Switch the play, attack the weak side

The Weekly Session #1 · 3 games in progression · from 4v4 to 11-a-side shapes

Three games on the same principle: when the opponent shifts to the ball, the far side is free. Game 1 makes players see it, game 2 makes them use it against a real block, game 3 makes them build the overload before finishing.

GAME	TIME	WHAT IT TRAINS
1. SSG: switch the play (4v4 on two pitches)	15'	Overloading the ball side, then switching play to the weak side; for the defenders, winning the ball and finishing at once.
2. Conditioned game: score on the width	24' (3 x 8')	Consolidating possession in superiority and attacking the opponent's weak side; for the defenders, a low block and a fast counter.
3. Conditioned game: unlock the wide players before you shoot	18' (3 x 6')	Using the width to create superiority before finishing.

What the research says

EVIDENCE: EMERGING

Placing the goals diagonally in small-sided games made youth teams spread wider on the pitch.

Canton et al. (2021), Biology of Sport. DOI: 10.5114/biolsport.2021.102929

EVIDENCE: EMERGING

Changing the number of goals changed how professional teams positioned and stretched in small-sided games.

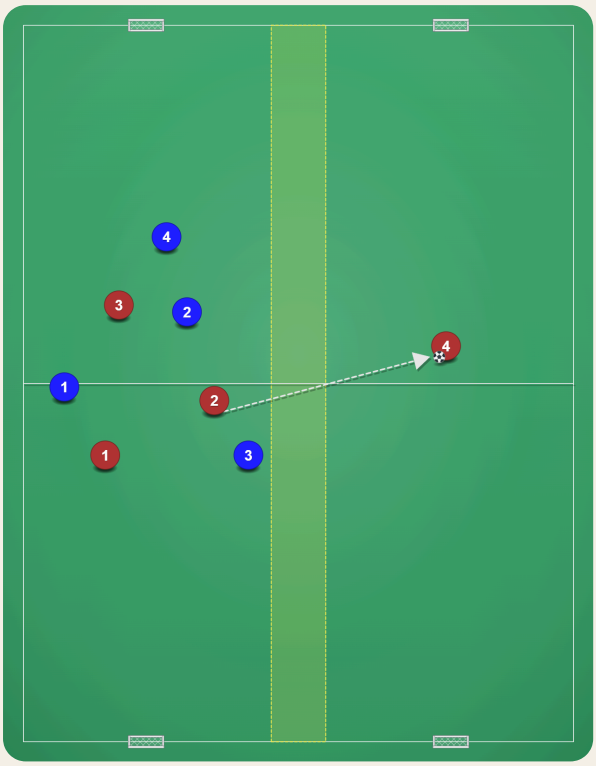
Travassos et al. (2014), Human Movement Science. DOI: 10.1016/j.humov.2014.10.005

No study has tested these three games. The rules and the progression are the coach's tactical reading, built on these principles.

GAME 1 · 15'

SSG: switch the play (4v4 on two pitches)

Aim: Overloading the ball side, then switching play to the weak side; for the defenders, winning the ball and finishing at once.



SET-UP

Two pitches side by side, split by a middle lane. A small goal at each end of each pitch (4 in total). 4v4, no keepers. With 19 players, add one joker.

RULES

- Players move freely on both pitches, but nobody can receive in the middle lane: it can be crossed only with a pass.
- In possession: overload the ball side and make 4-5 passes there before switching to the weak side. One player always stays on the other pitch.
- Out of possession: all four players can be on the same pitch. Win the ball and score in the small goal of the pitch where the ball is.

COACHING POINTS

- Draw the defenders: keep the ball on one side long enough to pull all four across.
- The player on the far pitch stays wide and available, ready for the switch after the 4th-5th pass.
- Defenders: press as a group on the ball side; when you win it, finish at once in that goal.

