



SESSION 32 • STANDALONE PLAN

Creating and Taking Chances — Putting the Block Together

Attacking and finishing • Reference format: U12 9v9 • 60 minutes • 14–16 players

AT A GLANCE

TIME	MINS	PHASE	PRACTICE
0:00 – 0:10	10	■ Warm-up	32.1 The Whole Picture
0:10 – 0:25	15	■ Technical practice	32.2 Make One, Take One
0:25 – 0:40	15	■ Skill game	32.3 The Chance Count
0:40 – 0:55	15	■ Conditioned match	32.4 The Attacking Exam
0:55 – 1:00	5	■ Reflection	Review, with the players

USING THIS SESSION

This is a standalone plan. It does not depend on any other session in the set and can be run whenever it is useful to you — as a one-off, out of order, or repeated. Nothing here assumes the players did something last week.

U12 nine-a-side is the reference format, not the audience. The session is written at 9v9 because something has to be, and the phone index adapts it to the other four Irish FA formats — pick your team at the top of it and this session will tell you whether to run it as printed, scale it, adapt it, or leave it for another age.

Scaling up, and down as far as 7v7, is a matter of numbers. Keep roughly the same space per player: to 7v7 that is about a fifth smaller with a player off each team, to 5v5 about a third. **For eleven-a-side** add ten to fifteen metres to the length of the bigger practices and put the extra players in as outside players or a second team, never in a queue.

Below U10 it is not just a matter of size, because the game itself is different. There is no offside, no throw-in — restarts are a dribble or a pass in — no referee, and no league result. At U8–U9 the technical practice usually wants shortening or dropping. At U6–U7 there are no goalkeepers at all and the four-phase hour is the wrong shape entirely. The Formats tab in the phone index has the rules for each stage.

WHY THIS SESSION MATTERS

The attacking ideas come together tonight. Getting in (Session 29), putting it away (Session 30), and using an extra player when you have one (Session 31) are not three separate skills — they are three parts of the same thirty seconds. The session is built around one idea that is worth stating clearly to the squad and to yourself: **the number that matters is chances created, not goals scored.** A squad that makes eight chances and scores two has had a very good evening. A squad that makes one chance and scores it has been lucky, and will lose next time. Goals at under-12 are noisy — a deflection, a goalkeeping error, a bobble — and judging a team by them teaches players to feel good or bad about things they did not control. Chances are quiet, repeatable, and almost entirely within the squad's control. So tonight everything is counted, and the counting itself is the coaching. **And there is one more reason to measure chances rather than goals, which matters more than any of the tactics:** it means the shy player who made the run that dragged a defender away gets credit, and the player who scuffed the finish is not the story of the evening.

BY THE END, PLAYERS CAN

- **Combine all three routes in** — behind, past him, and the cutback — in one attack.
- **Create chances repeatedly**, rather than hoping for one.
- **Finish quickly and accurately** when the chance arrives.
- **Count what we make**, not only what we score.
- **Recognise who created the chance**, not just who finished it.

