

# **“RECOGNIZING THE MOMENT TO PLAY”**

**Anticipation**

**Imagination**

**Awareness**

***by Wayne Harrison, UEFA A License B.A.***

This unique coaching program focuses on the development of each players soccer instincts (Anticipation,Imagination,Awareness) through the use of specially designed training sessions. While this is quite possibly the most important aspect of a players soccer development, it is also the most difficult to coach. In this book, the author provides several practical exercises and small sided games to help players

**A.I.A - RECOGNIZING THE MOMENT TO PLAY**  
**AN ANTICIPATION / IMAGINATION / AWARENESS**  
**YOUTH SOCCER COACHING PROGRAM**  
**A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SOCCER**

This system of coaching will begin to teach each player the **psychological, physical, technical** and **tactical** fundamentals of soccer and together these form the basis of the requirements needed to be able to play soccer. The degree of improvement a player attains using these aspects depends on their own **commitment** (in terms of repetition of practice and belief in the system) and level of **ability**. Don't expect results overnight. Players have to be patient in learning this new approach as it takes time and great concentration to develop.

The players must be both psychologically and physically prepared to meet the demands of the program. The process is ongoing throughout their playing career and will be further influenced by the **experience** gained from every coaching session and every game played over time. We are trying to establish the following:

1. Using **Correct Technique** to perform the task efficiently and effectively. Particular attention must be paid to the **first touch** of the ball by the players.
2. **Psychologically** being able to develop composure on the ball, to relax under pressure, creating in the mind of the player **Imagination / Insight** in the **Use** of the ball; each pass is **unique** to that moment.
3. **Tactical** considerations will be covered teaching the ability to look **Beyond the ball**, having the **capacity** to **Anticipate Situations**, an **Awareness** of others positions (own players, opponents and the ball) movements off the ball and an appreciation of **Space**.
4. **Physical work** will be a natural part of the program aiding relevant types of fitness.
5. The program is aiming to develop the above in all players to aid the **DECISION MAKING PROCESS**.

8. The coach must try to build into the player each observation as it happens. Over time and with much practice the player learns to assimilate each observation more quickly until eventually they will all combine in the mind into one.

9. On reception of the ball and the ensuing success of a good first touch to control the ball the player deciding to pass the ball must think about the weight accuracy and timing of the pass. The success or not of this can be highlighted in most of the exercises used in this book and the coach can focus on this.

10. The use of regulation soccer balls is good for these exercises but you can also use smaller soccer balls to practice.

**Futsal / Brazilian Ball – An Introduction.** The use of the ball is based around touch, control and passing. It can't be kicked long easily and it's difficult to get off the ground. It is geared around developing fast feet and soft touches on the ball.

a) It is a Size Two / Three ball (regular balls are sizes 4 or 5). Due to its' smaller size, a greater degree of precision is needed to dribble and pass it but when the skills are mastered and you switch to a conventional ball these skills are easier to perform.

b) You have to drill the passes, drive the ball and this makes the passing hard and accurate.

