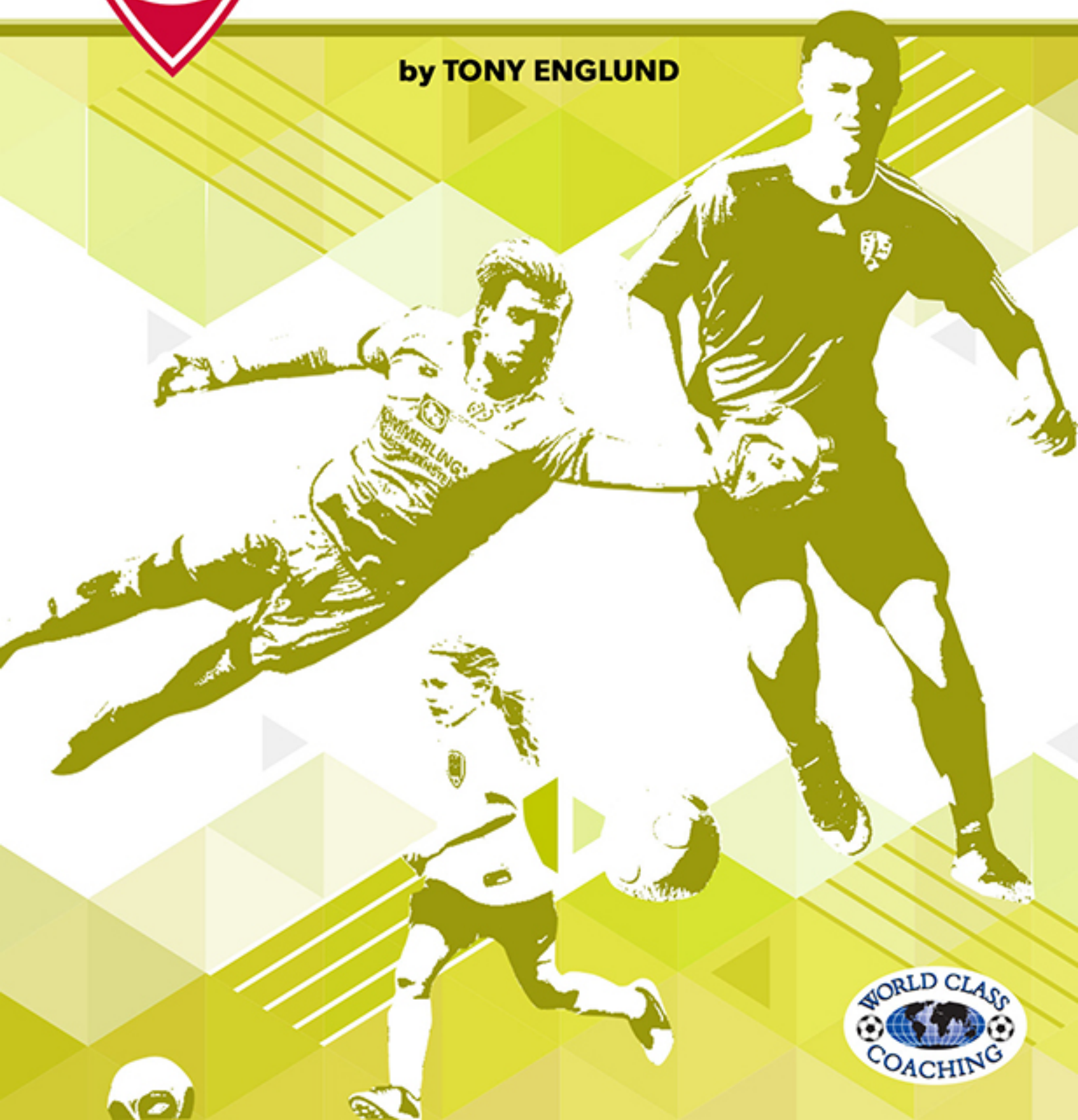


CLUB CURRICULUM



U11-U12 SEASON

by **TONY ENGLUND**



U11/U12 Complete Season Training Curriculum

by
Tony Englund

Published by
WORLD CLASS COACHING

U11/U12 Complete Season Training Curriculum

First published June, 2017 by
WORLD CLASS COACHING 12851 Flint St Overland Park, KS 66213

Copyright © WORLD CLASS COACHING 2017

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

by Tony Englund

Edited by Tom Mura



Published by
WORLD CLASS COACHING



U11/U12 Complete Season Training Curriculum

A full season of training for a competitive U11/U12 (8v8) team featuring 24 training sessions, detailed analysis of systems of play, and more than 50 full-color diagrams.

Tony Englund

Contents

Introduction: The Golden Age of Soccer Learning	3
Organizing a U11-U12 Practice	4
Systems of Play: 1-3-3-1	5
Systems of Play: 1-2-3-2	8
 Training Sessions	
1. Individual Attacking	11
2. Individual Defending	14
3. Individual Attacking	18
4. Individual Defending	22
5. Individual Attacking	24
6. Passing and Receiving	29
7. Passing and Receiving	34
8. Possession	38
9. Possession	41
10. Turning	45
11. 2-Person Combination Play	50
12. Finishing	55
13. Advanced Passing and Combination Play	58
14. Long Passing	62
15. Receiving out of the Air	68
16. Heading	71
17. Cross and Finish	74
18. Finishing	79
19. Second defender	83
20. Shadow play: Attacking patterns -1-3-3-1	87
21. Shadow play: Attacking patterns -1-2-3-2	91
22. Technique Olympics	94
23. Attacking Set Plays	97
24. Defending Set Plays	101
 Sources	105
About the Author	106

Introduction: The Golden Age of Soccer Learning

The starting point for any adult planning to mentor young children is to be certain to adopt the proper perspective in developing a philosophy of coaching that reflects a thorough understanding of the differences between adults and children. Simply put, coaching 11-12 year-olds carries a mandate to continue the technical development of young players while also nurturing their love of the game.

Adults must take into account the physical and psychological abilities and needs of young children in planning and also coaching activities for 11 and 12-year olds. Children at these ages have immature and growing skeletal and cardiovascular systems that influence their motor abilities. At 11 and 12 there are often considerable variations in physical maturity and ability. Psychologically, young children have a fragile and evolving self concept that needs consistent nurturing through social acceptance and adult approval of their *efforts* (as opposed to results), and though they are intrinsically motivated, they do not yet have the sense of competition that is present in older children and adults.

In addition to accounting for the physical and psychological needs of young children, coaches must also attempt to understand why children play soccer (or any sport), and try to design the team experience to nurture those motivations. Fun, exercise, being with their friends and skill development are all important considerations for young children in this sense.

There are numerous studies in print outlining the reasons why children quit playing sports (as many as 75% by age 13). Not surprisingly, those reasons mirror the motivational elements that draw children to participate, as not having fun or improving and not being with their friends are among the chief reasons kids stop playing.

The message, then, is a simple, but very important one: Young children have different physical and psychological needs and abilities than adults and the latter must coach to the needs of the former, not to the needs or abilities of a fully mature adult. Children generally play sports for exercise, fun and skill acquisition, not to win, and, as a mentor once explained to the author, “Coaches at this age should judge their success this year not based on wins and losses, but rather on the number of kids who sign up to play again next year.”

Given all of the requisite warnings about the philosophy of coaching the 11 and U12 years, it is also noteworthy that these two years introduce children to competitive soccer, and national coaching organizations the world over agree this period also represents the high point of what is generally referred to as the ‘Golden Age of Soccer Learning.’ Children at these ages are able to learn mentally and physically at an accelerated pace, and their skills and tactical understanding can be dramatically improved during these critical years through quality training. Therefore, coaches must be well prepared for every training session and focus on both fun and learning.

Organizing a U11/U12 practice session

One of the most important aspects of coaching is preparation. Even at the youngest ages, players and parents will recognize whether a coach has taken the time to organize his or her thoughts and create an effective, coherent practice plan.

Preparation elements:

- Practice plan: Which exercises will be used and for how much time? What are the key teaching points? The coach should have a written plan for every session.
- Equipment: What types and how many balls, vests, cones, goals, etc. will be needed? Don't forget a ball pump!
- Safety: The coach should walk the practice area before each session, checking for items that could pose a danger to children. In addition, the coach should carry a phone with emergency numbers for all players. The coach or manager should always have a first-aid kit on site. Lastly, the coach should be the first to arrive and the last to leave training, assuring that there is adult supervision of children at play and that no child is left alone at the field. It is recommended that two adults be present at all times.

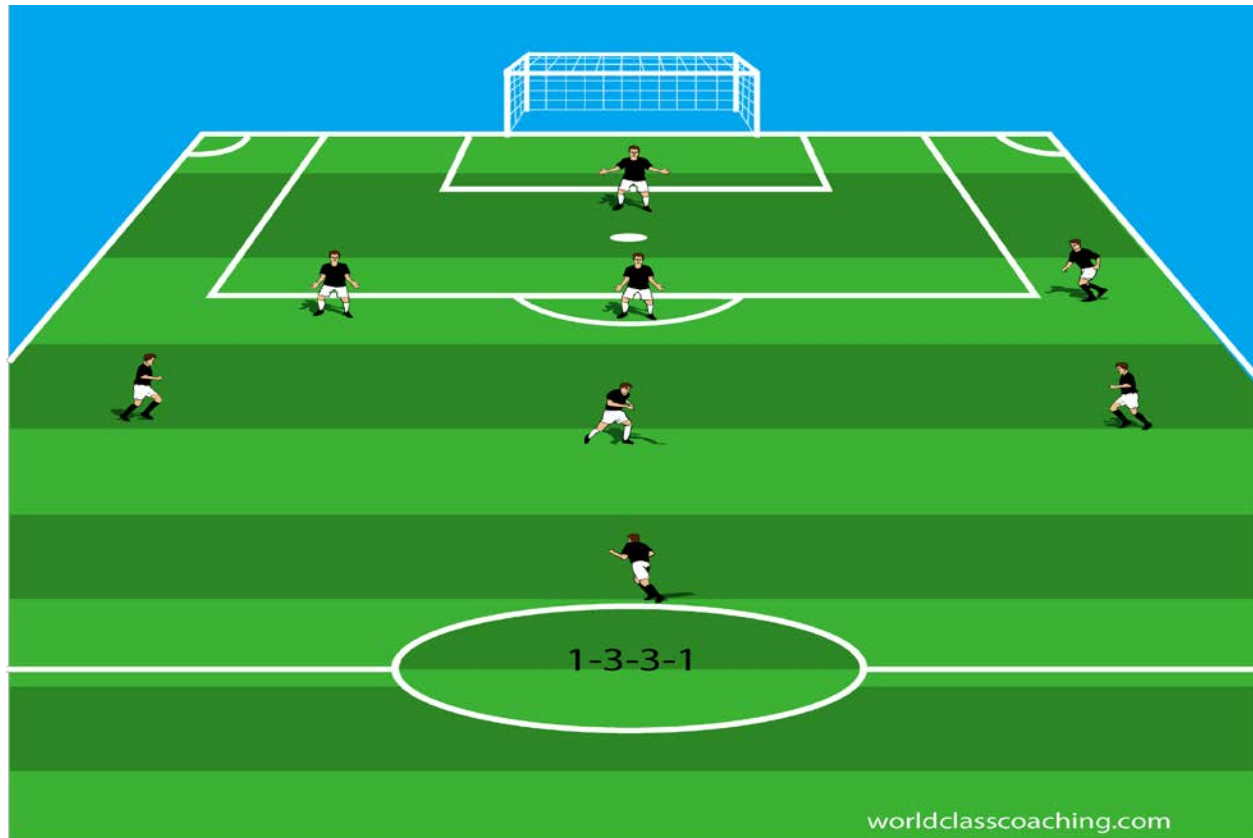
Children at these ages continue acquiring motor and mental skills, and their U11/U12 competitive experience will likely determine whether they acquire the skills and appreciation for the game that will incline them to continue playing into their teen years. Therefore, U11/U12 coaches must be well prepared, skilled trainers who can continue to challenge all team members in a fun, inclusive environment.

Training time: Roughly equal to the length of a game, and generally not more than an hour.

Composition: 1/3-1/2 (usually the final portion of practice) of every training session should be spent just letting children play soccer. The remainder of the session is used to introduce and refine skills through efficient training exercises and games, building toward the final game. It is recommended that the coach choose a theme for each session (i.e. individual attacking, defending or passing and receiving). It is important to remember that at this age, children are ready to change activities fairly quickly and it is important to give them new tasks and challenges to keep practice fun and exciting.

Systems of Play: 1-3-3-1

As teams at these age groups play with a goalkeeper and seven field players, coaches need to consider which tactical system or systems suit their players and style of play. This link provides an overview of the two most common systems of play and some of the key tactical considerations associated with each.



3-3-1

Key Considerations

This system deploys a goalkeeper, three defenders, three midfielders and a forward.

Advantages

- Similar to a 4-4-2 (just add a player at each level), the most common system utilized by U13+ teams in 11v11 games.
- Allows for three backs, which simplifies work at the back and allows for coaches to be able to teach basic covering responsibilities.
- When the team loses the ball, 6 players (all of the defender and midfielders) are available to defend.
- The team can organize well behind the ball in transition. The central midfielder has a lot of attacking options, and the three backs will outnumber the opposing team's attackers and be available to receive support passes to build possession.

- The flank players have a lot of room to run forward and their defensive responsibilities are limited, given the small field and the fact that there is a back behind them to deal with much of the flank pressure.
- The central midfielder most often is not required to retreat deep into her defensive zone to help out, as the three backs can deal with most of the deep pressure.

Disadvantages

- The single striker is a major concern here. Depending upon how the coach decides to lay out responsibilities, the single striker can be isolated and of limited use in transition (she is often a target to receive and lay-off passes rather than a runner) and she can be hard to find if she has to roam sideline-to-sideline in search of clearing passes. In addition, if the opposition play three backs, she has a very difficult time applying pressure and the opponents can run her around without threat of losing possession. This can be very frustrating for young attackers.
- Transition can be difficult, as the single target player means that direct play can be difficult unless the wing midfielders play very high.
- Three backs can be a concern on a number of levels. First, unless well coached, the wing defenders can become simple blocking players and their ability to learn an active role in the game can be limited (they need to be used in possession if they are to develop). Second, because the field is quite narrow, the back three can become crowded together and of little use in transition.

Training Considerations

In general, the coach must emphasize the importance of transition, and the need to use the flank midfielders to stretch opposing defenses. The shape of the team allows for good, compact defense, but the forward and the midfielders must be trained to get into good attacking positions as soon as the ball is won. In addition, the back line players must be trained to fan out and provide support in transition. In addition, it is recommended that the forward move in line with the ball on defense to make play out of the back predictable.

Player Characteristics and Positional Skill Requirements

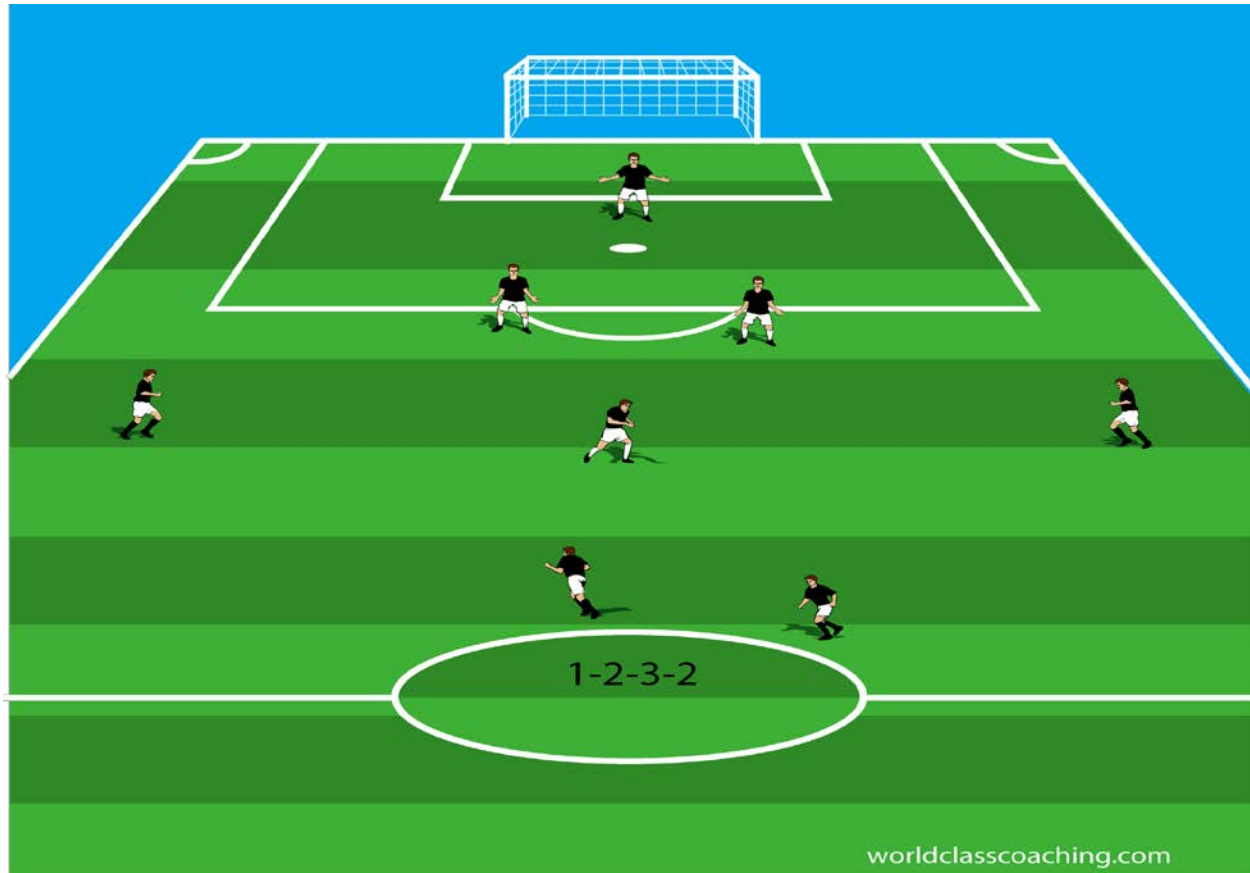
Specialized technical and physical skills and tactical understanding are necessary for players to perform well within the 1-3-3-1.

- **Goalkeeper:** The goalkeeper position often becomes specialized at U11 and U12, as qualified candidates are identified. Among the critical skills to be developed at this age are: Basic and consistent handling and footwork; safe and effective diving; distribution (both throwing and kicking/punting); knowledge of angle play; punting; dealing with set-pieces; organizing the defense; and the mentality of shot-stopping.
- **Defenders:** The coach can organize the backs as either a central defender (sweeper) set behind two backs or a “flat” three. If there is a center back, she needs to be quick, a sure tackler and able to communicate to organize the defense. She should also be strong in the air and she must long pass well. The outside backs are normally quick, good in 1v1 duels and able to pass the ball over distance. Among the key tactical requirements for the outside backs are the ability to cover for the center back and also the ability to make good decisions regarding when to engage opposing attackers.

- **Wing midfielders:** These players are typically quick, hard-working players who can get forward to attack flank space behind opposing defenses. Outside midfielders also need to be able to cross the ball well, combine with the central midfielder, forwards and even the outside back on their side, and they need to be able to finish crosses from the far side of the field..
- **Central midfielder:** This player must possess the ability to see the field well (distribute intelligently) and her ability to connect with all of the other field players is critical in transition, organizing possession, changing fields and pushing the attack. Her ability to shoot from distance can provide considerable attacking potential as well. Finally, central midfielders are typically strong 1v1 players as well.
- **Forward:** This player must have a very consistent work rate as she must cover a lot of ground both on defense and in the attack. A sharp change of speed will get her behind the defense on occasion, and she needs to be a talented finisher. Her ability to receive (both on the ground and in the air) is critical for the team's transition. This player must also possess the willingness to take on defenders to create both space and attacking opportunities. She should know how to combine well with the midfielders.

In summary, while players will only perhaps possess some of the above characteristics, this information should be helpful in aiding coaches to both place players and also design training.

Systems of Play: 1-2-3-2



2-3-2

Key Considerations

This system deploys a goalkeeper, two defenders, three midfielders and two forwards.

Advantages

- Two forwards provide both balance and many more opportunities in attack.
- Transition is aided by the presence to two target players.
- It is easier to apply defensive pressure further from one's goal with two strikers.
- The flank players have a lot of room to run forward.
- The central midfielder most often is not required to retreat deep into the defensive zone and has many good options going forward in transition.

Disadvantages

- The team is set up to defend with only 5 players (defenders and midfielders). If a team can not get transition, the backs and midfielders will be worn down playing extensively in the back third.
- The use of only two defenders is the most perilous characteristic of this arrangement. The two backs have to be very quick and have a very good understanding to deal with attackers from any area.

- Central attacks can cause considerable disruption in that the central midfielder may be dragged back to the goal to help deal with a crisis and the backs may make a mistake as to who is responsible for a runner (runs that aim to split them may cause problems).
- Consistent flank attacks against this system will tear apart its shape as either the near-side outside midfielder or the backside outside midfielder must be dragged in to track runners or provide cover. This loss of shape puts physical pressure on the flank players to run endline to endline and makes transition very difficult.
- Finally, it may be difficult to organize possession on the back line with only two backs.

Training Considerations

This system is well-suited to a team that expects to do a great deal of attacking. The coach must be confident that the goalkeeper and the two backs will be able to close down transition and attacking by the opponent. In addition, the flank players will need regular rest and consistent encouragement to work endline-to-endline. On the other hand, the opportunity to train the midfielders to link with the forwards and to train the strikers to work together makes this a lively arrangement to train and watch.

Player Characteristics and Positional Skill Requirements

Specialized technical and physical skills and tactical understanding are necessary for players to perform well within the 1-2-3-2.

- **Goalkeeper:** The goalkeeper position often becomes specialized at U11 and U12, as qualified candidates are identified. Among the critical skills to be developed at this age are: Basic and consistent handling and footwork; safe and effective diving; distribution (both throwing and kicking/punting); knowledge of angle play; punting; dealing with set-pieces; organizing the defense; and the mentality of shot-stopping.
- **Defenders:** If the team will play only two defenders, these players must be quick, and be able to make good decisions under pressure. Their ability to close down and tackle, as well as cover, will likely determine whether the team can be successful in a 1-2-3-2. They need to learn to play well in the air and they need to be vocal in organizing the defense. The ability to long pass is also essential.
- **Wing midfielders:** These players are typically quick, hard-working players who can get forward to attack flank space behind opposing defenses. Outside midfielders also need to be able to cross the ball well, combine with the central midfielder, forwards and even the outside back on their side, and they need to be able to finish crosses from the far side of the field. In a 2-3-2, outside midfielders also need to be able to defend well on the flank and be willing to make long defensive runs in particular.
- **Central midfielder:** This player must possess the ability to see the field well (distribute intelligently) and her ability to connect with all of the other field players is critical in transition, organizing possession, changing fields and pushing the attack. Her ability to shoot from distance can provide considerable attacking potential as well. Finally, central midfielders are typically strong 1v1 players as well.
- **Forwards:** These players must have a very consistent work rate as they must cover a lot of ground both on defense and in the attack. A sharp change of speed will get the striker behind the defense on occasion, and strikers need to become talented finishers. The striker's ability to receive (both on the ground and in the air) is critical for the team's transition. These players must also possess the willingness to take on defenders to create both space and attacking opportunities. They should know how to combine well with the other striker and the midfielders.

In summary, while players will only perhaps possess some of the above characteristics, this information should be helpful in aiding coaches to both place players and also design training.

Training Session #1: Individual Attacking.

Introduction

The opening session in the series blends fun dribbling games with an emphasis on shielding the ball, before putting defensive dribbling into game situations.

Dribbling square - 20x20 yard grid

Each player needs a ball. Players dribble within the grid. Utilize the following restrictions for twenty seconds each: Dribble in place; dribble left foot only; dribble right foot only; change pace and direction with every fourth touch; dribble with one touch per step; left foot only, alternating between the inside surface and the outside surface; right foot only, alternating between the inside surface and the outside surface.

Awareness dribbling - 20x20 yard grid

Each player has a ball. Players dribble within the grid. After twenty seconds, the coach stops the exercise to explain the importance of changing the dribbling surface with purpose. Then the coach details the players to switch the ball to the outside of the away foot when they encounter pressure. Whenever the switch is made, players must also point to open space and dribble there with a sharp increase in speed. Explain that these are the building blocks to defensive dribbling and learning to keep the ball under pressure. Play for one minute.

Awareness tag - 20x20 yard grid

Each player has a ball. Players dribble in the square with the goal of tagging other players while avoiding being tagged. For a tag to count, it must be on another player's back and the tag must be applied before the target player calls out the name of the player applying the tag. This game is designed to get players to be aware of the space all around them when they are in possession, and also to encourage players to be creative and even sneaky on the dribble. Play for two minutes and check scores. Re-emphasize the importance of "keeping one's head on a swivel" in possession and then play a second game.



Shielding - 20x20 yard grid

Work in pairs with one ball for each group. Use one pair to demonstrate proper shielding. One player stands with the ball on the outside of one foot and her opposite shoulder into the defender (her partner). The shielding player should be shown to be able to keep the ball beyond the reach of the defender as long as she adjusts her feet, keeps a shoulder into the defender and keeps the ball on the outside of the away foot. Allow each player to practice in a stagnant setting (the defender does not try to win the ball). Then have one partner dribble and at a cue from the coach, she goes into a shielding position and her partner tries to win the ball. After five seconds of shielding, switch the ball to the other partner and play again. Give each player three opportunities to practice shielding with pressure.

Knockout - 20x20 yard grid

Every player needs a ball. Explain that the purpose of the game is to keep one's ball (remind the players to shield the ball if under pressure) while trying to knock other players' balls out of the grid. Explain that play will go on for two minutes and then they will be asked to subtract the number of times their ball is knocked out from the number of balls they knock out to determine a winner. When a player's ball is knocked out, they must sprint after the ball and then complete six dribbling touches along the perimeter of the grid before they can reenter the game.

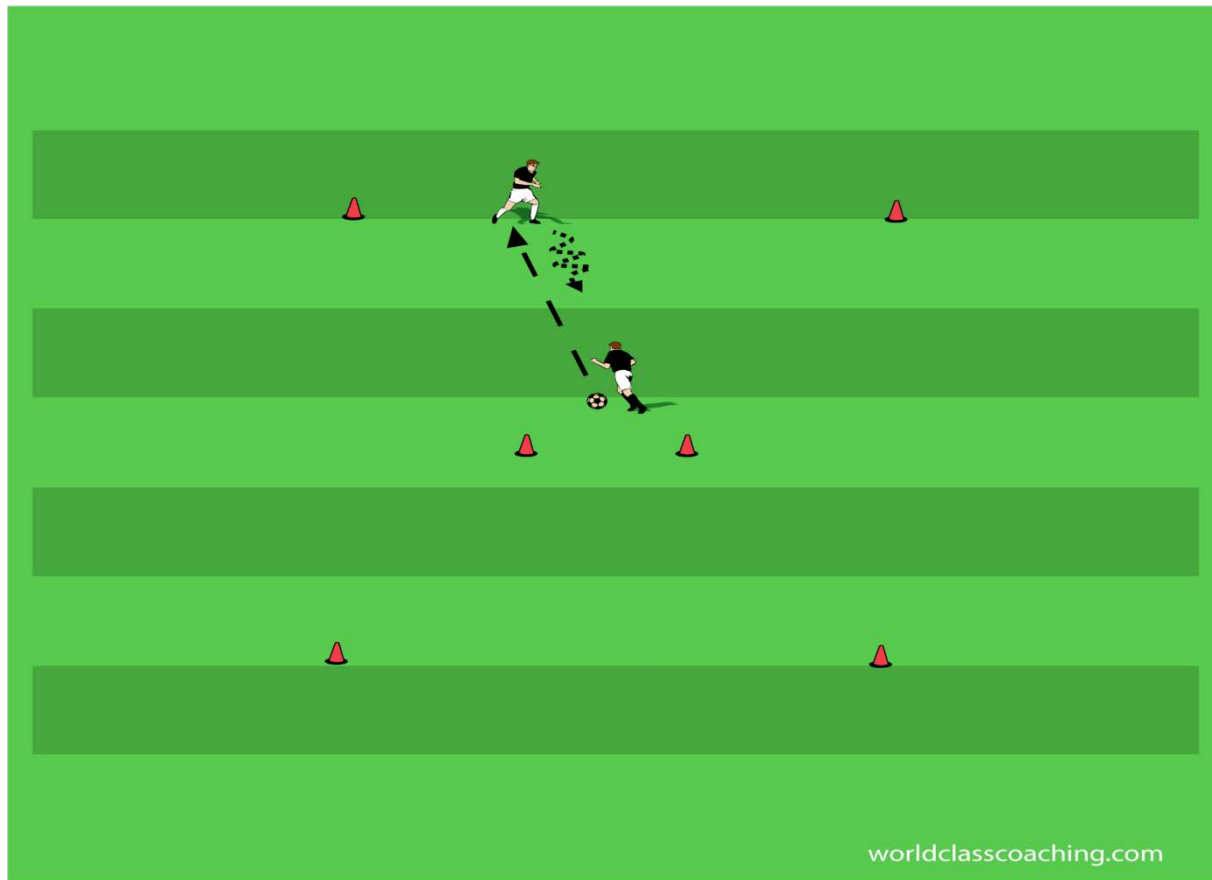
Creating attacking opportunities out of defensive dribbling situations - 20x20 yard grid

Players work in pairs in the grid with a ball for each group. The purpose of these walk-throughs is to show players moves to turn shielding situations into attacking runs. The pairs set up with one player in a shielding position and the other as a passive defender. Demonstrate the following possibilities:

- **Spin off.** If the defender is either forward or behind (as opposed to straight on the the shielding shoulder), the attacker can spin off using the outside of the away foot to move the ball and the

shielding shoulder to keep the defender off of the ball. Emphasize that the ball can be moved while the attacker is shielding to try to create an unbalanced defensive position.

- Self-pass. If the defender maintains a balanced defensive position, the attacker can use the outside of her away foot to tap the ball 1-2 yards away from the defender and then quickly get separation from the defender to face-up (work one's body around the ball to face the defender). The attacker is always better off to get faced up and create a better range of attacking options.



1v1 to a central goal - 12x12 yard grid

Players work in pairs in a grid with a ball and a two-yard central cone goal. Explain the purpose of the exercise is to give the attacker the opportunity to hold the ball in tight space under pressure. In this environment, both shielding and the spin-off and self pass can be practiced. Goals can be scored by either player and the attacker may dribble through the goal from either side. Play for three minutes and then check scores.

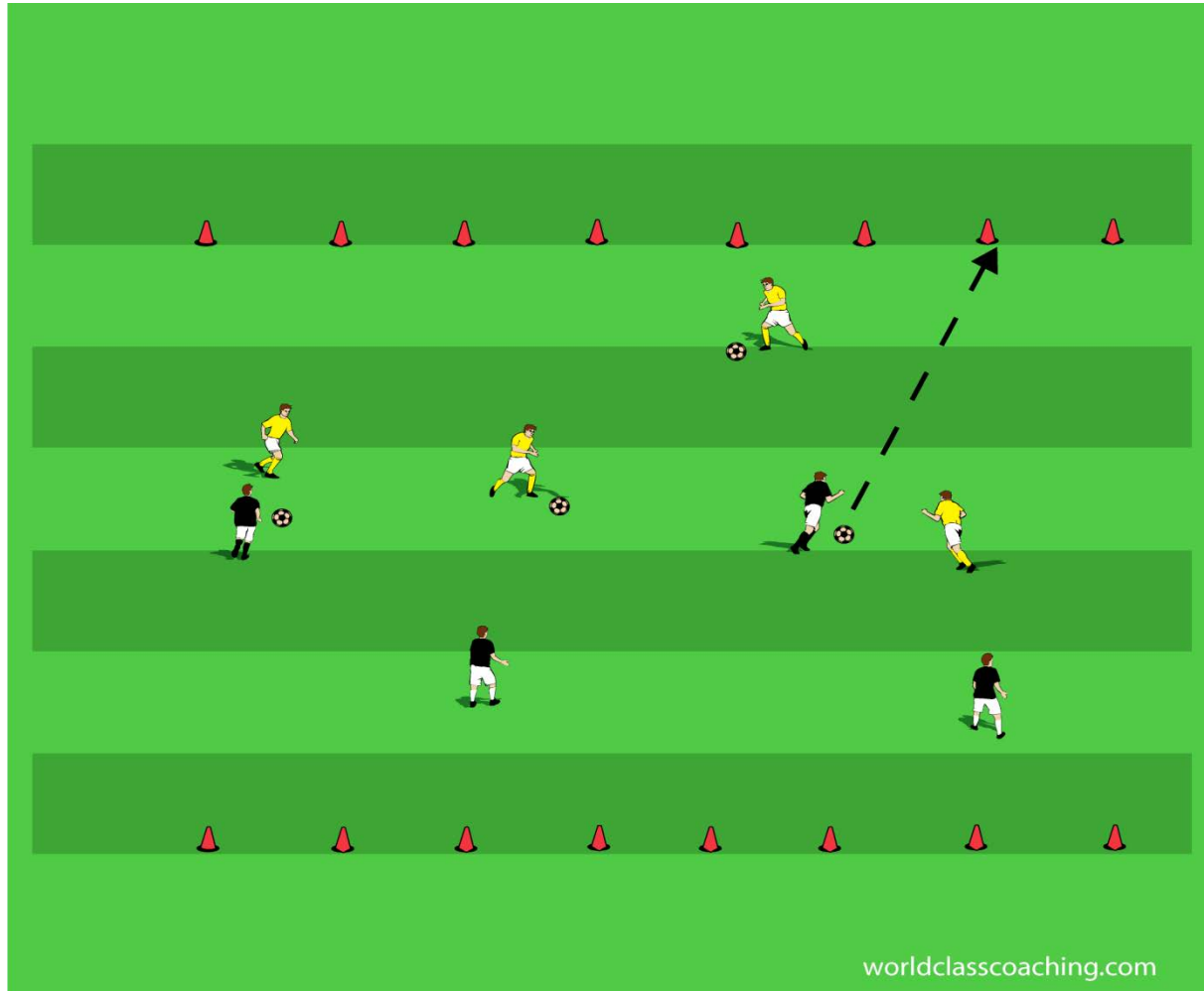
3v3 line soccer - 25x25 yard grids

Play small-sided games (ideally 3v3 or 4v4). For the first ten minutes, require a three-touch minimum for each player in possession. This will create high pressure dribbling situations and allow players to practice the defensive dribbling they practiced in this session. A point is earned by dribbling over one's opponents endline. After ten minutes remove the restriction and allow open play.

Training Session #2: Individual Defending.

Introduction

This session reviews jockeying and block tackling, refining players' ability to close down and dispossess opponents in tight spaces.



Cone Stealers - 25x30 yard grid

Place two lines of 8-10 tall cones at opposite ends of the playing area. Divide the team into two groups (one in scrimmage vests). Introduce soccer balls so that there are $\frac{1}{2}$ as many balls as total players in the game (balls should be divided evenly between the teams). Explain that this game is similar to "capture the flag" in that the goal is to use a ball to knock down the opposing team's cones and then return them to one's own team's cone supply. As only half the players on the field have a ball at any given time, this is a good warm-up to prime players for a session on individual defending. Explain that the players with balls can knock down as many cones as possible (i.e. until they lose the ball) before carrying the cones back to their end and placing them in line with the remainder of the team's cones. If one team captures all of the cones, that team wins the game. Otherwise, play for three minutes and then check to see which team has more cones.

Jockey - 20x20 yard grid

Begin a progression to introduce the basic concepts involved in individual defending. Players work in pairs along the endline of the grid with one ball for two people. The attacker is on the end line with the defender two yards away and facing the ball and the attacker. Explain that the ultimate goal of the session is to create opportunities to win the ball back. Footwork is critical to setting up tackles.

Jockeying is the footwork used to set up the tackle. The attacking player will dribble slowly across the grid allowing the defending player to practice drop-stepping to stay goal-side (that is, between the ball and the end line). Emphasize that the attacking player is not trying to beat the defender at this point and the defender may not tackle. Here are more concepts to introduce into this exercise as the players get comfortable.

- The defender must learn to only “show” one foot to the attacker. That is, the foot work here is staggered and a drop-step is employed to remain in good tackling position. This will help drive the attacker to one side and make play more predictable and also prevent the attacker from playing the ball between the defender’s legs.
- The defender’s attention must be on the ball. Most fakes used by attackers involve body swerves or foot movements that do not affect the path of the ball. Defenders must learn to focus on the ball.
- Defenders should adopt a semi-crouched approach to the ball. Standing upright slows reaction time and the bent approach increases focus as well.
- Can the defender channel the attacker to one side only? Attackers are taught to cross the defender by attacking their lead foot, so defenders work to contain the ball and player and avoid being crossed. If they do get crossed, defenders must learn to switch their footwork to try to contain the ball on the other side.
- Finally, pay careful attention to the spacing between the attacker and the defender. This is the most critical concept in jockeying. If the defender gets too close, the attacker can touch the ball beyond the defender and win the duel. If the defender is too far away, the attacker can look up and assess options (i.e. not enough pressure is being applied). A balance must be maintained.

Work the pairs back and forth across the grid, being sure to integrate each of the above concepts into the habits of the defenders.

Closing down - 15x10 yard grids

Place players in grids in groups of four. Two players begin on each end of the grid (in line). Put a ball supply on one end. This exercise is designed to introduce the precursor to jockeying, which is closing down. Through a demonstration, show that the player who starts with the ball begins the exercise by passing to the first player on the other end of the grid, simulating a turnover. The receiving player is the attacker and it is her goal to dribble over her partner’s endline as quickly as possible after receiving. The defender takes the following steps to try to contain the attacker:

- Adopt a bent run to pin the attacker to one side of the grid (it is useful to start the players in opposite corners of the grid to make the bent run concept easier to adopt). Explain that by limiting the attacker’s options, the defender is making defending easier for her and for the entire team.
- The size of the steps in closing down is very important. The first few steps should be longer with an eye toward closing the space quickly. As the defender draws within about five yards, she must shorten her steps to a chop. The reason for this is that the short steps allow her to adjust to changes in the angle and speed that the ball is travelling.

- Once again, the spacing is critical here. If the defender adopts an improper angle of approach, the attacker will either not be under sufficient pressure (if the space remains more than 2-3 yards) or will be able to run past the defender, winning the duel.
- Shift to jockeying. Once the defender has closed down the attacker, then the defender jockeys the attacker, remaining goal side and working to delay the ball.
- Mentality. Explain that the defender is not allowed to tackle in this exercise. Typically players are discouraged by this restriction, so it is important to address the mentality required to be an accomplished defender. How long can the defender jockey and keep the ball in the grid? Have the defender count aloud the time she is able to delay the attacker and give her a point each successive time that she increases that time.

At the end of each duel, the players change ends of the grid and the other pair play.

Block tackle - 20x20 yard grid

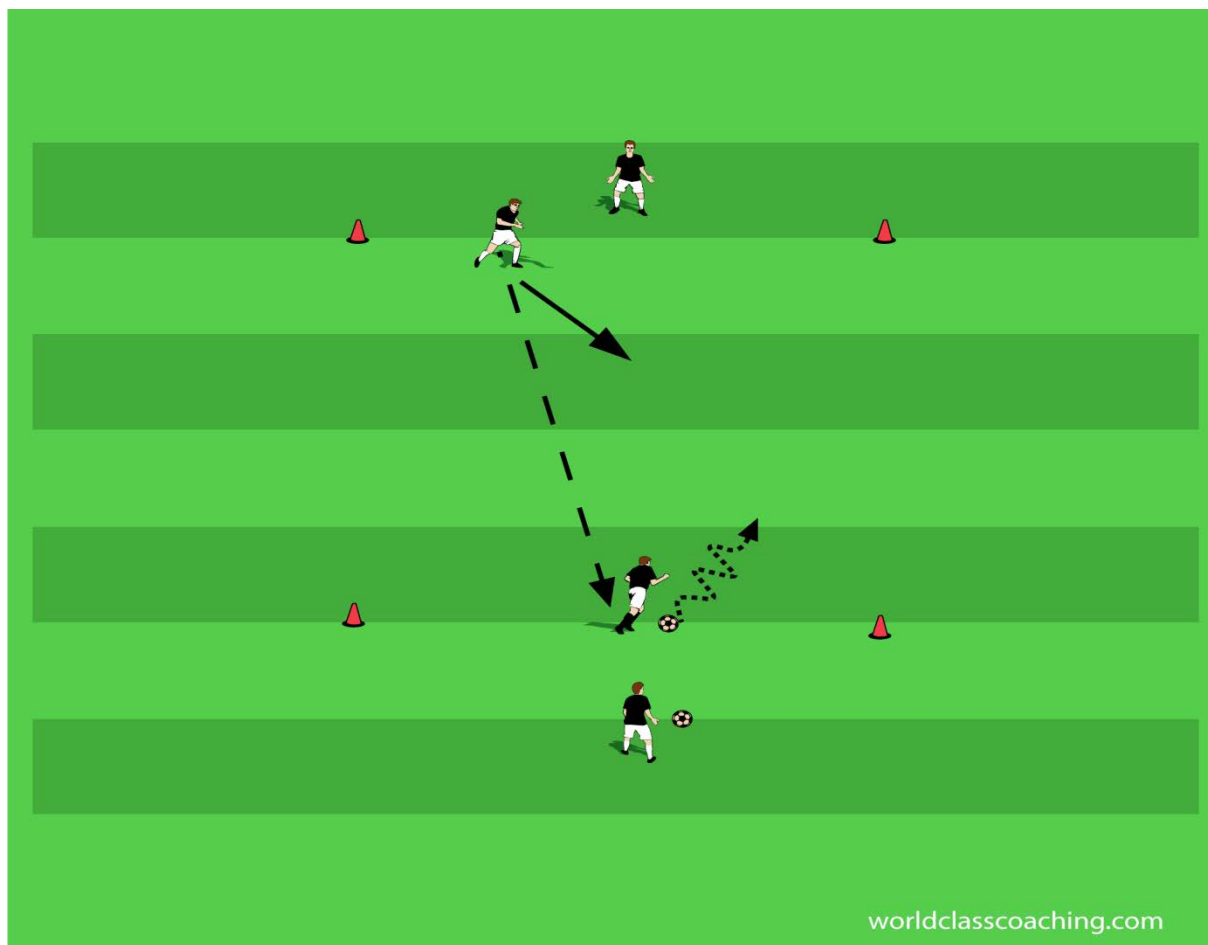
There are three types of tackle in soccer: Block, poke, and slide. Block tackling will be introduced here and slide tackling will be dealt with at a later date. Demonstrate using two players with a ball between them. Here are the basic cues for block tackling:

- This tackle is typically used in tight space where it is possible to catch the ball on the foot of the attacker.
- If the attacker is about to use her right foot to touch the ball, the defender must be faced up on the attacker and she should use her right foot to effect the tackle.
- The tackle is made by trapping the ball between the attacker's foot and the defender's foot. The ankle of the tackling players must be locked (both to control the ball and also to avoid injury). In addition, the surface used to tackle is the inside, long surface of the foot. The heel should be just above the ground and the front of the foot needs to be held higher. This will prevent the ball rolling over the tackling foot.
- The other cues for a sound tackle include: The distance between the tackling and standing foot should be smaller than the ball so that the ball cannot be pushed between the feet in the course of the tackle; the knee of the tackling foot should be pushed slightly forward. This will help trap the ball between the two feet of the tackler and the attacker and will prevent the ball from popping up in the air.
- The final instruction is to "stay in the tackle." The most common mistake in block tackling is that the defender walks through the tackle. It is critical that the tackler remain goal-side of both the attacker and the ball until the tackle is won.

Have players practice block tackling in pairs in a grid. The ball is placed between the players and one player says, "Go!". The players then work to take a plant step and tackle. There is a tendency to swing the tackling foot at the ball and make a popping sound. However, swinging at the ball can create timing problems and will make it hard to disguise the tackle. The tackler should make a sharp, but controlled stab at the ball. The pairs should train the right foot for a minute and then the left foot for a minute.

Controlled block tackle - 20x20 yard grid

Give one-half of the players a ball. Players with balls dribble around the grid and those without a ball practice block tackling. Each time, the player with the ball walks through the tackle, allowing the defender to win the ball. Then the player who lost ball wins a ball off of another player. Play for two minutes, reminding players of the basic tenets of good tackling as outlined above.



1v1 continuous - 10x12 yard grids

Build enough grids to accommodate four players in each grid. Create a ball supply on one end. As in the shutting down/jockeying exercise above, two players start on each end (in lines). The player with the ball passes to the first player on the other end of the grid and proceeds to shut down and jockey with an eye toward block tackling. Players earn points by dribbling over their opponent's end line. The duel lasts as long as the ball remains in the grid. At the conclusion of the duel, the players change ends and the resting players duel. Play for five minutes and then check scores to see who won in each grid.

