Not stopping the game sequence or exercise too often

*To be able to correct an error, the coach must be well-positioned on the pitch!*

In general, the coach should give encouragement at delicate moments as well as motivating players to aim for better performance.

### **The confident player**

As the player begins to make fewer technical errors, he will gain self-confidence and will gradually attempt more complex things.

If he remembers the points above, he will play confidently and will keep an open mind enabling him to find the best tactical solutions. Sometimes a player makes a lot of errors in a row during a match and gets discouraged.

In order to regain his self-confidence, the coach should give him simple things to do that may not make a contribution to the game but allow him to forget his errors.

### Setting challenges

As motivation, the coach should give the players goals to reach for:

How many crosses did you manage out of ten attempts? Who can manage to do a double step-over?

It is also possible for players to set challenges for each other: Who can score the most goals out of ten shots?

### Football “homework”

*No homework = not enough touches of the ball*

You can never do too much training in technique, and no form of training allows players to get enough touches of the ball through training sessions alone.

They must also train outside of sessions, which was actually easier in the past when youngsters could work on their technique by playing in the street, at a friend’s house or in the garden – unfortunately nowadays there are fewer opportunities for this type of practice in many countries and cities.

Practising technical drills must become part of the daily routine in the basic training period, which has led a large number of countries to integrate “football homework” into their programmes when training the top players of the future, following the motto: no homework = not enough touches of the ball.



## Technical training in the basic training stage

### Improving technique: 1. Passing and control (receiving the ball)

#### 1. Ground passing and control

##### Organisation:

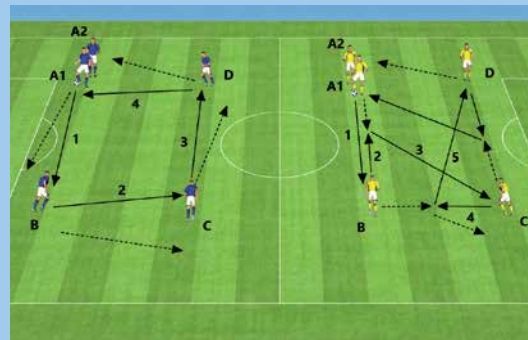
- 5 players per exercise
- Areas marked out (with cones, markers, etc.)
- 1 ball then 2 balls

##### Procedure:

- Player A1 gives the ball to B, then takes B's place
- B controls the ball directing and playing it into the path of C, then takes the place of C
- C gives the ball to D, who controls the ball directing and passing it into the path of A2
- After passing, the players change position according to the instructions of the coach – Change direction

##### Variants:

- Passes and varied control – Exercise with 2 balls
- Playing directly with one touch (pass, lay-off, pass) as shown in the example with the yellow players



#### 2. Short and long aerial passing

##### Organisation:

- 4 players per exercise
- Areas marked out (with cones, markers, etc.)
- 1 ball

##### Procedure:

- The A players keep moving and playing short and direct passes
- After 3 or 4 passes, they make a long pass to the B players
- One B player controls the ball and plays it to his partner (direct pass)
- Passes with the right foot and the left foot

##### Variants:

- A1 gives the ball to B1 who lays it off. A1 makes a long pass along the ground or in the air to A2
- The B players play the ball with one touch and move position



#### 3. Varied passing and control

##### Organisation:

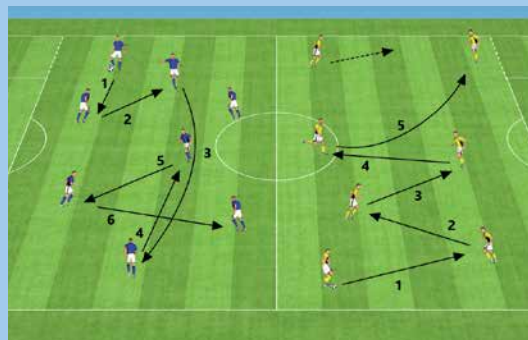
- 2 groups of 6 to 8 players
- Areas marked out (with cones, markers, etc.)
- 1 ball per group

##### Procedure:

- Players circulate the ball around the group with two touches, then one touch depending on the situation
- Players occupy the whole of the pitch and are always moving
- The aim is to form a triangle
- Then, 3 short passes followed by one long one

##### Variants:

- The 2 groups play together
- Each player always plays to a player wearing the other colour
- With 1, 2 or 3 balls



## 4. Game of 8v8 or 6v6 with goalkeepers

### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 8 players
- Area marked out (with cones, markers, etc.)
- 2 neutral goalkeepers play behind the line

### Procedure:

- Retain possession and occupy the pitch
- Maximum of 3 touches
- A goal is scored after 5 passes followed by an aerial pass into the hands of a goalkeeper from the opposite half

### Variants:

- Maximum of 2 touches
- As above but with 2 goals
- After 5 passes, a goal may be scored in the 2 goals



## 5. Receiving the ball and short or long passing

### Organisation:

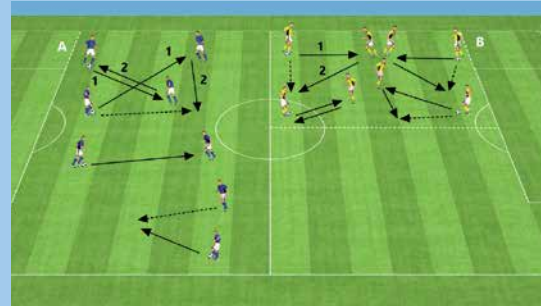
- 2 groups of 8 players working in pairs per exercise, 1 ball for 2 players
- Areas marked out (A and B)
- Change halves after a specified time

### Procedure:

- Passes to the feet, receive and direct the ball (inside/outside of foot, between each pair)
- Passes to the inside of the foot or the instep; control with right foot, pass with left foot
- Players move around the pitch
- Then change partners

### Variants:

- Vary passes and trajectories. After an aerial pass, control with the chest.



## 6. Receiving the ball, "pass and move"

### Organisation:

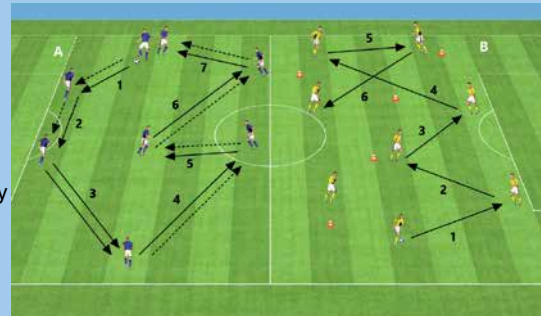
- 2 groups of 7 or 8 players per exercise
- 1 ball per group
- 5 to 6 cones on pitch B (as opponents)

### Procedure:

- Players take positions
- Play to the feet, with the body facing the ball
- When receiving the ball, direct it in the direction of the pass, then play of the foot or instep)
- After passing, take the place of the partner

### Variants:

- Increase the pace
- On pitch B, play with 1 touch or 2 touches
- Players stay in their positions but are always moving



## 7. Passing and circulating the ball within the team

### Organisation:

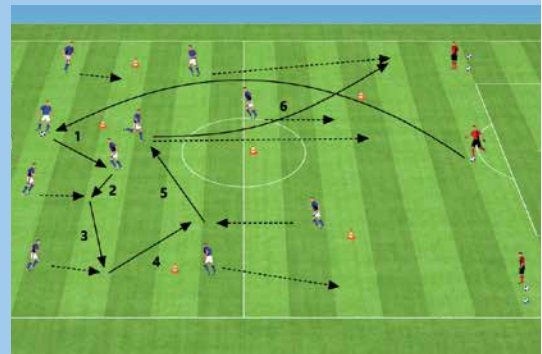
- Team of 11, positioned according to formation
- 2 to 3 goalkeepers to start play
- 5 to 6 cones (as opponents)

### Procedure:

- When one of the goalkeepers starts play, players control the ball and attack gradually (1 or 2 touches) until play ends in a goal
- The team follows the ball, occupies the pitch, and keeps moving
- Vary the types of passes, increase pace. The coach can direct the game.

### Variants:

- Put out cones to hamper possession, then use passive opponents (3 to 5 players)
- Limit the number of passes; limit the time before finishing
- Play with a team of 7 or 9 players



## 8. Game of 4v4 or 8v8 with 2 floating players

### Organisation:

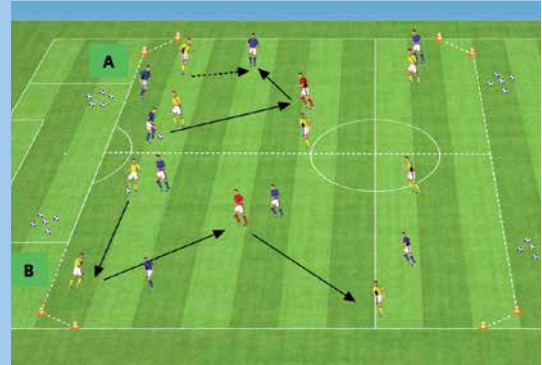
- 2 teams of 8 players + 2 neutral floating players (goalkeepers)
- Pitch divided into 2 zones (A + B) with 4 mini-goals in the corners

### Procedure:

- 4v4 in each zone (1 or 2 touches)
- The neutral floating player has 1 touch
- A point is scored after 6 passes amongst the team (without counting the floating player's passes)
- Then play 8v8 using the whole area; the neutral floating players each stay in one zone
- 1 point after 10 passes

### Variants:

- Play with mini-goals
- After 6 passes, a goal may be scored in one of the 4 mini-goals
- Each team defends 2 goals and attacks the other 2



## Improving technique: shooting

### 1. Controlling the ball and shooting (with instep)

#### Organisation:

- Group of 6 to 8 players per station + goalkeepers
- 2 large goals and 2 to 3 mini-goals – Balls and cones

#### Procedure:

- Pitch A :
- Control, slalom and shoot (right foot/left foot)
  - The player goes to retrieve his ball
- Pitch B :
- Direct the ball towards a goal with no goalkeeper, and shoot
  - The player goes to retrieve his ball
  - Juggle (3-4x) and shoot

#### Variants:

- Vary the types of kicks (inside of foot, with spin, etc.)
- On pitch B, 4 players with the ball, 2 without the ball laying it off
- Shoot at goal after a one-two



### 2. Taking a direct shot after running

#### Organisation:

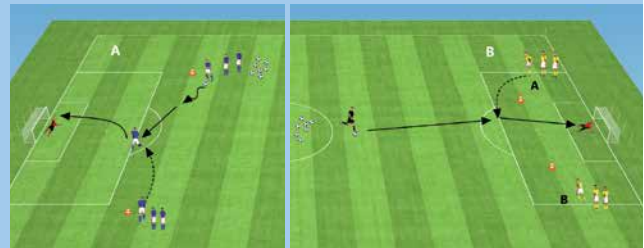
- Group of 6 to 8 players per station + goalkeepers
- 2 goals
- Balls and cones

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- A runs with the ball and passes it to B who shoots on the turn
- After passing and shooting, change positions
- The action comes from one side and then, after a few shots, from the other

#### Variants:

- A takes the ball and passes it to B who lays it off in the direction A is running and A then shoots
- Pitch B: the coach plays between the cones for A or B who run in from the opposite side



### 3. Shooting under pressure (physical)

#### Organisation:

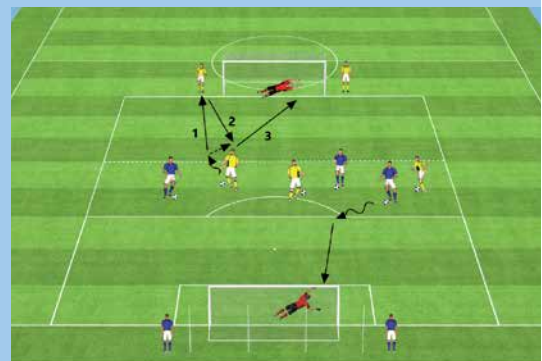
- 2 groups of 3 to 5 players with numbers + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked-out area
- 1 ball per player, and cones

#### Procedure:

- Each player has a ball
- When their number is called, the players (blue/yellow) enter the goal area and shoot at goal
- The shot can be taken with the right foot or the left foot
- The coach decides on the point of contact that shall be used

#### Variants:

- The player enters the goal area, plays to the support player who passes it back to him and he shoots
- The support player throws the ball in for the player to shoot using a volley or half-volley



### 4. Game of 4v4 or 3v3 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

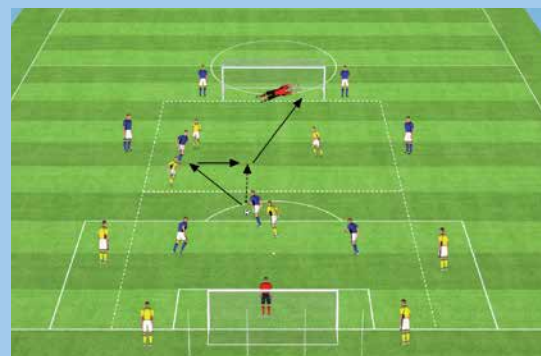
- 2 teams of 4 players + 2 goalkeepers; 4 support players per team
- Marked-out area
- 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play
- The support players have 1 touch (or 2) and may not play the ball to each other
- Players switch

#### Variants:

- Goal after first-time shot in attacking zone
- Goal after first-time shot on receiving lay-off
- Goal from shot within own half



## Improving technique: shooting at the goal after a pass

### 1. Shooting at the goal after a direct lay back

#### Organisation:

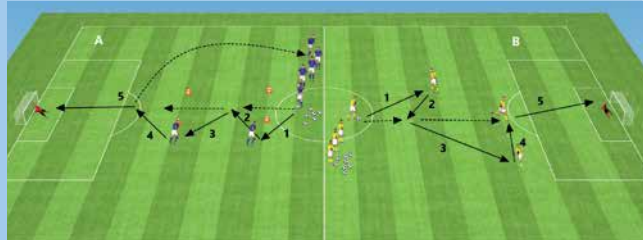
- Groups of 6 to 8 players per exercise. – Balls and cones.
- The exercise is performed using two goals with the goalkeepers.

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- A plays a one-two with B and then to C who lays the ball back for A to run onto
- A shoots at goal and then runs back slowly
- The players laying the ball on are then changed
- The ball should be played from the left and the right
- The shooting distance should be varied with emphasis on shot placement as well

#### Variant (Pitch B):

- A plays the ball to B, who lays the ball back. A gives the ball to C who plays a cross-field pass to A, who then shoots on the run
- The players switch positions as soon as the action is complete



### 2. Shooting at the goal after the ball has been laid back

#### Organisation:

- A group of 6 to 8 players per exercise + goalkeeper
- This exercise can be performed using two goals

#### Procedure:

- A plays the ball to B, B to C
- C lays the ball back for A, who shoots at goal
- A takes C's position and C A's position
- Play is then switched to the side where D is located

#### Variant:

- After the pass from B to C, B runs after A and acts as an opponent.



### 3. Shooting at the goal after a fast run and passing move

#### Organisation:

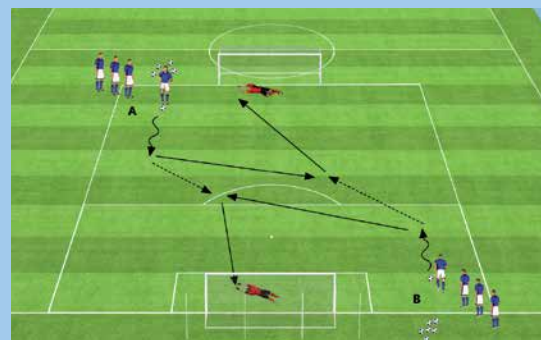
- 2 groups of 4-5 players each + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out playing area + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- A and B each run with the ball and then play a cross-field pass along the ground to the centre of the pitch
- A controls the pass from B and shoots at goal
- B controls the pass from A and shoots at goal
- The players shoot at goal directly or after controlling the ball
- The players then change sides

#### Variant:

- The trajectories of the passes can be varied
- A contest between the teams: which team can score the most goals after 6 shots from each player?



### 4. Game of 3v3 or 4v4

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 4 players each + 2 groups of 4 extra players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out playing area + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Unrestricted play and quick finishing
- A maximum of 5 passes within the team, including those with the extra players along the touchline, who can play one touch only
- One player must always remain in the defence zone
- 1 point is scored per goal, and 3 points for every goal scored from the defence zone

#### Variant:

- A goal scored before three passes have been made is worth 2 points, but at least one pass must be made.



## Improving technique: shooting at the goal from a cross

### 1. Shooting at the goal after a low cross

#### Organisation:

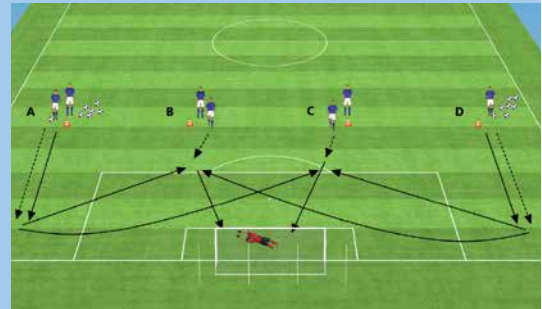
- 4 to 8 players + goalkeeper
- This exercise can be performed using both goals

#### Procedure:

- A plays the ball towards the byline. He runs after the ball and delivers a low cross along the ground to B. After doing this 5 times, he then crosses to C
- D does the same thing
- After 10 attempts, the players swap roles

#### Variant:

- A high cross to the far post and a low cross to the near post. B and C swap positions in front of goal



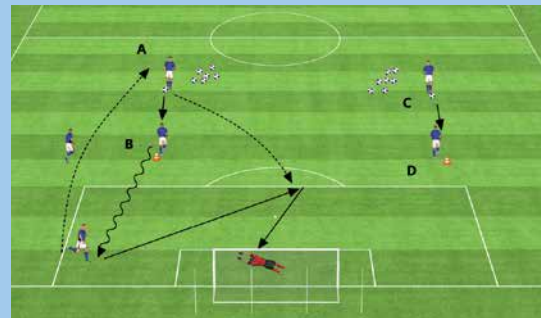
### 2. Shooting at the goal after the ball has been laid back

#### Organisation:

- 4 to 8 players + goalkeeper
- This exercise can be performed using both goals

#### Procedure:

- A plays the ball to B, who has his back to goal
- B controls the ball on his outside, runs with it and crosses it for A to shoot on the run.
- A and B swap roles
- C and D do the same thing
- There should be variation with the crosses: the direct shot on goal should come from a low or high cross, and also after the ball has been controlled
- After starting play, the goalkeeper comes and opposes A
- » A connects with the ball after a curved run



### 3. Finishing from crosses in the air

#### Organisation:

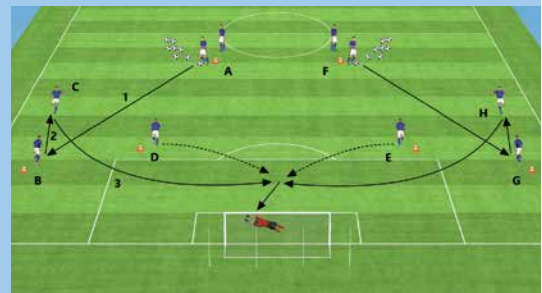
- 8 to 10 players + goalkeeper

#### Procedure:

- A plays the ball "firmly" along the ground to B, who lays it back directly to C
- Without controlling it, C crosses the ball to D or E
- D or E shoots at goal (either directly, after controlling the ball or a lay off), depending on how the cross comes in
- D and E can swap positions with each other (by running across one other)

#### Variant:

- Using a defender (either passive or semi-active) to provide opposition in the centre



### 4. Game of 5v5 or 6v6 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 5 + 2 neutral extra players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out playing area + 2 neutral "strips" at the side + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play; the players have to try to score from crosses
- Goals scored from crosses are worth 2 points; goals scored from a single touch after a cross are worth 3 points; goals scored normally are worth 1 point
- Teams must complete 4 passes before crossing the ball

#### Variant:

- 5v5 with a maximum of 3 touches.
- No fixed extra players along the side. The ball is played out to the flanks to a player running into space.





## Improving technique: one-on-one situations with the goalkeeper

### 1. Controlling the ball and taking on the goalkeeper

#### Organisation:

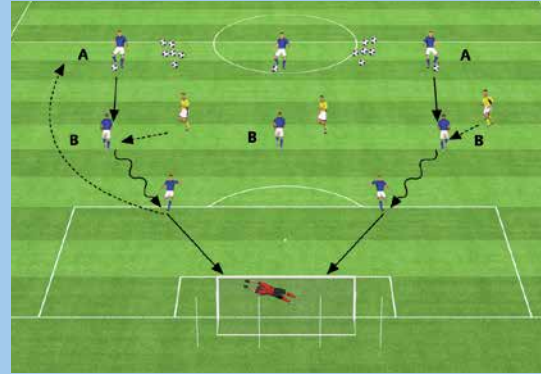
- 6 to 9 players + goalkeeper
- 6 attackers and 3 defenders

#### Procedure:

- The A players play the ball to B, who has his back to goal
- B controls the ball and takes on the goalkeeper (by shooting or dribbling past him)
- A and B swap roles after each attempt

#### Variants:

- Once the ball has been controlled, the yellow defender pursues the attacker and acts as an opponent
- The attacker runs with the ball from the middle of the pitch and has 6" to 8" to score



### 2. Quick finishing

#### Organisation:

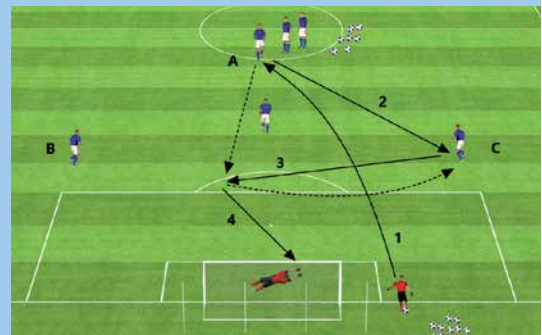
- 4 to 6 players + 2 goalkeepers

#### Procedure:

- The goalkeeper clears from the side of the goal (with a drop kick, a goal kick or a pass out) to player A
- A controls the ball and plays it to B or C
- B or C lays the ball back to A, who shoots on the run or takes on the goalkeeper.
- After the shot, A takes the place of the player who laid the ball on for him, and vice versa
- The tempo should then be increased

#### Variants:

- The type of delivery can be varied (one-two, cross-field ball, pull back, high cross)
- After clearing, the goalkeeper comes out to provide opposition for A



### 3. Simulated match sequences against the goalkeeper

#### Organisation:

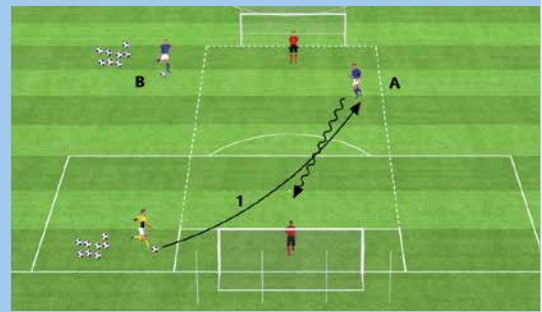
- 2 teams and 2 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out playing area

#### Procedure:

- The yellow player plays the ball (diagonally) to A, who controls it, takes on the goalkeeper and finishes.
- The player is allowed only 1 or 2 touches before shooting
- B then plays the ball (diagonally) to the other yellow player
- The players switch sides after each attempt
- A time limit is imposed

#### Variants:

- The attacker attempts to dribble past the goalkeeper, who comes out to challenge him
- Restrict the time between controlling the ball and finishing (e.g. 4" to 5")



### 4. 4v4/5v5 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 5 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Playing area marked out into 3 zones
- 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Unrestricted play in the central zone
- The players have to try to cross the opponents' defensive line with the ball at their feet if they are to score a goal
- 1 point for crossing the line; 2 points for scoring a goal
- 1 point for the goalkeeper if he saves the shot

#### Variants:

- A defender can chase the attacker into the goal area when the attacker takes on the goalkeeper



## Improving technique: one-on-one duels

### 1. Retaining and gaining possession

#### Organisation:

- 3 teams of 2 to 3 players
- One-on-one games on marked out playing areas
- The ball is fed in between the players – Restricted playing time

#### Procedure:

- The 1<sup>st</sup> player tries to keep the ball (by covering and protecting it and feinting)
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> player tries to dispossess him or to knock the ball out of play
- »» The coach coaches the attacker (on how to dribble) and then the defender (on his defensive play)

#### Variant:

- The attacker attempts to get past the defender's goal line
- The coach can instruct the defender on defensive play and the attacker on attacking play



### 2. Attacking and defending

#### Organisation:

- The same as exercise 1 on marked out playing areas
- "Stop ball" against the clock (e.g. 1 minute)

#### Procedure:

- The players try to bring the ball to a stop behind the opponents' line
- The action is restarted by the team that has scored the point
- »» The coaching is the same as for exercise 1

#### Variant:

- The game can be played with 2 or 4 goals; every player can score
- The ball is fed in by the coach in the centre



### 3. Retaining possession and attacking

#### Organisation:

- 3 groups comprising 4 players each
- Marked out playing areas
- One-on-one with a time limit (as soon as the ball goes out of play)

#### Procedure:

- A plays the ball to B, who gets away from the defender marking him. With the ball at his feet, he attempts to run with it past the defensive line
- If the defender dispossesses him, he plays the ball back to the defender behind the line

#### Variant:

- If the defender knocks the ball into touch as a result of a challenge or sliding tackle, he scores 1 point



### 4. One-on-one game with goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 3 to 4 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out playing areas + 2 goals
- Goalkeeper on the line

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- The teams play with two goals and try to score
- The ball is fed in by the goalkeeper to one of his players
- Time limit on play (e.g. 1')

#### Variant (Pitch B):

- With 2 goals and 2 small goals, in which each team can score by crossing the line with the ball at the feet of the scoring player



## Improving technique: headers

### 1. Basic technique

#### Organisation:

- 4 to 6 players per group
- Pitch divided into 4 zones (1, 2, 3 and 4) + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- 1 Throw the ball to the player who headers it (without jumping; standing on two feet; with a run-up), as well as when moving
- 2 Throw the ball to the player who moves behind the cones (vary the attack on the ball)
- 3 Throw the ball over the player in passive opposition. Header while jumping and varied types of kicks (on the ground, clearance)
- 4 • 4v4 game with support players and 2 goals (no goalkeeper)
  - Handball game (1 point for a header laying the ball off to a support player; 2 points for a header into the goal)

**Variants:** the ball is kicked in



### 2. Defensive heading

#### Organisation:

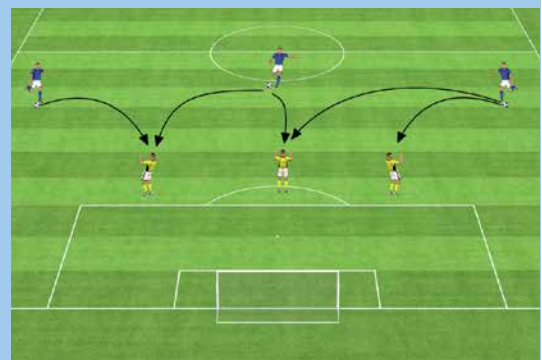
- 6 to 8 players
- 3 defenders and 3 passers

#### Procedure:

- The three defenders in their zone
- Alternatively, the passers play the ball to a defender who heads it
- Vary the trajectory and the direction of the header
- The passer volleys the ball, then does a long kick

#### Variants:

- With defenders in opposition, then in a duel
- When regaining possession, head the ball to 3 players, then to 6 while moving



### 3. Attacking heading

#### Organisation:

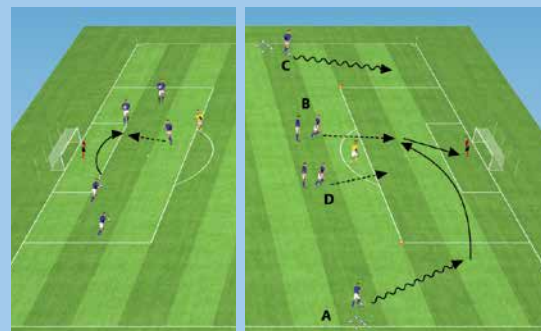
- 5 to 6 players per exercise + goalkeeper

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- After passing with the hands, the player heads the ball into the goal
- Different runs
- Passes with the feet
- Also with the passive opposition of a yellow defender

#### Variants (Pitch B):

- Heading crosses: A to B, C to D
- B and D set off at the same time (near and far post)
- Also with the passive opposition of a yellow defender



### 4. 3v3 game (4v4) + 2 support players

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 3 players + 2 goalkeepers (passive/active)
- 2 neutral support players crossing
- Marked-out area

#### Procedure:

- The goalkeeper always plays to one of the orange support players who crosses (alternatively to one of the goals). The attackers try to score with a header
- If a defender clears the ball, play is restarted by the goalkeeper

#### Variants:

- With goalkeepers guarding the goals
- After the cross and the header, if no goal is scored, the game continues as normal
- Also increase the playing area



## Improving technique: basic practice games

### 1. 1v1/2v2 with support players

#### Organisation:

- 6 to 8 players per area
- Areas marked out
- Play 1v1 and 2v2 with neutral support players

#### Procedure:

- The support players have 1 and 2 touches. They do not play to each other
- Try to keep the ball, give options to the player in possession
- Play for a limited time, then change players

#### Variants:

- Points are awarded for getting the ball behind the line of defenders or for scoring in the mini-goals placed at the corners of the marked-out square



### 2. 2v2/3v2/4v4

#### Organisation:

- 8 players per area; play 2v2 and 3v2
- Marked-out areas and 4 mini-goals
- Play for a limited time, then change roles

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- The blue team tries to score in the mini-goals
- The yellow team defends. When they gain possession, they pass the ball forward to the yellow attacking players (who are waiting)
- Play always starts with the blue attackers

#### Variants (Pitch B):

- 4v4 with 2 goalkeepers. Play 2v2 in each zone. Try to score
- The team may play with 3 players in the attacking zone (3v2)



### 3. 6v4/6v6

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 6 players; 6v4
- Marked-out areas + 2 mini-goals per area

#### Procedure (Pitch A):

- The blue team keeps the ball (1 to 2 touches) and tries to make 5 or 6 passes
- After 5 or 6 passes, 1 point is awarded for scoring in one of the mini-goals from a direct pass
- The yellow team defends. When they gain possession, they look for a waiting partner (switching play) and the 4 yellows change side and the 4 blues become defenders (2 blues are left over)
- If the change is successful, the game continues in the other area with 6 yellow against 4 blue

#### Variants (Pitch B):

- Free play 6v6 with 2 goalkeepers – Limit the number of touches (2) in the defenders' half



### 4. 7v7 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 7 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Area marked out with 3 zones
- Game: 2v2 and 3v3 in the zones

#### Procedure:

- The game starts with the goalkeeper, who plays the ball to the middle of the pitch. Play 2v2
- The blue team tries to play with a blue attacker who tries to lose his marker
- If he succeeds, a midfielder can advance into the attacking zone (3v3)

#### Variants:

- Two midfielders can advance into the attacking zone
- One or two defenders can advance into the middle zone



## Technical training in the intermediate training stage

### Technical-tactical training: varied games on a medium-sized pitch

#### 1. Game of 7v7 (8v8) to improve movement and positioning

##### Organisation:

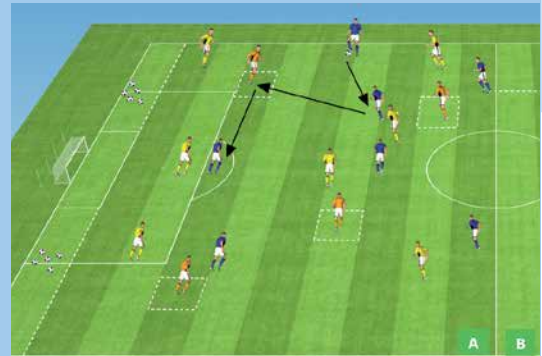
- 2 teams of 7 players and 4 neutral players laying off the ball in the boxes
- Marked-out areas and 4 boxes

##### Procedure (Pitch A):

- Free play or limited touches allowed (2 to 3). The players who lay off the ball are limited to 1 or 2 touches
- Try to keep the ball, to change play and to play with the lay-off players
- If the assist provided by the lay-off player is successful, 1 point is awarded to the team

##### Variant (Pitch B):

- A team plays only with 2 lay-off players
- Move around with the lay-off players
- Game as above but in a smaller area



#### 2. Game of 7v7 (6v6) to occupy the pitch

##### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 7 players
- Area marked out into 6 zones + 4 mini-goals (gates with poles)
- When the ball goes out, the coach restarts play

##### Procedure:

- Limited touches allowed (1, 2 or 3 max.)
- Pass the ball around and try to score. Goals must be scored from a direct shot
- Before a strike is attempted, the ball must pass through 4 zones
- No more than 3 players from one team allowed in the same zone

##### Variant:

- In the defensive half, play with 1 or 2 touches. Free play in the attacking zone
- Play as above but in 2 zones (A+B)



#### 3. Game of 7v7 + 1 floating player to get into the finishing zone

##### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 7 players + 2 neutral floating players and 2 goalkeepers
- Area marked out into 3 zones + 6 mini-goals
- Cones or poles

##### Procedure:

- Free play or limited touches allowed (2 to 3) in the central zone
- Try to get into the goal area through one of the three gates (by passing or dribbling)
- Finish facing the goalkeeper (1-on-1)
- The floating players play with the attackers, but each occupy one zone
- Goal: 1 point on reaching the gate, 2 points for a goal

##### Variant:

- A defender may challenge the attacker
- A second attacker may come to support the player in possession (2-on-1)
- A second defender comes back, then all the players



#### 4. Game of 8v8 (9v9) to attack and defend

##### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 8 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Area marked out + 2 large goals and 2 mini-goals
- Play is always started by the blue team who are attacking

##### Procedure:

- The yellow team defends with a 4-4 formation. The blue team attacks with a 3-3-2 (or other formation)
- Free play or with limited touches for the attacking team
- Try to score; if they gain possession, the yellow team must make 5 or 6 passes to gain 1 point
- Change roles after 10 attacks

##### Variants:

- When the yellows gain possession, they may score straight away in the large goal or in the two mini-goals
- Increase or decrease the size of the playing area



## Technical-tactical training: game formats with numerical advantage to improve possession play

### 1. Game of 7v5 or 7v6 (8v6)

#### Organisation:

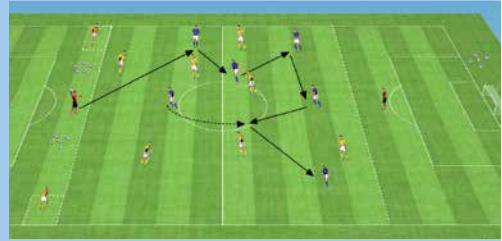
- The blue team have 7 players + goalkeeper as a back-up, the yellow team have 5 players + goalkeeper as a back-up
- The goalkeepers may not use their hands – Marked-out area

#### Procedure:

- The blue team move the ball around with one, two or three touches for as long as possible (1 point after 10 passes)
- When the ball goes out, the blue goalkeeper restarts play
- If the yellow team gain possession, they play freely looking for the orange players with a long ball down the wings. The blue team should be looking for movement, playing in triangles, switching play, playing one-twos, etc.

#### Variant:

- If the yellow team gain possession, they make 5 passes before passing the ball to the orange players – Switch roles



### 2. Game of 8v6 (7v5/9v7) with neutral goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

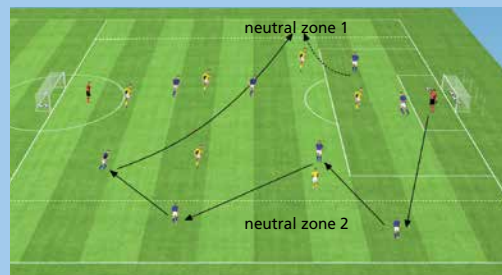
- Blue team have 8 players, yellow team have 6
- Area marked out into 3 zones (central and 1 and 2)
- 2 neutral goalkeepers

#### Procedure:

- The blue team keep the ball (1 to 2 touches in the central zone and the neutral zone 2). After 8 consecutive passes, change sides and start again
- When the yellow team gain possession, they may score in the two goals
- 1 point is awarded for each change of play. 2 points are awarded for goals scored
- When the blue team are defending, they try to recover possession to play with a goalkeeper

#### Variant:

- If the long pass and switching play are unsuccessful, the ball is given to the goalkeeper who passes it to a yellow player



### 3. Game of 7v5 to 9v7 (changing halves)

#### Organisation:

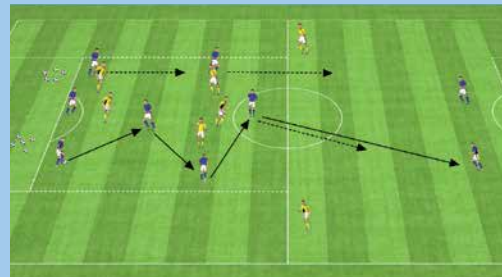
- The blue team have 7 players in the restricted zone, 9 in the large zone
- The yellow team have 5 players in the restricted zone, 7 in the large zone
- Areas marked out

#### Procedure:

- The blue team circulate the ball with 2 to 3 touches
- After 5 or 6 passes, the ball is played long to the blue player who is in the large zone and the whole team move into the attacking half and position themselves to circulate the ball with 1 touch (9v7)
- If the yellow team gain possession, they play to one of the yellow players (first pass) who is still in the large zone
- The game starts again in the restricted zone

#### Variant:

- With 9v7 in the large zone, the team who have regained possession also try to do 5 passes
- The blue team try to recover the ball to play it back to the blue player who is still in the other half



### 4. Game of 6v4 (7v5) (playing deep)

#### Organisation:

- The blue team have 7 players, the yellow team have 6 + a goalkeeper
- Marked out area + 1 large goal

#### Procedure:

- In their own half, the blue team play with 1 or 2 touches of the ball. After 8 or 10 passes, they look for depth playing towards a blue player at the 18 yard line
- The blue players, apart from one who stays put, move into the other half to play. The yellow players who are defending return
- How many times can they change half? – If the yellow team recover the ball, they play directly (first pass) to a yellow player on the outside – Play is restarted by the blue team

#### Variant:

- In the attacking half, players may shoot after 4 passes
- In the attacking zone, it is also possible to play down the wings (from possession play to rapid attack)



## Technical-tactical training: finishing on small pitches

### 1. 6v3 + goalkeeper

#### Organisation:

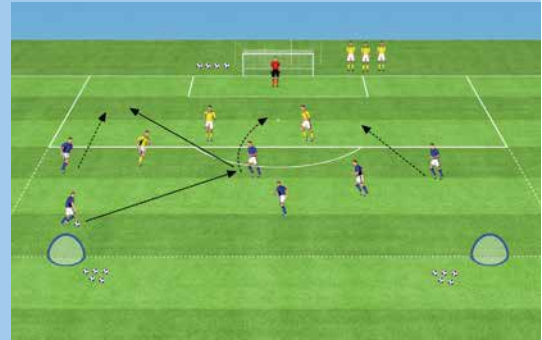
- 2 teams of 6 players + goalkeeper. Play 6 against 3
- Marked-out area
- 1 large goal; 2 mini-goals

#### Procedure:

- The blue team of 6 tries to score in the large goal. After a goal or a save by the goalkeeper, the ball is put back into play by the blue team from their half
- If the defenders recover the ball, they may score immediately in one of the mini-goals (first pass)
- After a limited period of time, the three defenders switch
- Limit the duration of the game

#### Variant:

- If the defenders score in the mini-goals, the roles are immediately reversed. They then play with 6 players and the 3 attackers play as defenders



### 2. 3v3 (4v4) + 2 goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

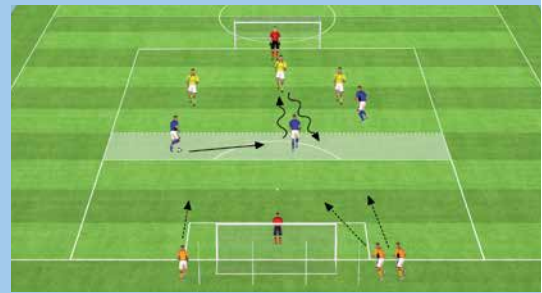
- 3 teams of 3 (or 4 players) + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked-out area
- 2 large goals

#### Procedure:

- The blue team tries to score. If they lose the ball, the yellow team attack the other goal defended by the blue team. The blue team leaves the game
- The team who score a goal keep the ball and stay in the game to attack the other goal
- Free play

#### Variant:

- If the attackers lose the ball in the attacking zone, they can try to regain possession by pressing and marking



### 3. 5v5 or 6v6 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

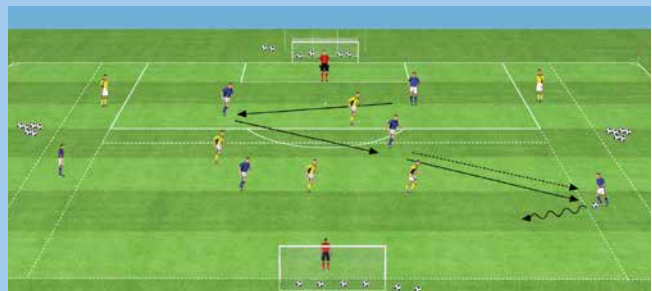
- 2 teams of 6 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked out area + 2 large goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play. Play 4v4 + 2 support players per team on the wings
- When a support player receives the ball, he may take two touches or dribble with the ball
- The player who passed to the support player takes his place

#### Variant:

- Limit the number of touches allowed in the game
- Goal scored from a cross from a support player = 2 points



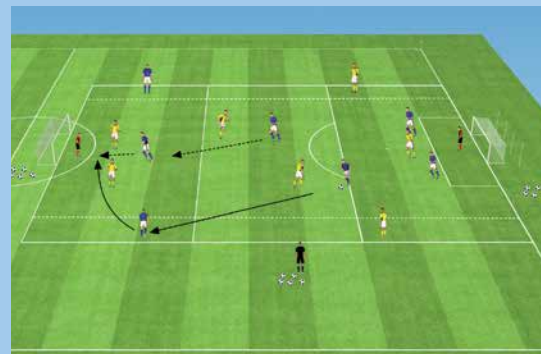
### 4. 7v7 (2v2/2v2/2v2) + 2 goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 7 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Area marked out into 3 zones + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play 5v5 with 2 support players per team on the wings
- The game starts in the central zone with 2 against 2
- The team in possession of the ball attempts to pass to the attacker or to a support player
- A midfield player may enter the attacking zone to play 2 against 2
- The support players may have 2 touches of the ball
- If the defenders recover the ball, they continue to play with a midfielder
- Goal from a cross = 2 points, normal goal = 1 point





## Training of cognitive qualities: exercises and game formats

### 1. Group passing exercise

#### Organisation:

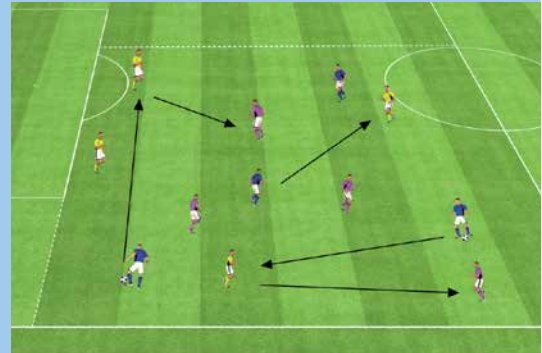
- 3 teams of 4 players (3 different colours)
- Marked-out area
- Game with 1 ball, then 2 and 3 balls

#### Procedure:

- Passing game with limited touches allowed (3, 2 or 1)
- The ball carrier always plays to a different colour player
- The coach may give technical instructions (e.g. control with one foot, pass with the other)

#### Variants:

- Start the exercise by playing with the hands
- Vary the size of the area (depending on the technical or tactical objective)
- Teams of 3, 5 or 6 players



### 2. Group passing exercise

#### Organisation:

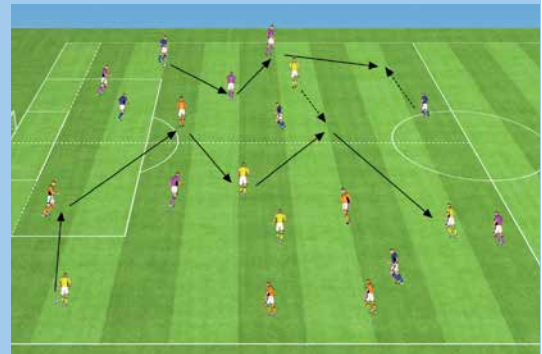
- 4 teams of 5 or 6 players (different colours)
- Area marked out with two halves
- Play with 2 and then 3 balls

#### Procedure:

- Passing game with 2 or 3 touches to the partner team
- The blue team only play with the grey team
- The yellow team only play with the orange team. 1 or 2 players per team are always in the other half (work on long and short passes)

#### Variants:

- Limit the period of time (e.g. as many passes as possible in 2 minutes)
- Game format: 10 passes between the partner teams (e.g. the blues with the greys and the yellows with the oranges)



### 3. Practice game of 4 + 4v4 to keep the ball

#### Organisation:

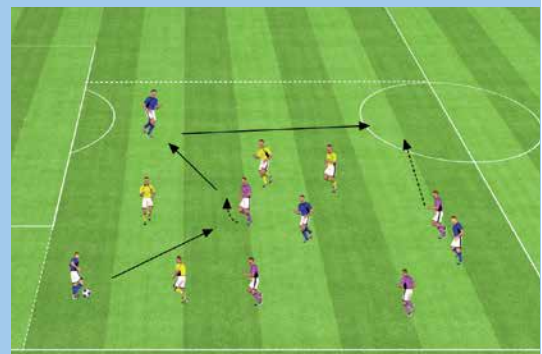
- 3 teams of 4 players (different colours); marked out area
- Start the game with a throw-in

#### Procedure:

- Possession game with 2 or 3 touches
- Play between 2 teams. The blues always play with the greys
- The yellow team defend. When they regain possession, they take the place of the team that has lost the ball (e.g. the blues lose the ball, the yellows play with the greys)

#### Variants:

- Count the number of passes
- Increase the size of the pitch to encourage long passes and switching play
- Teams of 5, 6 or 7 players



### 4. Game of 4 + 4v4 to keep the ball while moving

#### Organisation:

- The coach instructs the team what formation to play in (e.g. 4-3-1-2)
- Different colour per defensive line (blue, grey and orange)

#### Procedure:

- Game of 11 against 4 to 5 yellow opponents (semi-active and active)
- The team in action with 1 or 2 touches tries to finish
- Always play to a different colour player

#### Variants:

- Not allowed to pass the ball back to the player who has made the last pass
- Limit the number of passes before finishing
- Limit the duration of the attack



## Training of cognitive qualities: cognitive games

### 1. Game of 3v3v3 for finishing

#### Organisation:

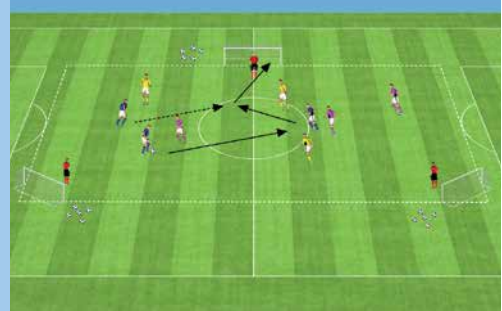
- 3 teams of 3 players (3 different colours) + 3 goalkeepers
- Marked-out playing area
- 3 large goals (also with poles)
- 1 ball in play

#### Procedure:

- Each team plays against each other
- Players try to score against the two other teams
- Free play. Make the right choice

#### Variants:

- Play without a goalkeeper
- One floating player playing with all 3 teams
- Vary the size of the playing area and the number of players per team



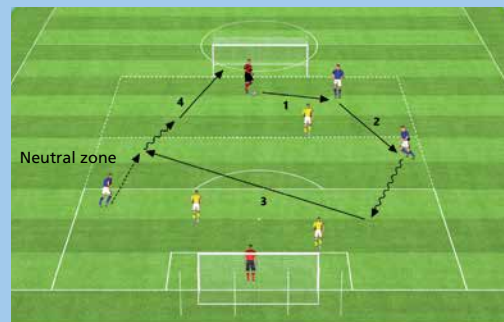
### 2. Game of 3v3 (or 4v4) for finishing

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 3 players + 2 neutral goalkeepers
- Marked out area + 2 large goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play. It is possible to score in both goals
- The goalkeeper starts play in the defensive zone. When the ball is in the neutral zone, it is possible to choose from which side to shoot
- After recovering the ball in the attacking zone, it must be returned to the neutral zone by passing or dribbling
- If a team scores, the goalkeeper restarts play with the same team
- Normal goal or direct kick



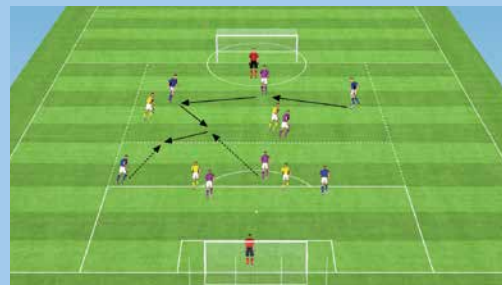
### 3. Game of 4 + 4v4 to keep the ball and finish

#### Organisation:

- 3 teams of 4 players (different colours) and 2 neutral goalkeepers
- Marked-out area + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- The blue team play with the grey team against the yellow team. The blues and greys play with 2 touches (or 1) to make 10 passes before finishing with a direct shot into one of the 2 goals
- The yellow team defend. If they recover the ball, they may shoot straight away or after passing into the two goals. Free play for the yellow team
- Change roles every 5 to 6 minutes
- Which team can score the most goals?



### 4. Game of 11v7 + 2 goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- Game of 11v7 + goalkeeper
- Different colours for each block for the 11-man team (blue, grey and orange)
- 7-man team wear yellow
- Area marked out + 2 large goals + 2 mini-goals
- The coach instructs the teams what formations to play in (e.g. 4-4-2 against 3-3-1)

#### Procedure:

- The 11-man team attack with 2 or 3 touches of the ball. Always play to a different colour player
- The yellow team defend. If they recover the ball, they may play freely and shoot at the large goal or one of the 2 mini-goals
- If the 11-man team lose possession, they try to recover the ball in order to play a possession game before attacking

#### Variants:

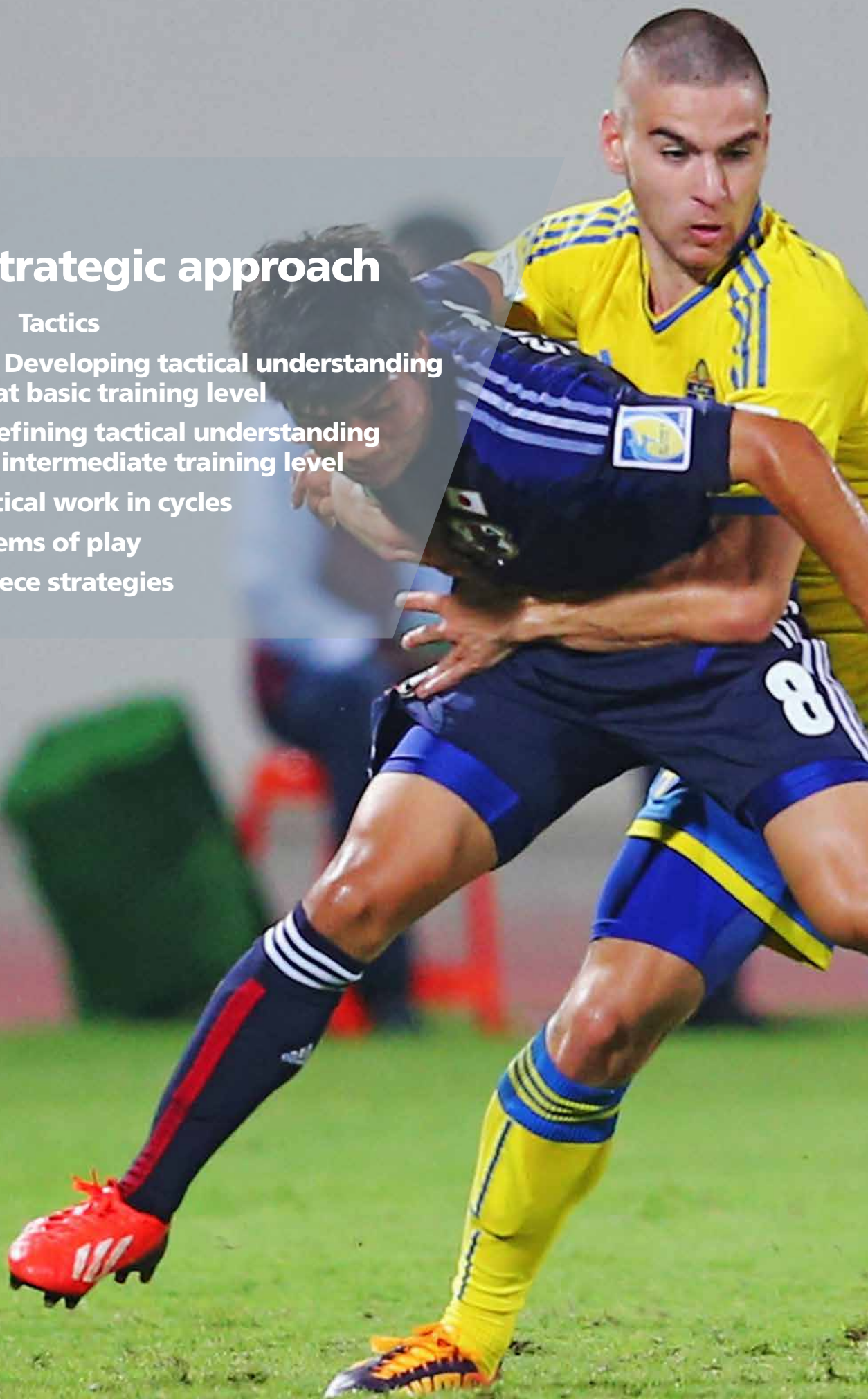
- Give instructions (e.g. press when the yellow team have the ball, finish after a cross, etc.)



# 5

## Strategic approach

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## 5 – STRATEGIC APPROACH

A general strategic approach consists of various elements based upon a rationalisation of the game to create an effective structure on the pitch.

Taken as a whole, a strategic approach is established based on individual resources and qualities. It can sometimes be a reflection of a group or of an individual, particularly the coach.

A strategic approach can stem from an analysis of the sporting culture, the intrinsic qualities of the main persons involved, and the environment in which the players find themselves.

In principle, all of the players' activities are in line with the required strategic approach, which is part of the group's overall vision.

Anticipating and processing information on the pitch in order to exploit space is essential and this is what makes tactics

such a key part of football. As a result, the information that comes from experience and respecting the Laws of the Game will help players to move around the pitch. By taking the time to think and make a decision, the player does something that benefits the team's play.

Tactical performances are very dependent on the cognitive aspect and physical resources during movements.

Each section presents various methods of working with young players so that the overall strategic approach is understood and appropriate, particularly at the basic and intermediate training levels. In training, mastering the basics of movement and tactics is key to understanding and reading the game.

A strategic approach is a team's way of playing on the pitch. It is akin to a "trademark", a game philosophy, or in other words, a team's style of play. One could even refer to the spirit that the coach instils by calling upon his experience, his

football culture and especially through the players at his disposal. This approach is built upon a formation and organisation, in other words the movements of players that vary depending on the selected principles of play.



## Definitions

### Formation

A series of figures describing, line by line, the positioning of players on the pitch. The formation is chosen by the coach, e.g. 4-4-2 / 4-3-3 / 4-3-1-2 / 4-1-3-2 / 4-2-3-1, etc.

### Organisation

A good distribution of roles on the pitch in defensive and attacking phases, position by position, line by line, which results in the formation being as effective as possible. Such an organisation depends on its own values and can be easily adapted to different circumstances.

### Game plan

The precise strategy for a particular match in the form of individual and collective instructions.

