

Coaching Youth Soccer



Street Soccer Created World Class Players

- In the 50's and 60's kids played street soccer every day
- They always played a game
- Organization depended on number of players and the sides were even
- The game was easy to understand
- There was no adult involved
- They played for hours and hours
- **They enjoyed it!**



The Dutch Vision

- **Play** soccer to learn soccer
- Learn by doing
- No enjoyment, no learning
- Always have the essential elements of soccer



The Essential Elements

- Ball
- Team-mates
- Opponents
- Space
- Direction
- Rules

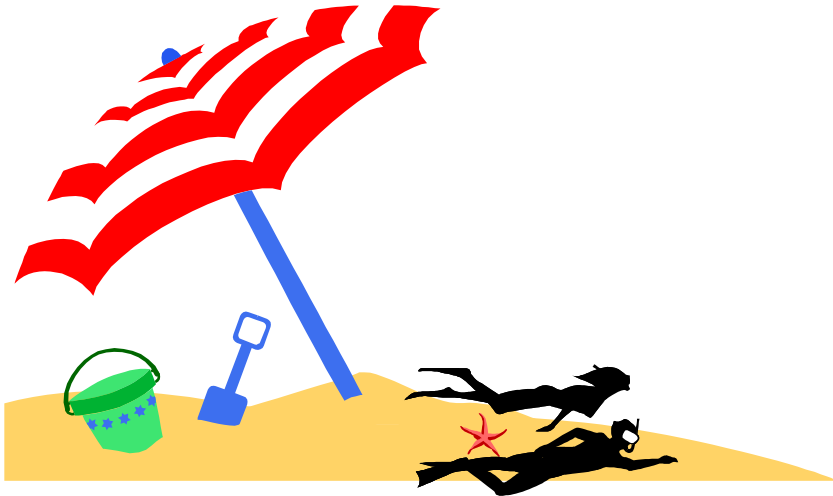


- Score
- Attack or build-up
- Defend

**All Elements Must be Present
for Effective Learning**

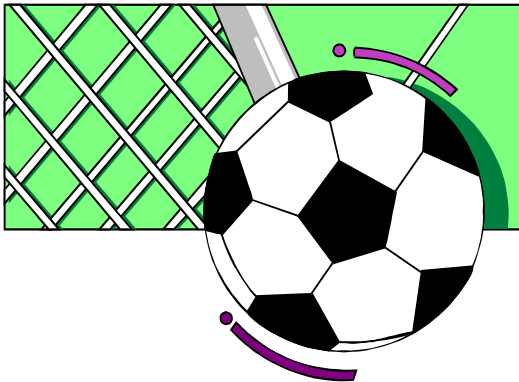
Avoid Dry Swimming

- Techniques are too often taught out of context in boring drills
- Kids are standing around waiting to take their turn
- A coach has one hour a week to make a difference
- Soccer insight and technical skills are most effectively developed in game-related situations



The Dutch 4v4

- A small sided game maximizes involvement in real soccer situations
- 4 a-side is the most effective small unit
 - ◆ Play wide
 - ◆ Play deep
 - ◆ Play backwards
- Kids naturally learn match situations by constant repetition and frequent ball contact



Consequences

- More enjoyment
- More intensity
- Better cooperation
- Better vision
- Many more learning moments



Does it Work?

- Holland is a world leader in soccer with a population of only 8 million people
- Dutch soccer is a joy to watch
- All youth coaches in Holland employ these techniques
- Holland has invested time and expertise to develop a program which **maximizes the effectiveness** of limited practice time



The Basic Form 4v4

- 4v4 with 2 goals, 2 yds wide
- No goalkeepers
- Widen goals if scoring proves difficult
- After goal or goalkick: tap-in or dribble from goal-line
- Throw-ins: tap-in from side-line
- All free kicks are indirect
- No offside
- Penalties from center line, no goalkeeper

