

# **DEVELOPING SOCCER INTELLIGENCE THROUGH 4v4** *by Philip Cauchi*



***Volume 2***

# **Developing Soccer Intelligence Through 4 v 4**

## **Volume 2**

*By*

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# Developing Soccer Intelligence through 4v4

## † 2 – Practical part 1

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## Progressive training sessions to develop the principles of play using the 4v4

### Introduction.

The exercises presented in this section can all be used by beginners, intermediate or advanced players alike. The coach just needs to increase or decrease the area of play, increase or decrease the number of participating players and increase or decrease the complexity of the exercises; i.e. the constraints presented.

### The beginner stage

Training sessions aimed for beginners target the development of creating triangles and angles of support. The players assimilate this concept with the use of exercises and games that promote passing patterns within a diamond formation. The quality of passes and touch oriented reception is continuously emphasised during this consolidation phase, therefore the technical competence of the players is enhanced. Throughout this stage, we aim to develop having a rhythm between the four members of the team through various exercises including combination play within a dynamic environment.

### The intermediate stage.

During this stage the training sessions focus more on positional play, off-the-ball movement to create space and basic interchanging of positions. Reference to the sub-principles of width, height and depth are emphasised throughout the sessions. We may use the same exercises as in the beginners' stage but now we might need to play in tighter areas so to raise the bar of our players to perform more soccer actions per minute (Verheijen, 2014) and increase their ability to perceive the right stimuli, select and execute well-timed soccer actions.

## The advanced stage.

In the advanced stage we continue working on perceiving the right stimuli and execute correctly timed soccer actions but with reference to the positions the players play and the typical situations the players find themselves in during a match. For advanced players training within a 4v4 setup, increasing their technical and tactical competence is not the ultimate aim. This is where we differ from the two previous stages. In the advanced stage, we supplement the work done in training to help our team's global performance in the 11v11 match. As a training methodology we will use the tactical periodization. From session number 20 onwards all the presented practices are referred to this method. In these sessions we will not show the whole session but the 4v4 part used to develop sectorial or inter-sectorial team behaviour. Therefore, we will only go into the detail of the 4v4 game and its related practice.

**Session number:** 1.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Apply correct passing within a diamond formation.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Players on different lines.
2. Open body stance with a view of the ball and the situation.
3. Move towards an open passing lane.
4. Pass to back foot.
5. Direction oriented first touch.

**Duration of session:** 75 minutes.

**Number of players:** 10 to 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Mini goals (four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs).

Markers (to mark areas and positions).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation: 15 minutes.

Passing practice 1 – Anti/clockwise passing within a diamond formation: 10 minutes.

Passing practice 2: Dribbling and passing combined: 10 minutes.

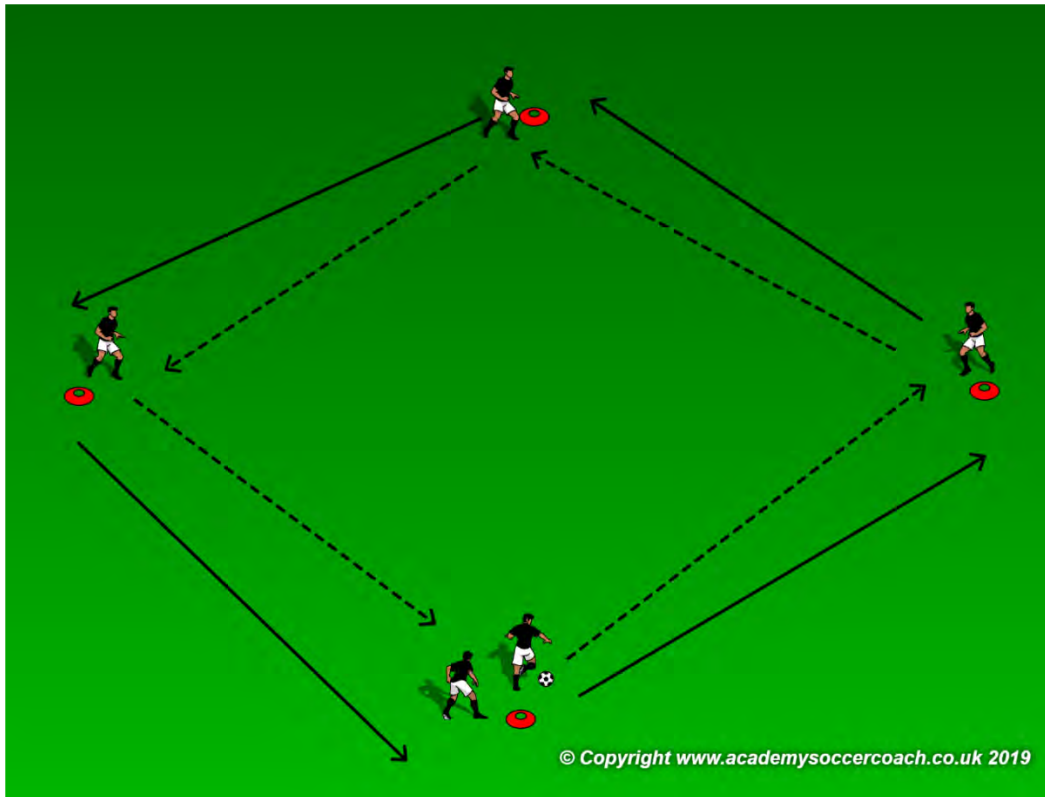
Passing practice 3: Rondo 4v1: 10 minutes.

Game: 4v4 on four goals: 30 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Ball mastery interspersed with dynamic flexibility – 10 minutes.
2. Relay races with the ball – 5 minutes.

### **Passing practice 1 – Anti/clockwise passing within a diamond formation.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) adapt an open body stance to receive the ball and 2) pass towards the back foot.

**Area:** Diamond setup where all sides measure 10 yards.

**Players:** Five players in total. Have a player at each marker.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Players pass to the player to their right and follow their pass.

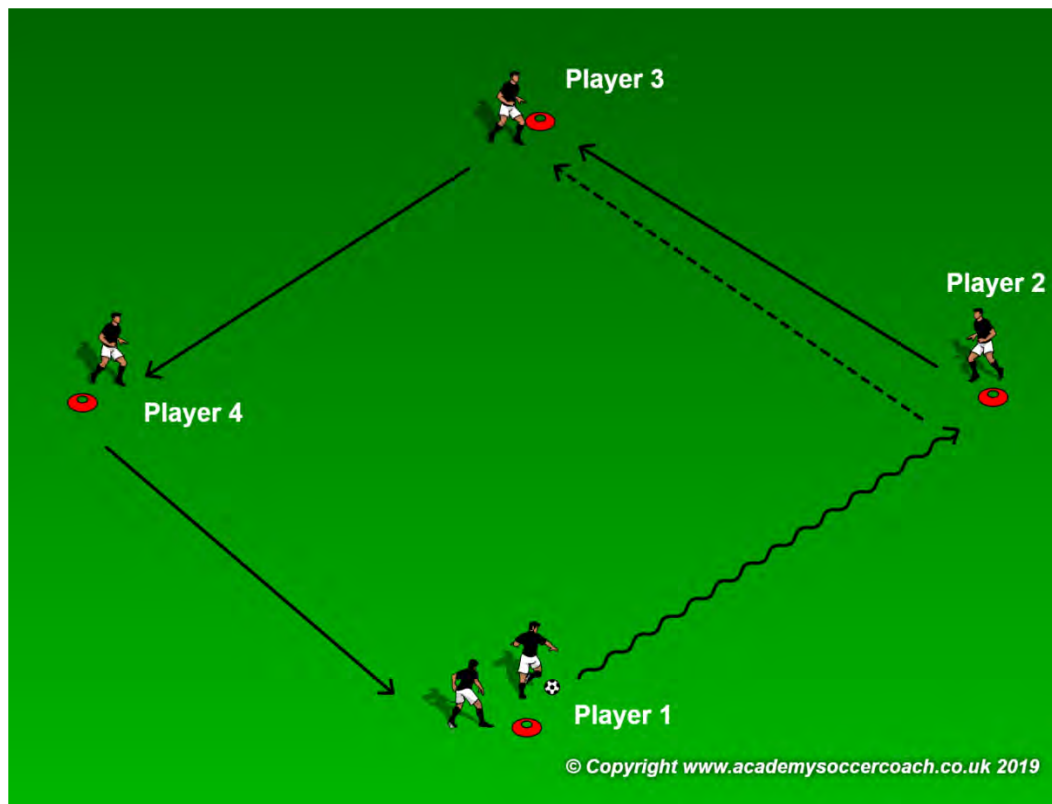
#### **Progressions:**

1. Players pass to their right but move to the next position to their left.
2. Same as the previous exercise but players pass anti-clockwise.



3. The player on the ball may decide to pass to either the player to his right or to his left.

### Passing practice 2: Dribbling and passing combined.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) adapt an open body stance to receive the ball, 2) pass toward the back foot and 3) be alert on the balls of their feet.

**Area:** Diamond setup where all sides measure 10 yards.

**Players:** Five players in total. Have a player at each marker.

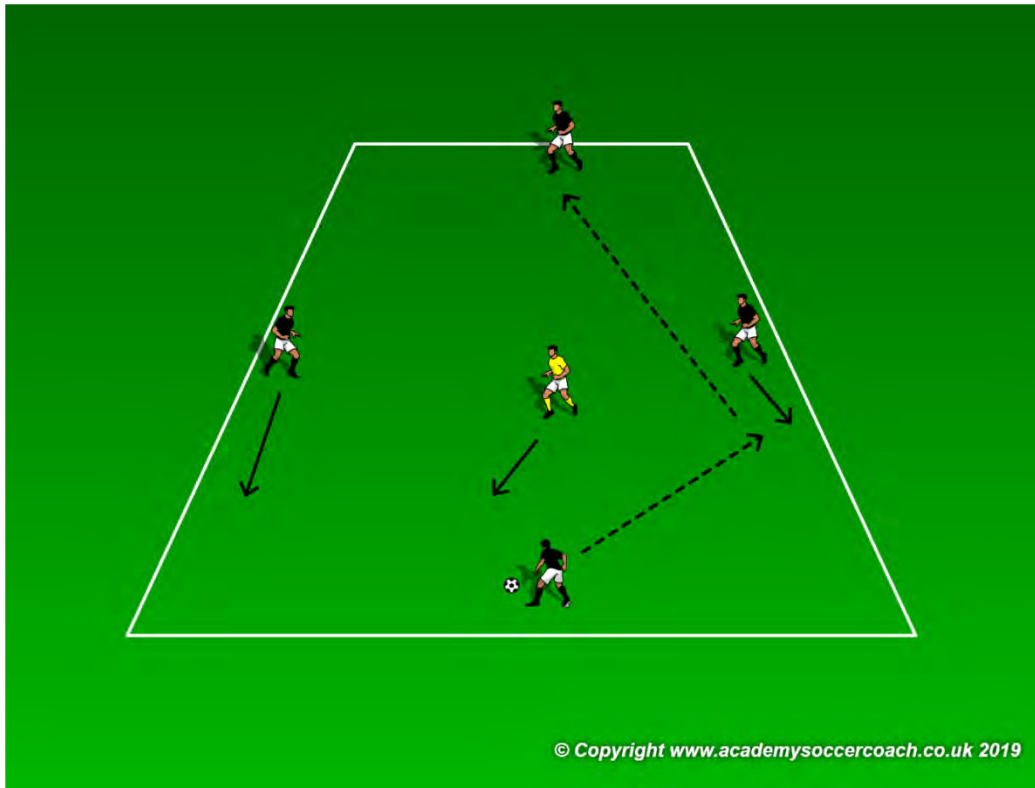
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Players may either dribble to the next position to their right or pass the ball. If a dribble takes place all the other players must move accordingly to create the space for the dribbler and keep the diamond shape intact. In the example above player 1 has decided to dribble the ball to player 2's position. All other players move one position to their right. Player 1 then passes the ball to player 2 at their new positions.

**Progressions:**

When dribbling, the player with the ball may decide to change direction and return to his original position. All other players must respond accordingly and return to their positions to maintain the shape of the diamond.

### Passing practice 3: Rondo 4v1.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) players positioned on different lines, 2) moving towards an open passing lane, and 3) open body stance to receive the ball.

**Area:** 12 yards in length by 10 yards in width.

**Players:** Four attackers and a defender.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 sets x 6 reps x 30 seconds with 30 seconds rest in between reps and a minute rest between sets.

**Description:** Attackers aim to keep possession of the ball while contrasted by the defenders. If the defender wins the ball he attempts to dribble it outside the area to score a point. The defender is rotated after each repetition.

**Variations:**

For beginners we might need to increase the area. On the other hand if this exercise becomes too easy for the attackers we need to reduce the area of play to approximately 10 yards by 8 yards.

**Game: 4v4 on four goals.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) players positioned on different lines, 2) moving towards an open passing lane, and 3) open body stance to receive the ball.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width with two mini goals positioned at each end.

**Players:** Four players each team.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

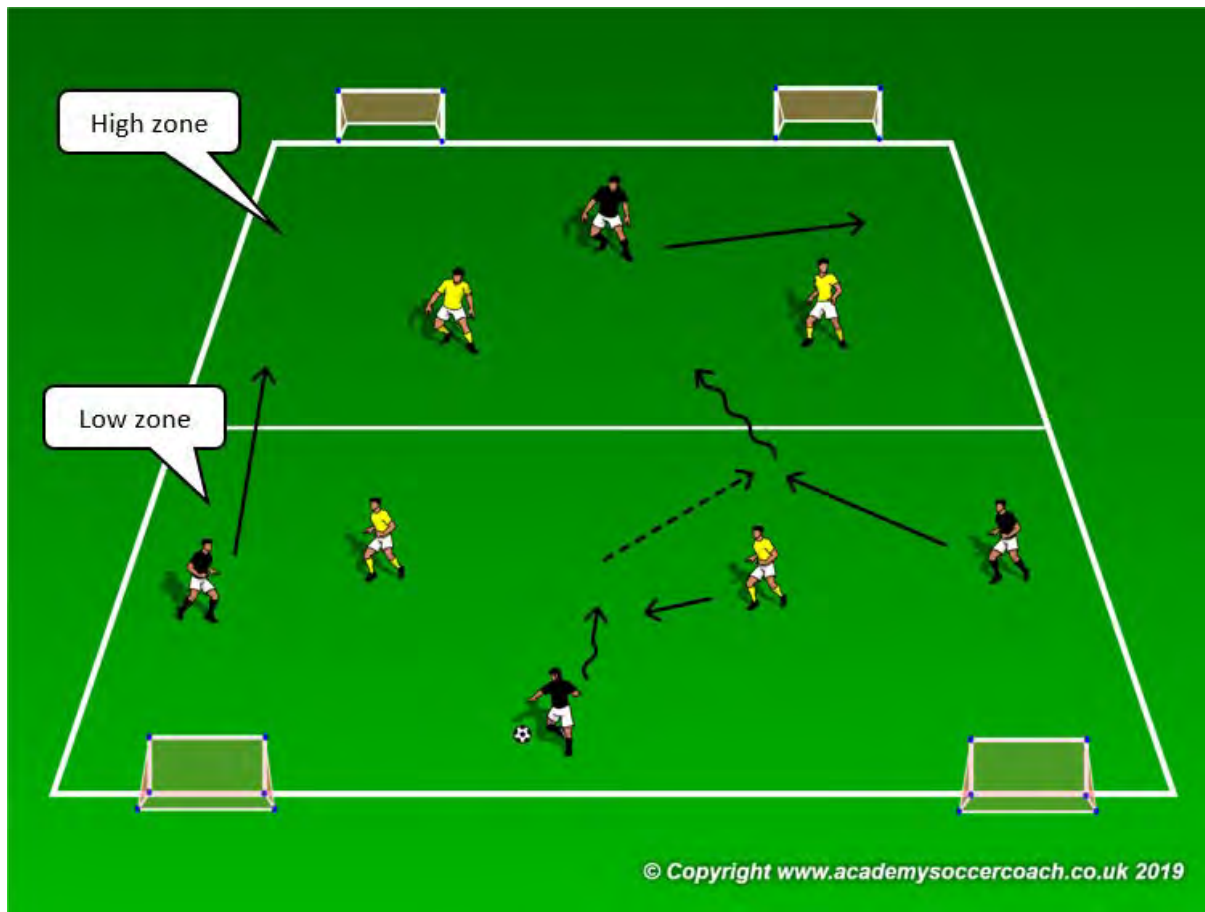
**Workload:** 4 x 6 minutes with 2 minutes rest between series.

**Description:** Both teams attack two mini goals and defend the opposite two. Encourage the players of the team in possession to open up and create the necessary space to retain the ball or to play in verticality.

**Variations:**

If this game becomes too difficult for the players to handle, it might be better to lower the level of play and introduce the constraint described in the exercise of the next page. This should allow for a better understanding of space and makes it easier for the players to retain the ball within a better constructed team shape.

**Variation: 3v2 in each zone.**



**Description:** The team in possession always have an extra player inside the ball zone, thus we have a 3v2 overload. The pitch is separated between the low zone and the high zone. The defending team has two players in each of the two zones, while the attacking team always has three players inside the zone where the ball is.

**Session number:** 2.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Apply correct passing within a diamond formation.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Players on different lines.
2. Open body stance with a view of the ball and the situation.
3. Receiver to be light on balls of feet.
4. Direction oriented first touch.
5. Move towards an open passing lane.
6. Pass aimed towards the back foot.

**Duration of session:** 75 minutes.

**Number of players:** 10 to 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Mini goals (four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs and another two of a different colour).

Markers (to mark areas and positions).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.

Passing practice 1 – Combination through the central square: 10 minutes.

Passing practice 2 – 3v1 in the first zone then combine to score: 10 minutes.

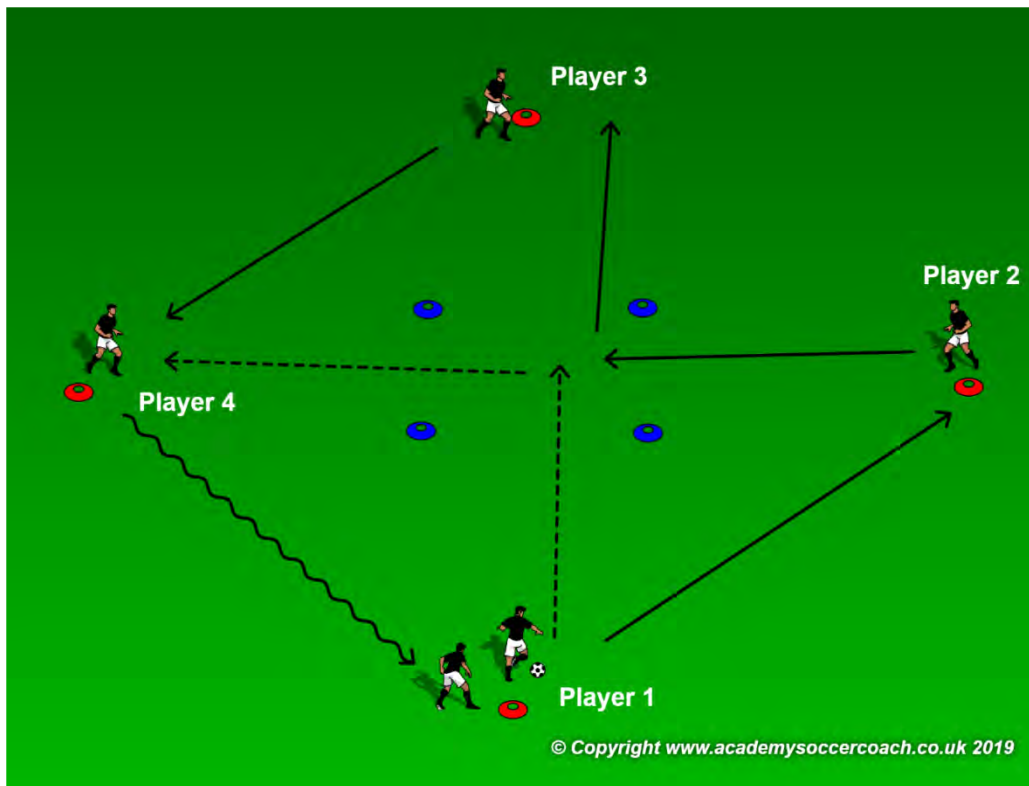
Passing practice 3: 3v1 in both zones: 10 minutes.

Game – 4v4 and GKs plus two neutrals in four quadrants: 30 minutes.

### Movement preparation and coordination.

1. Footwork using the agility ladder – 10 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility – 5 minutes.

### Passing practice 1 – Combination through the central square.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) adapt an open body stance to receive the ball and 2) direct the ball towards the next pass or dribble.

**Area:** Have two setups of a diamond where all sides measure 10 yards and a central square with sides measuring 2 yards.

