

Choose your concepts wisely

A sample weekly schedule with three sessions
by **Andreas Knetter**, U19 coach, Arminia Bielefeld

In the pages of *Success in Soccer*, we often talk about planning according to training concepts and working consistently toward long-term objectives. But how do you create a weekly training schedule? On one hand, you have to think in the long term, but on the other, you also have to talk to the team about what they did right and wrong in their last match, and respond accordingly. And you have to think about the next match too! In this article, Andreas Knetter shows you how to do this mental split and still train your players effectively.

Objectives during the season

In the spring or fall, most coaches' agendas include the following objectives:

- continued improvement of basic skills
- refinement of team tactics and formation
- specialized training for individual players and groups
- position-specific training, and
- stabilization of condition.

Each week, these concepts function as guideposts as you work on what you've learned from your last match. At the same time, you should also be working on concepts that prepare you for the playoffs at the end of the season.

The weekly schedule

The majority of all amateur adult teams have three practice sessions each week: Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Tuesday's practice usually focuses on soccer-specific condition training. Thursday is devoted to intensive technique training, and on Friday the emphasis shifts to group and team tactics.

As a fundamental rule, all practice sessions should be complex and play-oriented. Individual condition exercises may be included, but they should always be soccer-specific.

Creating a practice session

In general, practice sessions should always be structured as follows:

- Warm-up should always include the ball, so that players are also working on technique. It should also be coordinated with the main session in terms of concept. Exertion levels should be systematically increased.
- The main session should focus on just one or two technical/tactical concepts. The right ratio of activity to rest is essential for achieving training objectives. Concepts that require players to be completely fresh must be scheduled at the beginning of the main session in order to see improvements.
- Ideally, the concluding game should also focus on the same technical/tactical concepts as in the main session. End the session with a cool-down activity (intensity depends on intensity of main session).

As we move into winter, be sure to take wet, cold and windy weather conditions into account by planning activities that keep players constantly moving. Wet and uneven field surfaces should also be considered when planning offensive training. Spring and fall are the best times for fine-tuning technique!

When to schedule team meetings

You should discuss your last match before your Tuesday practice session. That way, players get feedback on their performance and an



One practice session might focus on the concept of offensive 1 v. 1 play, for example.

AXEL HEIMKEN

overview of your plans for the week. Your Friday practice session should be followed by a discussion of the match that's coming up. In addition to the usual details of time, place and lineup, you can also tell your players about the opposition, and you can outline the formation and tactics you want to use.



Tactical concepts for this week

Lessons from previous match:

- weak offensive 1 v. 1 play (Tuesday)
- numbers-up play not effective (Thursday)

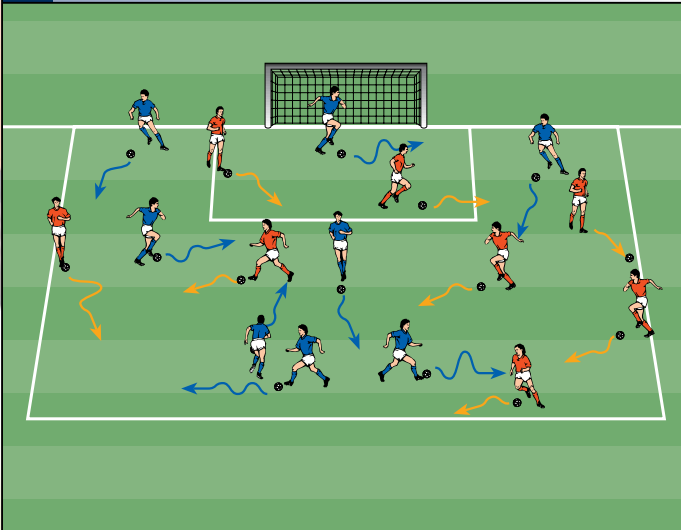
Preparation for next match:

- finishing (every day)
- setting up shots from the wing (Friday)
- opening up play from tight spaces (Friday)
- tough opponent with good heading skills (Friday)