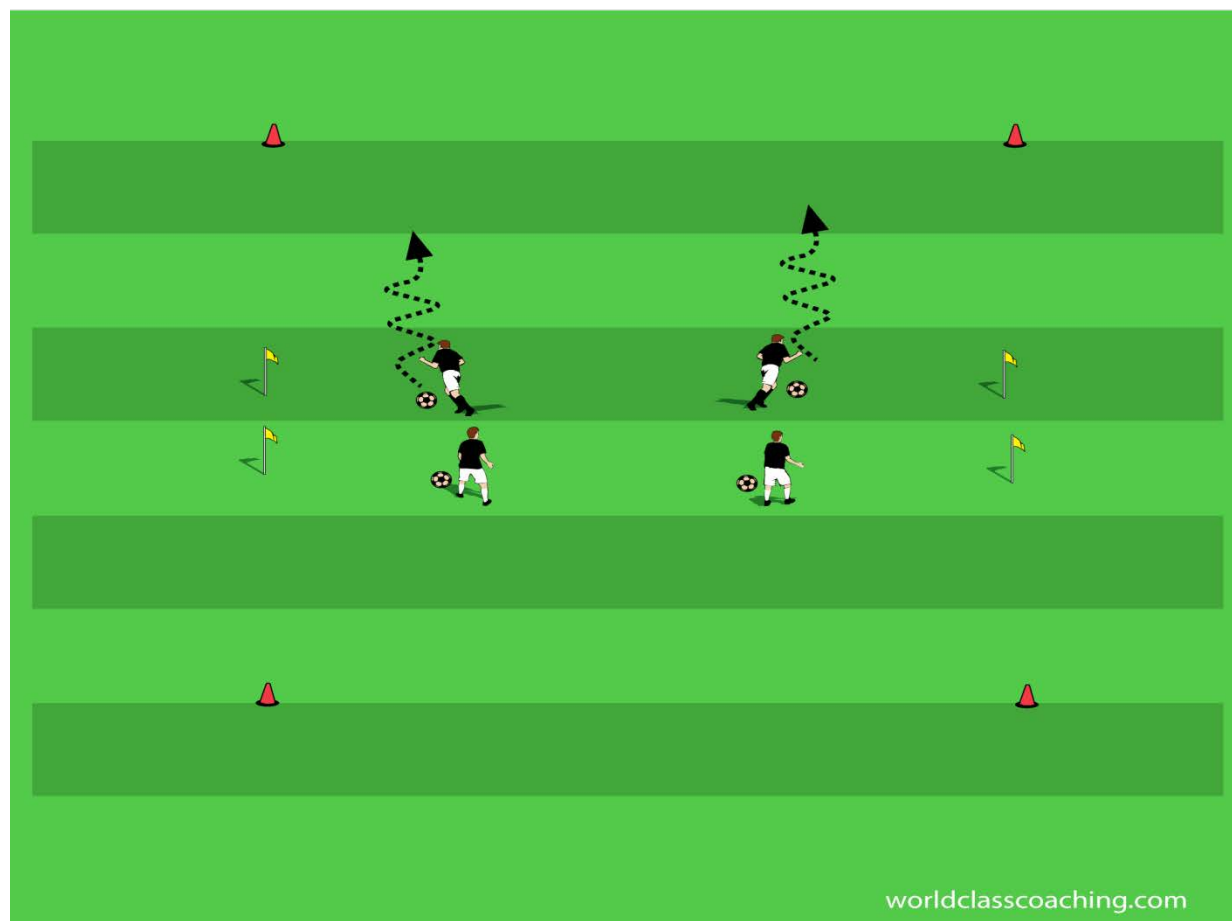
3v3 to goals - 20x25 yard fields

Play a standard 3v3 game to cone goals. Reinforce strong individual defending by awarding a point for a strong tackle and two points for a goal. After five minutes, just award a point for a goal and let the players play.

Training Session #3: Individual Attacking.

Introduction

Session#3 introduces a new attacking move while also reviewing basic moves and then puts to the test the attacker's ability to use the moves under pressure.



Crows and Cranes - 35x20 yard grid

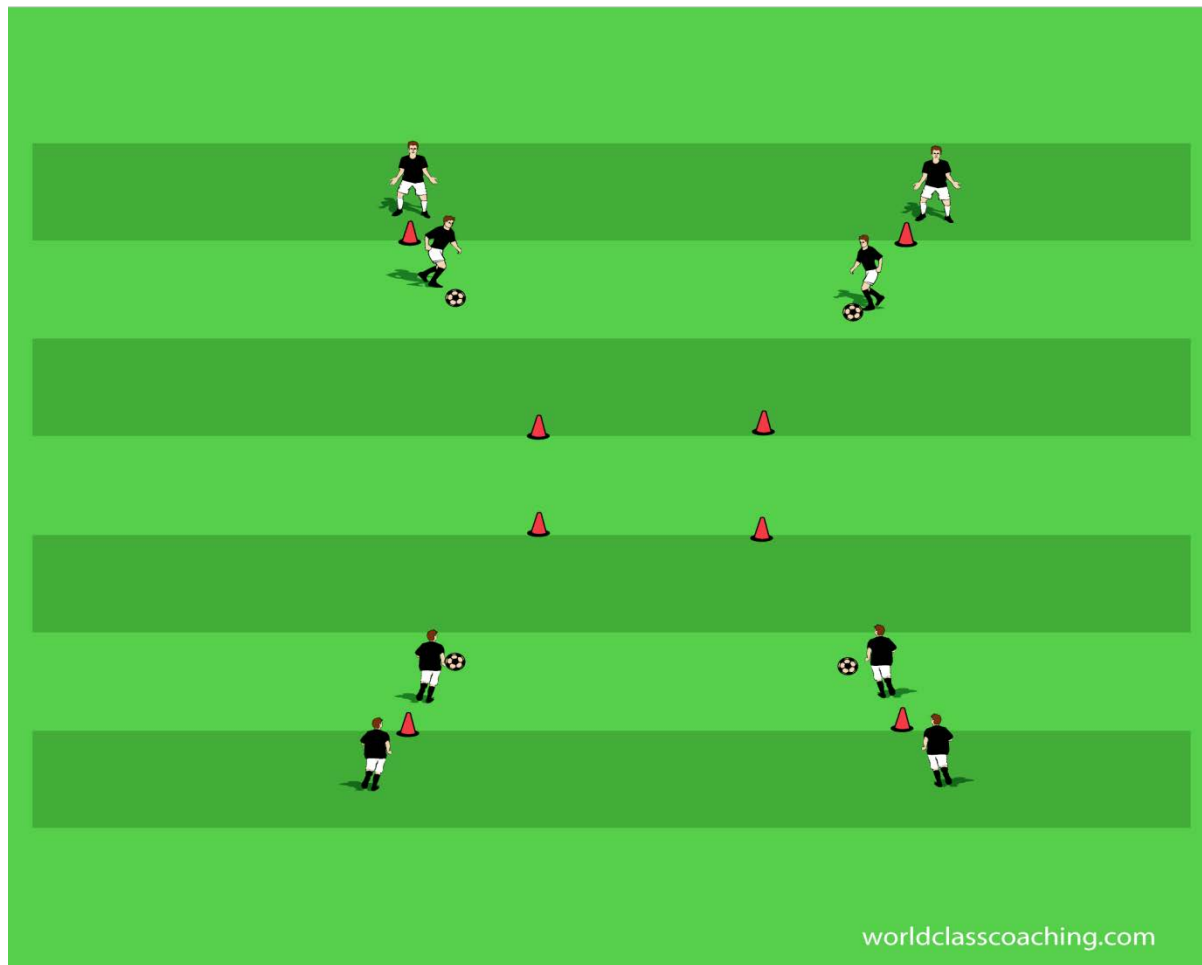
This game is used to assess/teach speed dribbling. Get the game started first, then go back and coach. Players pair up and each player has a ball. Explain that at a signal from the coach (pointing to one end-line or the other), the players on the side the coach points to dribble as fast as they can toward the end line on the open end of the grid. Their partners leave their balls and chase their partners, trying to tag them before they cross the end line. The winner earns a point. Reverse roles and play in the other direction. Play each way three times and check scores. Speed dribbling is used to cover open space as quickly as possible.

Here are the key teaching cues

- The first touch into space should be longer and taken with the laces. This allows the attacker to get into an explosive running rhythm.

- Subsequent touches are also with the laces and become progressively shorter as the attacker closes in on goal or another defender.

This skill needs to be practiced regularly so that players both recognize the opportunity to speed dribble and develop comfort with dribbling touches on their laces. Play the game again, this time adding the restriction that the dribbler must stop the ball on the end line to earn the point. This will compel the dribbler to shorten her touches at the end of the run.



Basic moves square - 22x22 yard grid

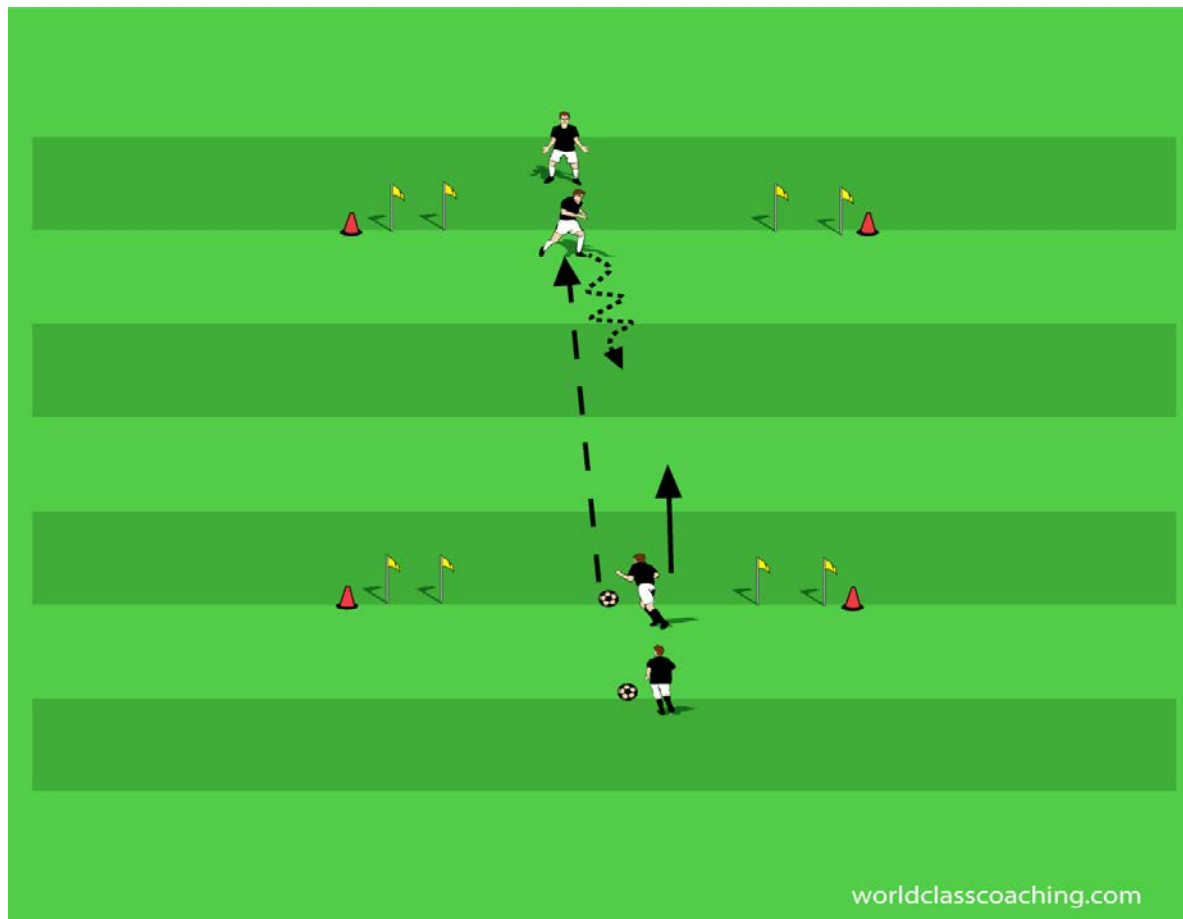
Divide the team into four equal groups and place them in lines (facing in) at the corners of the grid. Each player needs a ball. Explain that the purpose of this exercise is to allow players to practice basic attacking moves in a low pressure environment. The first player in each line dribbles toward the near corner of the inner grid and performs the basic attacking move before returning to the start point, where the next player enters the pattern. The coach stands in the inner grid and gives feedback to the working players.

The attacking moves and performance cues

- Inside of the foot cuts. The player dribbles to the cut point, turns her hips and shoulders and takes the ball with the inside of the lead foot, pulling the ball across the body and returning to the edge of the grid. Players need to bend their legs as they perform the move and accelerate

after performing the cut. Players should alternate the foot they use to cut the ball and advanced players should check their space (by looking over their shoulder while dribbling in toward the cut point) to be sure that the space is clear for the move.

- Outside of the foot cuts. The players dribble to the cut point and turn hips and shoulders as above. The player then reaches past the ball with their lead foot, and then takes the ball with the outside of the trailing foot. As with inside cuts, the players need to check their space before the cut and accelerate after the cut to clear tight space. The most common error with outside of the foot cuts is that players fail to reach the lead foot past the ball, creating an unstable platform for the cut and also limiting the potential for the fake that can be created through quick movement with the cut foot. Rotate the cut foot.
- Pull-back. As above, the players dribble to the inner cone. This time, they remained facing the cone. A pull-back is executed by placing one foot on top of the ball (reach the toes forward and down to increase control) and pivoting, pulling the pull-back side hip and shoulder back with the ball and turning before dribbling back to the start point. A pull-back must be preceded by a check of the space behind the attacker on the way into the grid and a sharp change of speed after the move is completed. Alternate the foot used to perform the pull-back.
- Hook turn. Turn and get shoulder-on to the cone. Use the bottom of the foot closest to the cone to pull the ball across in front of the standing foot while hopping and turning back toward the start point.



1v1 to 4 cone goals - 20x20 yard grid

The above move set is designed to be both simple to learn and also to give players a means to changing directions to create space. Often these moves do not eliminate opponents, but they allow a player to move in a new direction and reset their options. This game allows players to practice the move set under pressure, and the players will find that when followed by a sharp change of speed, the moves in this set can help them eliminate a single opponent as well. Divide the team into two groups and line them up at opposite ends of the grid. Provide a ball supply for one group. The first player in line with a ball begins the duel by passing to the first player in line at the other end of the grid. The active players then duel with an eye toward dribbling the ball through either of the goals on their opponent's endline. The duel lasts as long as the ball stays in the grid, and players return to their group's line and play again. The availability of multiple goals should encourage the use of the moves set practiced above. Give each team a point for every goal scored. Play for five minutes and then switch the ball supply to the other team and play again.

2v2 to 4 cone goals - 20x20 yard grid

This exercise is just an expansion of the above environment. Encourage players to use cuts and pull-backs to set up a pass to their partner and to open up the field.

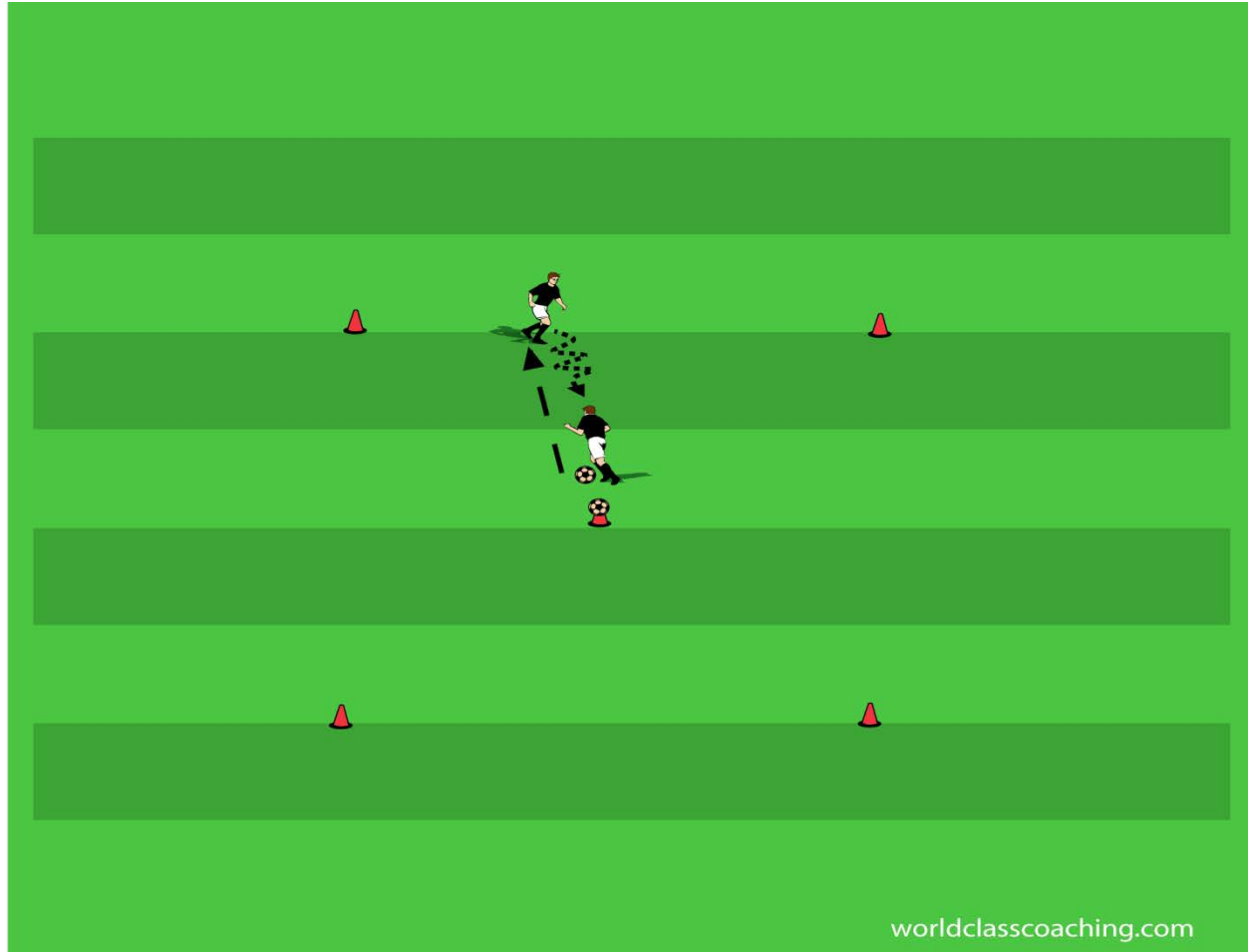
3v3 to cone goals - 30x25 yard fields

Play a small-sided scrimmage without restrictions. Place small cone goals on the end lines and encourage the players to continue to practice the move set introduced in the session.

Training Session #4: Individual Defending.

Introduction

This session focuses on the individual player's ability to close down and poke tackle an opponent.



1v1 to a cone/ball goal - 10x10 yard grids

Players work in pairs in 10x10 yard grids with two balls. Place one ball on top of a disc cone and give the other ball to one player. The attacker can start play anywhere on the perimeter of the grid. The attacker attempts to dribble the ball past the other player, who is the defender, and use her ball to knock the other ball off of the cone. Each time she does this, she earns a point. If the defender wins the ball, she must dribble to the perimeter of the grid and restart play and the roles change. Play for three minutes and check scores. It is important that the coach encourage the defender to come out and challenge the attacker and not just wait by the cone.

Review closing down and jockeying - 30x20 yard area

Players work in pairs with one soccer ball. Put one player with the ball on the endline and the other player starts twelve yards away (all groups should work at once and be lined up in similar fashion). At a signal from the coach, the partners without the ball make bent runs and “shut down” their partner with the ball. The partner with the ball begins to slowly dribble straight ahead, allowing the defender to

practice jockeying. Do not allow either the attacker to dribble past the defender or the defender to tackle at this stage. When the players reach the far side of the grid, they change roles. Be sure to reinforce proper jockeying, changing footwork, and a focus on the ball in particular.

Fake tackle

The defender must work to force the attacker to focus on the ball and one way to keep the attacker from getting comfortable is to fake tackle. This is accomplished with a sharp step forward by the jockeying player, with a short transfer of weight to the front foot to simulate a tackling motion. The defender must be careful to do this when there is sufficient space between her and the defender so as not to jeopardize her ability to stay goal-side. Practice this action by requiring a fake tackle inside of the practice runs outlined above.

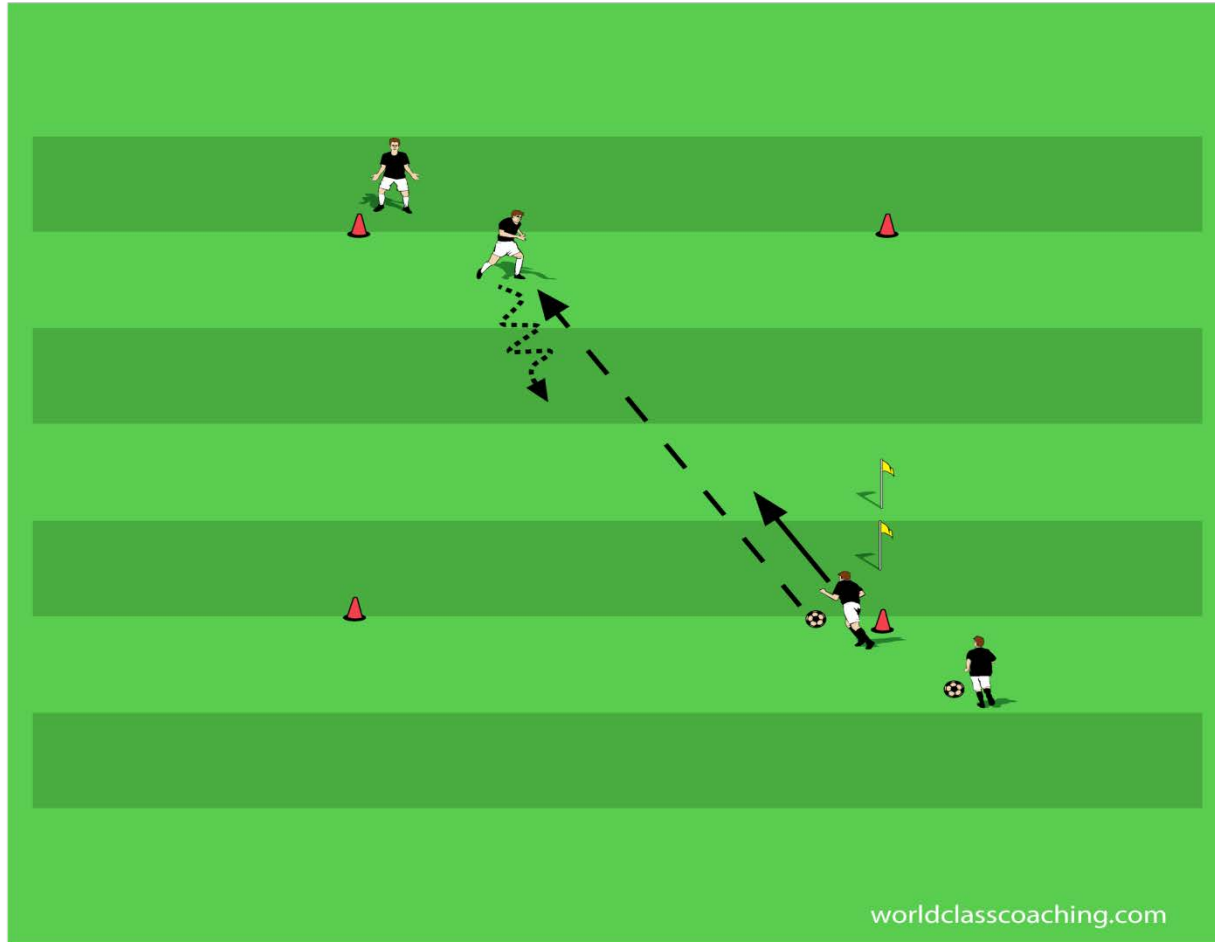
Poke Tackle - 12x12 yard grids

Remind players that there are three basic forms of tackle in soccer: Block, poke and slide. The block tackle has already been covered in an earlier session, and it is useful to begin by reminding players that block tackling requires contacting the ball simultaneously with the attacker and trapping the ball between two players. Therefore, it is often used in tight space. The poke tackle, by contrast, is set up differently and also more useful, in general, in more space.

Here are the cues for poke tackling:

- The approach (shutting down) and the use of jockeying to contain and control attackers is the same as with the block tackle.
- To poke tackle, defenders must look for a touch that moves the ball off of the foot of the attacker to a point where the defender can step in and literally “poke” the ball out of the attacker’s path.
- There is some debate as to which foot is the preferred one to use for the poke tackle. Out of the jockeying position, the front foot is easier to disguise and allows for easier recovery in case of a failed tackle, but it is also more likely to cause a foul, as it is closer to the attacker’s feet and a tangle often leads to a call against the defender. The rear foot, on the other hand, is more difficult to disguise and a miss will often put the defender in a wrong-foot position, facing up field (usually having lost goal-side position), but it is easier to avoid contact with the attacker using this foot. Most players use the front foot, but it is useful to point out both the advantages and disadvantages of using either foot to players learning the poke tackle.

Train on the poke tackle by having players set up in 12x12 grids. Put two players on one end (in line) and two on the other end. Give one group a supply of balls. The first player with a ball passes to the first player on the other end of the grid and then closes down jockies the attacker. For the first two minutes, have the attackers take a couple of short touches and then a longer touch to help set up the tackle. Once the tackle is made, the two players change ends and the other pair duel. Encourage the defenders to utilize fake tackles as well and to learn to feel the distance needed to both remain goalside and also apply pressure and make good tackles.



1v1 to a side flag goal - 10x10 yard grids

Organize players in groups of 4-6 per grid, with a ball supply at one end of the grid. Put an equal number of players in lines at each end of the grid. The lines are organized on opposite corners of the grid this time. Play is live as long as the ball remains inside the grid. The first player on the end where the balls are organized initiates re-starts by passing to the first player on the other end of the grid. These duels teach players how to deal with a defender in limited space, changing speed and direction on the ball, jockeying and tackling skills and much more. The side flag goal can be used to introduce the idea of “goal side,” which is a reference to the need for the defender to stay between the ball and the goal. If the defender wins the ball, she still attempts to dribble out her opponent’s end of the grid for a point. For the attacker, she must now consider how to attack a more limited space and goal. After each duel, players change ends. Play for two minutes and check scores.

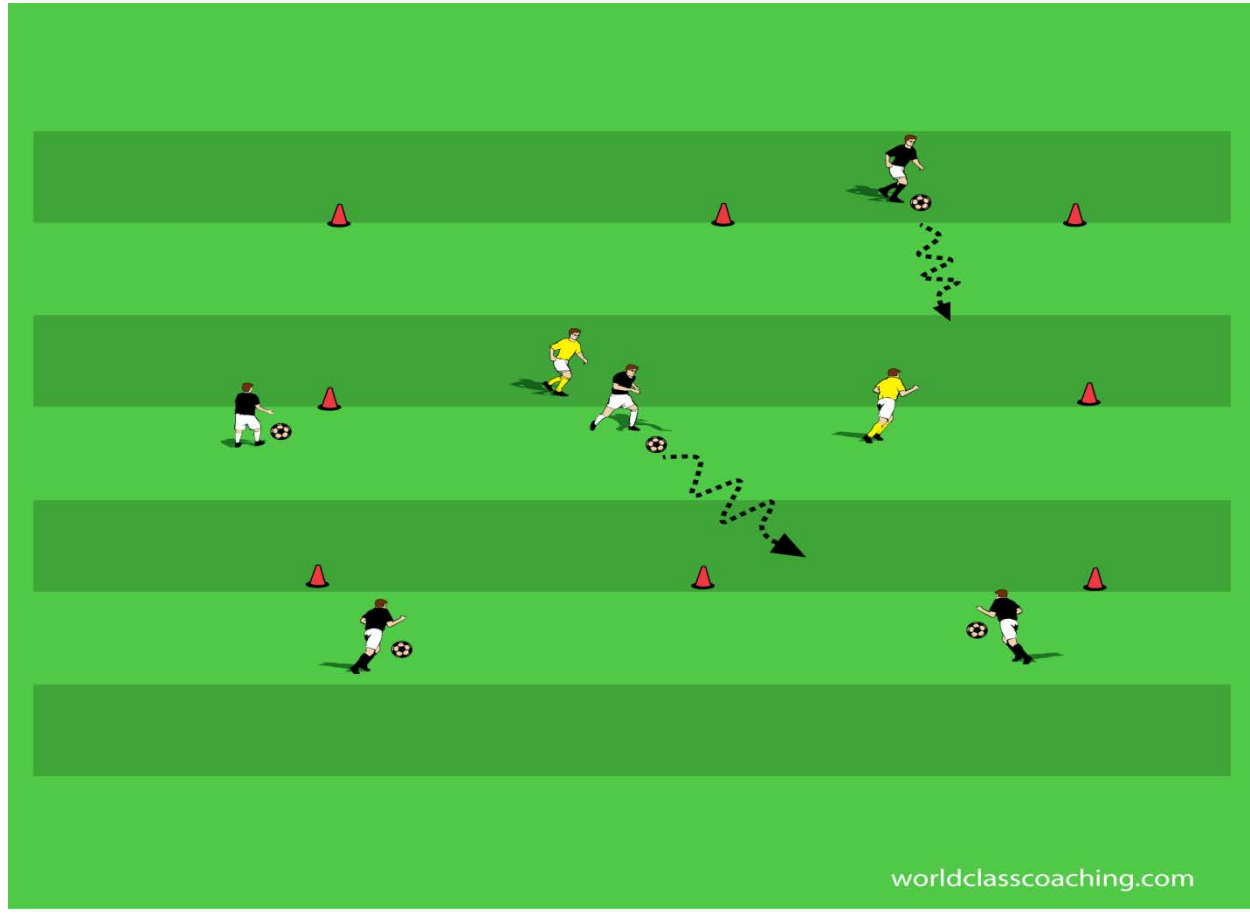
3v3 to cone goals - 25x30 yard fields

Continue the theme of playing small-sided games early in the training process. Play 3v3 to small endline goals. For the first five minutes, award a point for a good poke tackle and two points for a goal. If there are multiple games, rotate teams and implement tournament scoring (i.e. total points over all games played). Then simplify the rules to just grant a point for a goal and let the players play for the remainder of the session.

Training Session #5: Individual Attacking.

Introduction

Session#5 introduces speed moves that players can use to get in behind a defender. These moves are trained in isolation and then tested in game situations.



Alligator Alley - 20x20 grid

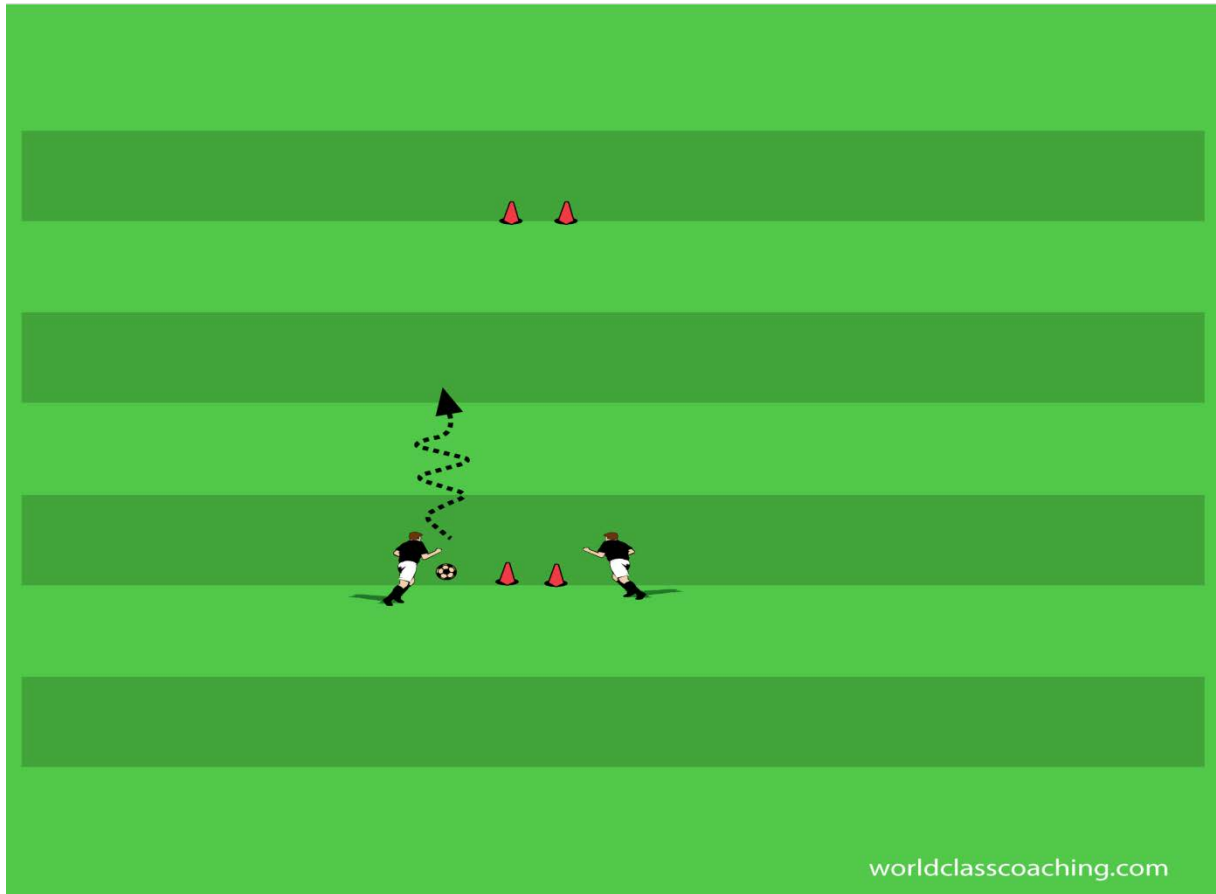
This is a fun warm-up game used to get players focused on 1v1 play. Select three “alligators” who enter the smaller, central grid (see diagram). These players do not have soccer balls. Explain that the central grid is the “alley” and that the alligators are confined to this space. The rest of the players each have a ball and they spread out around the perimeter of the central grid. The object of the game for the players with balls is to dribble across the alley as many times as possible without losing their ball to the alligators. Players earn one point for dribbling across the narrow length of the grid and three points for dribbling the longer length of the grid (see diagram). The alligators earn one point for each ball they kick out the grid. Players who lose their ball in the alley are not eliminated. They must sprint to get their ball and try again. Play for two minutes and then check scores. Ask players what the attackers have to do well to be successful in this game (see space; change directions and speeds; keep their ball close). Make the high scorers the new alligators and play a second game.

Speed moves - 30x30 yard area

Players work in fours, with each player needing a soccer ball. Place two cones ten yards apart and start the players in two lines on either side of one of the cones (the lines face the other cone – see diagram). Explain that the moves in this set are designed to be used as speed moves and this environment will allow them to train both the moves and also performing the moves at speed. In the first phase, two players work at once (one from each line and on opposite sides of the cones). The players work on performing the moves and then sharply changing speed to get out of the grid, all without defensive pressure.

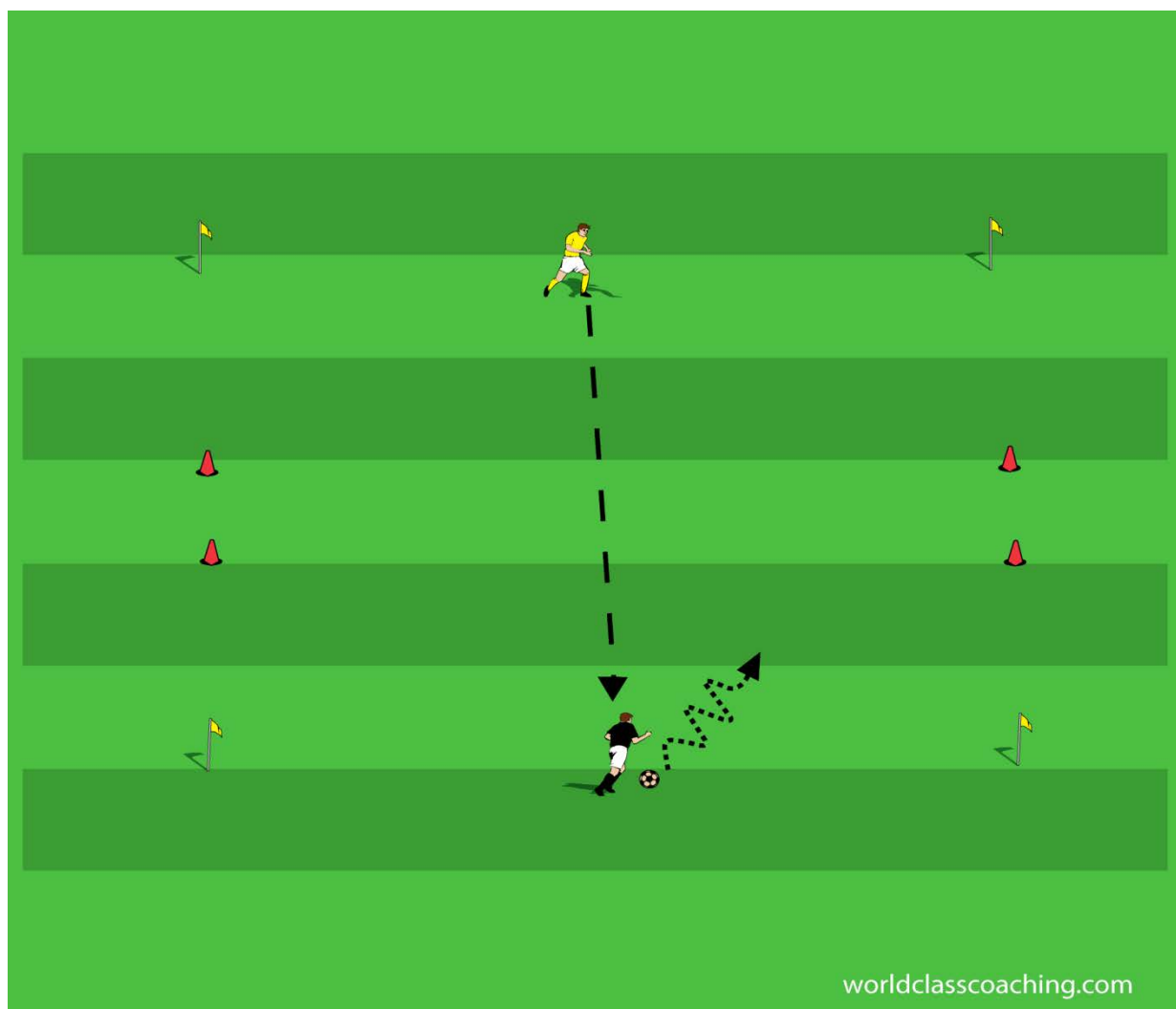
Here is the move set:

- **High wave.** This move is simple to perform in that the ball is not affected by the fake and the quality of the move is dependent only on the quality of the leg fake. The player dribbles between the cones and at the mid-way point, pushes the ball forward with the away foot and then lifts that foot as if to step on the ball, but then quickly explodes forward past the far cone. The idea here is that the movement to step on the ball must be convincing so that the defender pauses, allowing the attacker to pull away with a burst of speed. Players should practice one foot and then the other as they move back to the start point.
- **Step- on and go.** This move is similar to the high wave except that the attacker actually does step on the ball with away foot. Then, in quick succession, the player quickly pulls the foot back behind the ball and explodes forward. Once again, the rationale is that stepping on the ball will momentarily freeze the defender, allowing the attacker to break away. As with the high wave, players should practice the move with the away foot moving across the grid and then change the step-on foot on the way back to the starting point.
- **Double cut.** Here the attacker dribbles half-way to the far cone before cutting the ball with the inside of the foot, and after rotating the hips and shoulders and taking a step, the attacker cuts the ball with the inside of the foot again and accelerates to the far cone. This move is designed to get the defender to react to the first cut and then lose her with the second cut. It is important to note that this move can be performed both facing the defender and facing away from the defender.
- **Behind the heel cut.** This move is similar to an inside of the foot cut. The attacker pushes the ball into the grid and at the midpoint between cones, turns hips and shoulders to face the defender (use the other working player as the defender in this case). Then the attacker plants the trailing foot behind the ball but far enough forward so that the ball can pass behind it. It is critical that the trailing (plant) foot be pointed at the defender, as this maximizes the fake. The lead foot then reaches around the ball and using the inside surface, pulls the ball behind the standing foot. Then the player accelerates back to the starting point in the grid. This move is best when it is well “sold.” The lead foot should be raised heel first to accentuate its movement and create the impression that the ball will be kicked before the pull behind the standing foot is made. Players need to practice this move a great deal to make it effective, but it is very useful as the ball is not exposed to the defender during the cut. The pairs should work on the move using one foot for three minutes and then change sides so that they can train the other foot.



Mirrors speed moves - 30x30 yard area

Using the same set-up, now allow the players to practice the move set with light pressure. Players line up as before, but now only one player has a ball (her partner is on the other side of the cones without a ball). The player with the ball dribbles forward between the cones. The player without the ball shadows her movements. The players must remain on their own side of the cone line (no tackling) and the object for the attacker is to use the speed move set to wrong-foot the defender and then run past either cone before the defender can get to that same cone. After the duel is done, the resting pair play and the players alternate roles. Encourage players to be creative and to combine the speed moves to wear down and defeat the defender. The attackers earn a point only if they dribble beyond the cone before the defender can race beyond that same cone. The defender must mirror the attacker's movements until the attacker decides to make a run to get beyond either cone. Play for five minutes and check scores.



1v1 speed duels - 10x20 yard grids

Players begin on opposite sides of the grid as pictured. The defender passes to the attacker and the attacker tries to dribble through either end goal. Encourage players to experiment with speed moves in the wide grid. If the defender wins the ball, she tries to score in the same fashion. Play until the ball leaves the grid and then change roles.

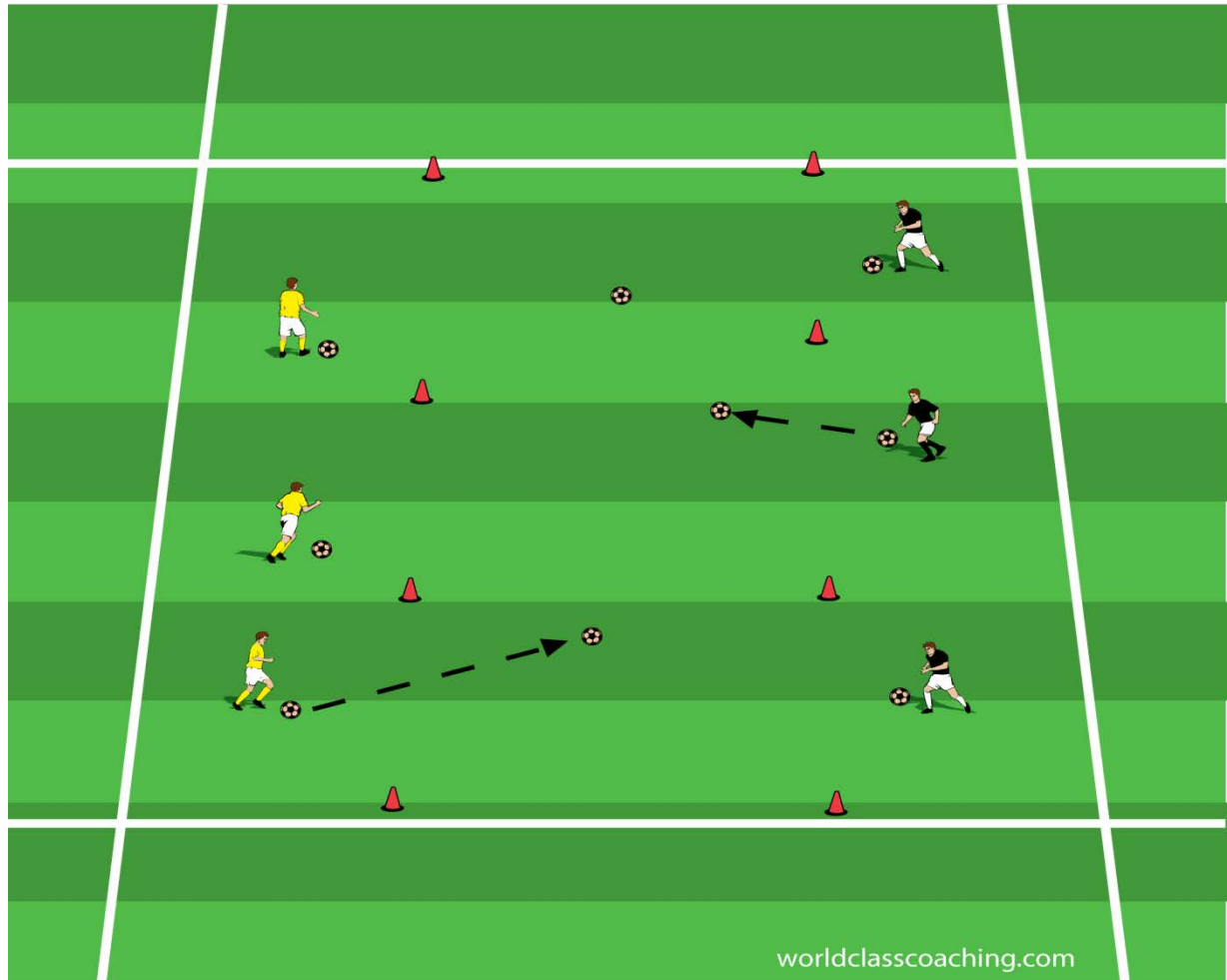
4 goal soccer - 30x35 yard fields Play 3v3 four-goal soccer.

Place goals on the end lines near the corners of a 30x35 yard field. This area is big for the numbers and the placement of goals in the corners will create situations where the attackers will need to run the ball forward and use speed moves to beat opponents. Encourage players to use the moves by awarding one point for a sharp speed move and two points for a goal. After ten minutes, remove the reward for the moves and just give one point per goal. If there are multiple games, play in a tournament (i.e. total points), rotating the teams through several games. At the end of the session, check to see which team compiled the most points.

Training Session #6: Passing and Receiving.

Introduction

This session reviews technical passing in high-repetition environments and then adds a tactical element to encourage players to make good choices as they pass.



Cue ball - 25x12 yard area

Put a ball (or two) of a distinctive color in the middle of the grid. Put a ball supply in each end zone and put half of the players in each of the end zones. Explain that the goal of the game is to pass a ball from the end zone to strike the ball in the center. The target ball must be knocked into the opposing end zone to earn a point. Players may only enter the center area to retrieve a ball. If the target ball is knocked into a team's end zone, they pick it up and run it back to the center and play continues. Teams may kick a cue ball at a target ball rolling toward their end zone in an effort to keep it from crossing the line. Play for five minutes and then check scores.

Pairs passing and receiving - 20x20 yard area

Line players up in pairs with one soccer ball along a line on the field. One player stands on the line while her partner stands four yards away and facing her.

