



Global Football Development

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# FUTSAL COACHING MANUAL



## Welcome to this coaching manual

Futsal is an integral element of the wider football community and is now played by millions worldwide across many of our member associations. For some, futsal is a popular format of football in its own right, whereas for others, it acts as a development tool for young footballers.

At FIFA, we recognise the importance of all formats of the game. Futsal has been a relatively late benefactor of coaching support offered across the football family. Now is the time to integrate futsal into the wider football community to enable the harnessing of its core assets, whilst further developing this format of the game.

By modernising the game, making futsal more accessible, demystifying its concepts and showing how simple it is to play, more boys and girls will be able to experience futsal. By simplifying its content and simply encouraging play rather than promoting concepts of rigidly structured, complex training drills and exercises, it is also hoped that more adults will be encouraged to coach and lead the game.

Children want to play – that is their natural instinct. Fostering a game which children can be free to experience and where they can express themselves without the rigid control of an adult fulfilling a tick-box session for their benefit and not the children's is the best way to engage children.

We additionally recognise that, from a young age, all formats of the game play a huge role in the development of both girls and boys. Futsal offers

a format that can accelerate the development of young female players through its game constraints. This can only enhance and grow the women's game.

Coaching/teaching has to be more about **what is being said**, which can be supported by evidence and data, rather than **who is saying it**. However, as coaches, we make decisions based on judgement which cannot simply be replaced by data, but the data should inform our decision-making without making the decisions for us.

This coaching manual is not intended to offer a curriculum or a coaching qualification. It is intended to offer guidance on a changing approach to engaging young players. The concepts of simple games, allowing young players to play and have more contact with the ball, getting comfortable on the ball and freely trying new things underpin this coaching manual.

We can catalyse progress by exposing every young player to the randomness of gameplay during training sessions rather than designing and implementing sessions with fixed outcomes. Allowing the young mind to explore and experiment – which allows them to learn through experimentation, trial and error or a guided discovery – will develop capable young people confident in expressing themselves from an early age. Offering them an opportunity to contribute to their learning provides ownership of that journey where each player is an individual with their own specific learning journey.

Age-specific coaching environments with experts at the various age ranges rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to coaching is also key to creating the appropriate environments.

This coaching manual is not intended to replace other resources already published, but to supplement them, with perhaps a more up-to-date approach to coaching futsal.

As applicable as this guide is to all levels of the game from grassroots to elite, it should not be considered a utopian guide to win tournaments at any level. It is intended to shape future players while guiding more coaches, teachers, parents and volunteers towards developing foundations through simply allowing players to play with freedom, but with a constraint-led approach.

We have also recognised the need to approach the different development phases of every young player, from early childhood to adulthood and beyond.

In this context, the coaching manual refers to:

- **The developing player** (6–12 years old)
- **The youth player** (13–18 years old)
- **Recreational futsal**
- **Elite play**

We hope that you enjoy the journey throughout this coaching manual, irrespective of your futsal knowledge and your role in either football or futsal and that it stimulates thought and curiosity to understand futsal better from your own perspective.



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## General introduction

In more recent years, futsal has experienced significant growth around the world as the small format of the game evolves and develops thanks to increased awareness and participation opportunities.

In some member associations, futsal is the most popular format of football played. In others, it is just getting started. However, in many member associations, futsal is not only a game in its own right, but also a core aspect of a long-term player development pathway for football with its benefits recognised more widely across a hybrid player development experience.



Consequently, futsal is now played by all demographic groups in many of FIFA's member associations. Reflecting this shift in participation and the widespread engagement in futsal from early childhood through to adulthood around the world, the FIFA Futsal Coaching Manual can be applied appropriately at all ages and at all levels of ability with the appropriate interventions and developmental adjustments.

This coaching manual provides guidance on the application of futsal coaching concepts for the **developing player** (6–12 years old) and **youth player** (13–18 years old) so that age-specific pathways can be developed using the outlined principles, from grassroots through to elite performance. The content recognises and highlights the variable coaching skills and practical adaptations required across the different child development phases, whilst directing the coach-educator accordingly.



**These two phases of player development are distinct enough to be stand-alone concepts.**

The **developing player** (6–12 years old) requires a focus on technical development, ability and comfort on the ball – this is the age of discovery. At this age, children are in the process of developing an understanding of exactly what's going on. Some of the children's actions will be seen as a reluctance to engage, but they may also be considered moments of observation whilst summoning the courage to try and get involved. It is here that the coach has to show understanding and empathy with the young player who is developing their own confidence and awareness. The impact of smaller pitches and reduced numbers of players compared with 11v11 football and the consequence of more contact with the ball all contribute towards an improved player experience, which leads to increased engagement. Of course, the futsal ball also plays a key role here, providing time on the ball to quickly build confidence, engagement and individual experimentation. At this young age, players tend to want to keep the ball and experience the success of scoring goals, which should be encouraged in all training sessions. Training sessions should be designed around the implementation of these two focus areas (keeping the ball and scoring goals) in gameplay rather than drills and activities with fixed outcomes.

By contrast, although all of these facets continue to play a part in player development, when players reach the **youth player** phase (13–18 years), there is greater emphasis on developing tactical understanding as part of a team and the development of more complex technical skills. By its very nature, tactical play is more structured and works towards defined outcomes. After all, that is the principle of a tactical approach.

It is vital to acknowledge that, in order to apply tactical concepts from grassroots through to advanced levels, the principles of technical ability have to be embedded. Players without a good understanding of (and ability to execute) simple technical tasks such as passing, running with the ball, creating space, shooting accurately, tracking players (to emphasise just a few of the required skill sets) will not be able to apply tactical concepts adequately for them to be effective.

This coaching manual offers a complete futsal player development framework which is predicated on the three functional contributors of development: **Player • Game • Coach**.





This manual is fundamentally a coaching resource. However, young players' thirst for knowledge results in this audience turning to coaching resources for further insight and understanding as a core component of their self-guided learning. This is becoming increasingly prevalent in players under the age of 20 as social changes occur, namely, a greater reliance upon the internet and immediate access to platforms with an abundance of information.

The coaching manual has been produced to meet the demand for online resources by players, coaches and fans alike. In a changing world where mobile devices and other technology are more prevalent today than they were a decade ago, this concept is specifically relevant to the youngest of generations.

The principle of this coaching manual is to provide guidance for any participant irrespective of experience or age, ranging from grassroots through to elite. It is not intended to be a single source of wisdom or advice, but to support and be considered alongside other valuable resources already published.

The online resource should be suitably "open" in its ideals to be equally understood by a "novice" as it would by an "expert". The development of futsal vocabulary in different languages is also important in order to unify the game rather than languages simply adopting terms used in countries where futsal is traditionally played. Translating literally from the languages spoken in traditional futsal nations isn't ideal because meanings and word association may be lost or confused when translating to another language.

Within this coaching manual, we aim to offer "tools", not "solutions" (the "how to", not the "what") and to promote that development and understanding is more about "what" is being said rather than "who" is saying it. In this regard, following the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021<sup>®</sup>, FIFA took a new approach to capture data from elite futsal play at this tournament which would provide insights to direct the development of players over the coming years as well as an understanding of how the game is developing and evolving. This is a different approach compared to simply acting on the interpretation of gameplay by experts or commentators.

The responsibility for coach licensing sits with each member association. This coaching manual aims to support the process, whilst recognising that some member associations and confederations already have an advanced futsal coaching education system.





Over recent decades, futsal may not have benefitted from the support, research and “deep dive” into the game compared with other formats of football, instead finding its own way and acting in isolation. This has propagated a progression largely adopting linear coaching concepts, where repetition is witnessed across all levels and phases of the game, irrespective of age, ability or gender. This could be considered to be effective given the recent growth of the game globally, yet this coaching style inhibits game development and growth due to its limited teaching flexibility and consequently, players’ learning capability. It should be acknowledged that more up-to-date coaching philosophies and methods are now prevalent and adopted within many member associations, typifying changes in pedagogical understanding and general coaching evolution, yet this is still to filter its way through futsal.

At present, the challenge across futsal is the gap between what players do in training, the key practice and exploration phase, and what actually best prepares them to compete and perform during matches. It is evident from studies and reviews conducted by technical experts that lots of time is wasted during training sessions by practising in ways that do not emulate real gameplay. Time is also wasted as a consequence of a coaching method that the coach is focused on following, irrespective of whether that method and approach is beneficial to the development of young players. It is here that a significant, yet easy improvement can be made.

This coaching manual is not just about developing established coaches, either specialising in futsal or football, but also encouraging and helping those who will start on their futsal coaching journey. It is also applicable to anyone simply wanting further insight into futsal and its nuances, whether that be a player, coach, referee, administrator or fan.

Great coaches will possess both knowledge “of” the game and knowledge “in” the game. These two facets are fundamentally different. They cannot be learnt academically, instead they will be garnered and adapted over time through exposure and experience. The manual will discuss these two facets.



## 1.1 Using game-based training for development

The principles and benefits of ‘*Teaching Games for Understanding*’ [Thorpe, R et al. Loughborough University] and its principles of promoting the learning concepts generated by the randomness of gameplay through tactical learning linked to technical ability are considered a major benefit to futsal.

Although this concept dates back to the 1980s, it has more recently been demonstrated to have significant developmental impacts on team sports.

Futsal is an unpredictable, fast-paced game in which players should be able to provide some structure to gameplay. These two aspects are interlinked, but arguably neglected by a linear coaching methodology. This is particularly important when trying to engage an inexperienced coach who may not be comfortable with the structure and specific detail required to support the implementation of linear coaching, and who may also be new to futsal.

It is this intimidating issue of being seen to lack futsal understanding or knowledge that deters many from engaging in the teaching or supervision of a coaching session.



## 1.2 A constraint-led approach (CLA) to coaching futsal

- The theory of a CLA can underpin the design of coaching sessions to give coaches the best chance of satisfying the technical development, skill acquisition and psychological needs of every child in the session.
- Unless they are engaged in the session, the hidden objective of many children during play activity is often to avoid showing their weaknesses through finding creative ways to avoid taking part. Linear coaching drills and exercises that set up an environment which forces children to attempt to replicate perfect technique when their motor skills are not developed enough only sets them up for failure and demotivates them from further engagement.
- Providing young players with opportunities to achieve some initial success is crucial in developing their skills.
- During play, challenges emerge through exploration and solutions often arrive through the concepts of reactivity and the interaction of unique yet focused constraints. There is no unique, optimal way of solving performance problems, therefore young players need to experience multiple situations to understand response strategies in their own minds and in their own way through their developing mindset.
- A key focus of the CLA is that each individual is acting in a dynamic, ever-changing environment, so when designing tasks, it is vital to keep the key information or constraint used to control actions present to enable the development of functional perception-action couplings. It is not always necessary to move from a constrained game to end a training session with a non-constrained, open game. Again, the onus is on the coach to recognise need, benefit and development.
- Constraints do not act in isolation – changing any constraint will likely have an impact on other areas of play. Recognition of this by the coach or teacher is important in the delivery of a CLA session.



## 1.3 Coaching young players

This coaching manual considers the various phases of learning and player development from the **developing player** and **youth player** through to adulthood, and it identifies a collaborative approach with golden threads that weave through each phase until the end of the cycle. We recognise that development is never complete. It is always a work-in-progress that sometimes involves unexpected twists and turns but by providing guidance, this can be successfully navigated by the coach and player, whether at grassroots or elite level.

In this manual, we provide specific guidance for the **developing player** (6–12 years old) and the **youth player** (13–18 years) with direction around the transition from youth to adult play. Whilst practices depicted in the manual can be applied irrespective of age or gender, there is a need for specific guidance within these learning phases to ensure application meets the needs of each phase. Although – in many member associations – it is likely that they would be chosen as a youth team coach, an adult senior coach may not possess the appropriate skill sets required for working with young players and developing their potential (refer to *TSG's 2018 YOG outcomes in the FIFA Development Report*).

This should be seen as a risk, yet also an opportunity, in developing young futsal players. Having knowledge is somewhat irrelevant if it is not delivered suitably to the audience or adapted to suit players' ages and abilities.

The importance of the **developing player** phase in the personal growth cycle of young people is also recognised in this manual. We will focus on the **developing player** spending an increased amount of time with the ball, on the ball and not focusing on tactics and team formations until much later in their development.

Having an abundance of knowledge about tactics, training drills and exercises or the most complex play strategies as a coach of young players is worthless, unless you understand the individual needs of every child at every phase of their development. As adult coaches, we must try to visualise the game through the eyes of a child and understand what makes it fun for them, what engages them and most importantly, what gets them motivated.



At the **developing player** phase of player development, the role of the coach could be divided into two aspects: their knowledge (20%) and their relationship with and understanding of the individual (80%). When a young player feels safe and cared for, they will thrive and learn more, they will be receptive to learning in different ways through trust, and they will be curious thanks to the freedom they are offered. At this age, we should expect to see an emotional and mental transaction, not just the complex design of training sessions. For effective coaching, it should not be about passing a test or an exam – it is about the ability to create positive environments.

Young players' coaches should be comfortable with chaos in a children's coaching session. In the child's mind, which is underdeveloped at this phase of their growth, there is no structure since it has not yet fully formed, so chaos is normal for them. We must start by helping every child to develop confidence in themselves and their ability to gain new skills by allowing that chaos to run its course until they find their own structure.

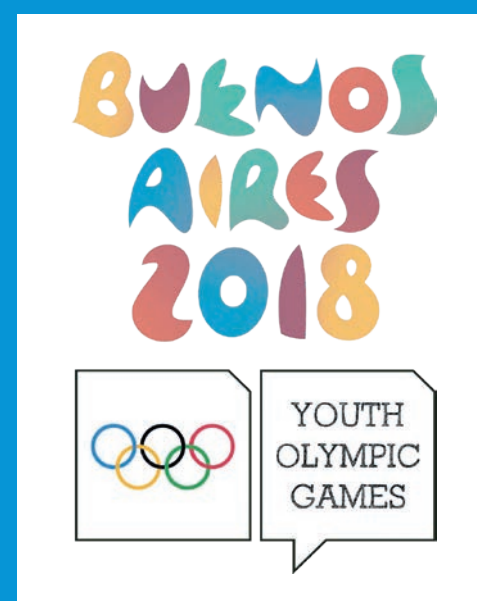
This coaching manual promotes and supports the message that age-specific coaching and the age-specific application of resources and methodologies is vital for a young person's development. It advocates the importance of the right people with the right skill sets, supported by informed pedagogical (research, teaching and learning) understandings of working at these various ages. It is known that many coaches learn better with informal instruction and less formal opportunities such as casual conversations with other coaches than they do by following a structured learning environment of presentations and guided outcomes. The same must and does apply to young learners. Yet it is the coach who has traditionally insisted on creating a structured learning environment where the coach's management is paramount to learning. However, this approach needs to be adapted to better suit the current situation.

Positive experiences for children are at the heart of engaging and retaining children in physical activity. Active children are happier and more resilient so, as a community, we have to ensure that all young people have those opportunities through futsal. It is here that age-appropriate coaching must be initiated where the needs of young people are fully understood, and coaching strategies that maximise those positive and engaging experiences must be implemented for long-term gain and engagement in futsal

## 1.4 Trends from the 2018 YOG to influence youth development

The TSG development report from the 2018 YOG identified trends in playing and coaching. These have been considered in the development of this coaching manual so that they influence all of those areas identified by FIFA's technical experts. There is an evident need to address the approach to coaching young players as if they were adults, attempting to impose complex tactical actions without players first possessing the basic technical abilities, in order for them to be effective in those tactical actions. Hiring the same coaches who work with adult teams to work with either developing or youth players whilst applying the same training demands as they do for adults when it is inappropriate to do so will have little benefit.

Additionally, the need for age-specific teaching approaches and environments has been seen as key to developing the next generation of futsal players around the world, whilst maintaining a focus on young players' welfare.



## 1.5 The learning journey

The content leans towards an introduction to futsal from a young age as a key component of a young player's development experience, but one that is fun and focuses on the fundamentals of the game. This should be influenced by developing technical ability. The coaching manual addresses the transitional

journey from a young age (6–12 years) towards more complex play (13–18 years) with specialist teaching at these ages that directs and guides the development of technical abilities into the various technical facets of tactical play and awareness through to 18 years of age and beyond.

## 1.6 Phases of learning

When considering each of a young player's development phases, three phases of learning can be considered: **experimentation**, **automation** and **perfectionism**.



In all situations, the coach must consider the progression phase at any moment relative to the individual player. The progression at each phase must be driven by the player's abilities given both their age and futsal understanding. Here, we should tailor the

syllabus to the player rather than use a rigid, one-size-fits-all syllabus that the player's learning is centred upon as not all players have the same needs at the same time.



Over time, they will develop an understanding and the challenges they encounter and how they approach each challenge they face will vary depending on their futsal understanding and ability to execute the task encountered. Only when these two characteristics align can progress be made. This approach identifies the common mistake of applying complex tactical work to technically underdeveloped players who do not yet possess the ability to execute basic technical skills. Futsal is a game that relies on technical understanding and ability, perhaps to an even greater extent than 11v11 as a consequence of the space constraints, players within that space and the tempo of the game.

Adaptation is key. The coach's job is to apply the appropriate technical content in line with the young player's phase and age of learning.

In both the **developing** and **youth player** phases, ongoing experimentation is vital and should be encouraged with opportunities to play. As a result of the exposure to the variety of challenges that the randomness of play presents, rather than a structured exercise with defined outcomes, the learning is experience-based. For example, by trial and error or guided discovery methods of learning that become embedded. The appropriate course of action will eventually become second nature and, over time, the player will face greater challenges in more complex situations which allows them to perfect the execution of the action. Prior experience and exposure to similar situations shapes the ability to recall what to do on demand.



### 1.7 Women's and girl's futsal

Women's and girls' futsal are not separate categories to male futsal – all types of futsal are considered one and the same. Nevertheless, it is important to influence the adoption of futsal for development across the women's game, recognising that certain communities embrace the format of the game as their “football of choice”.

There are many barriers to participation in female football. Many of which are real, but they may also be artificial or perceptive. However, futsal offers many solutions to these traditional obstructions.



### 1.8 A standardised football and futsal language

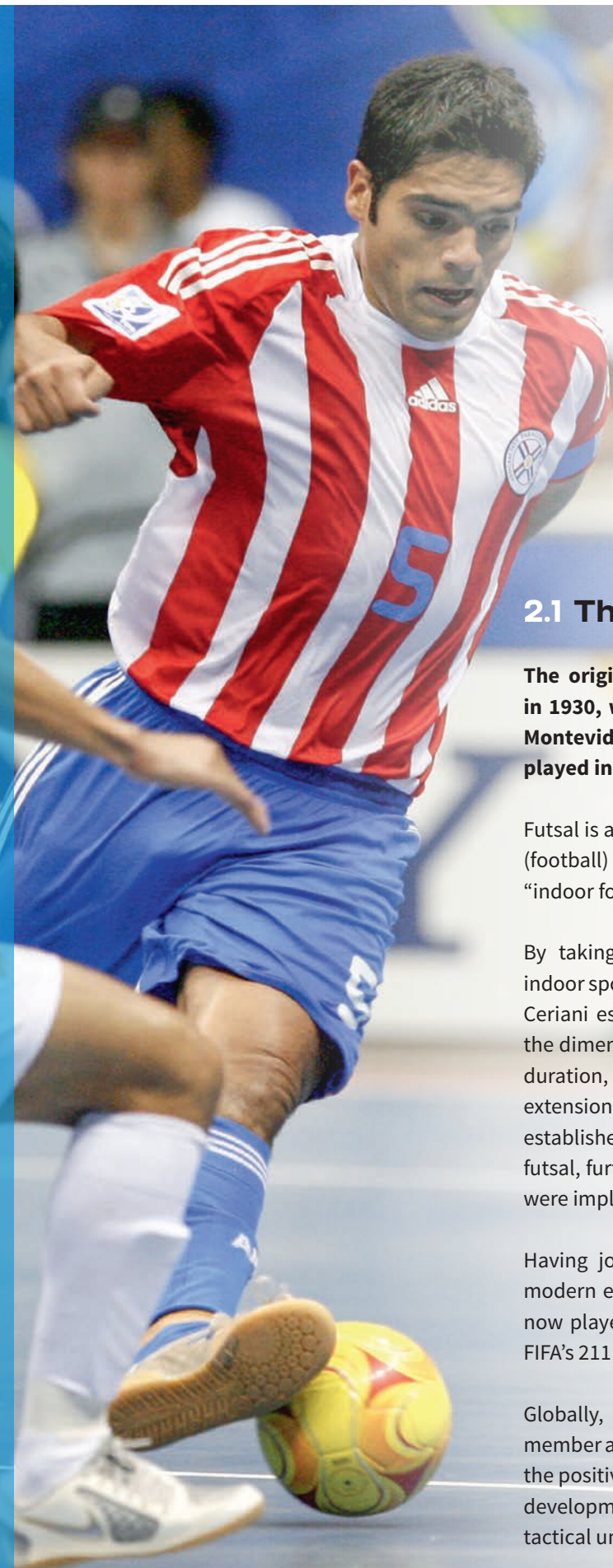
Although futsal is a game in its own right, it is also recognised to be harnessed by many around the world as an influencing part of a young football player's development. It is therefore important not to create confusion in the terminology used across both football and futsal in order for its transition and transfer to be seamless, relevant and relative.

### 1.9 Vectors of the game

This coaching manual refers to the game periods of **in possession** (attack), **out of possession** (defence) **transition** (counter-attack) and **goalkeeping**.

Goalkeeping has had to be specifically outlined as part of this content due to the importance of goalkeepers in futsal as a result of the smaller pitch size and reduced number of players on each team. The specificities of the position and role of the goalkeeper are expanded upon as is the inclusion of the goalkeeper in outfield practices.





## 2.1 The development of futsal

The origins of futsal can be traced back to Uruguay in 1930, when Juan Carlos Ceriani (a PE teacher from Montevideo) invented a new kind of football to be played indoors, unaffected by weather conditions.

Futsal is a blendword formed by the Spanish words fútbol (football) and sala (room), which can be translated as “indoor football”.

By taking and adapting rules from other established indoor sports such as basketball, water polo and handball, Ceriani established a format of regulations that defined the dimensions of the pitch, the number of players, game duration, and the general rules with both limitations and extensions to the goalkeeper’s remit. This construct was established for decades, and once FIFA assumed control of futsal, further adjustments such as the futsal-specific ball were implemented.

Having joined the FIFA football family in 1985, in the modern era, a recent FIFA study has shown that futsal is now played – indoors or outdoors – in more than 170 of FIFA’s 211 member associations.

Globally, futsal is growing steadily as more and more member associations become familiar with and appreciate the positive impact this format of football can have on the development of a child’s technique, variable skill sets, tactical understanding, coordination and agility.

## 2.2 An introduction to futsal and its key features

Futsal is a format of football. Some may consider futsal as a sport and game in its own right, whilst others consider futsal as a unique development tool for all young footballers.



There are facets of the game which make it unique when compared to other small-sided formats of football. Only once all these facets combine to form a game do the real technical benefits of futsal come to the fore for player development and player enjoyment. For game identity and those identified technical benefits, it is vital that the core principles of the game are retained no matter how they are used. Without the smaller ball, reduced player numbers, different footwear, different surface and smaller goalposts, we would find merely a derivative of futsal, resulting in fewer technical benefits.

When all of these aspects come together, the game can be fast-paced and technical, which allows all players to have more touches of the ball.

With only five players on each side and reduced size goals on a pitch almost eight times smaller than a conventional football pitch, the need for skilful, imaginative play with precise technical execution is paramount. Tight spaces, fast-moving action, quick decisions and end-to-end play with transitions are key to futsal’s success, making this a challenging but enjoyable format of football.

Futsal involves **attacking** (in possession) and **defensive** (out of possession) **phases of play**. The switch from one to the other, called the **attacking** (defence to attack – when this is done quickly before the opponents have time to reposition themselves, it is referred to as a **counter-attack**) and **defensive** (attack to defence) transitions, are often considered the crucial moments during matches.

- Futsal can be played indoors or outdoors.
- Pitch sizes vary up to a maximum of 40x20m for senior international matches. For the developing player age groups, smaller, age-specific pitches are often used.
- Futsal-specific goals with a height of 2m and width of 3m.
- Five-a-side (including one goalkeeper) – in the event of a Power Play, one outfield player with designated goalkeeper responsibilities.
- A futsal ball (smaller than a football) of approximately the same weight as a football but with significantly reduced bounce.
- Games consist of two halves of 20 minutes each for adults with less time for the developing and youth players.
- Futsal enjoys its own specific Laws of the Game which are modelled on football to reflect its engagement in the football family.
- Unlimited substitutions.
- No offside Law.



Like in football, futsal players can be defined according to the positions they occupy on the pitch: **goalkeeper, defender, winger and pivot/forward**. Whilst these positions have often had terms and references applied to them from the Spanish language, these are not always reflective of their intended meaning when translated around the world in other languages. Consequently, these have been standardised to have a consistent meaning and implication irrespective of translation across the official FIFA languages.

Whilst some players provide versatility with skill sets in various positions, others are absolute specialists (e.g. pivots/forwards, who offer specific attributes and aptitudes and are particularly skilled in 1v1 situations with specific technical skills or outstanding physical attributes). Not so much at the **developing player** or **youth player** phase of development, but as players transition into adult play, the types of player on a team and their specific characteristics will likely determine the way the team plays. This is also seen at international level, where teams are built around the availability of specialists so that a specific philosophy and playing style can be applied.

Futsal requires a high level of active participation and players must have developed, perhaps advanced motor skills which promote ambidextrous development and provides an excellent platform for developing skills amongst children. The use of a full bench and roll-on/roll-off substitutes engages every player in a match with active involvement, whether actively on the pitch or passively as a substitute awaiting their turn to make an impact in the match.

Developing the ability to know when to pass to feet or pass into space, when to pass or dribble, when to shoot or simply retain the ball, and when to mark the player or mark the space are all developmental aspects that the likes of Kaká, Robinho, Xavi, Dani Alves, Messi, Marta, Cristiane and Cristiano Ronaldo learnt from a young age. These are skill sets that can be transferred to football, developed within a game that encourages players to play freely and make decisions early by thinking more quickly, trying something different, defending then immediately having an attacking mindset – all in the free flow of gameplay. The game enables players to become rounded in all aspects whilst adopting the principles of fair play.

In all instances, futsal offers players multiple opportunities to express themselves as individuals or as part of a team and the community and social impact can therefore never be underestimated.



Futsal also offers alternative opportunities for member associations to host and qualify for international competitions and additional options for players, coaches and referees to be part of the game.

Increasingly attracting more players and fans, futsal is a game in its own right that offers transferable skill sets that help to expand on the foundations of football. It is also an excellent complement to the men's and women's 11-a-side game. As participation numbers grow (already estimated to be in excess of 30 million globally), so does the need to ensure sustainable supporting structures and knowledge transfer within the wider football family to maximise its potential.



As an invasion game involving two competing teams, it requires teamwork and cooperation whilst the individual assets of a player also repeatedly come to the fore irrespective of age, gender or ability.

Futsal should be a core element of every young player's development plan. It presents different challenges and opportunities than other formats and should be considered part of the overall development toolkit available to young players and coaches alike.

Futsal is an invasion game, where the space of one team is threatened and invaded by an opponent. It is a constant ebb and flow of attacking, defending and counter-attacking.

Futsal is played at varying intensities around the world, yet it is often considered a fast-paced game that involves creativity by the individual both alone and as part of a team. With restricted **time and space** available to execute the various technical and tactical elements of play, it requires astute **awareness and decision-making**. Whilst futsal is a team sport, the outcomes of games are often defined by the individual actions of players and the negative or positive impact that these can have on the wider game.

Complementing the high **technical** demand required in futsal, it remains a highly **tactical** game, especially when considering the limitations of space and the disproportionate number of players within that space when compared with football.

Futsal is a game identified by short bursts of intense effort, largely dictated by the pitch dimensions and occupancy of space. The match result can change in the blink of an eye due to those intense exertions within small spaces. At all levels of ability, the Futsal Laws of the Game facilitate recovery periods for players, as the game constraints create moments of absolute intensity requiring physical strength and speed endurance to maintain a high tempo. At elite level, appropriate physical preparation is essential if players are to adequately recover from the constant effort they have to exert.



## Introduction

**Futsal is regulated by the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game. Futsal should be played globally to this standardised set of Laws so that a consistent approach to play is achieved.**

**Unlike the Laws of the Game for football, the Futsal Laws of the Game are currently within the jurisdiction of the FIFA Council, not The IFAB.**

The FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game work on a philosophy to:

- reflect an indoor version of football;
- promote fair play;
- develop a fast, exciting, end-to-end game; and
- provide constraints relative to the game size.

By having a standardised set of laws with a common language and terminology, clarity is maintained across continents and between game formats.

However, as futsal is the smaller format of football and its laws reflect those of football, it is commonplace for any changes in the Laws of the Game for football to have an impact upon the Futsal Laws of the Game, albeit with a short time lag. That is not to say that the laws are duplicated, far from it, but the nuance of the adaptation is often considered to reflect some common ground and transfer of concepts.

The more recent publication of these laws provide guidance for member associations regarding the implementation of localised adaptations for youth development. It is the responsibility of each member association to determine how it wants to vary the Futsal Laws of the Game to suit their challenges of futsal development for young players, or recreational play. Once approved by the member association, these may be adopted within its jurisdiction.

The FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game can be found [here](#).

However, given that laws may vary locally, some caution should be exercised to fully understand the impact of change. The unintended consequences of change and adaptation must be carefully considered and trialled with the outcomes being observed and understood before any such change is adopted. Adaptations that may be seen as a form of help at a younger age may stifle development as players get older or limit players' technical growth which they need to help them find solutions for themselves through gameplay and the challenges presented by the laws.

Probably the most significant impact that change can have is around the perception that futsal, irrespective of age, must be played on a pitch of maximum size. This is not appropriate for the developing player. Consequently, guidance on maximum pitch sizes to be adopted within this age range should be considered carefully.

Some non-compulsory guidance on age-specific pitch sizing is set out below:

	Length (max) m	Width (max) m	Run off (min) m	Centre Circle (min rad) m	2nd (10m) Penalty (min)
<b>U9</b>	18.00	11.00	1.00	1.50	4.50
<b>U11</b>	20.00	12.50	1.00	1.50	4.50
<b>U12-16</b>	30.00	15.00	1.00	2.25	10.00



It may not always be evident to coaches and players alike, however, understanding the Futsal Laws of the Game is fundamental to finding ways to improve play that respect these laws whilst delivering innovation and advancement in play. Whilst there is often a philosophy in all sports that the laws governing play are for the referees to understand and implement, the game is improved when all participants have a good and common understanding of what is permitted and what is not.

Fairness and fair play are FIFA hallmarks across the entire football family and core to that premise is that players and officials alike work within a framework of governance to underpin fair play. It is also true that for coaches to be innovative in strategies and tactics, they must do so within those constraints set out by the Laws of the Game, so understanding the limits and boundaries is therefore key to innovative thinking, training and implementation. It is pointless to lose learning time by training in a way that breaches the Laws of the Game or does not reflect futsal gameplay. One example is training 6v6, or 7v7 to accommodate all squad players when the game is limited by its laws to a maximum of 5v5. Whereas 3v2, 4v3, etc. (in both underload and overload) are common features of futsal play. Additional players can still be included and active in training sessions whilst maintaining the principles of the laws – this simply requires innovative thinking in session planning to ensure that the phase of play during training never exceeds 5v5 in an active area.

FIFA publishes the Futsal Laws of the Game. This is not an annual publication but is amended as and when required by the need for change. The game must always remain up-to-date, reflective of improvement and fairness. Both coaches and players therefore need to stay up to date with change, especially where the laws change, as play must adapt.

Member associations should encourage basic referee course participation by players, coaches and administrators alike as not only does this develop the refereeing workforce, but it ensures alignment with the requirements of the Futsal Laws of the Game between all participants.



### 3.1 Applying the Futsal Laws of the Game

The fact that the same Futsal Laws of the Game apply in every match in every confederation, country, town and village throughout the world is a considerable strength which must be preserved. This is also an opportunity which must be harnessed everywhere for futsal's benefit.

Those who educate match officials and other participants should emphasise that:

- referees should apply the Futsal Laws of the Game within the spirit of the game to help create fair and safe match environments; and
- everyone must respect the match officials and their decisions, remembering and respecting the integrity of the Futsal Laws of the Game.

Players have a major responsibility for the image of the game and the team captain should play an important role in helping to ensure that the Futsal Laws of the Game and referees' decisions are respected and protected.

### 3.2 Amendments to the Futsal Laws of the Game

Given that the Futsal Laws of the Game are applied universally, the game is essentially the same in every part of the world and at every level. As well as creating a fair and safe environment in which the game is played, the Futsal Laws of the Game should also promote participation and enjoyment.

Historically, FIFA has allowed member associations to have some flexibility in amending the "organisational" laws for specific categories of futsal. However, FIFA strongly believes that member associations should be able to modify some other aspects of the way futsal is organised if it will benefit futsal in their own country.

How the game is played and refereed should be the same on every futsal pitch in the world. However, a country's domestic futsal needs should determine how long the game lasts, how many people can take part and how some unfair behaviour is punished.

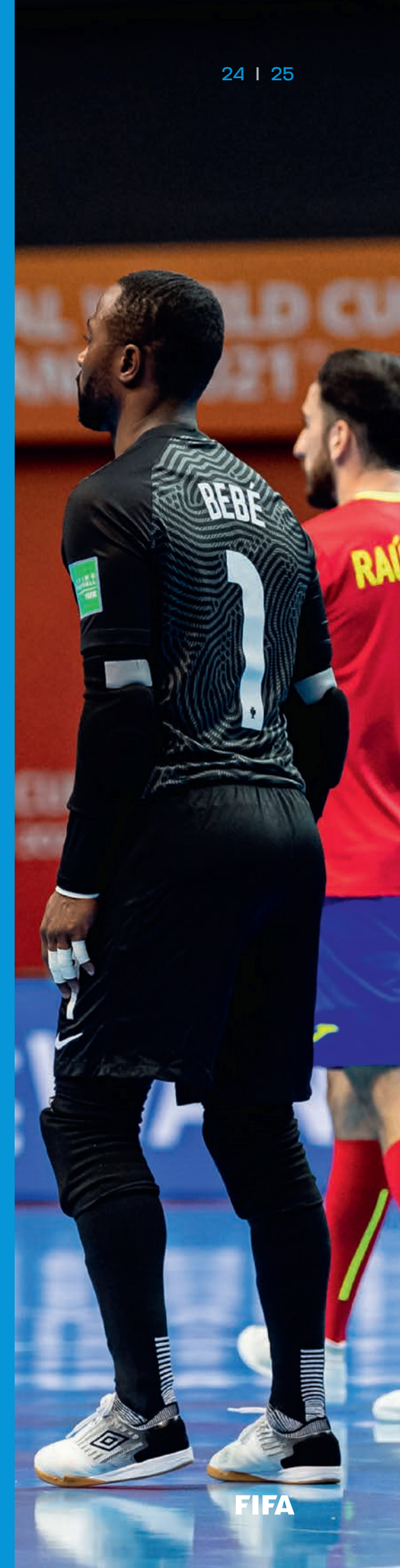
Consequently, member associations, confederations and FIFA have the option to amend all or some of the following organisational areas of the Futsal Laws of the Game for which they are responsible for youth, veterans', disability and grassroots futsal:

- The size of the pitch
- The size, weight and material of the ball
- The width between the goalposts and the height of the crossbar from the ground
- The duration of the two (equal) halves of the game (and two equal halves of extra time)
- Limitations on the throwing of the ball by the goalkeeper

In addition, to allow member associations further flexibility to benefit and develop futsal domestically, the following changes relating to "categories" of futsal are permitted:

- Member associations, confederations and FIFA have the flexibility to decide the age restrictions for youth and veterans' futsal.
- Each member association will determine which competitions at the lowest levels of futsal are designated as grassroots futsal.

Member associations have the option to approve some of these amendments for different competitions – there is no requirement to apply them all across the board. However, no other amendments are allowed without the permission of FIFA.





## Limitations on the throwing of the ball by the goalkeeper

FIFA has approved certain limitations on the throwing of the ball by goalkeepers for youth, veterans', disability and grassroots futsal, subject to the approval of the relevant organisation – the member association or confederation organising the competition, or FIFA.

References to the limitations are found in:

### LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

“An indirect free kick is also awarded if a goalkeeper commits any of the following offences: [...]

- where this is outlawed by domestic rules for youth, veterans', disability
- and/or grassroots futsal, throws the ball directly over the halfway line (the free kick is to be taken from the place where the ball crossed the halfway line).”

### LAW 16 – THE GOAL CLEARANCE

“Where this is outlawed by domestic rules for youth, veterans', disability and/or grassroots futsal, if the goalkeeper throws the ball directly over the halfway line, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the ball crossed the halfway line.”

The philosophy behind this limitation is to promote creative futsal and encourage technical development.

Member associations are asked to inform FIFA of their use of all of the aforementioned amendments, and at which levels they are used, as this information (especially the reason(s) why the amendments are being used) may identify development ideas or strategies that FIFA can share to assist the development of futsal in other member associations.

FIFA is open to hearing about other potential amendments to the Futsal Laws of the Game, which could increase participation, make futsal more attractive and promote its worldwide development.

Having allowed this provision, there is also some caution to be exercised in deviating too far from the game's principles. Although amendments may be viewed as something which improves the player experience, that requires substantiated evidence before change is implemented. Change should always merge and balance the benefits for the player with an improved spectator experience of the game. The unintended consequences in the short, medium and long term must also be considered in any amendment and change should be evidence-based, following trials and test events to consider the intended impact of a proposed change whilst looking at the long-term benefits and impact. Simply changing a law at youth or grassroots level because of a perceptive gain and improvement could damage the game and player development in the long run.

For example, preventing a goalkeeper throwing over the halfway line has to be relative to pitch size. Pitch size depends on players' age and ability. This limitation may impose far more attacking pressure on a team if they cannot progress into the opponent's half through passing and movement. This consequently has a negative impact on creative play. This is particularly evident where one team is physically and technically stronger than another. An alternative change to achieve the same outcome is simply to limit the pitch size for certain ages, despite the goalkeeper distributing over the halfway line being a core feature of futsal.

Another way that innovative coaching and game management can achieve the same outcome and provides a technically better option for players and coaches alike is through the application of innovative thinking and introducing other game constraints whilst abiding by the Laws of the Game.



## 3.3 Managing amendments to the Futsal Laws of the Game

For every proposed amendment, the focus must be on fairness, integrity, respect, safety, the enjoyment of the participants, and how technology can benefit the game. The Futsal Laws of the Game must also encourage participation by everyone, regardless of their background or ability.

Although accidents occur, the Futsal Laws of the Game should make the game as safe as possible. This requires players to show respect for their opponents, and referees should create a safe environment by dealing strongly with those whose play is too aggressive and dangerous. The Futsal Laws of the Game embody the unacceptability of unsafe play in their disciplinary phrases (e.g. “reckless challenge” [caution = yellow card] and “endangering the safety of an opponent” or “using excessive force” [sending-off = red card]).

Futsal must be attractive and enjoyable for players, match officials and coaches, as well as spectators, fans, administrators, etc. These amendments must help make the game attractive and enjoyable so that everybody, regardless of age, race, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability, etc., can take part in and enjoy playing futsal.

These amendments aim to simplify the game and bring many aspects of the Futsal Laws of the Game into line with those of football but, as many situations are subjective and referees are human (and therefore make mistakes), some decisions will inevitably cause debate and discussion.

The Futsal Laws of the Game cannot deal with every single situation, so where there is no direct provision therein, FIFA expects referees to make a decision within the spirit of the game by using their understanding of futsal. This often involves asking the question: “what would be in futsal's best interests?”



### Introduction

Futsal is both a game in its own right and can be considered a player development tool for football. Both approaches have a part to play in developing this format of the game and there is variance in the approach taken by FIFA's member associations around the world.

It is true that some member associations see futsal as being as important to its communities as football, whilst others, perhaps smaller member associations are more focused on achievements for their smaller communities through futsal than football. There will also be those that simply see futsal as a player development tool for football. None of these approaches are right or wrong, nor do they offer an ideal solution, but they do demonstrate the flexibility that can be applied to the portability of futsal across broad and diverse communities and territories.

Young players, especially developing players, require a balance of different game formats to develop their enjoyment, awareness, technical abilities and game understanding. Futsal forms a key element of that balance. Although it can't be deemed to be the universal solution that is often talked about in terms of footballer development, it should nevertheless form a significant part of the developing players experiences.

Futsal is a truly standardised game format with its own laws applied universally across all of FIFA's member associations. This approach contributes significantly to a futsal player pathway which offers opportunity for re-engagement in later life having benefited from exposure and experience at a young age.



## 4.1 Futsal – a tool for player development

The key characteristics of the game, such as fewer players, a smaller pitch, the futsal-specific ball and an unlimited number of substitutions all add to its attractiveness as a more portable format. This leads to:

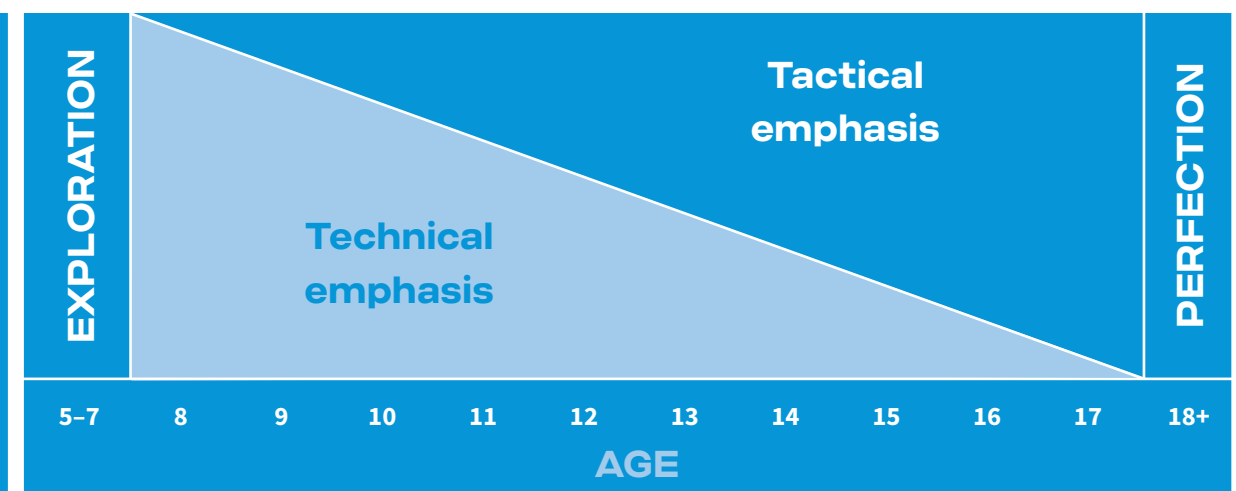
- increased contact with the ball and shots on goal;
- limited time and space to control and pass the ball;
- the promotion of rapid decision-making;
- a dynamic playing system and positional rotation by all players;
- the motivation of all players through involvement; and
- the constant engagement of all players, specifically those without the ball.

It also makes futsal the perfect tool to develop and improve individual technique, tactical understanding, agility, physicality, confidence with both feet, and coordination, as well as the speed and reactivity of both football and futsal players.

There are many transferable skills between futsal and football. However, maximising the benefits that futsal can offer the wider football family by maintaining the ethos and the core characteristics of futsal as a game is important in player development. The more these are diluted, the lesser the benefits and their value to football. It is also important to recognise that futsal is only one format of small-sided football that should form the rounded-player development experience.

## 4.2 Developing creativity in young players

A core component of player development is developing creativity – these actions first begin in the mind of the young player. Freedom to express their thoughts and ideas in environments that are inclusive, welcoming and free from judgement provide safe havens for young people. Encouraging trial and error and the use of imagination and innovation spurs creative play and is part of the experimentation process that is vital to the development of creative players.





When a child plays, in their imagination they are playing in their “theatre of dreams”, whereas for a mature adult, they see the environment as it is. Pure joy, happiness and celebration is what a child sees when they are engaged and they will feel as if the world is watching them through their success or indeed, failings or lack of success. It is therefore important for young players’ coaches to be empathetic to these highs and lows through the experimentation and challenge phases.



Young players have an unstructured mind, their formative years are spent organising and creating a mental system that controls the data they receive and its structure. However, creative thinking and innovation come from less-structured thinking, and it is unstructured activity that presents a variety of options for problemsolving. The randomness of gameplay presents unpredictable challenges, requiring an array of solutions that come from guided discovery and trial and error, two learning concepts that arise where outcomes are not restricted.

### 4.3 Knowledge “of” the game and knowledge “in” the game

When considering an approach to coaching that applies the four key parts of a training session’s design: (**physical, psychological, technical and tactical**), there is also a fifth element that is often disregarded: knowledge. Whilst these four parts are key to the development of a well-rounded player, the work of the coach develops and evolves at the same time. Here is where both knowledge “of” and knowledge “in” the game become relevant.

It can be considered that, as a coach or player develops through the game, they acquire both knowledge “of” and knowledge “in” this game format: futsal.

These two facets are best described as follows:

**Knowledge of the game** – this is game understanding that is based on immersion and task/activity-specific knowledge. Examples of this are tactical and technical knowledge in the context of game-specific formations, across both in- and out-of-possession strategies.

**Knowledge in the game** – this refers to situation-specific understanding that emerges as the game unfolds, where improvisation and innovation are core outcomes.

In considering both knowledge facets, we must also determine how they are trained or developed. In reality, both facets are based on immersion in the game, time spent undertaking relevant tasks and a desire to learn and be exposed to a variety of challenges presented by the unpredictability of gameplay. It is also wise, when trying to develop and acquire knowledge, to adopt a more flexible learning environment where freedom to express and experiment underpins constraints-based learning, but which provides exposure to challenges that require the player (and coach) to find a solution. Here is where, through experience, players develop a mental library of potential solutions which are stored in their memory, awaiting an appropriate cue to immediately recall or improvise.

For coaches, knowledge will become crucial through the maturing phases of player development in constraints-based learning. Although this can be just as simple as it can be complicated, the important element in the design of training sessions and progression is maintaining a relationship with the game in away that enables constraints to be applied appropriately.

### 4.4 Futsal – accessibility and portability

Futsal can be considered a portable and accessible format of football. Not every country can set up and maintain grass pitches throughout its regions. Equally as significant, not every community can provide 22 players of approximately equal age to provide development opportunities to developing or youth players. In some countries, where faith and culture impacts the community (e.g. women being expected not to engage in sporting activities), there is evidence that a smaller format is more appropriate.

