

# The Game is the Best Teacher

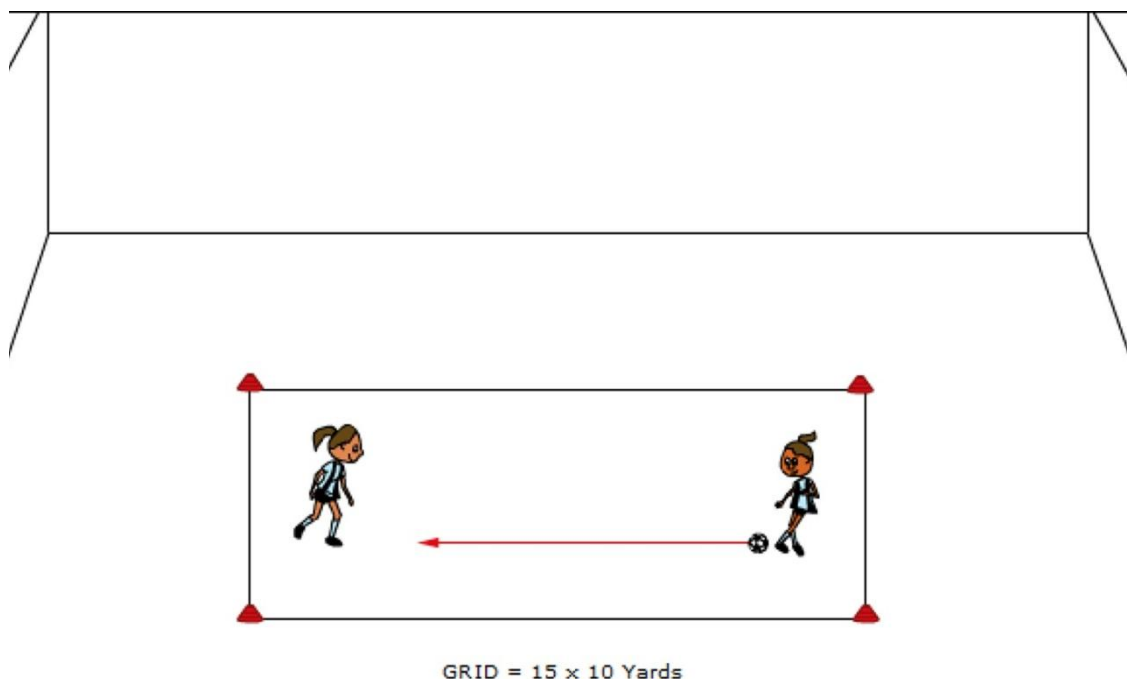
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The game is the best teacher – maybe. It does indeed teach players by showing them their strengths and weaknesses. However, there must be a proper mix of matches, training sessions, free play and time off each season. In training sessions a coach must guide the improvement of the players in all aspects of the game, not least of which is the interaction with teammates. Teamwork begins in pairs and gradually increases to 11 individuals playing as a team. The earliest age to play as a pair is U8. For this age group pairs play can occur in the following options: 2v0, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, 3v3, 4v3 and 4v4. The game-based activities provide young players the chance to solve soccer challenges together.

Objectives: nudge players away from seeing the game solely from an ego-centric perspective, **communicate** with a teammate, **cooperate** with a teammate and **coordinate** their actions.

