

Small Sided Games to Develop  
**SOCCER INTELLIGENCE**



Horst Wein  
Author

Peter Schreiner  
Publisher



**Horst Wein**

# **Small Sided Games to Develop Soccer Intelligence**

“Teaching the players to see, to understand, and to resolve problems are demonstrated impressively in these DVDs. Horst Wein’s coaching awareness is the coaching style of the future.”  
Norbert Elgert, Schalke '04 Under 19 coach

## **Publisher**

Peter Schreiner - Institute for Youth Soccer, Germany - [www.ifj96.de](http://www.ifj96.de)



## **Cover and Layout**

Becker|Richter - Graphics+Text  
[www.mediadidaktik.de](http://www.mediadidaktik.de)

## **Technical assistance**

Peter Schreiner, Jörg Amthor

© Copyright 2004 Horst Wein, Peter Schreiner

All rights reserved. No part of the booklet may be reproduced by copying, microfilm or any other way without permission of the Institute for Youth Soccer, Germany. It is not allowed to publish or translate the booklet, not even by electronic means.

# Contents

<b>What is soccer intelligence?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>How can soccer intelligence be encouraged?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>An intelligent player ...</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Making coaching sessions as exciting as real games</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Made-to-measure games</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Why mini-soccer?</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Rules of mini-soccer</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Preparatory games for mini-soccer</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Testing playing ability in mini-soccer</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Mini-soccer pentathlon</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Developing soccer intelligence with variations on mini-soccer</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>From mini-soccer to 7 v 7</b>	<b>49</b>



**PLAYING SOCCER WITHOUT THINKING  
IS LIKE SHOOTING WITHOUT AIMING**

## What is soccer intelligence?

Finding space, passing, shooting, controlling and running with the ball, taking the ball past an opponent and winning the ball - these technical skills can be learned relatively easily. An intelligent player also understands how to merge these basic elements into a higher, more meaningful and effective whole.

In the search for the best possible solution to a game situation, an intelligent player quickly sees the available opportunities, but also the risks. While he perceives and analyzes the actions of his teammates, he already knows and has mastered the various solutions to the problems that arise and understands how to translate these solutions into practice.

## How can soccer intelligence be encouraged?

The secret is: Stimulation through play instead of instruction through drills. The more a good coach knows, the less he reveals!

Learning by practice (motor learning) goes hand in hand with learning by perception and reasoning (cognitive learning). Modern soccer coaching is therefore aimed at developing soccer technique and soccer

intelligence in complex game situations. The coach confronts his players with the same or similar game situations, in which they have to make decisions quickly and translate them into action.

The coach asks the players questions designed to stimulate them to discover answers for themselves in small sided games. Only in this way – and not by constantly following the coach's instructions – can they develop genuine soccer intelligence.



**TELL ME – AND I WILL FORGET  
SHOW ME – AND I WILL REMEMBER  
INVITE ME – AND I WILL UNDERSTAND (LAO TSE).**

## An intelligent player ...

- ✓ understands how to read game situations in a flash, analyze them exactly and solve them correctly without losing any time. And: He has the necessary technique to be able to take his eye off the ball;
- ✓ knows when and where to pass, and when not to pass;
- ✓ plays the ball quickly or slows the game down when necessary. At the same time he is never rushed;



- ✓ feels absolutely secure even in difficult game situations;
- ✓ uses his experience to correctly size up the available space and the constantly changing distances to teammates and opponents. He has a perfect eye and feel for the available space (narrow/wide, in front/behind, on the flanks/in the center);
- ✓ dares to take risks, but is aware of the importance of balancing risks against safety (taking too many risks results in loss of possession, or defeat, while excessive emphasis on safety results in stagnation);
- ✓ knows that he cannot always do everything correctly, and therefore refuses to allow errors to have a negative effect on his game;
- ✓ finds the best solution for the game situation in which he finds himself. The solution is characterized by originality (rarity value), flexibility (he has more than 1 solution) or the element of surprise (surprising and creative solutions);
- ✓ uses his skills for the good of the team;
- ✓ knows what his second touch will be before he controls the ball with his first touch.

## Making coaching sessions as exciting as real games

Playing is the best way to learn how to play. The teaching and learning process proceeds step by step, with each step representing a gradual increase in the level of difficulty. The tasks become more complex. The different dimensions of technique, tactics and physical and mental fitness are no longer isolated, but are coached in a global, integrated manner.

Soccer is more than the sum of technique, tactics and condition. In a game of soccer, more than half of all instances of loss of possession are due to a wrong decision rather than poor technique. A coach who teaches his players correct technique using special, frequently repeated drills is neglecting to teach them “why,” “when” and “where” they need to use a technique to deal with a given game situation. The players learn to read game situations correctly by chance – if at all.

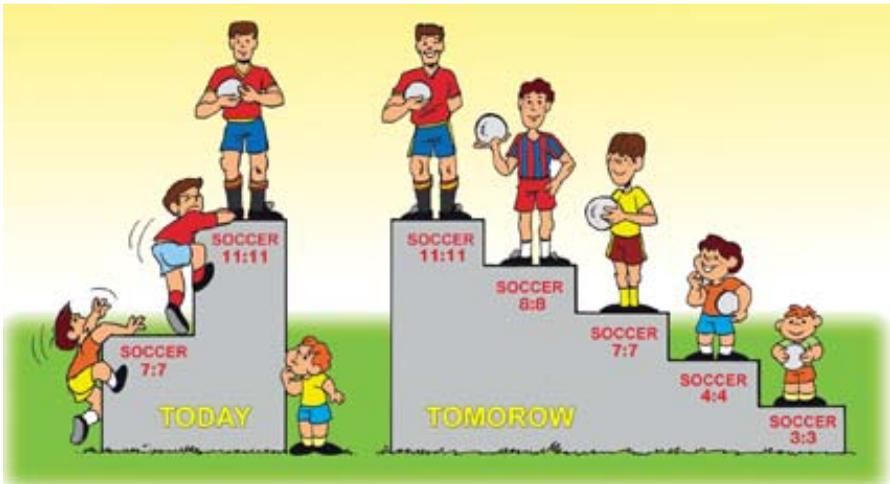
### Our players need games and drills that

- stimulate them technically, tactically, physically and mentally in equal measure,
- promote their understanding of the game,
- improve their perception and decision-making ability,
- help them learn to adapt quickly and securely to the constantly changing game situations in defense and attack.



## Made-to-measure games

Games tailored to the physical and mental capacity of players are a first step toward modernizing the methods of soccer coaching and ensuring that coaching sessions again become as stimulating as playing – as in street soccer. However, it would be wrong to mourn the disappearance of the street soccer that produced the great stars of the past.



In made-to-measure games, players can understand and master the complex demands of soccer step by step at each stage of their development.

The teaching and learning process advances step by step. The tasks and conditions change within the framework of a small sided game, but the game idea remains constant.

At each development stage the size of the field and the goals, the ways in which goals are scored, the size of the ball, the number of players and the rules are harmonized to suit the age and level of ability of the players.

## Why mini-soccer?

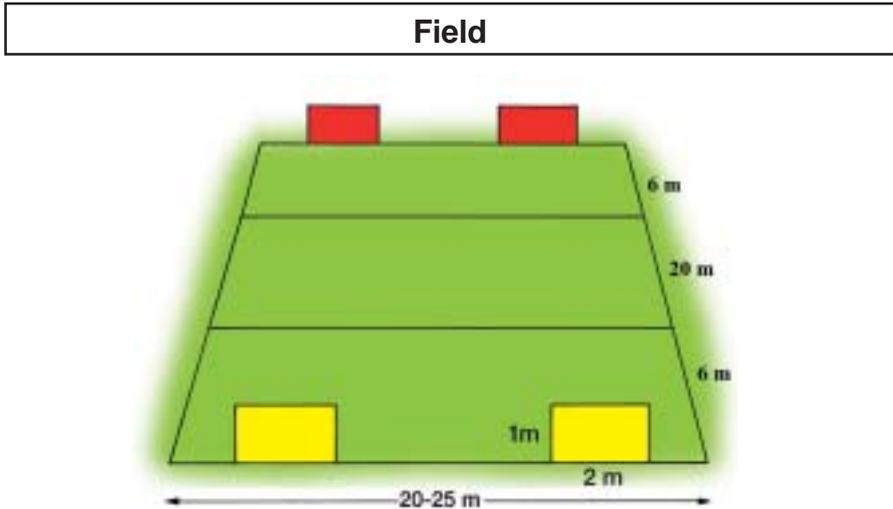
Because the players have a lot of possession, mini-soccer stimulates not only their technical skills but also the elements of soccer intelligence such as perception, analysis of game situations, anticipation, spontaneity, fantasy and creativity, and develops them step by step.

- ✓ Mini-soccer encourages the players to build up attacks on the flanks. More than almost any other game, it stimulates soccer intelligence and perception. The players learn to analyze game situations and make tactically clever decisions. Their visual, mental and physical capabilities are continuously put to the test.
- ✓ In mini-soccer, the players discover the habits of play – with and without the ball – that characterize the world's best soccer players. Coaches can quickly and accurately assess, analyze and correct the performance of their players, because they are dealing with simplified game situations.
- ✓ In mini-soccer, the players learn fast, because they are repeatedly confronted with just a few, almost identical, game situations. There are no fixed positions. This means that all of the players learn all aspects of the game. The players are all involved in the game and have lots of ball touches.
- ✓ The players treat the ball like their best friend, lovingly and tenderly. The ball is almost never simply hacked away to clear up a dangerous situation.
- ✓ The frequently occurring triangular situations stimulate communication and cooperation in both attack and defense.



**TALENT DEVELOPS IN REPEATED CONFRONTATIONS  
BETWEEN LOTS OF PLAYERS IN A SMALL FIELD,  
WHEREAS A LARGE FIELD EXHAUSTS THE CREATIVE,  
LIVELY AND IMAGINATIVE PLAYERS.**

## Rules of mini-soccer



- ✓ The size of the mini-soccer field is 22 x 32 meters or a basketball court of 14 x 26 meters can also be used.
- ✓ On each end line, there are 2 goals measuring 2 x 1 meters. The goals are 12 meters apart (or, on a basketball court, 8 meters).
- ✓ The penalty area or shooting zone is marked by a line parallel to, and 6 meters from, the end line.
- ✓ A goal is only valid if it is scored from inside the shooting zone.

