

6v6 Team Shape Considerations

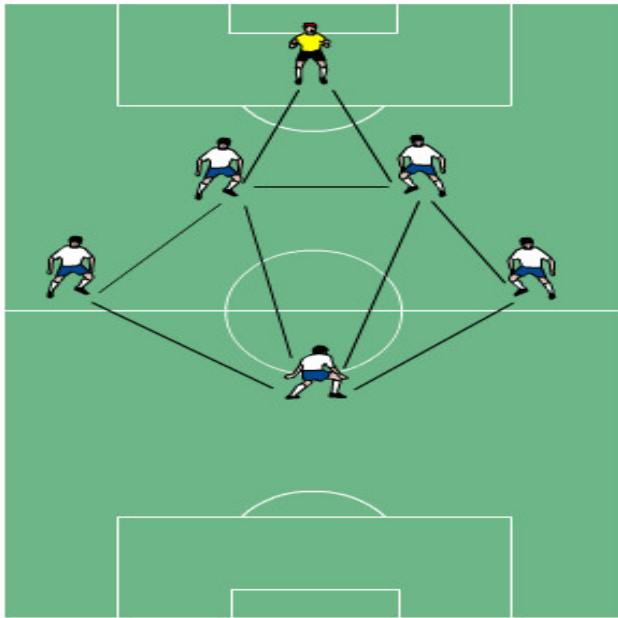
*This is an article to provide coaches a few options to consider. It is **NOT** intended to be a training session for young players.*

The transition from the 4v4 game with no goalies to the 6v6 game can be a bit overwhelming for players and coaches. It is the first time the goalkeeper is introduced as a member of the team and throw-ins and goal kicks are introduced to the game. All of these new facets of the game can make for a difficult transition for everyone involved. Although the technical development of the players **MUST** remain the priority of all coaches, it is helpful to understand various ways you can align your team. Please note these formations are something a coach should be aware of, but not spend a great deal of time focusing on. Please encourage players to cover spaces and not remain in a certain position!

Remember to **rotate all players so they experience playing in different areas of the field!**

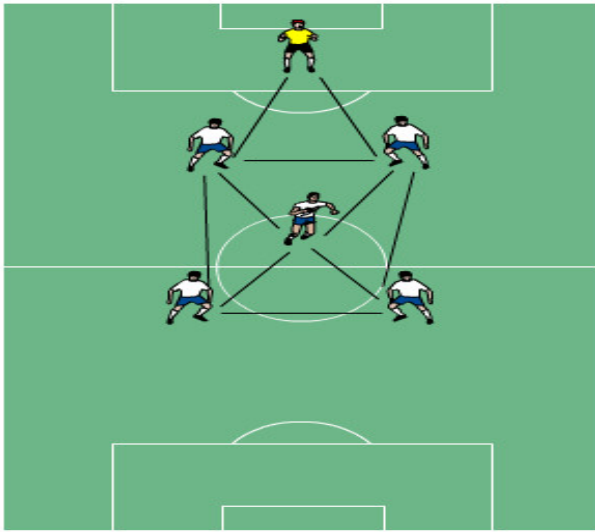
Here are a few options to choose from and reasons why you might select to align your team in this fashion. I have inserted triangles to show how players should remain connected to one another. This includes the goalkeeper:

Option 1: K-2-2-1 (back to front)



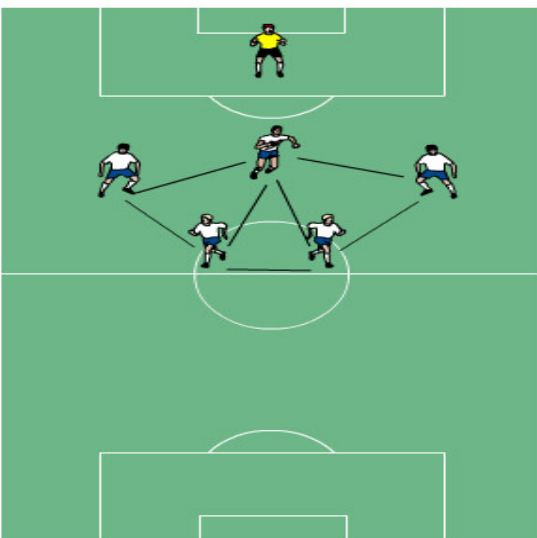
This formation will allow you to maximize the width of the field, while still having a strong amount of cover at the back (notice the keeper should not be planted on his goal line). One area you'll be conceding in this system will be the central midfield. This might not be the best option at the youngest age groups. The single player up top can become isolated from his/her teammates and the team may struggle to create goal scoring opportunities.