TUESDAY PRACTICE: 1 v. 1 play

WARM-UP

1 Warming up with the ball

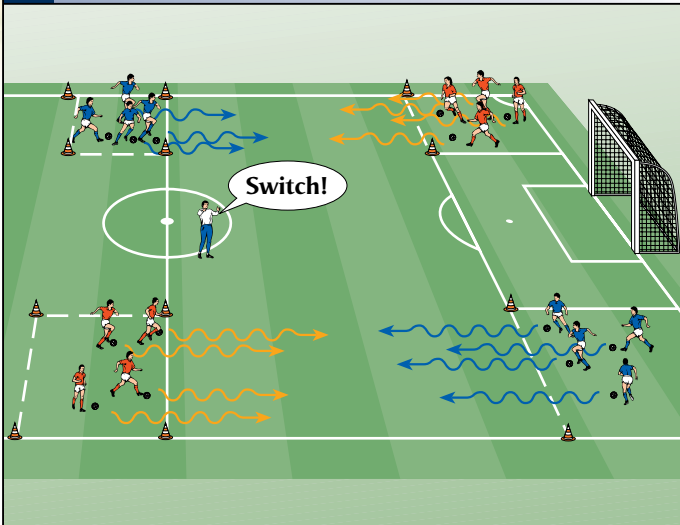


Description

All players, including the goalkeeper, dribble freely inside the penalty box. After three minutes, they do the following activities:

- Dribble only with the right/left foot.
- Dribble only with the inside/outside of the foot.
- Pull the ball to the side with the sole of the foot.
- Do various fakes (lunge step, single/double step-over, scissors, shooting fake, etc.), briefly accelerating after each.
- Finish with a brief period of stretching.

2 Switching fields



Setup

- Field players line up in the corners beside the penalty box and in two similar fields behind the centerline.
- Goalkeepers warm up separately.

Sequence

- Players dribble freely inside their fields. On command, they do an assigned fake and quickly dribble to a different field.
- The coach tells them which way to go: straight across, clockwise, counterclockwise or diagonally.

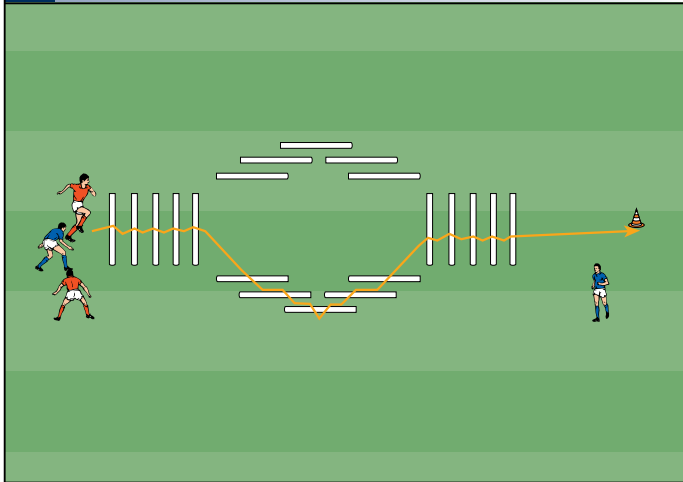
Variations

- Instead of dribbling, players juggle. On command, they play the ball up high in the air, receiving and controlling it as they switch fields.
- Players do an assigned number of fakes while switching fields.

TUESDAY PRACTICE: 1 v. 1 play

MAIN SESSION 1

Coordination and speed training



Setup

- Lay out five poles in a row. Lay out five more in a pyramid shape on each side, and then lay out five more at the far end, with a cone eight yards beyond them.

Activities

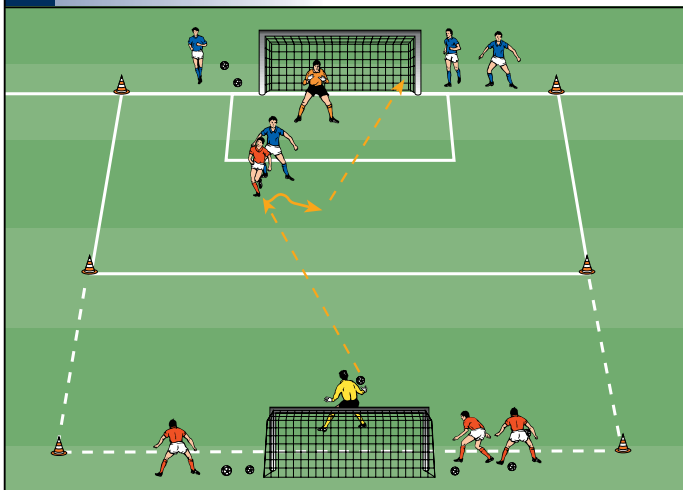
- Run forward (or backwards) over the first and last rows of poles and then sprint to the cone.
- Run sideways over the first and last rows and then sprint to the cone.
- Run forward over the first row (taking one, two or three steps between poles), sideways over the right-hand pyramid and forward over the last row; then sprint. Repeat on the left side.