KIT LIST

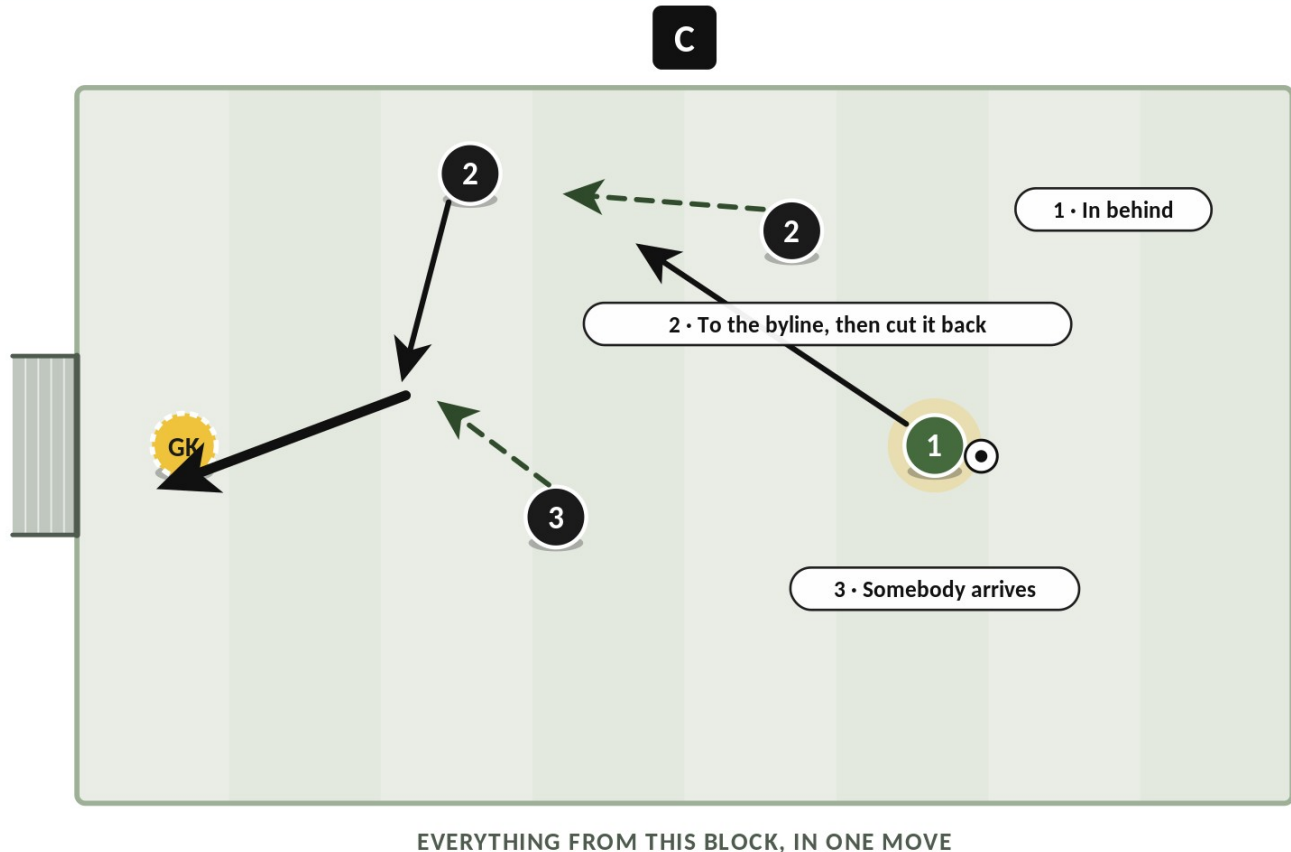
Ground needed: about 60 × 45 m. This is the summary session for this theme and it carries the review page, so protect the final five minutes. Tell the squad at the start exactly how tonight is scored and why: **we are counting chances, and a chance is worth something even when it doesn't go in**. That sentence changes the mood of a finishing session more than anything else you can say, because it stops the evening being a referendum on whichever player misses most.

ITEM	QTY	USED IN
Footballs (size 4)	22	All practices
Flat markers	52	Boxes, zones and pitch edges
Bibs — red / blue / yellow	8 / 8 / 4	Two clear teams plus goalkeepers
Full-size goals	2	All practices
Goalkeeper gloves	2 pairs	Rotate keepers
Notebook	1	For the exam match — four things to count

32.1 THE WHOLE PICTURE

One move containing everything from this theme — a pass in behind, a run to the byline, a cutback, and somebody arriving to finish. Groups of four, no defenders, and enough repetitions that the sequence becomes familiar rather than clever.

34 x 20 m • fours • in behind, to the byline, cut it back, finish • 10 minutes



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SET UP

- 34 × 20 m with a **full goal and goalkeeper** at one end.
- **Groups of four:** one passer, one runner who becomes the crosser, one arriving finisher, one retrieving.
- Two groups working alternately from opposite sides.
- Balls at the starting point.
- Coach beside the goal.

HOW IT RUNS

- Minutes 0–3 — arrival.** Greet each player by name, ball each, dribbling and striking. **Collect the Session 31 homework** — *how often did the carrier run at the defender before passing?*
- Minute 3 — walk the sequence once.** Pass in behind, run to the byline, cut it back, finish. Ninety seconds, no coaching detail.
- Minutes 4–7 — live at pace,** alternating sides so both feet get used.

4. **Minute 7 — one question, twenty seconds.** *Who made that goal?* You want them to name the runner and the passer, not just the finisher.
5. **Minutes 7-10 — competitive.** Count completed sequences per group. A sequence counts if all four parts happen, whether or not it goes in.

RULES & SCORING

- **All four parts must happen** — in behind, to the byline, cutback, finish.
- **A completed sequence counts even if the finish misses.**
- The cutback must be along the ground.
- Alternate sides so both feet are used.
- Everybody does every role.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Four techniques in twelve seconds — the weighted pass, the carry at speed, the firm low cutback, and the one-touch finish.
Tactical	Timing is the whole sequence. The runner goes before the pass; the finisher arrives after the cutback. Every failure in this warm-up is a timing failure, not a technical one.
Physical	Repeated sprints with recovery. A good warm-up load.
Psychological	Counting sequences rather than goals sets the tone for the whole evening. Do it deliberately.
Social	<i>Who made that goal?</i> is worth asking four or five times tonight. It changes what players notice.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
The finisher arriving too early	<i>Wait. Come in behind the ball, not in front of it.</i>
Cutbacks lifted	<i>Along the ground.</i>
Crossing before the byline	<i>Two more steps. Same as Session 29.</i>
The sequence being rushed into chaos	Slow it once, then rebuild the pace.
Only the strong foot being used	Alternate sides and it fixes itself.