## Principles of play

The tactical elements that make up the formation in attacking and defensive phases of play. Instructions are applied individually and collectively according to the position of the team unit on the pitch and, of course, the game situation.

Examples of attacking principles:

- Long balls towards two attackers with the support of the midfielders
- Wing play with overlaps

Examples of defensive principles:

- Pressing in midfield
- Pushing opponents out wide

### Animation

The team's movement and the coordinated movement of players around the pitch in line with the team's attacking and defensive principles. This animation enables a team to vary its play and to make changes to its formation during a match, moving from a 4-4-2 to a 3-4-3 when on the attack, for example.

Time, space and the ball carrier determine the movement.

Collective play makes football dynamic.

## Tactics

Victory or defeat is not only down to the players' ability on the ball. As football is a team sport, it is vital that the team shows collective intelligence.

The outcome of a match is also inextricably linked to tactics. The players' positioning on the pitch, the phases of play practised during training, and more generally the ability of 11 players to play in a coordinated manner are all factors that can significantly affect a team's results. Consequently, football does not just require skill, power and resistance, but also a subtle understanding of the strategic options that are the best for the team, which is sometimes referred to as "game intelligence".

Tactical instructions cover the positioning of players in relation to each other as well

as their movement. All of this is worked on upon during training and put into practice by players during matches.

Tactical play can therefore be defined as "the spontaneous actions of a player or a group of players in response to a situation in a match, whether attacking or defending".

### Switching roles

Every player on the pitch now has to play a role in his team's attacking play as well as defensive play.

Consequently, attackers have to try to break up the opponent's attacks with effective individual pressing. Conversely, defenders can push forward to create a numerical advantage when their team is on the attack. Midfielders, meanwhile, can join their team's attack or defence depending on the situation in the game, although a team's tactics can radically change during the course of a match. Today, a team's ability to adapt its tactics due to a change in circumstances (goal scored or conceded, a substitution by the opponents, a sending off or injury, being dominated or trying to

take the initiative, etc.) can make all the difference.

Versatility is a virtue that a good coach can use when he deems it necessary, which is why players who can operate in a number of positions are much sought after by coaches.

In the modern game, versatility and the ability to adapt are important, as are creativity and the player's ability to play in the team's basic formation.

### Tactical evolution

The evolution of tactical cultures depends less on clubs than on coaches themselves, with the most prominent and experienced coaches at the elite level preferring one formation or another. There has also been a levelling out in terms of tactics, mainly due to the development of an incredibly effective new tactical weapon: video analysis.

The trend of fielding more and more defenders seems to have reached its limit. Five-man defences have never been particularly convincing, and having fewer than three or four attacking players (midfielders and attackers), as a number of top teams currently do, seems to be counter-productive. The emphasis is now on versatility and keeping the lines close together, often called a "unit", which

results in closing down the opponent's time and space. Defensive play is based on key tactics such as full participation of the ten outfield players, regrouping, attackers pressing the ball, a defensive line, etc. Attacking play gives teams more room to experiment and show creativity (depending on whether one, two or three attackers are

used, or whether playmakers are wide or central), giving football analysts many years of observation work.

## Developing tactics

Although technique is a key part of success, it needs to be combined with good tactical work from the youngest possible age in order to develop "tactical awareness", which appears as soon as a player needs to find solutions: in other words, the response of a player or a group of players to a situation that occurs during a match. The best response depends on the player's technique and his ability to adapt to the situation, a skill that is learnt and improved during training and drills. Tactics are derived from principles of play, which ensure that all players react in the same way. All of this is learnt in the basic training stage.

*Tactics start in 1v1!*

Thus, a player can call upon his understanding of tactics as soon as he has to run with the ball or regain possession. A tactical culture is predominantly taught during free play, which gives players the freedom to develop their creativity. The coach should therefore ensure that games are part of his training sessions, with exercises and directed play.

His objective should be to work on all of the elements that affect the adjustment of a strategy or an organisation, the team's collective play and/or the tactical abilities of each player. He has to train good players with very good technique, adapted physiology, unflinching spirit and a tactical understanding so that his team is perfectly coordinated between using the ball while occupying the space, and regaining possession by closing down space.

In this regard, he has to improve each player's:

- know-how (motor skills, technique)
- perception of movement of team-mates and opponents
- speed of play, which includes the speed of perception, execution, reaction and sometimes the frequency of movement

Training is therefore conducted at game speed in situations that are as close as possible to those that may occur during matches, using training games:

- Small-sided games
- Directed play
- Games focusing on a theme
- Attack and defence
  - Equal teams, or teams with a numerical advantage/disadvantage
  - 1v1, 2v1, 3v2, 4v2, 4v3, etc.



## Developing tactical understanding at basic training level

At the start of the basic training cycle, young footballers have some tactical problems:

- Too much is left to chance and not enough is deliberate
- Poor skills when in possession
- Lack of participation in attack; lack of anticipation in defence
- Tendency to continue to mark a player even when the ball is far away
- Too focused on being either an attacker or a defender (youngsters are happy to be a defender and continue to mark

- their opponent even in possession, or an attacker and never drop back to defend)
- The still embryonic notion of team play

In this key phase, it is therefore vital to define the expectations, roles and movements of each position in relation to the other positions, as well as to explain the ideas of positioning on the pitch and play without the ball.

### Developing tactical qualities

The strategy in the basic training cycle is based upon work that is more focused on individual training, which has to help young players slot into the team so that the team adapts as one to different types of games and situations on the pitch.

Practising the basic principles of the game on a regular basis will improve the players' tactical understanding little by little, so focus on helping them to run with the ball, call for the ball, pass, move, defend in zones, play with a numerical disadvantage or play on small pitches.

#### Tools for tactical development

- Progressively increasing the size of the pitch will enable players to discover different zones on the pitch (in the centre or on the wings when in attack, or at the back or in the centre when defending) and this helps them to position themselves correctly.
- At the same time, progressively increasing the number of players will give players more options when attacking, but also more problems to solve when defending.

#### More players = more duels

Formations change from one small game to another, which means that the players' individual behaviour also changes and this helps them to improve their reading of the game. Obtaining information during play, reaction time and perception of space are all part of each young player's progressive education, which will also help with the team's collective organisation.

#### Purposes

If he is encouraged to think about the choices he has to make in order to be effective during games and in various situations, a player will always be called upon to use his intelligence.

By the time he has finished his basic training as he moves up into intermediate training, he will have blossomed as a player and learnt all of the individual and team tactics that he will need to play in various tactical formations.

Beyond the purely sporting aspect, he will also be ready to accept or appreciate the efforts made for himself or the group as part of his respect for the club's community and social life.

#### Zonal culture = modern football

Moving from 7v7 to 9v9 and then to 11v11 during the basic training period is an important transition from a team playing in two lines to a team playing in three.

Although it is important to not overemphasise the value of tactical formations in youngsters between the ages of six and 12, attention must still be paid to the team's basic organisation.

Without a rational but simple formation set up to occupy space, it will never be possible to put plans for constructed play in place. Zonal football and the correct principles will help to develop the players' tactical awareness:

- Occupying wide positions will enable a team to build up smooth attacks down the wings

- The more a team is spread out across the pitch, the harder it will be for their opponents because wingers provide width and depth in attack
- The basic principles of zonal defending are the notions of working as a unit, regrouping together, distance between the lines, mutual covering, density and closing down space

### General principles of play

- The principles of play practised in small-sided games (4v4, 5v5, 7v7, etc.) are to be expanded upon and developed in a more specific manner depending on the game situation
- The notion of transition between defence and attack upon regaining possession has to be addressed (importance of quickly deciding if an attack should be launched immediately, or whether it is better to wait and retain possession)
- Long balls and fast counter-attacks with a limited number of passes become real alternatives for attacking play
- Players are to be encouraged to show initiative and take risks
- In front of goal, players need to be determined to finish a move
- Transitions between defence and attack need to be worked on: every player has to play an active role in regaining possession, which begins with dropping back quickly into defence or pressing the ball as a unit
- Little by little, the keys to good defensive organisation are revealed to be the principles of closing down the opponent's space, harrying the player in possession, controlling the opponents and behaviour in duels

### Tactical foundations: main areas to work upon

#### Attacking aspects / circulating the ball:

- Space – the key to attacks (width and depth)
- Play forward quickly when possible, as first intention
- Make an individual difference:
  - duels / running quickly with the ball (dribbles)
  - play the ball into gaps
  - look and play the ball between two players

- Help the player with the ball (runs towards the ball/ahead of the ball/behind the ball) to retain possession:
  - gradual build-up attacks
  - open up space by giving the player in possession some options
  - circulate the ball using the width to get past the defence: wing play
  - players running into gaps
  - show for the ball in between two opponents
  - pass and move
- Make the difference together:
  - counter-attacks / fast attacks
  - maximum of 4-6 passes
  - look for depth quickly
  - runs into space / long balls / changes of pace
  - play second balls well
- Finishing involving:
  - shooting: a key part of the game
  - taking risks
  - determination
  - runs into the penalty area
  - mental aptitude

#### Defensive aspects / regaining the ball:

- Density of numbers – the key to defence
- Close down the runner with the ball:
  - create a numerical advantage behind the ball
  - do not let him pick up speed
  - stop him playing deep
  - close down space behind the defence
- Control players who are not in possession:
  - regrouping / marking / protection
  - occupation of zones
- Regain possession:
  - harass the ball carrier
  - regain possession as a team
  - defensive unit, numerical advantage
  - pressing high up the pitch and in midfield
- Skill in duels:
  - win duels in important areas

**Zonal play**

## Principles:

- Signals: ball, goal, opponents and lines
- Collective regrouping: numerical advantage
- The closer the ball is to the goal, the more important it is to close down the opponent's space
- Retreat and "jockey" moves / interception and launch attacks quickly

## Advantages:

- Good protection of shooting zones
- More effective defence against fast attackers and good dribblers
- Reduced movement
- Compact unit and few difficulties when opponents make diagonal runs
- Compensation for individual weaknesses in duels
- Ease of retaining possession (occupied zones)

## Disadvantages:

- Tendency to over-rely on team-mates
- Need for players to have very good coordination in movements
- Playing zonally calls upon the players' intelligence and on an excellent understanding of positioning
- It does not always make it easy to regain possession quickly (unit)

**How to play against a team that is organised zonally?**

- Keep play on one side and then switch the play
- Create a numerical advantage behind the ball
- Cut the ball back from crosses
- Alternate between short and long passes into gaps
- Shoot from distance after a lay-off from an attacker
- Run on to the ball to shoot
- Attackers: must play based on a limited number of touches of the ball, on the move and in the gaps

**Formations**

While progressing towards 11-a-side football at the basic training level, it is generally better to use a flexible 4-3-3 as a team's basic formation.

This system enables a team to cover the pitch correctly and also to stay balanced at all times, in addition to opening up a

greater number of "playing triangles" when on the front foot.

This system helps to improve the players' understanding of tactics by encouraging players to move around the pitch, defenders to participate in attacks, and attackers to drop back into defence.

The players gradually learn about playing in a team with three lines, and about how to act or react depending on the situation, with the objectives of finding a perfect balance between defending and attacking movements, and also obtaining a specific form of tactical awareness.

## Refining tactical understanding at intermediate training level

This is the final stage in a players' development, from the age of 15 onwards. In addition to finishing the development of the players' physical and technical abilities, the intermediate training level is an opportunity to fine-tune their tactical understanding in order to prepare them as much as possible for higher level football.

Having digested practically all of the technical education, this can now be used as a basis for more complex individual and team tactics to improve the players' understanding of lines and zones.

At this age, players have acquired an understanding of technique and tactics that they will need to use for competitive football.

The demands and rigours of football, coupled with the level of commitment required, mean that modern-day

footballers can no longer rely solely on their natural skill. It is only through serious, high-quality training that a player can become a competitive footballer.

**Basic organisation**  
+  
**Player movement**  
+  
**Intelligent movement**

This attacking and defensive play makes all the difference, but they are always inextricably linked.

The position of the defensive unit also generally determines the type of intended attack.

At basic training level, tactical work is done simply to focus on getting the team playing well together.

### Balance – imbalance – transition

Transitions from attack to defence – and vice versa – are now the key to winning football matches.

Dropping back as quickly as possible, or playing the ball forward as quickly as possible after regaining possession to profit from the opponent's defensive imbalance is the defining feature of modern-day football.

#### **A battle of space and time...**

In terms of transitions, the seconds lost in launching an attack are also seconds lost in which to take advantage and exploit the

spaces left open by the opponents for a brief moment.

It is vital that the unit stays well balanced.

On the other hand, however, there is only one way to unbalance a well-positioned defensive unit, and that is through the players' movements, which obviously unbalance the players' own team.

To win a game, a team has to know when to accept being unbalanced in order to put their opponents in an even more unbalanced situation.

### Players exceeding position requirements

Players move around the pitch in order to attack or defend. Attacking movements involve runs (movement towards the goal) and moving ahead of/behind the ball (movement towards the ball).

Defensive movements involve covering runs and regrouping movements (dropping back into defence).

The extent of these movements differs from one position to the next, but it is an inescapable fact that at some point in the match, players will need to do more than their position actually requires in the interest of the entire team, for example a midfielder finding himself playing as a winger.

Football is all about movement, and it goes without saying that without movement there can be no team play.

Play without the ball represents the lion's share of a footballer's activity as each player will only be in possession for an average of 2-3 minutes per game.

The reduction of space, coupled with the strengthening of central defence, means that coaches are now trying to stretch defences by using combinations down the wings (attackers, midfielders and full backs).

In short, a player's position is determined by where he is on the pitch and where he is in relation to the other players.

He has primary and secondary duties.

The difference between an average player and an excellent player is therefore his ability to do more than his role demands.

## Defensive play

### Phase of non-possession

The defensive play of a unit is a succession of coordinated movements between the players forming the unit, with the aim of one player or the entire unit regaining possession of the ball.

A defence's primary objective is to protect the goal, if necessary to the detriment of regaining possession.

The purpose and spirit of defensive play requires the defence to:

- quell the opponent's attacks
- prevent opponents from passing or shooting, but above all:
- regain possession to launch an attack on the opponent's goal

### Defending well means regaining possession of the ball

#### Defensive dynamics

- Define a formation that can stop an opposition attack
- Understand that opponents can attack down the centre (using depth, long balls) as well as across the pitch (using width, switching play)
- Develop a positive mentality in the player to help him understand that defending is about:
  - "attacking an attack" and not waiting
  - understanding that everything starts as soon as the ball has been lost
  - realising that each individual defensive action affects the entire team's defensive play, and that significant coordination is required
  - paying attention, working together and being strong mentally

- knowing that all players have defensive duties and are involved in regaining possession

#### Basic principles

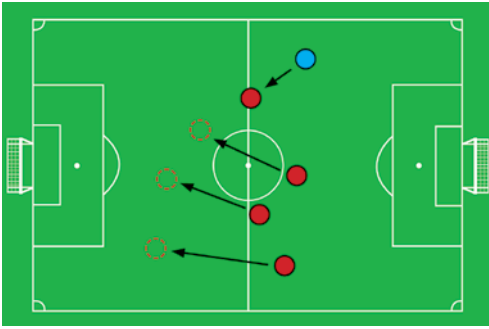
A team's defensive play consists of forming a wall against an opponent's attack, generally involving three lines during static phases, but increasingly involving two lines during more dynamic phases of defensive play (pressing).

In the static phases:

- The first line of players forms a barrier or uses "jockey moves"
- The second line of players harries or intercepts
- The third line of players marks or controls the opponent's attackers

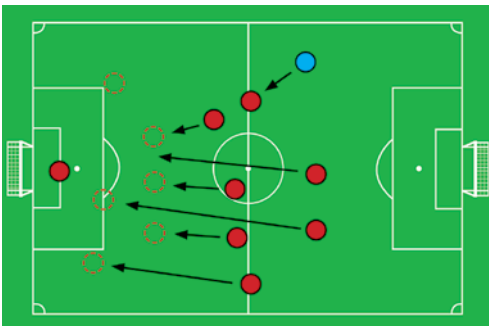
In the more dynamic phases:

- The first and second lines form one single line to block, harass or intercept
- The third line of players continues to mark or control the opponent's attackers, or even to intercept passes

**"Jockey moves"**

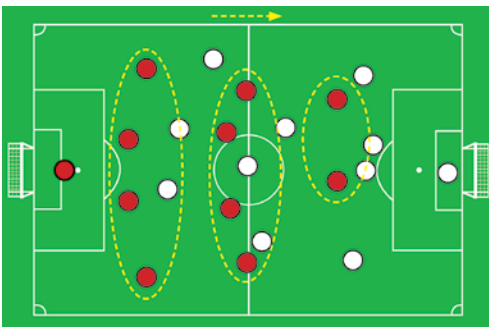
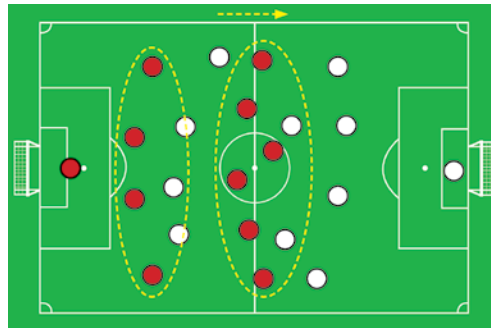
The principle is to slow down the opponent who is in possession of the ball:

- Try to guide him into a specific area
- One player "jockeys" the player in possession
- His team-mates drop back to cover the player doing the pressing and use the offside line to continue to form a compact unit

**"Jockeying" while dropping back**

The principle is to protect the goal:

- One player "jockeys" the opponent in possession
- His team-mates drop deep
- They form a wall to prevent long-range shots and to stop opponents getting closer to goal

**Three defensive lines****Two defensive lines****When and where does defensive play begin?**

**When?** As soon as the opponent has the ball

**Where?** In any area of the pitch:

- In the opponent's final third: try to stop the opponent from launching an attack
- In the midfield: try to slow down the opponent's move
- In a team's own final third: protect the goal

Using:

- the selected formation
- the basic position of the unit on the pitch
- the players' individual characteristics
- players who do more than their roles demand
- respect for the team's balance

**Defending = a job for the whole team**

Regardless of the formation used, the type of play or the basic position of the team unit, the coach has to ensure that all of his players understand that one system is used and that each player knows:

- what he has to do
- where he has to do it
- when he has to do it
- how he has to do it

Putting such a system in place revolves around two questions:

- Where should the team's attempts to regain possession start?
- How will these attempts be organised?

The system will also take three key things into account, namely:

- The ball carrier
- Time
- Space

**The ball carrier:** immediately close down the player in possession of the ball, shut down his options for playing deep, and stop him moving forward with the ball at his feet

**Time:** slow down the attack and prevent the opposition from playing long, giving as many team-mates as possible the chance to get themselves in between the ball and the team's goal

**Space:** shut down all options of playing balls in behind the defence, bring the lines closer together and close down the space in which the opponents can play

The common objectives are:

- Pressurise the opposition
- Deny the opposition time and space
- Win duels and intercept the ball

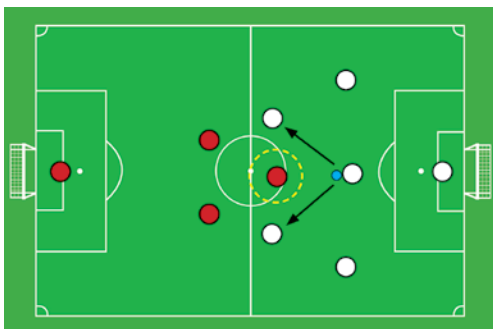
### Basic defensive tactics

#### Individual and collective play

Irrespective of the defensive systems being used, individual and collective tactical play remains the same: deter, help, press, intercept and counter.

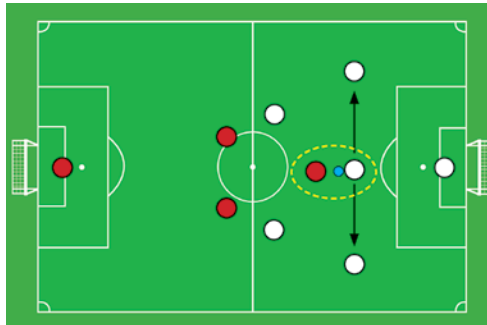
#### Close down the player with the ball

The job of the first line of defence is to stop the ball carrier from playing long and instead force him to either play out wide or backwards. The priorities are to prevent the opponents from long balls and playing forward quickly.



#### Incorrect

The defensive position of the player in the red team is not good because he is giving the opponent too many opportunities to play deep.



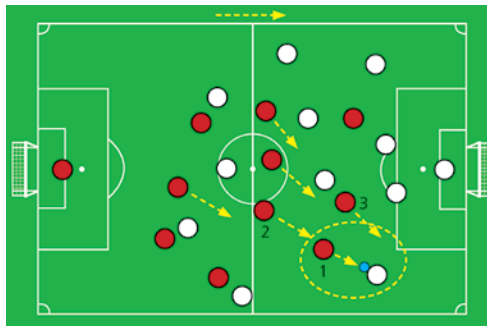
#### Correct

The defensive position of the player in the red team will force the opponent to play square, closing down the option of playing deep.

#### Supporting players not in possession

Any player joining the second line of defence must:

- alter his run so that he is on an imaginary line between the ball carrier and one of his team-mates (interception)
- intervene immediately if an opponent in his vicinity receives the ball (defensive intervention)
- support a team-mate in his defensive work (covering play)
- help to ensure that his team has numbers back behind the ball



#### Successive pressing

- Stop opponents playing deep at all costs
- Each successive ball carrier is put under pressure
- Player 1 presses
- Player 2 covers
- Player 3 intercepts
- The other players move towards the ball side of the pitch

**Create defensive balance**

Form a defensive unit of two or three lines: slow down, prevent deep balls, regroup

**Quickly create a numerical advantage**

Get numbers back behind the ball, cover the centre and the wings

**Regain possession collectively**

- Apply the team's defensive principles (pressing high up the pitch, in midfield, zonally, deep, etc.)
- Individual defensive behaviour

**Comments**

The efficiency of a defensive system depends upon the good coordination of the various defensive actions mentioned above with regard to:

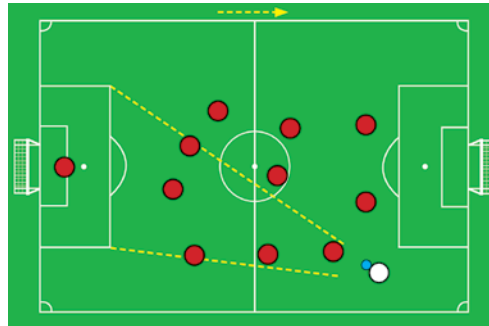
- the player in possession
- his team-mates who are not in possession of the ball
- the possible trajectories of passes
- closing down space in which to play

**Regain possession individually**

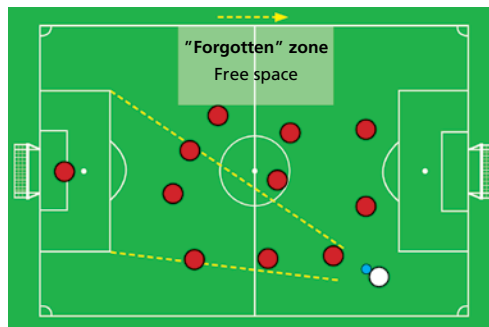
- Anticipate attacking play
- Take up a good position in relation to the ball
- Be in the ball's trajectory
- Anticipate = get in front of the opponent
- Force the ball carrier to play with his weaker foot
- Force the ball carrier towards other defenders to pen him in
- Block an opponent's move and do not allow him to turn
- Block or clear the ball
- Win duels (in the air or on the ground)

**Defensive strategies for set pieces**

- Man-to-man marking
- Zonal marking
- Mixed marking (man-to-man on one or two opponents; zonal for the others)
- Ensure that players who are powerful in the air drop back into defence

**Formation of a unit**

- Immediate block by the team-mate closest to the ball to prevent any balls being played forward.
- Coverage by the closest team-mate(s).
- The other players form a compact unit in the area between the ball and goal.
- The goalkeeper covers the unit.

**Collective movement of a unit**

- Immediate block by the team-mate closest to the ball to prevent any balls being played forward.
- Coverage by the closest team-mate(s).
- The other players form a compact unit in the area between the ball and goal.
- The goalkeeper covers the unit.



## Pressing by zone

Pressing by zone is the first individual action after the team has lost the ball. It signals the start of collective activity, the primary objective of which is to protect the goal, to slow down the opponent's progression up the pitch, and finally to work together to regain possession.

Interceptions can be dangerous, because the team that has just lost the ball is still set up to attack.

Pressing by zone is an emergency response to this situation. The players closest to the opponent who has just won the ball have to circle him and cut out any possible passes, particularly any attacking passes.

Forcing him to take his time or to play a pass backwards will give the team's defenders time to regroup.

### The basics of pressing by zone

#### Defending while pushing up

The principle of pressing by zone is for a team to constantly close down the ball carrier and enable the team-mates to regroup as a unit.

The objective is to prevent the opponent from playing forward and to force him to play sideways (which helps interceptions) or backwards.

#### Phase 1: closing down the ball carrier

As soon as a team has lost the ball, the player closest to the opponent in possession closes him down (without diving in). While closing a player down, it is also possible to push him out towards the touch line or to stop him from turning.

#### Phase 2: covering and marking

The team-mates of the player closing down the player in possession take up covering positions and mark their opposing players who could possibly receive a pass in the same zone.

Close down space and gaps.

#### Stay in position or start pressing

Depending on the team's objective or strategy, closing a player down may turn into pressing, which becomes more aggressive as the objective is clearly to win the ball back either through an interception, or by forcing the opponent to make a mistake.

#### Collective responsibility

Several players have to move and work together, as only one or two players doing so would be ineffective.

## Pressing

Pressing is a way for a team to put the opposition under immediate pressure to try and regain possession or force a mistake. Players need to show excellent athleticism and tactical discipline as well as great determination in duels.

Pressing is also a psychological weapon that gives confidence to a team and instils doubt in the opposition:

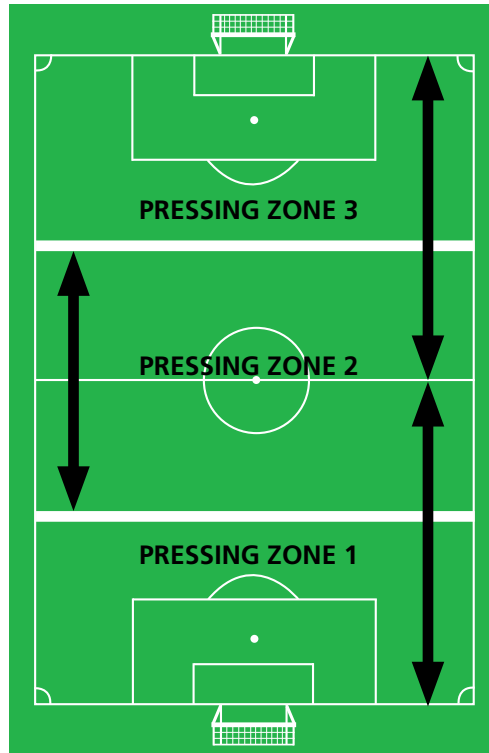
- Press, harass, close down, encircle the opponent, put him under pressure to regain possession or stop an attack. Pressing is not linked to one specific strategic approach. Given the inherent risks and the physical demands placed on the players, it is not used for the entire match but simply when the game situation requires it or at specific moments, such as when a team has fallen behind, for example.
- It dictates the pace of the opponent's game, and as such it creates a feeling of insecurity. It forms the foundations for counter-attacks launched from the midfield or a team's own half.

### Some basic principles for pressing

- Stay as a unit in defence and with a numerical advantage in the area in which the pressing will take place
- Ensure that the unit stays compact and closed with a numerical advantage around the area where the ball is located
- Contain the opposition, slow the play down and guide them into the preferred zone for pressing (on a wing, for example)
- Harass the player with the ball to prevent him playing long or deep
- Hold up the opponent, put him under pressure, force him to make a mistake (turned back, on his weaker foot, poor control, off balance) and look for a duel
- Once the pressing has begun with the ball carrier under pressure, try to regain possession of the ball with active and determined anticipatory marking of players who may receive a pass
- Stop or limit passes backwards to the sweeper or goalkeeper, which would allow the opponent to get out of the pressing zone and play long

**The three types of pressing**

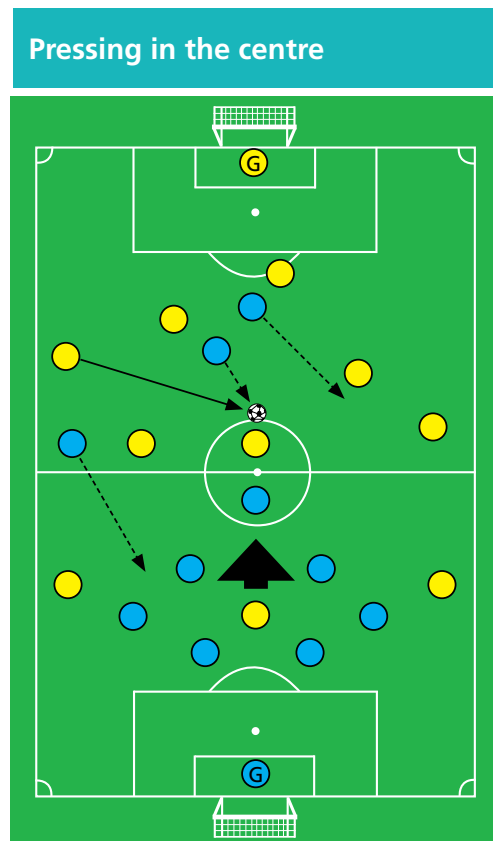
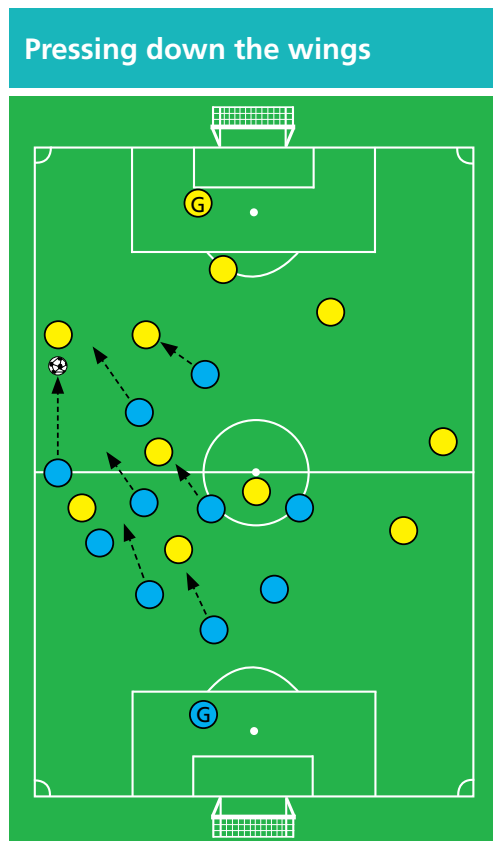
- Midfield pressing in zone 2
- Attacking pressing in zone 3
- Defensive pressing in zone 1



**Midfield pressing**

Attack the opposition in the middle of the pitch, drive them out wide or back into the centre in order to regain possession.

Depending on the quality and area in which possession was regained, decide whether to attack gradually or quickly.



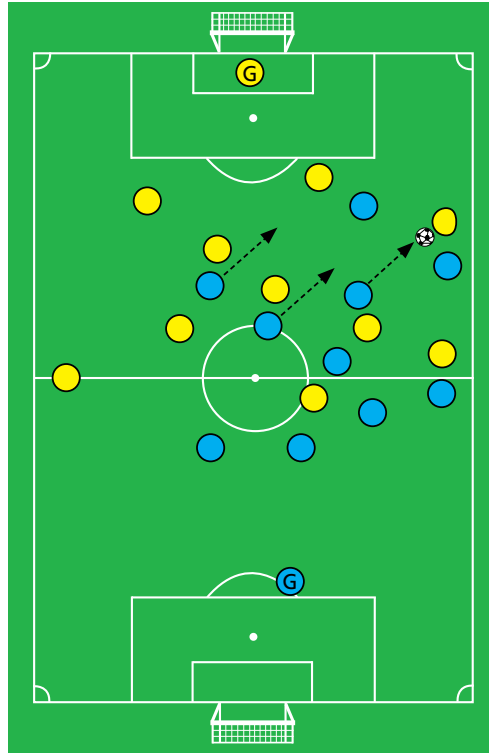
### Attacking pressing

Put the opposition under heavy pressure in their own half of the pitch. The team harasses the opposition to stop them developing their play, to destabilise them and to force them to make a mistake so that the ball can be regained.

As soon as the ball has been lost in the opposition half of the pitch, the players become defenders (attack/defence transition). They attack the ball carrier and put him under pressure. As soon as they have won the ball back, they launch a fast counter-attack by looking to play forward and deep as quickly as possible.

If the pressing is not successful, the team's defence can find itself outnumbered. The defence therefore has to:

- slow the game down, gain time and force the opposition back into their own half of the pitch
- reorganise the team as quickly as possible
- possibly put the opposition back under pressure



### Defensive pressing

A team drops back as a unit and waits for the opposition in their own half of the pitch. The team is compact, has a numerical advantage and closes down space, especially in the centre of the pitch.

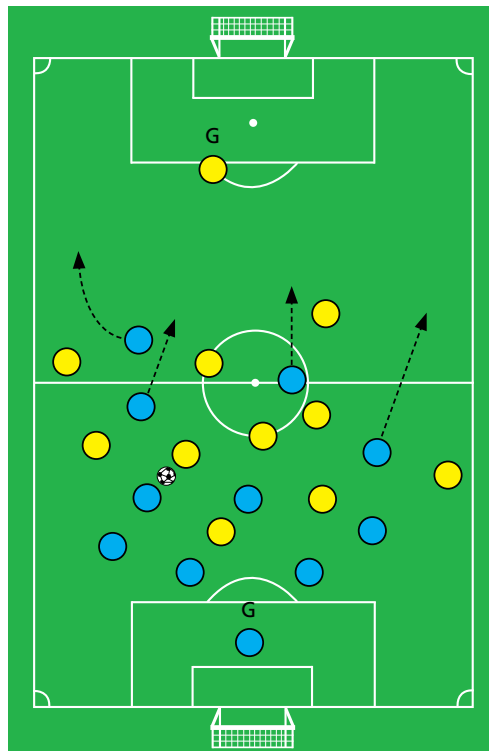
The players have to pay great attention.

Slow the opponent's game down, constantly harass the ball carrier, and force the opposition to make a mistake (e.g. an opponent receives the ball with his back to goal) before stepping in at the right time.

If the team wins the ball back, it can immediately launch a counter-attack (fast transition between defence and attack).

If it is impossible to launch a counter-attack, the team can, without taking any risks:

- get the ball away from the defence by clearing it or by playing a high-quality pass
- play the ball out wide, long or back to the goalkeeper to slow the game down



This type of defensive play is an attacking weapon because by closing down the centre of the pitch, it frees up the wings and creates space for a counter-attack.

## Attacking play

### Phase of ball possession

**Remember:** defensive and attacking play is always inextricably linked. Most of the time, the defensive position of a team unit will determine the type of attack to be launched.

Furthermore, the coach always has to bear another key factor in mind: regardless of where on the pitch that possession is regained, the width is always more or less the same. The depth, however, will always be different (80m, 60m, 40m, 30m, etc.) because it depends on the area in which possession is regained.

### Guiding principles

A team's attacking passes and movements form its attacking play.

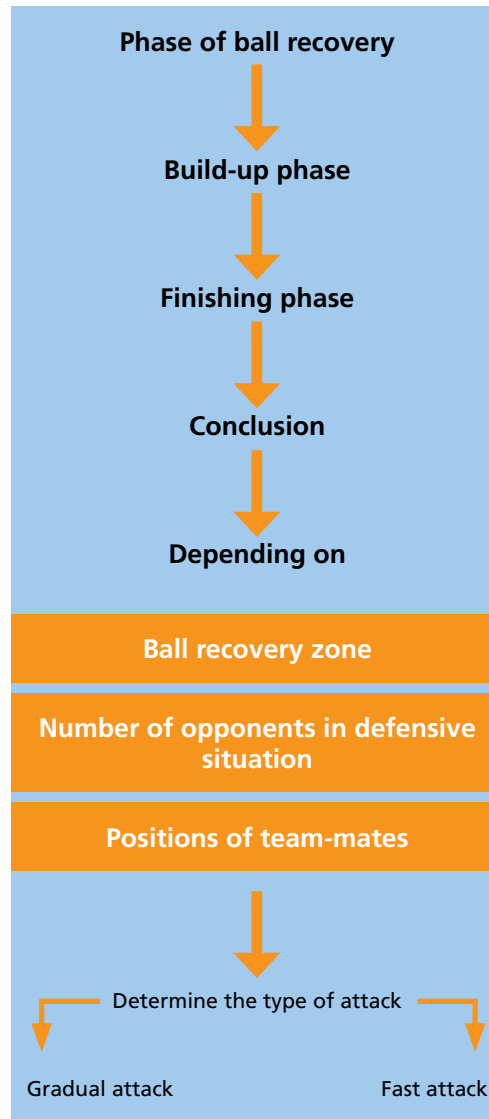
Consequently, the coach has to make a decision and work with his players to create reflexes that will help the team to destabilise the opponents.

A team's attacking play is the method it uses to break down an opponent's defence while taking various phases into account.

Depending on the type of attack (gradual build-up or fast), a team's attacking play will be based upon its basic tactical principles, according to which the players will play on both an individual and a collective level.

A number of elements will help a player to keep adapting and adjusting his behaviour, regardless of whether he has the ball or not:

- The position of the ball
- The position of the defence
- The positions of his team-mates
- The distance to the goal to be attacked
  - on the basis of constant movement
  - doing more than his role demands



On the basis of these elements, he will choose a type of play using the factors below, depending on the situation:

- Width or playing square
- Depth or playing deep
- Switches of play
- Changes of pace
- Gaps
- Penetration
- Unpredictability

## Basic tactical principles in build-up phase and finishing phase

### Individual and collective behaviour

#### Retaining possession as a group

Ensure that possession is retained well and that it is not lost quickly after working hard to regain it:

- Open up space by giving the player in possession some options
- Circulate the ball while using the width of the pitch
- Look for gaps
- Look and show between two opponents
- Notion of being ahead of/behind the ball
- Switch the play; play cross-field passes
- Play with one or two touches of the ball
- Speed the game up when circulating the ball

#### Collective imbalance of opponents

As soon as a team has regained possession, it needs to play forward as quickly as possible before the opponents have started to retreat or regroup in defence, or just as they are beginning to do so:

- Play two or three passes in quick succession after regaining possession high up the pitch to get a player in a position to shoot as quickly as possible
- Create a numerical advantage: calling for the ball and controlling the ball on the run are crucial
- Exploit and develop maximum potential speed
- Importance of changing the rhythm by injecting pace into passes
- Vary the pace and intensity of movements
- Coordination of movements and runs for the ball from inside to outside, from the back to the front, or from the outside to the inside depending on the game situation and the positions of the opposition

#### Individual imbalance of opponents

A defence can be put off balance by running movements, passes or individual play.

The overall objective is to destabilise the defence.

#### Running movements:

- Change of pace in runs for the ball and movements
- Darting runs in behind the defence
- Runs into gaps ("show between two opponents")
- Movements and runs between the lines
- Diagonal runs
- Runs into the zone opposite the play
- Principle of numerical advantage in attack

#### Passes:

- Play forward as first intention
- Limit the number of touches of the ball
- Look to play 1-2s or 1-2-3s
- Passes into gaps ("look between two opponents")
- Play between the lines
- Switch the play to create crossing opportunities
- Play passes in behind defenders (look for depth)

#### Individual initiatives:

- Directional ball control and on the move
- Use feints
- Use dribbles
- Look for one-on-ones

#### Effective finishing

Finishing is the conclusion of an attack and is a skill that requires certain moral qualities (perseverance, not being discouraged), all of which need to be reinforced in a player through encouragement:

- Positional sense
- Good timing
- Good anticipation
- Cutting off trajectories
- Getting in front of the defender
- Speed of execution
- Determination to hit the target with shots

When close to goal, players need to be on the lookout for and alert to mistakes by the defenders.

### **Type of attack and style of play**

In general terms, there are two types of teams based on their preferred way of attacking. A team's attacking philosophy therefore defines its style of play:

- On the one hand, there are teams who make possession a key part of their game because they are better and more efficient with the ball
- On the other, there are teams who do not retain possession for long, either because they are better without the ball or because they do not really have a choice

The first group of teams like to dominate and control the match, dictate the game, play and press high up the pitch, circulate the ball, create movement in the opponent's half of the pitch, and use their technique and team play to build up attacks gradually.

Conversely, the second group of teams either choose or are forced to sit back and stay compact, close down space, let the other team play, look for one-on-ones, regain possession in their own half of the pitch, and launch counter-attacks by moving between defensive phases and attacking phases with direct play, which is the key to their fast attacks.

The paradox for these teams is that they have to master build-up play even though they know that fast attacks with two, three or four passes are more effective, even if they are less popular.

In reality, however, things are not quite so clear-cut and, at the top level, the best teams have to be able to play both systems, in other words they need to excel at building up attacks gradually but also at hitting teams with fast counter-attacks. These two systems have to be worked on during training.

### **Gradual build-up attack: patient destabilisation**

#### **Basic principle**

The opponent's defensive unit is already in place, which means a fast attack is not necessary. In other words, the team has to circulate the ball until the opponent's defence makes a mistake:

- Do not lose sight of the objective of attacking play, which is to move forward to create a goalscoring opportunity
- Using passes to progress up the pitch, with the majority of passes being played forward, can be defined as "positive" possession
- Conflict between the need to keep the ball and taking risks to open up a gap in the opposition defence

#### **Basic tactics for gradual build-up attacks**

Attacking play built around gradual build-up attacks is based upon a team's basic tactical principles, according to which the players play on both an individual and collective level.

- The main objective is for a team to impose its passing game
- A gradual build-up attack requires time, is dependent upon the quality of the passes played, and on accurate positioning and movements
- The entire team is involved in these situations because the objective – to destabilise the defence – requires each player to be able to push up and create a numerical advantage, if necessary by doing more than his initial role demands
- The player who launches the attack is the one who creates space, makes the difference in a duel or who plays the decisive pass

A number of essential criteria can be defined:

- Mobility or movements of players
- Width
- Depth or playing deep
- Quality of runs into space and vision of gaps
- Changes of pace
- Quality of passes and control
- Unpredictability

#### **Mobility and movements of players**

Football is all about movement.

Coordinated player movements are essential to ensure that ball circulation is as effective as possible as part of attempts to

destabilise the opposition defence. The objective is for the ball carrier to always have an option for playing a pass.

It goes without saying that team play could not exist without movement.

The fundamental points are:

- Do not stand level with the player with the ball so as to avoid square passes, which are easy to intercept, do not force the game forward, and create a situation in which there is no defensive security if the ball is lost
- Take up a position in a triangle, or even a diamond, to create more options for the ball carrier
- Move between the opponent's defensive lines (midfield/defence) so that depth can be injected into the game
- In the same way, take up a position between two opponents so that passes can be played into gaps
- Use coordinated runs from the centre to out wide, or vice versa, to disrupt the opponent's zonal marking
- Runs from the outside to the inside create space down the wings and give players a chance to push up for an overlap
- Make diagonal runs to get in behind the defenders
- Use different depths: centre forwards make runs with another player ahead of the ball to lay the ball off, and another player making a run into space for a ball in behind the defence
- Develop counter-movements (runs off the ball, decoy runs)

In conclusion, the players' mobility depends on the gameplan and the team's intentions, which relate as much to the occupation of space as to working with team-mates and destabilising opponents.

This mobility must result in a "positive" circulation of the ball and the creation of space, giving the team the opportunity to impose its attacking play.

### Using the width

Using the width is a key part of football. The reduction of space, coupled with teams playing with stronger defensive blocks, means that coaches now try to stretch defences by taking the game out wide. Using the width allows the teams to do just that, creating gaps on the wings for possible crosses from wingers, or spaces in

the centre to search for depth by playing in the gaps.

The basic points are:

- Use the entire width of the pitch
- Use the space on the opposite side of the pitch
- Keep the defence on one side to switch the play better
- Always keep the wide players involved in the game (full backs, wide midfielders or wingers depending on the formation)

Many goals are scored in this manner: the defence being kept on one side of the pitch because of multiple short passes before the play is switched towards a player making a run on the opposite side of the pitch (alternating between short and long play / alternating between wing play and diagonal balls / play switched with diagonal balls).

### Depth or playing deep

The general idea is to play an accurate pass, whenever possible, forward to exploit space; in other words, to be able to play between the opponent's lines or between two opponents.

Players must therefore be taught that their main priority is to always exploit the space in front of them.

Quickly switching the ball from one side of the pitch to the other creates space in the middle of the pitch, which in turns creates a chance to look for depth by playing in the gaps.

The main objective, therefore, is to break through the opposition lines with:

- passes between the opposition lines (midfield and defence)
- passes between two opponents
- passes in behind the defence

An attacker who is able to play as a pivot, either laying the ball off for others or moving into space behind the defence will also occupy the defence and create space for his team-mates.

### Quality of passes and changes of pace

To play in small spaces occupied by many defenders, players have to be able to play accurate passes and be able to change the pace of the game.

A limited number of touches, flick-ons, playing in triangles, one-twos, many short and fast passes, pauses followed by sudden



acceleration, play on the ground, changes of direction and pace, change of target at the last minute in line with the situation

- any of these tactics can be used to destabilise a defence that has regrouped. Consequently, apart from physical speed, players have to develop mental speed during competitive matches to enable them to adapt to any situation and to make the right choice, and to have enough time to process all the information and to make a decision.

### Unpredictability

The ability to take opponents by surprise instead of always playing the same way is a key factor in effective football.

Good team play requires smooth coordination between the various elements that make up a team's structure and gameplan, but it also requires creativity and individual initiative:

- Changes of pace in runs with and without the ball
- Use of feints and dribbles
- Use of runs into space and decoy runs
- Duels to destabilise the opposition
- Ability to change decision at the last minute

### Fast attacks: destabilisation by surprise

Many teams base their game on meticulous defensive organisation and direct, long play with a limited number of touches in the middle of the pitch. These teams prey on opposition mistakes and tend to excel in second-phase play.

Their style of play is all about defending deep with very tight lines, focusing on one-on-ones, reducing the spaces and gaps to prevent balls in behind their defence, playing with only a few touches of the ball, and looking for overlaps and gaps before breaking forward quickly after regaining possession with a very direct and accurate style of play.

### Basic principle

A team is at its most vulnerable at the precise moment that it loses the ball as it has not had the time to regroup defensively. It is still in attacking mode and appears to be disorganised. This is the ideal moment to launch a fast counter-attack by getting the ball up towards the opposition goal as quickly as possible to put the

opponents under pressure in terms of time and space:

- Time pressure due to the time that the opponents need to regroup
- Space pressure in terms of playing in the space vacated by the opponents while they were pushing forward to support their own attacks

Fast attacks are therefore a way to exploit the opponent's defensive instability. They can be launched from any area of the pitch, but the higher up the pitch they begin, the more likely it is that they will be successful. Such attacks enable teams to get forward quickly and into a shooting position. They are based on runs into space, which in turn destabilises the opposition defence, and as such players need good vision to play the ball over a line towards team-mates who have made runs. Fast attacks are not without risk, however, as they rely on a quick first pass. If a player takes too long to get his pass away, the attack will not be as effective.

### Basic tactics for fast attacks

Fast counter-attacks can be grouped into various categories:

- A traditional counter-attack launched with a long ball towards 1 or 2 players, who finish(es) the move as quickly as possible with the minimum number of touches
- A fast attack following a defensive set piece (corner kick or indirect free kick), and an interception followed by a quick long ball from the goalkeeper or a defender. Such attacks are also finished off as quickly as possible and with as few touches as possible
- A fast attack after an interception in midfield, leading to a counter-attack with 3 or 4 players swiftly exchanging passes to get forward, using as few touches as possible
- A fast attack following pressing close to the opponent's goal, leading to an immediate pass in behind the defence
- A fast attack following an individual piece of skill based on dribbles and explosive runs

More than half of all goals scored at major international competitions are a direct result of fast counter-attacks or breakaways, which underlines the importance of this tactic in modern-day football.

Successful fast attacks are the conclusion of rapid transitions and immediate breakaways, with players committed to supporting the attack, making explosive runs, circulating the ball rapidly, making as few passes as possible, taking the minimum number of touches and looking to score as quickly as possible.

Organised defences and the limited space available have made breakaway moves and fast transitions a key tactic in attacking play.

### **Principles of play for fast attacks**

- **Play forward / importance of looking long quickly**
  - Square or backwards passes are to be avoided, unless they are to set up an immediate pass forward (e.g. a centre forward laying the ball off for a pass in behind the defence). Look to play ball out to the wings or in behind the defence
  - The first pass after regaining possession is always crucial, so always look to play forward whenever possible
- **Limit the number of touches of the ball**
  - Try to use one or two, or three touches of the ball at the most, to inject pace into the game
  - Unnecessary touches or passes of the ball and unnecessary dribbles are all detrimental to the success of a fast attack
  - Quick passes are therefore essential
  - Finally, changing the pace of the game after regaining possession is also crucial
- **Movement and availability of players**
  - Playing forward quickly does not mean that every single player – particularly the attackers and wide midfielders – have to run towards the opposition goal. Diagonal runs are the runs that destabilise opposition defences the most: importance of long runs (20-40m) without the ball
  - Football is all about movement. Coordinated player movements are essential to ensure that ball circulation is as effective as possible as part of attempts to destabilise the opposition defence
  - The objective is for players to always create an angle for the ball carrier to play a pass in behind the defence
- Players who make forward runs do so into space and gaps. Runs into gaps give players the chance to play a pass in behind the defence
- If there is no movement, fast attacks will fail
- **Support the play**
  - Runs for the ball are linked to losing your marker, and they require players to always pay attention and anticipate their team-mates' moves. If a player moves from his set position to act as a midfielder or an attacker in a fast attack, he demonstrates his versatility and helps to destabilise the opposition
  - Furthermore, during fast attacks, runs off the ball on the other side of the pitch are one of the best ways to destabilise the opponents
- **Team pushing up as a unit**
  - As soon as possession has been regained, the team pushes forward as a unit to give the player with the ball three or four options. When play is moving forward quickly, the defence should take advantage by pushing forward to the halfway line to close the lines
  - Nevertheless, a team may decide to leave the defensive unit deep to avoid giving their opponents the chance to launch a counter-attack if they regain possession
- **Finishing off moves and efficiency in front of goal**
  - A move often finishes with a pass into a gap and into the path of an attacker, or with a cross cut back towards a player on the move. The move therefore has to be quick, but not to the detriment of efficiency
  - The principles behind fast attacks could therefore be described as the intention to quickly bring danger into the opposition half and to use the space in behind the defence

## Speed

Players have to keep their thinking time to an absolute minimum because opponents cause them all manner of problems.

It is in this direction that football, which is now all about playing as a team, will continue to develop in the future.

Speed is acceptable and desirable when it is allied to technical precision, or technique on the move.

The need for speed must not lead to any hint of haste or mistakes.

After all, what use is speed if a player can run quickly but not control the ball?

Why rush if you don't know which direction to go or how?

In football, the word "speed" can be deceptive.

It is better to talk about "acceleration", which is closer to the truth in football: learn to control the ball, work as part of a finely tuned team game and then, all of a sudden, stun your opponent with decisive and unexpected bursts of acceleration that will catch your opponent off guard because it is a break from the norm.

It is therefore better to talk about "fast mental reflexes", because such reflexes are at the root of all types of speed.

## Transitions

Football is a game of two distinct phases determined by possession and non-possession of the ball: the attacking phase, when a team has the ball, and the defending phase, when a team does not have the ball and tries to win it back. There is, however, another phase that occurs throughout each game. The period between these two phases is called a transition, which is a very short interruption in the match (3-4 seconds) in which the team that was not initially in possession of the ball can benefit.

The concept of transition could also be understood as the moment when possession moves from one team to the other:

- Transition between attack and defence: the situation in which a team loses possession and has to regroup in defence as quickly as possible
- Transition between defence and attack: the situation in which a team regains possession and launches an attack as quickly as possible

When working on these transition phases in training, a team's objective should be to keep the time needed to move into the next phase after possession has changed hands to an absolute minimum, and to try and complete its transition before their opponents (who will be doing the opposite).

Exploiting those seconds in which a team is unbalanced will give a team more chance of success, either in its attacking moves during transitions between defence and attack, or in regrouping its defence during transitions between attack and defence. Nevertheless, to keep the duration of the imbalance to an absolute minimum and to profit from that imbalance, teams have to retain some balance so that they are well positioned when possession changes hands: they need to make sure that there is some defensive cover when attacking, or keep the team compact as a unit to facilitate pressing and to "counter a counter-attack" when defending.

This ability to quickly and correctly manage the transition from one phase to another is crucial and requires players to concentrate all the time.

**Transition phase (defence to attack)**

Space, options provided by team-mates, the area of the pitch in which possession is regained, and the positioning of opponents across the pitch are all basic aspects that players have to focus upon to help them decide whether to launch a fast counter-attack or to keep the ball as part of a gradual build-up attack.

**Transition phase (attack to defence)**

Regrouping the defence quickly and effectively, knowing how to slow down an opponent's move, getting numbers around the ball by correctly occupying space and pressing the ball carrier (individually or collectively) will limit the effectiveness of an opponent's attack.

Transitions are crucial in modern-day football, especially as most goals are a direct result of a team's (in)ability to make the most of their transitions.

Some training principles enable coaches to use training games to develop the ability to launch various speeds of play:

**Launching two phases of play:**

Defence	→	Regaining possession	→	Gradual build-up attack
Defence	→	Regaining possession	→	Fast attack
Attack	→	Loss of ball	→	Regroup defensively
Attack	→	Loss of ball	→	Pressing

**Launching three phases of play:**

Defence	→	Regaining possession	→	Gradual build-up attack	→	Regroup defensively
Defence	→	Regaining possession	→	Gradual build-up attack	→	Pressing
Attack	→	Regroup defensively	→	Regaining possession	→	Fast attack
Attack	→	Regroup defensively	→	Pressing	→	Gradual build-up attack

## Tactical work in cycles

In attack, tactics are based on general game principles such as playing on the move, looking for space, getting away from a marker (ahead of the ball, behind the ball), communication between players (ball carrier and team-mates), and play specific to the position.

Defensive tactics have also developed in recent years, and have been influenced by the evolution of the game at the highest level. Established tactics such as switching positions, covering team-mates, jockeying

movements, etc. have been supplemented by new defensive strategies such as defending high up the pitch and pressing.

Working on tactics by teaching general principles of play requires time. Not everything can be taught and learnt at the same time, which is why it is better to work in cycles, focusing on one principle per week.

### Basic football rules to start a cycle

#### Cycle I

#### Do not lose the ball in the attacking phase

##### For the team

- Create as many passing options as possible
- Increase the number of switching options (ahead of/behind the ball)
- Anticipate to increase the options for the ball carrier
- Use all of the space on the pitch
- Use the width
- Be committed to the team's play and try and score more goals than the opposition
- Respect the Laws of the Game

Master some techniques for the specific type of game regarding

- the occupation of space
- the act of shooting and scoring
- movement with the ball
- the link between recipient and non-recipient, between ball carrier and non-ball carrier whenever necessary and possible

#### For the ball carrier

- Keep the ball away from the opponent and close to your own body
- Protect the ball (use your own body as an obstacle)
- Pass the ball quickly (and firmly) away from your team-mate's direct opponent
- Make basic choices in order to achieve the set of objectives
- Play alone or with a team-mate
- Shoot or pass
- Play short or long

#### For the team-mates of the ball carrier

- Move to a suitable distance for a pass and away from the defender's reach
- Break the alignment of ball carrier, defender and non-ball carrier
- Move while changing speed
- Occupy space

**Comments:** in the basic training phase, the skills and knowledge to be acquired from small-sided games should enable a player to work with his team-mates to pose difficulties for the opposing team and play towards goal.

