

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



**Volume 3**

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

## **Volume 3**

*By*

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**Session number:** 12.

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

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Create and exploit the space to play forward.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Move into passing lanes.
3. Open body stance to receive the ball.
4. Have width to stretch and create gaps in the defence.
5. Look to play vertically.
6. Support the vertical pass.

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

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

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight.

Markers – to mark pitch dimensions and zones.

Mannequins – two in each setup. These can also be substituted with cones.

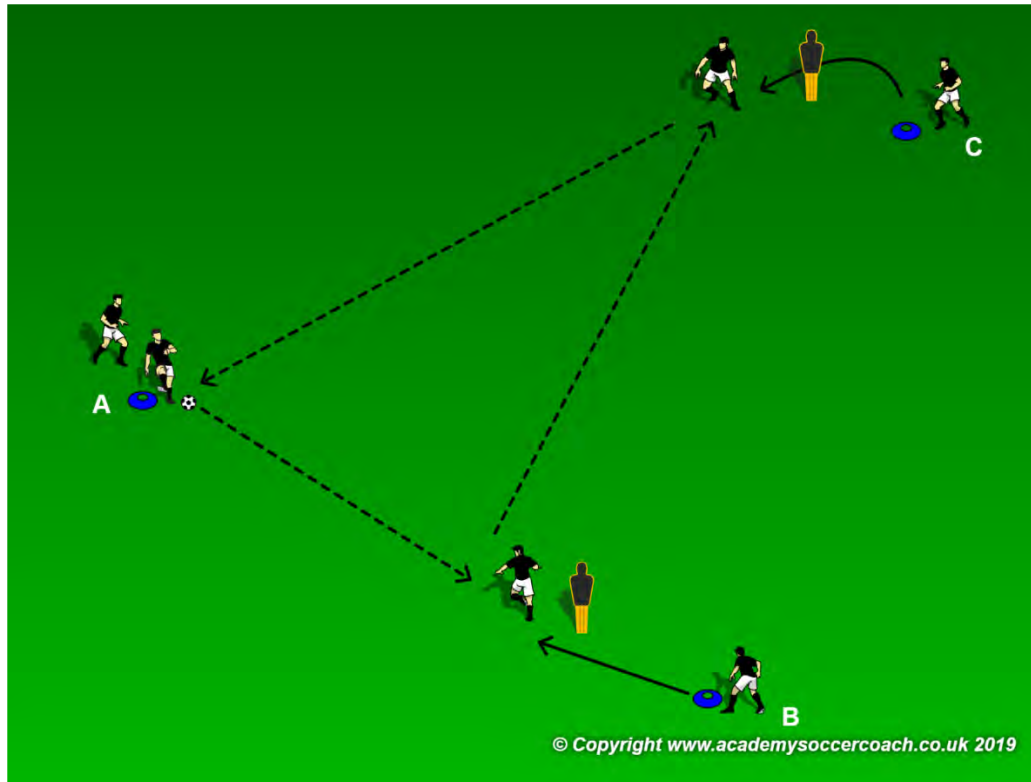
**Session plan:**

1. Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – Triangular passing combinations: 10 minutes.
3. Positional play – 2v2+4 play to the target: 10 minutes.
4. Positional play – 3v3+2 support the forward pass: 10 minutes.
5. Small sided game – 3v3+2 target players on retracted goals with no goalkeeper: 20 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

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

1. Running mechanics using the agility ladder – 10 minutes.
2. Mobility and dynamic stretching – 5 minutes.
3. Reactive sprints – 5 minutes (six repetitions each player).

### **Technical-tactical activation – Triangular passing combinations.**



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

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

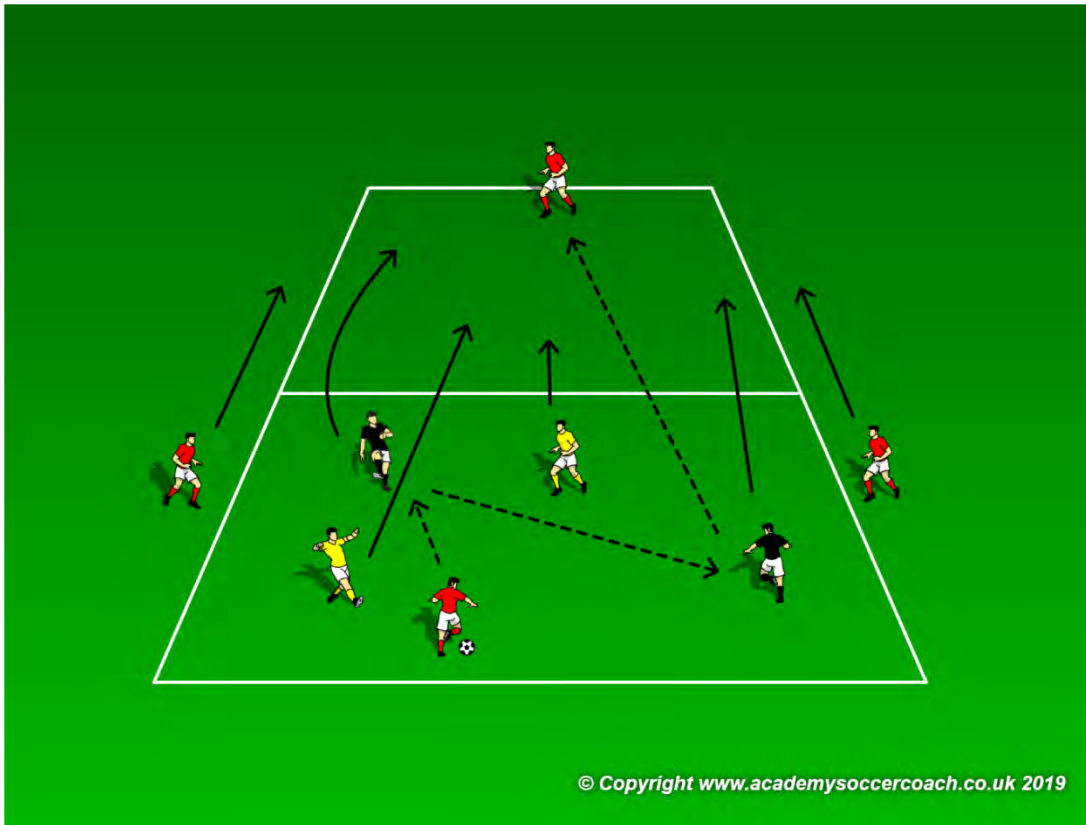
**Players:** Two to three players at each position.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Player B comes short to receive a pass from player A. Player B should receive the ball in front of the mannequin with an open body stance. As soon as player B raises his head and there is eye contact with player C, the latter spins around the mannequin to receive a pass from player B. Player C passes to the player at position A (the new player A). Players move one position forward after passing.

**Progression:** Player A wall-passes with player B prior to passing to player C.

## Positional play – 2v2+4 play to the target.



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

**Area:** 16 yards in length by 8 yards in width divided into equal horizontal zones.

**Players:** Two teams of two players plus four neutrals.

**Workload:** 4 x 2 minutes with 30 seconds rest in between.

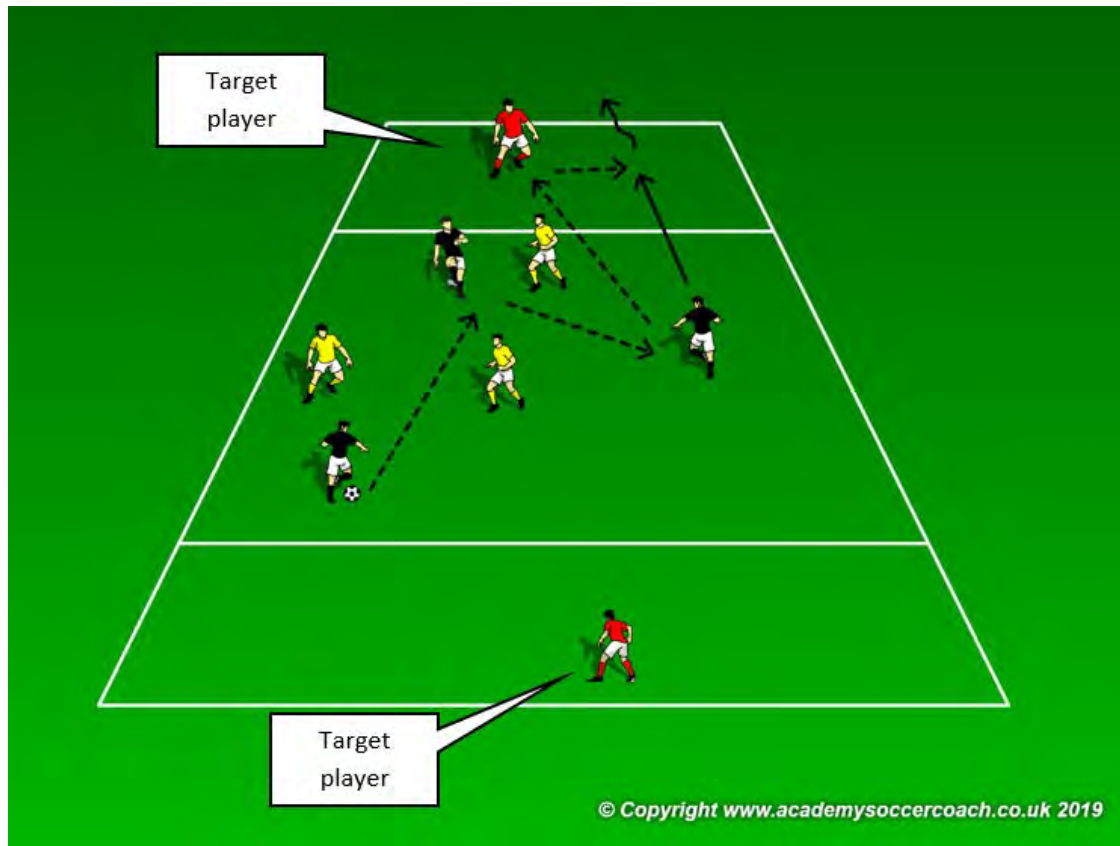
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Play is 2v2+3 in one zone. The team in possession aims to play the ball to the target player (neutral) in the opposite half of the area. Once this is accomplished the same situation is reversed in the opposite half with one neutral player remaining as a target. Teams must make a string of at least three consecutive passes before playing the ball into the opposite half.

### **Progressions:**

1. The neutral players are not allowed to pass the ball directly to the target player in the opposite side.
2. The side players are not neutral, therefore each team has a player on the perimeter.

## Positional play – 3v3+2 support the forward pass.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having staggered angles and 2) looking to play vertically.

**Area:** 35 yards in length by 20 yards in width including two target zones measuring 3 yards in length at each end.

**Players:** Three players in each team and a target player at each end.

**Workload:** 2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Directional game where teams try to score by dribbling over the opposition team's end line after combining with the target player. Teams may use both target players; one to penetrate and the opposite to secure possession of the ball. If the situation is on, the neutral player used to support play may pass directly to the opposite target player.

### **Progressions:**

1. Play 4v4 with no neutral players but with a target player for each team.
2. Encourage mobility where the target player drops and another player takes his position to exploit the created space.



**Small sided game – 3v3+2 target players on retracted goals with no goalkeeper.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) establishing width in attack, 2) looking to play vertically and 3) supporting the vertical pass.

**Area:** 35 yards in length by 20 yards in width including two target zones measuring three yards in length at each end.

**Players:** Three players in each team and a neutral target player at each end.

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

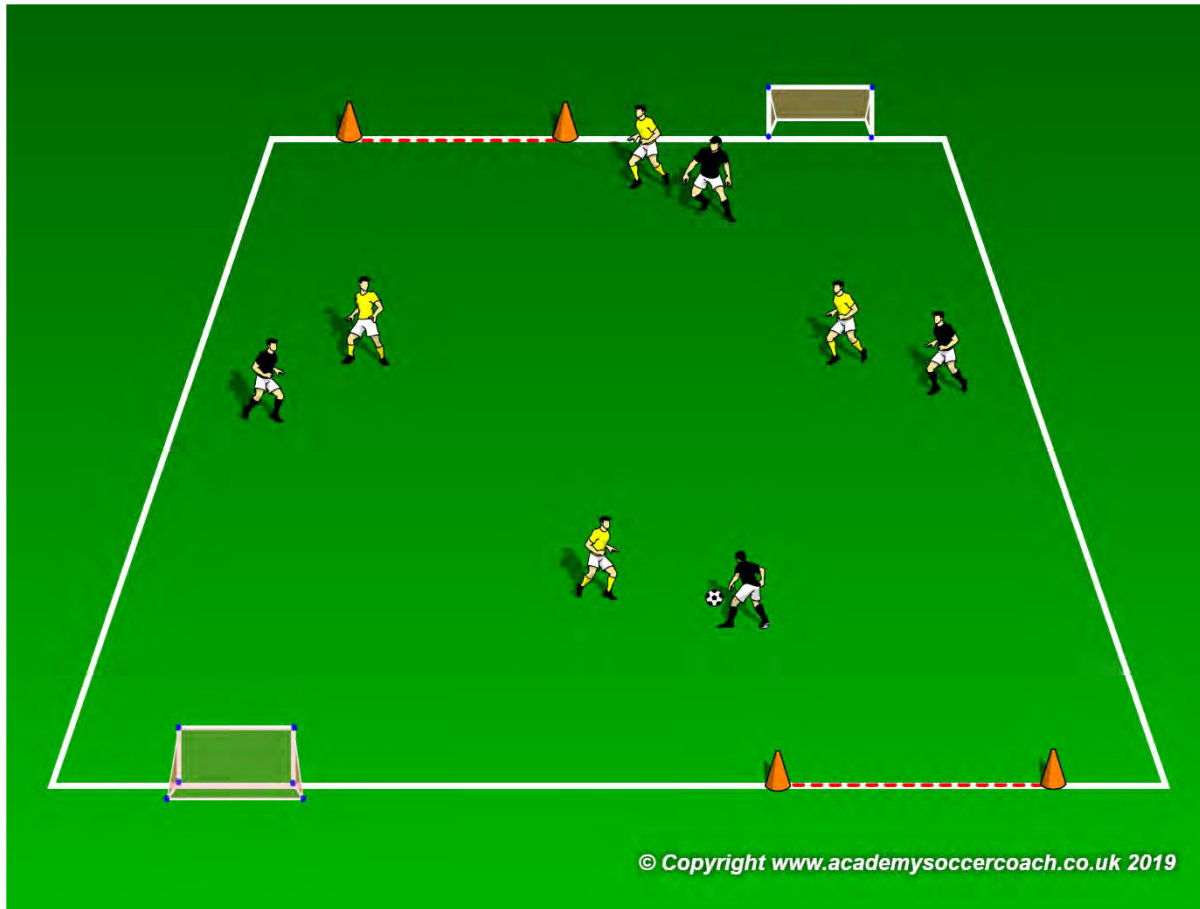
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** As in the previous activity but now the attacking team must combine play with the target player prior to finish with a first time shot on goal. If a goal is score after a three player combination, the goal counts double.

**Progressions:**

1. Play 4v4 with no neutral players but with a target player for each team.
2. Encourage mobility where the target player drops and another player takes his position in order to exploit the space created.

**Small sided game – 4v4 on mini goals and goal lines.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) establishing width in attack, 2) looking to play vertically and 3) supporting the vertical pass.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width with a mini goal and a five meter goal line at both ends.

**Players:** Each team is composed of four players and no goalkeepers.

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

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Each team attacks a goal line five meters in length and a mini goal and defends the opposite two. A goal after combining play with the target player (player giving the team length) counts twice.

**Session number:** 13.

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

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Create and exploit space to build a central attack.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Have height, depth and length.
3. Off-the-ball movement to open up passing lanes.
4. Look to play vertically.
5. Support the forward pass.
6. Stance to receive and play the ball.

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

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

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight.

Markers – to mark pitch dimensions and zones.

Mannequins – two in each setup. These can also be substituted with cones.

