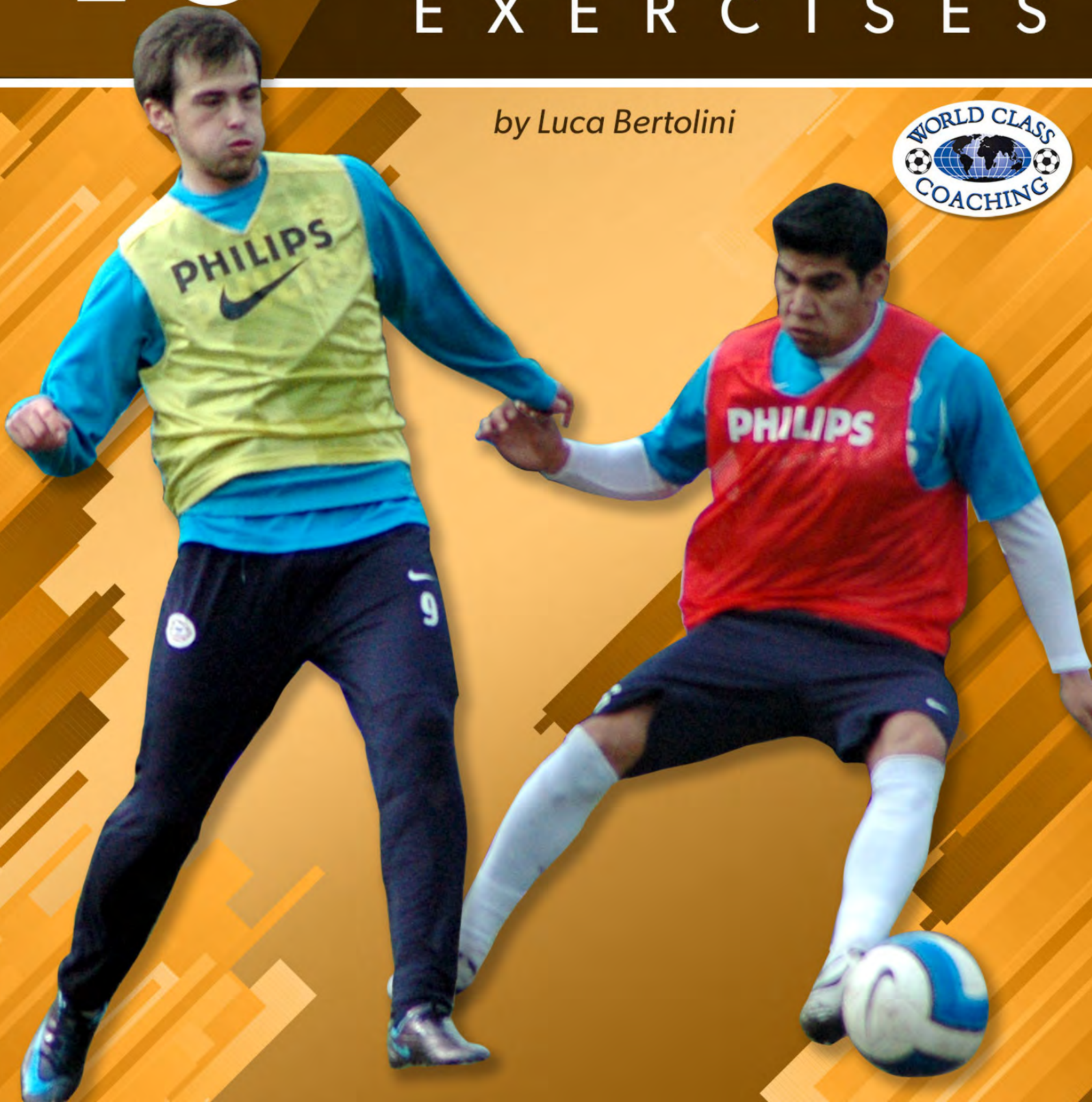


40

GROUP AND TACTICAL DEFENDING EXERCISES

by Luca Bertolini



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Introduction: team defense

Team defense is a dance; the players are dancers who must learn the individual steps first (the individual soccer principles of play), then how to move in relation to the closer dancers (teammates and opponents - group defense) and, in the end, how to dance at the same rhythm of all the other teammates, with the right timing, toward the right spaces that are required by the game situation.

It is very important to understand how the principles of team defense (defense tactical principles) must always be respected and followed, whatever are the tactical developments or solutions that a team uses as pattern of play, to solve a game situation; it doesn't matter if a team uses man or zonal defense, with 3, 4 or 5 defenders, as these principles are the basis of the phase of play without possession.



The positioning of the team without possession is the prerequisite to develop all the other principles of defense. The team must make the pitch small to tighten the space for the opposition. Each player should be positioned both to counter an opponent and to cover a space or a teammate. This principle is valid among the players, as well as among the team sectors.

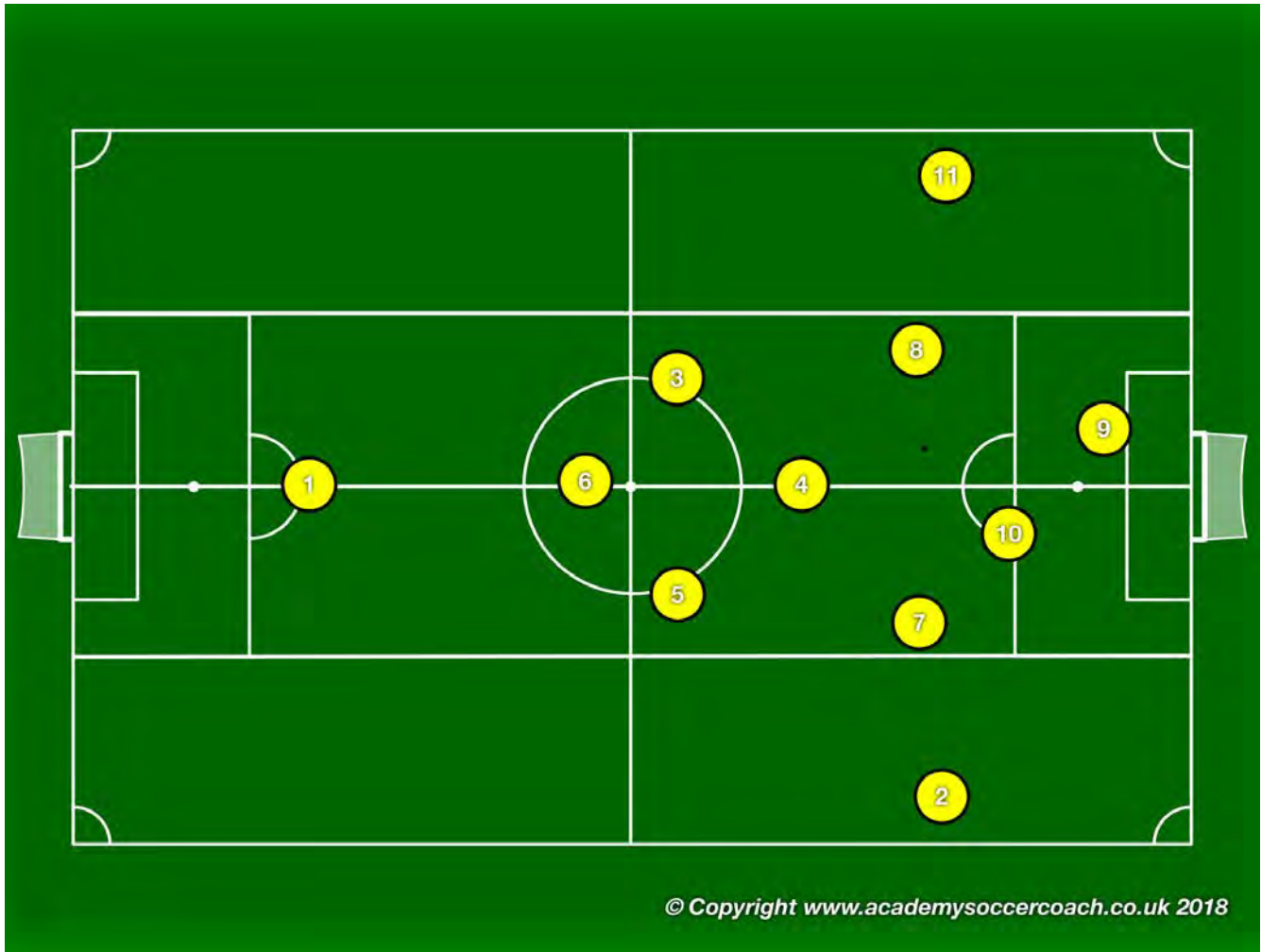
On the next two pages, we will show pictures of two different defensive positioning shapes.

The first picture shows a classic offensive team shape of Guardiola's Manchester City and consequently, the team shape during transitions to defense phases, as the possession is lost.

The players must be well skilled from an individual point of view to switch the attitude from possession to non-possession phase, but they must be correctly positioned to react as team to the transition to defense phase. For example: 6 advanced players to counter-press, 1 player to balance, 3 defenders to cover deep and protect the goalkeeper, who is placed out of the penalty area.

The type of players' positioning affects all the other defense principles of play that are independent from the tactical developments anyway.

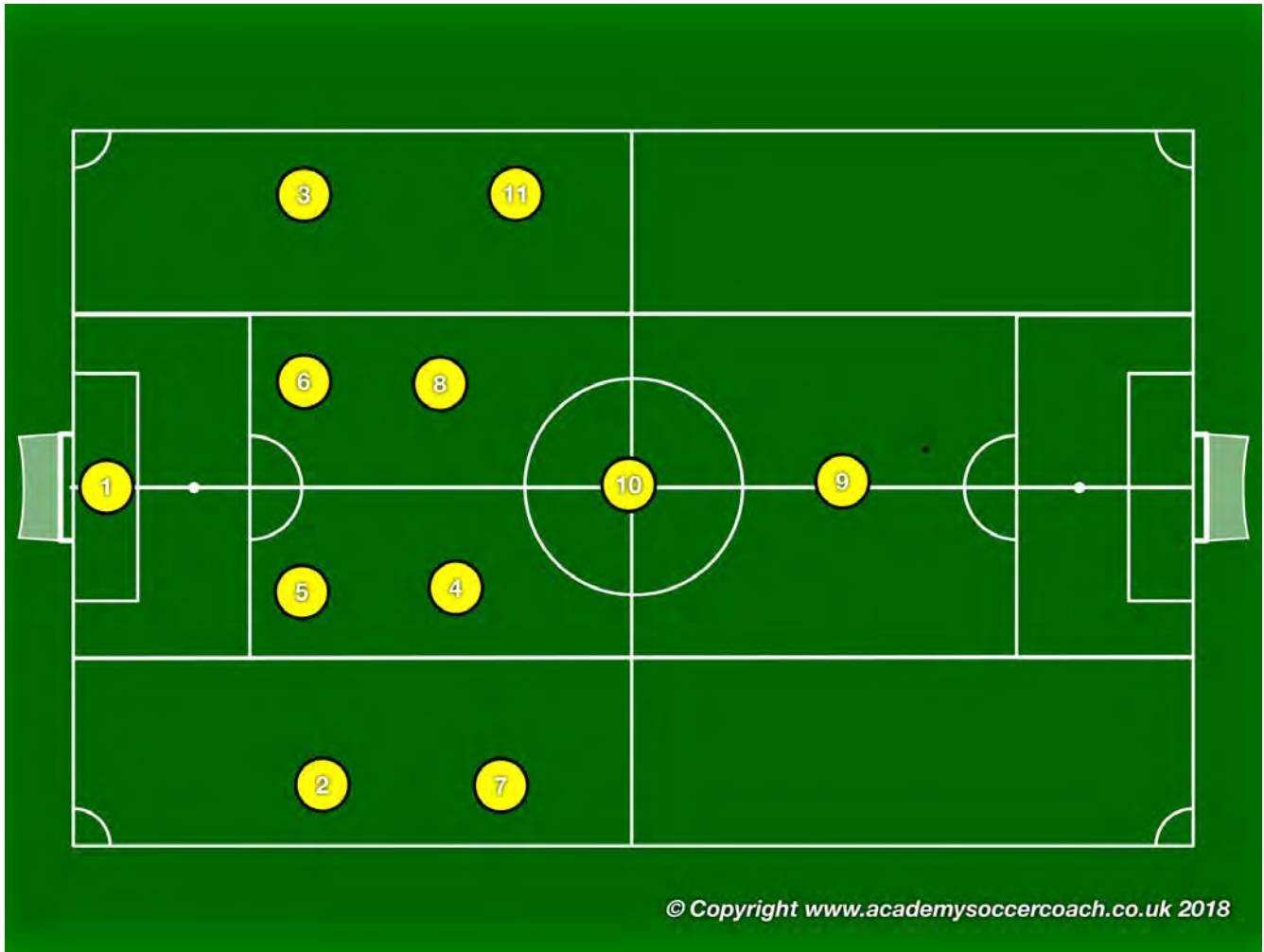
The attacking positions determine the transition to defense phase of the team that loses the possession; but here again, the main principles of defense phase are the same.



When and how to press, when to drop off, when and how to counter, to create a strong area or side etc. are developments related to the game situation and to the positions of the ball and of the opponents.

This is an example of team shape after a tactical development, after a failed pressure attempt, as the opposing team has been able to progress forward and to develop a possession phase inside the middle and first third.

The principles of play in this situation are fixed, but how the team arrived at this shape is a consequence of tactical developments and game situations.



This example is a classic 1-4-4-2-defense shape, usually in front of the penalty area, whatever is the starting formation and further developments. These last seasons, beside the 3 man defense, the coaches have moved to a compact and organized flat back 4.

It is very important to work on covering space, not marking, away from the ball, and on getting support for the first defender near the ball, backing off instantly when the opponent passes the ball away. To cover the depth is then the first goal. 1 v 1 duels seem to be very important during pressure phases, but then the depth protection becomes fundamental if the opposition is able to progress forward.

Team principles of play

Balance: coordinated movements of the defending team from one area of the field to another one, as the ball is moved to that part, keeping the defensive active area (near and around the ball) balanced and paying attention to the weak side (away from the ball). The objective is to reorganize the defense in front of the ball.

Tracking: following opponents' runs off the ball and of the player in possession when dribbling. For example, a defender chasing an attacking player who is making a forward and/or diagonal movement to generate a passing option in front of the ball.

Switching positions: the exchange of positions between 2 defenders in order to be more efficient defensively against cut, diagonal runs or overlapping combinations of the opponents. For example, a center back moves to the flank to defend the right-attacker and the left defender runs toward the center to cover the center back position, while retreating.

Zonal defending: the equal distribution of defenders into space to create defensive efficiency and to prevent the opposition from reaching the goal; every player should be aware of the assigned area of responsibility.

Team pressure: intense, constant and organized actions of a group of players against the opponents to create defending numerical advantage 2 v 1, or more, on the ball, and as unit in the final third, middle third or first third.

Retreat and recovery: movement of a group of players back toward defensive positions in order to reorganize the team's defensive shape and to prevent the opposition from playing in behind the lines and at the back of the last defense line, when the pressure action is not effective.

Compactness/Concentration: create high density of players near the ball to force the opposition's possession phase backwards or toward the sidelines.

Direct the opponent: force the direction of the possession phase of the opposition (player, sector or team) toward easier areas to defend; generally outside or inside to create high density of players.

Delay: action of the defending team against the opposition to decrease the space of the offensive phase, restricting the passing options and preventing dribbling moves to progress through the field and toward the goal. The rhythm of play must be slowed down.

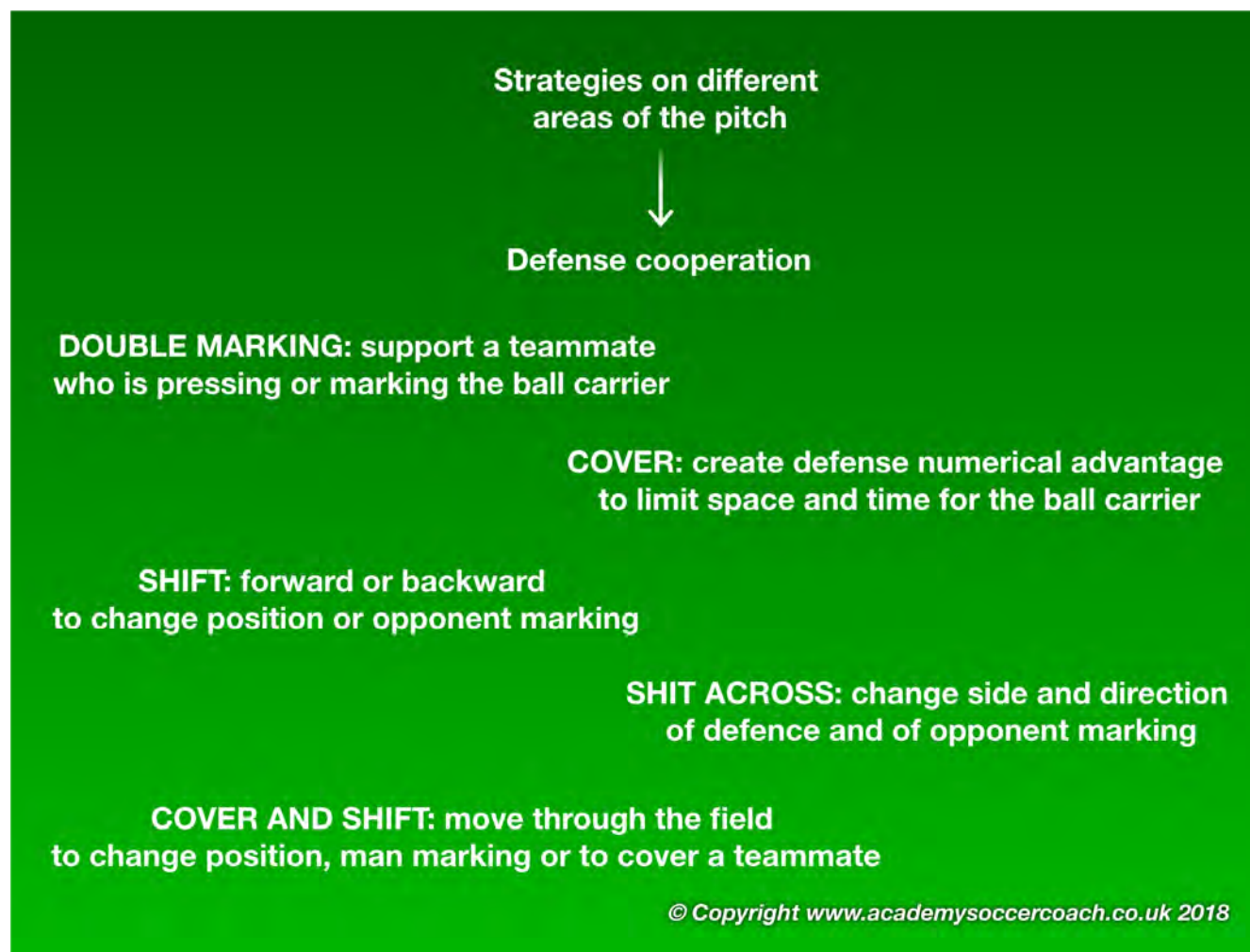
The principles of play on the field



- 1) Team pressure to win the ball back, to keep the opposition away from the own goal with low risk.
- 2) Show the opposition strong zones, keep the opponent wide or show the center space if it's overload; prevent switches of play or the ball carrier from seeing the pitch.
- 3) Be compact to prevent forward passes or runs and be balanced to prevent counter-attacks. Force the possession phase toward zones 2 or 1.
- 4) Anticipate overloads, prevent cross passes or overlap runs and force the opposition backward. Track the opponents.
- 5) Patience and delay, pressure to force the opponents backward and avoid them turning. Compactness to prevent opposition passes in behind. Man mark is often required as well as retreating and recovering (tracking) the space, if the opposition is facing the goal.
- 6) Compactness to man mark the opponents, pressure to avoid any finishing chance and to clear the area.

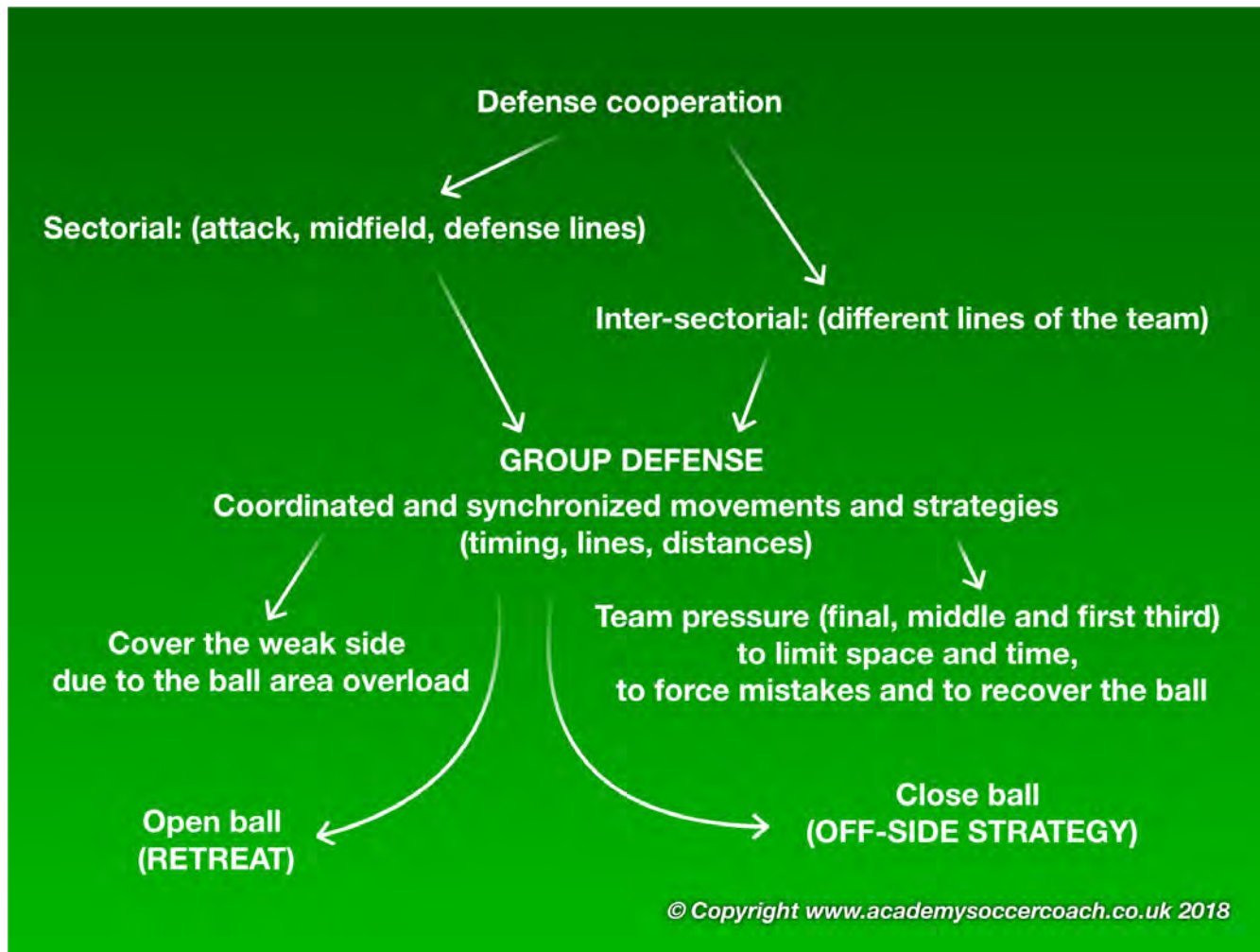
From defense cooperation to team defense tactics

What is the defender's behavior according to the different areas of the field? How to work on the strategies in each area of the field? Is it better to code the behavior rules to be performed in each zone or to encourage experiences for the players to discover solutions?



All these sectorial and inter-sectorial principles of play create defense cooperation pattern of play and shape the team transition to defend and the defense phases.

Group defense means coordinated and synchronized movements and strategies related to timing, lines and players distances of the defending team.



Cover the weak side:

- Prevention on the weak side due to the density near the ball area
- Sectorial and inter-sectorial organization and cooperation
- Synchronization of movements and timings related to the offside strategy

Pressure:

- Inside the first third in case of outnumbered situations
- Inside the middle third to look for counter-attacks chances
- Inside the final third to counter the build up phase of play of the opposition

When to press?

- Wrong ball control of the opponents
- Wrong body position of the opponent on the ball or of a potential receiver
- Wrong pass
- Wandering aerial balls
- Throw-ins

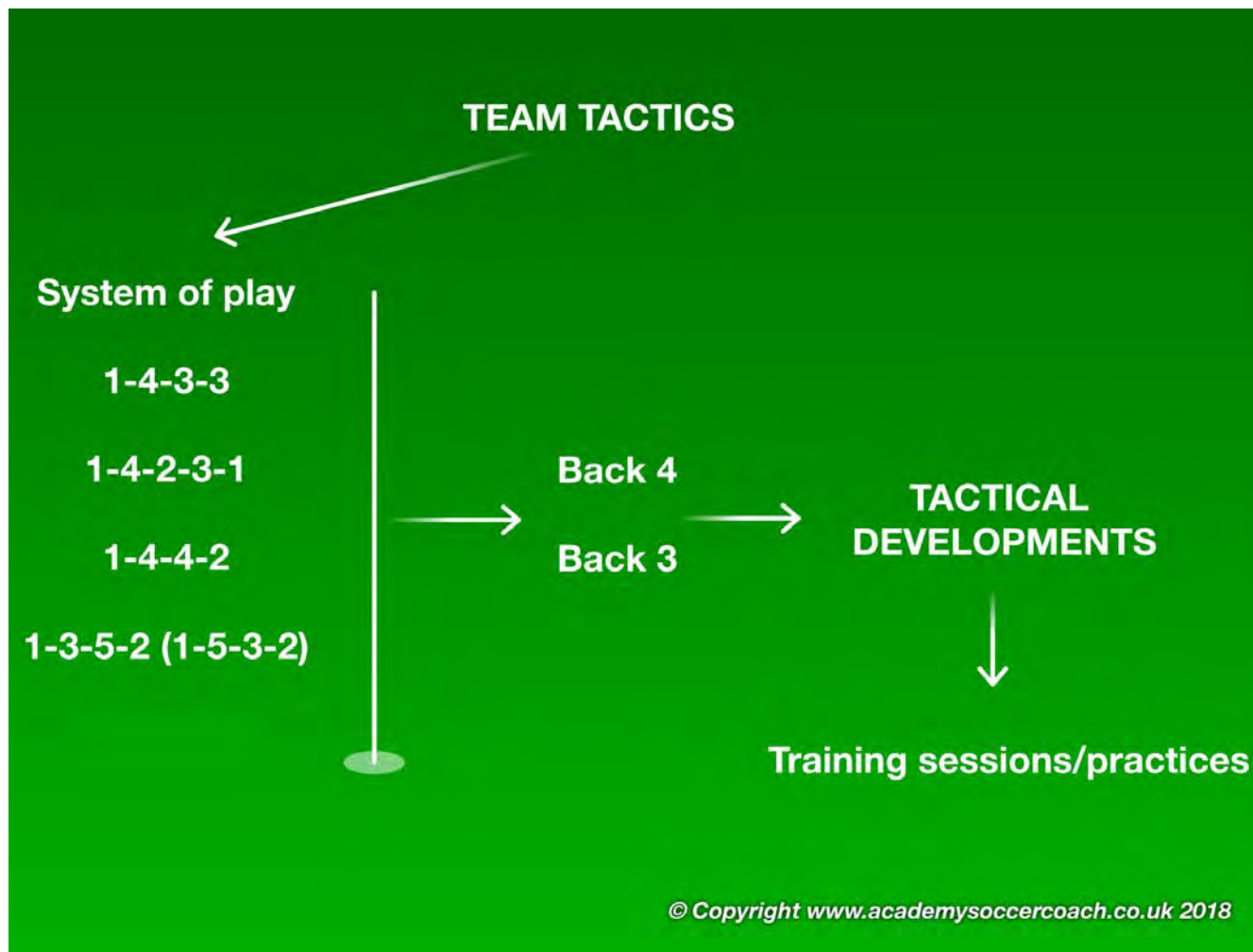
Offside strategy situations:

- Outnumbered defense situation
- "Easy reading" situation
- Goalkeeper, defense and midfield synchronization
- Zonal defending
- Player characteristics

The principles of play of the **offside** or **retreat** strategies:

Open ball	Close ball
The opponent in possession can choose the best solution to progress the attacking phase, facing the goal to score in	The opponent in possession can't choose the best solution quickly as he is turned toward his own goal
Strategy?	
Open ball	Close ball
Retreat until the penalty area border line and then press the opponents if the defenders are in numerical advantage or use offside if outnumbered	Pressure to force the possession phase of the opposition backward or sideways

