

CREATING CHAOS



by Matt Carroll

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Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 4
Chaos Practice Elements	Page 5
4-Bad Calls	
4-PK Pressure Situations	
4-Various Ball Sizes	
5-Using Music to Recreate Tempo	
5-Socks/Tape for Dominant Foot	
5-Removing Key Players	
6-Headbands	
Chaos Rondos	Page 8
8-Two Team Rondo	
11-Rondo Death Star	
14-Rondo Progression	
17-Breakout Rondo	
20-Hurt Locker	
Chaos to Recreate Shooting Scenarios	Page 24
24-2v1 Striker Madness	
28-Killer Pass Transitions	
31-POMO Chaos	
Chaos to Build the Press/Break the Press/Recreate the Transition	Page 35
35-Transition to Attack	
38-No Elimination Knockout	
41-Transition Keep Away	
Chaos to Create Mental Awareness	Page 45
45-Color Recognition Game	
48-Cone Race	
Final Conclusion	Page 52

Introduction

Soccer is a sport that is dependent on such minute variables that hitting the post is seen as unlucky or even, in games with less on the line, nearly as good as a goal. This is a phenomenon that American Football kickers do not enjoy, as evidenced by the 2018 playoffs. To score a goal players must execute their technique to near perfection while avoiding any one of the other 19 field players, the goalkeeper, and keep the ball under the bar. Players can, and need to, practice their form in order to execute it at a moment's notice but the situations they will see in the game are so incredibly varied that players can never really recreate accurately the pressure, setting, angle, sights, and mental state they will be in during a shot on target. Nor will the placement of the other players, the positioning of the goalie, or the noise from the staff and fans ever be the same. This reality extends beyond shooting, to every single aspect of the game as well. That is why it is my firm belief that to truly prepare players for a game, practice needs to have varying elements of chaos sewn into it as much as possible.

Chaos is defined as “complete disorder and confusion” and at times soccer can embody this definition. Compared to football and baseball, with their clear stop and starts and choreography, soccer is chaotic. It is a mess of 22 bodies in near constant movement adjusting to the random bounce of an inflated ball. A ball is punted 30 feet into the air and players, being jostled by an opposing player, in the air, must correctly strike the ball within a millimeter of accuracy to propel that ball forward. A millimeter to the left and it lands at the opposing striker's feet, a millimeter back and it jumps over the player's own keeper. Positions, other than goalie, have no specific set of rules like in American Football. The left back may score the winning goal, and vice versa the striker may make a goal line clearance. The right midfielder may end up marking a player all the way on the left side of the field. The false nine is now common practice, but now the “false two” is coming into vogue with an outside back playing as a central midfielder in attack and back in defense. There is no way to effectively prepare for every situation your players may face, but by introducing chaos into practice players will be at least willing to adapt to it. You will see professional coaches blame the referee, grounds crew, medical staff, heat, cold, an unfair red card, a blown call, VAR, lack of VAR, type of ball used, fixture congestion, lack of competitive games, the sun, the floodlights, injuries, wind, and any other myriad of problems that made it impossible for their team to succeed. These are variables they cannot change, and if they cannot change them then the loss cannot be their fault, right? Wrong- their players, if the coach is to be believed, failed to adjust to the problem presented to them.

Implementing chaos into practice can come in many forms and it can improve players in equally as many ways. Some of these advantages include:

- Improve visual scanning and awareness
- Ability to adjust to various scenarios
- Make players mentally flexible (go with the flow and still perform)
- Improve positional awareness
- Create more consistent players
- Make every practice interesting

Chaos Practice Elements

While there are specific drills that will be discussed in this book, attempting to recreate the chaos found in different situations in the game, there are different, simple practice methods that can be implemented on a daily basis to make players more mentally flexible.

Bad Calls: Referees have an incredibly difficult job, and respect for them should be taught to every level of player, but they make mistakes. Most of these are innocent mistakes, but occasionally you will be assigned a referee who took the job for the wrong reasons. It could be they want to show their power and verbally berate your players, or they have some connection to your opposition, or worse your fans have said something to him/her and you won't be getting a call your way for the rest of the game. These incidents may be rare, since most referees just want to call a straight game, and you may want to call the assigner afterwards, but in the heat of the moment you and your players cannot control the situation and therefore you need to be prepared. To do this in practice my staff and I will select a player/team/or particular part of the game to focus on when we are reffing a game in practice. We may allow a ball to roll two feet out of bounds and not make the call; initially the defending team will stop playing and the attacking team will take advantage of it by going on the attack. At this point we usually have to address "palms up" behavior and give the "play to the whistle" talk. We have one particular referee who tends to make remarks to players and is very demonstrative if a player shows any sign of dissent. When we know that he is going to be reffing a game we try to recreate those situations in practice as much as possible. We find that our players are then able to better control their emotions in the heat of the moment no matter the referee or situation.

PK Pressure Situations: We call this situation the "three whistle" drill. At any point in practice if the players hear three quick whistles they all know to immediately jog to the endline, this could be done during transitions between activities, at the end of a water break, or even in the middle of a particular activity. We then choose, or allow a player to volunteer, to step up to take a PK. If they miss, the whole team will need to do some sort of conditioning/lose out on a privilege/etc. so there is pressure on the kick taker to sink their shot. If they miss, it is important to that every player come up to them, give

them a high five/hug/pat on the back and reassure them. What this does is remind the player that no matter what happens their teammates have their back and this will give them a mental boost the next time they are in a pressure situation. If they make the shot every player must celebrate with that kick taker and it is a massive boost for team spirit and the individual who scored.

Various Ball Sizes: This is especially effective during indoor practices, but can be used outdoor as well. Replacing the normal practice ball provides some chaos within the game as players are forced to readjust to a new and constantly changing variable. They are forced to truly focus on their touch and the weight of their passes, the more change the more they have to focus, while still dealing with the endless variables the game itself provides. A drop from size 5 to 3 is the most common change, but coaches can get creative with this. The most effective way to do this is to have a coach with a pile of various balls stand on the touch line and throw/punt new balls in whenever there is a reset. The size/quality/and amount of air in the ball can be varied, in addition kickballs, reaction balls, basketballs, or even a football can be utilized. The key is to keep players off balance and more ready to react to changes in the game at a moment's notice.

Using Music to Recreate Tempo: It is no secret that if you want players enjoy practice more you can play music for them. Players love it, but stopping and starting the music to yell out key points to your players and dealing with inappropriate music can be a headache for coaching staffs. With that you will have to find a balance, or whether you allow it at all. The reason they love it is the music makes the situation feel like the movies, it ups the tempo to any drill, but during a game there is no music, and the game is very rarely 80 minutes of high tempo adrenaline. The game has peaks and valleys, and your players must be able to operate mentally, tactically, and technically during every phase of the game. To recreate the tempo drops try playing hardcore fast music, then following it up with a slow song. We prefer blasting some hard rock, then throwing "Cheeseburger in Paradise" on the speaker. You will initially see that players' intensity increases during the faster music, but then will drop during the slower songs. With time and practice players will be able to control their emotion and maintain their level of play no matter the song. This will then translate to the game, and players that are able to deal appropriately with the ebbs and flow of the tempo of the game. In addition, pumping in crowd noise during pressure PK situations always adds a sense of realism to the experience.

Socks/Tape for Dominant Foot: This is a strategy used by a number of Brazilian academies to train young players to be dual-footed. The coach provides each player with either a sock or a piece of tape that denotes their strong foot. The defense then knows immediately to attack that foot to force them weak side. In the academies players

are forced to wear the socks until the coaching staff deems that they are adequately dual footed, there is even a small ceremony for the player in question. This is a sound long term strategy, but it can also be used sparingly to create chaos situations where players are allowed to play their regular game the practice or previous drill, and then all the sudden having defenders lunging at their strong side. This is another example of presenting players with a series of challenges that they must overcome while forcing them to improve technically.

Removing Key Players: Injuries and cards are part of the game. There are countless stories of a team losing a key player and their season falling to pieces. While it can be devastating, being prepared for this type of situation can better help your players overcome the challenge when the time comes (this can also help with teams who become far too dependent on one or two players). The coaching staff should select 1-4 players that have some significance to the team (a strike pairing, the captains, the back four) and have an assistant coach run a separate technical practice for the players in question. The team then runs the activity, or the whole practice, without those key players. The team then learns to play with that player's replacement, the replacement gets valuable first team reps, and players are forced to find ways to win without those players. Even if the team never has to play without the key players in a game situation they will be more confident in finding a Plan B if the key player is marked out or having an off day.

Headbands: Every coach would agree, players need to scan the field more. Too many times players make a mistake that could have been easily vetoed had they turned their head only inches one way or the other. This idea works best when players have matching training kits, but works equally as well if players simply all wear the same color pinny. Players wear headbands, strings, hats, or just tie pinnies around their heads. This creates a chaotic situation where everyone wearing matching colors, this then forces players to pick their heads up and read visual cues that they cannot recognize with their heads down.

Chaos Rondos

Although it is an often overused adage, Johan Cruyff's thoughts on the rondo, "Everything that goes on in a match, except shooting, you can do in a rondo," have stood the test of time. The rondo itself is form of chaos with the high intensity passing, short range, and limited decision making time, therefore they are a perfect tool to add some chaos to your session. There really is endless options of ways to modify and adapt the rondo to your team's needs but here is a few activities and their various uses.

Name: Two Team Rondo

Description:

The two team rondo is an activity designed to improve player's vision and mental conditioning by creating a series of distractions that increase as the activity proceeds, but still requires all the base technical elements to be executed to precision throughout

Setup:

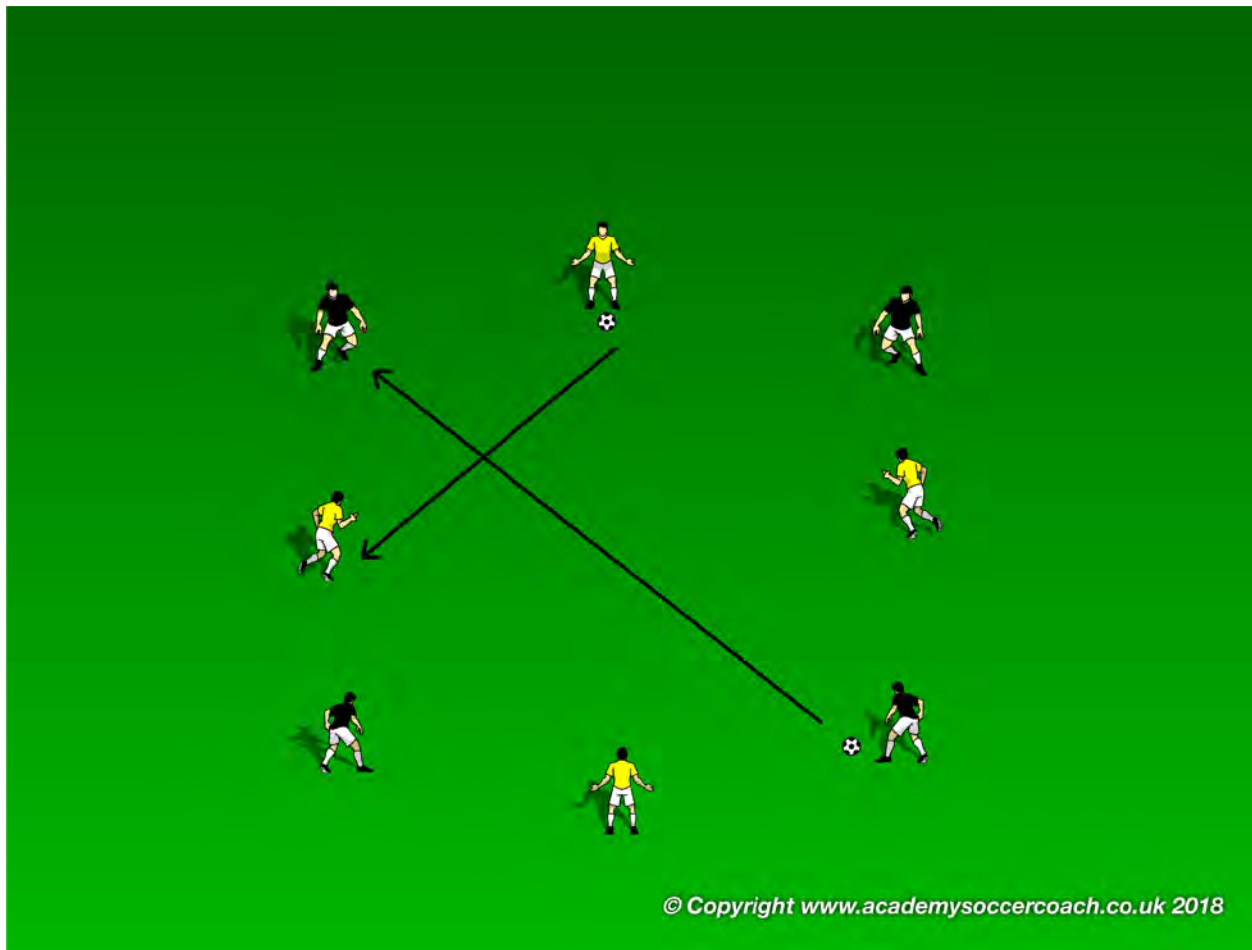
Set up a normal rondo with every alternating player wearing a different colored bib. Give a ball to a player with one color bib, and one to the other.



Execution:

Begin the game as a normal rondo with the stipulation that the players cannot pass to the player on their team directly to the left and right of them, and must play either one or

two touch. If the balls that are in play touch both teams need to do some sort of conditioning (push ups, sit ups, jumping jacks, etc.)



As the drill progresses and the players become more comfortable with the rhythm and technique add a player from each team in the middle. If the player in the middle wins the ball they should pass to their own team so that the team that won the ball now is possessing with two balls. Players on the outside of the rondo can only win possession of a ball if the ball is passed directly to them by the opposition.



Variations:

To increase the hectic nature of the drill additional balls can be added, for example each team plays with two balls.

To create additional distractions a small tennis ball can be added that players must throw to each other. If the player with the ball receives a pass while holding the ball, or the ball is dropped or held for longer than three seconds the group as a whole must do some sort of conditioning

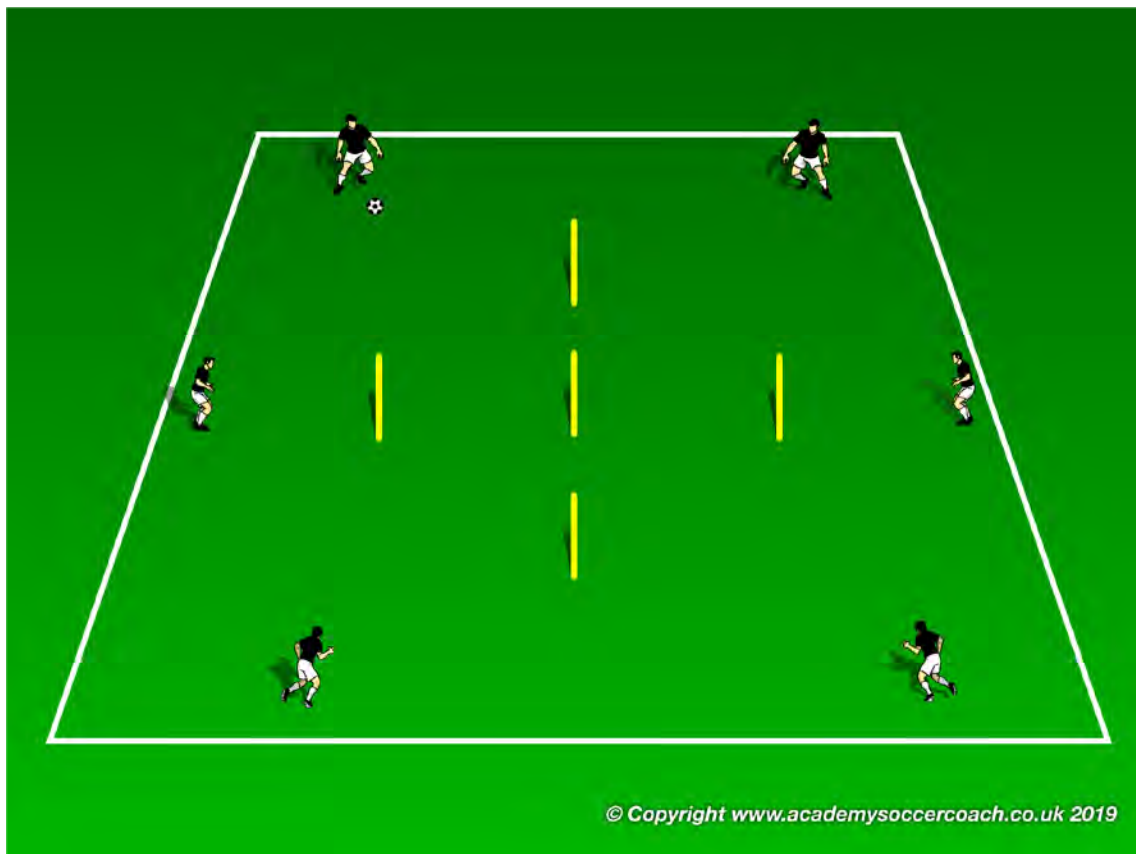
Rondo Death Star

Description:

This multi-ball rondo forces players to scan the field to recognize passing opportunities and stimuli from multiple angles. The use of the middle coaching stick grid alleviates the problem of players figuring out a pattern and leads to increasing randomness and creativity.

