

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO

TACTICAL PERIODIZATION



by **Dan Minutillo**
and **Rich Rafloski**

A Practical Guide to Tactical Periodization

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Chapter 1

What is Tactical Periodization?

This book can be used as a practical “how to” coach’s guide to train a soccer team using the concept of Tactical Periodization. One full week of in-season training, one day at a time, is provided revolving around the chosen training theme for that week, in this case, using the wings on attack with examples and diagrams for easy reading.

The small sided games mentioned in this book are provided to illustrate general training principles related to tactical periodization and are for example only. If you have training exercises that you feel more comfortable with, use them so long as the following training principles are met:

1. That the primary purpose of training is to imprint the Game Model on players.
2. Training exercises (small sided games) for each session must progress from simple to complex.
3. Training must be logically incremental, that is, build on what was learned in the last session.
4. Training must replicate the game so players must move at game speed during training sessions.
5. Follow the five day pattern: recovery, strength (first step power), endurance, speed, activation.
6. Alternate aerobic and anaerobic training effort.
7. Players must be peaked but rested on game day.

As mentioned in the book, “A Coach’s Guide to Tactical Periodization” (Minutillo and Rafloski), Tactical Periodization is a concept to be used to train a soccer team in an orderly, game related manner so each important phase of the game, that is, offense, defense, transition from defense to offense, and transition from offense to defense become seamless and potent on game day. It is used to train attacking and defending, and the transitional phases in between. It can be used to train a soccer team no matter what formation or system of play is used. Literally, the best coaches in the world use the concept of Tactical Periodization, modified to fit their needs to train their team.

This eBook is just a sample of the training sessions available in [A Coach’s Guide to Tactical Periodization](#). Much more comprehensive information on the training system is available from the link above.

Tactical Periodization differs from functional training, that is, specific technical training related to a player's game day position, because it is broader and much more inclusive emphasizing use of a Game Model based on moments of a game which are team related not positional related. It is also different from the concept of "Formation Based Soccer Training" (Minutillo 2010) because it is not solely focused on training to learn a formation or system of play within a formation. Tactical Periodization is a much broader concept than Formation Based Soccer Training.

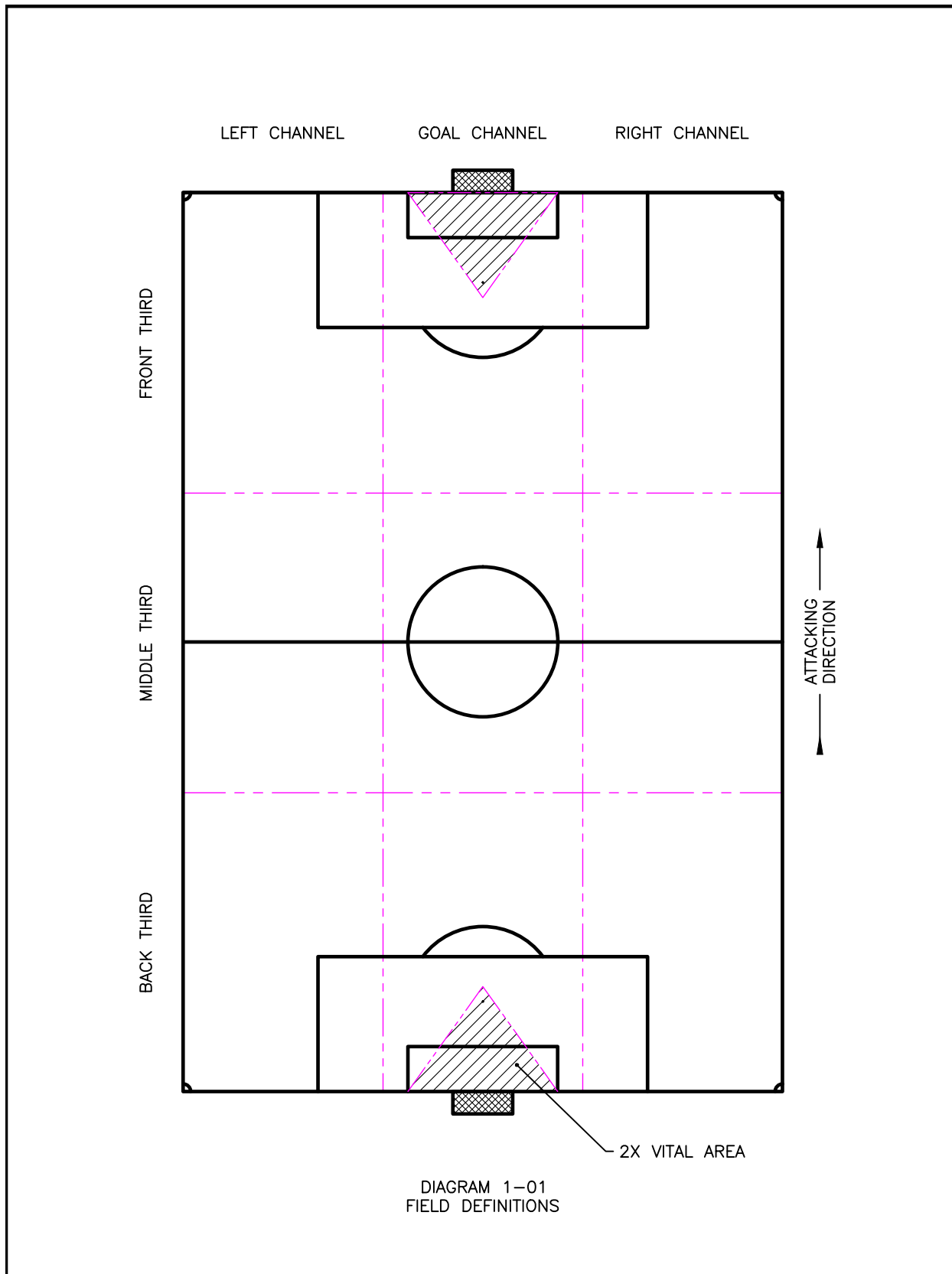
To avoid confusion, Diagram 1-01 provides an example of the words used in this book to describe vertical channels and horizontal parts of a soccer field.

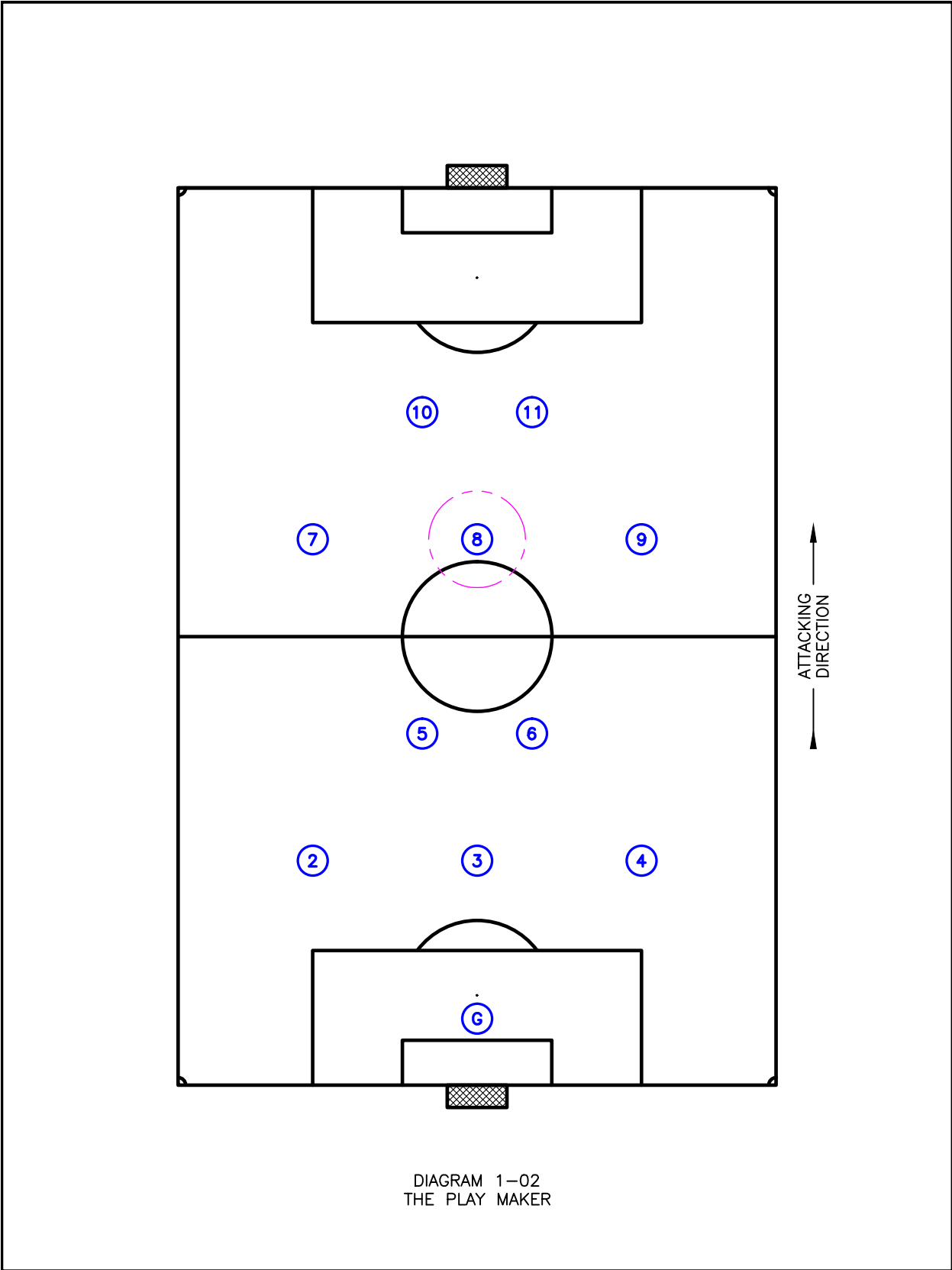
Before using this practical one week training guide, a coach must analyze each player's strengths and weaknesses, that is, player propensities, and then set the formation and system of play (the Game Model) to be used for a season based on those propensities. Again, this must be done before following the one week training schedule mentioned below.

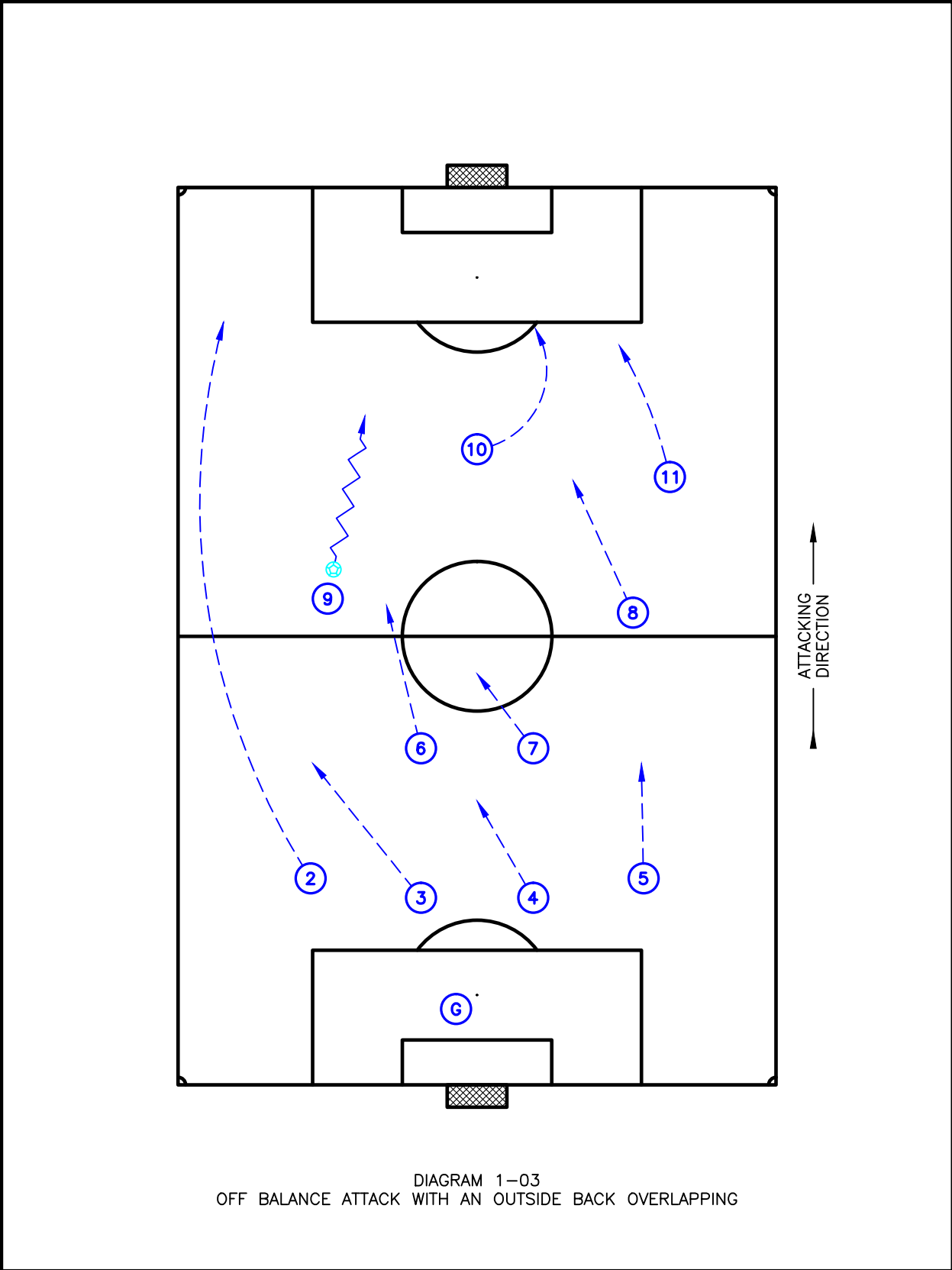
A few examples of player propensities as related to the Game Model are:

1. A technically gifted player who commands a field during a game with great vision and the ability to send piercing through balls into the front third of the field setting up shot after shot on goal is wasted playing in a deep back line as a retracted center back in a 3-5-2 formation. A player with this ability would be well utilized in a center midfield position spraying balls in all directions in the front third of the field on attack as shown in Diagram 1-02.
2. A speedy wing player can be used to play an off-balanced offense that is, creating a situation on offense where the attacking team uses tactics which create numbers up for the attackers in the front third of the field as shown in Diagram 1-03. A player with this ability would be well utilized as an outside back using explosive first step power and speed to sprint up field from the back line to join the attack up field. The Game Model could then call for sending the strong side or weak side outside back up the wing high into the front third of the field to combine with a two or three front on attack. Sweden did this many times in their game against Denmark in the 2015 Euro qualifiers.
3. If a team has many tactically savvy players with the ability to properly recognize danger when defending, part of the Game Model might require the team to "park the bus" quickly dropping behind the ball at the exact right moment to be concentrated on transition to defense; to quickly attain the chosen defensive shape in the back third choking the attacking team or at least slowing the attack; and to get compact in or near the goal channel of the field with eight or nine players behind the ball as shown in Diagram 1-04.
4. If a team has a strong, big center forward like Ibrahimović from PSG with the ability to hold the ball off pressure from an aggressive center back like a Skrtel from Liverpool, the Game Model might call for long balls over the top of the midfield to that center forward who will hold the ball, wait for help, spray it wide or turn for a shot on goal.

Any formation could utilize a dozen systems of play, one at a time, depending on the game day competition and on a team's player propensities. A coach might claim to use a 4-4-2 formation for an entire season but that formation could change during the run of play to effect a 3-5-2 when a speedy outside back runs up field to combine with midfielders as shown in Diagram 1-05; or to a 4-3-3 when a seasoned







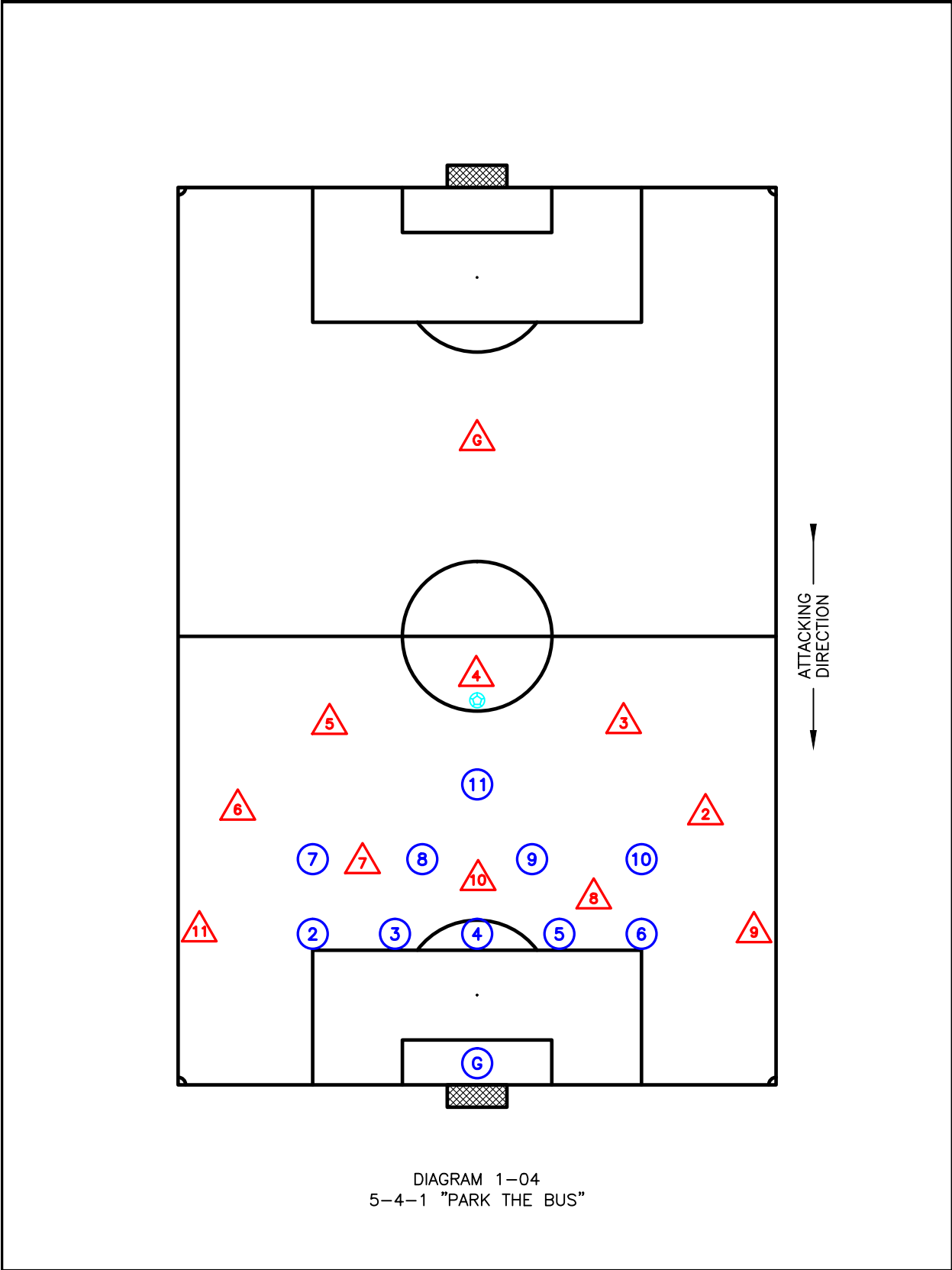


DIAGRAM 1-04
5-4-1 "PARK THE BUS"

