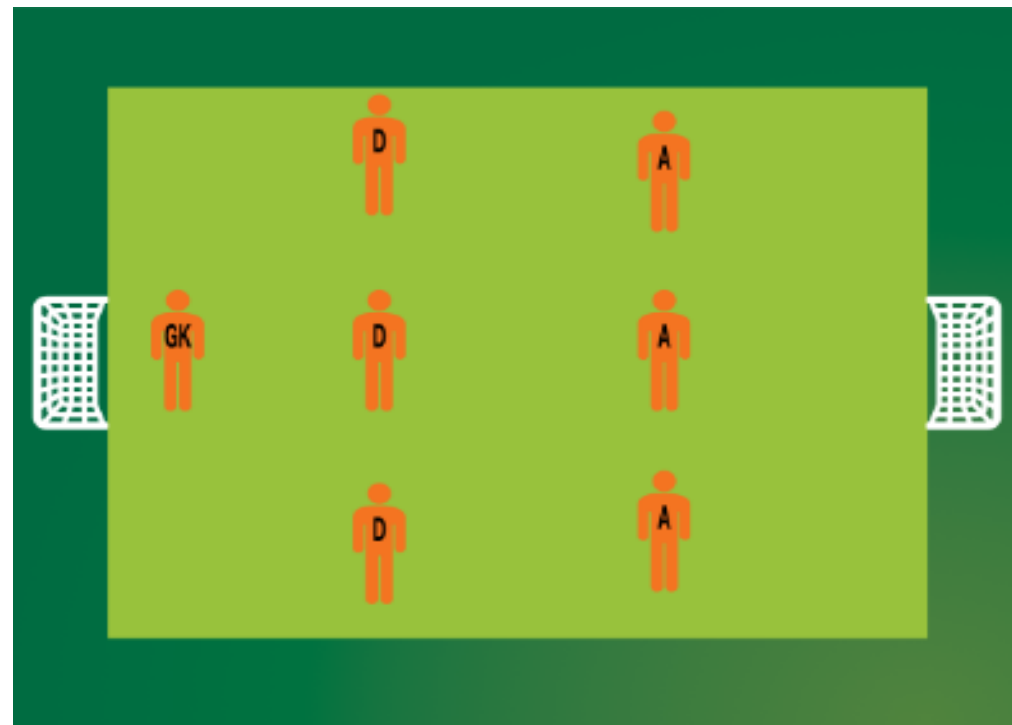




# Preferred Formations

# Preferred Formations

U8s & U9s – 7 a side



# Preferred Formations

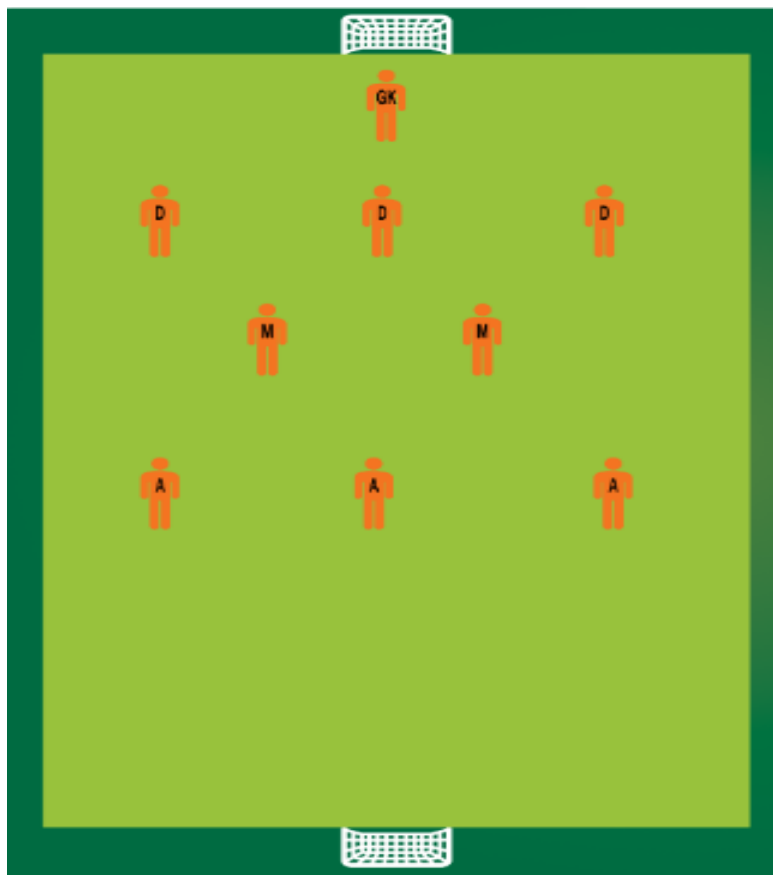
## U8s & U9s – 7 a side



- The players now begin to understand what the game's purpose is (winning by scoring more goals than the opponent).
- There will still be a lot of individual play but the players start to understand that they have to work together in order to be successful.
- A basic 'feeling' for team play, direction and dealing with an opponent starts to develop.
- Preference and talent for a specific position starts to show: you can start working on a basic organisation (1 in goal; 3 at the back; 3 up front) and a basic understanding of some team tasks (how to defend and attack as a team).
- The coach should still let every player play in every position regularly. One week they want to be goalie, next time the centre forward. Let them!
- Bigger goals with goalkeepers automatically appeal to aiming and shooting: give them all plenty of opportunities to shoot (or be the goalkeeper).
- In 7 v 7 football, the coach should still not be too concerned with 'tactics'. The focus in training is on the individual player, so in the weekend game the players should have the opportunity to apply their skills in a game setting. The coach organises the players into two lines of three with a Goalkeeper behind. The players just need simple tasks so they do not become confused or overwhelmed with information (Examples: 'You three try to defend more than you attack' 'You three try to attack more than you defend' 'Let's see if we can always have one of our players pushed right up in the middle of the pitch' 'when the opponent has the ball, can we get one of our team near every one of their players on the goal side', etc.)