Setup:

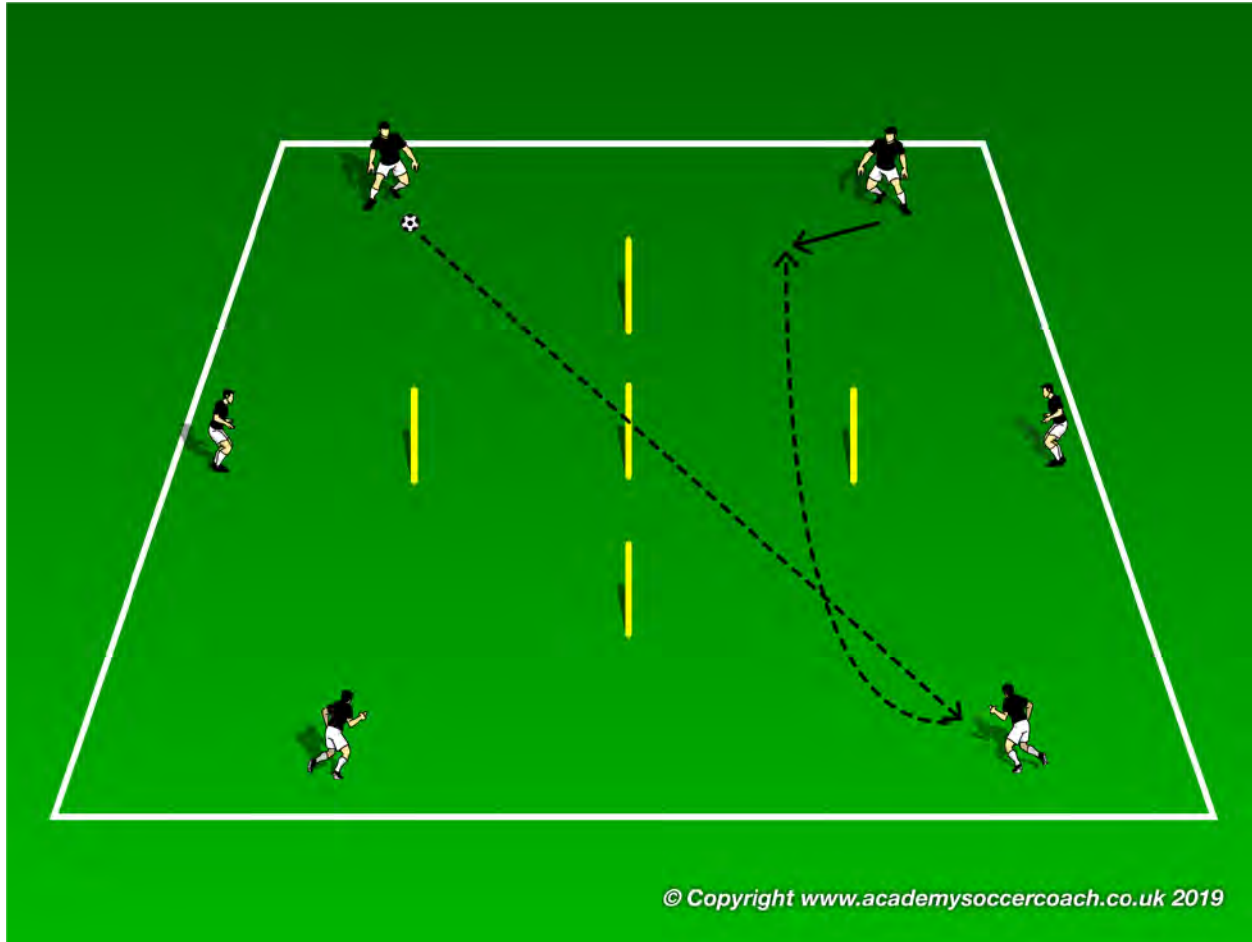
A rondo circle is set up with coaching sticks set up in a plus sign with a single stick in the middle. Depending on the number of players there should be 1-5 balls.



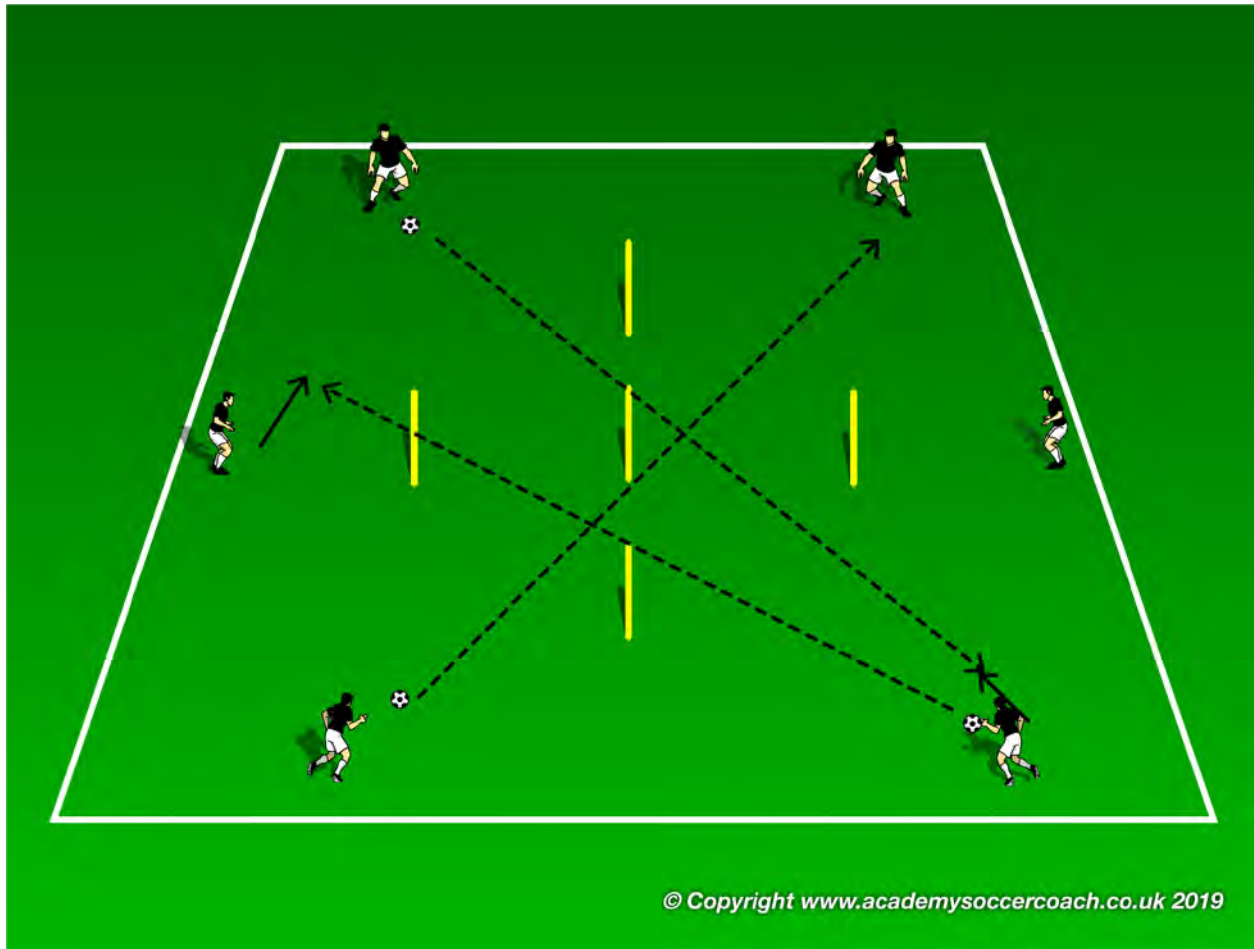
Execution:

Start the session with one ball and the team in the rondo shape. The ball must be passed two touch through at least two of the coaching sticks. The ball cannot go back through the same two sticks that it just went through. Play stops if a ball touches a coaching stick, a player uses more than two touches, two balls touch, a ball goes

beyond the rondo line, a player receives more than one ball, or a ball goes back through the same two coaching sticks. Once play stops, players must do some designated fitness, and then repeat.



As the players become accustomed to the patterns the coach then adds balls into play as players able to handle.



Variations:

A tennis ball can be added to the outside. Players must toss the ball around and play stops if the ball drops or a player with the ball receives a pass.

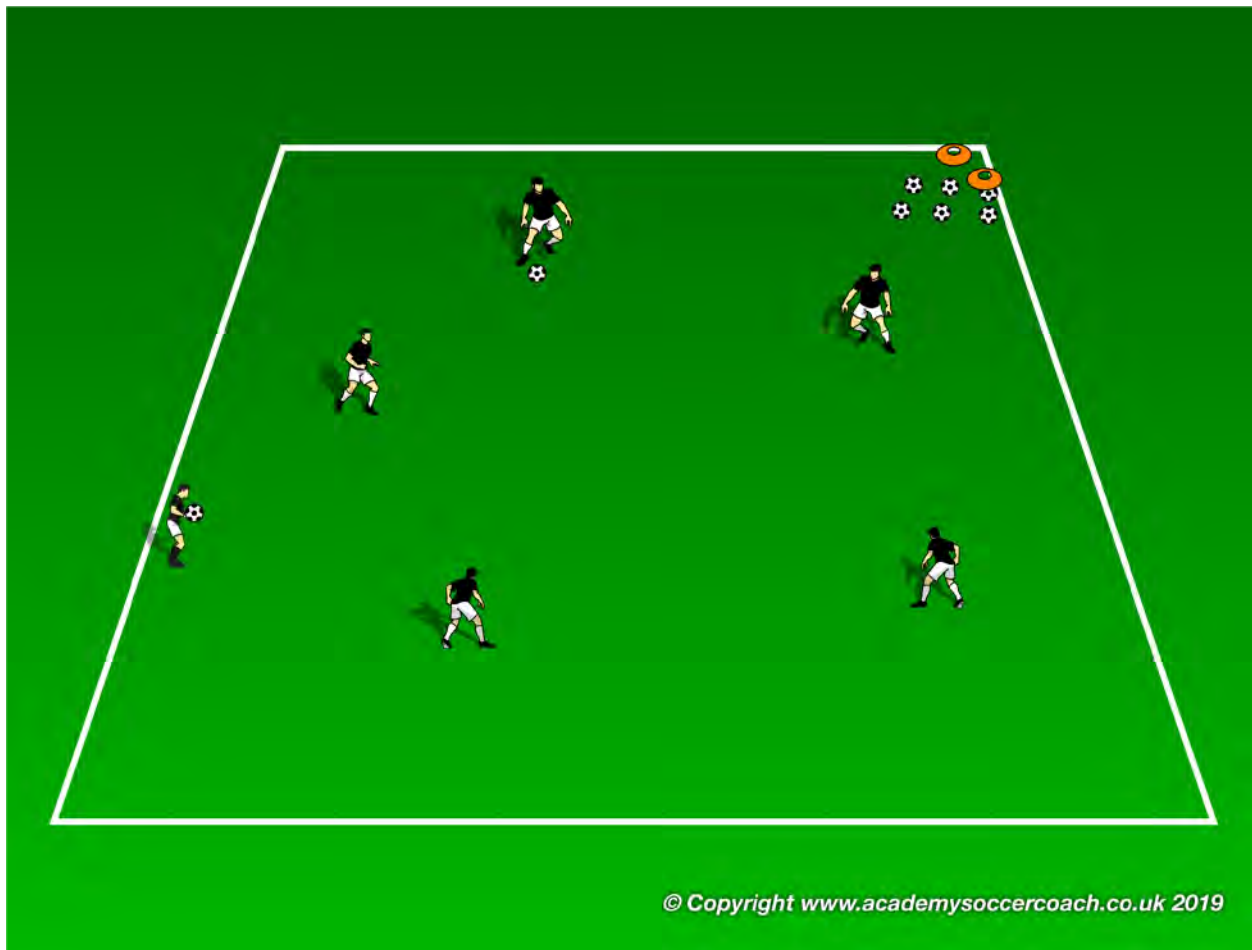
Rondo Progression

Description:

The Rondo Progression is really more of a series of rondos and activities, and is really only limited to the coaches imagination. The point of the activity is to provide as many stimuli to the players as possible and attempt to bring order to the chaos created by the coach. This drill can be used as a simple warm up to every practice if the challenges can be varied to a noticeable degree.

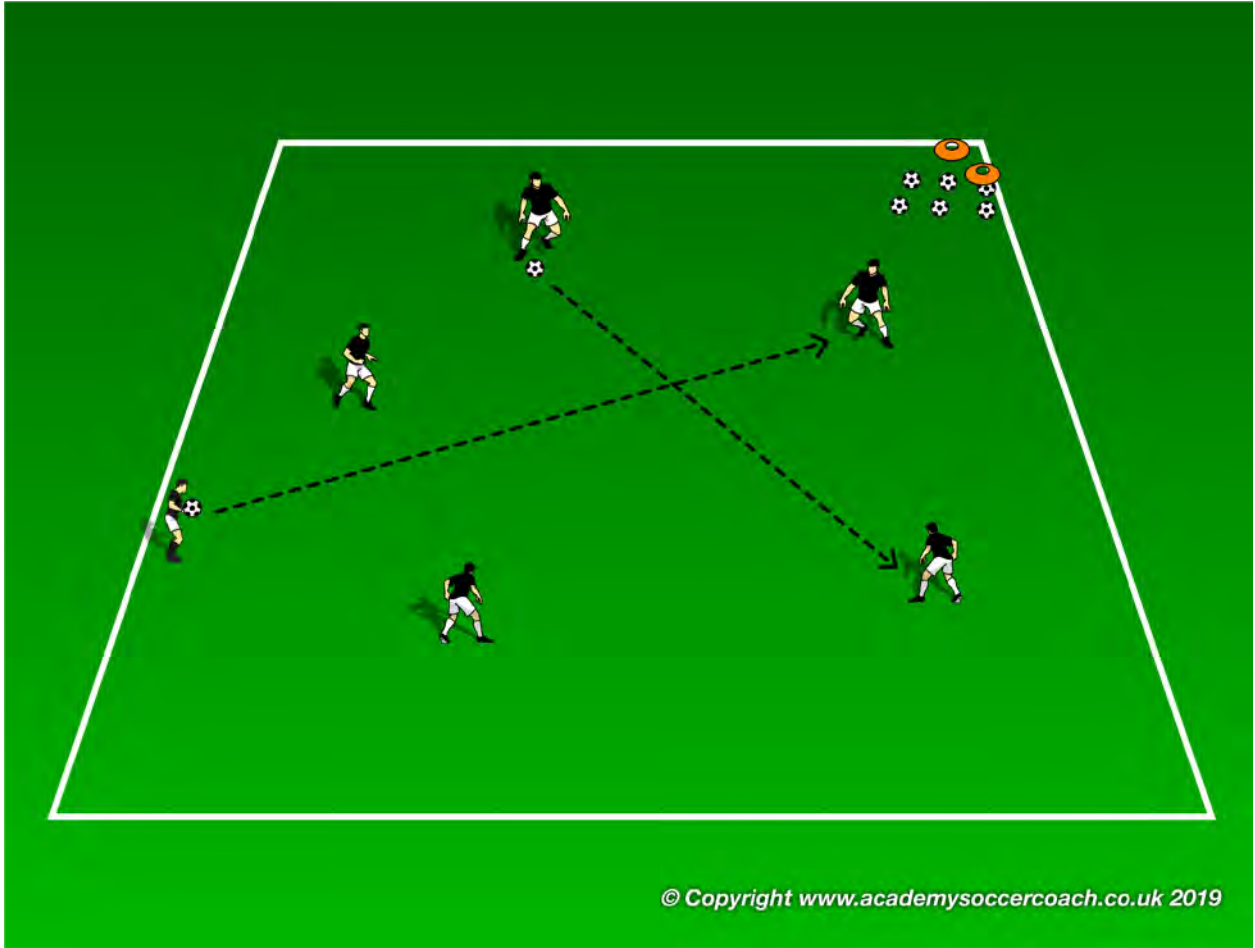
Setup:

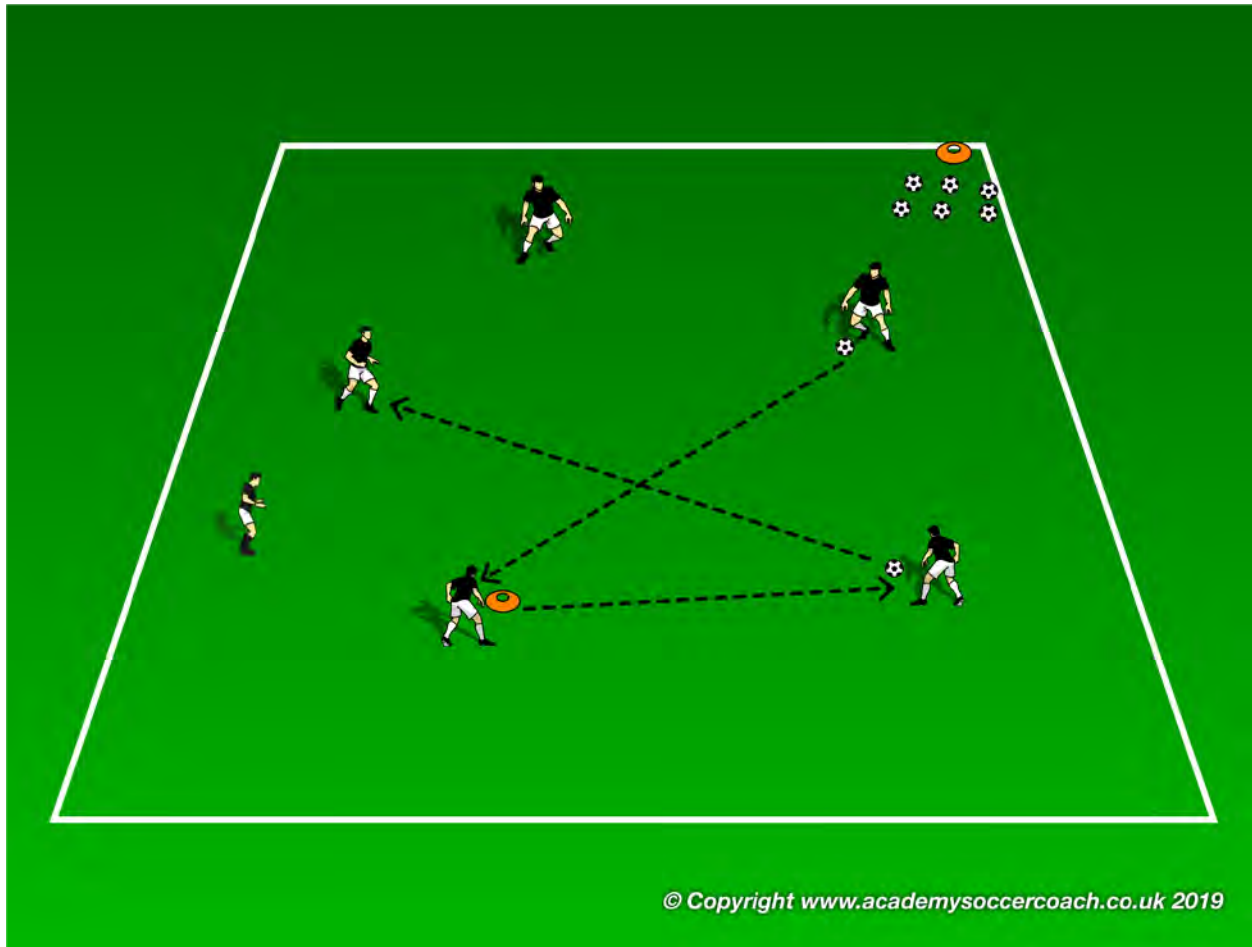
Set up Rondo circle. Balls are placed outside to be quickly replaced. Optional: Have any other types of balls or gear you are going to use on the outside as well.



