Game Leader Handbook

United Through Soccer

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Welcome to THPFC

Welcome to the Team!

Introduction from Manager of Recreation

On behalf of everyone at Toronto High Park FC, I would like to take the time to thank you all for your help throughout the year. Without your time, input, and feedback we would not be able to function successfully as a football club.

THPFC's strengths continue to lie in community building and a sense of togetherness, two factors that formed the basis of the club many years ago. As we continue to prosper and grow, I hope we can maintain that community feel while also developing the the professional standards that a club of this size needs.

The following handbook will assist you as a Game Leader, provide you with a framework for your respective program, and act as a valuable educational tool to further your development as a game leader, mentor, and role model for our players. The network of THPFC parent and volunteer game leaders is one of our biggest assets and provides and excellent foundation for our club.

Good luck for the season ahead!

Justin Johnson
Manager Of Recreation, THPFC

Message from the Technical Lead

First and foremost, thank you for your willingness to game lead within our recreational program. The impact of a game leader on a young player cannot be understated. To this day, I recall with fondness, the game leader who had the biggest influence on me personally.

This summer, you will have the opportunity to impact many young individuals in a positive way. In the past, we have not been structured to provide our recreational game leaders with much in the way of support. We have updated our game leader manual this year, with information specific to the age groups you will be working with. With a variety of activities and session plans, we hope this manual will serve as a useful guide and resource.

Thank you again for being a game leader. We fully recognize the dedication and effort required for the role. We truly hope you find it a rewarding experience.

Edin Kozica
Technical Lead, THPFC

Message from the Coach Development Manager

Toronto High Park FC has a proud history of providing recreational soccer programs for kids in our community. Our Club's roots are firmly planted in house league soccer. It's been true for over 30 years. It will remain true in the future.

House league soccer is meant to be fun. That doesn't mean players can not and should not learn to play properly, or have the opportunity to improve their skills. Soccer is a game players can play for life and building a solid foundation and love for the game is key. It's the game leader that helps make this happen!

THPFC knows about the importance of volunteer game leaders. For the young player, the volunteer game leader is a very important part of their soccer experience. We hope this manual helps make the volunteer game leading experience easier and more rewarding.

Some of my fondest coaching memories come from the 10 years I spent coaching and convening house league. I hope you will create the same memories for yourself.

See you on the field!

Joe Kelly
Coach Development Manager, THPFC

Long Term Player Development

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LTPD

Long-Term Player Development (LTPD)

- Launched in 2008 by the Canadian Soccer Association.
- Follows the principles of athlete development as laid out in the generic model Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD).
- The seven stage model provides a framework for development that ensures enjoyable lifelong playing opportunities for players of all levels of ability, as well as development of a pathway for elite players who pursue excellence.

Some of the key components relevant to soccer are below but for more information, reference the LTPD information made available through Canada Soccer and Ontario Soccer.

LTPD Key Components

This the heart of the program: we are giving children of all ages and abilities the opportunity to experience and enjoy a new sport or build on the skills they have learnt in other areas.

We do this by including games that are both educational and fun. Each session will be delivered by you with animation, effort, and a sense of how important early experiences are to a child.

This is achieved by tailoring each of our sessions to ensure every player has a ball and gets to use it as frequently as possible. We minimize downtime between activities to maximize the amount of time the ball is moving during a session.

Sometimes a soccer session comes around when it is not convenient for you as a game leader. Work running late, plans have changed, or a host of other reasons. We are taking the time to plan out sessions to help you as a game leader and the players you teach; as long as you bring the energy, the players will have a good time and come away from the session feeling like they have succeeded in learning.

Always try to let the game be the teacher; the players learn more and have more fun when they are given extended time to play the game.

Every session that is included in this manual is age specific. We understand that players need appropriate space when playing to give the best learning environment and different age groups will need to have different field sizes.

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Defining A Game Leader

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Your role on the field!

Roles Of a Game Leader

- As a game leader, you are going to be required to wear many different hats. Everything from mentor and role model to part-time pirate and monster. You will need to show compassion and enthusiasm towards both the game of soccer and its participants.
- It is important to remember that for a lot of the children you are game leading, it is the first time they have ever had to lace up a pair of cleats. As a result, you will need to fill your sessions with energy, excitement, and a willingness to adapt and be flexible. There will be times where discipline is needed, but the overriding factor should always be the element of fun to the game.
- Being a player's first game leader is a often a larger responsibility than people realize; you will be shaping the child's views on an entire sport and will often have a lasting impact on their participation in the game. **It is this responsibility that brings both the biggest challenges and the biggest rewards.**
- It is important to note that every player is unique and you will need to be flexible in your game leading style to get the best out of all your players. This may involve being loud and boisterous to the main group and immediately having a quiet word in the ear of a child who is feeling shy being away from their parents.

What is a Game Leader?

