

DEVELOPING SOCCER INTELLIGENCE THROUGH 4v4 *by Philip Cauchi*



Volume 1

Developing Soccer Intelligence Through 4 v 4

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By

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Introduction

The purpose of this book is to guide coaches towards creating successful training programmes based on the 4v4. Although the 4v4 is a great tool to work with the younger ages on honing their tactical intelligence while polishing their technical competence, it can also be utilised with advanced players working on more complex aspects of the game.

I do not take soccer coaching and training according to the participants' age. My point of reference with players is their current level of ability. We can have an eight year old girl who is proficiently able to handle basic tactical soccer situations, while on the other hand we can have an eleven year old boy who is a total beginner. With the eight year old we should move on towards more complex situations, thus raising her bar and stretching her overall soccer competence level. With the eleven year old we could have to start with basic situations such as 4v1, 3v1 to score, or even a 3v0, thus working on developing his technique and composure while at the same time building the fundamental tactical understanding of the game.

In this book, various practices are presented which may be utilised with players bearing different soccer abilities. It is the coach who then decides how to use these practices. The coach may use a complete session, part of it, or modify the practices completely according to the necessities. The practices provided in this book are just a guideline for the coach. The idea here is to spark the ideas of the coach in creating specific practices for the needs of the players.

It is not how nice an exercise looks on paper, but how it can enhance the performance of the players. When evaluating a session, the coach should ask how the players responded to it. Was the session too easy? Was it too hard? Or was it of the right level? It might be a good idea to supply this self-analysis by asking the players how they themselves felt during the session. Furthermore, asking the players some questions about the main outcomes of the session will definitely give the coach a better insight about their understanding of the game. Video recording the training sessions and reviewing them from time to time will also help with

notational analysis and see the improvement of the players, especially when compared with the same practices. This also applies to analysing match performances.

Long-term Planning

Long-term planning means programming the development of the soccer player throughout the phases and years. Every soccer association and high level academies should have a clear vision and direction. The path towards the top should be well-lit and guided. Every season, training program and sessions should target the achievement of particular outcomes that act as stepping stones towards reaching the final destination; i.e., to develop players towards reaching their maximum level of potential.

A soccer curriculum guides us in our planning and establishes continuity within the player's development (Jozak, R. and Kepčija, I. 2018). Profiling should exist in such a way that the development of players and what they accomplish over the years is recorded. This will serve as a guideline for the coaches under which these players train during their career. Coaches should know the players and what level they are at, thus proper planning towards further advancement in their soccer development can be done.

Although repeating practices that the players are already familiar with is important to reinforce what they have already acquired, stretching the players' abilities should be the ultimate target for every soccer coach. Every practice should be very effective in that the players always face challenges that further develops their ability to perceive and anticipate situations as well as selecting the most appropriate techniques to solve problems in the least possible time.

When planning a youth soccer curriculum, it is vital to pay attention to the sensitive phases of development. This means that during these phases, there is an acceleration in the learning or acquisition of a particular capacity (both motor, cognitive and technical) if properly trained. Adaptation to the respective skill or capacity occurs faster during this phase of development.

Training programmes should take these sensitive phases into account (Aznar, D., Juanes, R., Dorado, M. and Gaspar F., 2014).

Training methodology

Training practices should be designed around the players' capacity to perceive information from the environment, the view about themselves and how they interact with others (Jozak, R. and Kepčija, I. 2018). This points out the reason why training should be relevant to the game in a way that players learn to focus on the most relevant cues to build an accurate picture of the situation.

Nevertheless, the stimuli that we create in training should be related to the developmental age of the players. This is very important when planning sessions as an eight year old child perceives soccer differently than a twelve year old. An eight year old is more recipient towards training that involve individual development than small group tactical training. It is thus extremely important to recognise that individual training on how to receive the ball, turn with the ball, apply fakes and feints, etc. are more suitable than playing 4v4 with the emphasis on defending for the eight year old. The twelve year old will be more receptive towards small group tactics and is thus ready to learn more about the principles of play. Training at this age could be designed on the moments of the game with particular emphasis on specific tactical themes.

Every training session and practice are important in the development of players. These should thus be meaningful learning experiences for the players (Grima, 2016). It is not only how many ball contacts the players make during a session, but more importantly how immersed they are within realistic game situations that target the growth in all the soccer domains (technical, tactical, physical and mental). We can also include the social aspect with these. A soccer player is required to have good social and collaborative skills in order to succeed at the higher levels of the game.

Training practices should be game realistic at any level of ability. This does not mean that we have to train always with opponents. What it means is that the practices should be directly linked with specific situations that occur in a game. Exercises that are analytical and deal with the development of technique can be done. However, they should not take too much time from the total available for the training session (Mariman, H., Berger, H. and Coolen, L, 2015). With higher level players decision making becomes ever more important in developing game action speed. It is thus recommended that even when working on technique some aspect of decision-making should be present. This can be practicing both against a passive or semi-active defender/s, and/or under time pressure, where other constraints are present in exercises where creativity is allowed.

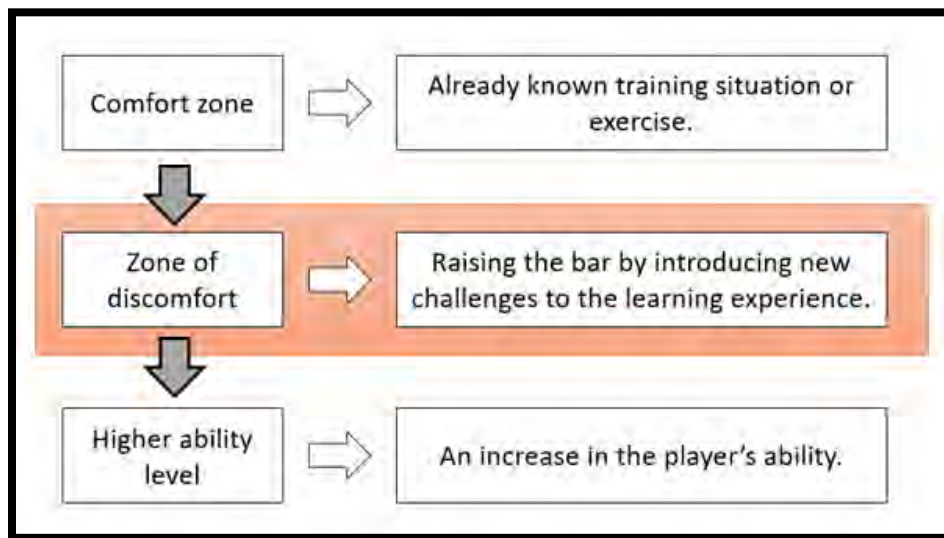
In our training sessions we should let our young aspiring soccer players know what the main aim is and what the required outcomes in order to achieve this aim are. These outcomes will guide us towards achieving the ultimate objective of the session. Explaining what the session is about and establish a brief discussion with the players prior to the training session is highly recommended (Mariman et al., 2015). Tactical boards and videos are great tools to use to demonstrate and discuss with the players the basic tactical principles. This is called ideomotor training where the players are guided through well-planned questioning to envision the tactical response to a situation described by the coach on the board (Jozak, R. and Kepčija, I. 2018).

At regular periods during the season we should review with the players what we have accomplished so far. This gives them a sense of achievement which in return motivates them for further learning. Every session we carry out on the training pitch should get us one step closer to the planned objectives. Training sessions should enable the players to experience game situations where the projected outcomes are clearly highlighted.

Training should be simple, yet guide the players towards achieving higher levels. We are therefore always in search of raising the players' bar and stretching their technical, tactical, physical and mental abilities. This is imperative as we educate the nervous system to carry out

both generic and specific motor tasks. Apart from this, game insight such as moving into the right space and at the right time to receive the ball will also be developed. We as coaches should make sure to select the right stimuli (exercises) at the right time of the players' development. This way efficient learning can occur.

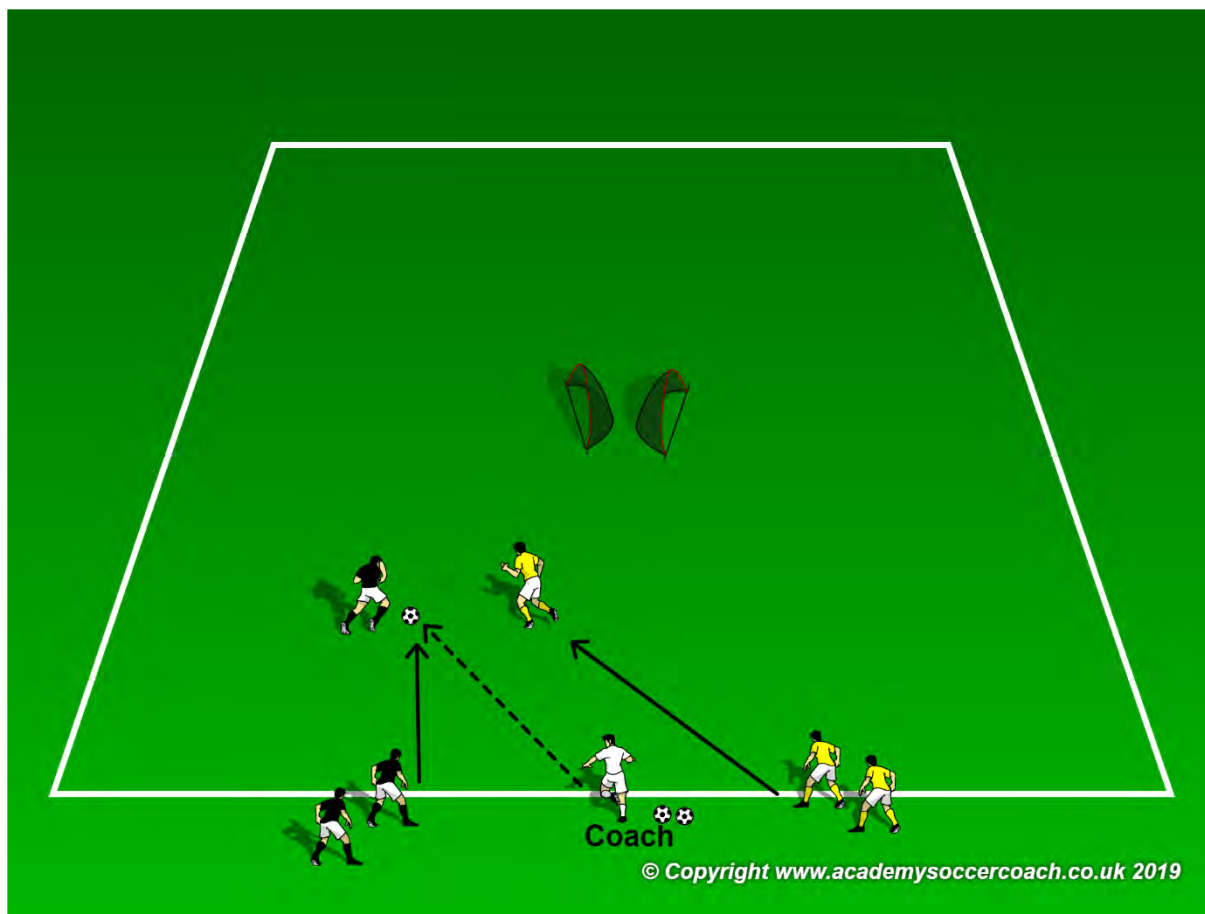
Every training session should start from a situation within which the players are familiar. The process in training sessions should guide them towards new or slightly modified situations. These are situations where the players get out of their comfort zone to experience, experiment and learn to acquire new soccer skills.



Practices should be frequently repeated. It is the most effective way that the players learn and it is also the most efficient as we do not waste precious time in every training session to explain new exercises. Within these practices we should however work in a random manner. No robotic patterns of play should take place, and if the need be they should be kept to a minimum. Within the same practice we can have variations where the players learn to apply the basic principles of play but within different situations while varying the resistance. It could be that a 1v1 is played with the defender facing the attacker, the defender and the attacker starting side by side, or the attacker receiving the ball with his back to the goal while being pressured by the defender from behind. The principles of individual attacking and defending

are being stressed here but within different scenarios. This is known as *repeating without repeating*.

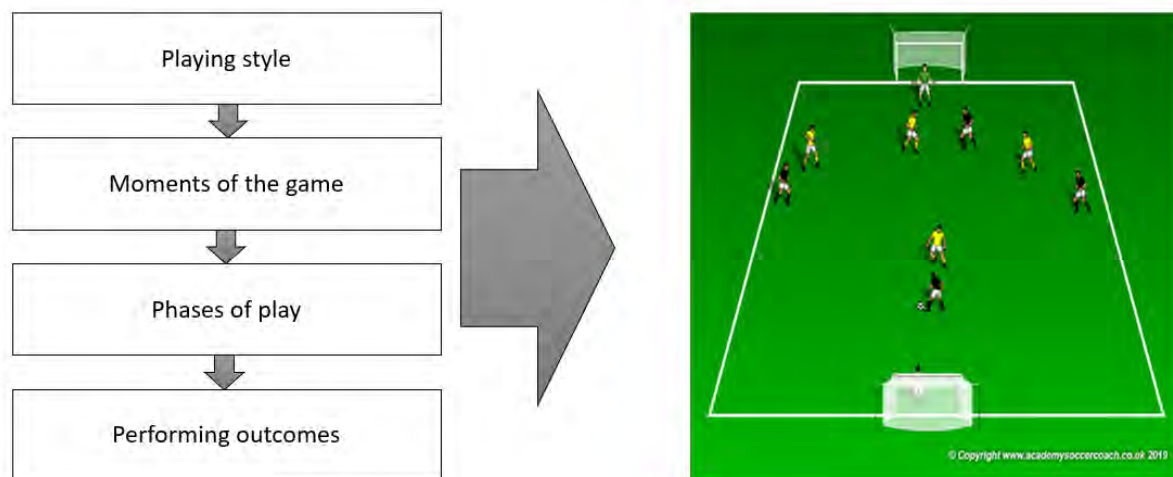
Training situations should be simple, yet bear specific and clear objectives. We do not need to complicate matters! The below diagram provides us with an example. Here we have a basic situation where the aim is to score a goal in either of the two goals positioned back to back. The rules are simple; to outplay the defender and score in either of the two mini goals.



When planning a training session we just need to focus on a few performing outcomes. These outcomes should be clearly selected and listed in a progressive manner that guide us towards achieving the main aim of the session.

When using small sided games we expose the players to frequent problems from which these outcomes are derived (Grima, 2017). In a game of 3v3 or 4v4 the problem and its associated principles of play and outcomes will be continuously repeated from different dimensions. This means that even if the problems are frequently repeated there is always uncertainty in the outcome of situations. Unlike drills where the outcome is already known as the solution for the problems has been given by the coach, in a small sided game it is the players themselves who must perceive the situation and select the most appropriate response.