ASK THEM

- Who made that goal?
- When does the finisher start his run?
- Where does the cutback go?
- What went wrong when it didn't work — the technique or the timing?
- Which part is hardest?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
One touch on the finish.	Two touches on the finish.
A passive defender in the box.	Walk the sequence twice more.
Two finishers arriving at different spots.	Shorter distances.
Ten seconds per sequence.	Remove the goalkeeper for the first three minutes.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Complete sequences happening regularly.

Runners going before the pass.

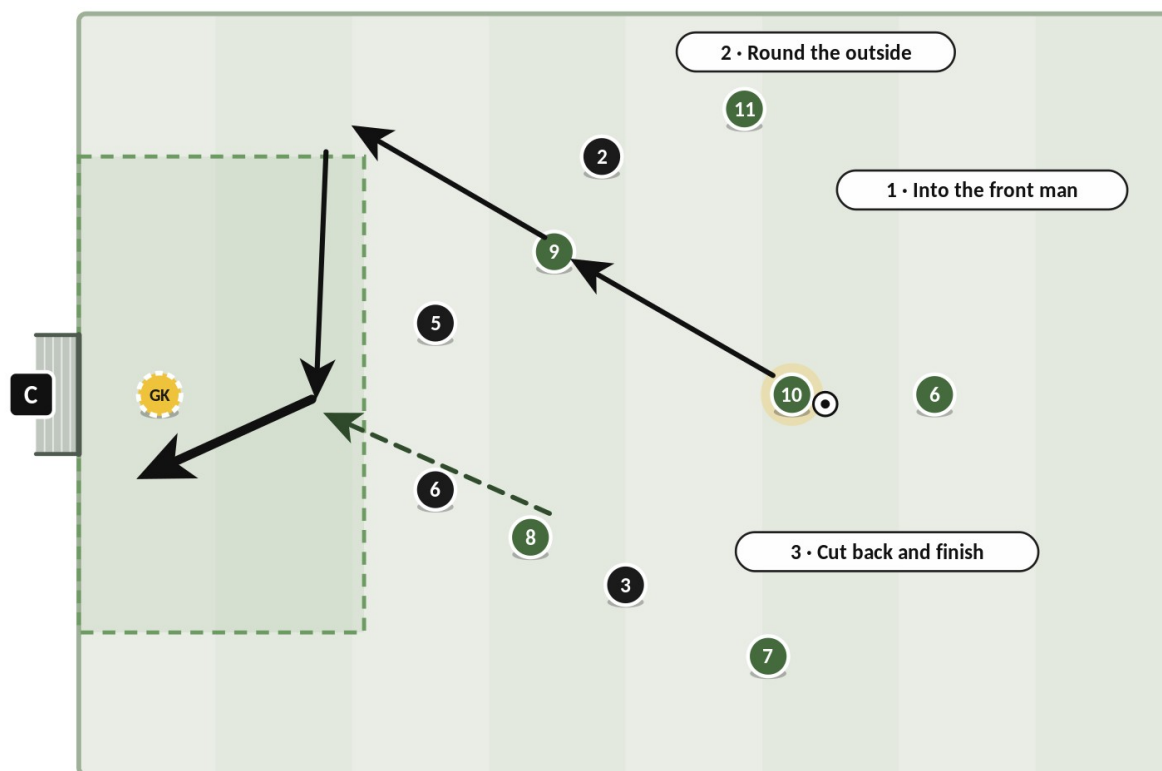
Cutbacks along the ground.

Players naming the creator, not just the scorer.

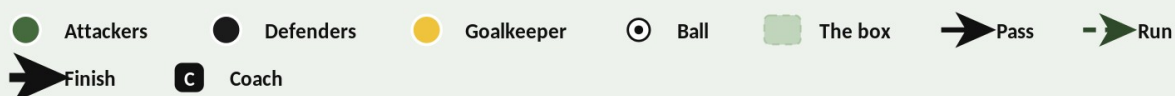
32.2 MAKE ONE, TAKE ONE

Six attack four and a goalkeeper with twelve seconds on the clock, and every attack is expected to produce a chance. The score is kept in two columns — chances made and goals scored — and the first column is the one that matters.