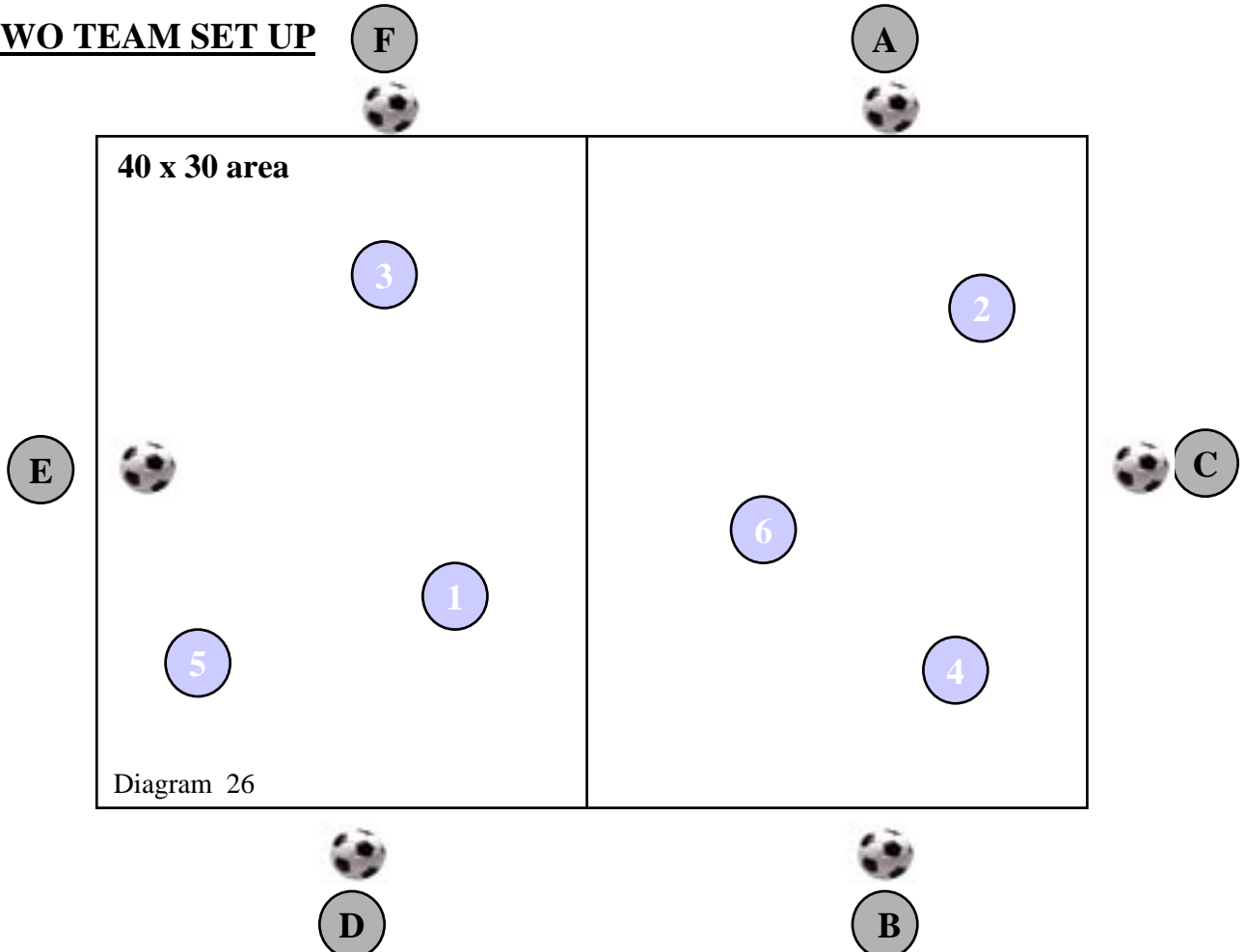
c) It is heavier than a regular ball so it doesn't bounce as much. Emphasizes passing on the ground. Paradoxically the weighted ball is easier to control and helps the receiver develop a better **first touch** (the most important touch on the ball in soccer).

d) Players have many **more touch's** during a small-sided game practice than with a conventional ball because the Futsal ball isn't spending so much time out of play or bouncing off people. It's heaviness ensures it isn't bouncing everywhere.

## SIMPLE INTRODUCTION TO THE A.I.A.SSESSION

This practice is designed to allow the players to be gently introduced to the fundamentals of the A.I.A. session enabling them to practice without too much movement.