**Play on the move****For the team**

- Make many runs for the ball towards the goal and around the ball carrier
- Vary the speed of movements
- Limit the number of touches of the ball

**For the ball carrier**

- Pass into the path of a team-mate
- Use flicks
- Look around before controlling the ball

**For the team-mates of the ball carrier**

- Control the ball while on the move
- Move into the ball carrier's field of vision

**Create and use space****For the team**

- Keep the defence in one zone and play into another
- Switch between direct and indirect play, between short and long play
- Execute the tasks needed for continuity:
  - Ball carrier: pass, shoot, possibly dribble
  - Team-mates: play ahead of the ball, behind the ball, or square
  - Alternate between playing long and playing wide

**For the ball carrier**

- Occupy opponent to free up team-mates
- Switch play
- Play ahead of the ball, in free space

**For the team-mates of the ball carrier**

- Move far away from defenders and into free space, into gaps, behind defenders
- Use changes of speed and direction
- Use runs out wide to create space and channels

**Create uncertainty****For the team**

- Alternate between direct and indirect play
- Drag an opponent into one zone and finish in another
- Changes of pace
- Increase the number of players involved in the move
- Occupy all of the space

**For the ball carrier**

- Feint: combine changes of pace, space, orientation and control
- Feint to pass, shoot, dribble: pretend to shoot or pass on one side but shoot or pass on the other

**For the team-mates of the ball carrier**

- Feint: vary movements by combining changes of pace and direction, making more runs for the ball

**Defensive game****Stop the ball progressing by reducing uncertainty****For the team**

- Cut out as many passing options as possible
- Anticipate the opponent's moves
- Quickly decipher the opponent's system of play
- Agree on the team's approach to defending
- Take up the roles need to break up the opponent's play: intercept, impede, counter

**For the player**

- Identify, gauge and watch direct opponent
- Coordinate the defence
- Impede the progress of the ball and/or the ball carrier by harassing him, by pressurising his control
- Reduce the space and movement

**Stop the ball progressing by reducing space and movement****For the team**

- Quickly change the defensive system: move forward, press
- Limit the amount of free space, alternate between zonal defending and man-to-man marking
- Push the attack towards one zone to keep it away from goal
- Define the roles of everyone in the game

**For the player**

- Identify your opponent's playing area
- Reduce the space in which he can play
- Push the ball carrier into a small space out of harm's way

**Regain possession****For the team**

- Stop the opposition from progressing
- Mark all the players
- Organise pressing

**For the player**

- Try to intercept
- Harass the ball carrier
- Block passing lines to his team-mates

**Defend own goal****For the team**

- Get as many players as possible between the ball and the goal
- Always cover the area in front of goal
- Push attacks out wide

**For the player**

- Do not dive in
- Cover team-mates
- Prevent opponents from shooting
- Drop back quickly while watching the ball

## Cycle II

**Objective**

- Try to win a match using attacks with permanent occupation of space (width and length) against a defence that is organised to regain possession and defend its goal as a team
- The team uses all of the attacking area to get past a staggered defence that is trying to regain possession by harassing the man in possession. Players can have defined roles

**The defence**

- is individualised and organised in defensive lines across half a pitch to:
  - help each other to contain and deter attacks
  - regain possession in duels and regroup defensively to intercept
  - protect its goal

**The attack**

- organises itself around occupying the maximum space available to:
  - use the channels and start moves based on near and far attacking support play
  - destabilise in duels to create space for the shooter, playing on the counter-attack
- start moves using basic skills to:
  - increase the possibilities of shots and trajectories by using different types of shots
  - use "pass and go" and "pass and follow" moves
  - identify, create and exploit numerical advantage (set, give, call, feint, commit)

## Cycle III

**Objective**

- Try to win a match by making collective tactical decisions based on the speed of execution, the exploitation of space off the ball and in the air, and using at least two team-mates. The defence closes down space
- The team tries to help the ball carrier who is trying to open up space against a defence that is closing down his space to try and regain possession
- In comparison to the previous cycle, the approach is more complex: the players organise themselves according to defined roles in attack and defence, and can also have different roles depending on the situation

**General principles**

- Use individual and collective play adapted to the reactions of the opponent to:
  - use direct play (towards goal) or indirect play (on the outskirts)
  - occupy space well in attack and defence
  - find your bearings and take up a position in relation to the goal, team-mates and opponents
  - identify and exploit the signs in the move to determine whether to launch a fast attack or start a gradual build-up
  - initiate moves to regain possession or to regroup in defence, depending on the situation
- Master the solutions needed to:
  - use space to be able to attack and defend
  - act on ball movements in attack and defence

**The defence**

- The team forms a unit of several lines to:
  - push back the opposition
  - prevent opponents getting towards goal and protect the centre of the pitch
  - regain possession by pressing (impede, slow down, deter, intercept) and play on the counter-attack (alone or with team-mates)

**The attack**

- The attack can increase its potential activity by:
  - trying to occupy the opponents before passing to an unmarked player, or switching play
  - trying to increase the speed of execution
  - working for and with team-mates
- By reading the game, players can overlap, centre, switch wings, play short or long, play slowly and/or quickly

**Comments:** once all these cycles have been concluded and the players have acquired all the necessary skills, they will be able to take part in various forms of attack. They have to be capable of using the alternatives that are inherent to these types of play.



## Systems of play

A system of play involves giving each player on the pitch a task, which is why it is also referred to as a team's basic organisation. Nevertheless, it is the players' movements within this basic organisation – the skeleton of a team – that will allow the team to express itself. But to be able to move, this skeleton needs a muscular system (movement of players) and a nervous system (intelligence of movements and players' tactical intelligence) to give it orders.

### Flexibility of system

During a match, a team's basic organisation changes depending on match situations (defensive or attacking). A basic 4-3-3 can become a 4-4-2 or a 4-5-1 when defending, or a 4-2-4, a 3-4-3 or even a 3-3-4 when attacking. A basic 4-4-2 can become a 4-5-1 when defending, or a 4-3-3 or even a 4-2-4 when attacking.

Attacking and defensive play makes all the difference between teams but they are inextricably linked. The position of the team unit while defending also generally determines the type of attack.

The basic training phase should focus first on the 4-3-3 as it not only allows for a significant number of team moves and a rational occupation of the pitch, but it also helps players to progress without any difficulty to more sophisticated systems.

At intermediate training level, more focus should be placed on tactical flexibility, either from one match to another or during the course of a single match, as well as on different systems to prepare players for the demands of playing at the highest level.

### 4-3-3

During basic training, it is better to start with a flexible 4-3-3 as a team's basic organisation as it allows for a rational occupation of the pitch and ensures that the team is always balanced, in addition to offering many "triangles" for attacking play.

This system helps to improve the players' understanding of tactics by encouraging players to move around the pitch, defenders to participate in attacks, and attackers to drop back into defence. They gradually learn about playing in a team with three lines, and how to act or react depending on the situation, with the objectives of finding a perfect balance between defending and attacking movements, and of obtaining a specific form of tactical awareness.

The 4-3-3 (four defenders, three midfielders and three attackers) has a defence that often acts in a line like in the 4-4-2, but the midfielders' roles can change. The midfield is generally more defensive, and has to get the ball forward quickly to the attackers, generally one centre forward and two wide attackers.

The players in this system will normally be as follows: a traditional defence with, if possible, two attacking full backs; three midfielders (two passers and one ball winner, playing in a similar fashion to a 4-4-2 diamond formation) who are capable of covering a lot of ground to compensate for the missing fourth midfielder); two fast wide players with powerful shots; and an attacker, preferably athletic and good in the air.

It should also be noted that the 4-1-4-1 formation used by some coaches is merely a defensive version of the 4-3-3. In a 4-1-4-1, there is still one ball winner and two passers, as well as two wide players who are attacking midfielders who do more defensive work.

### General use of four-man defence and zonal system

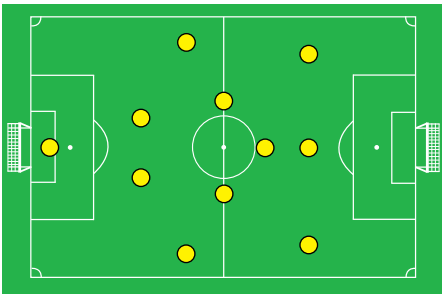
An increasing number of teams are now using a zonal defence of four players who cover each other and move around the pitch depending on the position of the ball. Zonal play is therefore dominant, and teams only differ from each other in terms of midfield organisation.

**Differences in midfield**

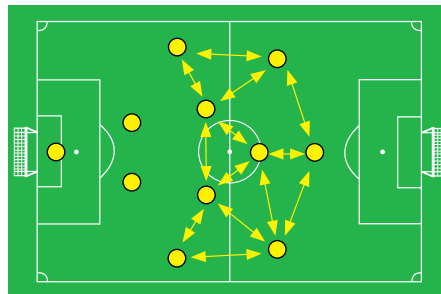
The differences in midfield organisation and the distribution of tasks means that three, four or five players can occupy the midfield, with logical consequences: the number of players in attack depends on the number of players in midfield.

**4-3-3 system**

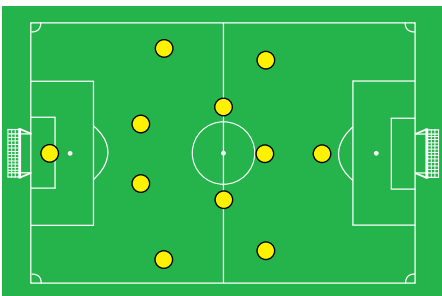
**4-3-3: rational occupation of pitch**



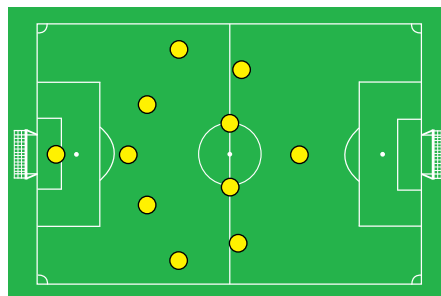
**4-3-3: several triangles**



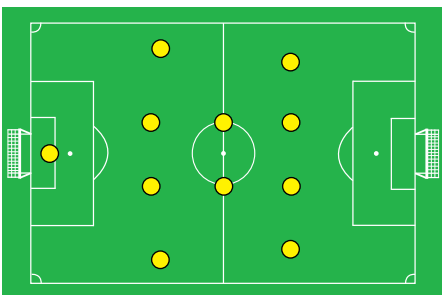
**4-3-3: defensive play ... towards 4-5-1**



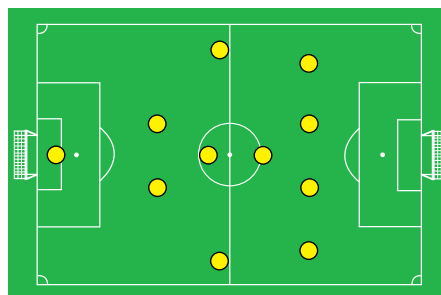
**4-3-3: defensive play ... towards 5-4-1**



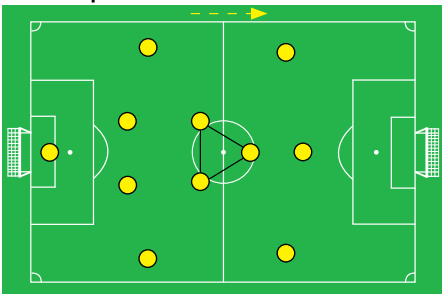
**4-3-3: attacking play ... towards 4-2-4**



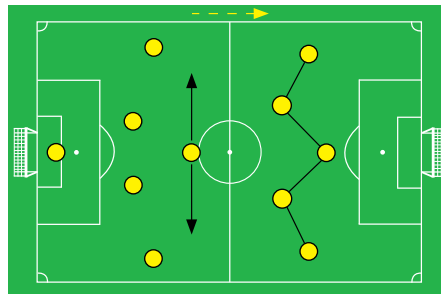
**4-3-3: attacking play ... towards 2-3-1-4**



**4-3-3 with a playmaker and two passers**



**4-3-3 with a "midfield sweeper" and a W in attack**



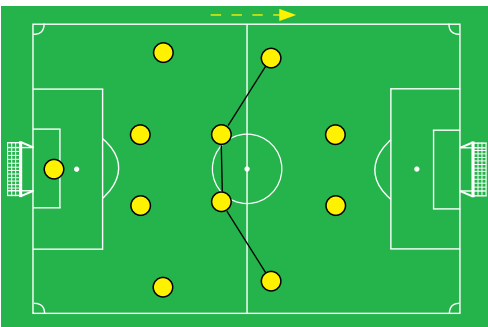
## 4-4-2

The 4-4-2 (four defenders, four midfielders, two attackers) is one of the more traditional formations in modern-day football. There are two forms: the traditional flat 4-4-2 (below left), and the diamond-shaped 4-4-2 (below right). The two forms are identical in terms of defending and attacking (two central defenders, two full backs, two strikers). The difference lies in the midfield:

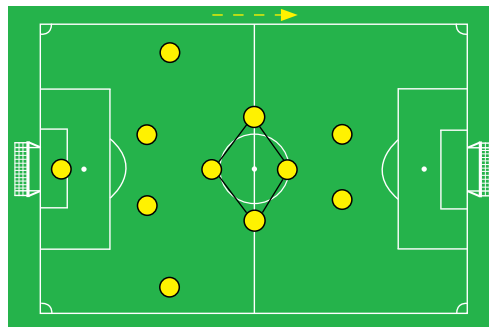
- In the traditional 4-4-2, the midfield is made up of two defensive midfielders: generally a passer and a ball winner. There are also two wide midfielders (one on the left and one on the right), whose task is to take charge of build-up play and to link up with the other attackers, whether on their respective wings or in the centre. The two wide midfielders can certainly be wingers, but they will still have defensive instructions to follow.
- In the diamond-shaped 4-4-2 (which can be more of a 4-3-1-2 or a 4-1-3-2

depending on the players selected), which either has a defensive midfielder flanked by two midfield passers and an attacking central midfielder, or three defensive midfielders behind an attacking central midfielder (a "playmaker", which indicates a role rather than a position on the pitch), who is the fulcrum of his team and has to play the decisive passes for the two strikers to compensate for the lack of overlapping midfielders. In this formation, the defensive midfielders will generally be a central ball winner and two midfield passers in the channels, but with more defensive work to do than the wide midfielders in a 4-4-2.

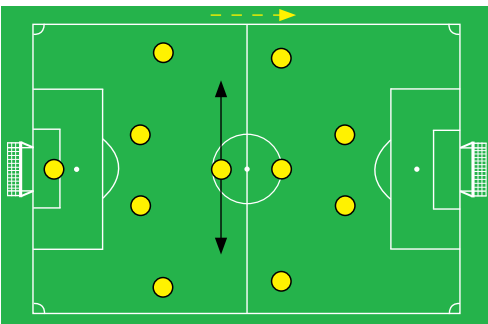
**Traditional 4-4-2 with 2 central midfielders and 2 wide midfielders**



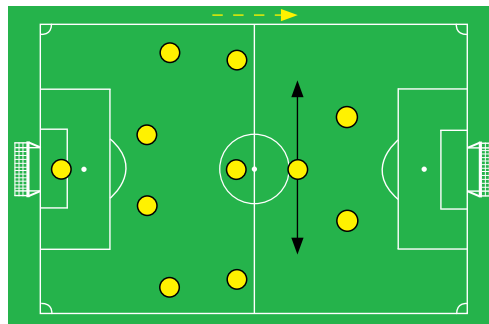
**4-4-2 in a diamond shape**



**4-4-2 with one defensive midfielder and three attackers**



**4-4-2 with one attacking midfielder and three ball winners**

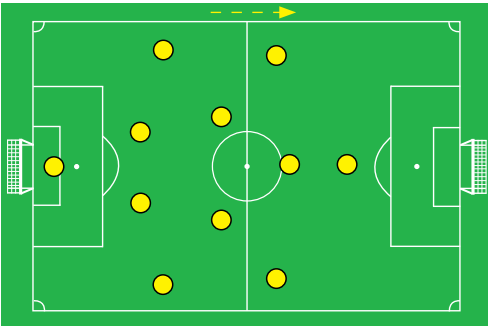


## 4-2-3-1 and its evolution

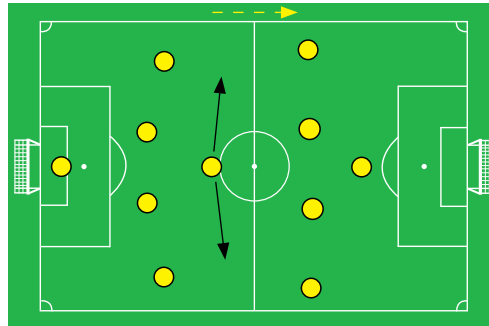
The 4-2-3-1 (four defenders, five midfielders, one attacker) is a system that, like the 4-3-3, tries to suffocate the opposition in the midfield by using two defensive midfielders, generally one good passer of the ball and one ball winner. The midfield is that of a diamond 4-4-2 with an extra attacking central midfielder, who is the playmaker and needs to have the vision and technique to create goalscoring opportunities on his own. Although

there is only one player in attack, he is supported by three attacking midfielders. This formation accentuates the qualities of a playmaker, who covers a lot of ground in the centre of the pitch. It is also one of the most popular formations among coaches.

**4-5-1 / 4-2-3-1 with two defensive midfielders and three players supporting an attacker**



**4-5-1 / 4-1-4-1 with a "midfield sweeper" and four supporting attackers**



### Formation with three central defenders

Some teams still use three central defenders in defence, either when needed in a match, or as their system of choice.

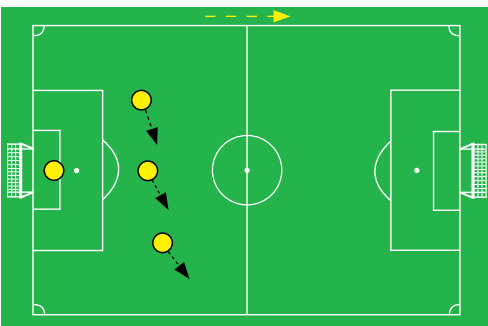
These defenders:

- either play zonally and cover each other;
- or
- are two markers with one sweeper covering.

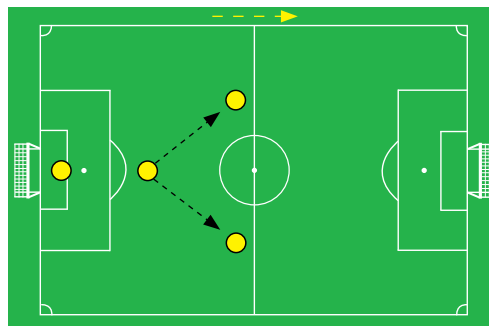
In this type of system, the team's intentions influence:

- the basic system (defence of five or three)
- the position of the players in the channels (more defensive-minded or more midfield-based)
- the positioning and number of players in midfield

**3 central defenders playing zonally and covering each other**



**3 central defenders, with two markers with one player covering**



## 3-5-2 and its evolution

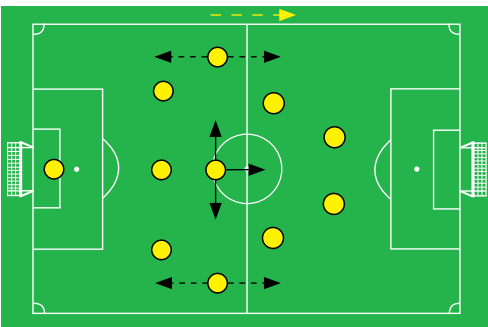
The 3-5-2 can easily become more defensive in the form of a 5-3-2, with the wide players dropping back to the level of the central defenders. This formation is very similar to the 3-5-2 but with wide players who are more defensive. Unlike the 3-5-2, however, it is generally used by teams that are weaker than their opponents and overly cautious.

The 3-5-2 provides more options in the middle: the attacking variation of this formation, with two defensive midfielders ahead of the defence and three players supporting two attackers, and the

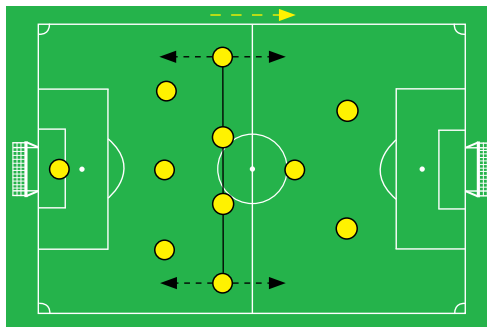
defensive variation, with a line of four ball winners ahead of the defence and one solitary central playmaker behind the two attackers. These formations are mainly used by South American teams.

The 3-5-2 is slightly more attack-minded than the 5-3-2. Instead of reinforcing the defence with two defenders supporting the midfield, teams try to create a numerical advantage in midfield with two more attacking players.

**3-5-2 / 3-3-2-2 with three midfield ball winners and two attacking support players. Essential tactical role of defensive midfielders**



**3-5-2 / 3-4-1-2 with four midfield ball winners and one attacking support player. Essential tactical role of two players playing as "full backs/midfielders"**

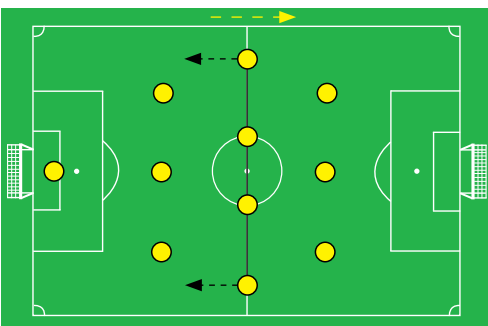


While the 3-4-3 is virtually identical to the 5-4-1 in terms of the positioning of players, it is more attacking in the players' behaviour with a line of three central defenders, a middle line consisting of two ball winners/passers, and two full backs who are capable of making overlapping runs and releasing the two wingers who support the centre forward. Although this tactic can offer great versatility and allow

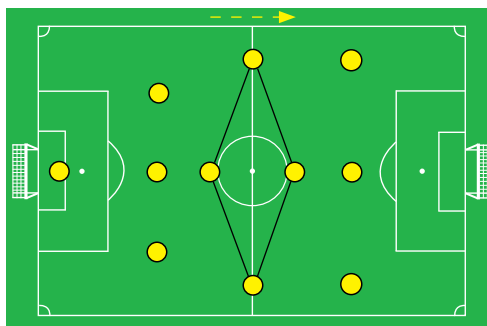
teams to create a numerical advantage in certain situations, it is reliant on counter-attacks and adventurous runs down the wings. The midfield can also be set up in a diamond formation.

The very attack-minded full backs play deep balls for the wingers or, if the wingers are playing on their weaker side (e.g. a left-footed player playing on the right wing), they can overlap.

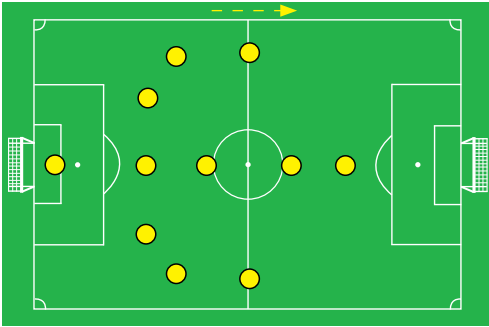
**3-4-3 with four midfield ball winners and three attackers. Essential tactical role of defensive midfielders**



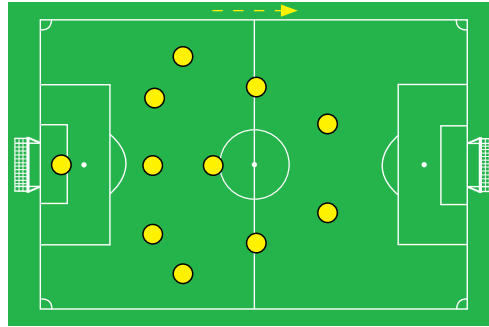
**3-4-3 with four midfielders in a diamond and three attackers**



**5-4-1: five defenders, four midfielders, one attacker**



**5-3-2: five defenders, three midfielders, two attackers**



This extremely defensive formation is generally developed during the course of a match by a team that has either scored enough goals or wants to avoid defeat at all costs by operating on the counter-

attack. In the case of the 5-4-1, there is often a four-man defence together with a sweeper who covers the space and intercepts any through-balls. The midfield is the same as in a flat 4-4-2.



## Team as a unit

The quality and efficiency of a team's technique form the basis of the team's tactics as soon as it has regained possession. Good control and a good first pass are key to attacking play and changing the pace of the game.

Nevertheless, the players' tactical behaviour is based on cognitive qualities (vision, anticipation), concentration, self-belief and in-game communication.

The quality of tactics also depends on the experience that players have acquired in training and competitive play, as well as on their tactical awareness.

Intelligence and a good understanding of the game promote inspiration,

improvisation and risk-tasking, all of which can make a difference and help a team to swing a match in its favour.

A team's gameplan is not linked to its formation and organisation. A team set up in a 3-5-2 or a 3-4-3 formation, for example, can still attack gradually or quickly.

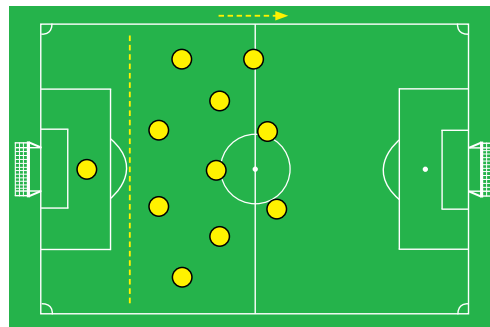
Such a choice depends on the game situation, where possession is regained, the number of players available to join an attack, the possible imbalance of the opponents, and above all the positioning of the defensive unit.

The area in which position is regained therefore determines the type of attack as well as a team's style of play.

### Deep defensive unit

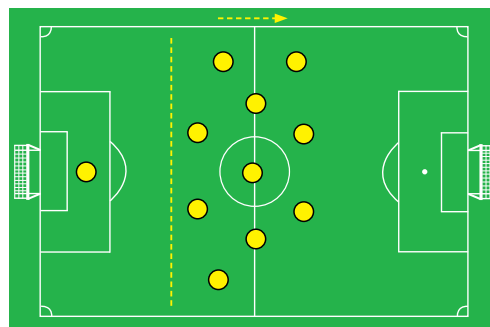
A defensive unit positioned deep will significantly reduce the amount of space available and will, above all, prevent opponents from playing balls in behind the defence.

However, after regaining possession, a team set up in this manner will have to play long balls and rely on counter-attacks.



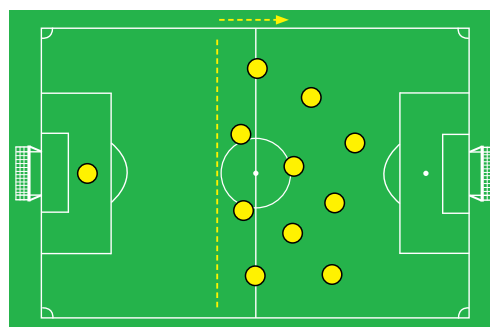
### Defensive unit in the middle of the pitch

A defensive unit set up in the middle of the pitch will enable the team to retain numbers in defence. While this tactic leaves space open and gives opponents the opportunity to play balls in behind the defence, it gives the teams more options after regaining possession: gradual build-up attacks, rapid attacks involving the entire team, or even counter-attacks. This is the most commonly used positioning.



### High defensive unit

A defensive unit positioned high up the pitch means that the team has to permanently press the ball and, as soon as possession has been regained, get the ball forward quickly. This tactic requires a great deal of energy, however, and has the disadvantage of leaving a lot of space behind the defence for opponents to exploit.



### Conclusion

The current trend is to position the defensive unit in the middle of the pitch and not press too high up the pitch so as to

avoid leaving too much space behind the defence, keeping a 30-35m zone in attack for all kinds of attacks (fast or gradual).

## How to create a coherent formation in basic training, starting from 4-3-3

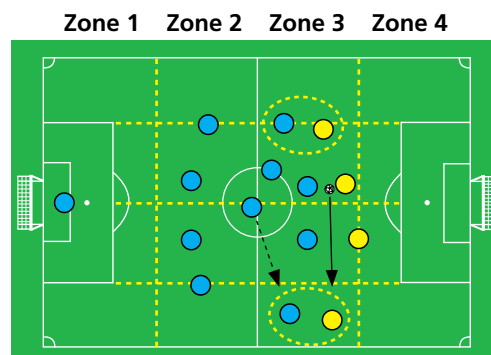
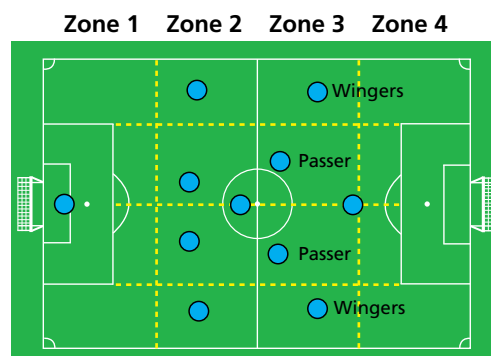
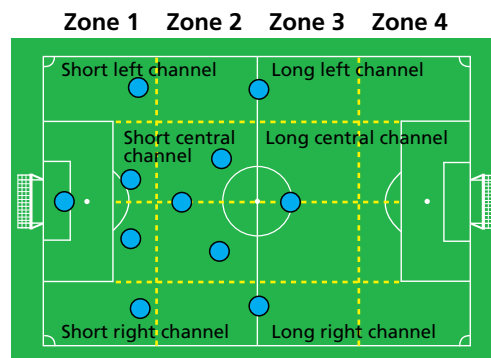
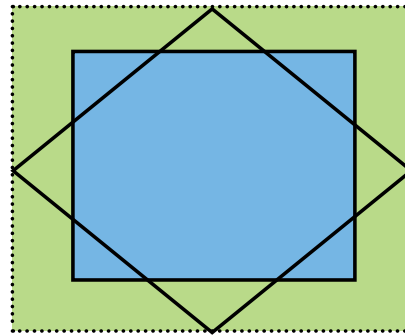
The objective is to put a formation in place with coherent progression in its construction.

### Diamond – why?

The virtual surface (in green), covered by four players organised in a diamond formation and keeping the same distance between themselves, is greater than the surface in the square (in blue). The players therefore expend less energy in covering the space, which explains why some teams use a diamond formation.

Furthermore, it also enables teams to use basic tactical principles: support play and runs into space, and pressing/covering in defence.

- **The pitch is divided into four channels:**
  - 2 wide channels
  - 2 central channels
  - 4 cross-pitch channels
- **The four defenders are positioned in zone 1:**
  - The full-backs are positioned in the short channels, and the two central defenders are in the short central channels
- **The three midfielders are positioned in zone 2 in the short central channels**
- **The three attackers are positioned:**
  - The centre forward is in the long central channel
- **The two wide players are in the short wide channels**



### High positional play

A team's movement in a 4-3-3 formation has to manage the non-possession phase according to zonal principles.

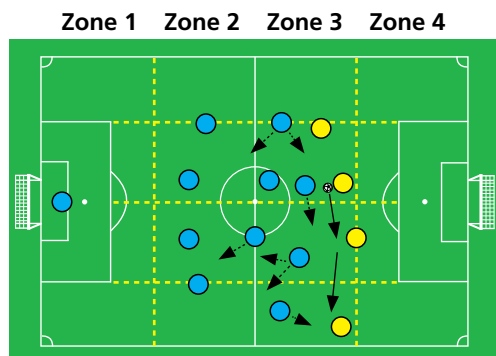
The midfield positions can be inverted with two defensive midfielders and one attacking midfielder.

In a high position, the defensive phase is very aggressive towards the opposition attack: the centre forward covers the right-sided central defender so that a direct pass towards the left-sided central defender will see him pressurised by the right-sided midfielder.

The wingers wait in their zone for the opposition full backs. Their positioning is important to prevent the opponents from easily building up attacks.



If the ball is played out to the opposition's left channel, the winger has to press the ball and be covered by his wide midfielder. The centre forward will enter an "indirect duel" with the left-sided central defender to neutralise him, whereas the winger on the weaker side (left) gauges the tactical situation before deciding whether to join the pressing zone or whether to wait and assume a more cautious position.



In the midfield area, the three midfielders have to cover the space with the help of at least one of the two wingers. It is vital that the team stays compact and balanced, using delaying and slowing-down tactics and not trying to push and regain possession immediately.

Pressing should only commence once the technical and tactical foundations are in place. If pressing is not conducted with intelligence, it can be dangerous and costly in terms of energy.

If the wingers are positioned high up the pitch, the opposition cannot launch attacks via their full backs.

The 4-3-3 formation, if all of the players work together, allows a team to cover space well, particularly in midfield.

The wingers have to understand the principle of providing cover on the opposite side of the pitch to where the attack is developing in order to get three men around the ball when opponents are in possession. This general principle makes sense and is also used in other formations such as 3-4-3 and 4-4-2.

# Set-piece strategies

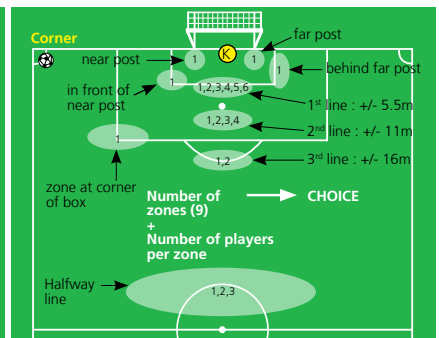
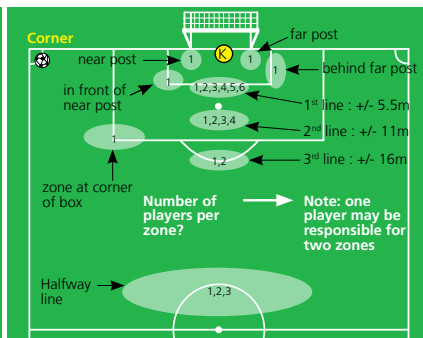
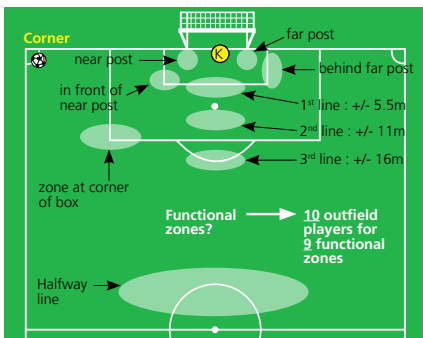
## Man-to-man or zonal marking at corner kicks?

### Several questions:

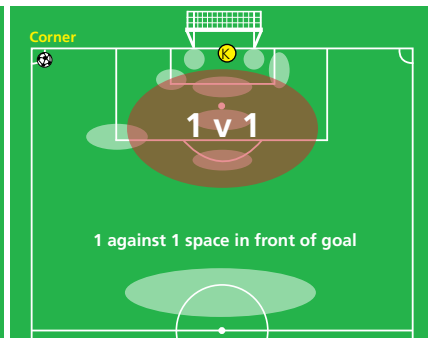
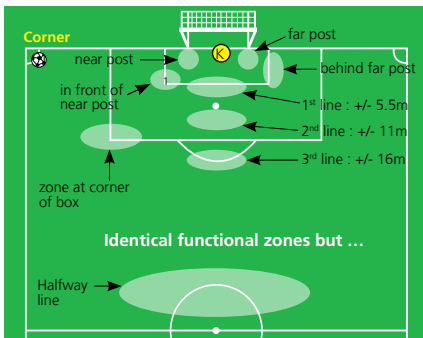
- Where should I stand?
- Who should I mark?
- How should I defend?
- Should I watch the opponent?
- Should I watch the ball?

### Examples:

- Near post: 1 player
- +/- 5.5m: 4 players
- +/- 11m: 2 players
- Short corner: 1 player



## Mixed marking (man-to-man and zonal)



## Mixed marking

- Should I watch the opponent?
- Should I watch the ball?
- Should I follow the opponent?

## Examples:

- 5 man-to-man markers + 5 players zonally
- 7 man-to-man markers + 3 players zonally
- 5 man-to-man markers + 4 players zonally
- 4 man-to-man markers + 3 players zonally
- 4 man-to-man markers + 4 players zonally

**Summary**

		<b>Zone</b>	<b>Man-to-man marking</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	Ball is stationary	– Assume positions	– Mark direct opponent
<b>Phase 2</b>	The kicker prepares to take the kick	– Watch all opponents – Start to move	– Watch direct opponent
<b>Phase 3</b>	The ball is kicked	– Watch the ball – Keep moving	– Watch direct opponent – Follow direct opponent
<b>Phase 4</b>	The ball is in front of the goal	– Be the first to the ball in own zone	– Win the duel
<b>Phase 5</b>	The ball is cleared	– Push out as a unit while staying in own zone	– Push out individually and re-assume position
<b>Phase 6</b>	The team is in possession of the ball	– Unit repositions itself quickly – Ball carrier: play deep – Attackers: sprint forwards	– Unit more difficult to reposition – Ball carrier: play deep – Attackers: sprint forwards

**Zonal or man-to-man marking? Personal choice of coach for maximum efficiency**

Personal choice: after analysing the advantages and disadvantages of the two defensive methods

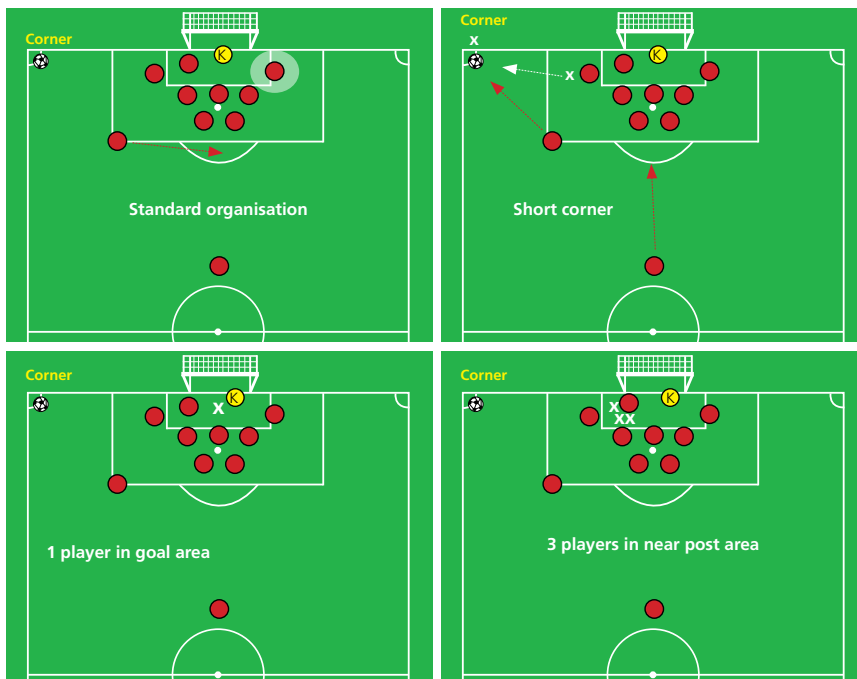
**What type of zone? What type of marking?**

- Own qualities?
- Opponent's qualities?
- Context of match?



**Examples**

Standard organisation:

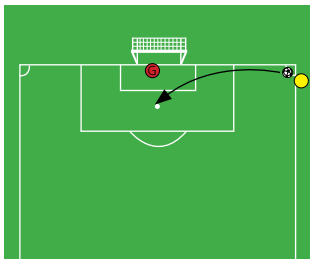
- What to do if a corner is played short?
- What about an opponent in the goal area (5.5m)?
- What to do if there are three opponents close to the near post?



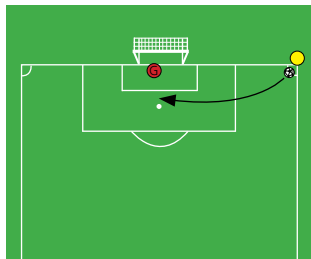
### Advantages and disadvantages of man-marking and zonal marking

		
<b>Man-to-man marking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The coach can give precise instructions (who marks whom): the task is defined for the player</li> <li>– A player can be paired with another player who has the same qualities (good heading ability, speed)</li> <li>– Responsibility for direct opponent</li> <li>– Possibility of blocking known running lines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The organisation always has to be adapted to each opponent</li> <li>– If there is a block or a feint, the opponent can escape</li> <li>– Good movement can create space right in front of goal</li> <li>– Physical duels can lead to a penalty being awarded</li> <li>– Possible confusion in unexpected situations: the designated opponent not playing, leading to a change in either own team or opponent's team (a good header of the ball is replaced by a player who is not as good in the air)</li> <li>– If a corner is cleared, it takes too long to put the basic organisation back in place</li> <li>– Difficult to see movement behind</li> <li>– The player always has delayed reactions to the movement of opponent</li> <li>– Use of zonal marking is leading to the disappearance of man-to-man marking</li> <li>– Vulnerability if designated opponent moves for a short corner as it creates space</li> </ul>
<b>Zonal marking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Organisation to be determined in advance, regardless of opponents (little or no influence of replacements, fixed organisation even for short corners with three players in the penalty area)</li> <li>– Best headers of the ball in the most dangerous areas in front of goal</li> <li>– Specific movements and manoeuvres do not lead to disorganisation in the team</li> <li>– Possibility of rapid regrouping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a corner is cleared, the players return to their positions quickly</li> <li>• If a corner is cleared, positions may be occupied more quickly by other players</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Better overall vision of game and pitch</li> <li>– Players act instead of reacting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Who attacks the ball if it is between two zones? It is not always clear as to who is responsible for which zone</li> <li>– Numerical disadvantage in a specific zone if several attackers who are good in the air run towards this zone and the ball lands there</li> <li>– Not possible to reach maximum jumping height from standing position</li> <li>– Space can be left at crosses from short corners due to poor positioning</li> <li>– The ball can be played towards the most aerially powerful opponent, who attacks the zone covered by the player with the weakest aerial ability</li> </ul>

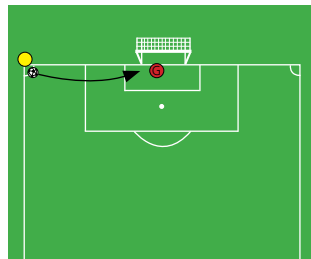
### Attacking corner kicks



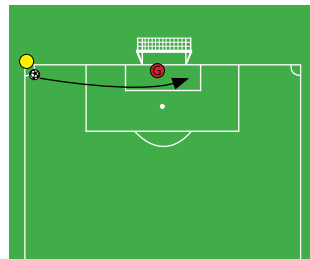
1. Direct outswinging corner (from the right: with right foot; from the left: with left foot)



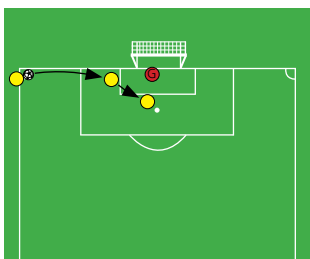
2. Direct inswinging corner (from the right: with left foot; from the left: with right foot)



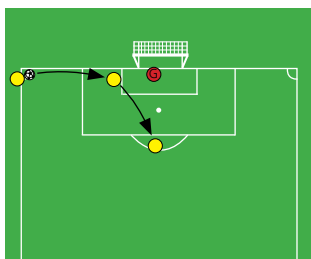
3. Directly to near post



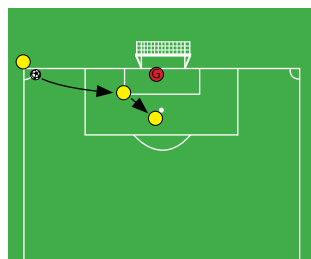
4. Directly to far post



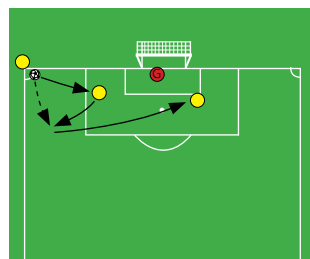
5. To near post for a player to flick on with head behind him



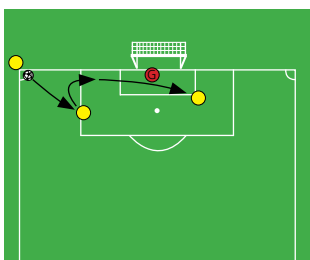
6. To near post for a player to flick on towards centre of goal



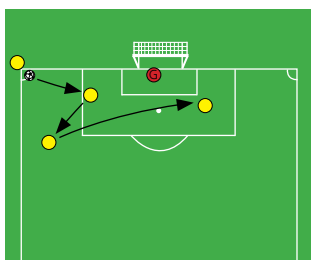
7. Direct low corner towards a player who dummies the ball for a second player



8. Two-person play: the receiver passes the ball back to the passer, who crosses

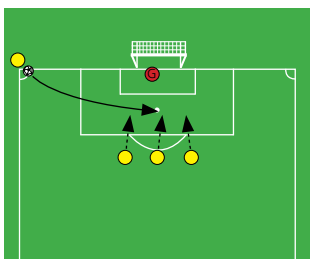


9. Two-person play: the receiver feints to pass, gets to the goal line and crosses

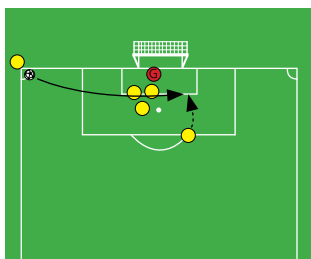


10. Three-person play: the receiver passes the ball to the full-back, who crosses

### Variants

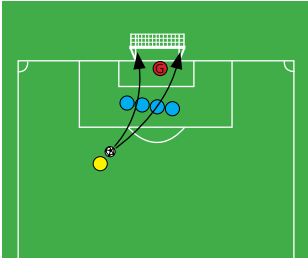


a) The attackers attack the ball in front of them

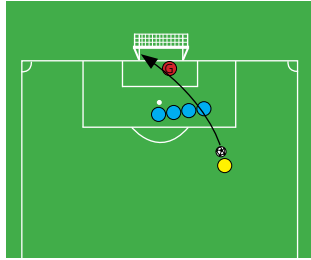


b) The attackers cross their runs

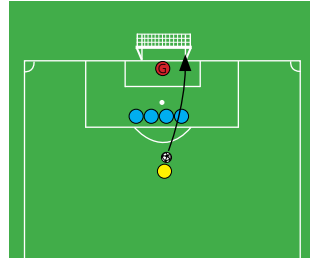
## Attacking free kicks



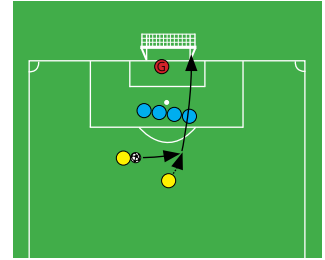
1. Kick taken with the right foot from the left; and with the left foot from the right (near or far post)



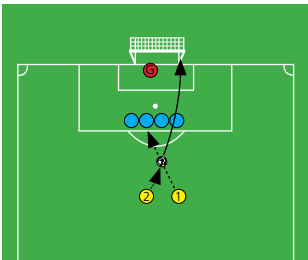
2. Kick taken with the right foot from the right; and with the left foot from the left, looking for the far corner of the goal



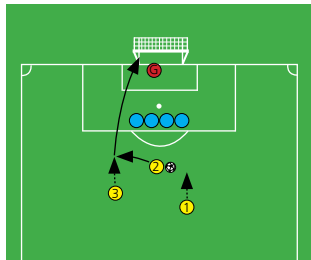
3. Kick taken with the instep or the outside of the foot



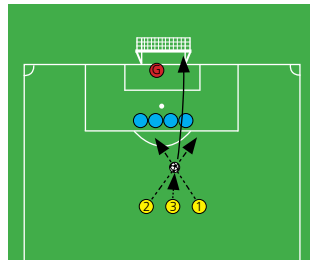
4. Two-person play: pass to a player running in



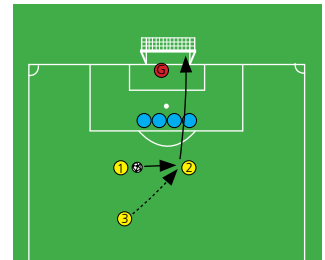
5. Two-person play: 1 runs towards ball, dummies it and 2 shoots



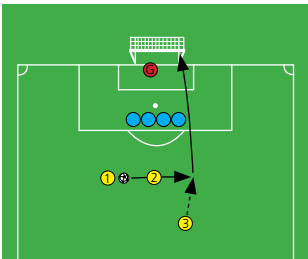
6. Three-person play: 1 runs towards ball, gets in front of passer (2) who taps the ball to 3 behind him, who shoots



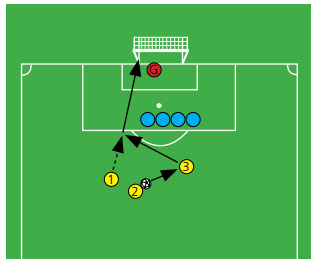
7. Three-person play: 1 and 2 dummy the ball (1 from the right, 2 from the left), 3 shoots



8. Three-person play: 1 passes to 2, who puts his foot on the ball, and 3 shoots



9. Three-person play: 1 passes to 2, who lets the ball run through his legs to 3, who shoots



10. Three-person play: 1 feints to shoot but runs to the side of the wall, 2 passes to 3, who passes to 1, who turns and shoots

# 6

## Physical preparation of young players

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## 6 – PHYSICAL PREPARATION OF YOUNG PLAYERS

Physical conditioning is increasingly of central importance in the performances of today's footballers. This has not just been proven at the professional level, but also at the level of youth football: primarily at international level, but also at national level in certain countries. It is notable also that there is an increasing number of young players aged 18 to 20 years who are already developing in the first team of the top professional teams.

This situation is due to the improved quality of the training of young players in recent years, but also to a much earlier development of physical capacities in young players, based on scientific and methodological approaches tailored to the different stages of development in youngsters.

## Physical conditioning in modern football

It has been recognised that the ideal period for training in technical and technical-tactical qualities, as well as coordination and cognitive capacity, is between the first and second growth spurt (between 9-10 and 13-14), that is, during the “golden age for learning”.

It is the period in which childhood kickabouts end and basic training begins. This age, which favours the development of psychomotor skills, is also the period in which young players experience for the first time demands on their physical capacities, particularly in terms of flexibility, reaction speed and the aerobic metabolism for endurance. However, the training methodology at this level places the emphasis on the relationship between player and ball, and on the different game formats and match experience. At this age, integrated training (also known as “dissociated”) is very important.

Already from the second phase of puberty, the first physical foundations are in place, particularly in terms of speed, endurance and even muscular strength, all of which is engaged in strength training and core strength training for the upper body and reaction speed.

Physical conditioning at this stage of basic training is essentially centred around physical capacity training, which means instilling in youngsters the key importance of this type of training in order to understand that both attacking and defensive play also depend on physical qualities. It is also the age at which to start training mental attitudes, particularly related to physical condition: desire, perseverance, bravery, self-confidence, focus, etc.

It is, however, from the end of the second phase of puberty, at the start of adolescence (15-16 years), and until the end of adolescence (18-19 years, depending on the player) that the real athletic and physical growth takes place in young players through a general and then specific training.

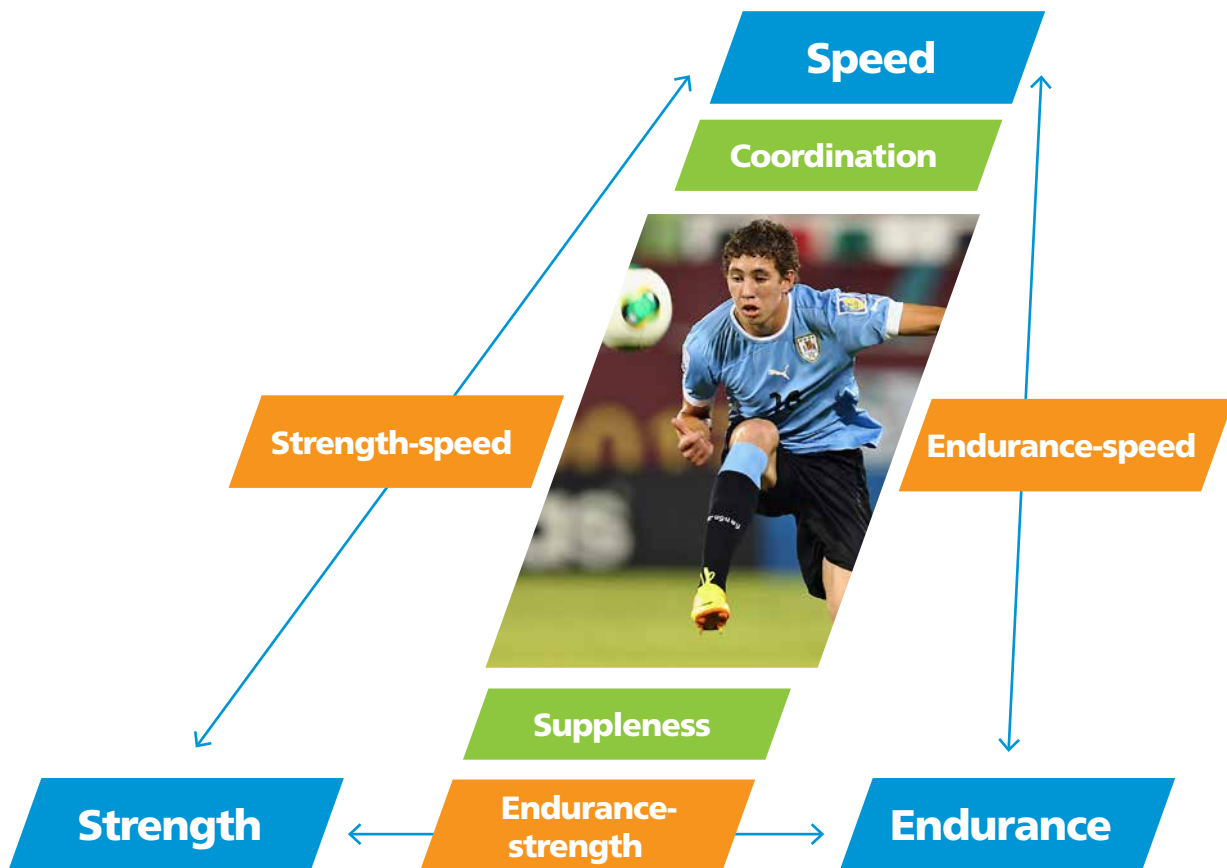
During this stage of training, known as “performance training”, it is of primary importance that all players are not grouped together at the same level in physical training sessions, but rather that the particular physical development of each player should be respected. In terms of the development of the musculoskeletal system (bones, cartilage, tendons, ligaments and muscles), the cardio-vascular and respiratory systems (energy pathways), and coordination, as well as in terms of psychological strength, it is often possible to observe vast differences between players of the same age.

From this stage onwards, the planning and scheduling of training become important as a methodological process for the regulation of training:  
duration – intensity – recovery.

The specific methods and forms of training should therefore be adapted to these different levels of learning. If, during development, a balance needs to be maintained between the isolated and integrated forms of physical training, significant efforts at this age could also be made to bring in technical and tactical aspects with combined and more complex forms of training.

However, the content – as well as the methods – of the training must be adapted to the age of the players and their personal levels of development.

## Physical capacities to be developed in the young player



**Coordination:** an essential quality in the control of the body, which demonstrates the interaction between the nervous system and the muscles during the execution of a movement. Good coordination enables a faster and more effective learning of psychomotor skills.

Coordination is the basis for learning technical movements. It should be worked on in training from an early age and is best taught between the ages of 8 and 13 years. Coordination training is also highly recommended for balance in young adolescents during a period of fast growth.

**Speed:** a desired attribute in modern football, most often connected to genetic characteristics related to the nervous system and muscle fibres. It should be worked on in training very early with youngsters when the nervous system is adaptable. The first recognised opportunity for speed training comes at the age of 7-9 years, and the second comes at around the age of basic training, between 13 and

15-16 years for boys (N.B. for young girls, the ideal age for speed training is between 13 and 14 years). It is important to find opportunities to include speed or speed-strength elements in every training session for young players.