### Number of players in each team

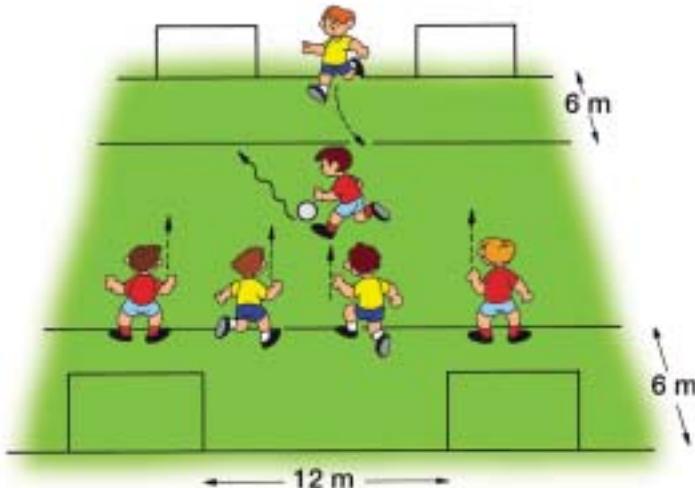
- ✓ A team consists of 4 players, 3 of whom are on the field. A team loses if it only has 2 players left.
- ✓ After each goal, the 2 teams substitute 1 player in a fixed sequence. The substitutions take place at the centerline.
- ✓ A penalty is awarded each time an offense is committed.

### Duration of the game

- ✓ A game usually lasts for 3 periods of 10 minutes.
- ✓ If several games are scheduled on the same day as part of a tournament, the games only last for 2 periods of 10 minutes.

### Rules

- ✓ There are no offsides, corners or penalty kicks.
- ✓ Free kicks are awarded only in midfield and to defending teams in their own penalty area. Free kicks are taken by passing the ball or running with it. Free kicks must be taken at least 3 meters from the opposition's penalty area and the opposing players must stand at least 3 meters away from the ball.
- ✓ When the ball goes out of play, it is brought back into play by passing or running with it. The opposing players must stand at least 3 meters away from the ball.
- ✓ If a defender commits an offense in his own penalty area, a penalty is awarded to the



- ✓ At a signal from the referee, an attacker runs with the ball from the center of the field toward one of the opposing team's goals. At the same time the other 2 attackers and 2 defenders set off from an imaginary 5-meter line to support the attack or defend against it. The defending team's 2 goals are guarded by 1 defender, who advances toward the attacker and forces him to pass to a teammate.
- ✓ The referee gives the start signal when all 6 players are in position.
- ✓ If several penalties are awarded, the players must take them in turn.

### Punishments

If a player is guilty of unsporting behavior, the referee asks the coach to exclude the player from the game.

### Equipment

- ✓ **Ball:** A size 4 (under 12) or size 5 (over 12) ball should be used.
- ✓ **Clothing:** All the players of a team wear vests of the same color.
- ✓ **Protection:** All of the players should wear shin guards.

### Referee

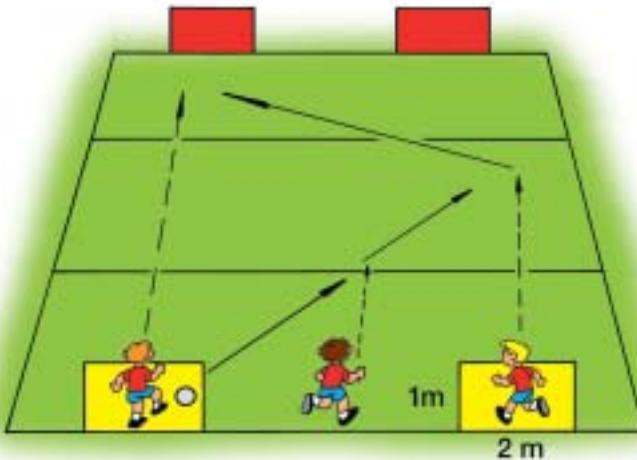
A referee is in charge of the game. There are no referee's assistants. In mini-soccer, referees should be under 18 years of age if possible. This ensures that new referees come up through the ranks.

**IN SOCCER, AN OUNCE OF INTELLIGENCE IS WORTH MORE THAN A POUND OF MUSCLE.**

## Preparatory games for mini-soccer

### Mini games of 3 v 0

- ✓ All of the teams of 3 players practice separately on the mini-soccer field. One player sets off from each of the team's 2 goals, while the third player starts from the end line. Without any opposing player, they pass the ball to each other over the length and breadth of the field. Each player must have at least 1 ball touch before one of them shoots at a goal from inside the shooting zone.
- ✓ An attack ends with a goal or when the ball goes out of play.

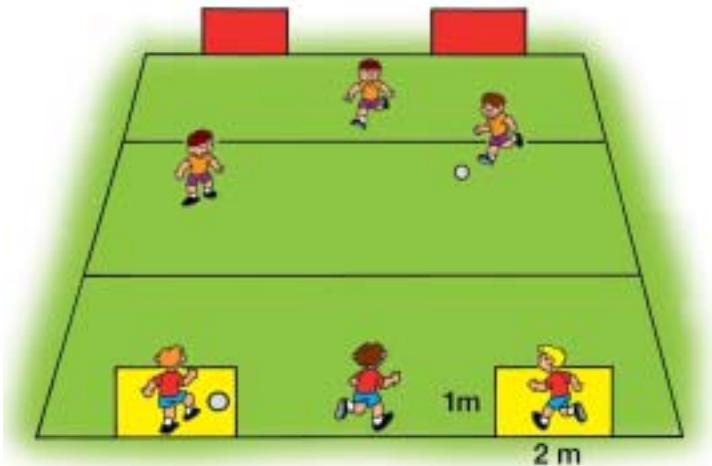


In this game and all other 3 v 0 games, the players familiarize themselves with the field and learn how to pass the ball securely and quickly to each other, how to control and run with the ball, and how to shoot accurately from inside the shooting zone. While they are practicing, the coach explains the rules of mini-soccer little by little.

How many different ways can the players think of to advance the ball into the shooting area while keeping the ball under control?

### 3 v 0 in opposite directions

The game conditions perception and the ability to recognize and exploit free space: Two teams of 3 players start from opposite ends of the field at the same time. Without pausing after completing their attacks, they continue until 1 team has scored 5 goals.



### 3 v 0 in a triangular formation

The 3 players of a team must always stay in a triangular formation during an attack. A goal does not count if it is scored when the players are all in a line.



**Why must you play in a triangular formation?**

- It offers more passing options.
- The opposing team has fewer opportunities to attack successfully.
- Even inaccurate passes reach their destination without the defender being able to intercept them.
- A player receiving a pass can more easily play the ball directly to the next player.
- It is easier to actively control and run with the ball.

### 3 v 0 with interchange of attacking positions

To score a goal, the 3 attackers must interchange positions during the passing move, so that when they score, each of them is in a different position than when they started.

**Where do you have to play the ball in order to get forward as quickly as possible?** - Into the path of your teammate.



**Why should all the attacking positions always be occupied?** - Because this will eventually enable you to pull the opposing team's defense out of position.

**What is the point of interchanging positions?** - Interchanging positions confuses the opposing team and makes it more difficult for the defenders to cover the attackers. The players learn to follow their own pass and not simply stand and wait. This creates space for the other players to push forward.

### 3 v 0 – Taking a pass on the run

A goal only counts if all passes are taken on the run, without stopping.

**When and why should you pass the ball first time rather than controlling it?** - If an opponent is close to you when the pass arrives, or if an attack needs to be speeded up and you want to give the defenders less time to challenge.



### 3 v 0 – First-time passing

A goal only counts if each player has made a first-time pass, without using his first touch to control the ball. The players should also shoot first time.

**When can a pass be helped on its way with your first touch?** - If it is played to you accurately or is played at a pace that makes it easy to deal with. A player must be available to receive the pass comfortably.



**When should you hold on to the ball before passing it, rather than playing a first-time pass?** - If the ball is passed to you inaccurately or too fast, or if no teammate is available to receive the pass.

**Why should you pass the ball into the path of your teammate when there is no defender in front of him?** - Because your teammate can get forward faster if he runs onto the ball rather than running with it. As a result, the defenders do not have enough time to challenge.

### 3 v 0 – Using the weaker foot

A goal only counts if it the ball was passed by each player once/twice with the “weaker” foot.

### 3 v 0 – Fast attack

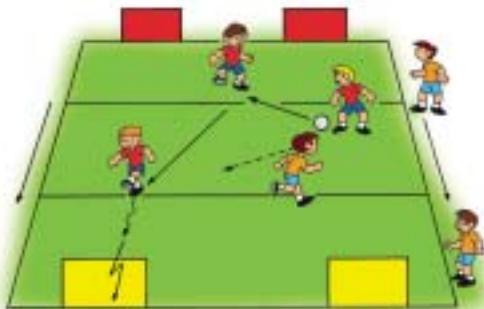
This is a game between all of the teams of 3 players. The teams have to score a goal in the shortest possible time. If no stopwatch is available, the game can be carried out in opposite directions. (In this case there is a risk of collisions but it makes the players aware of others around them.)



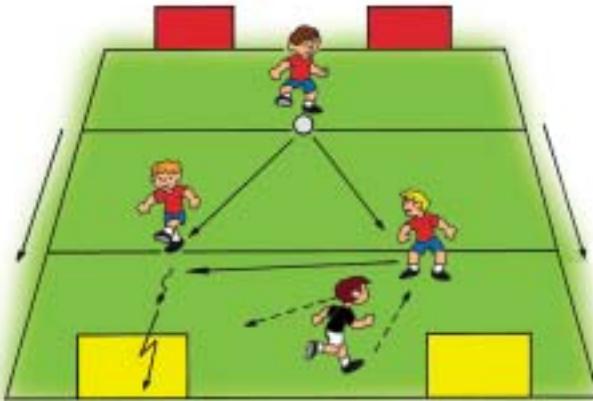
The coach’s clever questions guide the players to the best possible attacking combination. He directs their attention especially toward the player who starts the play, and to the direction and number of passes. After several attempts, the players learn to always start the attacks with the right winger. The winger passes the ball to the center forward, who runs onto it in the center of the field and immediately plays the left winger into the shooting zone.

