TRAINING THROUGH THE SOCCER PROBLEMS METHOD

A SELF-STUDY GUIDE FOR “E” AND “D” LEVEL COACHES

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INTRODUCTION

COACHES IDENTIFY SPECIFIC AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND BY OBSERVING TRAINING AND GAMES.

ONCE PLAYERS DEVELOP A BASIC LEVEL OF TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY AND TACTICAL INSIGHT, FORMAL SOCCER TRAINING SHOULD FOCUS ON THE APPLICATION OF TECHNIQUE WITHIN TACTICAL SITUATIONS.

THIS COACHING PROGRESSION NATURALLY BUILDS IN COMPLEXITY FROM BASIC IDEAS ABOUT SPREADING OUT (SPACING) TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIONAL (FUNCTIONAL) UNDERSTANDING WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF TEAM PLAY IN BOTH SMALL-SIDED AND 11-A-SIDE GAMES.
INTRODUCTION

“SOCCER PROBLEMS” ARE AREAS OF PERFORMANCE THAT THE COACH TARGETS FOR IMPROVEMENT. SOCCER PROBLEMS CAN ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS, GROUPS OF PLAYERS, OR THE TEAM AS A WHOLE. ULTIMATELY, EXCELLENT COACHES DEVELOP EXCELLENT TEAMS BY DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS.

THE MORE SPECIFICALLY A SOCCER PROBLEM IS DEFINED, THE EASIER IT BECOMES TO CREATE REALISTIC TRAINING ACTIVITIES. AND THE MORE CLOSELY TRAINING ACTIVITIES RESEMBLE REALISTIC MATCH SITUATIONS, THE MORE LIKELY LEARNING WILL IMPROVE INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM PERFORMANCE.
SOCCER PROBLEMS ARE DESCRIBED IN TERMS OF THE “FIVE W’S”…

**WHAT** NEEDS TO GET BETTER?

**WHO** IS INVOLVED?

**WHERE** ON THE FIELD DO THESE PLAYERS OPERATE?

**WHEN** DOES THE BREAKDOWN HAPPEN?

**WHY** DOES THE BREAKDOWN OCCUR?
US SOCCER APPLIES THE SOCCER PROBLEMS APPROACH FROM THE ENTRY-LEVEL “E” LICENSE TO THE FINAL STOP ON THE PROFESSIONAL COACHING PATHWAY, THE “A” LICENSE. THE COACHING EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH LICENSE LEVEL ARE NOTED IN THE TABLE BELOW.

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<td>“Focus” on coaching System versus System</td>
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THIS PRESENTATION PROVIDES COACHES WITH A PRACTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SOCCER PROBLEMS METHOD.
STANDARD NUMBERING SYSTEM

Modern coaching practice assigns a designated number to each player’s position (role) on the field.

It is the coach’s responsibility to then define how each player will operate within the team’s system of play. This defines the player’s function. Individual functions often change from game-to-game and in response to changes in the match situation.

The following slides provide examples of the standard numbering applied within common 11-a-side systems.
STANDARD NUMBERING SYSTEM

4-3-3

#1 Goalkeeper
#2 Right Defender
#3 Left Defender
#4 Right Sided Center Back
#5 Left Sided Center Back
#6 Defensive Midfielder
#7 Right Attacker
#8 Center Midfielder
#9 Striker
#10 Attacking Midfielder
#11 Left Attacker
4-3-3

VARIATIONS

Two Defensive MF's (#6's)
No Attacking MF (#10)
4-3-3

VARIATIONS

One Center MF (#8’s)

One Attacking MF (#8)
4-4-2

VARIATIONS

Two Strikers (#9’s)

No Attacking MF (#10)
4-2-3-1

VARIATIONS

No Wingers (#7 and #11)

No Attacking MF (#10)

No Wingers (#7 and #11)
VARIATIONS

4-2-2-2

No Wingers (#7 and #11)
No Attacking MF (#10)
PRINCIPLES AND PHASES

DEVELOPING COACHES MUST BECOME COMPETENT IN WORKING WITH TWO IMPORTANT FRAMES OF REFERENCE: THE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY AND THE PHASES OF PLAY. THESE CONSTRUCTS HELP COACHES A) ASSESS TEAM STRUCTURE AND INDIVIDUAL DECISION MAKING AND B) PROVIDE A MEANS OF SITUATING SOCCER PROBLEMS AT THE RIGHT MOMENTS DURING PLAY.