**Strength:** strength training has become an integral part of modern football, but with specific strength characteristics adapted to the sport. Even among youngsters in training, strain on the muscles is an integral part of the training, particularly with the aim of achieving balanced physical development. The recommended age for dedicated strength training is about 12 to 20 months after peak growth (i.e. around 15-16 years for boys and 13-14 for girls, which tends to coincide with the beginning of menstruation), but with lighter loads to start with.

Muscular strength can start to be utilised – particularly for physical well-being and as strength training – from the age of 9-10

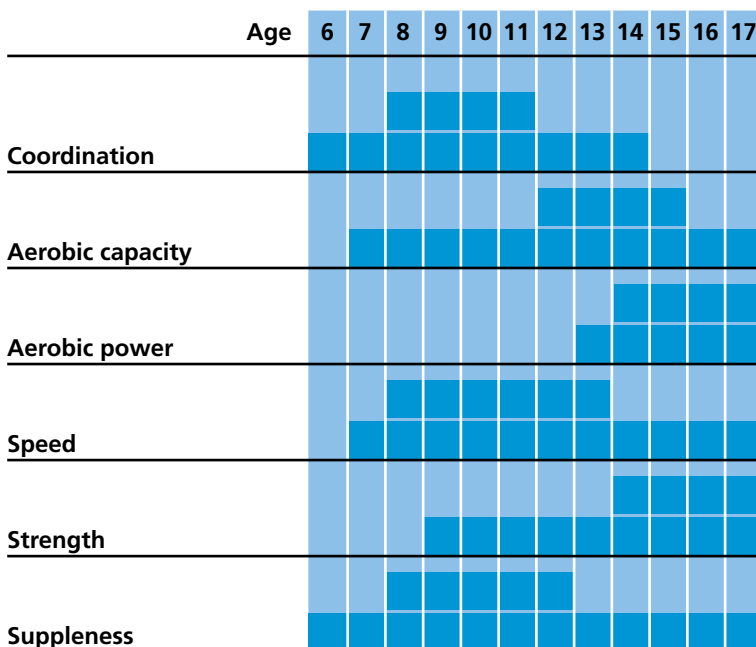
years through methods that are, of course, adapted for the age group and emphasise the use of the core muscles, meaning a general focus on the upper body and primarily the abdominal and back muscles and using their own body weight. Leg strength is developed through regular activity in running, sprinting, jumping and kicking the ball during training and games.

**Endurance:** optimal development of basic endurance (aerobic capacity) should be initiated before the second growth spurt, i.e. from the age of 11-12 years. Endurance specific to football (strength-endurance) can be worked on later by phasing it into training around the age of 14-15 years. The ideal period for endurance training among males is between 14 and 22 years, and between 12 and 17-18 years among females.

**Suppleness:** a natural capacity that can be developed very quickly from the initial years of the first growth spurt, around 5-6 years, and during the ideal period for building on this, between 12 and 14 years. It is a particularly interesting age for suppleness, notably in the spine, with significant mobility favouring the passage of stimuli of the nervous system and important adductor-abductor movements. The second phase of puberty, around 15-16 years, is also an important phase in the training of suppleness – as well as coordination, particularly among certain youngsters whose rapid growth has caused an imbalance in the development of joints and muscles.

While it is not an essential physical factor in football, working on suppleness also helps to prevent injuries.

#### The importance of factors according to age



## The physical demands of modern football

### In the game:

- Very attacking play (more than 2.5 goals per game) in the big competitions of some countries
- Play in confined spaces and with lots of one-on-ones
- Increased running, with and without the ball
- Organised, disciplined teams that are rigorous in their system and movement on and off the ball
- Fast transition: defence-to-attack and attack-to-defence
- Dropping back quickly as a defensive unit
- Pressing in different situations, often directly after losing the ball
- The best teams switch between possession and counter-attacking football
- Almost 25% of goals are still scored in the last quarter of an hour

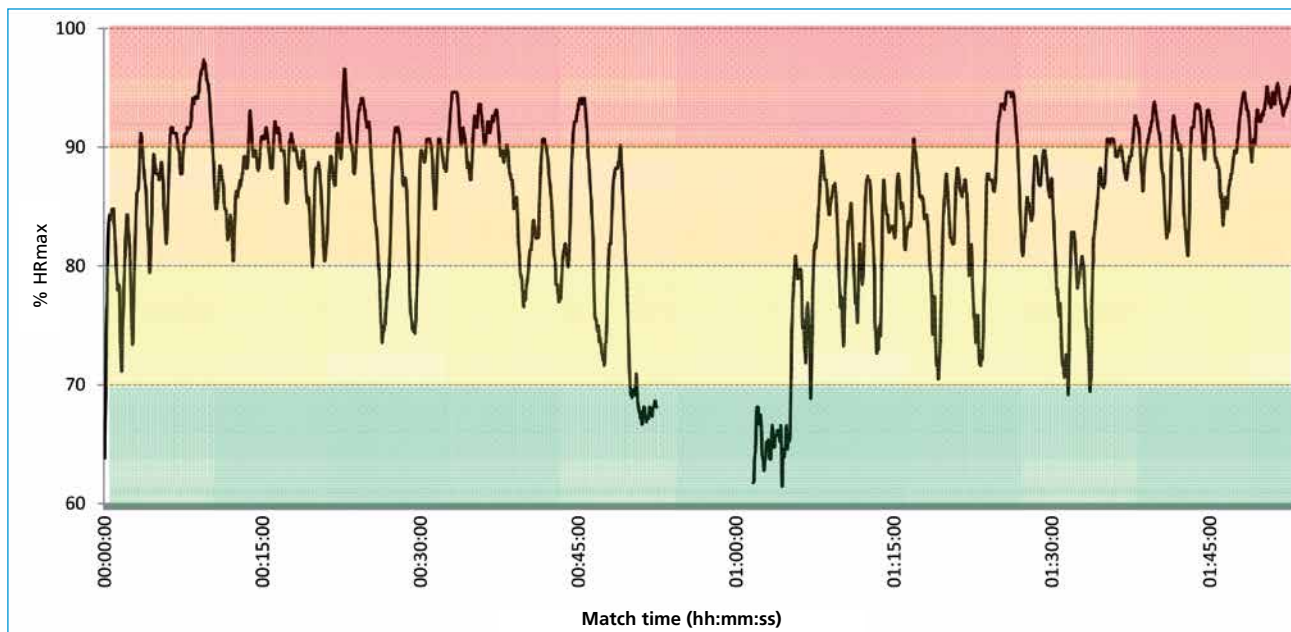
### What this means:

- Between 30 and 100 touches of the ball per match, depending on position
- Average total distance run and area covered per team and per match:
  - from 10-11km up to 14km in total
  - from 3km to 4.5km with the ball and from 3.6 to 4.5km without the ball
  - between 500m and 800m high-intensity running (21-24km/h)
- Average total distance run and area covered according to position:
  - central midfielders: 11-14km
  - wide midfielders: 11-12km
  - central defenders: 9.5-11km
  - full backs: 10.5-12km
  - attackers: 10.5-12km
- Sprinting distance (increase of more than 30% since 1994):
  - 200-350m sprinting (over 25km/h), or approx. 10-20 sprints per player (depending on position)
  - 40-150m with the ball and 90-150m without the ball
  - 280-350m for full backs and wide midfielders
  - 230-300m for attackers (120-180m with the ball and 80-120m without the ball)
  - average sprinting distance: 15-23m (total: 10-40m)
- > **Average recovery time between intense bursts of activity in general: 30-45s, and between sprints: 1'-4' (depending on position)**

## Average distances run during a match by a U-18 national team

	Speed	Distance
Walk	0-6km/h	3.1km
Trot	6-10km/h	3.5km
Low-speed run	11-14km/h	1.5km
Moderate run	14-16km/h	1.2km
Fast run	16-20km/h	0.4km
High-speed run	21-24km/h	0.2km
Sprint (100%)	30-31km/h	0.250km
Running backwards		0.8km
Running with ball	(varied pace)	1.9km
<b>Total distance</b>	<b>7.850km + 3.100km</b>	<b>1.950km</b>

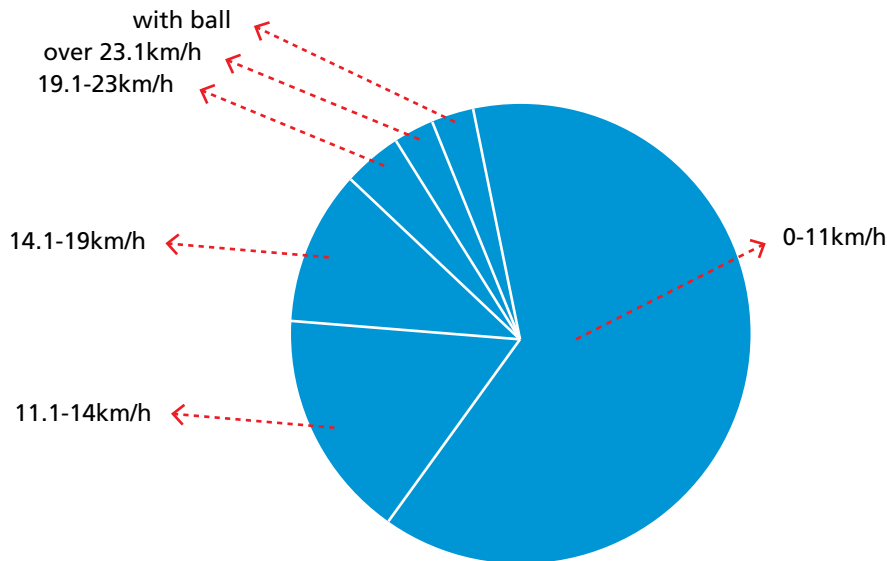
## Variation in heart rate (HR) during a U-18 match



## Duration of various intensities (heart rate) recorded during the match

- 28'-30' of activity at 85-90% of HRmax
  - 18'-20' of activity at 90-95% of HRmax
  - 8'-12' of activity at 95-100% of HRmax
- For between 60 and 70 minutes, players are therefore functioning at over 85% of their HRmax (175-180 on average)

### Proportions of distance covered in the match by running speed



Football is therefore a sport of intermittent activity that constantly requires all of the essential aspects of the game, whether physical, tactical, technical or mental. The physical demands during matches and, above all, the varied running with and without the ball have increased considerably in recent years, including for youth players. It is particularly through high-speed running (19-23km/h) and sprinting (over 24-25km/h) that physical progress is most notable, enabling a faster and more dynamic game. Several years observing high-level football have proven that the teams that retain possession of the ball also run the most during a match.

Power (strength-speed) and speed are unquestionably the physical capacities that are most important and even decisive in modern football. Nevertheless, for the regular repetition of all of the different types of movement around the pitch and changes of pace during a match, aerobic-anaerobic endurance capacity also appears to be a key factor in performance, just as muscular strength forms the basis for this speed and strength.

However, match analysis has shown that it is possible to observe that physical exertion varies a great deal from one player to another according to the positions of the players. This reinforces the guidance of individualised training, i.e. training tailored according to the potential and individual qualities of the player. Here, the notion of tailored individual training becomes indispensable in the optimum physical development of young players.

Furthermore, in modern training, physical preparation must, as with technical-tactical aspects, be as close to the reality of the game as possible, in its action and in all of the factors of match performance.

In light of these observations, physical training for players during different stages of development appears to be indispensable for ensuring that young players will be prepared for the game at the highest level.

Preparing a proper physical foundation at this age also ensures good health and strengthens the immune system.

## Training coordination skills

Coordination boosts psychomotor skills and enables athletes to perform predictable (automatic) and unpredictable (adapted) actions with precision and efficiency in terms of energy usage, and, if necessary, to learn movements as quickly as possible.

**Coordination is the basis for technique**

### The aims of coordination training

**To facilitate the process of control and regulation**

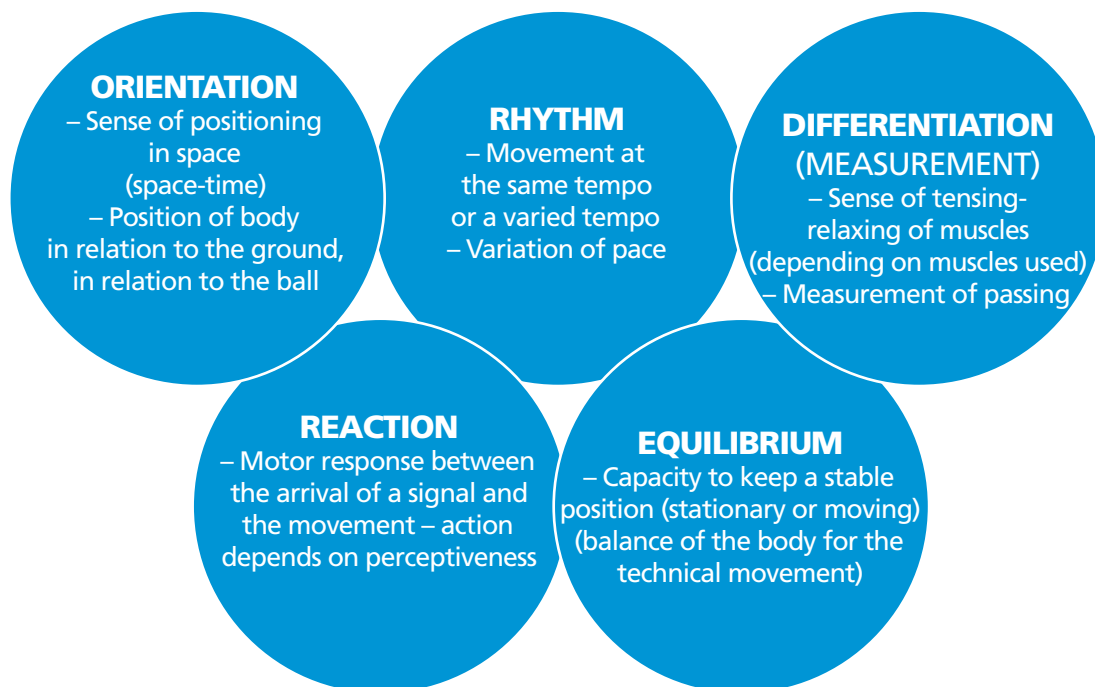
- Control over a movement
- Adaptation to changing situations
- Creation and development of solution opportunities (learning)

**Building the repertoire of motor skills and the variety of movements**

**Adapting quickly to other unpredictable situations**

Developing the maximum range of varied movements related to coordination while progressively increasing the speed of execution

**Coordination skills (O.R.D.E.R.)**





## Examples of integrated coordination exercises

Objectives	Exercises
<b>Orientation/Differentiation Equilibrium</b>	With back to goal, directional control and then shoot into the corner of the net (precision)
<b>Orientation/Differentiation Equilibrium/Reaction</b>	Shot on target (specify front or back post) after a forward roll and directional control of the ball
<b>Orientation/Differentiation Rhythm/Equilibrium</b>	Series of jumps (right/left foot) in hoops before receiving the ball and then slaloming between cones and performing a precise long pass (or cross)
<b>Differentiation (measurement)</b>	Juggling various different balls (football, tennis ball, volleyball, etc.). Alternate high and low juggling
<b>Differentiation/Orientation</b>	Juggling individually or in pairs, with movement off the ball, half turn, etc.
<b>Rhythm/Equilibrium</b>	Running with the ball in a slalom (+ cones), using the inside and outside of the foot, double touches and triple touches
<b>Orientation/Differentiation Reaction/Equilibrium</b>	Finishing of direct or indirect rebounds. Initial shot by a support player at full speed, varied trajectories + varied distances (4-5 repetitions)
<b>Orientation/Equilibrium</b>	Attempt to finish a move while being closely marked by an opponent (one-on-one situation)

## Methodology for coordination training

Period	Form	Organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very early for youngsters to learn movements (8-12 years)</li> <li>- During a period of growth (adolescence) to achieve a good physical, neuromuscular and psychological balance (16-18 years)</li> <li>- At elite level + high level (18-21 years) for maintaining, adjusting, finding a more economical use of energy and personalised workload:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intra- and inter-muscular coordination</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elements of form separated between exercises, but quickly integrated (with the ball)</li> <li>- Integrated form               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• combination of movements with the ball</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Game format + game               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with emphasis on the various elements of coordination (ORDER)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Multiple sporting ability (other sports)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Varied coordination exercises with the ball (separate and integrated)</li> <li>- Running course with various exercises (for stamina) with and without the ball</li> <li>- Mastering full bodily control (on feet and on the ground)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• forward roll, getting up to standing position and controlling the ball + sequence</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Running session, varied jumping exercises               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emphasis on posture, steadiness on feet, step rate (skipping rope, hoops)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Technical exercises with the emphasis on coordination skills               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• orientation and balance with controlling the ball and shooting on goal</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Development of proprioception               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• balance (strengthening of the ankles and knees)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- All game formats (small-sided pitch)</li> </ul>
<p>At each specialised training session for children or during warm-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Duration 10'-15' or 2 x 7'-8'               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-3 times per week during basic training</li> <li>• 1-2 times per week during intermediate training</li> <li>• + 1x tailored individual programme</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>At the level of intermediate training, coordination is worked on as part of technical training or during the warm-up</p>	<p>Repetition of movements, actions, combinations of movements</p> <p>Analytical approach to the action + global and sequential approach (sequences of actions)</p> <p>Increasing the speed of execution</p>	<p>Use of balls, smaller balls or other coordination equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- agility ladder, skipping rope, circular wobble board, etc.</li> </ul>

## Endurance training

Endurance is a key physical factor for athletes and for the well-being of people in general. A good level of endurance guarantees optimal performance throughout a whole season and enables the individual to better manage his efforts – whether in competition or in training; and whether physical, mental, sensory or emotional – and also to recover more effectively.

### The elements of endurance are:

#### Basic endurance (extensive)

Fundamental and natural aerobic capacity (AC) for performance that utilises the aerobic system for a prolonged period of moderately intense activity. The aerobic system uses oxygen to break down carbohydrates and convert them into long-lasting energy.

This aerobic capacity is the foundation for the development of general endurance and the whole cardio-vascular and respiratory system and, more so in children, the growth of the heart.

#### Specific endurance (intensive)

The body's ability to resist fatigue when it is put under specific intensive strain in football. This endurance involves both the aerobic and anaerobic systems to enable dynamic and intense efforts over prolonged periods. Such efforts often lasting between two and ten minutes draw on aerobic power (AP) and/or maximum aerobic power (MAP), depending on the intensity of the exertion.

#### Speed endurance

A capacity that is specific to football to enable exertion at close-to-maximum speeds (80-90% of maximum speed) for as long as possible.

A very good level of endurance (capacity and aerobic power) will enable the repetition of this type of effort several times in a match.

#### Localised endurance

This capacity, which takes up less than 1-6% of total muscle mass, enables an individual to resist fatigue. An effort of this kind to facilitate the supply of oxygen to the muscles also involves the cardio-vascular and respiratory systems.

### General aim of endurance training

The general aim of endurance in football is to maintain intensive efforts until the end of the match, and decent work on aerobic and anaerobic qualities enables the development of physical qualities that involve the two following criteria:

#### 1. Building the player's oxygen reserve (fuel):

- Fundamental and natural endurance
- Endurance through aerobic capacity (AC)

#### 2. Developing the player's "engine" and "turbo":

- Specific endurance – intensive endurance
- Endurance through aerobic power (AP) and maximum aerobic power (MAP)



- Develop the VO<sub>2</sub> max (maximum oxygen consumption) or aerobic power with an increased oxidative capacity

The maximum volume of oxygen during intense continuous and progressive effort, primarily using the aerobic processes. It is calculated in ml/kg/min. based on tests of specific effort in a laboratory or on the pitch. Body mass can also affect the athlete's max. VO<sub>2</sub>.

In simple terms, this element is often referred to as the "athlete's reserve", which is developed and improved through exercise that draws on the aerobic and anaerobic energy systems.

The larger the reserve and the more the player is able to use the resources of that reserve, the better his performance in the match and throughout the season will be. Endurance athletes (marathon, 10,000m, cycling, cross-country skiing) can have max. VO<sub>2</sub> levels of more than 80ml/kg/min. In football, the best players can reach max. VO<sub>2</sub> levels of 65-70ml/kg/min, depending on their age, level of individual performance and position on the pitch. A max. VO<sub>2</sub> of 60-62ml/kg/min is already considered to be a decent reserve for a footballer and more so for players aged 16-17 years.

Age is a significant factor in max. VO<sub>2</sub>, which varies as a player grows and can be very different from one player to another. Young players age 13-14 years can have variations in max. VO<sub>2</sub> between 49 and 65ml/kg/min.

These levels increase during childhood and adolescence before becoming stable after 20 years of age. Between the ages of 13 and 16 years, youngsters in training centres tend to have average increases of +3.5-5ml/kg/min. Elite U-15 players can even reach average max. VO<sub>2</sub> levels of 58-62ml/kg/min and U-18 players achieve 60-66ml/kg/min, particularly midfielders.

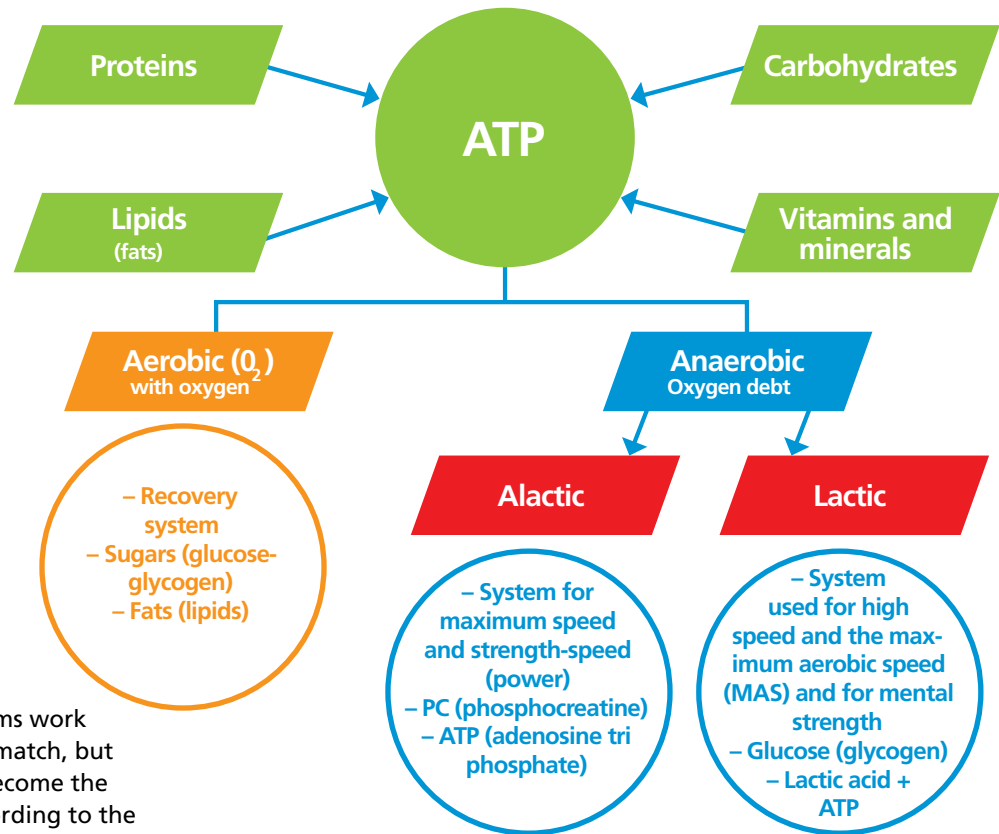
#### The features of endurance:

Having a decent endurance level:

- is beneficial for performance in competitions (general and specific endurance) and for taking on a heavy workload in training
- helps to quickly replenish energy that is vital to the general metabolism, ATP (adenosine-triphosphate)
- helps to maintain work rates and changes of pace in a match and in training
- helps to eliminate toxic elements produced through fatigue more quickly
- helps to slow down the production of lactates (lactic acid) and aids the tolerance of these
- helps to keep the neuromuscular system alert and particularly speed of perception, anticipation and decision-making
- helps to reduce technical and tactical errors due to fatigue, particularly late in a match
- aids mental sharpness
- limits the risk of injury and improves the immune system



**The aerobic-anaerobic energy systems**



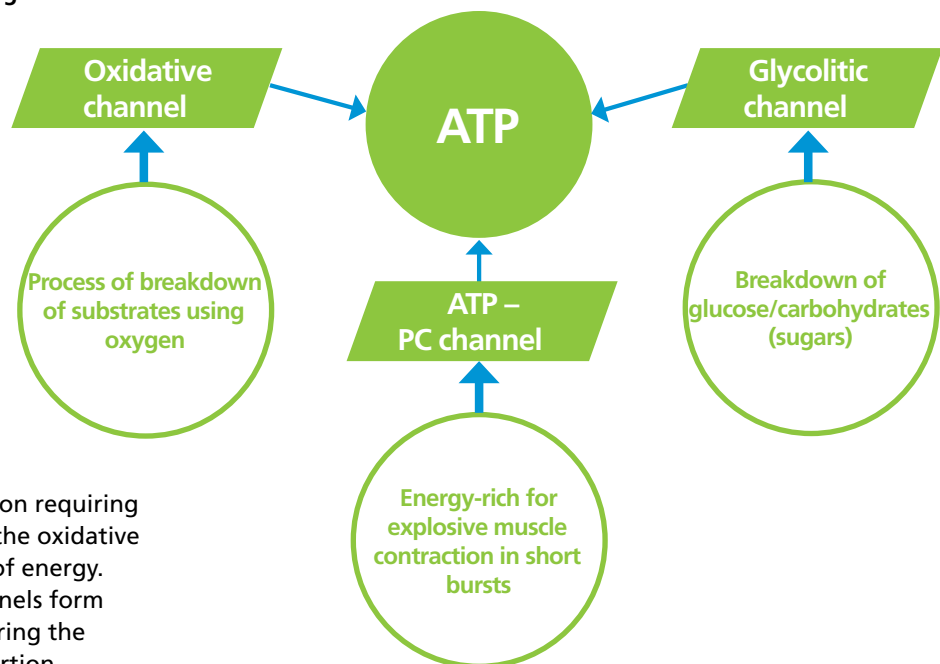
These three energy systems work simultaneously during a match, but one system will always become the predominant system according to the exertion required.

**Energy channels for endurance capacity**

The functioning of the muscles happens through the supply of energy substrates from food energy sources and a natural

fuel, oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>), to produce the necessary fuel for the bodily metabolism: **adenosine triphosphate (ATP)**

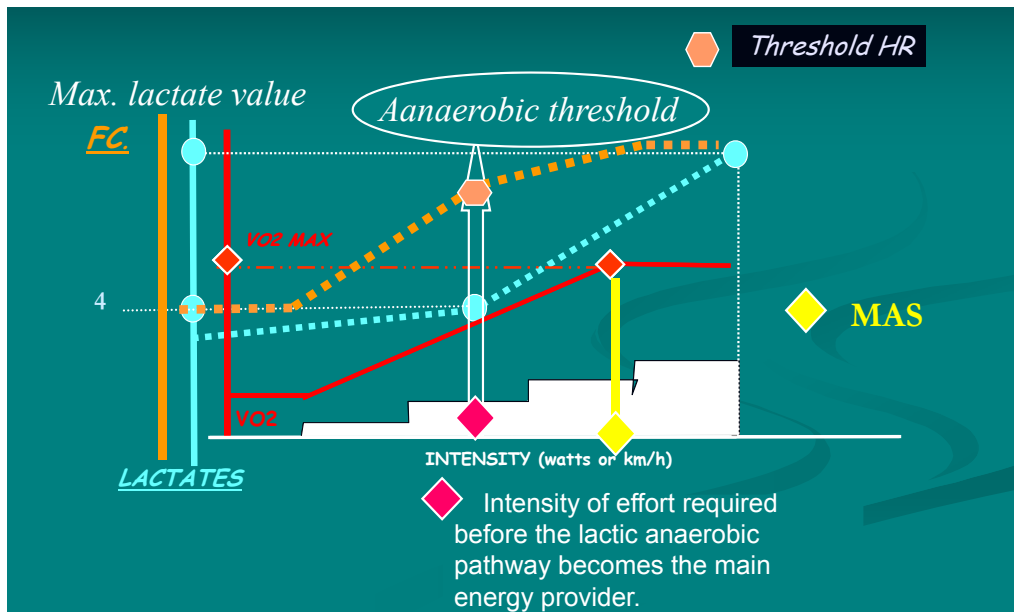
**ATP is synthesised/made through three energy channels:**



For exertion of a longer duration requiring a considerable energy supply, the oxidative channel is an essential source of energy. The ATP-PC and glycolytic channels form the primary energy sources during the initial minutes of intensive exertion.

## Factors affecting aerobic-anaerobic endurance training

Maximum heart rate and threshold/Anaerobic threshold/Maximum aerobic speed (MAS)/  
Level of lactate/Muscle quality



Awareness of the anaerobic threshold and maximum aerobic speed (MAS) provides important reference points for measuring the quality of an endurance training session.

### Heart rate:

Awareness of the maximum heart rate (HRmax), as with the anaerobic threshold or rest, allow a better knowledge of the training heart rate (THR) at which the player should train.

These heart rates can be detected through specific tests carried out in the laboratory and even on the pitch, particularly the HRmax, which will be a key measure for the intensity and quality of endurance training.

As an individual and sometimes very differentiated value, it also indicates the limit for the concentration of lactate (lactic acid) that is found in the blood at a certain intensity of exertion. Up until a concentration of lactic acid of 4mmol/l in the blood is reached, energy is produced primarily aerobically with oxygen. Above that threshold, the lactic anaerobic processes take over. The body then enters a critical zone of anaerobic resistance, called the "red zone".

Despite having been called into question in recent years, training at the anaerobic threshold (which uses as reference the values of lactate, heart rate or speed) is a method that is still widely used in sport generally and in football in particular.

The notion of training according to the threshold helps to determine the intensity of training while avoiding the production of lactate. Speed at the anaerobic threshold is another parameter that allows for a controlled individual running pace. However, to determine this speed, the players must undergo specific tests.

### Maximum aerobic speed (MAS):

Speed corresponds to the maximum consumption of oxygen (max.  $VO_2$ ). This has been used for several years in measuring and setting intensity levels, especially in interval running (interval training).

This value, which needs to be attained through a specific test that can be carried out in a laboratory or on the pitch, allows for a better quality of training with improved precision, particularly in developing aerobic-anaerobic endurance capacity with a personalised training scheme.

By knowing this reference speed, training can be optimised with group work according to the players' individual MAS values, both in continuous and interval training.

An optimal MAS in football is between 17km/h and 19km/h. Young players in a training academy aged 13-15 years can already have an MAS of 16-17km/h, and those aged 16-18 years can have an MAS of 17-18km/h.

Various tests can be used to detect the MAS: yo-yo, Vameval, Gacon, on a treadmill or exercise bike...

Calculation of the MAS using the Cooper test: distance run divided by two. 3,350m gives an MAS of around 16.7km/h or 17km/h.

#### **Lactic acid, or lactate**

Lactic acid (value expressed in mmol/l and detected through blood tests) is the result of the breakdown of glycogen and glucose through glycolysis. It is therefore a hyperacidification of the blood in the muscles when exertion is made at very high levels of intensity and the muscles use only the anaerobic system. Although lactate is produced in small quantities during intense exertion, it is after 15"-20" (depending on the player) that the anaerobic-lactic system is activated to compensate the reserves of ATP-PC energy. However, the lactate energy system can be used as a substrate for the production of energy only for short bursts (1-2' depending on the player).

Even if the level of lactic acid is not very high during a match, we now know that lactate is not, strictly speaking, an enemy of the body, nor the cause of cramps or stiffness, but that it in fact helps in the renewal of glycolytic energy through transformations of anaerobic-lactic origins. It is therefore a useful reserve energy that many athletes draw upon, especially during very intense exertion or in the latter stages of a sporting test.

The normal lactate level in physiology is around 4mmol/l and, during a match, can rise to 8-10mmol/l but drops back to its base level – and to even less than 4mmol/l – in under two hours. Highly trained athletes can eliminate this lactate in as quickly as 45'.

In football, it is therefore possible to regularly train this anaerobic-lactic system not just for purposes of lactate tolerance but also to acclimatise the body to producing it and converting it into energy.

#### **Muscle fibres (ST/FT)**

The proportion of slow red muscle fibres (ST, or slow twitch) and fast white muscle fibres (FT, or fast twitch) also influences the quality and training of endurance capacity. A suitable training regime can convert FT fibres into ST fibres; the opposite, meanwhile, is not possible except to a very limited extent (according to recent studies). In endurance training, particularly basic endurance (basic endurance and aerobic capacity) where unused fast twitch (FT) fibres can "go to sleep", it is therefore often recommended to incorporate reactivity, speed and coordination exercises at the end of the training session.

For qualitative purposes but also in order to prevent injuries, it is very important to carry out adaptation training before moving onto match training, particularly small-sided games with sudden stresses on the muscles, through changes of direction, stopping and sprinting. It is therefore recommended, in training, to "wake up" the fast muscle fibres before taking on a new type of exertion, and to call on the qualities of intermuscular coordination and joint-muscle mobility.

Interval and intermittent aerobic power exercises, by running or even in a game, call on the fast muscle fibres – both type IIa and type IIb fibres – depending on the intensity of the workload.

## How to train basic and specific endurance

### **Basic endurance = aerobic capacity**

Aerobic capacity represents the total amount of potential energy supplied by the oxidative channel depending on the total fuel reserves of the body. Aerobic capacity training is most often referred to as basic endurance training.

In terms of the intensity level of training, it is recommended to train in:

- Intensity zones 1 and 2 (60-80 up to 85% of the HRmax)

### **Specific endurance = aerobic power (AP) + maximum aerobic power (MAP)**

Aerobic power training represents the maximum amount of oxygen that a body can use per unit of time during intense exertion using peripheral aerobic elements (cardio-vascular) as well as the main muscle elements (calling on muscular strength/fast twitch muscle fibres).

The MAP is the level of power at the max.  $VO_2$  and is equal to the MAS (maximum aerobic speed).

The variation recommended here between AP and MAP is a difference of intensity in the development of the player's endurance reserve. The exertion made in AP equates to about the average intensity of a match (HR 175-178). This below-maximum intensity of aerobic training can optimise the building of the player's specific endurance with workloads at 85-90% of the HRmax.

Meanwhile, MAP training demands the maximum level of training intensity, equal to the max.  $VO_2$  with a high heart rate (90-96% up to almost 100% of the HRmax), which helps to further increase the player's reserve, to raise the anaerobic threshold and to have a better tolerance and use of lactate. This workload will therefore boost the player's "turbo" mode and in turn he will be able to change the pace of a match with greater intensity and also optimise his max.  $VO_2$  and MAS.

In terms of the intensity level of training, it is recommended to train in:

- Intensity zones 3 and, especially, 4 (85-97% of the HRmax)



## Regulating metabolism systems for endurance

### Aerobic system (uses oxygen)

Enables the production and transportation of oxygen-based energy to facilitate long-term cardio-vascular activity (covering the 90 minutes of a match and any additional time).

This endurance affects the performance of long-lasting exertion, upwards of five minutes, and particularly helps to maintain intensity for as long as possible.

Basic endurance and aerobic capacity training using moderate and fast exertion for long periods in long intervals (series of 10' or 20'):

- Duration between 30' and 60' basic endurance (60-70% HRmax)
- Duration between 20' and 45' basic endurance (70-85% HRmax)
- partial recovery

To achieve a player's maximum oxygen consumption (max.  $\text{VO}_2$ ), the exertion must correspond to the maximum aerobic endurance (MAP) and must be maintained at a high level of intensity (MAS).

Specific endurance training, aerobic power (AP + MAP) through medium and short intense exertion:

- Duration between 3' and 4'-6' aerobic power (AP) (85-90% HRmax) (3 to 5 repetitions)
- Duration between 1' and 3'-4' maximum aerobic power (90-95% HRmax) (3 to 4 repetitions/1-3 sets)
- recovery 2'-4' depending on exertion

The aerobic system, the oxygenation system, is activated by slow to moderate exertion lasting 3'-4' for children and 5'-8' during growth, with warm-up exercises becoming increasingly important with age.

### Anaerobic system (lack of oxygen)

Enables a higher production of energy without using oxygen for short and very intense exertion.

For example: sprinting, jumping, one-on-ones, two-on-twos, etc.

This system is divided into two energy systems:

- 1. Alactic system
- 2. Lactic system

The alactic anaerobic system enables very intense exertion (100% or even 110% of the maximum sprinting speed) of a very short duration. It is the energy system for speed, reactivity and muscular power:

- Duration of between 2"-3" and 10"-12" (6 to 10 repetitions)
- Total recovery

The lactic anaerobic system enables intense exertion (90-100%) of the maximum intensity over a short duration. Energy system producing lactates (lactic acid) as energy:

- Duration of between 20" and 2'-3' (3-4 to 6 repetitions)
- Total or partial recovery

To facilitate the repetition of intense exertion with the anaerobic system, a large endurance capacity and a very good level of aerobic power (reserves or max.  $\text{VO}_2$ ) are essential.

## Training methods for developing aerobic-anaerobic endurance

### Continuous method

- Running in a natural environment or on the pitch
- 30'-60' at the same intensity without breaks
- it is rarely used in modern football or in certain training sessions during a period of preparation, but most often by long intervals (low intensity/60-75% of the HRmax/60-70% of the MAS)
- this training essentially works the slow twitch (ST) muscle fibres

### Fartlek method

(Swedish method = speed play):

- Running that involves alternation between slow, moderate and fast pace, but often in an intuitive manner
- Duration of between 12' and 20' with changes of pace (2'-3' moderate speed running with 30" to 1' of acceleration); intensity between 70% and 85% of the HRmax/(60-70% to 80-90% of the MAS)
- Used regularly in football during periods of preparation, alternating with the continuous method.

### Interval method

(low/medium intensity SLD/high intensity training HIT)

Alternation between exertion and recovery, always bringing the heart rate down to 120-140bpm between periods of exertion:

- Very commonly used in sport, and particularly in football
- Running, technical or technical-tactical exercises with repetitions and sets
- Duration and intensity vary according to the purpose of the endurance training
- Basic endurance running at 70% of the HRmax (150-160bpm) 3x 15'
- Recovery 1'-2'

(30" exertion to 1' of active recovery.

Recovery for 3' between sets and progressively bringing recovery time down to 2' and then 1'30")

A 5v5 (+2 floating players) game format focusing on possession, duration 3x4' (50x40m), and is also considered to be medium interval training.

Using the interval method, it is possible to work both the isolated and integrated forms of training.

## The different types of interval

(according to desired aims):

- long interval of exertion lasting 10'-15'-20' per set (1-3 according to duration and intensity/short recovery)
- medium interval of exertion lasting 3' to 8'-10' (3-5 sets)  
Active or passive partial recovery
- short interval of exertion lasting 30" to 2'-3' (3-5 repetitions, 2-3 sets)  
Active or passive partial recovery.

Medium and short intervals are used to maximum aerobic power training (intensity level 4).

Training using repetitions is also an interval method, but more specifically tailored for speed training with total recovery breaks (HR 120-100bpm)

### Practice games

(integrated or complex form - TE-TA-CO + mental)

Alternation of games with partial or total recovery.

Duration according to the desired physical aims:

- 5v5 (45x40m) = 5-6' (2 to 4 periods)
- 3v3 (30x25m) = 3-4' (3 to 5 periods)
- 9v9 (16x16m) = 8-12' (2 to 4 periods)

It is possible to use different forms and methods of training in order to break the routine of the body and to develop a higher level of adaptation, which is an aim in itself. It is also a means of raising the level of motivation and reducing monotony for the players, as they can otherwise suffer psychological fatigue.

**Training focused on aerobic power and maximum aerobic power (AP+MAP)**

(intensity zones 3-4)

Total training time: 30'

- Intermittent
  - >6'
  - 10"-20"/Recovery 3'
- practice game
  - >6'
  - 6v6 + 4 interchangeable substitutes/ Recovery 3'
- fartlek running
  - >6'
  - dribbling with the ball 1' moderate and 30" fast with changes of direction/ Recovery 3'
- final game
  - >6'
  - 3x2' 3v3 + goalkeepers/Recovery 2'

For practice games, the structure of the playing surface is very important, not just for technical-tactical aspects but also, and especially, for endurance training.

This form has come into modern training with variations on match situations and different workloads practiced in the same training session. This is particularly highly recommended in intermediate training where the youngsters are undergoing integrated training.

**Intermittence method (MAS)**

Intermittent training is a recent endurance-power training method with exertion levels tailored to the reality of a match incorporating changes of pace. It is recommended especially for AP and MAP training.

It is a continuous succession of periods of increasing levels of intensity (85-90% of HRmax and 80-100-120% of the MAS), active or passive recovery breaks (75-80% of the HRmax and 50-60% of the MAS), which depends on the duration and intensity of the workload.

Using this method, the HR increases according to exertion, but decreases very little during the short recovery time; it reaches a plateau with maximum drops of 10-15bpm between exertion and recovery. The recovery can be active or passive, depending on the workload, the duration and the intensity of MAS.

In addition, an exertion intensity of more than 90% of the MAS also calls on the fast twitch muscle fibres.

For this method to be most effective, partial recovery between periods of intense exertion must not allow the heart rate to go below 160-150bpm. It is therefore different to the interval method, which generally allows the heart rate to go down to 140-130, or even 120bpm.

With this isolated or mixed (isolated + integrated) method, awareness of the maximum aerobic speed (MAS) is necessary for the precision of the training.

The total duration of exertion varies between 4'-5' and 8'-10' depending on the intensity of the MAS with short training periods.

The number of sets varies between two and four, depending on the workload and the period of training.

Recognised intensities in football: 30"-30" / 15"-15" / 10"-20" / 5"-20" / 5"-25" or 5"-30" (for the youngest players)

**Example of intermittent training:**

- Duration 3 x 8'
  - 10" running at 110% of the MAS and 20" of recovery
  - gentle running or technical work: ball juggling
- or
- 5" running at 140-160% of the MAS and 25"-30" of recovery
  - gentle running or technical work amongst 4 players (passing or ball juggling) – duration 4 x 4'
  - training with workloads of 5"-25" or 5"-30" is beneficial for speed-endurance work
  - within a single training session, it is possible to use 2 or 3 different types of intermittent exercises

Intermittent-strength training is an interesting alternative in football for the development of endurance with reactive muscle training and in particular for youngsters in basic training.

**Example of intermittent training:**

- Duration 4 x 5' depending on the level
- 5"-30" or 20"/3-4 reactive jumps at 100% representing 5" and then running at 90% of the MAS
- recovery by gentle running (50% of the MAS) or technical work in groups for 30" in basic training and 20" in intermediate training.

To reduce the workload of the jumps, particularly among the youngest players, it is recommended to alternate between a maximum exertion and another exercise involving 5" of jumping and 5" sprinting.

However, this training work requires players to already have a decent level of

coordination for jumps and good reactivity in bearing weight on their legs.

As the workloads increase, youngsters aged 17-18 years with a good foundation of strength can perform this training with more explosive jumps seeking to jump higher in an intermittent period of 10"-20".

This alternation between exercises (MAS + technical work or sprinting + gentle running + technical work), with dynamic demands made on the muscles (training of the fast twitch muscle fibres) on the basis of repetitions, is an excellent adapted form in the basic training of young players.

Although practice games are the priority for children, the intermittent method can easily be adapted for 13-14-year-olds as well. Short intermittent exercises (5"-30"), in particular, enable important work on the aerobic system and on the fast twitch muscle fibres at this stage of growth.

**Intensity zones in aerobic training for developing a player's reserve (max. VO<sub>2</sub>)**

<b>INTENSITY ZONE 5</b> <b>Red zone</b> Training under oxygen debt with the production of lactate > Tolerance of lactate	Lactic-anaerobic system "Resistance-heavy workload" training Tolerance of lactates (Desire, mental strength)	Training beyond the anaerobic threshold Training under oxygen debt Maximum to beyond-maximum intensity Working of the fast twitch muscle fibres	High anaerobic intensity HR 95-100% (MAS 90-140%) > 11-16 mmol/l 7'-8' of a match
<b>INTENSITY ZONE 4</b> Raising the threshold short-duration training > increasing the "turbo" mode	Aerobic+anaerobic systems Maximum aerobic power endurance (MAP) Specific endurance (intensive)	Training at the anaerobic threshold Training to move the threshold High to very high intensity Intense match pace Calling on the fast twitch muscle fibres	High aerobic/anaerobic intensity HR 90-97% (MAS 100-120%) > 9-12 mmol/l 19'-20' of a match
<b>INTENSITY ZONE 3</b> Zone for developing workloads over a prolonged period > developing the "engine"	Aerobic system (+anaerobic) Aerobic-power endurance (AP) Specific endurance (general)	Training below and at the limit of the threshold/intensity Calling on the fast twitch muscle fibres Average match pace (HR 173-180)	High aerobic intensity HR 80-90% (MAS 85-100%) > 5-8/9 mmol/l 28'-30' of a match
<b>INTENSITY ZONE 2</b> Natural base zone > Building the reserve	Aerobic system (alone) Aerobic-capacity endurance (AC) Natural endurance (general)	Pure aerobic training Moderate intensity Training pace for basic TE-TA work	Moderate aerobic intensity HR 70-80/85% (MAS 70-80%) > 3-4 mmol/l 40'-42' of a match
<b>INTENSITY ZONE 1</b> Basic endurance zone > Stimulation of the system of cardiovascular channels	Aerobic oxygenation system Basic aerobic endurance Working of the capillaries	Recovery and fitness training Low to moderate intensity Pace of TA training (blocks)	Low aerobic intensity HR 60-70% (MAS 50-70%) Lactate > 1-3 mmol/l

## Suggestions to optimise endurance training for young players

The training of endurance capacity begins very early among young players: from the age of 12-13 years, this element can be built into all technical or technical-tactical training sessions, particularly in practice games. It is therefore in the types and content of training that the difference between youngsters in basic and intermediate training is notable.

- In basic training, practice games are essential, particularly small-sided games, with on-the-ball training, but striving for a fun approach in training. Therefore, an integrated form of training (with the ball) is a priority at this age, particularly in basic training. However, it is not a bad idea to gradually introduce the isolated form of training (without the ball) through fartlek or intermittent exercises to increase the training load. This isolated form can also be carried out with the ball (ball control, dribbling or passing technique on the move in twos or threes)
- From the end of the second growth spurt (13-14 years), with increasing training loads, the isolated form of training becomes more important in developing training capacities and primarily for maximum aerobic power (MAP) endurance – intensity zones 4 to 5 – through intermittent training (100-120% of the MAS) or interval training. Training through small-sided games is, of course, still ideal for this type of training and especially during a competition period. The coach should find a decent balance between the forms and methods of training
- Starting from the principle that endurance capacity varies from one player to another, the heart rate values will therefore be different, as will be the maximum aerobic speed (MAS), and it is therefore important that development of this capacity is done on an individual basis. It is wrong, and even dangerous – especially in the development and improvement of endurance – to make all players follow the same pace as that of the player(s) who naturally have a stronger potential because they are growing more quickly. Players must therefore be allowed to run at their own pace and according to

the results of specific aerobic endurance tests.

In gentle to moderate running (intensity zone 1), the player should be able to talk during the exercise. It is also important to observe the running, posture, the relaxing of the stride, balance on the feet and even the breathing of the player, without forgetting the heart rate control.

The explanation of the concept of heart rate – and learning how to measure it during training – is fundamental for youngsters in intermediate training.

Endurance training must therefore be introduced to increase this aerobic capacity with moderate workloads at 70-85% of the HRmax. The emphasis should be on the volume of the workload rather than intensity.

Youngsters who regularly play football and who practice other sporting activities develop this capacity easily. All continuous exercises performed with a ball, interval game play and practice games are all effective in contributing to this capacity:

- Aerobic-power (AP) endurance can be worked on specifically from the age of puberty (14-15 years) with a higher intensity at 85-90% of the HRmax to increase the potential of the aerobic-power and build the “engine” of the player. Small-sided practice games are recognised for helping to develop the AP, while also putting the emphasis of training on technical-tactical and cognitive skills. Fartlek training with changes of pace, and intermittent training based on the players’ MAS are decent alternatives for this kind of training.
- Maximum aerobic power training, with high and intense workloads, becomes a major priority in training for the development of the player’s “turbo” mode.

If training incorporates practice games, with an intensity level at 90-100% of the HRmax, and small-sided games (1v1, 2v2, 5v3), then the intermittent method (MAS 100-130%) or interval running exercises or fartlek are also recommended for achieving the projected maximum intensity.

- Nonetheless, this type of intensive training cannot be conducted without respecting the individual development of the players. During this period of growth, when youngsters go through different changes in size, weight, aerobic and anaerobic capacity as well as muscle mass, there are big differences from one player to the next, whereby some achieve optimal development, while others develop later.

This means that, for this age group, it is best to use this type of training cautiously and to a limited extent, according to the players' degree of development, varying the forms of training and, especially, the workloads. It is only at the end of adolescence (18-19 years), on the basis of acquired performance potential, that is possible to increase the intensity of training workloads and volumes, which gets closer to the training of adults.



## Strength in football

Strength is an important factor in football and is also often decisive in certain circumstances. The muscles or muscle groups exert tension in order to bear the loads that are becoming increasingly significant in the modern game.

As such, strength is highly involved in an overall process of development that comprises different phases:

- Building an athletic and solid muscular foundation.  
(With the advantage of preventing injuries)
- Developing a dynamic and explosive performance potential for a functional foundation.  
(With training of intra and inter-muscular coordination)
- Improving muscle performance.  
(With adjustment of energy levels according to the needs of the player)
- Functional and neural adaptation.
- Developing a dynamic and explosive performance potential.
- Facilitating the development of a better psychological fitness.

Developing players' strength in this way will result in high-quality and holistic development, and will help to improve all of the players' moves.

A sense of well-being is noticeable in the player, who recognises that he is faster

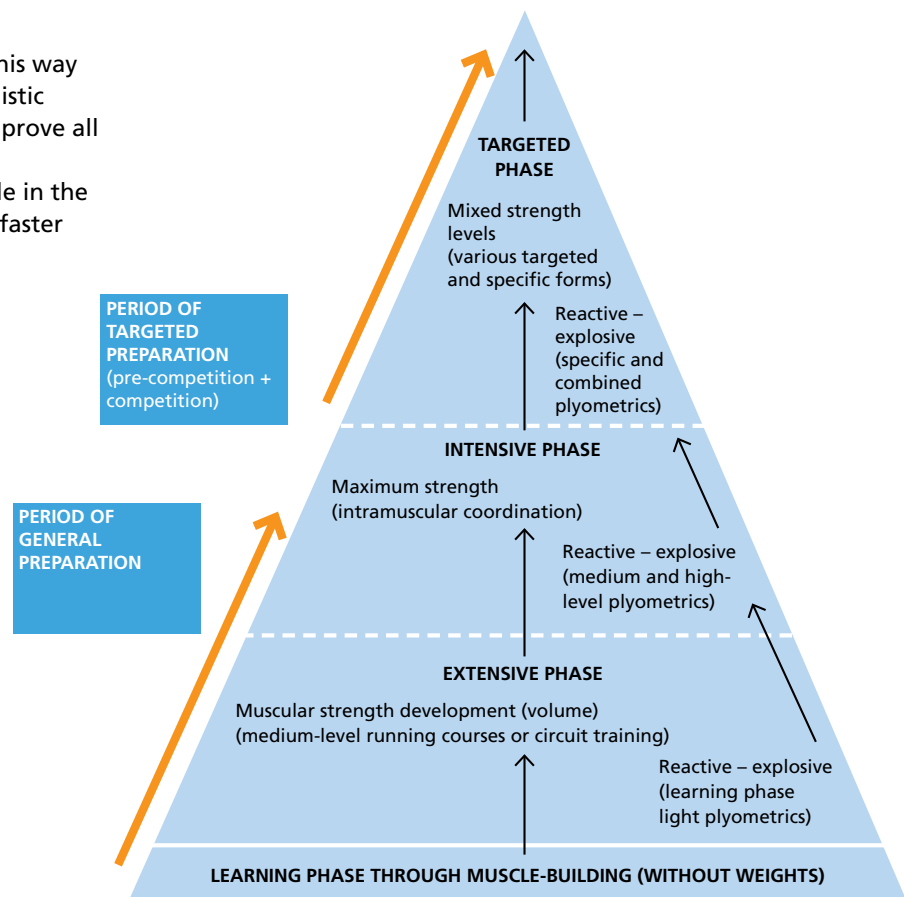
and more explosive in his movements, with increased strength in starting off on runs and power when shooting or in one-on-one situations.

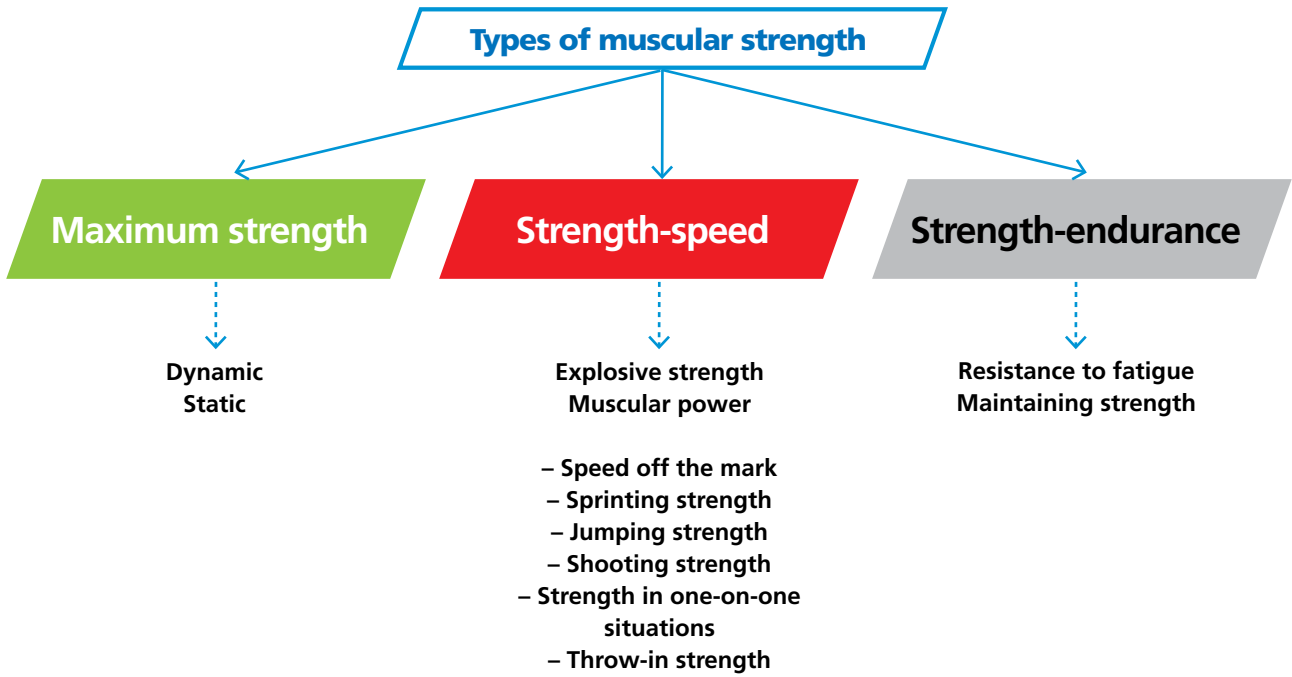
The pace of play in football matches has risen sharply: an increase of 37% since 1990.

More specifically and for the players' positions on the field, certain repeated speed exercises have increased and, as a result, the use of strength has also risen significantly.