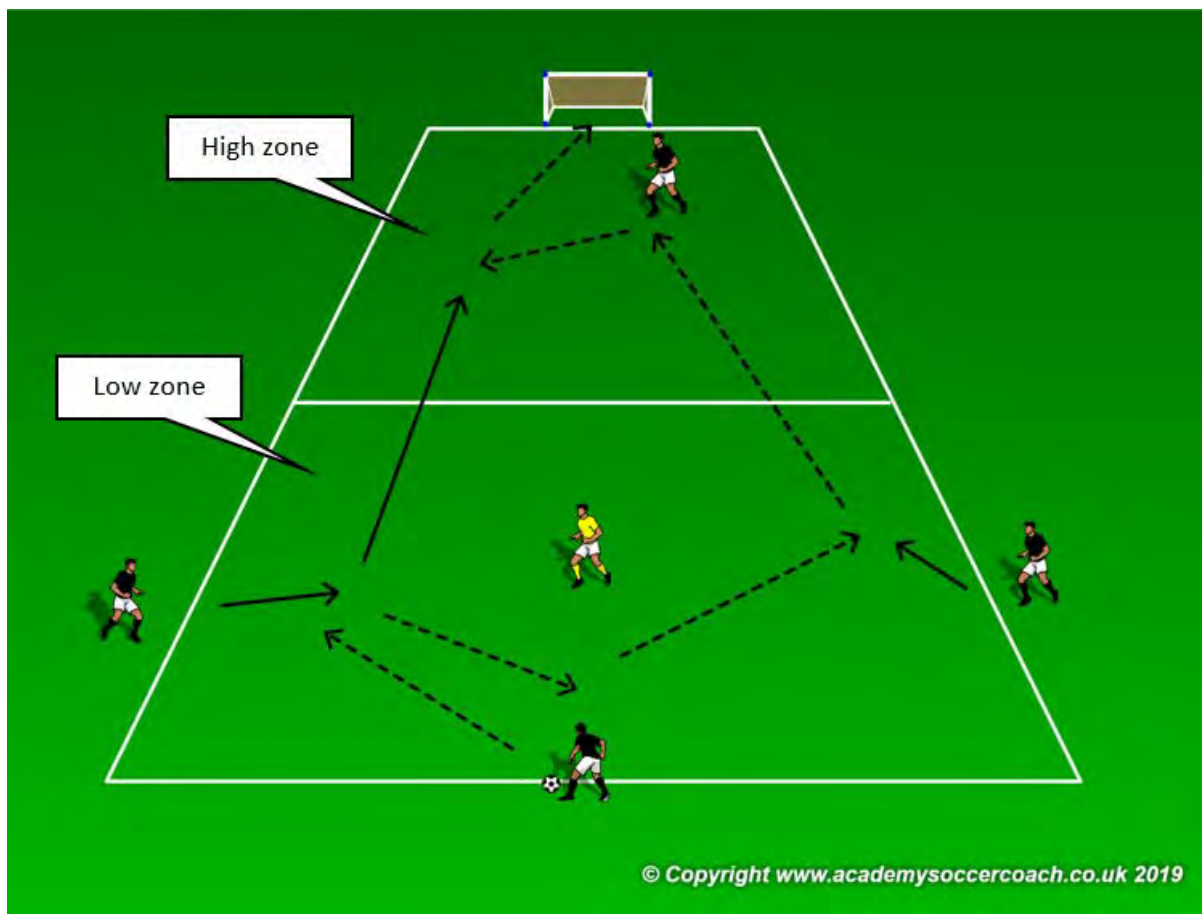
**Players:** Five players in total. Have a player positioned at each marker.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Player 1 passes to player 2 in the square. Player 2 receives inside the square and passes to player 4. Player 4 dribbles the ball to start position. After passing, the players move one position to their right as shown in the above diagram.

**Variation:** Player 1 passes to player 3, who lays the ball to player 2 to pass to player 4.

**Passing practice 2 – 3v1 in the first zone then combine to score.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having players on different lines (angles) and 2) receiving the ball using an open body stance.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 10 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. A mini goal is positioned on the opposite end line.

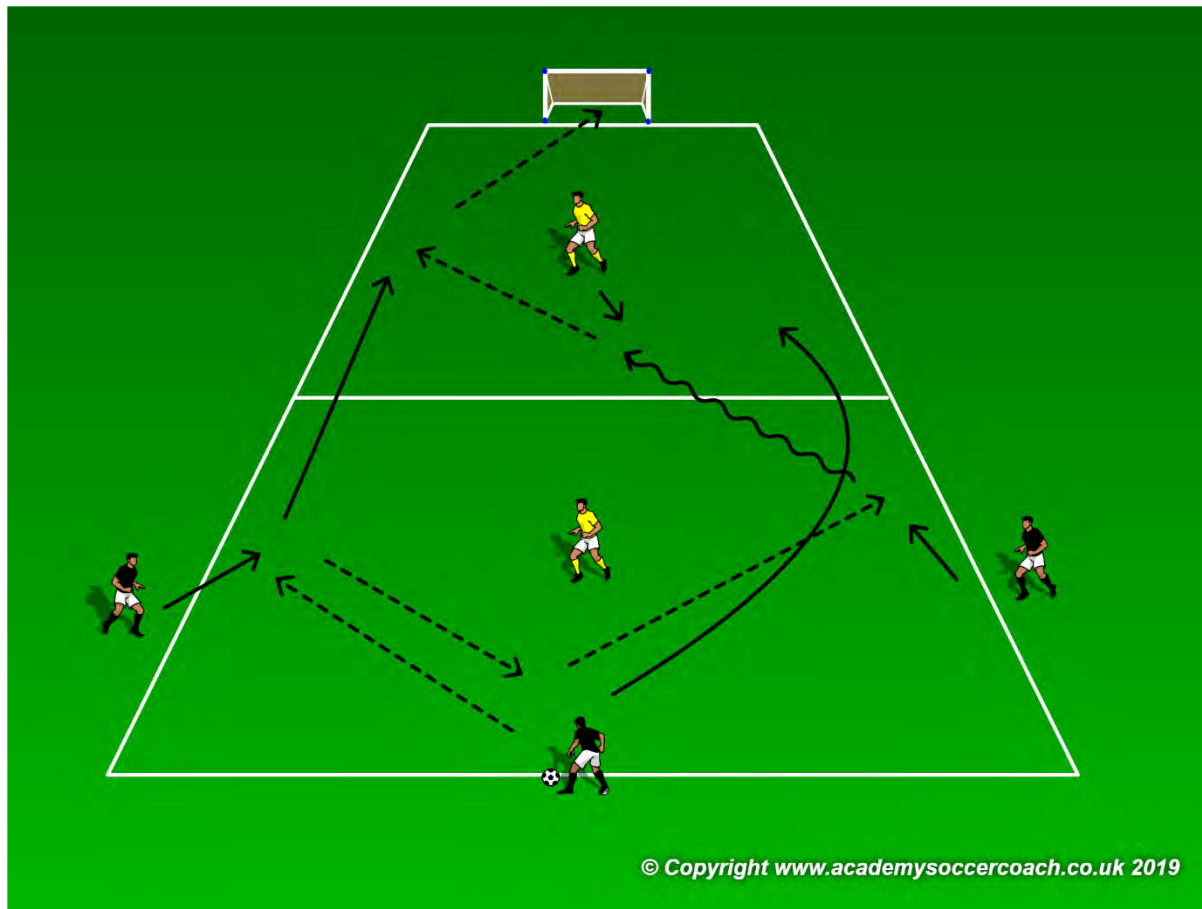
**Players:** Three attackers start in the low zone and another in the high zone. The defender is situated in the low zone.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The attacker in the middle initiates play by either dribbling or passing to another attacker. The attackers aim to get past the defender and into the high zone to combine with the attacker inside this zone prior to finish on goal. The defender is restricted to remain inside the low zone. Change the defender every three repetitions.

**Variation:** The defender is allowed to track back into the high zone to defend.

**Passing practice 3 – 3v1 in both zones.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having players on different lines (angles) and 2) receiving the ball using an open body stance.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 10 yards in width divided into two equal zones. A mini goal is positioned on the opposite end line.

**Players:** Three attackers start in the low zone and another in the high zone. A defender is positioned in both zones.

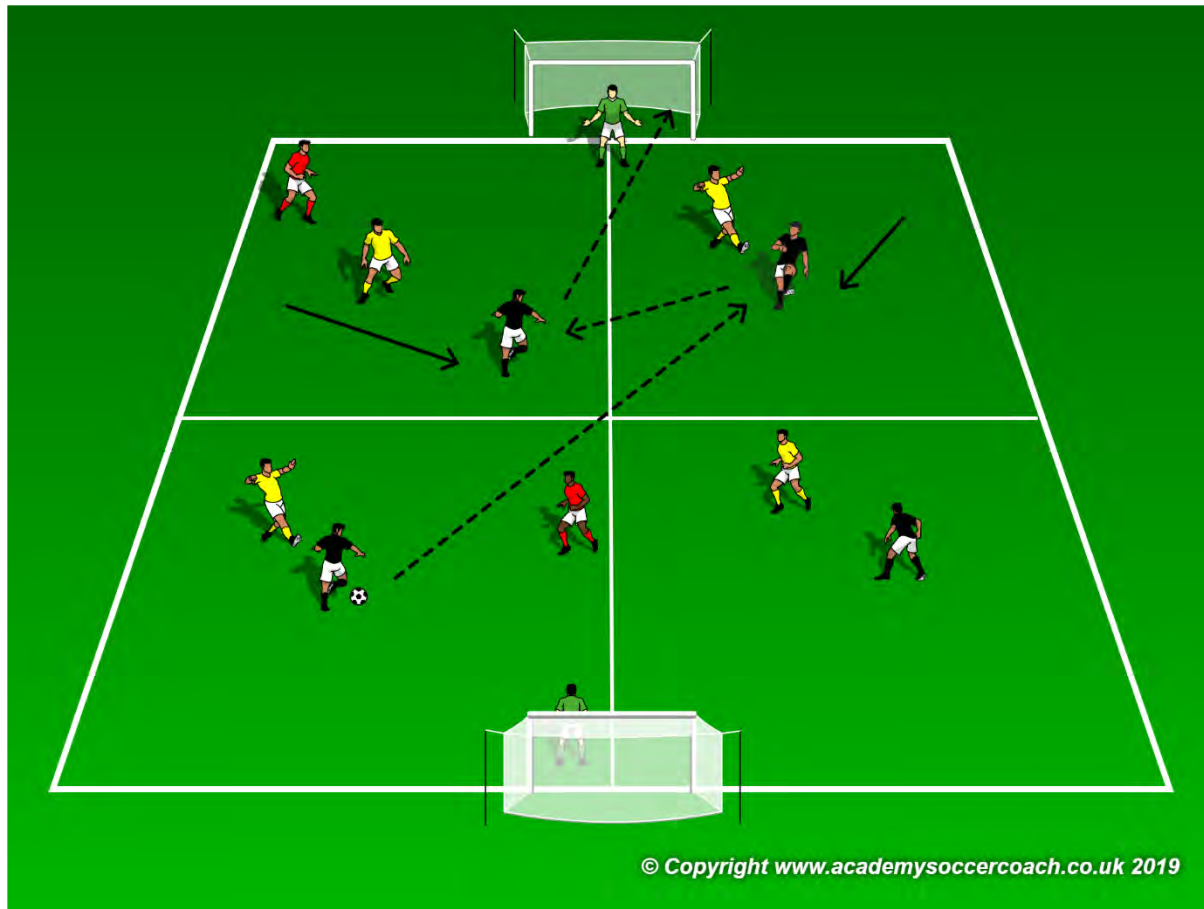
**Duration:** 10 minutes.



**Description:** The attacker in the middle initiates play by either dribbling or passing to another attacker. The attackers aim to get past the defender and into the other zone to again play a 3v1 against the other defender with the aim of getting past him and score in the mini goal.

**Variation:** Defenders must score within a pre-allotted time frame.

**Game – 4v4 and GKs plus two neutrals in four quadrants.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having players on different lines (angles) and 2) moving towards open passing lanes.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into four equal quadrants. A regular goal is positioned at each end of the grid.

**Players:** Each team composed of four players and a goalkeeper. Two other players act as neutrals and play for the team in possession.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 6 minutes with 2 minutes rest between series.

**Description:** The players in each team must remain inside their assigned zones. The neutral players may move freely between zones thus creating a 2v1 situation. Inside each team's defensive half the goalkeeper may also be used to create further numerical overload.

**Variation:** If after passing the ball through three zones a goal is scored, it counts double. We introduce this variation so that the players develop a habit of looking for the space to receive the ball and to also create overloads (with the use of the neutral players) that give the team in possession more options to play.

**Session number:** 3.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Finish at goal after a combination.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Players on different lines.
2. Counter movement to receive the ball in the space created (move back then explode into the space created to receive the ball).
3. Quality of passes.
4. Direction oriented first touch.
5. Keep the shot low and aim at the least protected bottom corner of the goal.

**Duration of session:** 80 minutes.

**Number of players:** 10 to 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs and another two of a different colour).

Markers (to mark zones and positions).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 20 minutes.

Passing combination practice – Combination in a diamond to finish at goal: 15 minutes.

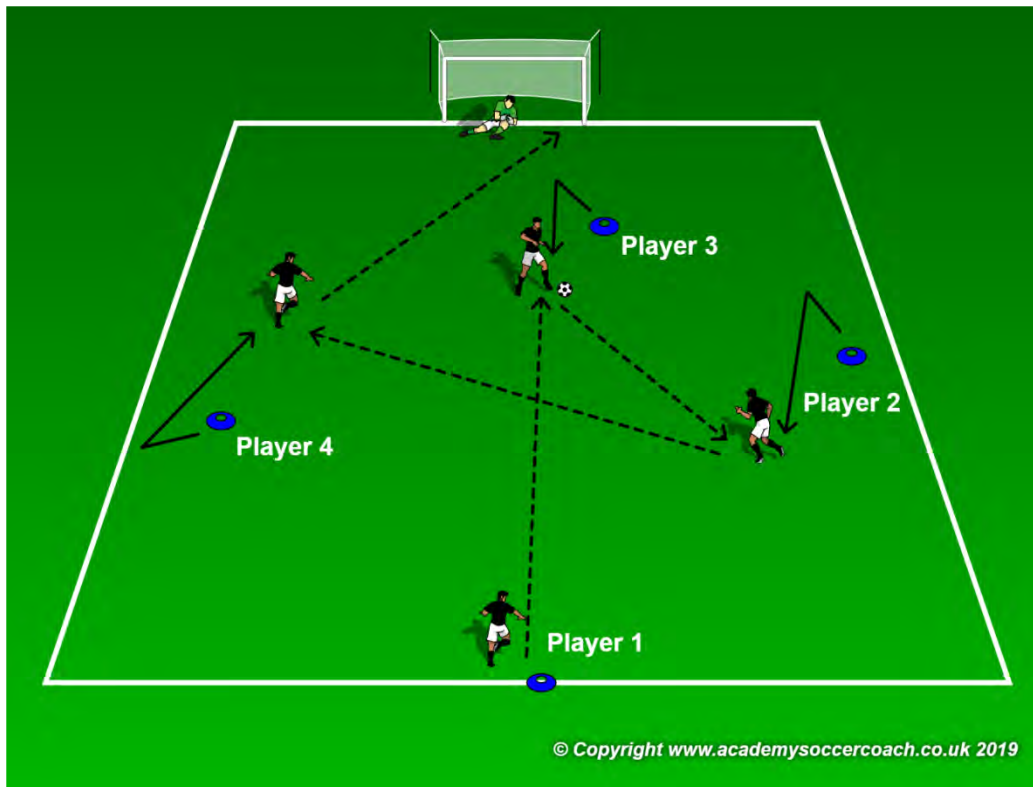
Game 1 – 4v4+GKs and two neutral players in zones: 14 minutes.

Game 2 – 4v4+GKs and two neutral players in zones (2): 30 minutes.

### Movement preparation and coordination.

1. Short passing combinations – 10 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility and short sprints– 10 minutes.

### Passing combination practice – Combination in a diamond to finish at goal.



**Remind players to focus on:** performing the counter-movement to create space to receive the ball.

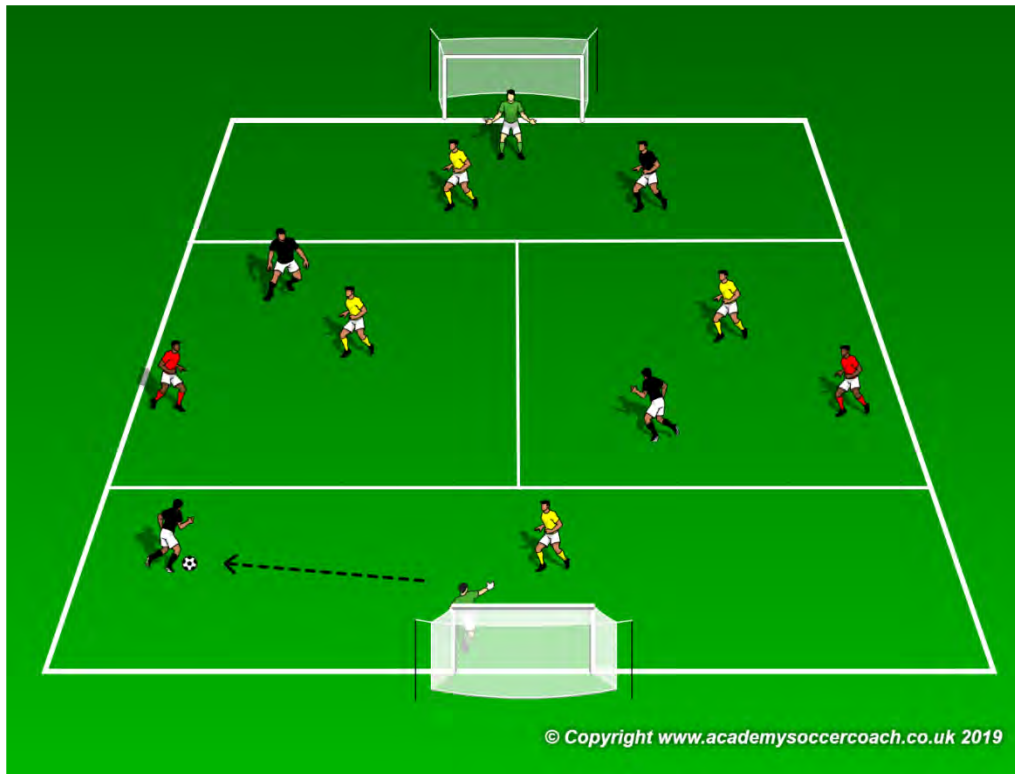
**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width.

**Players:** Players set in a diamond and positioned at positions 1, 2, 3 and 4. Have two players at each marker (not shown in the image for the purpose of maintaining clarity) and a goalkeeper in goal.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Player 1 passes to player 3, who lays the ball to player 2 to pass diagonally to player 4 to finish at goal. Players initiate the counter-movement as the passer is about to receive the ball. After passing, the players move one position in sequential order.

## Game 1 – 4v4+GKs and two neutral players in zones (1).



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating a passing angle and 2) receiving the ball using an open body stance.

**Area:** 40 yards in length x 30 yards in width divided into thirds with the midfield third divided equally into two vertical zones.

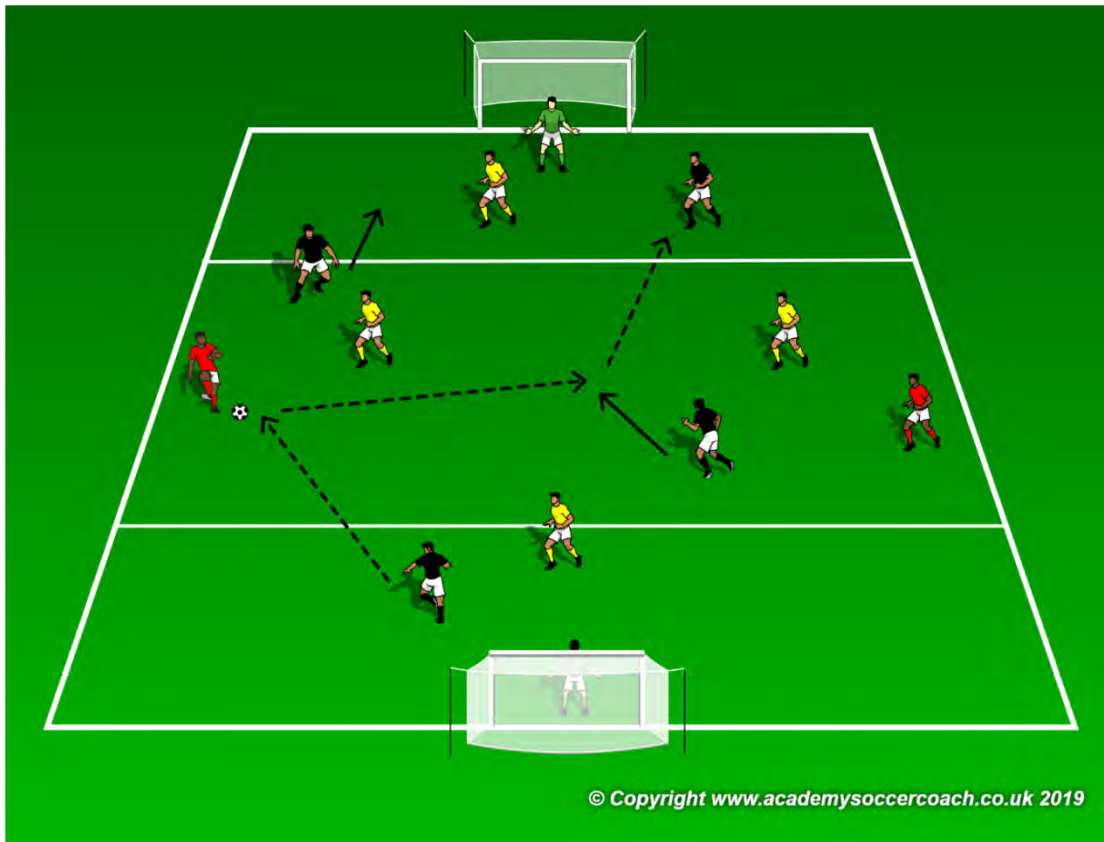
**Players:** Each team composed of four outfield players and a goalkeeper. Two neutral players play with the team in possession. Each team has a goalkeeper and a defender in the defending third, two midfielders in the midfield third (one in each zone), and an attacker in the attacking third. A neutral player is positioned in each zone of the midfield third.

