

3.

The Building Blocks



3.

Performance Phase



- Preparing teams for a competition environment where winning becomes the main aim
- Training to focus on solving football problems, based on match analysis
- FOOTBALL CONDITIONING becomes a key part of the program

The Performance Phase (17 years and older)

The Performance Phase starts when the puberty phase has ended and the growth spurt has come to a standstill. Generally this happens around the age of 16, but differs from individual to individual and, as stated before, girls generally reach this point earlier than boys.

Girls and boys diverge in their physical abilities as they enter puberty and move through adolescence. Higher levels of the hormone **Testosterone** allow boys to add muscle and even without much effort on their part, get stronger. In turn, they become less flexible.

Girls, as their levels of the hormone **Estrogen** increase, tend to add fat rather than muscle. They must train rigorously to get significantly stronger. Estrogen also makes girls' ligaments lax which makes them more flexible than boys but also more prone to certain injuries such as ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) rupture.

Core Stability strength training is therefore an important training element in the Performance phase, especially for girls. However, it's unnecessary to do that in a gym since Core Stability programs can perfectly be done on the pitch as part of the warm-up. This way we avoid losing valuable **football** training time.

At this stage of development, the young adults are ready for high performance training. Coordination is back, the mental balance has been restored and the energy systems of the body are now effectively 'trainable'.

This is the moment that **football-specific conditioning** can start. At an earlier age so-called 'conditioning' is mostly pointless and generally a waste of time (or even dangerous if conducted inexpertly).

This is also the moment that winning really starts to matter. That's why the purpose of the Performance Phase is:

Learning how to perform/win as a team

So in the Performance Phase, the coach is very much focused on getting results. Training, therefore, is centred on fixing specific problems with the team's tactical performance.

You'll find the Performance Phase Model Sessions on page 267.

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Performance Phase



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Performance Phase Model Sessions



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Model Sessions

The concept of rotating through pre-determined themes, which serves us well in the Skill Acquisition and Game Training phases, will not apply now. However, the basic structure of the ideal training session is almost identical to those in the Game Training phase:

- Welcome/explanation: 5 minutes
- Warm Up: 15-20 minutes
- Positioning Games: 20 minutes
- Game Training component: 25-30 minutes
- Training Game: 20-25 minutes
- Warm Down/wrap up 5-10 minutes

The differences are:

1. The session themes are based largely on recent match performance, with a view to improvement in the next match.
 - This requires from a coach the ability to properly **analyse** a game, **define** the 'football problems' and **design** sessions to improve the team's ability to solve these football problems.
2. The Training Game can now be used as a Football Conditioning game.
 - Football Conditioning Games are part of the Football Periodisation Model, developed by exercise physiologist Raymond Verheijen, which has been adopted by FFA.

The Football Periodisation Model is based on the principle that it's totally possible to get your players fit for playing football by playing football. This aligns perfectly with our vision that a holistic approach to coaching is not only the most educationally effective way but also the most time effective way. If done in the proper way, football training automatically becomes conditioning and therefore it's unnecessary and unwise to separate fitness training from football training.

In the Football Periodisation Model there are three types of conditioning games:

- The big games (8 v 8 or 9 v 9 or 10 v 10 or 11 v 11)
- The medium games (5 v 5 or 6 v 6 or 7 v 7)
- The small games (3 v 3 or 4 v 4)

Put simply, if these games are conducted in the right way, they develop the qualities of aerobic capacity and aerobic power specific to football players. However, a real understanding of this conditioning method, including football sprints, can only be gained by attending **FFA's Advanced Coaching Courses**.

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Regarding the 6-week cycles in the Performance Phase the following points are essential:

- The session with the Football Conditioning Games must always be planned for the beginning of the week to avoid players still being fatigued on the day of the next game
- We consider 4 sessions of 75-90 minutes and one game a maximum safe weekly workload for the Performance Phase (Advanced level only)
- The planning and progression of the Football Conditioning Games requires expert knowledge of the Football Periodisation Model. **It is dangerous to experiment with Football Conditioning without having the necessary knowledge**
- To give coaches a basic grasp of the concepts, we provide three sample Performance Phase sessions, based on hypothetical 'football problems' that a team might have. Each sample session shows how the Training Game can be changed to a Conditioning Game (one 'big', one 'medium' and one 'small' game), gaining a football fitness benefit while still working on the team's 'football problem'.

Click on the links below to go to specific sections withing the Performance Phase Model Sessions:

- **Model Session 1 - Football Conditioning (Big games)**
- **Model Session 2 - Football Conditioning (Middle games)**
- **Model Session 3 - Football Conditioning (Small games)**



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 1 Football Conditioning (Big games)

Football problem:

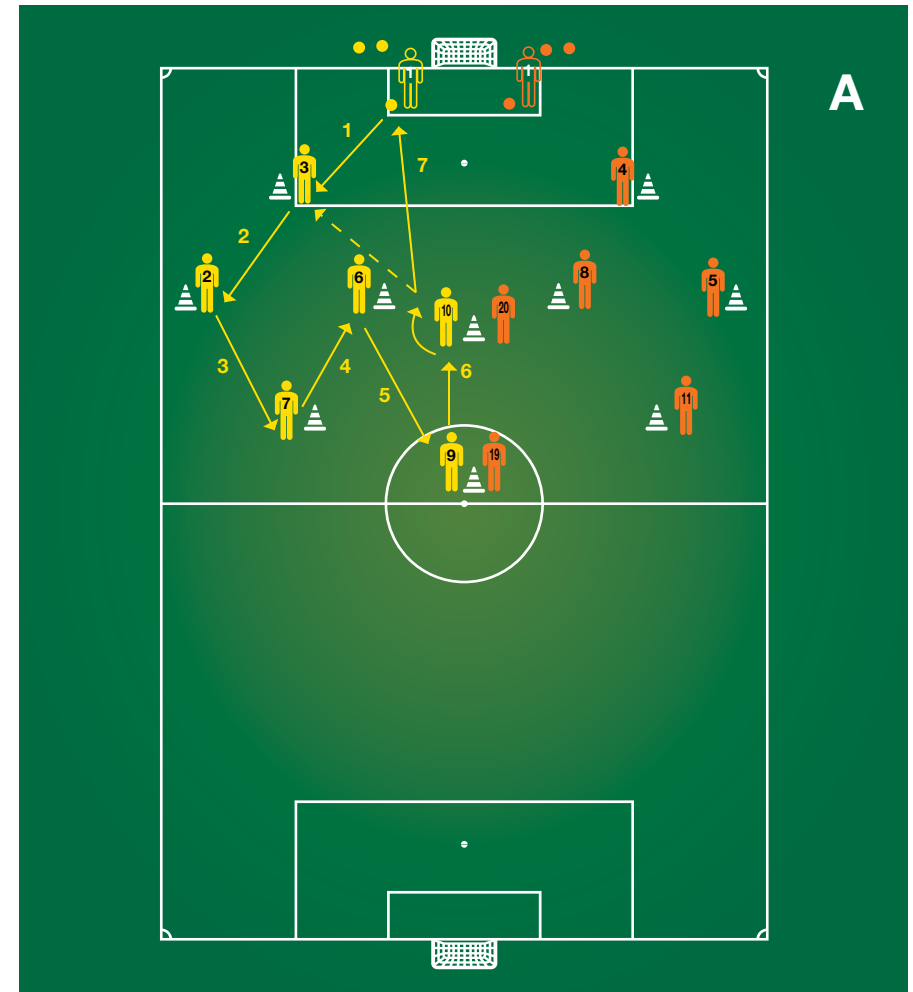
“Our team struggles with playing out from the back. Too often we play a senseless ball forward that is easily intercepted by the opponent.

The players do not recognise the right moments to play a forward pass or see the solutions too late.

They are also hesitant to break the line and create a numerical advantage by moving forward with the ball at their feet”.

1. Warm-up: passing exercise

- Players in game positions as shown in diagram A
- The passing sequence starts with the two goalkeepers (can be simultaneous): one to the right side; the other to the left side
- The players pass the ball in a ‘logical’ order (1-7) while staying in their positions
- “Pass precision and ball speed”
- “Now follow your pass to the next position” (NB: #10 goes to position #3/4)
- “Gradually increase your running speed”

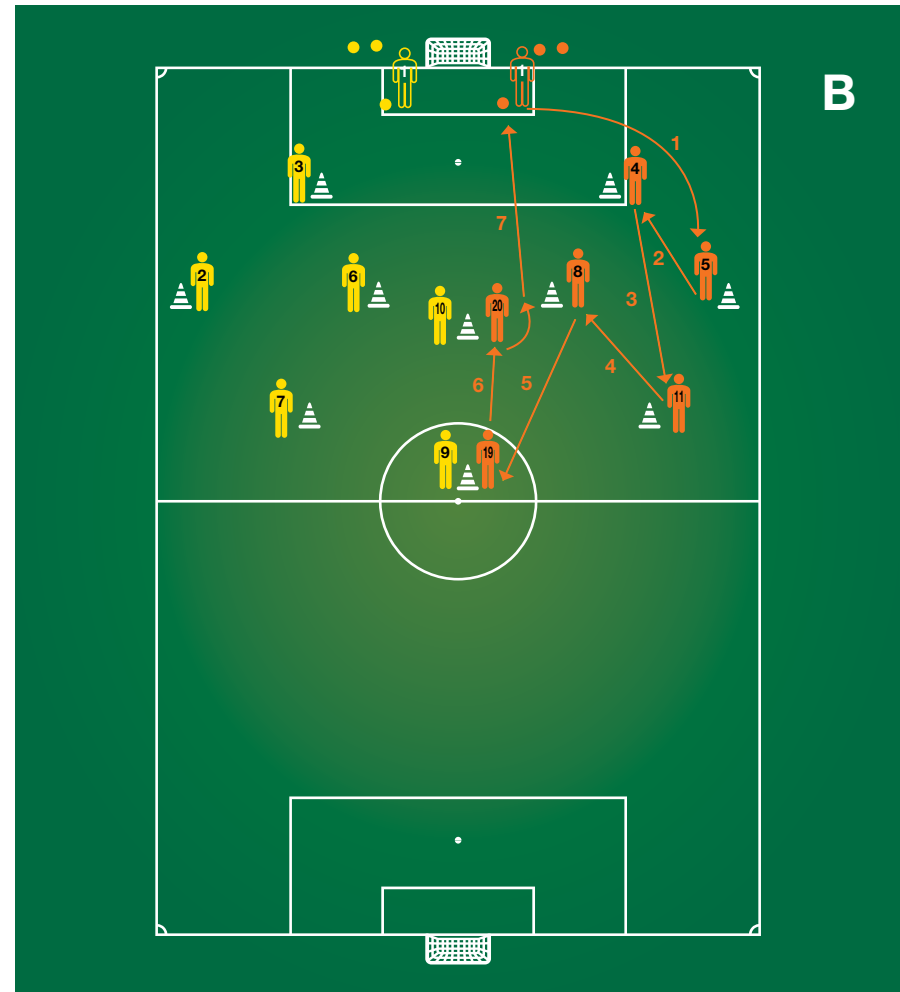


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Performance Phase – Model Session 1

