

# 40

# SMALL SIDED GAMES

by Luca Bertolini



# 40 Small-Sided Games

*By*

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## Introduction: Small-Sided Game definition.

A small-sided game is a technical exercise which is carried out in the form of a game. The coach shapes and decides the rules of the game, thinking about the goals of the exercise and the training session. It's organized on the basis of the number of the available players and spaces. We may say that small-sided games come from all those games where the number of players, the rules, and the playing spaces must be considered to construct a match between two teams, wherever it's played.

This kind of exercise is useful to improve the players' technical skills the physical conditioning, as the level of effort for the players is very close to, or more than, an 11 v 11 game. Since small sided games vary in size and predictability of the learning environment, this kind of practice can improve the creative decision making process. Last but not the least, small-sided games help motivate those players who usually isolate themselves by forcing them to take part and develop their game vision.

Generally 4 v 4 and 7 v 7 practices require the same efforts of 11 v 11 games; 2 v 2 and 5 v 5 exercises are even harder. But, as we found out, there are some important key factors that are responsible for the high intensity of the performance of a player, who is involved in a small-sided game:

<b>Higher Intensity</b>	<b>Lower Intensity</b>
<b>Small pitch</b>	<b>Medium and Large pitch</b>
<b>Few players</b>	<b>More players</b>
<b>Without goalkeepers</b>	<b>With goalkeepers</b>
Limited ball touches	Unlimited ball touches
Coach support	No coach support
Many balls to be played	Few balls to be played

Surely, the sizes of the pitches and the number of players are the main key factors to perform a high intensity small-sided game. This following table is the most common connection between these key factors:

<b>Pitches (y)</b>	<b>2 v 2</b>	<b>3 v 3</b>	<b>4 v 4</b>	<b>5 v 5</b>	<b>6 v 6</b>	<b>7 v 7</b>	<b>8 v 8</b>
Small	10 x 15	15 x 20	20 x 25	25 x 30	30 x 35	35 x 40	40 x 45
Medium	15 x 20	20 x 25	25 x 30	30 x 35	35 x 40	40 x 45	45 x 50
Big	20 x 25	25 x 30	30 x 35	35 x 40	40 x 45	45 x 50	50 x 55

Small-sided games can be considered as a reduced version of soccer game, if we think about them as a sequence of duels, with fewer players. The rules of the games have an important effect on the goals and

on coaching results of the practices. For example, rules like the number of touches, the man on marking, the outside free players' support, scoring rules, interval training or non-stop mode can influence the internal player level of effort.

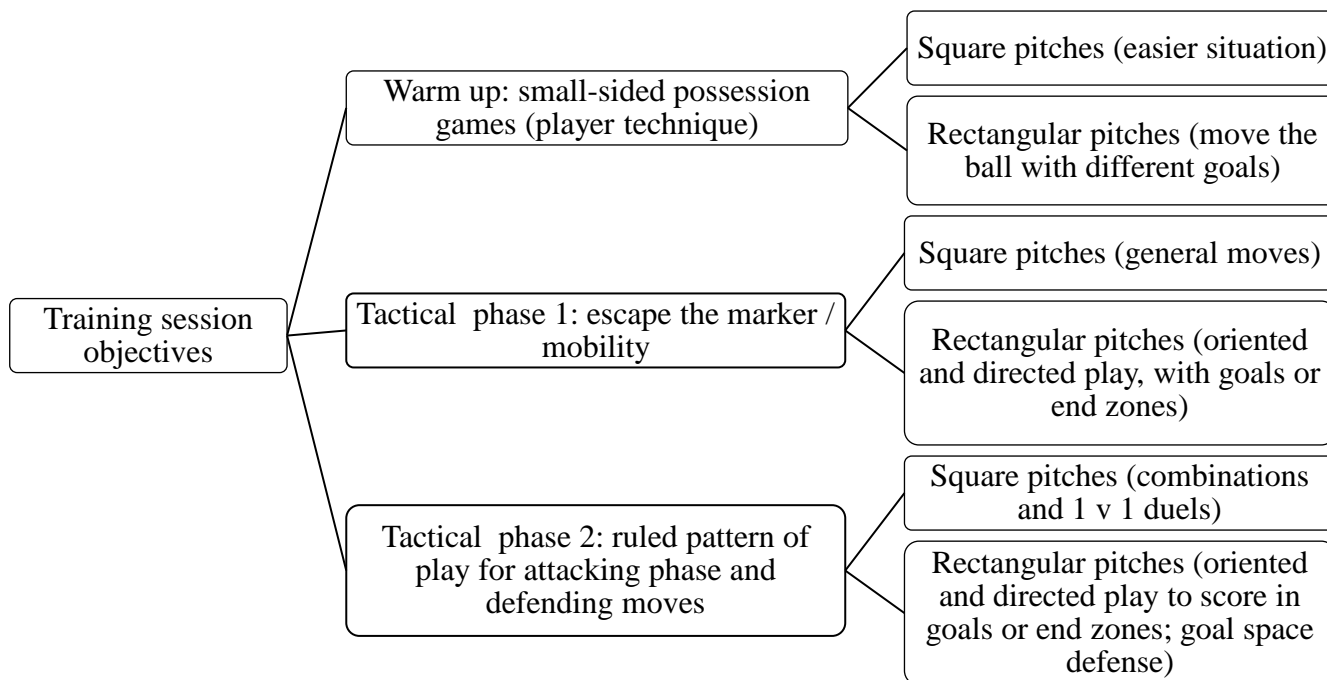
Small-sided games have a limit. The players just work on possession or non-possession phases of play, without specific tactical requirements. Perhaps the transition phases are not coached fully, as they are only a succession of the moves, with the ball and without the ball.

Then the tasks of the players need to be specified inside the game and the patterns of play need to be created during the game to shape exchanges of positions and rotations of players which they could repeat on the field during the matches. This way, the timing of play, the numerical advantage, and the outnumbered situations concepts are introduced.

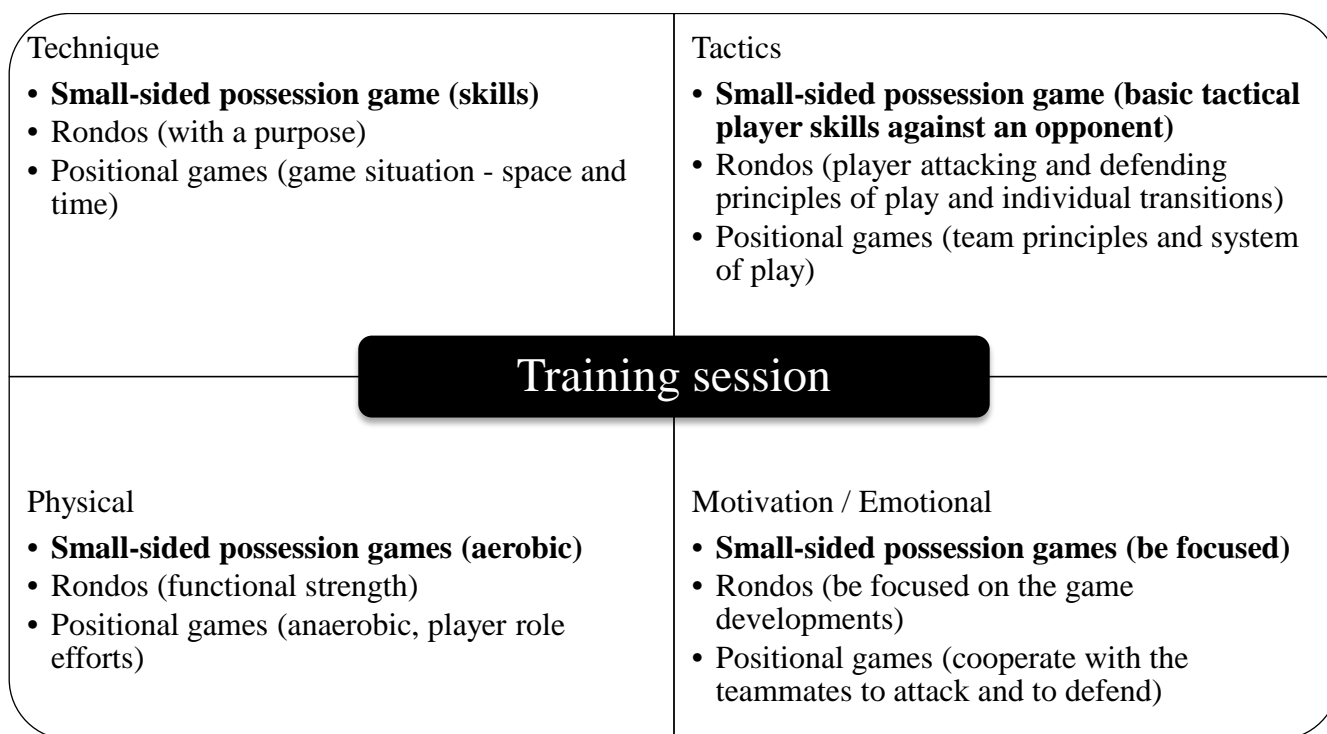
There are two fundamental parameters in a soccer game: space and time. The space that the players are given in each situation of the game and the time they have to fix the issue of the game situation, both from individual and team tactics point of view. The space and the time, while being in possession, and recovering the ball while defending, need to be understood and exploited before the opponents.

<b>Small-Sided Games</b>
General ball possession
Players move all around inside the set-up
Be unmarked freely
Numerical advantage is not ensured
General improvement of the players
Direct play
There's no direction of attack and defense in many of the practices (but not all of them)
Finishing phase can be included or not
Transition phases are not the results of a tactical ideas, but a reaction to the situation
Pay attention to the number of players
They are always played inside small-sided spaces related to the number of players

## What do we coach with a small-sided game in a training session?



## How to include them in a training session?



### Which are the benefits of the small-sided games?

Ssg	Technical - Tactical Benefits
2 v 2	High level of alternated possession and non-possession phases (lost and won balls), high level of individual transition phases with changes of direction.
3 v 3 4 v 4	High level of individual duels and of tackles, high percentage of complete passes, high levels of feints, shots and ball touches for each player, high percentage of changes of direction.
5 v 5 7 v 7 8 v 8	High percentage of complete and missed passes and of tackles, high level of team transitions, high levels of feints, shots and ball touches for each player, high level of changes of direction with and without the ball, high percentage of headers and interceptions.

### How to perform them?

Ssg	Pitch dimensions	Working time / Rest
2 v 2	20 x 15 y	4x2 min. - 3 min.
3 v 3	25 x 30 y	4x3 min. - 3 min. 3x6 min. - 5 min.
4 v 4	30 x 35 y	4x4 min. - 3 min.
5 v 5	35 x 40 y	3 x 4 min. - 3 min.
6 v 6	40 x 45 y	
7 v 7	45 x 50	3x8 min - 3 min
8 v 8	50 x 55	



## When to run them?

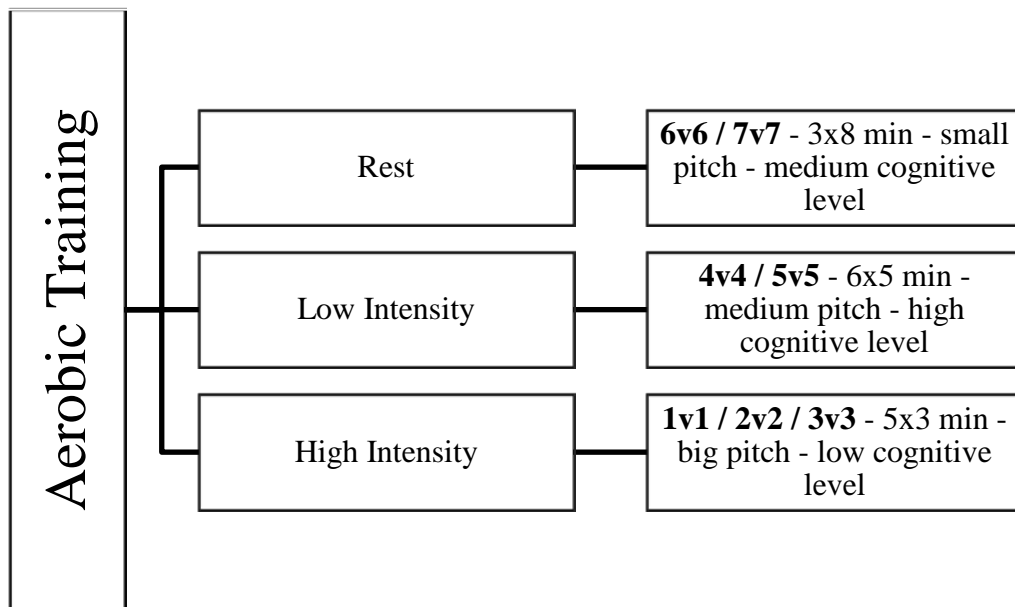
This is a basic scheme of metabolic priority of the training session throughout the whole season and the priority (high - HP, medium - MP or low - LP) of the aerobic and anaerobic training:

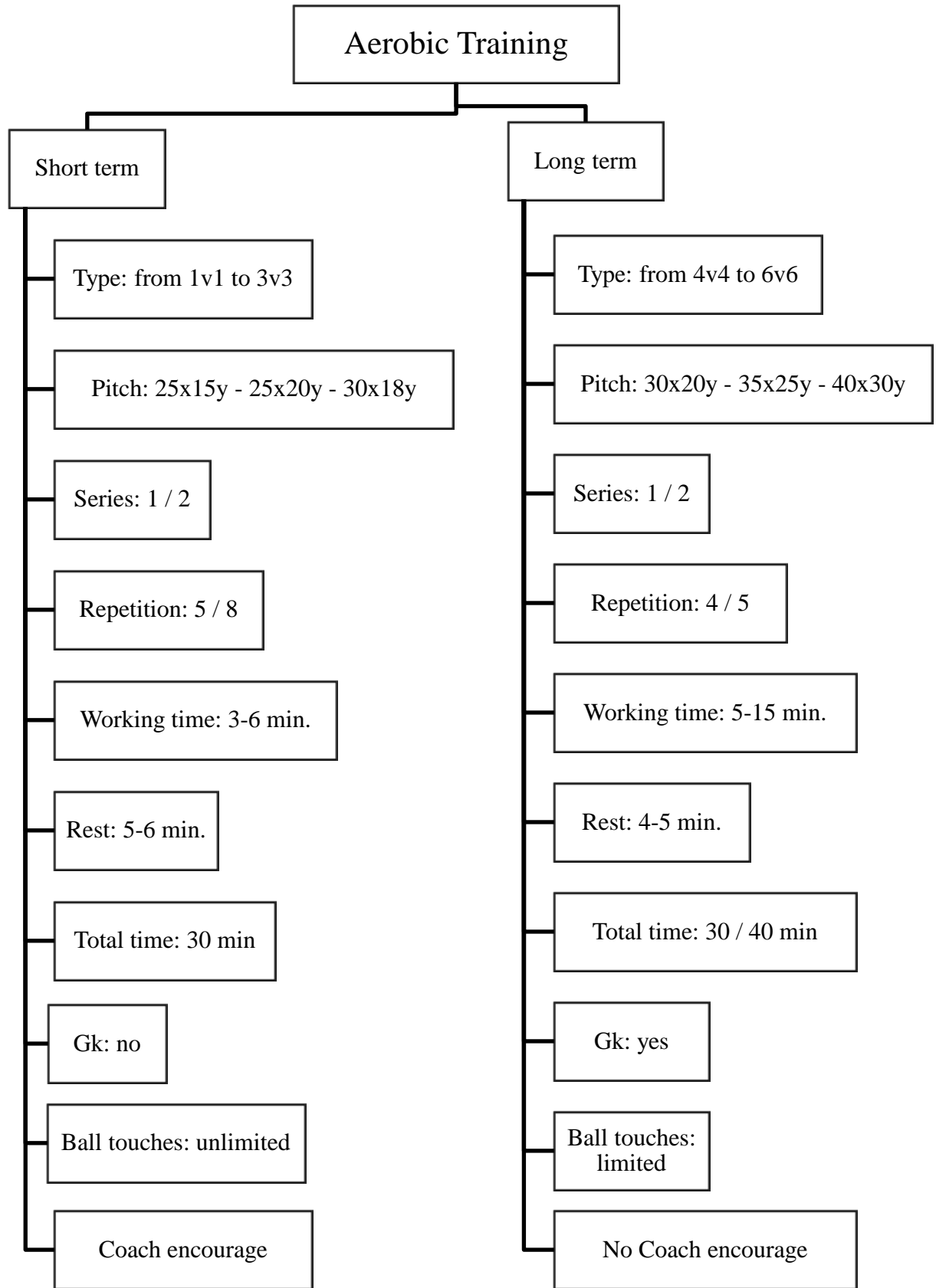
	Month	Pre-season		Regular Season							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aerobic	Low intensity	HP	HP	MP	HP	MP	HP	MP	HP	MP	HP
	High intensity	MP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	MP
Anaerobic	Speed resistance	LP	MP	HP	MP	HP	MP	HP	MP	HP	MP
	Speed Sprint	LP	LP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP	HP

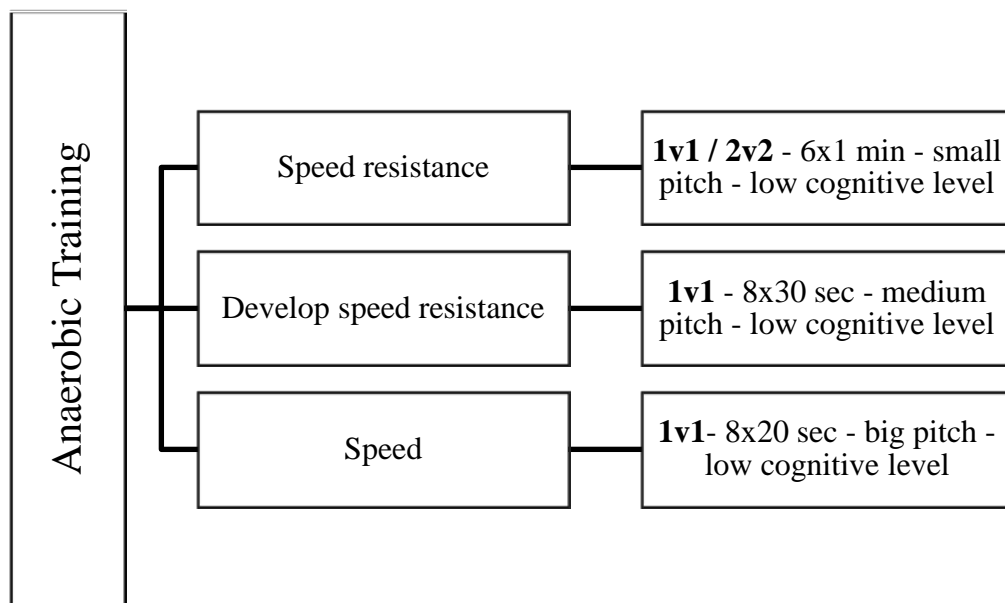
And this is a possible weekly plan to run the right small-sided game on the right day. The week is based on Sunday as match day, Monday as rest day and one daily training session from Tuesday to Friday.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Player	Rest Day	4v4 5v5 6v6	2v2 3v3 4v4	5v5 6v6 7v7	1v1 2v2 3v3	4v4 5v5 6v6	Match Day
Pitch		Medium	Small / Big	Big	Medium	Medium	
Repetitions		1 - 8	3 - 6	4 - 8	3 - 5	1 - 8	
Working time		6 - 15 min	30sec - 3 min	3 - 6 min	20sec - 2 min	6 - 15 min	
Series		1-2	2-4	2-3	3-5	1-2	
Work / Rest		1:0,2	1:1 - 1:2	1:0,5 - 1:1	1:2 - 1:3	1:0,2	

**Which kind of small-sided game has to be performed?**

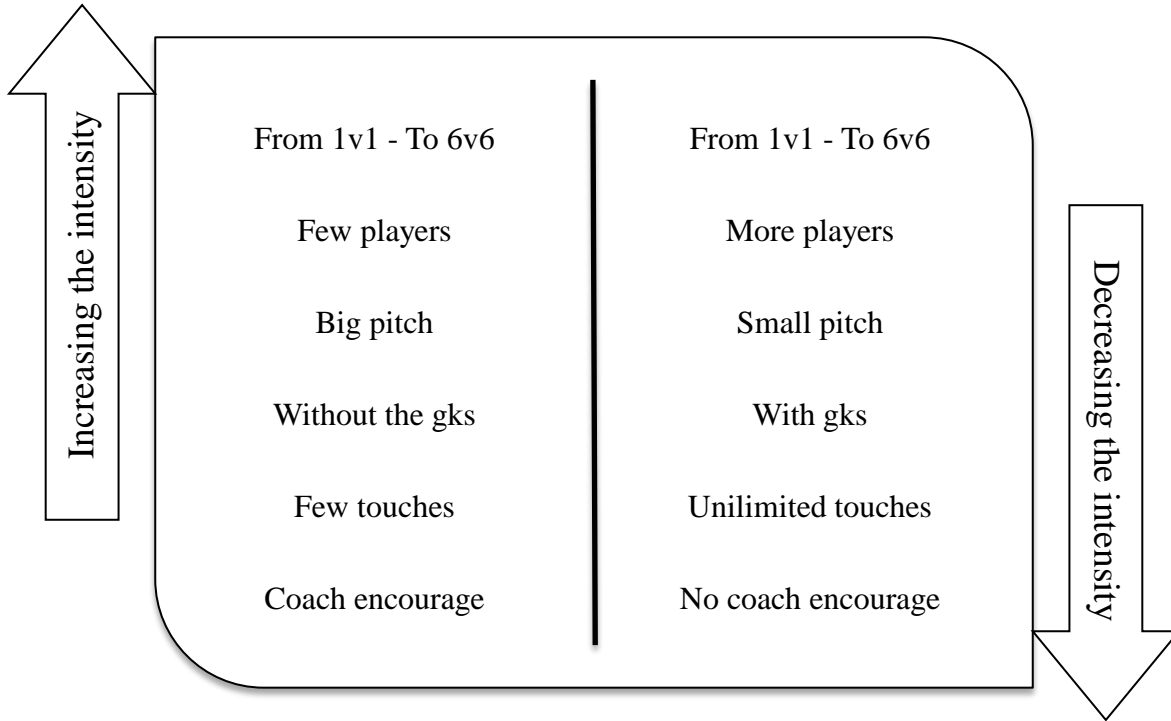




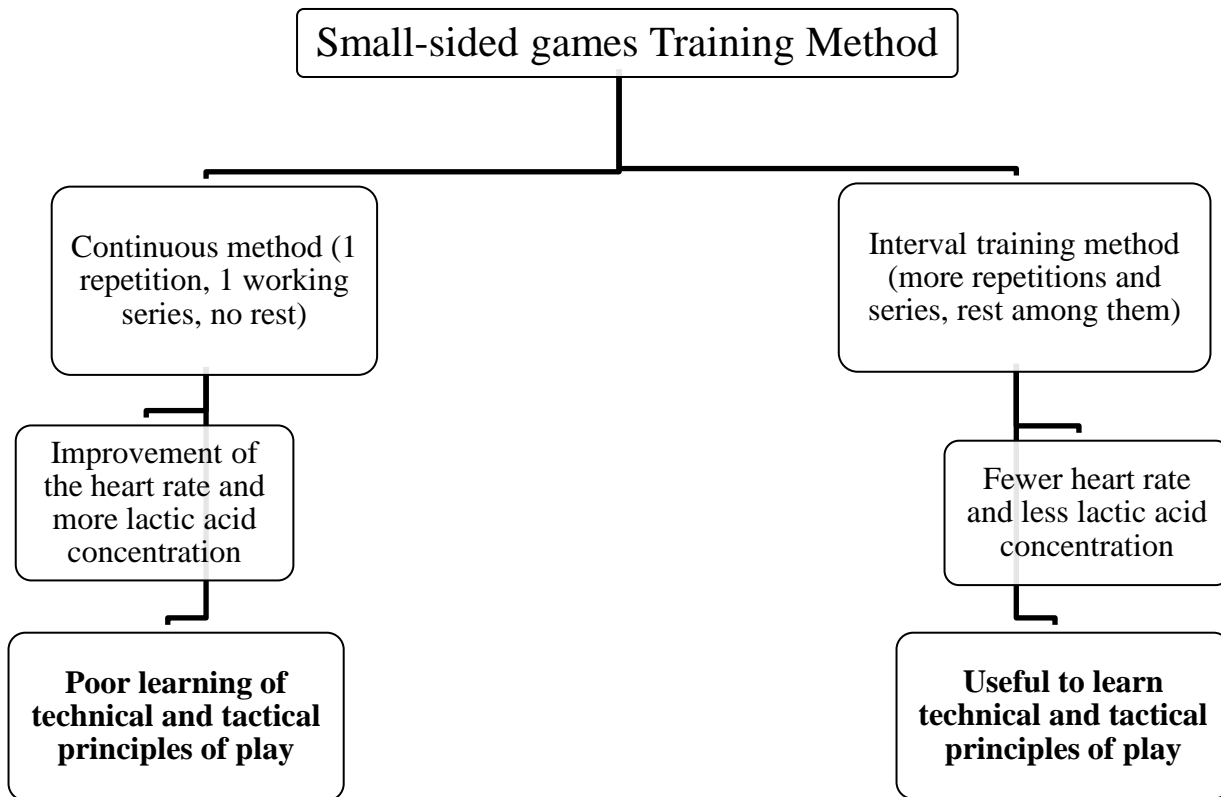


<b>Anaerobic Training</b>	<b>Type: from 1v1 to 3v3</b>	Pitch: 10x5y - 15x10y - 20x15y
		Series: 2 / 4
		Repetition: 4 / 8
		Working time: 30 sec. - 3 min.
		Rest: 3-5 min.
		Total time: 4 - 16 min
		Gk: no
		Ball touches: limited
		Coach encourage

**How to increase or decrease the intensity of the practices?**



**What kind of small-sided game is useful depending on the objectives?**



## **The neutral/free player role**

### **How?**

They haven't a specific role or position, as they can be a lower or upper vertex for the team in possession, they can be placed out or in the middle of the playing area. They have the task to be support players for the possession team or even for the defending team, losing the marker or marking wherever it's required by the game situation. They can be still or moving players, they can be pressed or not, they can be always active, taking part to the whole sequence of a practice or just to be a part of it, they can be involved in the transition phases or not, depending on the coach's requirements.