Team tactics and system of play

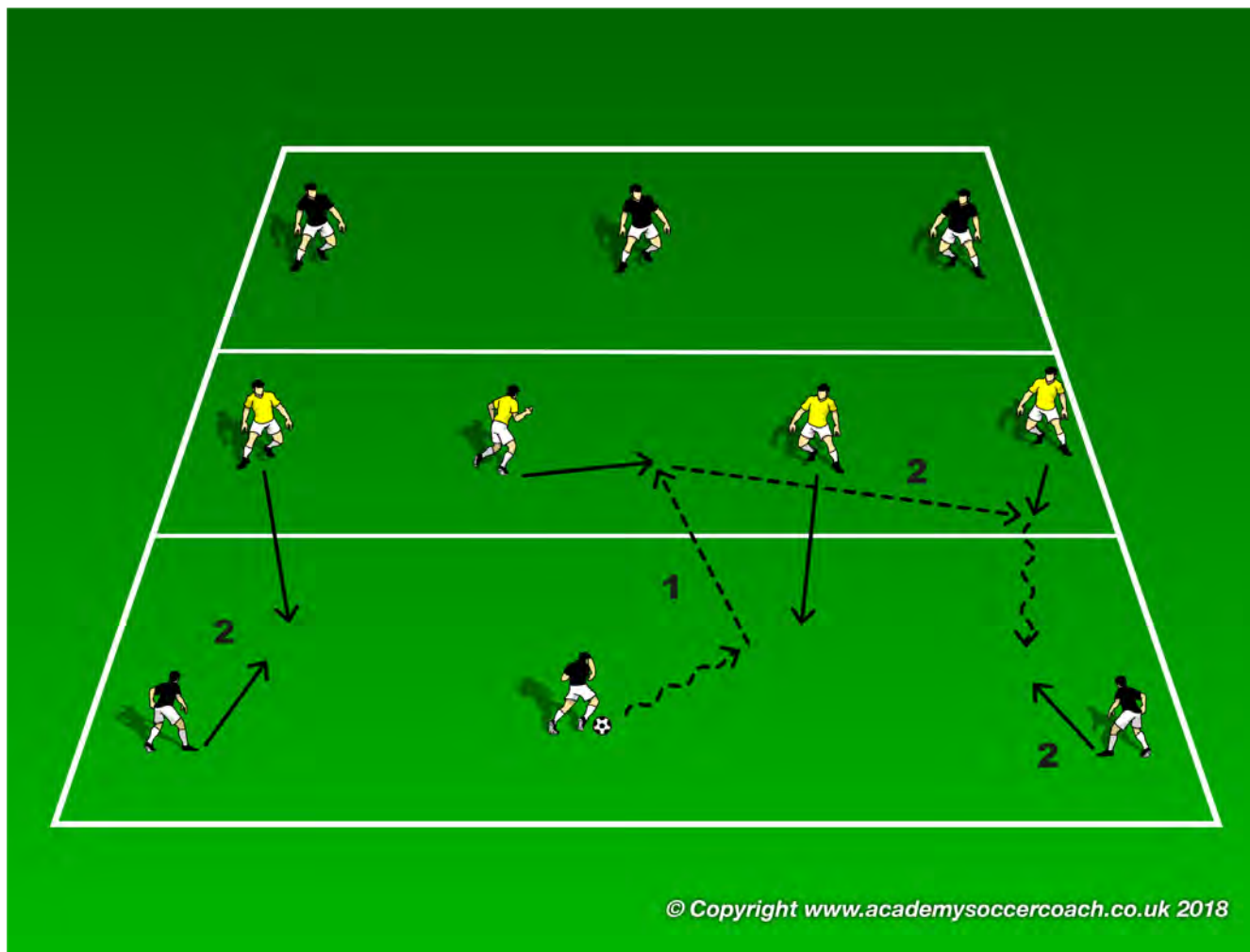


The defense tactics and the transition to defense phase too are influenced by the system of play and its tactical developments of a back 4, 3 or even 5 defense line. The individual principles of play are not strictly related to the systems of play and its developments because they are skills of the players that they can show whatever are roles and team's formations. We may say the same about the cooperation's process among few players who are involved in a game situation, but just from sequential point of view. The game situation and its developments are now very important for the players' attitude and actions. Talking about sectorial, inter-sectorial and team tactics, where players from the same line, players of different lines, relations between the sectors are involved, the defense tactics are heavily influenced by the system of play and by the structural organization used by the team.

At this level, the structural organization becomes functional organization; it means that the system of play and the tactical ideas must be functional to create effective tactical developments. Relationships and interactions become very important; for this reason the system of play should help in creating these developments. The sectorial, inter-sectorial and team practices must be oriented toward this goal: create functional game situations where the tactical developments are related to the system of play and they fix the issue of the phases of play without the ball (transitions to defend and defense phase).

1-4-3-3

Exercise 1: 3 + 3 v 4 (1)



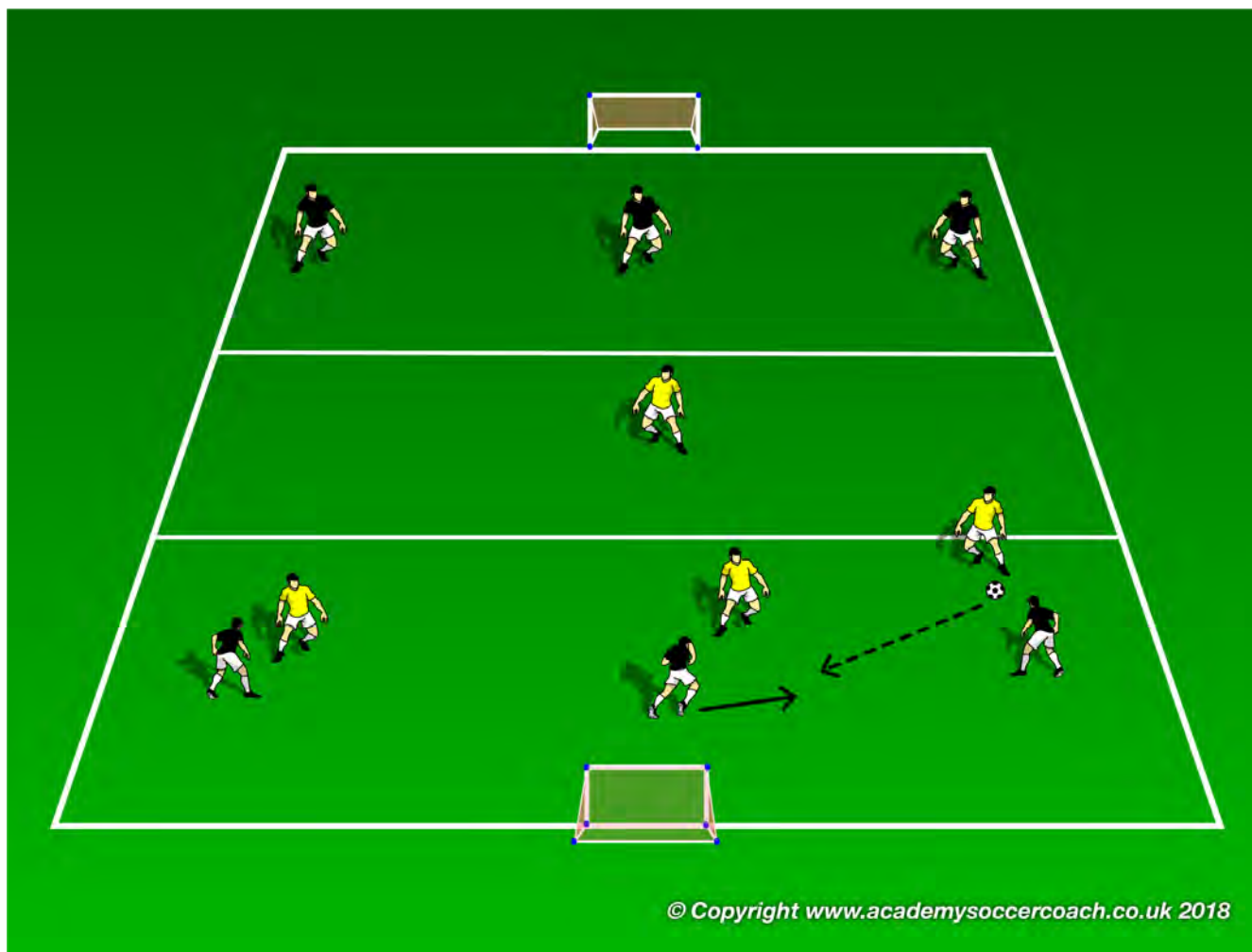
Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 10 players are involved in the exercise. 3 players of the black possession team are placed inside each outer area and 4 defenders are placed in the center one. One group of 3 is in possession and the ball must be moved toward the opposite zone.

The defenders must intercept the ball after closing the passing lanes, shifting across and moving forward and backward inside the center area, depending on the ball position (1).

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they must dribble it inside the area where the ball was coming from. The 3 players who lost the ball, or who made a wrong pass, must counter the 4 yellow players, who are now in possession, to prevent the opponents from dribbling over the end line, by defending the depth in an outnumbered situation 3 v 4 (2).

Tactical key points: defend as block, maintain the players' line distances, close the passing lane, depth defense.

Exercise 2: 3 + 3 v 4 (2)



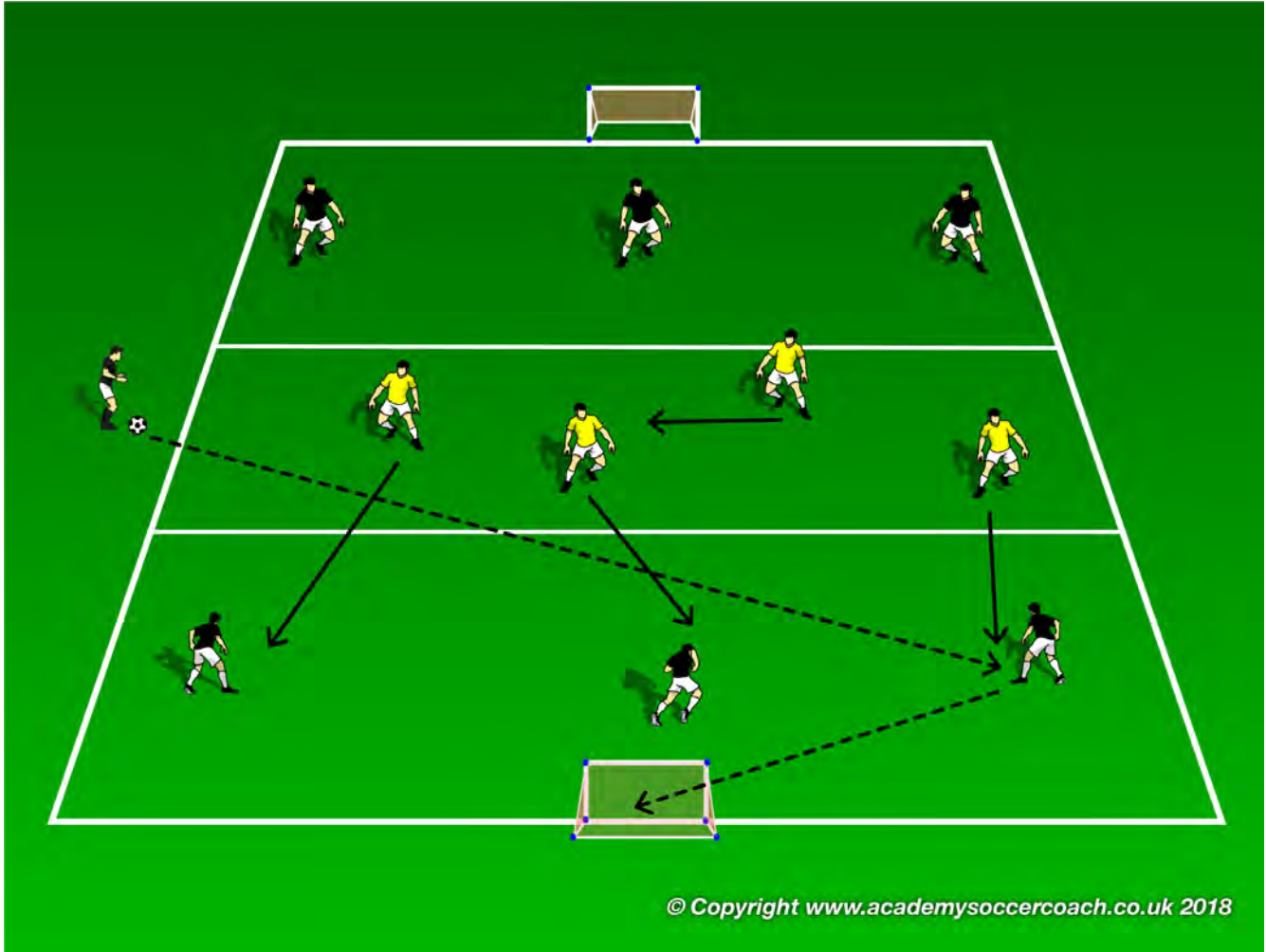
Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 10 players are involved in the exercise. 3 players of the black possession team are placed inside each outer area and 4 defenders are placed in the center one. One group of 3 is in possession and the ball must be moved toward the opposite zone.

3 defenders must press the possession group, moving forward inside the outer area where the ball is being played. The fourth defender must provide balance, staying placed inside the center area and intercepting any forward pass.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they must dribble over the end line. The 3 players who lost the ball, or who made a wrong pass, must counter the 3 yellow players who are now in possession to prevent them from dribbling, by counter pressing in a 3 v 3 situation.

Tactical key points: pressure, balance, close the passing lane, counter pressing.

Exercise 3: 3 + 3 v 4 (3)



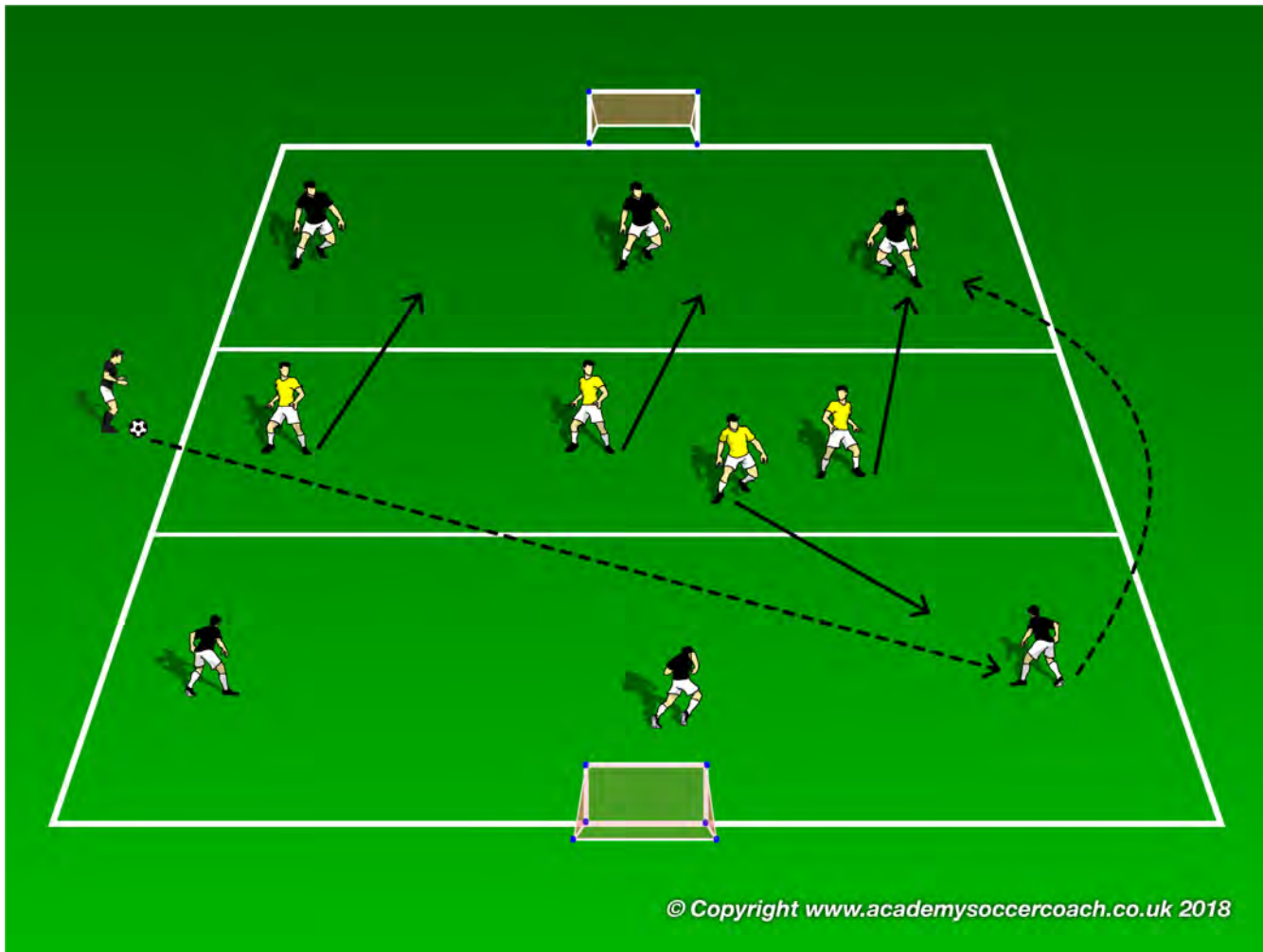
Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. A rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 10 players are involved in the exercise. 3 players of the black possession team are placed inside each outer area and 4 defenders are placed in the center one. 2 goals are added, as in the picture. The coach decides the first possession group of 3, by passing the ball inside their zones.

3 defenders must press the possession group, moving forward inside the outer area where the ball is being played. The fourth defender must provide balance staying placed inside the center area and intercepting any forward pass. They must avoid the passes toward the opposite area, where the other 3 forwards must score.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they must score in the mini goal of the area where the possession is recovered. The 3 players who lost the ball, or who made a wrong pass, must counter the 3 yellow players, who are now in possession, to prevent them from scoring, by counter pressing in a 3 v 3 situation.

Tactical key points: pressure, balance, close the passing lane, counter pressing.

Exercise 4: 3 + 3 v 4 (4)



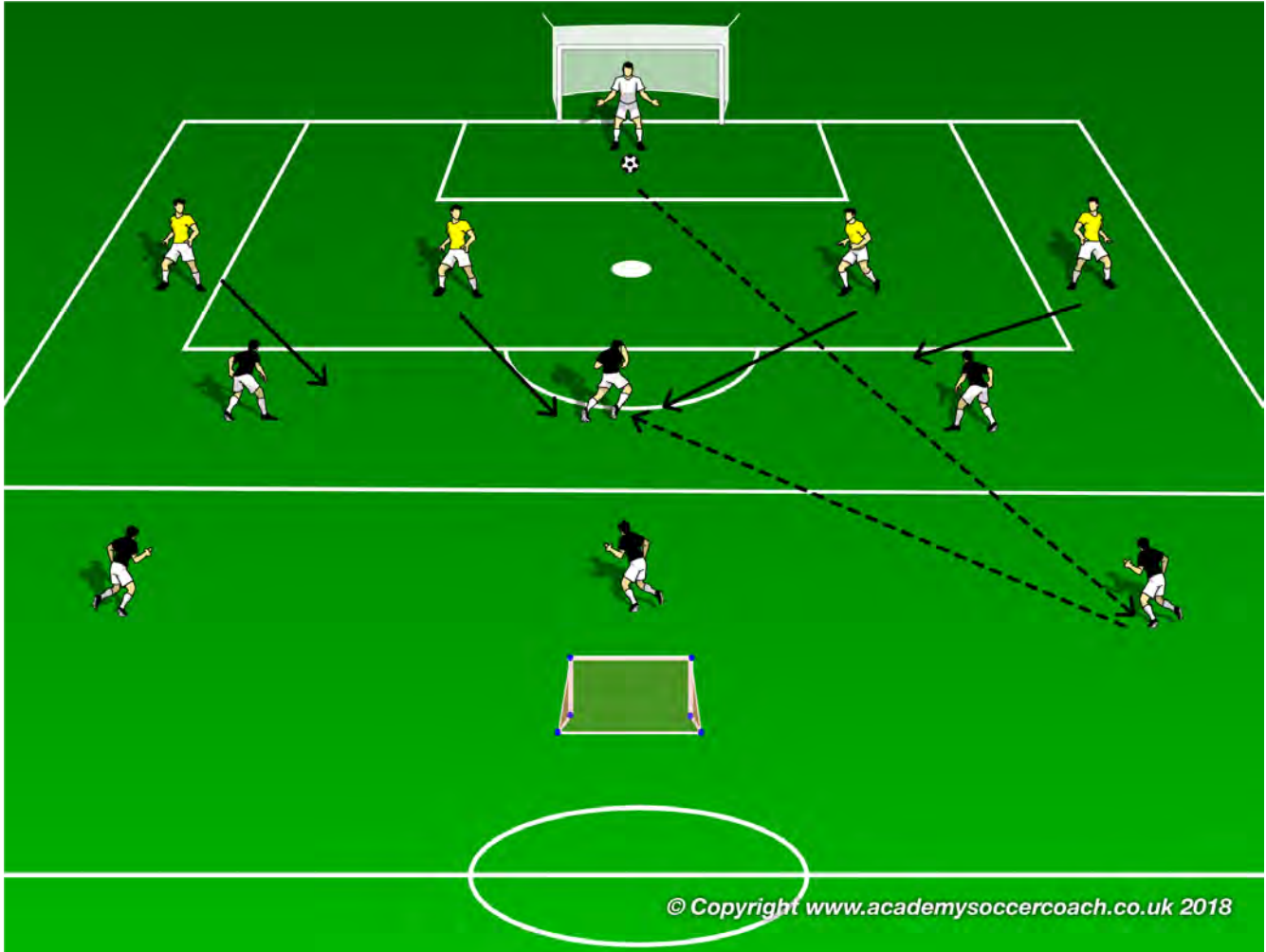
Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is another progression of the previous one. A rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 10 players are involved in the exercise. 3 players of the black possession team are placed inside each outer area and 4 defenders are placed in the center one. 2 goals are added, as in the picture. The coach decides the first possession group of 3 by passing the ball inside the zone.

The defenders must save the depth, by moving backward inside the area where the ball is being played, after the first kick of the coach where the receiver passes the ball with a long one touch. The fourth defender must press the receiver to prevent him from passing the ball forward.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score in the mini goal of the opposite area. If the ball is lost during the first phase, the black players must counter-press the new possession team. If the ball is lost during the second phase, the 3 lower players must save the goal space against 4 yellow players and the 3 further one must retreat to shape a 6 v 4 duel, creating defensive numerical advantage to recover the possession.

Tactical key points: defend the depth, counter pressing, retreat to create defensive numerical advantage, patience.

Exercise 5: 3 + 3 v 4 + gk (1)



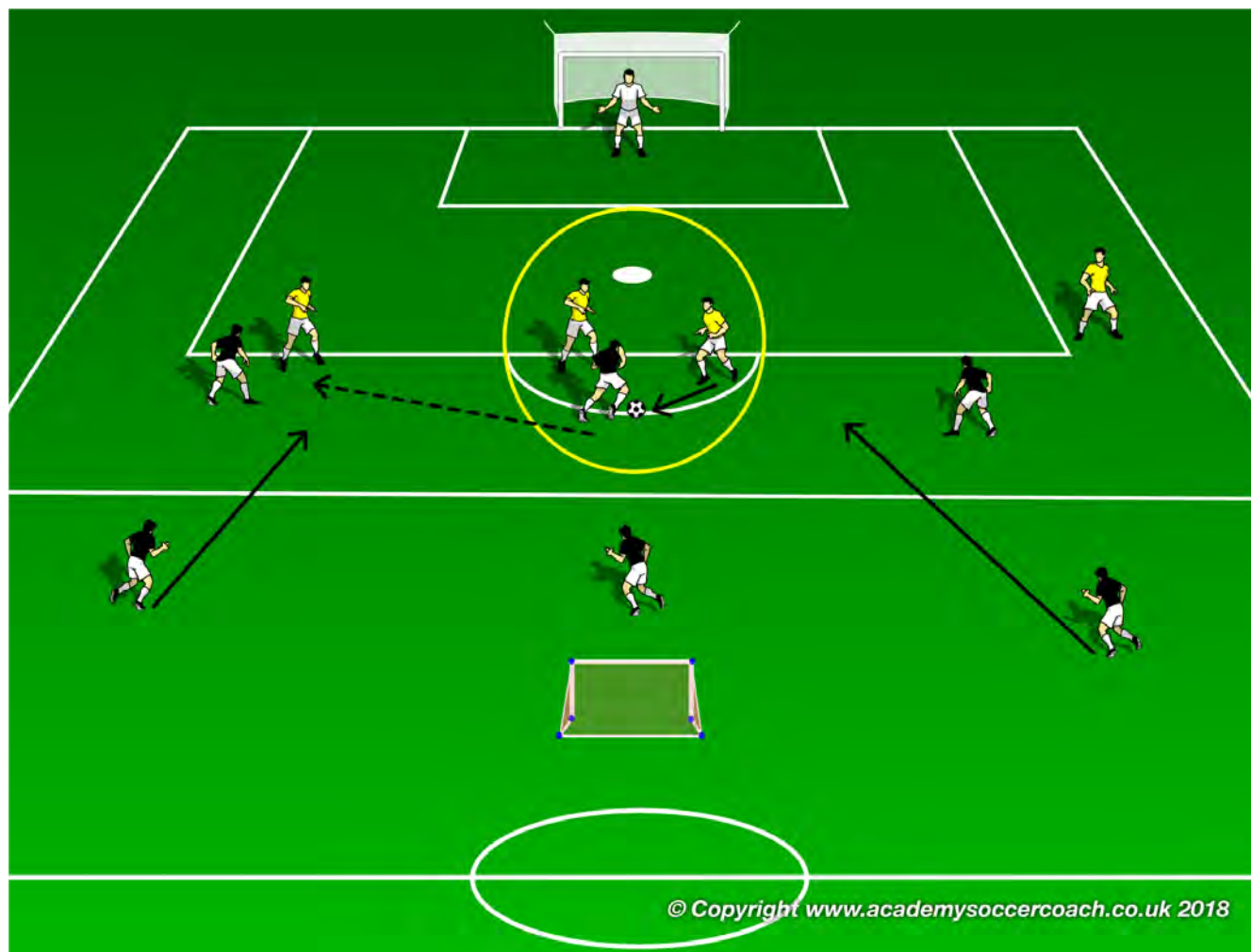
Set-up and Sequence: Place 10 field players and 1 goalkeeper inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 3 forwards; 3 more forwards are placed inside the lower half. The goalkeeper has the possession.

As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward the one of the further attackers, the 4 defenders must put pressure against the 3 nearest black opponents, condensing the center and saving the goal space, preventing them from receiving, turning and finishing.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score in the mini goal of the opposite area. The 3 lower players must save the goal space against the 4 yellow players and the 3 attackers must retreat to shape a 6 v 4 duel, creating defensive numerical advantage to recover the possession.

Tactical key points: condense the center, pressure to prevent the opposition progression of the possession phase, retreat to create defensive numerical advantage, save the depth.

