

Attacking

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY



GOALKEEPER & DEFENDERS
IN ATTACKING PLAY

DEVELOPING STRIKERS IN
TODAY'S GAME

WAYS TO ATTACK THROUGH
THE MIDFIELD

Gwynne Williams (Executive Director, Issaquah Soccer Club); Charlie Slagle (Chief Executive, Capital Area Soccer League); Rene Miramontes (Director of Coaching, San Diego Crusaders); Robert Parr (Director of Coaching, Arkansas State Soccer Association) and Ian Barker (Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA)



**National Soccer Coaches
Association of America**

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**National Soccer Coaches
Association of America**

Dear NSCAA Member,

On the behalf of the NSCAA, we would like to thank you for your recent participation in the webinar series entitled 'Attacking Principles of Play'.

The NSCAA is committed to delivering coaching education in a variety of methods – methods that reflect different learning styles and interest levels of our members. Presenting vibrant and engaging content in a convenient and low cost E-learning format to supplement and enhance existing NSCAA courses and events is a priority.

For the first time, NSCAA Members engaging in the entire Elearning program receive formal recognition/credit for their participation. Benefits of Elearning are considerable, both for the individual and NSCAA. Expect to see many more opportunities in the near future to engage with top professional educators without the need to leave your home, office or local library.

This series would not have been possible without contributions of our presenters, each individual volunteering their time to create and present 5 unique sessions. The sessions and presenters were:

1. Introduction to Attacking Principles

Ian Barker, Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA

2. The Role of the Goalkeeper and Defenders in Attacking Play

Gwynne Williams, Executive Director, Issaquah Soccer Club

3. Developing Strikers in Today's Game

Charlie Slagle, Chief Executive, Capital Area Soccer League (CASL)

4. Multiple Ways to Attack through the Midfield

Rene Miramontes, Director of Coaching, San Diego Crusaders

5. The Review Session

Host – Robert Parr, Director of Coaching, Arkansas State Soccer Association

The NSCAA would also like to highlight the involvement of our presenting partner – *Soccer Coach Weekly*. The activities in this manual and those used in the webinar series are exceptional. Even the most complex movement patterns - on and off the ball - are illustrated in such detail that you can fully understand the entire activity with just 3 diagrams.

We hope you enjoy the manual. Please don't hesitate to provide us with feedback relating to the webinars, manual and discussions.

Kind Regards,

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David Newbery

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Wrap it up with a straight-up game of 11v11 to see the different elements combined and your players' decision making tested in a match situation

37 THE REVIEW SESSION

The Attacking Principles Webinar series concluded with a review of the previous 4 presentations delivered by Ian, Gwynne, Charlie and Rene. Presented by Robert Parr

The Principles Of Play

An introduction to the principles of attacking play. By David Newbery



DAVID NEWBERY

Coordinator, NSCAA Club Standards Project

For 25 years David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches and club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching.

David was appointed to lead the NSCAA Club Standards Project in January 2012. David has been providing consultant services and support to volunteer based youth programs for the past 10 years, helping clubs to become more serious about player and coach development. He contributes articles regularly to soccer publications, has written books focusing on player and coach development and presents at national soccer events. In his spare time David operates a youth soccer program for players age 3 to 8 in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Soccer is an invasion game. The objective is to breach another team's defense to score. Invasion games rely upon the concepts of attack and defense and to that end, transferring knowledge between sports such as Basketball, American Football, Rugby and Soccer is significant. It can be a real advantage when planning coaching education, to have coaches with previous teaching/coaching experiences in other sports, particularly when training coaches new to soccer. Establishing an in-house coaching education program based on Attacking and Defending Principles of Play can provide a Director/Educator with an ideal framework to deliver meaningful training building upon (for most people) prior knowledge and experiences.

Principles of play are the underpinning concepts of the game and can be coached from the first stage of development (3-5 year old players) onwards. The principles relate to attacking and defending and should not be confused with systems of play – the formation of the team on the field. The principles of play are the same in any system of play.

I have found that coaches with working understanding of these principles make better decisions on which skill, technique and tactic to select. Removing the guesswork from coaching allows the coach to focus on methodology, personality and performance. With a good appreciation of the principles of play and excellent technique a team will be able to play any system and style.

As we witnessed during the webinar presentations, the most experienced

and respected educators sometimes differ in their perspectives on the key principles. For example, Gwynne introduced the principle of 'Possession' and Charlie discussed the principle of 'Transition' – both very important concepts for coaching attacking play. But neither make the most common list of 5 Principles outlined in the introductory presentation by Ian. Depending on your frame of reference, the number and organization of the principles may vary from these 5 Principles of Attack.

As a note, due to significant differences in the development pace of young players of the same age, I prefer to focus on developmental stages than age of players when planning coach training. To this end, I have made reference above and below to 'Stages of Development' in an effort to provide the reader with guidance on when it is feasible to commence teaching a particular Principle. In the 5 stage of development model – a soccer adaptation of the Canadian Long Term Athletic Development Model – development occurs on a continuum where the age of the player is not as important as developmental readiness. The stages are loosely based on the following: Stage 1 (3 - 5 year olds), Stage 2 (6-8), Stage 3 (9-11), Stage 4 (12-14) & Stage 5 (15-18). Each stage of the model promotes a different development focus – the interplay between physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological and social variables.

To learn more, please contact me – dnewbery@nscaa.com.

ATTACKING PRINCIPLES

1. PENETRATION

In simplistic terms penetration is the act of breaking through the defense by dribbling, shooting, running or passing. We can start to coach penetration at the 1st stage of development.

2. SUPPORT

A player in possession of the ball receives help to maintain possession. Support attackers provide forward, backward and sideways options to the attacker in possession. We can start to coach support at the 2nd stage of development with an introduction to passing and receiving.

3. MOBILITY

Attackers make runs into different areas of the field in order to draw defenders out of their positions. A coach can commence teaching this principle late 2nd stage for advanced learners and stage 3 for others.

4. WIDTH

The attacking team attempts to stretch the opponent's defensive shape. The attacking players use the width of the field to tempt defenders from a compact shape covering the dangerous areas in front of goal and in so doing create space. The attackers move the

ball to change the point of attack in an effort to find a seam or space between or behind the defense. We can start coaching width in late stage 2 and early stage 3.

5. IMPROVISATION, CREATIVITY & SURPRISE

Attackers will try to break down defenses by employing the element of surprise. Skills such as back-heels, cut backs, flicks, feints and fakes are all used to this end. Comfort on the ball is critical and this training starts in the 1st stage of development.

Introduction To Attacking Principles

The main focus of this session was to provide an overview of the 5 principles and how a coach can introduce them with youth players. Presented by Ian Barker



IAN BARKER

Director of Coaching Education, National Soccer Coaches Association of America

Ian is somewhat unique having held leadership positions with US Youth Soccer and NSCAA and he has had extensive experience at youth and college levels. Ian coached for 21 seasons with the men's programs at the University of Wisconsin and Macalester College, before becoming NSCAA Director of Coaching Education in 2012.

Ian was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Minnesota Youth Soccer Association for 10 years and is a Head Coach of Region II Boys Olympic Development Program

Ian's qualifications are extensive and he holds the USSF A License, NSCAA Premier Diploma and NSCAA Master Coach Diploma.

Penetration

To introduce young players formally to the principle of penetration, Ian suggested using 'transition' – the moment in the game when possession is transferred from one team to the other. Start by asking the players what they should be doing when they have won the ball back from the opposition. The first objective is to get the ball forward by using a shot, dribble or pass. As players become more technically proficient, we can then start to work on team play using combinations to move the ball up the field. A couple of issues the coach will need to address, are firstly the technical proficiency of the players and secondly decision-making when in possession of the ball. Both components need to be addressed in tandem, as it is difficult to foresee a successful outcome of good decision making without the technical ability to execute the decision.

Support

The objective of support is to create space in front, behind and to the sides of the player in possession of the ball. Simply, the principle of support means creating options for the person on the ball. The coach's role is to help players understand the importance of angles of support and distance of support. One method proposed by Ian is to discuss the importance of creating triangles. He challenged coaches to pose the question to players 'how can 2 players create a triangle?' This question is intended to stimulate thought and hopefully the players conclude that in order to create a triangle with 2 players one player has to move into a support position.

Mobility

Mobility becomes a more advanced concept as we add numbers to the field. Mobility is about creating space and movement of players on and off the ball. The objective for support players must be to make the field as big as possible and understand that effective mobility is away from the ball to stretch the opponent's defense. Coaches are advised to start with, 1) the person on the ball, 2) the person in the immediate vicinity of the ball in support and 3) players away from the ball. Consider 2 specific types of movement. Firstly, 'elusive movement' – movement by a player to find space behind or in front of an opponent - one objective being to distract the defenders concentration. Secondly, 'Velcro' movement – whereby the attacking player tries to drag the opponent out of the space and create room for a teammate with the ball or another teammate

off the ball. With older players the coach can work on more advanced concepts like 'timing of the run' and 'economy of the run'.

Width

Ian referred to width being the brother/sister principle of mobility. In simple terms width refers to taking up as much of the available space as possible and coaching the players to move towards the touchline in support positions when the team is in good possession of the ball. Width can have a dramatic effect on the opponent's defensive compactness. If the defense remains compact then there will be more opportunity to attack down the wings. If however, the opponent spreads out in response to the attacking team's width, passing lanes/seams will appear allowing penetration.

Improvisation/creativity

Ian put forth the case that although creativity is not as easy to coach in the same way as some of the other principles, improvisation still can be highly encouraged and must be coached. There are areas of the field where improvisation should be encouraged and discouraged. Benefits to the team can be extremely high in the attacking 3rd of the field, but the risks can be equally as profound when improvising in the defensive 3rd. Ian urges coaches to 'brave the percentages', suggesting that a coach must be willing to accept that in order to reap the benefits of exciting and creative players, there will likely be a fair amount unsuccessful attempts at first.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Ian Barker

Q1: Are changes to the formation of a team during the game potentially too difficult for younger youth players to properly execute? Marc Campoverde

Marc, this is an excellent question reflecting the need to be sensitive to the ability of the players to execute what we ask of them. If in doubt I would not make potentially complex changes and rather help the players to sort things out within the formation they have practiced. If, however, you have worked in training to sometimes mix things up and worked on a few variations then the players are prepared. This may not be earth shattering changes, but they could be meaningful and helpful. I would suggest making changes at half time for two reasons, to let the coach be sure upon reflection that they make sense and to allow the players

some time to absorb and understand the changes that they have been prepared in training to make.

Q2: How early can one teach the principles of attack? Age group? Dean De Aguiar

Dean, if you play some 1 vs. 1 in training with U6s you will talk about dribbling and shooting. As such you have addressed “principles of attack”. You will not use this language, but you will be asking and helping the players with different ways to “penetrate”. As soon as you go 2 vs. 1, or bigger, you now talk about “helping” which is essentially “support”. So the decisions of the game are there at the youngest of ages as long as the kids are in activities that allow for decisions. Of course technique should be the focus of what we help the players with at these younger ages, but we can talk about decisions.

Q3: I think a follow up to Dean’s question would be how you balance ‘Principles of the Game’ with kids who are just learning technique. Carl Gibson

Good question. While it is important the coach has a grasp of the principles they must “keep their powder dry” and focus on the technical needs of the players as a priority. Even when the players have the cognitive ability to understand the principles if they cannot execute technically that understanding is not of much value in performance. Certainly a coach can plan sessions on passing and receiving, dribbling, shooting and finishing that are highly technically focused and begin to prompt the ideas of penetration etc. The key is to primarily teach the players things they can reasonably achieve and try not give too much advanced content until they are ready to be able to respond to it.

Q4: How important are dribbling moves, fakes and feints when teaching youth players to improvise? Antonio Superbia

Antonio, this is a good question because I think we do not encourage kids to try tricks and flicks enough in training. If when we get to the game we come down on a player who attempts something a little extraordinary that does not work it can stifle creativity. With younger players try some tag activities without the ball and talk about body movement and change of speed and direction. You can even have them do such work with the ball in one hand before you put it on the ground. Lots of 1 vs 1 activity and/or “invasion” game where the player has to get “somewhere” are great. Remember cones do not move, so I like to do the dribbling with a lot of moving bodies, not all trying to steal the ball and this encourages heads up movement and body and ball movement. If you can create “free play” and “street soccer” environments you empower the kids to try more skills.

Q5: In the modern game would you also consider ‘transition’ as another principle of attack (as well as defense), or would you advocate that it doesn’t have its place here? Matt Malej

I think transition is definitely a “principle” that when training attacking and defending needs to be addressed. At younger ages it might be as simple as, “have the ball, get big”, “lose the ball, get small”. Transition is important to teach in small sided games because players are closer to the ball and can see more clearly why a quick reaction to the ball changing hands includes them. Of course if technical levels are modest the ball changes hands a lot so understanding the importance of these moments of transition is always there.

Q6: Are these activities appropriate for older and more proficient players? Osman Zeki Korkmaz

Osman, when I look at all these activities I am pretty confident they could be adapted and used with a wide age and proficiency range. The first activity in my series is a relatively straight forward technical one with no opponents. Certainly this activity is good for younger players for lots

of reps and yet you will still see higher ability teams dedicate parts of training to technical repetition of this kind. All of the other “opposed” activities I would recommend to younger teams with the caveat that we will reduce numbers and field size. I think the key is these activities can work in teaching the concepts and it is the ability of each individual coach to manage them to fit their players.

Q7: When considering the principles of attack and direct vs indirect play, do you think youth coaches should focus on direct play because of the technical skill level of the players? Jeff Norman

In short “no”. An extreme example of how the lack of technical skill crudely impacts play occurs when the youth goalkeeper cannot throw or bowl the ball well and the players are challenged in control. When this is the case the coach may ask the young goalkeeper to punt the ball and given the smaller field this direct style can be effective in the short run. Of course though if we as coaches do not encourage players to try to possess the ball and deal with passing and receiving we do them a grave disservice. I think that we can teach a variety of attacking ideas that reflect both direct and indirect play and not forsake technical training. If players can serve the ball in the air and receive it in the air then they have the technical ability to be more direct. If we are direct simply because there is no fundamental technical basis we should probably train a lot more and compete a little less.

Q8: Would you recommend that a coach (for that session) becomes more of a facilitator and confidence booster, rather than a coach, to help players improvise and become creative? Matthew Hodgson

Matthew, when you are in the finishing activities and the activities that have the opportunity for creativity I think it is essential to be really positive and to encourage chance taking and to help the players feel that a “failure” in training is totally “ok”. As such while the coach should be a confidence booster all the time in these activities it is even more important to support flair and risk taking. At the same time a coach should guide the players to other possibilities, suggest different techniques or ideas and as such still be a teacher. So I think you are on to something in that improvisation and creativity are somewhat unique to coach and you must not be too inflexible in your ideas, but I do think you still must have some ideas.

Penetration

Sharpen up your players in front of goal with this devastating attacking practice that gives them so many chances to shoot they can't help but score

WHY USE IT

This session will put a stop to wasted chances up front. It allows your players to experiment with their technique and get used to hitting the target with a snap shot or when finishing off a move.

SET UP

Use the penalty area of the pitch you play on or recreate it with cones. The session uses nine players plus a keeper. You need lots of balls, bibs, cones and a goal. You need to start each sequence with the first pass from off the pitch.

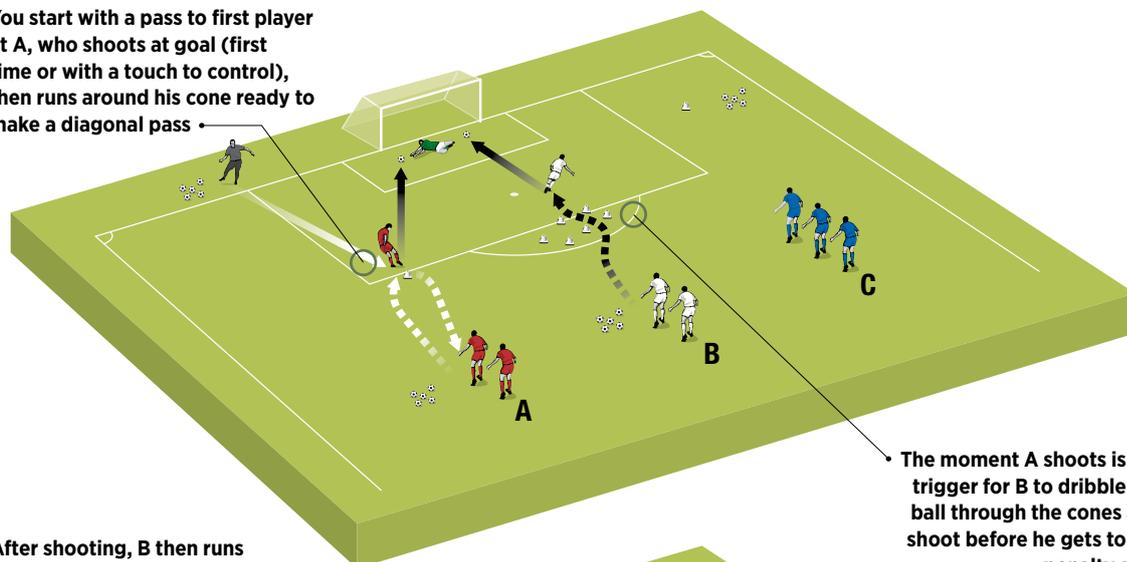
HOW TO PLAY

Split your group into three even lines A, B and C and start with your pass to A. Run the drill as described and the players should work at a quick pace, speeding up as the session progresses. Keep a count of the number of shots they take in 30 seconds and try to beat it each time.

TECHNIQUE

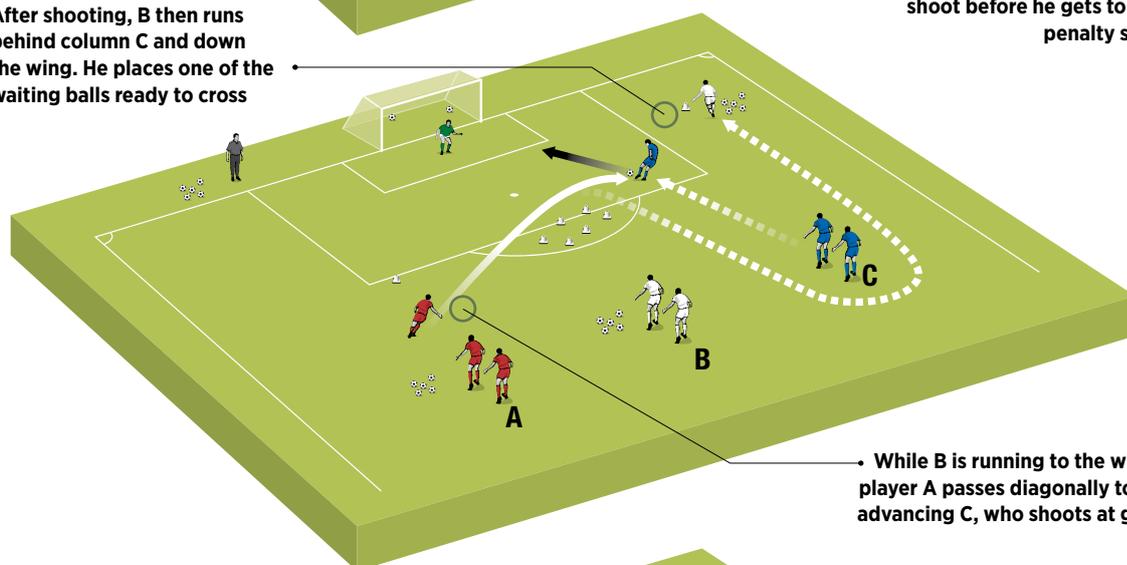
Players should use their arms for balance and plant the standing leg next to or slightly behind the ball, striking it just below the centre. Coaches should look for players to use different parts of their foot (or their forehead with shot four) and make the correct runs with good delivery of passes.

You start with a pass to first player at A, who shoots at goal (first time or with a touch to control), then runs around his cone ready to make a diagonal pass



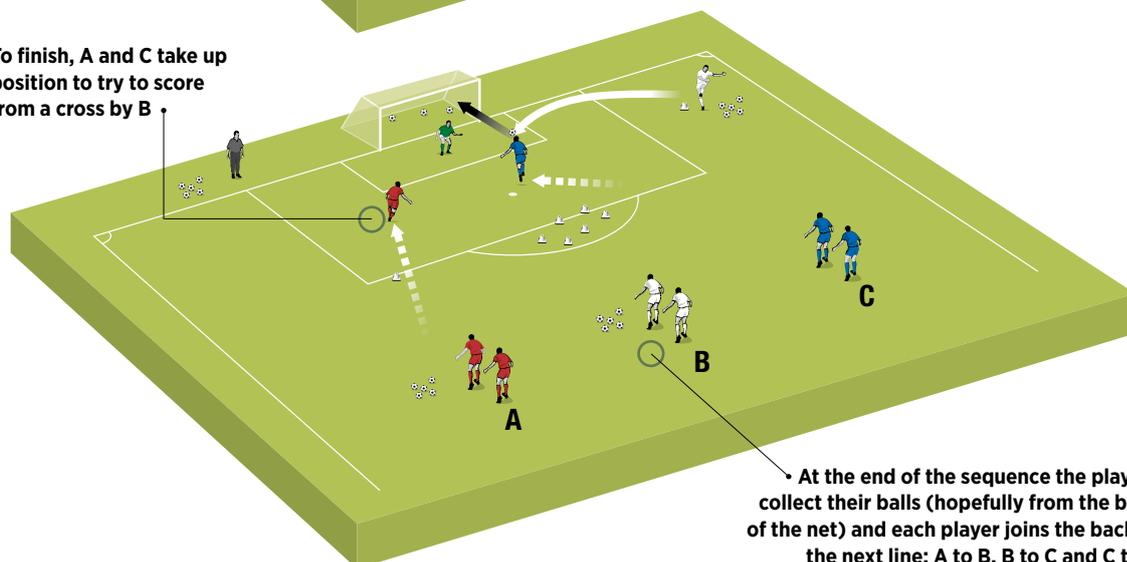
The moment A shoots is the trigger for B to dribble the ball through the cones and shoot before he gets to the penalty spot

After shooting, B then runs behind column C and down the wing. He places one of the waiting balls ready to cross



While B is running to the wing, player A passes diagonally to an advancing C, who shoots at goal

To finish, A and C take up position to try to score from a cross by B



At the end of the sequence the players collect their balls (hopefully from the back of the net) and each player joins the back of the next line: A to B, B to C and C to A

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Support

This good attacking and defending session from Team USA will teach your players the importance of keeping possession and helps with beating the offside trap

WHY USE IT

Possession is key with players tactically keeping position in the midfield focal point of the pitch. Movement is vital to keeping the ball and fast breaks will result.

SET UP

Use your full pitch, marking out the midfield area between the Ds of the penalty area and cutting off the wings by eight yards. Create two end zones that run along the six-yard lines. We've used 20 players.

HOW TO PLAY

Play 10v10 in the marked out box in the centre. Teams have a back four plus two midfielders in their half of the box, with three attackers and a midfielder in the attacking half of the box.

When defending, the centre backs can drop back out of the box to defend the area in front of the end zone. When attacking, two players from the back half can join the attacking half.

No more than six players from each team are allowed in either half. Teams can attack after making five consecutive passes and two attackers can break out of the box. Score by passing and receiving in the end zone. Play offsides.

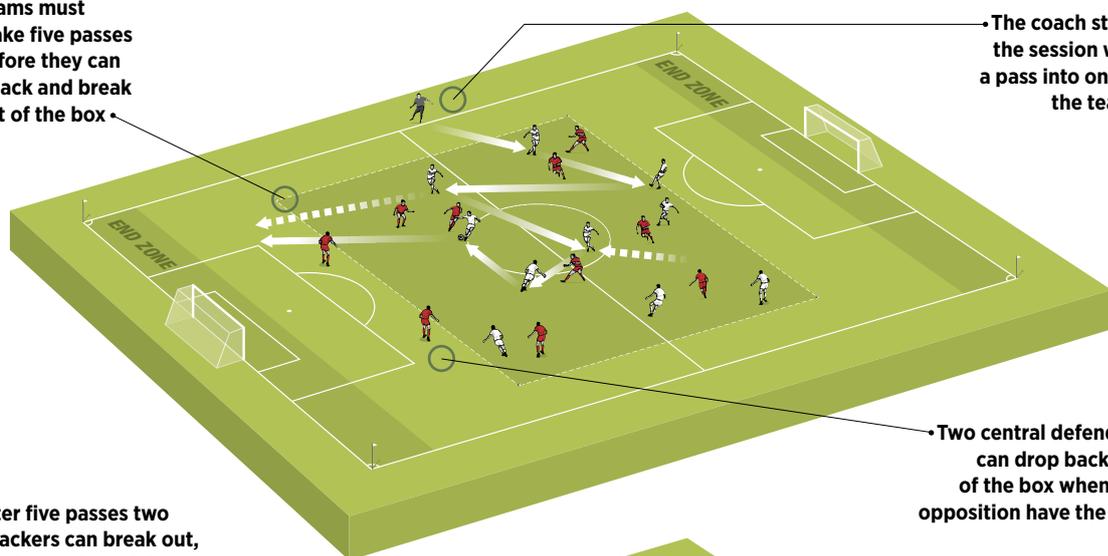
TECHNIQUE

It is important for positional sense all over the pitch and winning the midfield battles.