Football Conditioning (Big games)

- “Here is another variation” (see diagram B)
- “Now just improvise but use a logical order and every player must touch the ball”



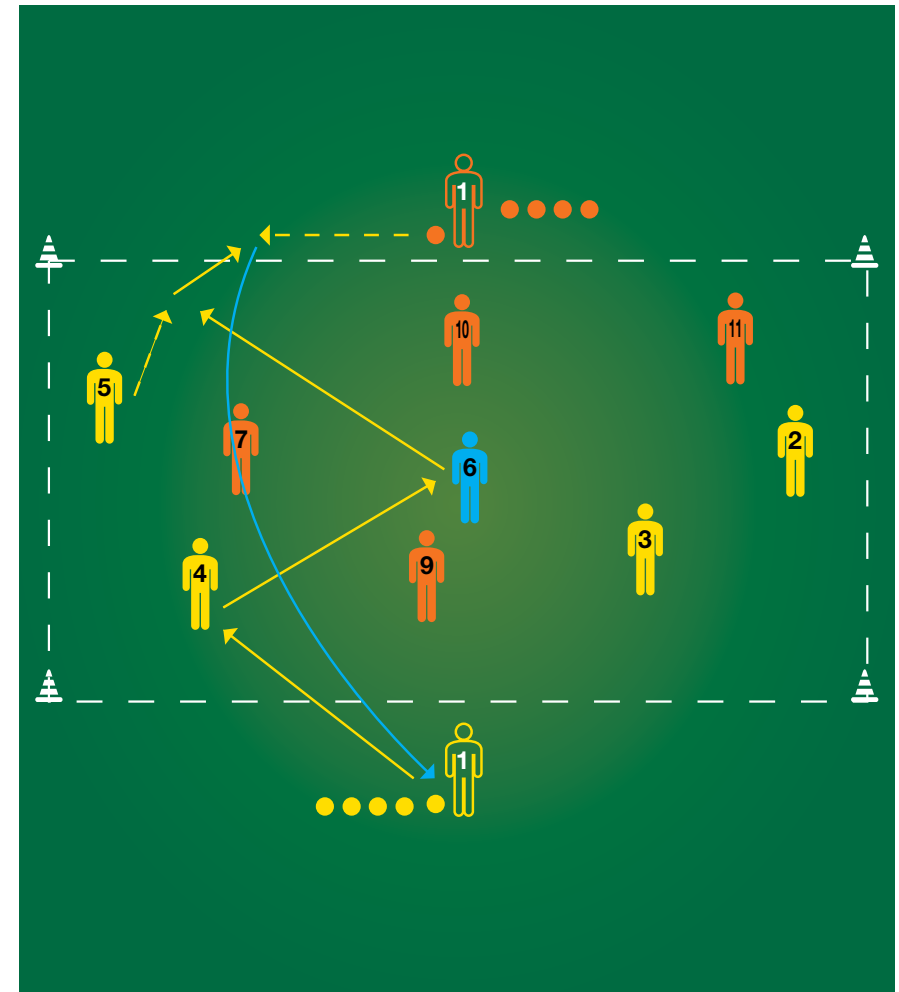
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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 1 Football Conditioning (Big games)

2. Positioning game: 5 v 4 + 2 (7 v 4)

- A grid of approximately 40m wide x 30m long
- 2 groups of 4 outfield players (orange + yellow)
- Yellow consisting of the players #2-3-4-5
- Orange consisting of the players #7-9-10-11
- #6 is a neutral player who always plays with the team in possession
- The 2 goalkeepers are neutral players who always play with the team in possession and are positioned just behind each back line
- The players as far as the game allows in 'logical' positions
- Yellow #1 starts the game for the yellow team, who must try to pass the ball to orange #1 on the opposite side (see diagram)
- If they succeed, orange #1 must now pass the ball across the grid back to yellow #1 on the opposite side, who must catch the ball and start again
- If orange wins the ball, they must try to pass the ball to orange #1 who restarts the game with orange in possession and yellow defending



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Performance Phase – Model Session 1

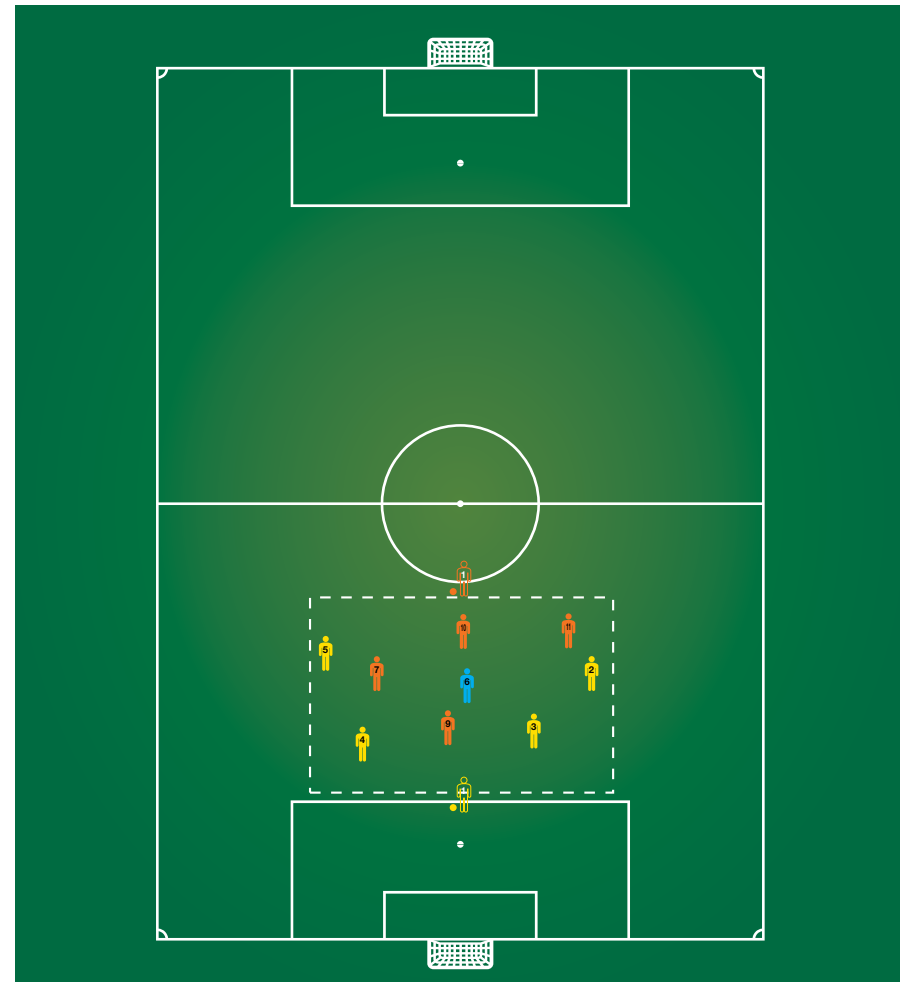
Football Conditioning (Big games)

Steps up or down:

- Make grid bigger/smaller
- Free/limited touches
- Free/minimum number of passes before you can pass to #1
- 1 point for every successful pass from goalkeeper to goalkeeper

Remark:

- Position the grids in 'game realistic' areas of the field (see diagram on the right)