### **When?**

They can receive whenever is needed if the only goal of a possession practice is to keep the ball and if the only goal of the defending team is to recover it as soon as possible to make it safe. Otherwise, they should receive a pass, or to become active during a specific phase of play (transition to attack, transition to defend, after a required number of passes, etc.) create numerical advantages for the team in possession or for the defending team.

### **Where?**

They can play inside or outside the set-up to support the possession team or the defending team from different positions. These position are not usually linked to the roles and to the positions on the field during the matches; they are just useful to coach cooperation and combinations among the players. If the direction of the game sequences is not.

### **Why?**

They support the players in possession to help the team keeping the ball or winning it back, as possession pattern of play is usually the main objective of these kinds of practices. Small-sided games are not linked with a system of play; then the neutral players must be inside or wide supports, back or upper vertex, following the ball's direction and not only the attacking / defending direction of play.

## **Practices**

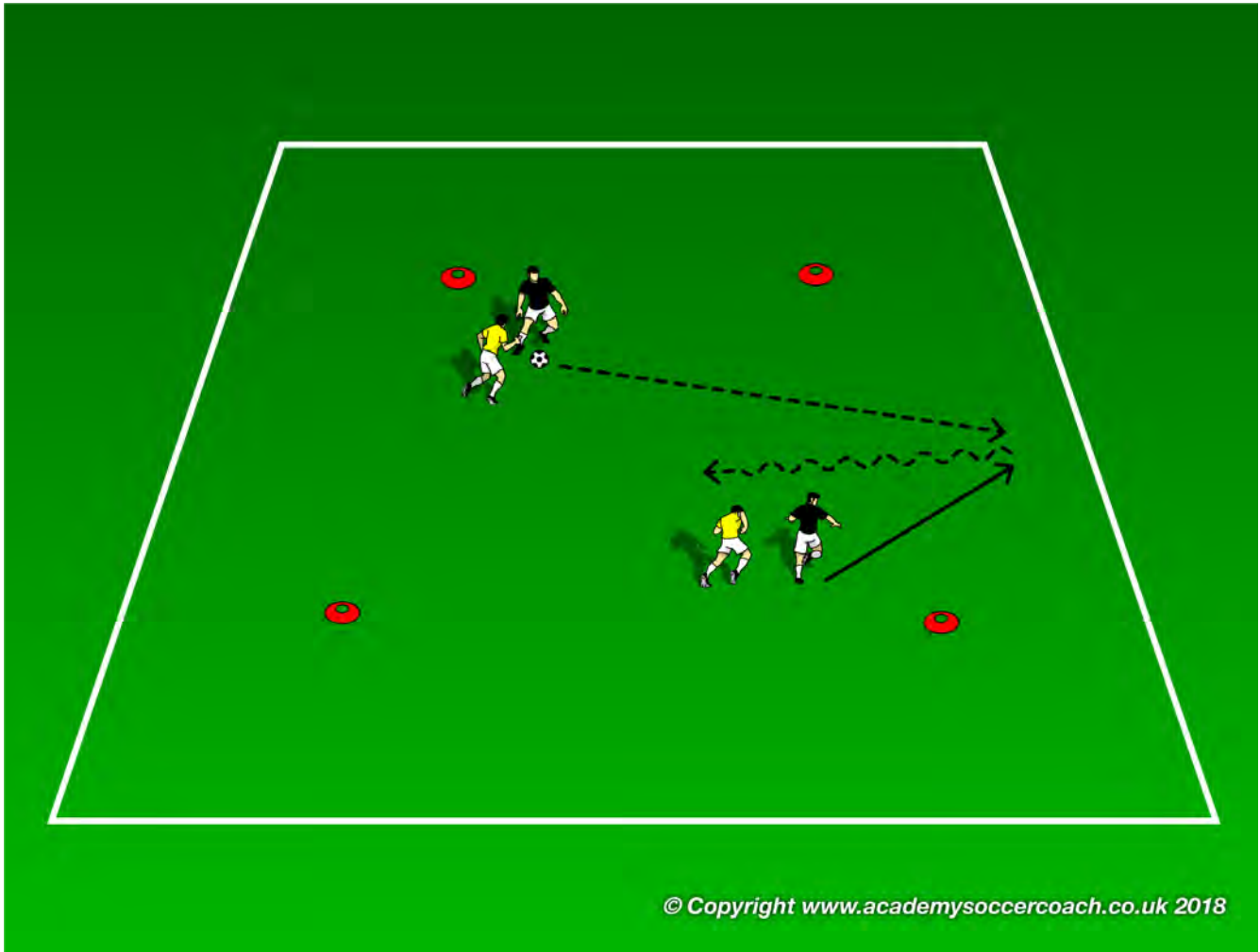
These 40 exercises concern a progression from the basic 2 v 2 (or games with 4 players) until more complex 8 v 8 small-sided games.

Each progression is made of 5 practices with different requirements and goals; they are divided as follow:

- 1) Without direction of play (possession)
- 2) With direction of play (attacking/defending with goals or end zones)
- 3) Without numerical advantage
- 4) With numerical advantage (for attacking or defending team)
- 5) Transition phases coaching

The book is then completed with 5 final exercises with goalkeepers (9 v 9) that follow the same requirements and objectives.

## 2 v 2 Exercises (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 2 v 2 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is positioned in the middle of a bigger rectangular area.

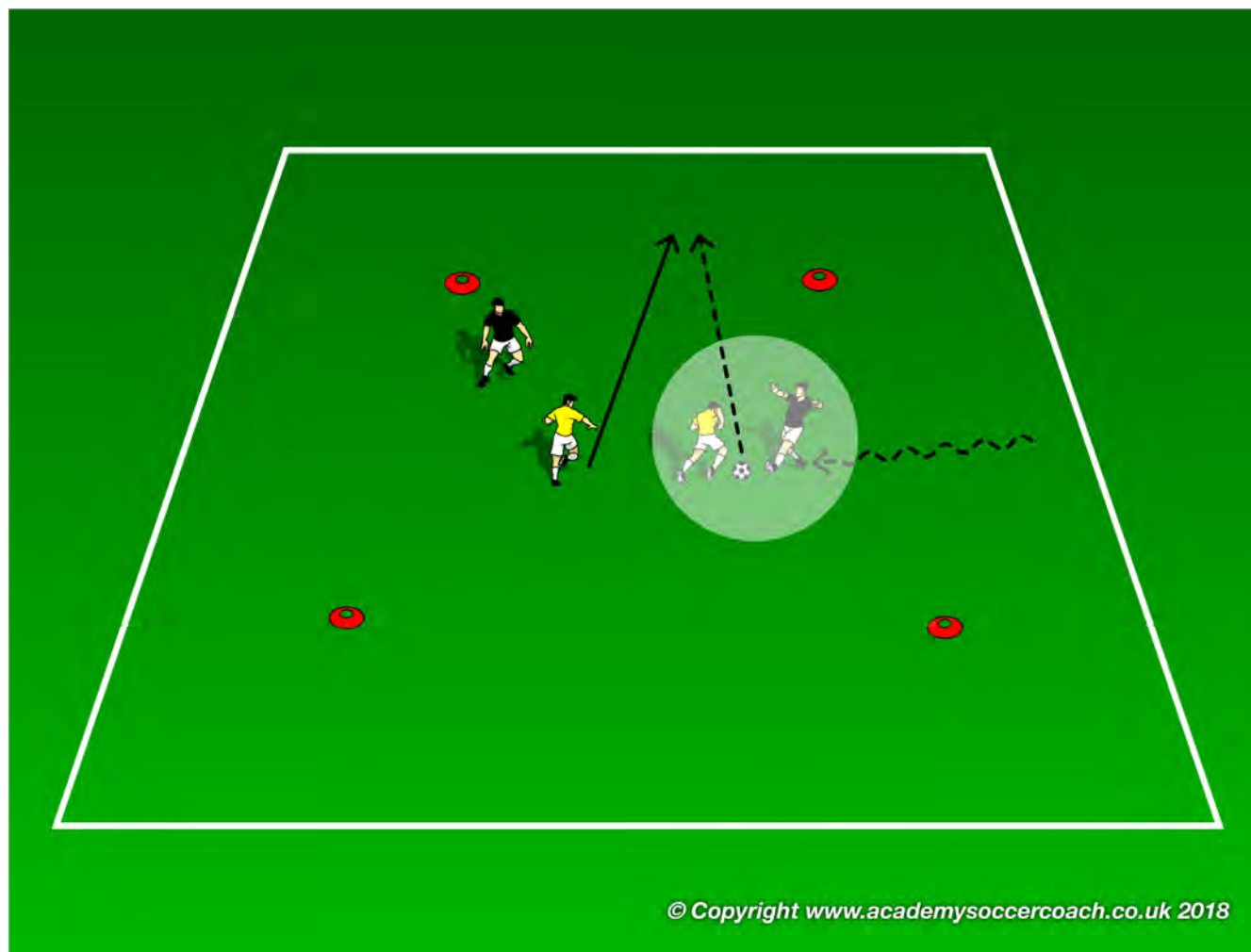
The couple with the ball must allow 1 player receiving out of the smaller area and dribbling back in the middle (1 point), to try to gain another point.

The pass can be directed out of all the sides of the structure. If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Variation:** ask the players to complete a passing sequence in the middle (1 point) before playing wide.

**Eye on:** quick passes, oriented ball control, receiving on the run, focus the defense phase on the players.

## 2 v 2 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** the sequence and the objectives are the same of the previous exercise, but the directions of play are different.

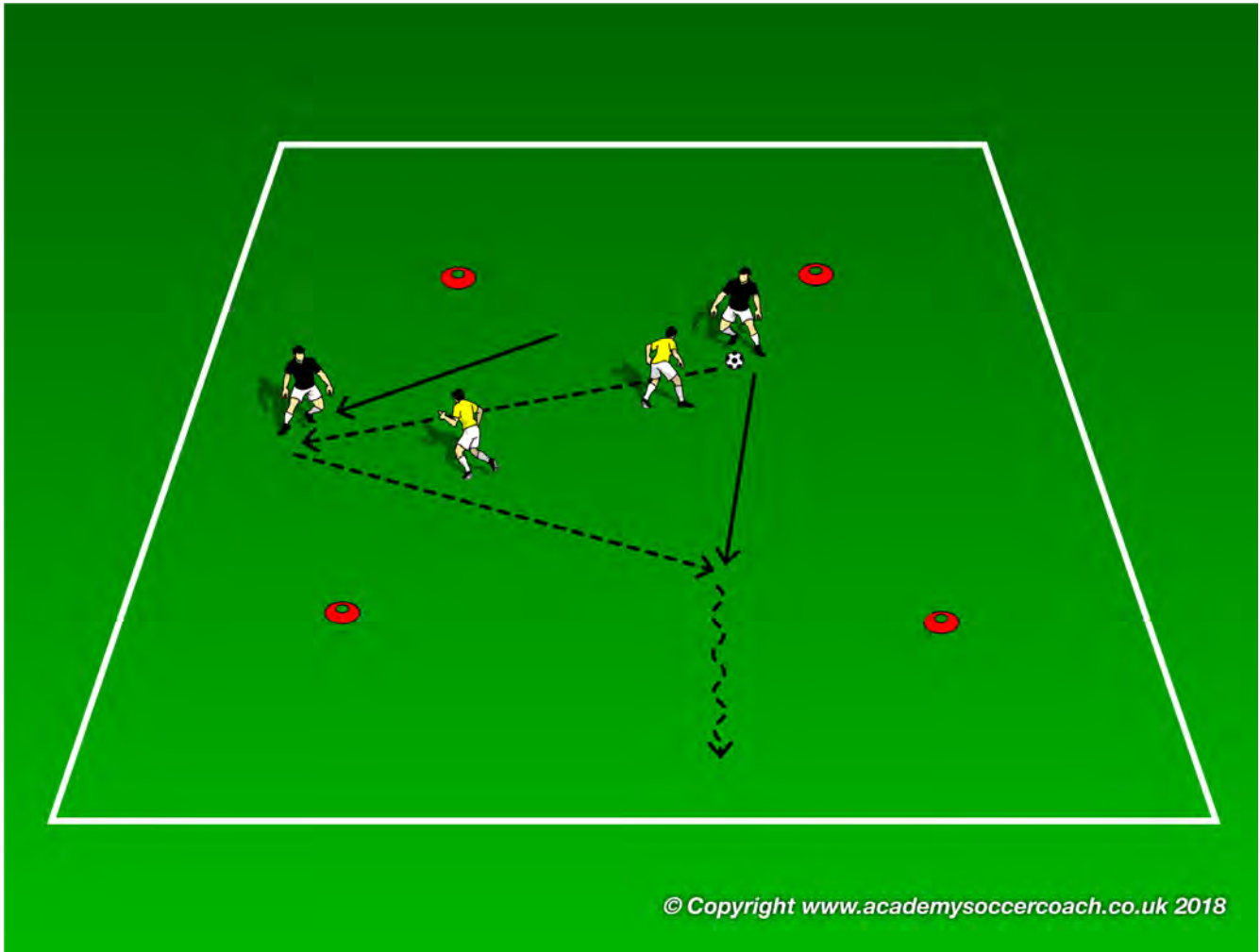
The black players must pass wide along the longer sides of the rectangle; if the yellow defenders recover the possession, they must play toward the shorter sides of the structure.

**Variation:** ask the players to complete a passing sequence in the middle (1 point) before playing wide.

**Eye on:** quick passes, oriented ball control, receiving on the run, focus the defense phase on the player in possession (1 v 1) and on the space to be covered.



### 2 v 2 Exercises (3)



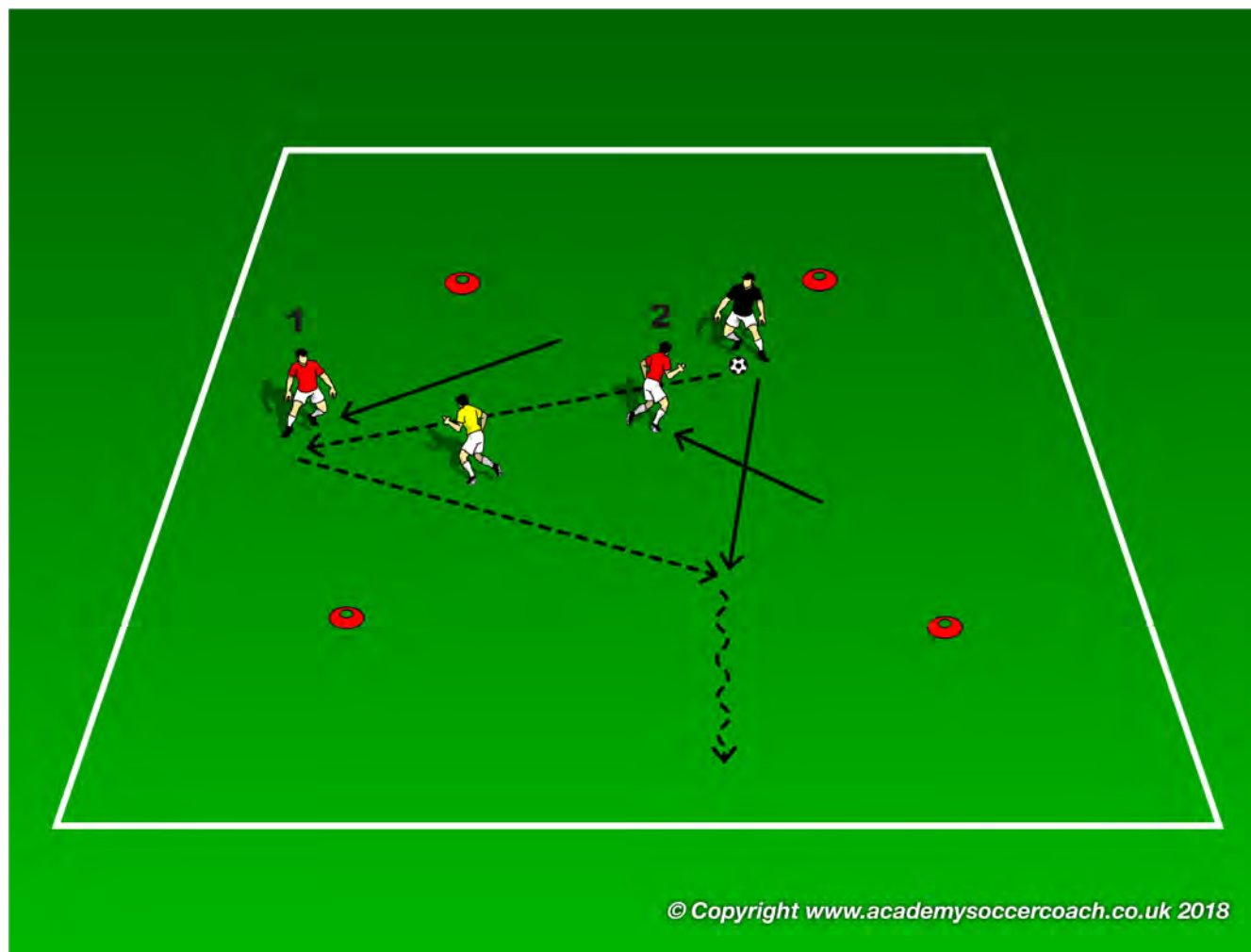
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 2 v 2 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is positioned in the middle of a bigger rectangular area.

The couple with the ball must allow 1 player receiving out of the smaller area and along the longer sides first (1 point), and then playing a back pass to complete a triangle combination and to dribble out, overcoming one of the shorter sides of the structure (1 point more).

**Variation:** ask the players to complete a passing sequence in the middle (1point) before playing wide.

**Eye on:** quick passes, oriented ball control, receiving on the run, focus the defense phase on the players and on the closure of the passing lanes.

## 2 v 2 Exercises (4) - after 5 passes (3 v 1)

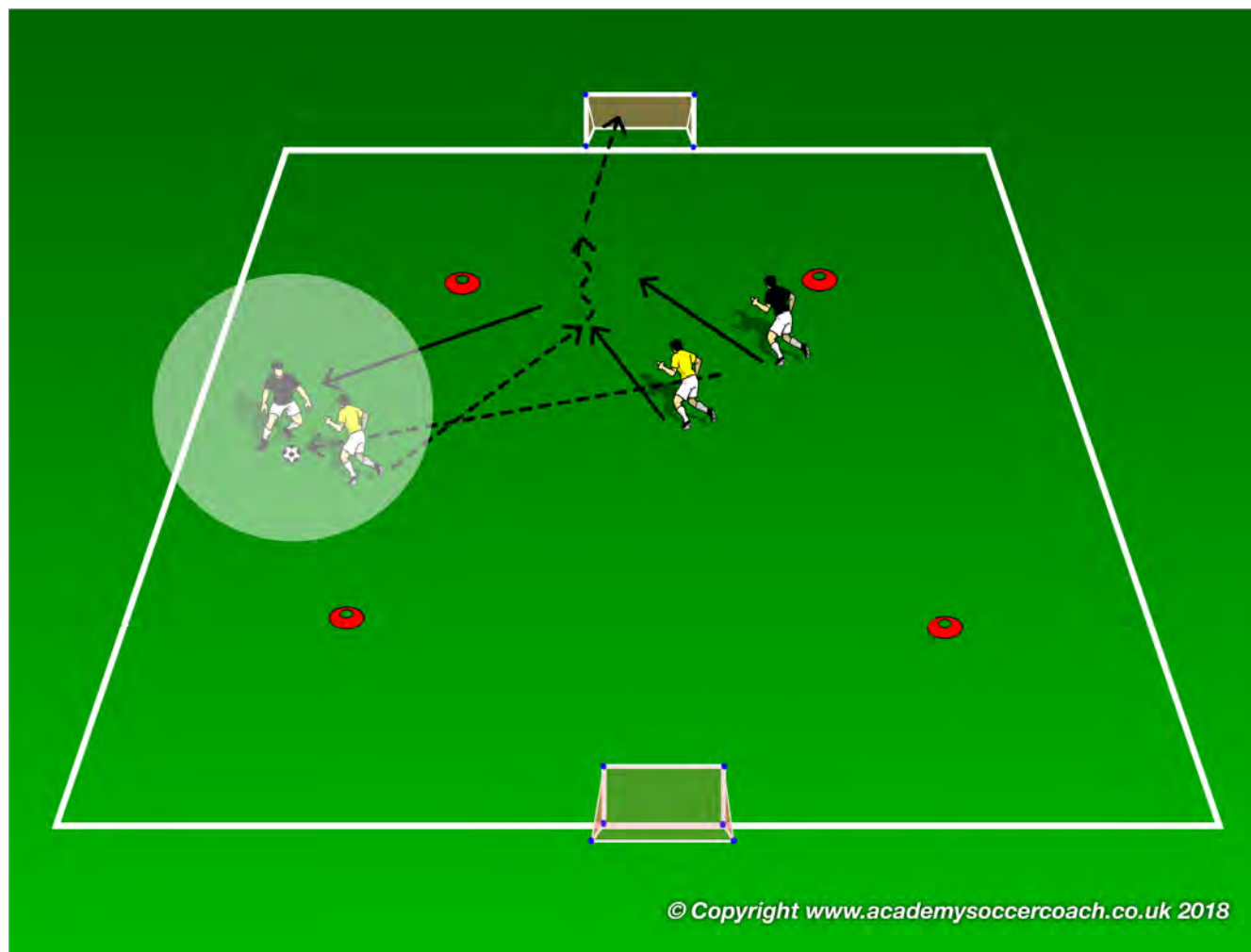


**Set-up and Sequence:** the practice has the same goal of the previous one; to complete a triangle pass with a wide player to dribble toward one of the shorter sides, after receiving the return pass.

A 3 v 1 duel is played before the final sequence, thanks to the red neutral players (1 and 2). After a fix number of passes, or after a minimum limit of time, one free player runs wide to receive and he becomes attacker; the other red free player becomes defender, re-forming the 2 v 2 duel.

**Eye on:** quick passes, oriented ball control, receiving on the run, focus the defense phase on the players and on the closure of the passing lanes, and be clever to recognize the role on the pitch.

## 2 v 2 Exercises (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this last 2 v 2 practice is a progression of the previous ones. The attacking couple must complete the triangle sequence, playing wide and dribbling the ball forward.

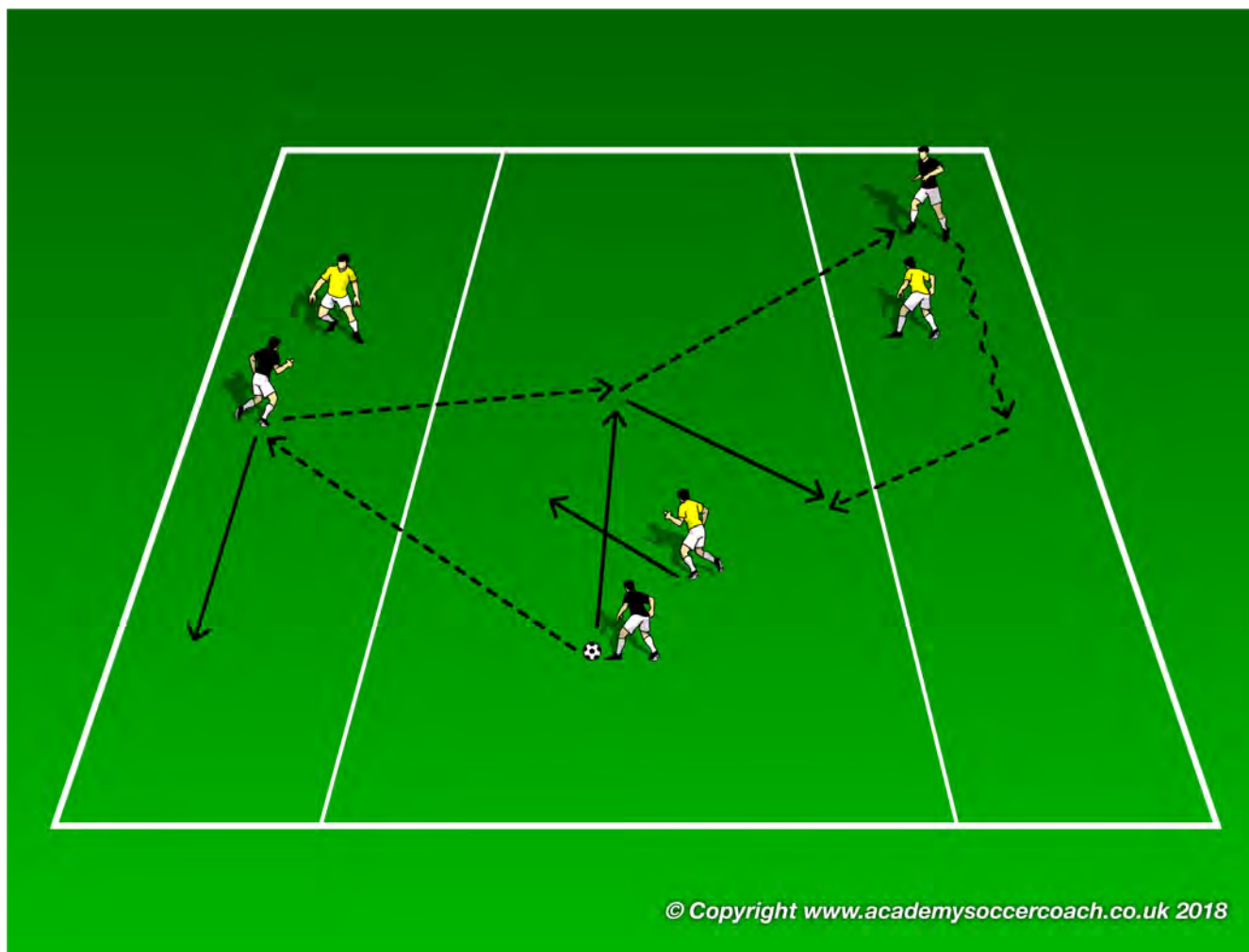
If the defending team wins the possession, the move must finished scoring in one of the mini-goals on the end lines of the structure.