Option 2: K-2-1-2



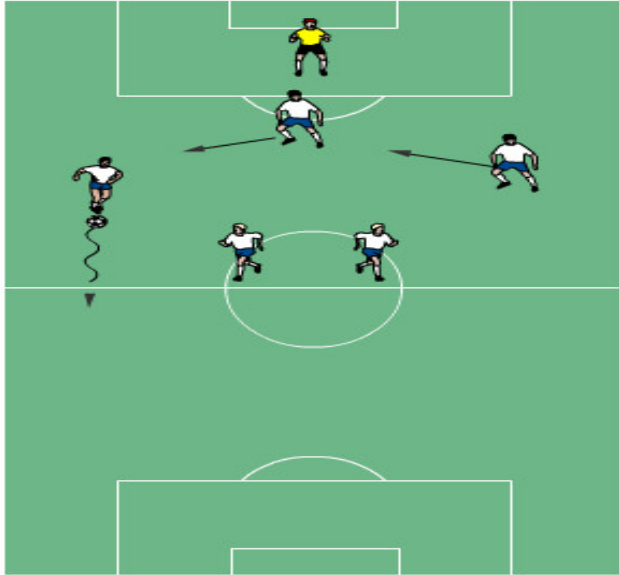
If you choose to align your team in this fashion you'll be in a good position to control the middle of the field, while conceding the space out wide. Defensively this is a better option for young players. They learn to remain compact and not get beat down the middle of the field. If they move as a group they'll be able to limit the space for the opposition to attack through. However, it is difficult for players to learn to "widen out" and create space once they regain possession. This can be a good option to select if you are playing against a stronger opponent. You will also have closer support when one of the players up front receives the ball.

Option 3: K-3-2



Let's examine this formation a bit closer!

This (K-3-2) would be my preferred playing style. You have excellent cover at the back while having good numbers to control the middle of the field. One of the keys components, if you choose to align your team in this fashion, is that you encourage the flank players at the back to “attack the space” in front of them. (Pictured Below).



“Building out of the back” (pictured above): Notice how when the right wing player attacks the space with the dribble that the two other players at the back slide over to protect the space at the back. One of the reasons I prefer having the additional player begin at the back is that young players are generally more comfortable when they can see the field in front of them. If you start players higher (K-2-3) up the field, the front players will spend a lot of the game facing their own goal.



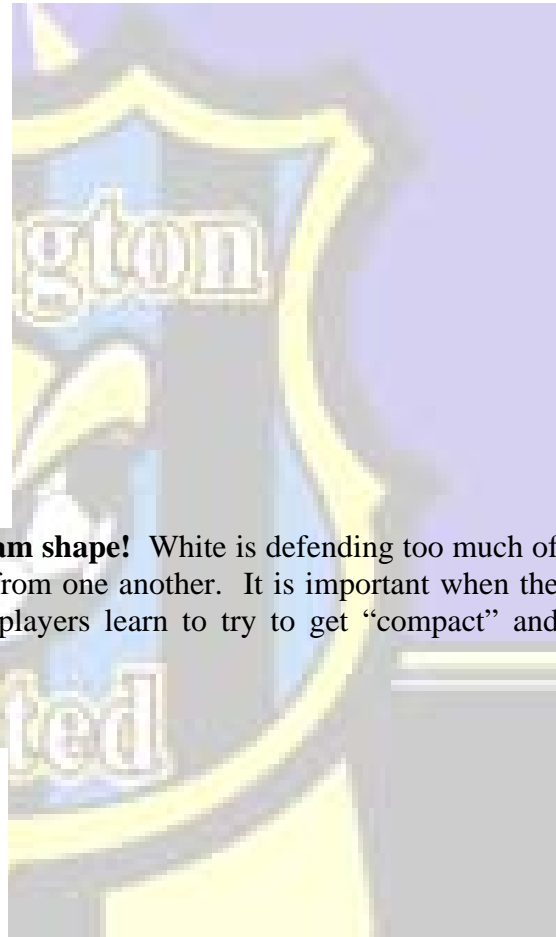
Midfield or beyond (pictured above): When the team is in the opposing half of the field it is okay for the central defender to step into the attack if he is under no pressure, but the other players at the back should recognize this and “pinch in”. Please observe how the goalkeeper does not remain on the goal line, but instead moves toward the top of the penalty box to remain closer to his/her teammates.

Opposition in possession (below):



In this picture you see an example of **poor team shape!** White is defending too much of the field and the players are “disconnected” from one another. It is important when the opposition is in possession of the ball that players learn to try to get “compact” and defend as a group.

Proper Team Shape (Below):



(Pictured above) Notice how the white players limit the space for red to play through by remaining closer together or more “compact”. If the central defender steps closer to the oppositions forward, it will discourage the opponent to play into him. Observe how the keeper adjusts his/her position when the central defender moves forward. The two forwards (on white) should try to remain close to one another and begin to work as a group.

Ball on the flank (opponents’ possession):



White continues to remain “compact” by shifting to the “ball side”. This will limit the attackers’ options on the “near side” of the field. By remaining as a unit you will give the opposition far less open space to play through and create more opportunities for your players to regain possession.

Final thoughts:

Before deciding on “What system to play” or focusing on your team defending you must recognize that defensive success is first and foremost based on quality 1 vs. 1 defending. Getting pressure on the player with the ball is vital if the rest of the team is to carry out their defensive responsibilities. Only when this pressure takes place can the remainder of the players get “compact” and take away space from the attacking team.

Offensively, it is easier for young players to find space on the flanks. It is important that coaches encourage this in training by choosing exercises such as the Four Goal game. The exercises should allow the players to “discover” the answers for themselves without constant instruction from the coach.

Comments and feedback are always welcome at bdonahue@lexingtonsoccer.org

Brendan