

Session Summary

Session:	CONDITIONED MATCHES SESSION - WIDTH & DEPTH IN POSSESSION		
Date:	-	Coach:	-
Duration:	1-2 hours (20-30 mins per game)	Equipment:	Balls, bibs, cones, 2 goals
#Players:	12 - 16	Age Group:	U9 +

Introduction

These conditioned games introduce various aspects of attacking play and how we can use the space on the pitch to create goalscoring chances. They are all match-based, with plenty of “ball rolling” time, so your players should enjoy them. Some of them involve neutral players - be sure to rotate the players in those roles, especially if they are locked into certain areas as it keeps it interesting for your players (and on cold days ensures nobody is inactive).

Session Setup

- A small “6 a side” size pitch with a goal at each end, size of pitch and goals adapted to the age of your players.
- Approximately 12 cones of a one colour and 12 of another colour, ready to be added part way through the session.
- Enough bibs for two even teams,
- Footballs at the side of the pitch with the coach and 3 or 4 in each goal.
- If you have flat cones, you can set all the cones up at the start of the session to save time later on.

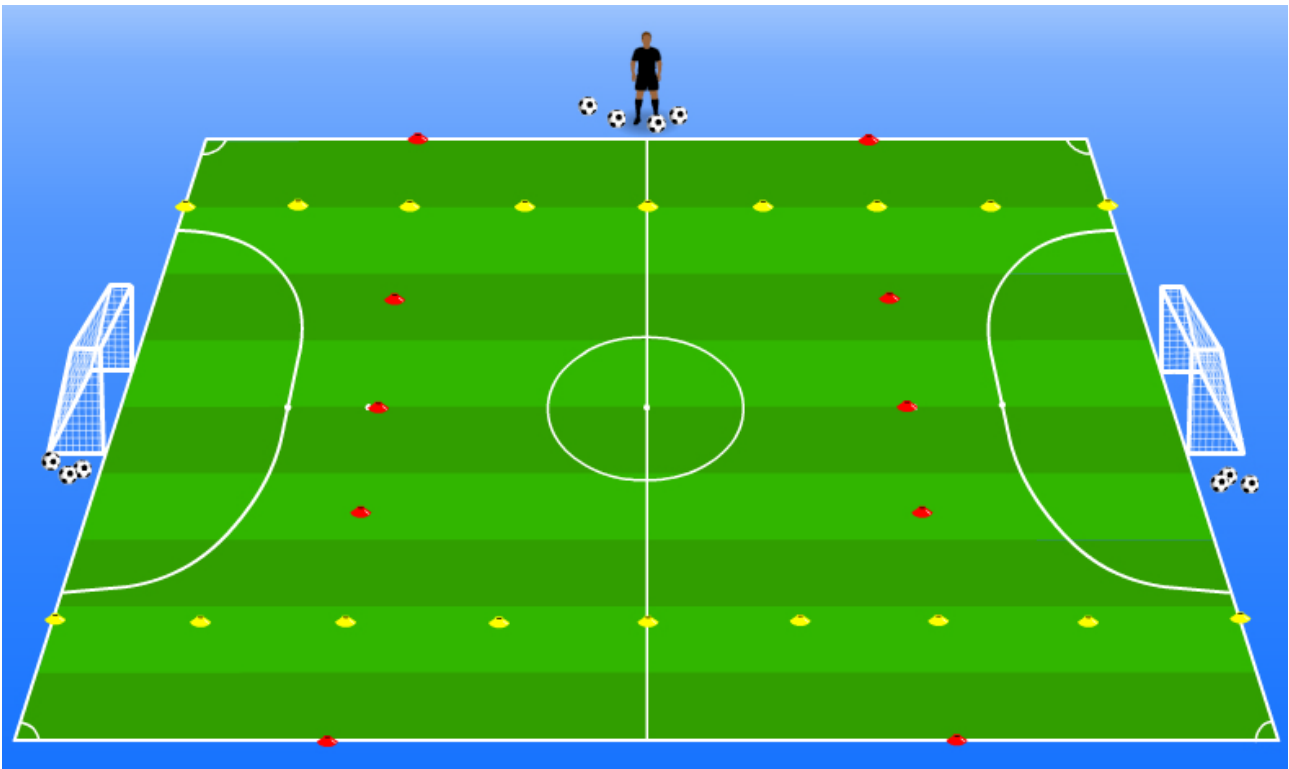
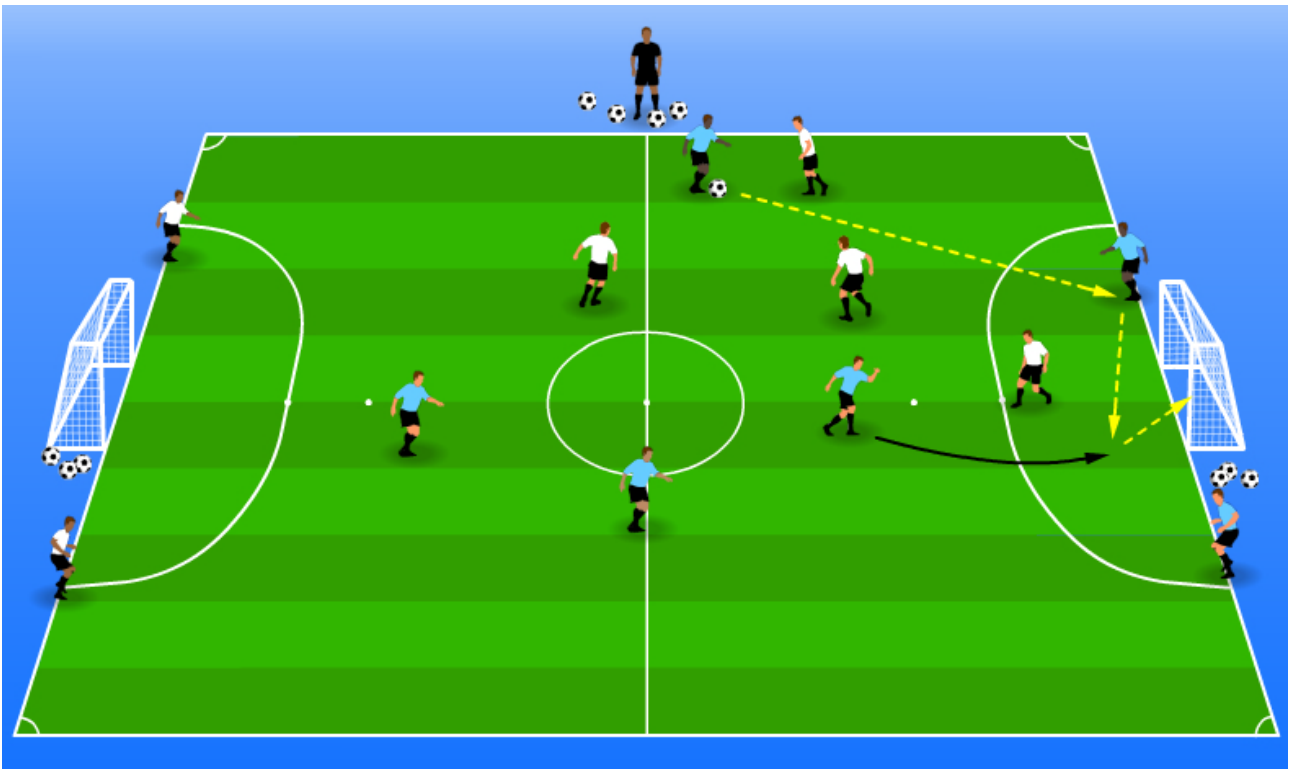


