

# 35 POSSESSION RONDOS

by Luca Bertolini



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*By*

*Luca Bertolini*

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Authors – Luca Bertolini  
Editor - Tom Mura  
Cover Art By - Barrie Smith



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## **Introduction: About Rondos**

We can link everything that happens in a soccer match to a rondo: passing, passing combinations, receiving, oriented ball control, one touch and two touch play, vertical play, wide play, inside/outside play, pressure, closure of passing lanes, coverage of a space, interceptions, playing rhythm, speed of play, individual transitions (when a player loses possession and when a player wins possession), change of positions between the players, exchange of positions among the players.

The finishing phase is the consequence of all these sequences; players' techniques and tactics to address these situations can be coached and improved through rondo exercises.

The efforts of the players during a match are not the same, as well as the playing sequences in which they occur. The efforts of the defenders are not the same of those of the midfielders or forwards. For instance, the forwards are distinguished by their speed, the midfielders by their resistance, and the defenders by their strength. If this is not completely true, it is true that every player has his own skills and features on the field, whatever their role in the starting line.

How does a coach organize training sessions so all the players train at their appropriate level and are well trained for their role to create a unique and ready to win group? A way to coach the players looking for the specific objectives of soccer must be found. Note that, by my side, this last statement can be right for first teams and not for youth academies.

Group planned sessions (defenders with defenders, midfielders with midfielders) might be useful from a physical point of view and the players would have something more in common maybe, but they don't reproduce the real game situations; we can work only on team tactics with this kind of organization.

Individualized training would require a coach for each player, which is unimaginable. Again, the solution is to have a coach for each sector of the team; many top clubs work this way nowadays.

Soccer's physical efforts, jumps, races, spins, appear discontinuous and unpredictable. If we do not coach the players this way, the physical efforts are repeated sequences and the rest times are different from the ones occurring in real games. They are usually related to speed and strength, they are short, intense, repetitive, and to be maintained at the same level during the whole game. Again, how to coach them?

Training with the ball provides the players, individually and collectively, with the necessary requirements and skills to be competitive, always paying attention to their physical work, if we talk about adult level first teams. Since the goal of a physical activity is to improve the effectiveness of training and the most important skills and qualities of the player are technical and tactical, then we may say that the technical and tactical skills and efforts with the ball improve physical work and efficiency from the perspective of the real game.

Which are the practices to summarize all those coaching points? The Rondos inside small-sided spaces in relation with the number of involved players.

## **The History of Rondos**

In 1960, a Spanish coach named Laureano Ruiz invented the rondo. Rondos were simply an exercise or a game where the group in possession outnumbered the defenders (e.g. 3v1, 4v1, 5v2, etc.). He can be considered the inventor of Barcelona Universe. His six seasons during the '70s as Barcelona youth coach were the most important for the club Masia creation.

Ruiz's 1960's rondos remain foundational for the modern possession style of play; maybe of all possession style of play, not only for Barcelona. Ruiz believed that a player who performs well in rondo had all the tools to become a professional player.

Barcelona brought Ruiz to the club in 1972 as head coach of Barcelona's Juvenil A. In those days, Barcelona was all about tall, fast, and physically strong players; short players were not welcome. He then started to develop small, technically skilled players, and rondos were at the core of his training program.

Before Ruiz, the search for success came through the accumulation of titles, but he asked Barcelona to follow a philosophy and a faith even before achieving a title; everything started after a defeat of the oldest youth academy. "We have to do something, we cannot allow it," the president of those seasons, Agustí Montal, told Rinus Michels, father of "total football" and coach of the first team.

Laureano Ruiz started from the choice of players--the predominant feature had to be technical and not physical; he was the first to prefer talent. Secondly, he worked on training methodology: no athletic sessions and only exercises with the ball. Playing with the ball allowed the players to refine the technique and to improve athletic endurance with more intense sessions at the same time. So he invented the rondos, games without a finishing phase but with dribbling the ball through a gate to score a goal, and games with only vertical ball dribbling. Third choice was the team shape 1-4-3-3. So every player was educated to play as the first team in order to grow talents the same way from an early age.

In the years after Ruiz left Barcelona, the club continued to use and expand his training methods, incorporating them into Johan Cruyff's "dutch total football" philosophy. Cruyff and Barcelona built a youth academy that produced technically skilled footballers through the years like the latest ones: Xavi, Iniesta, Fabregas, Pedro, and Busquets, the core of a dominant Barcelona team under Pep Guardiola.

Cruyff's dream team and Guardiola's tiki-taka are just consequences of Ruiz's job during those seasons.

## **What is a Rondo?**

There are two fundamental parameters in a soccer game: space and time. The space that the players are given in each situation of the game and the time that they have to fix the issue, both from individual and team tactical point of view.

Players are good players because of their individual skills and of their effective interpretation of the moves before any game situation development. Why? Because the space and the time while being in possession and the recovery of the ball while defending are understood and exploited involving other players and opponents.

During a soccer match there are a lot of "playing questions" a player must answer quickly (time) that are related to the space of play; these answers are generated by the ball, teammates, and opponents. These relationships of space and time must be coached.

Recovery of and the loss of the possession can be considered as the beginning and the end of the offensive or defensive processes. Many attacking or defending situations are missed due to individual failures or team tactical mistakes. If the moves end with a shot on goal or with the recovery of the ball, it is because of the technical accuracy of the player or tactical organization of small groups near the ball.

Whether the cause of mistakes is a consequence of individual quality of the player or forced by the opposition, it is clear that the foundation of training is to give the players a high level of technical skills to ensure the possession of the ball under pressure or to recover the possession through the pressure against the opposition.

Rondo is a training game with the numerical advantage for the possession players or team and it is played inside small-sided spaces, usually squares, rectangular, or circular spaces.

The main objectives are to keep the ball first of all and then to keep it away from the defenders, playing possession combinations with high rhythm and speed. The defenders work on pressure timing, closing of the passing lanes, individual duels in the middle of the space, and the recovery of the ball.

From this point of view, there are two kinds of rondos:

- possession rondos, where the defenders can recover the possession, but the sequences end and restart with inverted roles. Or the roles are changed after a fixed amount of time.
- transition rondos, where the player who wins the possession changes the role with the player who loses the possession but the sequence doesn't end and it goes on through a link or a neutral player.

Rondo is not a simple possession exercise as the players are placed inside a pre-set space or along a line of the set-up and they don't play all over the structure. Rondos are about how to keep the possession under pressure, to develop technique and how to pressure to recover the ball being outnumbered.

As the numerical advantage is ensured for the players in possession, rondos can be developed into shooting exercises or sequences as the last level of a training progression.

## **How to Practice Rondos: the key points**

These are the key points to organize, to practice, and to correct a rondo exercise:

- Small-sided space: rectangular, square, circular, grids, or any needed shape
- Players must have a specific position inside and outside the shape, but they don't play all around
- Give the players a specific role or exchange the roles among them
- Size of the shape must be related to the number of players and the objectives of the exercise
- Balls shall be always available next to the playing area
- Any sequence must have a time to practice and a time to rest related with the objectives of the exercise
- Fix a passing and receiving rhythm; it is decisive for the success of a rondo exercise
- Stay on the balls of the feet with an open body shape and be ready to receive the ball from any side or forward direction
- Pass the ball to any side, forward or backward
- Pass forward if possible; those are the killer passes to score
- Pay attention to the game
- Look for a high level performance
- Speed of thought
- Speed of play
- Have fun and bring energy to the group. A player who is having fun trains harder
- Underline the great passes and defensive plays
- Creativity and teamwork must go together



## **What are the benefits of coaching a player with rondos?**

### **Speed of thought related to the number of touches:**

Players must think very quickly during a game as well as during the rondo exercises, as the ball is passed and received very quickly. Rondos can help the players to understand when to play quickly and when to put their foot on the ball and slow the rhythm down depending on how close the opposition player is.

Players get between 20 and 40 touches in 5 minutes. So, if a player is coached through rondo exercises, he must think and play with high rhythm many more times than in an 11 v 11 match; for this reason he is supposed to be ready enough when he plays matches.

### **Technique, Mobility & Agility:**

The players are asked to be skilled at a good level to keep possession during a rondo exercise sequence; the ball moves very quickly in a rondo and the players need to execute very fast as well. Rondo does not build skill quickly; these exercises improve the skills with an already good basis. If the players must work fast, their motor, mobility and agility skills are improved at the same time.

It's easy to fix how many touches players can take as a coach, but by using rondos, 1 or 2 touches are enforced without any rule. Playing in tight spaces forces the players to have a good first touch and also to realize if they need to take a first touch away from an opponent. Players are also asked to exercise the movement opening up the passing lanes for their teammates. Passing, receiving, and moving become habits thanks to these repetitions.

### **Team tactics:**

Rondos can be considered a first team tactical work during the possession phases, as the players with the ball are always more than two and with numerical advantage.

Coaches ask their players to move constantly and through rondos they will be used to moving, whether it's 2 yards or 10 yards. This also helps the players with the understanding of passing lanes, where to find them and how to move into them to give a teammate a passing option.

Using rondos in training sessions can help players to understand when, where, and how to overload an area to keep possession or to exploit a weak area or side among the opposition defenders.

When the defending players are two or more, we can consider the rondos as first team tactics work for the defensive phase of play. Basically, the understanding between the players is very important, as they begin to work as one unit.

### **Problem Solving & Creativity:**

Rondos test the player's skills to problem solve the entire time as they play fast and with high rhythm. The players in possession must be creative to break down the opposition pressure or a defensive line. They are always under strong pressure in possession and they must be organized to recover the ball.

Not all the passes are perfect and rondos can help the players to learn how to improvise if a pass is short or played harder than expected. As a result, most Barcelona Academy players are able to pass with any surface of their feet or their bodies; these skills are built up through the rondo exercises inside small-sided spaces.

**Competition and Have Fun:**

Rondos are always very fun for the players and they make the practices healthy competitions to train at high intensity and rhythm. The skills to keep possession of the ball in tight spaces against strong pressure of the opponents can be useful for any team even if they are not Barcelona.

**Physical Conditioning:**

With rondos, a team may work on anaerobic resistance by varying the space, time, and number of players involved, and even on specific soccer stamina.

**How the Rondo e-books collection is organized**

Rondos are not only possession games--they can help players to understand how to change their positions, how to exchange positions between two players and among more players, how to play the transitions to attack and defend. They can help the players to be unmarked before finishing as well.

This collection is then divided in three volumes:

- The first volume is about Possession Rondos
- The second will be about Transition Rondos
- The third one will be about Finishing Rondos

## **Possession Rondos**

A possession style of play is synonymous with teams like Barcelona, Villarreal, and the Spanish national team, and rondos are a main part of their training methodology. Anyway, it's important to understand that the possession style of play is not just a "passing, receiving and passing" sequence, first of all.

When Barcelona is playing short back and forward passes in the middle third, it's not just to reach great complete passing stats; the aim is always to move the opposition, to create space for a pass or to exploit a tactical weakness of the opponents.

The possession style means try to take control of the match against the opposition, both during attacking and defending phases of play. The aim is to keep the ball while setting up tactical plans or positional attacks, rather than to leave the ball to the opposition.

Possession doesn't mean to pass wherever the options are. The first thought is always to pass and run forward or to dribble with the ball forward; when these options are not possible, ask the players to pass quick and as close as possible as they have the ball.

"Without the ball we are a horrible team. So we need the ball," said Guardiola in a conversation about Barcelona's smaller physical size and technical advantage against the opposition.

Guardiola said in a conversation about the philosophy of Barcelona and the youth academy, "What I learned here is that everything starts with the ball and ends with the ball. Sometimes we forget that it's a game of 11 v 11 with one ball. We try to keep this ball, we try to play with the ball; we try to make everything with the ball. This is what we learn when we started as children here."

"If you dribble forward to overload an opponent, to create numerical advantage and to finish, it's ok; but if it's not possible, pass the ball immediately and pass it forward," Guardiola said in a conversation about dribbling and passing the ball.

The idea is to do everything with the ball. If your team is comfortable in possession you can defend by keeping possession and circulating the ball around; but you can also keep possession in order to wait until players are in the correct position to attack. The possession phase can be useful to move the opposition and to create space.

Everything is about the ball; then everything is about possession, passing, and receiving.

Which are the main types of passes?

- **First Line Break/Pass:** pass to the teammate next to you. Easiest pass to make in rondo as it doesn't require a wide range of vision.
- **Second Line Break/Pass:** the pass will bypass the teammate next to you but it doesn't split defenders. The second line pass requires a little larger passing vision; it's more difficult than the first line pass.
- **Third Line Split Pass:** this is the pass that splits the defenders through the middle. It requires skill, creativity, vision and timing of play. In soccer, the ultimate goal is to get the ball forward and score. Third line split passes help to develop this skill.

Rondo is then a useful training method to develop the possession style of play; it's not the only one, but it may be the best one. To keep possession safe means to play safe passes (forward, backward or sideways); the safest kind of passes are short passes. But even a short pass must have a purpose.

Rondo is not useful when a team uses a more direct or counter attacking style of play, as there are better training sessions to teach the players these kinds of styles of play. Pressure phases are always useful to win the ball and make the possession phase safe, but not to counter attack or play long passes.

The pitch size of rondos must be adapted to the level of the players, but as they become more advanced, the grid sizes become more significant; they are supposed to become smaller to improve the individual technique or bigger if the goal is physical. The grids can have varying sizes, from 8x8 yards to a half pitch, depending on the skill level of the players or the aspect of play they are working on.

When using a possession style of play, most of the passes are usually 12 yards or less. Using rondos gives the players practice playing passes at this distance under pressure. Teams like Barcelona and Villarreal want to play passes of 10 yards or less, as all the players without the ball can press the opponents with the ball intensely to win the possession.

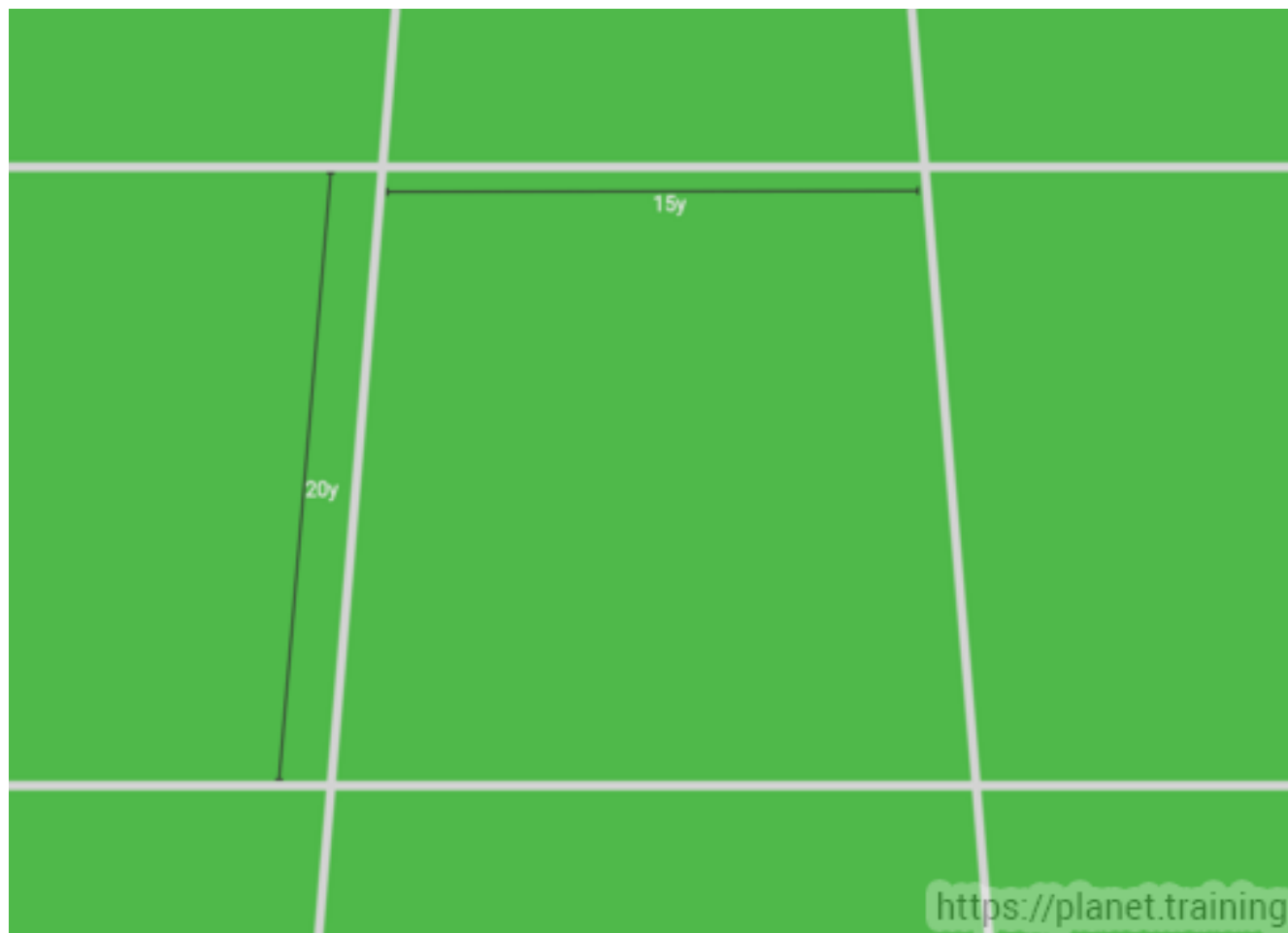
One of the important aspects of the rondo training sessions is to organize them (set-ups and sequences) with the style of play and tactical plans in mind. The shape of players' positions should be the same as during the game, so that your players can recognize them and react to the situations as they have already practiced.

There must be always players "in the middle" for the team in possession; numerical advantage outside and with equal number of players or outnumbered in the middle. Neutral players can be used as well.

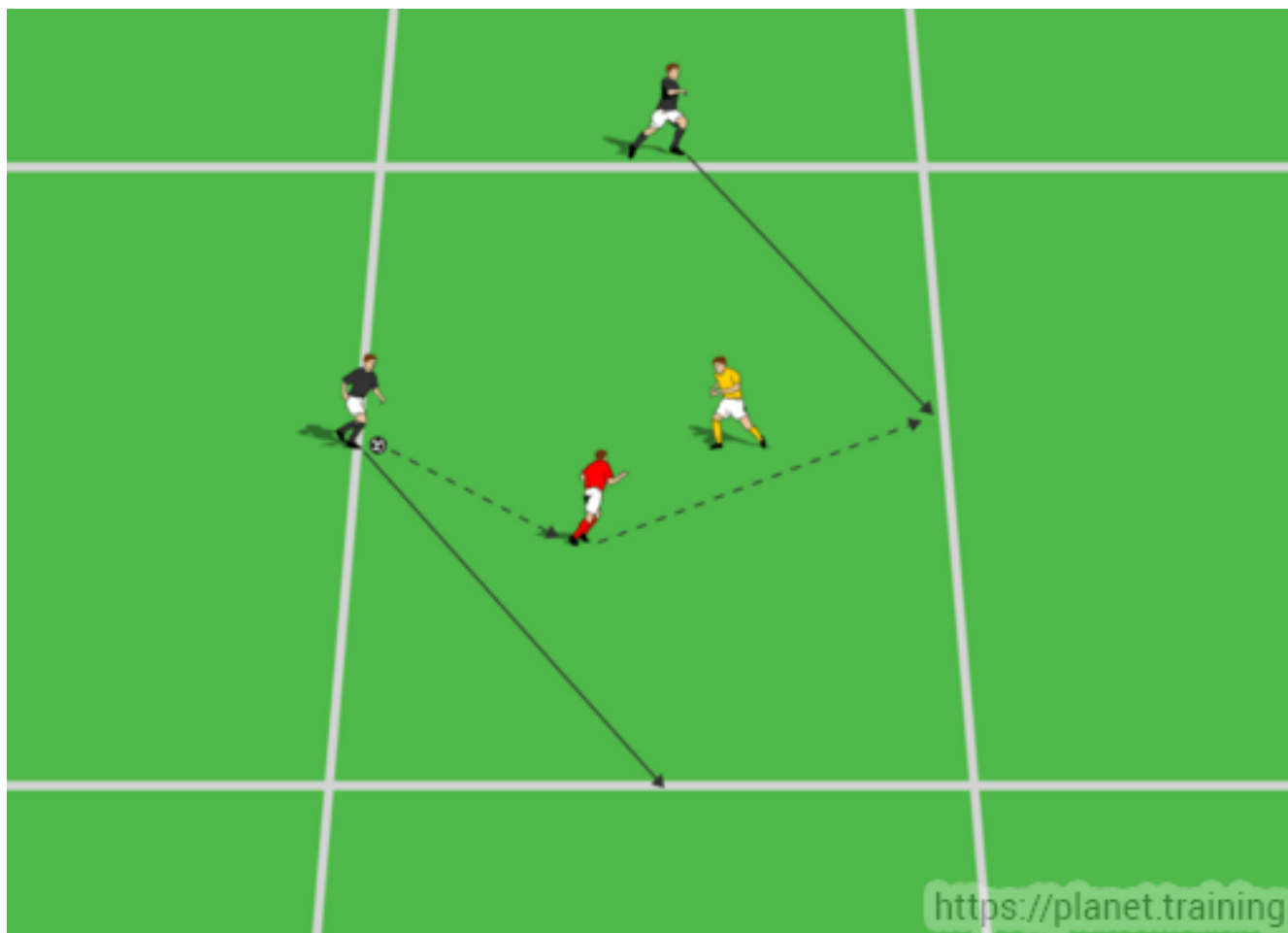
The most popular basic rondos are: 3v1, 4v2, 5v2 and 6v3 and there are many possible set ups; in this first eBook, rectangles are used vertically and horizontally to coach the players to keep the possession passing wide, deep, diagonally and in the middle toward dropping back and running forward teammates.

