

OJFC Coach Guide - U9/10



A simple guide to help support your team through the transition to 7v7 football.



Purpose

This guide is designed to support all coaches, especially parents new to coaching, in transitioning their team into the 7v7 format whilst continuing to create a fun, development-focused football environment for U9 and U10 players. At this stage, players are starting to grasp basic teamwork, positional play, and game rules, but enjoyment and skill development should still come first!

Success at this age isn't about winning—it's about growing confidence, learning new skills, and making decisions on the field. Players should be encouraged to experiment, make mistakes, and improve through play while gradually understanding concepts like passing, spacing, and teamwork.

If players enjoy the game and feel encouraged, they will stay engaged, keep improving, and carry their passion for football into the future!



Key Coaching Principles



Fun

Football should be enjoyable! Young players learn best when they are engaged and having fun. Keep sessions light, positive, and full of energy.

Touches on the Ball

Every player should have as many interactions with the ball as possible. Avoid long lines or waiting time—maximise movement and involvement.

Player-Centred Coaching

Encourage kids to explore and make decisions. Let them try things, make mistakes, and learn through experience rather than constant instruction. Drills will feel ‘messy’ — that’s okay!

What To Expect

More Game Awareness

Players start to understand positions and teamwork but still love to dribble and take on opponents. Encourage both passing and individual creativity.

Developing Coordination

Kids are improving their control and movement but will still make mistakes. Keep instructions simple and focus on building confidence.

New Rules & Responsibilities

Goalkeepers, offside, corners and throw ins are now in the game! Introduce these rules gradually with plenty of patience and positive reinforcement.



Coach Tip: Ensure trainings and games remain enjoyable for the players. The more they enjoy the game, the more they will learn and improve!

Key Differences

Throw Ins

A throw-in restarts play when the ball crosses the sideline. Players must use both hands, keep both feet on the ground, and throw from behind their head to a teammate.

Retreat Lines

The retreat line ensures young players can play out from the back. On goal kicks, opponents must move behind a line marking a third of the pitch until the ball is in play.

Goal Kicks and Corners

A goal kick is awarded when the attacking team puts the ball over the goal line. A corner kick is awarded when the defending team does. Both are key parts of the game!

Goalkeepers and Formations

Goalkeepers can use their hands inside the penalty area. Formations help organise a team, ensuring balance in attack and defence. Teaching simple positioning concepts helps young players understand teamwork.

