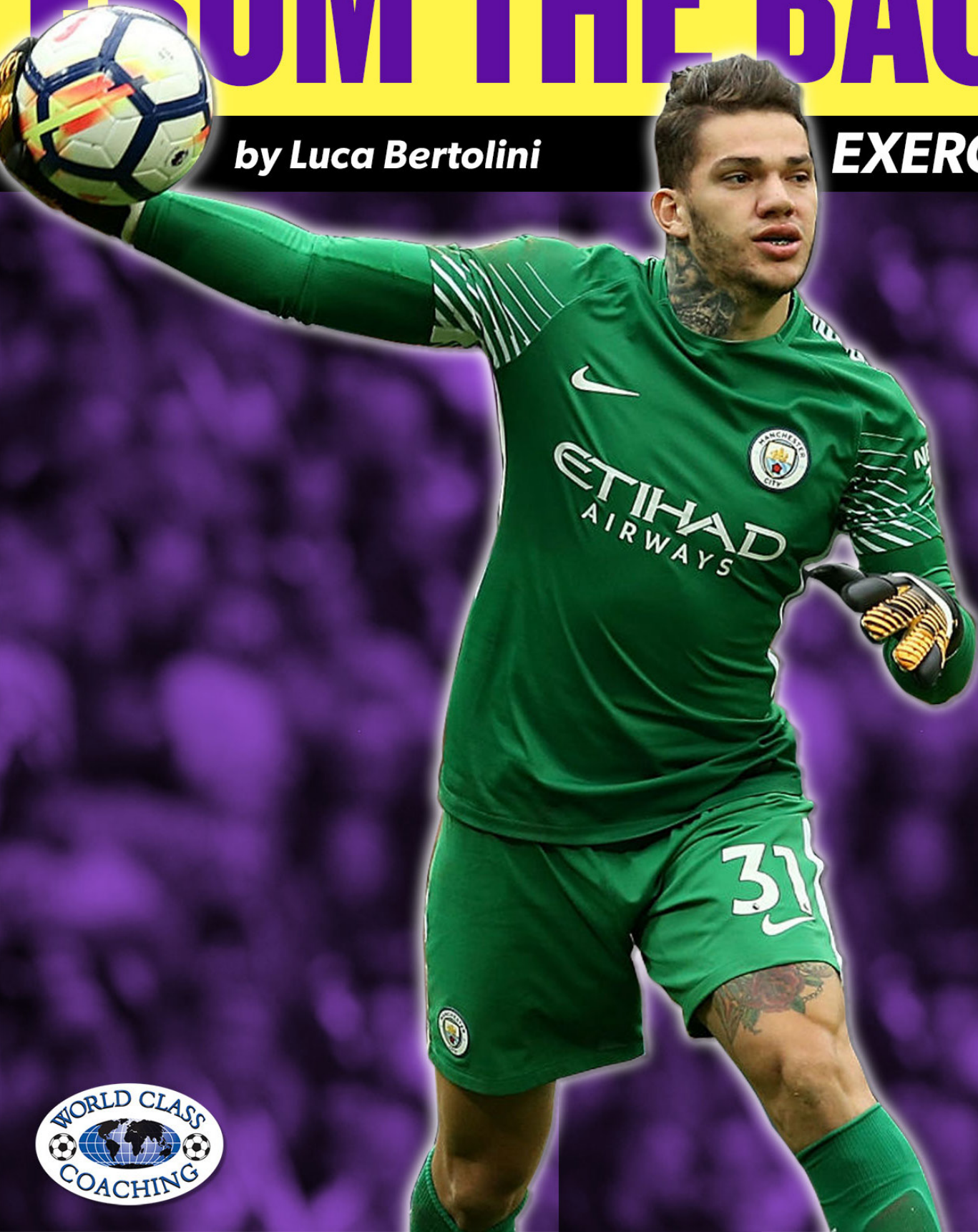


# BUILD UP FROM THE BACK

by Luca Bertolini

EXERCISES 2



# **Build Up From The Back**

## **Exercises 2**

*By*

*Luca Bertolini*

*Published by*

**WORLD CLASS COACHING**

First published October, 2018 by  
WORLD CLASS COACHING 12851 Flint Street Overland Park, KS 66213 (913) 402-0030

Copyright © WORLD CLASS COACHING 2018

All rights reserved. No parts of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

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



## Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Team requirements to build up and to play out from the back	9
Goalkeeper and center backs combinations	10
Goalkeeper, center backs and balance midfielder combinations	12
Goalkeeper, center backs, balance midfielder and fullbacks combinations	13
Goalkeeper, center backs, two midfielders and fullbacks combinations	15
Goalkeeper, center backs, three midfielders and fullbacks combinations	19
Specific small-sided games	23
Goalkeeper and center backs specific small-sided games	24
Goalkeeper, center backs and balance midfielder specific small-sided game	26
Goalkeeper, center backs and full back specific small-sided game	28
Goalkeeper, center backs and full backs, two midfielders specific small-sided game	29
Goalkeeper, center backs and fullback and balance midfielder specific small-sided game	31
Fullback playing out specific small-sided games	33
Play out through the center (zonal duels)	35
Play out through the center (specific small-sided game)	41
Build up from the back switching the side (zonal duels)	42
Build up from the back with the 1-4-2-3-1	44
Build up from the back with the 1-4-3-3	49

## Introduction

"A lot of people said we won in Barcelona because of Messi; they are right. People say we won at Bayern Munich because they always win and they are right too. At City people had doubts that I would be able to win that way, even myself. But we did it. That is why I'm so happy."

"The idea of what we are going to do is so important. You have to give passes and passes; an extra pass helps you always be together. We run to regain the ball. Not run to run. No pressing just to press. We believe that if we regain the ball high, we are close to score a goal."

"We let them run, to try in the right moment to attack. Taking the decision in the right moment. That is the most difficult thing in football. What I want is to not lose the ball. Play simple. Do the simple things."

"We play well because we play easily and we play quickly because we play easily..."the ball must always moving"

"If you want to dribble to make a 1 v 1 or a feint, let's do it; but if not, move the ball, let's play together and move the opponents."

"I love attacking because is positive, it makes the players brave and it makes feeling them to have a leading role inside the match."

Guardiola applied an updated tiki-taka model from Barcelona to Bayern team, as possession was still the king, with the inverted wingers, allowing the fullbacks to provide the width.

A tinkered version of that Bayern blueprint lives on at City. The fullbacks are still vital but they sit a little deeper with Leroy Sané and Raheem Sterling instead providing width.

One of Guardiola's main principles of play has been to build up from the back through the goalkeeper, the center back and the center balance midfielder: Valdes, Pujol, Piquet, and Busquets at Barcelona, Neuer, Dante, Martinez, Kross-Thiago at Bayern; and nowadays with Ederson, Stones, Otamendi, Fernandinho at Manchester City.

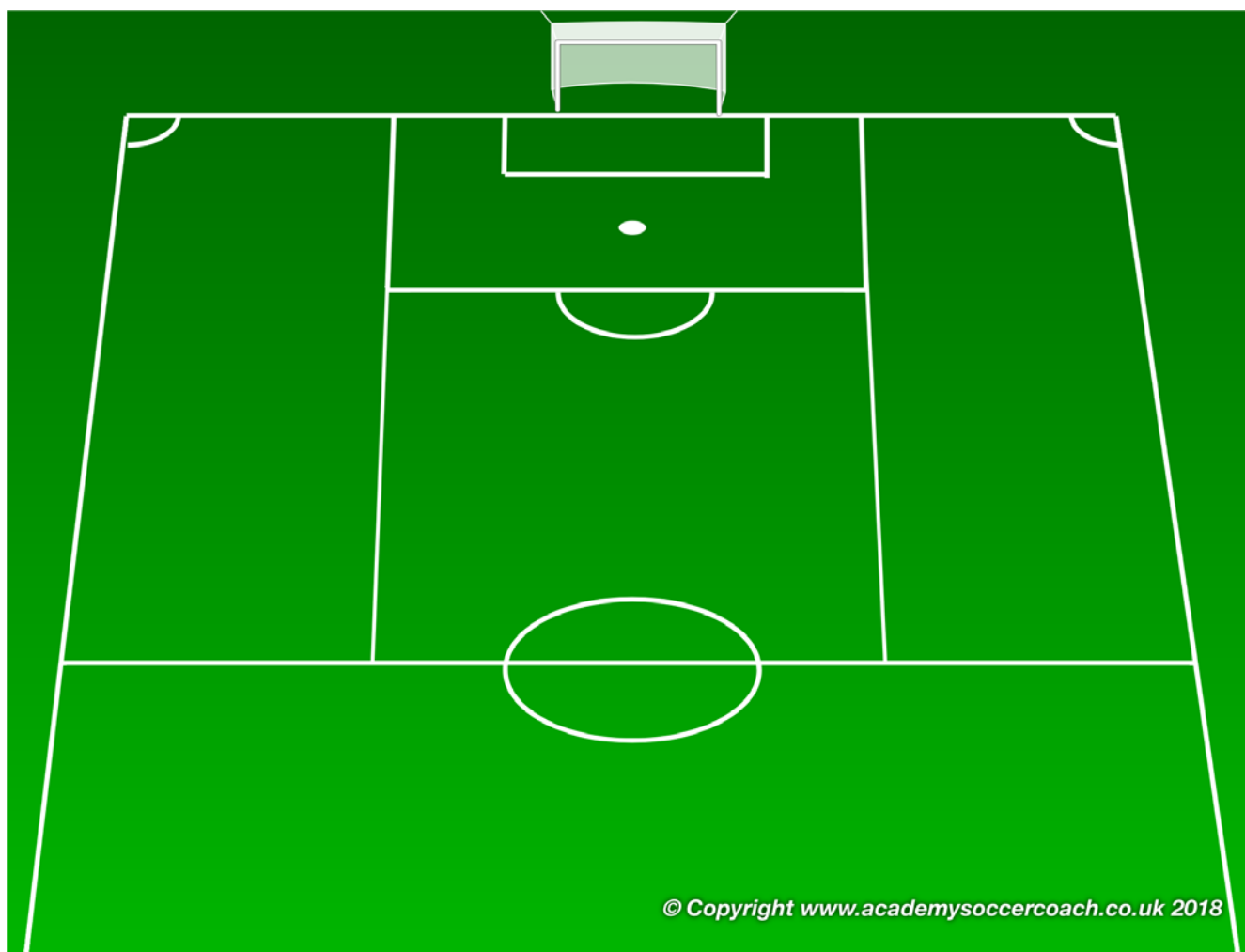
Another major feature is playing out from the back through the "fulcrum" of the team--first it was Xavi, Iniesta; then Thiago, Xabi Alonso; now with Kevin De Bruyne, Silva. These players remain the key points.

The reality of City's title won last season is not the dilution of Guardiola's ideas but in fact their maximal implementation; the build-up and the play out from the back phases were made efficient and safe.

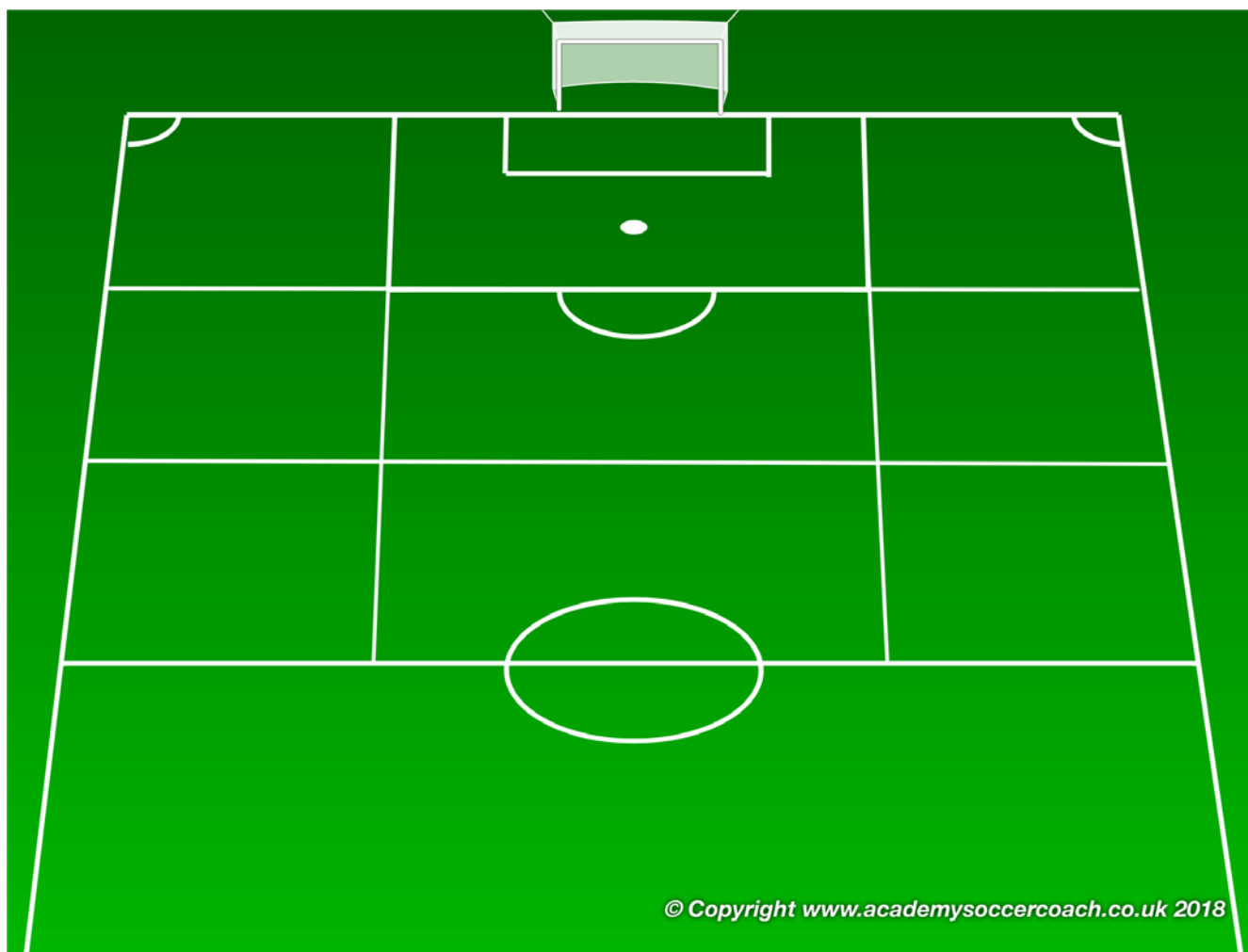
The technical exercises of the prior volume are to coach the players' technical skills, the individual tactics and the passing patterns of play to build up and to play out. In those exercises, we focus on breaking the first line of the opposition without active pressure using air-bodies. In this volume we discuss tactical exercises related to real game situations and specific small-sided games.

All the rondos, possession, and position games to work on the players' tactical skills to build up and play out against active pressure and to coach the reactions to the loss or the recovery of the ball which were included in the prior book, are now useful to coach the individual tactics inside these practices.

All the tactical exercises and the game situations are carried out inside a half or 3/4 of a half field. The half pitch is divided into three parts to locate the players starting positions and the placements while practicing.



All the specific small-sided games are played inside the area of the field where the situation may occur and the dimensions of the pitches are those commonly accepted for the Guardiola's style of positional play.



I relate the tactical exercises to build up from the back to the main systems of play which are coached nowadays: 1-4-2-3-1 and 1-4-3-3.

The defenders must face from 1 to 3 opponents and the midfielders might be in numerical advantage or outnumbered.

Some other tactical practices are dedicated to playing out from the back under strong ultra-offensive opposition pressure. These work on how to manage possession to find a weak area on the field, with and without long balls and how to exploit the space as it's created.

“Tactics determine where the ball should go, but technique determines whether it gets there,” said Johan Cruyff. This is so true when playing out from the back.

As all of us know, the building up phase has become crucial for soccer nowadays. Every coach and every team have their own ways, passing pattern they play, and synchronized movements to play out from the back.

The idea of moving the ball from the goalkeeper and then from the back line could seem to be the contrary of the main objective of soccer, which is to reach the opposite half pitch and to get as close as possible to the opponent's goal. It's easy to think this is a faster and simpler way to attack. For these reasons the most effective strategy to score could seem the long kicks and passes to step over many players, and to approach to the area of danger for the opponents.

But a long ball, like a volleyball of the attacking team, is no longer a ball in possession and it must be recovered.

Knowing this, is it better to play a complex move, building it up from the back or to simplify the sequences with a long kick and then attacking the second times of the ball? The first one seems to be the best solution as the last decade proved.

There is no team without pattern of play and sequences to start the move from the back. The ideas on how to carry them out have become equal to those about set pieces. A good start from the back of the move is the best way to be dangerous inside the opposition goal area.

The beginning of a move is now as important as the finishing phase, the first pass is worth as much as the shot on goal. This multiplies the steps and the movements involved, therefore the chances of a mistake for the team in possession; but it's the same for the defending team.

It also means that the team has to overcome the obstacles all over the field from time to time, without shortcuts; but the advantage is that all the players will arrive to the finishing stage of the move in a better position with a greater inertia and with ideal conditions to easily finish towards the opponent's goal.

As we have already stated, the ideas and the tactics to build up from the back are many and they develop time to time, depending on teams and opponents. Here are some teams' principles of play.

Team	Basic tactics
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Manchester City</b></p>	<p>To dribble and to circulate the ball inside the own penalty area and opposition half, accepting the risks of mistakes, to "invite" the opposition team to the press and to come out, to get up the field to regain the ball. As the opposition pressure is not perfect, a gap is supposed to be opened behind the first line, where Guardiola's offensive players have usually time to move to receive, so as to start the second phase of the attack facing an unorganized opposition.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Tottenham</b></p>	<p>Pochettino seems to prefer a three man defense, as his priority is to guarantee the numerical advantage at the beginning of the move, rather than at the finishing phase. Wrap the opposition pressure, send</p>



	the ball on the outside and overload the center.
<b>Napoli</b>	Sarri asked his players not to give up building from the back, even when Napoli suffered an ultra-offensive pressing, because he considered it a moment in which the useful inertia to speed up all the move is imprinted. For this reason Napoli built up keeping the positions tight among the involved players and the rhythm was much higher, than Manchester City, for instance.
<b>Chelsea</b>	Again Sarri, but with a different idea, as the move begins with a vertical pass to Jorginho, who exploits the space between the two center backs, who move wide to receive and then deliver the ball toward the two center ones. Basically, Sarri wants the second player who touches the ball after the goalkeeper as director; this way the center backs can start the move to progress on the pitch with simpler play.
<b>Barcelona</b>	Valverde has simplified the team structure on a classic 1-4-3-3. The balance player must call the opponents to mark him on, to free the center backs and the other midfielders. This way, the balance player is not a playmaker anymore, and the advanced midfielders must play out by dropping closer to the center backs and the fullbacks can run up the field.
<b>Real Madrid</b>	Lopetegui has kept Zidane's asymmetrical structure in the ball's exit phase, with the typical Kroos movement towards the left side to receive and having the vision of the whole field, with the ball on the strong foot to start the move. The advance of Marcelo and the countermovement of Asensio, who is available to receive ball between the lines, in the middle third, balance this mechanism.
<b>Liverpool</b>	Also a vertical and direct team like Klopp's, Liverpool builds up from the back. The goal is to extend the time to get on the full backs, thus allowing the midfielders to run forward, where the ball should arrive. The focus of the German coach remains to attack the second time of the ball, but the start of the moves is useful to postpone the long ball, adding men inside the opposition half.