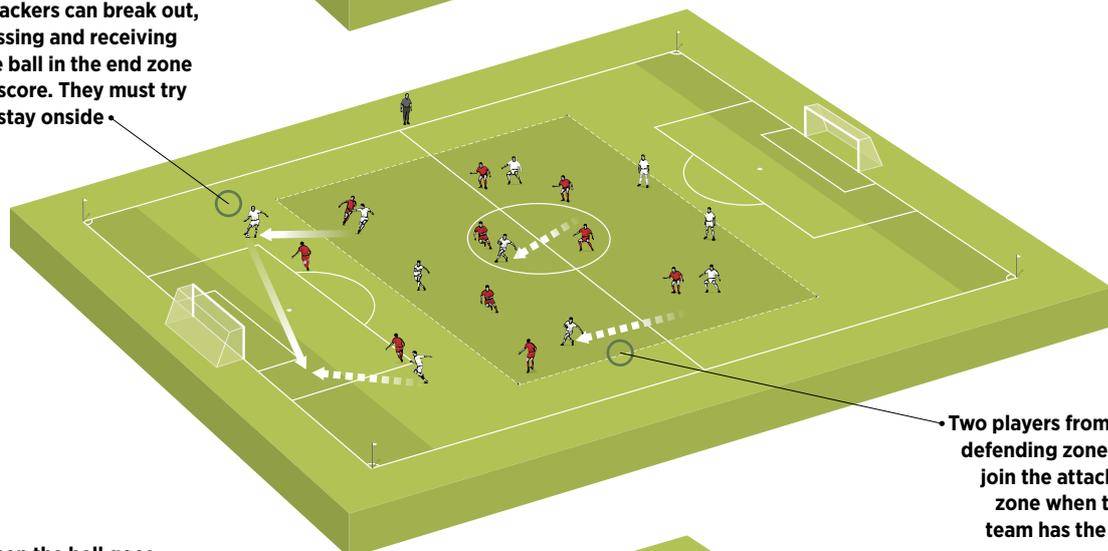
Teams must make five passes before they can attack and break out of the box

After five passes two attackers can break out, passing and receiving the ball in the end zone to score. They must try to stay outside

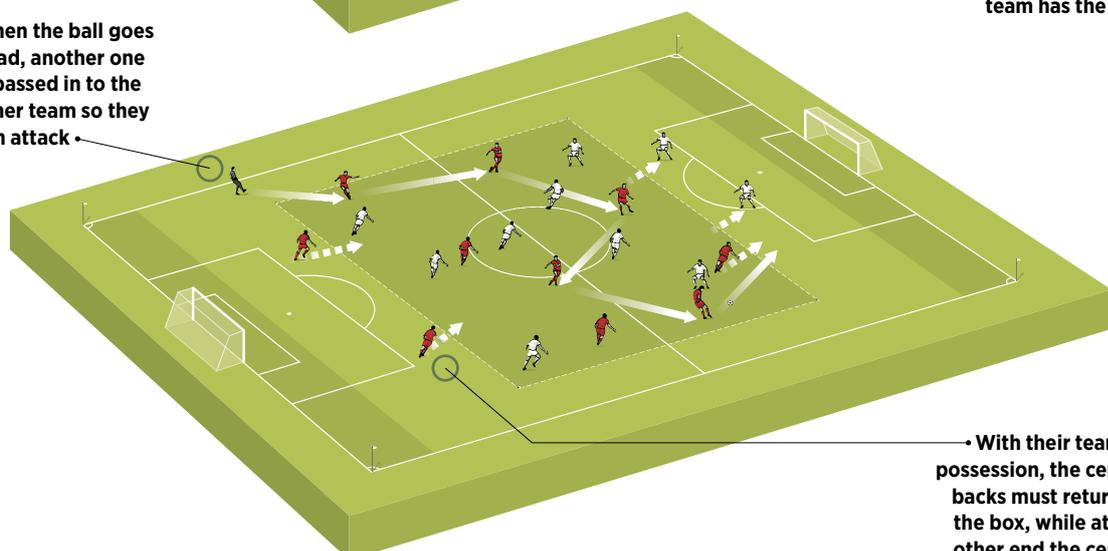
When the ball goes dead, another one is passed in to the other team so they can attack



The coach starts the session with a pass into one of the teams



Two central defenders can drop back out of the box when the opposition have the ball



With their team in possession, the centre backs must return to the box, while at the other end the centre backs can drop out of it

Player movement
Ball movement
Run with ball
Shot

Mobility

With just four passes before a shot has to be made, your players will learn how break from midfield with pace and precision

WHY USE IT

Speed and incision are key elements in lightning breaks from midfield and this session uses fast movement to play past and eliminate opponents. Accelerating across open areas of the pitch with swift and slick support play are the coaching points in this session.

SET UP

Set up an area of 35x30 yards split into three zones: the outer zones are 15 yards and the central zone is 10 yards. We are using 12 players in this session and the teams line up with two players in the home zone, two in the central zone and one in the attacking zone. You need balls, bibs, cones and two goals.

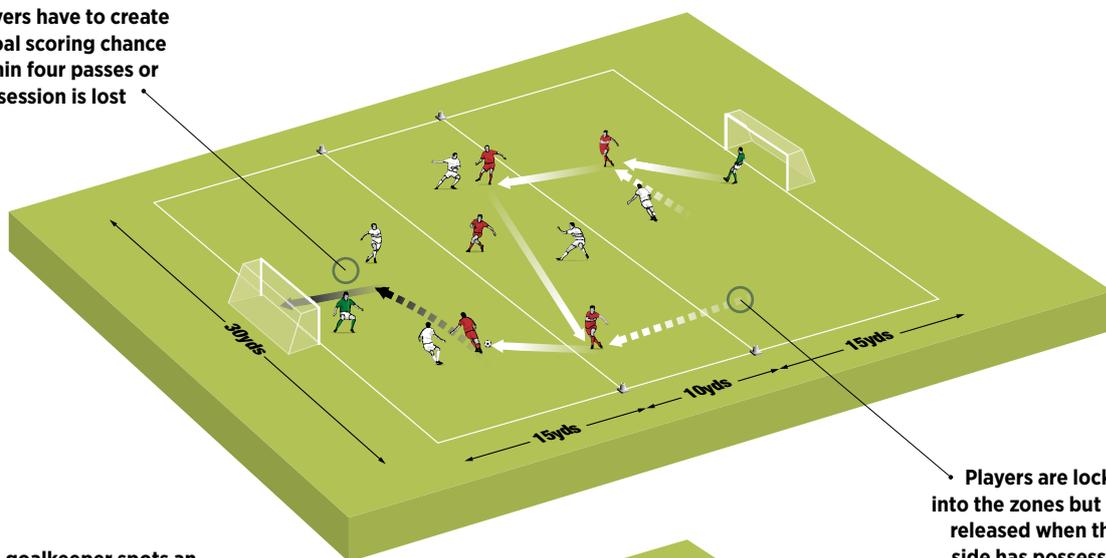
HOW TO PLAY

Players have four passes to score from the moment they get possession. Any more and possession is turned over. Players must stay in their zones if they are defending but when they have the ball they are free to roam all zones.

TECHNIQUE

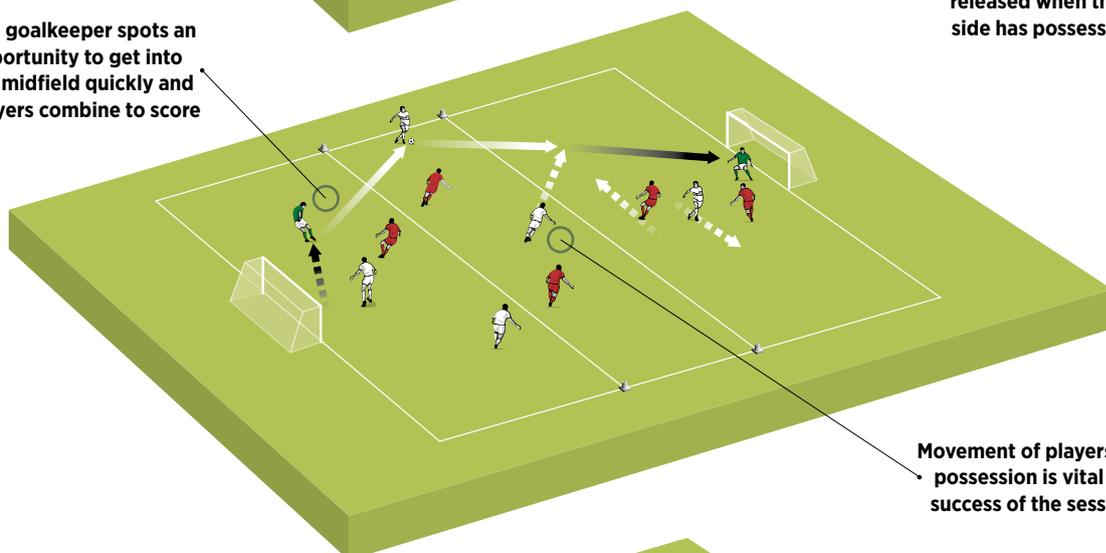
In a match situation the reality of recovery means that within five passes the opposition defenders will have time to recover and get back behind the ball, so the game revolves around a quick four passes and a shot.

Players have to create a goal scoring chance within four passes or possession is lost

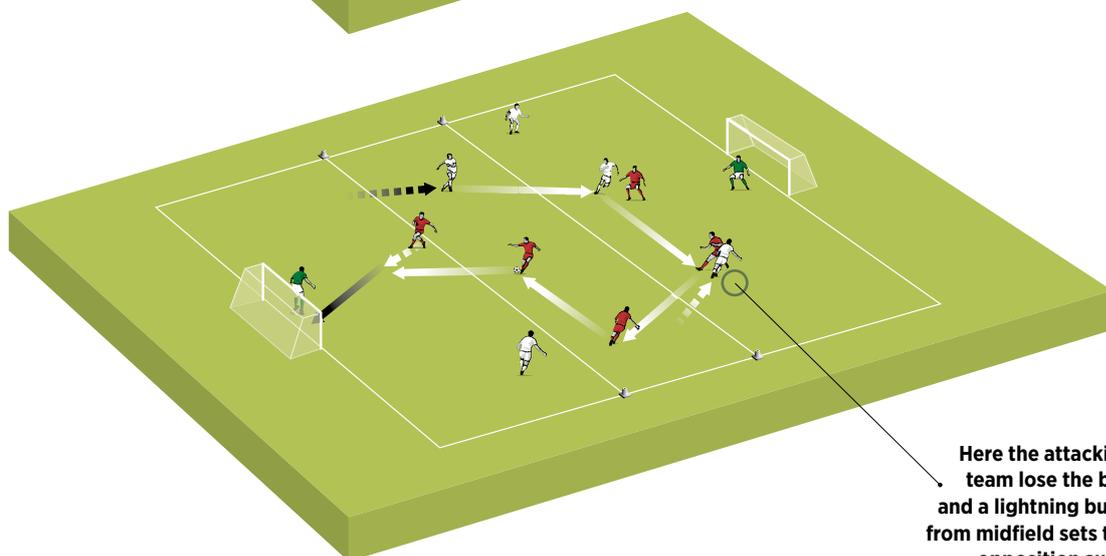


Players are locked into the zones but are released when their side has possession

The goalkeeper spots an opportunity to get into the midfield quickly and players combine to score



Movement of players in possession is vital for success of the session



Here the attacking team lose the ball and a lightning burst from midfield sets the opposition away

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Width

Help your strike partners develop an effective understanding with each other in order to create the space needed to score goals like Robin van Persie

WHY USE IT

When two strikers play together they develop an understanding. Robin van Persie uses his strike partners to create the space needed for match winning shots on goal. Follow this drill and your players could forge a similar understanding.

SET UP

You need at least eight players, plus two keepers. One striker and a defender should be in each half, with a line of second strikers for each team at the side of the pitch by the halfway mark. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Play a small-sided game on a 40x30-yard pitch with goals at each end.

HOW TO PLAY

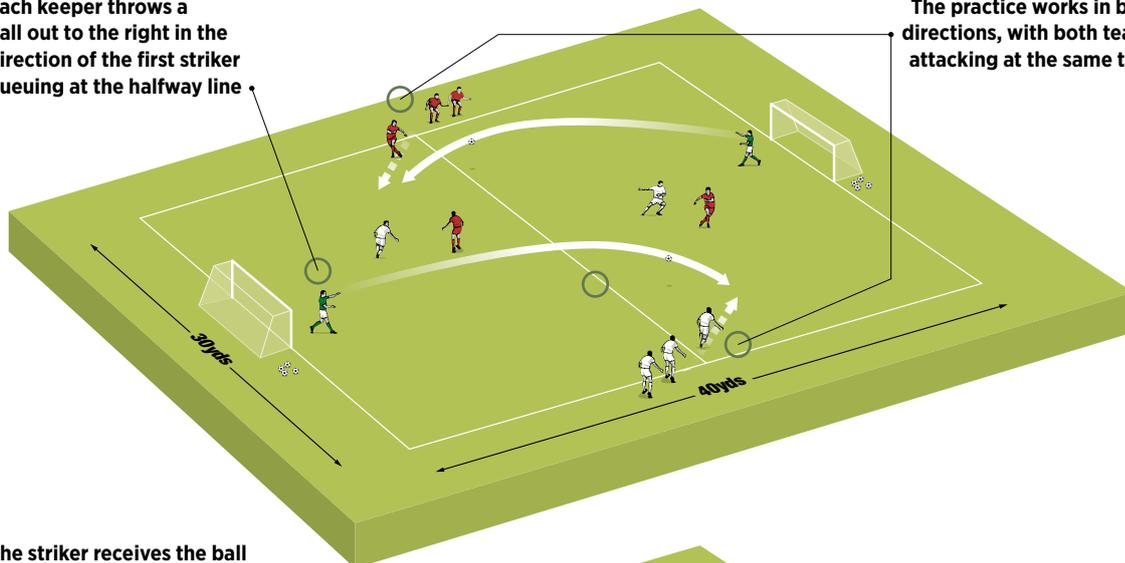
To attack at both ends simultaneously, each keeper throws the ball to the first of the strikers waiting on the sidelines. He must combine 2v1 with the attacker already on the pitch in order to set-up a scoring chance.

TECHNIQUE

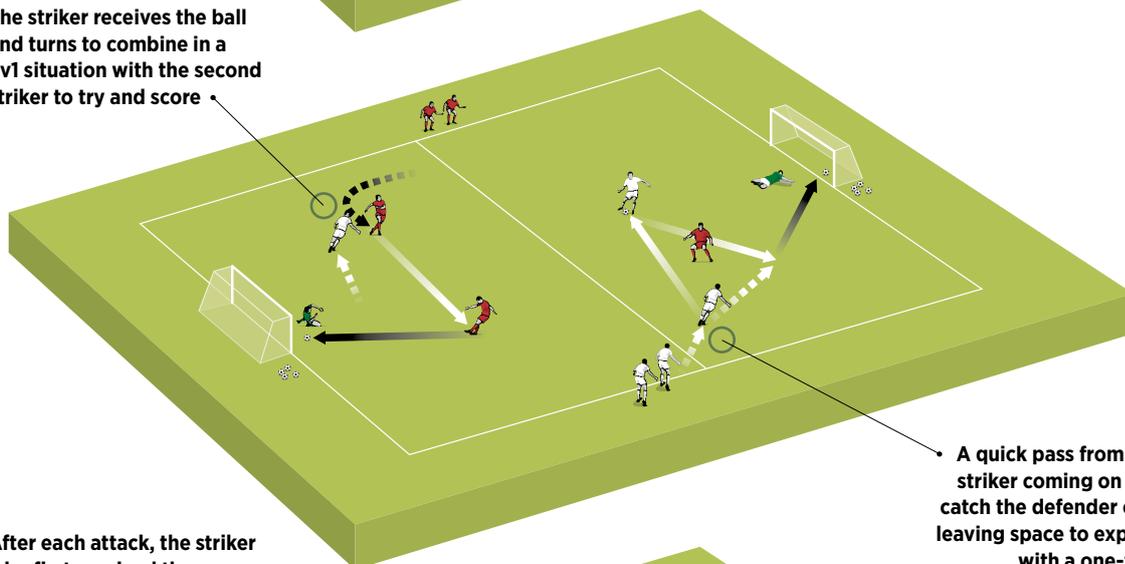
To develop a partnership between two forwards they must work intensively in training, moving into different positions to disrupt the defence. Creativity is key to opening up space and a good first touch can help to beat defenders.

Each keeper throws a ball out to the right in the direction of the first striker queuing at the halfway line

The practice works in both directions, with both teams attacking at the same time

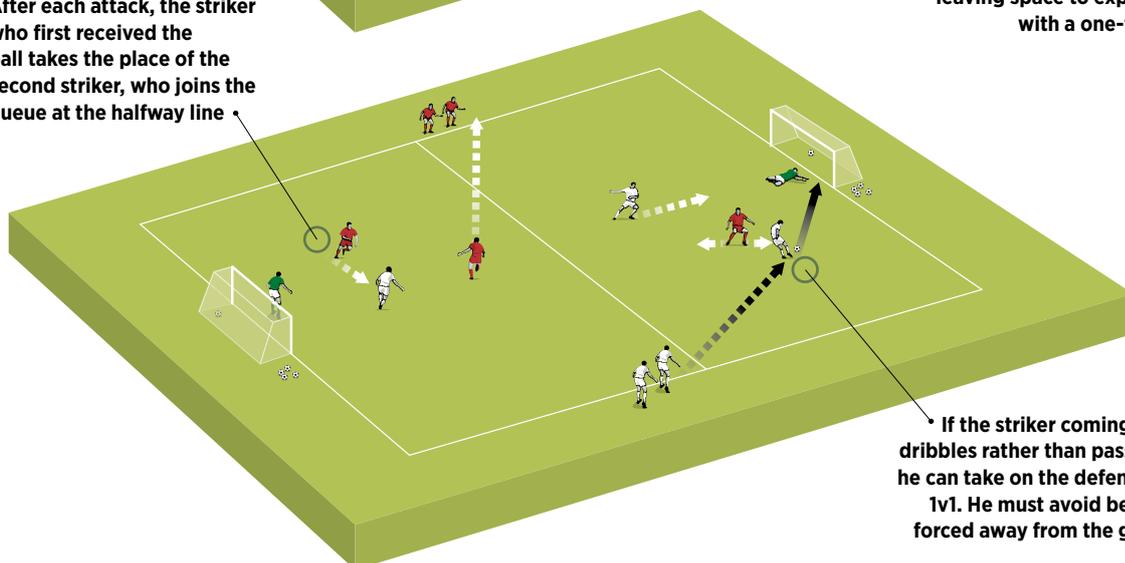


The striker receives the ball and turns to combine in a 2v1 situation with the second striker to try and score



A quick pass from the striker coming on can catch the defender out, leaving space to exploit with a one-two

After each attack, the striker who first received the ball takes the place of the second striker, who joins the queue at the halfway line



If the striker coming on dribbles rather than passes, he can take on the defender 1v1. He must avoid being forced away from the goal

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Improvisation

An end-to-end game that will help your players to develop a goal poacher's instincts by limiting strikers to just one touch in the final scoring third of the pitch

WHY USE IT

To score, players need to have the correct techniques and the ability to use all parts of either foot. This session will have your players practising a variety of shooting techniques.

SET UP

Set up an area of 30x35 yards split into three 10-yard zones: attack, midfield and defence. We're playing 5v5 including keepers. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

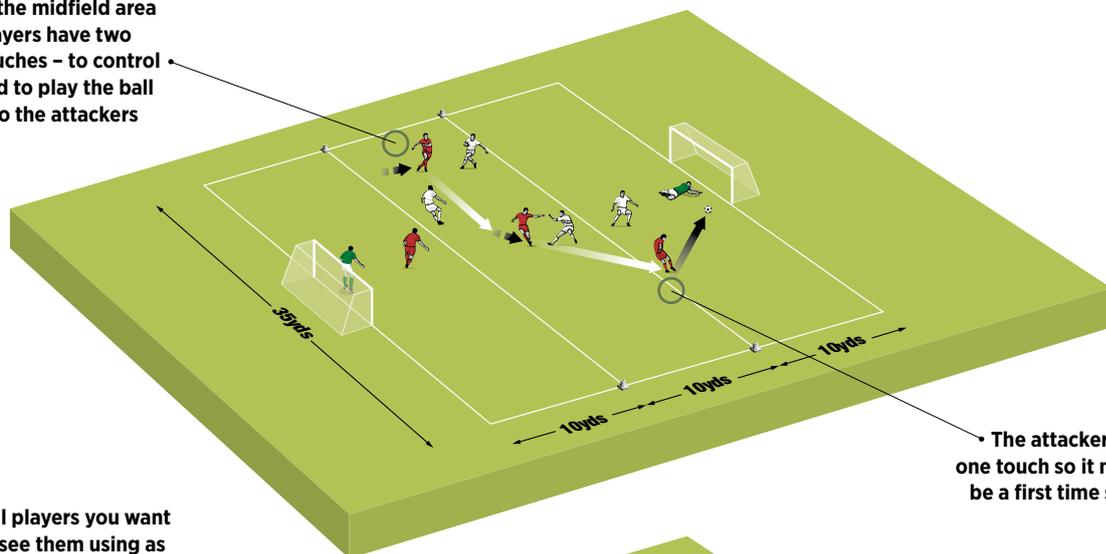
HOW TO PLAY

Play a small-sided game. Players have limited touches in different thirds: they are allowed three touches in the defensive third, two touches in the middle third and just one touch in the attacking third. Players can only score from the attacking third. The first team to score five goals wins.

TECHNIQUE

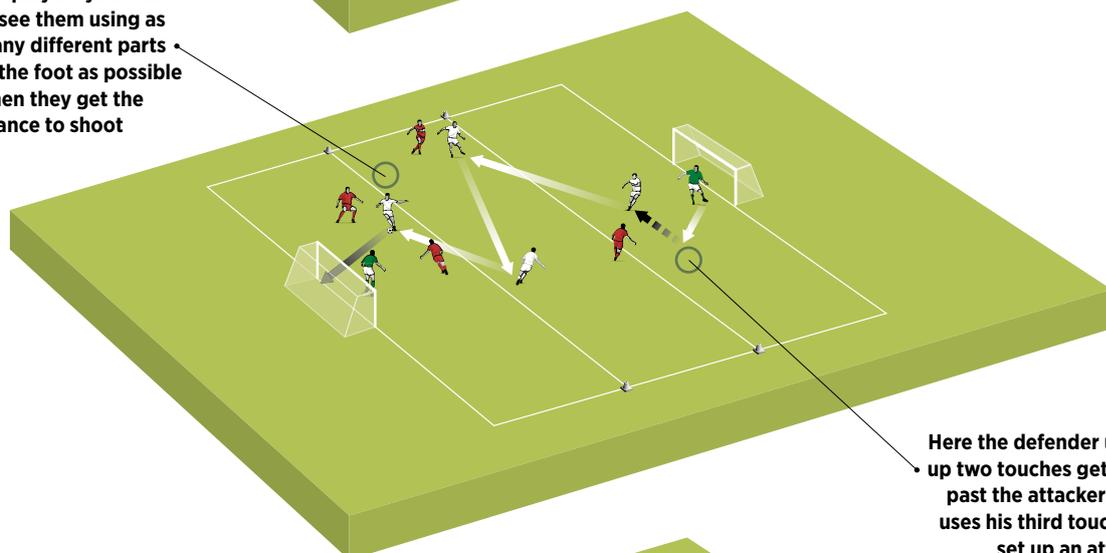
Look for players to use a variety of techniques to strike the ball. For power, tell them to use the instep (the laces) with the toes down and the ankle locked; to sidefoot the ball, they should strike the horizontal mid-line of the ball; to chip they should 'stab' underneath the ball with the toes; or they can swerve it with either the outside or the inside of their boot.

In the midfield area players have two touches – to control and to play the ball into the attackers

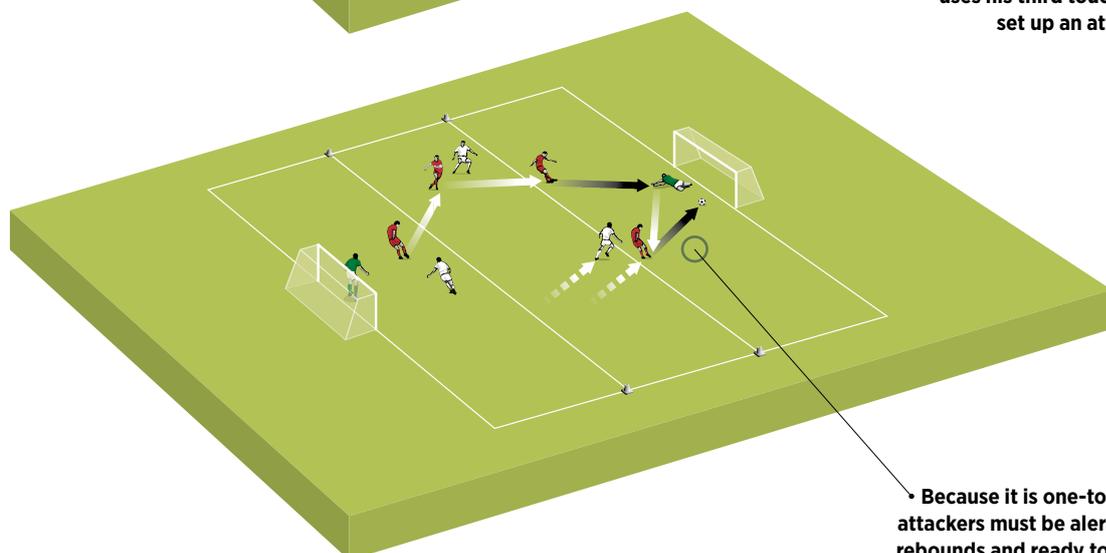


The attacker has one touch so it must be a first time shot

Tell players you want to see them using as many different parts of the foot as possible when they get the chance to shoot



Here the defender uses up two touches getting past the attacker and uses his third touch to set up an attack



Because it is one-touch, attackers must be alert for rebounds and ready to put the loose ball in the net

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

The Role Of The Goalkeeper And Defense In Attacking Play

This session emphasized the need for coaches to include goalkeepers in outfield practices.
Presented by Gwynne Williams



GWYNNE WILLIAMS
Executive Director, Issaquah Soccer Club

Gwynne Williams has a wealth of coaching and leadership experience at International, Professional, State and youth levels. In May 2013, Gwynne was appointed as the Executive Director of Issaquah Soccer Club, located in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains in Washington State. The club is home to over 300 youth teams and more than 3000 players.

Gwynne was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Alabama Youth Soccer Association, and was the assistant coach of the MLS professional team the New England Revolution from 2007 – 2010. International experience includes 14 years as a National Team Staff Coach for the Bermuda Football Association and a consultant to the Canadian Men's National Teams. As a coach educator, Gwynne works with US Soccer Federation, US Youth Soccer and NSCAA.

Summary

Gwynne set the scene for this session by discussing changes to the rules in 1992 that prevented the goalkeeper picking the ball from a back pass. He suggested that a goalkeeper with limited technical foot skills becomes a liability and will undoubtedly limit the team's ability to launch an attack from defense. Less competent goalkeepers make play predictable and usually risk losing possession for their team. On the other hand, capable goalkeepers are a real asset. Goalkeepers have the benefit of more time and space than most outfield players, so it is important that when the ball is in the defensive 3rd of the field the goalkeeper provides a supporting option for the defenders.

Gwynne emphasized the need for coaches to include goalkeepers in outfield practices. Gwynne retold a story from his days as the assistant coach with the New England Revolution, when he had to convince the head coach that the goalkeeper should not be excluded from the majority of outfield training - a decision that rewarded the club's attacking play. His belief is that many coaches look at the goalkeeper as the last line of defense and not as the first line of attack. Possession should be the number one priority - so the goalkeeper becomes pivotal in supporting the defenders, providing an option for the team to possess the ball and a point for switching the point of attack.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Gwynne Williams

Q1: Many young keepers cannot take long goal kicks. Should they be encouraged to play out to their defenders rather than try to kick the long ball downfield? Dave Hourcade

The simple answer is yes. Many youth leagues are modifying their rules to ensure that the opposition retreat to the halfway line prior to the goal kick being taken to allow possession to be established.

Teaching players to kick the ball properly is still advisable and too few coaches spend the time to do this with their goalkeepers.

Q2: With the youth players, should the coach encourage goalkeepers to take goal kicks or should the kick be left to a defender with a stronger kick? Jeff Norman

In my opinion the goalkeeper needs to be the one taking the goal kicks. Coaches need to work with their goalkeepers so they become proficient

in kicking the ball.

