



Player Development

Principle Based Guide
U13+



VISION

A community driven, nationally
recognized leader in the
development and the growth of
soccer.

MISSION

Our mission is to provide
leadership to our members by
building vibrant communities
through a player-centred
approach embracing the values
of fair play, respect and a
passion for the game of soccer.

VALUES

Respect
Player-Centred
Innovation
Integrity
Quality
Inclusion



About This Document

This document serves to provide information about Soccer Nova Scotia's philosophy on Player Development to the greater soccer community of Nova Scotia.

While much of the content of this document is self-explanatory and familiar, other concepts may be new to some - we hope that it sparks curiosity for players, parents and coaches to research some of the ideas presented in more detail.

By providing a framework and language around things such as moments of the game, principles of play and session design, as well as providing sample sessions, we believe that we can better align all levels of soccer in Nova Scotia.

Please contact your Club Licence Consultant if you would like more information on anything in this document

"The needs of the player comes first"

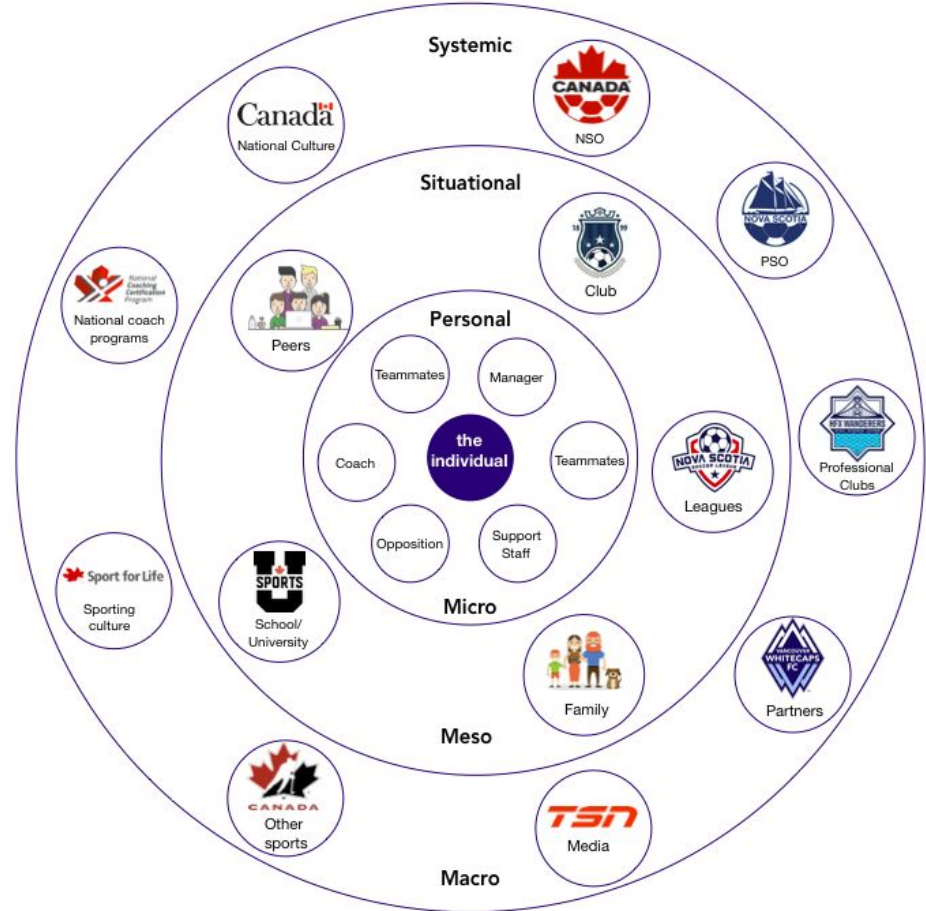
Development Environment

Every child that plays soccer is influenced by multiple factors that impacts their development. From obvious influencers such as their parents and coaches to wider societal factors like other sports and national culture, there are many things that we need to be aware of when working with children.

Our aim is to inspire children to love the sport, play for the entirety of their life and reach the highest level of which they are capable. In order to do that we must ensure that the child is at the centre of our thoughts when designing programs and training sessions.

Individual(s) and team behaviours emerge from interactions with their environment, therefore it is important that immediate influencers of the child, people such as teammates, coaches, managers and parents are conveying a consistent message to the player.

The diagram to the right gives an example of factors that may influence a player in Nova Scotia.