In a small sided game all the elements of the global game are present. This means that the moments and phases of play, the principles of play and the performance outcomes are always there. Although we may use drills to reinforce the development of a particular technique, the ingredients that develop a holistic soccer player are left out. This means that in a drill we only concentrate on only one aspect without the players having to think for themselves. I am not saying that drills have to be completely abolished. However, we must dedicate appropriate time for them! Too much time devoted to drills will make the players completely reliant on the coach. Their problem solving skills will therefore be hindered.



Small sided games simplify the global game and make the phases of play much easier to develop. The outcomes that determine the success of a phase of play are also easily visible and manageable through small sided games. In these kind of games players have to continuously be focused and adjust according to the ever changing environment. This aids in the development of game insight and therefore the players will also develop their ability to anticipate situations.

Various uses of the 4v4

The 4v4 game can be used for different purposes. It could be used as a tactical guideline to develop beginners. It may also be used to develop technique or to refine and develop group tactical concepts with more advanced players. Furthermore, the 4v4 if properly utilised can serve as a soccer specific conditioning tool!

The 4v4 is the smallest manifestation of the 11v11 game where realism is still present despite the smaller number of players. Within this game setup, basic positional reference can be applied and therefore the development of a particular principle of play could be nourished and transferred to the global game (Hyballa and Te Poel, 2012). Similar problems and the solutions available in an 11v11 game are also found in the 4v4 version (Jankowski, 2016).

In the 4v4 version all the moments and phases of the game are present. When working on establishing a particular playing style, adjusting the pitch dimensions will definitely help in developing the players' habits and also aid in their ability to recognise specific cues within the environment. Playing in smaller numbers enables the game to recreate particular tactical situations itself and often. This setup makes it much easier for the coaches to pin point specific problems and highlight them for the players to understand and solve.

Dutch coach educator Dr Raymond Verheijen (2104) explains how a 4v4 practice (without goalkeepers) could be used to develop soccer specific performance. Using his soccer action language, Dr Verheijen explains how this simplified version of the game can either be used to develop more actions per minute (more pressing, more passing, more off-the-ball runs, etc.) by playing in a smaller area, or to maintain many actions per minute, thus working on maintaining a higher recovery power.

In a 4v4 game the players frequently find themselves in 1v1 situations. Although the frequency is not as high as in a 3v3 game, the options provided by the 4v4 game are more realistic. The

team shape is more realistic as the principles of having height, depth and width are all present. Something which the 3v3 version lacks.

When playing the 4v4 it is important to design the context in which we want our players to learn from. For a more effective learning environment the problems presented in the 4v4 game must match the reality of the global game (Ford in Strudwick, 2016). Meaningful practices develop the players' ability to read the game and perform unconscious automatic movements, habits to be more precise, which give our playing style an identity (Bordonau and Villanueva, 2018).

As more actions per minute can be achieved in a 4v4 game (Verheijen, 2014) if the playing area is quite small, technical competence is also developed. The number of touches each player has on the ball will be high. There will be more passes, more shots on goal, more dribbles, more tackles, more saves by the goalkeeper, etc. In a study done with the Manchester United's under 9 team during the 2002-2003 season, Dr Nick Fenoglio analysed and compared the game of 4v4 with the 8v8 (Jankowski, 2016). As shown in the table hereunder the number of on the ball actions was much higher in the 4v4 than in the 8v8.

Passes played	Over 135% or 585 more passes played in 4v4 than in 8v8.
Shots on goal	Over 260% or 481 more shots on goal in 4v4 than in 8v8.
Goals scored	Over 500% or 301 more goals scored in 4v4 than in 8v8.
1v1 situations	Over 225% or 525 more 1v1 situations in 4v4 than in 8v8.
Feints, tricks and dribbling	Over 280% or 436 more feints, tricks and dribbling in 4v4 than in 8v8.

The 4v4 is also an excellent tool to refine the details about the relationship of particular sectors or inter-sectors within a team during a particular moment and phase of the game. It could be that we want to work on the communication links between our central defenders and the two central midfielders within a 1-4-4-2 system of play when our team is not in possession of the ball and the opponents are attacking from a central position. We want our players to frequently meet this problem in training. Using specifically designed practices we create the right environment where the problem is experienced by our players repeatedly during the

session. The players will become more aware of the problem and recognise the need for more collaborative work to overcome this hurdle. In training, working on the problem using the 4v4 as a corrective tool might be more efficient than when working within an 11v11 in this case. The problem is clearly highlighted and the amount of repetition is high.

The below is a practice about working on a problem with the two central defenders and the two midfielders in a 1-4-4-2 system of play when the opponents are attacking from a central location and close to our goal. The coaching problem and solutions could be broken down as shown.

Problem: The two midfielders get pulled out of position when the opponents attack centrally.

Aim: Prevent the opponents from penetrating through the middle.

Macro principle of play: Retain compactness.

Sub-principle: Positioning of the two central defenders in relation to each other and to the two midfielders.

Sub-sub-principles: Marking stance, marking distance, way (how) to apply pressure on the ball and covering.



Description of the exercise: The attacking team lines up in a 3-1 formation of the 1-4-2-3-1 while the defending team lines up in a 1-2-2 formation representing the central low block of the team. The defending team aims to prevent the attacking team from scoring in regular goal, win the ball and score in the mini goals, as if simulating a counter attack.

4v4 – a fractal of the 11v11 game

The 4v4 is the smallest replication of the 11v11 game where all the training processes could be used to improve performance in the global game. It is therefore of utmost importance that when designing the training process, the exercises chosen should replicate real match problematic situations. The players are the main actors as they are the ones who will be facing these problems and they will be the ones who must solve them during the game. In training situations the players should be immersed in their natural position with reference to specific moments, phases and even the part of the pitch they will be in.



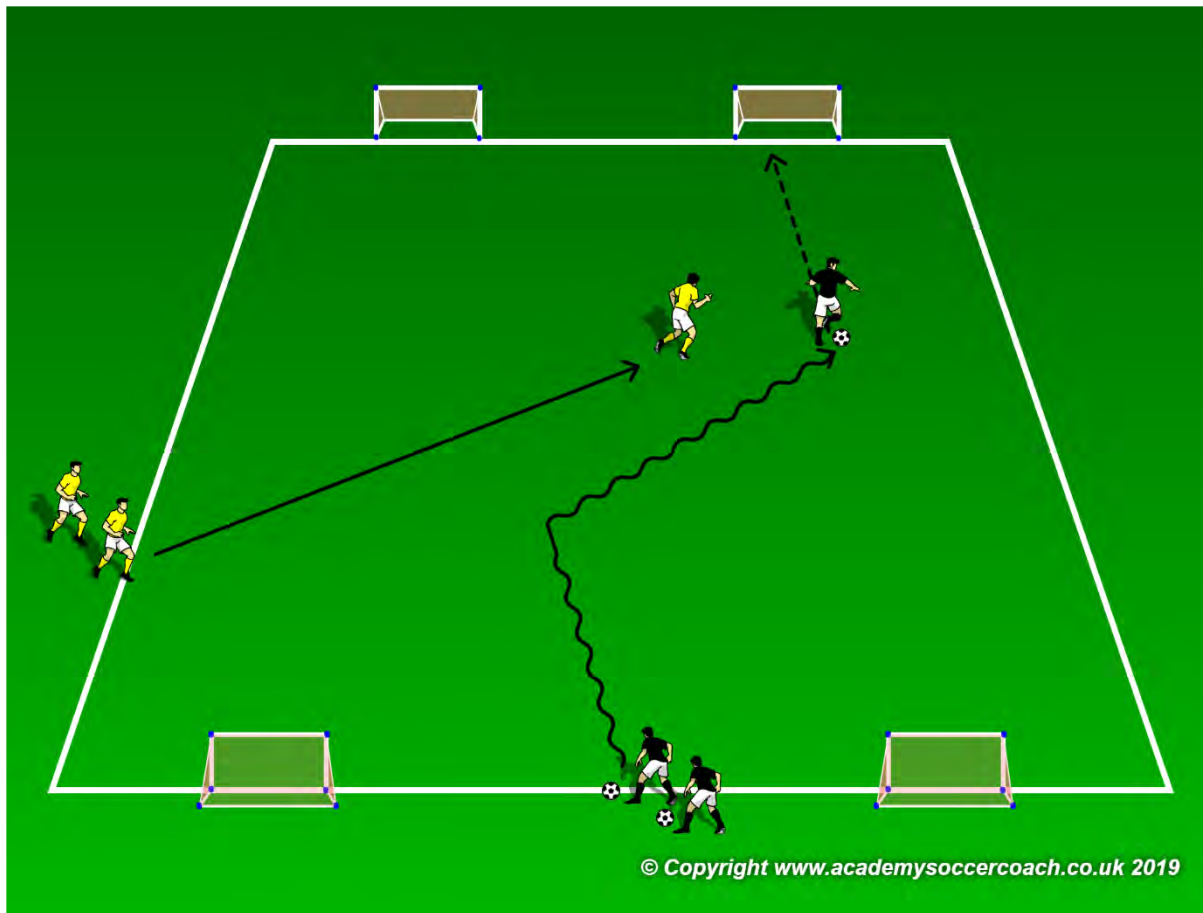
In the above diagram we take the example of two systems of play mapped against each other theoretically on the tactics board – the 1-4-4-2 against the 1-4-4-2. We want to work on the creative phase of the build-up and to develop the relationship between our midfield and attack during this phase of play. For this purpose we will use a 4v4 game involving the players

involved in such a situation. As one of our macro principles of the playing style requires us to build-up play through the thirds, we will be using the midfield sector a lot during the construction of an attack. We would then focus on the positioning of the four midfielders during this phase thus developing the necessary communication links is a must. Through systemic repetition (Bordonau and Villanueva, 2018) when playing 4v4 we will enhance our playing style and therefore strengthen the desired behaviour of the players during the game. In this 4v4 practice, teams are evenly matched so there will be a lot of 1v1 situations all over the training area. In this numerical equality there is no place for the players to hide or to relieve as when they are playing in a numerical advantage such as in a 4v4+2 neutrals. This constraint forces the players to think harder and smarter on how to create space both for themselves and for their teammates.

Game-like soccer training

The training situations described in this chapter are in progressive order. This means that they progress upon each other where the learning bar is always increased.

1v1 on four goals.



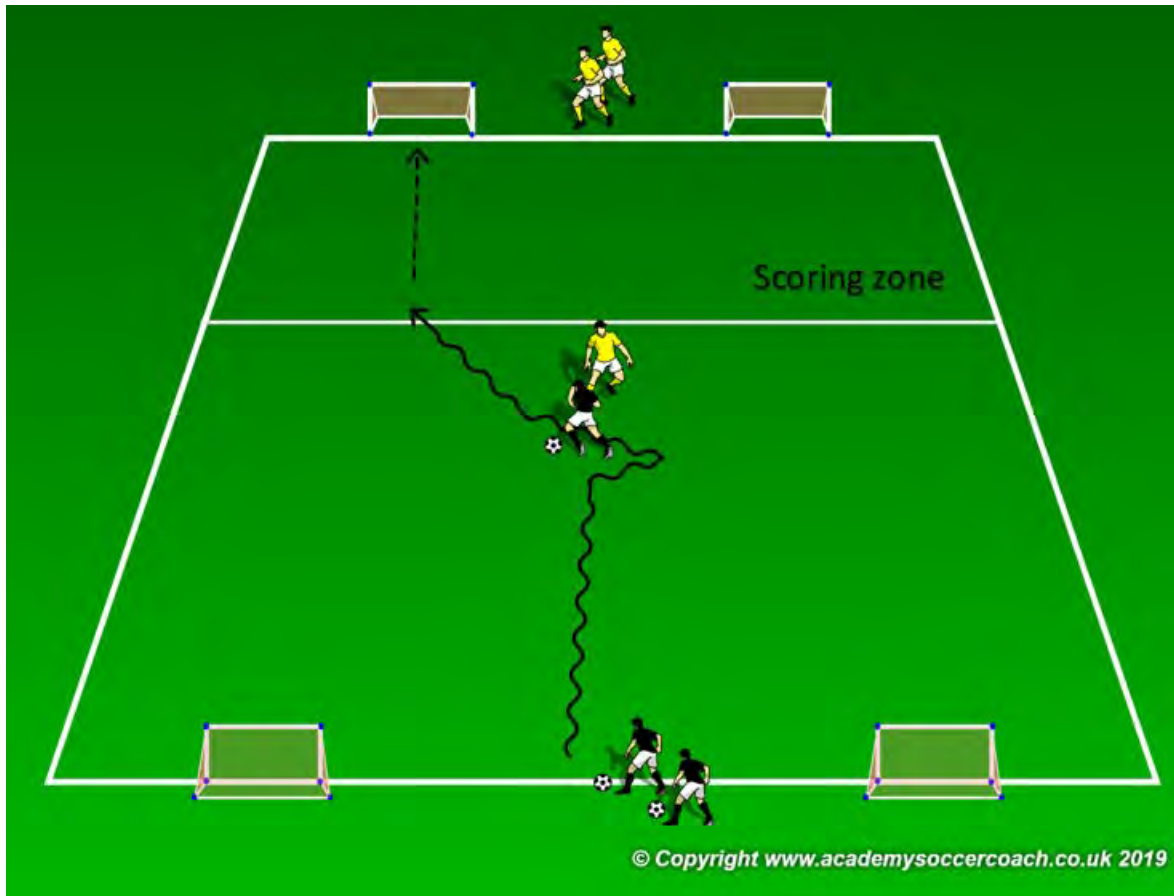
Aim: Run with the ball at speed to score.

Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. Two mini goals are positioned at each end line. Players are divided into two equal groups as attackers and defenders. The defenders start eight meters diagonally from the attackers. The attackers start with a ball.

Description: At the coach's signal which can be either acoustic or visual, the attacker runs with the ball forward while the defender moves quickly to prevent him from scoring. If the defender

wins the ball, he aims to counter on the opposite two mini goals. Both players rotate roles after each repetition.

1v1 on four goals scoring from inside the scoring zone.



Aim: Disguise opponent using feints to create space to score.