### Variations:

- 1) The attacking team must finish toward one mini-goal, playing a triangle combination first
- 2) The defending team must play the same if the possession is won back
- 3) The defending team must counter-attack directly to finish

**Eye on:** quick passes, oriented ball control, receiving on the run, focus the defense phase on the players and on the closure of the passing lanes, quick player transitions to attack and to defend.

### 3 v 3 Exercises (1)



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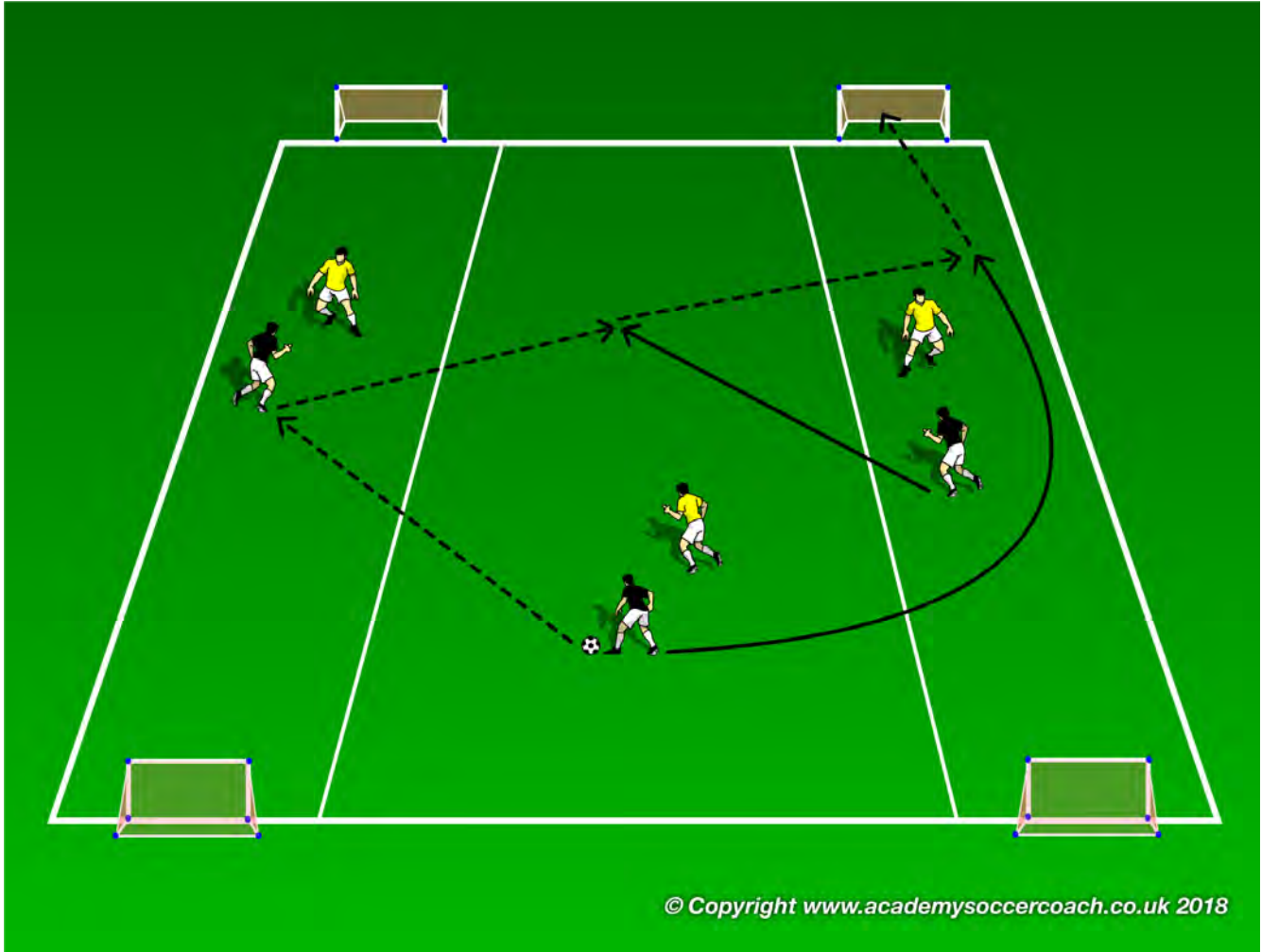
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 3 v 3 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into three areas vertically; a 1 v 1 duel is played inside each zone.

The goal for the possession team is to distribute the ball from one side the other through the center space, playing upwards and backwards.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker, oriented ball control.

## 3 v 3 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 3 v 3 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into three areas vertically; a 1 v 1 duel is played inside each zone. 4 goals are placed as in the picture.

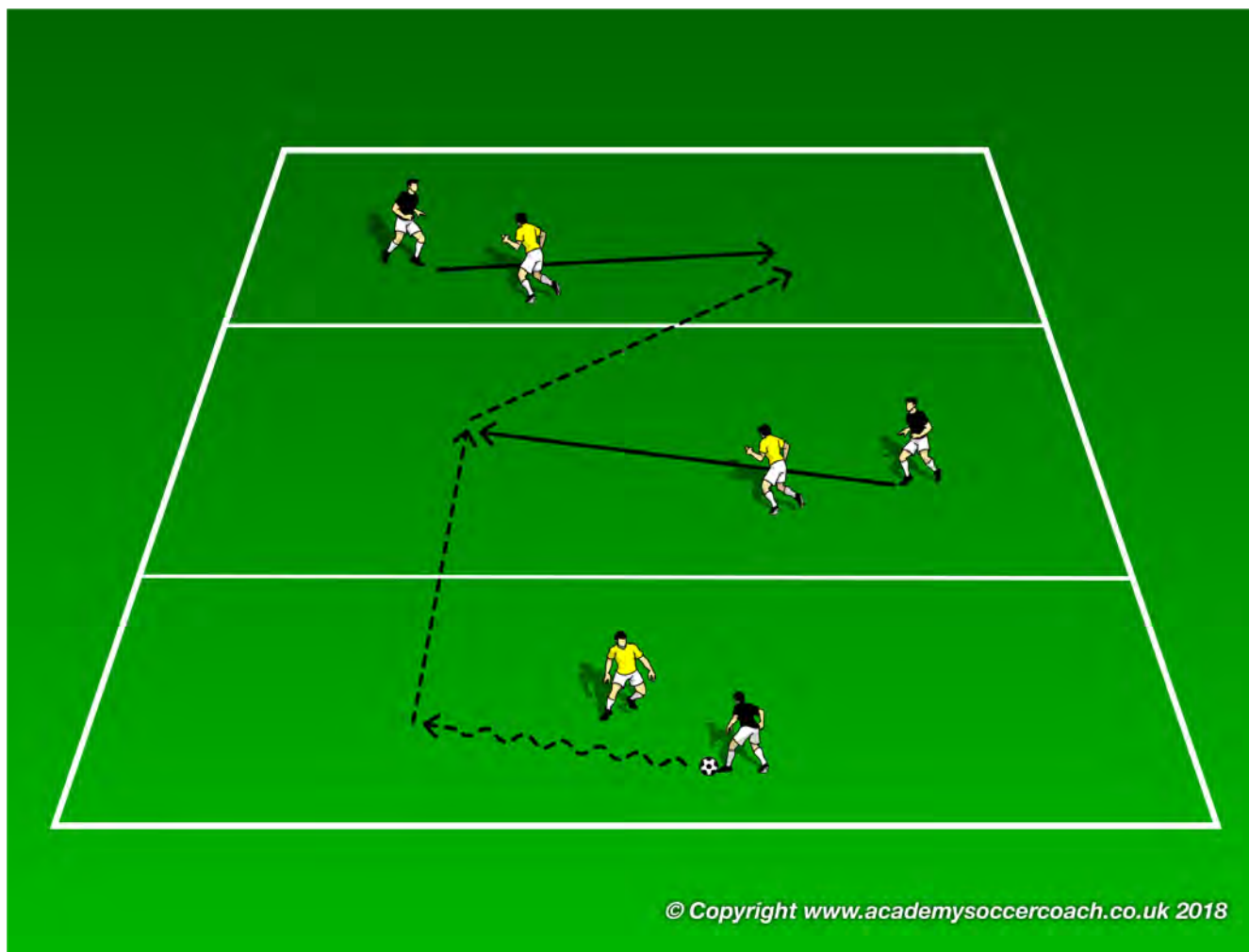
The goal for the possession team is to distribute the ball from one side the other through the center space, scoring in one of the mini-goal to be attacked and exchanging the positions between the center player, who overlaps, and the opposite wide teammate, who runs inside.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way toward the opposite side.

**Variations:** if the defenders win the possession, a 3 v 3 free duel is played to counter attack.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker, oriented ball control.

### 3 v 3 Exercises (3)



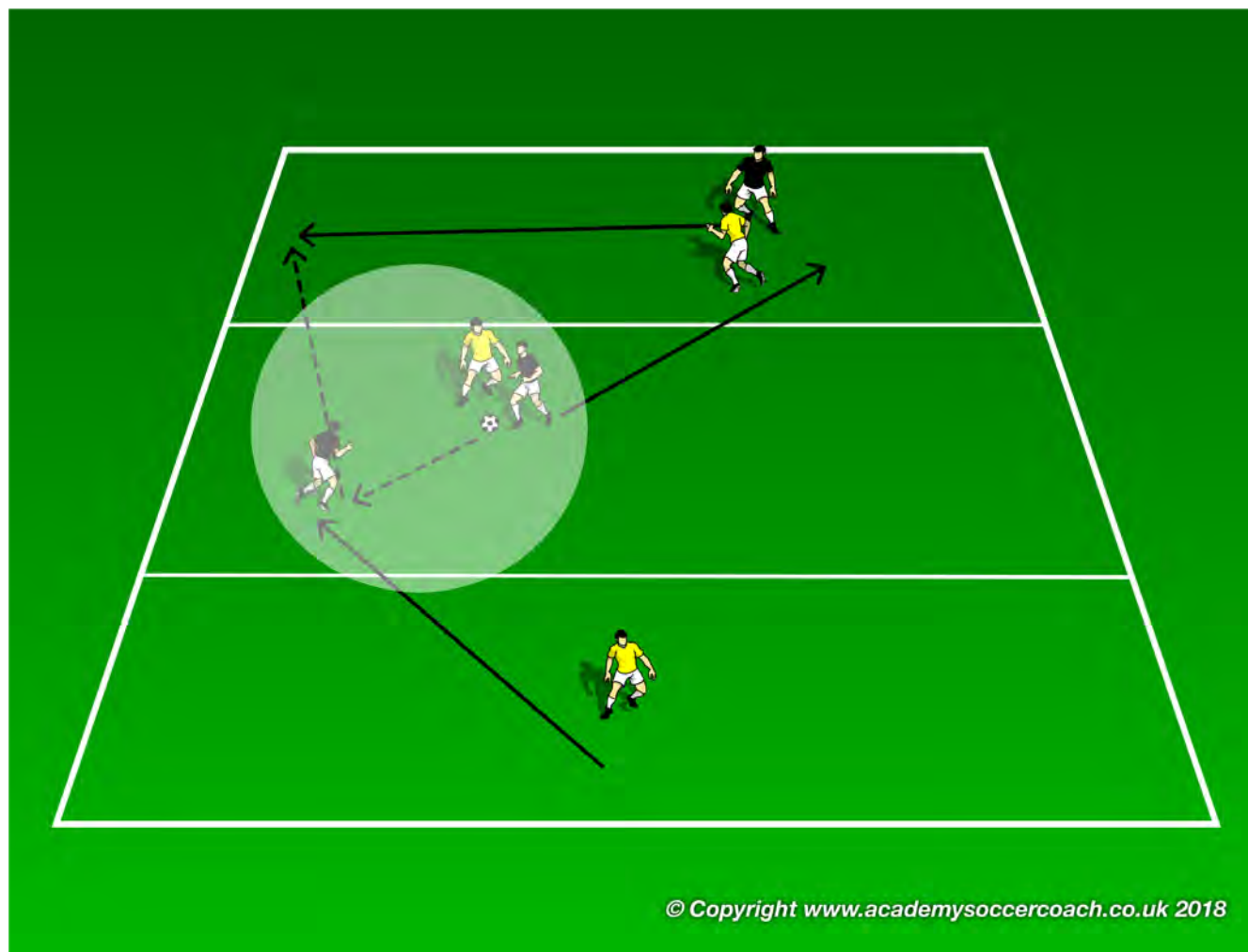
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 3 v 3 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into three areas horizontally; a 1 v 1 duel is played inside each zone.

The goal for the possession team is to play the ball vertically from the lower side the upper one and backward through the center space.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker, oriented ball control, and receive on the run.

### 3 v 3 Exercises (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this exercise is a variation of the previous one to create numerical advantage inside each area.

The goal for the possession team is always to play the ball vertically, from the lower side the upper one and backward through the center space.

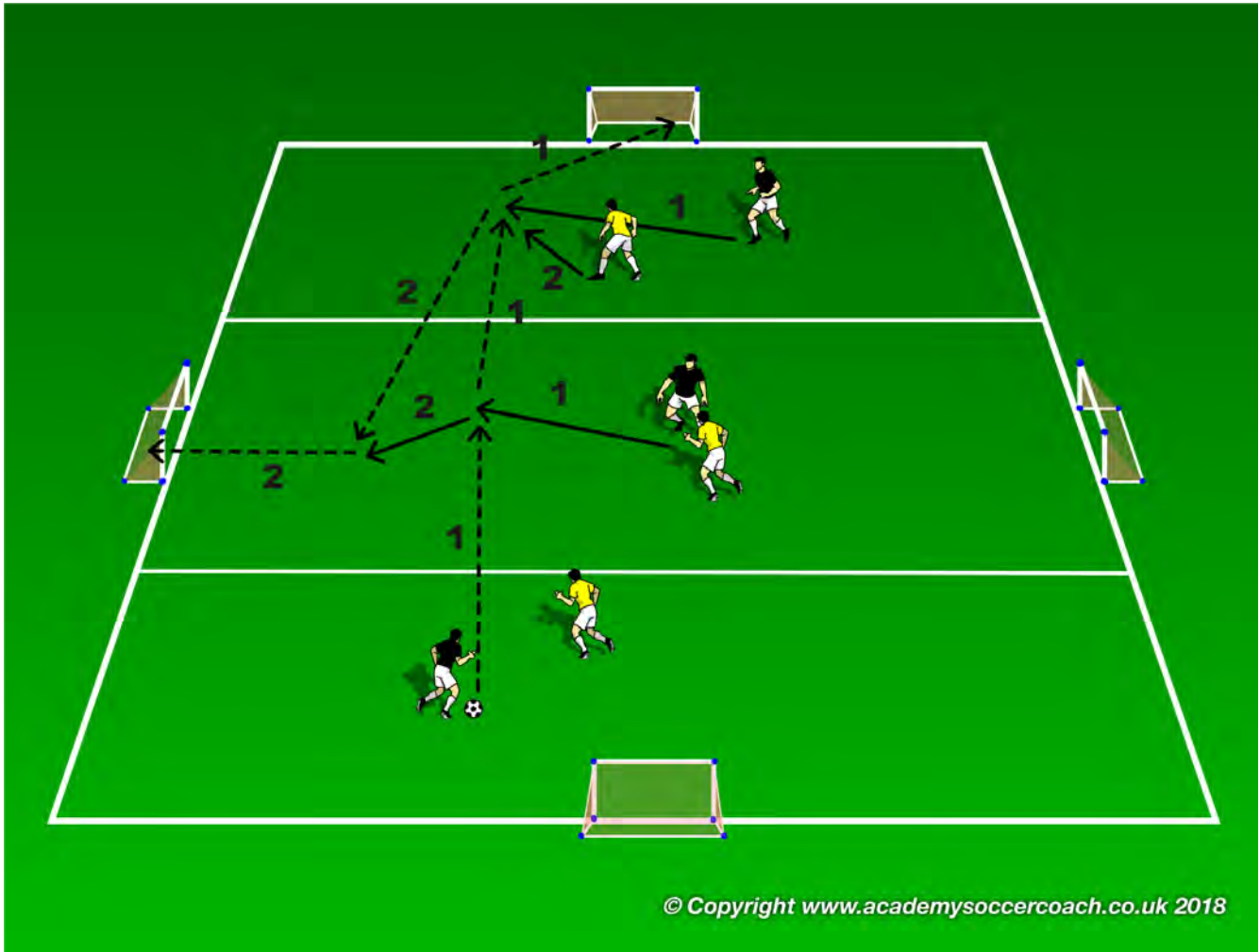
Every pass to the next zone must be followed to create a 2 v 1 duel inside each area.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker, oriented ball control, and support the teammate.



### 3 v 3 Exercises (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 3 v 3 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into three areas horizontally; a 1 v 1 duel is played inside each zone. 4 mini-goals are placed in the center of each side, as in the picture.

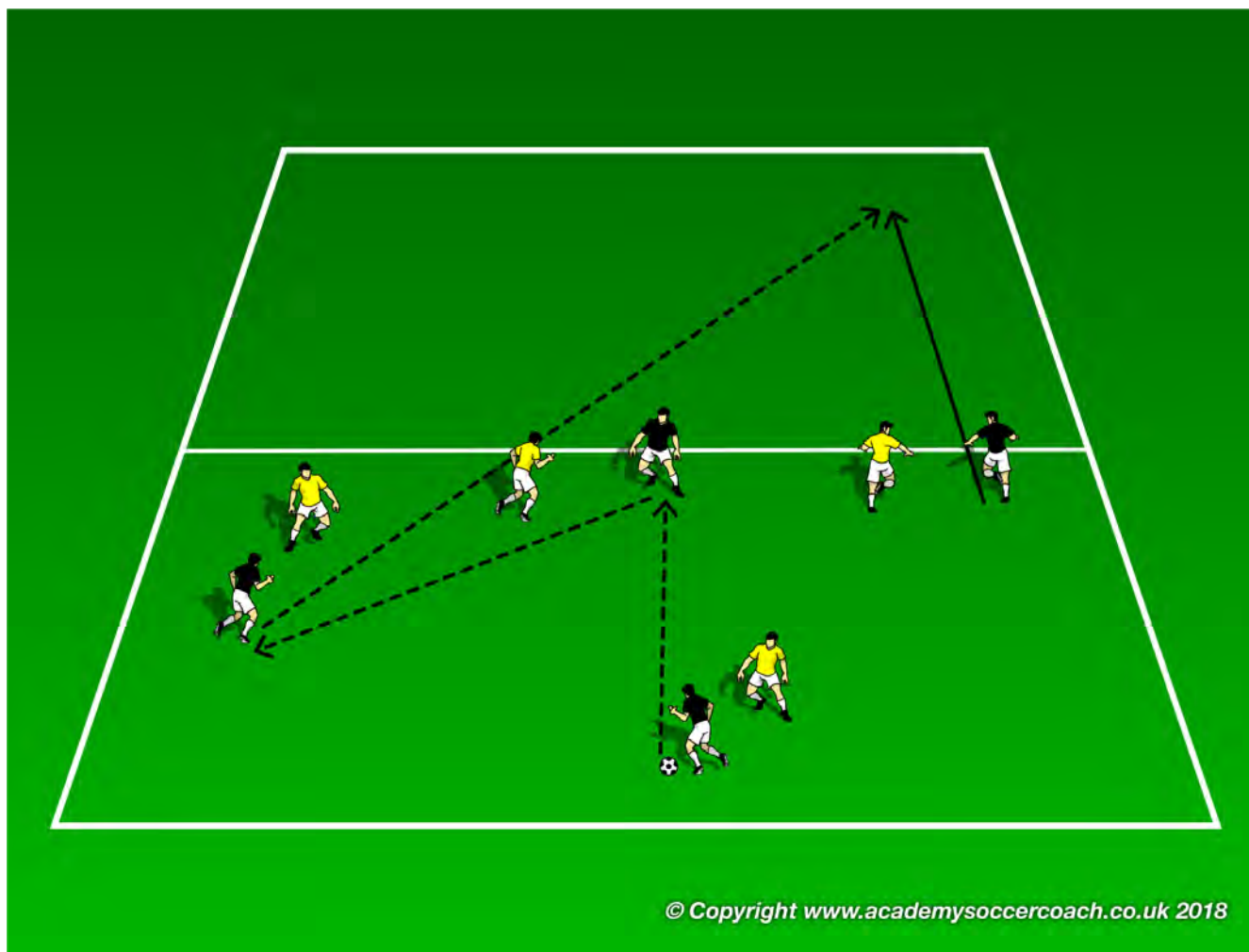
The goal for the possession team is to play the ball vertically to finish in one of the mini-goals that are placed on the shorter sides of the main rectangle (num. 1).

If the defenders win the ball, they must finish in one of the wide mini-goals that are placed along the longer sides of the structure (num.2).

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker, oriented ball control, and receive on the run.



## 4 v 4 Exercises (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 4 v 4 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into two areas horizontally; all the players are placed inside one of the halves as in the picture.

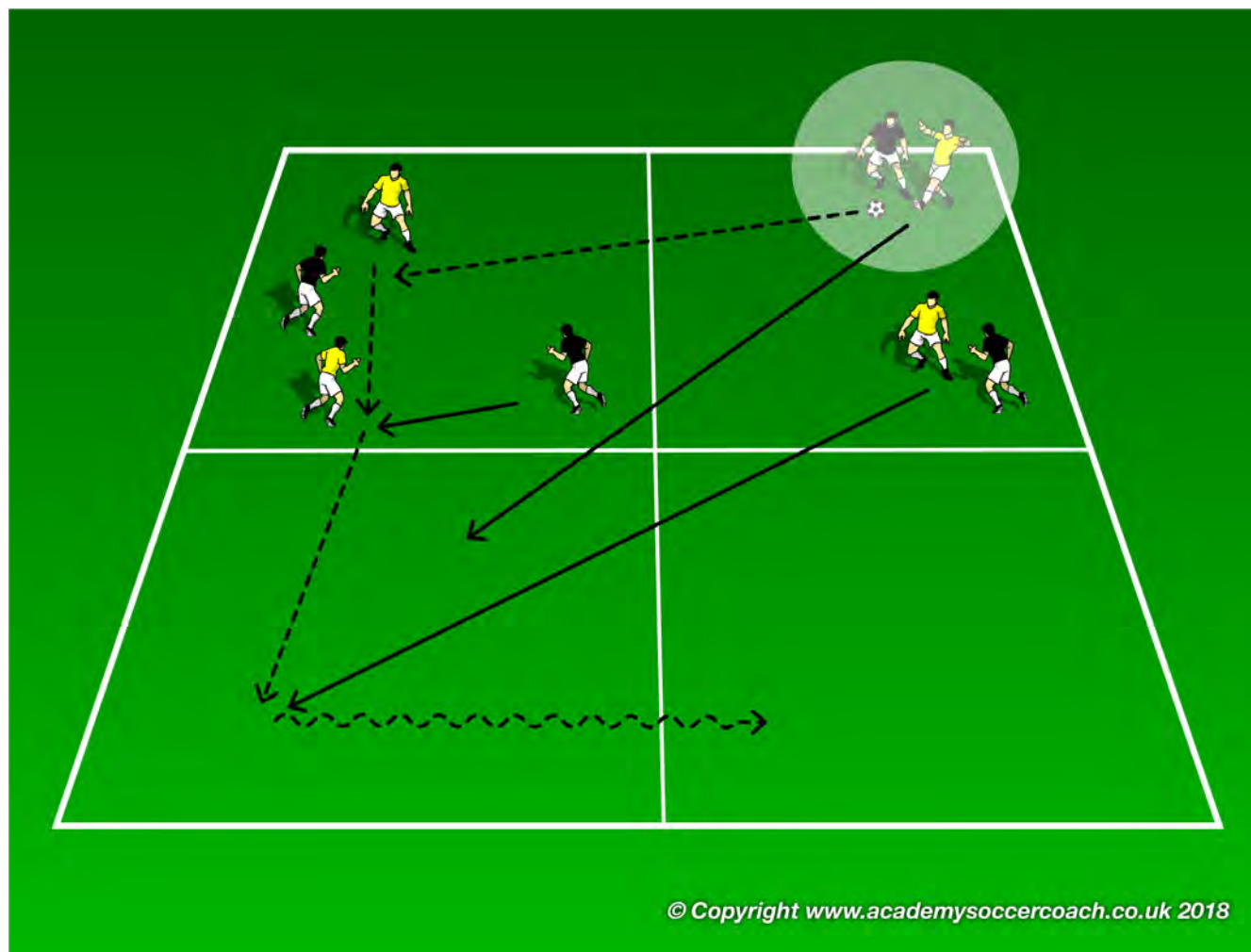
The goal for the possession team is to play toward the opposite zone, where a teammate must receive on the run, when three players have touched the ball.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Variations:** if the defenders win the possession, a 4 v 4 free duel is played all over the space.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker with the right timing.