## **Team requirements to build up and to play out from the back**

The main game principles of play to build up from the back are written in "bold" among all the others:

- **Play simply and be effective**
- **Play where you see to play simply**
- **Keep the ball to move the opposition and to avoid the pressure**
- **Circulate the ball to create space behind the opposition or to find a passing lane through the first pressure line**
- Think and play forward
- **Play passes with quality to make the possession safe**
- Receive the ball deliberately
- **Move cleverly to escape the marker or to find a space to receive**
- The third player is the most important
- Have an absolute will to score
- Search 1v1 situations
- Provoke one-twos
- **Organize the defense while playing in case of loss of possession**
- Press immediately after losing the ball
- Be attacker and defender
- Use surprise effects
- Take risks in the game
- Have fun and enjoy the game

It is important that each player is aware of his objectives (what is expected of him in his position) and how they have to be realized in the context of the:

- team as a whole
- the lines that make up the team
- the individuals who make up the lines

### **Mobility:**

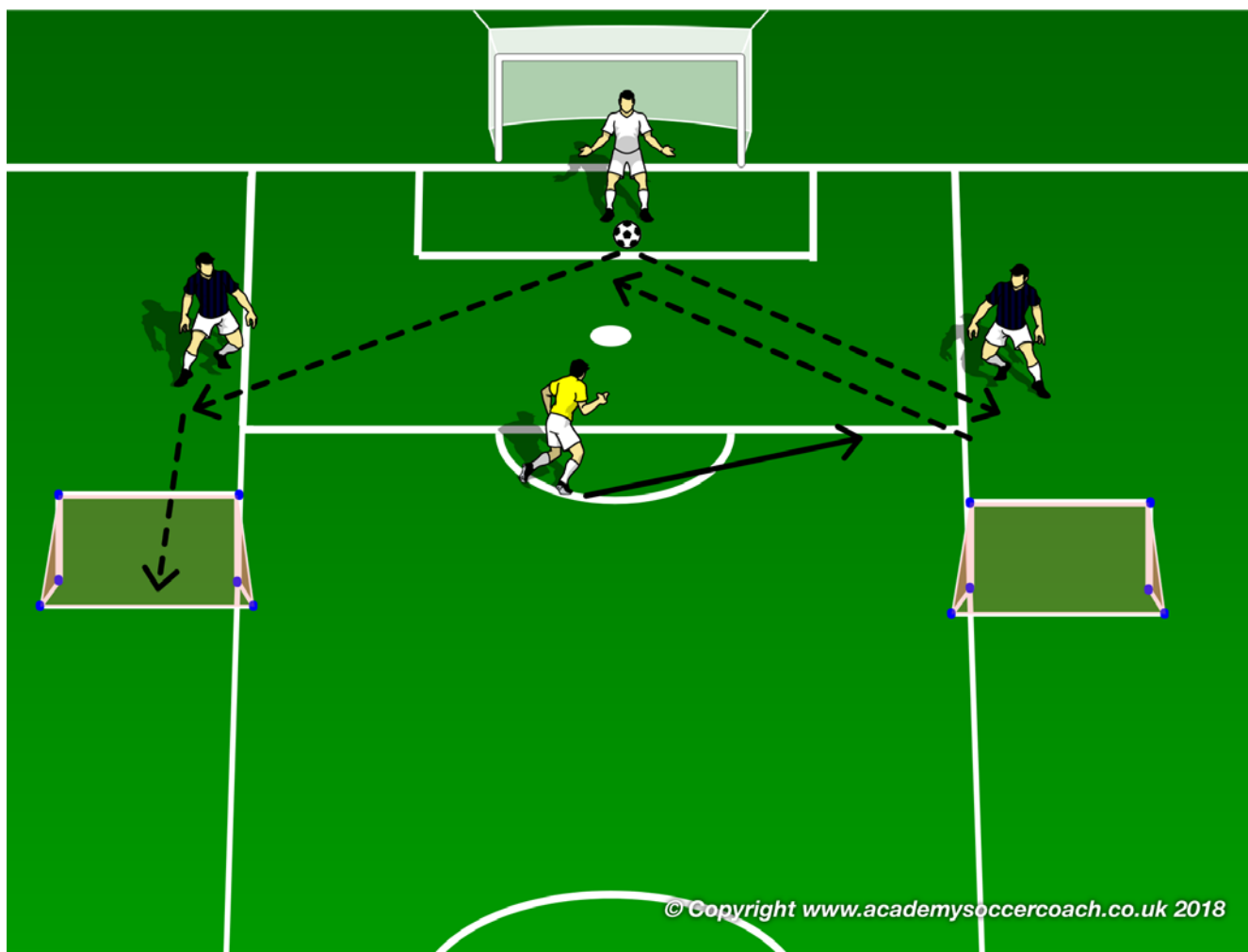
- **Mobility of players without the ball**
- **Constant support of the ball carrier (goalkeeper more than all the other involved teammates)**
- Triangular passing
- Playing between the lines to progress forward

### **Key points:**

- **Communication among the teammates**
- **Mutual understanding of teammates' placement and of body position**
- Creating Space
- **Timing and technique of running to receive with the right body shape**
- **Timing and technique of passing to play to the right player and in the right space**
- Acceleration
- Rhythm

## Goalkeeper and center backs combinations

### Exercise 1: 2 + gk v 1 (1)

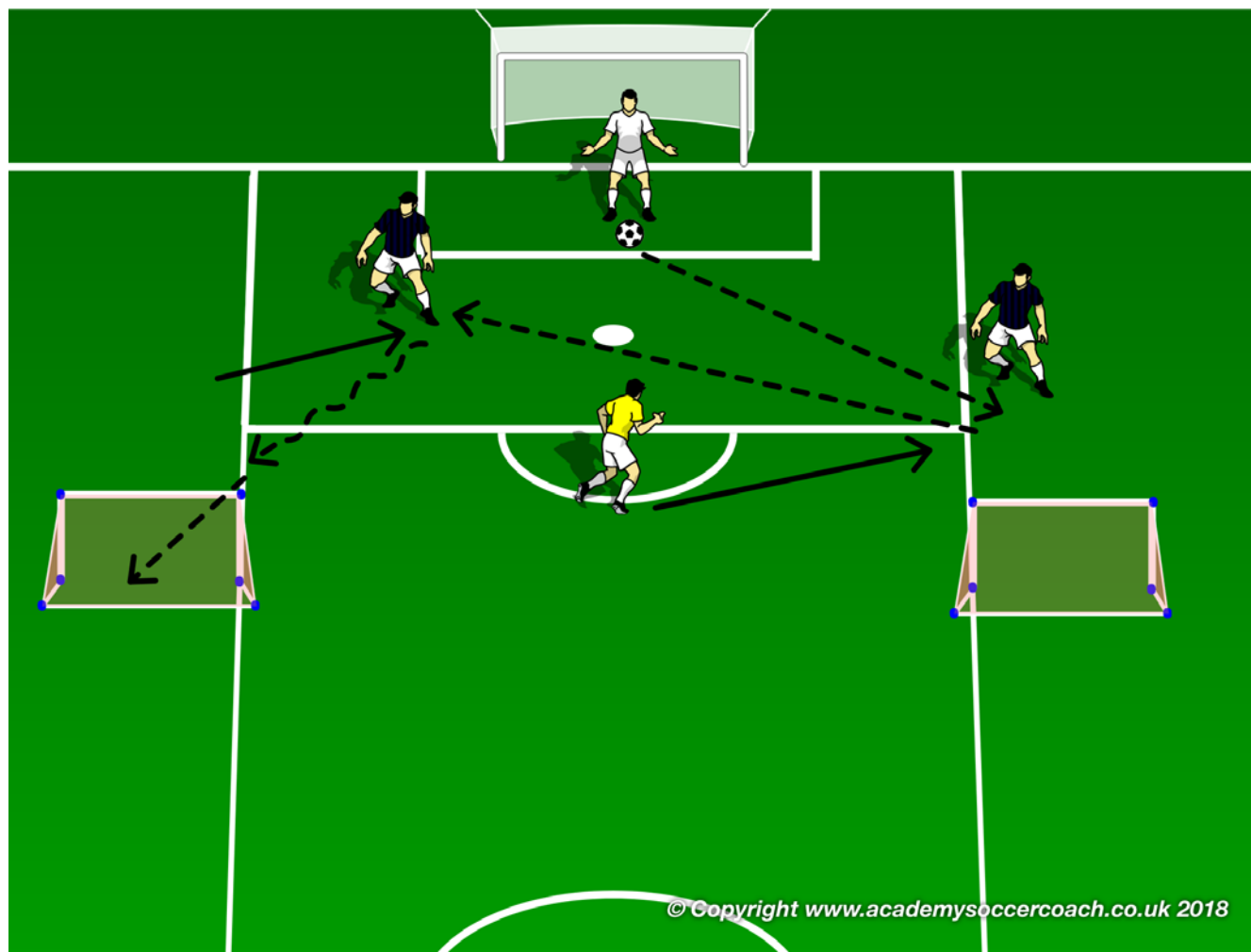


**Set-up and Sequence:** Place 1 goalkeeper and 2 center backs inside the penalty area against 1 opposition forward. The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play a 1-2 combination with the first center back, changing the side toward the second center back, to score in one of the mini goals that are placed just out of the penalty area. The second receiver of the first combination must shoot if the sequence must go on.

The opposition forward must try to force the direction of play out of the penalty area, when the center backs are in possession. If he wins the ball, he can finish in the main goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape a triangle to play diagonal passes with the goalkeeper.

## Exercise 2: 2 + gk v 1 (2)



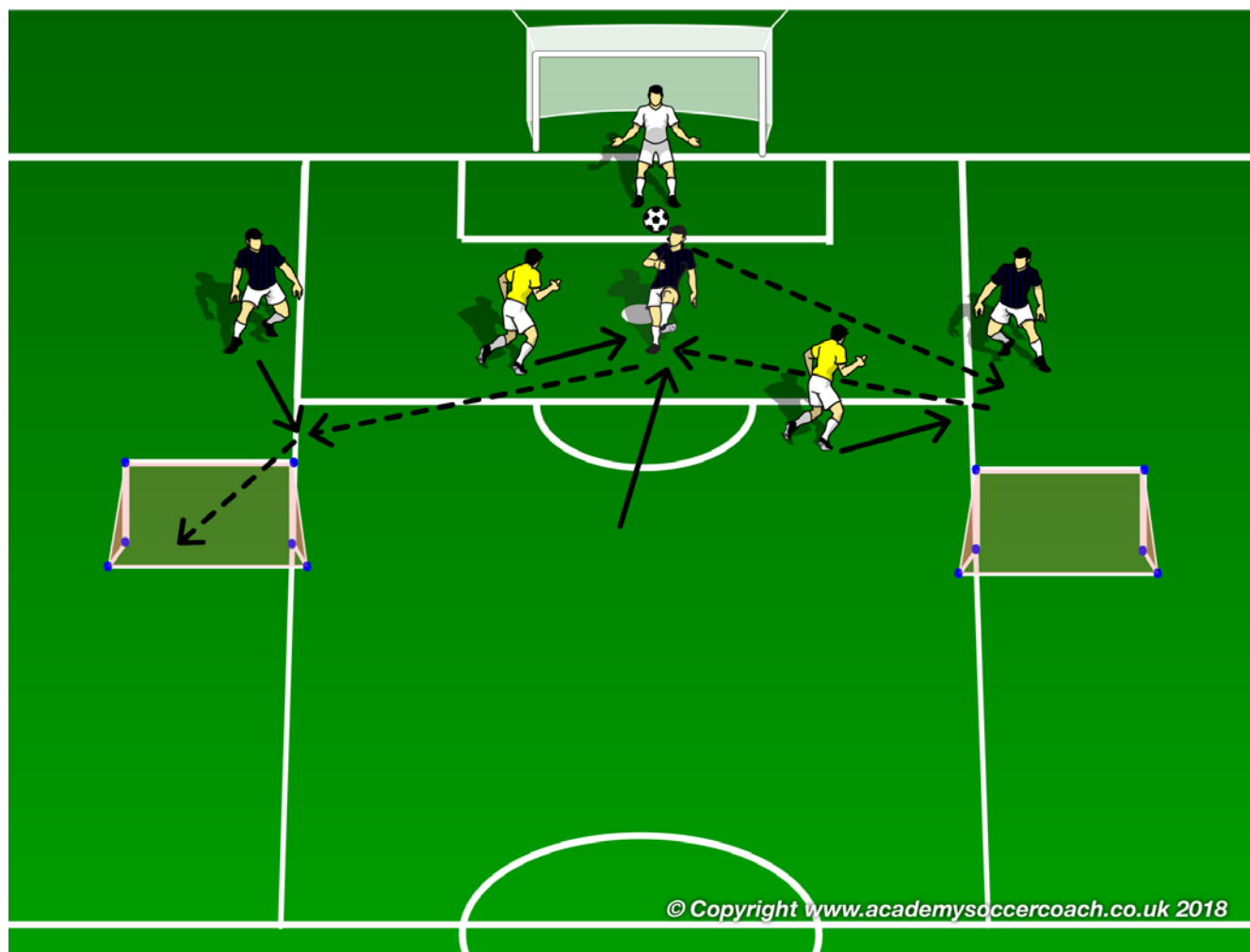
**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper and 2 center backs are placed inside a penalty area against 1 opposition forward. The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center back, changing the side, with one touch pass combination with the first center back to score in one of the mini goals, that are placed just out of the penalty area.

The opposition forward must try to force the direction of play out of the penalty area when the center backs are in possession. If he wins the ball, he can finish in the main goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape a triangle to play one touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side.

## Goalkeeper, center backs and balance midfielder combinations

### Exercise 3: 3 + gk v 2



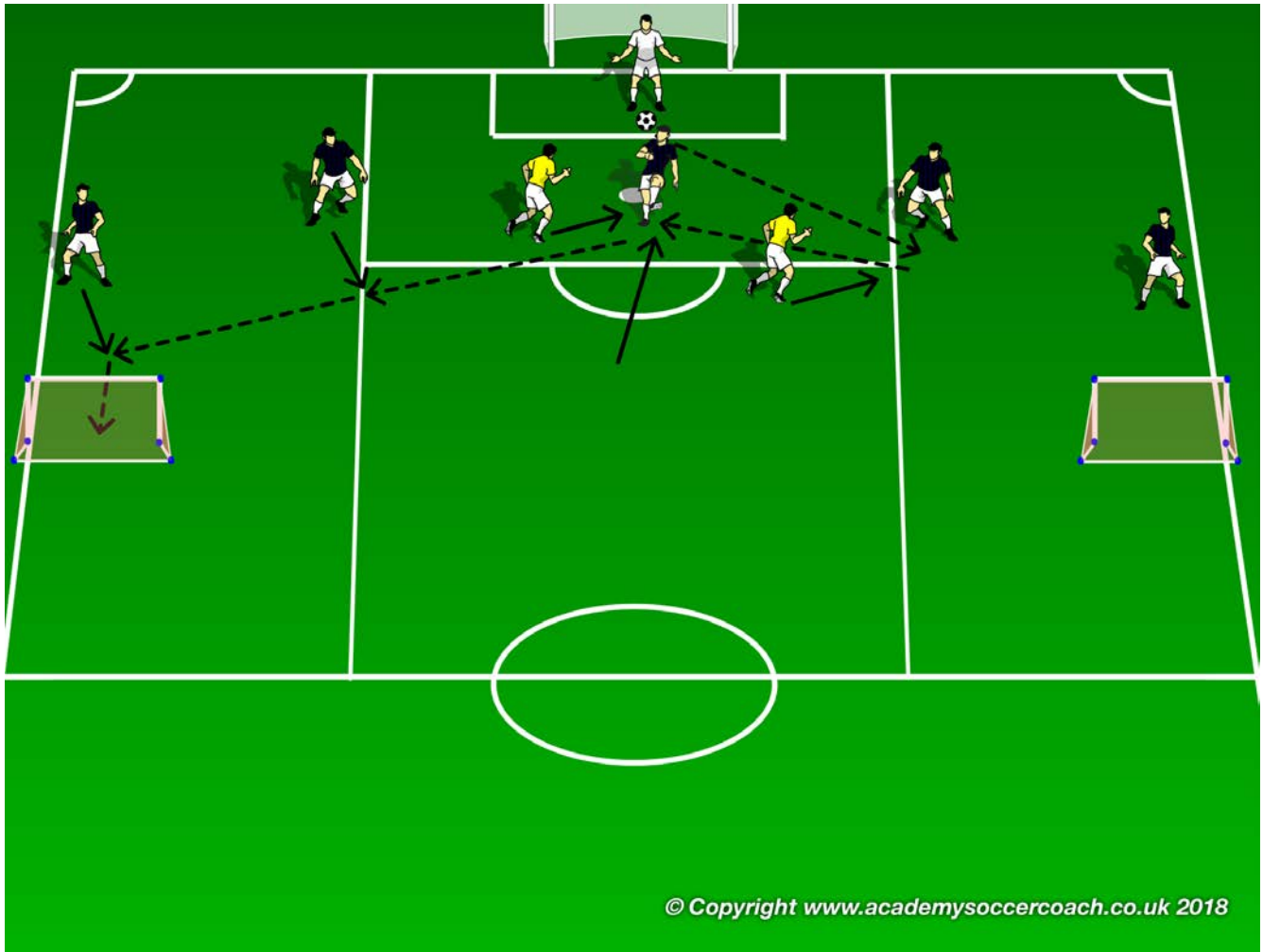
**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area against 2 opposition forwards. The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center backs through the midfielder, changing the side, with one touch pass to score in one of the mini goals that are placed just out of the penalty area.

The opposition forwards must try to force the direction of play out of the penalty area, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder when in possession to face the goal, to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side.

## Goalkeeper, center backs, balance midfielder and fullbacks combinations

### Exercise 4: 5 + gk v 2

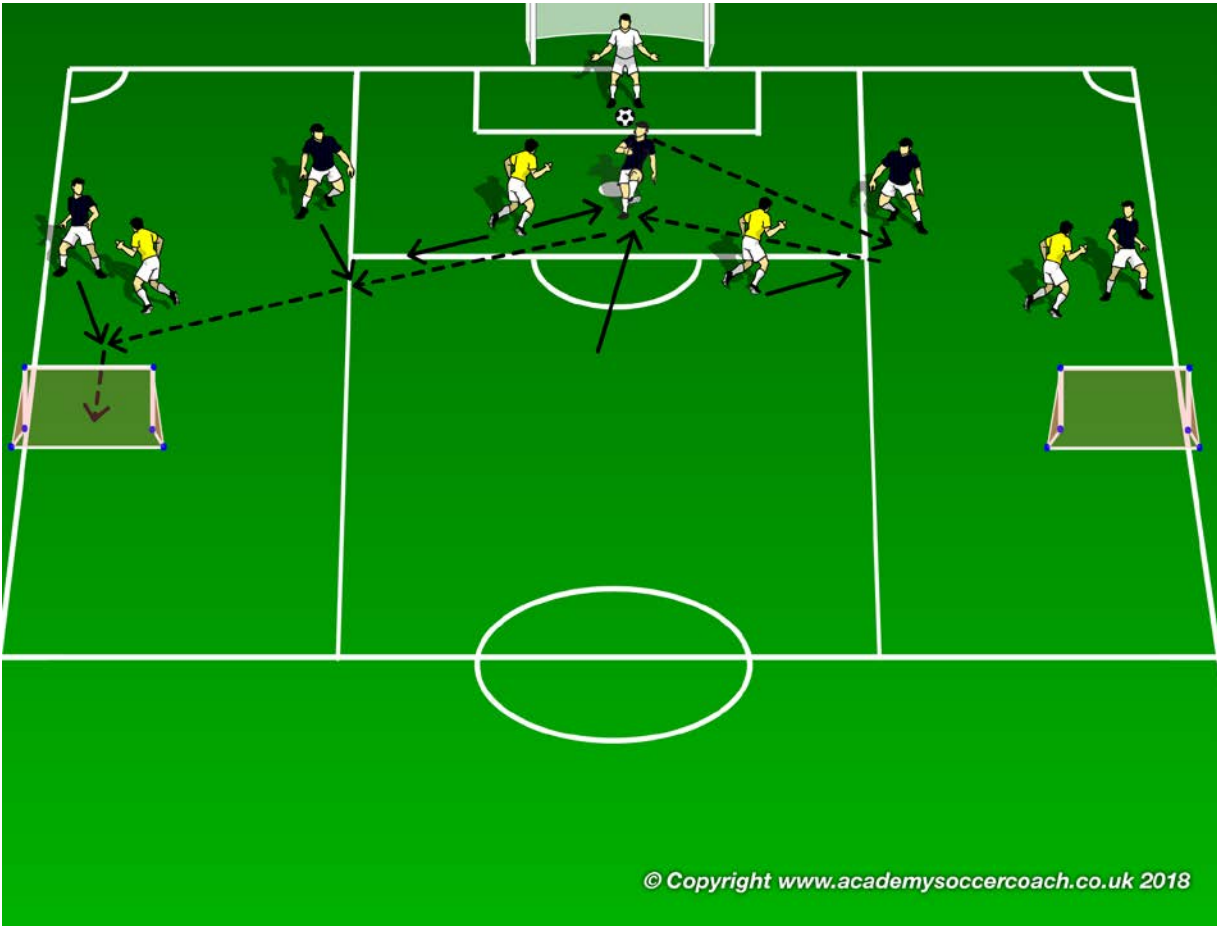


**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area against 2 opposition forwards. A left and a right fullback are placed wide, facing two mini goals. The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center backs, through the midfielder, changing the side and passing the ball toward the opposite fullback, with one touch pass, to score in the mini goal in front of him and close the sideline.

The opposition forwards must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder, when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side.

## Exercise 5: 5 + gk v 4 (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area against 2 opposition forwards. Left and right fullbacks are placed wide, facing two mini goals against 2 opponents.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center backs through the midfielder, changing the side and passing the ball toward the opposite fullback, with a one touch pass to score in the mini goal in front of him and close the sideline.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder, when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

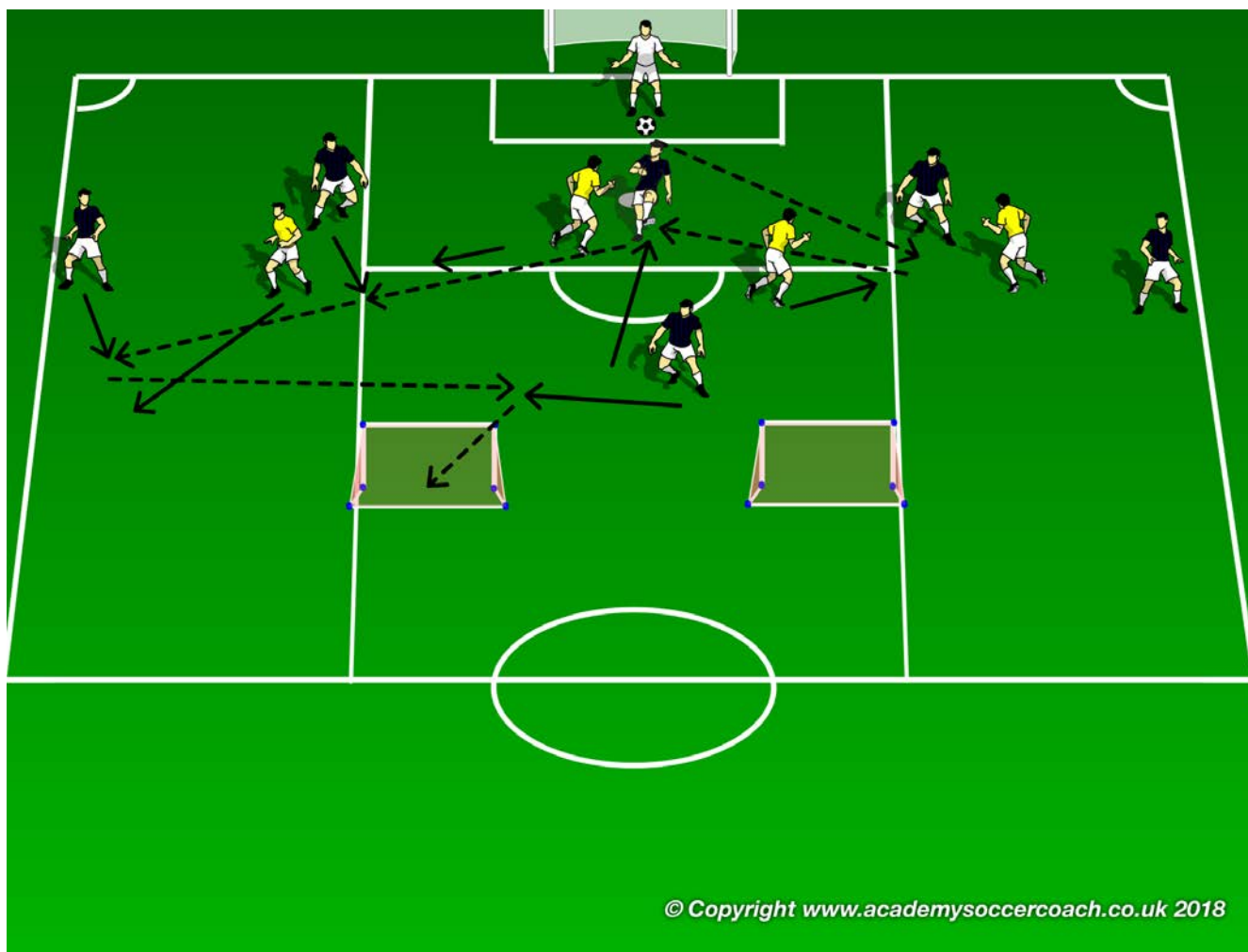
The outside yellow forwards must cover the goal space and press the fullback as they receive the ball. If any of the yellow players wins the possession a 4 v 5+gk is created to counter attack.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs inside the penalty area to create a 3+1 v 3 duel inside the penalty area.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side.

