

The Progression from 4v4 to 6v6

The 4v4 game is the smallest model of soccer that still includes all the qualities found in the bigger game. The shape of the team is a smaller version of what is found in the eleven-a-side game in that there is width, depth, and height to the team. The shape is dynamic in that the players are able to combine and work together as team mates in order to be successful and there is the potential for a constant interchange of positions and roles. A solid understanding of the principles of play, found in the basic 4v4 form allows for continued advancement as the players adapt to the added demands placed on them when more players are added to the tactical picture. From this number, we can begin to examine the qualities of the game that remain constant as we continue to add players up to 7v7. We can also examine the challenges that are introduced as more players are added into the mix.

4v4:

The basic attacking shape should create enough space to allow the players to find options in every direction, with the essential purpose of creating quality goal scoring opportunities. The most basic shape that allows for this space is the “diamond”, with a deep player who supports the attack from behind, two wide players who give the game width, and a high player who stretches the game forward and offers himself as a target for balls to be played into. Attention should be given to how the 4 players adjust as the ball and players move into the attack. Players must be prepared to move to different spots on the field, based on the movement of their teammates and the ball. For example, if the deep player steps forward with the ball, someone must replace him in the spot that he has just vacated, so that there continues to be support from behind.

The most effective defending shape should slow the opponent’s movement forward with some form of collective defending. The need for quality pressure on the ball remains an essential part of the team defensive effectiveness. Added to this pressure is the ability of the group to supply good “cover” for the pressuring defender in case the quality of that pressure is not sufficient to stop the forward progress of the ball. Finally, the group must keep its compact shape, not allowing the team to become too “spread out”. This limits the time and space that the attacking team has at their disposal and maximizes opportunities for the defending players to work collectively. At the same time, individual and group defending can also discourage the first ball forward by dropping and filling space closer to their own goal, rather than stepping and pressuring closer to the ball. These decisions, by the players closest to the ball, as well as the covering players, need to be made based on the principles of defending, and what makes the most sense on any given play.

5V5 (4 “field” players plus the keeper)

As the team progresses to 5v5, the added dimension to the team’s “shape” is that there now emerges a central midfield role for the team. The goalkeeper has the added responsibility of being the “last” player in the attack, allowing the “central back” to step more in to a midfield role. This, in essence, allows for another option for playing the ball forward out of the back, a role that serves as a “link” between players in the back and those up front. This further complicates the game as it demands that a player serve in a role that has pressure coming from all around him/her, rather than just basically from one direction. Now the basic shape remains a “diamond” but has a player serving in the “middle” of that diamond. At the same time, as the central player becomes more competent, the attacking team now has a player who has the potential to play the ball in many directions, thereby making the attack less predictable and therefore more effective.

6V6: (5 field players plus the goalkeeper)

Again, the basic “principles” of play are still present in the 6v6 form, but in a more complex manner than with the smaller numbers. The added player affords the opportunity for the team to add another player in the “back”. This makes the play of the opposing forward that much more difficult as there now are two defenders that must be dealt with (the goal keeper and a field defender). A common form for play at this stage is a GK plus 1-3-1. This allows for a continuation of the relationships that were present in the 5v5 model, especially the potential for combinations between the players down the middle of the field. For example, the 5v5 model included balls from the deep player to the high target, and back to the supporting central player. In the 6v6 model, there are now two sets of this combination (GK to central player and back to the defender, and defender to high target and back to central player).

There will be a constant demand on the players to effectively read what their teammates are doing. Now there is always more than one option in every direction to be able to play the ball to. Defensively, there should always be “cover” provided, wherever the ball is. There is a more complicated understanding required of defensive shape as a team as it involves more players. At the same time, essential goals in attacking and defending remain unchanged from those discussed in the 4v4 model.

Progression of forms:

4v4 (No GK) diamond/kite shape; attacking 40 x 25/30 x 44/20x30 (end line/5 yard zone; target(s); 2, 4-6 small goals-- 2yds wide or more if defending topic, 1 yard if attacking topic)

5v5 (GK + 4) central/link player emerges 2:1:1; 45 x 30 (2—18 feet wide goals)

6v6 (GK + 5) 1:3:1/2:3 or 3:2; ½ field x 44 (2—18 feet wide goals)