The SNS Player

As seen in the Development Environment on the previous page there are multiple stakeholders within the Nova Scotian macro-system that affects our players. While there may be different criteria by which stakeholders identify players for their programs the diagram below shows key features of what will be seen in a Soccer Nova Scotia player. They fall into 5 inter-connected categories:

- Mentality
- Soccer Intelligence
- Ability to execute
- Physical Attributes
- Character



Mentality

Displays emotional control under stress

Is a "4-moment" player

Intrinsically motivated to improve



Soccer Intelligence

Adapts to ever changing game conditions

Makes quick and effective decisions

Demonstrates tactical and situational awareness



Ability to Execute

Proficient in 1v1 scenarios

Possesses multiple tools to solve a problem

Confident to express themselves and play with belief



Physical Attributes

Uses their personal attributes to their advantage

Meets the demands of the 11-aside game



Character

Demonstrates the values of SNS

A leader on and off the field

Interacts positively with teammates, coaches and officials

The 4 Moments of the Game

Although the game is complex and fluid, we break the game into 4 main moments:

Attacking Organization (AO)

When we have established possession of the ball

Defensive Transition (DT)

The moments immediately after we lose the ball

Defensive Organization (DO)

When the other team has established possession

Attacking Transition (AT)

The moments immediately after we win the ball

These terms are important to help establish a consistent language between players and coaches. These will be used in all session plans provide by SNS to show what moment of the game we are working in



The 4 Moments of the Game



Even though a session may be focused on a certain moment of the game, it is important to make the practice as game realistic as possible. For this reason all activities should include a minimum of 2 moments, but allow for all 4 moments, of the game (also known as sequencing).

A simple example is an Attacking Organization session doing a 1v1 to goal. A session without sequencing would see the play stop when the defender wins the ball - this obviously does not happen in a game. **A more game-realistic activity would have an objective for the defender once they win the ball, eg. pass to a target or dribble to a certain area.** This allows the attacker to immediately go from AO to DT and the defender to go from DO to AT. Ideally, activities will allow for all 4 moments of the game to be present, so even if we are focusing on AO, we are implicitly training players how to act in all moments of the game.

The primary focus is the development of the individual player, however players are always dependent on their teammates to achieve their collective goal. Therefore it is important to develop a players understanding of, and that players show commitment to, all 4 moments of the game.

NEED TO KNOW...

Within the 4 moments of the game each Club will have their own philosophies and beliefs around how the game should be played. For example, in DO some clubs may defend with a '*high press*' while other may decide to have a '*low block*'. It is important to understand your Clubs *Game Model* to ensure that the identity of a team is consistent with the philosophy of the entire Club.

The SNS Approach and the Principles of play

As highlighted, the game is broken into 4 main moments. This is broadened into 2 moments when we look at how we view the game, these are:

1. When we have the ball (AO & AT)
2. When we do not have the ball (DO & DT)

In each of these moments we have specific objectives we are trying to achieve that are supported by the principles of Attacking or Defending.

When we have the ball (AO & AT)

Objectives: **discover, create and exploit gaps/space.**

Attacking Principles to support our objectives

- Penetration
- Mobility
- Support
- Width/Depth
- Improvisation

When we do not have the ball (AO & AT)

Objectives: **recognize, reduce & deny gaps/space.**

Defending Principles to support our objectives

- Delay
- Pressure/Support
- Cover/Screening
- Tracking/Marking
- Balance

Our Approach

In Possession

When we have the ball our objective is to: **discover, create and exploit gaps/space.**

Examples:

Discover: Scanning the field, looking for gaps to move into, looking for gaps to play the ball into

Create: Create space/gaps either for yourself or a teammate (by a dribble, by movement off the ball)

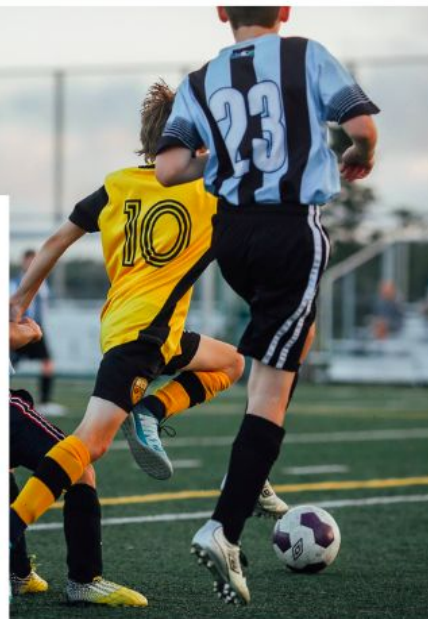
Exploit: Dribble through a gap, pass through a gap, run into the space



Discover



Create



Exploit

GAPS

In Possession

Recognize

GAPS

Out of Possession



Reduce

Deny



Our Approach

Out of Possession

When we do not have the ball our objective is to: **recognize, reduce & deny gaps/space.**

Examples:

Recognize: Scanning the field, looking for most dangerous space, prioritizing danger

Reduce: Making a gap smaller: getting pressure on the ball, getting closer to a teammate, dropping to prevent space behind backline

Deny: Getting high pressure on the ball, closing gaps completely, tackling.

