

Youth Level Diploma Course

The Youth Diploma Course offers a training methodology for the 4v4, 7v7 and 9v9 game, ages U6 – U12. However, for the U6 and younger age groups, we recommend incorporating multiple 2v2 and 1v1 games. Young children understand the relationship between themselves and the ball, but it is often difficult for them to understand the role of teammates, at such young ages.

The goal of the youth diploma course, is to provide a flexible methodology that teaches the physical, technical, tactical and cognitive areas of player development. The most important thing to grasp, are the overall ideas that are presented in the course. Once a coach understands the foundations of player development, they can then use those ideas, to fit their own unique settings. The reality is that every community, club and culture is different, what works with one group, may not work with another. The coach must find a way to teach the game successfully within each unique setting, this is often what makes top coaches so valuable, they are able to assess and develop players no matter the level or situation. It is my hope that the information

in the course, will give you the tools to become a better coach.

Around the world, each country and federation has slightly different ideas on player development.

However, there are some general ideas that we firmly believe every coach should implement. First is the acknowledgment of the value of small-sided games.

Decisions on the Ball in a 4v4 Compared to 8v8

This study by Manchester United, emphasizes the importance of small-sided games. The number of passes, scoring, scoring attempts and 1v1's increased dramatically.

The Manchester United 4 v 4 pilot scheme showed that in comparison to an 8v8 game:

- Players made 135% more passes
- 260% more scoring attempts
- Scored 500% more goals.
- The number of 1 v 1 encounters between attackers and defenders increased by 225%
- The number of 1v1 skills demonstrated by learners increased by 280%.

Source: Fanoglio, R. (2003)



Belgium Federation Model

- U4-U5 – 1v1 Duel
- U6 2v2 (the duel)
- U8 5v5 + Keeper - diamond – short range passing
- U12-U13 8v8+keeper – double diamond middle range passing
- U14 11v11 4-3-3 long range passing
- Ages 5-7 exploration phase
- 7-17 individual development
- 17+ competition stage with winning
- Street soccer, reality based learning, fun soccer to formations

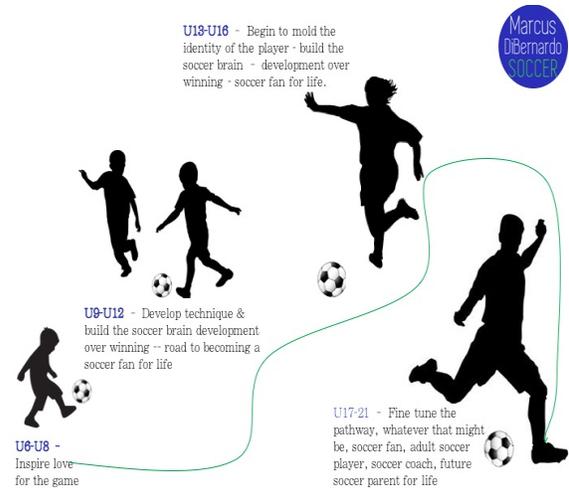
Notice Belgium starts out with the smallest possible training numbers, with 1v1 duels.



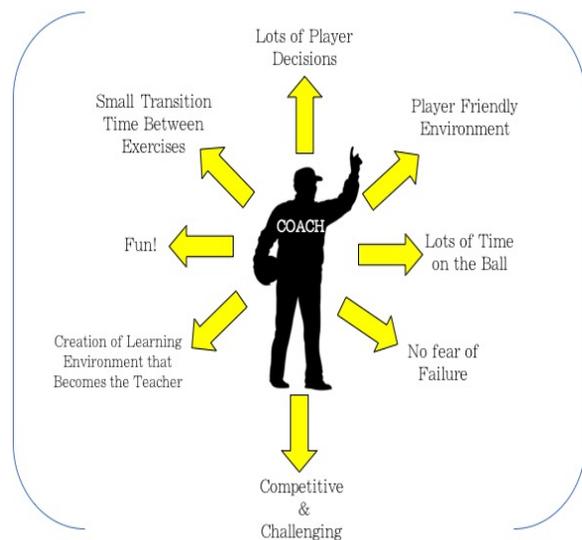
United States Soccer Federation

- U6-U8 - 4v4 no keeper - 1 goal per/team
- U9-U10 - 7v7 (keeper) - build-out line
- U11-U12 - 9v9 (keeper)
- Fun is #1 priority below 12
- Faster decisions, comfort with ball, technical development

The USSF has re-structured their entire system around small-sided games.