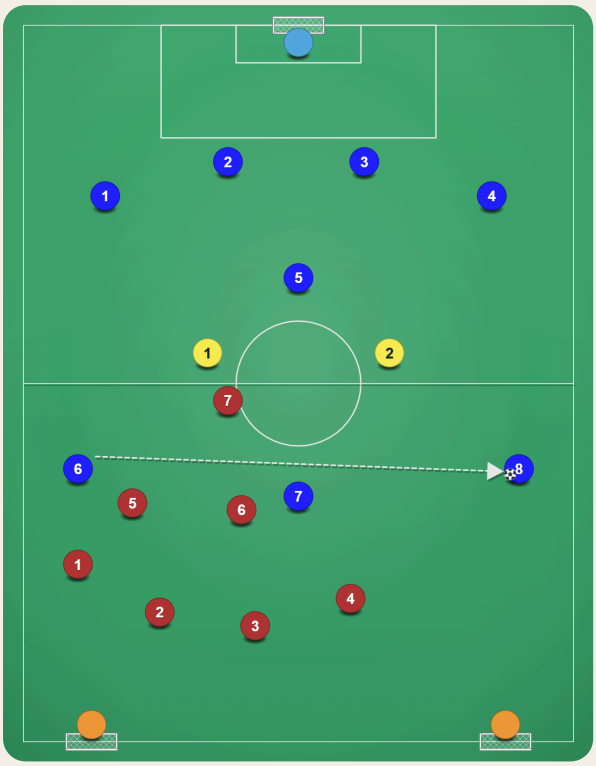
VARIATIONS

- Add a joker who plays for the team in possession (19 players).
- Lower to 3 passes for younger groups, raise to 6 for older ones.

GAME 2 · 24' (3 x 8')

Conditioned game: score on the width

Aim: Consolidating possession in superiority and attacking the opponent's weak side; for the defenders, a low block and a fast counter.



SET-UP

Blue 8 + 2 jokers + keeper (4-1-2 jokers-3) against red 7 (4-2-1) + 2 keepers. Blue attack two wide goals at the corners, each with a red keeper. Red attack one central goal with a blue keeper.

RULES

- Blue must occupy both wide lanes.
- Red defend low and must leave the side opposite the ball uncovered.
- Red score only in the central goal, after winning the ball: fast transition.
- Change the players every 8 minutes.

COACHING POINTS

- Blue: build with the extra players, draw the block to one side, then switch quickly.
- Blue: after the switch, attack the wide goal at once, before red can shift back.
- Red: compact on the ball side; on winning the ball, go forward in the first seconds.

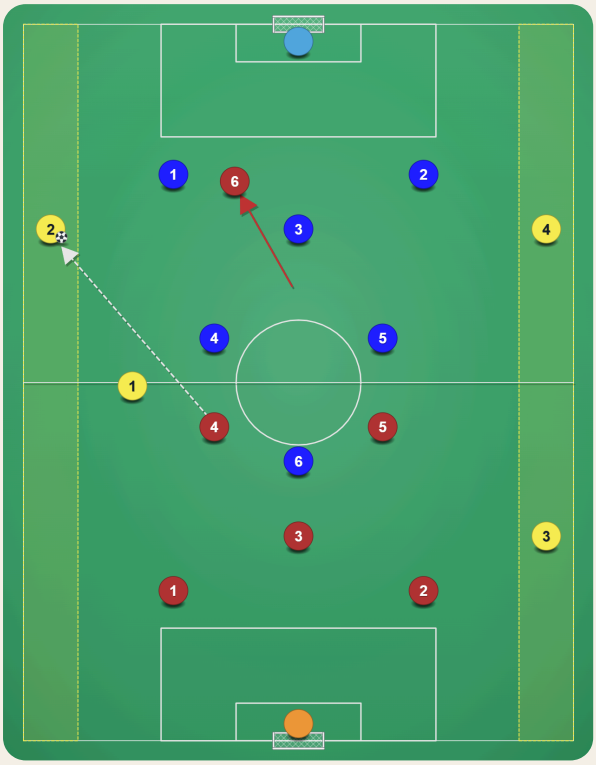
VARIATIONS

- Limit blue to two touches in the middle third.
- Remove one joker to reduce the superiority.

GAME 3 · 18' (3 x 6')

Conditioned game: unlock the wide players before you shoot

Aim: Using the width to create superiority before finishing.



SET-UP

6v6 + keepers, 4 mobile wide players (two per side) who play for the team in possession. With 19 players, add a central joker.

RULES

- Before shooting, the team must unlock the wide players: a wide player is unlocked when he receives a pass and comes into play.
- Before being unlocked, wide players cannot pass the ball to each other, and they can be tackled.
- Once unlocked they join the attack and can leave their zone (for example the low wide player overlaps inside or outside). The more you unlock, the bigger the overload.
- On a counter you can finish quickly, but the wide players can be used only once possession is consolidated and they are unlocked.
- Rotate the wide players every 6 minutes.

COACHING POINTS

- Play to the wide player when he can come into the game, not just to tick the rule.
- Unlocked wide players: attack the space at once (overlap inside or outside).
- Without the ball: close the passing lane to the wide players to stop the overload.

VARIATIONS

- Goal after unlocking all 4 wide players counts double.
- Limit unlocked wide players to two touches.

MC5 FOOTBALL

Research translated for the pitch.

Built by a UEFA A coach and professional scout working in top-flight European football, trained in match analysis.

A new session every week:
mc5football.com · Instagram and TikTok **@mc5football**