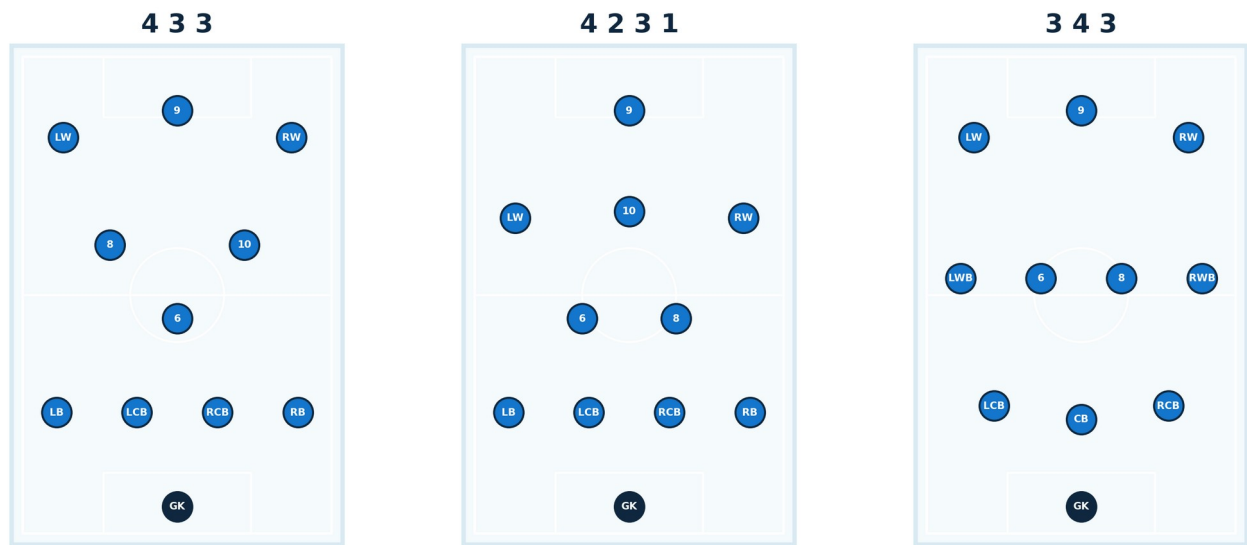


NORTH CALGARY FC GAME MODEL

Outdoor 11v11 | U13 to U19 | 2026 edition



THREE REFERENCE SHAPES



Player first | Game based | Development focused

Purpose and direction

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

This game model gives every NCFC outdoor team a recognizable way to train, compete and develop players in 11v11. It creates common language without turning football into a script. Coaches adapt the details to the age, level, opponent and available players while protecting the club's shared principles.

The central idea is simple: NCFC teams play with courage, intelligence and collective responsibility. We want players who can solve problems, compete honestly, handle the ball under pressure and understand more than one position. Development decisions come before short-term results.

Club promise

Commitment	Passion	Fun	Success
Prepare, work and support the team.	Compete with energy and love for the game.	Create an environment where players want to return.	Measure progress in skill, decision making, character and results.

Non negotiables

- The player is at the centre of every decision.
- We play to win, but never at the expense of long-term growth, safety or sportsmanship.
- Every player learns to receive, pass, carry, defend and make decisions under realistic pressure.
- Teams remain connected: close enough to support the ball and compact enough to defend together.
- Coaches use clear questions, guided discovery and game-based learning more often than constant instructions.
- Respect for teammates, opponents, officials and facilities is part of performance.

The NCFC player

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Our aim is not to manufacture identical players. It is to develop adaptable players who recognize the game, express their strengths and make useful decisions for the team.

Dimension	What it looks like
Technical	Comfortable with both feet; receives away from pressure; passes with purpose; can beat an opponent or protect the ball.
Tactical	Scans early; understands space, teammates and opponents; recognizes when to combine, penetrate, secure or reset.
Physical	Moves with balance and coordination; repeats high-quality efforts; develops safely for age and maturation.
Psychological	Brave enough to try; resilient after mistakes; focused, curious and accountable.
Social	Communicates, includes others, accepts roles, competes fairly and strengthens the group.

Player behaviours

- Scan before the ball arrives and receive with the next action in mind.
- Create a passing line after every pass.
- Recognize opportunities to play forward without forcing the game.
- React immediately when possession changes.
- Communicate early, specifically and positively.
- Own mistakes, recover quickly and stay available for the next action.