46 x 32 m • six attack four and a keeper • count the chances, not just the goals • 15 minutes



SIX AGAINST FOUR • TWELVE SECONDS • MAKE A CHANCE EVERY TIME



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SET UP

- 46 × 32 m with a full goal and goalkeeper, the box marked.
- Six attackers against four defenders, starting from the halfway line.
- Eleven to thirteen players. Rotate four attackers into defence every three minutes.
- Balls with the coach for instant restarts.
- Two columns written down where the players can see them: CHANCES and GOALS.

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Set it up in 60 seconds.** Define a chance out loud and simply: *a shot from inside the box with a defender not blocking it.* Everybody needs the same definition.
2. **Minutes 0–4 — play, and count aloud.** *That's a chance. That's not — too far out.* The commentary teaches the definition faster than any explanation.
3. **Minute 4 — one question:** *how many chances have we made in four minutes?* Then: *how many would we need in a match?* Three or four is a realistic answer for under-12.

4. Minutes 5–11 — **twelve seconds per attack**, scored in both columns. Announce both totals at minute 8.
5. Minute 11 — **reduce to eight seconds**. The chance has to arrive faster, which forces the direct routes.
6. Minutes 11–15 — **rotate so everybody defends at least once**.

RULES & SCORING

- **Twelve seconds per attack**, eight from minute 11.
- **A chance = a shot from inside the box that is not blocked**. Score it whether or not it goes in.
- **A goal also scores in the goals column** — the two are counted separately, not instead of each other.
- Defenders score 1 for winning the ball or running the clock down.
- Rotate four players into defence every three minutes.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	All of this theme under time pressure. The weakest link will show itself within four minutes and that is what to work on next.
Tactical	Six against four should produce a chance almost every time , and when it doesn't the reason is nearly always speed — the ball moved too slowly and four defenders became organised. Ask which of the three routes is being neglected and the answer is usually the cutback, because it takes the longest.
Physical	Repeated attacking sprints. Rotate on schedule; defenders get more rest than attackers, which is fair.
Psychological	The two-column score is the point of the practice. A group who make nine chances and score two should finish the practice pleased, and it is your job to make sure they do.
Social	Ask <i>who made that one?</i> after every chance. It takes four seconds and it changes the culture of a squad.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Chances not being created at all	Six against four should be enough. <i>What are we doing with the extra two?</i>
Everything going down one side	Back to Session 31 — <i>which side has the space?</i>
Shots from outside the box	Not a chance by the definition. Say so calmly and consistently.
The clock running out	<i>Twelve seconds is ages. What took so long?</i>
Only the same two players finishing	Check whether the others are arriving in the box at all.
Defenders organising well	Praise it — a well-defended attack is a compliment to this theme.

ASK THEM

- How many chances have we made?
- How many would we need in a match?
- Which of the three routes are we not using?
- Who made that one?
- What took so long?
- Six against four — where are the spare two?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Eight seconds from the start.	Sixteen seconds.
Six against five.	Six against three.
A chance only counts if three attackers are in the box.	Widen the definition — any shot from inside the box counts.
Two touches for the attackers.	Remove the clock for the first five minutes.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

A chance created in most attacks.

All three routes appearing.

The chances column well ahead of the goals column, and the squad content with that.