THE FOLLOWING SLIDES PROVIDE BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF EACH CONCEPT.
PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

THE GAME OF SOCCER IS A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF SMALL-SIDED GAMES THAT CONNECT DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PLAYERS TOGETHER AS THE BALL CIRCULATES AROUND THE FIELD.

INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS WILL CONNECT WITH DIFFERENT SMALL GROUPS BY PASSING THE BALL, BY DRIBBLING THE BALL, OR BY MOVING WITHOUT THE BALL INTO ADJACENT AREAS.

ALL INVASION SPORTS, SUCH AS SOCCER, BREAK DOWN INTO ATTACKING AND DEFENDING PRINCIPLES THAT PLAYERS LEARN TO “READ” AS A NATURAL RESPONSE TO REPEATEDLY EXPERIENCING STANDARD GAME SITUATIONS.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PLAY IS CRITICAL FOR HELPING COACHES ASSESS THE QUALITY OF THEIR PLAYER’S MOVEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING.
PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

**PENETRATE**
- Try To Score
- Try To Move The Ball Forward

**SUPPORT**
- Move To Help The Player With The Ball
- Combine With Teammates Around The Ball

**MOBILITY**
- Move To Pull Defenders Out Of Position
- Move To Attack Offside Space

**WIDTH**
- Create Space From Side to Side
- Draw Defenders Out Of The Middle

**DEPTH**
- Create Space From Front to Back
- Provide Options For Forward Passes
- Provide Options For Safe Backward Passes
PRINCIPLES OF ATTACK

ASSESSING INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING

1. Whenever possible, players should look to shoot at goal.

2. Players who can’t score, should look to pass to someone who can.

3. When scoring is not an immediate possibility, players should look to pass or dribble the ball forward and keep possession.

4. When there are no immediate forward options available, players should look to pass or dribble the ball sideways or backwards to maintain possession.

5. Only when there are no immediate constructive options available should the player simply kick the ball to safety.
### PRINCIPLES OF DEFENCE

| **PRESSURE** | Try To Win The Ball Back  
Try To Stop Forward Progress |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| **COVER**    | Move To Help Defend Around The Ball  
(Defensive Support) 
Follow Attackers Running Into Dangerous Spaces |
| **BALANCE**  | Squeeze Towards The Ball From The Sides  
Defend Space And Opponents On The Weak Side |
| **COMPACTNESS** | Squeeze Towards The Ball From Back and Front  
Manage The Depth Of The Team  
Manage Offside Tactics |
PRINCIPLES OF DEFENSE
ASSESSING INDIVIDUAL DECISION-MAKING

1. WHEN FIRST DISPOSSESSED, PLAYERS SHOULD LOOK TO IMMEDIATELY REGAIN POSSESSION. SIMILARLY, WHEN CLOSING DOWN AN OPPONENT, PLAYERS SHOULD FIRST LOOK TO INTERCEPT THE PASS AND REGAIN POSSESSION.

2. IF REGAINING POSSESSION IS NOT POSSIBLE, PLAYERS SHOULD TRY TO STOP THEIR OPPONENT FROM SHOOTING, OR DRIBBLING OR PASSING FORWARD.

3. WHEN IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO STOP FORWARD PROGRESS, DEFENDERS SHOULD TRY TO “STEER” THE BALL TOWARDS TEAMMATES OR INTO A MORE CONSTRICTED SPACE.

4. WHEN IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DEFENDING AROUND THE BALL, PLAYERS SHOULD RECOVER TO A POSITION INSIDE THE DEFENSIVE “BLOCK” TO HELP MINIMIZE THE THREAT OF GOALSCORING OPPORTUNITIES.
PHASES OF PLAY

SOCCER CAN BE BROKEN DOWN INTO FOUR PHASES OF PLAY (SEE FOLLOWING SLIDE). IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE COACH TO ACCURATELY CONNECT THE SOCCER PROBLEM TO THE CORRECT PHASE OF PLAY IN ORDER TO PROPERLY SITUATE THE TRAINING SESSION IN THE FLOW OF THE GAME.