First, review the key technical points for short passing:

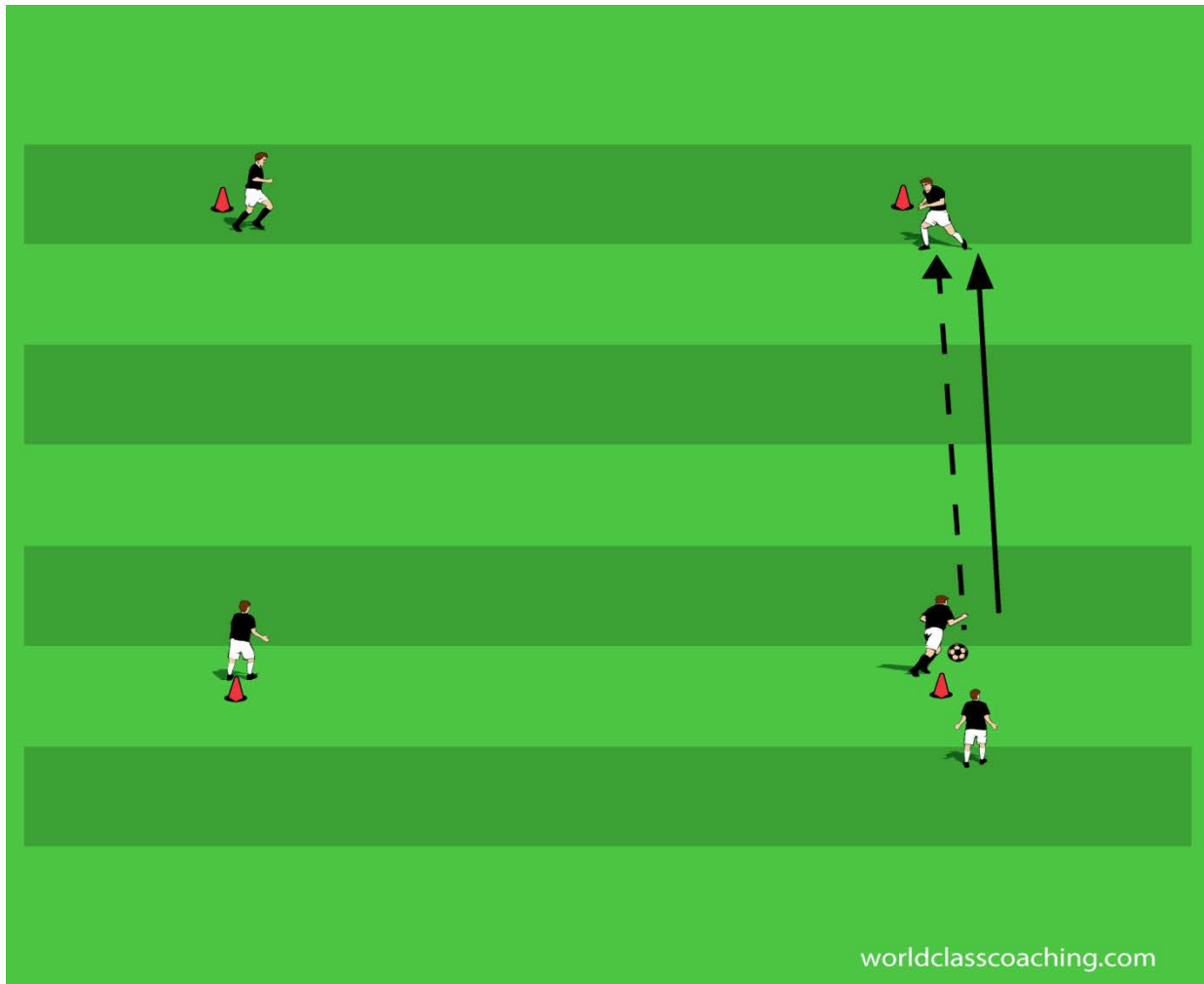
- Find a comfortable, yet locked position for the knee and ankle of the passing foot before striking the ball (i.e. use the hip as the point of rotation). This creates both power and consistency.
- The plant foot should face the target. This allows for more fluid motion and also more accurate passing.
- the striking surface is the long inside of the foot. The toes should be slightly elevated and, relatedly, the heel lowered. This posture creates a better control surface.
- The striking point on the ball is the center back. Players should diagnose the missed strikes by watching the path and spin of the ball. If the ball hops off the ground, the striking point is too low. If the ball skids unevenly along the ground, then the player topped the ball, striking too high. Similarly, side spin on the ball indicates that the player struck inside or outside of center on the back of the ball.
- The follow-through is a critical component of accurate passing. Players must learn in this isolated technical work to “hold” their foot at the very end of the strike on the follow through. This hold reinforces a proper striking form and also the idea of following through with an eye toward pointing the striking foot at the target.

Players pass and receive with a focus on proper striking of the ball. Insist that players alternate the foot they use to pass the ball. Play for one minute. At this early point in the progression, encourage the players to stop the ball as they receive so that they are striking a standing ball.

Now review the key technical cues for receiving.

It is useful to look at receiving as being the reverse of passing.

- As in passing, the ankle and knee are locked, although suppleness in receiving requires a softer posture than striking. The hips and shoulders must be “open” (facing) the ball as it arrives.
- Begin with the follow-through used to strike the ball in passing. Here, one presents one’s foot in front of the body to “welcome” the ball.
- Once again, the receiving foot must be presented as a low heel and elevated toes to allow for a surface that will prevent the ball from bouncing.
- As the ball is received, players must learn to cushion it and take speed out of the ball without actually stopping it (see cue #5).
- In good soccer, it is said, the ball never stops. Ideally, the ball must be prepared for release in a single touch. If players stop the ball between their feet, they will need two more touches to release the ball, allowing defenders time to close and tackle. Therefore, players must learn to use their first touch to push the ball forward and outside of their hips and shoulders so that the next touch can be a pass if needed. This is done by sharply turning the hips in particular at the moment of reception. This change of angle allows players to avoid pressure and eventually prepare the ball in the direction they are planning to play.
- Players return to passing with their partner. Observe their ability to maintain good technical form in both passing and receiving. Play for two minutes, emphasizing that all players need to alternate the foot they use both for passing and receiving.



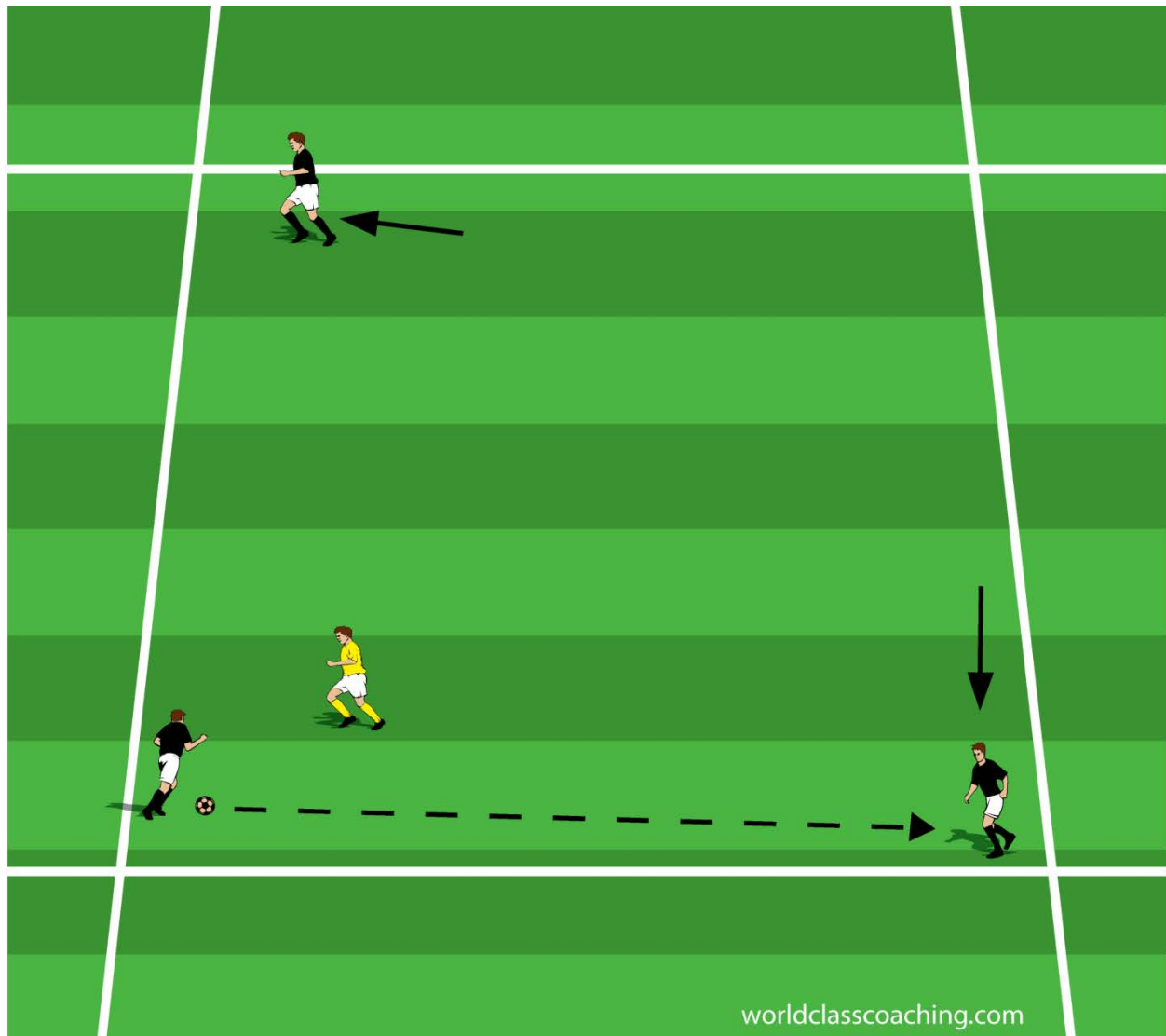
Pass and follow square - 12x12 yard grids

Build enough grids so that there are at least five players in each work area. Start by putting players at each corner cone of the grid (one per cone at three corners and the remainder in line behind the fourth cone, where the ball starts as well). The player with the ball plays clockwise to the player at the next corner of the grid and then follows her pass, and the pattern is established. Players pass and follow.

Coaching Points

- Although there is some movement, this is still a fairly low pressure exercise. The concentration here must be on continued good form in passing and also receiving.
- Explain that the receiving player should get the ball as early as possible while remaining near the cone (i.e. establish the habit of moving to the ball) and that early and sharp preparation of the ball is necessary. The ball must also now be moved in a particular direction, so for now, players should be receiving with the inside of their right foot and playing across their bodies to prepare to pass with their left foot.
- As play improves, increase the pressure slightly by encouraging players to pass with more pace.
- After two minutes, reverse the direction of play (the ball should travel counter-clockwise). Now players should receive with their left foot and pass with their right.

- Now go back to playing clockwise and ask the passing player to target the left, or leading foot on the player they are passing to (see diagram). This will require players to receive with the inside of their left foot and pass with that same surface. After two minutes, revert to playing counter-clockwise and instruct players to play with their right foot. Players should notice that this last variation is better soccer in the sense that the receiving player's work is much easier if the ball is passed into the lane where they intend to play.



3 vs. 1 passing in a grid - 12x12 yard grids

Build grids so that there are enough to place groups of four with one soccer ball. Start with players on three of the corner cones and one player, the defender, in the middle. Demonstrate with one group. Explain that in this environment, players must pass only to the corner cones and that all passes must travel along the perimeter of the grid. Similarly, the attackers may only move along the perimeter of the grid. The defender may move freely within the area of the grid. Start the ball in a corner with one of the attackers. Show that the attacker must always have two passing options available by moving the attackers not in possession to the adjacent corners of the grid. Begin the exercise by having the defender work at $\frac{1}{2}$ speed so that the attackers get a rhythm and lots of repetition. If the defender wins

the ball, have her return it to any of the attacking players. Rotate the defender every minute. After every player has taken a turn at the defender role, play through again, this time with the defender playing full speed after the first pass. Once again, if the defender wins the ball, she should return it to one of the perimeter players to restart play. This exercise is useful both to give some technical pressure to both passing and receiving, and also to begin the tactical building blocks of movement off of the ball and creating useful passing angles.

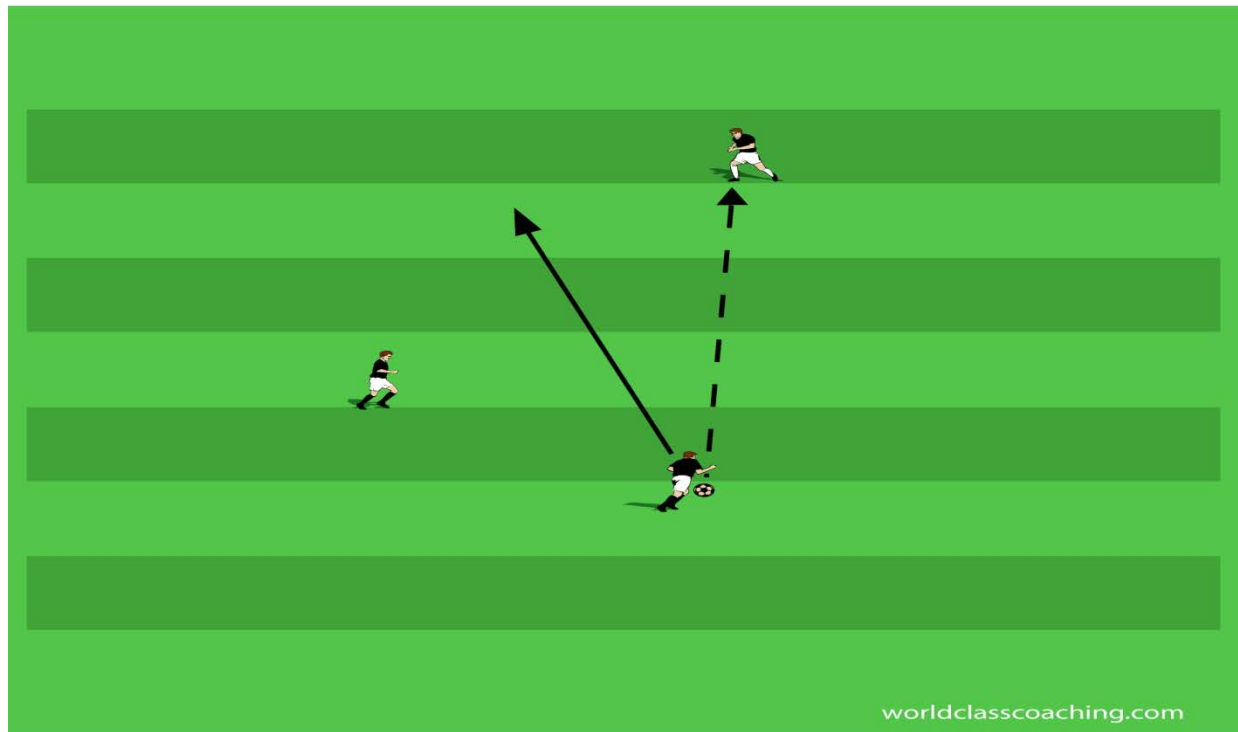
3v3 game to cone goals - 20x25 yard fields

Play 3v3 games. For the first five minutes require teams in possession to complete three consecutive passes before they can score. Then remove the restriction and let the players play.

Training Session #7: Passing and Receiving.

Introduction

This session emphasizes passing in combination with movement in small groups, and also looks at making the first receiving touch productive to avoid pressure.

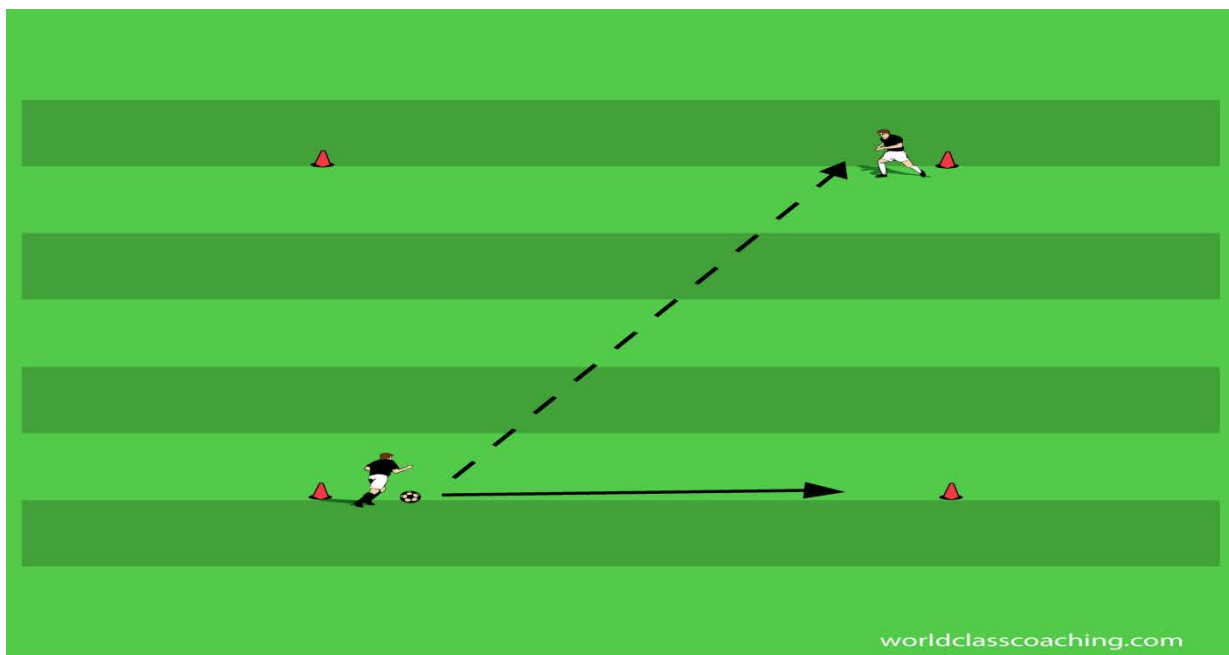


Triangle pass and receive - ½ field

Organize players in groups of three with one soccer ball for each group. Demonstrate with one group. The player with the ball passes to either of the other group members and then runs between them to create a new triangle.

Additional coaching points and variations:

- Players should sprint after making the pass (the player who just released the ball is typically the least-marked player on the field).
- Limit the players to two touches in possession and encourage them to use their first touch to set the ball in the direction in which they intend to pass with their second touch.
- The receiving player should check to (that is come to meet) the ball.
- Before receiving the ball, the player who is the next target should move away from the ball and then check back (this movement will pull a close-marking defender away from the ball and create space in which she can receive).
- Require players to pass and receive with their off foot for ½ of the exercise.
- Both eye and verbal communication should be mandatory for both the passer and the target.

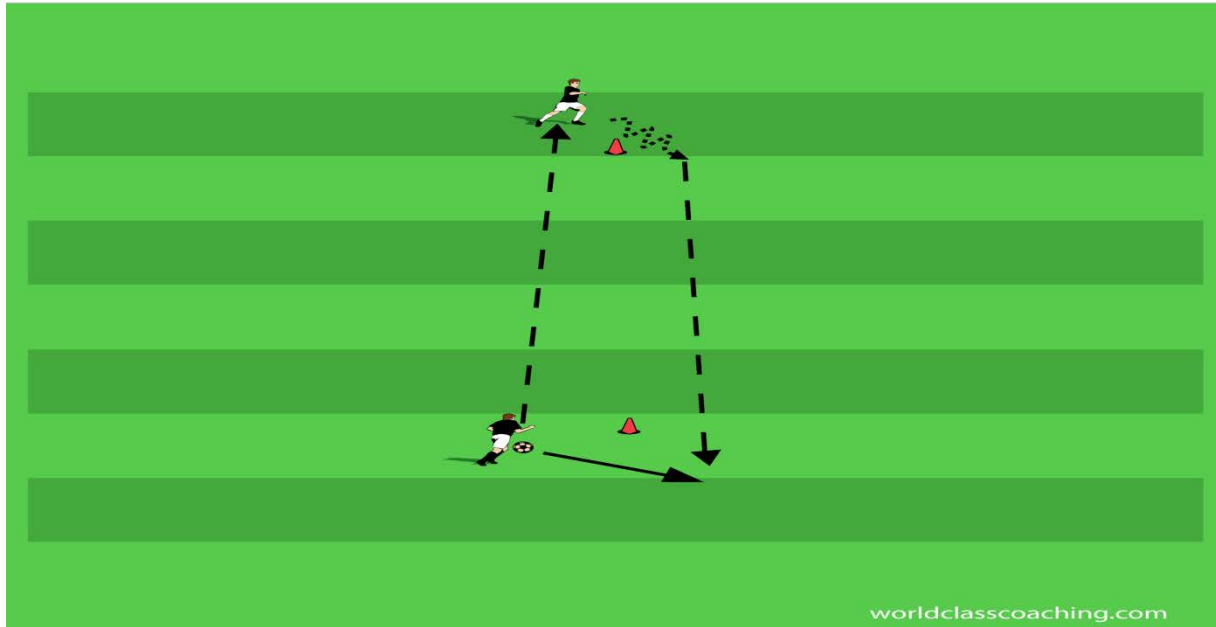


Angled passing in a grid - 10x10 yard grids

Build enough grids so players can work in pairs. Demonstrate with one group. Players start at opposite corners of the grid (see diagram). One player has the ball. This player passes at an angle to her partner, who receives with one touch and then plays straight ahead to her partner, who has sprinted over to the opposite corner on her end of the grid. After each pass, the players sprint to the other corner on their end, so that one player always plays straight and one at an angle.

Coaching Cues and Progression

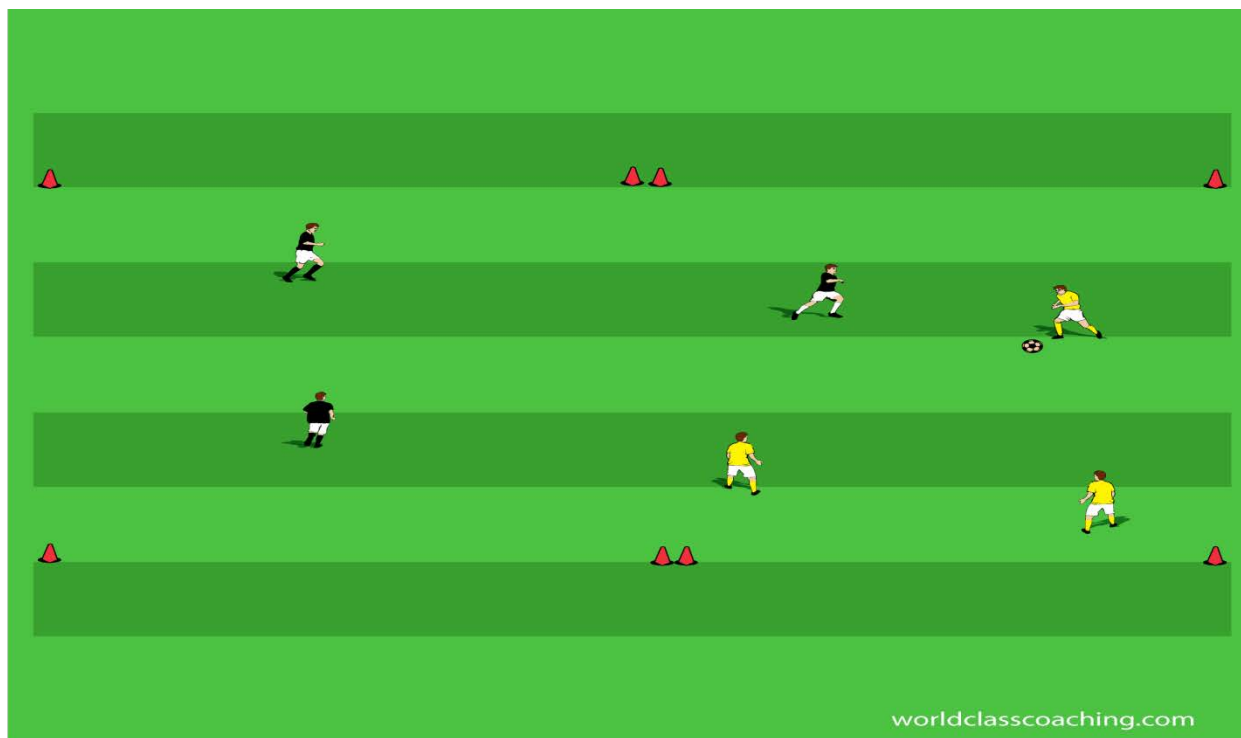
- Having the players sprint to a pre-determined point compels them to learn to play to a moving target. It's a bit easier because they are still playing to a fixed point, but there is still timing involved and players should learn to play with a sense of rhythm.
- The pace of the pass is critical. If they play too hard and/or too early, play will break down. If they delay or play with insufficient pace, their partner will be waiting for the ball at the cone, and the coach must encourage players to find the proper pace.
- The preparation touch is also important. Players must prepare the ball in the direction in which they intend to play. The first touch must get the ball out of their feet to allow them to play the proper ball on a consistent basis.
- Play for two minutes and then have the players change roles (i.e. so that the player who was playing straight ahead is now playing at an angle and vice versa).
- Play a second round, encouraging players to use one touch where possible. They will need to take a bit of pace off of the ball to allow the runner time to get to the cone.



Teaching preparation touches 10x10 yard grids Players work in pairs around two cones place seven yards apart. Demonstrate with one group. This exercise is designed to compel players to use their first touch to set up a pass with their second touch. Players start on the same side of their cones. The player with the ball passes straight ahead to her partner who receives about a yard behind her cone. The receiving touch must be played at a forward angle behind the cone so that receiving player can then step around the cone and forward to pass along the other side of the cone back to her partner and the pattern continues. This type of receiving forms good habits for both playing away from pressure and also getting the ball out of the receiver's feet with her first touch.

More Coaching Points

- Players should pass with their right foot and receive with their left to start.
- After three minutes, change the pattern so that players pass with their left and receive with their right.
- To help players learn to play forward at an angle, show them how to turn their hips at the moment of contact with the ball.
- Players will need to be reminded that they must start behind the cone, as many tend to creep up and make it difficult to have a useful angle behind the cone.



3 vs. 3 functioning as 3 vs. 1 - back-to-back 15x15 yard grids

Play 3 vs. 3 functioning as 3 vs. 1. Build two grids back-to-back and place teams of three in each grid (one team in vests). Demonstrate with one set of teams. Put a ball in one grid and explain that the team in the grid needs to try to keep the ball in possession as long as possible through dribbling and passing. The other team (in the adjacent grid) sends in one player to try to win the ball (if she wins it, she passes it back to her team in the other grid and the teams switch roles. The coach should keep a supply of balls outside the perimeter where the two grids join and every time the ball leaves the area, the coach plays a new ball into either grid to restart play.

Coach/Observe

- The teams will tend to stand close together in possession. Through a demonstration, show that players who are more spread out in the grid can make longer passes and more easily maintain possession.
- Encourage players to work hard off of the ball to create angles where they can receive the ball.
- Players should learn to anticipate the angle they will use to pass the ball and then use their first touch to prepare the ball in that direction.
- If one player is unable to win the ball as the defender, release a second player to enter the grid to help win the ball.

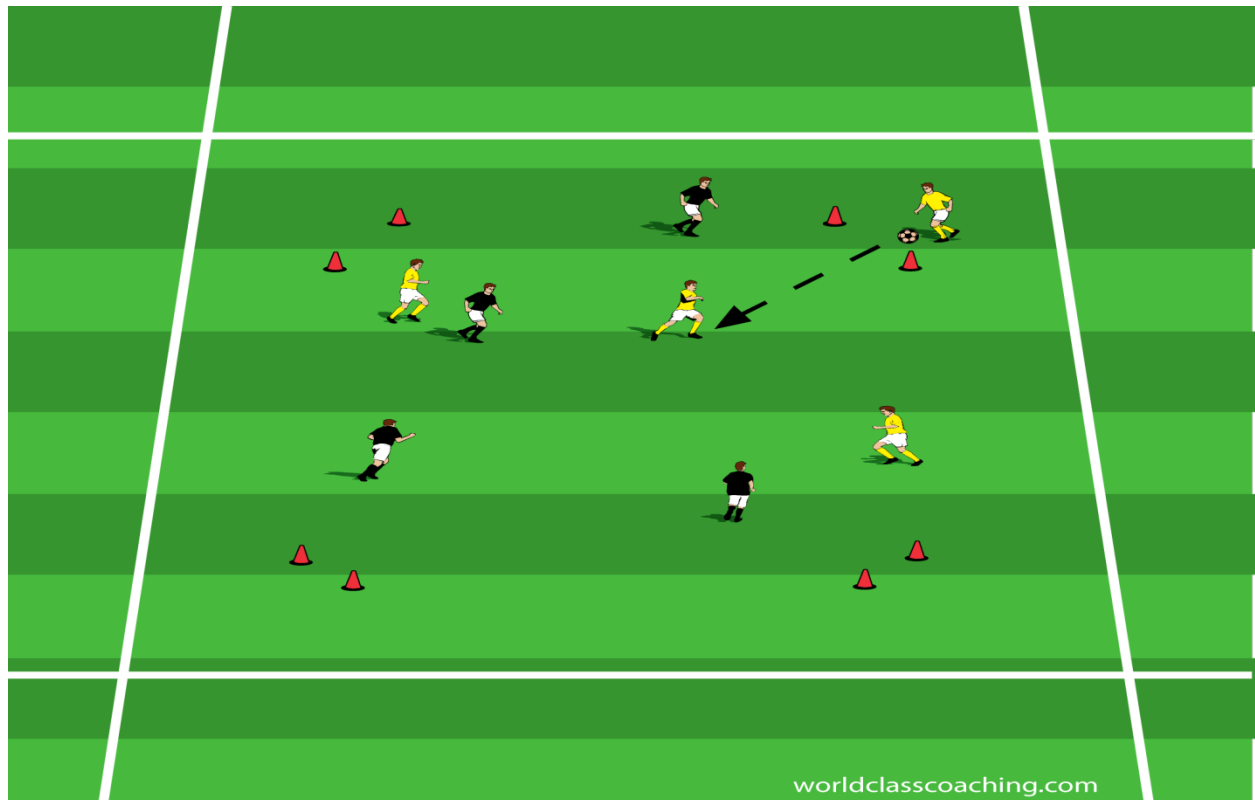
3 vs. 3 line soccer - 20x25 yard fields

Play 3 vs. 3 line soccer. The objective of the game is to possess the ball with an eye toward passing the ball to a team member on or over the opponents' endline. Require two passes in possession before a scoring pass can be attempted. Reinforce the importance of quality passing, receiving and running off of the ball under pressure.

Training Session #8: Possession.

Introduction

Session#8 offers more technical passing and also debuts no pressure possession in a progression designed to improve group awareness and cohesion in possession.



Gates - 30x30 yard grid

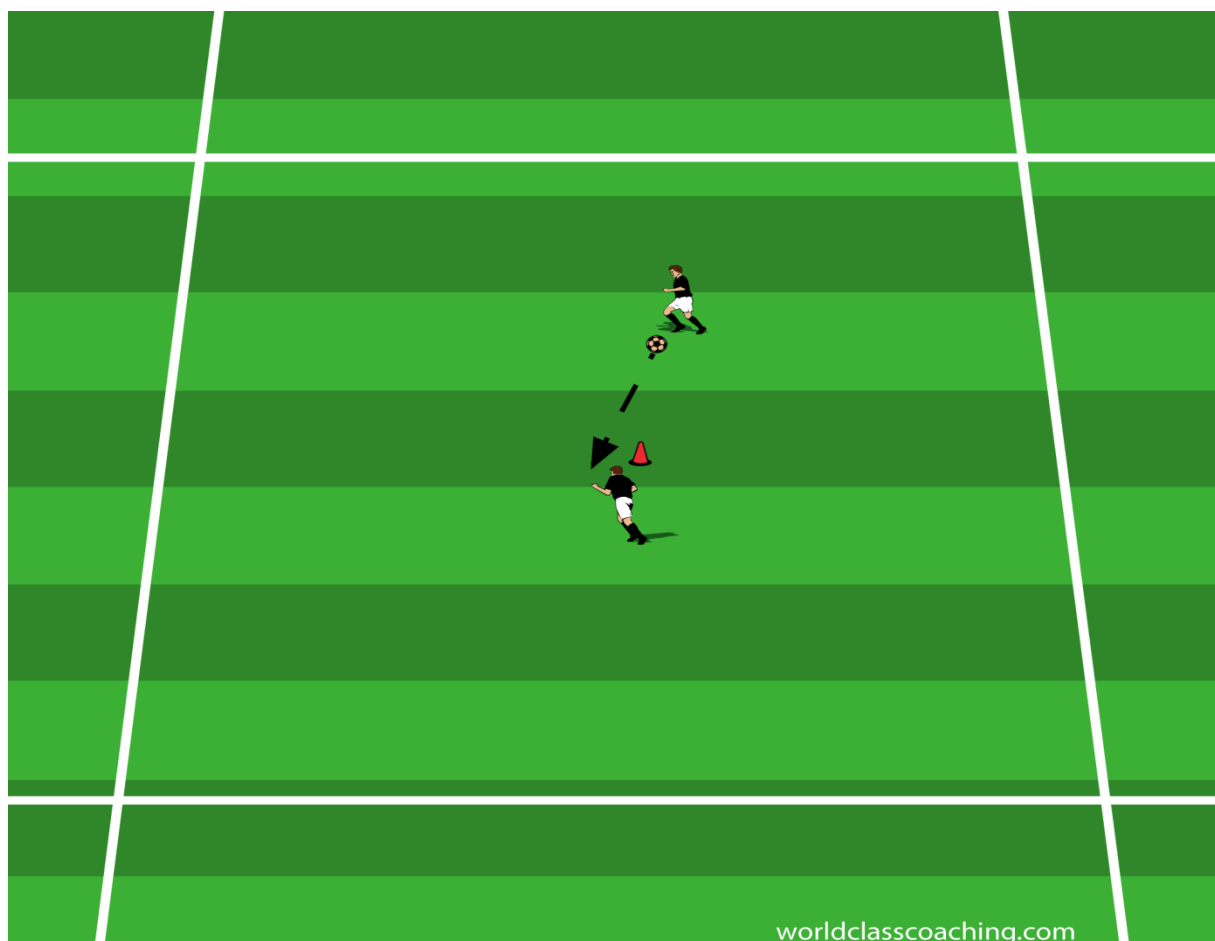
Create two equal teams (one in vests). The coach will need to have a supply of balls near the perimeter of the grid for restarting play when the ball leaves the grid. The two teams play a possession game inside the grid with the goal of passing the ball through any of the “gates” (pairs of cones one yard apart scattered throughout the grid as shown in the diagram).

Rules and coaching points:

- To score, a pass must travel through a gate and be received by a teammate on the other side.
- Explain to the players before beginning that it is very easy to defend a single gate as a defender can simply stand between the cones. Therefore, the teams need to look to possess the ball with an eye toward working to find an open gate. If a gate draws a defender, the attackers must look elsewhere.

The most common breakdown in this game is a tendency to crowd the ball. The coach should stop the action if need be a couple of times early on to demonstrate the need to spread out the game. Longer passes typically create open gates and relieve pressure for the attackers.

Play for seven minutes, using the game to assess the team’s ability to possess the ball under pressure.



Pairs pass and receive with a cone - 20x30 yard area

Arrange players in pairs with a ball. One player stands on the touchline with the ball and her partner stands behind a cone placed four yards from the touchline. Demonstrate with one pair. The player behind the cone works on the balls of her feet, alternately stepping around one side of the cone and then the other to receive. In receiving, she needs to touch the ball around the cone and play back on the other side. For example, if she steps around to her right, she should receive with the inside of the right foot and touch the ball behind the cone (forward, at an angle) and play back to her partner on left side of the cone using her left foot. Play for one minute and then change roles.

Variations:

- Play one touch for the working player.
- Play one touch for both players. This requires a very high work rate for the active player and will require rotation after thirty seconds.

No pressure possession in groups - ½ field

Put the players in two teams (one in vests). Each team has a ball. This environment is designed to allow players to focus on: Their technical ability; their speed of play; their communication; and their movement off of the ball. The two teams play in the field at the same time (they do not interfere with the other team's possession).

Play each of the following variations for two minutes.

- **Communication.** Before a pass can be made, the passer and the target must get eye contact (visual) and call out one-another's names (verbal communication).
- **Pass and sprint.** As the team knocks the ball around, the player who just passed the ball makes a five yard sprint away from the ball. Emphasize that all players must continue to jog and to use the entire space as their team plays. Explain that these rules apply throughout the exercise.
- **Off foot only.** Require players to both pass and receive with their off foot.
- **Check runs.** Players must sprint away from the ball and then come back to it before receiving. Explain that the purpose of this restriction is to create space in which to receive. Here communication becomes critical, and visual and verbal communication between the passer and target must be required by the coach.
- **Think ahead.** The passer must call out the name of the target before she plays. If the players do well with this restriction, then try having them call out the name of their target before the passer receives the ball. These restrictions compel players to plan ahead and to think quickly.
- **Short pass, long pass.** Here, the players must think about the use of space. If the pass to them was a short pass (i.e. ten yards or less), then they must make a longer pass as they release the ball.
- **Change direction.** After receiving, each player must use a cut or pull-back to change the direction of play before passing. This restriction is designed to force players to check multiple options (both targets and the direction of play) in possession.

6v6 to end line targets - 40x35 yard field

Organize two teams (one in vests). Each team places a target player on their opponents' end line. The purpose of the game is to keep possession and play to the end line target. The player passing in to the target then takes her place. As the target re-enters play, she passes the ball to the nearest player from the opposing team and play continues. Remind players of the possession cues trained above. Keep a ball supply just outside the perimeter of the field (near the center) where the coach can restart play if the ball is played out of the field area.

This game also introduces the concept of transition. As even after a point is scored play continues, players must change roles from offense to defense and constantly remain alert for their team to be successful. Encourage the targets to be active on the endlines, communicating with their teammates and moving to create open passing lanes. The coach can use any of the restrictions outlined in the previous exercise to require players to work to improve possession under pressure. Another useful restriction is to require a given number of passes (i.e. 3 or 4) before a pass can be made to a target.

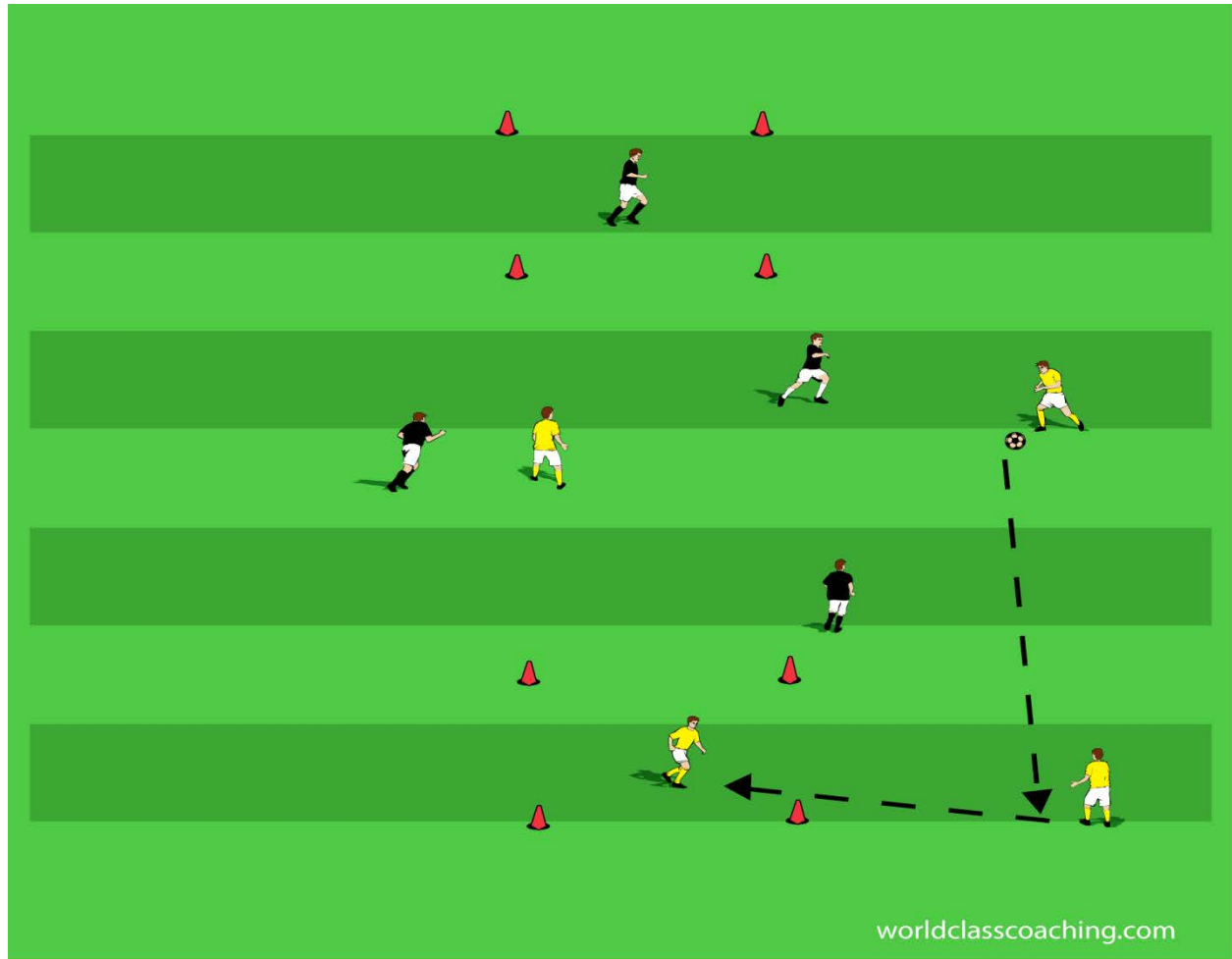
6v6 to goal - ½ or full field

Play a standard scrimmage, at first requiring four passes before a shot can be taken. After five minutes, remove the restriction and let the players play.

Training Session #9: Possession.

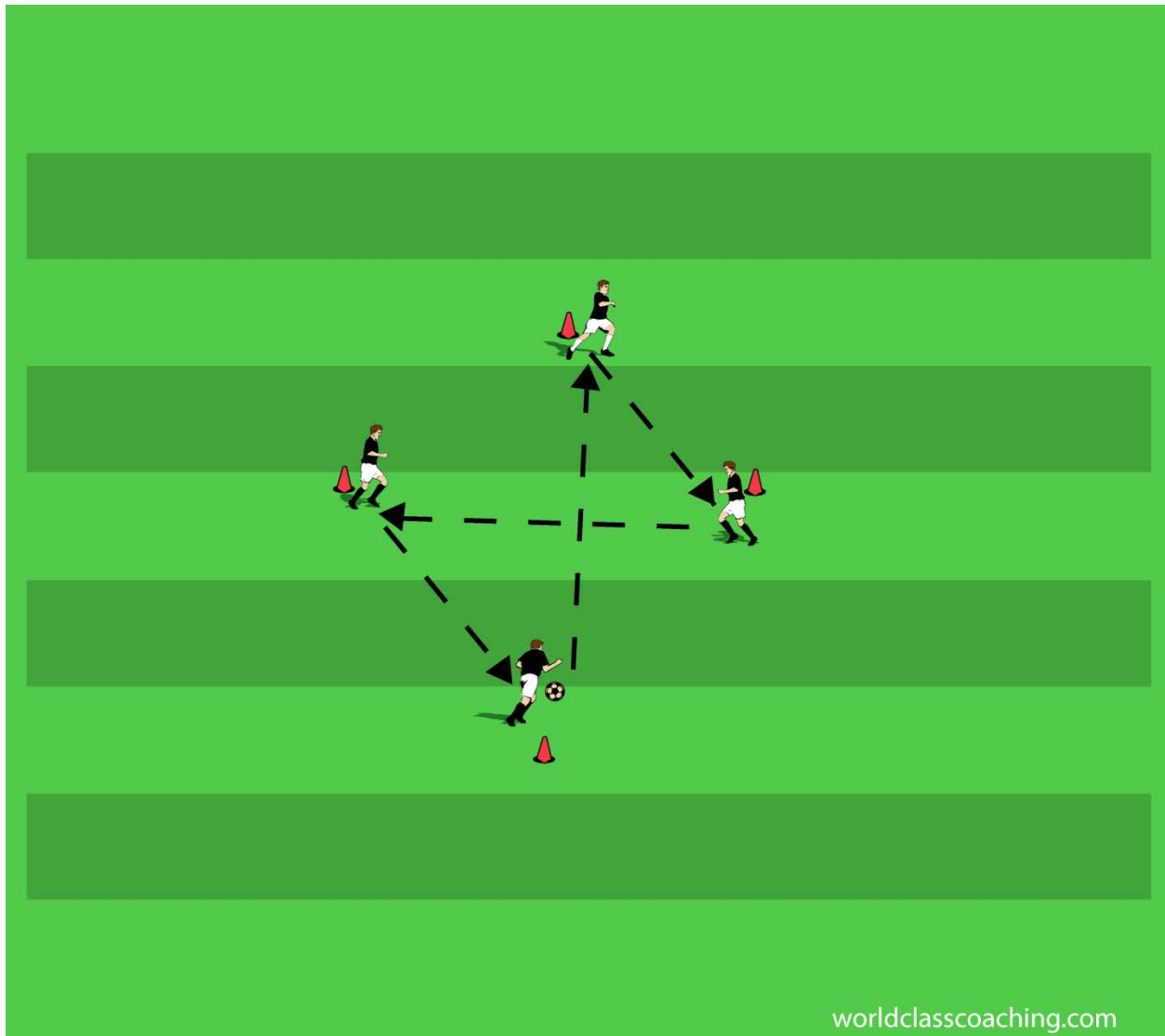
Introduction

This session offers advanced training exercises for players learning to build possession within the team. The session introduces games that ask players to pass into targets and make good decisions under pressure.