**Note: possession decisions to wait and find the right time and space to carry out the requirements are implied in all the exercises.**

## Single Grid Rondos



### Exercise 1: 2 + 1 v 1 to play forward and move wide (1)



#### Sequence

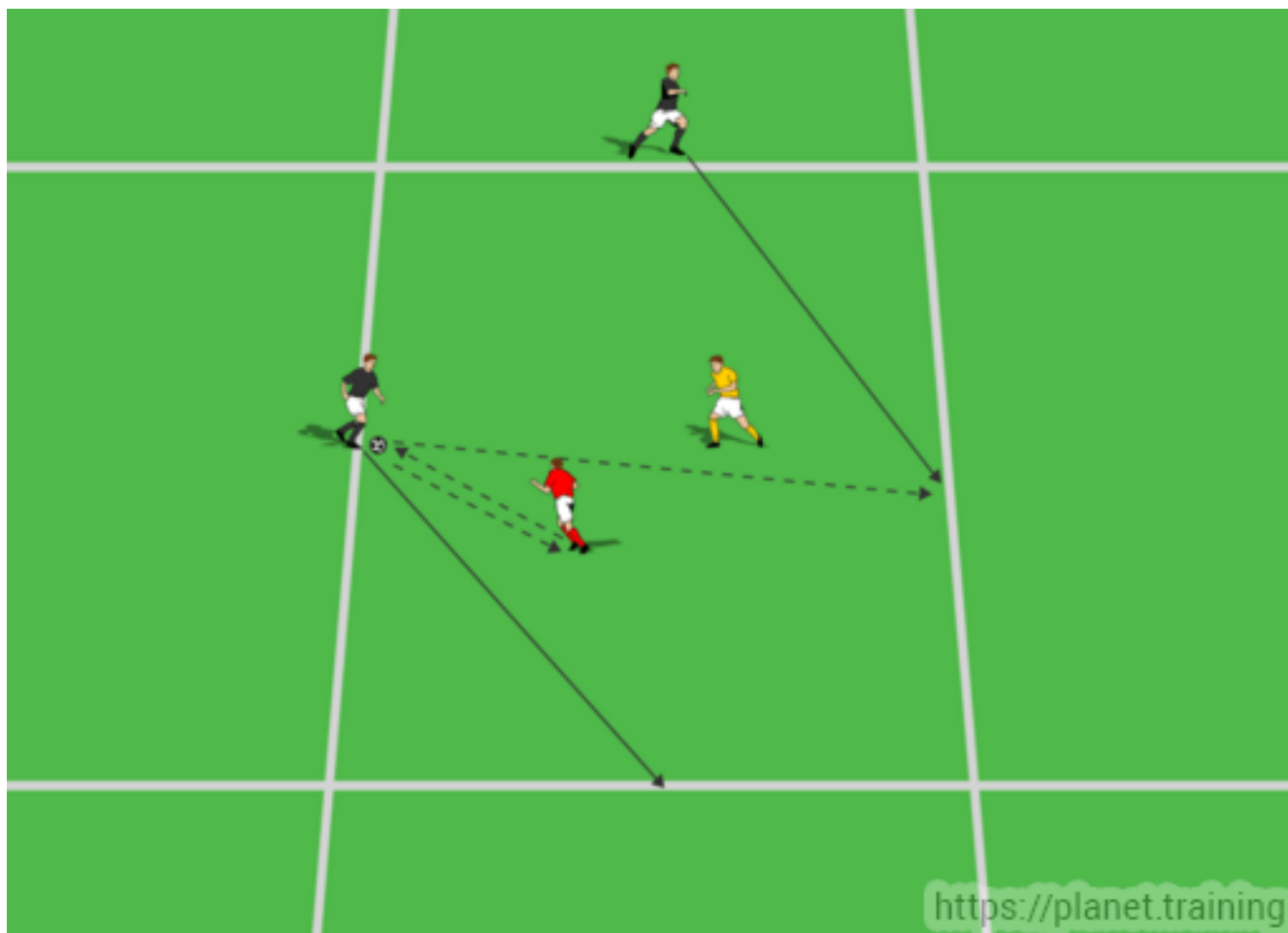
Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one longer side toward the other through the neutral player, to move deep to receive from the shorter side behind the defender and to move wide to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

## Exercise 2: 2 + 1 v 1 to play forward and move wide (2)



### Sequence

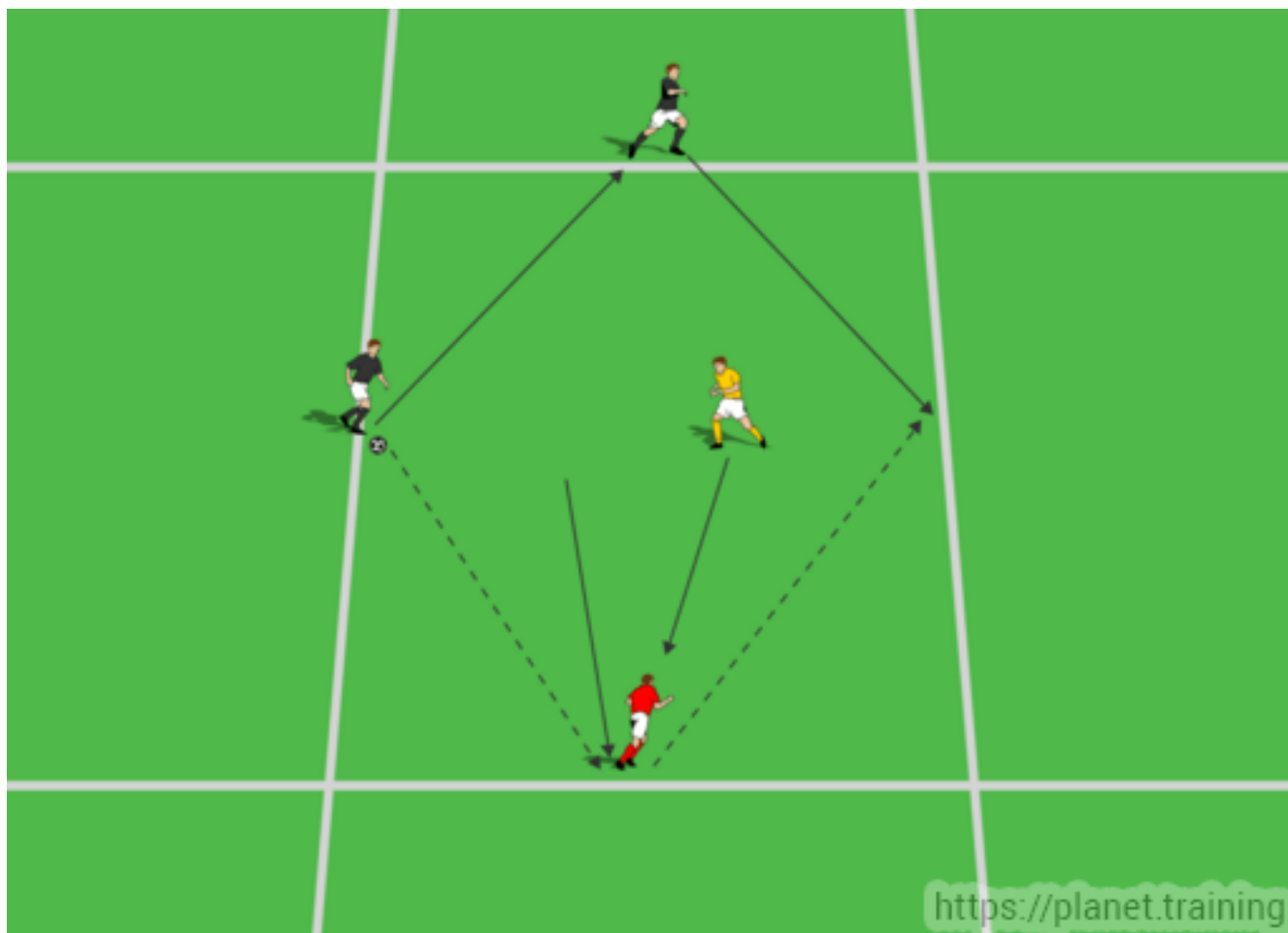
One black player is placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and one is placed along one of the shorter sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one longer side toward the other with vertical passes after a wall combination with the neutral player, to move deep to receive from the shorter side behind the defender and to move wide to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

### Exercise 3: 2 + 1 v 1 to play wide and move forward



#### Sequence

Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

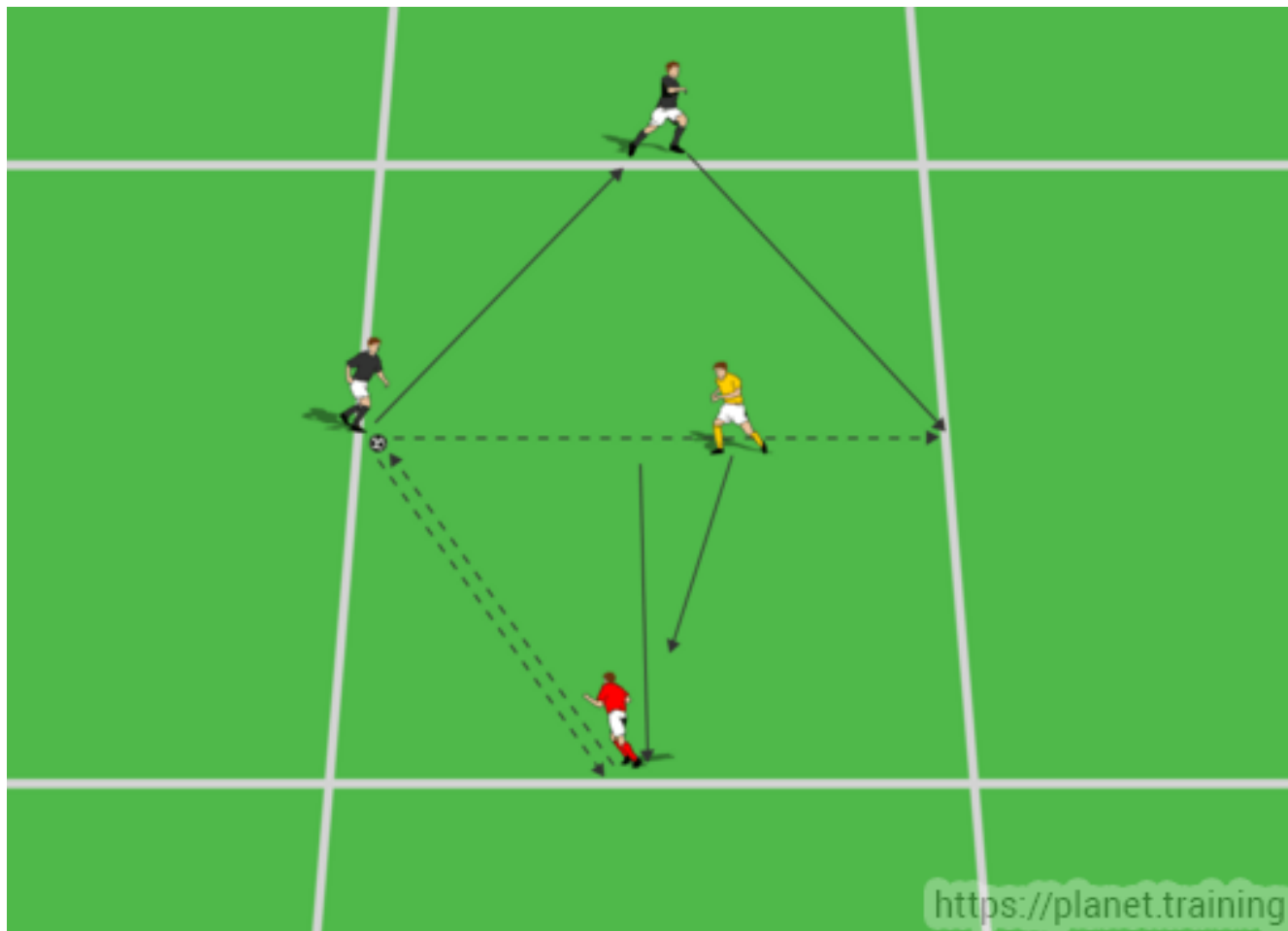
The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one longer side toward the other playing wide on the run of the neutral player, to move deep to receive from the shorter side behind the defender and to move wide to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The receiver must always have two wide passing options, but the neutral player must move from the middle and under the pressure of a defender. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.



#### Exercise 4: 2 + 1 v 1 to play wide and forward moving forward



#### Sequence

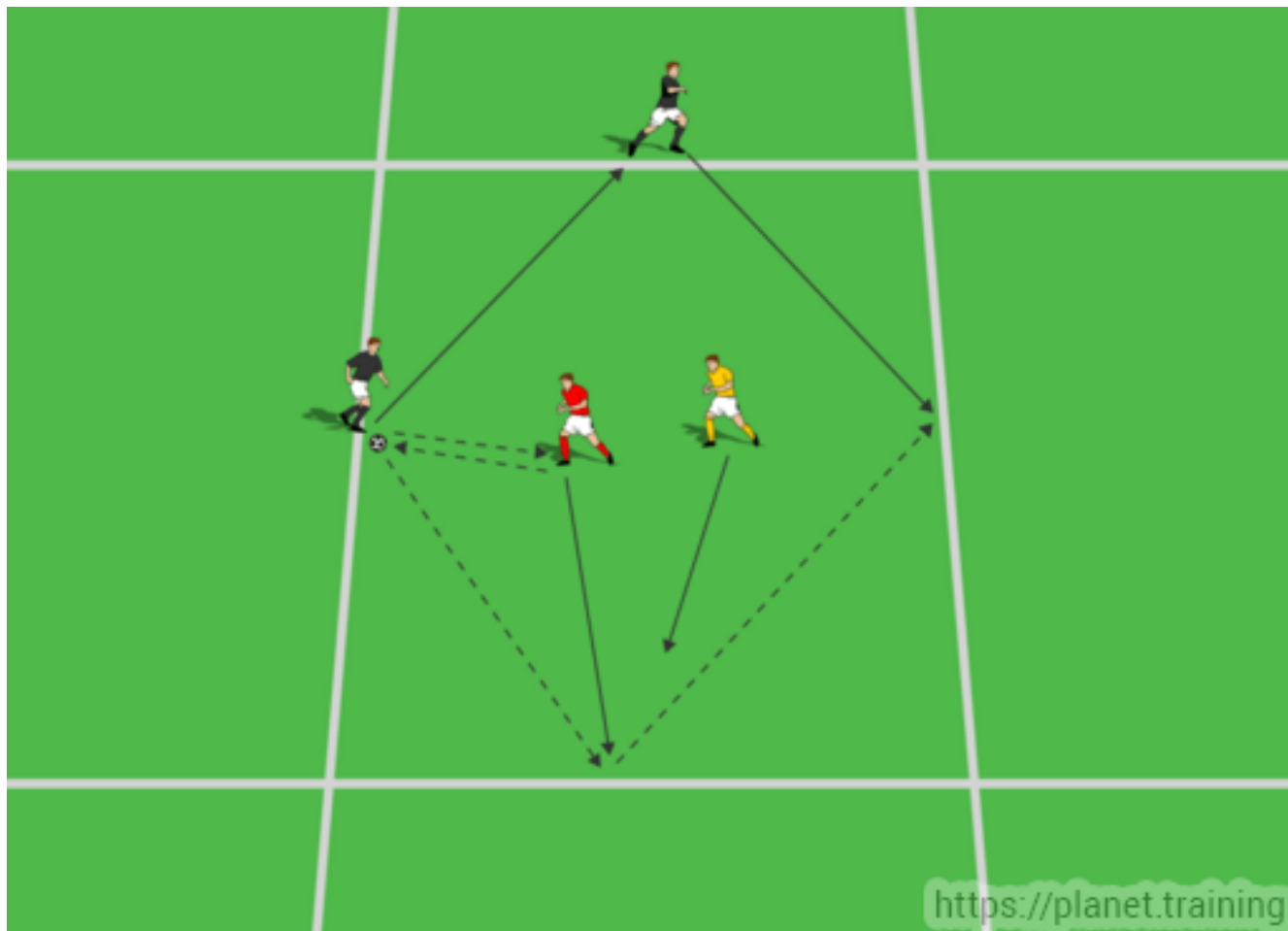
Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward and vertically from one longer side toward the other. It must be played a wide passing combination with the neutral player who must receive the ball on the run and then pass back. The second black player must move deep to receive from the shorter side behind the defender and the first player in possession must move wide to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The receiver must always have two wide passing options, but the neutral player must move from the middle and under the pressure of a defender. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

## Exercise 5: 2 + 1 v 1 to play wall passing combinations, moving and playing wide and forward



### Sequence

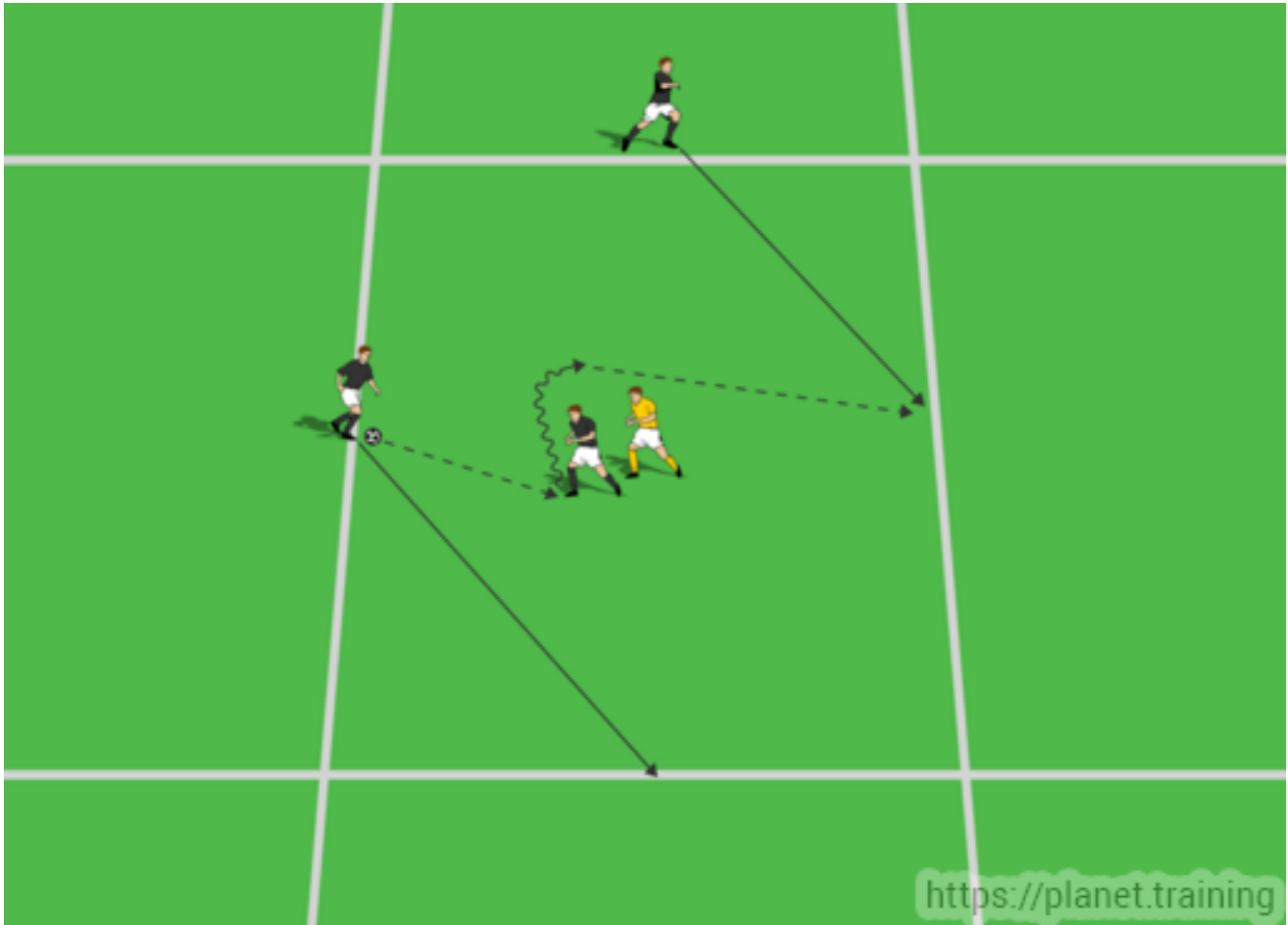
Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one longer side toward the other. A center passing combination must be played with the neutral player who must receive the ball and then pass back. The neutral player must receive another wide pass on his run to switch the side. The second black player must move deep to receive from the shorter side behind the defender and the first player in possession must move wide to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The receiver must always have two wide passing options, but the neutral player must move from the middle, after the first passing combination and under the pressure of a defender. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

## Exercise 6: 3 v 1 to play 1 v 1 duel and moving wide and forward (1)



### Sequence

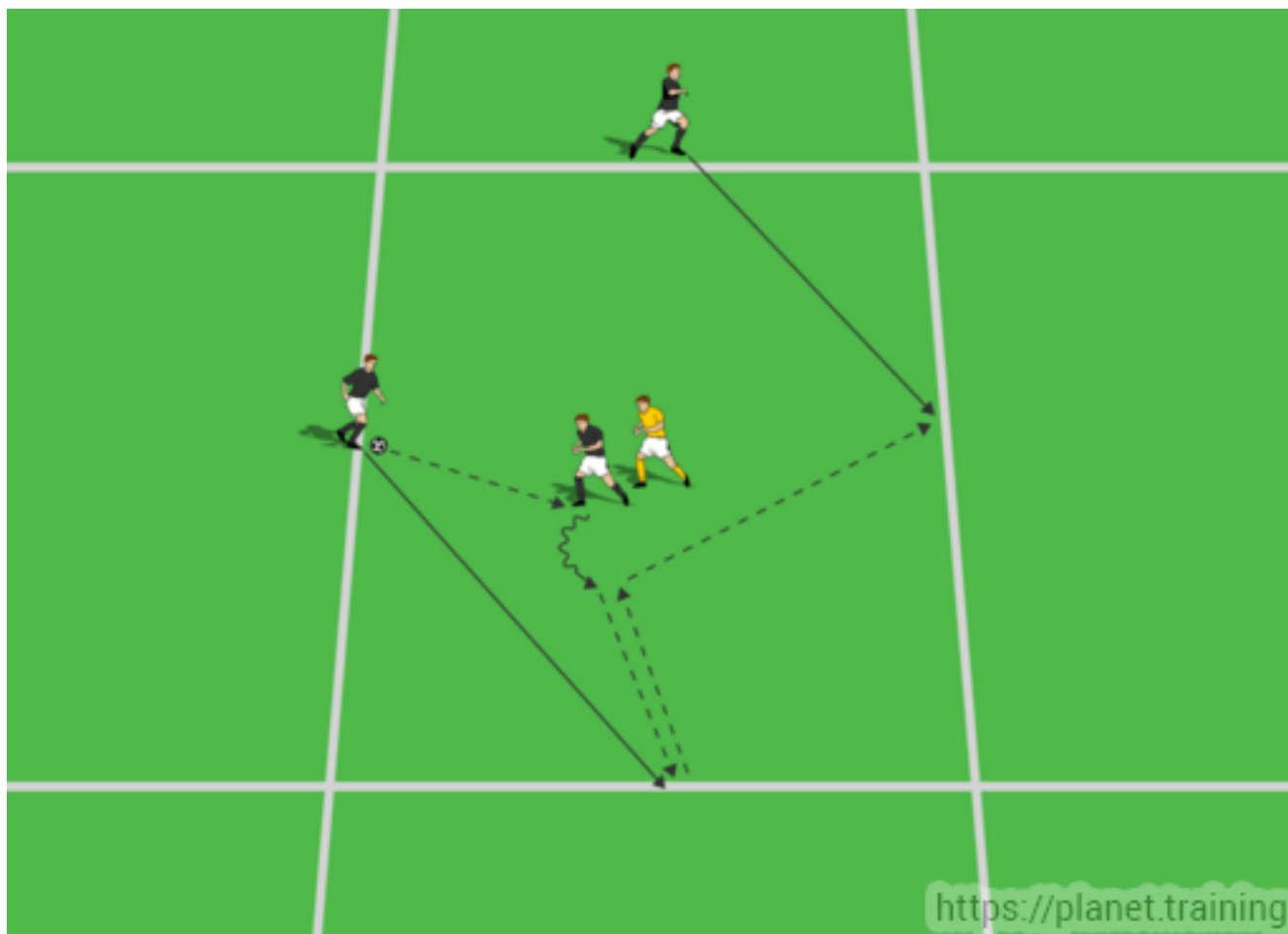
Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. Another player of the possession team and one defender are placed in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the players in possession is to pass the ball forward from one longer side toward the other. It must be played a center pass for the teammate who is playing 1 v 1 against the defender. The receiver must try to turn toward the same side where the third wide player is placed; if it's possible, a direct forward pass can be played to complete the sequence.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The first player in possession must run wide to create the same playing situation on the other side. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Oriented ball control to turn and dribble quickly. Pressure against the center player to win the possession.

## Exercise 7: 3 v 1 to play 1 v 1 duel and moving wide and forward (2)



### Sequence

The set-up and the first sequence of the exercise are the same of the previous one; but in this situation the center player can't turn toward the same side where the third wide player is placed; a direct forward pass is not possible then.

