

# PRO

# POSSESSION

# GAMES



*by Renato Lopes Moreira*

# Pro Possession Games

*By*

*Renato Lopes Moreira*

*Published by*

WORLD CLASS COACHING

First published April, 2019 by  
WORLD CLASS COACHING 12851 Flint Street Overland Park, KS 66213 (913) 402-0030

Copyright © WORLD CLASS COACHING 2019

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.

Authors – Renato Lopes Moreira  
Editor - Tom Mura  
Cover Art By - Barrie Smith



*"If you keep possession of the ball, the opponent does not have it."*

It was with this phrase that the legendary Johann Cruyff (1947 - 2016) defined why his teams always seek control of matches. Guardiola, one of the greatest followers of Cruyff's game philosophy, in an interview given in 2017, reinforced the importance of possession football with the following phrase:

*"If that happens (ball possession soccer will stop working), I will retire from football, because I do not see any other way to do that."*

These two coaches share a game philosophy centered on the idea of having possession of the ball. So we have the question: Is ball possession really important in soccer? If so, why in the last edition of the World Cup, did the teams with the highest averages of ball possession end up being eliminated early?

But, let's think: to attack, you need to have the ball. Right?

Regardless of whether you have 70% ball possession or you have a ball briefly on the counterattack, you need to have the ball with you. So, ball possession is something vital in soccer. But, returning to the question of having the ball possession or not, the idea of this material is not to defend one side in this discussion, but to present the importance of possession of ball in soccer. How you will use this information will be up to you.

To start, let's recall the **Operational Principles of Collective Sports** (OPCS), defined by the Frenchman Claude Bayer in his book "Theory of Collective Sports," released in 1994.

OPERACIONAL PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTIVE SPORTS	
ATTACK	DEFENSE
MAINTENANCE OF BALL POSSESSION	RECOVERY OF BALL POSSESSION
PROGRESSION BY THE OPPONENT FIELD	STOP THE OPPONENT'S PROGRESSION
FINALIZATION TO THE GOAL	DEFEND THE GOAL

(BAYER, 1994)

Now let's take a look at these principles, but especially the offensive ones:

**Maintenance of ball possession:** The attack will coordinate your actions to conserve the ball so as to wait for the right moment to attack, after unbalancing the opponent's defense and opting for the best way to end the attack. It is a fact that the goal in soccer does not happen by chance, so keep the ball possession is something so important.

Keeping the ball possession you force your opponent to play in order to always recover it.

You keeping the ball possession, we enter the second principle of attack, which is to:

**Progression by the opponent field:** Soccer is an invasion game, and the target I want to attack is in my opponent's field. Therefore, I need to advance to my opponent's field to increase my offensive chances. The closer I get to my opponent's goal, the higher my chances of scoring a goal.

We keep possession, we advance through the opposing field and now we enter Bayer's third principle:

**Attacking the goal:** The main goal of soccer is to score goals. If I score more goals than my opponent I win the game. In order to score the goal, I need to be very close to the goal of my opponent and with the ball possession. That is, if the two other principles are not well executed, I will not be able to score and this will reduce my chances of winning the match.

With all the operational principles of play understood, especially those of attack, we can return to the discussion about ball possession.

You do not have to have 70% possession of the ball every game to win the matches. Claudio Ranieri won a Premier League recently with Leicester with much less ball possession than his opponents. Mourinho won several national leagues and two Champions just playing with less ball possession. So why do I want to have more ball possession if, with a more vertical, direct and simple game, I can win matches and titles? Building the game requires a lot of ball possession on my players' feet, which increases the chance of my team making a mistake. Right?

Wrong.

Okay, building the game and maintaining ball possession for a long time during the matches is hard. Just as hard as you playing for only one ball.

Soccer can be a simple game, but it's not yet that simple to define one thing like this.

My idea here is to forget about your percentage of ball possession.

Focus on her effectiveness. Focus on the collective organization she gives you, when having 70% ball possession or playing for just one ball. Soccer wins come from who scores more goals.

The more effective my ball possession is, better for my team. This is a fact. Barcelona's ball possession game has its virtues, as does Leicester's one ball possession game. They work because they are effective in their proposals. If ball possession were the only important numbers, Germany and Spain would have made the final of the Russian World Cup instead of leaving the competition early as they did.

The purpose of this material is to help you with ball possession, presenting some exercises with the main focus on this question. All games are general, adaptable to any change or variation you may think of or want to adapt to your team. Just remember that any change directly influences the dynamics of the exercises and you have to keep this in mind. Your game model should prevail over any exercise thought or applied.

The main focus of this material is to present exercises about ball possession. There are 24 exercises that you can easily transform into many more, just thinking about other variables or exercises. In these exercises you will see that the most important is the game space, just as the importance of a conscious and balanced occupation that will help the maintenance of the ball possession and the advance through the opponent's field.

In the defensive aspect, the main focus is the pressing, the desire to recover the ball as soon as we can to be able to counterattack.

As the games are in reduced space, the physical component will always be very demanding, helping your team's conditioning. But, the intensity and duration of each exercise is up to you to define, according to the characteristics of your team.

To conclude, always remember: ball possession is not the numbers that appear as statistics during the matches or are commented daily on television. Numbers are cold and sometimes do not describe the reality of the game. Your team has to be effective in his game idea.

Always be effective in your proposal and, when you have the ball possession in your favor, always use it to organize your team, execute your attack ideas and score many goals as you can.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### CHAPTER 1 – Warmup game situation

1x1 + 1 - Chaotic game - possession game  
1x1 + 1 Possession game  
2x2 + 2 Jokers possession game  
3x3 + 4 Possession game  
4x2 - Pair game - possession game  
12x3 - One touch - possession game

### CHAPTER 2 – 4 player games situation

4x1 – 2x1 game situation – possession game  
4x3 – Diamond – possession game  
4x4 – 4x1 initial situation – possession game  
4x4 + 4 Jokers possession game  
4x4 + 5 Jokers – 3 touches – possession game  
4x4 + 6 Jokers possession game  
4x4 + 4x4 possession game

### CHAPTER 3 – 5 player games situation

5x5 - High pressure - possession game  
5x5 - 4x3 initial situation - possession game  
5x5 + 6 Jokers possession game  
5x5x5 possession game  
5x5x5 - 5x2 initial situation - possession game

### CHAPTER 4 – 6 player games situation

6x4 - 1 touch - possession game  
6x6 – 5 touches – possession game  
6x6 + 3 Jokers possession game

### CHAPTER 5 – Other game situation

8x2 Run, Run, Run – 4x2 situation – possession game  
8x3 – 4x2 game situation – possession game  
10x10 possession game

## CHAPTER 1 – Warmup game situation

### 1x1 + 1 - Chaotic game - possession game



#### **Setup:**

21 players  
50x30 meters game field

#### **Execution:**

Divide the team in trios.

Any attacker can play with any Joker during the exercise;

It is allowed one defender per attacker;

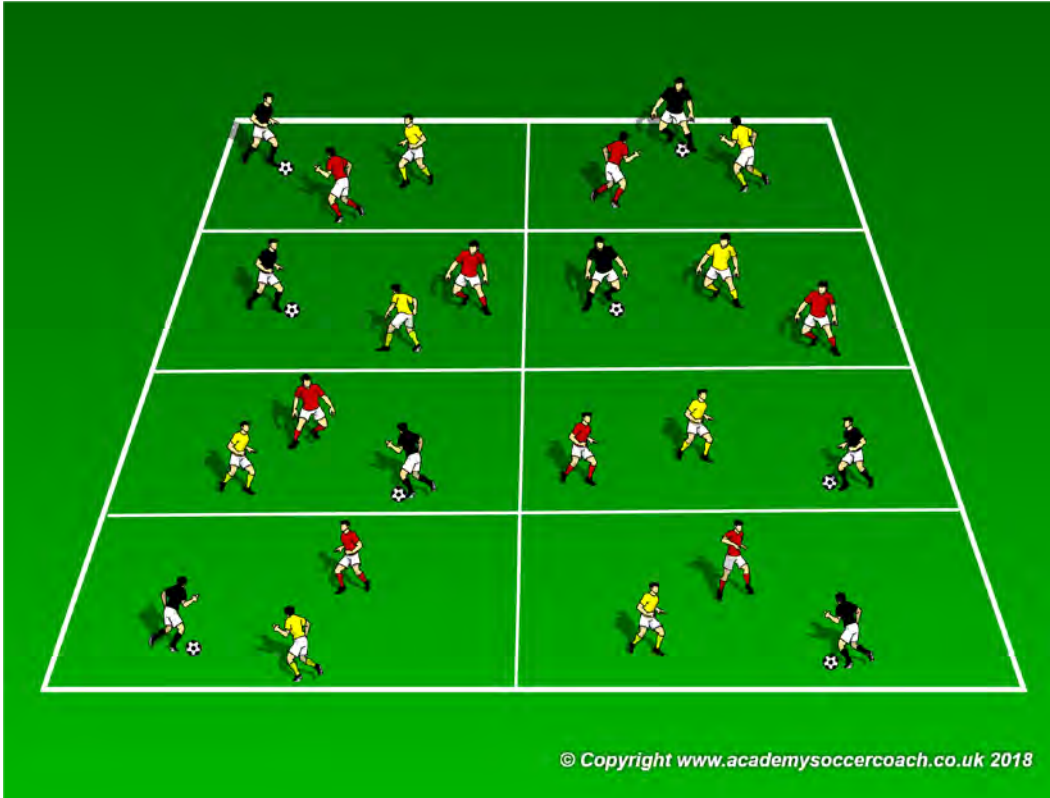
If the defender gets the ball possession, he starts to play along any Joker

#### **Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the number of defenders for each attacker;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player.



## 1x1 + 1 possession game



### Setup:

21 players  
50x35 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the team in trios and divide the field into small fields;

Put one trio inside one small field;

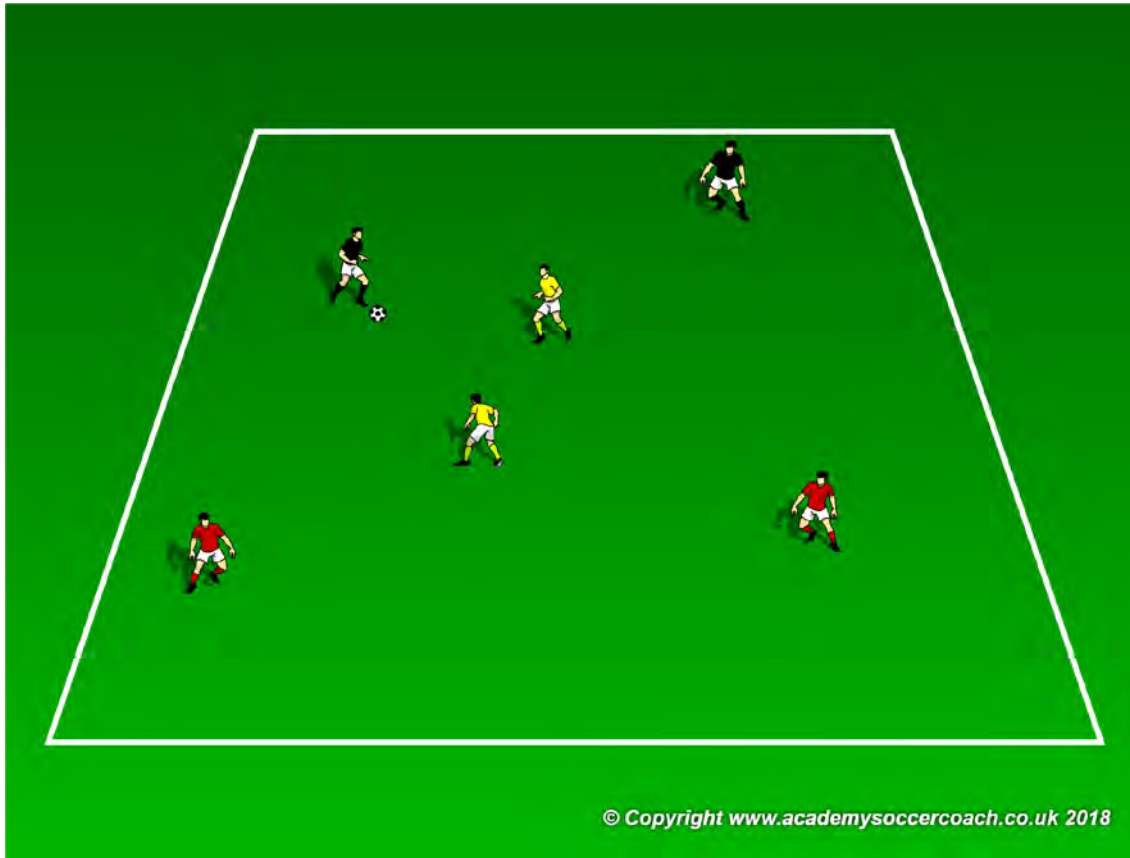
The attacker will play with the Joker during the exercise;

If the defender gets the ball possession, he starts to play along with the Joker

### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the number of defenders for each attacker;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player.

## 2x2 + 2 Jokers possession game



### Setup:

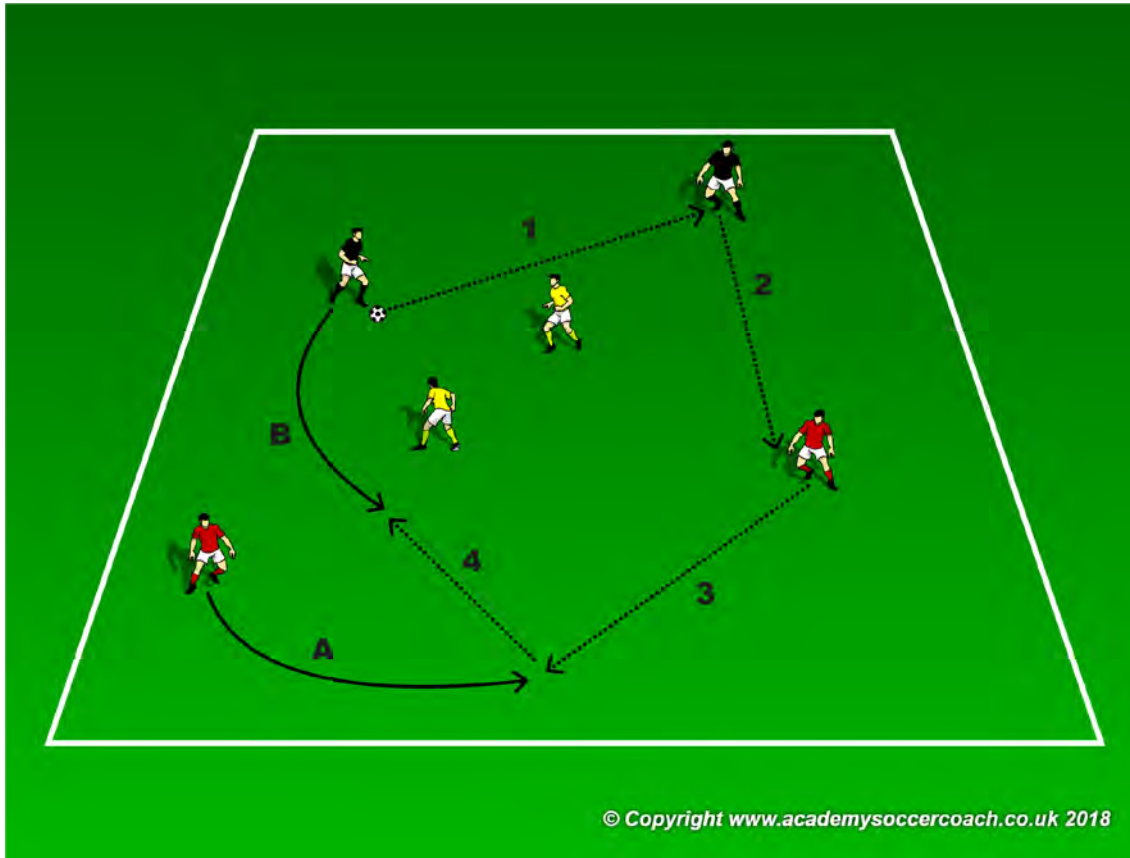
6 players  
10x10 meters game field

### Execution:

The attack can play with the Jokers while have the ball possession;

Five consecutive passes is a point for the attack;

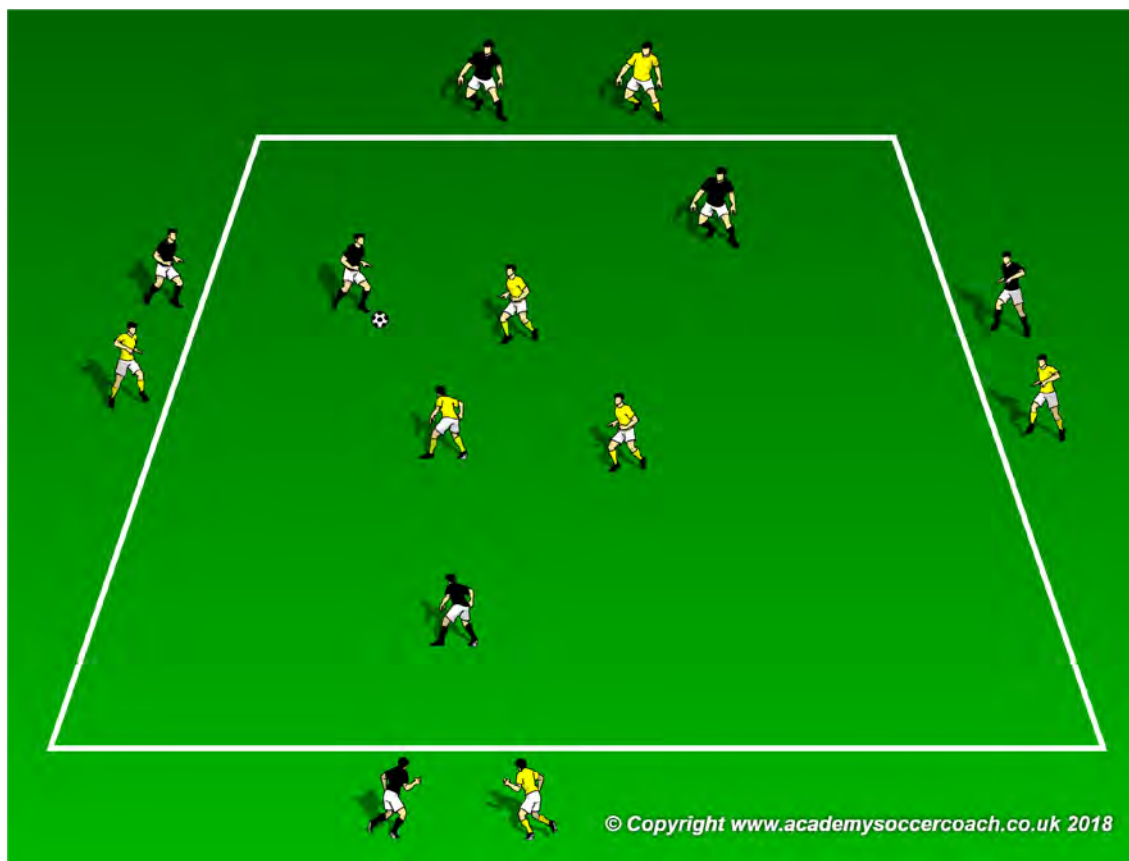
If the defense recovers the ball possession, they automatically start to pass the ball.



### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of Jokers;
- . You can increase or decrease the game field area;
- . You can define several touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can vary the number of consecutive passes to score a point;
- . You can put other small fields near and start a competition.

## 3x3 + 4 possession game



### Setup:

14 players  
20x20 meters game field

### Execution:

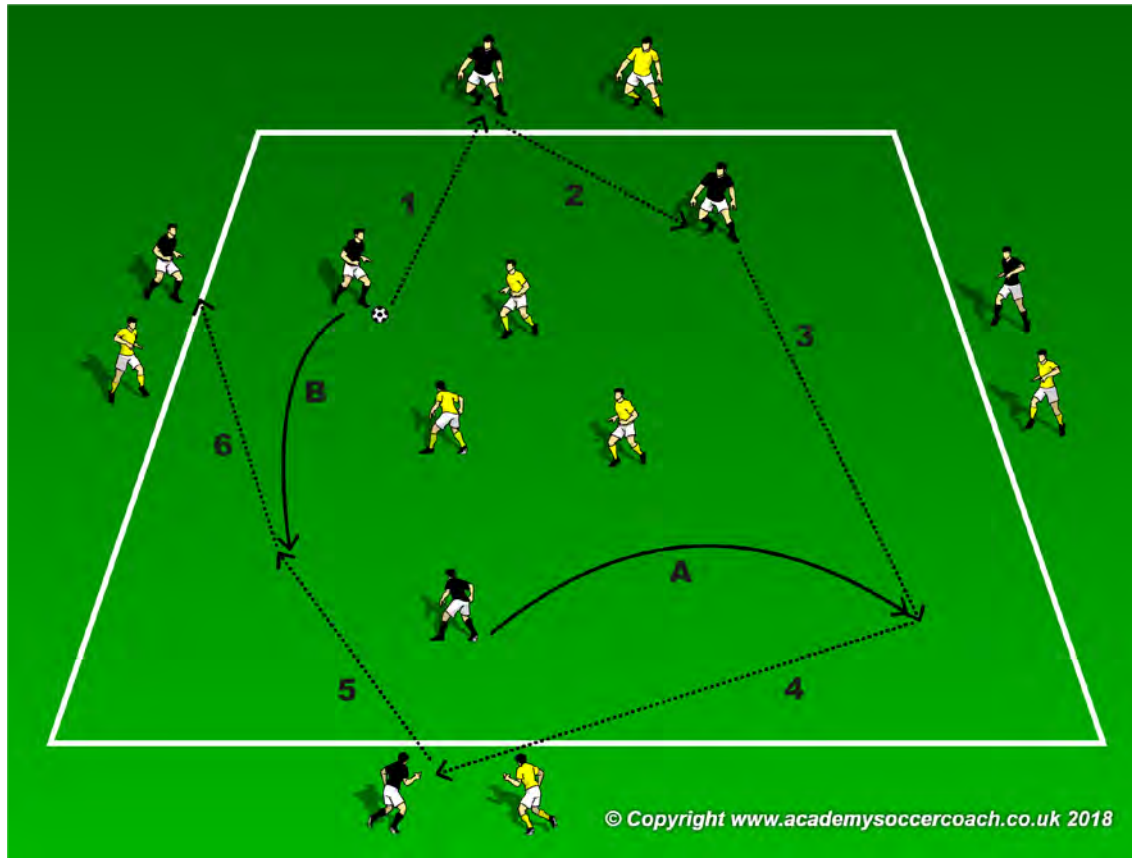
Divide the players in two teams;

Three players of each team will stay inside the game field while the others will stay outside;

The attackers will try to do the most passes between them, trying to maintain the ball possession as long as they can;

While the attack is moving the ball only the three defenders can try to get the ball possession. The outside defenders remain static in their positions;

It's not allowed to outside attackers move the ball between them. The ball must pass inside the game field to move around;



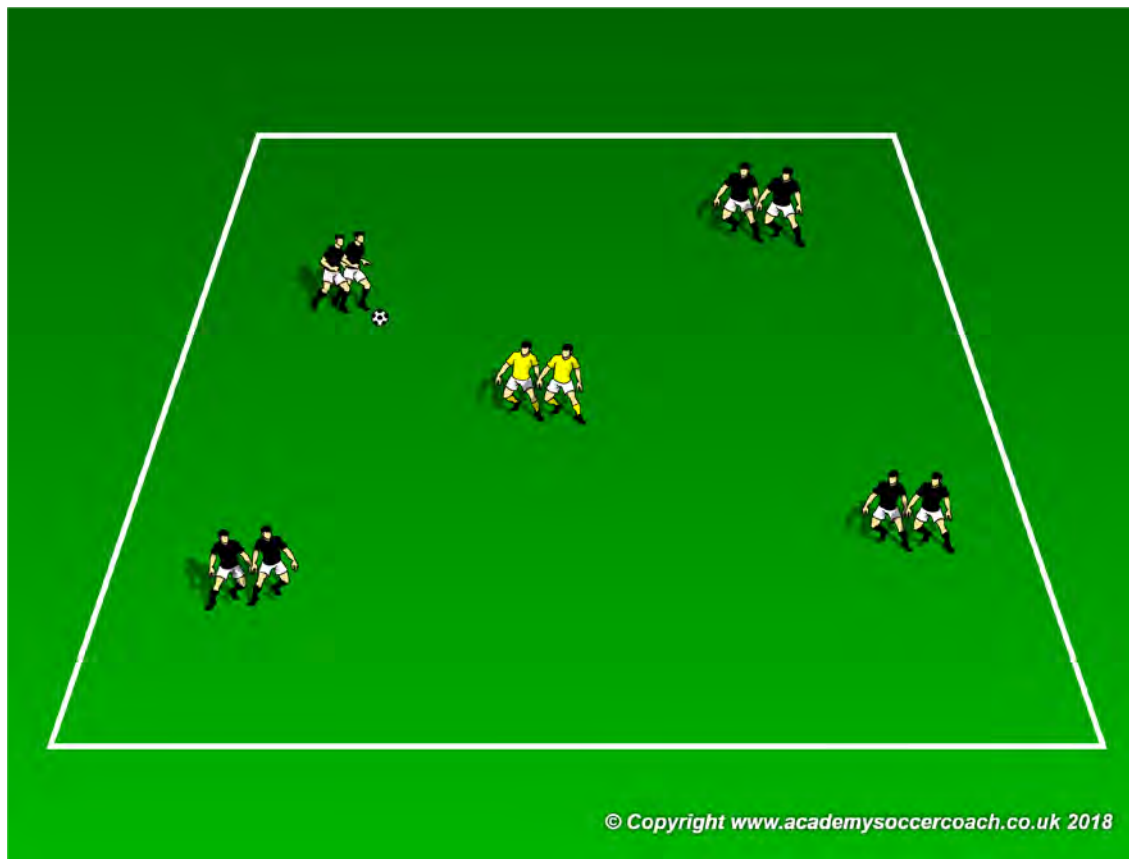
Every five consecutive passes, the attack scores one point;

If the defense recovers the ball possession, they automatically start to move the ball and count their passes.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can define several touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can allow the outside defenders to try to steal the ball possession.

## 4x2 - pair game - possession game



### Setup:

10 players  
18x10 meters game field

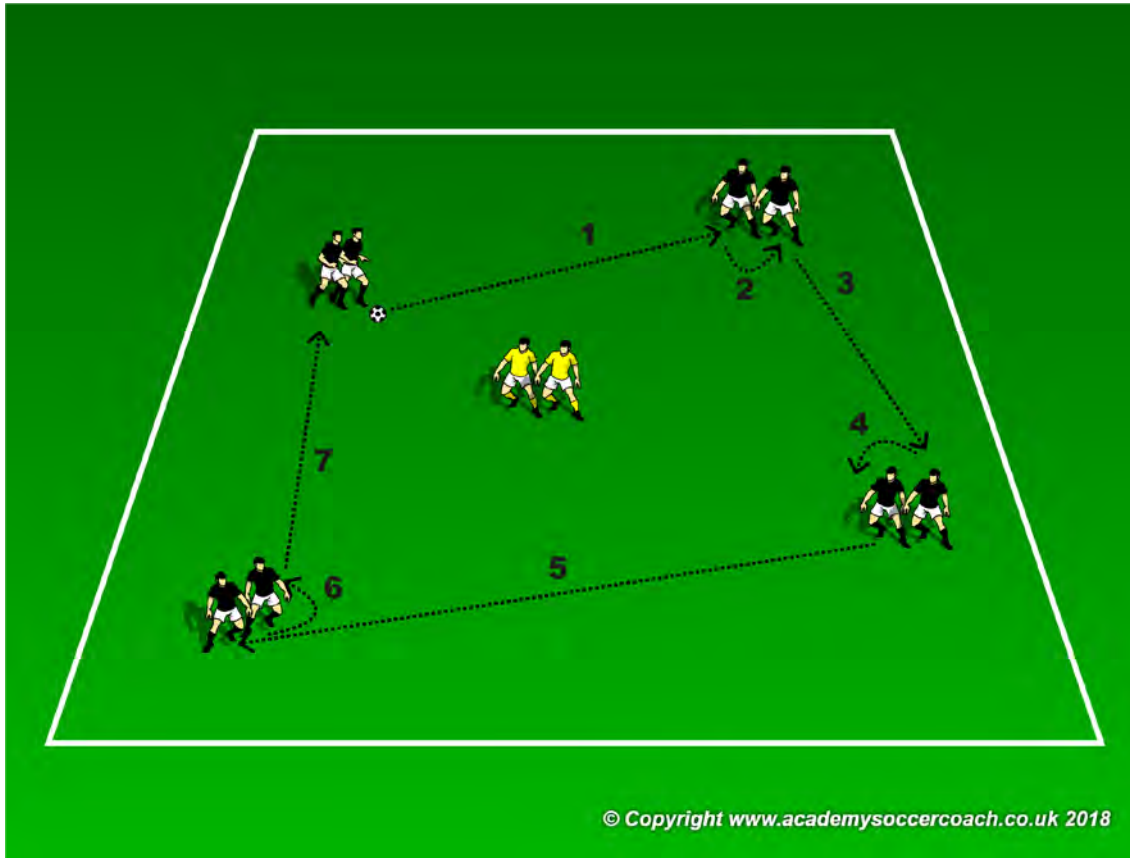
### Execution:

The players will form pairs;

The pairs can't release their hands during the whole exercise;

The pairs are not allowed to make a one touch pass between them;

One player of the pair receives the ball, make a short pass to his teammate and he made a medium or long pass for another pair;

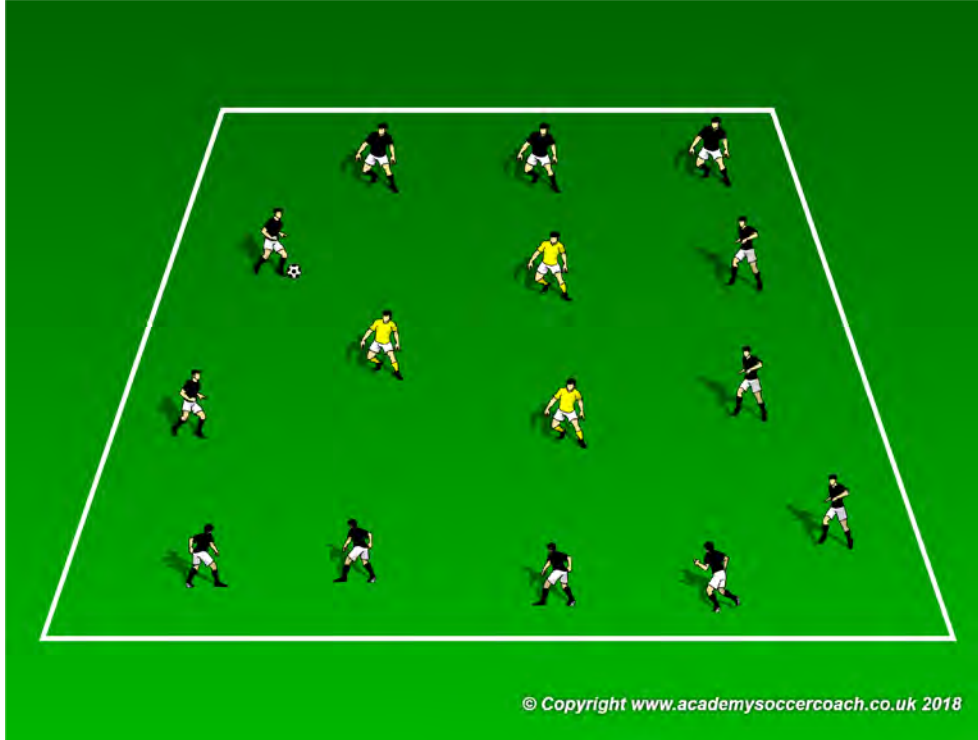


If the defense gets the ball possession, the pair switches position with the attackers who lost the ball.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can allow free touches on the ball for each pair;
- . You can use triplets, quartets or any formation you want.

## 12x3 - 1 touch - possession game



### Setup:

15 players  
20x10 meters game field.

### Execution:

The attack must touch the ball between them without losing the ball possession;

Each player is allowed one touch;

The defender who gets the ball possession switches position with the attacker who loses the ball;

If one attacker passes the ball directly outside the game field, he and two other players chosen by him will switch function with the defenders.

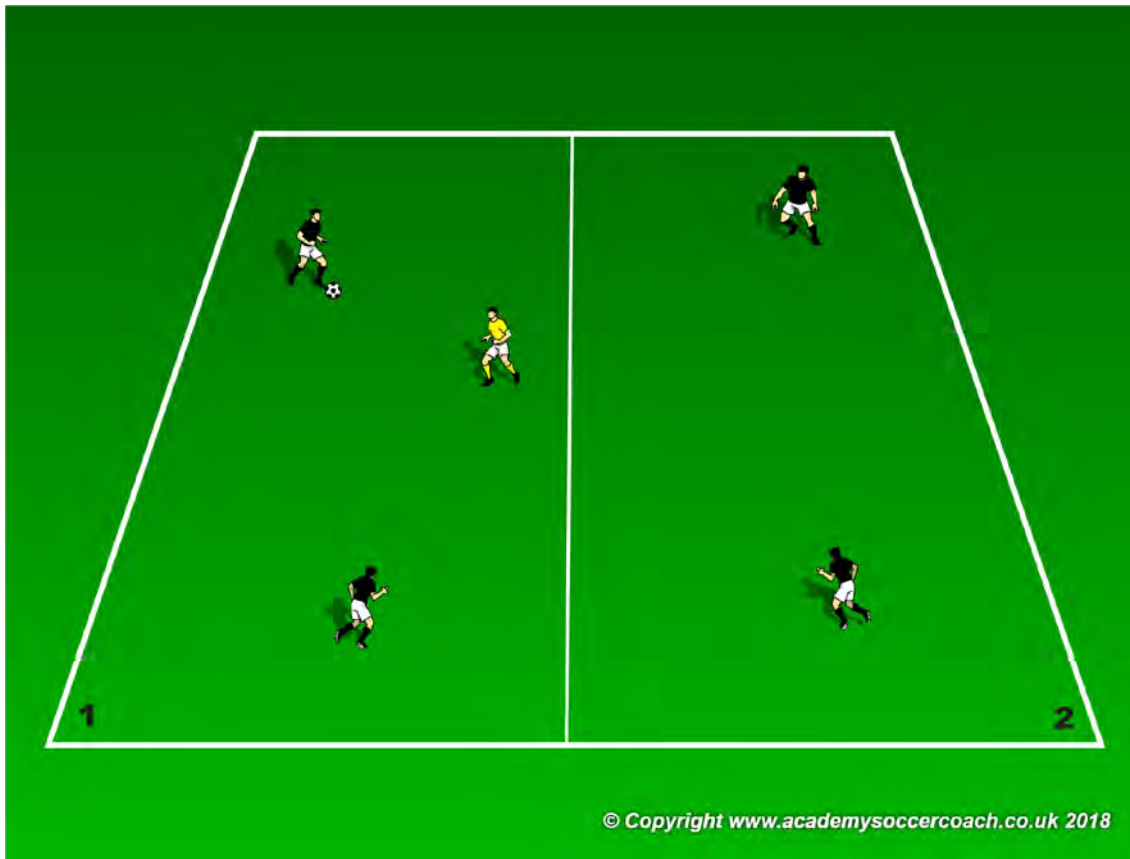
### Variations:

- . You can increase the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the type of pass by each player.