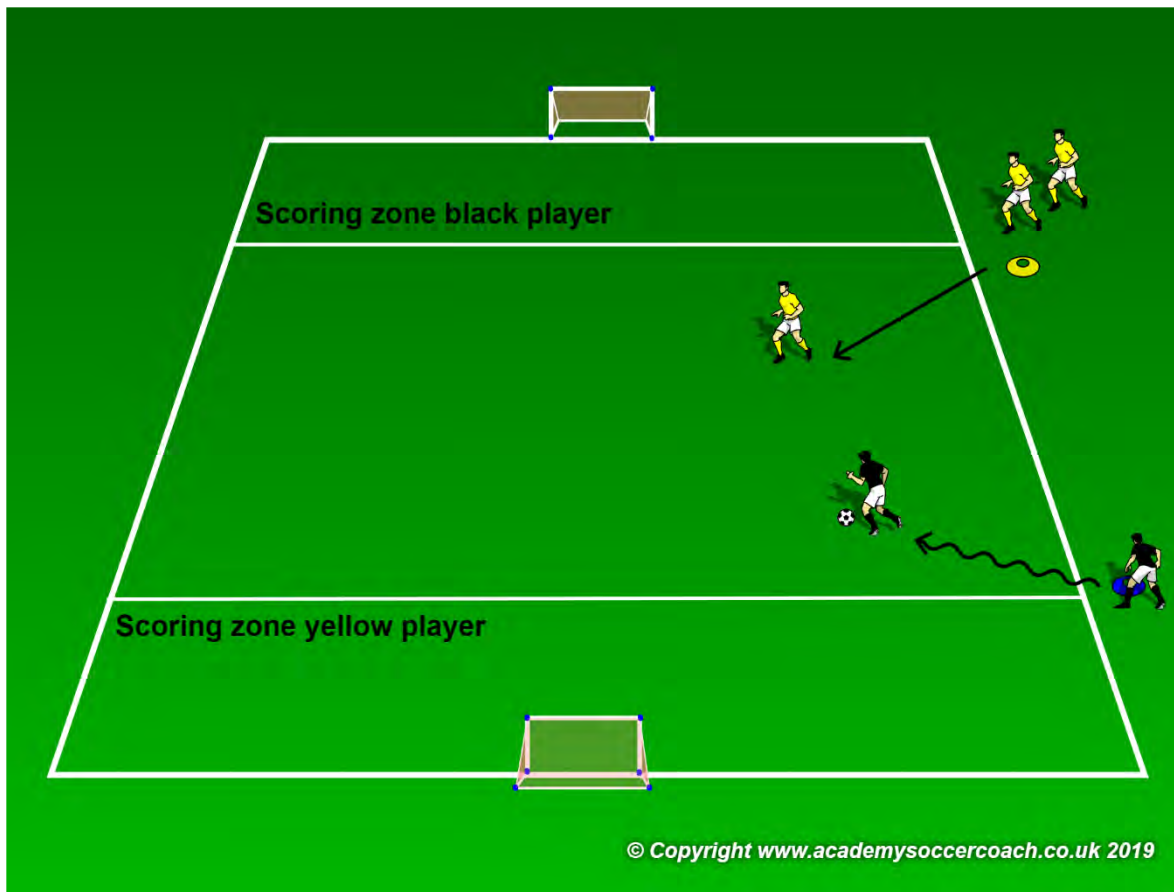
Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. A scoring zone measuring 4 yards by 12 yards is marked within this area. Two mini goals are positioned at each end line. Players are divided into two equal groups as attackers and defenders. The attackers and defenders start facing each other fifteen yards apart. The attackers start with a ball.

Description: At the coach's signal which can be either acoustic or visual, the attacker dribbles the ball forward while the defender moves quickly to prevent him from scoring. The attacker may only score from inside the scoring zone. If the defender wins the ball, he aims to counter on the opposite two mini goals. Both players rotate roles after each repetition.

Progressions:

1. The defender starts defending from the middle of the area instead of from the end line.
2. Reduce the length of the scoring zone to 3 yards.
3. If the defender scores within a particular time frame, the goal is worth double points.

1v1 on two goals from the side.



Aim: Dribble past the direct opponent to score.

Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. Two scoring zones measuring 2 yards by 12 yards are marked at each end. A mini goal is positioned at each end line. Players are divided into two equal groups as attackers and defenders. The attackers and defenders start eight yards away on the same vertical line. The attackers start with a ball.

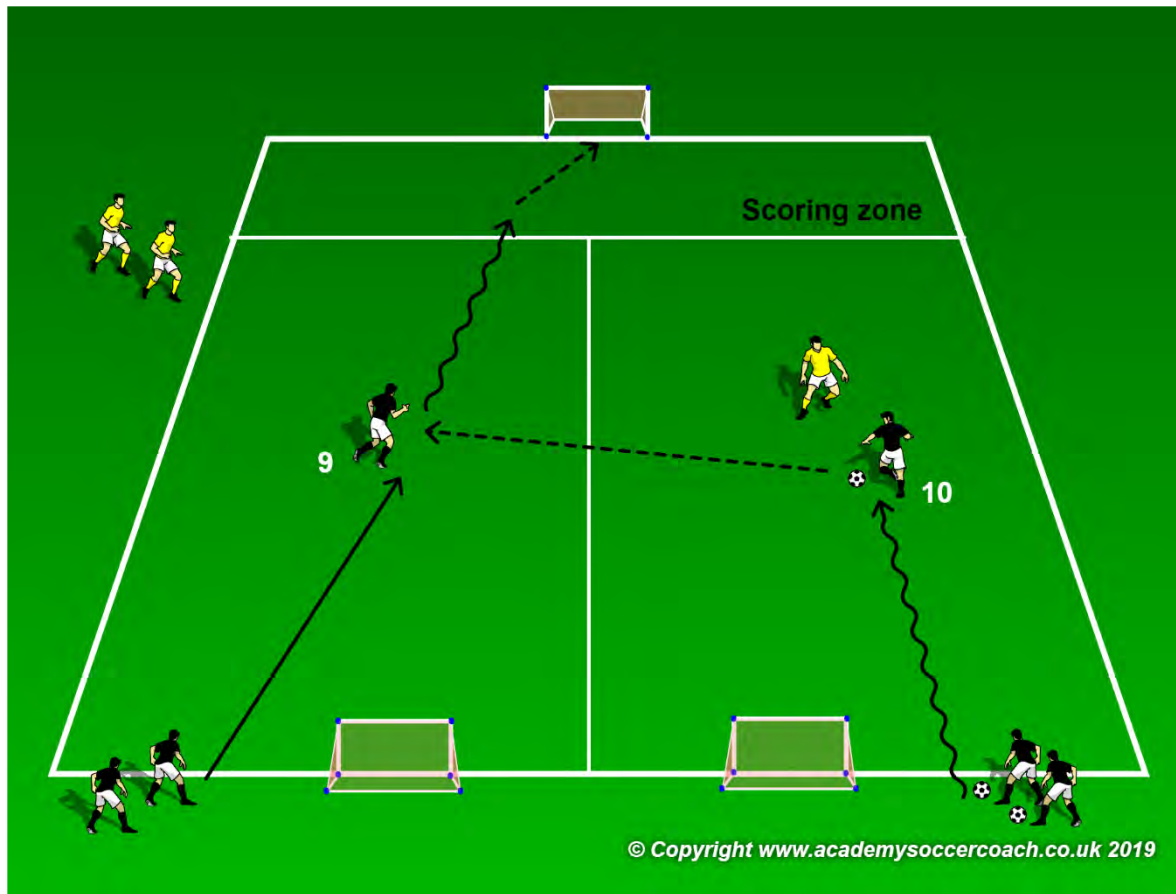
Description: At the coach's signal which can either be acoustic or visual, the attacker dribbles the ball forward with the aim of reaching the scoring zone. The attacker may only score from

inside the scoring zone. If the defender wins the ball, he aims to counter on the opposite mini goal and must also score from inside the scoring zone.

Progressions:

1. Both players are numbered and with a ball. When the coach calls out a number, the player representing that number attacks while the other leaves the ball and defends.
2. Same as in 1 but the coach provides a visual signal.

2v1 inside two vertical zones.



Aim: Stretch the defender to create scoring chances.

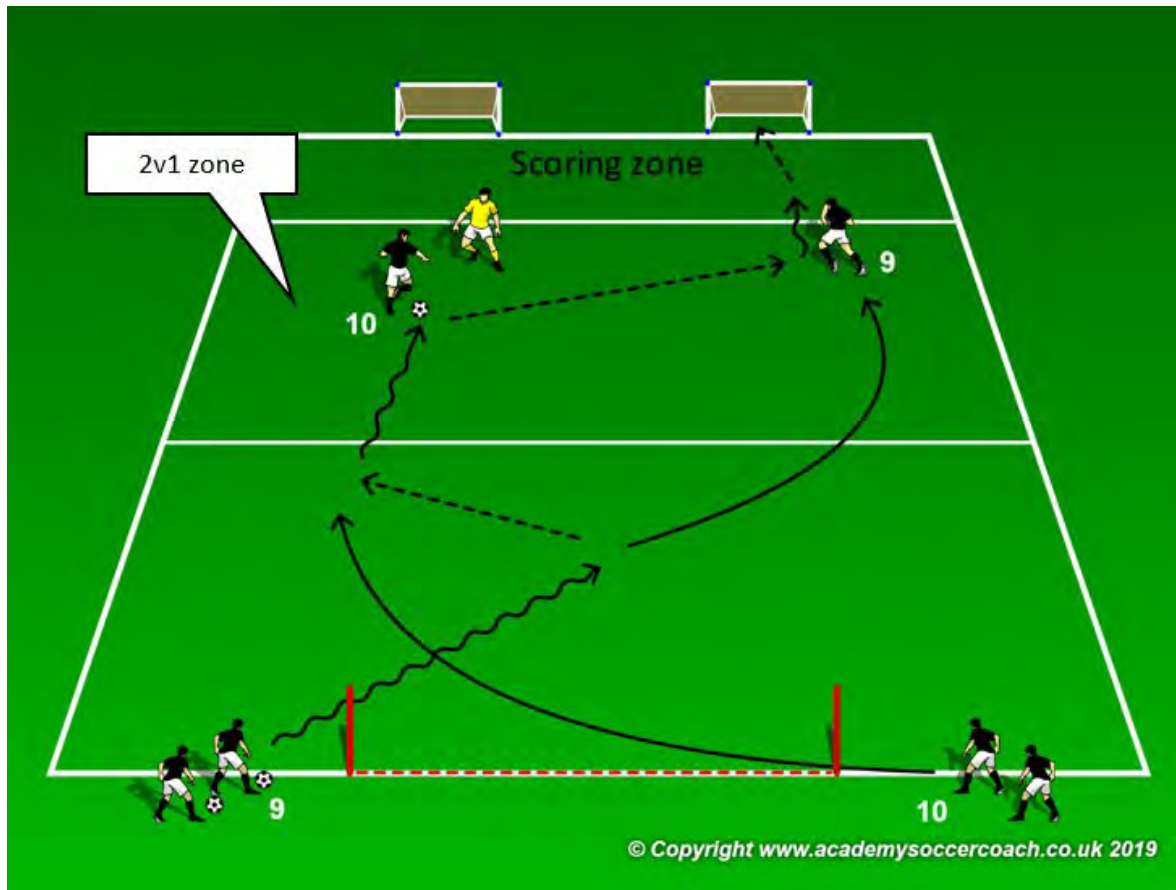
Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. A scoring zone measuring 2 yards by 12 yards is marked at attackers' scoring end. A mini goal is positioned at this end while two mini goals are positioned at the opposite end line. Players are divided into two groups of attackers and a group of defenders.

Description: Attacker 10 starts the action by dribbling the ball forward. Attackers must remain inside their assigned vertical zone. The defender is not allowed to enter the scoring zone and aims to win the ball before the attackers get inside this zone. If successful, the defender counters on any of the two mini goals situated on the opposite end line.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the area of play to 12 yards in length by 10 yards in width.
2. The attackers try to score within a pre-allotted time.

2v1 – introducing movements in attack.



Aim: Pull the defender out of position to create space.

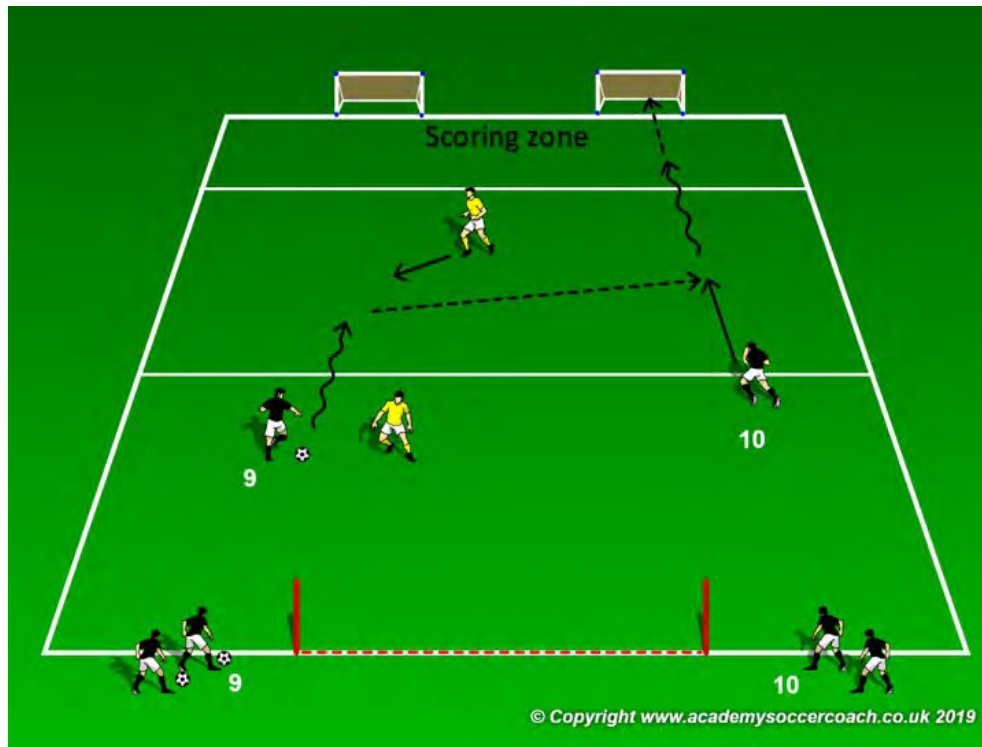
Set-up: Area measuring 17 yards in length by 12 yards in width is divided into two equal horizontal zones. A scoring zone measuring 2 yards by 12 yards is marked at attackers' scoring end. Two mini goals are positioned at this end while a counter gate (between the red poles) measuring 6 yards in width is added at the opposite end line.

Description: The action starts by having attacker 9 dribbles diagonally while attacker 10 overlaps. Attacker 9 can choose to either pass the ball to attacker 10 or dribbles forward. The defender is only allowed to defend inside the 2v1 zone as shown in the above illustration. Attackers may only score from inside the scoring zone. The defender is not allowed to enter this zone. If the defender wins the ball he counters on the counter gate.