An outside/inside wall passing combination must be played with the first player in possession who is moving wide toward the free side; the center player can now try to play forward to the third player and behind the defender.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The first player in possession must run wide to create the same playing situation on the other side. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Oriented ball control to turn and dribble quickly. Pressure against the center player to win the possession.

## Exercise 8: 3 v 1 to play wall passing combination and forward and moving wide and forward



### Sequence

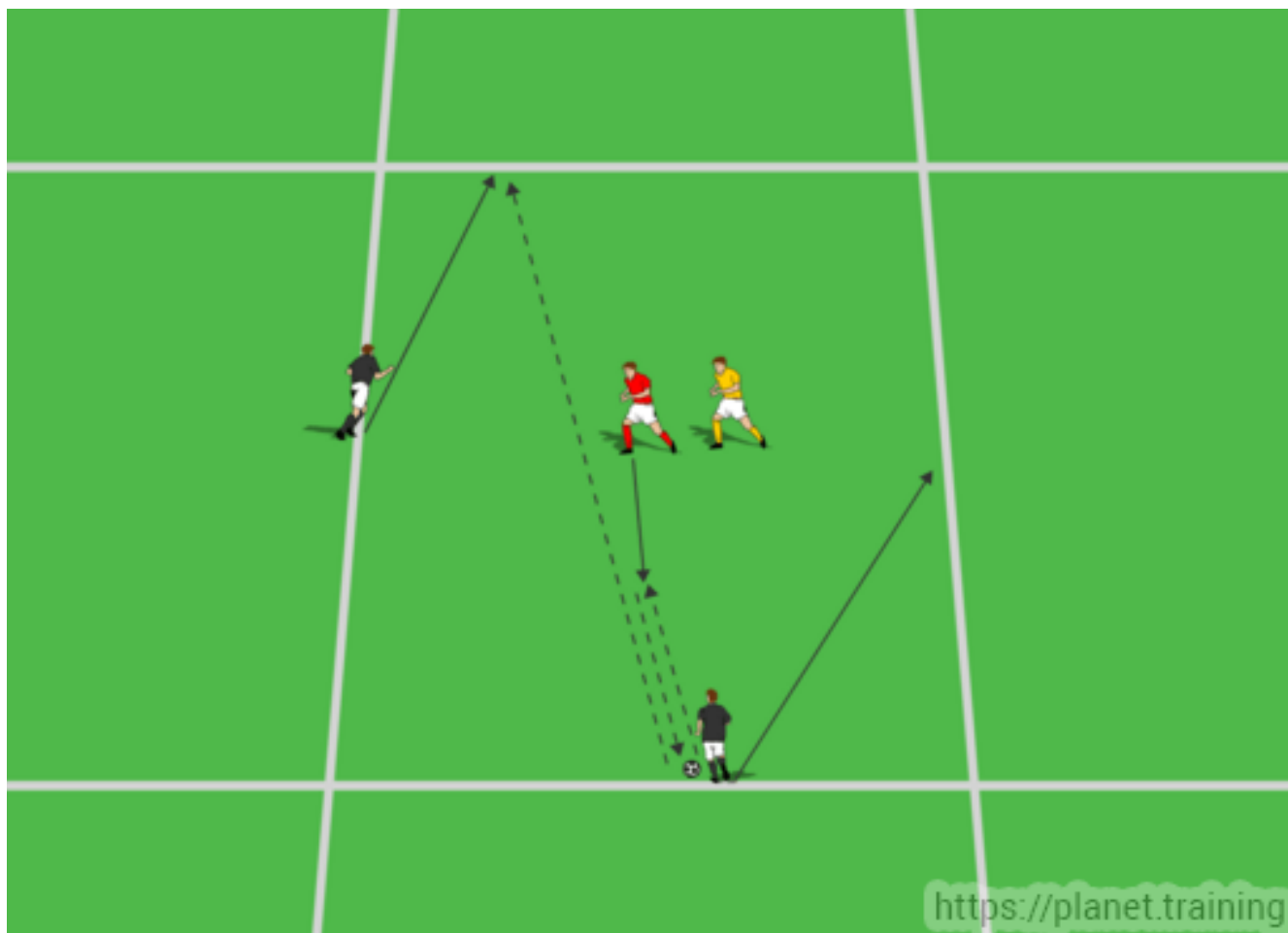
Two black players are placed along one of the shorter sides of a rectangle and along one of the longer sides. One defender is in the middle of the wide playing space.

The objective for the players in possession is to keep the possession for more than 8 to 10 seconds and then to pass the ball forward and vertically onto the run of the third teammate toward the opposite side.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The last player in possession before the decisive pass must run wide to create the same playing situation on the other side. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Close the passing lanes.

### Exercise 9: 2 + 1 v 1 to play vertically and move wide



#### Sequence

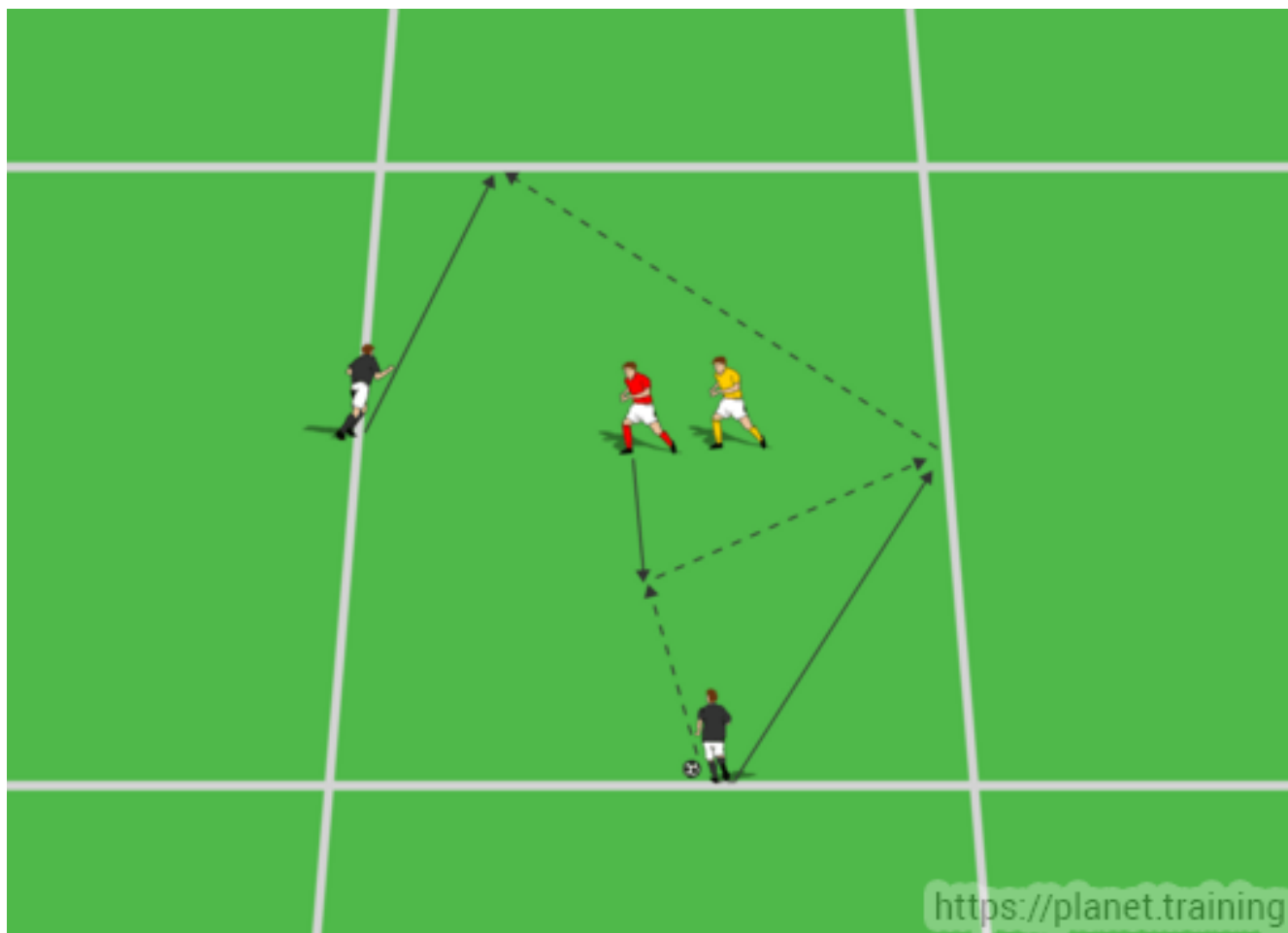
Two black players are placed along one of the shorter sides of a rectangle and along one of the longer sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the deep playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one shorter side toward the other with vertical passes after a wall passing combination with the neutral player, to move deep to receive from the longer side and behind the defender and to move wider to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

## Exercise 10: 2 + 1 v 1 to play wide and forward behind the defender



### Sequence

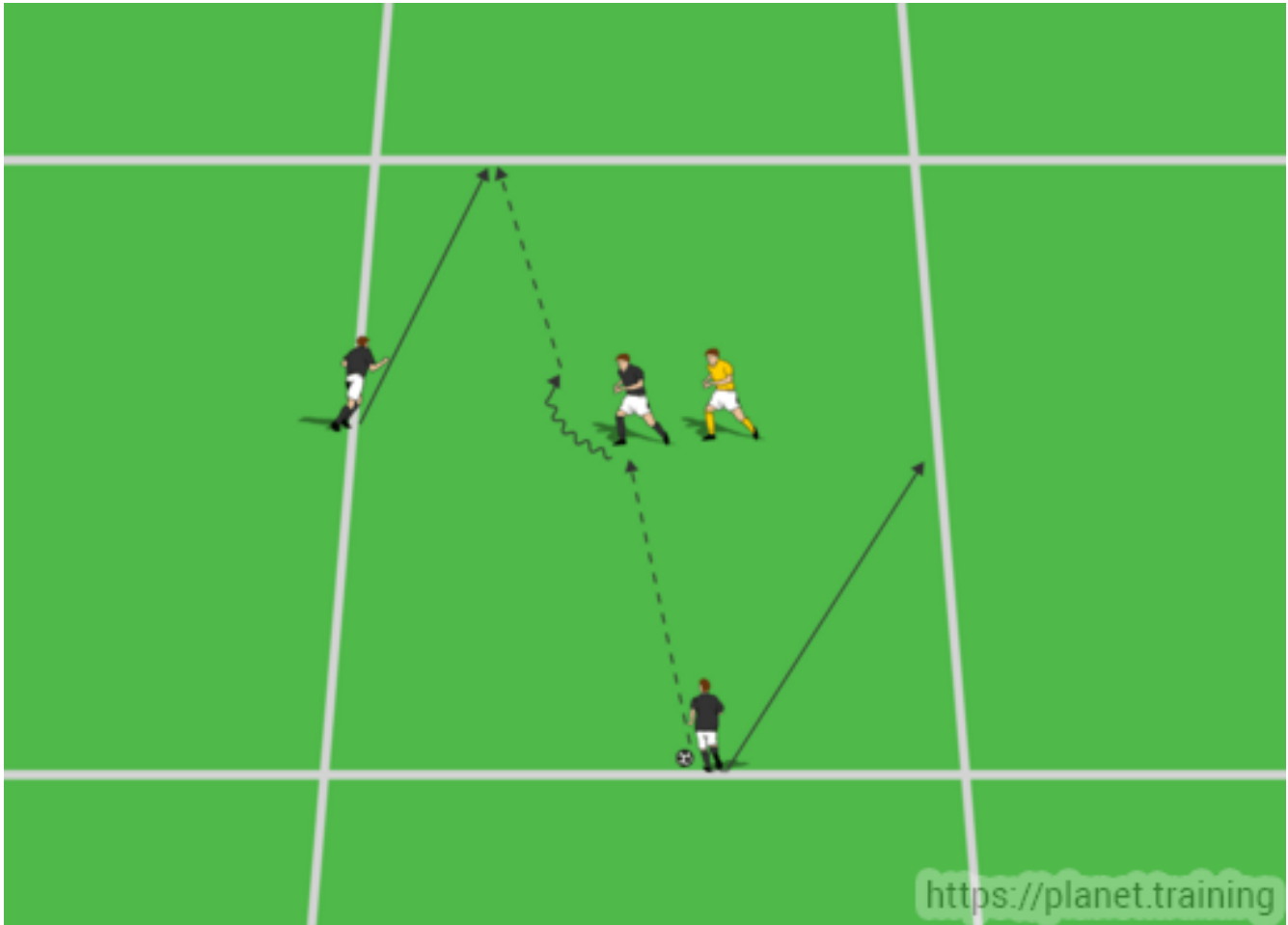
Two black players are placed along one of the shorter sides of a rectangle and along one of the longer sides. One neutral player and one defender are placed in the middle of the deep playing space.

The objective for the couple in possession is to pass the ball forward from one shorter side toward the other with vertical passes after a 1-2 combinations with the neutral player, to move deep to receive from the longer side and behind the defender and to move wider to support the possession phase.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or support the move. Pressure against the neutral player.

## Exercise 11: 3 v 1 to play vertically and to move wide



### Sequence

Two black players are placed along one of the longer sides of a rectangle and along one of the shorter sides. Another player of the possession team and one defender are placed in the middle of the deep playing space.

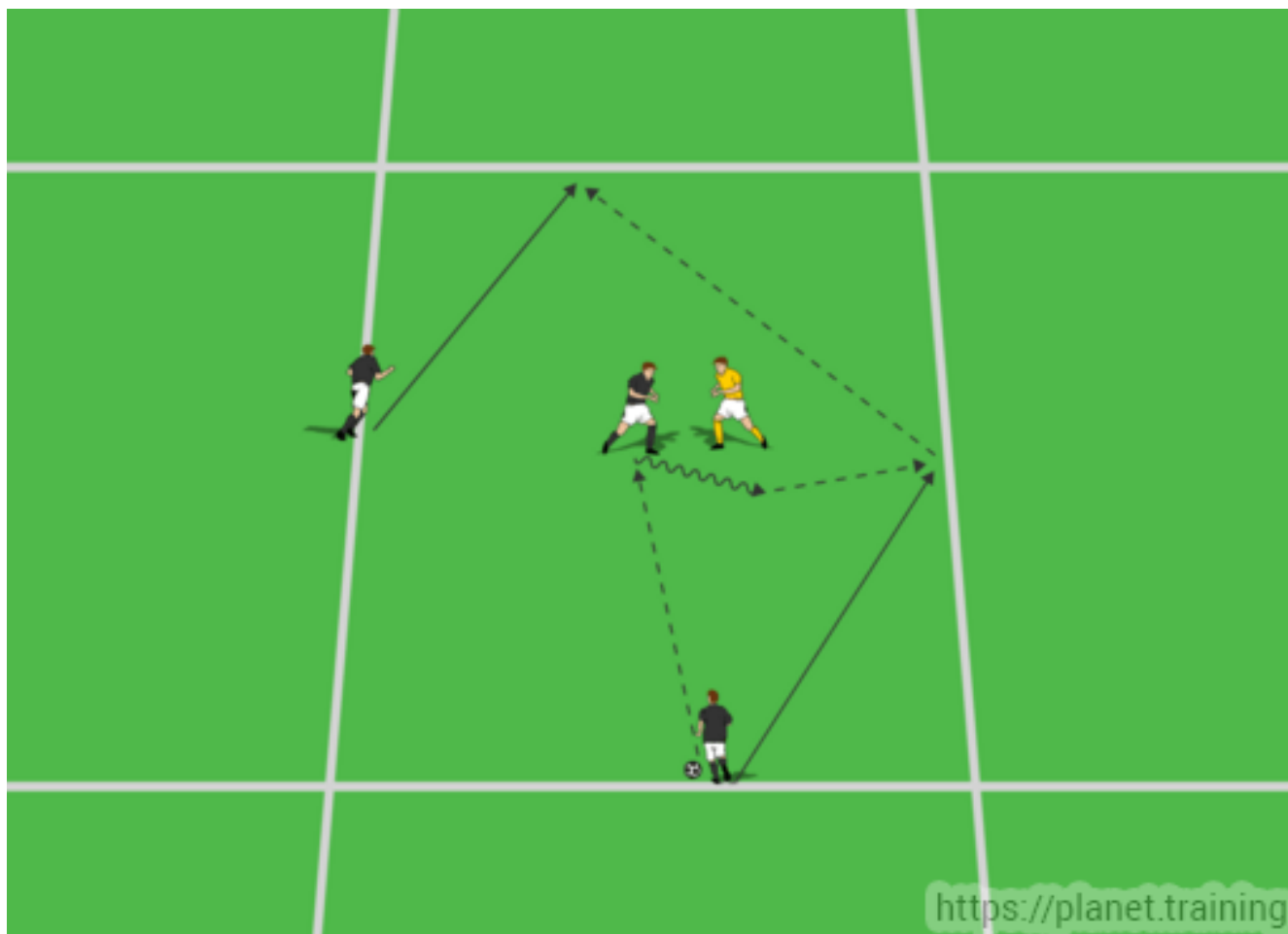
The objective for the players in possession is to pass the ball forward from one shorter side toward the other. A center pass must be made to the teammate who is playing 1 v 1 against the defender. The receiver must try to turn toward the same side where the third outer player is placed; if it's possible, a direct forward pass can be played to complete the sequence.

As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The first player in possession must run wider to create the same playing situation on the other side. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Oriented ball control to turn and dribble quickly. Pressure again the center player to win the possession.



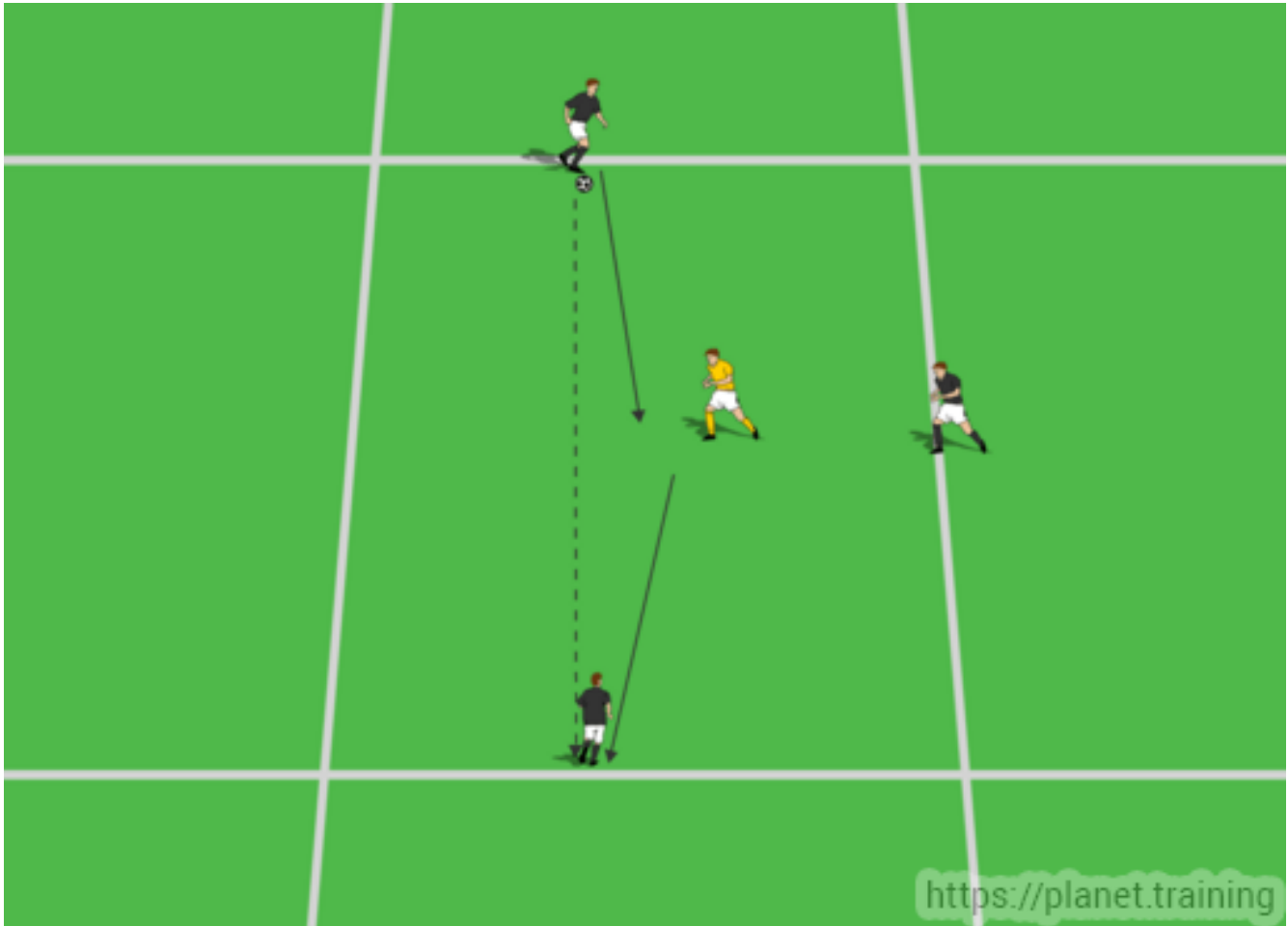
## Exercise 12: 3 v 1 to play wide and forward behind the defender



### Sequence

The set-up and the first sequence of the exercise are the same of the previous one; but in this situation the center player can't turn toward the same side where the third outer player is placed; a direct forward pass is not possible then.

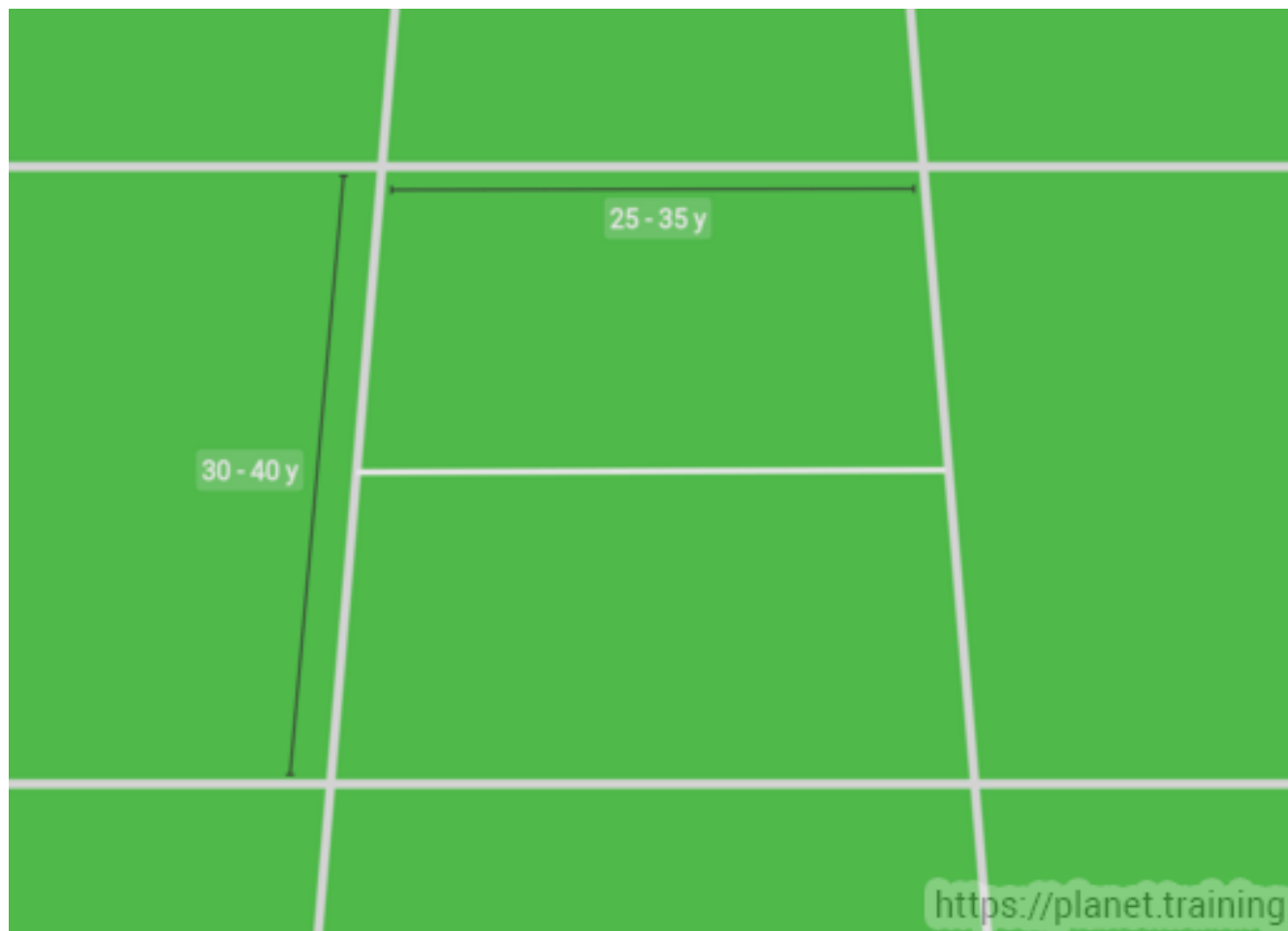
A 1-2 passing combination must be then played with the first player in possession who is moving outer and toward the free side; the receiver can now try to play forward to the third player and behind the defender.