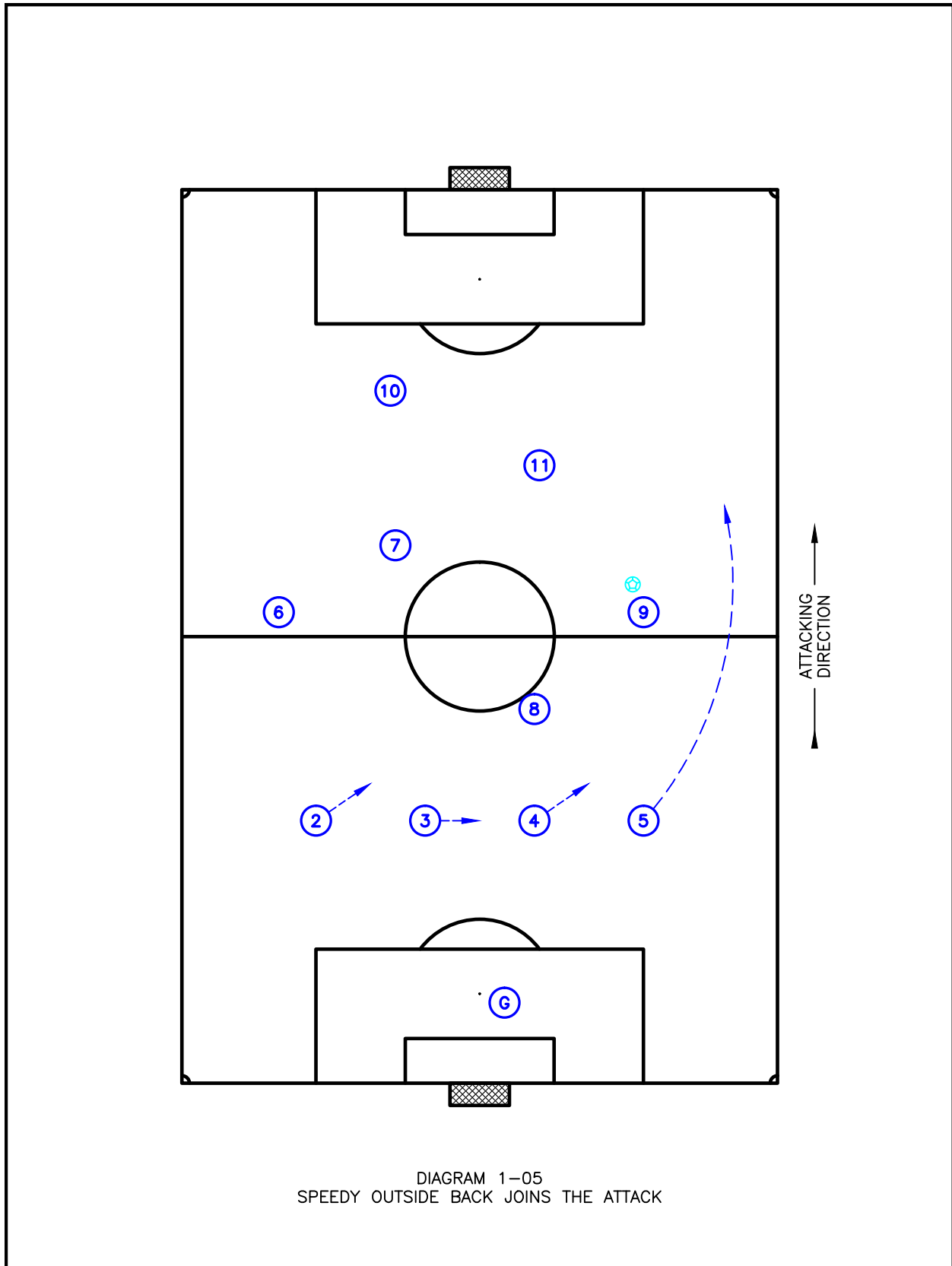


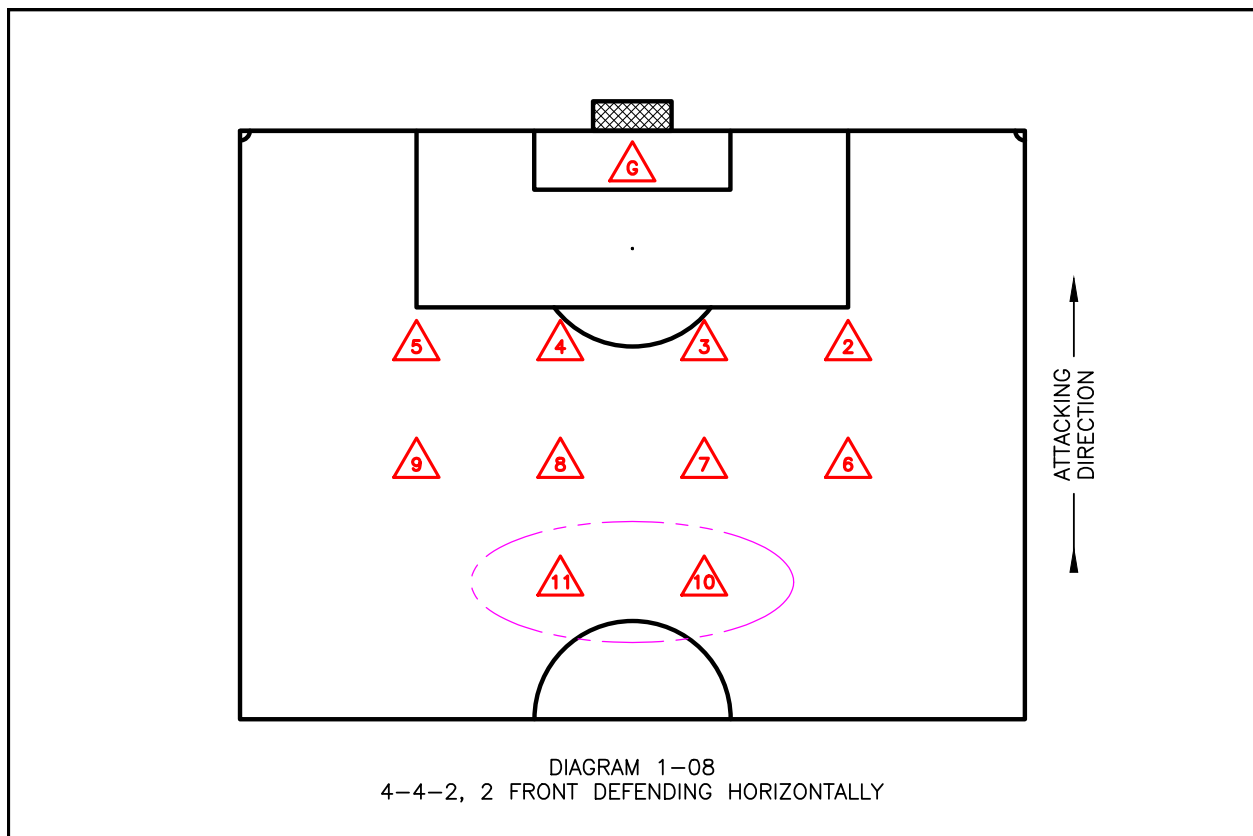
DIAGRAM 1-05
SPEEDY OUTSIDE BACK JOINS THE ATTACK

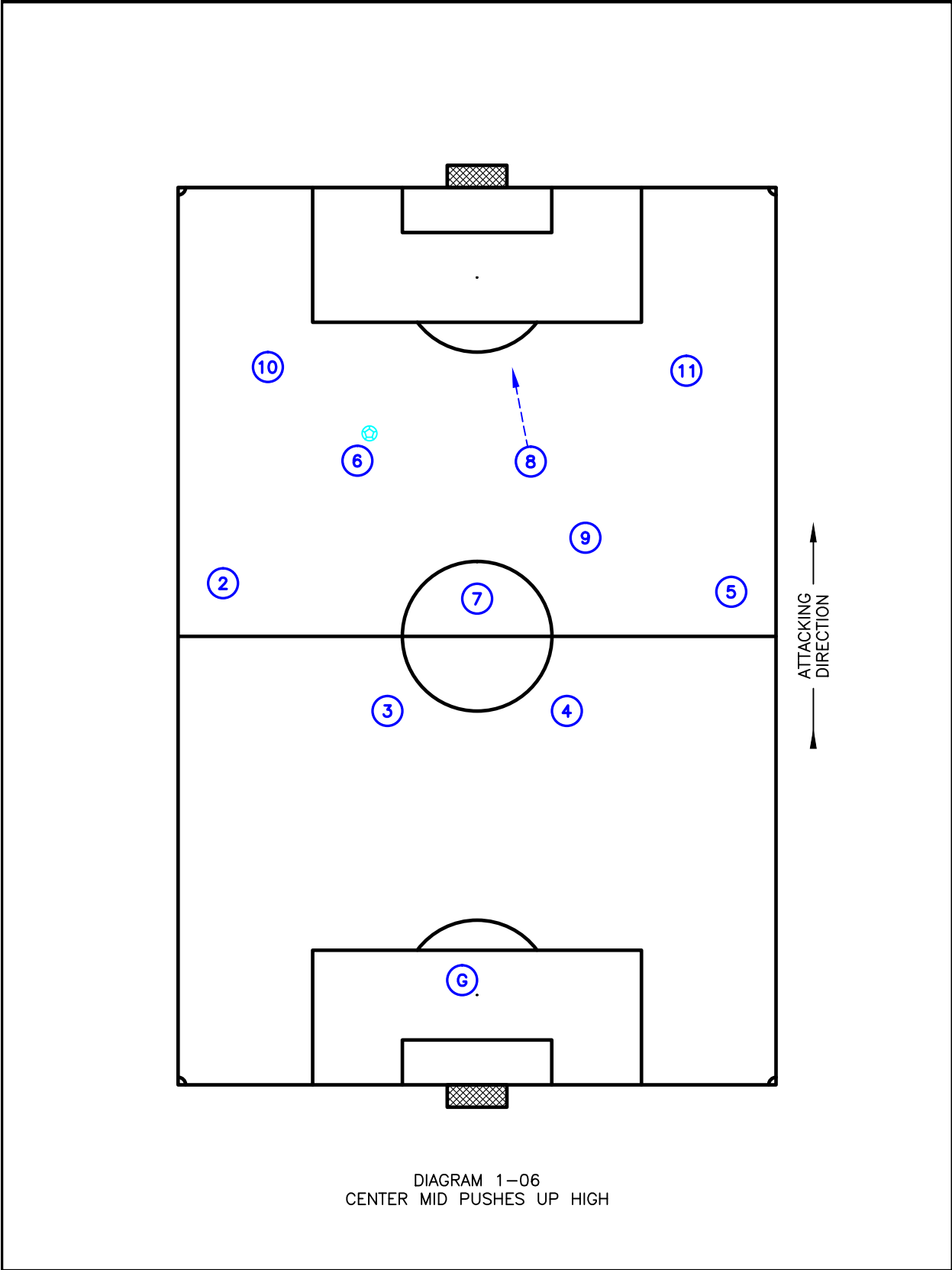
center midfielder pushes high up field into the front third to an attacking midfield position combining with two wide wingers up top as shown in Diagram 1-06.

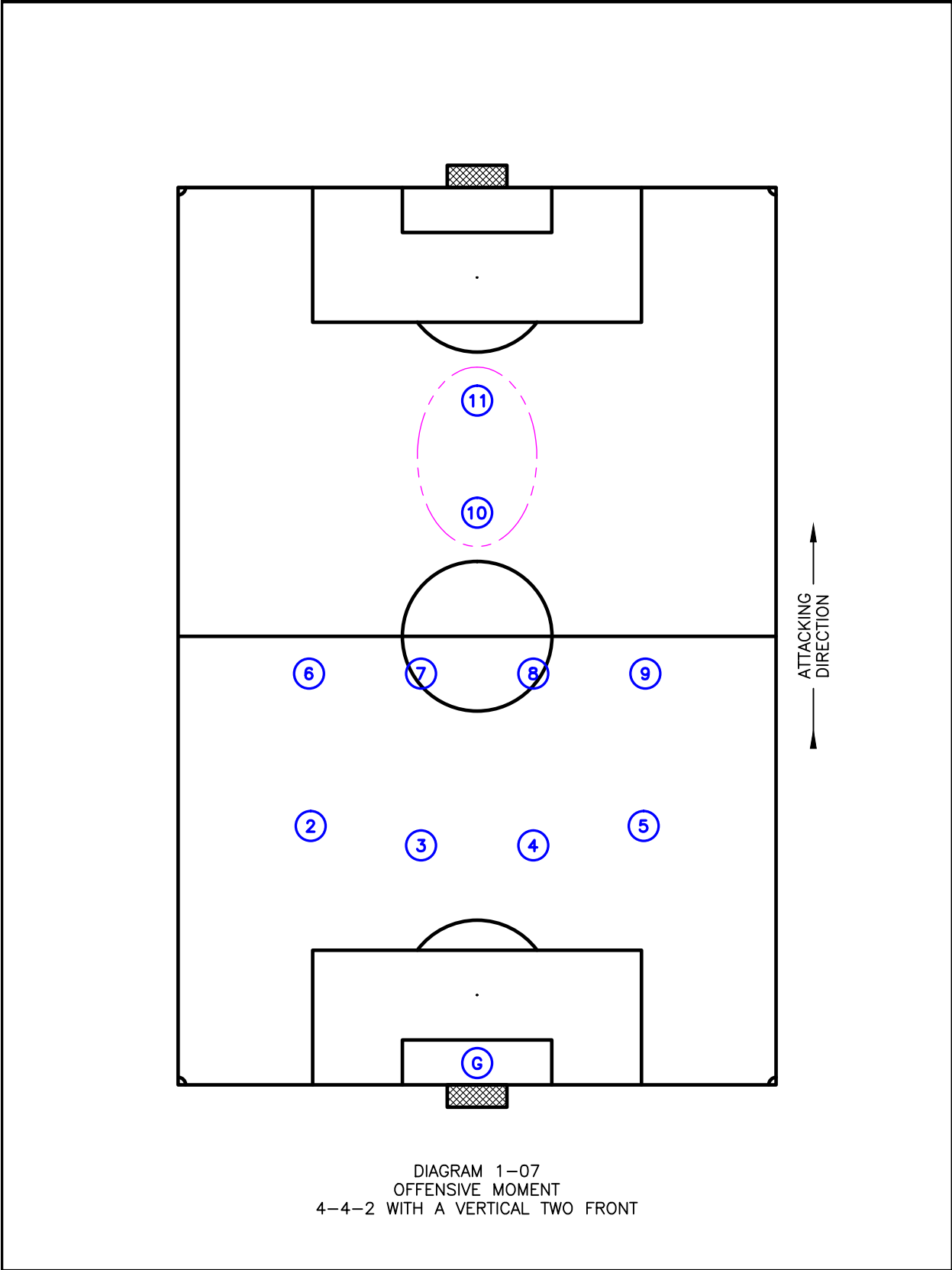
Part of the Game Model might call for the two front in a 4-4-2 to be stacked vertically on offense as shown in Diagram 1-07 but horizontally when defending as shown in Diagram 1-08. On offense, this allows the retracted forward to pierce the opponent's line of defense with through balls to his teammate holding high as shown in Diagram 1-09; or to a forward up top with the strength and ability to hold the ball as teammates make runs underneath as shown in Diagram 1-10.