## CHAPTER 2 – 4 player game situation

### 4x1 – 2x1 game situation – possession game



#### Setup:

5 players  
10x10 meters game field

#### Execution:

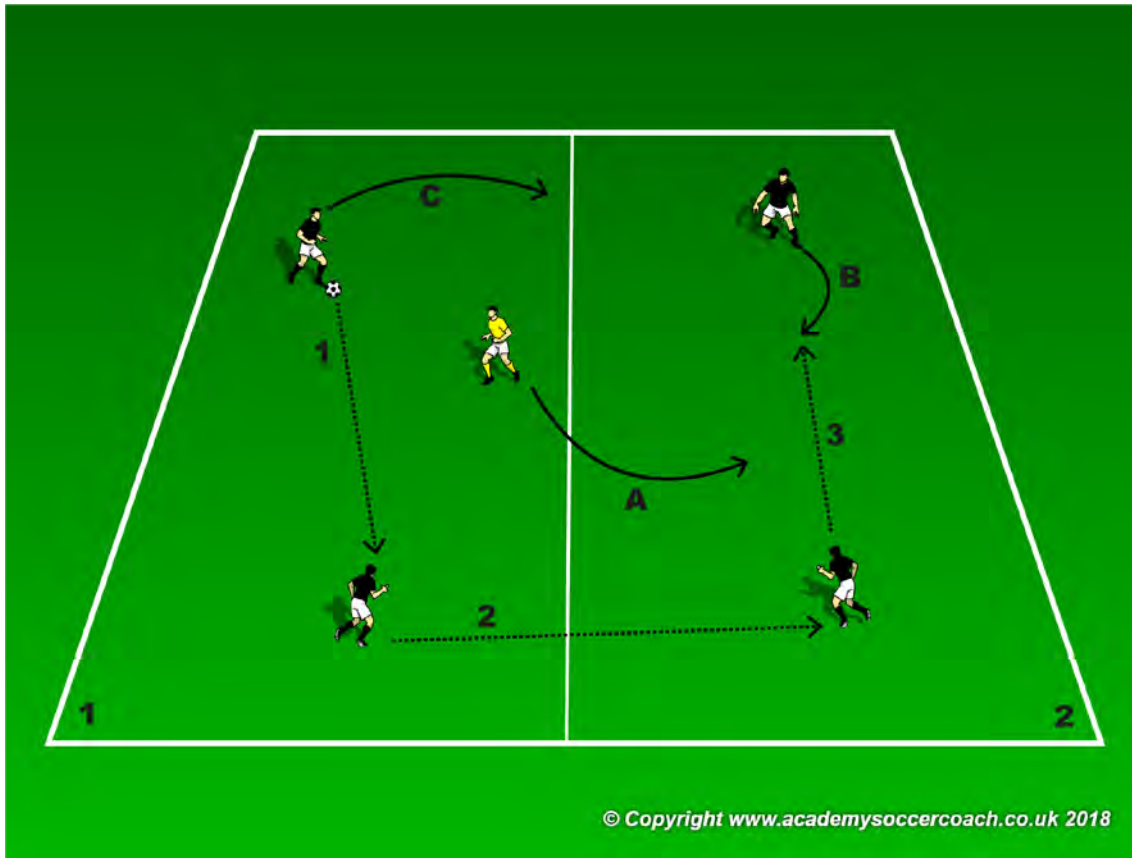
Divide the game field into two small fields.

Divide the attackers into two small teams with two players each;

One defender will try to get the ball while the attackers pass the ball between themselves;

The attackers don't have to make any specific number of passes to move the ball between the fields 1 and 2.

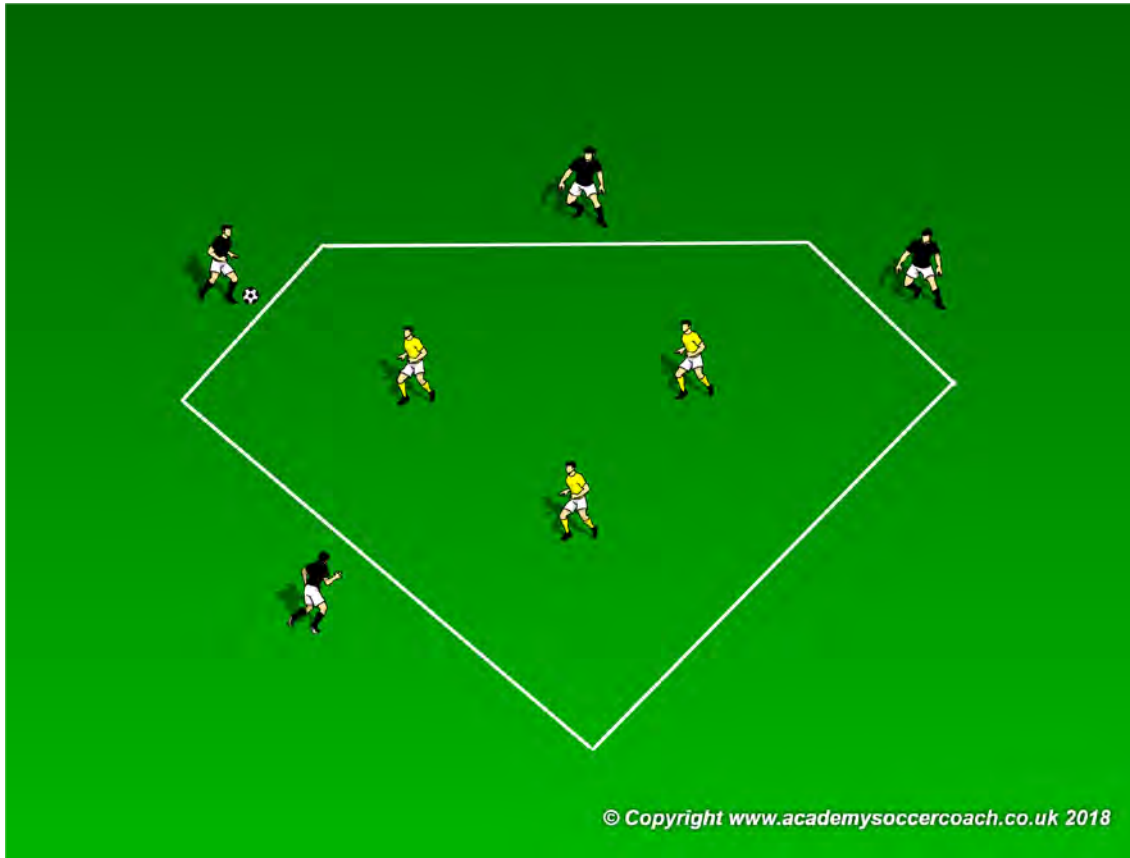
If the defender recovers ball possession, he change places with the attacker who lost the ball possession.



**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can define a number of touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can define a number of pass to move the ball between the fields.

## 4x3 – Diamond – possession game



### Setup:

7 players  
10x10 meters game field

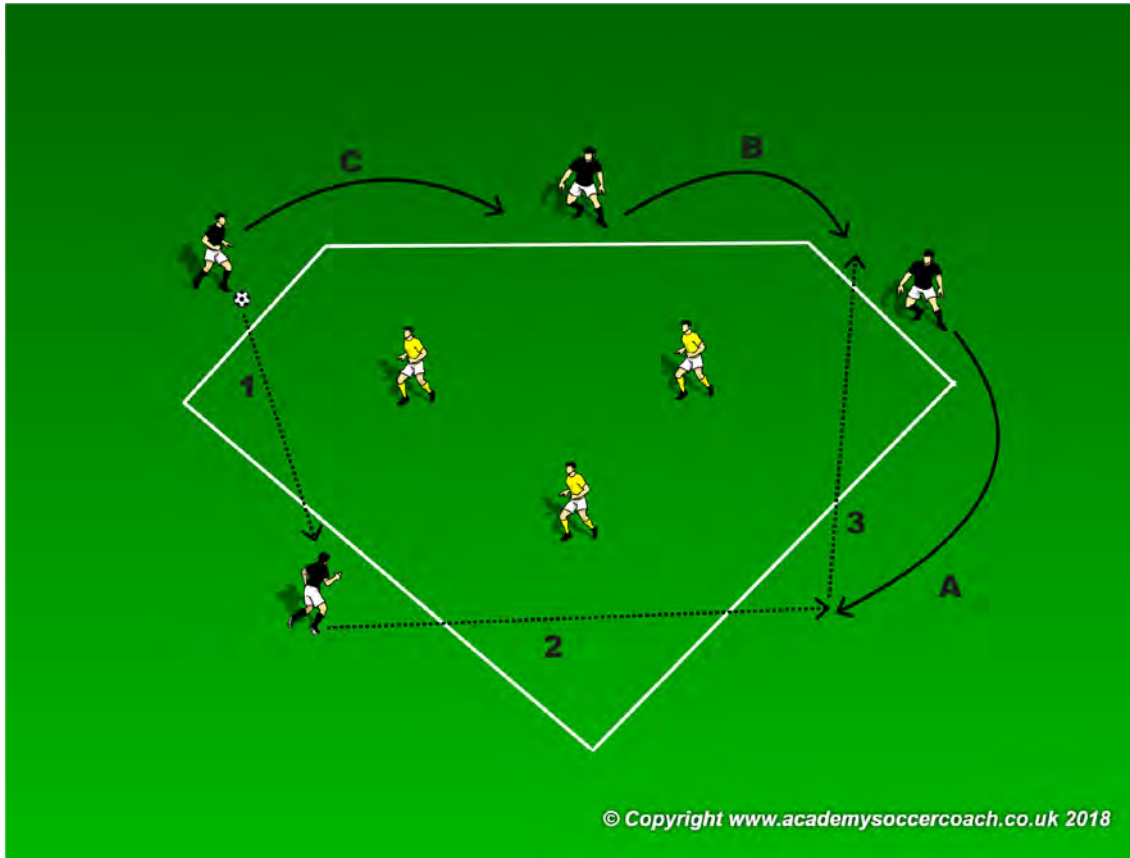
### Execution:

The attackers have to maintain the ball possession as long as they can;

Only one attacker can occupy an empty space to move the ball. If there are two attackers at the same space, both will play on defense for two rounds;

The attackers without the ball can move freely for the empty spaces, creating a secure pass line for the player with the ball.

The ball must pass inside the game field to move between the attackers;



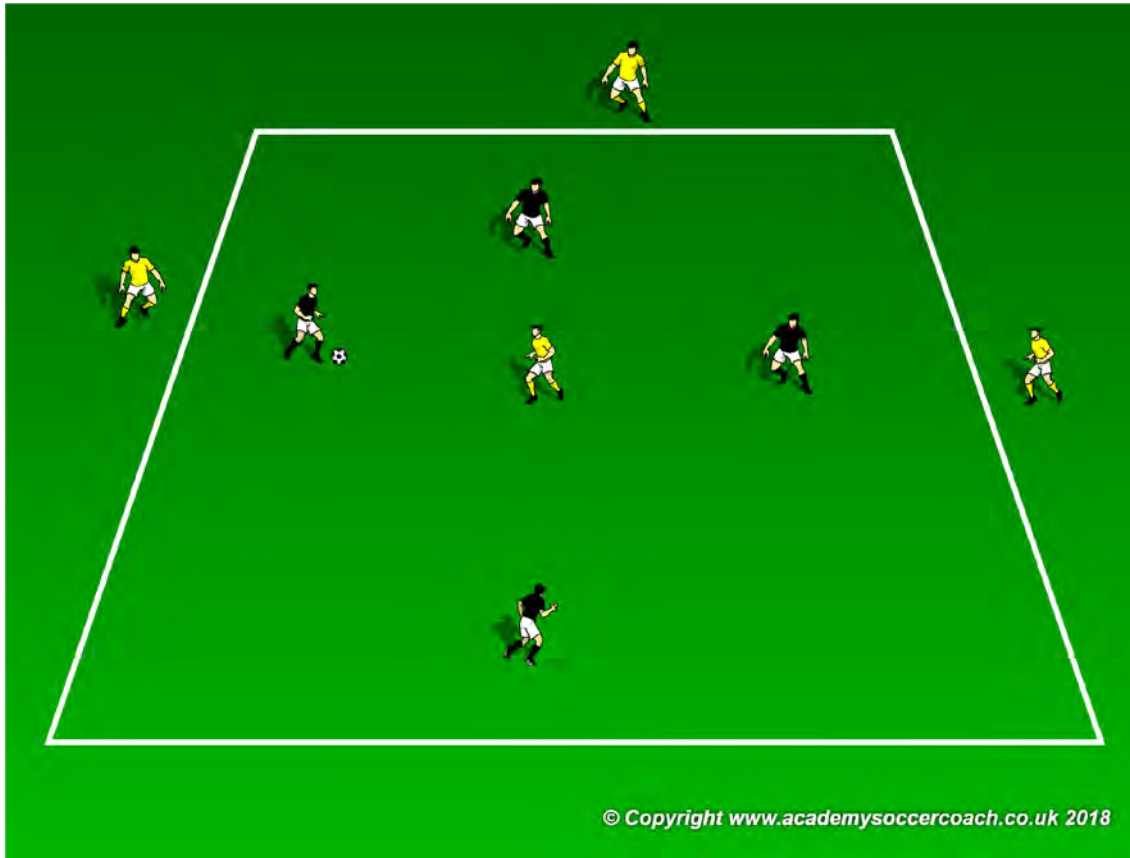
The defenders are not allowed to enter at the attackers' space;

The defender who gets the ball possession change places with the attacker who lost the ball.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the forms for the players to positioning;
- . You can allow the attackers to enter inside the defenders area;
- . You can allow the defenders to enter inside the attackers' area;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player.

## 4x4 – 4x1 initial situation – possession game



### Setup:

8 players  
10x10 meters game field

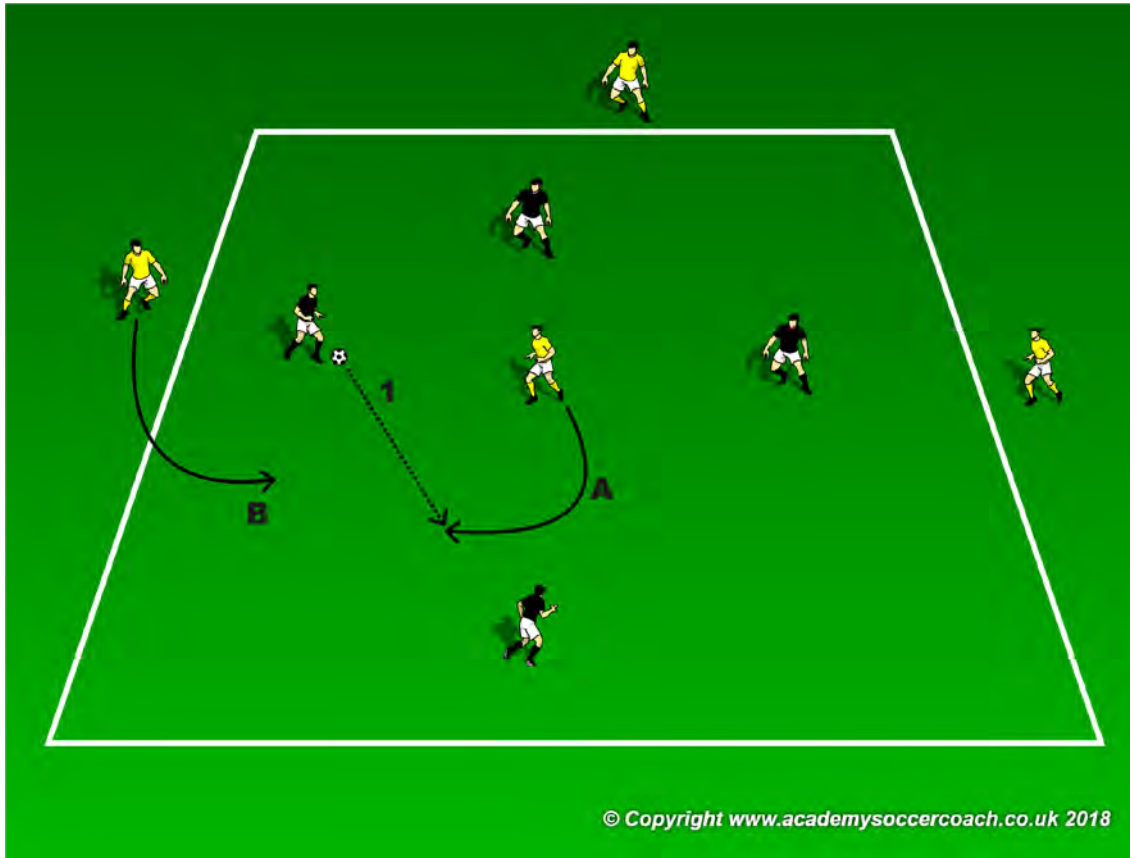
### Execution:

Divide the players in two teams;

The attackers will have four players inside the game field while the defense will only have one (game situation 4x1);

One defender will try to get the ball while the attackers pass the ball between. If the attack makes ten consecutive passes, they score one point;

When there's only one defender, the attackers can only touch the ball one time.