Throw Ins

Basic Rules

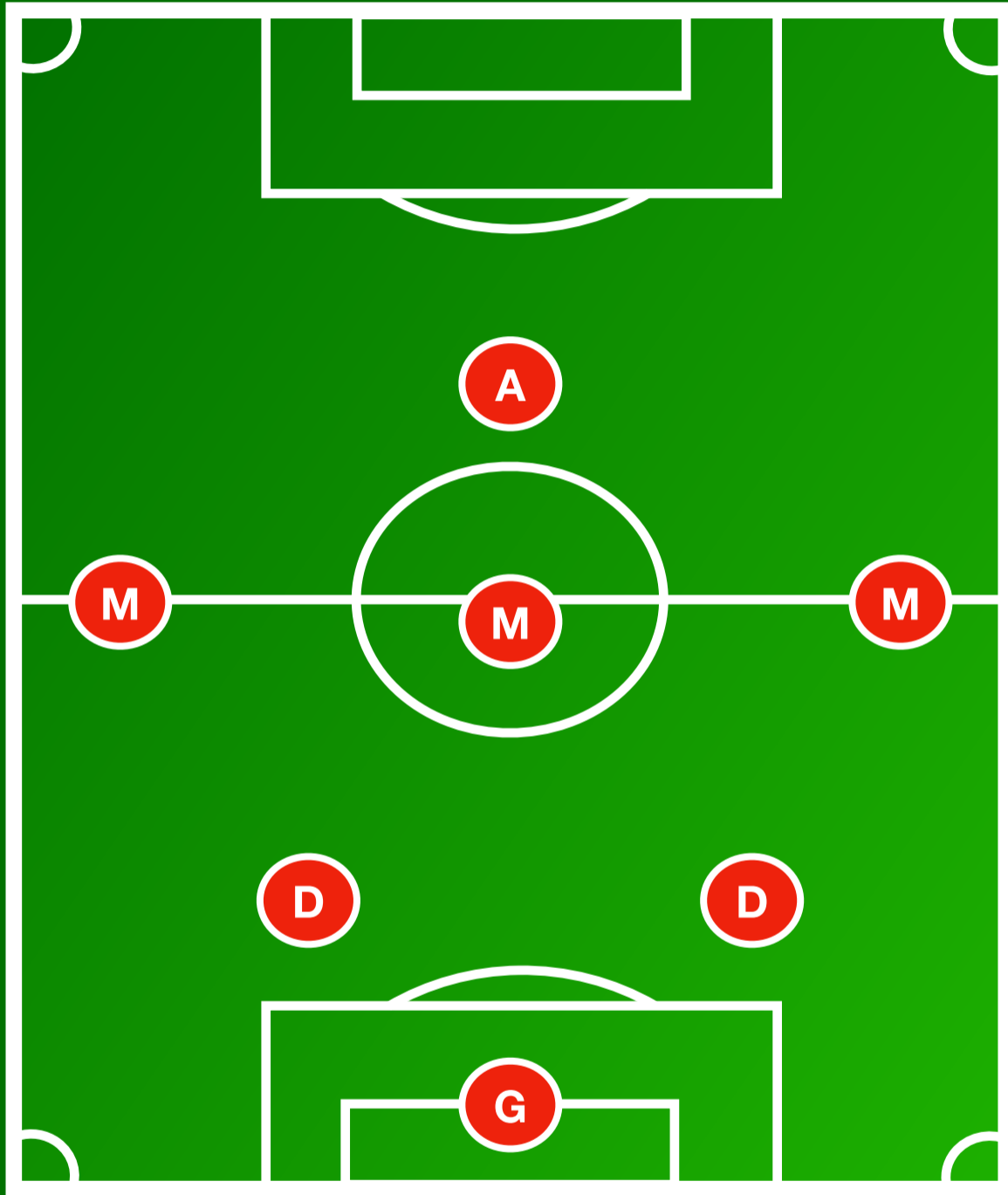
- ▶ The ball must be throw in using two hands on the ball.
- ▶ Both feet must be in contact with the ground during the whole throw.
- ▶ The player must be facing towards the field then taking the throw in.
- ▶ The ball must start behind the head and be thrown from in front of the head.

Cues for Players

- ▶ “Superglue your feet into the ground”
- ▶ “Make a W with your hands behind the ball”
- ▶ “Pull the ball back behind you and then fire it forward like a bow and arrow”