Variation

- Instead of the sprint at the end, a goalkeeper throws in a ball, and the runner passes it back directly (or on the second or third touch).

MAIN SESSION 2

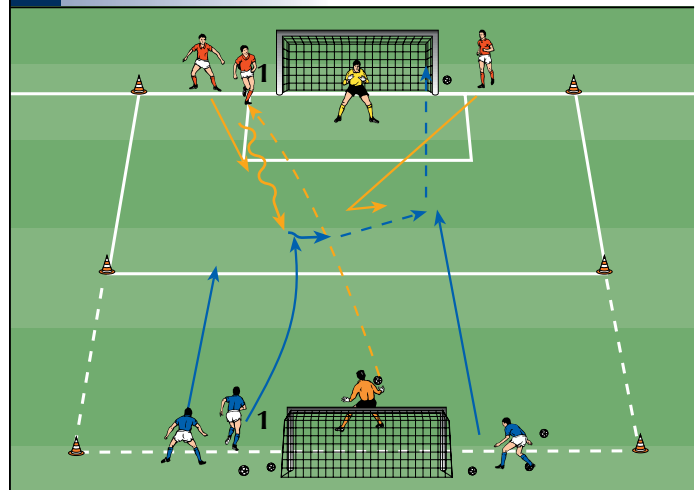
1 1 v. 1 on small field



Setup and sequence

- Divide players into two teams and mark out a field twice the size of the penalty box, with two goals with goalkeepers.
- Each player plays two 1 v. 1s in a row.
- For the first round, the goalkeeper of the attacking team throws the ball to the attacker in front of the opposite goal. The attacker tries to turn around, get past the defender and score.
- The defender may counterattack on the attacker's goal.
- After 45 seconds, or as soon as the attacker scores or plays the ball out, the next round begins. This time the other goalkeeper throws the ball in.

2 1 v. 1 to 3 v. 3



Setup and sequence

- Same as above, except now the attacker and defender start out beside their goals, together with two teammates each.
- The defenders' goalkeeper throws the ball to Attacker 1.
- If Defender 1 touches the ball, the other four players move onto the field and play 3 v. 3, each team trying to score on the other goal.
- Start over each time the ball goes out or a player scores.
- Maximum playing time is three minutes.

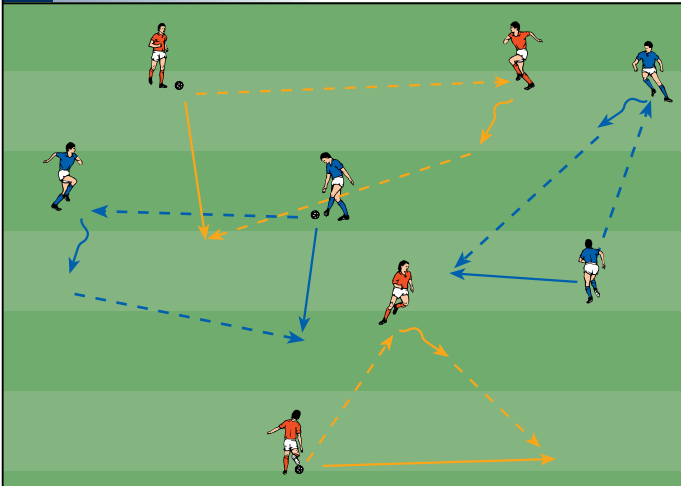
Concluding game

- Teams play 8 v. 8 between the penalty boxes.