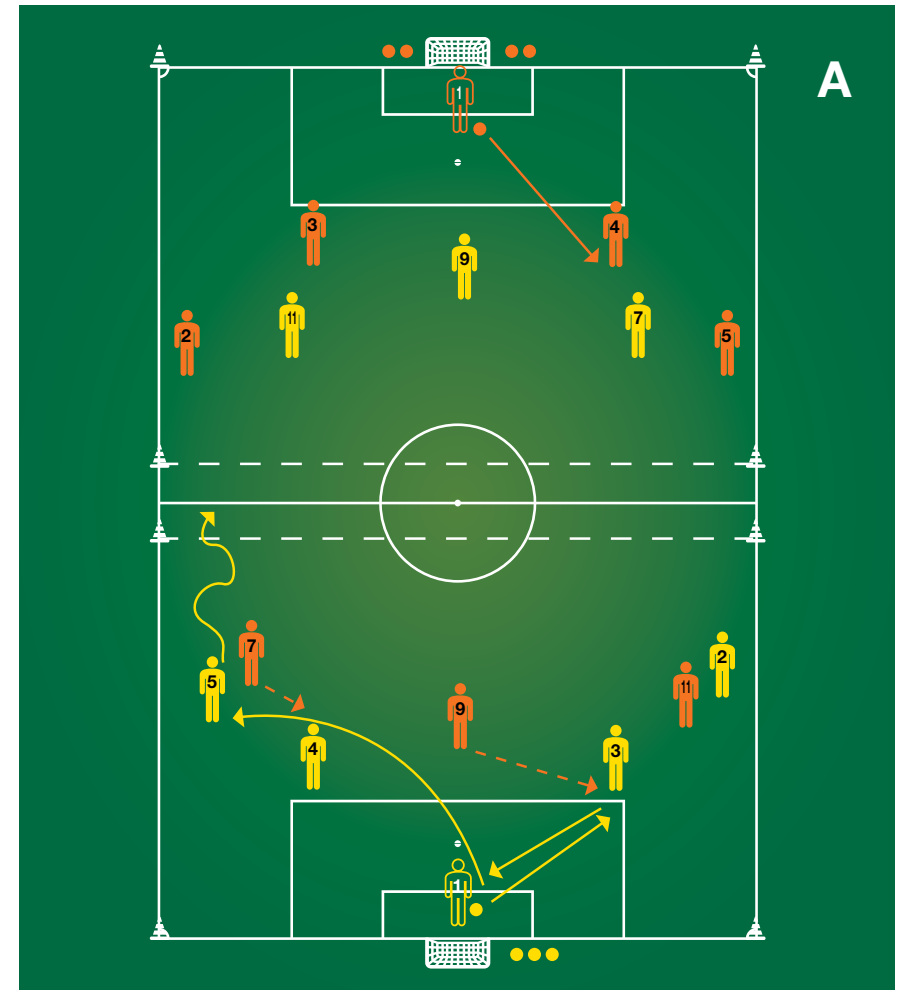
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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 1 Football Conditioning (Big games)

3. Game training component:

- Two teams of 8 players each consisting of a full defence line (#1-2-3-4-5) and attack line (#7-9-11)
- 2 grids approximately the width of a full pitch and 45m long as shown in diagram A
- In both grids the defenders of one team play against the attackers of the other team
- The goalkeepers start by serving the ball to one of the defenders (enough balls next to both goals)
- “Get the ball to the ‘free’ player who must run with the ball across the end line”
- If the attackers win the ball, attack the goal and try to score (one attempt only). If the defenders win the ball back, the action has ended
- Every restart from the goalkeeper

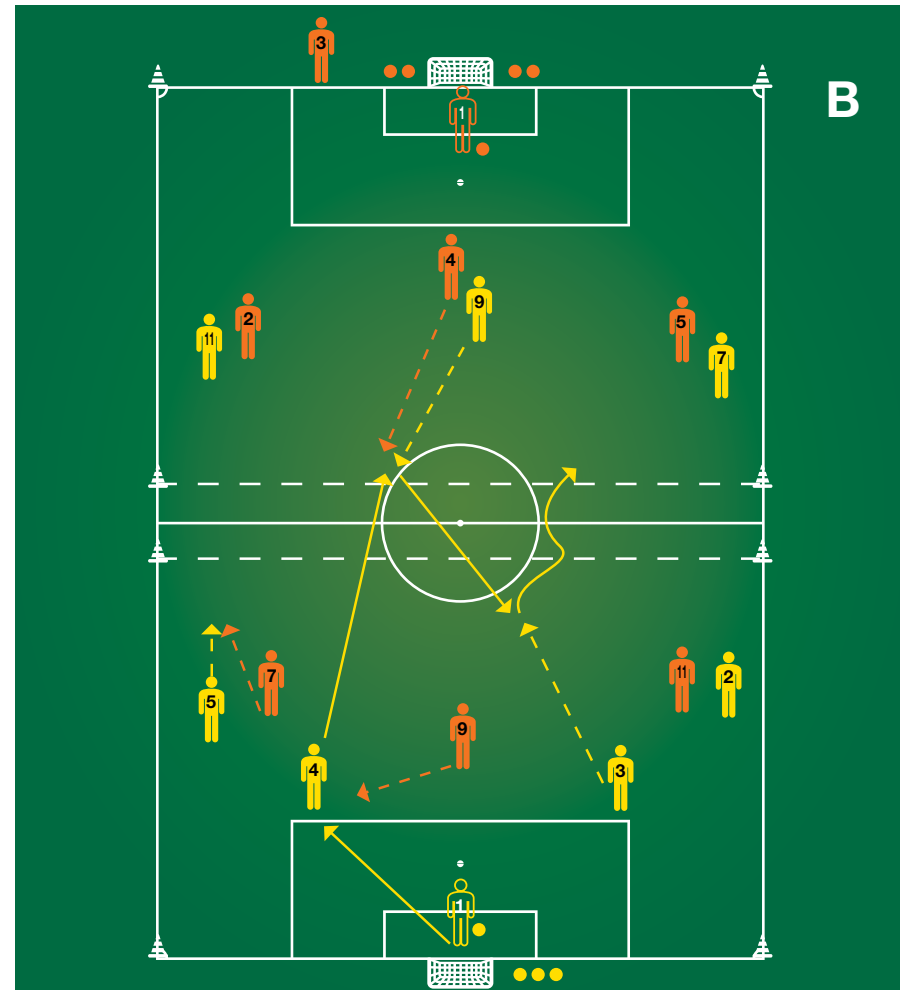


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Performance Phase – Model Session 1 Football Conditioning (Big games)

Progression:

- Now we 'connect' both grids (see diagram B)
- Yellow starts playing out from the back and tries to get one defender across to the other grid
- They can now also use the yellow attackers in the other grid as bouncers (offside applies)
- One orange defender waits next to the goal
- So yellow has a numerical advantage (4 v 3) and tries to score
- If the yellow team loses the ball in their defensive grid, orange can try to score (1 attempt only)
- If yellow loses the ball in the attacking grid, orange play back to their goalkeeper and the action has ended

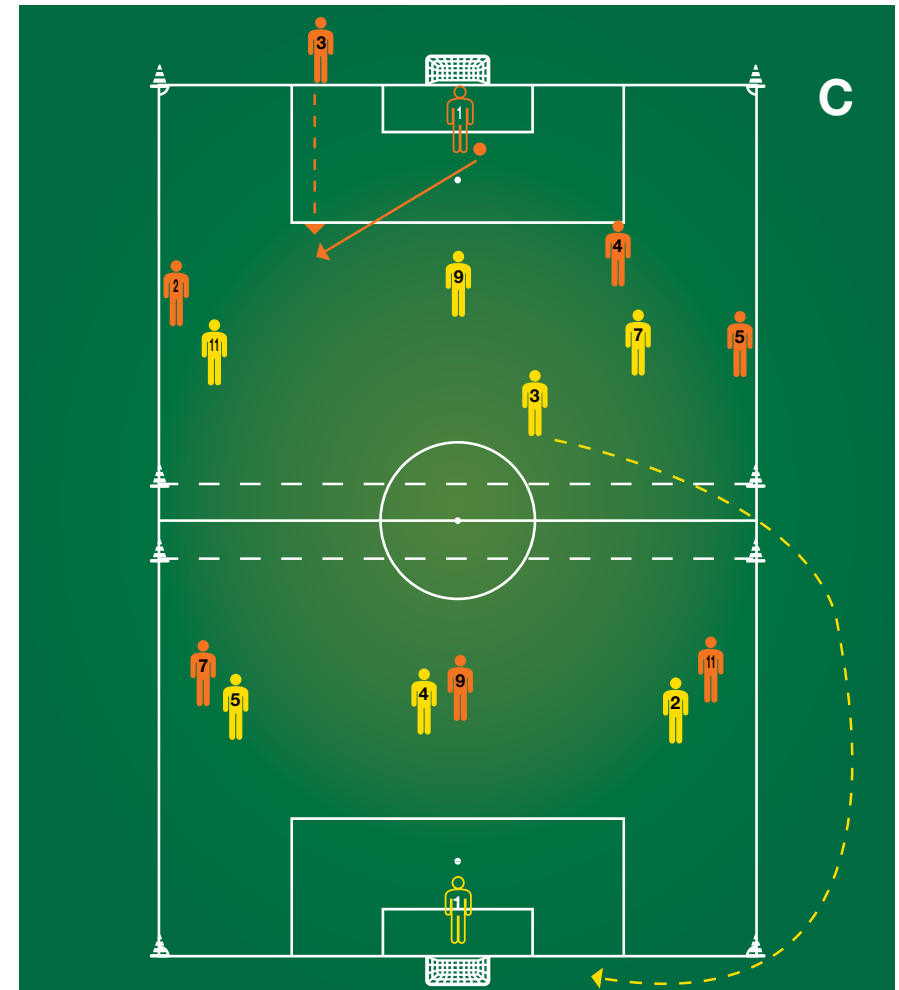


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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 1 Football Conditioning (Big games)

- Now the orange defender (#3), who was waiting next to the goal, comes on to the pitch and the yellow defender (#3) that had joined the attack steps out and jogs back to wait next to the goal
- The same action starts again but now with orange playing out and attacking while the yellow team defends (see diagram C)
- The next step up would be to decrease the size of the grids, with portable goals on the edge of each box and narrowing the pitch 5m each side. The halfway line now divides the attacking and defensive halves



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Performance Phase – Model Session 1