## Goalkeeper, center backs, two midfielders and fullbacks combinations

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



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area; 2 opposition forwards are free to move around the center area, where another center midfielder is waiting for the ball to play out and to score in one of the mini goals. Left and right fullbacks are placed wide against 2 opponents.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center backs through the midfielder, changing the side, and then passing the ball toward the opposite fullback with one touch pass. The final objective is to play out through the center and to give the second center midfielder the chance to score in the mini goals.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder, when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

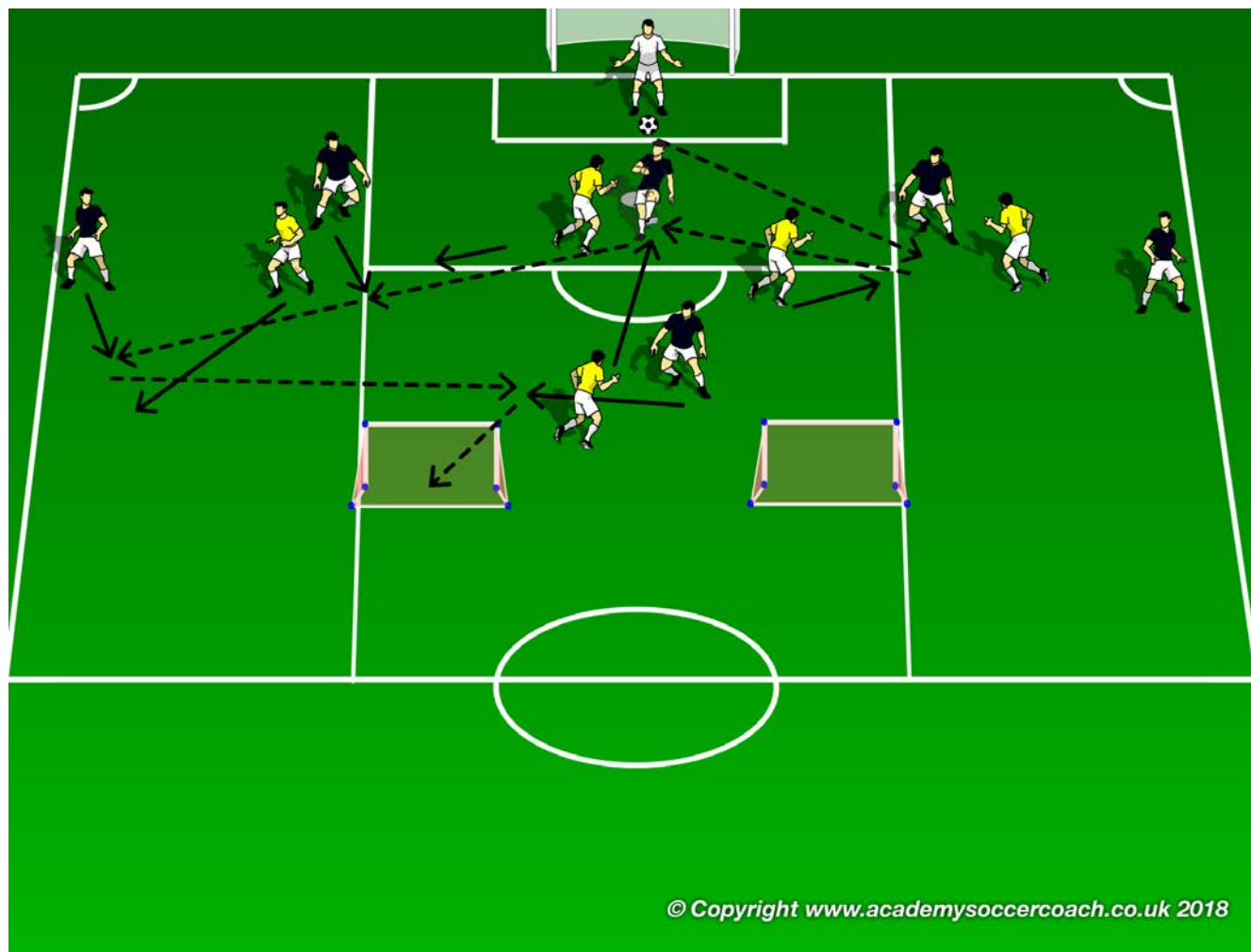


The outside yellow forwards must cover the goal space and to press the fullbacks as they receive the ball. If any of the yellow players wins the possession, a 4 v 5+gk is created to counter attack.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs inside the penalty area to create a 3+1 v 3 duel inside the penalty area or one outer yellow player can press inside the center area to prevent the midfielder from scoring.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side. Break through the first pressure line as quick as possible. Pressure against the ball carrier or close the center passing lanes.

## Exercise 7: 6 + gk v 5



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area; 2 opposition forwards are free to move around the center area where another center midfielder is waiting for the ball to play out and to score in one of the mini goals. Left and right fullbacks are placed wide against 2 opponents.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center back through the midfielder, changing the side, and then passing the ball toward the opposite fullback with one touch pass.

The final objective is to play out through the center and to give the second center midfielder, who is playing a 1 v 1 duel against a yellow player, the chance to score in the mini goals. The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder, when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

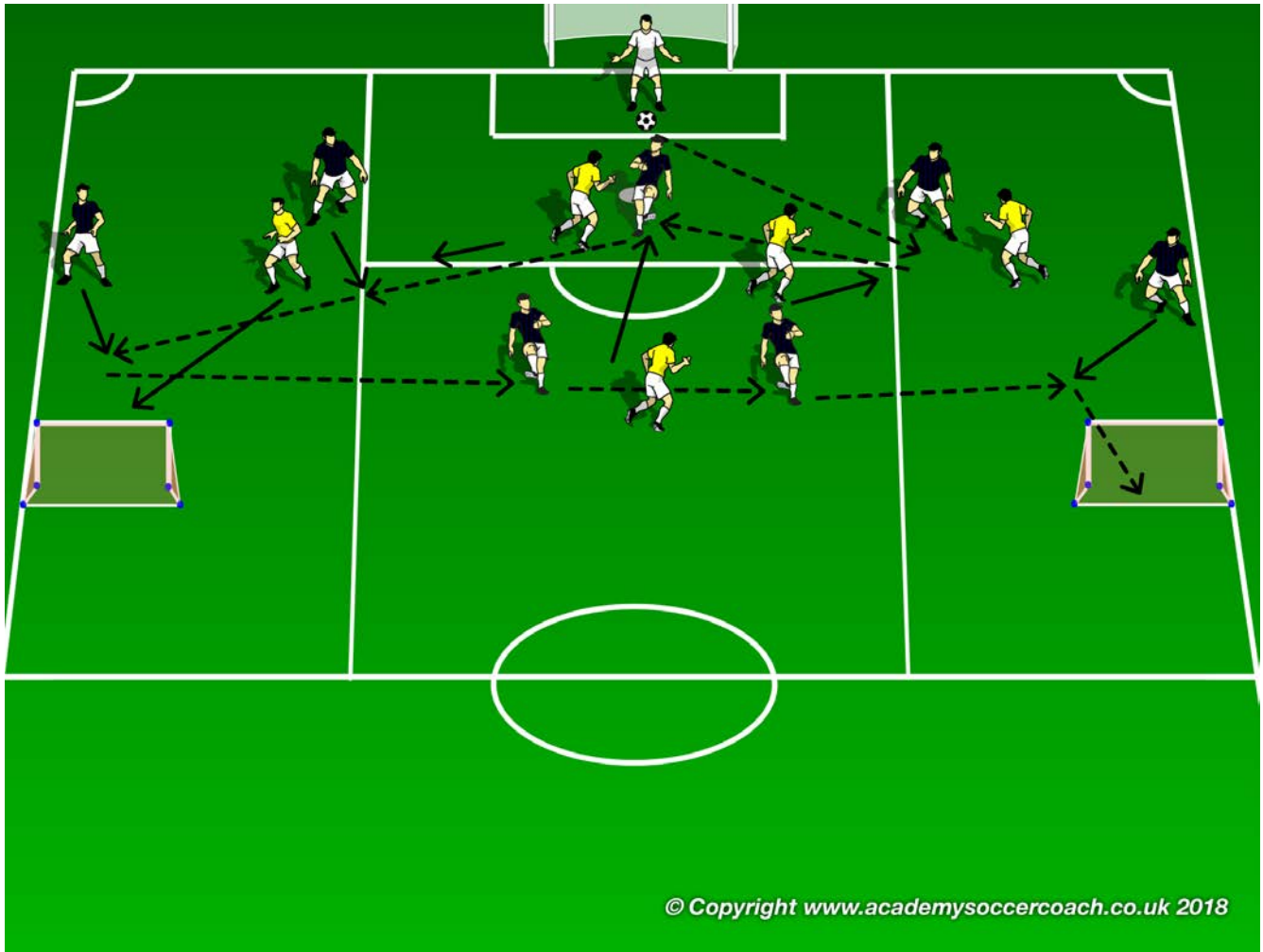
The outside yellow forwards must cover the goal space and press the fullbacks as they receive the ball. The center yellow player is free to double the mark wherever is needed inside all the other areas. If any of the yellow players wins the possession a 4 v 5+gk is created to counter attack.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs inside the penalty area to create a 3+1 v 3 duel inside the penalty area or one outer yellow player can press inside the center area to prevent the midfielder from scoring.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side. Break through the first pressure line as quick as possible. Pressure against the ball carrier or close the center passing lanes.

## Goalkeeper, center backs, three midfielders and fullbacks combinations

### Exercise 8: 7 + gk v 5



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area; 2 opposition forwards and 1 advanced midfielder are free to move around the center area to press the build up phase. Two other center midfielders are waiting for the ball to play out and to score in one of the mini goals that are placed along the flanks, after switching the side. Left and right fullbacks are placed wide against 2 opponents.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center backs through the midfielder, changing the side for the first time, and then passing the ball toward the opposite fullback with one touch passing combination. The final objective is to play out through the center where a 2 v 1 duel is being carried out, to score in the mini goals along the flanks.

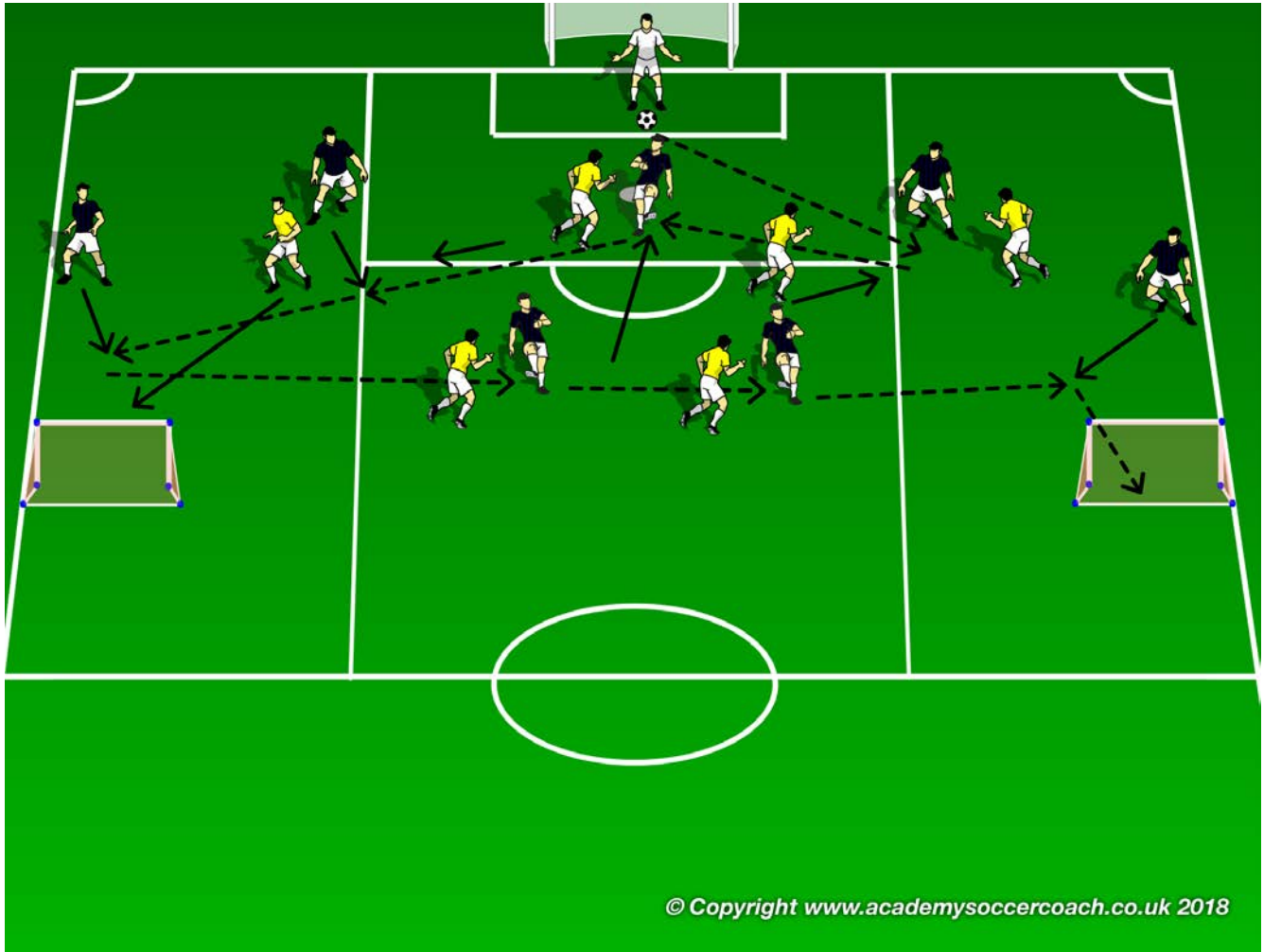
The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielders when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

The outside yellow forwards must cover the goal space and press the fullbacks as they receive the ball. The center yellow player is free to double the mark wherever is needed inside all the other areas, but his first task should be to close the passing lanes to switch the side. If any of the yellow players wins the possession a 5 v 7+gk is created to counter attack.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs inside the penalty area to create a 3+1 v 3 duel inside the penalty area or one center yellow player can press outside the center area to prevent the fullbacks from scoring.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side. Break through the first pressure line as quick as possible. Pressure against the ball carrier or close the wide passing lanes.

## Exercise 9: 7 + gk v 6



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, a dropping back midfielder are placed inside a penalty area; 2 opposition forwards and 2 advanced midfielders are free to move around the center area to counter the build up phase. Two other center midfielders are waiting for the ball to play out and to score in one of the mini goals that are placed along the flanks, after switching the side. Left and right fullbacks are placed wide against 2 opposition wingers.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the second center back through the midfielder, changing the side for the first time, and then passing the ball toward the opposite fullback, with one touch passing combination. The final objective is to play out through the center, where a 2 v 2 duel is being carried out, to score in the mini goals along the flanks.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must try to force the direction of play toward the fullback of the same side when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielders when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball.

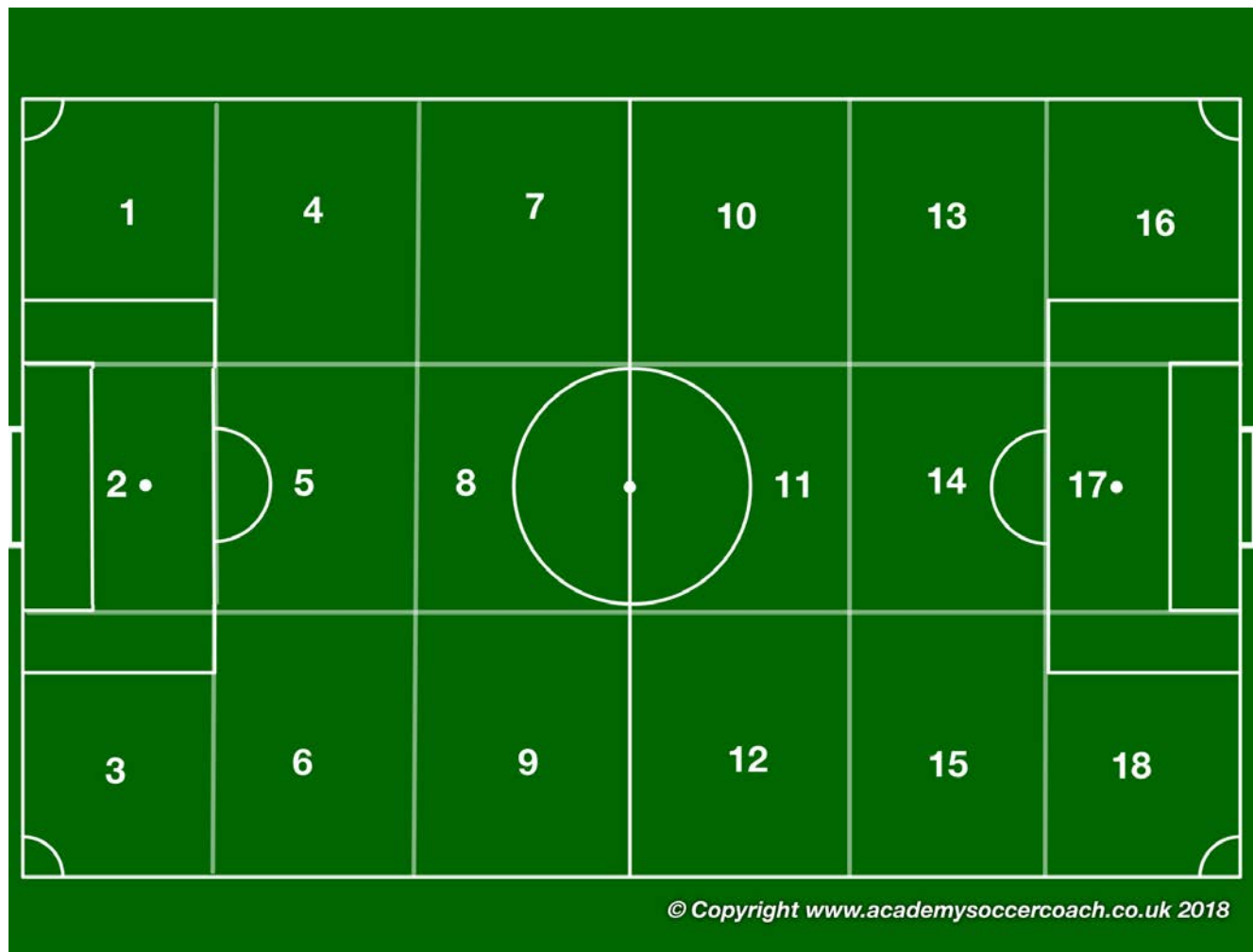
The outside yellow forwards must cover the goal space and press the fullbacks as they receive the ball. The center yellow players are free to double the mark wherever is needed inside all the other areas, but their first task should be to close the passing lanes to switch the side. If any of the yellow players wins the possession a 6 v 7+gk possession game is created to counter attack.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs inside the penalty area to create a 3+1 v 3 duel inside the penalty area or 1 center yellow player can press outside the center area to prevent the fullbacks from scoring.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side. Break through the first pressure line as quick as possible. Pressure against the ball carrier or close the wide passing lanes.

## Specific small-sided games

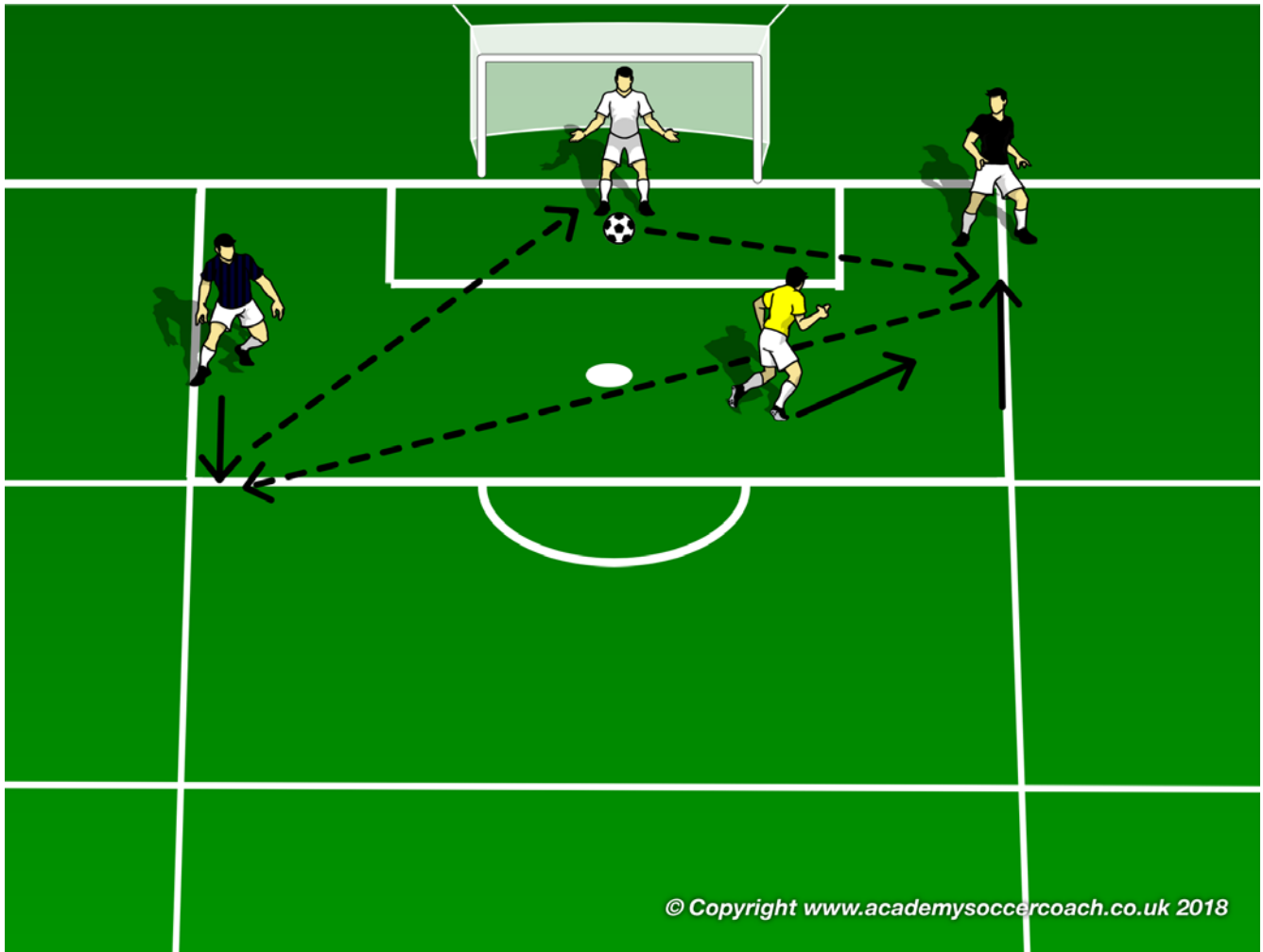
All the following practices are carried out inside the areas of the pitch that are commonly accepted as those of the positional play games.