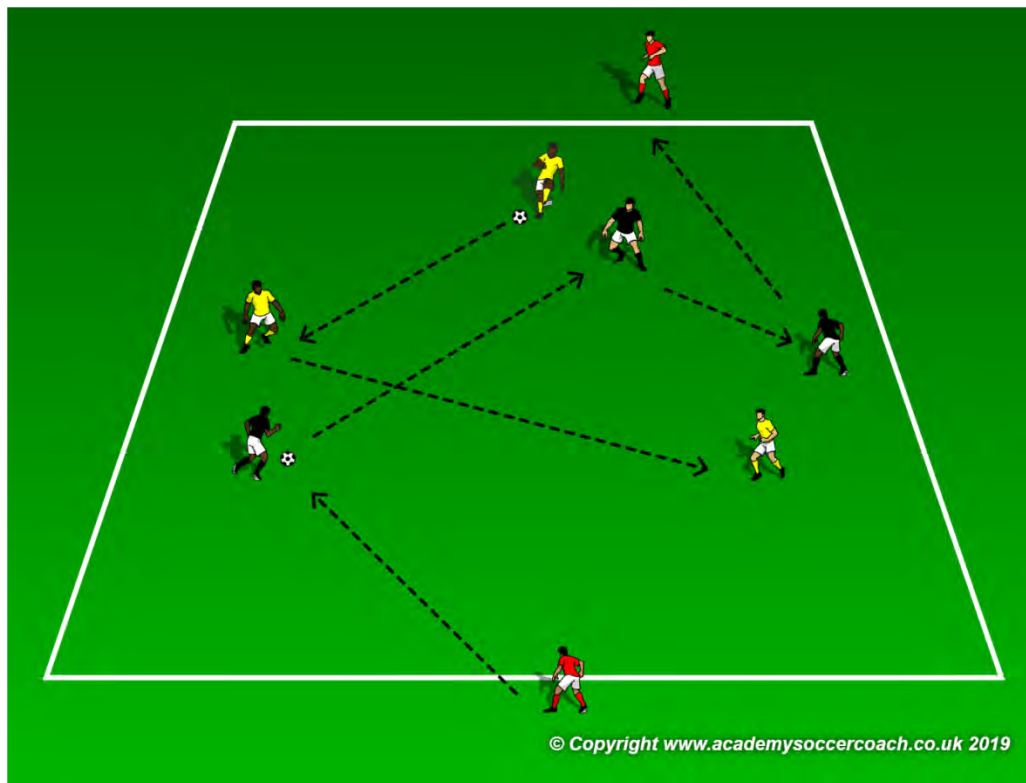
**Session plan:**

1. Movement preparation and coordination: 10 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – Passing angles to play to the target player: 10 minutes.
3. Game 1 – 3v3+2 on four goals on a pitch divided into two horizontal zones: 15 minutes.
4. Game 2 – 3v3+2 on four goals on a pitch divided into four quarters: 15 minutes.
5. Game 3 – 4v4 on four goals: 30 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

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

1. Multi directional movement (5 minutes).
2. Dynamic flexibility and mobility (5 minutes).

### **Technical-tactical activation – Passing angles to play to the target player.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) off-the-ball movement, 2) creating a passing angle and 3) adapting an open body stance.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards width.

**Players:** Three players in each team plus a neutral target player at each end.

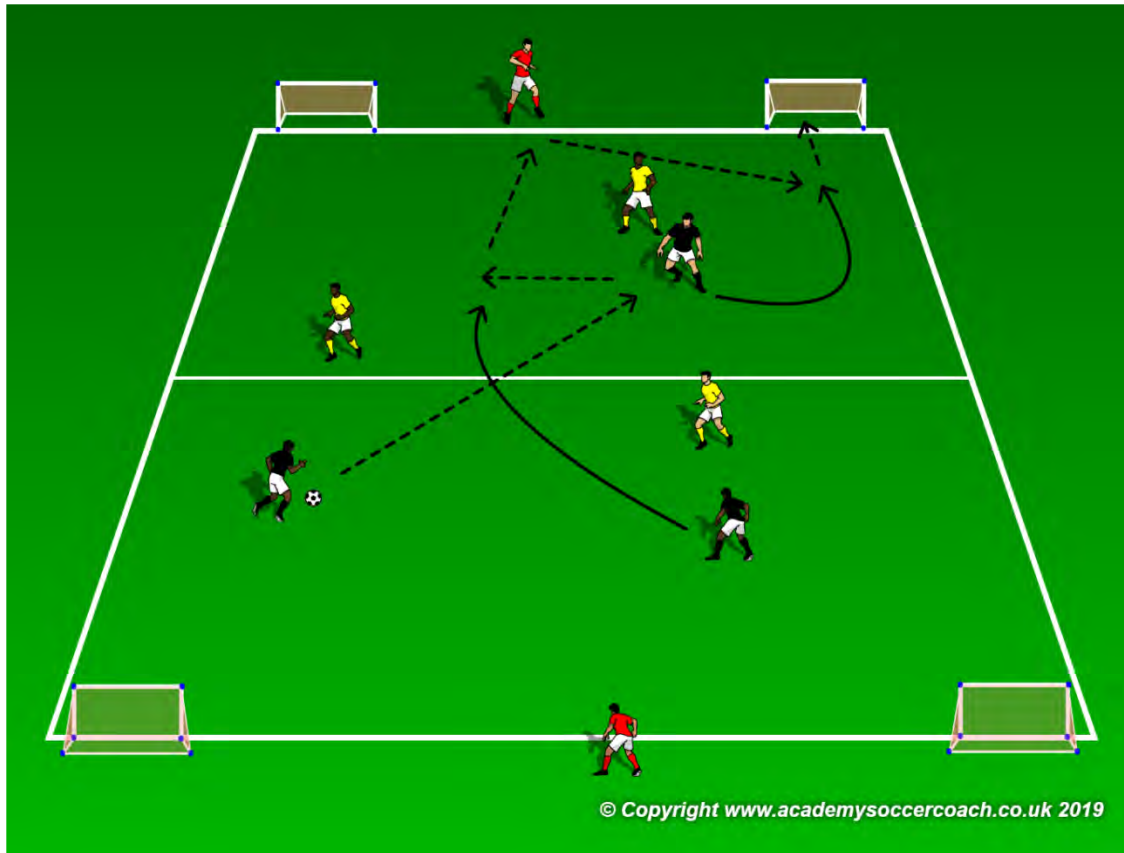
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Players pass the ball to teammates of the same team to play the ball to the opposite target player. Once a target player receives the ball, the same sequence is restarted in the opposite direction. Rotate target players every two minutes.

#### **Progressions:**

1. Players must move to a new angle after passing the ball to a teammate.
2. At least one wall-pass must be included in the sequence.

## Game 1 – 3v3 plus two targets.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having staggered passing angles, 2) looking to play in verticality and 3) support the vertical pass.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width divided into two equal horizontal zones.

**Players:** Three players in each team plus a neutral target player at each end.

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

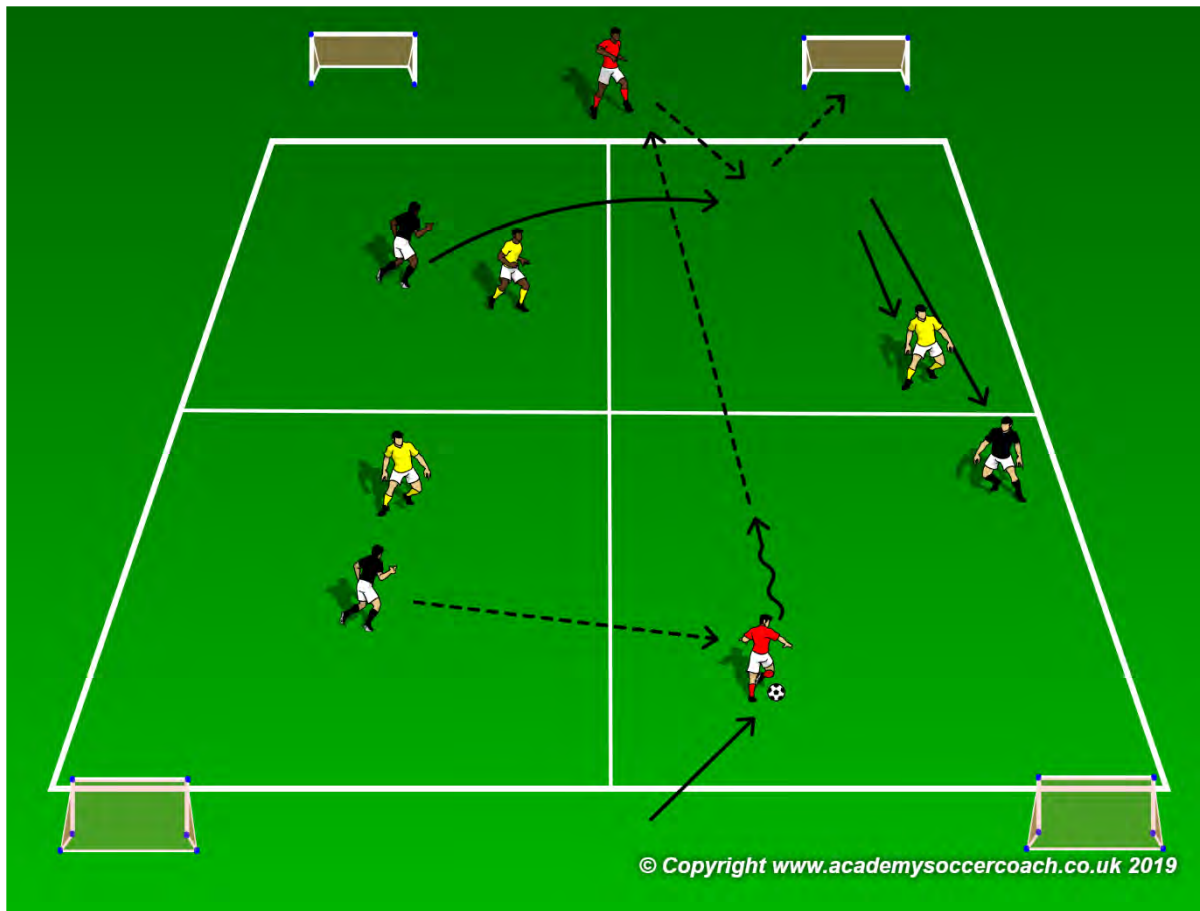
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Each team defends two mini goals on the same end line and attacks the opposite two. We have one constraint which is that there should be at least a player in every horizontal zone. Players may use the target players to play the vertical ball with them as they are the ones who are giving the team height.

### **Variation:**

We can have two groups; one playing this game and another playing with regular goals but with the same constraints. Players play two sets of this game and then the groups switch games.

**Game 2 – 3v3+2 on four goals on a pitch divided into four quarters.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) looking to play in verticality and 2) supporting the vertical pass.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards divided into four equal quadrants with two mini goals positioned two meters behind each end line.

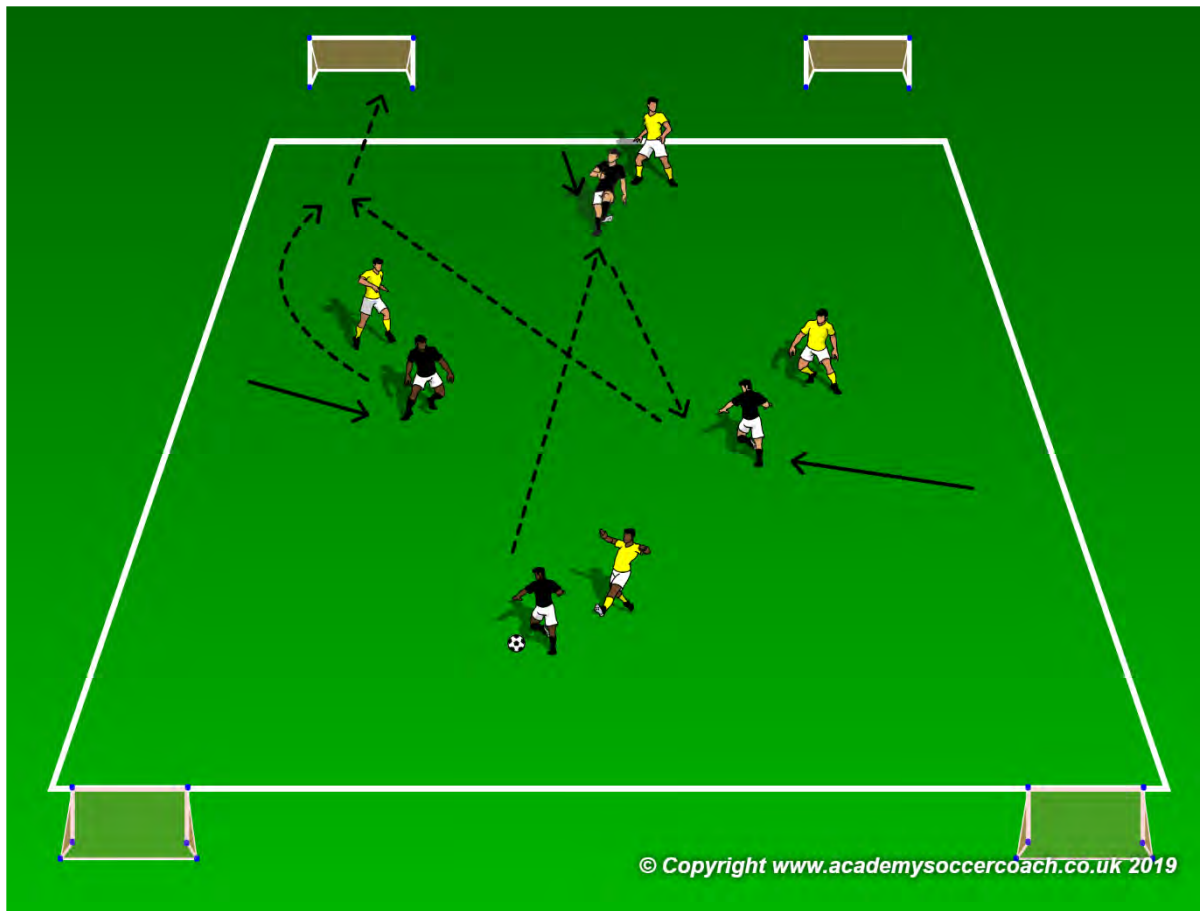
**Players:** Three players each team plus a neutral target player at each end.

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

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Description:** Same game but with a different constraint. Players can move freely between quadrants and may also rotate positions. However, there cannot be more than two players of the same team in the same quadrant. The neutral player can step out to aid in the build-up of an attack but must return quickly to his place once the ball is played (see above diagram).

### Game 3 – 4v4 on four goals.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) height, depth and length and 2) create passing lanes.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width with two mini goals at each side positioned two meters behind each end line.

**Players:** Four players in each team.

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

**Duration:** 30 minutes.

**Description:** Now we play a 4v4 game with no constraints. To work on the creation of having height, depth and width and to also create passing lanes we can reward with two points a goal scored after a three player combination like the one shown in the above diagram.

**Variation:**

We can have two groups; one playing this game and another playing with regular goals but with the same constraints. We play two sets of this game and then the groups switch games.

**Session number:** 14.

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

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Create and exploit space in attack to score.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Stance to receive and play the ball.
2. Staggered angles.
3. Have height, depth and length.
4. Off-the-ball movement to open up passing lanes.
5. Look to play vertically.
6. Support the forward pass.

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

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight.

Markers – to mark pitch dimensions and zones.

Balls – at least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Regular goals – at least two; four better to have two setups of each game.