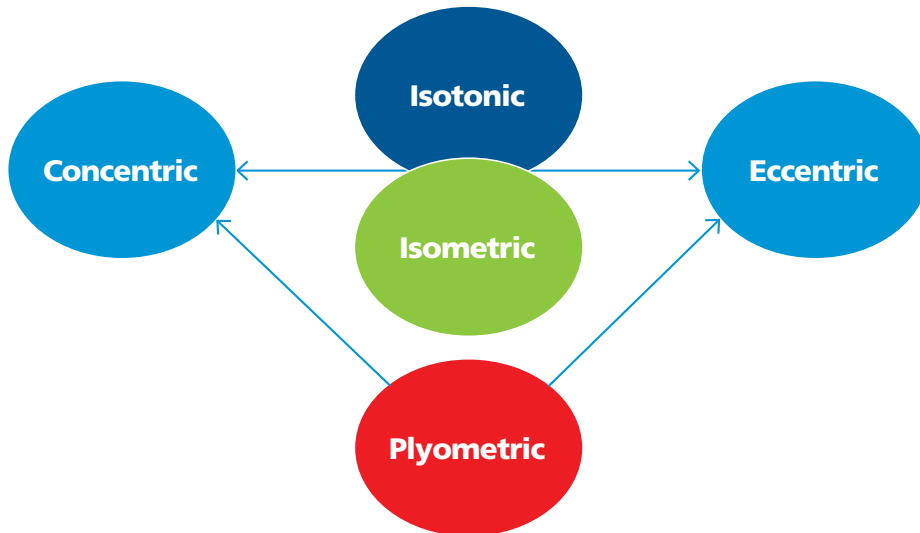
Defenders:	130 to 150 sprints (10m to 30m)
Midfielders:	100 to 120 sprints (10m to 40m)
Attackers:	140 to 170 sprints (10m to 25m)

### Building strength over time





The contraction of muscles is different





### The primary muscles of a footballer

Upper limbs	Torso/Trunk	Legs
Pectoralis major – Shoulder depressor – Shoulder adduction	Trapezius – Elevation and adduction of the shoulder blade – Stabilisation of the head and neck	Gluteal muscles – Thigh extensor (Gluteus maximus) – Thigh abductor (Gluteus medius)
Latissimus dorsi – Adduction and internal rotation of the shoulder – Shoulder adduction	Abdominals – Stabilisation of the trunk – Flexion of the trunk (Rectus abdominis) – Rotation of the trunk (obliques and transversus abdominis)	Adductors – Hip adduction Psoas – Hip flexion
Deltoid – Shoulder abduction – Arm raises	Dorsals – Stabilisation of the trunk – Extension of the spine (neck, back, lower back)	Quadriceps – Knee extension – Hip flexion
Biceps – Shoulder flexion – Arm flexion		Hamstrings – Hip extension – Knee flexion and rotation
Triceps – Elbow extension – Shoulder extension		Gemellus muscles + soleus (calf muscle) – Plantar flexion of the foot – Stabilisation of the knee
		Tibialis anterior – Extension (or dorsal flexion) of the foot

When executing a movement, we contract one or several agonist muscles and relax the antagonist muscles (opposing muscles). To flex the foot, therefore, we contract the hamstring and we relax the quadriceps.

During training, we must always remember to set exercises for the agonist muscles without forgetting to carry out other exercises for the antagonist muscles in the same muscle group.

#### Different phases of strength development:

- For a footballer, strength development requires a good general muscular condition based on the building of the agonist and antagonist muscles in order to ensure a perfect muscular balance. This rule is especially important for young footballers in basic training.
- during an extensive phase: the key aim is a general development of the muscles affecting the passive musculoskeletal system and ensuring a decent general balance for the more specific development of skills that are unique to football. This basic reinforcement stage is ideal for providing the foundation for a specific reinforcement related to the development of coordination skills,

particularly orientation, differentiation and balance. In particular, it is the learning phase and the basic muscle-building phase:

- muscle-strengthening training with the player's own body weight (core conditioning), gradually leading to light weights requiring 30-70% of the player's maximum strength.

Here are several recommendations to help you build a training programme:

- This training can be performed as a circuit (15"-30"/2-3 sets per exercise), or with more time dedicated to each station (3 sets of 10 at 50-70% of max strength). Then comes the work in the maximum strength zone (intramuscular coordination), in which complete safety must be ensured in order to avoid any overloading of the players. While this training does not pose any danger to the upper body, it is best to pay attention to the legs (particularly squats), where the load should never exceed 80% of the maximum strength (approx. 8 maximal repetitions = MR). Only a leg press allows maximal exertion.
- It is important to select agonist and antagonist exercises for each area of the body in order to avoid a muscular imbalance. The selected exercises should cover all parts of the body (lower and upper limbs, trunk). During this extensive phase, it seems necessary to plan two muscle-building training sessions per week (for example, Monday-Thursday or Tuesday-Friday) during the preparation phase or during basic muscle-building for young players.
- During the intensive phase (training): it is a question of simply increasing the weights while reducing the volume of training. The exertion/recovery times (in circuit training, for example) go to 20"-40", and, for station-based training, the number of repetitions is between five and six.

Jump training or reflex strength training (plyometrics) is also introduced during the micro-cycles of the extensive and intensive phases. The training will be very varied and will progressively develop from bare-foot training on the ground or on a soft mat (jumping) with more demanding forms (with obstacles), towards harder surfaces (football pitch). This type of training can be performed at least once a week, whether in isolated

form or combined with intermittent exercises.

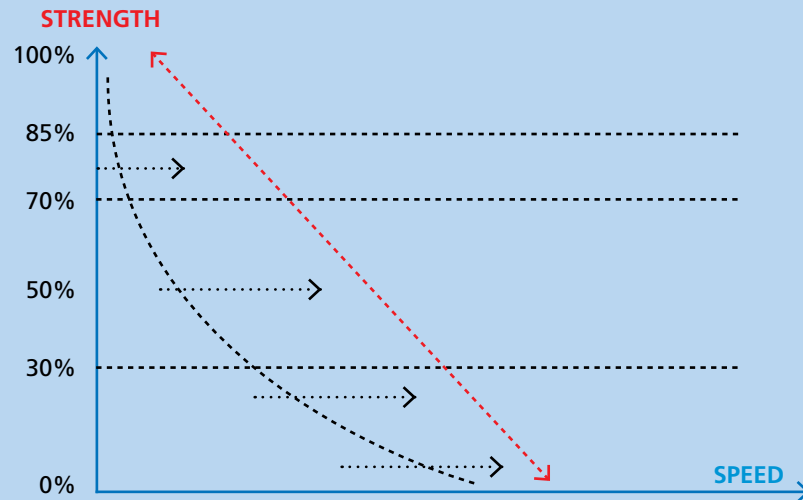
- During the targeted phase (advanced training): the muscles absolutely must be maintained at least once a week (start of the week) in order to maintain good muscle tone throughout the long period of competition. Such training may take the following forms:
  - station-based training, alternation between heavy and light loads (contrasting method) in actions specific to footballers
  - circuit training (15"-30"), also alternation between heavy and light loads
  - combination of circuit and strength training (20'-40") for the upper body and the trunk, with plyometric training (different types of jumping) for the legs (with insistence on a highly dynamic execution).

During this period and in the aim of developing a particular stamina-speed, mixed intermittent training is preferred (5"-15" or 10"-20", for example, with three periods of exertion of 6' and 3'-6' break).

## Methods of strength training

### Methods of strength training

The strength curve with the relationship  
Strength-Speed → Power



Max strength (85-100% of max strength)	> 1 to 5x/3 to 4 sets/Recovery 3' to 5'
Strength/muscle volume (70-85% of max strength)	> 8 to 12x/3 to 4 sets/Recovery 3' to 4'
Strength-speed/power (30-60% of max strength)	> 6 to 10x/3 to 5 sets/Recovery 2'
Strength-endurance (30-50% of max strength) 1 <sup>st</sup> strength training phase for youngsters	> 15 to 30x/3 to 4 sets/Recovery 1' to 2'
Speed-strength/Reactive strength-Plyometric method	> 5 to 10 jumps/5" to 10" max/3 to 4 sets/ Recovery 45" to 2'
– Reactive coordination/running session + jumps	
– Low, medium and high-level plyometrics (reactive–explosive exercises)	
Mixed strength levels (heavy-light) – Multi-form method Game-like scenario training to be performed on the pitch strength	> Static strength/isometrics 15"–30" or with a load 30-60% of the maximum strength or dynamic 30-50% of max strength + 5-8 jumps and sprinting 6-10m
– transformational training - targeted multi-form	> As above: Strength-jumping-sprinting and technical moves
Isometric strength (for young players or players recovering from injury)	> Maintain posture for 15" to 20" or 30" (depending on age) / 2 to 3 sets
Muscle strengthening/Conditioning/Stabilisation	> 15":15"/20:20"/30:30" or 10 to 20 reps/ 2 to 3 sets
– Basic strength for children and adolescents	

## Plyometrics

A very effective method in terms of developing speed and power. Its unique feature is that it is based on pre-stretching before a quick contraction of the muscle.

### **Light plyometrics:**

- Hopping (hopping and skipping session)
- skipping rope, long jumps, jumps on a single foot, crossover jumps, jumping with a skip ball, sideways jumping on one foot
- volume: 150 to 250 jumps per session (depending on age)
- 6 to 7 exercises with 6 to 12 repetitions depending on level and age
- 2 to 4 sets
- 45" to 1' break between repetitions
- 2' to 3' break between sets
- for youngsters, bare-foot training on a mat.

### **Moderate plyometrics:**

(obstacles 30 to 50cm)

- Varied jumping
- volume: 60 to 120 jumps per session (depending on age)
- 3 to 5 exercises with 4 to 6 repetitions depending on level and age (6 to 10 jumps for lateral jumps)
- 3 to 5 repetitions per exercise
- 1'15" to 1'30" break between repetitions
- 3' to 5' break between sets
- ideal to perform 16 to 20 repetitions of 4 to 5 jumps.

### **Heavy plyometrics:**

- Squat jumps, high obstacles (boxes, steps)
- volume: 40 to 70 jumps per session (depending on age)
- 2 to 3 exercises with 4 to 6 jumps depending on level and age
- 2 to 4 repetitions per exercise
- 2' to 3' break between repetitions
- 5' to 7' break between sets
- Warning: this method is not recommended for use in football as it is extremely draining.

Example for the strength of the legs with a contrasting method heavy-light:

- Squats (6x 40% of the max strength)
- followed by 5 hurdle jumps, then a shot on goal or a 12m sprint
- 3 to 5 exercises
- 2 to 5 repetitions per exercise
- 2' to 3' break between repetitions
- 3' to 5' break between sets

Example for the strength of the legs during an uphill run:

- Sprint method with additional resistance to emphasise the strength needed to start off on a run and in action
- duration: 2" to 3"
- 3 to 5 repetitions
- 2 to 4 sets
- 1' break between repetitions (20 times the training time)
- 4' to 5' break between sets

Alternative activity: sprinting up stairs

## Development of strength in young players

The period of pre-puberty (12 to 14 years) is ideal for developing strength generally (harmonious construction).

Exercises for the core muscles (upper body) are indispensable for children, as early as 9-10 years (isometrics).

The muscle strengthening method (conditioning-stabilisation) is recommended for this first phase, as well as learning about strength training with the isometric form being the initial priority.

Gradually, around the age of 15-16 years depending on the players' level, training with light loads (50-60% of body weight), taking the necessary precautions (correct execution of movements with respect to the recommended loads, with close monitoring of training sessions).

Strength development in youngsters using equipment can be undertaken with those who have taken strength endurance training (strengthening using one's own body weight) for at least two years and through mixed strength and speed-strength circuit training.

Strength work starts gradually with light loads (intermuscular coordination) in extensive strength before starting to work on muscle volume (muscle mass).

Already at this level, personalised training sessions become essential with respect to the development of the player and working on the maximum strength.

All training that involves equipment must be monitored by the coach.

Training by hops, jumps (reflex speed) and varied jumping (light plyometrics) can be introduced, although progressively from the age of 14-15 years.

- Given the fragility of young players' joints, muscles and ligaments (knees, ankles, adductors), precautions must be taken.

Moderate plyometric training (plyometric circuit), recommended during competition periods, can be used with youngsters aged 16-17 years once they have mastered the movements in light plyometrics and the pelvic stability to keep the body straight during jumps.

The targeted multi-form method (heavy-light) is possible from the age of 15 years if the player has good coordination in his running and light plyometrics, and the strength work before jumps is done through isometrics.

As such, this phase of training must always be preceded with an optimal warm-up of the muscles (coordination) and toning work on the core muscles of the trunk (abdominals, dorsals).

At the end of the session, the coach should insist on suppleness exercises, light, progressive stretching and "unwinding" for the spine (increased suppleness + mobility).

Basic coordination through running sessions (skips) must be introduced from the age of 11-12 years.

## Speed in football

Speed is primarily defined by the capacity to cover a given distance as quickly as possible with the maximum exertion (100%) and also by the maximum speed at which a movement or a series of movements are performed.

The fundamental quality in football is a performance ability of the neuromuscular system.

In fact, a great player stands out from the others by having an above-average technical-tactical awareness and a degree of speed that allows him to capitalise on his other qualities.

As such, different types of speed allow a player to be judged on this physical condition:

### Speed of reaction:

- Ability to react as quickly as possible to a given signal:
  - in football, this signal is most often visual: a game play, a complex situation, the behaviour of the other players, etc.
- it is often influenced by the speed of response (perception, anticipation, decision).

### Speed off the mark:

- This capacity, so often decisive in football, is based on reaction, but requires strength-speed (muscle power) and mental attitudes (concentration + aggressiveness).

### Acceleration speed:

- A capacity that requires an increase of speed over time
- influenced by muscle power (concentric and eccentric strength).

### Speed of action (or execution)

- The capacity to execute cyclic and acyclic movements at high and very high speed:
  - pure running, varied running, running combined with real-game actions
- the higher the intensity and the longer the duration, the more speed is influenced by strength.

## Elements and forms of speed training

### Cyclic speed:

- Speed under the same cycle of action, movement and frequency of action (frequency of strides)
- pure basic speed

### Acyclic speed:

- Speed that is not part of the same cycle during exertion, running, an action
- speed of a simple motor activity (jumps, shooting at goal).

### Isolated speed:

- Purely athletic work (setting off, running without the ball)
- specific training to look at running, work on stride and achieve the maximum pure speed

### Integrated speed:

- Training for different types of speed or game action, but with the ball:
  - sprinting and ball control + link-up, one-on-one over 20-30m, counter-attacking move
  - sprinting with the ball, combination of play in a three-on-one situation with a shot on goal within 7"-10" max

### Speed during practice games:

- Transformation of athletic speed into game speed ("optimal speed")
- the game reflects the reality of a match with its different types of speed and particularly speed of response and action
- however, maintaining control of the speed trained is difficult in a game

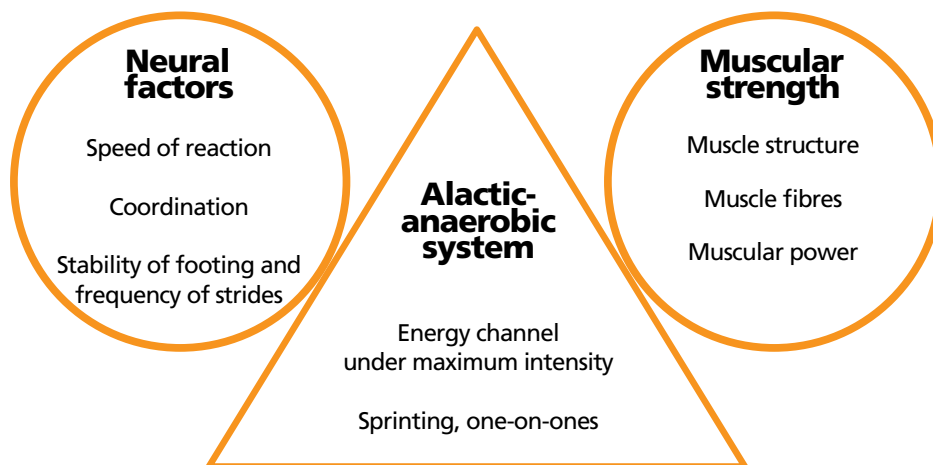
### Maximum speed:

- Pure sprinting speed at the greatest level of intensity (100%) that is not reached before 40m in youngsters and is trained without the ball

### Optimum speed:

- The speed of the footballer
- sprinting speed or speed of execution

## The anatomical and physiological foundations that influence speed



The nature of most of the different fibres is inherited genetically, but targeted speed training can develop the diameter of the fast twitch fibres – without losing the muscle elasticity that is essential for good coordination.

Strength development improves speed, and technical impetus is a decisive factor.

As such, the relationship between the agonist and antagonist muscles is fundamental, and the elements of coordination (such as pace or balance) are

indispensable in order to increase the small margin of likelihood of making progress in speed. Of course, the energy source in phosphocreatine (PC) remains the source of the movement.

The energy from adenosine triphosphate (ATP) for training pure speed specifically in football comes from the alactic-anaerobic system.

It should also be noted that sprinting speed increases during the course of puberty thanks to the development of the muscles.

## The interval repetition method according to different types of speed

The preferred method for training and developing maximum and optimal speed (of the footballer) with all of the other elements of speed and the alactic-anaerobic system (ATP-PC).

Sprints must always be performed at 100% with a duration of 3-5 seconds, up to a maximum of 8-10 seconds.

To work on and reach the maximum speed (frequency training), an exertion of at least approximately 6 seconds is required (45-55/60m).

To work on the specific speed of the footballer, sprints of 20-40m are required.

Working on short reaction speed (2-3m up to 10m) using the repetition method allows a higher number of repetitions than for acceleration speed or speed of action.

Recovery between each sprint should always be complete (1:10/1:15 up to 1:20 of the exertion time), according to the distance covered. For a set at maximum

speed (50-60m), total recovery is necessary and can last up to 2-3 minutes.

Recovery between repetitions is generally semi-active (walking) or passive. Between sets, which can last 3 to 6-7 minutes depending on the volume of sprints, recovery is generally semi-active (walking, gentle running, ball juggling between 4-5 players or even conditioning/stabilisation upper-body muscle work, or even dynamic suppleness):

- No stretching between speed training sets.

For speed training on the lactic-anaerobic system, the time of exertion is 10-15 seconds up to a maximum of 30 seconds.

For youngsters, sets of fewer repetitions (2-4) are recommended, although more sets can be performed (3-5) according to the volume of training.

The recommended volume of speed in a training session for young players:

- In basic training: 200 to 250m
- In intermediate training: 280 to 400m

For a reactive-explosive speed session on the eve of a match with distances of 10 to 20m:

- Volume of 100 to 180m (depending on age)

#### **Other methods for speed development:**

##### **Agility:**

- Maximum speed but with changes of direction of 90° up to 180°

Example:

- shuttle sprint 10m, followed by shuttle sprint 20m, etc.
- sprints into space and decoy sprints, with and without the ball
- speed should not just be trained in straight lines, but also with varied running (change of direction, running with acceleration, halting and re-acceleration).

##### **Uphill running:**

- moderate gradients over distances of maximum 10-20m, return at walking pace; recovery 1:15/1:20. Same but with a direct return by sprinting
- running with a load in tow, harnessed load (muscle power)
- fast skipping rope (20-30 times) followed by a sprint over 15-20m
- shuttle run (relay) in a one-on-one situation as a team, also with the ball (passed by throwing or kicking).

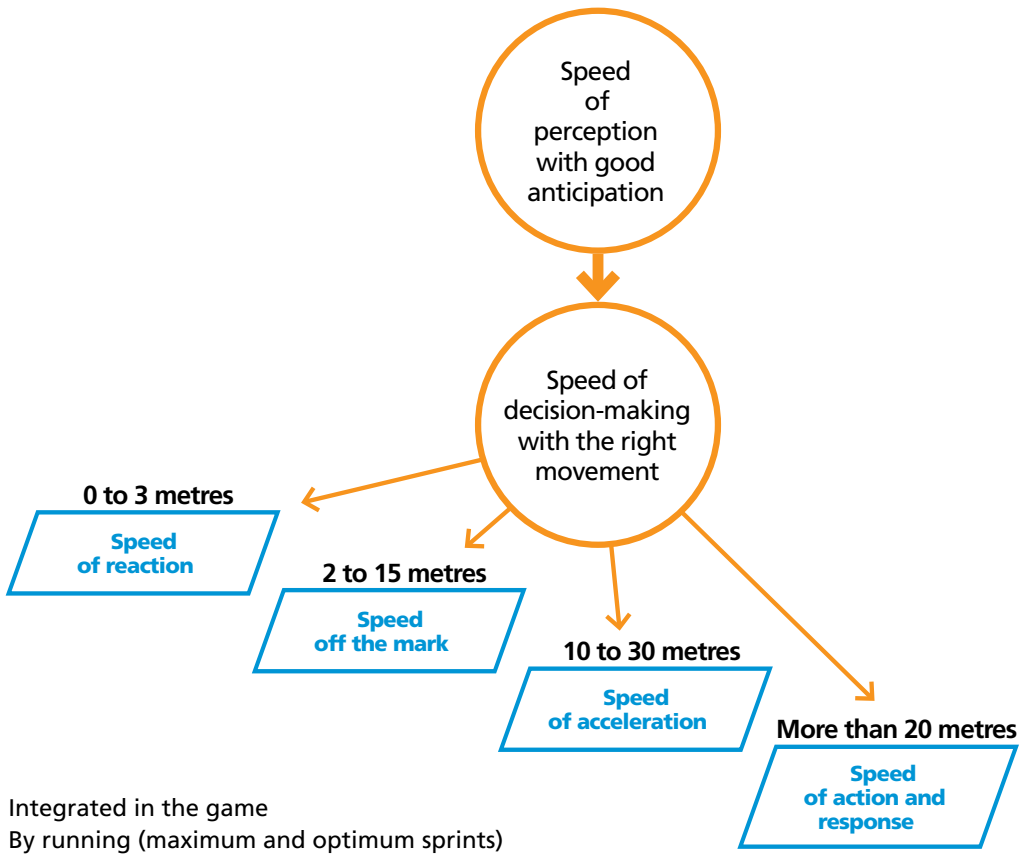
##### **Position-specific training:**

- Training adapted according to positions (distance, type of running and speed)
- station-based training (example).

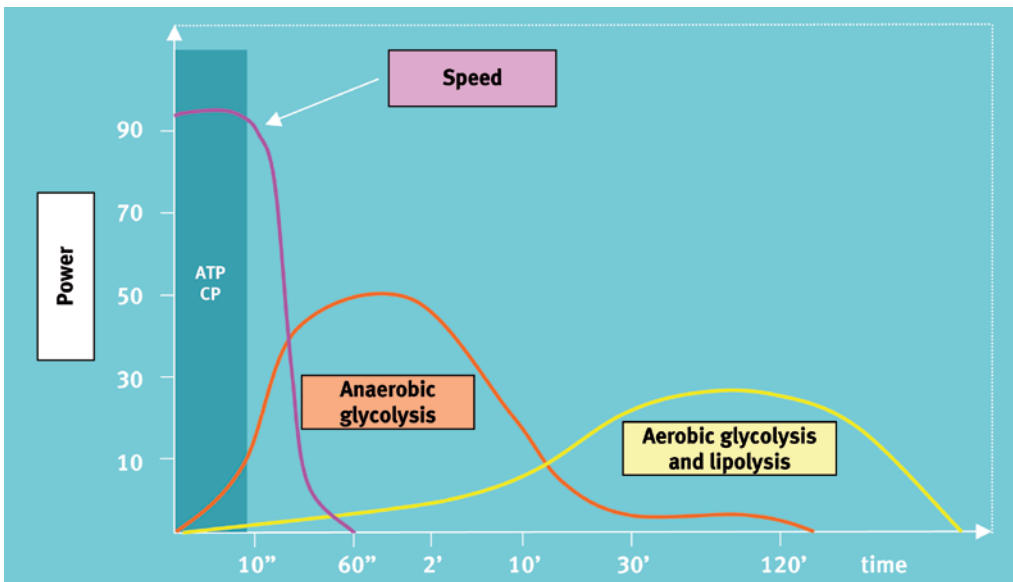




Evolution of speed/power and its related energy systems



Energy systems for speed and power



## How to structure and pace a speed training session

Define the type of speed and the form of training:

- Cyclic or acyclic speed
- integrated or isolated form

Define the volume of training suitable for the level:

- This varies, depending on the age of the players and the day of the session, between 120 and 350 metres
- do a global assessment of the distances in the integrated and isolated forms

Divide the training volume into sets and repetitions:

- For example, 5 to 8 repetitions for a distance of 10 metres followed by another set of another form

The recovery time between repetitions with a ratio of between 10 and 20 times the workout time:

- For example, for a 5" run, the recovery time can be up to twenty times that, at 1'40" and between sets it can be between 4' and 8', depending on the load in each set

Type of recovery break:

- Semi-active to passive between repetitions, particularly by walking
- passive + active between sets; technical work with movement is often recommended

Choice of training content following a speed session:

- It depends on the training day, but often with sequences based on technical-tactical skills.

In training that focuses on speed or speed-strength, it is necessary to bear in mind the physiological effects and adapt the training content to be performed in the session accordingly.

For training of purely technical-tactical football using the aerobic endurance system, the workload of the speed section can be more intensive.

On the other hand, if the focus on speed is adapted to the content that follows this session, then it will be necessary to adapt the planned workload. Therefore, the attacking work of a technical move at speed should be calculated as part of the total volume of speed in order to avoid overloading on neuromuscular and muscular training.

Good results, particularly among young players in intermediate training, have been achieved: they have shown the advantages of a daily double session with training in the morning focusing on speed and late-afternoon training using speed in football through technical-tactical work and game play.

### Pacing of speed training

Type of speed	Intensity	Pacing			Recovery		
		Duration	Repetitions	Sets	Type	Repetitions	Sets
Speed of reaction	Max. speed 100% of the maximum speed	1"-4" (0-2/6-8m)	5-6 x	2-3	Passive	20"-45" (1:10)	3-4' active
Speed off the mark	Max. speed 95-100% of the maximum speed	2"-4" (10-20m)	4-5 x	2-3	Passive Semi-active	30"-45" (1:10)	3-4' active
Speed of acceleration and action	High speed 90-100%	3"-6" (30-50m) 6"-8"-10" (40-80m)	4-6 x 3-4 x	2-3 1-2	Active	1'-2' (1:15/1:20)	4-6' active
Reactive coordination / Running session	Fast-reactive 80-100%	3"-5"	2-4 x = 1 set	3-4	Passive (walking)	45"-1'30" (1:15/1:20)	4-5' active

## Methodological principles of speed training

### Always perform a good warm-up:

- Raise the body temperature and muscles by activating the cardio-vascular system:
  - strengthening work on the trunk (abdominals, dorsals) is beneficial to the toning of the core muscles and a stable posture of the pelvis. Suppleness and mobility are also factors to be activated during the warm-up.

### Always go for speed at the beginning of the training session

### Always go for maximum and optimum speed (speed adapted for football)

### Always follow up with complete recovery

### Convert athletic speed into football speeds

#### Speed-endurance method

(lactic-anaerobic):

Training in adapting maximum speed to speed that can be repeated in a match. Training work at maximum speed over longer periods of exertion (9-10 up to 15 seconds) that require the lactic-anaerobic energy system.

Approaching a more personalised or position-specific training programme:

- Attacker for counter-attacking play
- Wide players (midfielders/defenders) in a long run down the wing, often with defensive repositioning at the optimum speed.

In this training work, recovery between repetitions is often active (gentle running) This training helps to increase the player's phosphagen reserves, to be protected against the build-up of lactic acid and to better recover before a new action or a new sprint.

Shuttle runs (4-6 x 10m) call on this reserve, as do runs in a real match situation like wide players (sprint: 50m and return for defensive repositioning 30-40m).

As this activity can build up lactic acid and other metabolic waste (depending on the volume of training), the full recovery period may take up to 72 hours.

This training aids the tolerance of lactic acid and its conversion into energy, albeit short-term energy.

#### Speed of reaction:

- Specific training for setting off the mark:
  - simple start: stereotypical motor response
  - complex start: situation involving a decision (acoustic, tactile or visual signal).

#### Vary the different types of messages

The starting positions should be varied, as should the types of signals in order to reflect as closely as possible the reality of a match.

The start should not always be signalled by the coach, but also by another player setting off, thereby causing the player to react.

Vary direction when starting off the mark and also the distances within a single set. Training can start with speed without the ball before moving on to speed with the ball, ending the off-the-mark start with a control of the ball and a dribble-pass, or with a shot on goal.

## Recovery and regeneration

All physical exertion requires time for recovery, rest or even full physical and psychological recuperation, so as to regenerate and rebuild the energy levels, both biological and mental, of the body and to regain strength. As in all other sports, this regeneration of energy in football must be done as quickly as possible, whether after a match or in between training sessions, in order to be able to quickly repeat the workloads demanded every day by the coach. Recovery is therefore an integral part of the training process.

In the planning of each training session and each training cycle (microcycle, mesocycle, macrocycle), the periods for rest, elimination of toxins and, above all, specific recovery must be incorporated alongside the technical, tactical and physical training content.

When well planned as part of training, the recovery-regeneration process allows the player to quickly recover the ability to perform a certain level of exertion. A well-paced programme of training and recovery allows the player to maintain an optimum physical and psychological state in order to handle the workloads of training (pay attention to avoid “overtraining”) and to avoid injury.

For youngsters in intermediate training, respect for this process is all the more important. Players going through training do not just have to cope with the demands of sporting exertion, but they also often have to deal with school work, studying or learning a trade.

Targeted recovery has the following primary aims:

- To prevent and eliminate physical and psychological fatigue after exertion
- To avoid the overload of training
- To allow the recovery of energy expended during exertion
- To reduce stress
- To reduce the risk of injury

After intensive exertion, such as that of a match, a period of at least 48 hours is needed to replenish the reserves of glycogen and other energy sources.

It is possible to reduce that time to 24-30 hours with oxygenation training and targeted recovery, based on physical work and treatment, and with a balanced diet that is rich in carbohydrates, (pasta, rice, potatoes, cassava, vegetables, fruit, drinks, etc.)

In this way, the individual’s performance capacity increases right from the regeneration of tissue during the recovery phase.

### Duration of recovery for different physical capacities

Basic endurance – Aerobic capacity (AC)	24 to 30 hours
Specific endurance – Aerobic power (AP/MAP)	40 to 48 hours
Alactic-anaerobic speed	24 to 30 hours
Lactic-anaerobic speed	48 to 72 hours
Maximum muscle power	40 to 48 hours
Strength-speed (power/explosiveness)	24 to 36 hours

These recovery times take into account the natural internal biological and physiological processes at work in the player, but also require the support of a

balanced diet, rest time and sleep needed for a balanced life.

The recovery times are also optimised for targeted recovery training.

## The different types of recovery

### The scheduling of training and recovery:

- Recovery depends on whether the players are in a period of training or competition, the team performance level, but also, and above all, the players' individual situations
- at what point should the coach set lighter training sessions, reduce the volume or intensity of training, or even set rest days?

### Type of recovery – active or passive:

- The coach's choice during training to schedule the type of recovery, with the option of active recovery (gentle running or individual/group ball control) or passive recovery (walking or resting on the spot)
- active recovery is beneficial to vascular and capillary activity, which is good for blood circulation and the elimination of toxins produced during exertion.

### Recovery between training sessions:

- Setting lighter training sessions in view of previous workloads, planning targeted recovery sessions or even assigning a day of passive rest allowing players not just physical relief, but also to regain a certain psychological freshness that is very important for young players in training. Some coaches sometimes even assign two days of complete rest in order to optimise the recovery of freshness that is often lacking in matches.

### Recovery as a training session:

- This should be scheduled within the training microcycle according to the training loads over the course of the week between training sessions and matches.

It is primarily known as a "system clearing" session, taking place the day after a match or even as part of the warm-down directly after a match.

During the training week, particularly for youngsters generally playing a match a week, it is scheduled after a block of three, four or even five training sessions (over 3-4 days). For the youngest players, in basic training, this type of recovery session can be scheduled the day after an intense training session when they have been using their aerobic-anaerobic metabolism or strength speed at the

maximum level. This recovery is often planned with sports-medical facilities (baths, massages or stretching), but depending on the physical and psychological state of the team or of individual players.

The physiological foundation of the recovery session between training sessions and also after a match is aerobic work, with the oxygenation system taking over in the recovery process.

## Active forms and means of recovery

### 1) Physical and psychological aspects

Metabolism (at an intensity of 1 to 2):

- Cardio-vascular – oxygenation + capillarisation:
  - walking and running in a natural environment (intensity 1 to 2)
  - bike-cardio (low energy output)
  - running on a treadmill
- Cardio-vascular while being able to maintain a conversation:
  - walking in water, aquagym, aquajogging
  - multi-sport (other sports)
  - foot tennis or another game (without losing breath)
- Muscle strength and suppleness:
  - strengthening/strength:
    - dynamic strength conditioning (2-3 sets 20-30x)
    - strength endurance with load at 30-40% of maximum strength (2-4 sets 15-30 x/according to the level of the player)
  - Important recommended training work for localised muscle oxygenation
- Relaxing/stretching:
  - dynamic suppleness/ballistic movement low to moderate pace (2 sets 12-20 x)
  - stretching (2-3 sets 20"-30"/10"-20" – youngsters in basic training)
- Psychological/mental:
  - take a break from sporting situations
  - practice another sport, other games
  - relaxation/breathing
  - yoga, relaxation therapy

**2) Sports-medical methods**

Immediately after exertion (match/intensive training session):

- Shower (hot/cold)
- Hot bath/hydrotherapy: beneficial for muscle relaxation
- Cold bath/cryotherapy: not just for cooling down the body to stop perspiration; it has a highly positive effect on cardiovascular dynamism and forces the body to use its own calorific energy to remove toxins produced through exertion. A cold bath is not recommended in cases of muscle spasm. Alternating between hot water, which dilates the blood vessels, and cold water, which contracts them. Hot-cold alternation is well recognised for its benefit to recovery
- Hot/cold cloths: can have the same effect as alternating between hot and cold water, but only in a localised manner on particular muscle areas (legs)
- Massage

**Targeted recovery:**

- Swimming, sauna, steam bath
- Massage

**Regeneration (restoring energy):**

- Drink (water): immediately after exertion for rehydration
- Energy drinks: immediately after exertion
- Nutrition/diet  
A diet adapted for the period from the end of a match or training session to aid the replenishing of energy reserves, particularly glycogen (carbohydrates).

**SLEEP – REST – HEALTHY LIFESTYLE****Recovery training model**

Duration 70' to 80' with a low intensity (70 to 80% of the HRmax)

**Oxygenation phase (30' to 35')**

- On the pitch or away from a football environment (nature, forest, seaside)
- Walking as a group 5'-6'
- Light to moderate running wearing running shoes – 10' to 12' (players are able to hold a conversation) (HRmax 140 to 160) (MAS 6 to 7km/h)
- Other form of cardio such as cycling
- Light dynamic suppleness – spine, arms – 4' to 5'
- Restart running, either dribbling with the ball or throwing the ball to one another as a team – 10' to 12' (HRmax 150-165) (MAS 8 to 10km/h)
- This form can be replaced with a game. E.g. handball (40x30m) at walking pace (scoring with a header)

**Coordination + fun activities (15' to 20')**

- Foot tennis (3v3 or 4v4) / "Piggy" 6v2
- Running with progressively long strides over 70-80m/4-5 x at 60-80% of running speed.
- Recovery 45" to 1' – individual ball juggling
- Stimulation of motor skills in the player's running and activation of the muscle fibres

**Muscle oxygenation (15' to 20')**

- Endurance-strength
- Work using strength equipment – 5 to 6 exercises in a circuit/30 to 50% of max strength depending on the player (3 sets 20x or 30")
- For youngsters in basic training – consolidating strength/core conditioning/upper body (5-6 exercises, 2 sets 20")
- Individual workout according to the player

**Muscle suppleness (10' to 12')**

- If conditions allow, work on the ground, on grass or on a mat
- Relaxation of the spine
- Stretching with focus on the legs (2 to 3 sets of 20" to 30")
- For the youngest players (2 to 3 sets of 10" to 15")

**Complementary treatments**

- Baths, sauna, treatments, massages

### Advice for teaching young players in basic training

For young athletes, particularly before their bodies have stopped growing, recovery between periods of exertion is often faster than it is in adults. However, it is best, in an initial period, to respect the planning of the volume-intensity of the workload and the duration of required recovery times.

Also taking into account that the workloads in training and in matches are different at different ages, just as the structure of training is different at clubs that do not have all of the necessary means for recovery, it is still important to educate youngsters on the importance of good recovery. It is important, therefore, to insist (above all) on the following:

- To warm down after exertion
- To always take a hot and a cold shower after training sessions and matches. If such facilities are not available at the club, players should take a hot/cold shower or bath at home
- To eat and drink well with a healthy diet
- To get enough sleep
- To lead a healthy lifestyle
- To reserve time for leisure and relaxation

Physical means such as stretching or jogging in a natural environment on days off, or even relaxation and breathing, are habits that should gradually be instilled in youngsters during their basic training. "Invisible" training, i.e. everything that a player does to improve his performance outside of training with his team, is very important for the body, especially when playing regular matches.



## Physical tests for young players

A physical test is a specific and standardised examination (energy, muscle, joint-muscle, psychological) that measures a particular capacity. In football, the following specific physical capacities are measured: aerobic endurance, speed, explosive strength, maximum strength, suppleness, coordination, etc.

The most scientific laboratory tests that enable the most precise measures and field tests that are recognised to be reliable, adapted to be simpler and less costly, are used.

In basic training, tests should be:

- Easy to carry out
- Used only for their particular purpose
- In accordance with a protocol that must be scrupulously respected

- Reliable
- Repeated during the season

Why carry out tests?

- To measure and assess individual performance capacities
- To measure specific coordination factors
- To monitor the physical development and progress of players
- To improve the quality and suitability of training programmes
- To compare the results of different players
- To motivate players in their training and progress

### Recommended tests in basic training

#### Biometric tests

- Size and weight. Body fat
- Bone age; this test is particularly useful for players approaching the end of puberty or are growing slowly
- Body mass index test (BMI) = Example: 70kg: 176x176 = 70kg: 3.09 = BMI 22.6 (BMI scale: under 20 = Underweight/20 to 25 = Normal/over 25 = Overweight)

#### Endurance tests

- VO<sub>2</sub> max/Maximum aerobic speed (MAS)/ maximum heart rate and recovery monitoring
- by: Yoyo endurance test/Cooper test\* 12'/Half Cooper test 6'/Vameval/ Léger-Boucher/Gacon test/ 12'
- Probst test/1,000m test/Mognoni test (giving the threshold speed), or other tests as chosen by the club

Although they are not as precise as the other tests, the two Cooper tests have the advantage of the fact that the player is alone in his performance and his frame of mind is very influential on the result. Players are allowed to decide on the intensity of their own running. For the other tests, the intensity is set by the test itself (steps, beep, whistle).

#### Speed tests

Sprinting: photoelectric cells or manual control using a stopwatch (less precise but gives a justifiable value that can be compared between players):

- Speed of reaction + speed off the mark -5m -10m/Speed of action 20m, 30m, 40m and/or 50m
- Agility: – 20m with a change of direction every 5m (manual timing on a stopwatch)
- Speed-endurance – 4 x 10m with changes of direction (shuttle running)
- Speed-endurance + coordination -IPTS-FB with football skills (FS) and manual timing

For this test, please see:

*Small-sided games and integrating physical preparation*, FIFA 2013

#### Muscular strength and explosiveness

- Explosive strength – Sargent (vertical jump) test
- horizontal strength – two-footed long jump test/five-stride test/or the Bosco test and Myotest (the latter two tests are performed with specific measuring equipment).



**Table of VO<sub>2</sub> max measurements**  
(ml/kg/min) based on the 12' Cooper test  
(J. Litwin, F. Gonzalo)

Distance covered (in metres)	estimated VO <sub>2</sub> max	MAS (in km/h)
2 800	52,1	14
2 900	53,3	14,5
3 000	55,5	15
3 100	58,0	15,5
<b>3 150</b>	<b>59,1</b>	<b>15,7</b>
3 200	60,2	16
<b>3 250</b>	<b>61,4</b>	16,2
3 300	62,3	16,5
3 350	63,6	16,7
3 400	64,7	17
3 450	65,8	17,2
3 500	66,9	17,5
3 600	69,1	18
3 700	71,4	18,5

Reference distances for players in the intermediate training age bracket in red and those for players in basic training in blue.

**Table of MAS measurements**  
based on the 6' Cooper test

Distance covered (in metres)	MAS (in km/h)
1 300	13
1 350	13,5
1 400	14
1 450	14,5
1 500	15
1 550	15,5
1 575	15,7
<b>1 600</b>	<b>16</b>
1 625	16,2
<b>1 650</b>	<b>16,5</b>
1 725	16,7
1 700	17
1 725	17,2
1 750	17,5
1 800	18
1 900	18,5

The test is essentially specifically for finding the MAS and HR. Based on these results, it is possible to form groups of different ability levels, for long interval runs and intermittent runs.

Reference MAS for players in the intermediate training age bracket in red and those for players in basic training in blue.

#### Muscular strength:

- Abdominal test for 1' (holding strength)
- Direct maximum dynamic strength test (progressively increased load until reaching the maximum strength = 1 to 2 repetitions).

#### Suppleness/mobility:

- Spine test
- Suppleness test of the hamstrings and psoas (ilio-psoas).

#### When to carry out the tests:

- Several days after the restart of training (3 to 4 days, but after a recovery day)
- At the end of a preparation period (after 6-7 weeks)

- For certain tests, after two thirds of the season (endurance – VO<sub>2</sub> max or MAS/ Speed/explosive strength)
- And again after half of the matches have been played so as to improve any declining individual and collective capacities
- One or two weeks before the end of the regular season.

It is recommended that tests be performed during a "light" week or during a week following a micro-cycle of regeneration, or after 48 hours of recovery.

## Principles for organisation

- Adapt training to the age and level of the players
- Use recognised, measurable and repeatable tests (comparable and personal scales)
- Provide clear explanations on the procedure for the test, ensure that every player has understood the test
- The players must know the objective of the test in order to optimise their motivation
- Repetition of the same tests and procedures:
  - always carry out the tests under the same conditions
- Have an understanding of the test and practice it once or twice to get used to the effort required
- Communicate the results:
  - explain the complete set of results to the team (provide the average for the team per test)
  - hold individual evaluation and discussion with the players (progress/lack of progress/training).

It goes without saying that the responsibility for the tests and the choice of tests depends on the culture of the club, the instructor and, of course, the structures and means of the club. A club with tradition and experience in providing basic training will select the most scientific laboratory tests (including blood testing, urine samples, fat mass, muscle mass, etc.).



# 7

## The mental and educational aspects of basic training

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## 7 – THE MENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS OF BASIC TRAINING

The trends in modern football have shown that mental strength is now a key capacity for players at the highest level and an essential part of their training.

However, the basic training of a player goes beyond that. Football should be a school of life in the widest sense – its purpose is not just to train professional players and their performance capacities, but also to contribute to the holistic development of young people. The noble and educational role of the instructors is to teach youngsters to be active in their own development, and nurture their latent talents so that they can do what they want with their own qualities.

## The educational potential of football

Football and football training are often connected by educational aims (punctuality, getting to know and master control of one's own body, building friendships, team spirit, integration, independence and socially responsible behaviour), which are aims that are often used to highlight the value of the sport. For logical reasoning, we need a closer analysis. We need to ask ourselves, where is the real potential for a specific education in and through football? It is a question of knowing what it is that young people can gain in their development through this beautiful game, by being instructed by specialised educators, regularly and over a long period. This position demands that we never lose perspective of the essential fascination and force of attraction of this magnificent sport.

Players enjoy football for different reasons, but the joy of playing always comes first. Therefore, if we expect any results from an education through football, without destroying this pure force of the game by using or manipulating youngsters, then we should revise the educational goals of the sport. In this sense, the true educational potential of this amazing game is in education on fair play and performance. The instructor, who is aware of his educational responsibility and provides support and meaningful feedback, contributes a great deal, with these objectives, to the development of personality in young people.

### **Education in fair play** (respect)

Football involves intensive physical contact with or against others, and the players, in the heat of the action, come together with or without respect. Education in fair play depends on such emotional situations, which require a great deal of self-control. These intense moments are guaranteed to provide high educational potential. The instructor must recognise these potentially educational situations and take the responsibility to gradually instil respect, using his educational influence. This requires a complete knowledge of the Laws of the Game and the code of conduct, but also an ability to understand the perspective of the players.

### **Education in performance**

(self-confidence)

The second major purpose of training is education in performance. The primary aim of teaching this is not, from a pedagogical perspective, about the player's capacity for performance, nor the capacity to win, but his self-confidence. Anyone who learns and achieves something gains confidence. There are endless such learning situations in football. Self-confidence is something that we want for all young people, not just as players.

Nothing can be achieved without effort in football. Commitment and desire are part of performance, not in terms of results, but in the sense of exertion and engagement for a beautiful game.

However, it is not hard to see the reverse side of this, which is an inferiority complex and the basis for so many failures. An inferiority complex is reinforced by negative reactions from coaches and teammates. Education in performance allows players to build self-confidence. As a result, the coach has a serious educational task and must show great sensitivity. It is only in this way that players can be shown that each small achievement, resulting from their effort and engagement, leads to successful game play. This way, the players can be encouraged to always perform better and build their confidence.

### **The real impact of education through football**

The process of educating through football is always a delicate act. The instructor, even when he commits fully to his undertaking, can never be sure that his work will have the desired effect. Intentions and outcomes cannot always be fulfilled, no matter how good the intentions. For this reason, education clearly always entails a risk of failure. This happens more often than would be ideal and we have to face reality: unfortunately, football can also have a negative impact on a player's personality. The basic training of young players carries the risk of breeding a culture of unsporting play.

Unfortunately, a formula has not yet been found to produce automatic positive effects in youth football – at least, not yet.

**Education through football – a highly under-used opportunity**

Many boys and girls are increasingly passionately involved in football. It is more a part of their lives than ever before and they are extremely motivated. The continued rise in the number of children and youngsters registered with clubs shows the popularity of the sport. The singular focus on high-level sporting trials and football competitions brings certain dangers, such as boisterous behaviour, aggression without care for the opponent, doping, match manipulation and corruption. As such, this requires our full attention. This means that our young people can get to know and love this sport, but should also develop a critical eye and not just consider football to be

the wonderful spectacle that is described in the media. Football can also contribute towards personality development in young people. Education must also deal with the current problems in the world of football. Thanks to the power of the game, the educational opportunities for instructors are excellent as they have a very high standing in clubs and among young players. Youngsters view their instructors as role models and even confide in them with their private problems. The conditions are good for an effective education.

## Mental strength

Being determined, taking risks, showing aggression, playing together or, alternatively, letting one's head drop after every defeat, lacking desire, having self-doubt, being afraid of shooting at goal, lacking concentration, etc. are mental attitudes that can be observed in players, whether during a match or in a training session. Negative mental attitudes have

the effect of lowering performance and slowing down the learning and progress of players. The difference between great players and average players is in their mastery of the mental aspect. Mental strength, with its many factors, is a key part of their talent and their performance.

## The various factors of mental strength

### CONCENTRATION, CARE, DISCIPLINE

- The ability to use the right information at the right time
- Focusing one's attention and maintaining it
- The ability to maintain concentration over a long time
- Not committing any rash technical fouls

### SELF-CONTROL

- Resistance to provocation
- The ability to remain in control during difficult times
- The ability to react according to the score
- Mental solidity

### SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Having the feeling of being able to "move mountains"
- Lucidity
- Having an awareness of one's own personal value
- Good self-esteem

### RESISTANCE TO STRESS

- The ability to adapt to changing circumstances
- The ability to play at one's best in a high-stakes match
- The ability to master one's fears and manage emotions

### AGGRESSIVENESS

- The ability to enter one-on-one situations, potency
- The will to impose oneself physically on the game, physical engagement
- Competitive spirit
- Daring, courage

### RISK-TAKING

- Imagination, creativity, spontaneity
- The ability to unlock difficult situations
- Having the courage to try "things"

### PSYCHOLOGICAL STAMINA

- The ability to repeat efforts and maintain a certain level
- Determination, tenacity, desire
- Perseverance despite failure
- Resistance to fatigue
- The ability to go beyond one's limits

### COMPETITIVENESS

- The ability to overcome, combativeness
- The desire to beat one's direct opponent
- The desire to win
- Passion for competition
- Enjoyment of combat

### PLAYING FOR THE TEAM

- Rejection of individualist attitudes
- A sense of self-sacrifice
- Constant prioritisation of the collective
- Cooperation, solidarity
- Communication

### HIGH MOTIVATION, PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT

- The desire to succeed, to make sacrifices
- Passion for football
- Close correlation between one's opportunities and one's performances

### DRIVE FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Desire to learn
- Challenging oneself
- Working on one's weaknesses
- Not being satisfied with one's current level
- Exploiting all of one's opportunities



## TRAINING MENTAL STRENGTH

It has been observed in talented young players, and even in future professionals, that shortcomings are often in the mental aspect. With regular and repeated work in training, players can expect to progress in this respect, as in other areas, but to a degree that remains to be defined. In fact, certain mental shortcomings (lack of aggressiveness, for example) often appear inherent to the personality of the individual and cannot really be worked on in the usual coaching context. As such, sports psychology is required.

In training, depending on the cycle and type of training session, the coach can give priority to mental attitudes, or associate a mental objective to other training objectives while preserving the regular exercises.

### Example:

- a) Getting away from a marker in a 5v5 game with two floating players. The mental objective is specified (concentration, communication) and particular instructions are set to raise the level of concentration and lucidity, and to improve communication between the players.
- b) 9v9 game with two goals and two goalkeepers. Duration of 30'. Ten minutes from the end, the score is 3-2 to the blue team. The yellow team can be provoked mentally (competitiveness, self-control, solidarity) by playing with 10 players against 8 and giving everything to equalise. The blue team has to fight stress, manage the pressure, and play even more as a team in order to preserve their advantage.
- c) Intensive physical conditioning exercises often involve a clear mental aspect: desire, aggressiveness, resistance to fatigue, going beyond one's limits (psychological endurance), etc.

### Other sources of objectives:

- Technical work plus: concentration, lucidity, self-confidence
- Tactical work plus: desire to learn, playing for the team, discipline in following instructions
- One-on-one situation plus: aggressiveness, enjoyment of combat, desire
- Practice games for concentration plus: risk-taking, determination, self-control, creativity
- etc.

It is therefore not the games or the exercises that are the most important thing, but the instructions of the coach, who knows the right time to identify the "mental" source of an unsuccessful activity or low motivation.

### Example:

- Lack of engagement or combativeness in practice games:
  - give instructions that encourage one-on-one situations to increase the pace of the game
  - show appreciation for the goals scored
- Low attention:
  - raise the difficulty of the task or reduce it to encourage success
  - change the exercise or activity.

### Techniques for mental training

To optimise a player's involvement, the coach can also use direct mental training techniques, such as strong key words, or the choice of more realistic and more concrete goals. Or he can use other methods, such as relaxation, creative visualisation, performance evaluation, etc.

### Key words

Words have strong emotional impact (more effective than a talk).

**Example :** aggressive, dynamic, impact, risk, calm, control, discipline

**Mental visualisation**

A virtual training technique. Take inspiration from creative visualisation techniques. Develop the capacity to create clear, precise and controllable images.

Mental visualisation:

- Image of a panther for a player that wants to develop his liveliness and suppleness
- Image of the move of a great player that the young player wants to imitate

**Setting objectives**

To be effective, objectives must be clear, precise, realistic and measurable.

Clarity of objectives aids success in all learning and training activities.

- Objectives set by the coach, but discussed with the player

**Example:** score 15 goals in a season/play ten matches in the first team.

**Positive affirmation**

The brain can remember sensory and motor experiences. Negativity only serves to reinforce the likelihood of the reoccurrence of the behaviour that we are trying to avoid.

**Example:**

- WE CAN'T LOSE TONIGHT!
- WE HAVE TO WIN TONIGHT!

**Performance evaluation**

It is important to know how to analyse performances to judge the skills that have been mastered and those situations or events that continue to pose problems:

- Evaluation by external feedback (by the coach)
- Evaluation by internal feedback (self-evaluation)

**Example:** analyse the performance in the previous match on video in order to take lessons from it with the coach.

**The mission**

A role that the coach assigns to the player in order to improve the team as a collective:

- A mission for both on and off the pitch
- Engage the players, give them responsibility

**Example:** in the event of a poor team performance, the coach asks the captain and leaders of the team to arrange a meeting with the players with the aim of allowing each member to express himself freely.

**Relaxation and energising techniques**

These enable the adjustment of the level of intensity:

- Relaxation:
  - reduces the intensity level
  - enables physical and mental recovery
  - conducive to calm, visualisation, attention
- Energising:
  - raises the intensity level
  - is very useful in training

Self-regulating training, relaxation therapy and yoga are well recognised relaxation methods in high-level sport and are recommended for individuals.

**To conclude**

The development and improvement of mental attitudes can begin at the age of basic training. By setting the players rules and instructions in training, we can boost the development of the mental aspect. Mental issues are often personal, which is why progress can only be made through specific individual work over the long term.

Education through football and development of mental strength, on and off the pitch, are not automatic, and the instructor must be aware that neither one nor the other comes from just a few theory or training sessions. Just as with tactical awareness and technical and physical preparation for high-level competition, mental attitudes and personality aspects must also be an integral part of the planning, organisation and progress of training over the years, prominently integrated, meaning as part of training

on the pitch, but also through specific work. An instructor must be ready to consciously support the development of youngsters in real situations and to stick, in the activities, to his projected targets and values, as well as take responsibility. Here, the instructor must be an educator and behave accordingly. During the various phases of training, education must be given its place, especially in basic training, but the development of mental strength takes place more in intermediate and advanced training.



## Mental training: exercises for improving mental attitudes

### 1. Technical and concentration exercise

#### Organisation:

- Groups of 2 players
- 2 balls per pair
- Station-based training

#### Procedure:

- 2 players facing one another: passing back and forth
- The balls must not touch:
  - passing along the ground
  - one ball on the ground, one ball in the air
  - increase the distance
  - with or without controlling
  - sideways movement, etc.

#### Variation:

- Player B mirrors player A, using the same points of contact.
- Set a time to spend without making any technical errors (e.g. 1').



### 2. Technical and concentration exercise

#### Organisation:

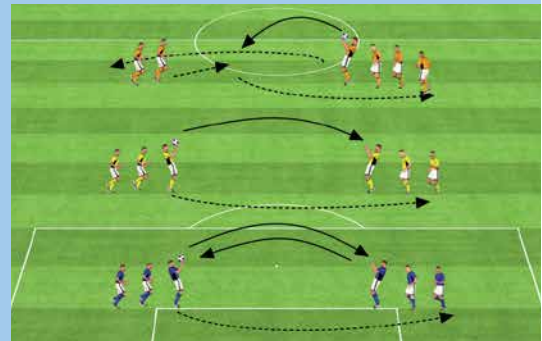
- 3 groups of 6 players, arranged in lines
- 1 ball per group

#### Procedure:

- 2 groups of players from the same team stand face to face
- Passing from the front of one group to the front of the other
- After completing a pass, join the opposite group

#### Variation:

- The first team to reach 60 passes. Complete the greatest number of passes in 1'.
- Also first-time or two-touch volleyed passes.



### 3. Technical, concentration and game awareness exercise

#### Organisation:

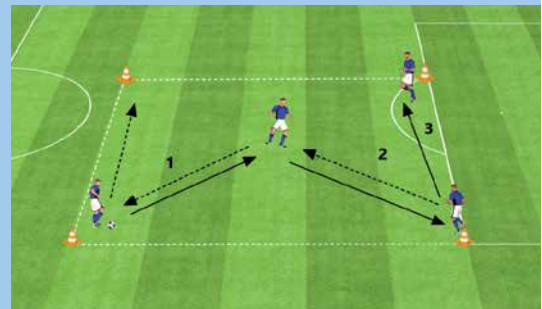
- Groups of 4 players
- Area marked out with cones or poles.
- 1 ball per group/station-based training.

#### Procedure:

- Pass the ball to a team-mate, then run to a free position.
- Variation of speed
- Variation of the amount of space
- Free play, then two-touch, then one-touch

#### Variation:

- Within the same setup, keep the ball in a 3-on-1 situation, with 1 or 2 touches mandatory.