**Duration:** 14 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 6 minutes with 2 minutes rest in between series.

**Description:** Restarts always take place from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. Players are restricted to remain inside their assigned zone. The ball must progress through the thirds. Once the ball is played in the attacking third another attacker from the midfield zone may join in to make the situation 2v1 against the defender and the goalkeeper. The ball doesn't have to be passed. The player with the ball can dribble into the attacking third.

## Game 2 – 4v4+GKs and two neutral players in zones (2).



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating a passing angle and 2) receiving the ball using an open body stance.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into thirds.

**Players:** Each team has a goalkeeper and a defender in the defending third, two midfielders in the midfield third, and an attacker in the attacking third. The two neutral players are positioned inside the midfield third.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 6 minutes with 2 minutes rest between series.

**Description:** Same as the game before but now in midfield we have only a single zone. Therefore we have a 4v2 situation in favour of the attacking team. To emphasise on shape have the neutral players play as lateral midfielders while the other two midfielders create the necessary angles with them. Play two series of this version and then play a free game of 4v4 without zones. Rotate the extra players with ones that are playing every two minutes.

**Session number:** 4.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Finish at goal with a shot.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Insertions into attack.
3. Attitude to finish.
4. Follow up shots.

**Duration of session:** 87 to 90 minutes.

**Number of players:** 10 to 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs and another two of a different colour).

Markers (to mark zones and positions).

Mannequins (two and which can be replaced by cones).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 20 minutes.

Shooting practice 1 – Dribble and shoot competition: 8 minutes.

Shooting practice 2 – Receive, turn and shoot competition: 8 minutes.

Shooting game – 2v2+1 with a perimeter player on each side: 15 minutes.

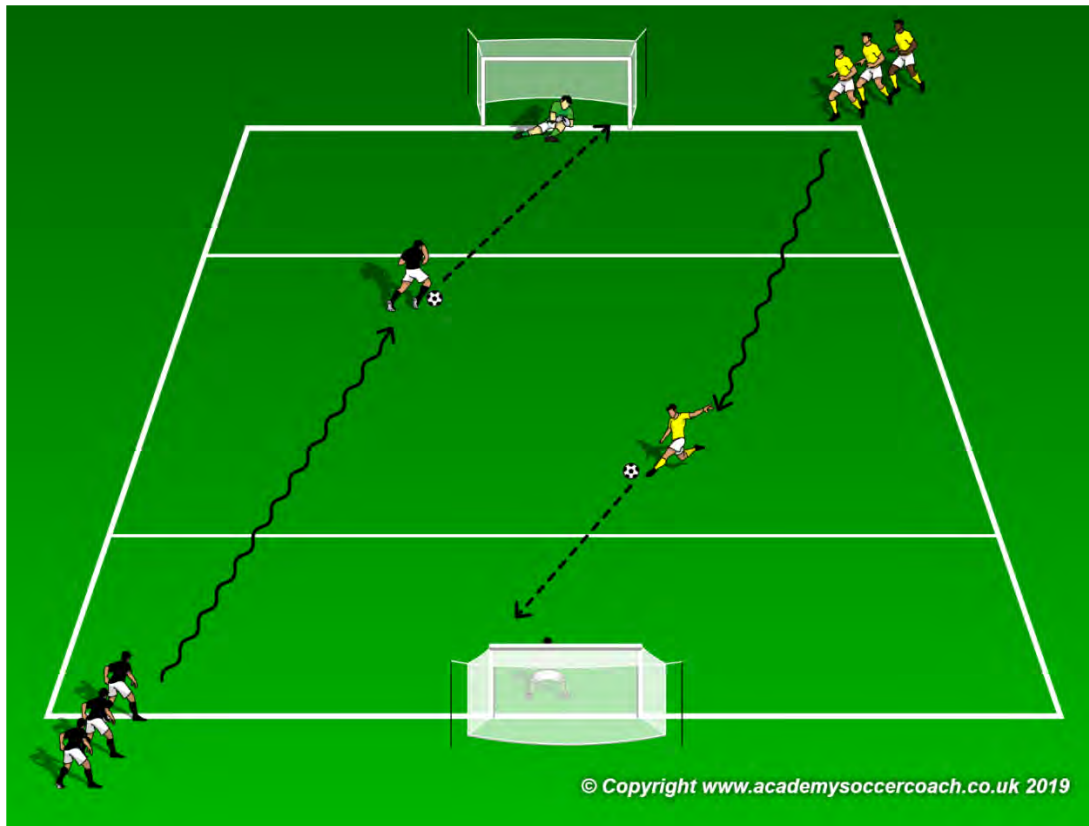
Shooting practice 3 – three player combination to shoot at goal: 10 minutes:

Game – 4v4+GKs: 26 minutes.

### Movement preparation and coordination.

1. Running coordination – 5 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility – 5 minutes.
3. Agility and short sprints – 10 minutes.

### Shooting practice 1 – Dribble and shoot competition.



**Remind players to focus on:** aiming the shot for the least protected bottom corner of the goal.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width.

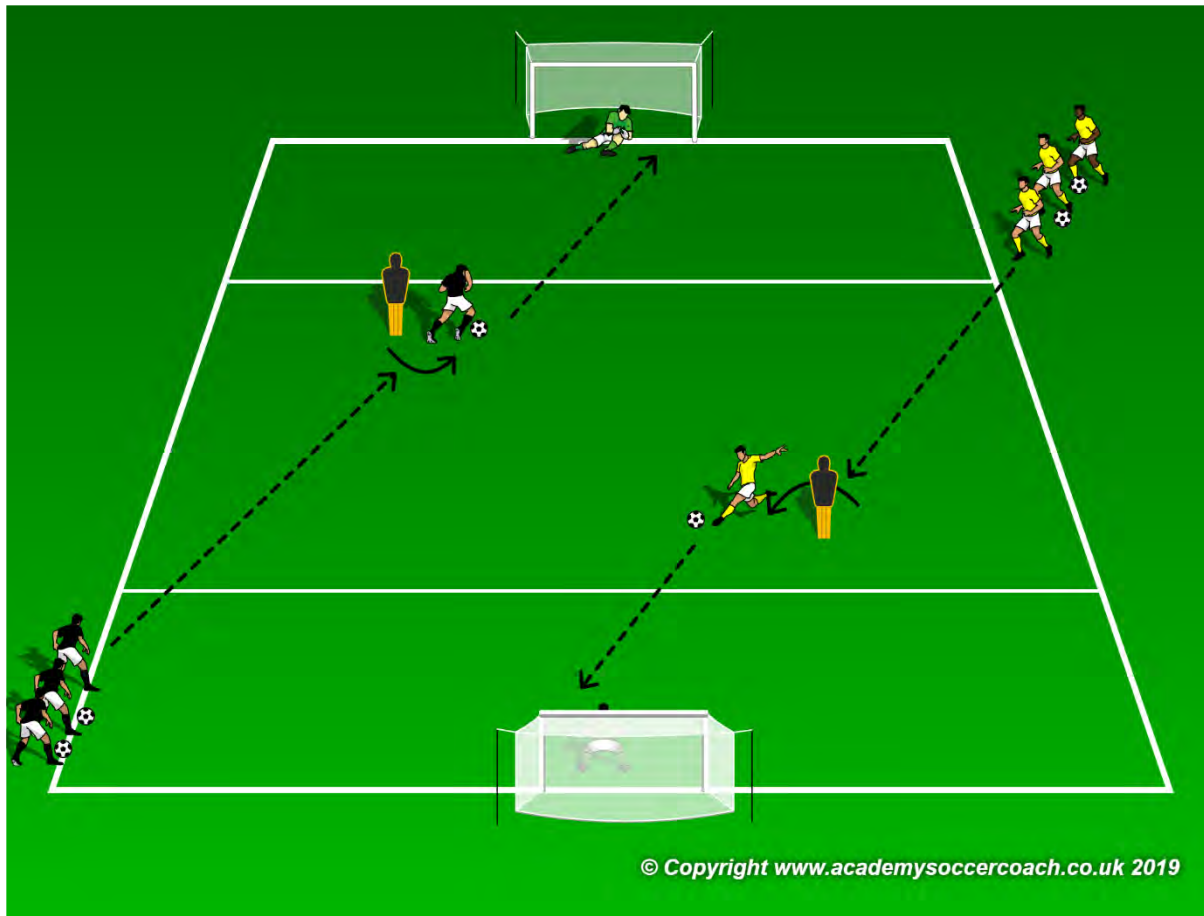
**Players:** Each team has four players in a line and a goalkeeper in goal.

**Duration:** 8 minutes.

**Description:** First player of each team dribbles forward to shoot at goal before reaching the threshold line. After shooting, the ball is collected and the next player in line takes his turn to finish on goal. Play three minutes for two series to see which team has scored the most goals. Rest for two minutes between series.



## Shooting practice 2 – Receive, turn and shoot competition.



**Remind players to focus on:** aiming the shot for the least protected bottom corner of the goal.

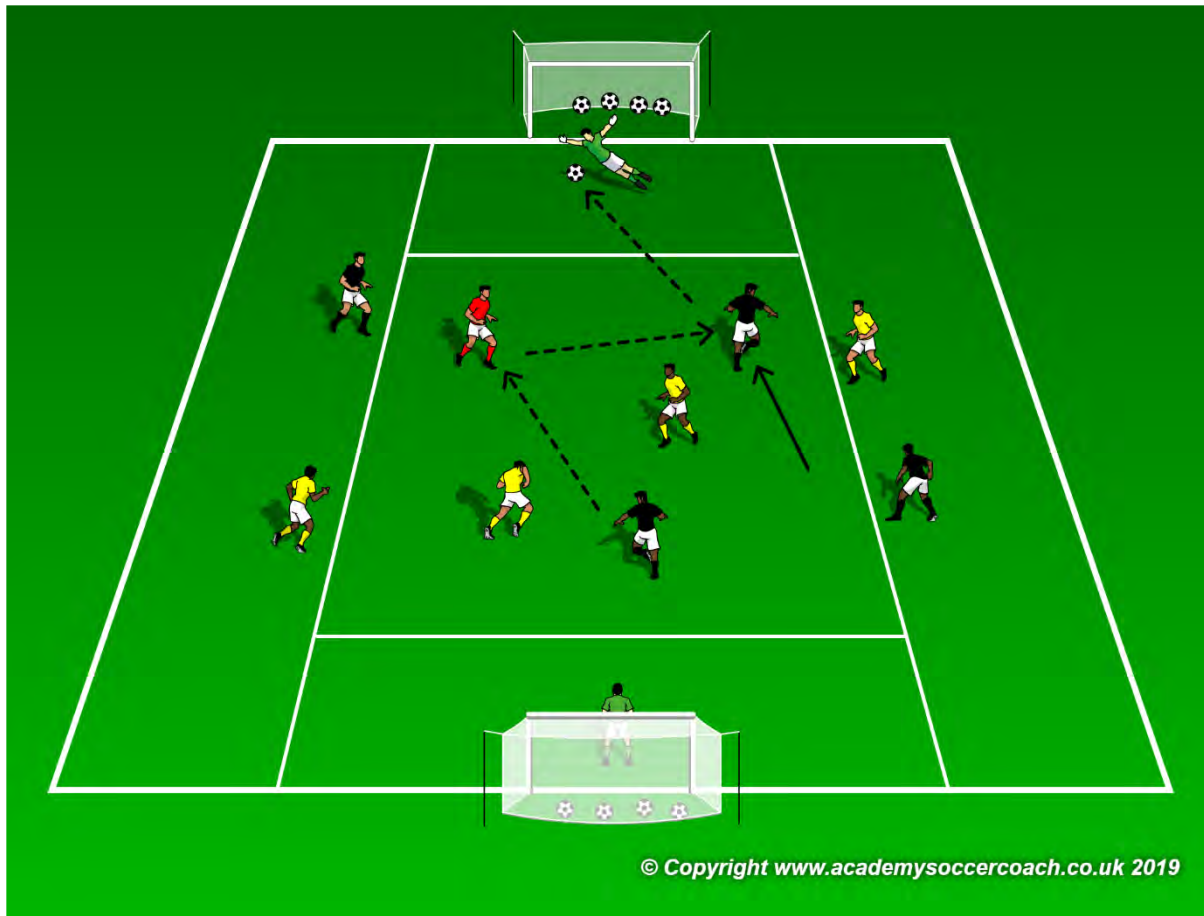
**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width.

**Players:** Each team has four players in a line and a goalkeeper in goal.

**Duration:** 8 minutes.

**Description:** The attacker with the ball passes to the attacker positioned in front of the mannequin. The latter turns around the mannequin to finish on goal. The passer becomes the finisher and moves in front of the mannequin for the same action to be repeated. Perform as a competition between the two teams and play for a total of three minutes to see which team emerges as the winner. Rest for two minutes and repeat the activity again for three minutes.

**Shooting game – 2v2+1 with a perimeter player on each side.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating staggered angles and 2) have a positive attitude towards finishing on goal.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width.

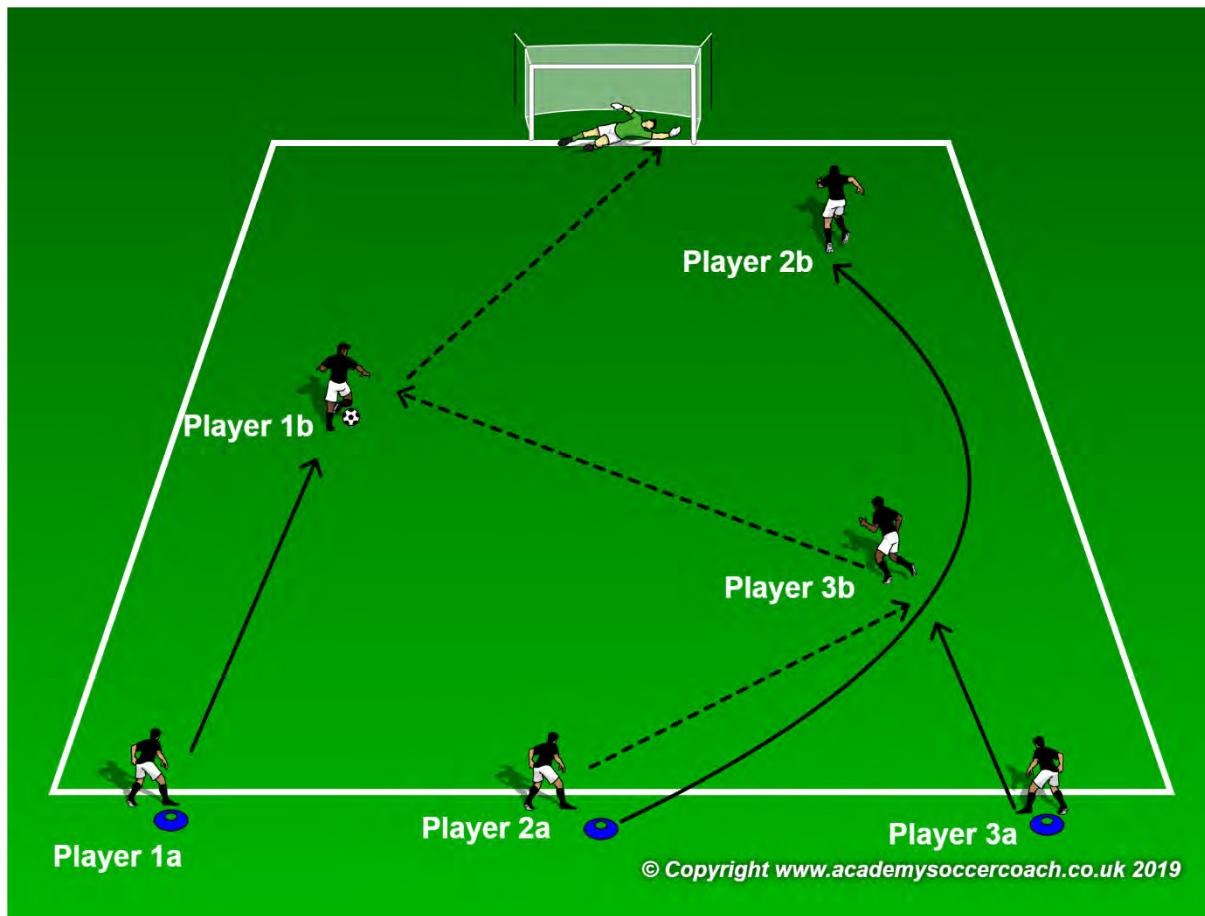
**Players:** Two players for each team inside the middle area with another perimeter player for each team on each flank zone. A neutral player plays with the team in possession inside the middle area.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 3 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** One team attacks one goal and defends the opposite. Only the players inside the middle area are allowed to score. The perimeter players help the team keep possession of the ball. These player may not be tackled by any of the opposition's team players, even by the opposite team's flank player.

### Shooting practice 3 – three player combination to shoot at goal.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) angles and timing of insertion runs, and 2) following up shots on goal.

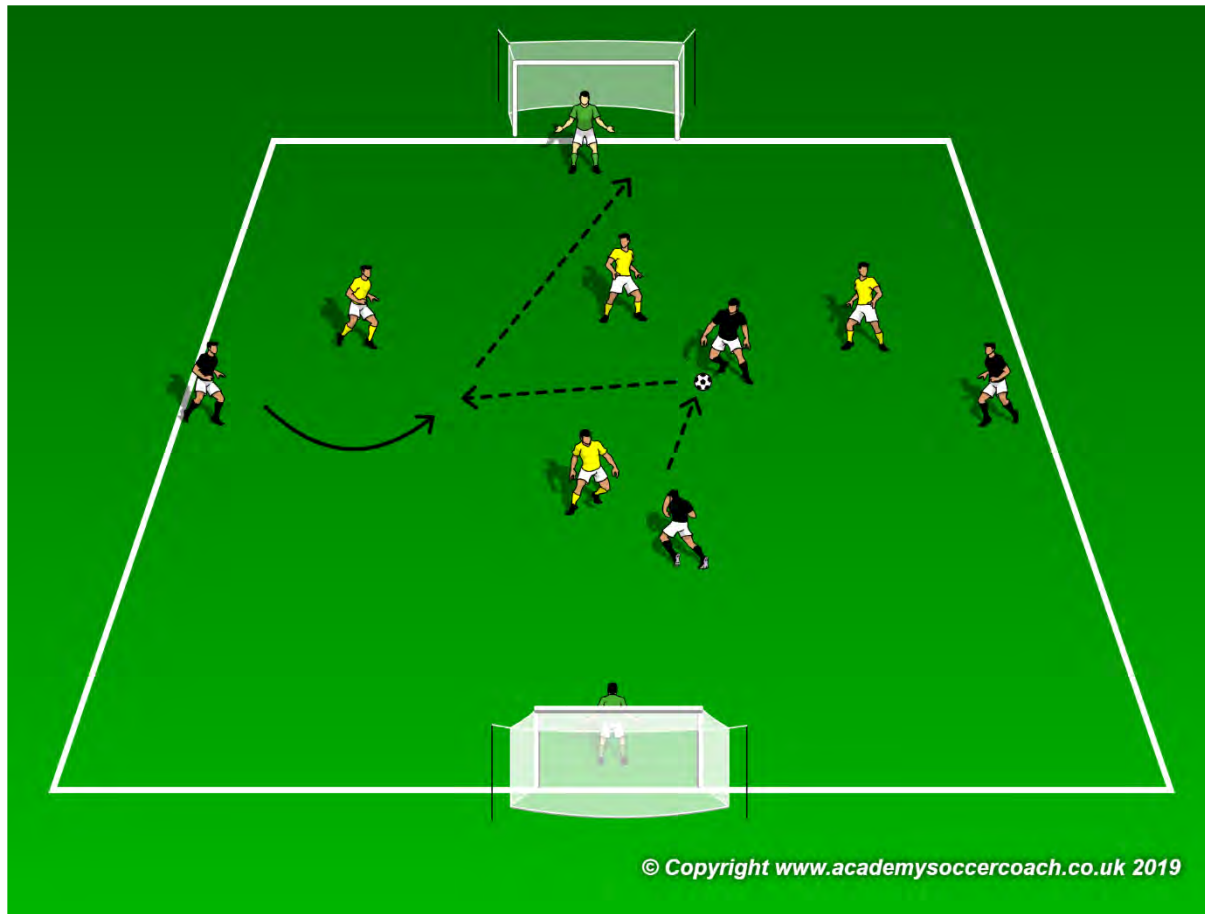
**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width.

**Players:** Attackers are divided into groups of three with a goalkeeper in goal. The attackers are positioned in positions 1, 2 and 3 as shown in the diagram above.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Player 2 starts with the ball who passes to player 3. Player 2 overlaps player 3, while the latter passes to player 1 who has moved to an advanced position to receive and finish on goal. Player 2 follows the shot on the far post to finish off any rebounds.

## Game – 4v4+GKs.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating staggered angles, 2) having a positive attitude towards finishing on goal and 3) following shots for any rebounds.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width with a regular goal positioned at each end line.

**Players:** Two teams of four outfield players and a goalkeeper.

**Duration:** 26 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between series.

**Description:** One team attacks one goal and defends the opposite. Normal game, however, there are no restarts. The goalkeeper of the team in possession starts the game whenever the ball goes out of playing bounds or a goal is scored.

