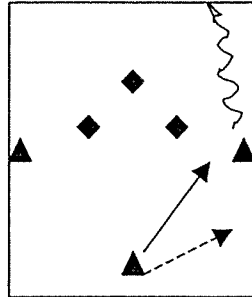


Tactical Development

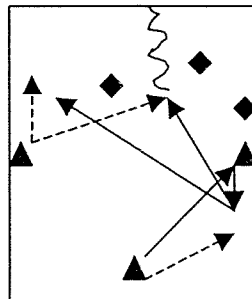
Tactical Development through the Age Groups

6- 8 Year Olds

For 6-8 year olds, the recommended learning format is 3v3 games. Players will tend to swarm, and the coach should be wary of introducing too much structure. The basic principles are width and backward depth or support.



The basic formation is a triangle. As always, the tactical decisions will be made based on the reaction of the opponent. If the opportunity exists to exploit the width with a dribble, then it is taken.



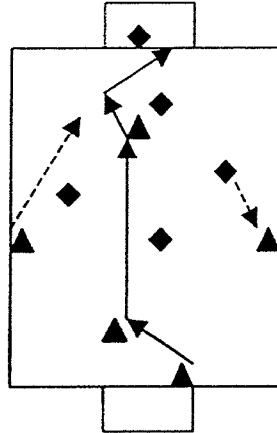
If the flank is blocked because of good defensive positioning and cover (1v2), then the width on the weak side can be exploited. It is also important that players learn mobility, playing out of this format. The inside run from the left-sided player is an example.

It is important to remember that all tactics are based on sound fundamental skills. Players must be able to receive and control the ball before attempting to pass or dribble. Individual ball possession is the focus of this group, so they should be encouraged to be comfortable running with the ball, changing direction, and taking people on. The basic concept is to go forward whenever possible, but not to force forward progress when it is blocked.

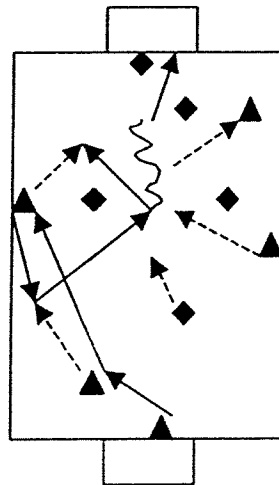
Tactical Development

8 and 9-Year Olds

The recommended format here is 5v5 (or 4v4 + GK), as some people prefer to call it. Players are becoming more capable of spatial understanding. This format is the smallest number that allows for all directions of the game: Forward support or depth, width on both sides, and backward support or depth.



The shape is now a diamond. Again, the choices made are based on reading the opponent's positioning or movements. The back player moves diagonally opposite the goalkeeper. If the defenders read the anticipated pass to the wide player, the ball is played to the back player whose first look is always deep to find the striker.

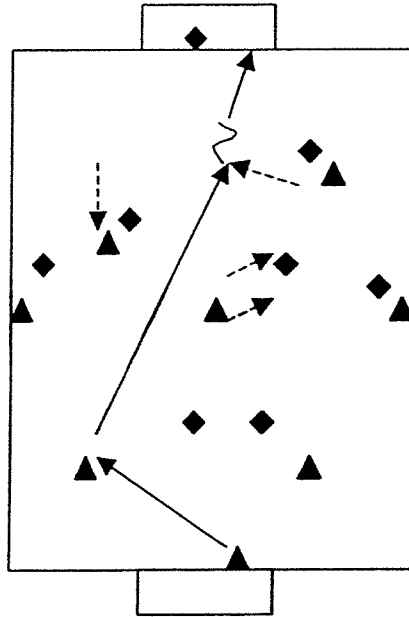


If the deep forward pass is blocked, the back player then plays sideways as a **second choice**. Players can now be taught various combinations and off ball movements designed to unbalance the opponent. In this case, the striker has created space with a deep diagonal run, and the space is exploited by the right-sided player who can attack the goal, or combine with the left-sided players, who has laid the ball off to the back player and spun into the space behind his marker.

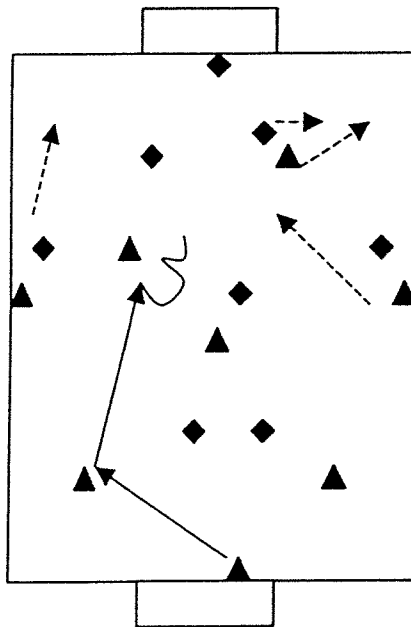
Tactical Development

10-12 Year Olds

The recommended learning format in this case is 8v8 (or 7v7 + GK). This is played on fields approximately 75x 55 (minimum 60x40), with goals that are smaller than the full size (approximately 21'x 7'). The format is simply two diamonds, side by side; so that all the functions learned earlier still apply.



The defender still looks long first, but now the first striker is taught when to check in looking for the pass, pulling a defender with him. The second striker now exploits that space and the back player bypasses the first striker, delivering the dangerous ball to the second striker. Some keys are the understanding of the wide players to keep the width, the first striker knowing *when* to check, the understanding of the central midfielder to keep the channel clear, and of course the first striker knowing *when* to attack the space.



Again, decisions are based on the decisions of the opponent. In this case, the defender did not get pulled in tight, and is occupying the space that was exploited in the previous sequence. The ball is now played to the first striker, who because he is half turned is able to turn quickly and attack the open space. At the same time, the striker has pulled the other defender wide, and the flank player cuts inside to assist the first striker. If the defender closes on the first striker, he can now play a 1-2 with the flank player to get around him.

In all cases the second choice is to play sideways, which now includes the central midfielder as an option.