**Session plan:**

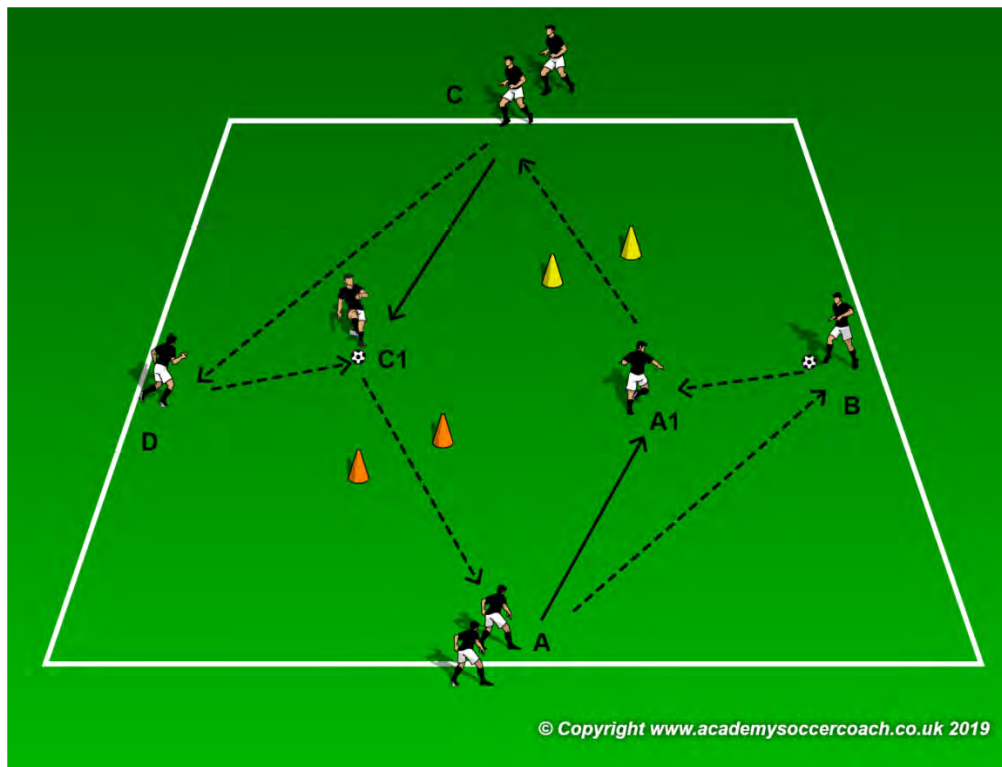
1. Movement preparation and coordination: 10 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – Gate passing combinations 1 and 2: 12 minutes.
3. Speed in attack – 1v1 to score from a through pass: 12 minutes.
4. Game 1 – 4v4+GKs play the through pass: 20 minutes.
5. Game 2 – 4v4+GKs: 20 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.



### Movement preparation and coordination.

1. Ball mastery (5 minutes).
2. Dynamic flexibility and mobility (5 minutes).

### Technical-tactical activation – Gate passing combination 1.



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

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

**Players:** Two or three players positioned at positions A and C and two players positioned at positions B and D respectively.

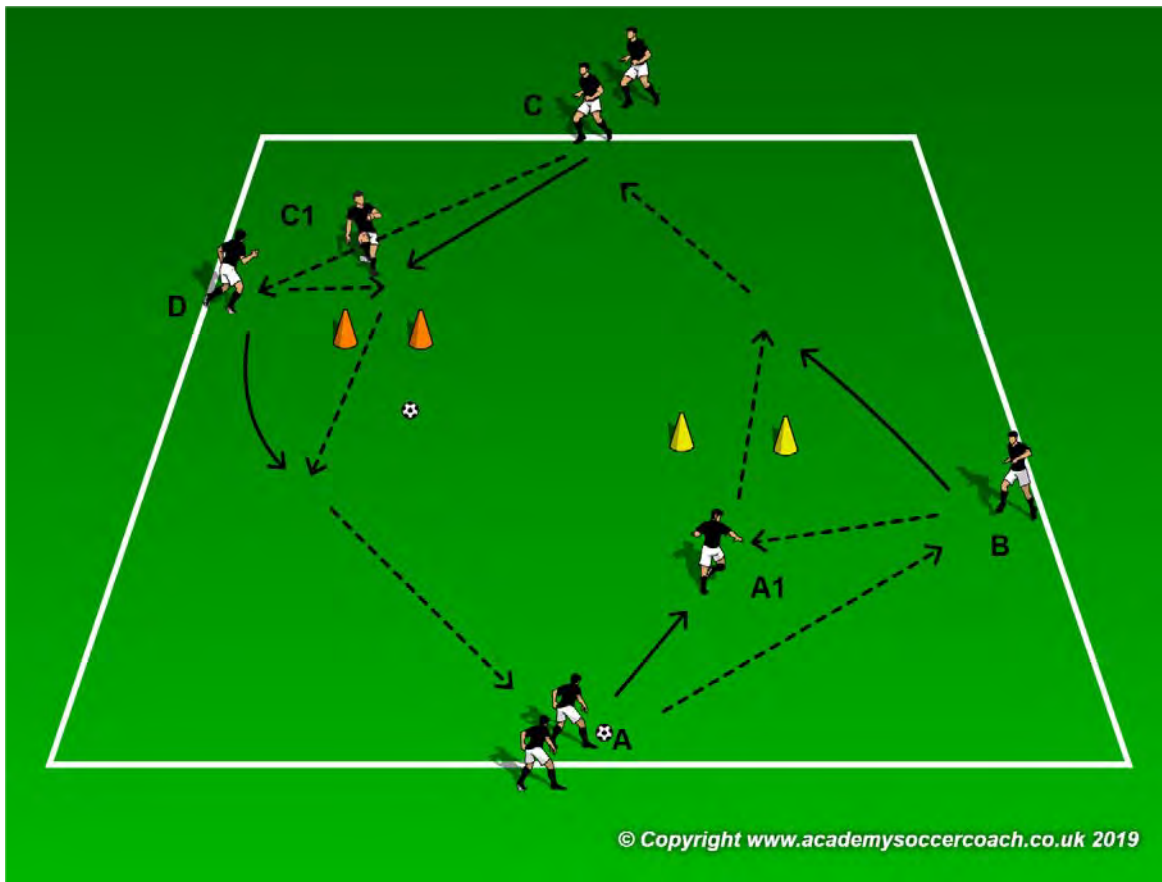
**Duration:** 6 minutes.

**Description:** Player A passes to player B who returns the ball to player A to pass to player C on the opposite side through the gate. After the sequence is over, player A moves to position B while player B moves to position C. The same sequence is repeated on the opposite side with player C combining with player D who returns the ball to player C to player through the gate to

player A. Players move one position forward; player C moves to position D, while player D moves to position A.

**Variation:** Repeat the same exercise in the opposite direction.

### Technical-tactical activation – Gate passing combination 2.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) receiving stance and 2) direction and weight of the pass.

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

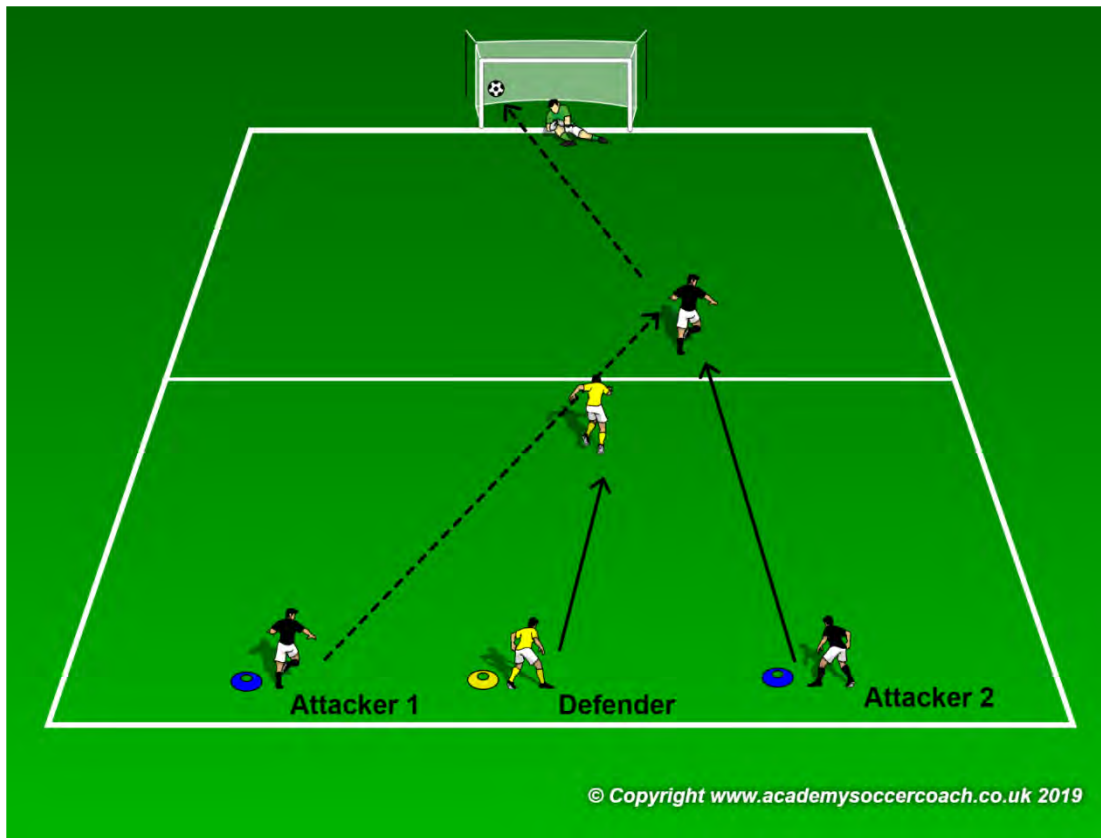
**Players:** Two or three players positioned at positions A and C and two players positioned at positions B and D respectively.

**Duration:** 6 minutes.

**Description:** Player A combines with player B who lays the ball back to A and spins around to receive the return pass through the gate prior to passing the ball to player C on the opposite side. The same situation is repeated on the opposite side with players C and D.

**Variation:** Repeat the same exercise in the opposite direction.

## Speed in attack – 1v1 to score from a through pass.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) adapting a ready stance to sprint and 2) look forward and focus on the ball.

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

**Players:** Three groups of two attackers and one defender.

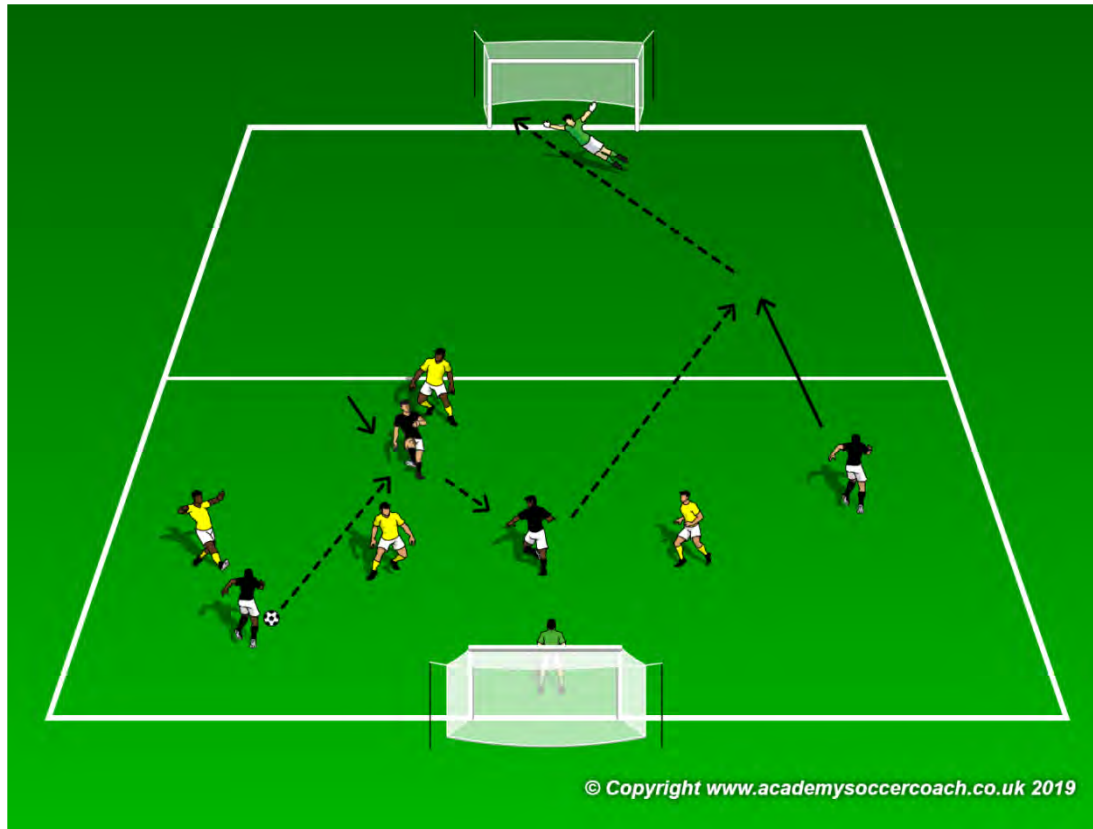
**Workload:** 2 x 6 repetitions – three times as a defender and one time as attacker 2.

**Duration:** 6 minutes.

**Description:** Attacker 1 passes in space to attacker 2 to finish on goal while being contrasted by the defender. Players move one position to their right after each repetition. Goals may only be scored from inside the attacking half, and if a goal is scored and the defender is not in the attacking half, the goal counts double. Keep score between two teams to make it more competitive.

**Progression:** As described above but now we add more pressure on the attackers. Attacker 1 attacks to make the situation a 2v1 but if the shot is off target, the defender scores a point for his team.

## Game 1 – 4v4+GKs play the through pass.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) looking to play forward.

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

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

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** Play is in one half of the pitch. To score, the attacking team must play the ball in the other half for another teammate to finish. When this happens, all outfield players must move into this half of the pitch. If a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, teams reverse roles and the new attacking team aims to attack in the opposite direction in the same way as described before. All restarts take place from the goalkeeper of the team in possession.

**Progression:** To increase the speed of play, the attacking team must finish at goal in less than a pre-established amount of time, otherwise the opposite team restarts play from their goalkeeper. We might need to reduce the duration to 3 minutes as this progression is more intensive.

## Game 2 – 4v4+GKs.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having height, depth and width and 2) creating passing angles.

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

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

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** Normal game but all restarts take place from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. Therefore we work on constructing play from the back with particular emphasis on off-the-ball movement to create passing options.

**Progression:** Play the third set as follows: A goal counts double if scored in less than six passes.

**Session number:** 15.

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

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Create and exploit space in attack to score.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Look to play vertically.
3. Support the forward pass.
4. Insertions from deep positions into the attack.
5. Attitude towards finishing at goal.

**Duration of session:** 77 to 80 minutes.

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers or we may rotate players as goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight and another set of six.

Markers – to mark pitch dimensions.

Cones – four.

Mini goals – four.