**Variation:** If an extra player is present we can have one team that plays 5v4 in a numerical advantage. We might also play with a neutral player 4v4+1, or play 4v4 and rotate the resting player every two minutes.

**Session number:** 5.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Play line breaking passes to create scoring opportunities.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Quality of passes.
3. Open body stance to receive the ball.
4. Direction oriented first touch.

**Duration of session:** 82 to 85 minutes.

**Number of players:** 10 to 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs).

Markers (two sets of a different colour).

Mini goals (four).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 20 minutes.

Keep the rhythm – Dribble and move in a diamond formation: 5 minutes.

Keep the rhythm – Pass and move in a diamond formation (1): 5 minutes.

Keep the rhythm – Pass and move in a diamond formation (2): 5 minutes.

Passing practice – 4v1 rondo in a diamond formation: 5 minutes.

Passing practice – 4v2 to score on a mini goal: 10 minutes.

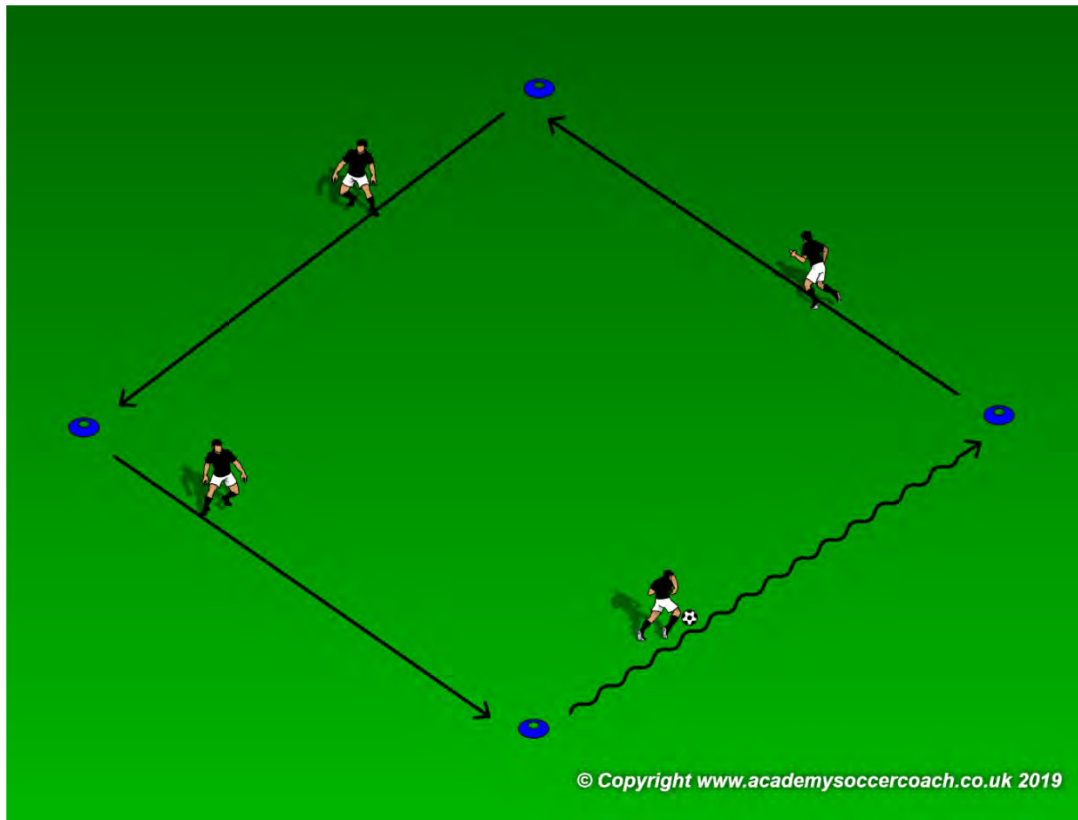
Game 1 – 4v2+2 score on both sides: 12 minutes.

Game 2 – 4v3+1: 20 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Running coordination – 5 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility – 5 minutes.
3. Agility and short sprints – 10 minutes.

### **Keep the rhythm – Dribble and move in a diamond formation.**



**Remind players to focus on:** arriving at the targeted marker at the same time as the dribbler.

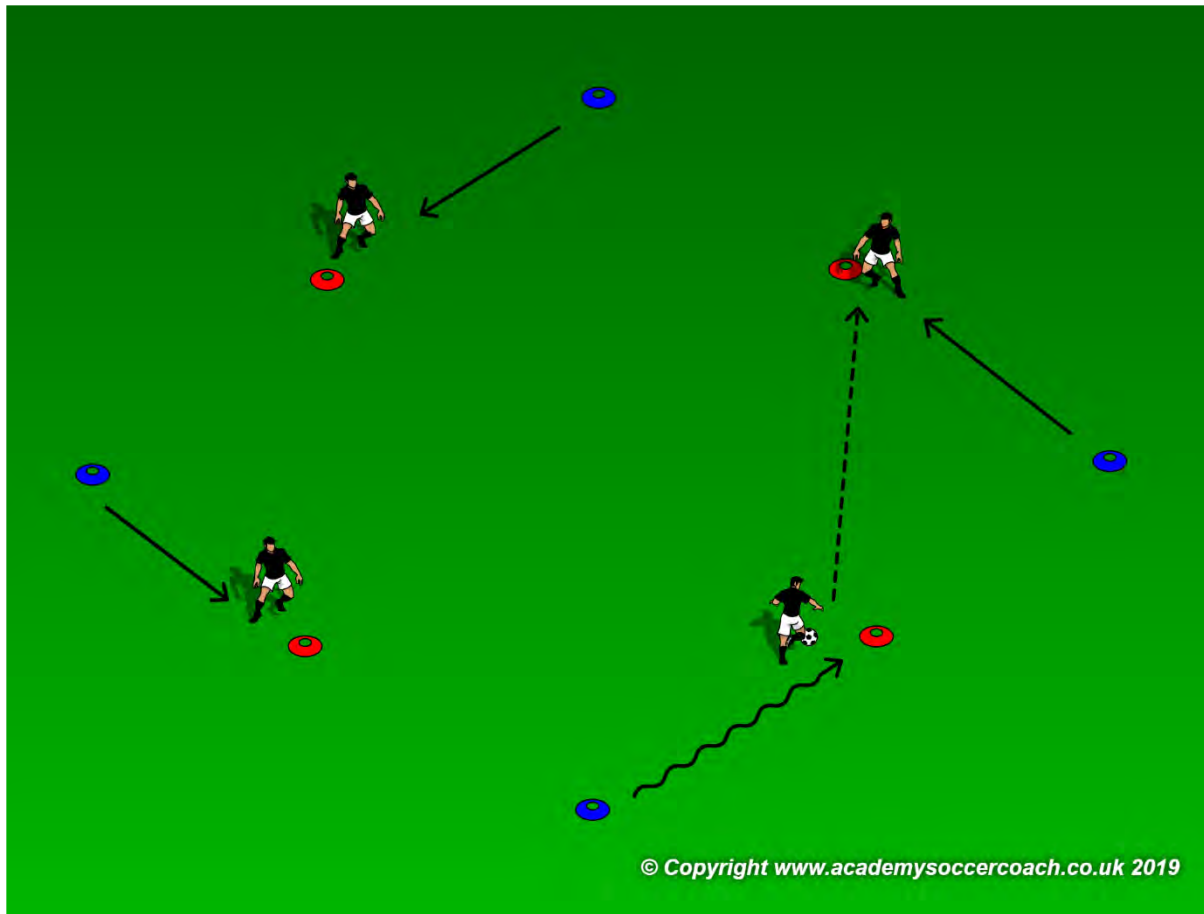
**Area:** Diamond with each side measuring 10 yards in length.

**Players:** Four players, one of them with a ball.

**Duration:** 5 minutes.

**Description:** Player with the ball dribbles to either the marker to his right or left. The other players move to the corresponding marker, to either their right or left, and attempt to arrive at the same time as the dribbler. Once at the targeted marker, the player with the ball passes to any other player who repeats the sequence.

## Keep the rhythm – Pass and move in a diamond formation (1).



**Remind players to focus on:** keeping the structure of the diamond intact.

**Area:** Diamond with each side measuring 10 yards in length.

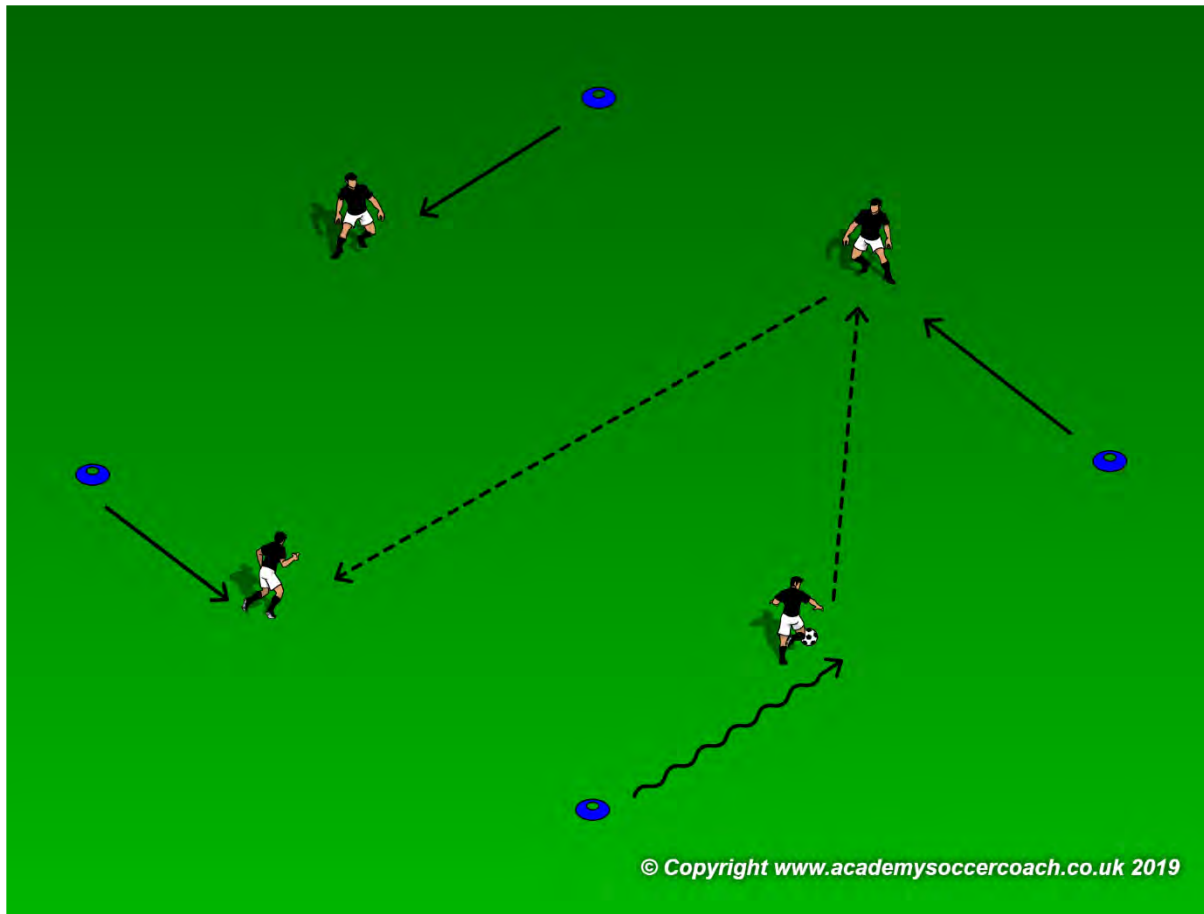
**Players:** Four players, one of them with a ball.

**Duration:** 5 minutes.

**Description:** Player with the ball dribbles to either the marker to his right or to his left. The dribbler may choose to pass the ball when he gets to the red marker, continue dribbling or return back from the start. The other players must respond accordingly.

**Progression:** The player with the ball may dribble diagonally towards the opposite player. In this case, the other players must quickly move to find a new space (blue marker) so to establish the shape of the diamond again.

## Keep the rhythm – Pass and move in a diamond formation (2).



**Remind players to focus on:** keeping the structure of the diamond intact.

**Area:** Diamond with each side measuring 10 yards in length.

**Players:** Four players, one of them with a ball.

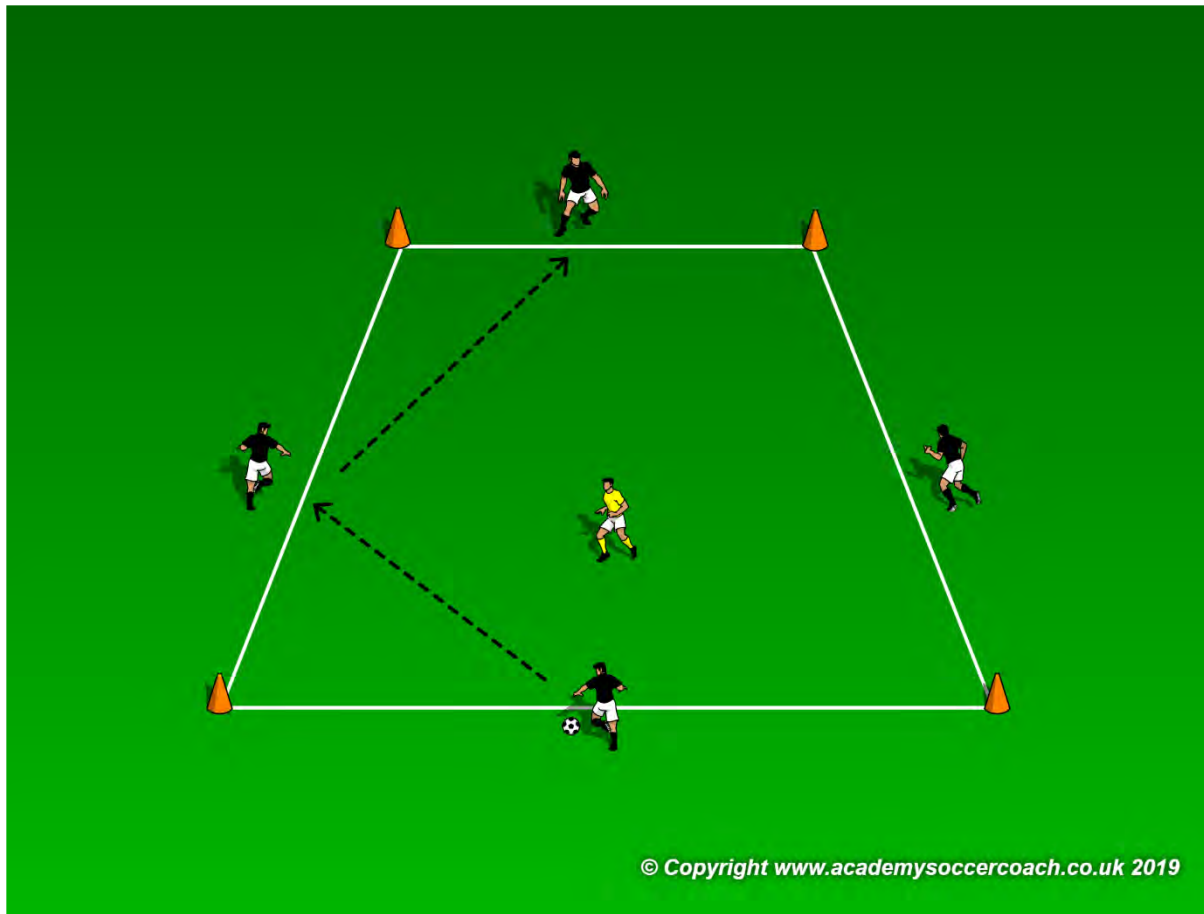
**Duration:** 5 minutes.

**Description:** Player with the ball dribbles to either the marker to his right or left. The dribbler may choose to dribble or pass the ball. In any case the shape of the diamond must remain intact.

**Progression:** The player with the ball may dribble at different speeds when between markers. In the diagram above it could be that the player instead of passing the ball, dribbled towards the opposite player. In this case all the other three players must move accordingly to re-establish the shape of the diamond.



## Passing practice – 4v1 rondo in a diamond formation.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) receiving the ball using an open body stance and 2) keeping the shape of the diamond.

**Area:** 10 yards in length by 8 yards in width.

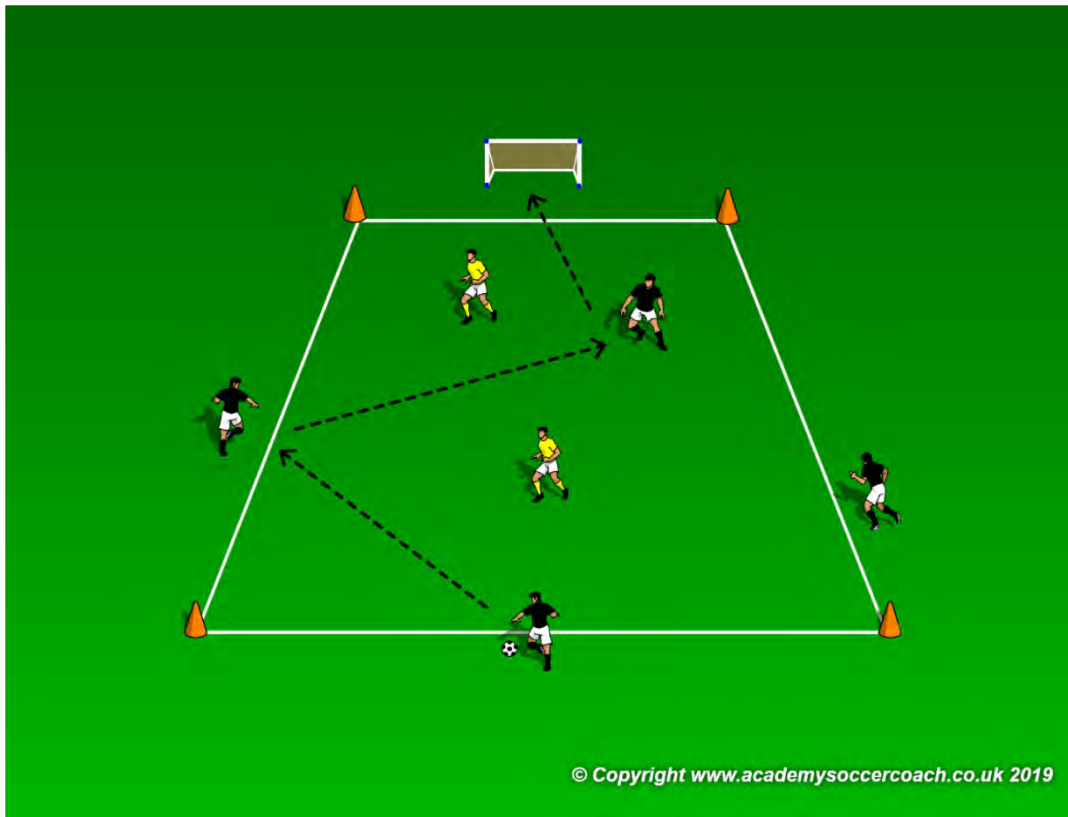
**Players:** Four attackers and one defender.

**Duration:** 5 minutes.

**Description:** Players must move along their designated side of the area. If the defender wins the ball, he attempts to dribble it outside the area by playing a 1v1 against the attacker who lost it.

**Progression:** Play with a two touch restriction so to work on using the correct body stance and applying the right touch on the ball.

## Passing practice – 4v2 to score on a mini goal.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) receiving the ball using an open body stance and 2) keeping the shape of the diamond.

**Area:** 12 yards in length by 10 yards in width.

**Players:** Four attackers and two defenders.

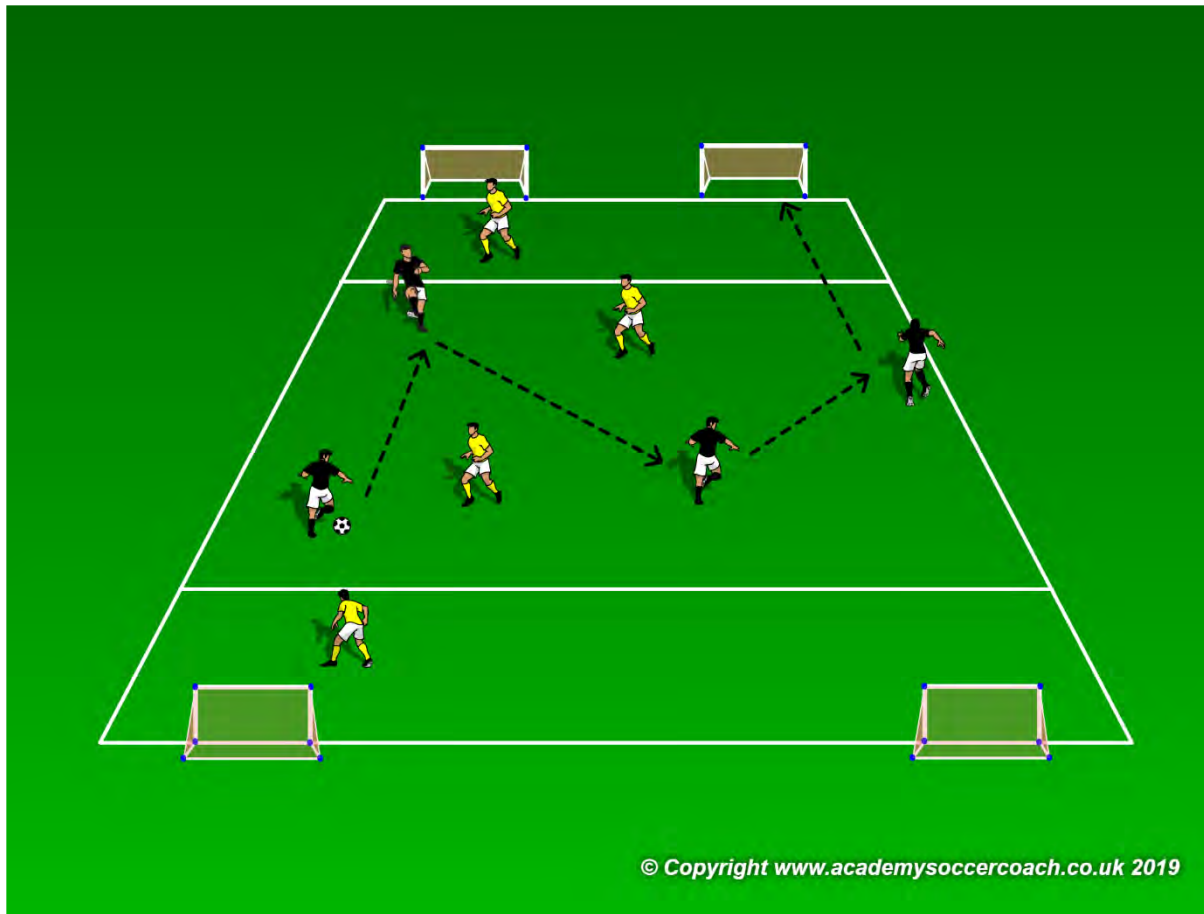
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 7 x 1 minute with thirty seconds rest in between series.

