Minor Games for Developing Strategy in Invasion Sports

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INVASION GAMES

HOW TO USE THE FOLLOWING GAMES:

• You might have to experiment with the ideal areas/sizes for each game to suit the level of your participants. For example, if it’s too easy for the defender, increase the area.
• To present each game, use the Game Sense Model (last page)
• The games are sequenced in a logical order

The following games can be used/adapted for lead up activities for any major invasion game. Only the skill used will change, not the strategy!!!
EG. - throwing/catching games with a round ball (eg. netball, basketball)
- football codes (eg. soccer, Gaelic football, speedball, AFL)
- rugby codes (pass backwards only!)
- hockey

Use small-sided games to teach basic strategies (max of 5-6 a side), so have 2 or 3 games operating side by side

When focusing on strategy, the best way to run these modified games is to initially have one side attacking for a certain time period (thus, ball turnovers are returned to the attacking team), so that any mistakes/problems can be worked on and improved! It allows more opportunity for teams to develop both attacking and defensive team plays. Egs:
- 2 minutes in attack/defense. If the ball is turned over, attacking team start with ball again from centre. Try to score as many times in the allocated time.
- 10 attempts from the centre to score. End up with a score out of 10.

DECISION-MAKING (INVASION) DEPENDS ON:
(1) TIME – when to run, when to pass
(2) RISK – which option to take
(3) SPACE – where to run/move to
(Questions should relate to the above points).

ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS!

General invasion game questions:
(1) How can you relate each game to invasion sports (give eg. of sports)?
(2) Using tactical examples, how are hockey and football similar?
(3) What tactics/strategies do all invasion games have in common?
(4) Why do you think rules in games have changed over the years? Give sporting eg. (i.e. 30 sec shot clock in basketball; 15m mark in AFL; no offside in hockey). How have they changed the way the games are played?

** Teach attacking strategies first!!!!

Keeping possession:  
(1) When to pass? (Hold & Draw) eg. 2v1, gauntlet
(2) How to pass? (bounce, chest) eg. 2v1
(3) Where to move? (receiving in space) eg. 4 corners
(4) When to move? (timing – reading cues)
(5) Where to pass? (multiple options – which is best option?) eg. 4v2 tag, 3v2 gauntlet, 3v3 half court etc.
COACHING/TEACHING POINTS

The coach establishes a learning environment and uses questioning and guided discovery to help players learn to address tactical situations.

GUIDELINES:

1. Have an aim or theme for each session/game
2. Explain purpose of game and limitations eg. area of play, time, basic rules only
3. Modify rules throughout to change tactical situations
4. Use small teams eg. 2-6 players to maximize the no. of decisions they make
5. Length – drills need to be long enough to allow plenty of repetition to develop “experience” ie., recall of situations from long term memory
6. Ask individual questions during activity/recovery periods. Stop game at appropriate points to ask tactical questions to group
7. Freeze the play (to demonstrate a point), rehearse, then replay the scenario
8. Feedback – on good and poor decisions – use questioning

QUESTIONING:

Coach’s role is to assist players in solving tactical problems, rather than solving the problems for them. Using questions will help ‘guide’ players.

- Questions revolve around 4 concepts:
  1. TIME – When should you…..?
  2. SPACE – Where should you…..?
  3. RISK – Which option was best? Why?
  4. EXECUTION – How should you…..?

- Turn feedback into questions to direct and test learning! (When, What, Where, Why, How?)

Individual learning question egs:

Who was the best person to pass to? (John). Why? (long option, 1 on 1 leading in front of opponent)
When was the best time to pass? Why? (after drawing defender – as it created a free player)
Where was the best place to run? Why? (wide to space – it opened up space in the middle)
What was the best way to pass the ball? (short and flat) Why? (less air time)
What was the best option? (take the space) Why? (all team mates manned or oppo zoned back deep)

Team-based learning question egs:

What strategies did you use when in possession? Which ones worked well? Why?
What type of defence did you use? How could you have done it better?
What would you do differently if the opposition zoned?
How could you move the ball quicker?
What can the attacking team do to create space better?

To develop strategy, we can use the games by:

1. One team in attack for a time (eg. 5 mins) or for a no. of trials (eg. 6 successes from 10 trials!)
2. Give one group a task (unknown to opposition) eg. use a zone defence only
3. Set a scenario eg. 2 mins left, attacking team is up by 2 pts
4. Have one team observe and evaluate tactics / experienced vs inexperienced teams etc.
GAME 1. “2 v 1 KEEPING OFF”

- Begin with simple 2 vs 1 game. Can run anywhere. Only rule to begin with is to keep the ball from the defender.
- HINT: Through questioning, encourage students to wait until they draw defender before passing

Variations:

(1) Can’t run with the ball
(2) Attempt as many passes in a time limit without an interception (best way to defend?)
(3) Perform game in small grid/area (see right):

- In grids of about 10x10m, 2 players start with a ball. They aim to keep the ball off the defender for 30 secs. No contact allowed!
- Same variations as above, plus:
  (1) TAG: defender attempts to tag an attacker whilst in possession of the ball
  (2) 20 second time limit. 1 pt for each successful pass, 5 pts to the defender for a tag

Key questions:

(1) When should you pass the ball?
(2) If you haven’t got the ball, where should you move to?
(3) Where is the best place for the defender to move to?