For the normal player who is not going to turn pro, this would be the pathway. If this was a pro pathway, the U17 – U21 period, would be critical for turning pro.



Youth coaches should keep in mind the following points from the above picture. When you evaluate your training session, these are some of the main factors to look at.

The Four Phases of the Game

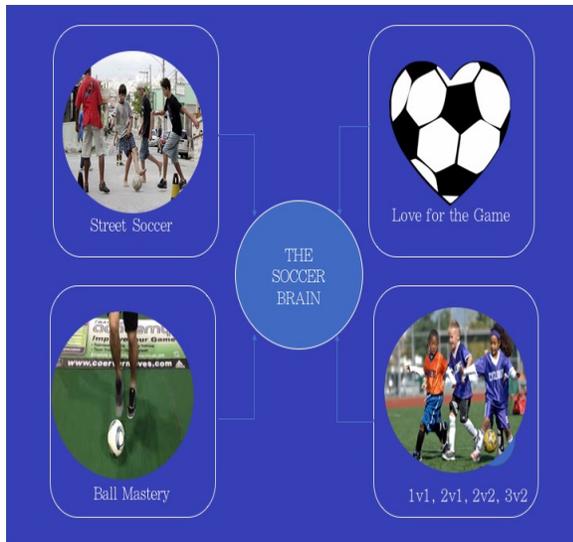


When teaching the game, it is useful to breakdown the game into the following four areas or phases.

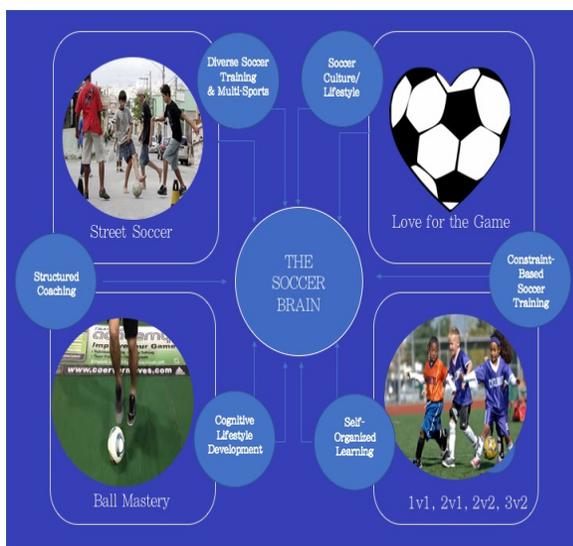
The above chart outlines the four major phases in a game, all four phases makeup what is called, the game cycle. Keep in mind that Soccer is a free flowing sport, so all four phases or moments of the game, are flowing and interchanging constantly.

Coaches can work on one part, two parts or all four parts in a training session, the idea is to teach the players what their individual and collective responsibilities are, in each phase of the game. In this course I give you a standard formation for attacking and defending for the 4v4, 7v7 and 9v9 game, but these formations are simply to provide the team structure. The formation will constantly being changing, you can call it a "transition", this is

most prevalent when the team loses the ball or wins the ball. The transitions cause the formations to change shape. Players must understand their responsibilities in transition, and the team must understand the collective objectives. Example, when possession is lost, the player or players closest to the ball must press immediately to win it back, the next line of players must cut out passing angles, and the last line of players must guard against the long ball over the top. When all these things are happening, the team shape will not be recognizable, compared to the team shape when they are in possession. Even when in possession of the ball, the team must make sure they still have defensive balance (not too many players committed to the attack) in case they lose the ball, this will influence the actual formation shape. The hard part in youth soccer is, that possession is often lost quickly, this means the team shape is all over all the place. It can take 15 – 20 passes to bring a team into full attacking shape in the opponents half, this most likely will happen in the older age groups. At the youth levels, we are looking for basic team shape and a knowledge of what to do in transition. The Senior Diploma Course will go into much more detail concerning the four phases of the game, and team shape.



Youth development can't possibly be maximized, with a couple structured practices per/week. The player must actively take part in their own development outside of formal training, developing a real love for the game. The above picture illustrates four major aspects of player development.