Formations



Formation: 1-2-3-1

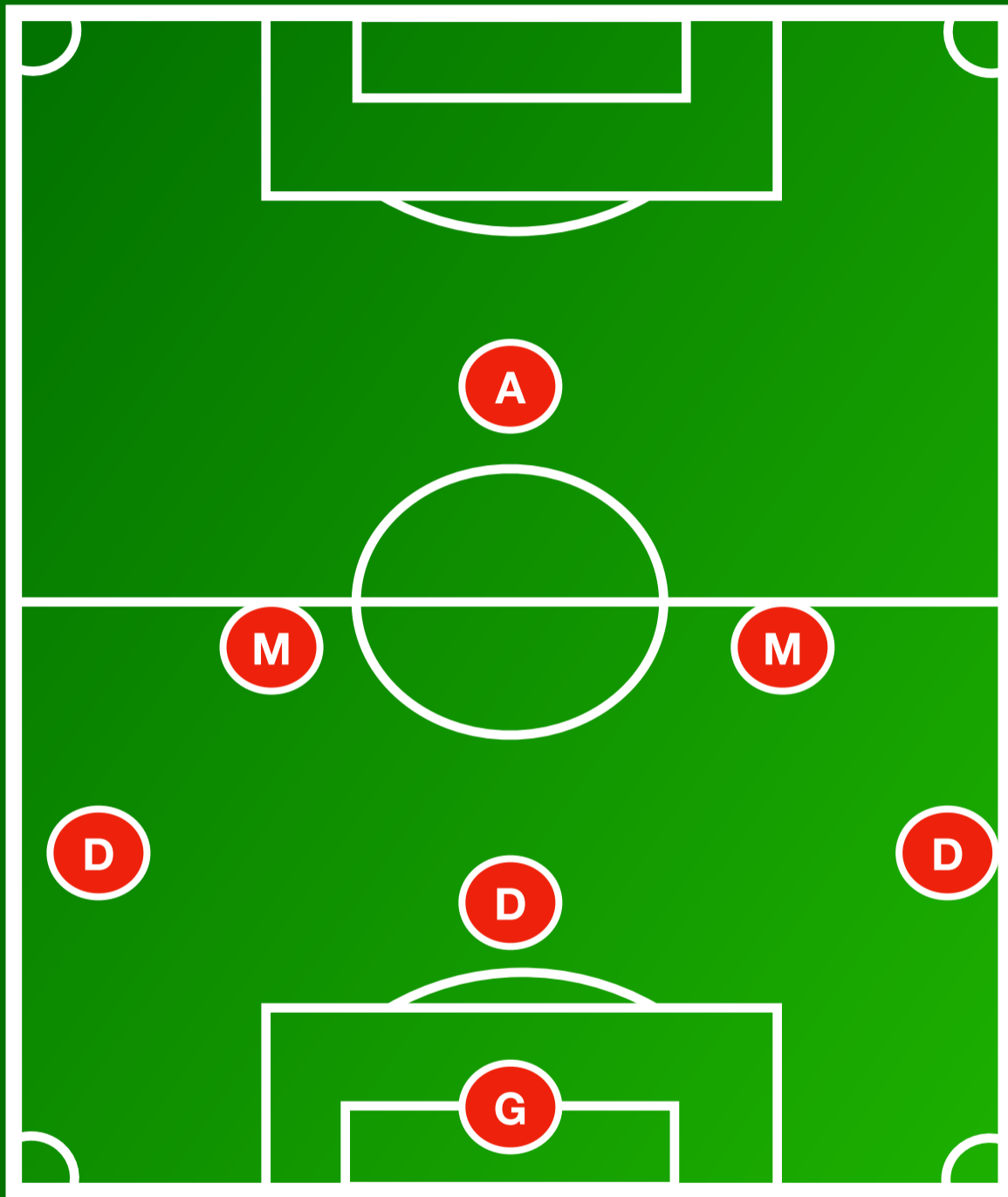
For the size of the field and number of players available, the recommended formation is a 1-2-3-1. This formation consists of a goalkeeper, two defenders, three midfielders and one attacker.

This formation allows players to easily spread out and create easy passing options to move the ball forward.



Coach Tip: Each position on the field requires players to use different skills. By rotating players through all positions on the pitch, we are creating well-rounded footballers!

Formations



Formation: 1-3-2-1 (the Xmas Tree)