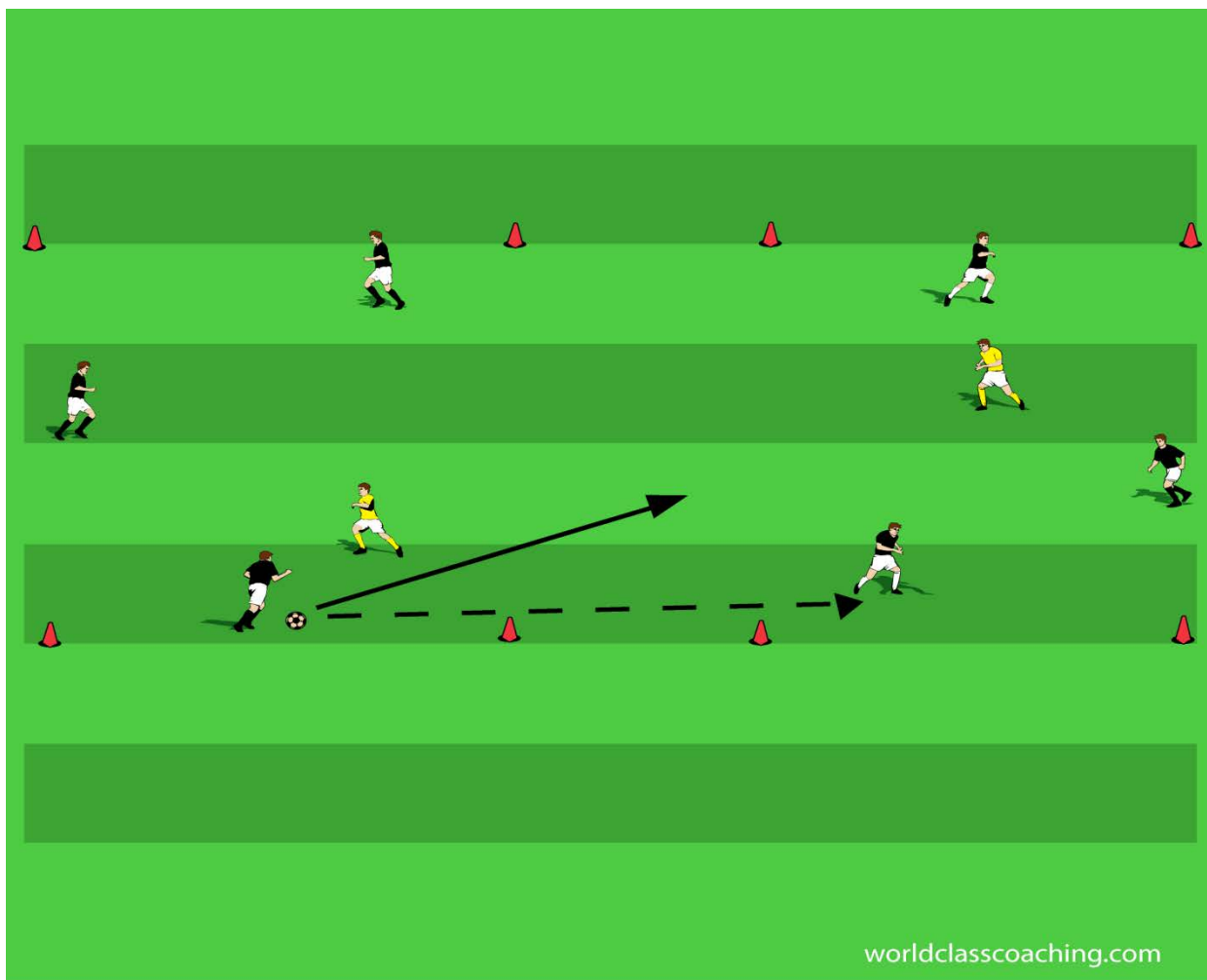
Possession to Target Zones - ½ field with two 5x5 yard target grids

Divide the group into two teams (one in vests). Prepare a ball supply outside the perimeter of the grid. Each team posts a target in the grid at their opponents' end of the field. The objective of the game is to get and keep possession and then try to play into the team's target player in the grid. The player passing into the target player then takes her place. When a point is scored, the target player restarts play by passing to a member of the opposing team. This game is a useful warm-up for a possession session in that it requires teamwork and movement off of the ball as well as passing under pressure. Once the players get used to the environment, it becomes apparent that given that one can play into the target from any angle, it is fairly easy to score, and a simple pass can open up an angle to score a point. Play for ten minutes, keeping score and being sure to rotate the target players if they are not played out by their team within two minutes.



Diamond Pattern Passing - 12x10 yard diamonds Players work in groups of five or six in a diamond. Put a player at each cone and those not on cones behind the first player on the end with the ball. Explain that this exercise is designed to give players the opportunity to work on one and two-touch passing and also receiving. The players pass the ball in the pattern outlined in the diagram and then follow their pass. Specifically, the pattern is: Straight; left; straight; right (repeat). To begin, allow players to play with two touches and simply encourage them to understand the pattern and develop some rhythm in their play. If there are enough players for two diamonds, hold a one minute contest to see which diamond can complete more passes.

Next, demonstrate to players that given one knows where the target of their passes will play, it is best to pass the ball to a position that allows their target to play with a single touch. Therefore, in the the diagram 1 plays the ball between 2 and 3, knowing that X2 will be playing to X3. Also, instruct players to consider the pace of their passes as they attempt to play 1-touch where possible now. Finally, the players must consider which foot they should use to make the pass (i.e. 2 should play with her left and 4 with her right). Let the players train this way for two minutes and then repeat the passing contest between the diamonds, encouraging players to use one touch where possible.



3 vs. 1 + 2 vs. 1 - 30x20 grid

This is a possession-building exercise based on two grids (divide the large grid in half to form two 10x15 yard grids). Begin by putting a defender in each grid. Then place two attackers in one grid and three in the other. The coach has a supply of balls just outside the perimeter of the grid. Explain that the defenders are isolated in the grid that they are playing in and that the ball will start in the grid with three attackers. Those attackers knock the ball around and when they have the opportunity they play to either of the attackers in the other grid. When the ball is played into the other grid, one of the three attackers crosses over so that the 3v1 situation is repeated. If either defender wins the ball, they step on it and pass it to an attacker in the other grid and play continues. Play for two minutes and then change the defenders.

Coach/Observe

- The three attackers need to constantly reform a useful triangle around the lone defender. In other words, the two attackers off of the ball need to move early and sharply to angles to make themselves available so that the player with the ball always has two passing options.
- Encourage two and even one-touch play and emphasize good footwork and touches to facilitate possession.

- The two attackers in the other grid often show a tendency to stand at the common border between the grids. Discourage this practice by demonstrating how easy it is to mark standing players. Instead, the two attackers should be active in the back half of their grid (as far away from the ball as possible), waiting for a good moment to check in and receive the ball from the other grid. This will involve early and urgent communication by the checking player in particular.

Cone drop game - ½ field

Create three equal teams (two teams in colored vests). This game is designed to create a possession environment with an effort to play into specific targets. Put all three teams in the playing area, each player standing with her teammates. Explain that two teams will be playing while one team will serve as targets. In this game, the targets hold three cones of one color and three cones of another color. Assign each of the playing teams a color of cone and explain that each time a target is played, she drops one cone of the designated color. The purpose of the game is to get all of the cones of a team's designated color on the ground (that is, no target player holds a cone of that color). The target players are limited to two touches and they cannot be tackled. Emphasize that the target players should receive and pass and then drop the cone so that play develops some rhythm. This is a fun game, and players may need a reminder occasionally to focus on spreading the field, maintaining possession and just working hard to organize their team's efforts toward finding the targets. The coach will need to keep a supply of balls along the perimeter of the grid to restart play.

Variations

- Allow the target players to walk around the area, but not check to the ball. This creates a constantly changing environment where the working teams will need to communicate to organize to find the target players.
- Allow the target players to play full speed. Now the game becomes much faster and the defenders' tasks become very difficult as there are so many active targets for the team in possession.

6v6 scrimmage - ½ field

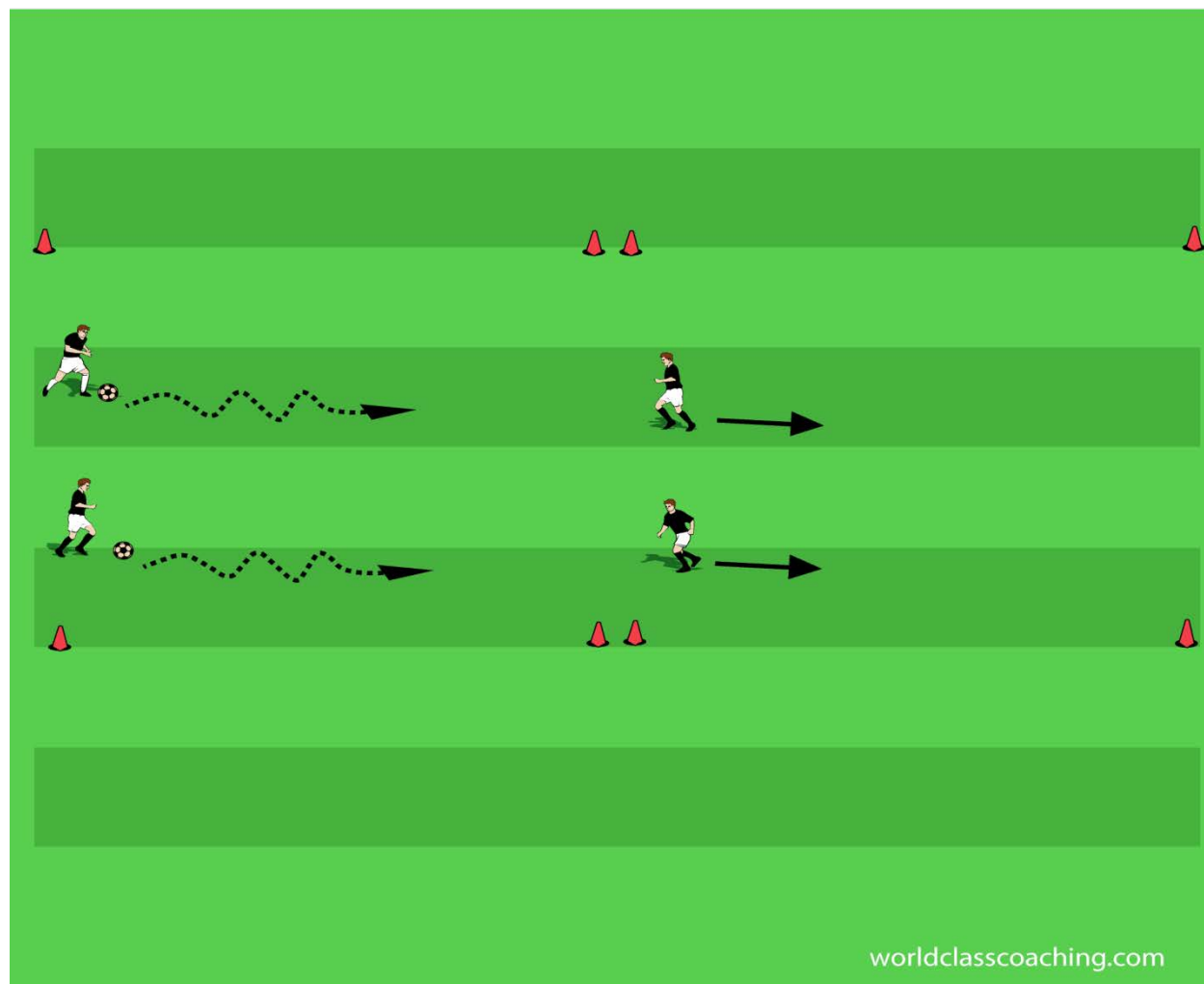
For the first ½ of the scrimmage, mix in the following restrictions:

- Require two passes before a shot at goal.
- All play is with the 'off' foot.
- Players in possession are allowed only two touches.

Remove the restrictions and let the players play.

Training Session #10: Turning.

Introduction: This session trains players to become familiar with their options for turning. The session gives players the opportunity to rehearse a number of possibilities and then closes with a zonal game requiring players to turn under pressure.

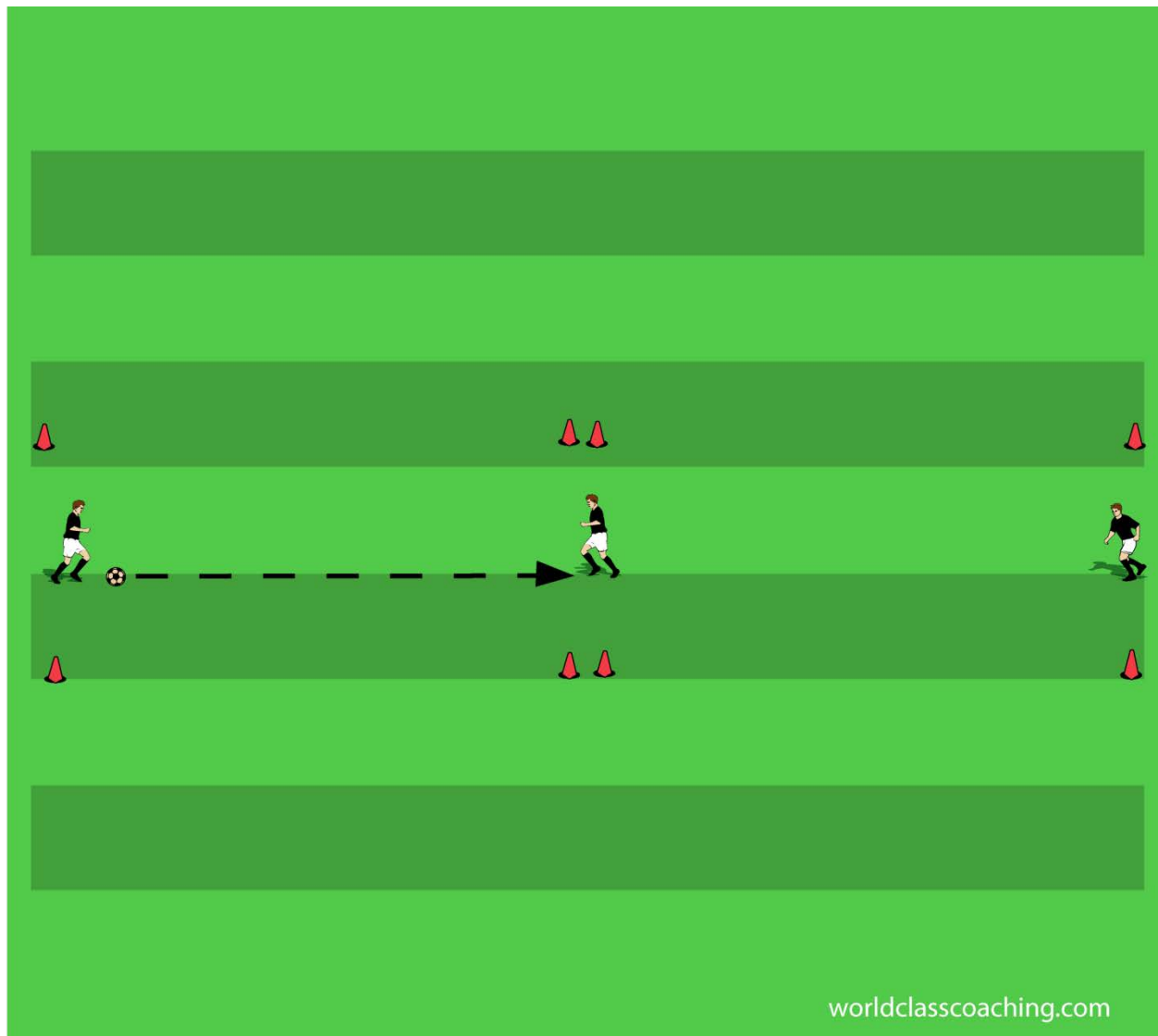


Touches and turning - 26x26 yard grid

Players work in pairs with one ball. The grid should be divided in half to create a pair of thirteen yard wide grids. One partner, with the ball, stands on the edge of the grid. The other partner stands where the grids meet (see diagram). There are two variations of this exercise, the first of which is a warm-up and the second of which introduces the turning topic.

- The player with the ball dribbles toward the center of the grid taking one touch for every step. This player should work hard and work fast to get to the center. Her partner backpedals to the edge of the grid on her side. When the dribbling player gets to the center, she passes the ball to her partner and their roles reverse. Play for two minutes.

- In the second variation, the player with the ball passes immediately to her partner in the middle of the grid. As she plays, she instructs her partner to, “Turn!” The receiving player gets “shoulder on” (turn one shoulder to point at the passing player. In this way, she is already half-turned) and receives the ball with the inside of the foot farthest from the server. She then turns and dribbles to the edge of the grid. Meanwhile, her partner sprints to the middle of the grid and their roles reverse. Instruct players that the running player who is checking to receive should time her run so that she is not waiting for the ball when it is played. Also, the turning player should alternate the shoulder she turns to the passer so that she can practice receiving with either foot. Play for three minutes.

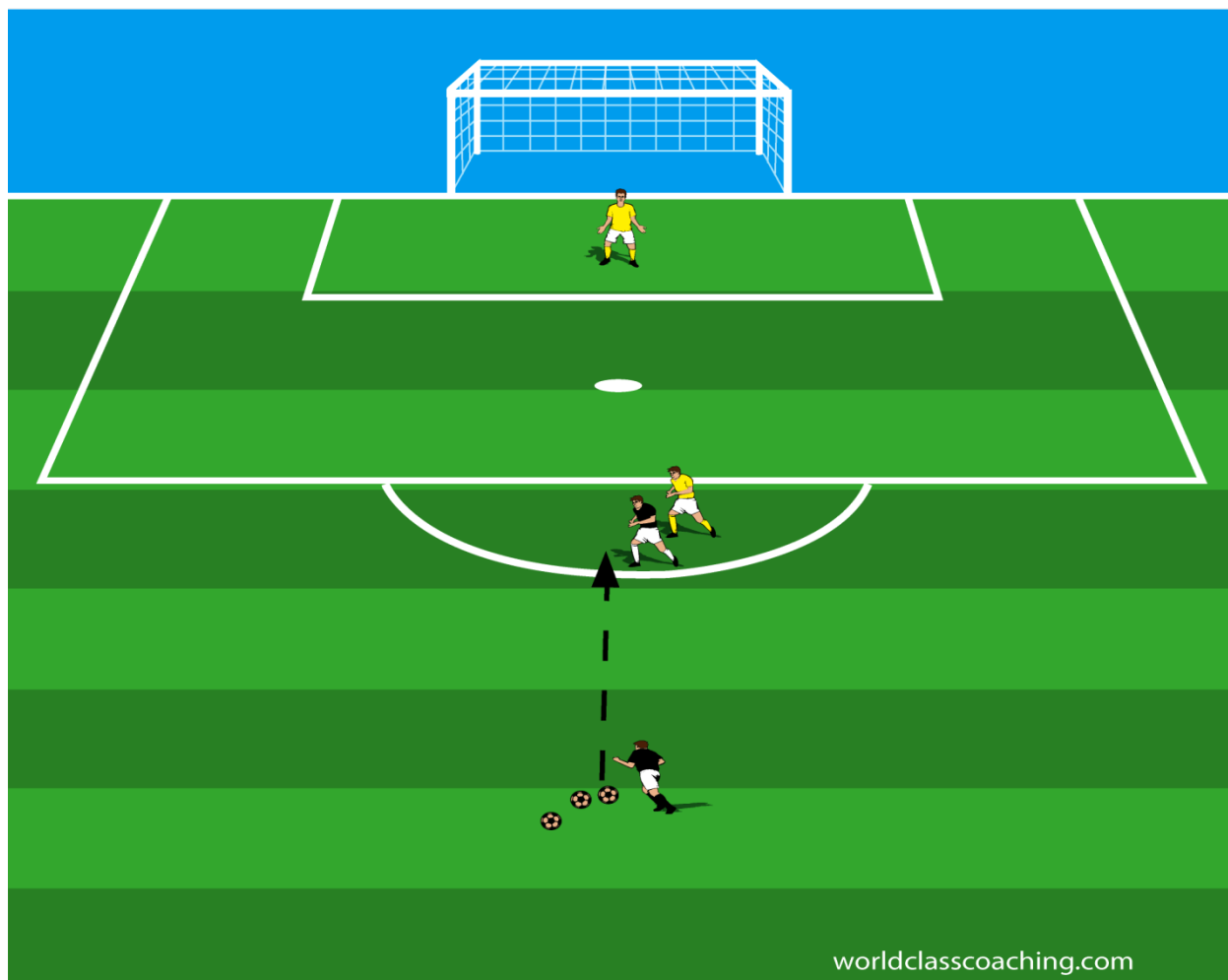


Carolina turning series (I) - 12x20 yard grids

Players work in groups of three with one soccer ball. There are many variations of what is often called the “Carolina turning series.” Here, the purpose is to introduce the basic format and simple turns for players learning to make good decisions in possession. The three turns are outlined below. Here, the

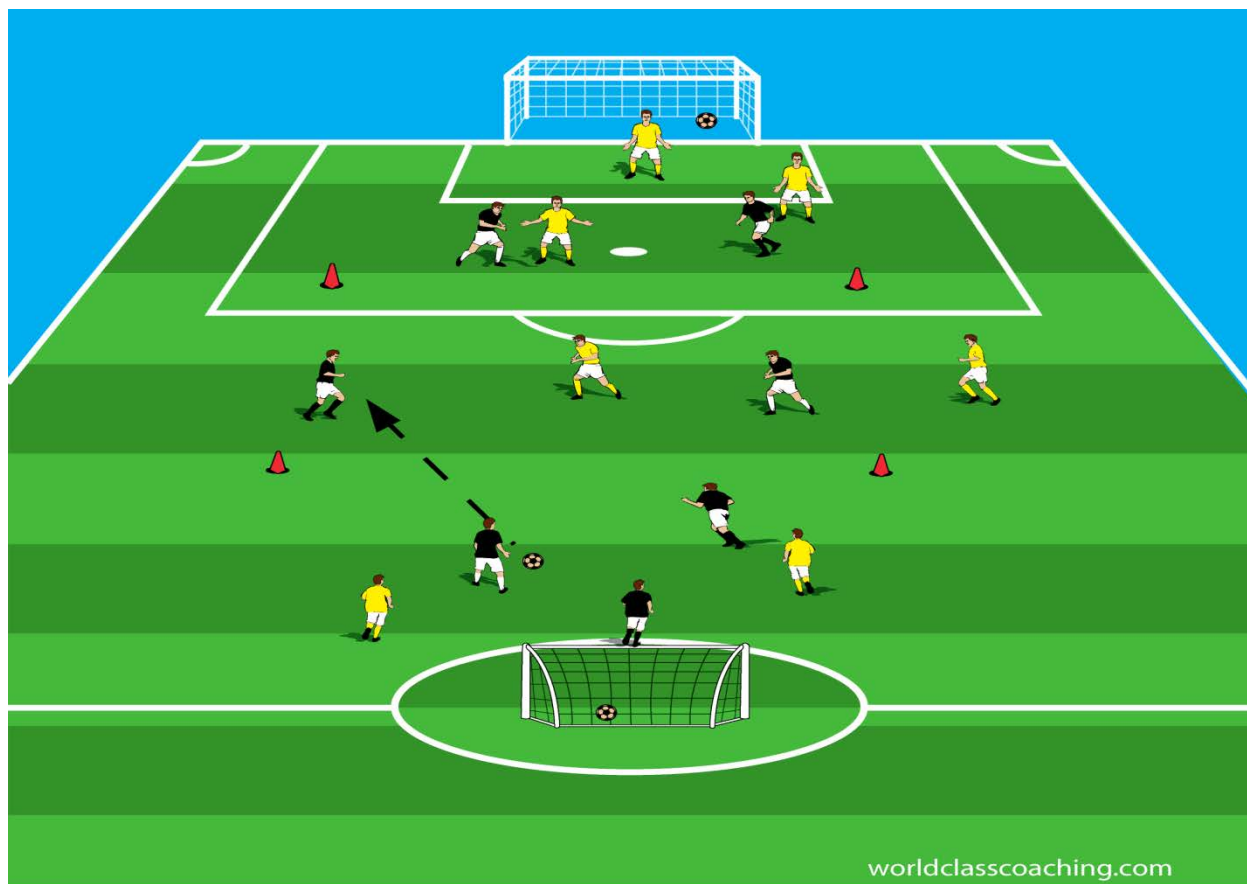
moves are performed without pressure. The working player needs to be instructed to check her space throughout the series. This is accomplished by taking a sharp look over her shoulder during the checking run. Each player should take a turn in the middle practicing each turn for two minutes.

- Front foot turn. This is the turn outlined in the warm-up exercise. Here the player decides that there is no pressure, gets shoulder on and receives with the inside of the foot farthest from the server. Once turned, she takes a dribbling touch and delivers the ball to the third player on the far end of the grid. The endline players need to be consistent in making the early command: "Turn!" Require the working player to alternate the receiving foot.
- Man on. In this case, the receiving player is operating under the pretense of pressure. Therefore, in making the checking run to the ball, she prepares to receive the ball with the outside of the foot *nearest* to the server. This touch puts the working player into a shielding position with her first touch. The passer hollers, "Man on!" with each serve. Once the working player has controlled the ball, the passer hollers, "Back!". At this signal, the working player passes the ball back to the server. Note: The passer should get into the habit of changing the angle of the back pass by sliding left or right while calling the ball back. This adjustment will serve the players well when they get into this situation on the big field in that the change of angle requires the defense to adjust their pressuring runs, and new passing angles are created immediately for the team in possession. Note: For this "turn" only, a second ball is required (that is, each of the endline players has a ball).
- Self-pass. Here the working player again operates under the pretense of pressure. Instead of shielding and back-passing, though, the working player "self-passes." In essence, this amounts to the working player getting into a shielding position, but instead of a shielding touch, she uses the outside of the foot closest to the server to take a longer touch (typically about a yard or a bit longer). The purpose of this touch is to create separation from the defender. The working player then runs sharply back around the ball to face up with the defender and takes a couple of touches before delivering the ball to the endline player on the far end of the grid. This turn is extremely useful in particular for quick, agile players (often on the flank) who can use their speed to get separation from the defender and then face up to create favorable 1v1 dueling situations. Instruct players to alternate the foot they use to make the self-pass.



1v1 to goal with turning emphasis - 1/3 field

Collect balls centrally and twenty-five yards from goal. An attacker and a defender begin in the “D” as shown. The attacker checks to receive a pass from the first player in line. Instruct defenders to vary their initial pressure so that the attackers can learn to think their way through their turning options. Play is live until the defender touches the ball or the ball leaves the area (i.e. through a goal or shot at goal). The easiest rotation is passer becomes attacker; attacker becomes defender; defender retrieves a ball and gets back in line.



3-zone game - 25x45 yard field

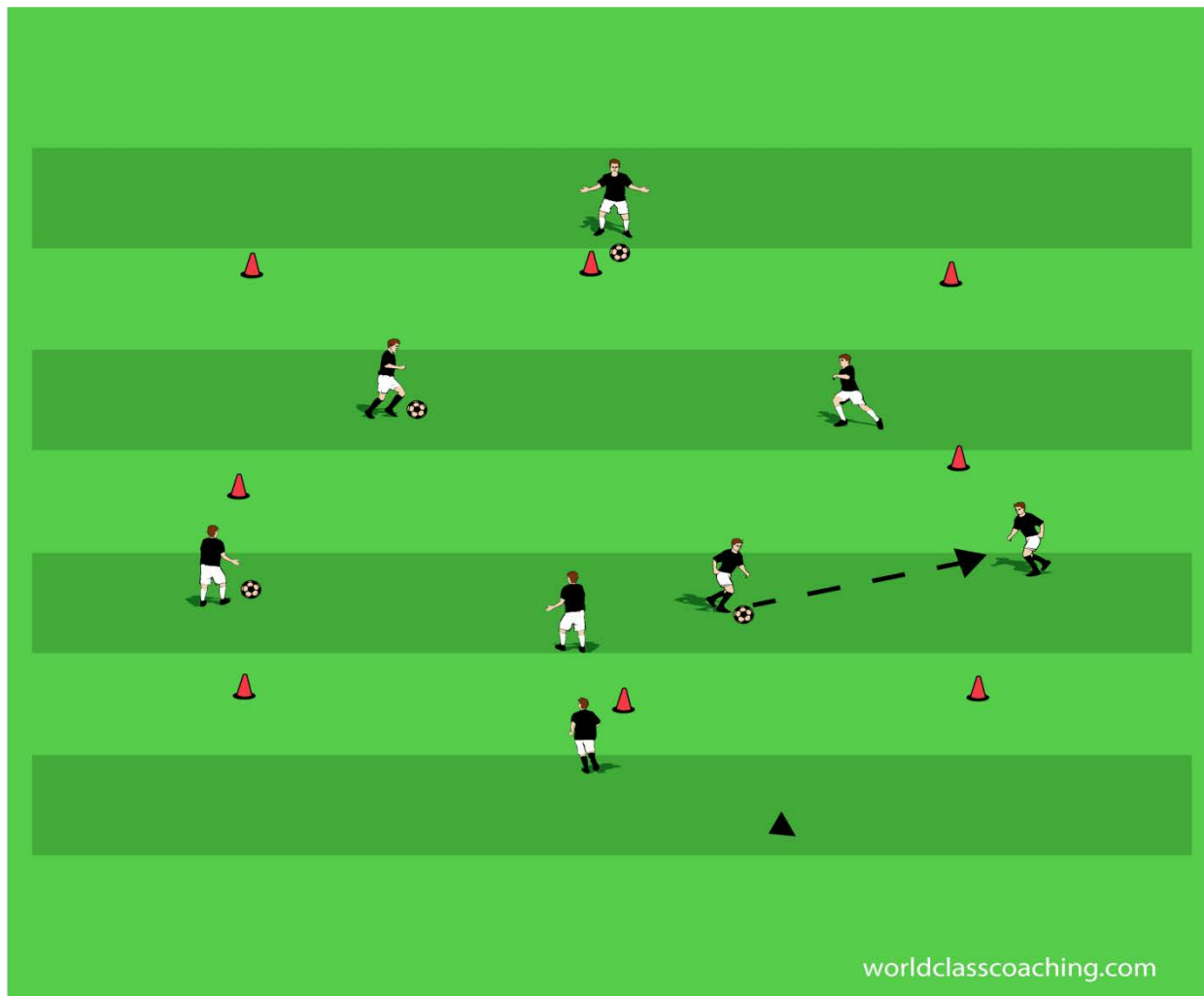
Play 6 vs. 6 on a field divided into three 15x25 yard zones (see diagram). This game can be played to full-sized goals or to small goals, depending upon the numbers available. The teams place two defenders (and a goalkeeper if possible) in their defensive third; two midfielders in the middle third and two forwards in the front third. Explain to the players that for the first part of the game, they are locked into the zones where they are placed. This restriction is designed to compel players to play the ball forward, creating situations where the players can practice both the communication and technical execution of the turns introduced above. The coach will need to encourage target players in the zones ahead of the ball to avoid lingering at the near edge of their zone, waiting for the ball. Instead, they need to be disciplined about creating space by remaining well away from the ball and then checking in to receive when supporting players are prepared to play to them. The other important coaching point that often needs emphasis here is the advantage gained by checking in at an angle to the ball. A player checking in at an angle is a much easier target to find and play accurately to than a player coming straight on to the ball.

After ten minutes, introduce a new rule: Allow a player who makes a successful pass into the zone directly ahead to join the attack in that zone. This will help build possession as teams can get an advantage in numbers by playing intelligently. Also, point out to players that they can play back to the zone behind them if they receive the ball under pressure and in this way the team can organize possession and create more service to target players in the next zone. Note: When possession is lost, any players who have worked their way forward must return to their original zone. Remove the zone limits for the final ten minutes of the scrimmage and let the players play.

Training Session #11: Two-person combinations: 1-2 and overlap.

Introduction

Session#11 rehearses one-twos and overlaps, giving players a better understanding of the technical and tactical requirements of two-person combination play.



Windows - 30x30 yard grid

Divide the team into two equal groups. Put one group of players, each with soccer balls, in the middle of the grid and the other team spreads out around the perimeter. The players in the middle dribble and pass the ball to the players on the outside and then go and receive the ball from another perimeter player and the sequence continues. In this first round, the players need to focus on clean touches, hard work and communication.

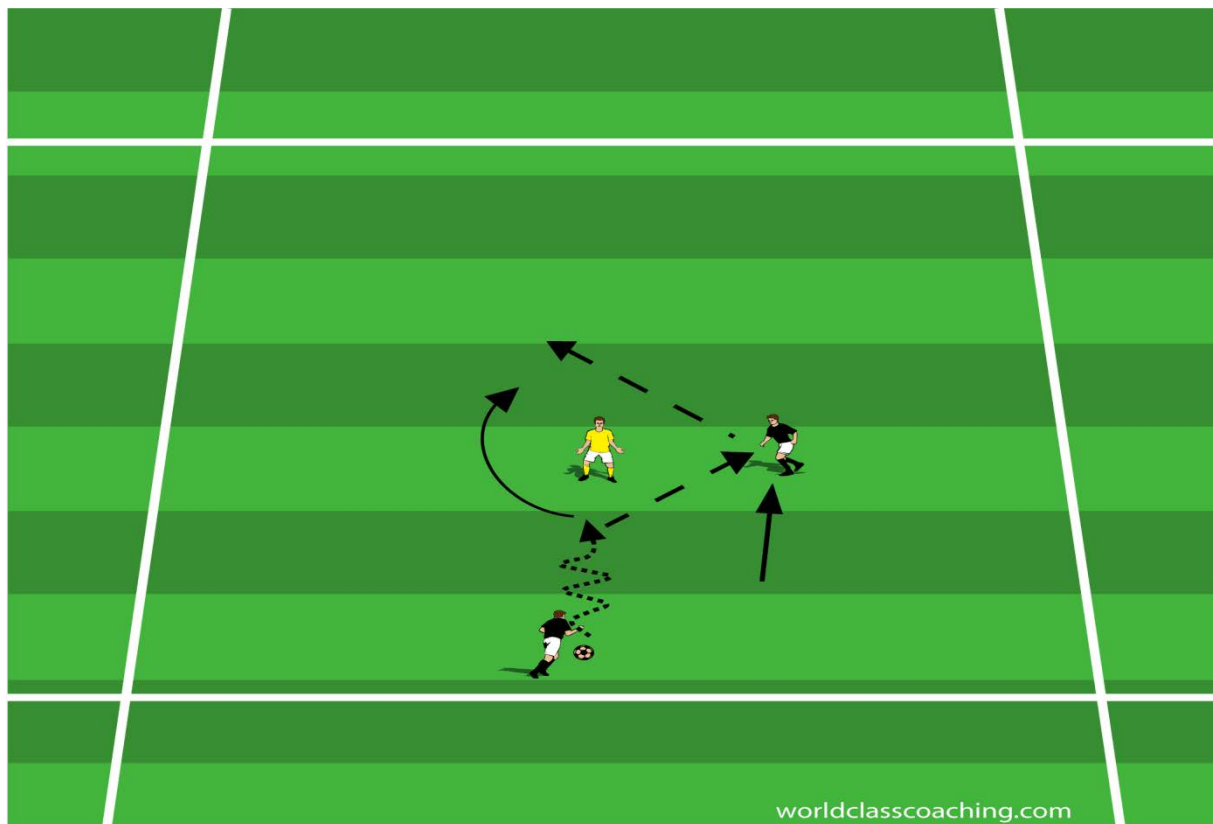
Play for one minute and then have the players change roles. This environment can be used for a variety of training topics. Here, the purpose is to get in a good warm-up and then introduce the two-person combinations that will be emphasized in this session.

Variations

- Put balls with the players on the outside. The inside players check-in and receive a pass from the targets on the outside, returning it with one touch. The working players need to alternate

the foot they use to return the pass and to help facilitate this, they need to indicate (using their hand to gesture) which foot the server needs to play to.

- **1-2's.** The players in the middle each have a ball. Demonstrate a 1-2 using a player on the outside of the grid to complete the combination. For now, the crucial coaching points are: 1. Get eye and verbal contact early with the target; 2. Play the ball to the foot on the target that will turn that player in the direction of the run the working player intends to make; 3. As soon as the pass to the target is made, sprint to the new space to receive the return pass in stride; 4. The runner needs to verbally demand the ball be returned and also indicate, using her hand, where she wants the ball played; 5. The target player plays one-touch. Allow each group to train the 1-2 basics for two minutes.
- **Overlap.** Once again, the players in the middle each have a ball. Demonstrate an overlap using a player on the outside of the grid to complete the combination. The working player gets eye and verbal contact with the target player on the perimeter and delivers a pass to the feet of that player. She then calls, "Hold!," alerting the target player that her run will create space and that she wants the ball returned. The working player then runs around the perimeter player (stay three yards away from the ball) and re-enters the grid on the far side of the target player, who then returns the ball to her using the outside of her near foot. This surface is used to disguise the overlap pass in the flow of play of the game. Give each group the opportunity to train for two minutes on the communication, runs and technical demands of the overlap combination.



1-2's in a grid - 12x15 yard grids

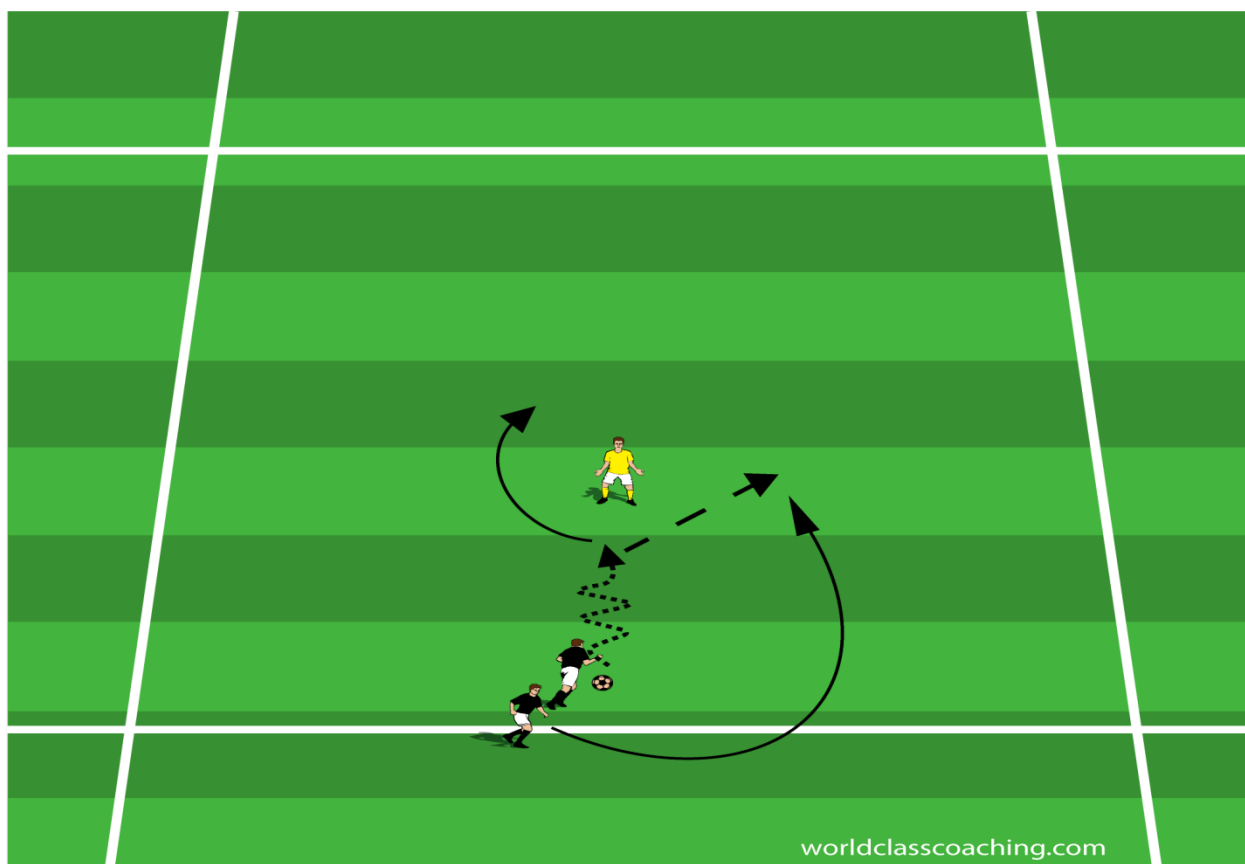
Build grids and groups of three with a soccer ball and a single vest. Demonstrate with one group. Identify a defender (have her start with the vest in hand) and explain with each restart, the defender must go to the mid-point of the grid. The defender is passive for the first stage of the exercise. The

purpose of this particular set-up is to sharpen the players' understanding of the technical and tactical requirements of the 1-2 combination. In essence, the two attackers will work back and forth across the grid, using a 1-2 combination to eliminate the defender each time and changing roles with each action.

Here are the cues the coach should introduce and coach:

- The player with the ball at the beginning of the sequence is the first attacker. This designation is for tactical identification, and the most important point of emphasis in this situation is that the first attacker must engage and occupy the defender. In the grids, the first attacker must take several touches toward the defender to compel the defender to focus on her in particular.
- The other attacker is known as the second attacker. It is the responsibility of the second attacker to create support opportunities off of the ball. In the case of a 1-2, the second attacker must sprint ahead to a position directly to the side of the defender (if she is too far forward or back, the passing angles become sharper and less efficient). The second attacker should also be 3-4 yards away from the defender, close enough to make for a quick combination and yet far enough away where the defender will have difficulty cutting out the passes or pressuring the target player. The other crucial piece of information for the second attacker is that she must get face-up with the side of the defender. Often, the runner tries to be a target for a 1-2 while still running and facing straight ahead toward the end of the grid. This makes for a very poor target and often destroys the rhythm of play.
- The first attacker, seeing the second attacker in position for a 1-2, dribbles hard at the defender before passing the ball with the outside of the near foot to the lead foot on the target player. These details are significant in that the use of the outside surface causes minimal disturbance to the first attacker's running stride and also helps disguise the pass until the last second. The target player's lead foot must be the receiving point for the pass because if her back foot is played, she often has to turn her hips and shoulders back and away from the area where the ball needs to be played with her first touch. In addition, she will have a more difficult time rejoining play immediately if she is forced to turn back. Finally, the passing angle for the return pass is also sharper and more likely to be interdicted by the defender.
- The players temporarily switch roles as the target player receives the ball. This is the critical moment in the combination. The first thing that must happen is that the target player and the runner must check to see that there is space available behind the defender. If there is not, then the target player must keep the ball. If there is, the runner sprints around the back side of the defender (leaving her sight as she turns with the ball) and into the space, calling for a return pass.

Play for two minutes and then rotate the defender. After two rotations, let the defender play full speed and emphasize to the attackers that if the combination is not on, they should work to the other end of the grid any way they can.



Overlap in a grid-12x15 yard grids

Use a similar set-up with three players and one ball per grid. Again, the defender will be passive for the first phase of the exercise. This time she should start each sequence midway between the center of the grid and the near endline where the attackers begin to set up the overlap.

- Once again, the first attacker starts the sequence by engaging the defender.
- the second attacker starts her run from behind and one side of the first attacker and she sprints across the back of the path of the first attacker. As she begins her run, she shouts, "Hold!" to inform the first attacker of her run. Her run must both get her beyond the defender and also create a viable passing angle from the first attacker.
- The first attacker runs at the defender and passes to the runner by using the outside of her near foot. Once again, this surface allows for the best speed retention by the runner and this surface also disguises the pass until the last moment. After giving the pass, the attacker then sprints past the backside of the defender, who has turned to face the ball. Both players work out the end of the grid and then turn around and change roles before completing the combination in the other direction. Change the defender after two minutes.
- After rotating each player through the defender position, play through a second round with the defender playing full speed. Explain to the attackers that they have the option of using the overlapping run or faking the pass and dribbling past the defender. As the defender will anticipate the overlap, this decision-making becomes a critical component in the learning process for the attackers.

5v5+2 to end lines - 25x40 yard grid

Create two teams of five and two neutral players. This is a possession exercise with an emphasis on combination play. To score, a team must first complete a two-person combination and then dribble the ball over their opponents' end line. The coach should encourage the teams to settle into possession first and then look to combine to get to end line. The two neutral players play with the team in possession and their presence should allow the attackers to establish possession and create opportunities to combine. Play for twenty minutes, rotating the neutral players every three minutes.

6v6 - ½ field

Play a standard scrimmage. For the first ten minutes, give the teams a point for a combination and two points for a goal. Then give just a point for a goal and let the players play.

Training Session #12: Finishing.

Introduction: This session reviews ball striking and provides a number of fun, efficient finishing exercises.

Score on either goal - ½ field

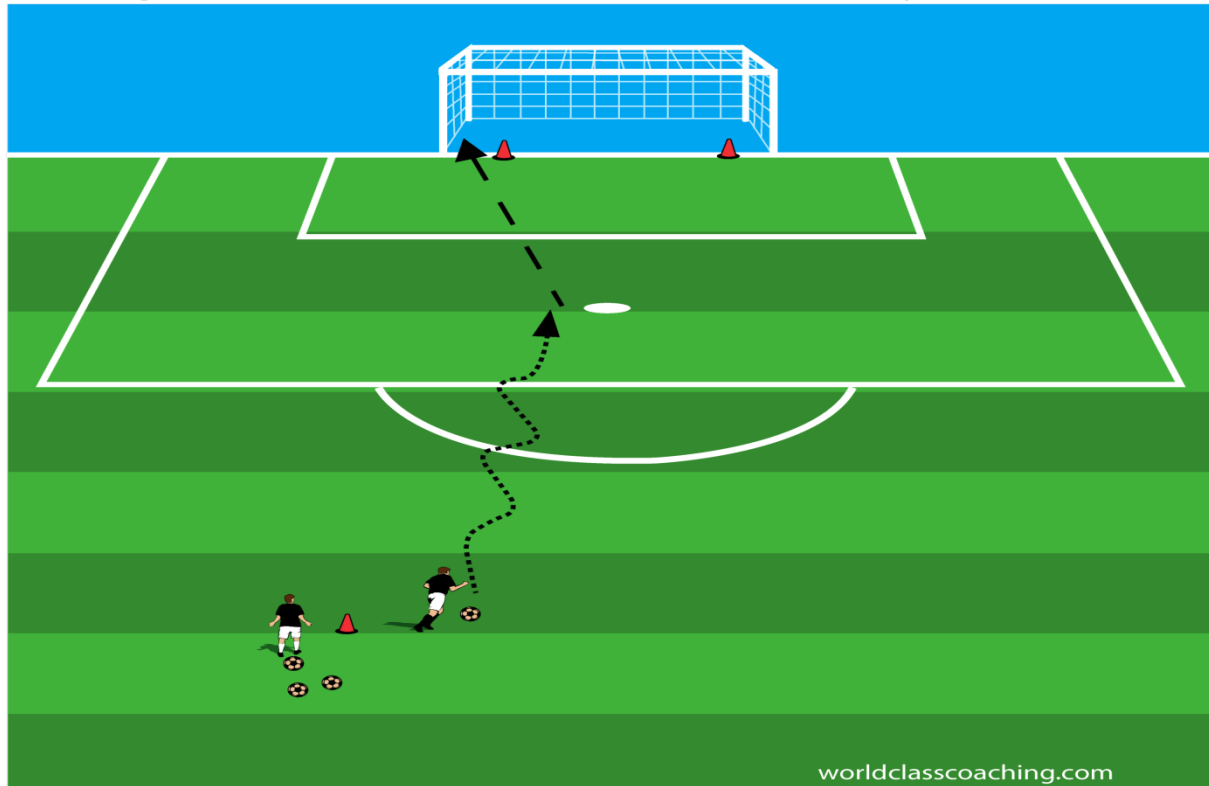
Divide the group into two equal teams (no goalkeepers) and play on ½ field. Explain teams may score on either goal. The coach keeps a supply of balls on the perimeter of the field and restarts play by randomly serving balls around the area. Encourage players to shoot as early and often as possible. Play for seven minutes, keeping track of score and assessing players' shooting ability.