The following advantages apply for the implementation of futsal:

- **Little infrastructure is required.**
- **It is possible to use existing facilities (e.g. schools, universities, community centres, etc. that provide age-appropriate facilities without the need for new development or ongoing maintenance).**  
[Note: In countries with less infrastructure, the use of tennis courts, netball and basketball courts, car parks and other open but hard surface areas which are safe for players can also be adapted for age-appropriate play.]
- **It is easy to start playing because fewer players are needed.**
- **It is accessible to regions or communities where it is difficult to play 11-a-side football due to the climate, infrastructure, funding or lack of space (e.g. large cities or isolated communities).**
- **It is accessible to women and children and the elderly where other social or community limitations may prevail.**

### 4.5 New opportunities

As futsal grows, it presents alternative options to play by increasing awareness of this format of football and its applicability to many geographical regions.

This results in:

- **new careers for players, coaches, referees, administrators, etc.;**
- **new opportunities for member associations to host and qualify for international competitions; and**
- **new opportunities for cooperation with NGOs, government authorities, private sponsors, etc.**



## 4.6 Marketing, advertising and the media

Futsal is still one of the fastest-developing sports in the world, which presents opportunities in a variety of ways.

Whilst futsal is part of the football family and is closely associated with football, its format avoids a saturated market and appeals to differing demographics (specifically, those aged under 25 of any gender). This characteristic of futsal attracts sponsors wishing to focus on these demographics.

Futsal is a fast-flowing, fun game which is attractive, particularly due to lots of goals being scored, finely

honed technical skills exhibited by its players and the high tempo of the game which sees plenty of attacking play, especially counter-attacks.

Although primarily considered an indoor game, futsal is also played around the world outdoors on appropriate surfaces or in climates where indoor play is restrictive and less favourable. Futsal is therefore also considered an outdoor game in those geographical regions and is positively promoted as such.

## 4.7 A complement to football – not a competitor

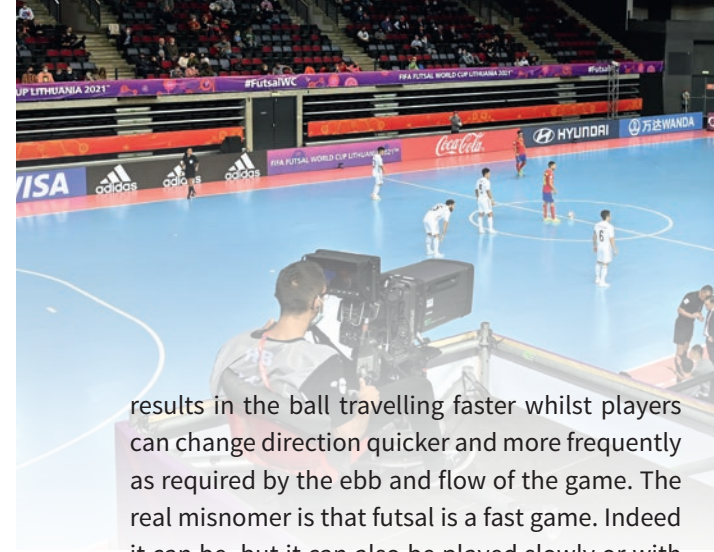
Although this opinion is becoming less common, futsal is sometimes considered to be a competitor to football. This could not be farther from the reality.

This coaching manual has already considered the part that futsal should play in every young player's football plan. It may serve as a possible first step into football and is a game which produces high-quality players and simplifies the technical management and educational process for many children who have few learning resources.

Futsal is part of the global FIFA football family and consequently expands upon the foundations of football as both a player development tool and as a game in its own right. By offering a format that is attractive and appealing to a wider audience, futsal attracts more players, fans, administrators, coaches and referees.

In the modern game, the thirst for improved technical players remains vibrant and at the forefront of every member association's development plan. Seeking new options and improving those that are already in place is paramount to ensuring evolutionary player development with the most forward-thinking member associations incorporating futsal as a diversification of football activities and an increase in indoor and outdoor small-sided play.

Futsal is a portable game – in an ideal scenario, a futsal pitch is available in a community, but in reality, that is not always the case. However, there are many facilities around the world that can be adapted. If a school has a playground or activity space without markings, the area can easily be adapted by simply using marker cones or other forms of space-guiding markers. A hard surface is what futsal is intended to be played on because this



results in the ball travelling faster whilst players can change direction quicker and more frequently as required by the ebb and flow of the game. The real misnomer is that futsal is a fast game. Indeed it can be, but it can also be played slowly or with a changing tempo as the game transitions from attack to defence through counter-attack. When the game tempo is high, this facilitates players developing their fitness levels quickly whilst having to manage their mentality and emotion in challenging situations.

The smaller spaces found on a futsal pitch require every player to be involved and active through having to take more touches on the ball and being actively engaged as part of a team. It is often promoted that futsal is as much about the players who don't have the ball as it is about the player who has control of the ball. This also means a differing approach to coaching for many, ensuring that the attacking players who can influence the game without carrying the ball require specific attention.

The close proximity of all players as a consequence of the spatial limitations results in more shots and defensive actions being executed by all players. This requires a greater volume of decision-making with little time to make those decisions to achieve favourable outcomes.

A futsal ball is often said to be heavier than a football – this is not correct. Whilst it is approximately the same weight, albeit it smaller in circumference, it has less bounce. This unique feature allows the ball to stay in play for much longer than a conventional football. This results in more play time and more touches of the ball for every player. With the lack of bounce, a futsal ball is able to spend more time on the floor, which leads to a higher number of short passes in games, although aerial play and lofted passes are common features of futsal. This means the ball is easier to control when it does hit the floor due to the minimal bounce characteristics.

## 4.8 Futsal as a grassroots activity

The **FIFA Grassroots Manual** is an associated support resource to this futsal coaching manual and provides additional guidance on many aspects of the developing player and participation across all of football's different formats. It is vital to note that the principles of player development remain the same for all formats of the game. Futsal will only be beneficial to player development if delivered in the right way. The uniqueness of the game, its core characteristics, must always be emphasised – this is what this FIFA Futsal Coaching Manual is all about. In the modern game (football), the importance of individual technical development for long-term impact continues to come to the fore. The rush to engage young players in 11v11 football should be discouraged – a gradual and progressive introduction to increased team size formats and pitch sizes is always advised. This requires a varied training and development plan for all players, with exposure to all formats of the game of which futsal is a core component.

The following are game constraints relevant to futsal (its core characteristics):

- **pitch surface**
- **futsal ball**
- **footwear**
- **number of players per team**
- **pitch size (age-specific)**
- **roll-on roll-off subs**
- **the four-second count**

They are somewhat unique but, to ensure the technical benefits of the game for overall player development, they must be retained rather than diluted. The FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game allow for member associations to make local adjustments to them for young player development. However, this requires evidence-based data to justify why a proposed change is in children's best interests that should also give due consideration of the unintended consequences of such a change that impacts players later in their personal development.

The **FIFA Grassroots Manual** provides further advice on or generalisation of engaging the developing player.





## 4.9 Futsal as a player development tool for football

The excitement of the ebb and flow of attack and counter-attack is underpinned by the technical brilliance of so many of the world's greatest futsal players. This can also be seen in the world's greatest football players, many of whom have grown up with futsal as part of their development phase.

Considering futsal as a game in its own right, played and followed globally by millions within the football family, there are many aspects of futsal to be considered for the impact on development and the opportunities for the format to grow in the future. With data collected across all 52 matches that took place during the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021, this is the first time such a comprehensive review of every second of every game in futsal has been undertaken. This provides an unparalleled amount of data that aims to challenge or support the perceptions of gameplay and individual participation. The data and technical reports also provide valuable insights into supporting our commitment to the growth and development of futsal worldwide.

FIFA has actively sought to collate data more recently to provide further insights into considering how futsal can contribute towards the development of football players from a young age. All young players require a wide range of football experiences in the influential period of development between five and 12 years of age. Futsal provides a multitude of possibilities for improving and developing a youngster's range of experiences.

### Transferable skills to football

We consider football and futsal as a partnership – a pairing that has mutual benefits. The game formats are not competing with each other, but rather collaborating. While respecting the format of each, we can see from the data that there are key “transferable skills” that should be considered and investigated further.

Anecdotally, futsal coaches have promoted an increase in ball contact for every player within a futsal match for some time. This gives rise to the idea that having more ball contact develops confidence on the ball and allows players to experiment and develop their technical ability and understanding through a variety of technical experiences (although this approach has rarely been evidence-based). The same can be said for the impact of one-on-one duels as well as the more active involvement of the goalkeeper in build-up play and game-changing distribution, to provide just two examples. Now, from the latest FIFA Futsal World Cup data, it can be clearly seen how futsal can contribute in a unique way to wider player development across the football family and what the additional role of futsal can be.

It is also important, where the formats cross over, to maintain a standardised futsal language which is correlated with the new FIFA football language that aligns the formats more closely for the benefit of understanding, transferability and development.

## 4.10 Benefits of futsal

Playing experiences shape a player's engagement in football for the rest of their life and while many players around the world play both futsal and football, we will also consider how engagement in both formats help keep players active in later life. Honing and refining an understanding of futsal through playing experience during early years supports re-engagement in later life – an activity which provides well-being, social, psychological and physical benefits.

We also recognise the huge benefits offered by futsal in certain geographical regions of the world where challenges posed by weather conditions and facilities – such as the inability to grow grass football pitches all year round – provide barriers to player development, either in summer or winter. However, the benefits that futsal brings in terms of both well-being and technical development cannot be underestimated, so we encourage greater interest in this format of the game.

Specifically for women's and girls' talent development, futsal can play an increasingly important role as its talent pathway develops and grows, providing more playing opportunities due to the fact that fewer participants are required on each team and there is a different level of participation in play with the ball's reduced bounce and rolling substitutions. Futsal offers fun and meaningful playing opportunities which encourage active involvement and enable the development of fundamental technical skills in every player which are then transferable when introducing women and girls to football.

FIFA's technical experts will continue to review this informative and constructive data and provide further outcomes and analysis to support the engagement of futsal as a key development tool for football, while strengthening our support for futsal as a game in its own right.

It is important to understand more about how futsal contributes to football and to consider the synergies and opportunities brought about by the small-sided format to support the wider development of skill sets and teamwork within the 11v11 game.





## Introduction

For some, futsal will be their core football family engagement. For others, it will form part of a wider coaching experience that is applied to the developing football player.

No matter how many resources, courses or books that an aspiring coach has experience in, the art of coaching is learned and developed through the practical application of coaching.

Given that futsal is still a relatively new format of football, its understanding and coaching support has a long way to catch up with 11v11. Futsal has had to find its own way in developing coaching resources and support for decades with little formalised and structured coaching education resources available. This is changing throughout all of FIFA's member associations as futsal relevance and a greater understanding of the format improves. This coaching manual intends to support the work being done within the confederations, not to fully replace it. We must also be mindful that some member associations are more advanced than others and that progressive steps need to be taken with developing associations to create an equity of understanding that can develop progressively over time.

For others, futsal will be totally new and somewhat novel. It would be a mistake to treat futsal as just another small-sided format of football. This would lead to its nuances being lost or diluted, and its benefits are then limited. It is equally important not to take a model from one country and attempt to implement the philosophy in another country.

Coaching is often seen as a controlling influence, but it should not be about controlling the outcomes. Instead, it should be about creating a learning environment so that players can discover various outcomes through their own learning. A place where they feel safe and free to experiment, where they are encouraged to try and, if necessary, fail without fear.

In the application of a constraint-led approach (CLA) to player development through gameplay, rather than fixed-outcome drills and exercises that work purely on isolated sections of play, the following are some aspects to consider:

- **Physical demands and the differing aerobic and anaerobic requirements**
- **Intensity of games**
- **Periods of play**
- **Increased rest periods to decrease the duration of activity but maintaining intensity during play**
  - ▶ If in doubt, always use longer rest periods for **developing players** as children's safety always comes first. Children will tell you when they are tired – they stop!
- **Volume – training load**
  - ▶ To increase the training load, adopt the principle of adding work periods rather than lengthening established work periods.
- **Rest-recovery ratios**
  - ▶ Maintain rest and work periods at the same length but increase the intensity of those work periods.
- **Application of constraints**
  - ▶ Only change one variable (e.g. pitch size or player numbers) at a time – never at the same time.
- **Intensity v. duration**
  - ▶ Both are important in training, especially when adopting the principle of “train as you play – play as you train”. Develop intensity first and then progress to a longer session duration whilst maintaining the rest-recovery principles.
  - ▶ Aim to improve faster decision-making and ball-handling skills by intensity.

## 5.1 A coaching methodology

For developing players, the coaching methodology and creation of the appropriate learning environment should be fully player-focused. That focus should be based on fun, inclusion, cooperation as a social interface, and game engagement. Young players will continue to participate in activities which are fun, rewarding and offer a sense of enjoyment whilst feeling motivated and valued. In turn, this will increase their learning engagement and progress.

A coach's role is to help every player fall in love with the uncertainty of competition to develop intrinsic motivation. The challenge for the coach in this is not to get hung up on match results, but to develop the process that determines match results.

It is a realisation in the modern game that – for coaches, teachers and parents alike – efforts have to be made to promote the shift of emphasis from winning to development.

The relationship between children and their coach is of equal importance as a key to learning. There is a huge benefit to creating an environment where children feel safe and able to express themselves. This ensures effectiveness in training along with the acceptance of failure provided that they can learn from it. Unless the coach can normalise failure as an outcome of trying, young players are unlikely to experiment or be prepared to try without the fear of failure and criticism. Positive encouragement and constructive criticism from the coach is important for every player.

Learning will be heavily influenced by the environment, the challenge and the constraints placed upon young players. These constraints should be adjusted as players develop and mature. Subtle changes to each area can show significant changes in both learning and performance. The ability of the coach-educator to identify and manipulate the environment and the constraints applied is paramount to the effective design of training sessions.





The type of constraints applied during training sessions will vary during the development cycle and be influenced by aspects relating to the players such as their height, weight and the perceptual changes in emotional state as they mature. All of these facets will have an impact on learning and performance outcomes. When coaching young girls, these development characteristics are often amplified and must be carefully considered in session planning and expectations. However, constraints must be player-driven as there may always be a need for simplification to remain appropriate for learners' needs.

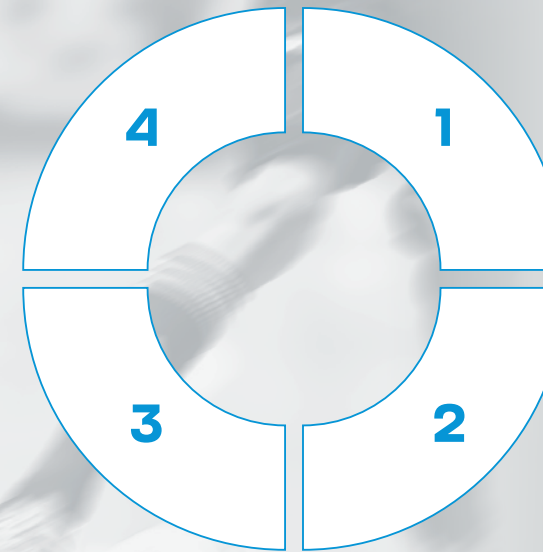
By constantly manipulating the framework of learning design, coaches can aim to encourage adaptability in young players that transfers to an ability to find a number of ways to solve specific challenges as they encounter them during matches. This adaptability is a vital asset for developing players. It is the gamespecific training variability in "real time" which is essential for learning and developing more intelligent players with an improved understanding of the game and decision-making skills. These constantly changing situations encourage

children to search for and discovery movement solutions which, combined with their technical ability, promotes innovation and imagination.

**Developing players** will not substantially improve over night, so patience is an essential part of the coacheducator's role. Immediate results are unlikely and the expectations of both coaches and players must be handled carefully. A skill that a coach-educator must have is understanding both "why" and "how" to manipulate the constraints when noticing the development progress of a player has stagnated for a noticeable period. Being able to identify and appropriately adjust the "limitations" is a key attribute of the coach and using match situations during training sessions as the medium for learning is a joint partnership between individual players, the team and the coach.

The phases of learning are varied – the table on the right provides an overview of the progressive developmental phases.

## 4 phases of effective learning



### 1 - Activation

The person can learn through engagement and being active within a game for example can facilitate learning.

### 2 - Demonstration

Some people, young people especially, learn form watching but also learn form being asked to show/demonstrate a technique as an example.

### 3 - Application

By offering the experience to try atechnique in a specific game setting the young player will better understand where it ,fits' in the game.

### 4 - Integration

Having fun with your peers is an important part of self-worth and social integration. Learning in environments where there is no pressure and by being confident to experiment without fear develops guided discovery skill-sets.

For each learning phase, it is important to define the parameters of learning to understand what each phase's intended learning is. This ensures that the coaching plan and each individual syllabus are clearly defined, and that each phase is clearly linked with progression to the next. Importantly, this must not be time-constrained as each player will develop at their own rate. Unless young players can master the basic technical skills and concepts, applying more complex tactical principles as they develop will prove ineffective.

Young players should develop at their own pace and not to a rigid plan dictated by the coach. It is importantto respect children's characteristics and needs and the role of the coach in understanding the learning phase as well as the appropriateness of the relevant syllabus – the player in question will determine its effectiveness. As mentioned earlier in this section, each phase of learning can be broken down into three specific intentions: **experimentation, automation and perfectionism.**

**Experimentation**



**Automation  
(auto recall)**



**Perfectionism**



Only when young players have demonstrated that they have grasped all three intentions should the coach consider moving to the next phase of development. Whilst they may not have fully perfected the technique, they may have sufficient understanding and perception to continue to train using match situations.



Within each player development phase, it is important to ensure that players understand the actions involved whether in or out of possession (i.e. defence or attack). But this must also be linked to young players' understanding of whether they personally have the ball (the ball carrier), or they are one of the remaining four players without the ball when their team is in possession. This is a vital characteristic of futsal – the notion that the players without the ball can be more important than the ball carrier themselves and therefore require a specific coaching focus on their actions and intentions. Futsal coaching has often focused on the player with the ball. However, the players without the ball are perhaps more important in terms of how they influence the actions and opportunities for the ball carrier. This may be considered the most influential approach of this coaching manual – working on and considering the actions of the “passive” players on a team (those without the ball).

When players are in possession, a misguided theory is that the tactical intention is always to score, but it may also be to retain possession to prevent the opponent from scoring. However, at a very young age during the initial learning phases, this tactical possession should not be a priority. Instead, attacking play with an intention to score through good directional possession should be encouraged.

## 5.2 Characteristics of a futsal coach

It is important to recognise that the fundamental principles of coaching remain the same across all sports, despite the fact that the sports or formats may vary. Futsal is no different. It requires the support and application of modern, developing concepts of coaching principles, methods and training to facilitate the development of the sport.

That said, there are notable differences between coach-educators according to the age and gender of the players who they develop and deal with, as well as whether the players are at an elite level or playing recreationally. Recognising the nuances and key differences required in each example can be regarded as a key asset for improved development and outcomes, while failing to recognise that different approaches and attributes facilitate growth can also be regarded as a hindrance. Member associations should support coach-educators in this by ensuring that the appropriate guidance and education is in place relative to age and gender. It is also important that participants recognise the need for age- and ability-appropriate coaching at all levels.

Age-specific coaching and the concept of this approach are commonplace in modern sports development – this is specifically relevant for the benefit of **developing players and youth players**.

The practice of appointing experienced, elite-level coaches to teams of **youth players and developing players** has been identified as a serious barrier to the development of futsal in recent years. With a minority of futsal coaches as figureheads, the knowledge base is limited and these coaches tend to be appointed to all levels of coaching, which is not necessarily appropriate. For example, a senior men's national team coach is unlikely to be the best advocate for coaching **developing players**. Although they know what is required at the elite end of the player pathway, will they understand how young people learn? Are they immersed in the educational process of young player development?

Irrespective of the coach's skill set and their area of expertise (male or female, children or adults, elite or recreational), the list below provides a guide to the ideal characteristics. A greater or lesser emphasis may be applied to the specific characteristics depending on which group of players they are coaching.

Similarly, coaches should be able to understand and get to know every player. Coaching is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Consequently, each player should be treated as an individual to get the best results. This will require the skill of the coach in knowing what to apply, how and when to apply it and in what moderation. The coaching of players must be tailored to their needs whilst engaging a blend of technical/tactical, social, psychological and physical interaction individually. When a player feels valued (in simple ways such as the coach addressing them by name), they will engage more and have a sense of value and self-esteem that leads to improved learning. It is often the small details that have the largest impact.



<p><b>1. Personality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude</li> <li>• Fair</li> <li>• Open character</li> <li>• Defined targets</li> <li>• Determined</li> <li>• Innovative</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. Qualities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knows how to listen</li> <li>• Knows how to communicate and convey the institutional philosophy</li> <li>• Knows how to express themselves clearly</li> <li>• Knows how to settle disputes</li> <li>• Confident decision-maker</li> <li>• Capacity for self-criticism</li> <li>• Knows how to motivate and encourage</li> <li>• Exemplary conduct (appearance, language, punctuality, attitude, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Techniques and tactics of futsal</li> <li>• Physical</li> <li>• Psychological and mental preparation</li> <li>• Nutritional</li> <li>• First aid</li> <li>• Organisational abilities</li> <li>• Methodologies</li> <li>• Standard of the team and each player</li> </ul>	<p><b>4. Conduct that must be avoided</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant shouting</li> <li>• Criticising players in front of their team-mates</li> <li>• Concentrating on negative aspects (overlooking positive aspects)</li> <li>• Long and confusing speeches</li> <li>• Continual interruptions of coaching sessions</li> <li>• Excessive repetition of the same exercises</li> <li>• Doing exercises for prolonged periods</li> <li>• Insisting on pre-defined objectives despite them being inappropriate</li> </ul>
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### Special features of technical management/education for children

<p><b>Profile of a coach-educator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge about the physical and mental characteristics of children (development phases)</li> <li>• Serving as an example and always available</li> <li>• Interest in children and their dreams</li> <li>• Ability to establish good relationships with parents</li> </ul>	<p><b>Code of conduct</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place emphasis on learning by playing</li> <li>• Welcome all children to training, regardless of their standard</li> <li>• Encourage a feeling of unity and identity</li> <li>• Ensure that children feel safe and valued</li> <li>• Instil confidence in children and encourage them</li> <li>• Do not treat children like small adults</li> <li>• Adjust equipment and the size of the playing area</li> <li>• Do not insist on a competitive aspect – let children play and enjoy the game</li> <li>• Balance the strength of teams (e.g. let children play in age categories)</li> <li>• Do not allow an excessive difference in scores in games</li> </ul>
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### 5.3 Age-specific coaching

Every player develops at a different rate and has different learning, social, psychological and physical needs and demands. To best address these areas for each individual as they mature, knowledge of the relevant age range is required.

The needs of mature adults are fundamentally different to those of young players, but between the ages of five and 18, these needs become increasingly variable and therefore require specialist attention.

It is imperative that players always come first and that both learning and development are player-focused. Players' needs must be recognised, and a learning plan must be devised to maximise opportunity and development.





## 6.1 Understanding the needs of developing players

It is vital for the coach to recognise and understand that all players develop at different rates through the phases and each player's developmental needs are unique. Consequently, the coach requires a flexible teaching style and an understanding of learning to facilitate the appropriate communication and assistance to support every player at their own personal phase of development.

Understanding how people learn (and importantly, the different ways that people learn) across these phases of their personal development cycle is a key attribute of a coach. Knowing what to coach and when to coach is key, recognising that there will be several needs within each group of players, particularly when dealing with **developing players** (6–12 years old).



It is also important to recognise that coaching styles and the application of specific session types vary throughout the player development phases due to age-appropriate coaching being required. That is to say, the way we coach young players is fundamentally different to how we coach mature adult players – it is unlikely that the coach would be the same person with the same skill sets if we are to achieve maximum results for the player. Coaching in an appropriate way to suit learners' needs and abilities, helping them to understand or engage, is a specific component of player development and knowledge retention. Providing players with a learning experience which encourages them to come back for more is an essential part of engagement. Players of all ages want to have fun, but while mature adult players will get a sense of satisfaction from experiencing a successful yet complex activity, younger players may find it far too complex to engage with and understand, reducing their enjoyment. Therefore, the application of complex drills and exercises that may suit an elite adult player is not appropriate for the **developing player**.

Teaching styles and approaches must be adapted to be appropriate and yield positive results. Young players' needs always come first. For example, understanding attention spans and young players' limited ability to retain information in large blocks are key facets of age-appropriate coaching delivery and engagement.



When players are aged between six and 12, the coach should be encouraged to use as much game-based play as is practical to achieve the intended technical result(s), allowing young players to experience the game at every opportunity. Young players want to “play” (an inherent component of being a child), so this should be enforced and encouraged. There is no better session outcome than when a young player asks, “Can we play a match?”, and the coach responds with an affirmative “Yes”, rather than rigidly following a session of structured drills and exercises leading to an end-of-session game dictated by the coach. Coaches should not suppress this desire to play, but simply use this to the children’s advantage. Complex drills or drills based on a linear coaching methodology tend to yield limited results and compress learning in such a way that the young players’ experiences become limited. This can lead to boredom and disengagement from the activity and, importantly, learning opportunities may be lost.

Young players should be challenged at every opportunity and encouraged to think for themselves, adapt to the game to find solutions and stimulate their imagination from an early age, both individually and as part of a team – key facets of developing technically and tactically better futsal players. This style of learning is further inhibited when the results are determined by drills and exercises within a coaching framework that prioritise the coach’s results over the players’ results. During this player development phase, coaching must be positive, enjoyable, interesting and engaging and, most importantly, fun for children. The results must also be rewarding for the coach, who should recognise progress and the benefits arisen from the activities.

Both coaching and the way children learn is changing. Modern society has become more interactive, with fewer constraints apart from time. Futsal coaching must be responsive to recognise and adapt to these developments in coaching methodology. We can only achieve this with an open and enquiring mind to change that aims to challenge the coach as much as the players, and to dispel the misguided role that complex drills and exercises play in achieving positive results.

A coach-educator should be able to design games that reflect realistic futsal play for developing players, whilst conditioning the game to achieve an intended result and simply allowing young players to play. Pure 1:1 technical coaching will always play an important role, as individuals and teams need guidance, help with correcting mistakes and problem-solving, but this should ideally be limited to no more than 25% of the total session time. In this way, the session becomes player-focused rather than coach-focused and, for some, is a shift in coaching philosophy where the coach has historically been the solution provider. However, using a game-based philosophy does not relieve the coach-educator of their responsibility to intervene and help the learner achieve better results.



This becomes a skill in its own right for the coach and it is important to recognise that the coach still has an integral role to play within a constraint-led teaching methodology. In contrast, youth coach-educators must be versatile and responsive to live situations arising from the unpredictability of gameplay. Therefore, this philosophy also challenges the coach.

Every child is a potential athlete. **Developing players** are complex and have different needs due to their underdeveloped mind and developing physical abilities. Providing players with 1:1 coaching at this age can be time-consuming. Furthermore, it can hinder other players’ development due to a lack of attention during training sessions. Additionally, each player’s needs will develop and change at different rates as they mature from early childhood into their youth. However, they should first learn to master the game of futsal at their own pace of learning, understanding and developing skills.



A young person's mind is not developed until their mid-twenties but, as that development takes place, they are developing their motor-skills and game understanding to equip them to better deal with the variety of challenges they will face. As they mature, players become better able to understand complexity and formulate solutions. This natural process can be hindered if solutions are given to them through sessions designed by a mature adult mindset. This can be defined as "linear coaching", where the outcome is predicted by the structure of the exercise and is repetitive because the constraints do not vary too much. The challenge of coaching young players is not to think with the complex mind of an adult, but with the simple, enquiring and underdeveloped mind of a child.

## 6.2 Adopting a game-based approach to develop understanding

Research (*Teaching Games for Understanding*) supports the theory that random play instils multiple learning opportunities, better equipping young players with experiences which they can draw on in future situations. This approach differs from a conflicting style of linear exercises and drills with predetermined, repetitive outcomes, which may rarely be repeated in a real match situation.

When games are challenging and unpredictable, this creates uncertainty that forces young players to adapt and respond to each scenario, improving thought, activation and, importantly, decision-making each time they face these challenges. The nature of futsal means that this can happen several times in a game – players are challenged physically, technically, tactically and mentally on each occasion.

It is unlikely that there will be any significant benefit derived from teaching advanced tactics at this age as young players' minds are geared towards exploring rather than learning. Children should be able to develop a basic understanding of the game through playing. The extent of tactical exposure at this age should be focused on establishing a basic understanding of the structure and principles behind:

- **defending;**
- **attacking; and**
- **counter-attacking.**

The teaching of complex movements should wait until the youth phase (13-18 years), when players are hopefully more technically proficient and more open to complex learning.

Coaches must ensure that **developing players** are given the opportunity to express themselves and develop their personal skill sets, which are elaborated upon later in this coaching manual.

This concept will also require the coach to have an understanding of age-appropriate spaces, the number of players and pitch sizes. For example, there is no logic in playing U-9s on a full-size futsal pitch (40m x 20m) or with a full-size futsal ball at that age. All of these aspects will require carefully considered implementation since this is a fundamental part of age-appropriate coaching.

In the early years of learning, having been exposed to a variety of games, young players' minds consider and create many possibilities. It can be presumed that this contributes to delayed decision-making. Once players have gained experience through the various learning processes (e.g. guided discovery or trial and error), the possible solutions and the willingness to try and experiment are developed. Whereas an expert's mind (i.e. the coach's) is more developed and formed, so they are less likely to experiment. However, this imposition on young players' choices slows down the learning process and significantly limits the outcomes and decision-making process. Children should first be exposed to an environment which encourages and facilitates the processing of a variety of information, made more complex by the contextual interference of unpredictable gameplay. It is from these concepts that better long-term results will be achieved.

In beginners' minds, there are many possibilities. In experts' minds, there are few. It is therefore important for the coach not to limit the learning opportunities by restricting the outcomes.



The coach aims to encourage young players to explore challenges, to create their own complexity within their and their team's ability thresholds, and to find solutions to such challenges. The coach-educator must aim to create playing opportunities that encourage players to explore the challenges brought about by the unpredictability of gameplay, so that they find solutions for themselves by responding to scenarios which are constantly developing and rarely repeated.

The example sessions in this coaching manual should be used at the appropriate development phase when players are technically equipped to cope with and benefit from the exercises. The inclusion of complex drills and exercises for developing players should be avoided and only introduced at youth level.

On the other hand, developing players should be encouraged to simply play, where the coach structures a game using a variety of constraints which reflect futsal (5v5 with its various underload and overload scenarios) to achieve the intended results of the session (e.g. passing, control, running with the ball, deception, 1v1 defending, 2v1 shooting, playing in the middle third with an underload, attacking with an overload, etc.).





### 6.3 A coaching syllabus

**Developing players** should be encouraged to grow as they experience the game and ensure that their technical skill sets are consolidated to enable them, as they develop, to play a key role in tactical movements, both individually and collectively.

Doing this effectively requires a guided approach to learning and skill acquisition. We have already stated that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for developing players, and that children's individual needs should always come first. Each child therefore requires a tailored syllabus to meet their needs. Nevertheless, whether written or unstructured, a syllabus should have four basic objectives, all of which should be implemented simultaneously during the learning experience:

- 1 To ensure each child's specific needs are met
- 2 To help the player become familiar with and understand concepts and topics
- 3 To develop a player with unique technical ability, which will allow them to connect to the game and other players
- 4 To develop positive habits, attitudes and traits which help the young player improve and have fun



Players with underdeveloped technical skills will be difficult to use tactically, so both technical and tactical intentions should be simultaneously developed in youth players.

It can be argued that this age of play is still the experimental phase, learning to understand and being encouraged to try everything, accepting that mistakes will be made. Only in this way can coaches create a positive environment that encourages guided discovery and trial and error, amongst other learning mechanisms. The mistake is not trying and failing but failing to learn from trying.

**Developing players** should be encouraged to become inquisitive and experimental because of the challenges they face during gameplay, rather than purely through training in isolation from the varied opportunities afforded by the unpredictability of gameplay. In this respect, **developing players** should have more opportunities to train through play than in a structured environment that leads to fixed results.

When considering the core technical elements of futsal, where understanding and experimentation are essential to developing a player with the technical skills to apply tactical actions, we can split these into two areas: active and passive. In other words, either with or without the ball (the latter considering both in possession and out of possession). The focus areas can be categorised as follows:

- Passing
- Control
- Running with the ball
- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Feinting to pass/deception
- 1v1 encounters
- Blocking
- Defending space
- Cutting passing lines
- Creating passing lines
- Deflecting the attack
- Requirements of different positions; wing, defender, forward, goalkeeper, etc.
- Ability to play with both feet
- Protecting the ball
- Supporting the player with the ball
- Creating space
- Denying space
- Displacement (of team-mates and the opponent)
- Managing and understanding match tempo
- Playing in pairs
- Playing forward as a priority
- Maintaining possession
- Valuing possession
- Individual actions in possession (attack)
- Individual actions out of possession (defence)
- Collective actions in possession (attack)
- Collective actions out of possession (defence)
- Basic defensive organisation
- Basic attacking organisation

Given that there are many aspects to futsal, this list is neither exhaustive nor definitive, but it is intended to provide an overview of the variety of technical aspects relating to the development of young players that the coach-educator should consider.

### 6.4 Coaching the developing player

For developing players (6–12 years), the coach is regarded as a guide rather than a coach, facilitating and creating the learning environment, encouraging fun and enjoyment by allowing players to play and experience futsal as a game, whilst always recognising the need to progress and facilitate individual learning. Where correction or guidance is needed, it should be subtle, not too complex and usually through broad game adaptations that challenge the player(s) to find solutions rather than through detailed individual instructions that offer a choice of solutions. It could be argued that priorities at this age need to be driven by three factors: play, environment and relationships. Although these factors should act as a continuum along the learning journey, they have a major impact on learning in early childhood.



At this personal development phase, all children's intrinsic needs are the same. There is no justification for training differently depending on players' gender. Their learning journey will be the same – unique. It is when maturation and puberty come to the fore that training plans may need to be adapted, although subject content should remain the same to ensure the development of a well-rounded player.





## Introduction

As players mature through early childhood into adolescence, they change in many ways. Boys change at a different rate to girls as they go through puberty, so a flexible approach is required. The most striking difference is their physical change, but also their ability to learn with an ever-enquiring mind. This makes youth players more coachable and open to facilitating their learning thanks to increased attention spans and a simple yet inquisitive thirst for knowledge. This is an opportunity that needs to be harnessed by the coach.



Having developed technical skills in their earlier years, **youth players** should get to this phase of learning equipped to train in isolated sessions dissimilar to competitive matches, but able to recognise the exercises within a game context. This is the technical foundation that should have been laid for **developing players**.

This approach allows coaches to develop both technical and tactical awareness with the associated movements that contribute to individuals and groups of players influencing a match. This is not an immediate shift in coaching philosophy at the age of 13, but a recognition that there is a change in approach and that it is a gradual transition from technical comfort to the use of technical skills in a more tactical environment.

Youth players grow, both physically and mentally, as they get older and their understanding of both individual and team work becomes more evident. Youth coaches should be able to combine the “individual” with the “collaborative” team ethos. This will involve a mixture of isolated 1:1 work, in-game drills and, of course, freedom during gameplay. It is at this phase of players’ development that the ratio of play to instruction during training sessions also shifts from the approach taken with **developing players**.

In each section, some examples of game-based training are given as guidance for working with **developing players** to achieve the technical objectives defined throughout this manual. These are not exhaustive or definitive, but provided as a guide.

However, these game-based examples can be applied to all ages and abilities (with the simple adaptation of both age- and ability-specific pitch sizes), so coaches at all ages and levels are encouraged to use them appropriately.

The **FIFA Youth Coaching Manual** (for football) is a complementary resource to this Futsal Coaching Manual which provides additional guidance on many aspects of youth players and coaching youth players. The principles remain the same regardless of the format of the game.



## 7.1 The youth futsal coach

On the other hand, youth coaches (coaching players aged 13–18 years) must develop the learning phase through a player in transition, enabling them to understand more about the game itself by using their previous technical training and building their confidence to explore their abilities through the technical challenges of the game. Here is where the use of gameplay has more value than predetermined drills or linear exercises as they encounter the fluctuating tempo of the game that challenges their decision-making and subsequent execution to a greater degree. At these ages, players are maturing into young adults so concentration levels may be longer, which can benefit teaching players, as opposed to guiding them, facilitating accelerated learning. Youth players can cope better with more structured games and training. In the more advanced age groups (15–18 years of age), as players develop their technical ability and skill acquisition progresses, coaches are able to go beyond simple teaching and progress to challenge their players to develop proficiency which should eventually lead to higher performance thresholds. In these examples, the coach becomes a facilitator of learning, seeking innovative ways to challenge players with game constraints and session limitations, but always mindful of encouraging players' decision-making.

Developing talent in the 13–18 age range is easier if the previous phases of individual technical development have been effective. The results during the youth development phase will become more noticeable if the underlying **developing player** concepts are consolidated early on to encourage decision-making through involvement in unpredictable gameplay that promotes and develops a key understanding from this young age.

Age-appropriate coaching also requires different coaching and contact/communication styles to be adopted by the coach than, for example, coaching adults. Tone of voice, dialogue, hand gestures, body contact and relationship-building must all be modified when coaching children and young people.



**Developing players** (6–12 years of age) may not benefit from training or games that involve formal refereeing, so this should be avoided during play. Learning the game through the constraints of a gamebased session is important for them to take ownership of their learning and develop a better understanding in their own time and their own style. Ownership of the training process is a vital component of innovation and imagination in all young players, without the authoritarian imposition of an adult controlling the training. Coaches should be able to structure the games in training using constraints that reflect the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game. Children like to play without constraints geared towards adults and will gradually create their own boundaries and rules to suit the game, but they must always remain realistic and reflective of a match experience.

For some young players, the time spent training or playing is the only time in the day when they are not under the control of adults. We should therefore create an environment where they feel safe, secure, have fun, take ownership of their game, promote personal values and, importantly, want to come back.

During the **developing player phase** (6–12 years of age), players will develop their motor skills and technical understanding of futsal and its features. Sessions based on the principles of gameplay must encourage a variety of engagement with the technical aspects of the game and fundamental movement skills, as opposed to the tactical understanding. Tactics will be of little value unless players can become technically proficient and adapt to the game. Technique should be the main objective between the ages of six and 12.



## 7.2 A youth coaching syllabus

When players get to the youth phase (13–18 years of age) of their personal development, their level of technical ability will dictate the effectiveness of applying more advanced technical and tactical concepts. This will have an impact upon their wider game experience as they mature and will be a key enabler to maintaining their engagement with futsal through fun, enjoyment and positive results.

However, if players get to this phase with limited technical understanding or ability, the application and execution of tactical plans, whether simple or complex, is much more difficult. The mistake often made by coaches working with players aged 13–18 is to try to implement complex tactical strategies which require a good level of technical execution. If players cannot pass effectively, control the ball under pressure, retain possession, create or block space (to name but a few), a tactical plan's chances of success are limited.

The main priority is to establish the general objectives of this age. The following could be considered:

- **To consolidate the learnings from the developing player phase**
- **To focus on maximising performance**  
(to transition from basic play to higher-level play)
- **To focus on specialising in one position** (e.g. pivot or goalkeeper)
- **To be able to dominate 1v1 encounters**
- **To use a more physical approach to possession and gameplay**
- **To master the ability to play with both feet when passing, dribbling, running with the ball or shooting**
- **To be able to block effectively**
- **To develop an unpredictable game plan through an advanced/developed repertoire of tactical applications**
- **To develop the game effectively and at the appropriate speed**
- **To manage the tempo of the game both in and out of possession**
- **To retain possession through accurate passing**



## 7.3 Specific content

The objectives of player development have been set out above. In order to achieve these objectives, it is important to identify which aspects players require more exposure to during this phase of youth development.

For example:

- **Individual tactical awareness**
- **Collective tactical awareness**
- **Complex collective tactics**
- **An understanding of how technical aspects are associated with tactical implementation**
- **Position-specific play**
- **Systems of play**
- **Strategies**
- **Conditional content.**



These eight areas are broken down further to specifically focus on young players' needs:

In possession	Out of possession
Positions	Defending as an individual
Decision-making (1v1)	Positional play
Decision-making (1vGK)	Creating cover
Feinting	Defending as a team
Passing	Zonal marking v. man marking
Defensive cover	Delay-Deny-Dictate
Fixing the pair	
Protecting the ball	



### 8.1 Playing recreationally

**Believing that every player wants to become a high-level futsal player at a young age is a misconception. As players mature, some will simply want to play recreationally – as a form of exercise and enjoyment. This should be encouraged.**

It is also true that far more players around the world play recreationally than at elite level. The impact that play has on their lives can therefore be substantial and widespread. In this context, the focus of development cannot simply be on the elite end of the game, but on the pathways that lead to that level. For this purpose, this coaching manual aims to provide background, guidance and advice for all levels of the game, but with a focus on players' development pathways.

However, it is also important to note that even though millions of adult players around the world are not elite, they are also not **developing or youth players**. Consequently, the structure and format of their coaching/playing sessions should also be carefully considered and adapted to ensure maximum impact and beneficial results. This philosophy reinforces the idea that a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate, and that age- and ability-based coaching is vital for maximising.

### 8.2 Advanced players

As can be demonstrated by the different qualities of coaches working with **developing players** compared with those working with **youth players**, there is a further skill set required for working with mature adult players (aged 18+). The combination of an established coach who possesses good tactical understanding, is used to working with adult players and aims for different results may not be the best choice for working with either **developing players or youth players**. This is a challenge that must be carefully managed within futsal as the format continues to grow and mature, as existing knowledge perhaps leans towards the more developed and senior end of the game. It is often the first place that advice is sought, but this may be a flawed resource for **developing players**. It is unlikely that those with the technical understanding will also have the necessary skills to work with younger players. Likewise, those with the skill sets to work with young players may not have the tactical understanding and therefore may not be able to provide the appropriate developmental benefits.



Adult players are different in many ways from their younger selves during the developmental journey. They have playing experience and technical/tactical exposure, but their motivations for playing will be broad and varied. Whether they play recreationally or at elite level, the principles of what the player wants to achieve through play will be different.

Some of the principles of coaching youth players still apply. Recreational futsal players may enjoy the game but may not have the technical skills to implement complex tactical strategies. The coach should therefore think carefully and structure the game for enjoyment as well as achieving objective results.

In contrast, elite players are likely to be more focused and driven by a desire to win. They will have reached an elite level because they have technical ability, an awareness of tactical responses, and a willingness to train and play competitively with incentives. All of these facets are more challenging for the coach, but the constraint-led approach and game-based methodology are equally applicable here.



### Introduction

Coaching sessions do not simply happen, they need to be considered, understood, prepared and, ultimately, delivered.

In this section of the coaching manual, we will consider the what, why and how. Session design and development are important elements of a constraint-led approach to coaching. Coaches must still be able to identify a problem arising from gameplay and plan or adjust the constraints to manipulate the exercise to yield the desired results – accomplishing the session's objectives. This requires exceptional observational skills and an understanding of each player, their abilities, and their individual needs. Once the session is underway, these observational skills come to the fore as the constraints will always need to be adjusted on the spot. This is an ongoing process throughout training sessions.

## 9.1 Interventions by the coach

**Developing players** want to play. They do not want to be interrupted by an adult coach in the environment that has been created for them to thrive, excel, experiment and, above all, have fun.

Interventions should therefore be kept to an absolute minimum at this age. Intervene only when needed after carefully evaluating whether that intervention will add value. If an intervention does not or will not add value, then think carefully about why the intervention is needed at all.

When dealing with young players, it is important for the coach to understand when it is appropriate to interrupt gameplay to offer coaching advice, and what kind of message or approach to use. Interventions must be carefully considered to ensure that they add value instead of interrupting learning. We often only consider that we will add value without considering the impact on learning outcomes.

When challenging young players, coaches should ideally engage the player to review the activity, and aim to assist them in finding their own solutions through a variety of intervention techniques such as the following:

- Question and answer
- Guided discovery
- Trial and error
- Check and challenge
- Observation and feedback



Coach-educators working in the development phase should avoid offering the solution or solutions. They should use these different techniques to engage players and get feedback from them so they can find their own solutions. It is just as important with young players, some might say all players regardless of their age, to follow a **Plan-Do-Review** philosophy which requires players to re-engage after the session to assess their understanding, allow them to challenge the advice or encourage them to discuss their successes or challenges faced in the session. From these results, coaches can better understand players' acceptance or their queries, all to better prepare the follow-up activities.



Coaches are seen as facilitators, organisers and developers. In each case, they should apply different measures relative to the players.

This is as much a powerful position to enable player development as it is to disable it, and it is here that the coach's role must exercise caution, especially when dealing with **developing players and youth players**.

Coaching is seen as the guiding influence over player development and has been for a long time. The role of the coach is to define, deliver and direct a programme of development activities that is then integrated into gameplay. However, every young player, their abilities and their needs are different, which requires specific 1:1 attention and adaptation. Applying a single process that follows a strict routine and syllabus does not help, no matter how good that process and syllabus may be.

Coaches should be able to understand each player's needs and create environments where each player can progress at their own rate but where they are challenged, encouraged and guided towards solutions that they discover for themselves.

Traditionally, coaching (or teaching for that matter) follows a set programme irrespective of player needs and aims to develop the technical aspects before approaching how that fits within the context of a game and the tactical requirements of the game. Suppose, then, that this concept is reversed, and that technical requirements developed through game experience in the context of the genuine, fluctuating challenges posed by the unpredictability of gameplay that constantly challenges players with ever-changing, nonrepeating game scenarios.

Young players want to play – that is why they come to training. Coaching drills and exercises are the vision of a coach, whose complex, developed mind wants to see structure and progress – often regardless of whether or not progress is made using linear drills and exercises – because the textbook says so. But this approach is not the vision nor does it meet the needs of young players. Finding who has an underdeveloped mind, little game or tactical understanding, and simply wants to kick a ball around with their mates, as well as a process and methodology that meets both player and coach objectives from the outset will yield better results.



This coaching manual aims to promote the use of futsal-oriented, small-sided games, maintaining the facets of the game at all times but with different results. All of this is in contrast to linear drills and exercises carried out in isolation from the full game format to achieve greater development and progressive results for futsal development. This applies to the development of players and coaches alike.