If the defender recovers the ball possession, one of the outside defenders enters the game field and starts to play (game situation 4x2);

When there are two defenders on the field, attackers can touch the ball twice.

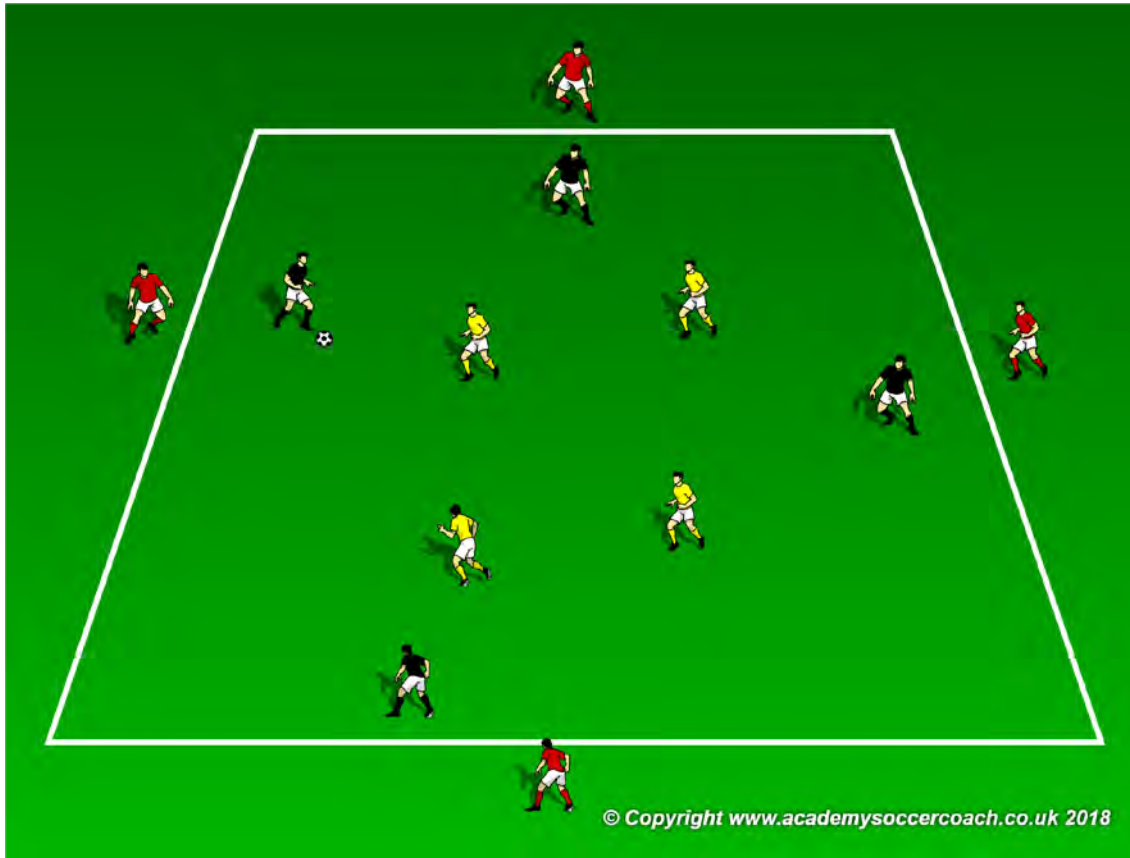
Three defenders, three touches on the ball and for defenders, four touches.

When the game is in a 4x4 game situation, the team who lose the ball possession must retire three players immediately and the exercise starts again.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the game field area;
- . You can define a number of consecutive passes to score a point.

## 4x4 + 4 Jokers possession game



### Setup:

10 players  
40x20 meters game field

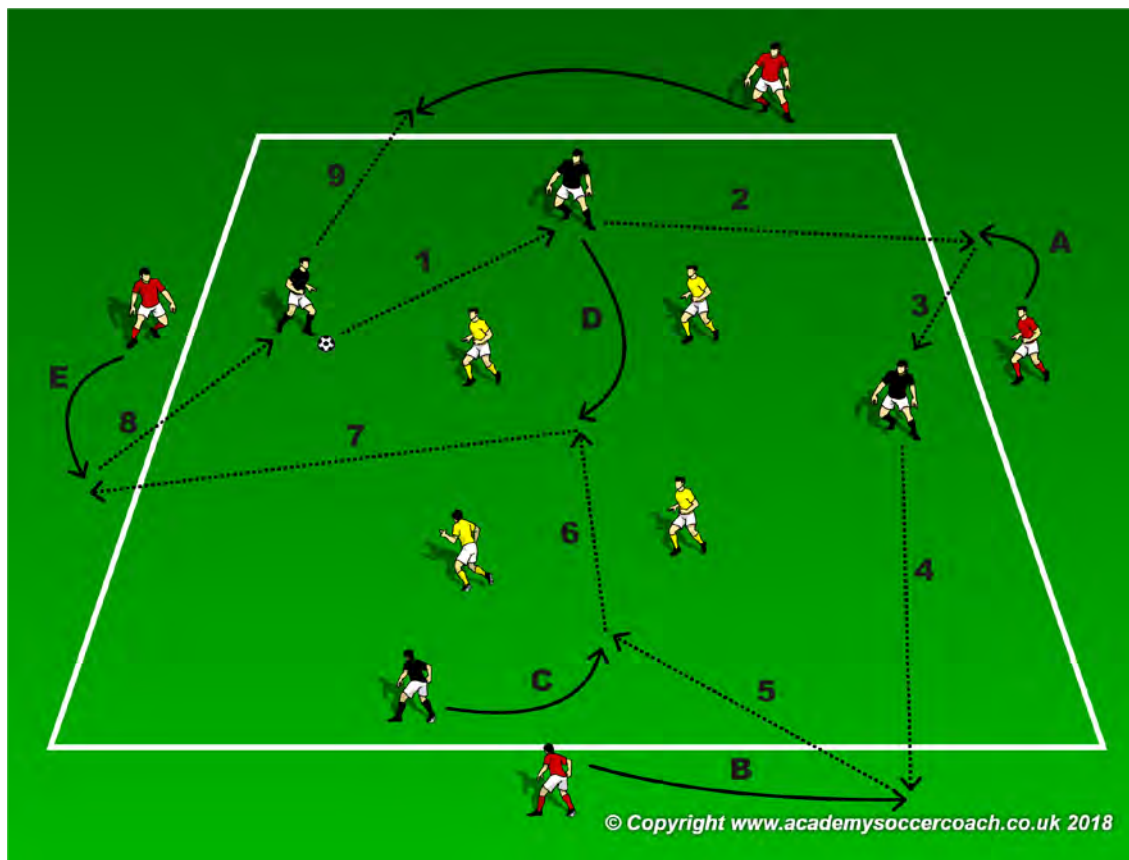
### Execution:

The jokers will play with the attackers;

It's not allowed to one Joker pass the ball to another. The ball must move inside the game field before pass to a Joker;

The attackers will try to do the most passes between them, trying to maintain the ball possession as long as they can;

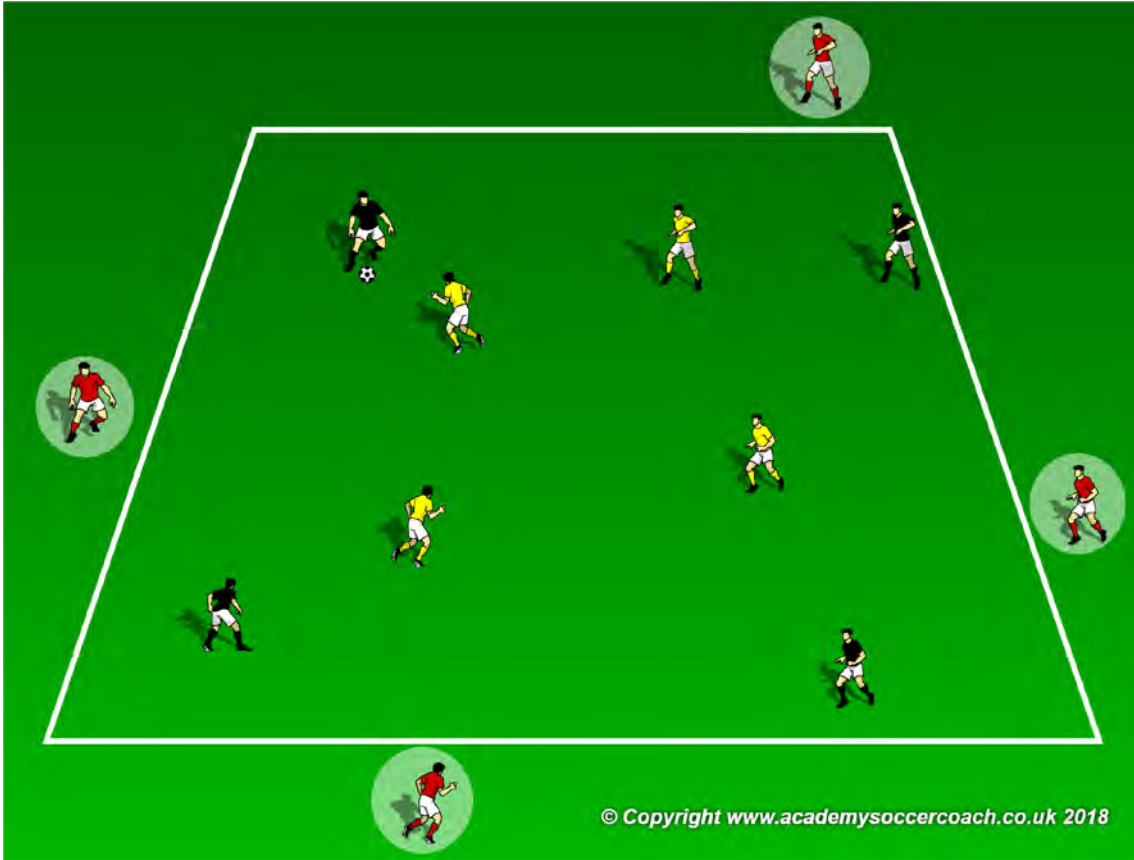
Every five consecutive passes, the attack score one point;



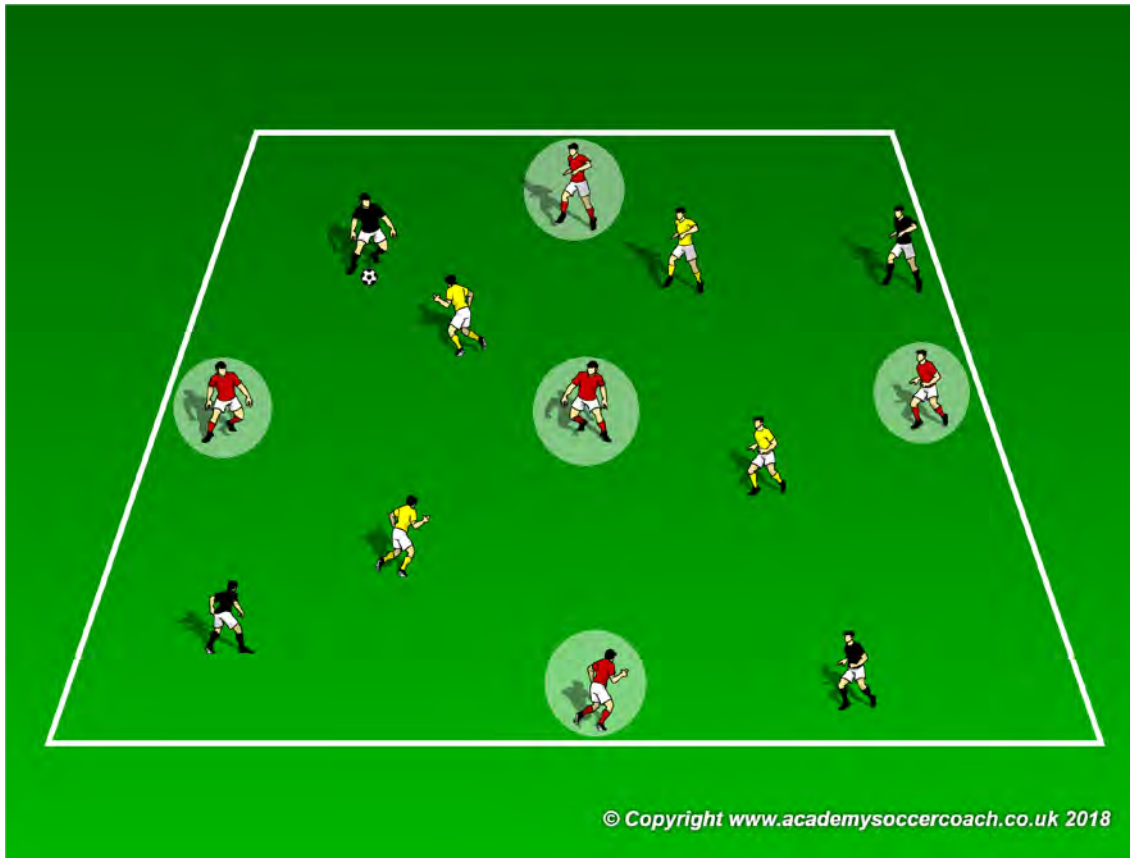
**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players or Jokers involved;
- . You can define a number of touches on the ball by each player or Joker;
- . You can limit the Jokers' position into the game field.





## 4x4 + 5 Jokers – 3 touches – possession game



### Setup:

10 players  
40x20 meters game field

### Execution:

The jokers will play with the attackers;

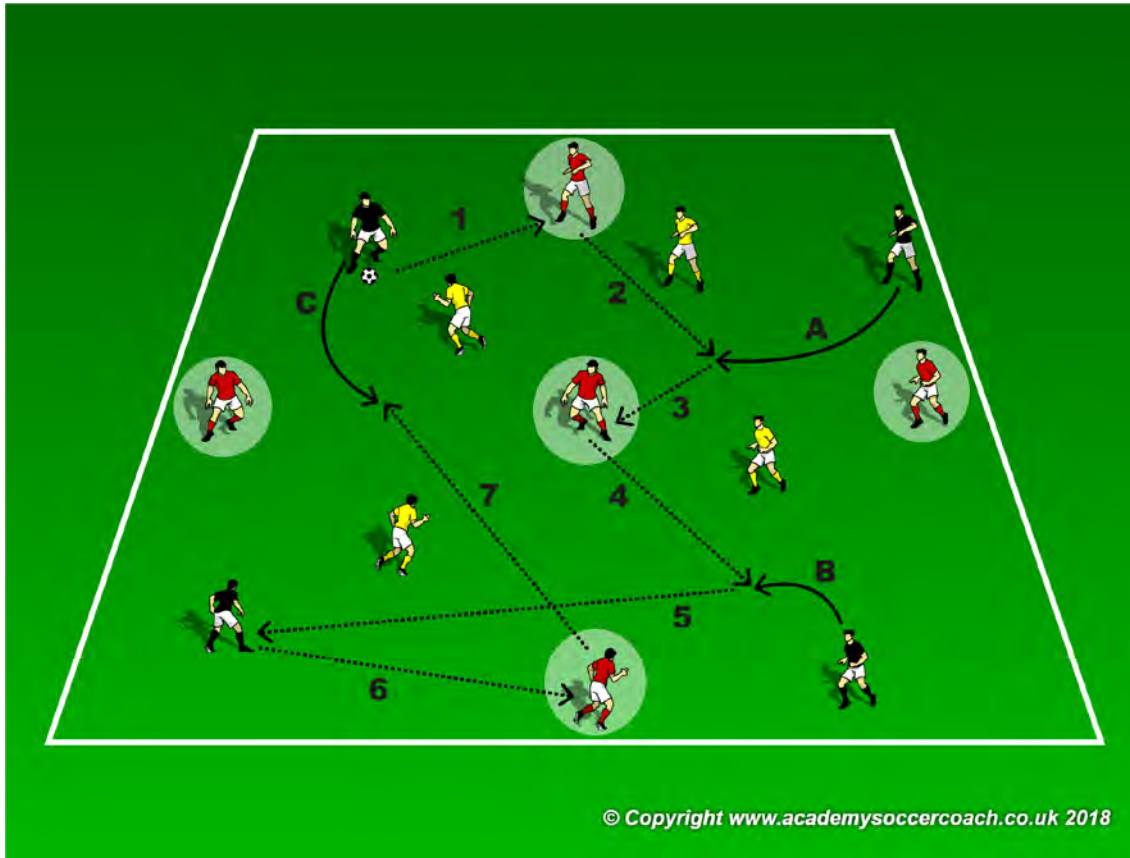
The Jokers can give only three touches on the ball;