### Mini-soccer – 3 v 1

- ✓ Three players of one team start at their end line and build up an attack on the opposing team’s 2 goals, which are defended by only 1 player. The same player can defend all the time, or 1 of the 2 players waiting on the touchline can switch places with him.



- ✓ If the defender wins the ball, he must shoot at one of the opposing team’s goals as quickly as possible, before the attackers can challenge him.
- ✓ After 6 attacks, another team of 3 players takes over.



- ✓ If 4 teams of 3 players are available, the coach can organize a tournament.
- ✓ Instead of 1 defender, a goalkeeper defends both goals.

**Which attacker should have the ball when the defender challenges for it?** – The center forward.



**Where should the center forward position himself when a winger has the ball?**  
If the defender challenges on the flank, the center forward hangs back or takes up a position behind the defender, where he can receive a through pass (triangle formation). The attacker on the opposite flank takes up positions that take account of the off-the-ball play of the center forward.

**When must you pass the ball?** – Neither too early nor too late. Pass when the defender is about to challenge. If the passer's timing is good, the defender cannot recover and challenge the player who receives the ball in time (this is the basis of success in 2 against 1 situations). Pass the ball when you are just out of reach of the defender (illustrate the defender's reach with sliding tackles). This distance may change if a defender backs off when faced by an attacker who is running at him with the ball.

**Why is it best if the center forward has the ball?** – Because he is the only attacker who has the option of passing in both directions to open up scoring chances. The task of the defender, who is isolated, is then at its most difficult.

**What do the teammates of the player in possession have to pay attention to?** – They must remain far enough away from the defender and roughly level with the player in possession, so that they can run onto the ball outside the reach of the defender.



**What else must you watch out for when you pass?** – Before you come within reach of the defender, disguise the direction of the pass by feinting, using a foot or body movement. In this way you trick the defender. Now play the ball diagonally into the path of a teammate, who receives it while level with the defender. After passing, remain involved in the play (follow the ball, overlap down the flank, or take up another position to receive a pass).



**What do you do if the path to goal is free or suddenly opens up?** – Run with the ball toward the goal and try to score.

**What do you do when you do not have the ball?** – Take up a good position in front of one of the goals, outside the reach of the defender.

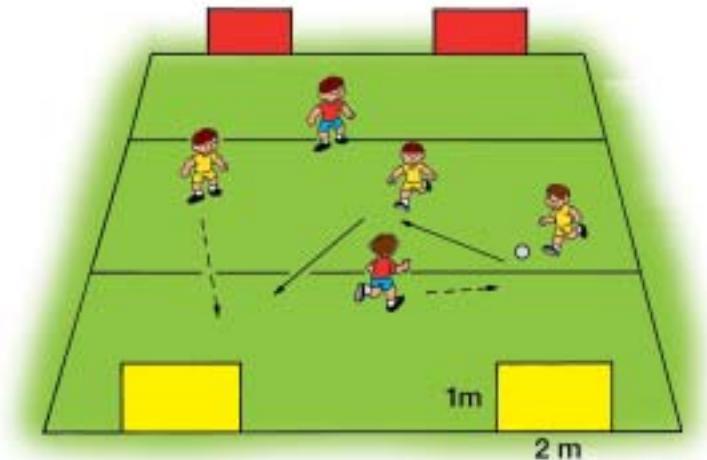
**What must you do to ensure that you can always receive a pass?** – Pay attention to the position of the defender relative to the player with the ball, and to the position of the third member of your team and the position of the goals. Never position yourself so that the defender is directly in line between you and the ball.

**Which passes should you avoid in 3 v 1 situations?** – Avoid passes that do not gain any space, so that you keep your numerical advantage and other defenders cannot intervene by tackling or intercepting.

**What should the single defender do?** – He should try to make the center forward play the ball to one of the wingers as soon as possible. On the flank he has a better chance of closing down the winger who has less options. He should only challenge for the ball if the attacker lets it roll too far away from his foot.

### 3 v 1 – Continuous and alternate attacks toward both ends

- ✓ A team of 3 players in the middle of the field attacks toward each end of the field alternately and tries to score. At each end, the two goals are defended by only 1 player. After 10 attacks, the two teams swap their positions and functions.
- ✓ An attack ends when the defender touches the ball.



- ✓ If a defender gains possession, he tries to pass the ball to a teammate in the other half.
- ✓ A defender who concedes a goal is always substituted by the third player of the defending team.
- ✓ Only one-touch passing and shooting is allowed in the shooting zone.

### VARIATION

A goal can also be scored after regaining possession of the ball.

### 3 v 1 – Forming a triangle, with special rules

See the first mini-soccer game of 3 v 1.

A goal only counts if the 3 attackers form a triangle during the attack (they must not play in a line), or if they play the ball twice with their weak foot, or if passes are controlled on the run.

### 3 v 1 – Fast attack

See the first mini-soccer game of 3 v 1 and the variations. The team of 3 players that scores a valid goal in the shortest time wins.



See also the questions to the game of 3 v 0 – Fast attack.

**Where should the ball be when the attack starts?** - Preferably with the center forward.

**What is the most successful way to attack in a game of 3 v 1?** - The center forward runs with the ball at the defender. At the right moment, he plays the ball into the shooting zone, into the path of one of the wingers. The winger then shoots first time at goal.



### 3 v 1 + 1 additional defender supporting from behind

Three attackers play against 1 defender. On the first ball touch, a second defender, positioned 8 (or 6 or 4) meters behind the attackers, joins in. The third player in the defending team takes a pause and replaces one of his teammates when the next attack takes place. He waits behind the start line in a corner of the field.



**What is the best way to score in this game?** - By running with the ball and passing it at the right moment, before the second defender can intervene. Unnecessary passes, which gain no ground, should be avoided.

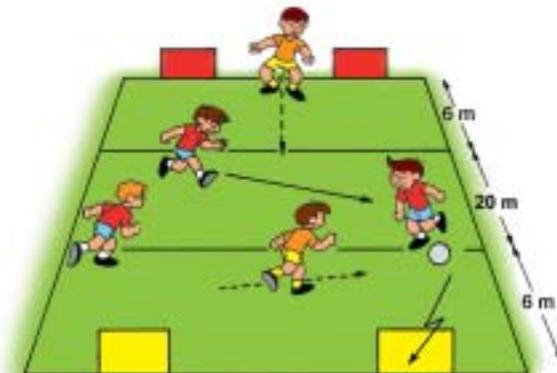
**Which player should have the ball when the attack starts?** - In order to lose as little time as possible, the center forward should have the ball.

How does the center forward start the attack? By passing to one of the wingers or by making a forward run with the ball? - **A forward run. If he passes to a winger, the defender may have time to intervene.**

**What is the best time for the center forward to pass the ball?** - When the defender challenges, preferably when the center forward is just outside the reach of the defender, so that the pass cannot be intercepted.

**Which factors play a role in the timing of the pass?** - What the defender does, the direction of the second defender's run, the positions of the other 2 attackers and the position of the defender in relation to the 2 mini-goals.

**Should the winger first control the ball in the shooting zone, or should he shoot first time?** - To give the defender as little time as possible to challenge, the winger should shoot first time.



### 3 v 1 + 2 additional defenders supporting from behind

The pressure on the attackers to act quickly is increased by having 2 additional defenders behind them. From a position 8 meters behind the attackers, the 2 additional defenders run back to help their teammate. The aim of the attackers is to pass the ball faster and more accurately, to run into space and shoot quickly.

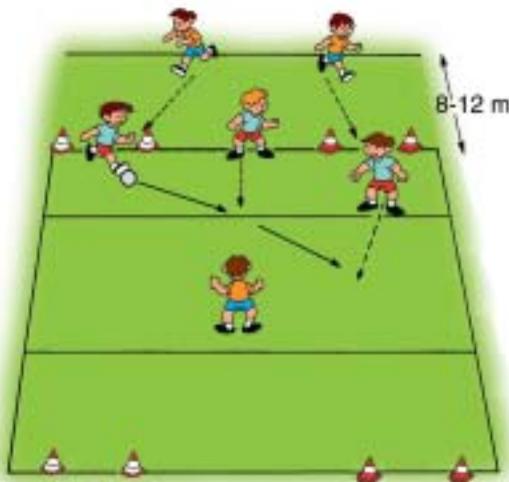
#### How do the 2 additional defenders influence the play of the attackers?

- If the attacker with the ball observes the 2 defenders behind the attackers, he knows which of his teammates is furthest from a defender. When the first defender challenges, the attacker should pass the ball into the shooting zone so that this teammate can run onto the ball and shoot first-time.



**Should the defenders coming from behind challenge the player in possession or try to close off his passing lines?** - While the first defender tries to hold up the center forward, the other 2 defenders should try to close off the passing lines. The 3 defenders should learn to agree in advance what they intend to do.

**How can the last defender influence the play of the attackers?** - If he takes no action to slow the attack and close down the passing lines, the center forward will not pass the ball. And: If he does not position himself exactly in the middle but rather more to one side, the ball will be passed into the path of the attacker who is furthest away from him.



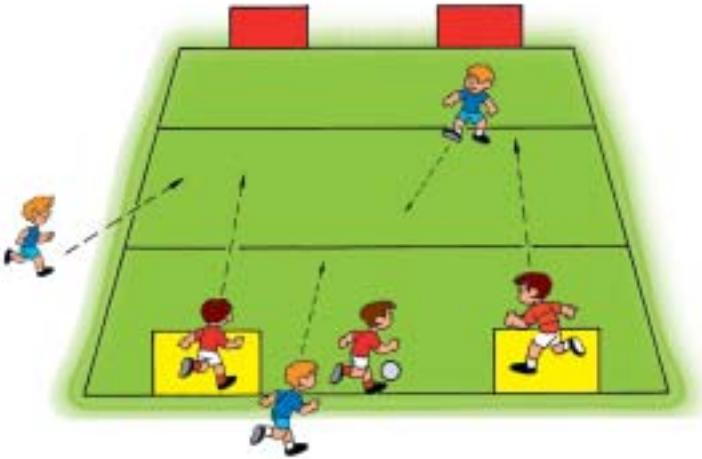
**3 v 1 + 2 additional defenders supporting from different positions (1 on the flank + 1 behind)**

Two additional defenders (1 on the flank + 1 behind) pressure the attackers to speed up their play. While the first defender is positioned in front of the 2 goals, a second defender starts off 8 meters (6 meters) behind the attackers. A third defender helps the first 2 from a number of positions – for example 10 meters (6 meters) from the touchlines. As soon as an attacker touches the ball, the defenders set off to prevent the attackers from scoring.

