

# Exploring The Benefits of Small Sided Games

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# ***New Playing Rules Beginning 9/1/2003***

***Under 6 – 3 vs. 3 (no goalkeepers)***

***Under 8 – 4 vs. 4 (no goalkeepers)***

***Under 10 – 6 vs. 6***

***Under 12 – 8 vs. 8***

***12 + - 11 vs. 11***



# Background

***Soccer games smaller than 11v11 provide many critical advantages to players including:***

- ✓ The ability to repeatedly contact the ball and the ability to repeatedly experience basic tactical problems.
- ✓ In terms of player development, this ability to actively participate is directly related to fun and enjoyment, and to the issues surrounding quality of play and retention.
- ✓ Players under eleven are routinely structured into formal positions at ages when their spatial awareness and technical range do not lend themselves to a practical understanding of large group tactics.



- ✓ The vast majority of youth coaches do not have a soccer background, yet are faced with, arguably, the most critical period of player development.
- ✓ Coaching games that demand a midfield organization (above 6v6) are too complicated for these coaches and often focus instruction on structural issues rather than individual technical and small-group tactical issues.



# The Building Blocks

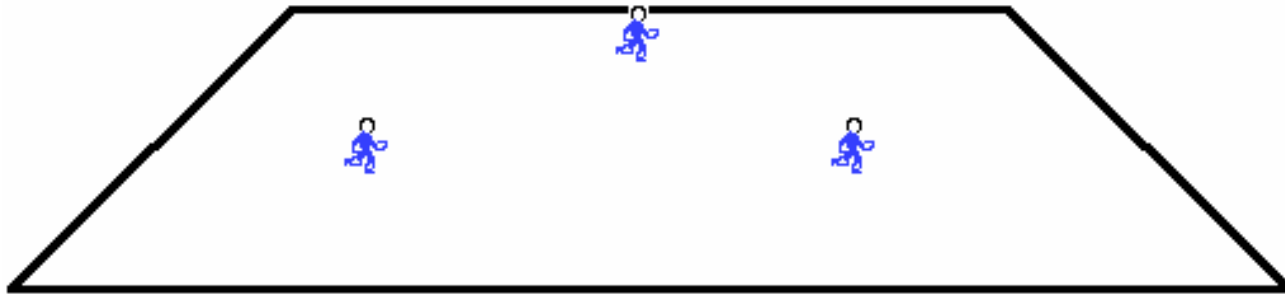
## Soccer is a game of “Shape”

- While at older ages the game is played 11 vs. 11, the game never truly involves all 22 players
- The large game of 11 vs. 11 is constantly broken into pieces, for example, 5 vs. 2, 4 vs. 3, 1 vs. 1 etc.
- Small sided games allow the players to learn small group shapes that are essential for their development in terms of how it relates to the full sized 11 vs. 11 game