Exercise 6: 3 + 3 v 4 + gk (2)

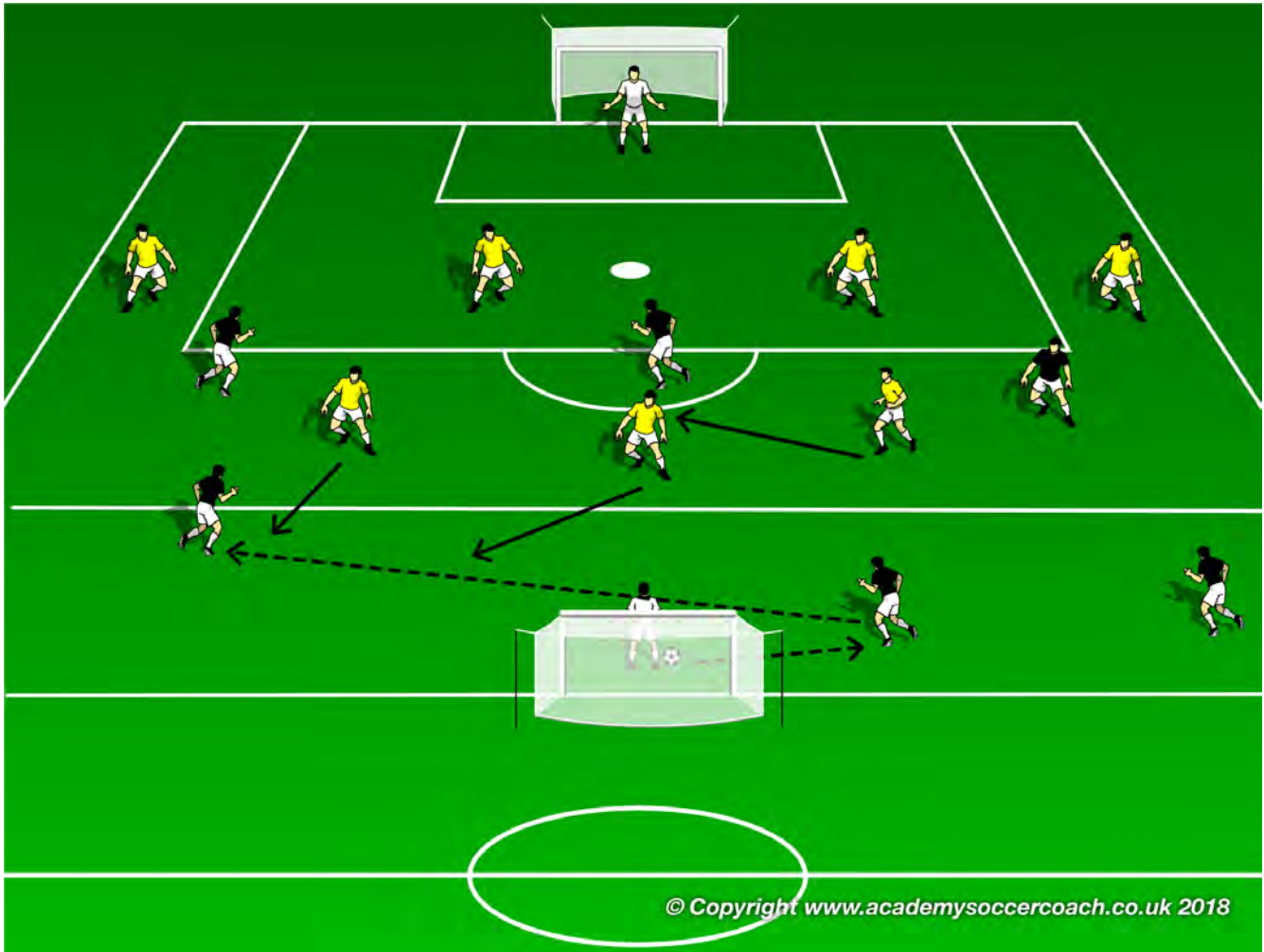


Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a variation of the previous one. 10 field players and 1 goalkeeper are placed inside a third of a regular field, that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 3 forwards; 3 more forwards are placed inside the lower half. The goalkeeper has the possession. As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward one of the attackers, the 4 defenders must put pressure against the 3 nearest black opponents, condensing the center and saving the goal space, preventing them from receiving and finishing, and recovering the possession within 6". If they can't, 2 black players can run inside to play a 5 v 4 duel, creating a numerical disadvantage for the defenders, who must now save the goal space and the depth.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball within 6", they can counter-attack to score in the mini goal of the opposite area, playing 4 v 3. The 3 lower players must save the mini goal space against the 4 yellow players; the 3 attackers can't retreat. If the defenders are able to recover the possession even if they are outnumbered, they can counter attack and the 3 forwards must retreat to draw the number of players (4 v 4 duel).

Tactical key points: pressure to recover the possession as soon as possible, stay balanced, save the goal space when outnumbered, retreat to support the defense phase, save the depth.

Exercise 7: 3 + 3 and gk v 7 + gk (1)



Set-up and Sequence: 13 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts (a smaller building up and pressure one and a bigger attacking/defending one). 4 defenders, 3 midfielders and the goalkeeper of the team without possession are placed inside the bigger area, as well as 3 forwards; 3 more forwards and the second goalkeeper are placed inside the lower half.

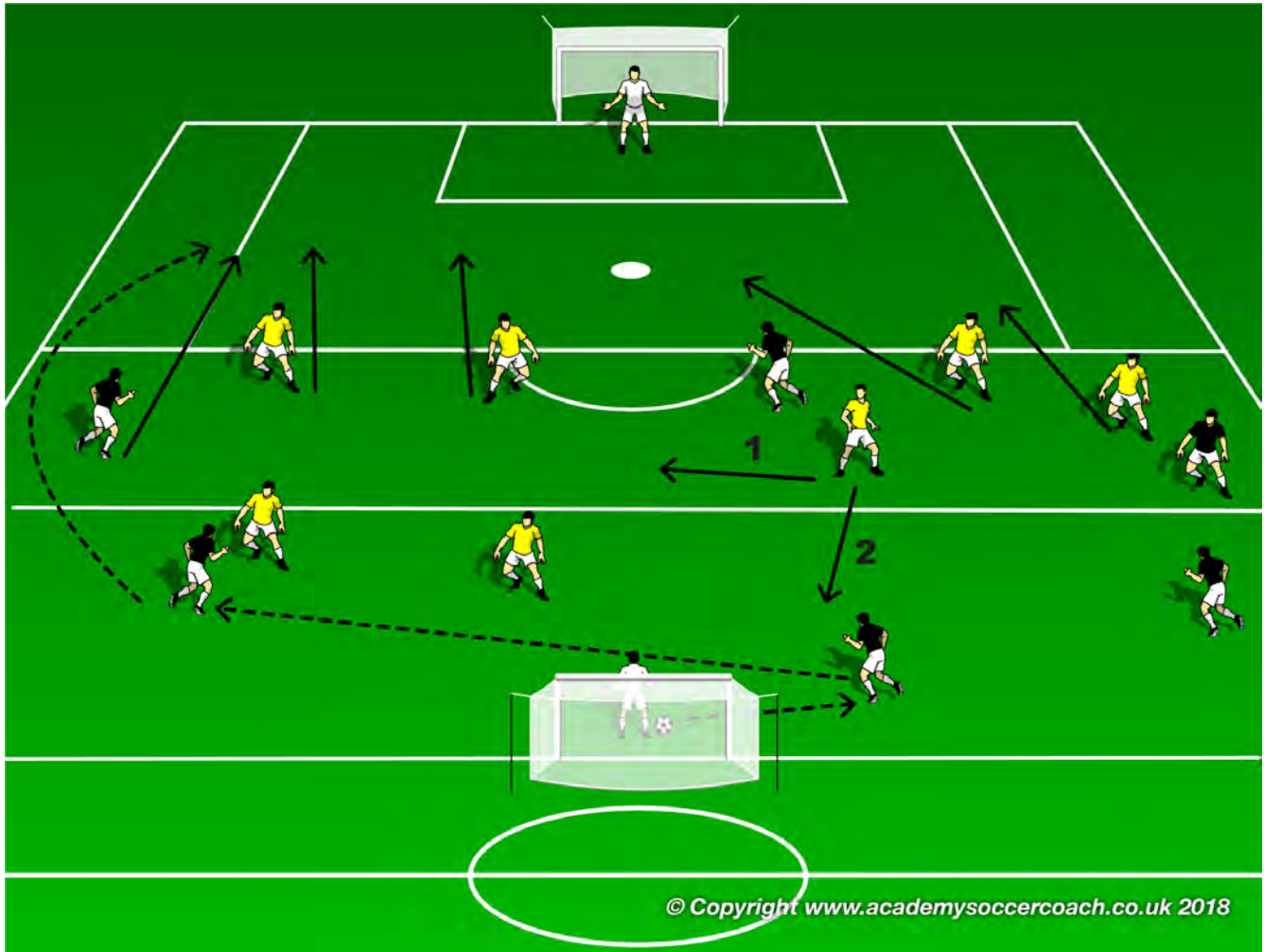
The goalkeeper of the black team has the possession. As the goalkeeper passes the ball, 2 midfielders of the defending team must run inside to put pressure against the 3 black opponents, forcing their building up phase wide and preventing them from playing out. The third yellow midfielder must provide balance at their back. The back 4 must mark the forward and press to prevent them from receiving in a 4 v 3 situation.

Defense transition phase: if the midfielders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score as quickly as possible together with the third teammate. The 3 lower players must close the goal space and the 3 attackers must retreat to shape a 6 v 3 duel, creating defensive numerical advantage to recover the possession.

If the defenders recover the possession a 7 v 6 duel is created; the new defending team must be balanced and shape a back 4 line by retreating one of the attackers who is not pressing the yellow opponents.

Tactical key points: force the opposition possession outside, provide balance, mark the opponents to prevent them from receiving, organize a back 4 line to save the depth.

Exercise 8: 3 + 3 and gk v 7 + gk (2)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one, where 13 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside a third of a regular field, that is divided into 3 parts (the outer 2 areas as long as the penalty area and the center one that is smaller than the other 2). 4 defenders and 1 balance midfielder of the team without possession are placed inside the middle area, as well as 3 forwards; 3 more black players and 2 yellows are placed inside the lower half. The last third of the field is empty at the beginning.

The goalkeeper of the black team has the possession and as he passes the ball, 2 midfielders of the defending team must put pressure against the 3 black opponents, forcing their building up phase outside and preventing them from playing long passes toward the final finishing third of the field. The third yellow midfielder must decide whether to provide balance at their back (1) or to help the pressure during the opposition building up phase. The back 4 must retreat toward the defensive third to save the goal space and to avoid any shot attempt.

Defense transition phase: if the midfielders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score as quickly as possible, together with the third teammate. The 3 lower players must close the goal space and the 3

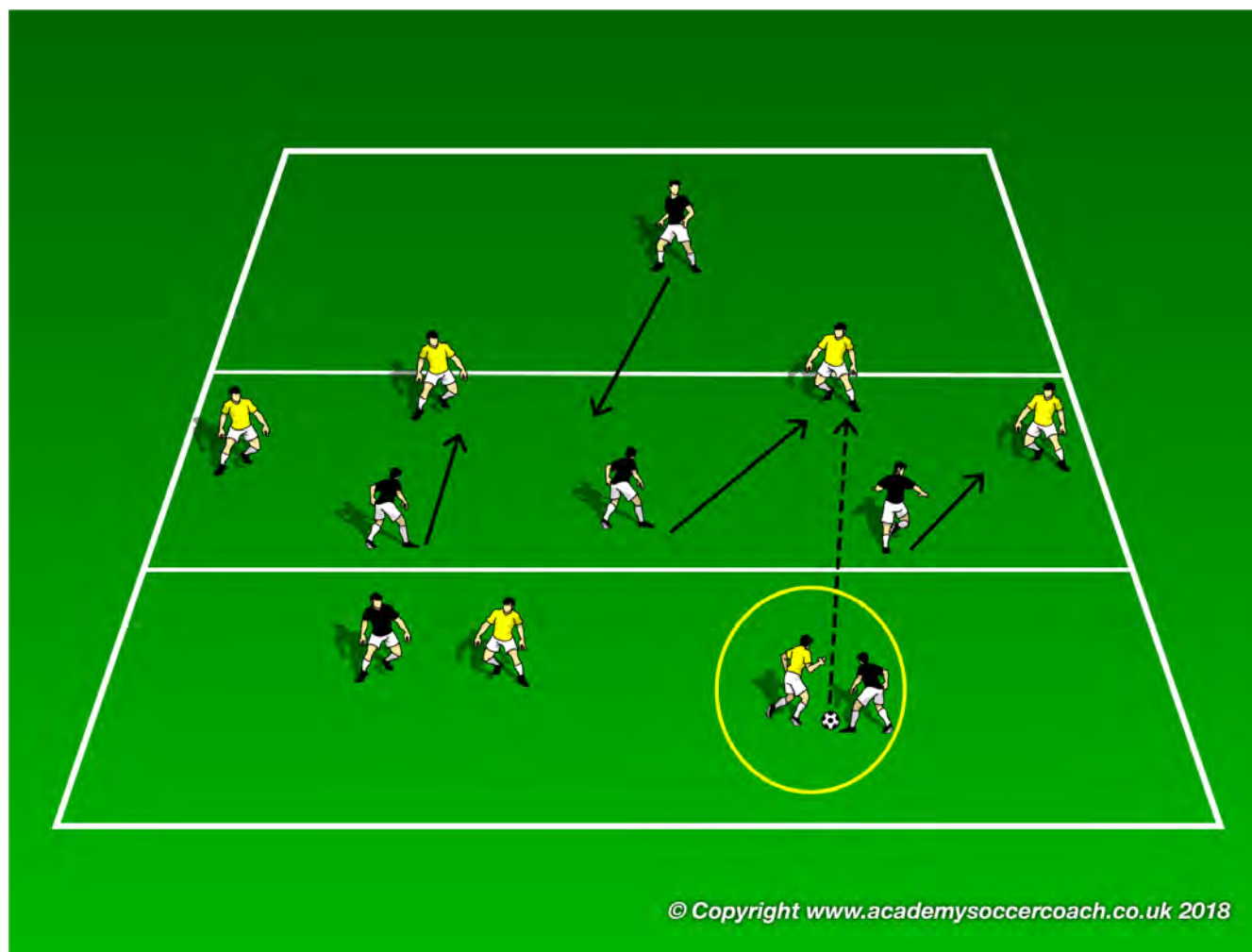
attackers must retreat to shape a 6 v 3 duel, creating defensive numerical advantage to recover the possession.

If the defenders recover the possession a 7 v 6 duel is created; the new defending team must be balanced and shape a back 4 line by retreating one of the attackers who is not pressing the yellow opponents

Tactical key points: force the opposition possession outside, pressure or provide balance, retreat to defend the depth, organize a back 4 line to save the depth.

1-4-2-3-1

Exercise 9: 6 v 6

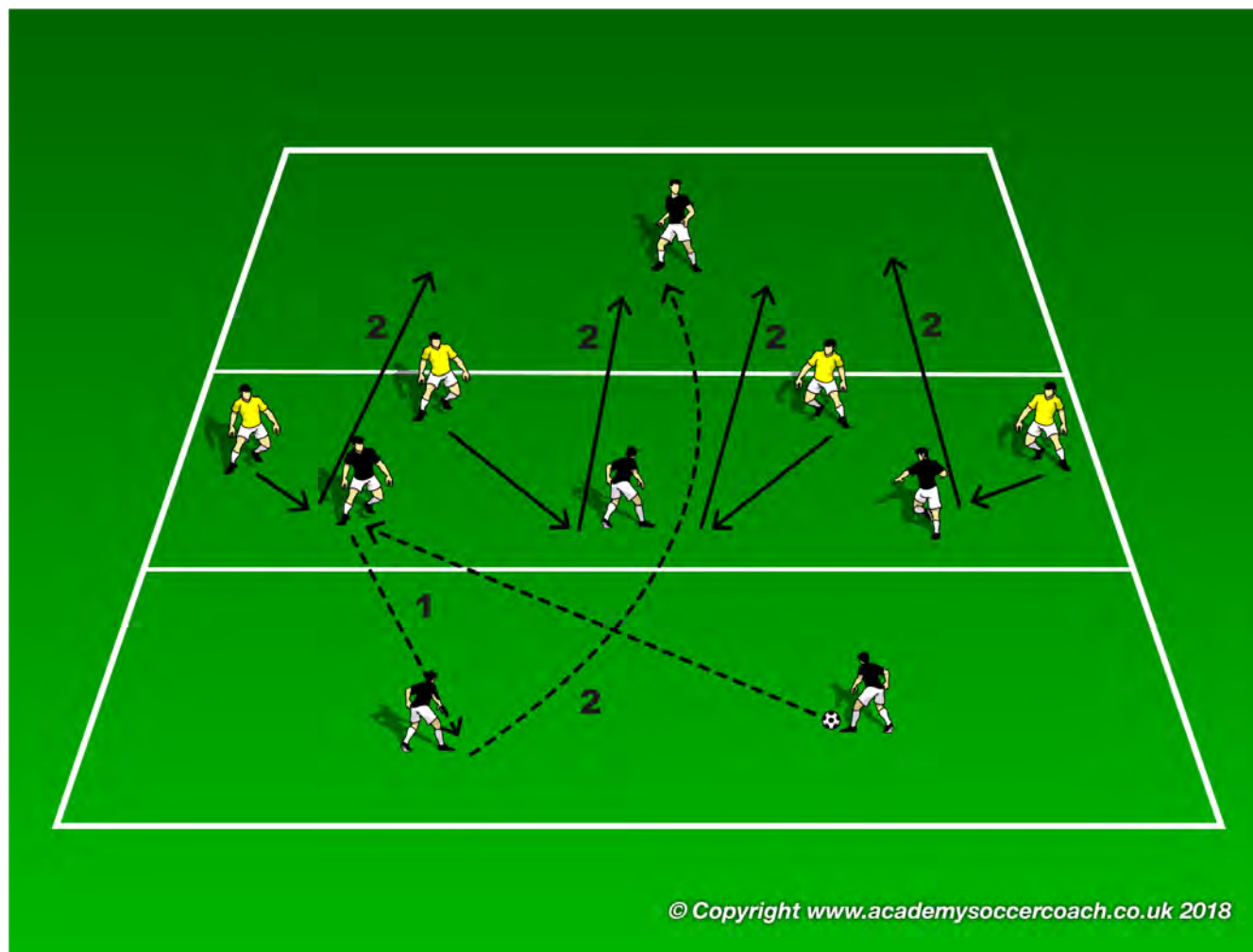


Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 12 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defenders are placed in the center zone, playing against 3 black forwards. 2 black and 2 yellow players are placed inside the lower area and the last black forward stays inside the third upper zone. The 2 yellow players inside the lower area must put pressure to prevent the opponents from building up and playing toward the middle area. The objectives and the sequence are the same as the previous exercise, but if the defenders win the ball.

Defense transition phase: if the 2 yellow players win the ball, they must pass backward before attacking the end line of the opposition. The players of the team who lost the possession, must stay balanced inside the center third against the opposition, waiting for the forward who is retreating to draw the number of players (4 v 4). The same sequence must be carried out if the 4 defenders win the ball.

Tactical key points: force the opposition possession backward, pressure and balance while waiting for support.

Exercise 10: 6 v 4



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 10 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defenders are placed in the center zone, playing against 3 black forwards. 2 black players are placed inside the lower area and the last one is inside the third upper zone.

The defenders must put pressure, shifting across and moving forward and backward inside the center area, depending on the ball position, to prevent the forwards from receiving and playing backward (1).

If the 2 free midfielders can receive a return pass, they must try play a long ball toward the opposite outer area; the defenders must then retreat to save the depth and clear or win the ball.

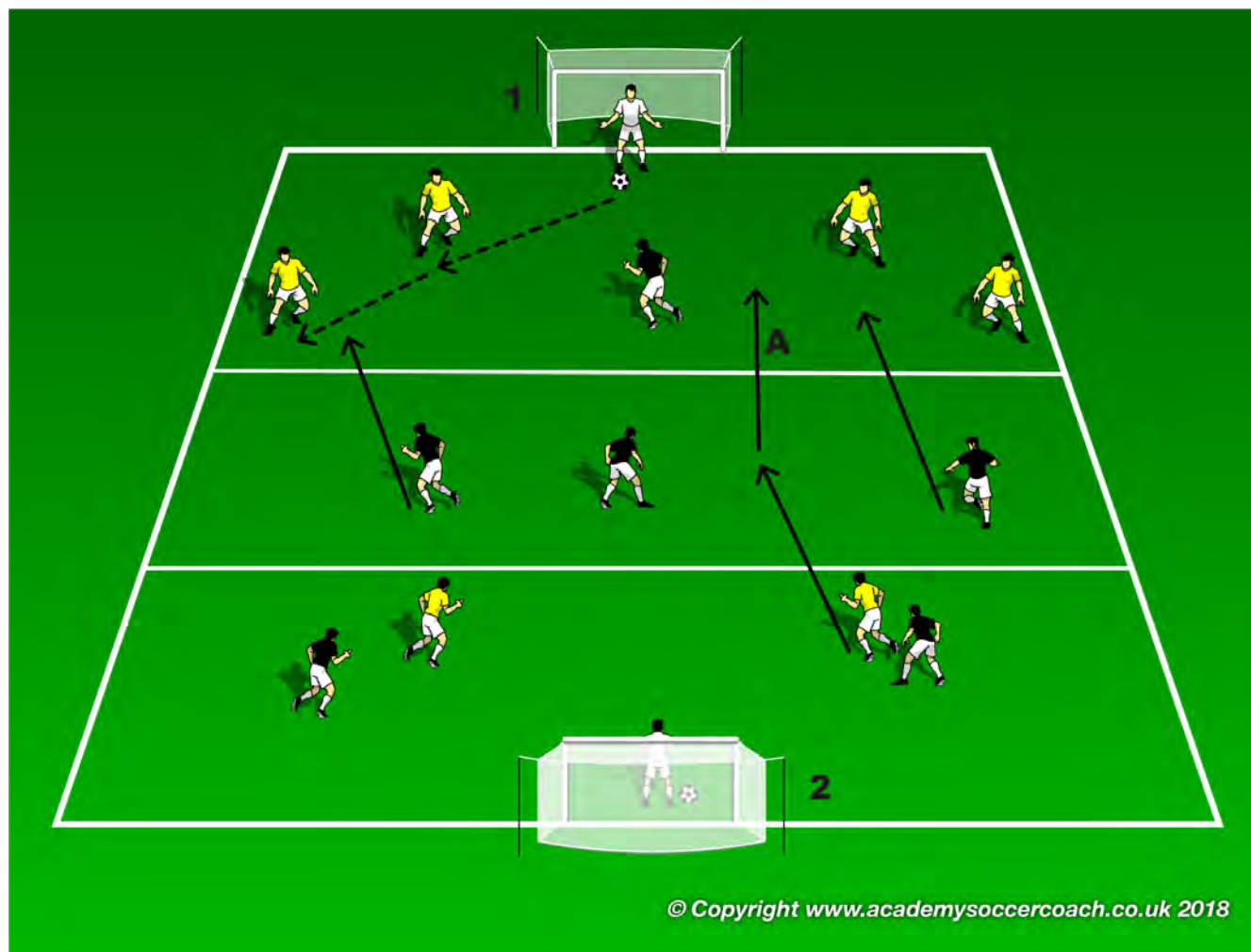
Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball during the pressure phase, then they dribble it inside the area where the ball was coming from to overcome the end line.

The 2 lower black players must counter the 4 yellows, who are now in possession, waiting for their teammate retreating from the center area, to prevent the opponents from dribbling over the end line, by defending the depth in a 5 v 4 overload situation.

If the yellow team is not able to dribble over the end line within 6", then also the black forward can retreat to press and to win the possession too.

Tactical key points: defend as block, maintain the players' line distances, close the passing lane, depth defense.

Exercise 11: 6 v 6 + gks (1)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 3 parts and 12 field players are involved in the exercise. 2 goalkeepers in possession of a ball defend a numbered goal each (1-2). 4 defenders are placed inside their first third against 1 black forward. 3 black players are freely placed inside the middle third and 2 black and 2 yellow players are placed inside the lower area.

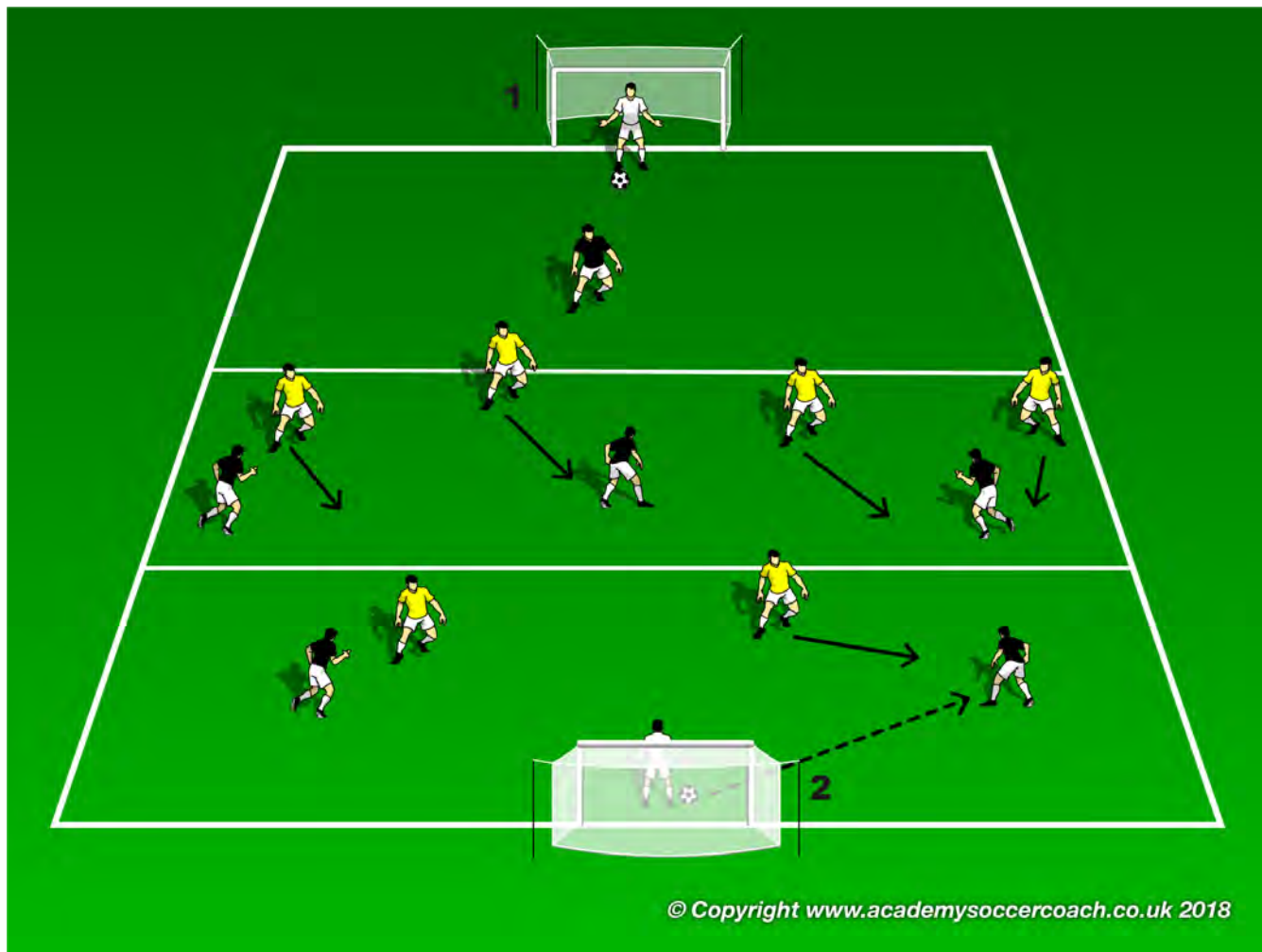
The coach decides the goalkeeper who must start the exercise (1 in the picture); as the first yellow player receives, 2 midfielders must run inside the building up area to put pressure and to close the passing lanes toward the advanced yellow players. 1 yellow player should drop back inside the middle third to play a 1 v 1 duel against the last black opponent after the first pass of the goalkeeper; the black player must mark him on inside there.

If the dropping back player decides to help the building up phase (A - 5+gk v 3), the black players must decide if to press there again, or if to retreat to defend the first third, helping the teammates who are involved in a 2 v 2 + gk duel.

Defense transition phase: if the defending team wins the ball, then the yellow players must counter press the opposition possession phase, both inside the final and in the middle third.

Tactical key points: force the opposition possession, pressure and balance while waiting for support.