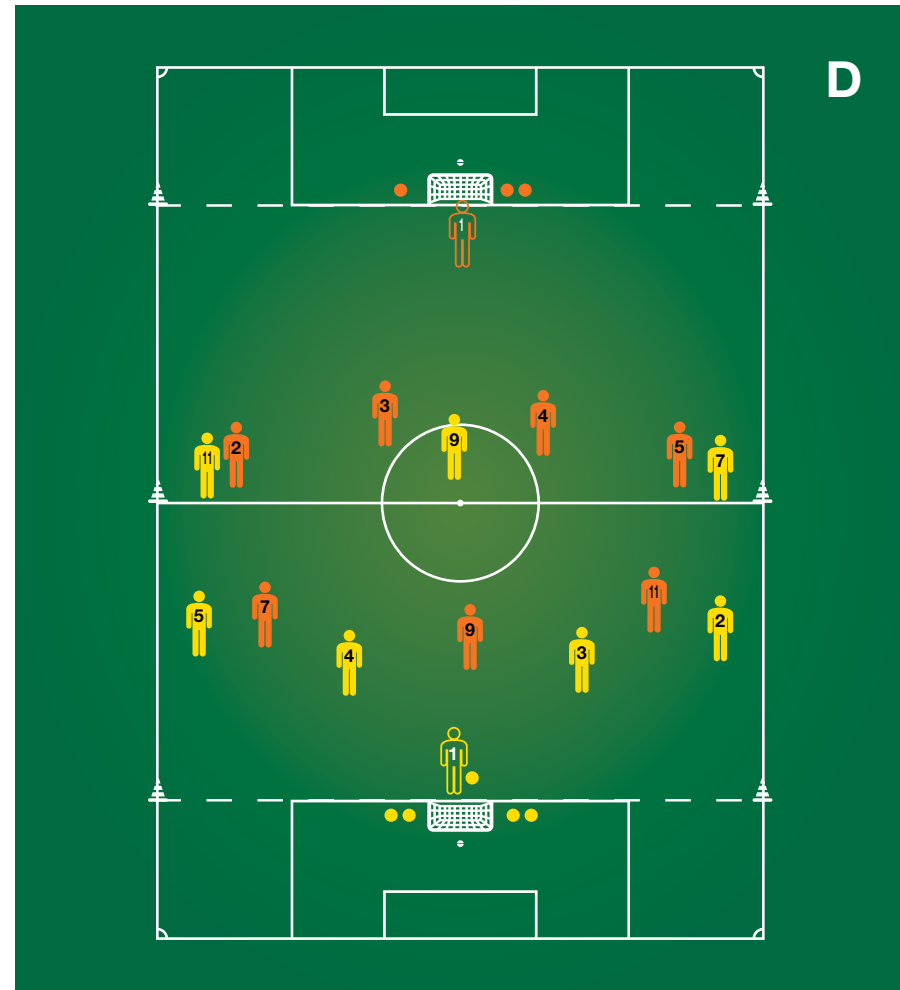
Football Conditioning (Big games)

4. Conditioning Game: 8 v 8 (7 v 7 + goalkeepers, see diagram D)

- Formation of both teams 1-4-3
- All players can move across the whole field
- Normal rules, offside applies
- Pitch size depends on player's ability (see diagram D)

- **Since it's a conditioning game the intensity must be high.** Therefore there are no stops for throw-ins; corners; free kicks or goal kicks. The goalkeeper of the team that should have had the throw-in, corner or free kick immediately serves a new ball (within 3 seconds otherwise the coach serves a ball to the other team)

- **Play 2 games of 10 minutes with two minutes rest between the games**



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 2 Football Conditioning (Middle games)

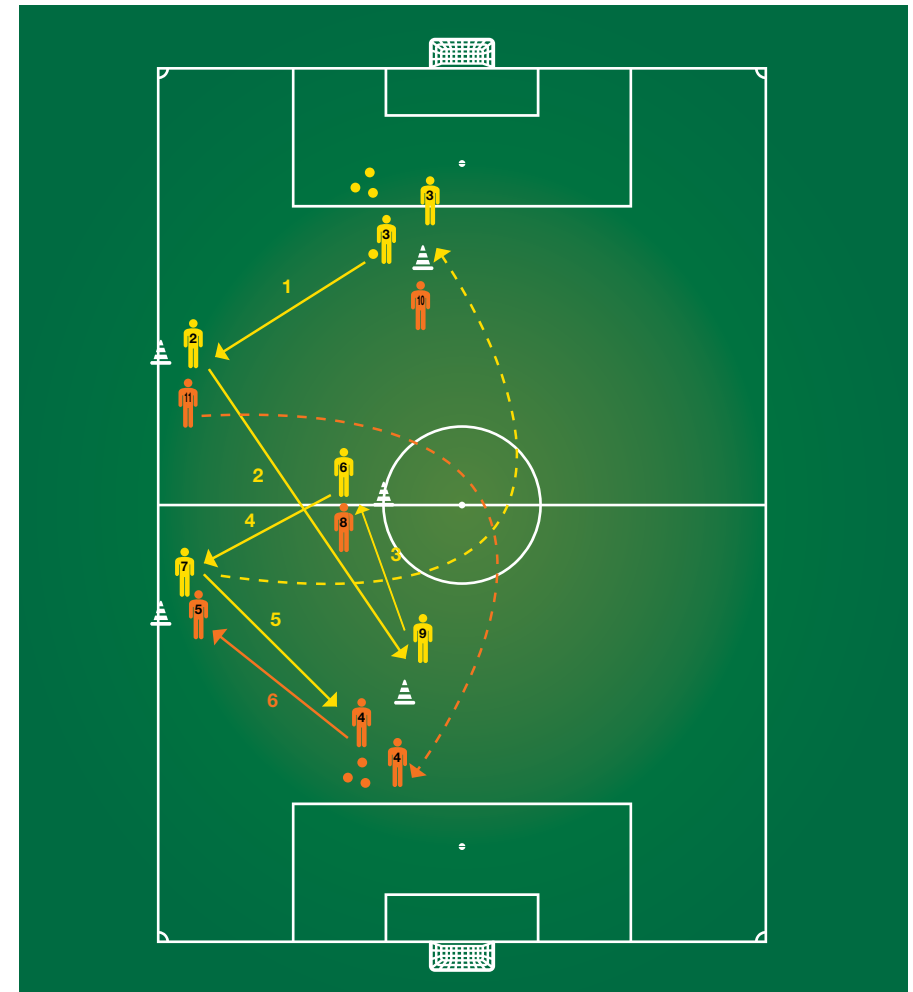
Football problem:

“Our team is not very effective when we attack in wide areas. The wingers, in combination with the full-backs, too often make wrong choices.

The awareness and decision-making of our wingers and the cooperation with the full-backs must improve to make our wing play more effective”.

1. Warm-up: passing exercise

- Players in their game positions (see diagram)
- Right side players (yellow) and left side players (orange) opposite of one another but not interfering with each other
- Minimum 2 players in the positions #3 & #4
- In case of bigger numbers: set up a similar organisation on the other wing
- Yellow works from top down; orange from bottom up (#7 yellow passes to #4 orange who starts the same combination in the opposite direction till #11 orange passes the ball again to yellow #3)
- All players follow their pass to the next position but only on their own team



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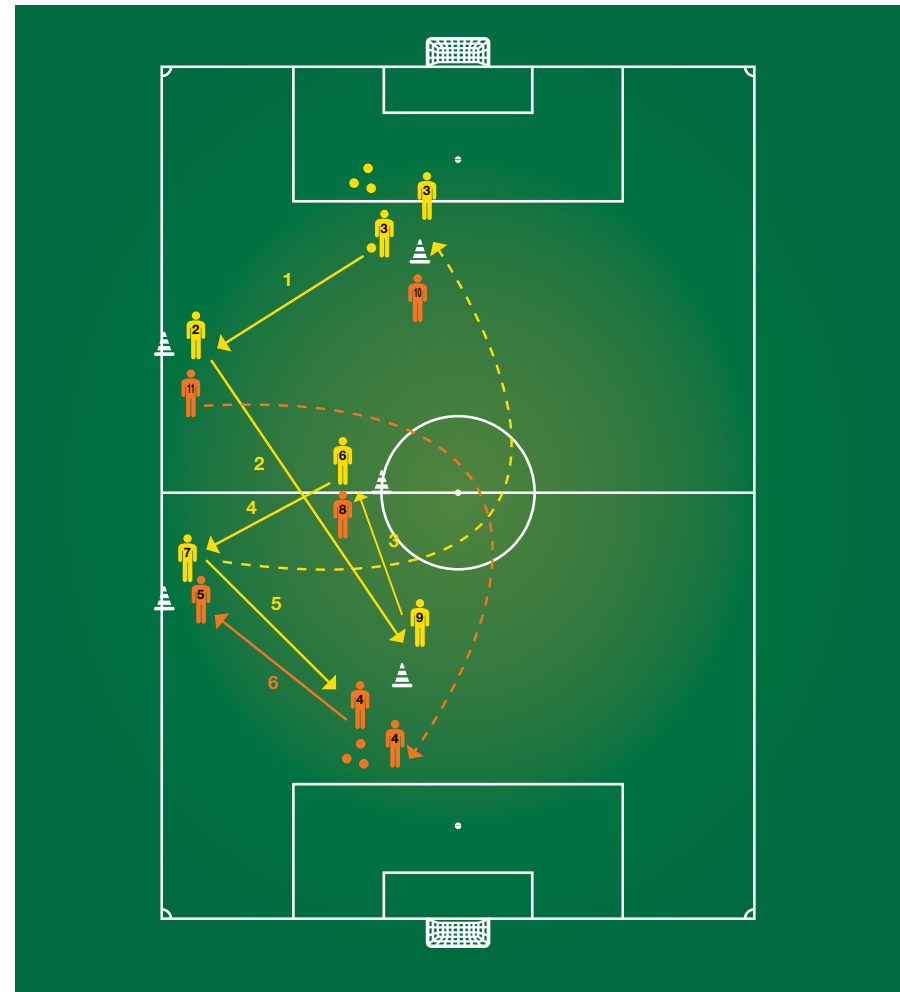
Performance Phase – Model Session 2

Football Conditioning (Middle games)

- i.e. After pass 5 to orange #4, yellow #7 goes to the position of yellow #3 (same for orange #11: to position #4).
- Start with prescribed pattern (as shown)
- Introduce a 2nd (3rd?) pattern

Progression:

- Now yellow passes with passive resistance of orange: choose the right option depending on the defensive positioning of the opposing players (this option is for advanced players only)