Easier variation: Play 2v0 where the players practice off-the-ball movements to receive and play the ball.

Progression: Play 2v1 where the defender is allowed to move anywhere inside the playing zone and the attackers must conclude within ten seconds of the first move.

2v1 in each horizontal zone.



Aim: Off-the-ball movement and support to go past the defenders.

Set-up: Area measuring 17 yards in length by 12 yards in width is divided into two equal horizontal zones. A scoring zone measuring 2 yards by 12 yards marked at attackers' scoring end. Two mini goals are positioned at this end while a counter gate (between the red poles) measuring 6 yards in width is added at the opposite end line. A defender is positioned in each horizontal zone.

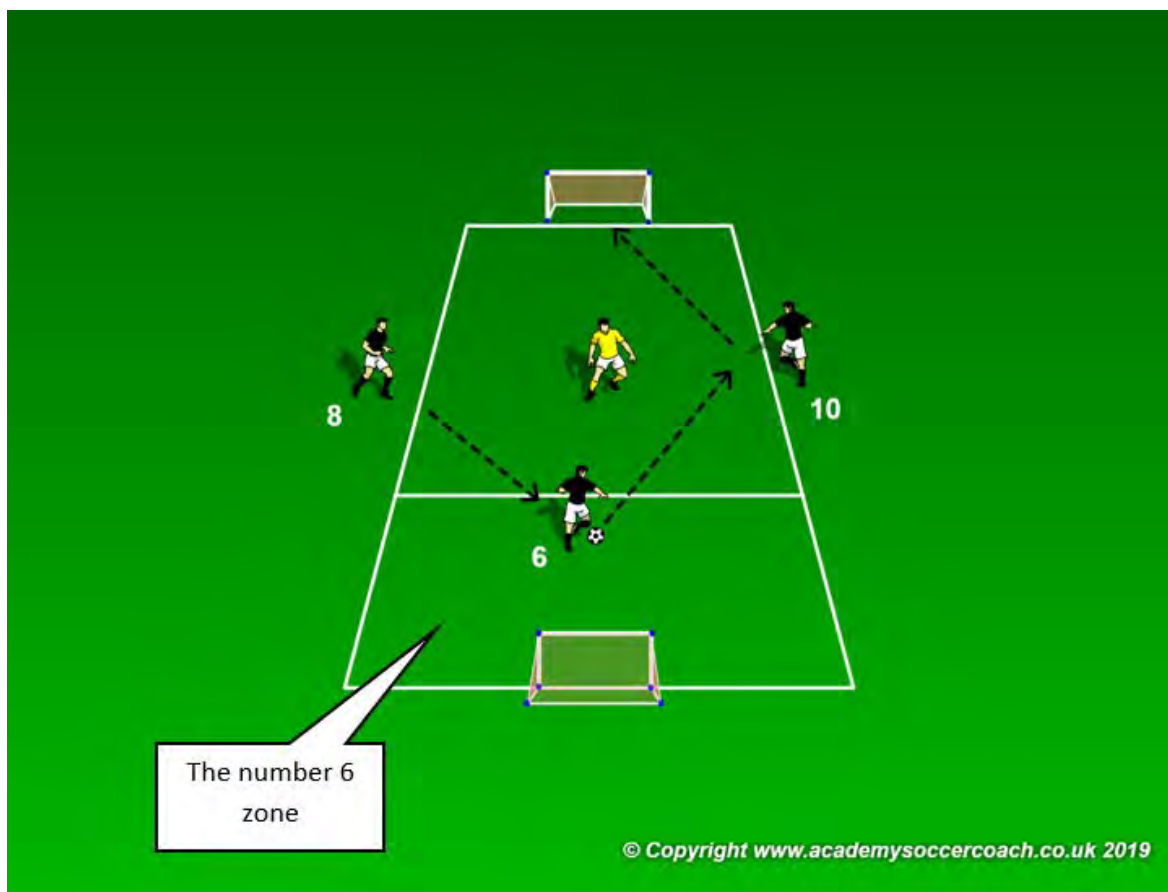
Description: Play is 2v1 in each zone where the attackers aim to dribble past the defender and progress to the next zone. Attackers are only allowed to score from inside the scoring zone. If

the defenders win the ball they both leave their assigned zones with the aim of scoring by dribbling through the counter gate.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the area of play to 12 yards in length by 10 yards in width or even to 10 by 8 yards.
2. The defender is allowed to enter the scoring zone to prevent the attackers from scoring.
3. The attackers have a pre-allotted amount of time to score.

3v1 on a narrow and long pitch.



Aim:

Form triangles to play around and past the defender.

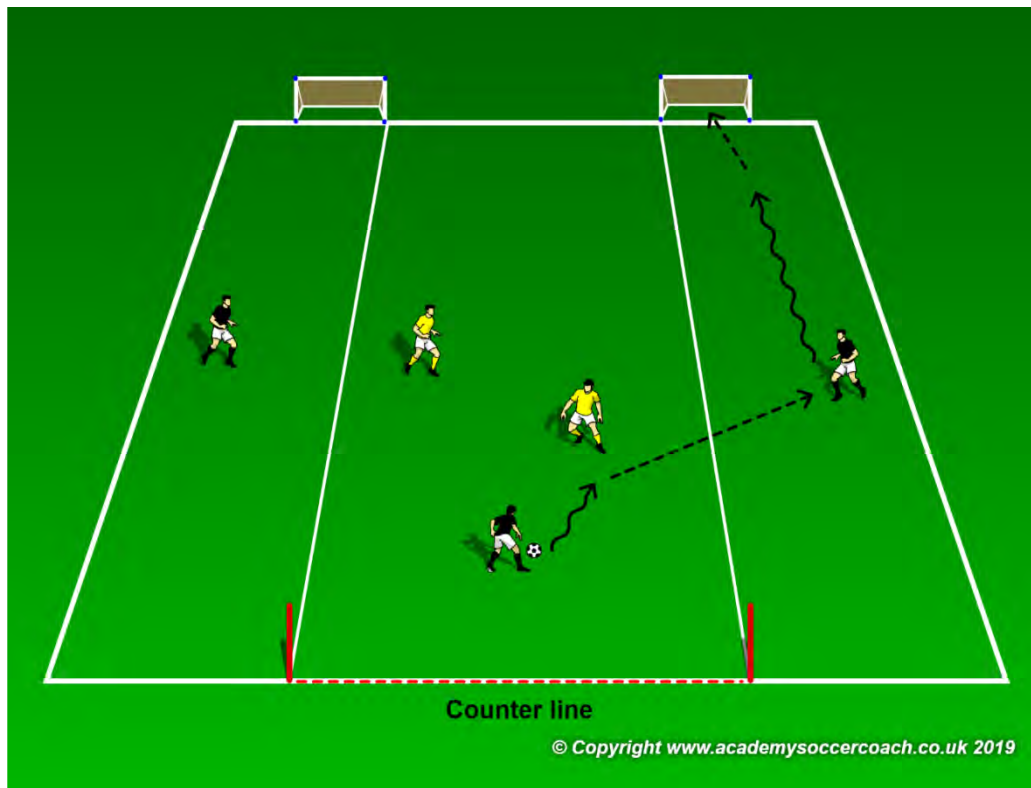
Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 10 yards in width. Inside this area another area called “the number 6 zone” is marked. The player designated as the number 6 remains inside this area. The number 8 and number 10 play on their assigned side. A mini goal is placed at each end of the marked area.

Description: Players are restricted to remain on their assigned side or zone and are also allowed to dribble the ball. The defender is not allowed to tackle the ball in the number 6 zone. If the defender wins the ball, he counters on the opposite goal against the number 6.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the area to 12 yards by 8 yards.
2. The defender is allowed to tackle the ball in any zone.
3. Attackers 8 and 10 play inside the area, thus making it more challenging for the attackers to create and exploit space.
4. The attackers have a pre-set amount of time to score.

3v2 on three vertical zones.



Aim: Stretch the opposition to penetrate and score.

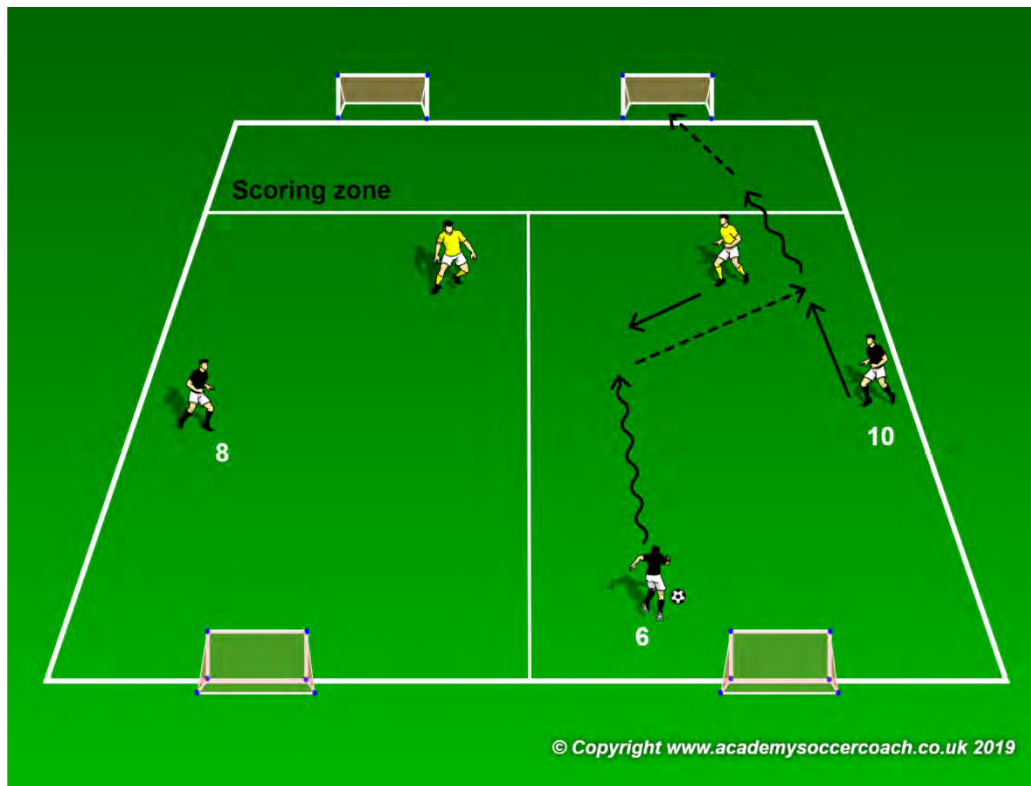
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width. Divide the area into three vertical zones where the outside vertical zones measure four yards in width while the central measures seven yards. An attacking team player is positioned inside each vertical zone. The two defenders start from inside the middle zone.

Description: The attackers aim to score in any of the two mini goals. They must however remain inside their assigned area. The two defenders may move anywhere inside the playing area. If the defenders win the ball they counter on the opposite counter line with a dribble.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the playing area to 18 yards in length by 12 yards in width.
2. Introduce a scoring zone for the attackers. Goals may only be scored from inside this zone.
3. Remove the vertical zones and play a normal 3v2 with the players free to move anywhere on the field of play.

3v2 in a vertically divided pitch.



Aim: Stretch the opposition to penetrate and score.

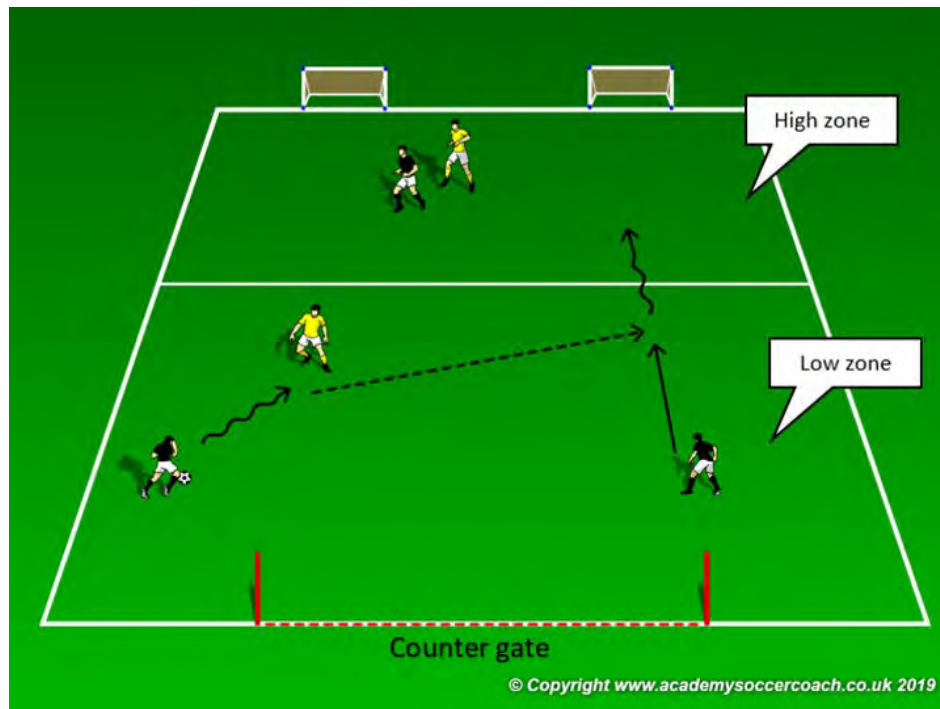
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width. Divide the area into two vertical zones and a scoring zone. Three players are designated as attackers while another two as defenders. Two mini goals are positioned on either end of the playing area.

Description: The attackers aim to penetrate and score by dribbling the ball into the scoring zone to score in one of the two mini goals. The defenders are not allowed to track the attackers inside the scoring zone. If the defenders win the ball, they counter on the opposite two mini goals.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the playing area to 18 yards in length by 12 yards in width.
2. The defenders may track the attackers into the scoring zone.
3. The attackers have a pre-allotted amount of time to score.
4. A recovering defender tracks back a number of seconds after the attack starts (3v2+1).

2v1 + 2v1 to finish an attack.



Aim: Play in verticality.