Simply bringing "big foot" back to kick the ball long serves very little purpose in the development of the goalkeeper.

Q3: At what age would you begin to encourage goalkeepers to be active in the attack? Daniel Bautista

From the moment they start to play the position.

There are only two situations in the game. Either your team has the ball and is attacking or your team does not and is defending. It is a team game and needs to be coached in its entirety.

Q4: Do you support having the goalkeeper join the attack for corner kicks in the last moments of a match or extra time? Scott Henry

We do see this in desperate situations and more so with professional players.

Suffice to say that it is best to never to be in a position that you contemplate this action.

However desperate situations require desperate measures and the presence of an extra body has reaped rewards on occasion. I dare say that the success percentage is low and the risk of being caught on the counter attack is high.

I would not use this tactic with young players myself.

Q5: Do you think it is good for development of goalkeepers at u9-10 to rotate the position regularly with the field players? Dexter McFarlin

I do.

It is good for all players to experience playing all positions especially this young.

You will not know at this young age just where they will gravitate to in the big picture.

Q6: Even in the modern game, with a heavily possession-based mentality, should the goalkeeper's first option to initiate an attack be a long ball? Peter Menyasz

Given that once in possession of the ball a team has only one objective - score a goal, and to score it as quickly as circumstances will allow.

A longer ball will achieve this in a shorter amount of time than a series of short passes.

Having stated that, now it depends on the ability of the players you have at your disposal.

Are they capable of playing a long ball?

Can the receiver hold up the ball?

If the answer to those questions is yes then it is a good option when it is on.

If the answer is no then all you succeed in doing most of the time is giving away possession.

That is immoral in this game.

When the goalkeeper has the choice of a long or short pass and has the skill level to play both options, then the longer ball will achieve the objective of scoring a goal in less time.

Q7: At what age do you think it's most appropriate to start having the same two goalkeepers playing every game? Anthony Cosky

There will always be exceptions and not many of us coach in perfect situations.

With that said I believe that every player should experience playing all positions regularly U-10 and below.

Between the ages of ten and thirteen you may be lucky and have a small group of three or four that like to play the position of goalkeeper and show an aptitude for the position.

It is not until a player gets to the U-14 and above that I would expect us to be gravitating to playing the same two goalkeeper's week in week out in every game. Even then it is ideal for these two goalkeepers to play in the out-field when they are not between the sticks.

Q8: I hear the term "keeper-sweeper" often. Can you explain this term a bit more? Rob Sovinski

The term "sweeper" was applied to a deep lying defender that played behind the other defenders and in front of the goalkeeper. This player effectively eliminated the goalkeeper supporting the defenders most of the time. It was perceived by many to be an overly cautious way to play the game.

More adventurous coaches encouraged the goalkeeper to take on this role of sweeping behind the back line therefore the term sweeper- keeper was born.

Q9: In moving to support our backline defenders, what types of specific communication can our GK use? Edwin Todd

Communication is very important. Prevention is better than cure as they say.

However it is not an easy skill for young goalkeepers to acquire. Many young goalkeepers are not confident and unsure of the game and themselves. We cannot expect young goalkeepers to be totally in command of the game around them when they do not have the experience or the skill set.

Never the less communication makes the game easier and results in less breakdowns.

All communication should be clear and timely. Goalkeepers will not have time for long speeches therefore quick clear and decisive instructions are best.

I teach goalkeepers to be consistent with their communication.

I ask them to state either "Keeper's" meaning that they will deal with the ball, or "away" meaning that they expect a defender to deal with the ball.

Goalkeepers can also give additional information: "Time", "Man-on" are examples.

The goalkeeper generally has the luxury of only viewing the game through 180 degrees and the outfield players have to view the game through 360 degrees.

Q10: In the youth program, how do you work with parents who are apprehensive when their son/daughter wants to play GK? Ryan Schierholz

Pressure is asking players to do something that they have not been prepared to do.

Therefore the key to building confidence in a player comes from the training ground. It is in training that you can develop skill and confidence. Once a player has those it is easy for all to see that they can be successful and are enjoying themselves.

Communication with parents will always be important and simply having a quick word and explaining what you are trying to do will go a long way.

Q11: Do you recommend the Striker(s) warm up the GK before the game, or a member of the Coaching staff? Ryan Schierholz

I prefer to have an assistant warm up the goalkeeper.

The warm up is to prepare the goalkeeper physically and mentally for the game.

The striker needs to warm up with a different mind-set. They are trying to put the ball past the goalkeeper.

The goalkeeper's warm up is both a practical and a psychological exercise. At its conclusion the goalkeeper must feel that they are ready both mentally and physically and feel that nothing can get past them.

Q12: The Goalkeeper 3 diploma course I attended encouraged me to have the Goalkeeper step hard to support the full back with the ball. I feel as though this takes the keeper out of position and thus hinders his ability to cut off angles, maintain balance. What do you recommend? Justin Morrow

While your defender has the ball your team are attacking. The first priority of the goalkeeper must be to support the player with the ball or give the team balance. At this moment the defensive side of the game is not a top priority. Keeping possession is.

Now as soon as possession is lost then the defensive responsibilities are important and could result in the goalkeeper having to make large adjustments to their position.

I recommend that the goalkeeper support when the team are in possession. If a breakdown occurs it is more likely a breakdown in passing and receiving than anything to do with the goalkeeper's defensive skills.

Q13: If possession is paramount why do we see so many GK's still punting the ball downfield turning it into essentially a 50/50 ball (at best) in the air? Kevin Casey

Sadly this is all too familiar. It occurs because of a lack of coaching. Goalkeepers want to be a part of the game and all too often they are only involved offensively when they kick the ball aimlessly down the field. The assessment should be based on if the team maintain possession. If you have a striker that can hold up the ball then this can be a good tactic. However all too often it is just an aimless kick and possession is lost.

A lot of leagues have recognized that kicking the ball aimlessly is not a desired quality and are making modifications to the rules to stop this. They do not allow the goalkeepers to punt the ball. They insist that they throw the ball or put the ball at their feet and play like all the other players.

Q14: If the GK is to support the attack what is the recommended position of the GK on the field if the attack is in the opponents half of the field? Same question from Mark Stanton and Chris Murray

The goalkeeper should be attached to the backline at all times. They will continually be adjusting their positioning NES&W as the game flows.

There are some considerations that need to be taken into account that are unique to each goalkeeper. These considerations will impact the goalkeepers positioning. Things like size. Larger goalkeepers can

generally be a bit more advanced off their line as the risk of high balls may not be as great.

Speed. The faster a goalkeeper is then the quicker they can recover or get to the ball that is played through.

In general if the ball is in the other teams half of the field the goalkeeper will be advanced off the line. The deeper the ball goes into the other teams half the greater that advancement will be.

I see no need for a goalkeeper to be more than 5 or 6 yards outside the penalty area. From this point they can cut out through balls, support their defenders and recover to protect the goal.

Q15: Should the goalkeeper be our best technical players in the team to be successful? Varsay Lewis

In an ideal world the goalkeeper should be as good technically with their feet and as astute as any outfield player on the team. A great example for our young players to watch is Nick Rimando of Real Salt Lake. He is as comfortable with the ball and his passing is as good as any player in the league. Not surprisingly he has had a long and successful career as a top goalkeeper in this country.

Q16: What are your thoughts on applying different levels of pressure on the goalkeeper in the different activities to create technical, tactical and psychological scenarios? Fabian Banchiero

Applying different levels of pressure on the goalkeeper would be a desired barometer of their ability to deal with situations. Pressure comes when we ask a goalkeeper to do something that they are unprepared for.

In coaching we start off with no pressure. This allows for repartition of the technique. Pressure is gradually introduced to create a sense of timing and confidence. This builds gradually to what we refer to as "game like" conditions.

In this way we gradually build the technique into skill and develop the tactical and psychological and physical qualities that are needed to perform under pressure.

Q17: Why did examples show more or an equal number of attackers when the goalkeeper was distributing a short pass? Daniel Docherty

It is true to say that we would start out by giving the goalkeeper and defenders numerical advantage so that they have a greater chance of success.

However it is desired to build the games to even numbers so that the degree of difficulty increases.

Players need to solve soccer questions (challenges) on the field and being numbers even and even numbers down will occur at times. We build to overcome those difficult situations that can and do occur in the game.

Short Passing Warm-up

This simple activity will get your players ready for a possession session by focusing on their technique

WHY USE IT

This activity gives you an opportunity to work with players on simple passing technique. It develops a player's short passing technique, movement after playing the ball and receiving with an open body position.

SET UP

Set up a 10x10 yard area with a cone in each corner. Two or three players in each corner of the square. Use two areas for a squad of 16 or more players.

HOW TO PLAY

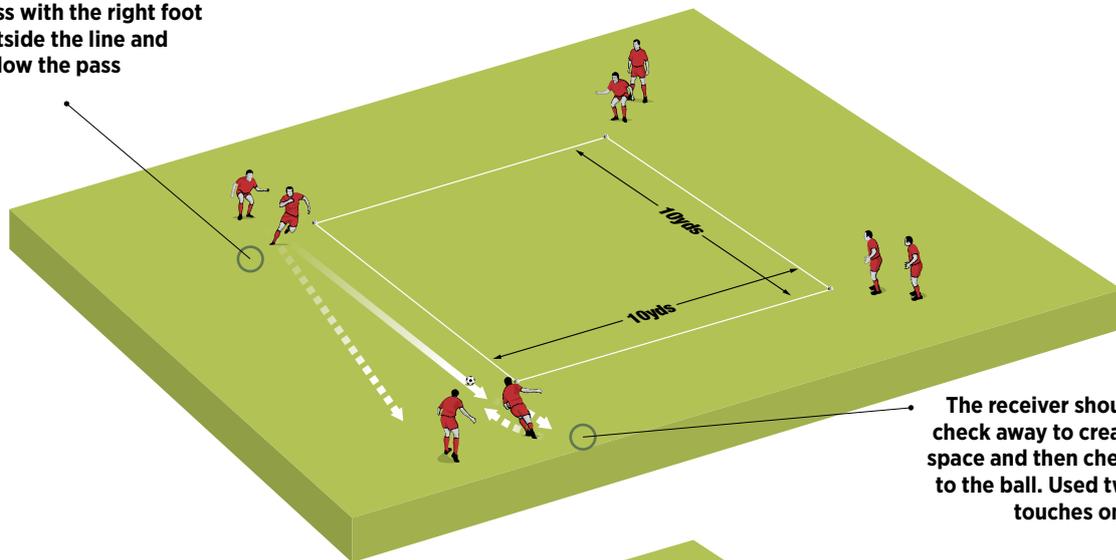
The first person in one of the corners starts the activity by making a pass with their right foot along the outside of the square in a counterclockwise direction.

After making the pass, the player follows the ball to the next group. The first person on the next cone receives the pass and continues the sequence. Play for three or four minutes or until you feel the players have had enough repetition.

TECHNIQUE

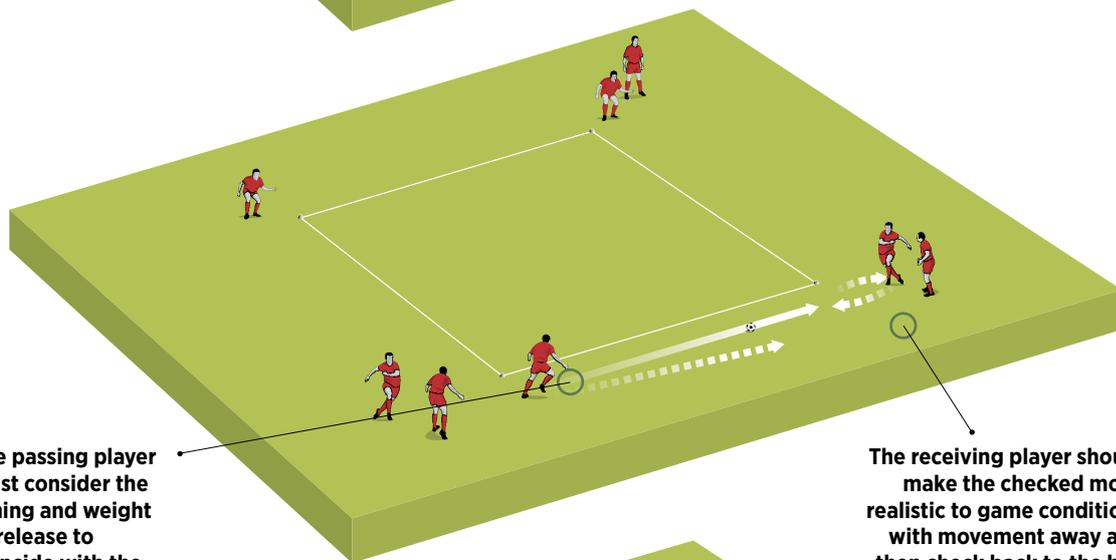
This activity emphasizes the correct passing technique over a short distance with the inside of the foot. The pass should be firm and along the ground and the receiver should open their body to setup the next pass with one touch.

Pass with the right foot outside the line and follow the pass



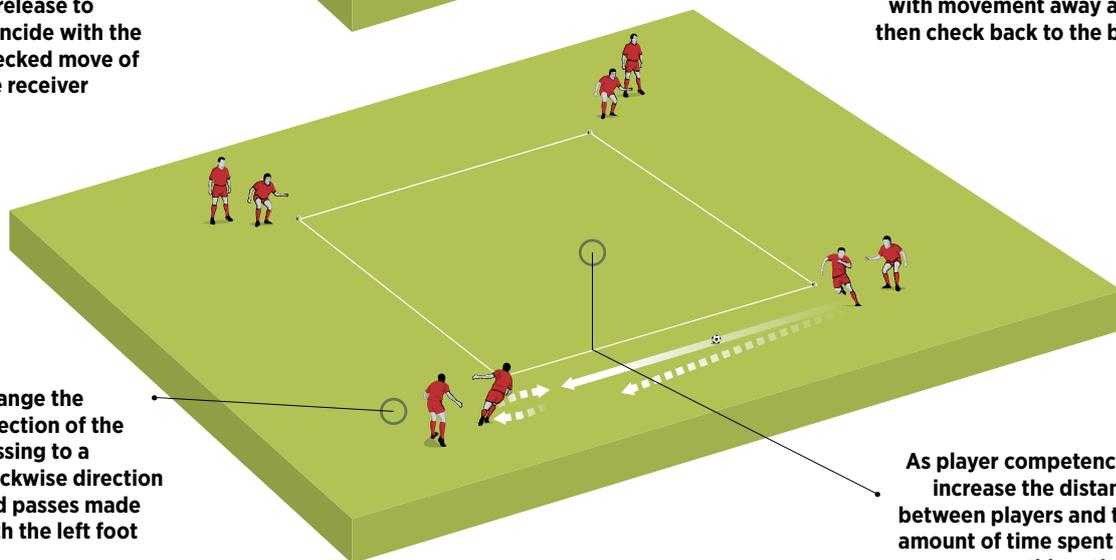
The receiver should check away to create space and then check to the ball. Used two touches only

The passing player must consider the timing and weight of release to coincide with the checked move of the receiver



The receiving player should make the checked move realistic to game conditions with movement away and then check back to the ball

Change the direction of the passing to a clockwise direction and passes made with the left foot



As player competencies increase the distance between players and the amount of time spent on this activity

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Goalkeeper Possession Game 1

Ease your goalkeepers into the team possession principle with this progressive activity

WHY USE IT

This activity encourages outfield players to keep possession of the ball by interchanging passes and including the goalkeeper. As in a game, the goalkeeper must use his or her feet when receiving a pass from a teammate.

SET UP

Set up a 15x15 yard area with room on all four sides of the square for support players. On two ends of the square place 4-5 spare balls. Set up an area for every eight players.

HOW TO PLAY

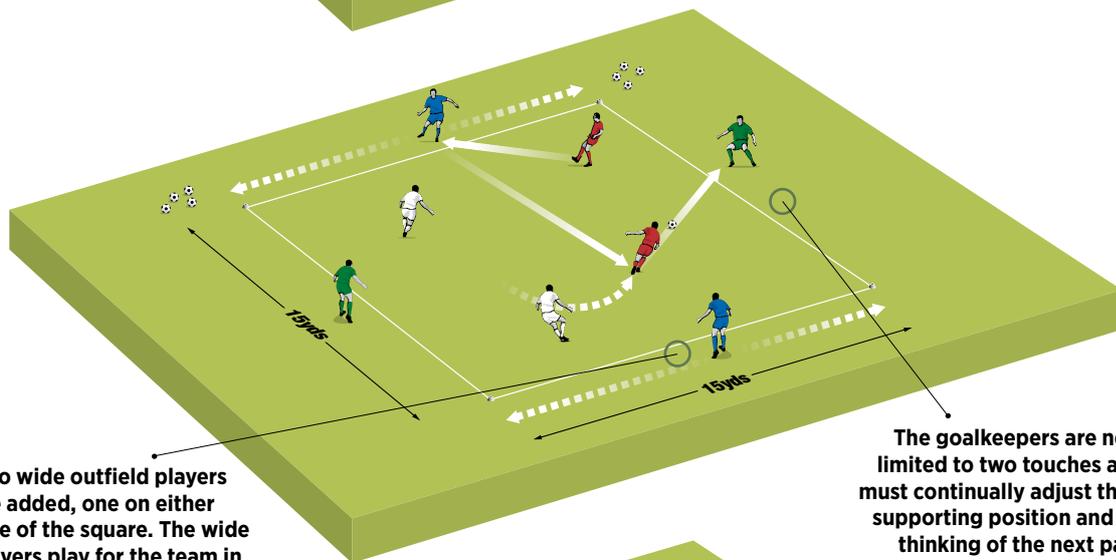
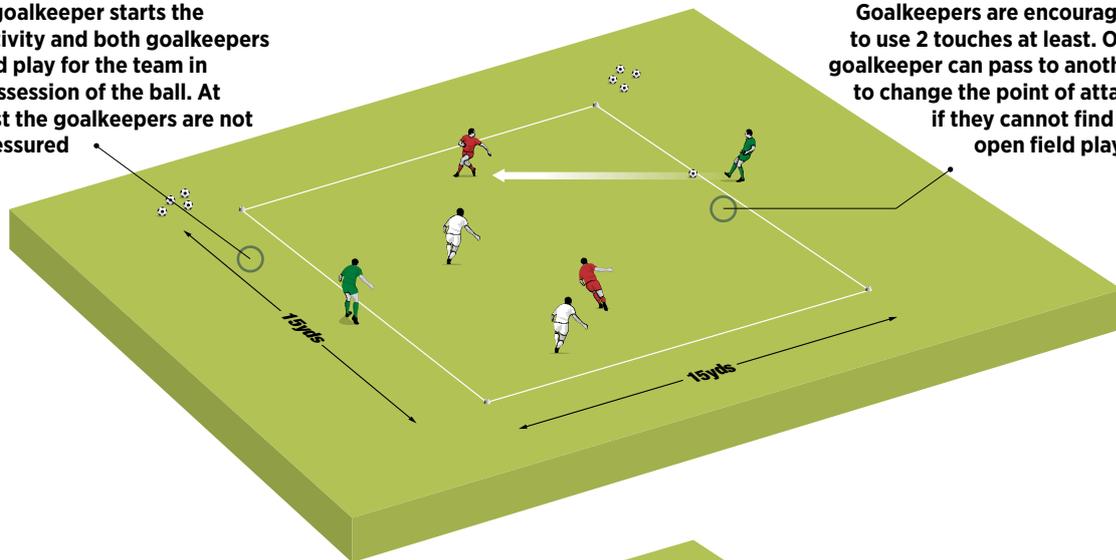
This activity involves eight players: 2v2 in the square and a goalkeeper on the outside of the square opposite each other. Two players rest. The objective of the activity is for the goalkeepers to develop confidence in using their feet and support the team in possession of the ball to retain possession. As the activity progresses, pressure is applied to the goalkeeper. One of the goalkeepers starts the activity with a pass to one of the teams in the square. Points are awarded for a team completing five consecutive passes.

TECHNIQUE

Goalkeepers are frequently required to use their feet and keep the flow and pace of attack constant. Limiting the goalkeepers to two touch adds pressure and requires the goalkeepers to play quickly.

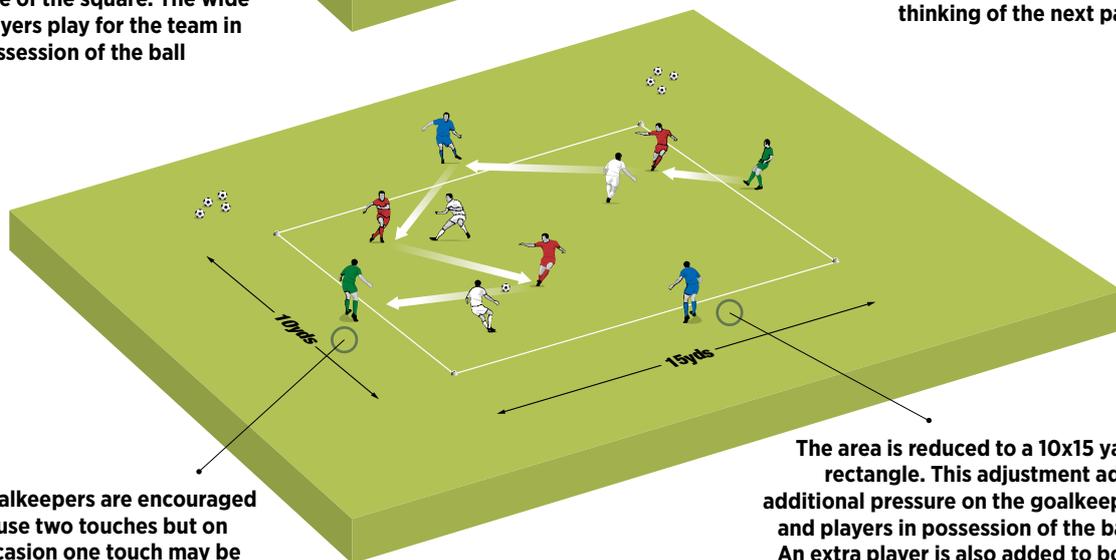
A goalkeeper starts the activity and both goalkeepers and play for the team in possession of the ball. At first the goalkeepers are not pressured

Goalkeepers are encouraged to use 2 touches at least. One goalkeeper can pass to another to change the point of attack if they cannot find an open field player



Two wide outfield players are added, one on either side of the square. The wide players play for the team in possession of the ball

The goalkeepers are now limited to two touches and must continually adjust their supporting position and be thinking of the next pass



Goalkeepers are encouraged to use two touches but on occasion one touch may be more appropriate

The area is reduced to a 10x15 yard rectangle. This adjustment adds additional pressure on the goalkeeper and players in possession of the ball. An extra player is also added to both teams, reducing space and time

Player movement
Ball movement
Run with ball
Shot

Goalkeeper Possession Game 2

The modern goalkeeper must be able to control and pass effectively in order to launch attacks and retain possession as emphasized in this activity

WHY USE IT

This activity emphasizes the role of the goalkeeper in supporting the attack. It encourages goalkeepers to combine with defensive players and develops confidence in using their feet.

SET UP

For realism, the activity is setup on the field adjacent to one of the penalty areas. One of the goalkeepers operates inside the penalty box and the other goalkeeper operates from the edge of the playing area at the other end. The playing area measures 30x20 yards. The squad is organized into three teams of four with two neutral players playing for the team in possession.

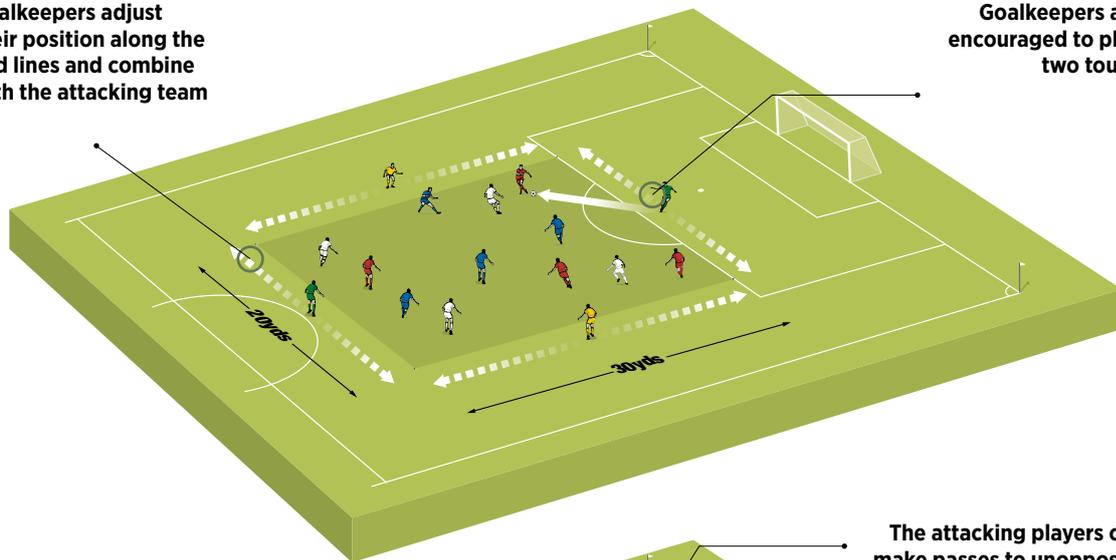
HOW TO PLAY

To begin the activity select one of the teams to be the defenders. The other two teams combine to create an 8v4 possession activity. When the defenders win possession, the team that gave the ball away automatically switch and become defenders.

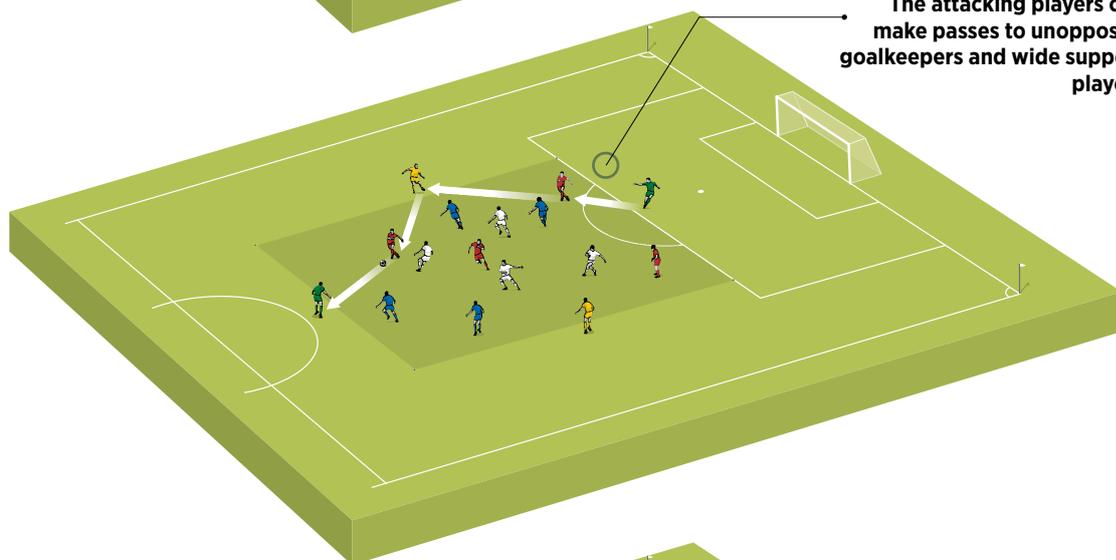
TECHNIQUE

The goalkeeper should be prepared to receive a pass back from any of the attacking players. Naturally, the quality of pass back will vary and will present the goalkeeper with challenges to receive the ball and play quickly to maintain speed of attack.