The Session Design

Principles of Session Design

Here are some key principles that we believe should be applied in all training sessions

- **Representative learning design** - *what players see and feel is representative of the game (decision making, opposition, direction etc.)*
- **Keep perception and action coupled** - *a player should be allowed to see something and act accordingly - not be prescribed how to act regardless of the situation - or act not without any situational context*
- **External focus of attention** - *focus on the outcome of the act, not the act itself*
- **Repetition with variability** - *whatever the focus of the session is, ensuring that players get appropriate repetition but in different scenarios (eg. players are not always making the same pass, facing opposition in same position etc.)*
- **Create the problem - not the solution - via constraints** - *don't tell players how to do something, create the problem and allow them figure out how to do it. Manipulation of constraints e.g. Task constraints (rules, regulations, number of players on either team, starting position of players, ball feed)*

The Environment

Soccer is a complex sport in which players must continually make decisions based on multiple factors, **eg. position of teammates, position of opponents, physical and technical abilities of other players, position of the ball, weather conditions, scoreline, minute of the game etc.**

As these demands are faced by players during a game it is important to replicate this in the training environment. In other words, sessions should be representative of the game where players have to continually make decisions based on what they see in front of them and not be told how they *should* do something.



The Session Design



Affordances

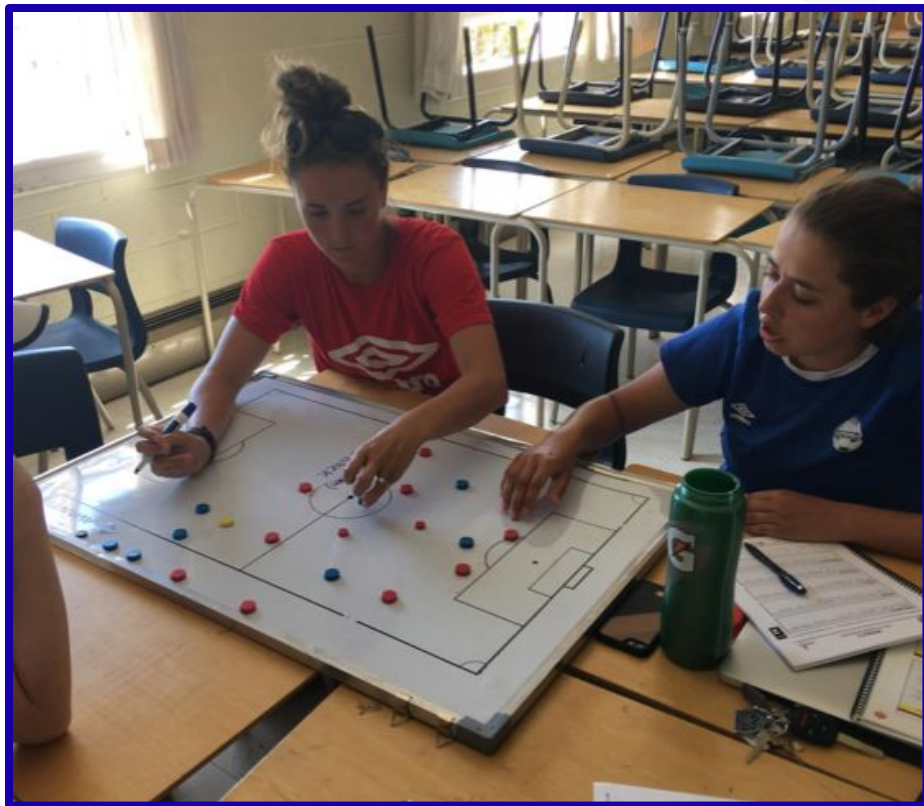
An affordance is what the environment offers the individual. Designing in affordances in the training environment is important because it allows for players to make their own decision based on what they see.

An example of an affordance would be a gap between two defenders. An attacker perceives there is a gap and acts appropriately - possibly by dribbling between them or playing a penetrative pass to a teammate (depending on the individuals capabilities).

A key factor of affordances in a dynamic environment is that they continually emerge and dissolve. For example if a defender moves then the gap could get bigger or smaller, and therefore impact the decision of the attacker.

CLICK THE IMAGE TO REVIEW THE VIDEO

The Session Design



Football (Soccer) Interactions

Football interactions are the soccer-specific actions we use when we play the game. These include things like passing, dribbling, shooting, tackling, running (with and with the ball), shielding, pressing etc.

Football interactions are how players utilize affordances during training and games. In a game situation a player will decide which soccer interaction to use based on the situation (affordances) and their own personal constraints.

NEED TO KNOW...

Sometimes players are told by coaches which football interaction to use at specific moments (eg. pass, don't dribble). This can lead to players being told they are wrong even if they have successfully completed a task.

Understanding affordances and football interactions allows us to focus on the outcome of an action, rather than which action was used.