### 4. Technical exercise for maintaining concentration

#### Organisation:

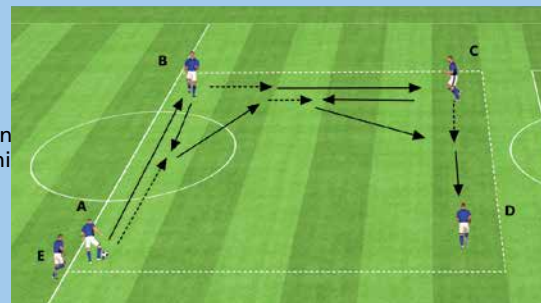
- Groups of 5 players; area marked out.
- 1 ball per group/station-based training.

#### Procedure:

- In a square formation, pass and follow-up with one-twos.
- A passes to B who passes back to A; A then passes the ball B while running.
- B passes to C who passes back to B; B then passes the ball C while running.
- etc.
- Always keep the ball on the ground (1 and 2 touches).
- Increase the speed of passing.
- Change the direction of passing.

#### Variation:

- Timed exercise of 1', trying not to make any errors.
- If a player makes a technical error, the group must run two laps of the pitch at a fast pace.



## Mental training: training game scenarios for improving mental attitudes

### 1. Game scenario in front of goal during fatigue, adaptation

#### Organisation:

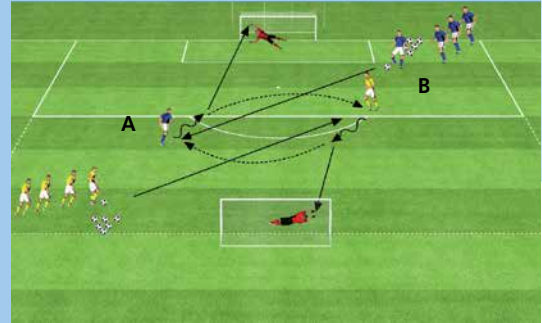
- A group of 10 to 12 players + 2 goalkeepers; area marked with 2 large goals 30-35m apart.
- Plenty of balls.

#### Procedure:

- Player A receives the ball from B, controls it and shoots at goal.
- He then turns towards the opposite goal, controls a second ball and shoots at goal.
- 4 balls per player. Count the number of goals scored by each player.

#### Variants:

- Introduction of an additional attacker and a defender.
- The additional players (attackers or defenders) each have a number and are called by the coach.
- Increase the number of repetitions (according to the aim).



### 2. Game scenario for improving confidence (keeping possession)

#### Organisation:

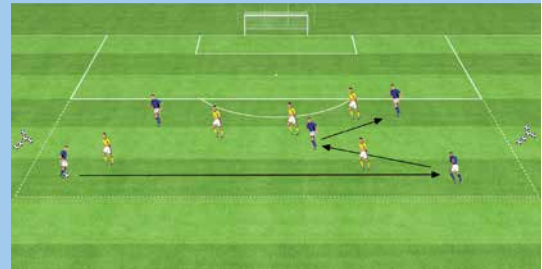
- 2 teams of 5 (or 6 players); area marked out.
- Possible warm-up exercise before a match.

#### Procedure:

- 5v5 game.
- Keep possession in a restricted space without any opposition (let the opponent play).
- Increase opposition (semi-active and active).
- Vary the number of touches.
- After 1'-2', the ball is played by the other side.

#### Variants:

- Technical instructions (e.g. 2 touches mandatory).
- Also, passing the ball by heading.



### 3. Game scenario for concentration under pressure (avoid technical errors)

#### Organisation:

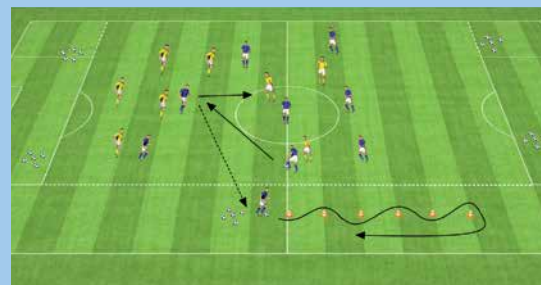
- 2 teams of 8 (or 9 players).
- 8v8 game without goalkeepers (or goalkeepers involved in the game).
- Possession play.

#### Procedure:

- Free play or with limited touches for possession play.
- The player who makes a serious technical error has to leave the pitch. He has to perform a running technical exercise (slalom with the ball) or run a lap of the pitch. During this time, his team has to play with one less player and with precise instructions (pressing, harrying)

#### Variants:

- The coach removes any player who makes a technical error.
- Teams can use a floating player. Count the number of technical errors.



### 4. Game scenario for aggressiveness, self-control and self-confidence

#### Organisation:

- 1 blue team with 11 players and 1 yellow team with 7 or 8 players + a goalkeeper.
- Regular or small-sided pitch; playing with fewer players, 7v11 or 8v11.

#### Procedure:

- Regular game (match spirit). Maintain a score of 1-0 for 5' for the team defending with fewer players – Equalise and win the match for the team with more players. – The coach plays the ball back into play to avoid any stoppages in play.

#### Variants:

- Lose a player whenever a goal is conceded.
- The goalkeeper of the team that has to make a comeback joins as an attacker when his team takes a corner.
- Play takes place only in the half of the defending team.





# 8

## Training games

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## 8 – TRAINING GAMES

Training games help to make training more appealing, more fun, more dynamic and more intense. During training sessions organised around games, the motivation of the players is higher and the mentality required for competition is strengthened. Training by playing is possible, but it requires strong footballing ability and understanding on the part of the coach. Training games constitute a broad range of training situations, providing the instructor with the main necessary elements of the objectives that he sets himself for his team.

They can respond to different objectives and consider, for example:

- the capacities of the players
- their aspirations
- different psychological aspects: motivation, mood, recovery, etc.
- technical, athletic or tactical qualities or faults
- training objectives
- available facilities

## The benefits of small-sided games

They are lively:

- The replacement/substitution of players helps to maintain the pace
- The players often get time on the ball in front of goal
- There is an unlimited range of possible scenarios

**Youngsters enjoy training games, which contain all of the technical, tactical and athletic aspects necessary for learning in football.**

Games that correspond to the demands of modern football, namely:

- Players close together
- Little space
- Speed
- Little time
- Frequent one-on-one situations
- Pressure.

### Topic, emphasis and supporting activity

Taking different factors into consideration, the instructor can organise training according to objectives set through:

- the chosen topic
- the emphasis
- the supporting activity

The key thing for the coach is to concentrate on the set objectives, i.e. the emphasis of the session, and not try to work on everything at the same time.

#### Example:

Topic:	4v4 game with small goals and a small-sided pitch
Tactical emphasis:	Retaining possession and passing the ball as a group
Supporting athletic activity:	Aerobic

**However, in the same way, the coach can also organise his training session as follows:**

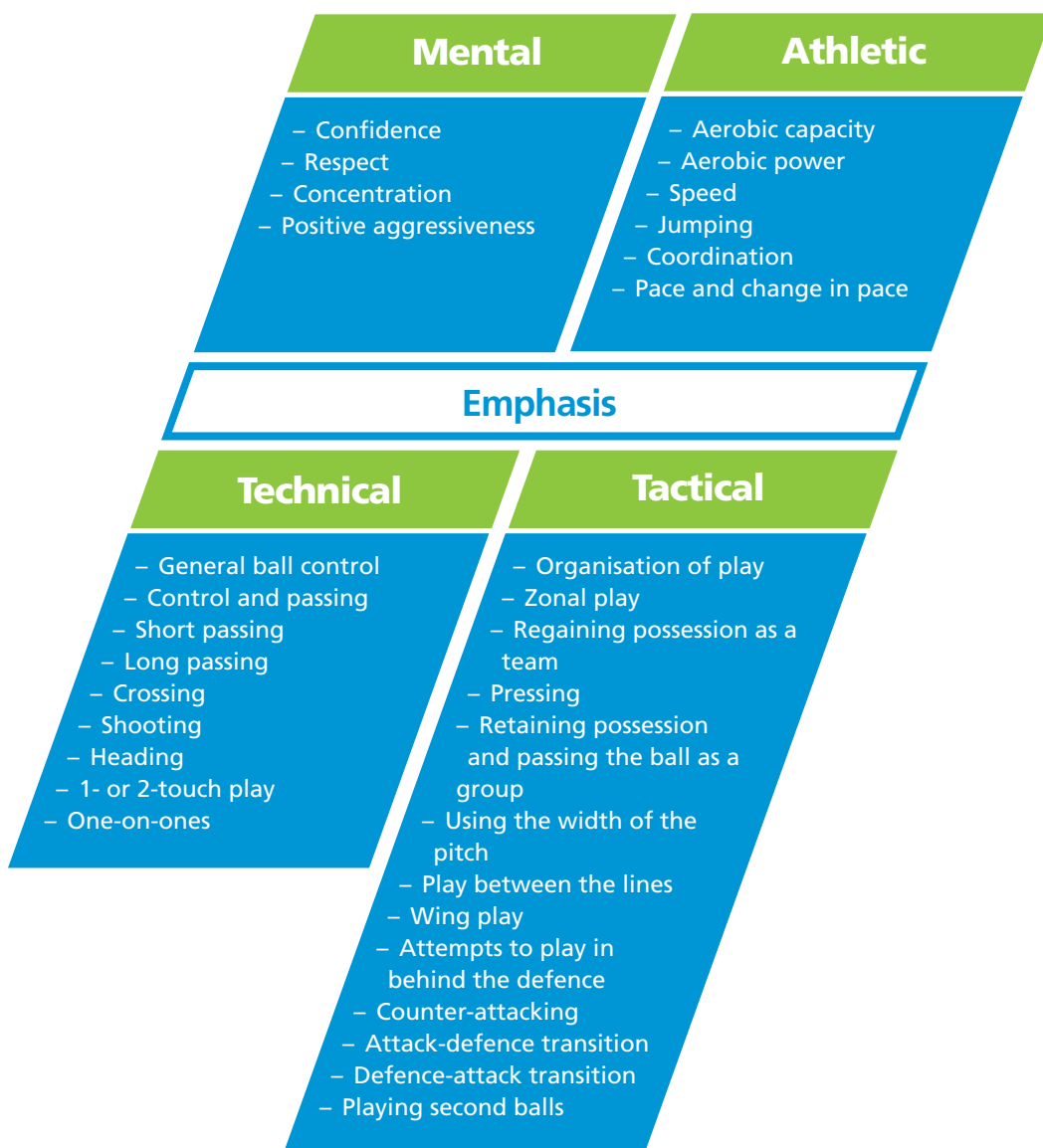
Topic:	4v4 game with small goals and a small-sided pitch with players supporting up front
Athletic emphasis:	Aerobic power (2' work, 2' active recovery)
Technical-tactical supporting activity:	Retaining possession and passing the ball as a group

*Everything can be trained through and in the game.*

### Comments

Practice games with goals (large or small) improve the motivation of the players because they are similar to competitive games. It is possible to distinguish between several types of game:

- Free play (freedom of expression, spontaneity, creativity)
- Guided play (breaks in play to go over and correct mistakes)
- Games by topic (use of a topic related to mistakes that have been observed during matches)



## Examples of training games

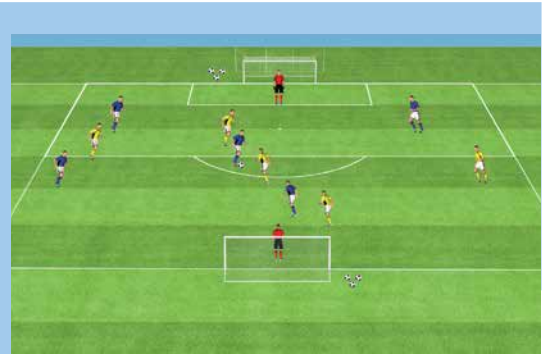
### Game 1

**Description:**

- 5v5 + 1 goalkeeper, or 6v6 + 1 goalkeeper
- Pitch: double the size of the penalty area
- Ball source: near the goals

**Technical objective:** shooting

**Instructions:** shoot after controlling or first time



### Game 2

**Description:**

- 7v7, or 8v8 + 1 goalkeeper
- Pitch: the width of the pitch and part of the length (1 goal on the 16.5-metre line)

**Technical objective:** fast transition from defensive zone to attacking zone

**Instructions:**

- Each team plays with 1 goalkeeper, 3 defenders, 2 or 3 midfielders and 2 attackers.

Players may not leave their zone, unless:

- a defender passes to a midfielder
- a midfielder passes to an attacker. In this case, the passing player can move into the zone into which he has played the ball and create a numerical advantage (3 against 2)



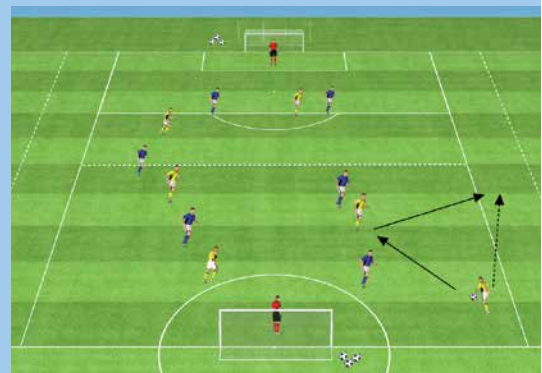
### Game 3

**Description:**

- 6v6 + 1 goalkeeper
- Half the length of a full pitch
- 2 wide channels

**Technical objective:** to improve crosses

**Instructions:** the two teams both have two wide channels that are protected and allow a player to cross without being challenged. Players may not enter these channels with the ball at their feet, or simply wait there for the ball. They must enter these channels to demand the ball (run) and to receive it while running.



### Game 4

**Description:**

- The players in the same team play with each other as well as with the support players wearing the same colour.
- Duration of the game: 3'
- Duration of recovery: 3'
- Type of recovery: active (jogging or skipping)
- Repetitions: 4
- The support players are resting
- 4 periods

**Athletic objective:** aerobic power

**Instructions:**

- 18 players
- Length of the pitch: double the size of the penalty area (33m)
- Width of the pitch: length of the penalty area
- 4v4 + goalkeepers + support players in each channel and at the side of each goal.
- Spare balls around the pitch and in the goals



## Game 5

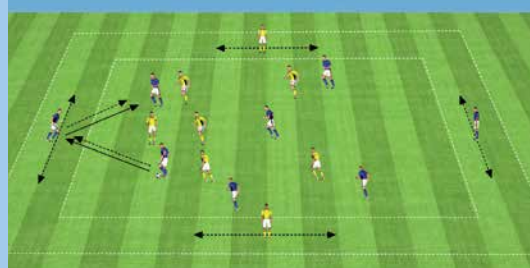
**Description:** 2 teams of 8 players attempt to retain possession and complete 10 passes to score 1 point. The support players are placed on different wings and come into play each time they touch the ball. Another player in that team then comes into the support zone. One team plays across the width of the pitch and the other plays along the length. Swap direction of play regularly.

**Athletic objective:** aerobic capacity

- Movement into space and control on the turn to escape difficult situations, eliminate an opponent with the first touch or protect the ball

**Instructions:**

- Topic: keeping possession
- Form: practice game
- Goals: to improve team play in short play and on the ground under pressure
- The player will be able to adapt his choices depending on the stress created by the game conditions



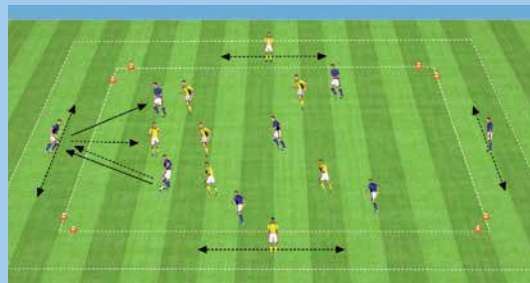
## Game 6

**Topic:** keeping possession and play in small spaces

**Description:** 2 teams of 7 players. The team in possession of the ball attempts to score in the goals in the corners (small spaces). For a goal to be scored, the ball must be played back and forth, but not necessarily between the same two players. As soon as 3 new passes have been completed, it is possible to score again in the same goal or in another goal.

**Objective:** to improve possession and play in small spaces, be able to adapt choices to the zones and instructions, and provide solutions adapted to zones.

**Variant:** it is possible to add a third team to play 2 teams against 1, or add floating players to create a numerical advantage.



## Game 7

**Topic:** playing between the lines (at the right moment)

**Description:** 2 teams of 3 players spread out around an oblong (size adapted according to the quality of the players). The players stay close to the line and pass the ball squarely with 1 or 2 touches of the ball. They attempt to pass the ball in between the lines for the floating player who is inside the area. By communicating, the floating player decides the direction of the game (one-two, or receiving the ball and playing the other way). The floating player attempts to play with 1 or 2 touches of the ball and listens to information to choose his position and make a decision. The defenders attempt to regain possession but are not allowed to individually mark the floating player.

**Objectives:** improve control of the game

**Methodology:** strive for quality by working in short periods.

Regularly change the floating player and defenders (team rotation)



## Game 8

**Topic:** attacking with a numerical advantage

**Description:** the team with the ball attacks in a 5v3 situation.

The defending team loses 2 players, who leave the pitch.

Upon regaining possession or at the end of the action, the 2 players who had left the team playing with 3 return to the pitch and it is the turn of the other team to lose 2 players.

**Objective:** tactical work



## Game 9

**Topic:** 5v5 across 3 zones, with 2 floating players

**Description:** the pitch is divided into 3 zones with 2 channels. Players play in the zones marked on the adjacent diagram. In an attacking move, only one player can move between the zones to provide support to the striker. The support players play with their team along the whole length of the pitch and have to respect the specified number of touches of the ball.

**Objective:** tactical work

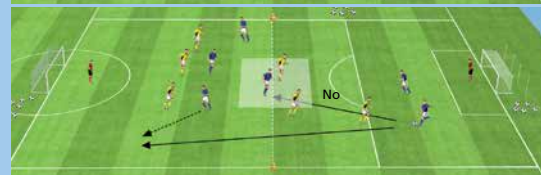
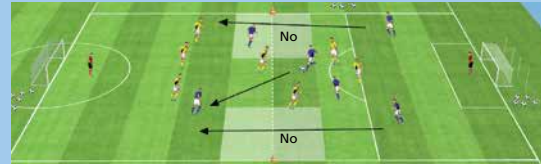


## Game 10

**Topic:** forbidden zones

**Description:** the players may move within the highlighted zones but the ball cannot enter these zones. In a second period, passes over the highlighted zones can be allowed. This game helps to force the players to play across the centre and down the wings, and then switch play or pass the ball into space.

**Objective:** tactical work



## Game 11

**Topic:** 7v7 + 2 goalkeepers + 3 floating players

**Description:** of the 3 floating players, 2 are involved in a move. The third regains possession. The game therefore creates situations of 9v7. The floating players change sides only when the ball comes into the possession of the defending team.

**Objective:** tactical work



## Game 12

**Topic:** game of 8v8 or 6v6 with goalkeepers

**Organisation:**

- 2 teams of 8 players
- Area marked out (with cones, markers, etc.)
- 2 neutral goalkeepers play behind the line

**Procedure:**

- Retain possession and occupy the pitch
- 3-touch (maximum) play
- To score 1 point, a team must complete 5 passes and one aerial pass into the hands of the goalkeeper in the opposite half of the pitch

**Variants:**

- 2-touch play, the same but with 2 goals
- After 5 passes, players are allowed to score in either of the two goals



## Game 13

**Game of 4v4 or 8v8 + 2 floating players**

**Organisation:**

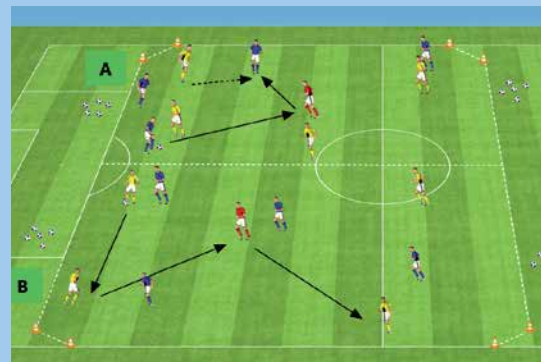
- 2 teams of 8 players + 2 neutral floating players (goalkeepers)
- Pitch divided into 2 zones (A + B) with 4 mini-goals in the corners

**Procedure:**

- Game of 4v4 in each zone (1 or 2 touches of the ball). The neutral floating player can only play with 1 touch
- A team scores 1 point every time it completes 6 consecutive passes (not including the passes from the floating player)
- Then play 8v8 using the whole area; the neutral floating players each stay in one zone
- 1 point after 10 passes

**Variants:**

- Play with mini-goals
- After 6 passes, a goal may be scored in one of the 4 mini-goals
- Each team defends 2 goals and attacks the other 2



## Game 14

### Game of 4v4 or 3v3 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

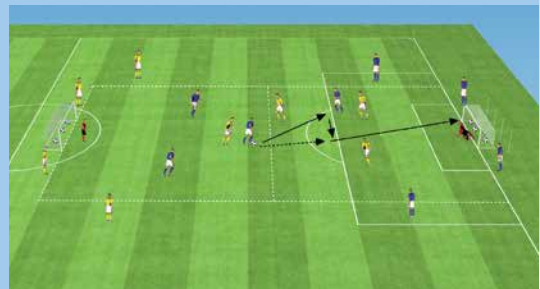
- 2 teams of 4 players + 2 goalkeepers; 4 support players per team
- Marked-out area
- 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play
- The support players have 1 touch (or 2) and may not play the ball to each other
- Players switch

#### Variants:

- Goal after first-time shot in attacking zone
- Goal after first-time shot on receiving lay-off
- Goal from shot within own half



## Game 15

### Game of 5v5 or 6v6 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

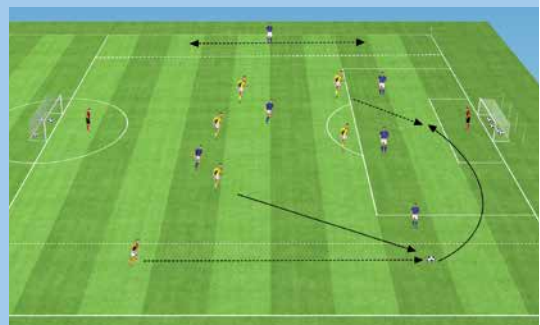
- 2 teams of 5 + 2 neutral support players (orange) and 2 goalkeepers
- Area marked out + 2 neutral channel zones + 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play, try to score from a cross
- Goals from a cross (2 points); from a cross and direct follow-up (3 points); normal goal (1 point)
- Players must make 4 passes before crossing

#### Variants:

- 5v5 with maximum of 3 touches
- No fixed support players. Play on the wings by calling for the ball



## Game 16

### Game of 4v4 or 5v5 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- 2 teams of 5 players + 2 goalkeepers
- The pitch is divided into 3 zones
- 2 goals

#### Procedure:

- Free play in the central zone
- Attempt to break through the opposing defensive line with the ball at feet in order to score a goal
- 1 point awarded for breaking through the line; 2 points for scoring a goal
- 1 point awarded to the goalkeeper for saving a shot

#### Variants:

- A defender can follow the attacker into the scoring zone when the attacker is taking on the goalkeeper



## Game 17

### Game of 7v7 + goalkeepers

#### Organisation:

- The pitch is divided into 3 zones
- 2v2 and 3v3 in the zones

#### Procedure:

- The game starts with the goalkeeper, who plays the ball to the middle of the pitch
- Game of 2v2
- The blue team tries to play with a blue attacker who tries to lose his marker
- If he succeeds, a midfielder can advance into the attacking zone (3v3)

#### Variants:

- Two midfielders can advance into the attacking zone
- One or two defenders can advance into the middle zone



## Game 18

Game of 3v3v3 (4v4v4) + 2 goalkeepers

### Organisation:

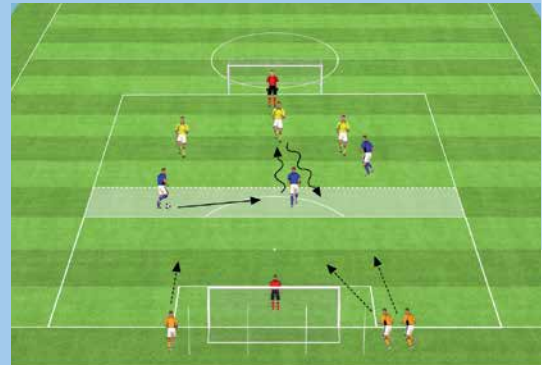
- 3 teams of 3 (or 4) players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked-out area
- 2 large goals

### Procedure:

- The blue team tries to score. If they lose the ball, the yellow team attacks the other goal defended by the orange team. The blue team leaves the game. The team that scores a goal keeps the ball and stays in the game to attack the other goal
- Free play

### Variant:

- If the attackers lose the ball in the attacking zone, they can try to regain possession by pressing and marking



## Game 19

Game of 5v5 or 6v6 + goalkeepers

### Organisation:

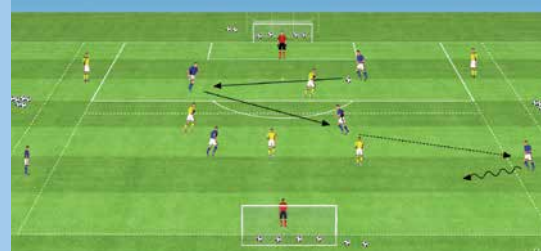
- 2 teams of 6 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked-out area + 2 large goals

### Procedure:

- Free play. 4v4 + 2 support players per team on the wings
- When a support player receives the ball, he may take two touches or dribble with the ball
- The player who passed to the support player takes his place

### Variant:

- Limited number of touches of the ball in the game
- Goal scored from a cross from a support player = 2 points



## Game 20

Game of 3v3v3: finishing

### Organisation:

- 3 teams of 3 players (3 different colours) + 3 goalkeepers
- Marked-out playing area
- 3 large goals (also possible with poles)
- 1 ball in play

### Procedure:

- Each team plays against the two other teams
- Players try to score in the goals of the two other teams
- Free play
- Make the right choice

### Variant:

- Play without a goalkeeper
- One floating player playing with all 3 teams
- Vary the size of the playing area and the number of players per team



## Game 21

Game of 4v4: maximum aerobic power

### Organisation:

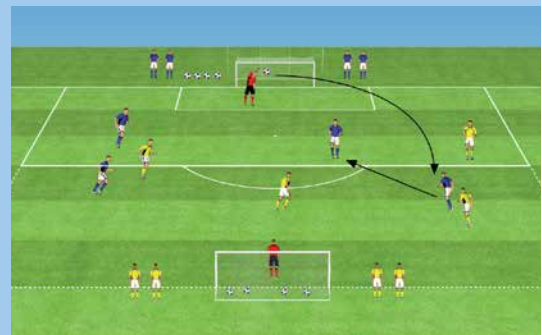
- 2 teams of 8 players + 2 goalkeepers
- Marked-out area + 2 large goals
- Balls provided by the goalkeepers
- Duration: 15' to 20'
- Periods: 4 or 5 periods of 3' or 4'
- Break: 3' or 4'
- Intensity level: HR 170 to 190

### Procedure:

- Game of 4v4; the goalkeepers can only play with 1 touch of the ball
- When the ball leaves the pitch, including for a corner, the goalkeeper of the team that had possession of the ball quickly puts the ball back into play – After each period (3' or 4'), the coach changes the players

### Variant:

- Game of 4v4 with support players for each team (playing with 1 touch)





# 9

## The goalkeeper

**187** The young goalkeeper (6 to 12 years old)  
– introductory phase

**188** The young goalkeeper (13 to 15 years old)  
– basic training

**202** The young goalkeeper (16 to 18 years old)  
– intermediate training





## 9 – THE GOALKEEPER

Individualising training by level and position is becoming increasingly important for all young players, and training goalkeepers requires more effort than for other positions. Recent major championships have demonstrated the vital importance of the goalkeeper and how his role has changed over the past 20 years. Controlling the penalty area is no longer enough: understanding and communicating with the other players, being able to use both feet, being in the right position behind the defence and releasing the ball immediately have all become indispensable. While the goalkeeper may join the rest of the team in training to experience match situations, specific training sessions need to be organised around his particular tasks. The key factors that goalkeepers need to focus on over the course of their career are acquiring specific techniques, tactical work, physical preparation and developing personality traits such as self-confidence, character and determination. Football needs goalkeepers who have strong personalities and are leaders.

This role is not fully recognised as far as their development and training is concerned, which is why goalkeepers need to be prepared from as young an age as possible.

Although different working conditions and approaches with regard to goalkeeping technique exist in every country, a young goalkeeper's development can nevertheless be broken down into three stages:

- **6 to 12 years old (introductory phase):**  
learning basic technique  
(acquiring and perfecting the necessary movements)
- **13 to 15 years old (basic training):**  
perfecting the acquired technique
- **16 to 18 years old (intermediate training):**  
preparing for high-level competition  
(constant strengthening of acquired technique)

This chapter provides a guide for developing specific programmes in member associations.

## Introductory phase for young goalkeepers

### 6 to 12 years old

These days, a new approach is needed for starting a young goalkeeper's training. The sooner he learns the basics, the better he will be able to develop them while training with the team. Getting the introductory phase right from the start will enable the player to avoid bad habits, which are difficult to eliminate later. However, goalkeeper training must not be carried out to the detriment of training with the team. Young goalkeepers should develop in the same way as outfield players, as controlling the ball with the feet is as important as controlling it with the hands in today's game.

The goalkeeper is an integral part of the team, which is why the coach has to find the time to instruct him on goalkeeping movements outside of team sessions. It is vital to adapt the content and methodology. Even today, many coaches still use the same exercises for beginners, teenagers and adults. During this introductory phase, it is not necessary to spend time on physical preparation: technical preparation is the sole focus here (acquiring goalkeeping skills). Young goalkeepers acquire their physical qualities naturally through their physical activities: they simply need to be allowed time to develop their technique and coordination skills.

There are two distinct phases of working with beginner goalkeepers:

#### – Acquiring movement techniques

Acquiring movement techniques is carried out in a series of interconnected stages. All movements are of equal importance to the goalkeeper, although each takes a different amount of time to learn. A "stage" in this context is defined by a variable period, during which a specific goalkeeping movement is the main focus of the session.

Why proceed in this way?

- Breaking it down in this way enables young goalkeepers to understand the movement in question and they are not bombarded with information on different subjects

- Focusing on one movement enables it to be repeated ad infinitum

#### Stages:

##### – Stage 1:

Basic positioning, ball control, moving with and without the ball and standing saves (catching the ball from the front, in the midriff, with bent knees, from crosses)

##### – Stage 2:

Dives (low shots, ball arriving at mid-height, bouncing ball)

##### – Stage 3:

Footwork and initial release of the ball together with stages 1 and 2

#### – Perfecting movement techniques

Goalkeepers continue to perfect movement techniques until they hang up their gloves: only the difficulty of the exercises changes. Provided young goalkeepers are ready to tackle complex exercises, they will continue to develop. As well as improving their motor skills, the aim of including small activities (hoops, small hurdles, cones) in these exercises is to put the goalkeeper in difficult situations before he can carry out his specific movement to stop or parry the ball. If the goalkeeper has acquired the basics well, it is possible to create a variety of exercises based on the same basic movements.



Three-part exercises



Release



Movement



Dive

## The young goalkeeper in basic training

### 13 to 15 years old

In the majority of countries, children start to play 11-a-side football on full-sized pitches between the ages of 13 and 15. In this age group, goalkeepers will already have acquired a solid base on which to build. Training becomes gradually

more difficult, involving more complex interventions, and the young goalkeeper makes progress in every area with a corresponding increase in the training load. So what do we need to work on?

#### Technical and technical-tactical preparation

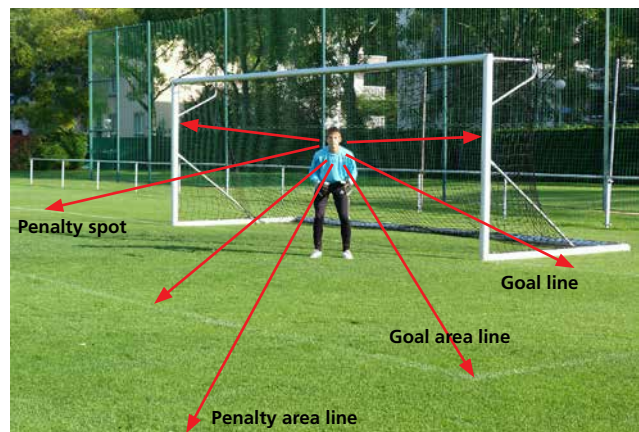
Goalkeepers continue to improve the movements that they acquired in the previous phase by taking on increasingly complicated exercises. At the same time, they learn new movements for

their transition to playing on full-sized pitches. At all times, the quality of work is paramount.

#### Goalkeeper's positioning in the large goal, reading the ball's trajectory, managing space, controlling the penalty area



Orientation vis-à-vis the ball, lines, penalty spot, opposite goal, etc.



It is vital to ensure that the goalkeeper does not stand on the line but in front of it, so that he can narrow the angle. He must cover the two sides of the goal without giving the opponent an opportunity to lob him.

#### Reading the trajectory, managing space

When the ball is in the opposition's half, the goalkeeper's role changes as he is responsible for the space that has opened up between him and his defence (managing the depth). His positioning in the penalty area depends on where the ball

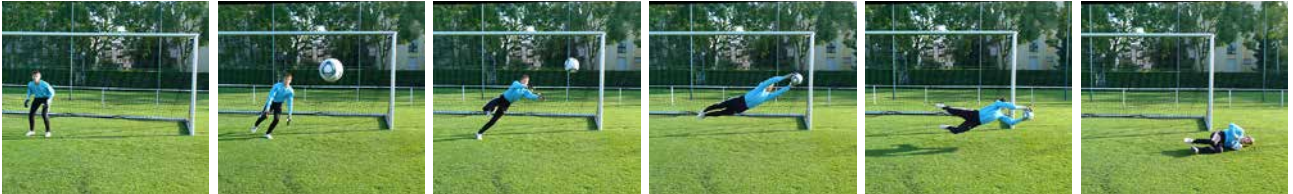
is. To have the most possible opportunities to intercept the ball in this space, he must be in a position where he is ready to set off and sprint.

## Diving for a high ball

The goalkeeper has learnt how to dive for low shots, balls arriving at mid-height and those that are bouncing – dives that we can continue to improve during warm-up with balls that are thrown at him. In the main

part of this training, he has to deal with shots from various distances, angles and trajectories in succession. As he goes along, the goalkeeper must learn how to dive for high balls and lobs.

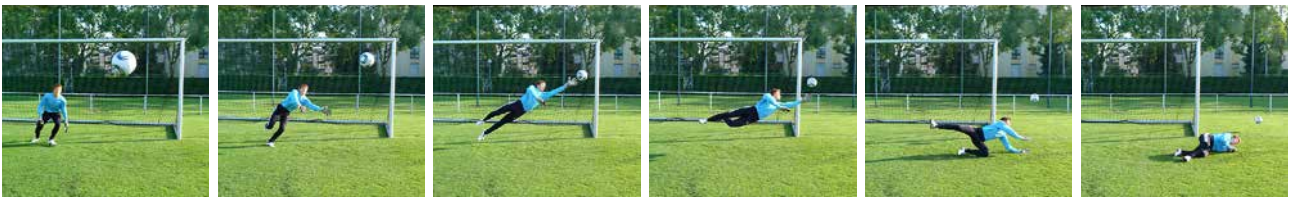
### Catching the ball



### Pushing the ball aside with the opposite hand



### Pushing the ball aside with the "natural" hand



### Tipping over lobs



During the introductory phase, the goalkeeper's safety is paramount. It is better to dive in the middle of the goal than to dive at the side, where the post could create additional fear in the goalkeeper's mind. It is also important to pay attention to inadequately secured nets and to the stanchion.



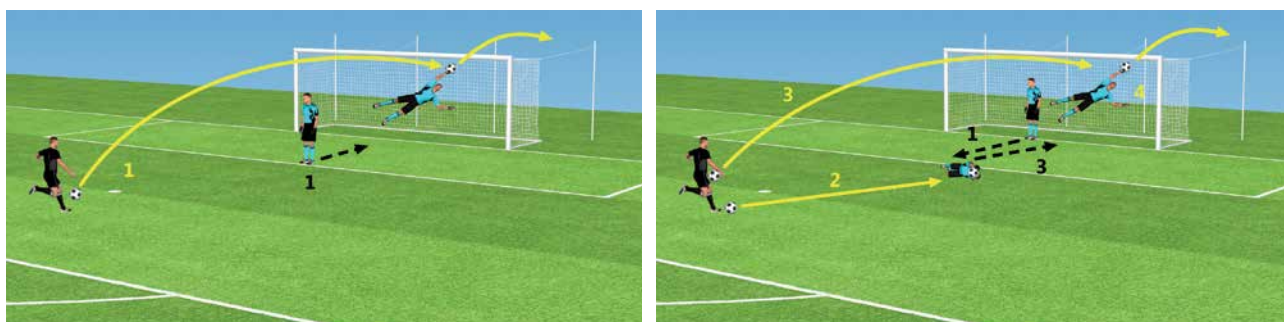
Training example (diving for a lob):

1. breaking down this complex movement into several basic movements
2. learning part-movements (A, B... F)
3. putting the movements back together and working on the complete save

**Moving, diving, complete save**



**Working through the exercise**



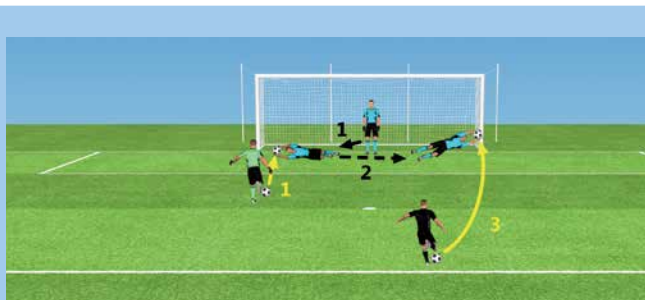
**Diving exercises**

**Exercise 1**

1. Dive (low shot)
2. Movement
3. Dive (mid-height)

Change of goalkeeper

4 balls from each side

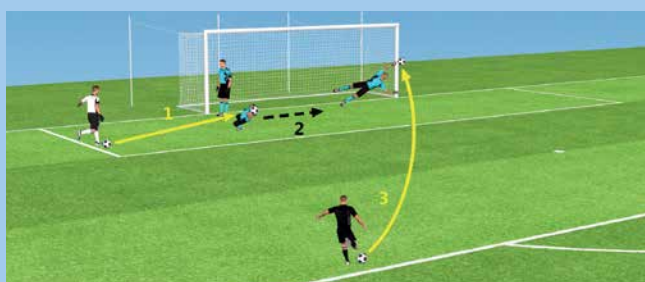


**Exercise 2**

1. Dive (mid-height)
2. Movement
3. Dive (high ball)

Change of goalkeeper

4 balls from each side



### One-on-one

The goalkeeper's ability to make the right decision enables him to know when to come out and when to stay where he is, when to dive at the attacker's feet or when to wait and get the ball another way. There are four steps involved in such situations: analysing the situation, making the decision, sprinting and making the appropriate movement.

The goalkeeper must deal with these situations:

- in the penalty area
  - intervene without diving
  - intervene by diving at feet (dribble or shot by opponent: if the opponent is dribbling with the ball, the goalkeeper must be stationary)
- outside the penalty area (advanced positioning and anticipation enables the situation to be dealt with effectively)



Starting position



When the opponent dribbles, the goalkeeper must be stationary

#### Diving at the feet by sliding to the ground



#### Diving at the feet by jumping towards the ball



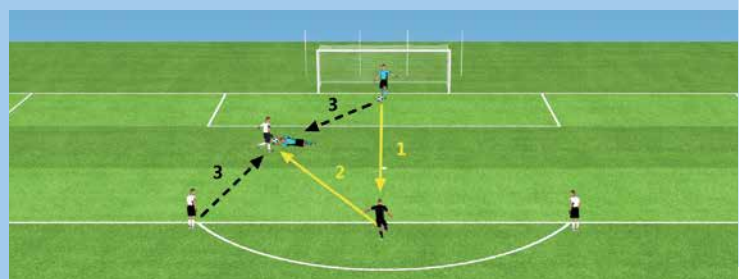
### One-on-one exercises

#### Exercise 1

1. Pass along the ground
2. Pass left or right
3. One-on-one

Change of goalkeeper

6 balls per goalkeeper

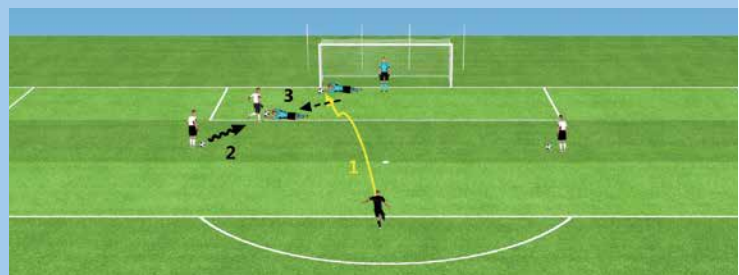


#### Exercise 2

1. Shot parried by the goalkeeper
2. The striker deliberately kicks the ball too far
3. One-on-one

Walk back to starting positions

3 balls and change of goalkeeper



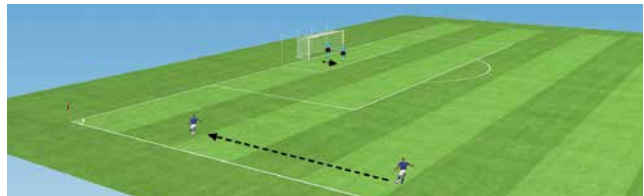
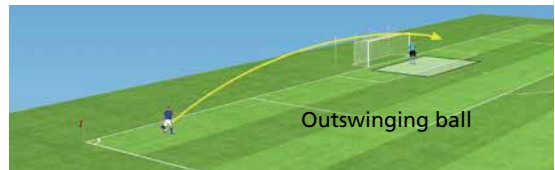
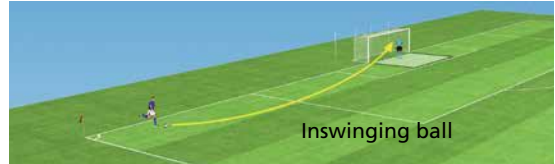


**Aerial balls**

Moving up to playing on full-sized pitches calls for regular work on aerial balls (orientation in the penalty area using the lines).

**Positioning of goalkeeper**

For aerial balls, the position of the body and feet is crucial. The body must be upright and allow the goalkeeper to see the ball and as much of the pitch as possible. The feet should be open with one foot slightly in front of the other to enable movement forwards or backwards if necessary.



The goalkeeper's movement is dictated by that of the striker.

- The closer the crosser is to the goal, the closer the goalkeeper must be to the near post;
- The further away the crosser is to the goal, the more the goalkeeper must move towards the crosser without running the risk of being lobbed.

**The goalkeeper's intervention:**

**1. The goalkeeper's movement towards the ball**



1. Sprint – ball going towards near post
2. Sideways steps or cross-steps
3. Three-quarter movement (in the form of sideways steps or cross-steps) – ball to the far post

Every goalkeeper has a stronger foot for pushing off with than the other. This difference can be eliminated provided work

on the imbalance is started early enough, thus enabling the goalkeeper to use both feet in the same way later on.

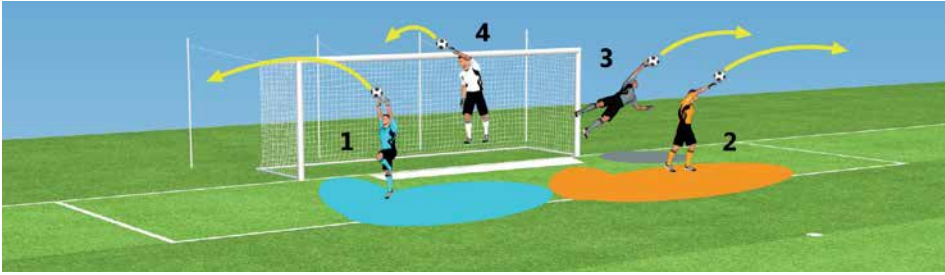
**2a. Saves**

**Catching the ball**



## 2b. Saves

### Parrying or punching the ball



1. Clearing with two fists
2. Clearing with one fist
3. Turning the ball aside with one hand
4. Tipping the ball over the goal

#### Clearing with two fists



#### Clearing with one fist



These movements must be learnt gradually, taking into account technique and coordination aspects. We start without the ball (just the movement), then with a ball held by the coach, and finally with a ball thrown by the coach. Using this method, the coach has a better control over the ball, unlike when he kicks the ball or fails to release it with 100% accuracy, which

tends to reduce the number of possible repetitions during the session. The coach crosses the ball with his foot as soon as he senses that the goalkeeper has mastered the movement, thus lowering the risk of needless injuries.

## Crossing exercises

### Exercise 1

1. Aerial ball (caught or punched)

Walk back to starting positions

6 balls from each side



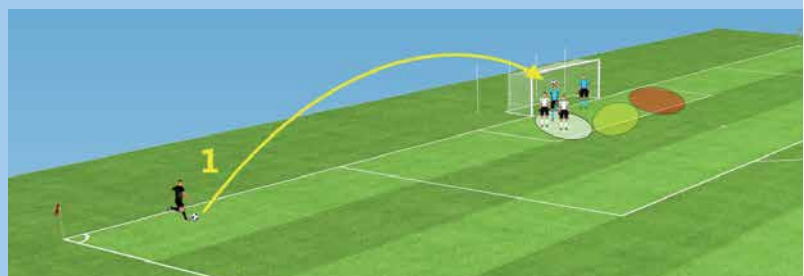
### Exercise 2

1. Aerial ball with opponents

4 balls and change of goalkeeper

Repeat on the other side

Change of zone



### Releasing the ball

The goalkeeper has already learned how to clear the ball in his own way. As the first line of attack, his role calls for perfect distribution of the ball. In this respect, playing on a full-sized pitch opens up a whole range of options for him. Although the distance travelled by the ball is

important, accuracy remains the key. The goalkeeper must be trained to use both feet to prepare him for different situations during a match. He must be familiar with every method of clearance (including volleying) and find the one that suits him best.

### Clearances with the foot

On the ground



Volley



Half-volley



### Release with the hand

During a match, goalkeepers mainly use their stronger hand, but it is advisable to

work on both hands in training so as to improve their motor coordination.

### Overhead throw



### Quick release at hip level



### Rolling the ball



The best way to progress is to stay after training and work on releasing the ball. If there are enough balls, perform the

exercises facing up the pitch, or if not then facing the goal, using both feet.

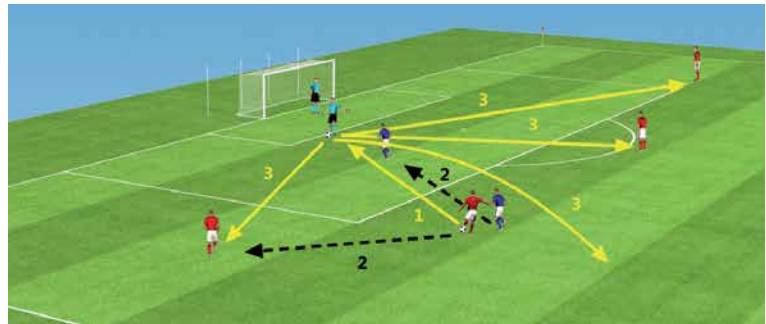
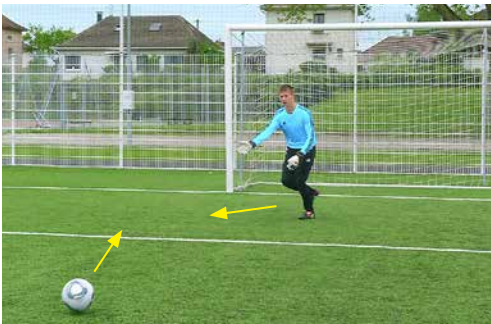


## The backpass

The goalkeeper is an integral part of the team and his team-mates are increasingly reliant on him, which is why it is important to devote sufficient time to this position and role. Exercises aimed at dealing with the backpass need to be included in specific training. It is also important to work on establishing a rapport with the other players (particularly the defenders) in group training and to create exercises that simulate real-match situations. The goalkeeper should be virtually a two-footed player and feel comfortable with every type of ball that comes his way (on the ground, in the air, bouncing).

This situation requires the goalkeeper to have an excellent understanding with his team-mates.

- **The goalkeeper must:**
  - request the ball (with his voice, a gesture or a movement)
  - choose the appropriate release
- **The player must:**
  - always place the ball where the goalkeeper requests it (and, if possible, only if he requests it)
  - offer a solution after passing the ball to the goalkeeper (particularly if the latter is being pressed by the opponent)



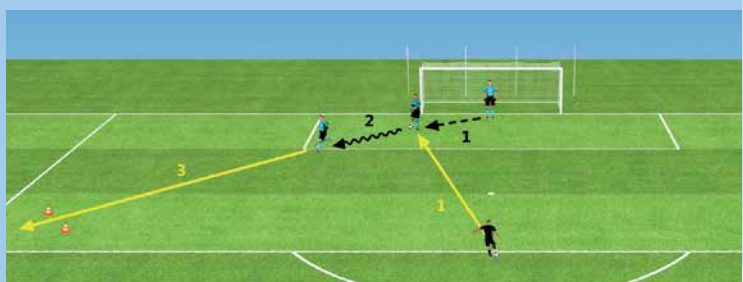
## Passback exercises

### Exercise 1

1. The goalkeeper requests the ball
2. Backpass
3. Pass along the ground

Change of goalkeeper

5 balls from each side

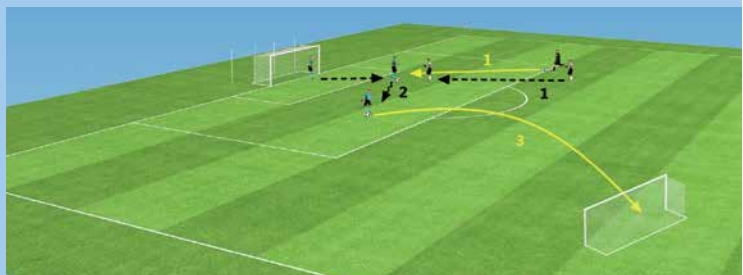


### Exercise 2

1. Backpass under pressure from an attacker
2. Directional control
3. Long pass

Change of goalkeeper

4 balls from each side



## Tactical preparation

Moving up to full-sized pitches opens up a huge area for working on the goalkeeper's tactical skills. It is essential that the goalkeeper understands his tactical role to the letter and puts it into practice on the pitch. He should therefore take part in tactical training sessions with the whole team. The goalkeeping coach can support the goalkeeper here, especially at the beginning, and correct any mistakes directly on the pitch. It is also possible to work on tactical skills in individual training from time to time, using various apparatus instead of players. In addition, watching and analysing video footage can be very useful.

The level of tactical awareness acquired by each goalkeeper influences his behaviour on the pitch, and the more rounded his comportment, the more he will be able to impose his physical and technical abilities.

This tactical awareness comprises three elements:

### **Tactical behaviour relating to his position:**

- This consists of a succession of choices that he must constantly adapt to the situation in order to perform the appropriate technique skill:
  - The goalkeeper positions himself according to the situation and makes the necessary intervention relating to the ball's trajectory, after which he can release the ball in accordance with his team-mates' positions

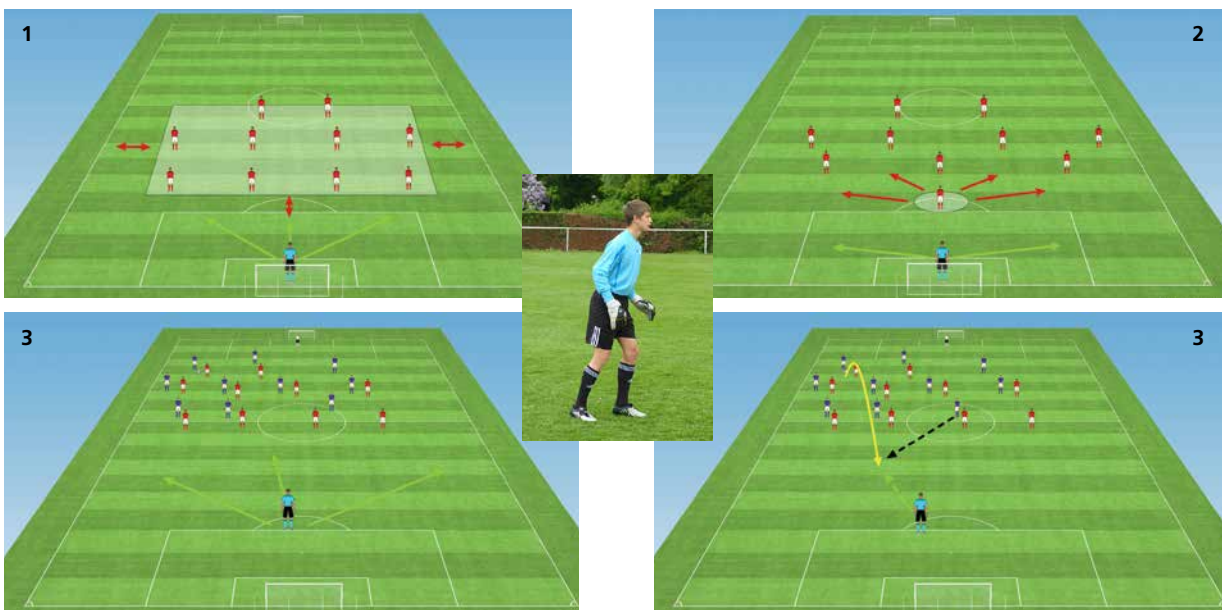
- By repeating situations in training and utilising his experience from matches, he can improve naturally, while also taking on board comments from the coach

### **Tactical behaviour with his team-mates:**

- At set pieces:
  - His behaviour will be linked to the tactical choices defined for these phases of play
  - He must know the tactical choice made (zonal/man/mixed marking) as well as where to stand and the role of each of his team-mates
  - He must know where to stand and how to intervene, as well as how and when to communicate
- For backpasses and in other situations where he has to give instructions to his team-mates

### **Tactical behaviour in a formation and in a match:**

- The choice of formation (flat back four (1), defence with a sweeper (2)) and of the tactical option (deep block (1,2) or a high block (3)) requires the goalkeeper to adapt his positioning and role accordingly.



The goalkeeping coach should attend tactical training sessions with the team to show the goalkeeper on the pitch how he should act in different situations, what to look out for and how he should communicate with his team-mates (4). For the future, it is beneficial for goalkeepers to learn to play very high up

the pitch, even if they will be exposed to certain risks (5). Doing so from as young an age as possible will enable them to adapt more easily later on to the quality of their opponent. By the same token, if they play in too deep a position, they will subsequently find it very difficult to play high up (6).



- Rapid attacks (7), gradual build-up attacks (8) and direct play (9) also require the goalkeeper to adapt his release of the ball



### Communication on the pitch

One of the goalkeeper's roles is to direct his team-mates, thanks to his position facing the play. He can anticipate and react quickly depending on the situations that develop and have an influence on play. There are two methods of communication open to him: making gestures and shouting.

#### Verbal communication

The goalkeeper responds verbally in the following situations:

- He directs his team-mates during the game and warns them when he is making interventions. Examples:
  - He warns them of the presence of opposing players who are free
  - He can shout to them: "Time!", "Man on!" or "Away!"
  - He can communicate with them during backpasses: "Back!"
  - He can shout, when coming to claim the ball: "Keeper's!" or "Leave!"

- He instructs the defence at set pieces.

Examples:

- He gives instructions and tells the defence where to stand
- He shouts, when coming to claim the ball: "Keeper's!" or "Leave!"
- If he stays where he is, he continues to direct his team-mates: "Away!" or "Out!"

The goalkeeper's verbal instructions must be short, precise and powerful. For their part, the outfield players must warn the goalkeeper if an opponent is nearby when he is moving towards the ball.