Someone who…

- Provides a safe and secure environment for all players and attendees.
- Prioritizes fun, sportsmanship & equal participation over winning.
- Helps maintain a positive flow to the game by managing substitutions and encouraging your team at all times.
- Arrives with enough time to set up before the players begin to filter in.
- Makes sure the parents and players understand what is expected from them and what you will provide.

Why Children Play Soccer

Children play soccer for a variey of reasons!

- To have fun
- To experience thrills
- To be with or make new friends
- To be challenged
- To feel good
- To feel accepted
- To improve and learn skills
- To be part of a team

As a game leader, be aware that every child is different and what works for one child will not necessarily work for another. Therefore, make sure that every game day is:

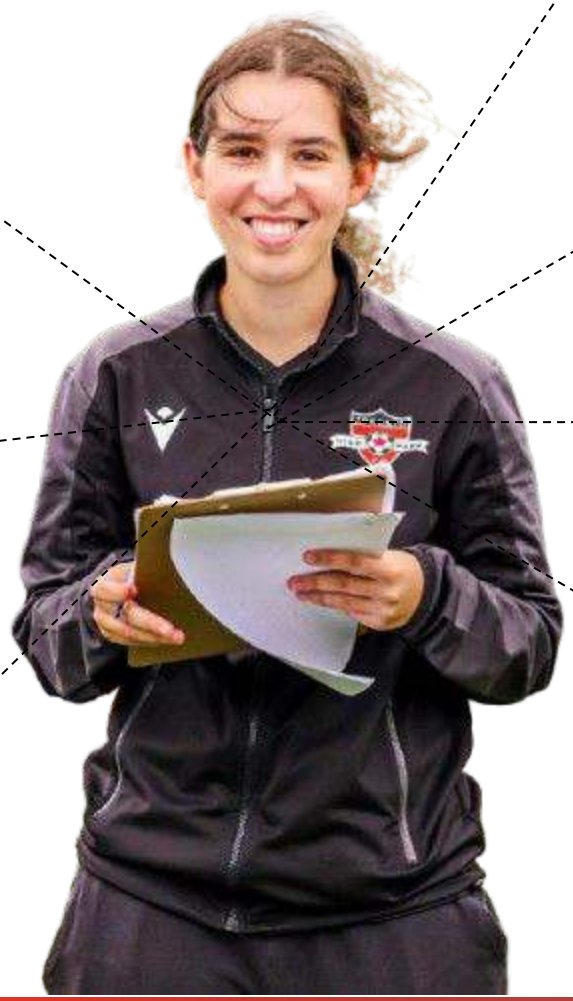
- Fun
- Safe
- Positive and Enjoyable
- Provides stimulating activities
- Has a well thought out plan (and a backup!)

A High Park Game Leader

High Caring

Excellent Communicator

Open Minded



Player Centred

Accountable

Knowledgeable

Role Model

5 Different Coaching Styles!

Question & Answer: The game leader leads with a question and requests an answer from players

"Which one of these options works better?"

"Which one of your teammates could you pass the ball to?"

Trial & Error: The players and/ or game leader decide on a challenge, and the players are encouraged to find their own solutions with minimal support from the game leader

Observation & Feedback: The game leader and players observe an activity and discuss the outcome

"Let's watch and see what happens"

Command: The game leader tells the player what to do and demonstrates it

"I want you to pass the ball to your partner"

Guided Discovery: The game leader asks a question and issues a challenge; the player than demonstrates how she/he would do it

"Can you show me how you would get the ball past the defender?"

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Nutrition and Lifestyle

Given the fast paced nature of soccer, there can be very high demands on a young player's body during the course of a game or training session. Therefore, what is consumed by the player has an impact on concentration levels, performance, recovery and overall health.

Some Key basic pointers for a young soccer player…

- Wake up at a similar time each day
- Eat breakfast within one hour of waking up.
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day
- Consume a pre and post training snack
- Have a portion of vegetables and fruit with each meal
- Limit Screen Time to 1 hr per day
- Consistently get 8-10 hours of sleep a night
- Go to bed at a similar time each day

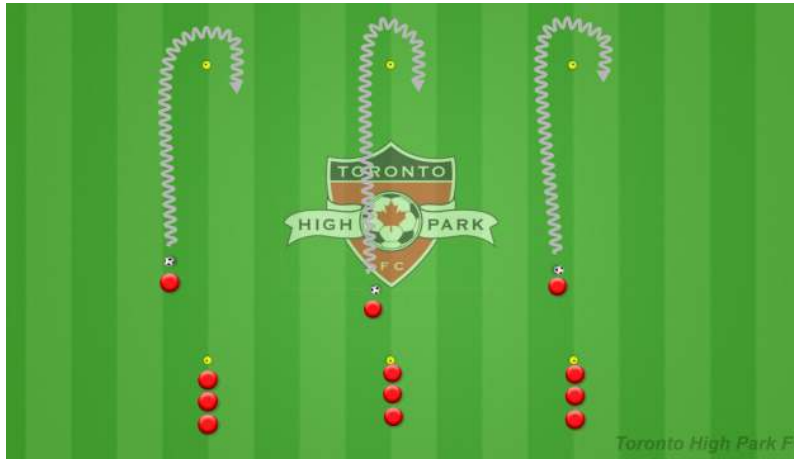
Game Day Activites

Develop your Teams!