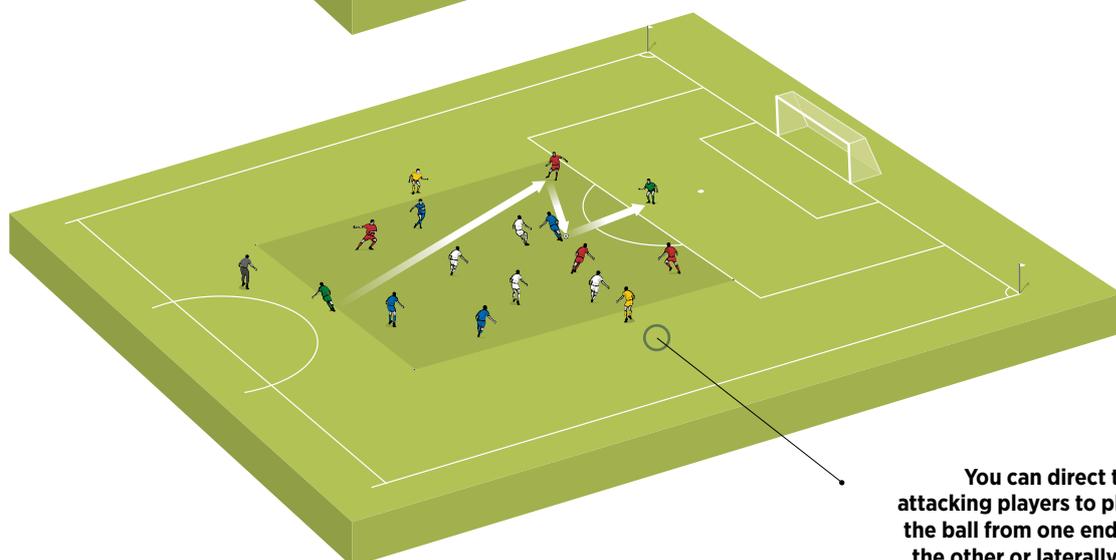
Goalkeepers adjust their position along the end lines and combine with the attacking team



Goalkeepers are encouraged to play two touch



The attacking players can make passes to unopposed goalkeepers and wide support players



You can direct the attacking players to play the ball from one end to the other or laterally to the wide players

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Goalkeeper & Defenders Possession Game

Ram home the principles of the goalkeeper as an additional outfield player with this fun activity

WHY USE IT

This activity gives you an opportunity to work with the goalkeeper and defensive players to move the ball forward and combine with midfield and attacking players.. Communication between the goalkeeper and defenders is emphasized.

SET UP

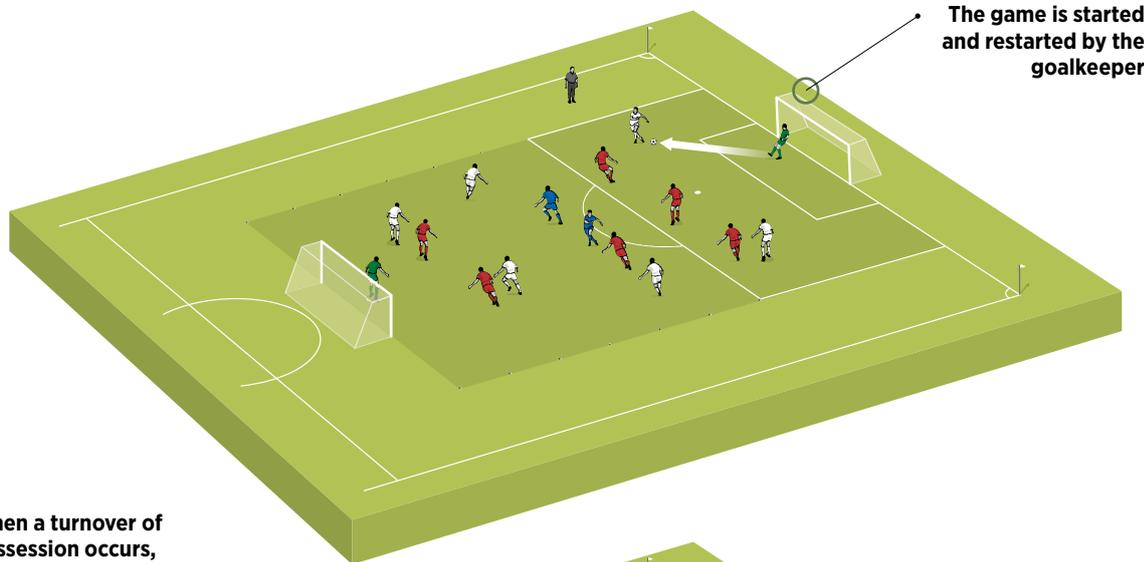
Set up two penalty boxes adjacent to each other. In each area is a full-sized goal with the goalkeeper. The field is the width of the penalty box and the depth of two penalty boxes.

HOW TO PLAY

Play 6v6 in the area with two neutral players playing for the team in possession. A goalkeeper plays for each team. Each team attacks the opponent's goal and regular rules apply. The only exception occurs when possession is won by the other team. The ball must be passed back to the goalie before it can be played into the opponent's half of the field.

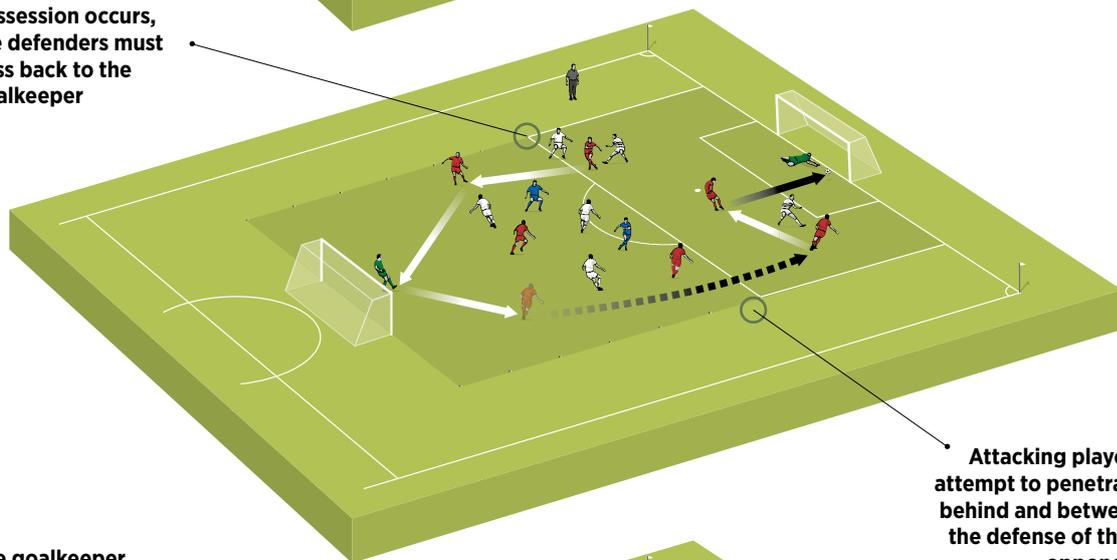
TECHNIQUE

Passes back to the goalkeeper should be played wide of the goal to prevent a goal being scored if the goalkeeper miskicks the ball. Where possible, defensive players should play the ball along the ground, and to the goalkeepers strongest foot.



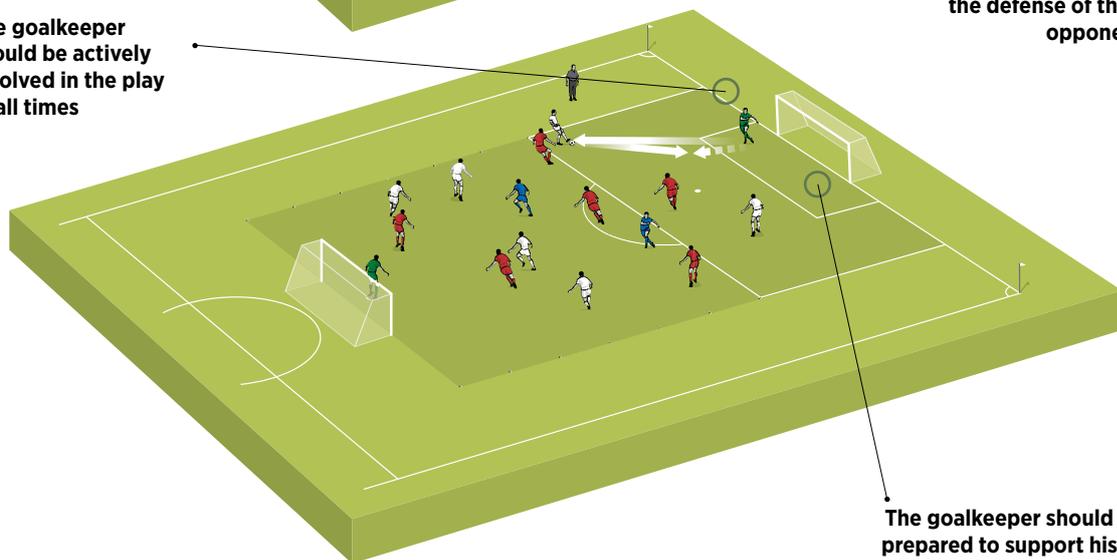
The game is started and restarted by the goalkeeper

When a turnover of possession occurs, the defenders must pass back to the goalkeeper



Attacking players attempt to penetrate behind and between the defense of their opponent

The goalkeeper should be actively involved in the play at all times



The goalkeeper should be prepared to support his or her own pass

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Role Of Keeper And Backline In Attack

Use this great game to give the keepers a focal point for launching attacks and switching possession

WHY USE IT

Use this activity to encourage players to penetrate from wide and central positions. The gates give the attacking team a target to aim for.

SET UP

Use one half of the field. Use cones to extend the width of the penalty box to the half way line. Players play 5v5 between the half way line and the goal line with two neutral players playing for the team in possession. One player operates wide on each side of the field and each team has a goalkeeper. Points are scored by penetrating through three 2-yard gates set up across the center of the field.

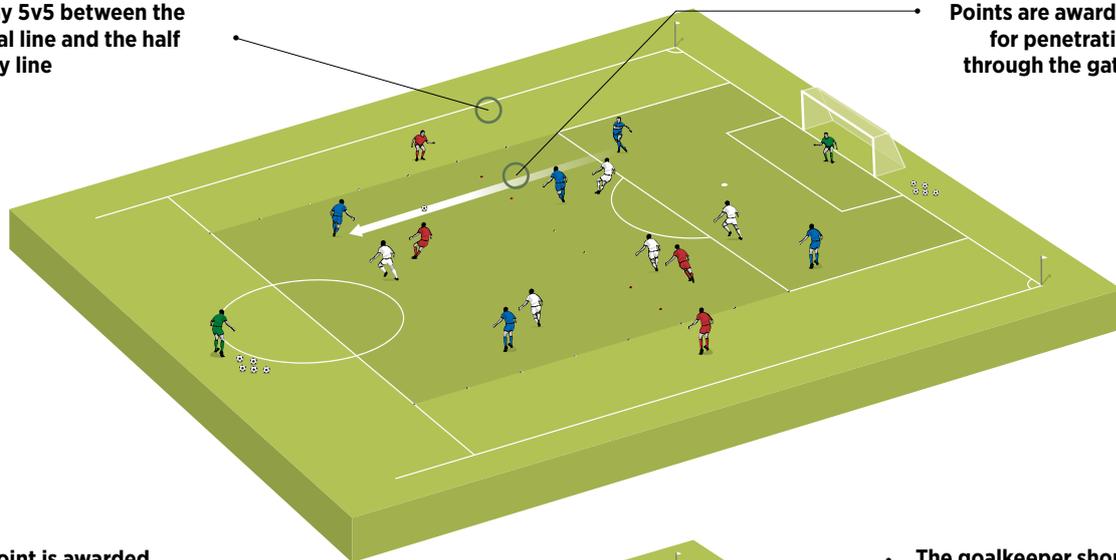
HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper starts by passing the ball to one of his or her team mates. The attacking team attempts to make a penetrating pass through the gates to a team mate or a penetrating dribble through the gate. A point is awarded for each successful attempt. The keeper supports from behind the play and is encouraged to switch play from one side to the other.

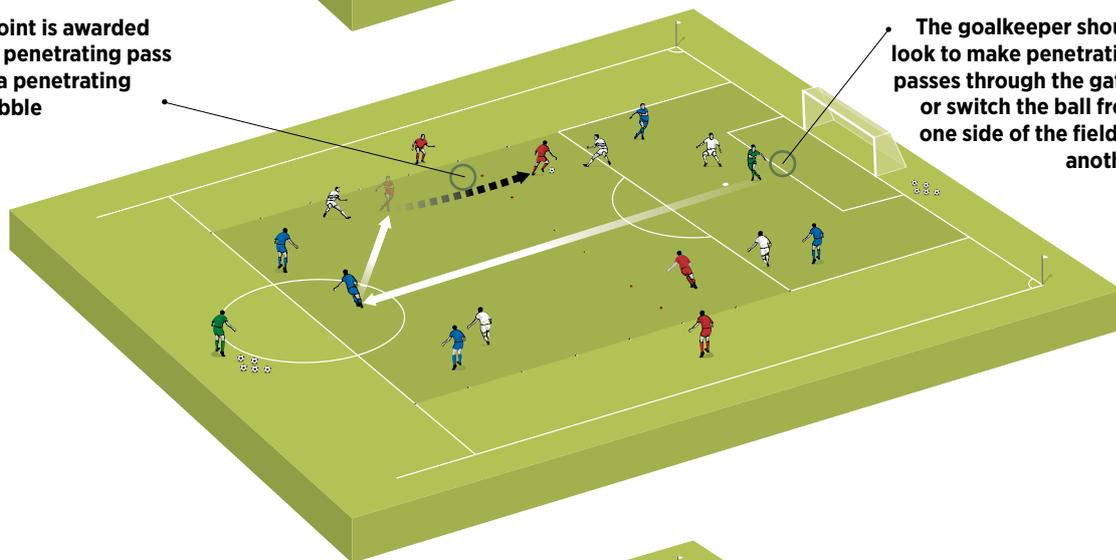
TECHNIQUE

When the goalkeeper receives a back pass from a teammate, he or she can play wide to the support players, or make penetrating passes through the center of the field.

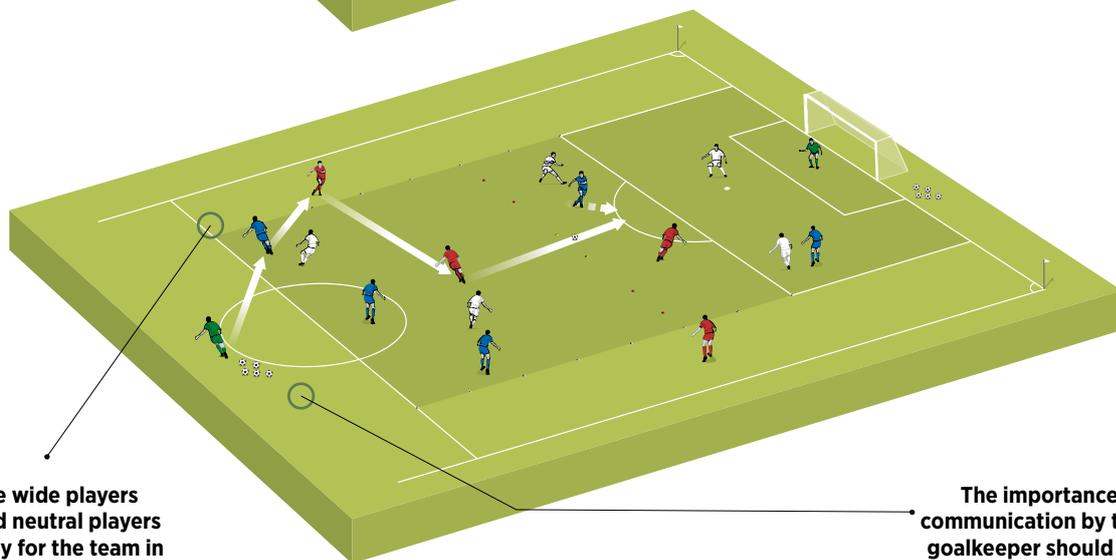
Play 5v5 between the goal line and the half way line



1 point is awarded for penetrating pass or a penetrating dribble



The wide players and neutral players play for the team in possession



The importance of communication by the goalkeeper should be encouraged at all times

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Attacking from the back half-field

This session gives you almost endless opportunities to practice different scenarios that require the goalkeeper to take an active part in building an attack

WHY USE IT

This activity gives you an opportunity to work with the goalkeeper, defense and midfield players to build up an attack from defensive positions.

SET UP

This activity occurs on one half of the field. A goal is positioned in the center circle facing the opposing goal. Two teams of 7 play against each other and each team has a goalkeeper.

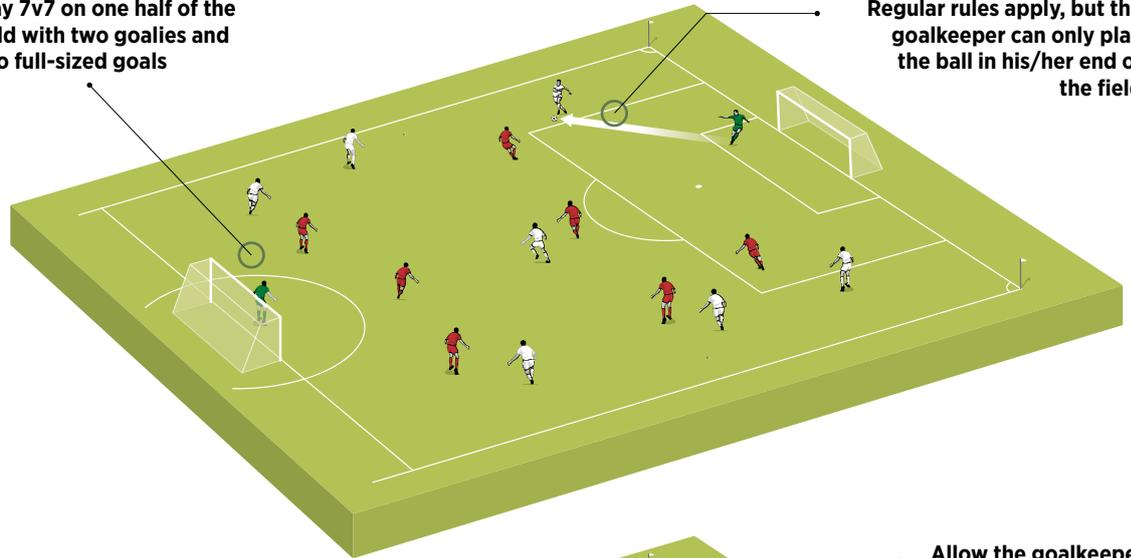
HOW TO PLAY

Regular rules apply to this activity. The goalkeepers are encouraged to support the defenders when they are facing back towards their goal. Initially the goalkeeper is only allowed play a pass to a player in the defensive half of the field.

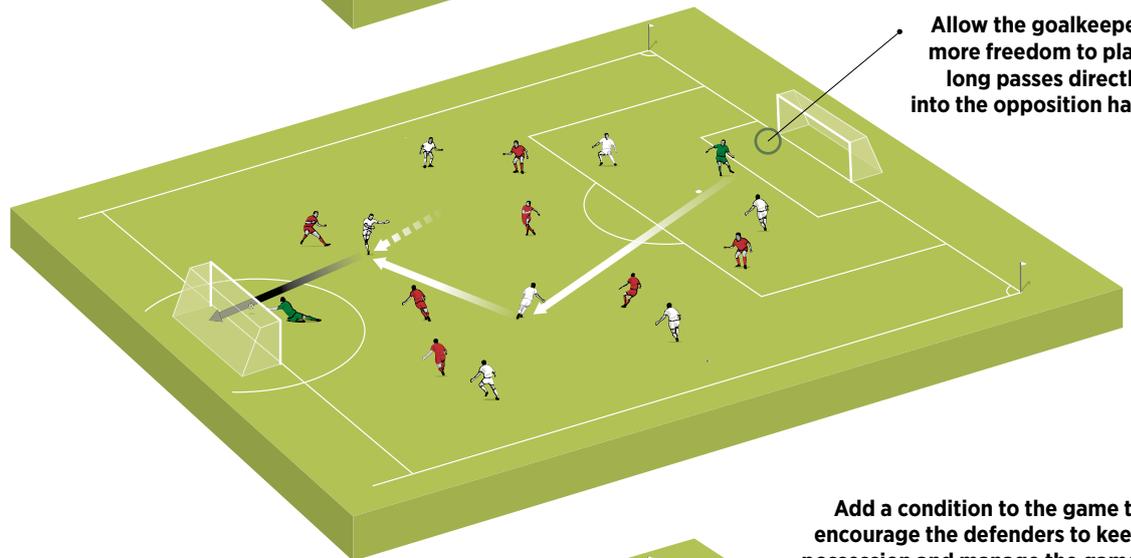
TECHNIQUE

The defensive and midfield units must work with the goalkeeper to play the ball forward to the attacking players. On receipt of the ball by the goalkeeper, wide defensive players and wide midfield players should stretch the field wide to provide space for the central players operate.

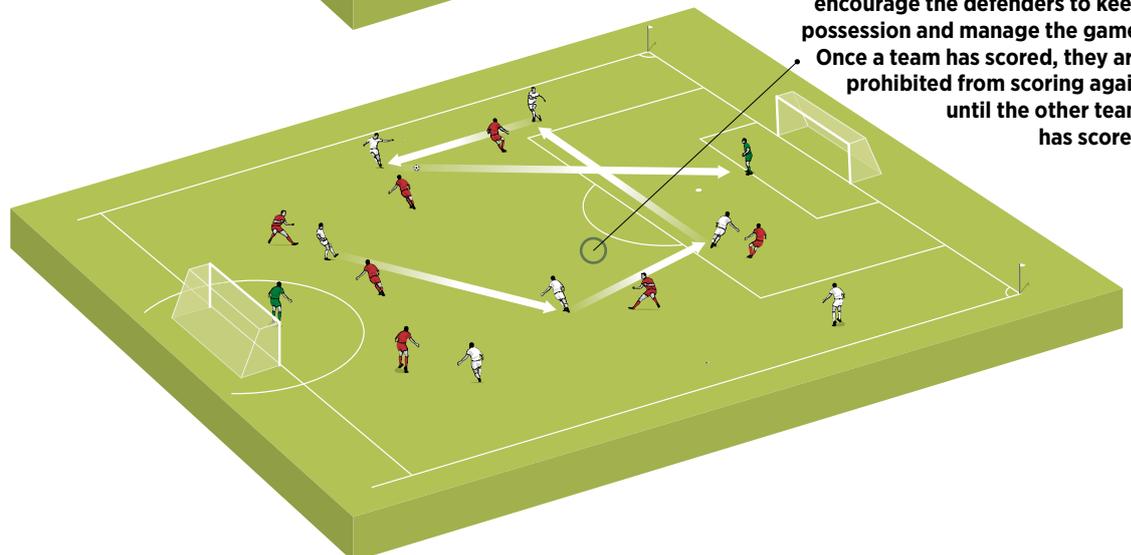
Play 7v7 on one half of the field with two goalies and two full-sized goals



Regular rules apply, but the goalkeeper can only play the ball in his/her end of the field



Allow the goalkeeper more freedom to play long passes directly into the opposition half



Add a condition to the game to encourage the defenders to keep possession and manage the game. Once a team has scored, they are prohibited from scoring again until the other team has scored

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Developing Strikers In Today's Game

This session emphasized the role of central strikers and wingers in attacking the final third of the field. Presented by Charlie Slagle



CHARLIE SLAGLE

Chief Executive, Capital Area Soccer League (CASL)

Charlie Slagle, is the CEO of Capital Area Soccer League based in Raleigh North Carolina – an organization that has over 800 registered teams and 9,000 players.

Charlie has been with the club better known in soccer circles as CASL since 2001. Prior to that, he was the Men's Soccer Coach at Davidson College for 21 years (1980-2000 seasons) where he led the team to a final 4 appearance in 1992. In the same year, Charlie was awarded the NCAA Division I National Coach of the Year, the Bill Jeffrey Award and the Charlotte Sportsman of the Year Award.

In addition to his role with CASL, Charlie also serves on NSCAA Board of Directors as Secretary and is an instructor for NSCAA Director of Coaching Diploma and a mentor for the Master Coach program.

Summary

Charlie's session focused on the role of central strikers and wingers in the attacking 3rd of the field. Charlie underlined the important role of the coach in helping players understand their responsibilities, and drew comparisons with facilitating a session and coaching a session. Unlike a facilitator, a coach must control variables, correct technique/ decision-making and inspire players throughout the session. A coach will continuously evaluate the success of the activity and where appropriate make changes.

Charlie outlined several key considerations when working with strikers:

- 1. Mentality** – it is important to work with players on taking shots early when presented with an opportunity. To this end, a scoring activity should replicate the game environment as much as possible, with activities occurring in and around the penalty box and with opponents trying to prevent shooting chances.
- 2. Positioning** – work with players on their movement on and off the ball to create space, and in addition, their body positioning and readiness to receive a pass and take a shot.
- 3. Physical preparation** – speed of movement, quick feet and establishing a strong and balanced body shape are characteristics of a successful striker.
- 4. Technique** – repetition and reinforcement of the correct technique for striking a ball that is moving away from the striker is critical. It is also vital for the coach to replicate service that originates from wide positions and with the striker with his/her back to goal.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Charlie Slagle

Q1: When running the attacking activities, is it important to include offsides? Doug Barkholz

Doug, most of the time it is important. In Activity 1 and 2, it is important. We can't allow scoring opportunities to occur when they will be flagged for offside in a game. In the free for all, unless a player is abusing the offsides, I think you don't need to call it. Being in an offside position when the coach didn't say that offsides would be called is some gamesmanship and improvisation. The crossing drill doesn't need offside except if players are serving from further out and you want to emphasize them getting to the endline (i.e. if you had taken the ball further your

teammates wouldn't have been offside"). In the 1 v goalkeeper, I wouldn't call offside as the ball needs to precede the player into the penalty area, either by pass or dribble. I hope this helps!

Q2: Is a blind side run also known as "ghosting"? If not, what does that term mean? Robert Curran

Robert, I am not familiar with the term ghosting. Hopefully, I can be enlightened and answer the question. Blind sided runs accomplish one thing, having your defender not be able to see you and the ball at the same time. It allows for space to be created.