TRAINING THE CORRECT PLAYERS IN THE CORRECT AREA OF THE FIELD ALSO PROVIDES FOR MORE REALISTIC TRANSFER (FAMILIARITY) BETWEEN THE TRAINING SESSION(S) AND THE COMPETITIVE MATCHES.
PHASES OF PLAY

We Have the Ball
“Build-Up / Attack”

We Win the Ball
“Counter-Attack”

We Lose the Ball
“Defend Counter”

They Have the Ball
“Recover Possession”
PHASES OF PLAY

“TRANSITION TO ATTACK”

In general, defenders try to position goal-side and inside of their opponents to protect the middle of the field. At the moment of transition, when possession is regained, the opponents are often spread out and in exposed defensive positions.

Therefore, the first priority when coming into possession and transitioning from defense to attack is to look for counter-attack opportunities.
“TRANSITION TO DEFENSE”

IN CONTRAST, WHEN THE ATTACKING TEAM LOSES POSSESSION AND IS NOT WELL ORGANIZED TO DEFEND, THEY MAY BE CAUGHT OPEN TO A COUNTER-ATTACK AND INITIALLY UNABLE TO DEFEND EFFECTIVELY AS A TEAM.

THEREFORE, THE FIRST PRIORITY WHEN LOSING POSSESSION AND TRANSITIONING TO DEFENSE IS TO MINIMIZE ANY IMMEDIATE THREAT OF LOSING A GOAL.
PHASES OF PLAY

“ATTACKING”

WHEN A COUNTER-ATTACK OPPORTUNITY IS NOT AVAILABLE, OR THE OPPONENT HAS ORGANIZED BEHIND THE BALL, THE ATTACKING TEAM MUST OFTEN CIRCULATE THE BALL IN ORDER TO FIND AN OPENING TO GO FORWARD. THIS IS CALLED BUILDING UP, OR THE BUILD-UP, AND THIS PHASE OF PLAY CAN TAKE PLACE IN EITHER HALF OF THE FIELD.
PHASES OF PLAY

“DEFENDING”

FINALLY, WHEN A DEFENDING TEAM HAS ELIMINATED THE THREAT OF A COUNTER-ATTACK, THEY SHOULD ORGANIZE INTO A “BLOCK” BEHIND THE BALL AND LOOK FOR THE NEXT GOOD MOMENT TO REGAIN POSSESSION. ONCE POSSESSION HAS BEEN REGAINED, THE FIRST THOUGHT SHOULD ALWAYS BE COUNTER-ATTACK.
BACK TO THE

SOCCER PROBLEMS
EXAMPLE #1
SO WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?

WE CAN’T BUILD OUT OF THE BACK!

RESULT:
WE ARE UNABLE TO PLAY CONSTRUCTIVELY THROUGH THE THIRDS OF THE FIELD.

WHY?
POSSIBLE INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS

(“E” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE PRE-CONTROL VISION OF THE #5 WHEN RECEIVING PASSES FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE PASS SELECTION OF THE #5 DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT) OF THE #9 IN SUPPORT OF THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.
POSSIBLE LINE PROBLEMS

(“D” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (RHYTHM AND PASS SELECTION) OF THE CENTRAL DEFENDERS (#4, #5) DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT) OF THE TWO #6’S IN SUPPORT OF THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT) OF THE FORWARD LINE (#7, #9, #11) IN SUPPORT OF THE BUILD-UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.
POSSIBLE TWO-LINE PROBLEMS

(“C” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT) BETWEEN THE CENTER BACKS (#4, #5) AND THE CENTRAL MIDFIELD PLAYERS (#6, #8) DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (RECOGNITION AND TIMING) OF THE FORWARDS (#7, #9, #11) DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE CENTRAL DEFENDERS (#4, #5).
POSSIBLE TEAM PROBLEMS

(“A/B” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE BUILD UP THROUGH THE THIRD OF THE FIELD IN NON-PRESSING SITUATIONS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE BALL CIRCULATION (PASS SELECTION / RHYTHM OF PLAY) WHEN BUILDING UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER IN NON-PRESSING SITUATIONS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE LINES WHEN BUILDING UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER IN NON-PRESSING SITUATIONS (4-3-3 VS 4-2-2).
EXAMPLE #2
SO WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?

