

## MENTAL ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENTIFIC – METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL



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<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>



### STAGES OF TACTICAL PREPARATION IN MINI-FOOTBALL SPORT

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#### ABOUT ARTICLE

**Key words:** mini-football players, training sessions, tactics, tactical methods and actions, tactical preparation.

**Received:** 10.06.25

**Accepted:** 12.06.25

**Published:** 14.06.25

**Abstract:** The article presents the results of a study aimed at determining the sequence of teaching the stages of tactical preparation in mini-football and identifying the organizational and methodological foundations for improving the tactical preparation of mini-football players for competitions. The study identifies the most common game situations that affect the effectiveness of tactical actions and reveals inefficiencies in the allocation of training time. Based on modern methodologies and statistical data, recommendations are provided for optimizing the tactical training process.

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## Introduction

The tactical aspects of modern mini-football are characterized by a wide arsenal of tools and techniques, shaped by the evolution of the game and the increasing complexity of player interactions. Effective use of tactical potential requires consideration of a multitude of factors that define the specifics of a mini-football match. These include an objective assessment of one's own team's capabilities and the opponent's potential (team composition, functional and technical-tactical readiness, motivation, psychological stability, etc.), as well as exogenous match conditions (pitch size and surface, lighting, presence and behavior of spectators, acoustic and emotional atmosphere, and more).

A key accelerator of tactical development in mini-football is the constant confrontation between offensive and defensive actions. It is within this dual opposition that new tactical ideas are born, stimulating the modernization of the training process and increasing players' tactical versatility. As in other team sports, technique and tactics in mini-football are closely interconnected: technical skills serve as the instrumental foundation for implementing players' tactical decisions.

Situations where a player must choose whether to shoot on goal, engage in a duel, or pass to a teammate are examples of tactical thinking activation. The chosen option is then executed using technical skills aligned with the intended objective.

Top teams around the world display a high level of tactical flexibility, which manifests in their ability to quickly adapt to changing in-game conditions, adjust tactical schemes during the match, and apply alternative models of play. At the same time, teams often exhibit an individualized style, frequently expressed through the use of a so-called "signature tactic" that reflects their collective identity and training philosophy. However, tactical conservatism — repeating the same playing style regardless of the opponent — renders a team predictable and vulnerable to counterstrategies.

The tactical structure of a mini-football match is based on a dual objective: to score against the opponent while simultaneously preventing goals against one's own team. Tactical

tools are typically divided into two broad categories — attacking and defensive tactics. Each category is further structured into levels of action: individual, group, and team. These levels are then classified by interaction forms (e.g., individual offensive actions can involve both ball possession and off-the-ball movements), while the specific content of actions defines methods, which are further differentiated into tactical variations based on execution context.

Tactical activity in competitive situations involves solving situational problems arising during interaction with teammates and opponents. A crucial factor is the ability to make justified and pragmatic decisions that allow players to maximize their action repertoire in pursuit of victory. Therefore, tactical training should ensure the mastery of a fundamental set of tactical behaviors that enable athletes to fully utilize their technical skills, special physical qualities, motor intelligence, and theoretical knowledge.

Tactical training is viewed as a systematically organized pedagogical process aimed at developing athletes' ability to rationally organize their actions in response to changing game conditions. The goal is to apply technical means within the dynamic context of the match through well-reasoned tactical decisions that support achieving competitive success.

Terminologically, "tactical training" encompasses a broader concept than simply "teaching tactics." Theoretical knowledge of tactical behavior, without the ability to apply it in practice, remains non-functional. Even complete mastery of all forms of tactical interactions — individual, group, and team — does not guarantee success. Efficiency is achieved through a functional synthesis of technique and tactics into a single operational behavioral system.

One of the fundamental methodological principles is the integrated development of technical and tactical components within a unified training process. Practice shows that hours allocated to technical development can also contribute to tactical growth if exercises incorporate elements of analysis, decision-making, and situational awareness. Thus, when solving a technical task, an athlete simultaneously trains cognitive mechanisms that underpin tactical competency.