A game-based approach is not necessarily new, but it still has not fully made its way into futsal yet. There are different terms used to describe this, such as “the game is the teacher” or “using games for understanding”, but these terms are often misunderstood, with sessions simply used as a game and the coach-educator simply acting as a referee or watching from a distance with no understanding. But here, by using a game-based approach, the coach is required to create the “environment” to learn from the game, and importantly, structure that environment to influence the learner using constraints so that the actions and learning meet the session objectives.

The environment created should allow freedom, exploration and, importantly, progression, where the coach invests time in understanding each learner's needs to adjust the constraints accordingly. Environmental disruption is a given in futsal, so removing this disruption and variability by using drills with fixed outcomes that are repetitive is not a true reflection of futsal and therefore slows down learning, even preventing it altogether. As players gain awareness, adjusting their actions and responses to the challenges they face, their coach's skill is applied by responding to challenges in a different way by adjusting constraints during the game.

This coaching manual will explore and offer guidance on how to progress from an established linear methodology to challenge players and coaches alike through a game-based environment that meets the needs of each learner. In some respects, this requires a greater understanding of people, the players, and how they are managed during training sessions to satisfy their developmental needs rather than simply applying a teaching approach of “here is the exercise and ‘x’ is the objective”.

Coaching methodology	Command	Question & answer	Observation & feedback	Guided discovery	Trial & error
<b>Player/coach interventions</b>	Coach tells and demonstrates required solution	Coach leads with a question to gain a response from the players	Coach & players observe	Coach asks a question or issues a challenge	Players and/or coach decide on the challenge
<b>Example</b>	„I want you to ...!“	„Can you tell me what you can do here?“	„Let's watch this.“	„Can you show me ...?“	„Try for yourself ...!“
<b>Description</b>	Coach defines the chosen outcomes in practice	Coach poses question & players offer verbal solution to the challenge	Players & coach observe and discuss their feedback	Coach prompts & players offer visual demonstration of their personal solution	Players are encouraged to find solutions with minimal support



## 9.2 Encouraging curiosity

It is crucial for players at all development phases to be curious since learning how to correct mistakes is key to progression. Making mistakes should be encouraged and normalised, yet failing is often frowned upon in young player development. It is only through trying and experimenting that we learn to fail. When players fail, it is an indication that they are trying, often things which are new to them or actions which they are yet to master, which they need to be exposed to in order to improve. It is also essential to understand how a mistake affects the game as a whole, as mistakes isolated through drills and exercises with fixed outcomes may not fully demonstrate the real impact of that mistake or its consequences. Only by creating a game in which players can try and experiment (often through guided discovery, trial and error or simple free play) can the understanding of the consequences of errors be embedded in young players' minds. This is the activity which guides young players through their experience to try something different in a similar scenario in due course.

As a player developer, it is important to remember that we must first produce players before we can create teams. There is a common misconception that results will be achieved simply by jumping to playing as a team without first developing players' technical abilities, or that "teams make players". However, it is also important for each player to understand the principles and concepts of playing in a team, and where they fit into its structure. Exposing players to team play as early in the development phase as possible is therefore advised. This enables them to explore and experiment without the intervention or complexity of tactics. This early exposure to playing as a team and its unpredictability will help develop awareness and a library of outcomes from technical actions, as well as build knowledge of the game.

Practising technical skills in isolation from a game will not best prepare developing players for how those technical actions occur or are required on-demand to deal with the unpredictability of gameplay. The earlier we expose developing players to different challenges, so their knowledge base is built using which they can learn how to respond on demand, the better. It is important that this knowledge base is built from as early as possible on their development journey. Coaching is not about giving the solutions, but creating challenges through game constraints that foster adaptability in the player to be able to find a solution, regardless of their age and ability.

There is a danger in futsal, as with many sports, that by adopting and maintaining linear coaching methods that lead to somewhat robotic and fixed outcomes, which emulate the choreographed structures of elite play, freedom of play and choice is diminished. This is a result of the predetermined outcomes that a linear approach to training and preparation brings. With **developing players**, this approach is far from ideal as it hinders creativity, learning and development and slows down futsal development. Coaching assistance is essential across the game due to its unpredictability. Coaches must also train and prepare to react to this challenge.



Futsal is a game for thinkers – it is a game for intelligent players as the ball moves faster and stays in play longer, which requires extended periods of focused concentration. Due to the limitations of space and numbers, players (and coaches alike) are required to think and act faster. Technical limitations imposed by physicality can be offset by thinking quicker – here is where psychological intent becomes more significant than physical preparedness.

How do we ensure that **developing players** understand and apply what they have learnt? This requires setting up engaging games for children, ones that **they** understand with the freedom to take control of managing and re-organising, often simplistically. Learning is a transformative process which requires practice in context (e.g. in a game scenario) rather than an artificial environment with limited game association or realism. Learning unrelated to game outcomes is disruptive and often takes the form of complex sessions which have little relevance to the game. Whereas a relevant game format provides outcomes and challenges in the context of the game on a frequent basis but with infinite variability which is easy to harness within a CLA.





Coaching interventions require an understanding of many actions, activities, progress and, importantly, people. Interventions should be carefully considered, limited and timely, whilst using a variety of intervention methods to prioritise the player over the objective. Coaches should be able to understand all of these elements and choose the appropriate intervention at the appropriate time.

Intervention should add value to the session, always ensuring that players' interest and development are the main point of focus. Avoid intervening unnecessarily, which is often used to justify the role of the coach,

in order to stimulate the flow of the session and to recognise that a scenario is unlikely to be repeated in the same way. Feedback can be provided later on in the session or at the end of the session during the review phase with all players. Of course, this must be balanced by ensuring that appropriate end-of-session educational or guiding feedback is given and, more importantly, received.

There are different intervention methods, and appropriate language is important. Some examples are given above.

### 9.3 Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle

The Assess-Plan-Do-Review cycle is a simple framework for designing youth coaching activities to ensure maximum fun, effectiveness and learning for the individual.

The principle of a Plan-Do-Review approach is not new or uncommon. However, it is the "Review" phase that often gets overlooked or seen as a simple singular look at review that fails to engage peers and players.

Before commencing the first phase of the cycle, evaluating and assessing the needs of each learner and the needs of the group is essential. This will determine the specific framework for the session.

**Assess:** Understand players' needs.

**Plan:** Create the session plan starting with its objective(s), moving to its concept and through to progression that suits the needs of the group and meets the established objectives. It is "how" the session will meet its objective(s), the session plan, key coaching points that need to be addressed, player engagement (all players active), constraints (and their intended outcomes), etc.

**Do:** In a game-based context, the delivery will involve all possible constraints that can be applied (space, location, players) to implement the "plan" and make adjustments where necessary to satisfy the individual needs of each learner and the group.

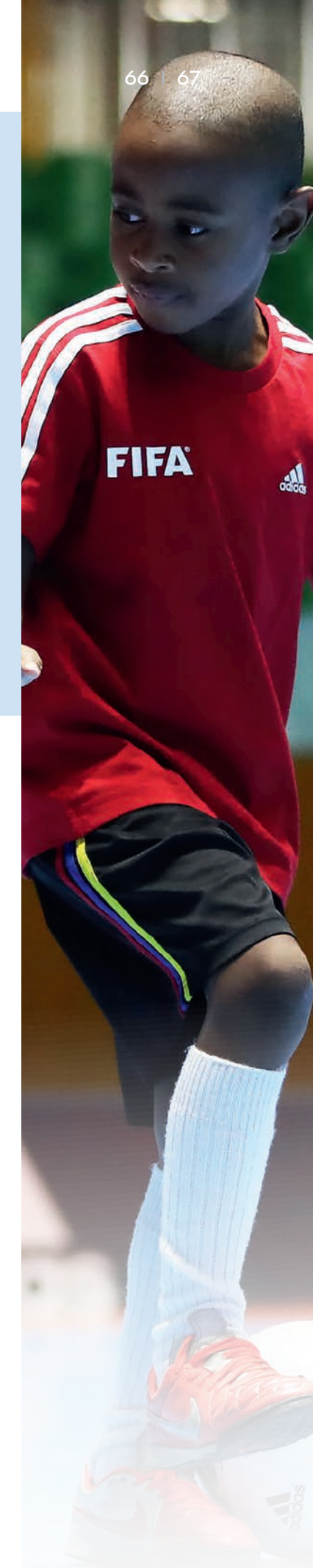
**Review:** Either during or after the session, both players and other staff should be consulted to establish whether the session met its objectives and to identify what can be improved upon or further developed. This should not take a long time, perhaps 5-10 minutes after the session and should include open-ended questioning, direct feedback, or challenging players to explain their results from what they have discovered during the session.

The 'Review' phase should be two-fold, initially just after the session with the players, where they will ideally lead the review to demonstrate their learning and understanding whilst offering development, adaptation and progressive phases for consideration. The coach should then assess that feedback alongside their own and/or that of other coaches or support staff.

These examples merely serve as a guide – there are many facets to each phase and the coach will find their own way of doing things.

When considering a Assess-Plan-Do-Review approach, the following should be taken into account:

- **Objectives** (technical, tactical, physical, psychological)
- **Period of the season**
- **Week of the season**
- **Day of the week**
- **Last match and next match**
- **Number of sessions taking place in the week**
- **Results from the previous coaching session**
- **Number of players available**
- **Technical, tactical and physical standard of the players**
- **Technical, tactical, physical and psychological considerations of the session**
- **Positions of the players** (including goalkeepers) available and the intent
- **Available facilities and training equipment/resources**
- **Weather conditions** (temperature, humidity, etc.) – **in some countries, futsal is not always played indoors.**





### 9.3.1 Explanation – communication styles

- The exercise's objective(s)
- Each player's role, depending on their different responsibilities
- Using appropriate resources (e.g. a tactical board or video)

This may take the form of verbal direction, challenge or guidance. However, young players switch off quickly. The use of coaching aids such as tactical boards, whiteboards or session plans engage young players quickly and more effectively than simply talking to or at them. Engaging players in an explanation by questioning or challenging their understanding, or even encouraging them to create the session is both rewarding and engaging for young players. Asking players to consider constraints to challenge them in gameplay will likely give an insight into their understanding or desire to be challenged. Challenging players to discuss outcomes amongst themselves to find a solution is rewarding for them and encourages ownership of self-guided principles.

### 9.3.2 Demonstration – by the coach or players

Some players (and coaches) are visual learners, so demonstration is a valuable asset to learning. However, not every coach will have the confidence or indeed technical ability to demonstrate properly. It is acceptable to identify a player who has shown the ability to execute an action to demonstrate it to others. In doing so, the rest of the team will acknowledge that they can also execute such action rather than considering it only to be achievable by an adult. When implementing this approach, it is also important to ensure that the responsibility of demonstration is fairly shared amongst the team to give each player the chance to stand out. This is essential for each individual's psychological engagement, worthiness and self-esteem.

Never be afraid to ask a player to demonstrate – their ability, particularly in the case of young players, may surprise you.

#### Observation

- of the players during the exercise; and
- while taking the aforementioned coaching points into account.

#### Intervention

- at the right moment;
- for instructions, when the exercise is not done correctly; and
- with the coaching points in mind.

#### Adaptation

- of the exercise's difficulty level, not for the sake of change, but at the appropriate time with the appropriate adaptation or development;
- of the delegation of roles and tasks within the exercise; and
- that is appropriate to players' current ability and physical condition.



### 9.4 Planning a coaching session

Developing players might have different needs than those other age groups. For example, they may be more susceptible to illness or injury, but less likely to let you know. They might struggle to understand instructions because of learning difficulties or make mistakes when passing if they struggle to distinguish colours due to colour blindness. All of these example circumstances may be unknown or unspoken of as young players navigate their own confidence and understanding of their limitations. An essential precursor to developing a session plan is prioritising the learners.

When using a constraint-led approach (CLA), coaches must manipulate and manage environmental chaos for young players in order to change the boundaries and parameters (the constraints) that the learner interacts with. For example, if the session objective is focused on moving the ball quickly, the coach will perhaps start off with a smaller area in order to create multiple situations where each player has a reduced time to act when receiving the ball and will therefore be forced to play the ball early due to pressure being applied by the opponent, or risk losing possession.

Once players learn how to deal with these numerical and spatial constraints (understanding the need to move the ball quickly and effectively), the coach must quickly identify a new constraint. This is necessary to make the environment more challenging, therefore pushing players to find more complex solutions to explore and experiment. For example, creating a numerical overload on one team will enable a new problem to occur, requiring a new solution for teams both in possession and out of possession.

Considerations when planning a session should include (but not be limited to) the following questions:

- What is the session objective?
- How are you trying to achieve that?
- Why will you do it this way?
- What alternative way is there to achieve the same results?
- Could this be a progressive step within the session, or the entire focus of the session?

This can then be considered further as part of the reflection and feedback phase with the players and any other coaches to help understand the necessary improvements or adaptations.

It will be important for the coach to consider all aspects of the guidance and make a judged assessment in relation to the ages and abilities of **developing players**.

The key aspects of a coaching session should include the following elements:

- Technical
- Tactical
- Psychological
- Physical
- Knowledge

Every coaching session for **developing players** should include aspects associated with or directly linked to all of these elements. When designing a session, it is crucial to provide players with a well-rounded experience, both in terms of the game and the social environment, in order to develop and support a deeper understanding.

Excessive session explanations should be avoided. The attention span of these young players may be as little as 30–60 seconds, so speaking for longer is simply wasting their opportunity to get stuck in.

However, young players should be engaged in designing aspects of every session from the outset and coaches may aim to use additional resources for this purpose such as tactical boards, mobile apps, whiteboards or flipcharts. This provides an opportunity for players to take ownership whilst enabling better session or concept understanding.



Training with match situations should entail constraints with intentional results, be game-related, and challenge the players. However, the constraints that are applied must allow young players to express themselves, be creative and not hinder imaginative play. The game is about dealing with both underload and overload scenarios either in possession or out of possession, so creating lots of opportunities during gameplay by using constraints for players to experience these types of challenge will therefore help to better equip them and improve their abilities as they develop with futsal.

**Who** am I coaching? **What** am I coaching? **How** am I coaching appropriate to the “who” and “what”. **Why** am I coaching?

Game-based sessions should be primarily player-driven. This requires feedback from the coach rather than controlled environments requiring coach structures.

There is an adage of “failure to prepare is preparing to fail”. However, too much planning can often hinder and stagnate a session whilst detracting from the unpredictability of gameplay by being too structured, which leads to a rigid, predetermined outcome – this can also be considered linear coaching. This approach hinders innovation and limits learning. Coaching has traditionally been regarded as a functionally structured process. Although unstructured sessions have been criticised as poor coaching, the opposite may actually be true.

It is vital that sessions have an objective, that the desired results are established and communicated, not mystified for players to discover once they begin. How those results are achieved is down to the design of the session’s constraint-led coaching, where the unpredictability of gameplay poses constant challenges where the outcomes are not predetermined.

Futsal has not benefitted from coach education support for many decades. Consequently, much of its development has been supported by self-learning or traditional coaching methodologies. This is evident in the repetition of session delivery around the world, often without topic knowledge and with little innovation and change, this consequently slows down development. The biggest threat to futsal development over recent times has been a copy-and-paste mentality to session delivery. In this manual, we aim to promote a constraint-led approach, which provides constant variation, with challenges that do not lead to predetermined outcomes during gameplay. This requires more organisational skills than technical coaching skills, particularly when coaching **developing players**.

However, game understanding is also important. Futsal is a 5v5 game with variations of underload and overload both in possession and out of possession as the game transitions from defensive to attacking phases of play. Provided that no more than five players on each team are engaged in any active phase, sessions involving gameplay can engage additional players. This is where the skill of the organiser (i.e. the coach) comes to the fore. We shall explore how to engage more than ten players whilst retaining the concept of 5v5 throughout this coaching manual.

Planning a game-based session requires foresight to know how to apply constraints and when. Fundamentally, small-sided games should be constrained by three core values:

- **Number of players**
- **Pitch size**
- **The four-second count**

The FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game do not dictate how many passes or touches a player can make, although these may be implemented as constraints due to the pressures of play requiring decisive actions. For example, to create a mindset for quick passing or decision-making.

There are many factors that influence session planning which are set out below. Importantly, a session plan should be just as unpredictable as a game is. The failure of most coaching sessions **for developing players** or youth players is that the coach is dictating the progression and speed of delivery to satisfy their coaching plan. However, it is the session plan that should be flexible. When to move on or alter direction must be dictated by the players’ progress or need to be challenged further by new constraints and not by a tick-box exercise because a coaching plan says so. Coaches should be able to recognise the right time to progress and when a progression has been implemented too soon or a constraint is currently unachievable.

An effective coaching methodology should include the learners. This could be at all or different phases of the learning cycle or session development. However, it is essential to adopt a strategy that includes a “Plan- Do-Review” approach that involves staff and players alike.



#### Exercises

##### Specificity:

- **Objectives**
- **Duration and intensity of the exercises and rest breaks**
- **Aspects that require special attention (coaching points)**
- **Organisation of the exercise and maximum player participation**
- **Progression of exercises: from simple to complex**
- **Number and position of players**
- **Position of the coach**
- **Necessary equipment**

#### Equipment

##### Preparation:

- **Pitch**
- **Goals**
- **Ball (and pump)**
- **Bibs**
- **Cones**
- **Stopwatch**
- **Whistle**

Use the lessons learned from the last match in training sessions to act as a bridge before the next match.



## 9.5 Model coaching sessions

Young players should be treated neither as a miniature adult, nor as an elite player – their needs are different, and their physical attributes vary considerably.

Coaching sessions for developing players should be game-based from the start (including any functional warm-up/welcome activity) and promote some form of technical development. Young players' bodies are less developed and therefore less susceptible to muscle vulnerability that would otherwise require an extensive warm-up phase, so this can be adapted. This activation element should be fun, engaging and involve all players including those assigned or self-promoted as goalkeepers. The activation should be designed to set the scene for the gameplay session and ideally have a technical link to the core part of the main session. This might be where the technical element of the session is delivered.



Coaches must carefully plan and consider training sessions for this age group. Sessions must be engaging and dynamic which allows every player to feel valued and engaged.

Drills and exercises which have repetitive, predetermined outcomes should be avoided as they limit the exposure to the unpredictability of gameplay during game-based training. Coaches should be able to design an appropriately conditioned game on an appropriately sized pitch to suit the age and ability of the players involved.

Applying similar reasoning to the cool-down/completion phase, young players should not be encouraged to stretch until their muscle development is mature enough to benefit from this. Each session should conclude with a period of activity that gradually reduces players' heart rates rather than a sudden drop. Additionally, this time should be used for reviewing and reflecting on the completed session that engages all learners in feedback. The end of session should mainly focus on encouraging young players to provide answers and responses to questions and be challenged by the coach, rather than the coach speaking at them. In this scenario, coaches are not there to provide what they consider to be the right solutions, but to ask the right questions so that players find the right solutions for themselves.

### 9.5.1 A model coaching session plan

#### SESSION DETAIL

**This game is NOT touch conditioned but it could be.**

Use the pitch size that best suits the players and abilities you are working with. In this example the session is for competent adult players. The duration of this session will be 60 minutes overall that will include warm up and cool down and water breaks.

#### CONSTRAINTS

Game is played on a full size pitch to suit the player ability and age levels.

The pitch is split into thirds.

3v1 in both end zones and 2 attackers in the mid zone. A specific GK at each end.

#### ORGANISATION

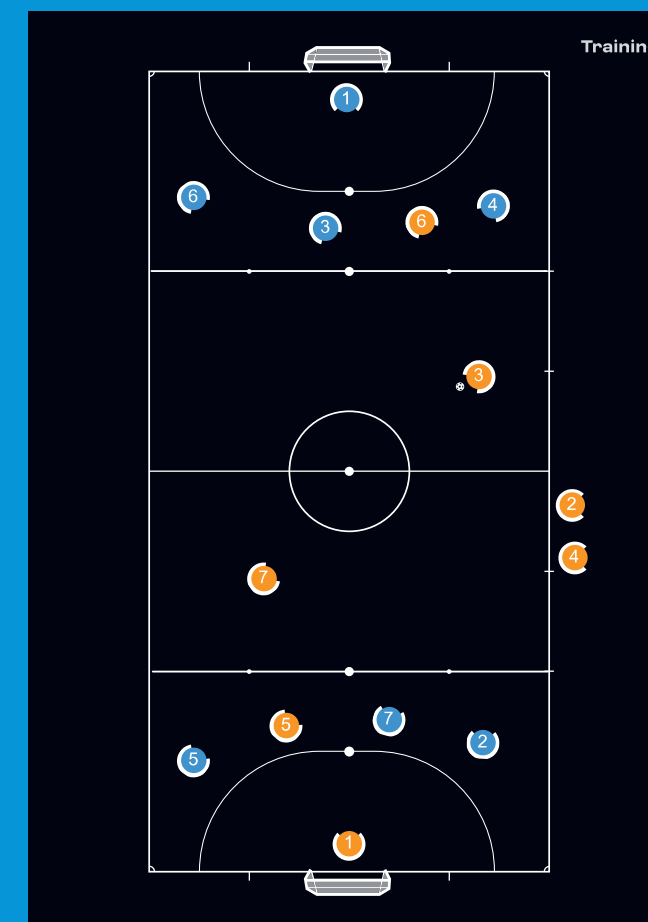
- Game starts with the two mid zone attackers passing the ball between them and then choosing an end to attack. This is shown set up on a full-size pitch above but an introduction to principles can be done in half of a pitch space.
- They may pass directly to the end zone or dribble it there and start a 3v3 attack, once they have entered the chosen end zone the lone attacker in the other end zone joins them to create an overload 4v3.
- Play until the ball is dead.
- If the defenders win the ball back they can counter to the opposite end of play as in a real game, but moving the ball across the mid third by a player running with it to join the attack. Defenders must retreat

#### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

- Swap teams around so that each group has an opportunity to attack.
- Re-structure to have 4v1 in each end zone
- Re-structure to have 4v2 in each end zone.
- If started in half a pitch then move to an end to end full size game based upon a pitch size relevant to the players age and ability.

#### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- Communication.
- Passing - forwards
- Ball movement and retention
- Player movement



- Overload and underload
- Can the team in-possession create scoring chances.
- Support play to the attackers
- Do the attackers have a defensive safety lock to delay the reverse counter?

#### GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To maintain possession through counter-attack leading to an attack that creates goal scoring opportunities. Specific Objective: Playing forwards as a priority and challenging the mindset to alternate quickly between defence and attack and attack and defence.

Number of Players: in this set up 14 however the session can be adjusted to engage greater or lesser numbers by modifying the number of players engage din the middle zone. Goalkeepers can be unlimited din numbers as this session helps develop their outfield technical skills and wider outfield understanding.

Equipment: Zone marker discs, balls (and pump), stopwatch, whistle, bibs of various colours, two goals.





## Introduction

Technical development and understanding is the foundation of every player. However, in this process, it is important to recognise that not every player wants to be a national team player, some simply want to play recreationally for enjoyment, whilst others will see opportunity beckon as a professional futsal player. That said, neither can reach their true potential without the relevant and relative technical ability.

The foundations of any player will be laid during the developing player phase (6-12 years old) – sometimes earlier. By the end of this development phase, players already favour one foot, whilst their motor skills are heavily consolidated, which makes developing their weaker foot harder to master. Futsal engagement from an early age will better assist this ambidextrous development through positional variance and the frequent transitions between defence and attack that cause positional imbalance.

## 10.1 Developing technique

The most often confused and misrepresented statements in sport refer to the misunderstanding and confusion of what represents “technique” and what represents “skill”.

Technique can be best described as the ‘technical action’ to overcome a challenge (e.g. a pass, a shot or control).

By contrast to skill, that is the selection and execution of the appropriate technical action at any given time for any given circumstance or challenge, often requiring responsiveness in a matter of seconds or, given the game constraints, fractions of a second. We will often hear players being described as ‘really skilful’ when the speaker is actually referring to players’ technical ability or their ability in general. It is important to distinguish between these two traits and to understand why they are different.

Futsal consists of many technical facets, but they can be readily grouped into five distinct actions requiring technical focus. Each technical action can be seen in all tactical play. This is where the importance of technical ability is an intrinsic part of tactical strategy:

- **Passing**
- **Control**
- **Travelling with the ball (running with the ball or dribbling)**
- **Shooting/finishing**
- **Creating space/movement/deception/feinting**

In this section, the manual considers each of these five technical actions in greater detail.



## 10.1.1 Passing

### Introduction

Passing is a key element of the game. Maintaining ball possession and preventing the opponent from doing so is a core principle of futsal. The more a team retains possession, the greater the number of touches and the ability to try and experiment for all players. During the developing player phase, this may result in frequent ball turnover (lost possession), but this should be considered normal during this phase to encourage both valuing possession of the ball and the concept of risk-taking to find successful solutions better.

Passing is a principle of moving the ball from player A to player B whereby A is the passer and B is the recipient. This is where the value of the player(s) without the ball immediately come to the fore. Player B (there will be at least three such players (perhaps four depending on the situation the goalkeeper finds themselves in)) should be encouraged to create passing lines. In other words, a route from A to B that is not at risk of interception or playing the ball out of play so that the ball can be safely received by B without immediate pressure from an opponent that may result in losing possession unnecessarily.

This requires constant movement and scanning by those players without the ball, always moving and adapting to the body shape of the player with the ball, reacting to their direction and speed of movement, as well as the reactions of the opponent. By offering multiple passing options the four players without the ball can make the role and actions of the ball carrier simple and decisive. Passing can take the form of a variety of actions such as the following:

- Short passing
- Long passing
- Lofted passing
- Driven passing

The selection and execution of the pass rests with the ball carrier, however, the choice can be made easier and quicker by the reaction of the support players.

Whilst the core principle of play is to score more goals than your opponent, which often dictates game strategies, sometimes possession can be a crucial defensive action by preventing the opponent from having ball possession and therefore, momentum. This can be demanding both mentally and physically upon players, so comfort on the ball, an aptitude to work harder without the ball to create passing lines, and the technical ability to execute passes all need to be developed from a young age during the **developing player phase**.

It is vital to maintain concentration and balance in order to pass properly. This is not an instinctive action for some players. Creating environments which exhibit the unpredictability of gameplay (but with game constraints) ensures that passing is a key focus area that will develop the ability to make the appropriate pass selection through experiential learning.

There is an inherent link between passing and control. Creating a passing line requires ball retention once the pass has been made, so the receiver must be able to control the ball effectively, either by stopping the ball dead or moving it in anticipation of the next move or subsequent pass.

When considering the constraints to be applied in a game-based training session to achieve the intended outcome of a passing session, the planning and progression must be considered to ensure that the session objective remains the focus. For example, as much emphasis must be placed on the receiving players to create the passing line as the ball carrier playing the pass, however, the session should not focus on the control element. This will be a learning outcome from the activity if constraints are applied appropriately.

## SESSION PLAN 1: Passing

### SESSION DETAIL

**This game is NOT touch conditioned but it could be.** Example on half of a full-size pitch but pitch could be narrower for younger age or size players so that they play on third of a full-size pitch.

### CONSTRAINTS

Only a GK and attacker play in the final quarter of the pitch.

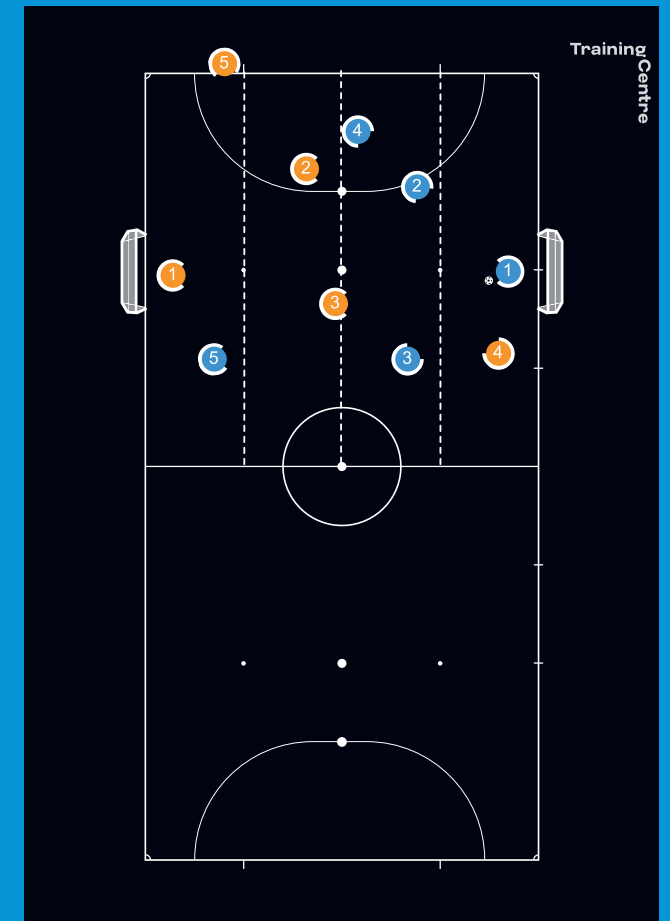
Objective is to pass to the attacker in the final quarter but the ball must have moved through the thirds and may only be delivered from Z3 to Z4.

### ORGANISATION

- GK starts the play and can play to any teammate in Zone 2. The ball must be passed so that each player touches the ball whether in Z2 or Z3 before being passed from Z3 to the attacker in Z4, this signifies a success. Team out-of-possession surrenders a player in Q2/3 so that in-possession team has a player overload. Once attacker receives the ball they then pass the ball to the opposing GK who re-starts the play.
- End to end fluid game. If the out-of-possession team win the ball back they get numerical superiority and play from that point.
- No touch limitation

### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

- Progression: numerical balance in Zones 2 & 3
- Progression: attacker can score
- Progression: Full size pitch and repeat constraints
- Progression: numerical inferiority to team in possession
- Open the play as players become competent to operate in two halves rather than thirds
- Encourage players to change Zones by following pass to create rotational movement and experience different quarters and the competencies required in each zone
- Use more players but never more than 5 active per team in any one part of the pitch
- Release more defenders into mid third to create a greater challenge to cut off passing lines



### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- Ball retention
- Passing forward as a priority
- Creating passing lines
- Movement & displacement of personnel
- Patience in possession
- Play and move/support
- Quick passing when required, slow when not



## Passing to keep possession

### Organisation

- Use one half of the court.
- Split the players into two teams of 5, including goalkeepers.

### Explanation

- Set up a 5v4 possession game.
- The in-possession team have a numerical advantage.
- When possession is lost, the player who played the last pass before possession was surrendered has to sit out and is replaced by an opposition player.

### Variation

- Variation 1: goalkeepers are limited to one touch.
- Variation 2: all players are limited to one touch.
- Variation 3: play a 5v5 with no restrictions on the number of touches allowed.
- Variation 4: the out-of-possession team have a 5v4 numerical advantage.
- Variation 5: goalkeepers are limited to one touch.

### Coaching points

- Players should focus on ball retention and try not to play loose passes.
- Forward passes should be considered a priority for all players, as they can enhance ball circulation.
- Non-ball-carrying players should create passing lines to provide team-mates with options at all times and to create space.
- Intelligent off-the-ball movement helps to disrupt the opposition.
- Be patient in possession rather than trying to force passes that are not on.
- All players should move and support team-mates when not in possession. Standing still and waiting for the ball is likely to result in possession being lost.
- When possible, play quicker combinations such as one-touch passing, which can be more effective.



## Passing and directional play

### Organisation

- Use the full court.
- Divide the court into three zones, with the central zone measuring 10m in length.
- Set up a 2v2, plus goalkeepers in both end zones.
- Organise a 1v1, plus a neutral player, who plays with the in-possession team, in the central zone.

### Explanation

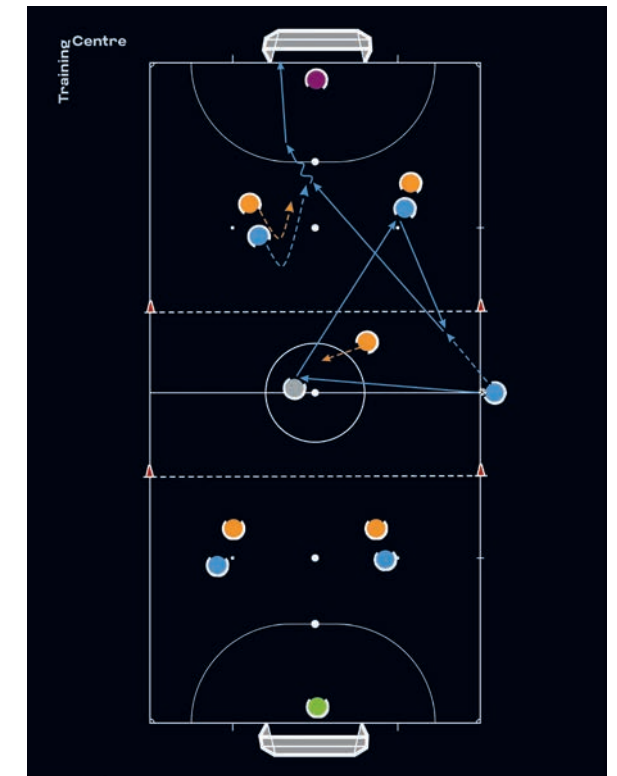
- Play starts and restarts with a kick-in taken from the touchline in the central zone. Play only restarts after the ball goes out of play.
- Only the ball can move from one zone to another.
- Players must remain in their designated zones.

### Variation

- An extra player can join the attack in the end zones to create a 3v2 scenario.

### Coaching points

- Move away from the ball carrier to avoid attracting opponents into their area of influence.
- Offer width and depth to create space for attacking actions.
- Focus on looking forward, playing forward and moving forward as much as possible to avoid wasting good attacking opportunities.
- Constantly create passing lanes and make good off-the-ball movement to enable the ball to be circulated with purpose.
- Play quick and firm passes to create gaps and displace defenders.
- Once a pass has been played, players should look to offer their team-mates passing options.
- Constantly rotating the neutral player allows for quicker transitions.





## Passing to progress play

### Organisation

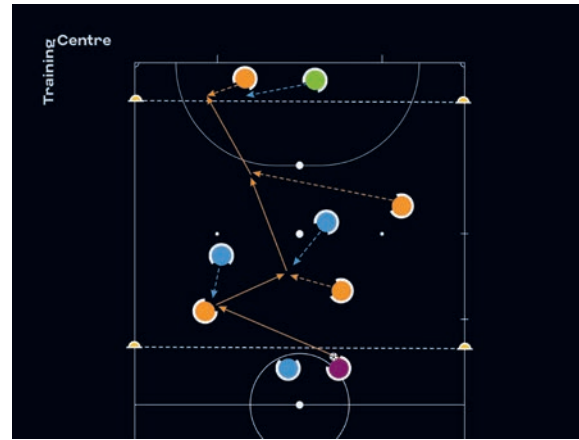
- Use one half of the court.
- Divide the court into three zones.
- Mark out one end zone 2m from the goal line.
- Mark out the other end zone 3m from the halfway line.
- The middle zone should be approximately 18m in length and account for the majority of the playing area.
- Position a goalkeeper and a pivot from each team in each end zone.
- Create a 3v2 scenario in the middle zone.
- One player from the team with a numerical disadvantage waits outside the playing area and only joins play when their team gain possession.

### Explanation

- The game should be end to end, and play should be fluid.
- The in-possession team have a 3v2 numerical advantage at all times.
- Each team aim to pass the ball from one end zone to the other.
- Play starts with the goalkeeper, who can pass the ball to any team-mate in the middle zone. Each member of the in-possession team must touch the ball before play can be progressed into the end zone.
- If the out-of-possession team win the ball back, they gain the numerical advantage and play continues from that point.
- One member of the team that is now out of possession leaves the playing area.
- There are no restrictions on the number of touches allowed.

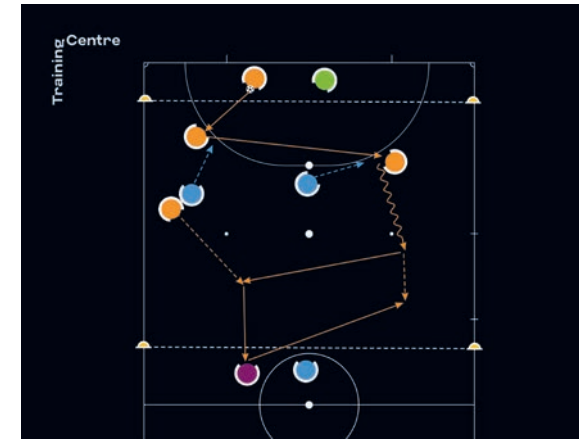
### Variation

- Variation 1: if a team play the ball into the pivot, they retain possession and try to transition to the opposite end zone.
- Variation 2: goalkeepers play in the middle zone to work on their passing and ball control skills.



### Coaching points

- Players must look after the ball, as a failure to do so can result in their team losing their numerical advantage and struggling to win the ball back.
- Forward passes should be considered a priority, as they allow players to progress play more quickly through the zones.
- Given their numerical advantage, it should be easier for the members of the in-possession team to create and open up passing lines off the ball.
- Intelligent and constant movement can serve to disorganise the opposition, who find it hard to pick players up when facing a numerical disadvantage.



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## 10.1.2 Control

### Introduction

Control is as much a by-product of possession as accurate passing is. Good ball control ensures that possession is retained and helps to initiate the next move more quickly, progressively and effectively.

To enable appropriate control, the decision-making process of how to control the ball in each scenario must consider different aspects when receiving the pass, not least of all what the next pass or action may be. This will be influenced by the weight of the pass (ball speed), its trajectory, and the positioning and movement of the receiver.

Depending on the receiver's intent, this may require the ball to be slowed down or the use of the ball speed to deceive and disguise the opponent with the next action using the direction of the first touch.

The decision-making process and successful control will depend on the technical execution of the chosen control method and surface. The receiver faces constant challenges due to the unpredictability and variability of gameplay. The ball's pace, trajectory, height, and direction, as well as the receiver's relative body shape and angle, are a continuous development process. Match situations incorporate the variability that drills and fixed-outcome exercises may do, but not in as much game-related variation or with the contextual interference provided by other game constraints and, importantly, opponents.

There will be times when stopping the ball dead is the right thing to do. Alternatively, players could move the ball away from a nearby opponent to set up the next pass or simply protect the ball, use the pace of the ball to play it quickly using a first-time pass (this is also a form of control), or use its pace on the first touch to create space away from an opponent so that the next touch and pass can lead to safe onward possession. To develop their ability to execute all of these examples, players require exposure to different experiences.

The key characteristics of futsal such as the flat, stable pitch surface, flat-soled shoes, the ball size, the ball's limited bounce, and tight pitch constraints all influence the common futsal method of control on the floor

using the sole of the foot. This technique has recently become more prevalent in football, probably due to players' exposure to futsal during their early years of development, despite football not sharing those characteristics with futsal. The technical ability of stopping the ball between the sole and the floor allows the receiver to feel safe under control of the ball, whilst being able to look up to increase visibility by scanning for passing opportunities or risks. This requires balance and stability while controlling the ball, although this may also occur on the move as the receiving player advances towards the oncoming pass to move the ball out of feet upon receipt or simply change direction with the first touch. Moving the ball with the sole of the foot subsequently becomes instinctive and a crucial technical action in futsal that should be encouraged from the outset of **developing players'** exposure to the game.

In the session design, the activity within the game and the constraints applied to achieve the intended results should therefore consider the pressures applied on the receiving player by the opponent (individual), the opponents (collectively), and the location on the pitch where the ball is received, for example:

- **Facing away from goal in a pivot position**
- **As a winger**
- **Facing towards the opponent's goal**  
(receiving mid-stride)
- **In the defensive, middle, or attacking third**

#### The following must be considered:

- **Weight of pass**
- **Trajectory on the ground or in the air**
- **Receiving the ball in the air or after it has touched the ground**

All of these factors influence how the ball is controlled and are facets of the technique to be trained and developed through constraints. The ability to control will emerge from this.

For example, if the exercise's objective is to improve ball control, then the activity to be established is based on increasing the number of passes made since control and passing are related.

## SESSION PLAN 2: Control in a game format

### SESSION DETAIL

**This game is NOT touch conditioned but it could be.**

U9's example on one third of a full-size pitch although pitch size can be varied to suit the age and capability of players. The session is designed to force control and which will require lots of passing although take care not to confuse the outcome with a passing game but the two are closely linked. The numbers shown indicate 5v5 but numbers can be varied to account for more players as long as no more than 5v4 in each area of the marked pitch to ensure futsal is reflected and every player plays.

### CONSTRAINTS

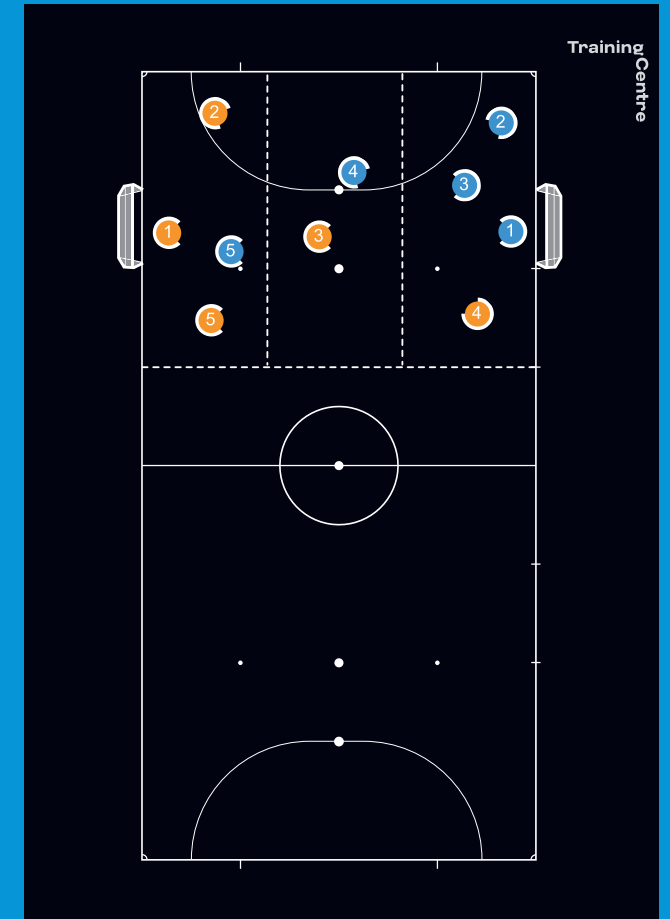
Goalkeepers may only use their feet and the goals are not included at the outset. The game is directional. End zones except of the middle zone creates an overload for one team. Players may touch the ball as many times as they need to. Players may only work in their zone unless released by the coach.

### ORGANISATION

- **The game of futsal reflects numerous underload and overload situations and this set-up reflects these challenges offering 3v1 and 1 v3 as well as 1v1.**
- **The movement has no specific direction as goals are not in play at first but may be added later to offer directional play with outcomes. This also engages the GK in outfield play to develop touch and control under pressure.**

### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

- **Vary the loading and ratios to achieve a variety of 1:2, 2:2, 3:2, 3v3 etc to create opportunity and pressure on the control.**
- **Must play through the thirds and not end to end.**
- **Open up thirds to create (subject to player numbers) 3v4 in each half so one team has to control in underload whilst the other controls in overload pressure. Don't forget to swap players around to experience these variable pressure loadings.**



- **Introduce goals so game becomes directional with a purpose**
- **Eventually move to a full unrestricted 5v5 game over a period of weeks as capability improves. This should not necessarily be an outcome of every session but seen as progression.**

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- **Ball retention**
- **Controlling surface, sole of foot, control to stop (allow movement and creation of passing lines), control to play (out of feet)**
- **Punctuation of passing by the control element**
- **Body balance and shape**
- **Use of both feet**



## Possession and ball control

### Organisation

- Divide half of the court into three horizontal zones.
- Arrange a 4v4, plus goalkeepers.
- Set up a 2v1 scenario in zone 1.
- Organise a 1v1 scenario in zone 2.
- Establish a 1v2 scenario in zone 3.

### Explanation

- Initially, the objective for both teams is to keep possession of the ball.
- Play starts with the goalkeeper.
- The in-possession team can make use of both goalkeepers.
- Players have a maximum of two touches.
- Players must remain in their zones, except for one player from each team who can move from the end zone into the central zone to create a 2v1 or 2v2 scenario.

### Variation

- Both teams can finish on goal from inside the end zones.
- If a player controls the ball with one foot and finishes with the other, they are awarded two goals.

### Coaching points

- Perform directional controls to progress play.
- Adopt the correct body orientation to progress play up the pitch. For example, if there is space ahead of you, you should open your body to receive the pass before advancing forward with the first touch.
- Ensure that the touch to control the ball keeps the ball out of opposing defenders' reach.
- Always receive the ball on the move and keep your head up to survey the situation.
- Use both feet to pass the ball to increase the chances of finding the space to progress play.



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## Control under pressure

### Organisation

- Mark out a 20x20m playing area.
- Split the group into two teams of 4, plus 1 neutral (attacking) player

### Explanation

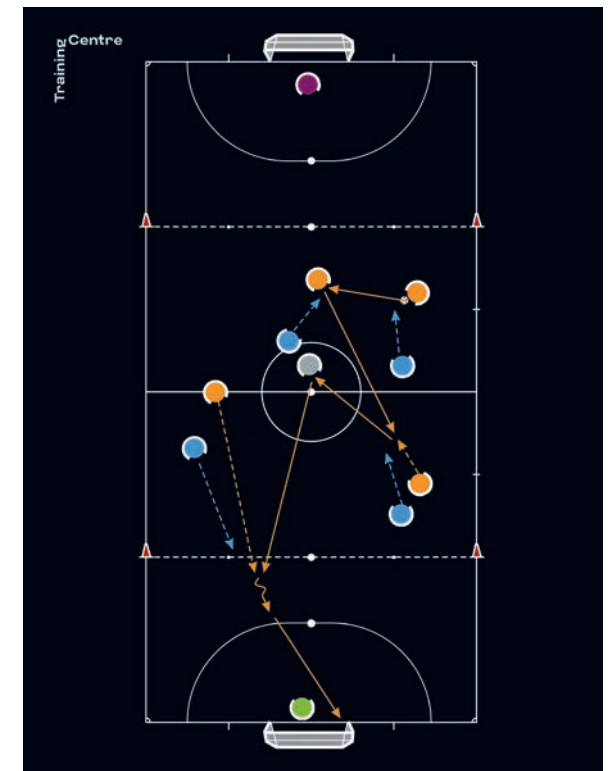
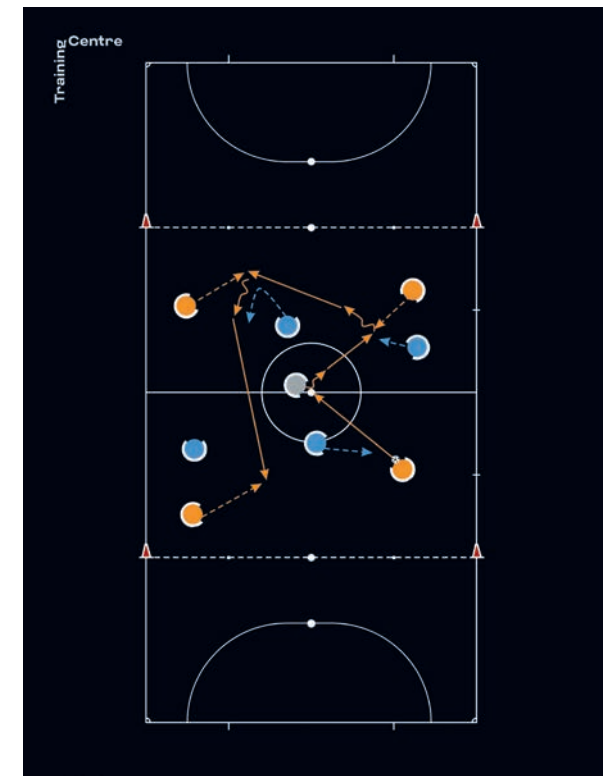
- The two teams compete to keep possession of the ball.
- All players must take a minimum of two touches. This rule also applies to the neutral player, who must perform an orientated ball control each time they receive the ball.