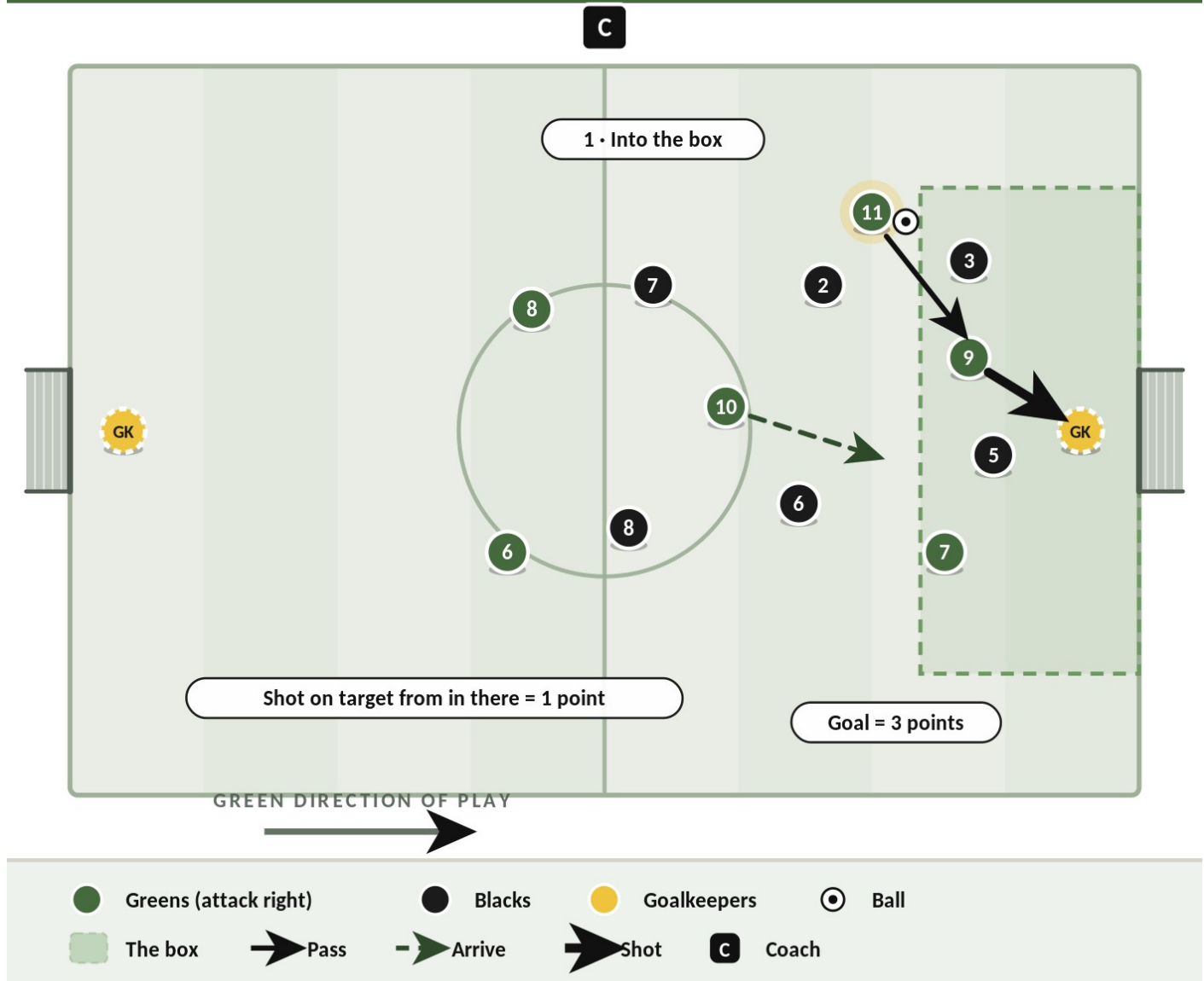
Different players finishing.

Somebody naming the creator without being asked.

32.3 THE CHANCE COUNT (6 v 6 + GKs)

A normal match in which a chance is worth a point and a goal is worth three. It removes the all-or-nothing feeling of finishing practice and rewards the team that keeps making things happen even when the finishing is poor.

44 x 30 m • a chance scores, a goal scores more • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- One pitch, 44 x 30 m, both full goals with a goalkeeper in each.
- **Boxes marked at both ends.**
- 6 v 6 outfield plus two goalkeepers (14). With 15–16, roll substitutes every two minutes.
- Spare balls behind both goals.
- Coach on the halfway line, judging and announcing every chance.

HOW IT RUNS

1. Teams, bibs and keepers in 60 seconds.
2. Explain the scoring in one sentence: A shot on target from inside the box is one. A goal is three.

3. **Minutes 0–5 — announce every chance out loud** with the creator's name as well as the shooter's.
4. **Minute 5 — one question:** *which team is making more? Why?* The answer is usually about the number of players getting into the box, which is Session 29 again.
5. **Minutes 6–12 — competition** with both running totals called out at minute 9.
6. **Minutes 12–15 — free play**, scoring retained, and the squad should now be generating chances without any prompting.

RULES & SCORING

- **A shot on target from inside the box = 1 point. A goal = 3 points.**
- Shots from outside the box score nothing, on target or not.
- Keepers restart within six seconds to keep the tempo high.
- No offside.
- The coach's judgement on what counts is immediate and final.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Finishing under fatigue, and the first touch inside the box that makes a shot possible.
Tactical	More players in the box means more chances, and more chances means more goals — in that order, and the order matters. A team chasing goals directly will shoot from anywhere; a team chasing chances will get into the box, which is where goals come from anyway.
Physical	Standard match load with high tempo. Substitute regularly.
Psychological	This is the practice that rescues a struggling finisher's evening. If somebody has missed four, make sure they are credited for the four chances they got into — and say why.
Social	By now <i>who made that?</i> should be coming from the players. If it is, the block has done something beyond football.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Shooting from distance to chase points	Nothing scored, calmly, every time.
One player in the box	Session 29 again — the chance count will be low and the reason is visible.
Chances being made and not recognised	Announce them. Every one.
A team behind on goals but ahead on chances	Point it out — it is the most useful thing they can learn tonight.
Goalkeepers being overworked	Rotate at the halfway point.
Quality dropping in the last three minutes	Expected. Let it.