**Which attacker has the best chance of scoring?** - The attacker who is furthest from the 3 defenders when the ball is passed.



**When should the center forward pass the ball, and who to?** - When the last defender is about to challenge, the center forward should pass to the teammate who is furthest away from the defender at the side and the defender behind them.



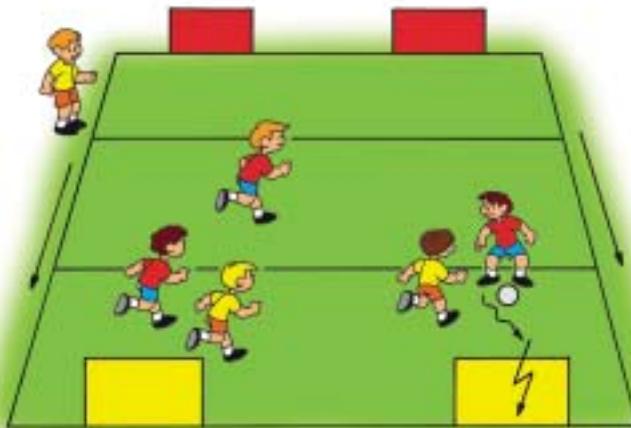
**IT IS IMPORTANT TO HAVE POSSESSION OF THE BALL,  
BUT IT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT.**

## Mini-soccer – 3:2

Different teams of 3 players take turns in attacking the two goals on each end line. Initially the goals at each end are defended by 1 player in the shooting zone and 1 midfielder in the center of the field. Subsequently the restrictions on the defenders' positions are lifted.

How many goals can the attackers score in sequence against the 2 pairs of defenders without losing possession or allowing the ball to go out of play?

An attack ends when a goal is scored, or when the ball goes out of play, or when a defender wins the ball and passes it to the other defender or to one of the other pair of defenders.



**Which flank is the most favorable for exploiting a 2 against 1 situation?**

The flank where a teammate is best positioned and the defender challenges first. It is important to create a 2 against 1 situation where the second defender is no longer able to intervene to help his teammate. The player with the ball can easily steer this through the direction of his run at a defender.

A 2 against 1 is most effective on the right flank because the attacker on the left flank can disguise the direction of a pass more easily (pass with outside of right foot, or feint to pass or run in one direction and then run into the center).

### Which attacker has the best chance of scoring?



Usually the attacker who makes a run down the flank. As the defender must first of all prevent the center forward from breaking through in the middle, the center forward can pass to the flank after running into the middle. The defender is thus wrong-footed by the direction of the run with the ball.

If the center forward runs with the ball toward one of the 2 defenders, his teammate on the same flank makes a run off the ball toward the wing, thus creating a 2 against 1 situation. He receives the ball from the center forward before the second defender can intervene.

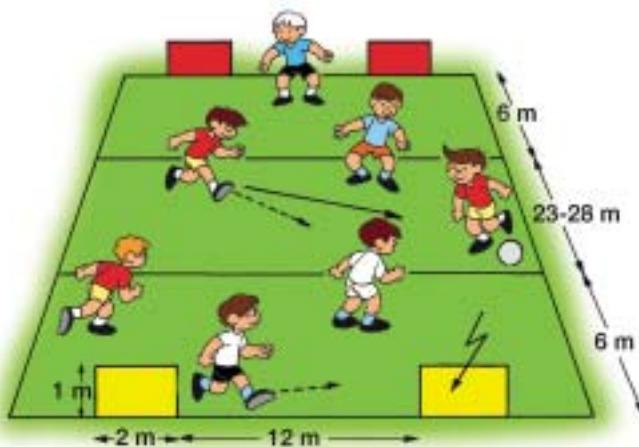
### What factors influence the interplay of the 3 attackers?



The off-the-ball runs of the 2 teammates of the player with the ball, the positions of the 2 defenders relative to each other, the positions of the defenders relative to the mini-goals, and the moment when a defender first challenges for the ball.

## 3 v 1 + 1 goalkeeper

A team of 3 players attacks the 2 goals on each end line of the mini-field. The goals are defended by a defender and a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper may not leave his penalty area.



**What does the player with the ball have to pay attention to before he passes?** - He should be aware of the position of the defender and the position of the goalkeeper.



## VARIATION

Three attackers against 2 defenders in one half of the field, with no positional restrictions on the defenders.

### 3 v 2 – Fast attack

The team of 3 players that scores the fastest goal against the 2 defenders is the winner.

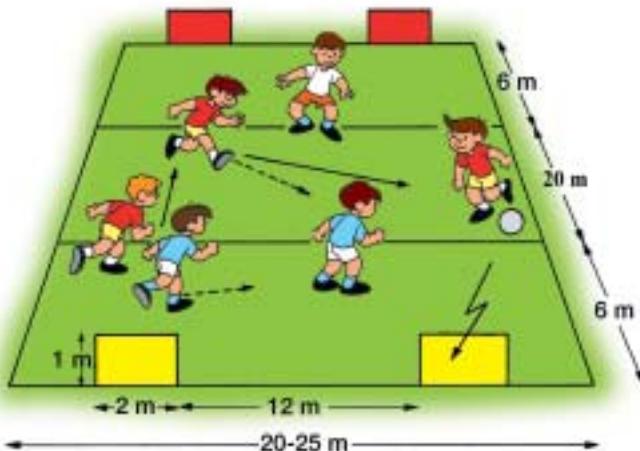


See the questions on the fast attack games of 3 v 0 and 3 v 1.

### 3 v 2 and 3 v 1 alternately

While one pair of mini-goals is guarded by 2 defenders, a single player defends the other pair. The 3 attackers first attack the goals defended by 1 player, then the goals defended by 2 players. After 10 attacks the teams of 3 swap places and tasks.

An attack ends when 1 of the 3 defenders wins the ball and passes to another defender, or when the ball goes out of play, or a goal is scored. The team that scores the most goals in 10 attacks is the winner.

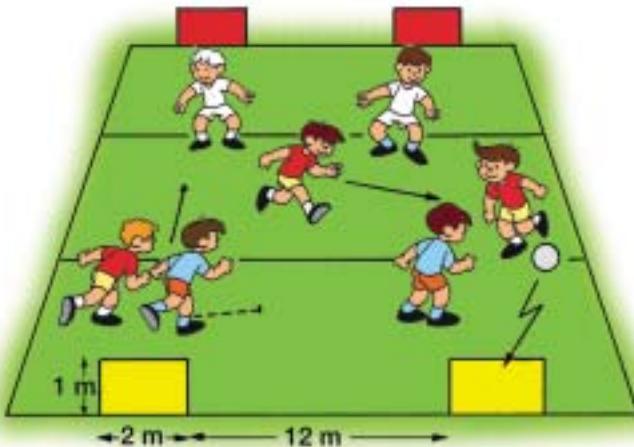


### 3 v 2 in both halves of the field (variation with runners)

After each attack against 2 defenders, one of the defenders runs to join his teammate in the other half, so that a 3 v 2 situation is again created. In this way both goals on each end line are always defended by 2 players.

### 3 v 2 in both halves of the field

A team of 3 players attacks the goals on one end line and then the goals on the other end line. Both pairs of goals are guarded by 2 defenders. Which team scores the most goals in 10 attacks?

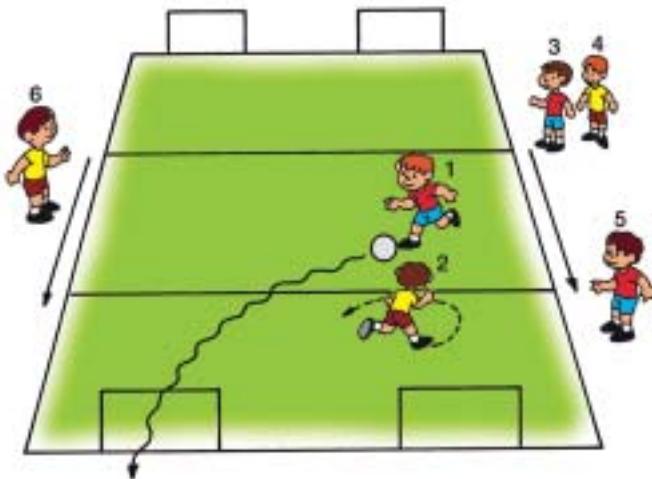


**THE SUCCESS OF COACHING SHOULD NOT BE MEASURED BY RESULTS OR CHAMPIONSHIPS, BUT RATHER BY THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS WHO MAKE THE TRANSITION TO THE NEXT LEVEL AT THE END OF THE SEASON.**

## Testing playing ability in mini-soccer

### 1 v 1 (Player 1 v 2, 3 v 4 und 5 v 6)

- ✓ The 6 players taking the test are numbered from 1 to 6. The player runs with the ball at his feet from one end line to the other, with the object of taking the ball through one of the 2 cone goals or scoring in one of the mini-goals from inside the shooting zone. His opponent, who sets off from the opposite end line, tries to win the ball from him and score a goal.
- ✓ After a goal is scored or the ball goes over the end line, both players remain behind their end line while another pair of players take their turn. Afterwards the first two players compete against each other again, but this time the second player starts with the ball.
- ✓ The first player to score 3 valid goals is the winner, and is awarded 1 point toward his test score.



**What is the best way for an attacker to score in the 1 v 1 situation?**

- He runs into unguarded space toward one of the goals.
- He changes direction if the defender gets too close, and tries to win time and space by feinting, using foot or body movements.

**What are the most common mistakes made by the attacker?**

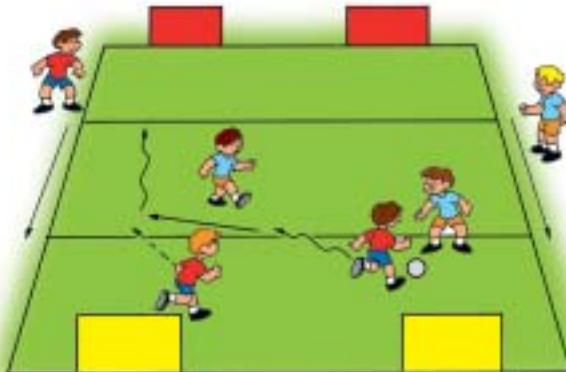
- He runs at the defender and unintentionally takes the ball within the defender's reach.
- He never changes his pace, or pushes the ball too far ahead.
- He does not screen the ball properly and gives the defender the opportunity of winning it.