Non-Linear Pedagogy

Constraints Led Approach

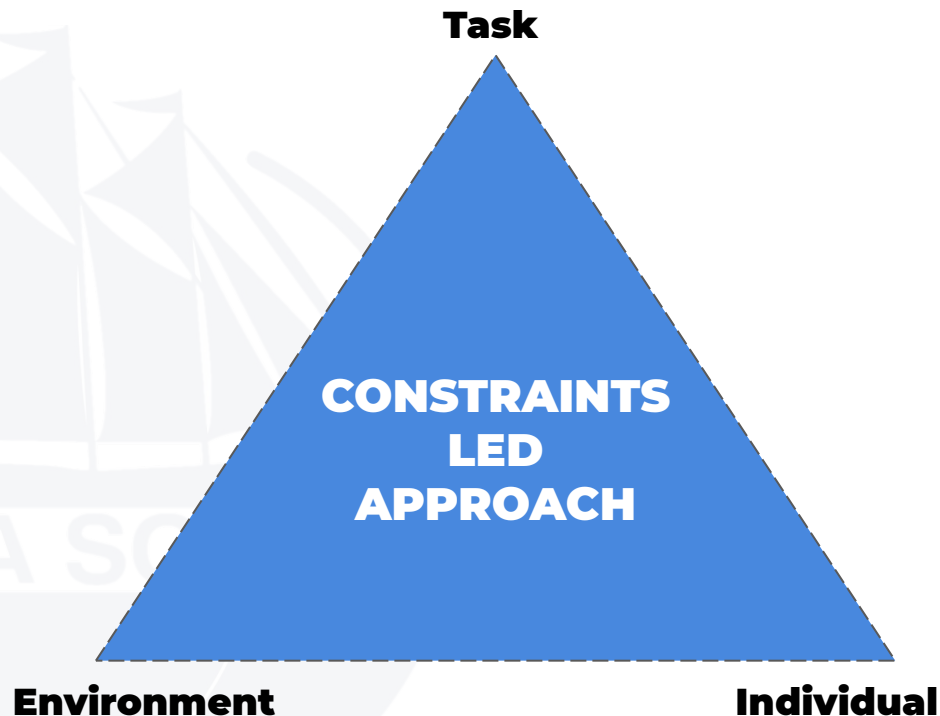
We believe that all players grow and develop at their own speed and therefore our coaching methods must reflect this.

The Constraints Led Approach looks at the relationship between 3 types of constraints:

- Environmental constraints
- Individual constraints
- Task constraints

The way in which an individual perceives the environment is key to how they act within it. The constraints listed above should not be viewed as positive or negative, they are simply factors that will affect the way in which an individual perceives their environment and therefore how they choose to interact with it.

These constraints are not fixed and will change over time as players grow, develop different skills.



CLICK THE IMAGE TO REVIEW THE VIDEO

Constraints Led Approach



Environmental Constraints

Environmental constraints include things such as the weather (windy, raining, high humidity etc.) and playing surface (playing on turf vs grass).

These are situational based on the day and will impact the decision a player makes at any given time. For example, playing in heavy wind or rain will elicit a different reaction in certain situations to playing in 30 degree heat.

Other environmental constraints are socio-cultural and take into account things such as family, friends, school, media etc. For example, the youngest child in a family whose older siblings all play soccer is likely to be more exposed to, and more culturally attuned to, playing soccer than an only child whose parents have no interest in the sport.

Constraints Led Approach

Personal Constraints

Personal constraints are factors unique to the individual such as height, speed, power, and even a player's motivation levels and emotional state. Knowing that all players have different constraints means that not all affordances are equal for all players.

Sessions should create an environment where players are given problems to solve and not prescribed which soccer interaction to use. This is because due to their own personal constraints players will find different solutions to the same problem.

Example: Player A and Player B both have a breakaway from half. In both cases the attacker is afforded (a) a large space between the attacker and goal, (b) no defenders in front of them, (c) the goalkeeper is near the top of the box, (d) defenders chasing from behind.

Player A is speedy and confident in their 1v1 finishing - based on their attributes the soccer interaction they decide to use is to sprint with the ball to the net before finishing.

Player B is slow but has great long range accuracy - based on their attributes the soccer interaction they choose is to chip the keeper from half.

In both instances the player has found a solution to the problem based on their individual constraints - neither is wrong and the player has owned the decision.

Doing drills where there is no decision making for players means that there are no affordances for players to explore and act upon - if we want to best replicate the demands of the game in our training environment we must ensure players are challenged in the same way they are challenged in games.