Our football identity

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

NCFC outdoor football is proactive. With the ball, we stretch the opponent, connect through useful angles and seek forward progress. Without the ball, we protect the centre, pressure with support and recover possession as a team. Transitions are treated as decisive moments, not pauses between phases.

Moment	NCFC intention	First question
Attacking	Keep the ball with purpose and create chances through width, depth, movement and combinations.	Can we play forward?
Defending to attacking	Secure the first action, then exploit space before the opponent reorganizes.	Can we attack now?
Defending	Protect the goal and centre, deny forward play and regain the ball together.	Who presses and who covers?
Attacking to defending	Counterpress when connected; recover compactly when the press is not on.	Can we win it back safely?
Restarts	Be organized, alert and creative while respecting age-appropriate priorities.	Are we ready before they are?

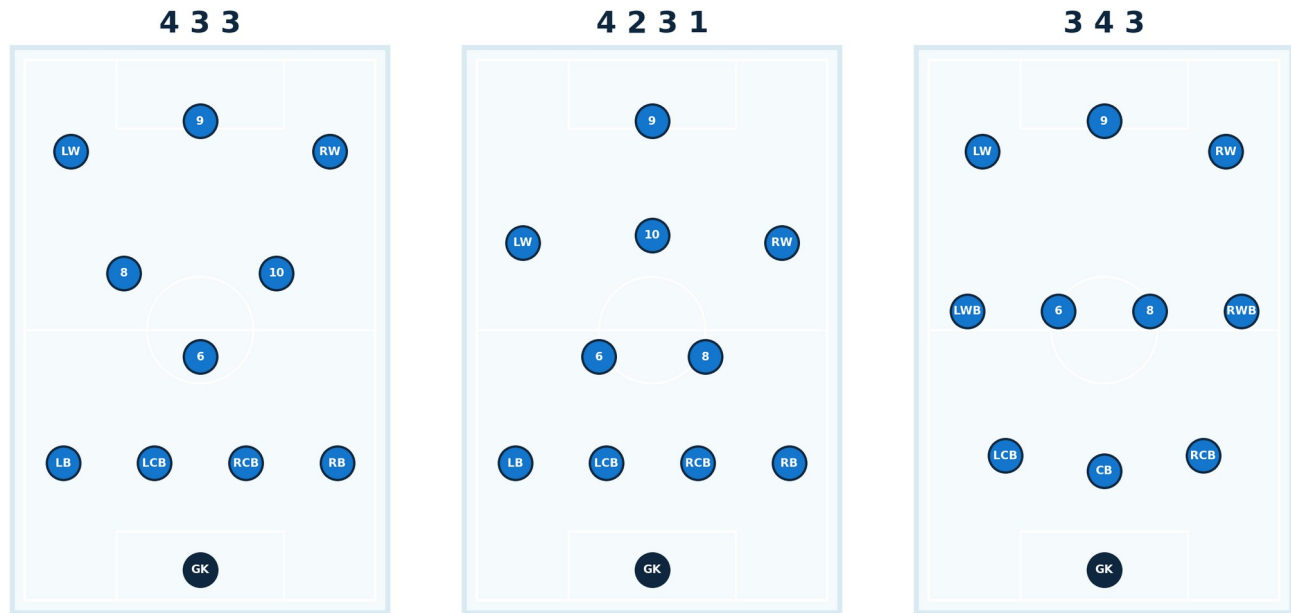
Three reference structures

NCFC outdoor teams use 4-3-3, 4-2-3-1 and 3-4-3 as connected reference shapes. They are learning structures, not rigid formations. The team can change shape by game state, opponent and available players while keeping the same attacking, defending and transition principles.

- 4-3-3 is the primary reference, creating natural width, three midfield levels and a clear front line.
- 4-2-3-1 adds a second holding midfielder and a defined number 10 when greater central security is required.
- 3-4-3 adds a central defender, releases the wingbacks and creates a five-player attacking line.

Outdoor reference formations

Attacking upward | Goalkeeper behind the back line



Formation	Position key	Coach cue
4-3-3	LB / LCB / RCB / RB; 6 / 8 / 10; LW / 9 / RW	Use the 6 to connect the back line; keep both wingers high enough to stretch the field.
4-2-3-1	Back four; 6 / 8; LW / 10 / RW; 9	The double pivot balances buildup and rest defence while the 10 connects to the striker.
3-4-3	LCB / CB / RCB; LWB / 6 / 8 / RWB; LW / 9 / RW	Wingbacks provide width; outside centre backs support progression without exposing the centre.