Execution:

Players play a normal unopposed rondo at first. The coach then progresses from there to two balls within the rondo, then add players throwing a ball to each other with the two balls or throwing a tennis ball/cone/frisbee to each other.





The following rules apply to all progressions: if a ball is played to the player holding a ball the group does some type of brief conditioning work. In addition if any ball comes into contact with another ball, one of the ball drops, or a player is passed two balls at one time, the group conditions.

Variations:

Coaches can get creative here depending on the number of players available and their skill level. As long as the players are being constantly stimulated and forced to make decisions the activity is effective.

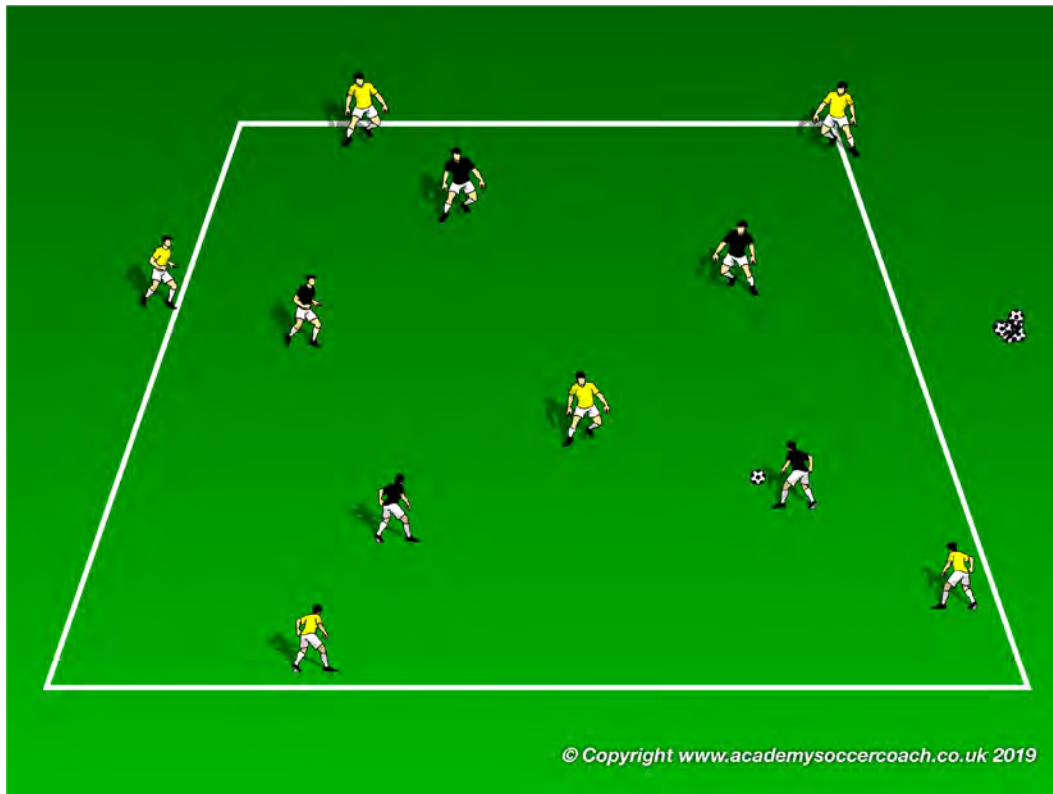
Breakout Rondo

Description:

The Purpose of the Breakout Rondo is to recreate the chaos inherent in transition. Players that are on offense are forced to “flick the switch” to a defensive posture and mindset the moment the ball is lost. Players that have lost the ball must decide whether they should press or drop off to cover their mark, all while finding a body position where they can see both attackers enough that they can make that decision.

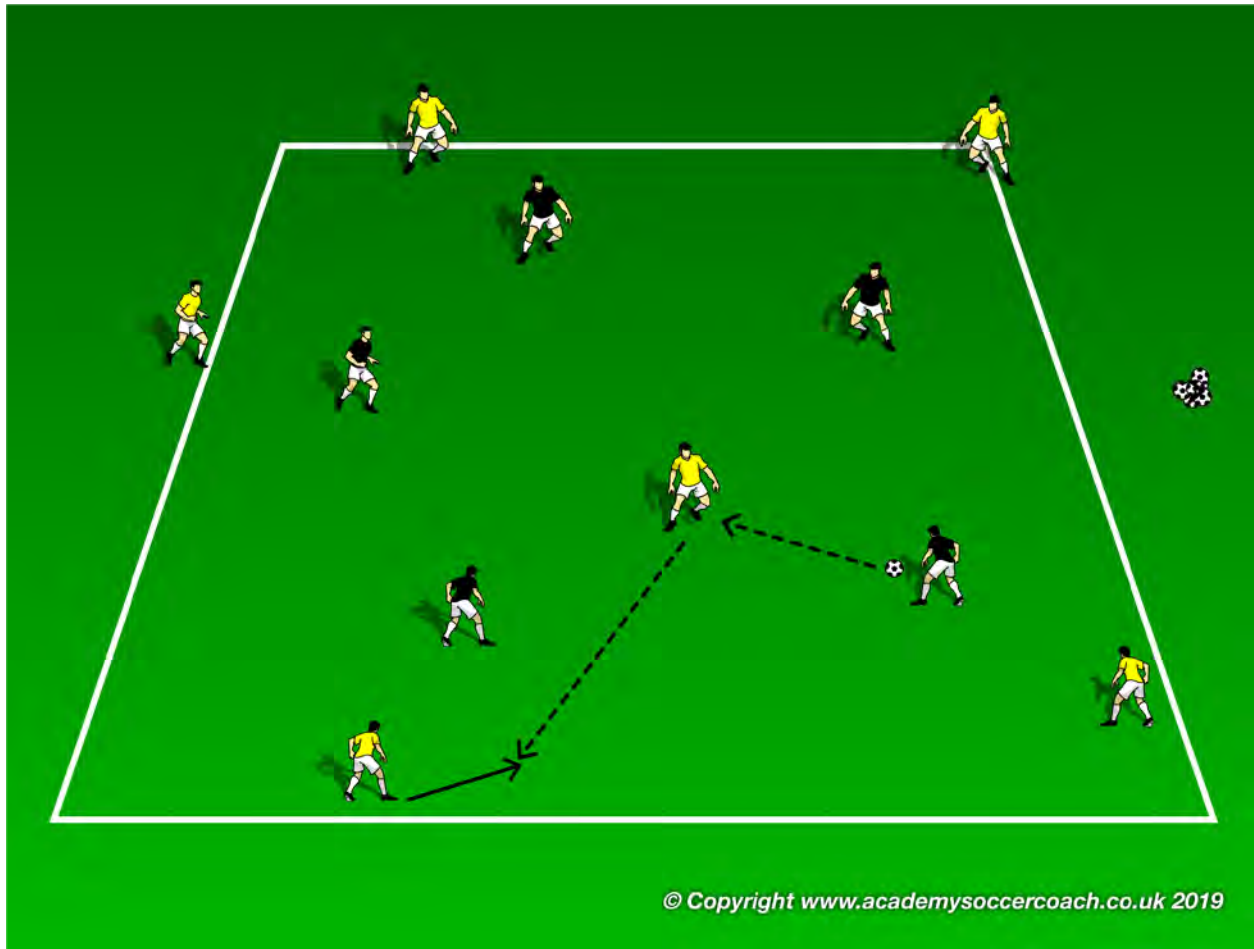
Setup:

Players form a rondo circle (5-8 players) with 1 player in the center. For every player on the inside another player stands 5 feet behind them, creating a larger outer circle.

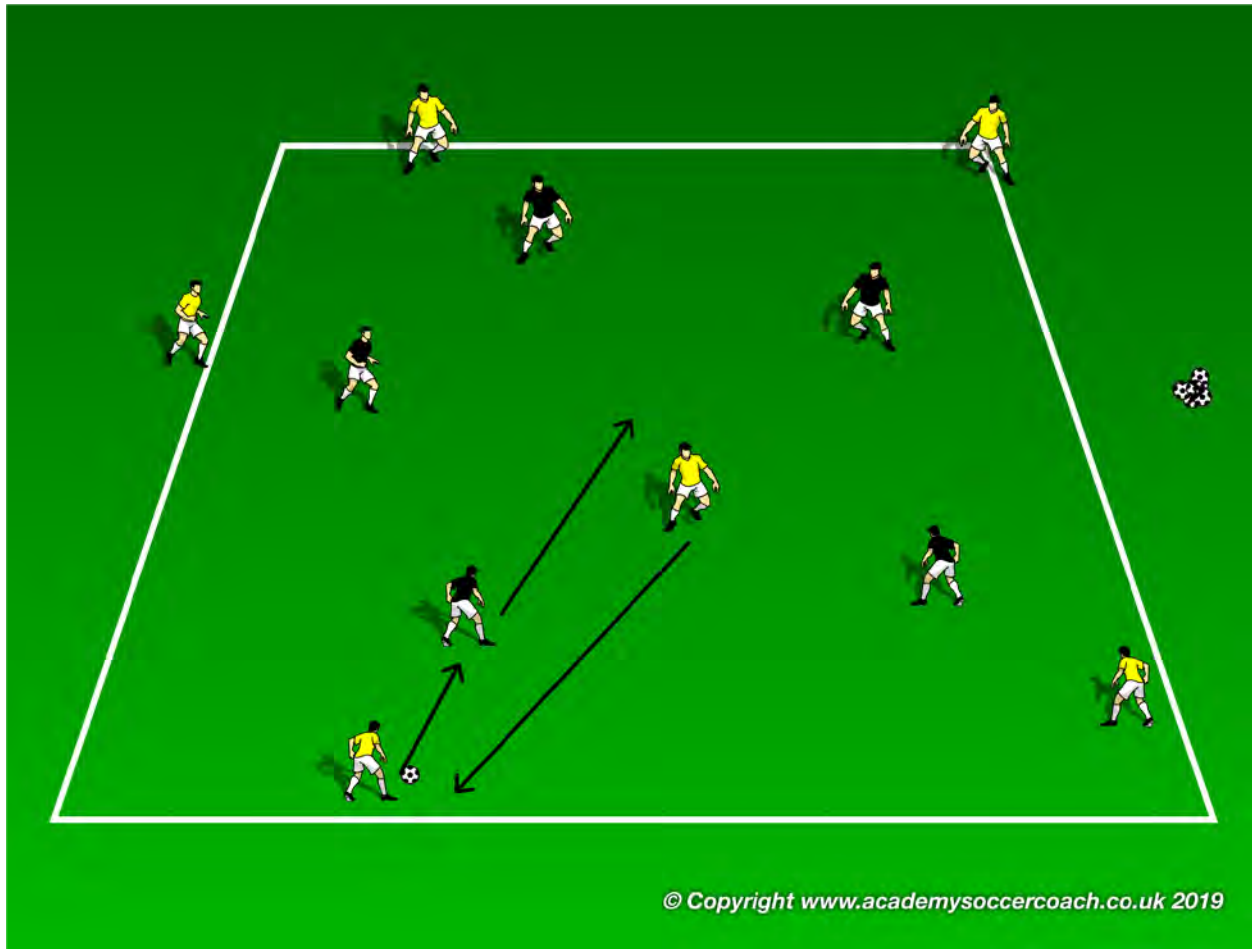


Execution:

The Breakout Rondo activity starts as a regular rondo with the rondo circle players passing among themselves, and the single defensive player in the middle attempting to win the ball back. When the single player is able to retrieve the ball their goal is to pass to one of their teammates on the outer circle.



If they complete their pass to the outer circle player, the player in the inner circle that was in front of the outer circle player is now in the middle of the rondo, the passer moves to the outer circle, and the outer circle moves into the inner circle.



In doing so the defender in the middle must quickly transition from a defensive player to an offensive player seeking a pass to breakout out of the press. The inner circle players transition from offensive to a defensive posture blocking passing lanes and opening their bodies up to get in position to check their shoulders to see both the ball and their assigned outer circle player. The outer circle players must transition from a defensive cover position to an offensive posture where they will need to receive a pass that breaks the inner circles lines.

Variations:

Variations can be made to the number of players in the middle so that the players in the center of the rondo collaborate in breaking the press.

To add complexity to the two player variation additional passing patterns can be added such as the outer circle player who received the pass must then play to another outer circle player, and then both players involved go into the inner circle, both inner circle players go to the center of the rondo, and both defenders go to the outer circle.

Hurt Locker

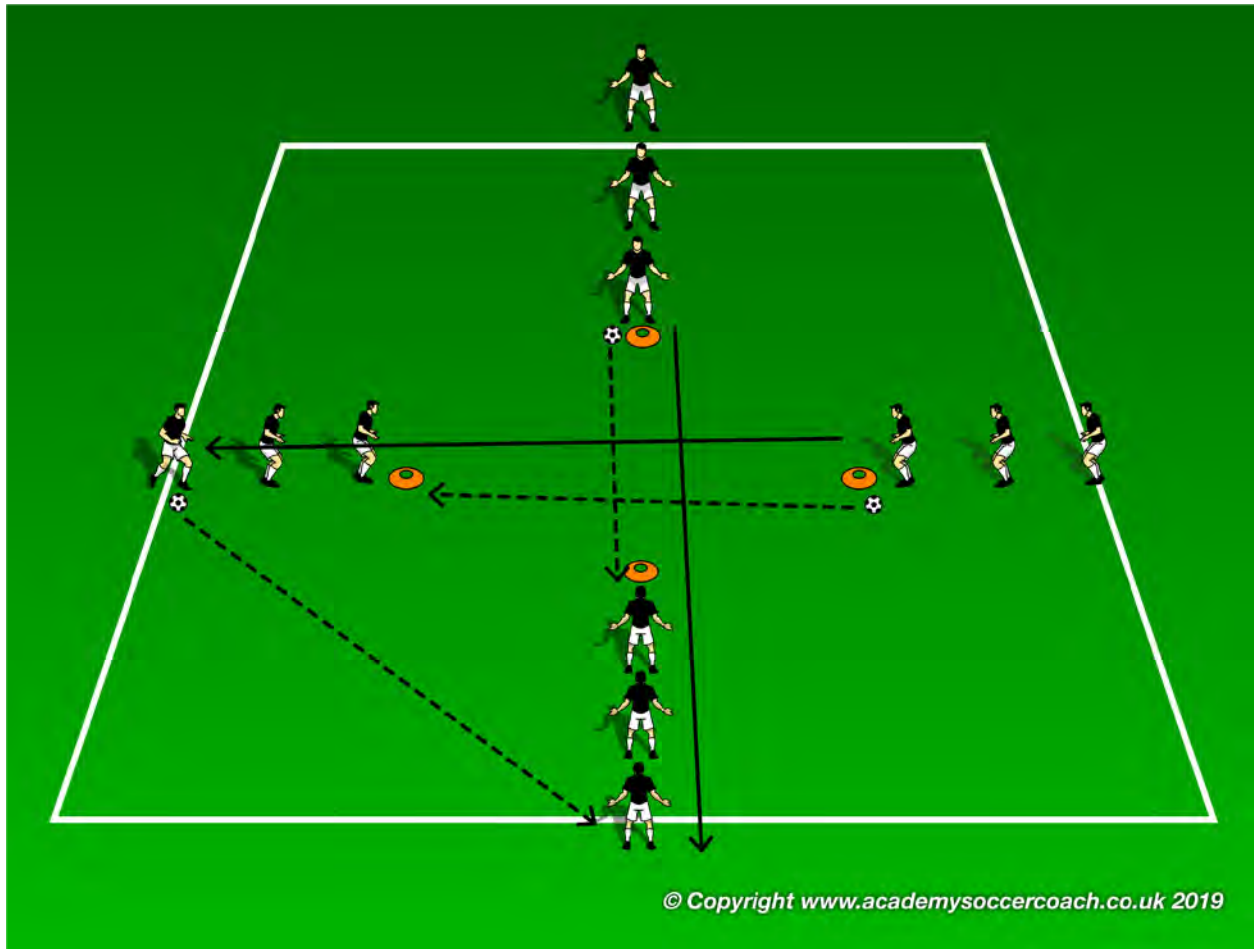
Setup:

Set up four lines about 10 yards apart in a diamond. Give one ball to each of the intersecting lines, and one to one of the players at the end of a line.