Pairs passing and shooting progression - ¼ field

Players work in pairs with one soccer ball per pair and along the touch-line. Instruct each pair to start and stay four yards apart. The following progression is designed to both give players numerous striking touches and also provide them with a useful tutorial in learning to select a finishing surface. Play each sequence for two minutes, focusing upon proper technique, accuracy and also assuring that players alternate the striking foot each time they play.

- Two-touch passing. Using the inside of the foot, players ping the ball back and forth with their partner. Emphasize speed and quality of footwork and striking.
- One-touch. Using the inside of the foot again, players knock the ball back and forth with their partner, alternating the striking foot with each touch. Players use one touch where possible and two touches when necessary to sustain the exercise.
- Laces striking: Short distance. Demonstrate with one pair proper use of the laces surface to strike the ball. Explain that this surface allows for the greatest striking power, but also creates more room for error, as the laces surface is more narrow and inherently less stable than the inside surface of the foot. Therefore, players must work very hard to develop consistency in striking with their laces. The technical cues for striking with the laces are:
 1. Lock the ankle with the toes pointed at the ground.
 2. Place the plant foot next to the ball, below the shoulder, assuring that the toes of the plant foot point in the direction of the target.
 3. Encourage players to put their knee in a firm position as well and consider their hip as the point of rotation. Players should practice this striking motion without a ball to begin, holding their foot on the follow-through to check their form.
- Laces striking: Medium distance. Move the players back so that the pairs are working with ten yards between them. Players continue to strike the ball with their laces, alternating feet with each strike. Continue to emphasize accuracy and proper technique. The most common technical errors are:
 1. The ball pops up in the air. This indicates that the player is striking the ball at a low point, causing the ball to fly upward off of her foot. This player needs to strike the middle-back of the ball to keep it traveling on the ground.
 2. The ball consistently travels wide of the target. Here, the player is typically either playing with the plant foot pointed away from the target or failing to strike the ball on the center back, so that the ball spins off of the laces to one side.
 3. The ball does not travel the distance. Here the player is typically failing to lock her ankle and/or knee or she is not striking the ball with sufficient force.
- "Shooting Dance." Players should begin to learn at age 11 and age 12 how to maximize the power in their strike of the ball. Therefore, have them practice (without the ball to start) the movement of the intended strike and then encourage them to land on kicking foot during their

follow-through. This is accomplished by utilizing a scissors movement of the feet on the follow-through. The footwork will feel awkward at first, but it is important for the players to learn this power step early on in their technical development. Practice with the ball for five minutes, developing comfort with both feet and with the footwork of the so-called “shooting dance.”



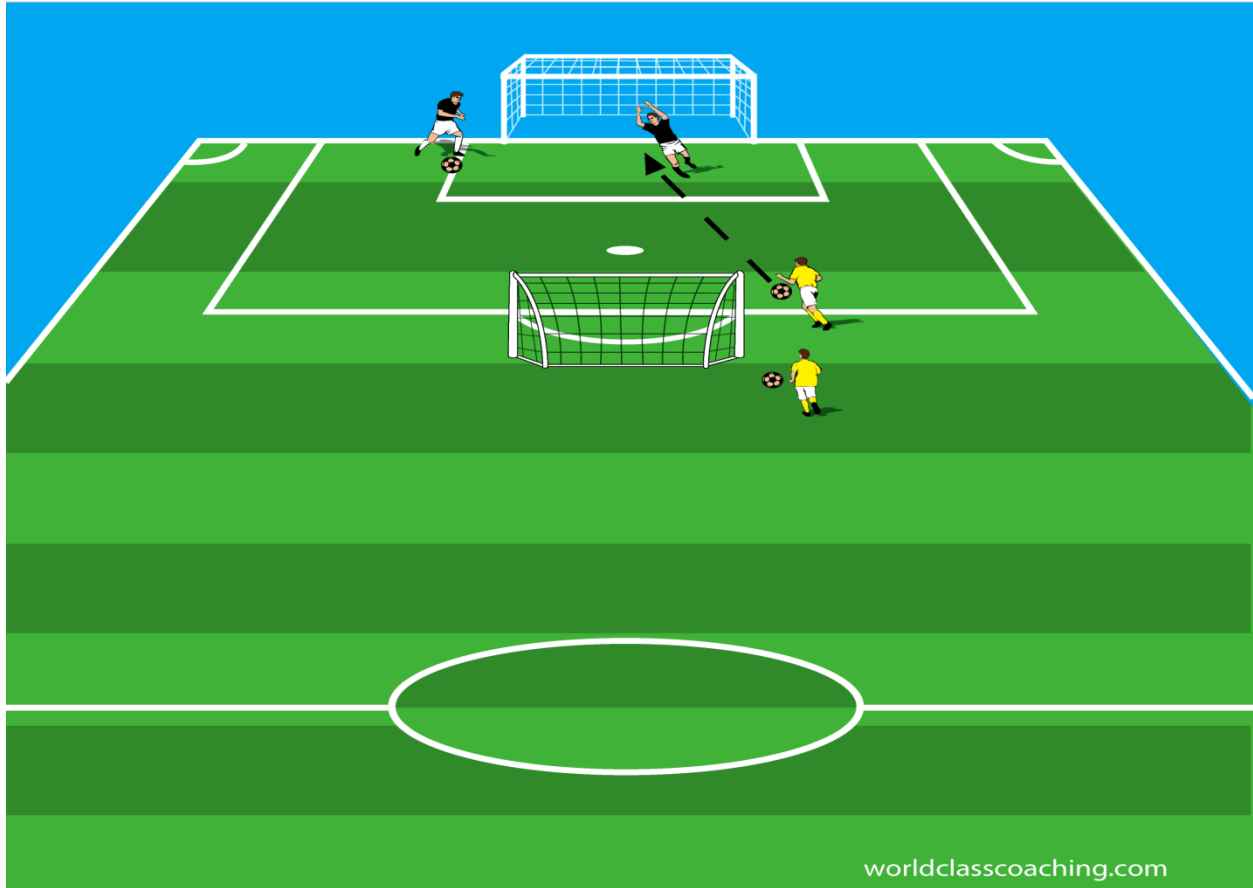
Goal box

In this exercise, players can begin to put the technical lessons learned above to work with movement and without pressure. Use the following progression to allow players to gain comfort in striking the ball properly and also in developing a finishing mentality.

Players line up, each with a ball, at the top of the goal box. Place a cone one yard inside of each post. Players dribble to the penalty kick mark and then strike the ball with their laces. For now, all goals must come off of strikes on the ground. For the player to earn a point, the shot must pass between the cone and post on one side of the goal. If the players are doing well, offer an extra point for all goals scored where the shooter lands on the shooting foot after the strike. Play for five minutes.

Progression:

- Require players to shoot with their off-foot for five minutes and check scores.
- Now, start the players ten yards outside the goal box. This is the same exercise as above except that the players must now shoot from the top of the goal box. To help players increase their accuracy and consistency, encourage them to look up at the goal after their preparation touch (the last touch before they shoot) and then focus on the ball as they strike it.
- Add a goalkeeper
- Add a pressuring defender who chases the attacker.



Shoot-keep-retrieve

Divide the team into two groups. Put each group at the side (opposite sides – see diagram) of a goal. Players take turns shooting the ball at the other goal, then playing goalkeeper for one turn and then getting a ball and getting back in line. Players may not cross the center line between the goals before shooting. Adjust the grid size to be sure that players are not too close (for safety reasons) or too far away (shots are not reaching the goals). For U8 players, the goals should be about 10 yards apart and 3 yards in width. Encourage players to shoot on the ground and to use their laces or the inside of their foot to strike the ball.

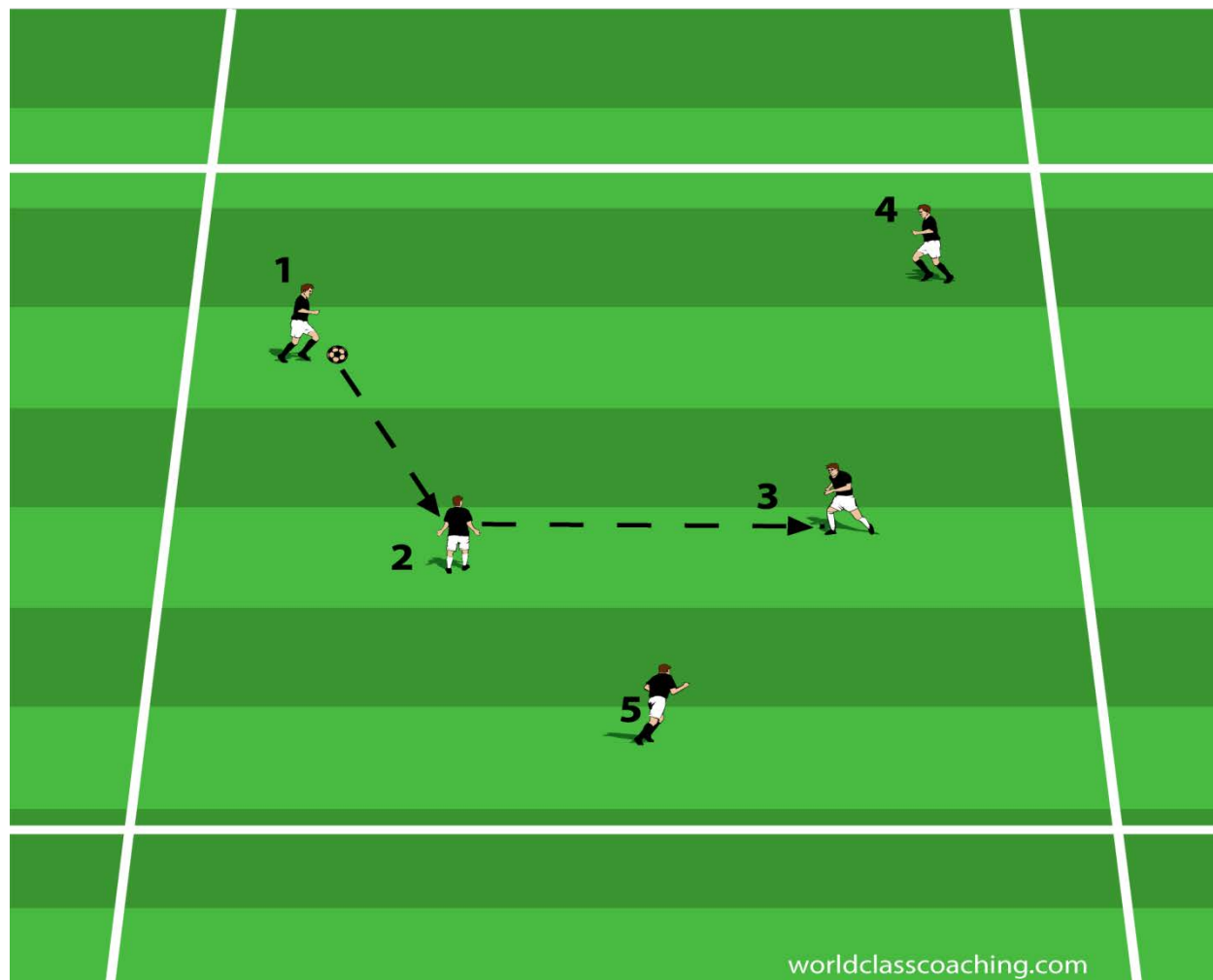
4 vs. 4 with endline bumpers - 25x25 yard area

Play 4 vs. 4 in the assigned area to full-sized goals. A third team of four function as “bumpers.” These players are stationed on the end lines (one on each side of the goals) on each end. They are limited to a single touch each time they receive and they should use their touch to play the ball in front of the goal on their end. In other words, the game is a standard game except that teams may use the bumpers on their opponents’ end to set up shots. Note that the bumpers may not be tackled or used by the defending team to build possession. Play for five minutes and then change the bumpers. Keep track of total goals throughout the three games.

Training Session #13: Advanced Passing and Combination Play.

Introduction

This session features technical and tactical passing in increasingly complex sequences, testing players' efficiency in possession.

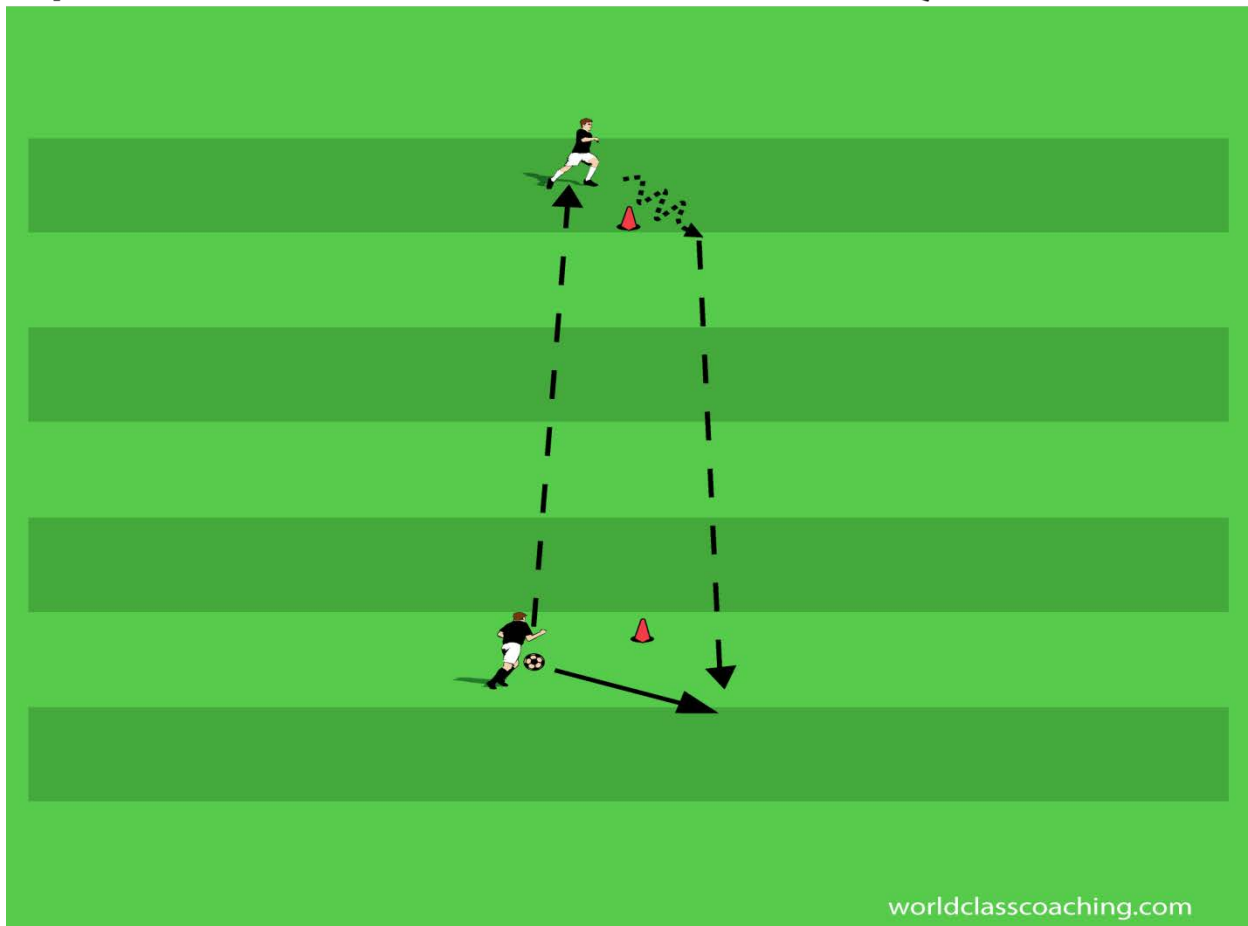


Sequenced passing - ½ field

Divide the group into two teams (in different color vests). Give each team a ball. Every player on each team should have a number as well. Explain that the purpose of the exercise is to work through the following passing and possession variations. In every case, players need to continue to move (the teams can and should intermingle), and they should move to a different part of the grid after they pass the ball. In addition, communication and checking to the ball should be emphasized as well.

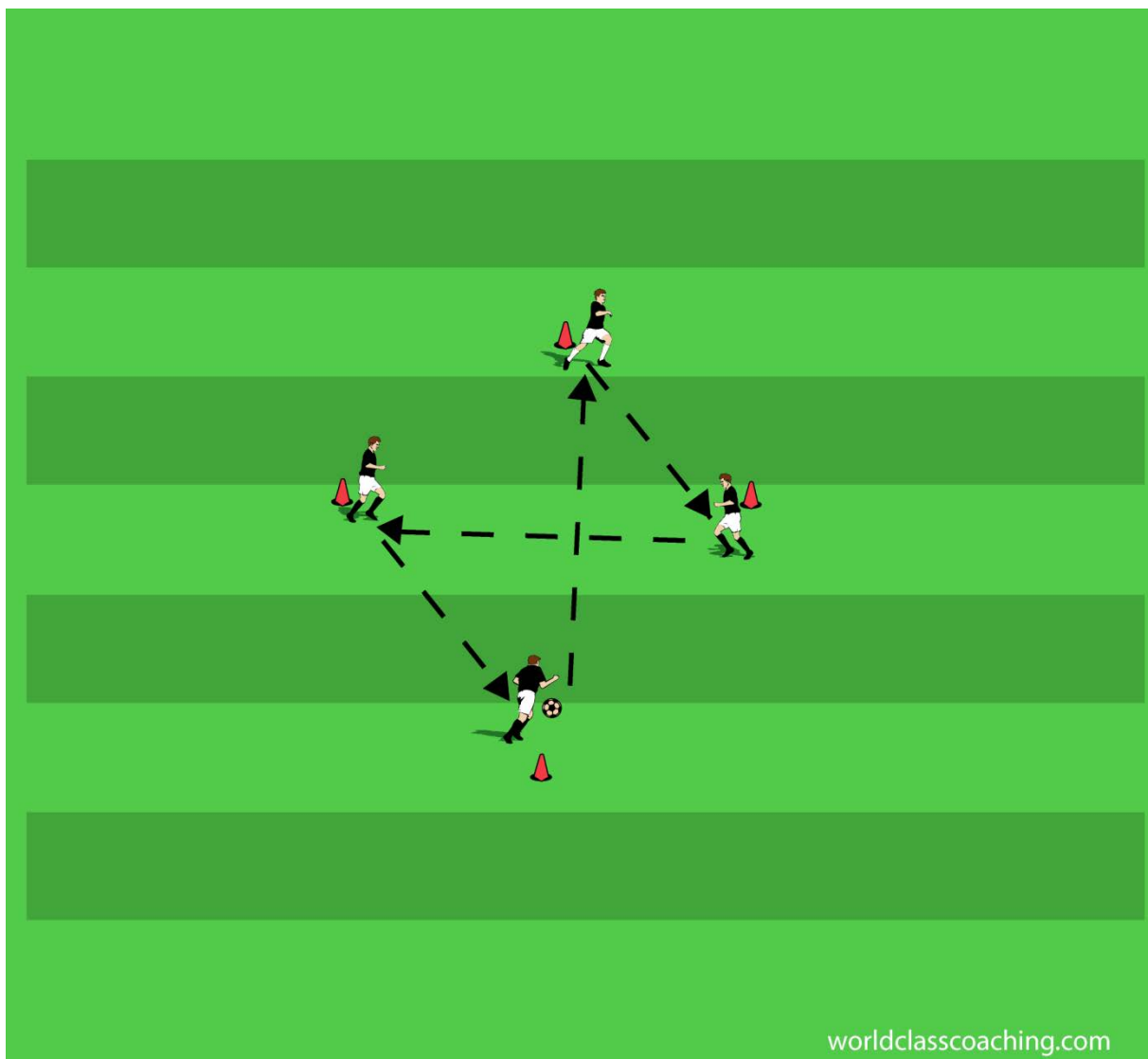
- Each team passes the ball to players in their group (color).
- Each team passes the ball to players in their group using only the right foot to pass and receive.
- Each team passes the ball to players in their group using only the left foot to pass and receive.

- Each team passes the ball to players in their group using one touch passing where possible.
- Each team passes the ball in sequenced order within their team.
- Teams pass the balls, alternating the color they pass to.



Advanced receiving -2 cones

Players work in pairs with one ball. Here the focus is on utilizing the first touch to both set up a second-touch pass and also sharply change the direction of play. Players receive the ball on one side (and behind) the cone on their end. They use their first touch to play forward and to the opposite side of the cone. Emphasize a change of speed and a sharp pass with the second touch. Play for one minute and change feet.

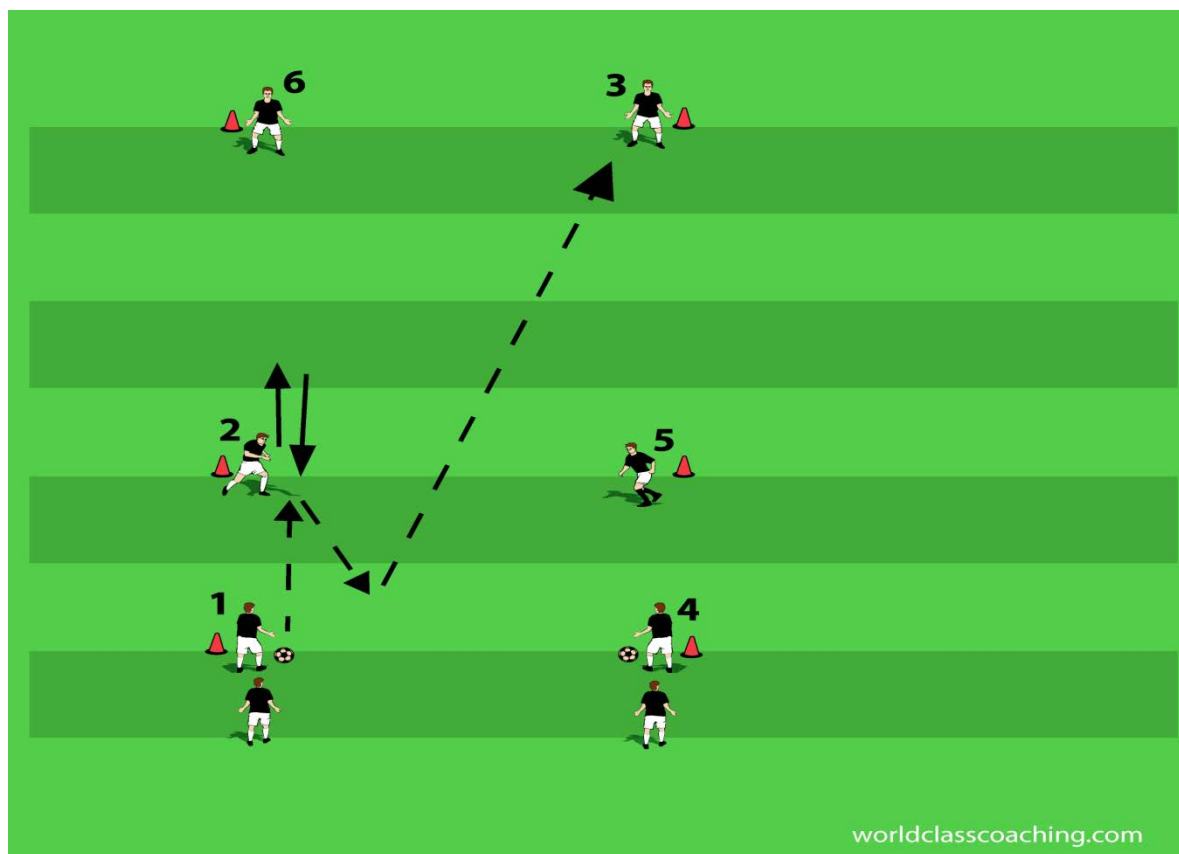


Diamond passing

This is an advanced passing exercise involving check runs, 1-2's, one-touch play, and creative running off of the ball. The basic pattern should be practiced first and then the more advanced variation can be implemented. Players move up one cone after each repetition. The player at the right side of the diamond checks away and then back to the ball. The server plays into her feet and the ball is laid off for the server to run onto and play into the player at the opposite end of the grid. The two players move one station counter-clockwise and play continues in the opposite direction.

Variation

- The runner at right, after laying off for the server, spins off to the outside and is played in behind by the server. The runner delivers the ball to the far end of the grid, and play continues in the other direction.



Rhythm passing - 6 cone area

This exercise is an advanced passing environment that maximizes technical passing and receiving requirements and also places considerable pressure on players to communicate, run off of the ball and also create rhythm in their passing. The player at the second level (2) cone begins by checking away and then back to the ball. The player with the ball (1) plays into the runner's feet. The checking runner lays the ball off to the inside for the server to run onto and play a long pass to the opposite side player at the far cone (3). This player dribbles at speed back to the starting point. Players advance one cone with each repetition (follow the pass). After players 1-3 complete the sequence, players 4-6 complete the pattern and play continues.

5v5+ end line and side bumpers - 25x35 yard field

Play a game to small goals. Each team has one end line bumper and there are two neutral sideline bumpers. The bumpers are limited to two quick touches. The bumpers cannot be tackled and they cannot enter the field. The neutral bumpers can move up and down the length of the grid and they play with and for the team with the ball. The end line bumpers can move along the width of the end line (but not in the goal area) and they look to play quick passes to teammates in the front of the goal area. Rotate the bumpers every three minutes. The coach can place restrictions on the field players to require 1-2's with the neutral players and/or the end line player before a goal can be scored. This should be a fast-paced, rhythm-oriented playing environment, and the coach can encourage sharp communication, passing, receiving and movement off of the ball.

Training Session #14: Long Passing.

Introduction

The U11/U12 years are critical to the development of sound ball striking and the ability to play over distance through long passing. This session features a progression from basic passing through technical long passing and then a pair of playing environments where playing over distance is required.

Passing warm-up - ½ field

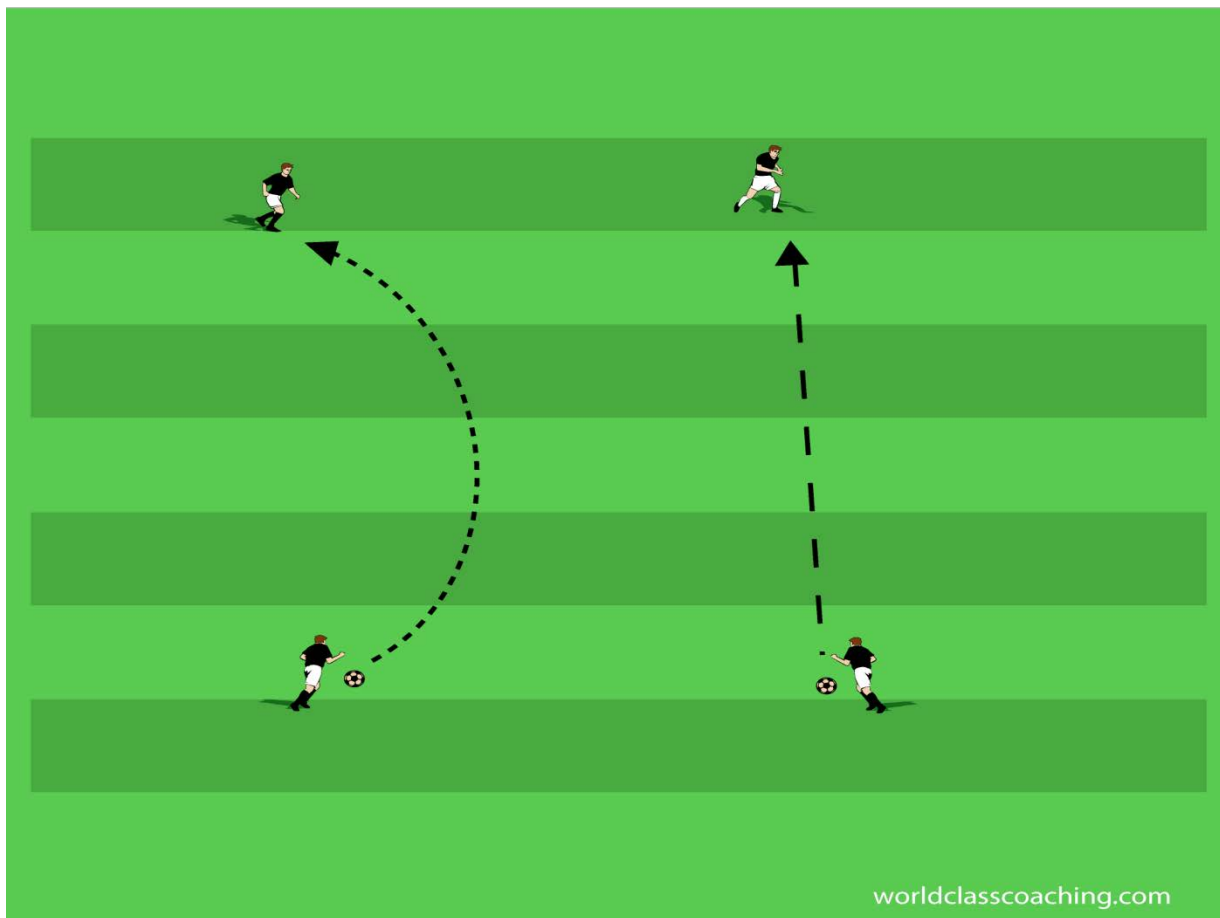
This exercise requires soccer balls of several different colors (three is preferable). There should be ½ as many balls as the total number of players. Players are instructed to spread out around the playing area. The team jog around the area, exchanging the soccer balls in the prescribed manner. For example, a white ball calls for a throw-in; a red ball indicates a short pass, and a black ball must be played over distance (long pass – which should be at least 15 yards). Play for three minutes. The coach can use this time to assess the players' ability to play a variety of passes with particular emphasis upon long passing.

Pairs passing – Touchline

Players work in pairs with a soccer ball for each pair to start (have a second ball nearby).

Progression

- **Two-touch passing.** Players pass in pairs using two touches. Emphasize technical speed and proper technique, including locked ankle, utilizing the inside of the foot, pointing the plant foot toes at the target and holding the foot momentarily after the strike to accentuate proper follow-through. Players should alternate the strike foot with each pass. Play for one minute and then change partners.
- **One-touch passing.** Players pass in pairs using one-touch where possible. Here the emphasis is upon measuring the strike so that the ball can be returned with one-touch. Once again, players must lock ankles, point the plant foot at the target, and use the laces surface. Players should also change the passing foot with each strike. Finally, point out to players that they need to be aware of the part of the ball that they strike. To keep the ball on the ground, players should focus on striking just above the mid-point on the back of the ball. Play for one minute and then change partners.
- **Two-ball passing.** Players pass in pairs with two balls using two touches. Here, the players must work to develop a rhythm in both passing and receiving. Players pass the ball simultaneously with their right foot and receive the pass from their partner with their left foot. Their first touch should be made with the inside of their left foot and should push the ball forward and across their bodies so that they may pass the ball with the inside of their right foot as the sequence begins again. The purpose here is to apply light technical pressure while also developing consistency in technique. Play for one minute and then change the passing and receiving foot.
- **Pairs laces passing.** Players work in pairs with one soccer ball. Here the players stand about four yards apart and focus on passing the ball to their partner with their laces surface. As the focus of the session is long passing, the laces surface will be critical to the technical success of the session, so players must focus on getting their toes down, locking their ankles and finding a comfortable placement for their standing foot, pointing the toes toward the target of the pass. Players work to get consistency in their strikes. After each pass, the ball should be stopped so that the technique can be practiced in isolation. Players should alternate the passing foot with each strike.

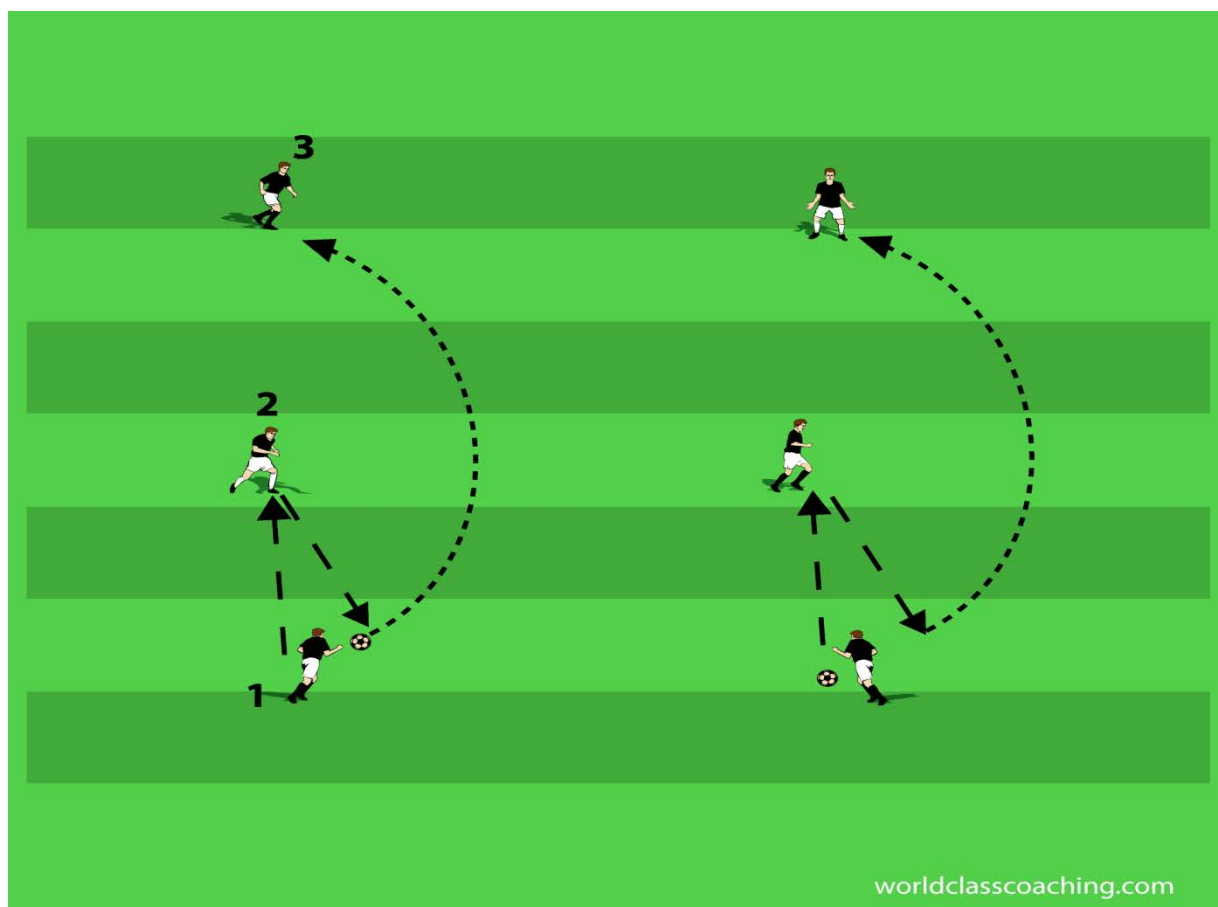


Driving range - ½ field

Introduce long passing. There are three types of long pass: Driven, lofted and chipped. Demonstrate one pass and allow players to practice striking the ball with a partner over a twenty to twenty-five yard space for about four minutes, compelling players to switch to their off foot after two minutes.

- Driven pass. This pass is very similar to a driven shot. This pass is used to send the ball over distance as fast as possible. The pass is driven and usually not more than shoulder high, and is often used to cross the ball (near post usually) or to change fields, and to play sharp, long through balls.
 1. Lock the foot with the toes pointed down.
 2. Use the laces to strike the ball.
 3. The plant foot is placed comfortably next to the ball and in a more forward position than in the lofted or chipped balls. This placement helps to limit the height of the pass.
 4. Players should think of their leg below their hip being locked and the hip as the point of rotation, as this will increase consistency and power.
 5. The strike point on the ball is on the center back, slightly above center. Again, this will aid in keeping the ball down.
 6. Follow-through should be held to emphasize a clean strike and balance and also the foot should be kept low.

- Lofted ball. This pass is used to put the ball over defenders to teammates. Typically, the lofted pass is utilized when the ball is crossed to the back post, or cleared from the back line, and also in changing fields and sometimes in playing through-balls.
 1. Lock the foot with the toes pointed down.
 2. Use the laces to strike the ball.
 3. The plant foot is placed comfortably next to the ball and in a more withdrawn position than in the driven ball. This placement helps to create the height of the pass.
 4. Players should think of their leg below their hip being locked and the hip as the point of rotation, as this will increase consistency and power.
 5. The strike point on the ball is on the center back, below center. Players need to learn to feel their laces cupping beneath and on the back of the ball. This lower striking position helps to raise the ball off of the ground for a lofted pass. Follow-through should be held to emphasize a clean strike and balance and also the foot should be raised to accentuate the lift placed on the ball.
- Chipped ball. This pass is used to drop a ball over a defender or group of defenders to the feet of a target. This is the most difficult of the passes to learn well, but it is also important for players to learn to perform this skill in that it teaches a new way to strike the ball in a way that is important for consideration in numerous situations on the field. Chipping the ball is particularly useful in that the strike creates backspin, allowing the ball to settle off of the bounce, meaning that the receiving player should be able to play it more easily and quickly than a driven or lofted service. The ball is often chipped on free kicks to put it behind the defense; on through-balls; to change fields to a particular target; sometimes to find a target on a short cross, etc.
 1. Lock the foot with the toes pointed down.
 2. Use the laces to strike the ball.
 3. The plant foot is placed comfortably next to the ball and in a more withdrawn position than in the set for the driven ball. This placement helps to create the height of the pass.
 4. Players should think of their leg below their hip being locked and the hip as the point of rotation, as this will increase consistency and power.
 5. The strike point on the ball is on the center back, well below center. Players need to learn to feel their laces cupping beneath and on the back of the ball. This lower striking position helps to raise the ball off of the ground for a chipped pass.
 6. The follow-through is the major difference between the chipped and lofted passes. With a chipped ball, there is no follow-through. In the strike, the player “digs” beneath the ball and then does not follow-through. Players must practice both of these cues, as part of the learning here is that with the chip, there is a bit of contact with the ground, which helps create backspin on the pass, and the lack of follow-through will not feel natural at first, but this also increases the backspin effect on the pass.



Short-short-long - ½ field

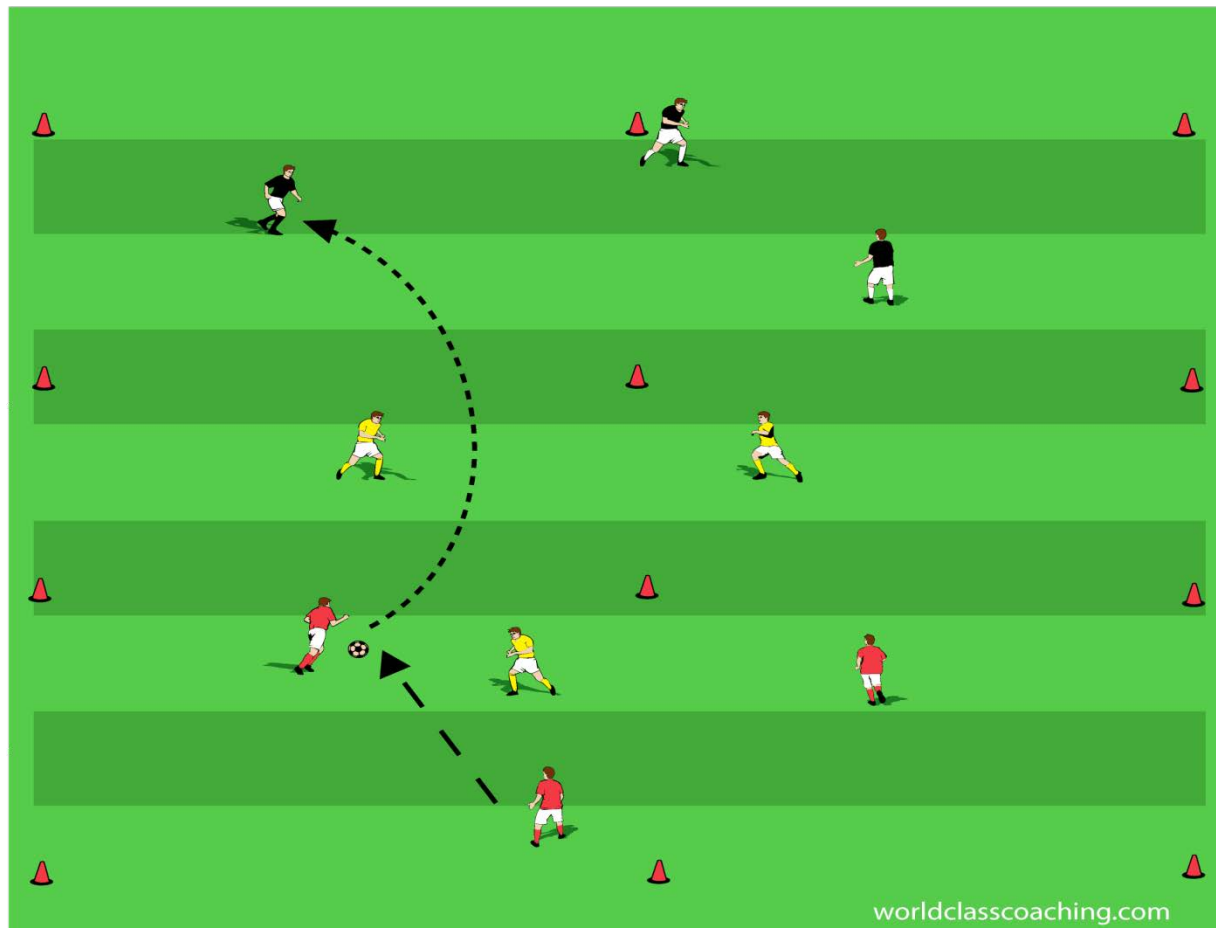
Players work in groups of three with one soccer ball. Demonstrate with one group. Put two players (1 and 3) about twenty five yards apart and the third player (2) between them. Player 2 starts the exercise by checking (running) toward the player with the ball (1). Player 1 passes into the feet of player 2, who returns it with a single touch if possible (note the change of angle on the return pass, which creates an easier approach for player 1 and also makes the work of defenders (not present) more difficult. Player 1 then takes a touch to settle the ball before playing a long pass to player 3 on the other side. The inside player then checks to the player with the ball and the sequence continues. This is a commonly used exercise that can be adjusted to train long passing at any level.

Here are some additional considerations for the coach in tweaking the exercise:

- Players learning to chip and loft the ball often benefit from having a target to play over. Therefore, with a warning about playing safely, the endline players can be encouraged to play lofted or chipped balls over the central player to their target on the other side.
- To make play more realistic, players who can already long pass well can be required to play the long pass one-touch (no settling touch) off of the return pass from the central player.
- Notice in the diagram that the angle of the return pass from the central player is changed. This is done both to create a better approach angle for the outside player and to force a defender pressing the central player to adjust her run if she were to try to press the long-passing player. The long-passing player should indicate (using a hand signal) to the central player where she wants the ball played to set up the long pass. These considerations are not as important for

players just learning the technical aspects of long passing, but are very important details for more advanced players.

- Another variation that adds some emphasis on skill for more advanced players is to encourage the endline players to receive and play the pass to the central player with one touch. This will force them to play the ball in the air sometimes and to learn to take some pace off of the ball in making the pass.
- Finally, to add a bit of skill emphasis for the central players, have the endline players receive and control the ball off of the long pass and then pick the ball up and take a throw-in toward the central player who settles the ball before playing the set-up pass back to the endline player.



3-zone passing game - 20x42 yard grid

Split the group into three teams and put them into different-colored vests. Each team occupies one of the three zones. Explain that the purpose of the game is to practice long-passing between the two end grids. For teams just learning to long-pass, the players are all confined to their respective zones. The coach serves a ball to either end grid. The team in that grid knocks the ball around to find a useful angle to play through to the far grid. The player in possession then lofts, drives, or chips (the coach can require a particular type of pass) the ball to the far grid. The team in the central grid attempt to knock down (no hands) the pass. For players learning to long pass, keep the central team in their grid even if they win a ball. Instead, the coach plays a ball into the other end grid and the players there attempt to play through or over the central grid to the far grid. Play for two minutes, giving each end team a point for every successful long pass. The central team also earns a point for each pass they knock down.

Here are more advanced variations:

- Every time the middle team knocks down a ball, their team takes the place of the team failing to play a successful pass and that team moves to the middle grid.
- Teams must receive the ball properly after a long pass or move to the central grid.
- The central team sends one player (as shown in the diagram) into the end grid when the ball arrives there. If that player wins the ball or forces the ball out of the grid, her team exchanges places with the team losing the ball.
- Building upon the last variation, require the end line team to string together 4-5 passes before playing a long pass. This allows the pressuring player from the center grid to apply pressure before a long ball can be played and also compels the teams in the end grids to be more active, making the game more realistic. When introducing this restriction, it is often useful to freeze the pressuring player from the center grid once the team in possession has strung together 4-5 passes. This will usually give enough success to develop some flow in the exercise. Then remove the “freeze” restriction so that the end grid teams are forced to play long passes under some pressure.

