

**CREWE ALEXANDRA**

**David Artell  
Small-sided fitness  
game**

**SET-UP**

<b>AREA</b>	60x40 yards
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	Balls, bibs, cones, 6 poles, 2 full-size goals
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>	12 players + 2 goalkeepers
<b>SESSION TIME</b>	As required: 15-40mins

**Overview**

This is a football-specific fitness session in the format of a small-sided game, although it can be used to target other areas of development, such as focusing on 2v2s and 3v3s or even individual player fitness.

As it's a small-sided game, players are instantly engaged by this activity and we can develop different types of fitness, depending on how we run the session. A long small-sided game will test their endurance, whilst a shorter game, with more players going off the pitch, will test their explosiveness if repeated over time.

We would run this as a pre-season fitness activity or a midweek session, when it's felt that the players need some work in their legs. This would be a perfect session to run when football finally restarts again after a period off.

**What do I get the players to do?**

**Small-sided fitness game**  
We set up a playing area of

60x40 yards with a full-size goal at each end. The pitch has poles on each corner and at each end of the halfway line. We're using 12 outfield players and two goalkeepers, split evenly into two teams of seven. We number the outfield players on each of the teams from one to six. We play a 7v7 game and normal rules apply but play always starts and restarts from the goalkeeper, although throw-ins can be used if required.

During the game, the coach calls out one or more numbers and the corresponding players on each team must sprint around one of the poles and then run back onto the pitch to rejoin the game, as shown [1a]. To make the activity a little more challenging for the

**KEY**

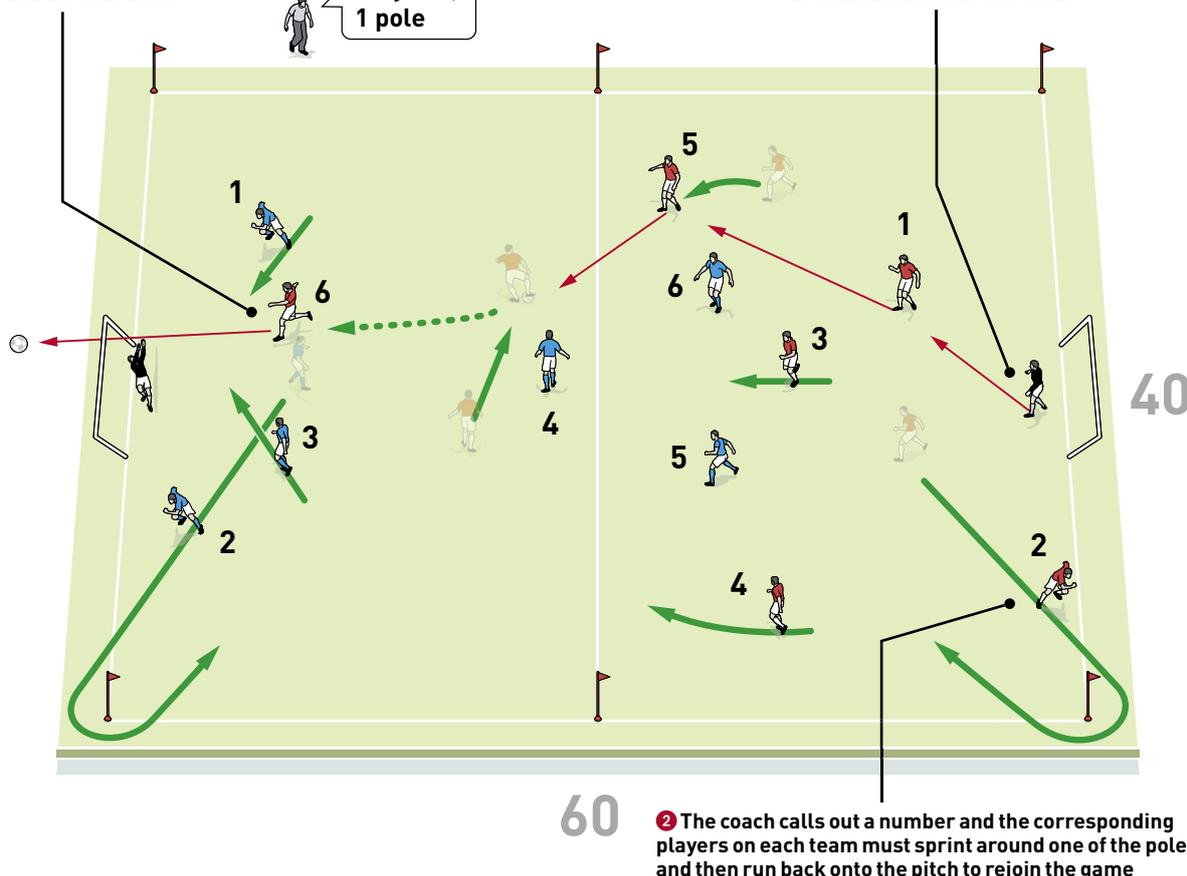
- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble .....→

**1a SMALL-SIDED FITNESS GAME**

3 Here the blue number 2 is called to run around the nearest pole but his team mates don't cover quick enough and the reds score

Player 2, 1 pole

1 Play a 7v7 game. Normal rules apply but play starts and restarts from the keeper. Outfield players are numbered from one to six