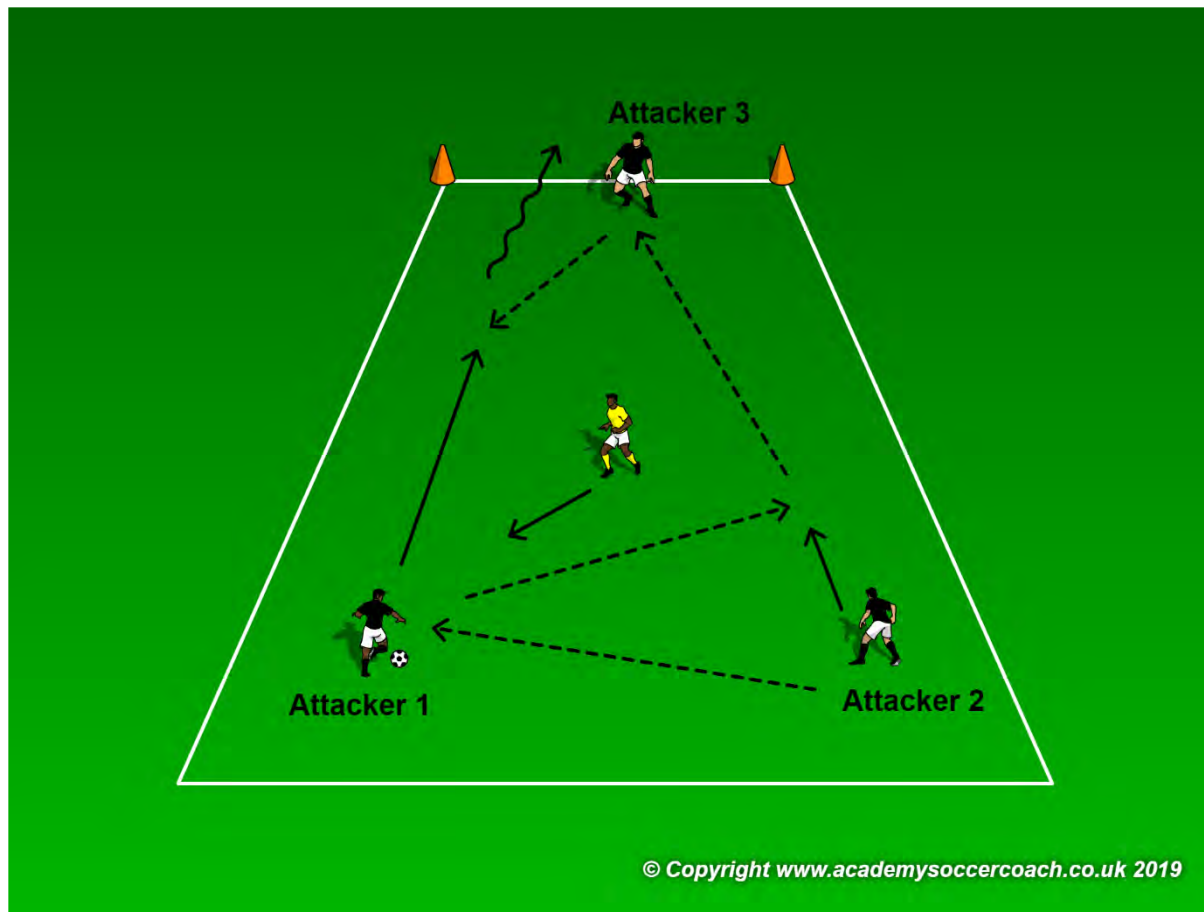
**Session plan:**

1. Movement preparation and coordination: 15 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – Line soccer combination play: 10 minutes.
3. Game 1 – Goals galore! 10 minutes.
4. Shooting practice – 2v2+3 to score: 15 minutes.
5. Game 2 – Game on long and narrow pitch: 22 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

### Movement preparation and coordination.

1. Footwork followed by dynamic flexibility (10 minutes).
2. Maintaining equilibrium (5 minutes).

### Technical-tactical activation – Line soccer combination play.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) playing in verticality and 2) supporting the forward pass.

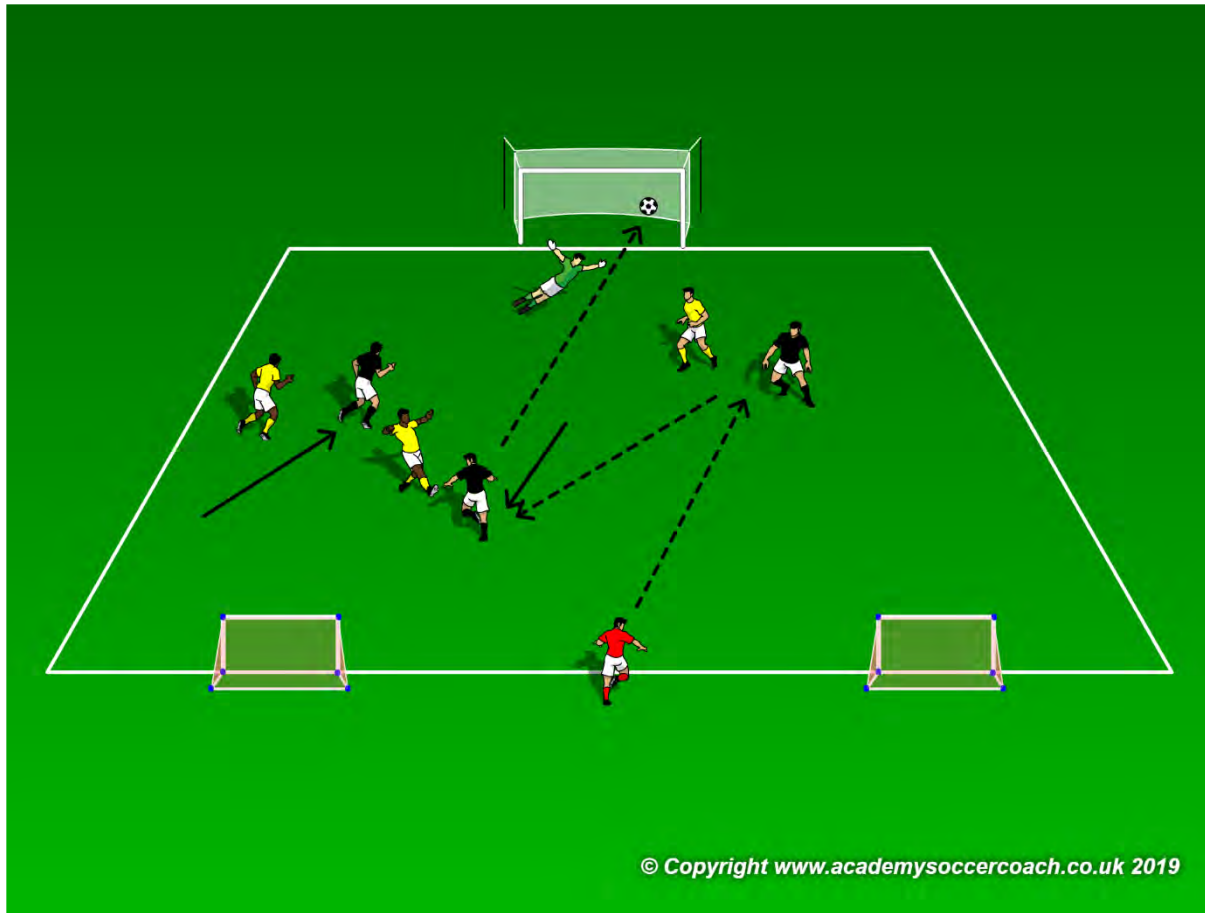
**Area:** 15 yards in length by 8 yards in width.

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

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** Attackers 1 and 2 combine together with the help of attacker 3 to score by stopping the ball over the opposite end line while being contrasted by the defender. Change the defender every minute. Focus on playing the forward pass and on players supporting this pass from deeper positions.

## Game 1 – Goals galore!



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) getting free of marking 2) finishing when the situation is on.

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

**Players:** One goalkeeper, three attackers, three defenders and a neutral player.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between.

**Description:** The team of attackers aim to score in the regular goal while the defending team aim to defend this goal and counter on the opposite two mini goals. The neutral player plays with the team in possession and is also allowed to score in the regular goal if the situation is favourable. Whenever a restart is in favour of the attackers they start from the neutral player. If the restart is in favour of the defenders, the goalkeeper puts the ball into play. Teams change roles, those who were previously attacking now defend and vice versa.



## Shooting practice – 2v2+3 to score.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) getting free of marking 2) attitude to finish at goal with accuracy.

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

**Players:** One goalkeeper, two teams of two players each and three neutrals, one on each of the other three sides of the area apart the goal line.

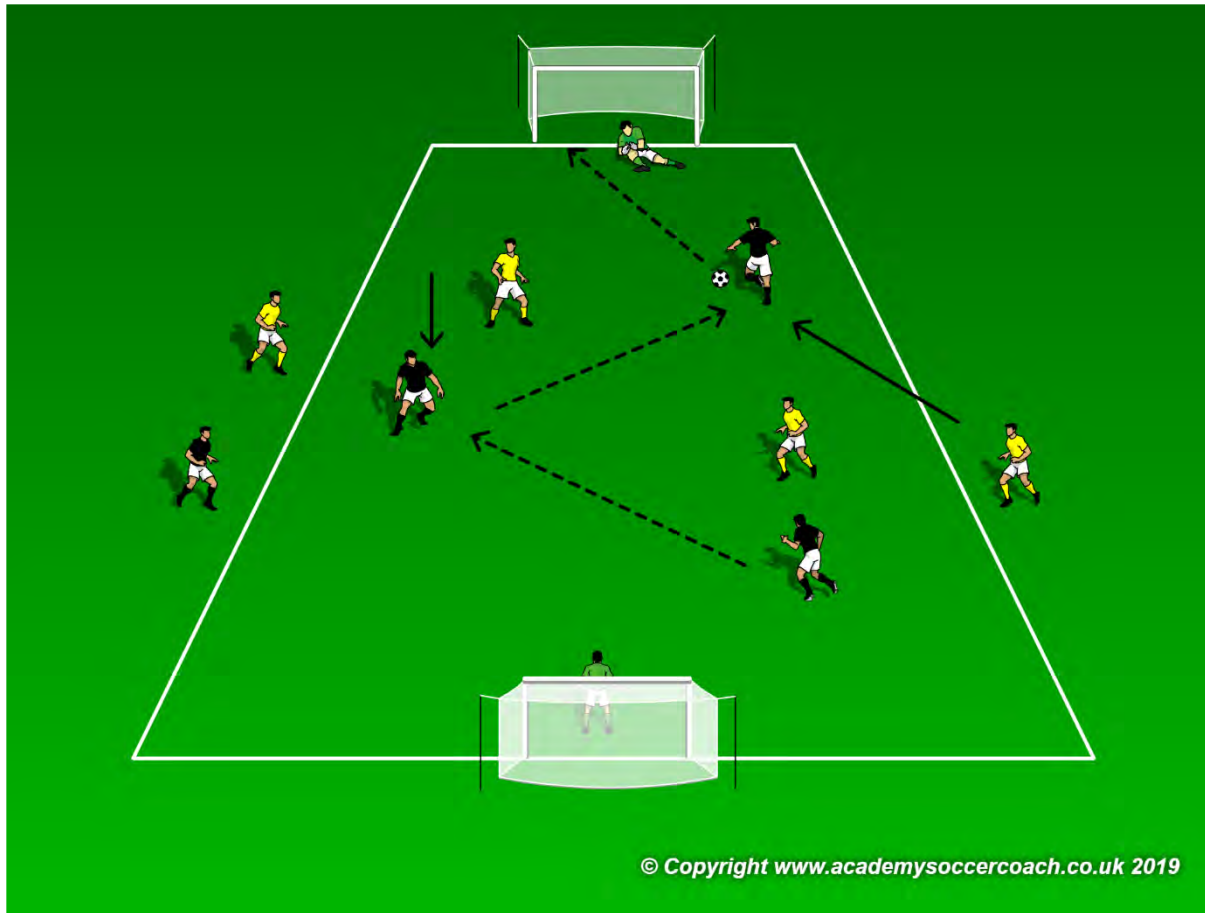
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

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

**Description:** One team attacks the goal while the other defends. The neutrals are allowed to score. If the defending team wins the ball they play it with the highlighted neutral player and switch roles with the opposite team. Now they attack! If a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the game restarts from the highlighted neutral player and teams rotate roles. Rotate neutral players after every round.

**Progression:** To challenge the attackers inside the area to create and exploit space to finish at goal with speed and accuracy, the neutral players are not allowed to score.

## Game 2 – Game on long and narrow pitch.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) playing in verticality 2) support the vertical pass.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 15 yards in width.

**Players:** Both teams are composed of four outfield players and a goalkeeper. Two outfield players play inside the marked area while a player is situated on each flank.

**Duration:** 22 minutes.

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

**Description:** Teams attack a goal and defend the opposite. Players from the inside may rotate positions with players on the flank. The flank players may finish at goal by moving inside to receive as shown in the above diagram.

**Progression:** To work on sharp finishing, all shots must be taken first time.

**Session number:** 16.

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

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Create and exploit scoring opportunities.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Staggered angles.
2. Rotation to create and exploit space.
3. Quick circulation of the ball.
4. Attitude towards finishing.
5. Apply immediate pressure on the ball upon losing possession.

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

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers or we may rotate players as goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight.

Markers – to mark areas.

Cones – eight.

Regular goals – two.

**Session plan:**

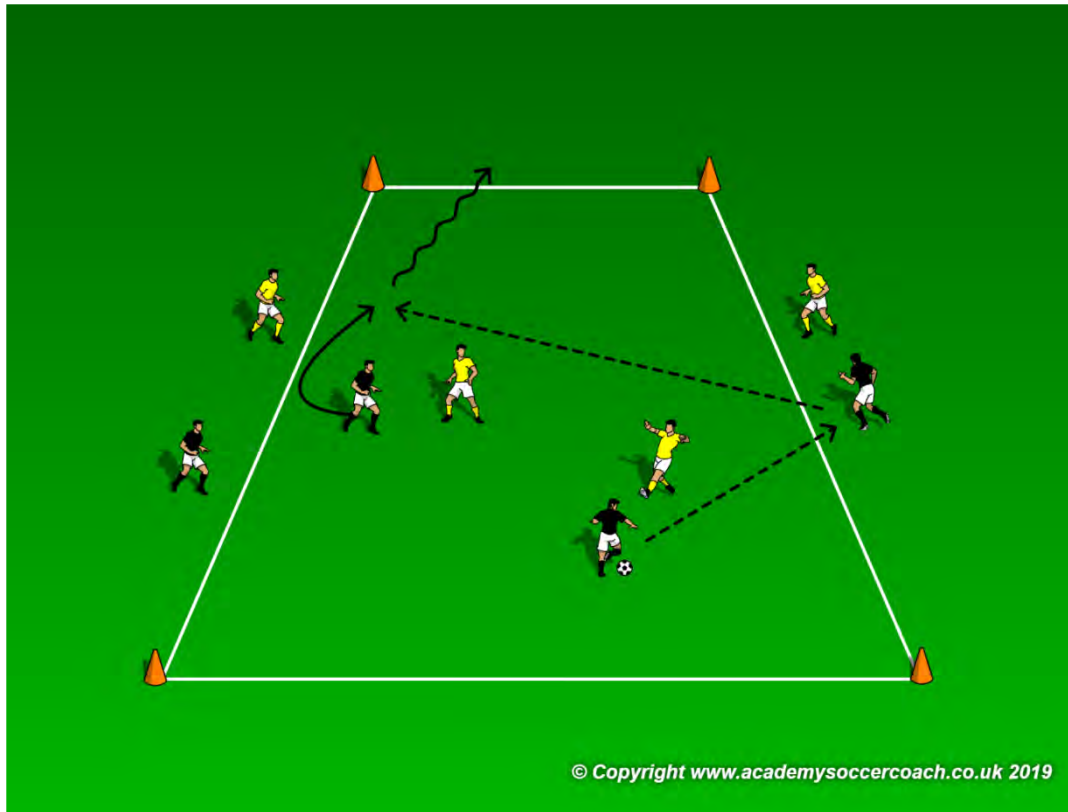
1. Movement preparation and coordination: 10 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – 2v2+2 line soccer: 10 minutes.
3. Game 1 – 4v4+GKs on a short and wide pitch: 22 minutes.
4. Shooting practice – 2v2+2 rapid shooting: 20 minutes.
5. Game 2 – 4v4+GKs regular game: 20 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

**N.B.** If we do not have four regular goals and/or goalkeepers, for the games and practices we can have one group of eight players playing the four goal game while the other plays the game shown in this session plan. After two series the groups rotate.

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

1. Running coordination (2 minutes).
2. Mobility exercises (3 minutes).
3. Skipping and proprioception (5 minutes).

### **Technical-tactical activation – 2v2+2 Line soccer.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) attitude to play forward.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 12 yards in width.

**Players:** Two teams of four players where each team has a player on each flank and two inside the area.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 2 minutes – interspersed with one minute rest between series.

**Description:** Each team attacks one end and defends the opposite. Introduce rotations. Inside players may rotate with flank players with the aim of exploiting space.

## Game 1 – 4v4+GKs on a short and wide pitch.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) positioning and 2) receiving using an open body stance.