#### Communication using gestures

In certain situations, the goalkeeper has to use gestures:

- Lining up the wall at free kicks
- Indicating where he wants to receive a backpass
- Telling the defence to move out



## Physical preparation

A young goalkeeper's physical qualities are all developed naturally during specific and group training. There is thus no need to devote additional time to this area in specific training, the priority should be on technique and tactics.

### Endurance:

- Group training:
  - Running, different games, technical circuit
- Specific training:
  - By expanding the goalkeeper's range of movements, it is possible to work on linking and then putting together simple exercises in order to improve his endurance.

### Strength:

- Certain jumps are included in the various exercises (work with body weight) that are more beneficial to coordination than to muscle strengthening
- Skipping rope
- Minor strengthening of abdominals and core conditioning after training

This work is commenced gradually. Assuming the required body position, performing the exercise correctly, breathing properly – these are all skills that the goalkeeper must include.

Core conditioning consists of strengthening the muscles to stabilise the trunk, balance the pelvis and maintain the posture.

### Speed

Various exercises develop the basic factors benefiting speed:

- Running speed
- Running technique
- Maximum frequency in running and sprinting exercises (skipping and dribbling)
- Locomotion with changes of direction

To develop the capacity to react, we use fun exercises that can be adapted in any number of ways by modifying the environmental conditions:

- Varying the execution of the movement (starting seated, change of direction, etc.)
- Varying the starting signals (call, whistle, etc.)
- Varying the participants (individual play, group runs, etc.)

### Specific training:

- Unlike in the previous period, we gradually call upon the goalkeeper to perform his movements more quickly
- The more complex exercises require movements with an adapted speed
- Exercises involving a specific goalkeeper movement can be performed in front of the goal
- Coordination work is also carried out at the same time, which is also very important

Reinforcement work on:

- the anterior chain
- the lateral chain
- the posterior chain



### Coordination

During puberty (which may start in this basic training phase), changes in size and weight alter and adversely affect coordination, so the acquired skills need to be preserved. The educator or goalkeeping coach must have plenty of patience and find the right words of encouragement during this phase.

If group training does not focus sufficiently on coordination exercises, the goalkeeping coach must include them in his specific programme.

There are two general ways of learning and developing the young goalkeeper's coordination skills during specific training.

### Exercises without ball

- Working on the goalkeeper's footing using circuits with or without small items of equipment (hurdles, hoops, cones, etc.)
- Skipping rope with multiple types of use (alone, in pairs, without moving position, changing position, etc.)
- gymnastics (rolls, cartwheels, etc.)

### Exercises with the ball

- Working on ball control (warm-up)
- Circuits with small items of equipment (hurdles, hoops, cones, etc.), finishing with a specific movement (taking the ball or diving)
- At the end of the session, small exercises to improve addressing the ball and accuracy (touching the crossbar, stopping the ball on a line)



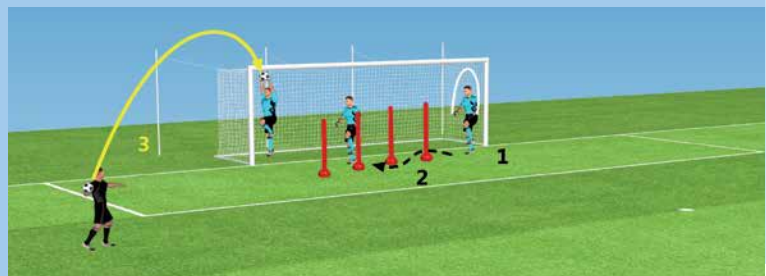
## Coordination exercises

### Exercise 1

1. Skipping rope (10 repetitions)
2. Slalom
3. Aerial balls

Change of goalkeeper

3 balls from each side

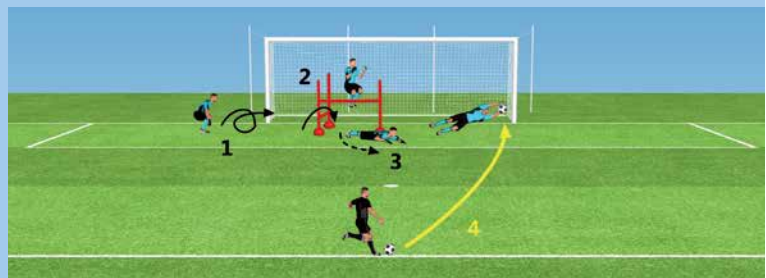


### Exercise 2

1. Roll
2. Jump
3. Dive below the hurdle
4. Dive (mid-height)

Change of goalkeeper

3 balls from each side



### Suppleness

Daily exercises provided by experienced personnel will provide good results, particularly in the period of growth, which is also a period of physiological imbalance.



## Psychological preparation

A young goalkeeper's psychological preparation is based on his relationship with the main coach and the goalkeeping coach. This period is similar to the previous one (6-12 years) in that the goalkeeper must take enjoyment from both playing and his own development. In this age group, goalkeepers can be alternated during a match and there is no need to have a permanent number one, unlike with senior players. This gives each goalkeeper an opportunity to play and avoids any frustration at a later date. Puberty arrives at different times, depending on the player,

which calls for an individual and sensitive approach by the goalkeeping coach. The young goalkeeper is searching for his identity, and the goalkeeping coach must find a way of handling problems with tact. The profound hormonal changes in an adolescent's body can also cause a temporary loss of certain physical abilities, particularly with regard to coordination and suppleness. The goalkeeping coach must not hesitate to explain these changes to the goalkeeper and encourage him in his work (cf. chapter 6).



## Planning

It is essential that the coach has a good knowledge of the goalkeeper's needs during this period to support planning. Acquiring good habits helps young goalkeepers adapt to playing on full-sized pitches. The coach can use the time to provide the goalkeeper with plenty of information both on and off the pitch by means of discussions and video analysis.

The coach has enough time during this period to work on the young goalkeeper's development, and can include new movements in the weekly programme or incorporate cycles for a specific movement. The difference between the two approaches varies according to the amount of information and above all to the number of repetitions.

### Examples of planning a week's work during basic training:

	Organisation of one week's work					
	Example 1: general organisation			Example 2: cyclical work (aerial balls)		
	Training 1	Training 2	Training 3	Training 1	Training 2	Training 3
<b>Warm-up</b>	General	General	General	Aerial balls	Aerial balls	Aerial balls and releasing
<b>Main part</b>						
Exercise 1	Diving	Diving	Diving	Aerial balls (catching)	Aerial balls (punching)	Aerial balls and releasing
Exercise 2	Diving	1v1	Aerial balls (punching)			
Exercise 3	Aerial balls (catching)	1v1	Releasing			
Exercise 4	Releasing	Reflex saves	Backpasses			
<b>Cool-down</b>						

Planning the exercises in cycles is beneficial and is the reason why it is recommended in these young player categories. These cycles should last for one or two weeks maximum, the objective being to focus on a single technique and to provide the goalkeeper with as much information as possible. He can then repeat the exercises without being pressed for time, thus preventing the session from being turned into physical work for which he is ill-suited at such a tender age. The young goalkeeper can sense his progress during warm-up and particularly in the main part. However, this does not mean that he cannot dive if he is working on aerial balls, for example. If he needs to take part in a shooting session with the rest of the team after his specific training, he must be prepared accordingly. The challenge for the coach, therefore, is to find a way of creating exercises that are

in line with the task in hand (such as aerial balls) and that also enable the goalkeeper to perform well during shots on goal.

#### Example of organising different cycles:

- Cycle 1: Taking the ball with and without diving in various situations (on the ground, bouncing, at mid-height)
- Cycle 2: Aerial balls (releases)
- Cycle 3: 1v1 (reflex saves)
- Cycle 4: Work on individual technique (footwork, backpasses, releases)

## The young goalkeeper in intermediate training

### 16 to 18 years old

At this age, the goalkeeper masters all of the techniques for his position, at least in theory. From now on right through to the end of his career, he will improve his technique at the training ground and during matches, and will gain his own experience. As he gets older and depending on the level of performance, the speed at which the game is played will increase and he will have less time to analyse situations. His opponents will be more experienced

and cunning. The physical impact of one-on-ones will also intensify. Towards the age of 17, some goalkeepers will gain their first taste of senior football and therefore need to be ready technically, tactically, physically and mentally. This gives an idea of the areas that can be worked on with young goalkeepers, in the same way that they can be worked on with adults. The transition to adult coaching will take place gradually.

### Technical and tactical preparation

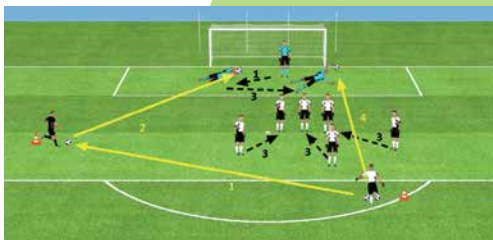
The goalkeeper is influencing his team's play more and more through his attacking and defensive decisions, and as such is a key figure when the coach decides on his tactics. He has overall responsibility for defending dead-ball scenarios and can use his communication skills to help his outfield team-mates in complex situations or to anticipate potential danger. Watching matches and attending theoretical sessions

are as important as training on the pitch. The coach will increasingly use exercises that approximate to real-match situations. During specific training, he uses other goalkeepers or items of equipment (dummies) or he can arrange for a small group of players to participate. As already mentioned, it is a good idea to choose exercises that help both the other players and the goalkeeper to progress.

### Specific training

(example of preparation for exercise)

Match situation (pass to attacker, shot, ball parried by goalkeeper, second shot and reflex save by goalkeeper, who is distracted by the presence of other players)



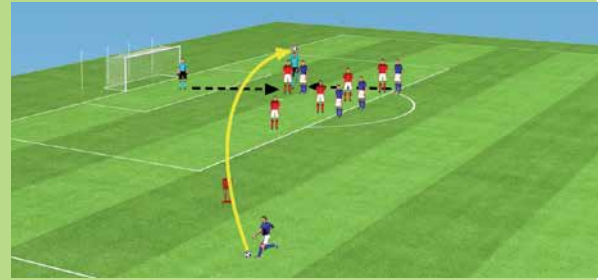
- 1 – Pass and sprint
- 2 – Shot and save
- 3 – Goalkeeper movement
- 4 – Shot and reflex save

Change of goalkeeper

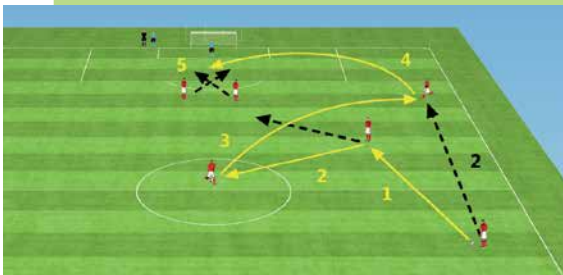
4 repetitions at each side

**Specific training**

with a group of players  
(work on aerial balls)

**Group training**

Example of a group exercise that also enables the goalkeeper to perfect his release  
(together with the team's head coach).

**Combining goalkeeper techniques**

(example using goalkeeper's release)

In a match, choosing the right release of the ball depends on the goalkeeper's decision, the availability of a team-mate or the coach's tactical choice. Training is also a good environment for goalkeepers to develop their release of the ball after

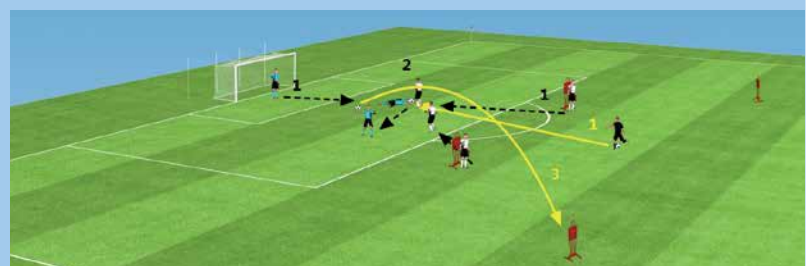
different types of save (cross, shot, one-on-one). The accuracy of the throw or kick is key and can be worked on using fixed targets (dummies) or moving targets (using other goalkeepers in targeted exercises). Improving the use of both feet is crucial for the goalkeeper.

**Release exercises****Exercise 1**

1. Pass along the ground
2. One-on-one
3. Release with the hand

Walk back to starting positions

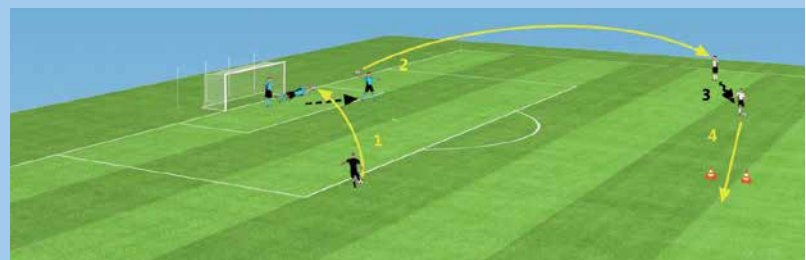
3 balls per goalkeeper (two sets)

**Exercise 2**

1. Shot
2. Release with the hand
3. Directional control
4. Pass along the ground

Walk back to starting positions

4 balls from each side



## Physical preparation

A young goalkeeper's physical preparation gradually starts to resemble that of an adult (16 is considered to be an age of transition). A goalkeeper's physical preparation before the season will enable him to bear his workload during the year. The goalkeeping coach's knowledge of the position and its particularities enable him to precisely target the physical work needed for the goalkeeper's progress by eliminating inappropriate exercises (800m, three-minute runs, etc.).

During the period of competitive matches, a goalkeeper's physical qualities are all developed in a planned manner. Using different working methods and appropriate tests is the basis of the individual programme that guarantees a young goalkeeper's progress. The work should start gradually, taking into account each goalkeeper's profile.

### Endurance:

- Without ball with the team (long period)
- With ball – group work with the team:
  - As an outfield player – keeping possession on a full-sized pitch
  - As goalkeeper – small-sided game, intense session with shots from the team
- With ball – specific work:
  - In the form of "fartlek" (speed play) by the goalkeeper
  - Intermittent exercises with ball
  - Development of speed endurance (sets of balls)

### In the form of "fartlek" (speed play) by the goalkeeper

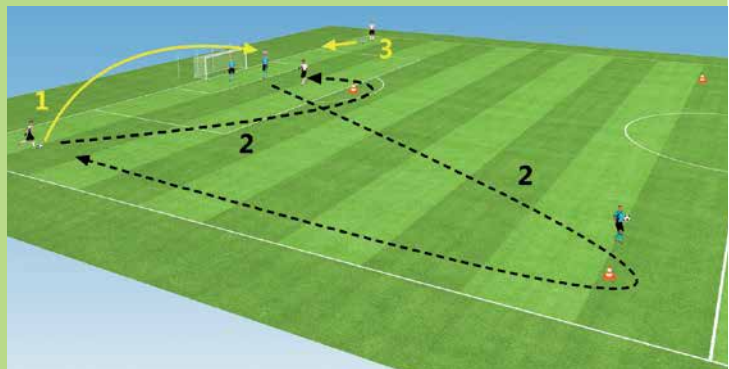
Running with aerial balls:

1. Cross
2. Change of position
3. Cross and change of position (other side)

Duration: 20 minutes

Period of preparation – full training

- Sets: 3 (variation of exercise)
- 5 minutes between each set
- HR: 150 to 160 bpm



### Intermittent exercises with ball

Intervals: 10" work and 10" recovery

1. The goalkeeper must complete the circuit in the time allocated:

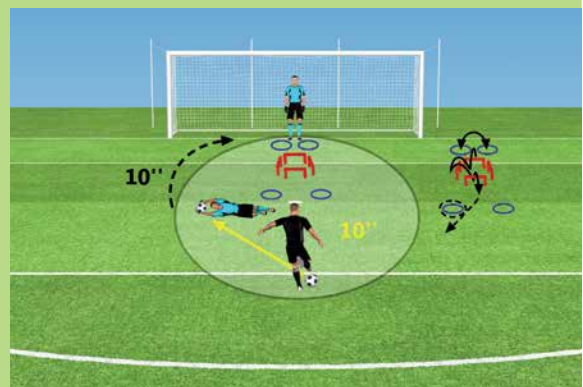
10" (no sprinting)

2. Return: walking

Duration: 4 minutes

Period of preparation – full training

- Good warm-up and preparation
- Intermittent exercises with ball
  - Duration of exercise: 4-8 minutes
  - Recovery: 5 minutes between each set
  - Sets: 2 to 3 (vary exercise)
  - Intensity: (80-90% of HRmax)
- Technical work (without straining)
- Cool-down



## Development of speed endurance

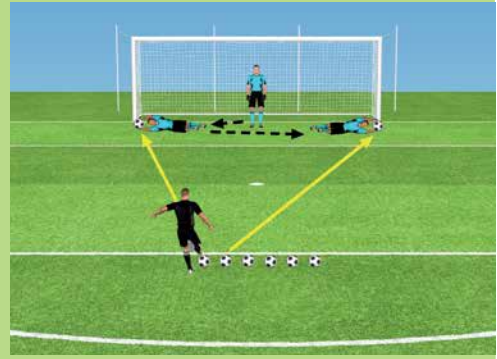
(sets of balls)

Sets of 6 balls (for 3 goalkeepers):

- 1 set of 6 balls (goalkeeper A)
- Change of goalkeeper
- Recovery: work with other goalkeepers and setting up balls

Period of preparation – full training:

- Good warm-up and preparation
- 6 sets (10 sets for a professional adult)
- Technical work (without straining)
- Cool-down



## Strength

A goalkeeper's strength can be gradually built up on the pitch or in the weights room, starting with acquiring the correct posture of the body, breathing properly during exercises and following safety instructions to avoid needless injuries. Tests are required to establish an individual programme for each goalkeeper.

Strengthening circuits are a good way of building up strength endurance and they can take place on the pitch or in the weights room. To improve the goalkeeper's jumps, the coach can deploy a variety of plyometric exercises.

## General strength endurance

Number of drills: 12

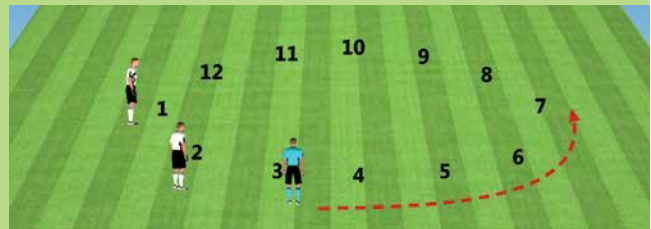
Duration of load: 30"

Recovery time 1:1

(including change of drill) – 30"

Number of sets: 3

Between sets: 3'



## Strength exercises

### Exercise 1

1. 5 jumps on the step (one leg)
2. Dive (low shot)
3. Movement
4. 5 jumps on the step (other leg)
5. Dive (low shot)

Change of goalkeeper

2 sets per goalkeeper



## Speed

Speed is developed through all of the goalkeeping exercises performed during training. The programme can also incorporate cycles aimed at developing speed by deploying various methods and types of equipment.

The goalkeeper should be well warmed up for this work, and if he shows the slightest sign of being injured, the session should be stopped immediately. The coach must adhere to the time allocated for work and recovery (one period of work = 15 to 20 periods of recovery).

### Speed exercises

#### Exercise 1

1. Coach's signal
2. Diving on a stopped ball

Change of goalkeeper

4 repetitions

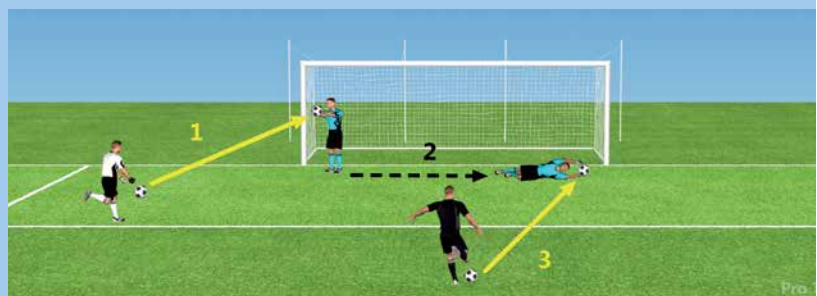


#### Exercise 2

1. Strong shot (reflex save)
2. Sprint
3. Dive (low shot)

Change of goalkeeper

3 repetitions at each side

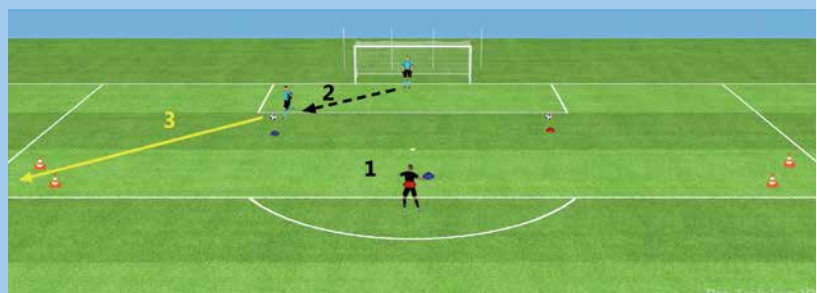


#### Exercise 3

1. Coach's signal (visual)
2. Sprint
3. Pass along the ground

Change of goalkeeper

4 repetitions



**Coordination**

Goalkeepers develop some of their powers of coordination on the pitch. They can also benefit greatly from acrobatic and gymnastic exercises in a well-equipped room (or on the pitch).

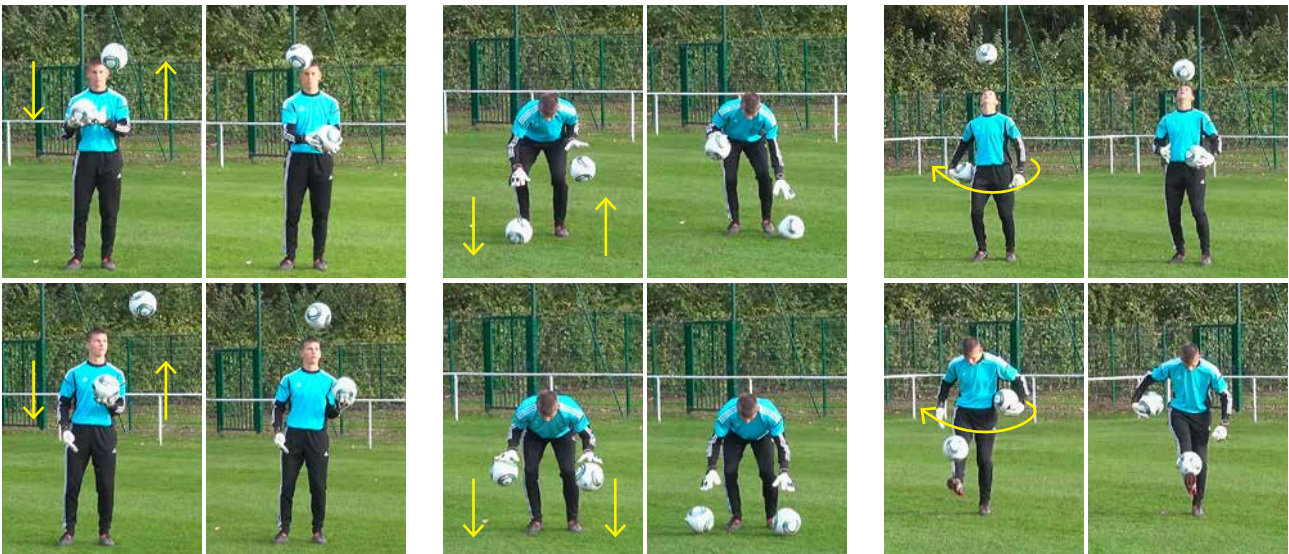
Proprioception exercises are also very beneficial for goalkeepers; when general proficiency has been reached in this area, the ball can be introduced.

**Examples of exercises with and without the ball**



Ball control exercises, such as juggling two balls in different ways (see pictures) can be used for warming up. This exercise enables

goalkeepers to have fun while developing coordination at the same time.



**Suppleness**

When developing suppleness and choosing the right moment for stretching are concerned, opinions differ greatly. The exercises selected and their frequency will

depend on the goalkeeper's profile, the aim being to support his progress to the best possible effect.



## Psychological preparation

As he gets older and especially as his level of performance improves, the goalkeeper's role becomes increasingly important, and the demands placed on him increase as a result. The goalkeeper's psychological preparation helps him to better handle the psychological pressure that goes with his position, to resist the external factors that are always present but also to remain true to his personality and character.

The particularities of the goalkeeper's position are:

- Only one goalkeeper out of several may play
- A high level of responsibility for the result
- He is left to his own devices in difficult situations
- The pressure to which he is subject

The goalkeeper's performance can be influenced by many positive factors (family, good coach, good agent, etc.), but unfortunately he is also constantly exposed to factors that can have a negative effect on him.

### **The goalkeeper's personality and character**

The goalkeeper's personality and character can have a direct impact on his frame of mind and performance. His main personality traits are:

- The ability to motivate himself
- Self-esteem
- His capacity to control his emotions

We consider that the goalkeeper's psychological preparation will always take the following forms:

- Natural: the goalkeeper analyses, sorts and memorises the daily flood of information and events and transforms them into experience
- Organised: the coach or someone else exerts a direct and positive influence on the goalkeeper

The goalkeeper's performance in a match is dependent on his state of mind and ability to deploy his personality traits judiciously.

Support information can be gathered from his daily work:

- Empirical observation of the goalkeeper: his habits and reactions in training and during a match
- Simple analysis of his personality
- Discussions with him
- Observation of the influence of the environment and other external factors

This information is used to find ways of facilitating the goalkeeper's work and showing when and how to react with the goalkeeper. It is vital to have an individual approach with each goalkeeper: a good coach knows and senses when to criticise, to encourage, to raise his voice or to turn a blind eye. The goalkeeper's expression, his reactions and his performances often provide clues. Each goalkeeper prepares differently for training and for a match, so it is necessary to pay particular attention when choosing the right way of supporting him. He can only benefit from this support before the match and at half-time, as during the match, he must rely on himself and his preparation.

Any psychological problems that could affect his performance can be tackled by an expert. It is the goalkeeping coach who must spot these problems, so it is important that the coach maintains a good relationship with the goalkeeper in order for the latter to confide in him.

This understanding develops over a period of time and not as a result of a single act. The big clubs work systematically on psychological preparation in order to optimise the performances of their players, particularly their goalkeepers.

## Planning

The level of performance determines the programme of work. If a goalkeeper only trains once or twice a week at the most, the focus should be on his technical and tactical development, in cycles.

At well-structured clubs and the best training centres, there is more time for specific training, which also enables physical development to be included. Tailoring the work based on tests and development programmes improves the quality of work. To ensure that the goalkeeper is not overloaded, the goalkeeping coach must know the team's programme.

The planning depends on the coach being present on either a part-time or full-time basis. He can combine certain categories. Provided the session is well organised, four to six goalkeepers enable real-match conditions to be simulated, although all must be involved either as goalkeepers or outfield players (development of individual technique) to avoid inactivity.

### Examples of exercises

#### Exercise 1

1. Shot
2. Clearances with the foot
3. Directional control
4. Crosses with opposition

Walk back to starting positions

3 repetitions on each side

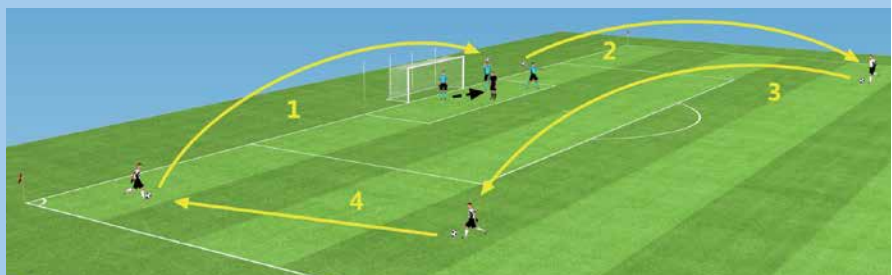


#### Exercise 2

1. Crosses with opposition
2. Long release with the hand
3. Control and long pass
4. Control and short pass

Walk back to starting positions

4 repetitions on each side

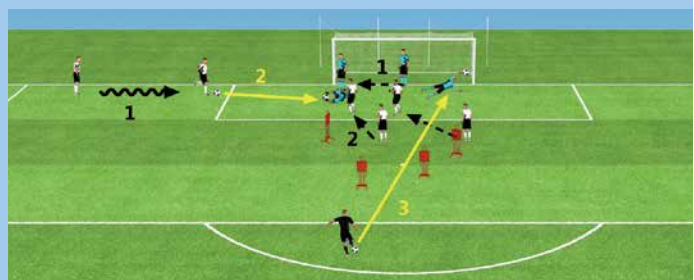


#### Exercise 3

1. Dribbling
2. Cross along the ground
3. Strong shot

Walk back to starting positions

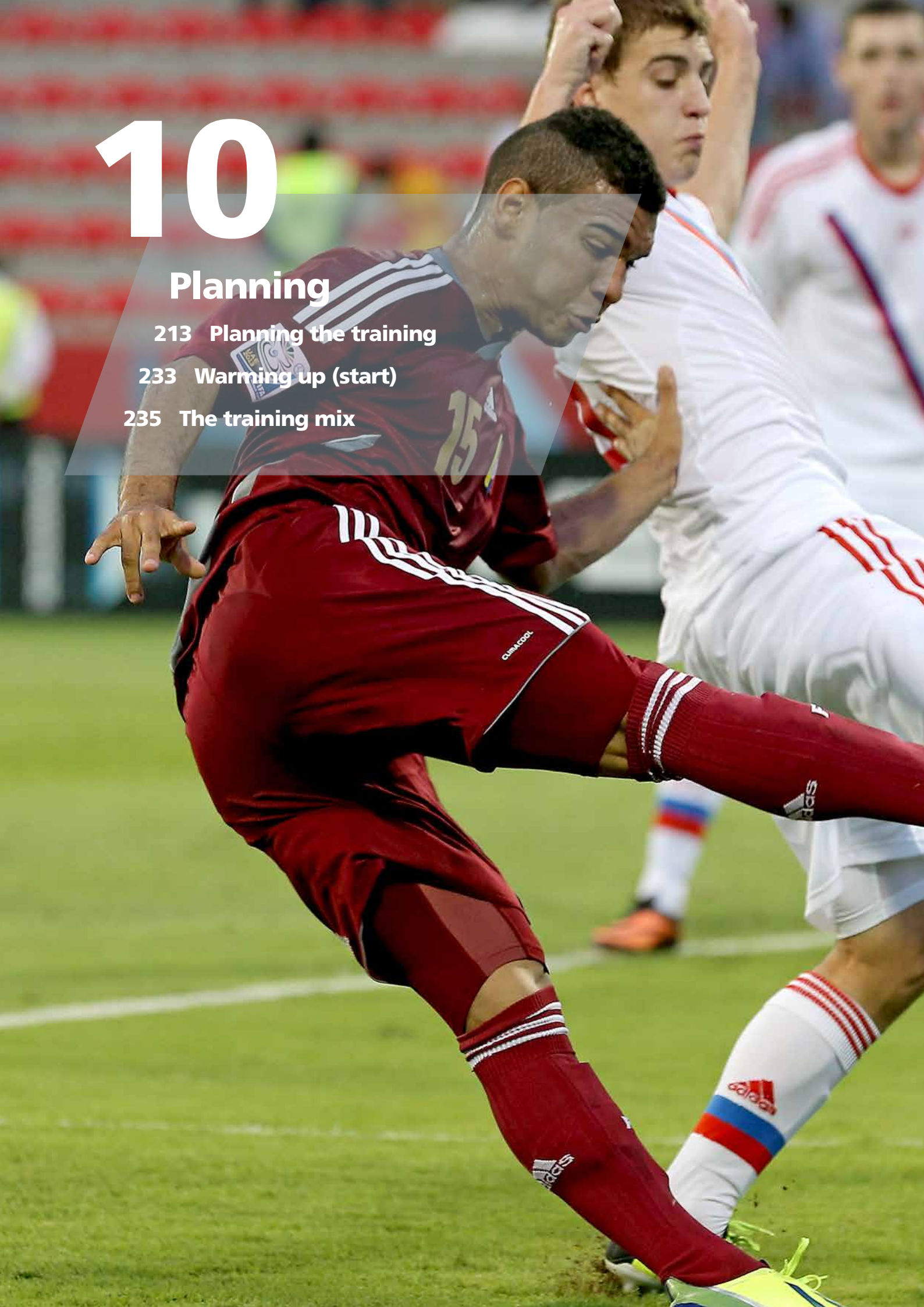
3 repetitions on each side



# 10

## Planning

- 213 Planning the training
- 233 Warming up (start)
- 235 The training mix





## 10 – PLANNING

Good planning is about time management and mapping out the way forward with a view to ensuring progress via structured work and intermediate checks.

Planning is influenced by a number of factors, and different types of planning are possible depending on the objectives and the means at one's disposal.

The age of the players, the infrastructure in place, the match calendar – not to mention various other factors to be managed for good progress – are the main aspects to be taken into account for optimal planning.

The periods of competition will have a key impact on all of the phases of preparation and transition.

It also needs to be borne in mind that a young player's preparation takes place over a long period and, as such, long-term planning will serve as a stabilising element for his progress.

This concept is firmly established in the philosophy of personalised development, depending on the objectives and means at one's disposal.

The data and knowledge of the goals remain the structural basis of a balanced programme.

This would leave little open to chance, although intuition and experience will also contribute to the progress of the work.

A well organised and planned programme will therefore enable the content to be controlled more effectively will help in setting the number of repetitions required to support long-term development.

A good annual training periodisation will produce stable performances and a gradual improvement in quality.

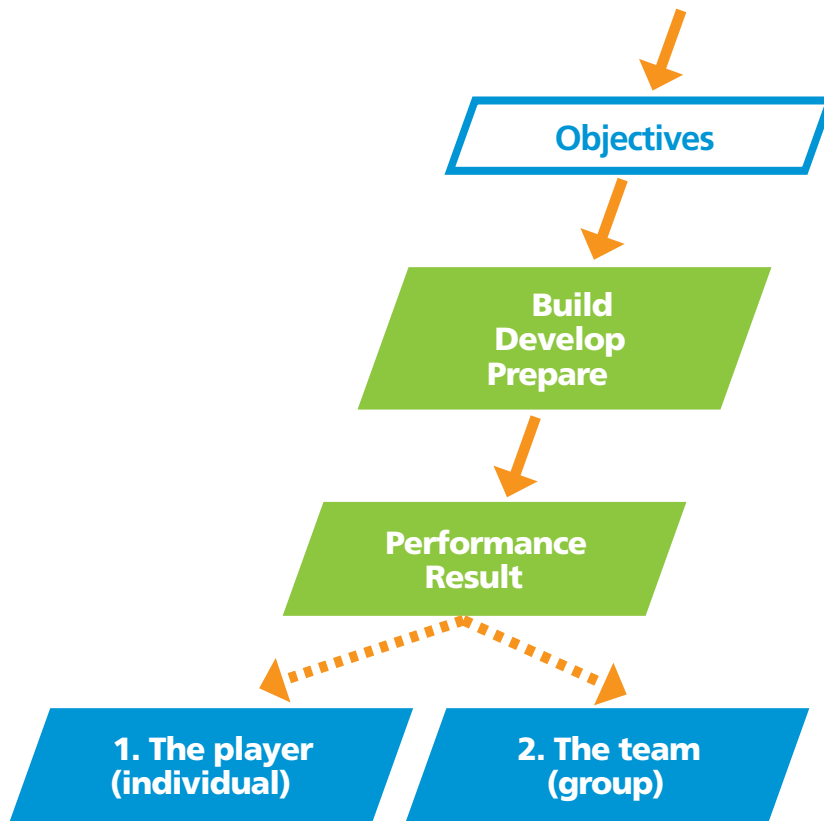
The quantity and intensity of the training are often decisive and recovering from the exertion will help to repeat the performance.

Planning is an integral part of the training process. To prepare an athlete, particularly a young one, to develop at all levels of training in order to help a team get good results, it is vital to respect the different stages of learning, development and level of the player in the planning process.

The main elements of planning are:

- A calendar with various cycles
- A training programme with training methods and principles, organisation and appropriate structures plus content (exercises, game formats, etc.)
- A training mix in line with the age and level of the players, the cycles and the workload

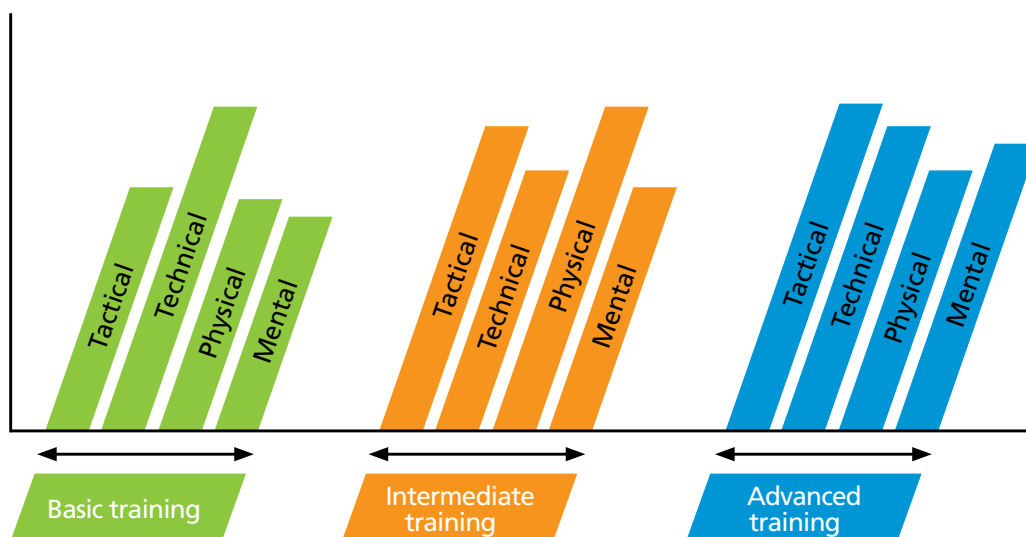
# Planning training for development



When developing young players, planning and programming the training are not based solely on team performances.

The player's individual development and acquisition of technical, tactical, physical and mental aspects are the priority when it comes to planning his training programme.

## Annual planning for aspects of football based on a development process



## Principles of planning training

Planning is based on biological, physiological and bioenergetic laws as well as on training principles centred on three main areas:



## Planning periodisation and annual cycles

The annual planning is the basis of the entire training programme built around the year of competition and is divided into three distinct periods:

1. **Period of pre-season preparation**
2. **Period of competition**
3. **Period of transition or rest**

The annual planning is itself divided into different cycles.

### Training macrocycle

The overall annual cycle for planning is divided into three periods.

In certain countries, for reasons of climate, the macrocycle is subdivided into two periods with a winter break of one to two months. Thus, two macrocycles are planned.

### Training mesocycle

A monthly cycle of two to five microcycles. The pre-season period of preparation is a big mesocycle of four to eight (sometimes even ten) weeks, often divided into two or three mesocycles. This variable period often depends on the match calendar, the age and level of the players and sometimes even the coach. The period of competition can also be planned in different mesocycles of two to four or six weeks, particularly with specific physical condition cycles adapted to age.

Example: physical mesocycle of four weeks focusing on strength-speed development.

### Training microcycle

Weekly planning of three to eight training sessions per week, depending on the age of the players, the level of play and the period of preparation or competition.

In a competition mesocycle, especially in training with four microcycles of six sessions, a microcycle of one to two days' rest is recommended for the purposes of recovery and regaining energy, both physical and mental.

### The training session

Daily unit of training, which can be team-based, specific to a group or position, or individual. Depending on the type of session, the day of the week or the training objectives, it can vary from 45' to 120' in length and even 150' during a period of competition. In general, the session lasts between 80' and 100' (including warm-up). With two sessions per day, the recommended total daily training period is from 120' to 150' maximum for young players. The duration also depends on the climate and culture of the country or club or even on the coach.

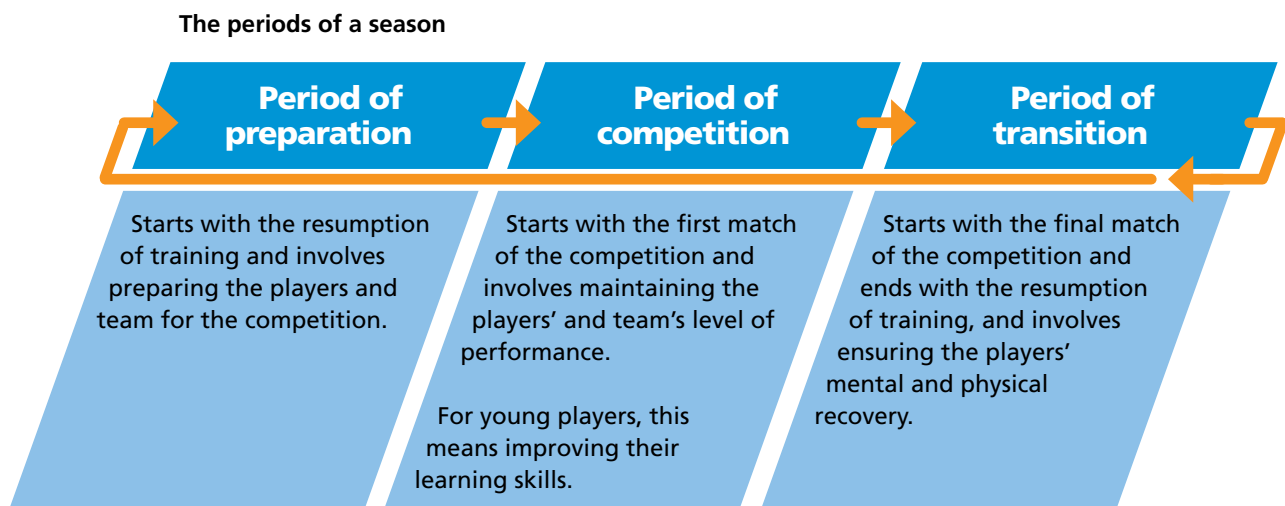
**Criteria for developing annual planning**

- Level of play, age, development phase
- Number of players available
- Competition calendar (length and start of championship)
- Objectives of performance in the season (of the team, of the players)
- Training days and hours
- Available infrastructure, equipment, training conditions, climate
- Technical staff available
- Analysis and evaluation of previous performances of the team and players
- Additional criteria:
  - Medical sports tests
  - Methods of recovery
  - Players' environment (family, location of home, studies, work, hobbies, lifestyle)

**Annual planning of the season**

One of the key conditions for the development and progress of the players and team is methodical planning, which should be built on physiological and physical principles based on the player's age and level of growth and categories of game.

Of course, this planning varies from one country to another, mainly for climatic, cultural and economic reasons, but also depending on the competition calendar.



**Period of preparation:**

- Crucial period for getting individual players and the team in shape
- 4 to 10 weeks (depending on the level of players and the competition), based on physiological principles
- Experience shows that the first positive effects of training appear after 6 to 10 weeks
- 6 to 8 weeks seem to be a period favoured by many clubs

- It is divided into two phases:
  - First phase: basic training aimed at giving the players a physical foundation to build on
  - Second phase: period of specific physical development integrating technical-tactical and mental components; the pre-competition phase. Reduction in training load; although quality may be associated with intensity, for many people, it is often synonymous with the amount of intensity.

Depending on its duration, this period of preparation may be divided into two to three mesocycles of two to five microcycles.



### Basic training methodology in the period of preparation

The pre-season period of preparation can last for four to five weeks, depending on the country, club and coach, particularly for young players aged between 13 and 15. This period enables the players to be ready for the start of the season, not to maintain their potential performance for the whole year. The concept of physical development is based on long-term thinking and the specific physical work is divided up over the whole season in cycles.

For young players, there are longer periods of five to seven, even eight, weeks in certain countries. As the preparation of young players often takes place during school holidays, it is possible to plan two sessions a day, while maintaining the division and mix of the training loads. At this level, the physical preparation, particularly among 17 to 18-year-olds, starts to resemble that for adults, although the development of physical factors will continue in cycles for the whole season.

Training always starts with basic endurance, aerobic capacity (natural and basic) at a rate of four to six sessions (depending on the players' level of  $VO_{2max}$ ) and with interval running, fartlek (variable pace) or with a technical circuit. The modern concept of training involves the use of a ball and deploying game formats for this type of endurance.

This is very quickly followed by specific endurance training (aerobic power – AP) from the second or third week, depending on the players' level of endurance and the period of holidays. If the running exercises help to develop AP, this type of session may include alternating between interval running or intermittent MAS and games on smaller pitches that approximate the reality of a match. As the competition approaches (pre-competition phase), the focus will be on MAP with games or other forms of training without the ball, increasing in intensity but decreasing in volume.

At the start of the first week of training in this initial preparation cycle, muscle strengthening by core conditioning is included for the youngest players, along with strength endurance with light weights for those at the end of puberty.

Working on the slow-twitch muscle fibres with intense basic endurance to stimulate the fast-twitch fibres, along with neuromuscular work, coordination and speed of reaction, produces a positive balance. By working specifically on jumps and short bursts of acceleration or on very short game formats played on smaller pitches, it is possible to tone up the muscles in order to introduce agility and reactivity more rapidly into the preparation.

From the third week onwards, the player's strength training in the basic training phase gradually starts to focus on speed strength, particularly through acyclical work on acceleration power, jumps (low-intensity plyometric training) and shots on goal. In the intermediate training stage, the accent is on strength speed (power) via exercises with a load (30-50% of HRmax), rapidly performed, and via low or medium-intensity plyometric training (depending on the player's growth) with two sessions per week.

When alternated with small-sided games (3v3/2v2/1v1) for AP and MAP work, strength will therefore also be included in these games.

Speed is also incorporated very quickly into the preparation, initially to stimulate the muscle fibres and agility (running, jumping, reactions), and then from the third week, by more specific speed training based on acceleration speed with a change of rhythm followed by speed of execution. In the basic training phase, following athletic work (running technique) and sprints at maximum speed in one-on-ones, the ball is included, mainly with exercises focusing on acceleration and shots on goal, sprinting and dribbling, or on short attacks of a technical-tactical nature. When the players are still learning, this neuromuscular work with athletic sessions without the ball and technical-tactical sessions with the ball will also be programmed alongside work on strength speed via acyclical exercises (jump-sprint) and multiform training. This work enabling maximum speed to be transformed into optimal speed – i.e. that of a match – is incorporated into small-sided game formats, with the accent on speed.

During the weeks of general physical preparation (GPP), training of physical capacities is based on the volume of work, whereas it is based on intensity during

the specific physical preparation (SPP). These training cycles with heavy workloads must be planned with the required effort-recovery mix in mind. It is therefore crucial to plan recovery microcycles in order for the player to regain the energy exerted both physically and mentally. In these weeks of “winding down”, the frequency and duration of training sessions are reduced, resulting in shorter duration of effort but not a lower intensity: the week could also include two or three days of rest, depending on the load of the week before the recovery cycle.

When training young players, it is essential to respect the phases of recovery and to explain to the players the importance of recovery phases and the methods available to facilitate regeneration.

**Basic structure for planning the preparation at the basic training age (13 to 15 years old)**

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
GPP I Adjustment	SPP I Load impact	Unwind Recovery	SPP II Activation	SPP Fine-tuning
General physical preparation I  Basic preparation	Specific physical preparation I	Week off for unwinding	Specific physical preparation  Pre-competition warm-up match	Physical pre-competition fine-tuning  Week of the competition start
<b>Moderate load</b> 4 to 6 sessions of 90' to 100'  + 1 warm-up match	<b>Higher load</b> 5 to 7 sessions of 90' to 110' (1 to 2 days of possible double sessions with a maximum daily amount of 130' to 140')  + 1 or 2 warm-up matches	<b>Reduced load</b> 2-3 team sessions of 80' to 90' + possibly 1-2 individual sessions (coordination + technique)  + 1 warm-up match	<b>Gradually reducing load</b> 4 to 6 sessions of 90' to 100'  (higher load at start of week and lower at end)  + 1 or 2 warm-up matches	<b>Reduced and decreasing load</b> 4 to 5 sessions of 80' to 90'  + possibly 1 warm-up match
Quantitative week at moderate intensity + Physical tests	Quantitative week at increased moderate intensity	Low-quantity week  Plan 2 days of recovery at start of week	Higher-intensity week  Plan 2 to 3 days of recovery at start of week	Moderate-intensity week + Physical tests – possible repetition

## Weekly model of a period of preparation at the basic training age of 13 to 15 years old (GPP and SPP)

OBJECTIVES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>WEEK 1</b> Endurance (70-80% HRmax) Coordination Basic strength	REST	REST	REST	REST	REST	REST	REST DAY
Technical-tactical	<b>Session 1 at 90'</b> > Welcome – Technical aerobics + running (3 x 7') – Technical coordination – Game 8v8 (60 x 40m)	<b>Session 2 at 100'</b> – Technical exercises, basic movements – Game 9v9 (60 x 50m, 40 x 60m) – Basic strength	<b>Session 3 at 100'</b> – Aerobics (2 x 8'), tech. circuit – Running – Technical-tactical 1v1 / 2v1 – Game 5v5 (40 x 40m)	<b>Session 4 at 80'</b> – Specific te-ta, zonal defending, shots from attackers – Tactical 11v1 / 11v5 – Basic strength	<b>Session 5 at 90'</b> – Cognitive play – Speed of reaction, te-ta, 5v3 / 5v5 – Game 6v6, wing play – Penalties	Warm-up match 1	REST DAY
<b>WEEK 2</b> Endurance (80-90% HRmax) Coordination Basic strength	REST	REST	<b>Session 3 at 80'</b> – specific technical, zonal defending, attacks, shots – Basic strength	REST (day off also possible)	<b>Session 5 at 50'</b> – Running – Individual theory, ball control – Basic strength	REST	REST DAY
Speed Technical-tactical	<b>Session 1 at 100'</b> > Speed + VO <sub>2</sub> max/MAS – Technical exercise – Game 6v3 / 6v6 – Basic strength	<b>Session 2 at 110'</b> – Jumping – Technical, passing – Game 7v5 / 7v7 (50 x 40m) – Free play	<b>Session 4 at 80'</b> – Aerobics (2 x 6'), intermittent 10"/20" (MAS 90-100%) – Te-ta 2v1 / 2v2 – Game 4v4 (40 x 30m)	<b>Session 5 at 60' Recovery</b> > Theory, the game (DVD) – Suppleness – Football tennis	<b>Session 8 at 80'</b> – Aerobics (3 x 3'), intermittent 5'/30' (MAS) – Technical-tactical 6v4 / 7v6 – Game 7v7, wing play – Set pieces	Warm-up match 2	
<b>WEEK 3</b> Unwinding cycle Endurance (70-85% HRmax) Coordination Basic strength	REST DAY	REST	<b>Session at 50'</b> – Individual specific, attackers	<b>Session at 50'</b> – Individual specific, defenders	REST	REST	REST DAY
Speed Technical-tactical		<b>Session 1 at 80'</b> – Basic technique – Speed (15-30m) (3 to 4 sets, 3 x 4 per set) – Technical-tactical 3v1 / 3v2 – Free play	<b>Session 2 at 70'</b> – Technical-tactical, 6v4 / 7v5, transition – Game 11v11 (4 x 10'), full pitch, half pitch	<b>Session 3 at 60' Recovery</b> – Basic strength – Tennis ball > Theory, nutrition	<b>Session 4 at 90'</b> – Cognitive play – Speed off the mark (without / with ball) – Technical-tactical 4v3 / 4v4 – Game 5v5 (40 x 35m)	Warm-up match 3	

OBJECTIVES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>WEEK 4</b> Endurance (85-100% HRmax) Coordination Basic strength	REST	Session 2 at 60' – Technical coordination – Basic strength – Suppleness	REST	REST or REST DAY	REST	REST	REST DAY
Technical-tactical	Session 1 at 90' – Aerobics (2 x 8'), tech. circuit – Attacking theory – Game area 5v5 and 10v10	Session 3 at 80' – Speed strength, multiple low jumps – Technical-tactical 1v1 to 3v3 – Free play	Session 4 at 100' – Game 3v3 (30 x 25m) – Basic technique, game 11v11 (3 x 10'), half pitch / full pitch	Session 5 at 60' Recovery + Theory – how to prepare for matches	Session 6 at 90' – Cognitive play – Speed of reaction (without / with ball) – Game 6v6, wing play – Basic strength	Warm-up match 4	REST DAY
<b>WEEK 5</b> Endurance (80-90% HRmax) Coordination Basic strength	REST	REST	REST	REST DAY	Session 3 at 50' – Position-specific – Basic strength	REST	REST DAY
Speed Technical-tactical	Session 1 at 90' – Basic technique – Speed of reaction (without / with ball) – Technical-tactical, 7v5 / 8v6, attacking-defending – Game 5v5 (40 x 30)	Warm-up match 5	Session 2 at 60' Recovery – Technical-tactical 6v2 / 7v3 – Football tennis Tactical, team exercise, tactical correction 11v1 / 11v6 + treatment	REST DAY	Session 4 at 80' – Speed (15-20m) (without / with ball) – Technical-tactical 5v5 / 7v7 – Game 11v11 (3 x 10') – Set pieces	Session 5 at 80' – Cognitive play – Speed of reaction – Technical, conclusion – Free play – Penalties	Championship match 1

This timetable for the period of preparation must nevertheless vary the loads for the U-13, U-14 and U-15 categories, particularly in terms of the frequency of sessions per week and the

volume of training undertaken.

For U-13s and U-14s, one session per day is recommended. If two sessions are scheduled, the second often contains fun activities associated with other sports.