5v5 with a dead zone - full field

Play 5 vs. 5 with a neutral dead zone. Each team places three players plus a goalkeeper in their defensive zone and two players in their attacking zone. No player may enter the dead zone. The coach has a supply of balls on the side of the dead zone and he or she restarts play from there any time a ball leaves play. The defenders have a 4 vs. 2 advantage in their respective zones and their purpose is to win the ball and play a long pass over or through the dead zone to a teammate in the attacking zone. Play this way for ten minutes and then remove the dead zone, allowing open play, but encouraging players to look for a long pass to set up scoring opportunities and to clear their own defensive zone.

Training Session#15: Receiving out of the Air

Introduction

This session is a review of the technical elements involved in playing the ball out of the air. At U11-U12, players must learn comfort receiving the ball out of the air with their feet, thighs, chest and, eventually, head. The earlier this comfort and skill are mastered, the more effective the player will be playing in the air.

Bounce juggle - 20x20 yard area

Each player has a ball. This is an activity designed to introduce players to juggling the ball. For young players, reacting to a ball in the air is an evolutionary process and this first challenge allows them to begin to work on their touch and to often experience some success as well. Players begin holding the ball at shoulder height. They allow it to drop and bounce and then try to use their laces surface to play the ball straight up in the air (not very high – usually waist high is a good starting point) and then the ball is allowed to bounce before they strike it again. Allow the players some time to experiment with and develop rhythm and touch. How many bounce juggles can they complete consecutively? The surfaces used in this progressing (laces, thighs, head) are three of the four standard surfaces (along with the chest) for receiving out of the air.

Progression:

- Alternate the striking foot
- Touch the ball with the thigh after one bounce, then the foot after a bounce, followed by a touch with the other thigh and finally the other foot (pattern repeats).
- Alternate between a touch with the head and one with a foot. When heading the ball, players should be instructed that safety is the primary focus at this age. Players should have their eyes open and mouths closed when heading and they should contact the ball at the hair line on their forehead.

Can they create other patterns?

Pairs receiving out of the air - touch line area

Players work in pairs along a touch line, with one player on the line and another on the field facing her, two yards away. Players on one side serve to their partner (underhand serves) for her to receive, settle to the ground and pass back. After ten repetitions, players change roles.

Progressions

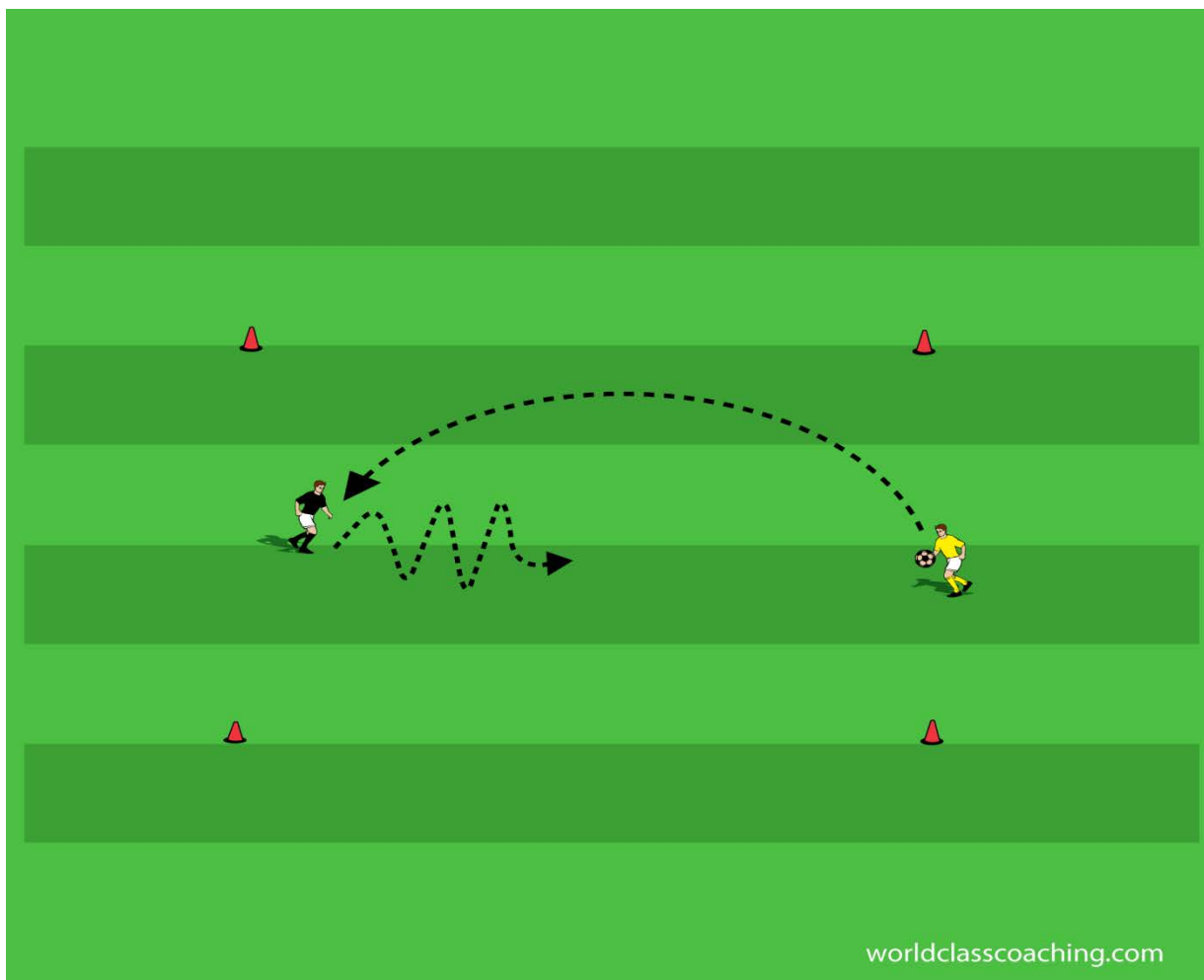
- Receiving with the laces. The receiving player gets in line with the ball, presents the foot to be used to receive the ball, contacts and cushions the ball by lowering the foot at the moment of contact, and settles the ball to the ground. Players should learn to receive the ball with the outer half of their laces, pushing the ball into space outside of and in front of either foot. This first touch puts the ball in a position to avoid immediate pressure and also to be able to pass the ball with the second touch (where as dropping the ball between the feet often requires an extra touch to put the ball in a position from which one can pass). Instruct servers to toss to alternating feet on the working player.
- Receiving with the thighs. The receiving player gets in line with the ball, presents the thigh to be used to receive the ball, contacts and cushions the ball by lowering the foot at the moment of contact and settles the ball to the ground. Players should learn to receive the ball with the outer half of the thigh pushing the ball into space outside of and in front of either foot. This first touch puts the ball in a position to avoid immediate pressure and also to be able to pass the ball

with the second touch (where as dropping the ball between the feet often requires an extra touch to put the ball in a position from which one can pass). Instruct servers to toss to alternating thighs on the working player.

- Receiving with the chest. The receiving player gets in line with the ball, pushes her chest forward and shoulders back, contacts and cushions the ball (contact point is the high center chest boney spot well below the base of the neck) by pushing the shoulders forward and guiding the ball to the ground. Players should learn to turn to one side above their waste, pushing the ball into space outside of and in front of either foot. This first touch puts the ball in a position to avoid immediate pressure and also to be able to pass the ball with the second touch (where as dropping the ball between the feet often requires an extra touch to put the ball in a position from which one can pass). Instruct the active player to turn the ball to alternating sides with each serve.
- Receiving the ball with the head. Although this is a technique that is rarely used (most often the ball is driven with the head rather than controlled with this surface), it is a useful introduction to heading for young players and a skill that can be very useful in game situations. Once again, the receiving players should be instructed to keep their eyes open and their mouth closed for safety. In this sequence and to learn to control the ball with the head, the server will continue to serve a ball for the active player to receive, but the goal, rather than settling the ball to the ground, will be to see if the active player can get the ball to stop, even briefly, on her head. This involves cushioning (the ball may bounce on the head a bit, but players should try to get shorter bounces with each touch) the ball with good balance. For this exercise, the players should alternate server/active player roles with each toss. Can anyone get the ball to settle on their head and stay there?

Individual collections - 20x20 yard grid

Each player has a ball. This exercise adds movement to the receiving. Players dribble around the area. Every 5 touches, they pick up the ball, toss it up high and settle the ball using any of the surfaces trained in the previous exercise.



1 vs. 1 with throw-in restarts - 10x10 yard grids

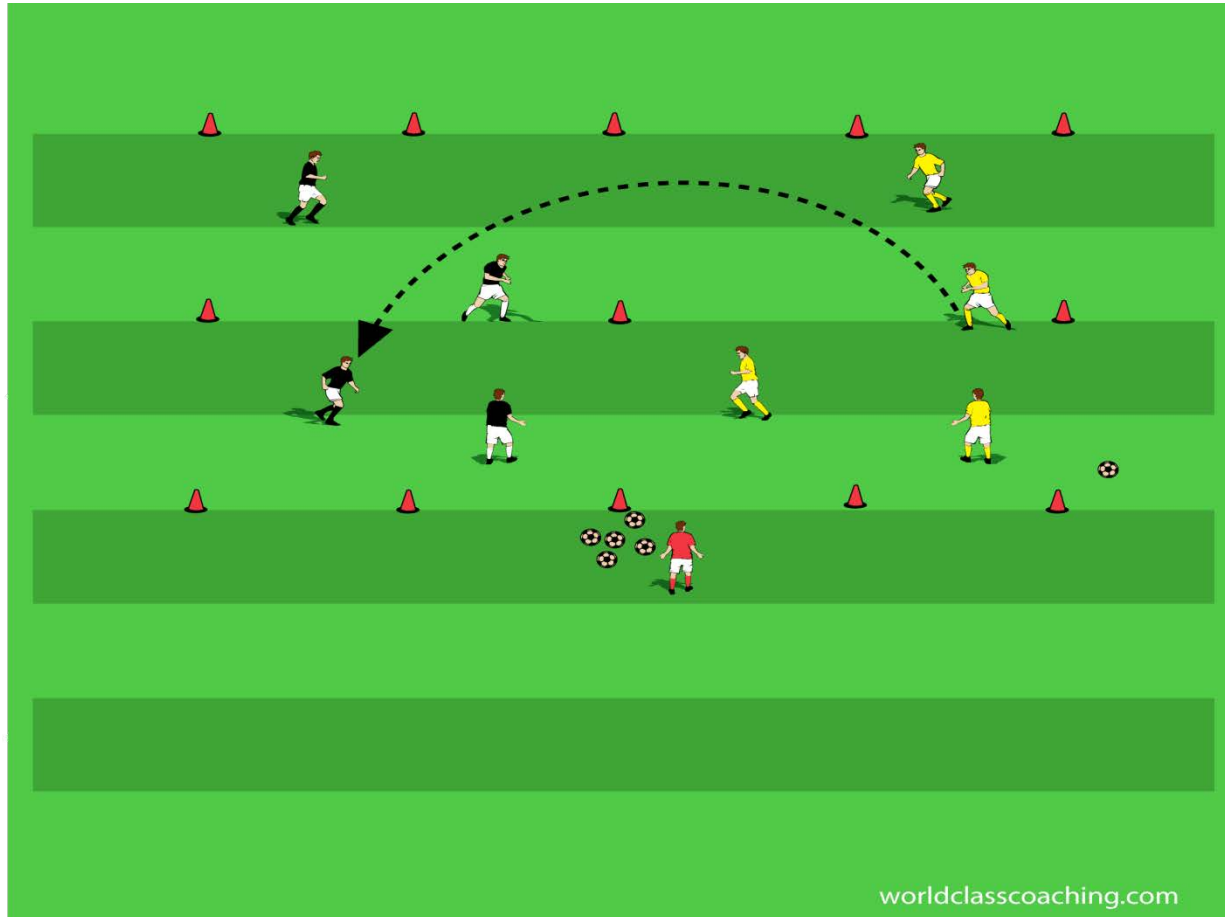
Put two players at each end of the grid as shown. A ball supply is located at one end. The server restarts play with a throw in to her opponent, who settles the ball out of the air. The two players then duel, trying to dribble the ball over one-another's end lines. When the ball leaves the grid, the duel is over. The two players change roles and the next duel begins.

3 vs. 3 games on a narrow field with throw-in restarts - 15x25 yard fields

Play small-sided games on narrow fields (to create more throw-in opportunities) to small cone goals. All re-starts are throw-ins and the target player for each throw is allowed one free touch before other players are live. Players should focus on receiving the ball and settling it. Mid way through the scrimmage, remove the restriction and allow free play.

Training Session #16: Heading.

Introduction: This session introduces heading, working players through a progression designed to strengthen the power and refine the technique of their striking, and then gives players the opportunity to utilize heading in a game situation.



Soccer Volleyball - back to back 6x8 yard grids

Play 3v3 soccer volleyball games. This is a fun and flexible activity to warm-up in a session focused on playing in the air. To begin, the coach serves balls randomly to either grid. Each team is allowed one bounce of the ball on their side of the cones each time the ball enters their area (for advanced players, no bounces should be allowed). Play to ten points.

Variation

- Play multiple games simultaneously and have the grids compete against each other for the highest single total number of exchanges (one point for each ball played from one side of the center line to the other).

Pairs technical heading progression - Touch line area

Players work in pairs with one soccer ball through each stage of the progression. At each level, emphasize safety (eyes open, mouth closed) and quality repetition. Explain that the progression is

designed to isolate particular muscle groups and motions that strengthen heading and improve technique.

Progression

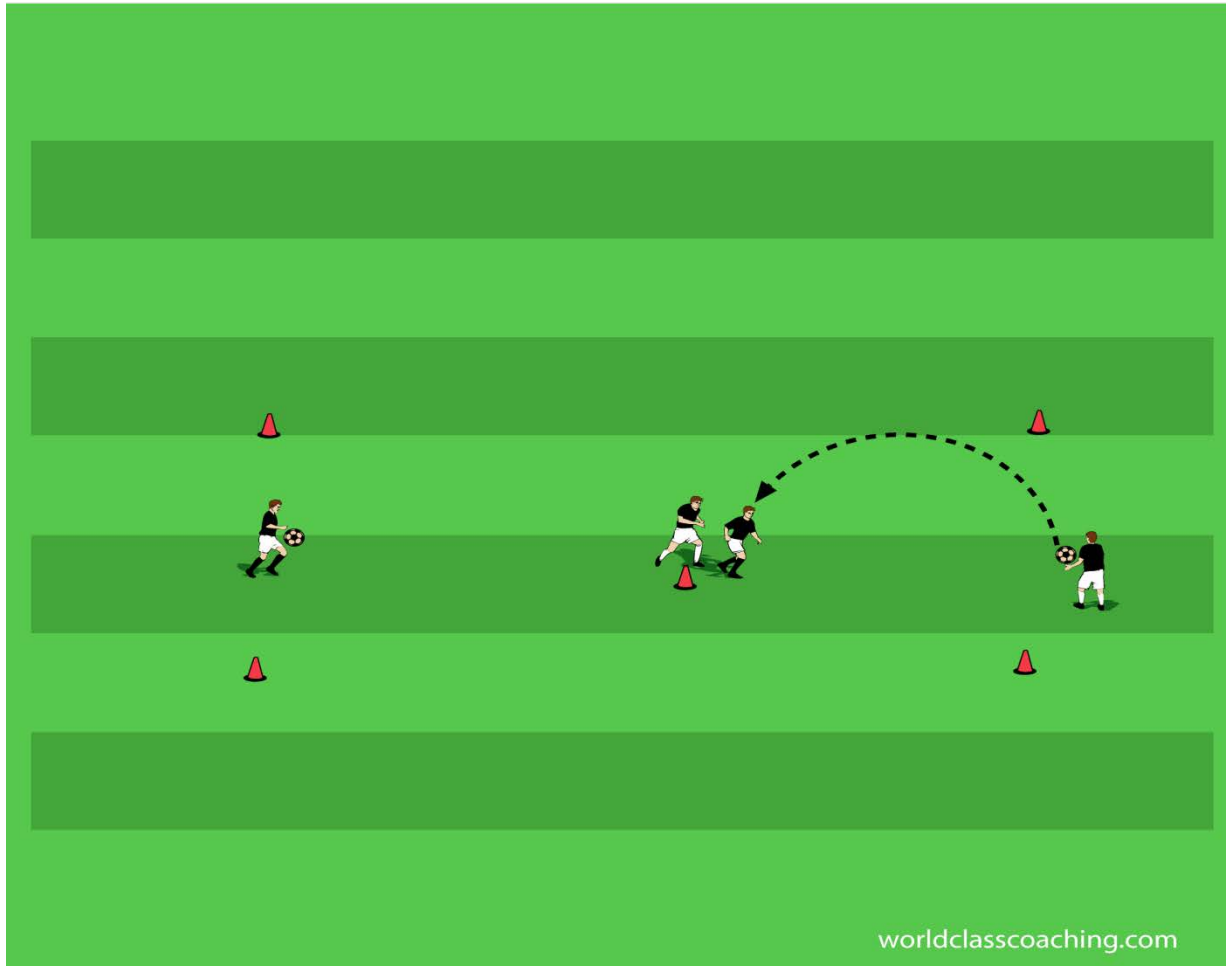
- Active player laying on her front side. The active player lays down facing her partner with her arms fully extended and supporting her shoulders and head. The server prepares to toss balls underhand and not more than a foot in front of the working player's head. The working player initiates each repetition by arching her back and pulling her head and shoulders back away from the server.
 1. Eyes open, mouth closed.
 2. Contact point is the hair line at the top of the forehead.
 3. Shoulders and head should be locked with the head forward and the shoulders pushing away at the moment of contact.
 4. Drive the ball back into the hands of the server.
- Active player seated. The active player initiates the repetition by leaning back to do about 1/3 sit-up.
 1. Utilize the lower back muscles, in addition to the points of emphasis above.
 2. Now the arms are held low and forward before contact and then thrust away from the ball (accentuating the shoulder movement) at the moment the ball is struck.
 3. Drive the ball back into the hands of the server.
- Active player standing. The server initiates each repetition with the toss.
 1. In addition to the above points of emphasis, it is advisable for young players in particular to have them stagger their feet, with one foot closer to the server and one comfortably further away. The working player starts each repetition with her weight on her away foot and transfers the weight to the front foot as part of the striking motion. This posture adds power and also gives a longer time window for timing the heading motion.
 2. Attacking heading. In attacking situations (i.e. in finishing crosses), it is often best to drive the ball downward (this makes it very difficult for defenders and the goalkeeper to react to). Show players that to create a downward angle on the header, the players need to contact the ball on the back side and above the center-back.
 3. Defensive heading. In defending situations (i.e. defending crosses) it is preferable to head the ball upward, clearing the ball away from danger and giving the defense time to organize while the ball travels. Show players that to create an upward angle, they need to contact the ball on the back side and below center.

Pairs heading contest - Touch line area

Working in pairs with one ball, see which group can complete the most consecutive headers. Players must alternate touches. Restarts are by a toss from one partner to the other. Explain that this exercise simulates defensive heading, as it requires that the ball be headed upward to one's partner. Players can use their feet, thighs and shoulders (not hands) to sustain their juggle, but those touches do not count toward the total. Keep track of the single best sequence for each pair.

Variation

- Rather than tracking the best single sequence, record the total number of headers by each pair throughout the exercise. This is a useful variation for very young players in that it encourages repetition rewards hard work if the players are unsuccessful with the standard rules of the game.



Competitive Heading - 10x10 yard areas

Players work in groups of 4, with two working players in the middle and two servers on the ends with soccer balls. The working players return to the center cone after each duel. Servers toss balls for the working players to try to head back to the servers. Any ball caught by the server is a point for the working player who headed the ball. Encourage servers to vary the height and type of service (i.e. lofted ball or flat throw).

Variations

- Players need to settle the ball before playing back.
- Players need to flick the ball on to the other server (shorten the area of play for this variation).

4v4 Games to goal with controlled restarts - 18-yard box

Play 4v4 games to goal with all restarts coming from throw-ins. This restriction creates numerous opportunities for players to duel in the air.

Additional ideas

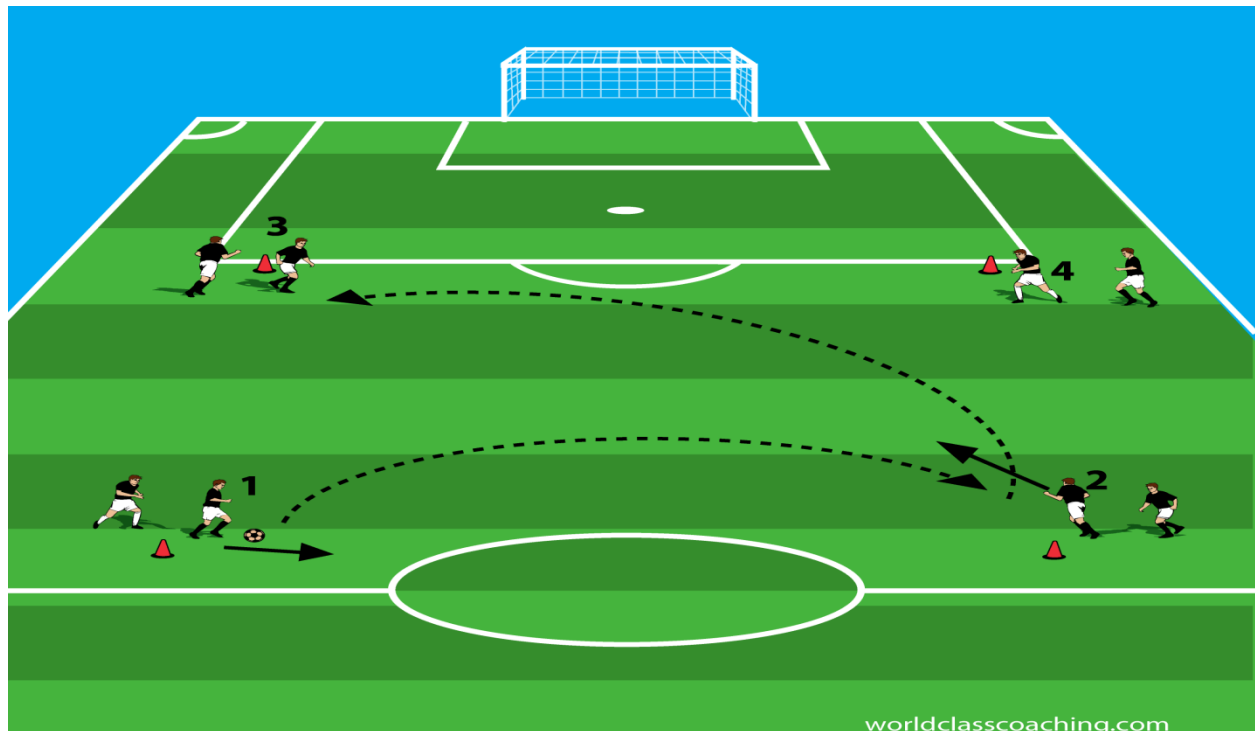
- Goalkeeper re-starts are short, high punts.

- Goals can only be scored off of crosses (add neutral crossers to promote)

Training Session #17: Cross and finish.

Introduction

This session reviews long passing and then provides a basic structure for training cross and finish situations.



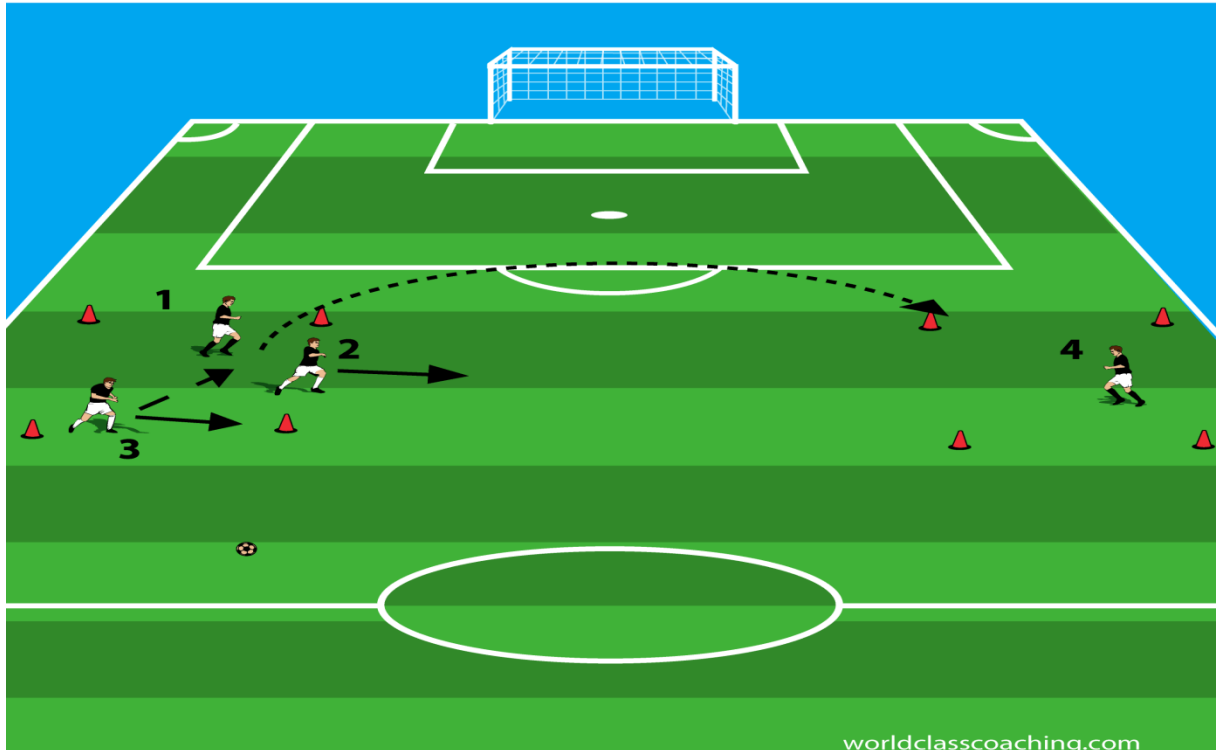
4 corners long passing - ½ field

Divide the team into four groups. Each group forms a line behind one of four cones placed to form a 20x20 yard grid in the center of one end of the field. Keep a ball supply at one cone. Explain that this is a passing sequence warm-up that will be expanded into a long passing exercise. The first player in line (1) with a ball passes straight ahead to the first person in line at the cone opposite her line (2). She then follows her pass and goes to the end of that line. The player receiving the ball (2) at the second cone then passes at a diagonal to the first player in line at the third cone (3) and follows her pass. The player at the third cone plays straight ahead (to player 4) and then follows her pass. Finally, the player at the fourth cone plays diagonally back to the start and follows her pass and the sequence begins again. This is a useful warm-up to emphasize passing accuracy, quality receiving (players should receive the ball using their first touch to set up their pass with the second touch, which is to say that their first touch should push the ball in the direction that they intend to pass), and running after the pass.

Progression:

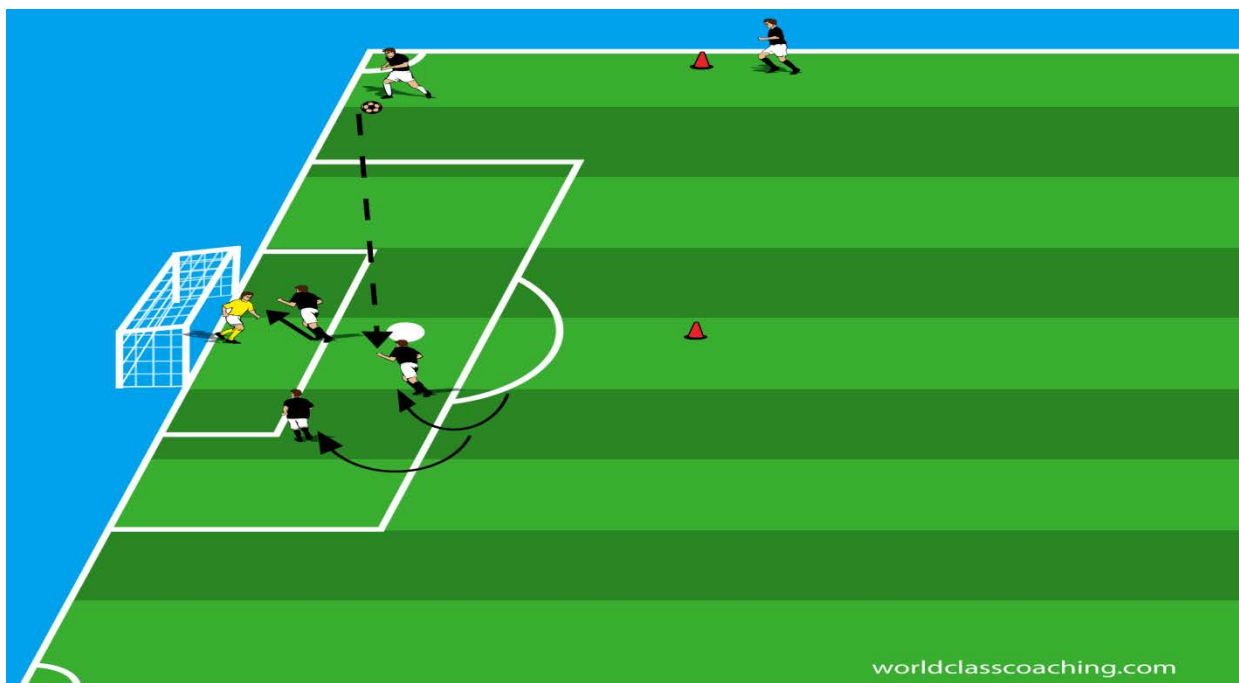
- Play for two minutes, and then see if the players can keep two balls moving at the same time.

- After two more minutes, move the cones back to create a 25x25 yard space. The exercise remains the same, except that now the passes are longer and the coach can dictate what type of serve (driven, lofted, chipped) is required. The coach should require players to alternate the foot they use for passing (in the short and long phases).
- Once the players have the pattern for the long pass, introduce a second ball to apply some time pressure and also more repetition for the players.



Fitness long passing - 10x10 grids (spaced)

Players work in groups of four with a ball. Place one player (4) in a 10x10 yard grid, and the other three in a 10x10 yard grid that is set up about twenty-five yards (adjust to fit the abilities of the players) from the other grid (see diagram). Demonstrate with one group. In the grid with three players, identify a single, passive defender (2). This player moves at walking pace to start. The remaining two players (1,3) are to pass the ball at least three times before one of them plays a long pass to their teammate in the far grid. Once the ball has left the grid, the player making the long pass (1) stays in the grid, while the other attacker and the defender race to the far grid. The last player to arrive in the new grid becomes the defender, while the other two players are attackers. The attackers move around the grid to connect three passes while the defender provides passive resistance. Then the long pass is made and the sequence continues. It is important that players understand the changing roles before commencing the exercise. This exercise provides long passing practice, highlights the importance of providing early support to the ball when the field is changed, and also raises the players' fitness by requiring frequent, short sprints. Play for five minutes.



Simple cross and finish - ½ field

This exercise is designed to create a very simple environment to train the basic patterns involved in crossing and finishing the ball. Place two players with a ball supply near the right touchline, near the top of the large box. The goalkeeper will be the only defender in the exercise at this point. The remaining players are divided in groups of three and gathered outside the top of the “D.” The first thing to establish is the running patterns and crossing cues for the wide player as she prepares to serve the ball.

- At first, quality runs and service are more important than speed.
- The server should make all of her runs to the end line at first. The idea here is to build into the players’ understanding that this run creates a lot of trouble for the defense, as they are forced to retreat deep and may either lose track of runners or the ball and they are often poorly positioned to clear a cross.
- The server’s last touch before crossing should be in the direction of the goal and not the end line. This is referred to as “turning the corner.” Many young players serve a lot of crosses behind the goal, often because they are trying to catch up to a touch that has them facing the ball as it rolls toward the end line. If the last touch before crossing is in the direction of the goal, the player will be able to then look up at the target area and select a target for the cross, turn her hips and shoulders toward the goal, and plant her non-striking foot pointing toward the goal as well. When these cues are followed, the server has a better chance of executing a successful cross.
- Also point out that the best crosses are often on the ground and cutting back across the defense. In other words, the ball is played back up field, into the area between the small box and the penalty kick mark (on the large field, this is referred to as the “second six”).
- The other point of focus here is the runs to get onto the end of the cross. There are several stages of development in learning to finish crosses, and the most basic imprint is desired here.
- Impress upon the runners the tactical importance of creating space and timing the runs. The most difficult aspect of this process is getting the players to hold their runs until the appropriate time. If players arrive in the target areas before the ball has arrived, they are much easier to

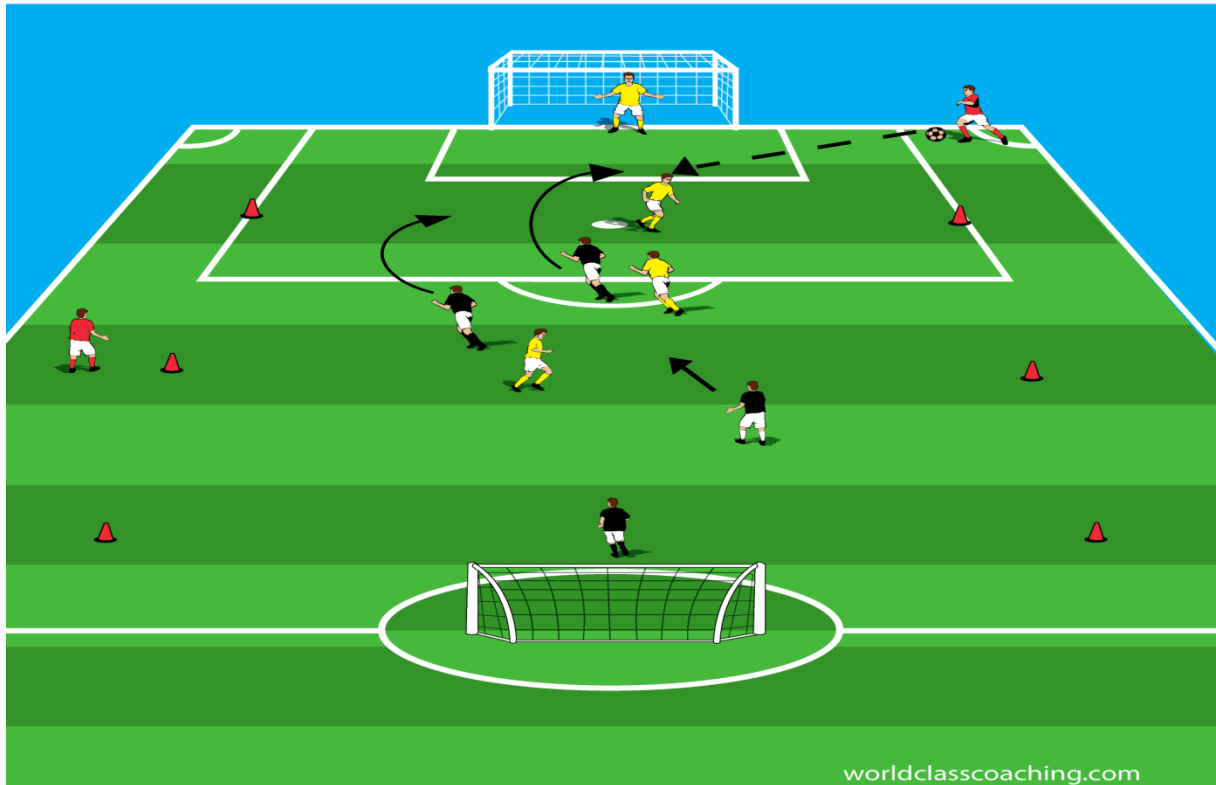
mark and the effectiveness of the movement will be very limited under pressure. It is often useful for the coach to hold the runners and release them a bit late so that they learn to be more patient.

- Target areas. In 8v8 soccer, there will rarely be more than three targets for a given cross. Therefore, it is useful to teach players at this early stage to sort out runs to three critical areas.
 1. Near post. The first player in will crash the near post.
 2. The second player in will arrive in the second six at the same time as the ball.
 3. Back-post. This player is the last player to arrive and is typically the back-side midfielder or forward. It is useful to emphasize that this player's purpose, particularly at the younger levels, is to assure that any ball that passes by the first two targets and the defenders is kept "in the mix," which is to say that she cleans the ball up by either finishing it at the back post or pushing the ball back into critical space if the cross has passed out of the target areas. The most common concern here is that the back-post player will want to close too tight to the goal, when she is often best served by remaining wider and higher until after the ball is hit and it becomes clear that she needs to adjust her position. This run becomes very important as players become more adept at serving lofted crosses to the back post, where the far target can get in to finish.
- Bent runs. Players will want to run straight to the goal. This choice makes them easier to mark and also gives them poorer finishing angles to the ball, an element that is critical to building success and confidence in young players. Instead, players need to be shown how to bend their runs away from the ball as the crossing run is developed. This forces the defenders to give attention to either the ball or the player, but makes it difficult to do both. Also, as the players then close at speed into their target positions, their collective body positions will be "open" to the ball, meaning that the ball will come straight at them (as opposed to from the side), giving them more finishing options and a better look at the ball (which gives them the ability to adjust their runs on approach to the ball as well).

Improving quality. Here are some additional suggestions for improving the quality of basic crossing and finishing as the exercise is developed.

- Allow play to continue as long as the ball is knocked down by one of the runners inside the large box. This way, young players are not compelled to finish with the first touch as they learn to deal with balls driven toward the front of the goal.
- Begin the exercise with a pass from one of the runners in the center to the flank runner. The idea here is that most crosses are set up by a ball served to the runner from a central position, so the pattern is expanded to simulate a realistic opportunity to set up a cross.
- Create teams and keep score. Each server and group of runners are a team (and the goalkeeper is her own team, earning points for quality saves) and each team earns a point for scoring (or if there are not a lot of goals in the early stages, give a point for a first-time shot that is on the face (i.e. would be a goal but the goalkeeper made the save) and two points for a goal).
- Be sure to switch the service to the left side (if there are enough players, arrange service from both sides and alternate the source of the runs and crosses).
- Also be sure to alternate the servers so that all players have the opportunity to serve and learn the runs to goal (players should also alternate the runs they make to goal (i.e. back-post, near-post, etc.).
- Encourage players to serve crosses on the ground first (to an open target), and then encourage them to try playing a long cross in the air to the back post area as they get more comfortable.

- Train all players to communicate. The server should visually and verbally identify her target and the runners should learn to demand the ball from the server.



4v4 with neutral crossers - ½ field

Play 5v5 with neutral crossers and goalkeepers. The crossers are required to stay in the neutral lanes on the flanks (see diagram) and no other players may enter that space. Re-starts come from the goalkeepers (place a supply of balls in each goal). The only means of scoring a goal is directly off of a cross, so teams will need to work to play in to the crossers to set up scoring opportunities. This is a good environment for training the runs for the targets and also for building the quality of the crossing. The coach should encourage early service wide to the crossers (even from the goalkeepers at re-starts) to create numerous crossing situations. Play for two minutes and then change the crossers. Crossers need to make end line runs before crossing. Coach the runners as above. Keep track of score.

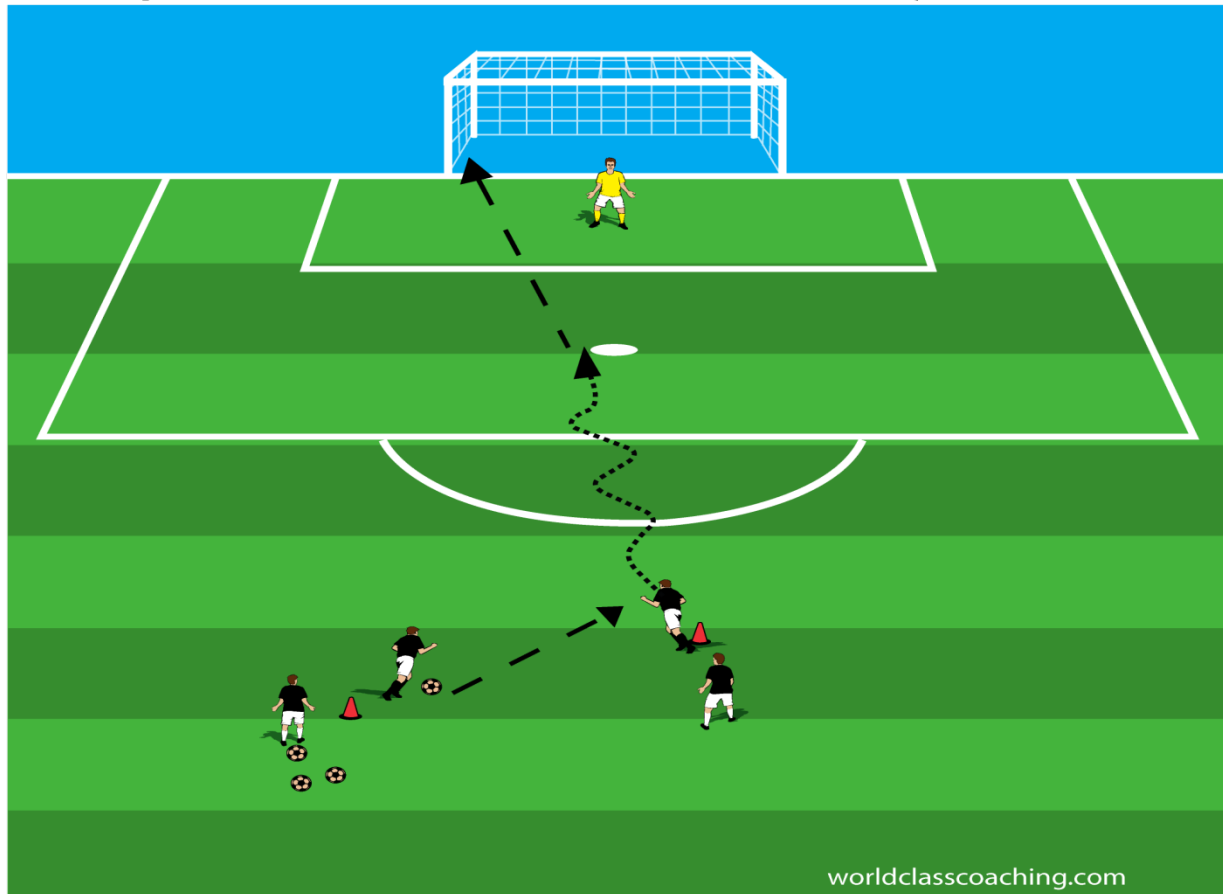
6v6 to full-sized goals - Full Field

Play 6v6 to goals. For the first ten minutes, give three points for a goal scored as a result of a cross and one point for all other goals. Then remove the three point bonus and let the players play.

Training Session#18: Finishing

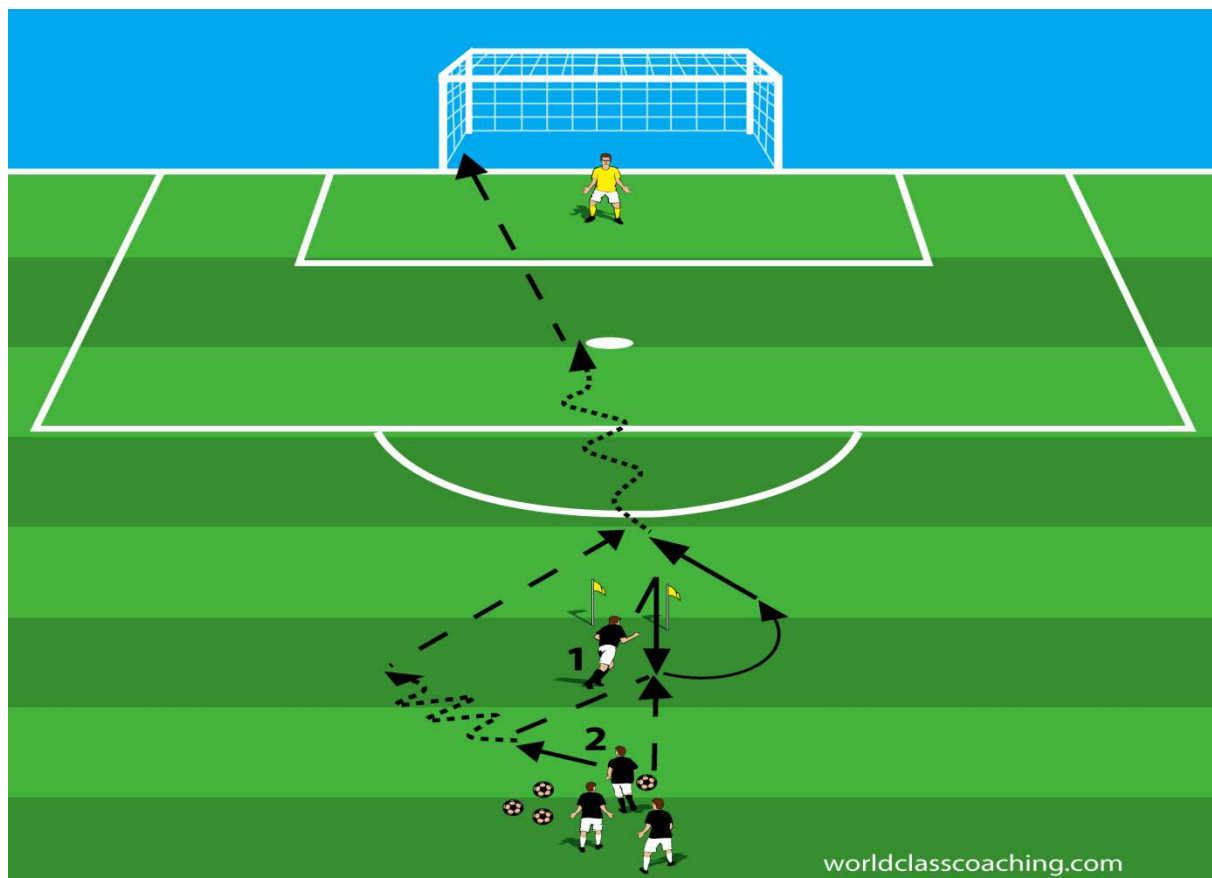
Introduction

This collection of finishing exercises does not represent a free standing session. These training environments are proven to be effective and fun means of improving finishing.