WE CAN’T PRESS THE BALL!

RESULT: WE ARE UNABLE TO RECOVER POSSESSION IN THE ATTACKING THIRD.

WHY?
POSSIBLE INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS
(“E” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (STARTING POSITIONS AND CHANNELING) OF THE #9 WHEN PRESSING DEEP THROW-INS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (STARTING POSITIONS AND CLOSING DOWN) OF THE #8 DURING ORGANIZED PRESSING SITUATIONS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING (TRACKING AND CLOSING) OF THE #3 WHEN DEFENDING FROM THE WEAK SIDE OF THE DEFENSIVE THIRD.
POSSIBLE LINE PROBLEMS
(“D” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE COLLECTIVE DEFENDING (MATCH-UPS/STARTING POSITIONS) OF THE WIDE PLAYERS (#3, #11 / #2, #7) WHEN PRESSING A DEEP THROW.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE POSITIONAL AWARENESS (BALANCE) OF THE MIDFIELD LINE (#6, #8, #10) WHEN DEFENDING IN ORGANIZED PRESSING SITUATIONS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE POSITIONAL AWARENESS (STARTING POSITIONS) OF THE BACK LINE (#2, #3, #4, #5) WHEN DEFENDING IN ORGANIZED PRESSING SITUATIONS.
POSSIBLE TWO-LINE PROBLEMS
(“C” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE DEFENDING (PRESSURE AND COMPACTNESS) OF THE FORWARD (#7, #8, #9) AND MIDFIELD (#6, #8, #10) LINES WHEN PRESSING A DEEP THROW.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE COLLECTIVE DEFENDING (STARTING POSITIONS AND PRESSURING) OF THE MIDFIELD (#6, #8, #10) AND BACK (#2, #3, #4, #5) LINES IN ORGANIZED PRESSING SITUATIONS.
POSSIBLE TEAM PROBLEMS
(“B/A” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT (BALANCE AND COMPACTNESS) OF THE DEFENSIVE BLOCK IN PRESSING DEEP THROW-INS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE RECOVERY LINES OF THE TEAM FOLLOWING A FAILED PRESS.

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE STARTING POSITIONS AND DEFENSIVE MATCH UPS WHEN PRESSING OUT OF A 4-3-3 SYSTEM AGAINST A TEAM PLAYING 4-4-2.
PRACTICE PLANNING
PROGRESSION

THE GENERAL TRAINING PROGRESSION IS OUTLINED BELOW.

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<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>Physical Preparation and Technical Repetition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smaller-Number Activity</td>
<td>Introduce the Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger-Number Activity</td>
<td>Develop the Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Game</td>
<td>Practice in the Competitive Format</td>
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WARM-UP

TRAINING SESSIONS SHOULD BEGIN WITH A PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL WARM-UP TO PREPARE THE PLAYERS FOR THE MAIN THEME OF THE SESSION. THE TECHNIQUES SELECTED FOR THE WARM-UP SHOULD REFLECT THE KEY ELEMENTS UNDERLYING THE SOCCER PROBLEM, SUCH AS LONG PASSING OR DEFENDING OR Dribbling FOR POSSESSION.
PROGRESSION

MAIN THEME

The main theme should build from a simple, clear example of the basic tactical situation (the soccer problem) towards a more complex organization that provides for repetition within the context of live training games.

This is accomplished by adding teammates and opponents to the initial organization - but only once improved performance (learning) has been observed at each level of complexity.

FINAL GAME

The final step of the soccer problems model is a large-sided game: of between 7v7 and 9v9 at the “E” level; of 9v9 at the “D” and “C” levels; and of 11v11 in the “B” and “A” courses.
DEMONSTRATING EXPERTISE

Coaches are expected to demonstrate an increased depth of technical and tactical soccer knowledge and more efficient teaching skills at each level of the US Soccer Licensing pathway.