In the development of tactical literacy, specially designed exercises and tactical combinations play a key role. Despite the usefulness of auxiliary tools, the main method remains practical immersion into realistic game situations. Tactical instruction from the earliest stages of training should not suppress tactical thinking but rather promote the development of productive thinking processes. Tactical interactions must flow logically from one another, reinforcing the overall structure of tactical consciousness and facilitating the integration of game patterns into long-term memory.

In conclusion, tactical training in mini-football represents a comprehensive system incorporating pedagogical, psychological, physiological, and methodological dimensions. It aims to develop players' capacity for effective organization of gameplay activities. The tactical maturity of a team is directly related to the systematic and scientifically grounded structure of the training process, variability of exercises, players' motor intelligence, and their ability to reflect and adapt in conditions of competitive uncertainty.

### **Materials and methods**

The study of tactical actions and variants should be conducted in two directions:

- Individual tactical preparation
- Group and team tactical preparation.

Individual tactical preparation forms the foundation for building strong and cohesive group and team-level interactions. Both defensive and offensive team strategies are fundamentally constructed upon the tactical skills and competencies of individual players. In this context, tactics can be broadly defined as the coordinated and simultaneous interactions among multiple players, aimed at effectively resolving specific game-related challenges.

When addressing individual tactical preparation, the focus should be placed on the personal tactical development of the athlete—specifically, the player's capacity to apply tactical knowledge and skills appropriately, and in a timely manner, while maintaining coherent interaction with teammates. This necessitates not only a solid understanding of tactical

principles but also an intuitive ability to integrate one's actions into the broader dynamics of the game.

Throughout the instructional and learning process, both offensive and defensive tactical scenarios must be systematically refined. Special emphasis should be placed on developing the ability to rapidly switch between different phases of play—for instance, transitioning from offensive to defensive modes, or from one tactical pattern to another. Coaches should introduce tactical actions and their variants through contextually grounded and familiar examples, always tailored to the real capabilities and potential of the team.

However, the focus should not be on mechanical assimilation of tactical sequences. Overemphasis on rote learning may hinder the emergence of creative and adaptive thinking in players. Tactical preparation, by its very nature, is a creative and situationally driven process. A player with well-formed tactical cognition should be capable of adjusting their behavior dynamically to evolving match conditions.

Regardless of the tools employed to foster tactical awareness and psychological readiness, the foundation remains rooted in the instruction of group and team interactions, which in turn stem from mastering basic technical skills. Once technical proficiency is in place, players acquire the flexibility and versatility required to adapt their actions to align with collective team goals. A lack of early exposure to tactical scenarios and underdeveloped tactical thinking can pose significant challenges later, even in technically skilled players. Without proper tactical intuition, athletes may struggle to perform effectively in real-game situations characterized by complex interactive dynamics.

The cultivation of creative thinking is also essential when teaching group and team tactical patterns. It enhances the ability to correctly interpret the opponent's behavior and intentions, facilitating real-time adaptations in team strategy without disrupting overall cohesion or causing excessive exertion.

Joint training sessions with elite teams offer valuable opportunities for tactical growth through experiential learning. Youth teams especially benefit from training alongside senior or

professional squads, gaining firsthand exposure to diverse tactical methodologies. These interactions allow young athletes not only to observe but also to internalize and apply advanced tactical principles.

Equally significant is the structured observation of matches played by leading domestic and international teams. Such sessions provide a rich source of tactical knowledge, offering visual examples of individual, group, and team-level tactical execution. To ensure these observations are purposeful, students should engage actively—taking structured notes, using observation cards, or recording key moments on video. Afterward, these tactical interactions should be critically analyzed in light of the situational context created by the opposition. This analysis should emphasize not only final match outcomes but also the technical execution and physical performance of players under various tactical demands.

In conclusion, tactical preparation is one of the most intricate and demanding components of mini-football training. It requires consistent, deliberate, and creative pedagogical effort. A well-structured tactical training program equips athletes with the tools necessary to navigate complex in-game scenarios effectively, enhances team cohesion, and fosters the development of intelligent, adaptable players capable of making sound decisions under pressure.

**Research Objective:** To develop and substantiate an effective methodology for teaching types of tactical preparation in the training system for mini-football players.

**Research Tasks:**

1. Identify shortcomings based on results obtained in competitive conditions.
2. Develop and substantiate a methodology aimed at improving types of preparation in the training process.