## Goalkeeper and center backs specific small-sided games

### Exercise 10: 2 + gk v 1

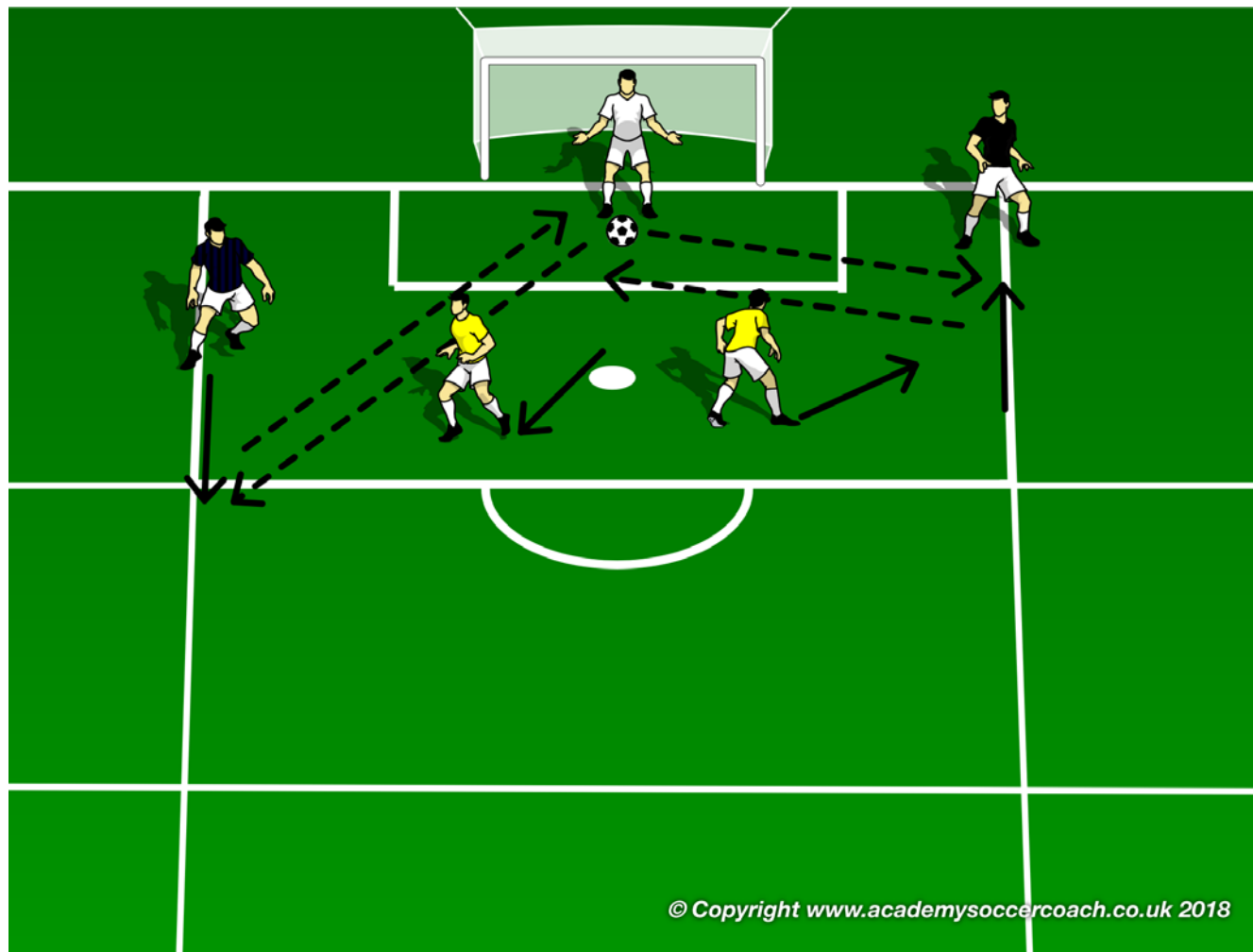


**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 1 opposition forward are placed inside the penalty area. The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, while they are being placed on different lines.

The yellow players can choose to try to close the passing lanes between the center backs or press the ball carrier. If he wins the ball, he can shoot on goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Pressure timing against the ball carrier.

## Exercise 11: 2 + gk v 2



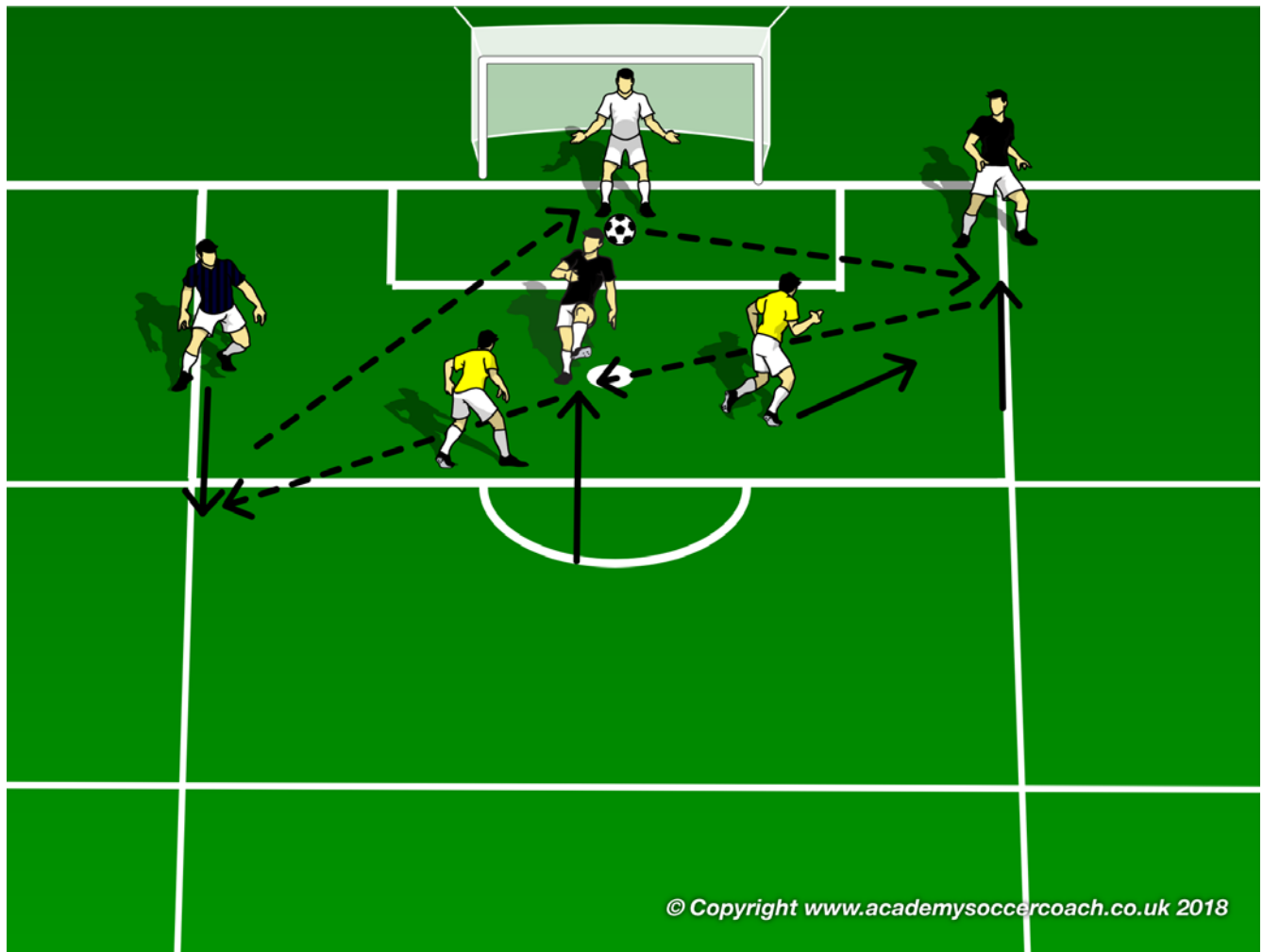
**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 2 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area. The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, but through the goalkeeper, while they are being placed on different lines.

The yellow players should try to press the ball carrier or double the mark on him. If they win the ball, they can shoot on goal directly.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Pressure timing against the ball carrier and double marking.

## Goalkeeper, center backs and balance midfielder specific small-sided game

### Exercise 12: 3 + gk v 2 (1)



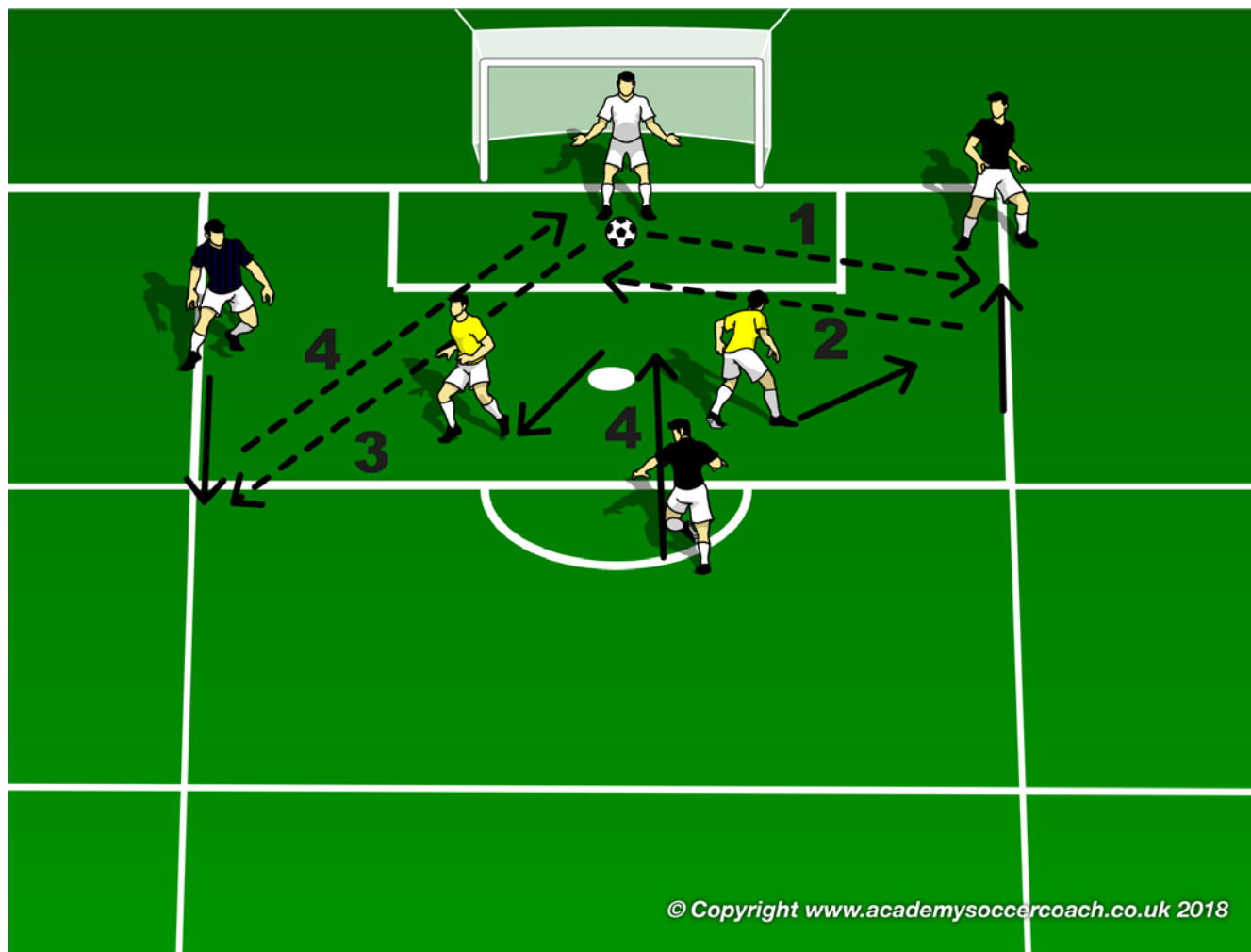
**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 2 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area. 1 balance midfielder of the possession team is placed just out the penalty area at the beginning of each sequence.

The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, but through the dropping back center midfielder, while they are being placed on different lines.

The yellow players should try to press the ball carrier or to close the passing lanes toward the center midfielder. If they win the ball, they can shoot on goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Dropping backs runs and pressure timing against the ball carrier and double marking.

### Exercise 13: 3 + gk v 2 (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 2 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area. 1 balance midfielder of the possession team is placed just out the penalty area at the beginning of each sequence.

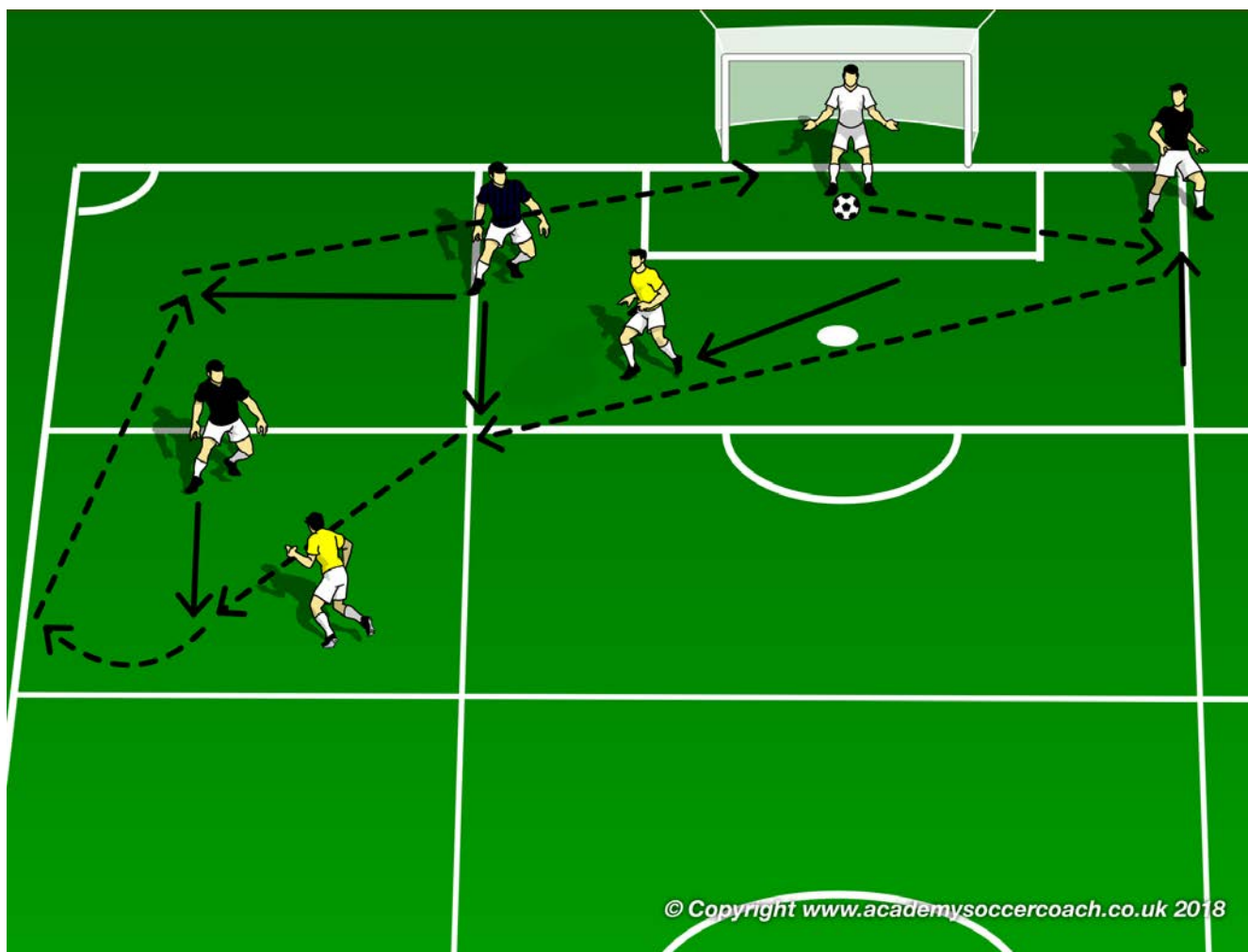
The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, while they are being placed on different lines. The center midfielder must drop back after the first switch of the side (4) to unbalance the opposition pressure definitively.

The yellow players should try to press the ball carrier or to close the passing lanes toward the center midfielder when he drops back. If they win the ball, they can shoot on goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Dropping backs and pressure timing.

## Goalkeeper, center backs and full back specific small-sided game

### Exercise 14: 3 + gk v 2 (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 1 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area. 1 fullback and 1 opposition winger are placed wide and inside the first square at the corner of the penalty area.

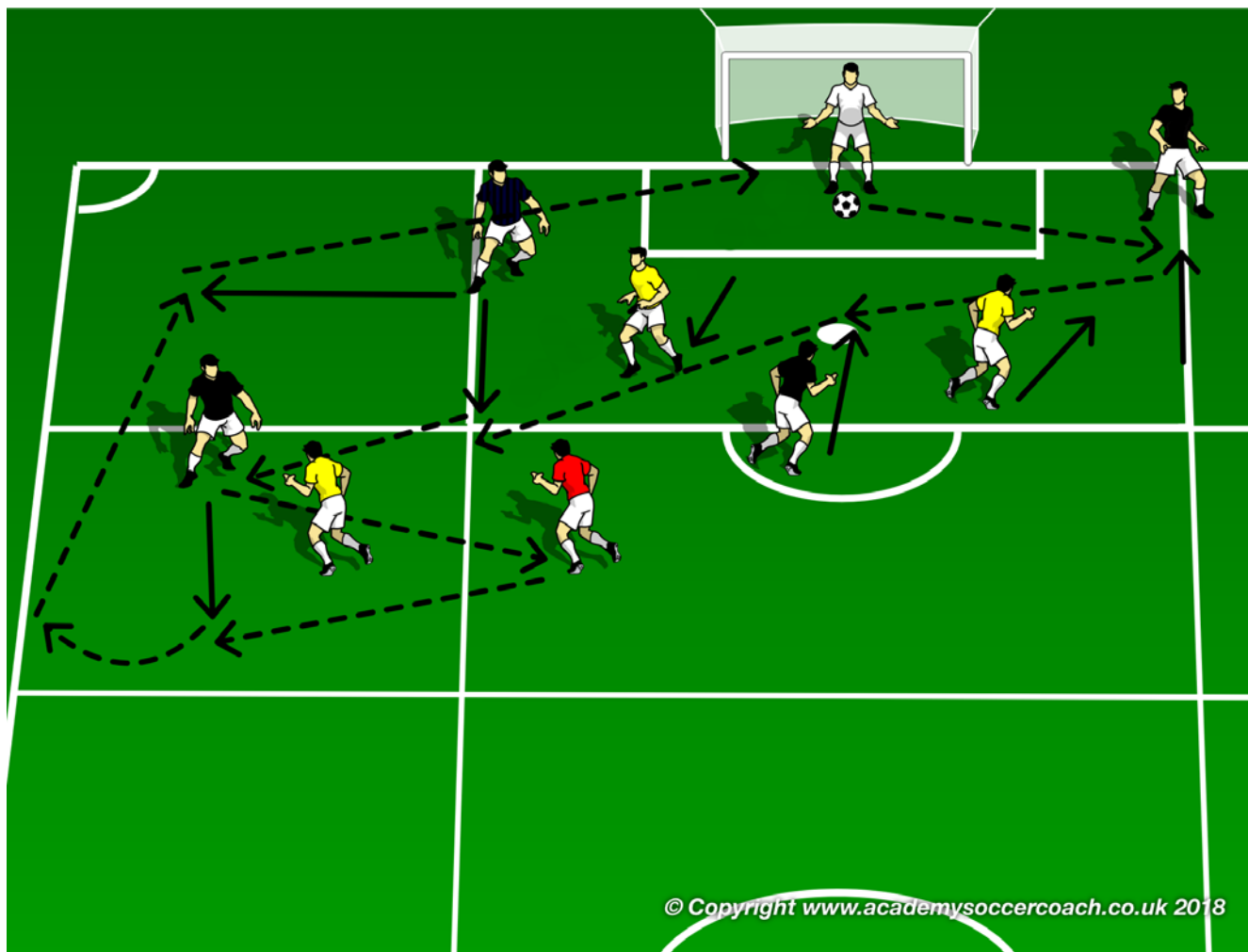
The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, while they are being placed on different lines. As the second center back receives, he must play out to the fullback, who is playing 1 v 1; he must keep the possession, turn and play a back pass the center back, who supports and passes back again to the goalkeeper to start the sequence again.

The yellow player inside the penalty area should try to close the passing lanes as he is outnumbered; the other one should press the fullback to win the ball back. If the defenders win the ball, they can shoot on goal.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper, be placed wide and with the right body shape to receive.

## Goalkeeper, center backs and full backs, two midfielders specific small-sided game

### Exercise 15: 4 + gk + 1 v 3



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 2 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area; 1 balance midfielder of the possession team is placed just out the penalty area. 1 fullback and 1 opposition winger and a red free player (second midfielder) are placed wide at the corner of the penalty area.

The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, but through the dropping back center midfielder, while they are being placed on different lines.