ASK THEM

- Which team is making more chances? Why?
- How many of us are getting into the box?
- Is it better to make five chances or score one lucky goal?
- Who made that one?
- What would our chance count have been in September?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Only shots from inside the box that follow a cutback count.	Any shot from inside the box counts, on target or not.
A chance requires two attackers in the box.	Smaller pitch (38 × 28 m) so the box is closer.
Bigger pitch (50 × 32 m).	A goal is worth two rather than three.
Two touches inside the box.	5 v 5 so there is more space.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Chances being created regularly by both teams.

Multiple attackers in the box.

Few shots from distance.

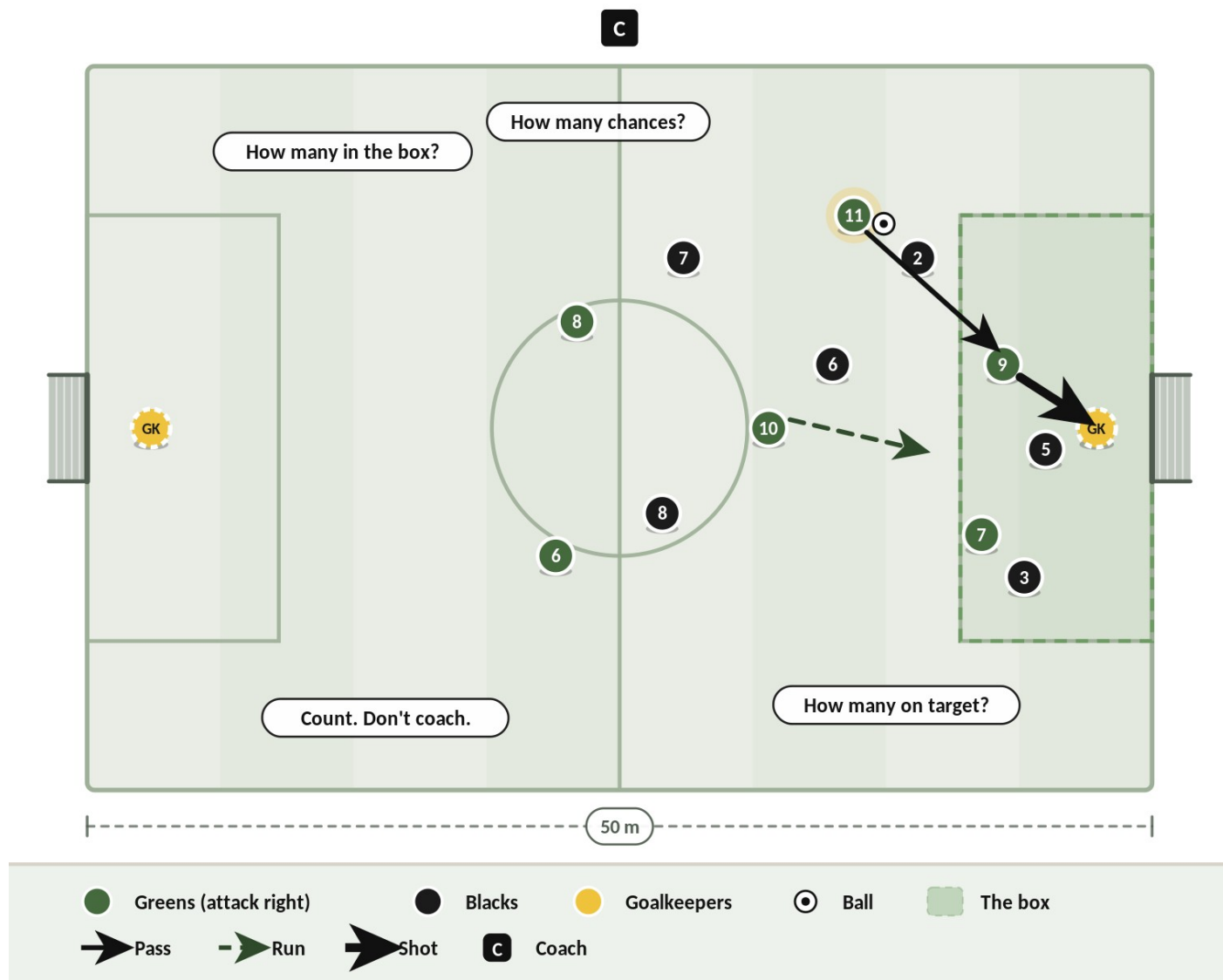
The chance totals being higher than the goal totals, and nobody minding.

Players crediting creators.

32.4 THE ATTACKING EXAM (7 v 7)

No conditions, no coaching, and four things counted in seven minutes of silence: chances created, shots on target, attackers in the box, and goals. Four numbers that between them describe everything this theme was about.