**Description:** Attackers always start building their attack from the end line opposite the mini goal as shown in the above diagram. The attackers aim to score in the mini goal which is positioned two yards behind the perimeter of the area, thus preventing the defenders from goal tending. If the defenders win the ball they counter by dribbling the ball on the opposite line where they play 2v2 with the inside attacker and the attacker on the end of the end line. Rotate the defenders every minute.

**Progression:** Attackers must score in a pre-allotted time. Therefore they are forced to apply the correct technique during the circulation of the ball and build-up of the attack.

**Game 1 – 4v2+2 score on both sides.**



**Remind players to focus on:** creating passing angles and playing forward whenever possible.

**Area:** 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width.

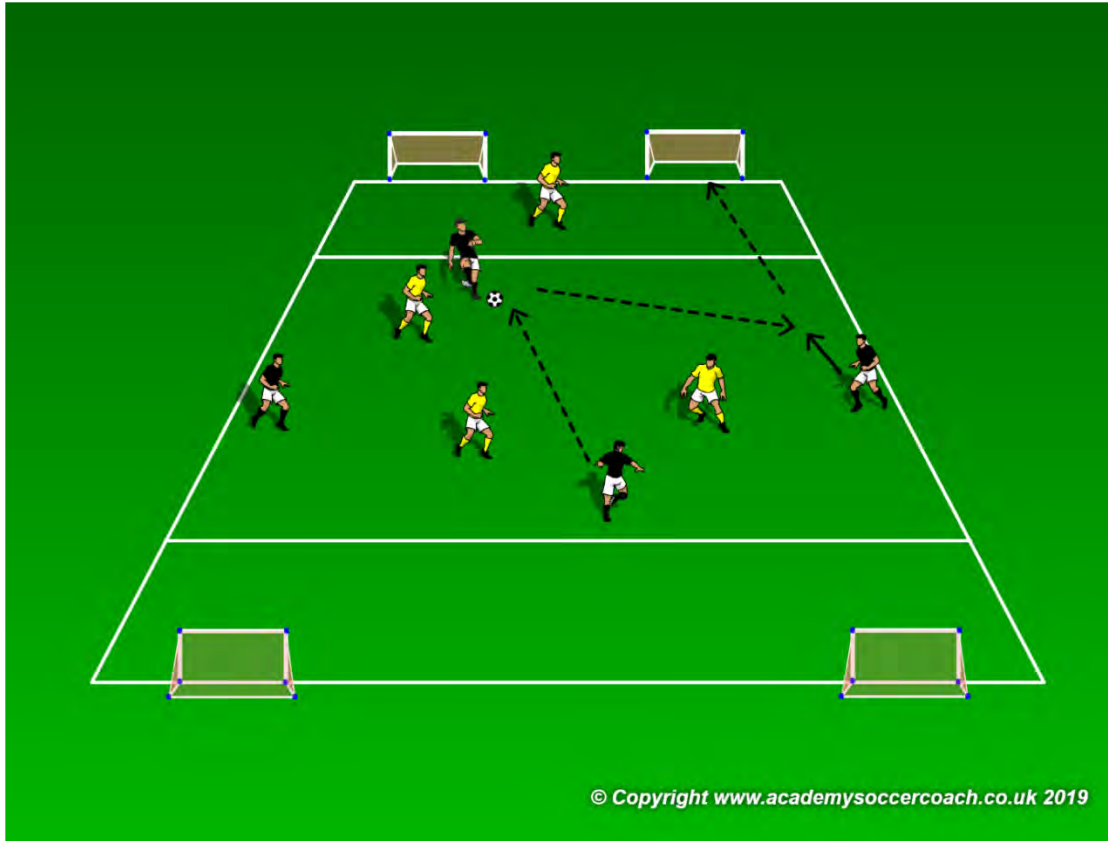
**Players:** Four attackers and two defenders plus a defender in each end zone.

**Duration:** 12 minutes.

**Workload:** 8 x 1 minute with thirty seconds rest in between series.

**Description:** The four attackers aim to score in either of the four mini goals. In order to do so they have to overcome the resistance of the two defenders and the defenders inside the end zones. Attackers may only score from outside the end zones while the defenders inside the end zones may intercept these passes/shots. Once a goal is scored, the attackers restart from the middle of the area. Play four series and then team switch roles in this game. Perform the exercise as a competition between teams.

## Game 2 – 4v3+1.



**Remind players to focus on:** creating passing angles and playing forward whenever possible.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width.

**Players:** Four attackers and three defenders plus another defender in the end zone.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 4 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** The attacking team aims to score in either of the two mini goals positioned on the end line. They play 4v3 against the defending team while another defender is positioned in the end zone with the aim of intercepting passes/shots on the mini goals. Whenever the ball goes out of bounds play starts by the team in possession from their end zone. In case the attacking team scores or the ball goes out of play, the teams change roles and the defending team now becomes the attacking team and attacks with four players. The previously attacking team now defends with three players in the middle zone and another player inside their end zone.

**Session number:** 6.

**Moment of the game:** Opponents in possession.

**Team task:** Deny the build-up.

**Aim:** Prevent the opponents from playing line-breaking passes.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Remain compact.
2. Cut off forward passing lanes.
3. Force the ball away from goal.
4. Move together as a group.

**Duration of session:** 80 minutes.

**Number of players:** 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs).

Markers (two sets of a different colour).

Mini goals (four).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.

Principles of defending – prevent the forward pass: 15 minutes.

Game 1 – defend your goal 4v4+4: 15 minutes.

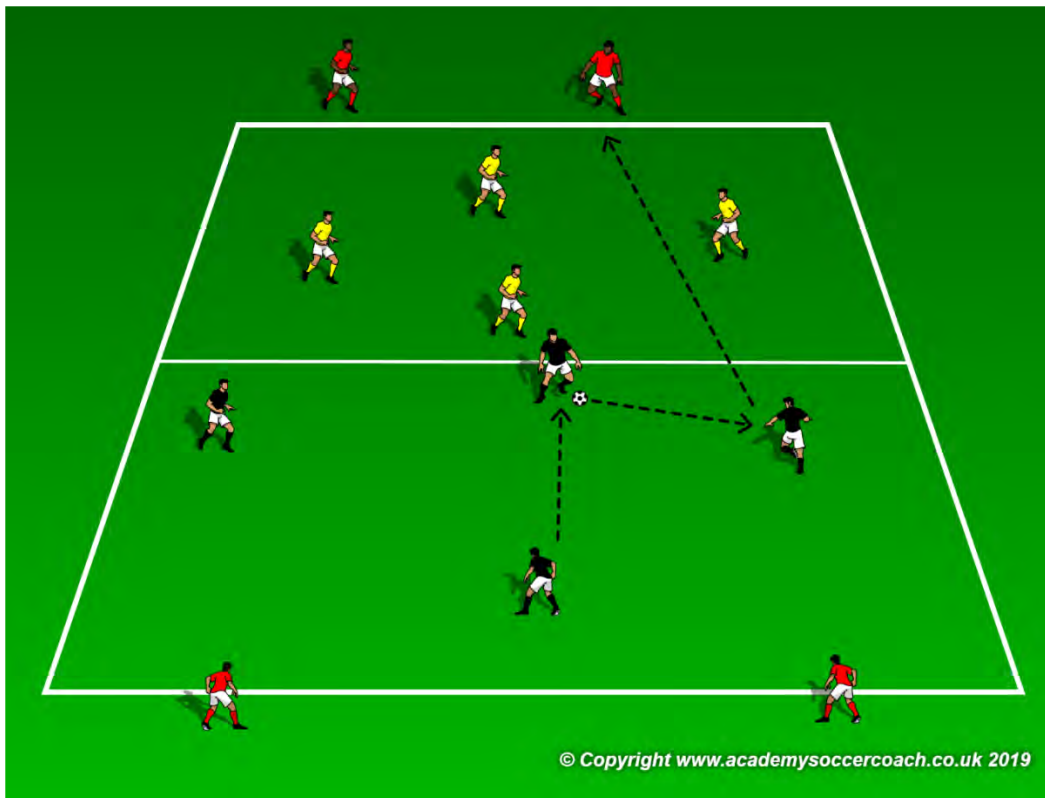
Game 2 – defend your goal 4v4+4: 15 minutes.

Game 3 – 4v4+GKs: 20 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Ball mastery – 10 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility and mobility – 5 minutes.

### **Principles of defending – prevent the forward pass.**



**Remind players to focus on:** cutting of the passing lanes to the attackers positioned in the opposite side.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones.

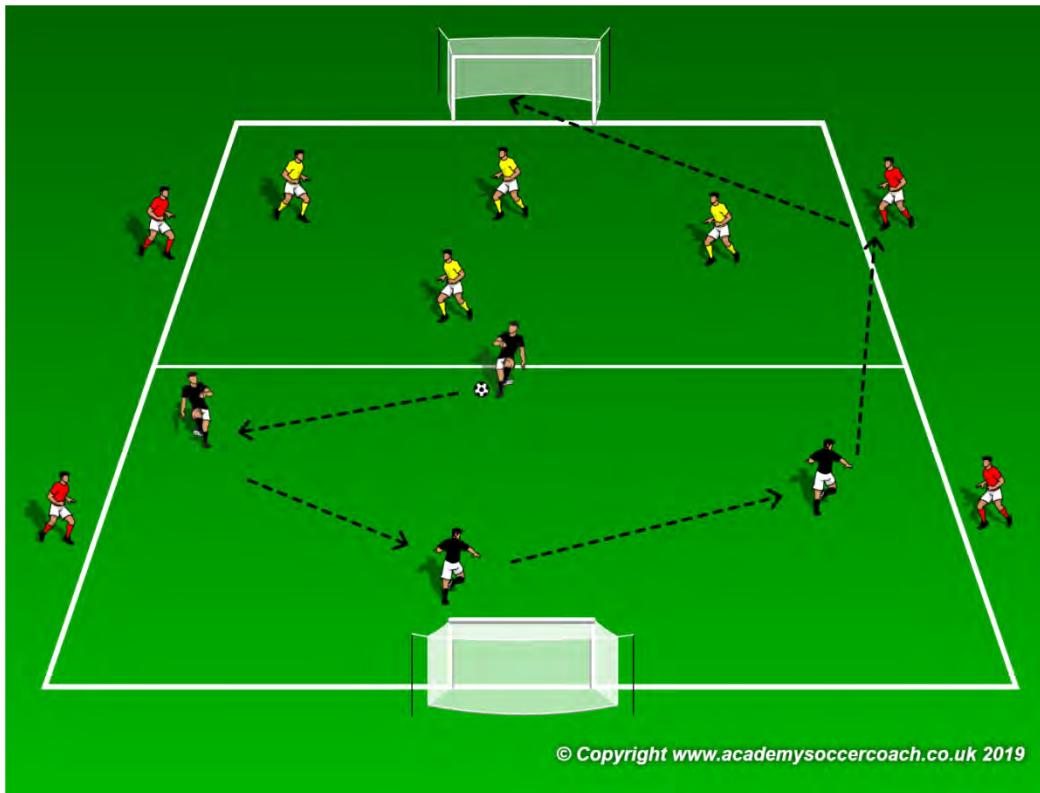
**Players:** Three groups of four players each. Two groups are positioned in their respective zone while the others (the neutrals) have two players at each end line acting as target players.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Both teams aim to play the ball to the opposite target players to score a point. Rotate team roles every four minutes.

**Variation:** To speed up play and make it more challenging for the defending team, the attacking team aims to score within twenty seconds, otherwise they lose possession.

## Game 1 – defend your goal 4v4+4.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) remaining compact and 2) moving together as a group on a switch in play.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. A regular goalpost is positioned at each end line.

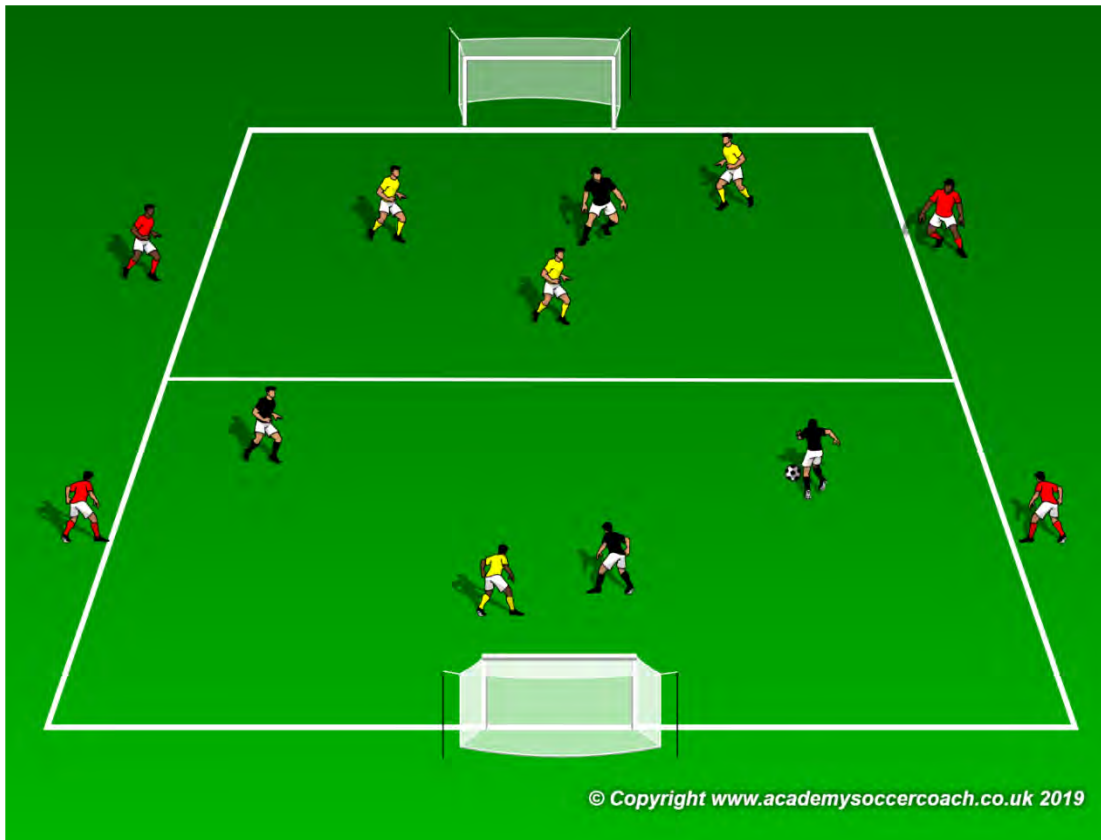
**Players:** Three groups of four players each. Two groups are positioned in their respective zone while the other (the neutrals) are positioned at the sides as shown in the diagram above. No goalkeepers are included in this exercise.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 3 x 4 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** Both teams try to find a way to score either by shooting directly from their zone or by passing to the neutral players on the flanks to finish themselves. The neutral players are allowed to pass to each other. There is one condition that both teams must adhere to. They must always play in a diamond formation, both when they have the ball and also when the opponents have the ball.

## Game 2 – defend your goal 4v4+4.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) remaining compact and 2) moving together as a group on a switch of play.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. A regular goalpost is positioned at each end line.

**Players:** Three groups of four players each. Two groups have three defenders and an attacker, while another group is composed of four neutral players and which are positioned at the sides of the area as shown above.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 3 x 4 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** Same as the previous exercise but now each team has an attacker in the opposition's half of the pitch, while having one player less in defence. This increases the scoring options for the attacking team.



**Progression:** An attacker in possession of the ball in his own half may dribble into the attacking half to create a numerical advantage for the attacking team (taking the neutral players into consideration it becomes a 4v3 in favour of the attacking team).

**Game 3 – 4v4+GKs.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) remaining compact and 2) forcing play away from goal.

**Area:** 40 yards in length x 30 yards in width. A regular goalpost is positioned at each end line.

**Players:** Two teams of four outfield players plus a goalkeeper each team.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 9 minutes with two minutes rest in between.

**Description:** Normal game but with restarts starting from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. This gives the defending team time to adjust itself during this moment of play, thus reinforcing the principles of defending by having all the team adjusted to the correct positions on the pitch.

**Progression:** Divide the pitch into two equal horizontal zones. Each team has a defensive half and an offensive half. If a team scores from inside the offensive half the goal counts double. This forces the players to be more compact and not to give too much space to the opponents near the goal.

**Session number:** 7.

**Moment of the game:** Opponents in possession.

**Team task:** Deny the build-up.

**Aim:** Prevent the opponents from playing line-breaking passes.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Remain compact.
2. Cut off forward passing lanes.
3. First defender applies pressure on the ball.
4. Nearby defenders cover and mark potential receivers.
5. Make play predictable.
6. Move together as a group.

**Duration of session:** 90 minutes.

**Number of players:** 12 players.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Bibs (one set of four bibs).

Markers (two sets of a different colour).

Mini goals (four).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.

Principles of defending – 4v2 prevent the split pass: 10 minutes.

Game 1 – 2v2 with quick turnovers: 15 minutes.

Group defending practice – 2v2 recovery defending: 10 minutes.

Game 2 – Six goal game: 15 minutes.

Game 3 – 4v4+GKs: 25 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Multi-lateral footwork – 5 minutes.
2. Dynamic flexibility and mobility – 5 minutes.
3. Reactive speed with five meter sprints – 5 minutes (2 sets x 6 reps).

### **Principles of defending – 4v2 prevent the split pass.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) remaining compact, 2) making play predictable and 3) moving together as a group.

**Area:** 12 yards by 12 yards.

**Players:** Four attackers and two defenders.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The attackers aim to make eight consecutive passes to score a point or play a splitting pass to score two points. If the defenders win the ball, they play 2v1 against an attacker on a particular line, scoring by dribbling the ball out of the area.

### Game 1 – 2v2 with quick turnovers.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) remaining compact, 2) moving together as a group and 3) forcing play away from goal.

**Area:** 20 yards in length x 15 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones.

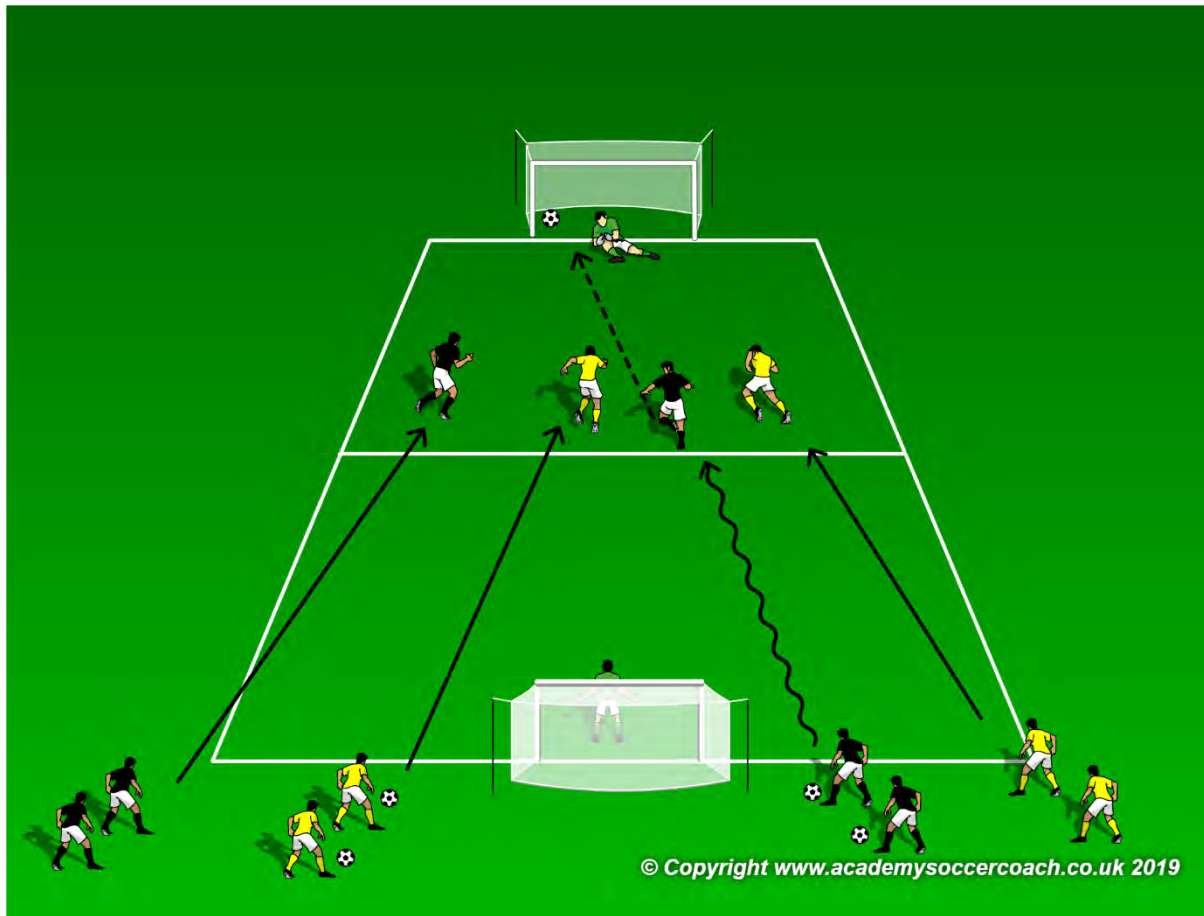
**Players:** Two players from each team playing the 2v2 plus a goalkeeper in each goal. The other players from each team rest.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 3 minutes with one minute rest between series.