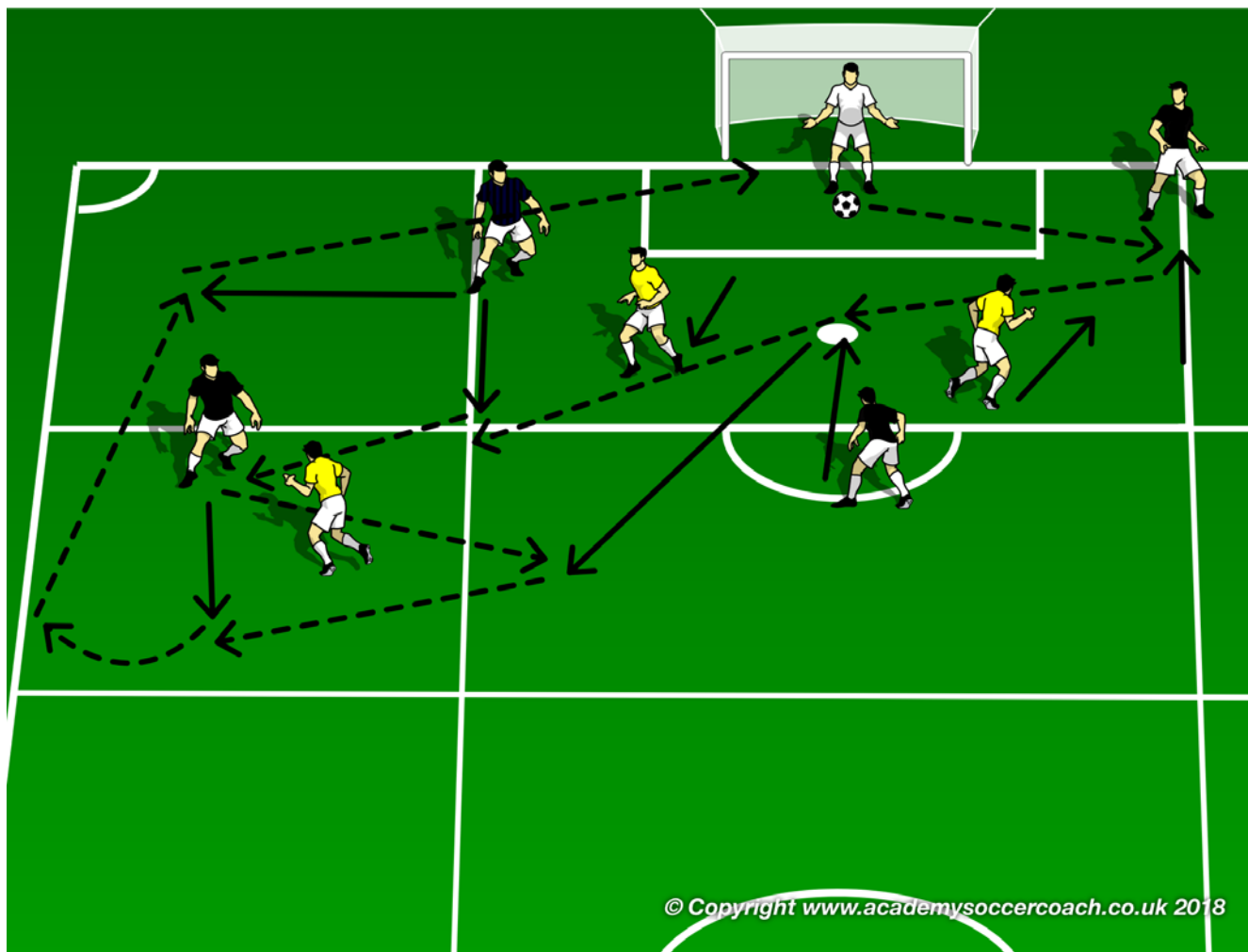
As the second center back receives, he must play out to the fullback who is playing 1 v 1; he must keep the possession playing a 1-2 combination with the free player to overcome the opponent, turn and play a back pass to the center back, who is supporting the move, and who then pass back again to the goalkeeper, to start the sequence again.

The yellow players should close the passing lanes to prevent the combinations, as they are always outnumbered. If they win the ball, a 3+1 v 4+1 duel is created to counter attack.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Dropping backs timing and quick passing combinations to play out. Close the passing lanes.

## Goalkeeper, center backs and fullback and balance midfielder specific small-sided game

### Exercise 16: 4 + 1 v 3



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs and 2 opposition forwards are placed inside the penalty area; 1 balance midfielder of the possession team is placed just out the penalty area. 1 fullback and 1 opposition winger are placed wide at the corner of the penalty area.

The goalkeeper is in possession and the ball must circulate from to him to the center backs and between them, but through the dropping back center midfielder, while they are being placed on different lines.

As the second center back receives, he must play out to the fullback, who is involved in a 1 v 1 duel; he must keep the possession playing a 1-2 combination with the midfielder, who dropped back before and who is now playing as holding midfielder. As the opponent has been overcome, the fullback must turn and he plays a back pass to the center back, who is supporting the move, and who then passes back again to the goalkeeper, to start the sequence again.

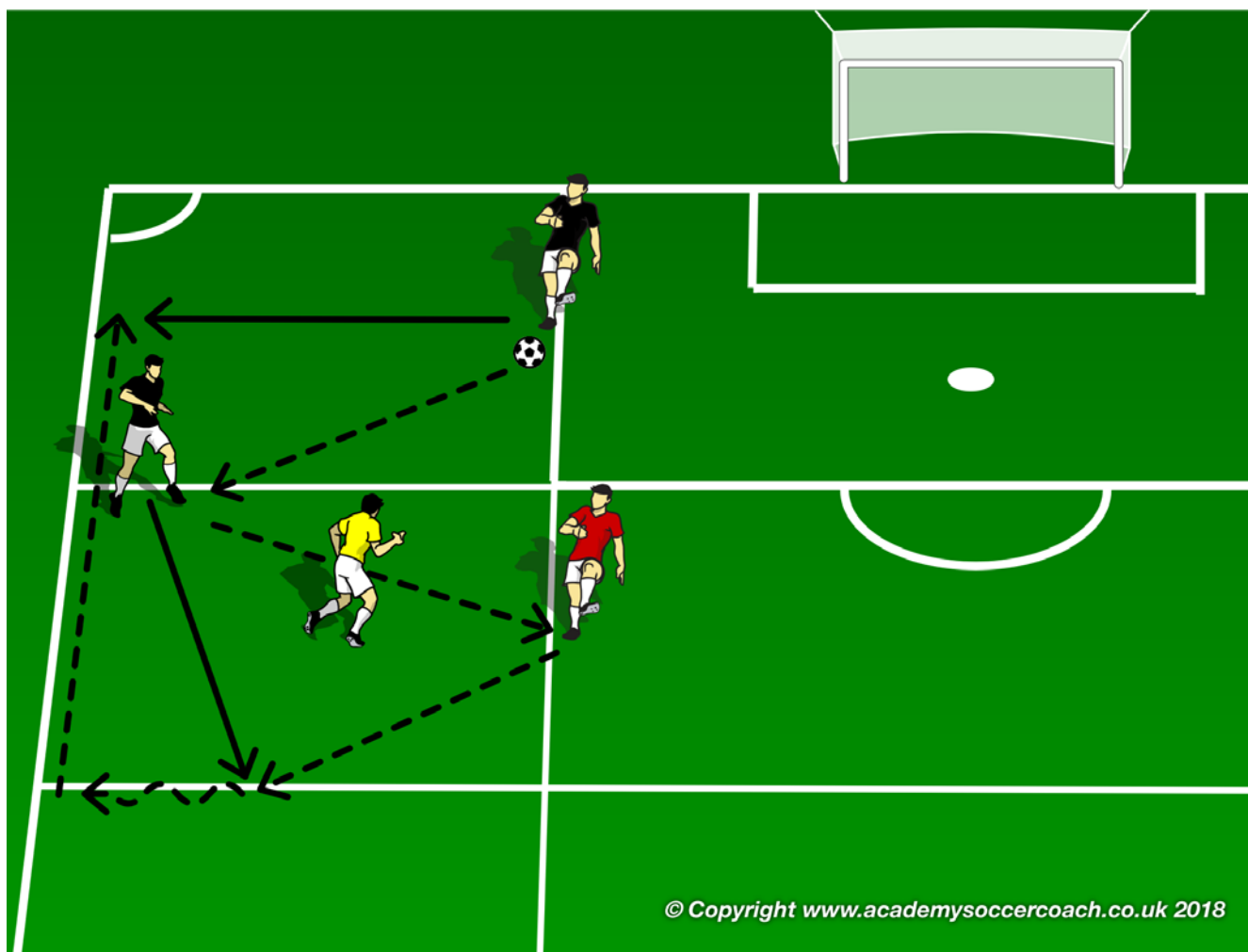
The yellow players should close the passing lanes to prevent the combinations, as they are always outnumbered. If they win the ball, a 3 v 4+1 duel is created to counter attack.



**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes with the goalkeeper. Dropping backs and support runs timing and quick passing combinations to play out. Close the passing lanes.

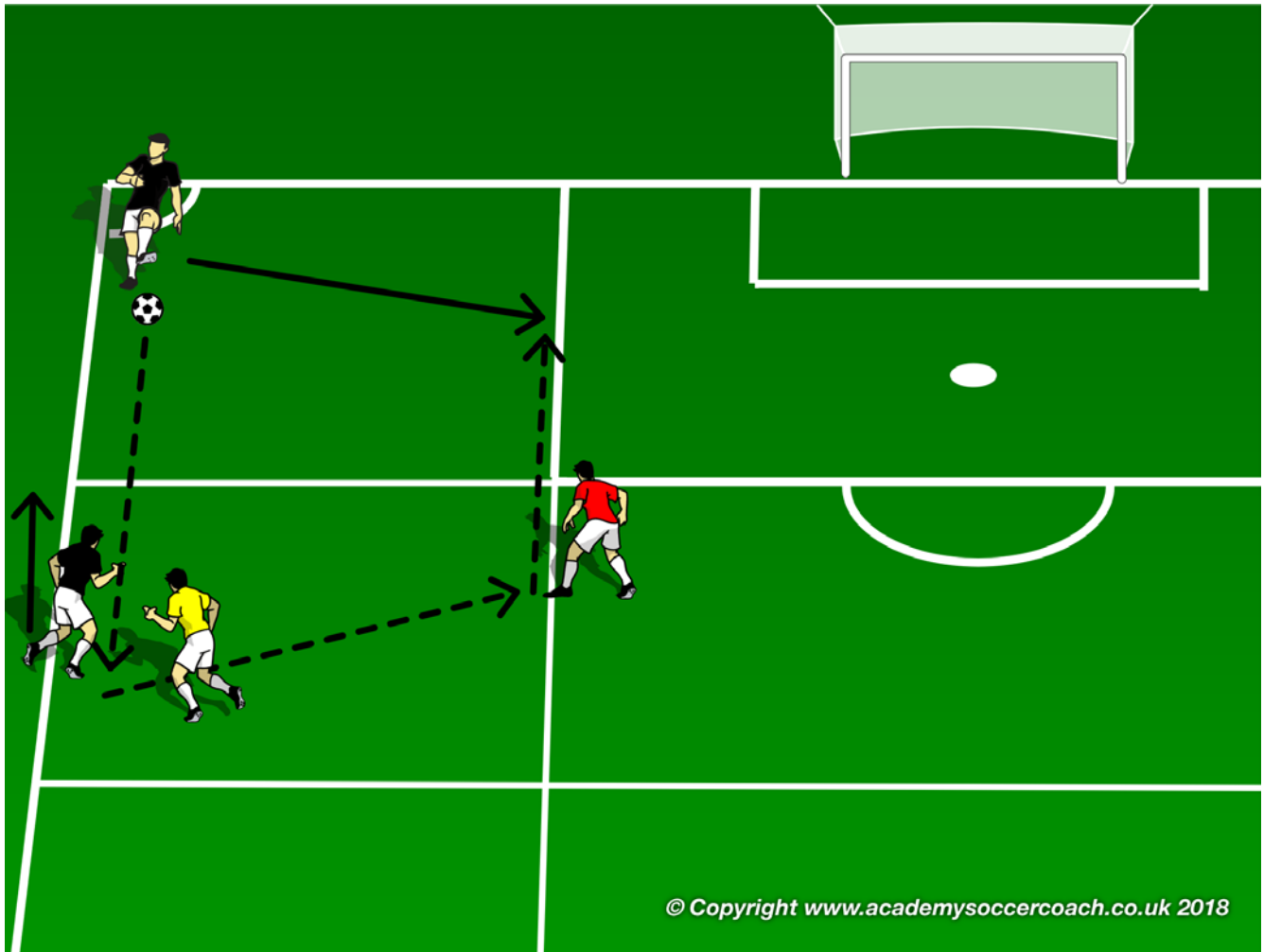
## Fullback playing out specific small-sided games

### Exercise 17: 2 + 1 v 1



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 center back, 1 full back and 1 red free player are placed wide, along the flank, inside the first third. The center back is in possession and he must pass to the fullback from the lower area of the flank.

The fullback must overcome the opponents playing a 1-2 combination with the holding red free player to overcome the opposition winger inside the next area; he then turns and passes back to the center back, who is supporting the move, running wide near the sideline.



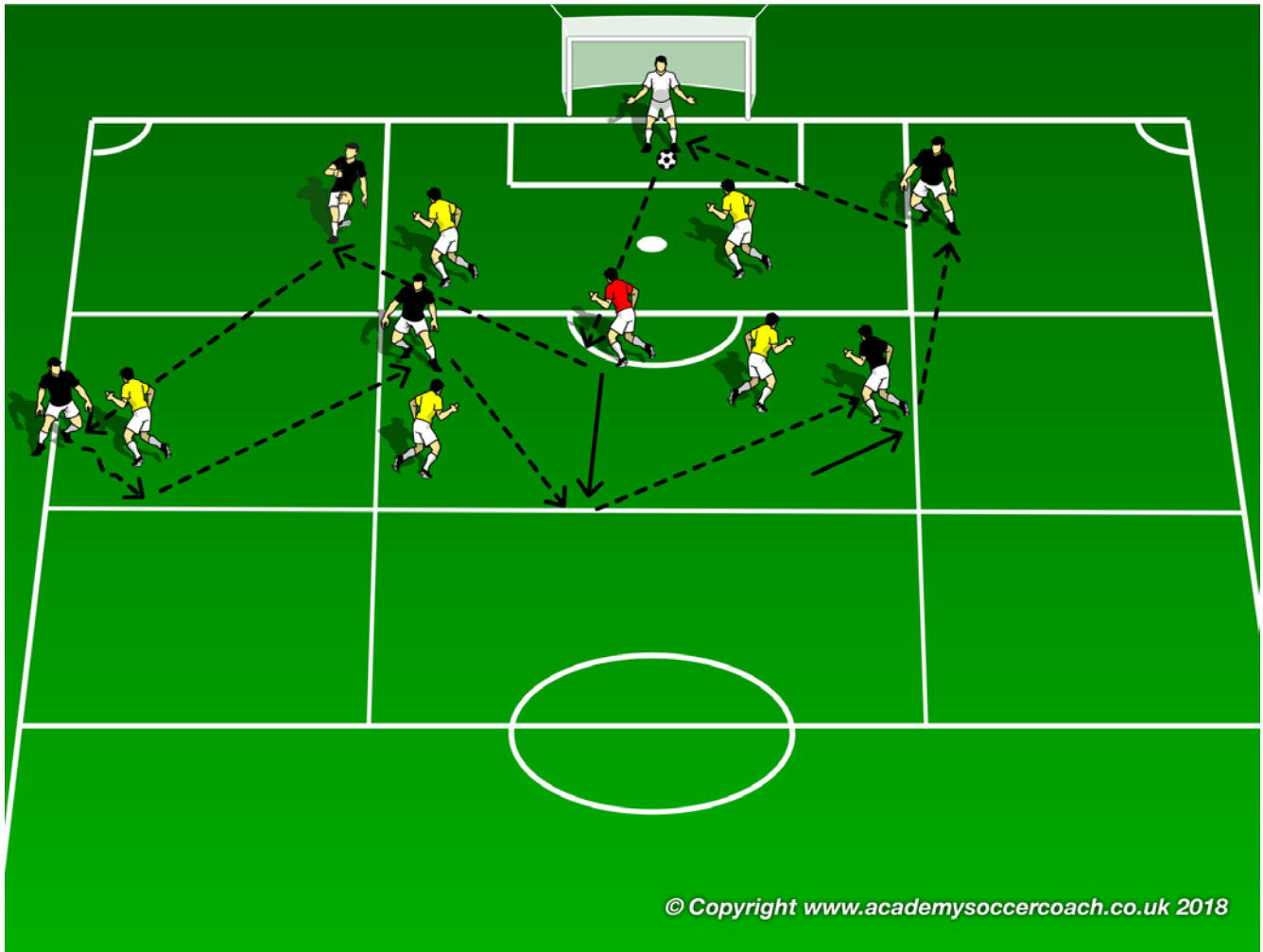
As the center back receives, he passes forward again to the fullback, who controls the ball and he passes to the red free player, who acts like a holding midfielder. The center back finally receives and the fullback drops deeper to start the sequence again.

The yellow defender must try to close the passing lanes, as he is outnumbered; but if he wins the possession, a 2 v 2 duel is created inside the playing areas of the field.

**Eye on:** Quick passing combinations to play out, support runs timing.

## Play out through the center (zonal duels)

### Exercise 18: 5 + 1 + gk v 5



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, 1 dropping back red free player (midfielder) are placed inside or just out of the penalty area. A 2 v 2 duel between couples of midfielders is played inside the center zone, in front of the penalty area. A 1 v 1 duel is played inside the outer area along the flank, at the corner of penalty area. All the players are active inside their areas only.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the balance player to build up or to play out and distribute along the flank that is involved in the sequence (the left one in the picture).

The direction of the move has to be switched to the opposite side through the 2 v 2 + 1 duel; the red midfielder must now play as vertex at the top of the middle zone. The center back must receive the ball to pass to the goalkeeper to simulate the play out sequence.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must press and try to force the direction of play toward the opposite flank, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder,

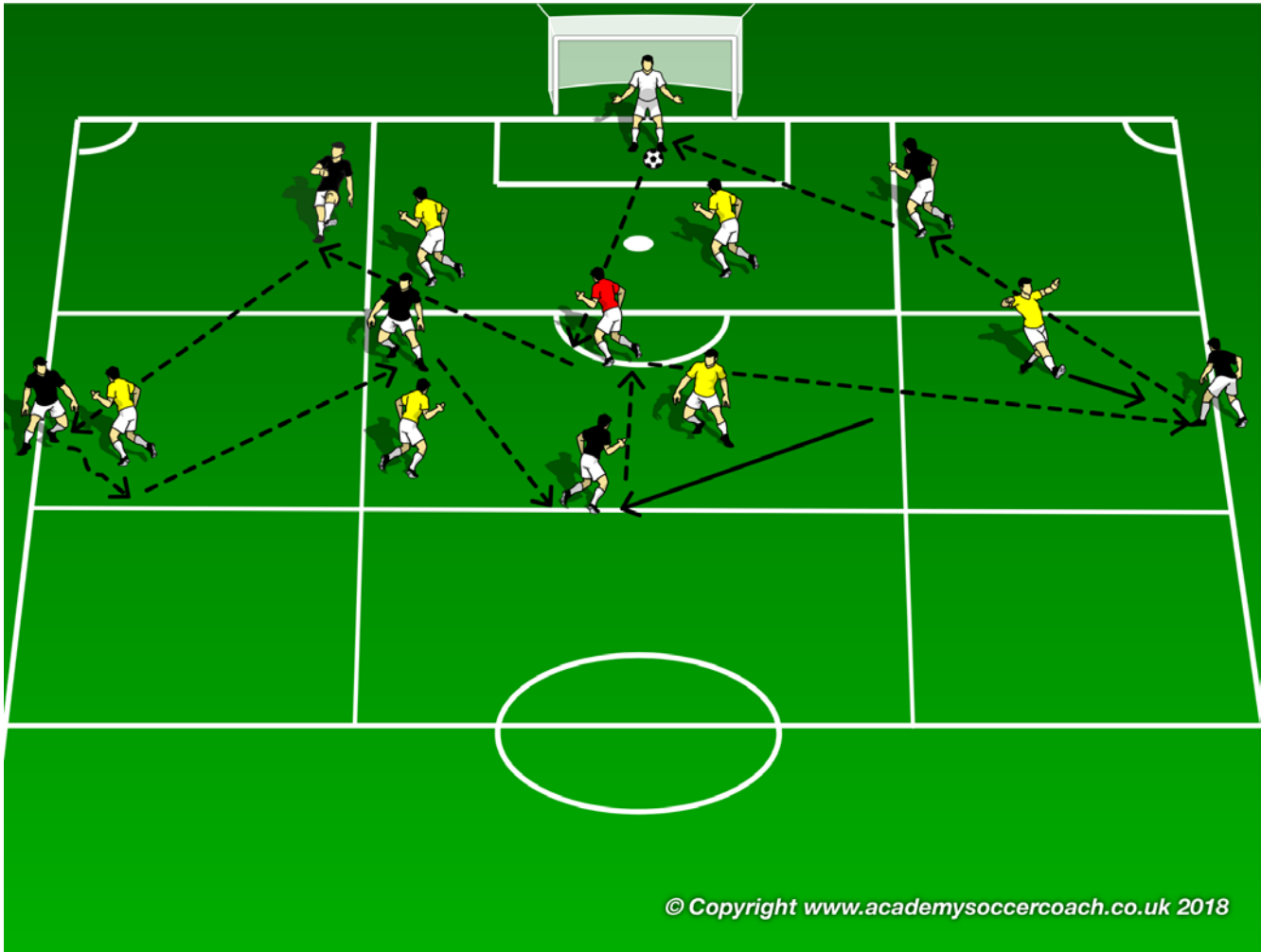
when in possession, to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball. The center yellow players must do the same to prevent the combinations switching the side of play. The outer yellow player must put strong pressure against the receiver, as he is the only one with 1 opponent to face.

If the defenders win the ball, a 5+1 v 5+gk duel is created; the red free player supports the defenders now.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs outside to create a 2 v 1duel to recover the possession.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side, quick passing combination through the center.

### Exercise 19: 6 + 1 + gk v 6 (1)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, 1 dropping back red free player (midfielder) are placed inside or just out of the penalty area. A 2 v 2 duel between couples of midfielders is played inside the center zone, in front of the penalty area. A 1 v 1 duel is played inside the outer area along the flank, at the corner of penalty area. All the players are active inside their areas only.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the balance player to build up or play out and to distribute along the flank that is involved in the sequence (the right one in the picture).