50 x 34 m • no conditions, no coaching for seven minutes • just count • 15 minutes



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SET UP

- 50 × 34 m with full-size goals and marked boxes. **No conditions.**
- 7 v 7 including goalkeepers (14). With 15–16, play 8v8 or roll subs every 90 seconds.
- 2-3-1 shape assigned and then left alone.
- Four spare balls behind each goal.
- **Coach on the halfway line with a notebook and four columns.**

HOW IT RUNS

1. **Keep the bibs and teams. Shape in 30 seconds.**
2. **Say one sentence:** *Normal football. I'm not going to say anything for a while.* Then stop talking.

3. **Minutes 0–7 — complete silence.** Count four things: chances created, shots on target, the number of attackers in the box each time the ball arrives there, and goals.
4. **Minute 7 — drinks break.** Read the four numbers out flatly, then ask one question: *what do those numbers tell you?*
5. **Minutes 8–13 — play on.** Two individual interventions maximum, only on what they identified themselves.
6. **Final two minutes — free play,** then straight into the review page while they are still on the pitch.

RULES & SCORING

- **No conditions.** Goals are goals.
- Keepers restart within eight seconds. No offside.
- **The coach says nothing for the first seven minutes.**
- Two individual interventions maximum after the break.
- Slide tackles still banned — the one rule that stays from this theme.

COACHING POINTS — THE FOUR CORNERS

Technical	Whatever survives. Note it rather than fixing it.
Tactical	The four this theme markers: chances created, shots on target, attackers in the box, and whether the three routes in are being used.
Physical	End of a hard block. Expect quality to fall and let it.
Psychological	Reading four numbers out neutrally is the most useful five seconds of the session. Do not editorialise; the numbers speak.
Social	Listen for whether the players credit creators without being prompted. That is the cultural result of this theme.

WATCH FOR

WHAT YOU'LL SEE	WHAT TO DO
Chances created	The number that summarises the block. Anything above six in seven minutes is good at this age.
Attackers in the box when the ball arrives there	Three is the target and the average will probably be closer to one and a half.
Shots on target as a proportion of shots	The finishing measure.
Which of the three routes in is missing	
Whether anybody follows a shot in	Session 30's habit, unprompted.
The last two minutes	Everything you need for the review is in them.

ASK THEM

- What do those four numbers tell you?
- How many chances did we make?
- How many of us were in the box?
- Which route in did we never use?
- Are we better at scoring than we were in September? Honestly?
- What's the one thing we'd fix first?

ADJUST IT

HARDER	EASIER
Smaller pitch (44 × 30 m) so chances come faster.	Bigger pitch (55 × 38 m).
Both teams press high.	6 v 6 on 44 × 30 m with rolling subs.
Two-touch outside the box.	Count two things rather than four.
Swap all positions at the halfway point.	Reduce to ten minutes and give the time to the review.

IT'S WORKING WHEN

Six or more chances created in seven minutes.

More than one attacker in the box most times.

A reasonable proportion of shots on target.

At least two of the three routes in being used.

Somebody following a shot in unprompted.

A full page of notes.

Finish, match day & homework

REFLECTION — 5 MINUTES, SITTING DOWN

- This is the **end of this theme** — take the full five minutes.
- *What are the three ways in?* Behind, past him, cut it back.
- *What do we do instead of shooting?* Pass it into the goal.
- *How many of us get in the box?*
- *What makes an extra player useful?* Somebody being occupied.
- *How many chances did we make tonight?* Read the number out.
- **Name every player once** and give each of them one thing that has improved since you ran Session 29 — and for at least three of them, make it something they did without the ball.
- Finish with what's coming: *last month. We work out how to win matches, and then we get ready for eleven-a-side.*

MATCH-DAY LINK

MATCH OBJECTIVES	WATCH FOR	ASK AFTERWARDS
- Make six chances, whatever the score. - Three attackers in the box whenever the ball goes in. - Side-foot the finishes.	- Count the chances. It is the single most useful thing you can record at this age. - Count the attackers in the box three or four times across the match. - Whether the squad credits creators or only celebrates finishers.	- <i>How many chances did we make?</i> - <i>How many of us were in the box?</i> - <i>Who made the goals?</i>

HOMEWORK — "THE WHOLE MOVE" · 15 MINUTES, THREE TIMES BEFORE YOU NEXT TRAIN

- **The sequence alone.** Against a wall: play a pass, sprint after it, carry it five metres, then side-foot it firmly back to a marker behind you as if cutting back. Twenty repetitions. It is the whole block in one exercise and needs nobody else.
- **Finishing under fatigue.** Ten shuttle runs of 15 m, then immediately twenty side-foot finishes at a target. Repeat twice. Almost every missed chance in a match is taken by a tired player.
- **Watch a game with a job.** Fifteen minutes of any professional match, counting **chances rather than goals**. Write down how many each team made and how many they scored. The ratio — usually somewhere between five and ten chances per goal — is the most useful number in football and almost no under-12 has ever been told it.
- *Optional extra:* pick one goal and work backwards through everything that made it possible. It is usually four or five actions long, and the finish is only the last one.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

Same theme — attacking and finishing. These cover the same ground from other angles and can be run in any order, before or after this one: **29** Penetration; **30** Finishing; **31** Attacking Overloads.