Pressure shooting - 1/3 field

Two lines form at the cones 30 yards from goal as indicated in the diagram. Note that the cones are staggered to give the attackers an advantage. The first player in the defending line passes to the front foot (or into space in front of her) and then the defender pressures and attempts to win the ball from the attacker, who sprints to finish. If the defender wins the ball, she tries to score. After the shot is taken, the attacker retrieves the ball and jogs back to and joins the defender's line. The defender joins the attackers line. Encourage the attacker in this exercise to take a straight angle with speed to the goal (there is a tendency for the attackers to veer to their right to avoid pressure) and adopt a good shooting angle. The attacker should also get a good look at the goalkeeper's position after her set up touch and see if she can shoot (low, back post is best) while the goalkeeper is trying to close her down (catch the goalkeeper moving forward).



Lay-off and penetrate - 1/3 field

Player 1 makes a hard run into the gate (representing the opposing back line) and then checks back toward the ball. Player 2 passes in to the feet of player 1, who lays the ball off to one side for player 2 and then makes a curved run in the opposite direction. Player 2 plays the ball in behind the opposing back line for player 1 to run onto and dribble to finish. Player 2 then makes a check run through the gate and the sequence repeats.

Coaching Points

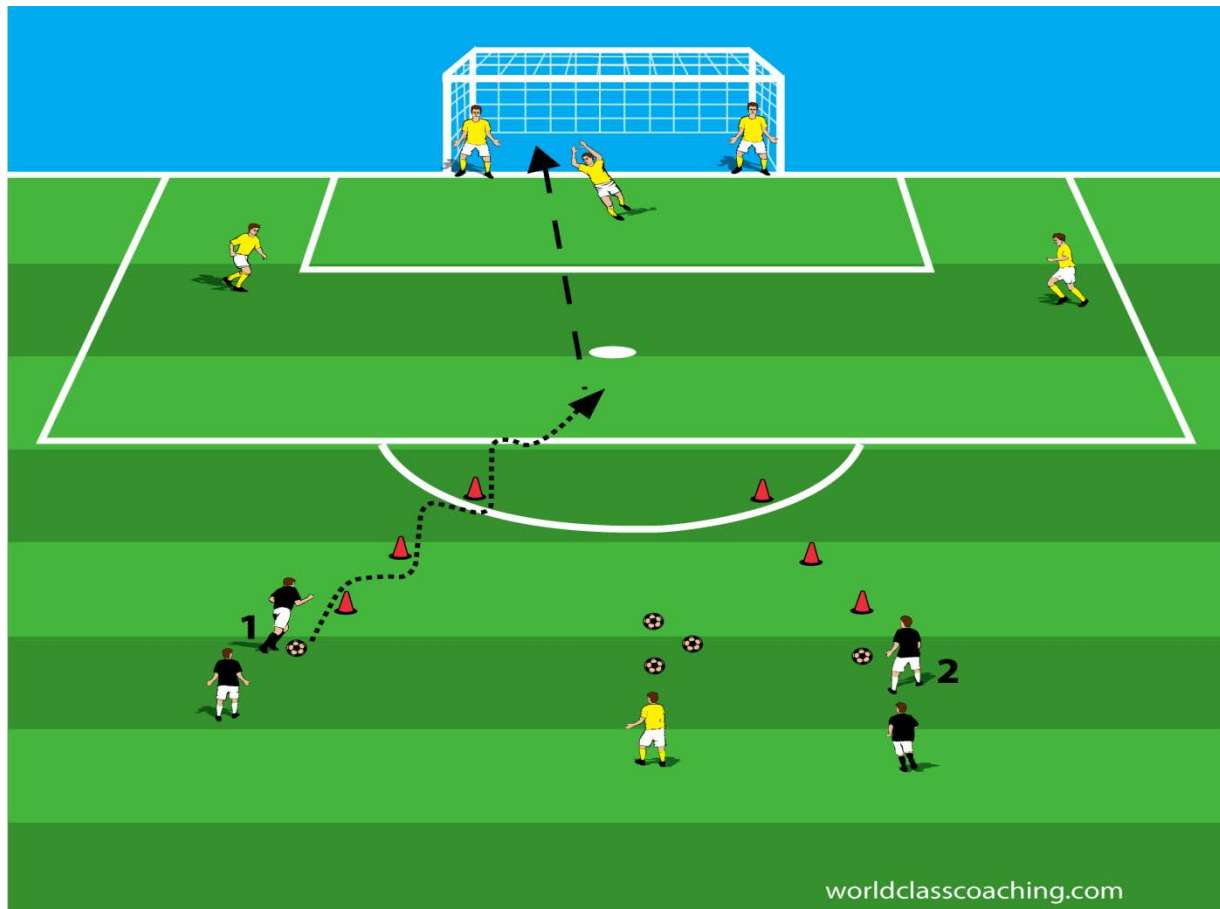
- Proper pace and location in passing: There should be rhythm in the passing to provide some realism in both the speed of play and also the timing of the runs. The lay-off pass in particular must be played at an angle that allows the receiving player to easily control the ball and develop a good passing window for the through pass.
- Quality runs: The check run must be made with conviction in both directions if it is to freeze and pull apart the opposing back line in a game situation. Similarly, the curved run prior to penetration must be made at speed and also with an eye toward being able to look over the inside shoulder to time the run to stay on-side and choose the proper point to get in behind the defense.
- Communication: The supporting player should demand the back-pass and also urge the runner to get in behind the defense. Similarly, the runner should demand the ball be played to her feet to initiate the sequence and then demand the ball be played in behind to complete the combination.

Shoot-keep-retrieve - 2 goals 22 yards apart

Divide the group into two teams gathered on opposite posts of the two goals with large supplies of balls. One team supplies a goalkeeper for the first shot by the other team. Each player shoots, then plays goalkeeper for one shot by an opponent and then retrieves a ball and gets back in line. Each player is allowed two touches (a set touch and the shooting touch) and the first touch must occur after the previous opponent's shot (so that the player can hustle over to play goalkeeper). This is a fast-moving, fun finishing environment. Keep track of score and play to 20 goals.

Variations

- After each shot, the players must drop down onto their front sides and recover before playing goalkeeper.
- Require a certain type of shot (i.e. off-foot; low, driven ball; shot under the bar)
- Number the corners of the goal 1-4. The shooters must call out the number of the corner they will play before striking the ball.



Supplemental goalkeepers - 30 yard area before goal

Divide the group into two teams. One team will provide two 'supplemental' goalkeepers, who must keep a hand on the back side of their respective posts and cannot use their hands, but otherwise try to assist the goalkeeper in blocking shots. The remaining players on the defending team are charged with organizing to keep a steady ball supply for the attackers.

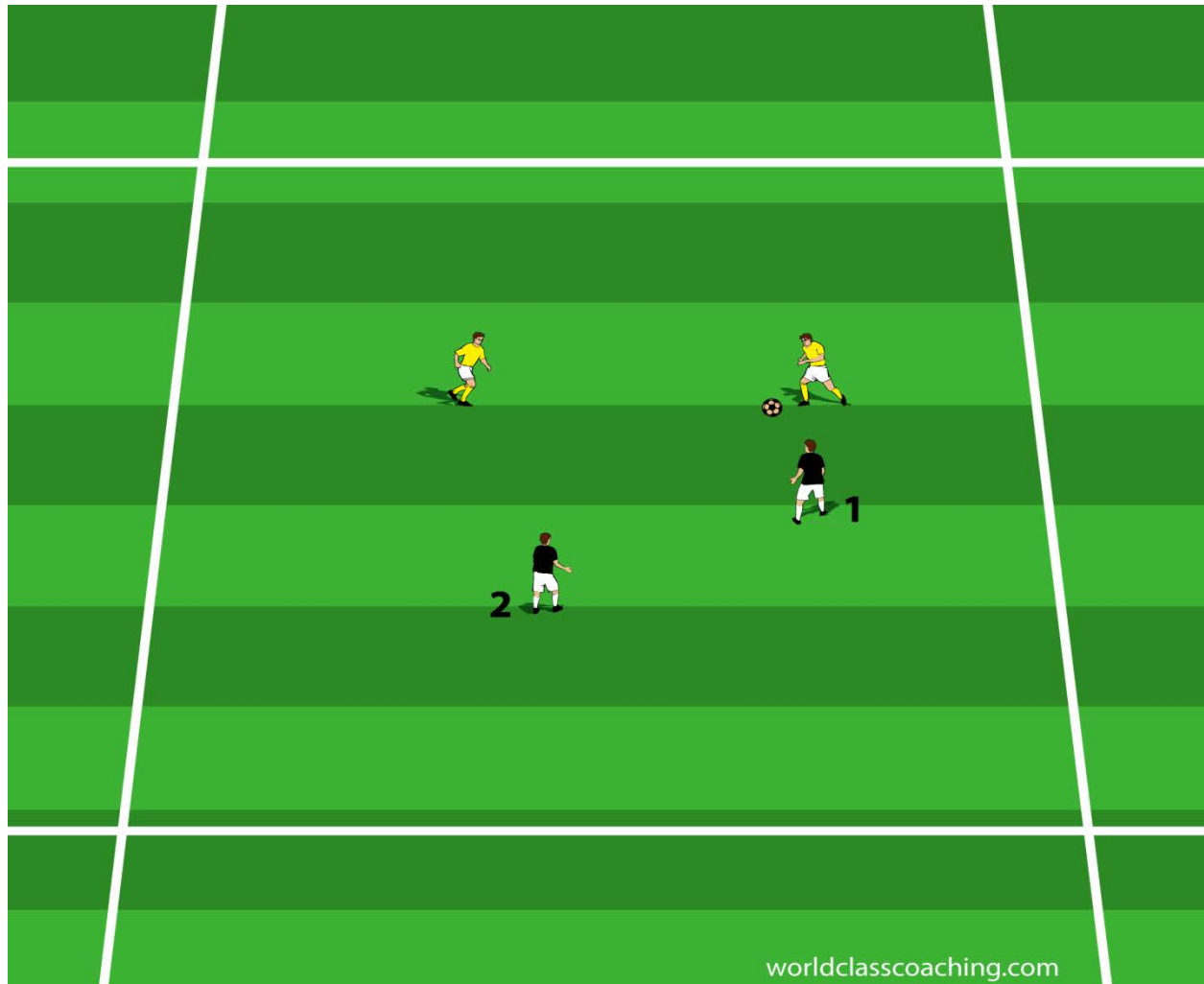
The attackers each have a ball and they are split in lines behind the cone lines. Alternating sides, the attackers must dribble through the cones at speed and then they get one touch before shooting at goal. After shooting, they get another ball and change lines. When the attacker on the opposite side clears the last cone on the dribble, the next attacker can start to navigate the cone line. Players in the left-side line must shoot with their right foot, and those approaching from the right must use their left foot (increases the shooting angle).

Play for ninety seconds and then change the supplemental goalkeepers and play for ninety seconds again. Keep track of the goals scored. After two rounds, the teams change positions. The team to score the most goals wins.

Training Session#19: Second Defender

Introduction

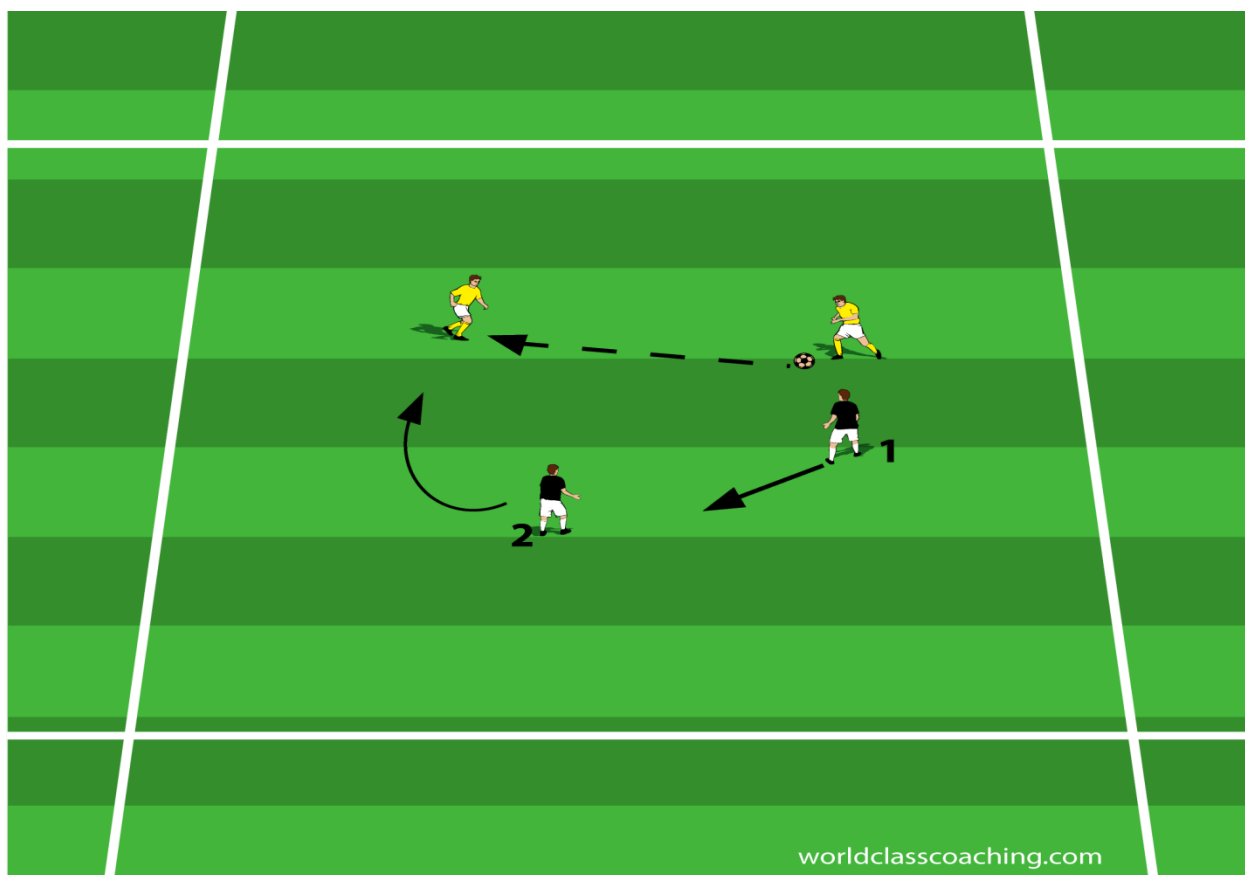
Session #19 introduces the role of the second defender. Players learn to recognize the importance of providing cover and working in tandem to limit attackers' options.



2 vs. 2 to end lines - 12x15 yard areas

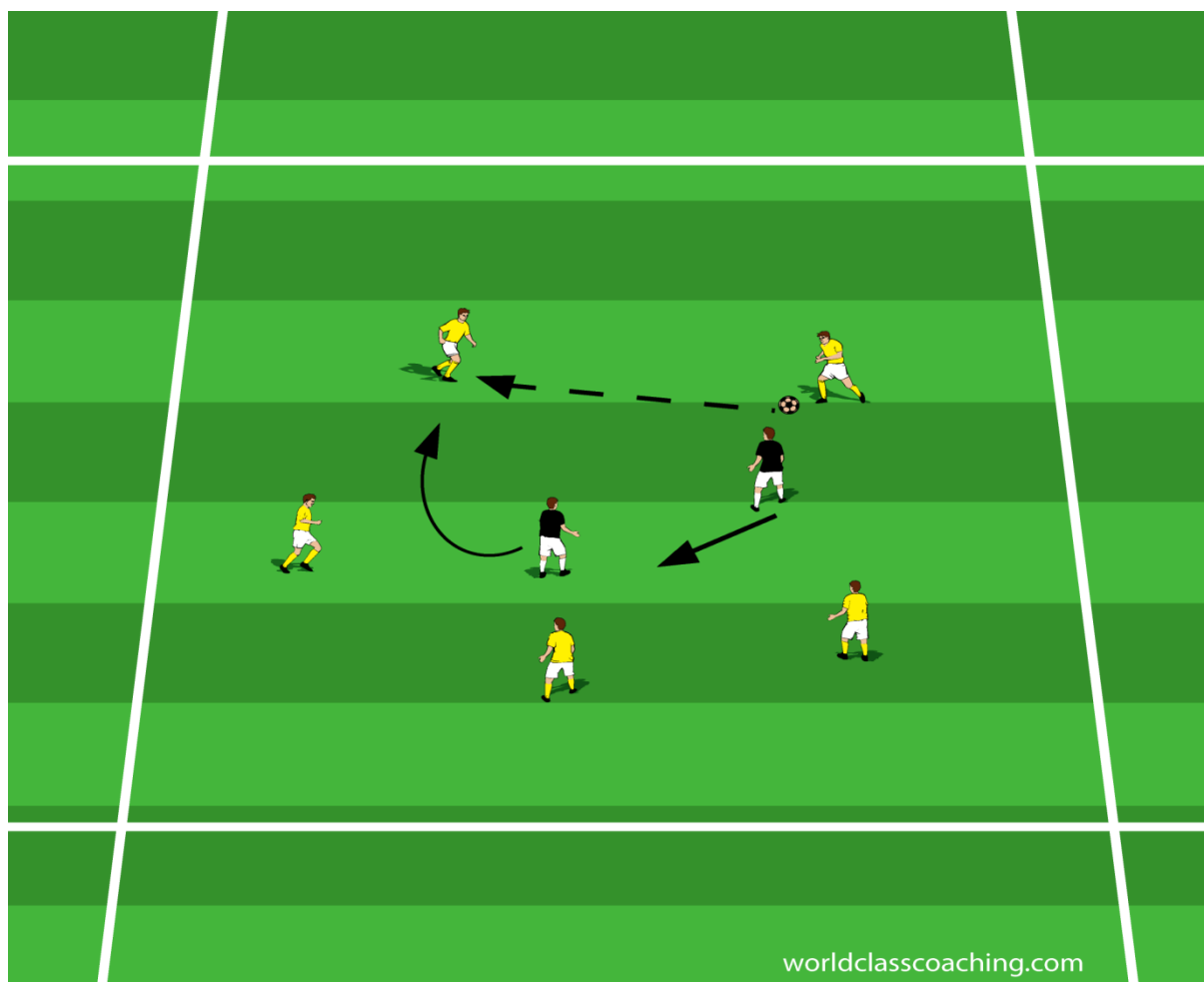
Play 2 vs. 2 to end lines. Play is initiated by passes from alternating ends. Use a walk through to demonstrate the tactical roles of the first and second defender.

- The first defender is the player nearest the ball. This player is responsible for pressurizing the ball and making the movements and options for the player in possession predictable.
- The second defender adopts a covering position (as shown above) off of the shoulder and behind the first defender (a good image for players regarding the distance is about the length of a corner flag). The second defender's responsibility is to communicate with the first defender as to which way to show the ball (toward cover) and also to be in position to become the first defender if her partner is beaten.



The diagram above shows how the players' roles shift as the ball is passed from one opponent to the other.

- Note that with the shift in roles, the new first defender works to force the ball back toward her support.
- Stress to the players that they look to each other as they shift (to assure that they are in sync as they shift roles).
- At this early stage, demonstrate but do not expect that players will call out (as second defenders) the side to which the ball should be channeled (left or right).



5 vs 2 - 10x10 yard areas

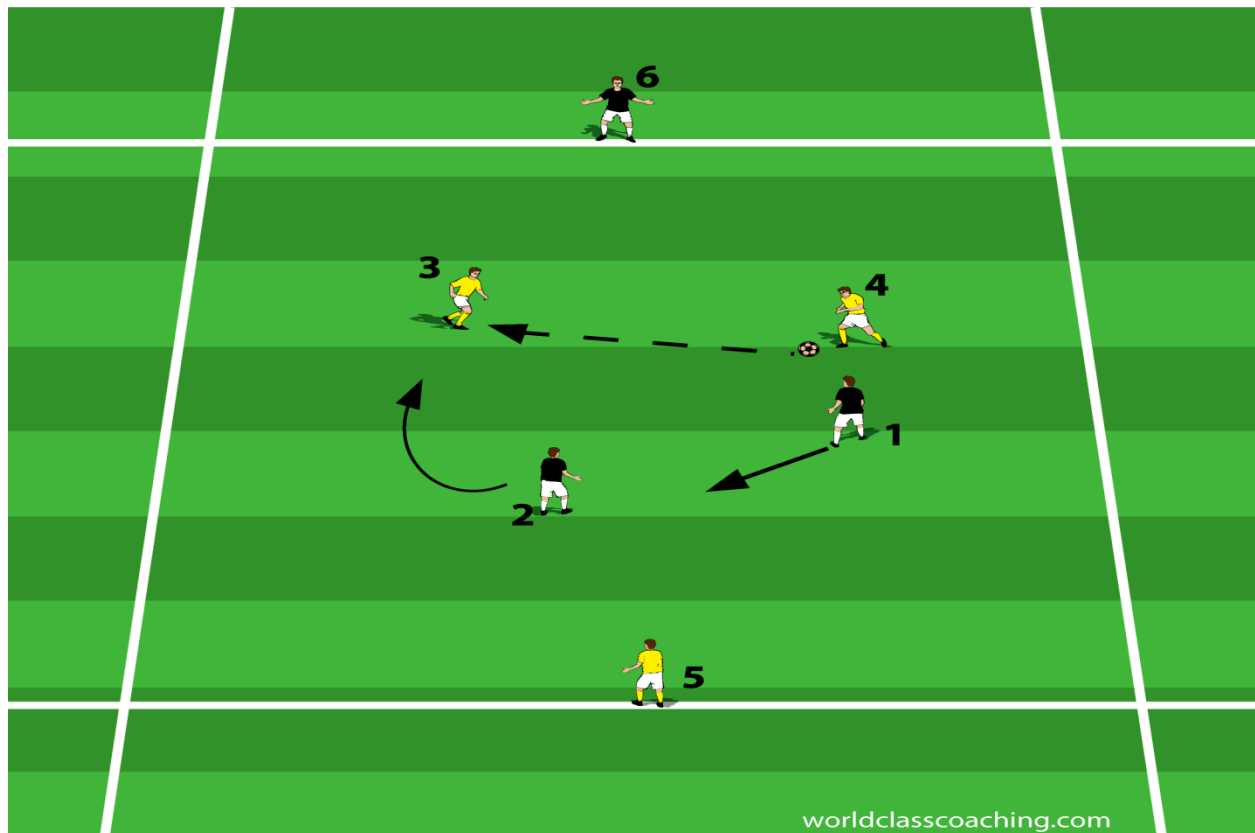
This is a popular environment for both a possession warm-up and also training first and second defender roles. The five attackers attempt to keep possession and whenever possible split the two defenders with a pass. The two defenders work to isolate the ball and sort out their defending roles with an eye toward winning the ball. When the ball is won, the attacker causing the turnover (last to touch the ball) takes the place of the defender who won the ball. Similarly, if the ball leaves the area, the attacker playing the ball out takes the place of one of the defenders. In this way, the defenders should be rotated often enough to keep them fresh.

Coach Points

- The strategy for the defenders is to apply pressure but be composed, looking for a poor pass or long touch that allows them to close down and win the ball. It is instructive to try to get the defenders to think in terms of trying to make the attackers play short passes and pin them in one area, getting ahead of the ball and being sure to take away any potential split pass (note the second defender's position above, cutting the through pass). In any case, the constant variations in direction of play and role changes by the two defenders require constant communication and good defensive vision.

Variations

- Require the attackers to move to a different part of the area (and shift to reform their circle) after they pass. This adds pressure to the attackers and also creates traffic for the defenders to read.
- Each pair of defenders remains in the middle for one minute. They earn one point for each ball they win or knock out of the grid. Give every player an opportunity to play in the middle and check to see which pair earned the most points.



2 vs 2 + 2 - 12x20 yard grids

Players 1 and 2 play against players 3 and 4, attempting to play either target player on the opposite end of the grid. 1 and 2 can use 5 as support pass option and 1 and 2 try to combine to play in to 6. 3 and 4 can use 6 for support and they try to play through to 5. Play is continuous and the middle pairs rotate out after three minutes.

Coach Points

- This is a narrow, directional playing environment, ideal for further familiarizing players with the first and second defender roles.
- Encourage the attackers to play directly to the target when possible. This adjustment will compel the defenders to keep pressure on the ball to avoid the early through pass.

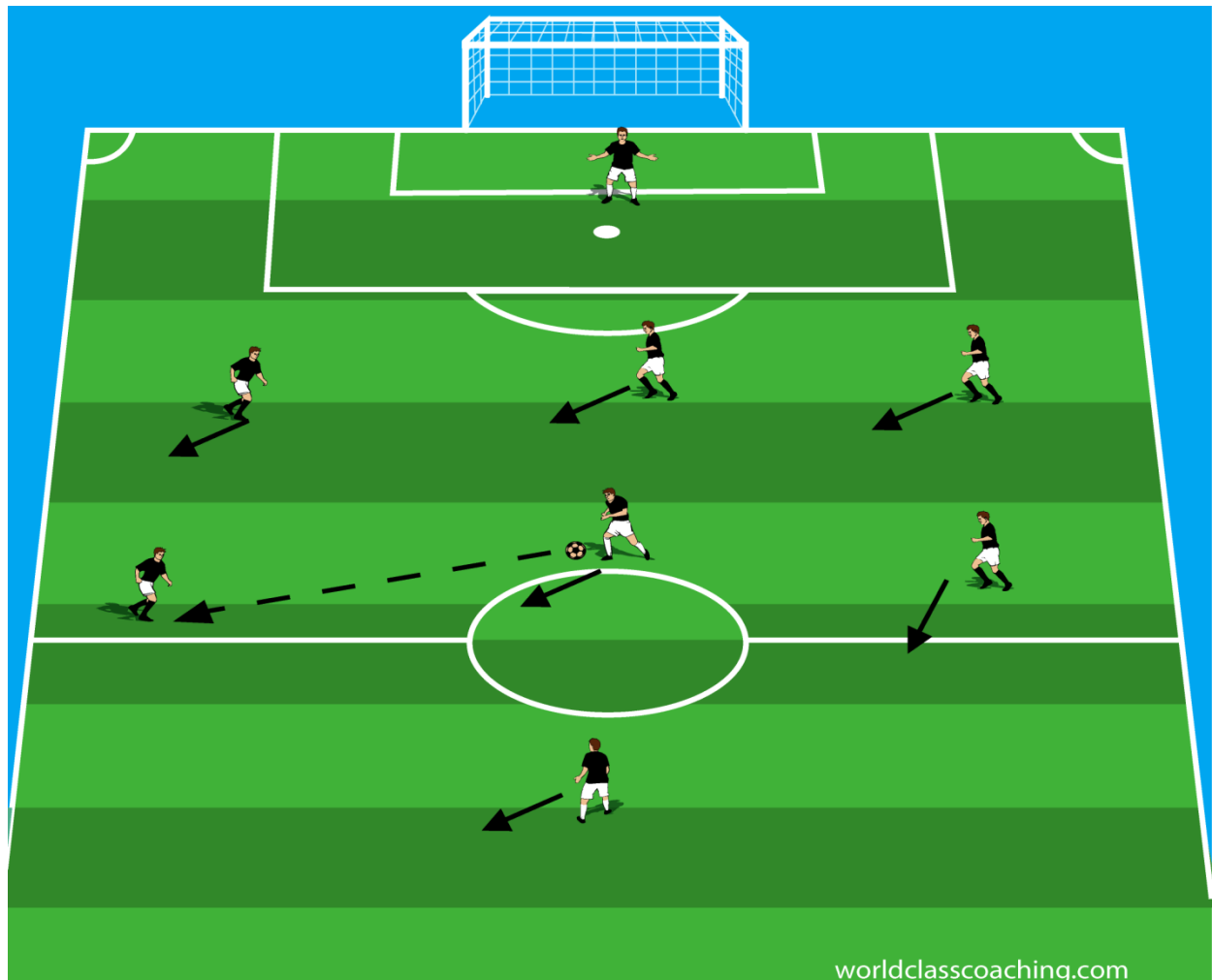
8 vs. 8 game - ½ field

Close the session with an 8v8 game on ½ field to full-sized goals. Award a point for a goal and also a point for good examples of the first and second defender working in tandem.

Training Session#20: Shadow Play: Attacking Patterns- 1-3-3-1

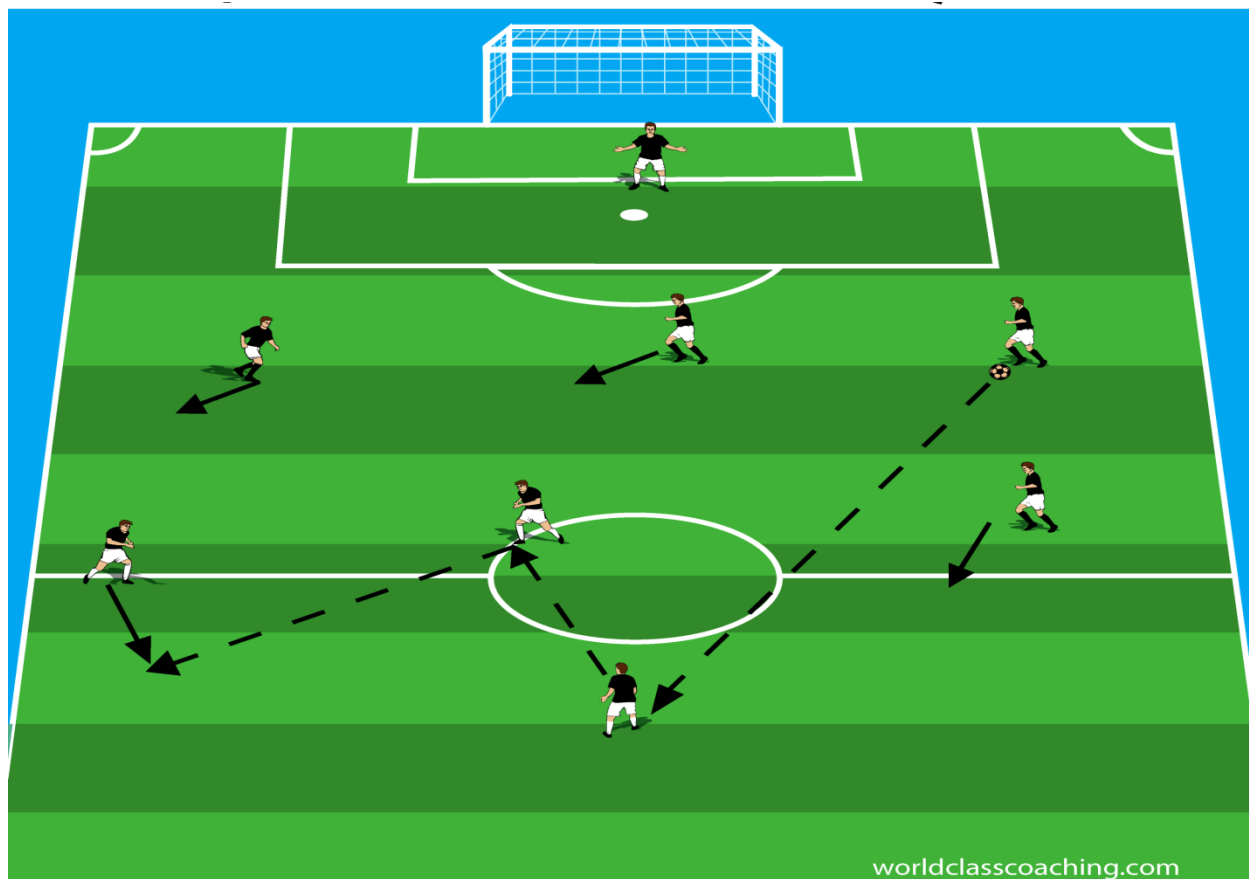
Introduction

This session familiarizes players with the team shape in possession and gives ideas as to how the team can transition into and complete the attacking phase. Shadow play is not realistic training (no resistance) and should only be used for brief periods with young players, but it is a good way to help players understand their roles and how they connect with their team members in possession.



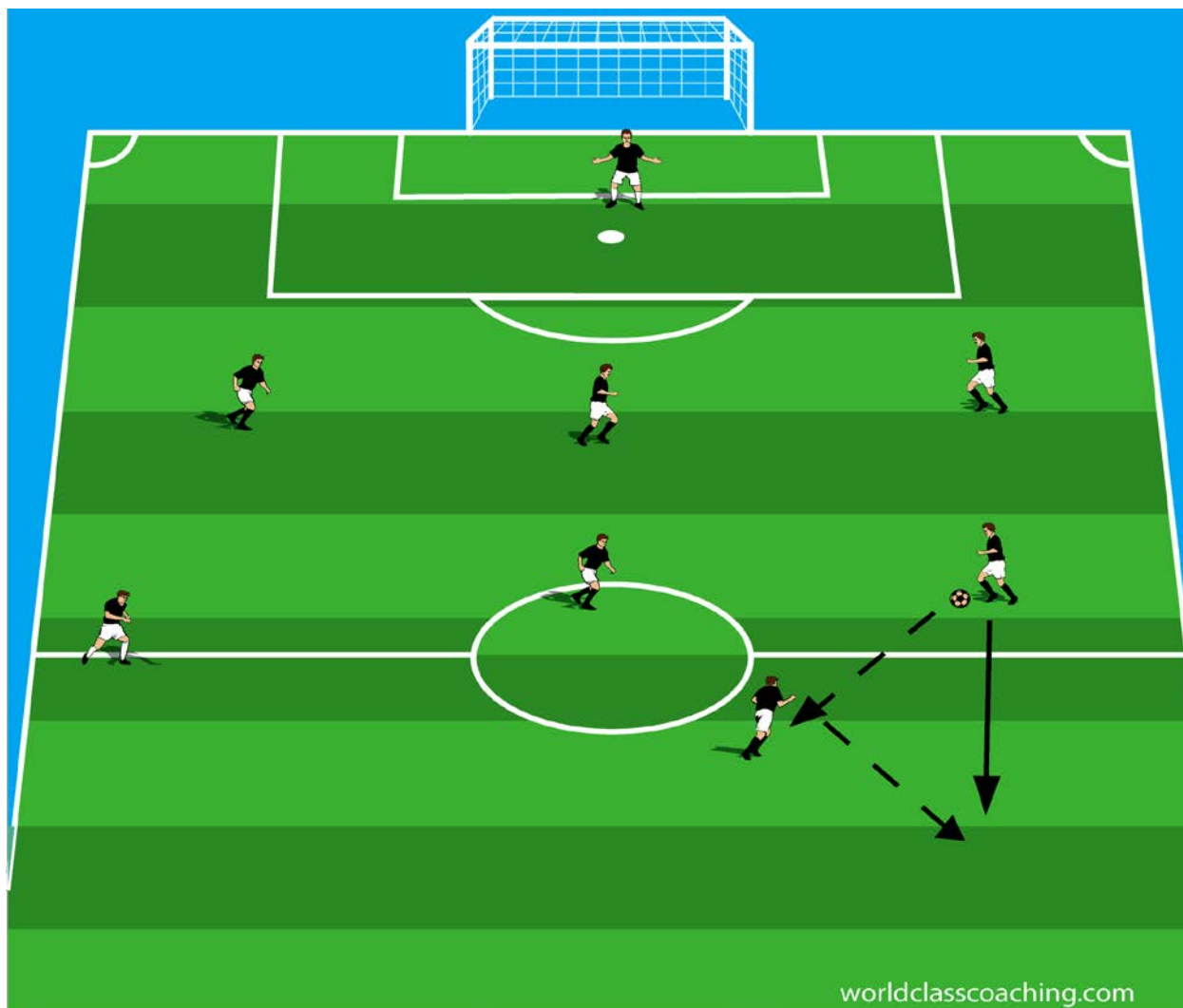
Basic shape and passing patterns - Full Field

Players ping the ball around as shown, learning the appropriate angles and passing relationships. Explain to the players that every time the ball moves, all 8 players must adjust their positions. The coach can use this setting to freeze the team and make adjustments.



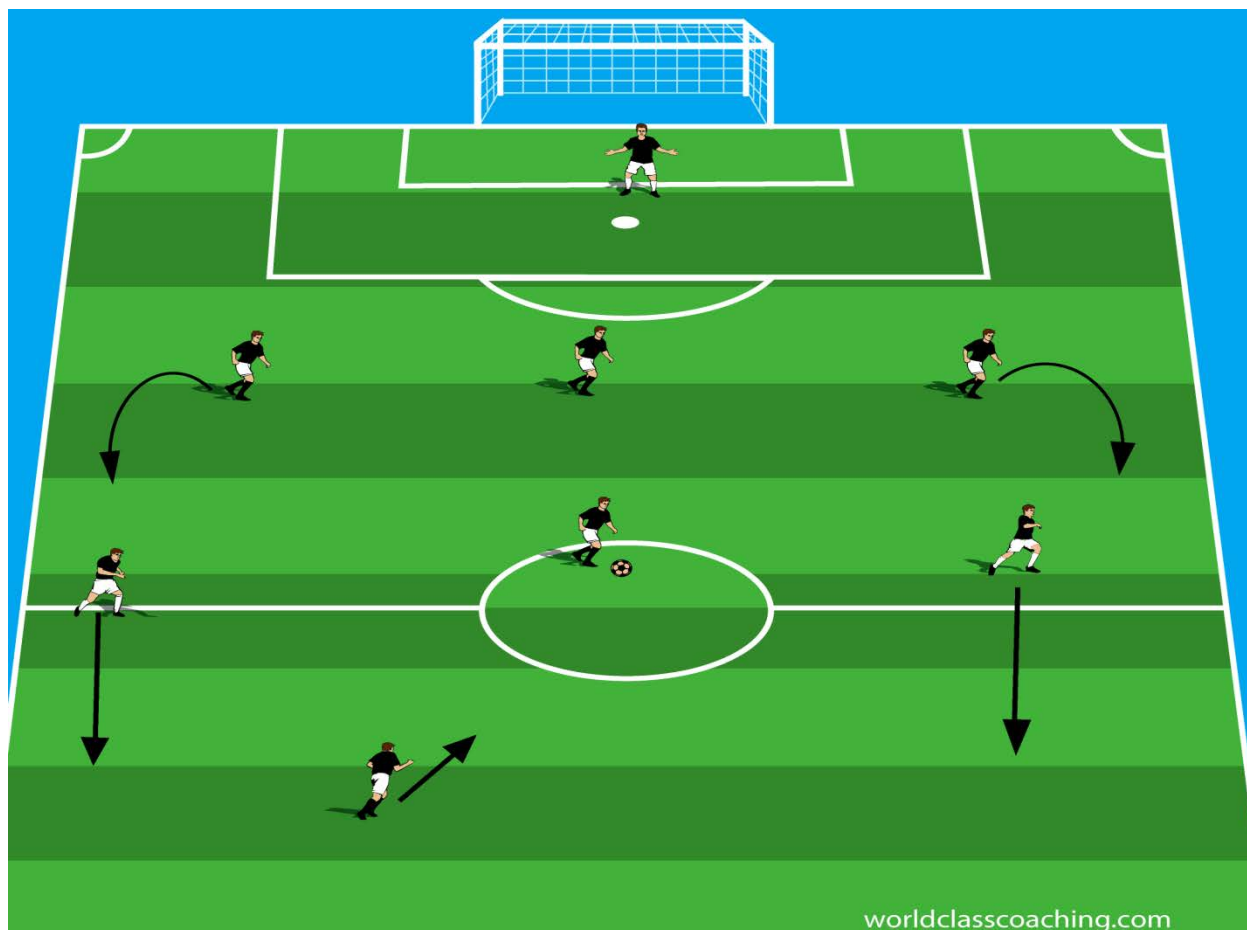
Transition through the striker 1 Full Field

One of the most common points of transition in this system is to play into the striker's feet and then lay the ball off for the central or flank midfielders while penetrating runs develop. Because of the single striker deployed in this system, it is essential that the player be mobile and make an effort to stay in line with the ball when the team is in possession.



Transition through the striker 2 - Full Field

Here, the striker checks to the ball as the wing midfielder receives, and the two complete a 1-2 to get the wing midfielder in behind the defense.



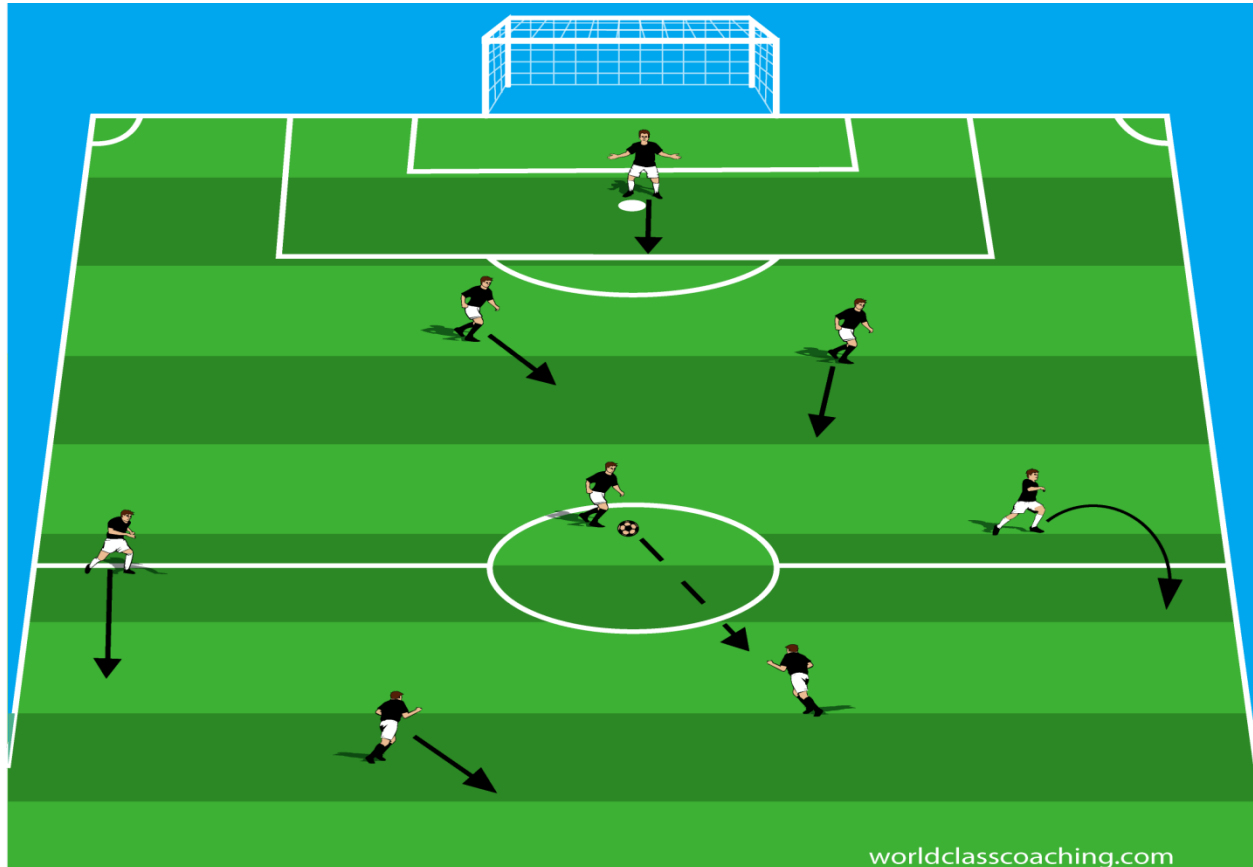
Central attacking options - Full Field

The central midfielder has the ball faced up entering the middle third. The outside backs move higher and wider and the wing midfielders make runs forward. The center striker can check to the ball if there is any pressure (shown) or make an angled, penetrating run if the central midfielder has room to dribble.

Training Session#21: Shadow Play: Attacking Patterns- 1-2-3-2

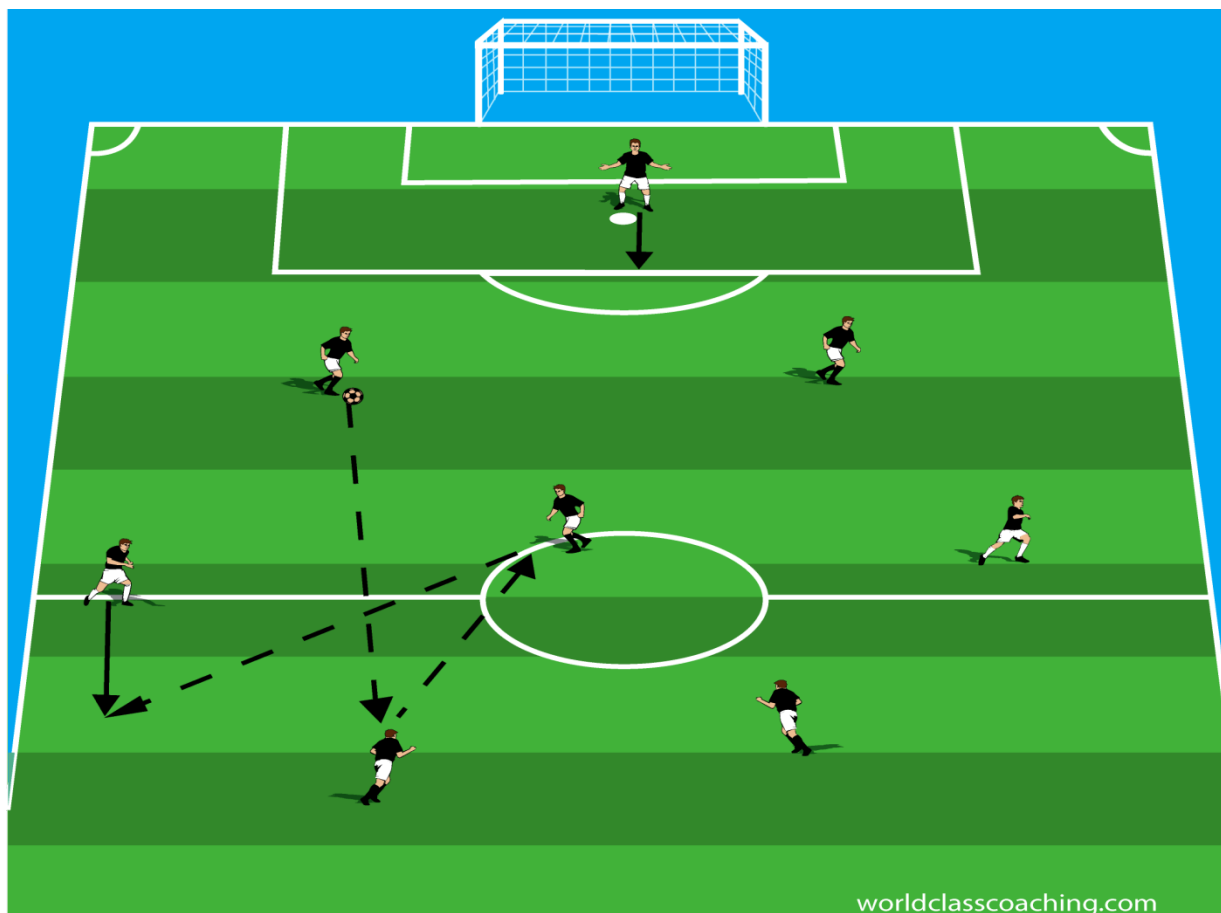
Introduction

This session familiarizes players with the team shape in possession and gives ideas as to how the team can transition into and complete the attacking phase. Shadow play is not realistic training (no resistance) and should only be used for brief periods with young players, but it is a good way to help players understand their roles and how they connect with their team members in possession.