In licensing terms, this is demonstrated by the increasing complexity of the training activities prior to the final game, where the final organizations at the “E” and “D” levels often serve as the building blocks in the construction of practices at the upper-level courses.

The following slides offer practical examples of training activities for “E” through “C” level coaches, based on video example #1.
PRACTICE PLANNING - 1

THE FIRST TASK IN DEVELOPING THE TRAINING SESSION IS TO DEFINE THE SPECIFIC SOCCER PROBLEM (WHAT?) AND IDENTIFY THE KEY PLAYER OR PLAYERS (WHO?). THE COMPLEXITY OF THE COACHING EXPECTATIONS INCREASE AS A FUNCTION OF COURSE LEVEL, AS SHOWN BELOW, WITH MORE EXPERIENCED COACHES EXPECTED TO INCORPORATE MORE VARIABLES INTO THEIR COACHING SESSIONS.

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“E” Level: “Focus” On One Player
“D” Level: “Focus” On One Line

Always include the GK with the back line.
“C” Level: “Focus” on Connecting Two Lines
“B” Level: “Focus” on Connecting Three Lines
“A” Level: “Focus” on System vs System

White: 4-3-3

Red: 4-4-2
PRACTICE PLANNING - 2

THE NEXT CHALLENGE IS TO IDENTIFY “WHERE” ON THE FIELD THE PROBLEM TAKES PLACE. THIS WILL ALSO START TO ANSWER THE “WHEN” QUESTION BY INCLUDING A STARTING POINT AND AN ENDING POINT FOR THE TRAINING ACTIVITIES.

STARTING POINT: WHICH LINE OR PLAYER DOES THE BALL COME FROM?

END POINT: WHICH LINE OR PLAYER DOES THE BALL GO TO?

THE FINAL PART OF THE “WHEN” QUESTION LOOKS AT THE SPECIFIC MATCH SITUATION AND THE ACTIONS OF THE RELATED PLAYERS. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO INCLUDE THE SPECIFIC PLAYERS “RELATED” TO THE PROBLEM IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING SESSIONS.
INDIVIDUAL PROBLEM

("E" LEVEL)

“THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE PASS SELECTION OF THE #5 DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.”

RELATED ATTACKING PLAYERS: #4 #6 #8

RELATED DEFENDING PLAYERS: #9 #8
“E” Level: “Focus” on One Player

Starting Point: GK to #5

Related Players

End Point: Target (#11)

Minimal Pressure (Red) to Start

End Point: Target (#7)
LINE PROBLEM

(“D” LEVEL)

“The coach needs to improve the tactical awareness (rhythm and pass selection) of the central defenders (#4, #5) during the build up from the goalkeeper.”

Related Attacking Players: #2 #3 #6 #6

Related Defending Players: #9 #7 #11 #10
“D” Level: “Focus” on One Line

Starting Point: GK

Red: 1 Forward and 3 Midfielders

End Point: Target (#11)

End Point: Target (#7)
TWO-LINE PROBLEM

(“C” LEVEL)

THE COACH NEEDS TO IMPROVE THE TACTICAL AWARENESS (POSITIONING AND MOVEMENT) BETWEEN THE CENTER BACKS (#4, #5) AND THE CENTRAL MIDFIELD PLAYERS (#6, #8) DURING THE BUILD UP FROM THE GOALKEEPER.

RELATED ATTACKING PLAYERS: #2  #3  #10

RELATED DEFENDING PLAYERS: #7  #8  #9  #10  #11
“C” Level: “Focus” on Connecting Two Lines

Starting Point: GK
End Point: Target (#11)
End Point: Target (#9)
End Point: Target (#7)

Red: 2 Forwards and 3 Midfielders
PRACTICE PLANNING - 3

FITNESS PLANNING ASIDE, THE FINAL PART OF SESSION PREPARATION IS THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE KEY TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL COACHING POINTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SOCCER PROBLEM. DETERMINING “WHY” THE GAME IS BREAKING DOWN PROVIDES THE COACH WITH A ROADMAP OF INFORMATION TO HELP EACH INDIVIDUAL PLAYER IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TEAM.