48 yds



32 yds

**Rules are designed to quickly
get the ball in play and
minimize stoppages**

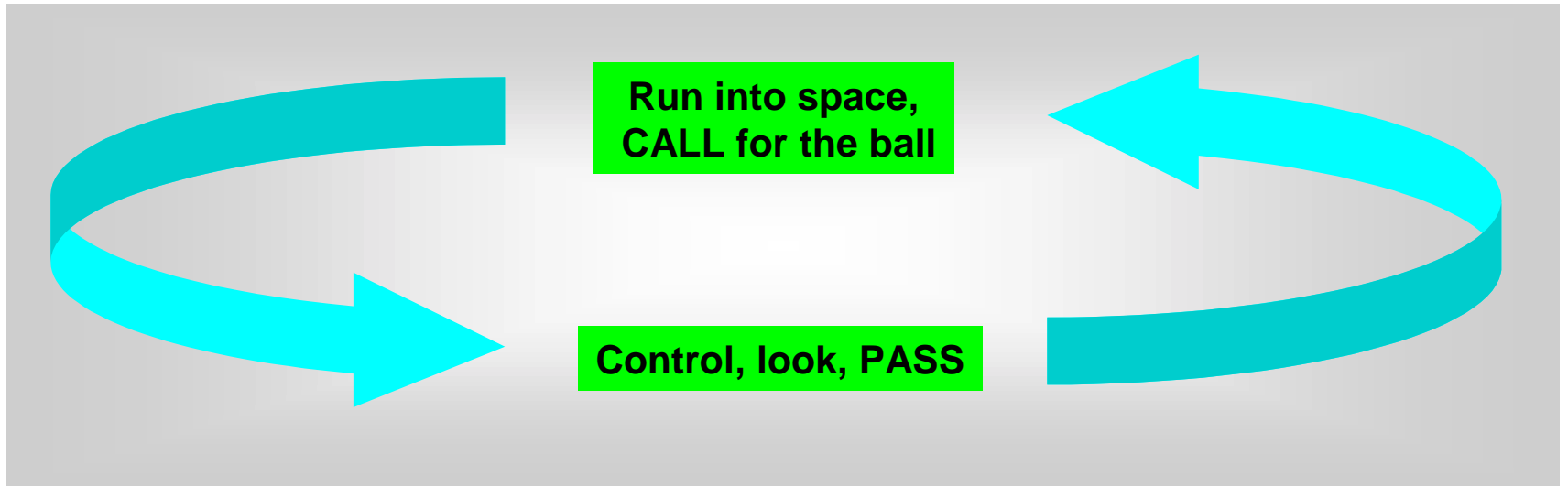
A Word on Space

- Maximum field size should be 48x32 yds*
- Space relates to how much **time** a player has to control the ball
- Reduce space to challenge players as they develop in skill
- Relative dimensions of length and width can encourage different aspects of the game