**Area:** 15 yards in length by 25 yards in width.

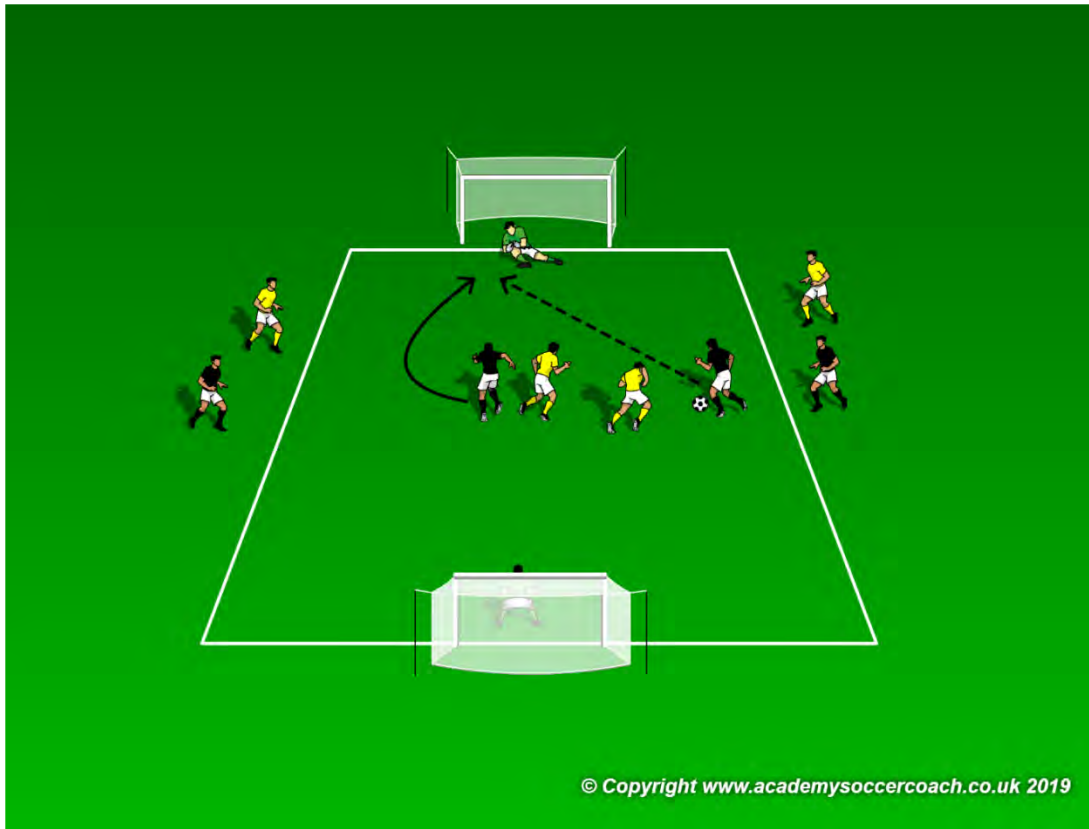
**Players:** Two teams composed of four outfield players plus a goalkeeper.

**Duration:** 22 minutes.

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

**Description:** Each team attacks one goal and defends the opposite. No corner kicks or throw-ins. Game restarts from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. It is recommended to have a large supply of balls to keep the flow of the session high. Ask questions that will elicit the players to identify the need to create angles and have width in attack. Examples would be *“How can having angles help us get more shots on goal?”* or *“How having width will help us create central space to finish at goal?”*

## Shooting practice – 2v2+2 rapid shooting.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) moving without the ball to create space and options.

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

**Players:** Two teams of four players plus goalkeepers. Each team has a goalkeeper in goal, two players in the central zone and a player on each flank.

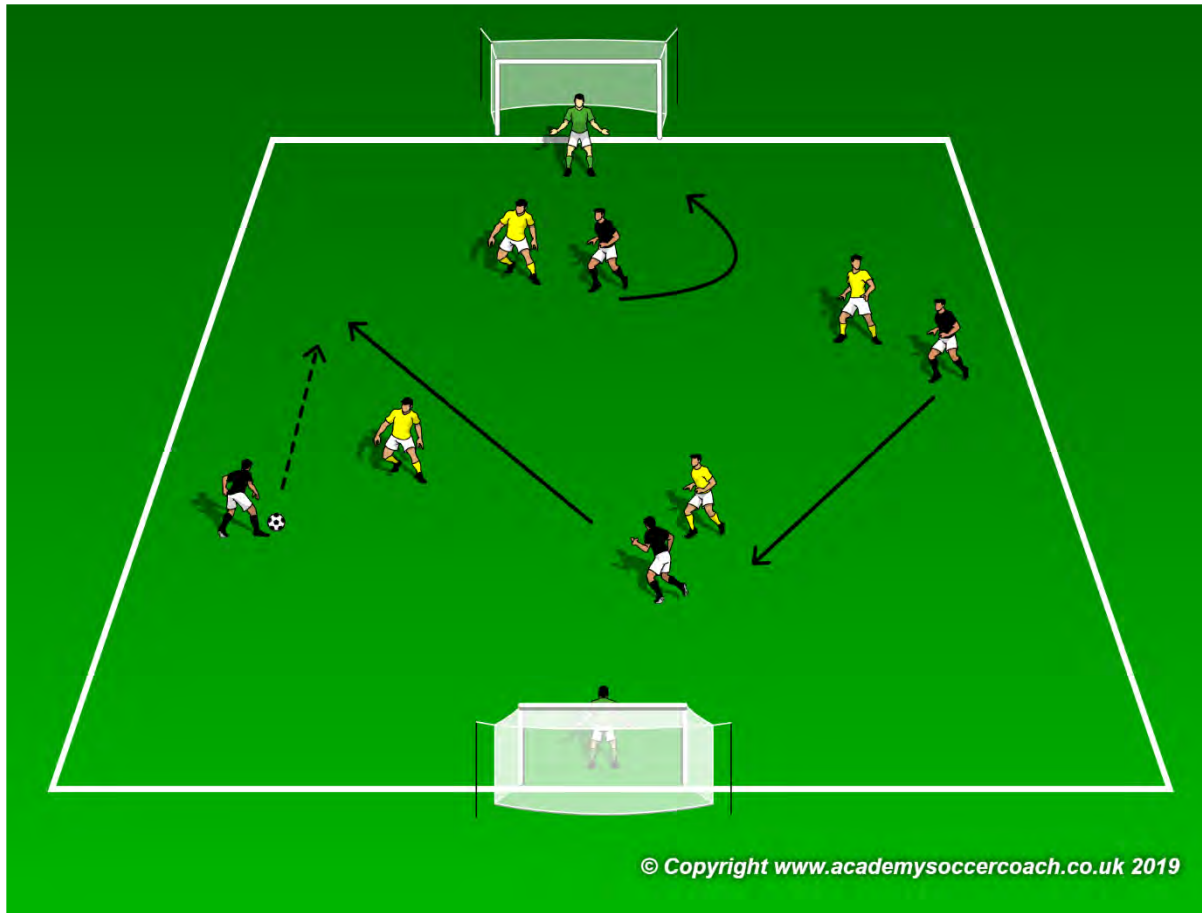
**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Workload:** 6 x 3 minutes – interspersed with one minute rest between series.

**Description:** Each team attacks one goal and defends the opposite. No corner kicks or throw-ins. Game restarts from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. It is recommended to have a large supply of balls to keep the flow of the session high. At first start with the flank players remaining on the perimeter where they may not be tackled by the opponent's flank player.

**Progression:** Introduce rotation where an inside player may move towards the flank while the flank player cuts inside.

## Game 2 – 4v4+GKs regular game.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) having a target player to provide height, 2) creating passing angles and 3) bearing and attitude to play forward.

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

**Players:** Both teams composed of four outfield players plus a goalkeeper.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

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

**Description:** Each team attacks one goal and defends the opposite. No corner kicks or throw-ins. Game restarts from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. This enables the players to have more opportunities to build a constructive attack from a central position. Ask the players questions on ideas how they can create the space needed to play vertically. An example would be to ask the players to show off-the-ball movements which might help them achieve this aim and support the attacker with the ball.

**Session number:** 17.

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

**Team task:** Prevent scoring.

**Aim:** Prevent opponents from scoring, win the ball and initiate the counter.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Closest (first) defender applies pressure on the attacker with the ball.
2. Angles of coverage.
3. Overload ball area.
4. Mark opponent ball-side.
5. Defender in line between the attacker with the ball and the goal.

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

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers or we may rotate players as goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight.

Markers – to mark areas.

Cones – eight.

Regular goals – two.

**Session plan:**

1. Movement preparation and coordination: 10 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – 2v2 to targets: 10 minutes.
3. Defending practice – 2v2+GKs on a small pitch: 22 minutes.
4. Defending practice – 4v3+1 plus GKs: 20 minutes.
5. Game – 4v4+GKs on three horizontal zones: 20 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

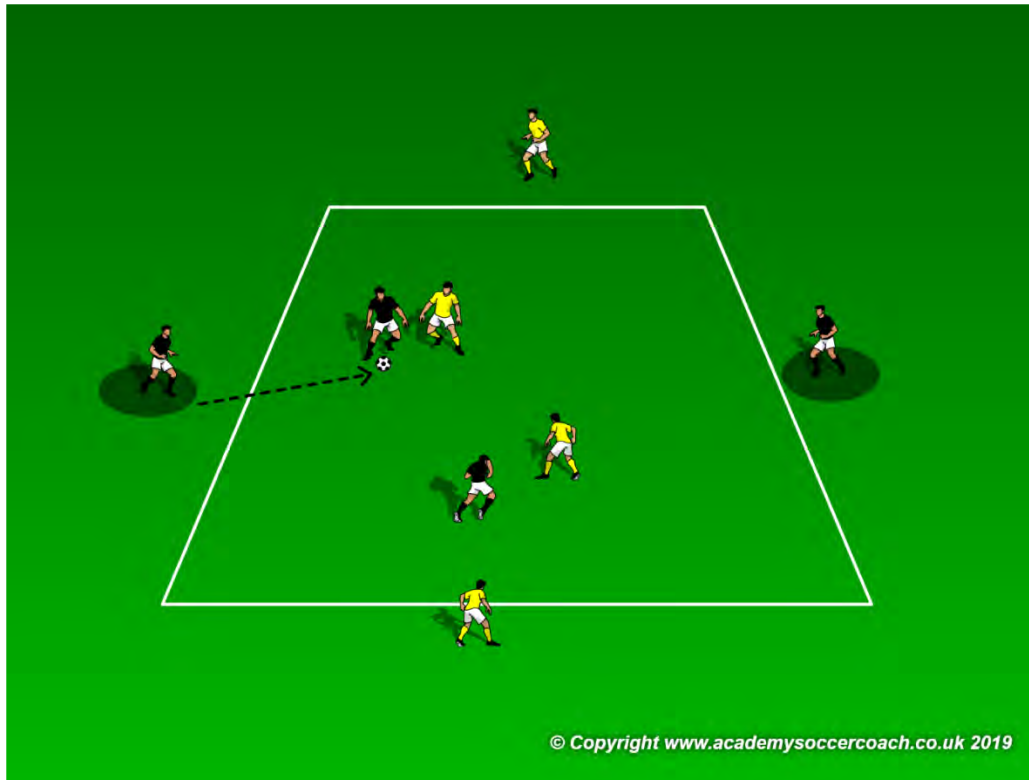
**N.B.** If we do not have four regular goals and/or goalkeepers, for the games and practices we can have one group of eight players playing the four goal game while the other plays the game shown in this session plan. After two series the groups rotate.



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

1. Ball mastery (10 minutes).
2. Dynamic flexibility and mobility (5 minutes).
3. Reactive sprints on 10 meters (5 minutes).

### **Technical-tactical activation – 2v2 to targets.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) applying pressure on the ball and 2) closing the passing lane to the target player.

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

**Players:** Two teams of four players of which two are inside the area and two players are situated on opposite ends as targets (highlighted in the diagram).

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 4 x 2 minutes – interspersed with one minute rest between series.

**Description:** Teams aim to play the ball to a target player. If they succeed, they score a point, retain possession of the ball and aim to play to the opposite target player to score another point.

## Defending practice – 2v2+GKs on a small pitch.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) first defender applying pressure on the ball, 2) cover provided by the second defender.

**Area:** 25 yards in length by 15 yards in width.

**Players:** Groups of attackers and defenders plus two goalkeepers, one in each goal.

**Duration:** 15 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 6 minutes – recovery is included between repetitions and a three minute rest is taken between series.

**Description:** Attacker 1 may choose to either pass to attacker 2 or start the action by dribbling forward himself. The defenders aim to prevent the attackers from scoring, win the ball and counter in the opposite goal.

**Progression:** If the defenders do not win the ball and conclude at goal within ten seconds it counts as a goal for the attackers. The idea behind this time constraint is to instil a positive mental attitude in the defenders to win the ball. Furthermore, if we allow the opponents the time to manoeuvre the ball in front of our goal the chance of conceding a goal increases.



### Game – 4v4+GKs on three horizontal zones.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) first defender applying pressure on the ball, 2) marking the opponent ball-side and tight when close to goal and 3) first defender staying in the same line between the attacker with the ball and the goal.

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

**Players:** Both team are composed of four outfield players and a goalkeeper.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

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

**Description:** Normal game, however if a goal is scored from inside the attacking third of the pitch it counts as double. This condition helps making the teams more aggressive towards aiming to win the ball higher up the pitch. Furthermore, if the opponents manage to enter the attacking third the defenders learn to defend with composure under pressure.

**Session number:** 18.

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

**Team task:** Prevent scoring.

**Aim:** Prevent opponents from scoring, win the ball and initiate the counter.

**Technical-tactical outcomes:**

1. Closest (first) defender applies pressure on the attacker with the ball.
2. Angles of coverage
3. Distance between players.
4. Overload ball area.
5. Mark opponent ball-side.
6. Defender in line between the attacker with the ball and the goal.

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

**Number of players:** 16 outfield players and 2 goalkeepers or we may rotate players as goalkeepers.

**Equipment:**

Bibs – one set of eight plus another colour for the neutral players.

Markers – to mark areas.

Regular goals – two.

Mini goals – four (two setups).

**Session plan:**

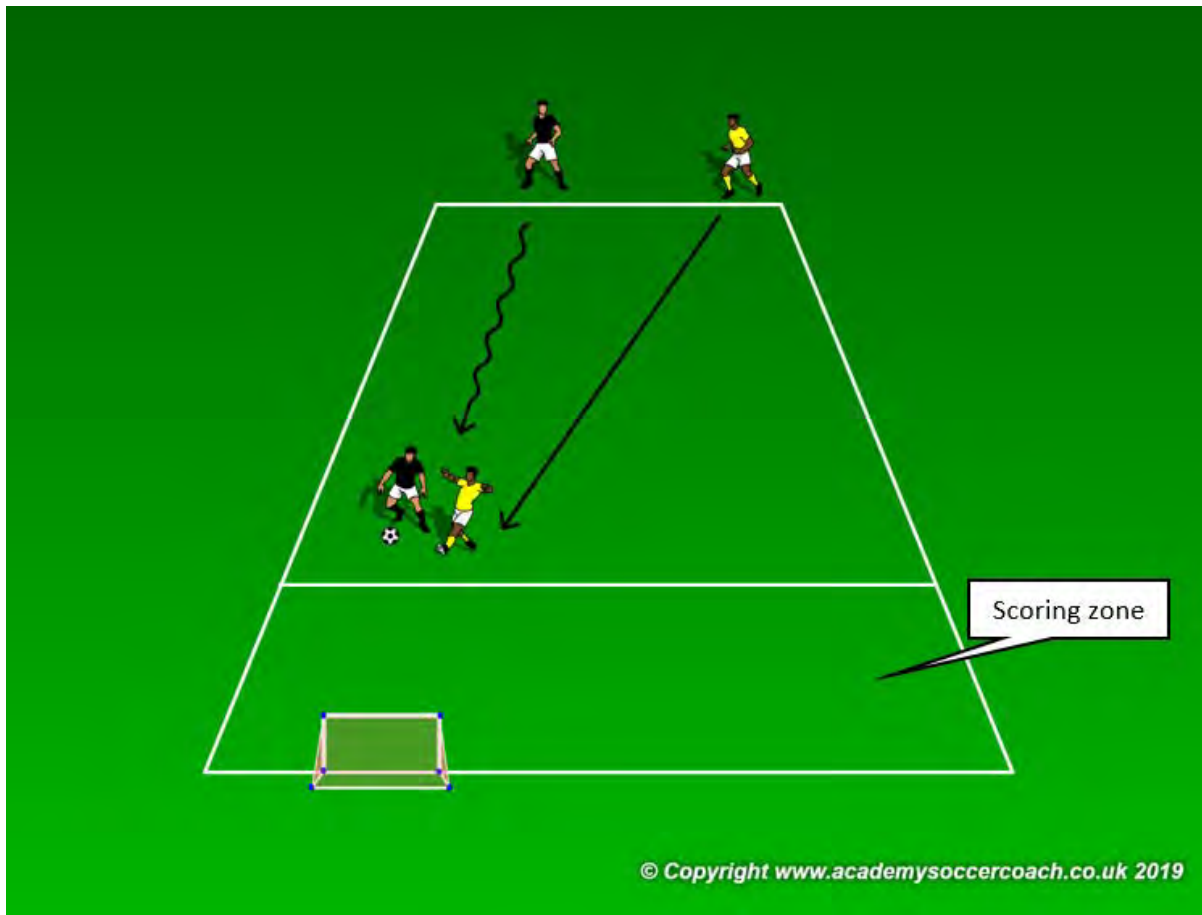
1. Movement preparation and agility: 18 minutes.
2. Technical-tactical activation – 1v1 recovery defending: 10 minutes.
3. Game 1 – Defend outnumbered and counter in a numerical advantage: 20 minutes.
4. Practice – 1v1 with the attacker receiving with his back to the goal: 10 minutes.
5. Game 2 – Defend outnumbered, win the ball and counter rapidly: 26 minutes.
6. Conclusion and recapitulation: 5 minutes.