Game Day Practices - Early Arrival

[Click Here For More Arrival Activities]

Activity #1	Activity #2	Activity #3
TAG	RELAY RACE	1v1/2v2 CHANNEL
Description: An excellent arrival game as it can be played with any number of players/parents. Designate a player to be a 'tagger' and ask the players what game of tag they would like to play. Use a ball if possible.	**Description:** Split the players into 3 or 4 teams and organise a relay race which allows the players to dribble and pass. Make it competitive between the teams!	**Description:** Set up a small channel with a goal at one end and allow the players to play either 1v1 or 2v2. One team attacks the goal the other team defends the goal. Rotate the players so they get to attack and defend.
Coaching Points: Encourage players to keep their head up and scan for space. Small touches on the ball to maintain control if dribbling.	**Coaching Points:** Max of 4 players per team to keep repetition high. Keep the relay simple so there is lots of success and activity i.e dribble to the cone and pass back.	**Coaching Points:** Defender passes the ball to the attacker to start. Play continues until a goal is scored or the ball leaves the channel or the defender wins the ball.

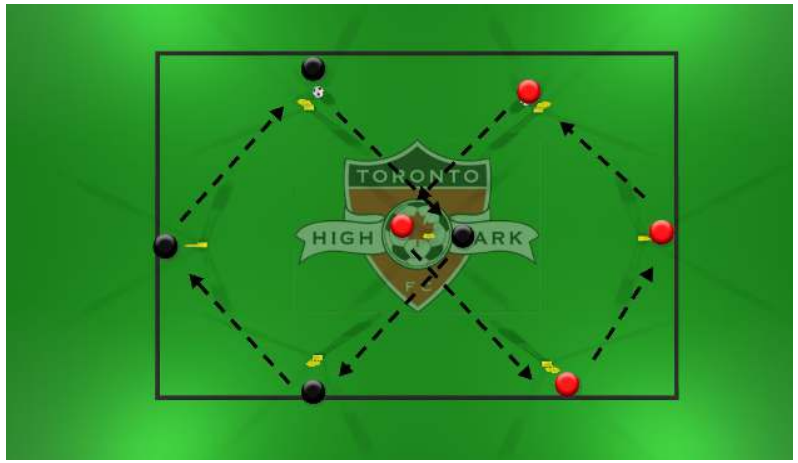


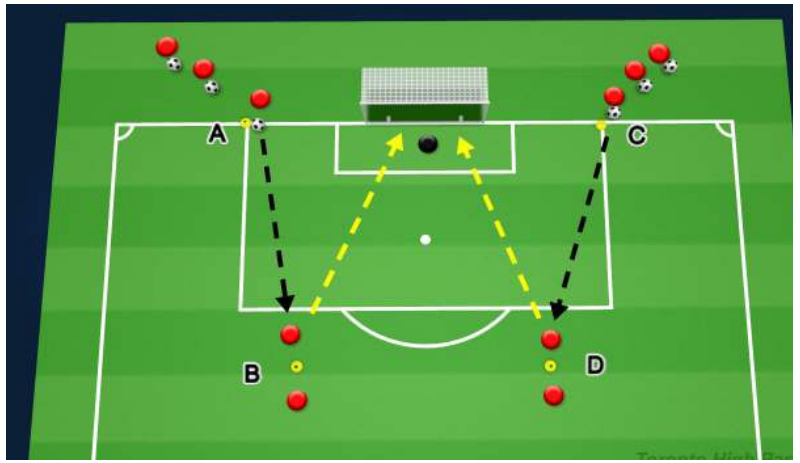
Game Day Practices - Technical

Activity #1	Activity #2
RECEIVING ON THE TURN	RECEIVING ON THE TURN
Description: A small-sided game in a playing area appropriate to the number of players. Regular FIFA rules. A goal equals 1 point, 1 point for a pass received where the player receives on the half turn and progresses.	**Description:** 10x10 grid. Red plays to red player in the middle, who receives, turns and plays to red player on the outside. Each colour is doing the same thing simultaneously.
Coaching Points: Scan, Communicate to determine best options to play, body shape to receive, part of foot/ball	**Coaching Points:** Scan, create angle to receive, body shape to receive, play forward quickly.

Game Day Practices - Technical

Activity #1	Activity #2
PASSING & CONTROL	FINISHING
Description: One player will start on each cone. Pass & follow around the diamond without colliding with the opposite colour. Double players up if additional number of players.	**Description:** Use 18yrd box for the practice or replicate the set up with the facilities you have. Split into 4 groups. Rotation is A-B-C-D. Pass/Shoot & Follow to the next position. Collect your ball after the shot at goal.
Coaching Points: Body shape when receiving back foot to be open, receive with one foot, pass with the other, communication vocally and through body language.	**Coaching Points:** Focus on 1st touch out the strikers feet. Laces for power, inside of the foot for accuracy. Work on shooting with both feet, from both positions.