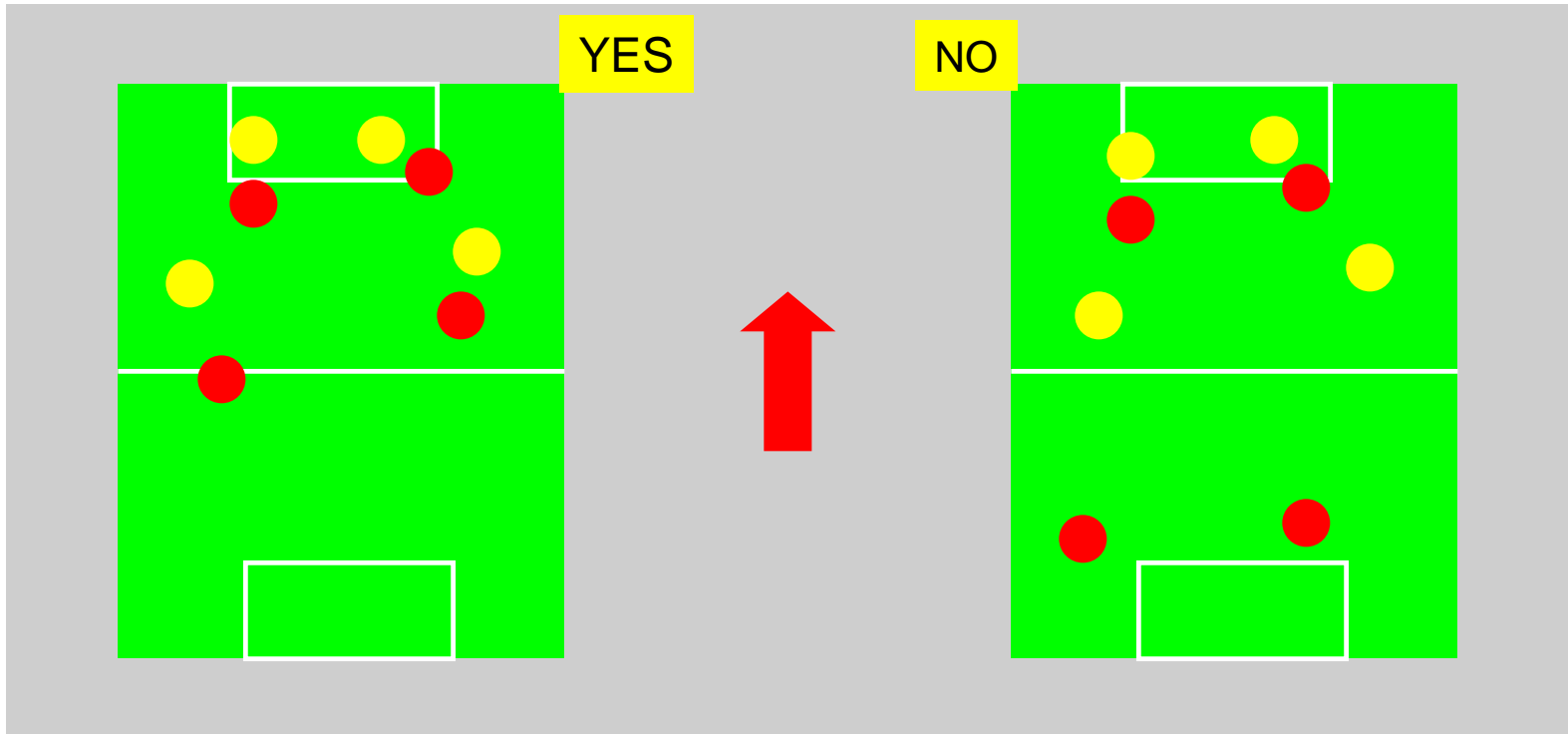
*As a rule of thumb use no more than 12x8 yds per player on a side

Guiding Soccer Basics - **Ball Movement**



**Stay cool, keep possession, make the easy pass,
run into space. Don't be a spectator and
DON'T just boot it**

Guiding Soccer Basics - Stay Compact



Advance and fall back as a compact unit
Be aware of other players
Think about your next pass BEFORE you get the ball

Guiding Soccer Basics - Dribbling

- Dribble when:
 - ◆ A good pass is not available
 - ◆ Uncontested space is open in front of you
 - ◆ Taking-on a defender will lead to a better scoring opportunity than a pass to a team-mate
- The greatest dribblers have one basic technique which they have practiced to perfection. Avoid trying to be Best, Rivelino, Mathews and Maradona all rolled into one
- The basic cut across the body with the inside (or outside) of either foot is simple and extremely effective

Discourage: head down, dribble until you lose it
Encourage: control, head-up, look and pass

Guiding Soccer Basics - Shooting

- Strike ball with laces, toe pointed DOWN for accuracy and power
- Go for accuracy first with **just enough** power
- Hardest shot to save is a LOW ball to the corner or far-post
- The position of the standing foot relative to the ball determines the loft of the shot
 - ◆ Foot level with ball, body over ball - LOW shot
 - ◆ Foot before ball, body behind ball - HIGH shot