A natural follow-on. Session 33 — Match Intelligence and the Bridge to Eleven-a-Side. These four are about judgement rather than technique — what to do with what the squad can already do. Game management — what to do at 1-0 up with ten minutes left, and at 1-0 down. Adapting to what the opposition are actually doing. And then two sessions bridging to eleven-a-side: the extra positions, the bigger pitch, and what changes when there are two more players on each team.

Or simply run this one again. Nothing in the set has to be done once. A session repeated three weeks later with a harder progression is usually worth more than a new session the players are meeting cold.

Review — where the squad stands on attacking and finishing

Complete this within a day of Session 32. This theme is the one that turns everything else into goals, and the honest measure is the chance count from Session 32.4 — how many chances the squad created in seven minutes with nobody coaching them.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE SEEING

AREA	WHAT YOU SHOULD NOW BE SEEING
Getting in	The three routes — in behind, past him, cutback. A squad that uses all three is genuinely hard to defend; one that only shoots from distance has not arrived yet.
Runs before passes	Players moving before the ball is played rather than waiting to be found. This is the habit that most separates a coached team from an uncoached one.
The cutback	Reaching the byline before crossing, and cutting it back along the ground. If this appears in matches, it is the clearest single sign the block has landed.
Finishing	Side-foot into the corner, taken early, followed in. Compare the proportion of shots on target with September if you recorded it.
Bodies in the box	Three attackers when the ball arrives. Most U12 teams manage one; if yours manages two consistently that is real progress.
Overloads	Carrying at a defender to commit him, and switching the ball to build an overload rather than running to it.
Vocabulary	In behind, cut it back, arrive late, follow it in, commit him, the spare man, chances. Fifty phrases across the set.

SQUAD AUDIT — FILL THIS IN

QUESTION	PLAYERS
How many chances did the squad create in the seven silent minutes of Session 32.4?	
How many attackers were in the box, on average, when the ball arrived there?	
Which of the three routes in does the squad never use?	
Who creates the most chances? Is it the same player who scores the most?	
Has anybody started following shots in without being told?	
Which player has improved most at finishing since you ran Session 29? Have you told them?	
Do the players credit creators, or only finishers?	
Has the squad's shots-on-target proportion changed since September?	

IF THE SQUAD HAS THIS COMFORTABLY

- **Keep counting chances at every match for the rest of the season.** One number, written on your hand if necessary. It will tell you more than the scoreline.
- **Add a finishing element to every warm-up from now on.** Ten minutes a week of side-foot finishing is worth more than one whole session of it.

- **Give the squad a chance target rather than a score target** before matches. *Make eight* is a better instruction than *win*, and it is entirely within their control.
- **Start rotating the striker.** Three or four players should be comfortable playing there by the end of the season.
- **Introduce set-piece attacking** if there is time — corners and free-kicks are worth a surprising number of goals at 9v9 and this curriculum has deliberately not covered them.

IF THE SQUAD IS STRUGGLING

- **Drop to one route in.** The cutback alone, done well, will produce more goals than three routes done vaguely.
- **Spend a whole session on finishing technique.** If the shots-on-target proportion is very low, no amount of chance creation will help.
- **Check the physical side.** Getting three players into the box requires running that a tired squad cannot do.
- **Look at the balance.** A team that pours forward will concede on the counter, and this theme's rest defence may need reinforcing before this theme can be used safely.
- **Be patient with finishing.** It improves more slowly than anything else in football and is heavily affected by growth and confidence. A player who cannot finish in March often can by September.
- **Watch the culture.** If missing a chance is greeted with groans from teammates, fix that before anything technical — it is the single biggest cause of players stopping shooting.

CARRY THIS FORWARD

The three habits worth carrying into anything you run next: getting bodies into the box, the run before the pass, and side-footing the finish.

The chance count is your ongoing measure, and it is the best one this curriculum has produced. Track it every match.

Where this sits. Everything the game asks technically and tactically has now been covered. The last four sessions are about judgement — managing a match, adapting to an opponent, and being ready for eleven-a-side.