In today's world, access to information is free, players can emulate soccer superstars, who can be

found on Youtube, Instagram and many other platforms for free. This access to information can be utilized as a major part of the player development process. Take the example of the Kenyan Javelin Thrower Julius Yego. He is a very special athlete that became a World Champion, by asking the "Big Questions", while seeking out the very best answers by himself. Below are few sentences describing Yego's incredible accomplishments.

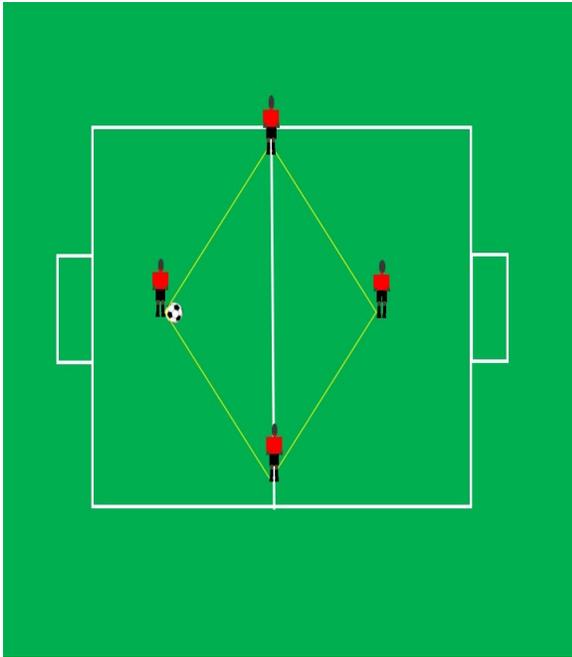
"I do not have a coach, my motivation comes from within. Training without a coach is not an easy thing... I watched YouTube and it really paid off for me, to see the training techniques and skills they are using." Yego studied an expert javelin thrower named Andreas Thorkildsen who threw in the 2004 and 2008 Olympics. Yego watched videos of Thorkildsen throwing, jotting down notes on his technique and training. "There were no coaches to guide me. I was just alone in the field, training. My father wanted me to give up javelin. Everybody here in Kenya is a runner. I took that as a challenge to find another way to succeed. I started watching videos... I could see that training like these people could improve me."

Yego's example is with the Javelin but this can easily be a soccer example. Young soccer player's today are just a few clicks away from an incredible amount of content that they can actively learn from. I wish I had the opportunity when I was growing up to click on Youtube and watch the best soccer players in the world. However, today is a different time, this is the "information age", and the people that excel will be the people who work hard, ask the "Big Questions" and find the answers!