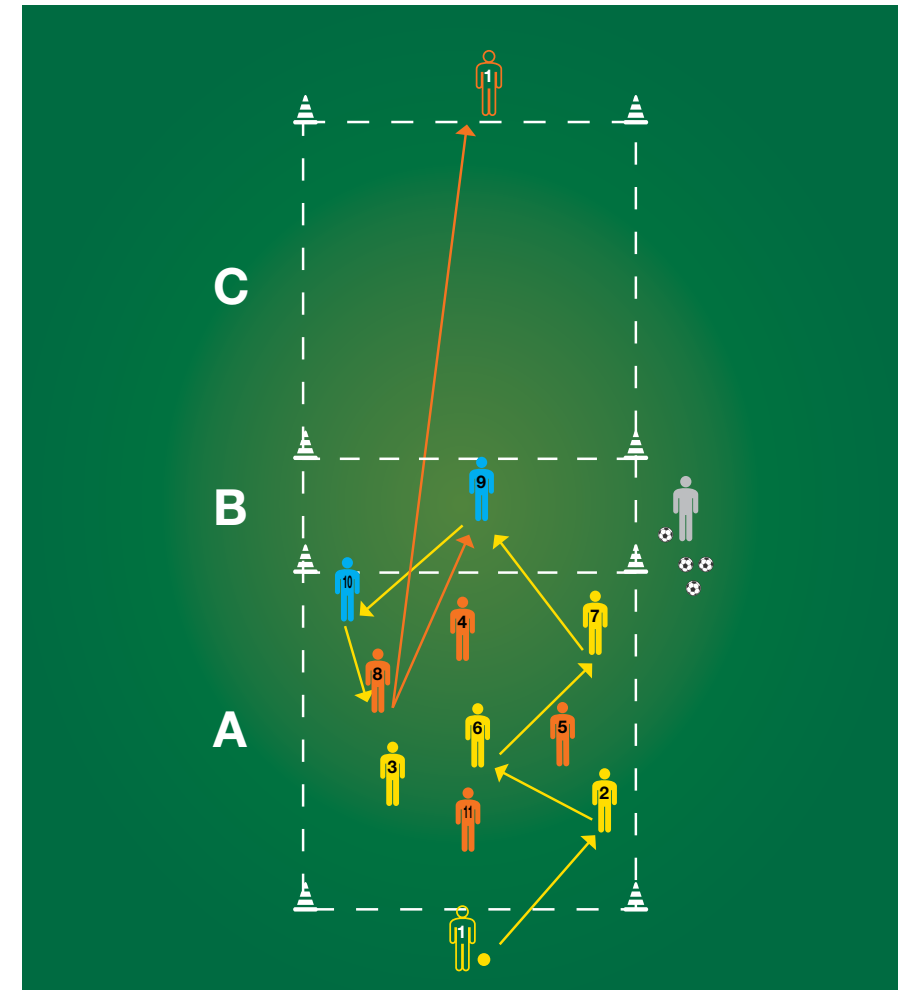
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Performance Phase Model Sessions

Performance Phase – Model Session 2 Football Conditioning (Middle games)

2. Positioning game: 7 v 4

- 2 grids of approximately 30m x 30m (A & C) separated by a grid of 5m x 30m (B)
- 2 groups of 4 outfield players
- Yellow consisting of the players #2-3-6-7
- Orange consisting of the players #4-5-8-11
- #9 and #10 are neutral players who always play with the team in possession; one in grid B the other in the grid where the positioning game takes place (see diagram)
- 2 goalkeepers positioned on each back line
- #7 (yellow) keep possession against #4 (orange)
- Players as much as possible in their game positions (especially the team in BP)
- Provide 4 options (left; right; central and far) for the player on the ball through proper positioning
- When orange wins the ball in grid A, they must try to pass to #9 in grid B or their goalkeeper at the far end
- If they succeed, all players cross over to grid C where the game continues with orange in possession and yellow defending
- If a yellow player passes the ball out of the grid, the coach immediately serves a new ball to the orange goalkeeper and the game restarts in grid C with possession for orange



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Performance Phase – Model Session 2

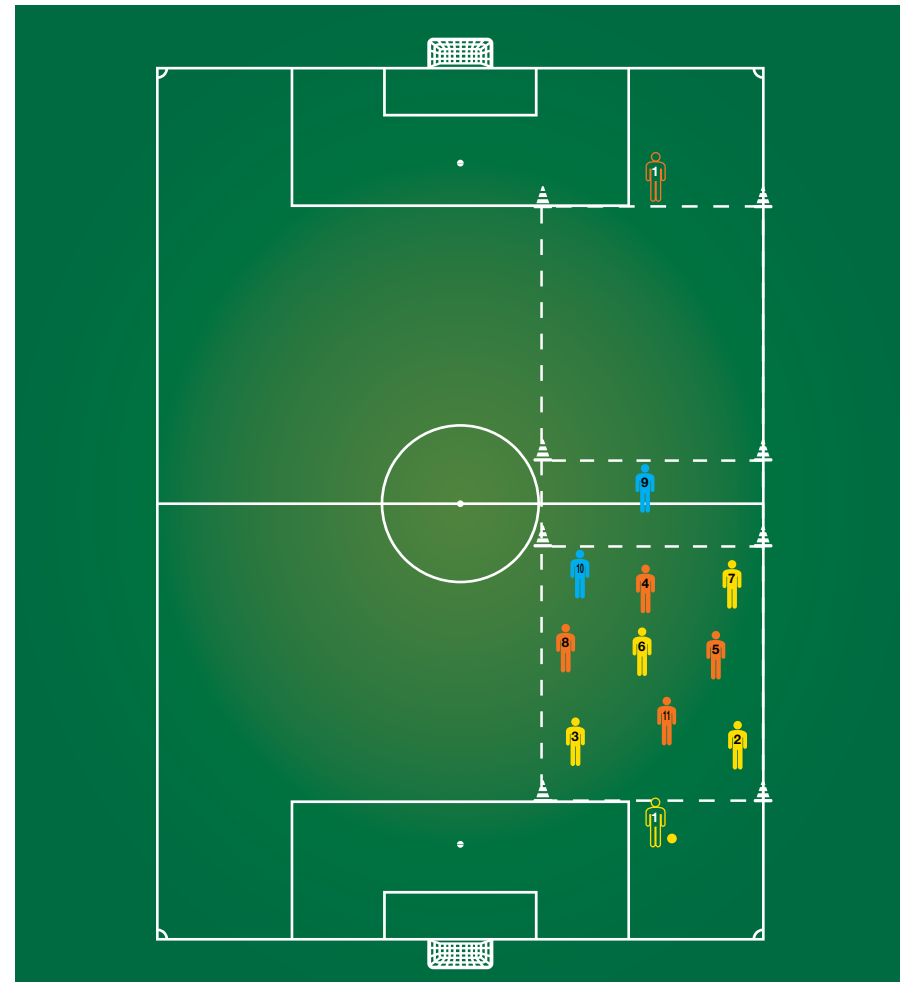
Football Conditioning (Middle games)

Steps up or down:

- Make grids bigger/smaller
- Free/limited touches
- Stop-start change of grids
- 'Flying' change of grids

Remark:

- Position the grids in 'game realistic' areas of the field (see diagram on the right)



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

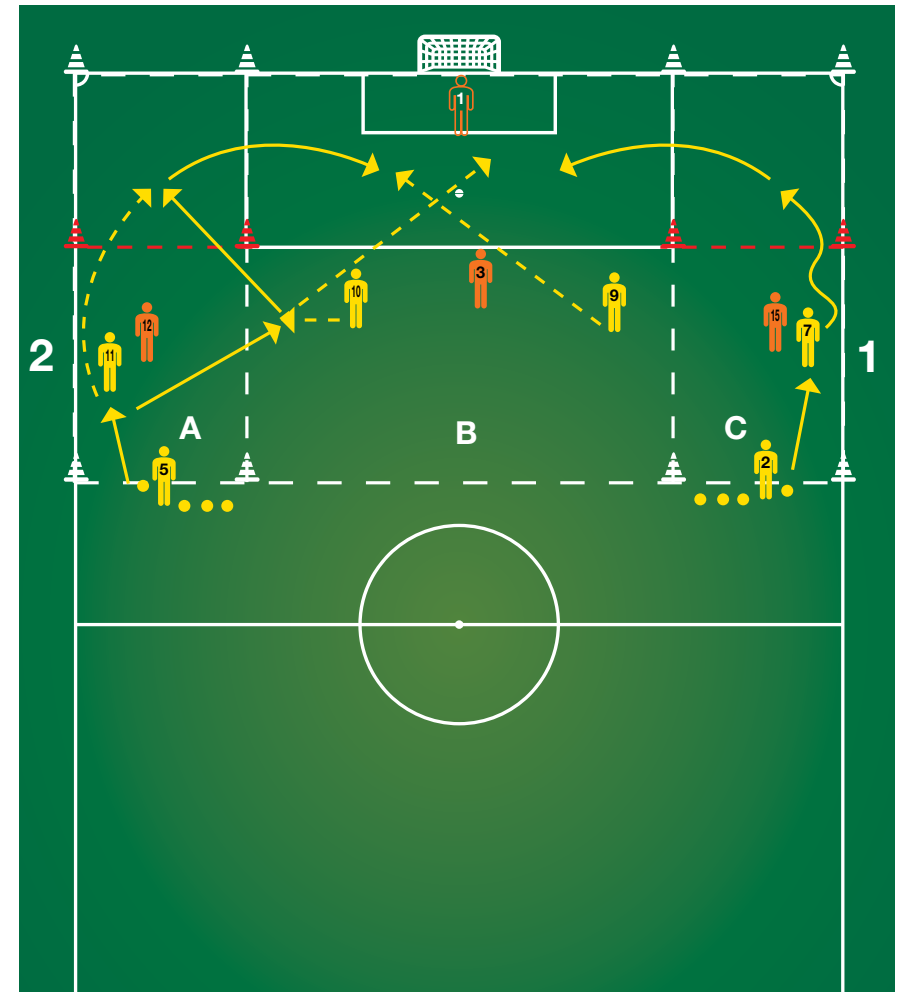
Performance Phase – Model Session 2 Football Conditioning (Middle games)