Fig. 1 - the final pitch setup will look something like this once we're into the last conditioned game. If you have flat cones, then you can set this up before you start.

GAME 1 - "Bounce" Players in High Positions

GAME 1 : Setup

- Play even teams with no goalkeepers.
- Each team has two players off the pitch - one either side of the goal they are attacking, giving them two "high" players they can bounce the ball off.
- The rest of the players should be on the pitch, with one team attacking each goal as per a "normal" match.
- Coach at the side with lots of spare footballs.



GAME 1 : Rules

- Start play from the coach.
- Play normal rules, with the exception that to score a goal, the team in possession have to use one of the two "bounce" players during the build up.
- For more advanced players, the bounce player has to provide the assist and the finish must be first time.
- Bounce players can move side to side, but cannot enter the pitch or be tackled.
- Rotate bounce players every couple of minutes.

GAME 1 : Key Points / Questions for Players

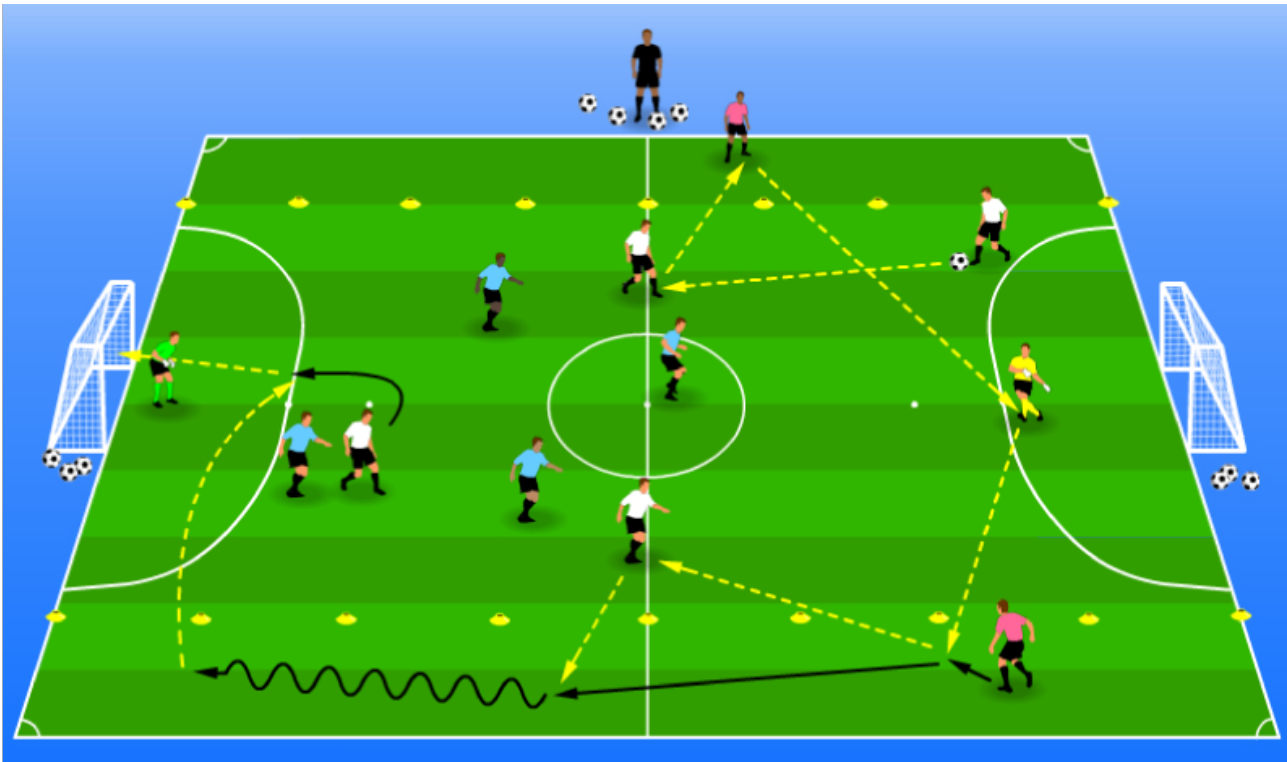
This game is great for encouraging your players to focus on quick counter attacks to attackers left high up the pitch.

- Ask players why we have introduced the bounce players. What do they simulate that we might see in a real match?
- Do they understand that by having an attacker high up the pitch, we can look to counter attack by passing to them early and supporting them?
- What would happen in a real match if we had attackers stay high up the pitch versus attackers who all drop deep into our own half because they want to the ball? How would the space available to attack change in each scenario?
- Reference the space that is created by having the opposition worried about the pass to the bounce players.
- Speed of counter attack is key - before the opposition can get back into shape.
- Passing accuracy, movement of the bounce player and the goalscorer to get into a position to receive the return pass are all important points to cover.
- Help the players that this game encourages one way of attacking in certain scenarios and to recognise when those scenarios are.

GAME 2 - Wide Players - Using the Width of the Pitch

GAME 2 : Setup

- Keep the pitch from Game 1 and send the players for a drink and ask them to talk through what did / didn't work for each team in the first game.
- Quickly mark out a wide channel on each side of the pitch using cones - about 3 or 4 yards wide (if you have flat cones, you could mark everything out before the session begins).
- Ask one player from each team to become a goalkeeper and one player from each team to put on a different colour bib and become a neutral wide player (pink in the below diagram).
- Footballs at the side with coach and more in / next to the goals for quick restarts.



GAME 2 : Rules

- Start play from the goalkeeper or with a ball in from the coach.
- Neutral wide players are the only ones allowed in the wide channels. They cannot be tackled and play for the team in possession. If they receive the ball from a team, they must give it back to the same team.
- To score, the team in possession MUST pass the ball to each of the two wide players at least once before scoring.
- If they lose possession, their use of the wide players is reset and they must do it again when they win the ball back.
- Alternate rule is that you don't need to involve both wide players in the build up but goals can only be scored direct from crosses. First time finishes for more advanced players.
- If the ball goes for a throw, restart from the wide player passing to whichever team has the "throw"
- No corners - if the ball goes behind, restart from the goalkeeper.