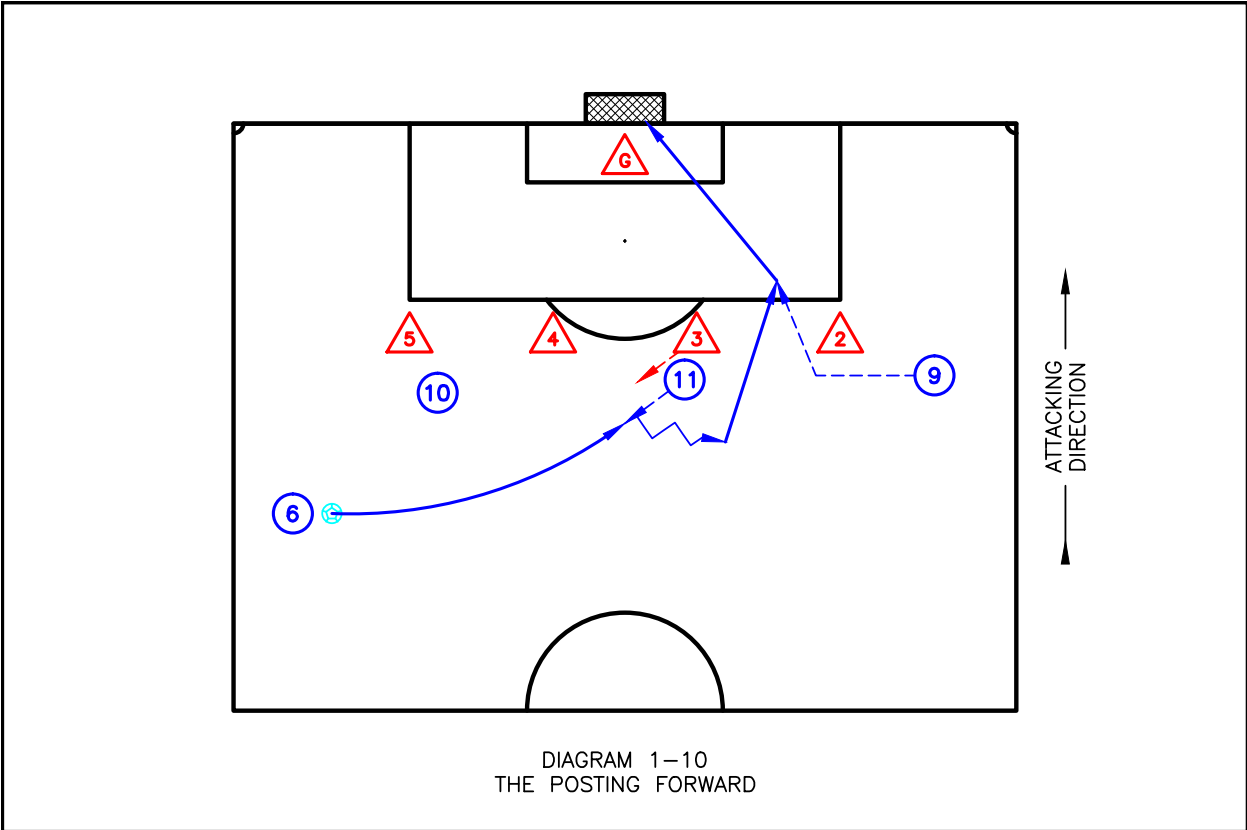
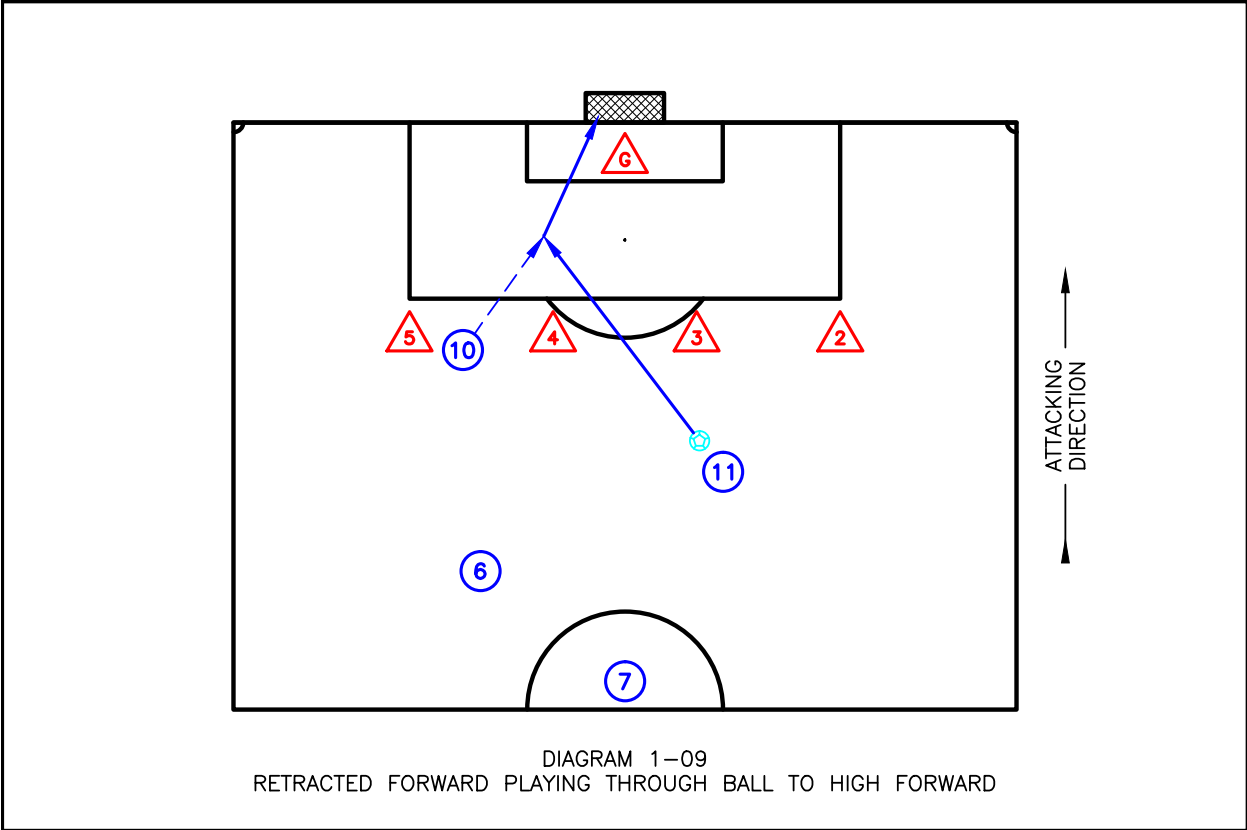
Each Game Model requires players with specific propensities in order to be successfully executed. If a coach either hasn't taken the time to analyze player propensities or makes a bad judgment about those propensities, then the chosen formation and general system of play within that formation will be ineffective.

Once player propensities are understood and the Game Model is set then, and only then, is it possible to create a training plan used to teach and imprint game day tactics for a specific upcoming game. This book assumes that the reader has already analyzed player propensities, set the chosen formation and the general system of play, that is, the Game Model, for the team for the season.









Chapter 2

Applying the Concept of Tactical Periodization to a One Week Training Schedule

Using tactical periodization as a training method this past year, our coaches took an average group of players to a 24 game undefeated streak, winning all titles achievable in our League and in our State. We did not have a single player with the propensities required of a true striker or of a true center midfielder, our speed was average on our touch on the ball was below average, yet we won game after game because each training session focused primarily on imprinting our Game Model so it appeared that we had an extra player or two on the field during the run of play.

Because the Game Model was imprinted on every player before our first game, player movement during the run of play was predictable and consistent with the Game Model. Though players synchronized their movement in accordance with the Game Model for most of every game, they were told to be creative and depart from the Game Model if they thought that a better option was available during the run of play. We encouraged creativity but used the Game Model to impart a sense of security on the players and provoke general patters of play on offense and defense.

The following one week training schedule can be used during that part of the year labelled “in-season” as shown in Diagram 2-01. Rest is part of training so it is included in the training schedule. The training theme chosen for the week is “using the wings on attack”. The goal is to imprint that part of the Game Model regarding this training theme on all players on the team so it could be implemented on game day. This will be the training theme for the entire week. Saturday will be considered game day and Sunday a day of total rest (a day off) or a day of active recovery except possibly for the substitutes as addressed *infra*.

SAMPLE HORIZONTAL WEEKLY TRAINING CHART							
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Theme	DAY OF REST	Defending Small Group Tactics Individual Technique	Defending Small Group Tactics Individual Technique	Defending Large Group Tactics Small Group Tactics	Defending Large Group Tactics	Defending Full Team Tactics	Game Day
Team Organizational Levels		Individual, Sectorial	Individual, Sectorial	Sectorial, Inter sectorial	Inter sectorial	Inter setorial and Full Team	
Dominant Pattern of Muscular Contraction		Recovery	Strength	Endurance	Speed	Activation	
Space Dimensions		Small	Small	Large	Medium	Large	
Number of Players		Small	Small	Large	Medium to Large	Large	
Complexity		Low	Moderate	High	High	High	
Exercise Duration		Short	Medium	Long	Medium	Short	
Number of Exercises		About 4	6 to 8	4 to 6	4 to 6	2 to 3	
Dominant Metabolism Type		Aerobic	Anaerobic	Aerobic	Anaerobic	Short Anaerobic	
Situations		Slower than Game	Require more effort (jumps, stops, changes of direction, etc.)	Game speed	Promote a high speed of thought and execution, but with minimal strength	Similar to the Game, but on a smaller scale and without provoking fatigue	
Context Types		Over rested between exercises	Obstacles forcing player growth	High player numbers per exercise	With few obstacles	Informative	
Training Session Duration		45 to 60 minutes	90 to 120 minutes	90 to 120 minutes	90 to 120 minutes	45 to 60 minutes	

DIAGRAM 2-01
SAMPLE HORIZONTAL WEEKLY TRAINING CHART

Take a quick look at the chart below taken from the book “A Coach’s Guide to Tactical Periodization”. Notice on the chart that the “Team Organizational Levels” become incrementally larger (focus on larger groups of players) one training day after the other, moving from left to right on the chart.

On Monday and Tuesday, individual players and lines of players like midfielders (sectorial) are the main focus of the training sessions and the sessions train individual technique and small group tactics. On Wednesday and Thursday, the number of players given most attentions grows now including multiple lines of players like midfielders and forwards together, and the sessions add training of large group tactics. On Friday, full team tactics is added to the training session for that day because the next day is game day.

Training as noted on the chart is incremental starting with individual technique, adding small group tactics, adding large group tactics, and ending with full team tactics----small to large numbers of players with every daily session revolving around only one theme.

Next, look at the box on the chart titled “Dominant Pattern of Muscular Contraction” which merely shows effect of the exercises chosen for that day like Monday, active recovery; Tuesday increasing strength (meaning first step explosive power); Wednesday increasing endurance; Thursday increasing speed; and Friday muscle activation to prepare the muscles for game day.

Next, look at the “Dominant Metabolism Type” toward the middle of the chart, first column. Notice that on some days the training activity is aerobic, that is, the player is not in oxygen debt during the training session and on other days the training activity is anaerobic, that is, the player is in oxygen debt for part of the training session. Each session is planned to stress players muscles in a different way or to rest muscles to ensure that the players are ready for game day. Training must be tactical, planned, incremental, progressive and logical!

The balance of the chart is self-explanatory. Each day of the week should have a specific plan for a specific effect on each player’s body with the goal to be fully rested yet muscle activated on game day. This is tactical planning on the part of a coach.

Pick a theme for the week; start with individual and small group tactics early in the week, ending with full team tactics before game day. Emphasize recovery on Monday all the way through activation on Friday and shadow play on Friday, all incremental to properly prepare a player for game day, one step at a time as referenced in the columns on the chart. This is the tactical part of coaching using the concept of tactical periodization.

Chapter 3

A schedule for one week of training

The training theme for the entire week as noted below will be “wide play” on attack and will assume a rest day on Sunday and a Saturday game day. This one week training session is based on the concept of tactical periodization. The chart is to be used for general guidance knowing that it is very difficult to fit a week of training exactly consistent with the information provided in the chart. Be creative. So long as the players are being trained to imprint the Game Model, strict adherence to the information provided in the chart is not necessary.

Monday

Monday training follows a full day of rest but many of the players will still be in recovery mode if the game which took place on Saturday was hard fought. Monday training would emphasize individual attacking tactics that is, taking on an opponent one v. one to work the ball into or up a wing, and small group attacking tactics, that is, combination play (1-2's) to work the ball up the wing. The size dimensions for grids used during the small sided games would be small on Monday to minimize long runs by players. The complexity of each small sided game would be low and the game duration would be short on Monday to allow for complete rest between games.

The physical exertion during this Monday session would be aerobic so that the players would not experience oxygen debt and the total training session would last about 60 to 90 minutes or so exclusive of the warm up and discussion as follows:

An extended dynamic warm-up followed by static stretching.

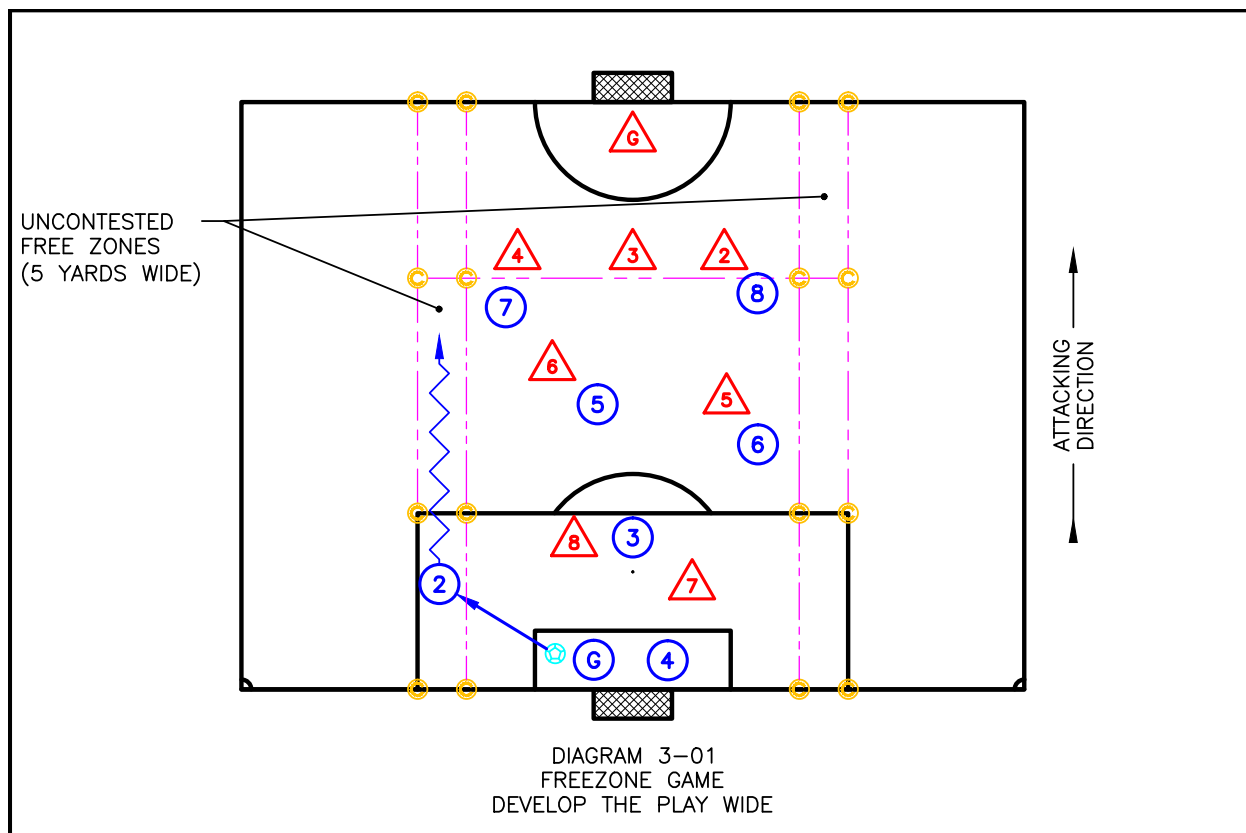
A very short discussion (less than five minutes) about the theme of the day and what is expected of the players, for example, the first attacker should attempt to advance the ball up the wing by dribbling as a first option during the small sided games; or look wide to pass the ball to a teammate on the wing to advance the ball, or to work combinations up the wing, etc.

The first small sided game to be used to teach individual and small group wide play on attack, is the “Free Zone” game in a small grid as shown in Diagram 3-01. This is a half field grid with the sidelines being equal to the side lines of the 18 yard box from the half way line to an end line.

Use a smaller than usual grid is used because Monday is a recovery day so you want to avoid long player runs during this small sided game. This game is directional, to goals, with opposing players in different colored bibs. A point is given to the team that uses the free zone by dribbling or passing into the free zone prior to a shot on goal. If a goal is scored any other way, no point.

Defenders are not allowed into the free zone. The first attacker can take on an opponent one on one and dribble into the free zone (stressing individual one on one technique) or pass into the free zone and move to space ready for a 1-2 combination, or as mentioned later to pass to a target with a third man running into the free zone (stressing small group tactics).

Because this game will emphasize individual technique for the first part of the training session focus on individual on and off the ball player movement to encourage wide play using a technique like “coaching

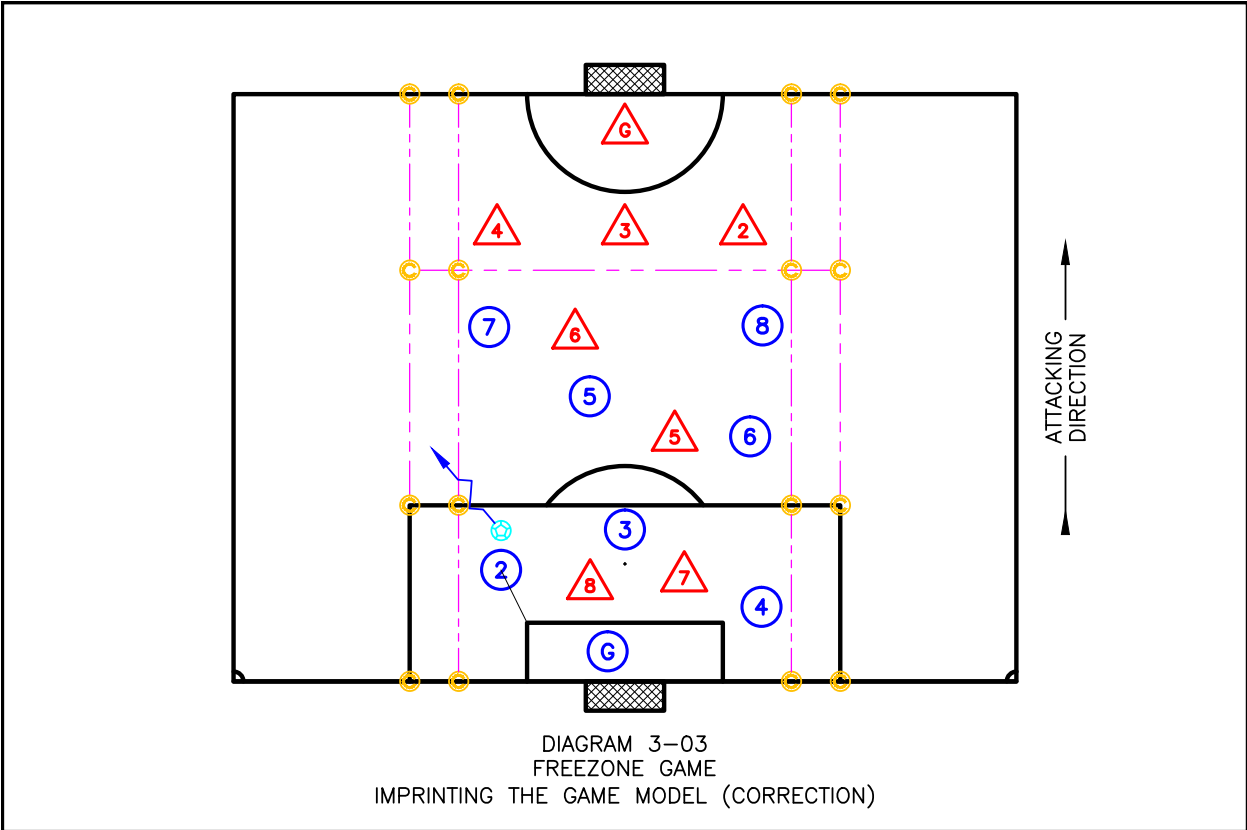
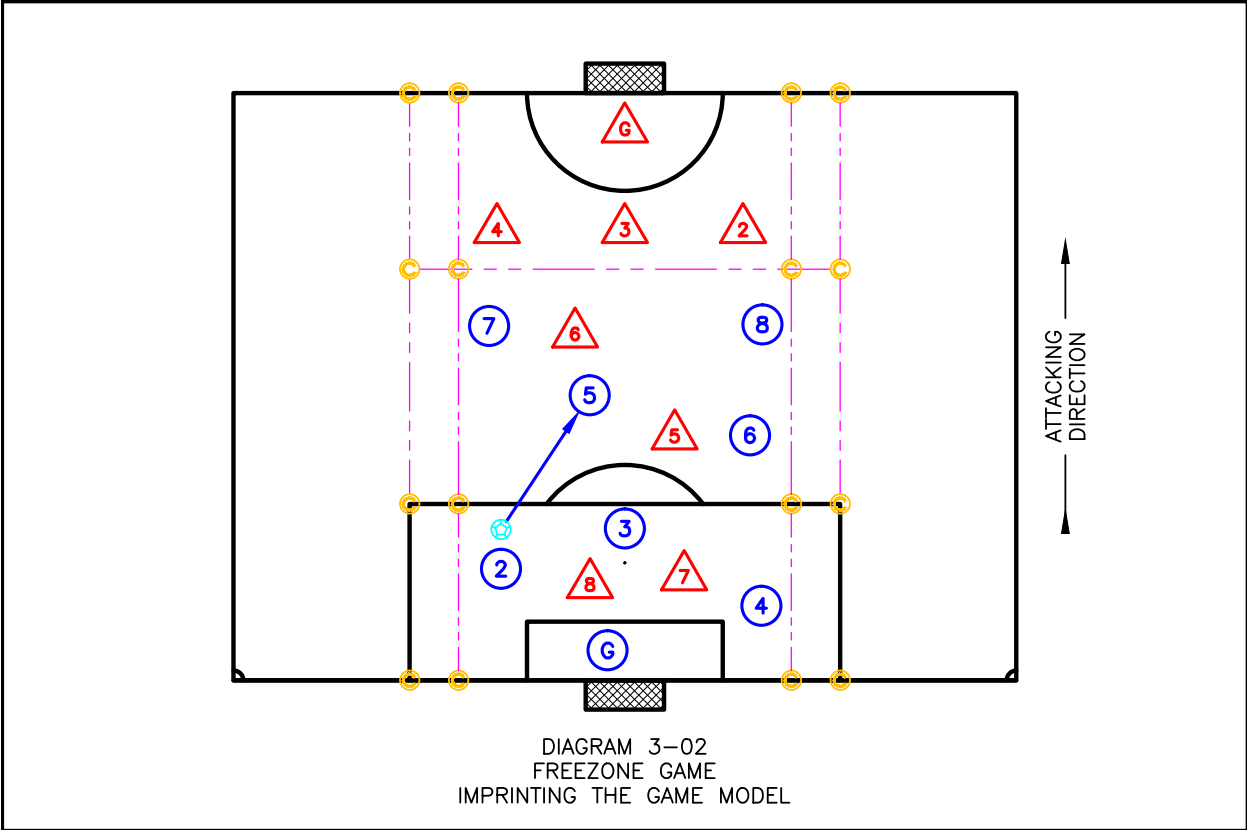


in the game” to freeze play and correct on and off the ball player movement or ball movement if wide play is not utilized.