The outdoor labels extend the same visual language used in the NCFC Indoor Rotation Playbook. The goalkeeper remains behind the back line, the team attacks upward, and related roles retain familiar names wherever possible.

Attacking principles

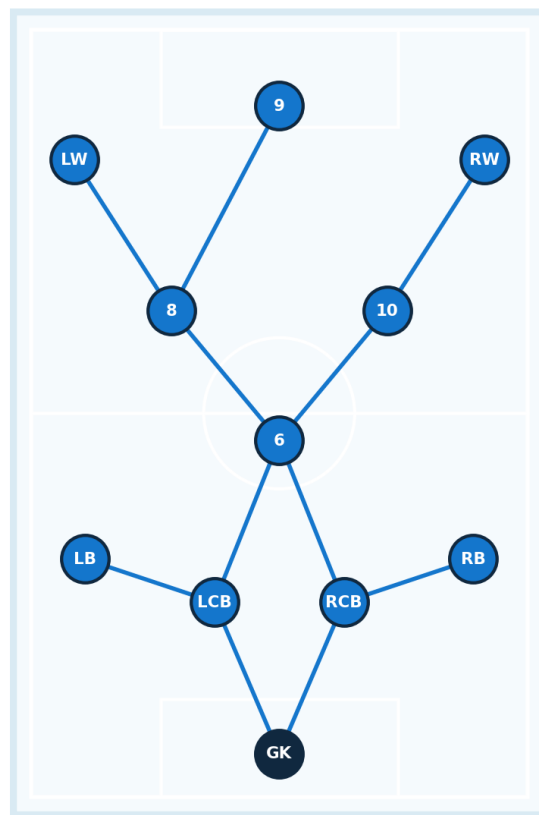
Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Our objective

We keep possession to move the opponent and create a route to goal. Possession without progress is useful only when it restores balance, attracts pressure or prepares the next attack.

1. See forward first. If a safe penetrating pass or carry is available, take it.
2. Create width and depth. Stretch the opponent both across and along the field.
3. Support at different heights and angles. Avoid standing on the same passing line.
4. Overload to combine, then switch to exploit the free side.
5. Occupy the box with timing. Arrive across the front, central and back-post lanes.
6. Secure the attack. Keep enough players behind and around the ball to stop the counterattack.

4 3 3 attacking connections



4 3 3 attacking connections using the outdoor role labels

Build from the goalkeeper

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

We prefer to build through pressure because it develops composure, technique and tactical understanding. We do not insist on short passes when the risk is unreasonable. The goalkeeper and defenders read the opponent, create a free player and select the best route.

Build sequence

1. Organize early: the defenders separate, wide players provide height and width, and central players occupy different lines.
2. Invite pressure only when the next pass is prepared.
3. Use the goalkeeper as an extra player to create numerical advantage.
4. Break the first line by passing, carrying or combining with a third player.
5. If the centre is blocked, use the outside route and connect forward.
6. If the opponent locks the build, play accurately beyond pressure and compete for the second ball.

Cue	Preferred response
One forward presses two defenders	Use the goalkeeper and far defender to create a 3v1.
Two forwards lock both defenders	Find a wide midfielder, drop the CM, or play accurately beyond pressure.
Opponent presses player to player	Rotate positions, create separation, then exploit the space behind the press.
No controlled option	Play into a prepared target area and compress around the second ball.

Progression and chance creation

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Progress through the thirds

- Use the CM or a checking forward between the opponent's lines whenever possible.
- The far-side wide player stays available to punish an over-shifted defence.
- Defenders choose their supporting height based on the ball, pressure and transition risk.
- Midfielders connect, rotate and run beyond the ball at different moments.
- The forward pins, checks, combines and threatens behind; movement must create a decision for defenders.

Create and finish

Route	Key behaviours
Wide combination	Overlap, underlap, wall pass or isolation for the winger; deliver with runners in distinct lanes.
Central combination	Third-player runs, bounce passes and quick play between lines.
Switch of play	Move the opponent, secure the pass, then attack the weak side before it closes.
Direct penetration	Run behind when the passer can look forward and the opponent's line is exposed.
Second phase	Recover clearances, recycle with composure and attack again from a balanced shape.