Exercise 12: 6 v 6 + gks (2)

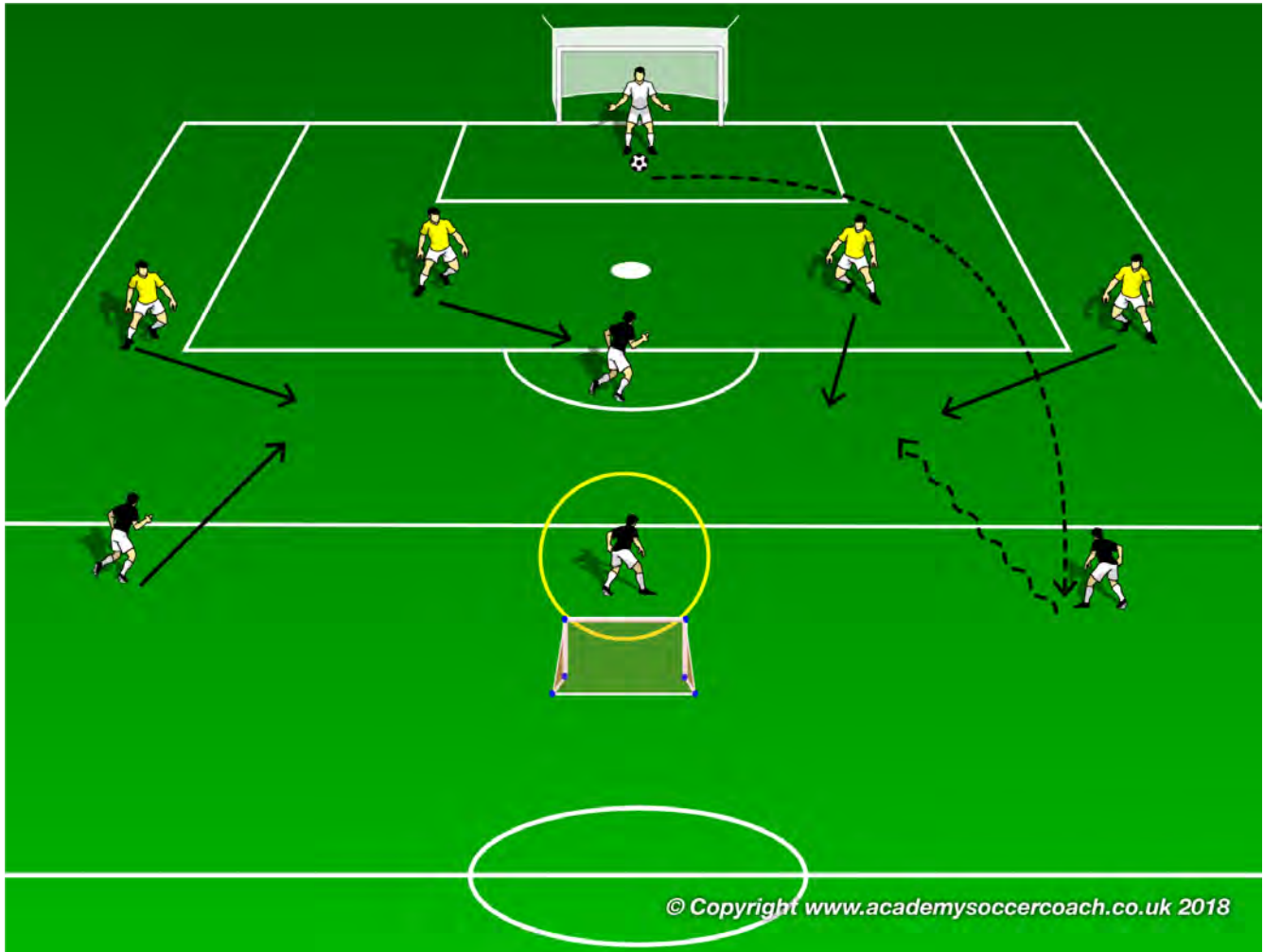


Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one (2). If the coach decides to ask the black goalkeeper to start the sequence, the yellow defenders must move forward inside the middle third as a block, closing the space and trying to leave the forward offside. If the black team is able to play out, then the defenders must retreat toward their first third to cover the depth.

Defense transition phase: if the defending team wins the ball, then the black players must manage an outnumbered situation 5 v 6, both inside the final third and in the middle third. If they are able to counter the opponents for more than 6", the sixth black player can retreat to equalize the duel.

Tactical key points: force the opposition possession, retreat to defend the depth, pressure and balance while waiting for support.

Exercise 13: 4 v 4 + gk



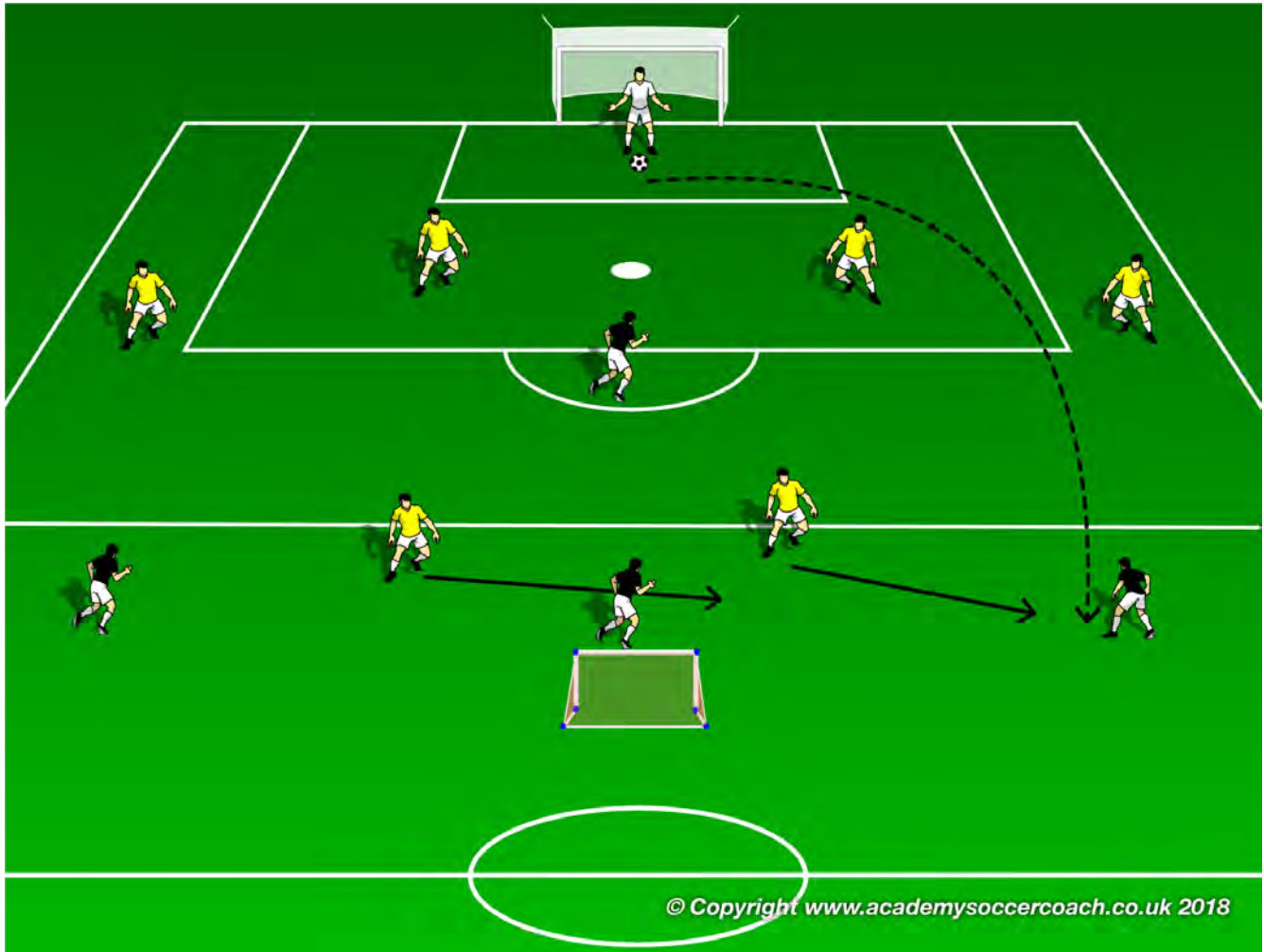
Set-up and Sequence: 8 field players and a goalkeeper are placed inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 1 forward; 3 more free forwards are placed inside the lower half. 1 regular goal and 1 mini goal are placed along the end lines. The goalkeeper has the possession.

As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward the one of the attackers, the 4 defenders must put pressure against 3 opponents (1 inside and 2 incoming), to leave them out of the penalty area and making them facing their own goal. 1 black player must provide balance inside the lower area. The center defenders are asked to anticipate the center forward.

Defense transition phase: if the defenders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score in the mini goal of the opposite area. The lower player must save the mini goal space against the 4 yellow players and the 3 attackers must retreat to shape a 4 v 4 duel, to organize a back 4 defense line as soon as possible.

Tactical key points: pressure to prevent the progression of the opposition's possession phase, retreat to organize a defense line, save the depth.

Exercise 14: 6 v 4 + gk



Set-up and Sequence: 10 field players and a goalkeeper are placed inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 1 forwards; 3 more free attackers and 2 defenders are placed inside the lower half. 1 regular goal and 1 mini goal are placed along the end lines. The goalkeeper has the possession.

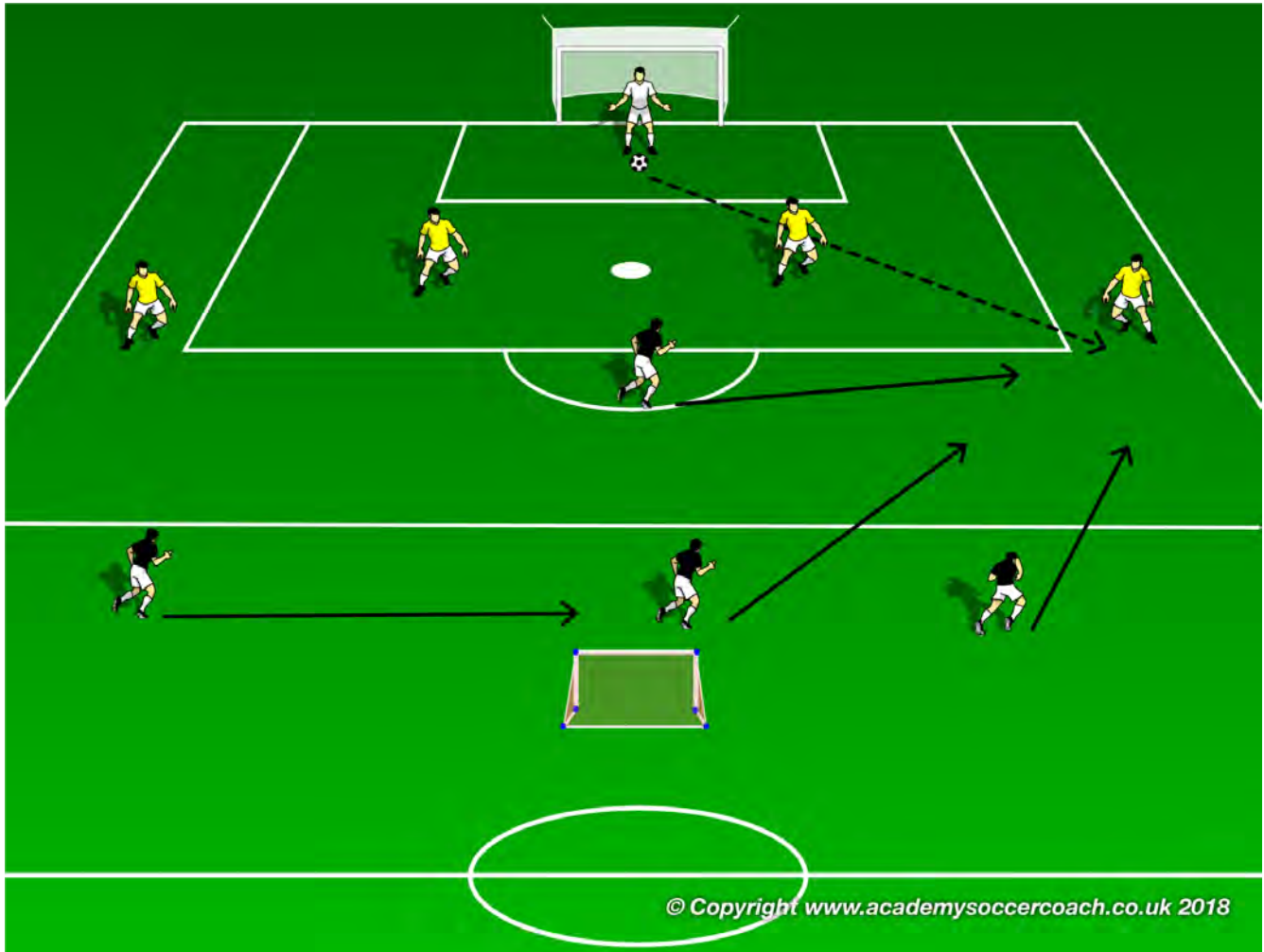
As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward one of the attackers, 2 yellow players must put pressure against 3 opponents to force their possession phase toward the sidelines or making them face their own goal.

The black forward can decide whether to drop back or not in this first phase (the defense line will move as a block). The center defenders are asked to anticipate the center forward or to counter 2 of the 3 other players. The center forward shall be double marked by the center backs or by a center back and a full back.

Defense transition phase: if the 2 first defenders win the ball, they can counter-attack to score in the mini goal of the opposite area. The lower players must counter press, being in numerical advantage 3 v 2. If the 4 black yellow defenders win the ball, then they can counter attack and the 3 attackers must retreat to be a support for the teammates and to limit the defensive numerical advantage 4 v 6.

Tactical key points: pressure to prevent the progression of the opposition possession phase, defend forward to recover the possession, retreat to cover the space and to organize a defense line, save the depth.

Exercise 15: 4 v 4 + gk



Set-up and Sequence: 8 field players and a goalkeeper are placed inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 1 forward; 3 more free forwards are placed inside the lower half. 1 regular goal and 1 mini goal are placed along the end line of one side and 15 yards over the other one. The goalkeeper has the possession.

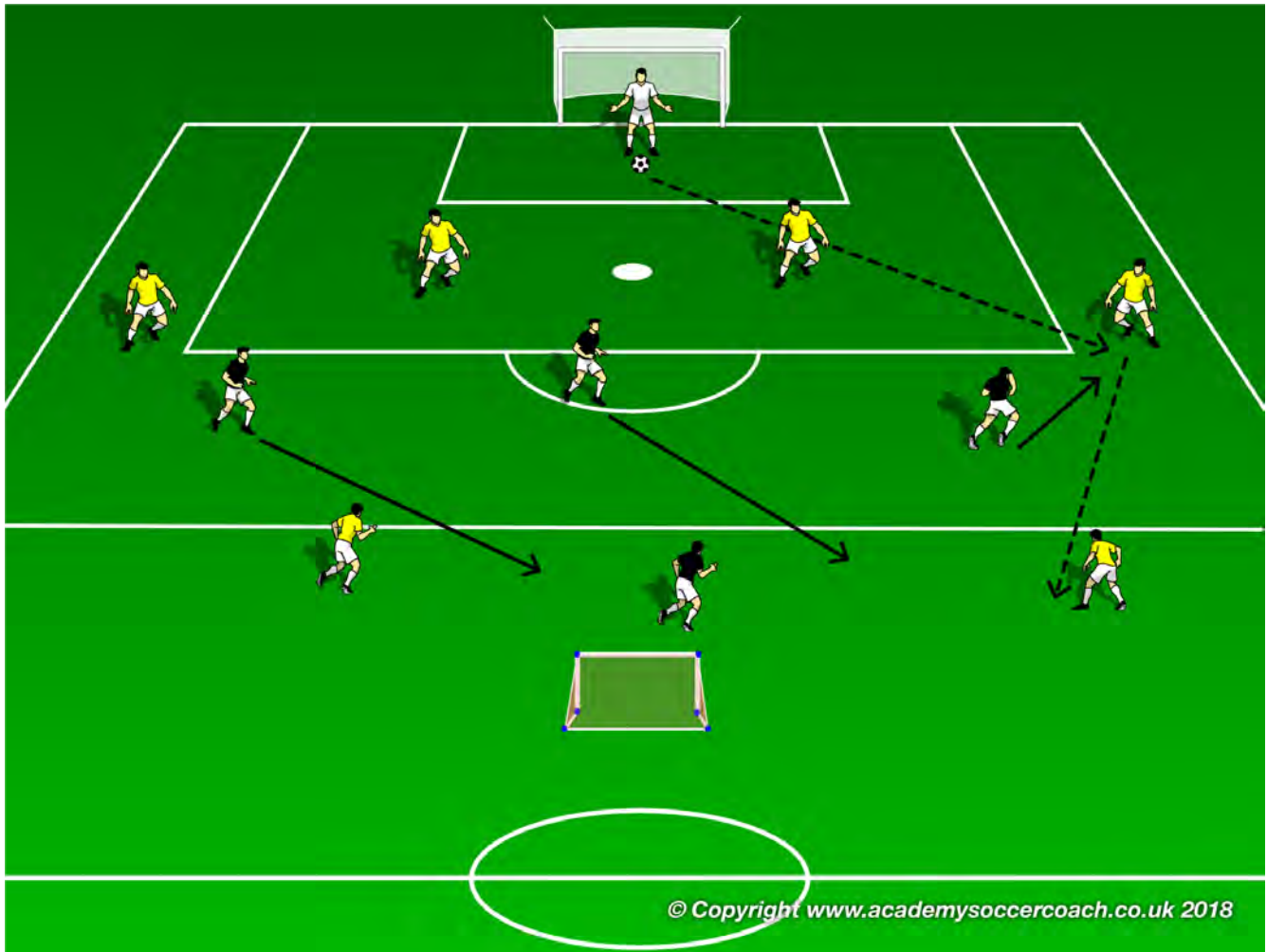
As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward one of the fullbacks to build up, 3 of the 4 black players must put pressure creating a strong side (1 forward and 2 teammates who are coming from the other half), to force the direction of possession toward the sidelines and making them face their own goal. 1 black player must provide balance inside the lower area, shifting across from the opposite weak side.

If the yellow players are able to play out, reaching the finishing half, the black players must retreat to support the balance teammate and to close the goal space.

Defense transition phase: if the team without the possession wins the ball, a counter-attack can be carried out through a 4 v 4 duel. The yellow players can retreat to cover the space or to organize a counter pressing action, if the ball can be recovered quickly.

Tactical key points: create a strong side through pressure, retreat to organize the defense line, save the depth, counter pressing.

Exercise 16: 6 + gk v 4



Set-up and Sequence: 10 field players and a goalkeeper are placed inside a third of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts. 4 defenders and the goalkeeper are placed inside the finishing half, as well as 3 forwards; 1 more free forward and 2 players of the yellow team are placed inside the lower half. 1 regular goal and 1 mini goal are placed along the end line of one side and 15 yards over the other one. The goalkeeper has the possession.

As the goalkeeper kicks the ball toward one of the fullbacks to build up, 1 black player must put pressure trying to force the direction toward the sideline. 2 black players must try to create a defensive strong side in the lower area, retreating back before a yellow player can receive the second pass.

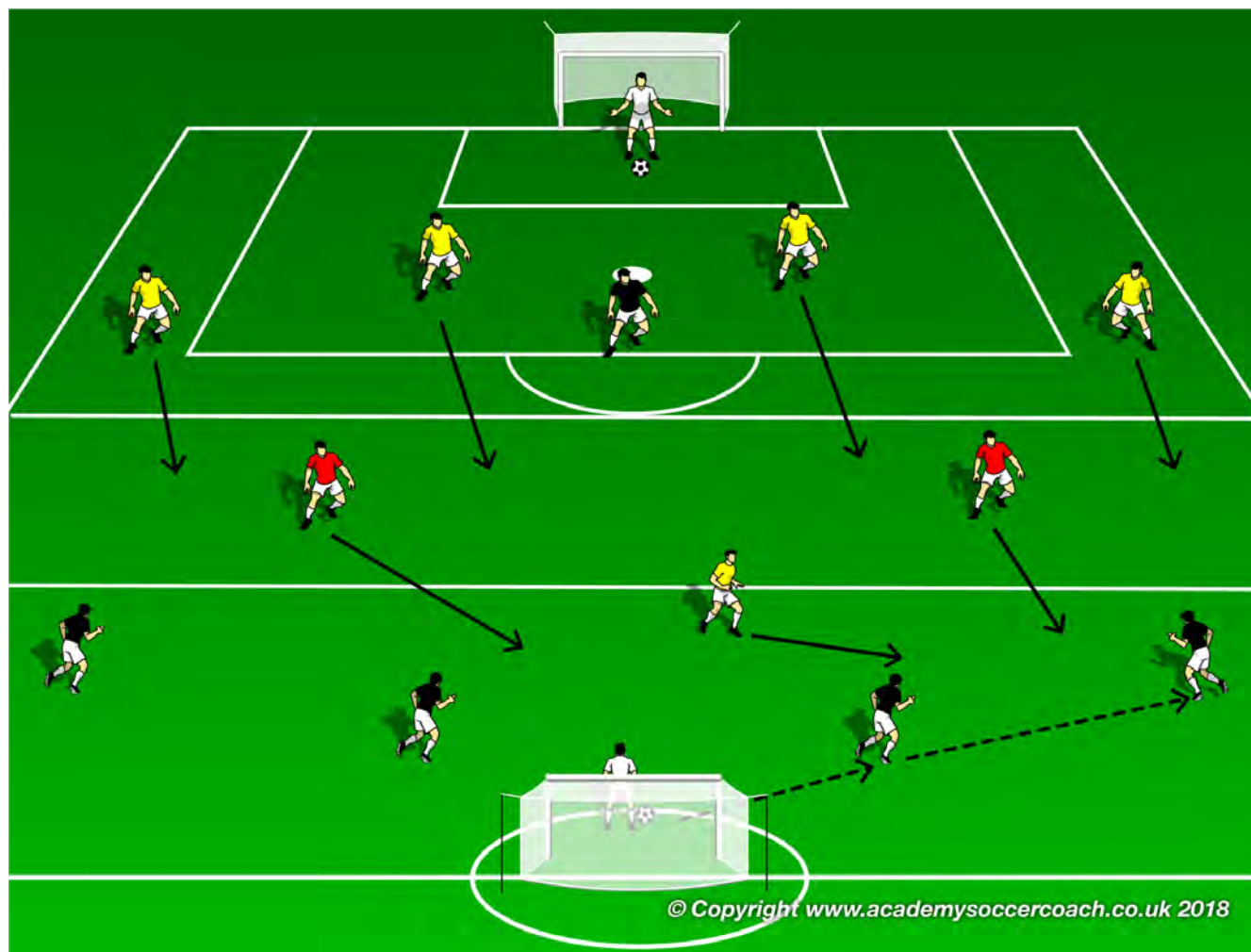
This way the opponent in possession is outnumbered and the passing lane toward the other teammate is supposed to be closed.

Defense transition phase: if the first black player wins the ball, his team can counter-attack to score in the main goal of the opposite area (all the black players are involved). The yellow players must counter press, defending by running forward to avoid any finishing attempt. If the possession is recovered

inside the defense third, the 2 yellow players can retreat to create a defensive numerical advantage 6 v 4.

Tactical key points: create a defensive strong side, defend forward to prevent the opposition's finishing attempt, retreat to create defensive numerical advantage.

Exercise 17: 5 + 2 v 5 and gks



Set-up and Sequence: 12 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside a half of a regular field that is divided into 3 parts (the center one is smaller than the other two). Each team is shaped with 4 defenders (inside the first third) and 1 forward (inside the final third); 2 more red free players are placed inside the center area, as support for the defending team.

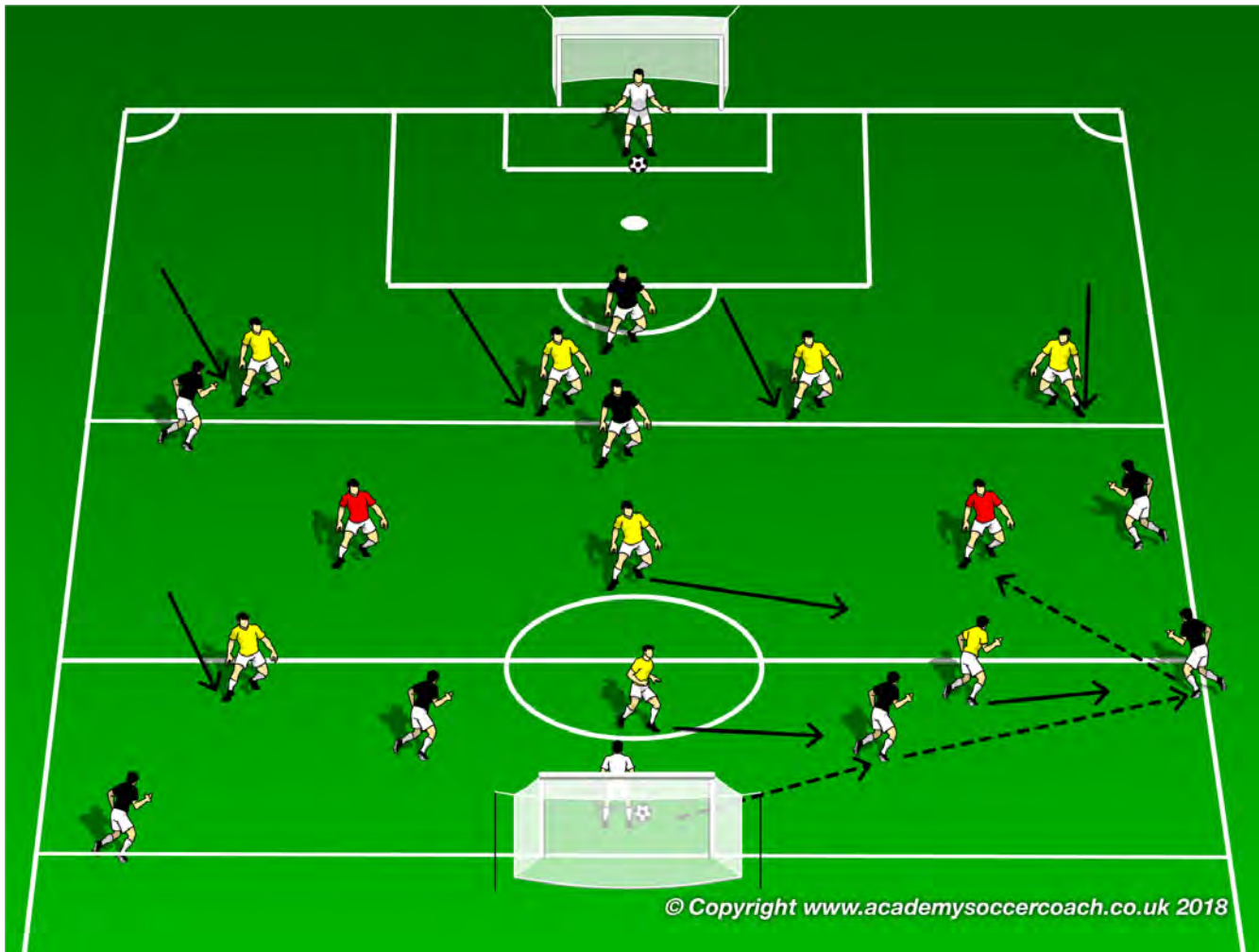
The goalkeeper of the black team has the possession and he starts the sequence, passing the ball toward a fullback to build up; the defending team must put pressure against the 4 black opponents, condensing the ball area thanks to the free players and forcing the opposition building up phase out, to prevent them from playing long passes toward the final finishing third of the field. The back 4 must move forward toward the middle area to leave the forward offside and to close the deepest passing lanes.

Defense transition phase: if the ball is recovered during the first pressure phase, then a 3 v 4 counter attack can be carried out; as the defenders have numerical advantage till the opposition reaches the middle area, they can try to counter press to win the ball back again. If the possession is won inside the middle third, the move must start from the goalkeeper of the new possession team, who must build up; the team who lost the possession must now press the opposition inside the first third and move forward the back line of 4.

Variation: the same sequence can be played on the other side, as the yellow goalkeeper starts the sequence, following the indications of the coach or alternating the sequences.

Tactical key points: condense the ball area, counter pressing and defend forward the covered balls.

Exercise 18: 8 v 8 + 2 and gks



Set-up and Sequence: 18 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside 3/4 of a regular field that is divided into 3 parts (the building up area of the attacking black team is smaller than the other two). Each team is shaped with 4 defenders (inside the first third), 3 advanced midfielders (free to move inside the middle or the final third) and 1 center forward inside the final third; 2 more red free players are placed inside the middle third, as support for the possession team. The goalkeepers have the possession.

The goalkeeper of the black team starts the sequence, passing the ball to a fullback to build up inside the smaller first third; the defending team (3 forwards) must put pressure against the 4 black opponents, condensing the ball area and forcing the opposition building up phase outside to prevent them from playing inside the final finishing third of the field and toward the free players.

The balance midfielder (who is outnumbered 1 v 2) must counter the potential receiver, preventing him from turning and forcing the direction of play backward; if possible he should mark him on, being placed in a useful position to close the passing lane toward the second one. The back four must move forward toward the middle area to leave the forward offside and to close the deep passing lanes, but staying balanced and as a unique block to cover the penalty area and the goal space.