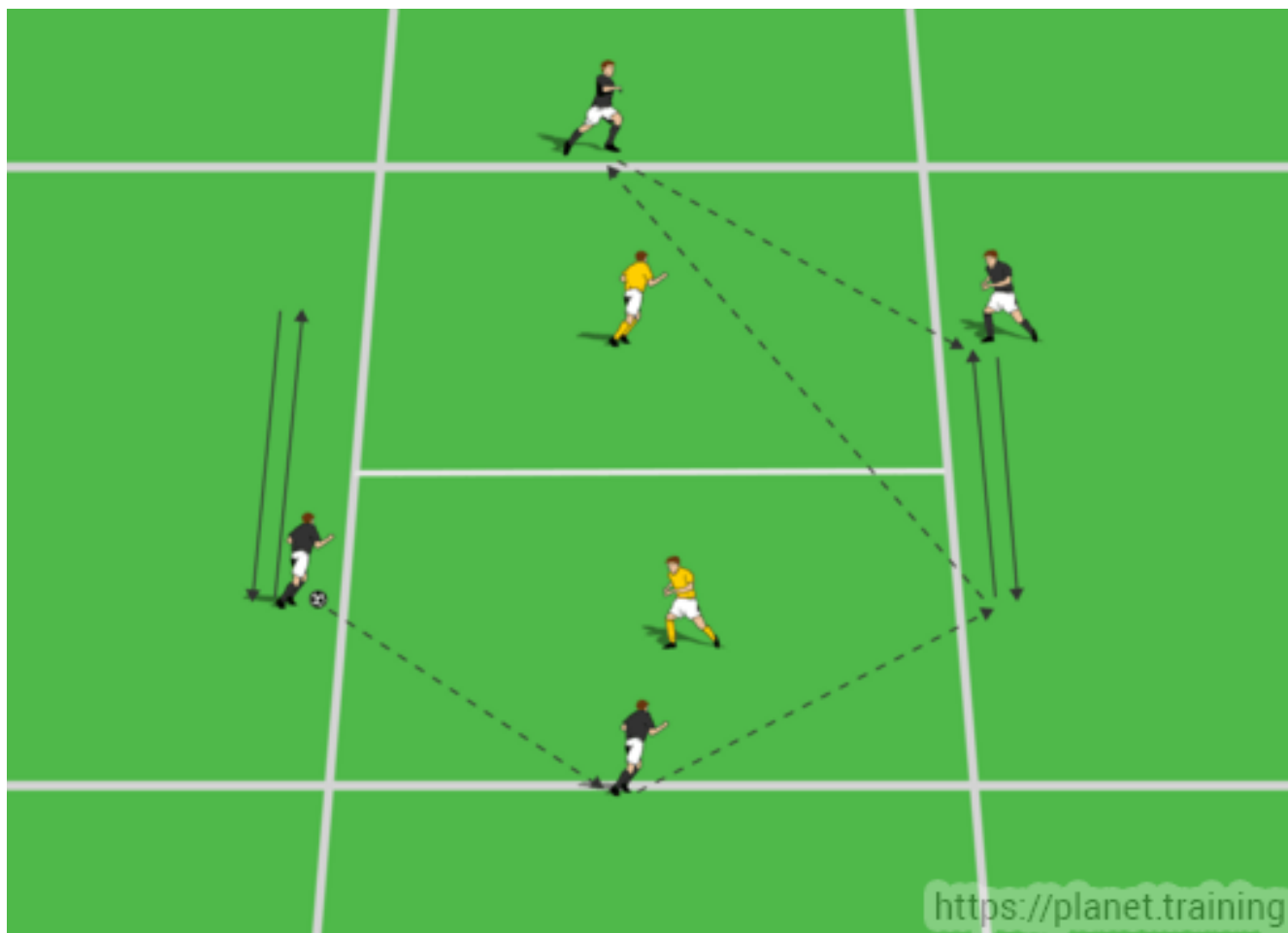
As the side of play is switched, the sequence starts again in the same way. The first player in possession must run wide and the center player must run toward the free shorter side of the playing area, to create the same situation on the other side. If the defender wins the ball, he exchanges the role with the player who missed the pass or the ball control.

**Eye on:** Times and rhythm of passes and of deep and wide runs to receive or to support the move. Oriented ball control to turn and dribble quickly. Pressure against the center player to win the possession, intercept the ball and close the passing lanes.

## Two Grids Rondos



### Exercise 13: 4 v 2 to play wide and forward and to move deep or to drop back



#### Sequence

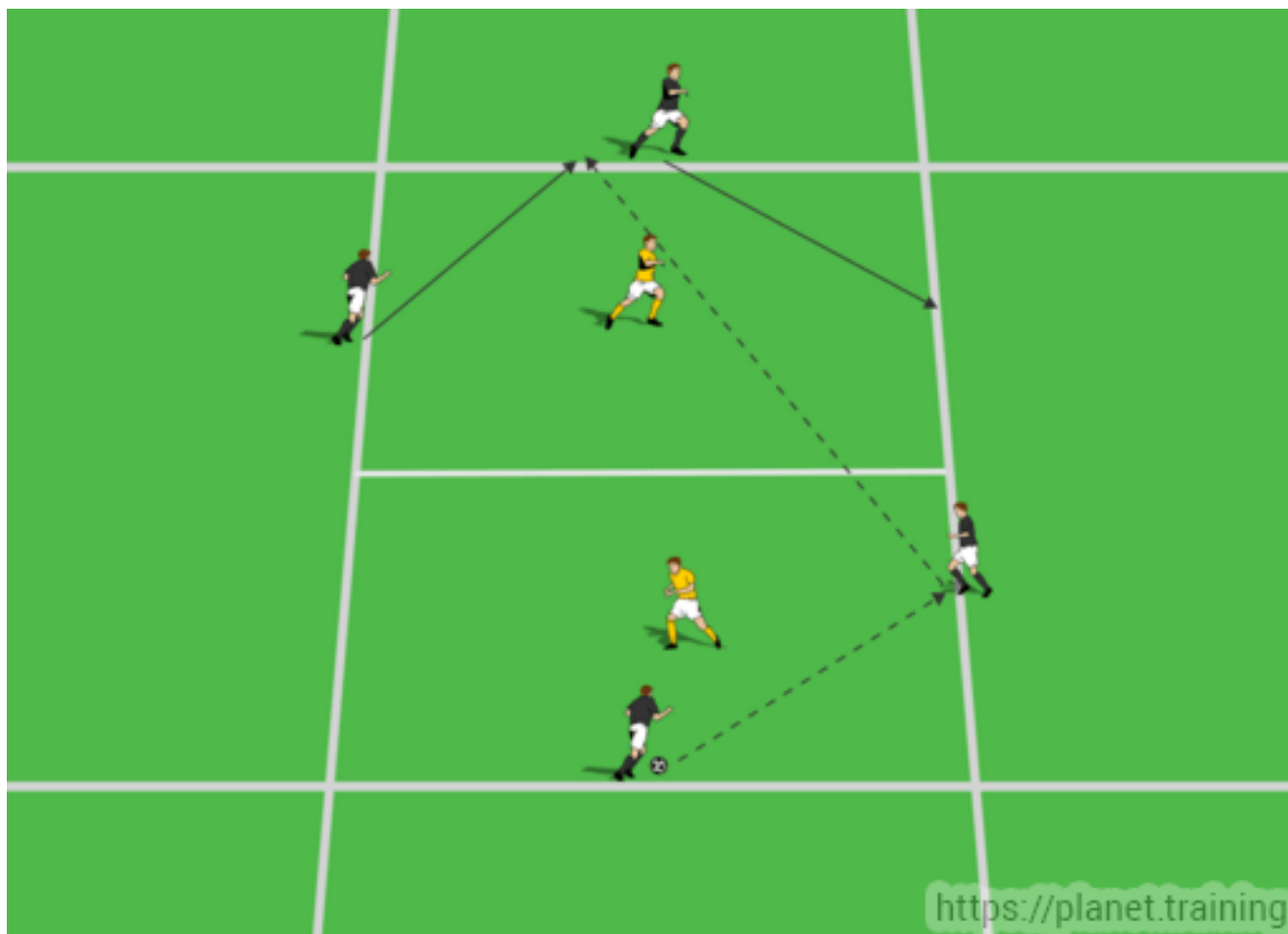
The playing space is divided into two areas. Four black players are placed along all the sides of the main rectangular space. Two defenders are placed in the middle of each grid of the wide playing space.

The objective for the players in possession is to play wide and forward on one side (on the right of the player with the ball in the picture) and then to switch the play toward the opposite side. The players on the longer sides of the main area must move on the left or the right to create momentary 3 v 1 duels to keep the possession and to switch the side.

The defenders are asked to intercept the ball, especially the longer passes to switch the side.

**Eye on:** Times of passes and of support runs to create the numerical advantage. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 14: 4 v 2 to play wide and forward and to move deep, back or wide



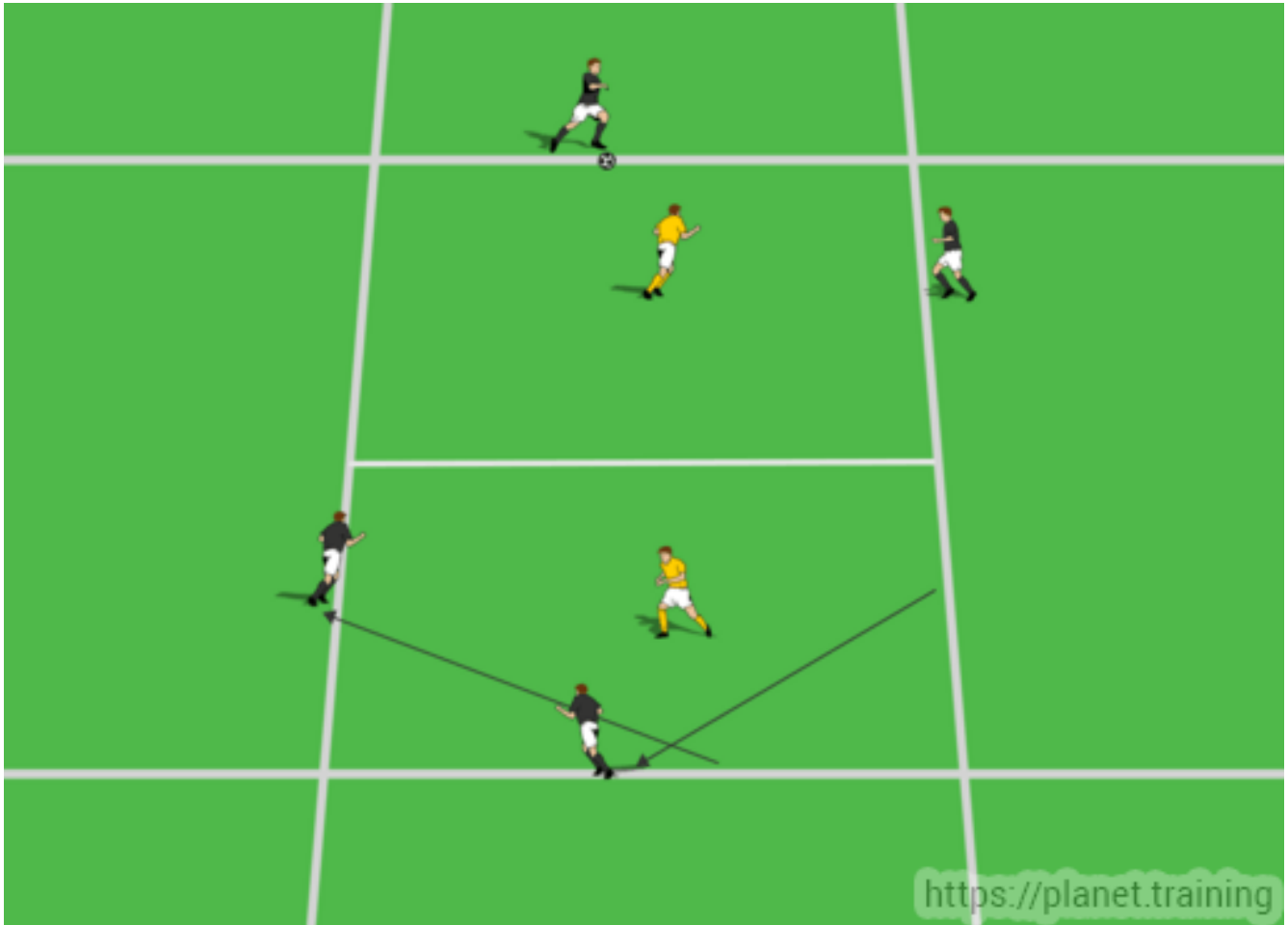
### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous one.

The objective for the players in possession is to play wide and forward on one side (on the right of the player with the ball in the picture) and then to switch the play toward the opposite side.

The players on the longer sides of the main area, must move on the left or the right to create momentary 3 v 1 duels to keep the possession and to switch the side. They must be always ready to accelerate to rotate their positions after the possession phase.

As the side of play is being switched, the couple of players on that side must rotate their positions.

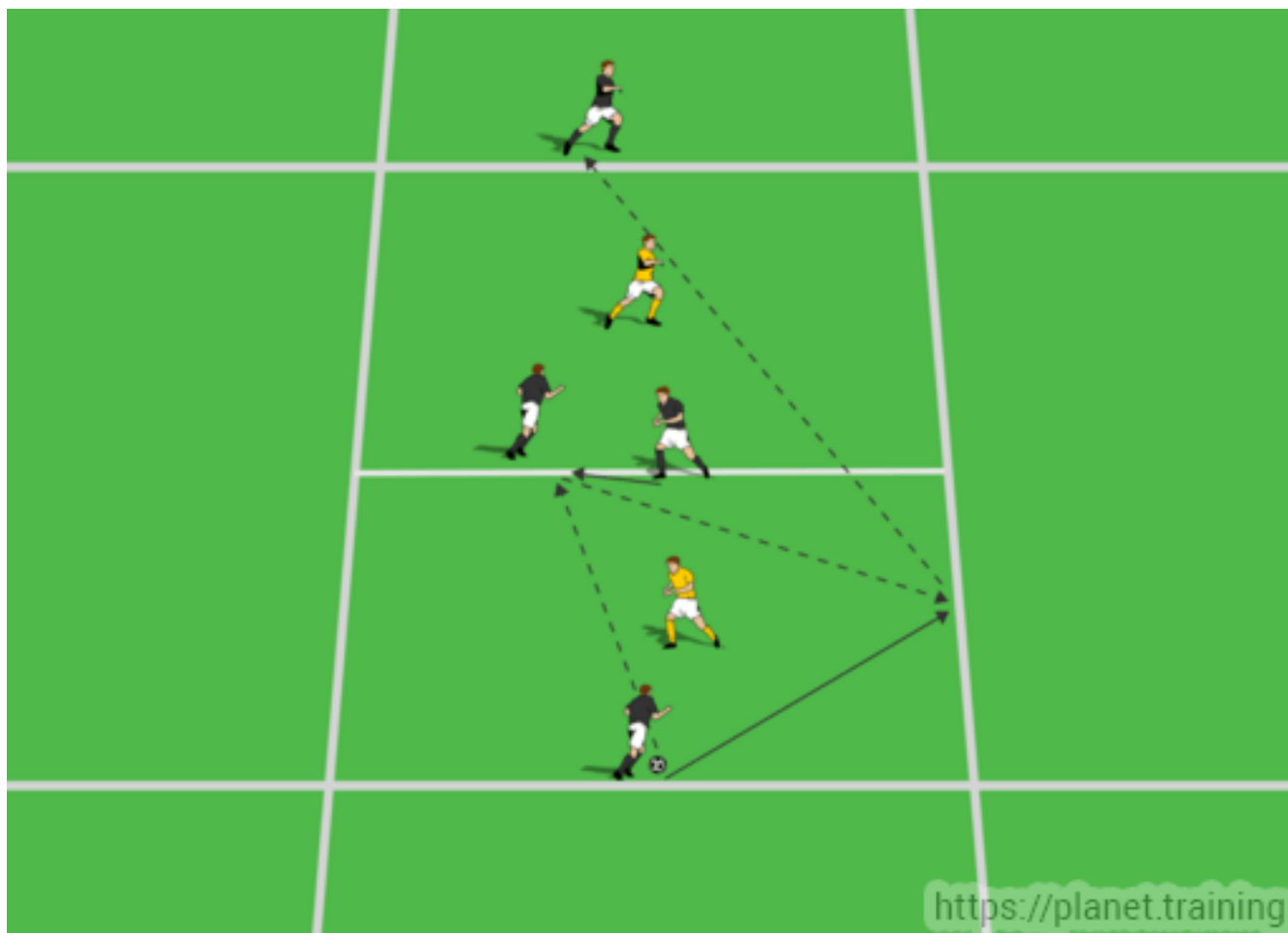


The same rotation has to be done on the opposite side before starting the sequence again.

The defenders are asked to intercept the ball, especially the longer passes to switch the side.

**Eye on:** Time of passes, of support runs to create the numerical advantage and of exchanges of positions. Close the passing lanes.

### Exercise 15: 4 v 2 to play forward and wide and to move wide

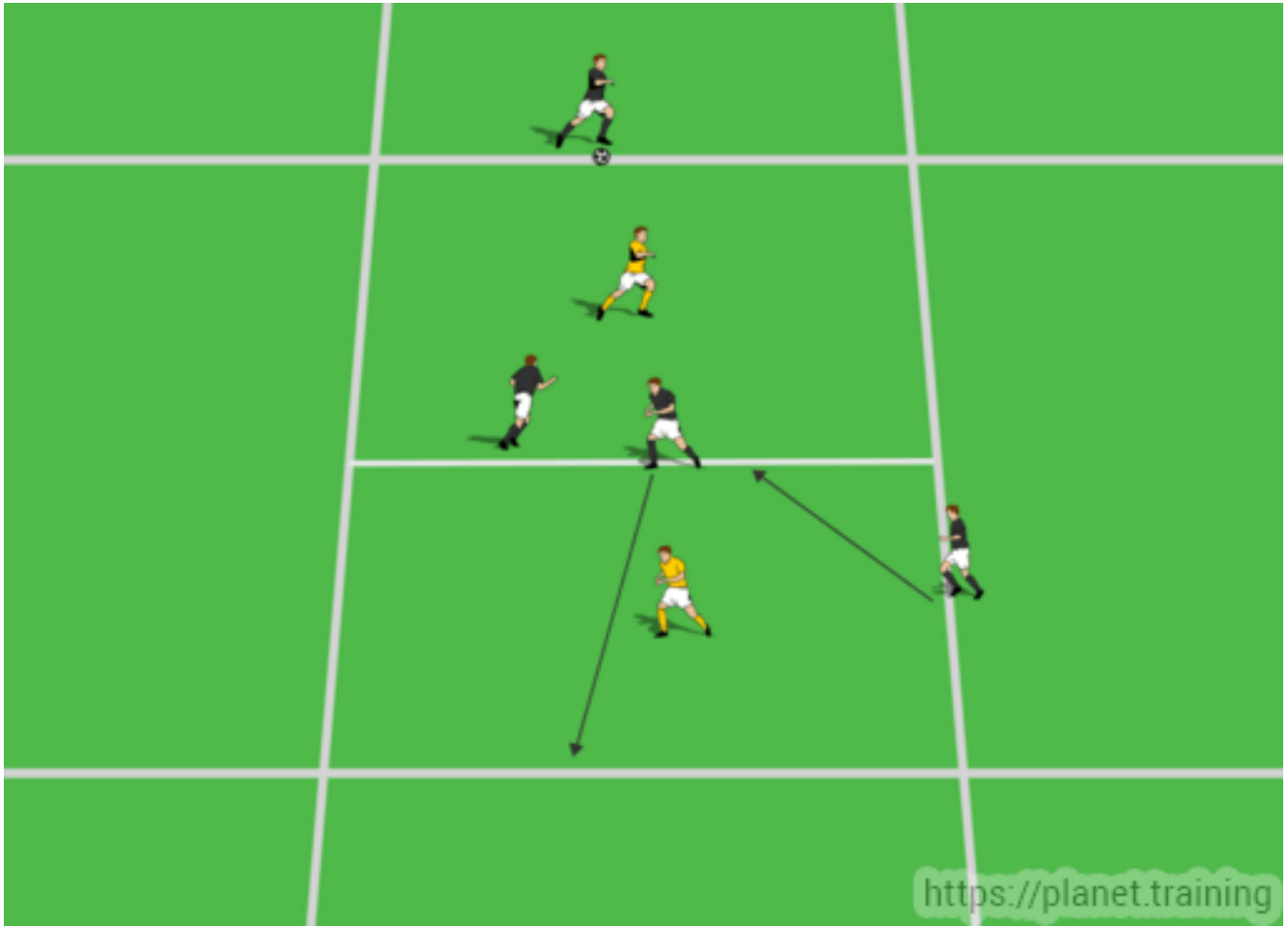


#### Sequence

The playing space is divided into two areas. Four black players are placed along the shorter sides of the main rectangle (two of them are placed along the middle line). Two defenders are placed in the middle of each grid of the vertical playing space.

The objective for the players in possession is to play a 1-2 combination forward and wide and then to play a longer pass toward the upper teammate on the opposite playing area. The players on the middle line must be always unmarked behind the defender.

The defenders are asked to intercept the ball, moreover the longer passes to play forward.