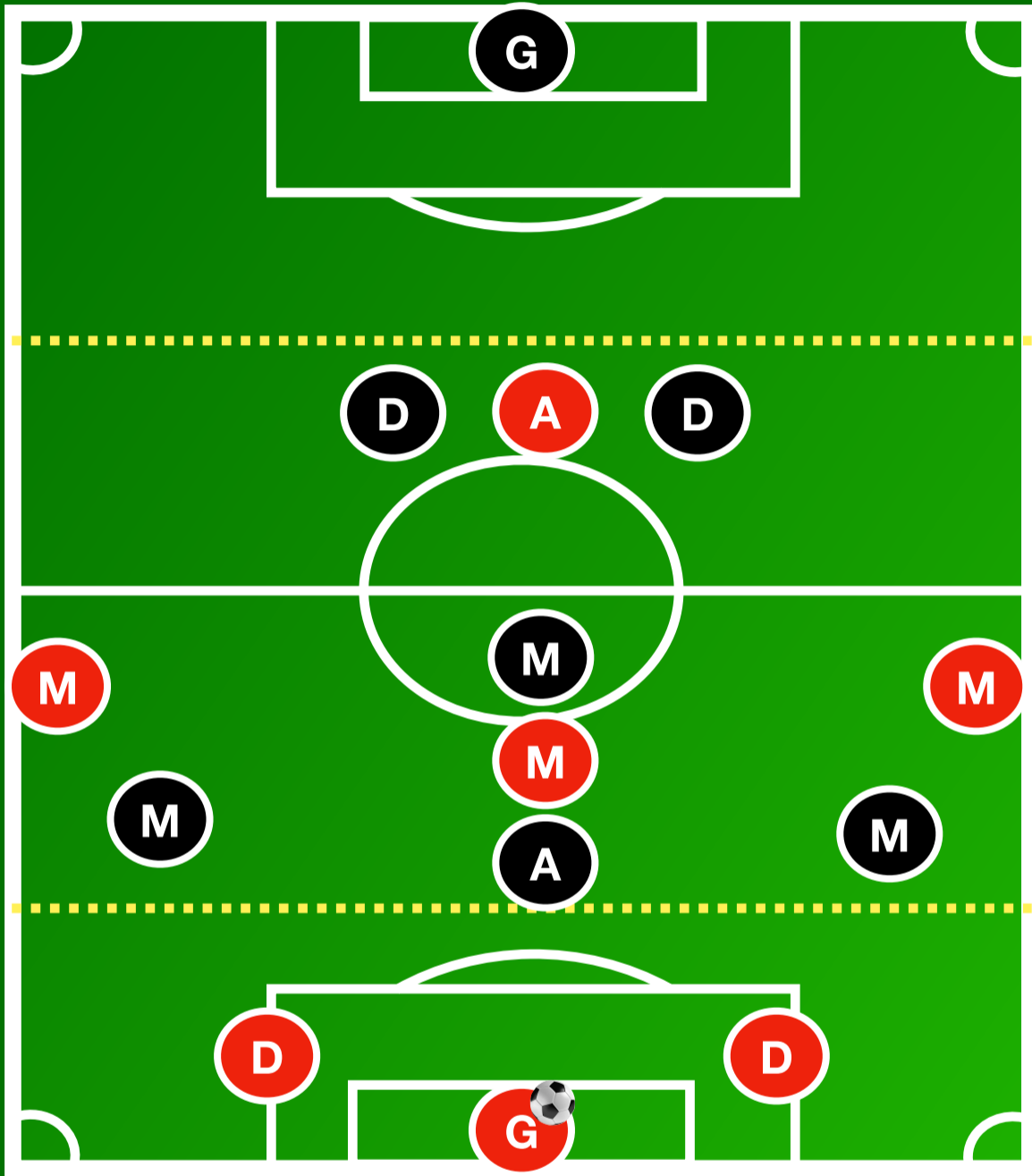
For the size of the field and number of players available, another formation you can use is a 1-3-2-1. This formation consists of a goalkeeper, three defenders, two midfielders and one attacker.

This formation allows players to easily spread out and create easy passing options to move the ball forward.



Coach Tip: Players at this age have incredible imaginations! The Xmas tree formation is easy for player visualise and understand the position they should be in.

