

DEVELOPMENT OF OFFENSIVE TACTICS IN MEDIUM GROUPS OF 10-12 YEAR OLD FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Abstract:

The paper aims to develop offensive tactics in medium groups in children aged 10 to 12, with the main aim of improving collaboration in attack and finishing efficiency. The hypothesis from which it was started claims that, if at the age of 10–12, initiation into collaboration tactics in small (1vs1, 2vs1, 2vs2) and medium (3vs2, 3vs3) groups is approached, significant progress is achieved in offensive play. The research was carried out on the synthetic field of the “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, using dimensions adapted to the 5+1 and 6+1 game systems. The experimental group was formed by 12 children registered at ACS Luceafărul Bucovina Suceava 2012, selected due to their constant collaboration in the last four years.

This age group was chosen because children demonstrate increased receptivity, team spirit in formation and the ability to make tactical decisions. The applied means aimed at developing tactical thinking, collaboration and creativity in situations of adversity. The results obtained from the applied tests highlighted progress, confirming the hypothesis and revealing the efficiency of the experimental method. The general conclusion indicates that the early and structured approach to the game in small and medium groups contributes decisively to the development of offensive collaboration and to increasing the efficiency of finishing among children aged 10–12.

Introduction

In general, the essence of sports games consists in the strategy or tactics of reasoning and producing essential changes, desired at certain moments of the game. The terms tactics and strategy are always present in the vocabulary of coaches and players. These two terms come from the military field, from the "art of war" and

are of Greek origin. "Strategos" in Greek means "general" or "the art, skill of a general", and tactics refer to aspects related to concrete arrangement in certain

situations. In the theory of war, strategy deals with large spaces, long periods of time and large movements of forces, and tactics concretely cosmeticizes the performance of actions on a small scale of time, space, and forces.

The correlation between technique and tactics plays an essential role because tactics represent in the game the active contribution of reason, through which the preparation of the players and their own team is valued, taking into account the particularities of the opponent, and technique is the one that materializes tactical thinking. [1,3,6]

Tactics represent the totality of individual and collective actions of the players of a team, organized and coordinated in a unitary and rational manner, within the limits of the game rules and sportsmanship, with the aim of achieving success, by utilizing the particularities of one's own team, as well as the characteristics of the opposing team. [2,4]

Tactical training is the means by which players assimilate methods and possible ways of organizing and acting at the offensive and defensive levels, in order to achieve the established objective. (to score goals and achieve victory). Regarding the correlation between tactics and technique, it can be stated that the basis of the success of the tactical plan, in any sport, is the high technical level and as a result, technique can represent a limiting factor for tactical maneuvers, and tactics are a function of the player's technique. [6,8,9]

Tactics presuppose the existence of a unitary conception of the game, a conception that is achieved through the sum of game actions, selected, organized and coordinated unitarily, according to well-established rules and principles. [7,10,11,12]

The concept of tactics presupposes:

- Capitalizing on the somatic, functional, motor and technical potential of the players, in real game conditions;
- Elaborating the didactic strategy that underlies the organization, preparation and evolution of the players, depending on the particularities of the opponents;
- Mental preparation of the players to understand the tactical model and the methods of its implementation.

Tactics presents several characteristics, determined by the need for its efficiency, the activities of the players and its historical development.:

- Accessibility
- Elasticity
- Creativity – evolution.

The constituent elements of the tactical factor are:

- Game conception;

- Game system;
- Tactical plan;
- Tactical actions.

"Effective offensive tactics at an early age require not only numerical superiority, but also functional superiority, that is, the ability of players to collaborate spontaneously, to recognize the optimal moment of action, and to build effective playing relationships, all developed through systematic exposure to situations of controlled adversity." [13]

"Training for children must integrate technical, tactical and decision-making components in a balanced way, in a stimulating environment that promotes exploration, learning through play and assuming tactical responsibility. Without these components, the training of the modern player remains incomplete." [5]

Table 1. Results of initial and final testing

Test	Media inițială (X)	Media finală (X)	Abatere standard inițială (G)	Abatere standard finală (G)	t (t- Student)	p (p-value)
1 vs 1	2.1667	3.8333	0.7528	0.7528	7.91	0.0005
2 vs 1	1.6667	3.6667	1.1547	1.1547	∞	0.0
2 vs 2	1.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	∞	0.0
3 vs 2	1.5	3.5	0.7071	0.7071	∞	0.0
3 vs 3	1.0	3.0	1.4142	1.4142	∞	0.0

Material-method

The research aims to investigate the efficiency of a methodical approach aimed at developing offensive tactics in medium groups in footballers aged between 10 and 12 years, with the central objective of improving collaboration in the attack phase and optimizing the finishing process. The formulated research hypothesis assumed that systematic initiation, in this age category, in tactical structures of the 1vs1, 2vs1, 2vs2, respectively 3vs2 and 3vs3 type, contributes significantly to the formation of collective offensive behaviors and to increasing efficiency in the finishing phases.

