

GRASSROOTS: SMALL-SIDED GAMES

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WHY SMALL-SIDED GAMES?

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- More touches on the ball
- More decisions to be made
- Greater concentration
- More individual attention by the coach
- More goals scored
- More goalkeeper's actions
- More transitions from defence to attack and vice versa
- More enjoyment and learning

SOME STATISTICS

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- Players touch the ball five times more often in 4-a-side football and 50% more in 7-a-side
- Players are three times more often in one-against-one situations in 4-a-side football and twice more often in 7-a-side
- Goals are scored every two minutes in 4-a-side football on average and every four minutes in 7-a-side
- Goalkeepers are involved in the action two to four times more often in 7-a-side football than in 11-a-side football
- The ball is out of play 8% of the time in 4-a-side football, 14% in 7-a-side and 34% in 11-a-side

AGES AND SMALL-SIDED GAMES

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Small-sided games \ Age	6-8 years	9-10 years	11-12 years
4 v 4	X	X	X
5 v 5	X	X	X
7 v 7		X	X
9 v 9			X

PLAYING AREA, GOALS AND EQUIPMENT

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Pitch

- The dimensions of the pitch should be suitable to the age, skills and number of children
- It is important to follow a logical development in which children move on from 4-a-side games (without goalkeepers) to eventually playing 9-a-side football

Goals

- The size of the goals should also be suitable for the age of the children
- A suggested goal size to start with in 4-a-side is a 3 metre goal gradually increasing to a 6 metre goal in 9-a-side
- Cones, poles and markers can be used to make different goal sizes

TECHNIQUES IN PLAY AND GAME FORMAT

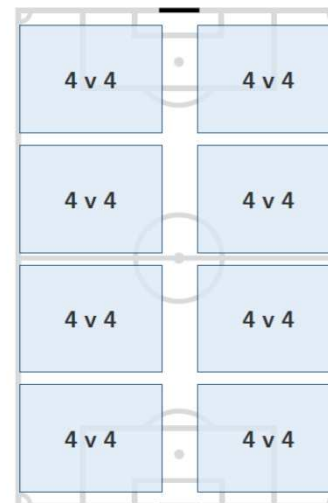
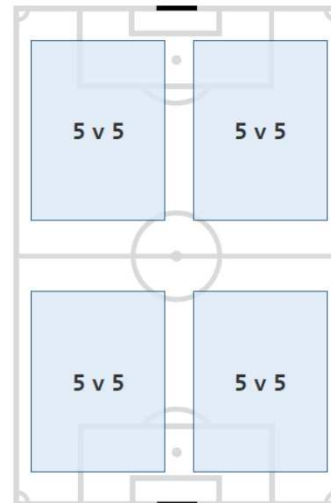
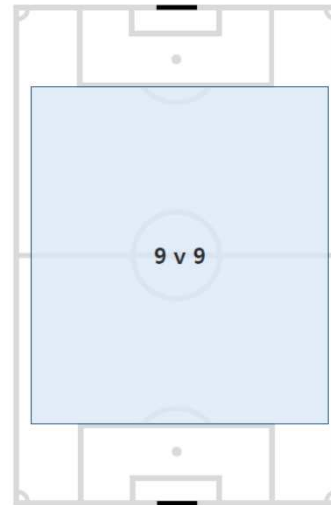


- Small-sided games allow the coach to adapt the rules in order to promote a specific aspect of the game. For example: dribbling, shooting, passing, heading, etc.
- The smallest format of a small-sided game is 1v1
- Gradually, players can be added (2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3, etc.)
- Small-sided games can be intense. Therefore the coach-educator should control the intensity of the activities.

EXAMPLES OF ORGANISATION

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PLAYING SYSTEMS IN SMALL-SIDED PITCHES

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- In the philosophy of grassroots, we have to take team spirit into account and we recommend playing football as a team
- However, in duels and 1 v 1 situations there can be specific objectives that give children the opportunity to develop basic individual tactics: attacking and defending
- Advanced positioning can be introduced once the players have acquired enough experience to be able to take up a position in open space
- A logical development of playing systems will see a 3 v 3 game eventually become 9 v 9 with various configurations in between such as 4 v 4, 5 v 5, 6 v 6, 7 v 7 and 8 v 8
- Having a numerical advantage also requires a great deal of tactical flexibility