## 4 v 4 Exercises (2)



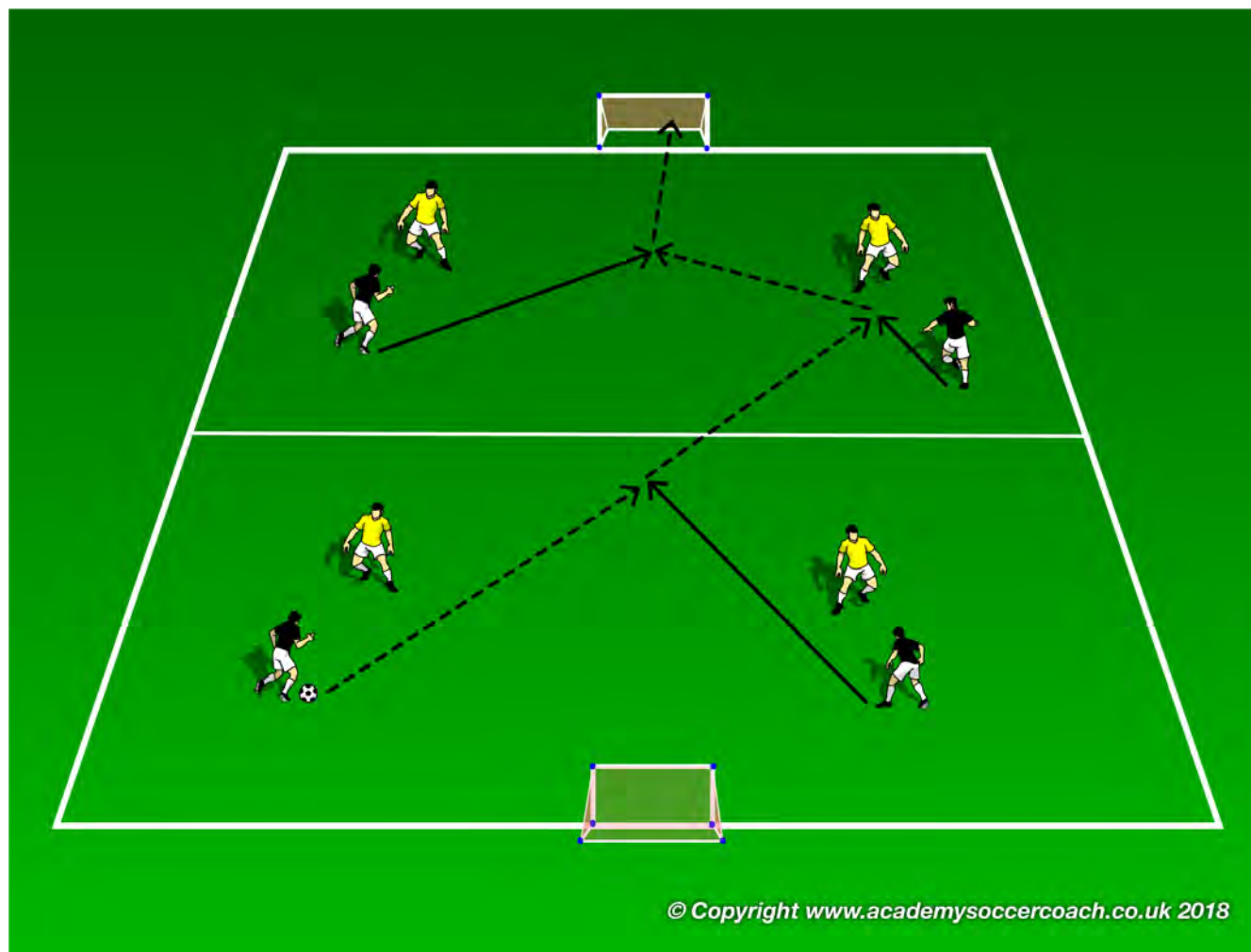
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 4 v 4 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into four areas horizontally and vertically. The black players must follow the horizontal division of the pitch; the yellow ones must follow the vertical one.

The goal for the possession team is to play toward the opposite zone where a teammate must receive on the run, when three players have touched the ball.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, but from the left to the right side, vice versa, after positioning the team, as in the picture.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, escape the marker with the right timing, replace in the pitch quickly.

### 4 v 4 Exercises (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 4 v 4 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into two areas horizontally; a 2 v 2 duel is played inside each half.

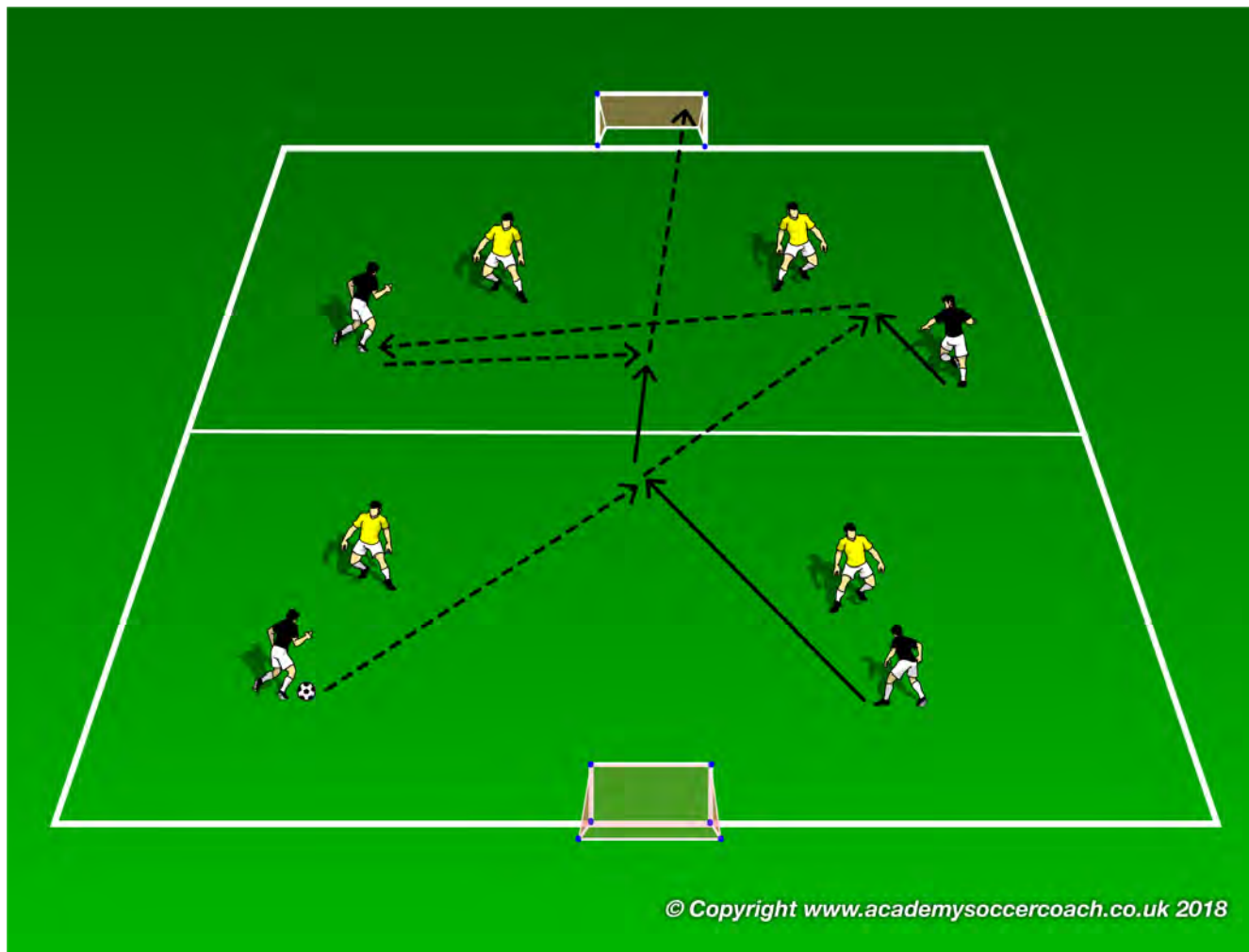
The goal for the possession team is to play toward the opposite zone to finish, winning the duel inside each area to build up first and then to shoot.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way toward the opposite side.

**Variations:** if the defenders win the possession, a 4 v 4 free duel is played to counter attack.

**Eye on:** play behind the opponents, escape the marker with the right timing, and finish quickly.

## 4 v 4 Exercises (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this exercise is a progression of the previous one.

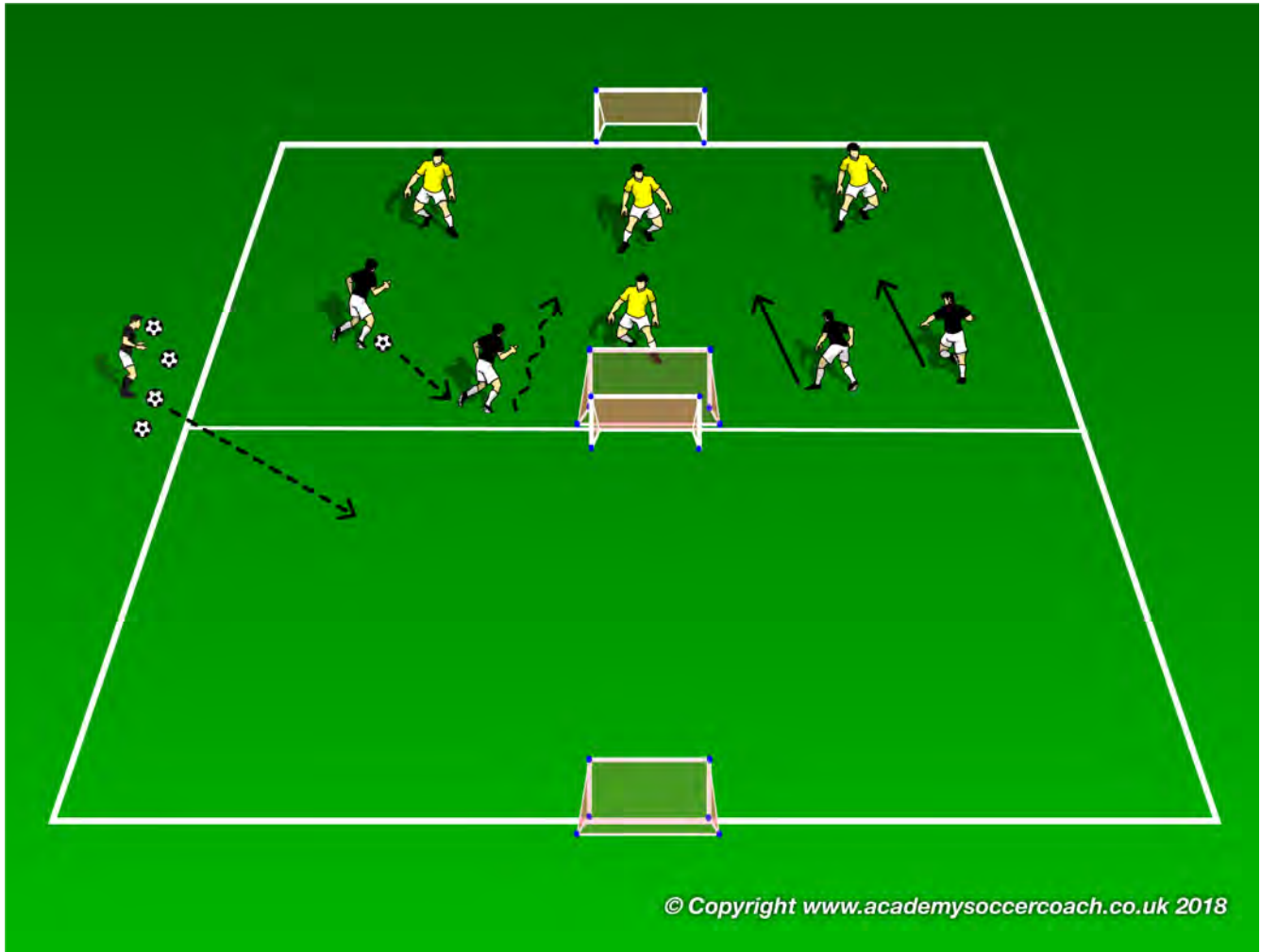
As the ball is played inside the forward half of the pitch, a momentary numerical advantage (3 v 2 for 5"/10") is created inside the finishing area. After this time, the equal number of players must be reform.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way toward the opposite side.

**Variations:** if the defenders win the possession, a 4 v 2 duel is played to counter attack.

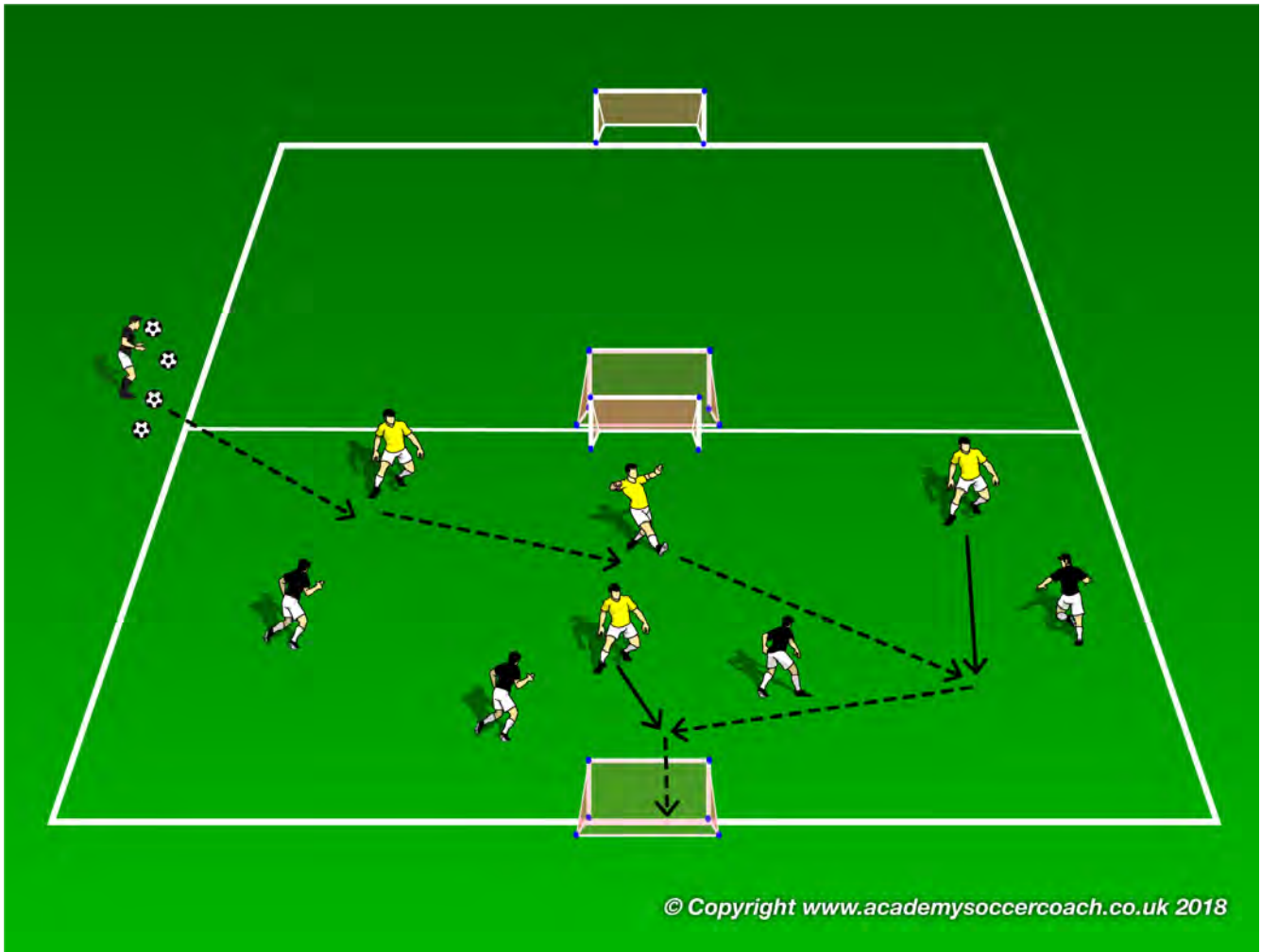
**Eye on:** play behind the opponents, exploit the numerical advantage to finish quickly.

## 4 v 4 Exercises (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 4 v 4 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 2 areas horizontally; all the players are placed inside one of the halves in the picture as well as and four mini goals.

Both the teams have one goal to defend and one goal to attack inside each half.



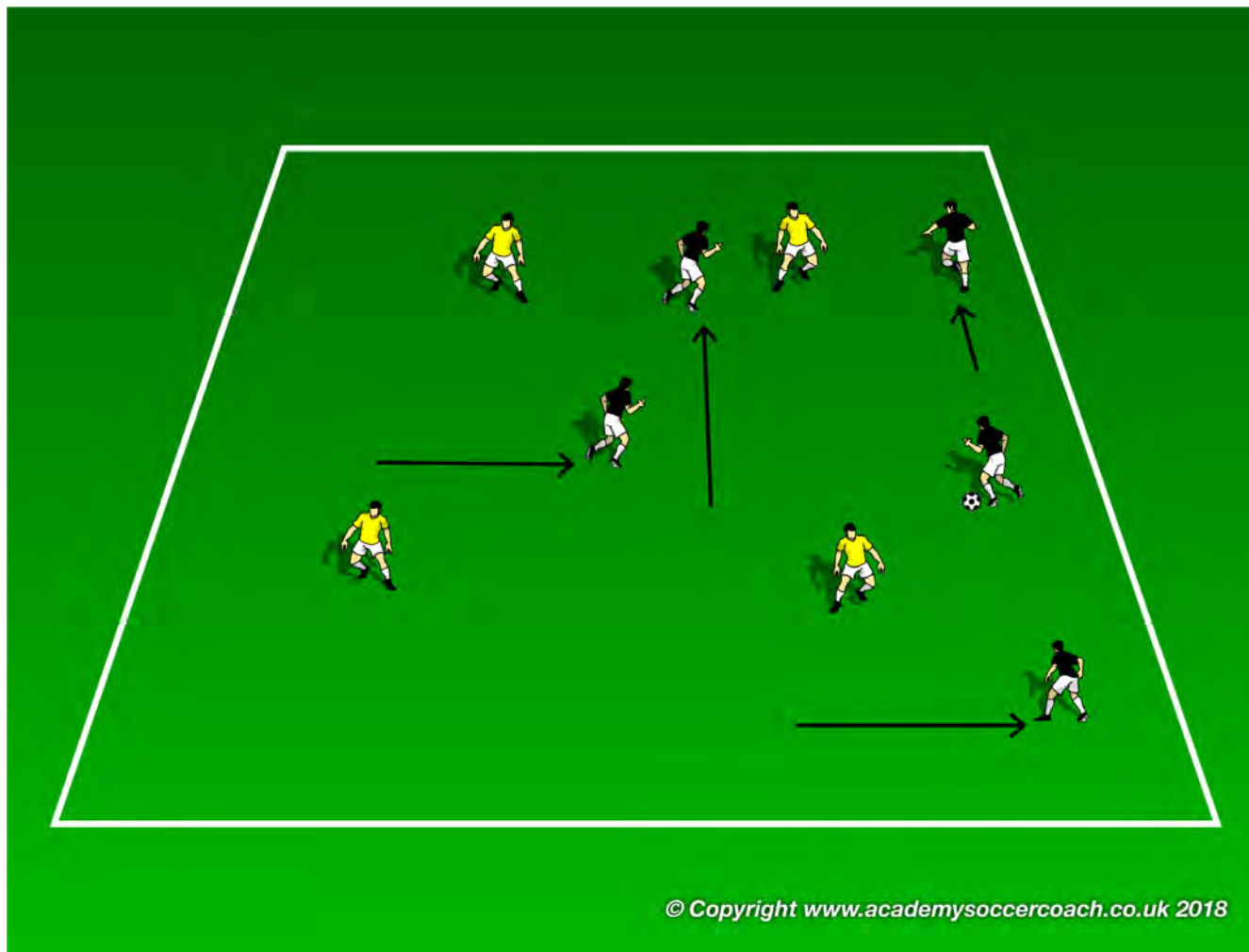
The coach can decide to play a ball inside the other half. From this moment the roles of the teams are inverted; the defending team becomes the attacking team and vice versa.

**Variation:** the coach plays the ball toward the opposite side and the roles on the pitch are the same.

**Eye on:** quick transition to attack and to defend, quick positioning.



## 5 v 5 Exercises (1)



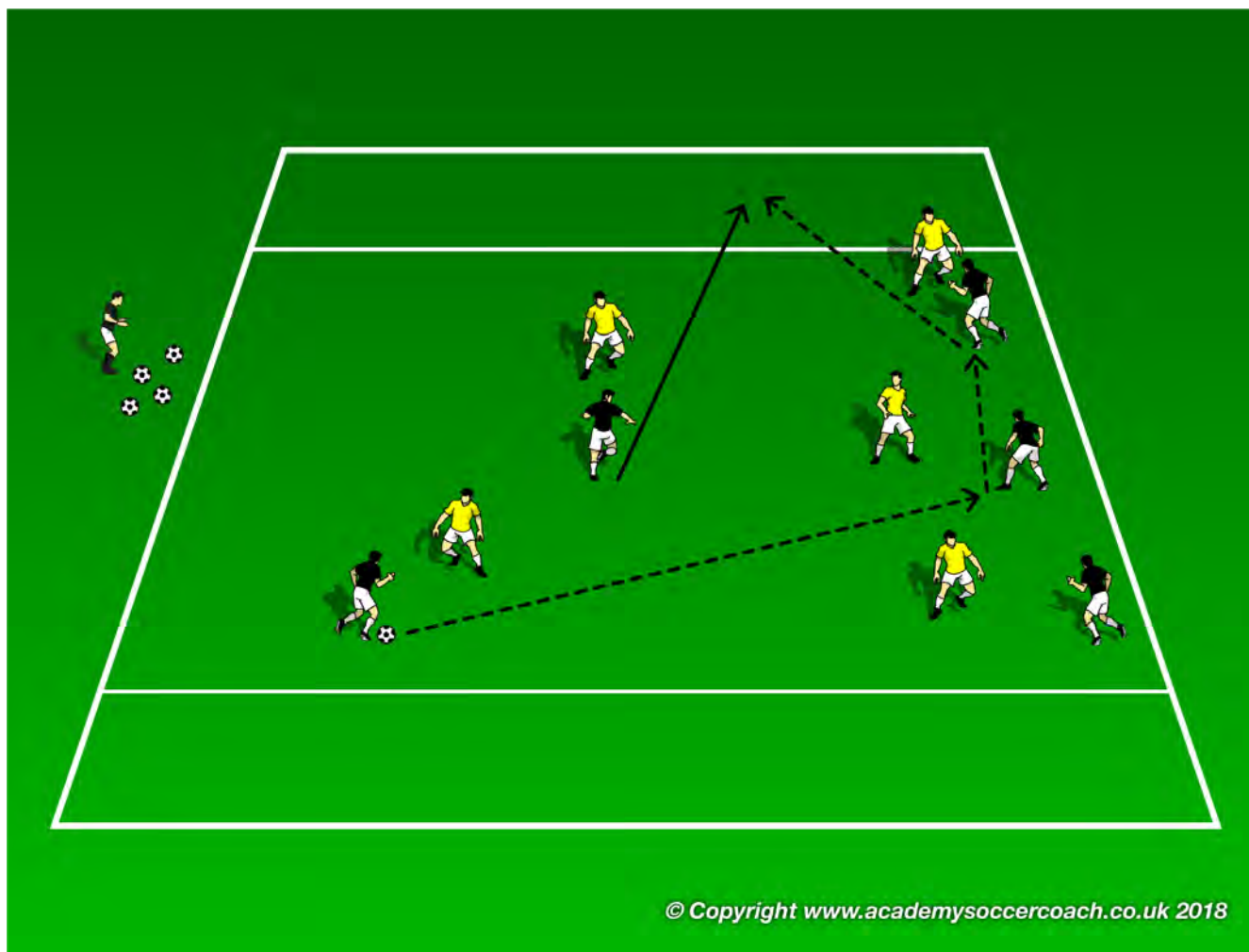
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 5 v 5 duel is played inside a rectangular space.

The goal for the possession team is to play a minimum number of passes to gain 1 point. The possession worth doubles when a wide ball carrier has back and upper supports, an inside passing option and the fifth teammate can receive on the run forward.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Eye on:** pay attention to the positioning on the pitch, 1 v 1 defense.