The study was conducted between February 3 and June 20, 2025, on the synthetic field of the "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, using playing spaces

adapted to the competitive requirements corresponding to the 5+1 and 6+1 systems, in accordance with the regulations specific to the age group. The experimental group consisted of 12 athletes registered at the ACS Luceafărul Bucovina Suceava club, selected on the basis of a consolidated pedagogical relationship, given my constant collaboration with them over the past four years. The training program involved three weekly training sessions (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), lasting 75 minutes, during which specific means were applied aimed at developing tactical cooperation and decision-making in dynamic game contexts. To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, relevant statistical methods in applied research were used. The arithmetic mean (\bar{X}) allowed highlighting the general level of performance before and after the intervention, while the standard deviation (SD) reflected the degree of homogeneity of the group. The coefficient of variation (CV%) expressed the relative variability of performances, facilitating the comparative analysis between the initial and final tests. To determine the significance of the differences between the means of the two tests, the t-test (t-Student) was applied, and the p-value (p-value) indicated the level of statistical significance. The results confirmed the validity of the hypothesis, highlighting the progress of the subjects and the efficiency of the methodological approach applied towards the development of offensive tactics in the context of team play.

For this research, we chose various phases of the game, of adversity, in order to be able to evaluate the number of successes. 5 attempts will be allocated for each test, and at the end of the attempts, the number of successes or failures will be evaluated.

1. The first test consists of a 1vs1 duel (1 attacker against 1 defender);
2. The second test consists of a 2vs1 duel (2 attackers against 1 defender);
3. The third test consists of a 2vs2 duel (2 attackers against 2 defenders);
4. The fourth test consists of a 3vs2 duel (3 forwards against 2 defenders)
5. The last test consists of a 3vs3 duel (3 forwards against 3 defenders).

Results

The analysis of the results obtained from the application of tactical tests aimed to evaluate the impact of the methodical intervention on the offensive collaboration capacity of athletes aged between 10 and 12 years. By correlating the quantitative data (means, standard deviations, coefficient of variation) with the qualitative indicators observed during the exercises, the aim was to highlight the efficiency of the proposed means. Interpreting statistical data allows not only to quantify progress, but also to understand group dynamics, decision-making mechanisms and how constant exposure to adversity contributes to the development of tactical thinking and collective coordination. The application of the t-Student test for paired samples provided an objective framework for validating the hypothesis, highlighting the extent to which the differences between the initial and final tests are

statistically significant. Also, the analysis of CV% values provides essential information regarding the homogeneity of progress within the group, reflecting the degree of cohesion and tactical adaptation of the players. In the following, the results of each test are briefly presented, followed by a detailed interpretation from a statistical and pedagogical perspective.

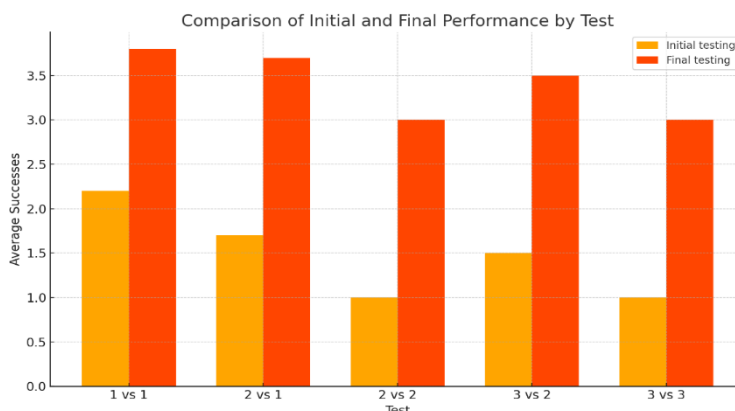


Diagram 1 - Graphical interpretation of the applied tests

The analysis of the data obtained following the application of the five tactical tests (1vs1, 2vs1, 2vs2, 3vs2 and 3vs3) highlights a clear and constant evolution of the level of performance in terms of collaboration in the attack phase. The average values obtained at the final testing are clearly superior to the initial ones in all the analyzed situations, which reflects the efficiency of the applied training program.