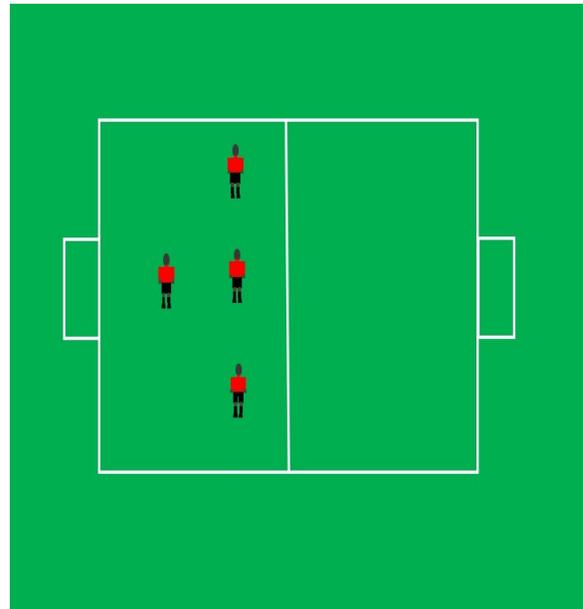
4v4 Training Model

U6 – U8

Basic Formation Shape



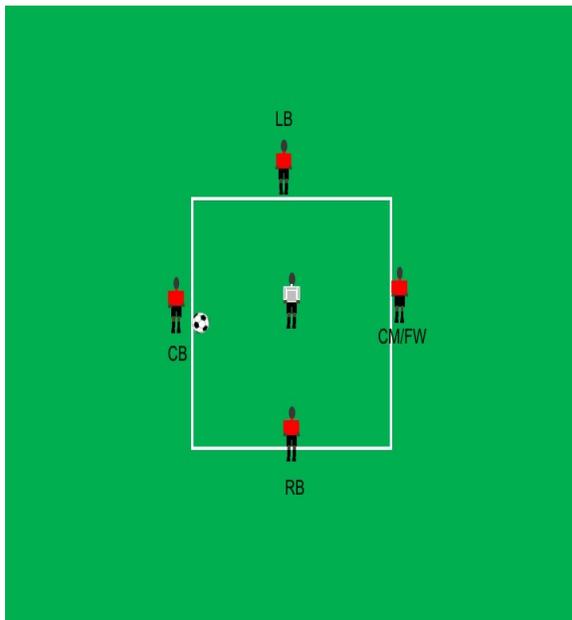
The 4v4 game with no goalkeepers, played to small goals, is the standard game for this age group. The shape when in possession of the ball is a diamond, but the shape can change with movement, and will also change when possession is lost. No goal keeper, small goals, and no throw-ins for the 4v4 game.



The defensive shape can vary, but the above example is a simple compact defensive shape for the 4v4 game.

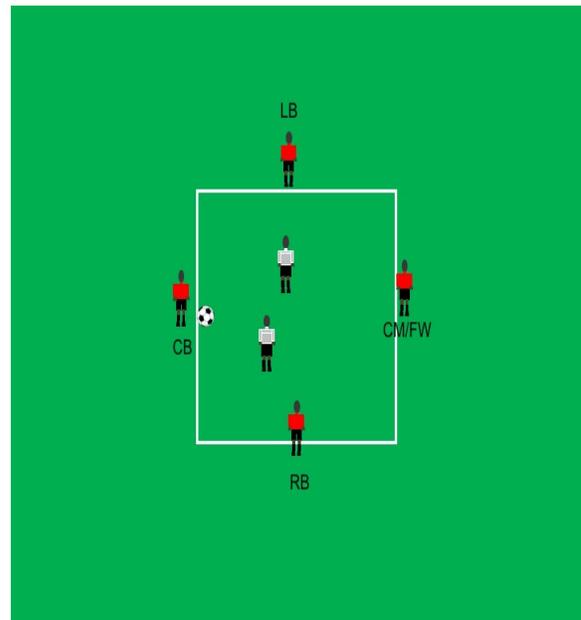
Rondo Training

One of the best player development exercises for all ages and game models, is called “Rondo”. Rondo is a simple possession game, that can be position specific, moving or stationary, it contains almost all parts of a real soccer game. The below examples, show rondo exercises, that are specific to the 4v4 game.



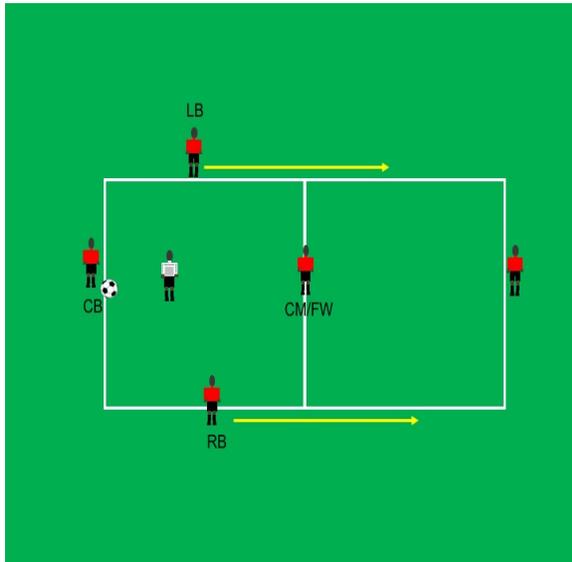
Notice the positioning of the four players, the shape is a position specific diamond, players don't stand in the corners. The players are labeled center back, right back, left back and center midfield/striker. The goal is to keep the ball, not letting the defender win the ball. Players can move a couple feet in each direction, in order to create good passing angles,

players are also encouraged to use efficient body position when receiving the ball (opening the hips), they must be conscious of playing to the back foot of teammates, which affords them more options, and more forward passing options on the ball. As players become better, a number of progressions can be added, 1-touch rondo, moving to a new grid after 4 passes, adding additional defenders or simply reduce the grid size.