Game Formations

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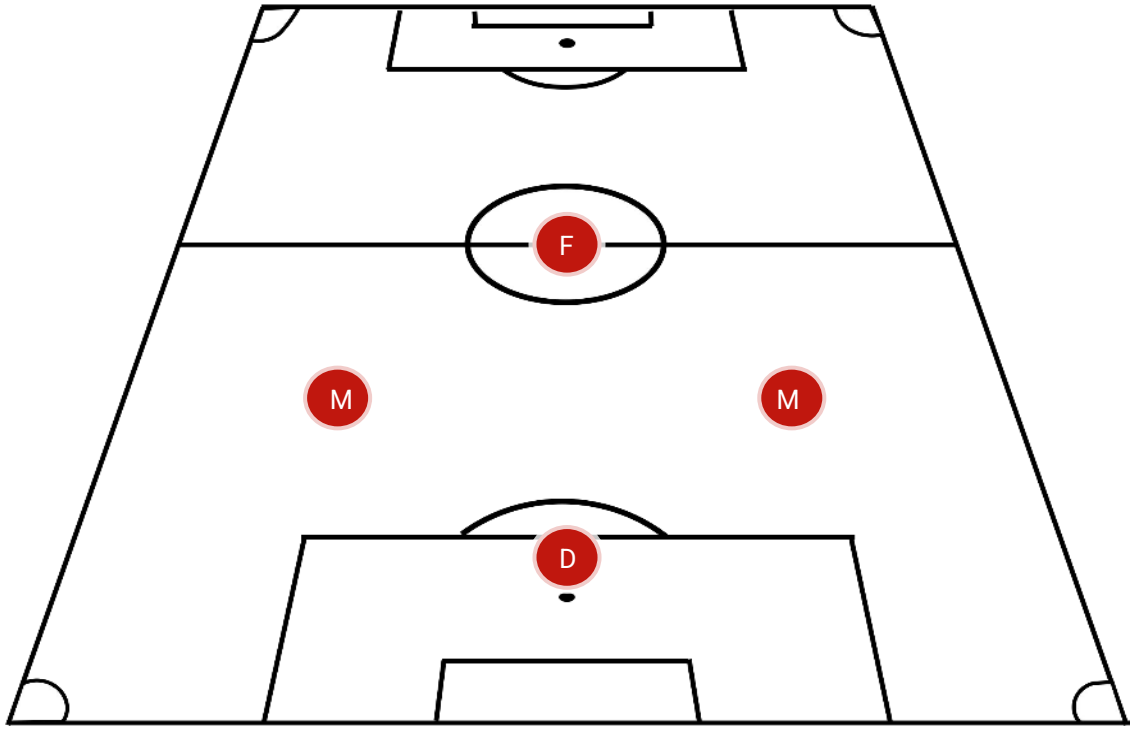
Get Ready To Play!