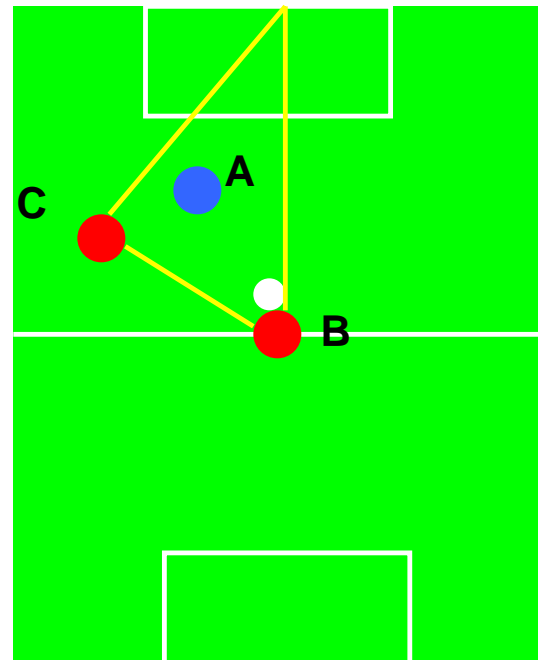
Guiding Soccer Basics - **Defending**

- **Contain:** Don't rush into a tackle but contain
 - ◆ Prevent an opponent with the ball from making a forward pass by moving 1-2 yards in front of her
 - ◆ Maintain an open stance so that you can turn quickly
 - ◆ Occasionally fake a tackle to unsettle your opponent
- **Hustle back:** Numerical superiority in the defensive third of the field is crucial
- **Mark tightly:** Reduce passing options. Go with an opponent making a run behind your defense

50% of goals in professional soccer occur after **forwards regain possession** in the attacking third of the field

Guiding Soccer Basics - Marking (the Guiding Triangle)

- Defender **A** takes a position inside the triangle formed by the opponent with the ball **B**, the opponent being marked **C** and the center of the goal
- **A** can see both **B** and **C** at all times
- **A** maintains an open stance
- **A** can quickly pressure **C** or intercept if **B** passes
- **A** can turn and defend against a through-ball



Practical Considerations

- For an 11v11 team a half-field can accommodate two 4v4 games (roster of 16)
- For 6v6 teams a half-field can accommodate one 4v4 game (roster of 8)
- Remaining players can practice juggling, fast-feet exercises and goalkeeping. Rotate players through the game quickly (6 minutes)
- Play with more players for remainder of practice in the same space



The Captain – It's a **Player's** Game

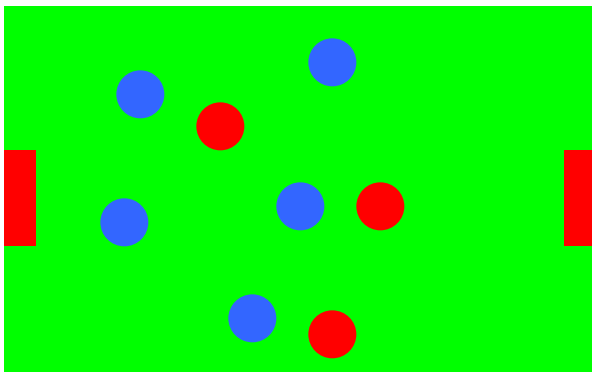


- Give kids their game back
- Appoint a Captain on each team to organize defenders and forwards during practice
- Encourage the Captain to lead (encourage intensity, give everyone a chance to change positions)
- During an actual match, the coaching input should be ZERO other than giving encouragement
- Players must learn to **think for themselves** during a game
- Avoid shouting a constant stream of instructions - it is confusing and spoils the fun
- Never berate a player for making a mistake or show frustration with his/her skill level
- Accept your limited influence on the result and **give encouragement and support**

Transition to Passing Game - One

- Younger players may have difficulty finding an open team-mate
- Run a 10 minute session of **5v3** to create more passing options
- Return to 4v4 for 10 minutes
- Run 5-3 again with reversed numerical advantage