**What should the defender do?**

- He should not position himself directly in front of the attacker, but should force the attacker to head for the right or left goal.
- He should shadow the attacker and wait for the best moment to challenge for the ball.

**2 v 2**  
**(players 1-2-3 against players 4-5-6)**

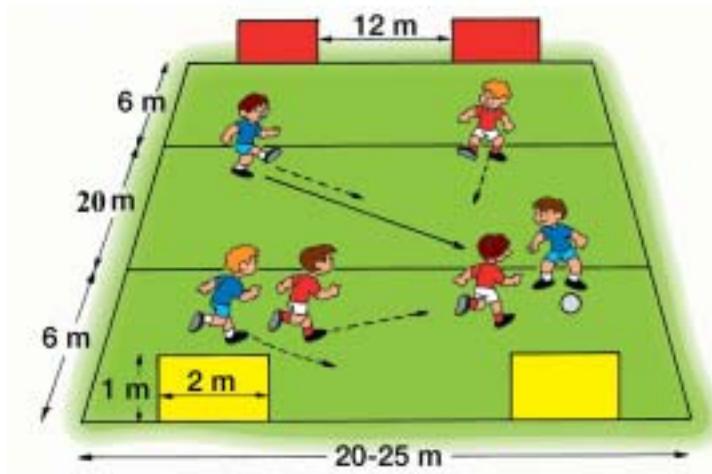
- ✓ Each team starts with just 2 players on the field. When one of the teams scores, both teams add 1 player.
- ✓ The official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper apply.
- ✓ Each team tries to score more goals than the other team in 3 minutes of playing time. Each member of the winning team is awarded 2 points toward his total test score.

**What is the most successful attacking tactic?**

To run diagonally with the ball toward one of the defenders and then to create a 2 against 1 situation with a teammate who has made a forward run in support.

### 3 v 3 (players 1-2-4 against players 3-5-6)

The official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper apply. The team that scores the most goals in three periods of 3 minutes playing time wins. Each member of the winning team is awarded 3 points toward his total test score.



### The winner

- ✓ The player with the highest total test score wins the mini-soccer ability test.
- ✓ If there is a tie between two or more players, the tie is settled by a 1 v 1 play-off between the 2 or 3 players. The play-off is started by throwing the ball in the air.
- ✓ If 12 players take part in the test, a second group of 6 players is formed. The top 3 players in each group qualify for the final round and the bottom 3 take part in the runners-up round. If there are 18 players they are organized into 3 test groups. The first 2 players in each group qualify for the final in the next coaching session. The numbers 3 and 4 in each group take part in the B-round, and the numbers 5 and 6 take part in the C round.

## Mini-soccer pentathlon

Players learn best between the ages of 8 and 12. If, at this age, the coaching program is designed to develop their coordination as well as their soccer-specific skills, they will subsequently be able to master any new, complicated, technical and tactical sequences quickly and vary them to good effect. However, as Norbert Elgert, the coach of the Under 19 professionals at Schalke 04 says “These innovative ideas will help my players develop into professional players in the Bundesliga.

Peter Schreiner’s outstanding DVD “Coordination and Agility Training with a Soccer Ball” has many excellent ideas for developing coordination and soccer specific skills.

If coaches are to be persuaded to enhance their coaching methods with a general and many faceted teaching and learning program, our traditional games of soccer will have to be changed. The mini-soccer pentathlon is one example of this.

The 5 events of the mini-soccer pentathlon last for about 1 hour. The winner of the pentathlon is the team of 3 players (with and without substitutes) that wins at least 3 of the 5 games.

### The 5 games of the mini-soccer pentathlon

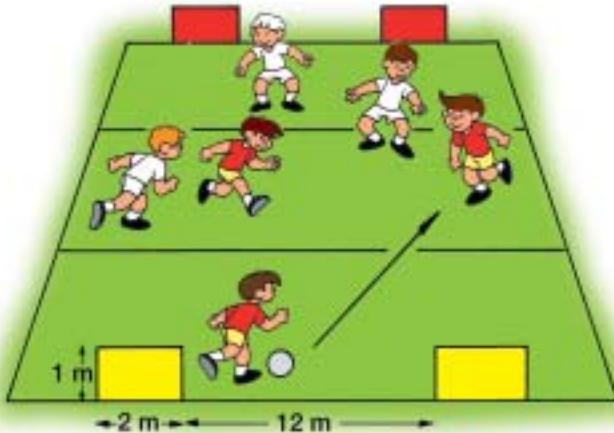
**Mini-soccer – 3 v 3**  
**with 1 player remaining inside the shooting zone**

See the official rules of mini-soccer. In this variation, 1 player of each team stays in the penalty area and cannot intervene in the midfield play. After each goal the defender is replaced by a midfielder, until each member of the team has played as the defender at least once during each half. A goal is scored by dribbling the ball into one of the opposing team’s cone goals.



### VARIATION

Instead of dribbling the ball over the goal line, the players shoot at one of the 2 goals from inside the shooting zone.



**Why should one of the 3 players stay in the penalty area?**

Three players should always form a triangle, so that there is a balance between defense and attack and there are more passing options.

**What are the tasks of the player who hangs back behind his teammates?**

He covers the backs of the midfield players, and his teammates can always pass the ball back to him when his team has possession. He can launch an attack with a pass or a surprise run with the ball, and create a "one man more" or superiority in numbers situation.

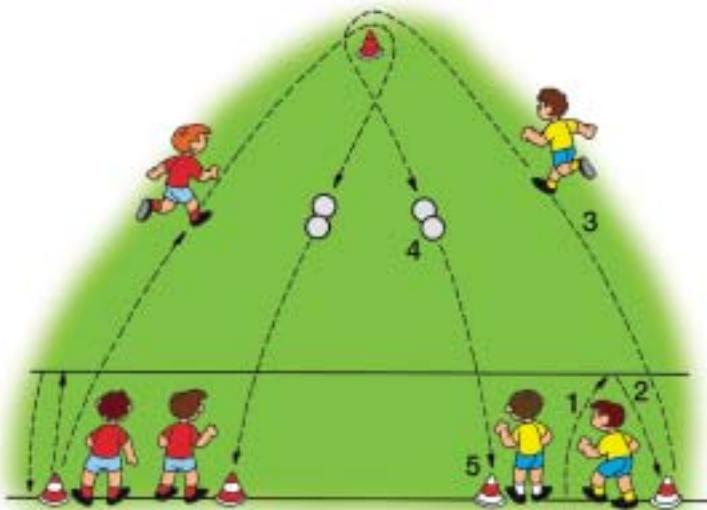
**A FAST SOCCER PLAYER IS RECOGNIZABLE NOT ONLY BY HIS SPRINTING ABILITY AND EXPLOSIVE START, BUT ALSO IN PARTICULAR BY HIS ABILITY TO READ GAME SITUATIONS AND MAKE QUICK DECISIONS.**

## Relay

Each team of 3 or 4 players lines up behind one of the 2 cone goals on the same end line of a mini-field. At a signal from the coach, the first player of each team:

- ✓ runs to the 6-meter line and touches it with his foot (1),
- ✓ returns to his goal and touches a cone with his foot (2),
- ✓ turns and runs round the cone in the middle of the field (3) (jostling is an accepted part of the game),
- ✓ jumps over a 2.5-meter wide “ditch” (marked by 2 balls, cones or a small hurdle) on his way back to the goal (4) and
- ✓ returns to the goal, where he touches the second cone with his foot. This is the signal for the next player to start the same sequence (5).

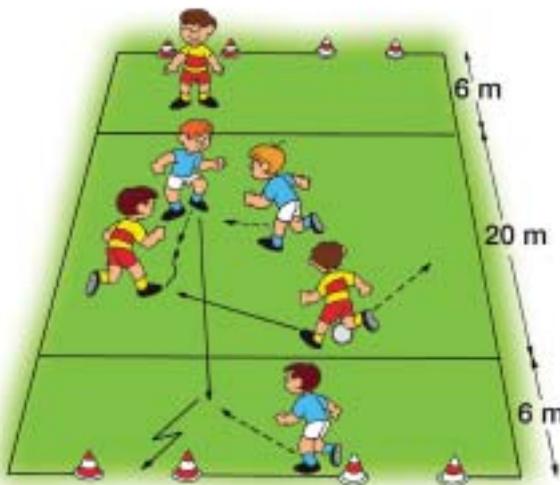
Each player should run twice. The winner is the team whose last player completes his second run first.



**Tip for the coach:** The content of the relay can be varied at will.

### Mini-soccer – 3 v 3 with through passes to a front runner

- ✓ The official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper apply. Each team has 1 striker (front runner) who must stay in the shooting zone, behind the opposing team's 2 midfielders. The striker cannot take part in the midfield play.
- ✓ The coach starts the game by throwing the ball in the air. The 2 midfield players of each team must then try to pass the ball to their striker. They can only leave the midfield when the ball is in the shooting zone.
- ✓ After every 2 goals, the striker swaps places with one of the midfielders.
- ✓ In the second half of the game, the striker is not allowed to score. When he receives a pass he must lay the ball off to a midfielder who has made a forward run and is better positioned. The midfielder can then shoot.



#### When is the best moment to play a through pass?

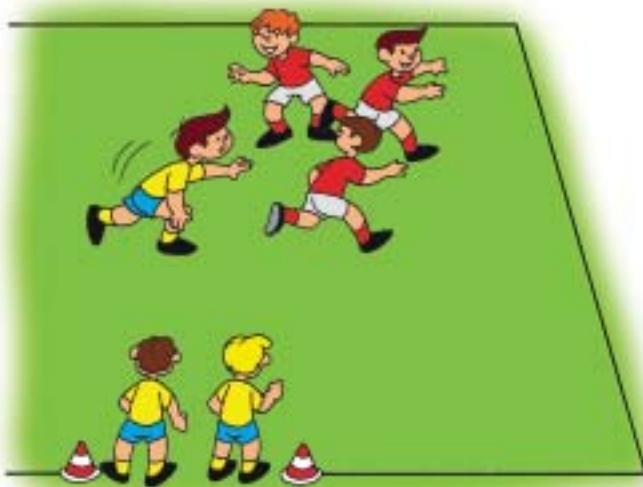
Immediately after winning the ball, before the opposing team can regroup in defense.