## 5 v 5 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this exercise is a variation of the previous one.

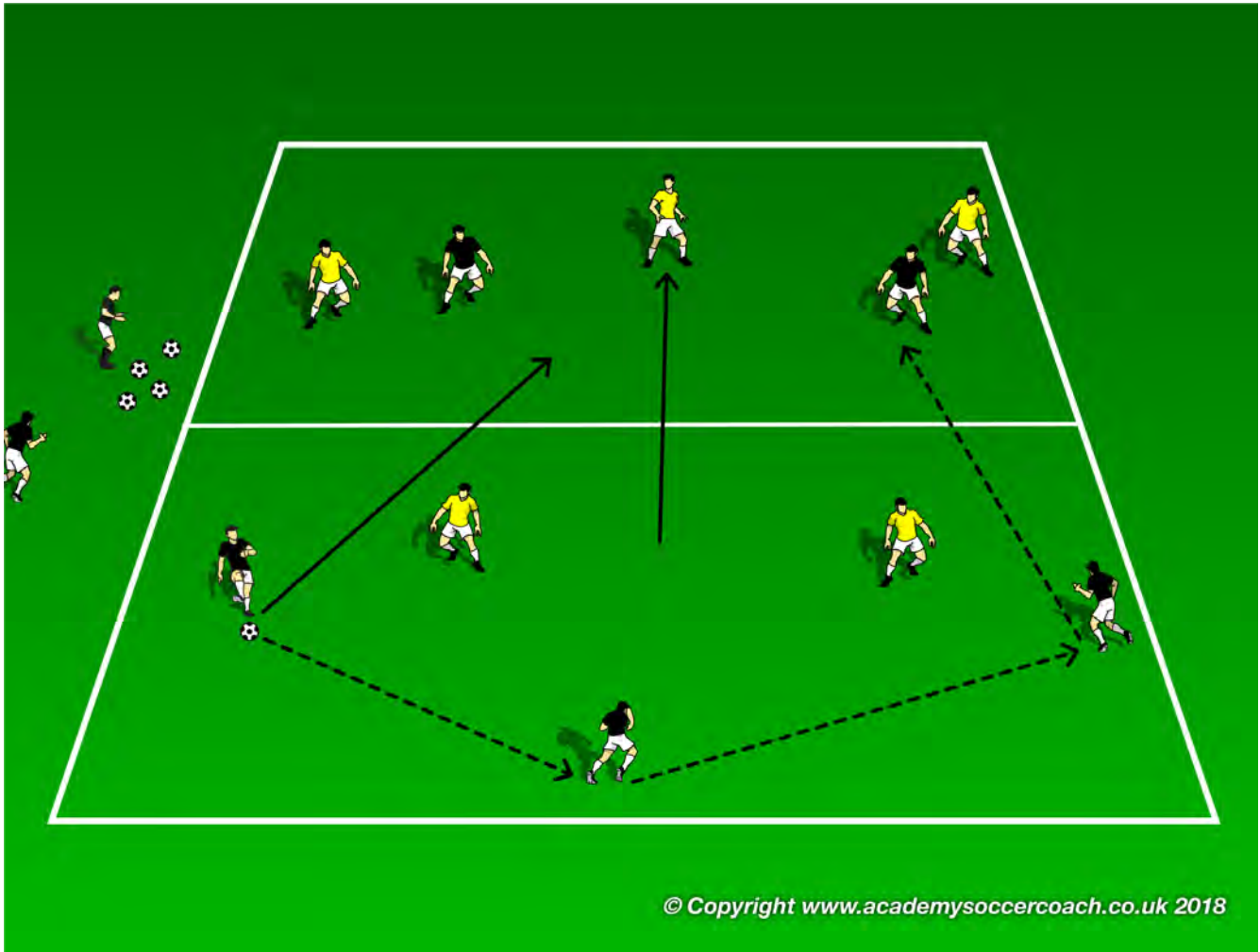
The goal for the possession team is to play to the fifth teammate, who can receive inside an end zone of the opposition. The possession is worth double when a wide ball carrier has back and upper supports, an inside passing option and the fifth teammate can receive on the run forward to score.

If the defenders win the ball, they must reach the opposite end zone.

**Eye on:** pay attention to the positioning on the pitch, 1 v 1 and space defense.



### 5 v 5 Exercises (3)



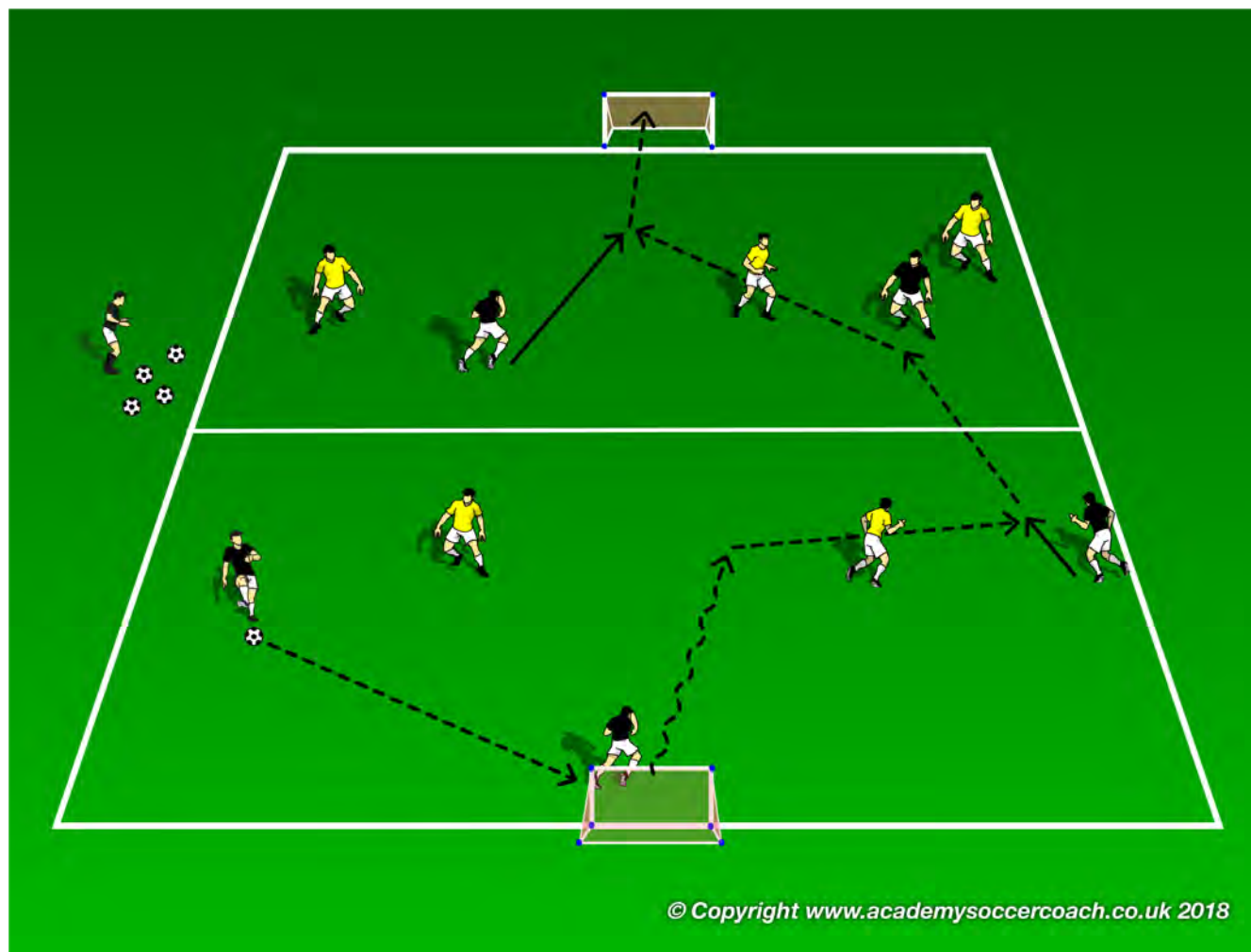
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 5 v 5 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 2 halves. 3 v 3 duels must be shaped inside each half.

The goal for the possession team is to play a minimum number of passes to gain 1 point, playing 3 v 3 inside each area. 1 attacking player and 1 defending player must support the teammates to keep or win the ball.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way inside the opposite half.

**Eye on:** quick positioning on the pitch, support the teammates with the right timing.

## 5 v 5 Exercises (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 5 v 5 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 2 halves. 3 v 3 duels are played inside the build up areas; 2 v 3 duels are played inside the finishing area.

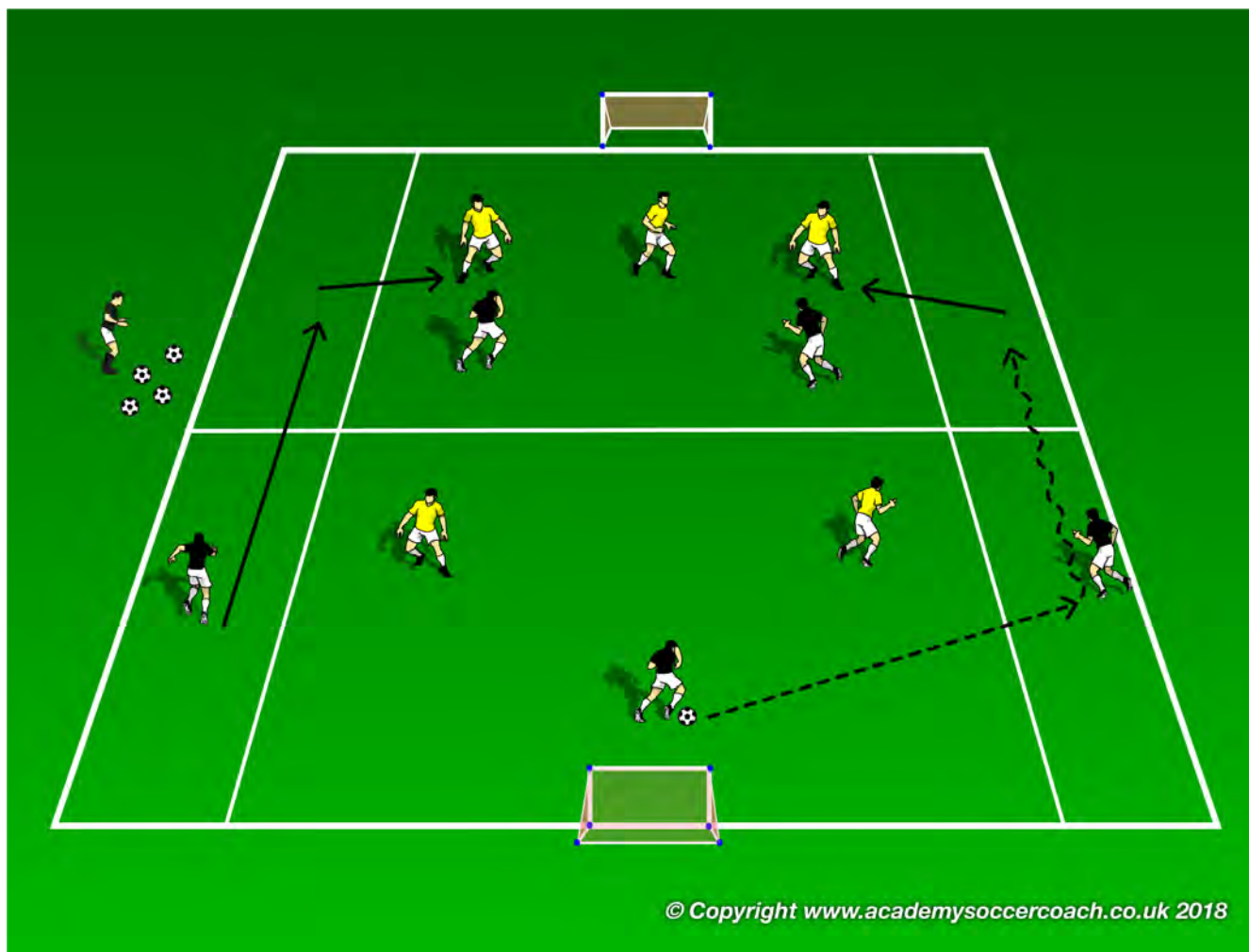
The goal for the possession team is to play a minimum number of passes to gain 1 point, playing 3 v 2 inside the building up area; the second goal for the team in possession is to shoot as quickly as possible, when the ball is played inside the finishing area.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way on the opposite half.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball a 5 v 5 duel is played to counter-attack toward the opposite direction.

**Eye on:** keep the possession safe, finish quickly.

## 5 v 5 Exercises (5)



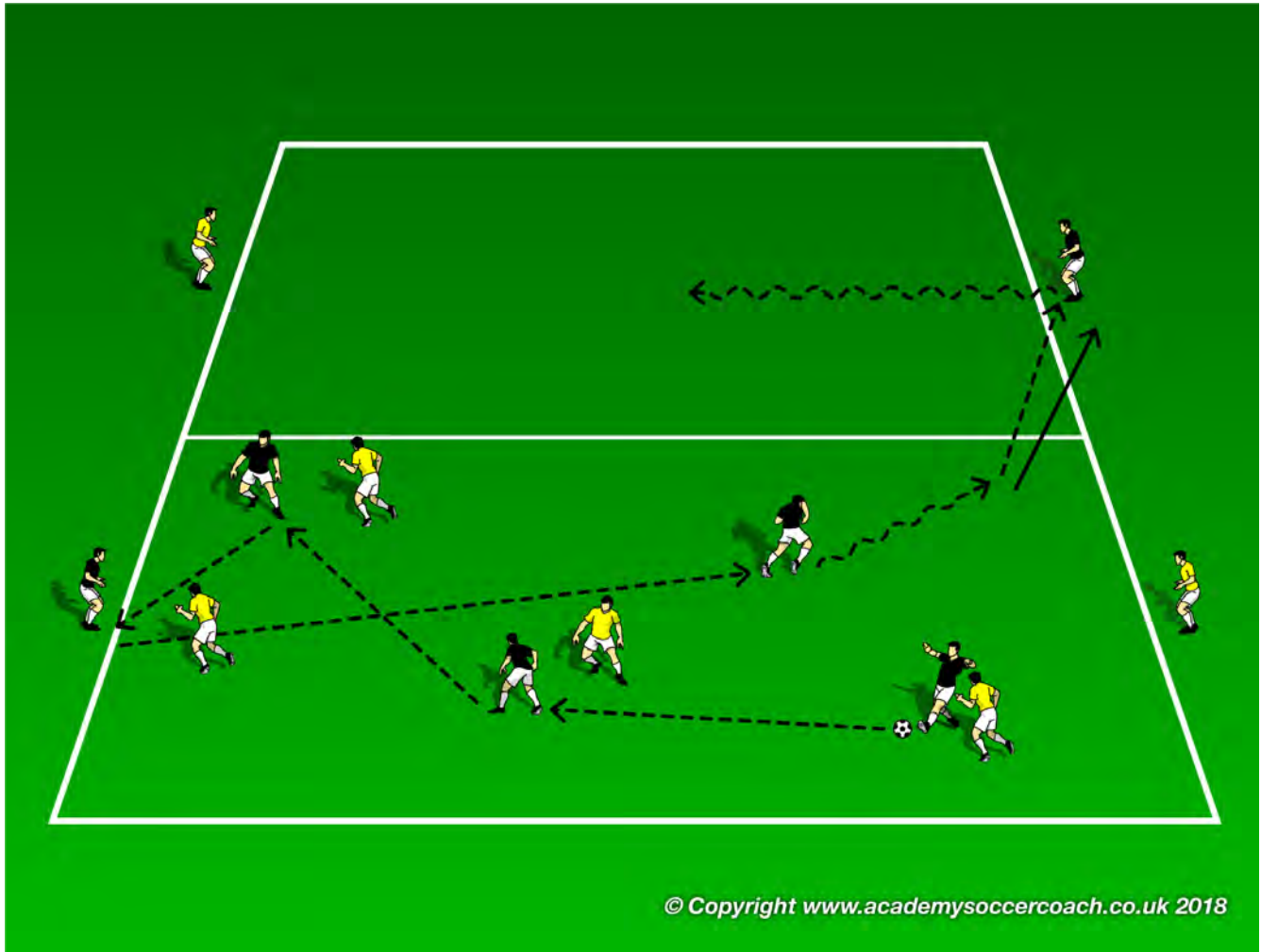
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 5 v 5 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 2 halves. 3 v 3 duels are played inside the build up areas; 2 v 3 duels are played inside the finishing area. 2 flanks are added in this practice.

The possession team must build up through 2 wide players as in the picture, after a minimum number of touches. A 4 v 3 duel is now created inside the finishing area.

The wide players of the defending team must stay placed inside the center zone to save the goal space, preventing the attacking team from scoring.

**Eye on:** keep the possession safe; finish quickly exploiting the numerical advantage.

## 6 v 6 Exercises (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 6 v 6 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into two areas horizontally; 4 players of each team are placed inside one of the halves as in the picture. 2 more players are placed along the half sides of the set-up, on the left and on the right alternately.

The goal for the possession team is to play toward the opposite zone, where the second wide teammate must receive to keep the possession, waiting for the others to run toward the opposite half. All the players in the middle and the first wide teammate must have touched the ball, before changing the half pitch.

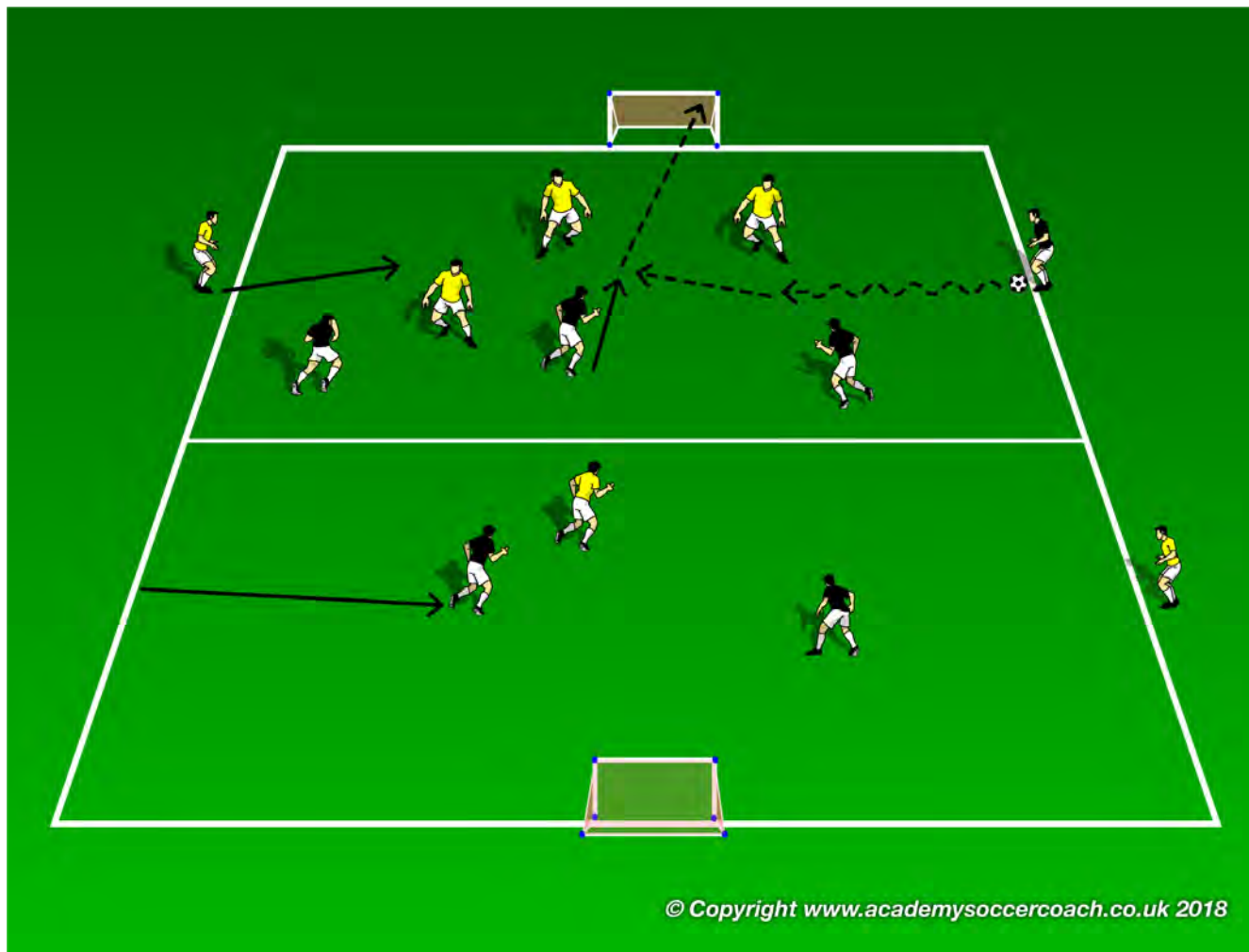
If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

### Variations:

- 1) If the defenders win the possession, a 6 v 6 free duel is played all over the space
- 2) If the defenders win the possession, the wide teammate on the other half must receive the first pass

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, clever positioning to keep the possession.

## 6 v 6 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this is a progression of the previous exercise. A 6 v 6 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 2 areas horizontally; 4 players of each team are placed inside 1 of the halves as in the picture. 2 more players are placed along the half sides of the set-up, on the left and on the right alternately. Each team has a goal to attack and a goal to defend.

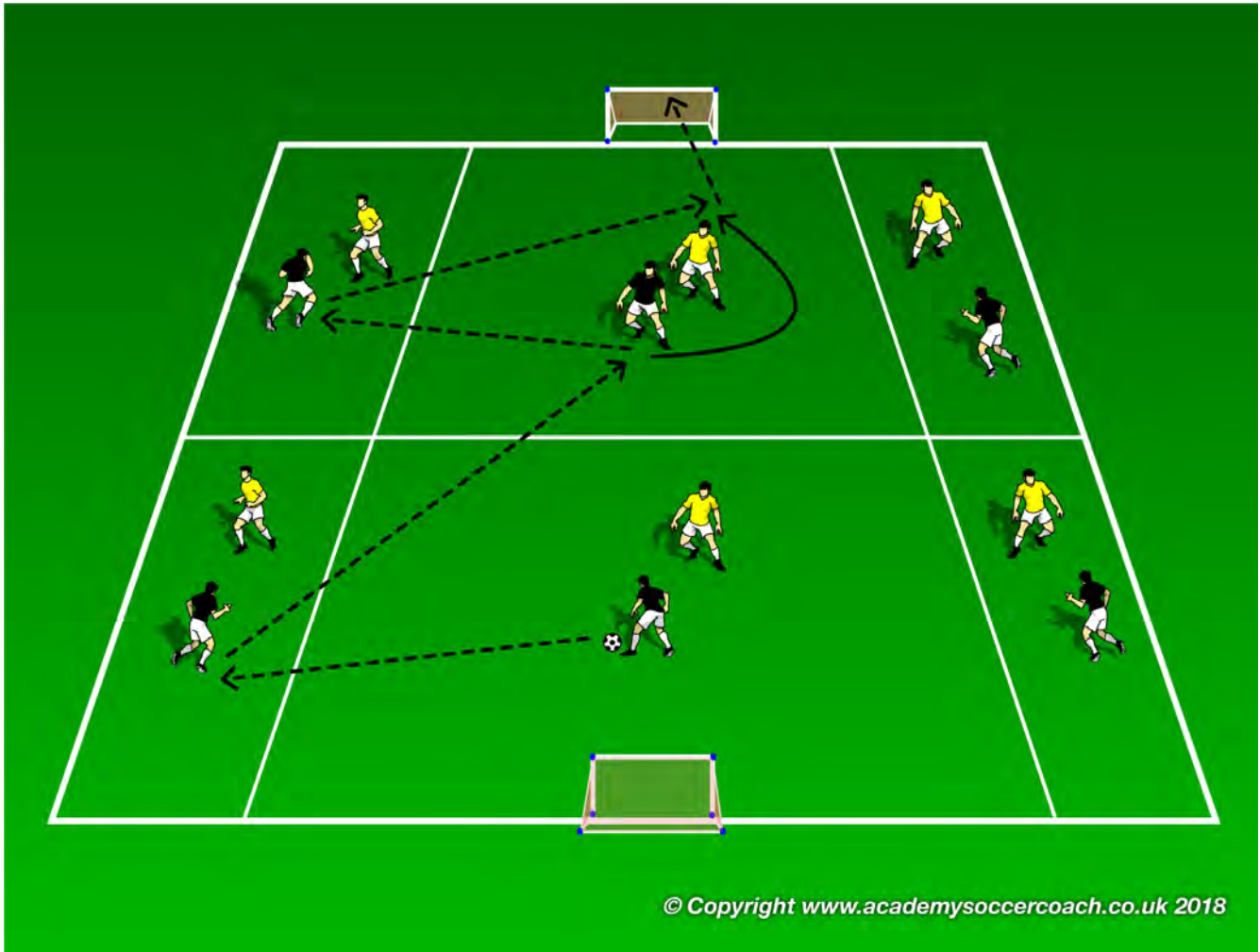
The goal for the possession team is to play toward the opposite zone, where the second wide teammate must receive to keep the possession and to score, waiting for the others to run toward the opposite half. All the players in the middle and the first wide teammate must have touched the ball before changing the half pitch. The first wide player runs inside to create a 2 v 2 defense situation, as well as the second wide player of the defending team runs inside to equalize the number of players.

If the defenders win the ball, they must pass the ball toward the attacking half to try to win the 2 v 2 duel.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, clever positioning to finish as soon as possible, finish the counter-attacking phase as soon as possible.



## 6 v 6 Exercises (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 6 v 6 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is divided into 3 areas in each half; a double 3 v 3 duels is then played, and 1 v 1 duels are played inside the center zone and along the flanks, as in the picture.

The goal for the possession team is to play wide to build first and then to finish in the mini-goal after an outside/inside wall passing combination.