**N.B.** If we do not have four regular goals and/or goalkeepers, for the games and practices we can have one group of eight players playing the four goal game while the other plays the game shown in this session plan. After two series the groups rotate.

**Movement preparation and agility.**

1. Multi-lateral footwork (8 minutes).
2. Dynamic flexibility (5 minutes).
3. Tag game (5 minutes).

## Technical-tactical activation – 1v1 recovery defending.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) the ball and nothing else 2) forcing the attacker towards the side line and away from goal.

**Area:** 15 yards in length by 10 yards in width with a scoring zone 3 meters from the end line.

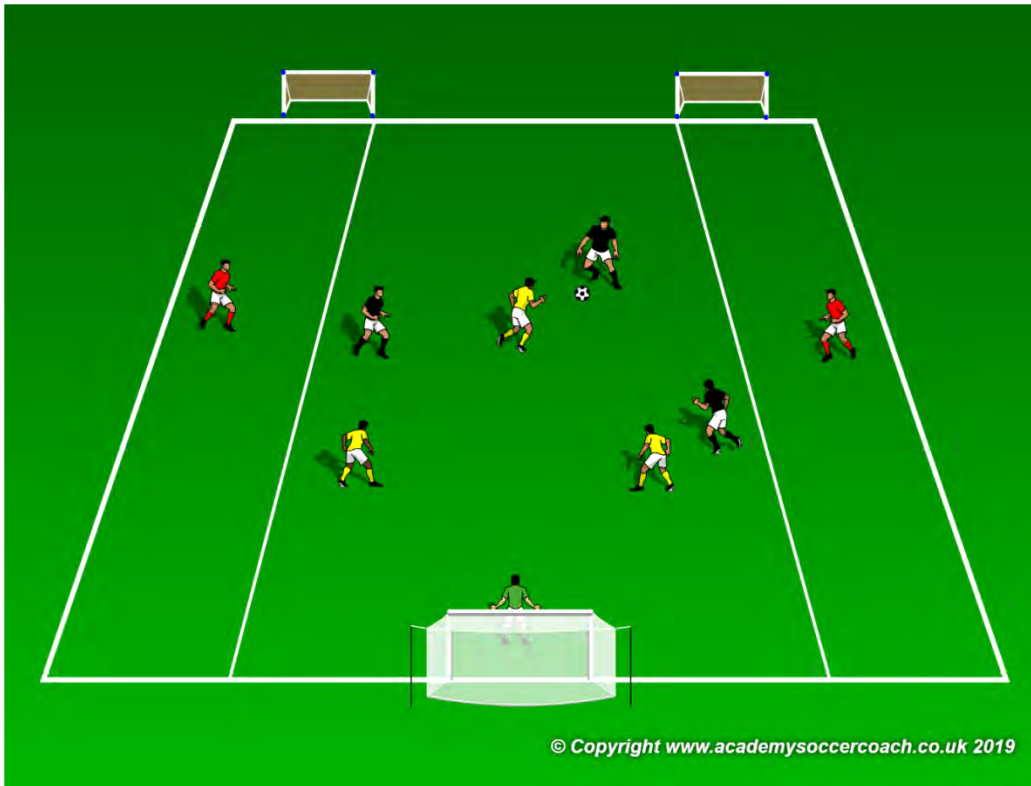
**Players:** Two teams one composed of defenders and the other of attackers.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 sets of 6 reps.

**Description:** Attacker starts dribbling forward at his discretion to score from inside the scoring zone. Defender must react quickly and defend accordingly. Players play one set as defenders and the next as attackers.

## Game 1 – Defend outnumbered and counter in a numerical advantage.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) first defender applying pressure on the ball, 2) marking opponent ball-side and tight when close to goal and 3) first defender staying in the same line between the attacker with the ball and the goal.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width with a flank zone on each side measuring three meters in width.

**Players:** The defending team is composed of three players and a goalkeeper, while the attacking team is composed of three players. Two neutral players are situated in the flank zones.

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

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

**Description:** The team with three attackers aim to score in the regular goal defended by the defenders and goalkeeper. The neutral players play with the team in possession and if the defenders win the ball, they aid in the construction of a counter-attack. The neutral players are allowed to score when the attacking team is in possession of the ball. The defending team aims to win the ball and score in the mini goals positioned on the opposite end line.



**Practice – 1v1 with the attacker receiving with his back to the goal.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) being able to see both the ball and the direct opponent, 2) not allowing the attacker to turn and face the goal.

**Area:** 20 yards in length by 10 yards in width.

**Players:** A goalkeeper in goal and a group of defenders and another of attackers. Have two setups playing simultaneously so to ensure sufficient repetition and session intensity.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 4 minutes – interspersed with two minutes rest between series.

**Description:** The attacker on the outside passes to the attacker inside the area. The defending player aims to prevent the attacker from turning and face the goal while trying to win the ball and counter on the mini goal. Players change roles after every repetition.

## Game 2 – Defend outnumbered, win the ball and counter rapidly.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) maintaining the appropriate distances and angles of coverage, 2) timing to apply pressure on the ball.

**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width.

**Players:** The defending team has a goalkeeper in goal and four outfield players while the attacking team have four outfield players.

**Duration:** 26 minutes.

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

**Description:** The attacking team aims to score in the regular goal while being contrasted for space and time by the defending team. If the defending team wins the ball they aim to play it to the target player (shaded player) and follow play. The target player must lay the ball off to the other players to finish on the mini goals. Whenever a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the attacking team restarts play from the centre line by attacking the defending team's goal. Play this game for two sets, then the last two sets as a free game.

**Session number:** 19.

**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. Quality of passes.
3. Direction oriented first touch.
4. Diamond shape.
5. Forward movement to provide momentum to the attack.

**Duration of session:** 84 to 90 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:**

Introduction and description of aim and outcomes: 5 minutes.

Activation – Move to receive – passing: 10 minutes.

Game 1 – 4v4 with safe zones: 12 minutes.

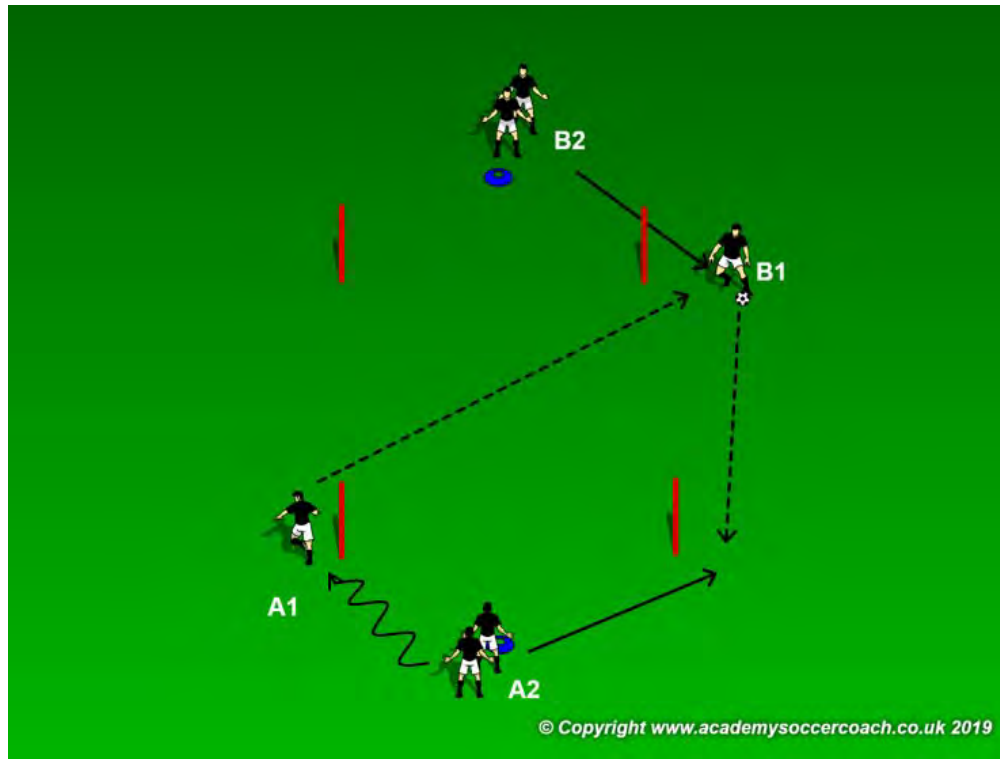
Passing practice – Support the forward pass: 15 minutes.

Game 2 – 4v4+4 on four goals on a divided pitch: 15 minutes.

Game 3 – 4v4+4 on four goals: 24 minutes.

Stretching and recapitulation – 5 minutes.

**Activation: Move to receive – passing.**



**Remind players to focus on:** passing the ball on the ground with the correct weight and accuracy.

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

**Players:** Six players, starting with three on each side opposite each other.

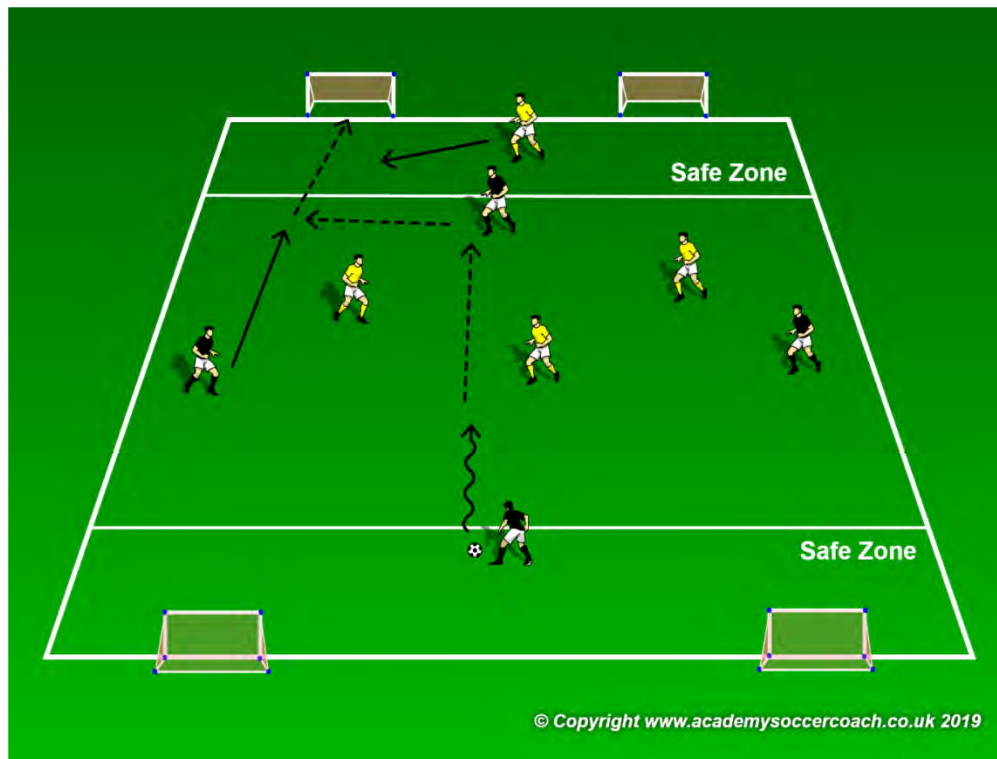
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Workload:** 2 x 4 minutes with two minutes mobility and dynamic stretching exercises in between.

**Description:** The exercise starts by having the ball carrier (A1) dribble to a pole and then pass to the player from the opposite line (B1) who has moved to receive the ball to the outside of one of the two poles. Immediately a player from the opposite line (A2) moves to receive the ball at either outside of the two poles. This sequence is continued. After passing, players move to the end of the opposite line.

**Progression:** Increase the length of the area from 12 yards to 15 yards. The player passing from one side must move to provide support and act as the wall player in a wall pass played by the receiver.

### Game 1: 4v4 with safe zones.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles and 2) having width, depth and length in attack.

**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width. Two safe zones are marked 5 yards from the end of each end line.

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

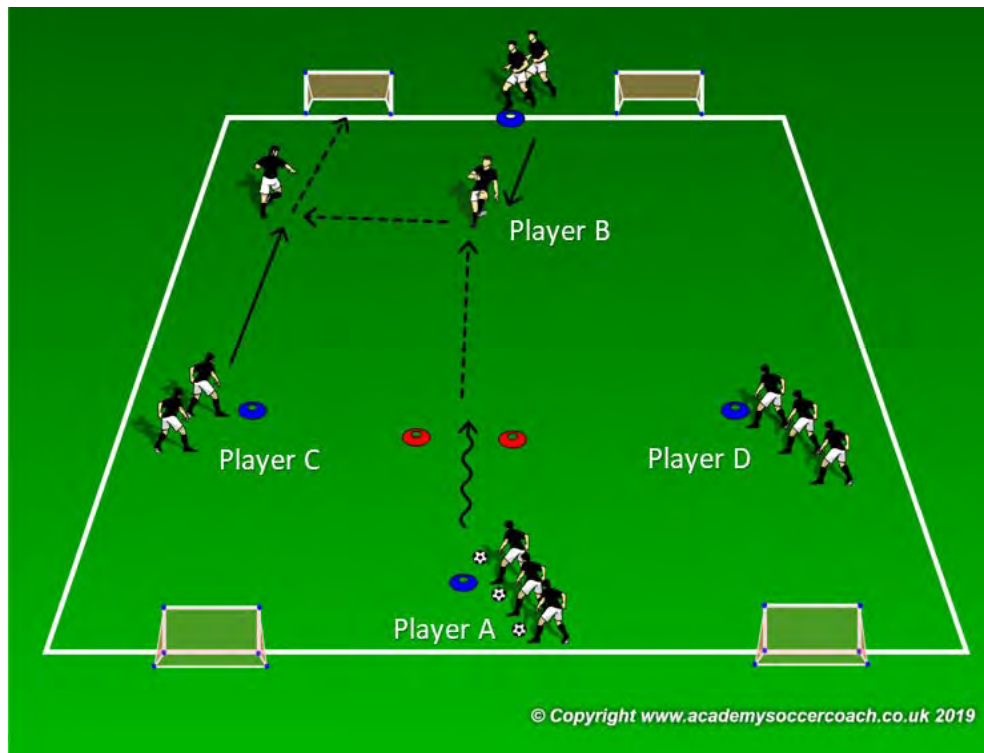
**Duration:** 10 minutes.