Defense transition phases:

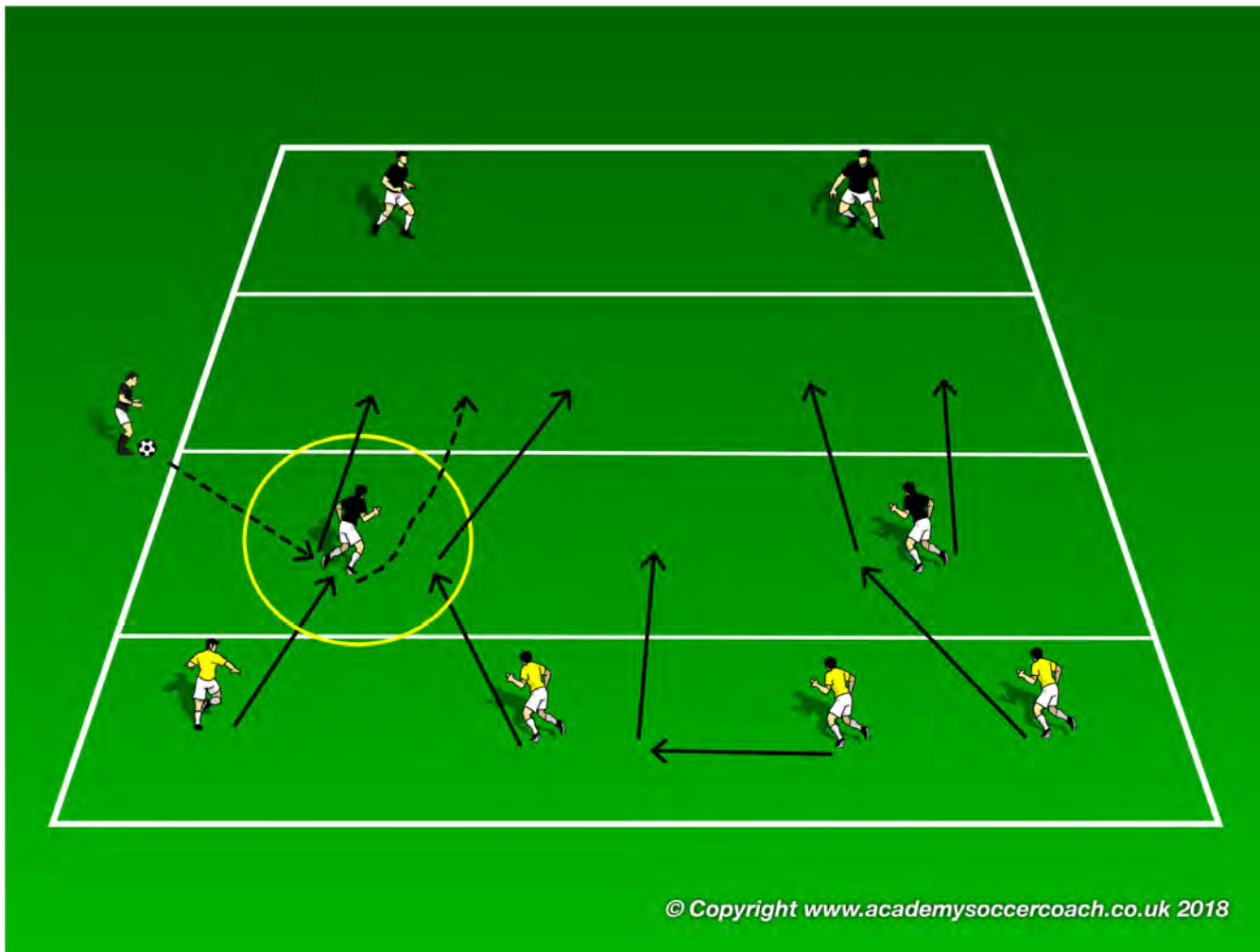
- 1) If the defenders recover the possession inside the first third, a 3 v 4 counter-attack can be played; the black players, who lost the possession, must counter press immediately being in numerical advantage to close the goal space and to force the direction of play backward.
- 2) If the defending team recovers the possession inside the middle third, then the free players become active as support for the new team in possession; a 6 v 4 counter-attack is then created. The black defenders must then retreat to cover the goal space and the deep passing lanes because of the outnumbered situation.
- 3) If the possession is recovered inside the first third, a 10 v 8 sequence starts; the forward and the advanced midfielders of the new defending team must retreat to counter the possession phase of the opposition, and the back 4 must decide if to cover the depth or if to stay placed high, even if outnumbered, to prevent deep passes.

Variation: the same sequence can be played on the other side, as the yellow goalkeeper starts the sequence; the building up area and the pressure area are then bigger than the opposite one. The pressure phase of the defending team must be stronger in the middle and final third. They can decide to let the opposition building up and then pressing as the ball is played inside the middle third, asking the advanced players to retreat as the sequence starts.

Tactical key points: condense the ball area, counter pressing, retreat if outnumbered, overload the center space if outnumbered.

1-4-4-2

Exercise 19: 4 v 4 (1)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 4 parts and 8 players are involved in the exercise. 4 players of the yellow defending team are placed inside the lower area, 2 of the black possession team are placed inside the next one and the last 2 inside the further zone, as in the picture.

The coach has the ball and he decides whether to pass to the closer black couple, as in the picture, or to play toward the upper couple. The defenders must run up through the areas to put pressure or to close the space, depending on who is the couple in possession:

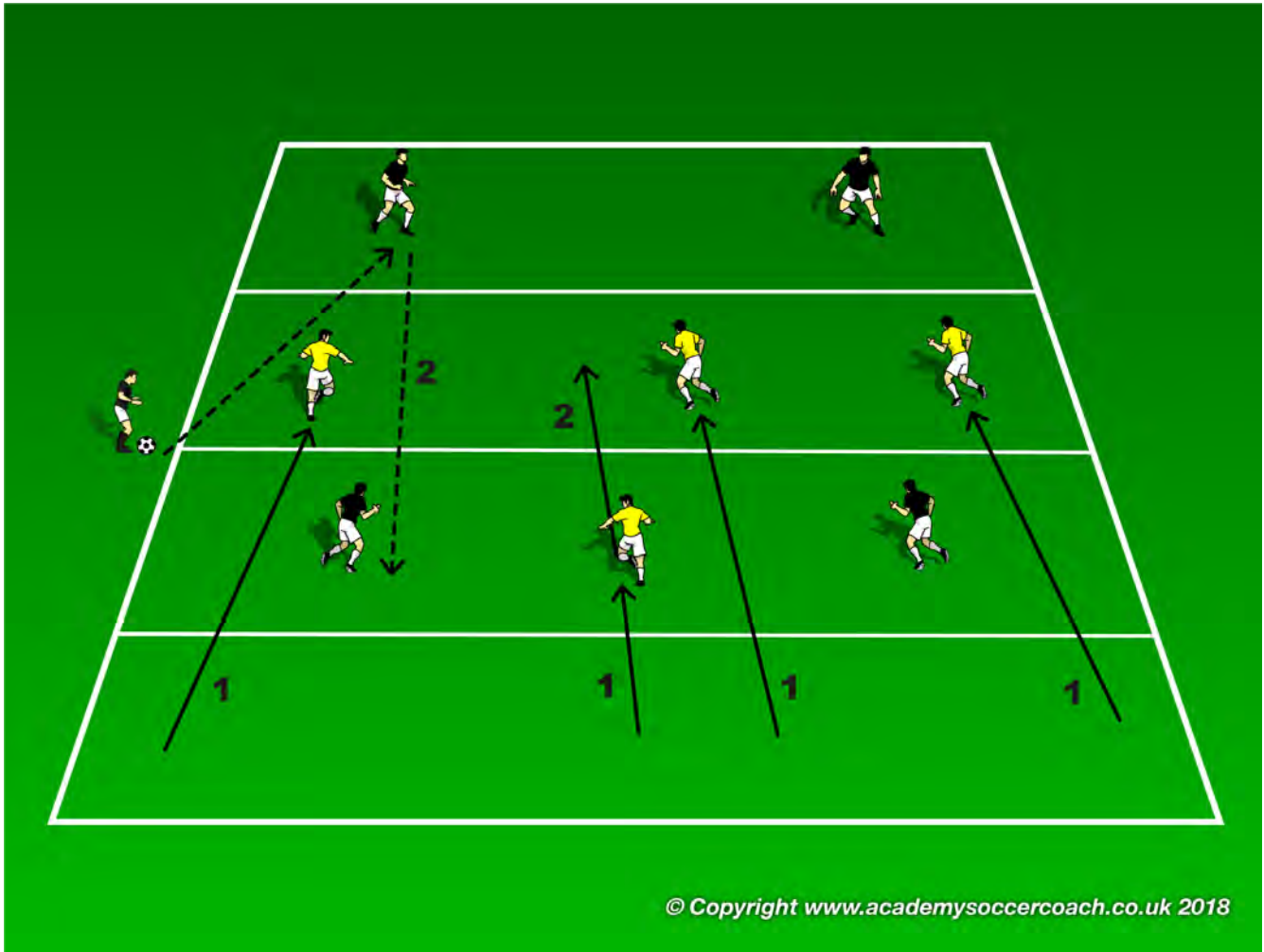
- 1) If the coach passes the ball to the nearest couple, as in the picture, the 4 defenders must press them, doubling the mark on the opponents to recover the possession, being in numerical advantage 4 v 2. They must prevent the black players from turning and dribbling over the end line.
- 2) If the coach passes the ball toward the further couple, the 4 defenders must run up quickly, to close the passing lanes from inside the third part of the pitch, preventing them from passing forward toward the other teammates. If possible, the defenders can try to recover the possession, as they are in numerical advantage.

Defense transition phase:

- 1) If the defenders win the ball, they must dribble over the opposite end line. The black couple of players who lost the possession must try to counter the new ball carrier and the other 2 must run up to equalize the duel near the ball (4 v 4).
- 2) If the defenders are able to recover the possession against the further opponents, the couple of players who lost the possession must try to cover the depth while they are waiting for the other teammates, who must retreat to equalize the duel (4 v 4).

Tactical key points: pressure, space cover, passing lanes closure, retreat to support the defense phase.

Exercise 20: 4 v 4 (2)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. A rectangular area is again divided into 4 parts and 8 players are involved in the exercise. 4 players of the yellow defending team are placed inside the lower area, 2 of the black possession team are placed inside the next one and the last 2 inside the further zone, as in the picture.

The coach has the ball and he decides whether to pass to the closer black couple or to play toward the upper couple; the defenders must run up through the areas to put pressure or to close the space depending on where the coach passes the ball, leaving always a balance player at the back in the first phase (1):

- 1) If the coach passes to the couple of opponent inside the second area, 3 of the 4 defenders must press them, doubling the mark on the ball carrier to recover the possession, being in numerical advantage 3 v 2. They must prevent the black players from turning and dribbling over the end line, leaving a balance player inside the first area.
- 2) If the coach passes the ball toward the further couple, again 3 of the 4 defenders must run up quickly, to close the passing lanes from inside the third part of the pitch, preventing them from passing forward toward the other teammates. The fourth defender must provide balance at the

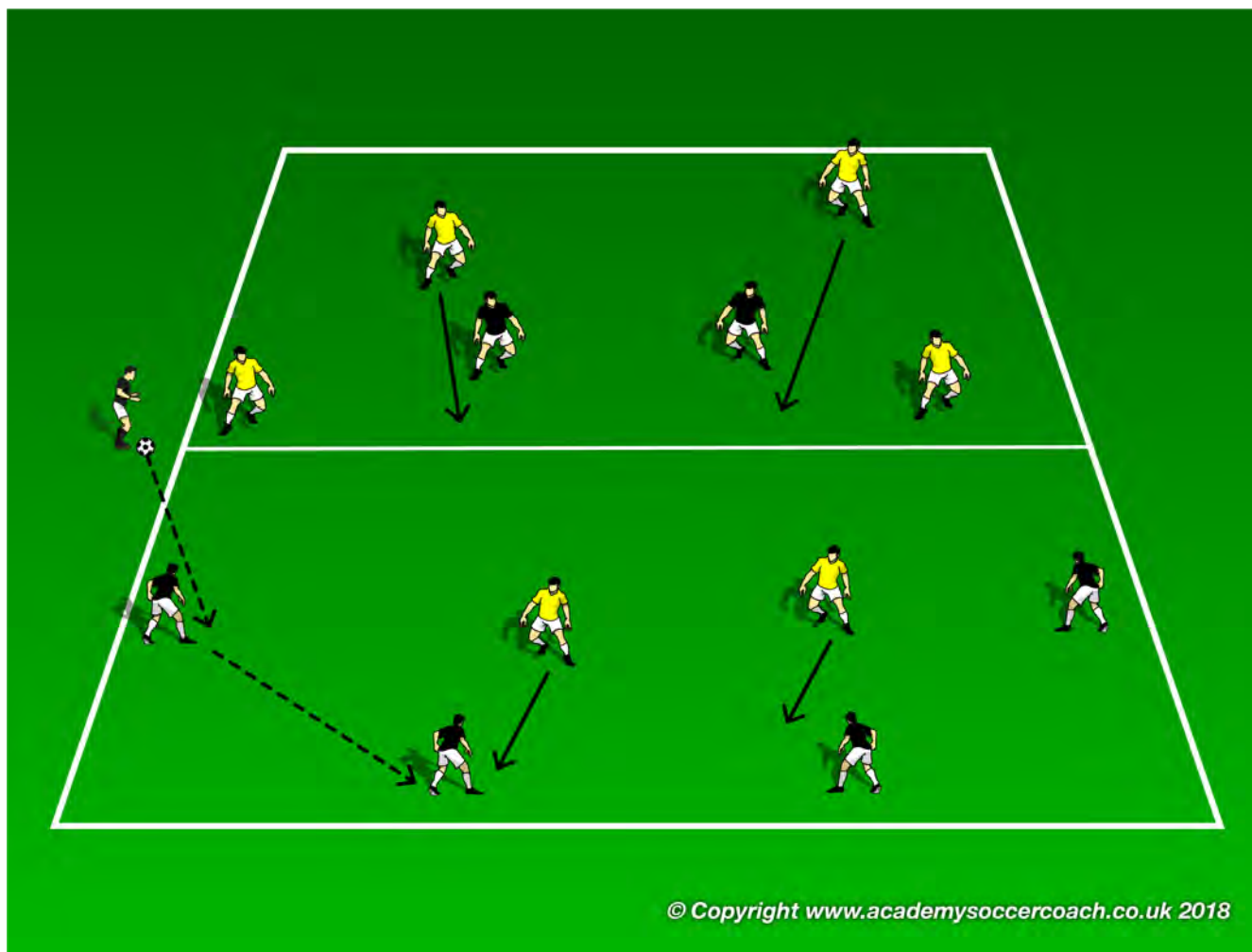
back; he can press too, but only if there a clear chance to recover the possession, freeing the opponents at his back and creating a 4 v 2 situation.

Defense transition phase:

- 1) If the defenders win the ball, they must dribble over the opposite end line. The black couple of players who lost the possession must try to counter the new ball carrier and the other 2 must run, equalizing the duel near the ball (4 v 4).
- 2) If the defenders are able to recover the possession against the further opponents, the couple of players who lost the possession must try to cover the depth, delaying the opposition's possession phase, while they are waiting for the other teammates, who must retreat to equalize the duel again (4 v 4).

Tactical key points: pressure, balance behind the pressing area, passing lanes closure, patience and delay when outnumbered, retreat to support the defense phase.

Exercise 21: 4 v 2 + 4 v 2 (1)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 parts and 12 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defending players of the each team are placed inside both the areas, as well as 2 forwards, as in the picture.

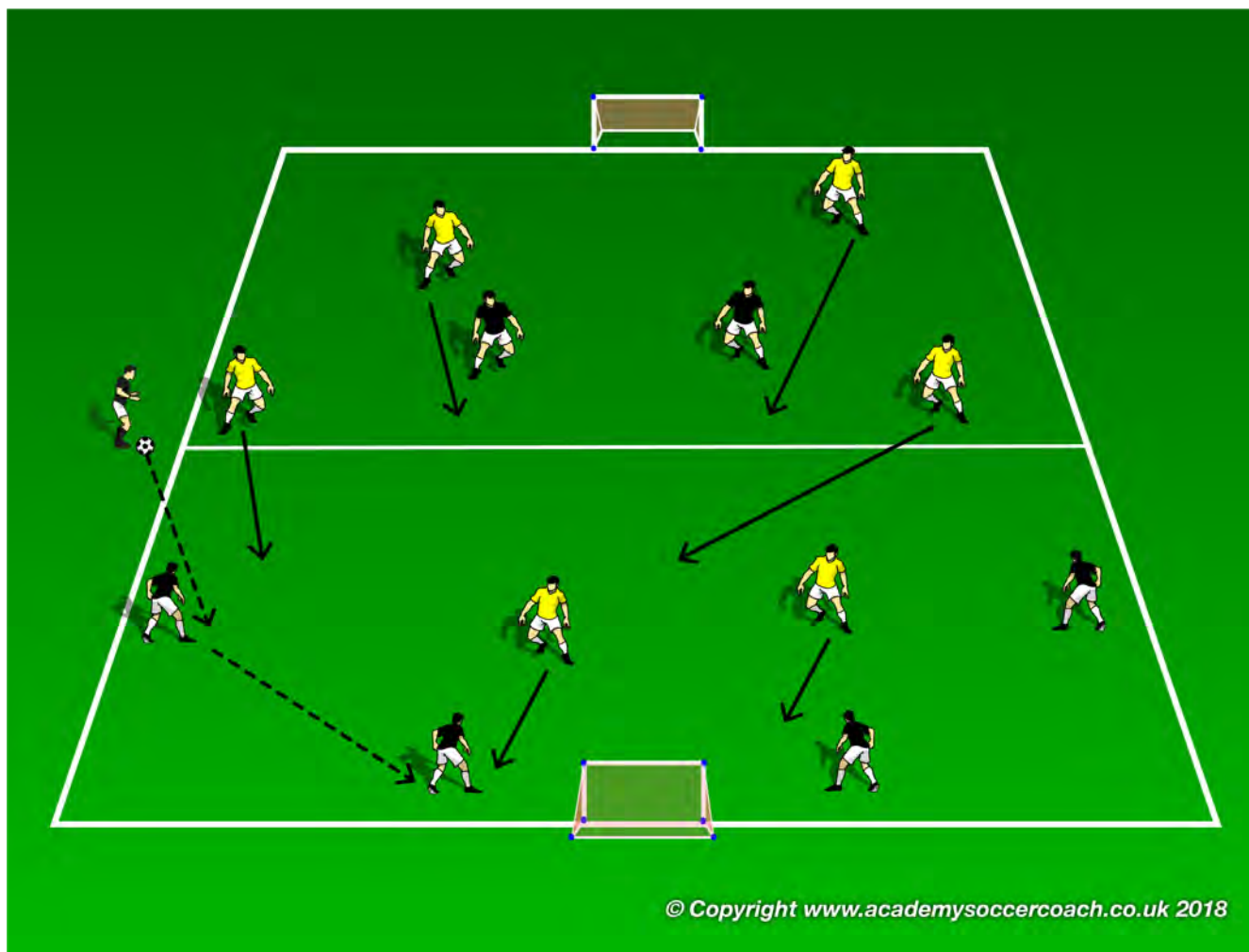
The coach has the ball and he decides who is the possession team (the black one in the picture); the forwards of the defending team must press immediately the ball carrier, while he's receiving and the back 4 must run up to avoid any deep pass; moreover the center backs must be placed in front of the forwards to try to anticipate them.

Defense transition phase:

- 1) If the first 2 defenders win the ball, they must try to dribble over the opposite end line within 6". The 4 black players who lost the possession must try to counter them directly, forcing the possession backward and recovering the possession, being in numerical advantage (4 v 2).
- 2) If the new couple of players in possession pass back, making the other 4 teammates active, or if the ball is won by the 4 defenders at the back, then a 6 v 6 possession game is created to dribble over the opposite end line, at the back of the opposition defense line. The defending team must then balance pressure and space coverage.

Tactical key points: pressure on the ball carrier, anticipation, balance between pressure actions and space coverage during the defense phase.

Exercise 22: 4 v 2 + 4 v 2 (2)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. A rectangular area is divided into 2 parts and 12 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defending players of the each team are placed inside both the areas, as well as 2 forwards, as in the picture.

The coach has the ball and he decides who is the possession team (the black one in the picture); the forwards of the defending team must press immediately the ball carrier, while he's receiving and the back 4 must run up to avoid any deep pass. The wide defenders must run inside the opposite half, one of them must support the pressure phase and the second one must place himself at the back of the pressure area, to provide balance; a 4 v 4 duel is then created. The center backs must be placed in front of the forwards to try to anticipate them.

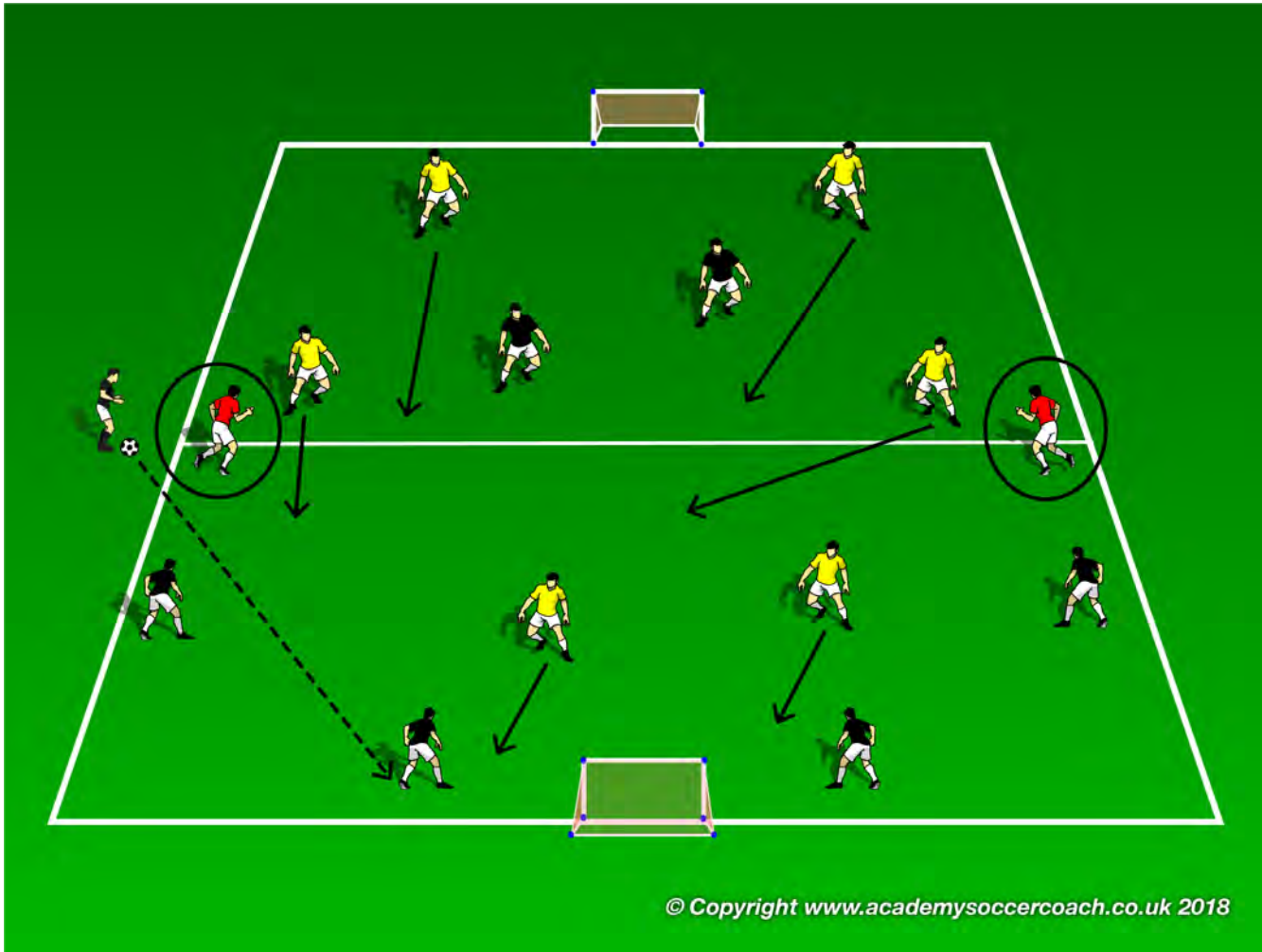
Defense transition phase:

- 1) If the first 4 defenders (2+2) win the ball, they must try to dribble over the opposite end line within 6". The 4 black players who lost the possession must try to counter them directly, forcing the possession backward and recovering the possession, waiting for the teammates, who can retreat to create defense numerical advantage (6 v 4).

- 2) If the new players in possession decide to pass back, or if they are forced backward, making the other 2 teammates active, or if the ball is won by the 2 defenders at the back (2 v 2 duel), then a 6 v 6 possession game is created to dribble over the opposite end line at the back of the opposition defense. The defending team must then balance pressure and space coverage.

Tactical key points: pressure on the ball carrier, balance between pressure actions and space coverage, numerical advantage creation.

Exercise 23: 4 v 2 + 4 v 2 (+ 2)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 parts and 14 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defending players of the each team are placed inside both the areas, as well as 2 forwards, as in the picture. 2 red free players are placed wide on the middle line, supporting the possession team.

The coach has the ball and he decides who is the possession team (the black one in the picture); the forwards of the defending team must press immediately the ball carrier while he's receiving, and the back 4 must run up to avoid any deep or wide (toward the free players) pass. The wide defenders must run inside the opposite half, one of them must support the pressure phase and the second one must place himself at the back of the ultra-offensive pressure area, to provide balance; a 4 v 4 duel is then created. The center backs must be placed between the forwards and the free players to be able to delay them if they receive the ball.

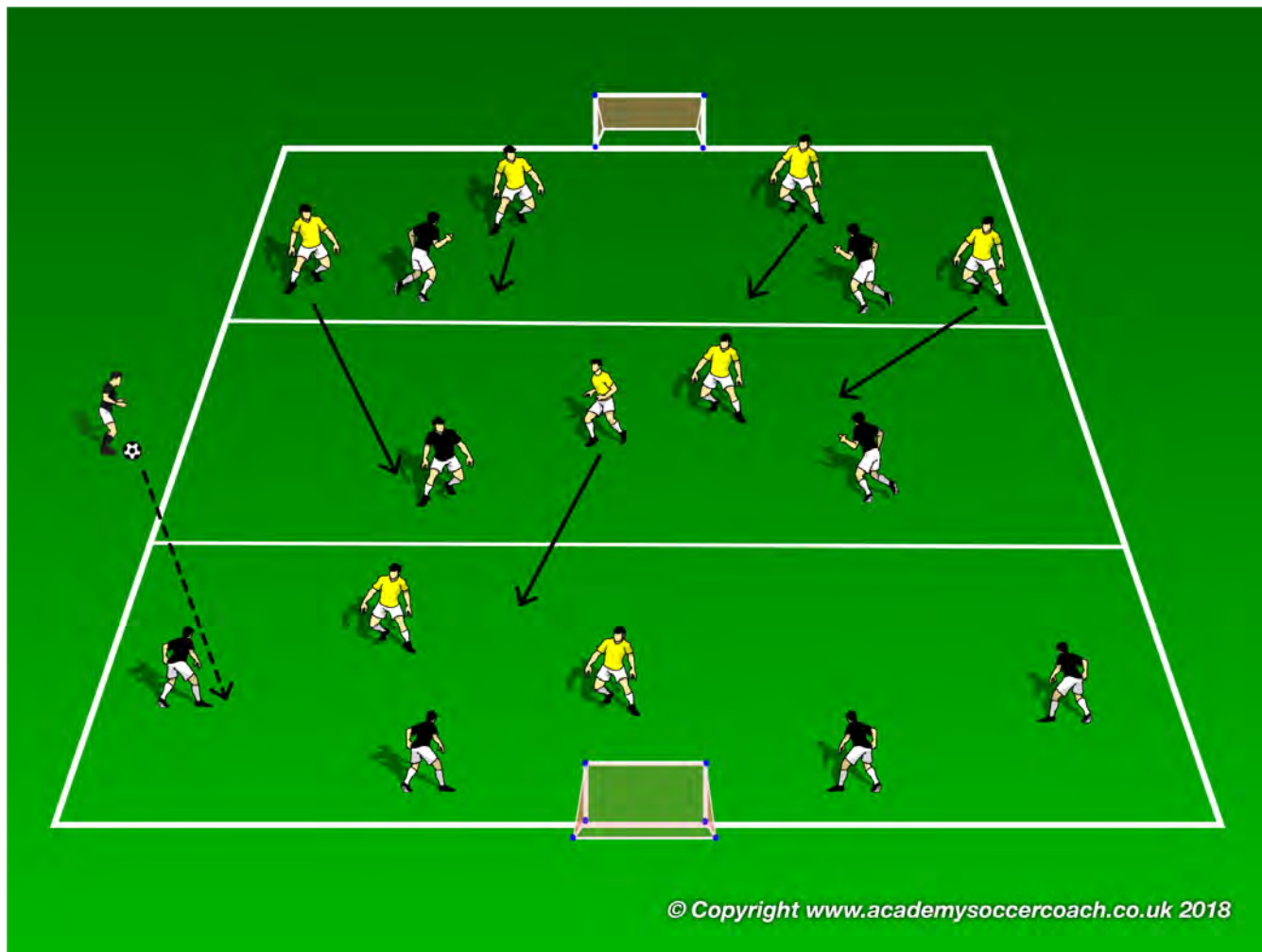
Defense transition phase:

- 1) If the first 4 defenders (2+2) win the ball, they must try to dribble over the opposite end line within 6". The 4 black players who lost the possession must try to counter them directly, forcing the possession backward and recovering the possession, waiting for the teammates, who can retreat to create defense numerical advantage (6 v 4).