Coaching in the game is a great tool to imprint a Game Model on players during a small sided game or scrimmage. The procedure for coaching in the game is to freeze play; then explain/demonstrate incorrect movement; explain correct movement; demonstrate correct movement; reset player positions; start replay using a trigger (as shown in Diagram 3-02) to see corrected play so as to imprint the correction. Once the game is in progress and the players appear to understand the rules and restrictions of the game then, if a player, the first attacker for example, does not dribble the ball into the wide free zone assuming this is the best option to get the ball wide on attack) then freeze play in the grid again and restart the procedure mentioned above.

For coaching in the game, while the players are frozen in position, explain that the best option at the time was for the first attacker to dribble into the free zone because that player had an unobstructed path to do so. After the explanation, move the players back to their original positions just before the error and demonstrate correct ball movement in slow motion, that is, the first attacker dribbling into the free zone as shown in Diagram 3-03. Then put the players back to the original positions, roll the ball to the first attacker as a trigger and commence play. Hopefully, the first attacker will dribble the ball into the free zone, unimpeded.

The Free Zone game is an excellent small sided game which can be played in a small or large grid area so long as the free zone area on the wings is wide enough to allow a ball to be passed or dribbled into it. Using the outside channels on attack is a good tactic because that area of the field usually has less pres-



sure than the goal channel area especially after a quick switch of the point of attack. During this training session encourage players to take an opponent on and dribble into the free zone (individual technique) or to pass the ball to a third man running into the free zone as shown in Diagram 3-04.

Wide play up a wing is also an excellent way to start the attack on transition to offense. The weak side wing is usually uncongested (because play is happening on the other side of the field) providing a great opportunity to exploit space up that wing to quickly move the ball up field with a long ball or quick lateral passes as shown in Diagram 3-05.

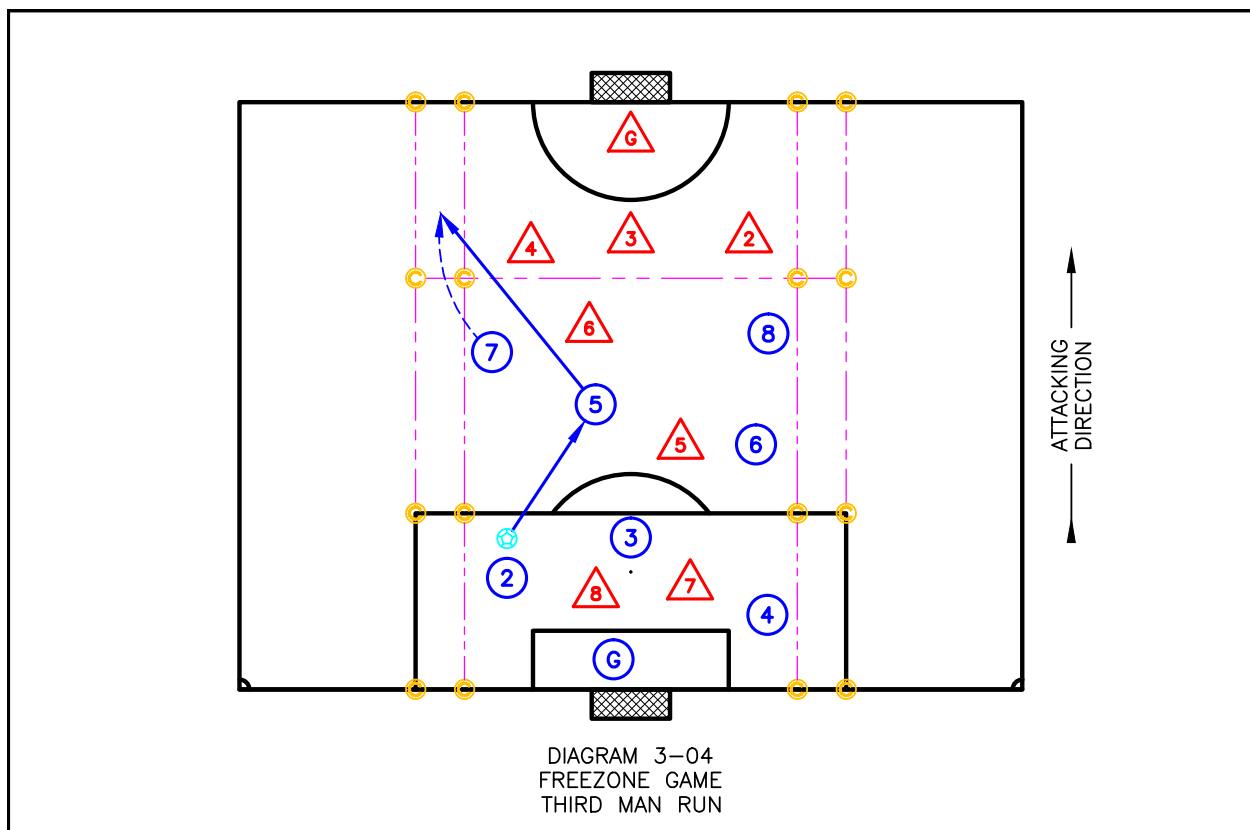
Emphasize on and off the ball player movement for wide play like:

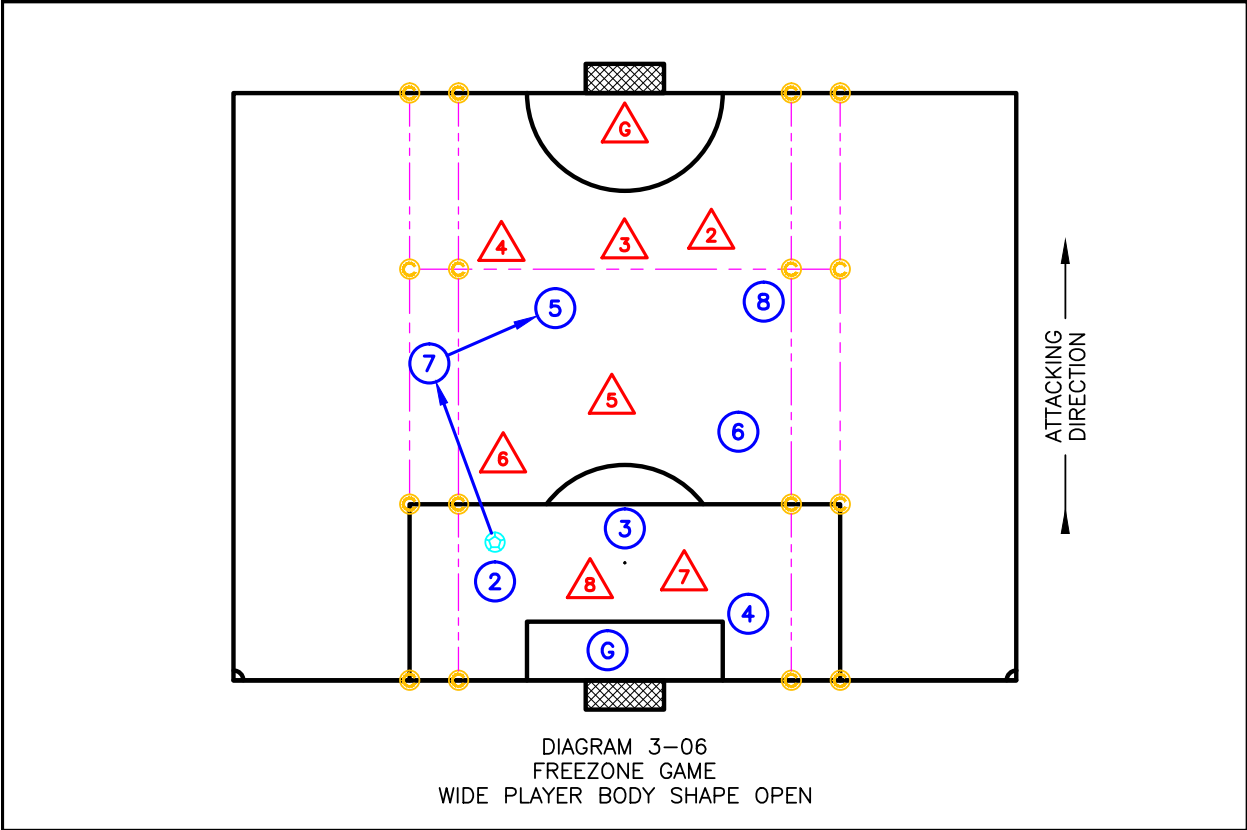
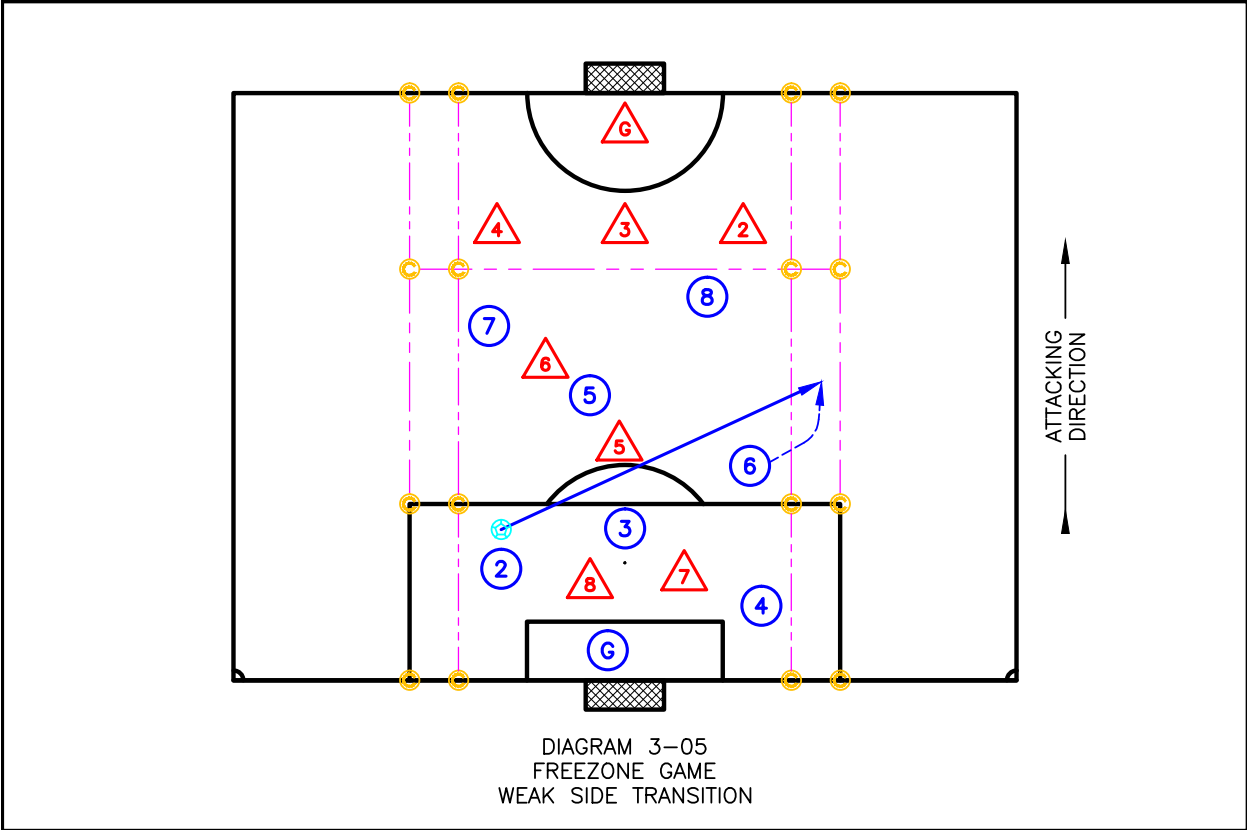
A strong side outside attacker moves wide into an outside channel, open to the first attacker and open to that part of the field which he intends to move the ball as shown in Diagram 3-06.

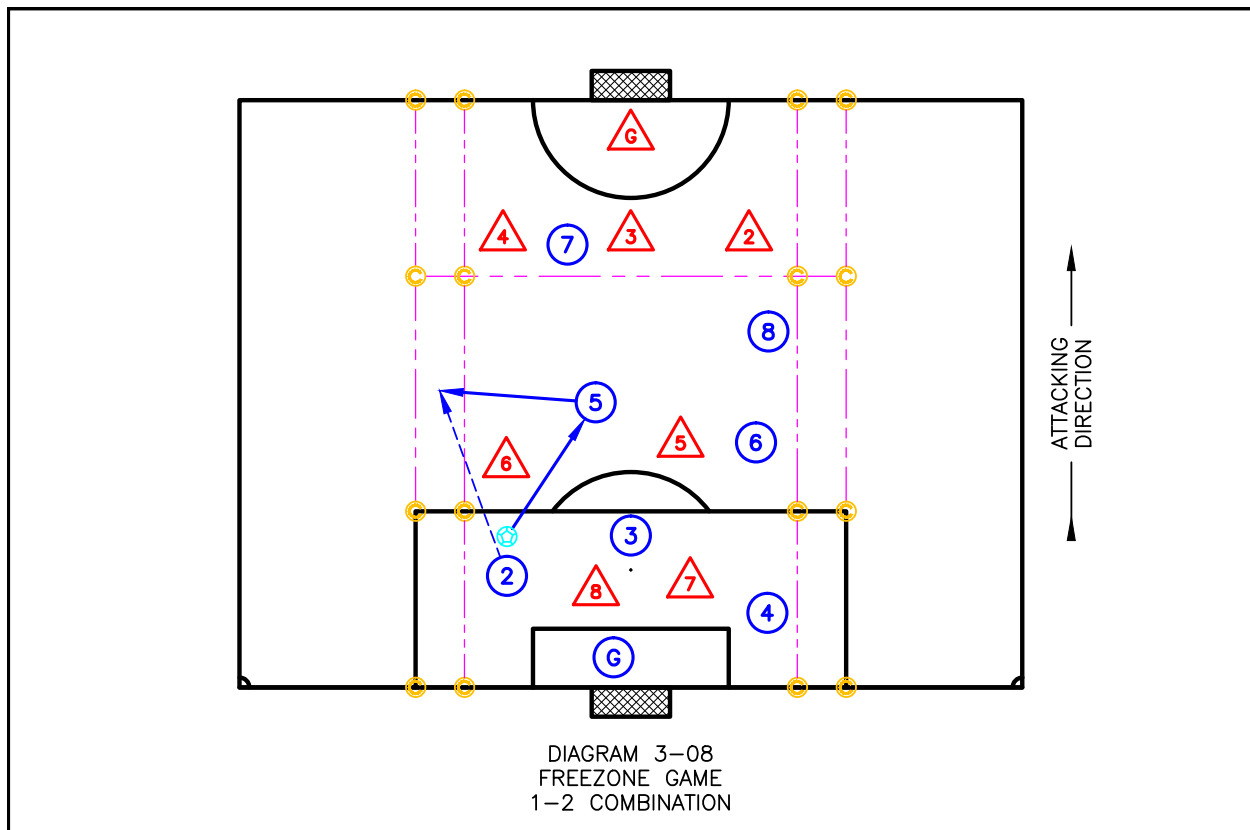
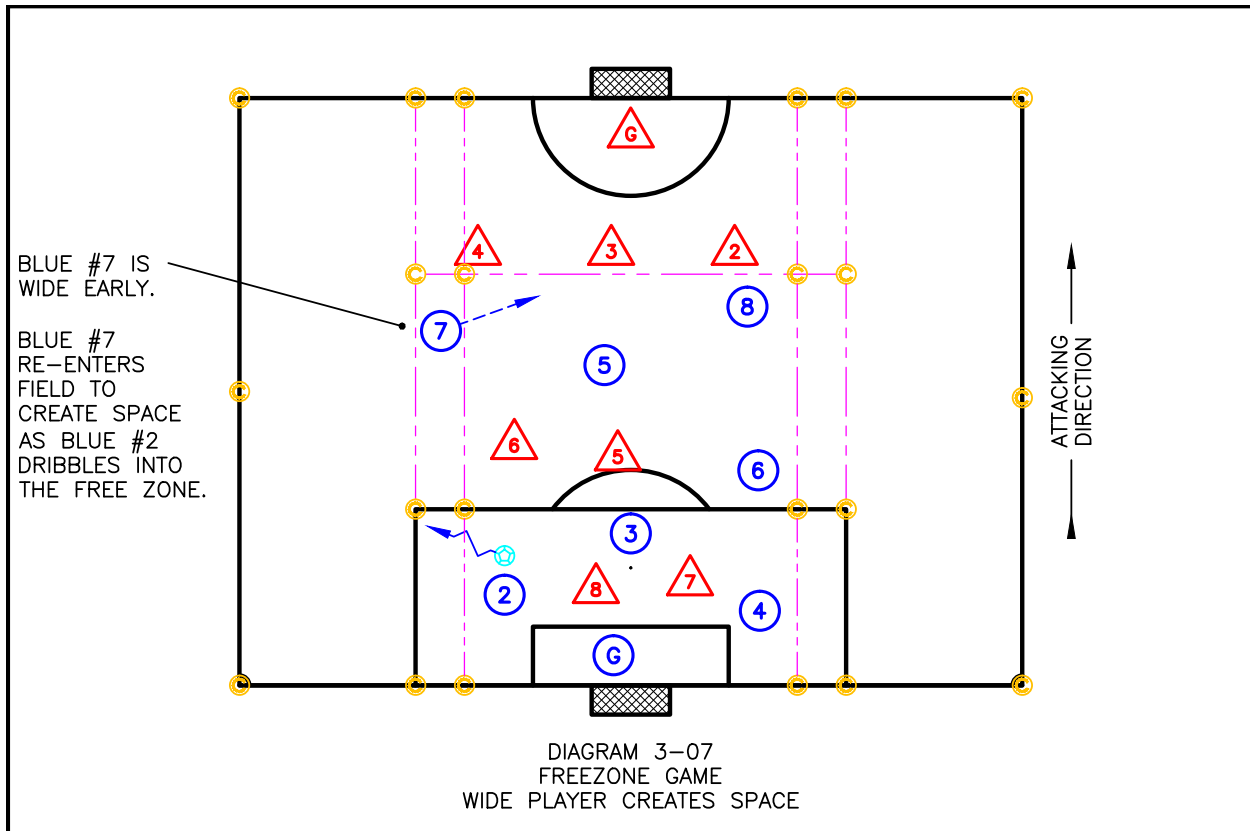
This strong side outside attacker must be able to see the ball unobstructed meaning that the passing lane to him is not blocked by a defender.