Q3: Is it possible to coach improvisation or should it just be facilitated? Dave Hourcade

Dave, I think the coach can encourage improvisation before an activity and as an activity is occurring. Tell players to try new things, yes they may lose the ball but it is a way to get better. Encourage the attempt, don't discourage the loss of the ball. A drill that is good for that is 1v2 in a small space. In this game, each player tries to keep the ball when they have it...however, due to being numbers down, it is no crime to lose the ball. I play it that if a ball is knocked out of bounds by a one of the 2, then the 1 gets to keep it and if the 1 loses it, the closest of the 2 gets the ball. A very physical drill that encourages improvisation. It, also, encourages defenders to win the ball, not just knock it away. This can be expanded to 2v4. The great ones got that way because they tried their moves in numbers down situations, Maradona did it in the streets with 1 v many. Play 'I have it, you folks try to get it'. The 1v2 and 2v4 accomplish that.

Q4: In activity 3, since it small numbers, how would you suggest keeping all players active (i.e. only three players involved at a time). Nathan Janulis

Nathan, On 3C, the continuous game, add a player at the goal and a player at each end who are the passers for the give and go. That is 7 players and that is continuous. A player shoots and follows the shot to go to the goal, then the ball will come to him/her when a teammate shoots and he/she becomes a passer, then he/she becomes the give and goer and it starts over again. 7 per group and two groups competing against each other is a full team. Throw the GKs in the drill or have them try to save shots.

Q5: What do you do with the rest of the team while doing these drill especially there is only one coach? Peter Kamas

Peter, 4v4 + 1 can become two groups of 3v3 + 1 and the coach puts the areas in close proximity to each other and stands so that he/she can watch both at the same time and comment to each group. The crossing activity and the free for all can involve the entire team, just make your space accommodates the larger group

Q6: With attacking principles such as these how often are you focusing on attacking sessions during a season? On average you may only have 16 practices per season. Duron Jones

Duron, Kids love to attack and score. In Activity 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6, there is an economy of approach because players are playing both offense and defense in the activity. Therefore, this can be done in all practices and can lead into the no restriction game at the end of the session. However, in a no restriction game on a day when you worked on 1-time shooting, if a player shoots first time, a coach could say, "Hey, that is what I am talking about, great first time strike at goal!" Other things may be emphasized such as possession in other activities but it is incorporated into the 1 v GK activity.

Q7: At what age group would you begin to teach players these exercises? Steve Lopiano

Steve, I will list these by activity- in addition to the age bracket matter, the ability of players in the team will matter as well.

- First time shooting-U9s
- Blind sided runs-U11s
- Give and Go-Simple part-U9, group activity U11
- Free for all-U7s
- Crosses-U9s
- 1 v GK-U11s

In each case, you can tone down the activity to make it easy to understand. The more restrictions that you have and the meatier the concept (blind sided runs can't be taught until there is an understanding of runs off the ball) the tougher it is to teach to younger and/or less experienced players. And don't think that as they get older that they grow out of the activity. I have used these activities with younger players and, also, a college men's team.

Q8: With younger players U12 and below, what percentage of your training time do you dedicate to shooting activities over a season?

Charlie Traughber

Charlie, First, I would make sure that your sessions are at least 80% skill-based. Secondly, I don't consider any of these activities as shooting activities (the closest one is the give and go activity), I consider them Scoring Activities. We are trying to train scorers not shooters, even though shooting is a part of scoring. Due to the build up and the game-like atmosphere, these activities can be used often. The players are getting more out of it than just the shooting aspect. Adding a scoring component to activities does energize the players, then adding a competitive aspect even increases the intensity.

First Time Shooting

First time shots require a great amount of control and technique. The neutral player in this game will give players plenty of chances to master the technique

WHY USE IT

This activity works on first time shooting in a competitive game-like situation. It works on shooting technique and tactical positioning to be open to shoot.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 40x44 yards (Penalty area width).

HOW TO PLAY

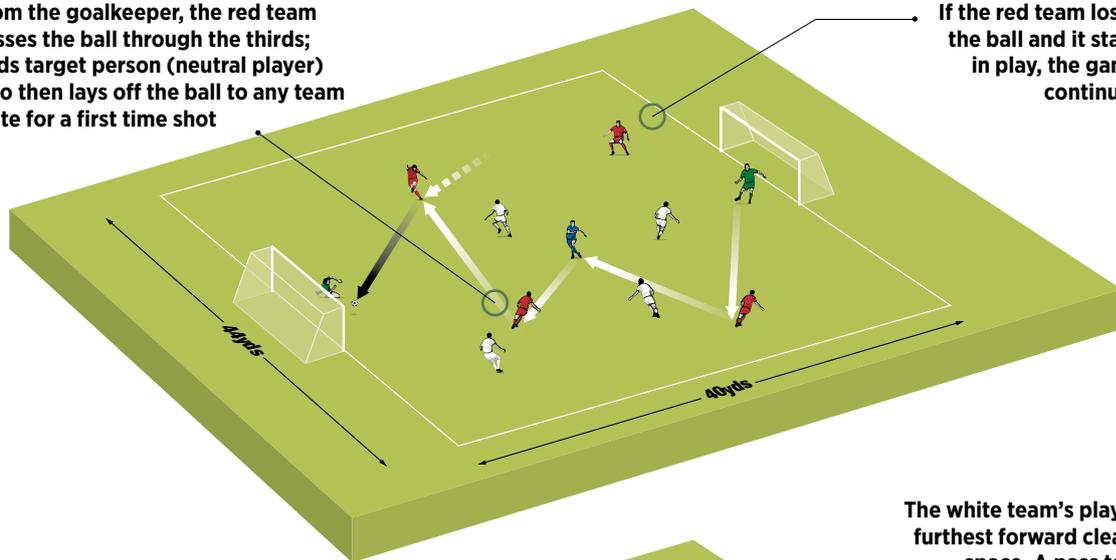
The ball starts with either goalkeeper and players play to score with the only restriction being shots must be taken first time. A neutral offensive player increases the number of opportunities to shoot. This is a continuous activity with both teams trying to outscore the other team. Goalkeepers take possession on corners and goal kicks. Throw-ins are played as usual.

TECHNIQUE

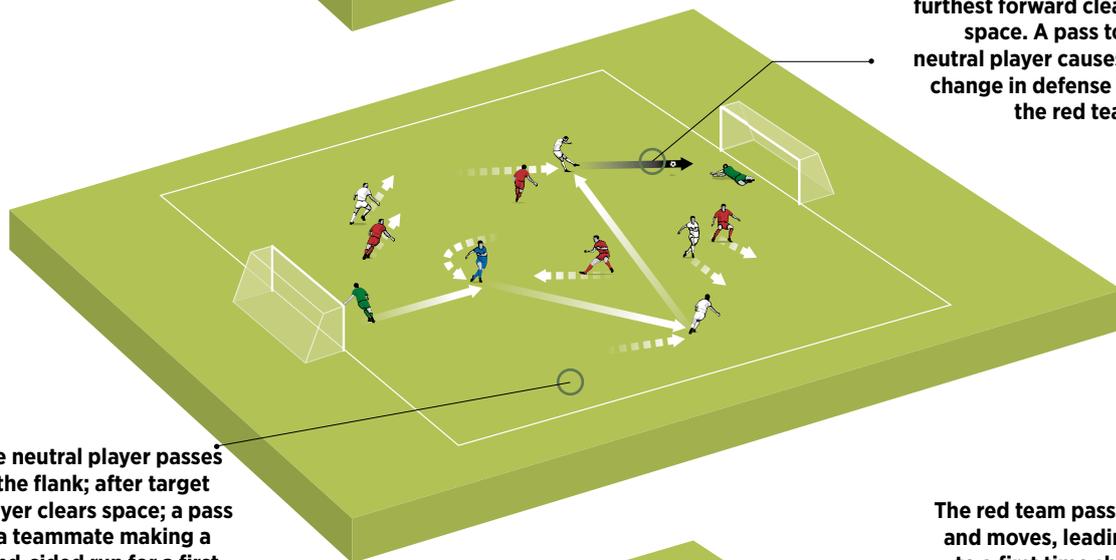
This activity emphasizes the correct technique of shooting moving balls from various angles, heights, etc. The technique of passing shootable balls to teammates is, also, emphasized.

From the goalkeeper, the red team passes the ball through the thirds; finds target person (neutral player) who then lays off the ball to any team mate for a first time shot

If the red team loses the ball and it stays in play, the game continues

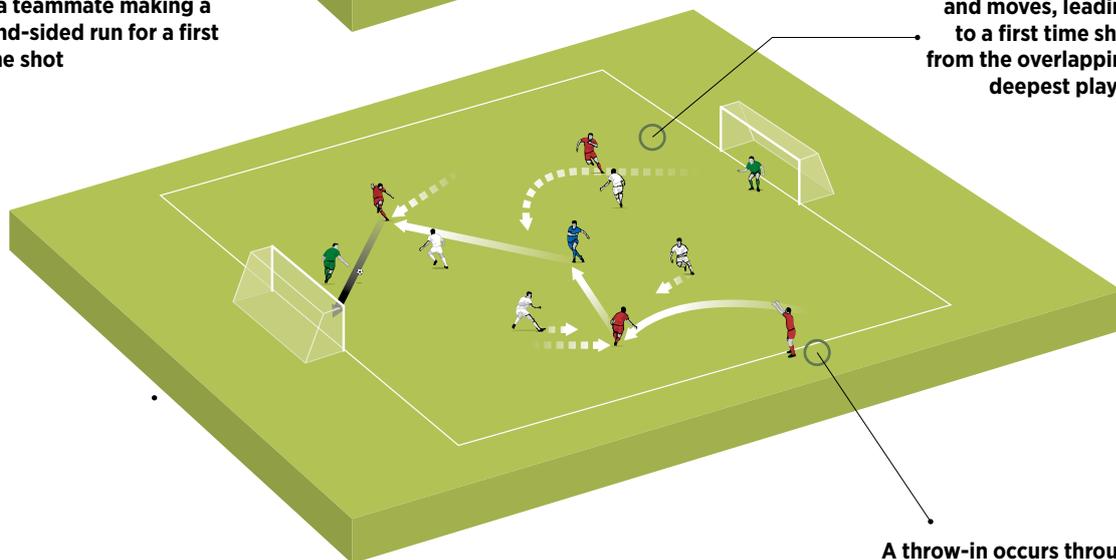


The white team's player furthest forward clears space. A pass to a neutral player causes a change in defense by the red team



The neutral player passes to the flank; after target player clears space; a pass to a teammate making a blind-sided run for a first time shot

The red team passes and moves, leading to a first time shot from the overlapping deepest player



A throw-in occurs through the run of play

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Blind-side Runs

To effectively use blind-sided runs players have to create space on the flanks. This activity will get them working together

WHY USE IT

This activity gets players using blind-sided runs to create scoring chances in a competitive game-like situation.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 40x44 yards (Penalty area width) with a goal at either end. Play 4v4 + 1, plus 2 goalkeepers.

HOW TO PLAY

The ball starts with either goalkeeper and players play to score with the restriction that finishes must be 1 or 2 touch.

Goals count 1 and goals that are scored due to a blind-sided run count 2.

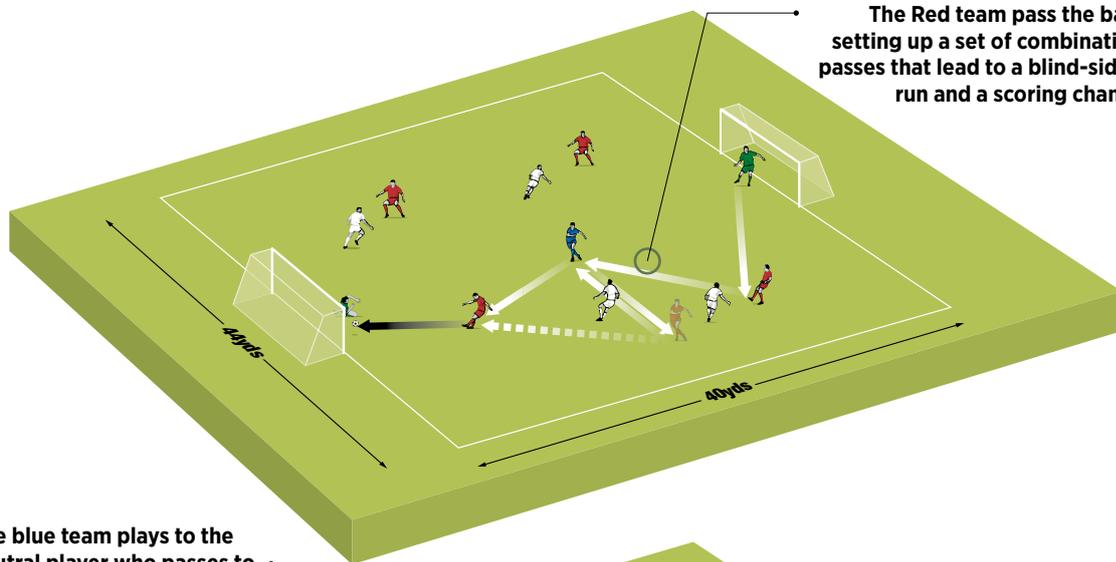
The neutral player cannot score but increases the number of opportunities for blind-sided runs leading to shots.

This is a continuous activity with both teams trying to outscore the other team.

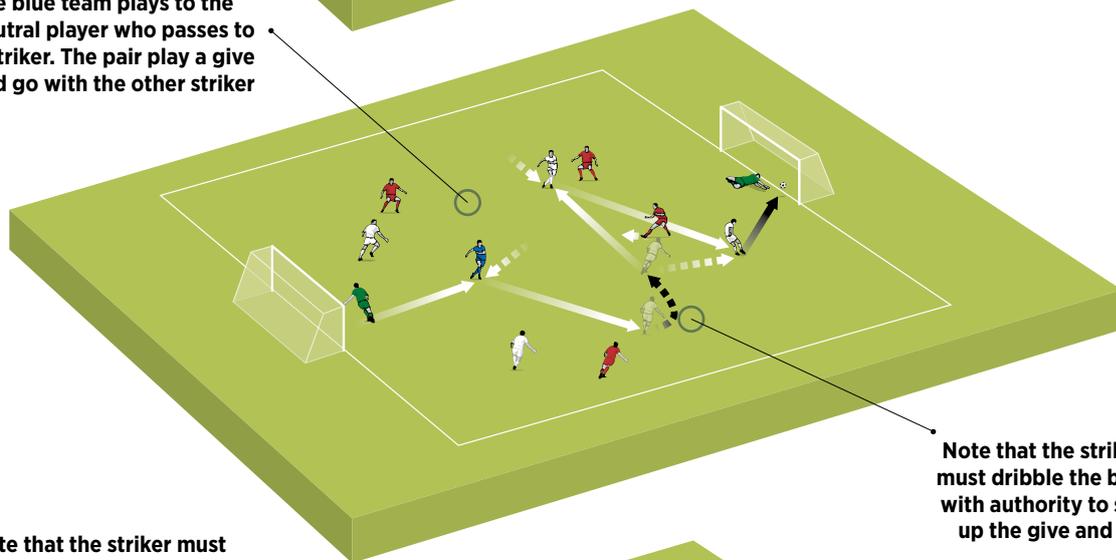
Goalkeepers take possession on corner kicks and goal kicks. Throw-ins are played as usual.

TECHNIQUE

The techniques of passing, receiving and shooting off passes and on the move will be emphasized.

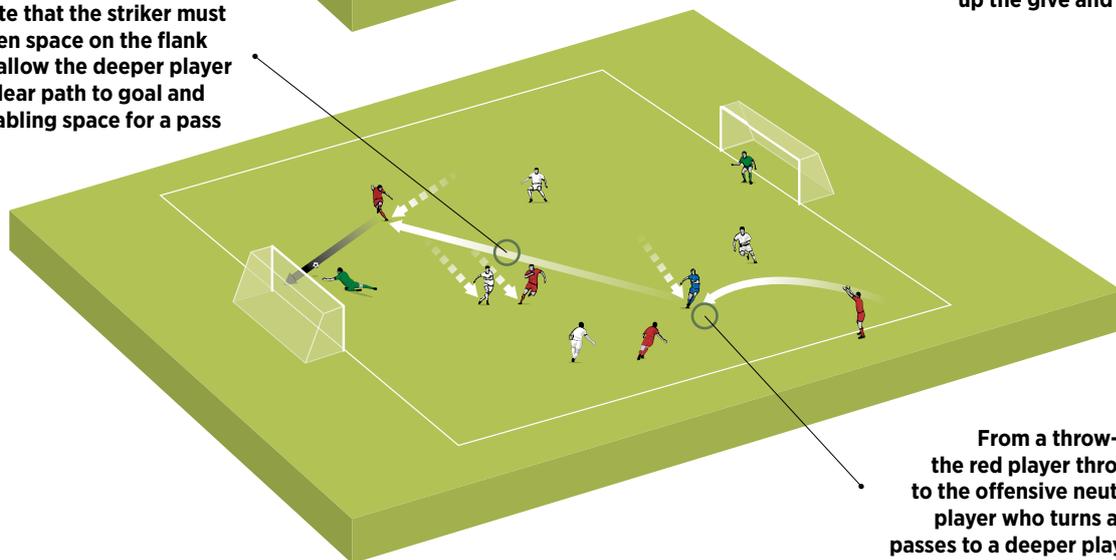


The Red team pass the ball, setting up a set of combination passes that lead to a blind-sided run and a scoring chance



The blue team plays to the neutral player who passes to a striker. The pair play a give and go with the other striker

Note that the striker must dribble the ball with authority to set up the give and go



Note that the striker must open space on the flank to allow the deeper player a clear path to goal and enabling space for a pass

From a throw-in, the red player throws to the offensive neutral player who turns and passes to a deeper player making a blind-sided run

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Tight Space Give And Gos

The give and go is a vital tool for picking a route through tight defences. This activity will help your players master the skill

WHY USE IT

This drill teaches players to play in tight spaces near goal. The challenge of time makes it important to play in the tight space. Competition also adds to the importance of doing this in as tight of space as possible in order to not waste time.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 15x38 yards with a goal at either end. Use cones to mark an 8-yard channel across the middle. Place two cones in each goal. Play with multiples of three players.

HOW TO PLAY

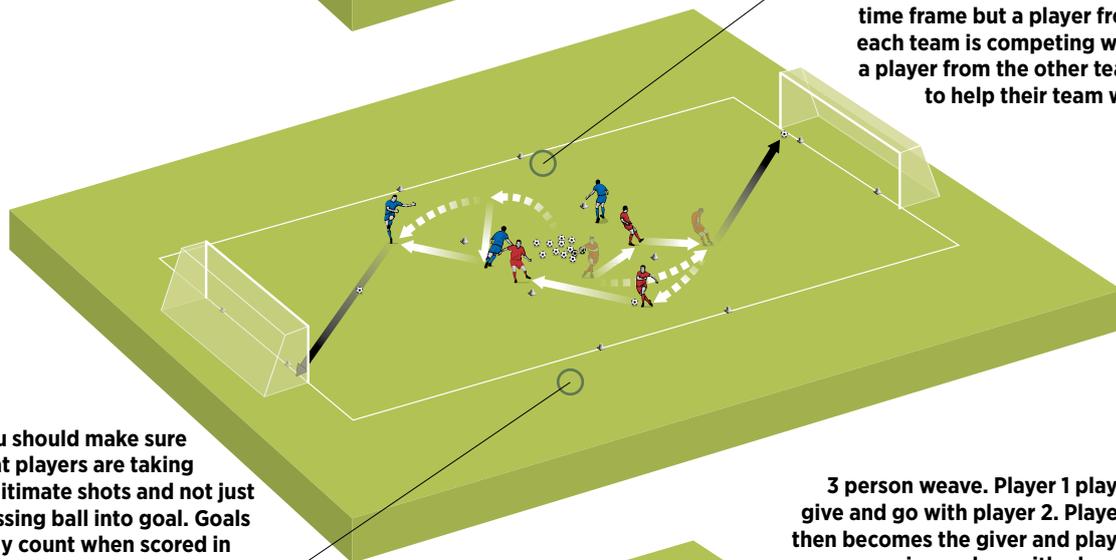
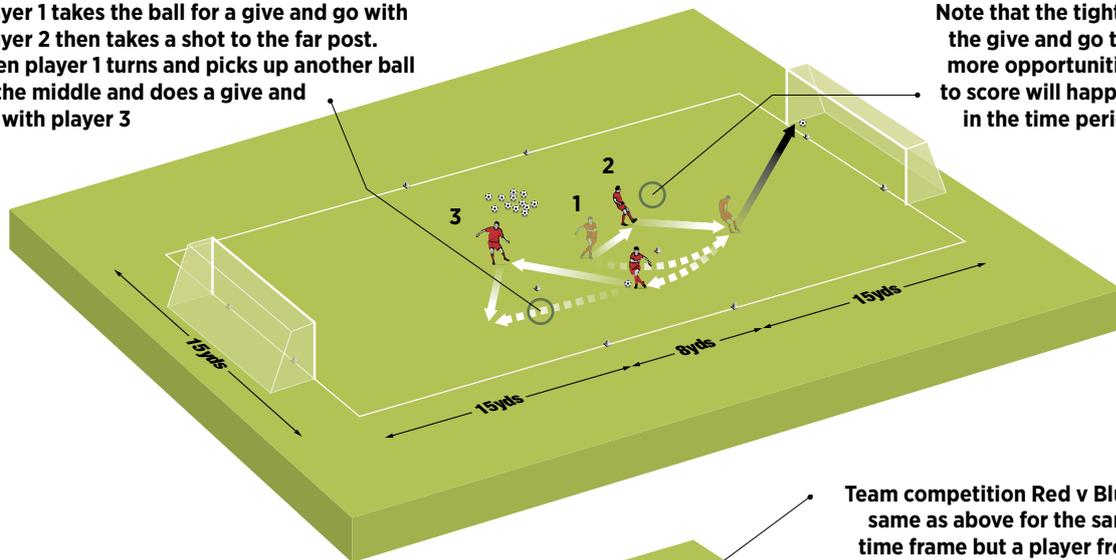
One player working at a time (1 minute). The player uses team mates for give and go and shots, trying to score as many times as possible in a minute. The player must shoot every ball, even if it gets away at the give and go. All shots need to go far post. Progress to one player working at a time but competing against another group of 3 (middle picture). Finish with a 3-person weave where each player will be in each of the 3 spots.

TECHNIQUE

Ball control, passing, receiving, shooting off pass.

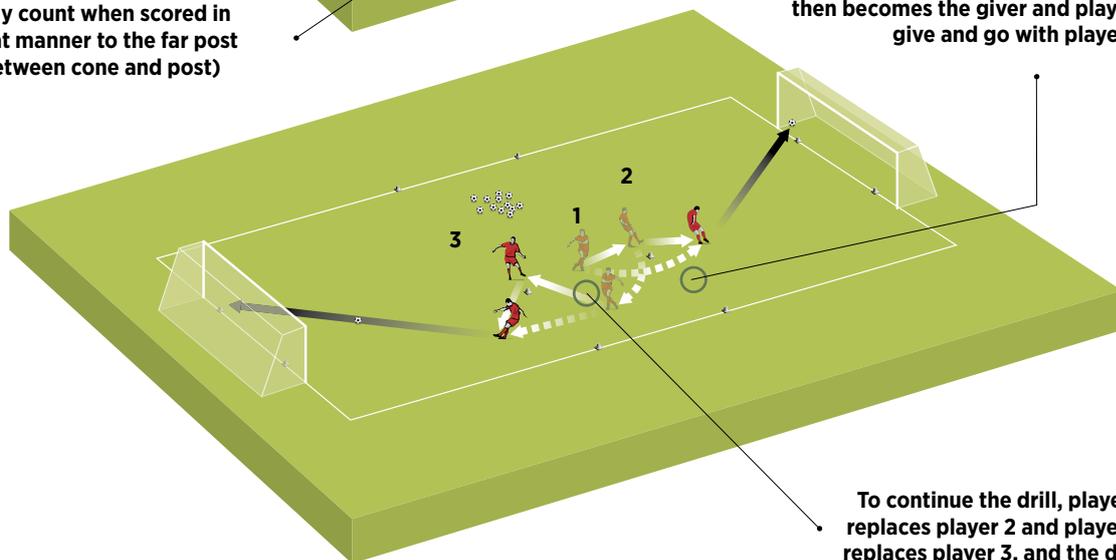
Player 1 takes the ball for a give and go with player 2 then takes a shot to the far post. Then player 1 turns and picks up another ball in the middle and does a give and go with player 3

Note that the tighter the give and go the more opportunities to score will happen in the time period



You should make sure that players are taking legitimate shots and not just passing ball into goal. Goals only count when scored in that manner to the far post (between cone and post)

Team competition Red v Blue; same as above for the same time frame but a player from each team is competing with a player from the other team to help their team win



3 person weave. Player 1 plays a give and go with player 2. Player 2 then becomes the giver and plays a give and go with player 3

To continue the drill, player 1 replaces player 2 and player 2 replaces player 3, and the drill continues for 4 minutes

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Shooting Free For All

Goalmouth scrambles are one of the most exciting things in soccer. Make sure you come out on top by preparing your players to get the ball in the net when it drops at their feet

WHY USE IT

This game simulates game situations such as corner kicks and long throws where scrambles happen in front of the net. Players must always be ready to shoot.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 30x25 yards with a goal at each end. Play 6v6 plus 2 goalkeepers.

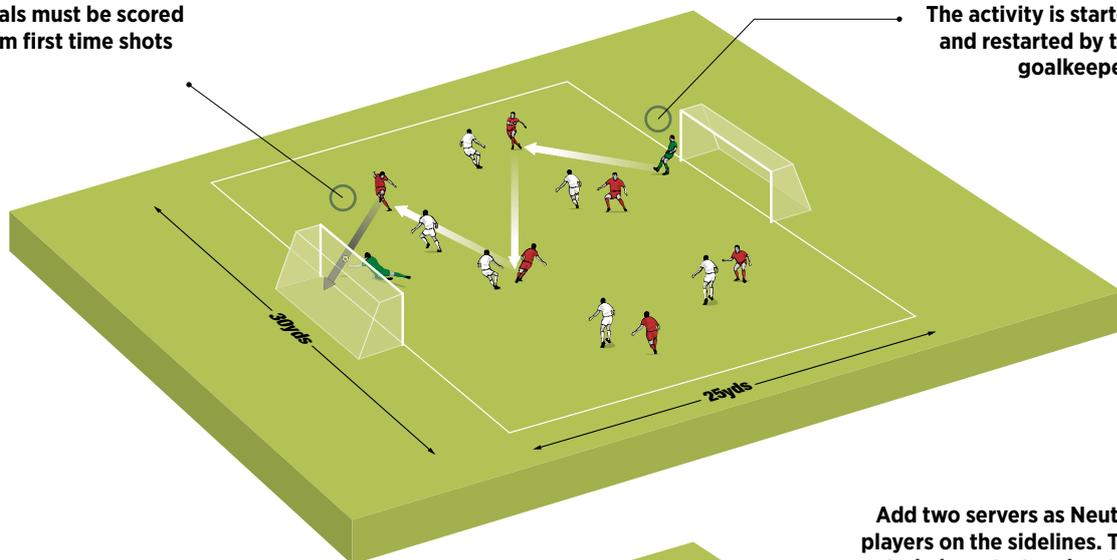
HOW TO PLAY

Get the ball in play and compete in close quarters. This is a competitive game where the score is being kept. Goals must be scored from first time shots. Play continuously - corner kicks will be played as corner kicks; goal kicks will be goalkeeper possession and throw-ins will be played as throw ins.