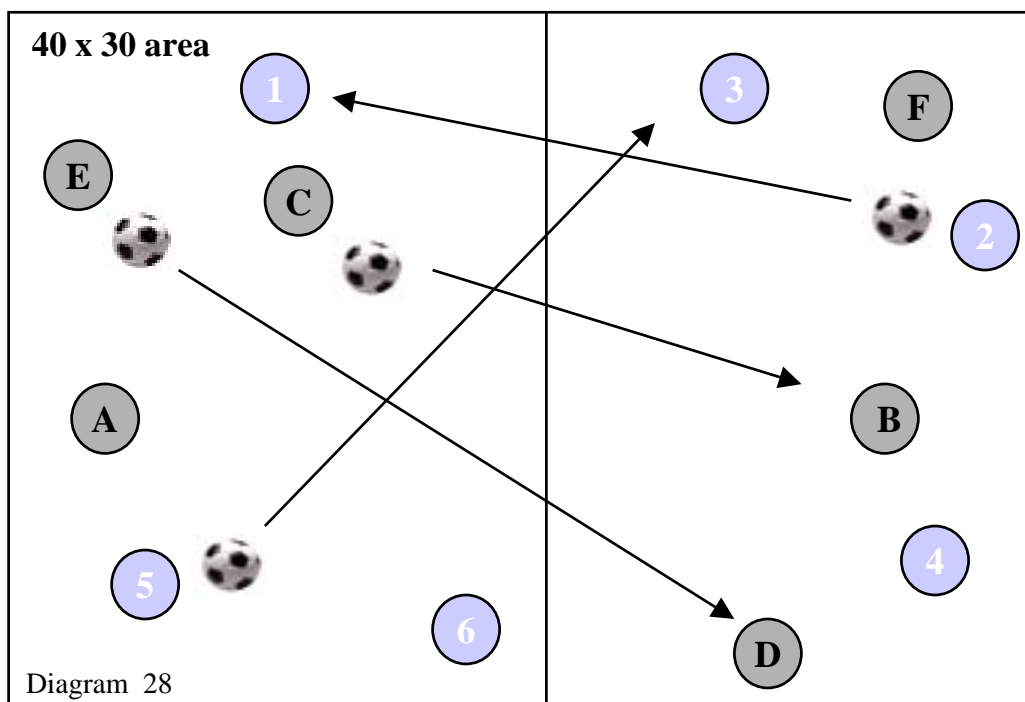
### TWO TEAM SET UP



1. One team inside, one team outside. A ball is with each outside player to begin.
2. Pass to an inside player who receives and turns and finds another outside free player with a pass. Then look to receive from another outside player.
3. The outside player receives and moves the ball side to side until another inside player is free to receive a pass. This ensures all the players are working both inside the grid and outside it.
4. Change the practice to all soccer balls starting with the inside players. These players now look to pass and receive a give and go from an outside player.
5. Rotate the players so both teams have the chance to play in the middle of the grid.
6. Move both teams to the middle, divide the grid into two with each team passing to their own team within their own grid area keeping teams separate to begin.

(Wayne Harrison)

## TWO TEAMS PLAYING THROUGH EACH OTHER



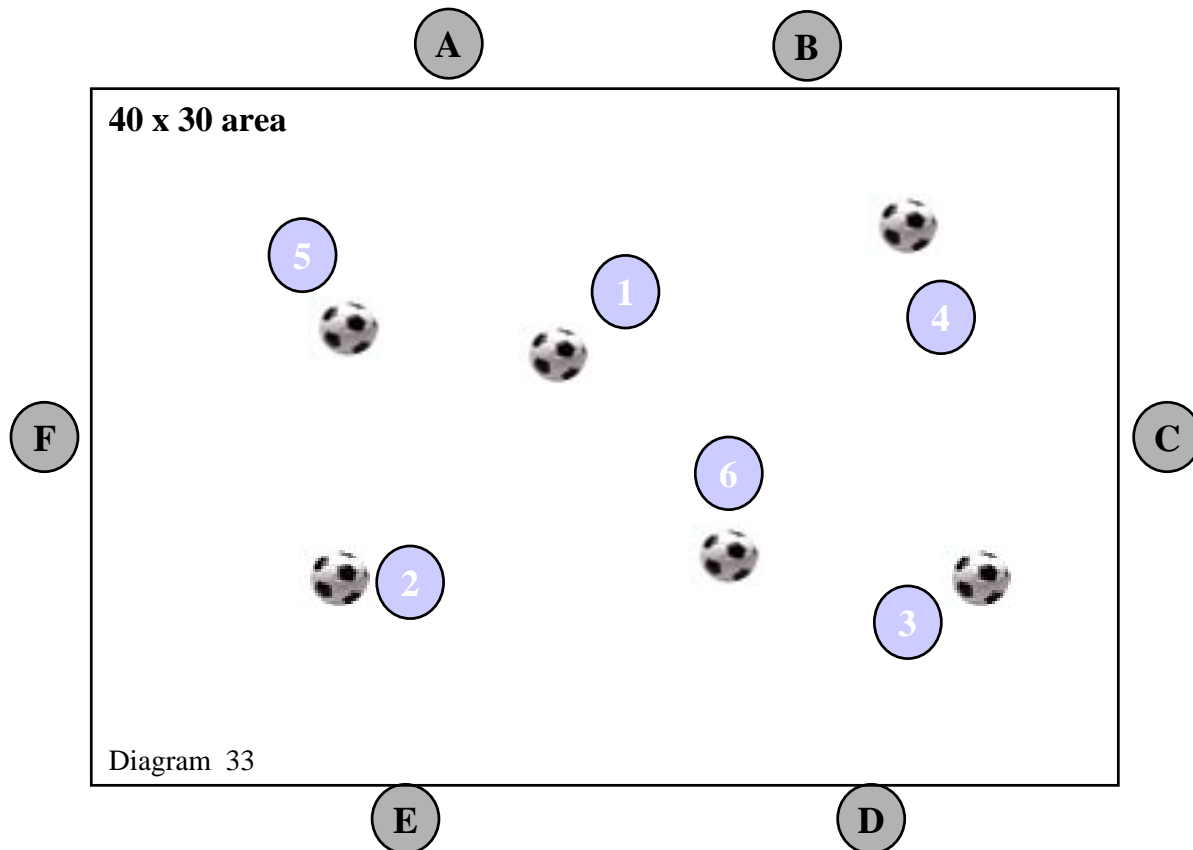
The following information forms the **basis** of what we are trying to achieve with this session, more information will be added later to progress the work we are doing here.

