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PREAMBLE

The Portuguese Football Federation, as I often mention in the course of my duties, has as its main watermark and statutory object the promotion, regulation and direction of the teaching and practice of football, in all its variants and competitions.

Developing and building the foundations of futsal have therefore been constant staples in the structure of the federation.

We believe in solid foundations, and the development plan for this sport, in which many of the authors of this book I am now presenting took part, has allowed us, without false modesty, to turn Portuguese futsal into a European and world power.

This success, in which the authors of *Futsal – Os Fundamentos do Jogo* also participated as coaches of the national teams, and where I inevitably have to highlight the national coach Jorge Braz, didn't just materialize in the conquest of the European champion title in Slovenia, in 2018, as a more superficial reading might suggest.

Portugal, and I would like to emphasize this, recently secured the right to take part in the final phase of a European Championship for the ninth time in a row, also adding to its record five appearances in the final phase of the world cups.

Today we have seven men's and five women's national teams and more than 22 national competitions, with over 56 000 players.

The publication of this book is part of this overall development policy: while we act, we also try to think about teaching and practice. In order to do this, we've turned ourselves to some of our best coaches, who, over the following pages, explain what futsal is – in terms of its rules, dynamics, tactics, objectives, principles, tactical or technical basic fundamentals.

In yet another excellent edition of the *FPF Books*, the fifteenth in the collection, we can see the concern to offer all futsal lovers and scholars an empirical view and tools that can even serve as a starting point for those who dream of deepening their connection to the sport.

FUTSAL – THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE GAME

I would like to thank the authors for their generous sharing.
Readers can rest assured that this is a work of excellence.

FERNANDO GOMES
President of the Portuguese Football Federation

PREFACE

It is a privilege and an enormous source of pride for me to write the foreword to such an important document for futsal and, at the same time, an enormous responsibility, given the extraordinary content of this book. How can you want to teach the game without knowing it deeply, without knowing its fundamentals?

The competence of trainers, rather than coaches, with the younger players is fundamental, as is the influence they will have on their future tactical-technical dimensions, as well as their human dimension, acting as facilitators, or not, of the work they will do in the future. Good formative examples are rarely given their due value and are forgotten and lost in time. This book will take us to moments of excellence in both teaching and learning. Believe what you like, but the truth is that in futsal, as in everything else in life, everything isn't made up.

It is a process of construction, deconstruction and permanent reconstruction.
It is created and recreated every day.

I don't believe in game systems per se.

I believe in in-depth knowledge of the basic fundamentals of the game and engaging dynamics.

I believe in game models based on knowledge that leads us to the right behaviour at different times.

I believe that better knowledge always means better decision-making.

This book teaches us many things that we sometimes forget along the way as coaches...

Training is the game and the game is training, always. Every exercise with the game in mind.

Always training what we want to play.

This book should now, and always, accompany us as we carry out our duties.

We must thank to Portuguese National Technical Team for the excellence of this extraordinary work. I'd like to end by thanking you for inviting me to write this foreword, leaving you all a word of enormous gratitude and friendship for making me a better coach and a better man.

ORLANDO DUARTE

1. INTRODUCTION

The growth of futsal in recent years, not only in terms of its social impact, but also in terms of the specific research associated with it, has enabled the development of knowledge in line with its own characteristics and specificities, the latter of which has allowed the sport to create an identity. However, despite the development of the sport and the growing trend of associated scientific research, there are still few works that enhance the transfer of knowledge into practice and support coaches at the different levels of intervention in player's sports training.

The Portuguese Football Federation (FPF) has sought to leverage the growth and development of futsal in Portugal based on the qualification of human resources, improving the quality and quantity of training provided, creating documentation to guide intervention in priority areas and implementing intervention programs in futsal.

Several programs have been put into action in recent years, one of the most important being the drafting of a document to guide the training stages of young futsal players, based on explaining and understanding the principles of the game.

It is, in fact, essential to understand what it means to comply with the principles of play discussed and explained in this book. We therefore believe it is crucial to take a new step towards unifying a language in the training/teaching of the game of futsal. Simplifying some of the content to meet the needs of coaches and thus bringing theoretical knowledge closer to the pitch. **The fundamentals of the game** is the key to fulfil the principles of the game and for giving clear intentionality to the actions it requires. The main aim of this book is to explain this conception.

The development of teaching material is an important factor in any sport, and the dissemination of knowledge allows for the reflection of good practices and promotes sustained evolution. In this sense, based on recent research in the area of futsal and the sports increment, this book aims to present the main fundamentals of the sport, with the aim of enabling coaches to gain a better understanding of the game, its principles and the consequent definition of the stages and priorities for teaching futsal.

2. THE GAME OF FUTSAL

The evolution and complexity of the game, together with the high speed and intensity, leads us to a point that understanding the factors that support high performance is fundamental to teaching it (Braz, 2006), from the lowest stages of training to high performance.