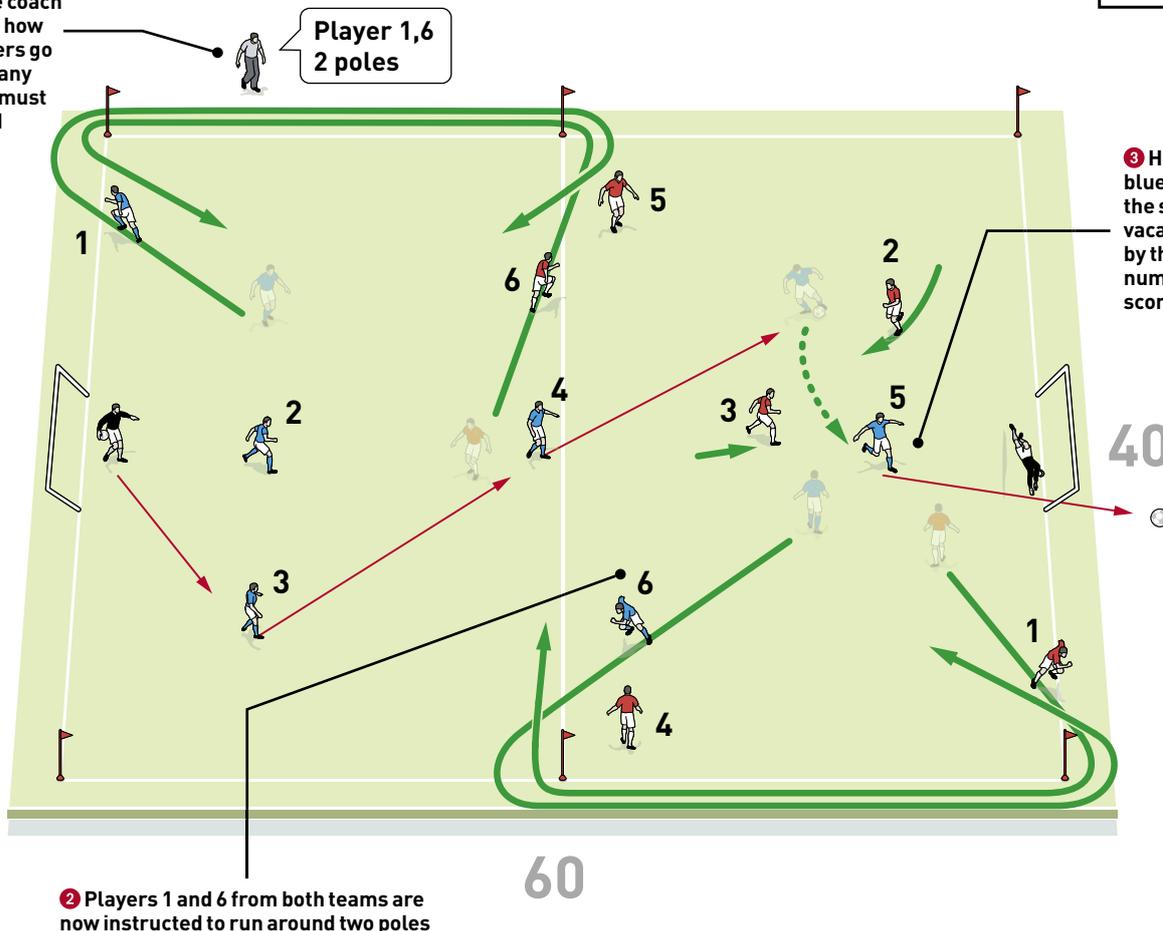


2 The coach calls out a number and the corresponding players on each team must sprint around one of the poles and then run back onto the pitch to rejoin the game

**DAVID ARTELL: SMALL-SIDED FITNESS GAME**

**1b**

1 To make it harder, the coach can dictate how many players go and how many poles they must run around



“To make things more challenging, the coach can dictate how many poles the players must run around”

players, the coach can also dictate how many poles they must run around, as shown [1b]. The coach can call the numbers sequentially, so that each player goes around one pole, then two poles, or the call can vary so both the players and the number of poles are randomly selected. If players try to stay close to the edge of the pitch to be as near as possible to the poles, the coach can choose to make them do more running by selecting more poles.

**How do I progress the session?**

We would alter the pitch size according to the numbers and the ability of the players. The size and rules can also vary depending on

the stage of the season and the required outcomes. For example, more players can be called to go around poles at the same time to physically expose the players left on the pitch or to set them a tactical challenge. The same players could be called to go around the poles repeatedly if we want to work on their individual fitness. We can obviously call more than one number at a time, which could leave 2v2 or 3v3 situations on the pitch if we want to work on these scenarios when the players are fatigued. We could also progress the session by adding conditions to the game: we could make play two-touch, require a one-touch finish to score, or we could

restrict passes to under head height. To add a fun element, the goalkeeper could also have a number and be required to run around the poles too.

**What are the key things to look for?**

If several numbers are called at once, then we want to see the tactically astute players regroup on the pitch and organise themselves into a new shape. For example, the centre back’s number might be called and, if he’s off the pitch, a full back or a central midfielder might need to fill in. Similarly, the centre back might re-enter the pitch from a pole and that means he could play centre forward until the next player goes to the poles.