### Technical / Tactical Design

- a) The players must play with their heads up (so they view what is around).
- b) Look over the shoulder before receiving the ball.
- c) Body stance open to receive the ball.
- d) Awareness of teammates positions on the field.
- e) Awareness of opponents positions on the field.
- f) Move the ball on the first touch away from pressure into space (or 1 touch transfer).
- g) Passing to space to move players into a better position on the field.
- h) Passing to the players feet.
- i) Turns / dribbles / 1t / 2t / free play etc.
- j) Communication (verbal, physical or through eye contact).
- k) Angles / distances of support.
- l) Passer pressures receiver by closing them down after the pass.
- m) Receiver moves the ball away at an angle off their first touch.

(Wayne Harrison)

## A.I.A. CHANGEOVER SESSION

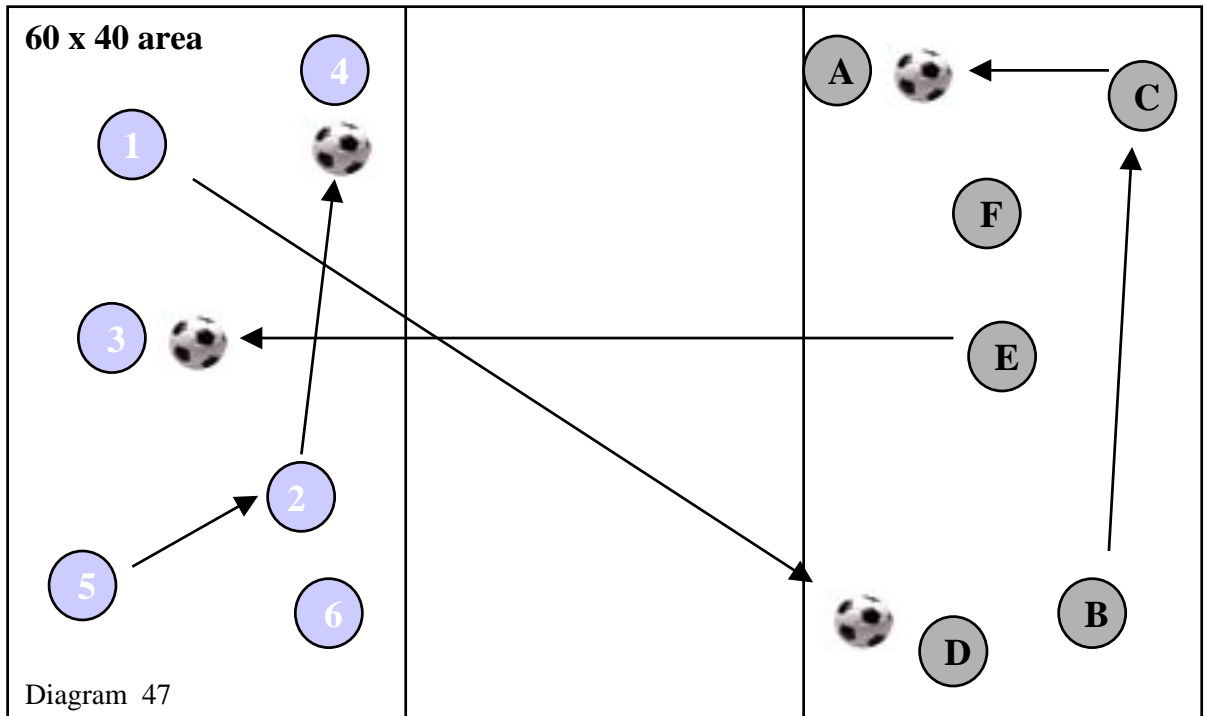


1. Inside team a ball each, look to find a free outside team player and pass to them. Outside player brings the ball back in, inside player moves outside the zone waiting to receive a pass from someone else.
2. Set up second touch with a good first touch. Awareness of who is free to pass to.
3. Work on a) first touch of outside player b) decision making of inside player in terms of when and where to pass and technique (quality) of pass.
4. **The Coach can create conditions** :
  - a) Get a turn in or dribble before passing.
  - b) All in (many) touches, 3 then 2 touches.
  - c) Play 1- 2 with inside player then go outside.
  - d) Do a crossover with outside player rather than make a pass.
5. Inside player passes to outside player and closes down quickly simulating a defensive movement, the receiver has to make a good first touch away from the pressure ie to either side of the pressuring player.