The tactical-technical content of the game of futsal is developed in an antagonistic framework, between two moments: attack and defence. This antagonistic relationship results in cooperation between the team's own players and opponents, in order to progress and finish or defend the goal and regain possession of the ball, respectively. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of each player in the game (attacker or defender), within the normative framework of their team's operation (game model), is to break the balance with the direct opponent/team in order to create a numerical or space advantage that will ensure their success (Hierro, 2017). This process takes place continuously at an individual, group or collective level, in the search for constant advantages (Travassos, 2020).

However, so that the imbalances generated allow the creation of superiority numerical or positional, with the aim of scoring a goal or preventing the opponent from doing so, the individual actions of each player to speed up/slow down the game at the right time in relation to their opponent are fundamental. Of course, in order to do this, players have to decide and act in a way that is adjusted to the information and contexts that are dynamically generated over time (Travassos, 2014). Players seek and create information that materializes in solving the problems posed by the game. To this end, the capacity for individual action based on their coordinative and conditional abilities, as well as their level of skill, will help increase the possibilities for action! A player who reads the game well, but who is also more coordinated, stronger and faster in relation to its context, tends to discover a greater number of possibilities for action (Travassos, 2014). Therefore it is urgent to understand the fundamentals that underpin the actions of futsal players, in order to enhance the teaching of the game, based on the identification of priorities in this area and the level of skill of each

player (Braz *et al.*, 2015). Our aim throughout the book is to highlight the basics, the essentials of teaching the game, in order to train players who know its principles but, above all, to equip them with the tools – fundamentals – that will improve their decisions and actions in the different moments and contexts of a match.

3. OBJECTIVES AND DYNAMICS OF THE GAME OF FUTSAL

In the game of futsal, the main objective, in offensive terms, is to score, while in defensive terms it is to prevent the opponent from doing so!

In offensive terms, moments of defence-attack transition or instability, which often result in counter-attacks, facilitate the immediate achievement of the game's objective. However, often, faced with an opponent who is organized and defensively balanced, the attacking team has to build and generate imbalances in order to create finishing situations from their possession, looking for in each individual or collective action possibilities for progression and creating the intended imbalances. In either situation, the key point to being able to create imbalances is based on each player's ability to intentionally pursue and carry out threatening actions that intentionally seeks scoring a goal.

In defensive terms, when the team doesn't have possession, different priorities can be set to prevent the creation of goal situations. Based on the contextual factors of the game (result, playing time...), but also the location of the ball or the organization vs. disorganization of the team, the team may seek to recover it immediately or as soon as possible, reacting to its loss, or, on the other hand, delay the progress of the players and the approach of the ball to their goal. In this case, the main priority for the defending team is to protect the defensive space and the goal in order to hinder progress. The main defensive objective remains: to prevent a goal.

The link between offensive and defensive moments gives rise to defence-attack and attack-defence transitions. These are the moments when a team moves from defence to offense, or vice-versa, respectively.

Whether offensively or defensively, the essence of the game can be described by the need for a team to coordinate its actions within a normative framework of play that defines its identity, its model of play, based on the individual characteristics of each player and the way they combine it to obtain momentary objectives. As such, players must be able to recognize the moments in the game and, depending on where they are on the pitch, the result or the strategy defined by the coach, adjust their individual actions with and without the ball

to the collective relationships defined by the players on the pitch, which allow them to enhance their actions collectively (Corrêa *et al.*, 2012). Even considering the objectives associated with each of these moments, it is not always possible to generalize that the moment of attack is associated with the existence or creation of a numerical or space advantage and that the moment of defence is related to a disadvantage. At every moment of the game, players and teams must always seek to create numerical, relational or space advantages that allow them to achieve their goals (Garganta, 2005).

4. THE GAME CYCLE

As mentioned above, the game of futsal is characterized by a dialectical relationship of cooperation/opposition, which takes place in a dynamic and variable context around the offensive and defensive moments and the respective transitions between them. We can be in a more offensive moment, when we have possession of the ball, or in a more defensive moment, when it's not on our side. However, the moment when we have possession and the moment when we don't are sometimes difficult to identify clearly, as there can be constant instability between them. Possession doesn't always clearly mean that you're in an advantageous situation. The opposite is also true: in other words, not having possession of the ball, in a given spatiotemporal situation, may not mean being at a disadvantage.

The richness of the game of futsal is based on this characteristic, where the phases of play are often just instants, short and situational. The logic of the game, its didactic understanding, will not always follow the cycle shown below ("Figure 1"); often, the game jumps from attack to defence in an instant.