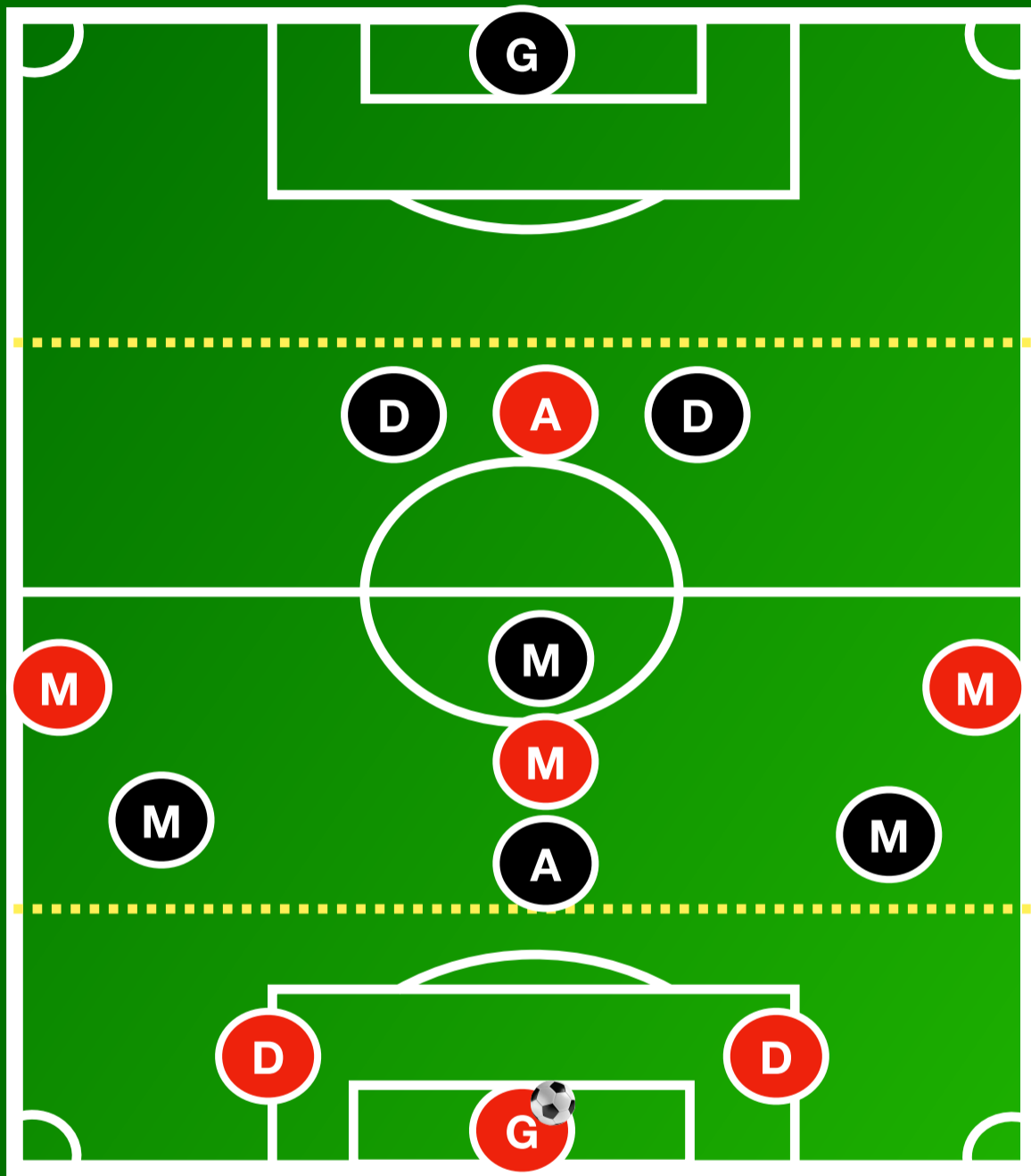
Retreating Line



- ▶ When the goalkeeper has the ball (from a goal kick or in hand), the opposing team must move behind the retreating line (usually the third of the field).
- ▶ The opposition may cross the line once the ball is the defender has touched the ball.
- ▶ This gives the team in possession a chance to play out from the back without immediate pressure.
- ▶ For 7v7 grades, the retreat line also acts as the offside line for the attacking team (rather than halfway).

For more detailed information on the retreat line, see [this video by New Zealand Football](#).

Goal Kicks



It is important for kids in this age group to learn the basics of **‘playing out’** from goal kicks.

Playing out involves taking a short goal kick and trying to move the ball forward with control bypassing or dribbling.