6. It's a good session because everyone is working but they get short intermittent rests, so maintaining quality.

(Wayne Harrison)

# DIRECTIONAL A.I.A. SESSION FOCUSING ON PASSING / SUPPORT AND RUNNING WITH AND WITHOUT THE BALL

## LONG PASSING



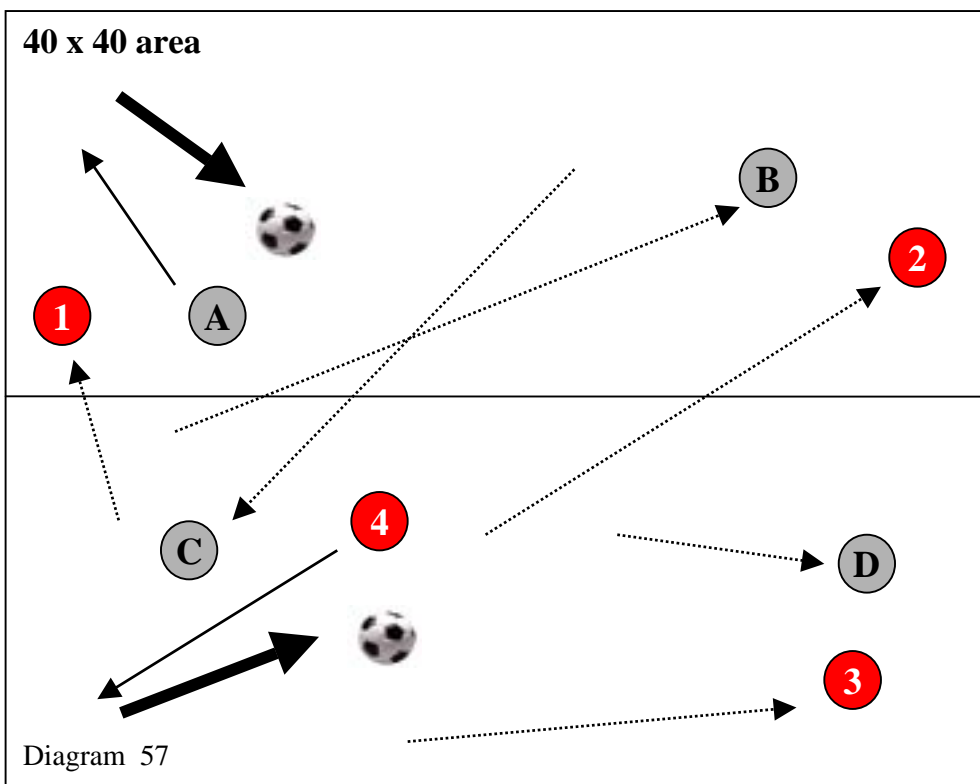
1. **Pass and move** in own grid until **eye** contact with a player in the **other** grid (or a call) then play a **long pass** to that player. Balls are constantly changing grids, players have to have **awareness** in their **own** grid to receive but also **awareness** of when a pass is on from the **other** grid (must have head up and be constantly looking around to see this). If they don't observe where their own teammates are or those in the other grid are, they won't be successful with this so they **must** play with their **head up** and have the ability to look **away** from the ball as well as **at** it, observing all the options that are on both in their own grid and the other one.
2. **Conditions** – Ball can't bounce between grids for chipped or lofted passes, or must be driven along the ground with pace for quick passing.
3. Develop **Running With The Ball** across the grids. Pass and move within own grid then a player picks a moment to run and takes it.
4. **Keep balance** of balls in each grid. Can start with one in each, try to avoid two in one grid at once. Increase to two balls per grid.
5. **Long pass** then **follow** the ball (supporting the pass) into the other grid so **not only** balls being transferred but **also players**. Players must move as **quickly** as possible to support in the other grid.