- At half time, the coach should rotate players around to experience different aspects of the game (e.g. the three defenders become the three attackers)
- Aim for equal playing time.

# Preferred Formations

U10s to U12s – 9 a side



# Preferred Formations

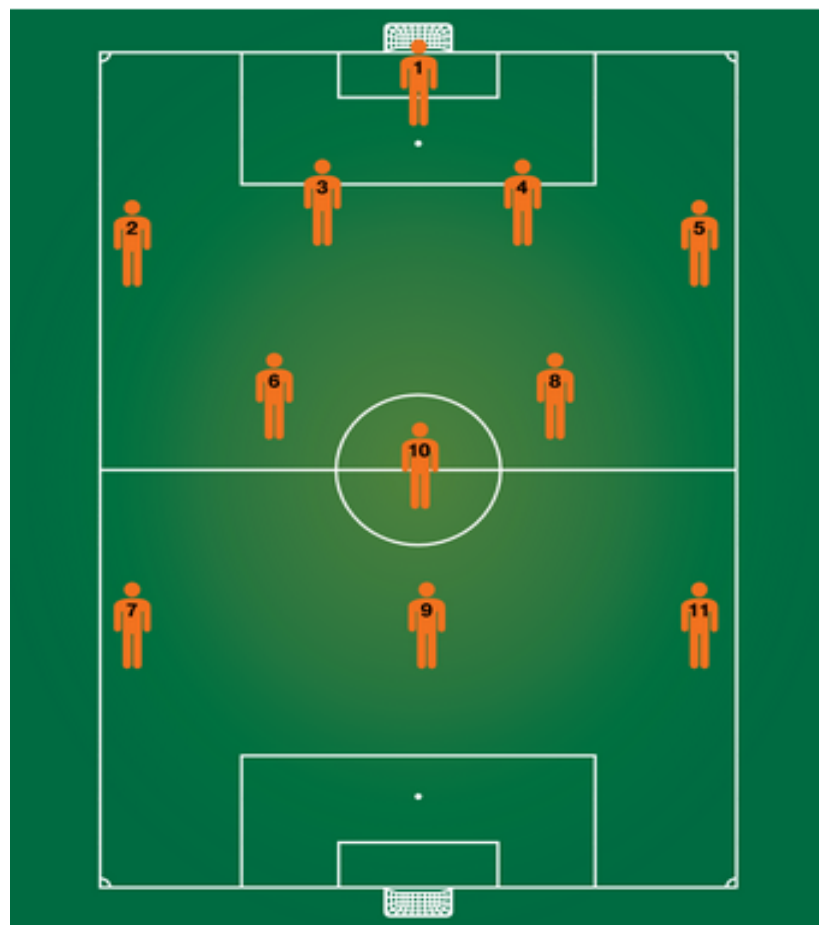
U10s to U12s – 9 a side



- The understanding of working together as a team develops more and more.
- The awareness of the individual roles in relation to teamwork is also developing as well as the understanding for acting without the ball both in defence and attack.
- With 8 outfield players a tighter and more strict task allocation and use of space is required.
- Preference / ability for specific positions becomes more and more clear.
- At this age the kids are very competitive and clever and very quickly develop their motor skills.
- All the above means that the coach can raise the bar on all these aspects but:
  - Avoid an information 'overkill'.
  - Keep it simple (speak their language).
  - It's their game, it's not about the coach.
- In 9 v 9, the coach organises the players into three lines with a goalkeeper behind, preferably in a 1-3-2-3 formation as a guide for team shape.
- The coach is still not too concerned with tactics or obsessed with results.
- The players still just need simple tasks on match day.
- The players should still be regularly rotated, either at half-time or from game to game.
- Avoid playing the best players in central positions, and 'hiding' the weaker players out wide.
- Aim for equal playing time.