3. Game training component:

- Three grids A, B and C as shown in diagram on the right
- In grid A, #11 yellow and an orange defender (#12); #5 yellow is positioned outside the grid with plenty of balls
- In grid B, #9 & #10 yellow and an orange defender (#3) plus a goalkeeper
- In grid C, #7 yellow and an orange defender (#15) with yellow #2 outside the grid
- #2 & #5 yellow alternately serve a ball to respectively #7 & #11
- #2-7 and #5-11 must beat the orange defenders in their respective grids through effective wing play and deliver a cross to #9 & #10 in grid B who try to finish 2 v 1
- The defenders in grids A & C cannot defend beyond the red dotted line

Wing play options:

- The winger beats the defender 1 v 1 (situation 1)
- The winger plays a wall pass with #9 or #10 (situation 2)



Performance Phase – Model Session 2

Football Conditioning (Middle games)

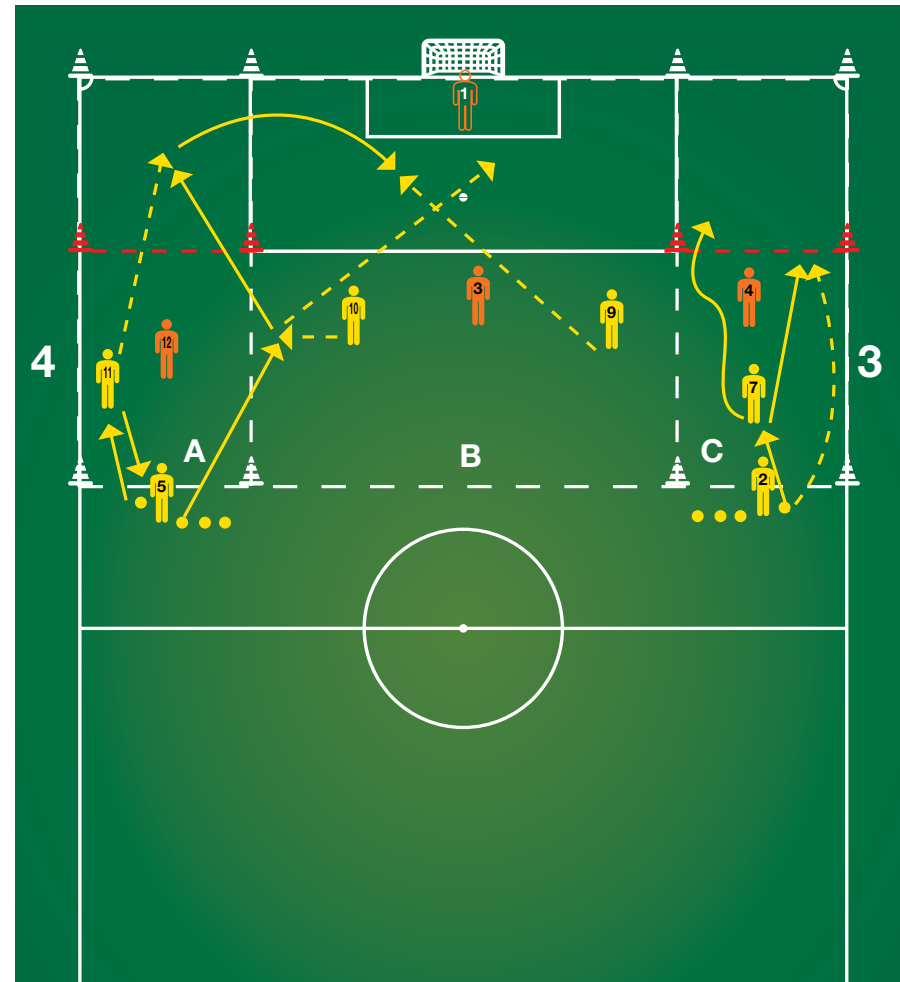
More wing play options:

- The full-back overlaps the winger to create a 2 v 1 (situation 3)
- The winger bounces with the full-back and becomes the 3rd man via a combination with #9 or #10 (situation 4)

The option selected by the attacking player often depends on the action of the defender. The coach may need to help the players develop their awareness and insight to select the most effective option.

Communication between the players is essential.

Also pay attention to the positioning and finishing of #9 & #10



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

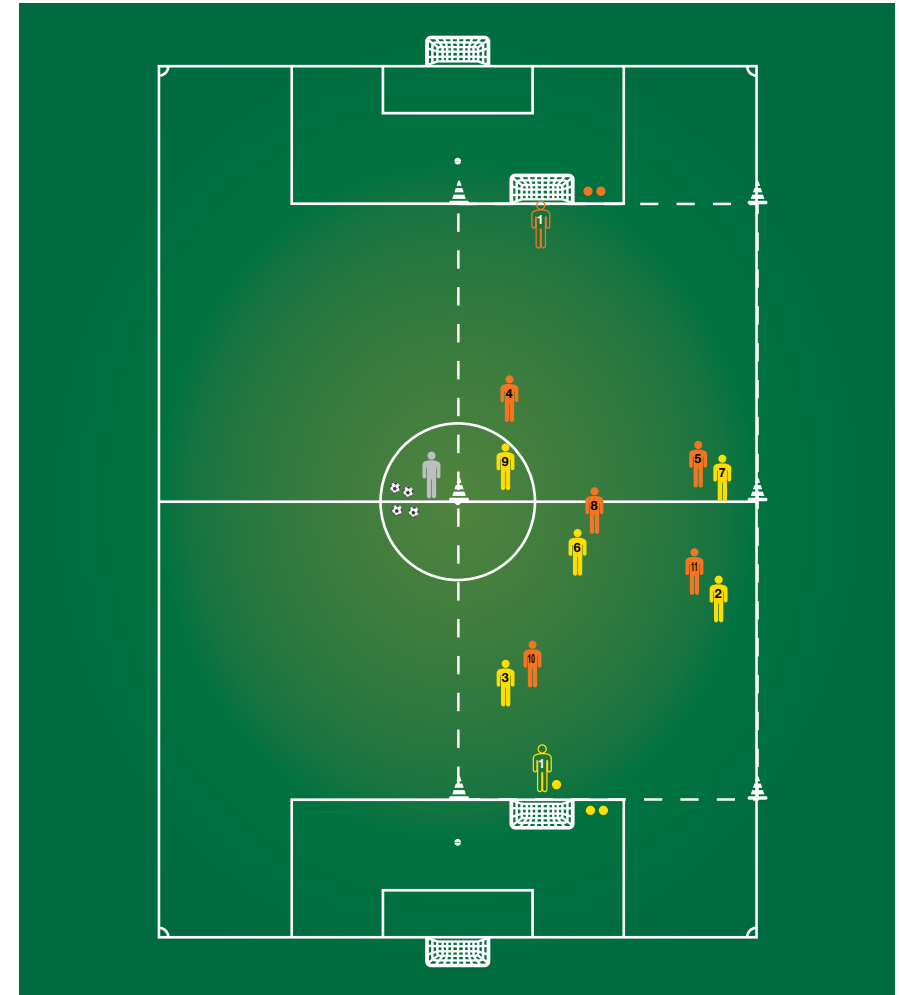
Performance Phase – Model Session 2 Football Conditioning (Middle games)

4. Conditioning game: 5 v 5 + goalkeepers

- The field is positioned in a wide area of the full pitch (see diagram)
- Pitch length: box to box (70m)
- Pitch width: central axis to sideline (35m), divided by the halfway line
- Two portable goals (or poles) placed as shown (balls next to the goals)
- The coach with balls on the halfway line
- Offside rule applies!
- Players in their usual 'game positions'
- In this particular game, it means that the right side of the team (#2-3-6-7) + striker #9 plays against the left side of the team (#4-5-8-11) + central midfielder #10. It is essential that the coach maintains realistic positions relative to a full field game (this explains the positions of the goals)
- #9 and #10 to change teams halfway through the game
- **By setting the game up this way, wing play will automatically be emphasised**

- **Since it's a conditioning game the intensity must be high.** Therefore there are no stops for throw-ins; corners; free kicks or goal kicks. The goalkeeper of the team that should have had the throw-in, corner or free kick immediately serves a new ball (within 3 seconds otherwise the coach serves a ball to the other team)

- **Play four games of 4 minutes with 2 minutes rest between the games**



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Performance Phase – Model Session 3

Football Conditioning (Small games)

Football problem:

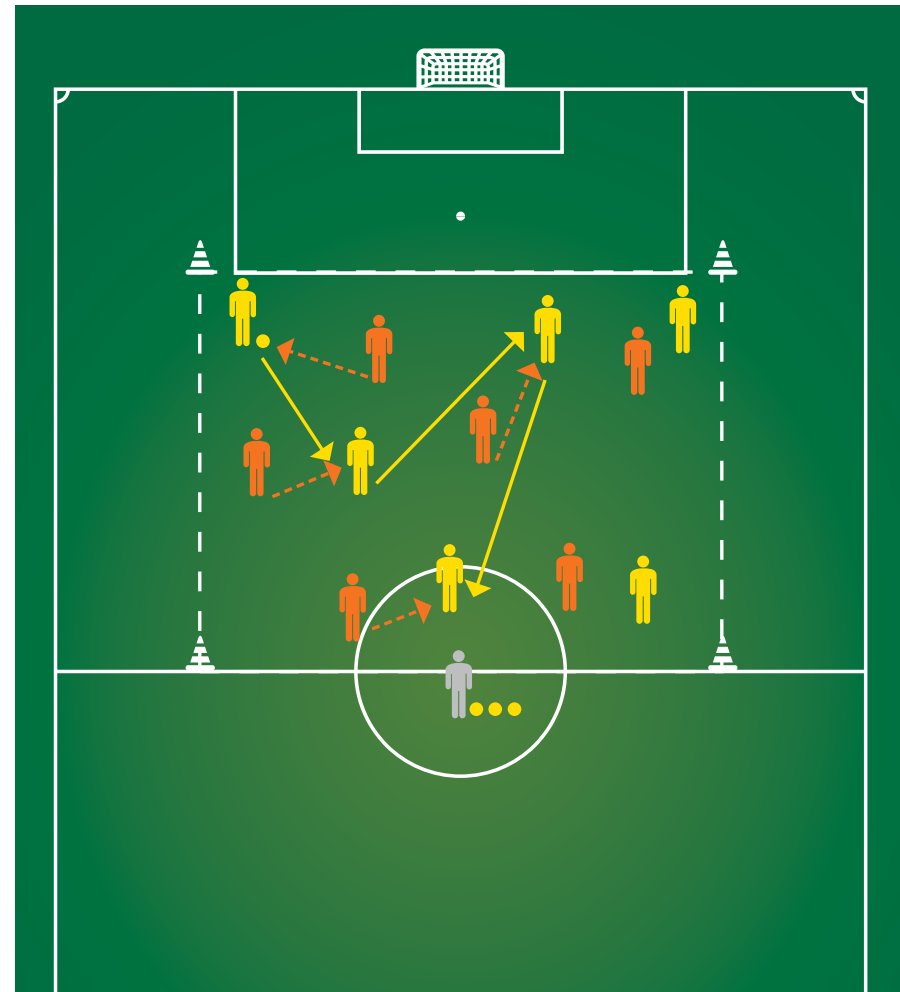
“Our team is not good at regaining the ball from the opponent. Our players are generally too passive and give their opponents too much time and space to receive, pass, shoot or run with the ball. We must improve our ability to defend more aggressively as a team as well as individually”.

1. Warm-up: passing exercise

- Two groups of 6 players position themselves in a grid of approximately 40m x 40m as shown in diagram
- The yellow players move freely in the grid while passing a ball in an un-prescribed order
- The yellow players must actively ask for the ball, check off, anticipate, etc
- The orange players ‘pressure’ the ball without intercepting it or disrupting the passing sequence

Progression:

- Change the role of the yellow and orange team regularly
- Dynamic stretches possible in the intervals
- Increase the passing and running speed
- Introduce a 2nd (3rd) ball



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

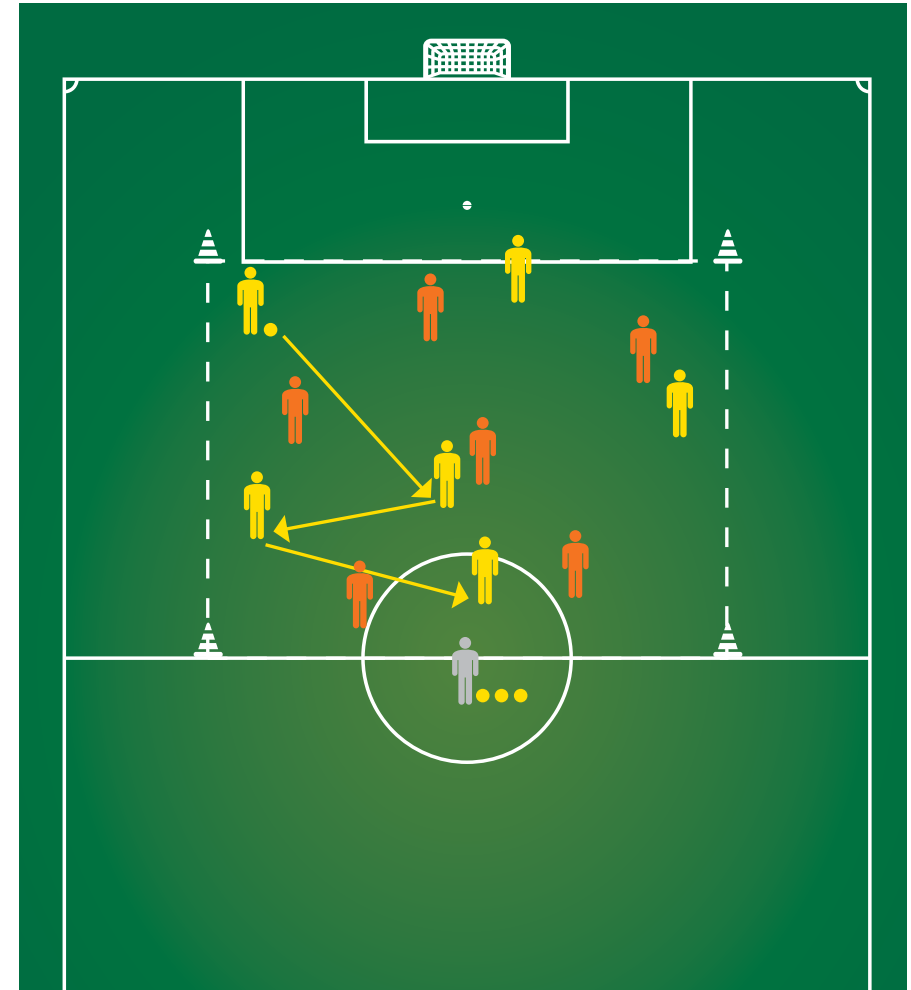
Performance Phase – Model Session 3 Football Conditioning (Small games)

2. Positioning game: 6 v 6

- Use the grid from the passing exercise
- One team keeps possession of the ball while the other team tries to win it back
- Series of 3-4 minutes max with 2 minutes rest in between

Steps up or down:

- Make the grid bigger/smaller
- Free/limited touches
- Zonal marking/man-marking



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Performance Phase – Model Session 3

Football Conditioning (Small games)

3. Game training component: duel 1 v 1

Organisation:

Outside the penalty box is a 15m x 15m grid with 6 cones placed as shown in the diagram.

Two teams (orange and yellow) are divided into 2 groups of equal numbers and positioned as shown.

Groups orange A and yellow C have a ball each. The exercise starts with A1 passing the ball to B1. A1 then runs around the central cone to receive the ball back from B1. At the moment A1 starts their run around the cone, D1 also starts to run around the opposite central cone.

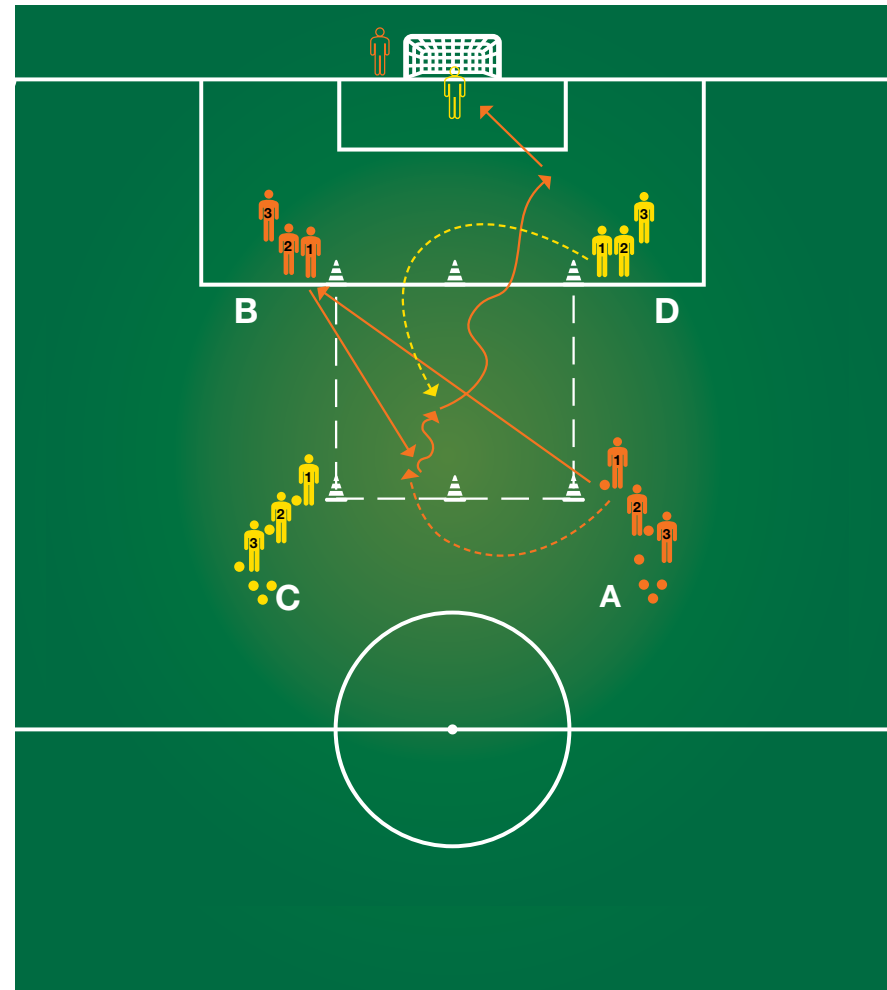
A1 must now try to beat D1 in a 1 v 1 to enter the penalty box and finish on goal. D1 can only defend in the grid and is not allowed to enter the penalty box.

The action stops when A1 has finished on goal; D1 captures the ball from A1 or the ball goes out of the grid.

After the action has finished the players involved move as follows:

- A1 to group B (bring back the ball)
- B1 to group A (bring ball from A1)
- D1 goes back to group D (line up at the back)
- Next sequence is C1 passing to D2 with B2 defending

“Which team can score the most?”