(Wayne Harrison)

## SWITCHING PLAY AS A TEAM

E

6



5

F

1. **Two teams** a ball **each** playing to targets. Once they get to one target they must work to get the ball to the other target. As the player passes to a target they must **change over** with the target player who comes into play. As above (4) passes to (5) and switches position, already the other players have spread out to attack the other target.
2. Teams play **through** each other and must have **awareness** of where their **own** players are and where the **other team** is as they pass through them. Emphasize a good **first touch** out their feet to set up the next pass or passing first time to a teammate. Always having players realize they must **look before** they receive the ball.
3. Ensure as the ball is transferred from one end to the other that **all** players get a touch on the ball before it gets to the next target.
4. As the ball is passed to the target and the target player brings the ball out with a good first touch the other players must already be positioning themselves to be in support to transfer the ball to the other target, this means spreading out **width wise** and **length wise** to make themselves hard to mark such as in a game. Ensure they don't turn their backs and run away but keep looking at the ball and open their stance up to receive a pass or at least offer an option. Show movement **across** the field as they break out, **diagonal runs** for example (C & B), no breaking in straight lines and hence easy to mark. Introduce **opposition** so the two teams play against each other and make it **competitive** by keeping score.

## SMALL SIDED GAME DEVELOPMENT

In considering the development of the A.I.A. coaching program I felt a need to relate it's use in producing soccer players to the small sided game concept that's use in itself is an important part of player development. The two go hand in hand.

With this in mind I have produced some small sided game practices that you the coach can use to further develop the work you have already done. I have taken the S.S.G. concept from a 3 v 3 triangular set up to a 4 v 4 diamond set up through 5 v 5, 6 v 6, 8 v 8, 9 v 9 up to 11 v 11 and the full field.

To explain why 11 v 11, I would say that within a full size game of soccer there are always S.S.G. situations with combination plays occurring all over the field and by practicing with smaller numbers you are reproducing what is happening in the full game.

The difference is that in the S.S.G's it is the same small number of players involved and hence they each have a lot more touches on the ball, in the full size game it is many different players being involved in many different S.S.G. situations.