THURSDAY PRACTICE: Numbers-up play

WARM-UP

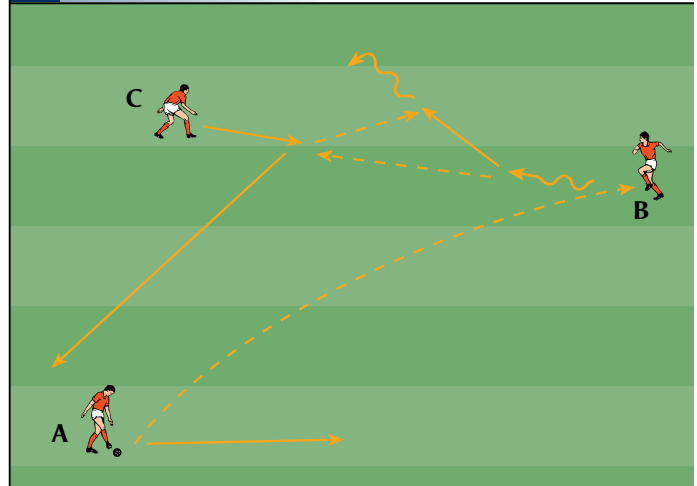
1 Partner passing/receiving exercise



Setup and activities

- Partners pass back and forth inside a half.
- Pass from less than 20 yards away, using any technique.
- Pass on ground, using inside of foot; use any technique to receive.
- Pass on ground, using inside of foot; receive and control with inside, then outside of foot while doing 90-degree turn.
- Pass on ground, using inside of foot; do body fake while receiving and dribble quickly away to one side.
- Finish with a brief period of stretching.

2 Long and short passing in threes

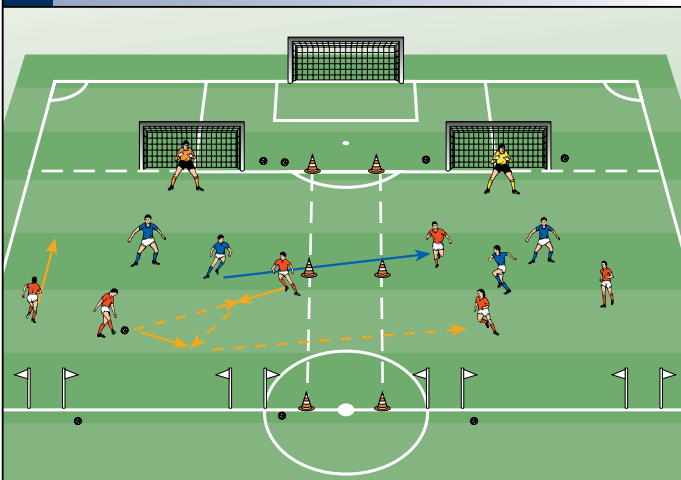


Setup and activities

- Players A, B and C pass back and forth.
- Player A does a wall pass with B and then passes to C. C passes to A, who drops the ball back; C passes to B, etc.
- Player A plays a flighted ball to B, who receives and controls it and plays a wall pass with C. C gets open, receives and controls the flighted ball from B, etc.
- Players form a triangle (three or four yards apart). Player A passes to B, who takes the ball toward C and passes on the second touch. C receives and controls the ball, etc. After each pass, players return to their cones for the next one. They can also pass two balls at once.

MAIN SESSION

Numbers up/numbers down



Setup

- Set up two portable goals at the corners of the penalty box and mark four small goals on the centerline. Mark out an eight-yard-wide no-go zone down the middle of the field.

3 v. 2 plus 3 v. 2

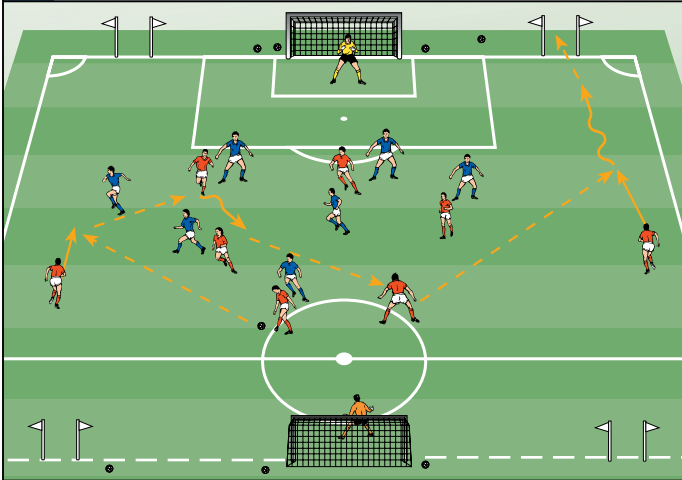
- Players work together with their teammates on the opposite side.
- On each side there are three attackers, who attack on the goal with goalkeeper, and two defenders, who can counterattack on the small goals. The offside rule is in effect.
- Defenders are allowed to cross the no-go zone to even out the numbers on the other side.
- If necessary, limit the attackers' touches.
- The remaining players jog around the field, periodically rotating in.