4v4 & 5v5 Formation



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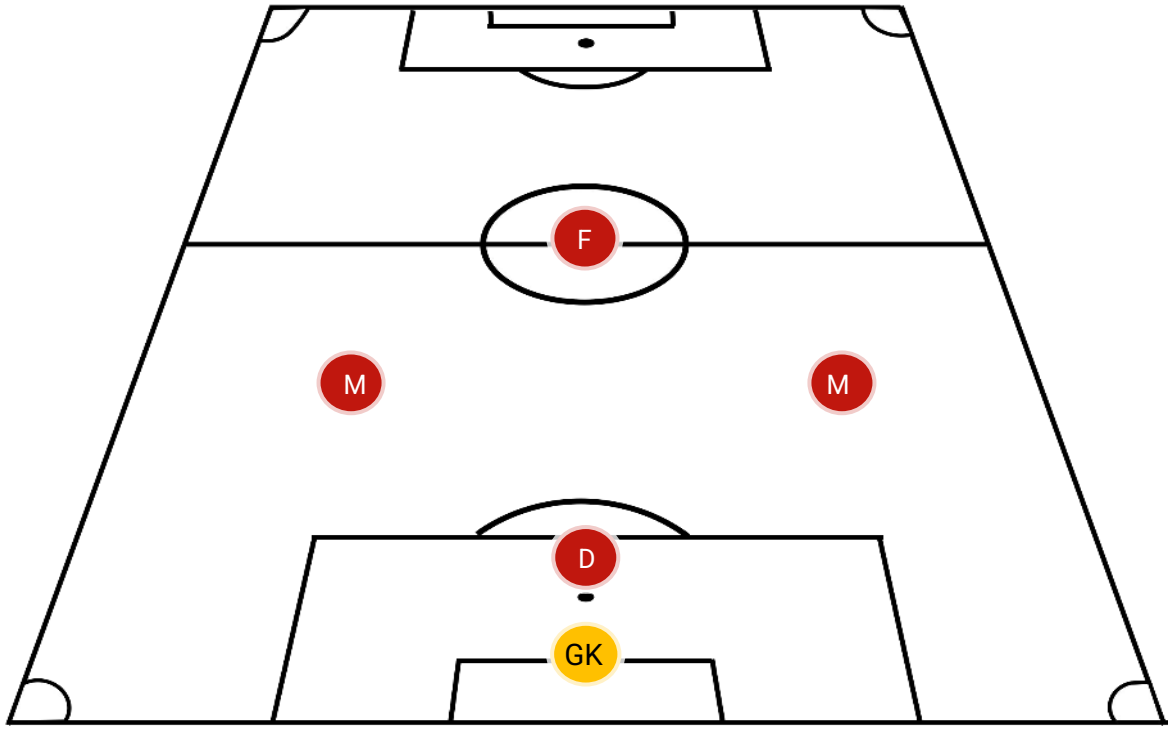
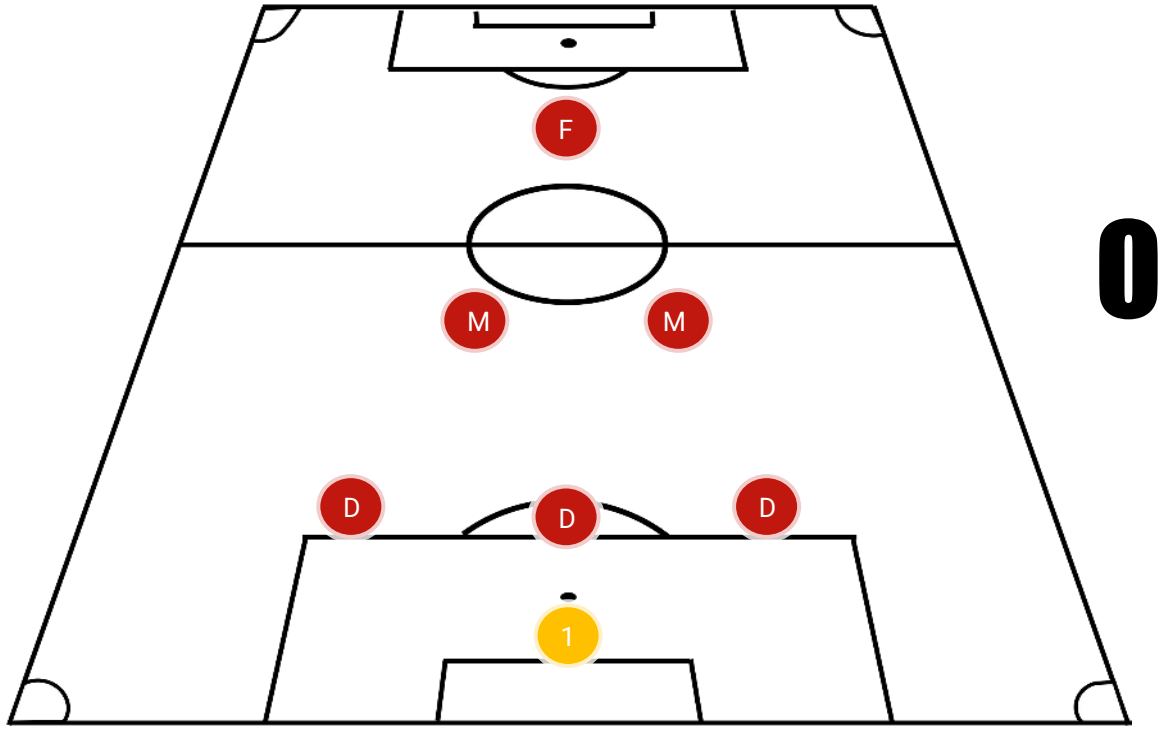


1-1-2-1 (5v5)