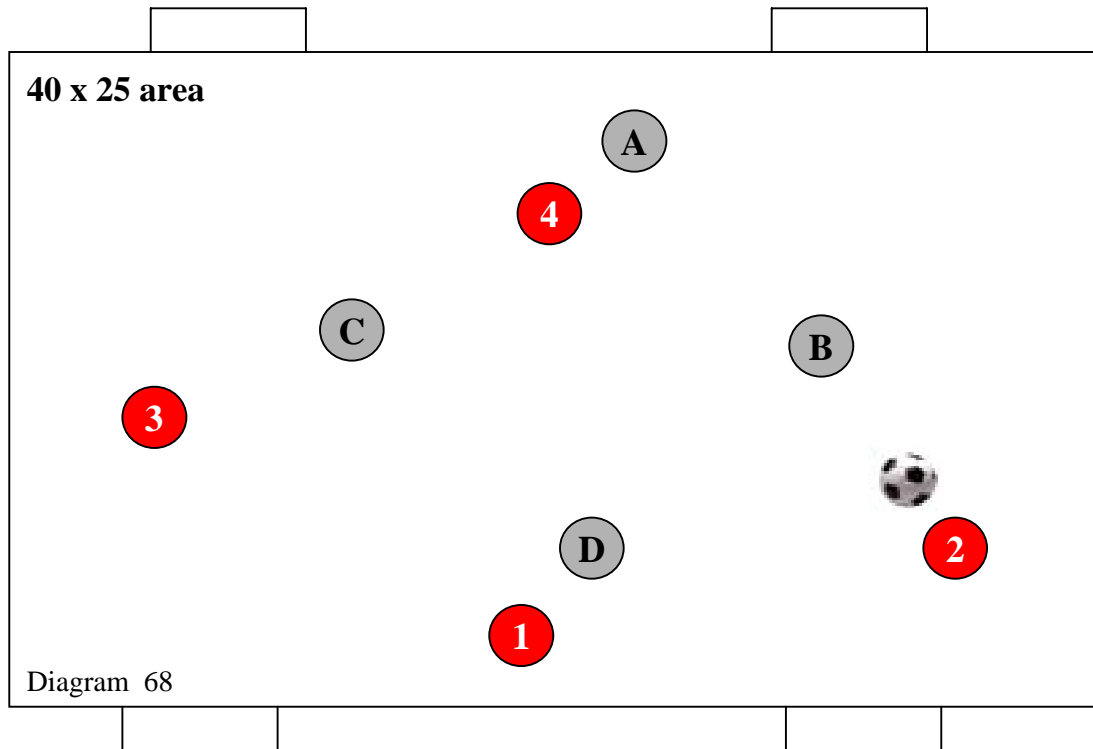
Aside from the game situations, **in training**, coaches often have different numbers of players available to train on any one occasion therefore I considered that it would be useful to show how to develop practices using different small sided game sizes in terms of player numbers and sizes of area used.

Ultimately as the S.S.G. concept becomes more accepted and certain sized teams play **officially** at certain age groups coaches can tailor their practices to suit the game sizes their players play in from both a technical and a tactical standpoint. 8 v 8 is played already played at Under 9 and Under 10 level, 6 v 6 is being introduced at these age groups at a later date in the State of Minnesota (where I live) and I hope to see 4 v 4 leagues being developed in the future for the very young.

Considering all these points, providing S.S.G. practices covering different themes is an important way to aid the development of all players who are trained this way. Coaches can themselves develop these themes and be able to use and relate them to different team sizes from the information they get from this book. The only thing restricting them is their own imagination!!!

# PASSING SUPPORT AND COMBINATION WORK GAME PLAN

## 4 v 4 – BASIC DIAMOND SHAPE



1. You can start as in other practices with two teams playing **through** each other with a ball each practicing switching play, attacking each goal in turn. Limit it to two touches to ensure quick decisions both from the player on the ball and the players off the ball who need to get in support positions early.
2. Using two **wide** positioned goals for each team to attack. This is designed to encourage players to spread out when they attack and **switch play**; changing direction if one route is blocked. It also encourages players on the ball to look around more as there are two areas to attack.
3. Looking for quick transition and movement off the ball to create space but attacking the space when it is on to do so. The first thought of the player on the ball should still be “Can I run or pass the ball forward”.

**Coaching Points** a) **Creating Space** – for yourself and your teammates.

b) **Decision** – When, Where and How to pass the ball.

c) **Technique** – The Quality of the pass (Accuracy, Weight, Angle).

d) **Support Positions** of teammates (Angle, Distance and Communication). In front and behind.

e) **Switching Play** using width in attack.

(Wayne Harrison)