Finishing standard: arrive with conviction, select the finish early, attack rebounds and immediately prepare to counterpress if the chance breaks down.

Defending principles

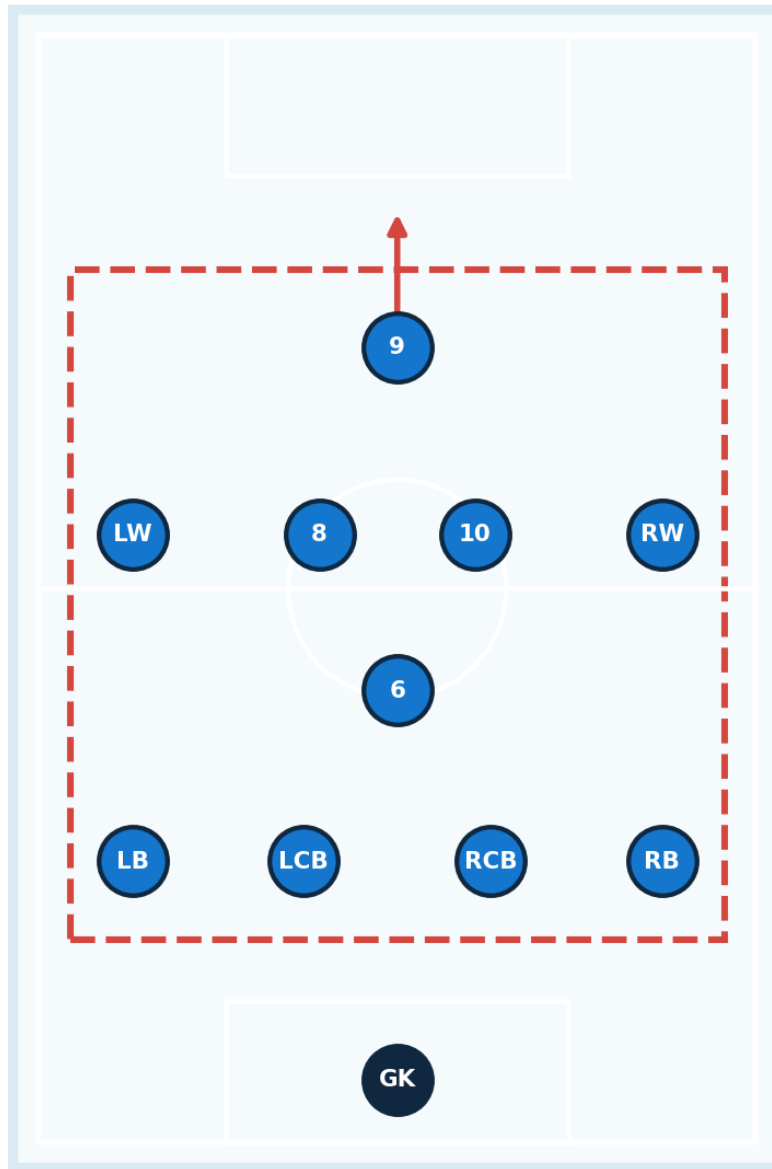
Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Our objective

We defend forward when the moment is right, but never as isolated individuals. Pressure must have cover and balance. When we cannot win the ball immediately, we protect the centre, recover compactness and make the opponent play around us.

1. Protect the goal and central corridor first.
2. The nearest player applies controlled pressure; teammates provide cover and balance.
3. Keep short distances between and within lines.
4. Show the opponent toward a prepared trap or lower-value space.
5. Track dangerous runners while preserving the team's structure.
6. On regaining the ball, shift immediately from defending to attacking.

Compact 4 1 4 1 block



The 4 3 3 contracts into a compact 4 1 4 1 defensive block

Pressing and the defensive block

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Pressing triggers

- A slow, square or backward pass.
- A poor first touch or receiver facing their own goal.
- A pass toward the touchline with limited support.
- An opponent receiving on their weaker side or under immediate pressure.
- A predictable restart or goalkeeper pass.
- A moment when the whole team is connected and ready to move forward.

Pressing responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
First defender	Arrive under control, deny the most dangerous route and make play predictable.
Second defender	Cover the first defender and be ready to tackle, intercept or take over pressure.
Third defenders	Protect central options, mark space and opponents, and prepare for the next pass.
Back line	Move with the press, manage depth and communicate continuously.
Goalkeeper	Set the line, defend space behind it and organize the box.