### Variation

- Place a goalkeeper in each goal. Once the in-possession team complete three passes, the playing area is extended to the whole court and the team can attack the opposition's goal.

### Coaching points

- Maintaining good ball control increases a team's chances of retaining possession for a longer period.
- Players need to consider using the sole and instep of their foot to improve their control of the ball.
- By taking an orientated first touch, players can move or pass in the direction they wish to go.
- Good body orientation allow players to gain an advantage when receiving the ball.
- Scanning before receiving the ball helps players to understand how much time they will have on the ball and in which direction they can move.
- Due to the limited space involved in the exercise, feinting passes or feinting to receive the ball can be effective ways to deceive opponents and create space.
- Players should work to open up passing lines to ensure that team-mates have a passing option at all times.
- Clever movement can create space to allow players to receive passes in good areas.



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To achieve this, the coach must consider how best to utilise the space (constraint) and player numbers (constraint) to increase the passes made (objective). This may require shortening the length or width of the pitch whilst retaining a maximum of 5v5 in any one area, but also applying overload and underload scenarios (3v2, 3v4, etc). With careful design, this can be achieved using more than a total of ten players so that as many squad players are included in the session as possible. To facilitate learning and confidence, the opponents' intervention may initially need to be restricted (constraint) by limiting the number of opponents in a specific area of the pitch (e.g. 3v2) before gradually increasing it as confidence and ability develops. As the session develops, the coach must look for players' improved ability to deal with the different situations faced during gameplay, and then be able to adjust, change or remove the constraints to suit, but also to further challenge players by applying

additional developmental constraints. This may take the form of overloading the team in possession so that they face more pressure on the ball, which therefore requires them to think more quickly, leading to decision-making.

Measuring the results should be a joint effort between players and the coaching staff so that the players understand what represents success and that their understanding of results and objectives are aligned. This process and acceptance of concepts and learning can also start to form the basis of feedback and understanding of the task from player to coach. We must remember that the players' needs have to be prioritised. By recognising the players' understanding, the coach is better able to adjust and assist the learning process through the environment created, whilst knowing when (and importantly, how) to progress through setting challenges within the activity.

### 10.1.3 Travelling with the ball

#### Introduction

In team sports, travelling with the ball is a common feature when in possession.

In the context of futsal, travelling with the ball can be referred to as either:

- A) **running with the ball; or**
- B) **dribbling.**

These two actions retain possession but are fundamentally different techniques which are applied differently within the game. Understanding the nuances of each and their application in different scenarios is key to implementing tactics.

Both actions can be described as follows:

- **Running with the ball – when speed is of the essence to progress forwards on the pitch into open space.**
- **Dribbling – close control of the ball when moving to overcome the pressures of restricted space due to the location on the pitch (e.g. in a corner) or player numbers in tight, congested areas of the pitch during open play.**

Each action requires a different technical approach and, importantly, an understanding of when one technique is used as opposed to the other.

For example, when running with the ball, this requires the creation of space to be able to exploit so the session design should facilitate this and consider the player numbers in each zone. Running with the ball can be a key technical aspect of counter-attacking, but it would be an unlikely choice in the final third.

Counter-attacking phases can be triggered through a number of actions that could include quick goalkeeper distribution from hands or feet, although they may also occur from a quick counter from open play following regained possession. In this last example, running with the ball would be a typical feature of a counter-attacking session that requires space to exploit. The design of gameplay should therefore be aimed towards creating space for exploitation.

When running with the ball, regardless of which part of the foot is used, the most important aspect is that the ball should be “an extension of the foot” so that the ball carrier

## SESSION PLAN 3: Running with the ball

### SESSION DETAIL

**This game is NOT touch conditioned but it could be.** Pitch size and player numbers relevant to the age and ability of players in the session.

### CONSTRAINTS

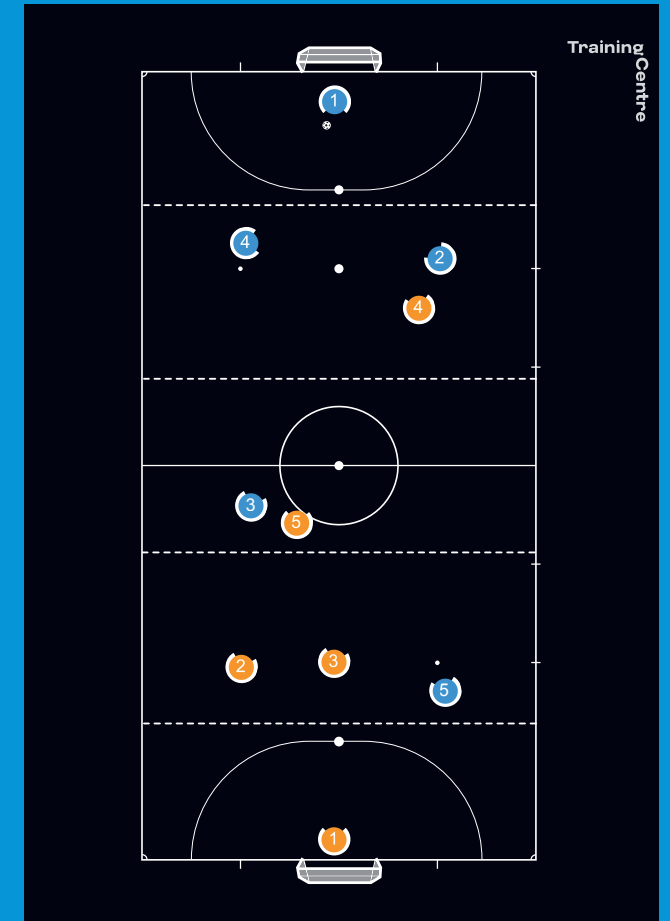
GK only in Z2, 2v1 in Z2 to start 1v1 in Z3 and 1 v2 in Z3  
GK may only play out to player in Z2

### ORGANISATION

- **GK starts and can play to any teammate in Zone 2.**
- **That player must travel as far as they can with the ball forwards. As they do they are replaced in their zone by a team mate dropping back and creating rotation once the phase is complete so players sequentially move backwards into zones and then move forwards as they become the traveller.**
- **Once the ball enters Z3 of Z4 it can't go back, but possession is surrendered to the opposing GK and repeat.**
- **Constant player rotation by forwards movement.**
- **Set up creates the spaces to run in to**
- **End to end fluid game. If the out-of-possession team win the ball back they get numerical superiority and play from that point but the coach can control the set up to ensure it doesn't just become an end to end game with no directional travel with the ball**
- **No touch limitation**

### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

- **Progression: move to thirds rather than quarters so only 1 v1 in mid third or a central zone, as doesn't need to be a third of pitch.**
- **Progression: overload in final third in-possession**
- **Progression: underload in final third in-possession**
- **Open the play as players become competent to operate in two halves rather than thirds**
- **Encourage players to change Zones by following pass to create rotational movement and experience different quarters and the competencies required in each zone**



### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- **Ball retention**
- **Moving forward as a priority**
- **Other players opening up space and creating space to be attacked**
- **Creating passing lines in final zone**
- **Support to the pass in final zone from ball carrier**
- **Speed of ball carrier**
- **Direction of ball carrier – straight, wings, diagonals, directional change**



## Running with the ball with awareness and speed

### Organisation

- Use a full-size court.
- Divide the court into three zones.
- The middle zone is marked out either side of the halfway line and is 10m in length.
- The overall game is a 5v5, including goalkeepers.
- Create a 2v1 scenario in the first zone.
- Set up a 1v1 scenario in the middle zone.
- Organise a 1v2 scenario in the third zone.

### Explanation

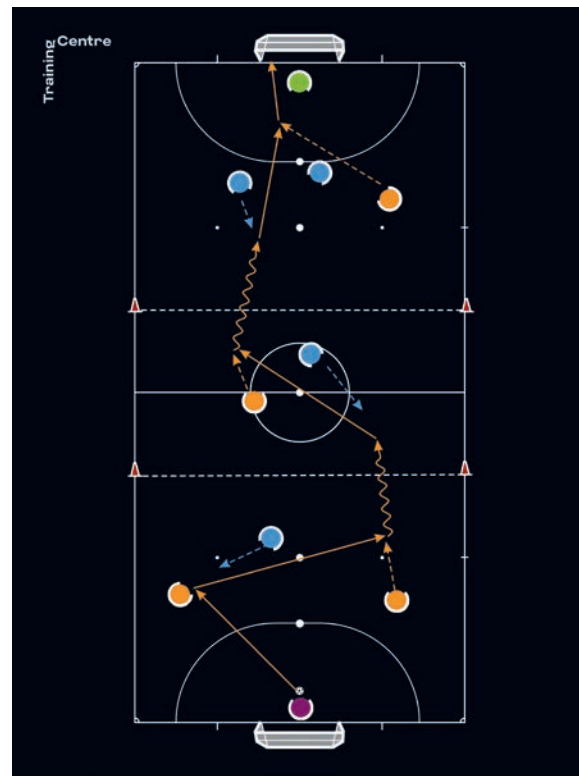
- The goalkeeper starts the play by passing the ball to a team-mate in the first zone.
- The player must try to dribble the ball into the middle zone.
- This creates an overload or a numerical disadvantage (2v1).
- The 2 players then try to progress the ball into the final third (third zone).
- The aim is to score in the opposition goal.
- When progressing play, the ball cannot be played back to a previous zone.

### Variation

- Variation 1: once the ball reaches the final third, an extra player from each team can enter this zone to create a 3v2 or 3v3 situation.
- Variation 2: all attackers can enter the final third.
- Variation 3: all players can enter the final third

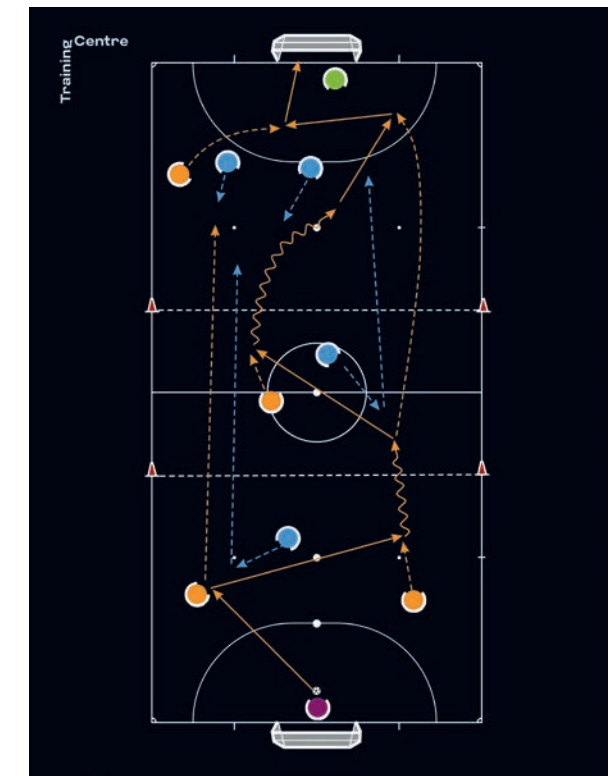
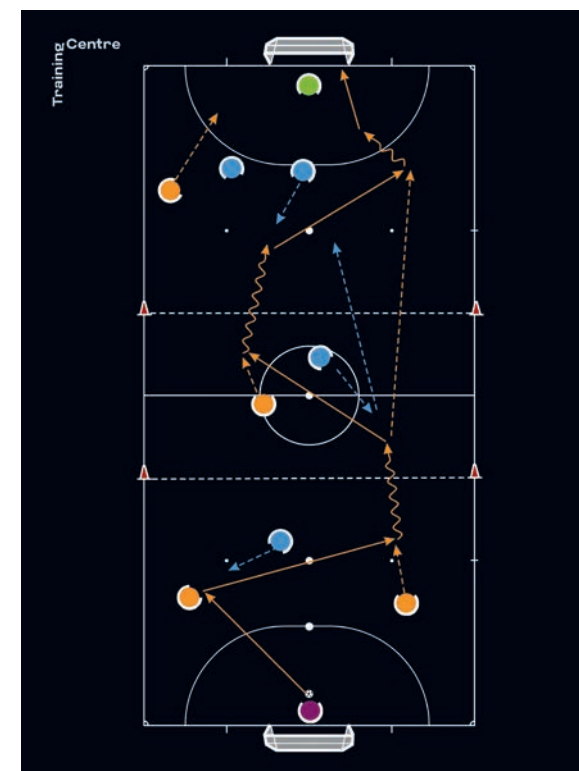
### Coaching points

- Emphasis should be placed on ball retention to ensure that a team do not lose their numerical advantage.
- Players should dribble at pace, with purpose and towards the opposition goal at all times to help progress the ball through the thirds effectively.
- Intelligent off-the-ball movement can create and open up space for key passes to be played in attack.
- Player should create passing lines in the final third to help work angles for attempts on goal.



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- Ball carriers must follow their pass through and offer a passing option once they progress into the next zone.
- Ball carriers can make a range of forward movements, such as running straight through the middle, running down the wings, making diagonal runs and performing directional changes.





can reach high speeds. The ball carrier should keep their head up to scan and see what else is happening in the game that influences their actions in the ball-carrying element of the phase.

The broader perspective enables players to make more effective tactical decisions than if they have to concentrate on the ball, which restricts their opportunities to scan.

On the other hand, when dribbling, players must always keep the ball close to them and under control to facilitate quick contact and ball manipulation. This will likely be in tight spaces under pressure, requiring the ball carrier to navigate quickly and effectively.



## 10.1.4 Dribbling (past opponents)

### Introduction

As indicated in the previous section, dribbling has fundamentally different characteristics to running with the ball.

Developing skills in this area requires an awareness of when and where to run with the ball as opposed to when and where to dribble. Selecting the skill on demand must be based on developing comfort on the ball and maintaining control of the ball regardless of speed and stride.

This is the technical development and skill acquisition that comes from exposure to the unpredictability of gameplay, more opportunities to engage with the ball, and facing different challenges which require different responses every time.

Developing dribbling skills requires careful consideration of space in relation to player numbers. For example, dribbling will not be readily developed on a full-size futsal pitch with a group of U-14s – the space is too large and the challenges of obstruction through opponents' contextual interference too dispersed. Similarly, trying to develop dribbling skills in a 2v2 scenario may not use appropriate constraints which lead to them becoming a practice isolated from other aspects of the game. Creating a game with a designated zone through which the ball must be played (therefore ensuring contact) is one solution. To

increase those occurrences, the overall pitch size should be reduced further.

The coach should be able to manipulate the space and player numbers to create an underload or overload in a certain area of the pitch. This must be adapted to player performance and understanding, being aware of the signs that indicate ability and understanding. At that phase, it is acceptable to progress to a new challenge if understanding is evident, but skill acquisition and technical execution still is not. Knowing if players understand the task and the challenge at hand is an important element of coaching delivery and session progression since adapting challenges will eventually lead to positive results and technical ability through game variability.

Dribbling must always involve opponents, not just against fixed obstacles lacking the unpredictability of gameplay because of opponents' or team-mates' movement. Dribbling is not an infinite exercise. Sometimes, it may only require the ball carrier to beat one opponent before executing the intended action (i.e. passing to a team-mate, taking a shot or beginning to travel with the ball).

Dribbling past an opponent can break down a defence, creating a numerical advantage. It is the most unpredictable technical manoeuvre and causes doubt and uncertainty in the opposing team.

## SESSION PLAN 4: Dribbling to beat an opponent

### SESSION DETAIL

The game is not fully touch conditioned but it could be. Instead the constraints created by organisation create the required interference to develop dribbling..

### CONSTRAINTS

Any player can go anywhere on the pitch from the outset. In the defending half of the pitch there is a 2 touch limitation.

It is free play in the attacking half with no limitations.

In the attacking half seek to take-on the defender

### ORGANISATION

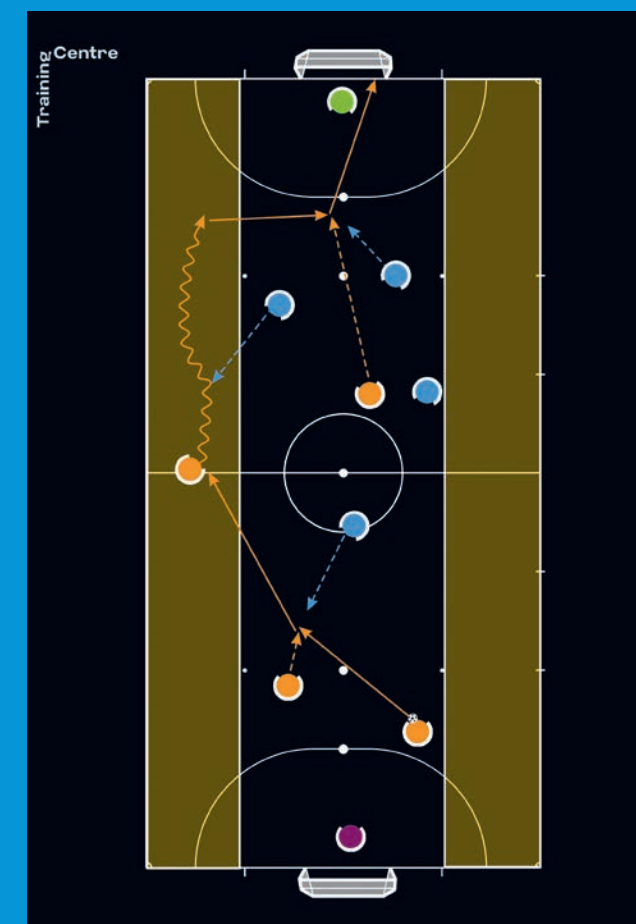
- Use the full length of the pitch and ensure that the overall pitch size is suitable for the age and ability of the players. For example, you would not use a full 40x20m pitch for u'9s.
- Mark out wide channels along the full length of the pitch being used on either side of the pitch. On a full-size pitch this can be 3m wide, however for younger ages and abilities on smaller pitch sizes make the channel proportional to the pitch being deployed.
- Place a goal at each end of the pitch as with a normal game, ready for transition to an unrestricted game as the session evolves.
- Set up as a 5v5 game.
- Every attack starts with the goalkeeper distributing the ball to a team mate in their own half.

### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

Within the attacking half there is no limitation on touches however gradually release the constraint of 2 touch in the defensive half but the ball carrier has to go past an attacker before they can pass unless they progress the ball over the half-way line and then they can take-on or pass.

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- Dribbling ability
- Effectiveness at 1v1
- Appetite to take-on 1v1
- Body orientation - to receive, to play, to take-on
- Encourage feinting to pass and feinting to move to unbalance the defender



- Adopt and encourage close ball control
- For the in-possession team, impact the players without the ball, can they engage a defender and 'drag' them into areas that free's up space for the ball carrier to progress ?
- Ball retention
- Does the ball carrier go past an opponent to gain forward distance or just maintain possession
- Creation of passing lines in tight spaces
- Blocking defenders who threaten the ball carrier
- Observe the constraints whilst they are in place



## 10.1.5 Shooting

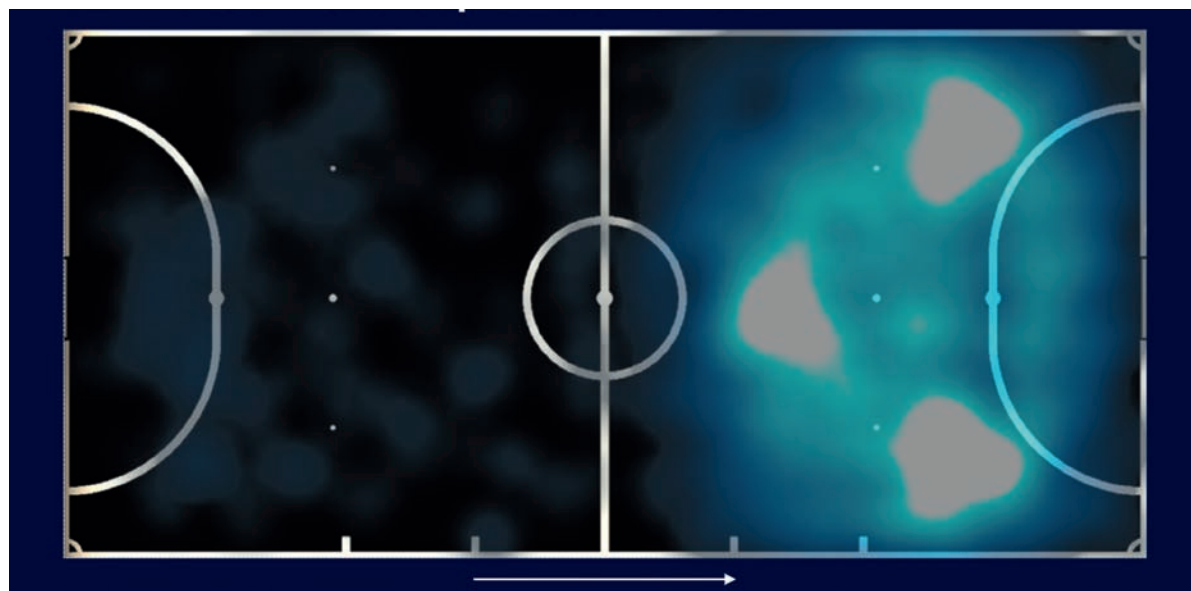
### Introduction

Futsal is an invasion game which involves the exploitation and command of territorial spaces. The end goal is to score more goals than your opponent.

Data from the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup (the elite level of play) provided some useful and impactful data insights into the positions from which goals were scored.

This provides teams with clear guidance in relation to the locations on the pitch where they have a better chance of creating goalscoring opportunities.

When considering shooting as an in-game activity as well as a discipline in itself (in contrast to football perhaps), long shots may be included as a part of this. In futsal, a large proportion of goals result from final touches at the far post. The pace of the ball, the size of the goal, and the number of players result in a much harder challenge for the goalkeeper to adequately protect the near post given that they must be responsive to the activity at the far post when the ball is switched. This enables attackers to exploit the far post while their team-mate(s) pose a threat at the near post. Newcomers to futsal may not understand the principle of shooting across the face of goal to miss the target at first, but this strategy proves highly effective when the far post arrival of a team-mate is timed to perfection. The goalkeeper simply cannot protect the near post, reduce the angle, and be agile enough to react to cover what is a small area at the far post, despite the size of the goal being smaller. This is where players without the ball (receiving players) with a willingness to get forward in a co-ordinated manner can take advantage of the attacking principles of futsal.



Shooting at goal – the most decisive objective when it comes to winning a match – is the culmination of an attacking move such as a counter-attack, an attacking phase or a positional attacking phase.

## SESSION PLAN 5: Shooting

### SESSION DETAIL

**This game is NOT touch conditioned but it could be.**  
Adjust length and width to suit player capability. Pitch unlikely to be much larger irrespective of age as intent is to promote close shooting opportunities in high volume

### CONSTRAINTS

Players constrained by zones (two halves of the pitch).  
No touch limitations.

### ORGANISATION

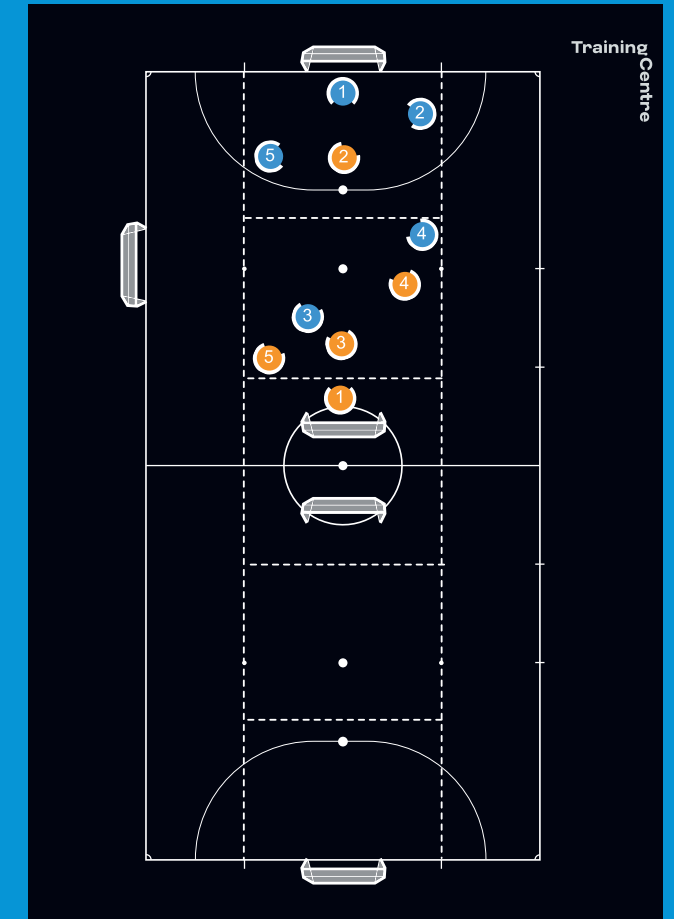
- LHS example above: 5v5 opposed but limited to 3v1 and 1v3 to start
- Principle is to ensure and create lots of shooting opportunities so always loaded in favour of attackers

### DEVELOPMENTS / PROGRESSION

- Gradually increase the pressure and become 3v2 & 2v3
- Play and move – create displacement
- RHS example above: move to include a wing player for each team initially unopposed and then opposed so that if ball can be fed into wide channels from defensive half of set up then it must get fed into attacking half but cannot be re-circulated to defending half.

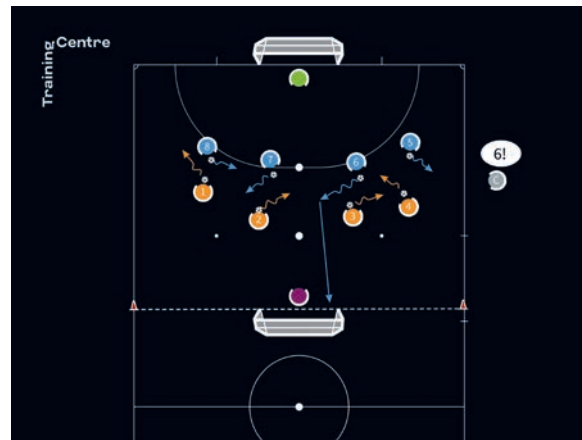
### THINGS TO LOOK FOR/COACHING POINTS

- Shots on target – prepared to lose possession initially
- Opportunistic work by lone attacker for rebounds or Pivot-play
- Recognising shooting opportunity
- Shoot, or move to shoot, or pass to shoot
- Shot accuracy
- Positioning ahead of the pass to create passing line
- Creating passing lines and shooting lines
- Retain possession or score
- Patience





## Progressive shooting



### Organisation

- Mark out an 18x20m playing area inside one half of the court.
- Split the group into two teams of 5, including goalkeepers.
- Give each player a ball.
- Each player is assigned a number from one to eight.

### Explanation

- The coach calls out a number at random and that player must immediately shoot on goal.

### Variation

- Variation 1: when a player is taking a shot, opposition players can try to disrupt them, without losing control of their own ball.
- Variation 2: play a 5v5 game with one ball. The goalkeepers are allowed to be in possession of the ball for more than four seconds.

- Variation 3: the goalkeeper and the off-court pivot take it in turns to take the restarts, based on the coach's instructions.
- Variation 4: the pivot takes the restarts.
- Variation 5: when a goal is scored, play is restarted by the team that scored.

### Coaching points

- Vary the part of the foot used to take shots, e.g. outside of foot, toe end, instep, etc.
- Players can offer their team-mates different options to help them to get into positions to finish on goal.
- A player can indicate where they wish to receive the ball by adopting an open body orientation, which serves to make passing sequences more successful.



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## Shooting in tight spaces

### Organisation

- Create a 5v5 game, including goalkeepers.
- Mark out a 15x10m playing area inside one half of the court.
- Divide the playing area into two equally sized zones.
- Place a goal at either end of the playing area.
- Mark out two wide channels on either side of the court that end 3m from the touchline.

### Explanation

- Set up a 3v1 scenario in the first zone and a 1v3 scenario in the second zone.
- The objective is to create lots of shooting opportunities. In order to achieve this, the attacking team should have a numerical advantage at all times. The attacking team try to capitalise on their numerical advantage in the first zone to create shooting opportunities.

### Variation

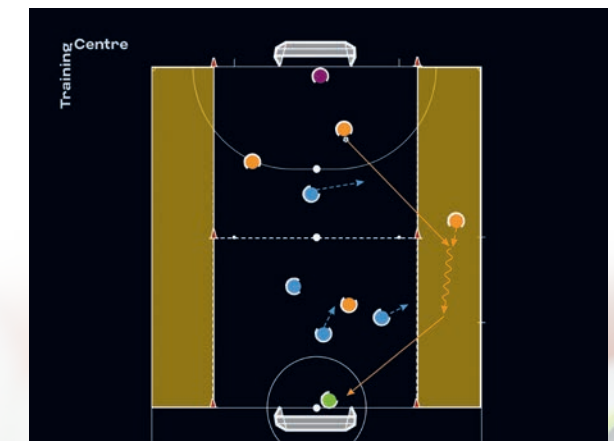
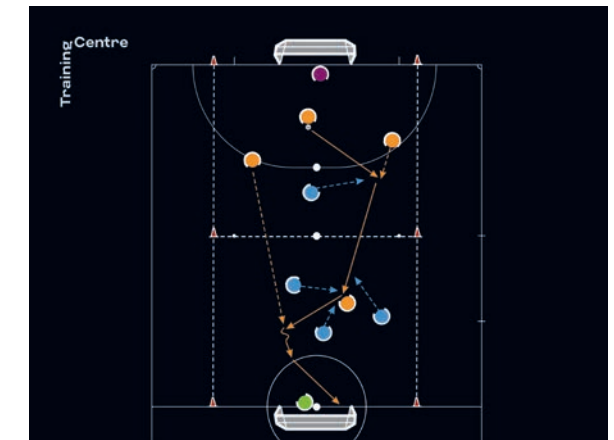
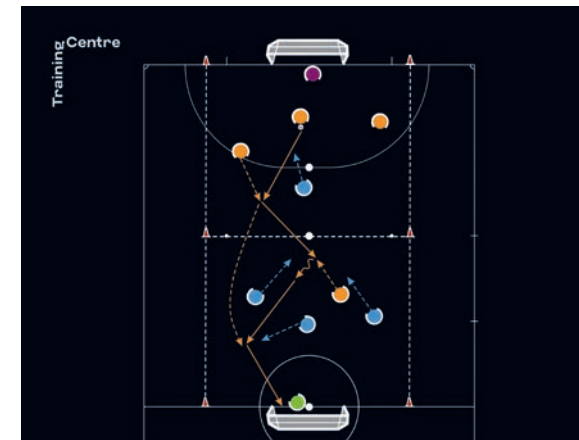
- Variation 1: when playing the ball into the pivot, the player who passed the ball can enter the attacking half to support the attack.
- Variation 2: increase the length of the playing area by moving the goal back to the halfway line.
- Variation 3: one player can enter the attacking half to create a 2v3 scenario.
- Variation 4: increase the width of the playing area. Attacking players can occupy the wide channels unopposed for four seconds and can shoot from inside this area.



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### Coaching points

- The focus is on registering as many shots on target as possible, even though this may result in the team losing possession for a short period.
- The lone attacker has to adopt an opportunistic mindset at all times and be prepared for rebounds and to operate as a pivot.
- Players must quickly identify when they are in shooting positions rather than shooting aimlessly from impossible angles.
- The following actions should be at the forefront of players' intentions: shoot, move to shoot or pass to shoot.
- Keeping one eye on where the goal is at all times enables players to record more shots on target.
- Excellent movement and positioning prior to the pass being played can help to create clearer passing lines.
- Retaining possession and trying to score are the main objectives for the in-possession team.
- Patience is required to engineer shooting opportunities that offer a high probability of scoring.

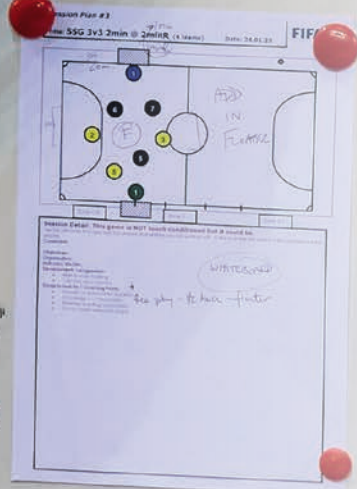




## AEROBIC POWER

### Introduction

When considering tactical formations, this does not infer rigid organisations or lines, but the organised positioning on the pitch in order to fulfil certain objectives, roles and functions (both as individuals and as a team). This distribution is used to establish a series of interactions between the members of the team (tactics) in order to achieve objectives without losing organisational balance.



Formations must be dynamic and flexible as they are constantly being broken down and reorganised during play. Several different formations are used in futsal nowadays, with the formation selected depending on the players on the pitch, the opponents, and the circumstances of the match.

It has been promoted throughout this coaching manual how developing players should first aim to master their own technical abilities as they mature through personal development, without concentrating on complex tactical formations and actions. As each player and each group of players become more technically proficient, the transition into tactical play will become easier and consolidated more logically once movements and passing actions can be completed successfully.



In futsal, players without the ball are even more important than the player who has the ball. If the work of the “passive” players is to create space, provide passing lines to receive or provide options for the ball carrier, they know how and when to mark players or find space both in possession and out of possession. The flow and progress of play then becomes more fluid and accomplished. As this develops with a solid understanding, the actions of the “active” player with the ball become easier. However, understanding the basics of defending, attacking and counter-attacking is a vital component to learning about futsal and how technical attributes link to these phases of play and the relevant tactics.

Adopting a constraint-led approach to achieve an intended technical outcome can also be used for developing tactical awareness at a young age. Game-based training can be linked to cover an aspect of core technical development (e.g. passing) in an attacking phase. This combination will link technical elements to tactical implementation more closely.



## 11.1 In possession

### 11.1.1 Tactical approaches to play

#### Signals

Tactical preparation is of great importance in build-up play as a way of trying to surprise the opposition with a quick and precise move that has been pre-prepared and understood, be it to score or to overcome a highblock. It requires a trigger, such as a team signal which can be changed from game to game and acts as the decisive moment to implement a familiar strategy to deal with certain aspects of the game.

Such signals can take the form of visual, verbal or transactional cues. In other words, a typical trigger could also be an opponent's action, such as putting pressure on the ball which impedes their immediate ability to adjust to a sudden change of pace or ball direction. Every team-mate reacts to that single action in a positive way.

#### Quads and triplets (substitutions)

A modern phenomenon in the game at elite level is the use of quadruple (quads) and triple (triplets) substitutions where players train in these small groups to get used to each another and benefit from collective strengths and an intentional variety of strengths. For example, one quad may be more defensively inclined, whereas another may

be more offensively inclined. They can be used at relative and appropriate times during a match. Whilst using quads is one solution, so are pairs and triplets, but this largely depends on the squad, their different attributes and an overall strategy.

This approach influences the game for both the team using it and their opponent.

This is becoming increasingly common in grassroots futsal as players develop within a team structure or squad.

Of course, there are both advantages and disadvantages in adopting such an approach with young players. The trade-off for young players playing with their close friends, which gives them the confidence to play, experiment and fail without fear, is that their wider learning from unfamiliarity and the exposure to more hostile environments is lost.

This is where the importance of the coach's awareness and understanding of personal and interpersonal relationships within their team is a key factor in deciding which approach is best for each young player in question.



#### Approach to play

There are many aspects that influence a team's approach. For instance, being confident of winning the match beforehand or being intimidated by playing a better team. However, teams approach each match or training session in two main ways:

**Positive** – higher playing intensity, where all the players are refreshed and mentally switched on during the game.

**Negative** – from a tactical and strategic perspective, the requirements of a match (result, number of fouls, rhythm of the game, etc.) may demand a certain type of player and attacking system, but the players whose turn it is to play may be completely different from what was needed at a prior moment in play. Understanding needs, resources and appropriate implementation is a very important area for coaches to reflect on if they really want their decision-making to have an impact on a match and players.

#### Switching systems during play

Despite coaches aiming to use a particular strategy and formation, teams transition between different formations. For example, a team will not consistently play 1-4-0 for a whole game, although some may consider them to be that type of team. However, it would be impractical and counterproductive to the implementation of that formation to do so. Players must therefore develop an understanding and play using a variety of different formations they are familiar with.

#### High-risk build-up

One of the highest-risk situations when during build-up involves placing just one player in Zones 1 or 2 with a high press on them and the remainder of players in Zones 3 and 4.

This raises the question for coaches to consider whether situations like these (i.e. the 1-3 build-up) could be an alternative option for teams instead of the power play, which has been diluted in its effectiveness and has mostly proved totally ineffective in recent times.





## Using width to create space in attack

### Organisation

- Divide the court into three vertical zones (5x40m/10x40m/5x40m).
- Create a 2v2 (1v1 in each half) scenario in the wide channels and a 1v1 plus a joker, who plays for the attacking team, in the middle zone.

### Explanation

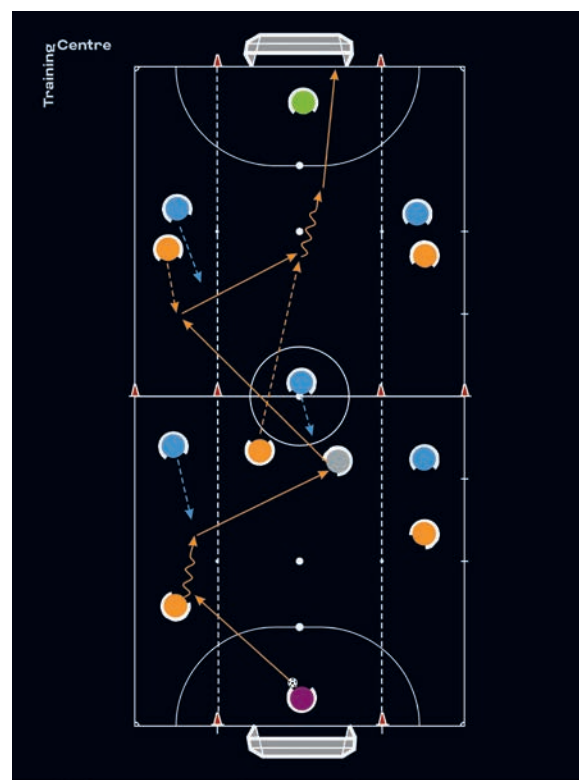
- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper.
- Players must remain in their zones at all times.

### Variation

- V1: players on the in-possession team can interchange zones with team-mates within the same half of the court.
- V2: wide players can interchange zones with team-mates positioned in the other half.
- V3: defenders follow the player who interchanges zones.
- V4: a match scenario in which there cannot be any more than a 5v5 (plus 1 neutral player) in one half of the court at any time.

### Coaching points

- Allow the players to play freely once they have understood the exercise.
- Using goalkeepers as neutral players gives them the opportunity to practise the power play (fly goalkeeper).
- Players must think about how their positioning can aid attacking play.
- Focus on ball retention to progress play.
- Make overlapping runs in wide zones and ask wingers to cut in.
- Out-of-possession players should constantly think about how they can impact the ball carrier with their movement and body orientation.
- Displacing opponents and recovering quickly improves a player's chances of success in both defence and attack.
- Playing at a high tempo and being on the move at all times helps a team to progress play through the thirds effectively.
- Constantly create space and passing lanes off the ball to support team-mates.



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- Once a wing player is engaged, teams should look to attack at pace.

## 11.1.2 Unopposed build-up play

At the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021™, the number of teams defending in a mid- or low-block was rare on the whole, whereas in the past many sides did so, allowing their opponents a comfortable build-up with no great pressure on the ball from a high block. At this tournament, the most common play was a high block and high press launched directly on the first pass out from the goalkeeper.

As players and coaches aim to develop their understanding of futsal at the **developing player or youth player** phases, low-blocks provide an opportunity for the in-possession teams to build an attack relatively unopposed. Of course, opponents will always be present in a match situation, but a low-block is more passive than using a mid-block or high-block.

When the opponent uses a high-block or a mid-block/mid press, this can arguably lead to more counterattacks, with the consequent need for ball carriers to make decisions more quickly and with greater risk than during an unopposed build-up.

Unopposed build-up can be perceived as favouring the attacking team. However, the reality is that if the attacking team can maintain possession more readily, they might find it much harder to open up and penetrate the defensive line since space (and therefore clear access to the opponent's goal) is denied.

One of the highest-risk strategies during build-up is to place only one player in Zone 2 and the rest in Zone 4. This poses a threat if possession is lost in Zones 2 or 3 with just a single defender in place, it must therefore be a calculated risk.





## Playing out from the back

### Organisation

- Divide the court into thirds.
- Set up a 5v5 (plus goalkeepers).
- Create a 2v1 scenario in the defensive third, a 2v2 scenario in the middle third, and a 1v2 scenario in the attacking third.

### Explanation

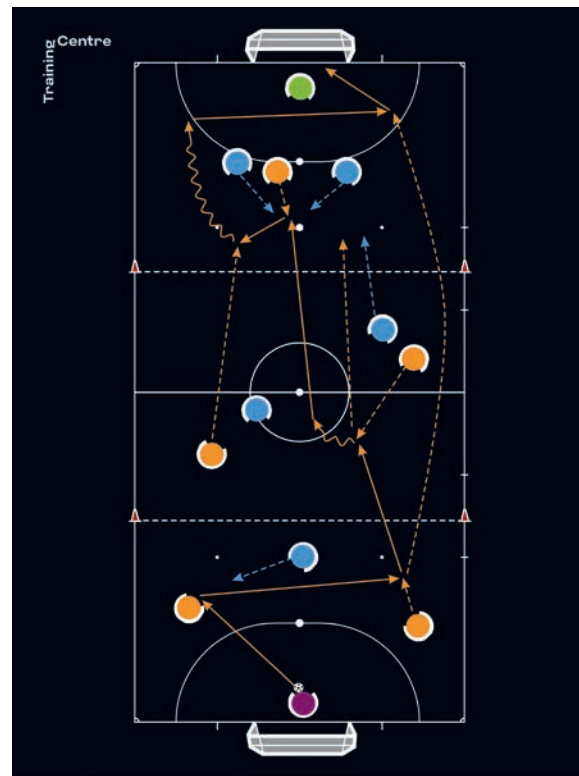
- The ball must pass through all three zones before a goal can be scored.
- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper.
- Both of the players in the defensive third must each touch the ball at least once before it can be transitioned into the middle third.
- The defensive player who plays the ball into the middle third can join their two team-mates in that zone to create a 3v2 scenario.
- When the ball is played into the attacking zone, only one defender from the middle third is allowed to enter the defensive third, thereby creating a 4v3 scenario.

### Variation

- V1: Limit the number of defenders allowed in their own half to create a 4v3 overload in favour of the attacking team.
- V2: All defending players can defend in their own half to create a 4v4 scenario.

### Coaching points

- Players should be encouraged to take good care of the ball when in possession to allow them to progress play through the thirds.
- Prioritise forward passes to enable the attacking team to penetrate the opposition's defence as quickly as possible.
- Create passing lanes for in-possession team-mates to ensure that they have multiple passing options.
- Be patient when in possession and look to create space.



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- Use gestures and body orientation to visually communicate with team-mates.
- Perform feints to force the opposition into mistakes and to create space to receive.
- Play at a high tempo with lots of movement and off-the-ball support.
- Circulate the ball quickly to disrupt the opposition's defensive set-up and seek to capitalise on this.

## 11.1.3 Opposed build-up play

The vast majority of teams use a variety of formations to ensure variation in their play and alternatives to the problems posed by their opponents. This is perhaps specifically relevant for youth players as they aim to experiment and develop an understanding of implementing strategies during this phase of development and understanding.

Using a 1-3-1 formation to expand the pitch (making it 'big') and play more directly is one such strategy to overcome opponent pressure.

Another approach is to use a 4-0 formation, with the attacking team attempting to lure the opponents out of their half and defensive block, seeking a 'trigger' to exploit the space left behind their defensive line. This particular style of play requires excellent ball control and possession with lots of player movement and tends to be adopted by more advanced and technically proficient teams.



In both examples, there are two main approaches when dealing with any kind of press (high, mid or low):

### Direct approach

Regardless of their formation, a more direct build-up encompasses taking fewer risks when implementing such an approach, although this does require a higher technical level from all players.

### Elaborate approach

Another approach is to have longer spells of ball possession, whilst maintaining a strong control and discipline over the system used and its objective. This also requires a high level of technical ability to execute and maintain the ball through long sequences of passing and ball retention, especially when under pressure.

The problem for teams with such elaborate or intricate systems of play is the difficulty in identifying the trigger for decisive action (i.e. the moment to launch a direct attack) without fully mastering the system of play, because of a lack of support and the threat of losing possession.



