

# Game Training Phase

## Model Sessions

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Similar to the sessions of the Skill Acquisition Phase, the sessions of the Game Training Phase are also 'themes based'. During the Skill Acquisition Phase the 'theme' of a session focuses on one of the four 'Core Skills' (first touch; running with the ball; 1 v 1; striking the ball)

In the Game Training Phase the 'theme' of a session focuses on one of the 'Main Moments' and the Team Tasks (as well as the individual player tasks) within that 'Main Moment'.

To arrange the Game Training Phase Model Sessions more practically, we have subdivided the Main Moments into 'trainable' themes.

### These themes are:

#### 1. In possession of the ball (BP):

- Playing out from the back
- Midfield play
- Attacking

#### 2. When the opponent is in possession of the ball (BPO):

- Disturbing/pressuring
- Defending/recapturing the ball

#### 3. Transitioning (BP>BPO and BPO>BP)

- Team and player actions when we lose the ball
- Team and player actions when we win the ball

Since Game Training Phase sessions should strive for game realistic scenarios, the practices must include game specific resistances such as opponents, team-mates, direction, rules and appropriate dimensions. As a consequence, in Game Training Phase sessions often all three Main Moments take place continuously, but the focus is on one of them.

Game Training Phase sessions consist of 4 components:

#### 1. Warm Up:

Starting points for the Warm Up are:

- Preferably with ball (e.g. passing practices);
- If possible 'theme related' including a level of decision-making; Avoid warm-ups that are more like conditioning sessions!

#### 2. Positioning games:

The main conditions for quality positioning play are:

- Maximal use of space in order to create more time on the ball (stretching the opponent)
- Triangles (no players in straight lines)
- Support play to create options for the player on the ball
- Anticipation and communication (verbal and non-verbal).

These basic principles form the foundation for proactive possession based football and this explains the importance of the positioning games in training practices.

Through positioning games young players:

- Learn to always create at least 3 options for the player on the ball (through proper positioning)
- Improve their decision-making (by learning to choose the right option)
- Increase their handling speed (less space and time forces quicker thinking and acting)
- Improve their technique (passing and first touch are essential technical skills)
- Learn to communicate both verbally (e.g. calling for the ball) and non-verbally (e.g. through ball speed and ball direction).

**This is the reason why positioning games are on the menu of every Game Training Phase and Performance Phase session.**

#### 3. The Game Training Component:

This is the part of the session where conscious teaching and learning of the designated Team Task takes place. For a proper Game Training practice the coach must therefore:

- Create the proper scenario (organize the practice in such a way that the focus is on the designated Team Task);
- Organize the practice in the right area of the field (where this particular situation takes place during the real game) and with the appropriate dimensions
- Create the proper level of resistance (too easy = no development; too difficult = no success)
- Make effective interventions and provide quality (specific) feedback
- Ask smart questions to develop player understanding and enhance learning

#### 4. Training Game:

This is the traditional game at the end of a session. In our approach however it should not just be a 'free' game. The definition of a Training Game in the context of a Game Training Phase session is:

A game at the end of the session that contains all the elements of the real game but with rules and restraints that see to it that the designated Team Task is emphasised.

During a Training Game the players are playing and the coach is observing if learning has taken place (little or no stop-start coaching but preferably coaching 'on the run').

#### **Clearly, quality coaching is not as easy as it may look!**

As explained earlier, the coach must be mindful of the Growth Spurt. Players going through this stage of maturation will have varying energy levels and are injury-prone. Proper managing of training loads to avoid over-training is essential.

Therefore we consider 3 sessions of 75-90 minutes and one game a maximum safe weekly work load, with the following session planning guidelines:

- Welcome/explanation: 5 minutes
- Warm Up: 15-20 minutes
- Positioning Games: 20 minutes
- Game Training component: 25-30 minutes
- Training Game: 20-25 minutes
- Warm Down/wrap up 5-10 minutes

# Game Training Phase

On the next pages you will find 12 Game Training Phase Model Sessions and two examples of how you can implement the sessions in 6-week cycles.

The 6-week cycles are based on the assumption that the weekly training sessions are on Tuesdays and Thursdays with the weekly game on Saturday.

Game Training Phase CYCLE 1	Tuesday	Thursday	Saturday
WEEK 1	Playing out from the back <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Midfield play <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 2	Attacking <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Disturbing/pressuring <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 3	Defending/recapturing <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Transitioning <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 4	Playing out from the back <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	Midfield play <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 5	Attacking <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	Disturbing/pressuring <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 6	Defending/recapturing <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	Transitioning <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>

In this cycle the ‘**trainable themes**’ appear in a sequential order.

As a consequence, more time is allocated to the main moment Ball Possession (3 consecutive sessions) compared to Ball Possession Opponent (2 consecutive sessions) and Transitioning (1 session).

The same sequence is continued in the next cycle with Model Sessions 3. When the coach has exhausted the 12 Model Sessions then repeat them using the ‘step up’ options outlined in the Model Sessions (**but only if the players are ready!**)



Here is another option:

Game Training Phase CYCLE 1	Tuesday	Thursday	Saturday
WEEK 1 (BP)	Playing out from the back <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Midfield play <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 2 (BPO)	Disturbing/pressuring <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Defending/recapturing <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 3 (TR)	Transitioning (BP > BPO) <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Transitioning (BPO > BP) <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 4 (BP)	Attacking <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Playing out from the back <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 5 (BPO)	Disturbing/pressuring <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	Defending/recapturing <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>
WEEK 6 (TR)	Transitioning (BP > BPO) <b>MODEL SESSION 1</b>	Transitioning (BPO > BP) <b>MODEL SESSION 2</b>	<b>GAME</b>

In this example, every week the focus is on one **Main Moment**. In week one the focus is on Ball Possession, in week two on Ball Possession Opponent and week three on Transitioning.

Creative coaches who understand the methodology will be able to design 6-week cycles and a season plan that suits their team best. Maybe your team has to improve in possession of the ball and are already sufficiently proficient defensively and in transition. You could then choose to spend a whole 6-week cycle focused on Ball Possession.

When you have 3 sessions per week, our advice is to limit the duration of the sessions to 75 minutes and rest the players the day before as well as the day after the game. If the game is on Saturday this would mean training on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

4 sessions per week would only be acceptable in a first class environment, such as a National Training Centre program, where there is a full-time, professional coach and qualified support staff. Player welfare is paramount.

In the wrong setting, 4 sessions per week could be harmful.

The best advice for a coach in this age-group would be to attend the **FFA Youth C Licence course**. This will provide you with more ideas and insight on session, cycle and season planning and developing your team.