This strong side outside attacker (receiver) must start his run early so that he reaches the outside channel as the first attacker is ready to pass the ball. Note that the first attacker might decide to dribble the ball wide but, in any event, the strong side outside teammate will open space for the first attacker to dribble as shown in Diagram 3-07.

The strong side outside attacker (receiver) should make his run so that the first attacker can play the ball the way he (the first attacker) is facing as shown in Diagram 3-06.



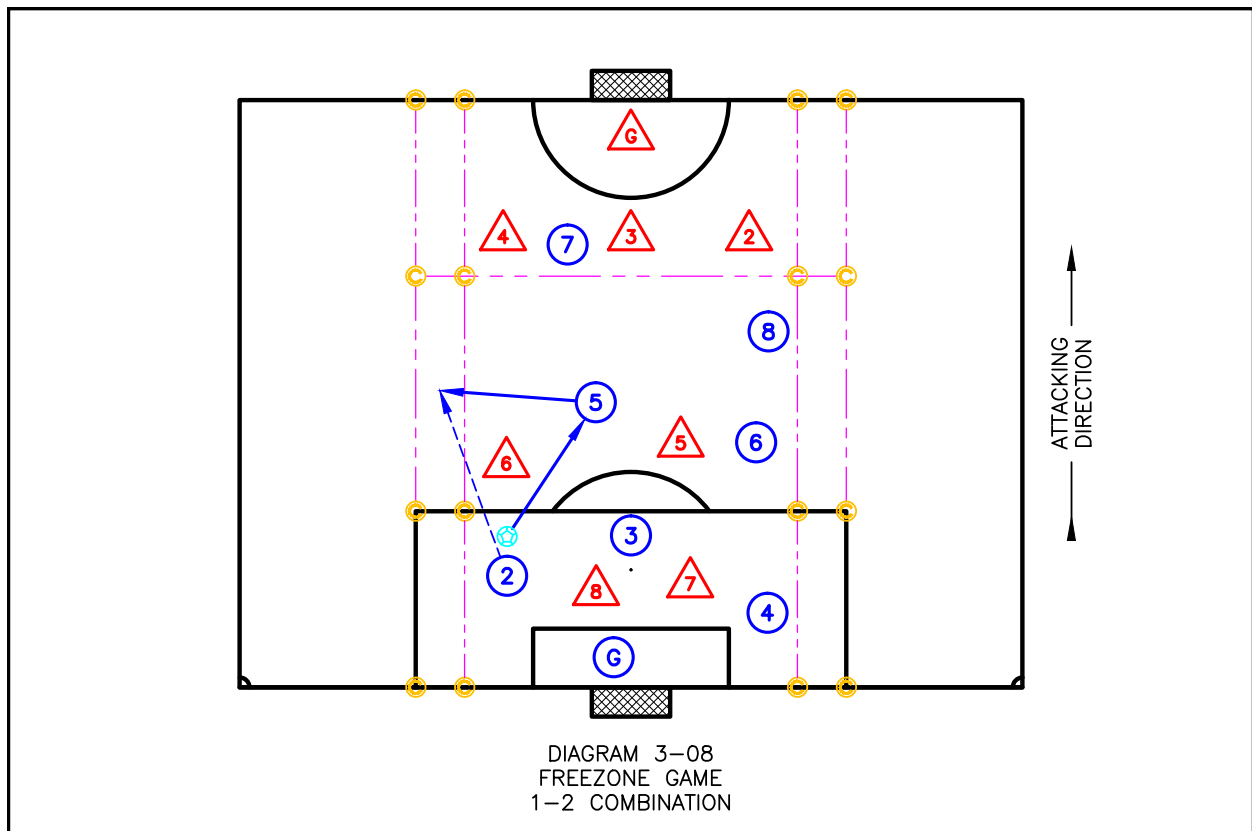




If the first attacker decides to pass the ball to space in front of the wide receiver, that pass must be with touch (soft) so that the receiver has the opportunity to run onto the ball to collect it.

If space around the outside receiver is tight then the pass should be weighted and to feet.

Once the pass is made, the first attacker must move to space ready for a 1-2 combination up the wing with the receiver as shown in Diagram 3-08.



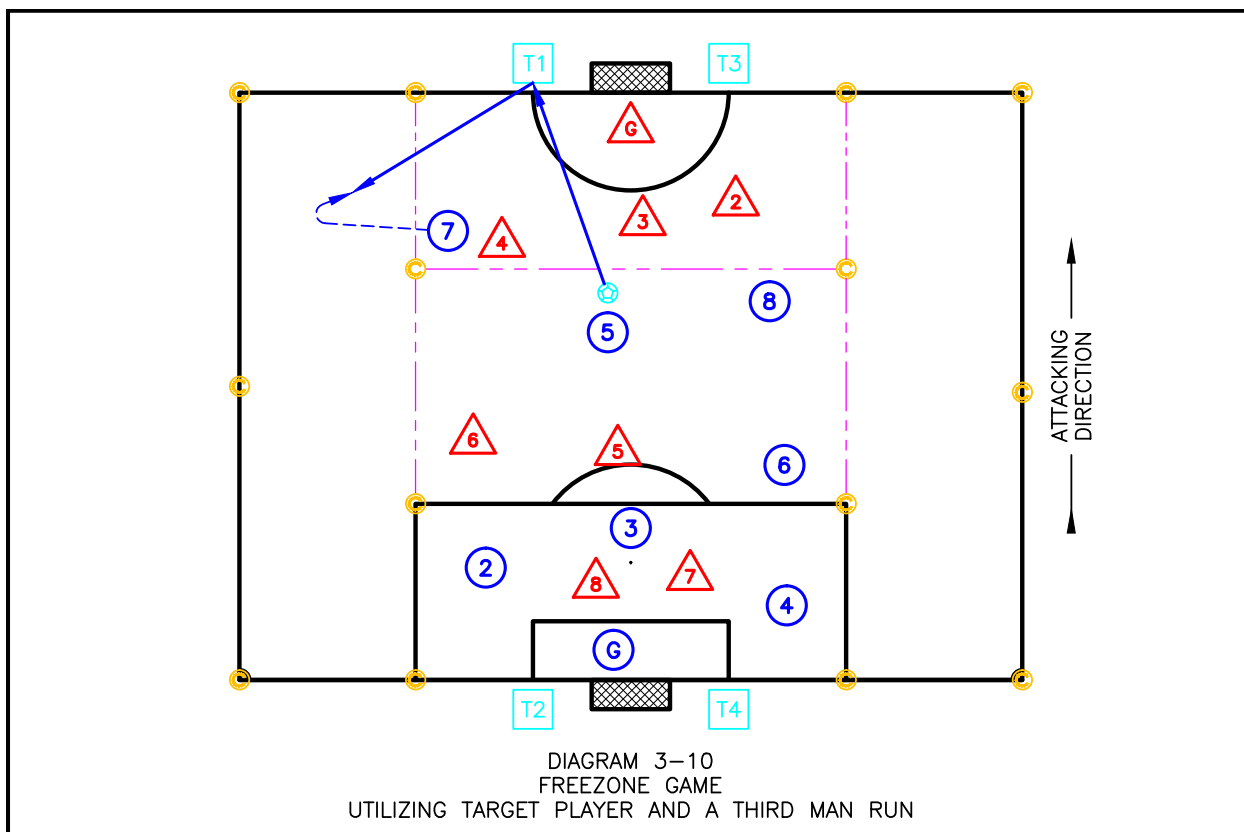
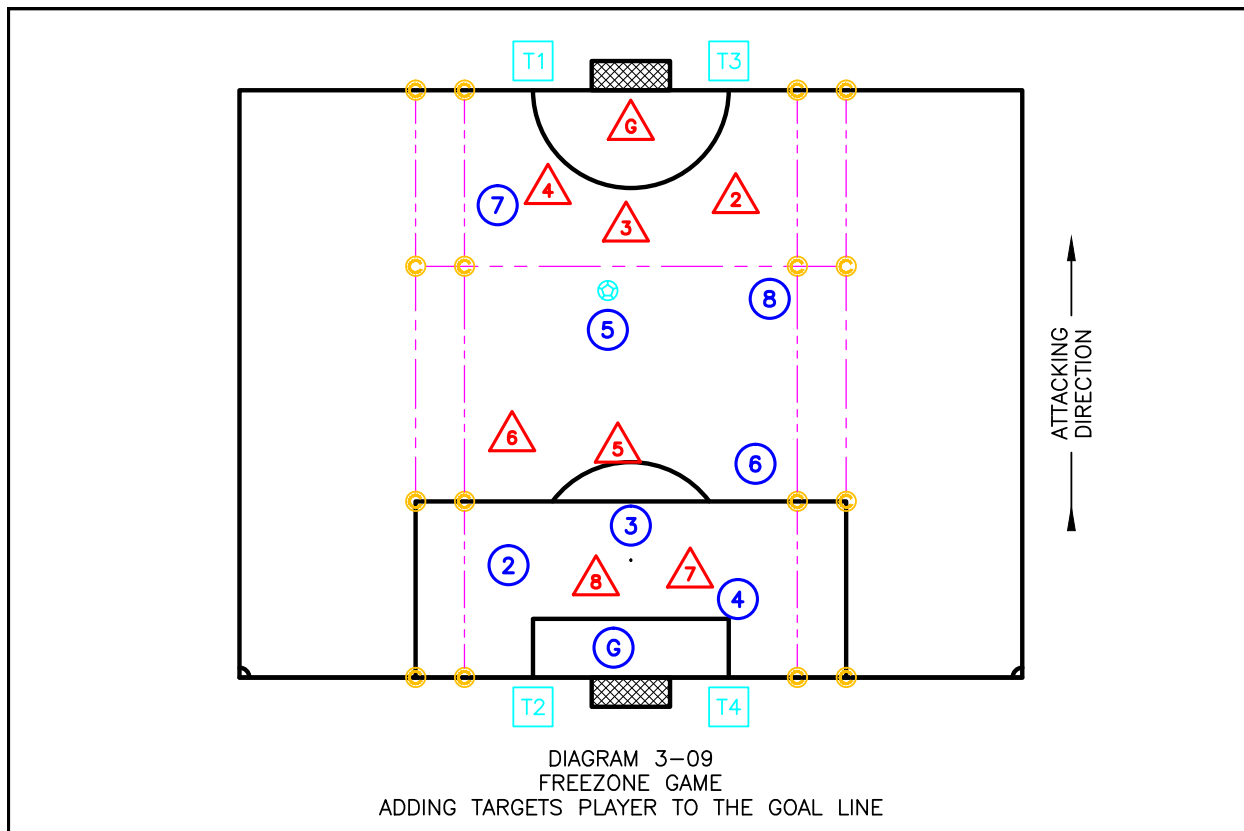
Continuing to the next exercise for this Monday session:

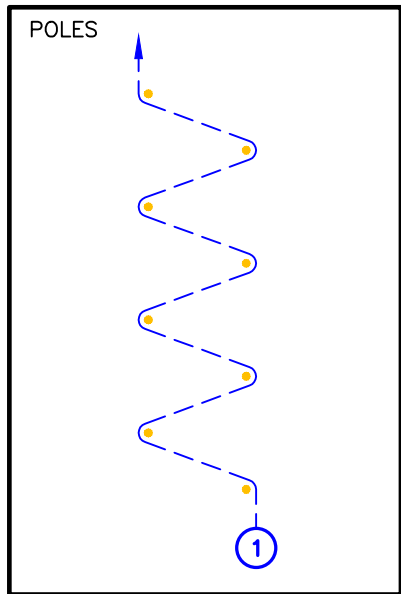
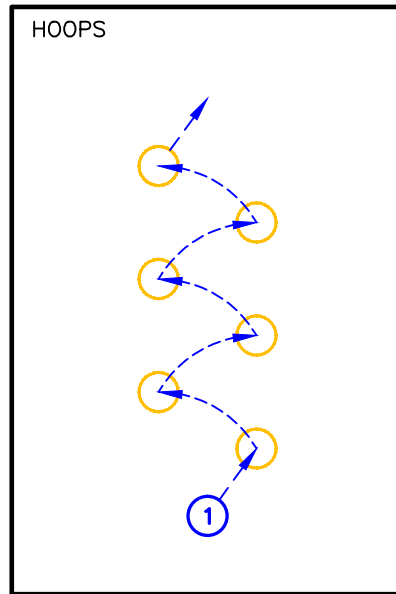
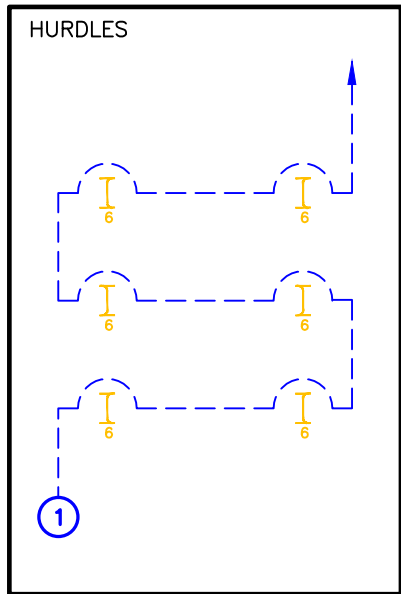
Add two targets per team at the end lines just outside of each goal post as shown in Diagram 3-09. The targets are only to be used as an option if the first attacker cannot move the ball into the free zone and the ball is in the front third of the field. The target immediately passes the ball back to the attacking team who then must move the ball to the free zone. This requires a third man running on the attacking team at the time the ball is passed to the target as shown in Diagram 3-10.

Then, very light aerobic conditioning, coach's choice. A few examples are in Diagrams 3-11.

Then, an extended dynamic cool down followed by a static stretch.

Then, a short question and answer session about what was learned at the session. End the session.





MONDAY

AS THIS IS STILL A RECOVERY DAY, THIS CONDITIONING SHOULD BE DONE AT A SLOWER PACE WITH LARGE REST PERIODS.

DIAGRAM 3-11
ANAEROBIC CONDITIONING WITH HURDLES, HOOPS AND OBSTACLE POLES

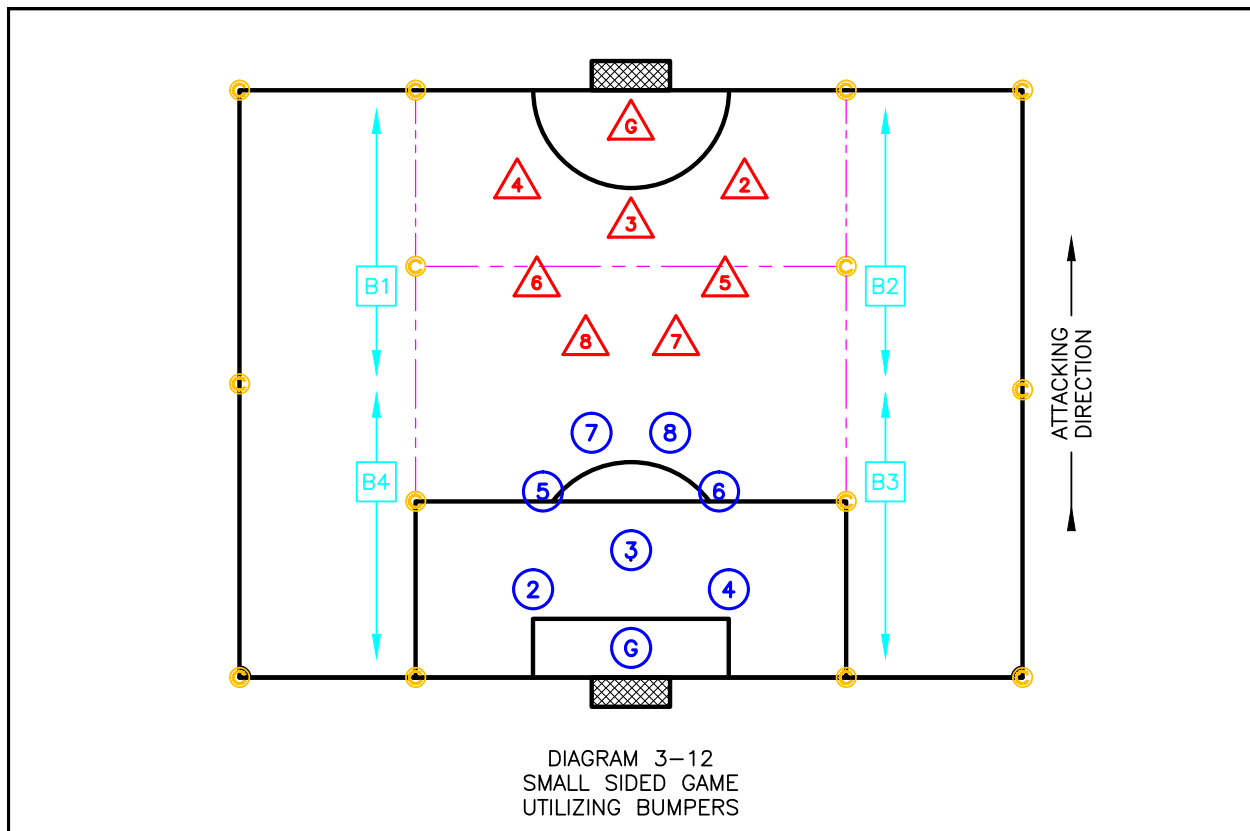
Tuesday

Each training session must build off of the prior session (incremental, progressive training) so that the Game Model can slowly imprint on players day by day from simple exercises to more complex exercises. On Monday the players learned how to move the ball wide on attack during the run of play using a very simple small sided free zone game. The next logical step is to use a small sided game, in small to medium space, with additional complications to force the players to think and create during the run of play. This training session should last about 90-120 minutes.