7v7 Formation



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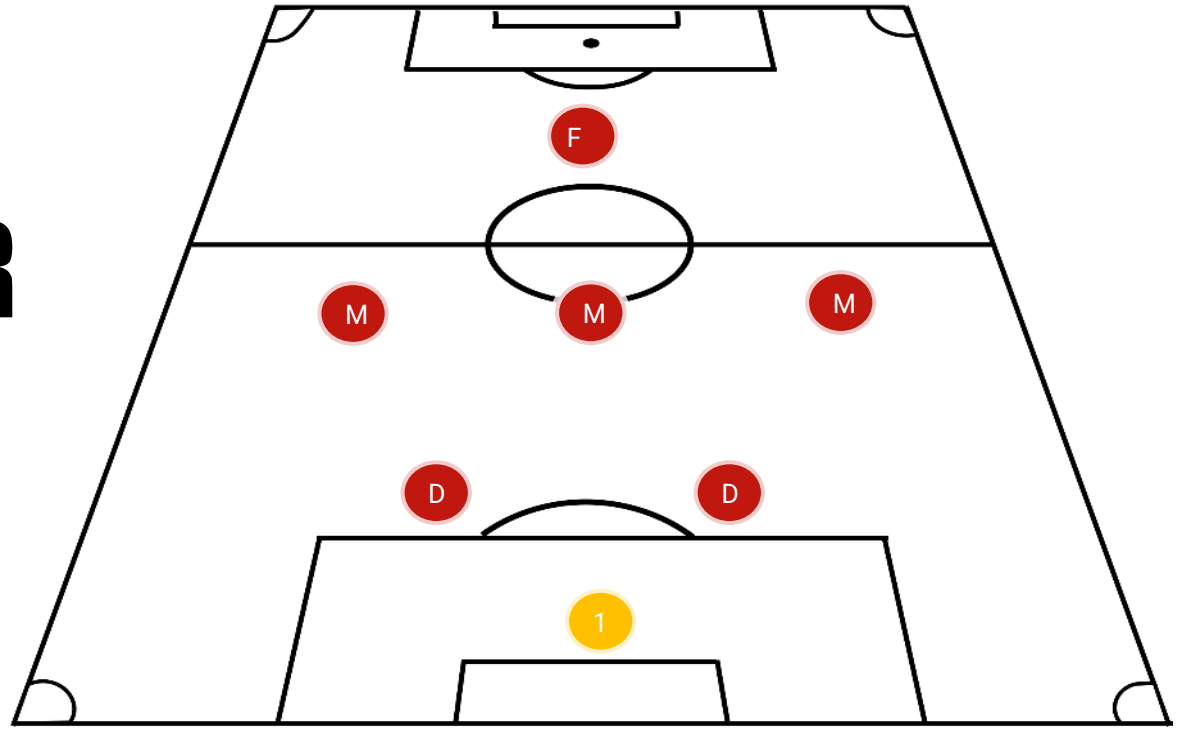

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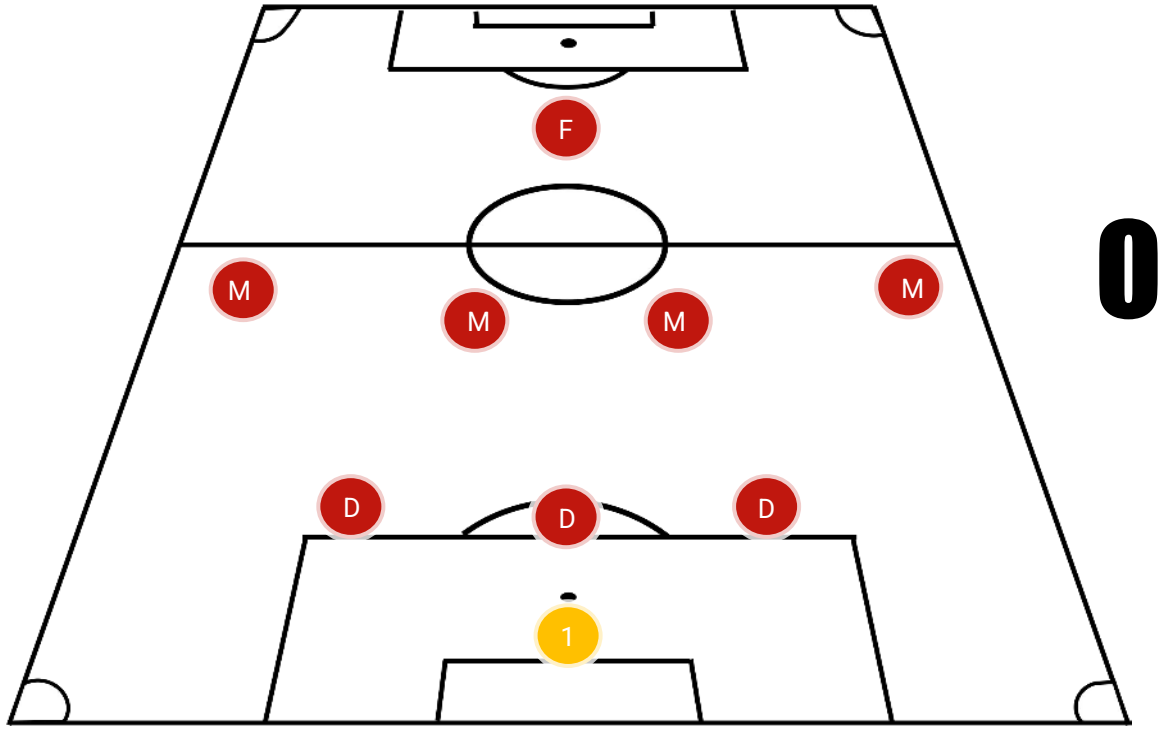
9v9 Formation