No attacker or defender can enter the Jokers' area;

It's not allowed for one Joker pass the ball to another. The ball must move inside the game field before being passed to a Joker;

The attackers will try to do the most passes between them, trying to maintain the ball possession if they can;

Every time the attack moves the ball through the five Jokers, they score one point;

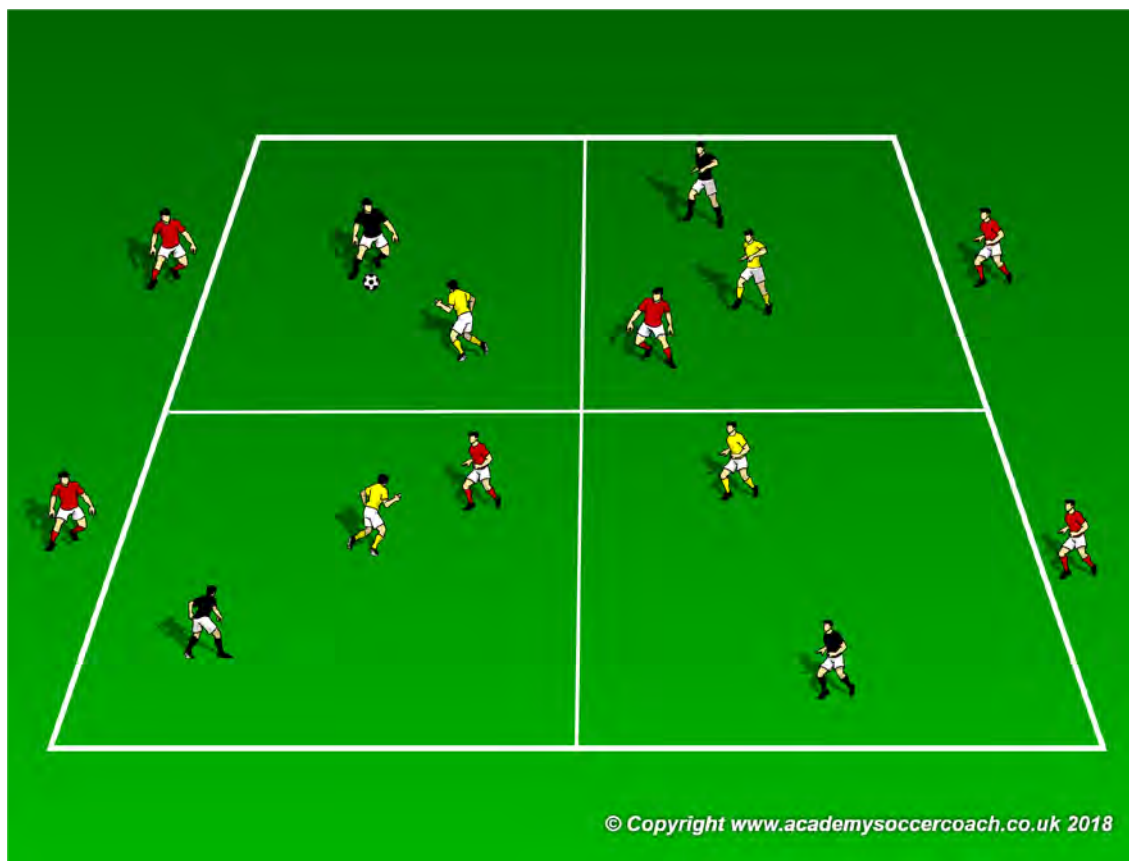


If any defender recovers the ball possession, he automatically starts to move the ball to his teammates and count the number of passes to the Jokers

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of the Jokers;
- . You can vary the number of touches on the ball by each player or Joker;
- . You can define several consecutive passes to score a point for the attack;
- . You can change the Jokers' positions on the game field.

## 4x4 + 6 Jokers possession game



### Setup:

14 players  
25x25 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the field into four areas;

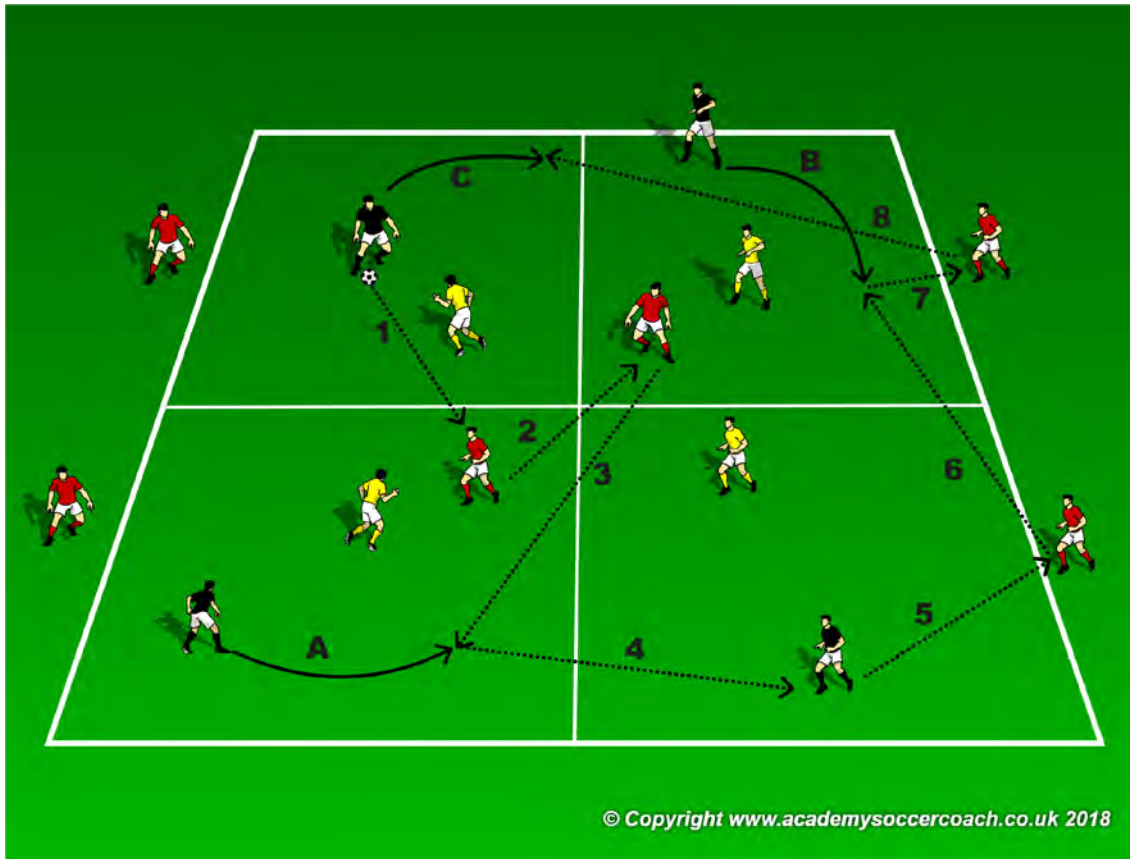
Divide the players into these four areas leaving two players of each team into them;

The game happens inside the areas with a 1x1 situation.

Two Jokers will play inside the game field and they can move freely;

The other four Jokers can move freely outside the game field between the cones;

The inside Jokers can pass the ball between them and to the outside Jokers;



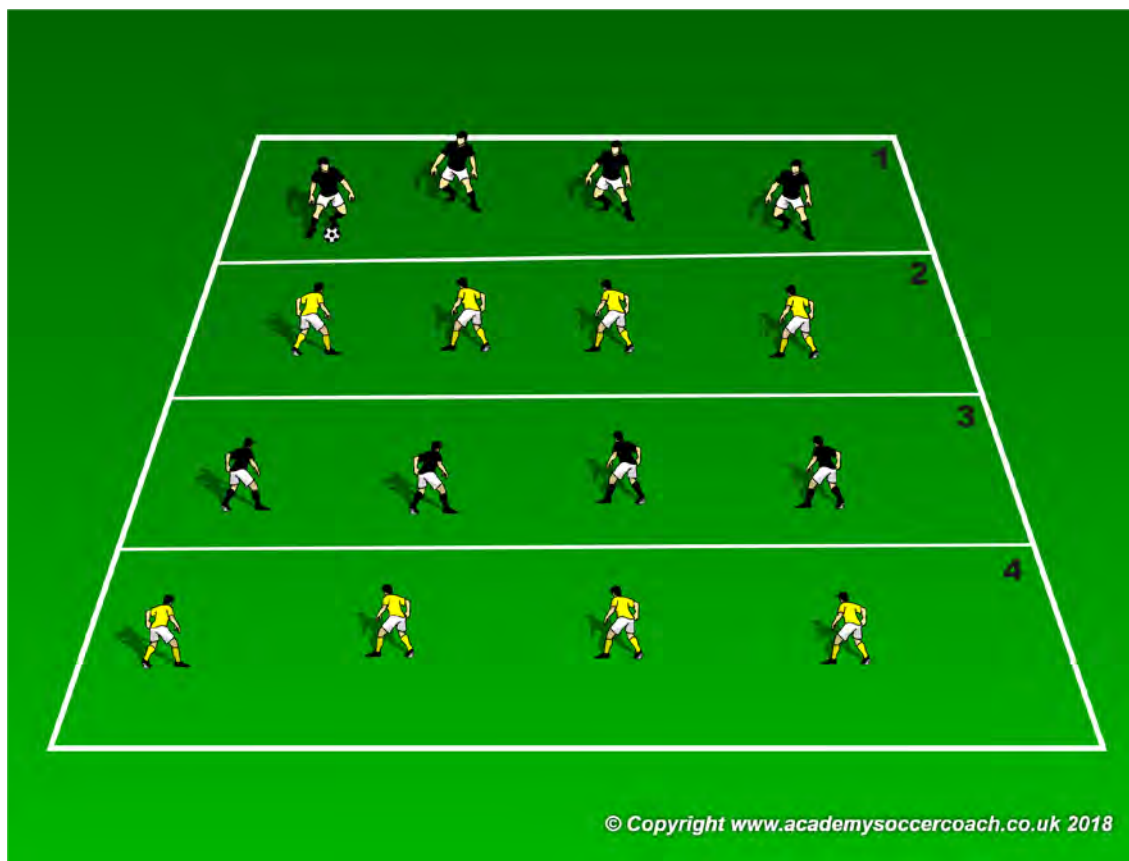
Five consecutive touches counts one point for the attack.

If the defense recovers the ball possession, they automatically start to move the ball.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the game field area;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of touches for scoring one point;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of Jokers;
- . You can vary the Jokers outside game field area.

## 4x4 + 4x4 possession game



### Setup:

12 players  
40x25 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the field in four:

- (a) Field 1
- (b) Field 2
- (c) Field 3
- (d) Field 4

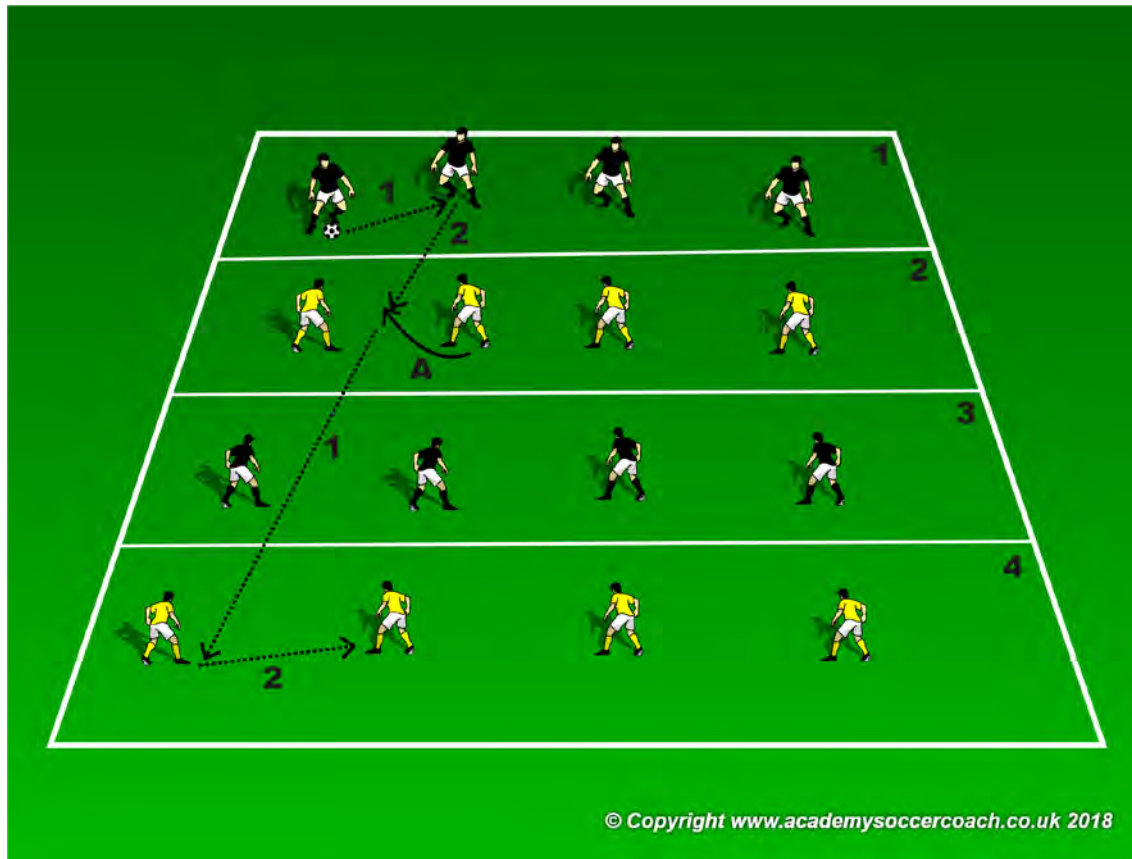
Divide two teams with 4 players to each one.

Put the attack into Fields 1 and 3 the defense into Fields 2 and 4.

Only the team with the ball can move between the fields;

The attack has to maintain the ball possession for as long as they can.

If the defenders of Field 2 steal the ball possession they try to reach his teammates on Field 4.

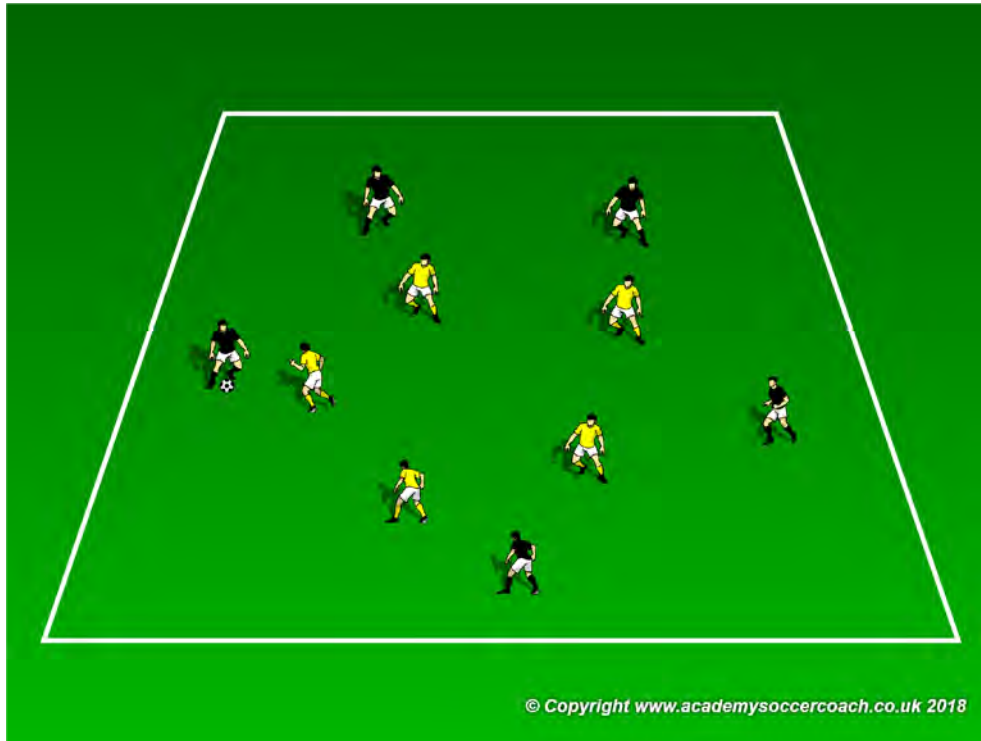


### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of small fields;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can vary the systems of play.

## CHAPTER 3 – 5 player game situation

### 5x5 - High pression - possession game



#### Setup:

10 players  
20x10 meters game field.

