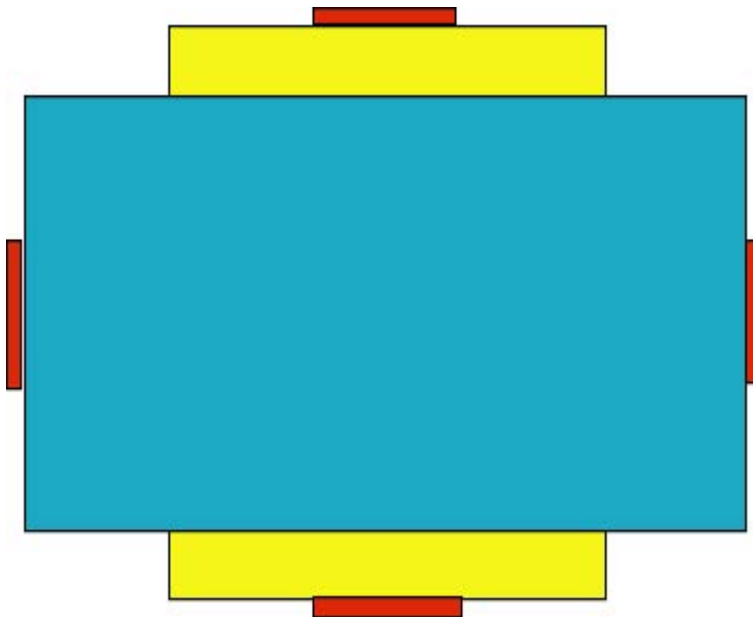


VISION ON AND OFF THE BALL

One of the biggest problems young players encounter is keeping their heads up both on and off the ball. As often as coaches talk about being aware of everything that is happening on the field, it's something that most coaches struggle with being able to teach.

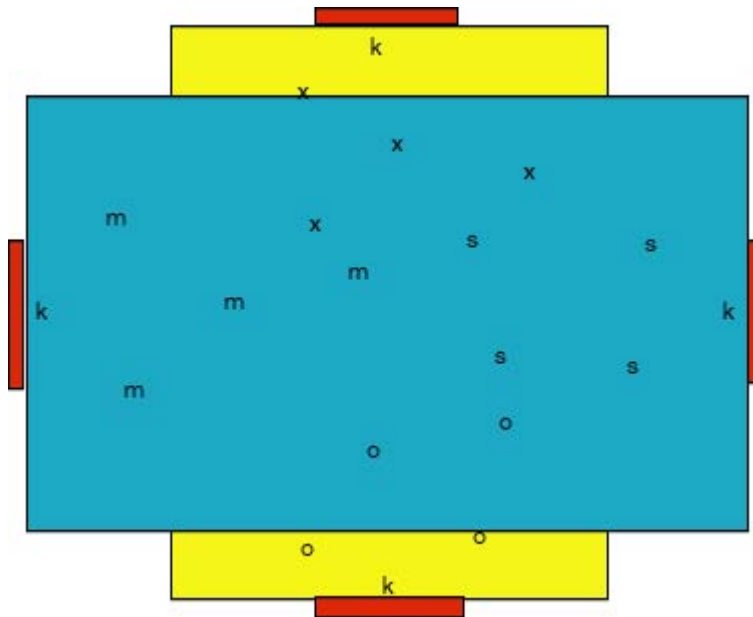
Here is a fun activity that works on everyone knowing what is around them at all times. This can be done by players of all ages and can be done with as few as 8 players or as many as 24.

This activity basically involves having two small sided games of soccer being played at the same time with fields going across each other. See diagram below



Two teams are playing on the blue field and the other two teams are playing on the yellow field. There are two balls and the two games are completely unrelated.

Looking at the diagram below. Team M is playing Team S on the blue field and Team X is playing Team O on the yellow field (the middle of the yellow field in this diagram is under the blue middle).



By having these two fields overlapping and two games going on across each other, players are required to keep their heads up at all times in order to make sure as not to pass (or run) into each other. Players learn to keep their heads up, constantly look around and know what is going on all over the field at all times. The other bonus in this game is the players learn to use width and depth as they will try to not only look for space to attack in the opposing team but they will also try to keep the ball in areas of the field away from the other game.

If you try this game, please understand that at first it will appear extremely chaotic and you might be tempted to stop the games and force them to do better, but if you are patient, most players will figure the game out and learn to keep their heads up on their own. From a coaching perspective, the more important thing to do is point out how much better they played at the end of the game than the beginning and if they can carry this over to a full sided game, they will be a much better player.