An extended dynamic warm-up followed by static stretching.

A very short discussion about the theme of the day and what is expected of the players during this training session, for example, the 1-2 combination passes must be crisp and to space with touch to move the ball up the wing on attack. Emphasize that the receiver should be able to run onto the ball rather than stop to collect it.

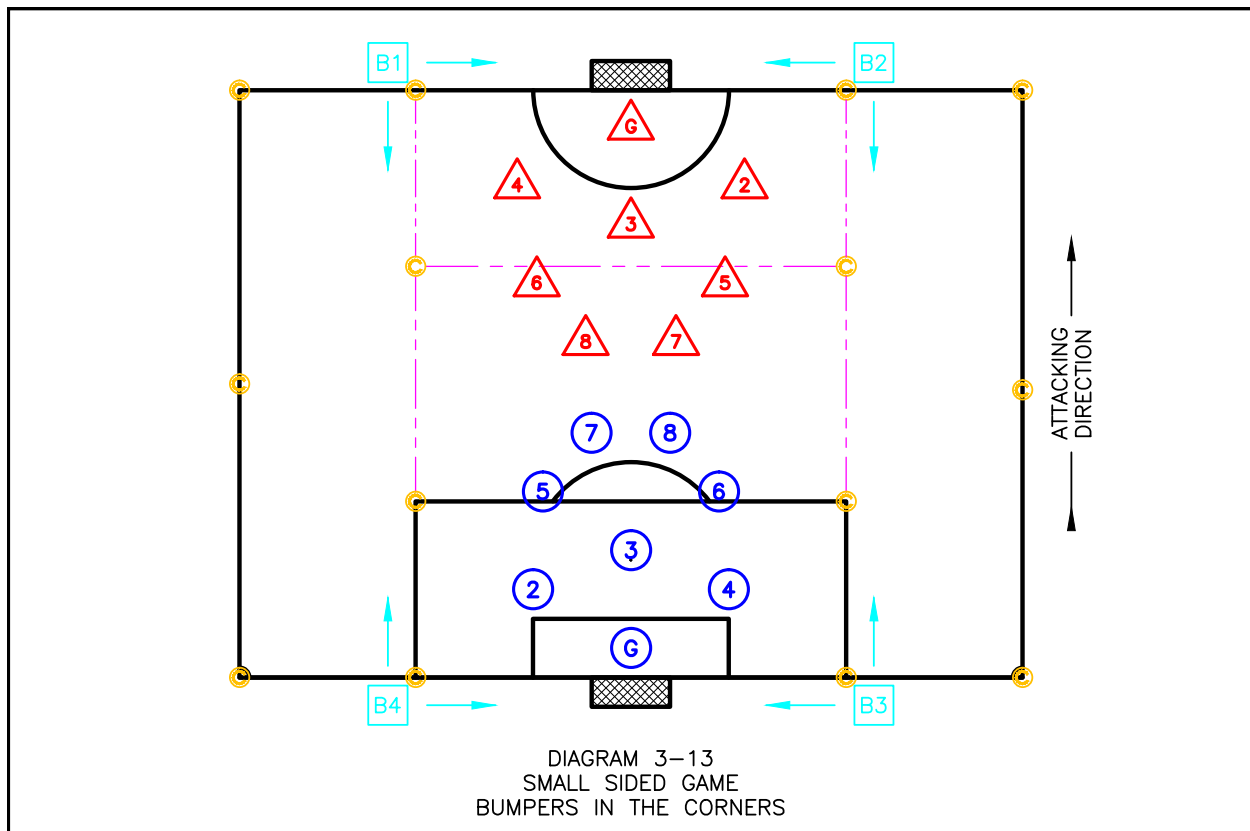
Set up a grid about the same size as used on Monday except omit the free zone. This small sided game is directional, to goals with keepers, with teams in bibs opposing each other but with two player bumpers equally spaced outside of each side line without bibs as shown in diagram 3-12, a total of four bumpers.



Players must pass to both bumpers holding wide on one side of the field before the attacking team can take a shot on goal. The bumpers can move to get open but they must stay near the sideline but off the field. If a bumper gets a ball, that player passes back to the attacking team to continue the attack. The bumpers cannot be challenged.

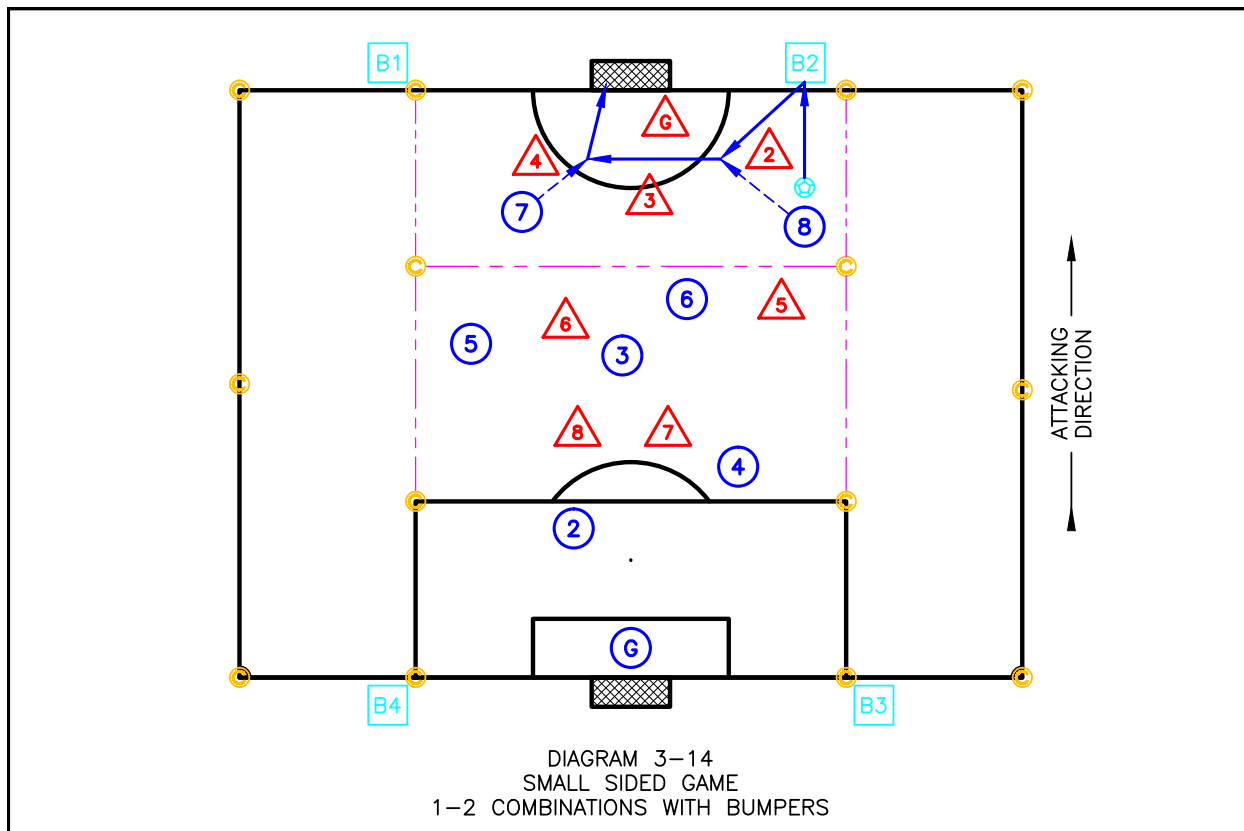
This small sided game is a bit more complicated (complexity training day by day should be simple to more complex) because both bumpers on one side of the field must be used before a shot on goal, forcing multiple wide passes on attack. The passing lane to the bumpers might be blocked forcing the first attacker to move the ball inside to another receiver so that receiver can move the ball to a bumper. This game increases player options and increases resistance on attack making it more complex than the free zone game.

For this next small sided game, use the same grid but move the player bumpers to the corners of the grid. One player bumper per corner as shown in Diagram 3-13. This game builds on the last game by increasing complexity. The corners will usually be more congested and provide less space for the attackers to maneuver than the outside channels.



Before an attacking player can shoot on goal one of the bumpers at one of the corners in the front third of the field must be used as a receiver. That bumper must pass the ball back to the passer who can shoot on goal or pass to a teammate. The player bumper must stay as close to the corner as possible. This game forces wide play but also causes the first attacker to pass and move to space after the pass to the bumper as shown in Diagram 3-14. This is more complex than the previous small sided game.

Heavier conditioning is required on Tuesday and it must be anaerobic, that is, to create player oxygen debt during conditioning. At least three different anaerobic conditioning exercises should be used. Hurdles, hoops or poles (Diagram 3-15) can be used as tools to produce an anaerobic effect. Many college coaches in the United States call this “terrible Tuesdays” because of the emphasis on anaerobic conditions. Some coaches prefer to intersperse conditioning exercises between small sided games to produce



the effect of game day second half fatigue.

An extended dynamic cool down followed by a static stretch.

A short question and answer session about what was learned at the session. End the session.

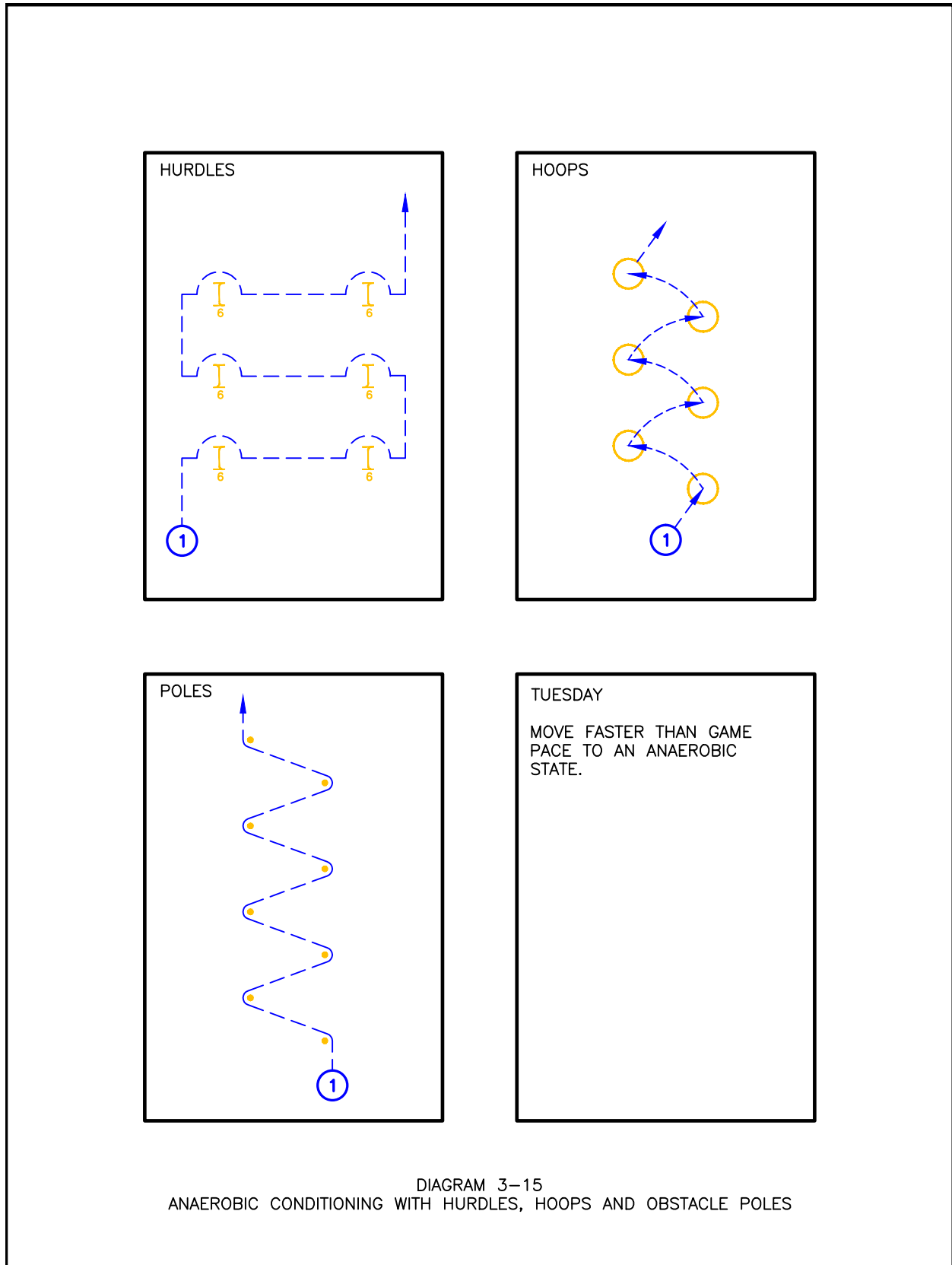


DIAGRAM 3-15
ANAEROBIC CONDITIONING WITH HURDLES, HOOPS AND OBSTACLE POLES

Wednesday

Wednesday's training session will build on the training sessions accomplished earlier in the week with a continued emphasis on wide play on attack but the complexity of the small sided games will be higher and large group tactics will be added as a teaching objective. The grids will be larger and the length of time for each small sided game will be longer to promote player endurance. All exercises will be at game speed. The dominant metabolism type will be aerobic (not in oxygen debt). This training session should last about 90-120 minutes.

The easiest way to accomplish fast thinking and fast movement in a large grid is to use numbers down on one team and then change (alternate) to numbers down on the opposing team during the training session. The team with numbers down will be under heavy pressure to move the ball quickly, speeding up thinking and enhancing player creativity during the run of play on the team with less players. Alternate teams with numbers down every ten minutes or so.

An extended dynamic warm-up followed by static stretching.

A very short discussion about the theme of the day and what is expected of the players, for example, quick one or two touch passing and constant off the ball movement if playing on the team with numbers down.

For this exercise set up a large grid, directional to goals with keepers, with two teams in bibs and one player bumper on each side line, no bib. One team will have numbers up by two players. The bumpers are restricted to one touch play. The bumpers holding wide are near a sideline but outside of the field and they can enter the field to check to the first attacker and using just one touch, return the pass to a player on the same team as shown in Diagram 3-16.

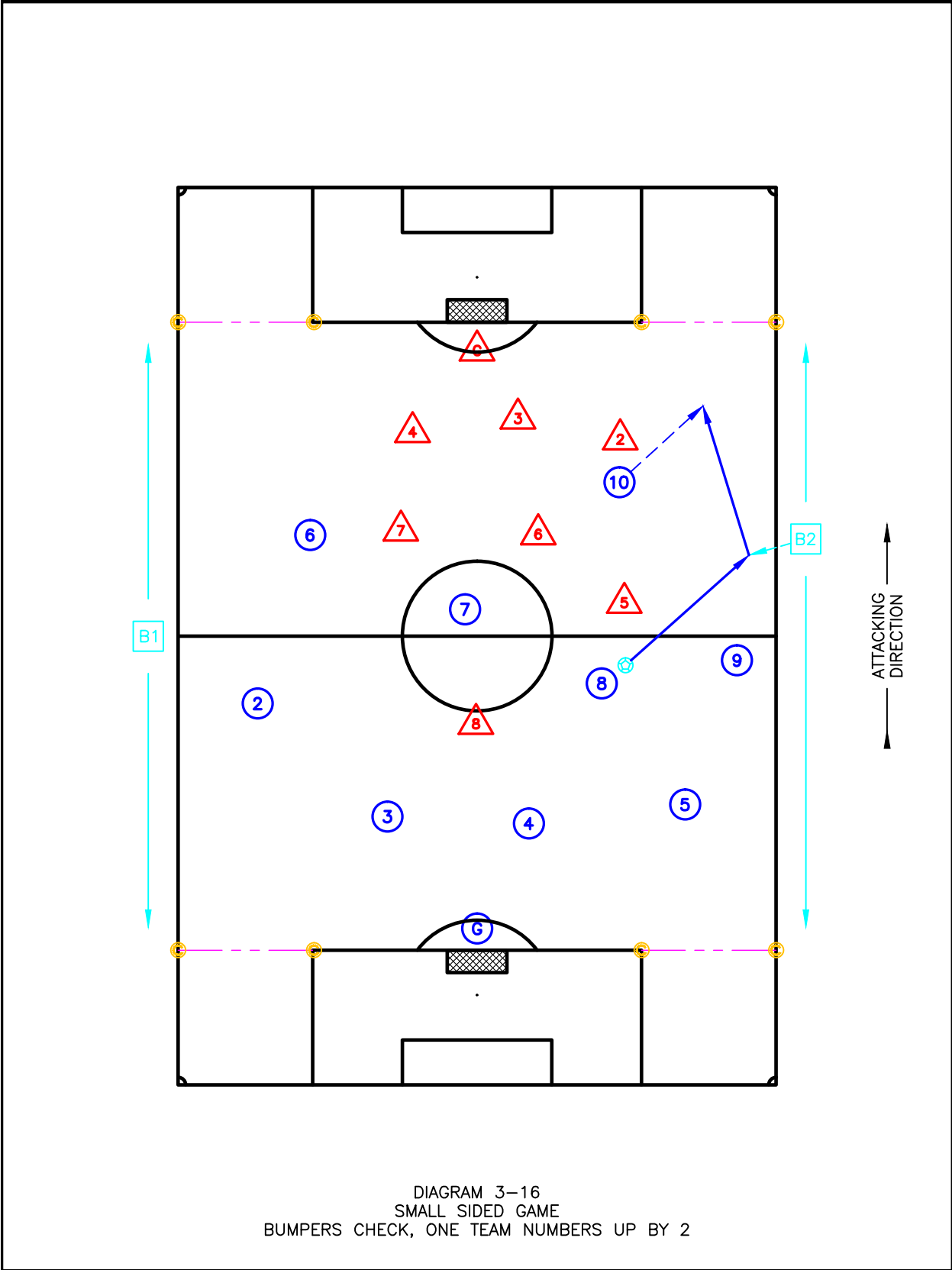
The complexity is increased because the first attacker must recognize the check run by the wide receiver and the pass to that wide receiver must be returned one touch to a player on the same team. The wide bumper can only receive a pass after a check run to and then away (wide) from the first attacker. The check runs complicate this game.