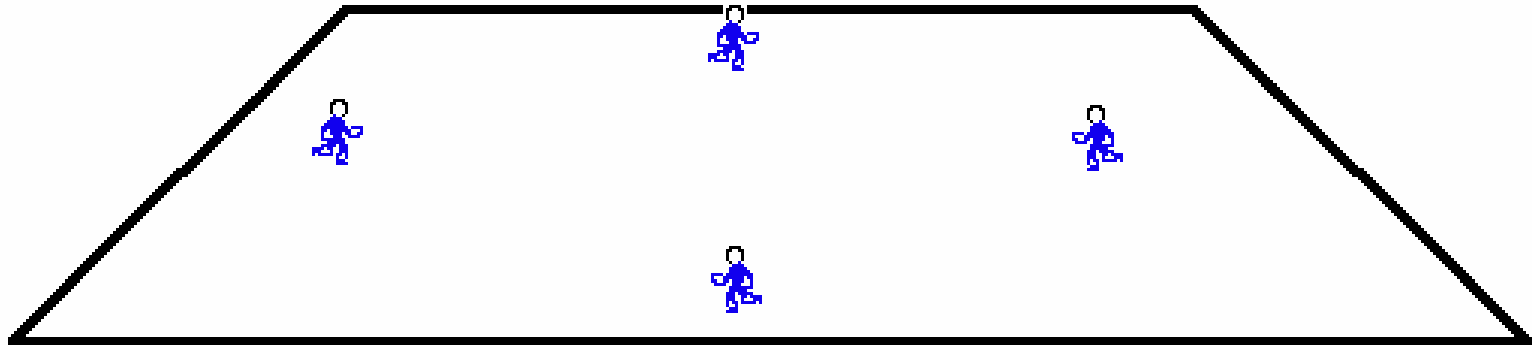
# Soccer Shapes

## Triangles (3 players)



# Soccer Shapes Cont.

## Diamonds (4 Players)



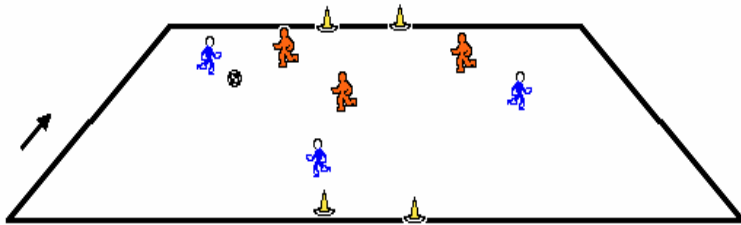
Diamonds Provide Principles of Attack and Defense:

Length, Depth, Width

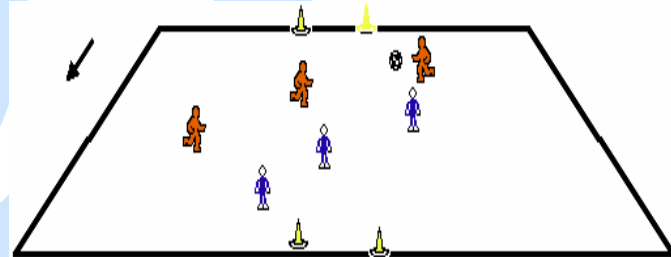


# Playing 3 vs. 3

Ideal Attacking Shape



Ideal Defending Shape



Includes options:

1. Forward
2. Back
3. Left
4. Right

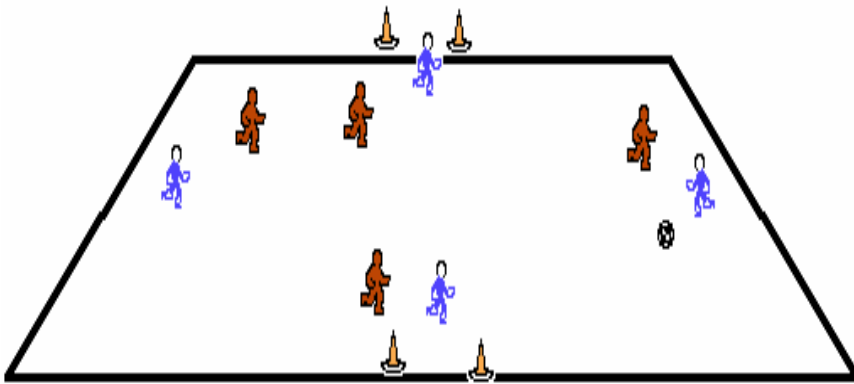
Provides:

1. Pressure
2. Cover
3. Balance



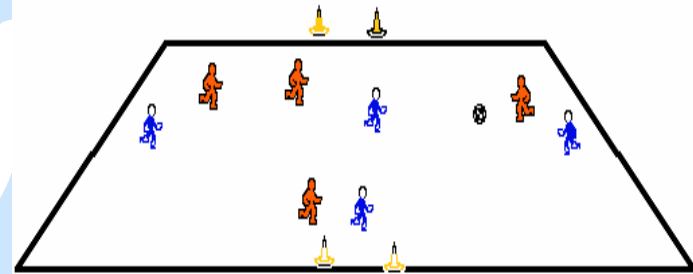
# Playing 4 vs. 4

Ideal Attacking Shape



1. Length (north)
2. Depth (south)
3. Width (east and west))

Ideal Defending Shape



1. Pressure (on the ball)
2. Cover (2<sup>nd</sup> closest to ball)
3. Balance (players behind 2<sup>nd</sup> closest to ball)