The t-Student scores and the associated p-values indicate a high statistical significance of the progress recorded ($p < 0.05$), confirming the validity of the research hypothesis. In the case of the 2vs1, 2vs2, 3vs2 and 3vs3 tests, all subjects progressed uniformly, which led to a standard deviation of the differences equal to zero and, implicitly, to a theoretical infinite t-value. This fact emphasizes not only the coherence of the progress, but also the high degree of homogeneity of the tactical development among the investigated group.

The reduction in the coefficient of variation (CV%) from the initial to the final testing in all samples reflects an increase in group homogeneity, a better understanding of tactical roles and a consolidation of decision-making mechanisms in the game context. In conclusion, the statistical data support the effectiveness of the methodical intervention focused on situations of tactical adversity and confirm that the systematic approach to the game in small and medium groups contributes significantly to the development of offensive collaboration, creativity and finishing efficiency in 10–12 year old footballers.

Discussions

The results obtained from the application of the five tactical tests indicate significant progress in terms of both individual performance and the development of offensive collaboration in the game context. These findings align with the conclusions formulated in recent specialized literature. For example, the study conducted by Memmert & Roth (2020) highlights that, in the case of children, training based on reduced games with controlled adversity stimulates decision-making and tactical cooperation, thus favoring implicit learning and situational transfer. Similarly, the research of Ford et al. (2019) confirms that early exposure to varied tactical contexts contributes to the formation of a collective player profile, capable of anticipating and collaborating effectively in the offensive phase.

The results of this study support the research hypothesis that the initiation of collaboration tactics in small (1v1, 2v1, 2v2) and medium (3v2, 3v3) groups at the age of 10–12 years contributes to increasing efficiency in attack and finishing. The constant progress recorded in all five tests, together with the high level of statistical significance of the differences, confirm that the applied methods were appropriate and effective for the developmental level of the subjects.

The importance of the results derives from the applied nature of the research, which provides youth coaches with a practical framework for designing tactical training. The demonstration of the effectiveness of these means suggests that the training process should emphasize real game situations, in which children have the freedom to collaborate, make decisions and build their tactical relationships naturally. Furthermore, the decrease in the coefficients of variation in all tests shows not only individual progress, but also a homogenization of the group, essential in the development of a collective playing style.

However, the study also presents certain methodological limitations. First, the small sample size ($n=12$) limits the possibility of generalizing the results to larger populations. Another limitation is the absence of a control group, which prevents a direct comparison between classical training and the proposed tactical intervention. Despite these limitations, the study provides a solid basis for future pedagogical interventions and suggests that, in the process of training young players, tactical training focused on offensive cooperative games represents an effective means adapted to age-specific characteristics.

Conclusions

The present paper aimed to highlight the efficiency of a methodical approach focused on the development of offensive tactics in small and medium groups, at the level of football players aged between 10 and 12, emphasizing collaboration, creativity and decision-making in specific game contexts. By applying progressive tactical situations of the 1vs1, 2vs1, 2vs2, 3vs2 and 3vs3 type, the aim was to

stimulate collaboration mechanisms and optimize the completion of offensive actions.

The intervention was carried out over a period of over four months and was supported by rigorous planning, adapted to the age characteristics and level of training of the athletes. The systematic application of training means led to the improvement of performance indicators, highlighted by the increase in the arithmetic averages of successes and the decrease in the coefficient of variation, which reflects a greater degree of homogeneity and synchronization in the offensive game.

The results of the t-Student test confirm, with high statistical significance ($p < 0.05$), the progress recorded in all the applied tests, supporting the validity of the formulated hypothesis. In particular, in situations where all subjects progressed identically, the appearance of the $t \infty$ value reveals a uniform improvement and a high efficiency of the method used. In conclusion, the research demonstrates that early and structured initiation in tactical game situations contributes significantly to the development of the capacity for collaboration in attack, to the streamlining of the decision-making process and to the consolidation of a collective, intelligent and efficient style of play. The results obtained can constitute a valuable benchmark for coaches in the youth sector in the design of training programs oriented towards the formation of the modern player.

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