## Building an attack

### Organisation

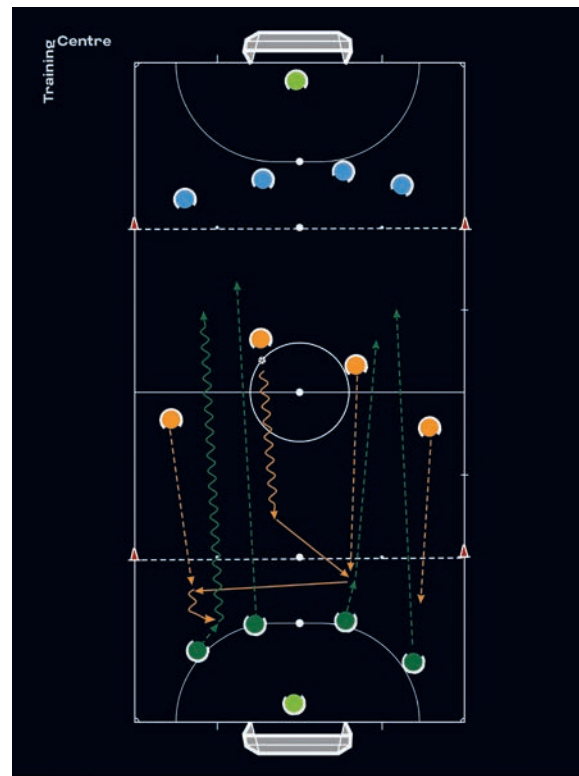
- Use the full court.
- Divide the court into three zones, with the two end zones both measuring 10m in length.
- Organise the players into three teams of 4, placing one team in each of the three zones.
- Position a goalkeeper in each goal.

### Explanation

- The exercise begins with the team in the central zone in possession.
- The two teams in the end zones are only allowed to defend inside their zones.
- If an attack breaks down or the ball is turned over, the defending team transition into attack and attack the goal at the opposite end of the court.
- If the attacking team score, they retain possession and attack the goal at the opposite end of the court.

### Coaching points

- If the ball carrier is not under pressure, their team-mates should provide longer passing options to stretch the opposition and open up the pitch.
- Adopt the correct body orientation and keep your eye on the ball at all times.
- Constantly create passing lanes to give ball-carrying team-mates multiple passing options.
- Focus on ball retention to test the defending team's concentration levels.
- Off-the-ball movement is incredibly important and helps to displace and disorganise the defence.
- Consider whether shooting is a better option than retaining and recycling the ball. Patience may be required to wait until better shooting opportunities present themselves.
- Recognise opportunities to shoot or play key passes.
- Play firm and quick passes to create gaps in the defensive line.
- Unlock the defensive block by switching play quickly, rotating positions and drawing the opposition out of position.
- Do not surrender possession easily. Take care of the ball, and only take risks when the chance of scoring is higher than conceding.



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## Playing out from the back under pressure

### Organisation

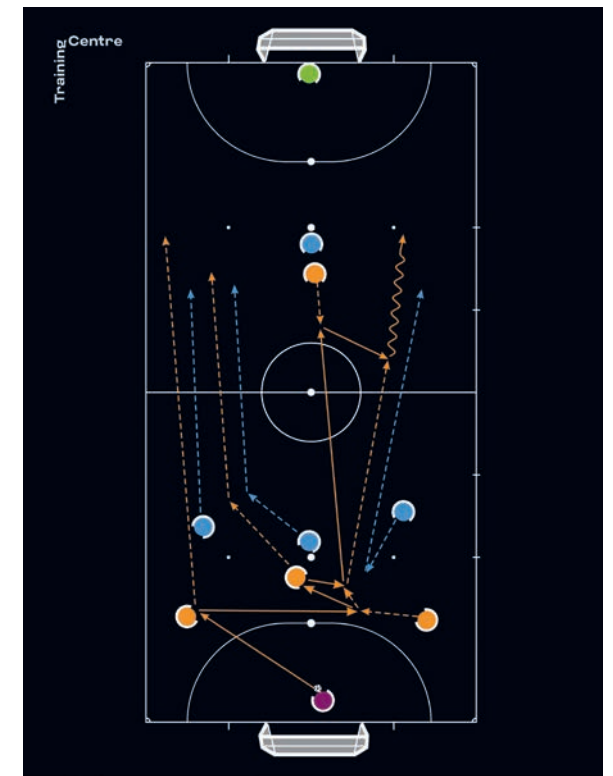
- Use the full court.
- Set up a 4v4 scenario, plus goalkeepers.
- Organise each team in a 3-1 system with a pivot (3v3 in the attacking half and 1v1 in the defensive half).

### Explanation

- Play starts with the goalkeeper, who must play out short to a player inside the defensive half.
- Once the goalkeeper has played the ball out short, the three players looking to beat the press inside the defensive half must complete three passes before play can be progressed into the pivot positioned inside the opposition's half.
- If the attacking team lose the ball, play restarts with the opposition's goalkeeper.

### Coaching points

- The pivots should anticipate the areas in which space is going to be created so that they can move into it and offer their team-mates a passing lane.
- Use the full width of the pitch to help to overcome the opposition's press.
- Perform blocks on opposing players to free up space and create passing lanes.



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### 11.1.4 The attacking phase

To attack effectively in modern futsal, teams need tactical fluidity in possession and in the defensive transition, which can entail immediate defensive actions.

Attacking is the phase of play which requires the most practice and development.

To be successful, positional or gradual build-up attacks require patience, knowing how to read and understand the game, and knowing how to cause the opponent's defence to become disorganised to take advantage of this.

For a quick attack to be effective, speed, accuracy and an element of surprise are required.

Fluidity in attack, combined with patience and positive passing, has been recognised by analysis to be a hallmark of successful futsal teams. This requires technically able players who understand the game, have good game intelligence and awareness, and the ability to work as part of a team.

The use of quads or triplets is a key component of team cohesion which leads to that tactical fluidity. It is also a key protocol for establishing and developing groups of players who suit particular styles to be effective in their groups when used together. The days of singular on/off substitutions (apart from in the developing player phase) are in the past and more tactical awareness has come to the fore.

This is important for coaching futsal. Understanding how the transition from **developing players** to **youth players** will be best structured to apply tactical understanding and combine this with technical skills is essential for positive results.

Quads can also be taken from within two banks of six players, where a mutual understanding between all players has been trained. Seeing familiarity in playing patterns and consistency of movement within the quads should be expected, perhaps less so during the youth player phase. However, by the time these players reach full maturity, that should be engrained.



The ability to move from rigid attacking formations and show flexibility when encountering a variety of defensive blocks is crucial to success. Using strict and rigid systems throughout an entire game is no longer common. At elite level, we see frequent switches between playing systems – not one commonly evident formation. In the more advanced elite teams, both domestically and internationally, some of this is deliberate, whereas in grassroots, youth and recreational adult teams, most of this is coincidental due to the lack of structure in play, nevertheless, it has an impact.

As the data from the 2021 FIFA Futsal World Cup suggests, many teams demonstrated considerable fluidity in their play, with key players being central to most attacking phases, therefore underlining the importance of strong accurate passing for successful teams. The engagement of the goalkeeper as an active outfield player has also distorted the data lately, but it still demonstrates the requirement for modern futsal goalkeepers to be active players who engage in outfield play more than ever before and contribute significantly to build-up play.

This fluidity will ultimately be reflected in the systems of play that are used (including the wide variety of players and 1-3, 3-1, 2-2 and 4-0 systems which will all be used within the same phases of the game) as teams develop and deepen their understanding. For newcomers to futsal, as well as inexperienced futsal coaches or players, these systems of play may not be fully noticeable at first – certainly not to the untrained eye – as teams at elite level play at incredible speeds, both the players and the ball. Yet even if the game appears full of totally unpredictable movements, the systems used remain evident.

This is where futsal coaches must provide players with support to understand each system of play and how they interchange and transition from one formation to another in the same movement and, importantly, why the change happens and for what tactical or strategic purpose. This may vary for each coach and each team depending on the strategy used and its objectives, however, there are underlying fundamentals that will be shared.

The attacking phase now involves an increase in one-on-one attacks which rely more on the ball carrier's technical ability than organised team movement and passing. One-on-ones have always been a part of the game. However, in modern futsal, many teams who lack tactical understanding and cohesion (possibly a coaching limitation) rely on this approach to win games. In some cases, it achieves the intended results, but a heavy reliance on a few individuals is not sustainable.



This is a concern for the development of futsal. Teams cannot rely on their most skilful player to create attacking opportunities. Instead, they need to retain possession and use it to identify passing lines and shooting opportunities for those with the best attacking attributes, rather than see it easily given away. This requires developmental coaching.

A lack of a structured attacking plan may lead to end-to-end games, caused by frequent turnovers in possession. The ability to retain possession in the attacking half and final third is paramount to positive results. Patience and an understanding of the importance of possession are key factors in an attacking phase.

However, for the first time, FIFA is able to rely on data analysis, notably from the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021. In terms of possession, the data collected indicates that retaining possession was less critical to results than previously thought. For example, a team which completed more passes than any other team during the group stage did not progress, demonstrating the importance of where you pass and how that links with attacking phases. Possession is only beneficial if the team can capitalise on it. Having lots of possession without scoring is not worthwhile – a greater focus is required on attacking results. That said, creating goalscoring opportunities in futsal is the hardest tactical challenge.

The challenge for developing countries is the need for the game to be (positively) directional, and for the results to reflect the effort put in.

This coaching manual sends a strong message about the need for age-appropriate coaching to be implemented across the **developing player and youth player** development phases. The number of young players reaching an elite level early in their futsal careers has significantly fallen over the last decade. Although there is no concrete evidence to suggest why this is the case, there is a belief amongst FIFA's technical experts that the lack of coaching development is a key contributor. It is also believed that it is easier for coaches to work with mature, elite players who already understand futsal than to develop a new generation of players for this level. This has to change, as does the way we coach. A mixture of experience and young talent (as well as having the courage to place confidence in the next generation and combine this with experience) is crucial in all elite teams.

### Physicality

Physicality was another issue worth discussing. All players should aspire to have a physical presence to put pressure on their opponents. This is a useful attribute when teams are pressing high. The psychological side of the player is important in these situations as players must be able to impose their physicality while playing with composure.

### Fewer fouls

Data also indicates that, in the attacking phase, there is now a significant reduction in the number of fouls conceded at all levels. Looking closer at this data indicates a number of possible explanations for the continuous decline. Longer periods of possession with more accurate and quicker passing, resulting in fewer challenges could be one such explanation. Another could be the prevalence of direct attacks that reduce player contact. There may also be an influence of changes in refereeing approaches following amendments to the Laws of the Game, but coaching also plays a part in that respect. It is necessary to understand law amendments and perceive their impacts on the game to adjust and innovate accordingly. The Laws of the Game establish a framework that everyone should know (i.e. the parameters within which the game must be played). Coaching is about finding ways to push the boundaries of the Laws of the Game, but also finding innovative ways to challenge their implementation or limitations. Coaches play an active role in challenging the Laws of the Game to make futsal an even more exciting sport to watch.



### Style of attack

What makes futsal so fascinating to many, and what we look for in search of inspiration as coaches, is the variability in approach to styles of play. As the gap between the world's top nations and those below them has narrowed in recent years, it is clear that both players and coaches have developed a deeper understanding of the game, even if the way in which the top teams are defended against thwarts attacking play. There is also recent evidence showing that these nations can also compete by adapting their attacking philosophies in an unorthodox manner that adds an element of surprise and defensive complexity for the opponent to deal with when the predictable becomes unpredictable.

This is where coaches' knowledge "in" the game and knowledge "of" the game play a key role in challenging futsal norms. This requires commitment and perseverance from both players and coaches with the desire to experiment but, importantly, to consider how the game is played from the youngest of ages to best prepare both developing players and youth players.

The reliable far-post tap-in, synonymous with futsal for decades, is now a less common route to goal owing to the advances in technical play, counter-attacking and goalkeeping agility. Of course, goals are still scored in this way, but not in the same volume as over the past two decades, which is a further indication that the game is changing. We see more one-on-one situations, take-ons, direct play and pivot actions. Teams also exhibit a greater awareness of their ability to defend out of possession, which can be interpreted as a lot of trust placed in individuals offensively, but also defensively.

When a team does not build an attack up or play through the middle third, instead relies on individual attacking play, this may indicate a change in tactical planning. However, it is more likely to be a reflection of a lack of technically adept players and a general reflection of a squad's technical limitations. It may bring occasional results but is not a long-term solution and once more leads us to focus on developing players' needs.



## Progressive attacking waves

### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Place a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Position two teams of four players behind each goal.

### Explanation

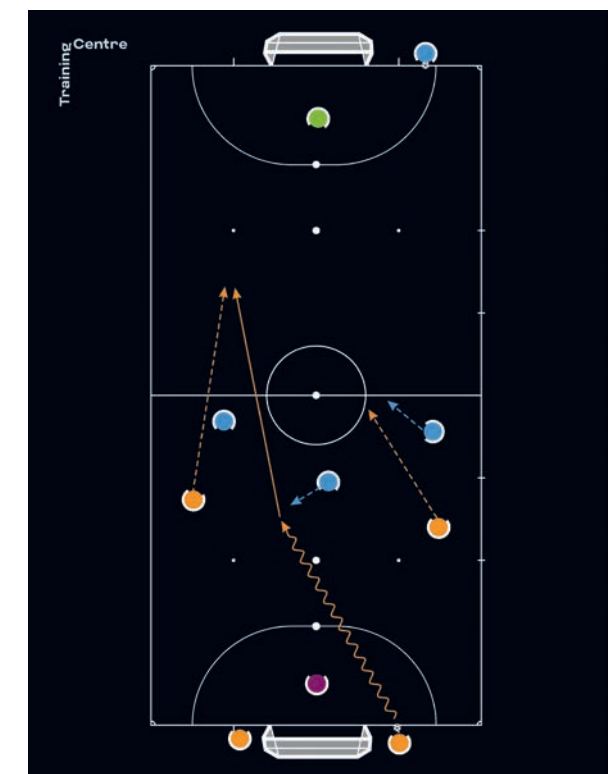
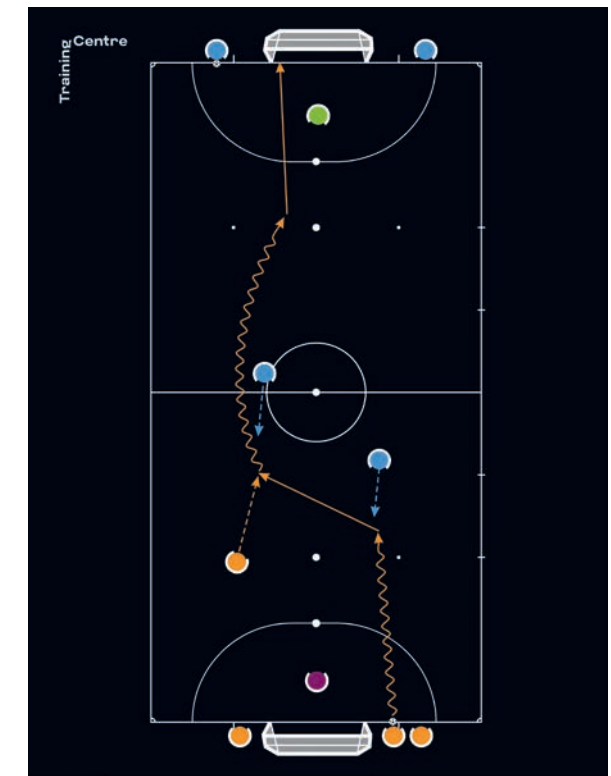
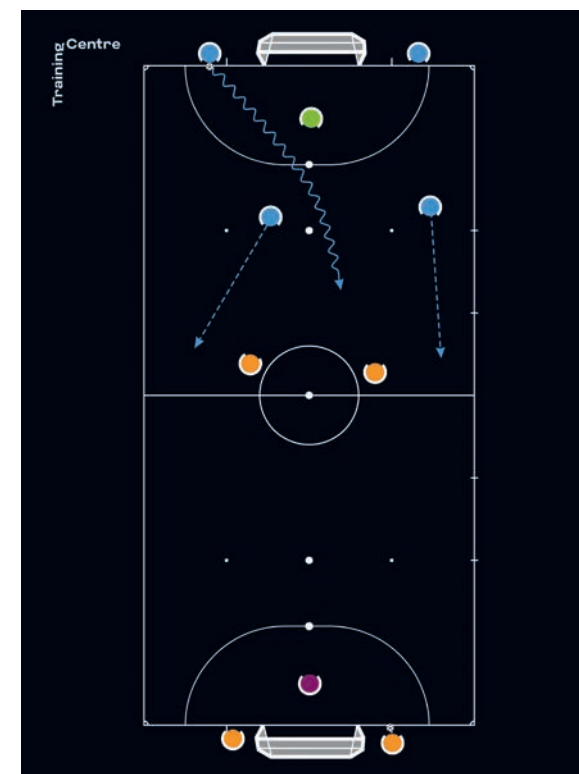
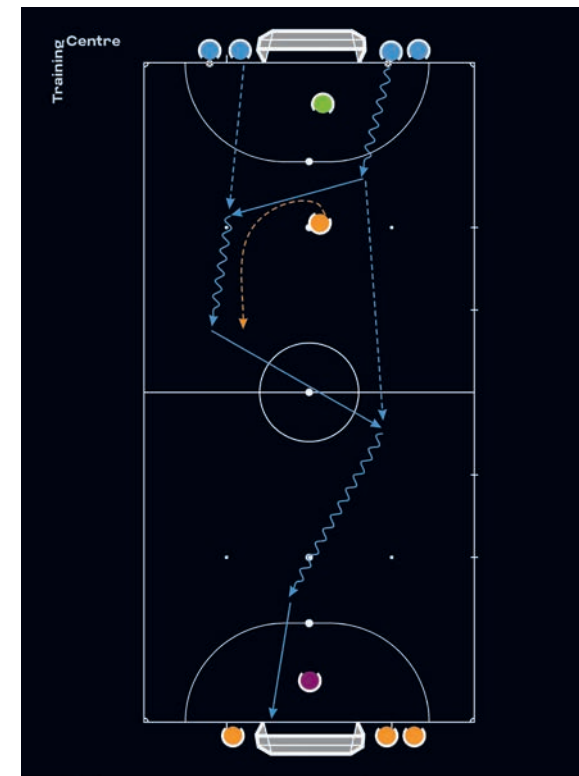
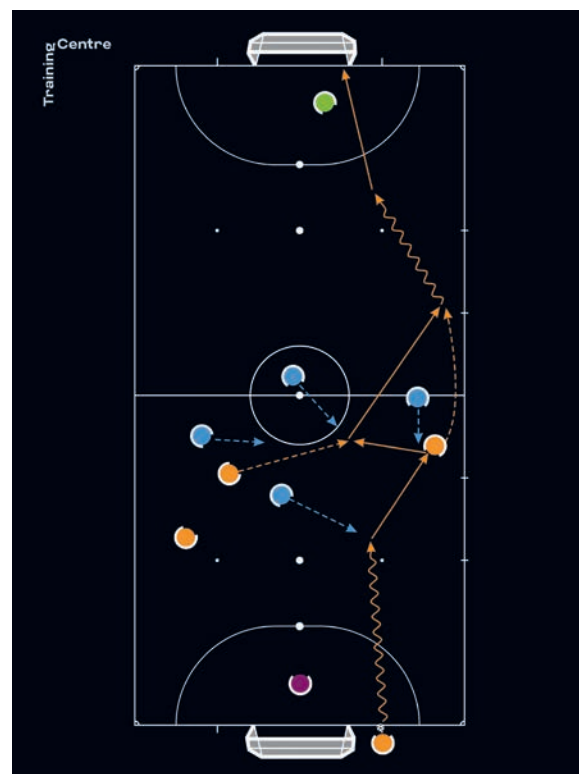
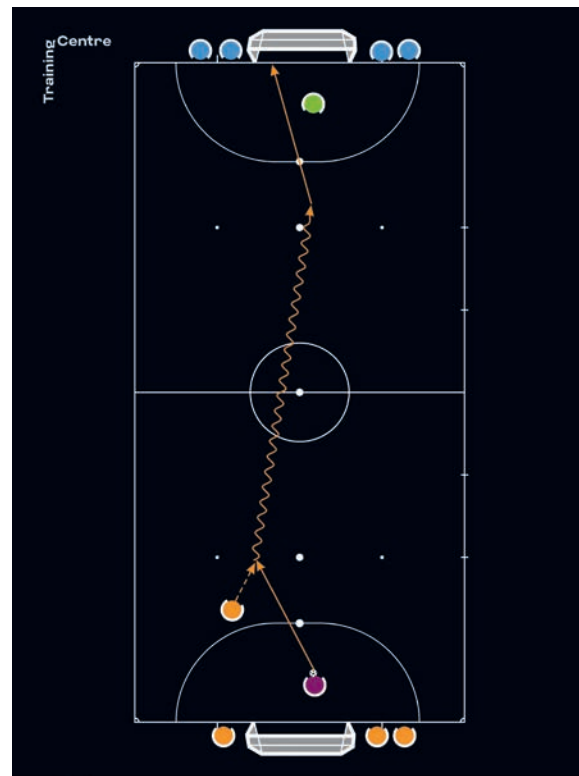
- The exercise starts with one of the two goalkeepers throwing the ball out to an attacking player, who tries to score in the opposite goal.
- Regardless of whether the attempt on goal is successful, the attacking player, who remains on the pitch and now becomes a defender, is joined by two attacking players from the opposing team to create a 2v1 scenario.
- The goalkeeper at the opposite end of the pitch from where the exercise started throws the ball out to one of the two attacking players, who attack the opposite goal.
- Once the 2v1 sequence is over, another player enters the pitch to create a 2v2 scenario and the direction of the attack switches to the opposite end.
- The exercise continues with a 3v2, 3v3, 3v4 and ends with a 4v4.
- Once the exercise progresses into a 4v4 end-to-end game, it is restarted.

### Coaching points

- Out-of-possession players should look to create good passing lanes for the ball carrier.
- Take good care of the ball when in possession.
- Look to open the court up by playing in wide areas.
- Focus on the speed of the counter-attack and identify when to speed play up and when to slow it down.
- Ensure that the size of the exercise area is appropriate to the age and ability of the players.



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## Creating chances in the final third

### Organisation

- Divide the court into quarters.
- Zone 1 is unoccupied until the opposition regain possession and attack.
- Create a 2v2 scenario in both zones 3 and 4.

### Explanation

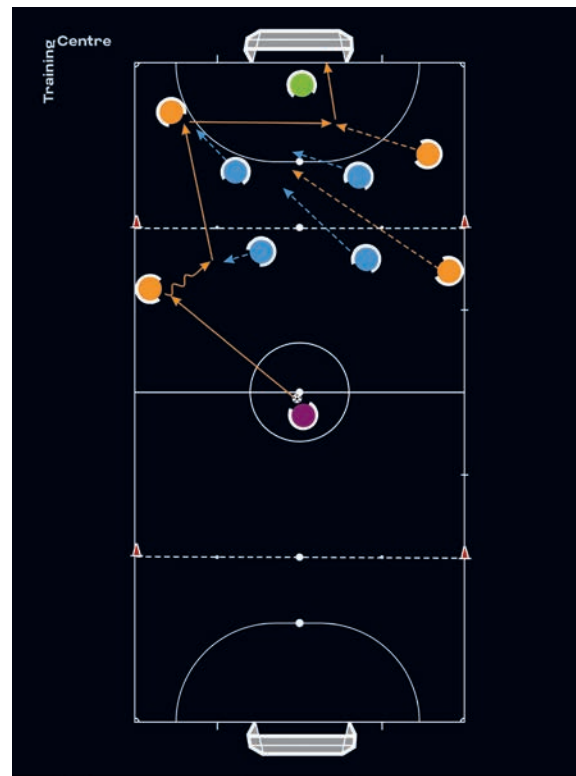
- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper, who passes the ball to a team-mate in zone 3.
- When the ball is played into zone 4, any of the attacking players in zone 3 can enter zone 4.
- If possession is turned over or the ball is lost after a shot or save, the defending team become the attacking team, but they cannot shoot until the goalkeeper is in position as play moves into the opposition's half.

### Variation

- The goalkeeper can be incorporated into the attack to create an overload (fly goalkeeper).

### Coaching points

- In-possession players should seek to displace opposition players through their off-the-ball movement.
- Constantly create space off the ball to create passing lanes and greater control when in possession.
- Force 1v1 scenarios in which defenders can be taken out of the game.
- Use the pivot to help to progress play into the next zone.
- Being patient in possession helps to create scenarios in which the pivot can be more effective.
- Emphasise attacking the far post and overlapping wing play to allow play to be switched quickly after the ball has been played into the pivot.
- Take risks by playing penetrative passes, particularly when the reward for success is high, and the penalty for failure is low.
- The fly goalkeeper must remain engaged to ensure that they are prepared for an attacking overload



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### 11.1.4.1 Direct attack

**Getting the ball forward with long passes has its merits, though a successful team must have other inpossession and attacking strategies at their disposal.**

Direct attacks may not always result in a specific goalscoring opportunity, but the action could also be the precursor to an attacking phase, so retaining possession is therefore important if it is not possible to take a shot immediately.

A trend towards individual direct play can be seen from match data, whether intentionally or accidentally, as players' individual actions came to the fore at the expense of teamwork in the attacking phase or build-up. This may be a consequence of limited player development, due to larger pools of talented players to choose from, or it could be a deliberate play where a team has an exceptionally talented individual player.

When resistance (high-blocks or mid-blocks) in open play is encountered, there is an increasing modern-day prevalence of playing long and bypassing the middle areas (Zones 2 and 3) of the pitch. This results in stretching play searching runs from deep in Zones 1 to 3 to evade their opponents' defensive blocks. However, this should be used as an additional tactic for continuous game development, not as a replacement for build-up play, as the two strategies work together cohesively and collaboratively.



### Technical skill requirement

Some may question the merit of an approach which foregoes playing through the pitch as a team, but when it is applied in the right way with precise delivery and the correct timing and location of runs, direct play of this kind has its value. It is also an additional strategy for teams to master.

Teams who are more technically adept may be able to combine a compact, short-passing game with a longball strategy. Less technically adept teams will be more reliant on a longball strategy but this approach may rarely succeed throughout an entire match.

### The art of surprise

Technical ability is key in attack to take advantage of possession, but so too is surprise. In this respect, the use of the toe-poke is a powerful technical weapon in the armoury of a number of teams in direct attack. Long seen as a futsal-specific technique, the toe-poke must be mastered in full stride to achieve that disguised, instantaneous strike.

### Stretching play and the involvement of the goalkeeper

Stretching play opens up the pitch while relieving pressure from the opponents' high press or high-block. However, this strategy relies on the forward player's quick thinking and bravery to break out from Zones 1 or 2. It also requires a team-mate's quick thinking and vision to start the attack with an accurate and wellweighted pass. Goalkeepers are pivotal in setting up direct attacks and their role as a creator of opportunities appears increasingly significant in modern futsal play.

Even when direct attacks do not result in a goalscoring opportunity, they can be vital in gaining ground to commence a positional attack and are therefore intrinsically linked.

### Aligning technique with tactics

In assessing this concept, guidance can be provided by the results of observations made after the 2018 YOG regarding developing teams who used tactics which required a certain technical ability. The view was that teams should carefully consider adopting strategies which require complex technical abilities, especially if those players' technical abilities are underdeveloped.

Even at elite level, tactical sophistication and technical ability are not always aligned. Teams who cannot combine their tactical approach with effective technical qualities will struggle to be effective. Futsal is a technical and tactical game, but tactics require understanding and the ability to execute them.

## Playing through the thirds

### Organisation

- Divide the court into thirds.
- Create a 2v2 scenario in both end zones and a 1v1 plus a neutral player, who plays for the in-possession team, in the middle zone.

### Explanation

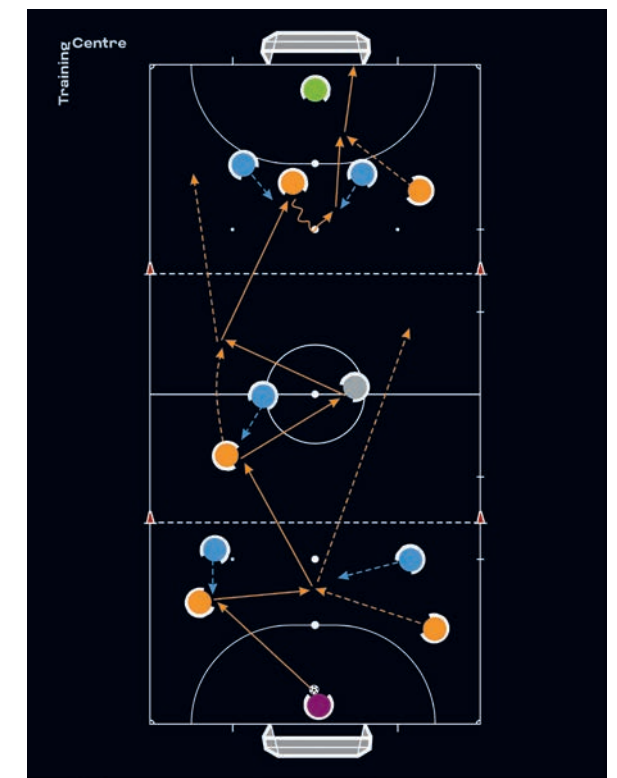
- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper, who plays short to a team-mate in the defensive third.
- Teams can progress play into the middle third either by passing or carrying the ball.
- Once play moves into the middle zone, a 4v3 overload is created in favour of the in-possession team.
- If a team score, they keep possession and restart play at the same end in which they scored and now attack in the opposite direction.

### Variation

- V1: The neutral player is limited to one touch.
- V2: The goalkeepers must distribute the ball within four seconds.
- V3: There is no limit on the number of touches the neutral player can take, while the other players in the middle zone are limited to one touch.
- V4: Players in the middle zone can rotate positions with team-mates from other zones.
- V5: There is no limit on the number of touches the players in the middle zone can take.

### Coaching points

- Perform feints to deceive defenders and create passing lanes.
- Constantly create and open up passing lanes to give team-mates passing options.
- Adopt a mindset in which the priority is on looking forward, playing forward and moving forward at all times.
- Avoid pressure by keeping the ball moving and avoid static play, which is easier for the opposition to defend against.



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- Prioritise forward passes and only play the ball backward to open space further forward through off-the-ball movement.
- Retain possession to achieve greater control of play.



### 11.1.4.2 Counter-attack

The counter-attack, also referred to as the transition phase due to the fact that it links defence and attack.

Futsal is a game of three core play philosophies:

- **Defence**
- **Attack**
- **Counter-attack**

Counter-attacking relies on:

- **Speed** (of both passing and player movement)
- **Direction** (forwards)
- **Surprise** (instant ball release from a defensive area to take advantage of a disorganised1 defence)
- **Space exploitation** (by all players)
- **Finishing**

This might lead to asking the following questions:

- **Are players opting for more control over the rhythm of the game?**
- **Do players not want to run? We did note, however, that almost every team opted for wholesale changes (four players coming on and four coming off) every three or four minutes.**
- **Do coaches not want their players sprinting forward in transitions? Are they asking for constant calm and control?**
- **Have teams generally improved a lot defensively?**
- **Are goalkeepers improving year-on-year and is their significance to the team being recognised?**
- **Is more work being done on build-ups than counters in training?**

Of course, there may not be simple answers to these questions and various factors may be at play depending on players' ages and their phase of development.

### Exploiting overloads on the counter-attack

#### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Split the court into thirds.
- Set up goals at either end of the court.
- Place a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Position two attackers in the middle zone.
- Set up three defenders and one attacker in each end zone.

#### Explanation

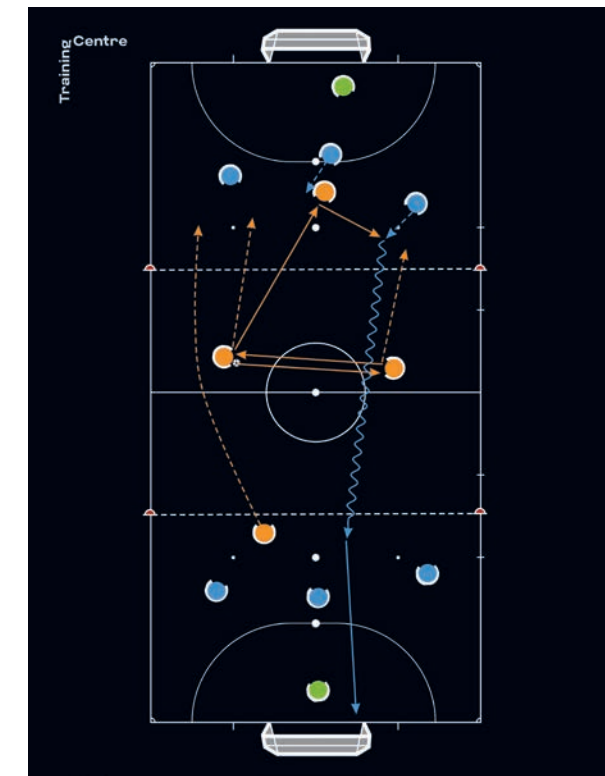
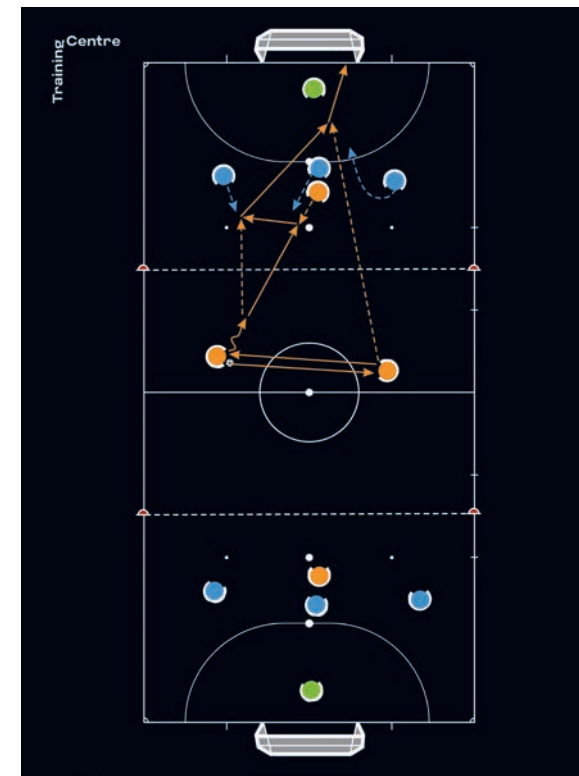
- The exercise starts with the two attackers in the middle zone passing the ball diagonally between themselves.
- These two attacking players decide which of the two goals to attack and aim to link up with the attacking player in either of the end zones.
- If they succeed in combining with the attacking player, they may enter the end zone to create a 3v3 scenario.

#### Variation

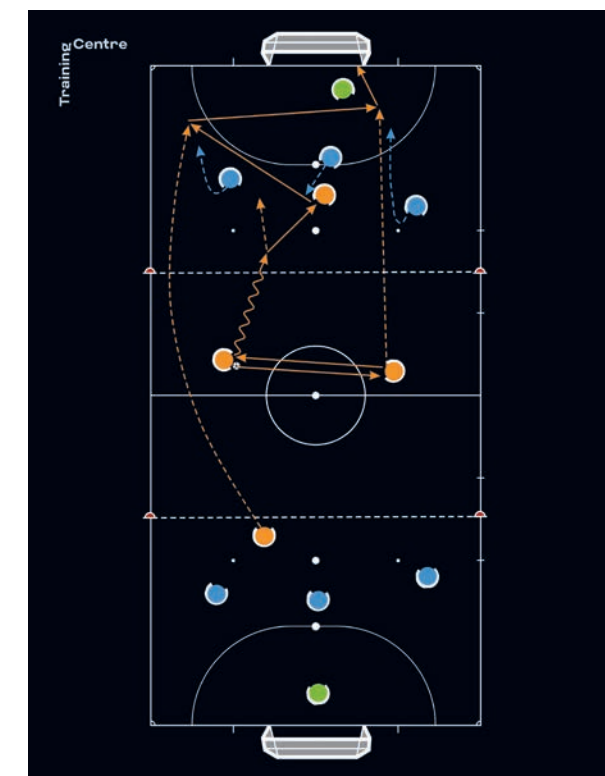
- Once the attacking players in the middle zone have played the ball into one of the end zones, the attacker in the opposite end zone can join the attack to create a 4v3 scenario.
- If the defending team win the ball, they can counter-attack.

#### Coaching points

- When passing the ball to each other, the attacking players in the middle zone should position themselves diagonally to each other to allow them to see their team-mates' movement in both end zones.
- The attacking players in the end zones should look to introduce some depth and width to the attack to avoid their first touch taking them back towards their team-mates.



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## Counter-attacking with speed

### Organisation

- Use three quarters of the court.
- Place a goal at each end of the exercise area.
- Position a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Place a defender in each half.
- Position a player at each end of the halfway line.
- Split the remaining group of players into two and position them behind the goals.

### Explanation

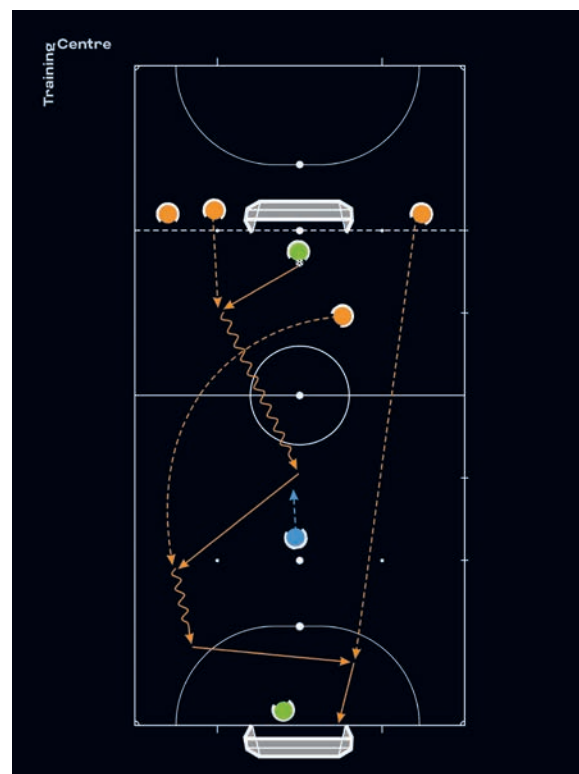
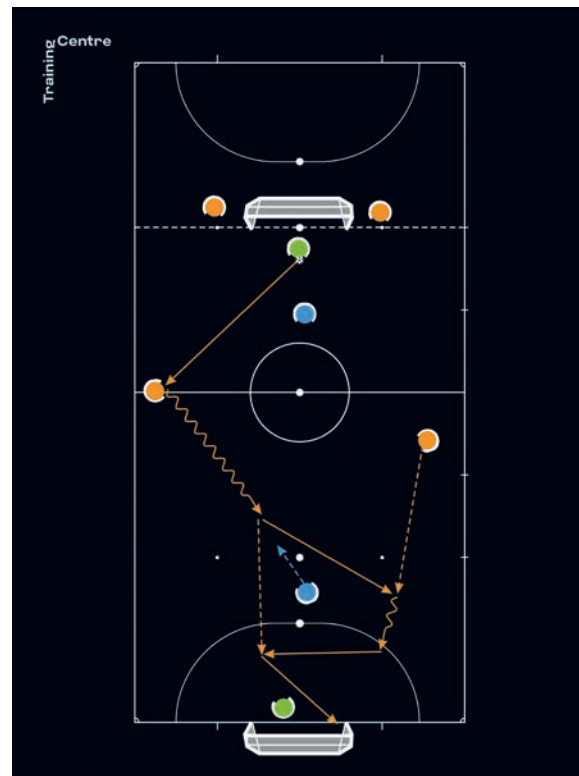
- The exercise starts with one of the goalkeepers throwing the ball to one of the players positioned at either end of the halfway line.
- This player decides which goal they wish to attack, and they are joined in attack by the player positioned at the other end of the halfway line to create a 2v1 scenario.
- Once the sequence is completed, the attacking players leave the pitch and wait behind the goal they were attacking.
- Two new attackers enter the pitch from behind the goal and attack the opposite goal along with the defending player in the previous sequence to create a 3v1 scenario.
- The two players who began the exercise occupying the role of defenders take up a position at either end of the halfway line.
- The two players who entered the pitch to set up the 3v1 scenario become the defenders.
- The two goalkeepers take it in turns to begin the sequence.

### Variation

- The counter-attack is launched by a player who dribbles the ball from behind the goal.

### Coaching points

- The goalkeepers should launch the counter-attacks as quickly as possible.
- The ball carrier should focus on attacking down the central channel of the pitch to engage the opposing defender.
- Passes should be played forwards, and directional controls should progress play forwards at all times.



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## Attack and counter-attack

### Organisation

- Game starts with the two mid zone attackers passing the ball between them and then choosing an end to attack. This is shown set up on a full-size pitch above but an introduction to principles can be done in half of a pitch space.
- They may pass directly to the end zone or dribble it there and start a 3v3 attack, once they have entered the chosen end zone the lone attacker in the other end zone joins them to create an overload 4v3.
- Play until the ball is dead.
- If the defenders win the ball back they can counter to the opposite end of play as in a real game, but moving the ball across the mid third by a player running with it to join the attack. Defenders must retreat.

### Explanation

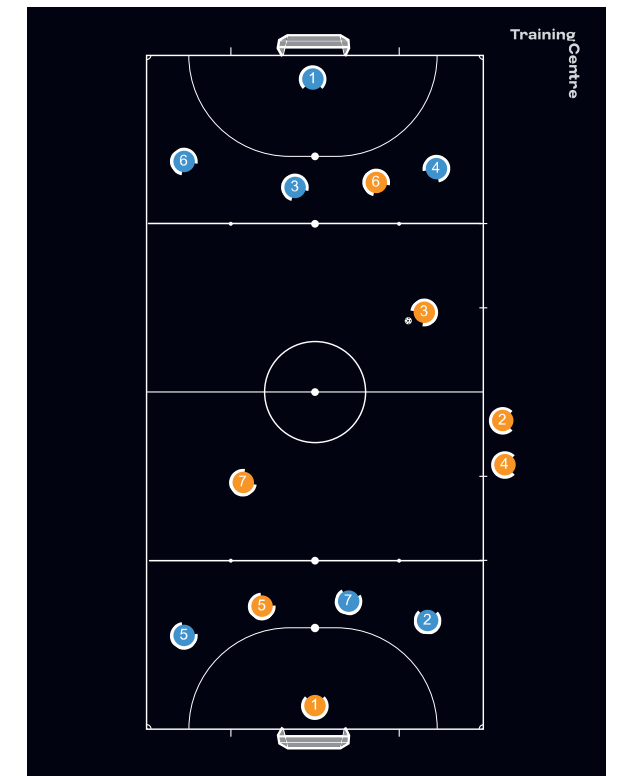
- Swap teams around so that each group has an opportunity to attack.
- Re-structure to have 4v1 in each end zone.
- Re-structure to have 4v2 in each end zone.
- If started in half a pitch then move to an end to end full size game based upon a pitch size relevant to the players age and ability.

### Coaching points

- Communication.
- Passing - forwards
- Ball movement and retention
- Player movement
- Overload and underload
- Can the team in-possession create scoring chances.
- Support play to the attackers
- Do the attackers have a defensive safety lock to delay the reverse counter?



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### 11.1.4.3 Power play

Futsal has some unique laws. One such law is referred to as the power play, and although not specifically referenced as this within Law 3.6, the term is universally understood as that specific law and its application.

At any point during a match, a team may replace a designated goalkeeper with an outfield player in order to benefit from having five **outfield** players (but never more than a total of five players) on the pitch at a given time. This is a high-risk strategy which relies on exceptional ball retention and movement abilities as it is only ever implemented by a team in possession.

Over the years, the concept has been to strengthen the playing squad with outfield players who have better footwork than a goalkeeper might have. However, in more recent times, this concept has been questioned due to significant improvements in goalkeepers' footwork.

Not only has the concept of the power play been overused with little impact, but it has also been overused in the developing player and youth player phases where

concept understanding should be prioritised over relying on strategies. Although widely considered an attacking concept used to score goals, evidence suggest that the power play may also be used to retain possession in order to prevent the opponent from increasing their lead or getting back into the game.

Some striking evidence from the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021 is that attacking teams are gaining little advantage from the power play. A review should be undertaken to understand why this is occurring and what can be done to better educate teams and provide solutions to tactically benefit from the implementation of the power play.

More recent evidence (also witnessed at the 2018 YOG) indicates a trend whereby teams have largely used the power play ineffectively. This is also seen domestically in adult recreational or competitive play. In all cases, this is almost certainly down to the lack of a clear understanding of how to apply the tactic, but also to the limited knowledge of what the power play has to achieve in order to be successful – its principles.

Strategically, the power play can be used to retain possession, but it is used with the creation of goalscoring opportunities in mind to a far greater extent (to increasingly limited effect over the last decade). Statistically, data from the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021 shows that teams only scored 16 goals whilst implementing the power play (an efficiency ratio of just 7%). Out of the 219 power play actions in total, the number leading to a shot or goal was just below 20%, with 42 resulting in at least a shot. This underlines the observation that tactics are only effectively implemented when supported by the necessary technical ability.

When deciding whether to use the power play, coaches should also consider whether it is a risk worth taking, with current evidence showing that implementing the power play leads to more conceded goals than scored. This directs us to the correct application of the tactic.

#### Principles

The principles of the power play are to create numerical superiority, the importance of which is heightened on a futsal pitch where space is at a premium. By moving the ball quickly and using the overload to cut the defensive lines through passing and player movement, teams should aim to create opportunities thanks to space afforded by the defensive imbalance.

Playing too closely to the defensive block will reduce the possibility of space creation and risk an interception. Moving the ball from side to side too slowly will not imbalance the defence, while minimal rotational movement from the wide pairs will not create a rare shooting opportunity.

Understanding how to effectively use the power play is a key futsal coaching requirement. Player understanding and knowledge in practice is equally important if it's a tactic that will be used. For the power play to be effective, teams must work hard to train all components and hone the necessary technical skills while understanding how these are related to each other.

As previously mentioned, the power play is a strategy used to dominate possession.

The principles of the power play:

- **Maintaining possession**
- **Using overload to move the ball quickly** (therefore inflicting fatigue upon the defence)
- **Opening up the defensive block and move the opponent**
- **Building pressure**
- **Varying ball speed and direction**
- **Creating passing lines to open up the defence**
- **Always playing to the receiver's stronger foot**
- **Moving around to open up a static defence**

#### Explaining the trend and how to correct it

When considering the effectiveness of the power play, the data shows a very different story to what power play is normally intended to achieve. This leads us to spend time reversing the trend and demonstrating what is required to succeed.