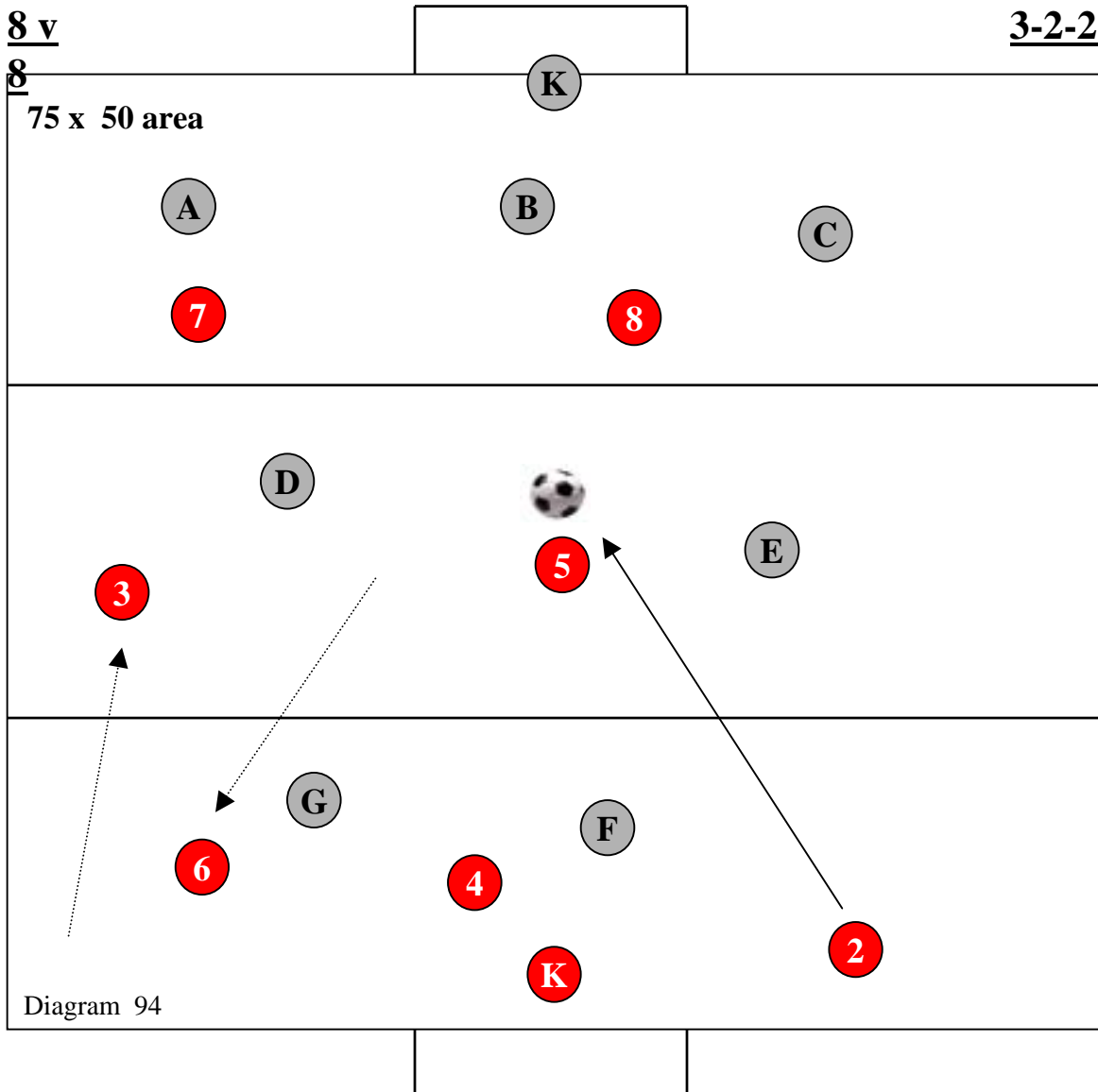
# TRANSITION GAMES MAINTAINING SHAPE AND BALANCE

8 v

3-2-2

8

75 x 50 area



1. Player (2) passes the ball into the middle zone to (5), (3) moves up from the defensive zone to the middle zone to support. (6) switches by dropping into the defensive zone from the middle zone to maintain the balance of the team.
2. This type of **transition movement** is important because it allows players to move **freely** between the zones knowing they will have a team mate covering for them.
3. In terms of the **opposition** this rapid movement and transition makes it **difficult** for them to pick players up, to read what your team is doing and how it is playing.
4. This means defenders **aren't just** defenders, midfielders **aren't just** midfielders and attackers **aren't just** attackers they work to **help each other** through the three units of the team and are free to mix the game up. This is **total soccer** played to encourage the **free movement** of players throughout the teams.

(Wayne Harrison)

**8 v 8 SESSION WITH COMPOSURE ZONES TO AID DEVELOPMENT**

**3 – 2 – 2 system**