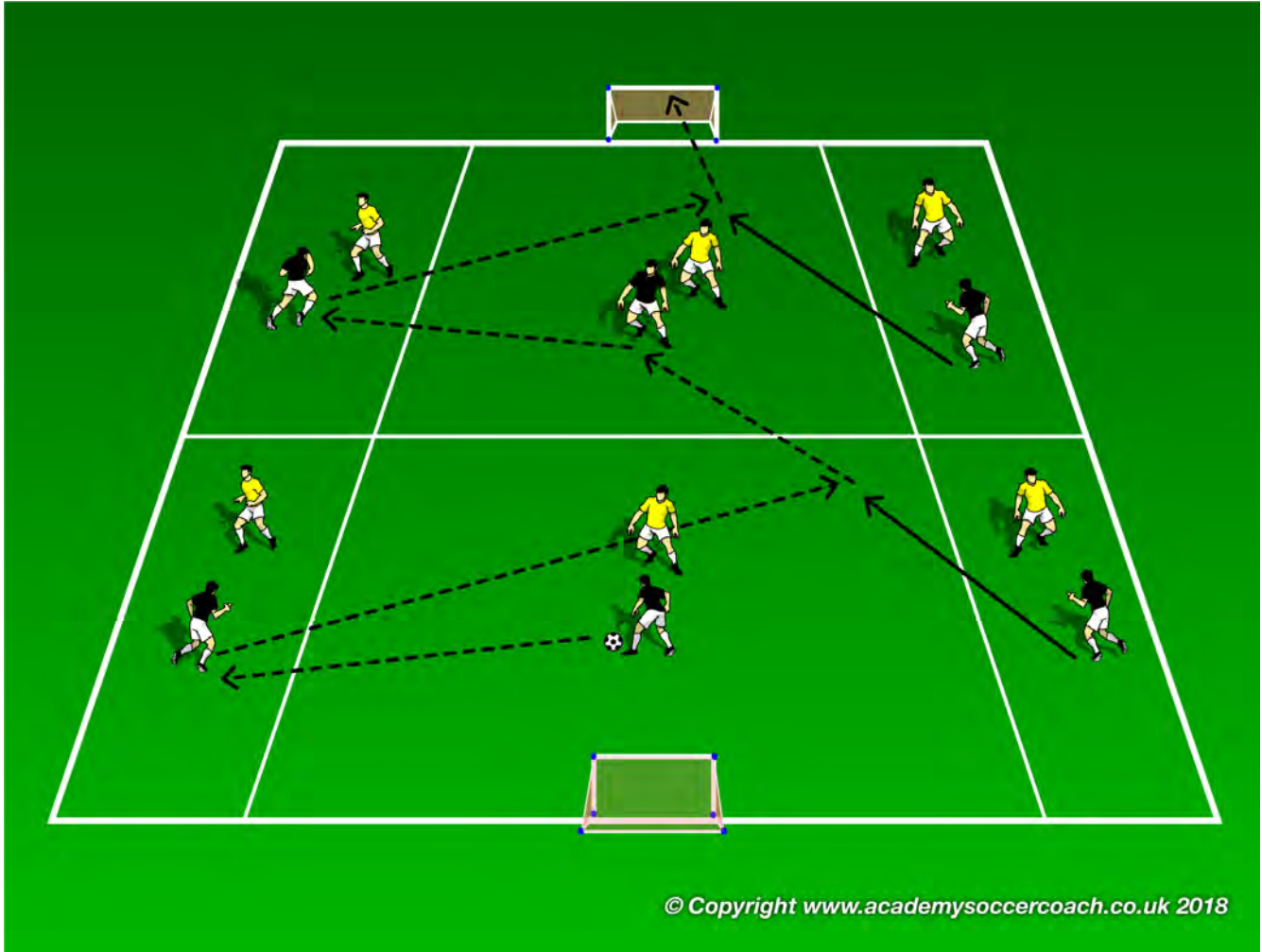
If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

### **Variations:**

If the defenders win the possession, the ball must be played toward the opposite side where a 3 v 3 duel is played to counter-attack

**Eye on:** escape the marker to receive, feints to win the 1 v 1 duels.

## 6 v 6 Exercises (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this exercise is a progression of the previous one; as the first wide player on the flank receives, the second opposite one must run inside to create 2 v 1 duels to build up first and to finish then.

All the combinations must be performed with 1 or 2 touches; if it's not possible, the defending team wins the possession.

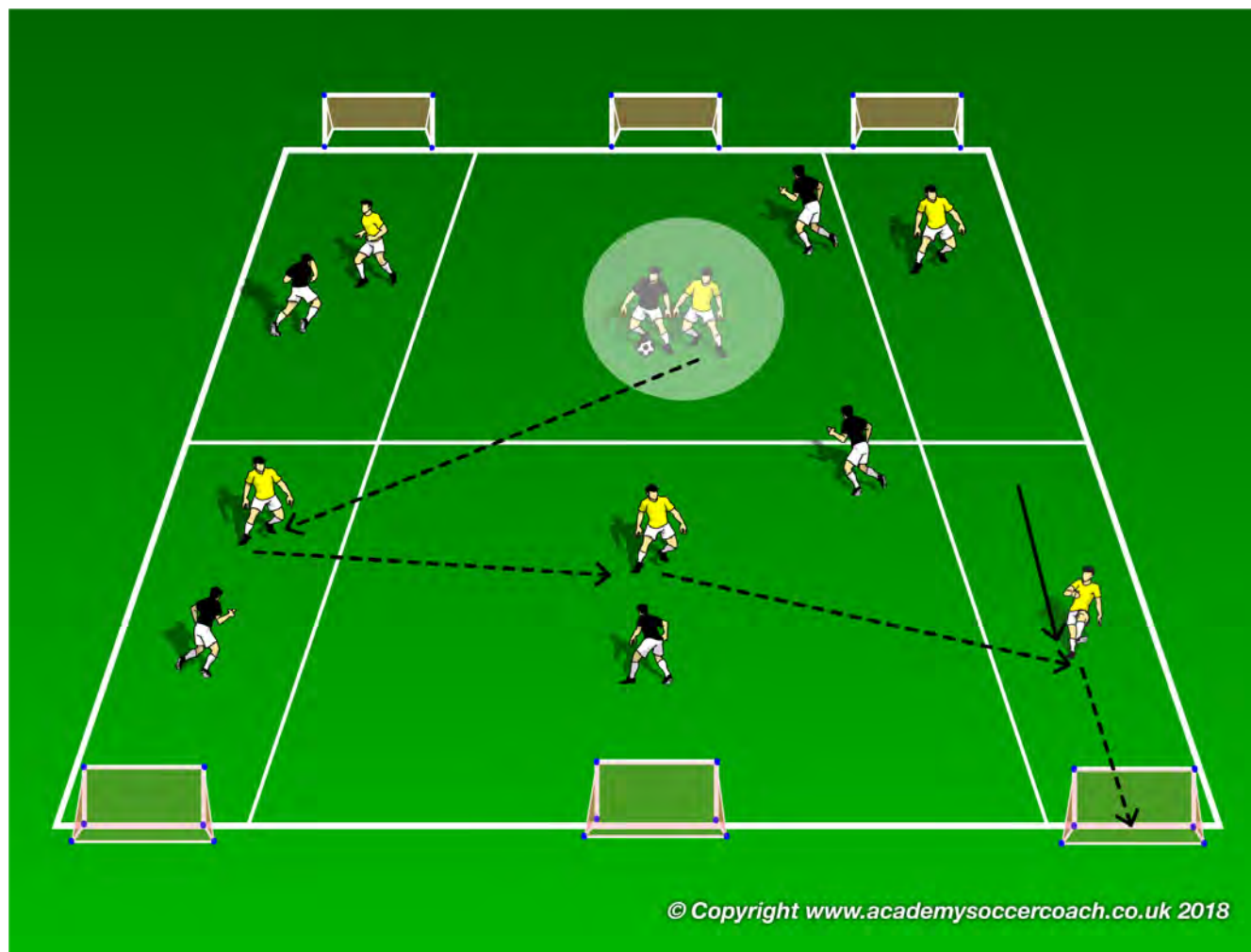
If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, once the possession is safe.

### **Variations:**

If the defenders win the possession, the ball must be played toward the opposite side where a 3 v 3 duel is played to counter-attack through the center zone.

**Eye on:** receive behind the opponent, quick combinations to win the 2 v 1 duels.

## 6 v 6 Exercises (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this exercise is another progression to coach the transitions to attack. 4 more mini goals are added along the borderlines of the flanks, as in the picture.

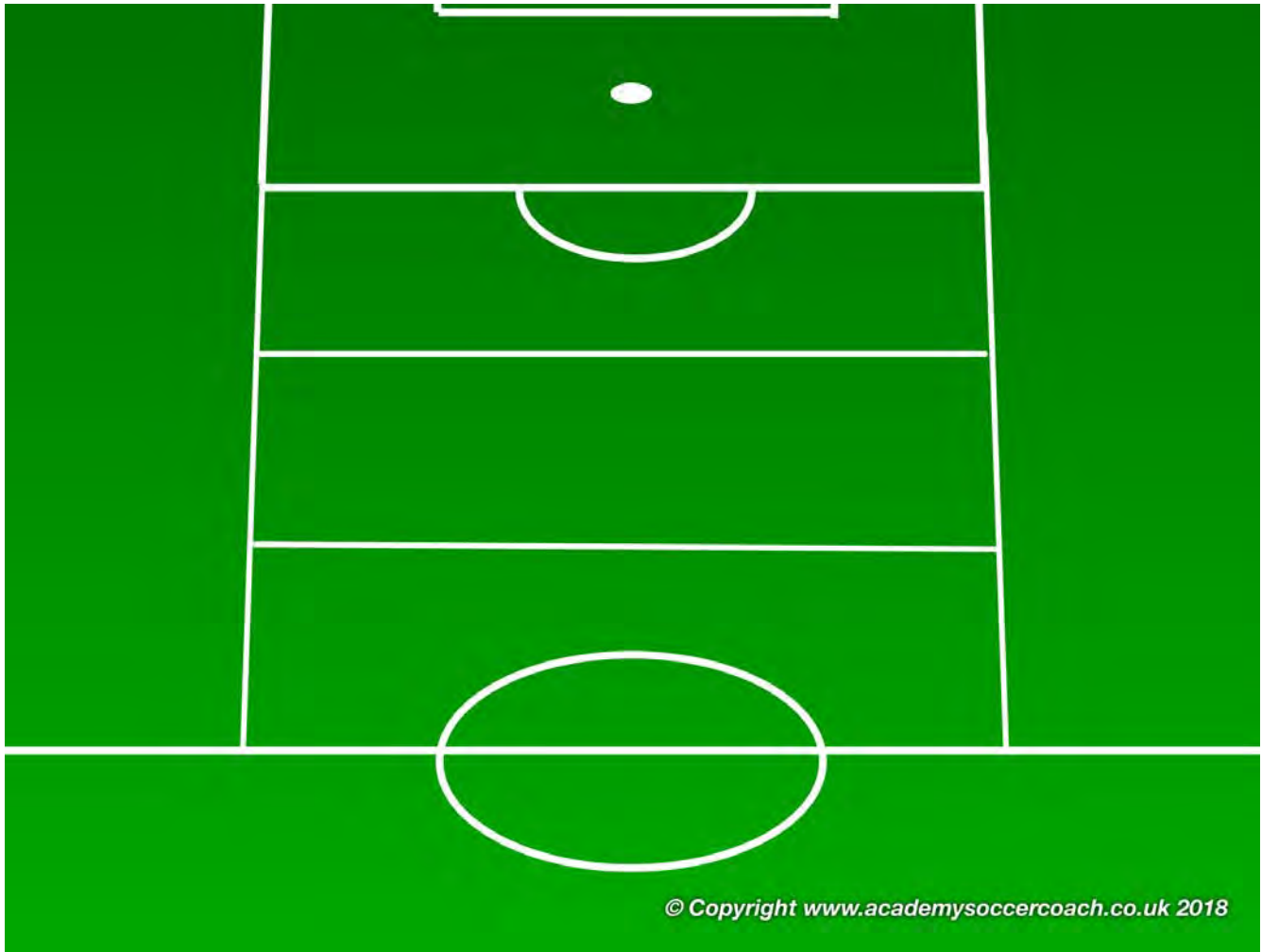
If the defenders win the ball, they must play wide, inside the attacking half and change the side through the center, to allow the second wide player finishing. 1 v 1 duels are played.

**Eye on:** play out wide quickly and change side as soon as possible with the fewer number of touches.

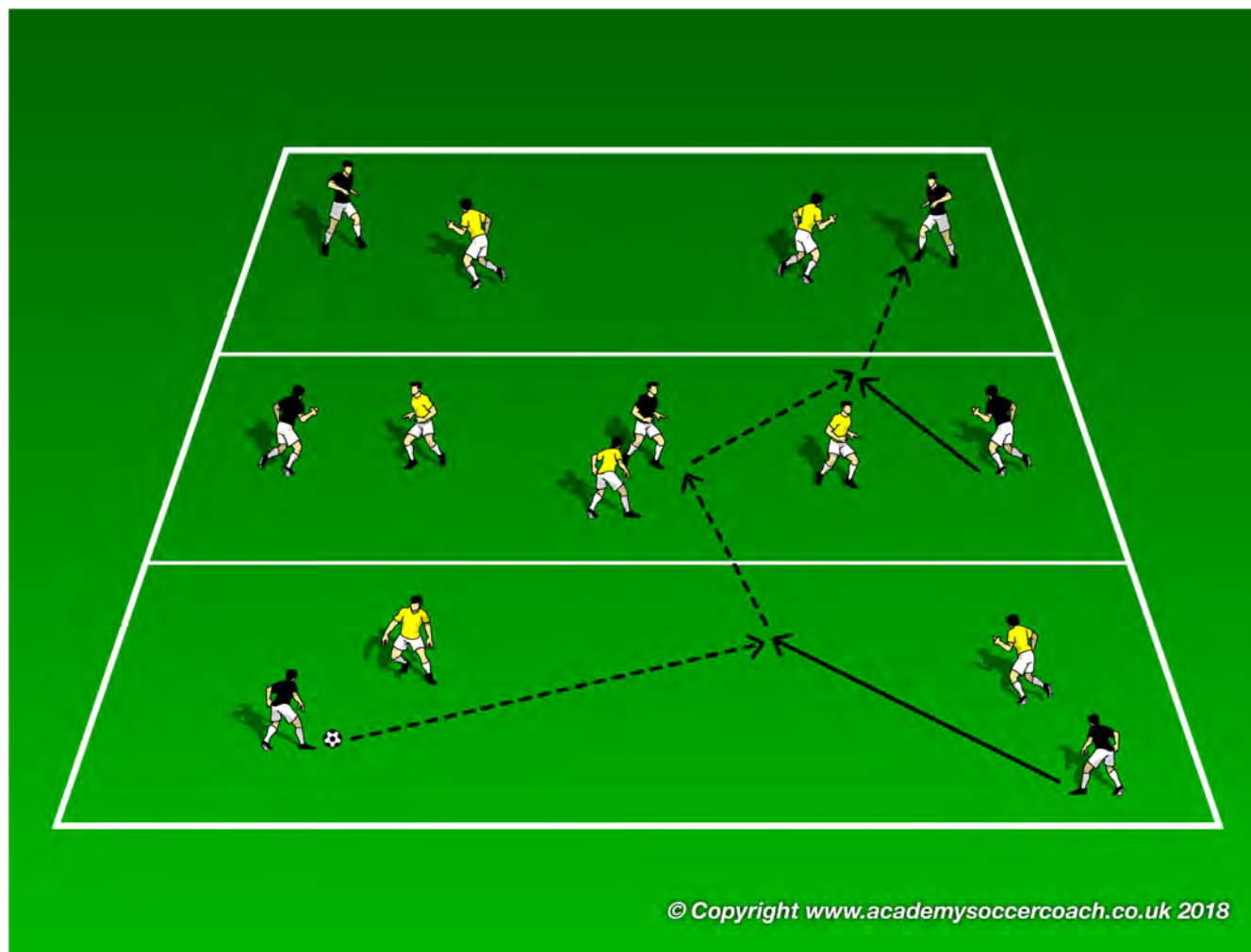


## 7 v 7 Exercises

This picture shows the playing space inside a half pitch. The space is marked out from the borderline of the penalty area and the middle line, it's wide as the penalty area and it's divided into three parts with the same measures.



## 7 v 7 Exercises (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 7 v 7 duel is played inside the marked space. A double 2 v 2 is played inside the outer areas and a 3 v 3 is played inside the center one.

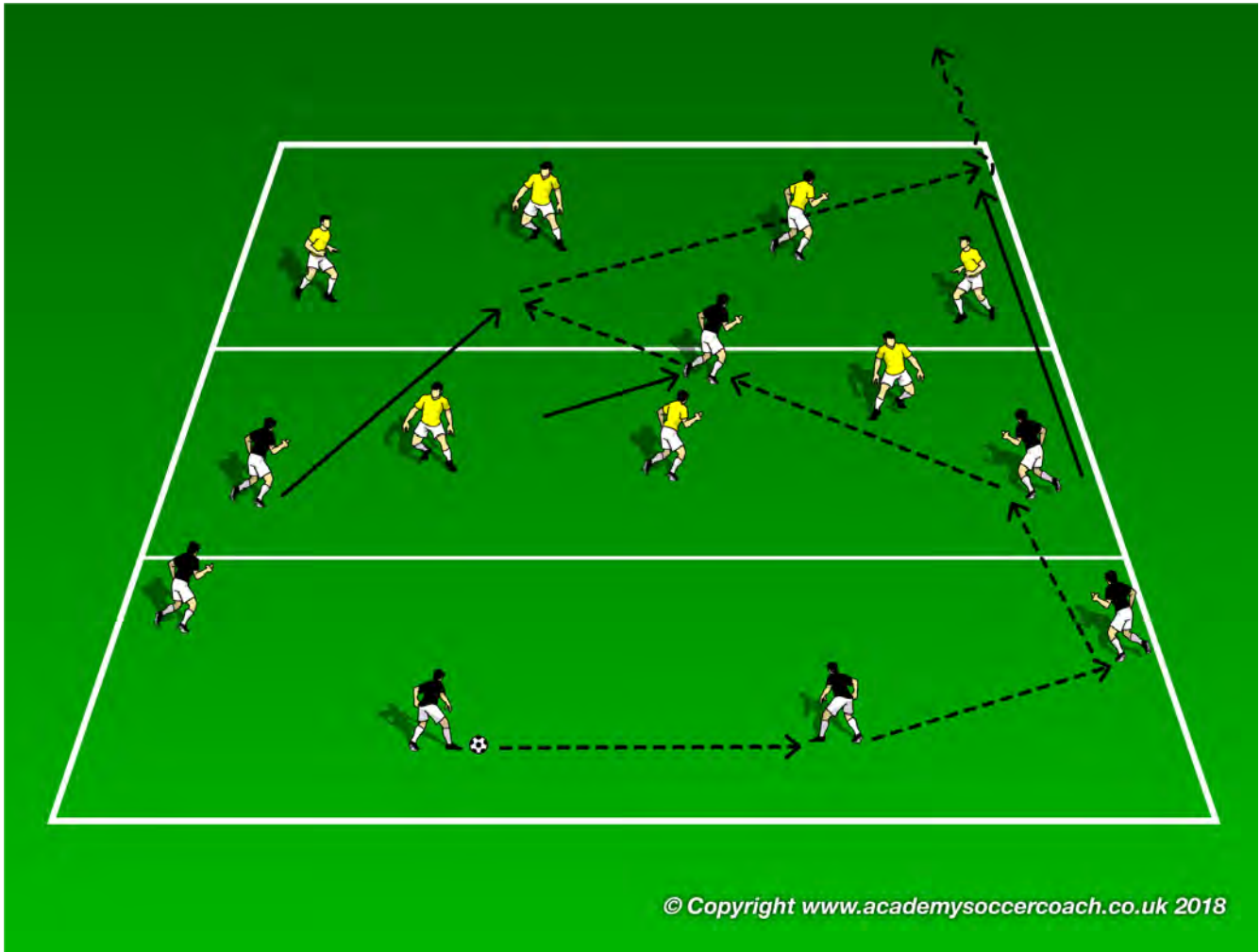
The goal for the possession team is to move the ball up and down the pitch, winning the duels and allowing all the players inside each area touching the ball.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, starting from the opposite outer area where the ball comes from.

This practice is designed to coach the possession phase of the 1-4-2-3-1 for midfielders and advanced players (2-3)

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, win individual duels.

## 7 v 7 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 7 v 7 duel is played inside the marked space. 4 defenders for each team are placed inside the outer areas; a 3 v 3 duel is played in the center zone.

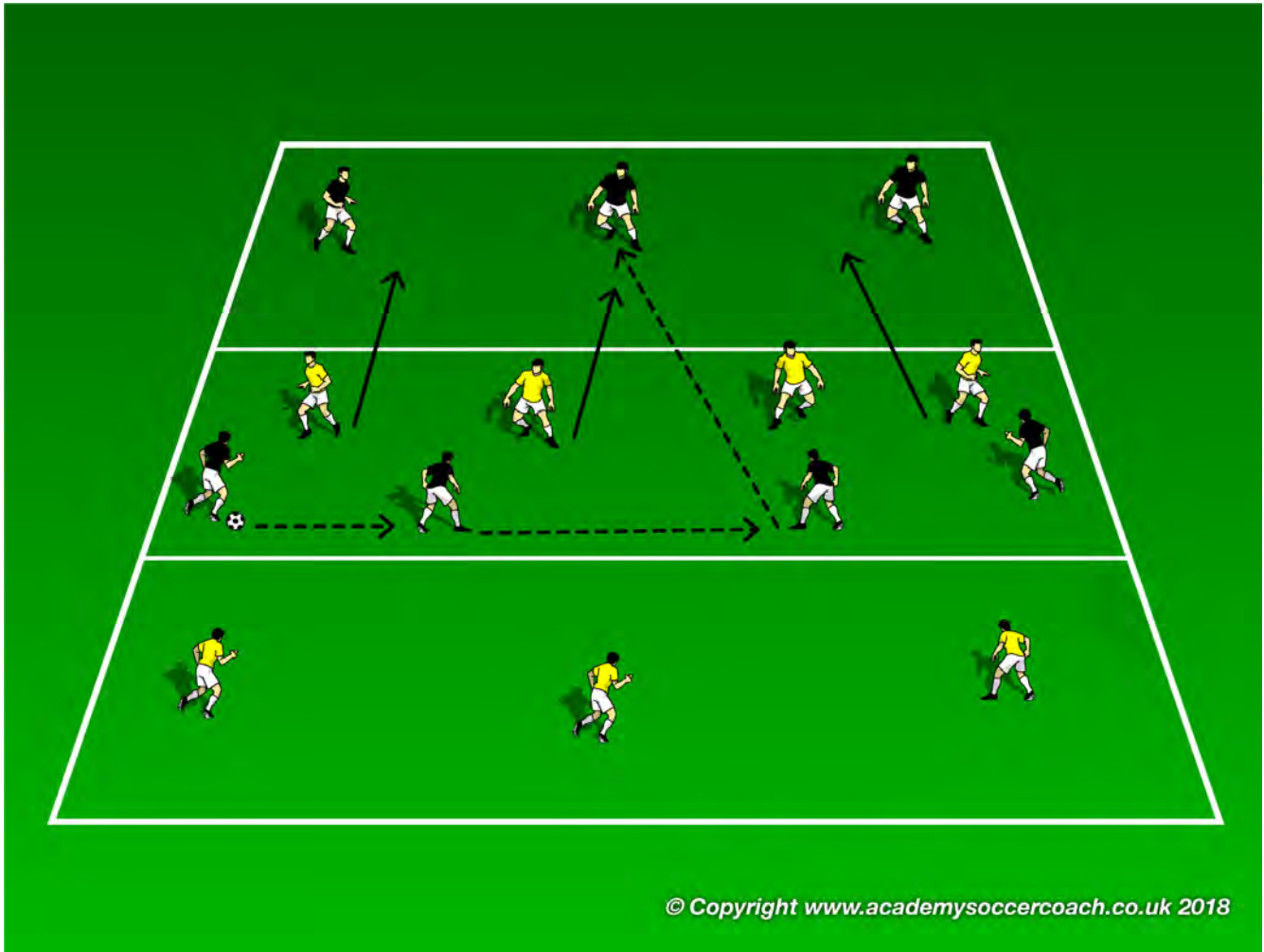
The goal for the possession team is to move the ball up to the middle zone from the outer area, where all the players must have touched the ball within 5", and then to attack the third area, trying to dribble the ball over the end line, playing outnumbered 3 v 4.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, starting from the back, wherever the ball is recovered.

This practice is designed to coach the possession phase of the 1-4-3-3 for defenders and midfielders (4-3)

**Eye on:** move the ball to move the opposition and to create space, overcome the first line of pressure.

## 7 v 7 Exercises (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 7 v 7 duel is played inside the marked space. 3 midfielders for each team are placed inside the outer areas; a 4 v 4 duel is played inside the center zone.