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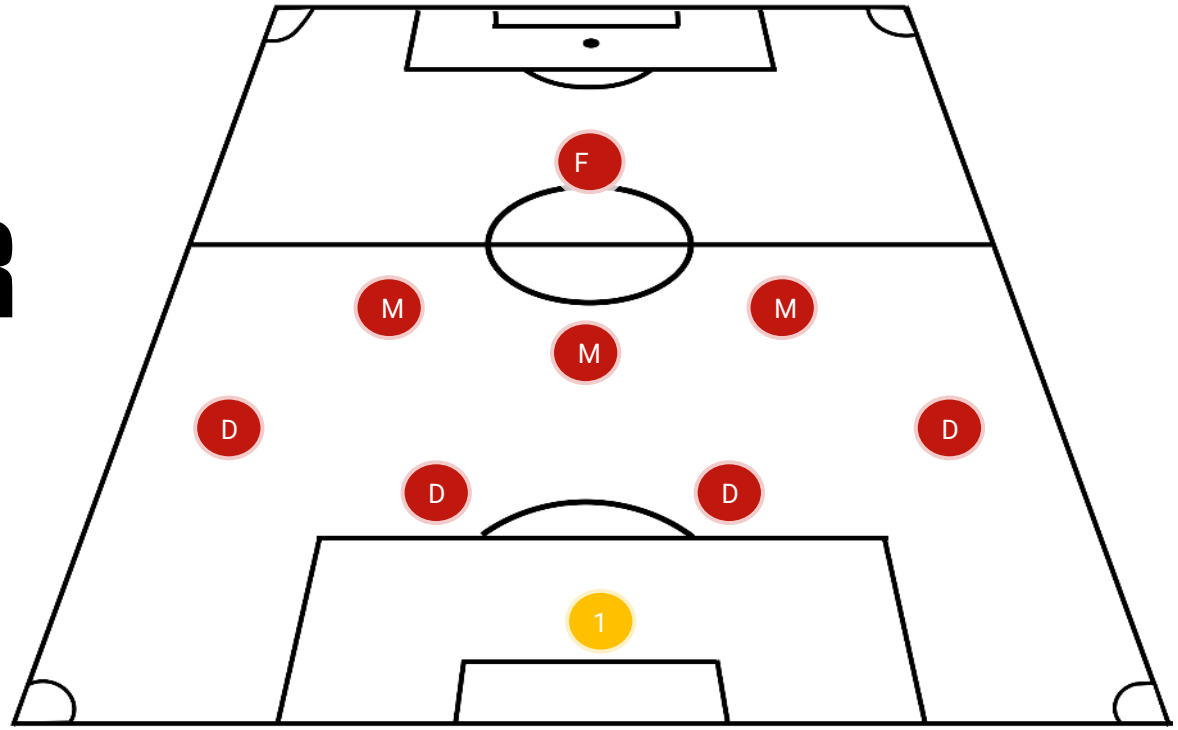

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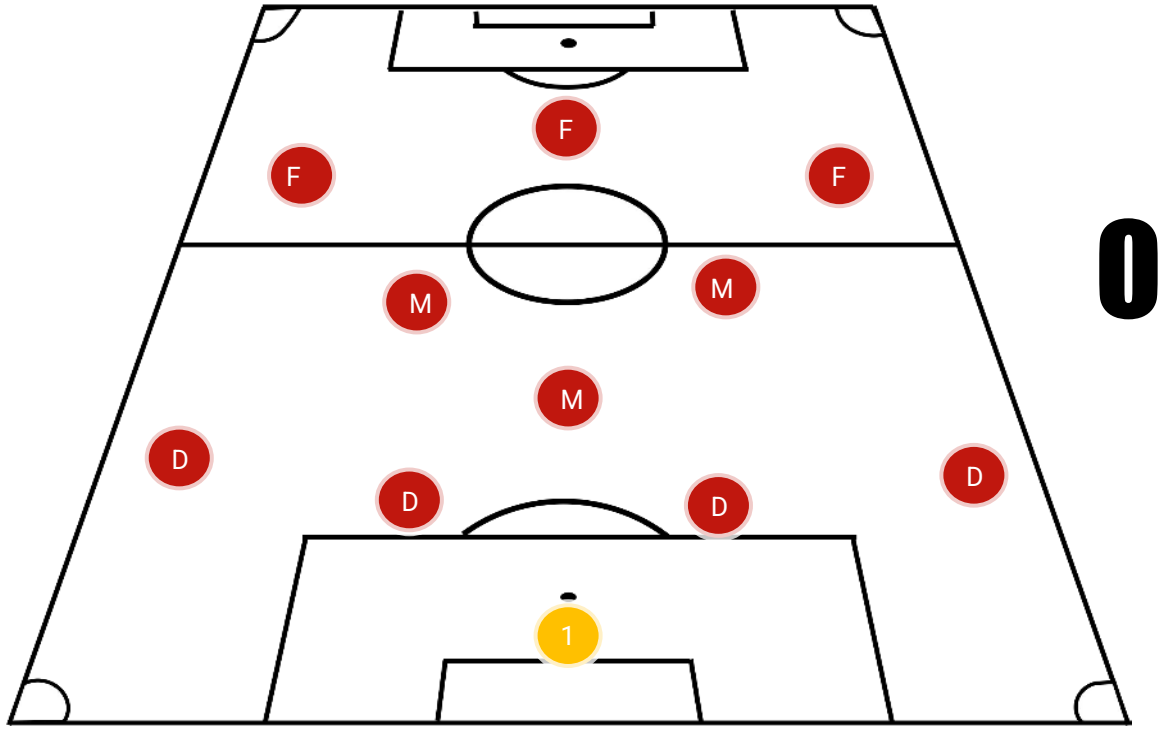
11v11 Formation