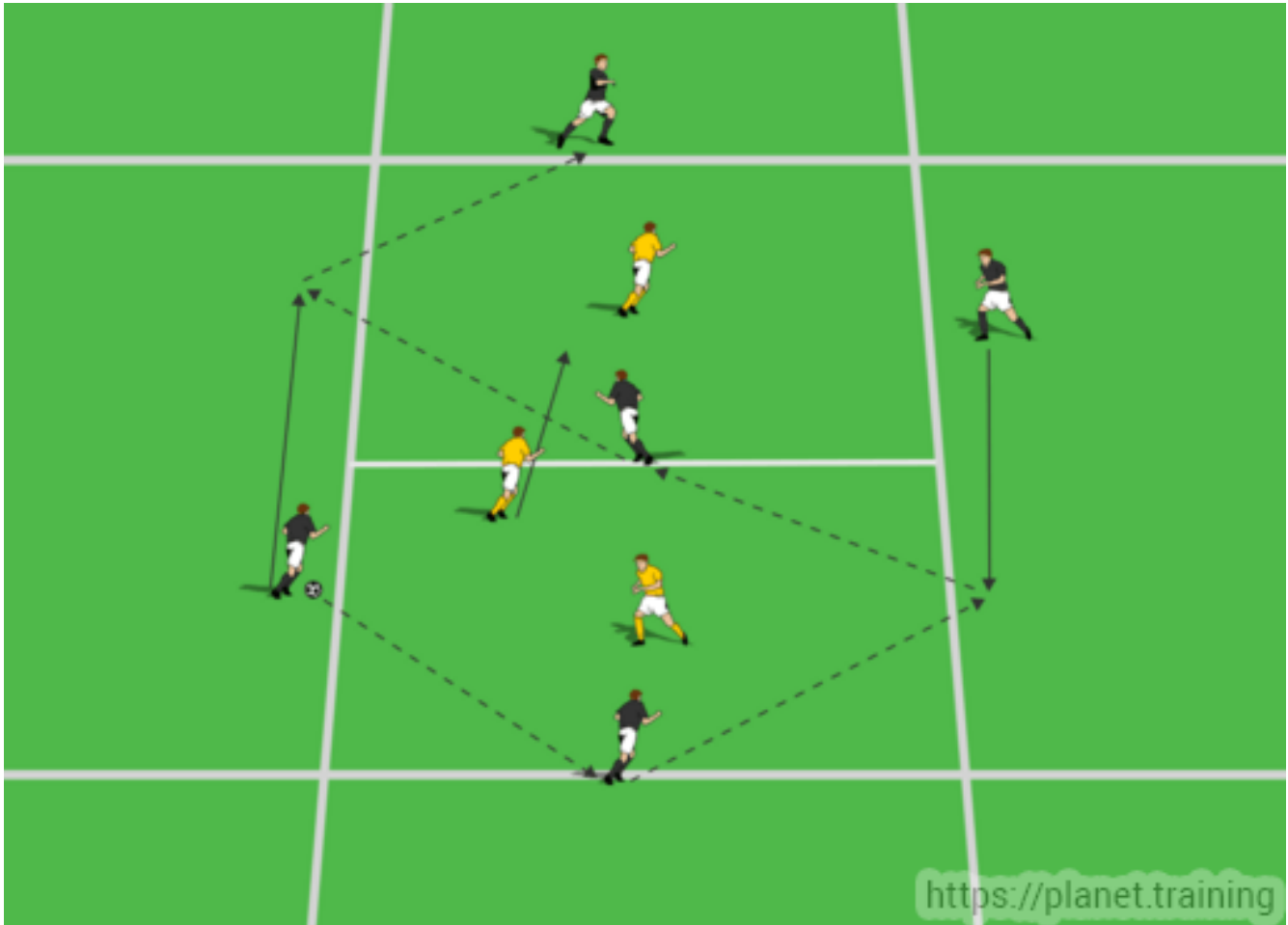


Every time the sequence is completed, the players who started it must exchange their position as lower and upper vertexes.

**Eye on:** Times of passes and of wide runs to receive the return pass. Pressure against the center player and close the passing lanes.



## Exercise 16: 5 v 3 to play wide and to move forward



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into two areas. Four black players are placed along all the sides of the main rectangular space and a fifth one is placed along the middle line. Three defenders are placed in the middle of the main playing area, two of them must be placed inside the playing area time to time.

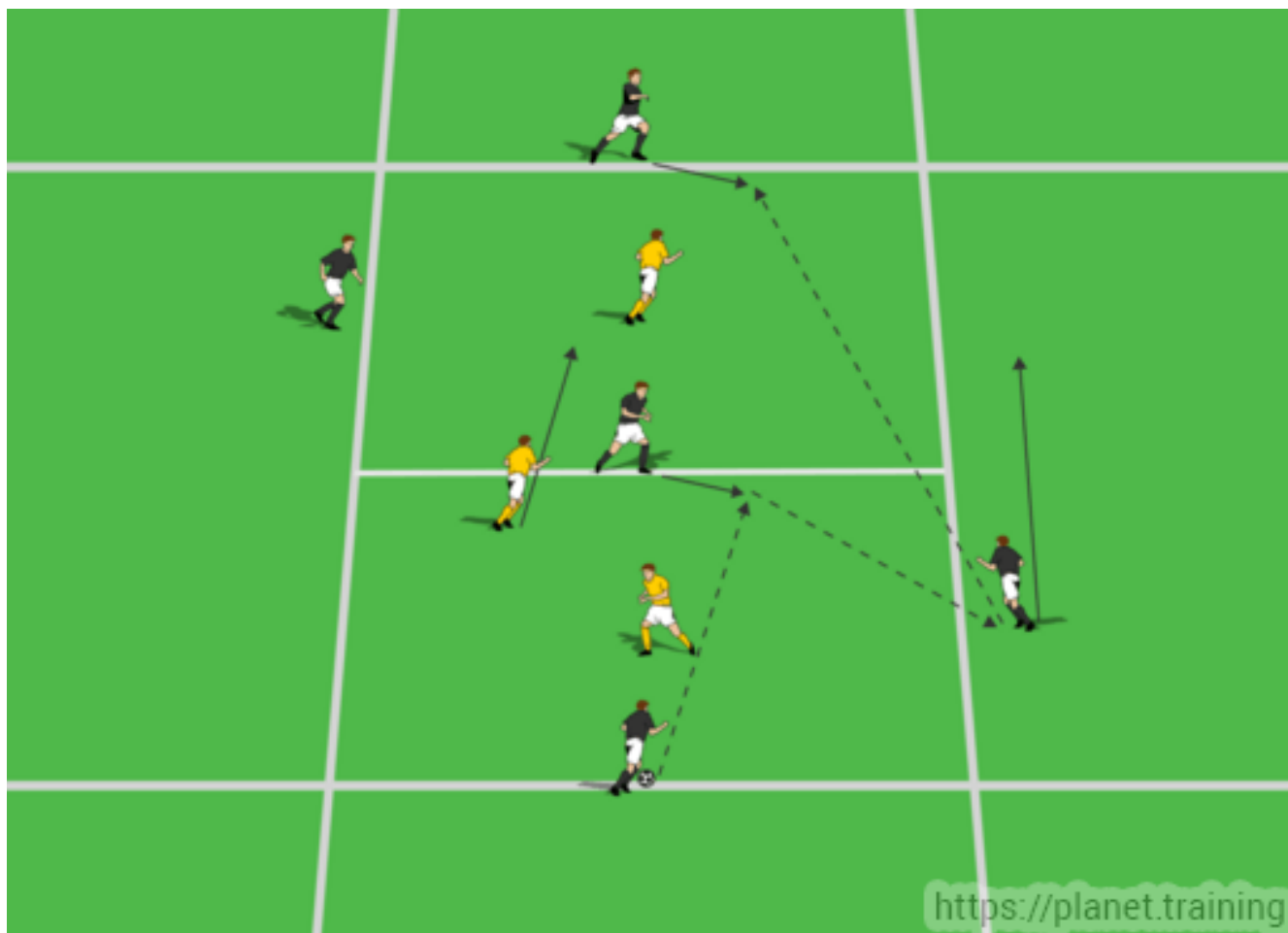
The objective for the players in possession is to play wide and forward on one side through a dropping back player (on the right in the picture) and then to switch the play toward the opposite side, through the center player.

The players on the longer sides of the main area, must move up and down to create momentary 3 v 1 duels to keep the possession and to switch the side toward the fourth player. The opposite vertex must be served in the end of the sequence.

The defenders are asked to play as a unit inside the areas where the ball is being played and to intercept the ball.

**Eye on:** Times of passes and of support runs to create the numerical advantage. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 17: 5 v 3 to play and to move forward

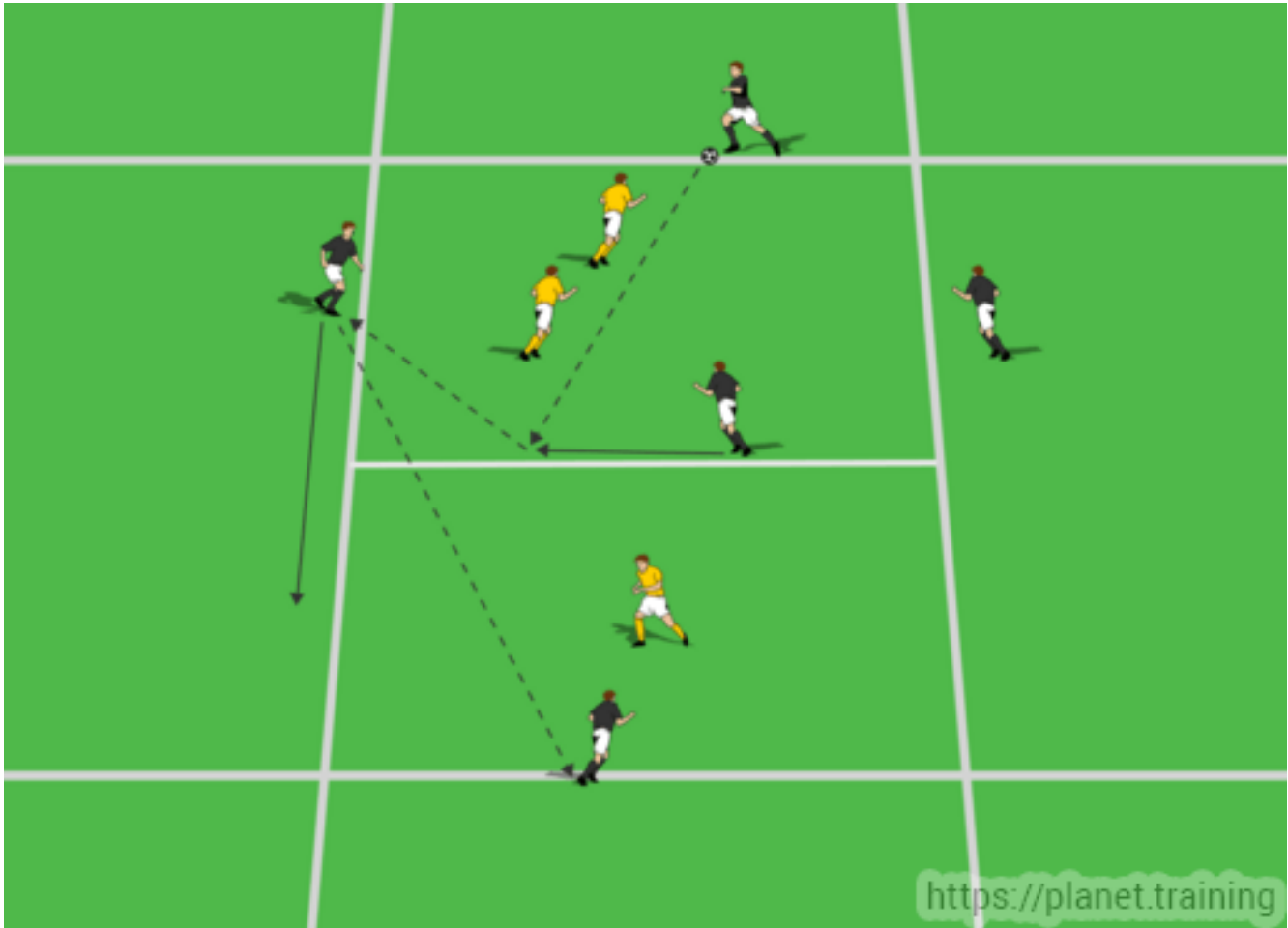


### Sequence

The playing set-up is the same of the previous exercise.

The objective for the players in possession is to play forward and backward passing combinations to send the ball toward the opposite area, through the center player and the outer one (on the right in the picture).

The players on the longer sides of the main area must move up and down to create momentary 3 v 1 duels to keep the possession and 4 v 1 duel as the ball is played in the upper part of the area. The opposite vertex must be served in the end of the sequence.

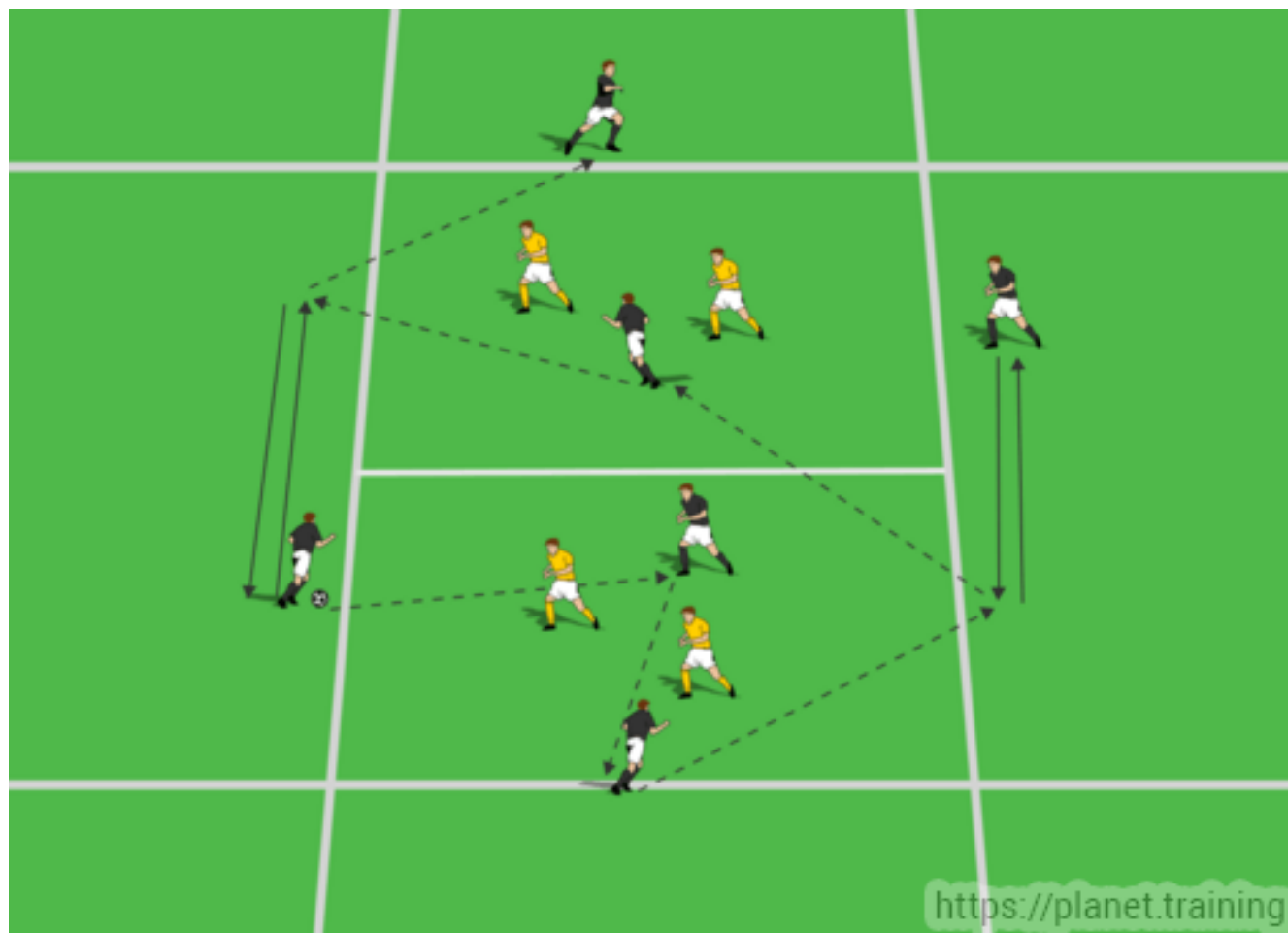


When the possession phase is played for more than 8 to 10 seconds, the ball must be passed back through a passing combination with the center player and the outer opposite player; the starting 3 v 1 situation must be created again.

The defenders are asked to play as couple inside the areas where the ball is being played and to intercept the ball.

**Eye on:** Times of forward and backward passes and of support runs to create the numerical advantage. Close the passing lanes and pressure on the center player.

## Exercise 18: 6 v 4 to play wide and to move forward/backward



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into two areas. Four black players are placed along all the sides of the main rectangular space and two more are inside the playing areas. Four defenders are placed in the middle of the main playing area, two inside each area.

The objective for the players in possession is to play wide and forward on one side through the middle player (from the left to the right in the picture) and then to switch the play toward the opposite side through the center player of the upper area.

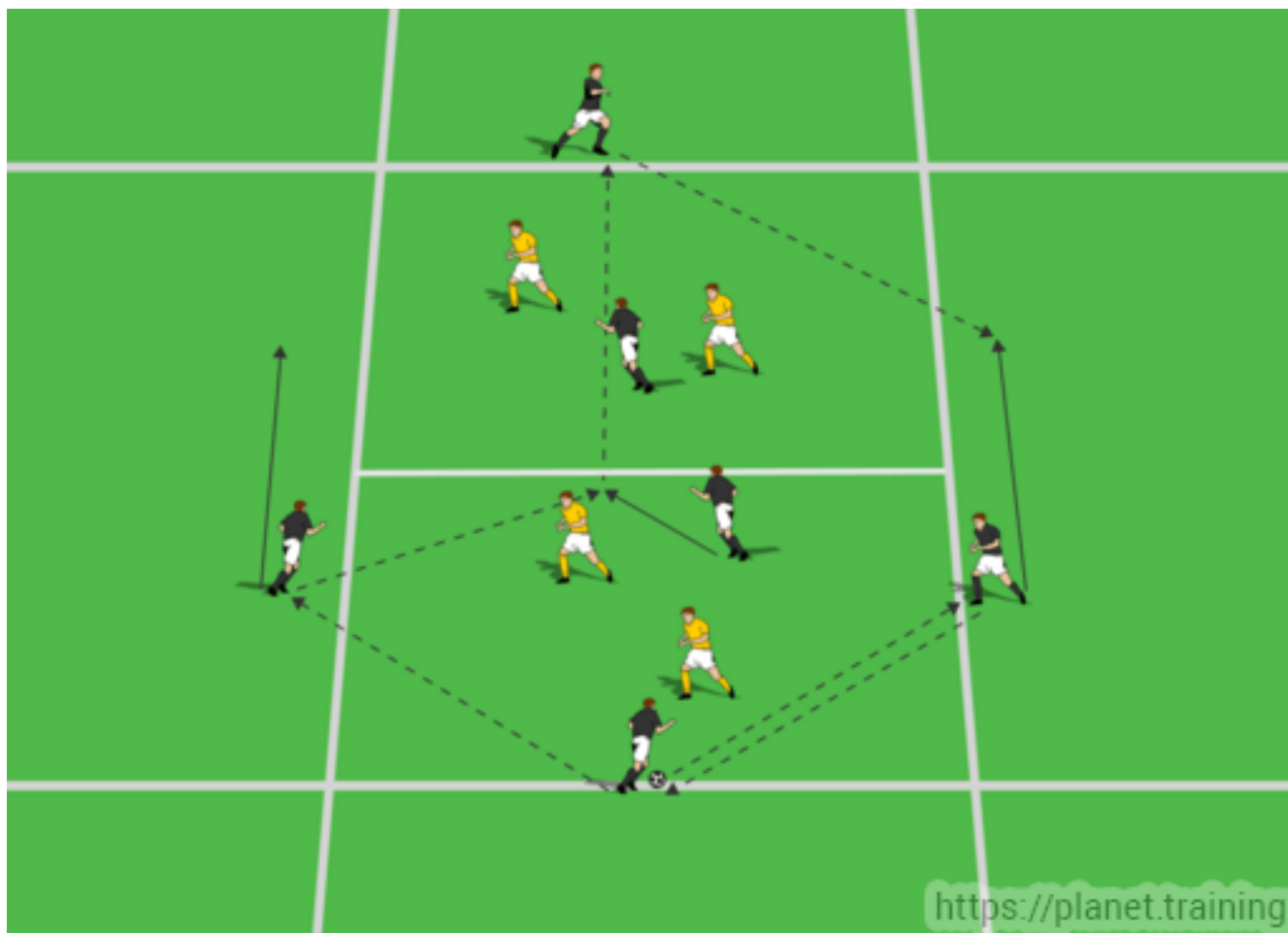
The players on the longer sides of the main area must move up and down to create momentary 4 v 2 duels to keep the possession. The opposite vertex must be served in the end of the sequence.

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black player in the middle and to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Times of passes and of support runs to create the numerical advantage. Close the passing lanes.



## Exercise 20: 6 v 4 to switch side of play and then to play deep



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into two areas. Four black players are placed along all the sides of the main rectangular space and two more are inside the playing areas. Two black players start the sequence in the lower part of the set-up, creating a 4 v 2 duel. Four defenders are placed in the middle of the main playing area, two inside each area.

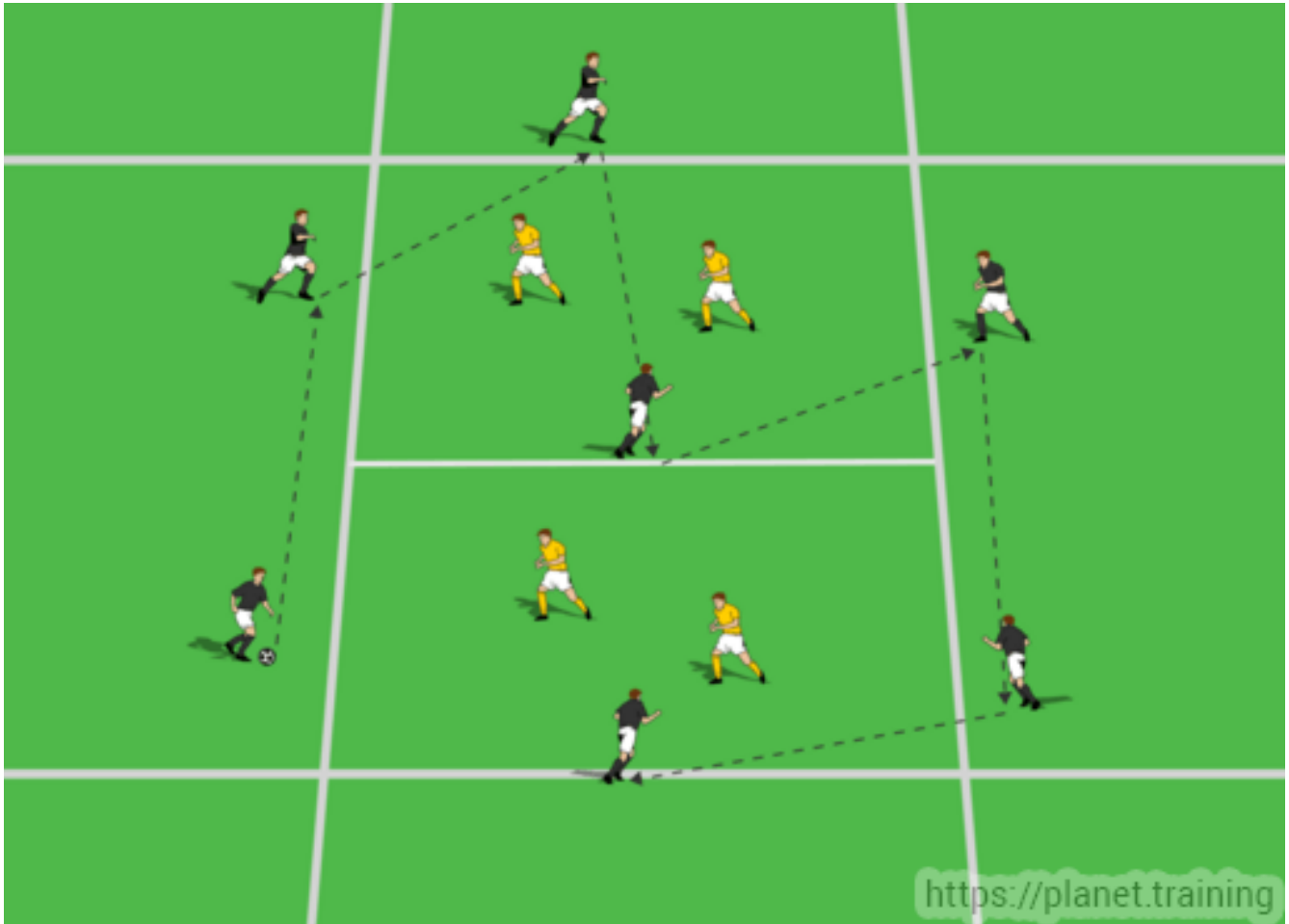
The objective for the players in possession is to switch side (on the left in the picture) after a wall passing combination on one side (on the right in the picture) and to play forward as soon as possible through the middle players behind the defenders. The ball shall be sent to the opposite vertex as quick as possible.