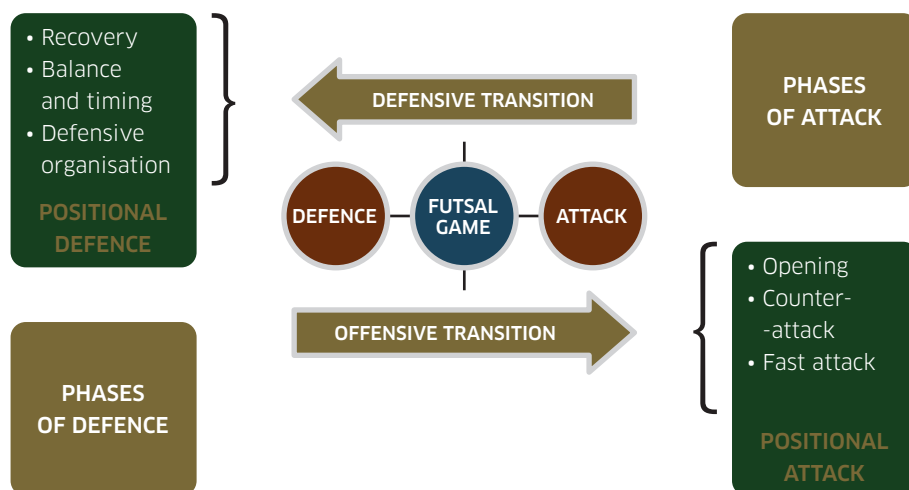


Figure 1. Phases of futsal play.

The initiative can eventually be altered and is not necessarily linked to the offensive phase, but is often present in the defensive phase.

At the defensive level, we can identify several phases that allow us to implement a positional defence. **Recovery** refers to the first phase of defence, through a quick reaction to the loss of space and the defensive return that we will need to make if the team doesn't get the ball back immediately. We then enter a second phase, in which the aim is to increase space **balance** and, if necessary, **timing**, in order to avoid the opponent's counter-attack. In this way, the defending team, even if it can't win the ball back, is in a position to organize itself defensively and must adjust its behaviour according to where it is and the space it wants to defend in order to achieve defensive balance. Finally, in the last phase, we aim to be in **positional defence** with the intention of preventing the opposite team from advancing into finishing areas, and waiting for the right opportunity to force a mistake and regain possession of the ball.

As we've said, all these phases are sometimes moments, because on many occasions, when we lose possession, we press immediately, trying to win it back. Then all the phases mentioned above don't appear, we tamper with the didactic logic, we try to take the initiative by conditioning the opponent's offensive phase.

In attack, when we win possession after the defensive process, there can be several phases. In the first one, the **opening phase**, the aim is to create space, both wide and deep, in order to take advantage of the moment when the opposition is disorganized after losing possession. The players should immediately try to direct the play towards the opponent's goal. As a second phase of the attacking process, the team could achieve a **counter-attack**.

This occurs when the opponent is outnumbered, where the numerical advantage is clear, so the actions must be quick and objective in order to progress towards the opponent's goal and seek finish the play. Even if the opponent is not outnumbered, they may be disorganized. Even so, we may have some positional advantage, given the opponent's lack of defensive organization. In this context, the conditions may be right to enter the third phase, the **fast attack**. If there is no numerical or positional advantage, and the opponent manages to prevent rapid progress, then the team should enter the **positional attack**, the last phase. When in a positional attack, we must build it up with a more elaborate game, to create, through of individual actions or collective movements, situations of imbalance and disorganization on the opponents side, allowing progress and goalscoring opportunities. And the cycle begins again.

THE GAME CYCLE

Despite this sequential logic, we know that the richness of futsal is based on the dynamics between moments of play, in which its contexts or implementation are summed up in small, short, situational moments. The logic of futsal, its didactic understanding, won't always show the cycles presented, because it often jumps from attack to defence in an instant, altering the initiative of the game or the sequence of actions between the offensive and defensive moments. We are certain that it is from this instability – which often occurs, given the alternation between balance and imbalance, whether desired or provoked – that the spectacularity that we all recognize in futsal emerges.

5. PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

5.1. General game principles

The general principles of play emphasize the concern that, with regard to the number of players in the area where the ball is played, you should try to create numerical superiority, avoid numerical equality and prevent numerical inferiority from occurring at any time (Hainaut & Benoit, 1979). As far as futsal is concerned, these behaviours are not easy to comply with. The small number of players, the reduced playing space and the dynamics, often create problems in complying with these rules of action; in such a way, that only teams with better quality of performance show them consistently.

5.2. Specific game principles

According to Travassos (2014), specific principles are essential information to support the teaching of the game as a collective project, because it is through them that players begin to develop collective behaviours that will allow a balanced space occupation in relation to the momentary objective (attacking or defending). The specific objectives are divided into offensive and defensive.