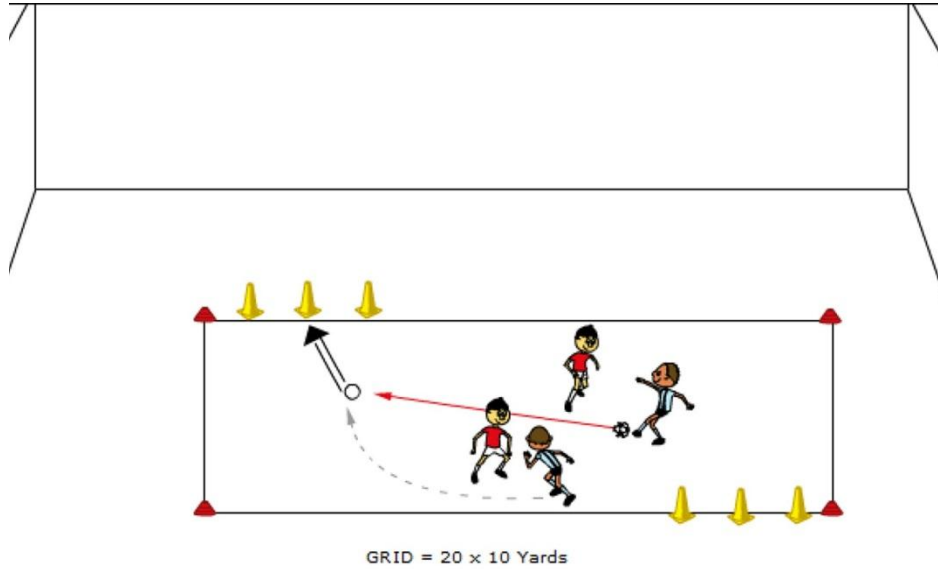
## 1. Paint the Grid

In pairs “paint” the grid via passing in a set amount of time. “What’s your plan to paint the whole grid?”



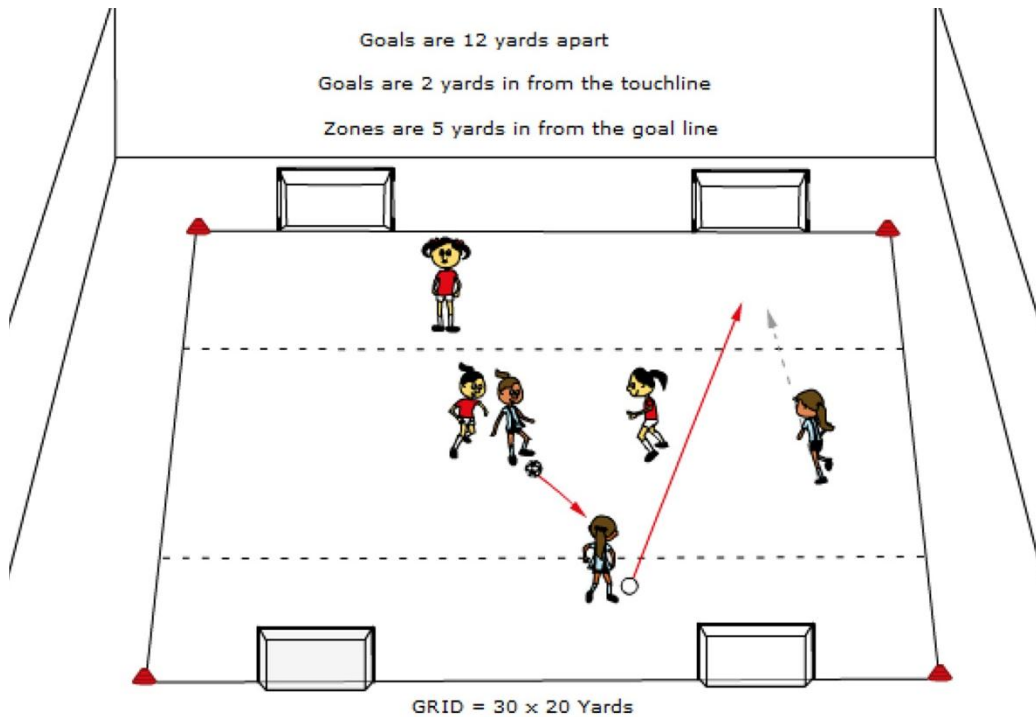
2. 2 vs. 2 to Cones

Play in pairs in a grid wider than long with cones offset. Score by knocking over opponent's cones while defending your cones. "Can you make a pass between the defenders?"