1-4-3-3

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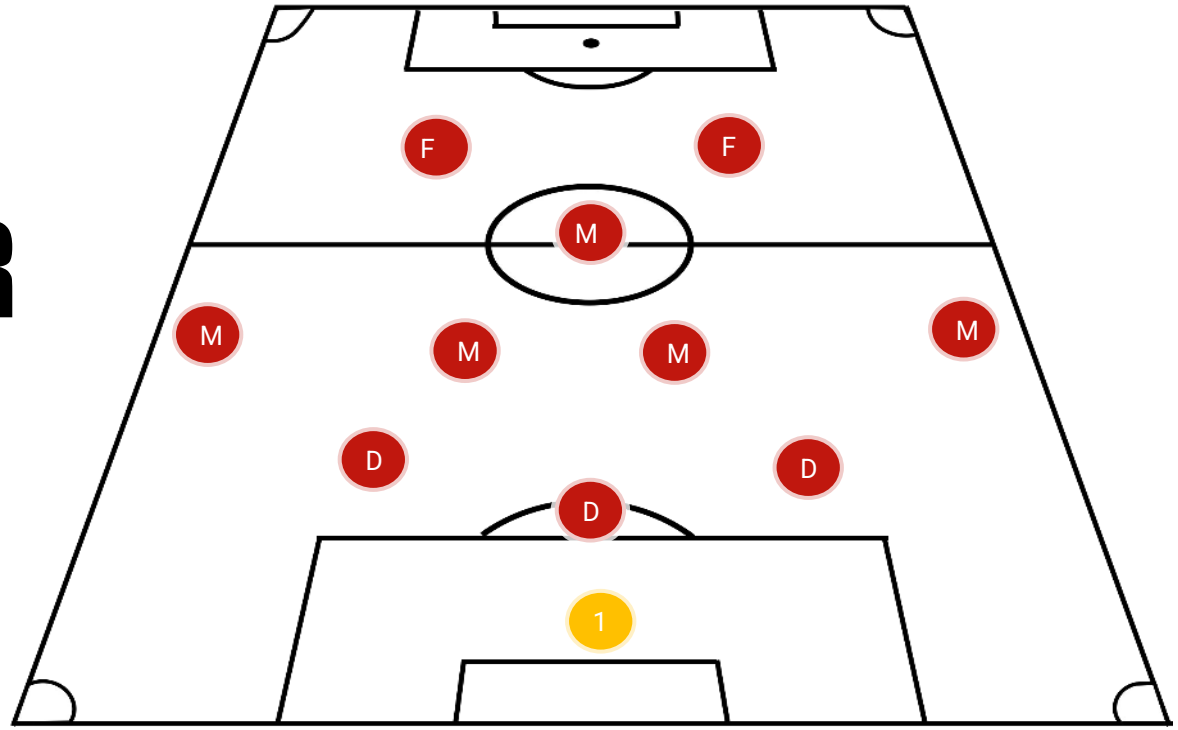

1-3-5-2

FAQs

Questions and Answers!

FAQs

- **What happens if I am absent?**
  - Ask your parent group or staff to cover, we are happy to fill in!
- **What if I don't have enough players?**
  - We will always find a way to get a game going! Reach out to staff at the field for pinnies or suggestions.
  - Reach out to the opposing game leader about lending your team an extra player(s).
- **I was involved in a incident with a match official, parent, or game leader?**
  - Immediately reach out to staff at the field, do not escalate the situation any further.

FAQs

- **My match official made a call that I do not agree with.**
  - Recognize that mistakes are part of the game and happen at even the professional level. This is recreation football where results/scores are not priority.
  - Ask before accusing, your referee is trained and there is a likely a good reason for a call or non-call. “Can you explain why..”
  - Use half time or end of game to properly connect with your match official to avoid disrupting the game.
- **Where can I find the House League Rulebook?**
  - You can click the link here: House League Rules

FAQs

- **What happens in the event of thunderstorms and lighting?**
  - A decision will be made at the field by either the operations team or your lead match official. If you see lighting, make your match official aware and assist with leading your team away from tall trees or metal structures.

- **What should I do if one of my players get injured?**
  - Minor injuries can be treated with ice packs or bandages that are available at your field. Operations staff should be notified of emergencies so that they can contact first responders.

Thank You!

TORONTO HIGH PARK FC

United Through Soccer