If the trigger is missed or the team is stretched, recover into the compact block. Pressing late and alone is not bravery; it opens the team.

Transitions

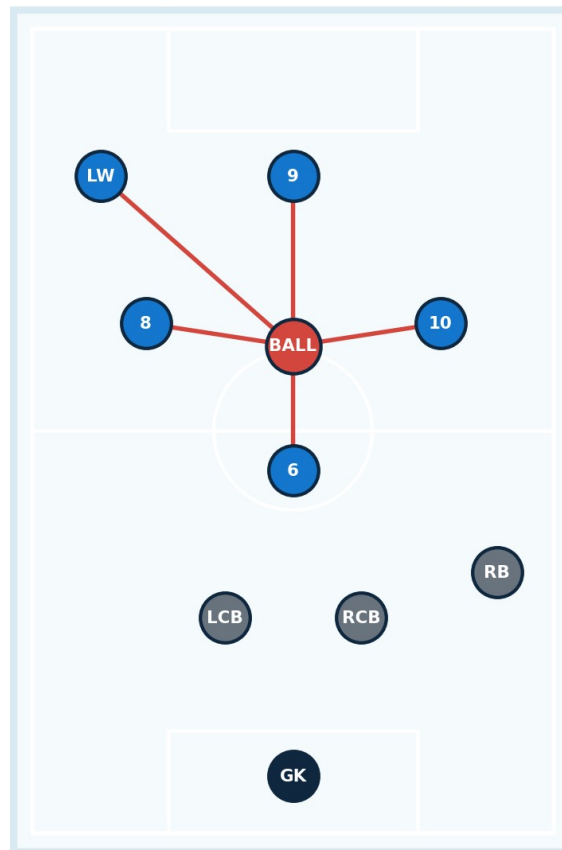
Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

When we lose the ball

The first three to five seconds are decisive. If players are close enough, the nearest players counterpress while others close central routes and protect depth. If the ball cannot be won safely, the team recovers behind it immediately.

- Nearest player pressures the ball without being eliminated easily.
- Second and third players close the next passes, especially through the centre.
- Players behind the ball compress the field and identify the opponent's fastest threat.
- Far-side players narrow quickly while remaining aware of the switch.
- Communication identifies whether the team presses or drops.

Nearest press others protect



Counterpress only when the outdoor team is connected

When we win the ball

- First look forward and attack space if the opponent is disorganized.
- Support the ball carrier with a forward option, a wide option and a secure option.
- If the counterattack is not clean, protect the first pass and rebuild possession.
- Players away from the ball sprint to create depth, width or protection.

Goalkeeper model

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

The NCFC goalkeeper is a decision maker, communicator and footballer. Technical saving remains essential, but the goalkeeper also starts attacks, supports possession and protects the space behind the team.

Moment	Goalkeeper behaviours
Team in possession	Offer a passing angle, scan both sides, communicate pressure, choose tempo and distribute with either foot.
Building under pressure	Recognize the free player, disguise passes, support after releasing, and use longer distribution when it improves the team's position.
Team defending	Set the defensive line, adjust starting position, manage low services and prepare for breakaways.
Transition to attack	Secure first, then release quickly when advantage exists; otherwise allow the team to expand.
Transition to defend	Recover an effective position, organize immediate pressure and be ready to sweep.

Development priorities

- Footwork, handling, diving technique and safe landing.
- Passing and receiving with both feet under pressure.
- Decision making on crosses, through balls and 1v1 situations.
- Clear, early and specific communication.
- Emotional recovery after errors.

Restarts

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Restarts should reinforce game understanding, not consume an excessive share of youth training. Every team needs clear organization and two or three repeatable options. Creativity is encouraged once players understand the safety and spacing requirements.

Restart	NCFC standard
Kickoff	Be ready to play forward, secure possession or create an immediate wide attack.
Goal kick	Use the same build principles as open play; prepare a longer option and the second-ball structure.
Throw in	Create movement before the restart, support inside and behind, use the goalkeeper when appropriate, and protect against transition.
Attacking corner	Attack distinct zones with timed movement; keep balanced protection against the quick counter.
Defending corner	Use a simple age-appropriate system; protect central space, track threats and react first to the clearance.
Free kick	Restart quickly when advantage exists; otherwise organize roles, delivery and rest defence.