**Research Methods:** Analysis and synthesis of scientific literature, pedagogical observation, mathematical-statistical methods.

## **Results and discussion**

As with any targeted pedagogical process, tactical preparation in mini-football is guided by clearly defined objectives, which include:

1. Creating optimal conditions for mastering tactical elements, including the development of cognitive, motor, and volitional qualities required for effective gameplay.
2. Forming stable tactical skills during the instructional process, through consistent and systematic training.
3. Ensuring the reliability and adaptability of tactical behavior under complex and stressful game conditions.
4. Mastering the foundations of individual, group, and team tactical actions in both offensive and defensive phases.
5. Enhancing tactical execution based on a player's positional responsibilities and strategic role within the team structure.
6. Developing the ability to adapt tactical and technical actions according to dynamic conditions—such as teammates' positioning, the opponent's state, and external match factors (e.g., pitch, audience, pressure).
7. Improving transition efficiency, i.e., the ability to swiftly shift from defense to attack and vice versa.
8. Analyzing opponents' tactical behaviors, including their structural formations, technical capabilities, and mental resilience.
9. Studying and synthesizing the tactical strategies of elite national and international teams, extracting key principles applicable to one's own team context.

To achieve these objectives, a diverse set of training methods and tools must be employed. Central to the tactical training process are tactical exercises at the individual, group, and team levels. These are complemented by bilateral training games, control and scheduled matches, and theoretical instruction covering the principles and evolution of mini-football tactics.

In mini-football, defensive tactical play refers to the strategic organization of a team's actions aimed at neutralizing the opponent's offensive initiatives. Effective defense requires coordinated positioning and proactive behaviors that hinder the opposing team's progression into dangerous zones—particularly the penalty area—and limit their opportunities to shoot on goal.

Furthermore, defensive tactics should incorporate mechanisms for ball recovery and counterattacking, thus transitioning defense into offense when possible. Because of these demands, the development of defensive strategies warrants a particularly rigorous and methodical approach. In teams where tactical preparation is prioritized, notable features include the consistency of players' roles, mutual understanding, and high tactical discipline during gameplay.

A well-formulated and rational defensive tactical system can become a decisive factor when competing against technically superior opponents. Like offensive tactics, defensive play is structured across three levels:

- Individual defensive actions (e.g., marking, intercepting, pressuring opponents);
- Group interactions (e.g., zonal pressing, covering teammates, double-teaming);
- Team-wide strategies (e.g., shifting formations, high or low defensive blocks, trap mechanisms).

The efficacy of defensive actions is strongly linked to a player's ability to act effectively in one-on-one situations—both against opponents in possession and off the ball. In either case, success depends heavily on the defender's ability to adopt optimal positioning relative to the opponent and the ball in a constantly changing environment. This requires high perceptual awareness, spatial orientation, and decision-making speed. Thus, rational positioning serves as the foundational component for executing successful defensive maneuvers and disrupting the attacking patterns of the opposition.

Tactical preparation in mini-football, like any purposeful pedagogical process, pursues a range of interconnected objectives that together ensure the development of a tactically



competent and cohesive team. The foundation of effective tactical training lies in creating the necessary conditions for players to master game tactics through the development of specific cognitive, motor, and psychological abilities. The process focuses not only on the formation of tactical skills but also on ensuring their reliable application in complex and dynamically changing match situations.

During tactical instruction, players gradually acquire the fundamentals of individual, group, and team actions in both offensive and defensive contexts. These skills must be adapted to the specific role of each player within the team structure, and continually improved through repeated application in varied scenarios. A central focus is developing players' capacity to select and execute appropriate tactical and technical actions in real time, based on an awareness of teammates' positions, opponents' behavior, and external situational factors. One of the most important elements of tactical maturity is the ability to rapidly transition between attack and defense, and vice versa, without losing coordination or strategic intent.

Equally important is the systematic study of opponents—their tactical preferences, technical skill level, and psychological readiness. Players must also analyze the strategies employed by leading national and international teams, drawing insights from advanced tactical models. This analytical approach is supported by practical training tools such as tactical exercises, small-group drills, full-team simulations, bilateral matches, and competitive fixtures. The theoretical study of tactics complements these activities, deepening players' understanding of strategic principles and promoting deliberate, informed decision-making.