THURSDAY PRACTICE: Numbers-up play

CONCLUDING GAME

8 v. 8 on six goals



Description

- Set up a standard goal with goalkeeper and two two-yard-wide goals on each endline of a field two-thirds the normal size. Position each small goal six yards from the sideline.
- Teams play 8 v. 8 on six goals.

Training concepts

- For attackers: attacking on the wings, switching point of attack to outnumber opponents
- For defenders: following the ball

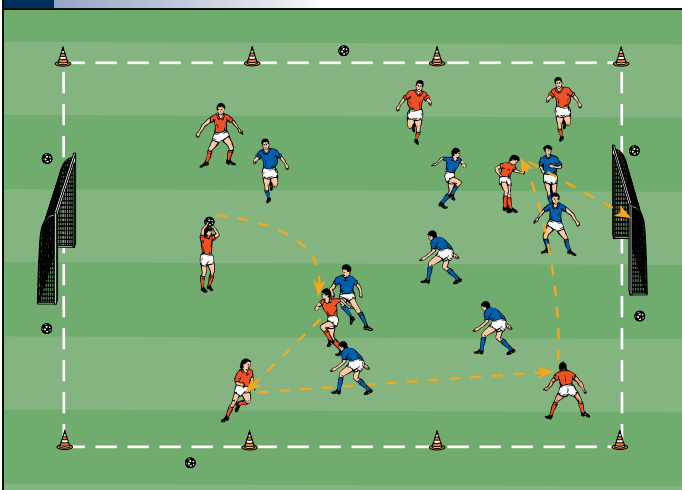
Variation

- Instead of small goals, mark goal lines 18 yards out from the endlines, forcing defenders to play higher on the field.

FRIDAY PRACTICE: Setting up shots

WARM-UP

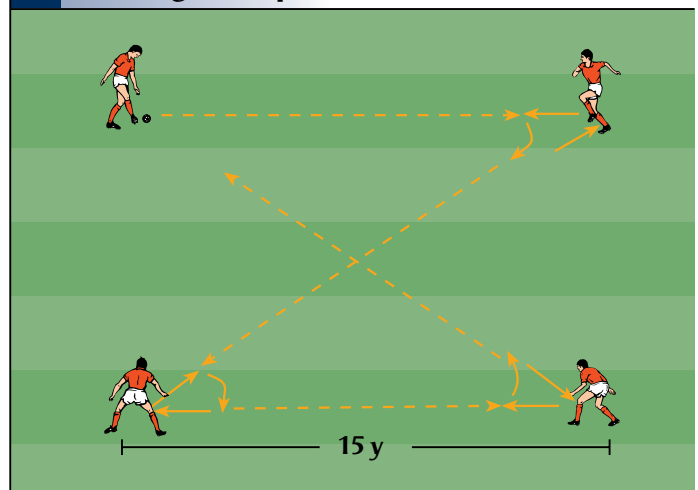
1 Handball/headball



Description

- Teams play 8 v. 8 (or 9 v. 9) handball on a 30 x 40-yard field with two goals. Attackers can only score on headers.
- The ball may not touch the ground before the header (no bouncing); otherwise attackers lose possession.
- Players must immediately throw the ball after catching it (no more than two steps while carrying it).