The players on the longer sides of the main area, must move up and down to create new 4 v 2 duels to keep the possession and to start the sequence again.

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players in the middle and to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Times of wall passing combinations, of forward passes and of support runs to create the numerical advantage. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 21: 7 v 4 to move the ball around and inside



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into two areas. Six black players are placed along all the sides of the main rectangular space and one more along the middle line. Four defenders are placed in the middle of the main playing space, two inside each area.

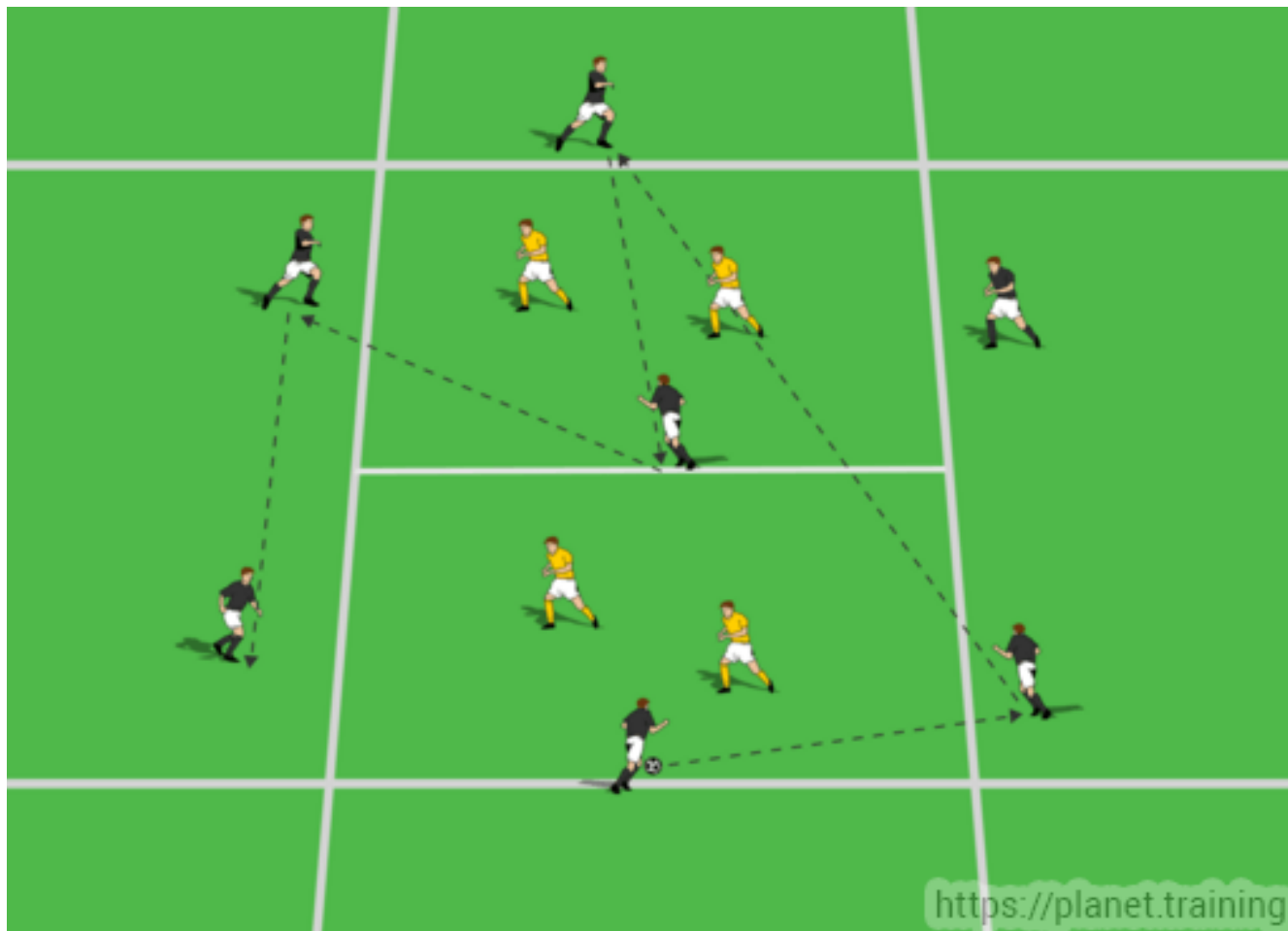
The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball around the main rectangle, with alternate side, inside and outside passing combinations among the outer players and the center one. The center player has limited number of touches (one or two).

Every two side passes an inside/outside combination must be played; a sequence shall be completed within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players in the middle and to close the passing lanes from outside to inside and vice versa.

**Eye on:** Quick passing combination, pressure on the center player. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 22: 7 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around



### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise.

The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball around the main rectangle, with alternate inside/outside and side passing combinations among the outer players and the center one. The center player has limited number of touches (one or two)

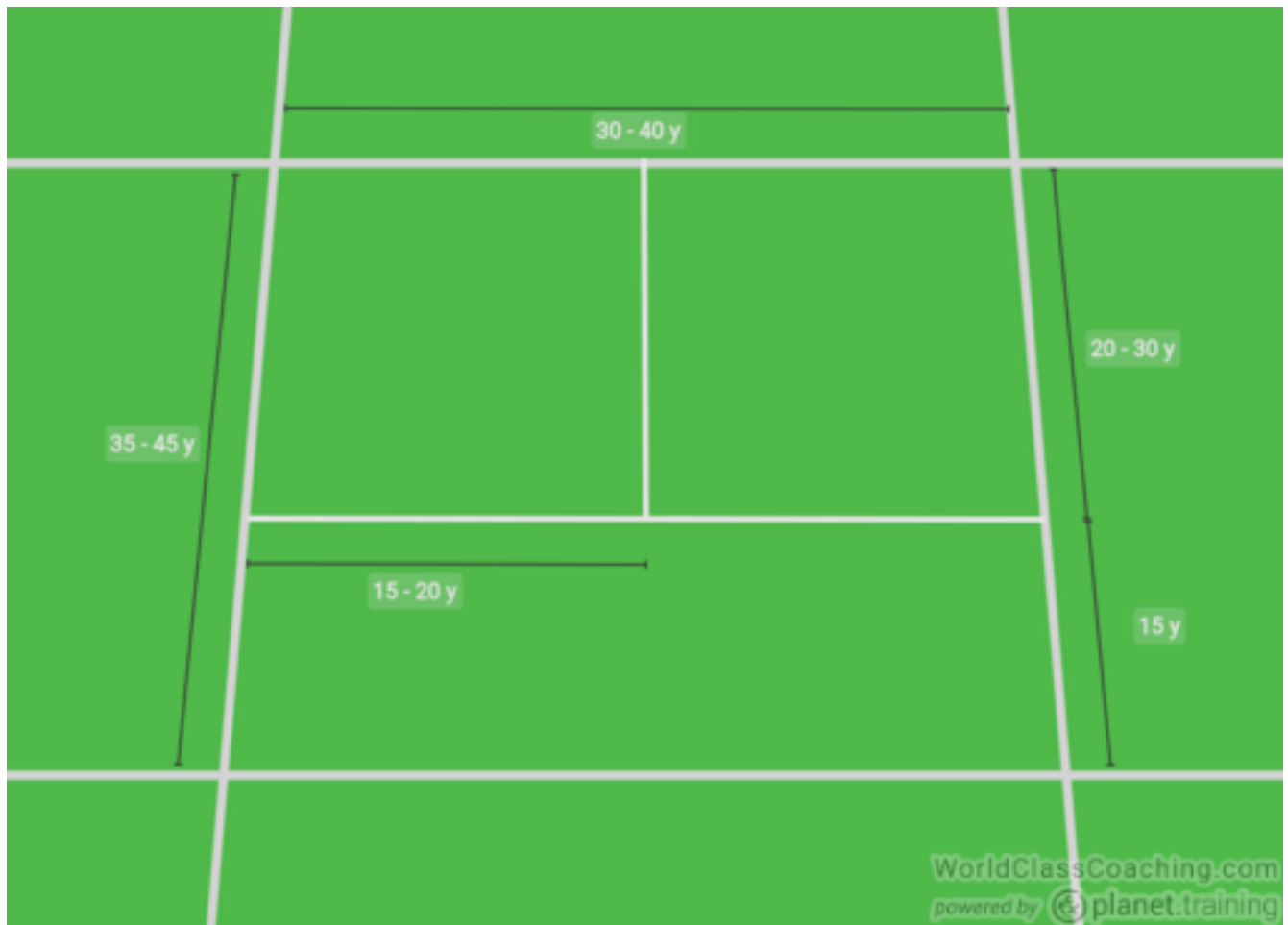
Every two inside/outside passes, one side pass can be played; a sequence shall be complete within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players in the middle and to close the passing lanes from outside to inside and vice versa.

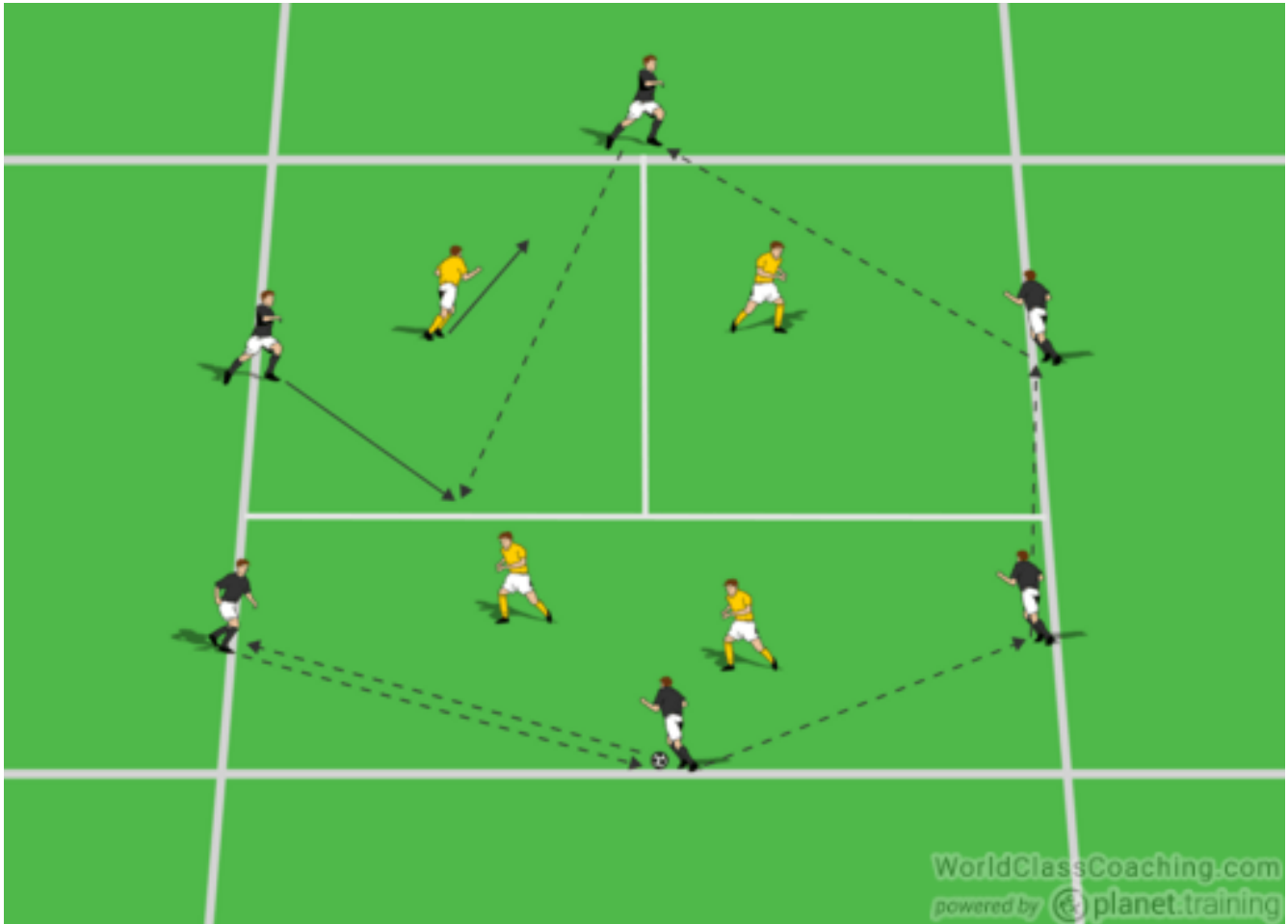
**Eye on:** Quick passing combination, pressure on the center player. Close the passing lanes.



## Three Grids Rondos



### Exercise 23: 6 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around (1)



#### Sequence

The playing space is divided into three areas; one horizontal lower area and two upper and vertical ones. Three black players are placed along the borders of the lower area and two defenders are inside it. Two other black players are placed along the outer lines of the two vertical areas; the last possession player is placed on the upper line of the set-up. Two defenders are inside the upper areas.

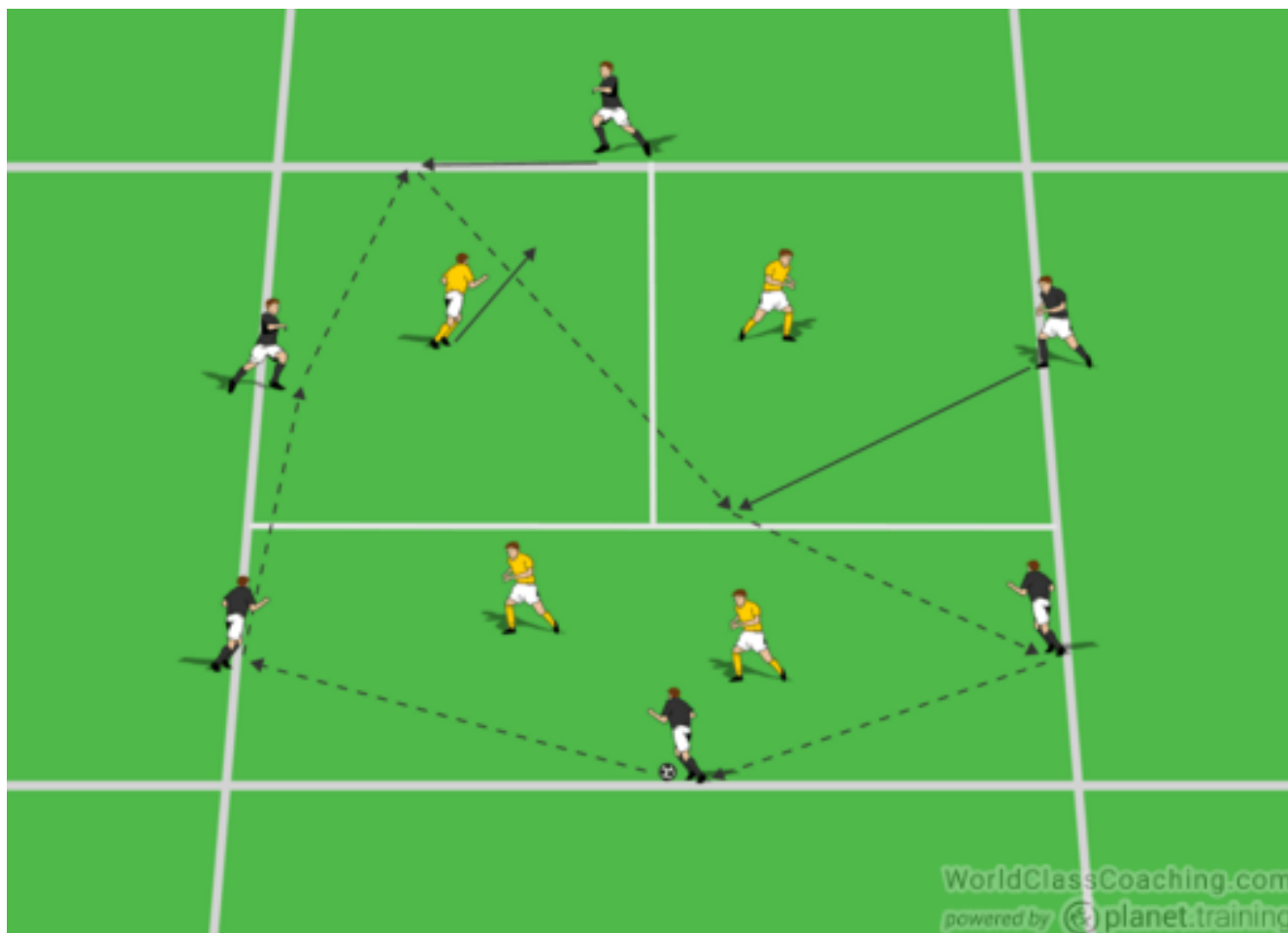
The objective for the players in possession is to play a wall passing combination on one side of the lower area (on the left in the picture) and then to switch the side (on the right) against two defenders who are pressing.

As the ball can be played forward, forward and backward passing combinations must be played to complete the sequence and to start again, thanks to an inside cut of an outer player.

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players inside the lower area and to close the passing lanes if they are placed inside the upper areas.

**Eye on:** Quick side, forward and backward passing combinations. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 24: 6 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around (2)



### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise.

The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball around along one side from the lower area (on the left in the picture) against two defenders who are pressing.

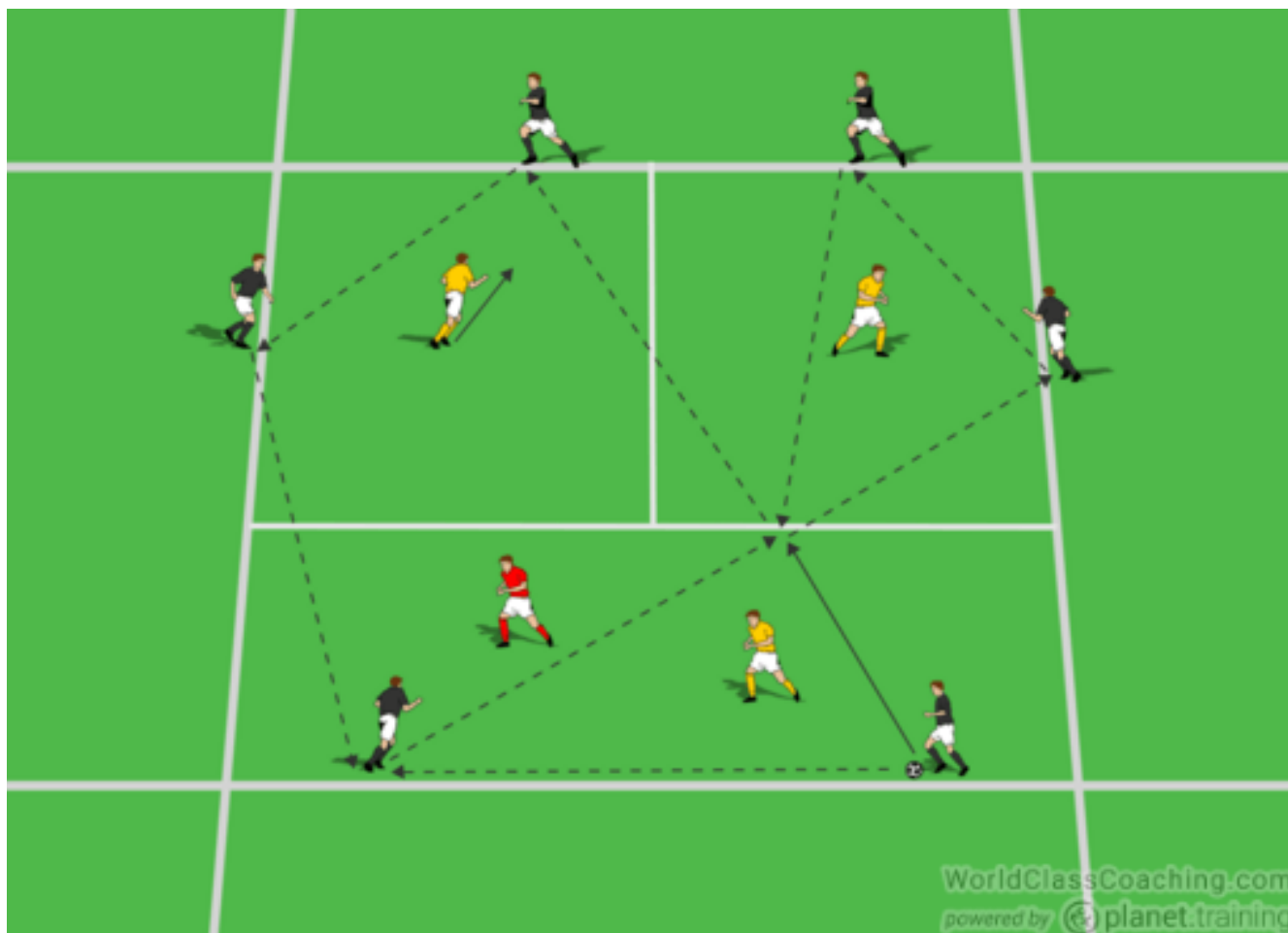
As the ball can be played forward, a backward pass must be played to complete the sequence and to start again, thanks to an inside cut of an outer player.

Every sequence shall be completed within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players inside the lower area and to close the passing lanes if they are placed inside the upper areas.

**Eye on:** Quick side, forward and backward passing combinations. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 25: 6 v 3 (+/- 1) to play forward and backward moving the ball around



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into three areas; one horizontal lower area and two upper and vertical ones. Two black players are placed along the end line of the lower area, one neutral player and one defender are inside it. Four other black players are placed along the outer lines of the two vertical areas. Two defenders are inside the upper areas.

The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball around on one side from the lower area (on the right in the picture) against two defenders who are pressing. The neutral player is a defender during the first 5"-6"; after this time, the neutral player becomes attacker and a 3 v 1 duel is created.