Restart behaviours

- Know the score, time and field position.
- Identify the ball, opponent and next action before the whistle.
- Communicate assignments early.
- Attack the second ball after every service.

Age stage application

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

The principles remain consistent, but the detail, field size, language and complexity must match the players. Coaches should not copy an adult model into a youth environment.

Stage	Primary focus	Coach emphasis
U13	Ball mastery, 1v1 confidence, scanning, basic width and support, immediate transition habits.	Short explanations, many repetitions, small-sided games, freedom to try different positions.
U14 to U16	Position relationships, playing through lines, pressing roles, compactness, speed of transition.	Guided questions, unit work inside games, clear individual feedback, continued positional variety.
U17 to U19	Game management, opponent adaptation, role detail, physical preparation, leadership and performance consistency.	Greater player ownership, video where available, position-specific detail and match-plan responsibility.

Outdoor formation progression

Stage	Reference emphasis	Principles to protect
Learning roles	4-3-3	Back-four spacing, the 6 as connector, two advanced midfielders and true attacking width.
Connecting lines	4-2-3-1	Double-pivot balance, the 10 between lines, winger support and coordinated pressing.
Game adaptation	3-4-3 plus all shapes	Wingback timing, back-three coverage and changing structure without losing central protection.

Squad and role management

Ten outfield positions | Planned substitutions | Development first

The game model defines how NCFC wants to play; the match plan assigns players to roles and manages substitutions for the game context. Outdoor substitutions should protect team connections while giving players meaningful opportunities to learn related positions.

Squad principles

Principle	Application
Ten connected outfield roles	Every lineup identifies the back line, midfield relationships and front line before kickoff.
Stable reference labels	Use the exact role keys from 4-3-3, 4-2-3-1 or 3-4-3 so instructions remain clear.
Unit continuity	Avoid changing an entire line at once unless the match or competition format requires it.
Planned flexibility	Adjust for fatigue, injury, discipline, weather, score and game state; record actual substitution times.
Developmental variety	Expose players to related roles while respecting safety, readiness and genuine positional strengths.
Transparent evaluation	Ratings may guide planning but are not public rankings or fixed promises of minutes.

Formation change on the fly

A formation change should require only a few clear moves. From 4-3-3 to 4-2-3-1, the 8 joins the 6 as a double pivot and the 10 stays between the lines. From 4-3-3 to 3-4-3, the 6 can drop between the centre backs while both fullbacks advance as wingbacks. Coaches should rehearse these changes so players recognize the picture immediately.

Training methodology

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Training must look and feel like football. Sessions use realistic direction, opponents, decisions, transitions and goals whenever possible. Technical detail is taught inside a meaningful picture of the game.

Session architecture

Block	Typical purpose	Coach action
Arrival and activation	Touches, movement quality, connection and readiness.	Observe, welcome and introduce the day's idea.
Game or problem	Expose the principle in a small-sided game.	Let players experience the problem before solving it.
Practice and detail	Repeat the key action under increasing pressure.	Coach one or two essential details; avoid stopping every error.
Expanded game	Transfer the idea to a larger, more realistic picture.	Use constraints only when they help the principle appear.
Free game and reflection	Play with normal rules and check learning.	Ask players what they recognized and what they will repeat.

Coach communication

- Use brief interventions and restart play quickly.
- Ask questions that direct attention: What did you see? Where is the free player? What protects us if we lose it?
- Praise the decision and intention, not only the outcome.
- Give individual feedback privately when possible and correct without humiliation.
- Finish with one or two clear takeaways, not a long speech.

Weekly planning

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

The weekly plan connects the previous match, the next challenge and the players' long-term needs. Teams with limited training time should protect repeated exposure to the club's core principles rather than chase a new theme every session.

Training opportunity	Recommended emphasis
One session plus match	One main game principle, technical detail within it, transitions and a short restart review.
Two sessions plus match	Session one develops the week's main principle; session two transfers it to team organization and match intensity.
Three sessions plus match	Recovery and technique; principle development; match preparation and restarts, adjusted for age and load.

Planning questions

1. What did the players need in the last match?
2. Which club principle addresses that need?
3. What game will make the problem visible?
4. What individual details will help players solve it?
5. How will we know the learning transferred to the match?

Training load must respect age, school demands, match congestion, injuries and individual maturation. More work is not automatically better work.