5.2.1. Specific principles of offensive play

The specific offensive principles of play are: (“Figure 2”):

- **Progression** – exploring the possibility of progressing towards the opposite goal and finishing;
- **Offensive support** – offensive balance through safe lines of passing, requesting a second attacker to allow the ball carrier’s play;
- **Mobility** – actions with or without the ball that seek to break down and unbalance the stability of the opponent’s defensive structure by creating free spaces and passing lines on the available space.

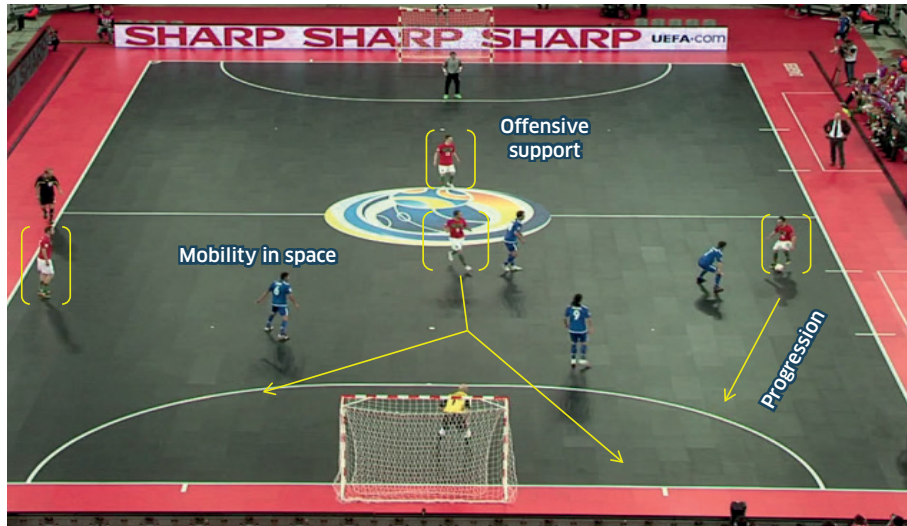


Figure 2. Specific principles of offensive play.

5.2.2. Specific principles of defensive play

The specific defensive play principles are ("Figure 3"):

- **Containment** – individual defensive action aimed at preventing progress or a shot by placing a player between the ball carrier and the goal; buying time so that the defence has more time to regain position;
- **Defensive support** – defensive help for the defender in containment that allows them to create a space advantage over the ball carrier;
- **Balance** – adjusting defensive positioning according to the position of the opponent, the ball and the goal, with the aim of reducing the available space for progression, covering the spaces and free players and any passing lines, causing the attackers to move into less dangerous spaces.

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

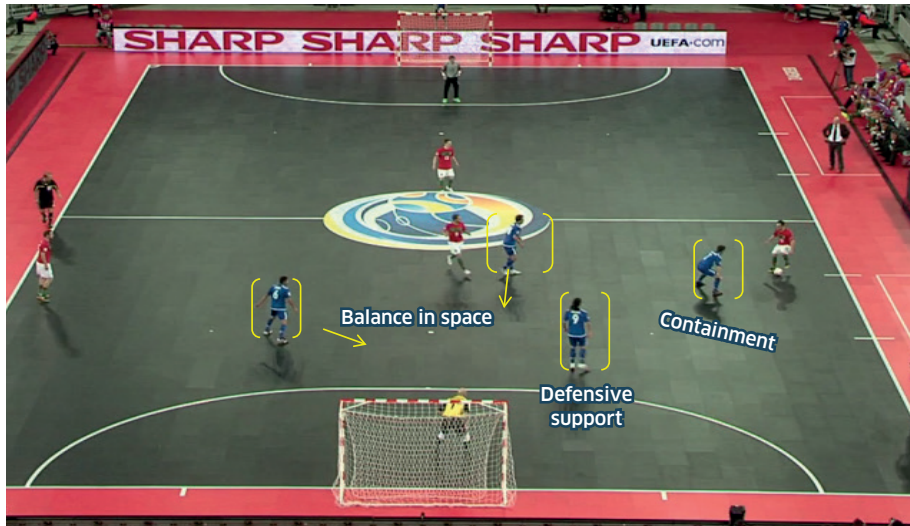


Figure 3. Specific principles of defensive play.

The general principles of play must be seen in conjunction with the specific principles. In the same way, and taking into account the dialectical relationship of cooperation/opposition that exists around the dynamics of the game, the specific offensive and defensive principles should be seen and articulated from exactly this perspective (“Table 1”).

Table 1. Articulation of general/specific offensive/defensive game principles.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF PLAY	Creating numerical superiority	SPECIFIC OFFENSIVE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY	Progression	SPECIFIC DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES OF PLAY	Containment
	Avoiding numerical equality		Offensive support		Defensive support
	Refusing numerical inferiority		Mobility in space		Balance in space