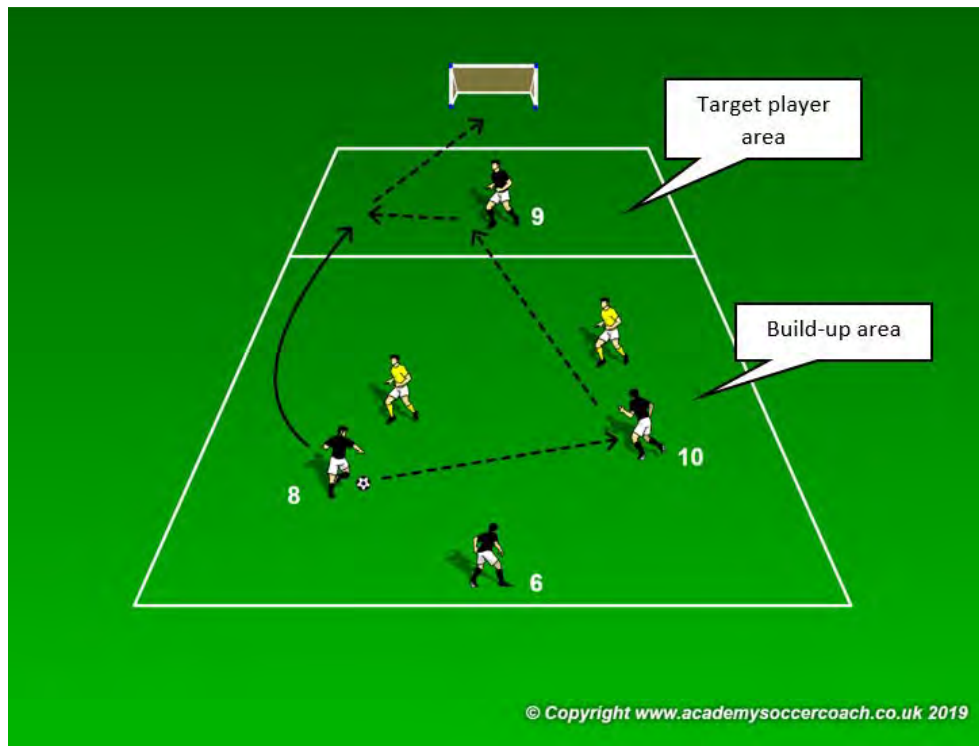
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width. Divide the area into two horizontal zones. The low zone measures 12 yards by 15 yards while the high zone measures 8 yards by 15 yards. Two attackers and a defender are positioned in the low zone while another attacker and a defender are positioned in the high zone.

Description: The two attackers in the low zone play against the defender to progress into the high zone. The ball may be passed to the attacker in the high zone or dribbled across the zones. In the high zone another 2v1 situation takes place. If the defenders win the ball they counter on the counter gate positioned at the opposite end of the area.

Progressions:

1. Reduce the playing area to 18 yards in length by 12 yards in width.
2. The attackers have a pre-allotted amount of time to score.
3. The defender inside the low zone is allowed to track back if the attackers progress to the high zone.

3v2 combine with the target player.



Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

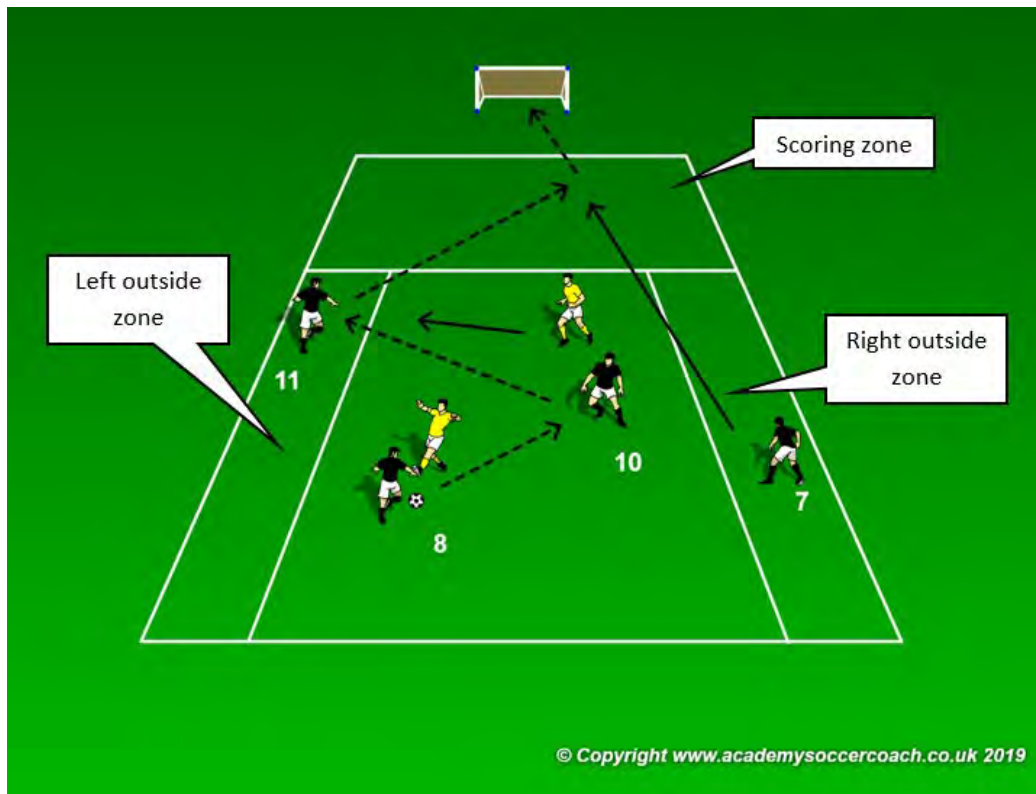
Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. The final third of the area is the target player area. A striker (9) is positioned inside the target player area. Three attacking players (6, 8 and 10) are positioned inside the build-up area. These three attacking players are opposed by two defenders. A mini goal is placed two yards behind the line.

Description: Attackers (6, 8 and 10) aim to play the ball to the striker and follow the pass to finish at goal. The two defenders aim to prevent this from happening, win the ball and dribble it out of the area. If the ball is lost, the attackers aim to press immediately to regain possession of it before the defenders dribble it out of the area (gegen pressing).

Progressions:

1. A defender may follow the ball inside the target player's zone to prevent the attackers from scoring.
2. The attackers have a pre-allotted amount of time to score.

4v2 play with wing zones.



Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

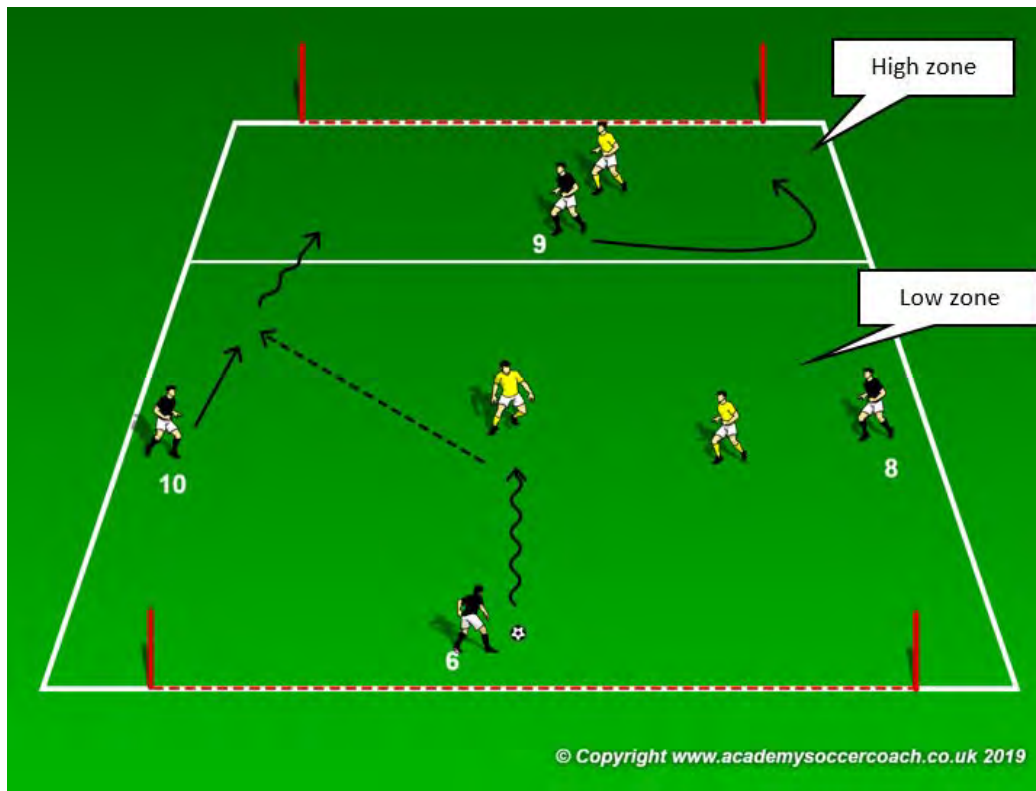
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length by 12 yards in width. The area is divided into three vertical areas where the outside zones each measure three meters in width. A scoring zone measuring 5 yards by 15 yards is marked at the end of the grid. Two attackers and two defenders are positioned inside the central zone while an attacking player is positioned in each of the outside zones. A mini goal is placed two yards behind the end line.

Description: Attackers 8 and 10 combine with each other or with the attackers inside the outside zones to play the ball into the scoring zone. Another attacker meets this pass to finish with a shot on the mini goal. The defenders aim to prevent the attackers from scoring, win the ball and dribble it out at the opposite end line, thus playing 2v2 against the 8 and 10.

Progressions:

1. A defender may follow the ball inside the scoring zone.
2. Play against three defenders positioned in the middle horizontal channel.

3v2 + 2v1 goal line soccer.



Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

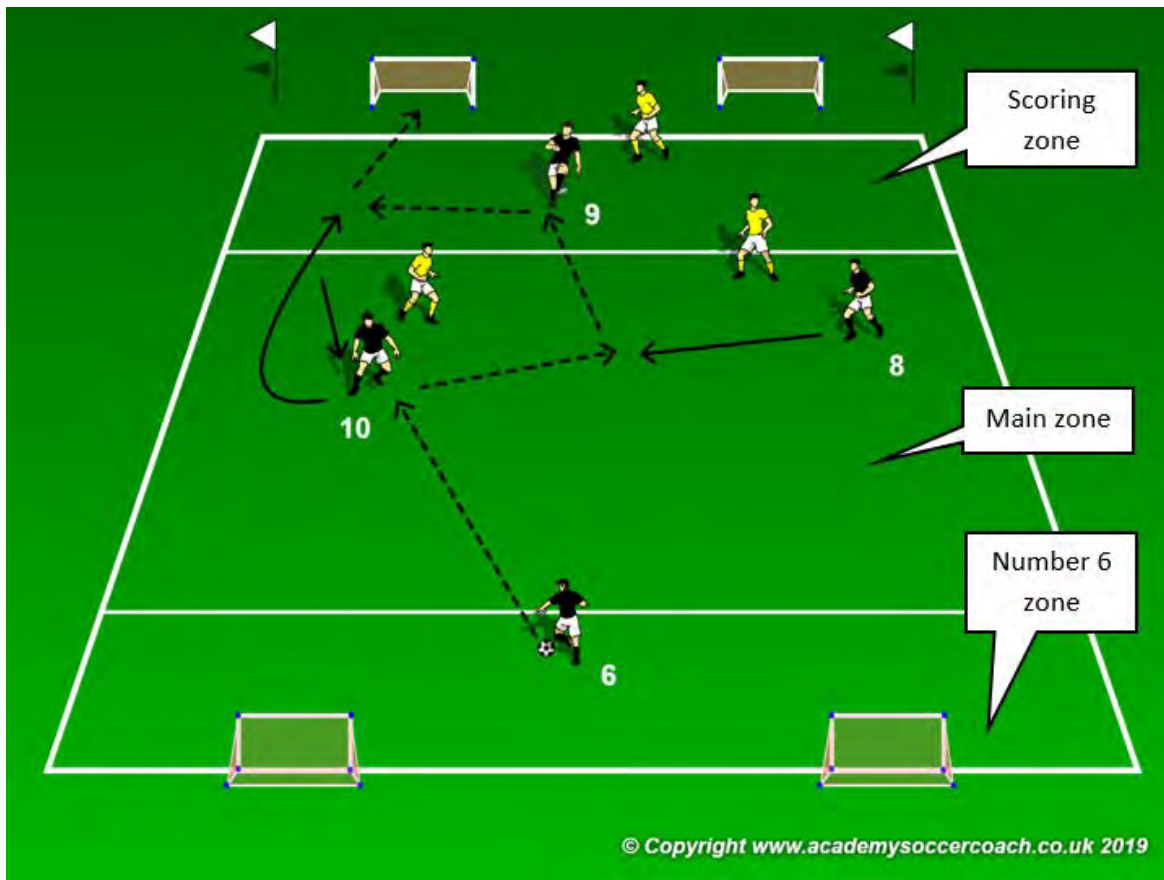
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width. The area is divided into two horizontal zones. The low zone measures 15 yards by 15 yards while the high zone measures 5 yards by 15 yards. Two gates measuring 10 meters in length are positioned at each end zone. Three attackers and two defenders are positioned inside the low zone, while in the high zone there is an attacker and a defender.

Description: Attackers 6, 8 and 10 aim to play the ball into the upper zone by either dribbling or passing it to the number 9. Once the ball is in the high zone, a 2v1 situation in favour of the attackers is created. The attacking team aims to score by stopping the ball over the defending team's goal line (between the two poles) to score a point. The defenders aim to win the ball and do the same but on the opposite goal line.

Progression:

Play 4v3 in a single zone by removing the low and high zones.

4v3 building an attack on two goals.