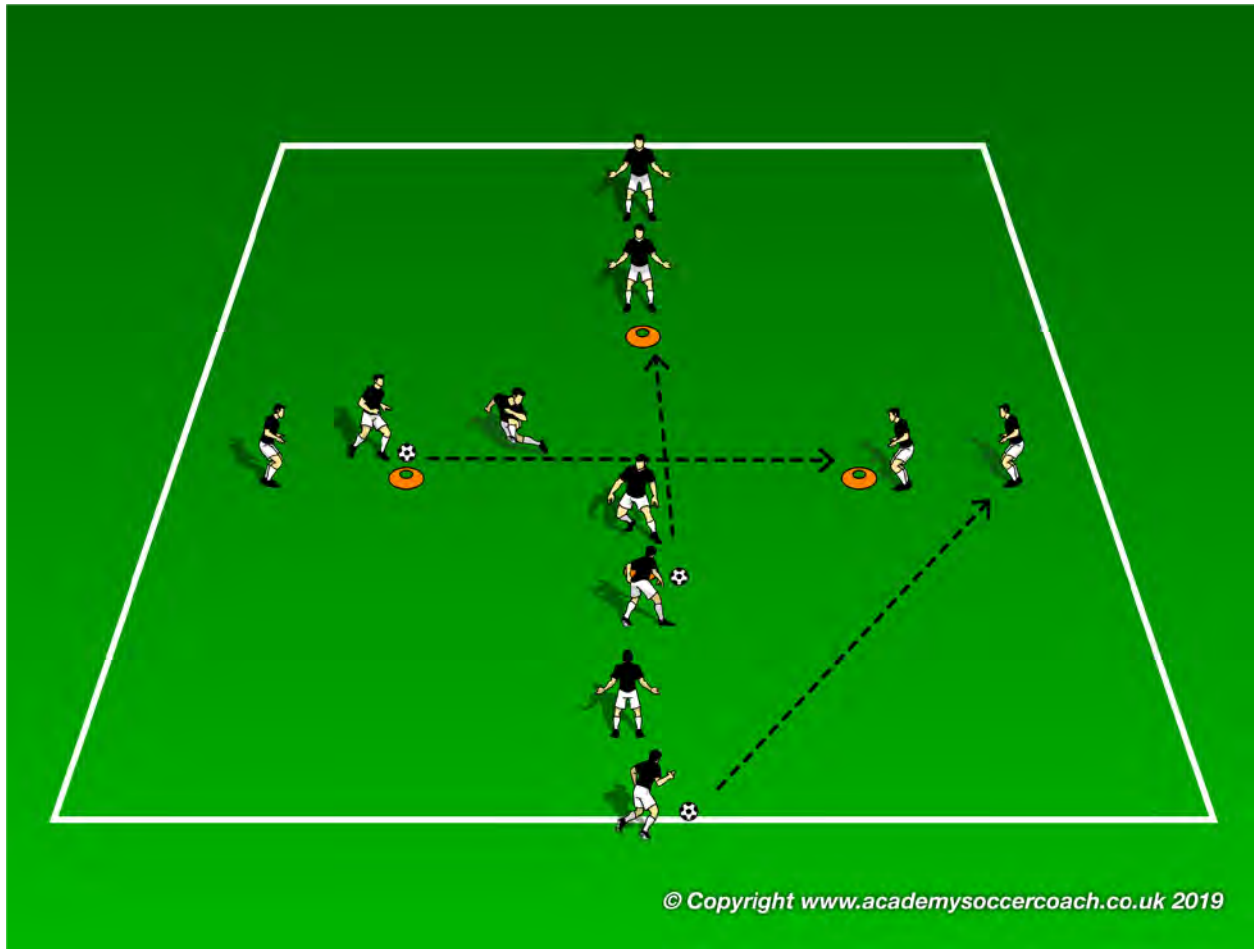


Execution:

Players must pass to the player in the other line directly facing them. Once the first pass is made every pass must be one touch and the ball cannot stop moving. The passer must follow his pass and go to the end of the other line. The balls from either line cannot touch. While the intersecting passes are happening on the inside, a ball is being played around the outside. The last player in line should check out to receive a pass, receive on their back foot, and play two touch to the last player in the next line.



At any point if the balls in between the lines stop, touch, hit a player, or is played with more than one touch the activity resets. Players should look to continue the pattern for a total of 3 minutes.



Variations:

Additional lines can be added

The time to complete can change or it can be changed to a number of passes needed to complete.

Fitness can be added in between each reset.

Chaos to Recreate Shooting Scenarios

No players will experience the exact same shot twice in their lives. The position the shot takes place may be the same, maybe even the goalie, but the weather, placement of the opposition, teammates, goalkeeper, what happened earlier that day, earlier in the game, etc. are constant variables. With all of these variables affecting the player, they then must execute their technique perfectly in order to just put the ball on frame. Teaching players to control their emotions and solely focus on their technique as the opposition attempts to create as much chaos around them as possible can create more consistent shooters, and hopefully more goals.

2 v 1 Striker Madness

Description:

The 2 v 1 Striker Madness game is meant to simulate as many situations a striker may see in the box, with pressure, as possible. The idea is that although it is a team game that implements passing, defending, and movement on and off the ball, the focus stays on the striker receiving and shooting a ball. The more players play, the more creative they will get in finding shooting chances amid the chaos.

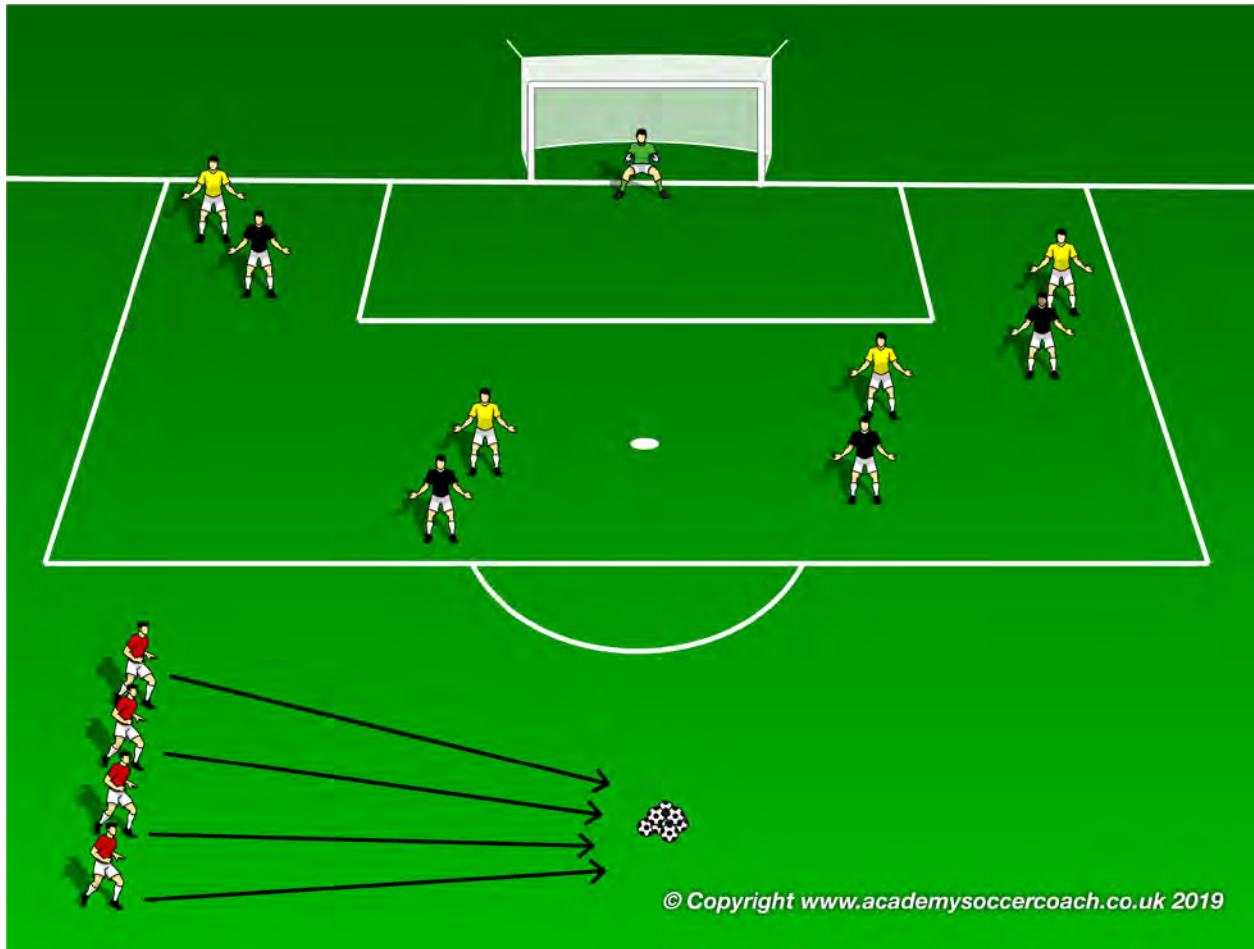
Setup:

Have a pile of balls (the number of balls will determine the competitiveness and the length of the game) set up about ten yards out from the 18. Have your players get into, or assign, groups of three. Within those groups have the players designated as defenders (1s) wear yellow, your passers (2s) in red, and your strikers (3s) in black. Depending on age and ability assign 1-2 goalkeepers as well. Have the defenders and strikers arrange themselves inside the 18, with the passers lining up behind the pile of balls.

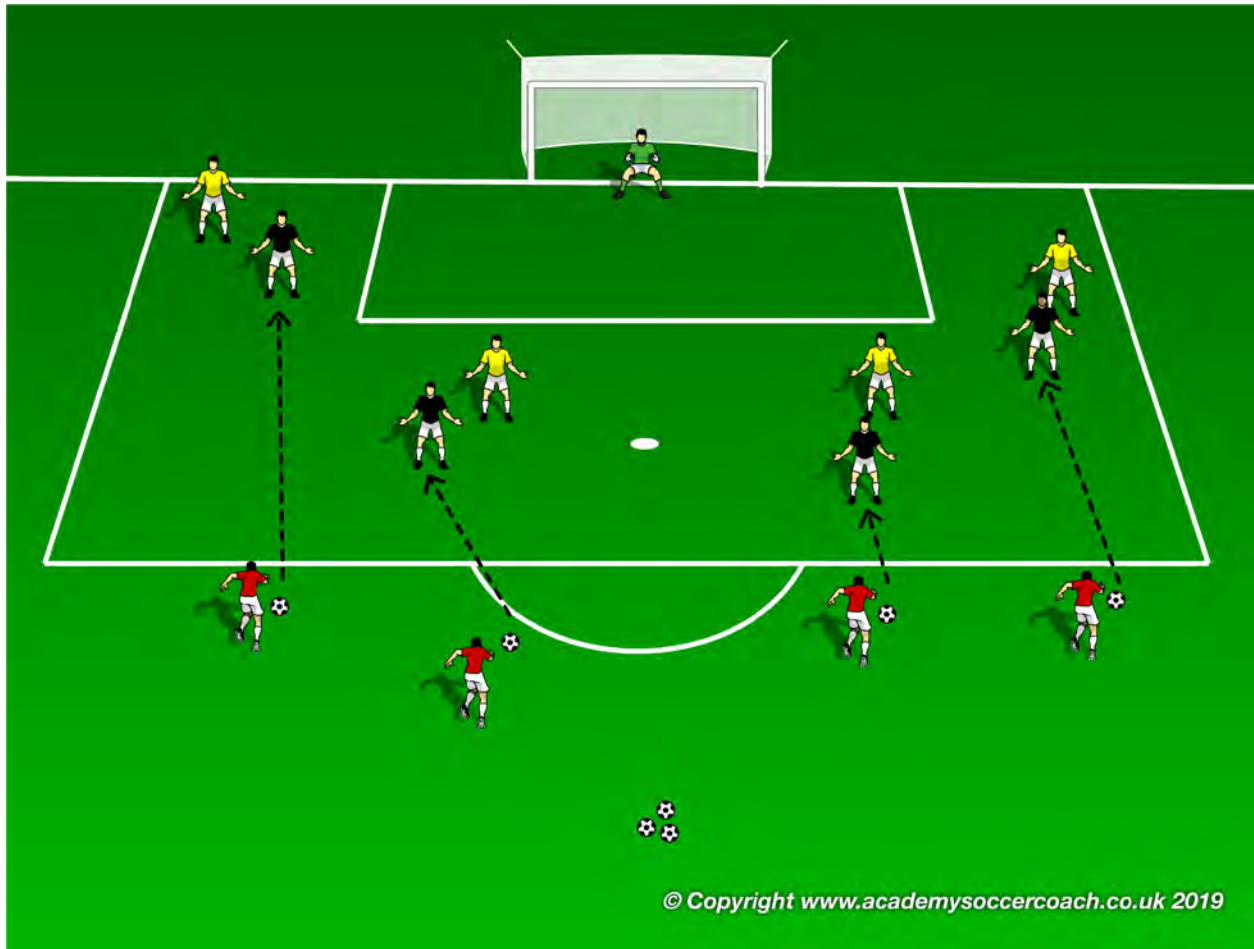


Execution:

The goal of the game is that within your team of three everyone has a role. The passer will collect balls from the pile (or from errant shots/passes/tackles) and feed passes to the striker that they are teammates with in the box.



The passer only passes to the striker on his team. The passer can pass from anywhere, as long as he is outside the 18 (this includes from behind the net). It is the striker's job then to receive passes from his teammate, the passer, and score goals. Every goal scored by the striker is a point for his team. The defenders job is then to ensure that none of the other strikers are able to score, and defend as many balls played in as possible.



The game ends when either all of the balls have been scored, or a certain time limit has been reached. Once the game ends the 1 becomes the 2, the 2 the 3, and the 3 the 1, and the game begins again.

Variations:

Additional strikers/passers/defenders can be added to each team.

The number of balls and winning conditions can be changed to all balls are scored, a certain number of goals, or a time limit.

Goalkeeper numbers can vary, or be replaced by targets.

Touch restrictions can be made to the strikers.

Defenders can be assigned specific strikers to mark.

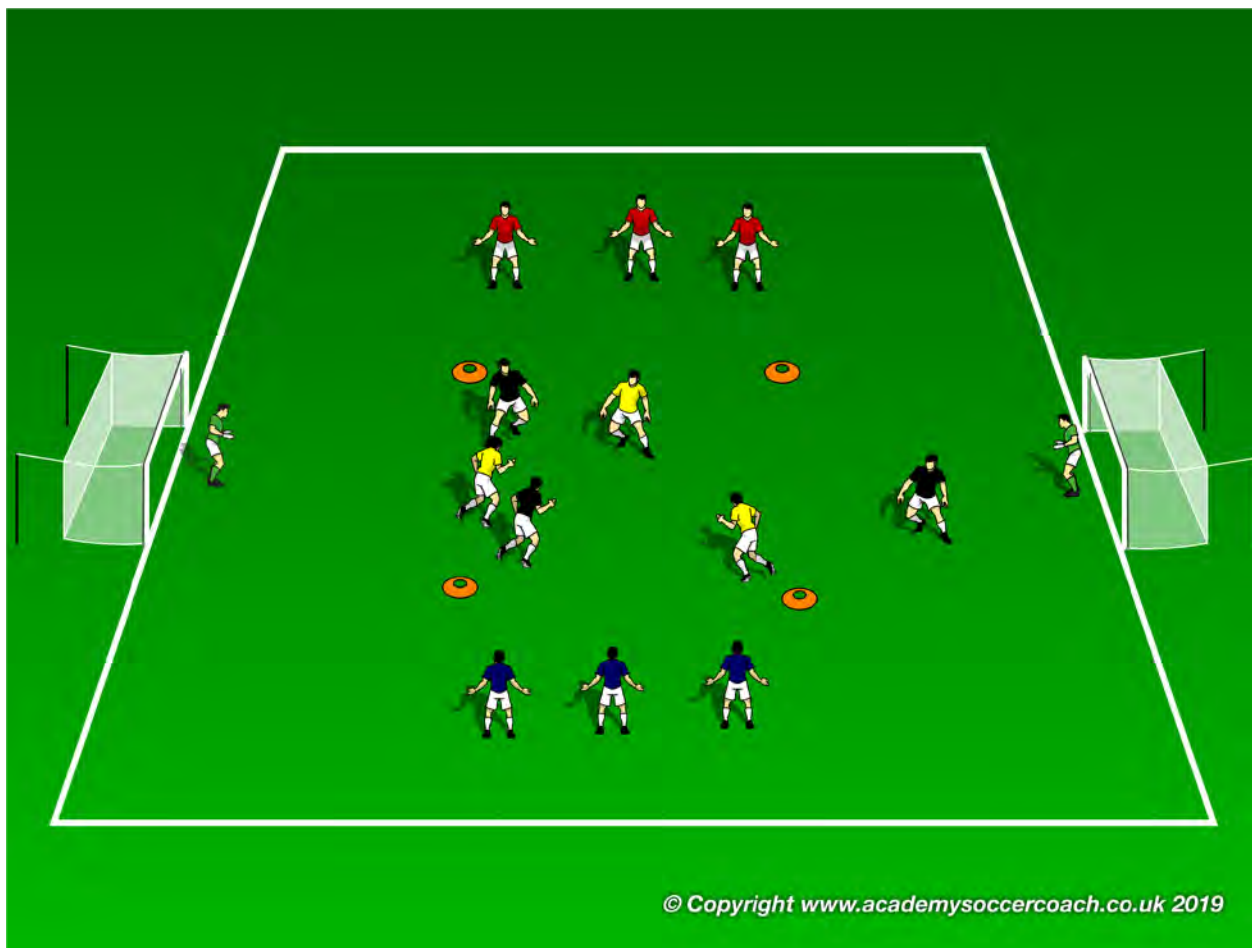
Killer Pass Transitions

Description:

The purpose of the “Killer Pass Transitions” activity is to create a high tempo simulation of play just beyond, or just in the box, in which players use short passing to break the defensive line and create an opportunity on net.