AT ANY LEVEL, TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY IS THE FOUNDATION FOR IMPROVING SPEED OF PLAY. HOWEVER, THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO TYPICAL TACTICAL SITUATIONS IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT.

THE COACH MUST DETERMINE WHETHER THE SOCCER PROBLEMS STEM PRIMARILY FROM TECHNICAL DEFICIENCIES – AND PLAN FOR MORE INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION – OR THE RESULT OF POOR TACTICAL AWARENESS – IN WHICH CASE THE TRAINING SHOULD BE MORE SITUATIONAL AND MORE FUNCTIONAL. IN EITHER CASE, REPETITION IS CRUCIAL.

FINALLY, COACHES SHOULD BE MINDFUL OF THE PHASES OF PLAY. SOCCER IS A GAME OF TURN-OVERS AND A GOOD TRAINING ENVIRONMENT WILL ROUTINELY INCORPORATE A “SIXTH W”… WHAT NEXT? THE REASON TEAMS DEFEND IS TO RECOVER THE BALL TO ATTACK; SIMILARLY, THE BEST RESPONSE TO A LOSS OF POSSESSION IS TO FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO REGAIN POSSESSION. TRAINING ACTIVITIES THAT REFLECT THESE REALITIES ARE NOT ONLY MORE EFFECTIVE, BUT ALSO MUCH MORE FUN.
APPENDIX I
SAMPLE PRACTICE ORGANIZATIONS
FOR “E” THROUGH “C” LEVELS
COACHING INFORMATION

WHEN PLANNING A TRAINING SESSION, THE COACH SHOULD LIST THE RELEVANT TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL DETAILS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPROVING THE SOCCER PROBLEM. THIS INFORMATION SERVES TO KEEP THE TRAINING SESSION ON TASK AND ALSO ACTS AS A POST-SESSION CHECK OF PLAYER LEARNING AND COACHING EFFECTIVENESS.

THE FOLLOWING “E,” “D,” AND “C” SAMPLE PRACTICES ARE BASED ON THE SAME SOCCER PROBLEM (“WE CAN’T BUILD OUT FROM THE GOALKEEPER”), SO THE COACHING INFORMATION IS THE SAME FOR EACH SESSION. COACHES SHOULD SEPARATE THEIR KEYS FOR IMPROVEMENT INTO INDIVIDUAL DETAILS AND GROUP DETAILS.

IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT EVERY COACHING POINT TO BE ADDRESSED DURING A SINGLE TRAINING SESSION. GOOD COACHES ARE SELECTIVE IN THE VOLUME AND TIMING OF INSTRUCTION AND CONSTANTLY CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING.
COACHING INFORMATION

THE INDIVIDUAL COACHING POINTS WOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

PRE-CONTROL VISION / BODY POSITION / USE OF THE 1ST TOUCH

AWARENESS OF TIME AND SPACE / CREATING SPACE / CHECKING

PASS SELECTION / PASS TEXTURE / PASS QUALITY

DRIBBLING TO POSSESS OR PENETRATE

SPEED OF PLAY
COACHING INFORMATION

THE COLLECTIVE (GROUP) COACHING POINTS WOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

SPACING / AREAS OF OPERATION
MOBILITY AND LINE BALANCE
SPEED OF BALL CIRCULATION
AWARENESS OF TACTICAL CUES TO PENETRATE OR POSSESS
TRANSITIONING TO DEFENSE (LOSS OF POSSESSION)
THE TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCCER PROBLEM ARE 1) PRE-CONTROL VISION; 2) RECEIVING INTO SPACE; AND 3) PASSING OVER MEDIUM AND LONGER DISTANCES. THE WARM-UP ACTIVITY SHOULD PROVIDE UNOPPOSED REPETITION IN THESE AREAS. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ‘E’ LEVEL WARM-UP ACTIVITY.
“E” Small-Number Activity

Organization: 5v2 to a target player (#9) in 44 yds. x half field.