Examining the data, a total of 16 goals were scored from the power play phase at the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021, as opposed to the 19 scored when the opponent regained possession, indicating a general principle that teams were more likely to concede than to score when attempting to take advantage of numerical superiority in the overload. It is worth noting that this is the elite level of futsal so, given that this happened, something is intrinsically wrong. However, this has trended across the game at all levels and is underpinned by a wider misunderstanding of the tactic. Power plays yielded a total of 194 shots which resulted in those 16 goals, yet the breakdowns in power plays resulted in the opposition taking 99 shots, resulting in 21 goals on the counter. This data reasonably indicates that, in the modern game, there is actually an advantage in playing against the power play than with it. This is certainly not the intention of the law, but the data provides food for thought.

These results are down to a combination of misunderstanding how and when to use the power play by players and coaches alike, as well as the technical inability to retain possession, leading to a finish. This coaching manual aims to improve the intended results in all these areas so that the power play can remain a meaningful tactical advantage as intended by the laws.



## Power play

### Organisation

- Use slightly more than half of the court.
- Place a goal at either end of the playing area.
- Set up a 4v4, plus goalkeepers.

### Explanation

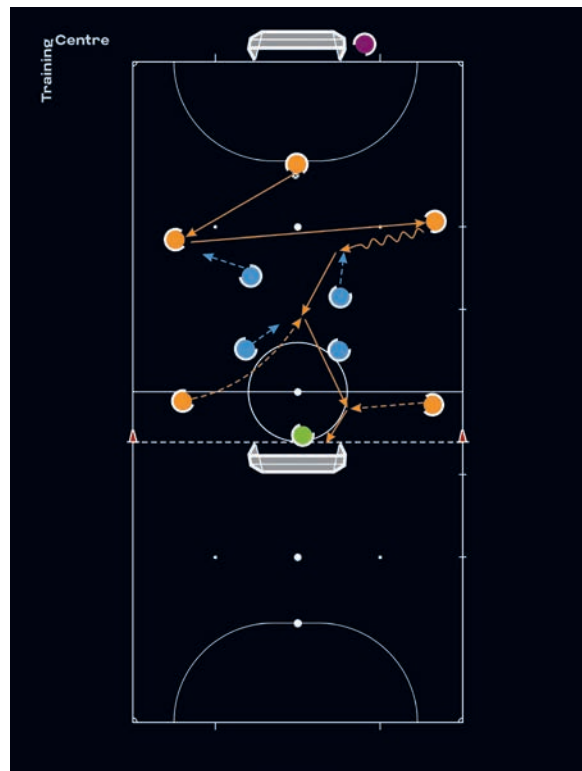
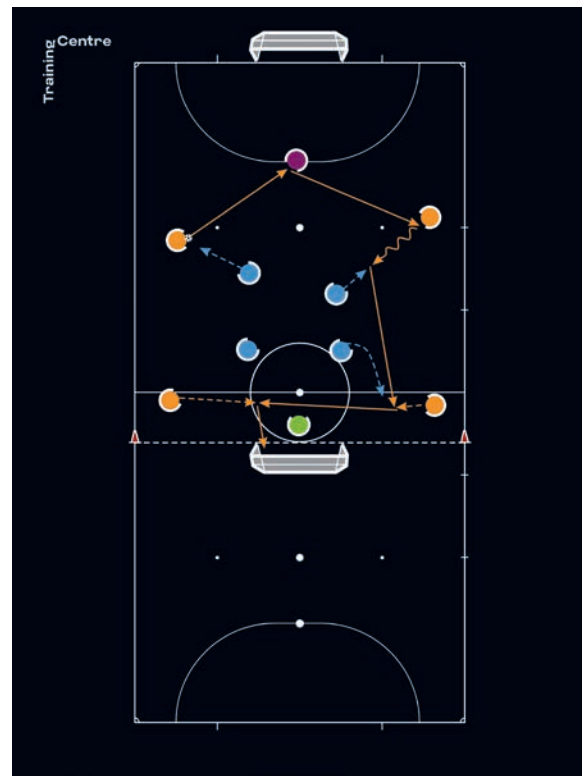
- Play starts with the fly goalkeeper.
- The attacking team aim to build an attack and finish on goal.
- Play restarts only when the ball goes out of play.

### Variation

- Swap the goalkeeper for an outfield player.

### Coaching points

- Identify opportunities to create 2v1 situations.
- Be aggressive and look to capitalise on the numerical advantage.
- Try to create situations of numerical superiority in central areas of the court to destabilise the opposition's defence.
- Keep your head up to ensure that you are aware of the position of the opposition's defence at all times and are able to identify any potential gaps in the defensive line.
- Open up the court to prevent opposition players from being able to provide defensive cover.
- Circulate the ball quickly to prevent the opposition's defence from being able to pin you against the touchline.
- If the opposition adopt a player-to-player marking system, the goalkeeper should progress with the ball to draw in and destabilise the opposition's defence before making a decision about the next pass to be played.
- Be patient when building up attacks to identify the right time to play the pass or take the shot.
- Position and accumulate players in certain areas of the court to destabilise the opposition's defence.
- Identify when to speed up and slow down the circulation of the ball.



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### 11.1.5 Attacking philosophies

The most recent data provides valuable insight into teams' attacking philosophies. It is no coincidence that the most clinical teams are the most successful.

However, when faced with a formidable opponent, flexibility in game strategies will be required. Taking a game to an experienced opponent can yield positive

results and provide assurances that, in whatever level of futsal, it is important to treating each match separately rather than repeating the same approach. This requires versatility throughout the squad, but with good game knowledge and confidence in technical ability and tactical implementation.

#### 11.1.5.1 Innovation

All invasion games change over time, or at least they should. For the game to be progressive and maintain its excitement and attraction, ongoing innovation and experimentation is required. At the FIFA Futsal World Cup 2021, such innovation was witnessed in some team's attacking play, particularly when playing in a 4-0 formation. This involved the occasional departure from the conventional pairs working in a butterfly movement on the wings to retain and recycle possession, with the forward-most player of the pair making a deliberate vertical retreat run to receive the ball with their back to goal in Zone 2 in the same way a pivot would before releasing a pass to the opposite flank for a forward breakaway by one of the opposite pair (see clip below). It is an innovative ploy to exploit space and has the element of surprise due to it differing from what is usually expected of a team in possession.



For teams to be successful in futsal, the key constraints of the game (i.e. pitch size, player numbers, and the ball) require the retention of possession. If attacking play is frequently interrupted by losing possession because of basic, unforced errors, an attacking philosophy will be hard to establish. As previously stated, players' abilities in passing and control are vital in retaining possession. If a team identifies the strengths of a few but the weaknesses of the collective five, and plays only to those individual strengths, the game will be too stagnant and predictable to be effective. If ever there was a reason for the importance of developing the **developing player** in futsal, this is it.

Variation and flexibility when playing as a team, combined with a mixture of individual flare and team cohesion, is a key recipe for success.

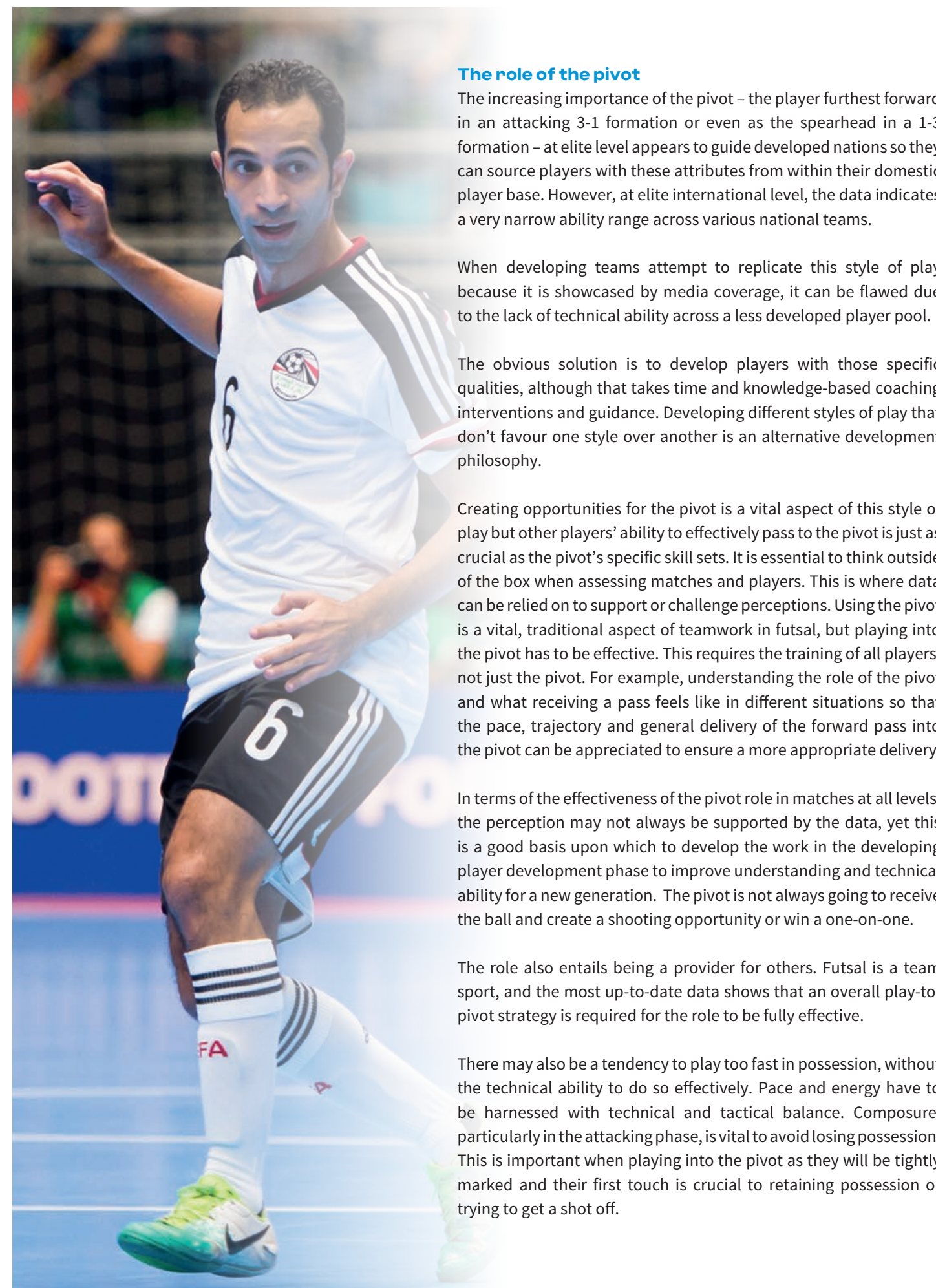


### 11.1.6 Positional specialities

It is no coincidence that the more advanced and established nations have had a significant influence on futsal for many years. In many ways, this has formed the game for some time. However, this has propagated a simplistic, repetitive approach that has hindered growth, development and innovation because, in modern society, it is too easy to copy the 'how' without first understanding the what and why. This approach and mentality has then transferred or simply copied this vocabulary without understanding why they

originated as they did or offering a direct and reflective translation into another language to have the same meaning.

This must be addressed so that there are universally applied terms that have the same meaning, regardless of translation and, importantly, align as closely as possible with the official FIFA Football Language to facilitate transfer and understanding across different formats of the game.



### The role of the pivot

The increasing importance of the pivot – the player furthest forward in an attacking 3-1 formation or even as the spearhead in a 1-3 formation – at elite level appears to guide developed nations so they can source players with these attributes from within their domestic player base. However, at elite international level, the data indicates a very narrow ability range across various national teams.

When developing teams attempt to replicate this style of play because it is showcased by media coverage, it can be flawed due to the lack of technical ability across a less developed player pool.

The obvious solution is to develop players with those specific qualities, although that takes time and knowledge-based coaching interventions and guidance. Developing different styles of play that don't favour one style over another is an alternative development philosophy.

Creating opportunities for the pivot is a vital aspect of this style of play but other players' ability to effectively pass to the pivot is just as crucial as the pivot's specific skill sets. It is essential to think outside of the box when assessing matches and players. This is where data can be relied on to support or challenge perceptions. Using the pivot is a vital, traditional aspect of teamwork in futsal, but playing into the pivot has to be effective. This requires the training of all players, not just the pivot. For example, understanding the role of the pivot and what receiving a pass feels like in different situations so that the pace, trajectory and general delivery of the forward pass into the pivot can be appreciated to ensure a more appropriate delivery.

In terms of the effectiveness of the pivot role in matches at all levels, the perception may not always be supported by the data, yet this is a good basis upon which to develop the work in the developing player development phase to improve understanding and technical ability for a new generation. The pivot is not always going to receive the ball and create a shooting opportunity or win a one-on-one.

The role also entails being a provider for others. Futsal is a team sport, and the most up-to-date data shows that an overall play-to-pivot strategy is required for the role to be fully effective.

There may also be a tendency to play too fast in possession, without the technical ability to do so effectively. Pace and energy have to be harnessed with technical and tactical balance. Composure, particularly in the attacking phase, is vital to avoid losing possession. This is important when playing into the pivot as they will be tightly marked and their first touch is crucial to retaining possession or trying to get a shot off.



The principle that an attacking phase must always end in a shot or a goal is misguided. Instead, we must recognise that the principles of the attacking phase are varied and can depend on factors such as the flow of play, the scoreline and the phase of the game. In some instances, the objective of an attacking phase may be to reduce the risk of losing possession in the defensive third or higher up the pitch and to frustrate the opponent by retaining possession. The principle that the opponent can only score goals when they have the ball is a simple one, so don't let them have the ball! This is particularly evident in the early phases of player development, as the attacking phase is amongst the hardest in the game to succeed in, regardless of whether playing into the pivot or not. At times, the objective of attacking will therefore simply be to keep the ball away from the opponent.

#### Out-of-possession pivot play

On the other hand, dealing with the opponent's pivot when out of possession also requires careful consideration and training. The pivot's aim is to 'pin' the defender and use momentum and resistance to roll the defender or use strength to shield the ball from the defender and block their view of the ball. The defender's position in relation to the pivot is often "touch tight", with both players in contact with one another, yet this is exactly how the pivot wants to be marked, with their back to goal or side-on to the defender. By knowing where the defender is, feeling the closeness of marking enables the pivot to use momentum, strength and resistance to turn using the defender's body as a way to face goal and preventing the defender from intervening.

The defender must strike a technical balance between being close enough to the pivot to avoid being rolled, but far away enough to have a clear view of the ball. The pivot wants to play in a controlled way, so the defender has to outwit the pivot in this regard by not making the pivot's job easier.



#### Winger

The role of the winger is primarily to offer width, as the name of this position implies. However, the role's specialisation goes further with players being extremely adept at one-on-one challenges in the attacking phase with the intention of drawing the defensive structure wide and destabilising its role.

The term "inverted winger" is used to describe left-footed wingers playing on the right and vice versa. The main intention of this is to create width when attacking by taking the ball out wide before cutting back inside onto their stronger foot. Wingers playing down the flank corresponding to their stronger side are also able to create width but intend to attack rapidly down the flank to pressure the opponent's defensive shape by dragging a defender to the near post and leaving the far post exposed if the ball can be adequately delivered.

#### Defender

This is the name given to the deepest (and generally last) defender on the penultimate defensive line. In traditional futsal nations, this position may be referred to as the "fixo", but this term has different meanings in different languages, so a more standardised term is required.

This is usually the player who will mark the pivot depending on out-of-possession structure and positional recovery.





### 3-1 system: Role of the pivot

#### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Place a goal at either end of the court.
- Position a goalkeeper in both goals.
- Divide each half into thirds.
- Use cones to mark out an area comprising two thirds of each half.
- Set up three defenders v. three attackers inside two thirds of one half.
- Place an attacking player (the pivot) inside the final third of the half to create a 4v3 scenario.
- Position the defending team's pivot in the final third of the opposite half.

#### Explanation

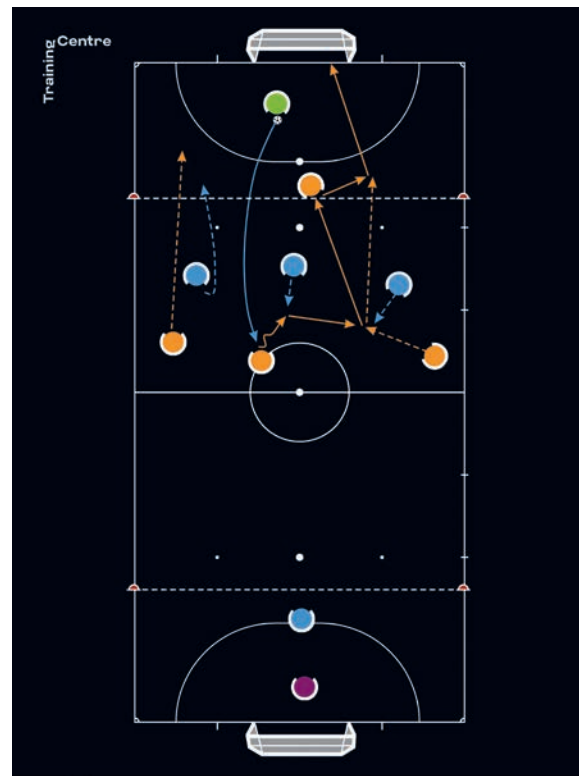
- Play begins with the defending team's goalkeeper throwing the ball out to an attacking player positioned inside the two thirds of the half.
- The attacking team aim to progress play into the pivot, who looks to hold the ball up and combine with team-mates or turn to take a shot on goal.
- If the defending team turn over possession, play moves to the opposite half of the court and the teams swap roles.

#### Variation

- A defending player joins the attacking pivot in the final third to create a 4v4 scenario inside one half.
- The pivot can leave the final third.
- Once the attacking team's move is over, the exercise progresses into an end-to-end game.

#### Coaching points

- The pivot should adapt their body shape to hold the ball up and turn to shoot (sideways on) or hold the ball up and lay it off to a team-mate (open shape).
- The in-possession team's deepest-lying player should adjust their position to provide cover against a possible counter-attack.
- After receiving the ball, the pivot should look to retain possession and slow play down.
- If the pivot comes short to support the play, a team-mate should occupy the pivot position



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### Playing into the pivot in the final third

#### Organisation

- Divide a half-court into three zones, including a 10-metre-wide middle zone.
- Place a goal on each touchline.
- Set up a 4v4 (plus goalkeepers) and arrange both teams in a 3-1 formation.

#### Explanation

- Each team's pivot is not allowed to defend and must stay in the marked-out attacking zone at all times.
- The out-of-possession team must leave one player in their defensive zone at all times to defend against the attacking team's pivot, resulting in a 3v2 numerical advantage in favour of the attacking team.
- The objective for the attacking team is to connect with the pivot, who can then either shoot on goal or lay the ball off to a team-mate who is now allowed to join them in the attacking zone.

#### Coaching points

- Adopting good body orientation provides players with the widest possible field of vision, which allows them to play the ball into any area of the court.
- Out-of-possession players must constantly look to create passing lanes to ensure that team-mates have multiple passing options.
- Emphasis should be placed on forward passes and forward movement.
- Players should show patience to improve their team's chances of scoring once the pivot receives the ball.
- When their team are in possession, players must look to support their team-mates and make runs off the pivot.
- Circulating the ball quickly allows a team to take advantage when the pivot is unmarked or under less pressure from the opposing defender.



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- The pivot must focus on shielding the ball, creating passing lanes, body orientation, receiving the ball, rolling the defender, controlling the ball to lay off to a team-mate, controlling the ball to turn, scanning, linking up with a support player, positioning to receive the ball and turn or combine with a team-mate.





### The line of three

A block will generally be performed by three out-of-possession players working in a line in a highly advanced position to slow down the progress of the ball and keep it high up the pitch, generally by obstruction or, alternatively, by pressing.

Using a block to put even the most dangerous teams under pressure can have significant benefits for the out-of-possession team, providing them with a clear understanding of how, what and (most importantly) when to apply pressure.

### Direct attacks, physicality and blocking

Using a high-block may have contributed to the high number of direct attacks now seen applied by many teams across development, domestic and international futsal. However, teams beating the block can progress the ball forwards quickly once they have overcome the high-block.

Speed and athleticism in applying an instant high-block positioning followed quickly by pressing is vital when transitioning from in possession to out of possession. This requires a constantly engaged mindset which clearly places mental pressure on all players – the psychological element of play and player development.

It is essential to highlight that, if the strategy implemented is to play a pressing game, the requirement for greater physicality from teams in order to apply immediate pressure is paramount.

The concept of blocking to delay progress is a vital characteristic of out-of-possession play. A mix of aggressive and passive blocking unsettles the opponent due to uncertainty regarding the style of blocking that they are about to face. This forces them to think more carefully (and therefore slower) about where they play and how they move as a unit. This can often cause the opponent to hesitate on the ball, leading to them losing control or delaying the pass – an opportunity which can be seized.

## 11.2 Out of possession

### 11.2.1 High-block and high press

Teams perform the high-block to pin their opponents as far back as possible – and often follow this initial reaction up with a press. The tendency for teams to press high up the pitch continued at the Futsal World Cup in Lithuania.

### 11.2.2 High-block

When considering the positional status of a block, it is worth noting that blocking is generally a precursor to pressing. However, this is not always the case, so the two actions should be treated mutually and separately. The zone in which the opposition have possession is irrelevant.

The principle of the high-block is to keep the ball in the defensive zone (Zone 1) or, when it moves into Zone 2, delay it in moving further forward. For an effective high-block, the out-of-possession team must use man marking and, as a general rule, not pass players on. This requires determination to track the marked player rather than pass them on to a team-mate. It is the preliminary stage of pressing.







### 11.2.3 High press

At futsal's elite level, the use of the high press has become more prevalent. It is a tactic used when you have both the technical and physical ability to do so.

During the **developing player** phase, this is unlikely to be a training priority or a recommendation. This would become more relevant during the **youth player** phase of progression as tactics are filtered into the player development strategy.

As noted previously, the high-block is frequently the cue for a high press. Understanding how to transition from the block to the press requires a team to understand the triggers (i.e. an opponent's action, body shape, first touch or head position, or ball movement, either backwards or sideways) that all of the out-of-position team should recognise before executing a partial or complete team press to apply pressure on the ball carrier and the intended recipients.

It is evident that even the most accomplished of players are less effective when placed under direct pressure. Despite this, pressure is often not applied by defenders, which enables the ball carrier to stay in control. The slightest of movements towards the ball carrier will often force their head down to ensure they have ball control, but in doing so, their mind and vision become occupied with ball retention and protection rather than passing or shooting.

Pressing also requires actions against opponents without the ball, to block passing lines and divert the ball carrier.

#### Implementing the high press

If the key principles of defending are to delay, deny and dictate. In terms of pressing, it is also imperative to consider, as a team, what the trigger is that sparks the opponent's high press. This is not just the initial distribution from the opposition goalkeeper to a team-mate, but also the secondary pass and movement between outfield players.

Timing and understanding are vital components of an effective high press. When applied effectively, it can take as little as two passes by the defending team to force a turnover in possession (or possibly longer depending on the quality of the team in possession).

The pressing, cutting of passing lines and denial of space by the out-of-possession team must be clinical and decisive with all players working in unison and understanding their roles. Futsal players need to be intelligent and decisive to act in the blink of an eye in order to thwart the opponent.

A high press ideally requires all of the out-of-possession team to be in the opposition's Zones 1 and 2, denying space with the intention of applying a block. Marking distances need to be sufficiently tight to challenge a pass and force the ball carrier into the easiest pass that can be shut down quickly. However, when the team in possession makes a direct move to place a forward in the defenders' Zone 1 (pivot), this requires quick forward pressure on the ball to keep the press effective and negate the stretching of play.

Pressing begins with the initial (and understood) trigger as the first step towards the ball and ball carrier. Players must be equally fast and aggressive in shutting down space for any opponent who could potentially receive the ball. This must continue as the ball is shifted on. The purpose of pressing is to deny passing opportunities and, when the pass is made, to put pressure on the receiver and force an error or a pass that is misplaced – above all, to prevent the ball from going forward.

It is vital to understand that the application of the press does not always require three forward-positioned players as the reaction has to be driven by the formation of the in-possession team. It can therefore also be applied against an offensive 1-2-2 formation, although the principles remain the same.



#### Triggers and complete pressing

Effective pressure on all opponents is a key part of the press. Timing when to press and identifying the trigger (an action that the entire squad can instantly identify) to initiate the pressure on the ball, and then on the opponent is vital when implementing this tactic. This requires a trained understanding of the various triggers to be adopted and is a core 'coached' component, as understanding the trigger is a skill in itself. Ball pressure applied at the wrong time without the whole team's involvement can be costly and ineffective.

While teams may apply a block to delay their opponents, that effort can be wasted if they do not follow it up by putting pressure on the ball and cutting passing lines and options. It is common to see a block that is passive, which can allow the pass to be made, leaving the defence wide open. Therefore, after the first blocking action, the defending team must then look to press with immediacy to force the error and deny the passing line.

During the youth player development phase (or even with adult), less experienced and less technical teams will have a stop-start relationship with blocking and pressing, getting one component right but not the other. However, it is important to persevere and understand the relationship between the first action, blocking, before following up by pressuring collectively.



### Automatic triggers, marking strategies and the role of the goalkeeper

One could argue that there is no single phase of play which is an automatic trigger for a high-block or press. That said, certain moments of play can be identified as triggers (restarts from the goalkeeper, offensive kick-ins from Zone 1, and the build-up phase of open play starting in Zone 1). The danger here is that, when pressure is applied in such scenarios, it can lead to an increased volume of direct attacks to evade the block or press.

For a block or press to be effective, man marking (and tracking) is required as they look to relieve the pressure applied on them or open up the passing lines. For some teams, the decision to track a player or pass them on to a team-mate is an untrained principle but is a necessary facet of a high-block or press.

Consequently, when teams attempt to apply a mixed marking strategy (e.g. passing marked players on to team-mates in trying to effectively apply pressure on the ball), this will generally be less successful. For pressure to be effective, it has to be continual, especially in futsal as the spaces available to pass into are small.

Passing an opponent on to a team-mate can therefore create a weakness in the block or press which the opponent can exploit. Of course, the initial blocking action is done to deny space and block passing lines, whereas the transition to pressing demands a full-on approach with the opponent always within touching distance in order to reduce space, angles and opportunities.



The role of the goalkeeper in the high-block or press is also an interesting element that must be considered as its prevalence is increasing in modern styles of play. The goalkeeper has a role to play in supporting the high press, particularly now technical play and tactical strategies see them acting in more advanced positions as the final and additional defender.

Some teams will press as part of an overall game strategy to frustrate and destabilise their opponent from the outset. Others will use it infrequently in isolated instances, not as a constant game strategy. Suddenly changing their approach therefore surprises the opponent. Teams may also adopt a high press whilst losing a match, aiming to exert pressure on their opponent to regain possession or slow them down to avoid conceding more goals.

Based on current evidence in the elite game, effective high pressing is becoming a game-changing feature of futsal. The high-block/press has been used more frequently over recent years. In the past, almost all teams adopted a passive mid-block approach. Using the high-block/press also has the unintended consequence of influencing the in-possession team's approach, who will revert to direct attack which requires more caution to be exercised by the last defender in order to effectively suppress that counter-attack. There is no doubt that effective high pressing requires a trained mindset, skill set and highly athletic players. For it to be implemented successfully, a collective understanding is crucial.

This strategy is perhaps inappropriate during the **developing player** phase, although it does stimulate the development of play intelligence, game knowledge and understanding from a young age in preparation for it to be implemented as players get older.

Understanding the benefits of implementing the high-block/press is a positive development for gameplay. Whilst this is already becoming commonplace at elite level, over the next decade, replication of this is expected to be attempted at grassroots and recreational levels. Whilst significant further developments in this tactical approach are to be expected, caution should be exercised over the use of this strategy without the appropriate technical and physical ability of players or understanding from the coaching staff of how, why and when to use it. This will simply result in disappointment, especially for young players, which must be avoided.

## Pressing with a numerical disadvantage

### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Divide the group into three teams of 5 (4 outfield players and a goalkeeper).
- Set two of the teams up on the court in an attack v. defence scenario.
- Set the attacking team up in a 4-0 formation.
- One of the defending-team players must remain inside their own half at all times.

### Explanation

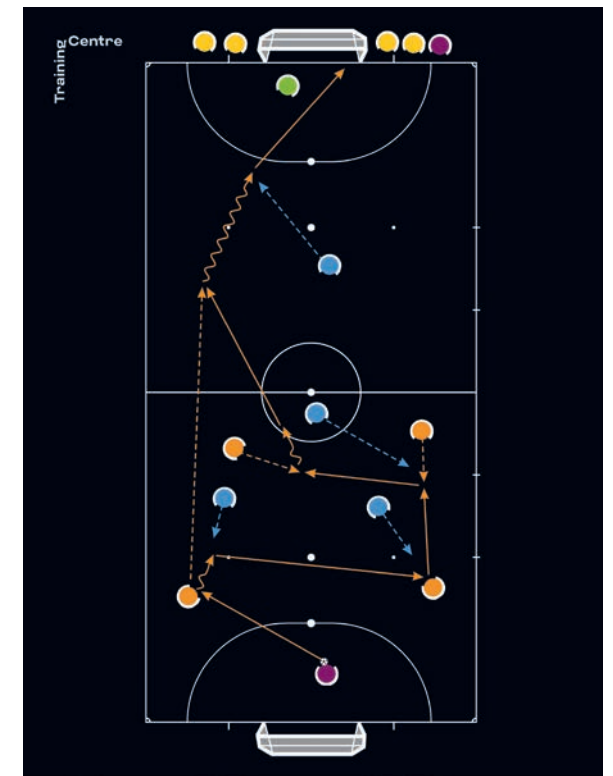
- The exercise starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper in possession.
- The attacking team aim to score by using their numerical advantage to progress play.
- The defending team try to prevent the attacking team from creating overloads.
- The attacking team can only dribble – and not pass – the ball past the halfway line.
- If the ball goes out of play, the out-of-possession team leave the pitch and the third team enter play.
- If a goal is scored, the team that scored leave the pitch and the third team enter play.

### Variation

- Variation 1: the central defender who initiates the move must make a run up the court once they have passed the ball.
- Variation 2: the last defender begins the move on the edge of the centre circle in their own half and once the opposition complete two passes, they are free to press in any area of the pitch.

### Coaching points

- Increase the intensity of the press when there is a good chance to regain possession.
- Identify in which areas of the pitch and when to adopt a player-to-player marking system.
- When engaging with the ball carrier, retain body balance and stop at the right distance from the opponent.
- Stress that players increase the intensity of the press at key moments.
- When defending close to their own goal, the defending team should seek to reduce the risk of making mistakes when apply the press.



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## Defending the counter outnumbered

### Organisation

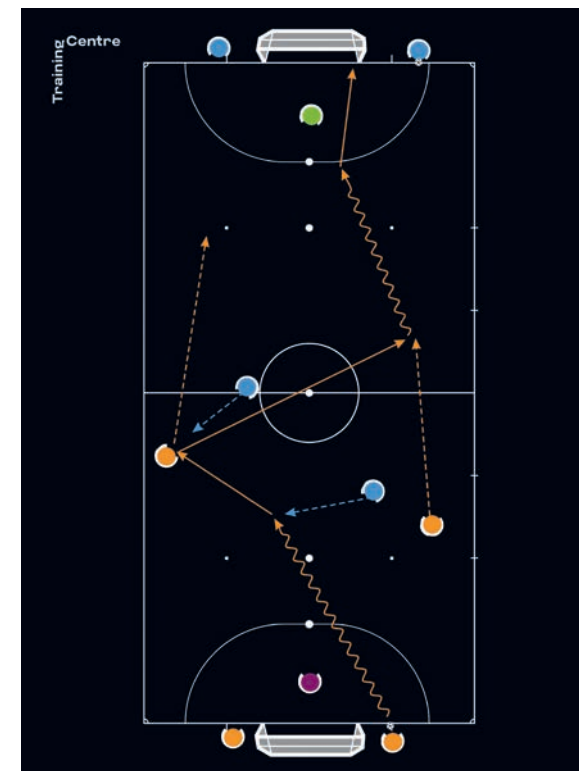
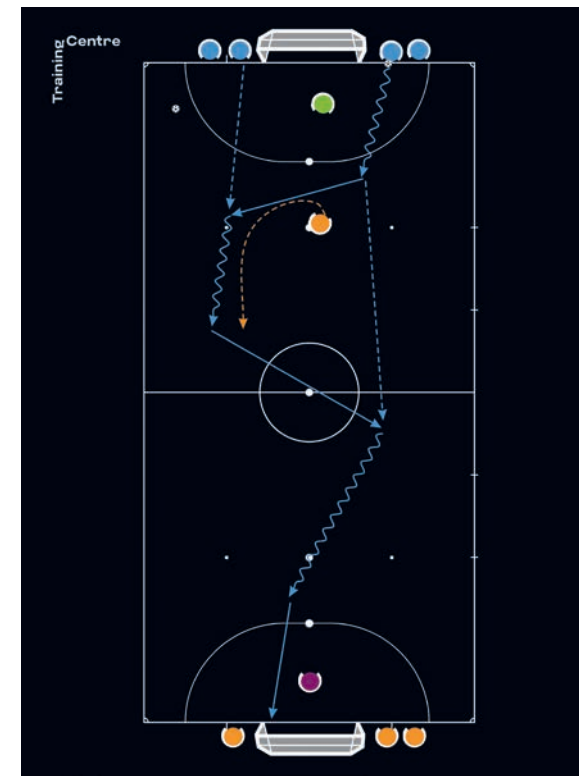
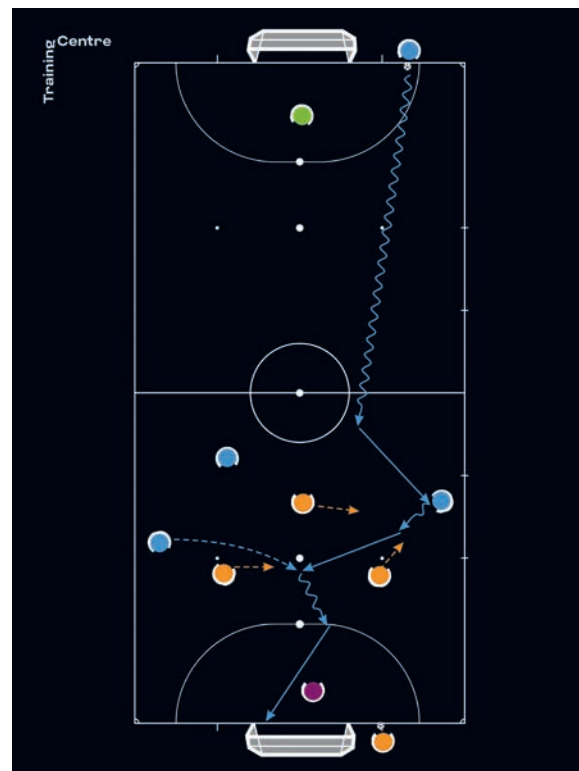
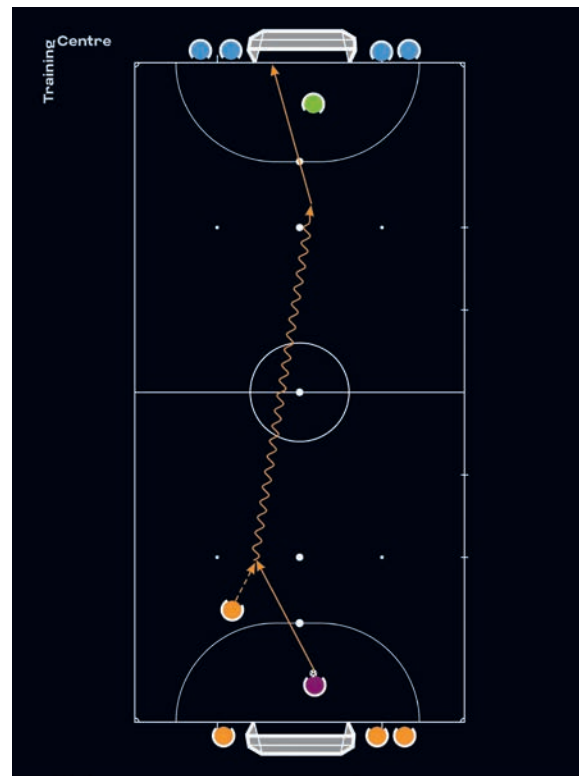
- Use a full court.
- Place a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Position two teams behind each goal.

### Explanation

- The exercise starts with one of the two goalkeepers throwing the ball out to an attacking player, who tries to score in the opposite goal.
- Regardless of whether the attempt on goal is successful, the attacking player, who remains on the pitch and now becomes a defender, is joined by two attacking players from the opposing team to create a 2v1 scenario.
- The goalkeeper at the opposite end of the pitch from where the exercise started throws the ball out to one of the two attacking players, who attack the opposite goal.
- The exercise continues with a 3v2, followed by a 4v3, with the direction of play switching in each attacking sequence.
- Once the 4v3 sequence has been completed, the exercise starts again, with play starting with the goalkeeper who defended the first attack last time round.

### Coaching points

- When facing a 3v4 numerical disadvantage, the defending team should coordinate their movements by forming a triangle.
- When defending with a numerical disadvantage, defenders should implement a zonal marking system and anticipate the direction of the attack.



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## Delay, dictate and deny the opposition

### Organisation

- Use three quarters of the court.
- Set up a goal at each 6m mark.
- Position a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Arrange three teams comprising three players each.
- Set up a 3v3 plus a defensive joker on the court to create a 4v3 in favour of the defending team.
- Place the members of the remaining team at each end of the halfway line, with two players at one end and one player at the other.

### Explanation

- The exercise starts with one of the goalkeepers playing the ball to one of the players positioned at either end of the halfway line.
- Once this player receives the ball, their team-mates join them to attack the goal at the opposite end of the playing area from where they received the goalkeeper's pass.
- The attacking team aim to score, while the defending team look to prevent them from doing so.
- Once the attacking move is over, the defending team take up positions on the halfway line and becoming the attacking team.
- The team that were waiting on the halfway line become the defending team.

### Coaching points

- Try to delay the opposition's passes to slow the pace of the counter-attack.
- Press the ball carrier at all times while coordinating with team-mates providing defensive cover.
- The joker should try to dictate to which side of the pitch the goalkeeper throws the ball, based on the team's defensive set-up.



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### 11.2.4 Mid-block and mid press

**The mid-block was the second-most common type of block at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021™ because, generally speaking, most teams preferred to defend in a high block to keep the ball as far as possible from their goal.**

According to the most recent data in the elite men's game, the mid-block is the second-most common type of block modern adult futsal. Generally speaking, most teams prefer to defend in a high-block to keep the ball as far as possible from their goal.

It is common for teams to opt for this defensive line almost permanently. Reasons for using the mid-block:

- **As part of a philosophy or concept of play**
- **Based on the opposition**
- **Intentionally at different phases of a match (depending on the scoreline, fatigue, the risk of conceding a direct free kick closer to goal, etc.)**



### Aims and objectives of the mid-block

- To provide improved defensive protection further from the goal
- To minimise the area that needs to be defended
- To prevent the opponent from getting in behind
- To let the opposition play offensively on the front foot, anticipating an error, in order to take advantage of regained possession to break on the counter before they can reorganise and exploit minimal space behind their defence

In all of these considerations, it is important to keep an active, aggressive defensive attitude to give the opposition no time to think, otherwise it would be counterproductive to defend only 20 metres from the goal.

### Types of defensive approach to a mid-block

#### 1. Passive

Waiting for an error, not proactive, no pressure on the ball. This kind of block is mostly used by developing teams and is a common strategy for youth players to develop game understanding when out of possession.

#### 2. Aggressive

A more active and engaged approach which requires high technical and physical conditioning to constantly apply pressure on the ball and cut passing lines, generally with the objective of forcing the opponent backwards to surrender territory.

### Types of mid-block marking

When using the mid-block, there is not one type of marking approach which is any more or less effective – the effectiveness of each approach depends on whether it was well executed or not.

At elite level, unlike the player development phase (either youth or adult), teams usually opt for man marking with defensive cover, passing opponents on at the same time. Few teams opt for solely zonal defending.

Passing opponents on in a defensive phase will heavily depend on whether to press or cover, as well as the position of the ball on the pitch.

### Some examples of strategies that can be implemented in the mid-block are:

- Individual defensive man marking
- Mixed (man marking and passing on), depending on the situation
- Zonal marking



### Tactical components of the mid-block

#### The opposite winger

Being aware of the opposing winger on the opposite side of the pitch to the ball is a key aspect of defending in a mid-block. This draws the defence's attention away from the ball carrier.



### Defending balls played inside to the pivot

An important element of the mid-block is how to defend balls played inside to the pivot. Teams attacking the mid-block with a 3-1 or 2-2 system will attempt to finish the move with balls to the pivot.

It is crucial to have a clearly defined and understood plan when defending situations like this. It is fundamental in successful defensive strategies. The following are examples of some solutions that teams found for this situation:

- Man marking, with a clear individual responsibility for the player marking the pivot (no type of defensive help from team-mates). If the ball reaches the pivot, each defender should stay with their attacker to prevent the pivot from passing to them.
- Switching the opponents being marked (referred to as “passing on”).
- By anticipating but considering the risk of misreading.
- Doubling up on the pivot to apply immediate pressure.
- Isolate the pivot by denying passing lines.

#### Providing cover

With this type of defensive approach, it is vital to have a clear covering system, particularly in one-on-one situations. The last defender or the goalkeeper usually provides the cover. The following are two example approaches:

- Primary defensive cover
- Defender + opposite winger who goes into the defender's position



## Defending in a mid-block

### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Split the court into quarters.
- Set up a 5v5 (attack v. defence).

### Explanation

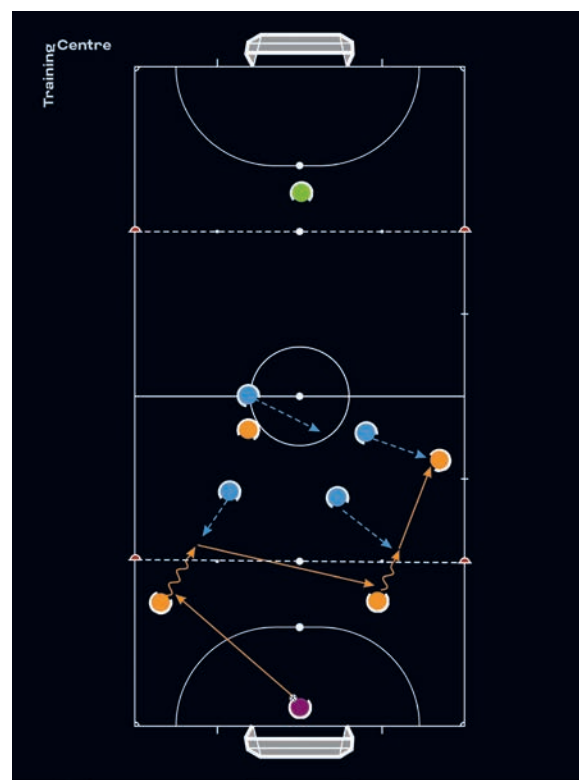
- The exercise begins with the attacking team's goalkeeper in possession.
- Two attacking-team players begin the action unopposed in the build-up zone, while the other two attacking players are free to position themselves in any other zone.
- The defending-team players are restricted to the two central zones. They can only drop back if the attacking team succeed in progressing play into their half.
- The attacking team aim to progress play through each zone.
- The defending team aim to prevent the attacking team from progressing the ball through the zones by implementing a player-to-player press.
- If the defending team turn over possession, the teams swap roles and play starts from the opposite end of the court.

### Variation

- When the defending team recover possession, they attack towards the opposition's goal.

### Coaching points

- Press the ball-carrying player in wide areas.
- Defenders should anticipate the direction of play in order to adopt the correct defensive position.
- Press the receiving player as the pass is played towards them.



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## 11.2.5 Low-block and low press

Low-blocks were rarely seen at the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021™. It was seen from teams who considered themselves to be vastly inferior to their opponents and felt that defending in a low-block would give them a better chance of winning

This approach is often taken by teams who consider themselves to be inferior to their opponents and the retreat or defensive shape position offers them more comfort to deny the space behind them and keep the ball in front of them. In a way, it can be considered a slightly less risk-based approach against a seemingly superior opponent.

The objective of defending in a low-block is to provide more defensive protection. When executed well, it can be extremely effective. It puts the onus on the attacker to create scoring opportunities and maintain ball possession so that a shot must be converted to avoid being caught on the counter-attack.

Conversely, there is always danger when defending too deep. With the risk of shooting opportunities, deflected shots or dangerous free kicks leading to a goal, mental concentration and reaction speed are vital in the defensive lines.

Additionally, when regaining possession, having the entire team behind the ball often makes it difficult to build an attacking move or makes it much easier for the opposition to counter-press, as shown in the video below.

Another important aspect of this strategy is the reality of defending for an entire game without much ball possession and relying upon the goalkeeper to cope with an abundance of shots from close range.

This approach is therefore often seen in the early phases of **youth player** development as they transition from a **developing player** and start to apply tactical awareness and coordination whilst gaining confidence and understanding in defensive blocks and actions.





### Types of defensive approach to a low-block

#### 1. Passive

Little pressure is applied on the ball, but the defending team sit deep.

#### 2. Aggressive

This approach applies more active pressure on the ball and the opponents without the ball to cut passing lines and deny space.

#### Low press – how does this work?

- **The wingers move with the ball. There is an active approach to pressing the opposition winger just as he receives the ball. This is the trigger point for the defensive action.**
- **The team moves as a unit from one side to the other based on where the ball goes without passing players on but maintaining a familiar defensive shape. If it is a low press, then the defensive lines move up to a mid-block and then to a high-block if that is the defensive plan.**

#### Types of marking against a low-block

In a low-block, each type of marking approach is equally effective. How well it is executed determines its effectiveness. At elite level, most teams choose to man mark with defensive cover (with the defensive lines very close together) in this defensive position. Only occasionally do defenders pass players on to a teammate, given that a mistake in this area can prove fatal by opening up space for the ball carrier to shoot or move into.

### Tactical aspects of the low-block

#### Dealing with the pivot

Something important to consider when defending deep like this is how to defend balls inside the defensive diamond to the pivot. In general, teams may attack this low-block with a 3-1 or 2-2 system, enabling a multitude of balls to reach the pivot. The defensive actions must aim to close the passing line to the pivot through the forward and winger on either side. The defensive action here is to force the ball wide or across the front of the first and second defensive lines – not between them.