#### Execution:

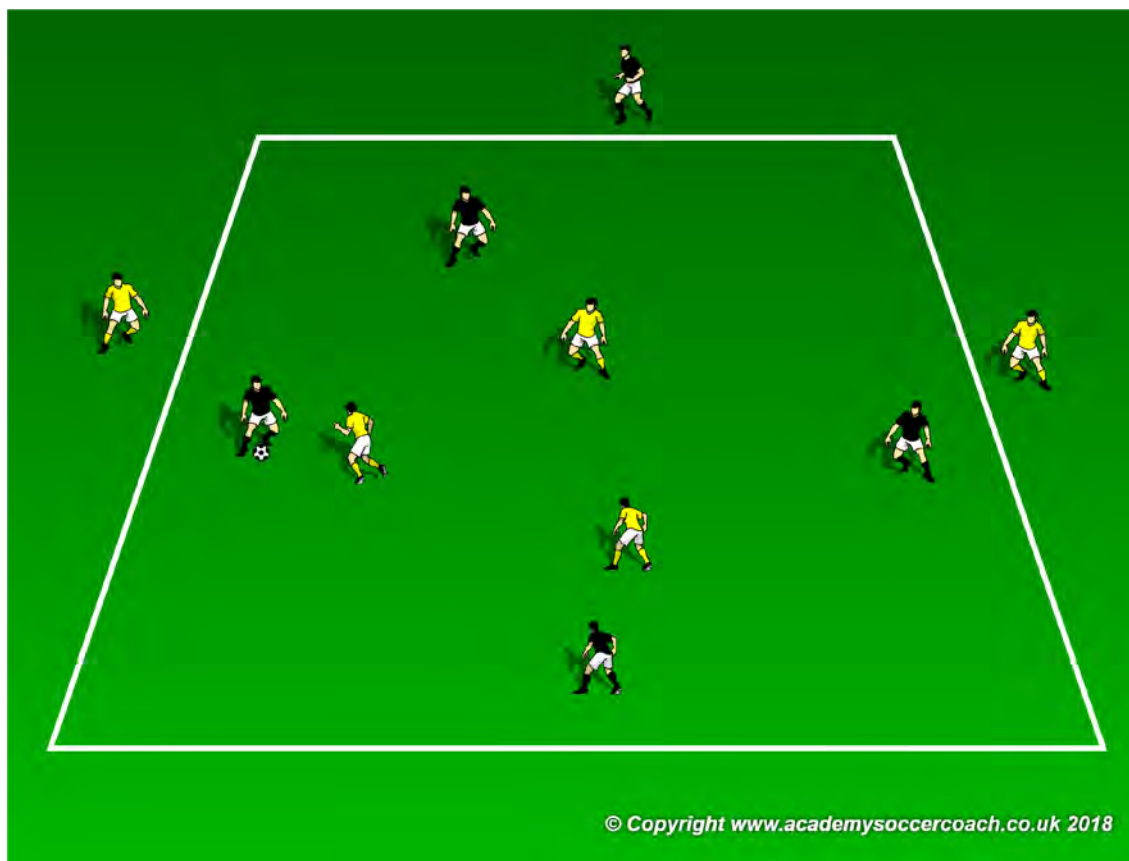
The attack must maintain the ball possession as long as they can;  
If the attack makes five consecutive passes, they score one point;  
If the defense recovers the ball possession, they start to move the ball around;  
There is no limit of touches on the ball for any player.

#### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the game field area;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball for each player.



## 5x5 - 4x3 initial situation - possession game



### Setup:

10 players  
30x20 meters game field

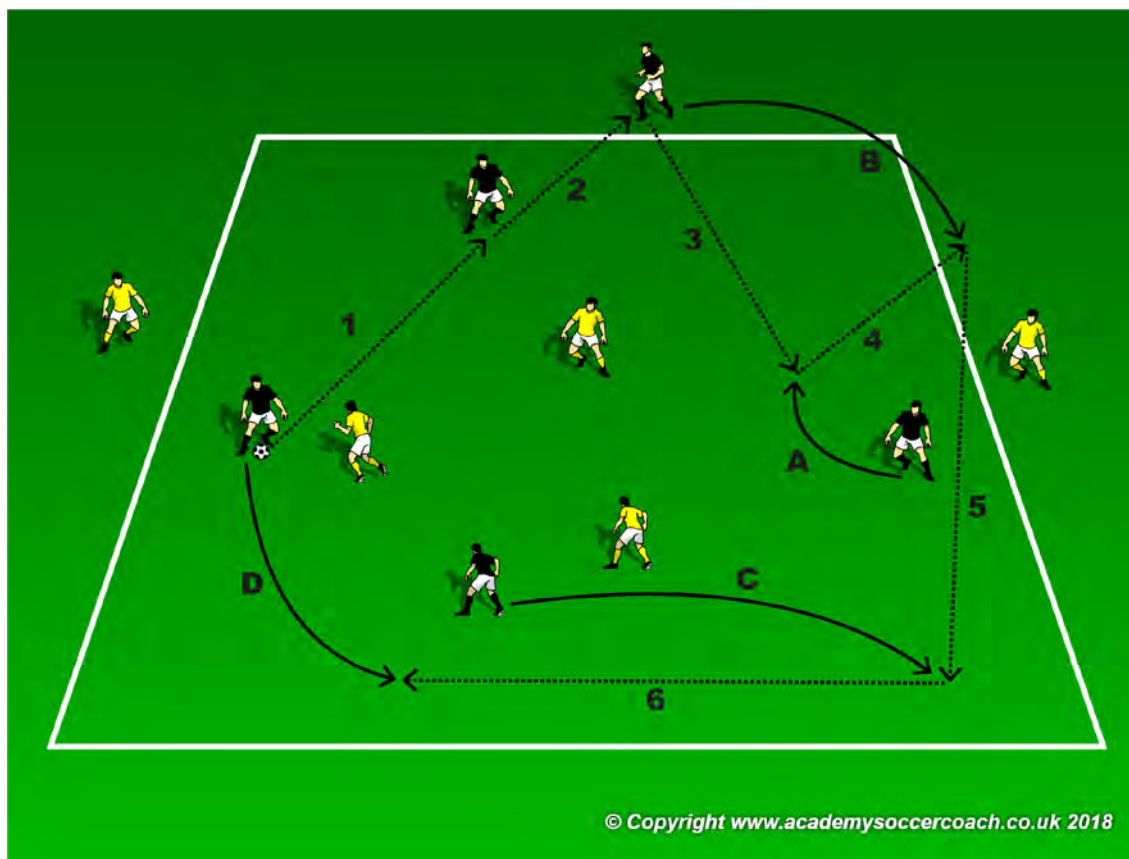
### Execution:

Divide the players in two teams;

The attackers will have four players inside the game field while the defense will only have three (game situation 4x3);

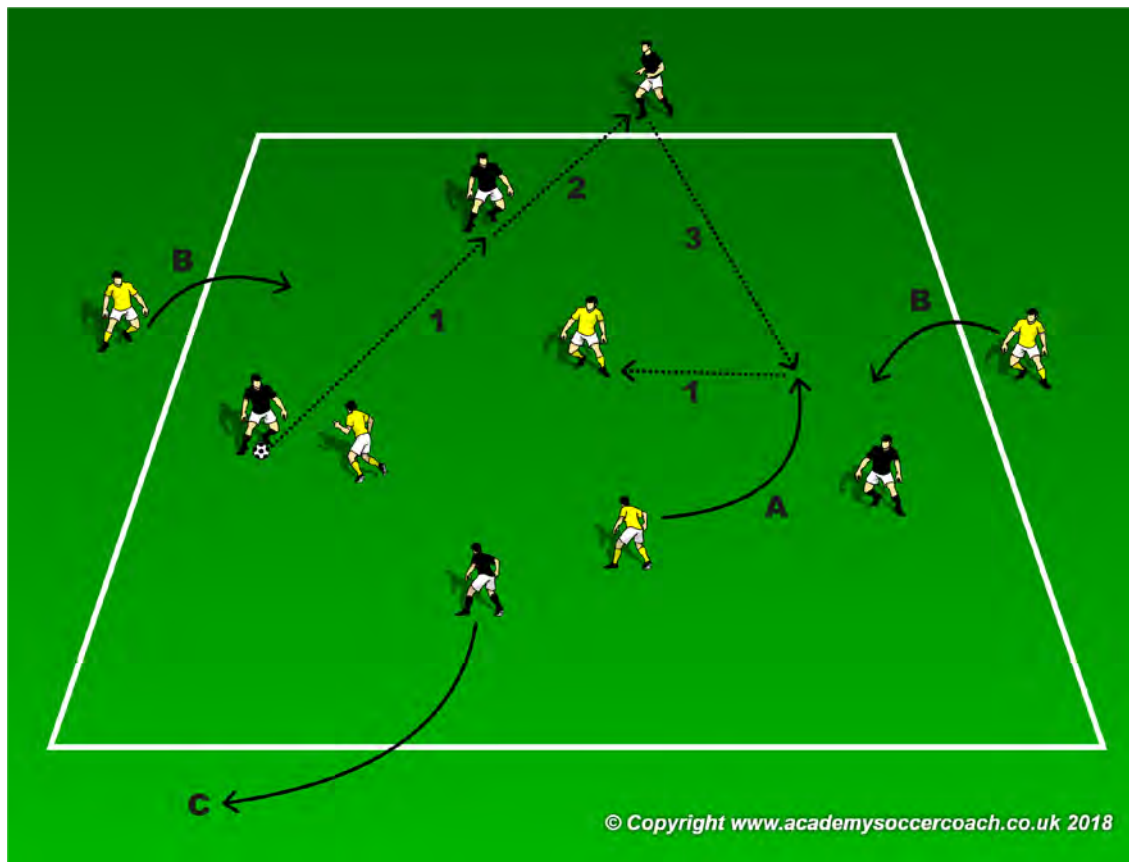
One attacker will be outside the game field and can play with his team, moving around the space;

Two defenders will be outside the game field, but they won't play until the defenders inside the game field recover the ball possession;



If the attack makes five consecutive passes they score one point;

If any defender recovers the ball possession, the two defenders outside the field quickly enter and start to move the ball around;

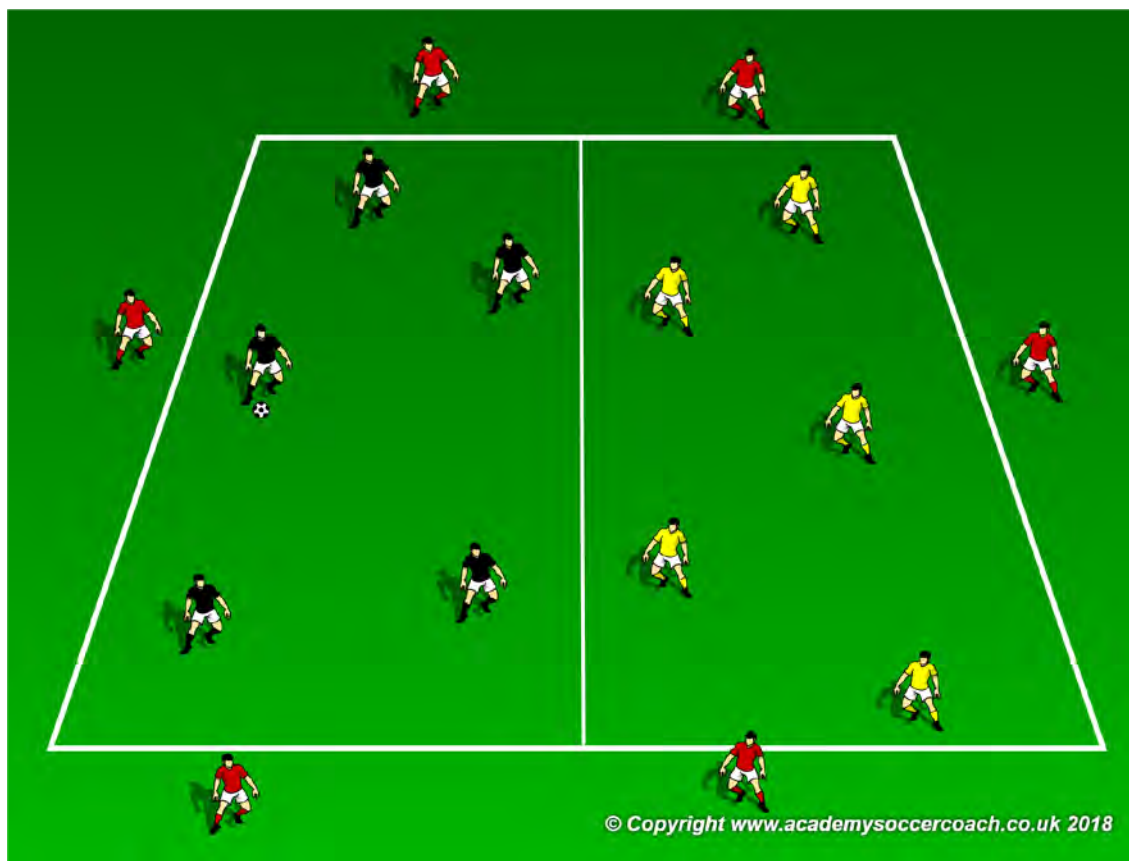


When the attack loses the ball one player must exit the field quickly and wait until the ball possession is recovered.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the game field area;
- . You can define a number of consecutive passes to score a point;
- . You can vary the number of outside players;
- . You can define several touches on the ball by each player.

## 5x5 + 6 Jokers possession game



### Setup:

16 players  
50x35 meters game field

### Execution:

The Jokers will play outside the field and helping the team with the ball possession;

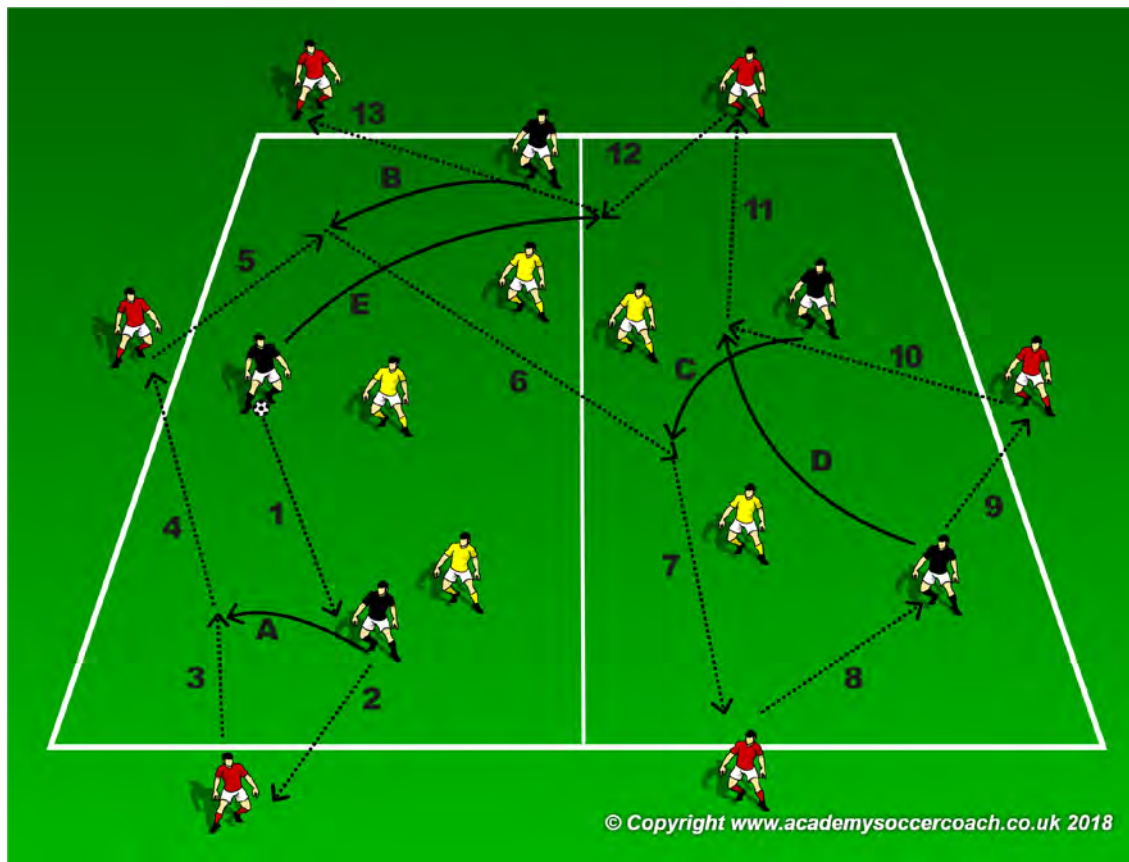
The Jokers are not allowed to pass the ball between them;

The Jokers can't switch places between them;

No defender or attacker can enter inside the Jokers' area;

The attack must move the ball between the six Jokers to score a point;

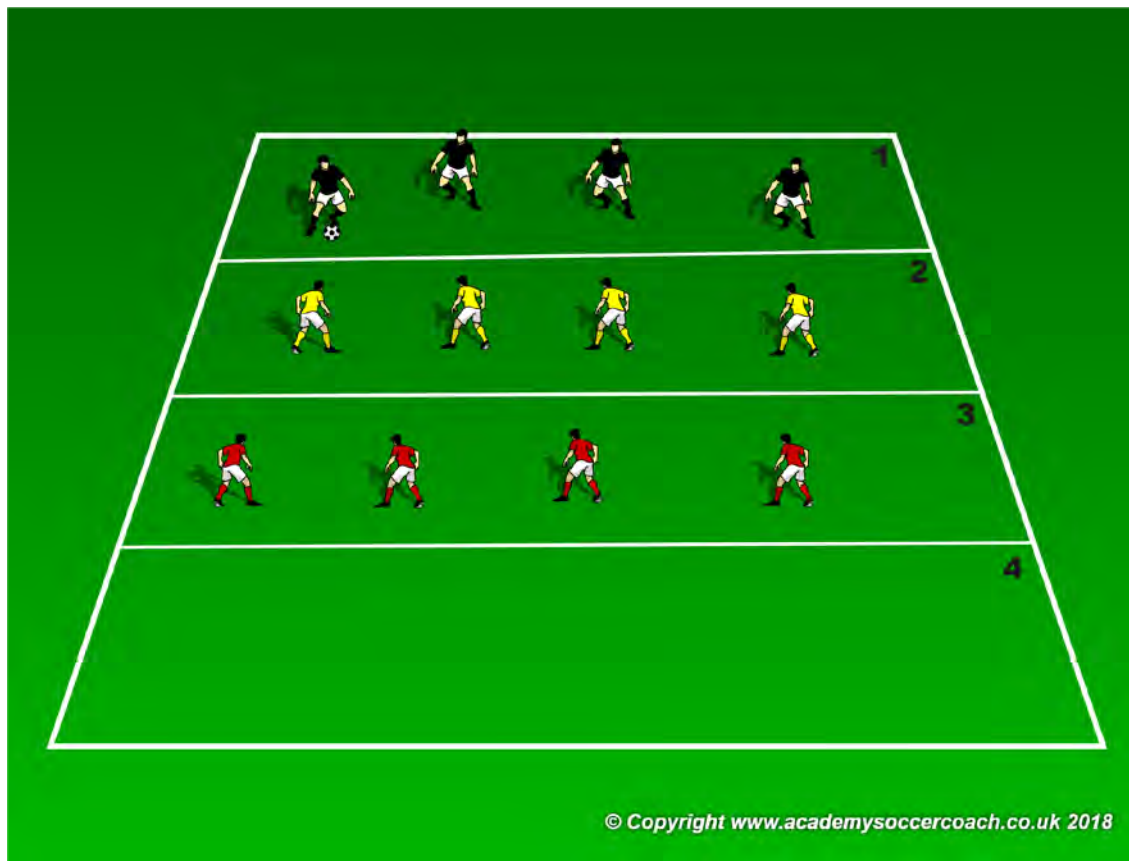
If the defense gets the ball possession, they will start to play with the Jokers.



### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the system of play of your team;
- . You can limit several touches on the ball for each player or Jokers;
- . You can allow the defenders enter inside the Jokers' area;
- . You can put the Jokers playing inside the game field.

## 5x5 possession game



### Setup:

15 players  
70x45 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the field in four:

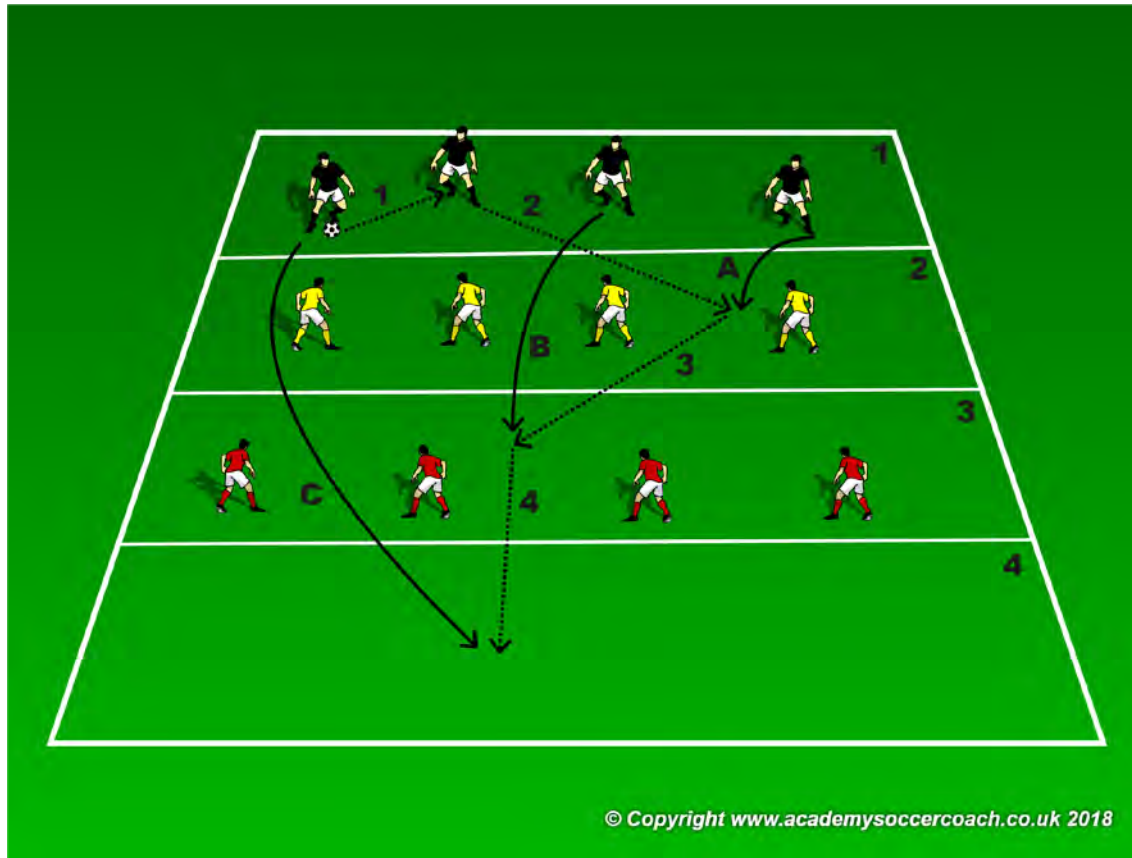
- (a) Field 1;
- (b) Field 2;
- (c) Field 3
- (d) Field 4

Divide three teams with 5 players to each one.

Put the attack into Field 1 and the two other teams into Fields 2 and 3.

Only the team with the ball can move between the fields;

The attack must reach Field 4 with the ball possession.

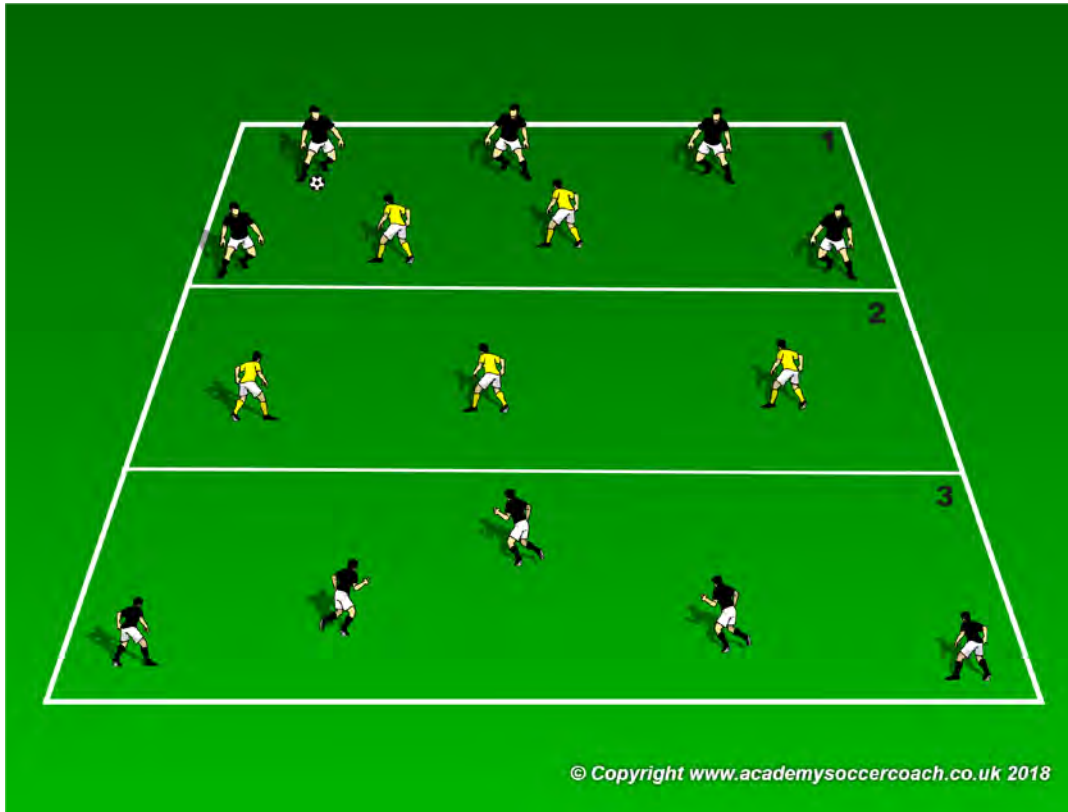


If the defenders of Field 2 or Field 3 steal the ball possession, they try to reach Field 4.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can vary the defensive systems.

## 5x5x5 - 5x2 initial situation - possession game



### Setup:

15 players

70x45 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the field in three:

(a) Field 1;

(b) Field 2;

(c) Field 3

Divide three teams with 5 players to each one.

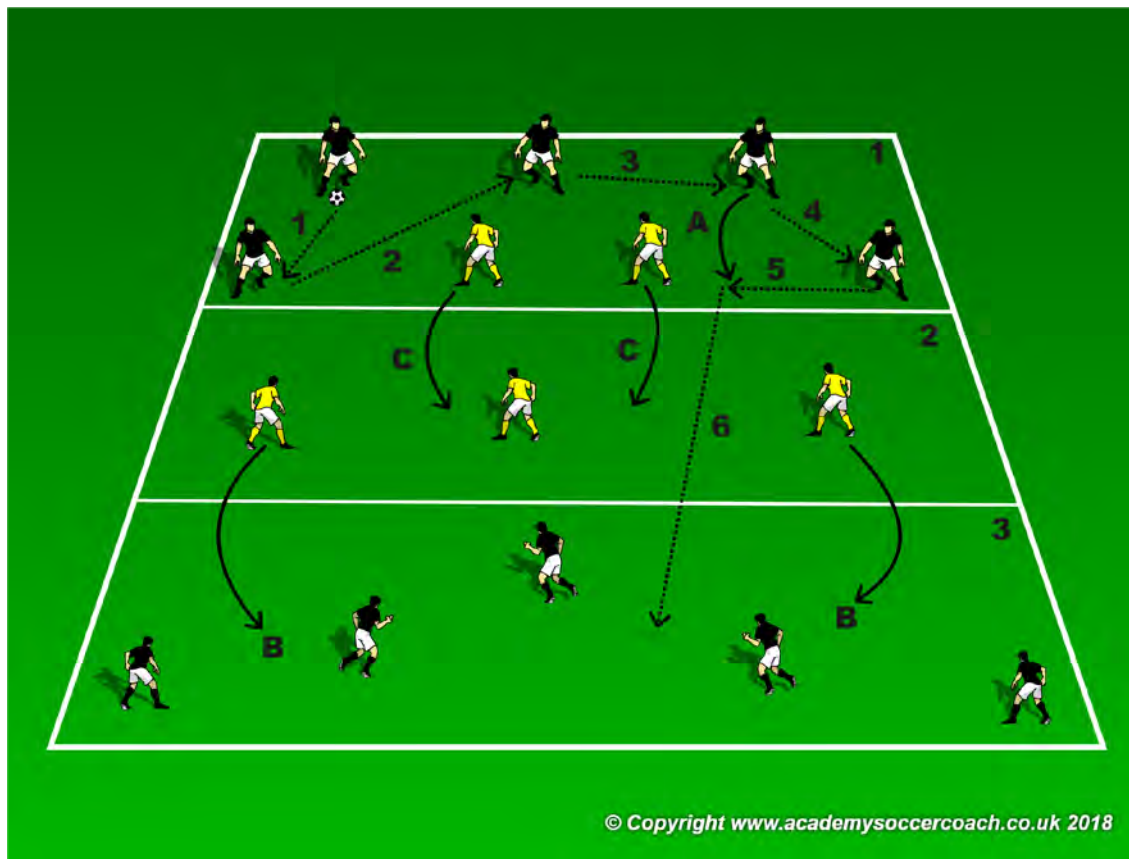
Put the attack into Field 1 and the two other teams into Fields 2 and 3.



The defense will start at Field 2 and while they are without the ball their players must stay there;

The attackers at Field 1 will move the ball between them while two defenders will try to get the ball possession;

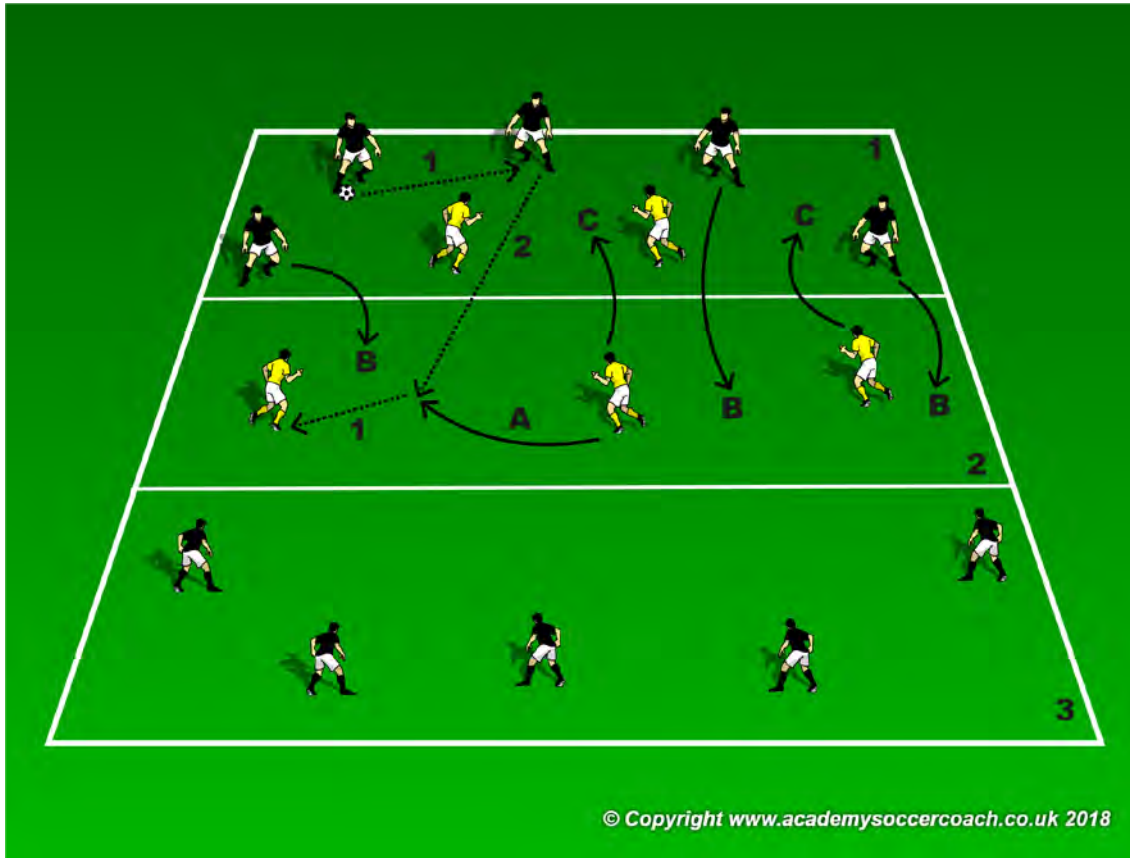
After five consecutive passes the attackers at Field 1 can pass the ball to the attackers at Field 3;



The defenders at Field 2 can try to intercept this ball;

If the ball reaches Field 3, two new defenders will go there trying to get the ball possession;

If the attackers of Field 1 or 3 lose the ball possession, they automatically start to defend.

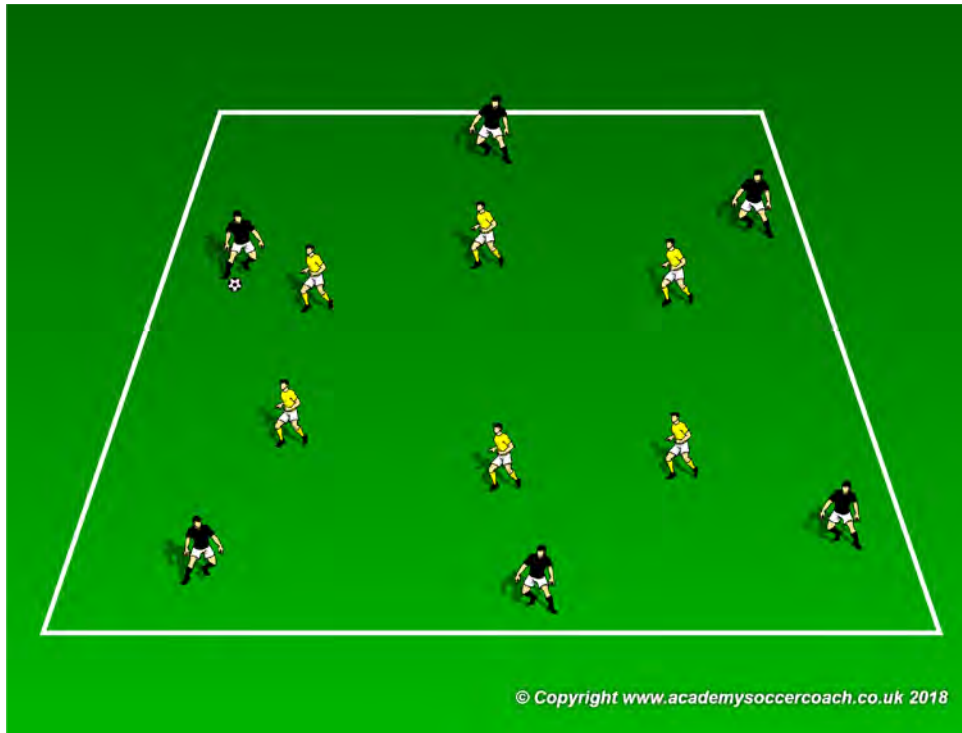


**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease more defensive areas;
- . You can vary the number of defenders inside the attacker's field;
- . You can limit the number touches on the ball by each player.