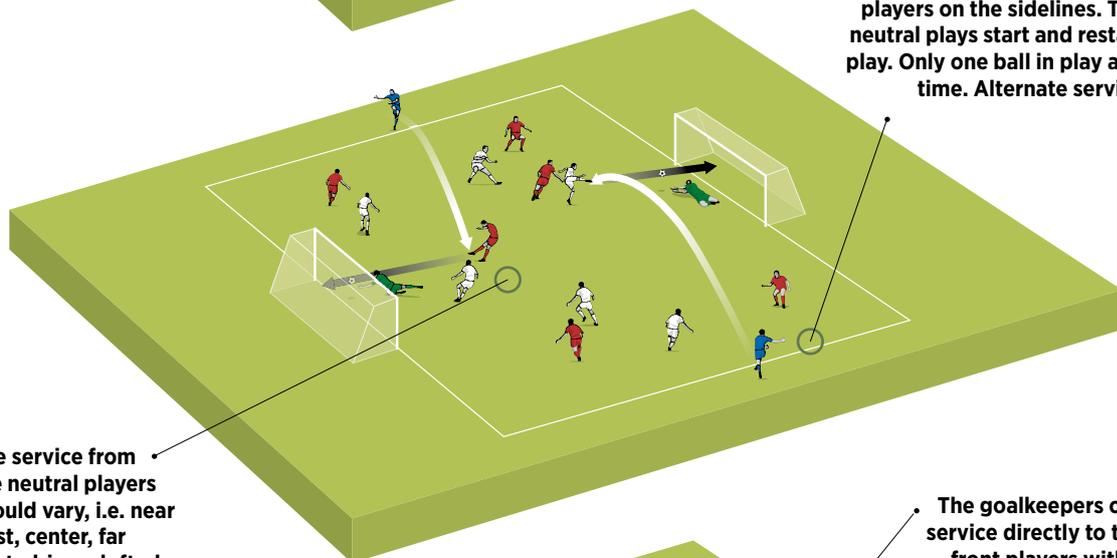
TECHNIQUE

Shooting in rapid fire situations with limitations of time and space.

Goals must be scored from first time shots

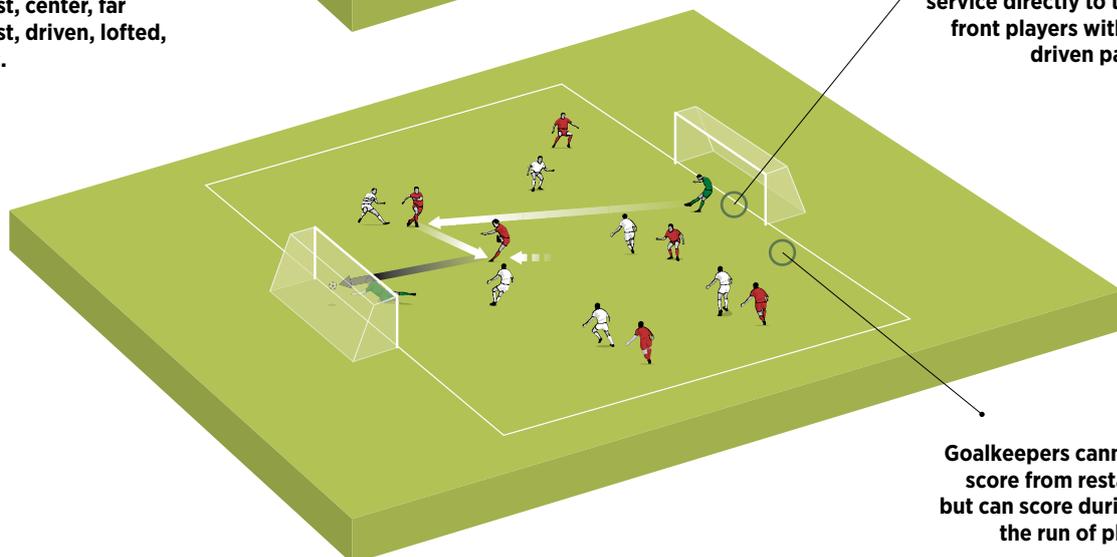


The activity is started and restarted by the goalkeepers



Add two servers as Neutral players on the sidelines. The neutral plays start and restart play. Only one ball in play at a time. Alternate service

The service from the neutral players should vary, i.e. near post, center, far post, driven, lofted, etc.



The goalkeepers can service directly to the front players with a driven pass

Goalkeepers cannot score from restart but can score during the run of play

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Scoring On The Run

Scoring on the run is all about timing. Use this exercise to get your players arriving in the right place, at the right time, to deadly effect

WHY USE IT

Drawing a defense out of the center in front of the goal allows many good scoring opportunities. In this activity, the players will see services from 3 distinct areas and have chances to score against a defense. The timing and location of the offensive runs is critical.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 50x25 yards, with a goal on each long side. Use 7 attacking players, 5 defending players and 2 goalkeepers.

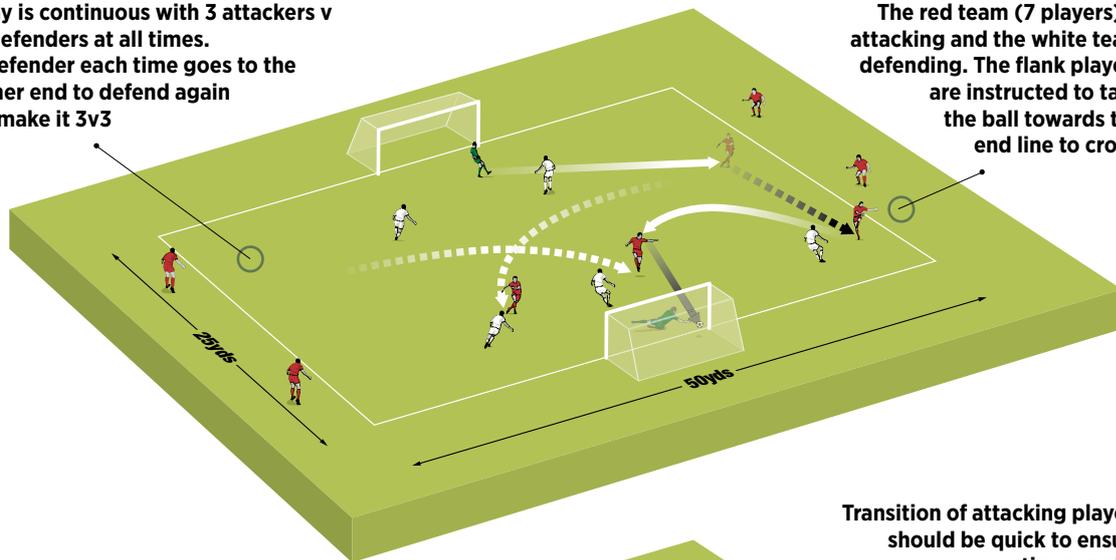
HOW TO PLAY

Servers put the ball in play (mainly in the penalty area) from 3 distinct locations. Players make runs and try to score on one goal and then go to the other end and try to score there. It is 3v3 in the scoring area with rest built in for both attackers and defenders in this continuous activity. If you want to make this a competition have goals count 5 points and defensive stops worth 1 point.

TECHNIQUE

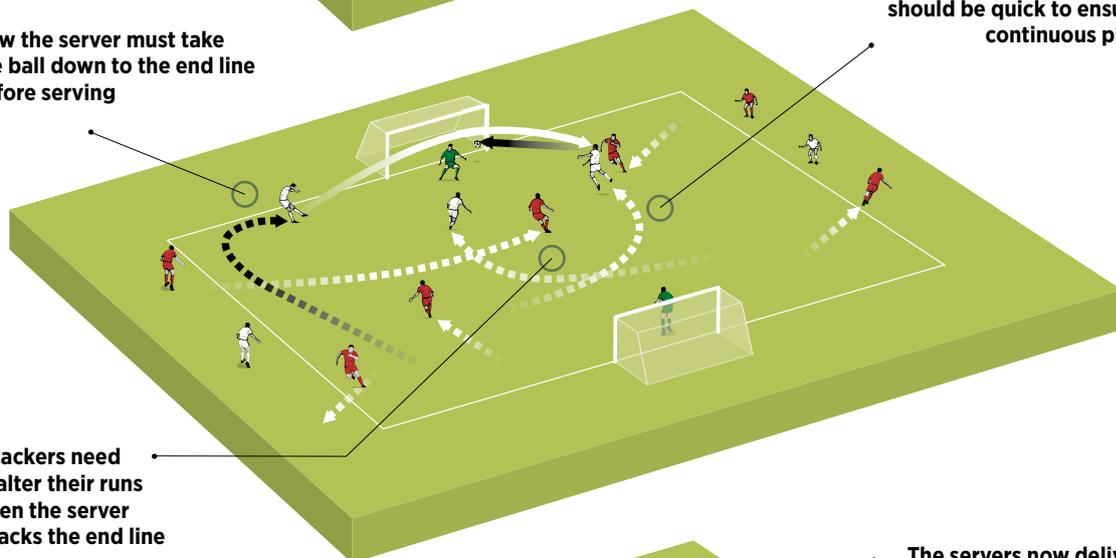
First time shooting including heading for goal.

Play is continuous with 3 attackers v 3 defenders at all times. 1 defender each time goes to the other end to defend again to make it 3v3



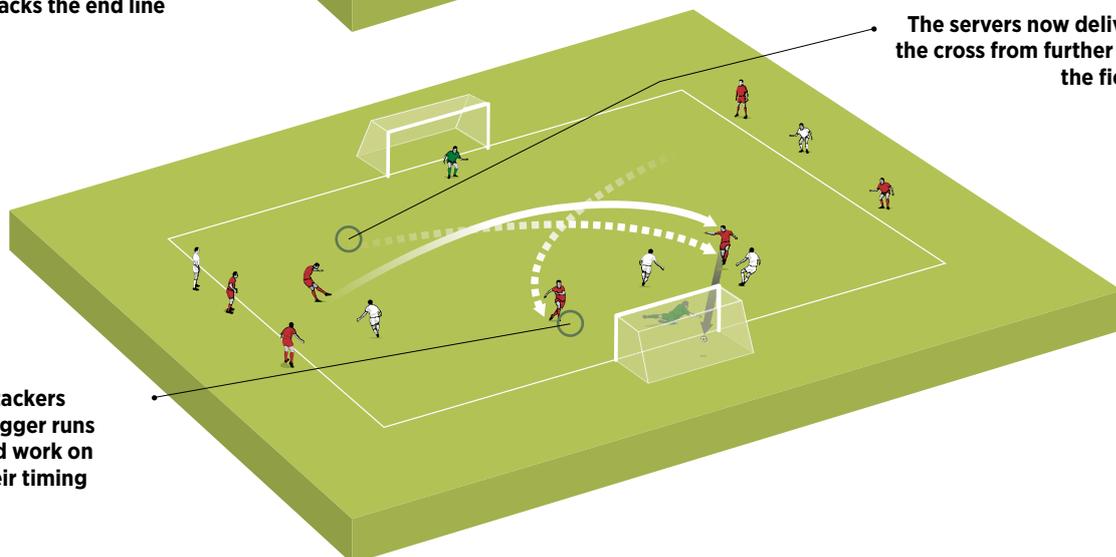
The red team (7 players) is attacking and the white team defending. The flank players are instructed to take the ball towards the end line to cross.

Now the server must take the ball down to the end line before serving



Transition of attacking players should be quick to ensure continuous play

Attackers need to alter their runs when the server attacks the end line



The servers now deliver the cross from further up the field

Attackers stagger runs and work on their timing

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Finishing 1 v The Goalkeeper

Competent players should be expected to beat the keeper in a 1v1. Make sure that's the case by rehearsing a 1v1 breakaway in this great activity

WHY USE IT

Games can be won and lost when a player makes or misses a breakaway 1 v goalkeeper. This activity will allow opportunities to get challenged breakaways versus the goalkeeper.

SET UP

Outside the penalty area, set up a 20x20 yard grid with one side on top of the penalty area. Play 4v4 + 1 plus goalkeeper.

HOW TO PLAY

Players play possession and after:

- a) 5 passes or more consecutively by one team, one player may enter the penalty area-the ball must enter first either by dribble or pass. Opposition can enter the penalty area after the attacking player enters to provide a challenge from behind or at an angle
- b) 4 balls through gates consecutively by one team-then the rules are the same as for a).

Progress by moving the 20x20 grid across the top of the penalty area to vary the angle of the 1 v goalkeeper. This is a competitive activity with a winner and loser. Note that the offensive neutral player can be the 1 v goalkeeper player.

TECHNIQUE

Passing, receiving, finishing 1 v goalkeeper.

Play in the 20x20 grid. Once the red team complete 5 consecutive passes they may enter the penalty area and go to goal.

The white team players cannot enter the penalty area until a red team player has. If the blue team win possession they attack

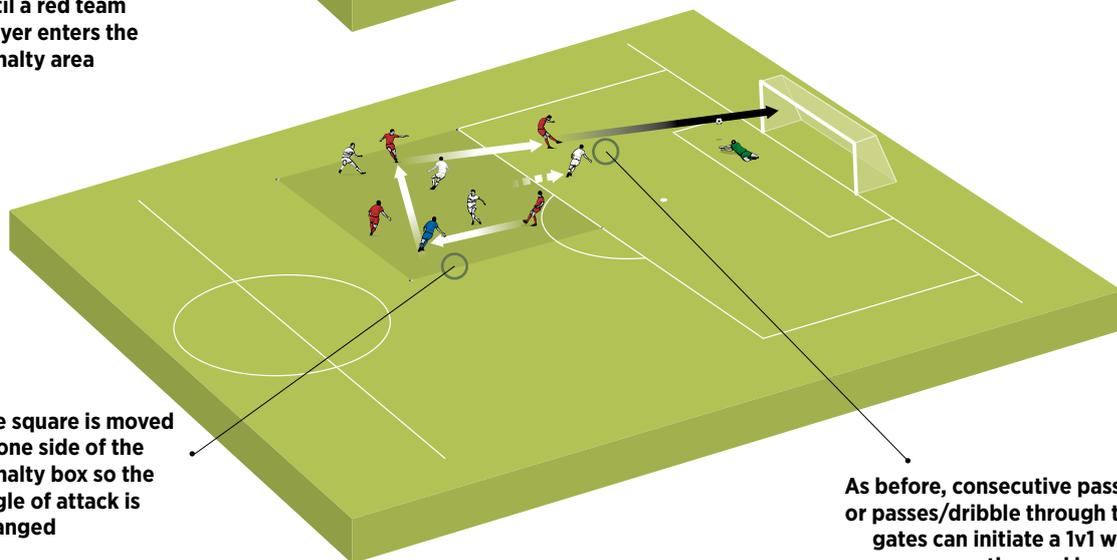
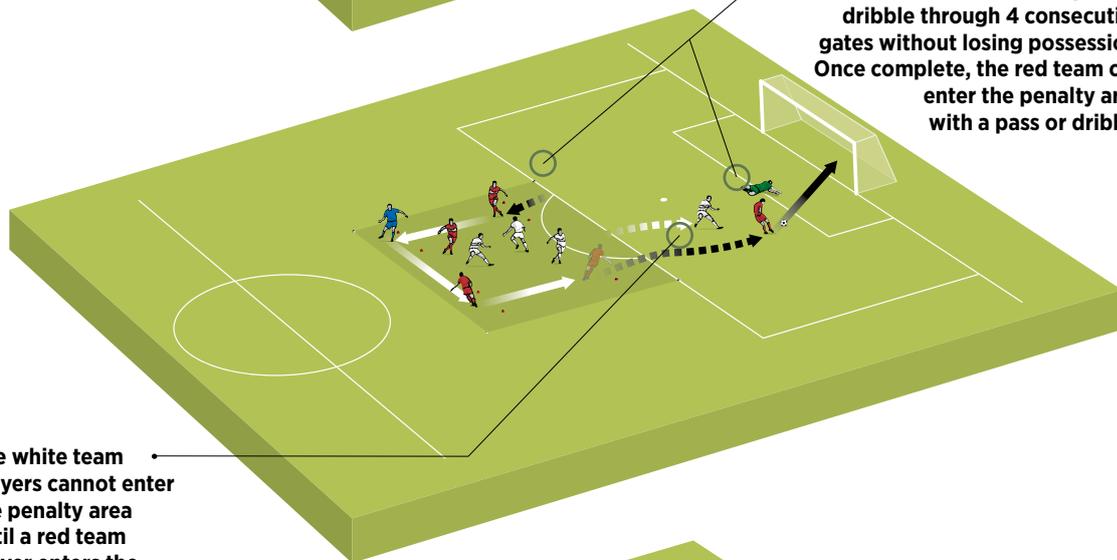
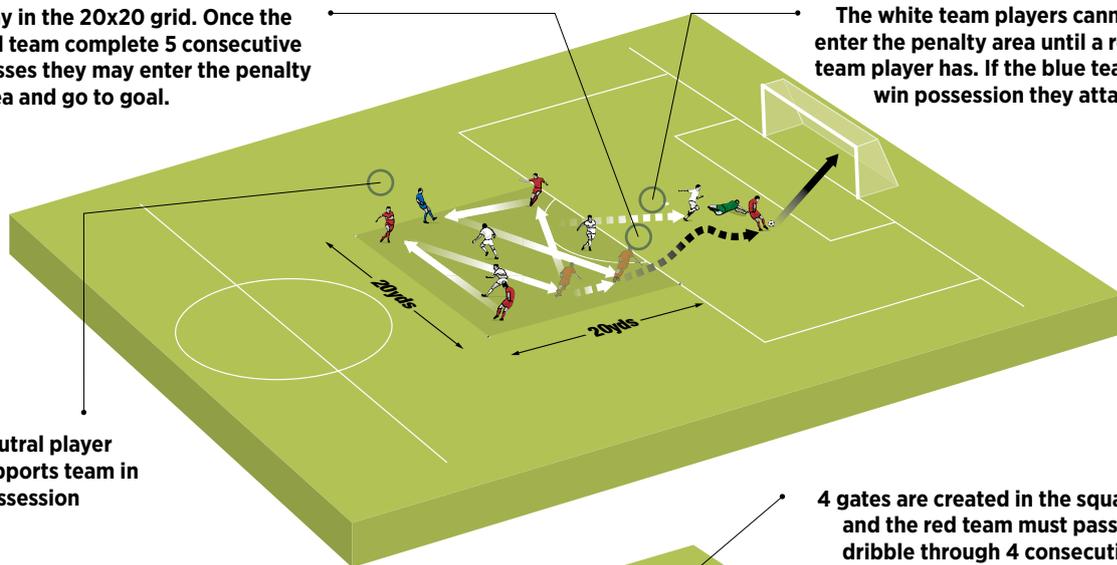
Neutral player supports team in possession

4 gates are created in the square and the red team must pass or dribble through 4 consecutive gates without losing possession. Once complete, the red team can enter the penalty area with a pass or dribble

The white team players cannot enter the penalty area until a red team player enters the penalty area

The square is moved to one side of the penalty box so the angle of attack is changed

As before, consecutive passes or passes/dribble through the gates can initiate a 1v1 with the goal keeper



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Multiple Ways To Attack Through Midfield

This session addressed attacking principles in team play, with specific focus on attacking through the midfield. Presented by Rene Miramontes



RENE MIRAMONTES

Director of Coaching, San Diego Crusaders Soccer Club

Rene has over 30 years professional coaching and playing experience. He is the Director of Coaching of San Diego Crusaders Soccer Club in California. A graduate of San Diego State University, Rene played 4 years of college soccer and then played semi pro in the San Diego area.

He has held various youth, school, college, professional and national coaching positions. During his distinguished career, Miramontes has coached prep school, served as an ODP district and regional coach, was an assistant head coach for the U.S. Olympic soccer team, was an assistant coach for Colorado Rapids, assists with the U.S. Paralympic National Soccer Team, a U.S. Soccer national staff coach and has sat on numerous MLS advisory committees.

Rene is a member of the national staff for NSCAA and a U.S. Soccer National Instructional.

In addition to his USSF "A" license, Miramontes was awarded an NSCAA Premier Diploma and was a recipient of NSCAA's National Coach of the Year.

Summary

In addition to addressing attacking principles applied to team play, Rene suggested that a subset of attacking principles exist for midfield players. Inherent in a midfielder's responsibility is the importance of being able to play on both sides of the ball – attacking and defending. A midfield player also has to have an acute ability to read the game and specifically, to determine the best strategy to outmaneuver the defensive organization. The midfield unit must establish a rhythm of play and be able to modify this rhythm as critical visual cues become available as defensive tactics are employed by the opposing team. Width and depth are crucial concepts for midfield players to understand, and a prime illustration exists when playing a diamond formation in midfield with attacking and defensive midfield roles and 2 wide players. The coach should work with midfield players on individual and collective responsibilities, and specifically developing an appreciation when to drive forward on the dribble, create combinations to play around or through the defense or recycle the play and change the point of attack to unbalance the defense. Another important factor in midfield play is the ability of players to win one versus one match ups and Rene was quick to point out that effective midfield players invariably win their match ups. Finally, Rene discussed the evolving role of midfield players as goal scorers and suggested that in the modern game, successful teams receive significant goal scoring contributions from midfield players.

René's focused on 3 primary roles of midfield players and outlined their specific responsibilities.

1. The 1st role discussed was that of the wide midfield player and the key responsibilities of creating width, finding seams between defenders and movements behind defenders as an individual or in combination play, provide crosses into the penalty box for oncoming forwards and to leave wide positions to attack defenders on the dribble.

2. The 2nd role is the attacking central midfield player. Responsibilities include, running at defenders with pace and guile, playing balls into the feet of the forward players, quick passing movements and interchanges with the forwards and shots on goal.

3. The 3rd role discussed was the holding midfielder player. Primary responsibilities include providing defensive cover for the attacking

midfield player, maintaining the shape of the midfield, providing support to wide midfield players and attacking players in tight situations, changing the point of attack by rotating the ball from one side of the field to the other, making forward runs late on the blindside and taking middle and long distance shots on goal.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Ian Barker

Q1: What are your thoughts on the debate that the classic number 10 is disappearing and hurting the development/creation of creative playmakers in exchange for more functional players? Fabian Banchiero

Very good question Fabian. I think it is a matter of perspective. I was a proponent of the classic #10 for a long time. I tried to build my teams around a #10 and still it can be done in the youth game. None the less, at the higher levels, the demands of the game call for more than 1 #10. As you know, the abilities, tactical requirements and athleticism in the game, is such that the role of the classic #10 has become a luxury. Simply put: The game is too fast for one player to only able to play on the attacking side of the ball. On the other hand I say that it is a matter of preference because I feel that (although not in the classic sense), the function of the #10 is divided amongst more than one. The perfect example for me is Barcelona. Who is the #10? Is it Xavi, Messi or Iniesta? Yet they all create and unbalance defenses. Each one is capable of master strokes in the game like in the times of the classic #10s.

Q2: How important is the consideration of attacking work rates vs defensive work rates when selecting your starting midfielders in a competitive match? Marc Campoverde

Work rates and willingness to work on both sides of the game is of vital importance. Just as important is the consideration of physical attributes. A player is more than willing to work on either side of the ball but if she/he doesn't have the "engine" to cover the distance and requirements of the position as dictated by the game, then it is all for naught. When selecting midfielders the technical abilities as well as tactical understanding of the moments of the game must be taken into account.

Q3: Is there a specific formation you prefer to get your mid field players into the attack? Jeremiah Johnson:

This is an interesting question Jeremiah: For me if the idea is to address the midfield, I would have to say a 1-4-2-3-1. In this system, the flexibility of how the 5 midfielders is integrated lends itself to many permutations and shapes in the attack. Consider the following options: 1. One can play a line of 4 that would match up the opposing back 4, while still using the 2 as supporting midfielders. 2. One can attack out of a diamond shape using a 1-2-1 formation in the final third. 3. One can also attack with a box in the final third by using a 2-2-2 (The Brazilian box), It is up to the coach's interpretation of the system as well as his/her imagination.

Q4: What can you do to transfer the principles included in this webinar U14+ to coaching younger players. Duron Jones

Excellent question Duron. My suggestion here is "Chunk It". Cut the concepts and activities into pieces that the younger players can digest. If you recall, at the webinar, I mentioned the idea of training using "Rondos". The Spanish tool for keep away, 4V2, 5V3 etc. An example of this can be seen in activity 1-C: 8v8 +2 Ns. You will see 2 very clear diamonds that are numbers up while maintaining possession. Here the midfield concepts of total team support, proper team/group shape, Rhythm, and penetration can be taught to the young ones in a very functional activity that can later on be built up to include more players and more principles of attack or midfield.

Q5: In a typical 1-4-4-2 formation, how much should the outside mid field player 'tuck in' when the ball is on the weak side of the field? Jeff Norman

As with any soccer, this is a matter of interpretation by the coach. I can tell you that as far as I am concerned, when the ball is on one side of the ball, the "weak-side" midfielder, should "tuck" in. 2 Reasons for this: 1. It keeps the line or team connected and 2. In the event of a turn over, it allows the team to achieve compactness quicker and more efficiently.

Q6: Rene mentioned specific players who exemplify the characteristics of different midfield positions. Could he repeat them again? Gary Spiro

I hope I understand the question. In the presentation I mentioned mainly 3 different functions in midfield each with unique responsibilities. The first one is the Wide Midfielder: Responsibilities: Create Width, Get behind Defenders (Individually or in Combo play), Provide Service From The Flanks, Run at Central Defenders, Finish. Attacking Central M.F: Responsibilities: Run At Defenders, Find The Forward's Feet, Combine With The FWDs, Finish. Holding M.F. Responsibilities: Maintain Shape in Mid Field, Switch The Point Of Attack, Support In "Tight" Situations, Make "Blind-Side " Runs in the Final third and Finally, Take Middle and Long Distance Shots.

Q7: In activity #1 - How much support are you expecting from your Defenders and Goalkeeper? Mark Stanton

I hope that I have the right slide, Mark. In the first activity the individual starting the activity is not the GK - it is the Coach. None the less, you can have the GK start the game. I like to start the activities because I can control what areas or players I want to play to as well as the pace of the activity but to answer your question, in the modern game the GK uses feet 7 times more than he/she uses hands, so this provides a perfect opportunity to integrate the GK in to the session at the same time that technical and tactical awareness is developed. Support from our defenders is crucial. The most important component in possession is numerical superiority. As you know, we must only have more players around the ball than the opponent, therefore as we get out of our back-third, we must now have those players join the midfield in order to maintain proper numbers around the ball to insure possession.