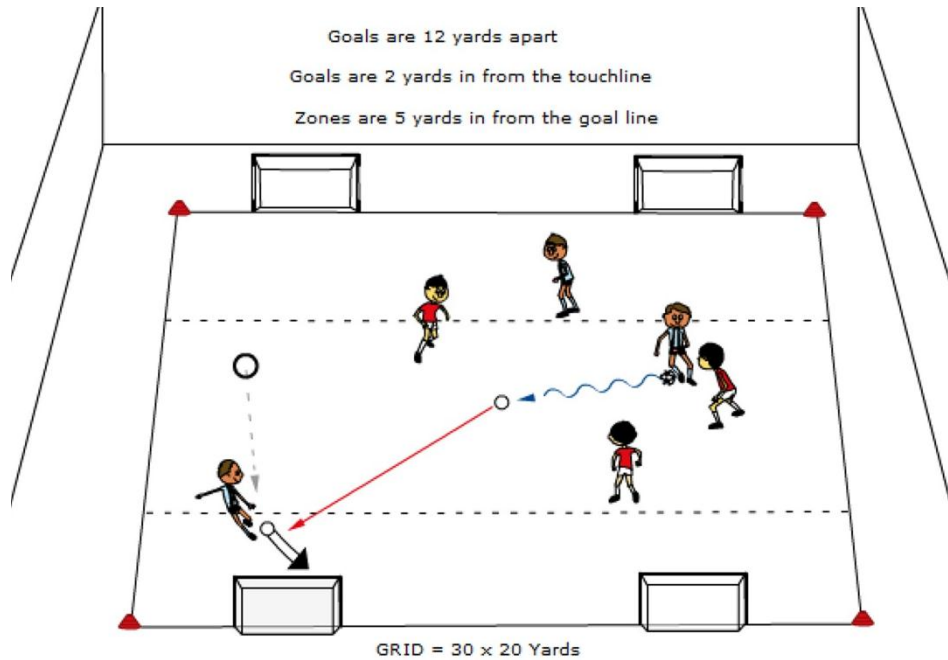
3. 4 Goal Shooting Zone

Play 3 vs. 3. Players can shoot only from the shooting zone (attacking third). One teammate must stay in the defending third giving support. After any goal switch the support player for both teams. "How can you (support attacker) help the other attackers score a goal?"



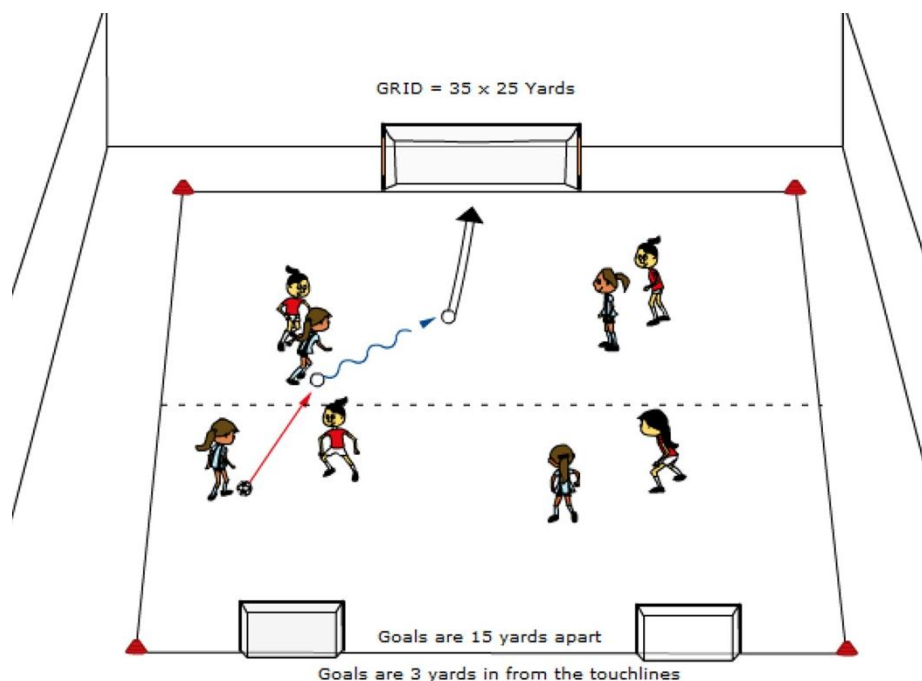
#### 4. 4 Goal Shooting Zone

Same activity as above. No restrictions. "When is it a good idea to shoot at the other goal?"