- 2) If the players now in possession decide to pass the ball toward the free ones or if they are forced backward, making them active in the new possession phase, then a 6 v 6 possession game is created to dribble over the opposite end line, at the back of the opposition defense line. The defending team must then balance pressure and space coverage. The center backs must stay placed on the middle line or just behind it to provide balance.
- 3) If the ball is won by the 2 defenders at the back (2 v 2 duel), an 8 v 6 duel is created on the pitch. The defending team is outnumbered and its player must try to delay the opposition possession phase and to cover the depth, to avoid any ball dribble over the end line.

Tactical key points: pressure on the ball carrier, ultra-offensive pressure, balance positions and between pressure actions and space coverage, delay and space coverage when outnumbered.

Exercise 24: 4 v 2 + 4 v 2 (2 + 2)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 parts and 14 players are involved in the exercise. 4 defending players of the each team are placed inside both the areas, as well as 2 forwards, as in the picture. 2 red free players are placed wide on the middle line, supporting the possession team.

The coach has the ball and he decides who is the possession team (the black one in the picture); the forwards of the defending team must press immediately the ball carrier, while he's receiving and the back 4 must run up to avoid any deep or wide (toward the free players) pass. The wide defenders must run inside the opposite half, one of them must support the pressure phase and the second one must place himself at the back of the ultra-offensive pressure area, to provide balance; a 4 v 4 duel is then created. The center backs must be placed between the forwards and the free players, to be able to delay them if they receive the ball.

Defense transition phase:

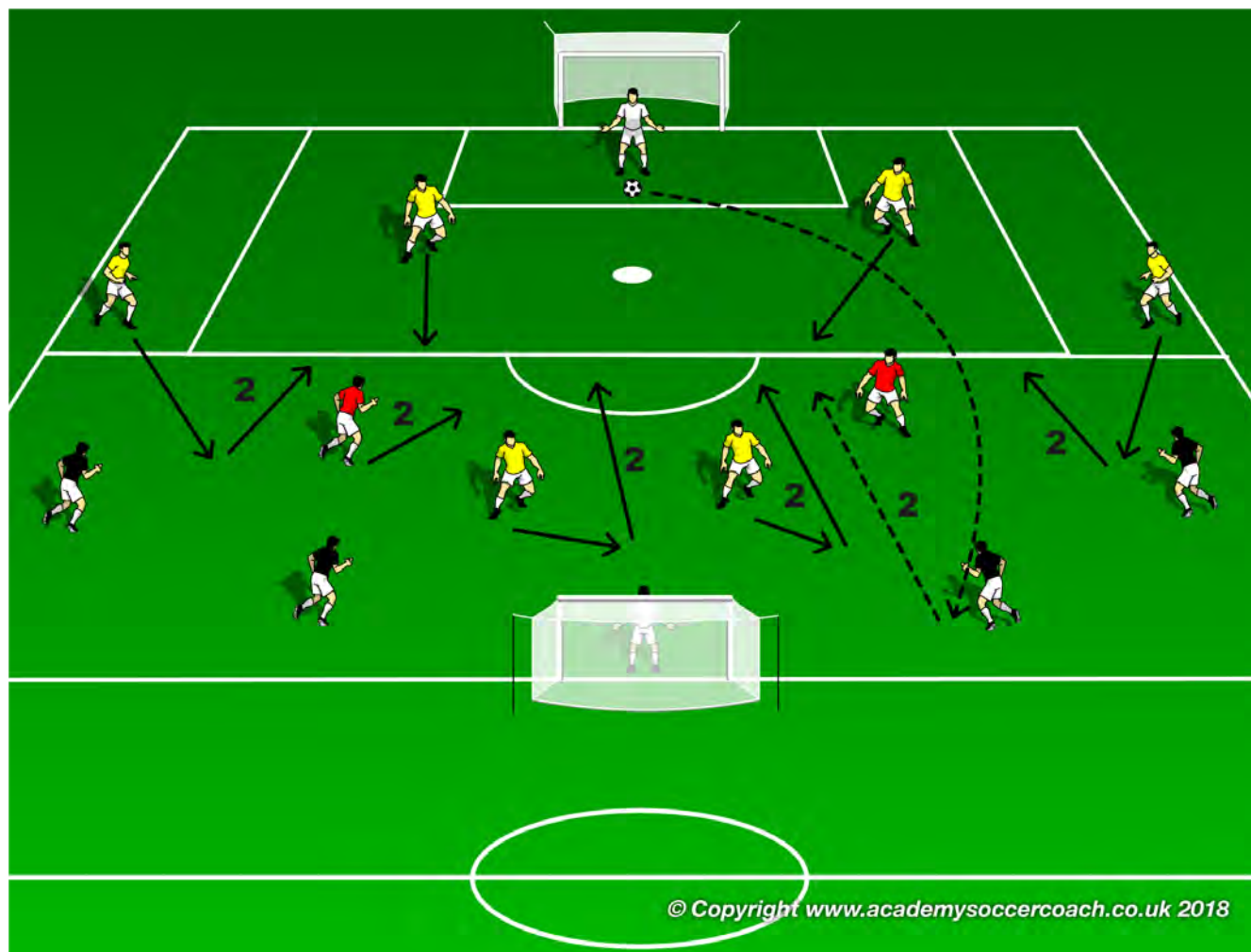
- 1) If the first 4 defenders (2+2) win the ball, they must try to dribble over the opposite end line within 6". The 4 black players who lost the possession must try to counter them directly, forcing

the possession backward and recovering the possession, waiting for the teammates, who can retreat to create defense numerical advantage (6 v 4).

- 2) If the new players in possession decide to pass the ball toward the free players, or if they are forced backward, making them active in the new possession phase, then a 6 v 6 possession game is created to dribble over the opposite end line, at the back of the opposition defense. The defending team must then balance pressure and space coverage. The center backs must stay placed on the middle line, or just behind it, to provide balance
- 3) If the ball is won by the 2 defenders at the back (2 v 2 duel), an 8 v 6 duel is created on the pitch. The defending team is outnumbered and its players must try to delay the opposition possession phase and to cover the depth to avoid any ball dribble over the end line.

Tactical key points: pressure on the ball carrier, ultra-offensive pressure, closure of passing lanes, balance positions and between pressure actions and space coverage, delay, space and depth coverage when outnumbered.

Exercise 25: 4 v 2 + 4 v 2 (+ 2) and gks



Set-up and Sequence: 12 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside 1/3 of a regular field that is divided into 2 parts; the defending half is as long as the penalty area, and the end line of the building up area is the same of the third of the field. The yellow defending team is shaped with 4 defenders and 2 advanced players; the attacking team has 4 players at the back and 2 red free players support them.

The goalkeeper of the yellow team starts the sequence, passing the ball to a black player to build up inside the first third; the advanced yellow players of the defending team must put pressure against the 4 black opponents, condensing the ball area and forcing the opposition building up phase outside to prevent them from playing at the back and toward the red free players.

2 wide yellow defenders must run inside from the second half to help the teammates, being balanced between the wide opponents and the red free players; the defenders are outnumbered 4+2 v 4. The center defenders must stay placed on the borderline of the penalty area to close the goal area.

If the black players are able to pass the ball forward and to play inside the finishing area, the 6 yellow defenders must condense the ball area, to prevent any finishing phase; the 4 advanced defenders must retreat their positions (2).

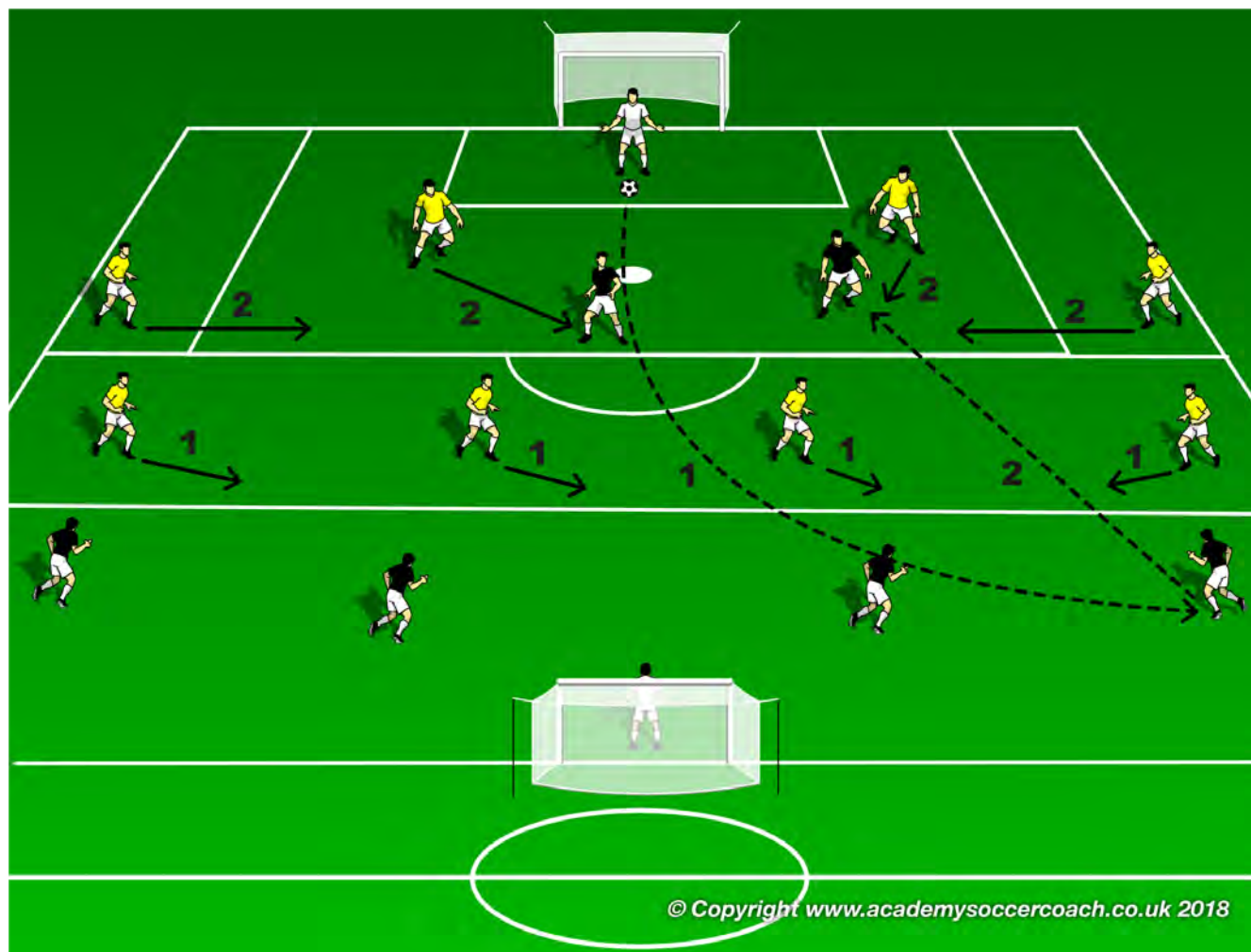
Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the advanced players of the defending team win the ball, they can play together with the red free players and the incoming teammates; the black players, now without possession, are outnumbered and they must cover the goal space to prevent any finishing chance.
- 2) If the possession is recovered at the back, the red free players become defenders together with the black ones and a 6 v 6 duel is created; the red free players are asked to counter press the opposition while the back 4 are running up the pitch.

Variation: wherever the defending team recovers the possession, the red free players are always a support for the attacking team. In this case the 4 black players must defend the goal as a block to try to avoid shooting chances.

Tactical key points: condense the ball area, support the pressure from the back, counter pressing, retreat to cover the depth, overload the center space and delay if outnumbered.

Exercise 26: 4 v 2 + 4 v 4 and gks (1)



Set-up and Sequence: 14 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside an area about 10 yards less than a half of a regular field (or on half of a field) that is divided into 3 parts, as in the picture. The black attacking team is shaped with 4 defenders (inside the first third) and 2 forwards (free to move inside the final third). The yellow team is shaped with 4 defenders inside the first third and 4 midfielders inside the middle third area of the space. The goalkeeper of the yellow team has the possession at the beginning. The attacking players can't play out of their areas when in possession.

The goalkeeper starts the sequence, kicking the ball to a fullback of the black team, who must receive and try to play in behind the lines toward the forward, as soon as possible; the midfielders of the defending team must put pressure against the 4 black opponents, moreover on the ball carrier, condensing the ball area and forcing the opposition building up phase backward or outside, to prevent them from playing toward the forwards (1).

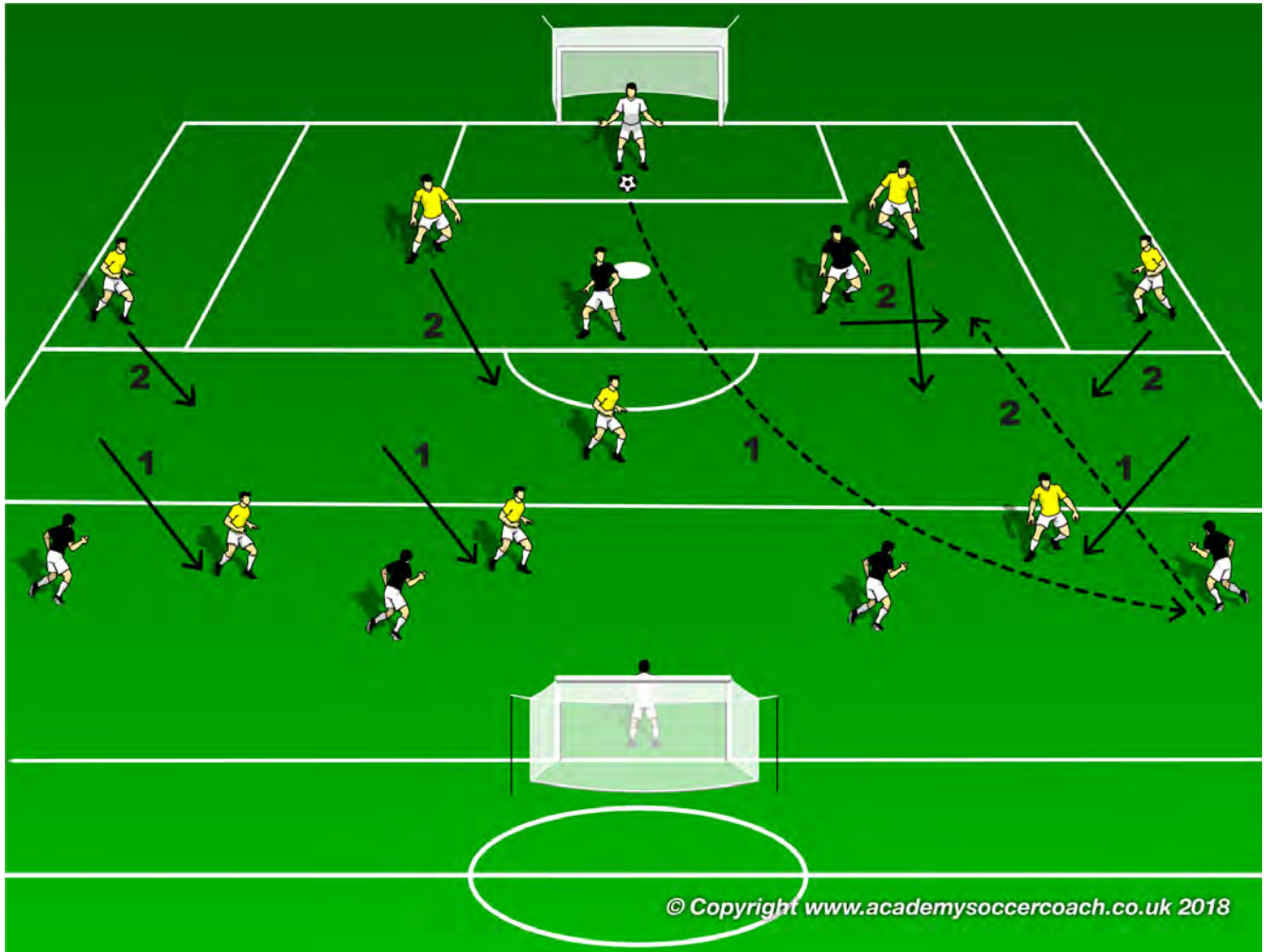
If the black forwards are able to receive, the yellow defenders must press them to force them backward and toward the midfielders, who are retreating to recover the possession.

Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the yellow midfielders are able to recover the possession, they can counter attack; the 4 blacks at the back must counter them, delaying the attacking phase and waiting for 2 teammates retreating, to support the defense phase and to create numerical advantage, after 6".
- 2) If the yellow defenders recover the possession, they must pass the ball to the midfielders to try to score. The black defenders must counter them, running inside the middle area, and pressing them to avoid any further pass. The yellow forwards must run back to create defensive numerical advantage 6 v 4.

Tactical key points: pressure to close the passing lanes and to recover the ball, delay the opposition possession waiting for support, condense the ball area to prevent forward passes.

Exercise 27: 4 v 2 + 4 v 4 and gks (2)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. 14 field players and 2 goalkeepers are again placed inside an area about 10 yards less than a half of a regular field (or on half of a field) that is divided into 3 parts, as in the picture.

The black attacking team is shaped with 4 defenders (inside the first third) and 2 forwards (free to move inside the final third). The yellow team is shaped with 4 defenders inside the first third and 4 midfielders inside the middle third area of the space, at the beginning. The goalkeeper of the yellow team has the possession at the beginning. The attacking players can't play out of their areas, when in possession.

The goalkeeper starts the sequence, kicking the ball to a fullback of the black team, who must receive and try to play in behind the lines toward the forward, as soon as possible; 3 of the 4 midfielders of the defending team must put ultra-offensive pressure against the 4 black opponents, running inside the final third of the space, forcing the opposition building up phase backward or outside, to prevent them from playing toward the forwards (1).

The fourth midfielder must provide balance inside the middle third.

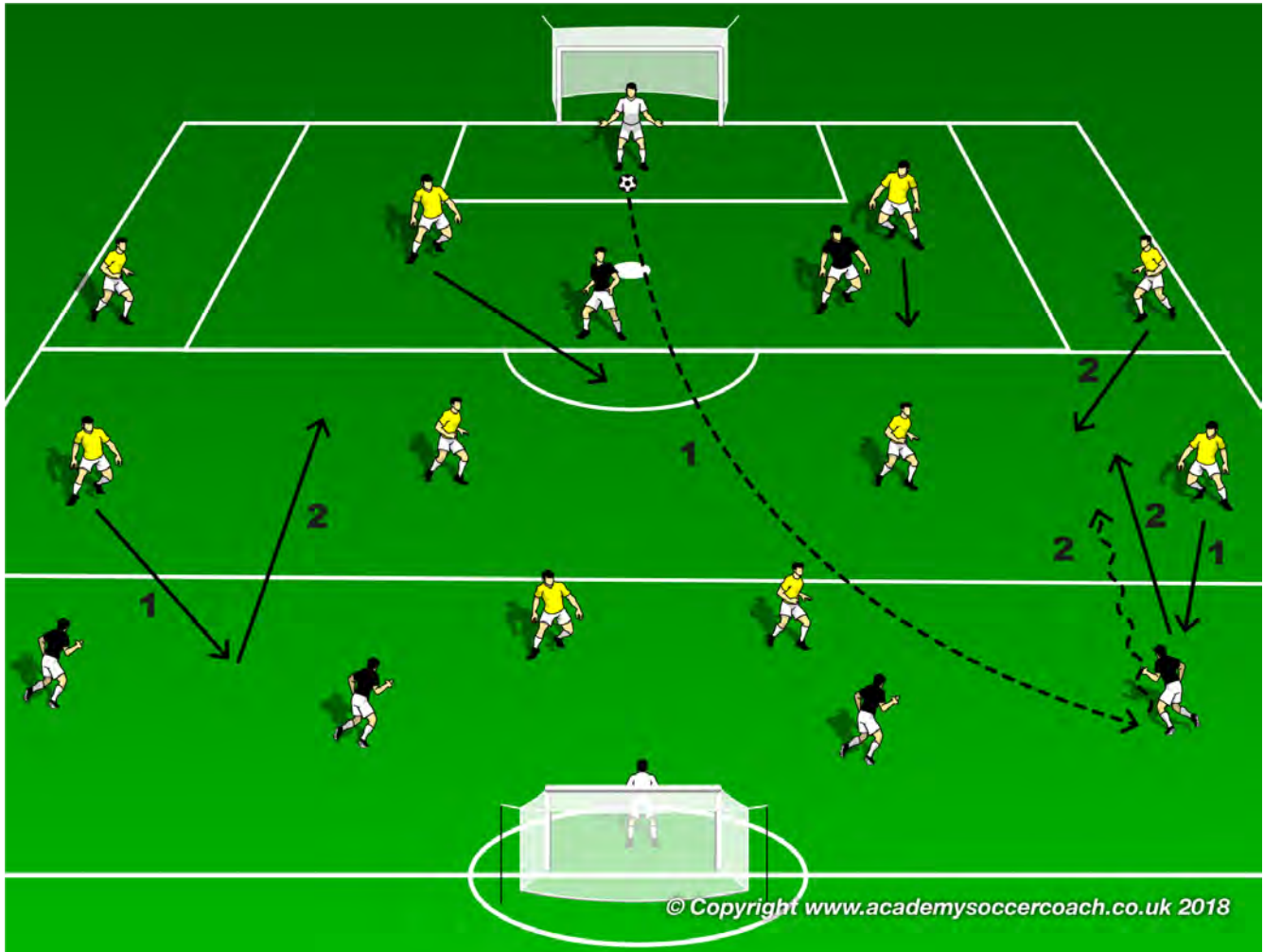
If the black forwards seem to be able to receive, the 4 at the back must run up in the middle third, trying to anticipate them or leaving them offside. 2 of the 4 defenders must press the potential receiver creating numerical advantage against him (2 v 1) - (2).

Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the yellow midfielders are able to recover the possession, they can counter-attack 3 v 4 with the fourth teammate as back support; the 4 blacks at the back must counter them, counter pressing thanks to the defensive numerical advantage.
- 2) If the yellow defenders recover the possession, they must pass the ball to the midfielders to try to score. The black defenders must counter them, delaying the possession phase of the opponents. The yellow forwards can run back to create defensive numerical advantage 6 v 4 after 6".

Tactical key points: pressure and balance at the back, anticipation, defend forward, condense the ball area, creation of defensive numerical advantage, delay to wait for teammates support.

Exercise 28: 4 - 2 v and gk v 1-4-4-2



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is another progression of number 26. 16 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside a half of a regular field that is divided into 3 parts, as in the picture. The black attacking team is shaped with 4 defenders (inside the first third) and 2 forwards (free to move inside the final third). The yellow team is shaped with a 1-4-4-2 formation through the thirds of the field, at the beginning. The goalkeeper of the yellow team has the possession.

The goalkeeper starts the sequence, kicking the ball to a fullback of the black team, who must receive and try to dribble inside the next area; the closest opposition winger must try to counter him while receiving to prevent him from playing forward (1). The opposite winger must shift across to make the pitch smaller for the attacking team. The winger, the nearest center midfielder and forward must create a strong area near the ball.

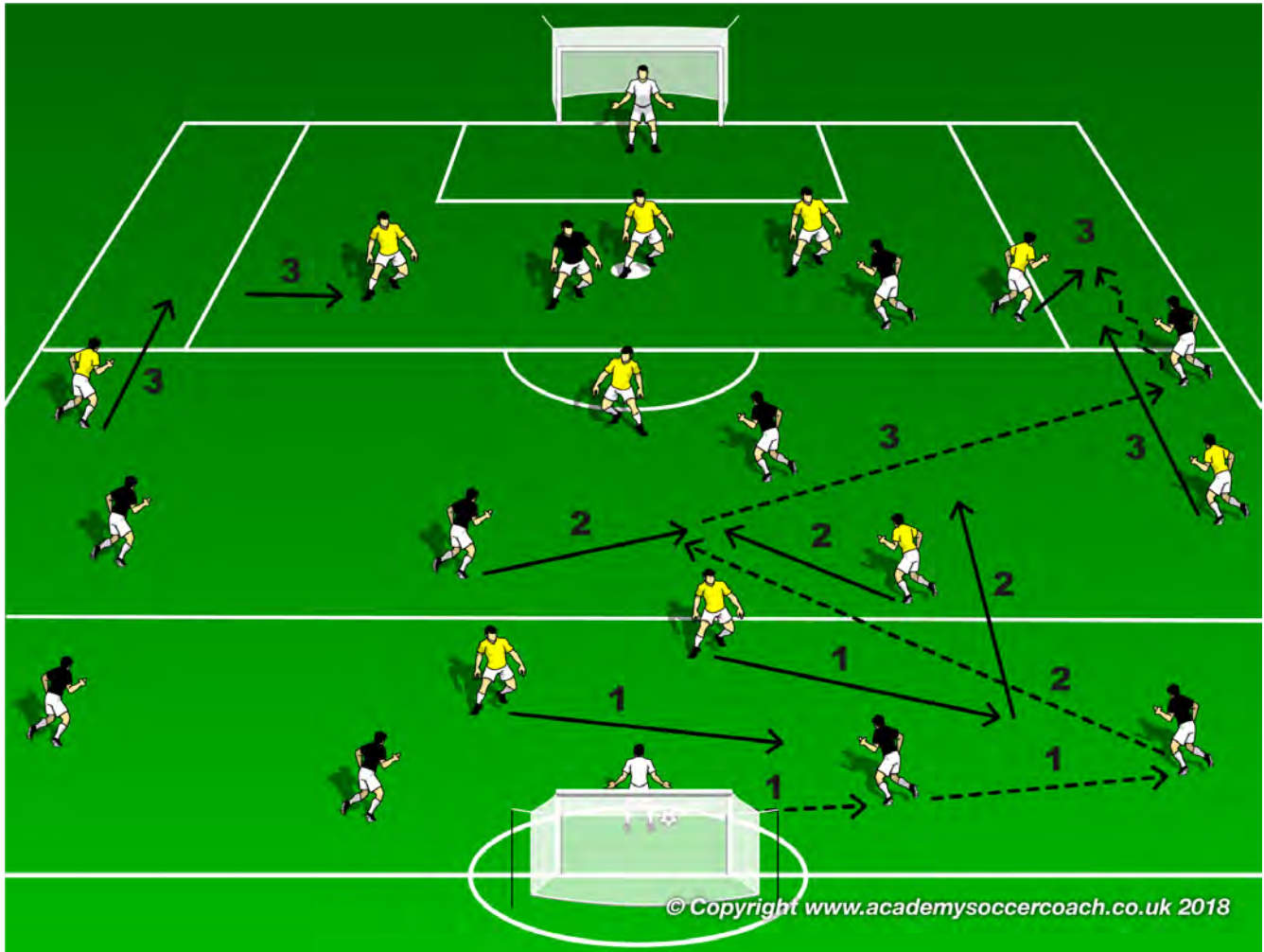
If the black player is able to dribble forward, the yellow winger must track him back, while the fullback is running forward, toward the next third to close the space in front of him - (2). The strong area on the ball must be created again, following its direction.

Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the first pressure phase is successful, a 4+2 v 4 counter attack situation can be developed; the black defenders must try to delay the attacking phase of the opponents for 6", to allow the forward to run back, to equalize the duel (6 v 6)
- 2) If the ball is recovered in the middle third or inside the first third, then the new possession team must build up from the goalkeeper; the black team without possession must shape a 4 - 2 defense formation inside the final and middle third, to save the depth and the goal space.

Tactical key points: create a strong area near the ball, retreat to support the defense phase, re-organize a back 4 defense line and save the center space with the center midfielders.

Exercise 29: 1-4-4-2 v 1-4-4-2 (1)



Set-up and Sequence: 20 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside a half of a regular field that is divided into 3 parts, as in the picture. Both teams are placed with 4 defenders in the first third, 4 midfielders inside the middle third and 2 forwards inside the final third, at the beginning. The goalkeeper of the black possession team starts the sequence.

The yellow forwards must try to put pressure against the 2 first opponents in possession to force the direction of play wide (1). If the midfielders of the attacking team are able to receive, one of the forwards must run back in the middle third to create defensive numerical advantage 5 v 4 (2).

If the possession team is able to play inside the final third, thanks to a winger or a midfielder, who can dribble forward, both the wingers of the defending team must retreat to allow the defense line to shift across and to create a strong area on the ball and a safe numerical advantage inside the first third (3).