Constraints Led Approach

Task Constraints

Task constraints are typically put in place by the coach through the session design. Here are some of the constraints that a coach can determine in a session:

- Number of players (and their position within the activity)
- Neutral players
- Size of playing area
- Starting positions of players
- Starting position of the ball
- Target - Is it to goal? Is it to a player? How many targets?
- Scoring systems
- Zones within the playing area
- Restarts (where and how - throw-ins etc)

Adding, removing or adjusting any of the above constraints will affect what a player perceives. An important challenge for coaches is to understand what constraints to use and how they will affect a players behaviour





Player & Coach Development Club Licence Integration

CLASSROOM

Workshop to explore the SNS
player development framework
& principles

01

FIELD SESSIONS

Staff will lead two/three field
sessions with the same team
during the week to introduce
the player development
principles

02

LEAGUE GAME

Staff will lead a league fixture
with the team they have
worked with all week with an
emphasis to transfer the
principles & identity of the
player development framework

03

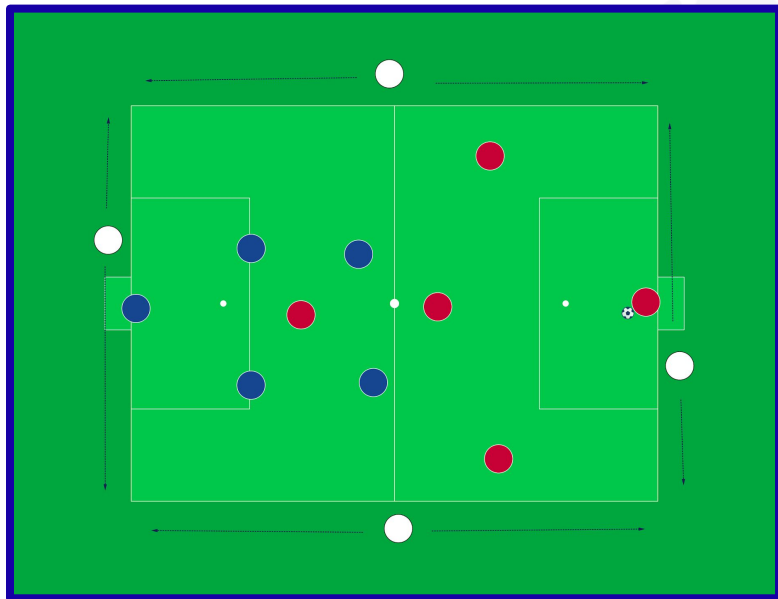
CONTACT YOUR CONSULTANT TO BOOK

Principle Based Sessions - Attacking Organization

Theme: Crossing and finishing

Emphasis: One touch finishing

[Click the image for animation video](#)



'search, create, and use gaps/space'

Organization

5v5 + neutrals

Game, each team has a net to attack & defend

Objective

Create goal-scoring opportunities from crosses

Task Variables

- Size of field
- # of players,
- Scoring system (eg, 2pts for one touch finish)
- Touch restrictions (on neutrals)

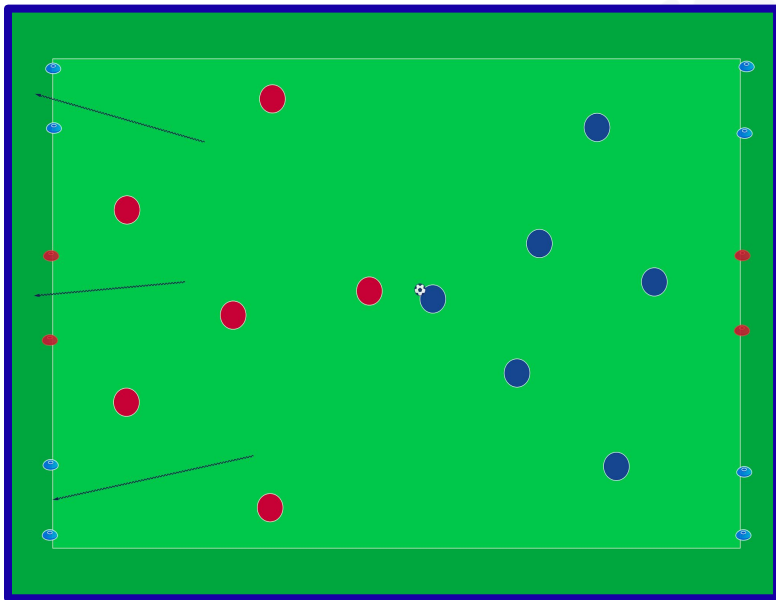
Coaching Points/Questions

- Where do we have numerical advantage? (discover)
- Angles of support from players/neutrals (create)
- Quality/type of cross - in the air, on the floor, cut back etc.
- Support around the ball (exploit)
- Mentality to get into goal scoring areas (create)
- Types of finishes (discover & exploit)

Principle Based Sessions - Attacking Organization

Theme: Dribbling

Emphasis: Penetrating centrally



‘search, create, and use gaps/space’

Organization

6v6 game

3 gates to dribble through to score.

Blue gates =1pt, Red gate=3pts.

