

## **DEVELOPING VISION**

**Tom Turner, December 1998**

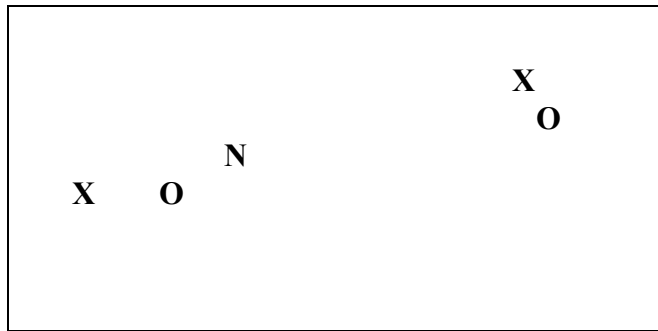
A player without vision cannot be regarded as a skillful player for any number of reasons. In the bigger scheme of the soccer game, the mentality that the best pass is one which scores a goal should be foremost in all players minds whenever they come to be in possession. This leads to the thought that the next best pass is one which sets up a goal, and that the next best pass is one which moves the ball forward, eliminates opponents, and keeps possession of the ball as the team builds into the attack. Obviously then, passes which do not look to score, or create a scoring chance, or take opposing players out of the game, or keep possession for the team by playing back or square, are not very well intentioned or grounded in constructive and creative play. Vision of the field — teammates, opponents, and space — with an eye towards scoring goals allows players to play more quickly and either create scoring chances or help the team change the point of attack and maintain possession when a forward option is not available.

So how do we develop vision in players? The easy answer is to play games, but it is more complicated than that. The first challenge is to develop a basic comfort level with the ball so that the players can be confident enough to lift their heads — before the ball arrives — and think at least one step ahead. Players without this basic comfort level are too concerned with the technical aspects of controlling the ball and maintaining possession to be concerned with the tactical aspects of what to do next. With this type of player, tactical thought will only be possible once the ball has been brought under control. These are slow players who are often caught in possession and who are limited in their attacking contribution to the team.

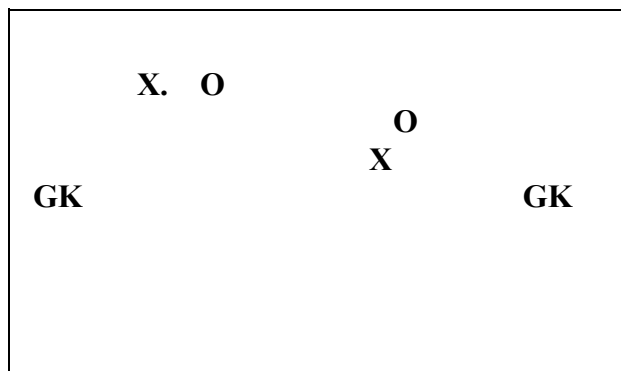
A further early challenge is to improve players' body position when receiving so that they are positioned sideways-on or facing forward when in space and not under pressure. This is particularly relevant to players in the defense who are likely to have more time and space to think ahead than players in midfield (less space) and up front (least space). As a loose rule of thumb, players should position themselves sideways-on or, better yet, facing the opponents goal whenever they can.

But body position by itself does not improve vision. It is the ability to scan the entire field as often as possible and assess possible attacking options which provokes questions over whether such and such a player really does have “eyes in the back of their head.” The better players display good vision for the game because they have scanned early for options and therefore developed instincts for the positioning and movement of teammates. The importance of training under pressure of opponents cannot be overstated when assessing the means by which we develop this type of skillful play.