The direction of the move has to be switched to the opposite side through the 2 v 2 + 1 duel; the red midfielder must now play as vertex at the top of the middle zone. The center back must receive the ball to pass to the goalkeeper to simulate the play out sequence.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must press and try to force the direction of play toward the opposite flank, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder, when in possession to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball. The center yellow players must do the same to prevent the combinations to switch the side of play. The outer

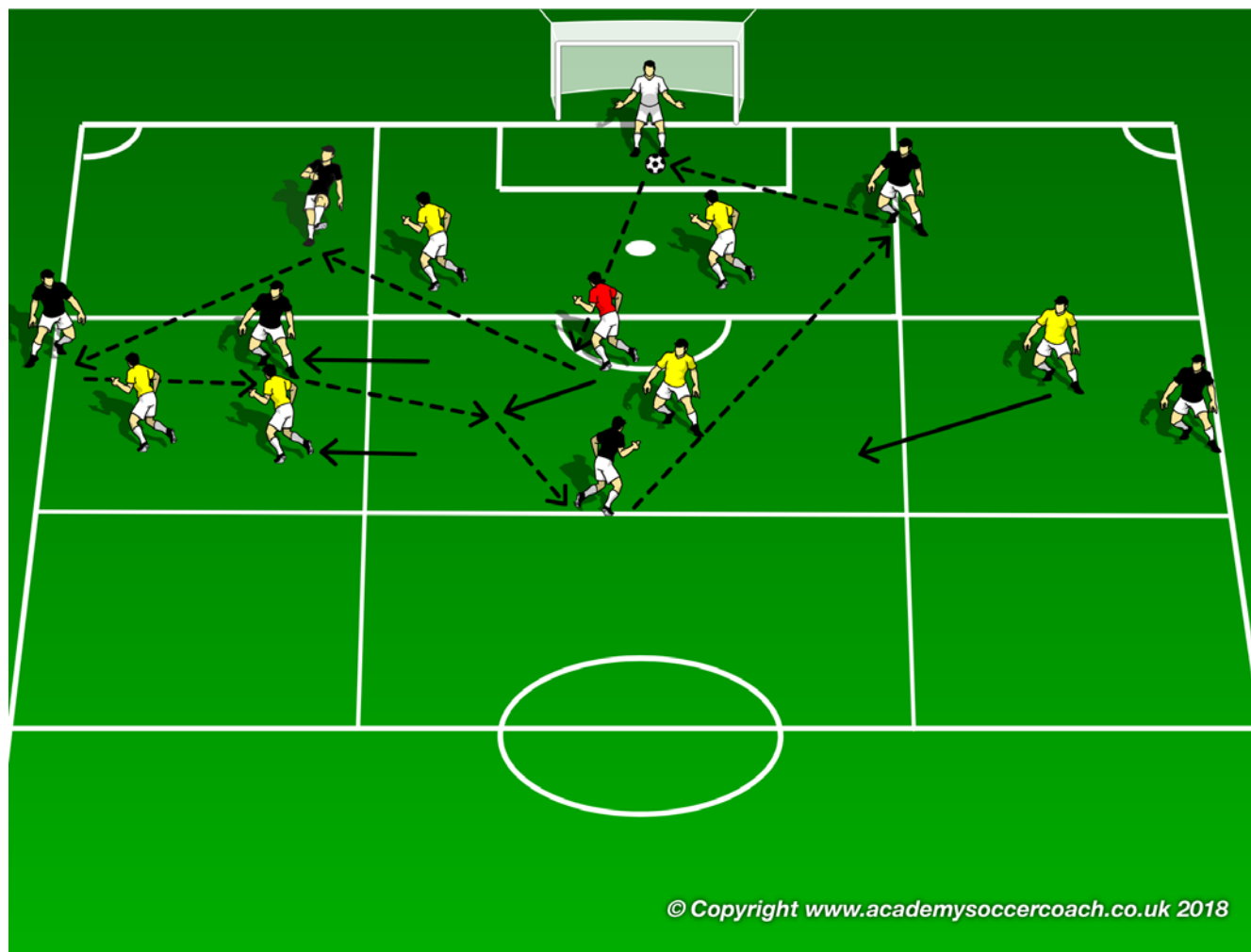
yellow player must put strong pressure against the receiver, as he is the only one with 1 opponent to face.

If the defenders win the ball, a 6+1 v 6+gk duel is created; the red free player supports the new team in possession now.

**Variation:** 1 yellow player runs outside to create a 2 v 1 duel to recover the possession.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side, quick passing combination through the center.

## Exercise 20: 6+1+gk v 6 (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 goalkeeper, 2 center backs, 1 dropping back red free player (midfielder) are placed inside or just out of the penalty area. A 2 v 2 duel between couples of midfielders is played inside the center zone, in front of the penalty area, at the beginning. A 1 v 1 duel is played inside the outer areas along the flanks, at the corner of penalty area.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the balance player to build up or play out and distribute along the flank that is involved in the sequence (the right one in the picture).

The side and the area of play is overloaded by one possession midfielder and a defending midfielder creating a 2 v 2 duel; the fullback must be a support behind them and the center midfielder must be a support from the center area, where a 1+1 v 2 duel is played to manage the possession, to play back to the second center back and to the goalkeeper in the end, to play out again on the same side or toward the opposite side.

The opposition forwards inside the penalty area must press and try to force the direction of play toward the opposite flank, when the center backs are in possession; or even to press the center midfielder,



when in possession to face the goal and to finish quickly in case of recovery of the ball. The center yellow players try to prevent the combinations to switch the side of play. The outer yellow players must put strong pressure against the receiver to win the ball back.

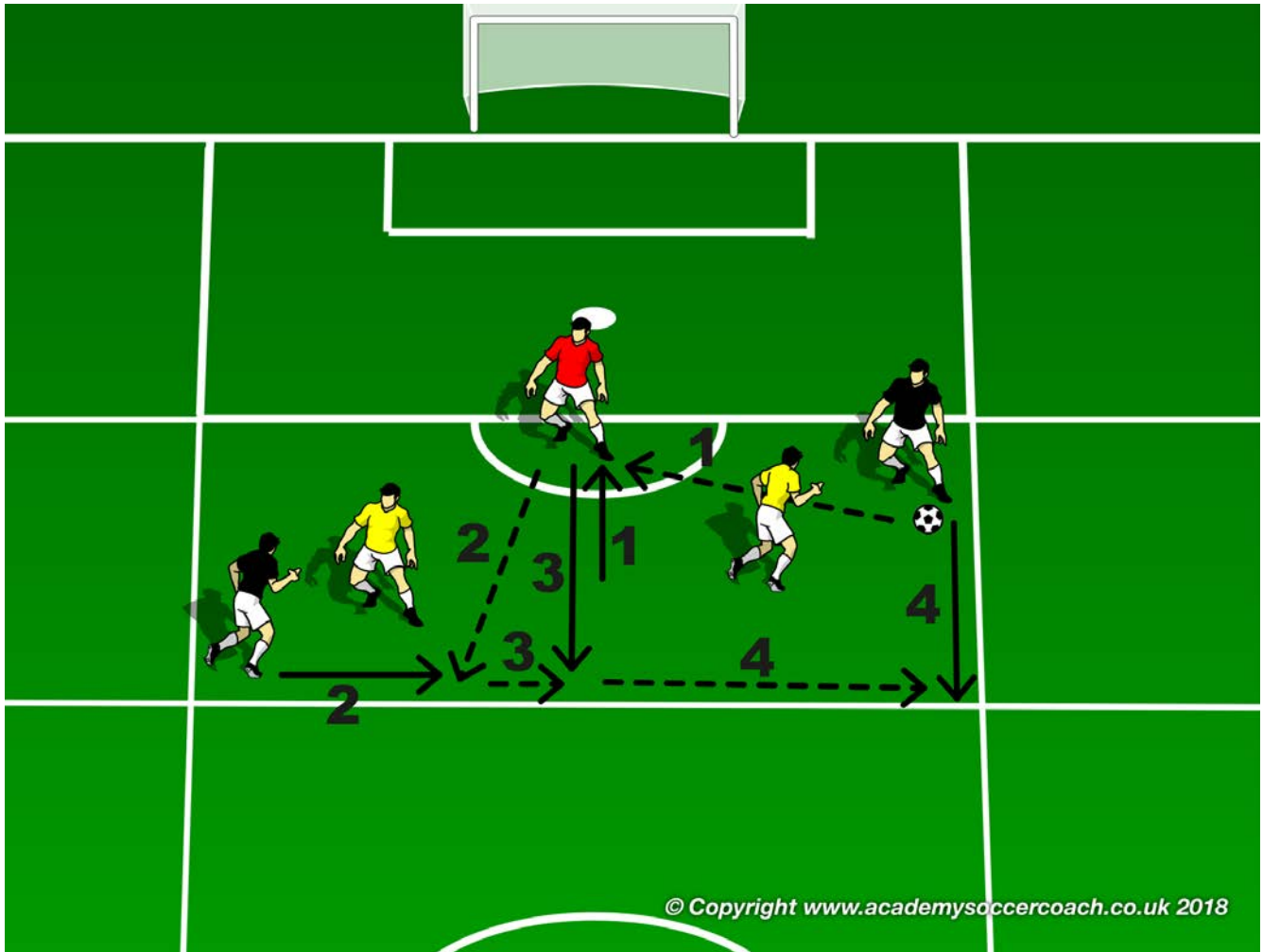
If the defenders win the ball, a 6+1 v 6+gk duel is created; the red free player supports the defenders now.

**Variation:** 1 more yellow player runs outside to create a numerical advantage for the defenders 3 v 2 duel to recover the possession.

**Eye on:** be placed on different lines and shape different triangles to play one-touch quick diagonal passes to switch the side, quick passing combination on the flank under pressure, synchronized runs to put pressure.

## Play out through the center (specific small-sided game)

### Exercise 21: 2 v 2 + 1



**Set-up and Sequence:** a 2 v 2 + 1 duel is played inside the center rectangle, in front of the penalty area. 2 black players are the midfielders of the possession team; the red one plays as balance midfielder.

The objective is to overcome the line of pressure of the defenders through a dropping back movement to receive a first pass and then a forward movement to receive the return pass before playing toward the second midfielder. The players are always asked to overcome the line of pressure at every passing combination.

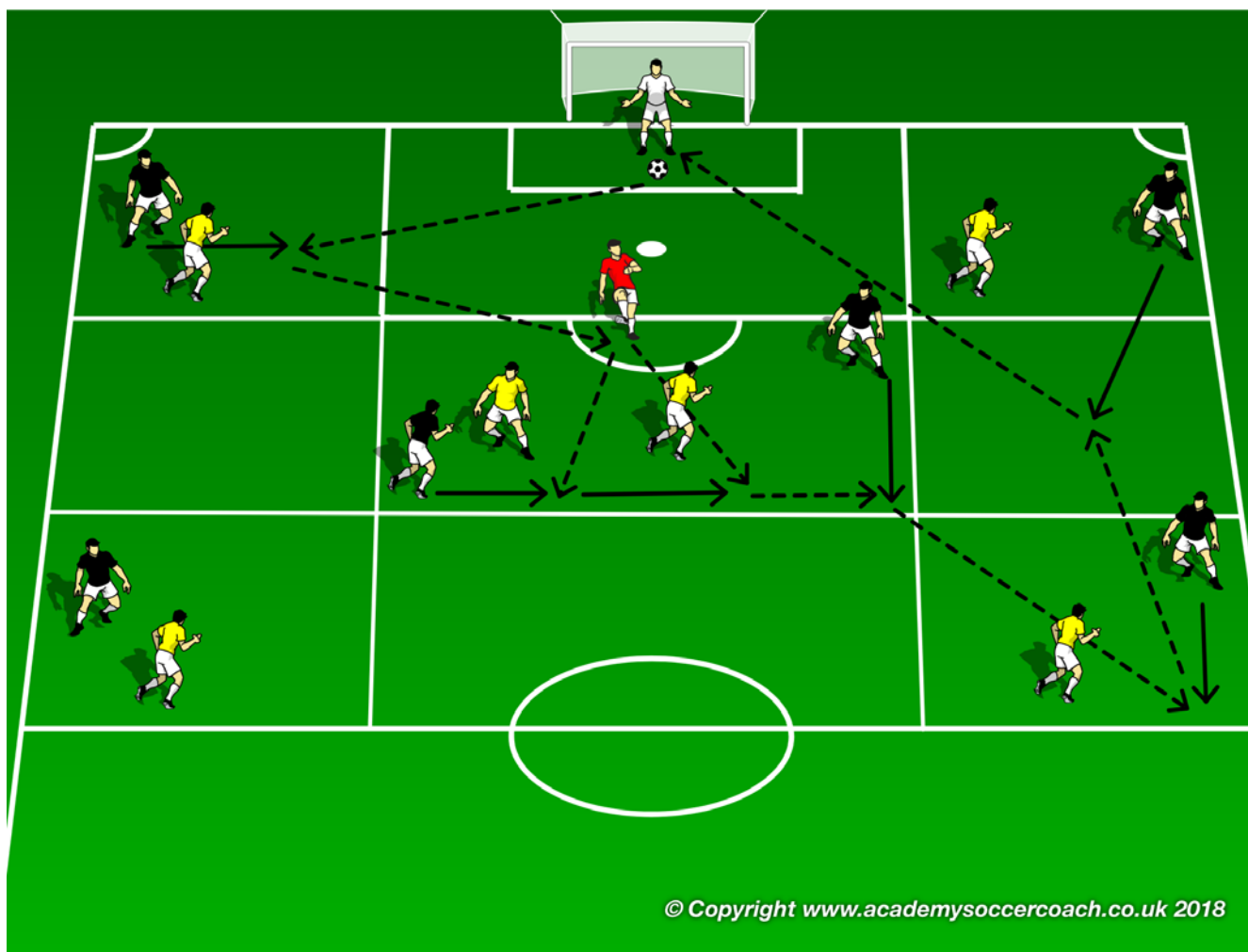
If the yellow players win the possession, they have the objective facing the goal area.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, a 2+1 v 2 possession game is created inside the center area.

**Eye on:** quick passing combinations to overcome the first line of pressure, press the ball carrier or close the passing lanes toward the free player to prevent the break through passing combination.

## Build up from the back switching the side (zonal duels)

### Exercise 22: 6 + 1 + gk v 6 (3)



**Set-up and Sequence:** A half of a regular field is required for this practice. The goalkeeper is in possession inside the penalty area, 1 v 1 duels are played on the flanks at the bottom and at the top of the game space and 2 + 1 v 2 is played in the middle area.

The goalkeeper is in possession, and the goal is to play quick passing combinations from him to the wide center back along one flank (the right one in the picture) and then to switch the side and the area of play forward (on the left in the picture), through the 2 + 1 v 2 duels in the middle zone.

As the fullback receives he must turn, he has to pass the center back who is supporting the move and the goalkeeper receive to play out on the other or the same side.

The opposition yellow players must press the opponents as equal number of players is ensured on the flanks. The yellow players must close the passing lanes toward the opposite side and force the direction of play toward the same side where the ball comes from.

If the defenders win the possession, they play the same way toward the goal and they can finish from the center zone in front of the penalty area.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, a 6+1 v 6+gk possession game is created. The red free player supports the new team in possession now.

**Eye on:** pass from the flanks using the middle players as link players to switch the side.

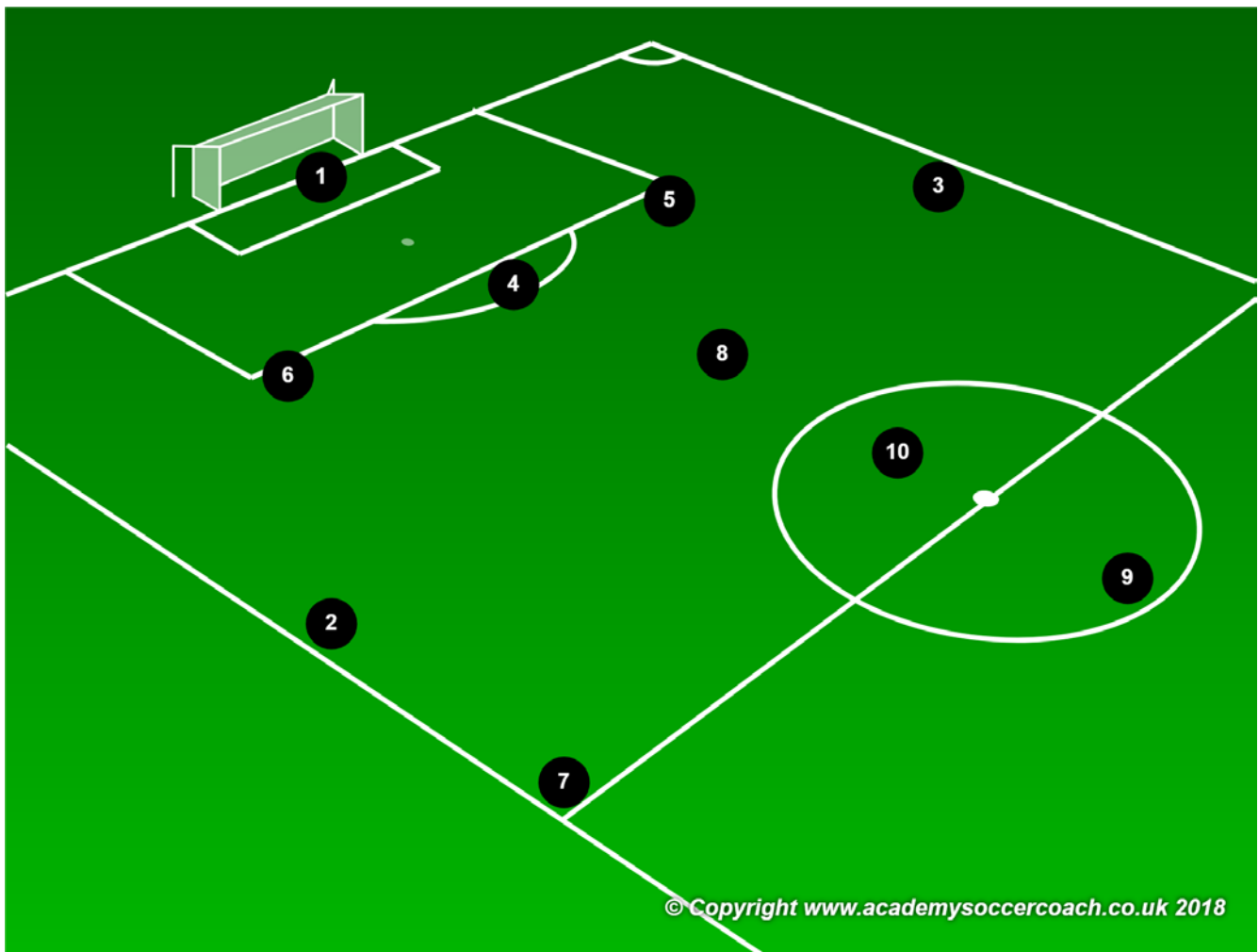
## Build up from the back with the 1-4-2-3-1

The 4-2-3-1 is one of the most popular soccer formations in the game nowadays; it is designed to outnumber the opposition in the middle third and it has enough flexibility to support both the defense and the attacking phases quickly and effectively.

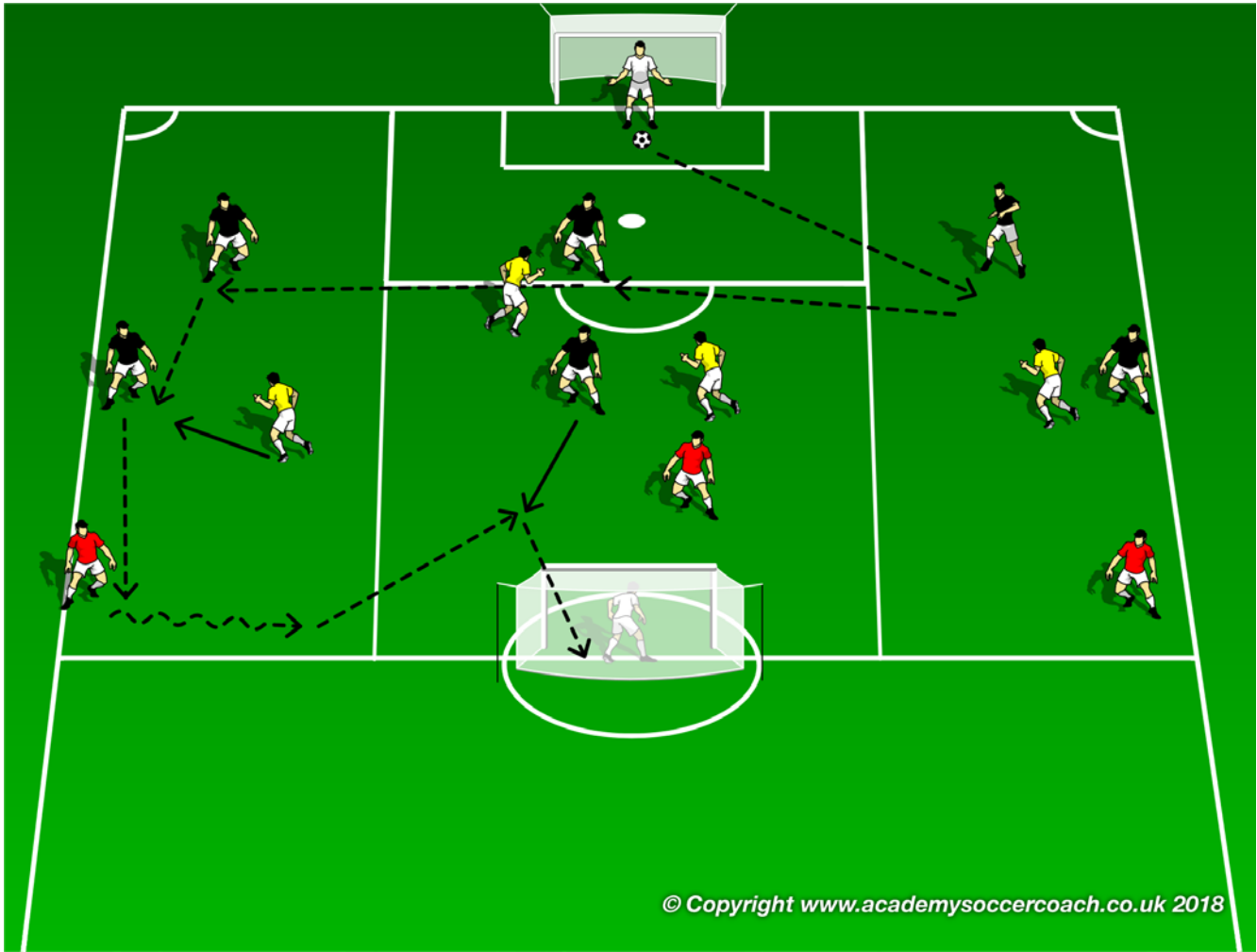
The 4-2-3-1 opening shape to play out from the back, when the goalkeeper plays the ball in, is usually the classic positioning of the players, which is required by "La Volpe Exit."