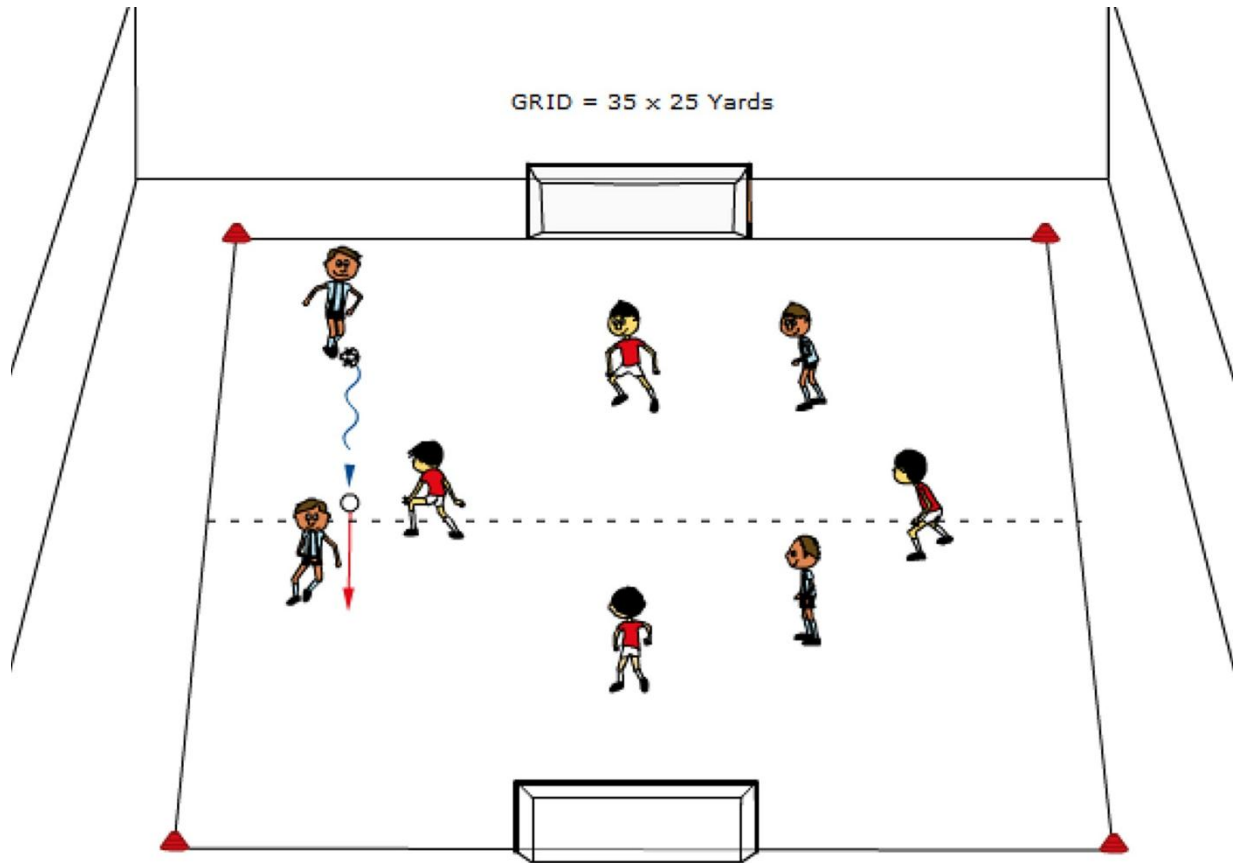
#### 5. 4 vs. 4 to 1 large goal and 2 small goals

When attacking the large goal a partner is most likely found in the horizontal line. When attacking the counterattack goals a partner is most likely found in the vertical line. "In what directions do you need to look to find help from a teammate?"



## 6. 4 vs. 4 Match

“Should you move to help your teammate with the ball?”



It's a 4 vs. 4 match but starts as an individual activity, then pairs and then a team of four. Team A vs. Team B – 8 balls total on the field. Team A has four players, each with a ball. Each of those players scores on the goal of Team B. Team A has won the first round. Next round there are four balls total on the field. Team A has four players and 2 balls so that they are dribbling, passing and shooting in pairs as they go to score at the goal of Team B. Team A scores both of their balls before Team B so they win the second round. In the last round there is 1 ball. They play a 4 vs. 4 match. You could play to the first goal and then start the sequence over again. Or play 4 vs. 4 for a set amount of time or to a set total number of goals.

Throughout the training session look for communication between teammates both verbal and visual. Look for attacking players executing penetration and support. Observe the attacker's decision on when to shoot, dribble or pass. Do not force the pass when in fact the decision to shoot or dribble was the better tactical choice at that moment. Do show the players when a pass could be the better option. Once they recognize moment to pass, then teamwork in pairs becomes realistic and useful to them.