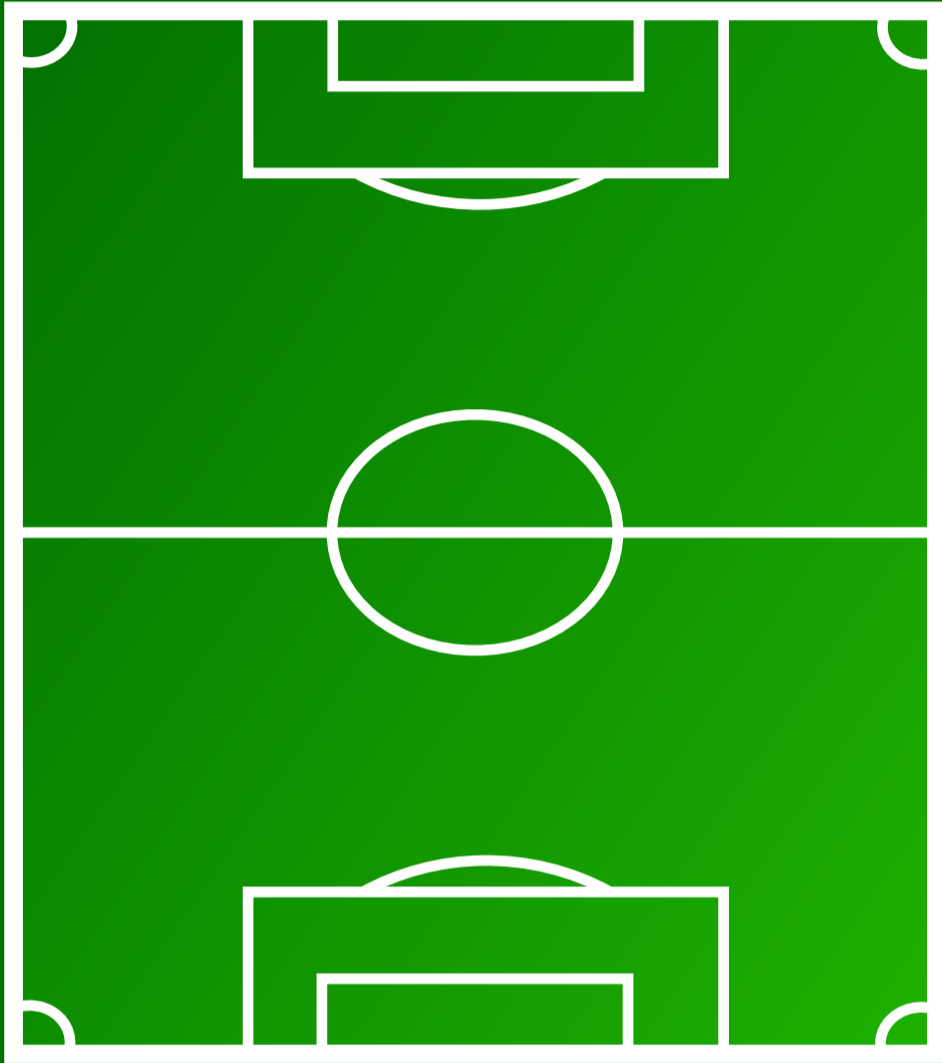
Some key things to remember for goal kicks are:

- Make the most of the space, ensure the attacker is high up the pitch and our widest players are close to the sidelines.
- Encourage short passing with control, rather than big passes from the goalkeeper for players to chase.



Coach Tip: At first, players will make lots of mistakes when trying to ‘play out’ from a goal kick and the team will likely concede goals as a result. Be patient with this and trust that it will lead to long-term success.

Corners



When the defending team kicks the ball out of play over the goal line, a corner is awarded! It is important at this age we begin to teach players the ideas of attacking and defending corners. Here are some key things to note!