Starting Point: GK to #5

End Point: Target (#9)

The players “related” to the problem are shown.
“E” Expanded-Number Activity

Starting Point: GK to #5

End Point: Target player (#9)

Organization: 5v3 to a target (#9) in ~50 yards x 60 yards

The players “related” to the problem are shown.
The coaching should focus “primarily” on the decision-making of the #5 during the build-up from the goalkeeper.
“D” Warm-up Activity

The technical foundations of the soccer problem are 1) pre-control vision; 2) receiving into space; and 3) passing over medium and longer distances. The warm-up activity should provide unopposed repetition in these areas. This is an example of a “D” level warm-up activity.

Five players organized as shown circulating two balls with one and two touches. Area: 35x30yds.
“D” Small-Number Activity

Starting Point: GK to #5

Organization: 5v3 to a target in ~50 x 60 yards.

End Point: Striker (#9) in a target zone.
“D” Expanded-Number Activity

Starting Point: GK to #5

End Point: Target Forwards

Organization: 7v5 to targets in half field +10yds
“D” Game: 8v8 Organization

The coaching should focus “primarily” on how the back four contributes to the build-up from the goalkeeper into the midfield.
THE TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SOCCER PROBLEM ARE 1) PRE-CONTROL VISION; 2) RECEIVING INTO SPACE; AND 3) PASSING OVER MEDIUM AND LONGER DISTANCES. THE WARM-UP ACTIVITY SHOULD PROVIDE UNOPPOSED REPETITION IN THESE AREAS. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A “C” LEVEL WARM UP ACTIVITY.
“C” Small-Number Activity

Starting Point: GK

End Point: Target (#11)

End Point: Target (#7)

Red: 1 Forward and 3 Midfielders

Organization: 7v5 to targets in half field +10yds
“C” Expanded-Number Activity

Starting Point: GK

End Point: Target (#11)
End Point: Target (#9)
End Point: Target (#7)

Organization: 8v5 to three targets in half field +10yds

Red: 2 Forwards and 3 Midfielders
“C” Game: 9v9 Organization

The coaching should focus “primarily” on how the back four and midfield three contribute to the build-up from the goalkeeper into the attacking half.
APPENDIX II

MATCHING FIELD SIZES TO PLAYING NUMBERS
This table provides approximate field sizes, relative to playing numbers. The actual size of the playing area will vary, based on the age and ability of the players and the nature of the soccer problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game Numbers</th>
<th>Field Length</th>
<th>Field Width</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11v11 (100%)</td>
<td>@ 120 yards</td>
<td>@ 75 yards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10v10 (91%)</td>
<td>110 (109)</td>
<td>70 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9v9 (82%)</td>
<td>100 (98)</td>
<td>60 (62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8v8 (73%)</td>
<td>90 (88)</td>
<td>55 (55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7v7 (64%)</td>
<td>80 (77)</td>
<td>50 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6v6 (55%)</td>
<td>70 (66)</td>
<td>40 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5v5 (45%)</td>
<td>60 (54)</td>
<td>35 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4v4 (36%)</td>
<td>45 (43)</td>
<td>30 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3v3 (27%)</td>
<td>30 (32)</td>
<td>20 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2v2 (18%)</td>
<td>25 (22)</td>
<td>14 (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX III

SAMPLE MODIFIED PLAYING SYSTEMS
Focus on the back four and two central midfielders (4-4-2).
Focus on the back four and two strikers (4-4-2).
Focus on overlapping fullbacks (4-4-2 / 4-3-3).
Focus on the midfield three (4-3-3).
Focus on the front three (4-3-3).
Focus on the midfield three and front three (4-3-3).
Focus on the back four and front three (4-3-3).
Focus on the midfield four (4-4-2).
Focus on the midfield three and front three (4-3-3).
8v8 Variations

Focus on two strikers (4-4-2).
Focus on the back four and midfield three (4-3-3).
Focus on the back four and two strikers (4-4-2).
Focus on the midfield four and two strikers (4-4-2).
Focus on the midfield three and three forwards (4-3-3).
Focus on flank play (4-4-2 / 4-3-3).
Additional Questions?

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