#### What conditions must be satisfied before a successful through pass can be played?

The passer and the receiver should make eye contact so that there is an understanding between them.

### Tag 2 robbers

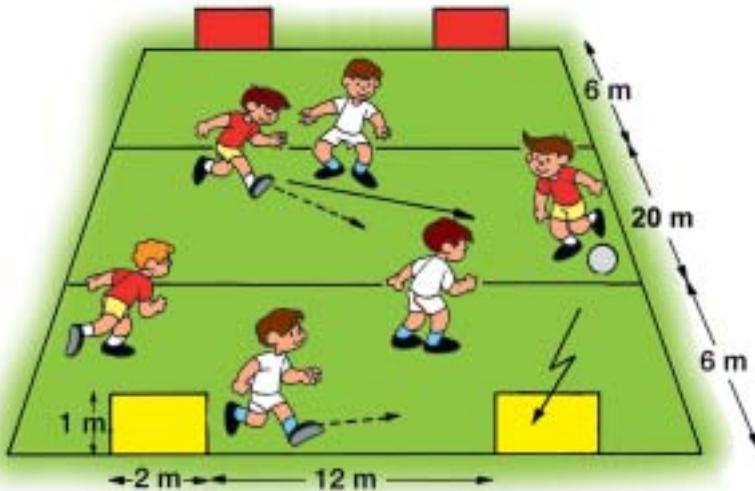
- ✓ The cops' team stands near its goal, while the robbers' team takes up positions in the shooting zone so that they cannot be easily tagged when the first cop comes after them.
- ✓ When the first cop has tagged 2 robbers, he goes back to his goal and gives the next player a high five as the signal that it is now his turn. A robber who leaves the shooting zone is considered to have been tagged.
- ✓ The time needed for all of the cops to tag 2 robbers is measured with a stopwatch. The 2 teams then swap places and tasks.
- ✓ If the team that won the first round loses the second round (each team has 2 turns as cops), the team that achieved the lowest time is the winner.



**Tip for the coach:** The content of this game can be varied to suit your coaching objectives. Tag games are good for stimulating players to learn and improve their perceptive skills, decision-making ability and coordination.

**Mini-soccer – 3 v 3**

- ✓ The official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper apply.
- ✓ Playing time: 3 periods of 3 minutes. If each team has a substitute, the playing time should be extended to 3 periods of 5 minutes.



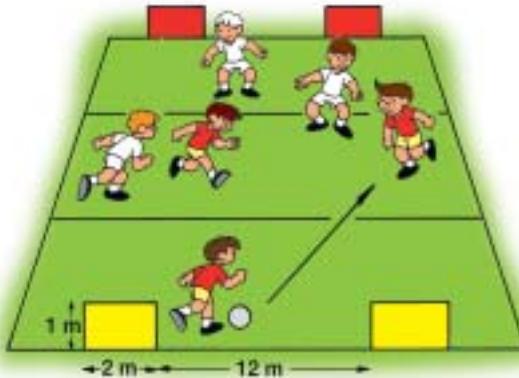
**TECHNICALLY SKILLED PLAYERS ARE ONLY OF VALUE  
IF THEY UNDERSTAND HOW TO USE THEIR SKILLS  
AT THE RIGHT MOMENT IN THE RIGHT GAME SITUATION  
AND IN THE RIGHT PART OF THE FIELD.**

## Development of soccer intelligence with variations on mini-soccer

Besides the already mentioned games (see “Preparatory games for mini-soccer”), the players should learn the following variations on mini-soccer. They are organized by level of difficulty and have a variety of learning aims to prepare the players for “real” 11 v 11 soccer.

### Mini-soccer with 1 player remaining inside the shooting zone

One player of each team stays in the penalty area and cannot advance into the midfield. After each goal this defender swaps places with a midfield player.



#### Why should one of the 3 players stay in the penalty area?

So that there is a balance between defense and attack and there are more passing options.



#### What are the tasks of the player who hangs back behind his teammates?

The player who hangs back can help out if his teammates make a defensive mistake, and can cover the backs of the midfield players. He can take up a position to receive a backpass and can launch an attack with his passes.

**Variation:** When his team is building up an attack, the defender can push forward into the midfield, provided a teammate falls back to cover for him.

### Dribbling the ball over one of the 2 goal lines

See the official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper. Instead of shooting into one of the 2 goals from inside the shooting zone, an attacker has to dribble the ball through one of the two 6-meter wide cone goals.

#### VARIATION 1

The player who dribbles the ball over the goal line has to demonstrate a trick, such as Zidane's spin.



**Tip for the coach:** This variation forces the players to use the space better and create clear goalscoring chances.

#### VARIATION 2

A goal only counts if each of the 3 players has played the ball at least once since the moment when the team won possession.

#### VARIATION 3

A goal only counts if the ball has only been played along the ground since the moment when the team won possession. This makes attacks faster and more effective.



#### **Why should the players keep the ball on the ground?**

High passes slow down the play and result in more ball-control errors by the receiving player.

#### VARIATION 4

A goal is only valid if all 3 players of the attacking team are in the defending team's half when the scorer shoots. This encourages all 3 players to attack as a compact unit.

#### VARIATION 5

Between the moment when the team wins possession and the moment when it scores, at least 1 high pass must be played (volley). This helps the players to improve their ball control.

#### VARIATION 6

To maintain a balance between attack and defense, one of 3 attackers must be in his own half of the field when a goal is scored. He is then in position to slow down an opposing counterattack if his team loses possession.

### Make it, take it

After scoring, the attackers immediately attack the goal at the other end of the field. The defending team cannot pressure them until they leave the shooting zone in which they have just scored. This means that the defenders can only defend in midfield and in the penalty area in front of the goal they are defending. The team that scores the most goals in sequence is the winner. This variation is especially good for improving the players' concentration.

**What do we learn when we have to attack the goal at the opposite end immediately after scoring a goal?**



- You learn how to adjust quickly to a new situation and how to play the ball quickly out of a crowded zone into space to give your team more time and space to create a scoring chance.
- You learn how to control the pace of the play (you can speed up the play or slow it down).

**What is the best way for the attacking team to score several times in succession?**



Immediately after scoring, the scorer should not try to run with the ball but should play it to a teammate who has made a run into space in midfield. All of the players who helped in the move that led to the goal should put distance between themselves and the ball and run into space in the opposing team's half of the field.

### Mini-soccer with a handicap

After each goal, the scoring team loses a player and must play until the next goal with 1 player less than the other team (2 v 3). If the team of 3 players scores, the third player of the other team comes back into the game, while the scoring team loses a player (3 v 2). If a team of 2 players scores, it again loses a player and must then play 1 v 3. This variation on mini-soccer without a goalkeeper is played for 3 periods of 2 minutes with 2 pauses of 1 minute, in which the coach discusses any errors that may have been made with his players.



#### Why do we play mini-soccer with a handicap?

So that you learn how to adjust to different game situations and how to continuously read the game. Initially you play 3 v 3, then 2 v 3 or 3 v 2 or even 1 v 3 or 3 v 1.



**DRILLS TO IMPROVE TECHNIQUE ARE CERTAINLY IMPORTANT, BUT CARRYING THEM OUT WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO REAL GAME SITUATIONS IS NOT ENJOYABLE AND UNREALISTIC. THE PLAYERS ALWAYS NEED TO BE AWARE OF THE RELATIONSHIP TO REAL GAME SITUATIONS IF THEY ARE TO BE MOTIVATED AND BENEFIT FROM THE DRILLS.**

### Mini-soccer with 3 teams

A team of 3 players takes up positions in the middle of the field and attacks the mini-goals on both end lines alternately. Each set of 2 goals is defended by a team of 3 players.

One defender is a goalkeeper and stays close to both goals, while another defender can only defend on the 6-meter line. The third defender can move and defend freely within his own half of the field.

#### Variation 1

All 3 defenders can move and defend freely in their own half of the field. After 10 attacks (5 at each end), the attackers swap places with one of the defending teams. This is repeated until all of the teams have played once as attackers.

#### Variation 2

The attackers lose their right to attack if a shot misses the goal or they lose possession. When the defenders win the ball, they must pass it at least once to acquire the right to carry out the next attack.



**How does the positional play of the goalkeeper in front of the 2 goals influence the buildup play of the 3 attackers? Give examples for the different positions of the goalkeeper in front of the 2 goals!**

The players should attack the goal furthest away from the goalkeeper (preferably using a long through pass).

When the ball is in the opposition's half, the goalkeeper observes the play from a position midway between the 2 goals, so that he can quickly defend the goal that is attacked.

## Through passing to a front runner

Each team positions a striker (front runner) in the shooting zone. The striker expects to receive an accurate through pass from one of his 2 teammates, who are not allowed to leave the midfield. The striker controls the ball (preferable standing side-on to the goals, so that he can see them) and shoots at one of the goals.

As the players skills become more proficient, the coach can not only ask the striker to stand side-on but can also ask the players to use different passing techniques with the right or left foot, otherwise a goal will not count.

### When is the best moment to play a through pass?

Immediately after winning the ball, before the opposing team has time to regroup defensively.

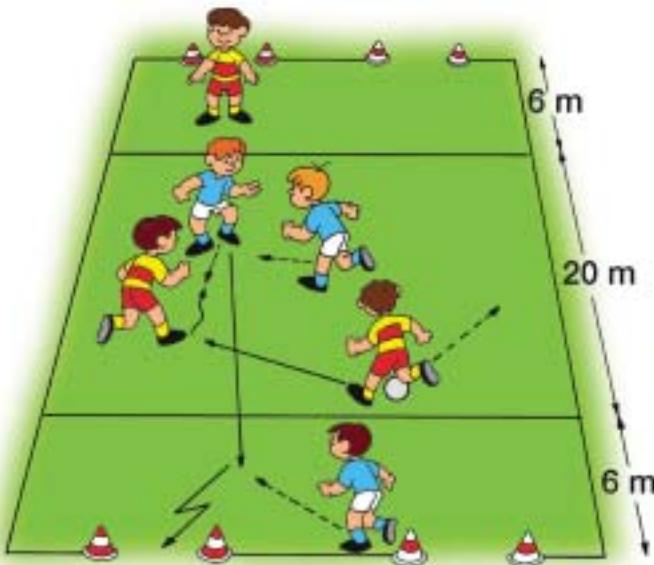


### What conditions must be satisfied before a successful through pass can be played?

The passer and the receiver should make eye touch so that there is an understanding between them. The receiver should control the ball standing side-on to the goals.