Next, the team that had numbers down now plays with numbers up by two players and the game continues.

Next, use the same grid with bumpers who are still required to check to and away (wide) but add a neutral player to each team in different colored bibs. Only the neutral player can move the ball wide to the checking bumper. The balance of the rules remains the same. This makes the game more complex. Conditioning should be endurance related on this training day so each session, hoops and/or hurdles for example should be longer in duration but slower in speed to keep the players aerobic.

An extended dynamic cool down followed by a static stretch.

A short question and answer session about what was learned at the session. End the session.



Thursday

This training session emphasizes only large group tactics so large grid games and shadow play can now be used to implement the Game Model. As you will notice on the chart Thursday calls for anaerobic conditioning. Because game day is Saturday, that conditioning should be very short in duration, just enough to get the players to an anaerobic state, with full recovery between repetitions. If you do otherwise, players will be fatigued on game day. The purpose of this anaerobic conditioning is not to increase anaerobic capacity by retarding lactic acid production, increasing VO₂ uptake, speed glycogen assimilation, etc., it is merely to activate a players anaerobic base.

An extended dynamic warm-up followed by static stretching.

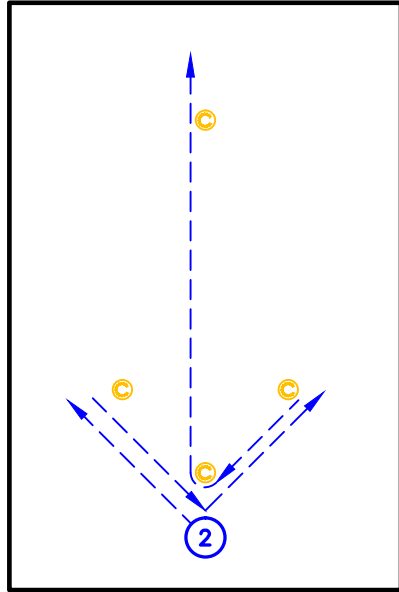
A very short discussion about the theme of the day and what is expected of the players, for example, go over the entire Game Model on a white board or a magnetic board, offense and defense.

Start the session with short anaerobic conditioning repetitions, not plyometric based (not leaping, bounding or hurdles). A few examples are shown in Diagram 3-17. Only a few repetitions of each anaerobic exercise are required with full recovery between repetitions.

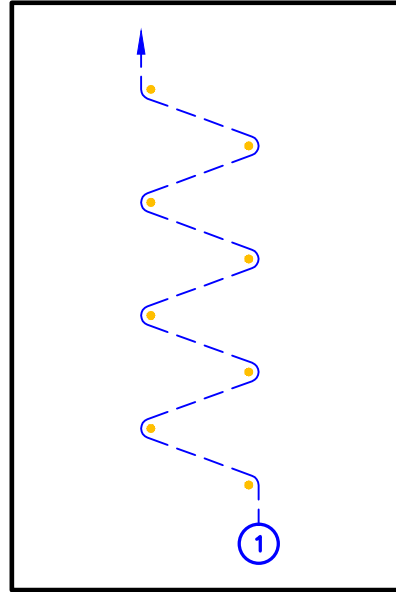
Shadow play. Shadow play is the backbone of imprinting and implementing the Game Model. Shadow play is accomplished by putting eleven players on a half field and replicating coria graphed movement consistent with the Game Model.

Below is a typical Game Model which can be used for a youth team. Notice that words like “our” and “your” are used so as to personalize the Model which will be provided to the players in their Playbook for the season.

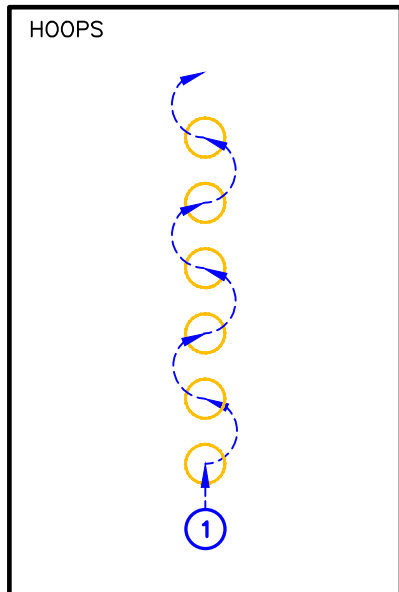
As mentioned earlier, players are told that they do not need to follow the Game Model if a better option is available during the run of play.



QUICK ACCELERATION AND BRAKING



CHANGE IN DIRECTION AND SPEED



THURSDAY

THIS CONDITIONING SHOULD BE DONE AT A FAST PACE, BUT SHORT DURATION WITH LARGE REST PERIODS.

HOOPS: TOTAL DISTANCE IS ABOUT 25 YARDS AND ARE SET AT A NORMAL RUNNING STRIDE.

DIAGRAM 3-17
SHORT ANAEROBIC CONDITIONING

GAME MODEL

4-4-2 FORMATION

Forwards during the run of play:

On offense:

- Our weak side forward gets high to the opponent's line of defense (to stretch the field holding their line of defense high so that we have room underneath to work on offense)--take as much space as they will give you; get as high as our opponent's deepest defender so that you are "on sides".
- Our strong side forward checks to the ball; get open to space in order to provide a passing option.
- Both forwards should try to stay about 10 yards apart working together.

On defense:

- Our weak side forward cuts passing lanes.
- Our strong side forward attacks the ball to become the first defender at our chosen line of confrontation (low, medium, high pressure);
- Close down: quick, slow, sideways, low, shepherd (steer) wide in all parts of the field.

Outside Mids during the run of play:

On offense:

- Our weak side outside mid compresses inside to space providing a passing option; check to the ball.
- Our strong side outside mid gets to the line, open, ready to receive a pass, body open to the ball and to goal.

On defense:

- Our weak side outside mid, if no man up field in your channel, compress inside to a man (mark him, pass him off and then take the next man up field in your area, zonal defending, always shepherd (steer) wide in all parts of the field).
- Our strong side outside mid, the play will be near you so either pressure (quick, slow, sideways, low), or cover (second defender), or mark a man near you cutting the passing lane to the man you are marking.

Inside Mids during the run of play:

On offense:

- Our weak side inside mid drops into the hole (just the opposite of the weak side forward) playing like a defensive midfielder.
- Our strong side inside mid attacks up field playing like an attacking midfielder.
- Hold your shape, do not get too wide (let our outside players work the outside channels). Work in the goal channel, check to the ball, support the attack.

On defense:

- Both inside mids mark a man in the goal channel, stay with him and then pass him off to a deeper teammate then sprint up field to take the next man up field in your area; zonal defending; shepherd wide.
- Be the first defender if the first attacker is near you. Don't just drop into space behind you—step to a man. Do not get even (lateral) with our line of defense. Take a man up field in the goal channel.

Outside Backs during the run of play:

On offense:

- Our weak side outside back compresses inside to create the line of defense with the other backs.
- Our strong side outside back attacks up field (play like a forward but get back on transition); run wide if our outside mid is inside, run inside if our wide outside mid is outside---look for space upfield.
- All backs push up to compress the field (vertical compression) to about 35 yards from the ball.

On defense:

- All backs drop to create the line of defense.
- Once the line of defense is set, then our weak side back balances and our strong side marks.
- Mark inside, shepherd wide in all parts of the field.

Inside backs during the run of play:

On offense and on defense:

- Both inside backs hold the goal channel.
- On offense, if one of the inside backs go up field on attack, get a fill man first (the fill man will usually be an inside mid).
- On defense, step up field to become the first defender if the first attacker is near you. The other inside back should then get into a cover position behind you (second defender).
- If marking one opponent, sandwich him, faster man behind him.
- On set pieces, if one of you goes up on attack, get a fill man so that you have numbers up by one Leland player.
- Always have numbers up by one, mark one step inside (goal side) and one step back (diagonal to your mark).
- Once our line of defense is set, always have one inside back should be slightly retracted behind our line of defense (to collect long balls over the top or through balls).
- Start to organize our defense as soon as the ball crosses the half way line----organize our mids and our backs loudly, start early!!!! END GAME MODEL

A few examples of shadow play follow:

Put eleven players in their game day positions on the field passing the ball, unopposed, from teammate to teammate and as the ball is moving, the players on the field move in accordance with the Game Model as shown in Diagram 3-18. This provides an offensive visual for the players.

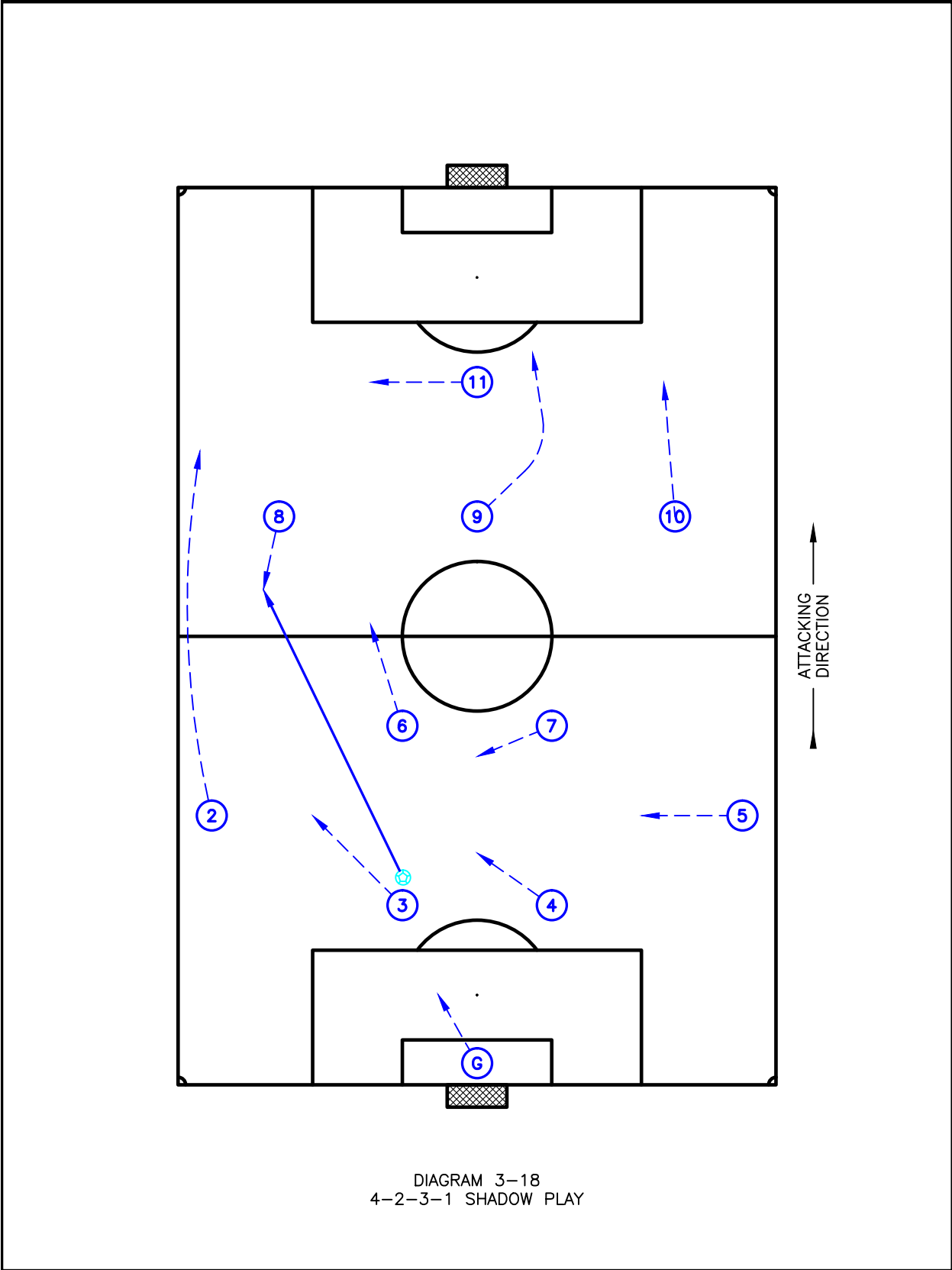
Same as 1 above but rather than passing the ball from teammate to teammate have the players toss the ball from teammate to teammate like a throw-in but upon receipt of the ball, the receiver must bounce the ball once before throwing it to a teammate. This will slow the game down so the coach can stop and correct players if the Game Model is not followed.

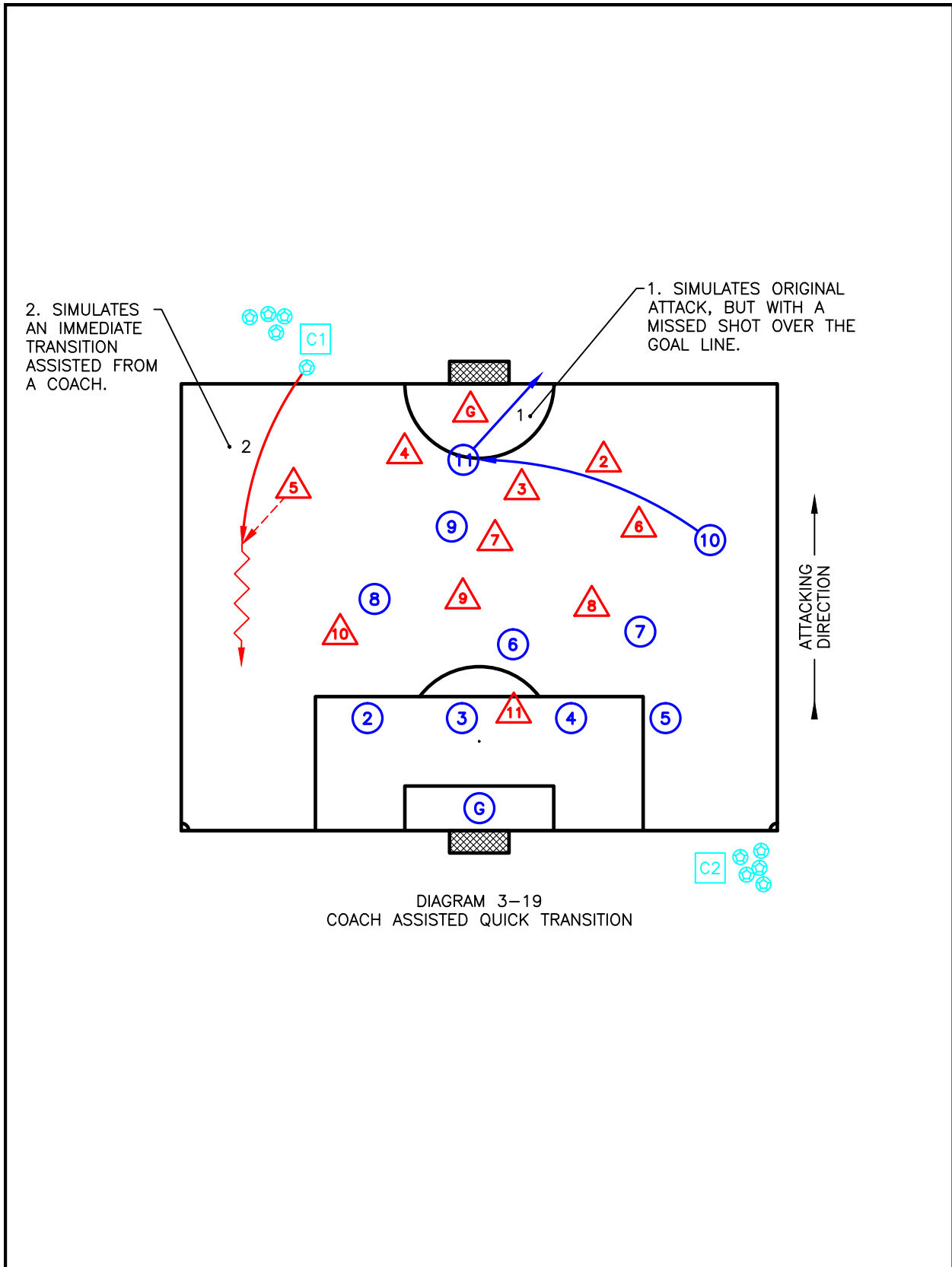
Same as 1 above, except add a few opponents in bibs to put pressure on the ball and to cut passing lanes without allowing these opponents to take the ball (passive defending).

Same as 1 above except add a full opposing team of 11 in bibs and as the ball is moved from teammate to teammate the opposing team creates defensive shape consistent with the Game Model without taking the ball (passive defending). Once coach is satisfied, then have the teams switch roles so the other team can work defensive shape consistent with the Game Model.

This small sided game promotes wide play on transition. As shown in Diagram 3-19, use a half field grid, directional to goals with keepers, two teams in bibs set up 11 v 11 in the game day formation, and a coach at each corner with an ample supply of balls nearby.

The game starts with a coach rolling a ball from the corner to an outside back. That back attempts to move the ball up the wing by dribbling or combination passes. If jammed, the attacking team should creatively move the ball up field. As soon as the ball goes out of play or after a shot on goal, the coach





at the nearest corner rolls the ball to the nearest outside back on transition (to the other team) and play resumes.

Coach must immediately roll the ball into play so that the attacking team can catch the defending team off guard forcing the defending team into quick defensive shape.

After about fifteen minutes, move the coaches up the side line about ten yards and continue play for another fifteen minutes or so. Coach must roll the ball to the nearest player on the wing on the opposing team (the opposite team that lost the ball or took the shot) to restart play after the ball has gone out of bounds or after a shot on goal. This will force play higher up field on transition. Use coaching in the game to make corrections if a player is not following the Game Model. There are many variations of this game but any variation must relate to the Game Model.

An extended dynamic cool down followed by a static stretch.

A short question and answer session about what was learned at the session AND about a ten minute discussion about the game model with diagrams drawn on a white board... End the session.

A comment about the question and answer session, over the years I've concluded that a Socratic (question and answer) method of teaching is best. Ask questions leading the player to the correct answer. Ask the entire team a question about a part of the Game Model and call on a player to answer so that the entire team must think about the answer when it is asked—not knowing which player will be called upon to answer. Just as you should do in training, lead the player to correct movement on the field; lead the player to a correct answer to your question, don't direct (command) the player. Let the player find his way and imprinting the Game Model and better player performance will come quicker.

Coaches might want to weave in body weight (no weights) calisthenics, plyometrics, isometric/isotonic exercises or simple, short burst running exercises into each training day. If so, Thursday (today in our sample schedule) is the last day that should be accomplished so that the players are not fatigued on game day. Also, I use shadow play every training day to imprint the Game Model. I even occasionally use shadow play as part of the warm up just prior to the game.