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

**Description:** Teams attack two mini goals at one end and defend the opposite two. Inside the safe zone, a designated player cannot be tackled. When not in possession of the ball, this player must remain inside the safe zone, while the safe zone player of the team in possession can move out of this area to make the situation 4v3 in favour of the attacking team. In the attacking phase the ball may be passed back to a player in order to secure possession of the ball.

**Progression:** Attacking player in the safe zone may be tackled. However the 4v3 situation in favour of the team in possession is still retained.

## Passing practice: Support the forward pass.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) off-the-ball movement to give the attack forward momentum, 2) applying to correct weight to the pass and 3) stance to be able to play the ball efficiently.

**Area:** Same setup and dimensions of area are kept from game 1.

**Players:** Four groups of players are set in a diamond formation.

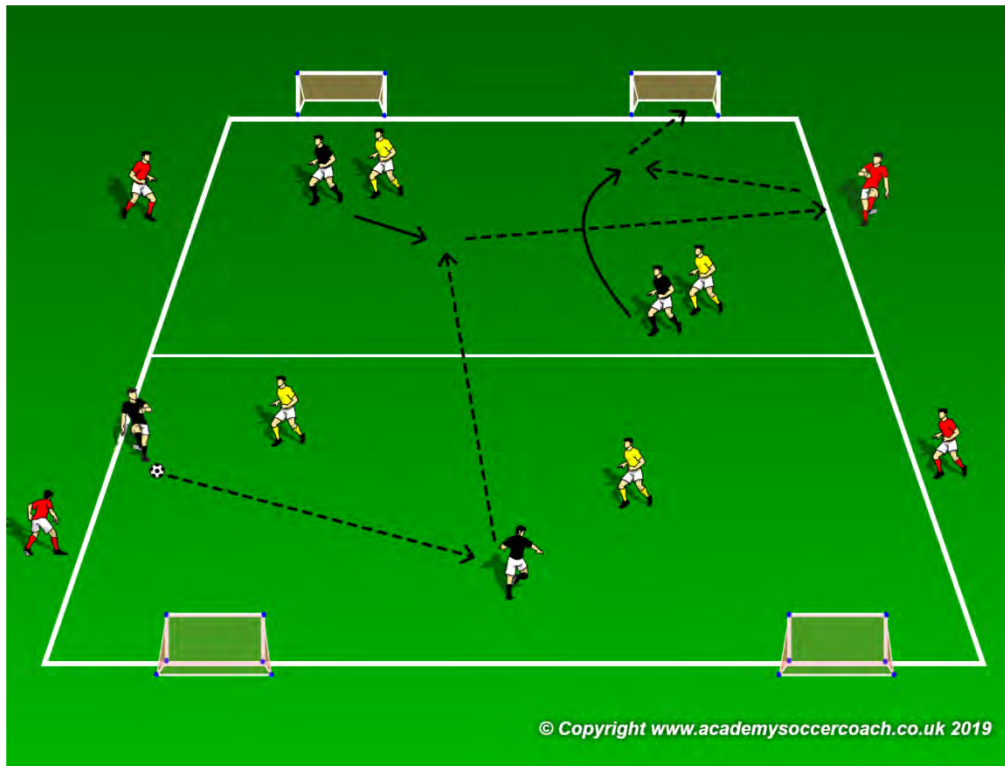
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

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

**Description:** Player A dribbles forward and once passing the red markers a vertical pass to player B is played. Player B should have checked back to receive the ball at his feet. Player B plays the ball to either his right or left to players C or D respectively. This pass is played alternately to players C and D. Players remain in their group for the whole three minutes, then rotate clockwise.

**Progression:** Play is switched to the opposite side. In the above diagram it would be that player C plays the ball to the opposite side to player D to finish on the mini goal. Here we can also introduce the counter movement by player C as if to get free of marking and receive the ball from player B.

**Game 2: 4v4+4 on four goals on a divided pitch.**



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles, 2) having width, depth and length in attack and 3) switching the point of attack whenever direct penetration is not possible.

**Area:** Same setup and dimensions of area are kept from the previous exercise. The pitch is divided into two equal horizontal zones.

**Players:** Two teams of four players inside the area and another four acting as neutrals on the perimeter as shown in the above diagram.

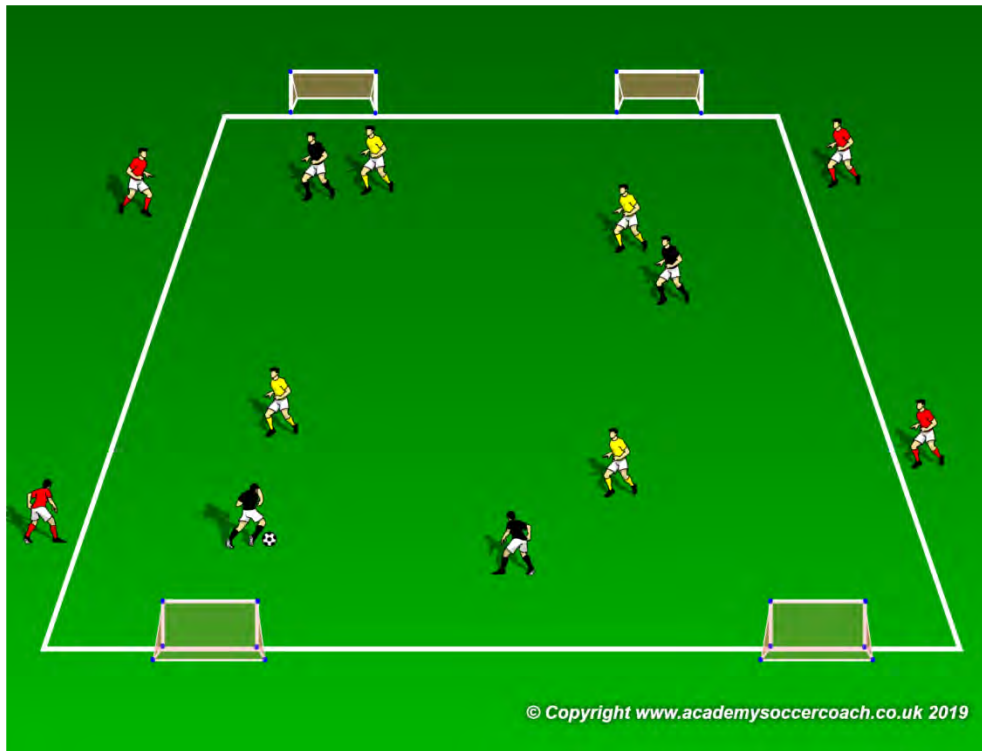
**Duration:** 15 minutes.

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

**Description:** Two players from each team are positioned inside each horizontal zone. Players are not allowed to leave this zone. In each half the situation is 4v2 for the team in possession (with the help of the neutral players). A goal may only be scored from inside the attacking zone.

**Progression:** An attacking player inside the defensive zone may dribble the ball forward but another attacker inside the attacking zone must drop to keep the team stable in case of a turn over.

### Game 3: 4v4+4 on four goals.



**Remind players to focus on:** 1) creating passing angles, 2) having width, depth and length in attack and 3) switching the point of attack whenever direct penetration is not possible.

**Area:** Same setup and dimensions of area are kept from the previous exercise, except now the pitch is not divided into two equal horizontal zones.

**Players:** Two teams composed of four players inside the area and another four acting as neutrals on the perimeter as shown in the above diagram.

**Duration:** 24 minutes.

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

**Description:** Normal game except that the team in possession has four neutral players playing with them making the situation an 8v4. Neutral players are allowed to score and can also be contested for the ball by the defending team.

#### **Progressions:**

1. Neutral players may score but are not allowed to pass the ball to each other. They must always pass the ball to a player from the team inside the area.
2. As in progression 1 but the neutral players are not allowed to score.



**Session number:** 20.

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

**Team task:** Scoring.

**Aim:** Movements to create space to penetrate and finish on goal.

**Macro principle:**

Overload the middle channel to penetrate from central positions.

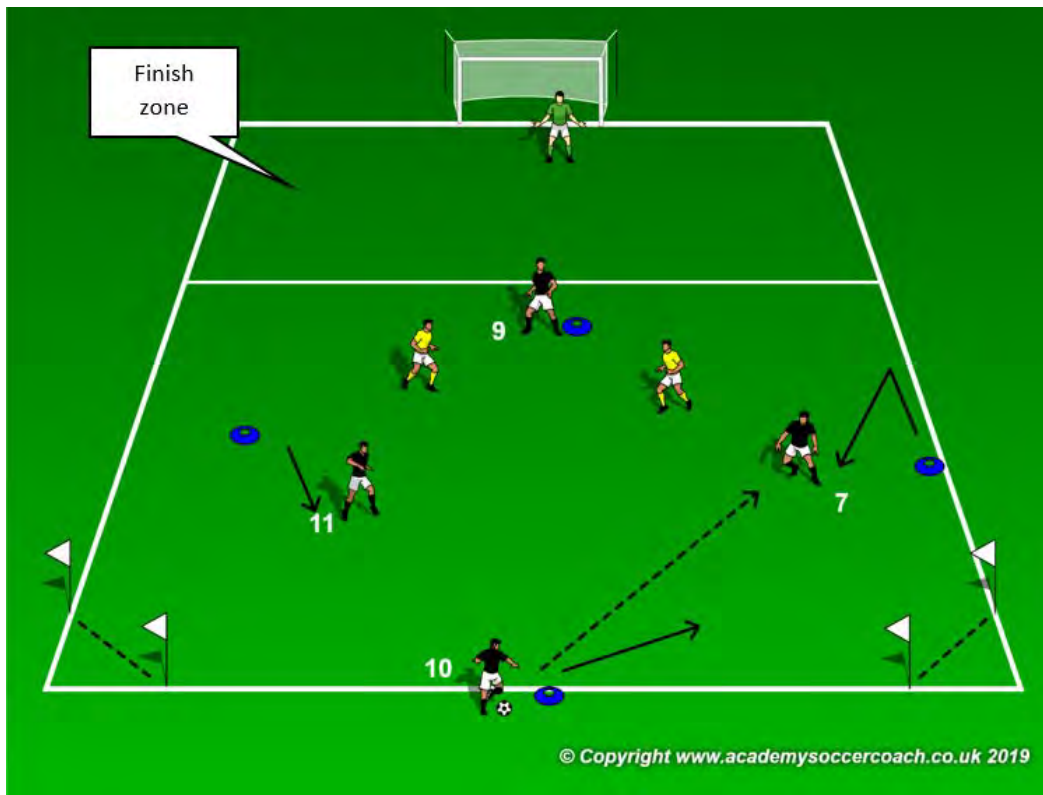
**Sub-principles:**

1. Lateral midfielders 7 and 11 tuck inside to become inside midfielders.
2. Striker 9 to provide height and create space and options to penetrate.
3. Staggered angles between offensive midfielder 10, lateral midfielders 7 and 11 and striker 9.

**Sub-sub-principles:**

1. Counter movement to create space to receive the ball.
2. Stance to receive the ball and play the first touch oriented towards the direction of the next pass or move.
3. Weight and direction (to feet or to space) of the pass.
4. Insertion runs into space in search of penetration.

## Practice – 4v2 to score.



**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width with additional finish zone measuring 10 yards in length.

**Players:** Four attackers starting in positions 7, 9, 10 and 11. These are opposed by two defenders and a goalkeeper in goal.

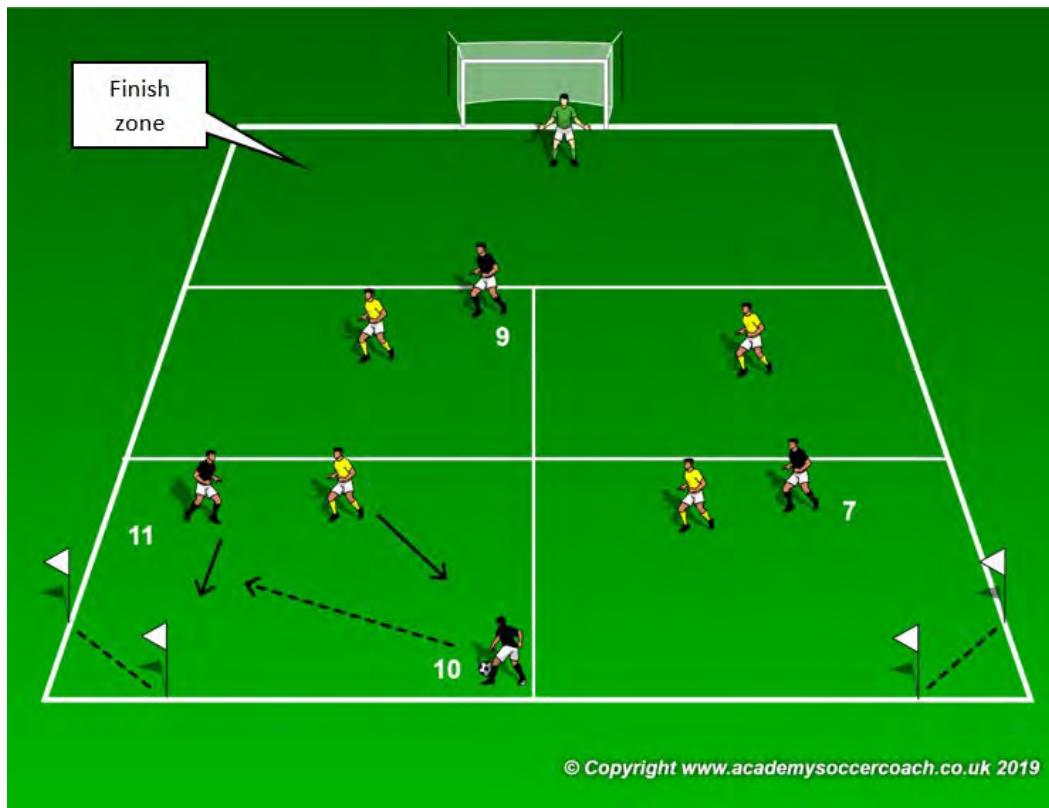
**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** Players start from the positions marked on the pitch. Attacker 10 starts the play after attacker 11 checks back to receive. This player may also check back by moving wider on the flank. Attacker 10 decides who to play the ball to or to dribble the ball forward himself. The aim of the attackers is to pass the ball into the finish zone to finish on target. If the two defenders win the ball, they counter on the two gates that are positioned at the opposite corners.

### **Progressions:**

1. The attackers play two touch and aim to score within fifteen seconds.
2. Add another defender.

**Game – 4v4 in four quadrants to finish at goal.**



**Area:** 30 yards by 20 yards with a finish zone measuring 10 yards in length. There are also four quadrants each measuring 10 yards by 10 yards. Two corner gates 2 yards in length act as target goals.

**Players:** An attacker and a defender in each quadrant plus a goalkeeper in goal.

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

**Duration:** 20 minutes.

**Description:** The players of the defending team may only remain inside their assigned quadrant. The players of the attacking team may move along but only two of them may be in the same quadrant. The aim of the attacking players is to play the ball into the finish zone to finish with a shot on goal. Only the attacker on the ball and the defender responsible of his zone is allowed to follow into the finish zone.

**Progression:** A defender may also have two players in the quadrants. Therefore a 2v2 situation may be created in the quadrant.

**Session number:** 21.

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

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Build-up from the first stage to the creative stage.

**Macro principle:**

Establish options in the middle vertical channel to play in verticality.