GAME 2. “2 v 1 GAUNTLET”

- Get students in pairs (then place 2 pairs ie. 4 students, in the defensive line).
- In pairs, must get the ball from one end to the other without being tagged while in possession of the ball, dropping it or turning the ball over. Defenders must stay on their line (ie. only move from side to side)

Variations/progressions:

(1) Attackers can run with the ball or pass
(2) Attackers cannot run with the ball (ie. netball)
(3) Attackers can dribble the ball to move or pass (ie. basketball)
(4) Attackers must pass the ball backwards (ie. rugby) – DIFFICULT!
(5) Have a variety of balls. Whichever ball they are given (or call the name of a sport), they must play to those rules eg. football, basketball, netball, Frisbee, rugby.
(6) 3 v 2 Gauntlet – add 1 defender who can move anywhere & 1 attacker

Key questions:

(1) What is the most effective way to get the ball over the end line?
(2) When should you pass the ball?
(3) When should you run with the ball?
(4) How do the different rules affect your strategies?
(5) If the game is too easy for the attackers, how could you modify it?
GAME 3. “4 CORNERS”

- Start with 3 attackers standing at each corner (one corner is vacant)
- 1 defender in the middle
- Attackers can take one step off cone
- Aim is for the 3 attackers to keep the ball off the defender, but cannot pass the ball diagonally across the square – only to each side. Therefore, an attacker should move to the vacant corner after each pass
- Start with netball rules eg. Defender is 3 feet away, and attackers have 3 seconds to pass

Variations:
(1) Netball rules
(2) 1 point for each successful pass, 5 points for an intercept
(3) Advanced – defender touches attacker in possession of ball for a point
(4) Advanced – 5 corners (see next game)

Key questions:
(1) What was the best type of pass to use?
(2) Where was the best place to defend?
(3) When should the attackers move to the vacant corner?
(4) How can you relate this to a game of………..(eg. netball, basketball, football)?

GAME 4. “4 V 2 TAG”

- Organise into groups of 6 - 4 attackers, 2 defenders/taggers. About 10x10m square.
- Use about a 30 second time limit. The aim is for the defenders to tag the ball carrier to score a point. Score as many in the time limit as possible.

Variations/progressions:
(1) Attackers can run with the ball or pass
(2) Attackers cannot run with the ball (ie. netball)
(3) Attackers can dribble the ball to move or pass (ie. basketball)
(4) Have a variety of balls. Whichever ball they are given (or call the name of a sport), they must play to those rules eg. football, basketball, netball, Frisbee, rugby.

Key questions:
(1) When should you pass the ball?
(2) Do you need to run with the ball?
(3) What is the best way for attackers without the ball to position themselves? (SPACE!)
(4) If the game is too easy for the defenders, how could you modify it?

GAME 5. “TEAM TAG BALL”

- 4v4-6v6 in approximately 10x10m area. One team has the ball and must pass the ball between them until they can tag an opposition player with the ball (not throw it at them!). No running with the ball and no contact allowed. Can’t tag same person twice in a row.
- Play for about 2 mins, count how many tags the team had. Swap over and opposition attempt to beat the score.
Key questions:

(1) What is the best way to pass the ball to each other (short/long?)
(2) Where is the best place on the field/court to get tags?
(3) What was best method to get as many tags as possible?
(4) How could students in the team being tagged help each other out?
(5) Is the team with the ball trying to create space or fill up space?

Variation:
- Same as above game, but the team being tagged can now attempt to intercept a pass. If so, they score 1 pt, then place the ball on the ground for the attacking team to continue. If they touch the ball, but do not take it as a clear possession, the attacking team scores 1 pt.
- When teams swap over after 2 mins, state the score (eg. team 1=5pts, team 2=2pts). Continue.

Key questions:

(1) How did the rule change affect the type of passes you used?
(2) When should you attempt to intercept?
(3) Was your positioning any different for this game?
(4) How would the score of the game affect team strategy (for both teams)!
(5) If your team was 1 point up with 10 seconds left to play, what strategy could you use?
(6) Why do you think rules have been changed in many sports over the past 10 years (ie. basketball, AFL)?

GAME 6. “END-ZONE BALL”

- 4v4-6v6. Approx ½ court basketball size
- One team has possession of the ball for 2 minutes, aiming to score as many “touchdowns” as possible
- If they score, the ball is turned over or hits the ground, they start from the middle again
- Cannot run with the ball, no contact allowed
- Anyone from either team is allowed in the end-zone (about 20m across, 3m zone width)
- Use any rules/balls ie. netball, basketball, ultimate, rugby ball.

Key questions:

(1) What is the best type of pass? (long/short). How will the type of defence and the players’ positioning influence the types of passes you will use?
(2) How can you work as a team in order to create space (attackers)?
(3) How will the score affect the way that you attack (RISK)? Defend?