**Description:** Both teams aim to score in the opponents' goal. If a goal is scored from inside the offensive half it counts double the points. Both teams should thus work on a strategy to limit the opponents from getting inside their defensive half. Furthermore, players have to work in cooperation to reduce the time and space of the opponents to finish at goal especially when they are inside their defensive half. When the ball goes out of play, two new players for each team step into the pitch to initiate a new 2v2. Have one team always starting the action and then change in the next series.

## Group defending practice – 2v2 recovery defending.



**Remind players to focus on:** tracking back quickly while reducing the time and space of the attacker on the ball.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 15 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones.

**Players:** Two sets of players for each team positioned on one end line of the pitch as shown in the above image. In each team one of the players (the middle ones) have a ball.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 sets of 6 reps with three minutes rest in between sets.

**Description:** One team attacks while the other defends. Goals only count if scored from inside the attacking half of the pitch. If the defending team wins the ball they counter on the opposite goal.

**Progression:** Coach shows using a marker or any type of visual stimulus to indicate the team that will attack. The other team automatically defends.

## Game 2 – Six goal game.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) retaining compactness and 2) mark potential receivers of the ball.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. A regular goal and two mini goals are positioned at each end line as shown in the above image.

**Players:** Two teams of four players plus a goalkeeper. The other four players play a 2v2 line soccer game and then rotate with a team playing in this game.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 sets of 3 minutes with one minute rest in between sets.

**Description:** Both teams defend two mini goals and a regular goal which are situated on one end line while attacking the opposite. Teams may score in the regular goal which equals to two points or in the mini goals which equal to one point. This situation forces the players to cooperate more in the defensive phase to eliminate the space the opponents require to manoeuvre the ball and create scoring chances.

### Game 3 – 4v4+GKs.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) retaining compactness and 2) mark potential receivers of the ball.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width with a regular goal positioned at each end line.

**Players:** Two teams composed of four players plus a goalkeeper. The other four players perform passing exercises. Teams rotate after each set.

**Duration:** 25 minutes.

**Workload:** 3 sets of 6 minutes with two minutes rest in between sets.

**Description:** Normal game where each team defends one goal and attacks the opposite.



**Session number:** 8.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Create passing angles and support.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Open body stance to receive the ball.
3. Quality of passing.
4. Moving into passing lanes.

**Duration of session:** 75 minutes.

**Number of players:** 12 outfield players and no goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Mini goals (at least one, but two highly recommended for a better flow of practice).

Bibs (four).

Markers. (Three sets of four colours each as per the first activity where we have three setups).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation: 15 minutes.

Technical-tactical activation – Create passing angles within a diamond: 10 minutes.

Passing practice – Combine with the inside player: 10 minutes.

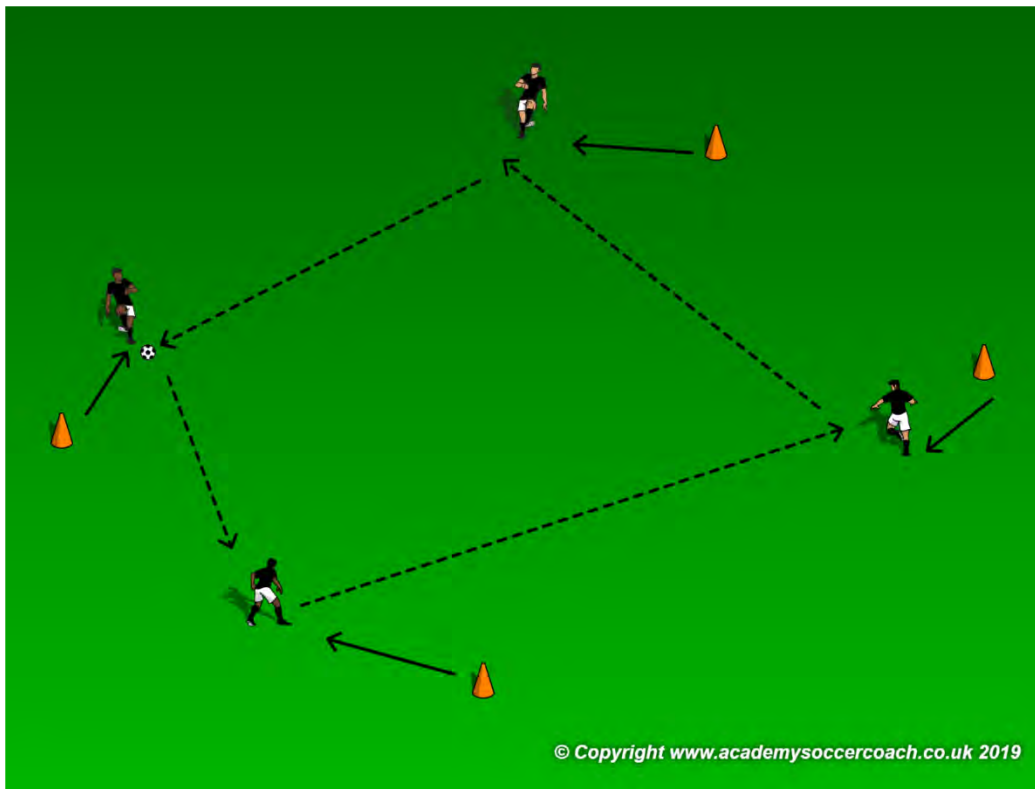
Passing practice – 3v1 in a triangle: 10 minutes.

Game – 4v4 on retracted mini goals: 30 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Footwork using the agility ladder interspersed with dynamic flexibility – 10 minutes.
2. Reaction speed with short sprints of five meters – 5 minutes.

### **Technical-tactical activation – Create passing angles within a diamond.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) moving to offer a passing angle, 2) adapt an open body stance to receive the ball and 3) pass the ball with speed and accuracy on the ground.

**Area:** Have three setups each measuring approximately 15 yards by 15 yards.

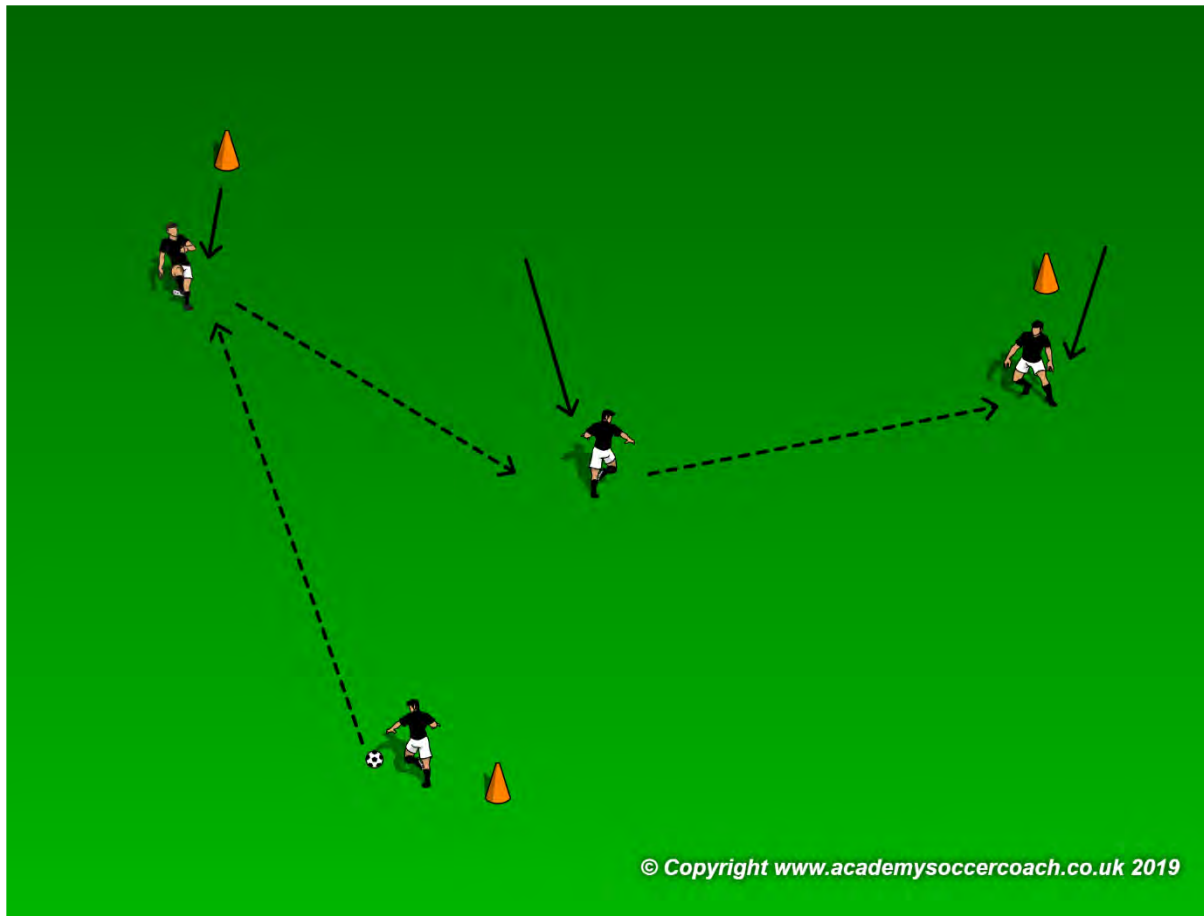
**Players:** Four players, one at each cone.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Players may pass to any other player within the diamond formation. Players must not remain static but must move away from the marker to create an angle as if to lose the defender and receive the ball in the space created.

**Progression:** Players aim to pass within two touches. This requires them to adapt the correct stance to receive, apply a direction oriented first touch and execute an accurate pass.

## Passing practice – Combine with the inside player.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles, 2) adapt an open body stance to receive the ball and 3) pass the ball with speed and accuracy on the ground.

**Area:** Have three setups each measuring approximately 12 yards by 12 yards.

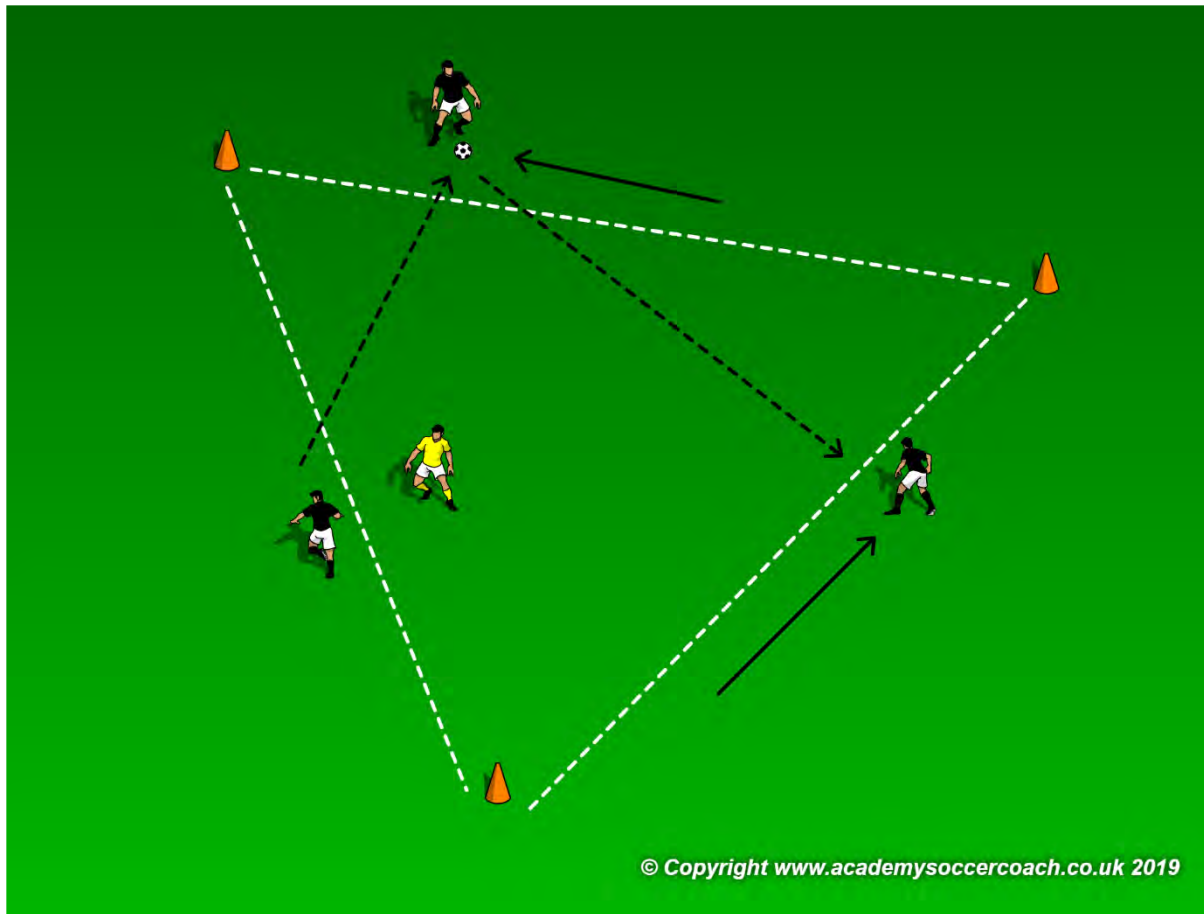
**Players:** Four players, three at a cone and another player roaming inside.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Players are free to combine with any other player. Players must move at angles to each other with the inside player acting as a pivot. Encourage players to be creative in their passing by playing one-twos or bypassing the pivot player by having the latter performing dummy runs.

**Progression:** The pivot player may move to a marker which acts as a trigger for the player positioned at that marker to move inside and perform a rotation.

## Passing practice – 3v1 in a triangle.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) moving to offer a passing option, 2) adapting an open body stance to receive the ball and 3) passing the ball with speed and accuracy on the ground.

**Area:** Have three setups where the sides of the triangular setup measures approximately 12 yards each.

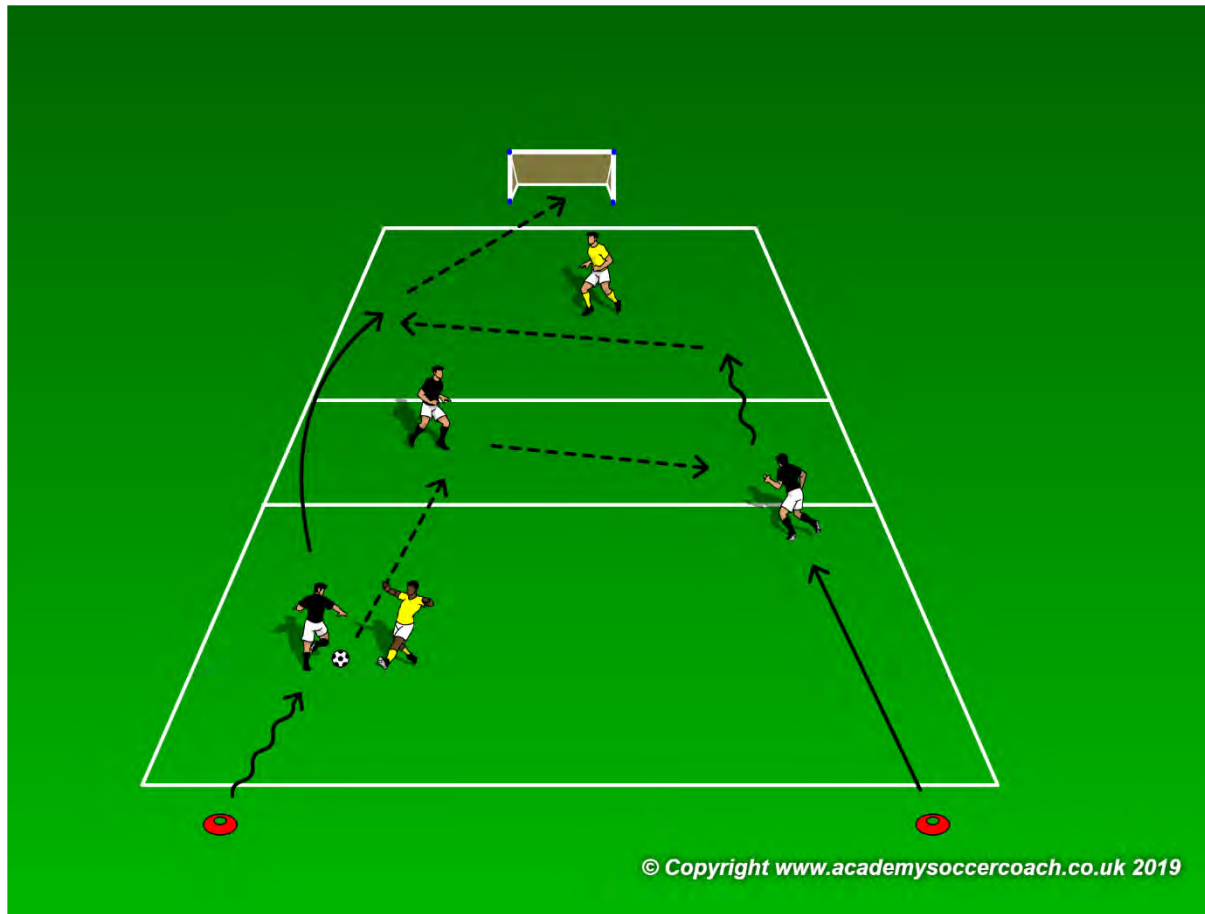
**Players:** Four players, one attacker at each side of the triangle and a defender inside.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The three attackers combine with each other to keep possession of the ball against the defender. If the defender wins the ball, he tries to dribble it out of the triangle by playing a 1v1 with the player positioned on that side.

**Progression:** Decrease the area of the triangle by reducing each side to 10 yards.

## Passing practice – 2v1 to 2v1 combining with the pivot player.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) moving to offer passing options, 2) adapting an open body stance to receive the ball and 3) passing the ball with speed and accuracy on the ground.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 12 yards in width with a middle channel measuring 3 yards in length. A mini goal is positioned 2 meters behind the end line.

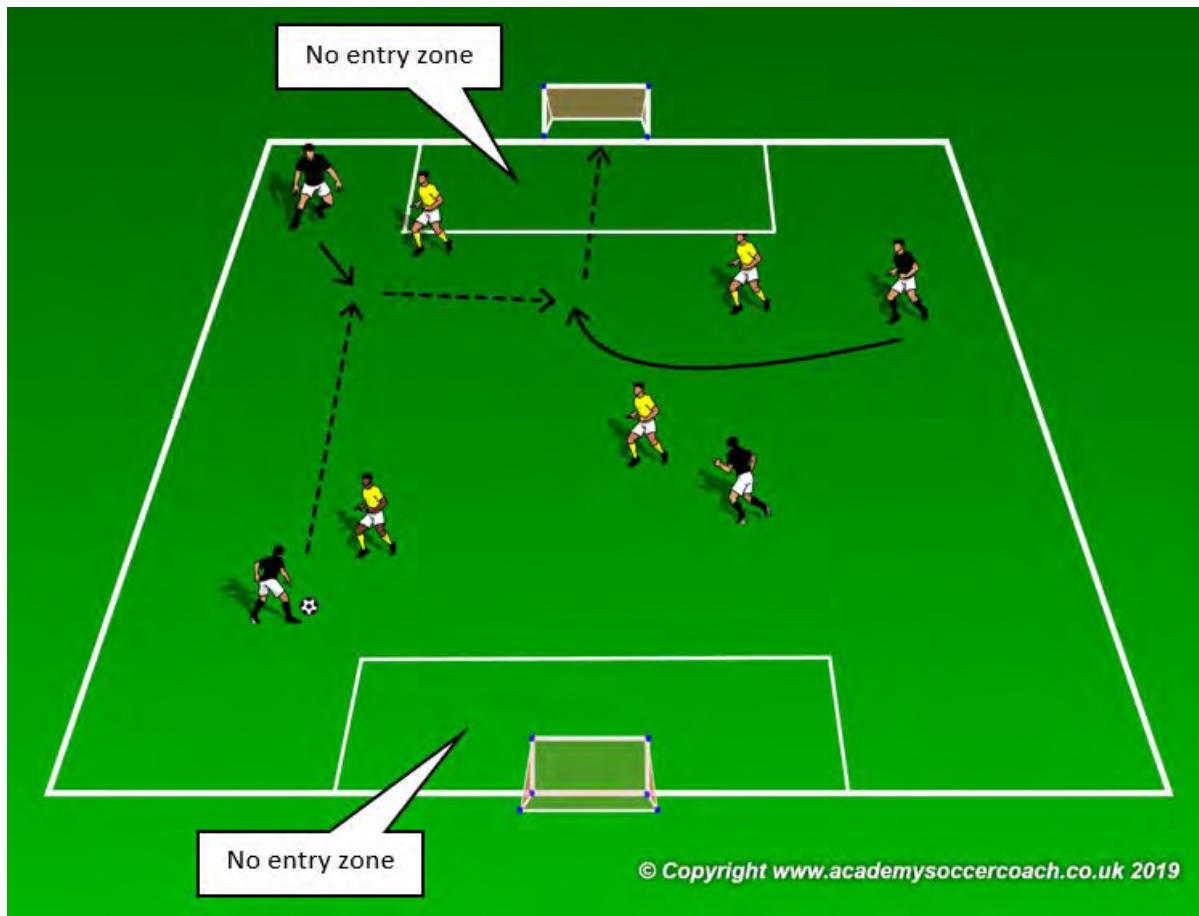
**Players:** A defender is positioned in each of the lateral zones. An attacking pivot player is positioned inside the horizontal middle channel, while another two attackers (one of them with the ball) start from the red markers.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The two attackers positioned at the red markers start with the ball against the defender positioned in this zone. They aim to combine with the pivot player prior to playing against the defender in the opposite area to score in the mini goal.