48 yds

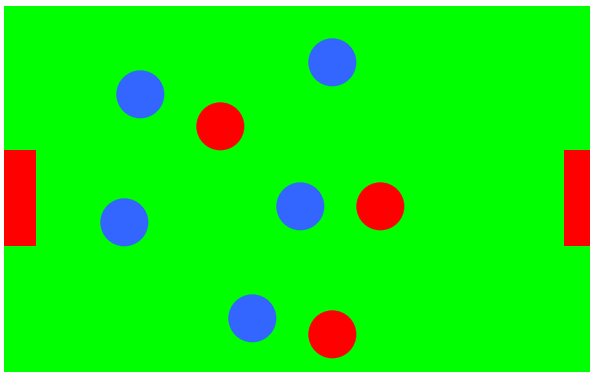


32 yds

Transition to Passing Game - Two

- Younger players instinctively look down at the ball and dribble
- Try calling a free-kick for excessive dribbling
- Run a 5-10 minute session with limited touch - if a player touches the ball more than 3 times, possession is lost
- Always return to the basic 4v4 with normal rules

48 yds



32 yds

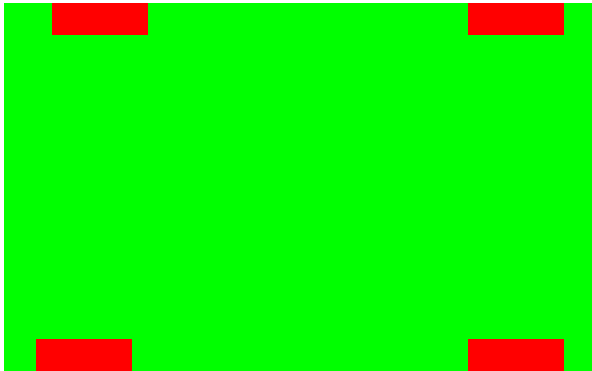
Appendix A

4v4 Variations



4v4 Four Goals – **Passing** Game

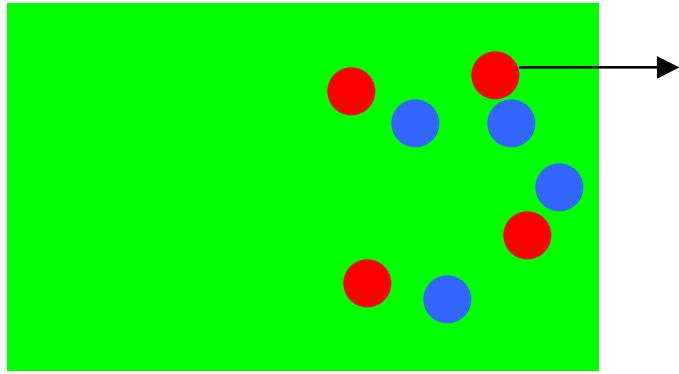
- Encourages width and wing play
- Reduces natural tendency to bunch-up around the ball
- Create chances by changing the field of play (passing from one side of the field to another)
- Defenders must mark tightly and track forwards to reduce vulnerability



4v4 Line Soccer – **Dribbling** Game

- Score by dribbling the ball over the goal line
- Create more scoring chances with good position play
- Defenders must choose the right position between their opponents and the goal line and mark tightly

Use sparingly after passing game is developed



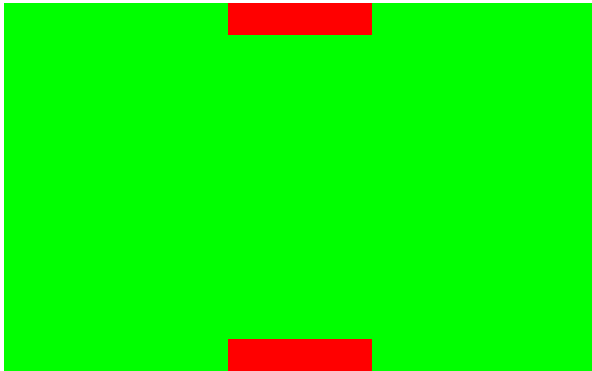
4v4 Large Goals (1) - **Shooting** Game

- No goalkeepers
- Forwards must shoot at every opportunity
- Many goals are conceded if defenders do not mark tightly



4v4 Large Goals (2) - Crossing/Heading Game

- Use goalkeepers
- Score only from header or volley
- Encourage play build-up down flanks
- Practice defending in the air



4v4 Narrow Field - **Through-Ball** Game

- The narrow field game is more advanced
- Win the ball and control in tight space
- Quickly release a deep pass into space
- Forwards anticipate and time runs