Q8: In activity #2 - How do you start the attack from the Goalkeeper and should the midfield players start? Mark Stanton

On this one, I defer to the coach. Each coach has specific objectives for the session therefore, game conditions as well as starting spots are the coach's domain. Personally, I like to replicate what the players will find in the game as much as possible. I don't see the midfielders starting play other than restarts so for me I rather the midfielders use the time and space to create proper team shape.

Q9: Rene, in your opinion, is the ability of a midfield player to read the game innate or can it be acquired during training? Antonio Superbia

What a terrific question Antonio. The latest trends in coaching suggest that in general, this can be taught. I agree with this concept. I believe that this is a matter of age appropriate and deliberate training of the players to accomplish this goal. There is no doubt that just as in school, some individuals will learn quicker and with more depth but in general, it can be learned. I also believe and - I will be the first one to rise my hand-That we confuse indoctrination (memorization) with education (understanding). An example of this would be to teach a wide midfielder to create width. We tell this player and we put him in situations that he has to get wide, when we have the ball over and over until he memorizes what to do, when we have the ball but does the player truly understand WHY he needs to get wide? Most of us present the players with the What, the Who, the How and the Where, but we seldom address the Why. If we, as coaches present activities that practically address the Principles of Play, then I believe the players will learn to read the game.

Q10: As a starting point, is it better to attack through wide or central midfield? Luis Swisher

For me, it is of the outmost importance to get the ball to the forward's feet. In order for me to do that I must create the space in the central track therefore, As a starting point, I like to attack through the wide midfielder. We must also consider what the game is showing us. If the opponent is allowing the path to the forward's feet straight away, then the starting point will be the center midfielder.

Q11: My team works hard on possession, building from the back and through our skilled midfield players. When we get the ball to our 2 strikers, all the patience goes out the window and they head straight to goal. What can I coach to avoid this? Chris Swope

I believe this is a matter of habits. I would offer 2 bits of advice Chris: 1. Truly define the role and function of your forwards. This should be a joint venture between you and the player(s). The player must be allowed to provide input in terms of their perceived responsibilities in the game. In the event that player and coach are not on the same page, then the coach must work his/her craft into convincing the players that the coach's approach is the best one. 2. Place the player in the environment that will allow for understanding of the needs of the game as well as repetition and specific coaching in order to replace the undesired habits for the correct ones. It all comes down to correct repetition and correct feedback.

Possession Game

This non-directional possession game provides a solid foundation for any possession-based session

WHY USE IT

This game allows players to get into the rhythm of the session in a competitive situation. It emphasizes good technique and good decision-making as far as keeping possession of the ball in the midfield area.

SET UP

Mark out a playing area measuring 40x60 yards (wider than longer).

HOW TO PLAY

Serve a ball to either of the teams.

The team in possession attempts to complete 6 passes without the opponents intercepting the ball.

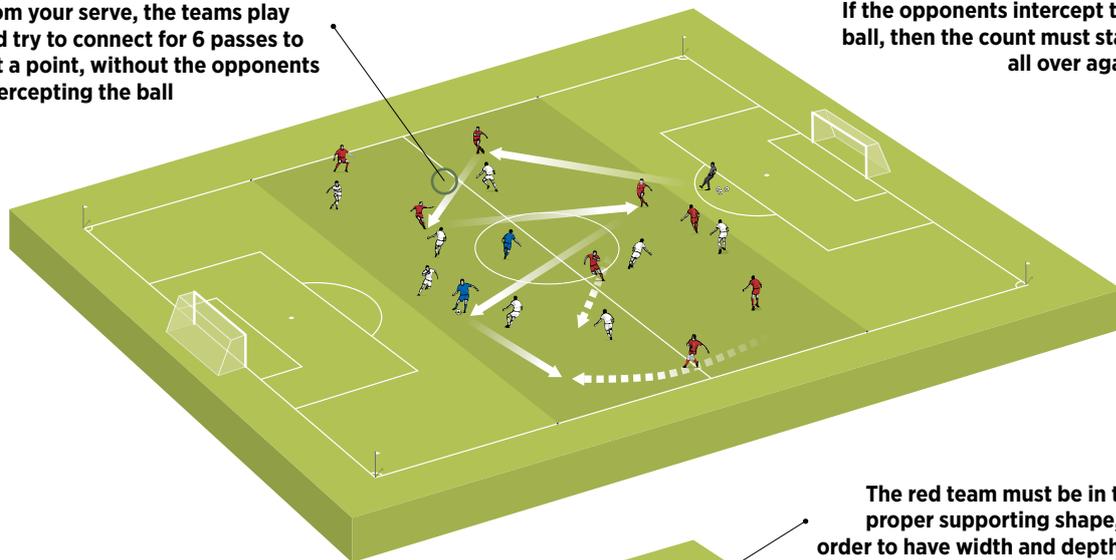
The teams have the support of the neutral players who have a 2-touch restriction. This is non-directional activity that emphasizes good team shape on both sides of the ball.

TECHNIQUE

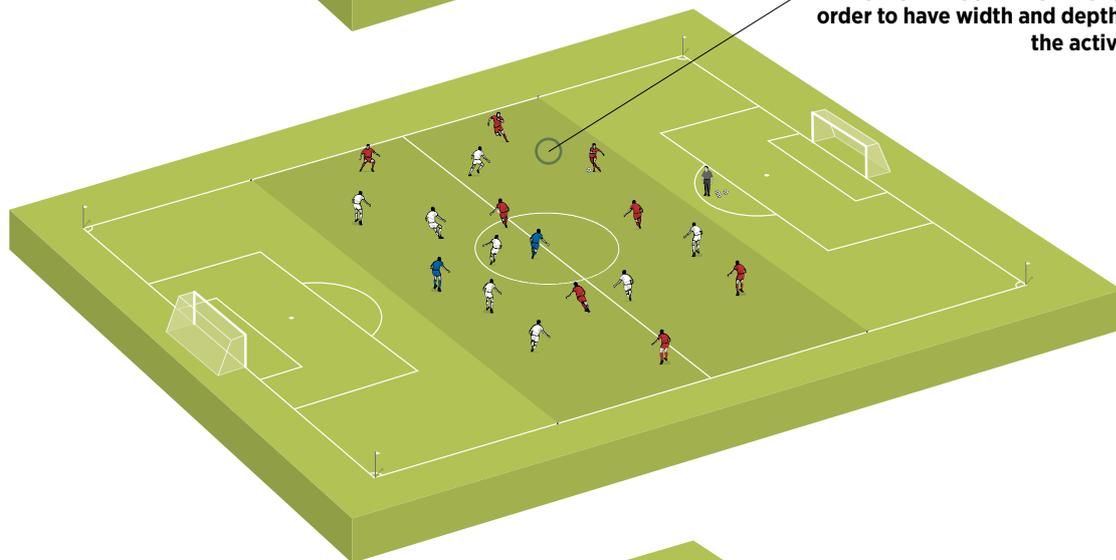
Good short and long passing and receiving of the ball. Good tactical awareness with proper support and switching the point of the point of attack.

From your serve, the teams play and try to connect for 6 passes to get a point, without the opponents intercepting the ball

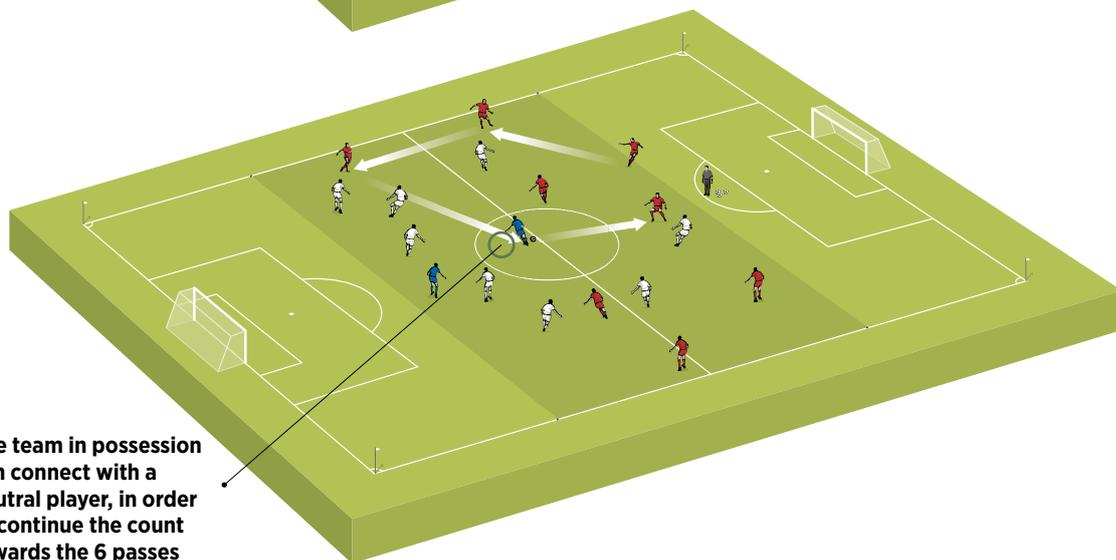
If the opponents intercept the ball, then the count must start all over again



The red team must be in the proper supporting shape, in order to have width and depth in the activity



The team in possession can connect with a neutral player, in order to continue the count towards the 6 passes and get the point



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Four Goal Game

Targets and restrictions in different areas provide an exciting challenge for players to overcome in this intense game

WHY USE IT

Once the team has grasped the basic ideas behind possession, the next step is to give it direction and rhythm. By dividing the area in zones you can give your players different touch restrictions that will force them to change the rhythm of play. This activity will also provide the players with targets that will also set the pattern of in-back-wide to switch play.

SET UP

Set up a 40x60 yard area and divide it into 3 zones. The players will have 2 touches in the middle zone and unlimited in the flanks. Also, set up 4 goals with flags in the flanks.

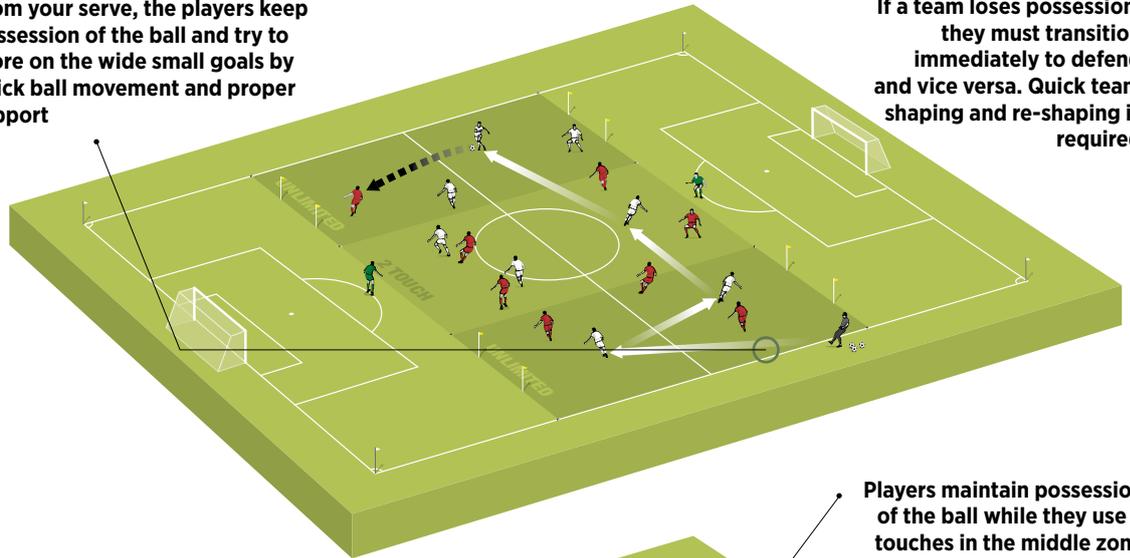
HOW TO PLAY

Play 8V8 using the keepers as targets. These targets can be used as support in the defending side of the game as well as a point of attack in offense. The players must dribble through the flags in order to get 1 point but if they use the targets in the buildup, they get 2 points.

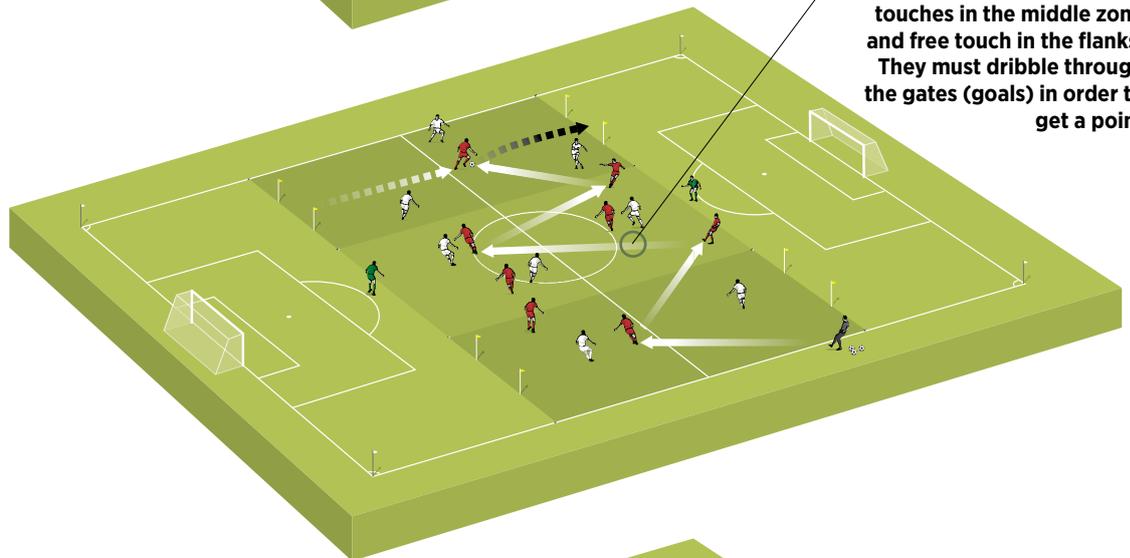
TECHNIQUE

This activity emphasizes the need to move the ball from side to side, in order to open up the middle of the field. It also allows for the use of the targets in order to switch the point of attack and attack the weak side. Players should recognize what is required of them according to their position on the field and the time in the game.

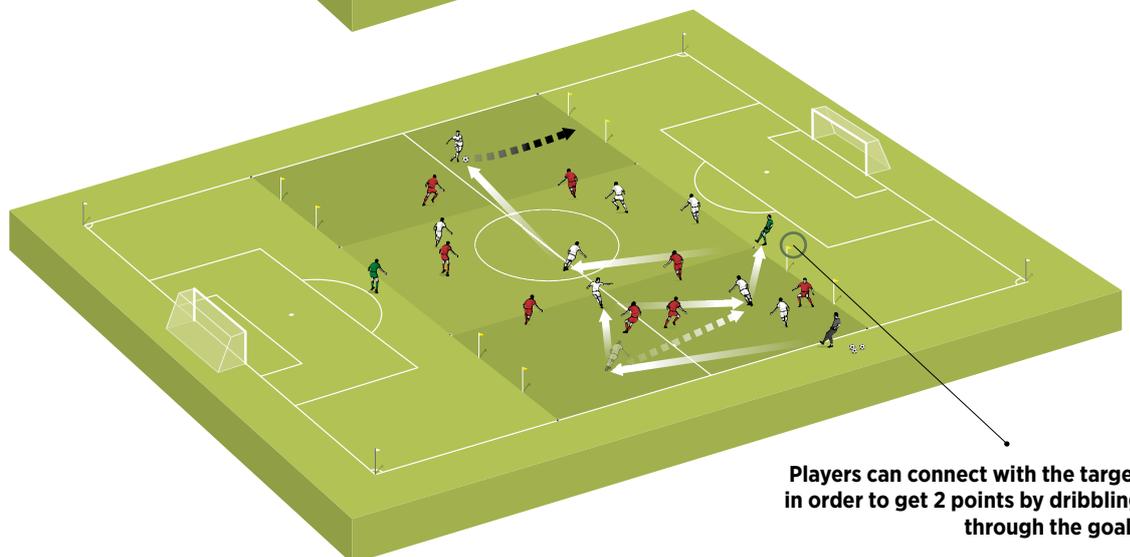
From your serve, the players keep possession of the ball and try to score on the wide small goals by quick ball movement and proper support



If a team loses possession, they must transition immediately to defend and vice versa. Quick team shaping and re-shaping is required



Players maintain possession of the ball while they use 2 touches in the middle zone and free touch in the flanks. They must dribble through the gates (goals) in order to get a point



Players can connect with the target in order to get 2 points by dribbling through the goals

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Support From Wide

Wide midfielders have to be switched on in order to get forward and support the forwards when the defense is penetrated. Get them rehearsed in this simple game

WHY USE IT

This activity incorporates the technical/tactical concepts of possession, while getting to the functions and responsibilities in attack of the wide midfielders

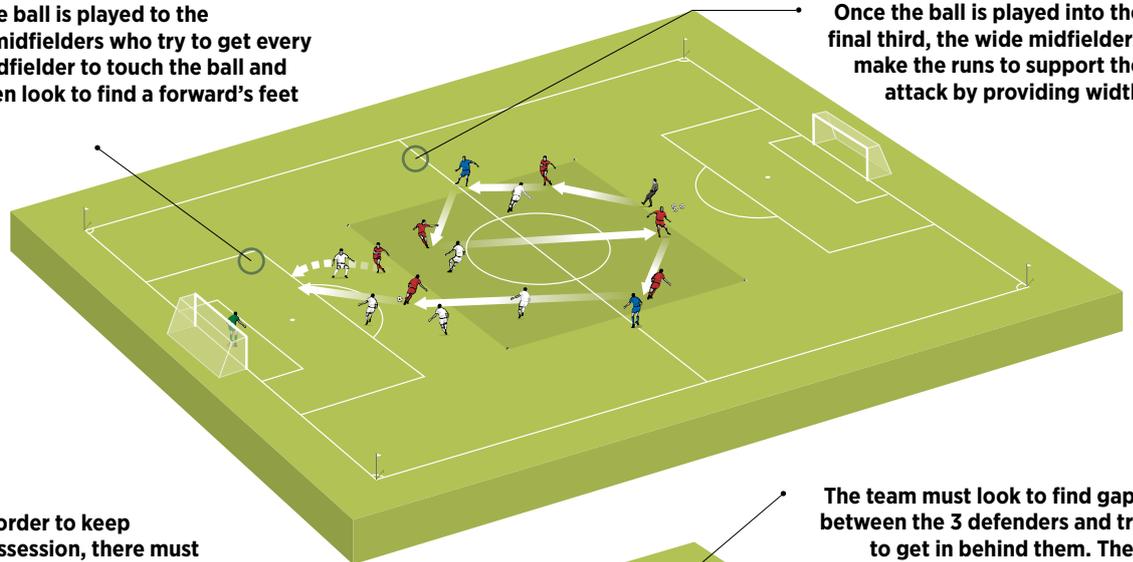
SET UP

In the middle third of the field, set up a 30x40 yard grid with 4 midfielders playing against 3 opponents plus 2 neutrals on the sides. In the final 3rd, set up 1 goal, a goalkeeper, and 3 defenders, playing against 2 forwards.

HOW TO PLAY

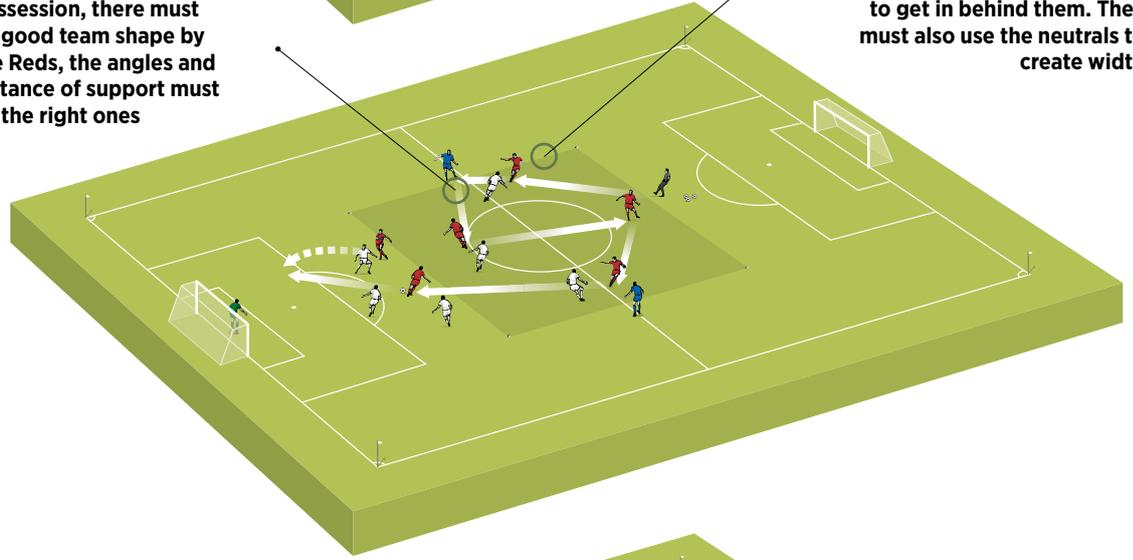
Play 4v3 + 2 in the grid with unlimited touches at first, then add a touch restriction. The neutrals, have 2 touch from the start. Once all the 4 midfielder's have touched the ball, then the team is ready to link with the forwards in the final 3rd. When the ball leaves the grid, then the 2 wide midfielders, join the forwards for a 4v4 in attack. If the 4 lose the ball in the grid, they must win it back immediately. If they lose possession outside the grid, they must retreat immediately. The defenders try to find the 3 midfielders in the grid. The reds get 2 points for every goal they score against the goalkeeper and the whites get one point every time defenders find the midfielders in the box.

The ball is played to the 4 midfielders who try to get every midfielder to touch the ball and then look to find a forward's feet



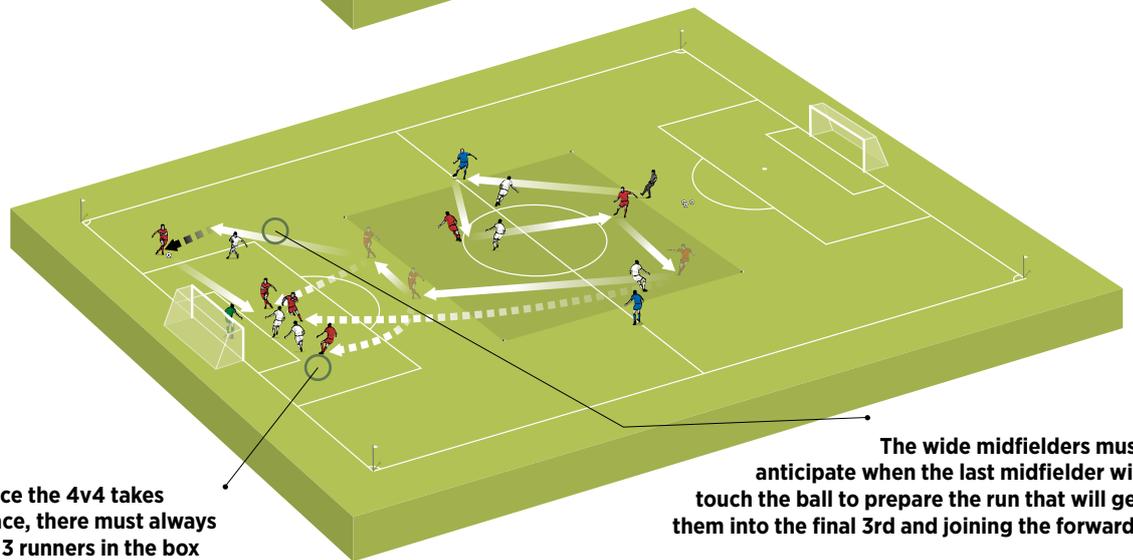
Once the ball is played into the final third, the wide midfielders make the runs to support the attack by providing width

In order to keep possession, there must be good team shape by the Reds, the angles and distance of support must be the right ones



The team must look to find gaps between the 3 defenders and try to get in behind them. They must also use the neutrals to create width

Once the 4v4 takes place, there must always be 3 runners in the box for every cross



The wide midfielders must anticipate when the last midfielder will touch the ball to prepare the run that will get them into the final 3rd and joining the forwards

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Attacking Centrally

Penetrating attacks through the middle can be devastatingly effective. If you can create wave-after-wave of attack you'll give the opposition centre backs no time to rest

WHY USE IT

This activity presents another option for attacking with the midfielders.

SET UP

In an area measuring 70x60 yards - or from the goal line to the edge of the center circle, arrange the teams so that the reds are in a 2:4:2 formation and the whites are in a 1:3:4:1.

HOW TO PLAY

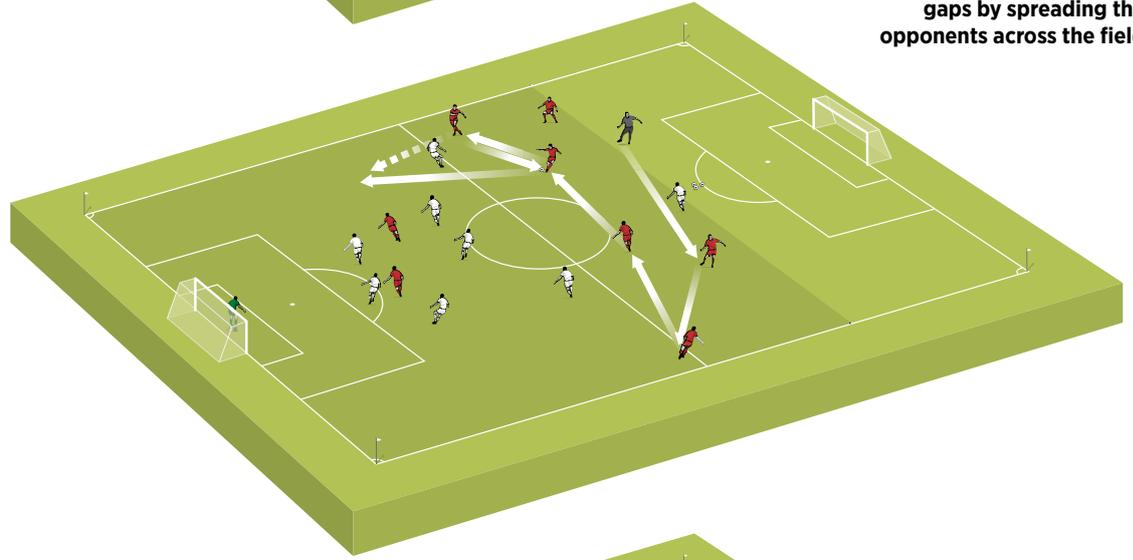
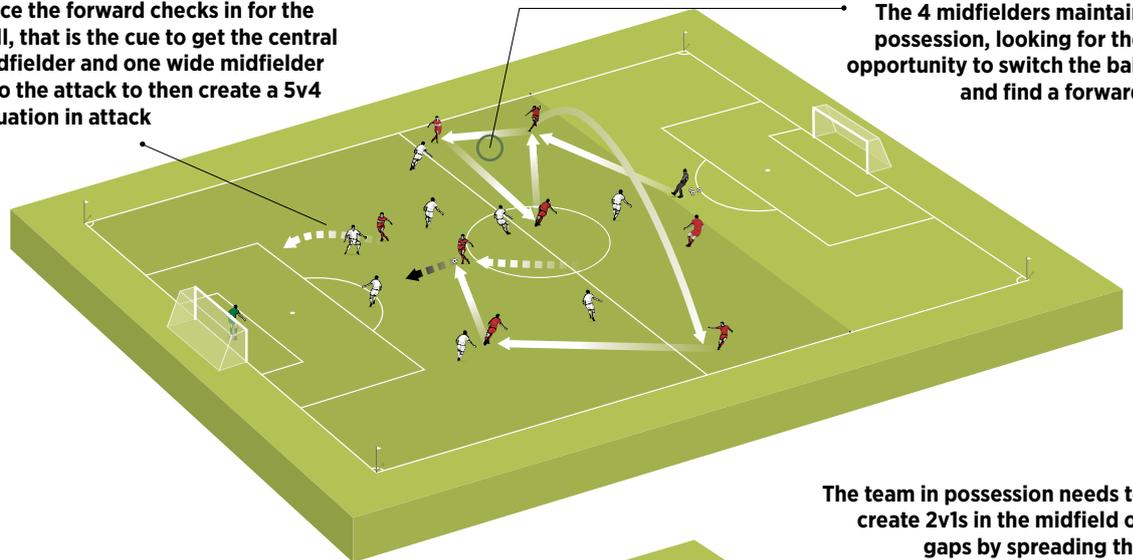
The game starts from you. The reds look to keep possession of the ball and make at least one switch in the point of attack. Once that is completed, they need to find the checking forward who will be supported by the central midfielder and a wide midfielder. Up to this point there is shadow defending from the whites. Once the central midfielder touches the ball, the game becomes live and the reds look to score. If the whites win the ball, they must find their forward in order to get a point. Later in the game, once some rhythm has been established, play a regular game with full pressure.