Match day framework

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Before the match

- Select no more than three team messages and connect them to familiar training language.
- Give players role clarity while leaving room to solve the game.
- Use a progressive warm-up that includes the ball, decisions and the expected match intensity.
- Confirm respect, substitutions, safety and communication standards.

During the match

- Coach the agreed behaviours, not every touch.
- Observe patterns before intervening.
- Use the bench as a learning environment and prepare substitutes with specific information.
- Make changes that serve player development and the game, not punishment for a single mistake.
- Model emotional control and respect for officials.

After the match

- Recognize effort and behaviour immediately; delay detailed analysis until emotions settle.
- Review whether the team expressed the game model, not only the score.
- Identify one strength to keep and one priority to train.
- Check player wellbeing and any injury concerns.

Observation and evaluation

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Evaluation should show whether players and teams are learning the model. Results matter, but they are interpreted alongside the quality of decisions, execution, resilience and development over time.

Area	Observable indicators
Attacking	Players scan; team creates width and depth; forward options appear; possession has purpose; box occupation is coordinated.
Defending	Pressure has cover; centre is protected; distances remain compact; back line and goalkeeper communicate.
Transitions	Immediate collective reaction; counterattack is recognized; team knows when to press and when to recover.
Individual growth	Improved decisions under pressure; greater use of both feet; positional understanding; confidence after mistakes.
Team culture	Positive communication, role acceptance, sportsmanship, attendance and shared responsibility.

Coach reflection

- Did the session or match give players enough decisions?
- Did my interventions improve understanding or interrupt learning?
- Which players need a different challenge or clearer support?
- Did playing time and positional exposure support development?
- What evidence will guide the next plan?

Common language

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

Phrase	Shared meaning
See forward	Scan for a useful forward action before choosing sideways or backward.
Stretch the field	Provide width and depth to increase space between opponents.
Different lines	Support at varied heights and angles rather than standing flat.
Fix and release	Draw an opponent toward the ball, then play to the free teammate.
Protect the centre	Make the direct route to goal difficult and force play away from danger.
Press with cover	The first defender pressures while teammates protect the next action.
Secure or go	After regaining possession, choose between an immediate attack and protecting the ball.
Rest defence	Players positioned to prevent or delay a counterattack while the team attacks.
Next action	Recover mentally and physically to influence what happens next.

Coaches may use age-appropriate language, but the underlying meaning should remain consistent across teams.

Implementation

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

A game model becomes real only when it shapes coach education, session planning, player feedback and match review. It should be introduced gradually, reviewed openly and refined as NCFC learns.

First 90 days

Period	Action
Weeks 1 to 2	Brief coaches on the identity, moments, common language and age-stage expectations.
Weeks 3 to 6	Each team selects one attacking, one defending and one transition principle as its immediate focus.
Weeks 7 to 10	Technical staff observe training and matches, collecting examples of what is clear or difficult.
Weeks 11 to 13	Coach forum reviews evidence, aligns language and proposes limited revisions.

Governance

- The Technical Director or Academy Director owns the football content and revision cycle.
- Coaches receive practical examples, not only the handbook.
- Age-group leads help translate principles into formats and training plans.
- The model is reviewed annually, while major changes require technical approval.
- Feedback from players and coaches is recorded and considered.

This 2026 edition should be treated as a working club standard. It is specific enough to create identity and flexible enough to serve different ages, tiers, coaches and players.

Sources and club foundations

Outdoor 11v11 playing and coaching framework

This game model was developed from NCFC's published vision, mission, values, policies, coach expectations, technical staff information and training resources, supplemented by established youth-development principles and the club's current club playing framework. The playing principles remain subject to technical approval and annual review.

- **North Calgary FC About NCFC**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/about-ncfc/>
- **North Calgary FC Coaching Code of Conduct**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/coaching-code-of-conduct/>
- **North Calgary FC Play Up Policy**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/play-up-policy/>
- **North Calgary FC Our Team**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/our-team/>
- **North Calgary FC Thank You Sergio**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/thank-you-sergio/>
- **Canada Soccer Learn to Train Drills hosted by NCFC**
<https://northcalgaryfc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Learn-To-Train-Drills.pdf>
- **NCFC Outdoor 11v11 Game Model working framework**
[Current NCFC coaching document](#)

Approval record

Role	Name	Date	Status
Technical lead			Draft for review
Academy and grassroots			Draft for review
Board representative			Draft for review