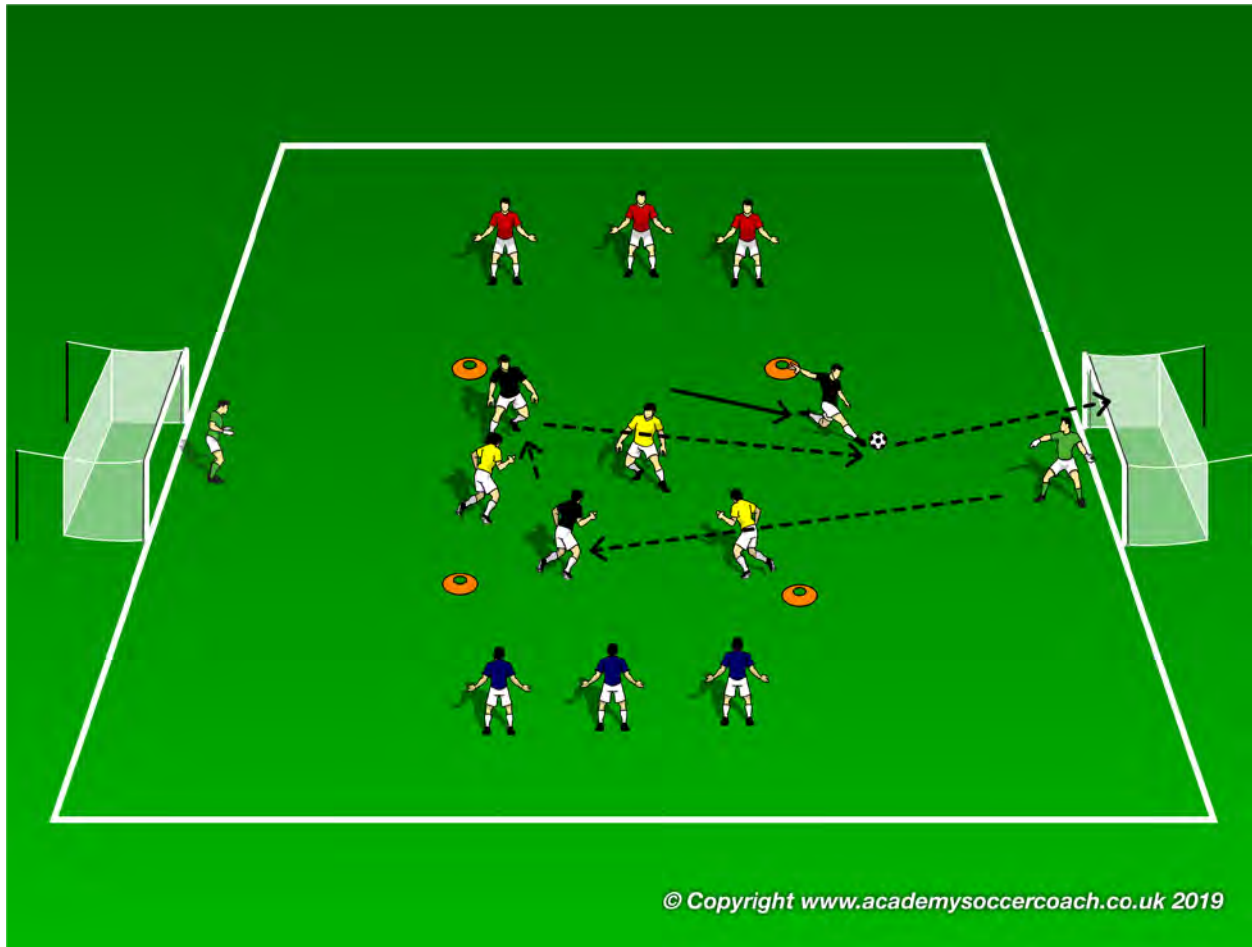
Setup:

One grid is established in the middle of the field. Grid size is determined by the number of players available. 3v3 grid should be around a 15x30. Depending on the age of the players the goals are placed 10-20 feet away from the long side of each grid. Players are divided into even teams (at least four), and placed on both ends of the short side of the grid (2 per side if there is four teams).

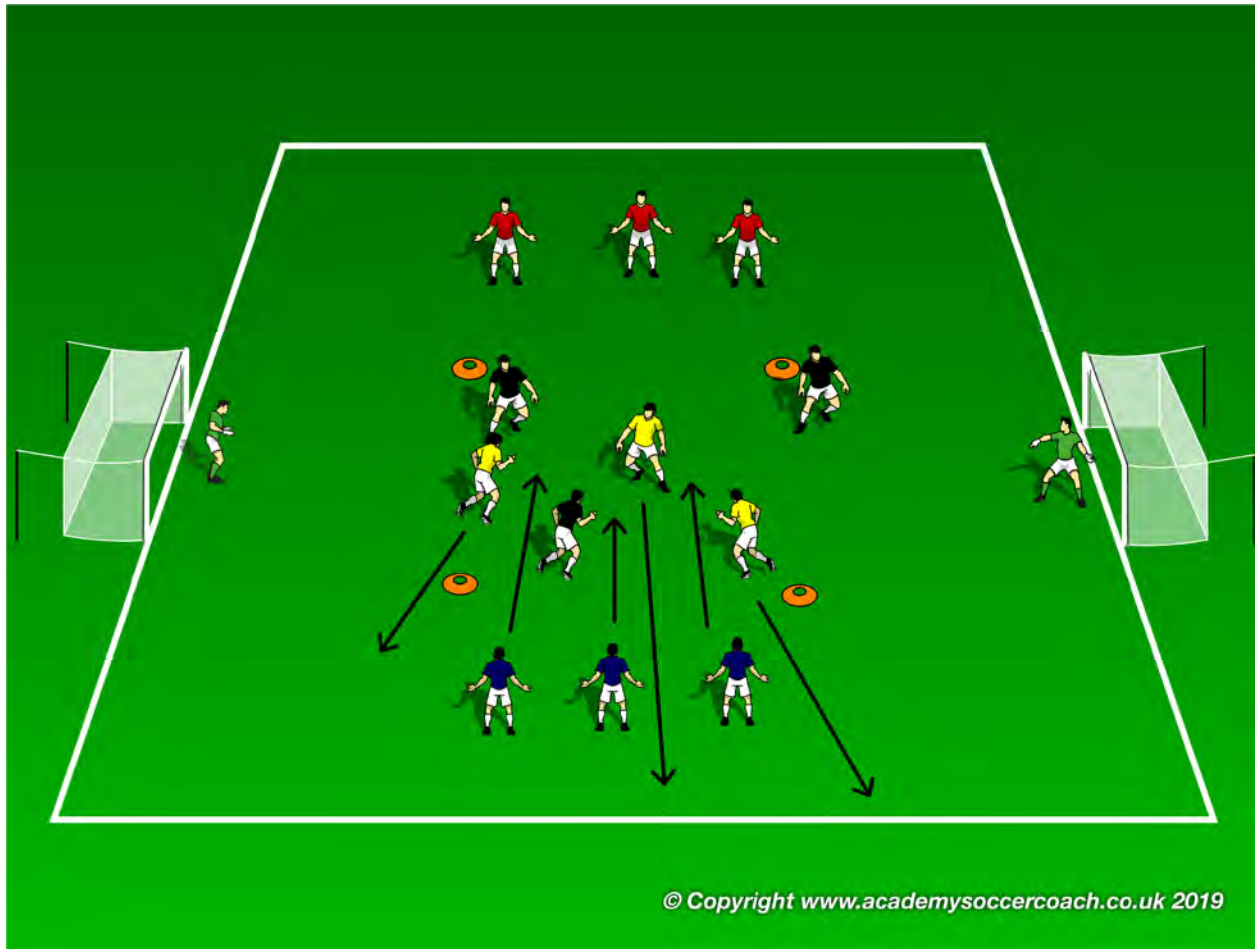


Execution:

Two teams start inside of the grid, a coach or the goalie then either rolls, passes, or throws a ball into the grid. The players must settle the ball and complete a set number of passes (normally 3) in order to leave the grid and take a shot on either goal. The final pass in the series can be a pass out of the grid, simulating a killer final pass towards goal.



If the shot is saved, both teams re-enter the grid and the goalie plays the ball into the grid to be played. If the shot is a miss that goes behind the net that player's team is "off" and goes to the sideline to be replaced by a new team, and the coach restarts the activity by playing a ball in. If the goal is scored the scorer's team stays on and the team that was scored on is replaced.



Game ends after a team scores a predetermined number of goals or the time limit is reached.

Variations:

A number of factors can be changed based on skill level, age, number of players, etc. including:

Grid Size

Goal Distance/Size

Number of Players in Grid

Time Limit/# of Goals

The side in which players can score can be altered as well.

POMO Chaos

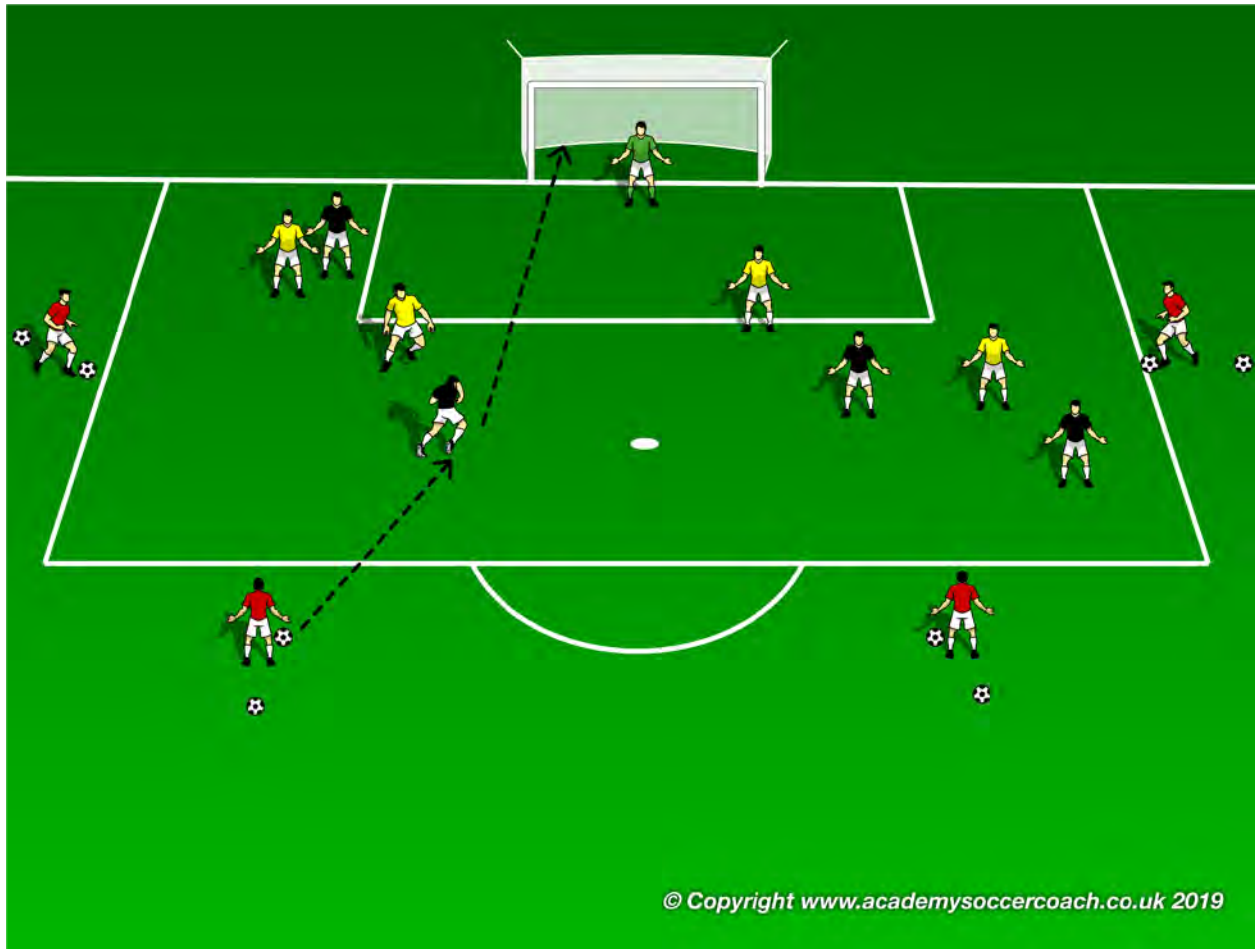
Setup:

3 teams are arranged, two within the 18, one surrounding the perimeter. Balls are placed outside the half circle and a coach stands by them ready to reload if the ball goes too far out of play. There can be either one or two goalies in the net.

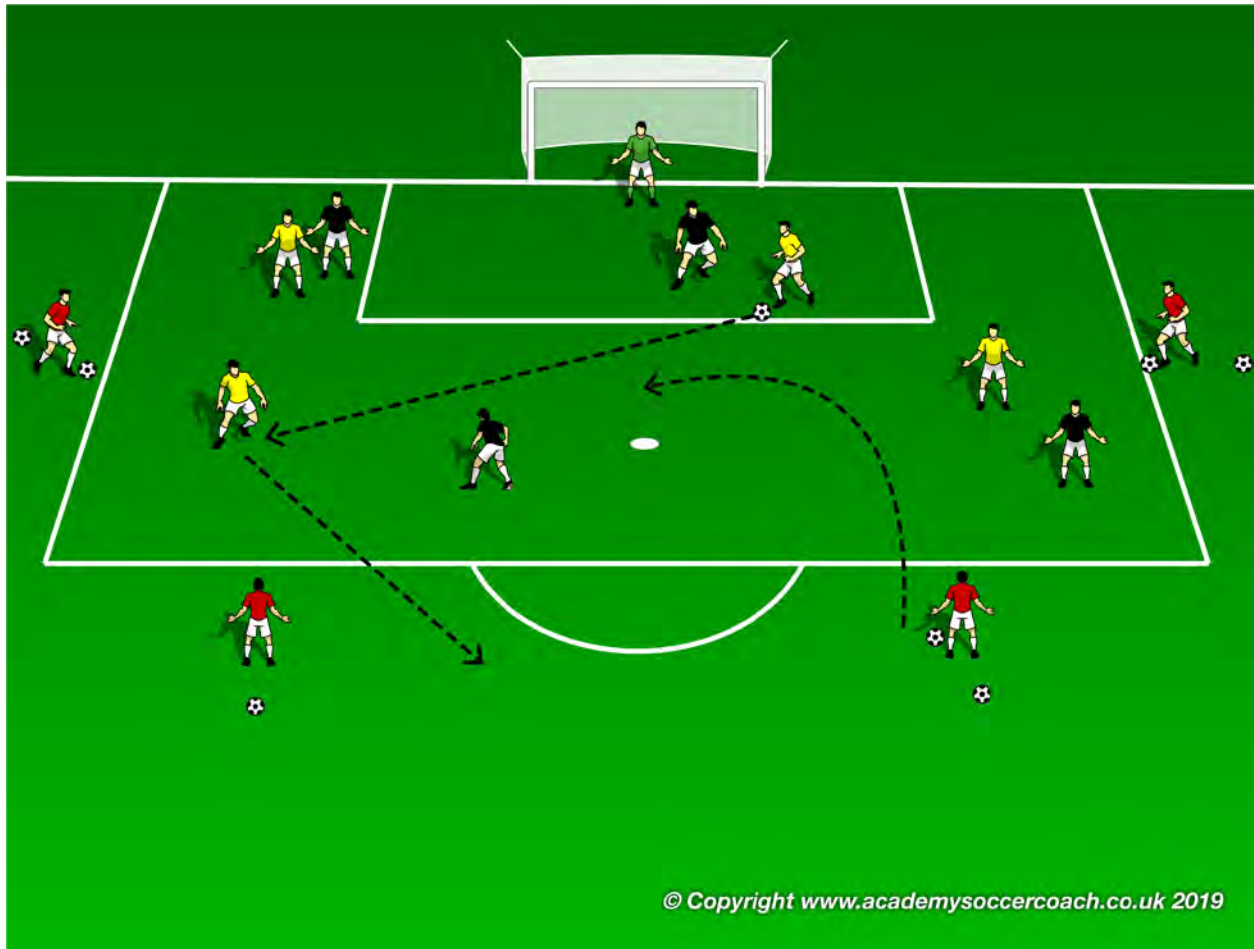


Execution:

The game starts with a cross from one of the players around the 18 into the box. The two teams in the 18 attempt to score for a minute.



If one team scores they stay on, the losing team goes to the perimeter of the 18, and the team that was on the perimeter enters the box. During play if the ball is passed or deflects to any perimeter player, they must play a 1-2 touch cross directly into the penalty spot.



Variations:

Multiple balls can be added to create even greater intensity

Time of play can be shortened or increased based on level of intensity

Certain stipulations can be added such as touch restrictions, number of passes before a shot on goal, or the ball must be played to a perimeter player before a goal can be scored.