**Progression:** Attackers aim to score within a pre-allotted time limit.

## Game – 4v4 on mini goals.



**Remind players to focus on:** creating passing angles.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width with two “no entry” areas marked at each end zone each measuring 5 yards in length by 15 yards in width.

**Players:** Two teams composed of four players each.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 6 minutes interspersed with two minutes rest in between series.

**Description:** Normal game but no player can enter the no entry zone.

**Progression:** Attackers aim to score within a pre-allotted time limit.

**Session number:** 9.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Keep possession of the ball in numerical superiority.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Diamond formation.
3. Quality of passes.
4. Direction oriented first touch.

**Duration of session:** 78 to 80 minutes.

**Number of players:** 12 outfield players and no goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Mini goals (two).

Bibs (four).

Markers. (Three sets of four colours each as per the first activity where we have three setups).

**Session plan:**

Movement activation: 15 minutes.

Technical-tactical activation – Passing through the defence: 10 minutes.

Passing practice – Four square 4v2 rondo: 15 minutes.

Analytical 2 – Four square 4v2 rondo: 15 minutes.

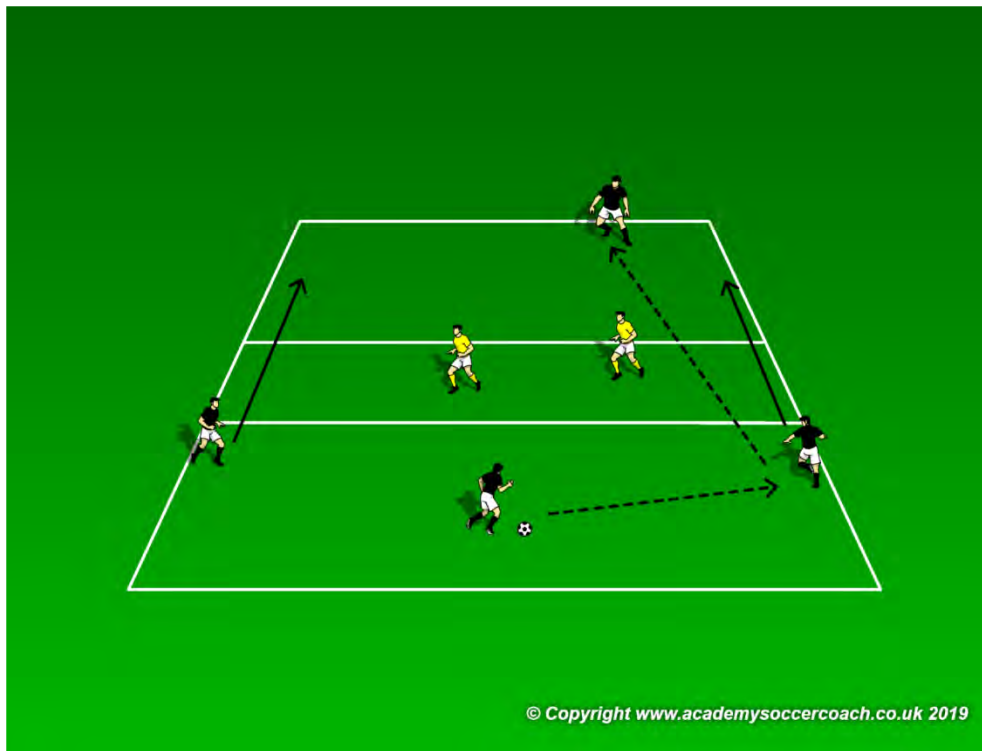
Analytical 3 – 4v2 on two retracted mini goals: 15 minutes.

Game – 4v4 on two retracted mini goals: 18 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Footwork using the agility ladder – 10 minutes.
2. Capacity of equilibrium – 5 minutes.

### **Technical-tactical activation – Passing through the defence.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles, 2) adapting an open body stance and 3) passing with the correct accuracy and weight.

**Area:** Area measuring 15 yards in length by 10 yards in width with a 4 yard channel in the middle.

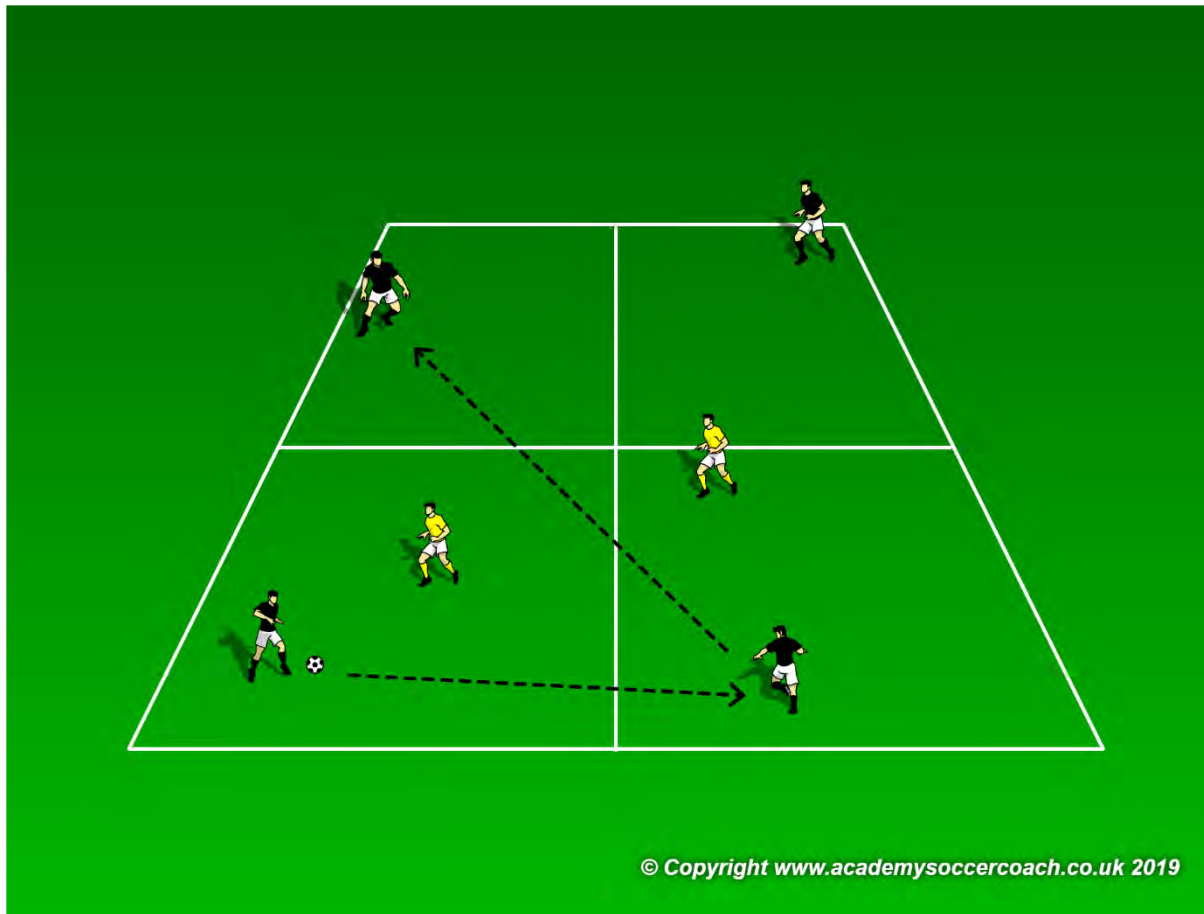
**Players:** Three attackers are situated on one side while another is situated on the opposite side. Two defenders roam the middle channel.

**Duration:** 12 minutes.

**Description:** Play starts from the side where there are three attackers. The three attackers aim to pass the ball to their teammate on the opposite side through the middle channel. If the ball is successfully played to the opposite side, two attackers follow to provide support and passing options to the receiver. The 3v2 situation is again recreated.



## Passing practice – Four square 4v2 rondo.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) passing the ball quickly.

**Area:** Area measuring 12 yards by 12 yards which is divided into four equal zones.

**Players:** An attacker is positioned in each zone. Two defenders are inside the square but they cannot be in the same zone.

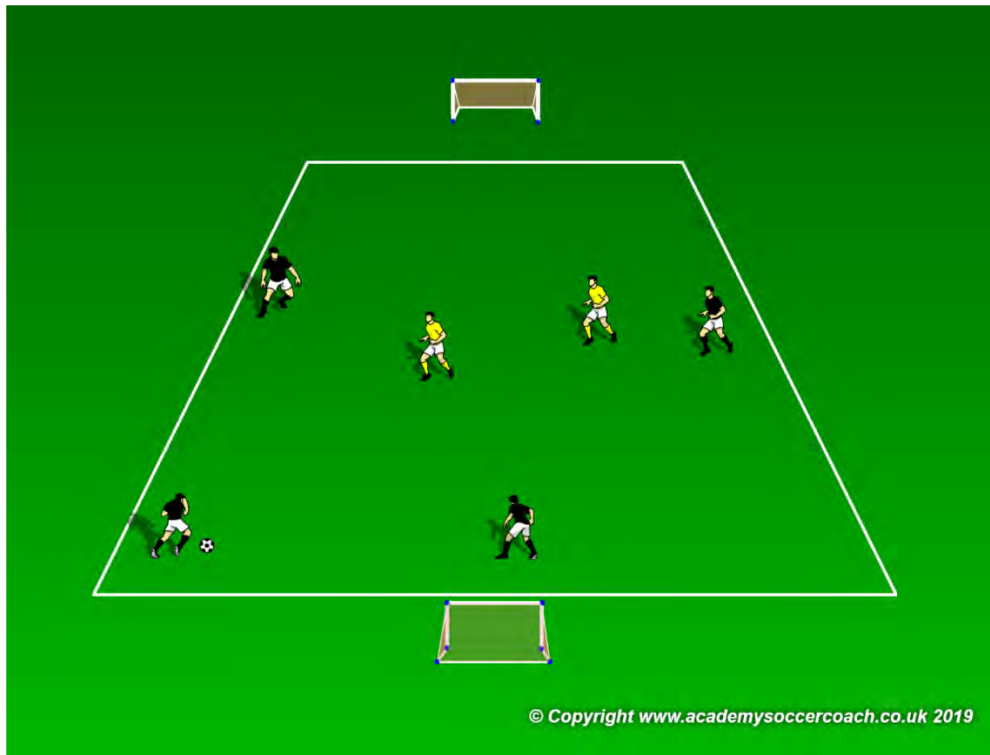
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 sets x 6 repetitions of 1 minute with thirty seconds rest in between repetitions and two minutes between sets.

**Description:** Attackers remain inside their zone and aim to circulate the ball to keep possession. The two defenders try to intercept the ball but cannot be both in the same zone. If the defenders win the ball, the defender who was successful aims to dribble it out of the area against the attacker in that quarter. Rotate defenders between series.

**Progression:** Reduce the area to 10 yards by 10 yards.

### Analytical 3: 4v2 on two retracted mini goals.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) moving into passing lanes and 2) adapting an open body stance to receive the ball.

**Area:** 15 yards in length by 12 yards in width. A mini goal is positioned two meters beyond each end line.

**Players:** Four attackers play against two defenders.

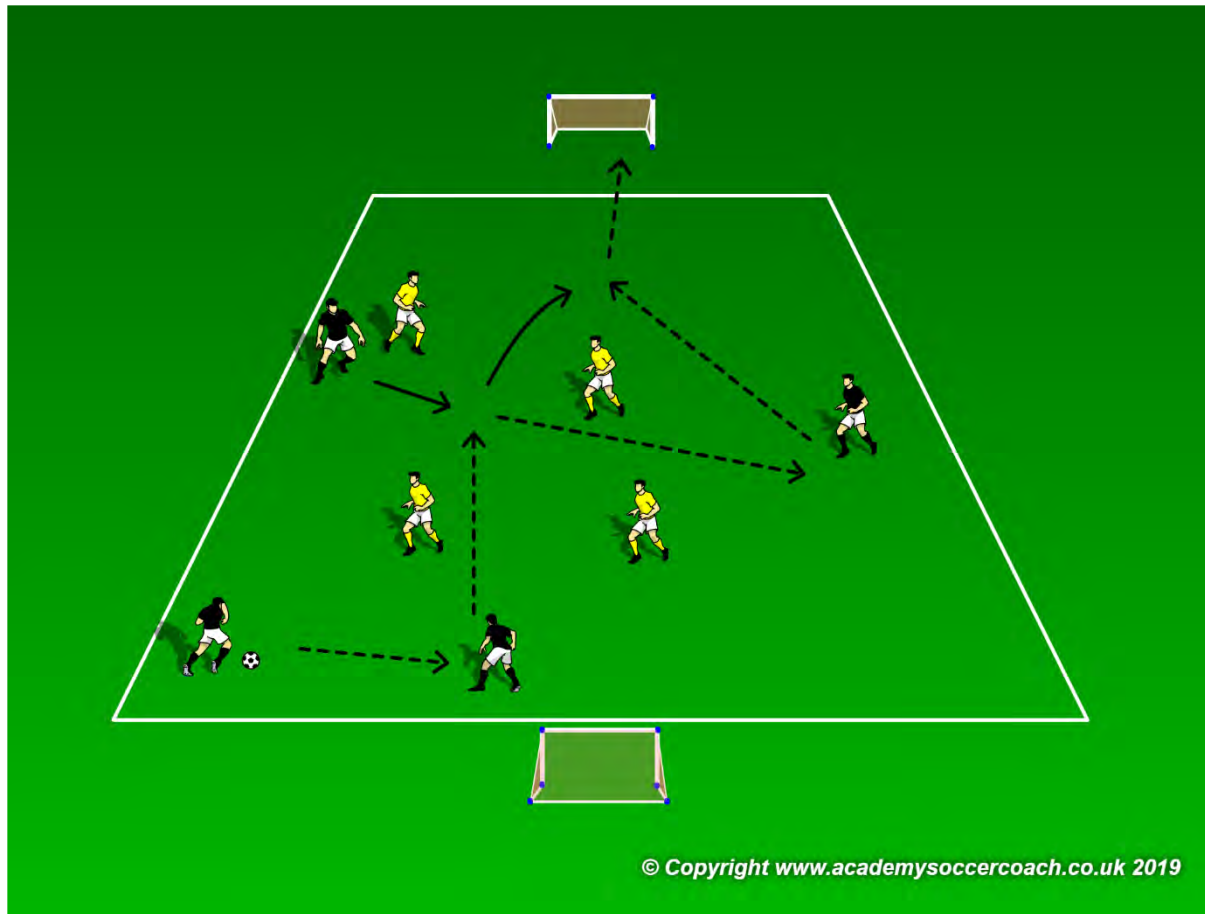
**Duration:** 18 minutes.

**Workload:** 6 x 2 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** Play always starts from the attacking team's goal line. The attackers aim to score in the defending team's goal while the defenders aim to prevent the attackers from scoring and counter in the opposite goal. Rotate the defenders after every set.

**Progression:** The attackers must score in less than a pre-established amount of time otherwise the defending team scores a point. This progression increases the perception of the players in the attacking team to get into positions quickly to either receive the ball or create space in search of the vertical pass. Angles of support and forward runs will come naturally with this progression.

**Game: 4v4 on two retracted mini goals.**



**Remind players to focus on:** creating staggered angles of support.

**Area:** Area measuring 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width. A mini goal is positioned two meters beyond each end line.

**Setup:** Teams play 4v4 with no goalkeepers on retracted mini goals. Third team does a 3v1 rondo.

**Workload:** Each team plays six games of two minutes each. Therefore we have a total of nine games totalling eighteen minutes. Teams rotate immediately so we have a minimal loss of time.

**Description:** Normal game where we emphasize the shape of the teams during the attacking phase of play. Do not stop to correct, but rather let the game flow. If players need some kind of feedback this can be given to them in their two minute break between games.

**Session number:** 10.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Create passing angles and support.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Open body stance to receive the ball.
3. Quality of passing.
4. Moving into passing lanes.

**Duration of session:** 75 minutes.

**Number of players:** 12 outfield players and no goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Balls (at least four).

Mini goals (at least one, but two highly recommended for a better flow of practice).

Bibs (four).

Markers. (Three sets of four colours each as per the first activity where we have three setups).

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.

Technical-tactical activation – Play the ball to the central player: 15 minutes.

Game – Build-up through the halves in a numerical advantage: 20 minutes.

Passing practice – 3v1 in a triangle: 10 minutes.

Game – 4v4 on retracted mini goals: 30 minutes.

### **Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Multi-lateral footwork (10 minutes).
2. Dynamic stretching and mobility (5 minutes).

### **Technical-tactical activation – Play the ball to the central player.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) moving to create a passing angle and 2) adapting an open body stance to receive the ball.

**Area:** 15 yards by 15 yards.

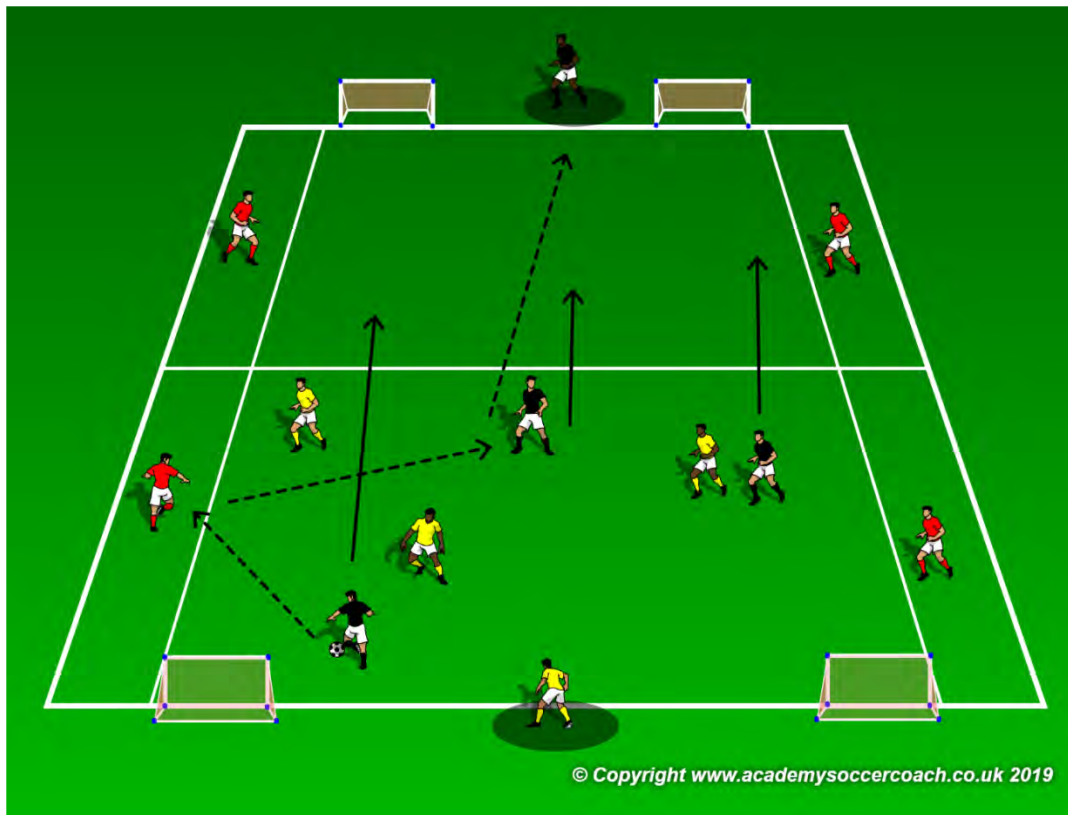
**Players:** Three attackers are situated at the cones positioned inside the grid. Another attacker is inside the central circle and two defenders roam the area.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** The three attackers may move away from their cone to receive and play the ball. The attackers' aim is to pass the ball to the central player positioned inside the circle to score a point. The defenders roam the area in order to prevent the attackers from accomplishing this aim.

