

# HOW TO USE GAME-LIKE ACTIVITIES IN PRACTICE

Jacob Daniel, Georgia Soccer Director of Coaching

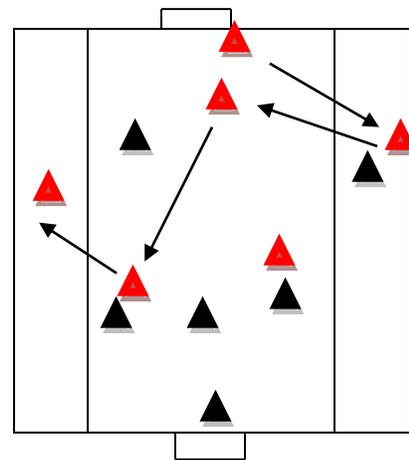
One of the pillars of coaching methodology is to use game-like activities in practice as opposed to drills. The idea is to replicate the game scenarios in practice using an activity that flows and provides opportunities for the players to make soccer decisions. Too often, coaches put players through boring drills in which the coach himself choreographs the movements and makes all the decisions for the players.

To help coaches select the right activity and organization in practice, here are some tried and tested examples of game-like activities that address specific topics:

## TEACH PLAYERS TO SWITCH THE POINT OF ATTACK

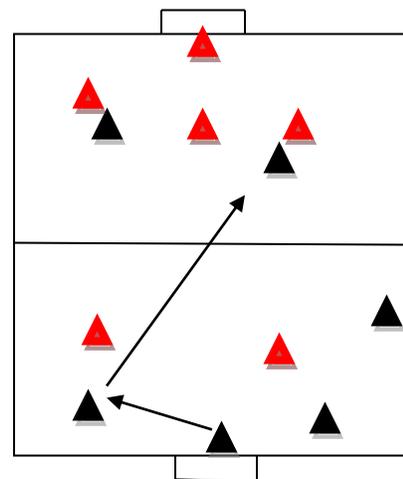
Play a game of 5v5 to 8v8 with keepers.  
Designate flank zones as shown, about 5-8 yards wide.  
Teams can only score after switching the ball from one flank to the other (But teams are allowed to score without switching flanks if they win the ball in the attacking half).

Progress to two touch play in the middle area and unlimited Touches on the flank zones (this encourages flank play and using the width)



## TEACH FORWARDS TO PLAY WITH THEIR BACK TO GOAL

Play a game of 6v6 (5 plus keeper) in a field split into two halves.  
Defenders cannot dribble from their half to the attacking half and can only pass the ball to the other half.  
One defender is allowed to step into the attacking half after a pass is made to a forward.  
In this game, the forwards will learn how to check towards the ball and receive it under pressure and combine to create goal chances.



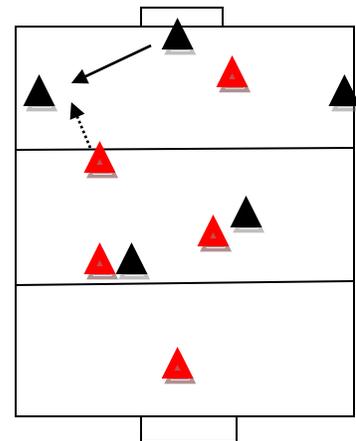
## TEACH PLAYERS TO HIGH PRESS THE BALL

Play a game of 5v5 to 8v8 with keepers.

Divide the field into thirds as shown.

Award 5 points for each goal that is scored from a counterattack after winning the ball in the attacking third. Award 4 points for a goal scored from a counterattack after winning the ball in the middle third. Award 2 points for a goal scored from a counterattack after winning the ball in the defensive third. Award one point for all other goals.

This encourages teams without the ball to pressure the ball early and high up the field and score a quick counterattack goal.



## TEACH YOUR CENTRAL MIDFIELDER TO BE THE PLAY MAKER

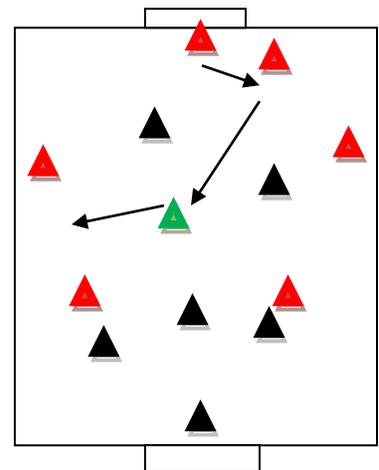
Play a game of 5v5 to 8v8 with keepers.

Add one neutral player who is your midfield play maker.

The neutral player plays for whichever team has possession so he/she is always on offense.

Start with unlimited touches.

Progress to all players restricted to max two touch but the neutral player has unlimited touches. This will teach the neutral to control the tempo and learn when to put his/her foot on the ball and hold it and when to play fast and when to switch the point of attack.



## FINAL THOUGHTS

Make sure that the field size for the small-sided activity replicates the passing range of the league game. Many coaches use field sizes too small which doesn't prepare the players for the technical demands of the game. For example, if your team plays 11v11 league games and in practice you play 6v6, the field size should be around 60x40 yards.

Finish the practice with a regular scrimmage with no restrictions and see if the players can execute what they learned in the small-sided activity when there are no restrictions. Furthermore, the scrimmage should incorporate all the elements of the game, including big goals and keepers and an off-side line so players learn to deal with the same environment as on game day.

Recommend that the scrimmage be played in specific formation. For example, if you play 5v5, play in a formation (example, 3 defenders and 2 forwards) and put players in the same positions they will occupy on game day. This way the players learn to make decisions which are position-specific and there is more transfer of learning from practice to game.