#### Flank coverage

The further effectiveness of this low-block approach also depends on the type of cover for one-on-one situations on the flanks. When defending in a low-block, the attacking team have more time to think and space to play their game as the defensive actions are often passive.

One such action, which is key to unlocking tight, deep defences, is for the attacking team to create an opening for a one-on-one on the wing. Without a defensive system with clear cover for every situation, this low-block can be “leaky”. Cover can come from each of the defensive players on the pitch:

- **The goalkeeper**
- **Primary defensive cover**
- **The defender who was marking the pivot**  
(with the “opposite forward” taking over the job)
- **“Opposite forward”**

### Diamond formation in a low block

#### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Set up a 4v4 attack v. defence scenario inside one half of the court.
- Set the defending team up in a 1-2-1 defensive diamond.
- Place a goalkeeper in the goal at either end of the court.

#### Explanation

- The exercise starts with the attacking-team player closest to their own goal in possession of the ball.
- The attacking team’s objective is to progress play and score.
- The defending team try to prevent the attacking team from having an attempt on goal.
- If the attacking team score or possession is turned over, they retreat their own half, and the teams swap roles and play switches to the opposite half of the court.

#### Coaching points

- Force the opposition to play wide and away from goal.
- Press the ball carrier immediately after they receive the ball to prevent them from scanning their options.
- When an attacking player dribbles with the ball, avoid retreating towards goal.
- Anticipate the attacking player’s movements to avoid being pinned and eliminated from the play.



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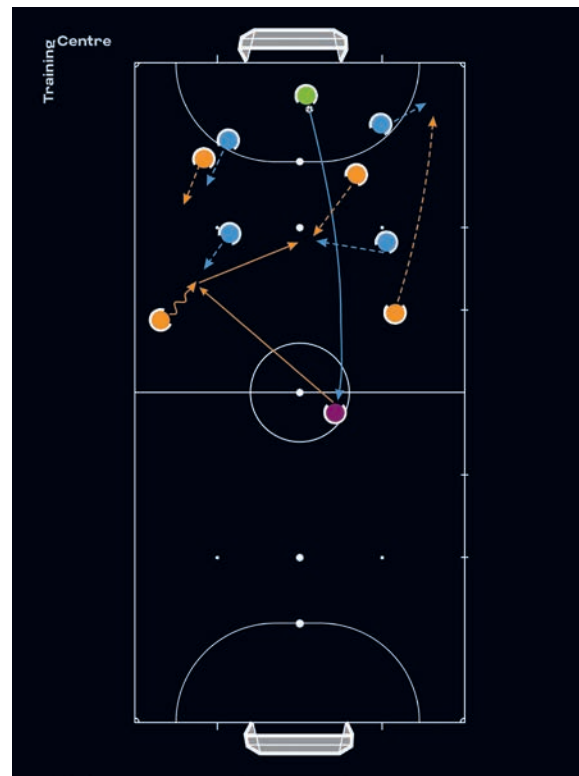
## Low-block press

### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Set up a 4v4 attack v. defence scenario inside one half of the court.
- Place a goalkeeper in the goal at either end of the court.

### Explanation

- The exercise starts with the defending team's goalkeeper playing a goal clearance to the attacking team's goalkeeper.
- The attacking team's goalkeeper advances towards the halfway line and plays the ball to one of the two players positioned in wide areas, which triggers the defending team's press.
- If the defending team turn over possession, the ball is played to the attacking team's goalkeeper, and the teams switch roles.
- If the defending team's goalkeeper saves an attempt on goal or a goal is scored, the attacking team retreat and the defending team attack towards the opposite goal, i.e. there are no counter-attacks.



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### Coaching points

- Increase the intensity of the defensive press when the attacking team play the ball into wide areas.
- Adopt a low centre of gravity when engaging with the ball carrier.
- When pressing the ball carrier in wide areas, get as close to them as possible to prevent them from scanning their options.
- If the attacking player dribbles with the ball, track them by using lateral movements.

## 11.2.6 Recovery

**Recovery work demands a team effort as well as individuals equipped both physically and mentally to take responsibility.**

An effective recovery requires a team effort, as well as players who are physically and mentally equipped to take responsibility for the defensive action.

The overall philosophy of recovery entails three core principles associated with such defensive actions:

- **Delay**
- **Deny**
- **Dictate**

Losing possession may result in a rapid transition from attack to defence, so an absolute recovery (where every player must get goalside of the ball) is the primary aim. However, upon losing possession, at least one player must initiate the attempt to slow down the progress of the ball where possible, importantly buying time for team-mates to get goalside and establish some form of **organised defence**. This is not always possible due to positional and structural imbalances, but it should be part of the coached mindset.

The ebb and flow of futsal, with its frequent transitions from attack to defence, creates many scenarios where recovery is required. Due to an increasing prevalence of direct attacks which will filter its way down from elite level to grassroots, it is expected that **absolute recovery** will become a common feature of futsal over time.

Those teams possessing the physical and mental aptitude to transition quickly to a defensive mindset and slow down the ball's progress after losing possession will be able to deal with 'absolute' recoveries.

The importance of applying pressure on the ball carrier from behind is an aspect of recovery that coaches can work on. Players applying pressure from behind on the opponent attacking at speed can be a hindrance, even if the defender cannot get goalside of the ball. When the ball carrier is aware of an opponent bearing down on them but cannot see them, they begin to think about where they might approach from, which helps to distract the ball carrier.

The recent changes in strategic approach has had a clear impact on the physical capacity and ability of players at elite level. This is an important facet of the **youth player** phase which prepares them for the future demands of the game. These attributes clearly have an impact on recovery effectiveness. In the modern game, limiting the end-to-end nature of gameplay and regaining possession as high up the pitch as possible has become a key defensive strategy.



Maintaining possession is a key aspect of the game but recovery will always be needed so coaches must train (but more specifically, coach) this action. Recovery entails a willing mindset and players taking individual responsibility whilst working collectively. There must be a recognition and understanding in the ever-changing circumstances of a game of who the most appropriate player to instigate the pressure on the ball is at that particular time or phase, with a balanced response from team-mates to recover their defensive organisation.

It is also imperative that the player applying the initial ball pressure in the recovery phase can scan the positional recovery of team-mates and remember their positions to help direct the pressure to the side or middle of the pitch, or simply to delay the opponents, facilitating the organisation of defensive lines and goalside structure.



## 11.2.7 Counter-press

The Futsal World Cup 2021 highlighted the increased significance of the counter-press while showing that to counter-press effectively demands a team effort.



The increased significance of the counter-press is a growing trend across the male adult game. Evidence shows that to counter-pressing effectively requires a team effort.

The definition and application of the counter-press is relatively new to futsal, but it is used to explain an inplay action which is becoming increasingly common given the prevalence of the high-block and high press. The counter-press can occur in an isolated situation, but it is also a key part of recovery.

The counter-press should not solely be seen as one individual player's action in immediately regaining possession, but rather one where anticipation, balanced with caution, is exercised by their team-mates to support the press. Anticipation is crucial, otherwise the effort of regaining possession may be wasted by an opposition overload. When this action has been prevalent in team play, there have been instances where a team regains possession with an effective counter-press only to immediately lose possession again due to insufficient numbers close to the ball.

Those teams more familiar with a high press with the necessary physical qualities are more attuned to this strategy of immediately applying pressure on the ball to regain possession. This requires aggression in the initial recovery phase, with pressure immediately applied on the ball.

The important principles to be applied are therefore:

- **Press the ball quickly**
- **Disrupt the player in possession**
- **Regain possession as quickly as possible.**

## Using the pivot to overcome the press

### Organisation

- Divide the court into thirds.
- Set up a 3v3 (plus a goalkeeper) in zone 1.
- Set up a 1v1 in zone 2.
- Place a goalkeeper in the goal in zone 3.

### Explanation

- The objective for each team is to score in the opposition goal by progressing play through the zones using the support of the pivot.
- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper, who can either play out short to one of their 3 team-mates in zone 1 or directly into the pivot in zone 2.
- The 3 attacking-team players in zone 1 try to play the ball into the pivot to progress play into the next zone.
- In zone 2, the pivot can only link play and has to combine with their team-mates in zone 2 before progressing play into zone 3.
- Once the ball reaches zone 3, any player can score.
- If a team lose possession, the opposition then attack towards the opposite goal.

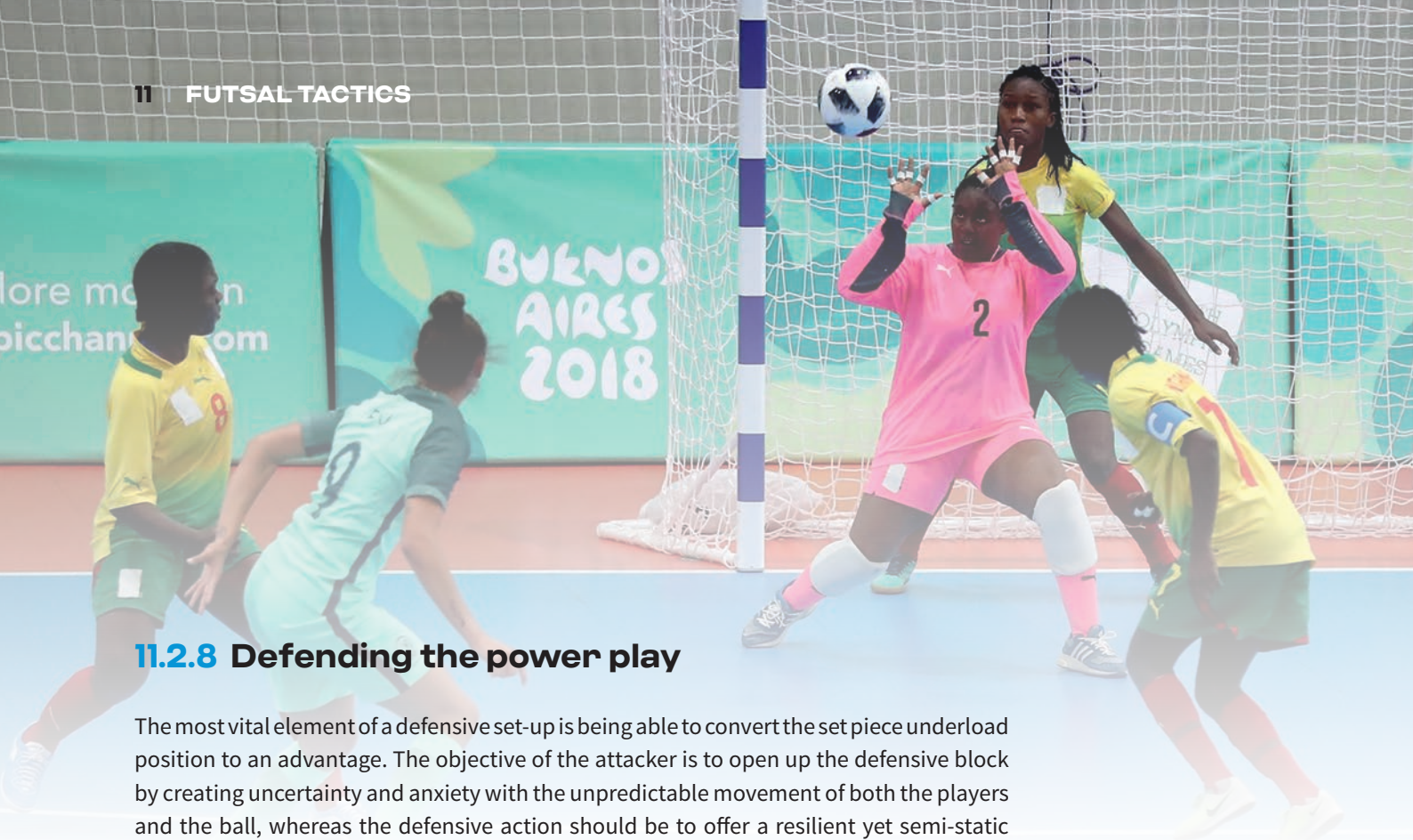
### Coaching points

- Adopting good body orientation provides players with the widest possible field of vision, which allows them to play the ball into any area of the court.
- Constantly create passing lanes to progress play into the next zone.
- Perform feints to pull opposition players out of position and create space to receive.
- Focus on ball retention and the quality of the first touch.
- Shift defenders around the court through constant on- and off-the-ball movement.
- Support the pivot by recognising when and where to move to receive a lay-off.
- Passes need to be firm and accurate.
- The pivot should focus on shielding the ball and playing with their back to goal.



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### 11.2.8 Defending the power play

The most vital element of a defensive set-up is being able to convert the set piece underload position to an advantage. The objective of the attacker is to open up the defensive block by creating uncertainty and anxiety with the unpredictable movement of both the players and the ball, whereas the defensive action should be to offer a resilient yet semi-static block that must be played around – not played through.

When defending a power play, the importance of denying space in the underload is the priority. Sitting deep with a clear rigid structure, passing opponent runners on rather than tracking them helps to maintain the defensive shape and cohesiveness. However, this approach should not prevent the defensive shape from disrupting the opponent's objectives – passing lines and movements.

Each team will defend to its strengths and, as is the case in many areas of futsal, there is no golden solution to defending the power play other than a strong structural discipline linked to a clear, shared strategic approach.

## 11.3 Organisation of play

When referring to formations, they should not signify rigid organisations or lines, but rather the organised occupation of the pitch in relation to certain objectives, roles and functions. The placement or distribution of players is intended to establish a series of interactions between each of them (tactics) in order to achieve the objective without losing organisational balance (structure). Formations should be dynamic and flexible, as they are constantly broken down and reorganised during the game by the team itself and the opponent's actions. Several different formations are used in futsal nowadays, depending on the players on the pitch, the opponents and the circumstances of the match. In reality, all teams, regardless of age or ability, use a combination of different formations as the ebb and flow of the game dictates the different strategies to be implemented, as do the opponent's actions. It is therefore important for young players to understand what each formation looks and feels like and the transitional relationships from one to another.

### 11.3.1 Playing systems – formations

When examining playing systems, the adult, fast-paced nature of modern futsal means clear patterns can sometimes be difficult to recognise. This can be confusing and hard to contemplate for grassroots coaches and those new to futsal or wanting to broaden their understanding.

However, the main thing is to resist the temptation of mimicking others. Instead, we should invest time in learning a lot about little, rather than little about a lot.

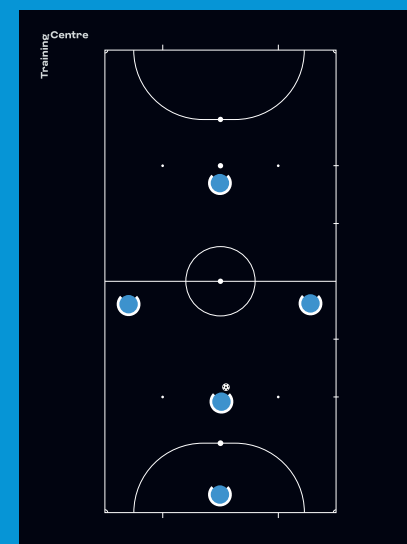
FIFA's technical experts will stress that, in futsal, one playing system is not necessarily more effective than another. The squad is crucial. There is a strong belief that tactical flexibility and fluidity are vital elements of successful teams, yet both rely on strong technical ability to be implemented.

When considering how to structure team play, all of the squad's abilities and qualities have to be recognised. Coaches should ask themselves the following: "Should I select a system to suit the players (**more likely in grassroots futsal**), or the players to suit a system?" (**more likelihood, resources and flexibility to do so with elite adults**).

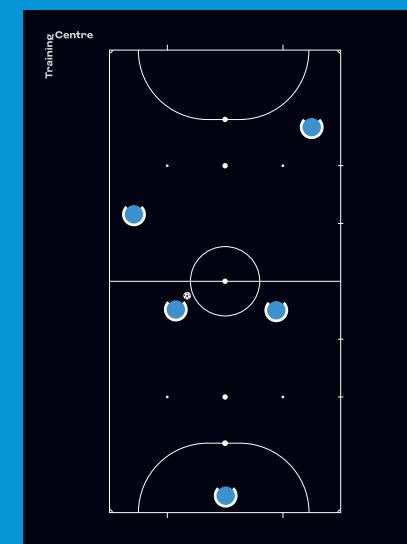
The approach will depend on many factors, but it is important to have an open mind when considering to how to proceed.

### Offensive playing formations

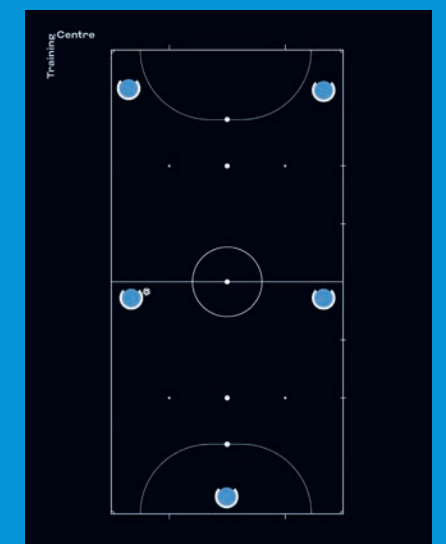
1-1-2-1



1-2-1-1



1-2-2





## 4-0 system: Creating space in behind

### Organisation

- Set up a 28x20m playing area.
- Place a goal on the edge of the penalty area at each end of the playing area.
- Position a goalkeeper in both goals.
- Set up a 3v3.

### Explanation

- Play starts with one of the goalkeepers playing the ball out to a team-mate on one of the flanks.
- The exercise involves free play.
- The out-of-possession team adopt a player-to-player marking system.

### Progression 1

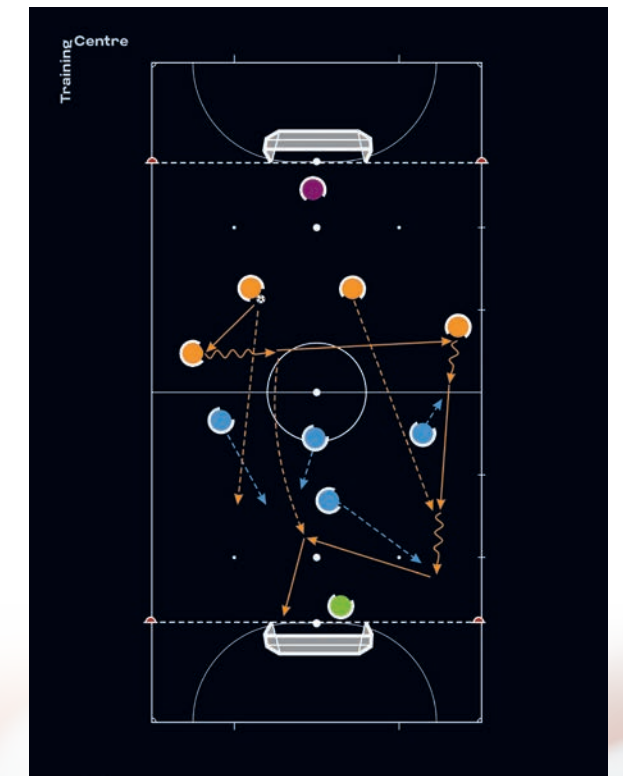
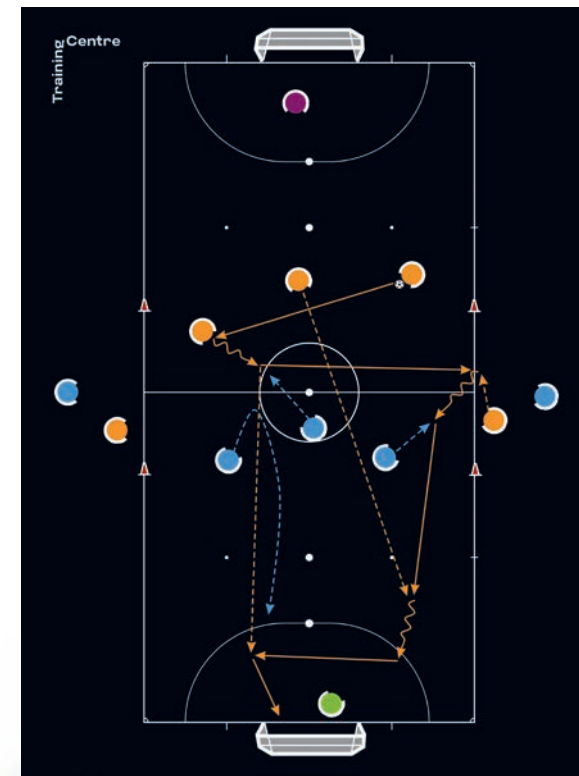
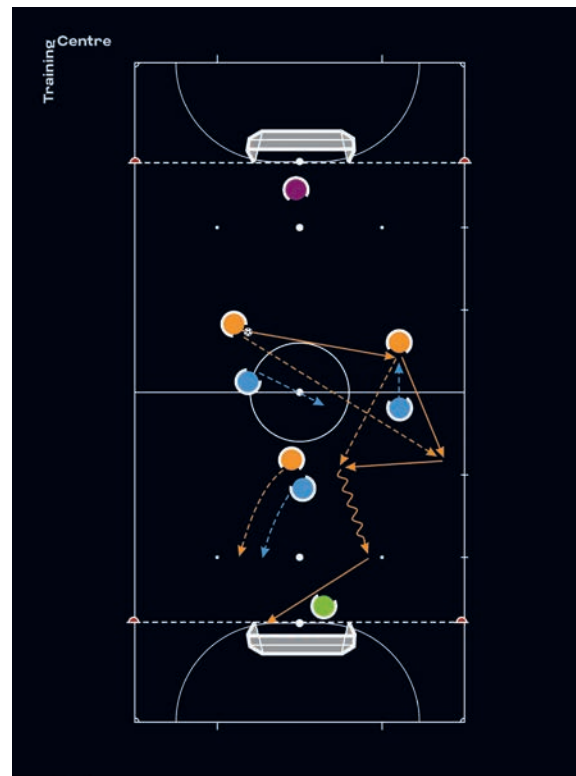
- Utilize the entire court.
- Place an additional player on each sideline for both teams.
- The extra player is allowed to join the attack, creating a 4v3 numerical advantage upon receiving possession in front of the midfield line.

### Progression 2

- Reduced playing area, as in the basic sequence
- 4v4, with a restriction for the team out of possession to defend only in their own half.
- Players are encouraged to put into practice all the attacking movements worked on in the previous two parts of the session

### Coaching points

- Support players' off-the-ball movement should enable them to receive a parallel pass.
- Support players' off-the-ball movement should enable them to receive a diagonal pass.
- Support players' off-the-ball movement should enable them to form a triangle around the ball.
- Players should avoid entering spaces occupied by a team-mate.



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## 2-2 system: 1v1 situations

### Organisation

- Use half a court.
- Place a goal at either end of the playing area.
- Position a goalkeeper in both goals.
- Divide the playing area in half.
- Organise the players into four attackers v. four defenders.
- Place two attackers in each half.
- Position two defenders in the attacking team's defensive half and the other two defenders off the court (beside their team's goal).

### Explanation

- Play starts with the attacking team's goalkeeper playing the ball out to a team-mate in the defensive half.
- Once the attacking team progress play into the attacking half, one of the attackers and both of the defenders can move from the attacking team's defensive half into the attacking half.
- The attacking team can only finish on goal from inside the attacking half.
- If possession is turned over or the attacking team finish on goal, the teams swap roles, with two attackers leaving the court and two defending-team players coming on to become attackers to create a 4v2 scenario.

### Variation

- Set up a 4v4 scenario involving a 2v2 in the attacking team's attacking half.

### Coaching points

- Players should use the full width and depth of the playing area to exploit the 2-2 system to the full.



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## 1-3 system: Space and verticality

### Organisation

- Use a full court.
- Place a goal at either end of the court.
- Position a goalkeeper in both goals.
- Set up four attackers v. two defenders.
- Place two balls adjacent to each other in the attacking team's defensive half, in the position shown in the graphic above.

### Explanation

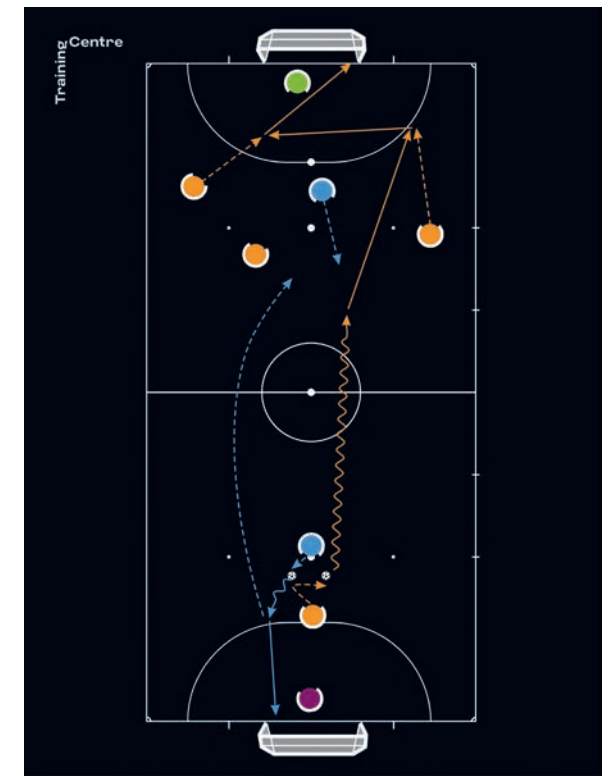
- Play starts with the attacking player in the 1v1 scenario deciding with which of the two balls to attack the opposition's goal.
- Once the attacker has chosen one of the two balls, they dribble unopposed past their opponent, who passes the other ball to the attacking team's goalkeeper with a lofted pass before immediately tracking back into their own half.
- The attacker looks to combine with their team-mates in the attacking half to finish on goal.
- The two attackers who begin the exercise in the most advanced attacking positions are limited to one touch.

### Variation

- Two defenders enter the court to create a 4v4 scenario.
- Play starts with the goalkeeper playing the ball out to their team-mate in the 1v1 scenario or to a team-mate in the attacking half.

### Coaching points

- Players should use the full width of the court to make it difficult for the opposition to defend.
- The attackers cannot leave the attacking half.



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## 12.1 In possession

Set pieces are a unique way to set up a structured movement of players and ball delivery that should yield positive results. In the attacking third, set pieces should usually be taken with the intention of scoring, however, they may also be used for retaining possession, particularly when taken in more defensive areas of the pitch.

Although the importance of set pieces during matches has been recognised for some time, there are different approaches to their application and execution, particularly when it comes to corners. However, a general lack of innovation in set pieces, which is driven by a tendency towards replicating specific movements without the technical ability to execute them, hinders futsal development.



For set pieces to be effective and yield positive results, the defending team needs to be surprised and challenged by how the attackers approach the situation. This is crucial to scoring goals.

Evidence from the FIFA Futsal World Cup in 2021 points to a consistency of traditional corner set-ups (those which have been used for more than three decades) being adopted, with teams still unable to find satisfactory defensive set-ups to thwart them despite their familiar structure and predictable execution.

The ability to read the game and anticipate a traditional type of delivery, such as a lofted pass to the far post for an aerial volley, is a key defensive skill, however, the ability to defend effectively becomes easier when facing a familiar set-up. If these long-standing set piece routines are not defended effectively then, of course, they will remain a favourable option. In this sense, it will take better defensive actions to force innovation, with one concept driving the other.

Innovation is a key part of the excitement of futsal. An advantage will arise from creating the unexpected and the possibility of multiple outcomes from a set piece situation depending on how it is taken. Progressive coaching and game understanding will develop these options, but that requires a specific mindset and willingness to try different things. However, as outlined throughout this coaching manual, players' technical ability is an essential component in other areas.



As a team becomes more confident, the more successful teams tend to take quick corners and capitalise on their speed of thought to attack the unorganised state of their opponents. It will generally be positive for the attacking team to ensure the element of surprise and take advantage of their own superior organisation for a quick pass and shot routine. This requires intelligence, awareness and proactivity in possession. This approach is best aided by players' better physical preparation, enabling teams to get on with play when their opponents still need time to reorganise and recover.

### Set piece principles

Set pieces rely on three key controlling principles:

- **Delivery**
- **Positioning**
- **Movement**

To some extent, the opponent's defensive positioning is an uncontrollable factor, however, the attackers' initial set-up will influence the starting point and actions of the defending side. In many cases, because teams only choose from a few options when it comes to set pieces routines, their efforts became somewhat routine and predictable. This is where coaching plays a key part in offering variation and innovation.

Successful teams maximise options at each set piece and each play should ideally have two or three options depending on how the opposition set up their defensive structure. Evidently, this requires an innovative approach to coaching and preparing a structure.

The goalkeepers' positioning during set pieces is another possible influence on the approach to corners, which is now evident in the modern game. There is a clear tendency for ball deliveries to be driven hard and low to the near post, possibly in the hope of a deflection as the goalkeeper's starting position appears to have changed in a likely attempt to anticipate covering those angles where the ball might be moved to for a shot from outside of the box. This approach can be associated with changes in defensive set-ups, particularly with the positioning of a three-man block at a corner.

One different approach for the defending team is to consider different positional set-ups when defending corners, not reacting to the opponent's positional set-up, but taking control of the opponent's options. Whilst the main principle of an attacking set piece is to occupy and position the defender, the attackers' own positions are hugely influential to this principle. If the defender is not reactive to the attacking set-up, the space which the attackers seek to exploit or the block they aim to implement cannot be effective, leading to the defence taking charge of the set piece.

Defensive teams who set up to defend a corner in the same way every time become predictable and inadvertently show their opponent how to play.

The prevalence of well-established attacking set pieces remain favourable as defences are still ill-prepared to anticipate and counter the threat. Here, we point to coaching objectives linked to game awareness and futsal understanding.

However, progressive teams will innovate, and coaches should note that while there should be several options for each attacking set piece, the same applies to out-of-possession positioning for which defences should be able to read several possible outcomes and be structured to be reactive accordingly.

Whilst the attacking team's set-up and the adoption of basic set piece principles both matter, technical execution is vital in capitalising on the opportunity.

The willingness to try new things and experiment is the only way to test concepts. The best place to do this is during competitive play where outcomes cannot be predicted as they are during training sessions.

## 12.1.1 Kick-ins (in possession)



For coaches, when the frequent opportunity of kick-ins arises, preparation has become a fundamental element in scoring goals. Kick-ins taken within the attacking third now account for a significant number of goals scored during matches, demonstrating that a greater emphasis has been placed on this area by coaches lately.

Kick-ins have two main objectives:

- 1. To launch an attempt on goal**
- 2. To ensure possession of the ball is retained**

These objectives are influenced by the distance from the opponents' goal, the position of the opposing defenders, the position of the attackers and, importantly, how the player taking the kick-in reads the game.

Because of the four-second count, reactivity in positioning and using the right skills are vital components of a successful kick-in. It is common to see teams who, despite facing a disorganised opposition defence, and a clear opportunity for a quick, sudden kick, choose not to take it. Instead, these teams trust their preparation and wait for their set-up to be positioned. This provides suitable evidence for a progressive development approach. Perhaps a quick kick-in does not always offer better results than an organised, well executed kick-in. In truth, teams require a combination of everything but mastering each scenario is a key asset of progressive, successful futsal teams.

Where the concept of the set piece is blocked out defensively then safety in ball retention must be the prevailing objective and playing the ball back so as to start out in a safe 3-1 formation before attempting to build an attack is the likely outcome. It is important to remember that in this scenario a kick-in represents an opportunity to maintain ball possession, balance in positioning and importantly game control.



### Tactical aspects of the kick-in

#### Blocks

Blocking is used by many teams to enable a long pass or to take out a defensive action is commonplace. There are two common types of blocks that are popular in futsal play: the direct block and the block and show.

#### Feint

A key aspect of successful kick-ins is the use of the feint to trick the opposition into believing the pass will go in one direction before playing it in another (where the pass will be played or by whom).

#### Position

It sometimes goes unnoticed but paying attention to the correct position (e.g. standing up to observe everything before leaning down lower but keeping their head up or watching and analysing the open play situation in order to select the best passing option) of the kicker before, during and after kick-ins is important to what happens after the kick-in is taken. Some take their foot off the ball, while others keep their foot on it until they actually play the ball.

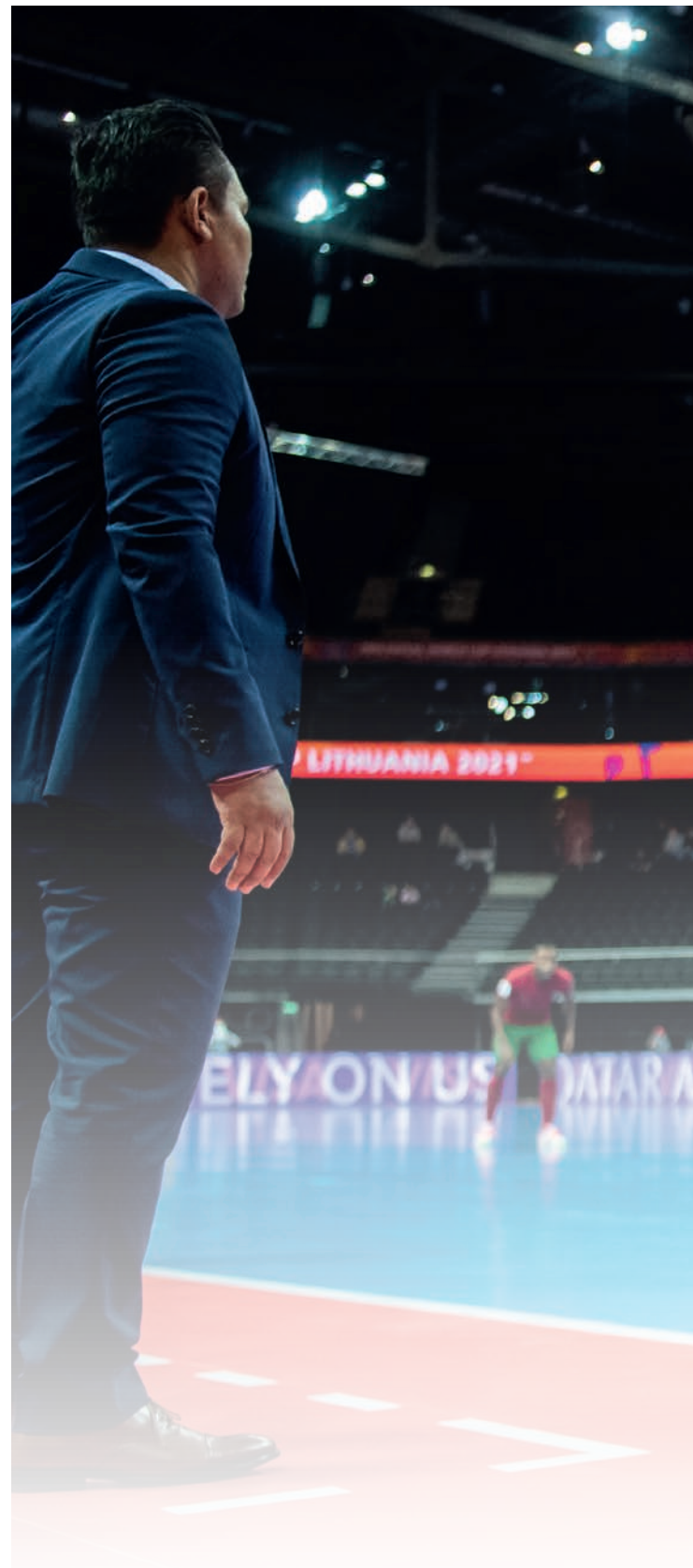
#### Timing

The FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game establish a four-second time limit for the ball to be played at the referee's discretion. It is important to train perceptive understanding of the four-second count so that players are attuned and not panicked into playing under pressure. So, rather than limiting the number of passes in a training exercise, which is not a constraint of open play set by the Laws of the Game, consider a time limit of no more than four seconds for a more game-specific constraint.

#### Using the goalkeeper

Using the goalkeeper as a fifth player is becoming more prevalent across all levels of the game, positioning them on the opposite flank in order to overcome the opposition's high press by adopting a numerical advantage.

Where permitted by the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game, the goalkeeper can adequately act as a fifth outfield player. This approach confirms the need to enhance both technique (passing, control, etc.) and tactics (how to pass and to whom) when training goalkeepers.



### Technical aspects of the kick-in

The tactical aspects of passing are inextricably related to the technical aspects (the type of pass, its weight, speed and direction, and whether it is lofted, driven, etc.). These are summed up as the quality of the pass.

Various types:

- **An aerial pass, driven just above the defenders' heads, before shooting. If a pass were too high, it would give the defenders the advantage, so it is vital to get the height just right for a successful volley afterwards.**
- **A low pass, preferably driven to a player's stronger foot for safe control and receipt.**

#### 12.1.2 Corner kicks (in possession)

Corner kicks (like all set pieces) may have multiple possible results, however, given the proximity to the opponent's goal and the benefit of being able to control the play, the main objective of corners is to score a goal or at least cause defensive problems for the opponent.

In addition, the objective is sometimes merely to retain possession. This is often the case where the opponents have a stronger defensive set-up than the attacker's creative options. The latter depends on the scoreline, the time left in the match, the probability of the corner being effective, and how the player taking the corner reads the situation. These are vital aspects of selecting the appropriate action.



#### 12.1.3 Free kicks (in possession)

The most significant element of a free kick is the coordination between the team's movements and the ball delivery.

In this situation, it is important that the free kick taker demonstrates a clear understanding of timing and accuracy, with the appropriate ball pace and trajectory. For this reason, the kicker should take their time, stay composed and remain alert to the current match situation and positioning of team-mates and opponents.

Once more, the intended results from free kicks will depend on the position on the pitch from where the kick is being taken, the phase in the game and the opponent's defensive set-up. In futsal, where the four-second count prevails for the in-possession team, the importance of all players being ready and reactive in possession is essential for success.

As well as having the objective of scoring a goal, free kicks may also be strategic in maintaining possession.





## 12.2 Out of possession

**A key but often overlooked aspect of being in possession is considering what will happen when ball possession is suddenly lost.**

If the team does not think about this until after they have lost the ball, it is too late. Every attack and counter-attack must therefore have what could be considered a “door lock” - a safety measure that is immediately applied upon losing possession.

This is different for set pieces than losing possession in open play where the defensive principles of delay, deny and dictate come to the fore. Defending set pieces, where the ball will be dead for some time whilst the opponent gets organised, provides an opportunity to organise defensively. However, it is also necessary to consider how to prevent the opponent from making a quick pass and moving (i.e. delay).

Defending set pieces in the most effective manner requires each team to have a shared plan of how to limit space, both individually and collectively as a unit. The deeper (closer to the defending team’s goal) the set piece, the greater the significance of the goalkeeper’s role in setting up that defensive unit. Once more, the role and significance of the goalkeeper comes to the fore. When facing the ball, the goalkeeper will invariably be the deepest player and therefore have the best vision of the whole pitch (the ball, space, teammates and opponents).

The key factor in set pieces is for the defensive team to be ready quicker than the attacking team, bearing in mind the four-second count and that denying the attacking team’s chance to play the ball quickly is vital. Organisation is everything in an effective defensive denial.

### 12.2.1 Kick-ins (out of possession)

Teams will implement different tactics to overcome the threat of kick-ins.

At the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021, the most recent edition, a total of 32 goals were scored from kick-ins. This represents over 10% of all goals scored during the tournament. Consequently, the importance of defending these set pieces has never been as vital as it is now in the modern game.

With an increasingly innovative and varied approach to kick-ins across the game, this requires teams to evaluate how they adapt to and defend the various threats posed by this type of restart. This is where coaching plays an important role in providing suitable resistance in positioning and blocking.

Generally, the defensive approach is either man marking or zonal marking. Both approaches are effective when executed well.

#### Tactical aspects

When defending a kick-in, **body position** is an important element of the ability to be reactive and attempt to dictate to the opponent where to play. The chances of defending successfully are increased by being aware of the ball’s position and its potential trajectory, the closest opponent, and where the rest of the attackers are positioned in order to anticipate their possible tactical movement. This also highlights the importance of the players without the ball, rather than the call carrier.

**Communication** within the team is also important (especially in zonal defending) since, in order to avoid errors and disarray, all players have to communicate to adjust who each player is marking in their zone once the attackers start to move around.

The goalkeeper plays a key role here as they are often the only player who has sight of every other player due to their position relative to the ball.

### 12.2.2 Corners and free kicks (out of possession)

It is often believed that the defensive team is not in control of these situations, with the attacking team in power instead. However, the opposite may be true.

The attacking team’s principle is to position players in such a way that they lead the defensive set-up exactly where they want them to be in order to create space, passing options and a general advantage in play. By being dictated to in this way, the defensive organisation works to the advantage of the attacking team to some extent, but the defensive team has some freedom to manage the risk whilst dictating the outcome.

Importantly, this is where the defensive strategy must be to cut passing lines and occupy and deny the space that could be exploited. Instructions for how to set up for both corners and free kicks is somewhat pointless as each dead-ball situation is unique, but these principles of static defending must be adhered to.





The vast majority of young players tend to idolise somebody. It could be a player or even a parent or sibling – this often influences their positional decision.

It must be recognised by all coaches and parents that, before the age of 12, players cannot and should not reasonably be assigned to a specific position. To offer every child the best possible futsal experience and development opportunities, they are encouraged to try and experience the game from various positions and engagements. For instance, unless a goalkeeper understands what it's like to receive a ball from a goalkeeper at pace to feet as a pivot, how can they know how to best deliver the ball to the pivot as a goalkeeper. Consequently, **developing player** coaches should embrace the concept of developing an allround player who has a developed understanding in all positions by the time they reach 12 years of age. Failing to do so could be regarded as not acting in young players' best interests and could see a six-year-old "goalkeeper" miss an opportunity to be a better outfield player than they could be a goalkeeper. Here is where coaches must adopt a fair and engaging approach to dealing with players perceived as young goalkeepers so that every session engages all players and does not isolate those labelled as goalkeepers at these ages.



Consequently, this section would not generally be applied to **developing players** unless there was a clear reason to do so. Of course, young goalkeepers should be encouraged if that is their vision and engages them with futsal, but they should also be engaged in outfield training to hone and refine their footwork, motor skills, positional sense, passing skills and a wider game and positional understanding.

For more information, check out the FUTSAL GOALKEEPING COACHING MANUAL





## Blocking and continuing play

### Organisation

- Use the full court.
- Place a goal at either end of the court.
- Mark out a dotted line 9m from the goal line of one of the goals using cones.
- Set up with three goalkeepers: one in goal and the other two (goalkeepers 2 and 3) beside the goal.
- Give goalkeepers 2 and 3 a ball.
- Line six attackers up behind the 9m line.
- Place a cone 5m directly in front of each goalpost.

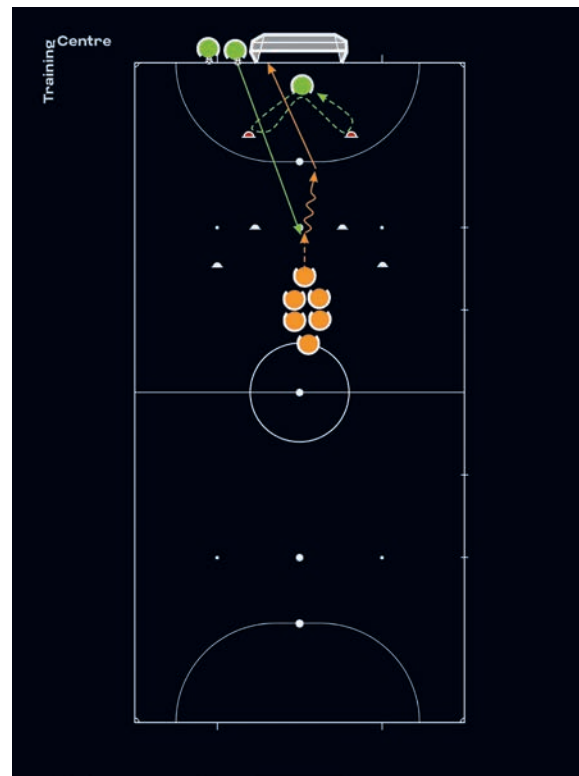
### Explanation

- Goalkeeper 1 moves alternately between a point slightly in front of the midpoint of the goal line and the two cones.
- As goalkeeper 1 performs these movements, goalkeeper 2 rolls the ball to the first attacker in the queue, who has two options: either to take a first-time shot on goal from behind the 9m line or to take a touch to control the ball behind the 9m line that sees them advance into the zone between the 9m line and the edge of the penalty area before finishing on goal in 1v1 scenario within three seconds.
- If the goalkeeper parries the attacker's shot back out to them, they have a maximum of two touches in which to finish on goal.
- The sequence ends when the ball goes out of play, the goalkeeper gains possession or a goal is scored.
- Once the sequence is over, the goalkeepers rotate positions, with goalkeeper 3 rolling the ball from beside the goal to the second attacker in the queue, goalkeeper 2 taking up a position in goal and goalkeeper 1 occupying a position beside the goal.

### Variations

#### Variation 1

- If the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, they try to score directly in the opposing goal with a goal clearance. If the goalkeeper fails to score from the goal clearance, they face another attacking sequence.