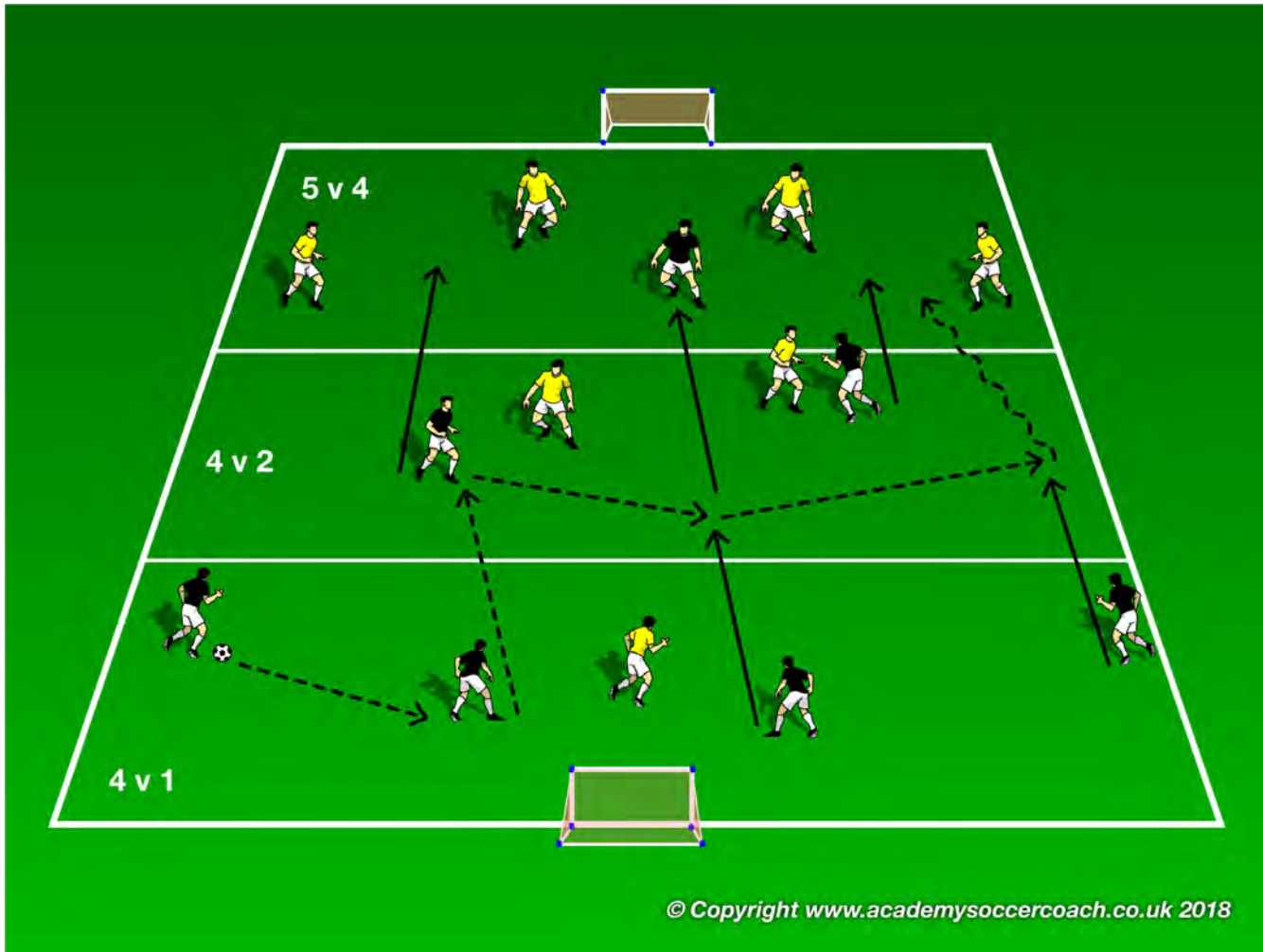
The goal for the possession team is to move the ball from the middle zone to the outer area, if all the players must have touched the ball within 5" and then to keep the ball in a 3 v 3 duel, as 3 of the 4 players of the opposition team can run back to counter the possession team. When all the 3 possession players have touched the ball, they must pass back to start the sequence again.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, starting from the middle area, wherever the ball is recovered.

This practice is designed to coach the possession phase of the 1-4-3-3 for defenders and midfielders (4-4 and 3-3), under pressure and to coach the dropping back movements of the defenders, if their line is overcome.

**Eye on:** move the ball under pressure to create space, keep the possession to invite the opposition pressure.

## 7 v 7 Exercises (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 7 v 7 duel is played inside the marked space. 4 defenders and 1 forward for each team are placed inside the outer areas; a 2 v 2 duel is played in the center zone. Each team has a goal to attack and another one to defend on the deep borderlines of the structure.

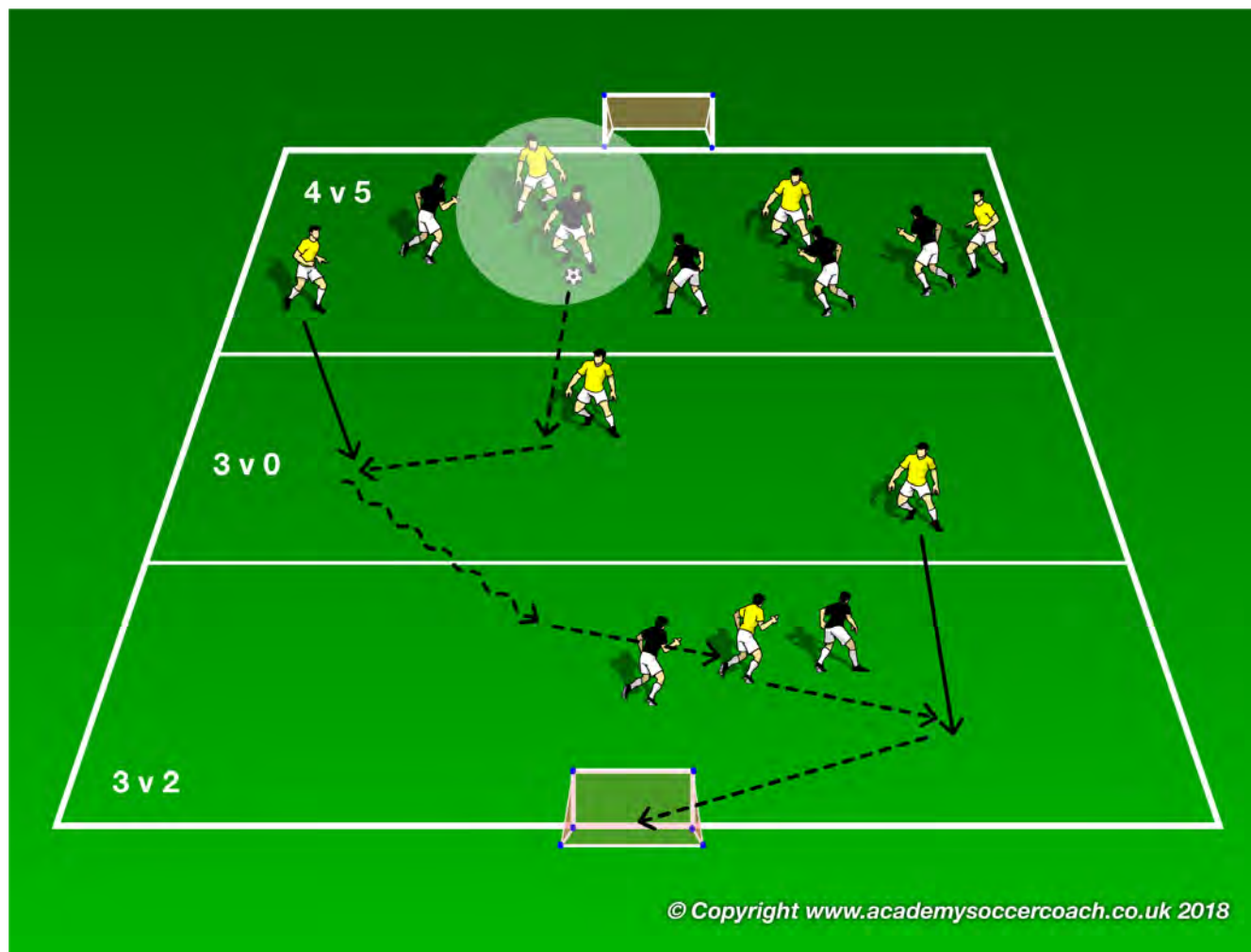
The goals for the possession team are to move the ball upward quickly from the back, to support the possession phase inside the middle area creating a 4 v 2 numerical advantage and to finish inside the third area creating numerical advantage again (5 v 4).

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way, starting from the middle area, wherever the ball is recovered. The sequence must be carried out from the starting situation.

This practice is designed to coach the possession phase of the 1-4-3-3, with the center midfielder as upper vertex (4-2-1), creating numerical advantage to play out.

**Eye on:** move the ball forward quickly; create numerical advantage to play out and to finish.

## 7 v 7 Exercises (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is a progression of the previous one. The goal is to coach the transition to attack phase of play.

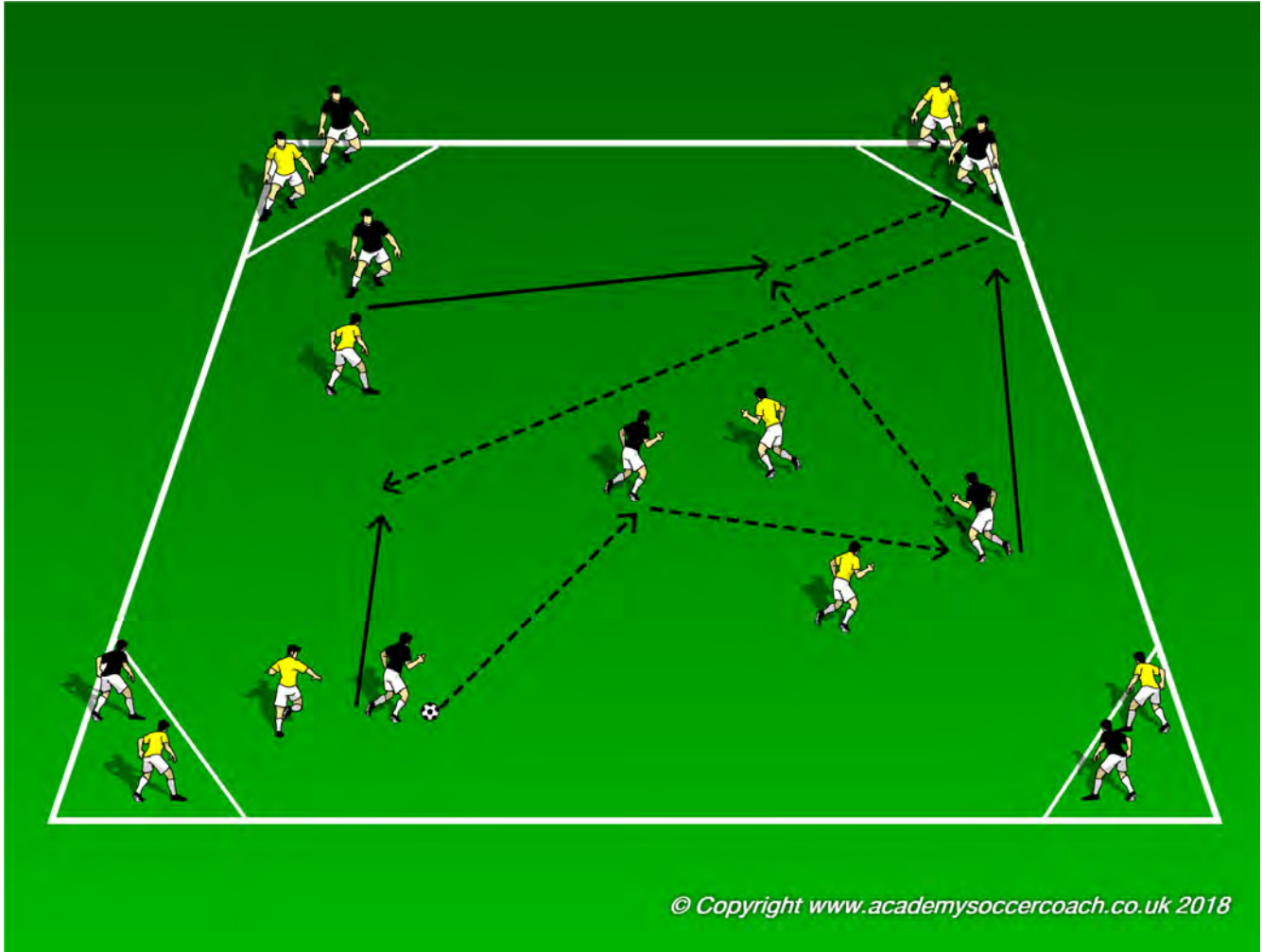
If the defenders win the possession while playing 4 v 5, they can counter-attack freely through the middle area (3 v 0), exploiting the 3 v 2 numerical advantage inside the third finishing area.

1 midfielder and 1 defender support the move; all the other players must provide space coverage at the back.

**Eye on:** pressure and space coverage, support the counter-attacks.



## 8 v 8 Exercises (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** an 8 v 8 duel is played inside a rectangular space that is organized as in the picture. A 4 v 4 is played in the middle and 1 v 1 duels inside corner spaces.

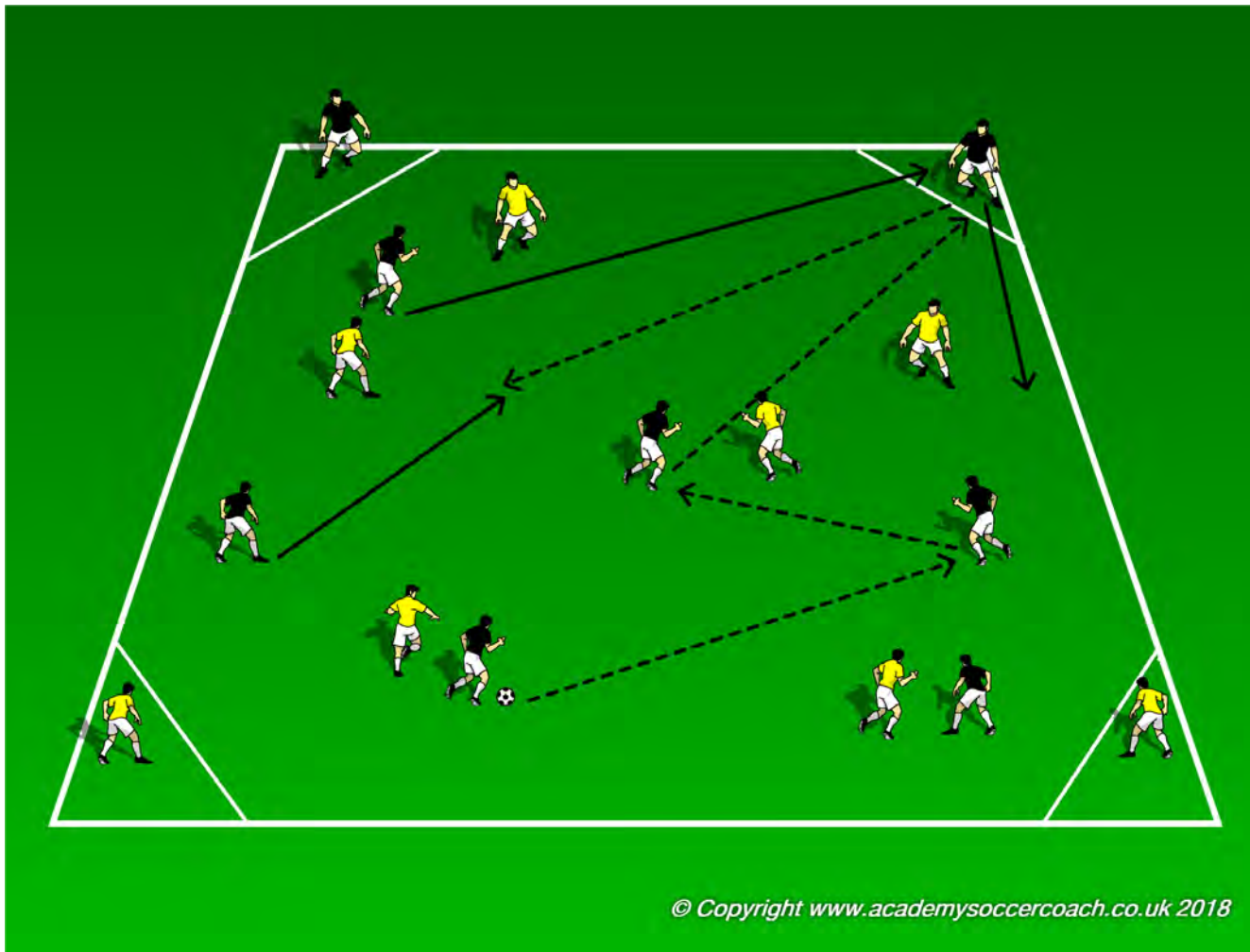
The goals for the possession team are to allow all the 4 players in the middle touching the ball (1 point), then to try to play a 3rd man passing combination with one of the players inside the corner spaces.

As this fifth player passes the ball back inside, he must exchange the positions with one of the middle teammates (1 more point). The 1 v 1 duels inside the corner spaces are fully active.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations; find the 3rd man with one touch pass.

## 8 v 8 Exercises (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is a variation of the previous one. A 6 v 6 is played in the middle and 2 players for each team are inside the corner spaces, as in the picture.

The goals for the possession team are to allow 5 players in the middle touching the ball (1 point), then to try to play a 3rd man passing combination with 1 of the 2 players inside the corner spaces.

As this fifth player passes the ball back inside, the sixth one, who didn't touch the ball, must exchange the positions with the teammate inside the corner before (1 more point).

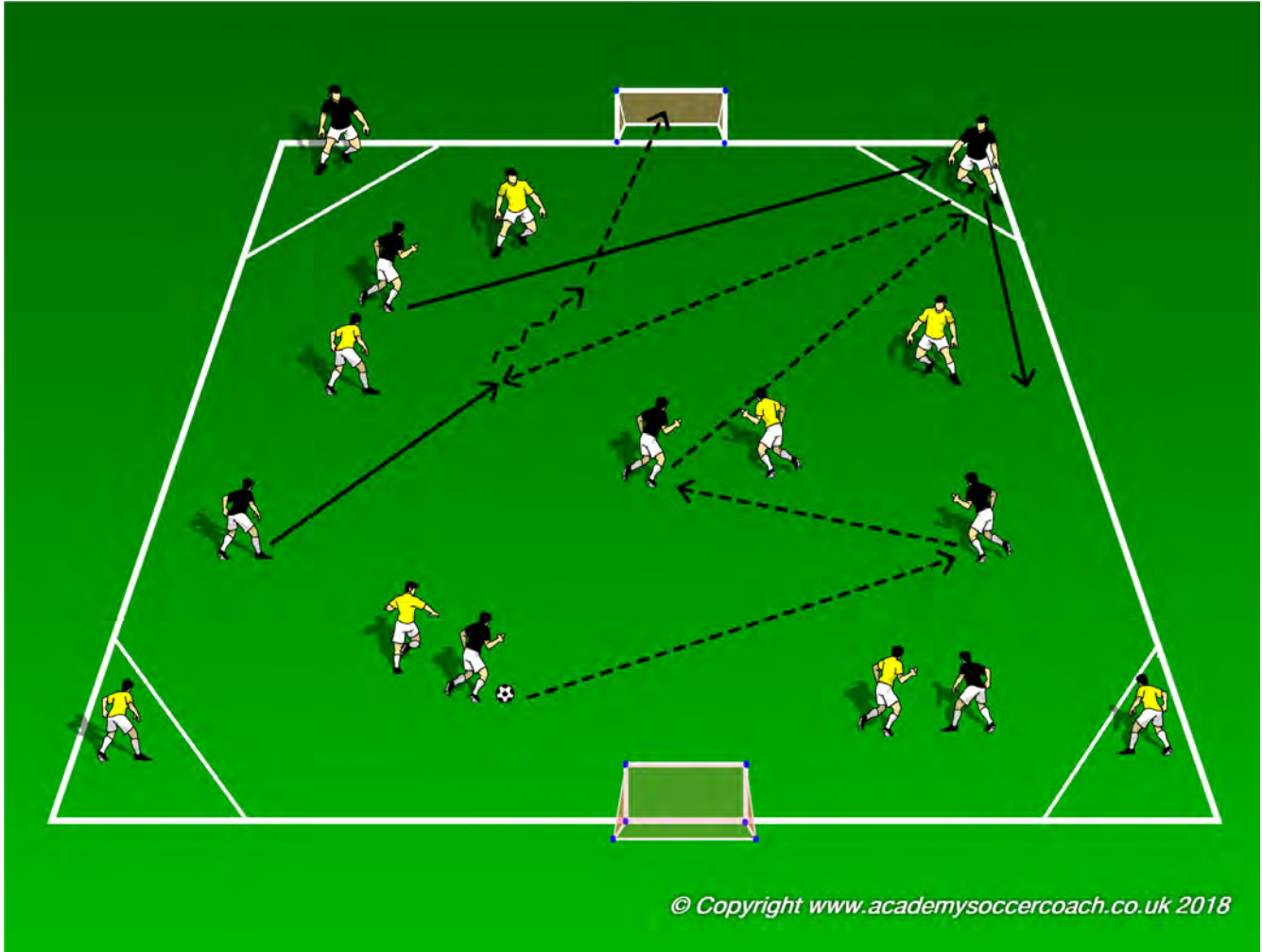
Each team must play toward 2 corners as well as it has 2 corners to defend.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way toward the opposite side.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, keep the possession outnumbered (5 v 6) as 1 player doesn't have to touch the ball, find the 3rd man with one touch pass.



## 8 v 8 Exercises (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is a progression of the previous one. A 6 v 6 duel is played in the middle and 2 players for each team are inside the corner spaces, as in the picture. Each team has now a goal to attack and a goal to defend.

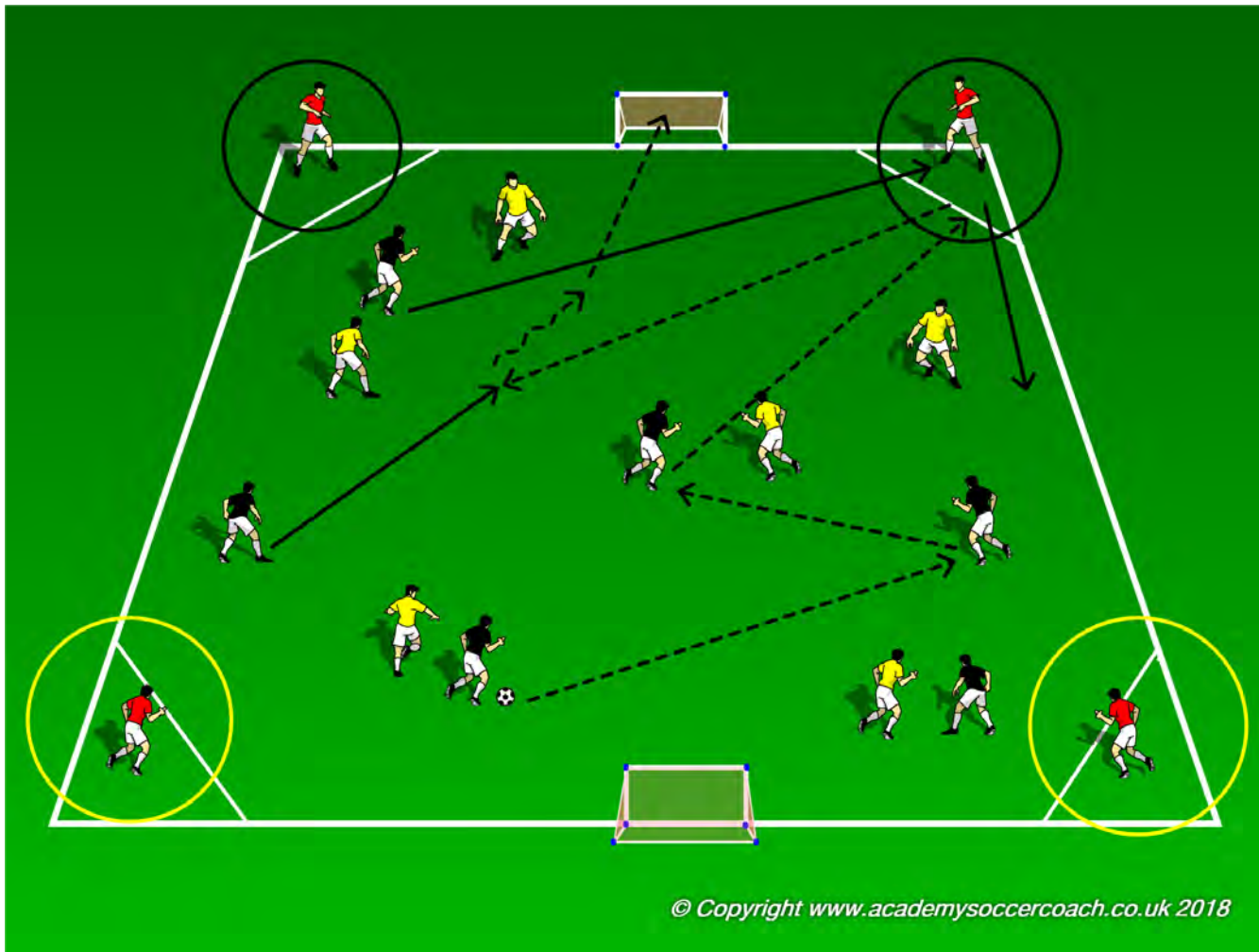
The goals for the possession team are to allow 5 players in the middle touching the ball (1 point), then to try to play a 3rd man passing combination with 1 of the 2 players inside the corner spaces and to finish scoring in the mini-goal.

As this fifth player passes the ball back inside, the sixth one who didn't touch the ball, must exchange the positions with the teammate inside the corner before (1 more point). The finishing phase is free for all the other players.

If the defenders win the ball, they must play the same way toward the opposite side.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, keep the possession and finish outnumbered (5 v 6) as one player doesn't have to touch the ball, find the 3rd man with one touch pass.

