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Small-Sided Conditioned Games: A Drill for Overall Player Development in Soccer

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Dear Editor,

The design of training programs that give team sports coaches reliable ways for improving training while promoting player performance has been a primary focus in sports sciences [1]. Bearing in mind, small-sided games are widely used by coaches, who think that training duplicates precise movement patterns produce the best outcomes [2]. The complexity of a soccer game (physical and mental demands) necessitates the completion of a multi-component training program [3], one of which is a small-sided conditioned game. Small-sided conditioned games (SSCG) are modified kinds of small games that are frequently used in training settings to teach a specific tactical skill to team game players. To meet the coaches' desires, various conditions may be applied. SSCGs are expected to elicit changes in the technical execution and tactical behaviors of team game players, in addition to the acute effects of these drill-based small games on overall player performance [4]. In this structured drill, players must be able to change positions rapidly and play with or without the ball, requiring quick decision-making. According to previous research, players' capability to decide on a challenging, ever-changing environment is heavily influenced by their developmental age, preparedness, and the situation's complexity. Nevertheless, SSCG can fulfill the requirement of a professional football game since the players must face very complicated situations in a very tiny space. Indeed, the small-sided games give coaches the finest chance to watch and assess players' individual and collective responses in game-like situations.

The Benefits of Small-Sided Conditioned Games:

- o   All players can touch the ball more frequently in all parts of the pitch

- o   More passes are attempt in a forward direction

- o   More frequent attacking style play such as final third entries can ensure in this game

- o   It is vital to have a lot of experience making quick decisions regularly

- o   Fun and enjoyment are directly tied to increase active participation

- o   The ball possession is changed frequently, allowing players to learn both attacking and defense skills

- o   Acquire the football-specific physical fitness

- o   A player may adapt both the transition phase of attacking to defense or defense to attack and react accordingly [1,2,4,5]

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In all above aspects, more benefits can be established by imposing particular conditions, such as the number of ball touches, entered in the opponent's half when scoring, emphasizing a specific ball direction, and including a neutral player from either inside or outside the pitch [5,6].

Movement is the driving force of football, and it is a vital training tool for small-sided games if a player wants to learn quickly. Both with and without the ball, these are essential for high-level football performance as soccer is one of the most complex, dynamic, and wise games (during match scenarios)

where all players move for the ball [7-9]. Therefore, analyzing the above points, it is known that small-sided conditioned games may impact quick decision-making as the game is fast. Altogether, football coaches are constantly attempting to incorporate new SSCG strategies into their training plans to meet the needs of their respective teams.

Conflicts of interest

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