Chaos to Teach the Press/Beat the Press/Transition

The moment of transition is the single most chaotic moment in the game. Teams are forced to make a series of incredibly important calculations with all 10 field players being forced to move from an offensive to defensive posture, or vice versa. Teams having won the ball are forced to move from a compact defensive position to an offensive one with every player needing to move to an appropriate space, and all of this with the ball likely won in their own defensive third. This chaos created by that movement means it is the point of time in which teams are most likely to press, trying to win the ball back within seconds. This is an incredibly effective tool if used properly. The majority of goals are scored in around 3-4 passes, which is obviously easier to complete if you are 30 yards from goal, rather than 100. To do this, though, the defensive team needs to be in incredible physical shape and retain players high up the field, leaving space behind that could be exploited for counter attacks. Therefore, training players to deal with, and even thrive, under the conditions of the transition moment can help them make better decisions at this vital moment in the game.

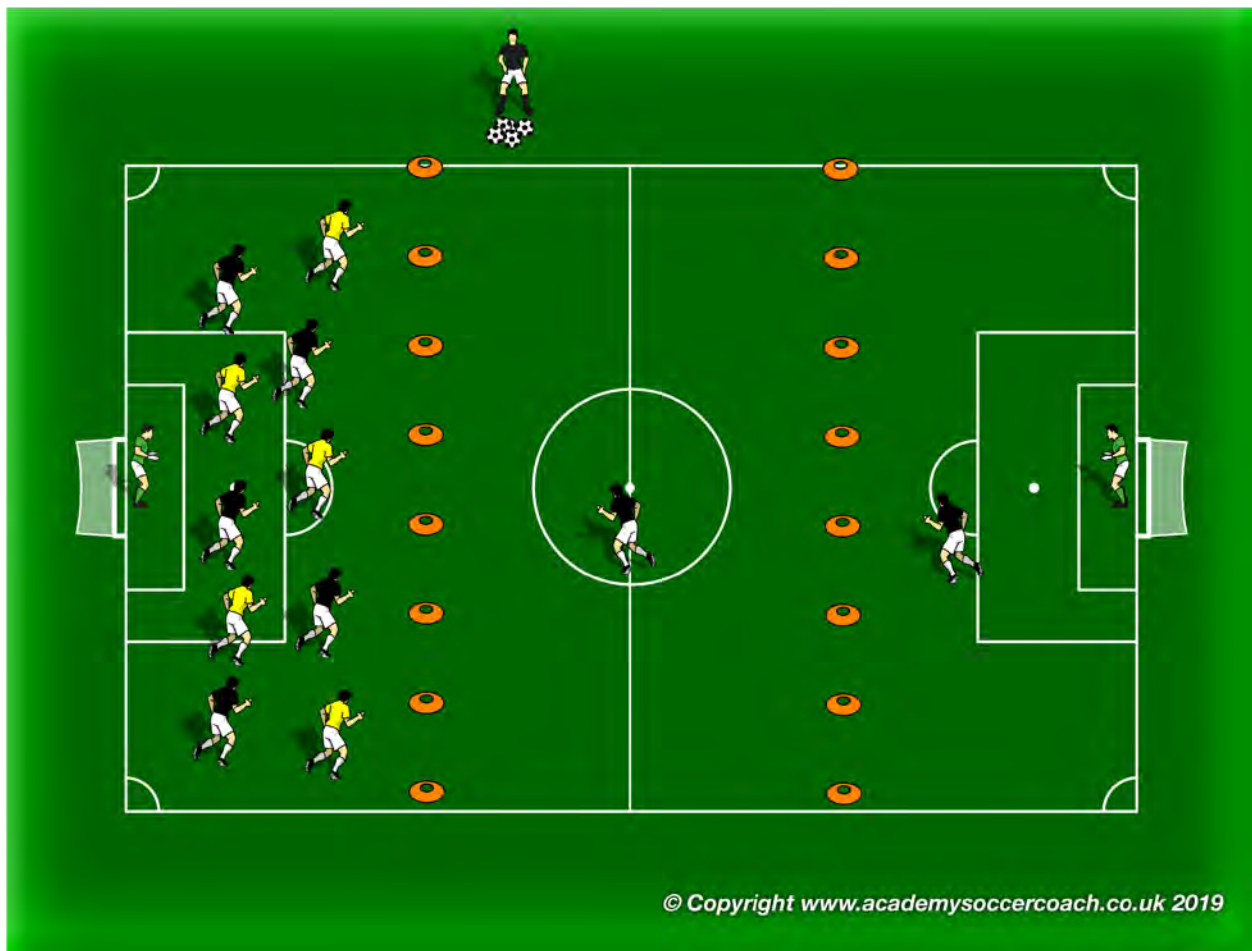
Transition to Attack

Description:

The purpose of the Transition to Attack drill is to recreate the pressure of defending in a team's own final third and creating lightning quick counter attacks from this position using support play from the 9 and 10.

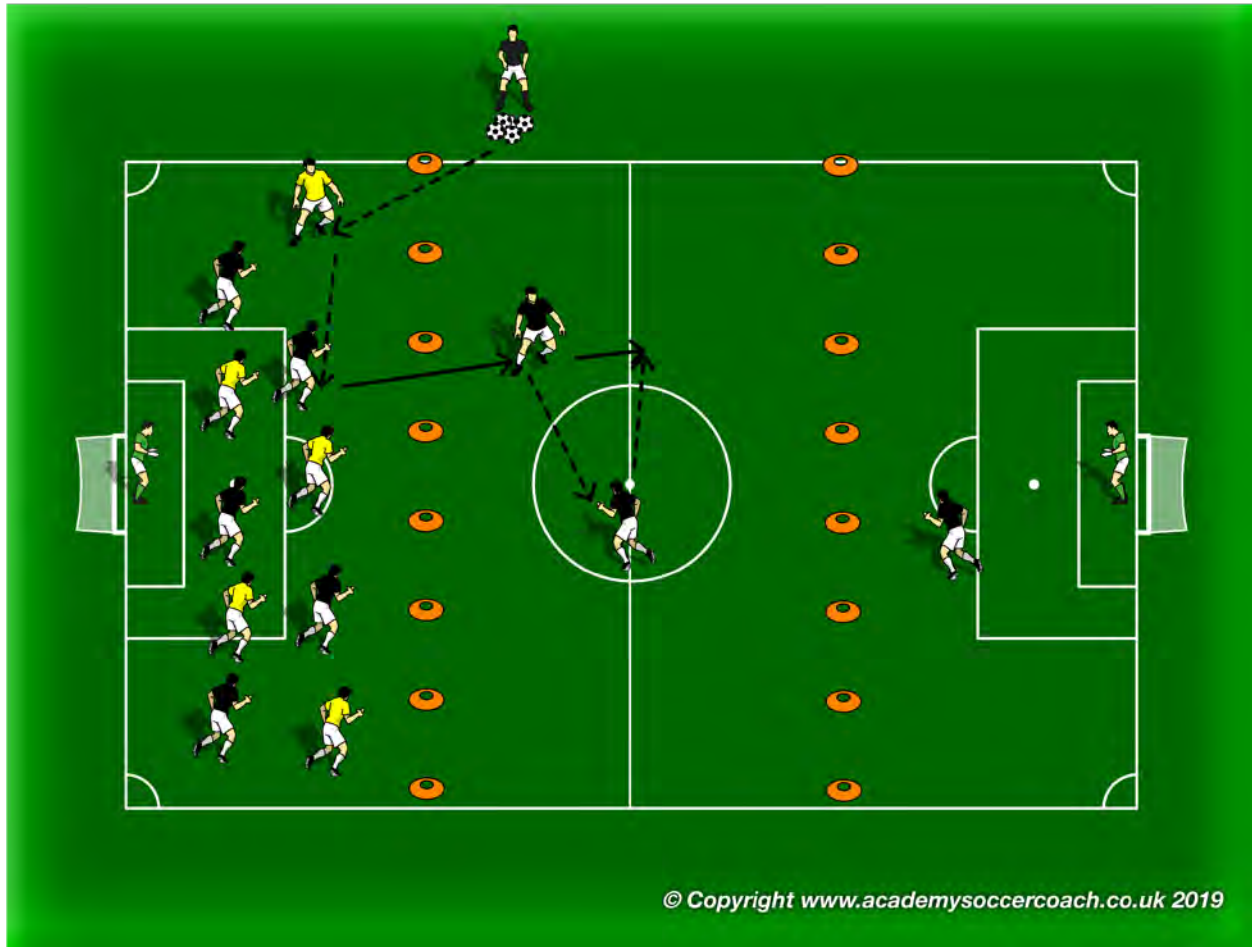
Setup:

The 10x54 yd field is split into three phases. 5 black players are placed as defenders representing the back line, the 6, and the 8. 4 yellow players are placed as attackers representing the 9s, 10, and 7/11. A red 10 is placed in the 2nd phase, and another red 9 is placed in phase 3. Balls are played in by the coach to attacking team at the edge of phase 1 and 2

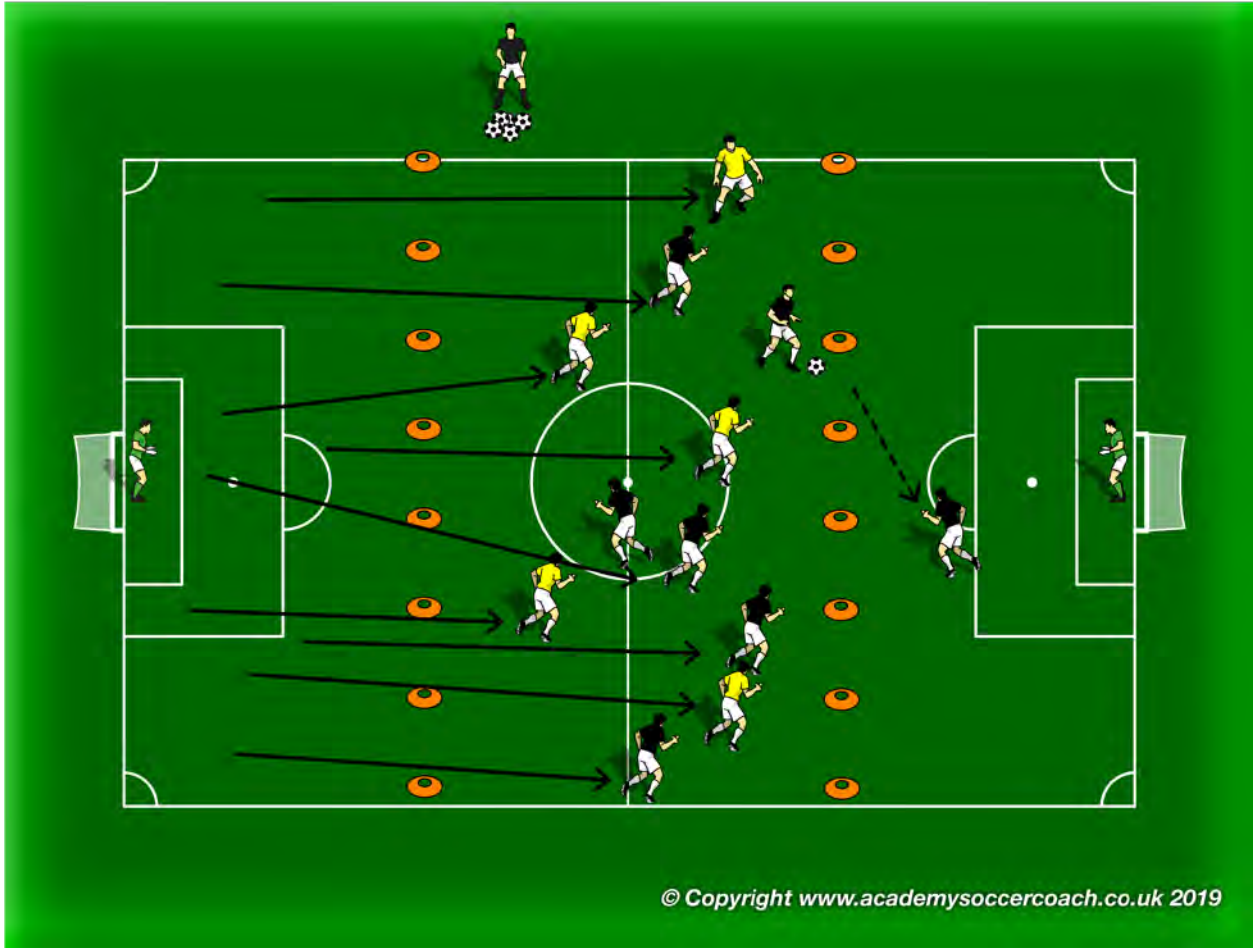


Execution:

Ball is initially played into the yellow team, who attempts to score goals against the black team. The black team then attempts to win the ball and play to the red player in phase 2.



Once they have played a pass to the red player they can then move onto phase 3 where they must play a pass to the green 9. Regular out of bounds rules are applied, every restart after a goal comes from the coaches.



Variations:

Defenders can be added to oppose the red team

The middle line can be bypassed

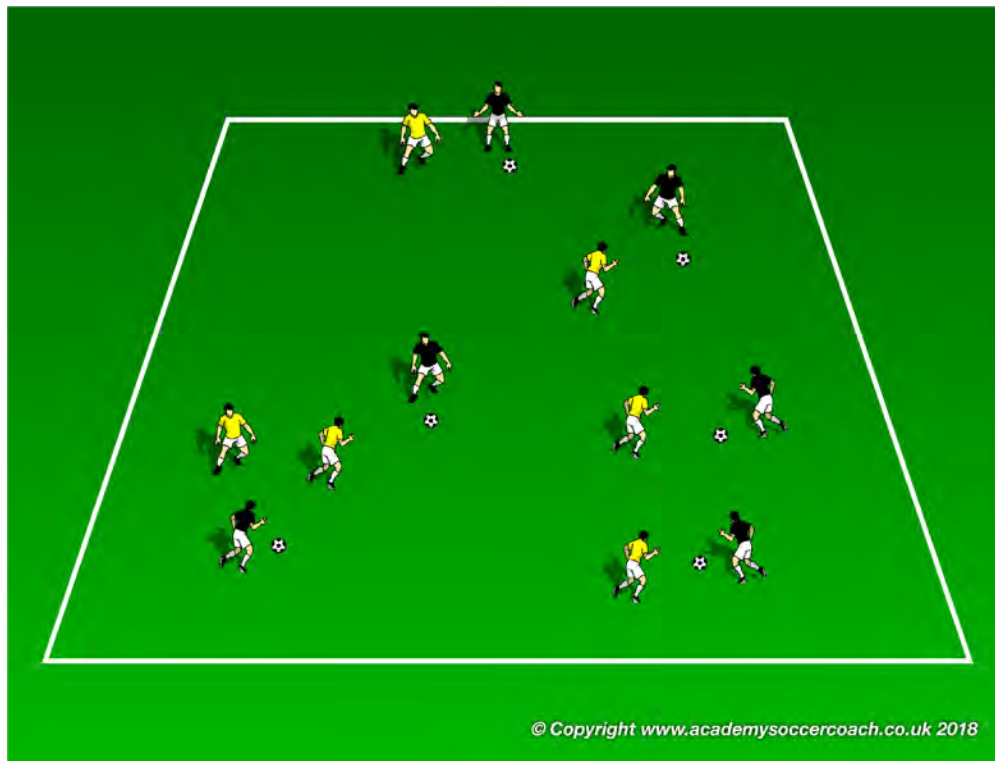
No Elimination Knockout

Description:

No Elimination Knockout is a game that creates systemized chaos in which the structure of the game is constantly changing from an individual game into a team oriented one. The defensive side works mainly on pressing and denying space to their opponents

Setup:

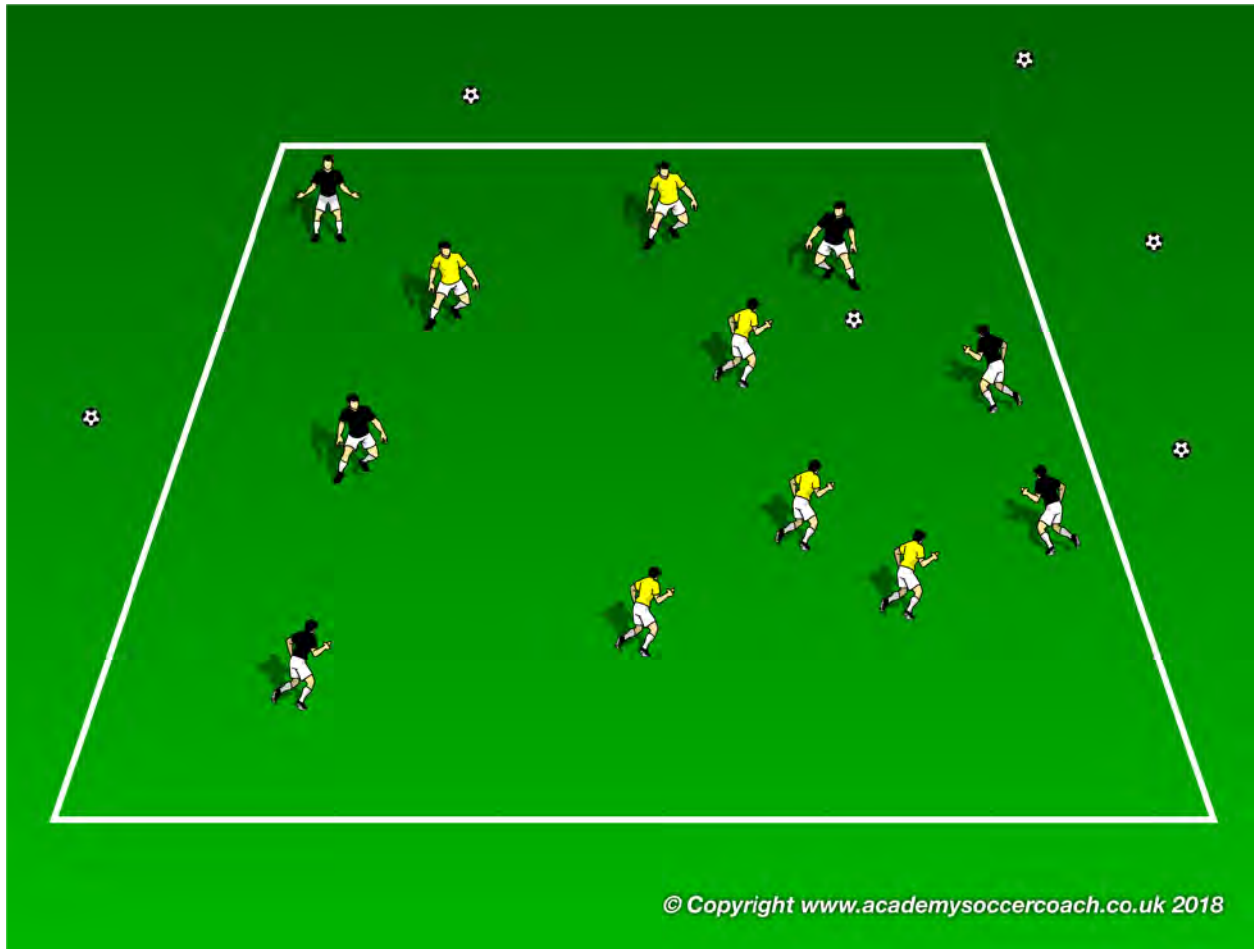
A grid is created in which one team is on “offense.” Each player has a ball. The other team is the defending team.