## 8 v 8 Exercises (4)



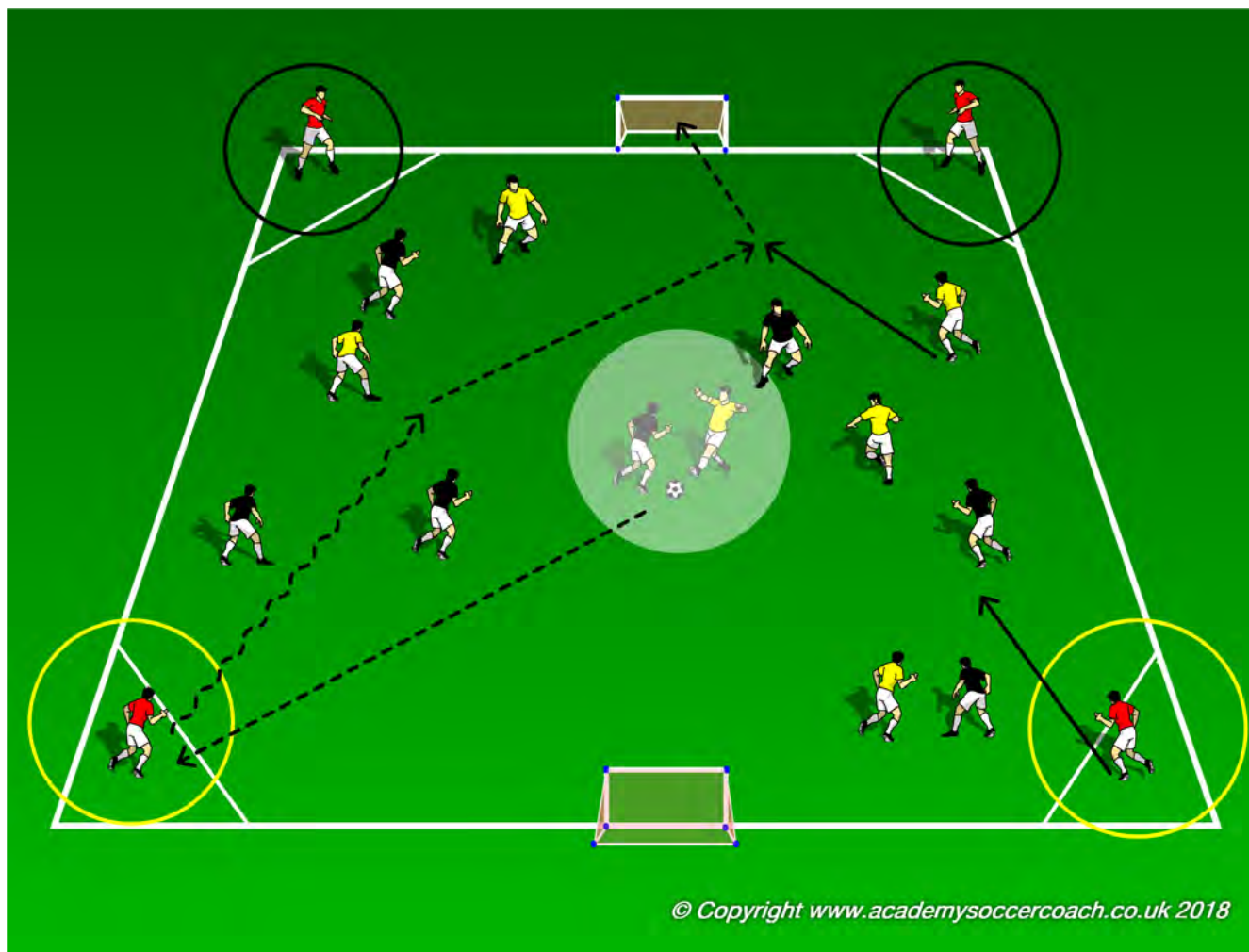
**Set-up and Sequence:** a 6 v 6 duel is played in the middle and 4 neutral players are placed inside the corner spaces, as in the picture. Each team has again a goal to attack and a goal to defend. The goals for the attacking team are to allow 5 players in the middle touching the ball (1 point), using all the 4 neutral players to keep the possession, to try to play a 3rd man passing combination with 1 of the 2 players inside the corner spaces and to finish scoring in the mini-goal to be attacked (in this situation the nearest neutral players to goal must support the forwards; the other 2 become defenders).

As the fifth player passes the ball back inside, the sixth one who didn't touch the ball, must exchange the positions with 1 of the attacking neutral players inside the corner before (1 more point); they exchange the role too. The finishing phase is free for all the other players.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter-attack 6+2 neutral fix players v 6 toward the opposite side.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, keep the possession exploiting the numerical advantage during possession phase, finish after a wall passing combination and find the 3rd man with one touch pass.

## 8 v 8 Exercises (5)

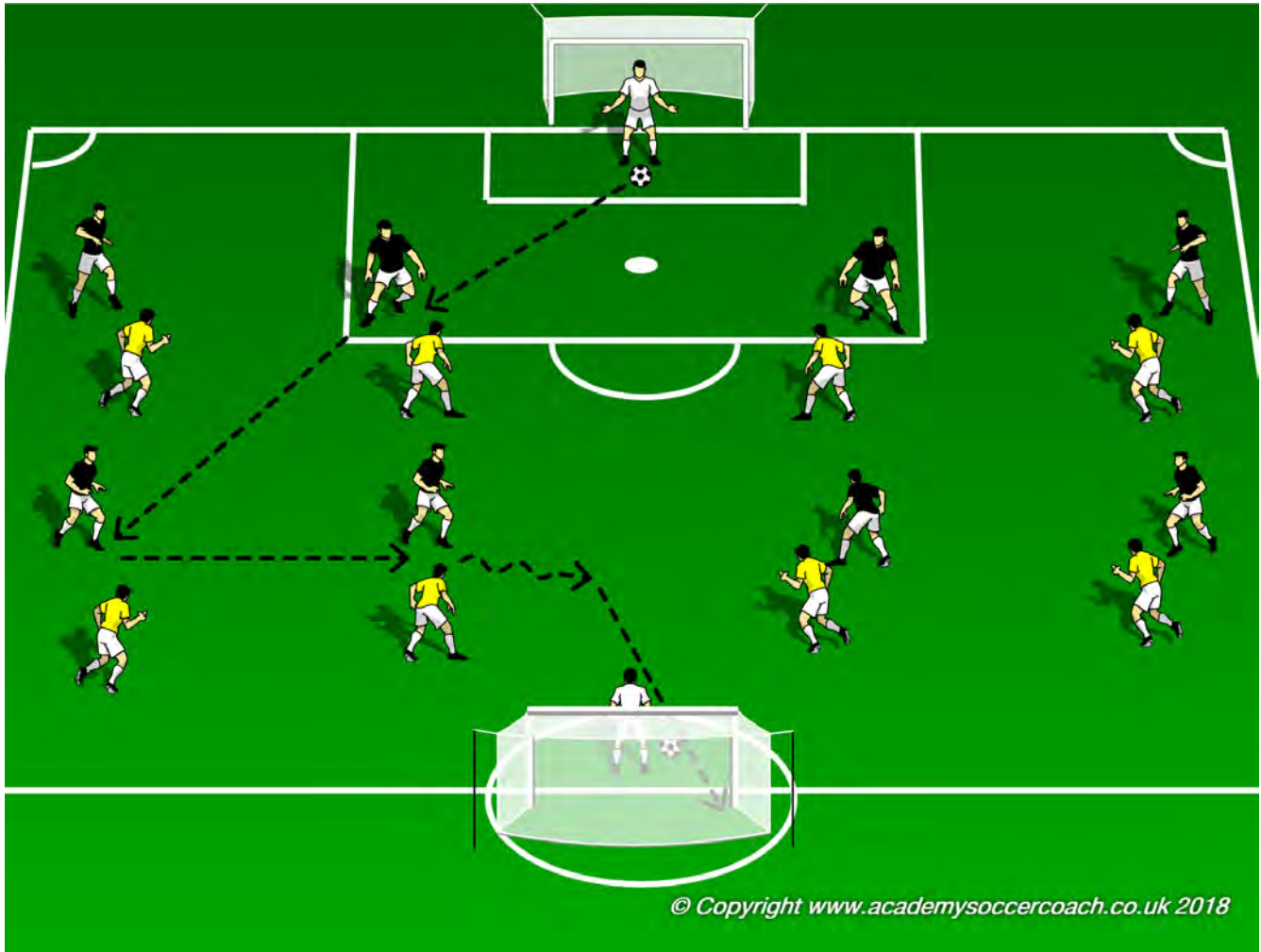


**Set-up and Sequence:** this is a progression of the previous exercise to coach the transitions to attack.

If the defenders win the ball, playing the same previous game, they can counter-attack only after a back pass to 1 of the supporting neutral players, who dribbles inside as he receives to attack 8 v 6; the second one runs inside too.

**Eye on:** quick passes combinations, pressure to win the ball, build up fast pattern of play to counter.

## 9 v 9 Exercises inside half pitch (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 9 v 9 (goalkeepers are included) is played inside a half of a field. The players are positioned on 2 alternated lines of 4 and both the goalkeepers have a ball to pass. The coach decides which goalkeeper plays the ball, as well as the goalkeeper can decide the team in possession.

The direction of play is now identified.

The attacking team must score overcoming 1 or 2 lines of pressure depending on which is the first group of players in possession; the nearest to the goalkeeper or the further one. If the defenders win the ball a free 8 v 8 field duel is played.

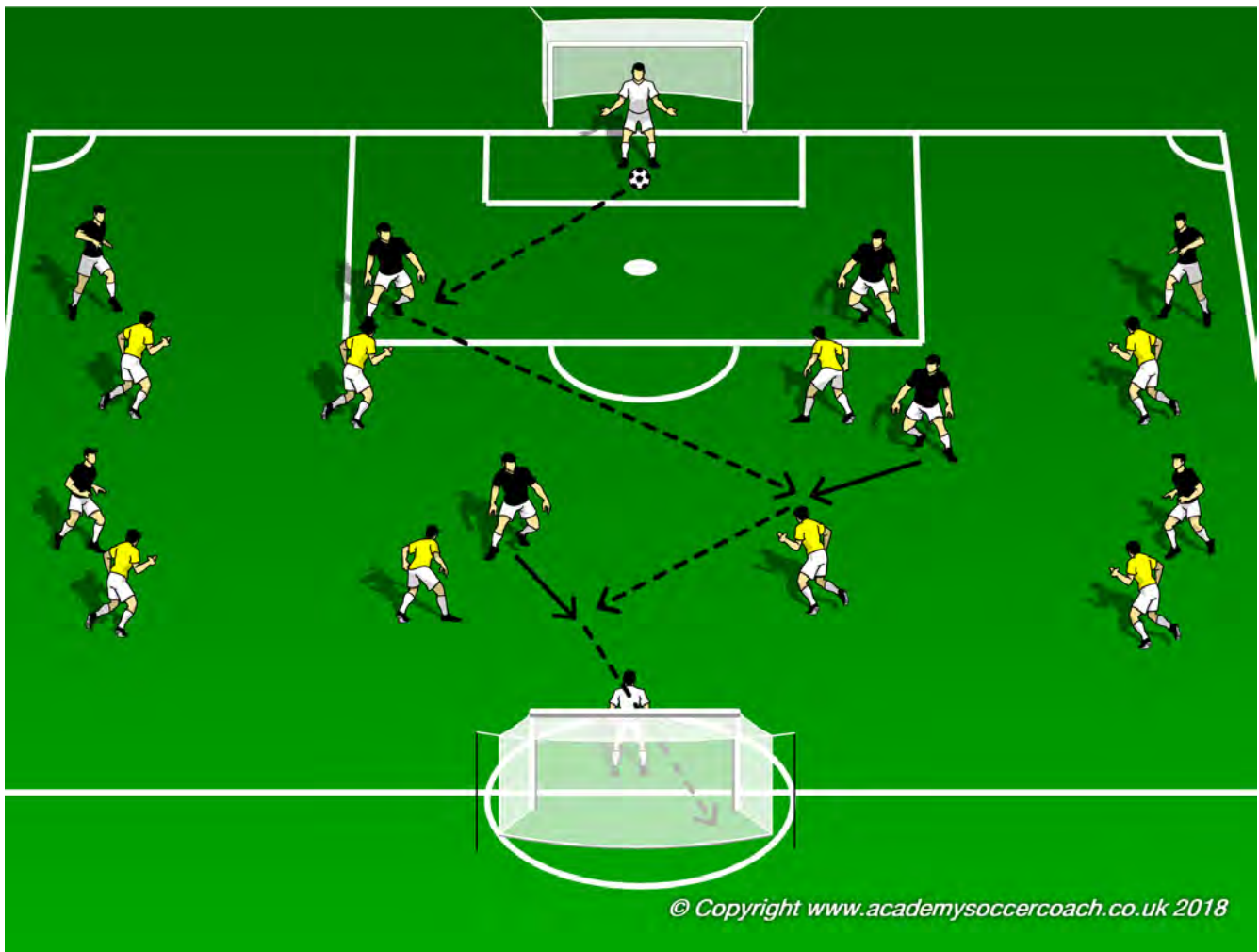
As the first sequence ends, the second goalkeeper plays the second ball in the same way.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, they must build up from the back, before being able to attack and finish.

**Eye on:** break through the opposition lines, play vertical passes as soon as possible, finish quickly.

## 9 v 9 Exercises inside half pitch (2)





**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is a variation of the previous one.

The goalkeeper of the attacking team has the possession and the goals are to break through the defending pressure lines of 4, before finishing.

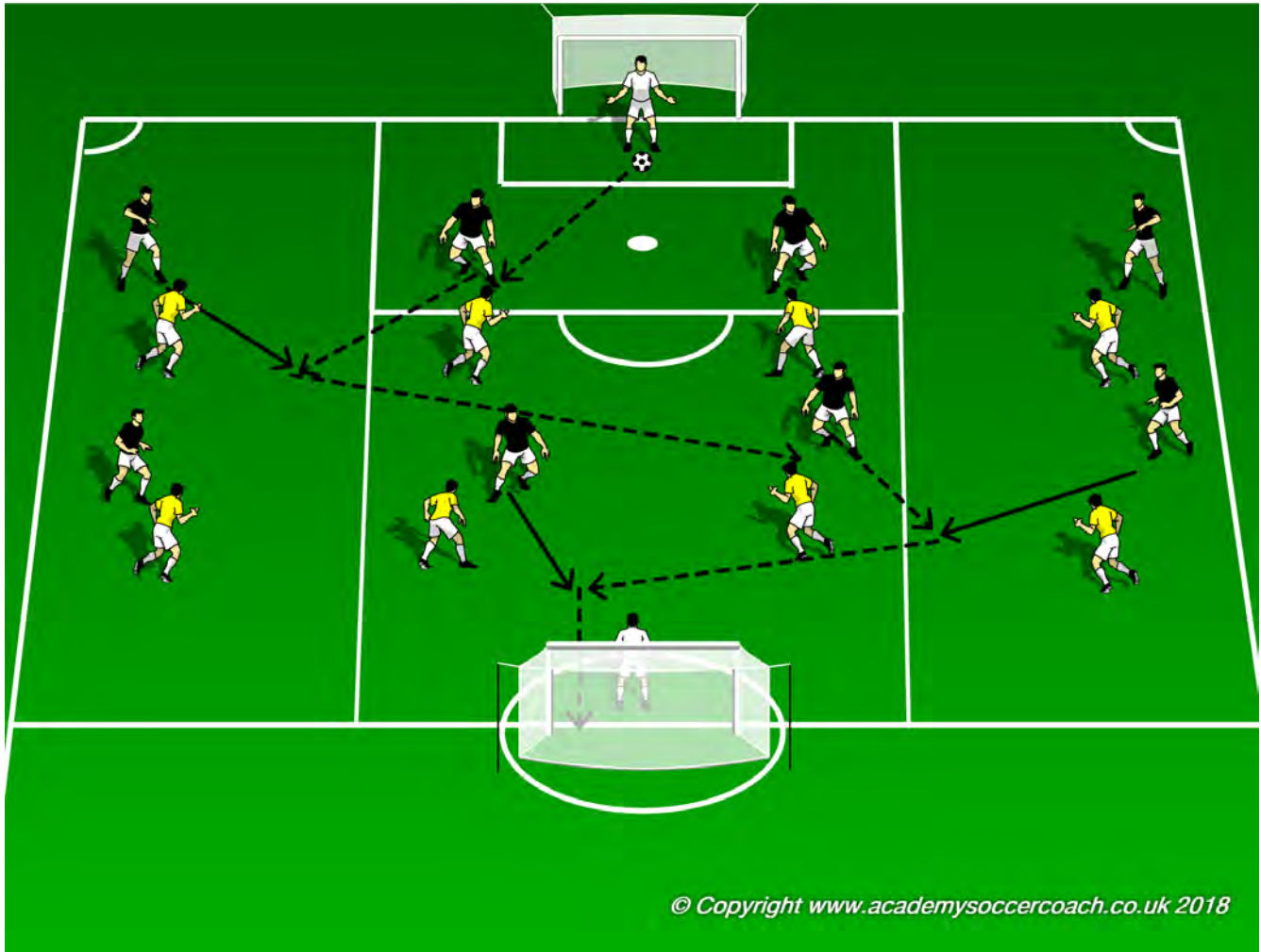
The defending team must always try to win the possession to counter-attack.

The role of the teams is inverted after a fixed limit of time.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, they must build up from the back before being able to attack and to finish.

**Eye on:** break through the opposition lines, counter-attack as quickly as possible.

### 9 v 9 Exercises inside half pitch (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 9 v 9 (goalkeepers are included) is played inside a half of a field. The half pitch is divided into 3 areas. 2 v 2 duels are played along the flanks and a 4 v 4 is played in the middle.

The goalkeeper of the attacking team has the possession and the goal is to break through the defending pressure lines before finishing. The build up phase must be directed toward one flank (on the right in the picture), the first pressure line must be overcome through the middle, changing the side toward the opposite flank (on the left) before finishing.

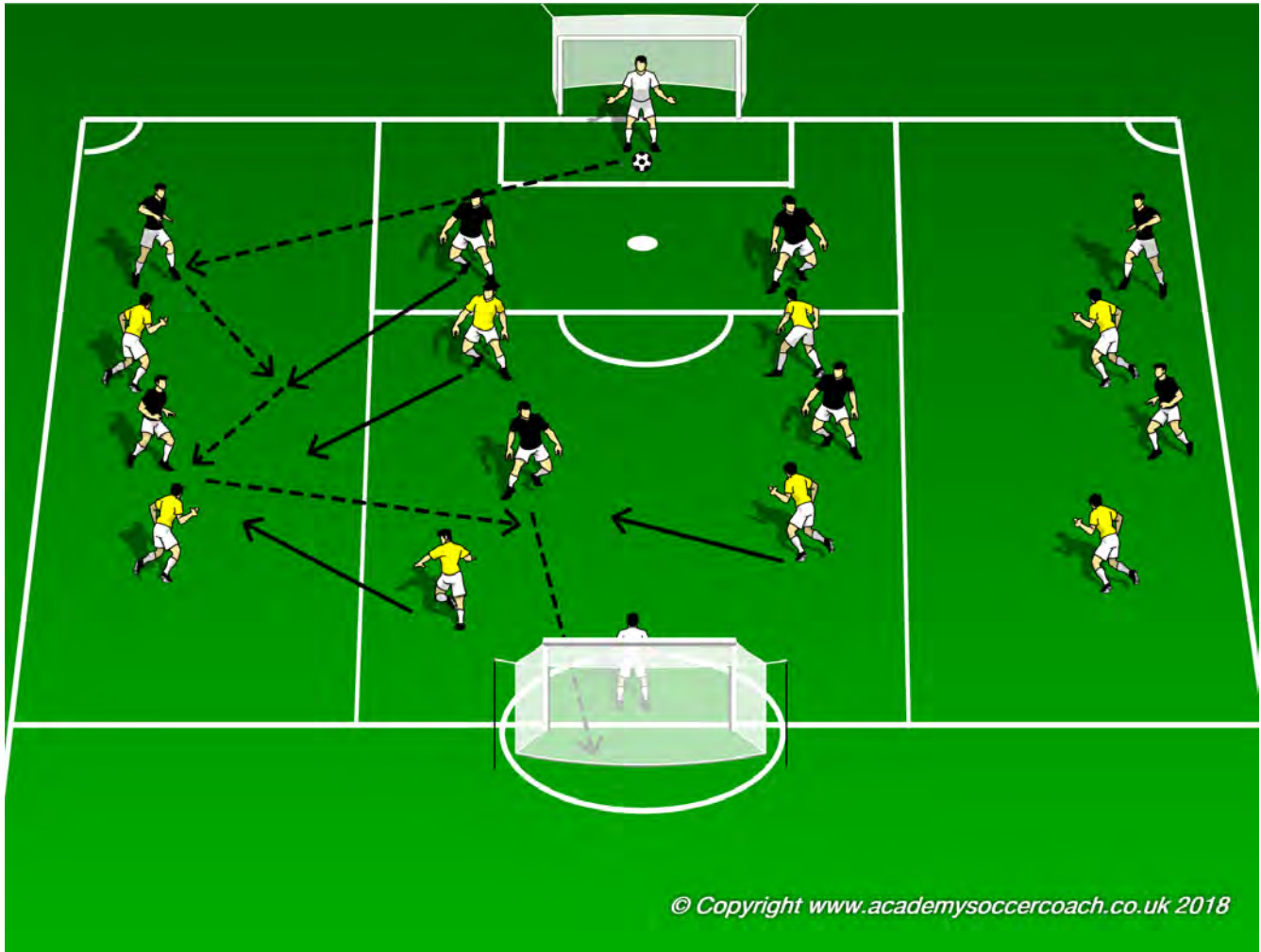
The defending team must always try to win the possession to counter-attack.

The role of the teams is inverted after a fixed limit of time.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, they must build up from the back and finish, as the attacking team must do.

**Eye on:** win the duels with equal number of players, break through the opposition lines, change the side with the fewer number of touches possible, and counter-attack as quickly as possible.

## 9 v 9 Exercises inside half pitch (4)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is a variation of the previous exercise.

The goalkeeper of the attacking team has the possession and he must start the build up phase on one flank (on the right in the picture). The defending team must be able to overload the flank (4 v 3 in the picture) to win the ball back and to counter-attack.

The attacking team must be able to play out even if outnumbered and to finish inside the center area. If the direction of play must be switched, the build up phase must be started again from the goalkeeper.

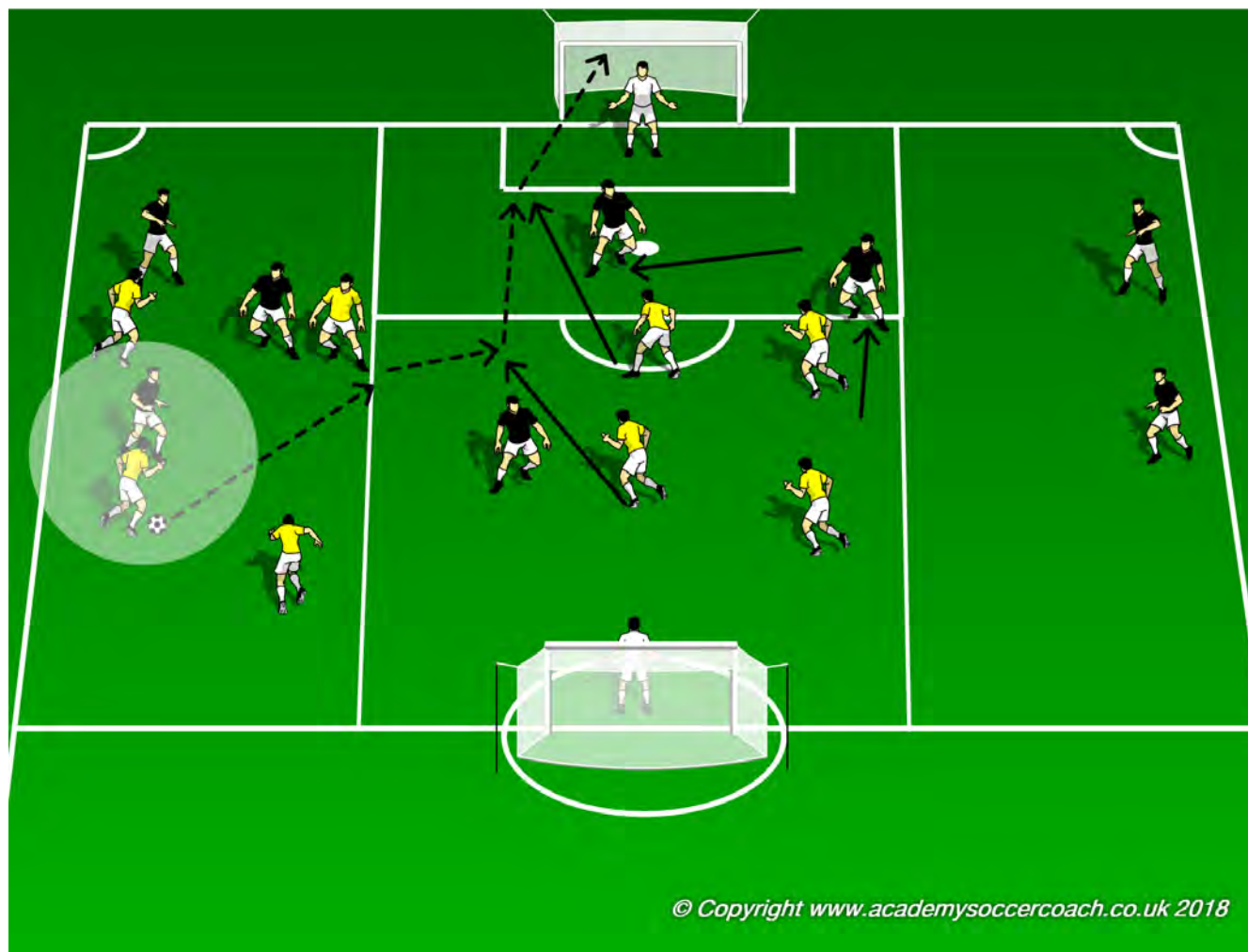
The role of the teams is inverted after a fix limit of time.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, they must build up from the back and the opposition must overload the flank to prevent the playing out phase of play.

**Eye on:** win the outnumbered duels to play out, break through the opposition pressure, and overload the ball area to win the ball back.



## 9 v 9 Exercises inside half pitch (5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** this practice is another variation of the previous exercise to coach the transitions to attack.

The game situation is the same of the previous exercise. If the defending team wins the possession, the center area must be overloaded (4 v 3) to counter-attack.

The outer players of the team now in possession must run inside to create numerical advantage to counter-attack.

**Variation:** the outer players of the team now in possession can overload the center area to create defending numerical advantage 5 v 4 to counter-press, to win the ball and to counter-attack.

**Eye on:** exploit the numerical advantage to finish quickly, save the goal space, when the team is outnumbered.