### Is it better to pass along the ground or in the air? Why?

Passing along the ground is better, because high passes complicate the play and slow it down. High passes result in more mistakes.



**VARIATION 1**

The midfielders can only enter the shooting zone after the ball has been passed into it. This forces the striker to control the ball and turn with it into space, where there is no opponent.

**VARIATION 2**

To improve controlling and running with the ball, the ball can only be volleyed to the striker.

**VARIATION 3**

The striker is not allowed to score. This means that one of the 2 midfielders must quickly make an intelligent run forward before a goal can be scored.

**What do we have to do to score a goal?**

One of the 2 midfielders must make a forward run into the shooting zone and call for the ball.

**Which of the 2 midfielders should make the forward run?**

Usually this will be the player who is closest to the striker. In some game situations a switch of flanks is better, because the midfielder who is furthest away then has a free run at the goal.

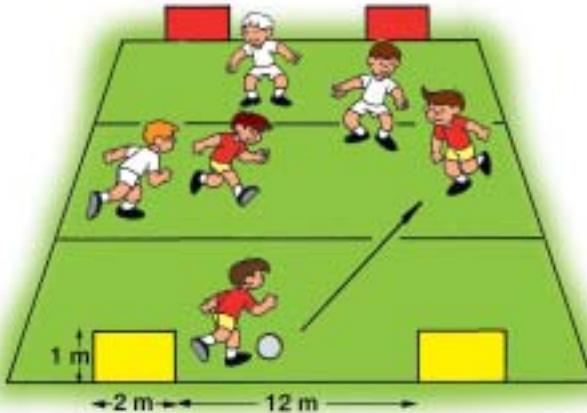
**Why do the 2 midfielders not both make forward runs?**

If the defenders win the ball, they will be able to counterattack, because no one is covering in midfield.

**Retaining possession in 3 v 2 situations**

Each team must have 1 player in its own penalty area. The other 2 players remain in the midfield. Each team tries to keep possession of the ball for 6 (8) seconds under pressure from the other team. Success gains the team 1 point.

The first team to acquire 3 points is the winner. The player in the penalty area can swap places with either one of the midfielders when his team is in possession.



### What is the best way to retain possession?

- avoid unnecessary 1 v 1 situations;
- pass the ball to the feet of a teammate whenever possible;
- run into space, look for free space and use it.



### VARIATION 1

With the exception of the following rules, the official rules of mini-soccer without a goalkeeper apply. A team has to pass the ball 4 times in succession before it can attack the opposing team's goals. The defender behind the midfielders can push up into midfield when his team is on the attack.

### What do the players have to do between winning the ball and scoring?

- secure possession;
- build up an attack in the direction of the shooting zone;
- pass the ball into the path of a teammate whenever possible;
- shoot.

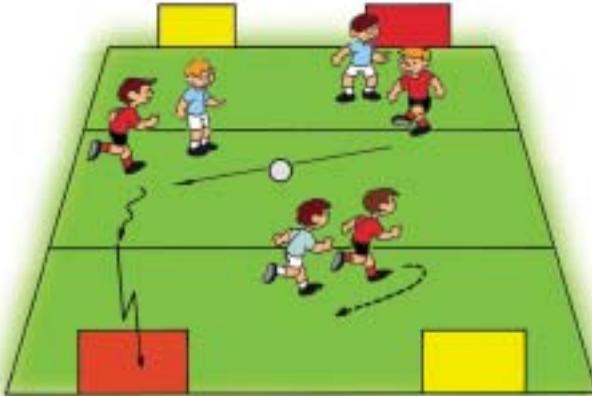


### VARIATION 2 (for older players)

To improve specific skills, only successful passes with the weaker foot, passes over more than 10 meters and first-time passes are counted.

### Attacking diagonally opposite goals

Each team attacks two diagonally opposite goals and defends the two other goals. A goal is scored by shooting into one of the 2 goals from inside the shooting zone or by dribbling the ball over one of the 2 goal lines.



#### Which of the 2 goals is the best one to attack?

The players should attack the goal that is defended by only 1 defender. To do so, they should create a 2 against 1 situation and exploit this successfully to score.

#### How should the attack be carried out (by running with the ball or passing)?

- Passes make the game faster and enable free space to be used more effectively.
- Frequent changes of direction when running with the ball may create more space and cause the defender to make a wrong decision or a positional error.

#### How can the attacker create a situation in which his team has a numerical advantage?

By changing direction when running with the ball and then switching the play.

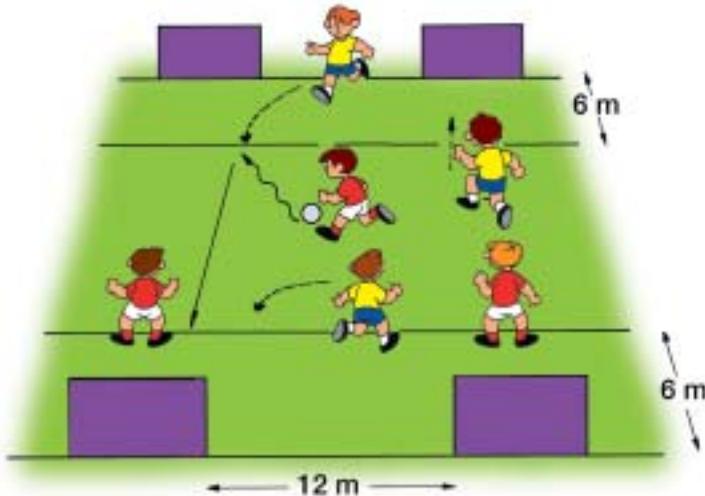
**COACHING IS A DEVELOPMENT PROCESS, WITH TASKS WHICH BECOME STEADILY MORE DIFFICULT FROM WEEK TO WEEK, MONTH TO MONTH AND YEAR TO YEAR BUT WHICH NEVER MAKE DEMANDS THAT EXCEED THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CAPABILITIES OF THE PLAYERS.**

### Choose any goal

The 3 attackers always attack the goal that they consider to be least well defended. The coach can specify whether a goal has to be scored by shooting from inside the shooting zone or by dribbling the ball over a goal line (6 meters wide).

### VARIATION 1

A goal only counts if the nearest defender is at least 5 meters away when the ball is dribbled over the goal line.



### VARIATION 2

A team of 3 players has 10 attacks and the other team has to defend 4 goals. An attack ends when a goal is scored, or the ball goes out of play, or when a defender touches the ball. Each attack starts in the middle of the field. The defenders have to position themselves intelligently to prevent the attackers from scoring. The objective of the game is to teach the attackers to use the space skillfully and to play so securely that they score 10 goals in the 10 attacks.

**How can I disguise the direction of my attack?**

First of all by running in another direction to fool your opponent. You can then accelerate and change direction to leave your opponent behind or take the ball past him.

**What does the attacker with the ball have to pay attention to?**

He needs to take his eyes off the ball (head up, peripheral vision), so that he can see what the defenders are doing in front of the goals and what his 2 teammates are doing, so that he can employ the right tactics.

**“Moving” goals**

In this game, the coach and an assistant (or player) change the color of the cone goals simultaneously when a signal is given. A goal is scored by dribbling the ball over the goal line of a cone goal of the correct color. This helps the players to improve their perceptive skills, as they have to observe all the goals as well as what is happening on the field.

**VARIATION**

The 4 goals can be positioned anywhere on the endlines or touchlines.

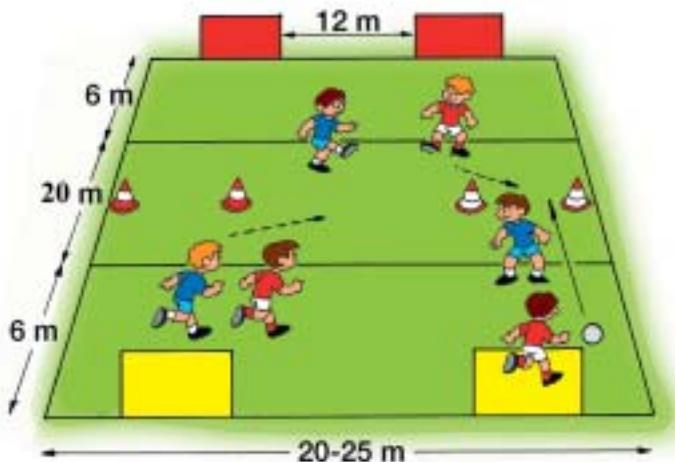


### Channeling attacks

The official rules of mini-soccer apply. If a team scores in the goal on the right it is awarded 3 points, and if it scores in the goal on the left is it only awarded 1 point. In this way, the defenders learn how to close down the available space and channel attacks towards the side of the field where they are best prepared.

### Giving width when attacking

This variation on mini-soccer encourages the players to build up attacks by playing down the flanks, and to give width to their attacks. Two 6-meter wide goals are formed by placing cones near the touchlines, about halfway down the field. The attackers must not start the build-up in the center (danger of counterattack if possession is lost) but must attack over the wings. A goal is only valid if the attack is started by dribbling or passing the ball through one of the cone goals.

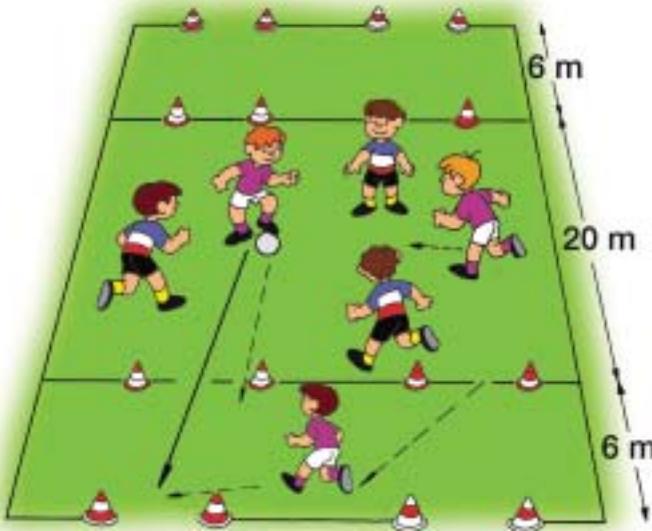


### VARIATION

Both goals in the center are set up parallel to the sidelines instead of the end lines. The attackers may only enter the opposing team's half of the field when the ball has been played through one of the 2 goals.