The field is made as big as possible to play the ball out and to create overloads near the ball. The center backs move toward the corners of the penalty area, the fullbacks push high up the field and wide, 1 of the defensive midfielders drops in between the 2 center backs. The outside midfielders stay closer to the middle to allow space for the wingers and fullbacks. These are the reason why the fixed back three is coming back in vogue during last two seasons.

The most famous development of the 1-4-2-3-1 is the 1-3-3-3-1 of Marcelo Bielsa, covering the whole width of the pitch.



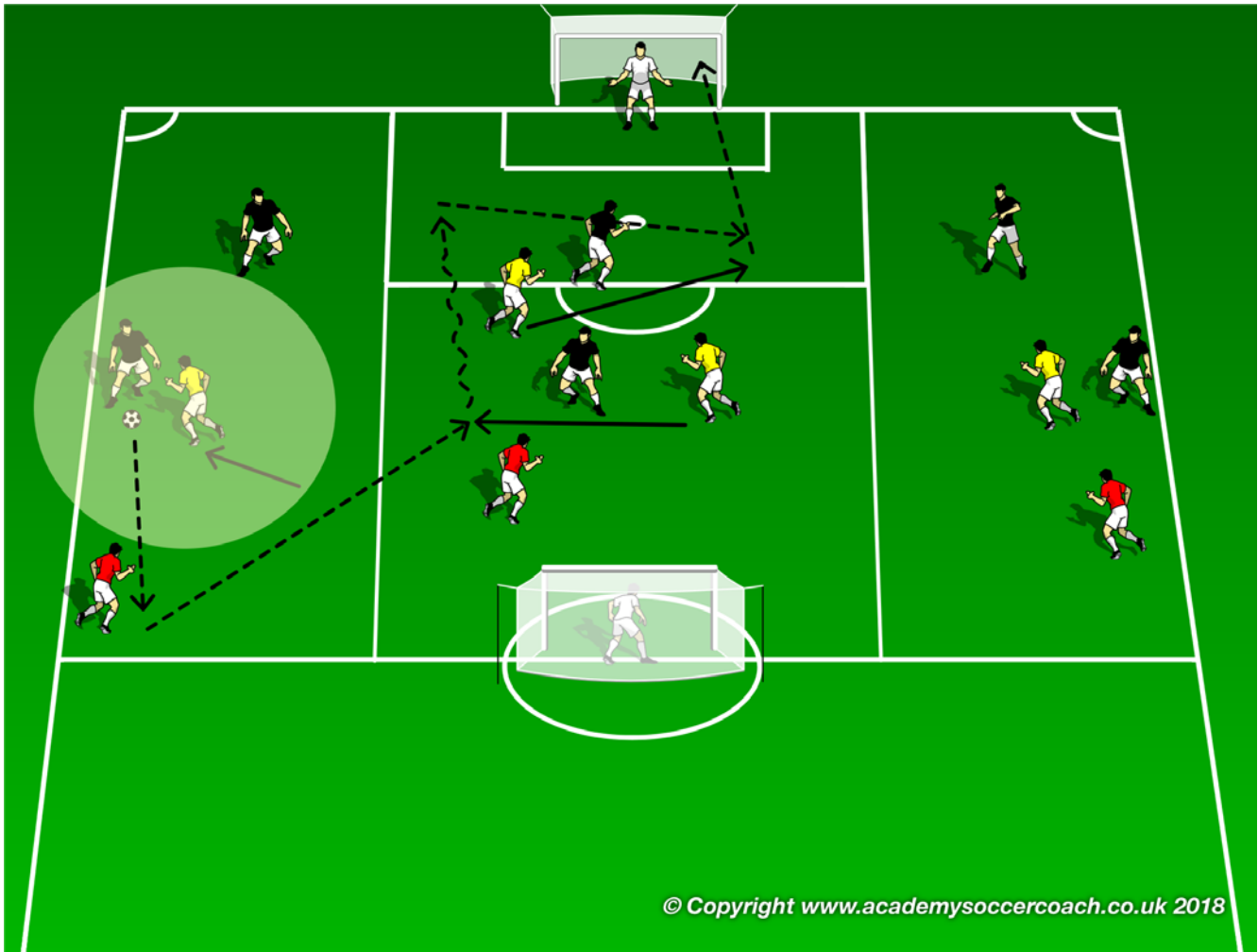
**Exercise 23: 6 + 3 + gk v 4 + gk (1)**



**Set-up and Sequence:** A half of a regular field is divided into three areas vertically. 2 black players are placed inside each area, as well as 1 yellow and 1 red free player. The goalkeeper is in possession.

The black players shape the first two lines of three and the reds shape the third one, before the opposition goal. The building up phase starts with an outside pass (on the left in the picture) and then switching the side through the center space of the first line. The yellow players are free to move all around.

The playing out phase has to be developed along the flank to send the ball to the last line of red free players. The finishing phase has to be carried out through a forward cutting run of midfielder from the second line.

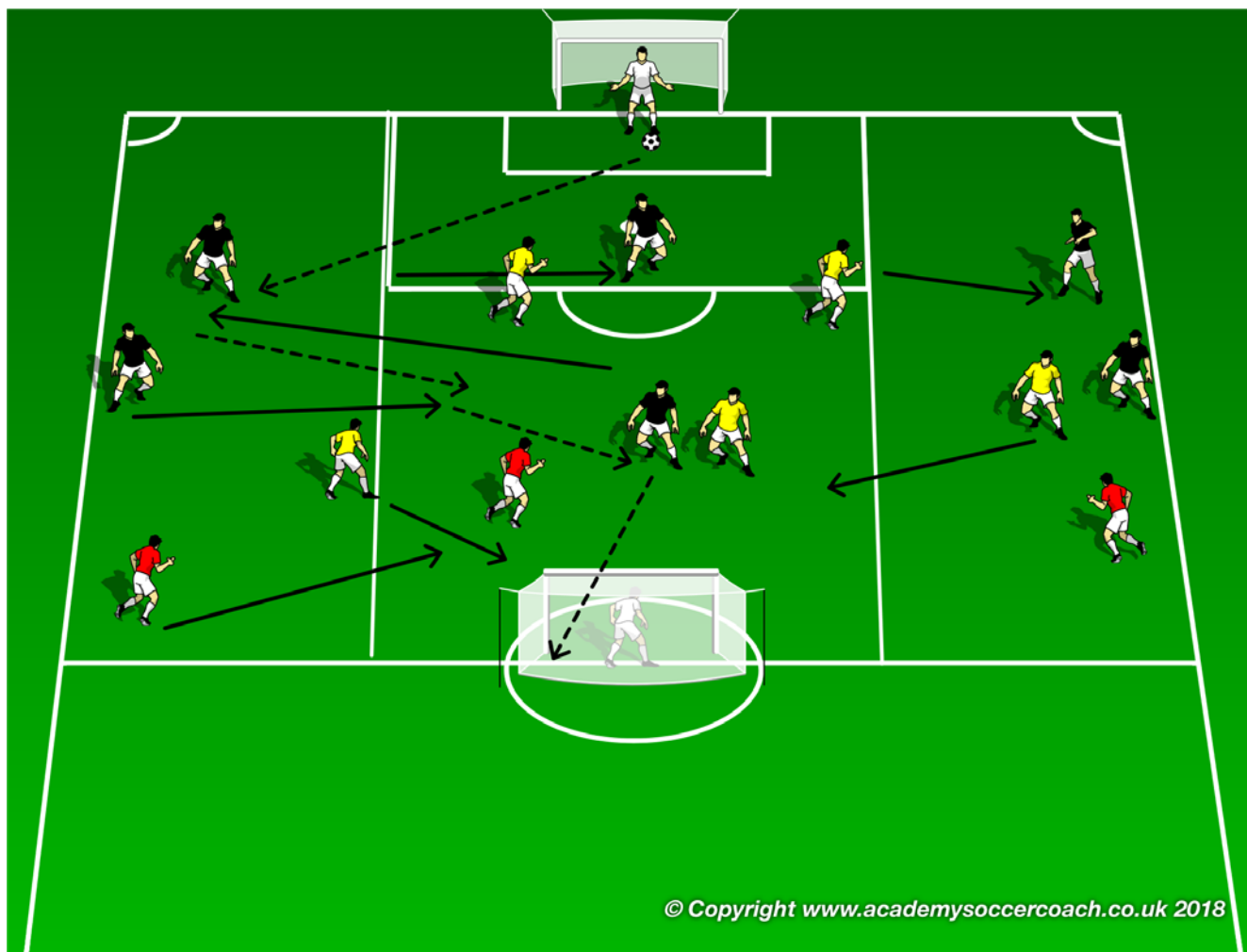


If a defender wins the ball, and wherever the possession is won back, a 4 + 3 v 6 + gk is played to finish in the goal, where the moves started. The players must be active inside the area, where they are placed. The goal worth double if the move is developed and finished in the center area.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, a 4+3+gk v 6+gk possession game is created; the red free player supports the new team in possession now.

**Eye on:** pass from the flanks using the middle players as link players to switch the side.

## Exercise 24: 6 + 3 + gk v 5 + gk (2)



**Set-up and Sequence:** A half of a regular field is divided into three areas vertically. 2 black players are placed inside each area, as well as 1 yellow and 1 red free player. The goalkeeper is in possession.

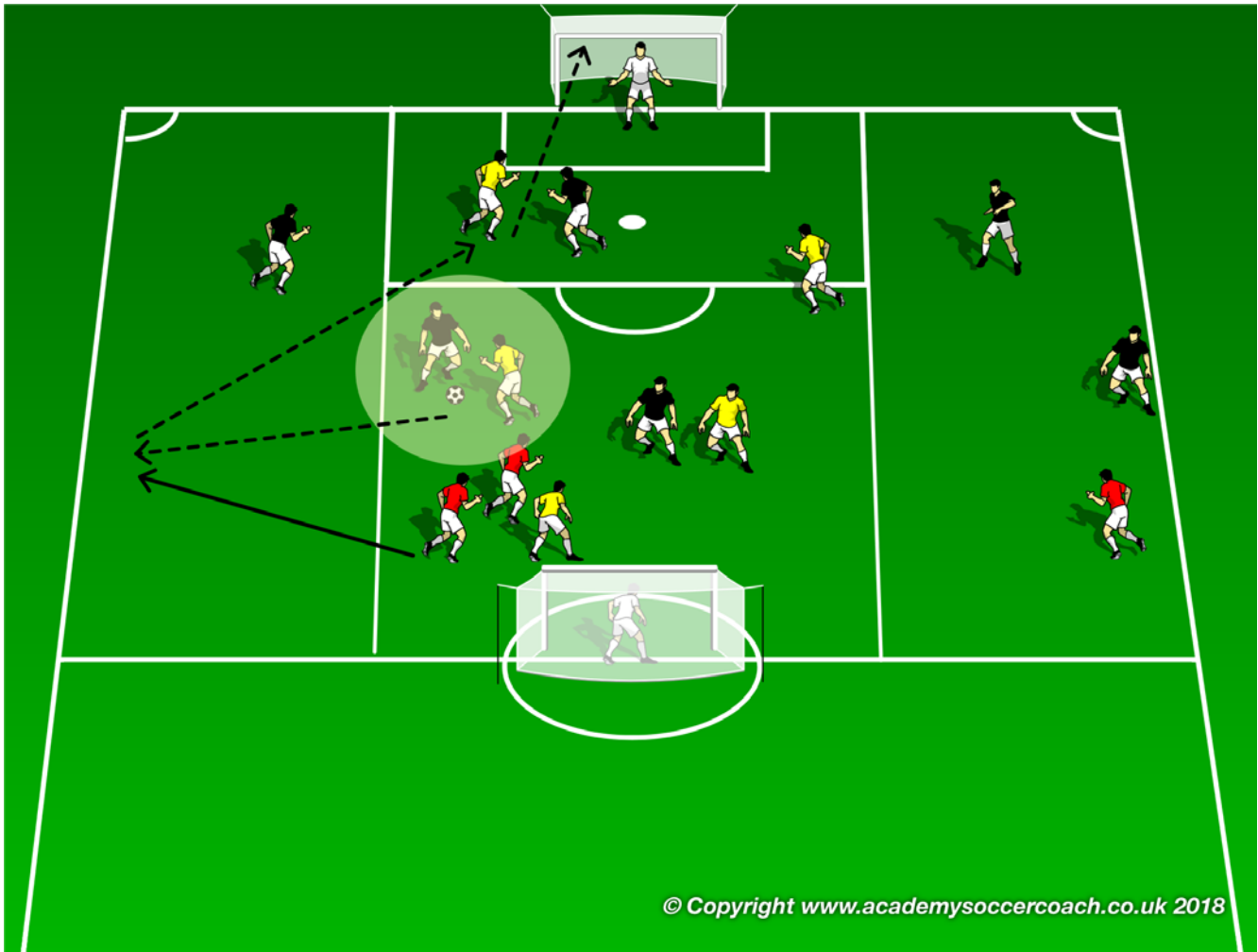
The black players shape the first two lines of three and the reds shape the third one, before the opposition goal. The building up phase starts with an outside pass (on the right in the picture) and then through the overloaded center space. The yellow players are free to move all around, but they must overload the center to prevent the forwards from shooting and to win the possession back.

The play out phase has to be developed through the center to send the ball to the last line of red free players. The finishing phase has to be carried out through a forward cutting run of a midfielder from the second line.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, a 6+1 v 6+gk possession game is created. The red free player supports the new team in possession now.

**Eye on:** pass from the flanks using the middle players as link players to switch the side.





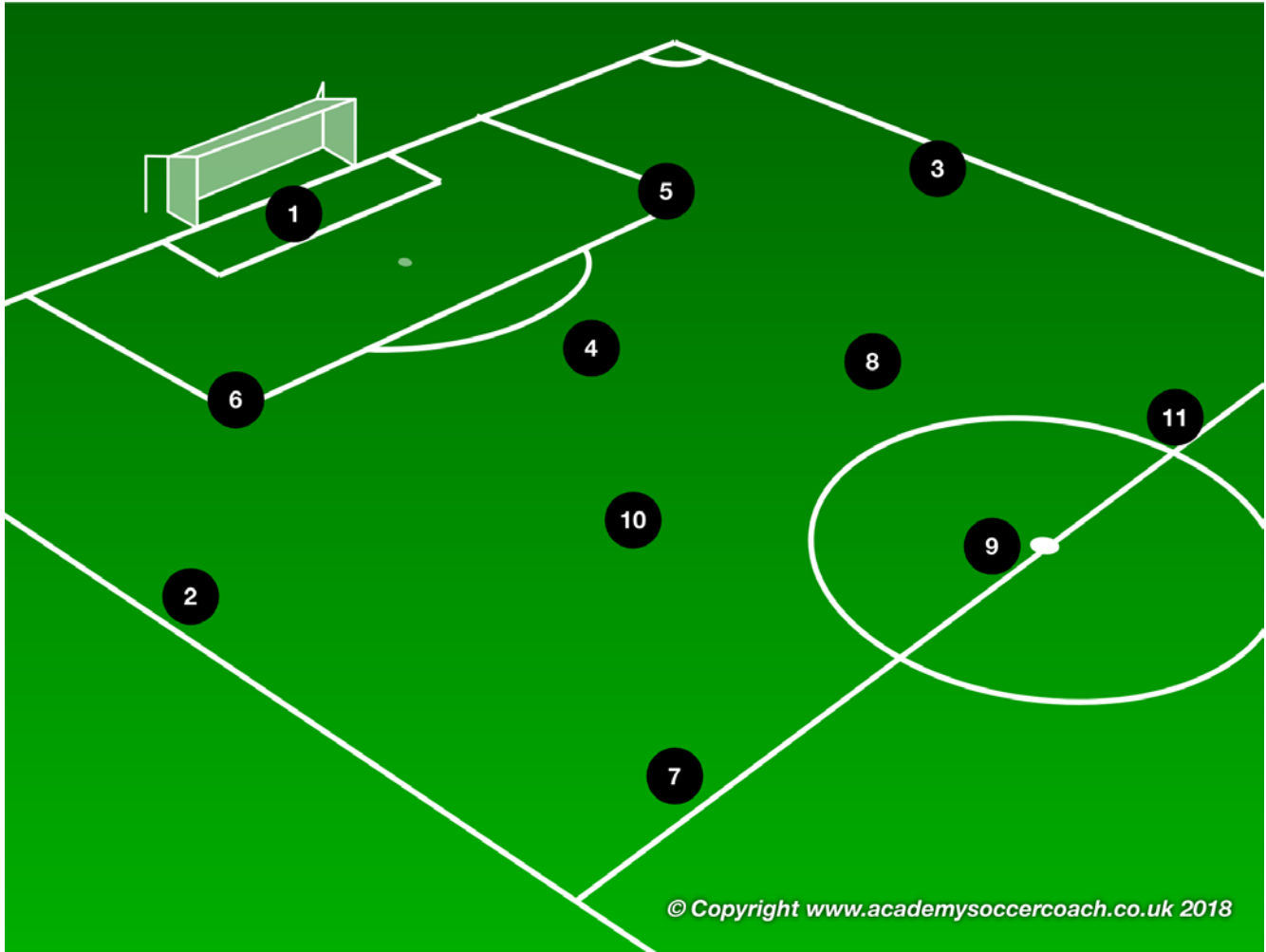
If the defenders win the possession, they must counter attack playing outside first and then finishing in the center.

**Variation:** if the defenders win the ball, a 5+1+gk v 6+gk possession game is created. The red free player supports the new team in possession now.

**Eye on:** overload the center to play out, exchange inside/outside positions.

## Build up from the back with the 1-4-3-3

The basic shape to build up is usually a 1-2-3-2-3 to stretch the opposition by making the pitch as big as possible, which will allow for opening of space as for the 1-4-2-3-1.



Variation 1 – Dropping down the sides of the box to play to the centre backs

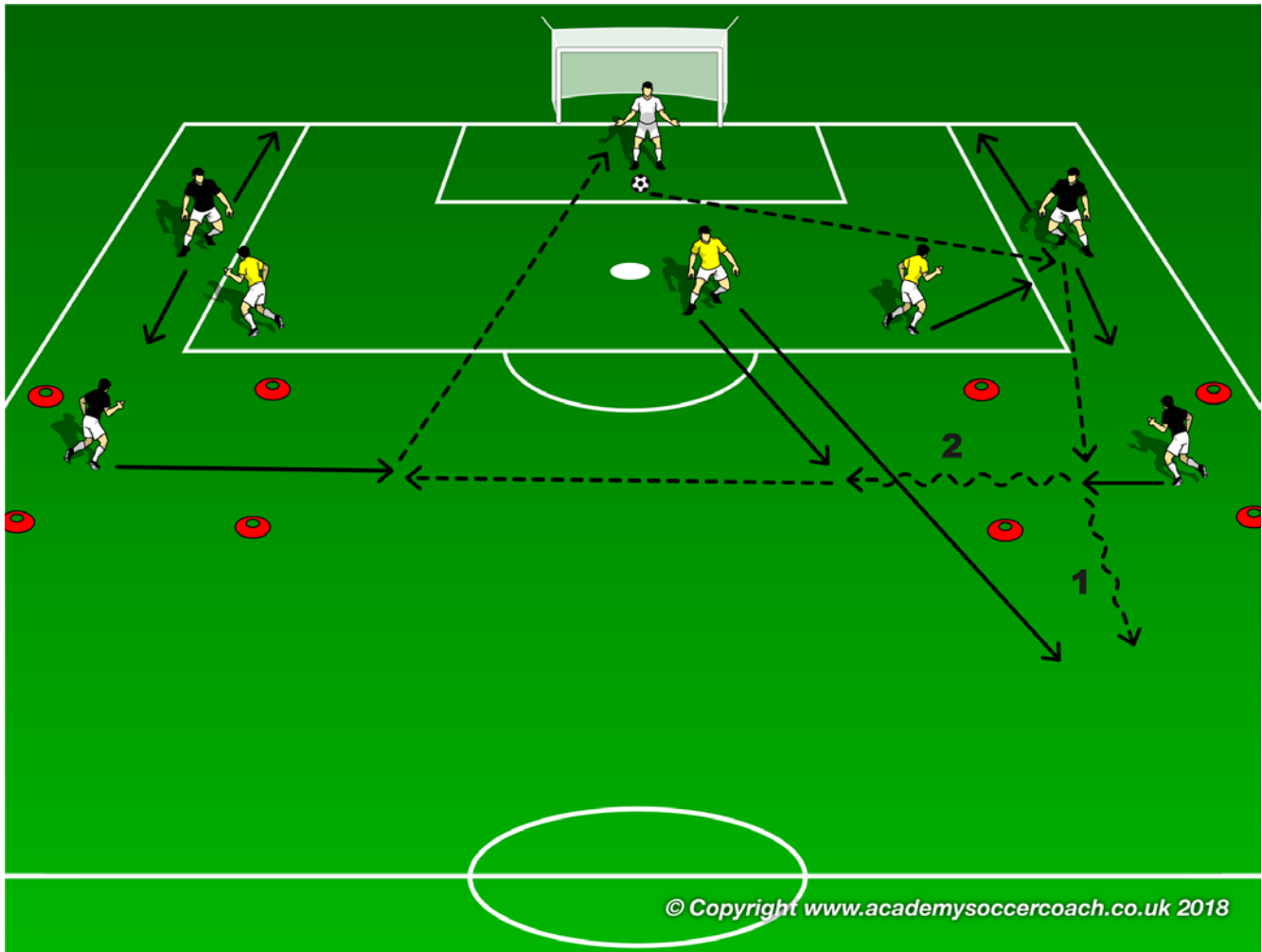
Variation 2 – Dropping down the sides of the box to play to the defensive midfielder

Variation 3 – Playing to the centre back under pressure

Variation 4 – Playing to the defensive midfielder under pressure

Variation 5 – Playing to the defensive midfielder in a situational back three

### Exercise 25 (for variation 1):



**Set-up and Sequence:** a quarter of a regular field is used in this exercise. 2 square areas are placed on the flanks just out of the penalty area and 2 fullbacks play inside them. The center backs move along the sides of the penalty area. 3 yellow players are placed along the borders of the penalty area as defenders. The goalkeeper is in possession.