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

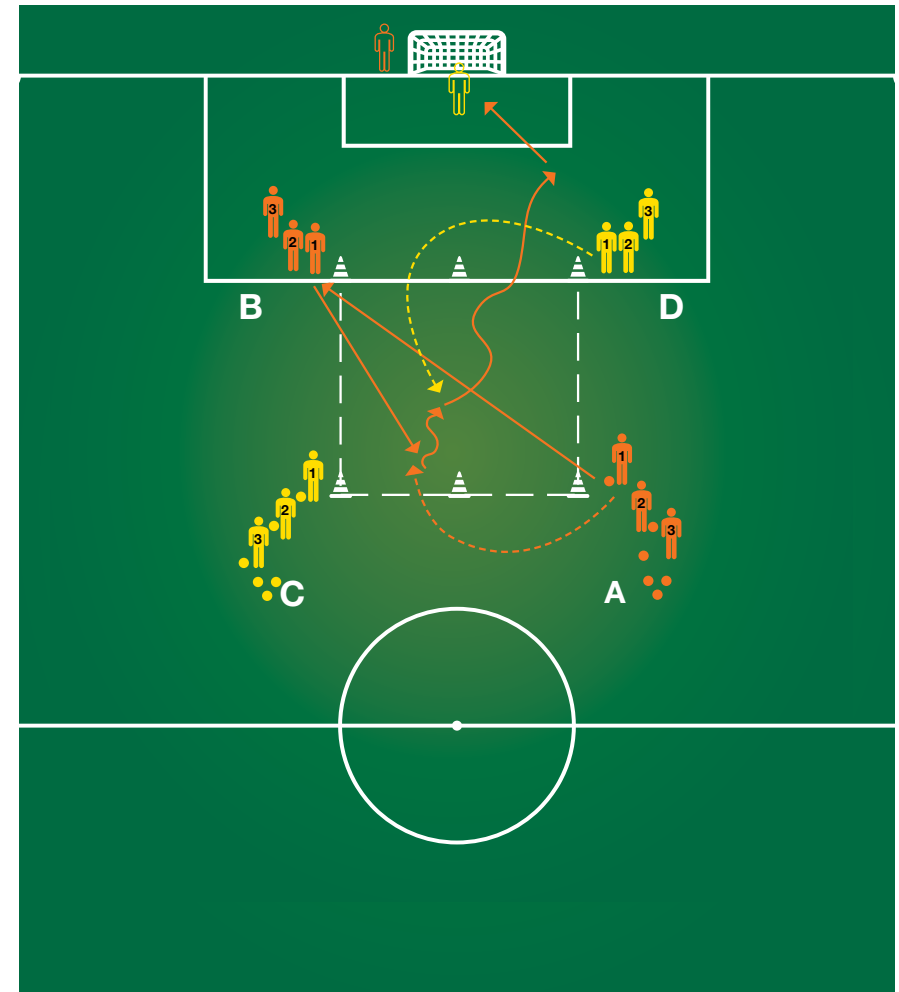
Performance Phase – Model Session 3 Football Conditioning (Small games)

Remember the coaching must focus on the defenders:

“Make contact and force the attacker to one side”

“Use feint attacks to slow the attacker down”

“Attack the ball aggressively when the opponent loses control of the ball or stops”



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Performance Phase – Model Session 3

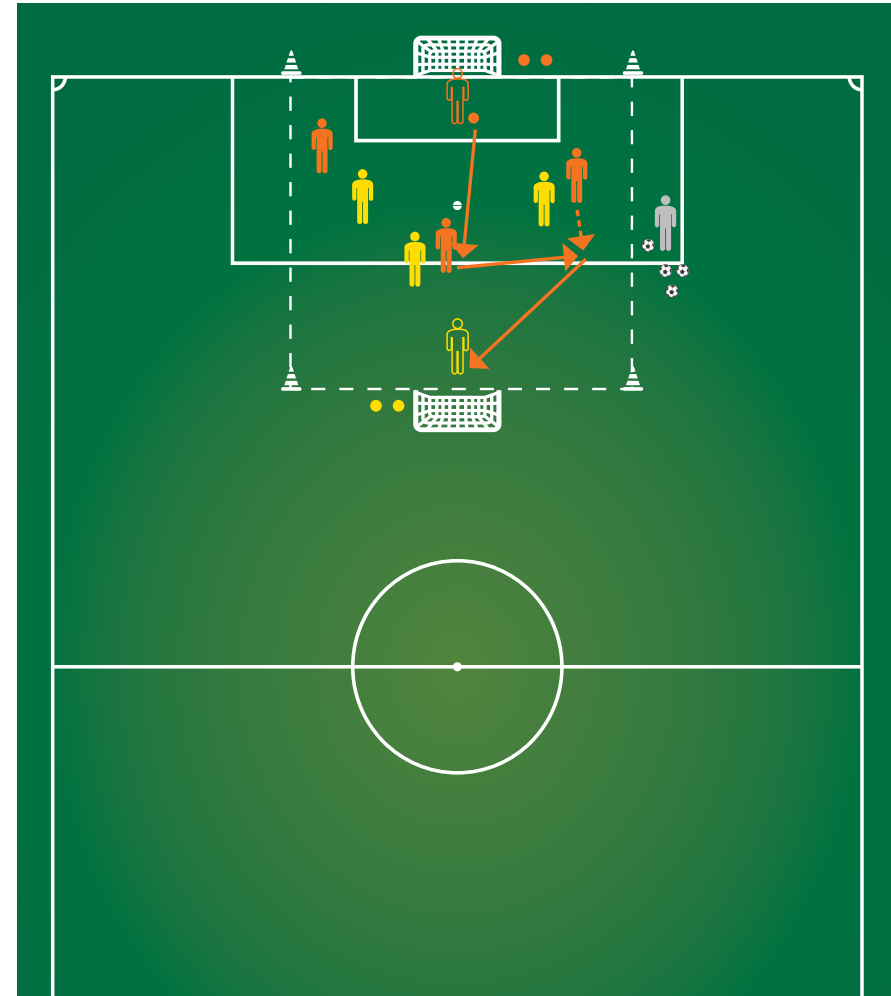
Football Conditioning (Small games)

4. Conditioning game: 3 v 3 games + goalkeepers

- A field of approximately 30m x 25m with two big goals and plenty of balls next to the goals
- The coach with balls on the sideline
- The team in possession must keep a diamond shape to make combination play possible
- The attackers can score from any position on the pitch, therefore the defenders must mark closely and defend aggressively everywhere

- **Since it's a conditioning game the intensity must be high.** Therefore there are no stops for throw-ins, corners, free kicks or goal kicks. The goalkeeper of the team that should have had the throw-in, corner or free kick immediately serves a new ball (within 3 seconds otherwise the coach serves a ball to the other team)

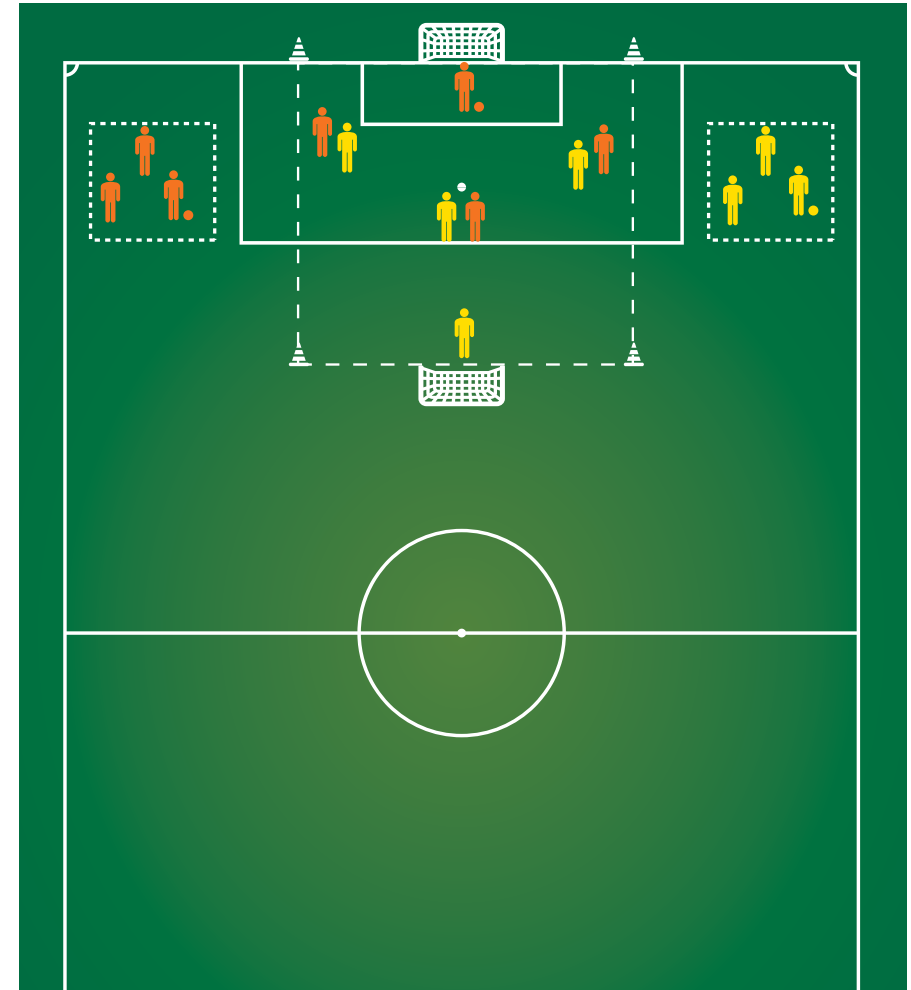
- **Play 12 games of 1 minute with 3 minutes rest between the games and a longer (6 minutes) break after the 6th repetition**



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Performance Phase Model Sessions

- The rest periods must be a so-called 'active rest'. This is a low intensity activity like juggling individually or as a group
- This can be done while another group of players is working (see diagram)



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