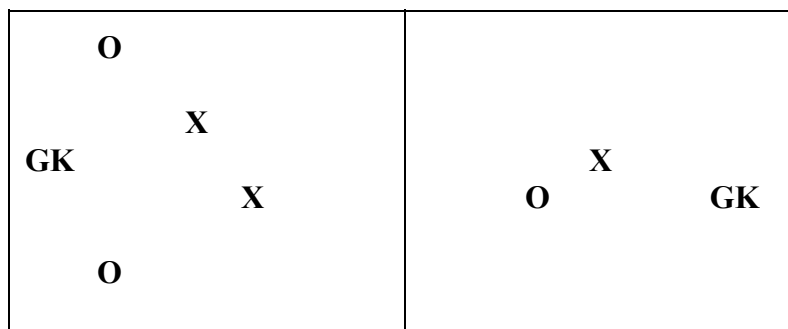
Simply put then, players with good vision position themselves to see as much of the field as possible, scan the field for teammates and opponents as often as possible, always have a sense of what to do with their first touch to take advantage of space and options, and are always evaluating their next move relative to the possibilities to score, assist, penetrate, or possess. One final important thought. Players with a good all-round technical range have the chance to become skillful members of a team. Seeing is one thing; implementing is entirely another matter. **Here are five examples of training exercises which will help players develop vision:**



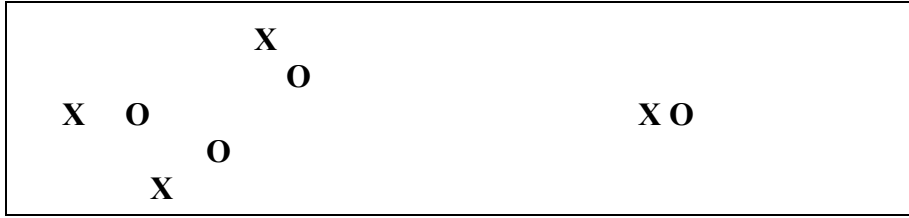
**2 V 2 (+1) OR 2 V 2 (+2) TO GOALS AND GOALKEEPERS, OR TO GOAL LINES (THE WIDTH OF THE END LINE), OR TO TARGET PLAYERS (WHO ALSO ACT AS SUPPORT PLAYERS FOR THE ATTACKING TEAM).**  
**(35 yards by 20 yards)**



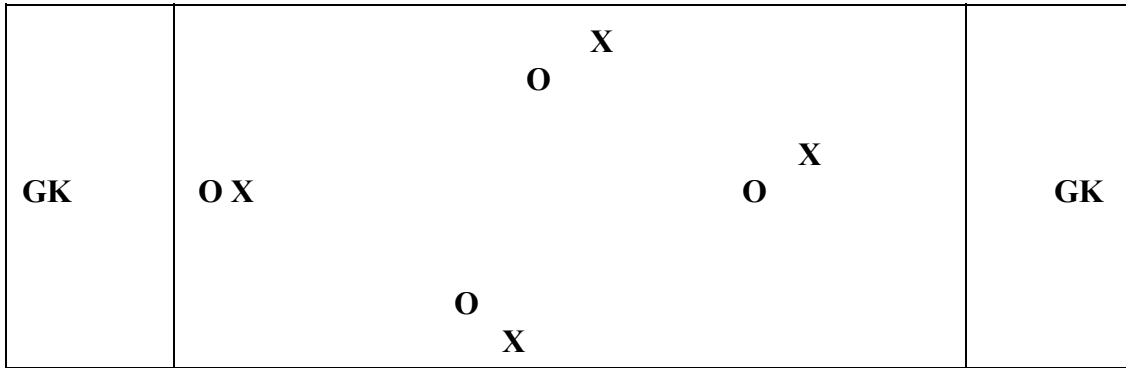
**3 V 3 TO GOALS WITH GOALKEEPERS, OR TO TARGET PLAYERS**  
**(30 yards by 20 yards)**



**4 V 4 TO GOALS. MAXIMUM OF TWO PLAYERS PER TEAM IN EACH HALF.**  
**(40 yards by 44 yards. Offside applies only after the first ball to the striker)**



**3 V 3 OR 4 V 4 TO TARGET PLAYERS ON A LONG NARROW FIELD  
(60 yards by 20 yards)**



**4 V 4 OR 5 V 5 TO GOALS ON A LONGER FIELD WITH DEEP OFFSIDE LINES  
(60 yards by 44 yards. Offside lines 12 yards from each goal)**