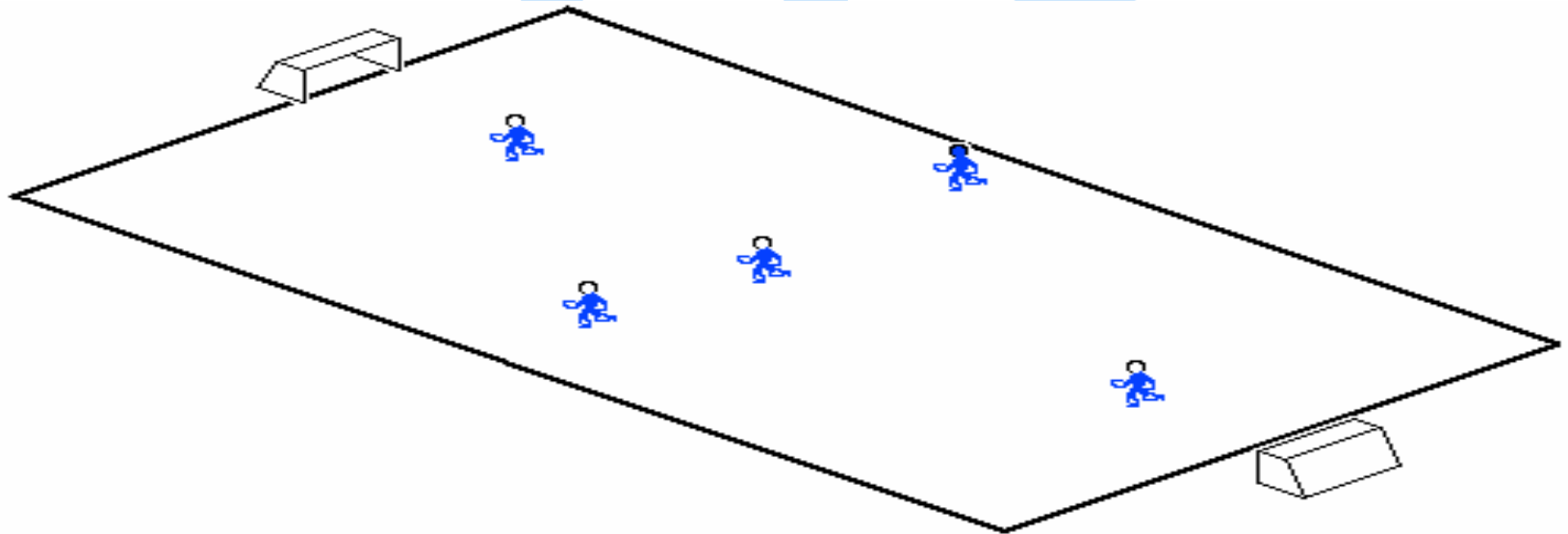
# Triangles and Diamonds as Building Blocks

- Triangles and Diamonds serve as the foundation for all shapes at U-8 and above
- At the U-10 level and above, coaches should begin constructing their “team shape” with triangles and diamonds as the “backbone” and should fill in additional players accordingly



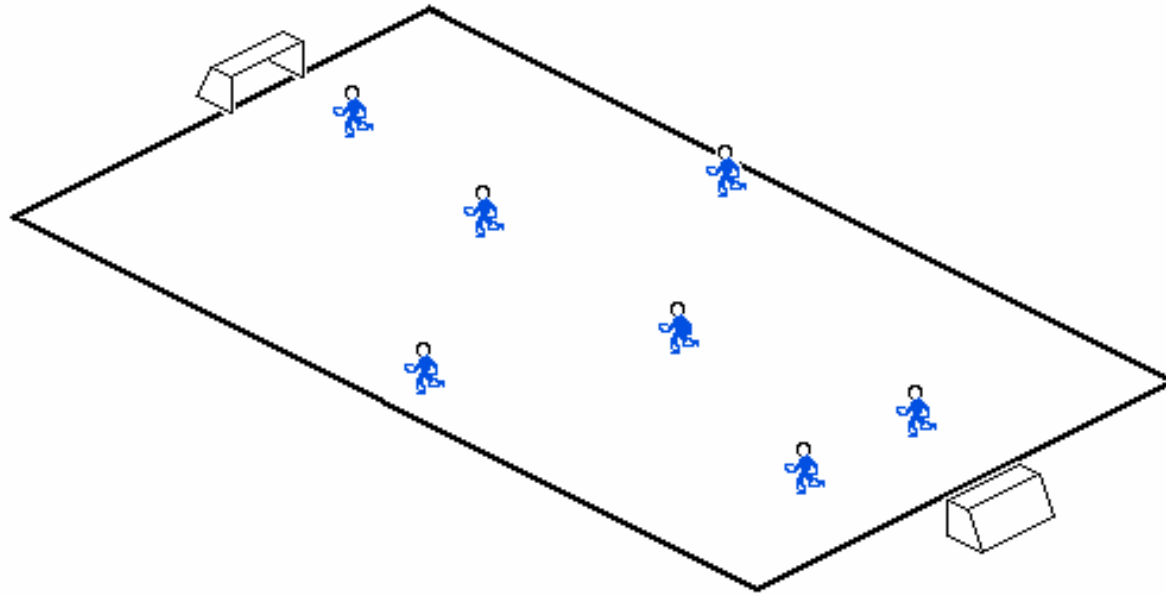
# U-10 (6 players)