48 yds



15-20 yds

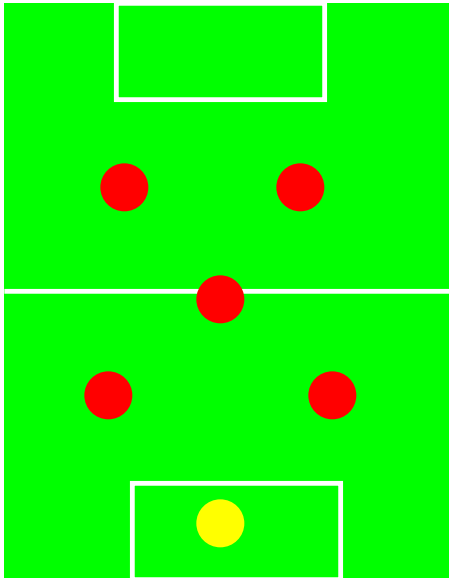
Appendix B

6v6 Formations



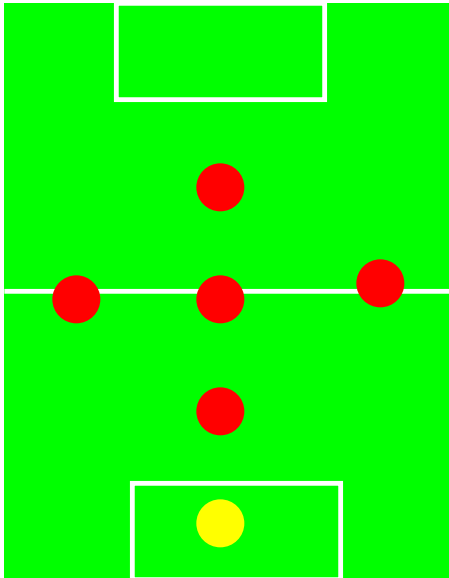
Formation One: 2-1-2

- Requires very strong midfielder: fast, good defender, good passer with vision, high stamina
- Defenders must be strong, quick and understand responsibility of covering the middle
- Advantages
 - ◆ Very effective learning formation used by many club teams. Good passing formation
 - ◆ Forwards have supporting defender and defenders have obvious outlet pass
- Disadvantages
 - ◆ Confusion on who should cover the middle if midfielder is caught out of defensive position



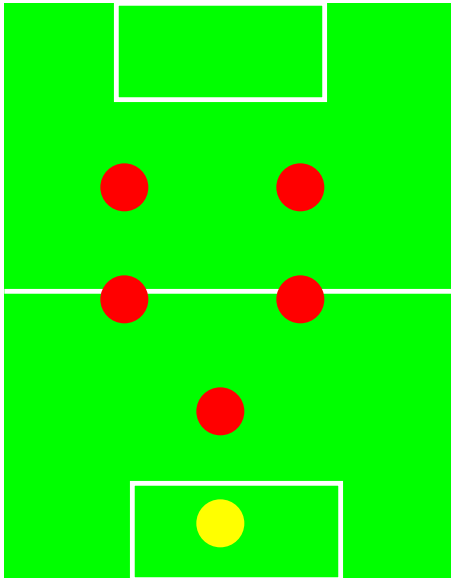
Formation Two: 1-3-1

- Sweeper should be fast, strong and good defender
- Flank players must have high stamina or be subbed frequently
- Advantages
 - ◆ Strong spine down the middle. Use weaker players on flanks
- Disadvantages
 - ◆ Vulnerable on weak-post (post furthest from ball) if flank midfielder caught out of defensive position



Formation Three: 1-2-2

- Requires good understanding between midfielders
- Midfielders must have high stamina and along with the sweeper be the strongest players on the team
- Advantages
 - ◆ Uses essentially a 4v4 formation with a supporting sweeper - consistent with practice
 - ◆ Good passing formation
- Disadvantages
 - ◆ Confusion on which midfielder should control center