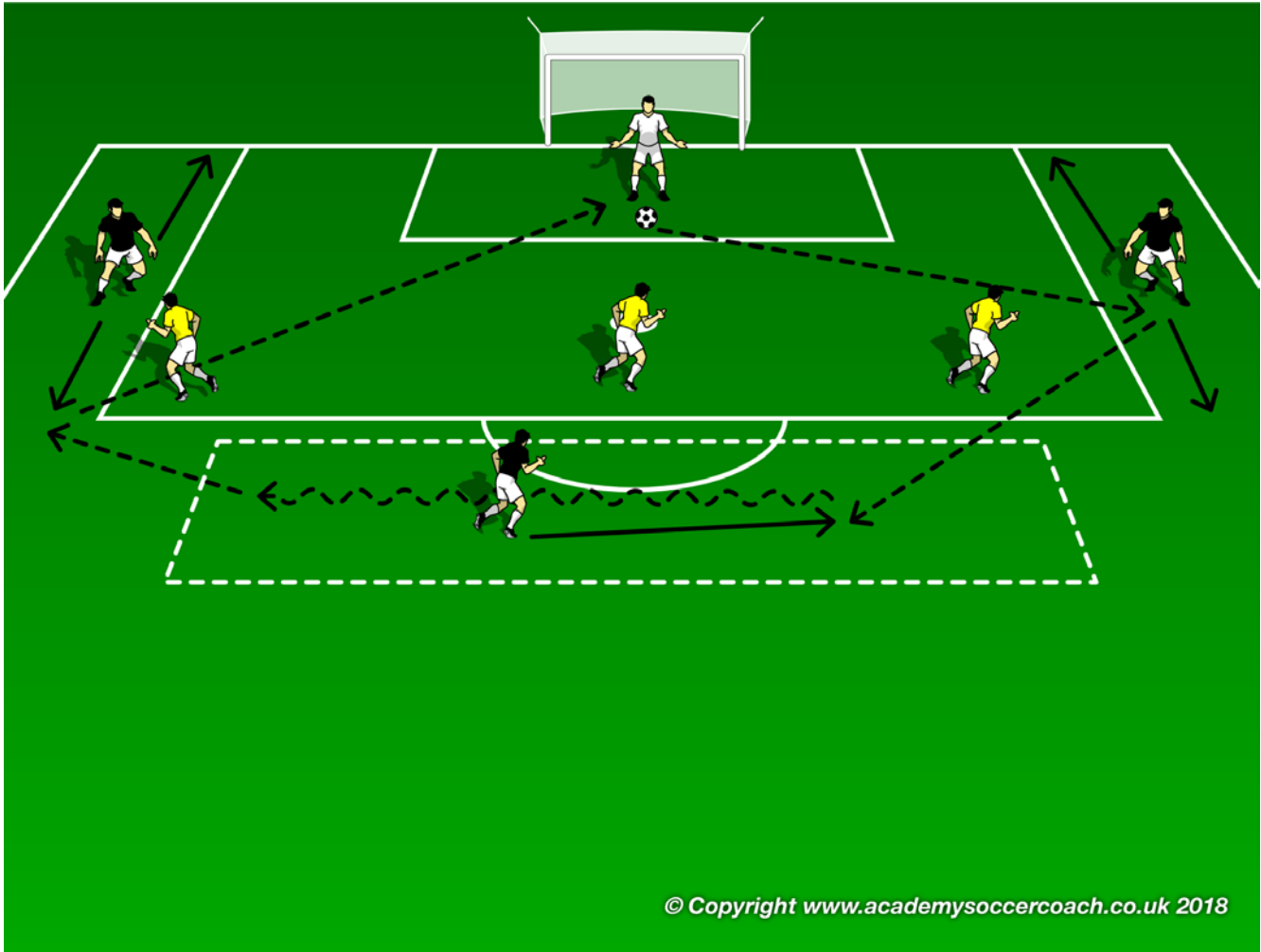
The goalkeeper decides which the center back receives (the left one in the picture); as the center back receives, he plays forward toward the next square area, where the fullback is free to play until a defender comes inside from the penalty area to counter him. The center back is under pressure of a yellow player.

The fullback can decide to dribble forward or toward the center to combine with the opposite fullback, who shifts across the center and he passes back to the goalkeeper to start the sequence again.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure

## Exercise 26 (for variation 2): 3 v 3 to overcome the first pressure line



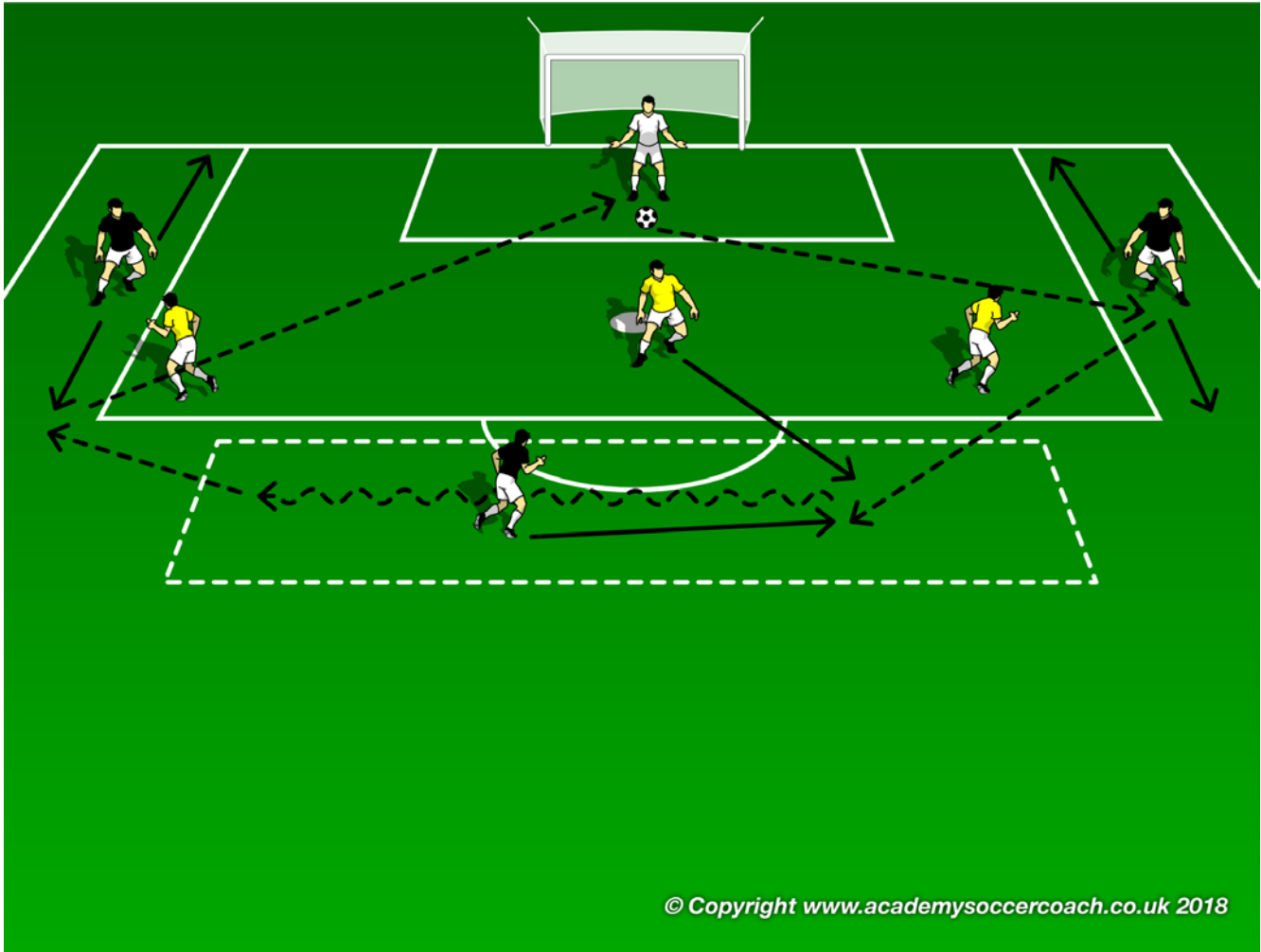
**Set-up and Sequence:** a rectangular zone is placed out of the penalty area, where a balance midfielder plays. 2 center backs move along the sides of the penalty area and 3 yellow players act as defenders along the borderlines of the penalty area.

The goalkeeper decides which center back receives (the left one in the picture); as the center back receives, he plays forward to the balance player, overcoming the line of pressure of the yellow players. The balance midfielder is free to receive and to play to switch the side, playing toward the opposite center back, who passes back to the goalkeeper to start the sequence again.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure and switch the side as soon as possible.

**Exercise 27 (for variation 2)-progression: 3 v 3 to overcome the first pressure line and following 1 v 1**



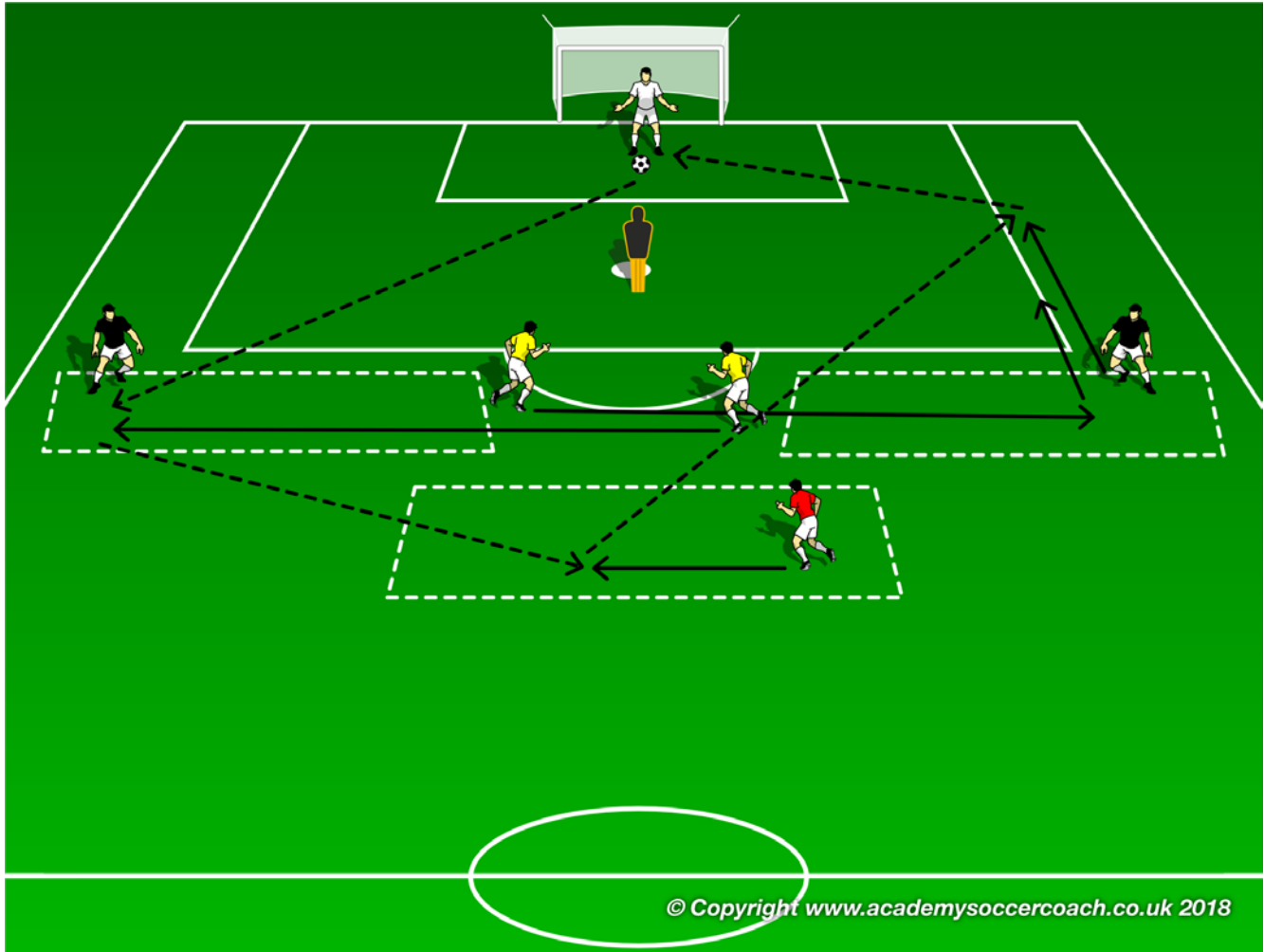
**Set-up and Sequence:** a rectangular zone is placed out of the penalty area, where a balance midfielder plays. Two center backs move along the sides of the penalty area and three yellow players act as defenders along the borderlines of the penalty area.

The goalkeeper decides which center back receives (the left one in the picture); as the center back receives, he plays forward to the balance player, overcoming the line of pressure of the yellow players. The balance midfielder is under pressure of a yellow player, who runs out the penalty area; the objective is to switch the side, playing toward the opposite center back, who passes back to the goalkeeper to start the sequence again.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure and switch the side as soon as possible.

**Exercise 28 (for variation 3):**



**Set-up and Sequence:** 3 rectangular areas are placed out of the penalty area, as in the picture. 1 balance midfielder plays inside the center one and 2 center backs move around the wide ones. 2 yellow defenders are placed between the outer area and 1 air-body is placed in the middle of the penalty area. The goalkeeper is in possession.

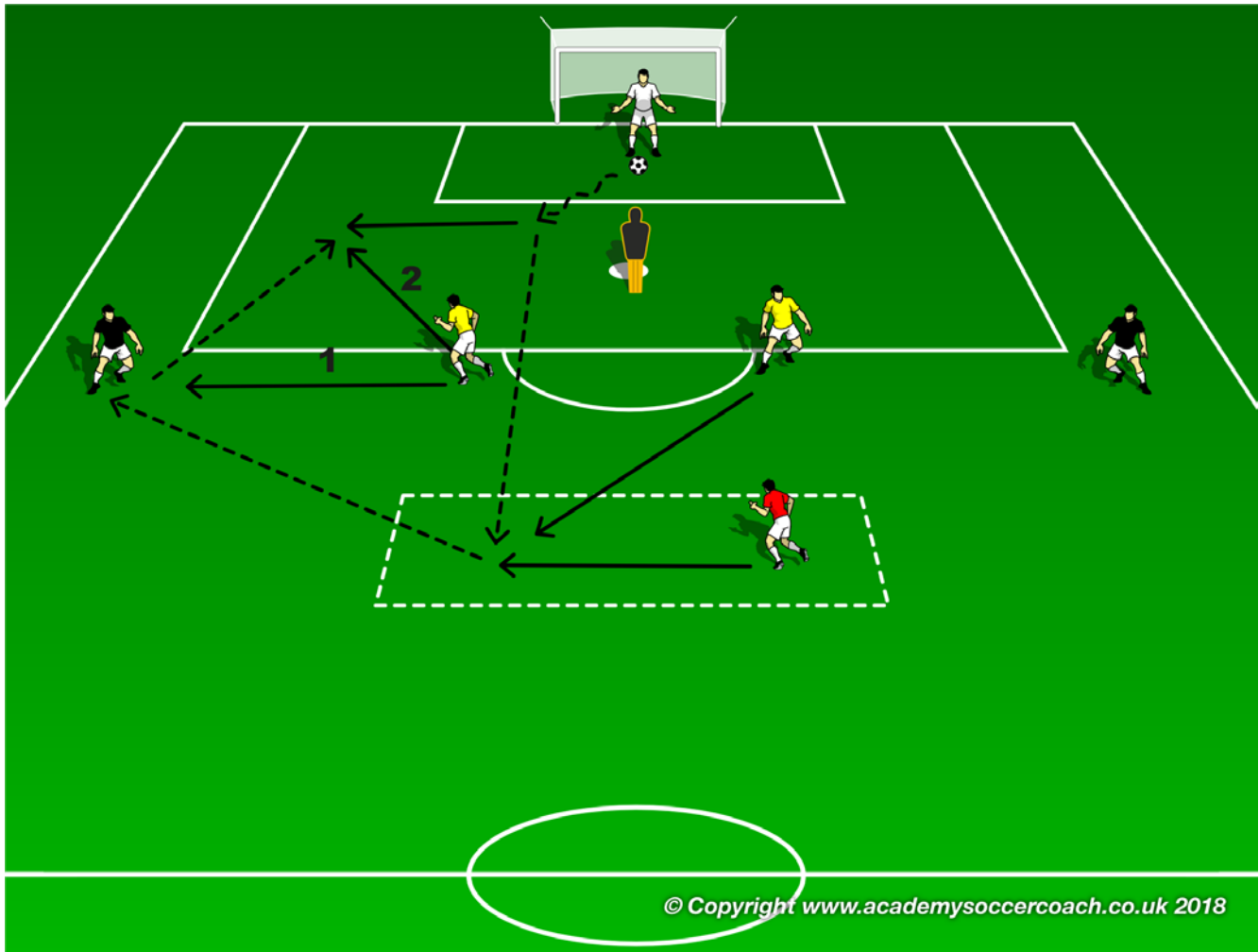
The goalkeeper decides which center back receives (the right one in the picture); as the center back receives, he plays forward to the balance player, overcoming the line of pressure of the yellow player who is running to counter him.

The center backs must be unmarked on a different line of the center air-body. The balance midfielder plays to switch the side toward the opposite center back, who then passes back to the goalkeeper to start the sequence again.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure and switch the side as soon as possible.

**Exercise 29 (for variation 4):**



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 rectangular area is placed out of the penalty area as in the picture. 1 balance midfielder plays inside it and 2 center backs move around the corners of the penalty area. 2 yellow defenders are placed between the outer area and the borderline of the penalty area. 1 air-body is placed in the middle of the penalty area. The goalkeeper is in possession.

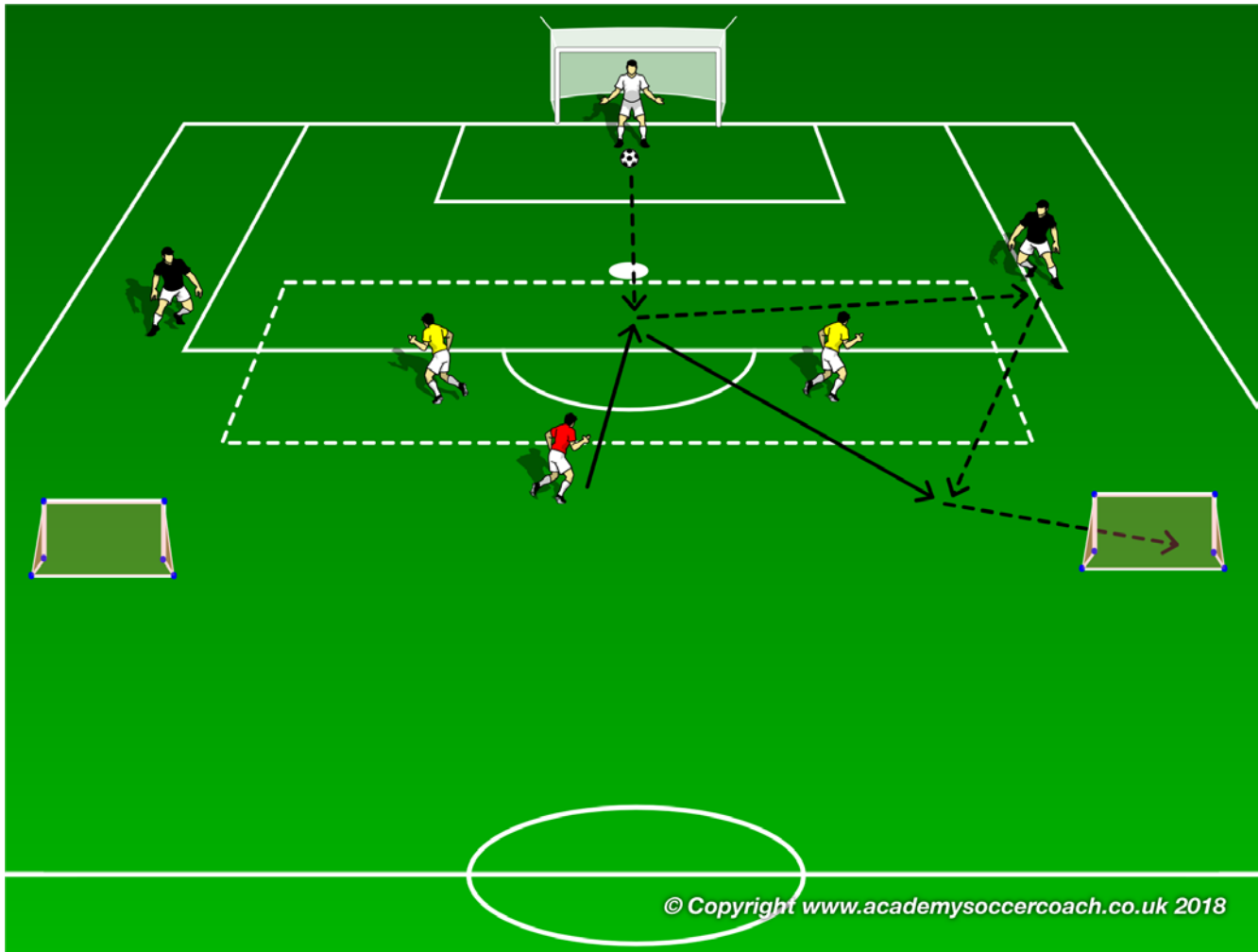
The goalkeeper passes the ball to the center balance player, who must be unmarked at the back of the air-body, as the goalkeeper must be able to see him; as he receives, he passes out toward the nearest center back, who then passes back to start the sequence again.

The first defender runs inside the center area to counter the balance player and the second one put pressure on the center back as he receives.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure and switch the side as soon as possible.

### Exercise 30 (for variation 5)



**Set-up and Sequence:** 1 rectangular area is placed on the border as centerline of the penalty area, as in the picture. 1 balance midfielder is placed just out of it and 2 center backs move around the corners of the penalty area. 2 yellow defenders are placed inside the center area. The goalkeeper is in possession.

The goalkeeper passes the ball to the center balance player, who drops back to receive; as he receives, he passes out toward the nearest center back, who then passes forward on the run of the balance player, who can finish in one of the mini goals.

The defenders are free to press the balance player all over the center area and to close the passing lanes toward the mini goals.

If the defenders win the ball, they can counter attack directly.

**Eye on:** pass quickly before being under pressure and finish as soon as possible.





**Variation:** if the goalkeeper passes the ball to one of the center backs, the balance midfielder drops back to receive and to switch the side, toward the opposite center back, who must score in the mini goals as soon as possible.

The defenders must play as in the previous practice.