Option #1

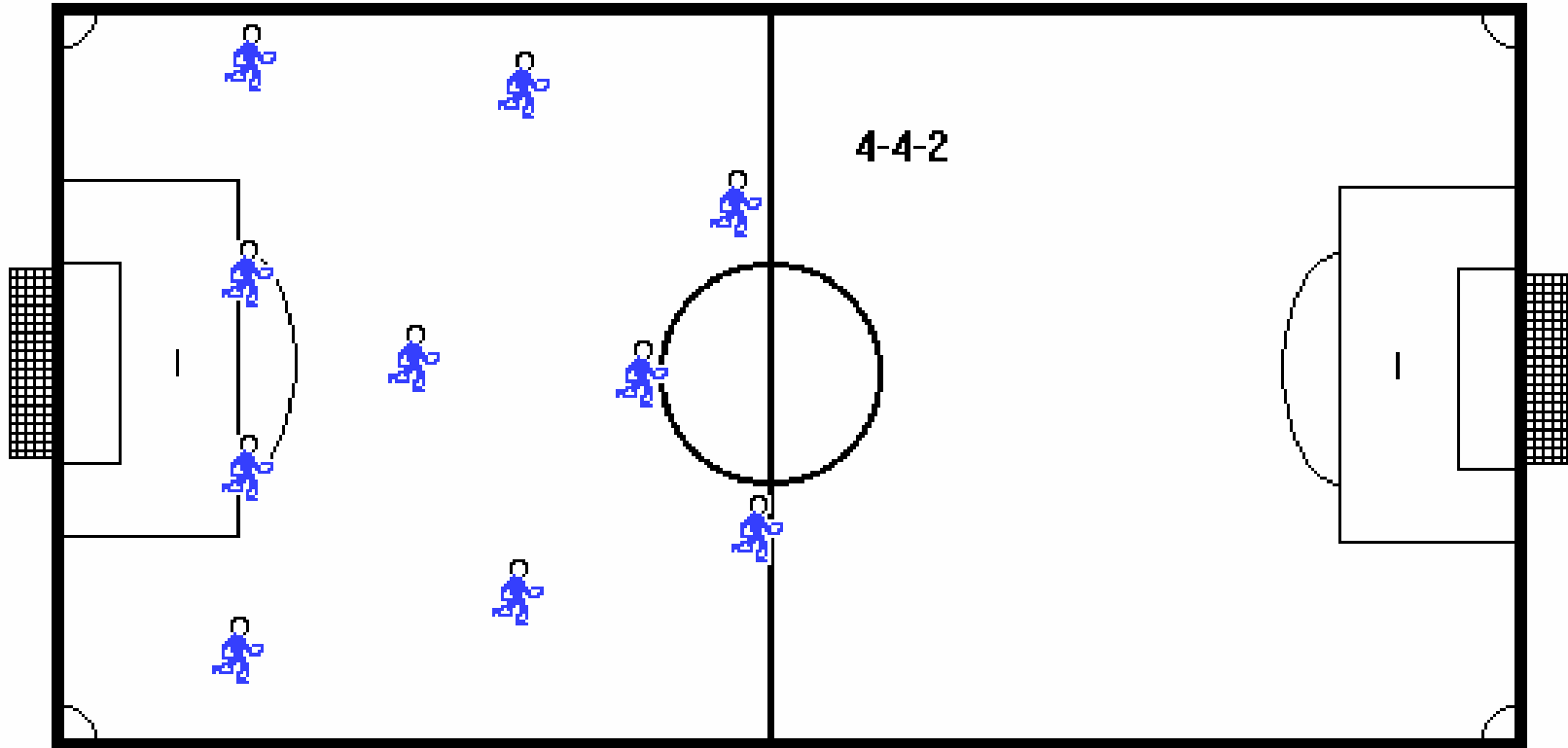


# U-12 (8 players)

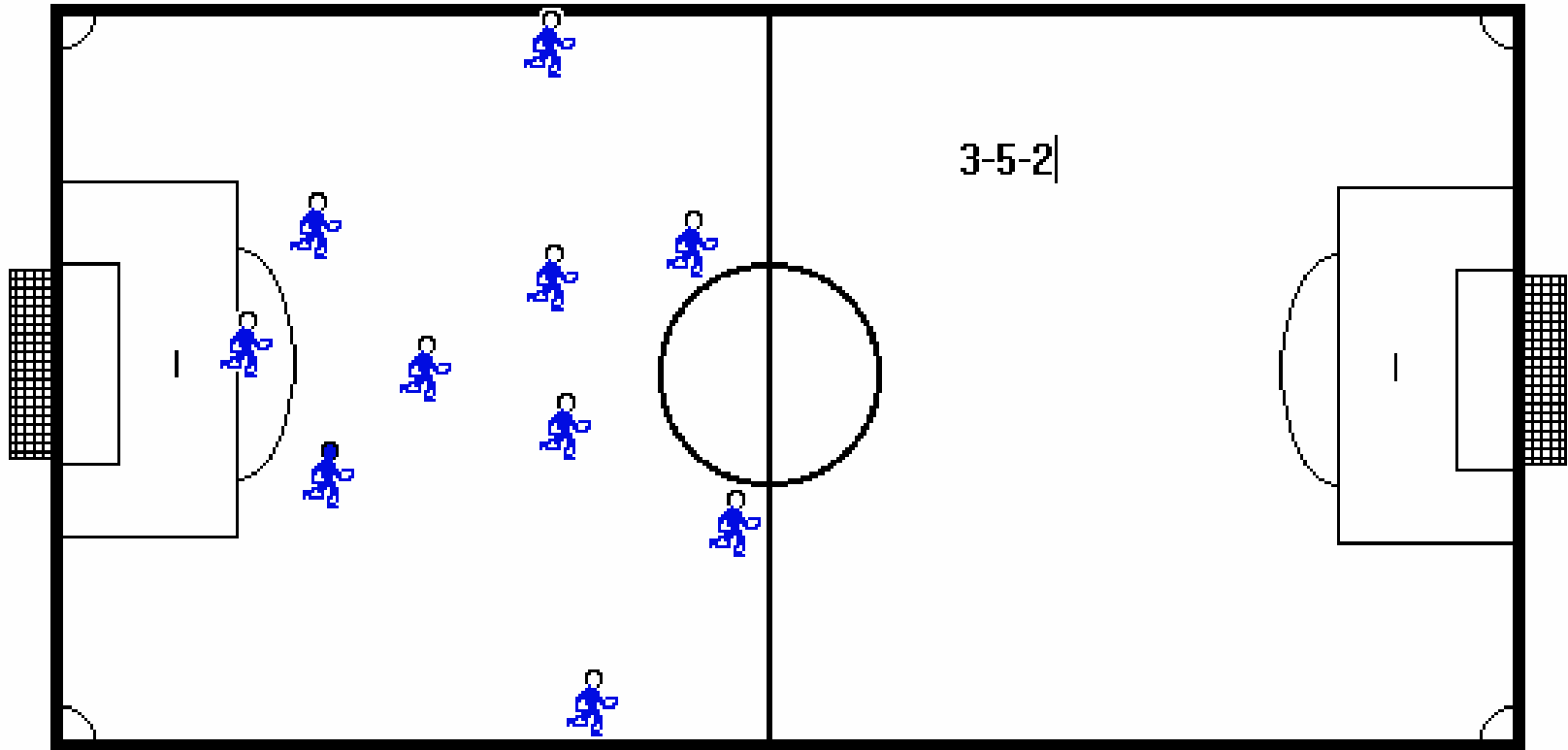
Option #1



# 12 and older (11 vs. 11)



# 12 And older (11 vs. 11)



# Benefits of Small Sided Games

- ✓ Allows for greater opportunities for players to touch the ball
- ✓ Makes it difficult for players to “hide”--- in SSG, all players must attack and defend in order for their team to succeed (mobility)



# Shape and Principles

- Soccer is a game of shape and principles
- Shape and principles go hand in hand
- Example - Diamond provides the structure in the attack to allow for the proper principles to flourish



# The Game as “The Teacher”

By arranging the Small Sided Games environment, that in itself lends to learning and player development. The game is the best teacher, and starting small with the vision of going bigger, allows the game to teach the players.



# Participation = Player Retention

- ❑ Soccer is a game that is always moving and players are forced to “think on the fly.”
- ❑ Participation and the increased chance that each player potentially can touch the ball at any time, is what makes soccer exciting.
- ❑ Since at the younger age groups, it is difficult for the players to strike or pass balls over a large distance, Small Sided Games (number of players on each team and size of field) is the most logical solution to make the game more inclusive for each player.



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