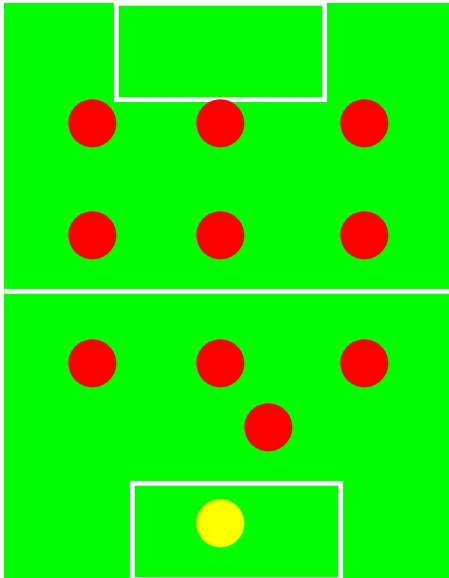
Appendix C

11v11 Variations



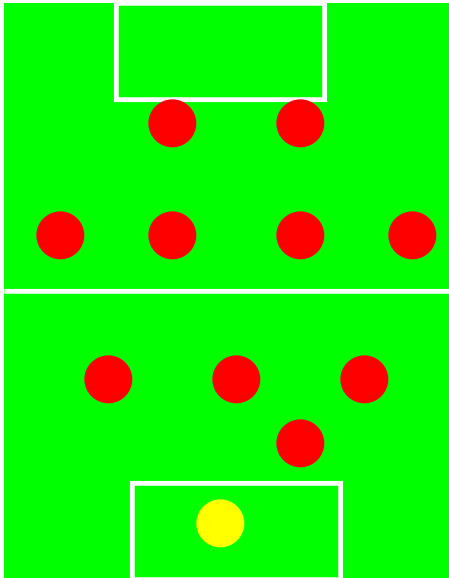
Formation One: 4-3-3

- Most natural formation with clearly defined roles
- Used extensively in Dutch youth soccer
- Central midfielder must be an exceptional player with great stamina
- Stopper (central defender) must also be very strong
- Advantages
 - ◆ Balanced attacking formation - wingers are always available to attack on flanks
 - ◆ Three front runners can exert more pressure on defense during attack and transition to defense
- Disadvantages
 - ◆ Vulnerable to 4-4-2 formation with stronger center midfield



Formation Two: 4-4-2

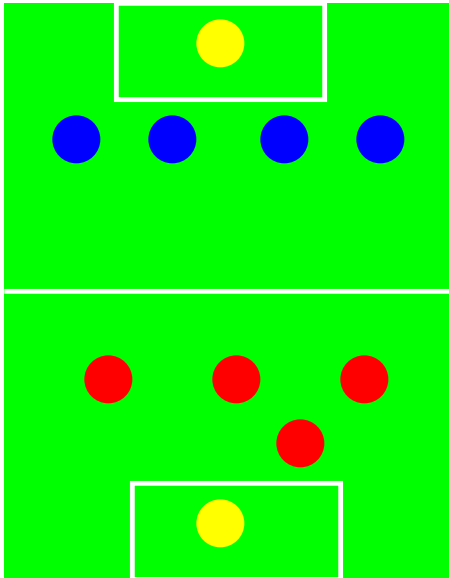
- More complex but more effective formation
- Flank midfielders must have stamina to support attack as wingers and drop back quickly to provide outlet pass option and support for defense
- Advantages
 - ◆ Two midfielders (playmaker and ball winner) effectively control the center of the field
- Disadvantages
 - ◆ Attacking width can be compromised if wing-mids do not support offence



Man-to-man v Zonal Defense

■ Man-to-man

- ◆ Most common youth soccer approach
- ◆ Defenders must mark opponent and track runs
- ◆ Clearly defined responsibility, strong defenders can mark strong attackers
- ◆ Sweeper can cover breakdowns and provide two-on-one situation



■ Zone

- ◆ More advanced approach requires very good communication between defenders
 - ◆ Defenders must be strong players as there is no covering sweeper
 - ◆ Defenders focus on a zone and assume opponent runs will be picked up in the next zone
 - ◆ Zonal defense has less tendency to be pulled out of shape by diagonal runs
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