

The Manchester United 4 v 4 Pilot Scheme

Source: “FA Insight”, Based upon study performed by the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at the Manchester Metropolitan University.

Summary Objective

- A pilot program attempting to optimize the “window of opportunity” that exists for skill development in the U9 range.

Methodology

- Compare 8 v 8 style of play with 4 v 4 format proposed by Manchester United Football Club
- Recreate, as much as possible, the playing environments in which the world's greatest players first learned and then developed the skill required for top-level performance:
 - Plenty of individual possession, ball control and touches
 - Trying new skills without fear, ridicule, or recrimination
 - Taking players on and challenging defenders
 - Little or no pressure from significant others
 - A Vibrant, creative and fun atmosphere

4 v 4 Program

- **Scheme format**
 - Goalkeepers game: 4v4 plus two Goalkeepers
 - Two goal game: 4v4 with four large cones as goals
 - Four goal game: 4v4 with eight large cones as goals
 - Line Ball: 4v4 with dotted line as a scoring line
- **Scheme Construct**
 - Game Duration: 8 minutes/station, 2 min break
(Exercise-to-rest ratio increases energy and mental awareness)
 - Scoring/Goals: No score is kept
(Emphasis on development, de-emphasis of winning)
 - Coaching: Very little overt coaching
(Encouragement only. No raised voices and no disciplining)

The Analysis

- Quantitative game analysis
 - Number of Passes
 - Scoring Attempts
 - Goals
 - 1v1 Encounters
 - Dribbling Skills (Tricks)
- Qualitative data on perceptions
 - Survey Data

Quantitative Analysis*

	# of Passes	Scoring Attempts	Goals	1v1 Encounter	Dribbling Skills
2-Goal Game	<u>170</u>	44	18	51	39
Line Ball	160	NA	<u>37</u>	56	<u>58</u>
GK Game	149	49	17	<u>92</u>	36
4-Goal Game	106	<u>62</u>	28	52	45
8 v 8	108	20	5	28	16

*Numbers listed are "Mean" scores

Quantitative Summary

On Average 4v4 versus 8v8 had:

1. 135% more passes
2. 260% more Scoring Attempts
3. 500% more Goals Scored
4. 225% more 1v1 Encounters
5. 280% more Dribbling Skills (tricks)

Qualitative Analysis

- Interviews with:
 - Club Directors and Assistant Directors
 - Club Coaches
 - Other observers:
 - National Football Administrators
 - Other coaches
 - Physiotherapists
 - Sport Scientists
 - Parents
 - Players

Qualitative Summary

Club Directors/Coaches/Administrators:

- 80% positive comments

Other Observers:

- 97% positive comments

Parents:

- 68% positive comments

Players:

- 75% positive comments

Top 8 Positive Comments

Positive Comments	A	B	C
The Pilot Scheme was more enjoyable than 8v8	29	18	12
The Pilot Scheme players were more involved	19	4	7
The Pilot Scheme was well organized	13	1	5
Players get more chances to express themselves	12	4	7
4v4 games are more challenging than 8v8	9	-	3
There is less emphasis on winning than 8v8	9	9	4
The 4v4 improves techniques more	9	6	5
Pilot Scheme is a good learning environment	9	4	8

	KEY
A	# of comments from Club Directors, Asst. Directors, Coaches
B	# of comments from MUFC and other parents
C	# of comments from Other Observers of the Pilot Scheme

Top 6 Negative Comments

Negative Comments	A	B	C
The 4v4 games are less competitive than the 8v8	3	12	-
Supervision of players was lacking or more difficult	7	-	-
The 4v4 games did not improve positional awareness	5	2	-
The players didn't understand it	4	5	1
The 4v4 games are less exiting to watch than the 8v8	-	4	-
It's difficult to compare the teams competing	-	4	-

	KEY
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Summary Notes

- MUFC continues to work with the FA to adapt and utilize this Scheme in youth games up to U13.
- MUFC support of the Pilot Scheme continues to grow from other Premier Clubs (i.e. Chelsea, Arsenal, etc.)
- Scheme is also popular in Holland (AJAX) and South America

Scheme Set-up