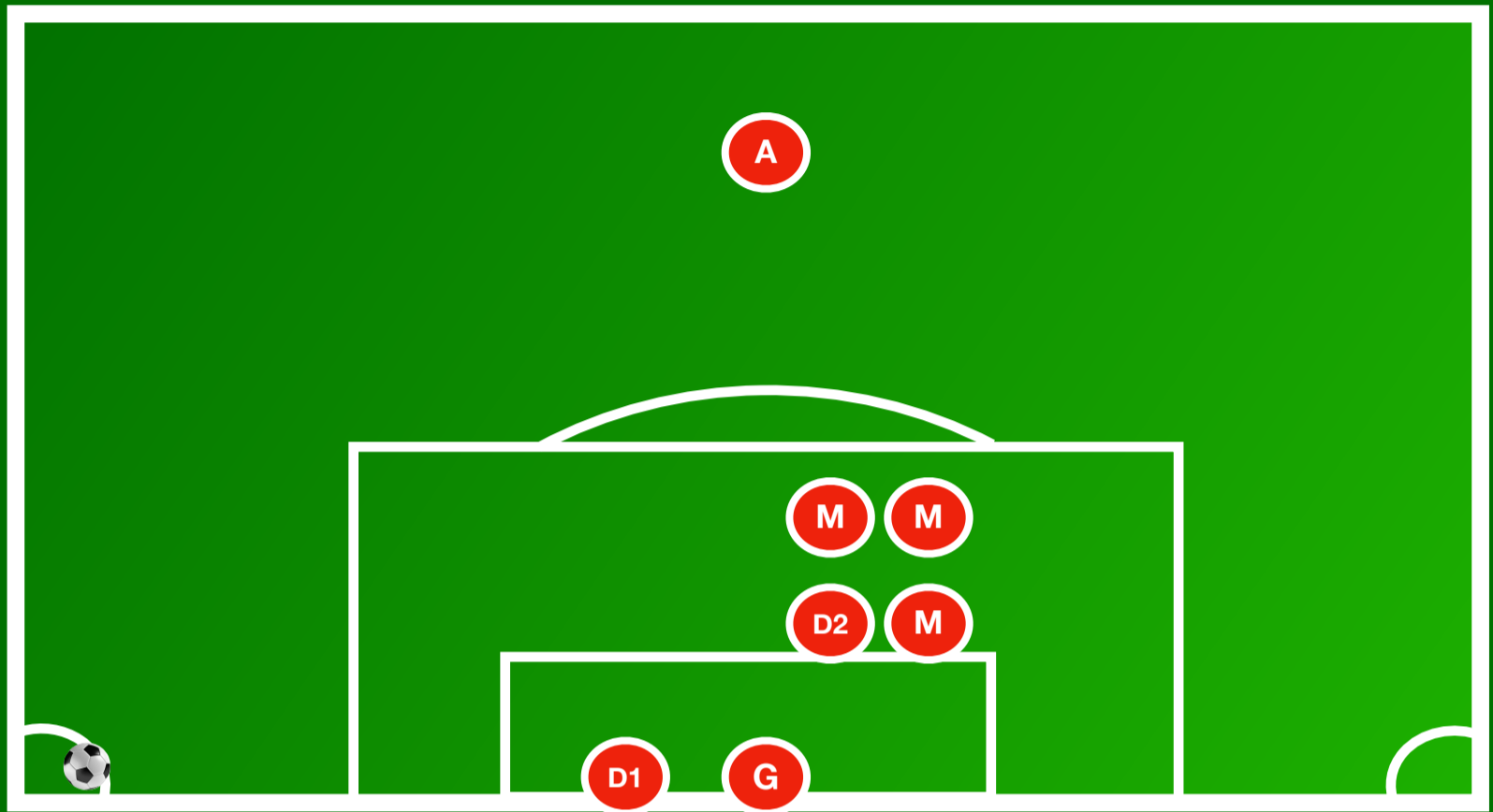
Attacking Corners

- ▶ The player taking the corner may not touch the ball again until another player has touched it.
- ▶ If there is an arc painted on the pitch, the ball must be placed within that area. If not, it should be placed close to the corner of the pitch.

Defending Corners

- ▶ No defenders are allowed within five metres of the ball before it is kicked.
- ▶ Encourage 'goal-side' marking from the defenders (being positioned between the attacker and the goal).

Corners - Defending



Defending corner kicks teaches U9/10 players awareness, positioning, and teamwork.

Learning to mark opponents and clear the ball are important defensive concepts. Early exposure to defensive roles builds confidence and lays the foundation for stronger defending as they progress in football.

Here are some of the key roles:

- ▶ The **goalkeeper** should learn to try and catch or push away anything cross near their goal.
- ▶ The **front post** defender (D1) should be positioned within arms reach of the near post. It is their role to clear any cross that comes short or block a shot at that post.
- ▶ The four **man markers** (M, D2) should be marking the opposition attackers 'goal side' to prevent easy shots at goal.
- ▶ The **attacker** (A) should be positioned to receive any clearances and start attacks towards the opponents goal.