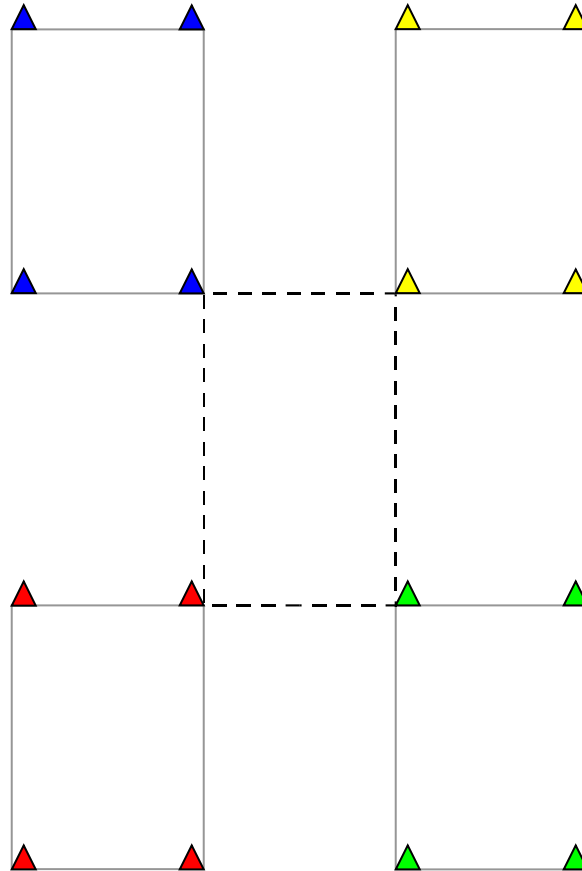


Bert-Jan Heijmans' - "The Magic Rectangle"



There are 5 rectangles

- Red
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green
- Multi-Coloured

The idea is that the coach can use the same structure, irrespective of the area available in which to work.

The coach can vary the size of the rectangle depending on age of the players or size of area available. So, for U10s you may choose to make each rectangle 8 x 10. For adults they may be 12 x 15 (13 x 20 gives almost a 40 x 60 when combined for SSG).



The 5 rectangles can be used as individual stations in a circuit – whether fitness or skills related.

You can have individual challenges within each area and you can have players move to different areas, for example – with a ball, avoiding other players, which develops dribbling ability and lifting the eyes/head.

Alternately, the players can use the ‘corner’ rectangles and the coach can position themselves in the central rectangle to be close to all the players as practice develops

Again the idea is that as the session develops from warm up through to technique development, skill practice and Small Sided Game.

All the coach has to do is remove a few cones (the 4 in the middle) as the session progresses rather than having to re-set a whole new arrangement of cones.

You will note that each shape is individually representative of the shape of a football field and that all the rectangles together form a bigger football pitch and to which you can move for a small sided game as the session develops.

If you are really creative, you may be able to see more than 5 rectangles in the diagram and all of which you can use in almost any combination to help your practice whether it be individual technique practice or 2v2 / 3v3 etc.

Gardens

Leaving all cones in place, the structure can also be used to teach players about the areas of the pitch and to consider which areas can be exploited or need ‘protecting’ depending on which team is in possession and where the ball is in relation to players.

BJ talked about using a concept of ‘gardens’ to help players become used to areas of the pitch rather than necessarily being restricted by position.

So, consider each area as a garden and by utilizing the defending, midfield and attacking thirds, there is a ready made structure to show unit responsibility. Similarly, there are 3 ‘channels’ running the length of the pitch, so again there is a structure to help teach balance in the team.

This concept can be used to develop players’ understanding and not purely rely on the “you’re a right back” type of instruction. ‘Freedom with Responsibility’ would be a phrase I would use to describe the concept (though whatever terminology you use to engage the players would be fine!).

Acknowledgement: ‘The Magic Rectangle’ is an original idea and the development of Bert-Jan Heijmans, Dutch coach and youth development expert.