Objective

Create situations where players can penetrate on the dribble

Task Variables

- Size of field
- # of players
- Size of gates
- Scoring system,

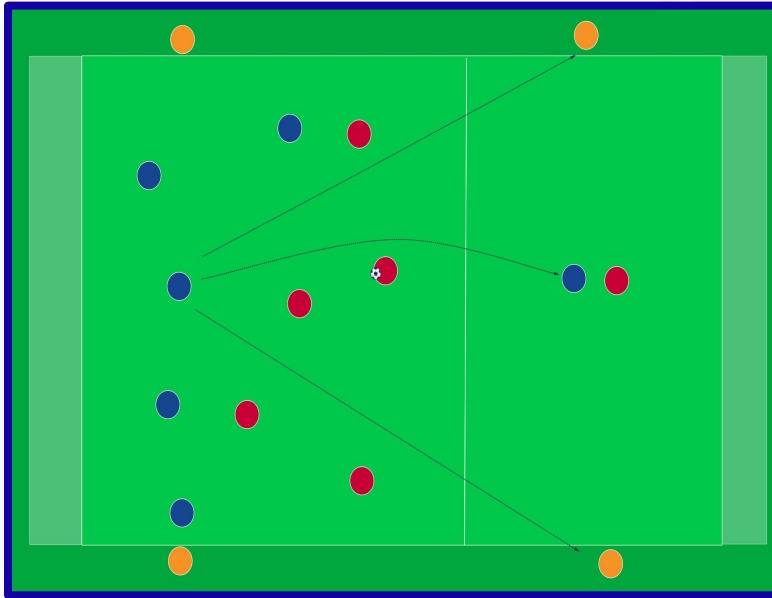
Coaching Points/Questions

- Is there a gap to go through? (discover)
- Can we move the opposition to create a gap? (create)
- When/where to pass? When/where to dribble? (exploit)
- Change of pace & direction (exploit)

Principle Based Sessions - Attacking Transition

Theme: Forward passing/movement

Emphasis: Finding the front 3



‘search, create, and use gaps/space’

Organization

6v6 + 4 neutrals

5v5 inside one half, 1v1 in the other.

2 neutrals per half (acting as wingers)

2 end zones - score by dribbling in

Objective

Team in possession - score by dribbling to end line.

Defending team - win ball back, hit target (striker or wingers) in far box.

One player per team can join in to make 2v2 in that box to combine and get in end-zone.

Task Variables

- Size of grids
- # of players per grid
- # of support players,
- restrictions on neutral,
- constraints on players (ie. allowing dribbling into second grid)

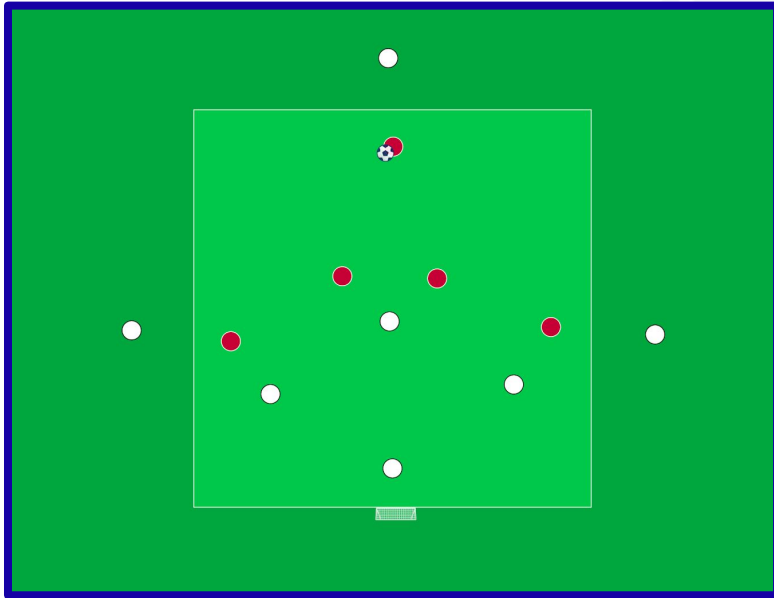
Coaching Points/Questions

- Risk vs reward - when to play forward, when to retain (discover)
- Support around the ball - support around where the ball is going (create)
- Body profile to receive, quality of first touch (create & exploit)
- Quality/type of pass to attacker (exploit)

Principle Based Sessions - Attacking Transition

Theme: Securing possession

Emphasis: Beating the press



‘search, create, and use gaps/space’

Organization

5v4 + 3 mobile targets

Reds in possession attempt to score on pugg net.