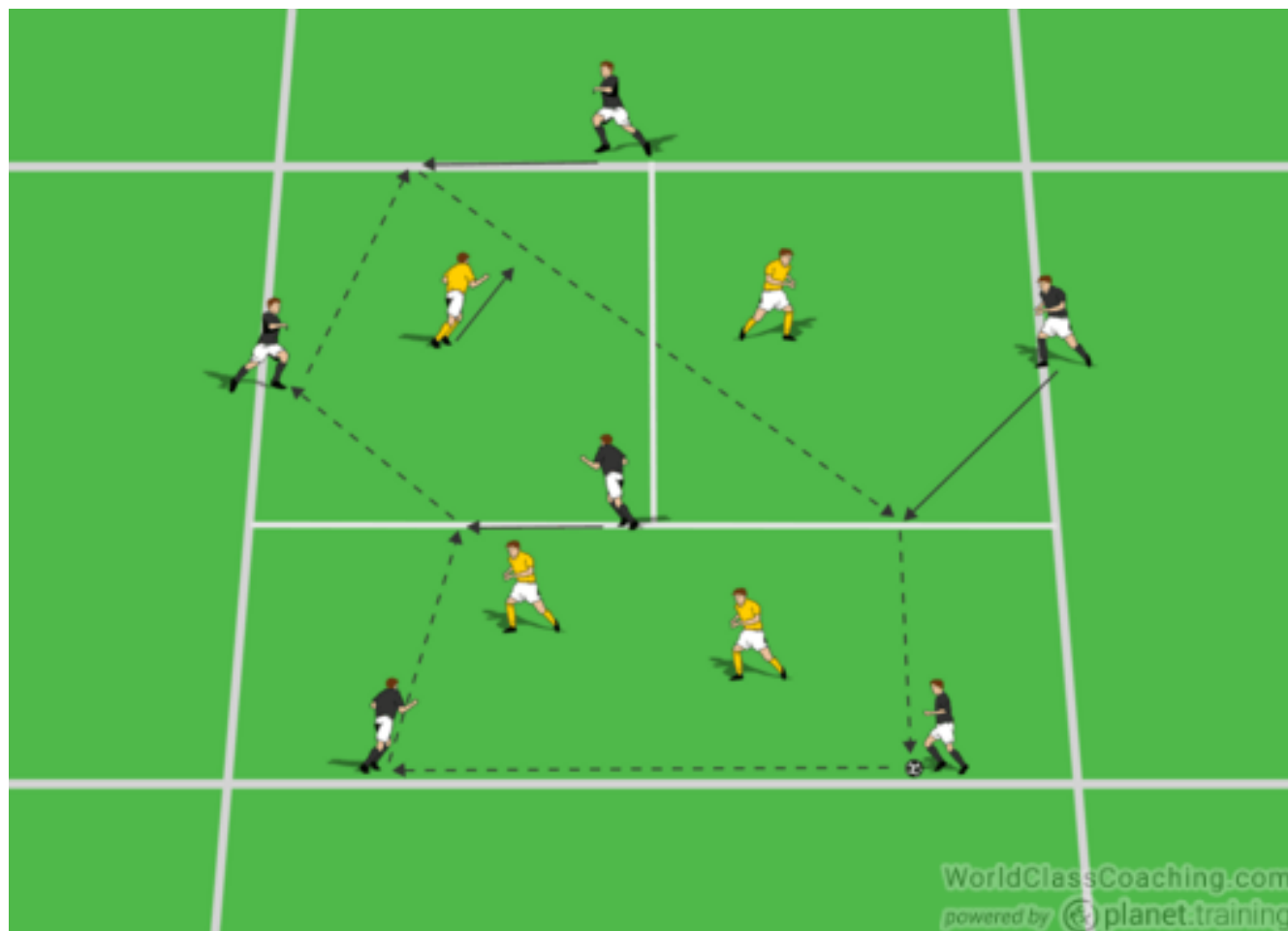
As the ball can be played behind the defender/s, forwards and backwards passing combinations must be played to complete the sequence.

Every sequence shall be completed within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players inside the lower area and to close the passing lanes if they are placed inside the upper areas.

**Eye on:** Quick side, forward and backward passing combinations. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 26: 6 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around



### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise. There are two defenders inside the lower area and four other players are placed along the outer borderlines of the upper areas

The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball along one side from the lower area (on the left in the picture) against two defenders who are pressing, passing the ball behind them toward the center player.

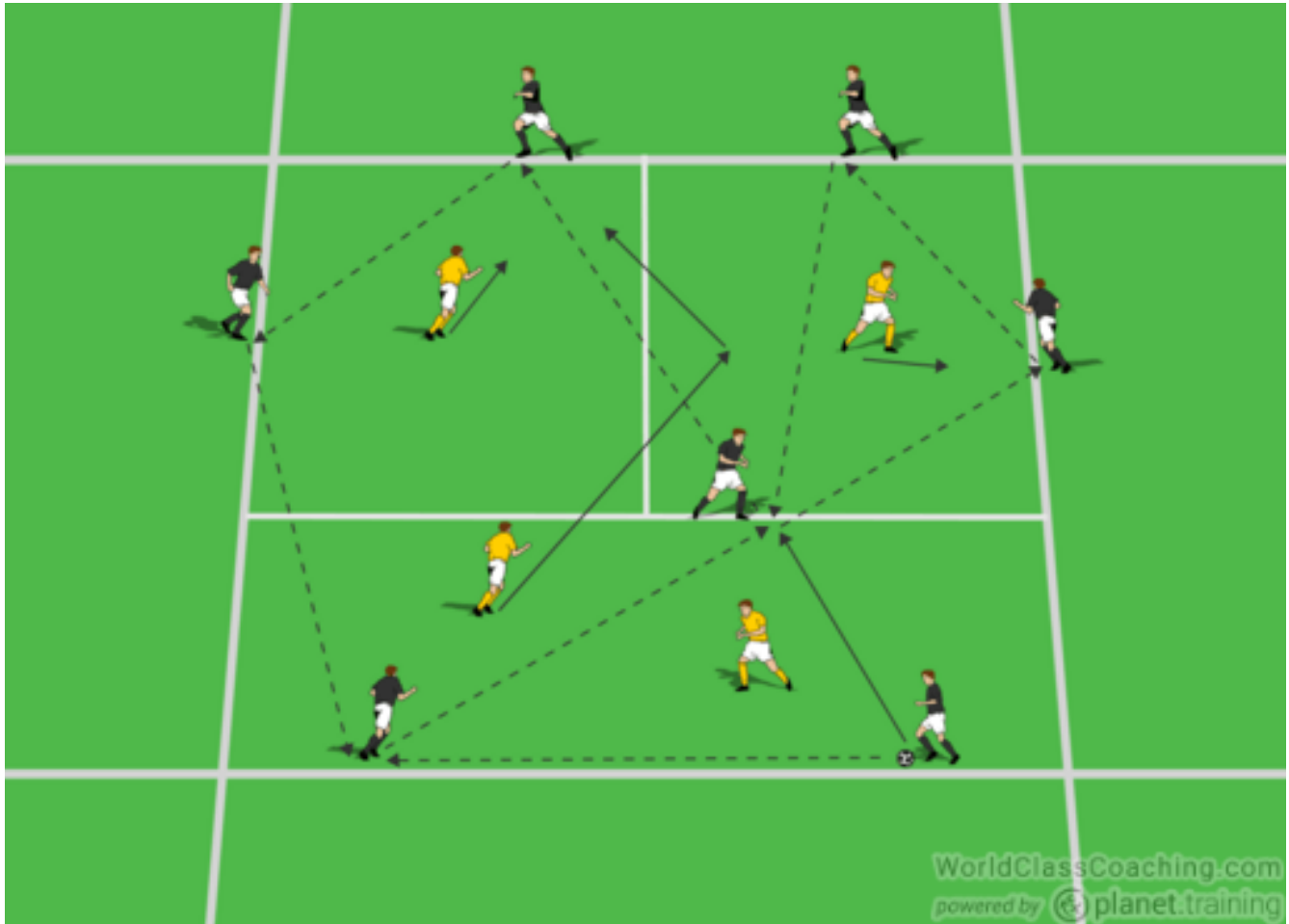
As the ball can be played forward, a backward pass must be played to complete the sequence and to start again, thanks to an inside cut of an opposite outer player.

Every sequence shall be completed within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black player inside the lower area and to close the passing lanes if they are placed inside the upper areas.

**Eye on:** Quick sideways, forward, and backward passing combinations. Pressure when playing 2 v 2. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 27: 7 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into three areas; one horizontal lower area and two upper and vertical ones. Two black players are placed along the end line of the lower area and two defenders are inside it. Five other players are placed along the outer borderlines of the upper areas.

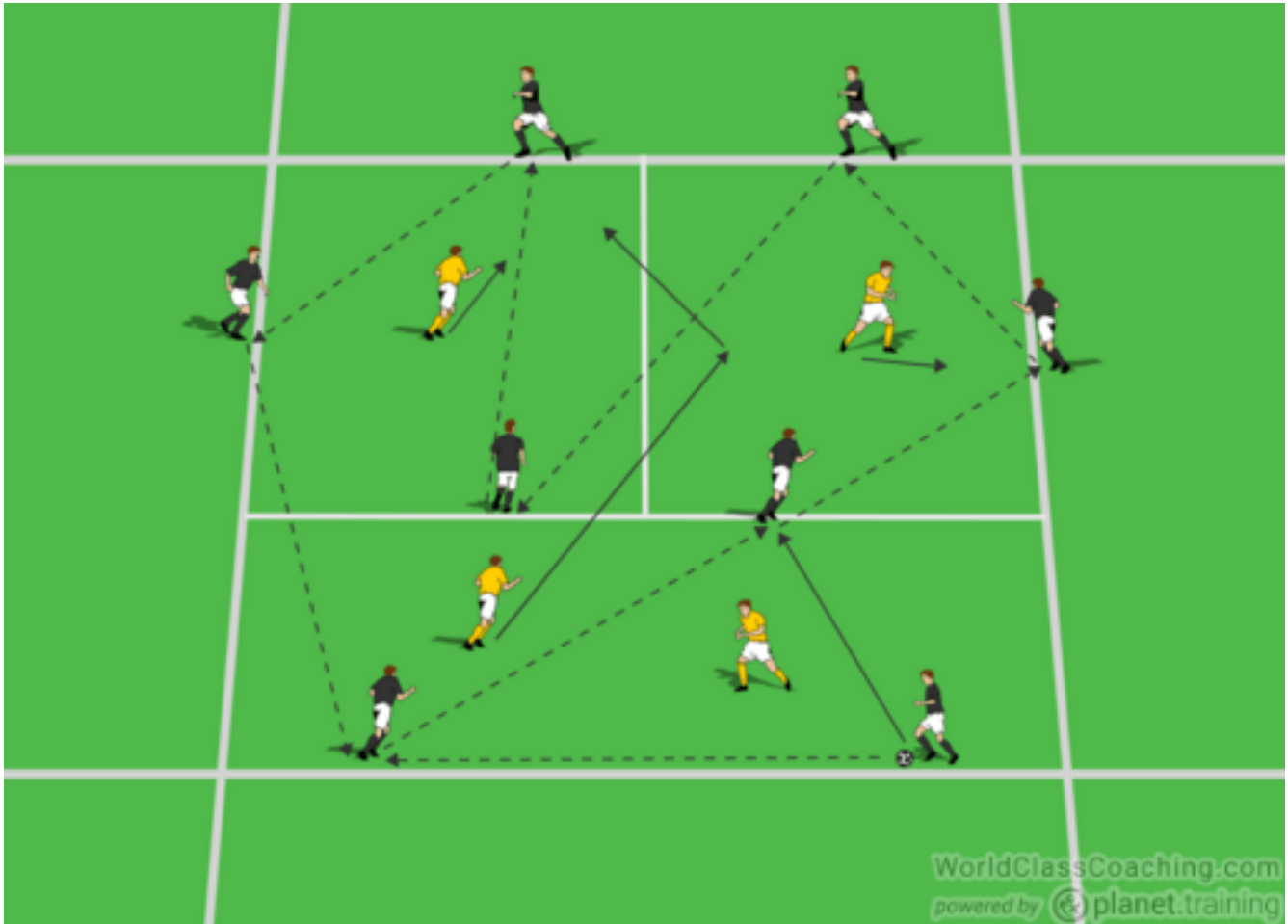
The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball forward along one side from the lower area (on the right in the picture) against two defenders who are pressing, passing the ball behind them toward the center player.

As the ball can be played forward, a diagonal forward and backward passing combination must be played to complete the sequence and to start again. One defender can run inside the upper areas where the ball is being played, to create momentary 3 v 2 duels. Every sequence shall be completed within 10"-12".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players inside the lower area and where they can play as couple and to close the passing lanes if they are placed alone inside the upper areas.

**Eye on:** Quick side, forward and backward passing combinations. Pressure when playing 2 v 2. Close the passing lanes.

## Exercise 28: 8 v 4 to play forward and backward moving the ball around



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into three areas: one horizontal lower area and two upper and vertical ones. Two black players are placed along the end line of the lower area and two defenders are inside it. Six other players are placed along the outer borderlines of the upper areas.

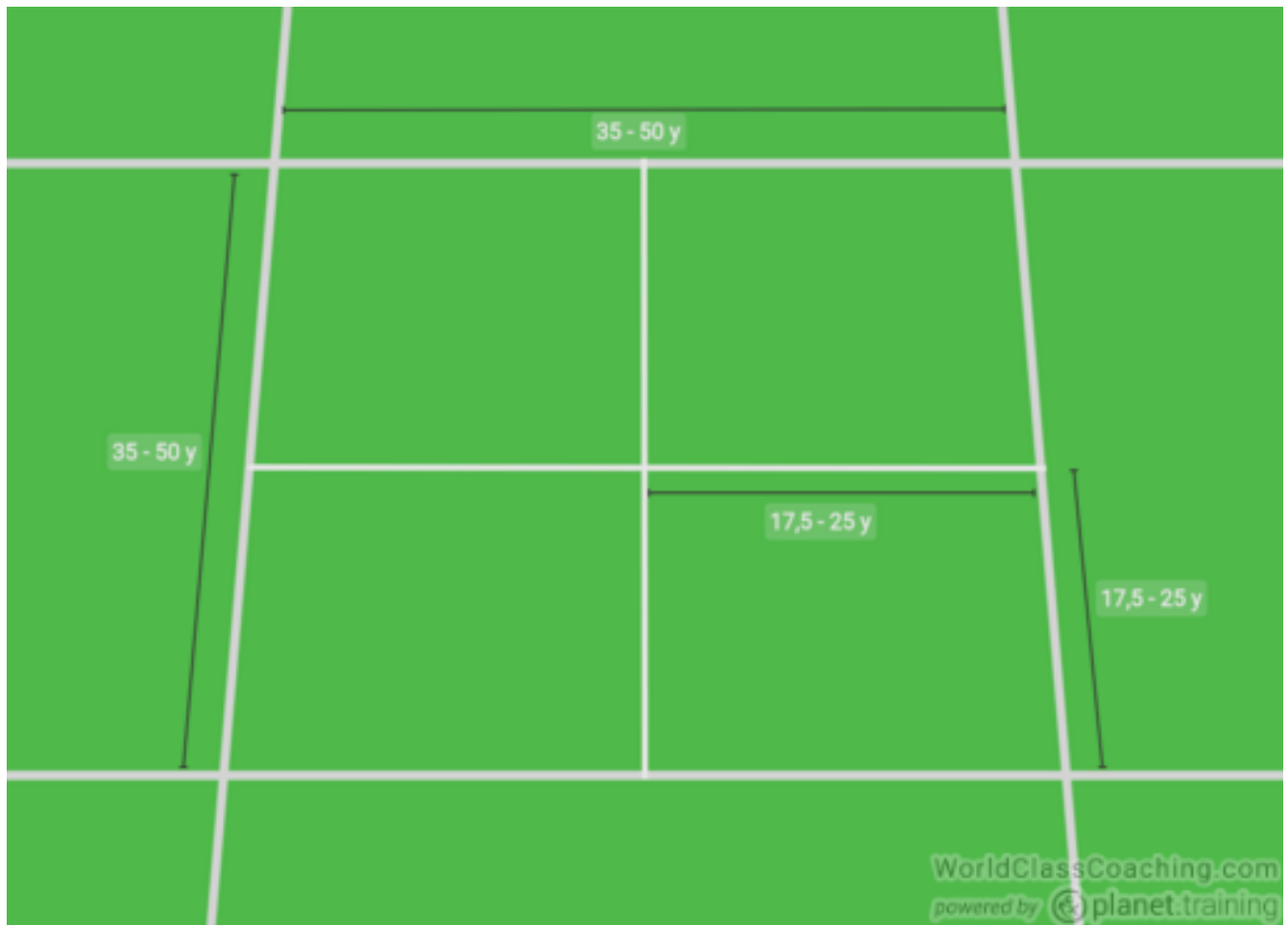
The objective for the players in possession is to move the ball forward along one side from the lower area (on the right in the picture) against two defenders who are pressing, passing the ball behind them toward the center player of one of the upper areas.

As the ball can be played forward, a diagonal forward and backward passing combination must be played to complete the sequence and to start again. One defender can run inside the upper areas where the ball is being played, to create momentary 3 v 2 duels. Every sequence shall be completed within 8"-10".

The defenders are asked to put pressure on the black players inside the lower area and where they can play as couple and to close the passing lanes if they are placed alone inside the upper areas.

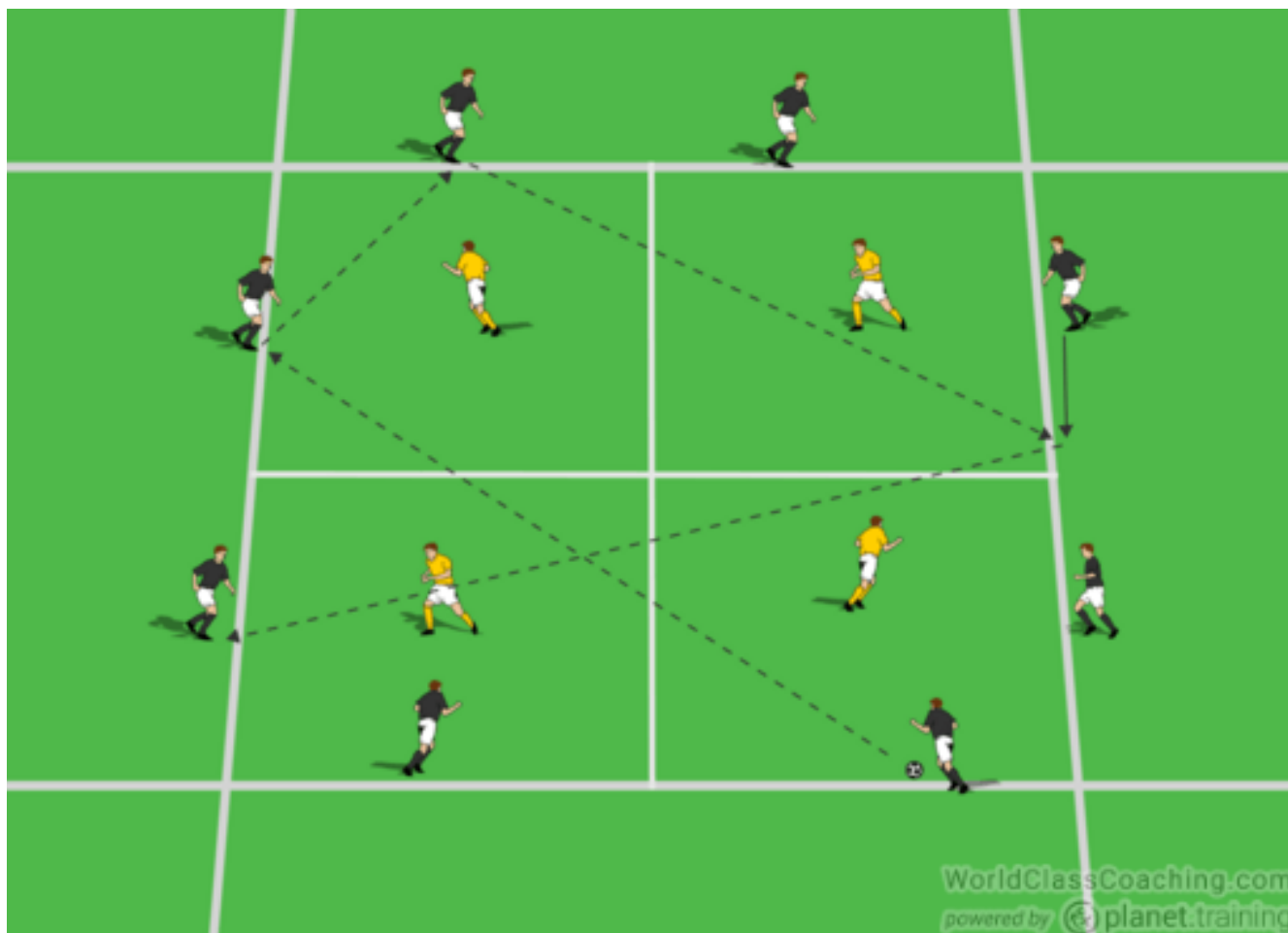
**Eye on:** Quick side, forward and backward passing combinations. Pressure when playing 2 v 2. Close the passing lanes.

## Four Grids Rondos





## Exercise 29: 8 v 4 to play vertical or diagonal passes



### Sequence

The playing space is divided into four squares. Two black players are placed along the outer end lines of all the squares and one defender is placed inside each square.

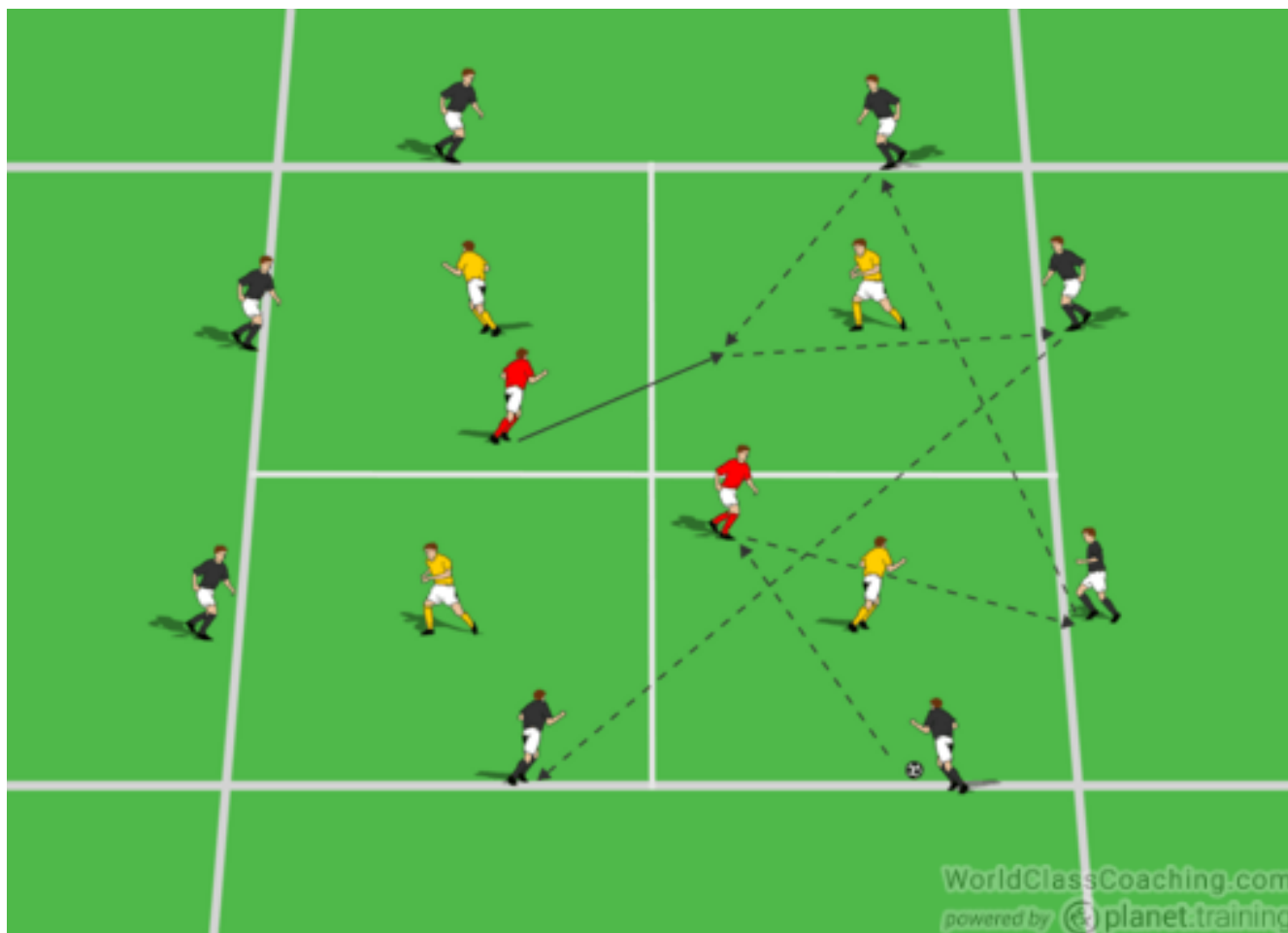
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. One player on the lower line of the set up must pass the ball to a teammate on the upper areas or to the teammate close to him, but diagonally.