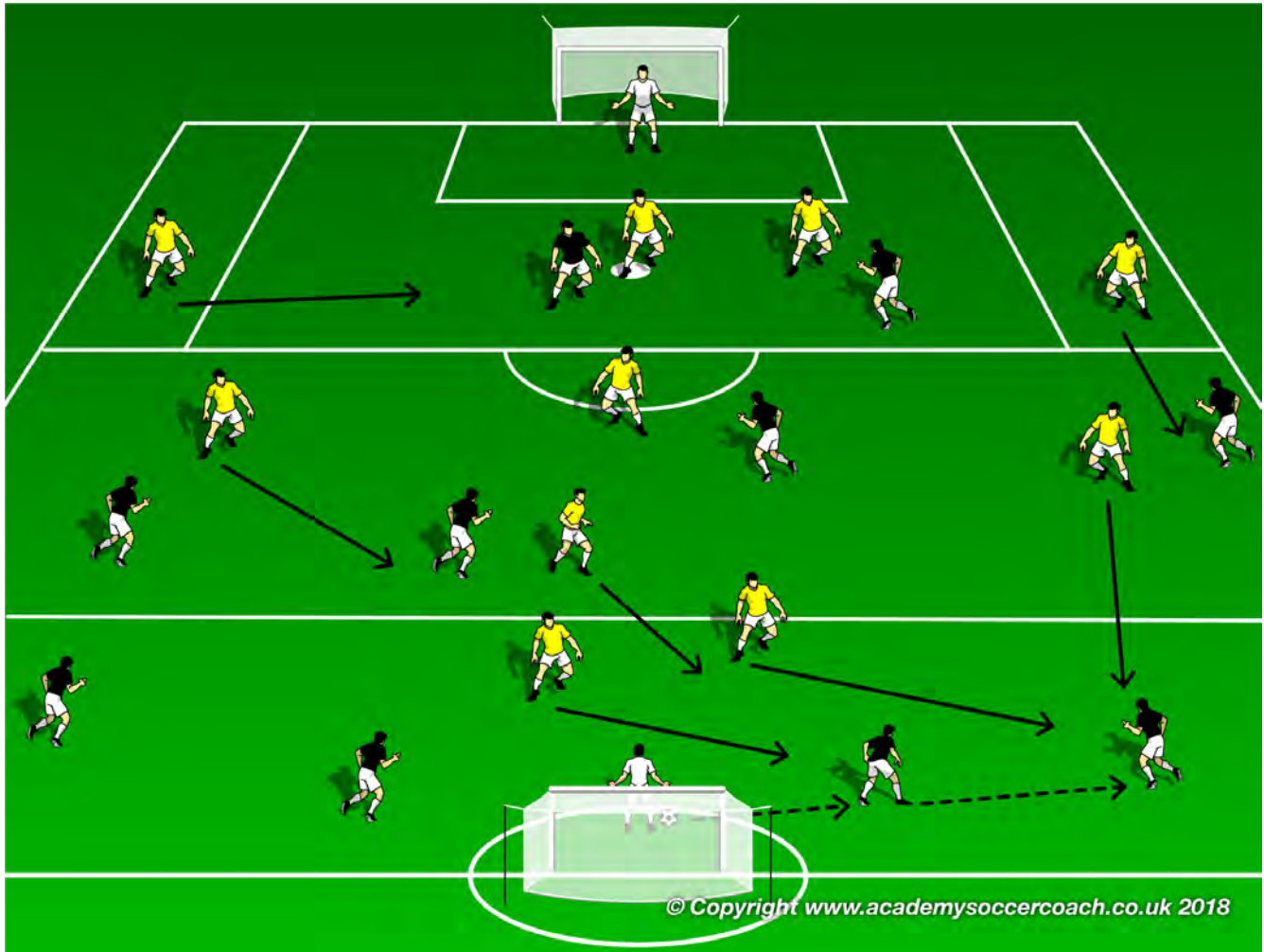
If the black player is able to dribble forward, the yellow winger must truck him back, while the fullback is running forward, toward the next third to close the space in front of him - (2). The strong area on the ball must be created again, following its direction.

Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the first pressure phase of pressure is successful, a 4+2 v 4+4 (defenders and midfielders) counter-attack situation can be developed; the black defenders must try to delay the attacking phase of the opponents for 6" (4 v 4+2), to allow the midfielders running back, creating a numerical advantage defense situation (8 v 6).
- 2) If the ball is recovered inside the middle third a 6 v 8 duel is played for 6"; if the new defending team is not able to counter press and to recover the possession within that time, then the attacking team can finish freely.
- 3) If the ball is recovered inside the first third, the possession team must build up from the back. The black team without possession must defend forward running up and placing the defense line inside the middle third, creating 2 defense lines very close to each other.

Tactical key points: create a strong area near the ball to force the opposition possession phase, delay, waiting for help of teammates, counter press if defending with numerical advantage, defend forward organizing 2 lines of 4 to avoid any in behind passes.

Exercise 30: 1-4-4-2 v 1-4-4-2 (2)



Set-up and Sequence: 20 field players and 2 goalkeepers are placed inside on a half of a regular field that is divided into 3 parts, as in the picture. Both teams are placed with 4 defenders in the first third, 4 midfielders inside the middle third and 2 forwards inside the final third, at the beginning. The goalkeeper of the black possession team starts the sequence.

The yellow forwards must try to put pressure against the 2 first opponents in possession, to force the direction of play wide or even to recover the possession, as 2 of the 4 midfielders run inside the final third, to create ultra-offensive pressure, equalizing the number of players; the other 2 midfielders provides balance in the middle third.

If the midfielders of the attacking team are able to receive, one of the fullbacks must run up to limit the defensive numerical disadvantage 4 v 3; the opposite fullback must shift across to shape a 3 back line together with the center backs.

If the possession team is able to play inside the final third, thanks to a winger or a midfielder, who can dribble forward, both the balance midfielders of the defending team must retreat to create defensive numerical advantage inside the first third.

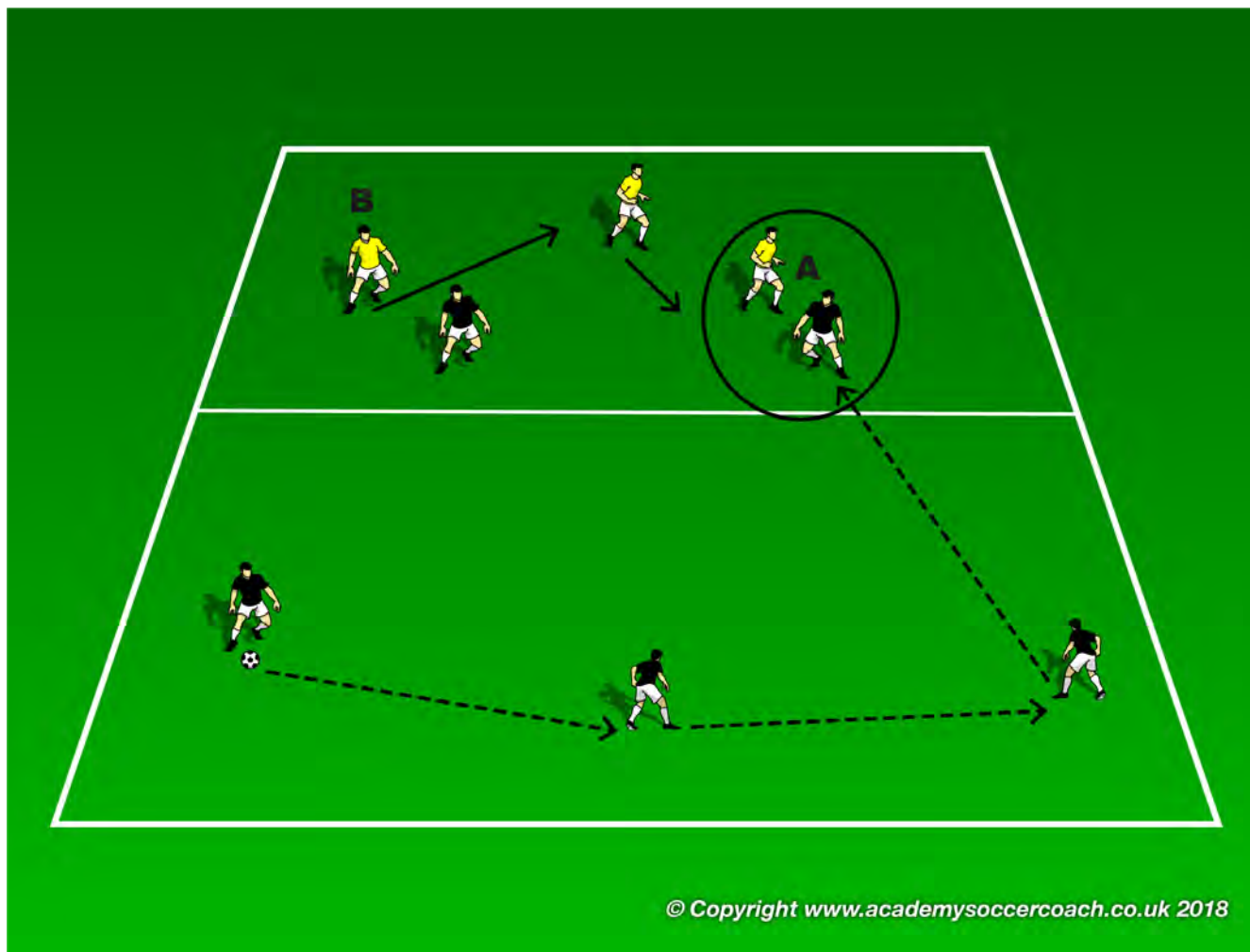
Defense transition phases:

- 1) If the first pressure phase is successful, a 4 v 4 counter attack situation is developed; the black defenders must try to delay the attacking phase of the opponents for 6", to allow the wingers running back, creating a numerical advantage defense situation (6 v 4), where at least one player can move out of the line to counter the ball carrier.
- 2) If the ball is recovered in the middle third a 7 v 8 duel is played for 6"; if the new defending team is not able to counter press and to recover the possession within that time, then the attacking team can finish freely.
- 3) If the ball is recovered inside the first third, the possession team must build up from the back. The black team without possession must defend forward, running up and placing the defense line inside the middle third, creating 2 defense lines very closed to each other.

Tactical key points: create a strong area near the ball to force the opposition possession phase through an ultra-offensive pressure action, delay, waiting for help of teammates, counter press if defending with numerical advantage, defend forward organizing 2 lines of 4 to avoid any in behind passes.

1-3-5-2

Exercise 31: 3 + 2 v 3 (1)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 parts and 8 players are involved in the exercise. 3 attacking players are freely active inside the lower half, 3 defending players and 2 attackers are placed inside the upper areas, as in the picture.

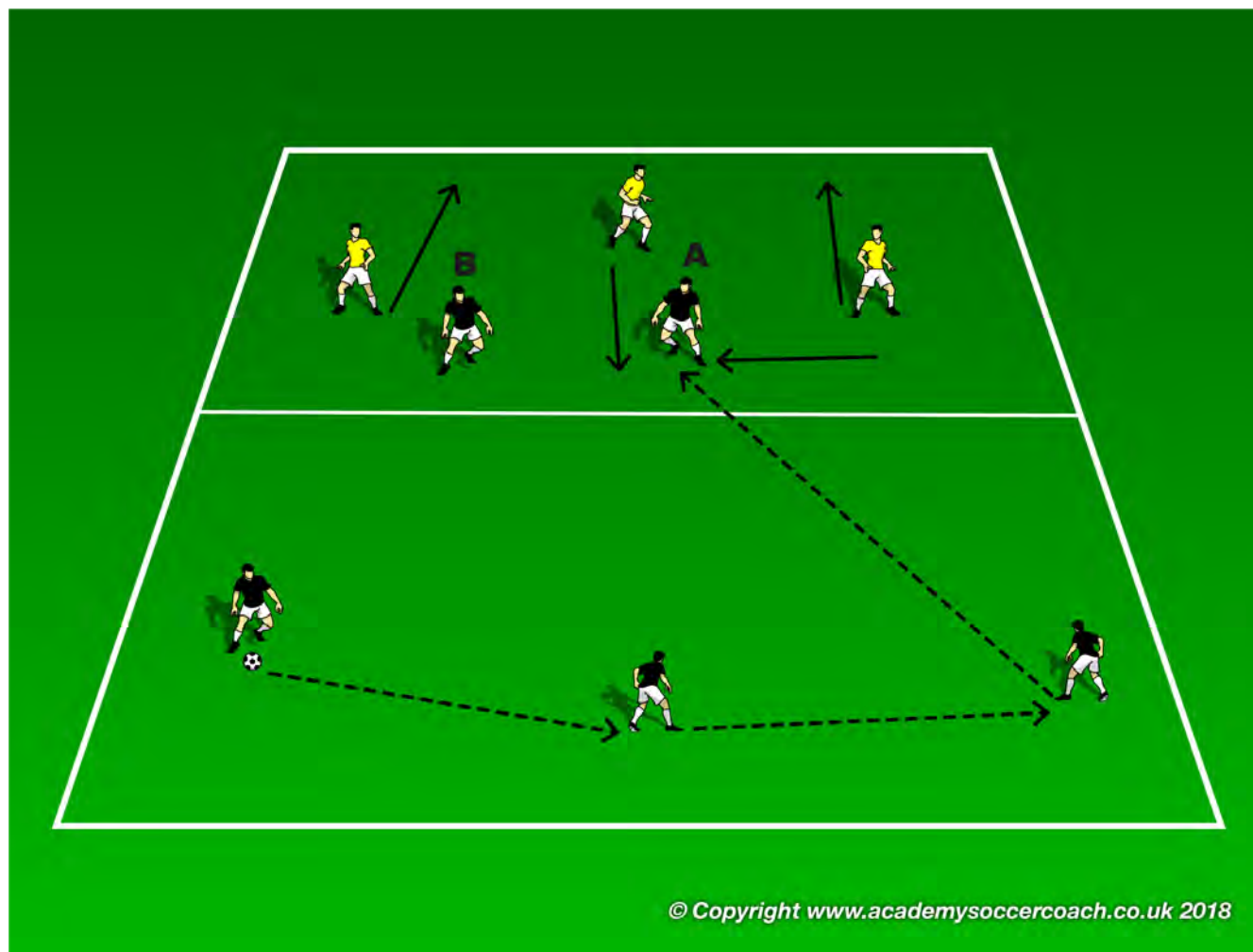
The 3 players with the possession are free to dribble or pass inside the lower area and the other 2 forwards must try to escape the markers inside the upper area. The defenders must always provide man marking and space coverage at the back, shifting across the upper area. The defenders must be placed as in the situation A in the picture, to prevent the forwards from turning and dribbling over the end line:

- One defender must mark the nearest forward to the ball.
- The second defender must be ready to double the mark.
- The third one must provide balance and be ready to re-organize the same shape against the other opponents (in a potential situation B).

Defense transition phase: if the yellow players recovers the possession, they must dribble toward the opposite area, to dribble over the end line; the black defenders must try to deny space, countering the opposition possession; after 6", 2 forwards can retreat to create defensive numerical advantage (5 v 3).

Tactical key points: organize pressure and balance against the forwards, deny space to avoid counter attacks, delay while waiting for defense support of the teammates.

Exercise 32: 3 + 2 v 3 (2)



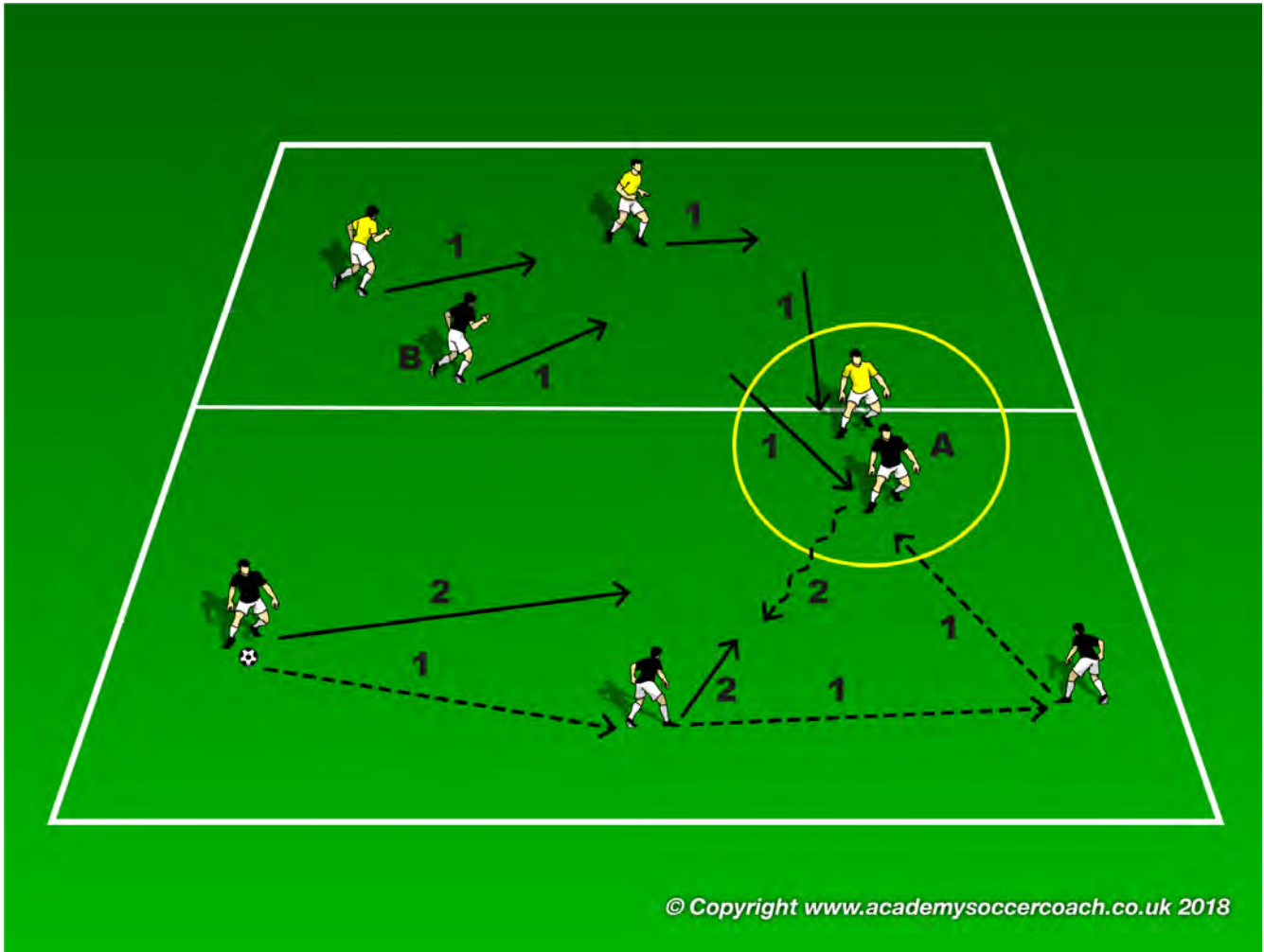
Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. A rectangular area is again divided into 2 parts and 8 players are involved in the exercise. 3 attacking players are freely active inside the lower half, 3 defending players and 2 attackers are placed inside the upper areas, as in the picture.

The 3 players with possession are free to dribble or pass inside the lower area and the other 2 named forwards (A and B) must try to escape the markers inside the upper area. The coach states who is the receiver, who must shift across toward the center of the upper area; the center defender of the back 3 must always provide man marking on him, pressing and trying to anticipate him, while the other 2 must cover the space, retreating at the back of the teammate on the ball.

Defense transition phase: if the yellow players recover the possession, they must dribble toward the opposite area and over the end line; the black defenders must try to deny space, countering the opposition possession; after 6", 2 forwards can retreat to create defensive numerical advantage (5 v 3).

Tactical key points: organize pressure against the forward and coverage and balance at his back, move as a unique block, deny space to avoid counter attacks, delay while waiting for defense support of the teammates.

Exercise 33: 3 + 2 v 3 (3)



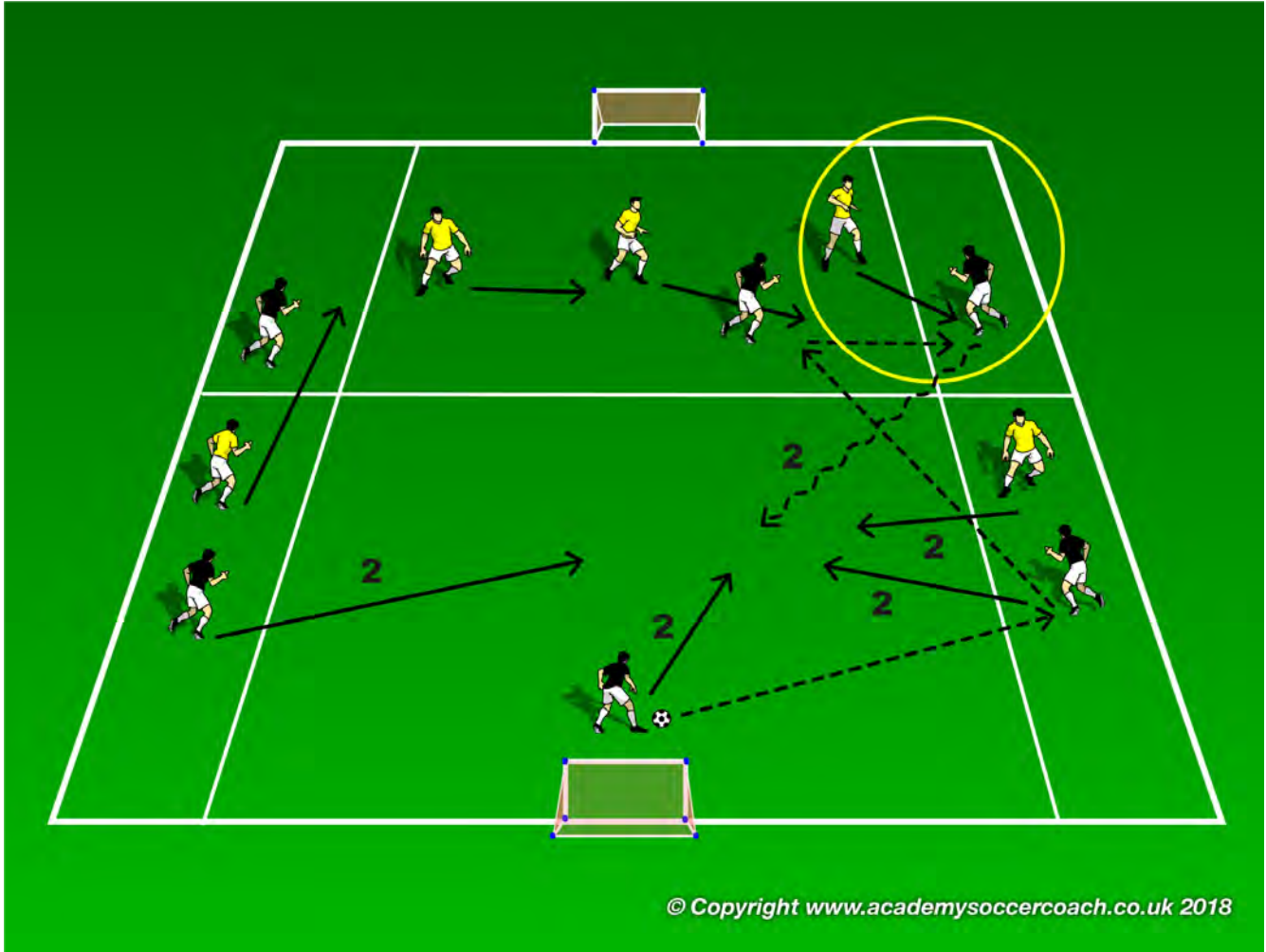
Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is another progression of the num. 29. A rectangular area is again divided into 2 parts and 8 players are involved in the exercise. 3 attacking players are freely active inside the lower half, 3 defending players and 2 attackers are placed inside the upper areas, as in the picture.

The 3 players with possession are free to dribble or pass inside the lower area (1) and the other 2 named forwards (A and B) must try to escape the markers inside the upper area. The coach states who is the receiver, who must drop back inside the lower area; both the wide center defenders of the back 3 must always provide man marking on him (the left one against the forward A), pressing and trying to anticipate him, while the other 2 must cover the space at the back, shifting across to cover the space that is left free.

Defense transition phase: if the yellow defender inside the building up area recovers the possession (2), he must dribble toward the opposite end line; the black players must try to deny space, counter pressing against him to recover the possession (3 v 1), exploiting the numerical advantage.

Tactical key points: shift across covering the spaces, move as a unique block, deny space to avoid counter attacks, counter-pressing actions exploiting the numerical advantage.

Exercise 34: 3 v 2 + 3 v 3 (+1)



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 center and 4 wide zones, where 11 players are involved. 3 attacking players are active inside the lower half; the center one is free to dribble and to play, but the outer teammates are involved in 1 v 1 duels. 3 yellow defenders are placed inside the upper half of the pitch, against 1 center forward and 2 wide attackers inside the flank areas, as in the picture. 2 goals are placed in the middle of the end lines.

The black player in possession decides where to pass the ball toward the flank (on the right, in the picture); the receiver must be able to pass forward inside the upper center area. The defenders must then close the passing lanes, forcing the ball carrier outside; the same has to be done inside the upper area, where the defenders must shift across the flank, where the ball is being played, to save the goal space. The nearest player to the ball are asked to press on the ball carriers, the opposite back winger is asked to retreat from the lower zone to create a numerical advantage defensive situation 4 v 3.

Defense transition phases:

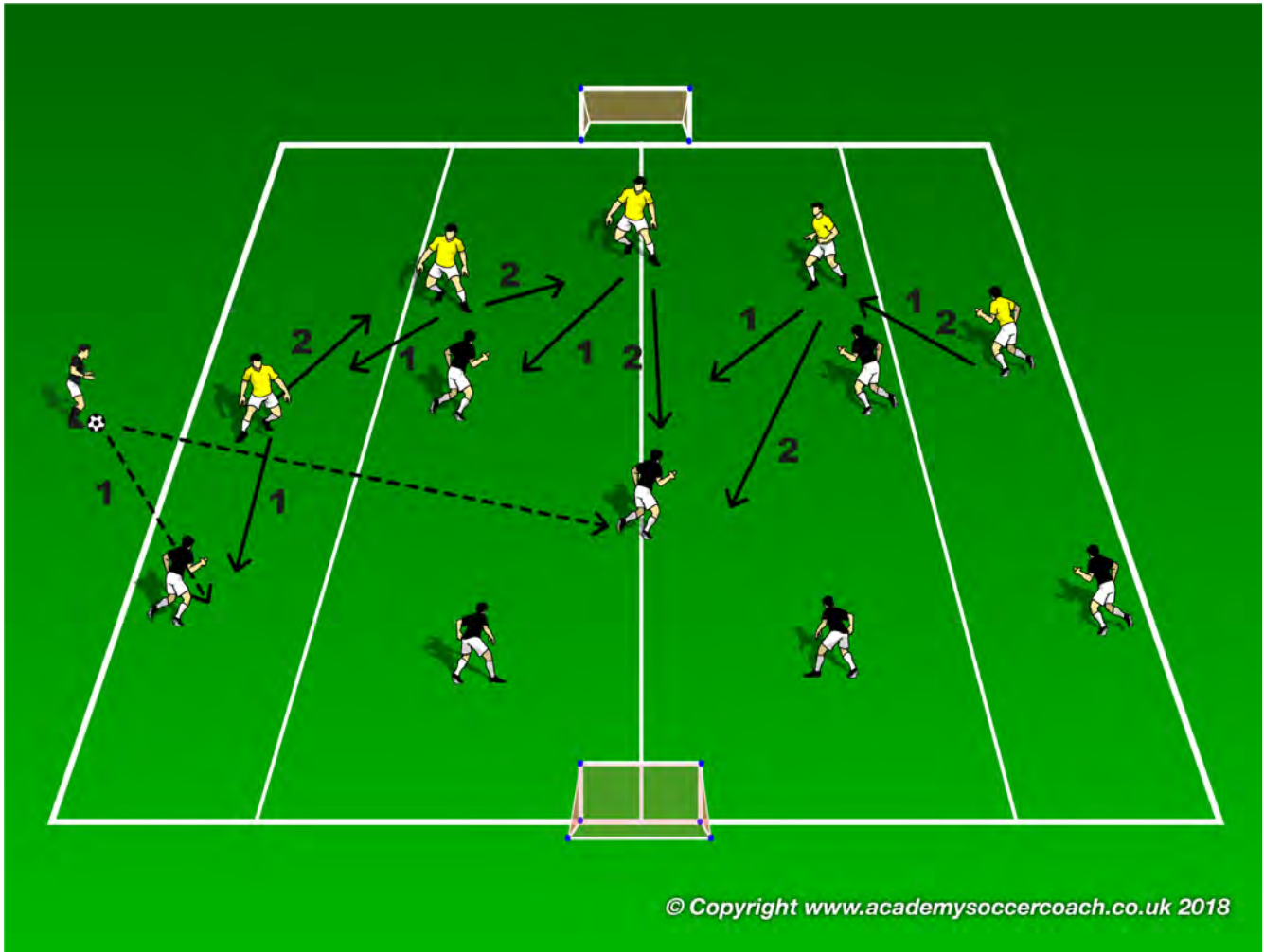
- If the wingbacks win the possession, the yellow team can counter-attack 5 (2 + 3 incoming players from the center upper area) v 3. The black team must delay the opposition possession

for 6", when the wingbacks can retreat to equalize the defense situation (5 v 5), allowing the left and right center backs condensing the center.