Whites defend pugg, look to win possession and connect with a target

Objective

- Protect the net, create situation to win the ball back.
- Find the high target player (can use wide players as bounce players)

Task Variables

- Size of area
- # of players per team
- # and size of goals
- # of target players
- constraints on players (ie. allowing dribbling into second grid)

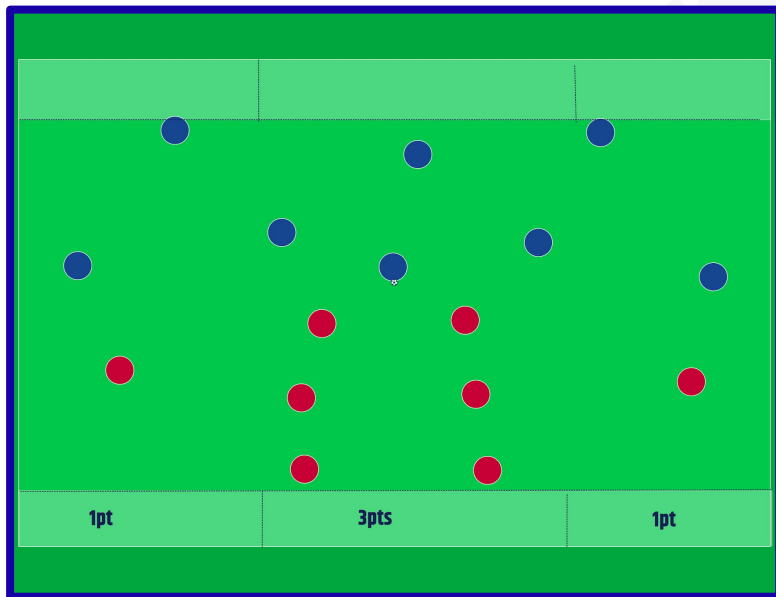
Coaching Points/Questions

- Organization to win the ball (pre-transition)
- Risk vs. reward - when to play forward, when to retain (discover)
- Movement after winning ball (create)
- 2nd pass completion (exploit)

Principle Based Sessions - Defending Organization

Theme: Deny penetration

Emphasis: Defending centrally



'Recognize, reduce, and deny gaps/space'

Organization

8v8 game.

Score dribbling or receiving a pass in the end zone (end zone acts as offside line)

- 3pts for scoring centrally, 1pt for scoring wide

Objective

Organize to be compact centrally, force wide, win ball

Task Variables

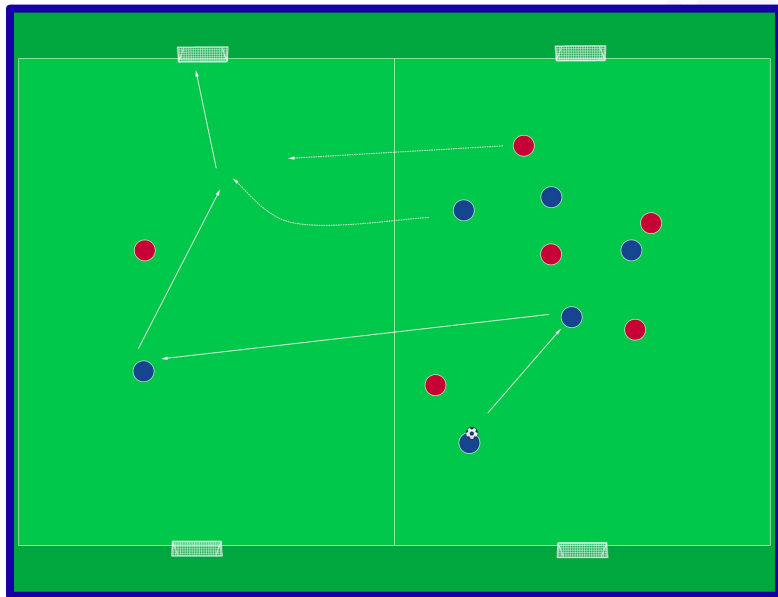
- Size of area
- # of players
- Width/depth of end zone
- Point system
- Offside lines
- Restarts (throw ins, kick ins, reset from a position)

Coaching Points/Questions

- Team shape (recognize)
- Reduce space centrally (reduce)
- Body shape - can we force one way? (deny)
- Mentality to win the ball (deny)

Principle Based Sessions - Defending Organization

Theme: Deny progression
Emphasis: Defending the switch



Organization

6v6 directional game

Score by scoring on one of 2 goals at end of field

1pt for goal, 3pts for switching play and scoring

Objective

Restrict attackers to play in one half of field, regain possession.