Defensive tactics in mini-football aim to organize team behavior in a way that limits the attacking options of the opponent. This involves making it difficult for opposing players to coordinate successful actions, preventing them from entering the penalty area or taking effective shots on goal, and simultaneously creating opportunities for ball recovery and the launch of counterattacks. Teams that invest in robust tactical preparation often demonstrate superior coordination, clear role awareness, and disciplined execution—qualities that are

particularly valuable when facing technically or physically superior opponents. Like offensive play, defensive tactics comprise individual, group, and collective components.

Individual defensive actions—both against players with and without the ball—are based on intelligent positioning, anticipation, and timing. The defender must maintain an advantageous position relative to the opponent and the ball, adjusting their distance and angle based on the opponent's movements and proximity to the goal. Effective pursuit and marking require not only speed and agility, but also an understanding of passing lanes and spatial dynamics. When confronting a player with the ball, defenders must decide whether to challenge directly, delay progression, or force a pass backward or toward the sideline. Successful defense involves pressure, deception, and precise body orientation that constrains the opponent's options and increases the likelihood of a turnover.

When possession is lost, a team must immediately reorganize to ensure the integrity of its defensive structure. The player who lost the ball should instantly apply pressure to delay the opponent's advance, while teammates take up appropriate defensive positions to mark opposing players and protect the goal. Failure to react in time often leads to dangerous situations near the goal, especially when defenders leave gaps or allow attackers to move unchallenged into key zones.

The development of individual and group defensive tactics must be tightly integrated with the teaching of basic technical skills. Training begins with simplified drills under low pressure and progresses toward full-speed execution under realistic conditions. The gradual increase in task complexity allows players to internalize tactical behaviors and apply them fluently during matches. Group defensive coordination is developed through drills emphasizing communication, mutual coverage, zone transitions, and collective ball recovery. These are especially important in outnumbered situations or when opponents use rapid, fluid combinations to break down the defense.

To support tactical development, training programs should incorporate exercises that enhance reaction speed, directional changes, and situational transitions. Technical exercises

should be supplemented by open-ended games, relay races, and game-based scenarios that replicate the unpredictability of actual play. All of this reinforces the adaptability, consistency, and creativity essential for modern tactical thinking.

In summary, tactical preparation in mini-football is a complex and dynamic process that requires daily, structured, and creative efforts from both coaches and players. Its success depends on a harmonious integration of theoretical knowledge, practical exercises, and constant analysis of one's own team and opponents. Only through this comprehensive approach can players achieve the level of tactical maturity necessary for high-level competition.

### **Conclusion**

Modern mini-football is increasingly defined by its high speed of play and the growing complexity of tactical combinations. In this context, it becomes critically important to train players not only in the execution of techniques but also in their tactical awareness. Players must learn to accurately assess the positioning of both teammates and opponents on the field, evaluate the location and trajectory of the ball, anticipate the actions of teammates, read the intentions of opponents, and quickly analyze rapidly changing game situations in order to choose and perform the most effective course of action.

Tactical preparation, therefore, must adhere to several core modern principles that underpin successful player development. A continuous emphasis must be placed on fostering the specific cognitive and motor abilities that support tactical decision-making. This includes determining a logical and pedagogically sound progression for the acquisition of technical skills, their combinations, and the ability to transition effectively between them during gameplay. Importantly, tactical qualities and abilities should be developed in conjunction with the teaching of technical techniques, allowing players to apply tactical concepts within practical contexts.

The process of forming tactical skills must be embedded within the broader training structure, with a rational progression from individual to group and then to full-team tactical actions, both in attack and defense. This progression should align closely with the sequence of

technical skill development, ensuring that tactical understanding grows in parallel with technical proficiency. Moreover, tactical skills must be honed and reinforced through an integrated training approach that emphasizes the interdependence of tactical and technical preparation. This includes designing training games with specific tactical objectives, applying these skills in controlled match environments, and reinforcing them during actual competitive play.

Ultimately, tactical preparation exercises—when designed and executed with these principles in mind—significantly enhance the overall readiness and game intelligence of mini-football players. This holistic approach allows players not only to perform technical actions with precision but also to make the correct decisions under pressure, adapt to the flow of the match, and contribute effectively to team strategy at every moment of play.

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