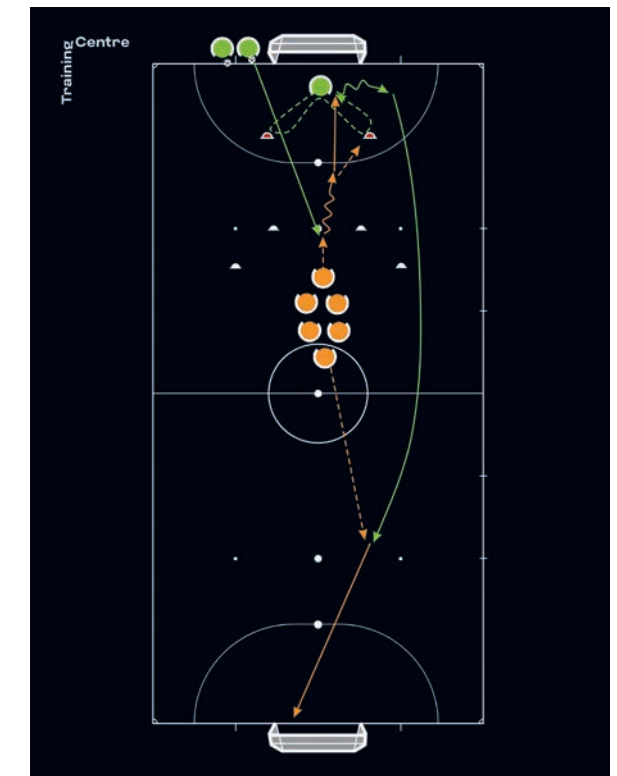
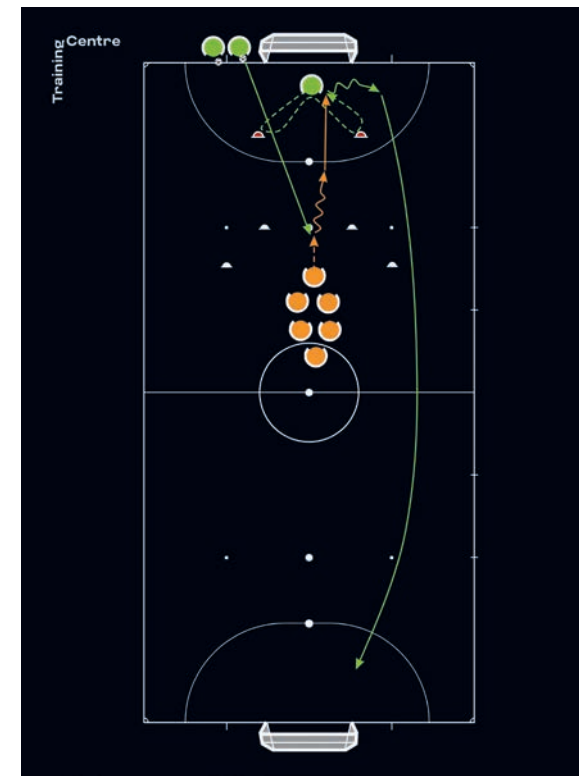
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#### Variation 2

- If the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, they launch a quick counter-attack by playing an overarm throw towards the last attacker in the queue, who takes up a position in the opposing half and has to finish first-time and within four seconds of the goalkeeper gaining possession of the ball. The attacker can jockey the goalkeeper.

#### Variation 3

- After gaining possession of the ball, the goalkeeper can choose between shooting directly into the opposing goal with a goal clearance or combining with the last attacker in the queue.



### Coaching points

- The goalkeeper should read the attacker's body language to decide whether to come off their line and close them down.
- If the attacker is preparing to take a shot on goal and the goalkeeper has already begun to close them down in anticipation of a 1v1 scenario, the goalkeeper should adopt a stationary position to avoid facing the attacker's shot on the move.



## Saving frontal shots

### Organisation

- Set up a 15x20m playing area.
- Place a goal at one end of the playing area.
- Mark out a dotted line 9m from the goal line using cones.
- Set up with three goalkeepers: one in goal and the other two (goalkeepers 2 and 3) beside the goal.
- Give goalkeepers 2 and 3 a ball.
- Line six attackers up behind the 9m line.

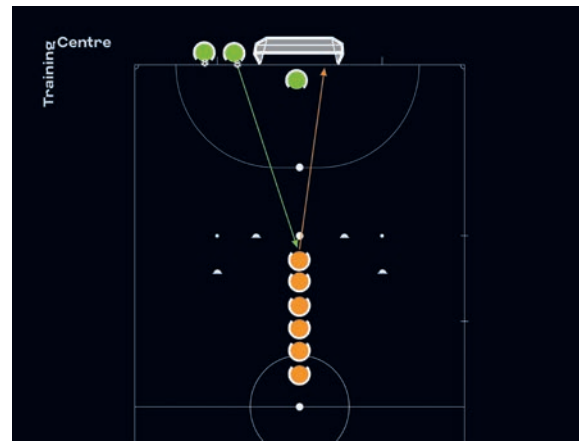
### Explanation

- Goalkeeper 2 rolls the ball towards the first attacker in the queue, who takes first-time shot on goal from behind the 9m line.
- The sequence ends when the ball goes out of play, the goalkeeper gains possession or a goal is scored.
- Once the sequence is over, the goalkeepers rotate positions, with goalkeeper 3 rolling the ball from beside the goal to the second attacker in the queue, goalkeeper 2 taking up a position in goal and goalkeeper 1 occupying a position beside the goal.
- If the goalkeeper parries the attacker's shot back out to them, they have a maximum of two touches in which to finish on goal.

### Variation

#### Variation 1

- Introduce a second attacker to the sequence to increase the level of uncertainty for the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper performs lateral movements between the two goalposts (slightly in front of the goal line), touching each of them before becoming active once the attacker receives the ball.
- If the goalkeeper parries the attacker's shot back out to them, the second attacker becomes active to create a 2v1 scenario.



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#### Variation 2

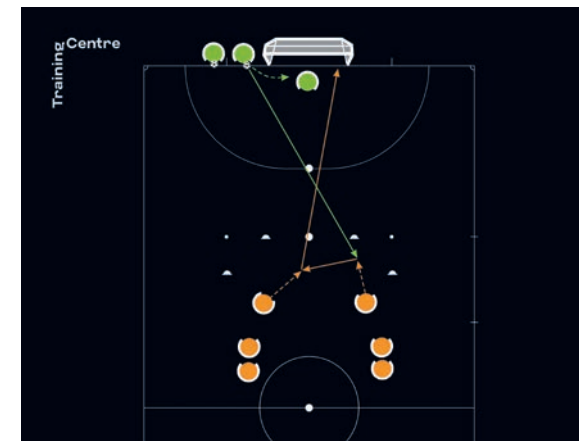
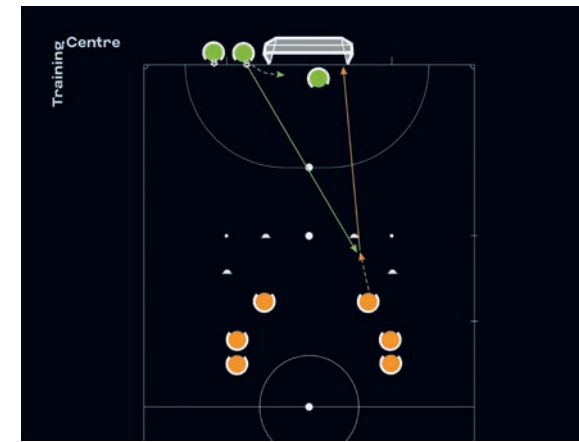
- The attacker has the option to finish on goal or set their team-mate up for a shot on goal.

#### Variation 3

- The two attackers can play up to three passes before finishing on goal.

### Coaching points

- The attacker should be alert to any rebounds following their initial shot on goal.
- The goalkeeper should parry shots into wide areas to avoid presenting the attacker with another shooting opportunity.
- The goalkeeper should be stationary and anchored to the ground when the attacker shoots at goal.





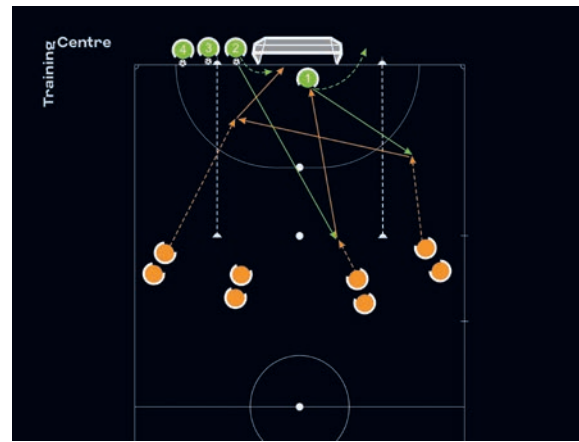
## Defending shots from out wide

### Organisation

- Set up a 15x20m playing area.
- Place a goal at one end of the playing area.
- Mark out a dotted line 9m from the goal line using cones and create two 5-metre-wide zones.
- Position a pair of attackers in each of the two central zones, approximately 1m behind the 9m line.
- Position a pair of attackers in each of the two wide zones, approximately 1m behind the 9m line.
- Set up with four goalkeepers: one in goal and the other three (goalkeepers 2,3 and 4) beside the goal.
- Give goalkeepers 2,3 and 4 a ball.

### Explanation

- Goalkeeper 2 rolls the ball towards one of the centrally positioned attackers, who takes a first-time shot on goal.
- The sequence ends when the ball goes out of play, the goalkeeper gains possession or a goal is scored.
- Once the sequence is over, the goalkeepers rotate positions, with goalkeeper 3 rolling the ball from beside the goal to the second attacker in the queue, goalkeeper 2 taking up a position in goal, goalkeeper 1 occupying a position beside the goal and goalkeeper 4 moving forward a position in the queue beside the goal.
- If the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, they roll it out to one of the attackers positioned in one of the two wide zones. After rolling the ball out, the goalkeeper swaps positions with a goalkeeper positioned beside the goal, who faces an attacking action in which the wide attacker has two touches in which to shoot or play a pass to the team-mate on the opposite wide channel attacking the far post.
- The wide player receiving the goalkeeper's roll-out cannot enter the central zone or the penalty area.



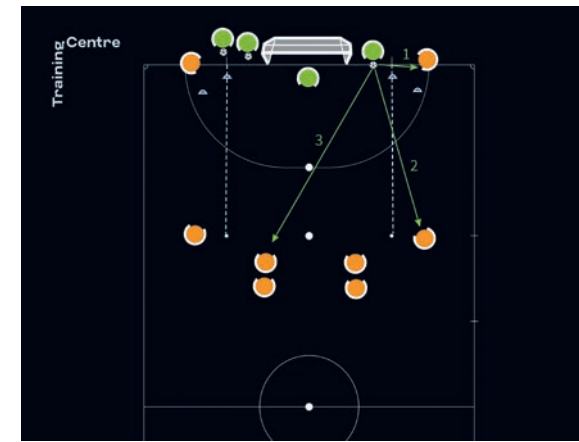
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### Variation

- Place two cones (in the positions displayed in the graphic) and one attacker near to the goal line on each side of the goal.
- The goalkeeper has three options to choose from in terms of the recipient of the roll-out that begins the sequence: a player positioned near to the goal line, in a wide zone or a central zone.
- Attackers choose whether to finish first-time or to pass to a team-mate, who has to finish first-time.
- If the goalkeeper rolls the ball out to one of the players positioned near to the goal line, this player's passing options involve one of the two players positioned centrally or a wide player on the opposite flank.

### Coaching points

- The goalkeeper should not retract their arms when facing shots.
- The goalkeeper should maintain the basic defensive position for as long as possible.
- The goalkeeper should cover as much of the goal as possible to make it more difficult for the opposition to score.
- The goalkeeper should read the game and constantly adapt their position based on the attacker's intentions.





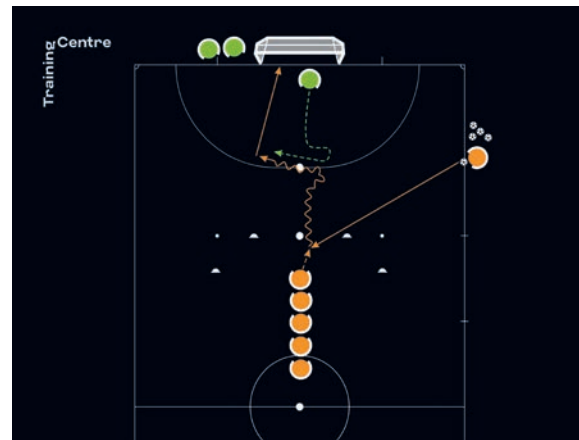
## Defending the edge of the penalty area

### Organisation

- Set up a 15x20m playing area.
- Place a goal at one end of the playing area.
- Mark out a dotted line 9m from the goal line using cones.
- Line five attackers up in a queue 1m behind the 9m line.
- Set up a ball station on one of the touchlines, placing a serving player at the station.
- Set up with three goalkeepers: one in goal and the other two (goalkeepers 2 and 3) beside the goal.

### Explanation

- The serving player plays a kick-in between the 9m line and the edge of the penalty area to the first attacker in the queue.
- The first attacker has an unlimited number of touches and three seconds in which to finish on goal.
- If the goalkeeper parries the ball back out to the attacker, they have two touches in which to finish on goal.
- The sequence ends when the ball goes out of play, the goalkeeper gains possession or a goal is scored.
- Once the sequence is over, the goalkeepers rotate positions, with goalkeeper 2 taking up a position in goal, goalkeeper 1 occupying a position beside the goal and goalkeeper 3 moving to the front of the queue beside the goal.
- If the goalkeeper gains possession of the ball, they roll it to the attacker at the front of the queue before swapping roles with the goalkeeper at the front of the queue beside the goal, who faces the attacker in a 1v1 scenario.



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### Variation

#### Variation 1

- A ball station and server player are added on the opposite touchline, with the attacker choosing from which touchline they receive the kick-in.

#### Variation 2

- The attacker receives a kick-in from one touchline and then from the other.

#### Variation 3

- Two balls are placed centrally, between the 9m line and the edge of the penalty area. After repeating Variation 2, the attacker chooses one of the two balls with which to perform the 1v1 action against the goalkeeper.

#### Variation 4

- The attacker chooses one of the four balls with which to perform the action. They have four seconds in which to make their decision/perform feints between the options and three seconds in which to finish after making contact with the ball.

### Coaching points

- The goalkeeper should only leave the penalty area if they are able to make a clearance or get a foot to the ball to divert it away from goal.





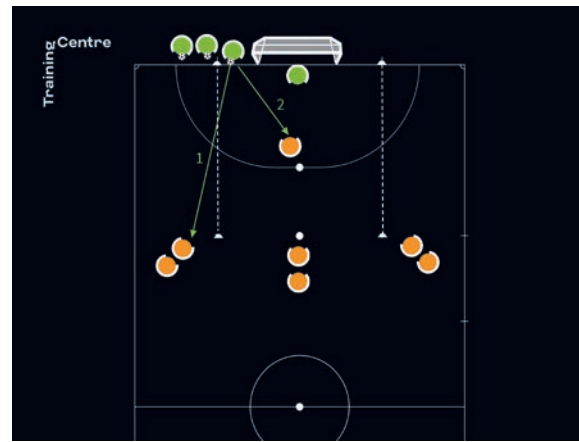
## Defending from the goal-line

### Organisation

- Set up a 15x20m playing area.
- Place a goal at one end of the playing area.
- Mark out a dotted line 9m from the goal line using cones and create two 5-metre-wide zones.
- Place a pair of attackers in each wide zone, 1m behind the 9m line. Position one attacker inside the penalty area. Arrange the remaining two attackers, who take it in turns to occupy the role of the attacker inside the penalty area after each sequence, in a queue between the two central zones.
- Set up with four goalkeepers: one in goal and the other three (goalkeepers 2, 3 and 4) beside the goal.
- Give goalkeepers 2, 3 and 4 a ball.

### Explanation

- Goalkeeper 2, who is positioned beside the goal, has two options to begin each sequence: either to play the ball to the attacker positioned inside the penalty area to finish on goal first-time or to pass to one of the two wide players, who control the ball before advancing and either finishing directly on goal or passing to the team-mate inside the penalty area, who takes up a position at the far post.
- The sequence ends when the ball goes out of play, the goalkeeper gains possession or a goal is scored.
- Once the sequence is over, the goalkeepers rotate positions, with goalkeeper 3 rolling the ball from beside the goal to the second attacker in the queue, goalkeeper 2 taking up a position in goal, goalkeeper 1 occupying a position beside the goal and goalkeeper 4 moving forward a position in the queue beside the goal.
- While the ball is in play, any player on the pitch (even those waiting in a queue) can finish on goal with a maximum of two touches.



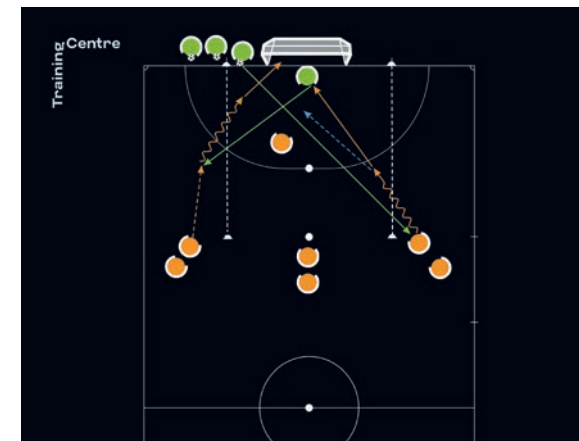
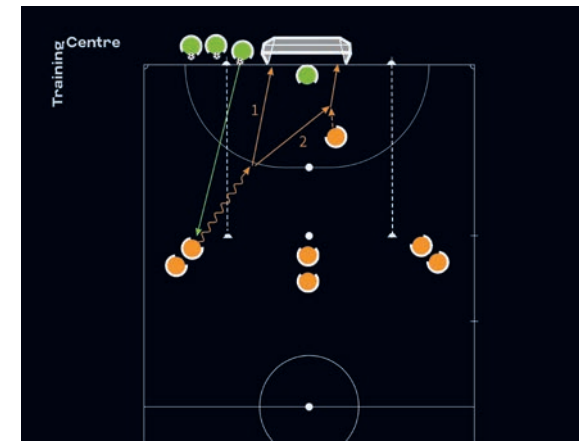
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### Variation

- The attacker positioned in the penalty area has a maximum of three touches in which to finish on goal.
- When the goalkeeper makes a save, the attacker whose shot was saved becomes a defender to create a 2v1 scenario (plus the goalkeeper). The goalkeeper rolls the ball out to either of the attackers and works with the defender to defend the attacking situation.

### Coaching points

- The goalkeeper should focus on adopting the right position to be able to deal with various attacking scenarios.
- The goalkeeper should constantly adjust their position to ensure that they are between the ball and the goal line at all times.
- When performing the split save, the goalkeeper should slide their heel along the ground.







### Specific qualities and requirements

Futsal is a unique game. Its Laws of the Game, the pitch size, minimal-bounce ball which stays in play longer, player numbers and constant rotation of players all contribute towards its uniqueness. Consequently, the development of players' physical conditions must take into account the requirements of the specific features of the game, whereas the physical objective is to provide the energy resources to facilitate the players' involvement in tactical play through technical delivery as effectively as possible.

To provide a key insight into the variable demands of the game, a proper evaluation of data has been undertaken. This is particularly relevant at elite level, where those resources are more available. However, this data will shape the journey from young player to adult in order to be best prepared for the demands and challenges faced at elite level.

There is common misconception that futsal requires players who can withstand heavy physical load demands. Whilst this may be true in certain areas of the game, there are many factors that dictate the speed of play and the physical styles needed to cope with it. For example, playing styles vary across continents. In those underdeveloped nations where ball retention is not developed, ball possession is frequently lost and gained, which is very physically demanding so players require better physical abilities. On the other hand, in nations where futsal has been played for longer, tactical games are more prevalent, perhaps leading to a lesser reliance on high load demands (apart from during specific spells of counterattacking and recovery). In this regard, the physical load tends to be more focused than constant, unlike in those nations new to futsal where transitions take place more frequently.

We must rely on the data and carefully examine its feedback in this explanation of variability.

### Weekly training plans

The focus can often be about what happens on the pitch on a matchday. What happens in the days, weeks and months before that day is important – matchdays create the continuum.

### Special features of physical preparation for young players

Young players are developing physically throughout their early childhood and early teens. The physical exercise they engage in from a young age will dictate their body shape and ability in later life. Likewise, overuse and over-play during that age period may cause physical imbalances that inhibit that development. Although young people are relatively resilient, there remains a duty of care by those in positions of responsibility and care to always do the right thing by understanding each child's needs and protecting them.



Mature players are a reflection of their development activities and opportunities in younger life, which were consolidated from that early age, making change that much harder the older the player. This section is applicable to players aged 16 years and older, only proportionately to the development phase of the specific player. The promotion of physical activity beyond normal, child's play is not encouraged for players under this age.

Young players should be encouraged to play within certain limits to avoid overexposure from an early age, which could impact their physical growth. Children will play for as long as their bodies allow them to, and their personalities demonstrate ways of telling you they have done enough. Young players will exercise and gain enough appropriate muscular/aerobic development from their own body weight, which naturally assists appropriate physical development.

When **developing players** are engaged in gameplay, core movement principles such as coordination, speed, strength, (futsal) agility, and physical contact must all be developed with a focus on gameplay.



As players develop and mature into a youth futsal environment, their developmental needs change. As players mature, greater emphasis can be placed upon individual and team tactics, formations, futsal fitness, complexities of technique, and more sophisticated movements in gameplay. In these environments, a mixture of drills and exercises can be introduced to focus on the development of key technical attributes, although these will also influence further physical development that will require additional physical support away from the game itself. However, this is not to ignore the significance of maintaining long periods of gameplay during training to enable the transfer of these more complex learning outcomes to enhance skill acquisition within the unpredictability of live game scenarios. As youth players develop, the coach can let them face more demanding and complex challenges. This approach must always relate to ability and physical development, which are core principles throughout this age range up to 18 years old and beyond.

When considering physical activities for children, the psychological and biological aspects of their growth at different ages have to be considered.

It is inappropriate to train **developing players** or **youth players** in the same way as an adult. Wellconsidered training sessions should be designed with age-appropriate coaching in mind.

Load demands, physical and mental preparation, and recovery vary between developmental phases but they are intrinsic in session planning and the meso- and macro-cycles used in preparation.

#### Simple guidelines:

- Adapt the rules of the game to the children's level of knowledge and development
- Adapt the tasks to the children's levels of preparation so that the learning/coaching motivates them
- Every child should benefit from positive reinforcement
- Objectives should be short-term so that children do not become demotivated
- The fun of playing, curiosity, etc. are motivational factors for children
- Failure in competition can demotivate children. For this reason, participation should be emphasised and positively reinforced

#### Stamina

- The genetic influence on maximum oxygen consumption is 90% while training only accounts for 10%
- Lactic anaerobic efforts should be delayed until the age of 15-16

#### Strength

- Work can start on improving maximum strength from the age of 16-17, with caution
- Work can start on developing explosive power from the age of 16-18
- Lactate endurance strength can be developed from the age of 18

#### Speed

- Exercises and games working on speed with short efforts can be introduced for young players
- Acceleration and speed of movement can be trained from the age of 14-15 for boys and 9-13 for girls
- Optimum age for speed training is usually between the ages of 16-18

#### Flexibility

- Flexibility reduces with age
- Children's flexibility starts to reduce considerably at the age of 10 for boys and 12 for girls
- Bone structure is more consolidated from the age of 14-16, meaning that muscular strength increases, and muscular elasticity may be reduced
- There should be daily work on flexibility

#### Coordination

Work to improve coordination can be classified into three groups:

##### 1. Exercises that do not require the use of equipment:

Various exercises for the head, torso, limbs (different types of turns, jumps, changes of rhythm, etc.)

##### 2. Exercises involving the skilful handling of equipment:

Work with sticks, balls, ropes, etc. In addition to the skill of handling, this also helps players calculate possible trajectories and suitable positions for throwing and receiving.

##### 3. Exercises that are specific to the sport:

Ball control: running with the ball, dribbling, etc.

When coaching coordination, starting with exercises from the first of these groups is advised.







**This coaching manual promotes the prioritisation of using as much gameplay as possible during the early player development phases. That said, not every training session should be regarded as a match, but gamebased training to provide realistic contexts in exercises.**

Every player will naturally want to play, but perhaps some players lack the desire to win or fail to recognise its importance. Of course, this is a fundamental incentive for playing in a team. Similarly, the coach must be able to see the benefits of play and understanding when playing (as opposed to simply winning) is the learning objective.

**Developing players** – individually and as part of a team – should be focused on participation and learning about futsal by participating, as opposed to being focused on results. Too much emphasis is often placed upon the result, potentially resulting in the game's various learning objectives being lost by that misguided emphasis. During this development phase, it is important to ensure that – for players and coaches alike – playing the game is the key motivator, not winning at all costs.

As players develop and progress to youth participation, being part of a team becomes important. Learning how to collaborate as groups of individuals to function as a unit, as well as an individual, is key to enjoyment and positive results. One way to measure success is obviously by evaluating results, but it cannot be the only way. For many, it will not even be the main way to measure success. During this development phase, a greater emphasis is placed upon the areas **of preparation, assessment and feedback (before, during and after matches)**, initially by the coach but also by the players. During the developing player phase, the focus is on short and simple pre-match explanations and involving players in post-match review and feedback. Coaches should be able to facilitate feedback by asking exploratory questions where players provide their honest views and understanding. Young players will probably only take in a small fraction of what the coach tells them. Within minutes, most of that will have been forgotten so verbal communication skills are vital. It is important that the coach does not speak **at** the young players but engages them to have a significant contribution.



Player learning is often seen to be demonstrated by action – the activity they undertake. This must be assessed against the verbal feedback received as a player's explanation may be interpreted as an indication of understanding, although not demonstrated in their ability. Young players may require additional coaching guidance when it comes to putting what they have learnt into practice. Understanding what has been learned is often assumed to be sufficient for progressing as a player, but the ability to apply that knowledge, which is the main objective of coaching, is essential. However, until the player has grasped the technical execution, progression should not be justified by their understanding. This may be a flawed interpretation of teaching success for the coach since mental understanding is only part of the desired results. How can we correct this?

This may require some 1:1 coaching intervention either 'in-game' or in an isolated exercise which is then incorporated back into a game scenario using the whole-part-whole coaching method.



## 15.1 The matchday experience



Depending on when a matchday occurs, preparation for an upcoming matchday occurs in the days leading up to it. However, it is not viable for every match to be considered in such micro-isolation, it must be part of a season-long plan of preparation and progress.

The coach's methodology plays a key development role in this regard. For **developing players**, match preparation is focused on the individual, their own development and gaining experience through gameplay. Encouraging their ability to try (without fearing failure) and to be challenged by those new, varied experiences, which promotes an ability to experiment. It should never be just about winning. In contrast, for **youth players**, this will perhaps involve a slightly adjusted focus to ensure those experiences and developing skill sets can now contribute towards working as a team, thanks to a deeper game understanding. When first transitioning from the **developing player** phase to the **youth player** phase, it is also appropriate to begin thinking about preparing to play as team against familiar opposition.

In this section, we are only going to concentrate on matchdays.

Matchdays can affect both players and coaches in different ways, but it is also important to understand that the event can be emotionally burdening. However, this day is just as important as any other day in the preparation phase, though leadership must come to the fore. On this day, coaches must take responsibility and provide an environment that facilitates performance.

Players, coaches and all other support staff recognise that mistakes on matchdays have far greater consequences than those made during training.

Matchdays also need to be prepared for and rehearsed, whether that is in actual play or the lead up to kick-off. When managed correctly by staff, matches provide a unique opportunity to put what has been learnt in training into practice in different environments. However, each match has a different rate of success or failure. The matchday preparation procedure starts well before kick-off, some might say that preparation for the next match starts when the last match ends. However, it is part of a season-long approach to development, with matchdays reflecting milestones in the seasonal cycle of play and development.

Individual and collective learning plans should be developed and assessed frequently by individual players and the coach, but also collectively as a team so that peer feedback is collected. Collecting and disseminating peer responses and feedback is often overlooked but is a vital component in assessing understanding. Peer feedback is often more powerful, valued and sometimes persuasive for young players rather than receiving it from an adult coach.

### 15.1.1 Match preparation



- If the match is played in the afternoon or evening, giving your talk in the morning is recommended so that players can visualise and reflect on the analysis of their opponents and the instructions received from the coach. If the match is in the morning, the match preparation can be done the afternoon or evening before.
- Although it is not a strict rule, it is recommended not to give one-way instructions for over 20/25 minutes because studies have shown that, after this amount of time has elapsed, the players' ability to pay attention and concentrate falls. For developing players, this should be far less, perhaps a matter of just a few minutes. Ideally, that will involve direct player engagement to understand their objectives, set tasks and encourage the concepts of experimentation and trial and error, assuring them that failure is a consequence of trying and not something to be feared. For youth players, this should be more player-led, so they can set out their individual and collective objectives with the coach only serving as a facilitator.
- It is a good idea and very healthy for players to participate, in order to maintain interest and commitment, although the coach will take the lead on this.





### 15.1.2 Pre-match team talk

Use the pre-match team talk to instil confidence in the players, reminding them that you are with them and that, as a coach, you are part of the team, its successes and its failures. It is always important to recognise that mistakes will be made during a game, so players must not dwell on these mistakes. Instead, they should get back into the game as quickly as possible and work harder to redeem themselves. It is also important that all players enjoy competitive gameplay, because of the hard work in preparing for the match, the excitement of trying something new, and the opportunity to bring success as the match unfolds.

- **This should be brief, specific and motivational. In the moments before a match, tension is high and focused on the match. The mind therefore rejects excessive explanations. Brief, specific messages and instructions are recommended.**
- **It is necessary to check the team's level of excitement and control it, relaxing any anxiety or motivating the team if there is a lack of competitive tension.**



### 15.1.3 Instructions during the match

The most common to see a coach constantly issuing instruction or direction at players, especially in grassroots or youth futsal. Not only is this unhelpful to a player-focused learning method but it is also a waste of the coach's energy that disengages players from the concentration required in gameplay. Young players retain very little of what they are told, less so when shouted at from a touchline during a match. Players cannot listen to pitchside instructions during gameplay whilst concentrating on the game itself. With a fast-flowing game such as futsal, there is even less chance of the coach being impactful. In fact, such an approach is harmful to players' development and just as harmful to a coach's reputation.

Futsal has somewhat unique Laws of the Game, such as both teams' ability to call a time-out in each half. These time-outs, as well as the half-time break, provide an opportunity to give instructions. In reality, there are as many as five opportunities when play comes to a halt during matches so that coaches can give instructions. Additionally, futsal allows roll-on, roll-off substitutions, which allows coaches to give further instructions to players while they rest momentarily.

Coaches who commentate as a game flows disable learning. Of course, the coach has to find the balance between positive encouragement and specific guidance. Importantly, in younger age groups parents also have a role to play in understanding that the coach's silence does not indicate a lack of commitment, quite the opposite. They are enabling and empowering the players to guide themselves through a journey of self-discovery and trial and error, which allows them to experiment freely without the constant noise of an adult voice or the fear of failure. When we consider that a young player may only remember 10% of what you tell them, coaches' or parents' effort can be put to better use.

Unlimited substitutions, the half-time break and time-outs during each half provide ideal opportunities for intervention, avoiding inappropriately timed interventions. The same goes for constraint-based learning, where the principle of "the game being the teacher" is applied. Allowing players to concentrate while playing without external distractions or interventional guidance is an essential part of coaching futsal.

- **It is of the utmost importance for coaches to control their emotions. If they lose control, it will be difficult to effectively analyse what is happening in the match and make the right decisions.**
- **As a match consists of several "mini-matches" (depending on factors such as which players are on the pitch at the time, the score, how much time has been played, injuries, fouls, etc.), mentally anticipating solutions is recommended in order to react quickly when it is necessary to make a decision.**



### 15.1.4 Post-match assessment

When matches finish, players' and coaches' emotions can often become heightened, depending on the result (whether their team has won, drawn or lost). Successfully reviewing the performance of individuals and the team as a whole requires the coach to be level-headed in order to gauge the mood. The coach, who knows the players best, should decide what to discuss and how to phrase questions and challenge players.

Effective personnel management skills will be required to ask each question with an expected response, but the response may not be what the coach expected, so it is important to listen to understand the players' point of view rather than having a predetermined answer in mind. Coach development is often regarded to be all about technical or tactical knowledge and the ability to design a session which looks fantastic, but effective coaching needs to incorporate leadership. If you can understand what makes each player tick and manage the complexities of groups, the players will often find the solutions for the coach, yet, in coach education, explaining how to manage people is often overlooked.



### 15.1.5 Review and feedback

- **After each match, when the coach is in a place of relaxation and reflection, they should look back on the matchday experience and as much of what happened during the match as possible. Above all, how the players have reacted to the instructions given, the new challenges that have arisen, and how you have analysed situations and made decisions. In this context, it is vital to be able to accurately recall what happened in gameplay. In the modern game, the perceptions and the reality may often be misaligned. This is where more emphasis should be placed on the data rather than the recollection, which can be beneficial to post-match analysis and reflection.**
- **One of the hardest elements of coaching and coach development is the application of self-criticism through reflection. However, it can be the most influential to personal development and often the most rewarding. When preparing for matchdays, every coach aims to win – they cannot allow players to have a mindset that prepares them to lose or not do the best they can. The coach may get this wrong, or could have made better adjustments, which is acceptable as no coach is perfect. Learning from this experience and reflection is only possible with an open mind and willingness to evaluate and analyse each step and action. Continuous improvement is also an important facet of coach development. Honesty, listening to input from others, and self-criticism are therefore all key components of the reflection process.**

Coaches may choose to do this alone or with others. To ensure that self-evaluation is functional and worthwhile, it is essential to surround yourself with people who are honest, who you respect and who can add value.

During a game of futsal, taking notes during a match may not be that easy for the coach due to its intensity and the game organisation required. Regardless of the level, having someone who can take notes for you, which can be used as a template for feedback and self-evaluation, is therefore recommended. Self-criticism is a key skill to possess. However, accepting constructive criticism from others is often a harder skill to develop. If you are the one offering feedback and criticism, it is often more about how a point is made rather than the point itself. Being receptive to constructive criticism requires an open mind. Perhaps not every piece of criticism is accurate, it may merely be an observation. Yet, after fully evaluating the observation with an open mind, the receiver can choose to take it on board for self-improvement, or disregard it if they don't agree.

- **As part of the development journey, take time to record your evaluations, findings and conclusions. All memory is selective. With time, we tend to forget the details that make us most uncomfortable. It is in these details where we have usually made a mistake. Once more, it is not imperative to memorise 100% of what we learn, only what we feel can add value to our coaching development.**

Although this section focuses on the coach's perspective, the same can be true for the player. Self-reflection, peer reflection and the acceptance of observation and feedback from others are all key to personal development, regardless of the level of futsal. There is room for improvement for all players at all levels – a complete player or finished article simply does not exist. A self-guided development journey is more tailored to individuals than a one-size-fits-all syllabus. This approach promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility, which are key characteristics of a futsal player. The individual player is the syllabus!







In general, the planning of a season should take into account:

- The category of player being trained (age)
- The level of the competition, which determines the number of matches and training sessions
- The players' technical, tactical and physical levels and their motivation
- The infrastructure and equipment available
- The coaching team available: assistant coach, fitness instructor, doctor, physiotherapist, etc.
- The club's financial resources

The following model applies to a senior team competing in a national championship.

The planning depends on the competition A futsal season can be considered to have four major phases:

- a preparation period
- a competition period
- two transition periods

**Preparation period**

- A fundamental period for improving the physical condition of the players and team as a whole
- Duration: 6 weeks

This period can be divided into three subperiods:

- basic subperiod
- specific subperiod
- precompetition subperiod
- Basic subperiod
- Duration: 2 weeks
- Sessions: 10-12 sessions of 80-100 minutes
- No matches

Periods						
Preparation			1 <sup>st</sup> competition	Transition	2 <sup>nd</sup> competition	Transition
Basic	Specific	Precompetition	First legs	Rest	Second legs	Rest

**Objectives**

- a) Physical:
  - Endurance
  - Suppleness
  - Strength
- b) Technique:
  - Basic techniques
- c) Tactical:
  - Defensive positioning
  - Basic tactical sequences
- d) Psychological:
  - Creating and uniting the group
- e) Games:
  - Various

**Specific subperiod**

- Duration: 2 weeks
- Sessions: maintaining quantity (6-8 sessions)
- 4-6 matches
- Increasing intensity

**Objectives**

- a) Physical:
  - Endurance
  - Strength
  - Speed
  - Suppleness
- b) Technique:
  - Numerous, varied repetitions (rhythm).
- c) Tactical:
  - Defensive tactics
  - Offensive tactics
  - Dead-ball situations
- d) Psychological:
  - Competitive mentality (approach this concept through training and matches)



### Competition Period

- Period in which the players should reach optimal performance capacity while trying to maintain this as long as possible
- Emotions and the pressure of competition build up during this phase
- Alternate high intensity weeks with medium intensity weeks to allow for recovery
- The duration of the period depends on the competition schedule

#### Objectives

- a) Physical: Maintaining levels.
- b) Technical/tactical: Improving everything about the game.

### Precompetition subperiod

- Duration: 2 weeks
- Sessions: reduction of quantity (4-6 sessions)
- 4-6 matches
- Increasing intensity

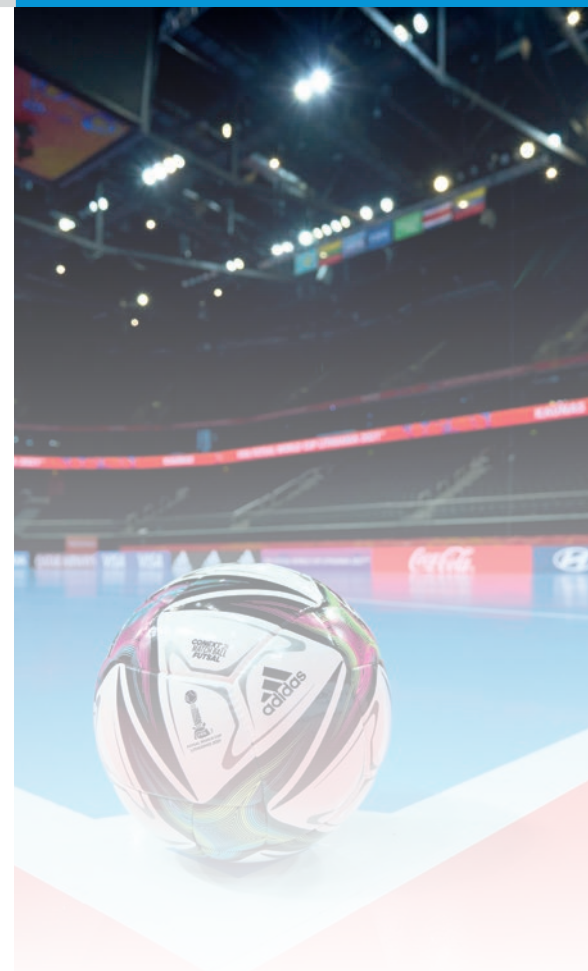
#### Objectives

- a) Physical:
  - Endurance
  - Speed
  - Suppleness
- b) Technical/tactical:
  - Improvement
  - Strategies
- c) Psychological:
  - Competitive mentality (approach this concept through training and matches).
- d) Matches:
  - Corresponding to the frequency of matches in the competition schedule.

Preparation Period		
Basic subperiod (2 weeks)	Specific subperiod (2 weeks)	Precompetition subperiod (2 weeks)
No matches Quantity: +++ Intensity: +	4 to 6 matches Quantity: +++ Intensity: ++	4 to 6 matches Quantity: + Intensity: +++

### Transition Periods

- These are periods during which performance decreases, allowing the players to recover both physically and psychologically from the efforts of competition
- This period also allows improvement in the physical fitness of players coming back from long-term injury and those who suffered a loss of form towards the end of the competition or season
- Given that 2-3 weeks of absolute rest may reduce performance significantly, it is recommended that a programme is drawn up for players to maintain their physical condition through progressive physical activities
- The duration of this period depends on the circumstances of the country in question, as well as the level and format of the competition

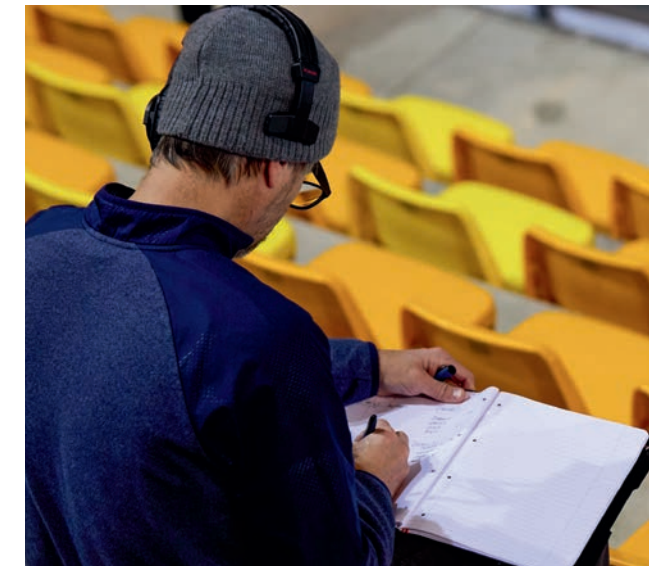


### Weekly Planning

The weekly schedule during the competition period must be conceived and constructed taking into account:

- The match to be played
- The previous match (if any)
- How much of the season has been played
- The players' physical conditions
- The need to avoid fatigue and psychological burn-out
- The number of session

In other words, establish the main features of the physical plan in close coordination with the technical/tactical objectives while maintaining motivation (psychological).



Planning of a season						
Preparation period (6 weeks)			1 <sup>st</sup> competition period (first legs)	Transition period	2 <sup>nd</sup> competition period (second legs)	Transition period
Basic subperiod (2 weeks)	Specific subperiod (2 weeks)	Precompetition subperiod (2 weeks)				
Quantity: 10 – 12 sessions (from 80 to 100')	Quantity: 6 – 8 sessions (from 80 to 100') Increase in intensity	Quantity: 4 – 6 sessions (from 60 to 80') Rhythm and intensity	Alternation of medium and high intensity sessions	In the event of a prolonged break (more than 4 weeks): 10 – 12 days of rest and then continue with the specific sub-period	Identical to 1st competition period  Also: a) improvement of weak points b) Reinforcement of strong points	Maintenance
Physical Endurance: +++ Strength: ++ Suppleness: +++ Speed: +	Physical Endurance: +++ Strength: ++ Speed: ++	Physical Endurance: + Strength: + Speed: +++	Physical maintain standards			
Technical/Tactical Review of technical foundations and combinations	Technical/Tactical Numerous and varied repetitions	Technical/Tactical Improvement of strategy	Technical/Tactical Improve everything concerning the game	In the event of short breaks: continue with the competition period		
Games	Matches (4 – 6)	Matches (4 – 6)	Matches			



# FUTSAL GLOSSARY

Futsal has an established culture throughout the world, but it is particularly popular in southern Europe and Latin America. These cultures have been influential in futsal development for some time. However, the terminology adopted has been taken literally from the Spanish language, but when translated into other languages, the words used may have a different meaning to what was intended in Spanish. Additionally, some vocabulary that has traditionally been used and how it originated may not be applicable to the concepts used in nations newer to futsal. Furthermore, literal translations can be confusing or simply does not make sense.

This is not unique to futsal – it has been seen across the entire football family for some time. We recognise that futsal is also a contributor to football, so the transfer of concepts and terms should therefore be standardised to aid understanding and forge relationships between game concepts.

FIFA has created the FIFA Football Language and now adopts and aligns a futsal vocabulary across the FIFA Training Centre and its standardised resources. In these resources, we will use the new futsal vocabulary as a starting point to standardise the terminology used across this format of the game.

## Backswing of the leg

This is the movement that takes the leg backwards and is made before passing or shooting the ball.

## Positional or static attack

This is the kind of attack used when faced with an organised defence.

## Rapid attack

This is the kind of attack that is used directly from the goalkeeper's kick or upon regaining possession. The defence is usually disorganised.

## An automatic technical movement or move

A movement or move is said to be automatic when it is not necessary to think in order to do it – it is done spontaneously.

## Tilting

This is an action that the winger on the opposite wing from the ball takes to provide balance to the team. It can be offensive or defensive.

## Pitch

The field of play. One third of the pitch is usually about 14 metres from the goal, one half of the pitch to the halfway line, three quarters of the pitch up to around 30 metres from the goal, and the whole pitch for the rest.

## Visual field

This is all that we can manage to see. This depends on the position or direction of the body and is divided into central and peripheral vision.

## Cover

This is the staggered support that is given to a teammate, anticipating that an opponent may go past them.

## Ball control

Controlling the ball and directing it where appropriate.

## Control of the game

Control of the rhythm, speed and tempo of all the aspects that have an influence on the match. This could be done by either the in-possession or out-of-possession team.





**Foot-eye coordination**

This is the coordination between speed, distance and direction of a team-mate without the ball and the strength and direction given to the ball so that it reaches the team-mate appropriately.

**Passive defence**

A defence that does not apply pressure, waiting for the opponent to make a mistake.

**Active defence**

A defence that applies pressure on the ball and causes the opponent to make a mistake, leading to surrendered possession.

**Closed defence**

A well-organised defence in the final third of the pitch.

**Support run**

A movement without the ball, to support a team-mate with the ball.

**Breakaway run**

A movement without the ball, to create free space for a team-mate.

**Drawing of the system/set-up**

This is the initial positioning of the chosen system.

**Feint**

A deceptive move where a player pretends to go one way and then changes direction or, in the case of passing, when they feint to pass in one direction before passing in another.

**Shot frequency**

The number of shots taken in a determined time.

**Win the ball**

Recovering ball possession.

**Shadow**

Defending the attacker without impeding them. Practically escorting the opponent.

**Reading the game**

Interpreting what is happening on the pitch in a tactical way. The positioning and movements of both the opponent and team-mates in order to make the appropriate decision.

**Passing line**

These are all the actual passing possibilities that exist at a moment during the game, whether made or not.

**Defensive lines**

These are imaginary and are represented by each of the defenders. If two defenders are positioned horizontally, they will occupy the same defensive line. The first defensive line is represented by the defender farthest forward and so on, until reaching the last player, the goalkeeper.

**Synchronised movements**

These consist of making two or more simultaneous movements to achieve a common objective.

**Positioning the body**

Placing the body in order to achieve the best performance in our objective (protecting the ball, making a pass, shooting, etc.).

**Passer**

A player who has possession of the ball at a given time.

**Channels**

Imaginary vertical areas in a part of the pitch closest to the touchlines.

**Switch**

Change of position between two players.

**Trapping the ball**

A technical action made using the sole of the foot.

**Passing accuracy**

Passes that are weighted and directed to reach their target safely.

**Near post**

The post closest to the ball.

**Toe-poke the ball**

To strike the ball with the toes.

**Retreat**

Backwards movement by the out-of-possession team into their own half of the pitch when the ball is lost.

**Far post**

The post farthest from the ball.

**Hold up**

Action to delay an attacker.

**Speed of execution**

The speed to execute a technical move.

**Numerical advantage**

To have a greater number of players in a certain move, phase or time in the game.

**Positional advantage**

To have a better position or organisation than the opponent in a certain move or area.

**Central vision**

The part of our vision where we place the focus of our attention. It is usually vivid and clear.

**Peripheral vision**

The external part of our vision. It is not usually clear and is sometimes almost intuitive.

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