Task Variables

- Size of area
- # of players
- Rules (eg. restricting players into zones)
- Point system
- Restarts position

Coaching Points/Questions

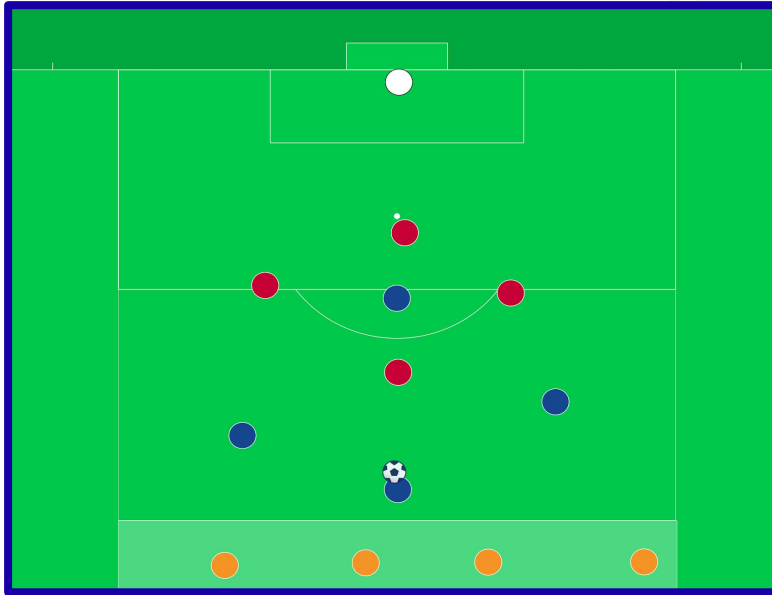
- Team shape (recognize)
- Pressure on the ball (reduce)
- Body shape to prevent the switch? (deny)
- Mentality to win the ball (deny)

'Recognize, reduce, and deny gaps/space'

Principle Based Sessions - Defending Transition

Theme: Defending in final third

Emphasis: Prioritizing danger



'Recognize, reduce, and deny gaps/space'

Organization

Blues attacking, reds defending, yellow 'off'

If reds win ball, they find a yellow and yellow become the attacking team, blue transition to become the defending team, reds become 'off'

Objective

Re-organize in transition to prevent goal scoring opportunities.

Task Variables

- Size of area
- # of players
- Rules (eg. restricting players into zones)
- Point system
- Restarts position

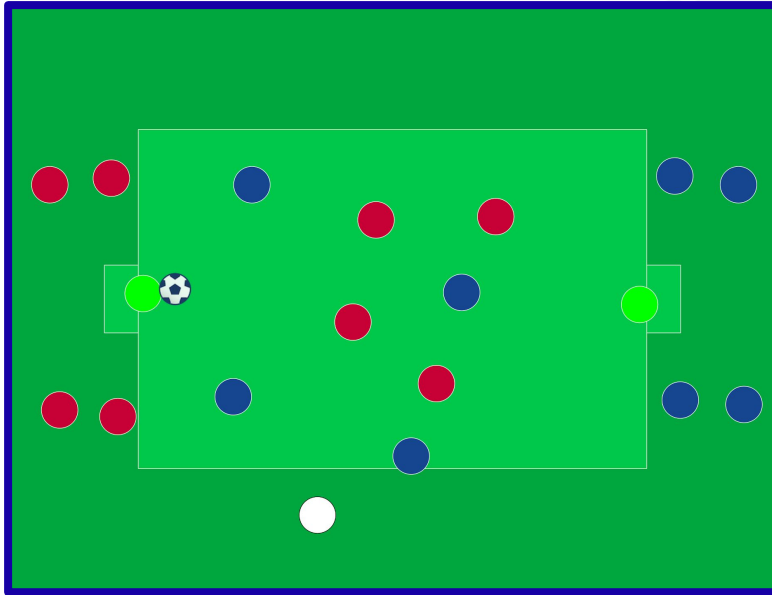
Coaching Points/Questions

- Get organized to have 'balance' (recognize)
- Where is the dangerous space? (recognize)
- Pressure on the ball if possible (reduce)
- Prevent dangerous spaces in behind (reduce/deny)
- Prevent quickest route to goal (deny)
- Mentality to block shots (deny)

Principle Based Sessions - Defending Transition

Theme: Deny shots

Emphasis: Re-organizing 'out of balance'



'Recognize, reduce, and deny gaps/space'

Organization

4v4 (with 4 extras per team)

Each team is numbered 1-4 for players both on & off the field.

Players off the field are behind net they are scoring on.

Coach calls a players # and the corresponding player from defending team leaves field, and player behind the goal enters the field to defend.

Objective

Organization of defending team to prevent shots. Recovery of defender to fill holes/apply back-pressure

Task Variables

- Field size
- # of players
- length of recovery run
- # of numbers called by coach

Coaching Points/Questions

- Can the player with the ball score? (recognize)
- Where is the dangerous space? (recognize)
- Pressure on the ball (in front/behind) (reduce)
- Delay attackers, prevent quickest route to goal (deny)
- Mentality to block shots (deny)



Mark O'Sullivan
A.I.K.
Research &
Development



Canada Soccer

Special Mentions

To those organizations
that provided their
principles & content for
the development of this
document