TECHNIQUE

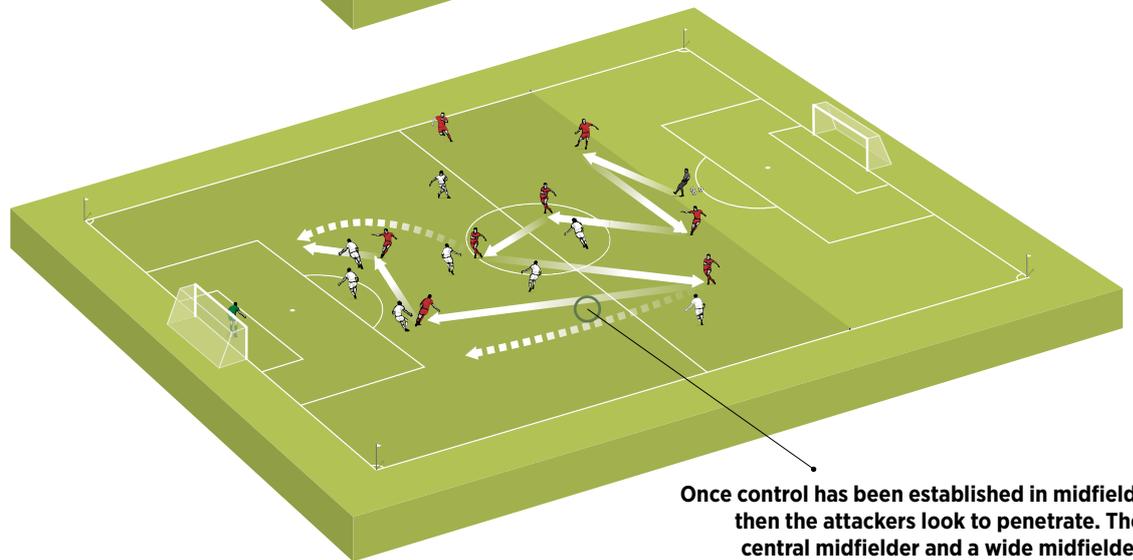
Solid passing and receiving both short and long passes. Good pace on the ball and the ability to drive balls on the ground. Good team shape and use of the neutrals to create width.

Once the forward checks in for the ball, that is the cue to get the central midfielder and one wide midfielder into the attack to then create a 5v4 situation in attack

The 4 midfielders maintain possession, looking for the opportunity to switch the ball and find a forward



The team in possession needs to create 2v1s in the midfield or gaps by spreading the opponents across the field



Once control has been established in midfield, then the attackers look to penetrate. The central midfielder and a wide midfielder support to get behind the defenders in a 4v4

Player movement
Ball movement
Run with ball
Shot

Mastering Transitions

In fast paced matches, transitions can be the difference between victory and defeat. Get your team working on both sides of the ball with this effective game

WHY USE IT

One of the principles of midfield is total team support. This implies attacking and defending at all times. This activity will set up the defensive structure of the team so that in turn, it will set up the counter attack.

SET UP

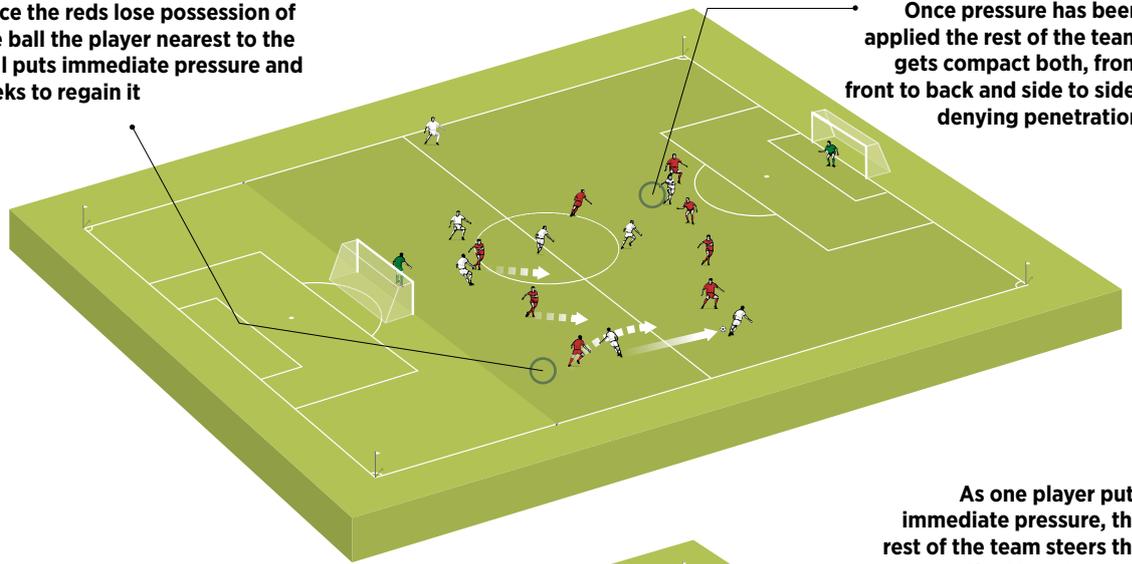
Place 2 goals in an area 70x75 yards or from the goal line to 15 yards behind the center circle, arrange the teams in the following formations: reds, 1:2:4:2 and the whites in a 1:3:4:1.

HOW TO PLAY

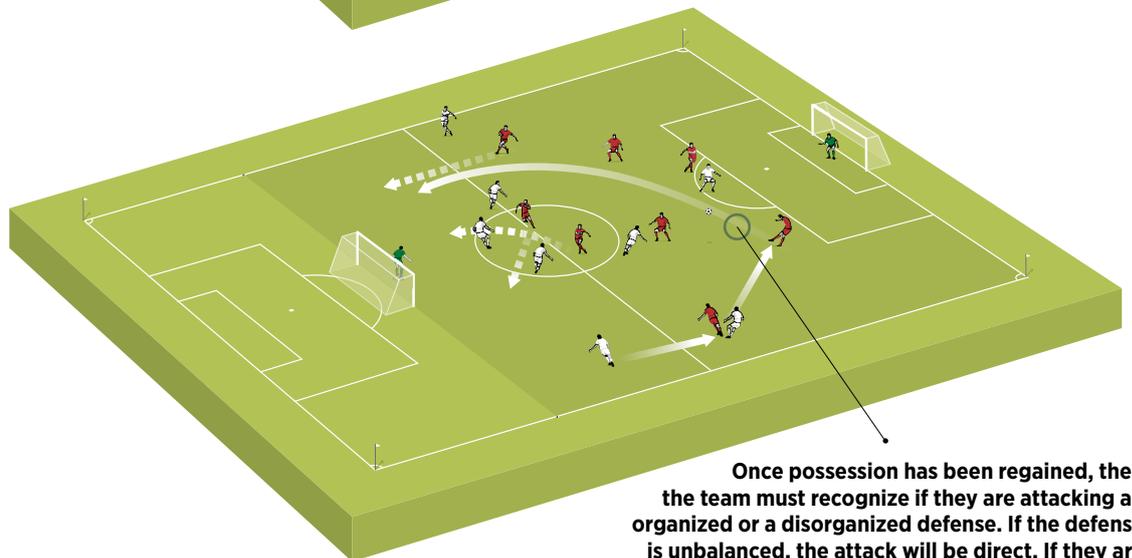
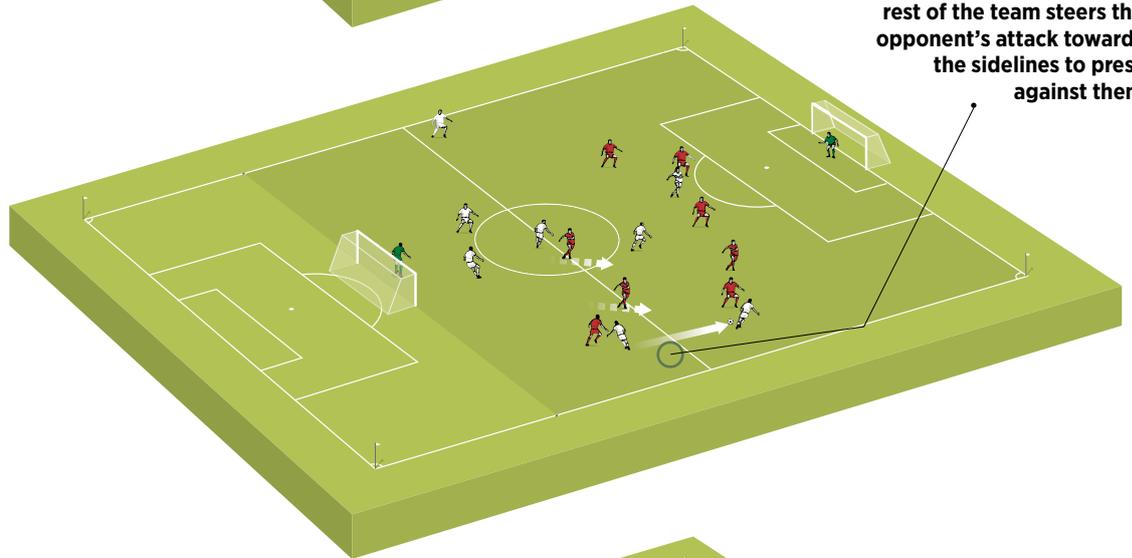
You serve the ball to one team from the sideline and a regular game is played. When the coach serves the ball, the Reds have 1 touch. When they lose the ball, the player that lost it, tries to recover it immediately. The rest of the players, get behind the ball and control the space around them at the same time that they mark the closest opponent.

Once the reds lose possession of the ball the player nearest to the ball puts immediate pressure and seeks to regain it

Once pressure has been applied the rest of the team gets compact both, from front to back and side to side, denying penetration



As one player puts immediate pressure, the rest of the team steers the opponent's attack towards the sidelines to press against them



Once possession has been regained, then the team must recognize if they are attacking an organized or a disorganized defense. If the defense is unbalanced, the attack will be direct. If they are organized, then, build-up is required

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Final Game: 11v11

Wrap it up with a straight-up game of 11v11 to see the different elements combined and your players' decision making tested in a match situation

WHY USE IT

The principles of midfield must be tested in a game. All of the previous concepts such as Total Team Support, Possession, Attacking Combinations, Positional Responsibilities, Finishing and Defending take place in this activity.

SET UP

Full Field, 2 goals, teams play out of a 1:4:4:2.

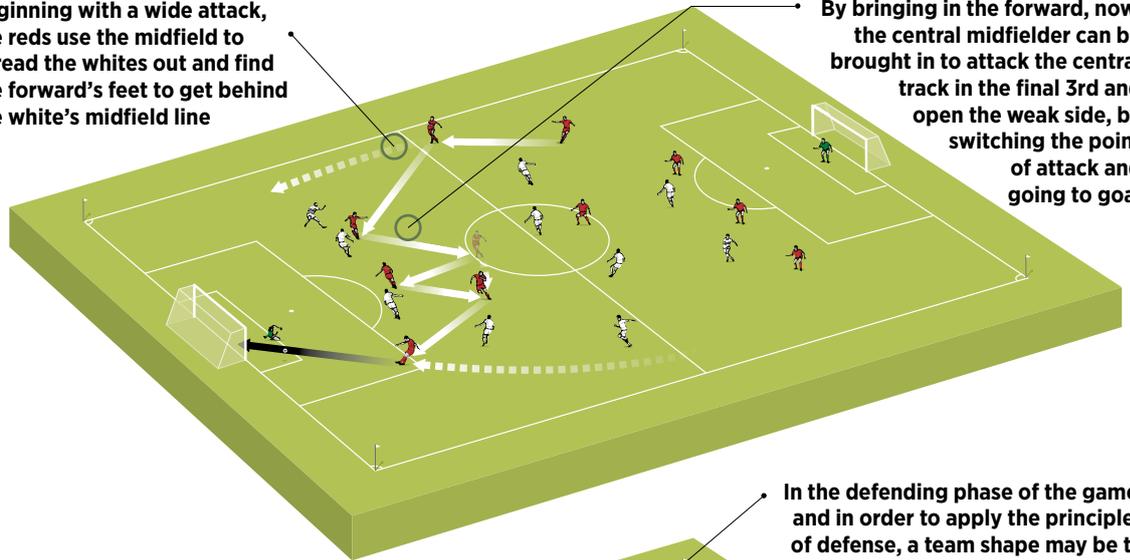
HOW TO PLAY

Regular game, all rules apply.

TECHNIQUE

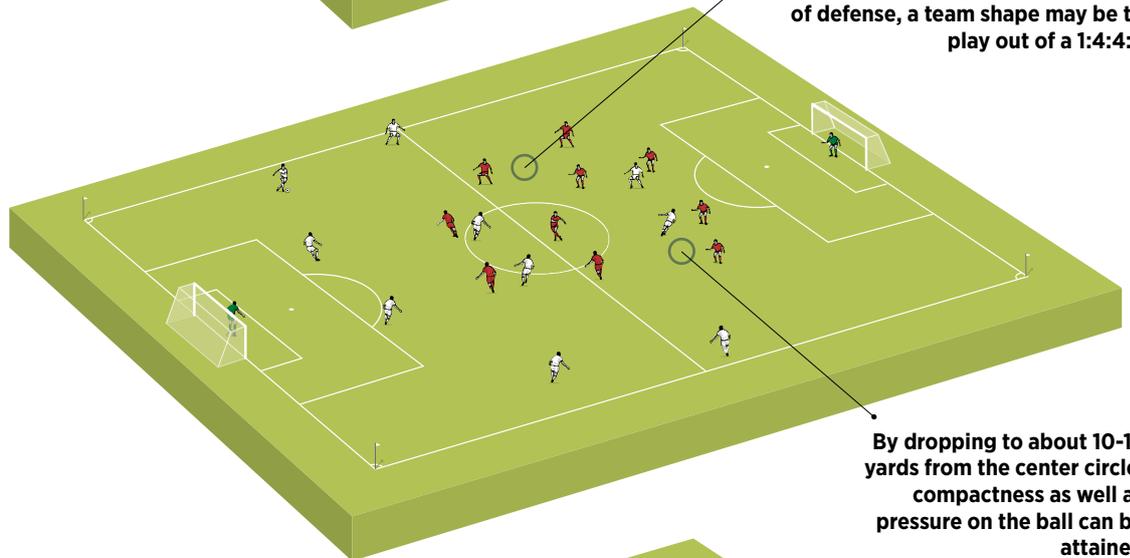
Good passing and receiving (long and short), good tackling ability. Transition into good team shape in attack and defense. Finishing.

Beginning with a wide attack, the reds use the midfield to spread the whites out and find the forward's feet to get behind the white's midfield line

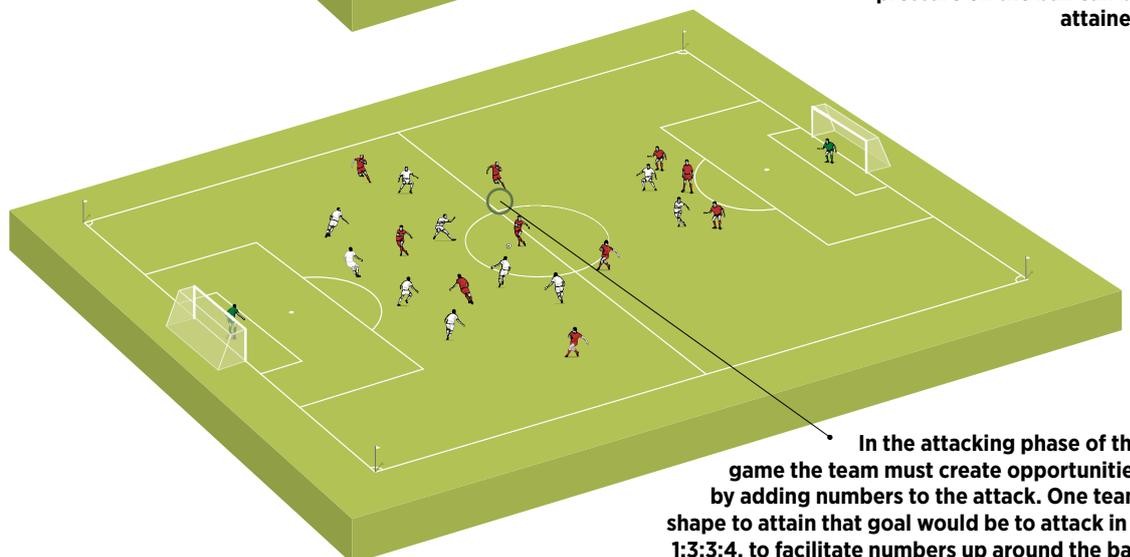


By bringing in the forward, now, the central midfielder can be brought in to attack the central track in the final 3rd and open the weak side, by switching the point of attack and going to goal

In the defending phase of the game, and in order to apply the principles of defense, a team shape may be to play out of a 1:4:4:2



By dropping to about 10-15 yards from the center circle, compactness as well as pressure on the ball can be attained



In the attacking phase of the game the team must create opportunities by adding numbers to the attack. One team shape to attain that goal would be to attack in a 1:3:3:4, to facilitate numbers up around the ball and create even numbers in attack

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

The Review Session

The Attacking Principles Webinar series concluded with a review of the previous 4 presentations delivered by Ian, Gwynne, Charlie and Rene. Presented by Robert Parr



ROBERT PARR

Director of Coaching, Arkansas State Soccer Association

Robert has been the Director of Coaching for the Arkansas State Soccer Association since January 2009. He holds a USSF 'A' license, NSCAA Premier Diploma, and a USSF National Youth Coaching license. He is also a Consultant for the NSCAA's Club Standards Project.

Robert has held various leadership positions in youth, college and professional soccer. In the youth game, Robert was the Director of Training in Austin, Texas for the club now known as Lonestar SC and an ODP coach in Georgia and Texas. His college experience includes the Women's Soccer Coach at Georgia College & State University and Men's Coach at University of Texas. And in the professional game, Robert was the Head Coach for the Puerto Rico Capitals FC playing in the WPSL.

Robert is an author and presents regularly at conferences and in webinars

The Principles

The 5 main Principles of Attack:

1. Penetration (get the ball forward & finish)
2. Depth (support ahead/behind the ball)
3. Width (support to the right/left of the ball)
4. Mobility (movement on/off the ball)
5. Improvisation (creativity)

You may recall that Rene discussed "finishing" as an additional principle. I always include finishing as part of penetration, since that is the ultimate objective, and the ultimate measure, of successful penetration. I think there is absolutely a case to be made, though, for adding "possession" as another principle. Depth, width, and mobility all help us maintain possession, but the act of keeping possession adds some other key elements to the game, as Spain and Barcelona have shown so effectively in recent years. Importantly, you can't control the tempo of the game unless you have the ball and can keep the ball. Again, Rene discussed the importance of establishing an attacking rhythm, especially given the fact that you can't run at maximum speed for 90 minutes. Possession is how you do this.

So, why do we even bother with defining and discussing principles of the game? As Ian mentioned in his presentation, it provides us with a common vocabulary. Principles are meant to be specific, yet flexible. This allows them to have well-understood meaning, yet also allow coaches and players to implement and express those principles in an infinite variety of ways.

By defining a high-level framework, we provide our players and coaches with a simple checklist of things to look for in the game. This approach greatly simplifies match analysis and also gives guidance to our players that helps them make better tactical decisions in what can be a pressure-filled and chaotic environment. Keep in mind that the soccer ecosystem is very fluid! Most of our players come to us having previously played for someone else, and most will eventually move on to play for someone else yet again. If we can establish a common vocabulary across teams, then we make it much easier for players to adapt in each new situation. This is surely an important aspect of player development. In short, principles give us the reasons WHY we should move or act in certain ways. It falls to coaches and players to get more specific in terms of WHERE and WHEN to do these things.

Methodology

Once we have a firm understanding of how we want to play the game, and how we want our team to look, we have to be able to transfer those ideas to our players. This is where methodology becomes important. There are a few things to consider here. First, the principles always relate to specific moments in the game. So, when we discuss width and depth, it is relative to the position of the ball. When we work on mobility, the selection and timing of our runs depends on how much pressure exists around the dribbler. Our options for penetration vary according to the arrangement of our tactical lines and the compactness of the opponent. Our preference for improvisation depends on how much reward we seek for any degree of risk.

Keep in mind that your choice of system or playing style doesn't change the underlying principles. However, these choices will affect which principles you emphasize and how you teach them. For example, if you prefer to play more direct, then you'll emphasize depth and penetration. If you prefer a two-touch possession game, then mobility and width will draw more of your focus. Our main tool for teaching is the way we set up and manage our training activities. If you take a standard game (such as 6v6 to two goals) and impose one or two additional restrictions, then you can change the specific points of emphasis dramatically, as we'll see again when we look at a few of the activities on the next few slides.

There certainly are other options to tweak, but I've listed the main variables here that we can adjust, which include...

- field shape/size/orientation
- starting position
- scoring methods
- #s up/down
- zonal (or channel) restrictions

Strikers – Charlie Slagle: Robert selected 'Tight Space Give and Goes' to illustrate his point.

To recap, we have a small group of players here who execute a give-and-go combination and then finish the sequence with a shot to the far post. The play then reverses in the opposite direction. The numbers are flexible, but some key considerations are:

- Keep things moving to get fitness training as well as technical/tactical training. Have plenty of balls available, and go for reps of approximately 90 seconds so that the intensity can be kept high.

- Although this is a fundamental stage activity (lacking pressure from a defender), you can use the competitive-cooperative structure to impose “pressure of performance” and keep things closer to game requirements in terms of the quality of the shots and the work rate of the players.

- The coach must also require that each sequence concludes with a shot -- do not let the players “bail out” just because of a poor touch. Focus on both the power and the accuracy of the shot.

- Recognize that the activity occurs in a tight space that corresponds to the central edges of the penalty areas. This translates into the requirement to perform a quick (one-touch) wall pass in a tight space to set up a shot, just as would be required in the match itself. Players rarely have the time or space to take extra touches or make longer passes in this part of the field in the game, so training must match those game demands.

Goalkeeper and Defenders – Gwynne Williams: Robert selected ‘Goalkeeper and Defenders Possession Game’ to illustrate his point

Here we see that we have a slightly larger playing area, a little bigger than two penalty areas, end-to-end. The vertical shape of this area will promote depth in the game. We also see that the use of two neutral players ensures we have numbers up for the team with possession.

The main coaching points here are:

- Have the keeper take two touches whenever possible, using the first touch to play the ball away from pressure.
- Make sure the keeper (and field players) move to support their passes.
- If a field player is facing backwards, play the ball back to the keeper so that the team can then play the ball forward.
- Make sure the keeper is actively reading the game to choose whether to distribute the ball long or short each time. Don’t always go long, or always go short.

This activity integrates the goalkeepers with the field players. We can’t just send our keepers off to train on their own all the time and expect them to perform well as a unit, either offensively or defensively! A lot of coaches (even very experienced coaches aren’t comfortable coaching keepers, because they didn’t play that position. We have to overcome these doubts and recognize that keepers are part of our team, too. Don’t just make it your assistant coach’s job to work with your keepers! Remember, you don’t have to be able to demonstrate a power dive to coach keepers in situations like this, and many others like it.

Midfield – Rene Miramontes: Robert selected ‘Four Goal Plus Targets’ to illustrate his point

Here, we note that the wide shape of the playing area promotes the principle of width. Rene has set up three vertical channels with different touch restrictions, and also has neutral players who can function in dual roles (representing either a supporting keeper or a target forward).

Coaching points include:

- Establish a rhythm, but also note where the rhythm should change. We want quick combination play in the center of the field, but want to encourage 1v1 attacking down the flanks.
- Use probing passes to bypass tactical lines and force deeper-lying defenders to have to step up.
- Look for diagonal support (triangles and diamonds)
- Make diagonal runs with the ball to commit central defenders and put stress on supporting (covering) players
- Find the feet of the target forward whenever possible.

Rene also discussed soccer as “a game of opposites”. This reminded me of the Brazilian expression that “soccer is like a poor man’s blanket -- if you pull it up to cover your shoulders, you expose your feet”. In this activity, this concept can be seen when the ball is played all the way to one wing, and the defenders have shifted over in response. The attackers

should look to switch the point of attack to get the ball to a teammate who has stayed wide on the opposite flank to create scoring chances.

Whole team – Ian Barker: Robert selected ‘10v10 to end zones’ to illustrate his point

This game is close to a full-field situation, but players are initially compressed in the midfield third. We use a “-2” technique to ensure that the attacking team always has numbers up, and the requirement to score by getting the ball into an end zone area enforces the principle of penetration. In this stage, we can focus on “putting it all together” and coach all of the attacking principles. We especially want to focus on the types and timing of attacking runs made by the players in this game. We also want to consider how the various principles relate to the different functional areas of the field. In general, players should focus on possession and building the attack in the midfield third, and then look for opportunities to penetrate and score in the attacking third.

As some possible progressions, we can easily add keepers and go to the full-size goals, or we could expand the midfield area to use the full width of the field. This game is very adaptable to whatever numbers you may have on your team.