GAME 2 : Key Points / Questions for Players

This game encourages your players to look to get the ball wide and use the width of the pitch to create space.

- Ask players why we have introduced the condition of using both wide players... why would we try and use the width of the pitch in a real match and how might that create attacking opportunities.
- How can the wide players be involved in the build up to a shooting chance? Dribbling, passing, crossing etc.
- Encourage the players to think about where to pass the ball to the wide player to give them the best chance of keeping the move flowing... if the pass is behind the player, then everything slows down for example.
- Body shape of the wide player and where their first touch takes the ball.
- Accuracy of crosses from the wide player and different types of cross.

GAME 3 - Deep Players & Playing Through the Goalkeeper

GAME 3 : Setup

- Keep the pitch from Game 2 and add a row of cones to mark an "end zone" at each end of the pitch approximately 5 yards deep (see original setup in figure 1 for reference).
- Keep the teams as they were, with a goalkeeper on each team and two neutral wide players as per game 2.
- Balls returned to the coach at the side and each goal.



GAME 3 : Rules

- Start play from the goalkeeper or with a ball in from the coach.
- This builds on the last game in that we still have neutral wide players playing for the team in possession, but in addition to using both of them in the build up to a goal, we also have to play the ball back through at least one player positioned in our defensive end zone. This will often be our goalkeeper, but could be a defender too.
- If you want to make the game easier, you could say that only one wide player needs to be involved.
- Insist on first time finishes to make the game more challenging.
- If a team loses possession, all conditions are reset and must be met again before they can score.
- In the example above, the white player on the ball plays to the lower wide player, who switches the play via the goalkeeper to the other wide player. All three conditions have now been met, so the team can attack and score.

GAME 3 : Key Points / Questions for Players

This game really encourages your players to think about using the full width of the pitch as well as creating space by playing backwards to draw their opponent onto them.

- Ask players why we have added the condition of playing back to our goalkeeper and how / when we might use that in a match.
- Do they understand what it achieves? (ie creating space by drawing our opposition out of their defensive shape)
- Continue to reference the wide players and why we would want to use them.
- All the other coaching points as per game 2.

GAME 4 - No Conditions

GAME 4 : Setup, Key Points & Questions for Players

- Remove all restrictions, neutral players and cones from the pitch.
- Play a "normal" game of football.
- Beforehand, take a short break with the players to remind yourselves as a group of the three games you've played.
- You can reference with your players the fact that the conditions we introduced in each of the games are not realistic to a normal game of football, but that we have introduced them to get them thinking about WHY and WHEN and HOW we might play forward quickly (game 1), wide (game 2) or backwards (game 3).
- Ask your players to try hard to think which of those ways of attacking and creating space they could use when they have the ball and to try and put them into practice even through the restrictions and cones are no longer there. Be sure to point out any times your players use what they've learned.

POST SESSION DEBRIEF

- Take 5 minutes at the end of the session to discuss with the players the why, when and how of each use of the pitch to create space for different types of attack.
- Remind them we played three games that introduced using the width and depth (high and deep players) of the pitch to create or exploit space when we have the ball and that this is a key concept when in possession.
- Try to link each game and style of attack to a team they have watched (Liverpool of 2019-2020 quickly counter attacking or how Manchester City of 2018-2019 use the width of the pitch to attack so effectively).
- Encourage them to look out for the different ways they have practised using the full size of the pitch to attack next time they are watching football live or on television.
- Ask the players for feedback around what they learned, what they enjoyed, what they thought could be improved and encourage them to try and put what they've learned into practice at the weekend in their next match.

Note - this session can be split over several weeks or revisited from time to time to really allow it to sink in. There are plenty of other restrictions and conditions you can put in place to encourage your players to problem-solve around any number of game-relevant scenarios.

Note 2 - there are plenty of ways to adapt the session depending on the age or ability of your players...

Reducing the number or strictness of the restrictions, increasing the size of the area, locking players into safe zones to give them more time on the ball are all ways of lowering the level of challenge if your players are finding it too difficult. Just make sure the key idea (ie the main message) is still coming across in some way that keeps the players thinking.

Introducing further restrictions (play in 2 touch for example) or making the area smaller would make things more difficult if the players are not being challenged enough.

And remember, you can add individual challenges for certain players if some are finding it easier than others.