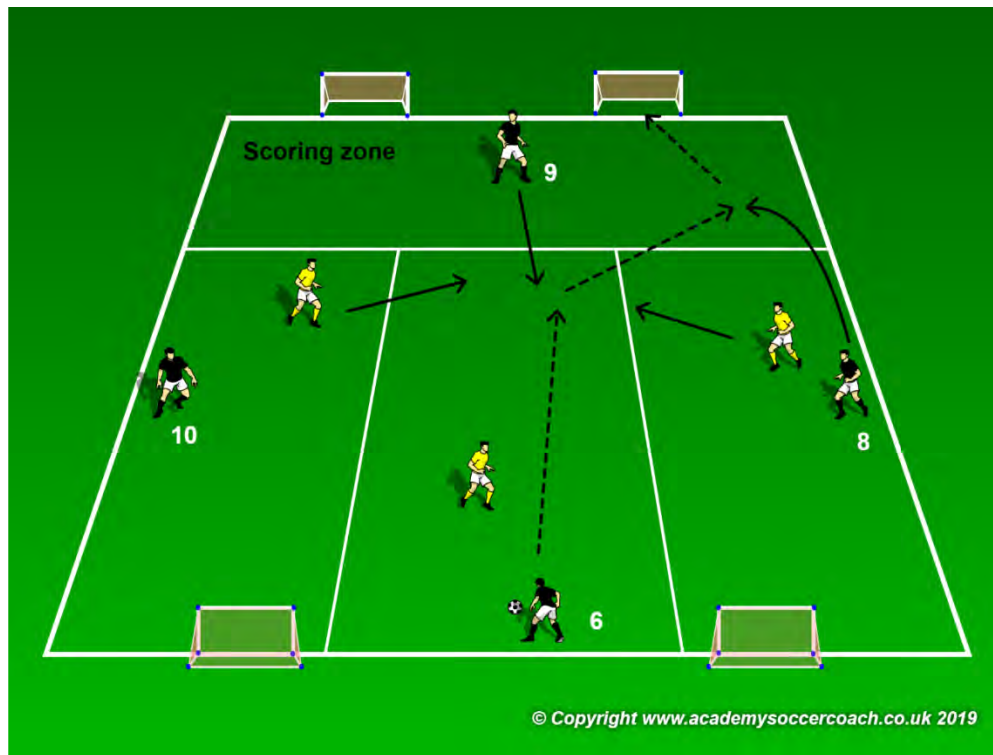


Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards by 15 yards. The number 6 zone and the scoring zone both measure 4 yards in length, while the main zone measures 12 yards in length. An attacking player is positioned in the number 6 zone. Two attackers and two defenders are positioned in the main central zone, while another attacker and a defender are situated in the scoring zone.

Description: The attacking team may only score from inside the scoring zone by either combining with the number 9 or by dribbling into this zone. In both circumstances a 2v1 situation is created. A player from the attacking team should always remain inside the number 6 zone. This player cannot be contrasted by the opposing team players. An attacker and a defender are situated in the scoring zone. If the defending team wins possession of the ball, they counter on the opposite mini goals.

4v3 in vertical zones.



Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

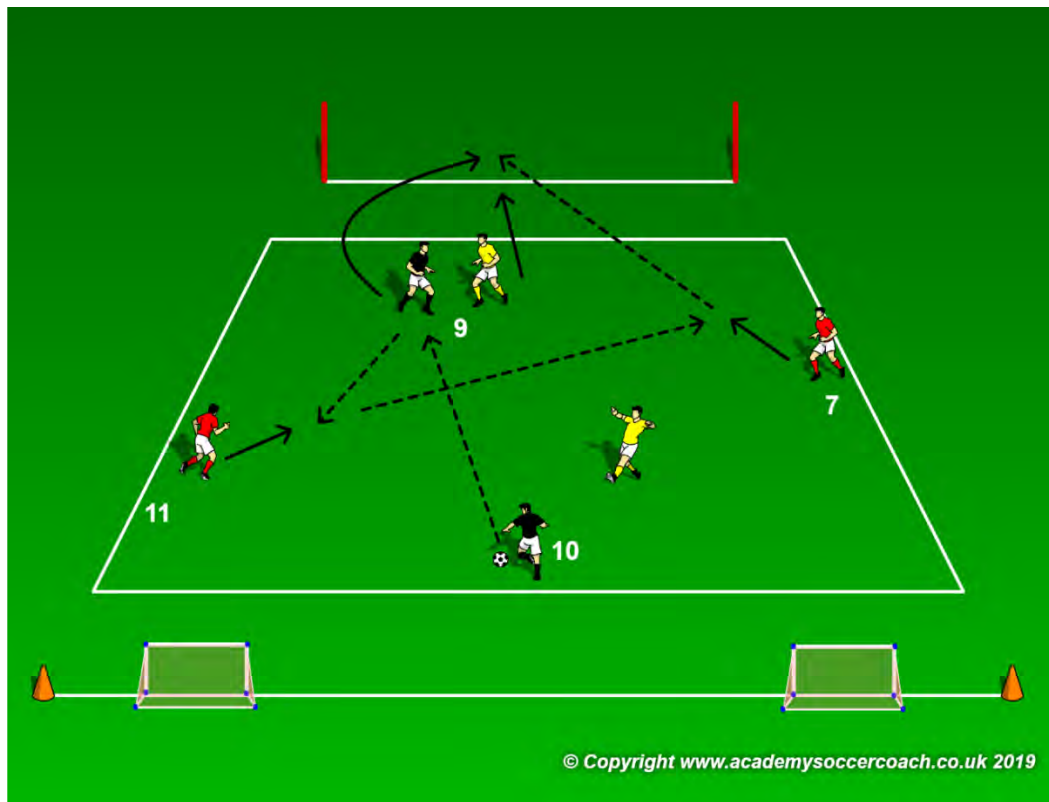
Set-up: Area measuring 25 yards in length by 24 yards in width. The area is further divided into three equal vertical zones each measuring 20 yards by 8 yards and a scoring zone measuring 5 yards by 24 yards. A defender and an attacker is positioned in each vertical zone, while another attacker is positioned in the scoring zone. Two goals are positioned at both ends of the area.

Description: The attacking team starts play from attacker 6. All players are to remain inside their assigned area until the ball is played to attacker 9. Attacker 9 may move anywhere to provide support and numerical superiority in any vertical zone. Attackers aim to score inside the two mini goals at the top, while the defenders aim to win the ball and counter on the opposite two mini goals.

Progression:

Play 3v3 plus attacker 9 in the scoring zone. Remove the vertical zones.

2v2+2 attack the goal line.



Aim: Play in verticality and support the attack.

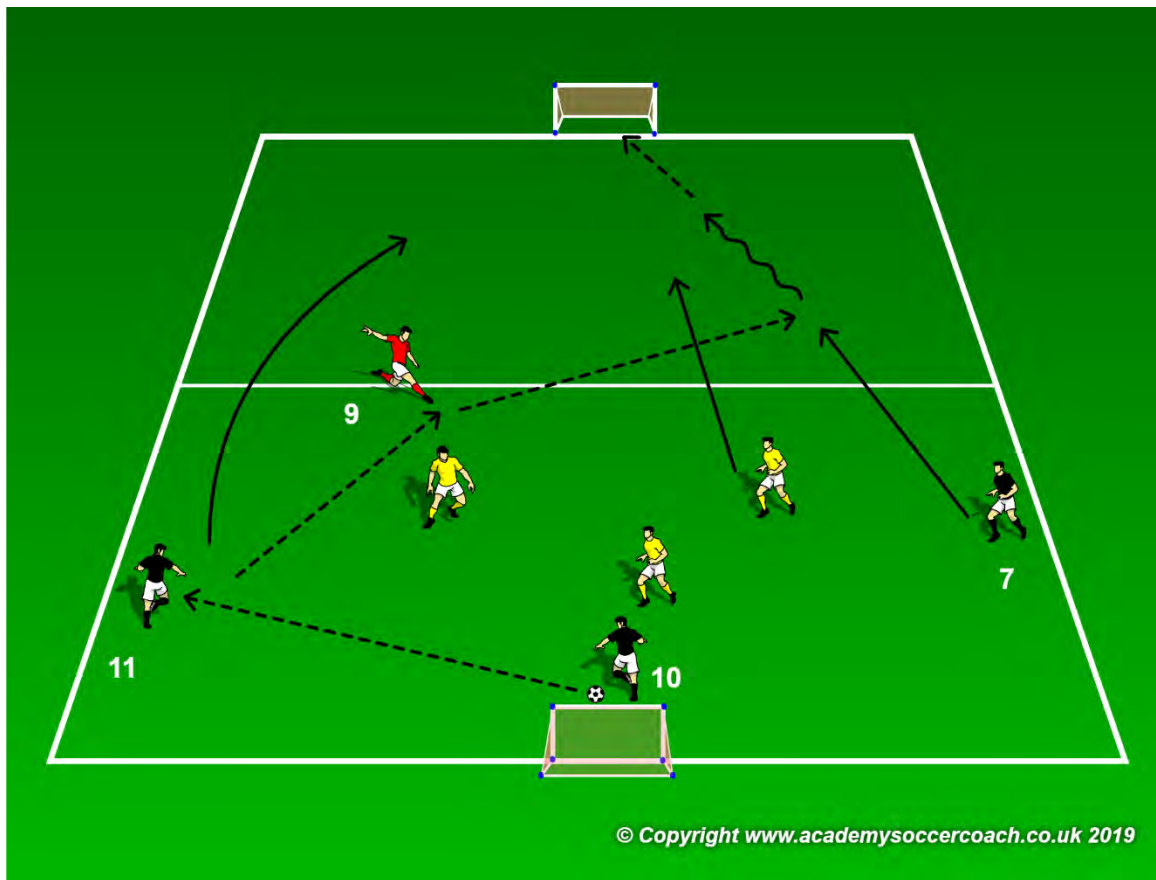
Set-up: Area measuring 15 yards by 12 yards. On one side we have a goal line two meters beyond the playing area, while on the opposite side we have another goal line with two mini goals two meters beyond it. Three groups of two players where one group acts as neutral and plays with the team in possession.

Description: The neutral players (reds) are instructed to remain wide. The team in possession play 4v2 against the defending team. However, the neutral players are not allowed to score. This means that the team in possession must work out how and when to play the ball to an attacking player and stop it beyond the goal line. When the defenders win the ball they counter 4v2 in a numerical advantage on the opposite two mini goals.

Progression:

Play 3v3 scoring in the same way with no neutrals.

3v3+1 break the press.



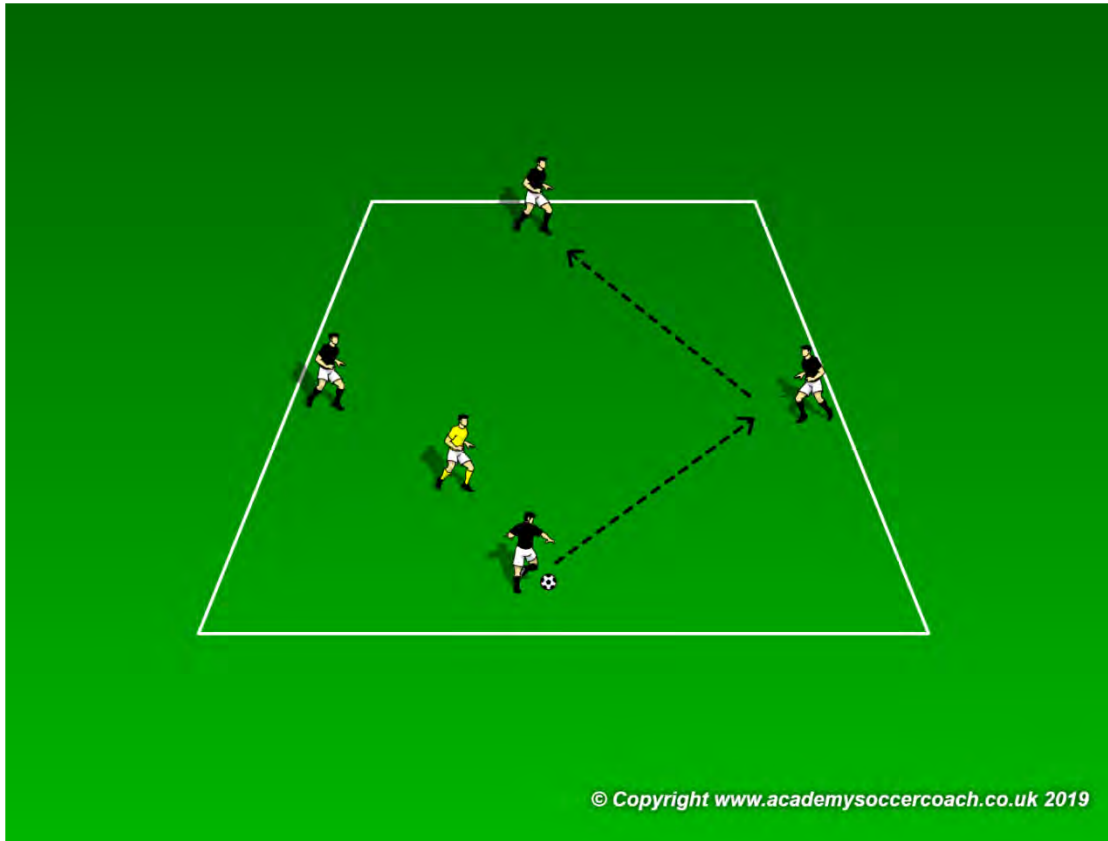
Aim: Play through or behind the defence.

Set-up: Area measuring 25 yards in length by 20 yards in width which is divided into two equal horizontal zones. Three attackers and three defenders plus a neutral player are positioned inside one half of the area. A mini goal is positioned at each end of the area.

Description: Play takes place in one of the two equal horizontal zones where the attacking team aims to play the ball into the opposite zone. The neutral player acts as a number 9 and gives the team height and forward penetrating options. In order for the ball to be played into the opposite zone, it must be passed to another player who should not be waiting inside this area. If this happens, possession of the ball is given to the opposite team. When the ball is played into this area, another attacker and a defender follow, thus making the situation 2v1 for the attackers. When the other team (yellow) has the ball, the same situation occurs but in the opposite direction.

Rondos to develop positional awareness in 4v4

4v1 Keep away.



Set-up: Area measuring 8 yards in length by 6 yards in width. Four attacking players, each situated on a side of the grid and a defender.

