

Dear Coaches,

Systems of play for the 8 v 8 games are smaller versions of the 11 v 11 game. In the 11 v 11 game, you will see systems of play ranging from the conservative (4-4-2) to the radical (3-5-2) and any where in between. The numbering system represents the number of players in playing positions. For an example, a 4-4-2 system would have four defenders, four mid-fielders, and two attackers. You read the numbers from left to right. The goal keeper is always assumed. Systems of play are: 4-4-2, 4-3-3, 3-4-3, 5-3-2, 3-5-2, and any combinations of them.

For the 8 v 8 game, you can see the following systems of play: 3-3-1, 3-2-2, 2-3-2, 2-4-1, or a 4-2-1. Selecting a system of play depends mostly upon the skills and the characteristic of your players. Regardless of the system of play you select you want your team to attack and defend as a “unit”.

The objective of the team moving up and down the field as a “unit” is to prevent “gaps” in between the playing positions; this includes the goal keeper. So, imagine a rope that connects the forward to the mid-fielder, to the defender and to the goal keeper. As the forward moves toward the opponent’s goal the whole team moves forward as a unit. The forward pulls the mid-fielders that pull the defender and goal keeper. The same is true when defending. The defender or goal keeper begins to drop back pulling the mid-fielders thus pulling the forward back. NO gaps between the playing positions.

In the first example, the defenders should be close to the $\frac{1}{2}$ line and the goal keeper should be at the top of your penalty box or at the top of the “D” covering the back of the defenders, again no “gaps”. For this, the goal keeper becomes a field player and we all know a goal keeper must be a field player first before being a goal keeper.

Have you seen in your game when your forward has in the ball in the opponent’s penalty area and the mid-fielders are standing at the $\frac{1}{2}$ line? A big “gap” has developed behind the forward. Or your mid-fielders move up to support the forward that is in or near the opponent’s penalty area and you see your defenders are standing on top of your penalty area and the goal keeper is a yard off the goal line. Again, a big “gap” exists behind the mid-fielders.

When “gaps” exist, this is an area for your opponent to use and exploit. Also when “gaps” exist you will see players standing waiting for the game to come to them, thus they are not involved with play.

Ask yourself, where would you like to win the ball back, at or near the $\frac{1}{2}$ line or in or near your penalty area?

So, attack and defend as a “unit” and everyone will be involved with play and will have fun.

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