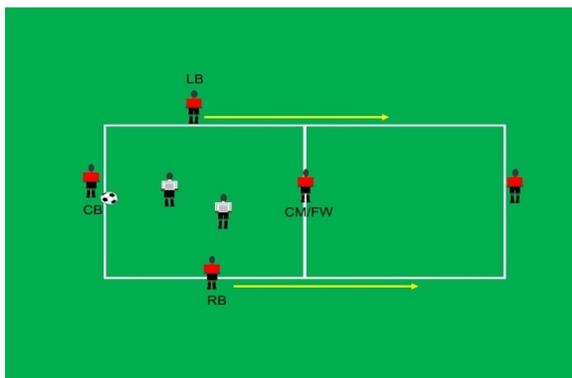


The next progression from 4v1 rondo is 4v2. Now the ultimate objective of the rondo is to split the two defenders, with a forward pass. In soccer, goals are scored by forward passing and shooting, rondo with multiple defenders teaches this aspect of the game. Square passes are fine to draw defenders and shift the defenders, but the splitting forward pass is the

goal. Notice the exercise is still position specific for the 4v4 game model.

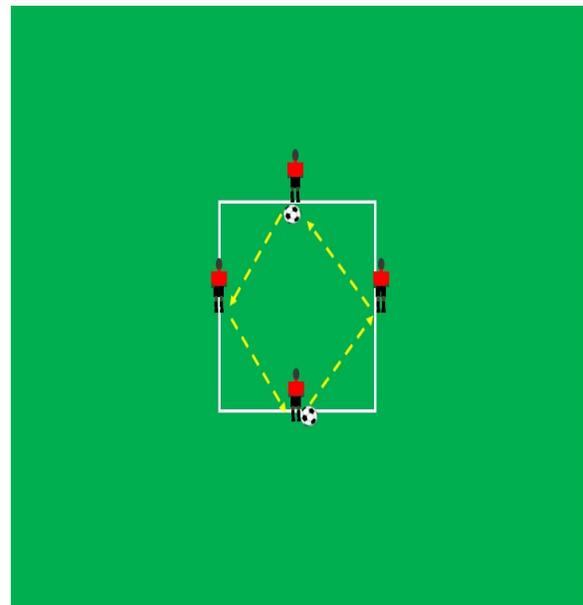


Increasing the difficulty of the rondo, this 4v1 rondo is called a moving rondo. After a set amount of passes the ball can be played to the furthest player in the far grid, the center player around turns to join, as the two side players run to the new grid, the defender chases the ball into the new grid. Moving rondos can be added to training, only after stationary rondos can be completed with consistency.

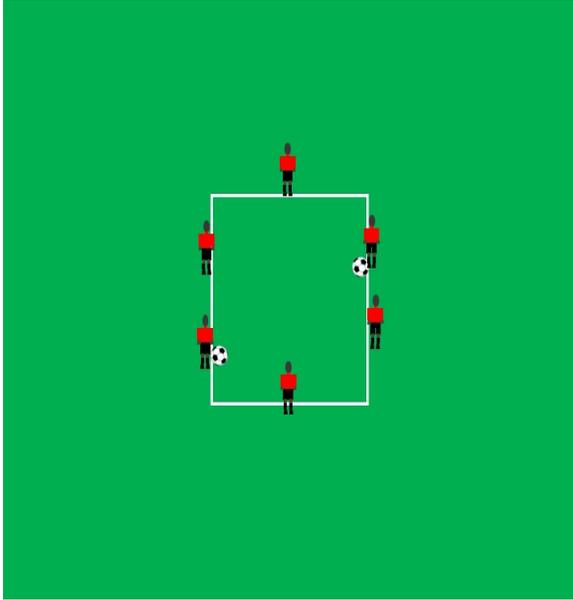


The progression is 4v2 sliding rondo.