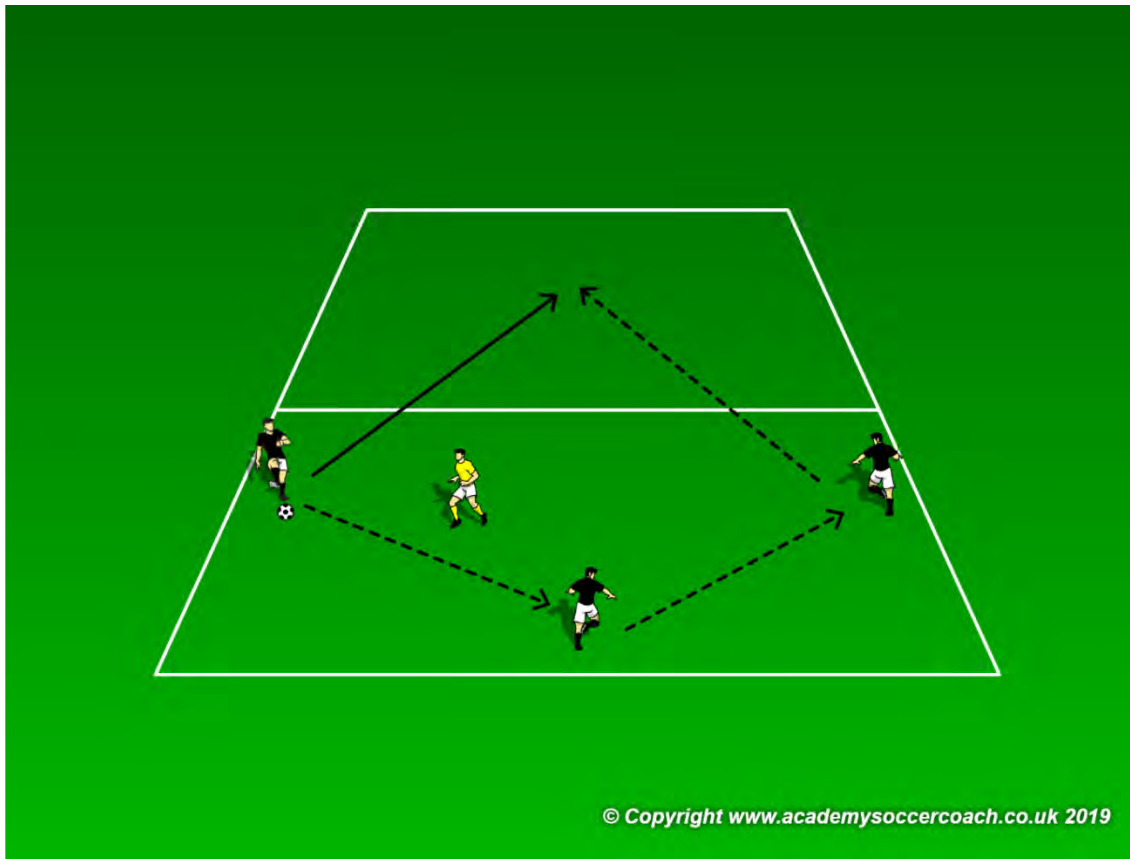
Work load: Six to ten repetitions of twenty to thirty seconds each. Rest for the same amount of time between repetitions.

Description: The four attackers aim to keep possession of the ball for the allotted time. They score a point if a pre-targeted amount of consecutive passes are completed.

Challenges for the players: If the attackers manage to complete the minimum set amount of passes, the defender has to make ten push-ups. If not, the attackers must make the push-ups.

Progression: Receiver may not pass back to the same player who passed him the ball. This encourages positional rotations.

3v1 to 3v1 sliding rondo.



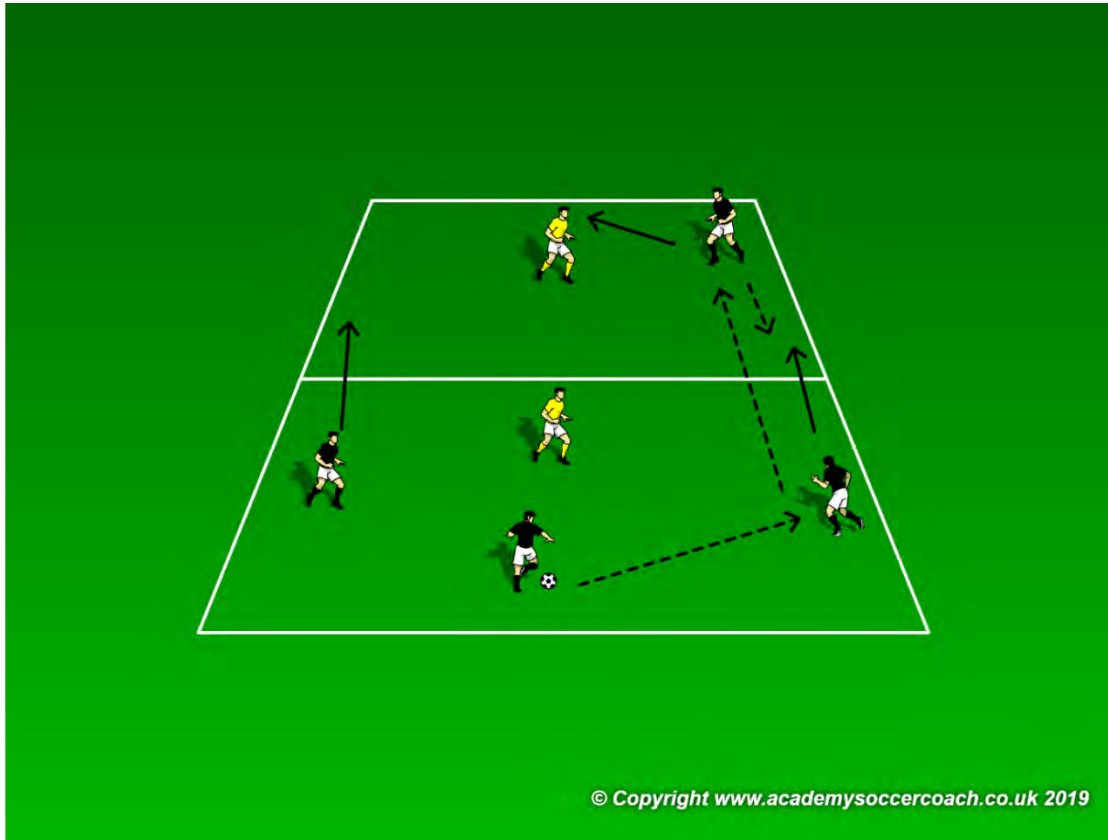
Set-up: Area measuring 16 yards in length by 8 yards in width. The area is divided into two equal zones of 8 yards by 8 yards. Three attacking players and a defender are positioned in the same half of the area.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of twenty to thirty seconds each. Rest for the same amount of time between repetitions.

Description: The three attackers aim to complete a pre-established amount of consecutive passes prior to playing the ball into the opposite half while being opposed by a defender. The pass into the opposite half must be played into space. Therefore, no attacker can remain standing in the opposite half waiting for the ball. Once the ball is played into this zone, the same passing sequence restarts.

Challenges for the players: If the attackers manage to switch the ball after a pre-stated number of times they win and the defender does a forfeit. If not, the attackers must do the forfeit.

3v1 – move the ball into the adjacent zone.



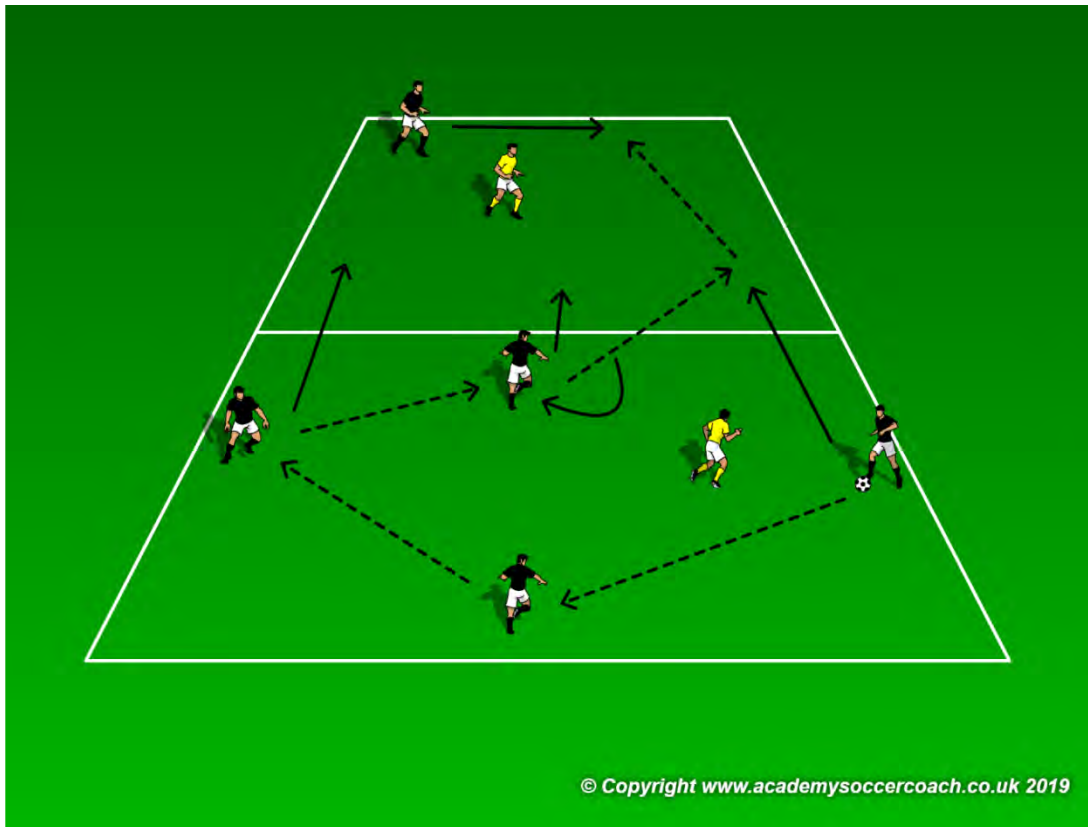
Set-up: Area measuring 16 yards in length by 8 yards in width. The area is divided into two equal zones of 8 yards by 8 yards. Three attacking players and a defender are positioned in one half of the area. We also have an attacker and a defender positioned in the opposite half.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of twenty to thirty seconds each. Rest for the same amount of time between repetitions.

Description: The three attackers aim to complete a pre-established amount of consecutive passes prior to playing the ball into the opposite half while being opposed by a defender. They may accomplish this by passing directly to the attacker positioned in the other half or by dribbling the ball across the two zones. When this is successfully completed, the two attackers follow into the other zone.

Challenges for the players: Pair players. The pair who lets the most number of string passes during their time as defenders, have to carry out three sprints of fifteen meters as a forfeit.

4v1 double diamond switching zones.



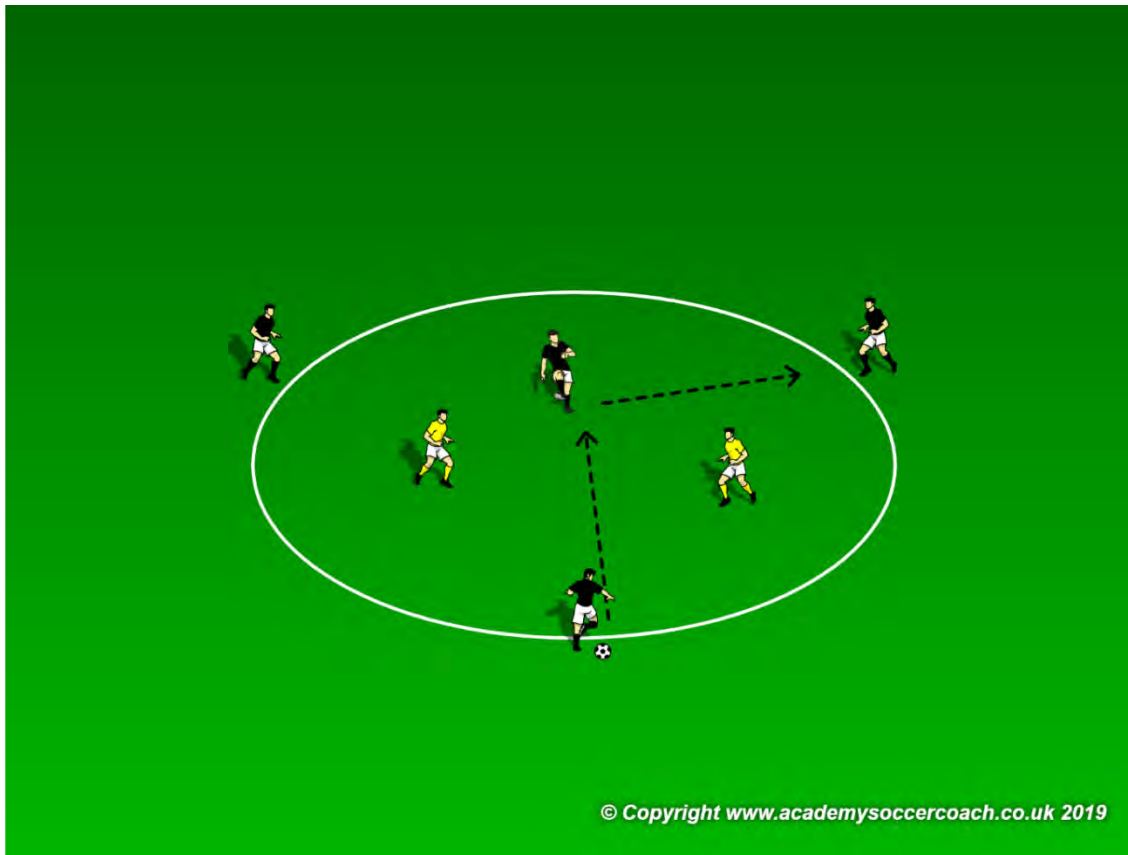
Set-up: Area measuring 16 yards length by 8 yards in width. The area is divided into two equal zones of 8 yards by 8 yards. Four attacking players and a defender are positioned in one half of the area while an attacking player and a defender are positioned in the other half.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of thirty to forty seconds each. Rest for the same amount of time between repetitions.

Description: The four attackers in the same area of the ball aim to make a pre-set amount of sequential passes prior to play the ball into the opposite half. When the ball is played into the opposite half, three attackers may move into the same zone to continue the sequence. The ball may be played directly to the attacker inside the other half, or combined with the attackers moving into this zone. The defender in the opposite side of the ball can intercept the passes.

Challenges for the players: Have both defenders moving freely between the two zones thus always having a 4v2 situation in favour of the attackers.

3v1 circular rondo.



