



Functional Training of the Wing Midfielders

by Laura Ray, Mass Youth Soccer Development Coach

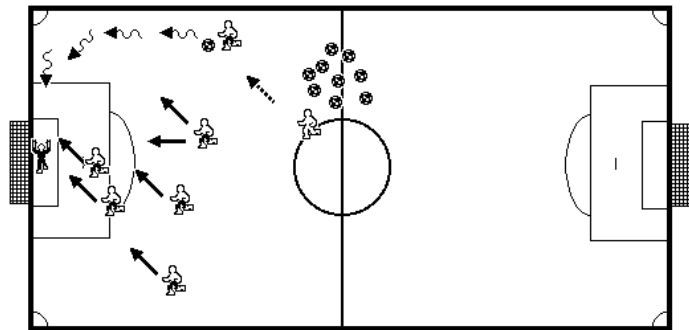
Objectives: To help improve wing midfielder play in the attack.

1) 6v1 to 6v6 (Warm-up – 20-25 minutes):

Start off with pattern play and movement of four midfielders with two forwards (6v1 goalkeeper). Then begin to add defenders until the result is 6v6 (see variations below).

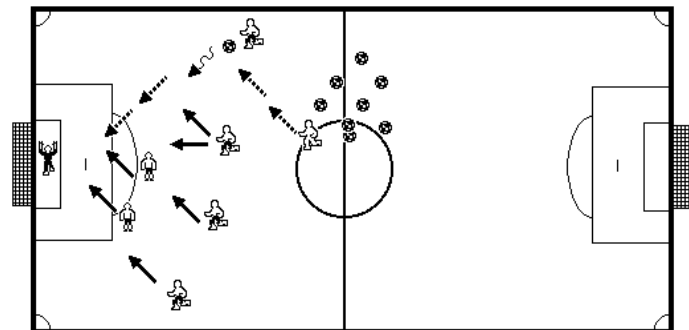
Possible patterns:

- (a) Midfielders and forwards pass the ball freely from the midfield stripe en route to the goal. When the ball is passed to a wing midfielder, the midfielder dribbles and/or combines with another player, gets to the end line and crosses the ball. The cross should eliminate the goalkeeper (low and away or high and away from GK towards the 12-18 yard marks). The other option for the cross would be a driven ball to the near post. Attacking Forward runs are as follows:

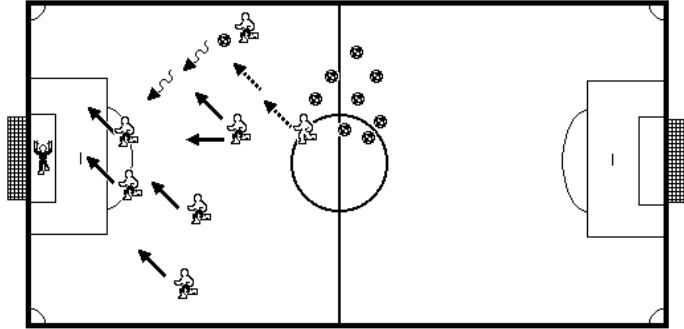


near post run, central run(s) and far post run. Players should time their runs so that they arrive when the ball arrives. They should not telegraph their runs...they should read the crosser's cues and move creatively to arrive on time (i.e. strong side forward moves out of near post space for weak side forward to run into).

- (b) Same activity as in (a) above. Wing midfielder has the option of making an early cross...crossing the ball before he/she gets to the end line. Ball should be bent away from the goalkeeper into attackers running onto it and behind defenders chasing back. Forward runs off the early cross are similar to those described above, but the runs start farther back. The visual cues that determine if an early cross is appropriate are: when he/she sees a numbers up situation offensively, GK is near their goal line, and/or sees attackers who are able to 'sneak' in behind a defender or across the front of a defender. The visual cues for players off the ball would be: to recognize the wing midfielder with the ball has the room to play an early cross in and sees the wing midfielder take a prep touch toward the box.



(c) As the ball is played to the wing midfielder, he/she takes the ball inside centrally and towards goal. This allows a central midfielder (or an outside back) to overlap into the live space created on the flank by the wing midfielder's penetrating movement. Strong side forward and central midfielder will support the ball providing possible combination play. Weak side forward and midfielders will be ready for through balls in behind the defense.



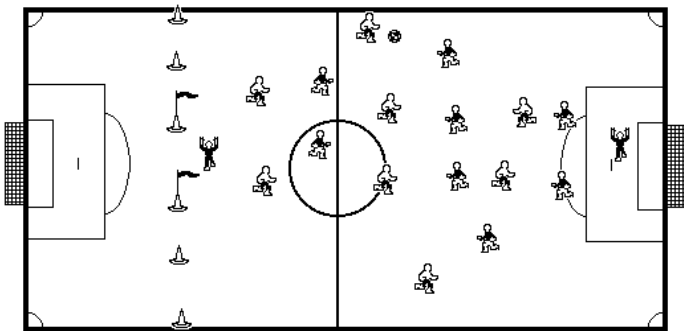
Version 2: Add in two central defenders to play in front of the goalkeeper (6v3). **Version 3:** Add two outside backs for the defense, making it 6v5. **Version 4:** Add in one central midfielder for the defending team to make it 6v6.

Coaching Points:

- Cues for wide midfielder to go to the end line: they have the space in front of them to attack and/or 1v1 situation in the flank with good space behind the defender; want to get more players on attacking team time to get into the box; want to get defenders chasing in a negative direction (toward their own goal).
- Cues for early cross: numbers up situation offensively; goalkeeper close to their goal line; defenders back pedaling; finding one of their own players who has gained a territorial advantage with his/her speed.
- Cues for penetrating centrally: recognizing LIVE (open) space centrally to attack; communication from central midfielder or outside back to take the ball inside for a possible overlap.

2) 9v9 to two big goals (25-30 minutes):

9 red vs. 9 yellow and space is 60-70 yards wide x 80-90 yards long. Coach can create a penalty box with cones on the opposite end. (Use a 2-4-2 to formation)

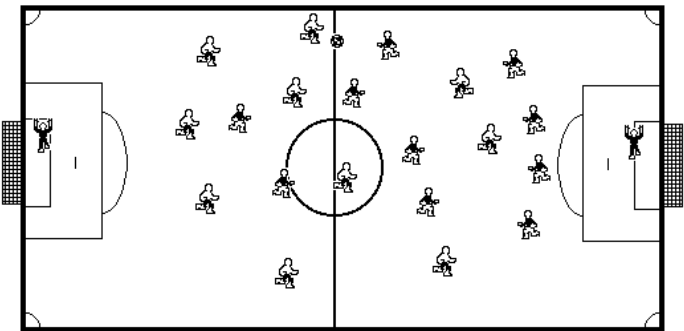


Coaching Points:

- Reinforce coaching points made throughout session.

3) 11v11 scrimmage (30-45 minutes):

Depending upon numbers, space will change. Ideally, finish with the number you normally play with in games. Play a regular game with goalkeepers.



Coaching Points:

- Reinforce coaching points made throughout session.

4) Cool-down (10 minutes):

Juggling and finishing cool-down with static stretching of major muscle groups.