If a pass is sent toward another area, two touches are allowed; if a pass is sent to the closest teammate, it has to be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the player of the area or to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Accurate passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes.

### Exercise 30: 8 + 2 v 4 to play quick passing combination and vertical passes



#### Sequence

The playing space is divided into four squares. Two black players are placed along the outer end lines of all the squares and one defender is placed inside each square. Two neutral players are free to move among the squares to create momentary 3 v 1 duels.

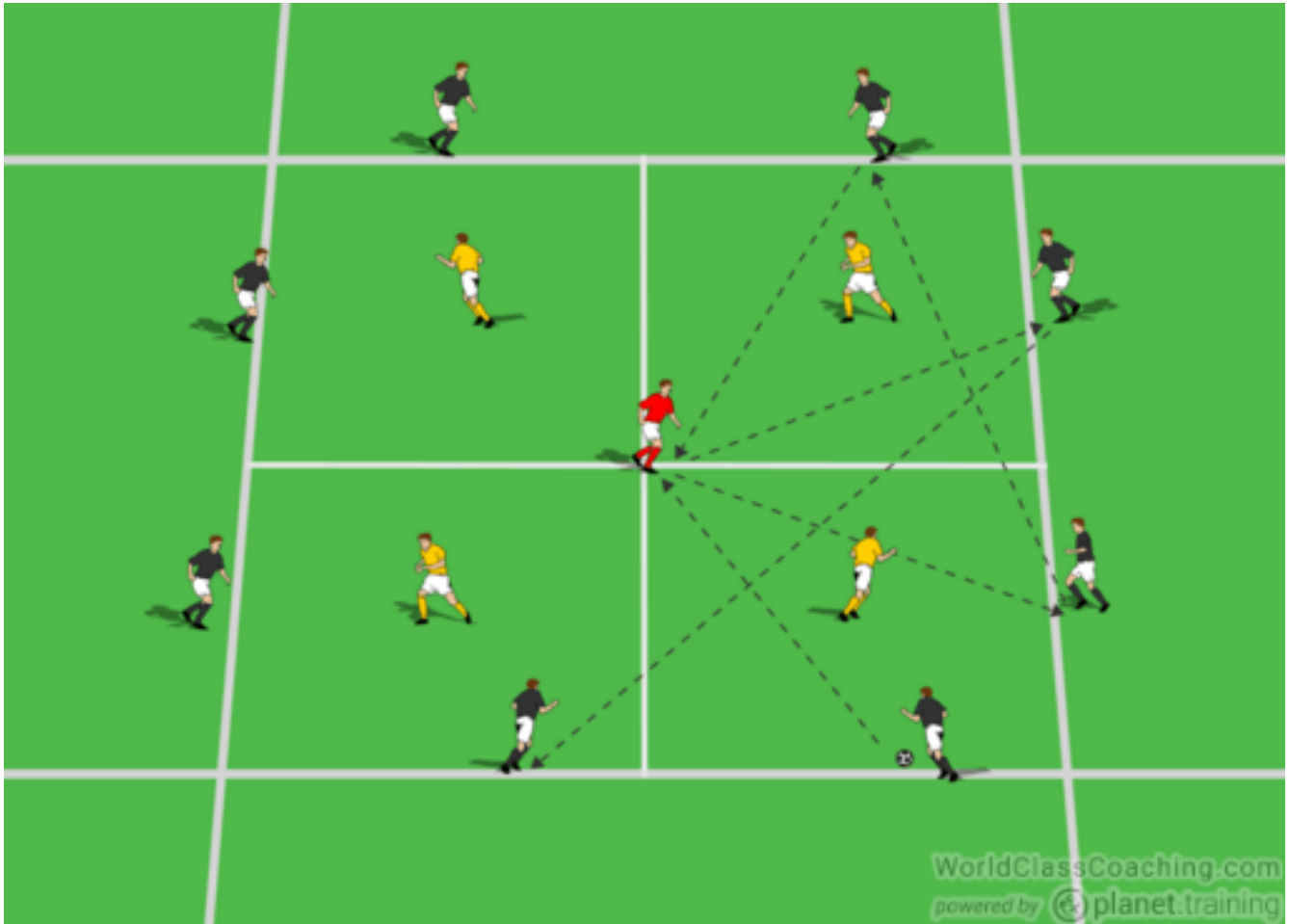
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. Every time the ball is received inside an area, a passing combination to find a third man together with a neutral player must be played, before being passed toward another square.

If a pass is sent toward another area, two touches are allowed. The passing combinations inside the same area should be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the neutral players or to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes.

### Exercise 31: 8 + 1 v 4 to play quick passing combinations and vertical passes



#### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise, but only one neutral player is placed on the center corner of the squares to create momentary 3 v 1 duels.

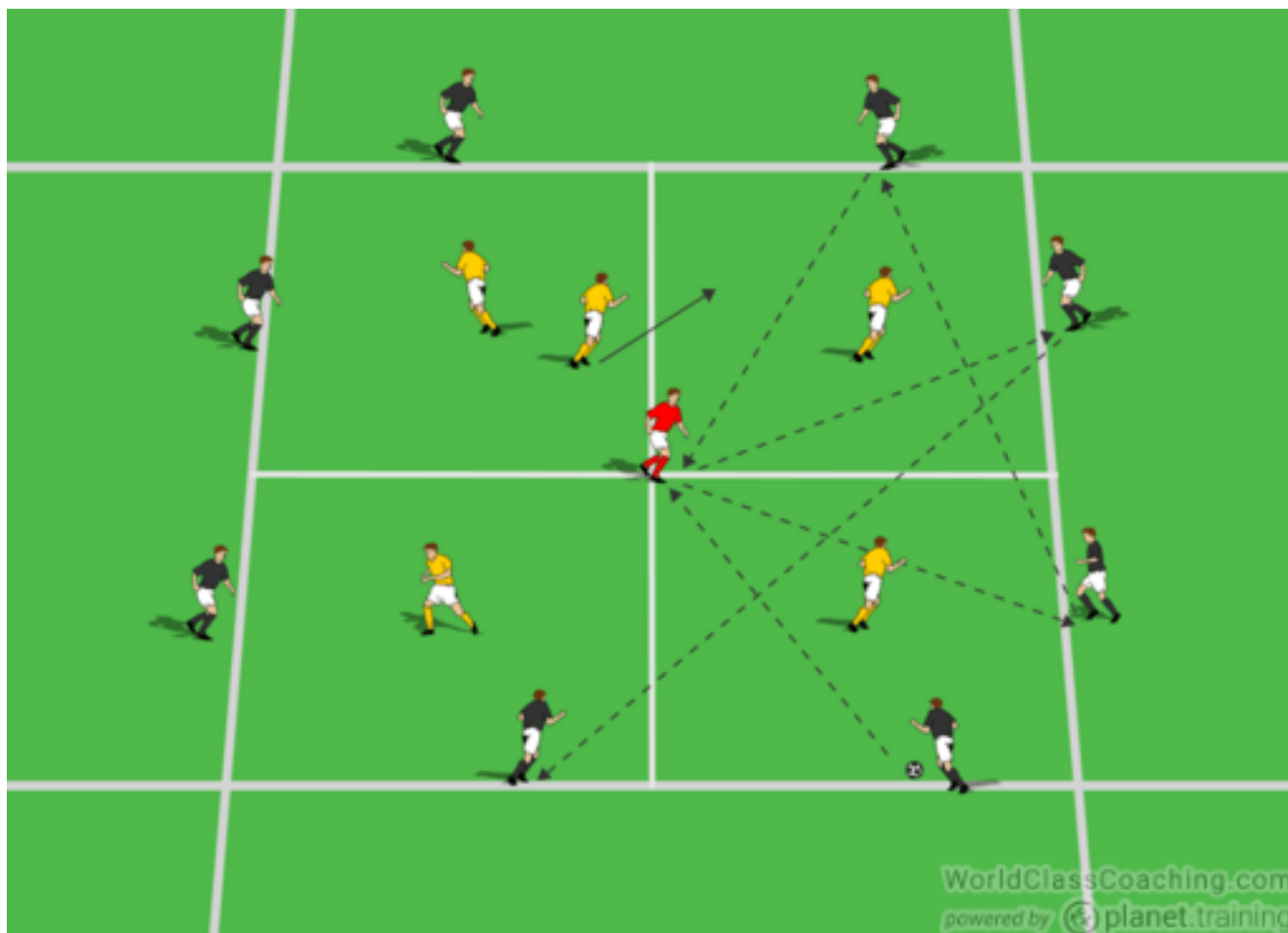
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. Every time the ball is received inside an area, a passing combination to find a third man together with the center neutral player must be played, before being passed toward another square.

If a pass is sent toward another area, two touches are allowed. The passing combinations inside the same area and with the center neutral player should be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the outer players or to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes.

## Exercise 32: 8 + 1 v 5 to play quick passing combinations and vertical passes



### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise; one neutral player is placed on the center corner of the squares to create momentary 3 v 1 duels. A fifth defender is now active and free to move to create 3 v 2 duels inside the squares.

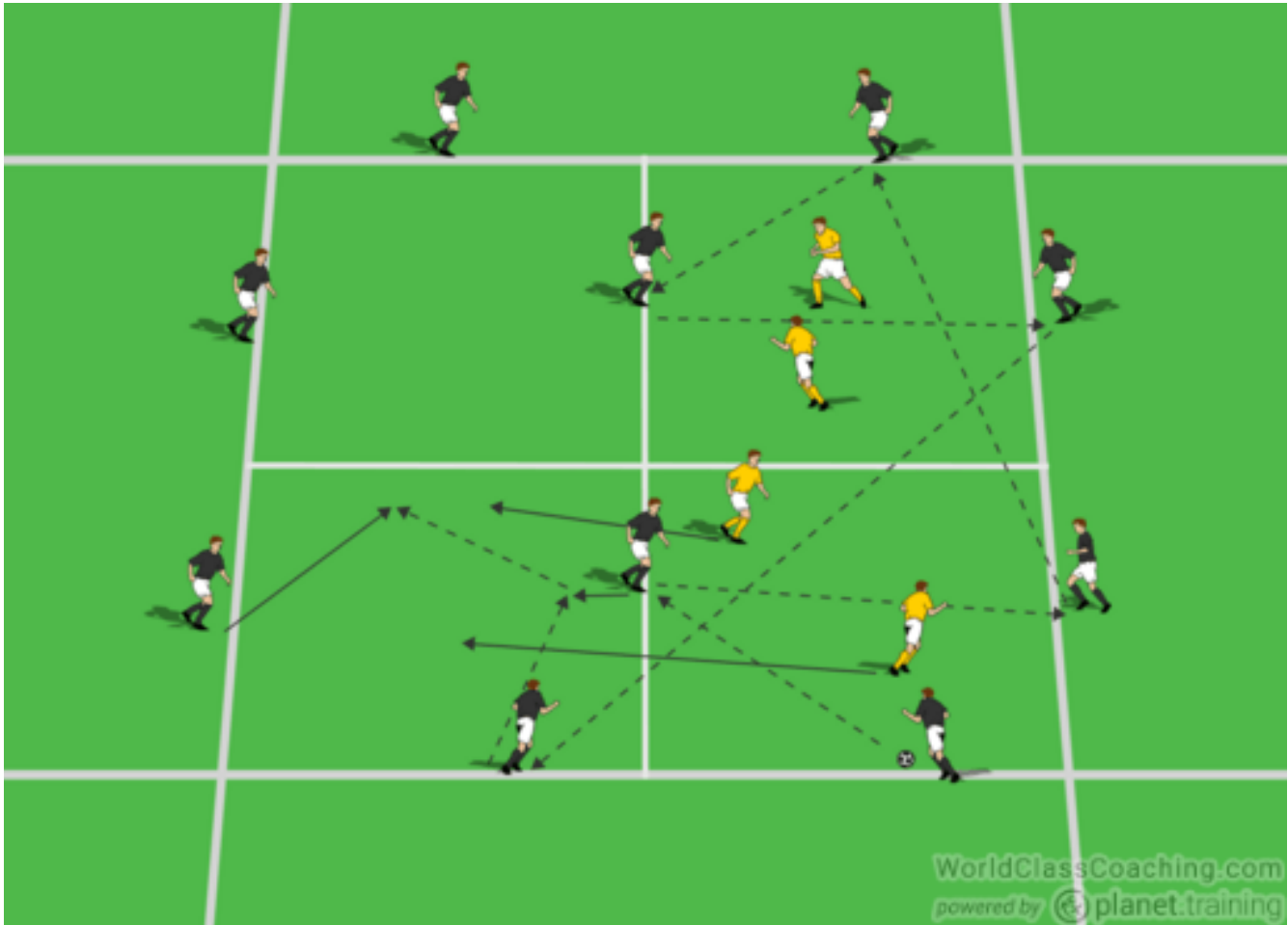
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. Every time the ball is received inside an area, a passing combination to find a third man together with the center neutral player must be played, before being passed toward another square.

If a pass is send toward another area, two touches are allowed. The passing combinations inside the same area and with the center neutral player should be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the outer players, to double the mark against the neutral player or to close the passing lanes.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes or anticipate the neutral player.

### Exercise 33: 10 v 4 to play with the third man



#### Sequence

The playing space is divided into four squares. Two black players are placed along the outer end lines of all the squares and two more are placed along two inside vertical lines as in the picture. Four defenders are free to press as couple inside the squares, creating momentary 3 v 2 duels.

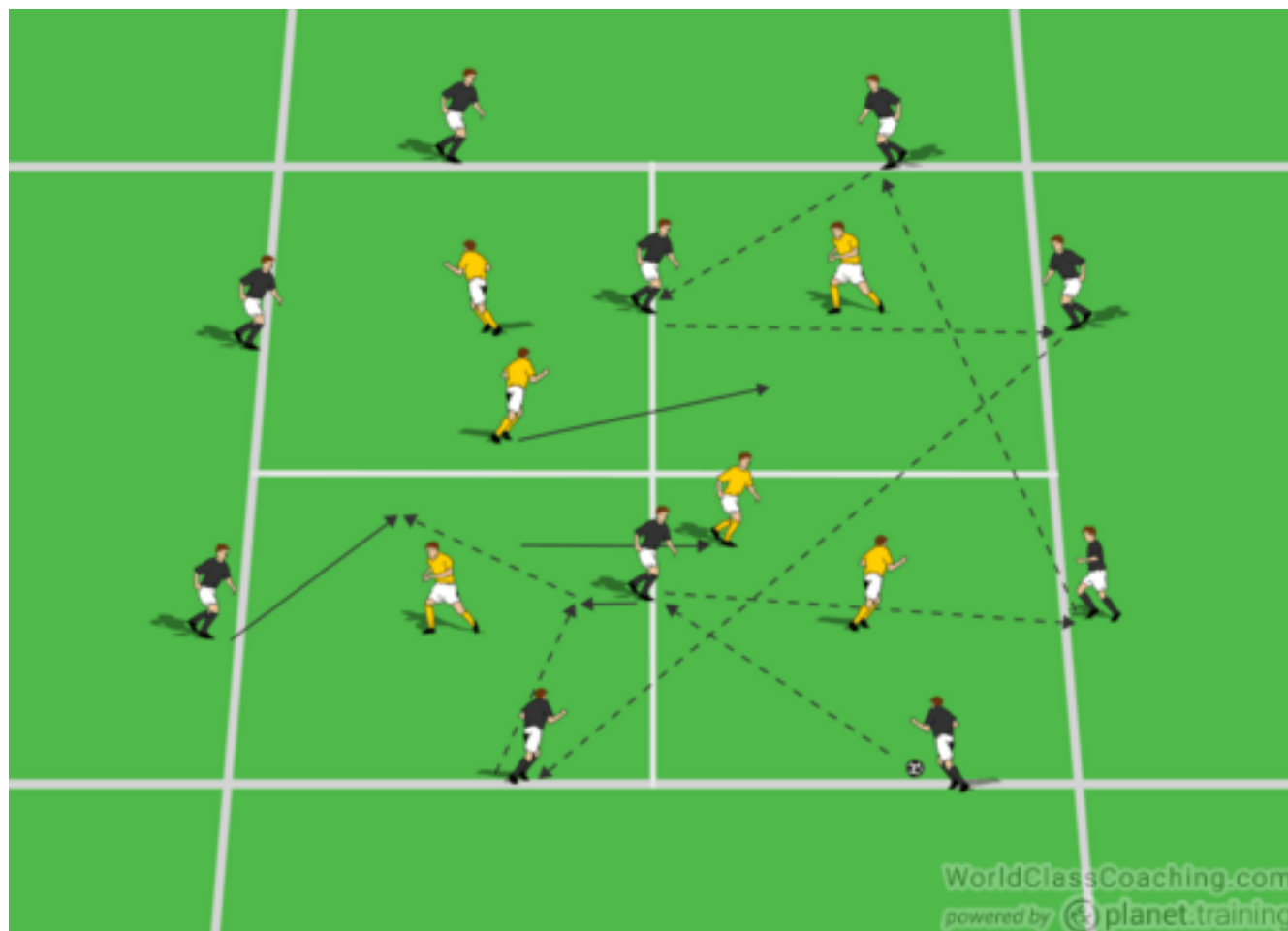
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. Every time the ball is received inside an area, a passing combination to find a third man together with the inside teammates must be played, before being passed toward another square.

If a pass is sent toward another area, two touches are allowed. The passing combinations inside the same area should be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the center players or to close the passing lanes. If they win the ball, they change the position with the couple of players of the area where the wrong pass comes from or where the ball control was wrong.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes. Press the opposition with the right timing.

### Exercise 34: 10 v 6 to play with the third man



#### Sequence

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise, but six defenders are free to move creating 3 v 2 duels where the ball is played and 3 v 1 duels off the ball.

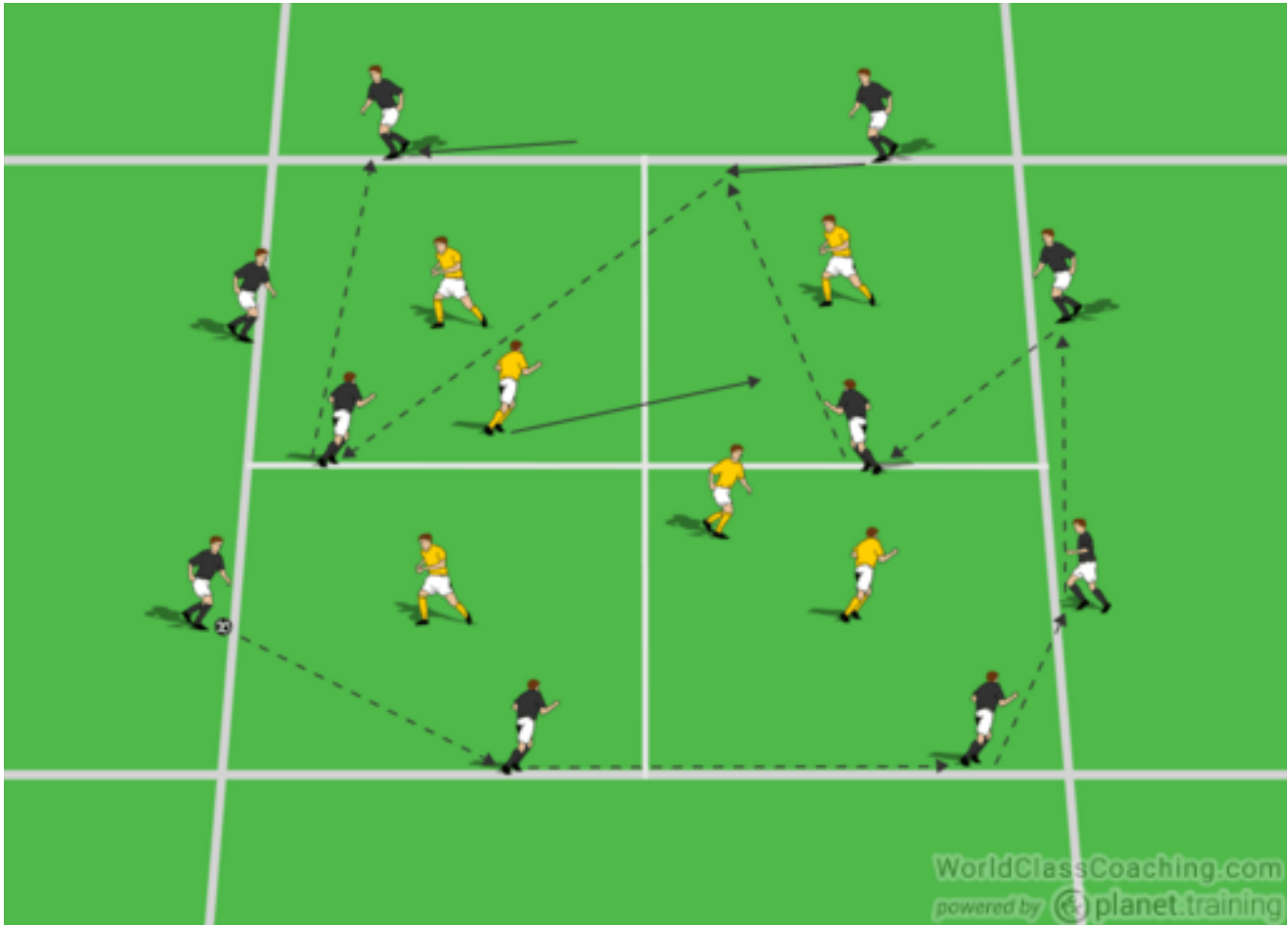
The ball must be passed among the outside players and through the areas without being played side by side horizontally. Every time the ball is received inside an area, a passing combination to find a third man together with the inside teammates must be played, before being passed toward another square.

If a pass is sent toward another area, two touches are allowed. The passing combinations inside the same area should be played with one touch.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the center players or to close the passing lanes. If they win the ball, they change the position with the couple of players of the area where the wrong pass comes from or where the ball control was wrong.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes. Press the opposition with the right timing.

**Exercise 35: 10 v 6 to switch the side and to play forward and backward passing combinations.**



**Sequence**

The set-up is the same of the previous exercise, but two black players are placed on the center lines horizontally and turned toward the upper areas. And again six defenders are free to move creating 3 v 2 duels where the ball is played and 3 v 1 duels off the ball.

The ball must be passed among the outside lower players, switching the side (from the left to the right in the picture). As the ball is played inside an upper area, forward and backward combinations must be played to move the ball.

The defenders can decide to put pressure against the center players or to close the passing lanes. If they win the ball, they change the position with the couple of players of the area where the wrong pass comes from or where the ball control was wrong.

**Eye on:** Accurate and quick passing, oriented control, play with one or two touches. Intercept the passes. Press the opposition with the right timing.