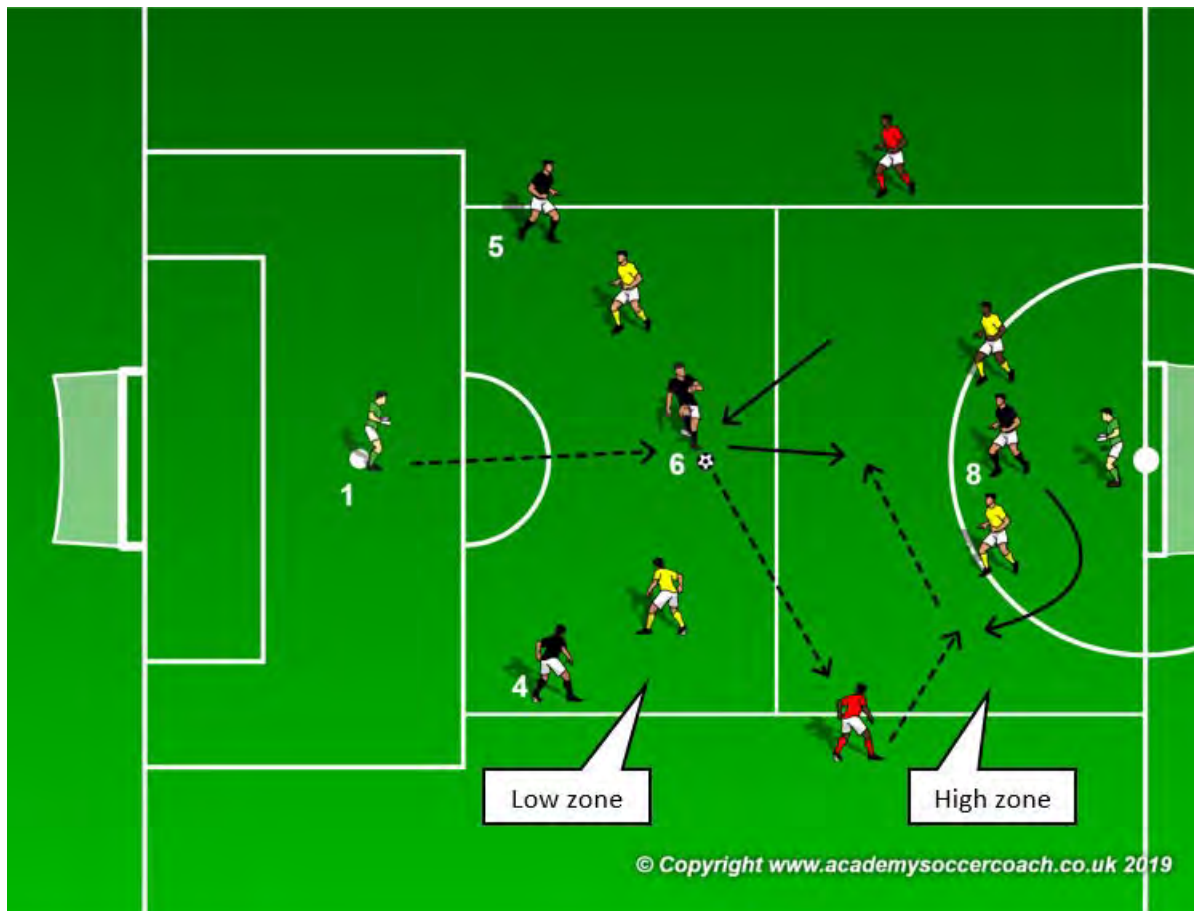
**Sub-principles:**

1. Position of the goalkeeper to aid in retaining possession or switch the point of attack.
2. Central defenders 4 and 5 widen up.
3. Full backs 2 and 3 move higher up the pitch with the midfield line.
4. Low playmaker 6 creates a numerical superiority at the back to create more options for the build-up.

**Sub-sub-principles:**

1. Receiving stance.
2. Quality of passes – fast and along the ground.
3. Closest teammates to provide support around the ball – in front and/or behind the ball.
4. First option is to play deep, otherwise retain the ball and switch play if necessary.

**Practice – 4v4+GKs and two neutral flank players.**



**Area:** 40 yards in length by 30 yards in width divided into two zones, the low one measuring 15 yards in length while the high one measures 25 yards in length.

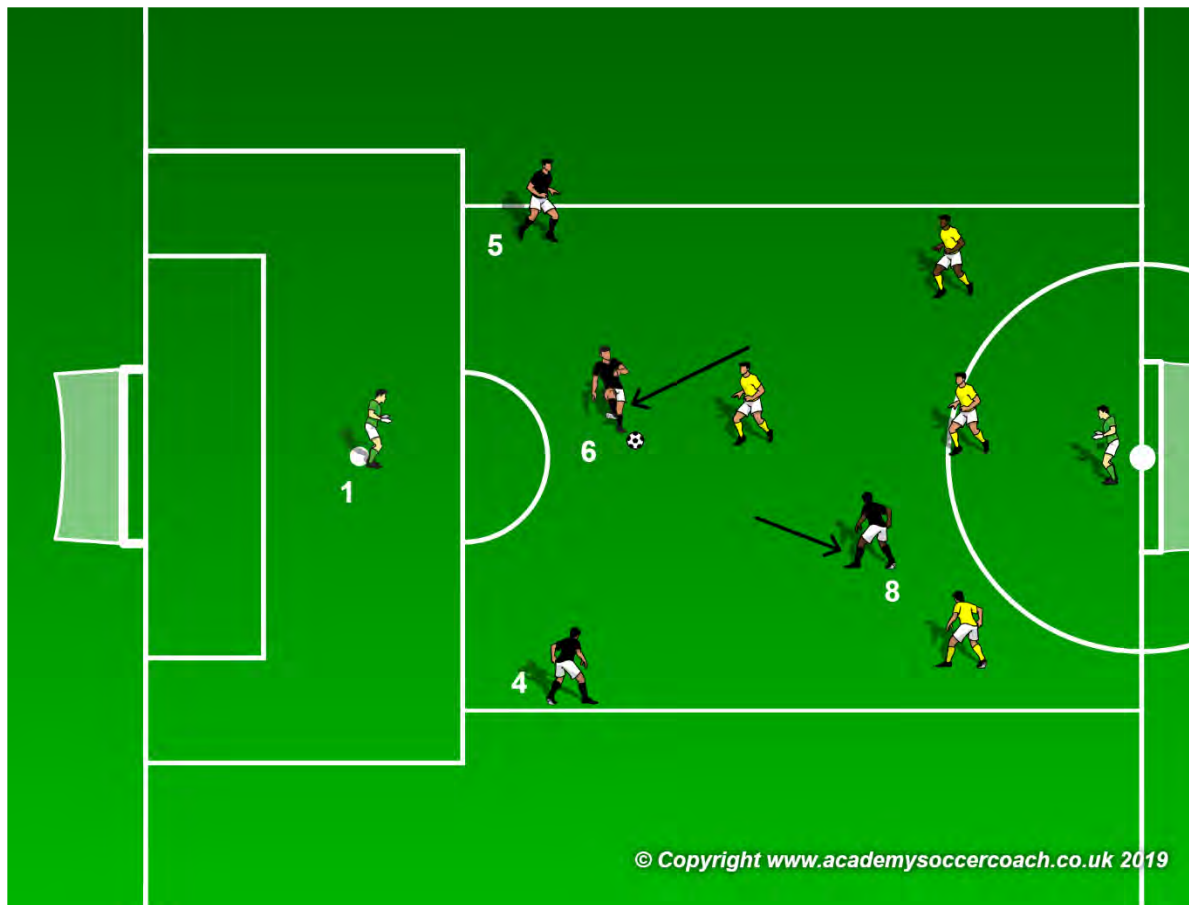
**Players:** The attacking team has a goalkeeper in goal, two central defenders and two midfielders. The defending team has two strikers, two midfielders and a goalkeeper in goal. A neutral player plays on each flank giving the team in possession a numerical advantage.

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between series.

**Duration:** 19 minutes.

**Description:** All players are restricted to remain inside their assigned zones except for the number 6 of the attacking team who can freely move between zones. The neutral flank players are not allowed to score.

## Game – 4v4 plus goalkeepers.



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

**Players:** The attacking team has a goalkeeper in goal, two central defenders and two midfielders. The defending team has two strikers, two midfielders and a goalkeeper in goal.

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between series.

**Duration:** 19 minutes.

**Description:** Normal game with goalkeepers where the focus is on the attacking team (black) aiming to create the right opportunities to play forward. If the defending team win the ball, they counter on the opposite goal defended by the attacking team.

**Progression:** The attacking team may only score from a line marked twenty meters away from the defending team's goal.

**Session number:** 22.

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

**Team task:** Build-up.

**Aim:** Create space and options to penetrate from central positions.

**Macro principle:**

Overload the middle area to create numerical superiority.

**Sub-principles:**

1. Striker 9 to provide length in the attack.
2. Lateral midfielders 7 and 11 to tuck inside and support the striker.
3. Midfielder 10 to provide cover and if necessary inserts himself into the attack.

**Sub-sub-principles:**

1. Counter movements to get free of marking to receive the ball in space.
2. Receiving stance.
3. Oriented first touch toward the direction of the next pass or move.
4. Timing of runs into the created space.
5. Timing and quality (weight and direction) of passes.

## Practice – Four-player combination to finish on goal.



**Area:** Half of a regular sized pitch.

**Players:** Attacking players positioned in their respective positions in which they find themselves on the field of play. Therefore we have midfielder 10, lateral midfielders 7 and 11 and striker 9. We also have two defenders who become active after 10's pass to 9 after the latter checks back to receive.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The two defenders become active after 10's pass to 9 and after the latter checks back to receive. Instruct both 7 and 11 to perform a counter movement as if to lose their marker before they receive the ball. After 9 receives the ball, it can be played back to 7 or to 10. From there the situation becomes free and the attackers have fifteen seconds to score.



## Game – 4v4 to penetrate.



**Area:** Half pitch with a 30 yard by 40 yard area marked inside the pitch and adjacent to the centre line.

**Players:** Four attackers with reference to positions 7, 9, 10 and 11 and four defenders (two central defenders and two defensive midfielders) plus a goalkeeper in goal.

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between series.

**Duration:** 19 minutes.

**Description:** The attacking team aims to play the ball behind the opposition's defensive line and finish on goal against the goalkeeper. The attacker running in the space to receive the through ball plays 1v1 against the goalkeeper. If the defenders win the ball, they counter by guiding (passing or dribbling) the ball through the two mini goals marked with cones.

### **Progressions:**

1. Move the marked inner area closer to the penalty area thus simulate playing against a low block. We can also narrow the width of the area to 20 or 25 yards.
2. As in one but a defender is allowed to contrast the attacker thus playing in a 1v1 situation.
3. Progress on (2) by having all the defenders tracking back when a through pass is played.

**Session number:** 23.

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

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

**Aim:** Prevent the opponents from penetrating through the midfield.

**Macro principle:**

Compactness in the centre of the pitch.

**Sub-principles:**

1. Compact midfield sector.
2. Zonal marking.
3. Cut off forward passing lanes.
4. Force play towards the outside.

**Sub-sub-principles:**

1. Establish pressure on the ball.
2. Mark potential receivers.
3. Distance and angles of coverage.
4. Marking stance and positioning.

## Practice – Prevent penetration.



**Area:** 30 yards in length by 20 yards in width.

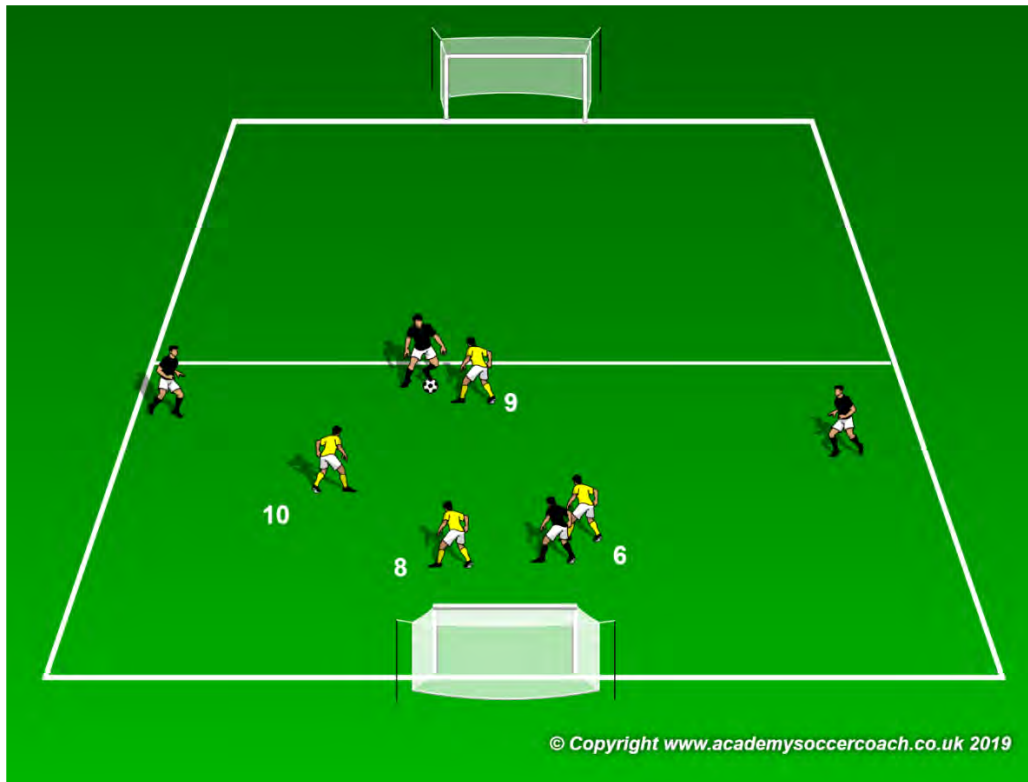
**Players:** Four attackers – two on both sides and four defenders set in a block in the centre of the area.

**Duration:** 10 minutes.

**Description:** The four defenders work in unison to prevent the attackers from playing a split pass and reach the target players on the opposite side. All players are restricted to remain inside their assigned zones. In case where the ball is played over the defenders' heads, they may track back into the target attackers' zone. If the defenders win the ball they aim to score by dribbling over the line guarded by two of the attacking team's players from where the ball was passed while the opposite two attackers track to defend with the aim of regaining possession of the ball.

**Progression:** Increase the width of the zone to 25 yards thus making it harder for the defenders to cover and intercept passes.

## Game – 4v4 without goalkeepers.



**Area:** 30 yards in length by 25 yards in width which is divided into two equal horizontal halves and where a regular goalpost is positioned at each end.

**Players:** Both teams are composed of four players.

**Workload:** 3 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest in between series.

**Duration:** 19 minutes.

**Description:** Both teams must score into the empty goal from inside their attacking half. This forces the defending team to retain compactness, close the gaps for the attacking team to play forward (or shoot), make play predictable towards the flank where there is less space to manoeuvre and prevent the opponent from getting out of the press. No corner kicks or throw-ins exist. Any restarts take place by the team in possession from their goal line.

**Progression:** The middle line is removed. Goals may be scored from anywhere on the pitch. The defending team is forced to keep an eye for any balls played overhead from inside the attacking team's half.

## Reflection

The aim of this book is not for the individual coach to just enjoy the presented exercises but to stimulate the coach to think that the chosen training activities must come from the match itself. Every minute spent at the training ground should be aimed to develop the team's physical, technical, tactical and mental domains in a holistic manner. These domains should as much as possible be included in all the exercises delivered in the session. Soccer is a game where these domains are continuously integrated with each other. A negative perception of a stimulus (mental) will affect the decision taken in a situation (tactical) with a negative influence on the execution of a soccer action (technique).

The conditioning aspect of the game cannot only be done in isolation. Although we may utilise some form of analytical exercises to develop soccer fitness, the most effective and efficient way to acquire this is by playing variations of the global game such as the 4v4. Integrated training approaches aid in the development of both the technical and physical domains. In soccer, however, the ability to keep perceiving the right stimuli and making the correct decisions during the whole ninety minutes is of paramount importance. Players should thus be trained to continue making decisions under conditions of fatigue, while also in the long term aiming to delay the onset of fatigue accumulation.

This book is about the various uses of the 4v4 from developing young players to training highly skilled professionals in the sport. A copy and paste of the presented exercises is not recommended. A coach may take ideas but has to implement them according to the level and needs of the players. If you have noticed, the recommended age bracket for the training sessions and practices in this book does not exist. The simple reason being that age is not an ideal indicator for training. Ability and readiness to learn and acquire new skills are however!

I wish you will find this book fruitful in your daily work as coaches. Let us continue to evolve together – in whichever corner of the world we come from – to develop the sport of soccer!

Sincerely yours,  
Philip Joe Cauchi

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