- If the possession is recovered at the back (2), a 3 v 3 duel is then played, and the black players must defend forward, counter pressing the opposition possession to deny center spaces.

Tactical key points: shifting across to press the wide ball areas, delay while waiting for defense support of the teammates, counter pressing, deny space condensing the center.

Exercise 35: 5 v 7



Set-up and Sequence: a rectangular area is divided into 2 center and 2 wide zones vertically, where 12 players are involved. 4 attacking players are placed inside each area in the lower part, the fifth one is active along the centerline and 2 forwards are placed inside the upper part of the center areas. 4 yellow defenders are placed inside each area and the fifth one is active along the middle line. 2 goals are placed in the middle of the end lines.

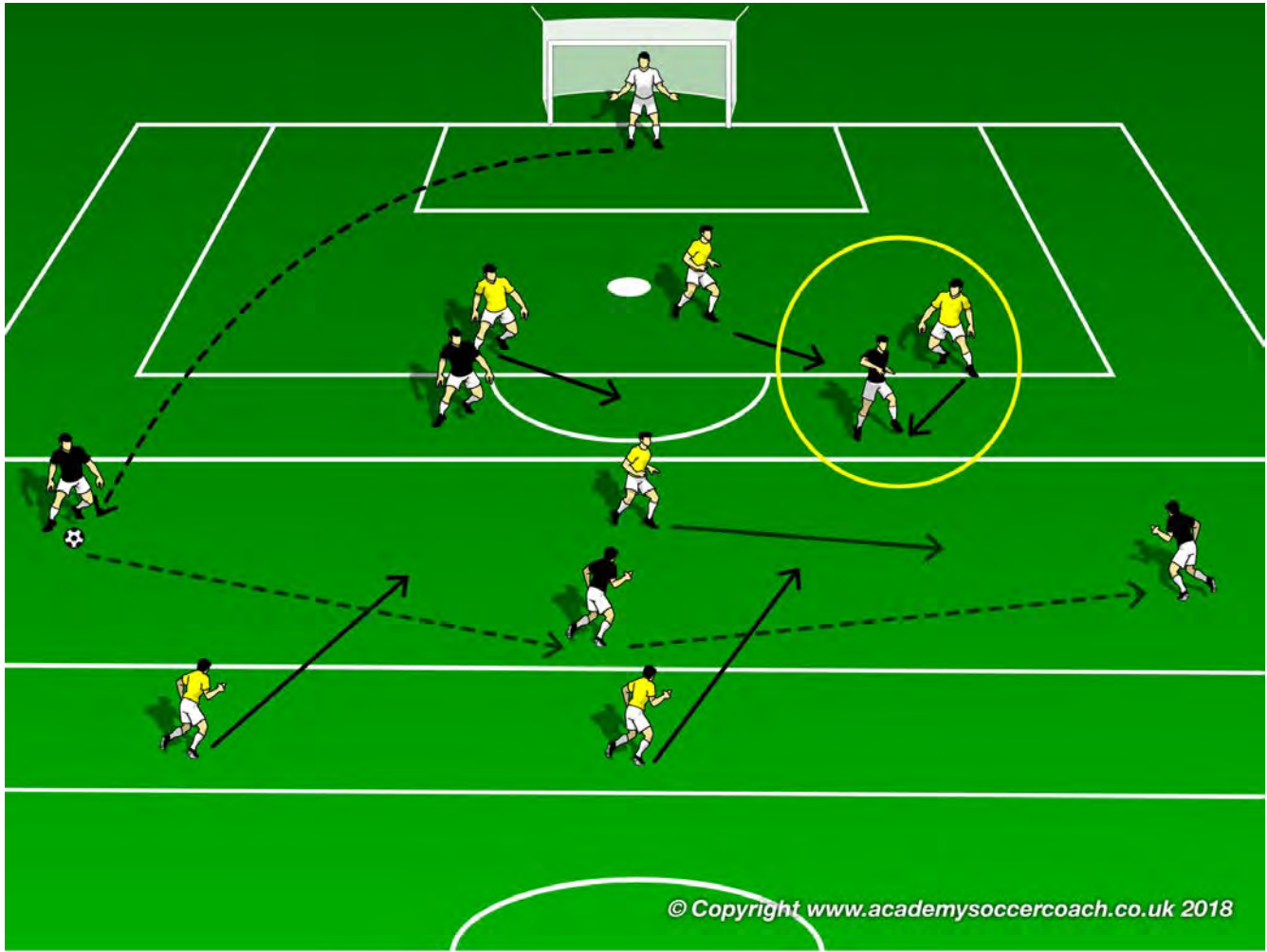
The coach is in possession and he must start the sequence passing the ball to the black team following 2 possible options:

- 1) If the coach passes the ball toward a wingback, 3 of the 5 defenders must shift across to create a strong side near it, the fourth one must provide balance near them and the fifth one must cover the space at their back and in front of the goal. Due to numerical disadvantage, the line of 5 must be always balanced at the back to save the depth.
- 2) If the coach passes the ball toward the center player, the yellow center back must press him while receiving, together with the left or right center back, depending on the direction of ball control (left one in the picture). The other 3 defenders must cover the center areas at the back to save the goal space.

Defense transition phases: if the yellow defenders win the possession, and wherever they are able to do it, immediate counter pressing actions must be taken, to exploit the defensive numerical advantage. The 3 advanced players must be the first ones pressing of the new ball carrier and the 4 defenders must defend running forward to overload the ball area.

Tactical key points: shifting across to press the wide ball areas, pressure, balance and coverage against center attacks, counter pressing, overload the ball area to exploit numerical advantage.

Exercise 36: 6 + gk v 5



Set-up and Sequence: 1/3 of a regular field is divided into 3 zones. The goalkeeper, 3 center defenders and 2 forwards are placed inside the bigger one (few yards longer than the penalty area), 3 black and 1 yellow midfielders are placed inside the center area and 2 forwards of the defending team are active inside the 3rd zone. The goalkeeper has the possession and he starts the sequences, passing the ball to the black midfielders, who must build up and try to finish. The possession players can't be active out of their positions.

As the first midfielder receives, the 3 defenders at the back must alternate the man mark (or double marking if needed) against the opposition forwards with the coverage of the goal space and balance. The forward who is playing through the same side of the ball position, has to be man marked, the center defender must provide balance (or double the mark) and the third one must cover the space, being ready to man mark the other forward.

The center midfielder must try to close the passing lanes first and then try to tackle the ball carrier, who is going to pass toward the forwards. The forwards of the defending team can retreat after the second pass of the possession team, to equalize the duel (3 v 3); the first forward should help the pressure

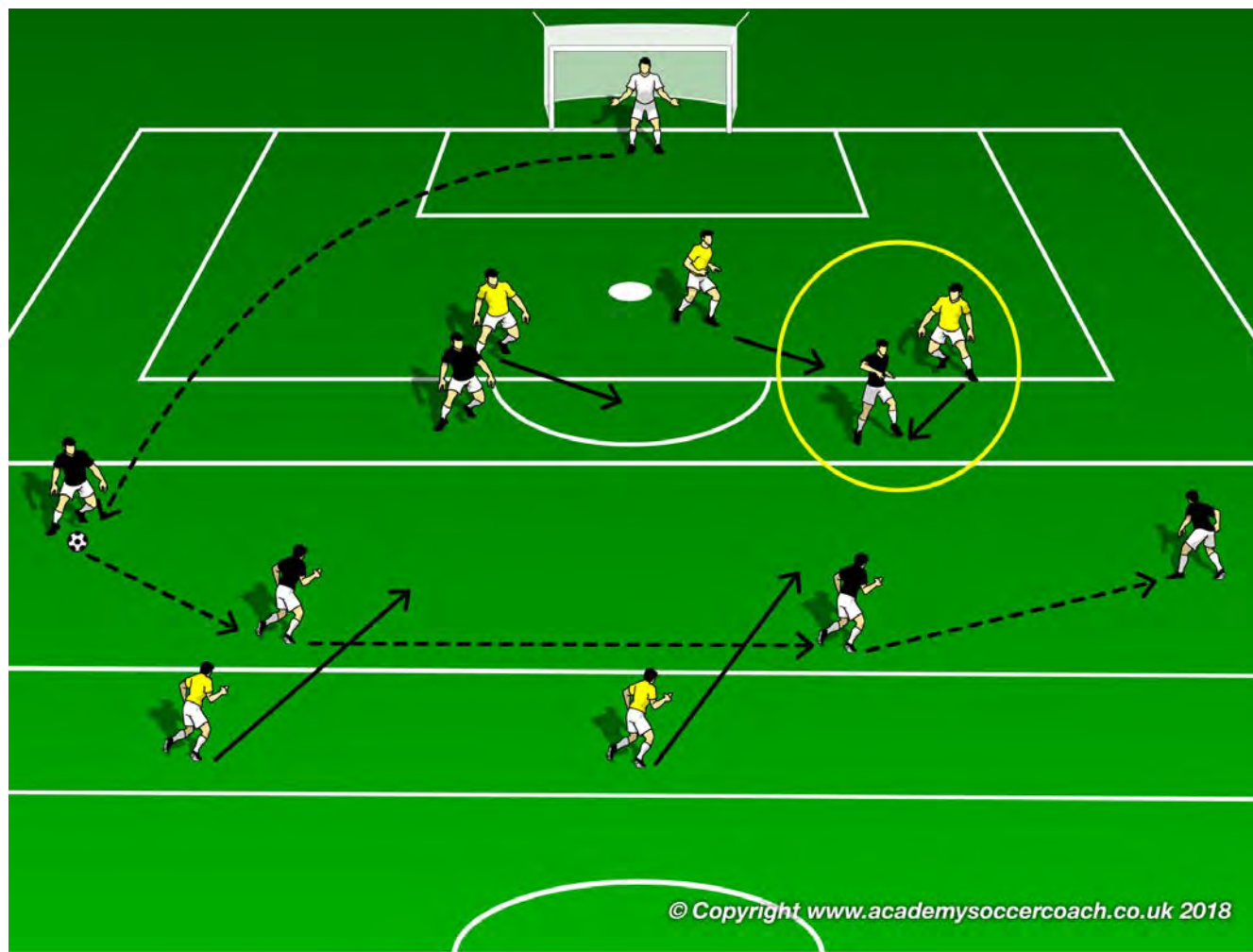
action on the ball, and the other one should mark the opponent, who is placed on the easiest passing lane.

Defense transition phases: if the defending team wins the possession, the ball must be dribbled over the last line of the playing area.

- 1) When the ball is recovered inside the middle area, immediate counter pressing actions must be taken to force the possession backward (a 3 v 3 duel is played).
- 2) If the ball is recovered at the back, a 5 v 5 duel is then played, as one defender of the team now in possession must stand at the back to provide balance. The black team must save the depth, running forward, to avoid the opposition from dribbling inside the last third of the field.

Tactical key points: balance the man marking and space coverage, delay the opposition possession, retreat to equalize a numerical disadvantage situation, counter pressing to send the opposition backward.

Exercise 37: 5 + gk v 6 (1)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is a progression of the previous one. The defending team is now outnumbered (5 v 6). 1/3 of a regular field is again divided into 3 zones. The goalkeeper, 3 center defenders and 2 forwards are placed inside the bigger one (few yards longer than the penalty area), 4 black midfielders are placed inside the center area and 2 forwards of the defending team are active inside the 3rd zone. The goalkeeper has the possession and he starts the sequences, passing the ball to the black midfielders, who must build up and try to finish. The possession players can't be active out of their positions.

As the first midfielder receives, the 3 defenders at the back must alternate the man mark (or double marking if needed) against the opposition forwards with the coverage of the goal space and balance. The forward who is playing through the same side of the ball position, has to be man marked, the center defender must provide balance (or double the mark) and the third one must cover the space, being ready to man mark the other forward.

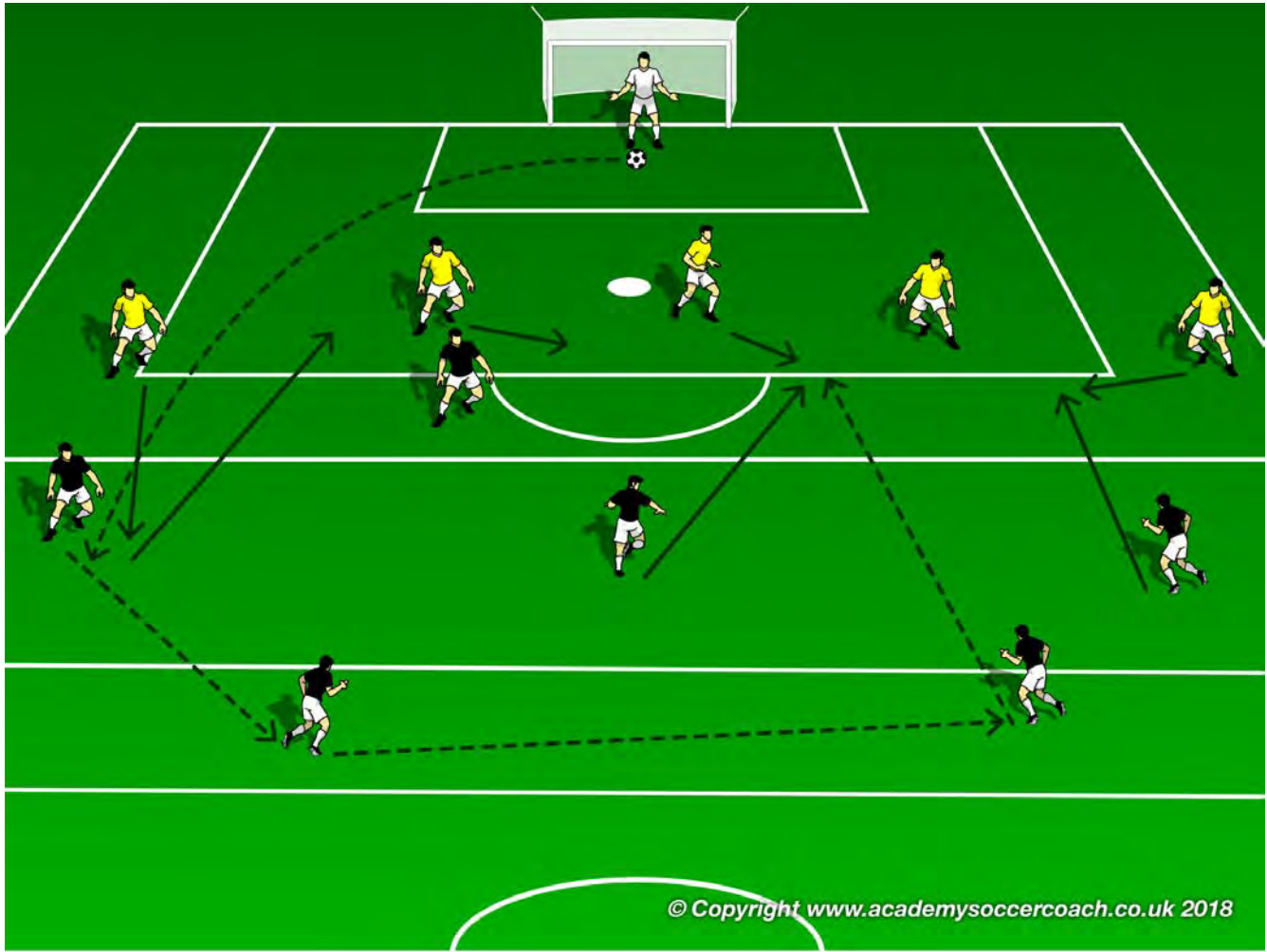
The forwards of the defending team can retreat after the first ball reception of the possession team, recovering the space and trying to force the direction of play outside.

Defense transition phases: if the defending team wins the possession, the ball must be dribbled over the last line of the playing area.

- 1) When the ball is recovered inside the middle area, immediate counter pressing action must be taken to recover the possession, exploiting the numerical advantage (a 4 v 2 duel is played)
- 2) If the ball is recovered at the back, a 4 v 6 duel is then played, as one defender of the team now in possession must stand at the back to provide balance, due to the general numerical disadvantage. The black team counters press to win the ball or to force the direction of play backward, preventing the team now in possession from playing or dribbling the ball inside the last third.

Tactical key points: balance the man marking and space coverage, delay the opposition possession, retreat to equalize a numerical disadvantage situation, counter pressing to send the opposition backward.

Exercise 38: 5 + gk v 6 (2)



Set-up and Sequence: this exercise is another progression of number 36. The defending team is now outnumbered (5 v 6) at the beginning, but all the 5 players are defenders (back 5). 1/3 of a regular field is again divided into 3 zones. 1 black forward is placed inside the final third against the defenders, 3 black midfielders are placed inside the center area and 2 more black players are active inside the 3rd zone. The goalkeeper has the possession and he starts the sequences, passing the ball to the black midfielders, who must build up from the first third and try to finish.

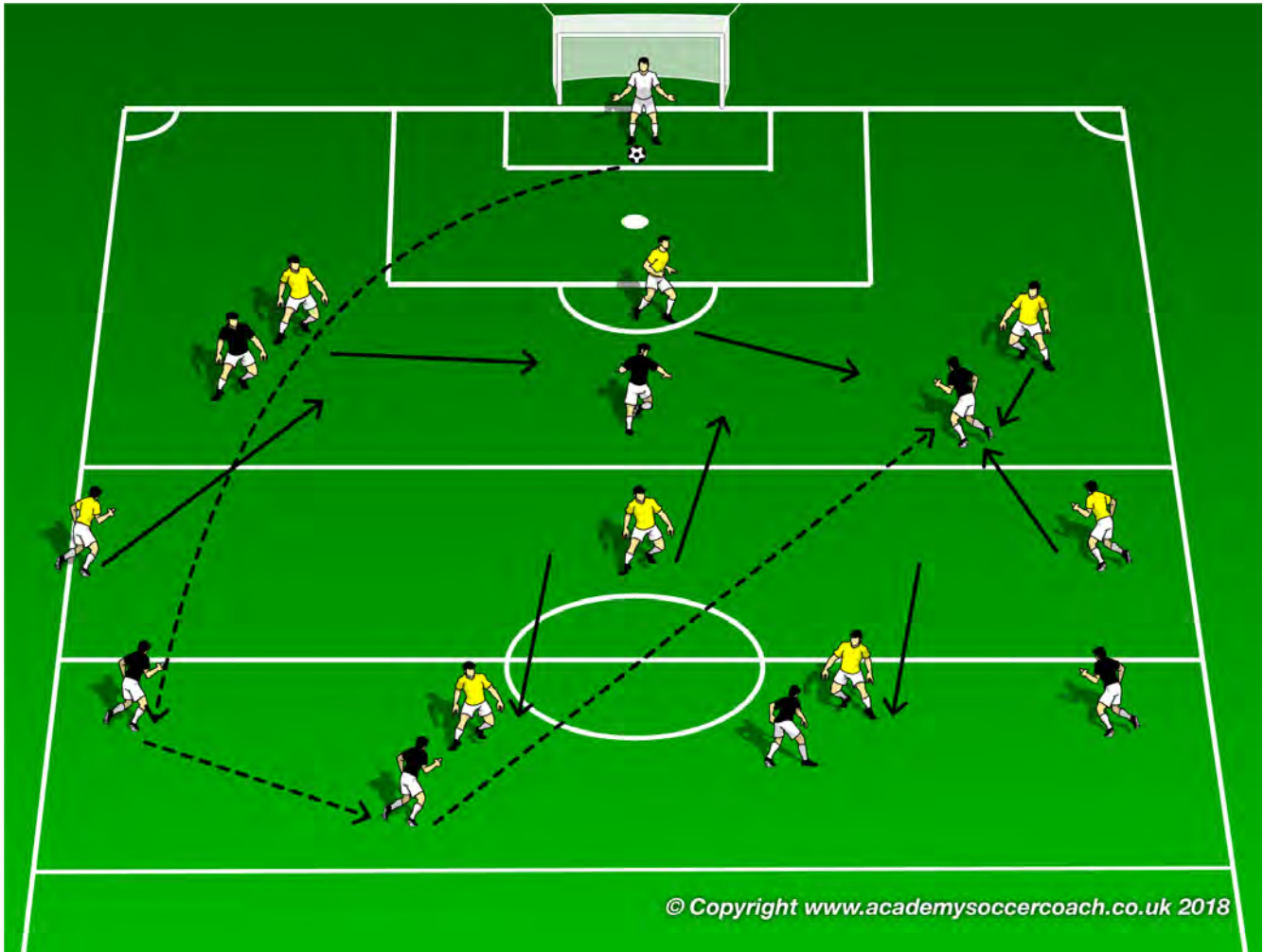
As the first outer midfielder receives, the wingback can try to press him while receiving, before retreating back to reshape the defense line, if the receiver is able to pass back. As the ball is played inside the building up area, it can't be played again inside the middle third; the other forward must run inside their final third to receive and finish.

The defenders must close the space to prevent through passes, counter the opposition forwards while receiving or track their cutting runs attempts. The outer center backs and the wingbacks should overload the center; as the defense line has the numerical advantage inside the first third (5 v 3), strong pressure is required to win the ball back. The 3 other black players must provide balance inside the middle third.

Defense transition phases: if the defending team wins the possession, the ball must be dribbled over the last line of the playing area within 6" (5 v 3), before the other 3 black players can retreat and create defensive numerical advantage (6 v 5).

Tactical key points: close the spaces to avoid through passes, overload the space in front of the goal delay the opposition possession, retreat to create a defensive numerical advantage situation.

Exercise 39: 8 + gk v 7



Set-up and Sequence: a playing space equal to a half of a regular field + 15 yards is divided as in the picture. The defending team has the general numerical advantage (8 v 7); a 3 + gk v 3 forwards duel is played inside the first third, 5 midfielders of the defending team are placed inside the middle third and 4 black defenders are placed inside the final third. The yellow goalkeeper has the possession and he starts the sequence, passing the ball toward the defenders of the black team.

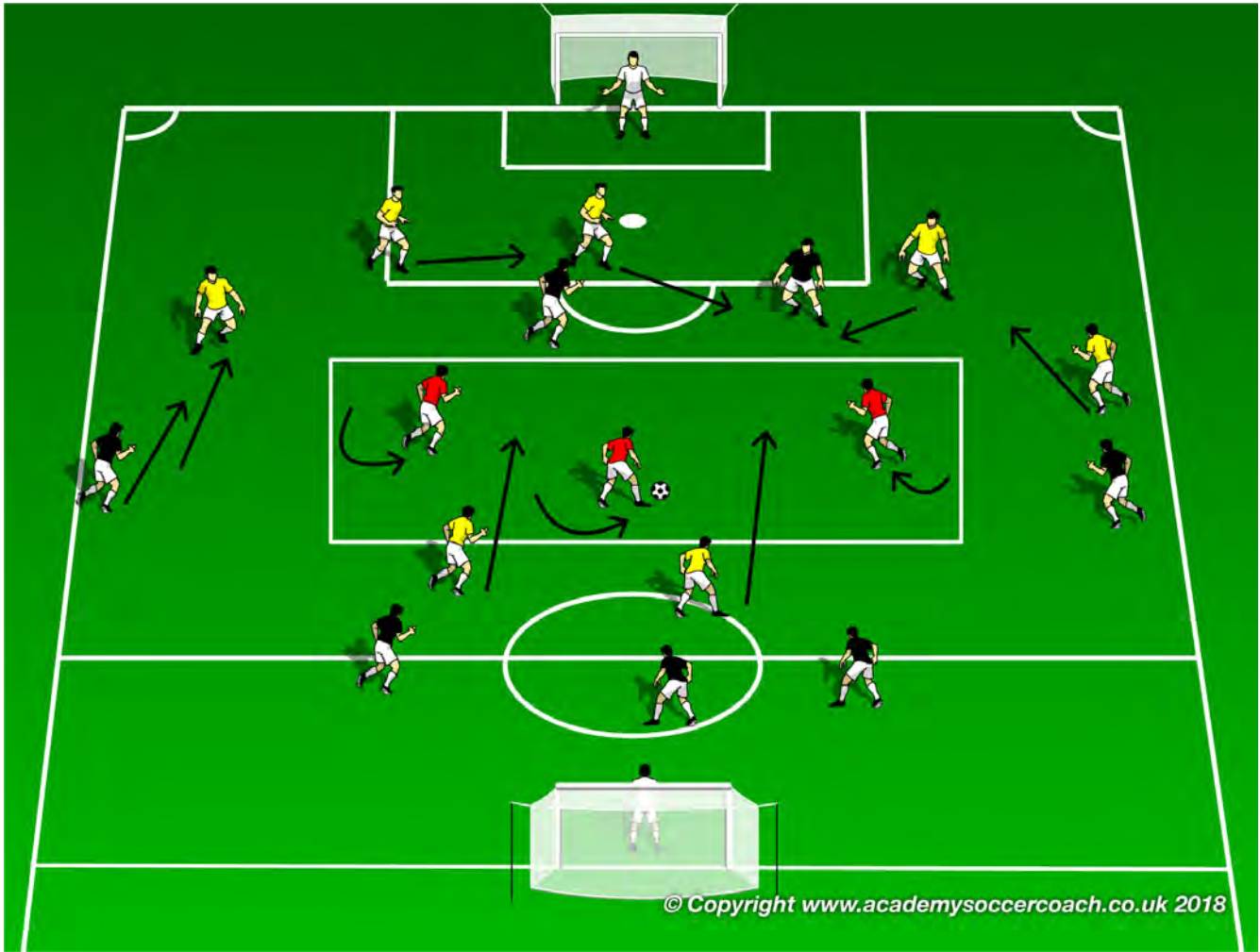
As the first outer defender receives, 2 midfielders can press the possession phase of the opponents and the other 3 must create numerical advantage at the back (5 v 3); the sixth yellow player must double the mark against the most dangerous attacker of the opposition. When the ball is played inside the building up area, it can't be played again inside the middle third; the other forwards must run inside their final third to receive and finish.

The defenders must close the space to prevent through passes, counter the opposition forwards while receiving or track their cutting runs attempts. The outer center backs and the wingbacks should overload the center; as the defense line has the numerical advantage inside the first third (6 v 3), strong pressure is required to win the ball back. The 3 other black players must provide balance inside the middle third.

Defense transition phases: if the defending team wins the possession, the move must be carried out inside the middle and the final third; the goal is to dribble over the end line of the playing area. The team now without possession must save the depth, delaying the opposition possession, waiting for the teammates retreating, to limit the disadvantage.

Tactical key points: close the spaces to avoid through passes, overload the space in front of the goal delay the opposition possession, retreat to create a defensive numerical advantage situation.

Exercise 40: 7 v 7 with gks + 3



Set-up and Sequence: a playing space equal to a half of a regular field + 15 yards is marked on a regular field. Both the yellow and black teams have 1 goalkeeper and 7 field players, which are shaped in a 5-2 formation. 3 red free players are active inside a rectangular center area; one of them has the possession and he decides the direction of play, as well as the attacking (black) and defending team (yellow), turning the body toward the goal to attack.

As the red free player turns to start the sequence, the forward of the defending team can run inside the center area, retreating back, to press them and try to avoid forward passes; from now on, the free players and the wingbacks shape the attack sector and the other 3 players provide balance the back (a 7 v 7 duels is then played).

The center yellow defenders must close the goal space and the wingbacks must run back quickly to shape a line of 5.

Defense transition phases: if the defending team wins the possession, 4 possible transition (to defend and to attack) phases can be played:

- 1) The red free players and 2 yellow attackers shape a 5 v 5 duel against 3 black center backs and the wingbacks, who must run back quickly to shape a back line of 5.
- 2) The red free players are inactive and the yellow and black teams (the forwards and the wingbacks must retreat as soon as possible) play a 7 v 7 duel
- 3) The red free players become midfielders of the 1-5-3-2 formation of the yellow team against 7 black players; the defending team must then save the depth.
- 4) The red free players become midfielders of the 1-5-3-2 formation of the black defending team against 7 yellow possession players; the defending team must then counter press to win the ball back within 6".

Tactical key points: close the spaces to avoid through passes, retreat to shape the defense line, save the depth, counter pressing to recover the possession as high in the field as possible.