Execution:

The defending team attempts to knock the opponent's balls out of the grid. If a player's ball is knocked out of the grid they then become an outlet player for their team, until ultimately it becomes a game of keep away with one ball.





The session is timed. The team that can knock out all of the opponents balls in the fastest time wins.

Variations:

Grid size, number of players, how many balls are involved are all variables that can be altered

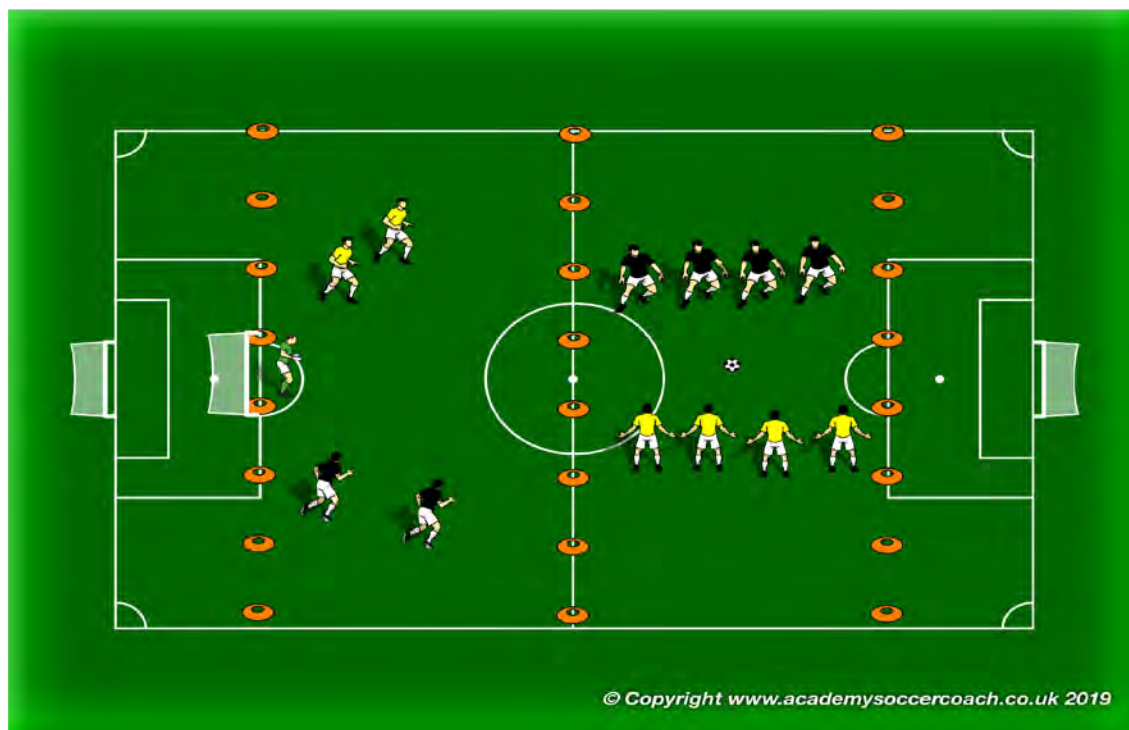
Transition Keep Away

Description:

The purpose of transition keep away is to simulate the pressure experienced under build up play, with the overall result of by retaining possession in a team's own third they open up opportunities in the opponent's final third.

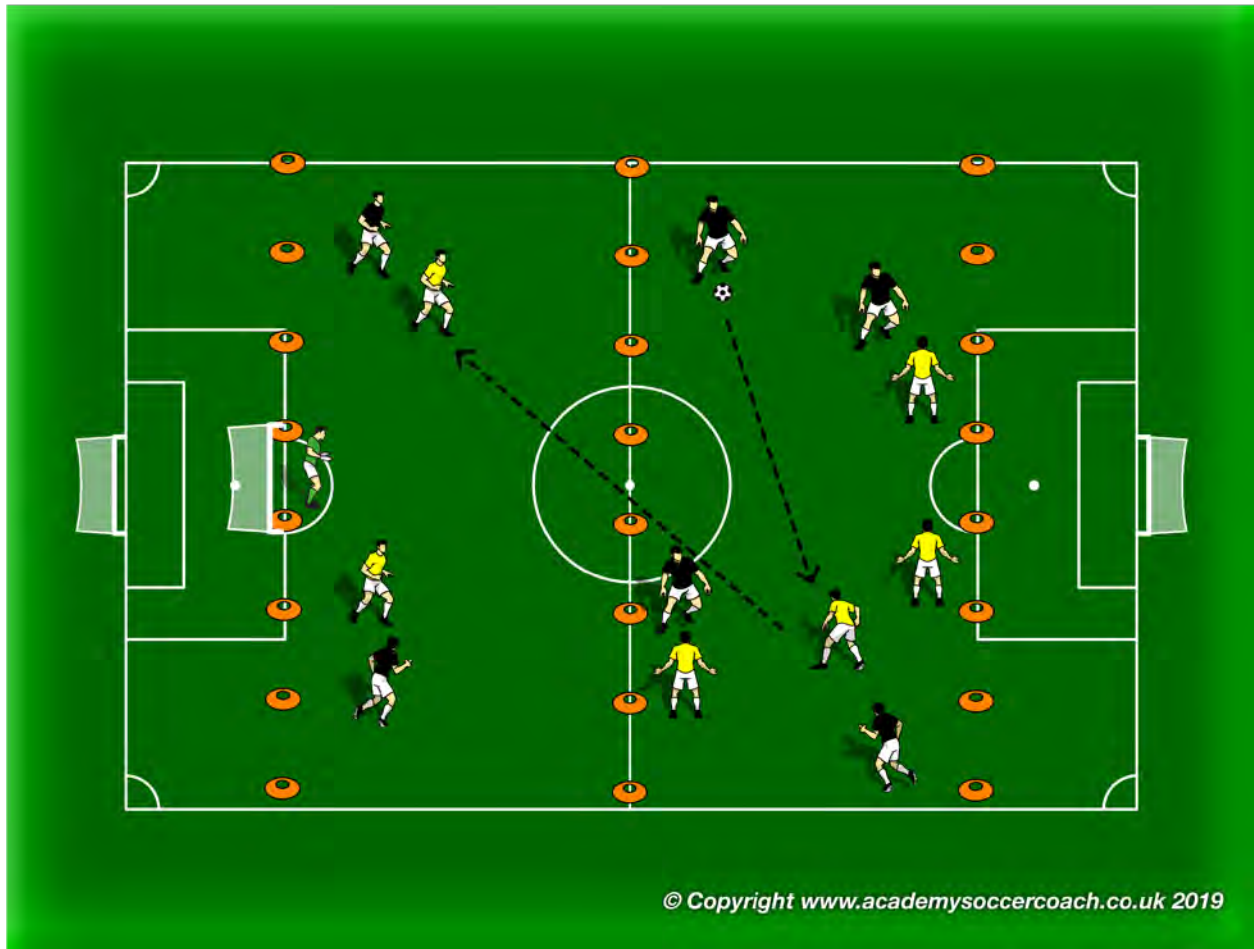
Setup:

Two boxes 30x30 boxes with a goal at the end of one of the boxes. Two 8 player teams set up in the possession box, and 3 players from each team set up in the second box.

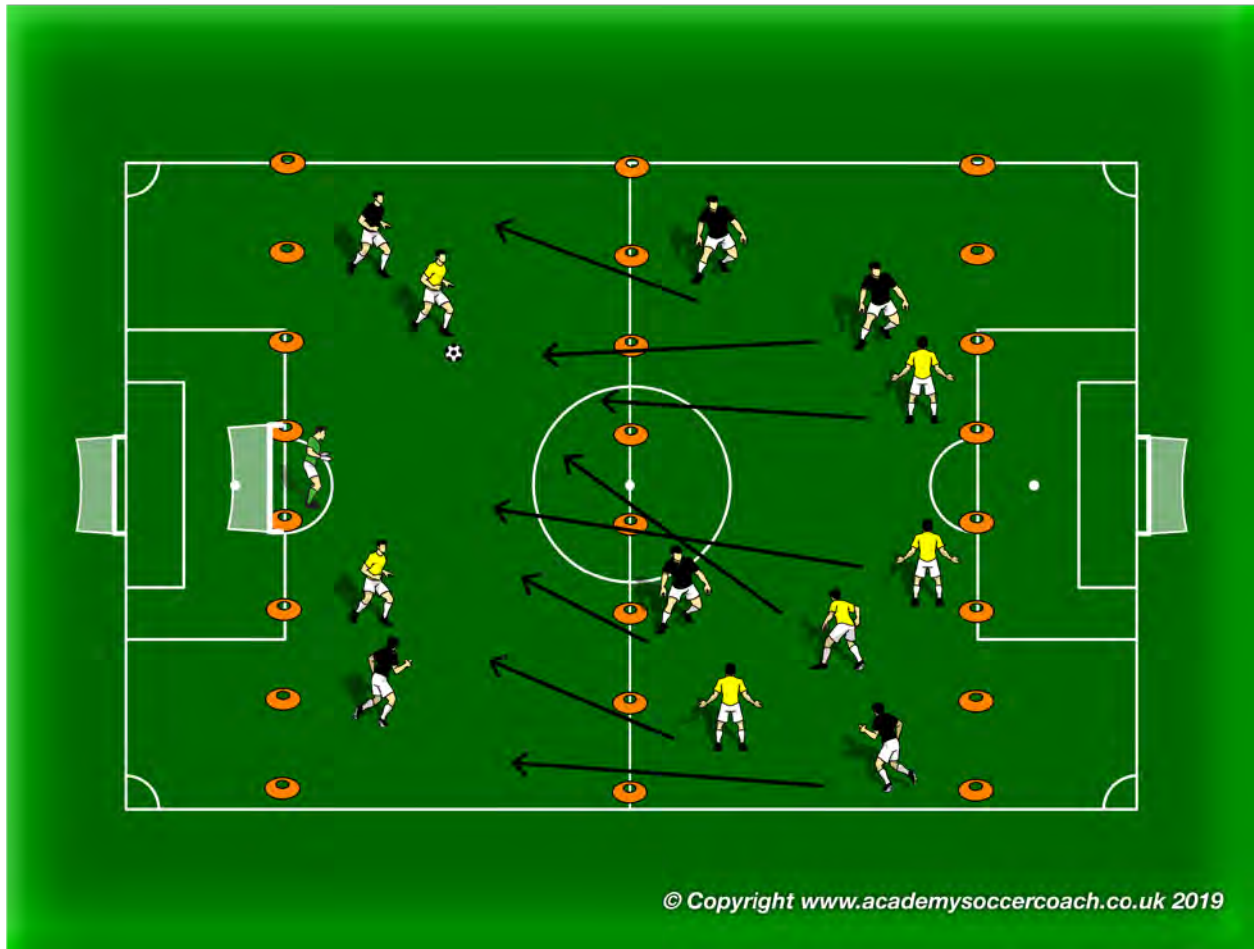


Execution:

In box 1 the possession team (black) attempts to connect on a set number of passes (10, 20, 30, etc.) within the grid. If they accomplish their goal they win and become the counter attack team, while the counter attack team becomes the possession team.



The defending team (yellow) must attempt to intercept a pass and attempt to counter into box 2, every player can enter the second box so rapid transition should give the yellow team numbers up in box 2 with a chance to score on net. The possession team attempts to win the ball back and bring in into box 1 to restart their count and attempt to achieve their goal.



Variations:

Goals can be set up on either end, and instead of the game being reset in the possession box after a failed counter attempt, the counter box becomes the possession box and the possession team just possesses in the same box they were just defending

Chaos to Create Mental Awareness

The key to thriving in a chaotic game is to be able to recognize the various stimuli being presented and make the most effective decision possible. While it is easier for coaches to simply verbally tell a player to perform an action in an activity at a certain cone, and thus create a clean flowing drill, come game day the effectiveness of such verbal cues is greatly diminished. In the game players must make these decisions themselves and by increasing their on field awareness and ability to receive, recognize, and process visual cues is the best way to develop flexible and intelligent players. Players will inevitably make mistakes, drills will look more chaotic and maybe even sloppier, and they may make decisions that defy your logic, but that is why it is massively important to ask the players what their viewpoint of the field was. Why did they make the decision, what verbal/visual stimuli were the presented, what was the expected outcome? In doing so, the coach can begin to realign the way the player interprets the game, or better yet, understand the way the player interprets the game to better utilize their skills within the team dynamic.

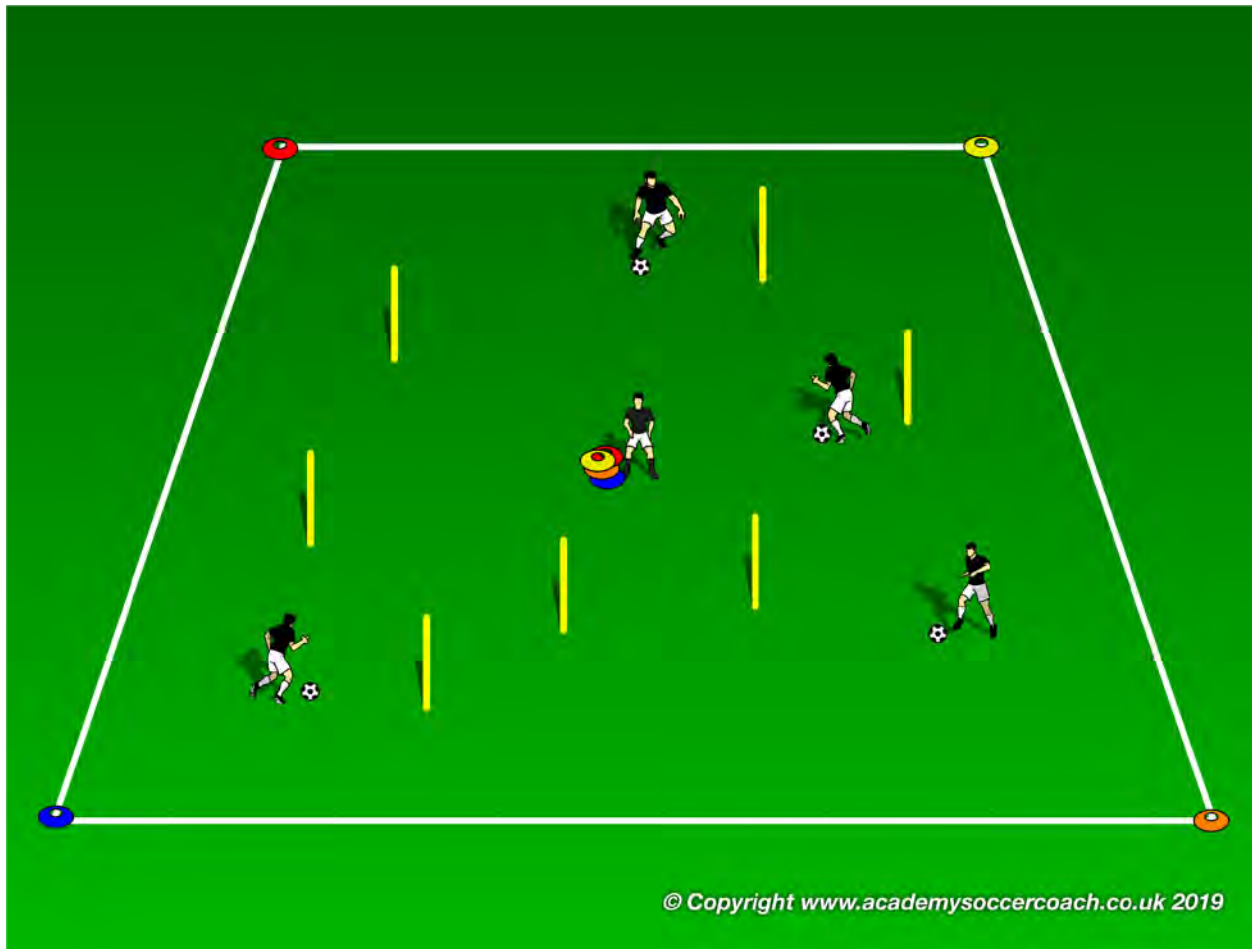
Color Recognition Game

Description:

The purpose of the Color Recognition Game is to get players to accept both visual and verbal cues and make appropriate decisions based on the interpretation of the stimuli. The competition aspect helps the game translate to the pitch by creating consequence for making the wrong choice, or doing so slowly.