2 Passing in a square



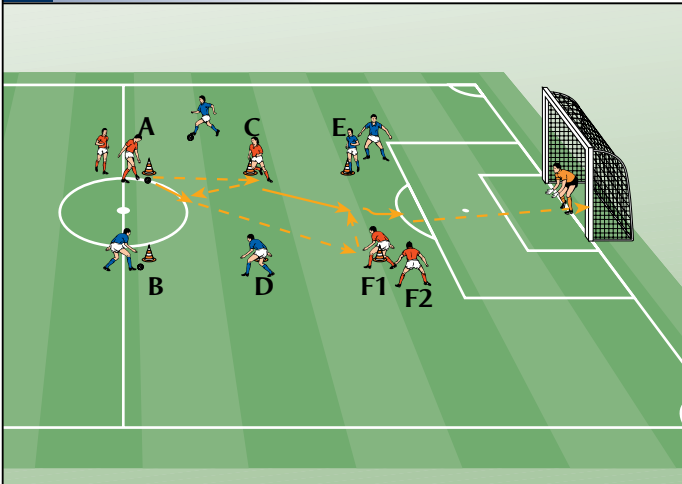
Description

- Groups of four form 15 x 15-yard squares. Each group has a ball.
- Players pass directly and on the ground, in no set order.
- Receivers move to meet the ball, take it toward the next receiver and pass, then return to their starting positions (see Thursday's triangle exercise). Passes should be crisp and straight.
- After a few minutes, players move farther apart and play flighted balls, each passer running after the ball.

FRIDAY PRACTICE: Setting up shots

MAIN SESSION

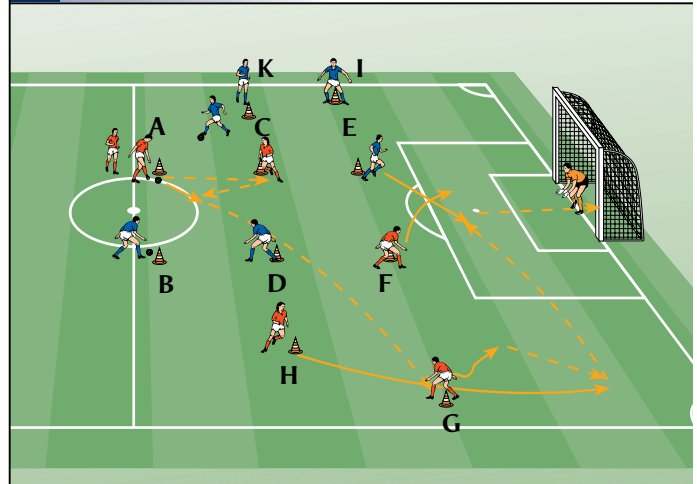
1 Combination play and shot



Setup and sequence

- Arrange six cones (spaced 12 yards apart) in a rectangle 22 yards in front of a goal with goalkeeper.
- Assign one player each to Cones C and D, and two each to E and F. All other players line up at A and B with one ball each.
- Player A winds up and passes to C, then runs after the ball. C drops it back and runs diagonally toward F1, who receives a pass from A and sets up C to shoot on the second touch.
- Each player moves to the next position. F1 goes to Cone B, and F2 sets up the next shooter. C retrieves his ball after the next play.
- Do the same sequence on the opposite side (B, D, E).

2 Combination on wing and shot



Setup and sequence

- Setup is the same, except with one player each at E and F, plus four more at inside and outside positions on the wings (G, H, I and K).
- Sequence is the same, except A passes to G. H overlaps G, who passes into H's path. E and F cross paths as they run into the penalty box to score on a cross/ground ball from H.
- Do the same sequence on the opposite side (B, D, E).

Concluding game (competition)

- Teams play 8 v. 8 between the penalty boxes.
- The losers buy drinks for the winners, who also score points for a competition that continues throughout the season.

NEW: SUCCESS IN SOCCER PRACTICE PLANNERS



Practice Planner 1 Youth U16-U18

If you're an advanced youth coach, your players need a motivational training program that enables them to have lots of fun playing the game and develop

also improving their soccer skills while also improving their physical fitness.

96 pages, paperbound, full color, \$14.99



Practice Planner 2 Amateur Adult 1

For lower-level amateur adult coaches, the number-one priority is to provide a training program that enables players to have fun playing the game while simultaneously improving

multaneously improving as well as their fitness.

96 pages, paperbound, full color, \$14.99



Practice Planner 3 Amateur Adult 2

The foundation for players and coaches is a positive attitude toward competitive soccer. That requires a systematic training program that improves the team

and its players and gives them a chance to have some fun too.

96 pages, paperbound, full color, \$14.99

To order, please visit us on the web at www.successinsoccer.com, or contact us directly: NORTH & SOUTH AMERICA: Success in Soccer, tel. (888) 828-4263 (U.S. only) or (505) 889-3680, fax (505) 883-4577; UK: Forsport Ltd, tel. 0208 658 2007, fax 0208 658 1314