Friday

Friday training emphasizes full team tactics to get ready for game day. The dominant pattern of muscular contraction should be activation, that is, just enough movement to stimulate the muscles to be used on game day avoiding overuse which would promote fatigue.

An extended dynamic warm-up followed by static stretching.

A very short discussion about the theme of the day and what is expected of the players, for example, to ignore the Game Model if a better option appears during the run of play.

C. To promote game day sharpness and applicable muscle activation, and to stay within the training theme for the week, the first small sided game today will be a one touch possession to targets on end lines in a small rectangular grid, two teams in bibs with neutral bumpers on the side lines. The targets and the bumpers do not wear bibs.

Target players without bibs are placed outside the grid at the center of each end line, one target per end line; and bumpers are placed outside the grid at the center of each side line, one bumper per side line. The targets must stay within a few yards of the center of each end line but the bumpers can move along the side lines but always outside the grid.

The game is directional to the targets. When the attacking team successfully passes to a target, that team gets one point. All passes, even to the target must be one touch. The target must pass back to the opposite team one touch so that team can start the attack in the other direction.

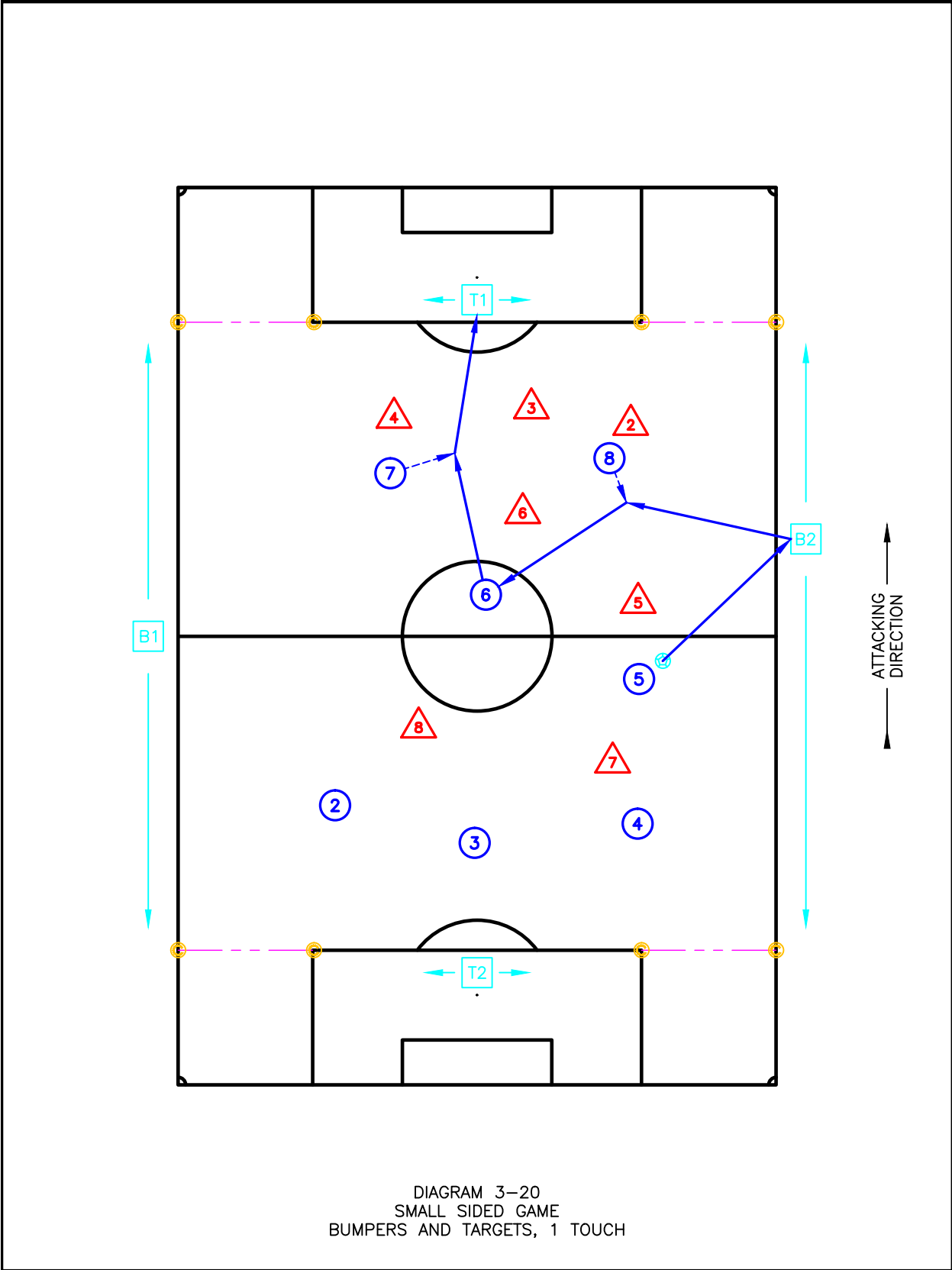
During the attack, the bumpers on the wing move up and down the field outside of the side line following the play. The first attacker can use a bumper as a receiver, one touch, anytime during the attack, as many times as needed to move the ball up the wing and toward the target. The bumper passes back, one touch, to the same player that passed the ball to him. All play is one touch. This small sided game is shown in Diagram 3-20.

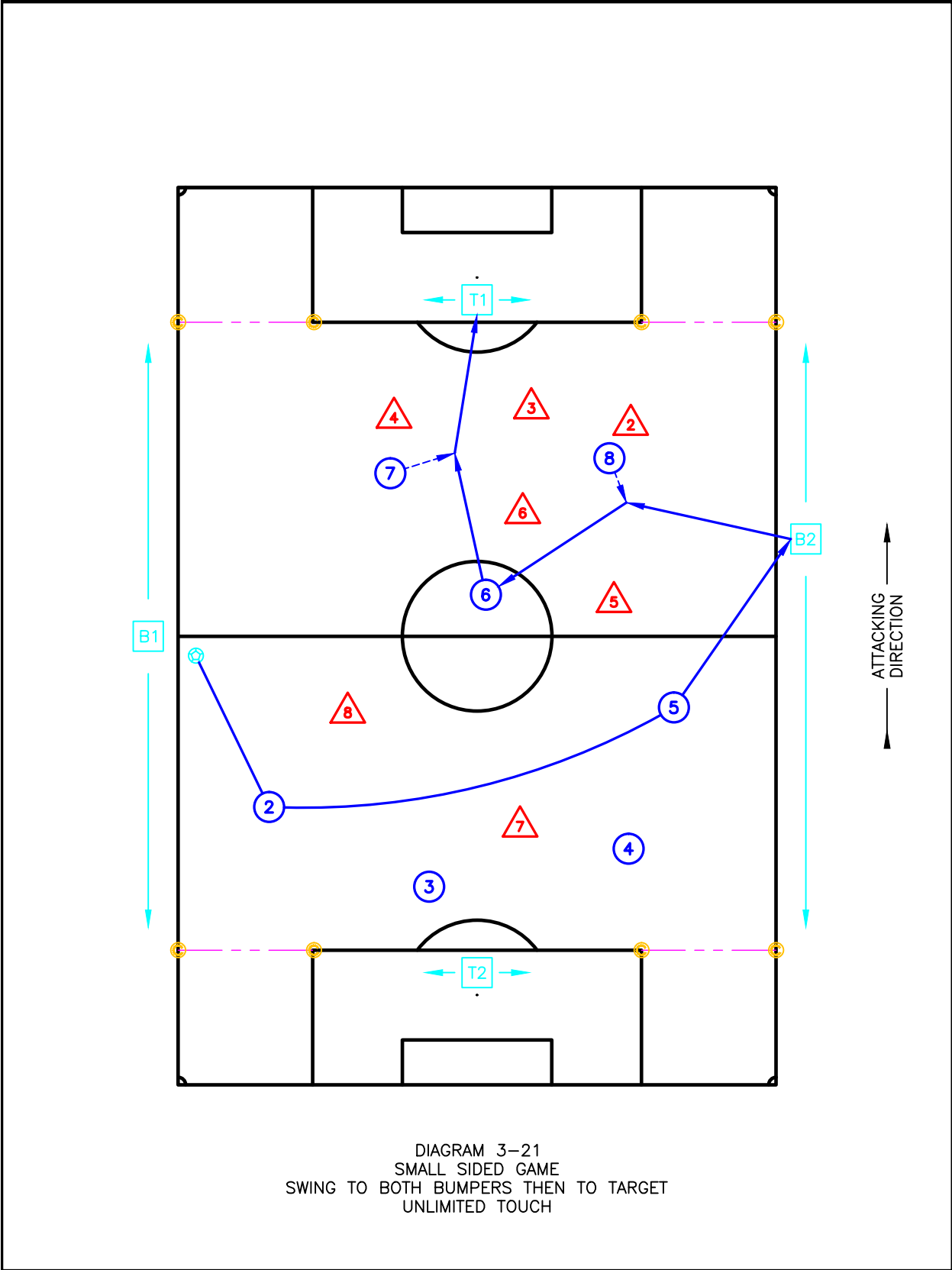
This is a very fast paced game in tight space so the bumpers will be used often enhancing wide play on attack. On training days before game day, I usually do not make corrections but merely allow the players to activate appropriate muscles to get ready for the game the next day.

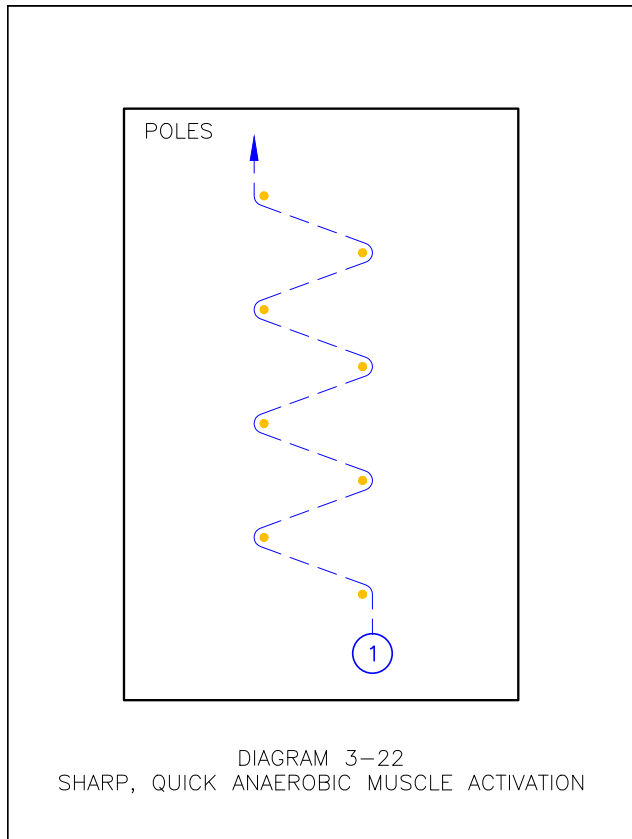
As a variation, the next small sided game uses unlimited touches requiring the bumper to pass back to any player on the attacking team, one touch, but on the pass back, the attacking team must attempt to switch the point of attack with short passes to the other bumper on the opposite end line and then continue with the attack to the appropriate target as shown in Diagram 3-21. This game forces the players to switch the point of attack and work the wings toward the target.

D. Next, shadow play on offense and defense to get the players ready to implement the Game Model on game day. Use one of the shadow play techniques mentioned above. Rotate from offense to defense so that the players on the field become familiar with the Game Model on both sides of the ball. Do not emphasize wing play during these shadow play exercises.

E. Sharp, quick anaerobic muscle activation exercises requiring multiple changes of direction using poles with bases as shown in Diagram 3-22 will help activate muscle sharpness for game day. Short, quick bursts of speed will get the players to an anaerobic state quickly without fatigue. It is crucial that every







exercise is followed by a full recovery on this day because the next day is game day. Activate each player's game related muscles and rest.

An extended dynamic cool down followed by a static stretch.

A short question and answer session about what was learned at the session. It is crucial that you go over the Game Model at the end of this session. Every play must know his role and responsibilities for Saturday's game. End the session.

Saturday is game day and Sunday is a full day of rest or simple and easy active recovery exercises. Use the Chart (Diagram 2-01) as a general guideline for one week of soccer training. Change the theme as related to that training day but make sure that the training themes are logically connected, one week following the next and don't be concerned if you need to emphasize the same theme on multiple weeks because the same deficiency appears during multiple games.

If, for example, the Game Model calls for wide play to a wide target player on transition from defense to offense and you do not see this approach taken by your team during the game, stick with that theme for a couple of weeks until you see the correction. The Chart is a modifiable guideline to be changed in any way suiting a coach so long as the general concepts provided in each box of each column are understood so that an informed decision can be made before modification.

A quick word about training players that normally serve as substitutes on game day. If you recall, the above week is for in-season training with one game per week. It is crucial to keep substitute players fitness and playing level even with that of the players that normally start a game. A fine balancing act during daily training is required to make sure that substitutes are ready on game day even though they get more rest (game day and the day of rest which follows) than the starters.

This might mean working the substitute players on the day of rest indicated on the Chart, or using recovery exercises for the starters on the first day of training for a week but a full, intense training session for the substitutes, extra conditioning for the substitutes each day of training or extra on the ball work for the substitutes each day of training.

No matter how a coach prefers to keep substitute players sharp, bottom line, extra work is necessary or the substitutes will quickly get injured when they do get the opportunity to play in a game or not perform at a satisfactory level because of fitness (conditioning) issues or on the ball sharpness issues.

One other comment about substitute players, they must participate in all shadow play in order to imprint the Game Model when attacking and when defending. All players on the team must understand and be able to implement the Game Model including players that do not get play time during a season.

Tactical Periodization is a concept, not an unbendable, strict, unwavering system of coaching. After reading about this concept, the reader should have a deeper understanding about the value of incremental, logically connected training themes moving from simple to complex week after week. The reader should also gain a stronger appreciation about the importance of coaching to a Game Model.

The purpose of this book is to give the reader a very quick glimpse of the concept of Tactical Periodization, and a taste of a related training week to spark interest in learning more about planned, deliberate, incremental training methods to imprint a Game Model on players over a stated period of time—Tactical Periodization.

Author Biographies

Dan Minutillo

Dan Minutillo has coached soccer in the United States for about 25 consecutive years coaching most age groups, male and female through the Academy level. He has coached with National team players Jimmy Conrad, Todd Dunivant, Darlene Del Carmen and Alejandro Moreno. He is the author of the best seller “Formation Based Soccer Training” and “Progressive Soccer Training in Grids”. Dan holds an NSCAA National diploma and various California coaching licenses.

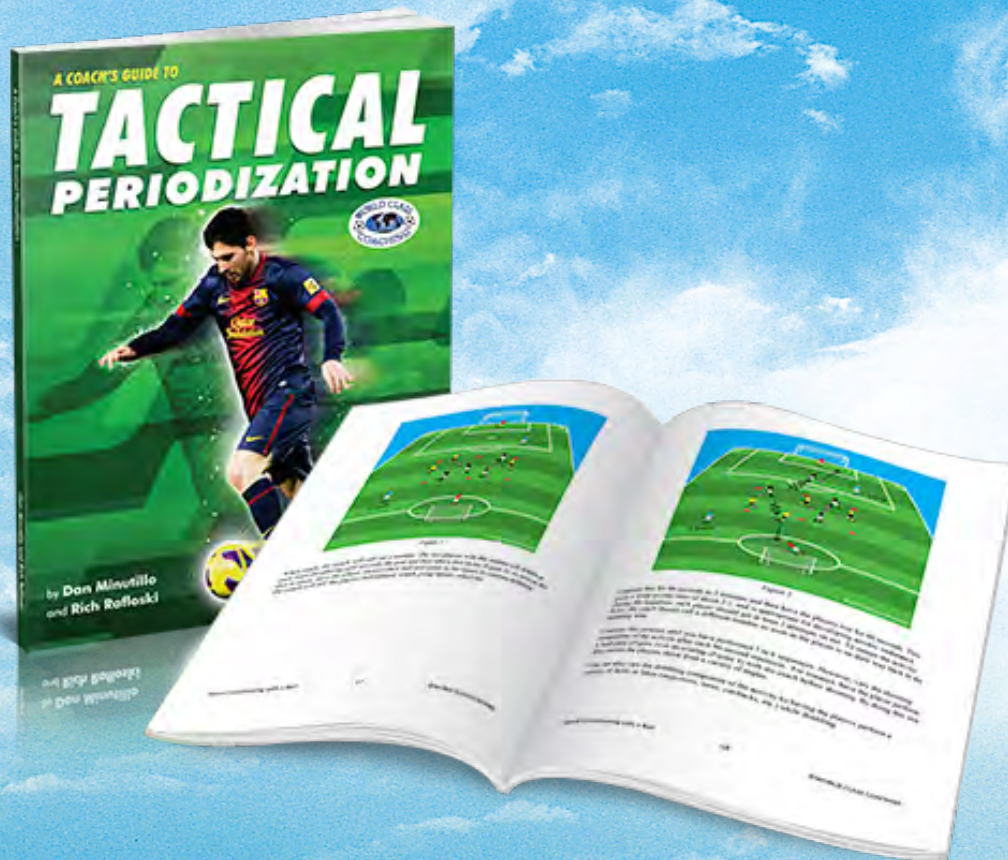
Dan has been published Nationally about various soccer coaching topics including third man runs, plyometrics for soccer players, speed of play for women, enhancing player motivation, improving foot skills, and internationally about attaining offensive and defensive game balance. Dan lectures often to coaching groups in California.

In this past season, Dan used Tactical Periodization as a training tool leading his team to a 24 game undefeated streak and winning all titles achievable in League and State. Dan has had only one losing soccer season with about an 800% win rate overall.

Rich Rafloski

Rich Rafloski, creator of the diagrams for this book, has coached soccer for over 20 years. Rich has coached men and women of numerous ages. In addition to coaching with Dan over the years, Rich was one of the key coaches for the AVYSL Project 40 program and he is the head goalkeeper coach for Real San Jose, a semiprofessional men’s soccer team in the NPSL. Rich holds an NSCAA National Diploma and various California coaching licenses.

Gain an In Depth Understanding of the 'Game Model' Concept



Success on game day is directly linked to your success in training. Success in training comes from having a methodological approach that ties all your training sessions together. That way you can gain incremental improvements and players with a deeper understanding of how they're expected to perform. This is known as the Game Model concept.

Game Models are now harnessed by top coaches all over the world to develop playing styles, rather than formations, and to build success through incremental steps. A Coach's Guide to Tactical Periodization provides a comprehensive yet clear guide on how the Game Model concept works. More importantly, it explains how to use it to create a season long training schedule for your team.

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