# Preferred Formations

U13s & up – 11 a side



# Preferred Formations

U13s & up – 11 a side



## **Goalkeeper #1**

The goalkeeper is of course a special position in any playing system or formation. First and foremost it's the goalkeeper's task to keep the opponent from scoring in any possible way within the rules of the game. Some goalkeepers do that by making spectacular saves, others are great at organizing their defence and anticipating situations. Top keepers possess all these qualities as well as the physical and mental characteristics required.

A condition for our preferred playing style is that goalkeepers must be able to play with their feet as a prerequisite for possession-based football and the goalkeeper is an indispensable link for that.

As a consequence of defending high up the park, there will regularly be a big space behind our defence. This requires a goalkeeper to be able to play as a 'sweeper' which is another characteristic specific to the playing style.

## **Full-backs #2 & #5**

Full-backs in modern high-level football must be very versatile.

Defensively sometimes they have a direct opponent (winger) which requires strong defensive 1 v 1 skills. Sometimes they have no direct opponent so they have to defend 'positionally' which requires awareness and tactical insight. The role of modern full-backs in playing out and especially in attacking wing play has become vitally important.

When playing out, it's often the full-backs that can receive the ball from the goalkeeper because they do not have a direct opponent and are therefore unmarked.

In attack, more often than not it's the overlapping full-backs that provide the decisive crosses and assists. Especially in possession of the ball it's favourable if #2 is right footed and #5 is left footed.

# Preferred Formations

U13s & up – 11 a side



## **Centre-backs #3 & #4**

Just like the full-backs, modern centre-backs also need to be more versatile than before.

Of course a centre-back still needs to be defensively strong and good in the air. But today's centre-backs also need to be tactically aware and know what to do when the opponent plays with one striker or with two, when to close down and mark an opponent and when to drop off and give cover.

In ball possession, a good cross-field pass to the wingers is still an important asset for any centre-back. But modern centre-backs should also be able to move into the midfield with the ball at their feet and create a numerical advantage. It's also important for a centre-back to have leadership skills and to coach and organise the team. Centre-backs usually have all the other outfield players in front of them which gives them an ideal view of the game.

Playing out is much easier if #3 is right-footed and #4 left-footed.

## **Midfielders #6 & #8**

The right (#6) and left (#8) midfielders are the 'engine room' of the team.

Their task is to stay centrally and support the back four during BPO as well as feed and support the attack in BP.

It's important they can 'read' the game (meaning they are tactically aware) and have a good passing range.

Defensively they must assist the defence by creating a block with the centre-backs and screen the passing lines to the opponent's central striker(s).

In BP they must be the link players that receive the ball from the defenders and deliver it to the attackers without turning it over unnecessarily.

One of the two should always join in to support the attack while the other one stays behind the ball to keep the defensive balance. If #6 is right footed and #8 left footed it's easier to quickly change the point of attack which increases the chance of successful attacking play.



# Preferred Formations

U13s & up – 11 a side



## **Attacking Midfielder #10**

In the 1-4-3-3 formation the role of the #10 is of vital importance for successful attacking play.

The #10 must be a versatile, creative player that can combine, dribble and take on opponents.

A good #10 recognises the right moments to play a killer pass and has the ability to score goals.

The #10 tries to get on the ball in the space between the opponent's back four and midfield ('playing between the lines').

Although the attacking contribution of #10 is vitally important, it's a midfield position (not a 2nd striker).

Defensively the attacking midfielder should therefore connect with #6 and #8 to form a compact unit that presses the opponent in the central midfield area.

## **Wingers #7 & #11**

The task of the right winger (#7) and left winger (#11) is to stretch the opponent's defence and, together with the full-backs, create openings in the wide areas. Although wingers can (should) also cut inside, it's important to do this at the right moment which means not too early and not all the time.

Their starting position should always be high and wide.

A moment when they should always come inside is when a cross is delivered into the penalty area from the opposite wing.

Wingers must have good attacking 1 v 1 skills, be able to run with the ball at speed and to deliver good crosses. Creative combination skills as well as goalscoring abilities are also important attributes.

Defensively the wingers play an important role in pressuring the opponent's back four and, together with the full-back, protect and defend their designated wing.

# Preferred Formations

U13s & up – 11 a side



## **Central Striker #9**

Traditionally the central striker or centre forward is the 'target man' that plays as high as possible. This is still the most common interpretation although there are also variations.

Of course the primary task of the central striker is to score goals. That means #9 must have a good shot with both feet and be a good header of the ball.

The #9 must also have a keen spatial awareness and excellent timing. Other important skills are creative combination play, the ability to keep the ball under pressure from an opponent and the ability to take on defenders.

Defending in modern football starts with the attackers. The central striker in particular has an important role in determining when and where to start pressuring the opponent's back four.