**Progression:** The attacker inside the circle is rotated after every pass.

## Game – Build-up through the halves in a numerical advantage.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating staggered angles and 2) moving into passing lanes.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones and two flank zones each 5 yards wide. Two mini goals are positioned at each end line and are twenty yards apart.

**Players:** Each team has three inside players and a target player. Two neutral players are positioned in each flank zone, each one in a different horizontal zone.

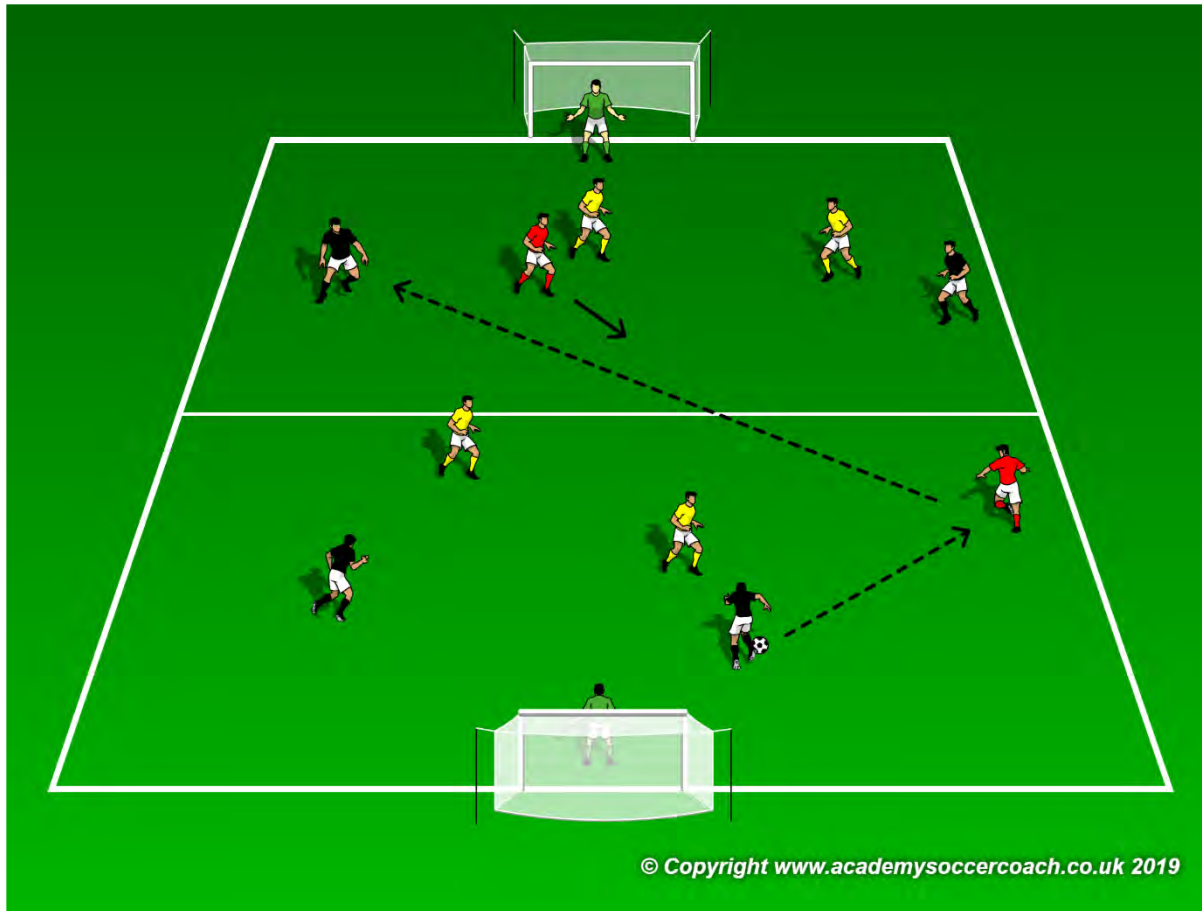
**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 4 minutes with one minute rest in between series.

**Description:** The team in attack aims to build from their own half to their target player at the opposite end. Once the ball is played to the target player, all inside players move to this zone; the attackers to score and the defenders to defend, win the ball and initiate a counter attack. Every time the ball goes out of play, restarts take place by the team in possession of the ball from inside their defending half.

**Progression:** Teams must make a minimum of five passes before passing the ball to the target player. Here we work on movement without the ball to create passing options.

**Game – Build-up through the halves in a numerical advantage.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating staggered angles and 2) moving into passing lanes.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones. Two regular goals are positioned at each end line.

**Players:** Each team has two players in each zone and a goalkeeper in goal. A neutral player is positioned in each zone.

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 6 minutes with two minutes rest between series.

**Description:** Players are restricted to remain inside their assigned zones. No corner kicks or throw-ins take place. The goalkeeper of the team in possession restarts play. Players rotate positions as goalkeepers and as neutral players.

**Progression:** Play the first two series in the conditions described above and then play the last two as a normal game of 4v4+2 neutrals.



**Session number:** 11.

**Moment of the game:** In possession.

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Keep possession of the ball in numerical superiority.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Width, depth and length to stretch the area of play.
3. Open body stance to receive the ball.
4. Directional first touch.
5. Quality of passes.

**Duration of session:** 85 to 90 minutes.

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and no goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Balls – at least four.

Bibs – one set of eight plus another four of the same colour.

Markers – to mark pitch dimensions and zones.

**Session plan:**

Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.

Technical-tactical activation – 3v1 rondo: 10 minutes.

Small sided game – The low playmaker game: 20 minutes.

Positional play – 3v3+2 neutrals: 15 minutes.

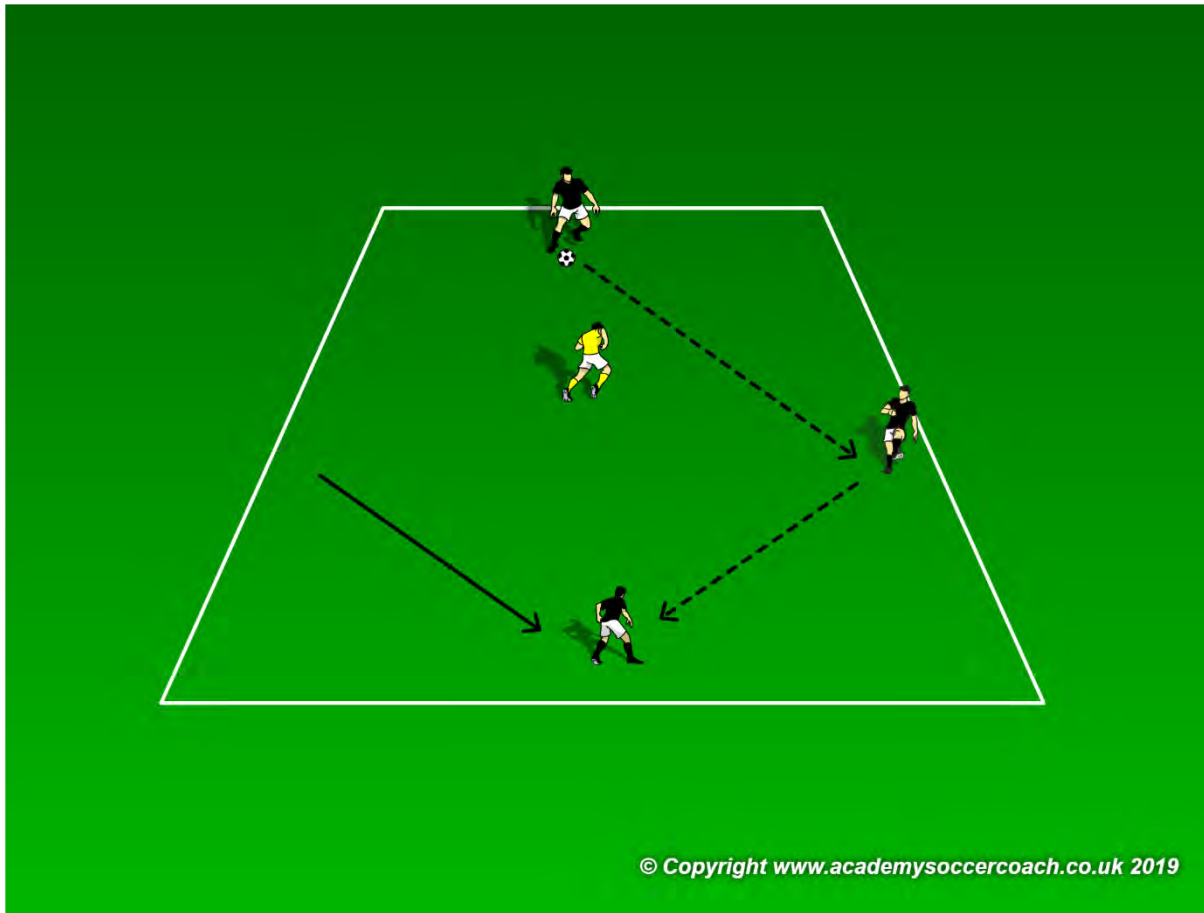
Small sided game – 4v4 on two halves with no goalkeepers: 20 minutes.

Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

**Movement preparation and coordination.**

1. Multi-directional footwork – 5 minutes.
2. Capacity of equilibrium – 5 minutes.
3. Reaction speed – 5 minutes.

## Technical-tactical activation – 3v1 rondo.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) adapting an open body stance.

**Area:** 10 yards in length by 6 yards in width.

**Players:** Three attackers and a defender in each group.

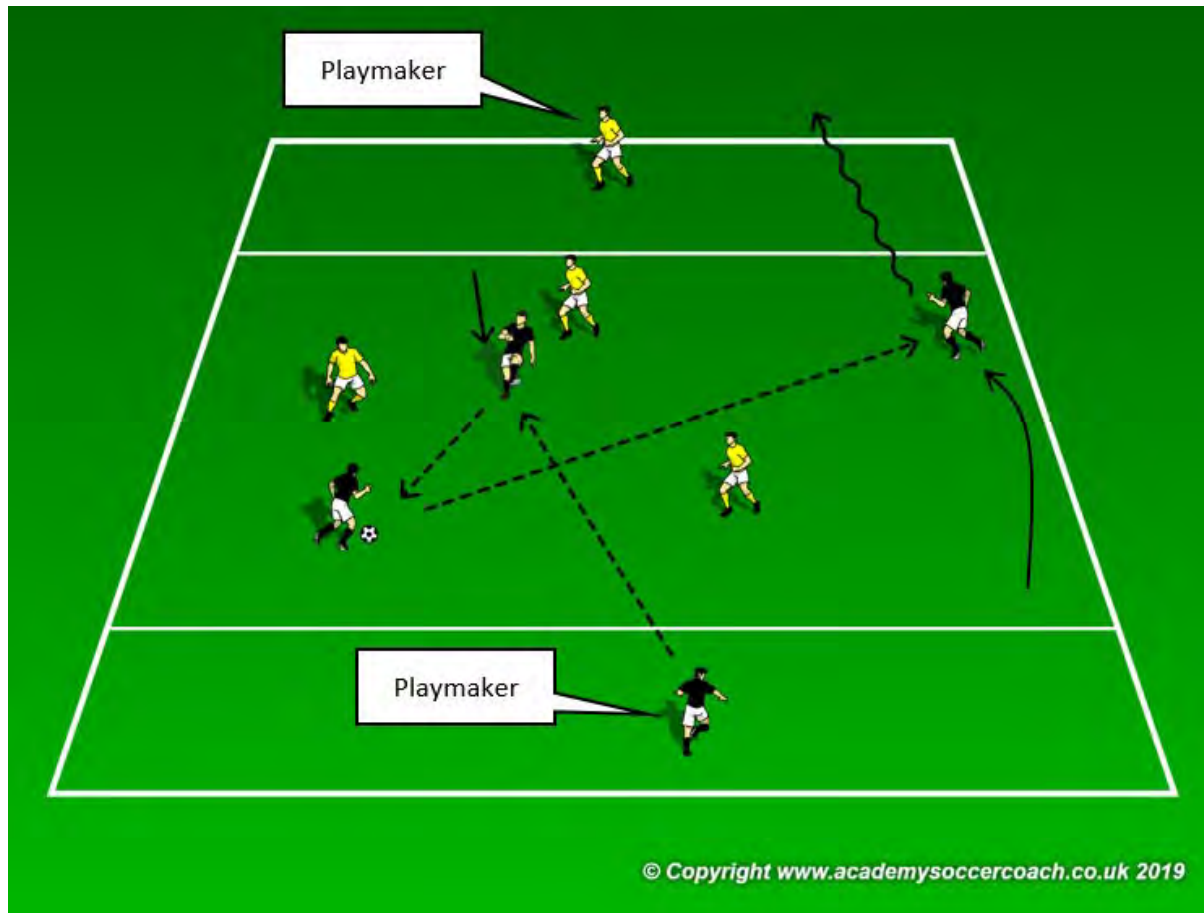
**Workload:** 8 x 30-40 seconds with 20 seconds rest in between series.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The three attackers maintain possession of the ball against the defender. If the defender wins the ball he dribbles it out of the area. Can the attackers accomplish eight consecutive passes to score a point?

**Progression:** The three attackers aim to score by stopping the ball over the opposite line within ten to fifteen seconds.

## Small sided game – The low playmaker game.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles, 2) adapting an open body stance and 3) positioning – width, depth and length.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 25 yards in width with a 5 yard zone at each end for the playmaker.

**Players:** Two teams composed of four players each.

**Workload:** 4 x 4 minutes with 1 minute rest in between series.

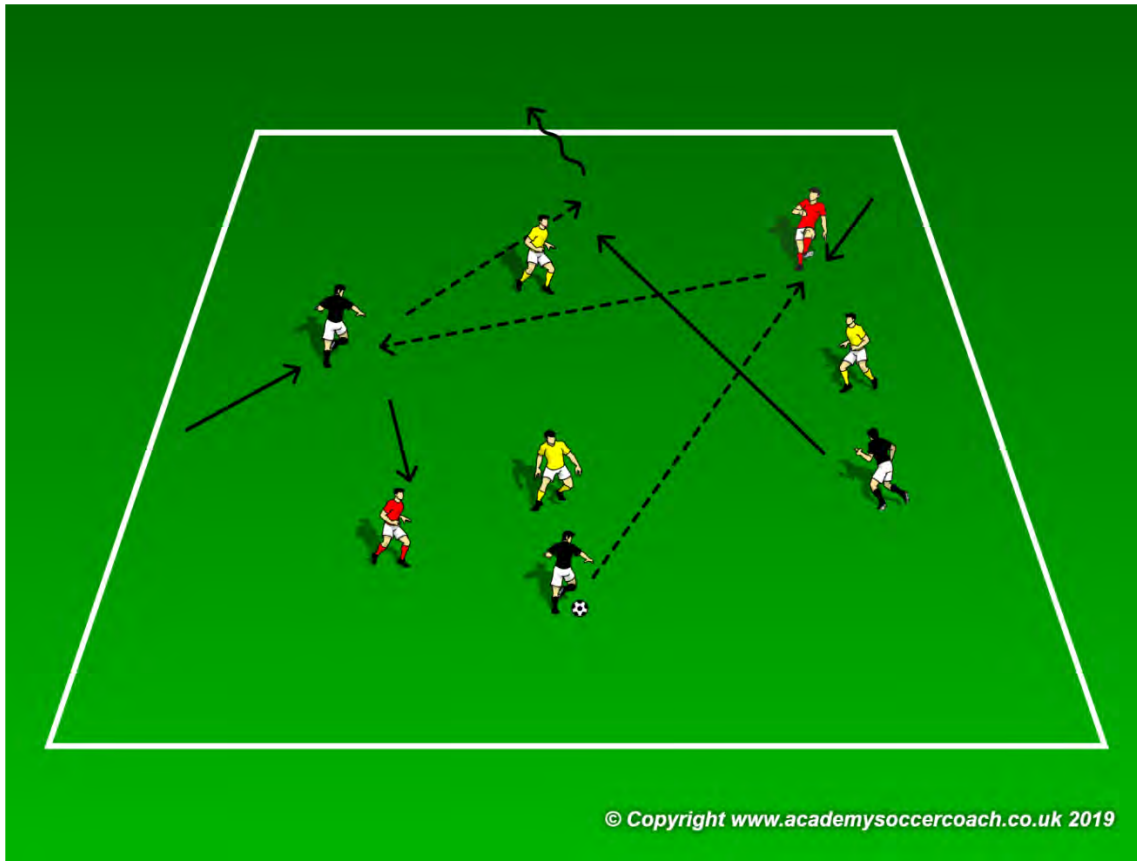
**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** Teams aim to score by stopping the ball over the opposite team's goal line. Each team has a playmaker in their playmaker zone. The playmaker may not be tackled inside this zone but has five seconds to play the ball either with a dribble or a pass.

### **Progressions:**

1. If the playmaker moves out of the playmaker zone, he must be replaced by another player.
2. Remove the playmaker zones and play 4v4 line soccer.

## Positional play – 3v3+2 neutrals.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having staggered passing angles and 2) positioning – width, depth and length.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 25 yards in width.

**Players:** Two teams of three players each plus two neutrals.

**Workload:** 4 x 3 minutes with 1 minute rest in between series.

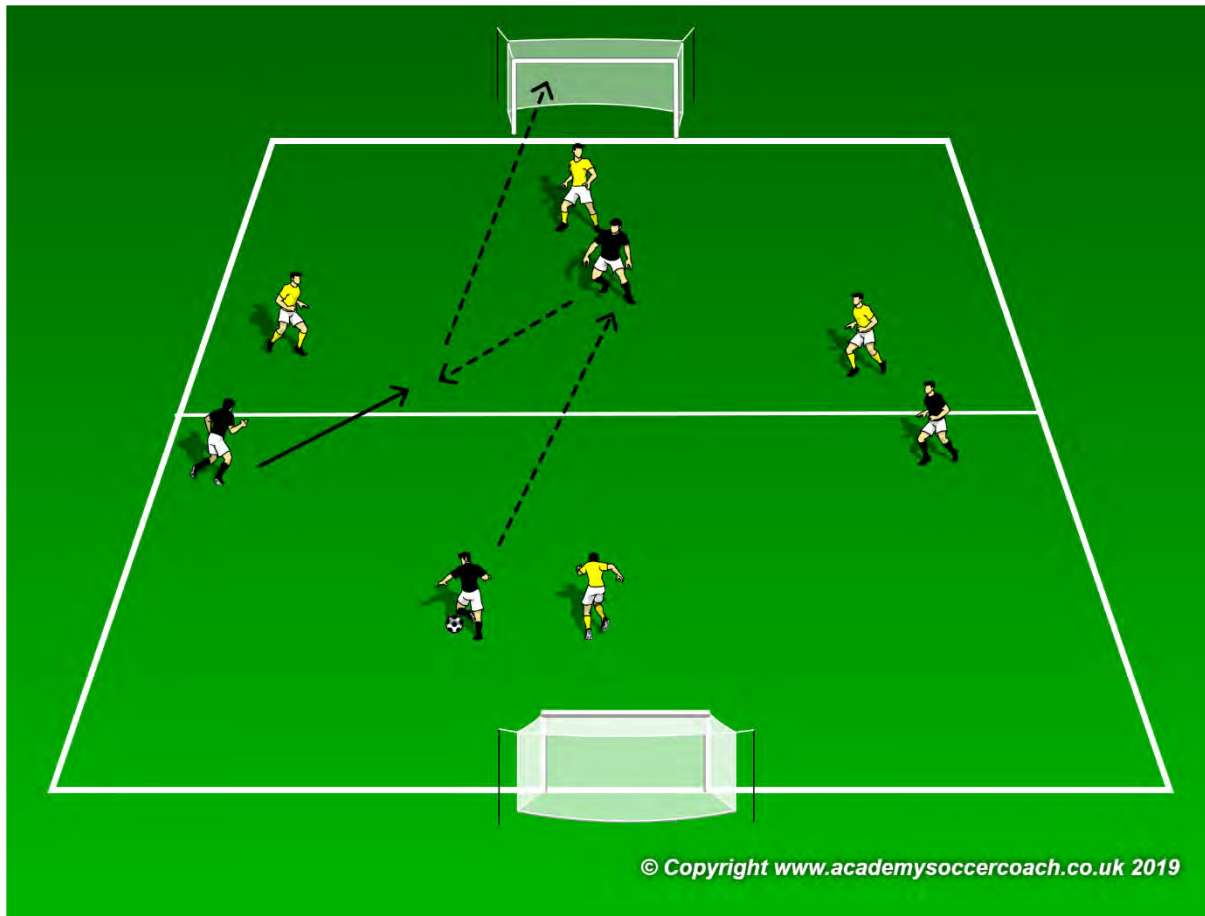
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Start this activity by having the two teams keeping possession of the ball with the help of the two neutral players. The two neutral players are free to roam anywhere inside the area to provide the necessary support to the team in possession.

### **Progressions:**

1. Both teams aim to score by stopping the ball over the opposite team's end line (as shown in the above diagram).
2. Reduce the playing dimensions to 25 yards in length by 20 yards in width.

**Small sided game – 4v4 on two halves with no goalkeepers.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having staggered passing angles/, 2) off-the-ball movement, and 3) positioning – width, depth and length.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 25 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones with a regular goal at both ends.

**Players:** Two teams composed of four players each.

**Workload:** 4 x 4 minutes with 1 minute rest in between series.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** Normal game except that teams may only score from inside the opposition's half.

**Progression:** For a goal to count, all team members must be in the attacking half of the pitch.