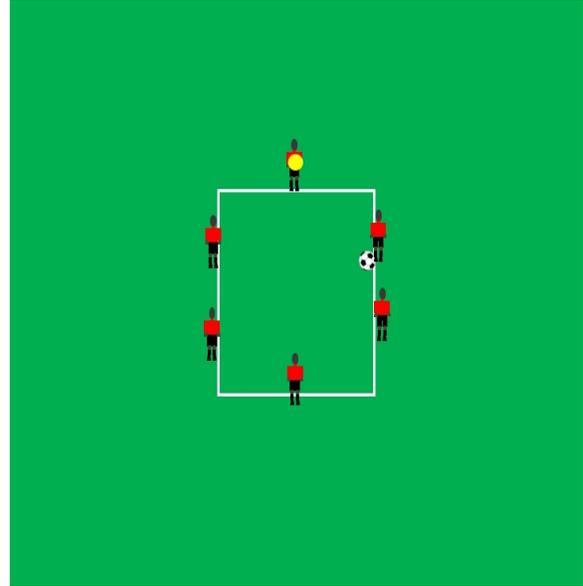
If your players are having a lot of difficulty playing the basic 4v1 rondo, try a couple of the below simple exercises to get them to the point, where they can do a 4v1 rondo.



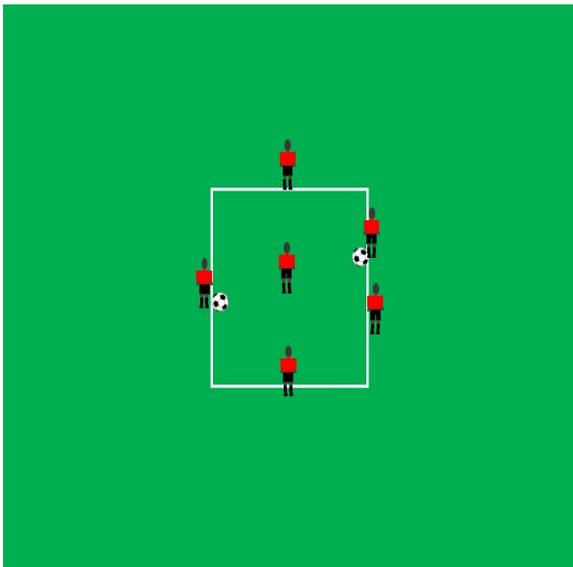
This is the rondo set-up but without a defender and using 2 balls. Both players pass at the same exact time, to the back foot of the next player, the receiving player receives on the back foot, then plays the ball forward with the inside of the other foot. It is critical that the players receive with the back foot. and pass with the inside of the other foot, without using any wasted steps in-between.



This lead up exercise to rondo, is to encourage 1-touch and 2-touch passing. Insist on eye contact with person you are passing to. Progress to 1-touch passing using the 2 balls. This exercise also builds cognitive attention span and concentration.



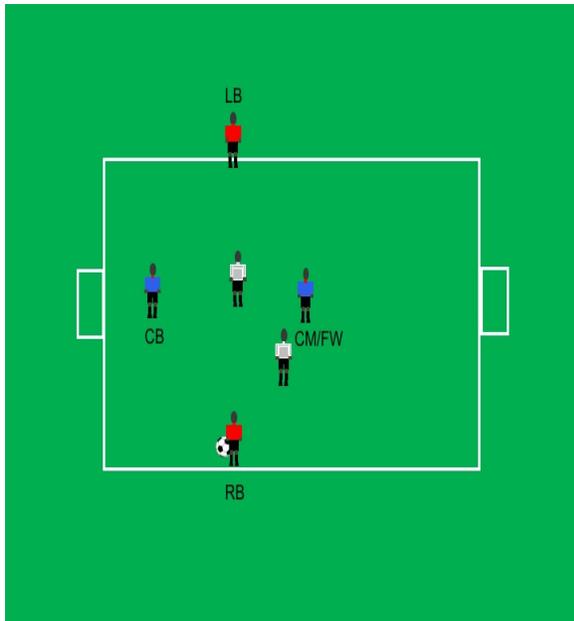
This special rondo lead-up game uses a ball in the hands (yellow ball), that is tossed under-hand from player to player, as the soccer ball is passed 1 or 2-touch on the ground. This exercise demands concentration.



The progression to the last exercise is adding a floating player in the middle that can be passed to.

Conditioned Game Exercises

Conditioned games offer ever changing environments for players to experience, they are vital in the process of player development.



This conditioned game is now played to goal. Notice how similar the game looks to 4v2 rondo, there is a direct correlation between the two exercises, and a logical progression. In the exercise, the red team is always on the outside, the blue team starts with the red in possession, they try to score on the far end, as the grey team defends (position specific to 4v4). If possession is lost the blue team become the defending team, as grey play with red in possession, attempting to score on the blue teams goal. Notice that because the red team is restricted to the