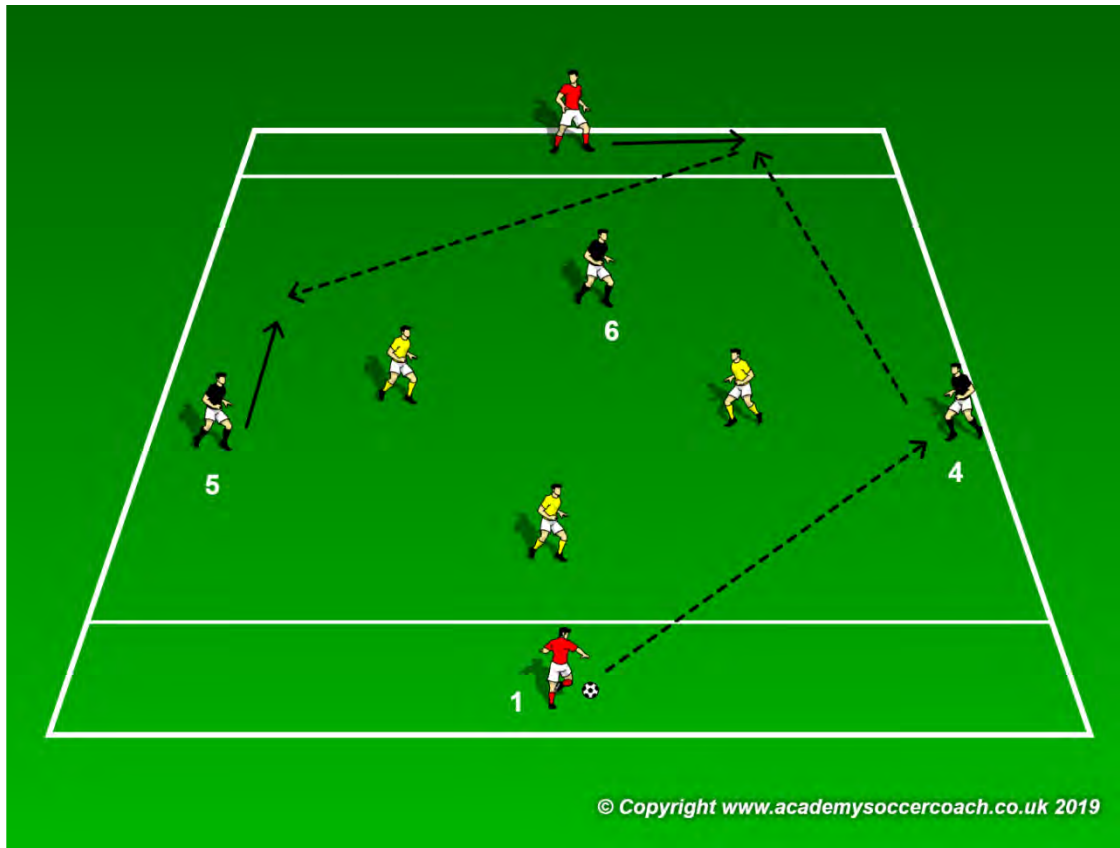
Set-up: Area measuring 12 yards in diameter. Three attackers are positioned on the circumference while another attacker and two defenders are positioned inside the circle.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of thirty to forty seconds each. Rest for the same amount of time between repetitions.

Description: The attackers aim to make a pre-established number of sequential passes to score a point. The outside players are allowed to pass to each other. If the defenders win the ball, they aim to dribble it out of the circle to score a point.

Challenges for the players: The inside attacker will be a neutral player who plays with the team in possession. As such if the defenders win the ball he becomes on their side with the aim of dribbling the ball out of the circle. The other attackers must immediately press to prevent this. If the defenders score, the attackers must complete five burpees.

3v3+2 to targets.



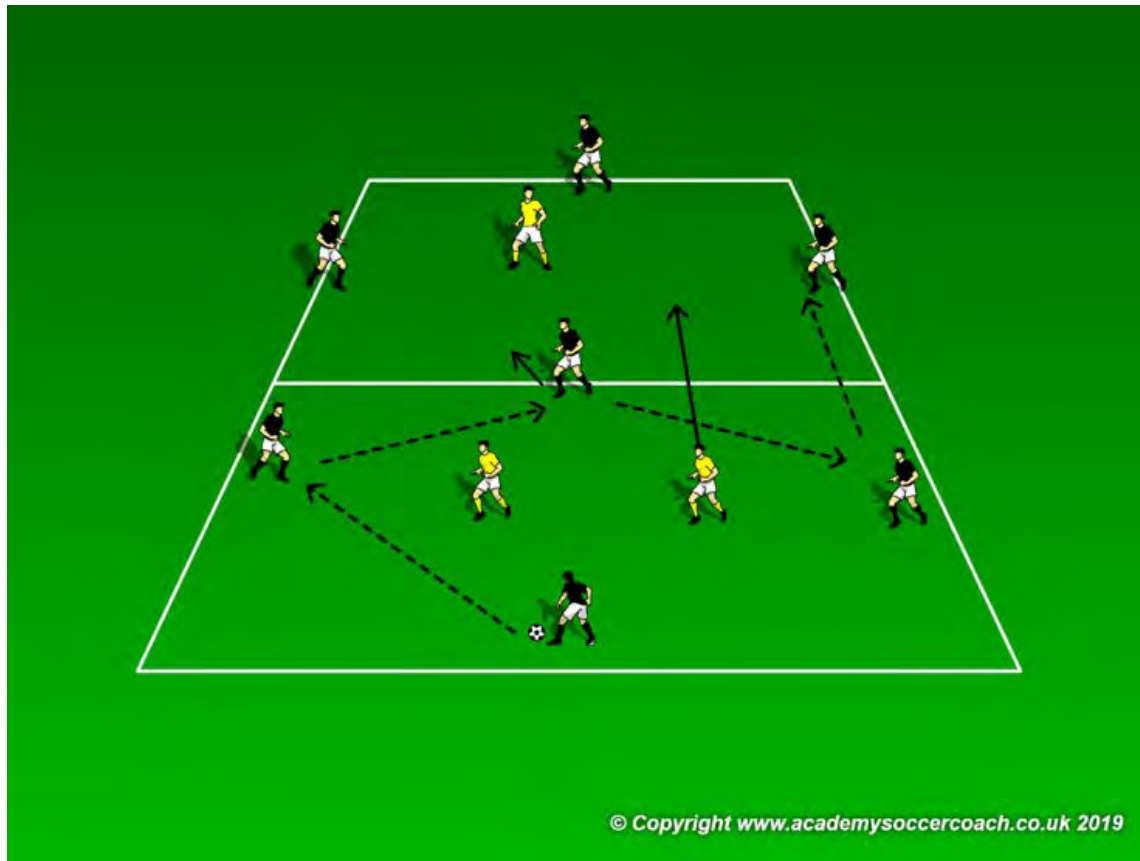
Set-up: Area measuring 16 yards in length and 12 yards in width. A target zone is marked at each end of the area. This should measure 2 yards in length and 12 yards in width. Two sets of players are situated inside the main area and a target player (reds) is situated inside each target zone.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of one minute each. Rest for thirty seconds between repetitions.

Description: Teams aim to play the ball from one target player to another, scoring a goal each time the ball is played to the opposite target player.

Challenges for the players: Play with positional references and include a goalkeeper. Have two goalposts at each end and replace target players with goalkeepers. If the defending team wins the ball they may score in either of the two goals. Can the attacking team maintain a clean sheet for one minute?

7v3 on two zones.



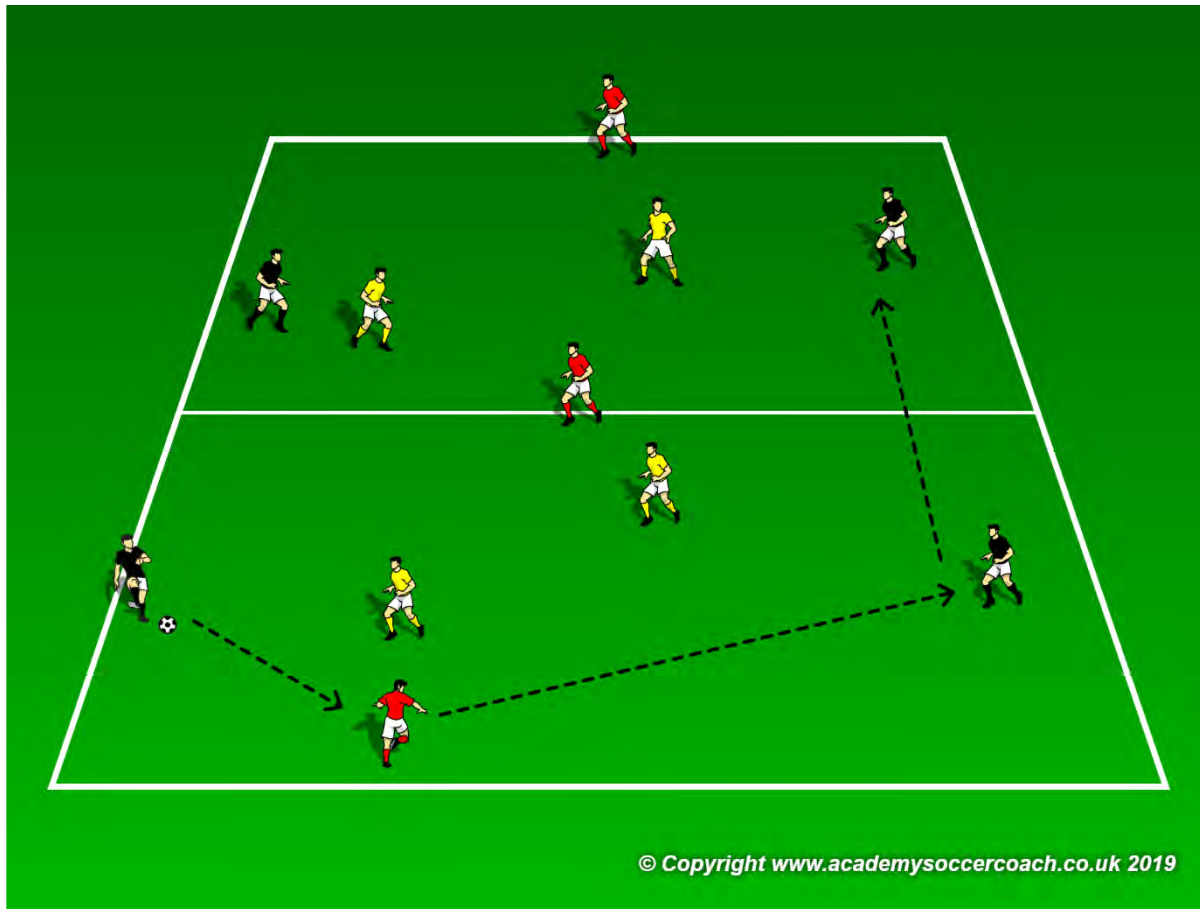
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length and 12 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. Start with four attackers and two defenders inside the half of where the ball is. In the opposite half three attackers and a defender are situated.

Work load: Six to ten repetitions of one minute each. Rest for thirty seconds between repetitions.

Description: Play 4v2 in the ball zone where the intention is to play the ball into the opposite zone. If this is successfully achieved, one defender and one attacker move into the opposite zone to recreate the 4v2 situation. If the defenders win the ball they dribble it out of the grid to score a point. If this occurs the attackers are urged to immediately apply pressure to regain possession of the ball.

Challenges for the players: Can the attacking team play the ball to the opposing target players twice within the one minute period?

4v4+3 in two zones.



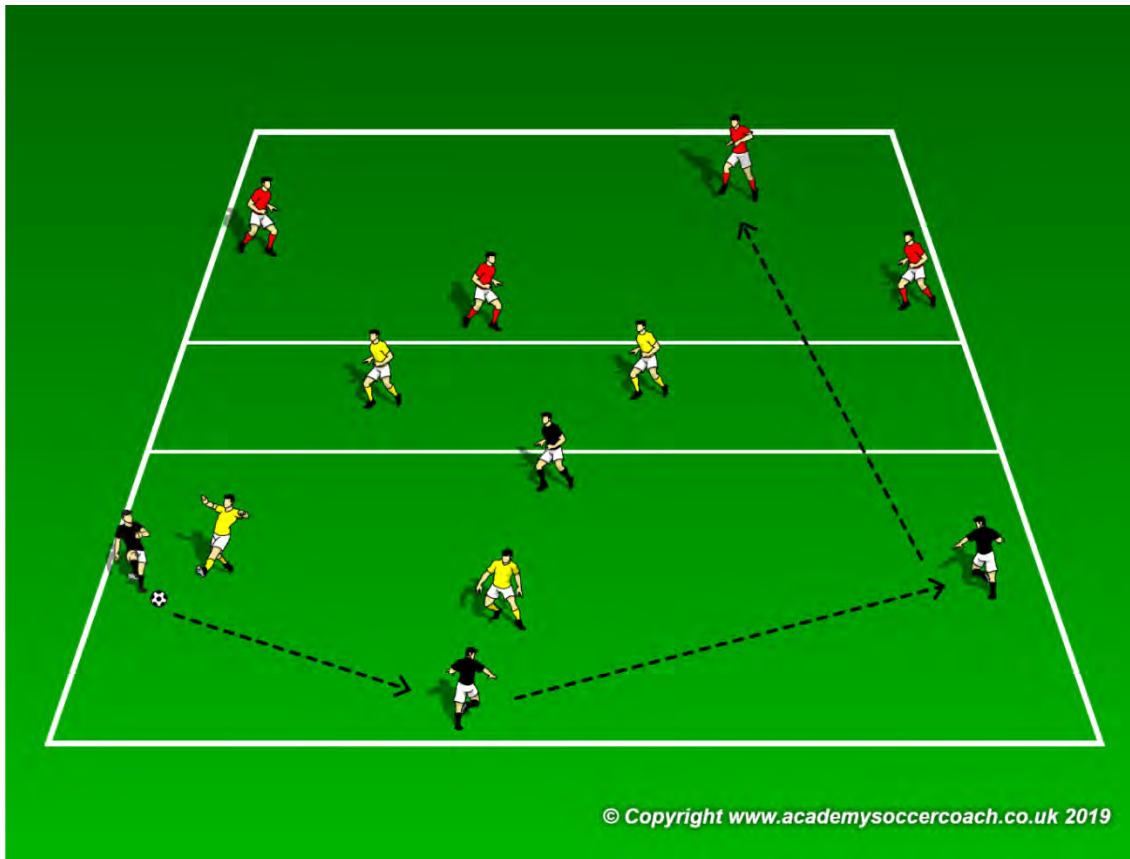
Set-up: Area measuring 20 yards in length and 12 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. In each zone there are two attackers, two defenders and a neutral player. Another neutral player is allowed to move freely between the two zones.

Work load: Five to eight repetitions of two minutes each. Rest for thirty seconds between repetitions.

Description: Play is always a 4v2 in the ball zone where the neutral players support the team in possession. If the other team wins the ball roles are rotated.

Challenges for the players: Which team can make the most number of sequential passes in the allowed two minutes?

4v2 through the central guarded channel.



Set-up: Area measuring 25 yards in length and 12 yards in width. The area is split into three zones. The outer zones measure 10 yards in length while the middle channel is 5 yards long.

Work load: Three to four repetitions of three minutes each. Rest for one minute between repetitions, thus maintain the quality and the intensity of the soccer actions high.

Description: In one of the outer zones the team in possession aims to create the necessary space to play the ball into the opposite zone after making a minimum of three passes. Two defenders aim to disrupt the attackers from playing the ball into the opposite outer zone while another two players cover the middle channel with the aim of intercepting passes. If the ball is intercepted, the defending team switch places with the attacking team responsible for the loss of the ball.

Challenges for the players: The ball can only be played low on the ground even when playing to the opposite zone.