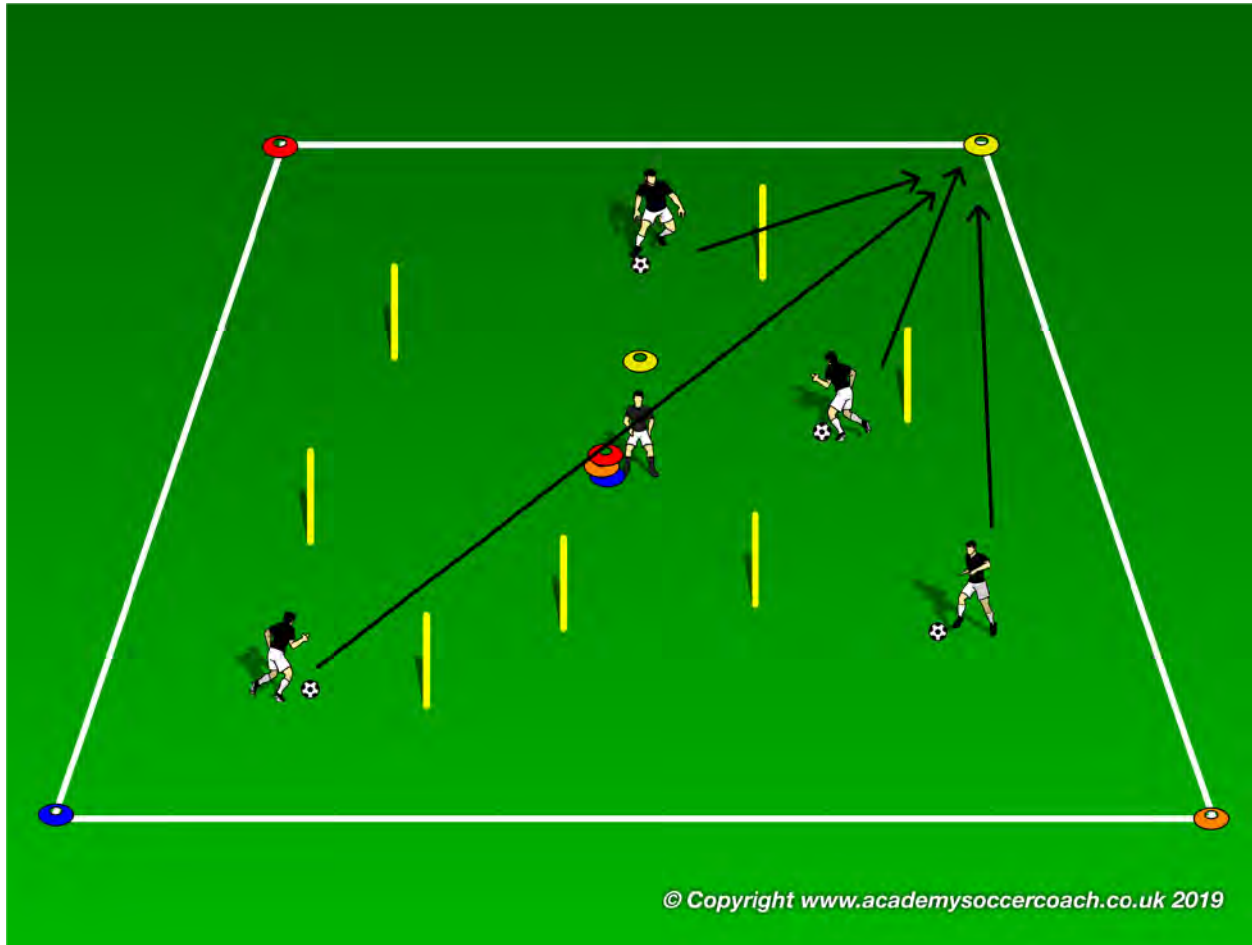
Setup:

Create a grid, size determined by number of players. In each corner of the grid place a different colored cone. Create an age/skill level appropriate obstacle course within the grid. A coach, with a cone that matches each cone in the corners, stands in the middle. Players spread themselves out amongst the grid, each with a ball.



Execution:

Players dribble in the grid without a series of obstacles set up by the coach. The coach stands in the middle with the colored cone and whenever they blow the whistle they throw a pinny in the air. Players must recognize the color of the cone and then proceed to dribble to the corner with the same colored cone.



Once they stop the ball under their foot on the corner they return to dribbling in the grid and wait for the next whistle

Variations:

The variations in this game are only limited by number of players and their ability. Coaches can add more colors, defenders, and obstacles in order to challenge their players' decision making. If limited in color pinnies and numbers of cones. I.e. if the coach throws up one cone players go to the area with one cone, two cones, the area with two cones. If players need an additional challenge two cones can be thrown in

sequence and players will need to dribble to the cones in the same sequence cones were thrown.



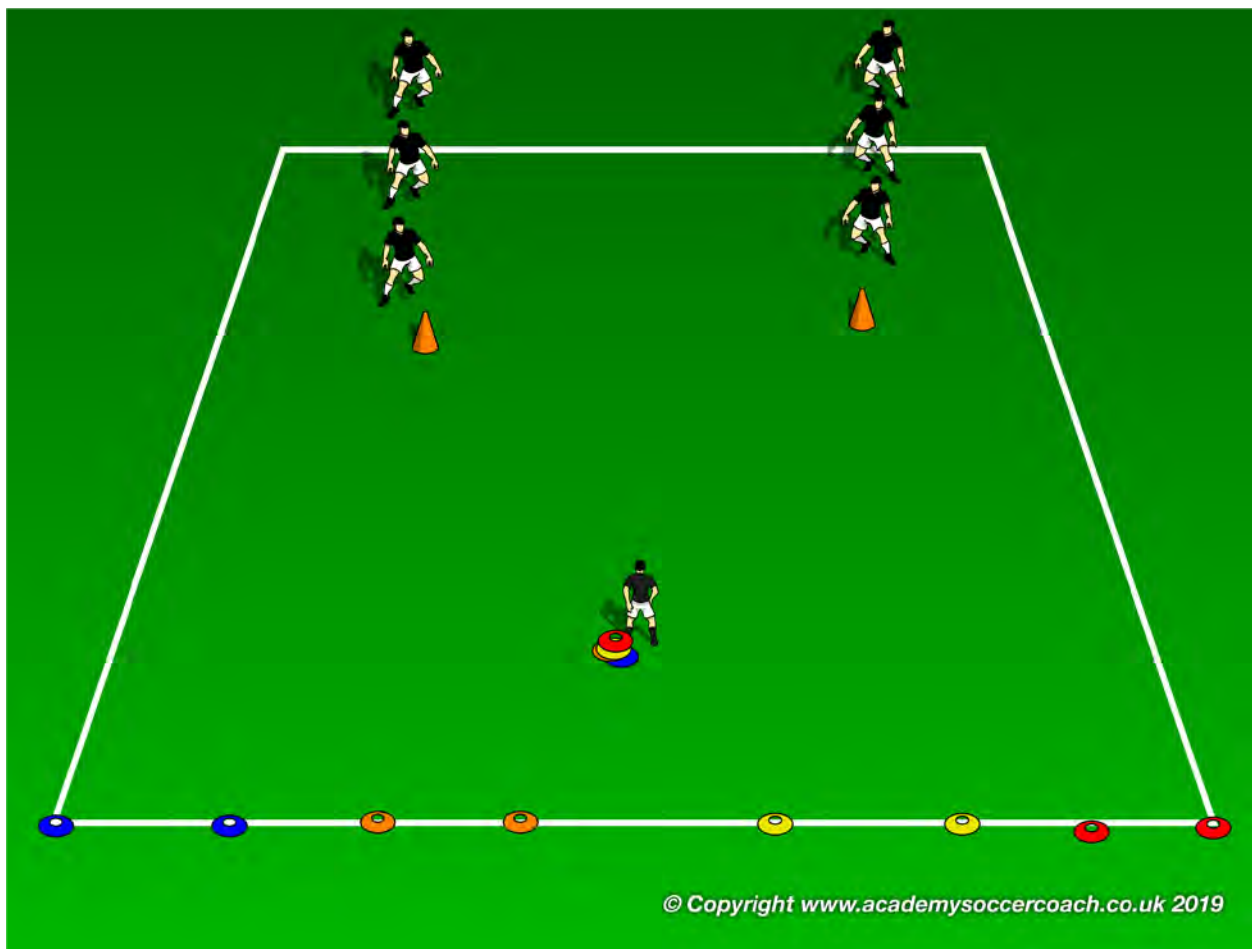
Cone Race

Description:

The purpose of the Cone Race game is, similar to the Color Recognition Game, to get players to react to visual stimuli. Players need to recognize their visual cue, and then translate that to choosing the best technique to beat their opponent to the grid. Regular cones can be used, but creating placards that have a color written on them that differs from the actual color of the placard drastically increases the difficulty of the activity.

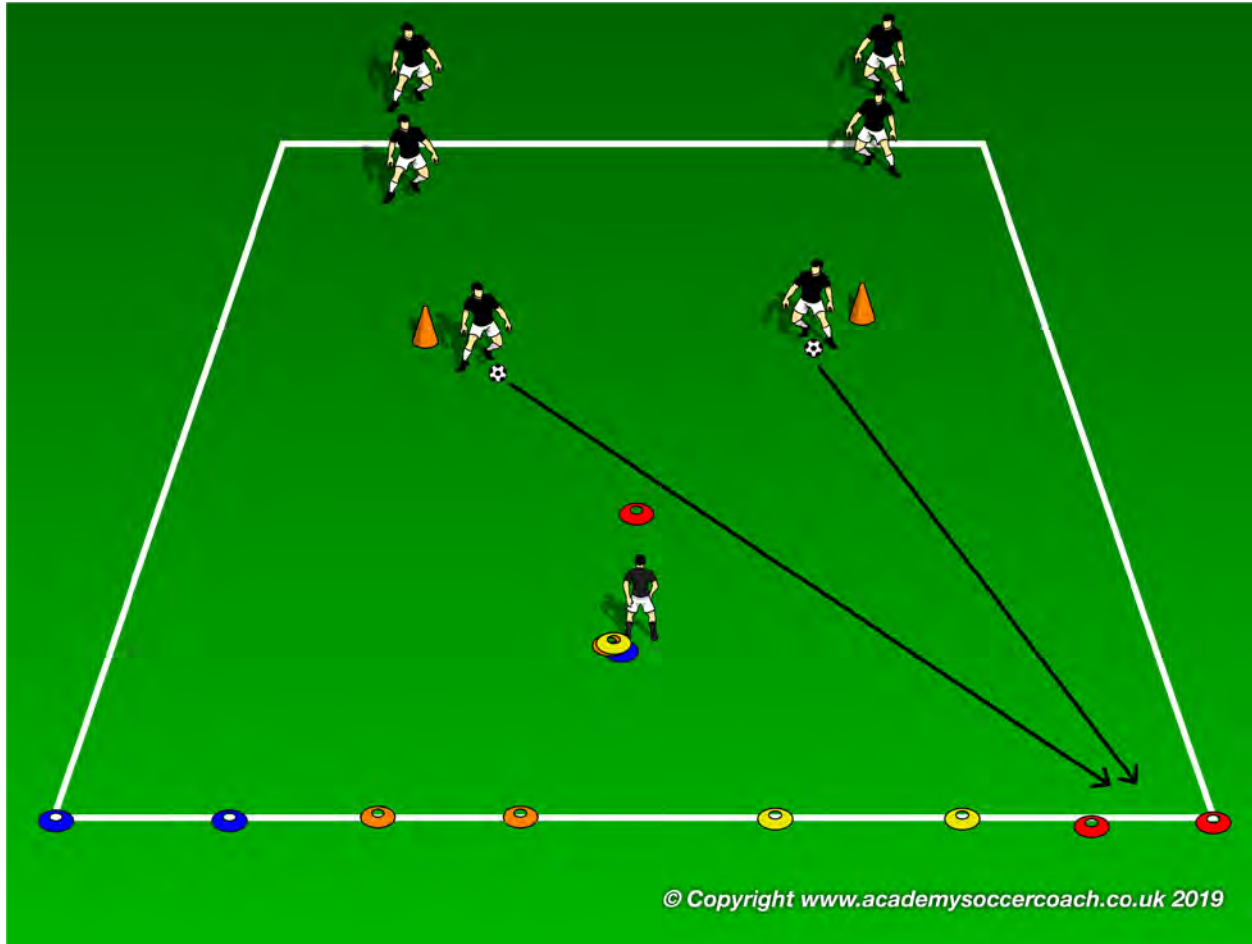
Setup:

Three grids are created representing red, yellow, and green. Players are put into two lines roughly 10 yards from the grids. The player that is "up" in either line has a ball. A coach stands between the grids and players with the placards: a yellow one that says green, a red one that says yellow, and a green one that says red.



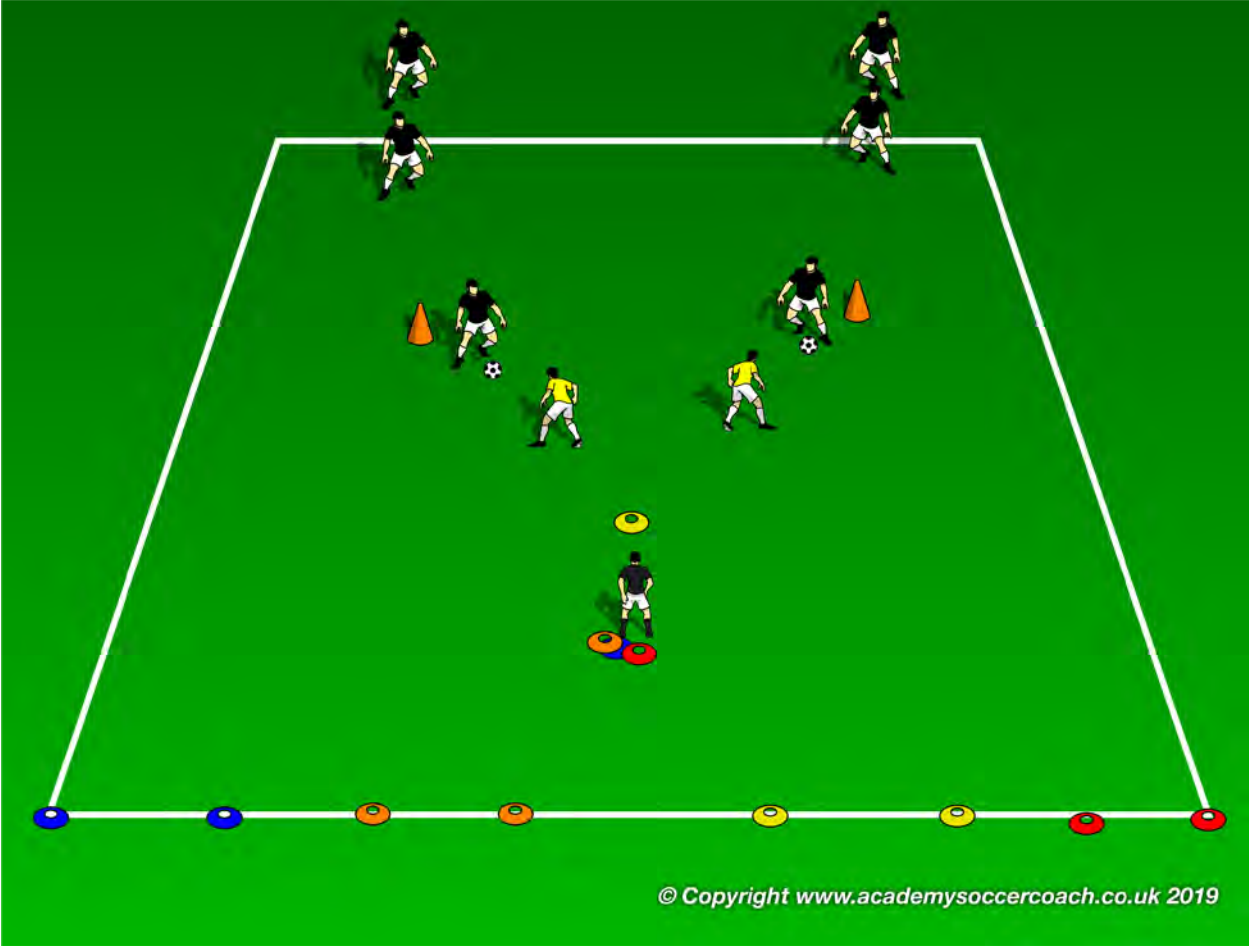
Execution:

The two players that are up start with their balls, the coach holds up one of the cards, the players then identify which grid they need to go to based on what the card says, not the color of the card. The players then race to that grid, whoever makes it there first is the winner and gets to go again, the loser goes to the back of their line.



Variations:

The numbers of placards, grids, and players can vary. Cones can also be replaced by pinnies, or jerseys, or really anything that will force players to recognize and react to visual stimuli. Adding a defender can also reduce the issue of having players closer to one zone than their opposition.



Conclusion

As with anything in life, it is human nature to make sense of chaos. Current attempts by statisticians with the use of sabermetrics are trying to map out an increasingly chaotic game and pinpoint and predict the outcomes of games. While this may make the outcomes more predictable in the future, it is impossible to ever remove the randomness of the bounce of the ball. Since that factor remains constant, even with the predictive stats and complex algorithms, the only thing coaches can do is to prepare their players for the unexpected and in doing so increase their chances of “getting lucky”. It is my hope that these concepts, practice elements, and activities will help you create players that are able to utilize their skills to make a clearer picture of the chaotic game, and use that imagery to make better decisions leading to more goals and more wins.