

Managing the Game in the Final Minutes

Why is it important?

The final minutes in any close game are critical. Many games have been lost in the dying seconds of the match due to simple mistakes that could have easily have been avoided. These close games are often lost because;

- Fatigue sets in and players are physically tired
- Lack of concentration due to mental exhaustion
- Not being aware of the time left on the clock
- Lack of discipline
- Taking unnecessary risks with and without the ball.

How to manage the game?

- **Physically Fit:** Must be physically prepared for the full 90 minutes, plus overtime. If a player is not fully “match fit” their technical execution will deteriorate as the game gets longer.
- **Mentally Fit:** Must be mentally prepared for the full 90 minutes, plus overtime. If a player is not physically fit, this will impact their mental state.
- **Sense of Urgency and Alertness:** Players must be aware of the time left on the clock and their style of play must that of a “no risk” mentality.
- **Play in the Opponents Half of the Field:** Clearance should be long and into the corners of the opponent’s half of the field. Keep away from the goalkeeper.
- **Slow the Clock:** Use set play and restarts such as throw-ins to slow the tempo of the game and kill time on the clock.
- **Forward on Throw ins and Free Kicks:** Always play the ball forward, never backwards on Throw-ins and Free Kicks.
- **Hold the ball in the Corner:** Dribbling the ball to their corner flag, protect the ball, look to get a corner or throw in.
- **Do Not Give Away Free Kicks:** Avoid any unnecessary fouls in the final seconds.