### Controlling through passes behind one of the mini-goals

Experienced players are able to send a through pass from midfield through one of the 2 goals on the 6-meter line to a teammate, who may not spend more than 5 seconds in the shooting zone behind the goals and must shoot immediately after controlling the ball with his first touch.



#### What is the easiest way for a team to score?

By playing the ball to a striker who runs into position to receive a pass behind the 2 goals immediately after his team wins the ball.



#### When should the striker run into position to receive the pass?

When he sees that a midfielder has an opportunity to play a through pass and has made eye touch with him. He then sprints into the shooting zone.

#### Where should the striker run to?

A sudden diagonal sprint behind the defenders is always promising. Good timing, exactly weighted passing and soccer intelligence are the crucial factors that determine whether a goal is scored.

## From mini-soccer to 7 v 7

### – A progressive series of games –

The transition from mini-soccer to 7 v 7 proceeds step by step. To help the players develop a feel for the larger field, the coach initially sets up a mini-soccer pitch in the 7 v 7 field.

The players carry out more complex tasks from game to game, and the number of players and the size of the field are gradually increased, until the players have learned how to play in all positions.

#### 3 v 3 without a goalkeeper

The game is played on a 7 v 7 field. The mini-field is positioned exactly in the middle. Each team of 3 players has 1 player who remains in the penalty area. A goal can only be scored by a player who is in the shooting zone.



Basic setup

#### VARIATION 1

The action radius of the third player is no longer limited to the penalty area.

**VARIATION 2**

A goal is scored by dribbling the ball over one of the 2 goal lines (cone goals).

One player of each team must take up a position in the shooting zone to receive a through pass from the midfield.

**3 v 3 with goalkeeper (4 v 4 variation)**

The goalkeeper guards both goals. A goal can only be scored from inside the shooting zone.

**VARIATION**

A goal can now only be scored from outside the shooting zone.



**A PLAYER WHO MAKES A RUN INTO SPACE MUST THINK, AND A PLAYER WHO THINKS MUST NEVER FORGET TO RUN INTO SPACE.**

## Games on the 7 v 7 field

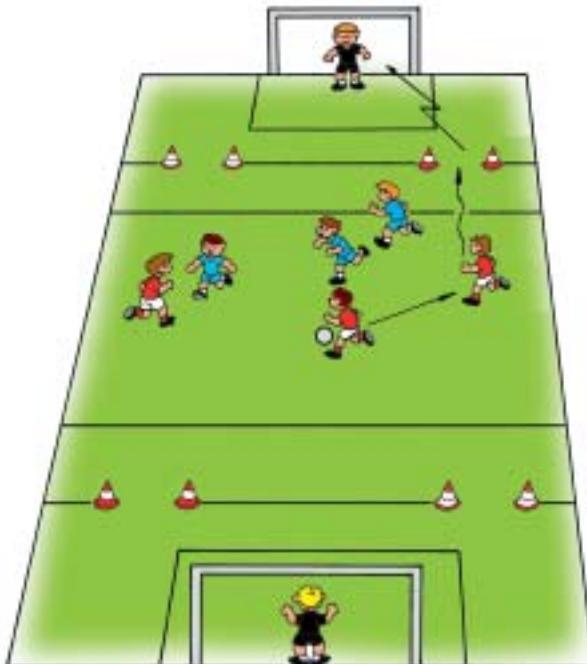
The field is expanded to the size of the 7 v 7 field. The goalkeeper is in the 6 meter x 2 meter goal and the number of players behind the end line of the mini-field becomes steadily larger.

### 3 v 3

#### Dribbling through cone goals before shooting

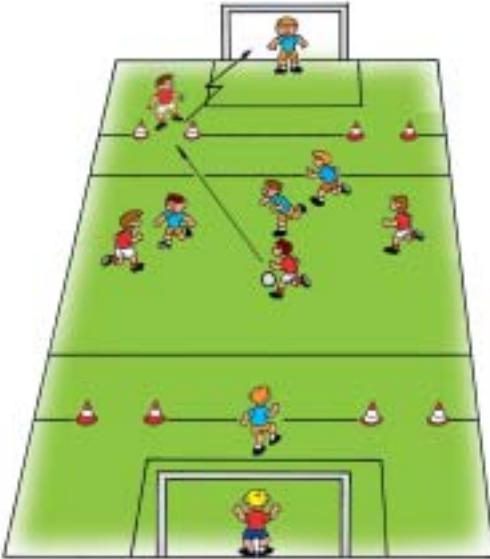
A goal is scored on the 7 v 7 field after the ball has been dribbled over one of the 2 goal lines (cone goals) of the mini-field.

**Variation:** After the ball has been dribbled over the 2 goal lines, all the players can leave the mini-field until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play.



### 3 v 3 + 1 Front runner

Each team has 1 striker (front runner) who takes up a position behind one of the cone goals on the end lines of the mini-field in order to receive a pass.



Three players of each team contest possession of the ball in the midfield, which they are not allowed to leave. When a team has possession, it tries to play an accurate pass to its striker.

After controlling the ball behind the mini-goals and in front of the penalty area of the 7 v 7 soccer field, the striker must shoot at the 6 meter x 2 meter goal within 3 seconds.

The teams practice first without, then with, goalkeepers.

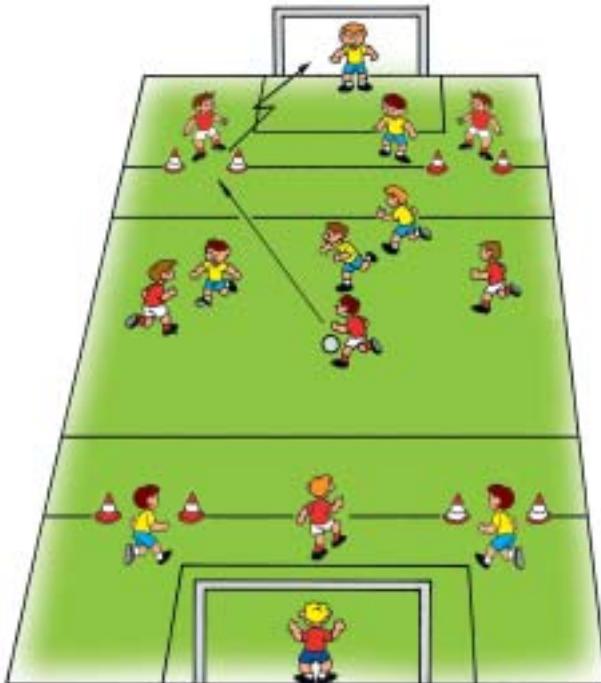


**3 v 3 + 2 front runners and 1 defender**

This is much the same as the previous game, except that there is now an additional striker behind the second cone goal and a defender in front of the 2 cone goals. The defender tries to intercept the through passes from the midfielders in front of the cone goals. If he succeeds, he passes the ball to his teammates in the midfield. If he does not succeed, and the ball reaches a striker, he helps his goalkeeper to defend against the attack.

**VARIATION**

The defender plays behind instead of in front of the 2 cone goals. There is therefore a 2 against 1 situation behind the goals of the mini-field. The game is first played without, then with, offside. Every 5 minutes the players swap roles and positions, until each player has occupied every position once.



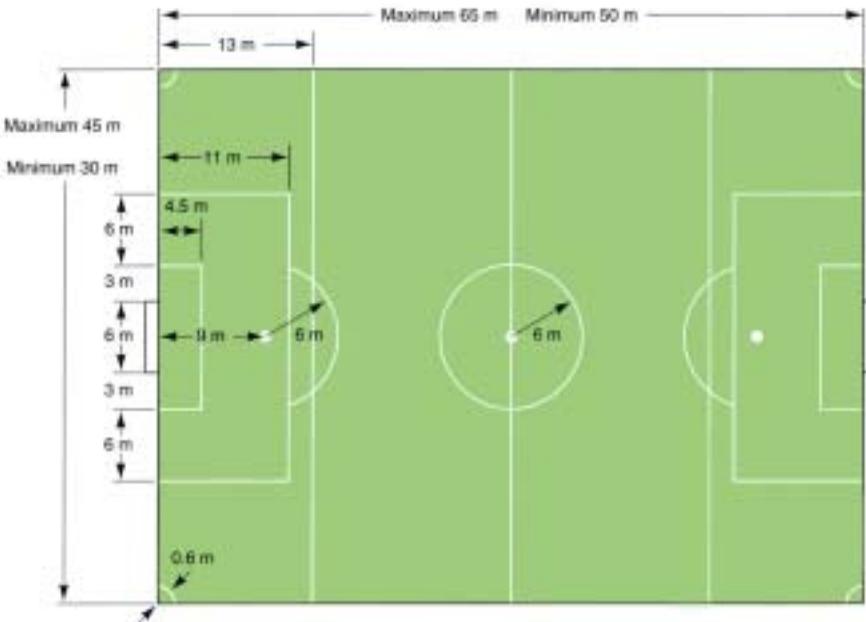
### 7 v 7 with restrictions

All 4 cone goals are removed, so the strikers can move around freely outside of the mini-field. As a variation, 1 or 2 players can make a forward run from the midfield after the ball has been passed to a striker.

One goalkeeper, 1 free defender, 3 midfielders and 2 strikers play 7 v 7 first without, then with, the offside rule. Every 5 minutes the players swap roles and positions, until each player is familiar with every position and has gained important experience.

### 7 v 7

The official rules apply (including offside only in the 13-meter area).



## Horst Wein

**“We should respect the soccer of the past,  
analyze the soccer of the present,  
and anticipate the soccer of the future.”**



Horst Wein (right) with Franz Beckenbauer and leading figures in the Spanish Soccer Association.

Horst Wein is an internationally recognized soccer expert, who has developed his own methods for coaching players. He has written more than 30 books and presented seminars in 51 countries in 4 continents. He works for CEDIF, the Spanish Soccer Association's soccer coaching and research center. Born in Germany, he has lived for more than 30 years in Spain.

**Horst Wein's new book  
“Developing Game Intelligence in Soccer”  
is available from  
[WWW.REEDSWAIN.COM](http://WWW.REEDSWAIN.COM)**