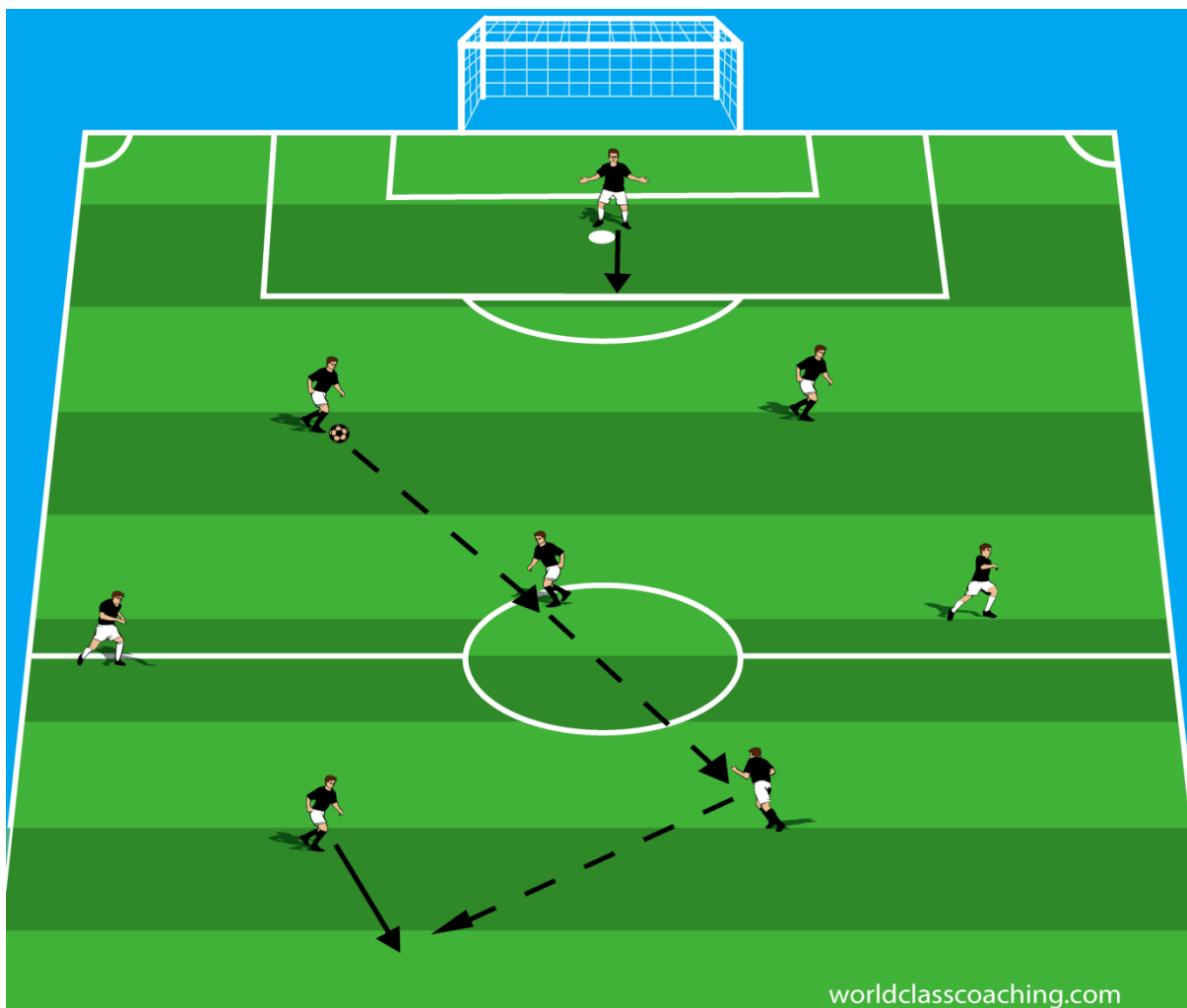
Basic shape and passing patterns - Full Field

Players ping the ball around as shown, learning the appropriate angles and passing relationships. Explain to the players that every time the ball moves, all 8 players must adjust their positions. The coach can use this setting to freeze the team and make adjustments. Note that with only two backs, it may be difficult to play backward and that when one defender has the ball, the other moves into a supporting position.



Combination to release the outside midfielder - Full Field

The right back passes into the feet of the checking right forward, who lays the ball off for the central midfielder. The right midfielder makes a determined run into space, where the central midfielder passes the ball for her.



Central attack through the two forwards - Full Field

The right back passes into the feet of the central midfielder who turns and plays the feet of the left forward. The right forward makes an angled run in behind the defense and her partner passes into space for her.

Training Session#22: Technique Olympics

Introduction

This series of technical challenges can serve as a fun team competition or as a periodic assessment of players' technical progress.

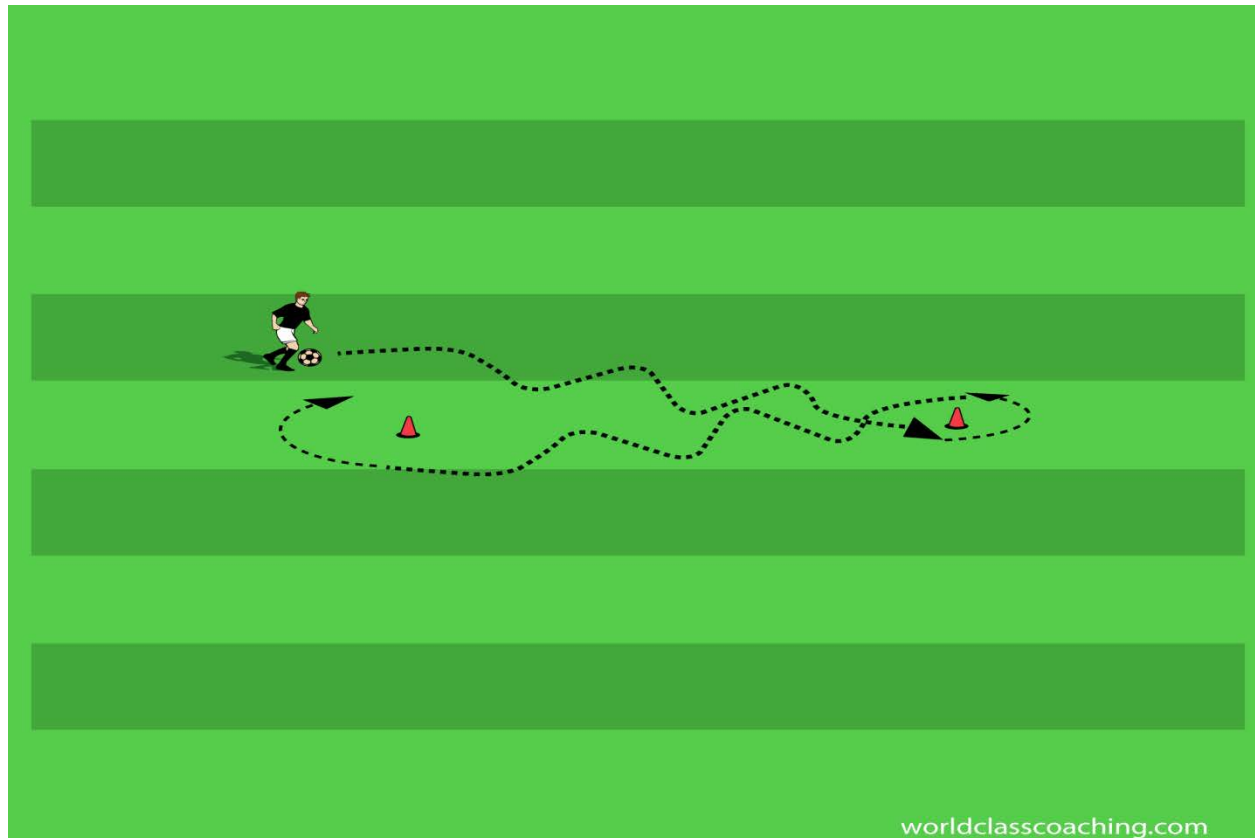


Figure 8 Dribbling - 10x3 yard areas

The player dribbles in a figure 8 pattern around the cones, using the inside of the foot for each turn. Which player can complete the most circuits in one minute?

Progression

- All turns are made with the outside of the foot.

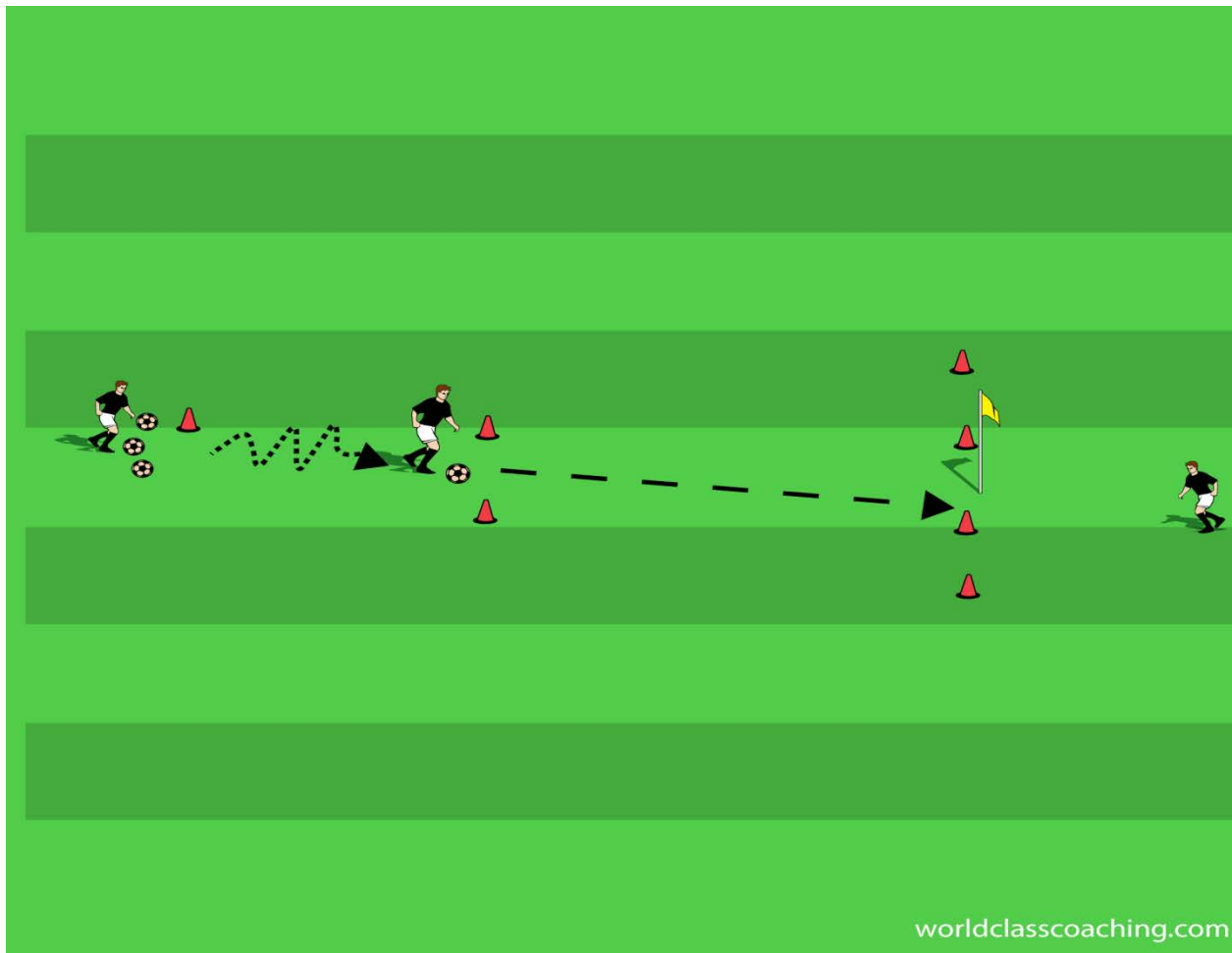
Body part juggling

Each player has a ball. The challenge here is to try to utilize as many body parts from the list below in each juggling sequence. Players earn a point for every different surface used in each sequence, but not for redundant use of a given surface.

1. Head
2. Left shoulder
3. Right shoulder
4. Chest
5. Right thigh

6. Left thigh
7. Top of right foot
8. Top of left foot
9. Inside of right foot
10. Inside of left foot
11. Outside of right foot
12. Outside of left foot
13. Right heel
14. Left heel

Which player earns the best score?



Passing accuracy - 10x10 yard areas

The active player dribbles to the cone line and passes, attempting to push the ball between the flag and the nearest cone on either side (2 points). A pass between the first and second cone on either side is worth a single point. Any pass outside of the flanking cones does not earn a point. The active player then runs back to retrieve another ball and tries again. The two resting players are responsible for maintaining a ball supply for the active player. Play for one minute and then change roles.

Variation

- All passing is with the 'off' foot.

Which player earns the highest score?

Head juggling

Each player has a ball. Which player can complete the most consecutive headers in one sequence? Play for one minute and check scores.

Variation

- Tally *total* headers over one minute.

Long passing accuracy - Two 10x10 yard grids twenty yards apart

Players work in pairs with a ball. One player stands in each grid. Players earn a point for every ball they can long pass in the air into their partner's grid. Play for three minutes.

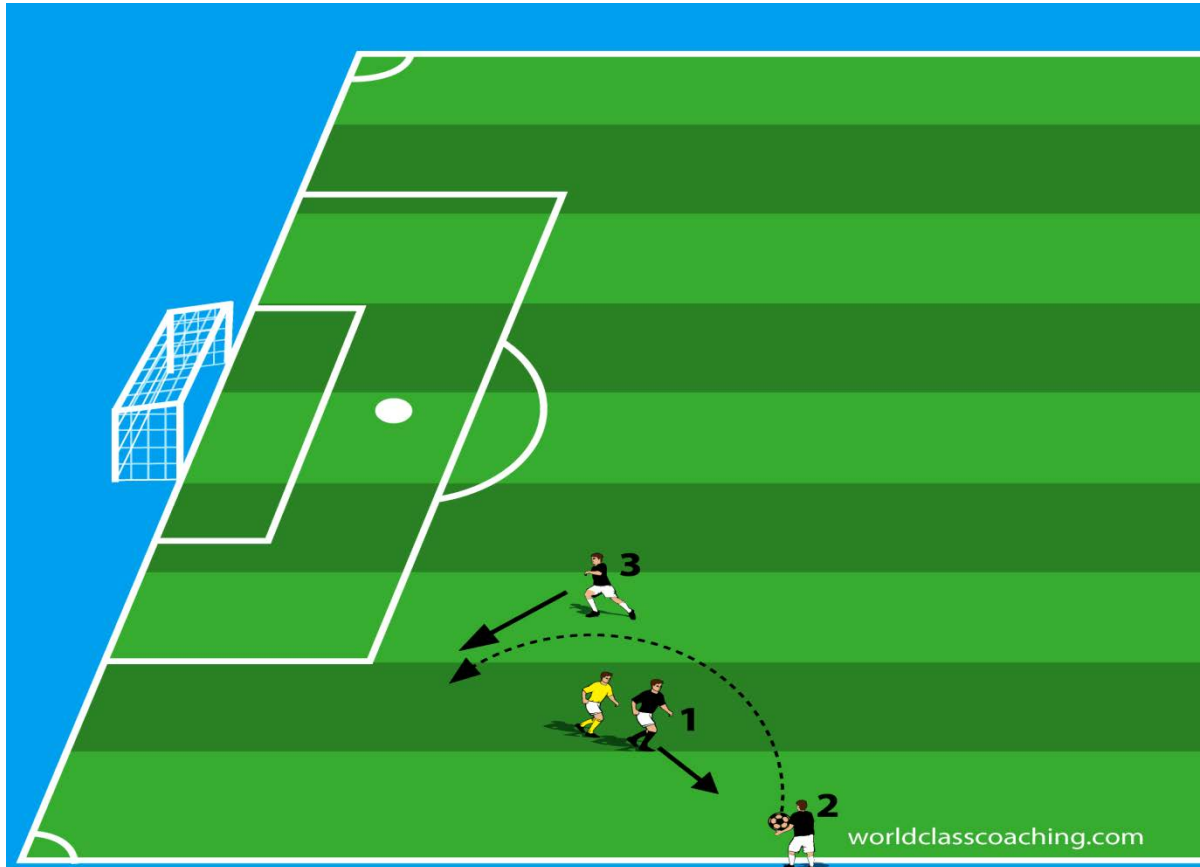
Variations

- All passes must be made with the 'off' foot.
- Give another point for proper receiving touches that keep the ball inside the receiving player's grid.

Training Session #23: Attacking Set Plays

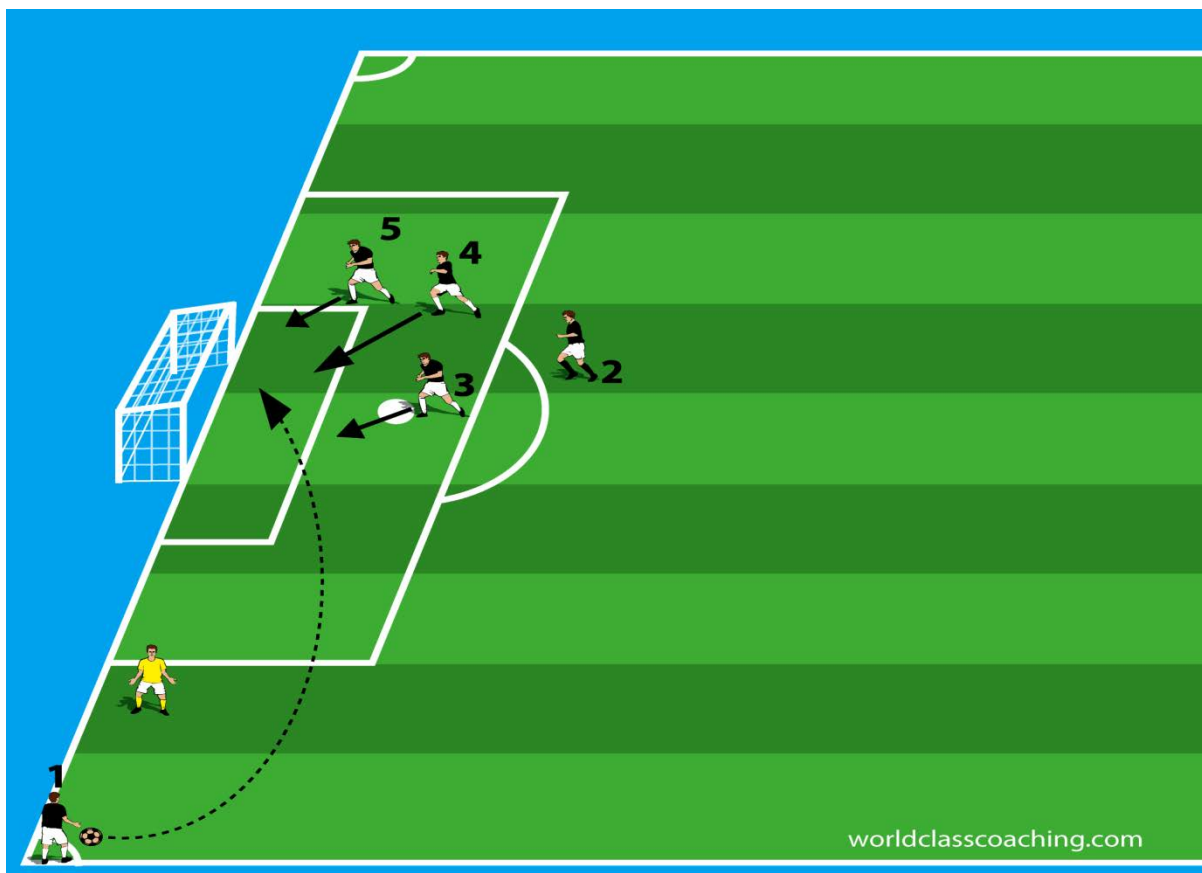
Introduction

For any competitive team, regardless of the chosen system of play, effective attacking set plays are critical to the team's success. This session is not intended to be a free-standing training session, but rather a collection of creative and effective throw in, corner kick, direct and indirect free kick plays.



Decoy throw-in play

Player 1 checks back toward the ball while player 3 sprints into the space behind player 1 as player 2 throws the ball for player 2 to run onto. Player 1 needs to be very demonstrative in demanding the ball as she checks to the ball so that the defender will be pulled out of position and player 3 can find space to run into.



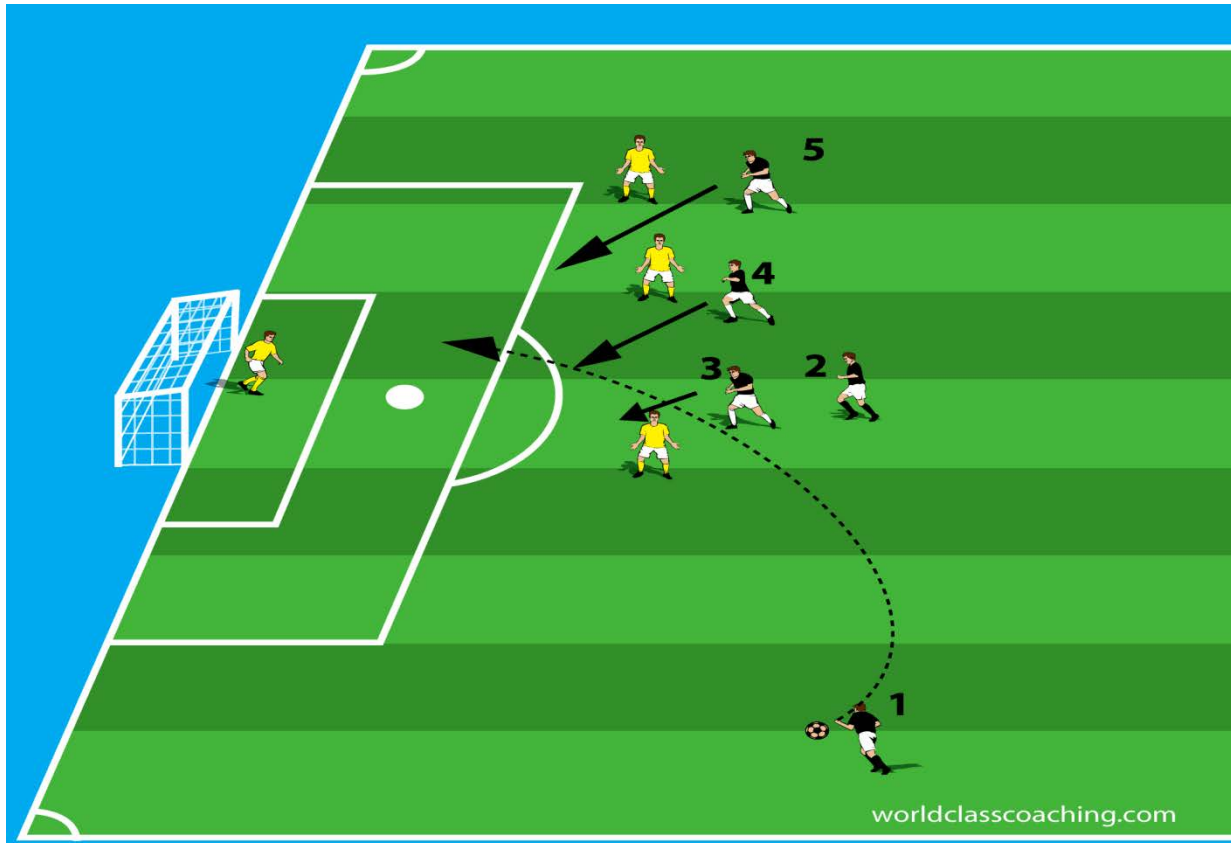
Wave corner kick play

Player 1 is at the corner. Players 2, 3, 4, and 5 gather at the top of the box and just beyond the back post. At a signal from player 1, the runners close on the goal and finish the serve from the corner. Note the varied runs that create an arc in which the ball is likely to fall for one of the runners. Also note that player 2 remains near the top of the box, available to play a ball that pops out or a miss-hit off of the corner.

Considerations

- The starting position for the runs can be varied. Some teams group the runners together, making the individual players difficult to track. Other teams put the players together but then have them mix about until just seconds before the kick, making the runners even more difficult to sort out. Finally, some coaches like to send the runners in stages, hoping to drag defenders out of position. Regardless, it is important the coach find a rhythm and pattern that is predictable and successful for the team.
- The coach can set the runs to meet the anticipated service to a particular zone (often the back half of the goal and 5-7 yards from the goal). It is advisable to have at least one runner getting into the near post area to find a short or low serve (advanced teams often target this player to flick the ball to the targets at the back post). Similarly, one runner should attempt to get to the goalkeeper to disrupt her concentration on any ball served to a point where she can play it), and

one player should seal off the area outside the back post to frame in any ball that gets through the area.



Distance free kick play

This is the classic play to take advantage of a free kick opportunity from a distance beyond which a direct shot at goal can be attempted. Player 1 is at the ball. Several target players line up along the defensive restraining line. Player 1 serves the ball behind the defensive restraining line, but also far enough from the goal to prevent the goalkeeper grabbing the serve, for the runners to find and finish.

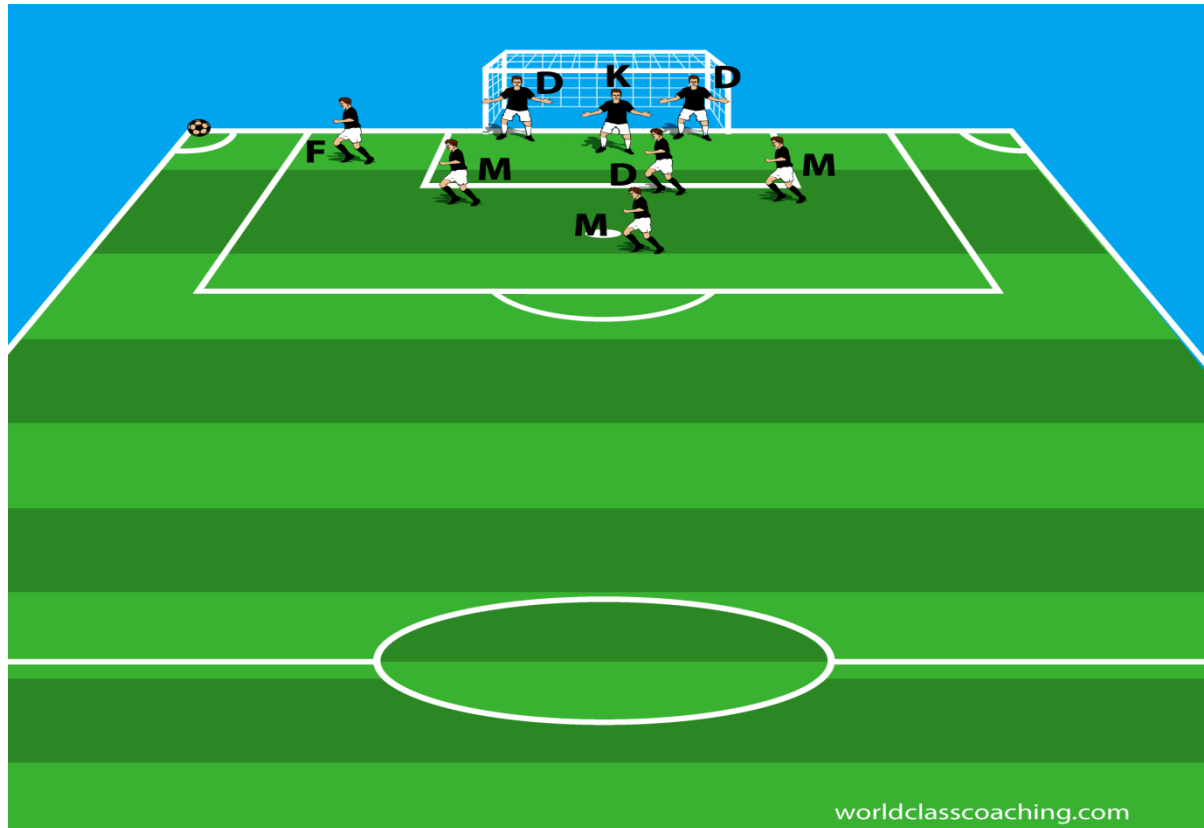
Considerations:

- The runs should be coordinated in such a way as to assure that a player gets end-line to prevent the ball going out for a goal kick and at least one player should make an effort to challenge an advancing goalkeeper for the ball as well.
- The runners should not all start on the defensive restraining line where they are easy to mark and where their runs can be disrupted by the defenders. Rather, it is useful to have some runners start in wider positions (and several yards on-side) and approach the restraining line at full speed (and out of the vision of the defenders as they focus on the ball) as the ball is served.
- Another tactic to frustrate markers is to have a runner(s) stand in an off-side position during the set-up of the play and then check sharply on-side just before the ball is struck.
- Finally, at high levels teams often run switches, with players crossing (and, cynically, picking off defenders) as they run, making it difficult to isolate a particular defender on a dangerous attacker.

Training Session#24: Defending set-pieces.

Introduction

Defending set plays requires considerable preparation, first by the coach in deciding the framework with which the team will confront opponents' efforts to finish and then in the team setting, to assure that every player instinctively understands their roles and will react properly and consistently under pressure. This session lays out the possibilities for defending at set-pieces, and also suggests ways to comb defending set-pieces into the training environment.



Defending corner kicks - 1/3 field

Corner kicks offer a very strong chance to score at any level, and the coach preparing her team to defend in these situations must first answer several important questions:

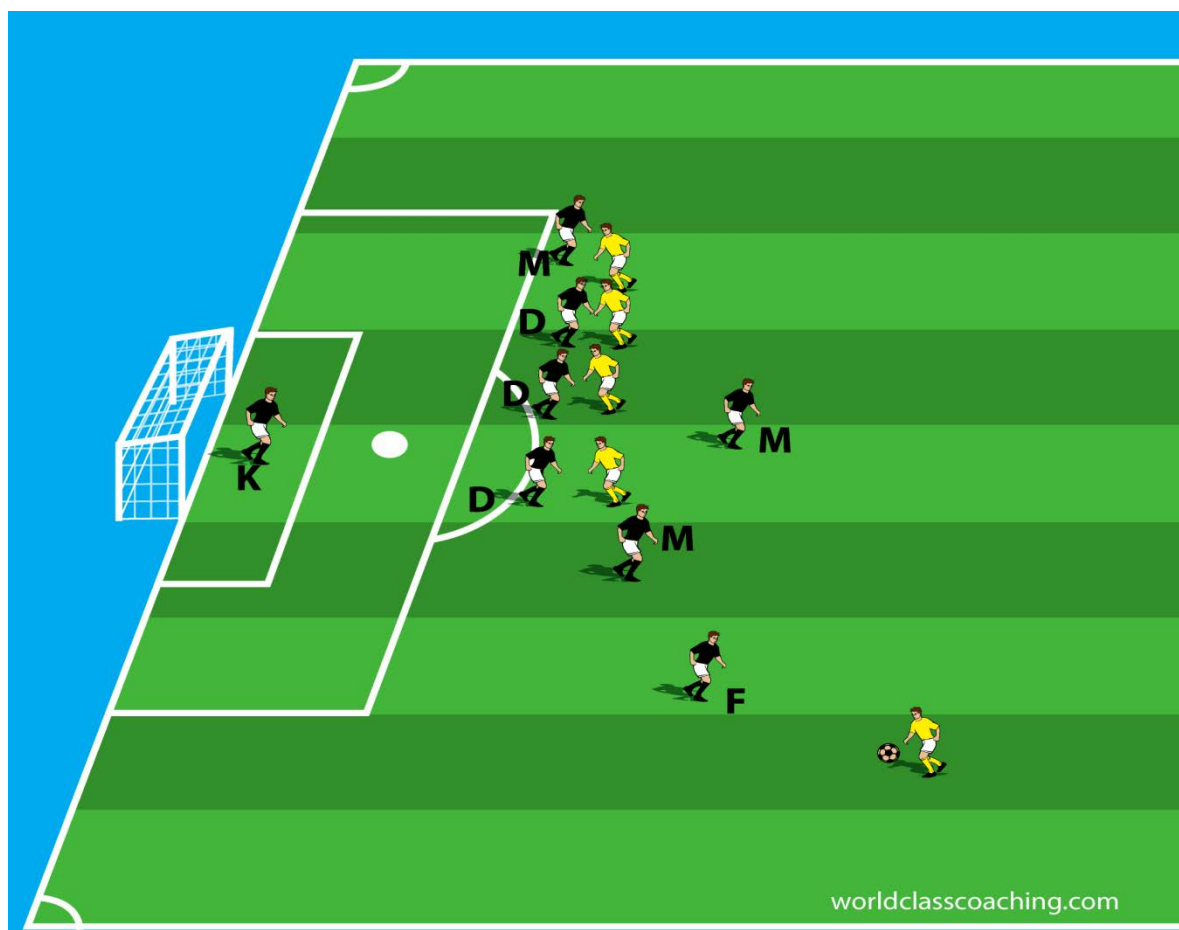
1. Will the team employ zone or man-marking or a mix?
2. How many players will defend?
3. How well does the team defend in the air (the answer to this question impacts the answer to #2)?
4. How big an area can be assigned to the goalkeeper (i.e. how strong is the goalkeeper in the air and handling the ball in traffic)?
5. Other considerations (opponents' efficiency at corners, weather, game situation).

Recommendation

- Deploy a mix of zonal defending and man-marking as shown, placing players at each post (note the near-side defender's up-field-facing position before the kick, freeing the goalkeeper's vision).

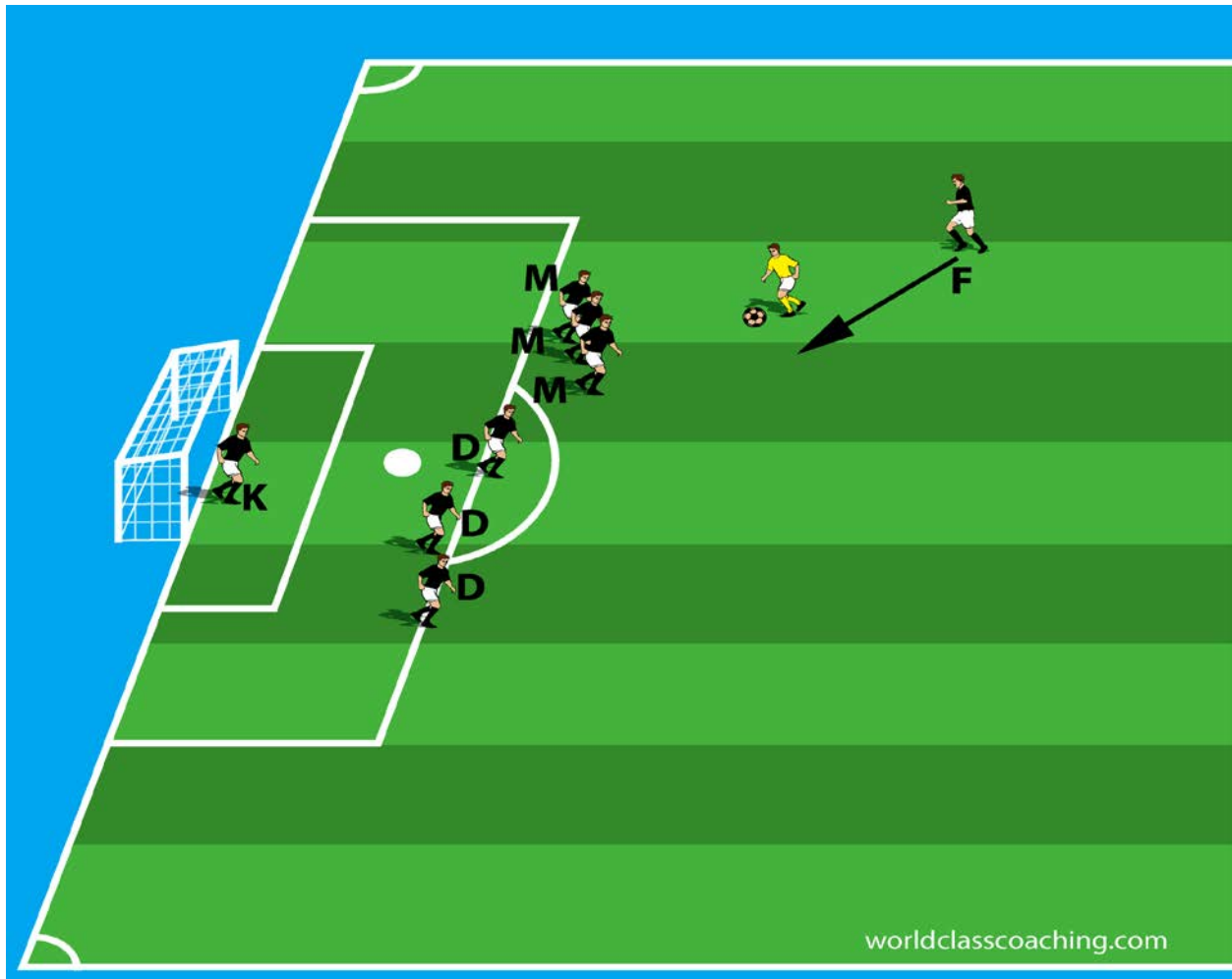
If instructed to clear the ball by the goalkeeper, she steps out and plays the ball away); the center back and the goalkeeper to control the six-yard box; the three midfielders are placed in a stacked zone across the top of the six-yard box. Any ball that would fall in front of any one of them is their responsibility. The forward is responsible for dealing with any potential short corner (many teams send one player to the corner to deal with this possibility and distract the kicker. It's even better to send a second player- a midfielder- to play 2 vs. 2 against a short corner). A midfielder can be detailed to mark a particularly dangerous opponent.

- Train a confident, aggressive mentality into the group for defending corners. Playing passively will lead to goals being conceded, whereas a loud, active and determined defending group provides an intimidating environment for the attackers and also gives the defenders a psychological sense of purpose.
- Clearing out. The team hunts the ball once the serve is struck. When the ball is played away from the goal, all but the two backs on the posts must pursue and pressure the ball. When the ball leaves the box, the two players on the posts sprint forward. Keeping them in gives extra protection in the goal area while the ball is still in a dangerous position. However, when the ball leaves the area, the danger decreases and the retention of those players on the posts both eliminates the possibility of an offside call against the attackers and detracts from the width of the defensive back line in transition.



Defending direct or indirect free kicks: Beyond shooting range - 2/3 field

When the opponent earns a free kick from beyond shooting range, the defending group may still employ a small wall (1-2 players) to distract the server and additional players may remain in the area to deal with short options for the attackers. The remainder of the team organize a restraining line to develop space for the goalkeeper to handle a long serve toward the area. Players along the restraining line should get shoulder-on with an attacker, with the idea that the contact will wreck the timing of their run into the area and also allow the defender to arrive first. If possible, at least one central defender should be left free. Some teams, particularly at the youth level, prefer to have this player leave the line and run into the area just before the ball is struck to give the player an advantage in the race to the ball. This decision may wreck the offside protection offered by holding the line, but it also gives the defender a major advantage. Regardless, the goalkeeper must make an early call as to whether she will handle the ball or if the team will need to clear the serve, and once the ball is cleared, the entire team must work to get forward and recover their shape as quickly as possible.



Defending direct or indirect free kicks: Shooting range - 1/3 field

Direct free kicks from around the edge of the 18-yard box and at angles where shots can be taken require special treatment from a defensive perspective. The coach should give parameters for the number of players to be placed in the wall (from 1-2 for wide angles and up to 4-5 for shots from straight on). Typically the midfielders and/or forward(s) form the wall. The coach can instruct the goalkeeper to arrange the wall or a forward can perform the same duty so that the goalkeeper can focus exclusively on the ball. Either way, the wall should be arranged with the tallest player on the near post (this area is most in danger, as the goalkeeper begins in the back half of the goal) and shorter players filling out the line. It is critical that the coach work out the process for the placement of the wall so that it can be done in just a few seconds under pressure. If the goalkeeper will set the wall, the end player (tallest) should either turn and face her or look over her outside shoulder to see her instructions, all the while grasping the next player in the wall to assure that movement is synchronized. The end player, as a rule, should be at least the width of one person outside the post to deter attempts to bend the ball around the wall. The defenders mark opponents around the wall, picking up the most dangerous players first and holding a line nearly as high as the wall itself (to minimize traffic for the goalkeeper in trying to make the save).

Tactical considerations

- In the modern game, most defending teams put a player(s) 2-3 yards in front of the ball to wreck any idea of taking the kick before the wall can be set. By the rules of the game, this is meant to be rewarded with a yellow card, but it is almost universal that there is no card and the attacker requests the proper 10-yard spacing. Once the official steps in to set the wall at the proper distance, play is only restarted with the referee's whistle.
- Use of a 'bullet.' Although more common in indirect free kick situations, some teams send a player off of the end of the wall running at the ball ('bullet') just before it is struck. Once again, technically-speaking this should result in a yellow card, but most often it results in a blocked kick. Many coaches only employ a 'bullet(s)' only in indirect kick situations.

Indirect free kick in the area - 18-yard box

Occasionally, a team will concede an indirect free kick in the area. This is a very dangerous situation, particularly if the placement of the ball is close to the goal mouth (as shown). In this case, many coaches place the entire team on the goal line, splitting the wall around the goalkeeper. Remind players that since this is an indirect kick situation, the opponents will need to take a touch before shooting. When that first touch is taken, the entire wall (some coaches leave players on the posts) sprints forward, keeping in their lanes, hoping to block the shot. Indirect kicks from sharp angles can be played more like a corner kick, with defenders on the posts and a combination of zone and man-marking in front of goal.

Sources and Recommended Reading

- Alagich, Richard. ***Soccer: Winning Through Technique and Tactics***. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1996.
- Dorrance, Anson. WCC Clinic Field Session.
- Fairclough, Paul. ***Soccer Strategies***. Buffalo, NY: Firefly Books, 2009.
- Fleck, Tom, and Ron Quinn. ***The Baffled Parents' Guide to Great Soccer Drills***. Camden, ME: Ragged Mountain Press, 2002.
- Galustian, Alf and Charlie Cooke. ***A New Era: A Coerver Coaching Masterclass Series***. Sportsmethod, 1998.
- Green, Shaun. ***Soccer Made Easy: Coaching 9-12 Year Olds***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 2002.
- Gregg, Lauren. ***The Champion Within: Training for Excellence***. Burlington, NC: JTC Sports, 1999.
- Harrison, Wayne. ***Full Season Training Program: A Complete Season of Training Sessions for a Competitive U12 Team***. Leawood, KS: World Class Coaching, 2007.
- Kormelink, Henny and Tjeu Seeverens. ***Developing Players the Dutch Way***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 1996.
- NSCAA. ***State Diploma***. Course materials.
- NSCAA. ***Regional Diploma***. Course materials.
- NSCAA. ***Advanced Regional Diploma***. Course materials.
- NSCAA. ***Coaching Soccer***. Edited by Tim Schum. Indianapolis, IN: Masters Press, 1996.
- Rees, Roy. ***The Manual of Soccer Coaching***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 1995.
- Rees, Roy and Cor Van Der Meer. ***Coaching Soccer Successfully***. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1997.
- Success in Soccer (DFB). ***Basic Training: Techniques and Tactics for Developing the Serious Player***. Munster, Germany: Philippka Sportverlag, 2002.
- Success in Soccer (DFB). ***Modern Youth Training: The Complete Guide to Soccer for Kids***. Munster, Germany: Philippka Sportverlag, 2006.
- Stoop, Tino. ***Coaching Under 12's: A Complete Coaching Course***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 2003.
- United States Soccer Federation. ***Soccer: How to Play the Game: The Official Playing and Coaching Manual of the United States Soccer Federation***. New York, NY: Universe Publishing, 1999.
- Wein, Horst. ***Developing Game Intelligence***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 2004.
- Wilkinson, Roger, and Mick Critchell. ***300 Innovative Soccer Drills for Total Player Development***. Spring City, PA: Reedswain, 2000.

About the Author



Photo courtesy of Christopher Mitchell and Minnesota Youth Soccer Association

Tony Englund is the Assistant Director of Coaching at St. Croix Soccer Club. Tony has earned more than a dozen diplomas from the National Soccer Coaches' Association of America, including the Premier, National Goalkeeping and Director of Coaching awards and he serves as an Associate Staff Coach for that organization. Tony is a frequent presenter at high-level coaching clinics. He has served as Director of Coaching and Player Development with three Minnesota clubs and has more than twenty years' experience as a successful club, high school and college head coach. His teams have repeatedly earned promotion to the highest levels of state and Midwest Regional League play and won multiple state championships, premier league titles and consistent regional rankings. He is the author of nine books published by World Class Coaching.