Variation 1:
- Play the game, but with the defensive team using each of the following defensive structures: (a) man-on-man; (b) zone in the area of play; and, (c) zone in the end-zone

(1) Which was the most effective defensive structure for your team? Why?
(2) How did the type of defence affect the way that the attacking team passed the ball? Positioned themselves? Speed of ball movement?
**Variation 2:**
- Attacking team allocates one player (wearing a different colourband) who will score 3 pts for the team if they catch the ball in the end-zone.

(1) *How did you utilize your 3 pt player in attack? How else could you use them?*
(2) *How did you change the way your team attacks? Defends?*
(3) *Can you relate this variation of a 3 pt player to real game scenarios?*

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**GAME 7. “REBOUND BALL”**

- The structure of this game is the same as game 8. However, to score, one player in the attacking team must throw the ball against the basketball backboard and be caught by a team-mate once it rebounds off.

**Variations:**

(1) *Instead of using the backboard, can use the whole width of the wall. Place a line of cones 3m away from the wall – the ball must be thrown and caught outside of this area.*
(2) *Add a 3 pt line 6m away from wall. If caught outside this area, the team scores 3 pts.*
(3) *Use variation 1 and 2 from game 7.*

**Key questions:**

(1) *When was the best time to throw the ball at the backboard/wall?*
(2) *When would you throw it short/long at the backboard/wall?*
(3) *Where was the best place to defend? How could you work out where to defend?*
(4) *If the ball was thrown at the backboard from the left hand side, where will it rebound to?*

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**GAME 8. “PRISON BREAK”**

- Groups of 4 or 5. Mark out a square (about 10x10m) with another one about 2m outside of it.
- One team begin as defenders, the other as attackers with the ball in the inside square
- Time limit of 2 minutes before swapping roles
- Defenders can move anywhere in the outer square, but cannot enter the inside square
- Aim is for the attacking team to pass the ball around or run with the ball, until they can run the ball through the outer square, without being tagged by a defender.
- If a score is made, the ball is placed on the ground and a team-mate picks it up to continue play by running it back into the inner square. The same occurs if a tag is made in the outer square before crossing the outer square.
- If a score or a tag has been made on one of the four sides, that side becomes out of play (only 3 sides to protect at one time!) until another score or tag has been made on another side (eg. Can’t score or be tagged on the same side in succession).
Variations:

a. Use a variety of sports situations – in order of difficulty: rugby, football handball, basketball, soccer
b. Advanced – add one defender into inside square to put pressure on passing (can intercept ball for a point)

Key questions:

(1) Attackers – what is the best way to score? Pass the ball quickly? Run with ball?
(2) Attackers – how do you go about creating a gap (or space) in the defensive zone?
(3) Defenders – how do you work together in order to prevent space for the attacking team?

GAME 9. “OUT AND IN”

- Aim is for attackers to handball to support players in goals outside the square to score
- Aim is for defenders to slow up the opposition in possession by applying defensive pressure
- Six per side - 4 v 4 in square with 2 players in goals outside area
- One team start with ball and have 1 min time limit for maximal score
- Once ball is passed to outside player, it must be handballed back in to a different player
- If ball turned over, defence place ball on ground. Variation – defence score 1 pt

Variations:

- Play is continuous eg. turnovers = play on
- If handballed to goalie, the scorer replaces the goalie
- A score only counts if the ball is handballed out, then back in to another attacker without being touched by defenders

Questions:

1. Was it best to control the ball or go as quickly as possible?
2. Defenders – was it best to pressure all players? When might you drop off opponent?
3. Attackers – how did you help each other to create space?
4. Defenders – what did you do to deny the oppo space?

GAME 10: “THROUGH THE HOOP”

- 2 teams of 5 or 6
- Handball only (or kick if bigger area), aim is to pass ball and score by handballing the ball through the hoop (attached between 2 poles about 2m above ground)
- No players are allowed within the 5m circle surrounding the goals
- Turnover results when the ball hits the ground (transition)
GAME SENSE MODEL *(Breed, 2002)*

**PLAY SMALL-SIDED GAME**

**QUESTION/S (RE: STRATEGY)**

**REPLAY GAME – (STRATEGY IS BASED ON STUDENT RESPONSES)**

**MODIFICATION TO GAME**

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**Example: Invasion**

Tag ball - 5 v 5 in a small square area (~10x10m)
- one team has possession of ball for 2 mins. Then swap over.
- aim is to tag as many opposition players as possible. Can’t run with ball. Can’t tag same person twice in a row.

- What type of pass was best to use? (eg. short/long?)
- Where was the easiest place on court to tag the opposition?
- How did you work as a team to gain as many tags as possible?
- Which team tried to create space? Which team tried to block up space?
  (Hence: which team were like attackers/defenders in invasion games?)

**NB:**
- After asking 2 or 3 questions, replay the game working on strategies that came from the student responses
- Repeat the game a few times (asking questions between each game) or until the strategies have been put into play

Only change 1 rule/aspect of the game at a time (then ask further questions relating to the change between each game!). Egs:
- *Change ball i.e, to a frisbee*
- Make the area bigger (say 15x15m)
- Allow team to intercept ball for one point