**Basic structure for pre-season planning at the intermediate training age (16 to 18 years old)**

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
GPP	GPP	SPP	Unwinding	SPP Fine-tuning	CPP Fine-tuning
General physical preparation I Basic preparation	General physical preparation II Basic preparation	Specific physical preparation I Match loads	Week off for unwinding, coordination-specific II Warm-up match	Specific physical preparation III Pre-competition warm-up match	Pre-competition physical fine-tuning Week of the competition start
<b>Gradual increase</b> 5 to 6 sessions of 80' to 110'  For this week, it is possible to schedule 1 or 2 days with 2 daily sessions of 70' to 80'	<b>Gradual increase</b> 6 to 8 sessions of 80' to 100' (possible 2-3 days of double sessions)  + 1 warm-up match	<b>Gradual increase</b> 5 to 7 sessions of 70' to 100' (2 days of double sessions of 70' to 90')  + 1 or 2 warm-up matches (maximum duration of 120' to 130' per day)	<b>Reduced load</b> <b>Unwinding cycle</b> 3 to 4 team sessions of 70' to 90'  + possibly 1 to 2 individual sessions (strength)  + 2 warm-up matches	<b>Gradually reducing load</b> 4 to 5 sessions of 80' to 90'  + 1 or 2 warm-up matches	<b>Reduced load</b> 4 to 5 sessions of 70' to 80'  + possibly 1 warm-up match  Work on physical and mental freshness
Week of low intensity in terms of quantity	Week of medium intensity in terms of quantity	Week of strong intensity and medium quantity	Low-quantity week – plan 2 to 3 days of rest at start of week	High-intensity week but low training volume	Medium-intensity week with low volume
Physical tests				Physical tests – repetition	



**Model of a pre-season period of preparation for players in basic intermediate training (16 to 18 years old)**

OBJECTIVES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>WEEK 1</b> Endurance (70-80% HRmax) Coordination General strength	<b>Session 1 at 80'</b> > Welcome – Aerobics (3 x 10'), jogging – Suppleness – Game 9v9 (60 x 50m)	<b>Session 2 at 70'</b> – Aerobics (3 x 12'), jogging + dribbling – Coordination – Strength circuit	<b>Session 4 at 90'</b> – Coordination, reactions – Individual technique, game 8v8 (50 x 40m), "through the gate" drill	<b>REST</b>	<b>Session 5 at 80'</b> – Coordination, reactions – Technical exercises – Game 9v9 (70 x 60m), "through the gate" drill	<b>Session 7 at 110'</b> – Strength circuit – Coordination + technical  Internal match (2 x 20')	<b>REST DAY</b>
Technical-tactical	<b>REST</b>	<b>Session 3 at 70'</b> – Technical exercises, basic movements – Game 9v9 (60 x 50m / 40 x 60m)	<b>REST</b>	<b>REST</b>	<b>Session 6 at 70'</b> – Aerobic strength circuit (2 x 8'), intermittent 15'/15' (MAS 90%)	<b>Session 8 at 80'</b> – Aerobics (2 sets 6 x 100m at 80%) – Tactical 11v1 / 11v6 – Game 5v5 without goals	<b>REST</b>
<b>WEEK 2</b> Endurance (75-85% HRmax) General strength Coordination	<b>Session 1 at 70'</b> – Aerobics (5 x 4'), interval running + technical – Strength circuit	<b>Session 3 at 60'</b> – Aerobics (3 x 8'), long interval fartlek (1'/1') – Suppleness – Game 6v2 / 5v2	<b>REST</b>	<b>REST</b>	<b>Session 7 at 70'</b> – Aerobic strength circuit (2 x 8'), intermittent 15'/15' (MAS 90%)	<b>Session 9 at 80'</b> – Aerobics (2 sets 6 x 100m at 80%) – Tactical 11v1 / 11v6 – Game 5v5 without / goals	<b>REST</b>
Speed of reaction Technical-tactical	<b>Session 2 at 90'</b> – Aerobics (5 x 4'), interval running + technical – Strength circuit	<b>Session 4 at 90'</b> – Aerobics (3 x 8'), long interval fartlek (1'/1') – Suppleness – Game 6v2 / 5v2	<b>Session 5 at 110'</b> – Strength circuit – Coordination and technical – Tactical game 8v8 / 9v9	<b>Session 6 at 80'</b> – Speed of reaction – Technical-feint-shoot – Tactical game 7v5 / 8v6	<b>Session 8 at 90'</b> – Technical-tactical positions – Zonal game – Game 6v6, without goals	<b>REST</b>	<b>Match 1 preparation</b>
<b>WEEK 3</b> Endurance (AP) (85-90% HRmax)	<b>CONGE</b>	<b>Session 1 at 60'</b> – Technical, 4-player passing – Jumping – Technical, duel 1v1 / 2v2	<b>Session 3 at 60'</b> – Tactical zonal defending – Technical, leaving zone with ball – Strength (upper body)	<b>REST</b>	<b>REST</b>  (or session focusing on theory, tactics, other subjects)	Possible warm-up exercises	<b>REST DAY</b>
Coordination Strength of reactions Speed of reaction Technical-tactical		<b>Session 2 at 80'</b> – Aerobics (AP), running (3 x 4'/3') (MAS 90% and 60%) Game 5v5 (30 x 40m)	<b>Session 4 at 90'</b> – Tactical 5v3 / 6v4, pressing – Zonal game – Game 9v9 with 4 goals	<b>Session 5 at 100'</b> – Aerobics (AP), running (4 x 4'/3') (MAS 90% and 60%) – Game 6v6 (45 x 40m), possession play + without goals	<b>Session 6 at 80'</b> – Technical speed of reaction, finishing Tactical, team exercise – Game 4v4 without goals (sets of 2' max)	<b>Match 1 preparation</b>	

OBJECTIVES	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>WEEK 4</b> Unwinding cycle Endurance (70-85% HRmax) Strength speed	REST DAY	Session 1 at 70' – Aerobics (2 x 10'), jogging in forest, recovery: suppleness – Strength (upper body) – Game 5v2 / 6v1	Session 3 at 90' – Speed strength, plyometric – Tactical attack/ defence – Game 4v4 (30 x 40m, sets of 2' 30")	REST	Specific session – Individual catch-up	REST	Possible warm-up exercises
Speed off the mark Technical-tactical		Session 2 at 60' Technical position, defence/ attack/ midfield – Game 7v5 / 8v6 – Tactical game 11v11	REST	Match 3 preparation	Recovery – Tactical theory + Baths / treatment	Session 4 at 70' – Speed off the mark – Technical, attacking – Game 6v6, without goals – Set pieces	Match 4 preparation
<b>WEEK 5</b> Endurance (AP/MAP) (90-100% HRmax)	REST DAY	Session 1 at 60' – Aerobics (3 x 7') – Speed strength, plyometric >Speed test	Session 3 at 80' – Aerobics (MAP), intermittent (2 x 6') 10-20 / MAS 110% – Game 3v3 (40 x 20m)	Specific session – Strength (upper body)	Specific session – Individual catch-up	REST	Possible warm-up exercises
Strength speed Speed of acceleration Technical-tactical		Session 2 at 80' – Game 8v6 / 7v9, pressing – Technical-tactical 1v1 / 3v2 – Game 5v5 / 6/6	REST	Session 4 at 90' – Tactical theory – Warm-up for match – Internal match (4 x 15')	Session 5 at 80' – Technical, individual – Technical-Tactical attacking without goals, cross/header – Set pieces	Session 6 at 80' – Speed exercises, one-on-ones, reaction – Tactical, moves 7v5 – Game 4v4 (sets of 2')	Match 5 preparation
<b>WEEK 6</b> Endurance (AP/MAP) (90-95% HRmax) Speed-strength	REST	REST DAY	Session 2 at 60' – Speed of acceleration (3 sets, 3 at 4 x), 1 set with ball – Game 3v1 / 4v2	REST	REPOS (dep. on physical and mental state of team) REST DAY	REST	Possible warm-up exercises
Speed of acceleration Technical-tactical	Session 1 at 70' – Recovery + strength – Baths / treatment		Session 3 at 70' – Game 7v7 + floating players – Tactical, defending – Game 11v11, zonal	Session 4 at 80' – Aerobics (MAP, intermittent (2 x 6' / 10 to 20) 120%) – Game 4v4 (30 x 40m) (sets of 2'30)	Session 5 at 70' – Recovery – Tactical theory	Session 6 at 70' – Cognitive play – Speed of reaction – Technical-tactical, attacking – Game 6v6 (50 x 40m)	Championship match 1



### The period of competition

- The period depends on the competition calendar
- It lasts for eight to ten months (depending on the country and standard of play)
- The period is divided into weekly cycles called microcycles
- Both general and specific exercises are transformed into competitive ones in order to achieve optimal performance levels and maintain them for as long as possible
- The need for competition should be stirred among the players, and the emotions and pressure of the competition should be managed
- As the level of performance during this period is dependent on the players' commitment in the various competitions and on their individual potential, the individual tailoring of the training needs to be taken into account
- To ensure that the training has the right mix and management, several microcycles are created in competition mesocycles of three to four weeks.

In view of the demands of today's top-level football, with often two matches being played per week), cycles of recovery and regeneration should be included in the mesocycle, particularly for young players.

Learning mesocycles are always programmed during the learning stage.

**Example:** three-week cycle focusing on technique: receiving the ball, directional control and first pass. Along with the physical and competition objectives, technique remains a priority of the cycle.

### The training microcycle

The microcycle (a mini-training cycle) covers several training sessions. Instead of repeating the previous cycle, it should have a new basis with a partial change in the training structure and in the forms and methods as well as in the loads from one week to the next, depending on the cycle. At the highest level, the microcycle is often dictated by the team's results, its level of performance, the amount of fatigue it is undergoing and any psychological problems. Where young players at the basic and intermediate training stage are concerned, however, the microcycle is dictated by the periodisation, the learning

cycles in the annual planning and, of course, the team's physical or mental fatigue; it should not essentially be based on the next match.

The microcycle is always based on the physiological principle of the split between effort and recovery.

### Physiological structure of the microcycle

- Always define the energy system as the backdrop to the training session  
Example: technical-tactical training based on basic aerobic endurance (aerobic capacity);
- Choose the intensity of each activity (game format/exercise) to stay focused on the main aim of the training session  
Example: 6v6 game format (on a 50 x 40m pitch), retaining possession based on MAP;
- Respect the muscular and neuromuscular demands;
- Start the microcycle by working on basic muscular oxygenation, cardiovascular endurance (aerobic capacity) and suppleness (restarting the engine!);
- Arrange the microcycle in three blocks:
  1. Acquisition of the level of performance through a physical block with and without the ball (technical-tactical-coordination + mental) of two to three days with one or two intensive sessions depending on the cycle of the period and age of the player
  2. Unwinding block with active recovery of one or two players or passive recovery (rest) of one day
  3. Neuromuscular fine-tuning with the accent on tactics of one or two days before the match with short, dynamic sessions and possible warm-up exercises on the morning of the match

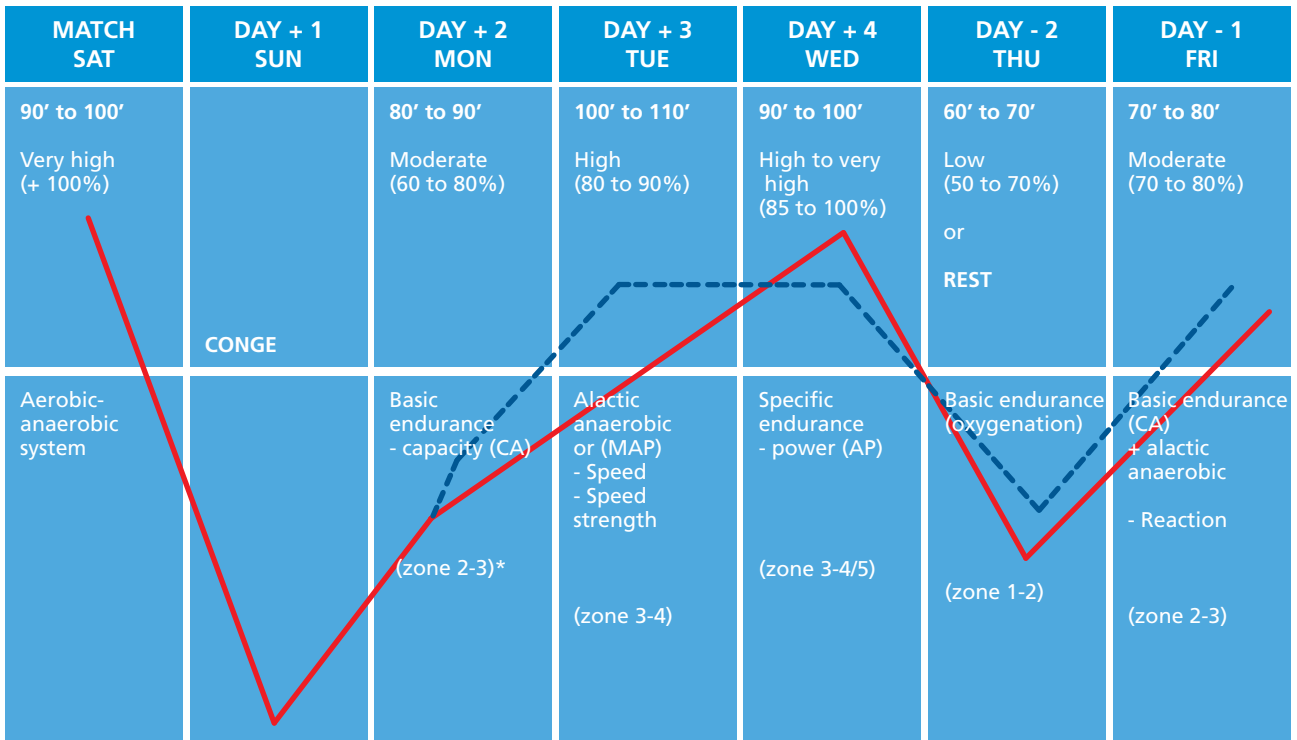
With intense microcycles one after another, a week of unwinding including one or two days of complete rest or active recovery is planned.

*"My weekly training programme is designed to help my players feel physically and mentally fresh so that they can be dynamic and reactive in the match."*

(José Mourinho, 2009)



**Curves of training loads for a competition microcycle with one session per week**  
 The two curves show possible variations of loads between microcycles



**Model of a competition microcycle in the basic training phase (13 to 15 years old)**

DAY + 1	DAY - 5	DAY - 4	DAY - 3	DAY - 2	DAY - 1	MATCH DAY
		If needed Specific Individual Coordination Strength (core conditioning)	If needed Specific Individual			Warm-up exercises (30' to 40') (dep. on time of match)
REST DAY	1. 80' to 90' Aerobics (CA) - Running-fartleck - Technical circuit / 5v2 Technical-Tactical (zone 2-3)* - Game format - Exercises > retain possession + transition Technical game (zone 3) (medium-sized pitch) - 7v7 / 8v8 / 9v9 Strength (core conditioning) + suppleness	2. 90' to 100' Speed or speed strength -without ball -with ball, technical Technical-tactical (zone 2) Attacking-defending -1v1 / 2v2 / 3v1 Tactical game (AP) (small pitch) - 5v5 / 6v6	3. 90' to 100' Game (AP) (small pitch) -4v4 / 3v3 Aerobics (MAP) -Intervals -Intermittent (running and technical) Tactical game (zone 3) - 8v8 / 10v10	4. 60' to 70' Specific recovery - Theory - Suppleness - Strength (core conditioning) - Individual technical (dead-ball situations) Rest day every 3 to 4 weeks	5. 70' to 85' Tactical-technical-mental - cognitive - team exercise Speed - Acceleration + shots on goal Game (zone 2-3) -theme-based-free (small pitch) Dead-ball situations	MATCH

**Model of a football academy microcycle during the period of competition (16 to 18 years old)**

DAY + 1	DAY - 5	DAY - 4	DAY - 3	DAY - 2	DAY - 1	MATCH DAY
		2. 60' to 70' – Speed or strength speed -without + with ball (dep. on cycle)	40' to 50' Specific technical Individual – Technical position (dep. on players)			Warm-up exercises (30' to 40') (dep. on time of match)
REST DAY	1. 80' to 90' Technical-coordination – Technical, individual – Game 6v2 / 7v2 Technical-tactical (zone 2-3)* 6v6 / 7v7 / 8v6 – Wing play – Transitional play Aerobics (CA) – Interval-running or fartlek Strength (core conditioning) + suppleness	3. 70' to 80' Basic technical – In groups Tactical-technical (zone 2-3) In 2 groups – Attackers: Finishing – Defenders: Headers and launching attacks Tactical game (AP) (small pitch) 5v5 / 4v4 / 5v3 – Pressing – Speed	4. 90' to 100' Aerobics (AP/ MAP) – Intervals – Intermittent > + mental Technical-tactical (zone 2) – Attacking/ defensive 2v1 / 3v1 3v2/ 4v3 6v4 / 7v5 Game (MAP) 2v2 / 3v3 / 4v4 or Internal game 11v11 (dep. on game)	5. 70' to 80' Specific Recovery (zone 1-2) – Aerobics – Suppleness – Strength (core conditioning) + – Tactical theory or REST DAY (dep. on cycle)	6. 70' to 85' Tactical-technical-mental (zone 2) – Cognitive play – 5v2 / 6v2 Speed – Reaction – Acceleration (with ball) Tactical team exercise – Final tactics Game (zone 3) 6v6 / 5v5 / 4v4 – Free Set pieces	MATCH

**Example of variation of training intensity in a microcycle (according to J. Bangsbo, 1995)**

As training can be repetitive from one day to another, often with the same rhythm, Bangsbo proposes the following variants, which are adapted to real match tempos and often change from one match to the next. They are also intended so that the body makes physiological adaptations to the variation in intensity created by this form of training.

Time of match	0-15	15-30	30-45	45-60	60-75	75-90	Cool-down
DAY							
Tuesday	Warm-up	3	3	3	Recovery		
Wednesday	Warm-up	3	5	3	4	3	Recovery
Thursday	Warm-up	5	2	4	4	3	Recovery
Friday	REST DAY						
Saturday	Warm-up	2	3	2			
Sunday			Match		Recovery		

**Level of intensity:**

1 = low intensity 2 = slow intensity 3 = moderate intensity 4 = high intensity 5 = very high intensity

### The period of transition

Period of reduced physical activity during which the player can recover physically and mentally from the effort put in during competition:

- It lasts for 4 to 8 weeks (depending on the country and standard of play)

Although this phase occurs after the period of competition, in the knowledge that two or three weeks of rest may be sufficient to significantly lower general endurance by 20 to 25%,  $VO_2$ max by 4 to 6% and the quality of strength and coordination, it is possible to propose a maintenance programme containing increasing physical activity.

#### Example: Phase 1, 7 to 14 days

After several days of no activity (depending on the player), programme active rest and recovery through additional sports (excursions, bike rides, swimming, tennis, etc.).

#### Phase 2, 10 to 20 days

A special individual programme focusing on endurance, suppleness and muscle strengthening.

Three or four sessions of 45' to 60' per week at 60-70% of training phase intensity.

This period also enables players with long-term injuries or who are not performing well during the final period of competition to regain their performance level.

In some countries with a double periodisation per year, two periods of transition are programmed:

the first at the end of first-round ties, with two to five transition weeks shared with one to three weeks of complete rest, and the second of two to three weeks of active training either before the return legs or a new period of winter preparation of four or five weeks, depending on the country. During the period of active transition, some coaches, particularly those of 16 to 17-year-olds, focus on a player's specific physical weaknesses (e.g. endurance or muscle strengthening). This is an excellent time in which to work on strength, as there is little risk involved in muscular improvement, in terms of both volume and intensity.

The youngest players in basic training can intensify their work on technical coordination, running and muscle

strengthening, as well as on learning strength techniques.

### The training session

The training session is at the heart of the planning process, being programmed every day by the coach and his technical team on a microcycle basis. It can be modified at any time according to the evaluation of the previous session, special circumstances and also depending on the atmospheric and climatic conditions.

For children and teenagers, the sessions differ from those for adults in terms of their objectives, training cycles, and particularly in terms of the loads, training methods and education. As far as the training content is concerned, this must also be adapted to the level of players, especially at a physical level. However, with certain games and game formats, it is possible to play similar types to those practised by adults, albeit on different sized pitches.

Thus, with a club like FC Barcelona, specific game formats are used by both the professional and the U-15 teams. The main reason for this approach is to allow young players to learn how to apply the basics of the same principle as that of the top team. The success of the games involving Barcelona's youth players shows that it is possible to adapt the training content of adults for children, especially in terms of games. The cognitive aspect (taking in information, making decisions and the right choice) is the foundation of tactics and is today developed very quickly in children.

**Objectives of a training session:**

- To approximate a real-match situation as closely as possible (spirit/intensity/rhythm)
- To respect the individual (age, level of training, limits in terms of acceptable load)
- To maintain continuity (repetition of content, forms and methods, loads and mix)
- To ensure the right variety of training by maintaining the choice of content while introducing other stimuli (technical-tactical-coordination aspects)
- To adapt and control the load according to the desired level of intensity
- To vary the volume and above all the intensity from one session to the next

**Structure of the training session****Phase 1: Warm-up (start):**

- Physiological preparation of the body, technical coordination and mental aspects
- Adapted to the content of the performance phase
  - > Duration of 10' to 12' in basic training and 15' to 20' in intermediate training.

**Phase 2: Performance (main part of the session):**

- Principal training phase for the development of physical capacities, technical and tactical aspects, and mental attitudes
  - Acquisition, construction, performance
  - Group training, specific training (position, group of similar skill level), individual training (geared towards player)
  - The training comprises "athletic" (i.e. without the ball) exercises, technical or technical-tactical training exercises with the ball (repetitions), and game formats and games (match mentality) that enable techniques to be perfected in match-like conditions
  - For young players, working in groups encourages commitment, maintaining intensity, and repeating the movements and the quality of individual corrections
    - > Duration of 60' to 120' depending on the age of the players, the period of training (preparation or competition), the training microcycle, the objectives and volume of the session
- The average duration of this phase is between 60' and 70' but can be up to 90' if the session aims to reproduce a match.

The current trend is to reduce the training volume (shorter sessions) instead of increasing the frequency (more sessions) and particularly instead of increasing the intensity to how it is experienced during a match. Although shorter, the sessions are closer to the reality of a match in terms of moves and intensity. One session minimum per week with the average load experienced in a match (80-85% / 175-178 HR) and a second phase of 60' to 70'.

**Phase 3: Cool-down:**

- Recovery phase immediately after the exertion, the main aim of which, especially for young players, is to relax both emotionally and muscle-wise;
- If running for 6' to 8' for oxygenation purposes will partly relax the body and stretch the muscles, other fun methods are also possible for children and teenagers: shots on goal, shots to hit the crossbar or passing contests from the 18-yard line to the touchline, etc.;
- For young players, putting away the equipment or cleaning the balls is another way of cooling down and also gives them a sense of responsibility;
  - > Duration of 5' to 10' depending on the load and content of the session.

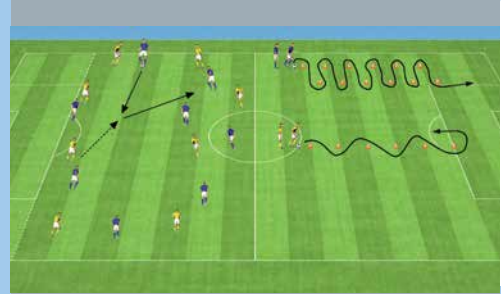
## Technical training in basic training (13 to 15 years old)

**Objectives: perfect the pass and directional control (receiving the ball)**

**Duration: 90'**

### 1. Technical warm-up (15')

- 2 teams of 8 players pass with 2 or 3 touches maximum. Pass to players in the other team
- Game with 1, 2 and 3 balls
- With movements (runs off the ball, decoy runs), receiving the ball with directional control and passing it accurately along the ground
- In two groups, coordination runs (with and without ball)
- Suppleness, stretching

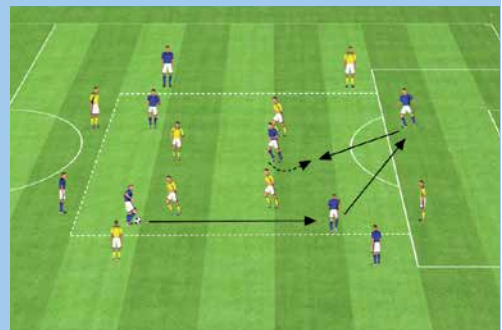


### 2. Introductory game format

- 2 teams of 8 players: 4v4 on a marked-out area
- Free play (then 3 touches) to keep the ball. The external support players always play (1-2 touches) with their team. Duration of 3' to 4', then change players
- Count the number of successful passes
- Quality of ball control and of the pass, movement

Variant:

- The support player receiving the ball can join the game with the ball.
- The passer becomes the support

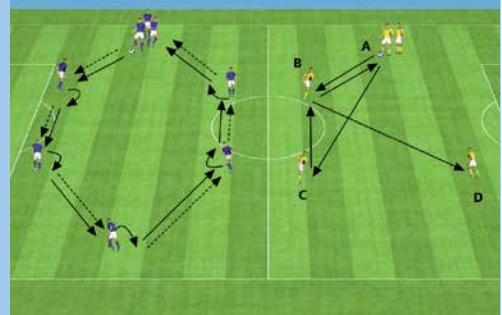


### 3. Technical exercise: directional control, pass and run (15')

- 2 groups of 8 players in the shape of a hexagon; distance between the players 10-15m
- Pass to feet along the ground; directional control and immediate pass (2 to 3 touches), follow the ball. Also with 2 balls (rhythm).
- Vary receiving the ball (inside/outside) and the pass (left/right foot).
- Rhythm in the movement

Variant (group of players in yellow):

- Direct pass and pass back: A passes to B, who passes back to A
- A plays a long ball to C, who passes to B, etc. The players are constantly moving

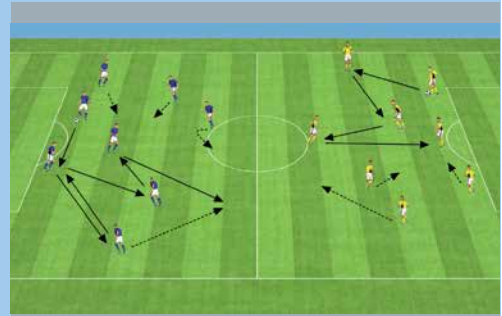


### 4. Technical-tactical exercise: receiving the ball, pass and move (10')

- 2 groups of 7 to 8 players on half the pitch
- Players positioned according to the formation (3-4-1)
- Circulate the ball among the team with 1 or 2 touches. All the players are moving; compact team. Change the players' positions.
- Ball into the player's path; change the game; vary the passes. Look for triangle, runs off the ball, decoy runs, linking long and short play

Variant:

- Bring in 2 or 3 opponents

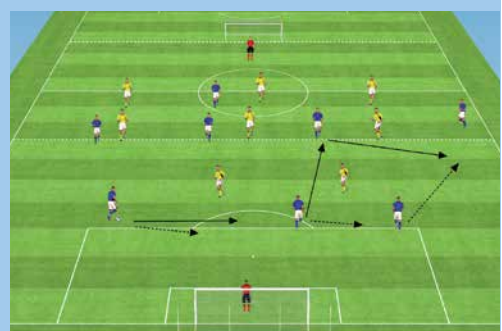


### 5. Final game (20')

- 8v8 (or 7v7) with 2 goalkeepers: play with 3 touches of the ball
- Goals: normal 1 point. Without control: 2 points
- Vary the formation. - Free play in the last 8-10 minutes.
- Working on movement, losing one's marker, playing without the ball and focusing on the technical quality of the passes (especially the first)

### 6. Cool-down (10')

- One lap of the pitch, light jog
- Recovery stretches
- The player can manage this phase of the training unaided



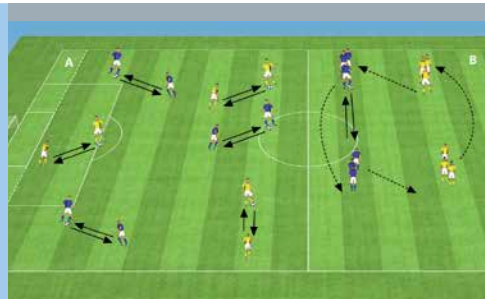
## Technical-tactical training at the intermediate training stage (16 to 18 years old)

**Objectives: work on ball control, passing and finishing**

**Duration: 90-95'**

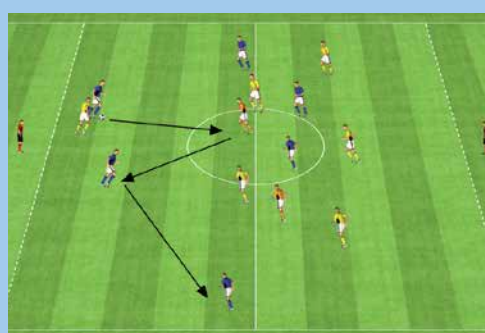
### 1. Technical warm-up (20')

- 1 ball per 2 players: pass and move with 2 touches of the ball
- Stationary: a player throws the ball to his partner, who volleys or heads it back
- Passing between 2, stationary: varying the pass and its distance and trajectory
- Dynamic suppleness and stretching
- Technical aerobic work: direct passes or with 2 touches and varied runs (2 x 4') [pitch B]
- Always use both feet



### 2. Game format: keeping the ball (15')

- 6v6 (or 7v) on a marked-out area + 2 neutral floating players in orange (who play 1 touch) and 2 goalkeepers
- Keeping the ball with 2 touches: after 7 or 8 passes, look for deep support player (goalkeeper) with a pass along the ground (=1 point)
- After the point, the ball is played by the other side
- The goalkeepers stay in position (occupying the zones)



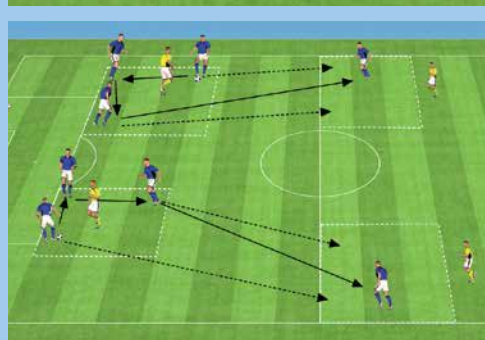
### 3. Exercise for short and long passes (15')

- Groups of 6 players, four 15 x 15m zones
- 3v1 game in two zones: after 6-8 passes (or a signal), one player plays to his partner in the opposite zone (at a distance conducive to long passes); then two players provide support to create a numerical advantage. As soon as the player controls the ball, the defender enters the game (3v1)
- Change defender every 2'

Quality of passing on the ground; movement, triangulation

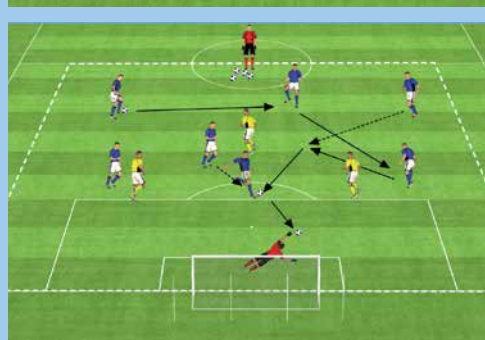
Variant:

- Vary the passes (diagonal, in behind; aerial)



### 4. Game situation; passing and finishing (15')

- Marked-out area: 6 attackers and 3 defenders + 2 goalkeepers
- The team plays (3 touches max.) and tries to score
- When the team regains possession, it plays without a limit on touches and tries to play long balls to the second goalkeeper waiting
- Change roles every 3' to 4'
- The team finds solutions (playing in behind, final pass). The coach then introduces a special combination. The defenders are semi-active, listening to the coach's instructions
- Restrict the number of touches before scoring or the amount of time of a move



### 5. Practice game 7v7 (8v8) (20')

- Marked-out area with central zone A (15m width)
- 2 or 3 touches for the team in the defensive zone; no limit in the others
- The aim is to score
- Normal goal (= 1 point), after pass in behind the defence that crosses central zone A (= 2 points)

### 6. Cool-down (10-12')

- Recovery run
- Intensive stretching



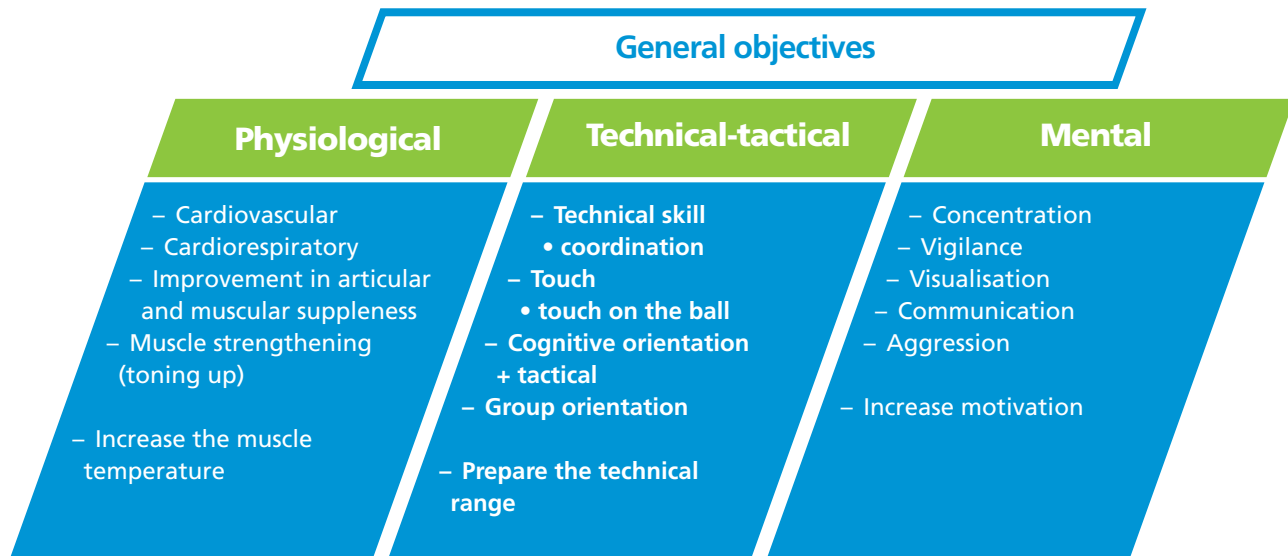




## Warming up (commencement) in football

The process of warming up is intended so that the player reaches an optimal level of physical, muscular and psychological preparation before training or a match. In various forms, it should increase the

temperature of the body and the muscles, preparing the cardio-pulmonary system according to the exertion that will be required after the warm-up.



### General warm-up methods

- The variety of warm-up methods is very important, particularly in terms of organisation (in a team, in groups, individual), form (with or without the ball) and types of running (with or without ball), but they should all respect the physiological and psychological principles at the start
- The players must know the content of their warm-up sessions to avoid constantly interruptions for explanations or corrections; warming up is a phase of preparation, not of learning
- For young players, introduce the ball on a regular basis via ball control, dribbling, feinting, including during suppleness exercises
- The warm-up rhythm should be fluid, progressive and performed with concentration, although it should also be enjoyable
- Care is needed in game formats for young players, who are often introduced too quickly to warming up and at an excessive intensity at an age when their muscles are not yet ready (muscle temperature too low)
- At intermediate training level, players who have been well instructed in warming up should be instilled with a sense of responsibility and warm up by themselves, either individually or with the team (led by a player)
- Although three to five minutes may be enough to increase the body temperature, it is not enough to prepare for a performance or even for a training session.

**Pre-match warm-up**

The pre-match warm-up varies from one team to another, according to the coach's methods, the culture of the country and the climate.

- The same physiological basis is used as for training warm-ups, but with higher levels of stimulation enabling the players to start the match in the best possible condition
- By optimising the neuromuscular system, the hormone levels (testosterone), the basis of aggression, increase
- Introduce the ball for technical confidence
- No stretching
- Drink during the warm-up
- Stay active in the changing room in case there is a wait of more than ten minute

**Model of pre-match warm-up**

- Running, free individual (or with team) > 3-4'
  - Mobilisation of joints + cardiovascular and respiratory activation > 4-5'
  - Active-passive stretching (dep. on players) > 2'
  - Technical skills with 2 or 3 players (ball awareness) > 3-4'
    - Relaxed-reactive-dynamic + long pass
  - Technical-tactical – possession 5v5 (25 x 25m) > 3-4'
    - One semi-active team (confidence) then active in confrontation (in confrontation, 2-3 sets of 45"-1')
  - Reactive work alone or one-on-one (jump-sprint 6-8m / 6-8x) > 3'
  - Possibility of specific individual – confidence! (dep. on players) > 4-5'
    - Attackers 5-6 shots on goal
    - Central defenders 4-5 heading (jumping)
    - Midfielders – some long balls
- > Duration of 20-25'

For youngsters in basic training, a good warm-up should be fast, dynamic and motivating. A period of 18 to 20' maximum would seem appropriate for this age group.

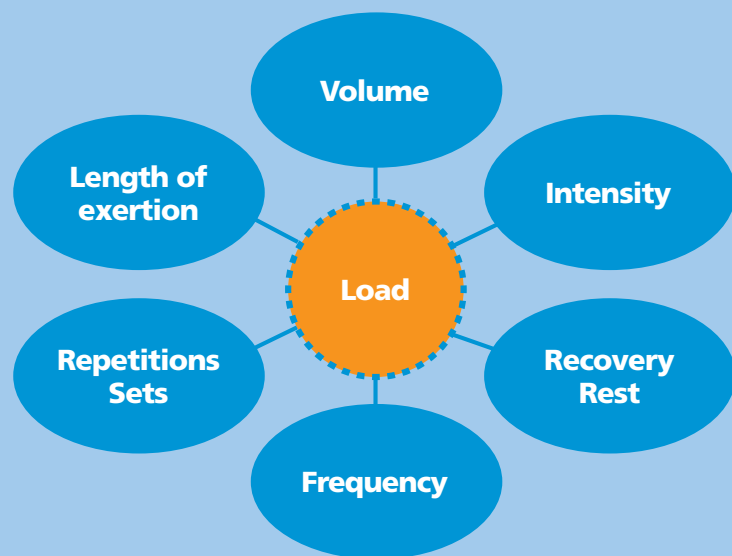
When the warm-up is too long, too complex or too boring for young players, there is a corresponding drop in attention span, concentration and motivation.

## The training mix

For a player to be able to train for a whole season at five to six sessions (or more) per week, plus competitions, while developing performance levels and maintaining them over the season without experiencing

difficulties (over-training) or even getting injured, there are certain key conditions regarding the right workload mix and especially periods of rest and recovery that must be respected.

### Key elements of the training mix



- Volume:** Total amount of training work, i.e. total distance covered in an endurance session, number of exercises, total weight lifted or pushed.
- Length of exertion:** Time spent exercising without rest. Example: actual duration of an exercise or game of 8' repeated three times.
- Intensity:** Amount of exertion corresponding to an exercise and at an increased level of quality and concentration. Exertion, pace, going to the limit. In sport, intensity is often measured by running speed, heart rate and muscular strength (weight lifted).
- Repetitions:** Number of times that an act of exertion, an exercise, a game or a learning activity is repeated. (Example: 5 repetitions of 20m sprints / 6 repetitions of an attacking move / 30 repetitions of abdominal exercises)
- Sets:** Total repetitions that follow each other at a given intensity. Multiple repetitions make a set. (Example: 2 sets of sprints, 5 at 30m and 6 at 20m. 3 sets of 5' in a game format at 6v6). Rest periods are applied between sets according to the required load of volume and intensity.
- Recovery (rest):** Restoring the player's energy sources and regaining his mental fitness depend enormously on the amount of time devoted to recovery and whether the latter is active or passive. The amount of rest depends on the required load during training (long, short, intensity, type practised). The rest between repetitions is shorter than that required between sets, which is also often more active. Recovery represents the time allocated between training sessions and cycles, and varies according to the overall training loads, the competition and even to the mental loads resulting from the physical activity, but also from daily life. This type of total recovery also calls for passive or active forms, albeit with specific physical or sports-medical methods.
- Frequency:** Number of training sessions per week. Team training, specific training per position/groups of same level, especially at the intermediate training stage, or individual (talent, rehabilitation). The number of sessions per week depends on the age of the players, the level of learning and the performance level. During a week of unwinding, i.e. in a recovery microcycle, it is essential, particularly among 13 to 15-year-olds, that the number of training sessions is reduced so that the player can better recharge his batteries.

# 11

## Youth competitions

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240 Evaluating the match





## 11 – YOUTH COMPETITIONS

It goes without saying that football is a game involving team-mates and opponents. Two key distinctions need to be made in order to understand its educational and formative value: free play is different in training than it is in a competition, and a competitive match while players are still learning their trade is different to one played by professionals or adult amateurs.

The intermediate training objectives are mainly long-term ones while those for top-level competitions are unfortunately short-term, which often has a huge adverse effect on players in advanced training.

The training simply must avoid suffering the effects of a competition that is not age-appropriate, and the instructor-coach must be aware of this. The training philosophy for young players of each member association and club is crucial, and must not be restricted to the results of a match or season of competition. The youth competition must cover all types of formations, tactics, etc., and the coaching before, during and after the match takes this into account (see chapter 3).

*“Experience is definitely the most important thing in life. Whether you play in a final as a teenager, at school or at the highest level, you must be able to take the essence of tomorrow’s success from these unique moments.”*

*(Johann Cruyff)*

## Structuring youth competitions

Member associations, confederations and FIFA have a major responsibility when it comes to structuring youth competitions. Without these age-appropriate competitions, the training cannot be completed. The main principle when structuring competitions is to group together teams of the same level. The ideal solution would be to organise regional competitions by category for grassroots football, and national competitions for

the elite (see double pyramid in chapter 1). Compromise solutions exist (e.g. final tournament) if the distances involved or lack of financial means preclude the organisation of championships for a whole season.

**Model of a possible youth competition structure (double pyramid, see page 6 )**

Age of player	Category of young player			Education level
	Regional championships	Elite: national championships	Selections	
21		U-21		Advanced
20		U-21	national U-21	Advanced
19	A	U-20	national U-20	Advanced
18	A	U-19	national U-19	Intermediate
17	A	U-18	national U-18	Intermediate
16	B	U-17	national U-17	Intermediate
15	B	U-16	national U-16	Basic
14	C	U-15	national U-15	Basic
13	C: 11 against 11	U-14	regional U-14	Basic
12	D: 9 against 9	U-13	regional U-13	Grassroots
11	D: 9 against 9			Grassroots
10	E: 7 against 7			Grassroots
9	E: 7 against 7			Grassroots
8	F: 5 against 5			Grassroots
7	F: 5 against 5			Grassroots
6	G: Club football academies			Grassroots
5	G: Club football academies			Grassroots



## Evaluating the match

Youth competitions represent a constant learning process, and enable your players and their instructors to systematically evaluate the former's progress and to enhance their experience. To reach this objective, matches should be organised regularly. Evaluating each player and the

team thus provides feedback on progress made during the learning period, and the long-term training plan starts to take shape. Evaluating by observation, with or without educational or technical methods, is therefore crucial to the success of the training work.

### Match observation sheet for young players

**Observation:** ..... **Observer:** .....

Teams (A/B): ..... / .....

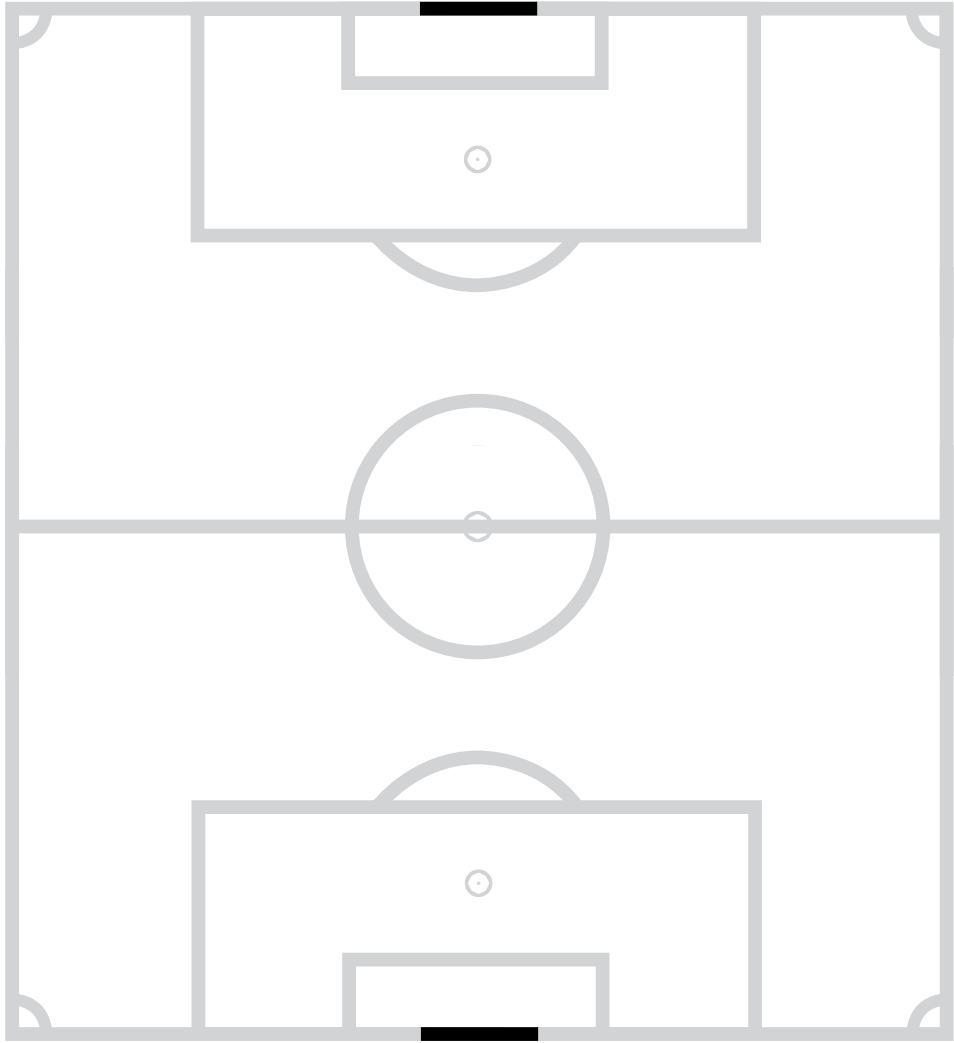
Place: ..... Date: ..... Time: .....

Climatic conditions / state of pitch: .....

Result: ..... (half-time: ..... )

Positions of players and numbers

**Team A** ↓



**Team B** ↑



# 12

## Football academies

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of an academy

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251 The various player  
evaluation sheets





## 12 – FOOTBALL ACADEMIES

Ensuring that budding stars receive the best possible training is the job of training centres and academies. The term “academy” covers a multitude of organisations and embraces private training centres, communities, clubs and an association’s regional or national centres. Each of them operates according to a training philosophy that is adapted to the cultural, social and educational demands of the country or region concerned and the traditions of the club or the ideas of its leaders – the crucial factor being the available infrastructure and financial means.

In every case, an academy is an important pillar in terms of training, with two main objectives and an appropriate set of requirements. First and foremost, the academy must offer its players high-quality sports, educational and social training. It should provide a developed and efficient scouting and recruitment process so that certain players can benefit from the best possible structure and organisation and from a training programme that is tailored to their needs. At the same time, the centre’s structure and organisation are a model for other training structures. Organising guided tours or advanced

training courses for coaches and officials enable an academy to show how such a centre should be run.

This chapter outlines some quality criteria for implementing this social, educational and training structure, with the focus on the key issue of talent and how to uncover it. Scouting is a major priority for clubs and associations that want to offer ideal conditions for training top players.

## Structure and organisation of an academy

- Goals:**
- Offer youngsters training that enables them to develop in both an educational and a sporting context
  - Provide a quality organisational structure and monitoring of young players
  - Optimise the learning process and training programmes
  - Serve as a model for other training structures



### Staff structure:

- Academy director
  - Administration
  - Reception staff
  - Accommodation and equipment staff
- Technical manager
  - Technical staff
  - Medical structure
- Educational manager
  - Teachers
  - Educational animator
  - Relationship with school

### Training conditions:

- Training pitch(es)
- Other grass or artificial pitches
- Training equipment and materials that are essential to good work.

### Welcome centre:

- Main building of the academy
  - Administration
  - Accommodation
  - Medical surgery
  - Classrooms (studies)
  - Dressing rooms
- Accommodation is not essential.  
The youngsters can stay at home, with a relative or at the home of a staff member.

**School/educational training:**

- The youngsters at the academy attend a state school or a private school close to the academy.
- The educational classes are held in the academy itself by teachers who are employed specifically by the academy or supplied by the school.
- The youngsters either attend a state or private school or are educated via a special programme at the academy run by specialist teachers or animators.

**Sports training programme:**

- Depends on the age and level of the young player, and is adapted to the learning objectives.

**Objectives:**

- Individual development of the performance levels through training and competition.  
The youngsters play with the team at the academy (club, regional centre, national centre) that is playing in an official competition such as a national championship or international competition.  
It is also possible for them to rejoin their respective clubs at the end of the week to play in the competition (particularly those at the basic training stage).
- Development of other knowledge (social cultural, sporting)
  - Management of their career
  - Management of their preparation
  - Leisure
  - Other

**Young trainees:**

They are chosen according to the concept and objectives of the academy:

- Training centre (football + study)
- Academy (football + educational staff)
- Football school (football + school for children)
- Training centre (football only)
- Other

They are selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- Sporting in general (experience, level)
- Evaluation and specific tests
- Motivation and mental attitude
- Level of education (able to attend school or another form of education)

- Minimum age: 12-13
- Maximum age: 16-18
- Number: depending on the concept and options of the academy

**Annual planning of operations:**

- According to the competition and school calendars
- Depending on the sporting aims and the objectives of the academy

Example of weekly programme

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<b>MORNING</b>						
School	Training Theory	School	Training Theory	School	Training or journey	
	Practice	Training	Practice			
<b>AFTERNOON</b>						
School	School	Rest	School	Personal homework	Match or rest	Match or rest
Recovery training	Training	Other activities		Training		





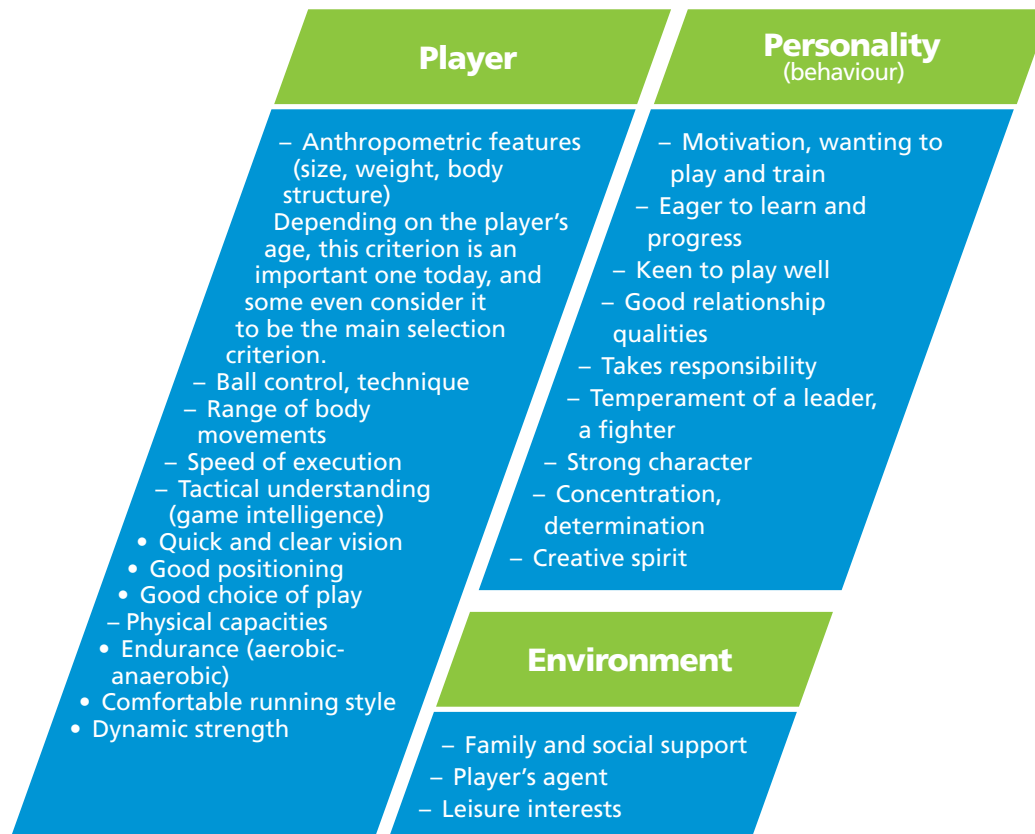


## Recruitment of young talent

Unearthing young talent is no easy matter, and often only occurs once the professional scout has carefully and methodically observed the player in question. Before

proceeding on this quest, however, the player's main quality criteria need to be discussed and decided on.

### Qualities that constitute "talent"



Talented players thus have better than average abilities, but it must be possible for these abilities to fully blossom. Weaknesses may appear, which may be difficult to detect sometimes (lower performance levels for a variety of reasons: latent depression, weakness of character, little appetite for prolonged exertion, quickly demotivated, gaps in education, etc.) and which seriously hamper the player's progress, even causing him to shy away from the obstacles that he is bound to encounter in top-flight football.

This goes to show that recruiting a talented young player may involve some hidden surprises somewhere along the line. Good scouting is not simply about watching a match and ticking off a list of criteria – the player must be observed on

many occasions and in different situations (behaviour on the pitch during training, in matches, with his team-mates and his coach, and outside football, with his parents and friends) in order to be certain that his psychomotor, physical and mental abilities will enable him to develop and eventually reach the desired level.

Although eight years is the norm for a player's ideal sporting development, it is difficult to define the exact period in which he must work towards the goal of being able to compete at the highest level. Experience shows that not all young footballers develop at the same rate and they cannot be forced to share the same training load or regime if the demands made of them are too heavy. Such are

the factors that can hinder a player's development.

A proper recruitment concept must therefore extend well beyond merely discovering a young talent and signing him up for a club. It must be possible to monitor his progress, to let him flourish and to

offer him a solid training structure along with quality care in terms of his social and educational development.

### What is the key to good recruitment?

- Employ good-quality and experienced recruitment staff
- Have selection criteria that is adapted to players' ages
- Watch several matches (home and away)
- Know how to observe how the player behaves in matches and at training
- Talk to the player and his parents
- Contact the club or sports organisation
- Have the player take specific proficiency tests:
  - Sports-medical (to determine his general physical and mental state)
  - Technical and physical (according to the club's criteria)
  - Mental (motivation, personality, character)

### Technique

The ball is my friend

### Intelligence (football)

Play with the others and they will be able to play with me

### Personality

React appropriately, be brave

### Speed

Sturdiness

## Various player evaluation sheets

A player's qualities can be assessed by video (match, recording) or by evaluation sheet (checklist), which can also be used to gauge his progress. Below are some possible criteria:

### Does the player know how to:

- run, with and without the ball?
- pass the ball?
- receive the ball?
- control the ball?
- dribble, feint?
- play with both feet?
- lose his marker?
- run into space?
- take up the right position?

### Does the player:

- behave correctly (in victory and defeat)?
- influence the game and his team-mates?

### Does the player have:

- the right physique?
- the strength to hold off an opponent?
- good vision?
- good heading skills?
- a positive attitude?

### Does the player:

- win one-on-ones?
- score goals?
- create chances for his team-mates?
- make the right decision at the right time?
- receive the ball and lay it off well?
- know how to stop when running with the ball and then move off again at speed?
- have ability at dead-ball situations?



Example of player evaluation by coach

<b>Evaluation sheet</b>					
Last name/first name .....					
Position:	<input type="radio"/> <i>Goalkeeper</i>	<input type="radio"/> <i>Full-back</i>	<input type="radio"/> <i>Wide midfielder</i>		
	<input type="radio"/> <i>Central defender</i>	<input type="radio"/> <i>Central midfielder</i>	<input type="radio"/> <i>Forward</i>		
	<b>1 = very good</b>	<b>2 = good</b>	<b>3 = average</b>	<b>4 = poor</b>	
<b>Technical</b>					
Use of both feet	□	□	□	□	
Passing	□	□	□	□	
Directional control	□	□	□	□	
Feinting and dribbling	□	□	□	□	
Shooting	□	□	□	□	
Heading	□	□	□	□	
Tackling	□	□	□	□	
Other .....	□	□	□	□	
<b>Physical condition</b>					
Strength (explosiveness)	□	□	□	□	
Speed	□	□	□	□	
Endurance	□	□	□	□	
Suppleness (mobility)	□	□	□	□	
Other .....	□	□	□	□	
<b>Tactical/cognitive qualities</b>					
Game intelligence	□	□	□	□	
Attacking behaviour	□	□	□	□	
Defensive behaviour	□	□	□	□	
Other .....	□	□	□	□	
<b>Coordination</b>					
Orientation	□	□	□	□	
Rhythm	□	□	□	□	
Differentiation	□	□	□	□	
Reactions	□	□	□	□	
Balance	□	□	□	□	
<b>Mental</b>					
Concentration	□	□	□	□	
Determination	□	□	□	□	
Perseverance	□	□	□	□	
Confidence	□	□	□	□	
Taking risks	□	□	□	□	
Creativity	□	□	□	□	
<b>Social environment</b>					
Communication	□	□	□	□	
Behaviour	□	□	□	□	
Aura/personality	□	□	□	□	
Conscientiousness	□	□	□	□	
Sense of responsibility	□	□	□	□	
<b>Physical condition</b>					
Constitution (height, weight: .....)	□	□	□	□	
Health	□	□	□	□	
Date: .....					





**Conclusion**

It would be wrong to think that a talented young player recruited at the age of 13 or 14 will experience a seamless development. The path to success is long and arduous and involves a lot of training, work and perseverance along the way.

Today's young players are often motivated to progress but some lack the necessary character. To give them the best possible chance of proving their worth and reaching their full potential in football, they must be placed at a club that has a genuine training structure and be taken care of by high-quality personnel.

Young players should be recruited for their considerable potential, not to strengthen a team. Too often, the criteria used for their recruitment are dubious and unscientific (one-off achievements, getting carried away, incomplete or false information).





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### **Youth Football**

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