## CHAPTER 4 – 6 player game situation

### 6x4 - 1 touch - possession game



#### Setup:

10 players  
20x10 meters game field.

#### Execution:

The attack must touch the ball between them without losing the ball possession;

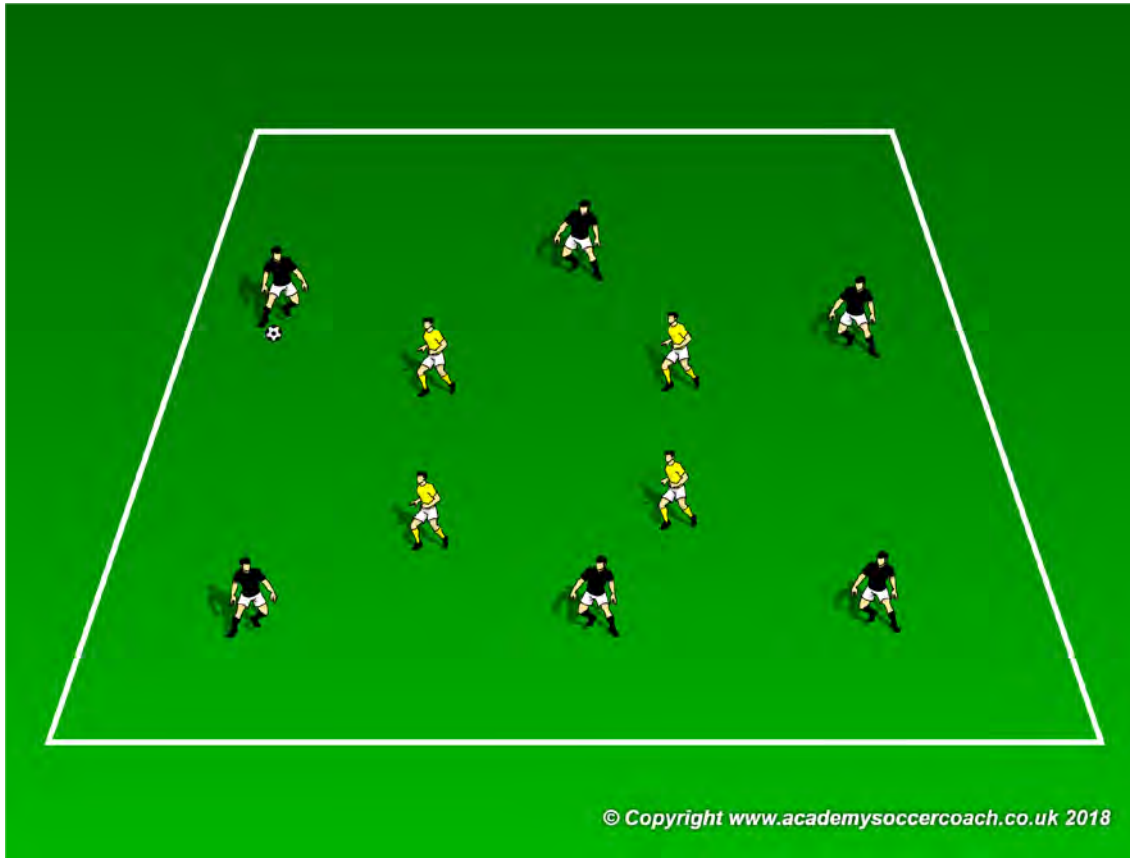
It is only allowed one touch on the ball by each player;

The defender who gets the ball possession switches position with the attacker who loses the ball.

#### Variations:

- . You can increase the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the game field area;
- . You can vary the number of touches on the ball by each player.

## 6x6 – 5 touches – possession game



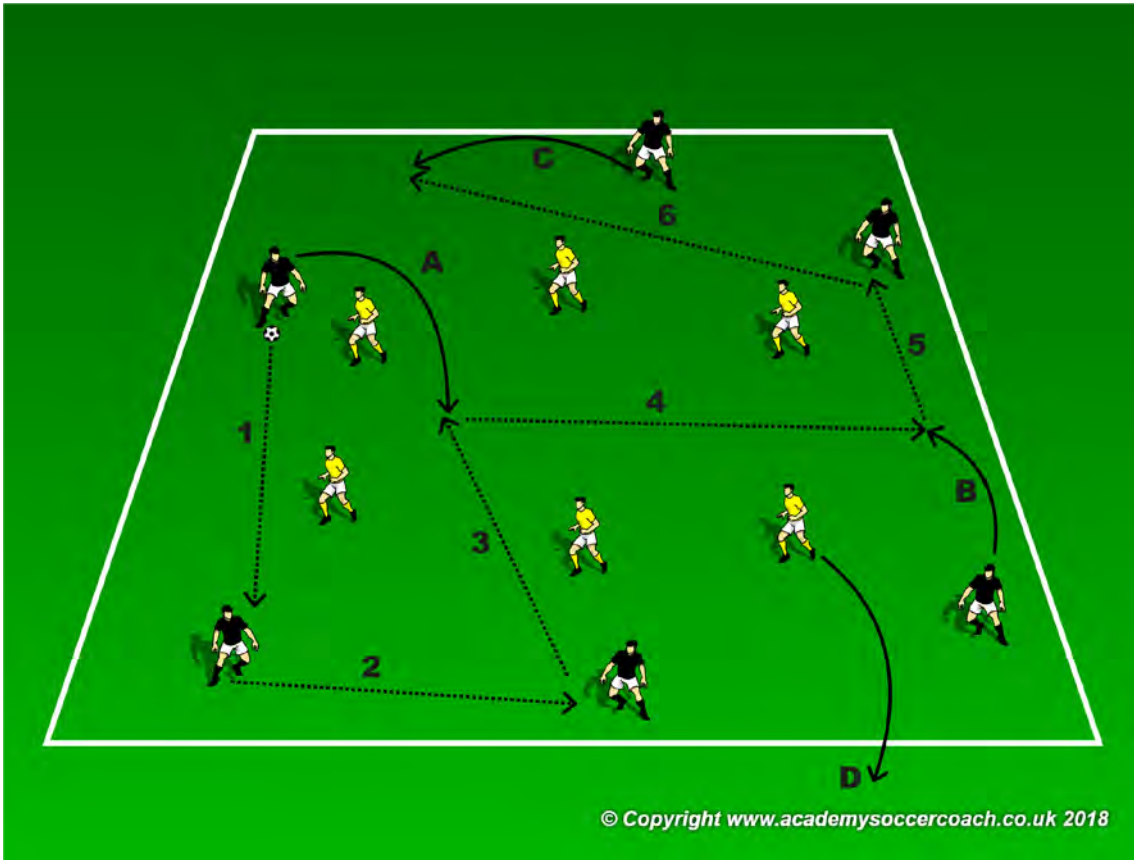
### Setup:

12 players  
20x10 meters game field

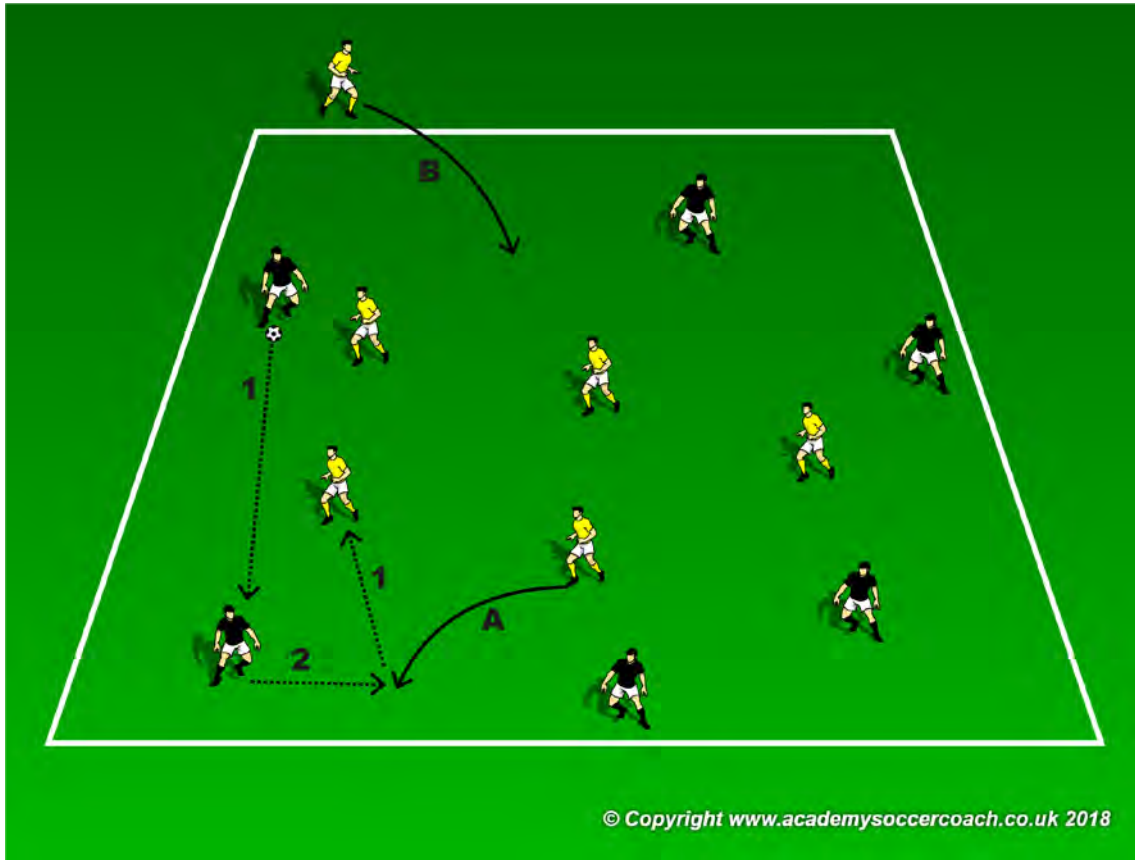
### Execution:

The attackers will try to move the ball between them maintaining the ball possession;

If the attack makes five consecutive passes, one defender leaves the field, starting a 6x5 game situation and every five passes made one defender leave the field.



If the defense recovers the ball possession and makes one pass, the defender who left the field returns to the game.

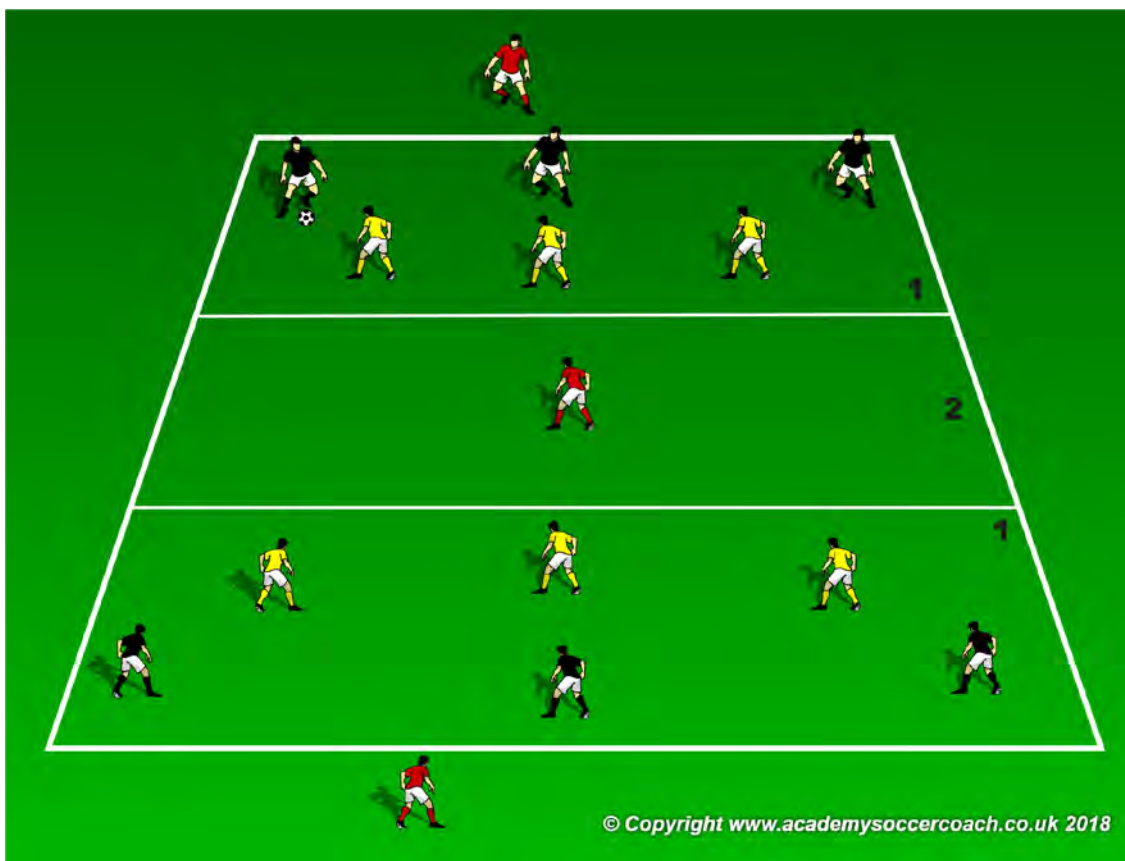


The team with more players in the end of the game wins.

**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can vary the number of passes to eliminate an opponent;
- . You can forbid the return of a eliminated player to the game.

## 6x6 + 3 Jokers possession game



### Setup:

15 players  
40x20 meters game field.

### Execution:

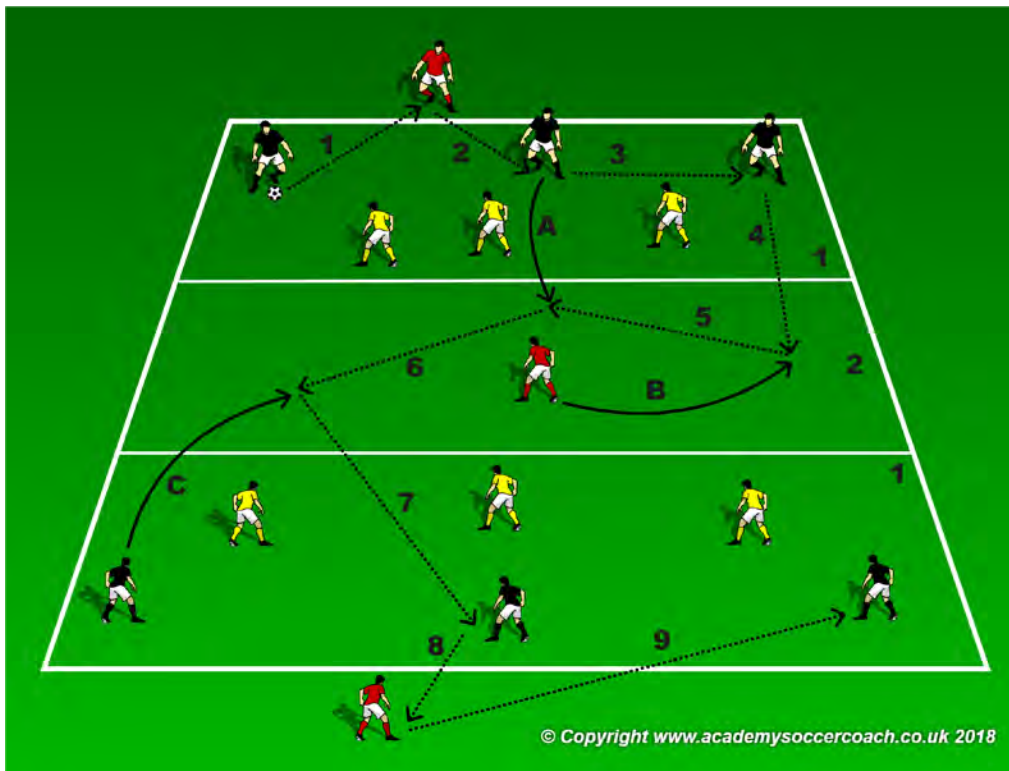
Divide the field in two:

- (a) Field 1;
- (b) Field 2;

Attackers and defenders will be positioned at Field 1;

Two Jokers will be playing outside the game field and one Joker will be playing at Field 2;

The Jokers can't leave their spaces and they also can't pass the ball to each other;



The attackers will try to move the ball between them and maintain the ball possession;

If the ball moves between the three Jokers, the attack scores a point;

The players inside the game field can move freely by the pitch but they are not allowed to leave any empty field during the exercise;

Inside the Field 2 it's only allowed two touches on the ball for any player;

If the defenders get the ball possession, they will start to move the ball between them.

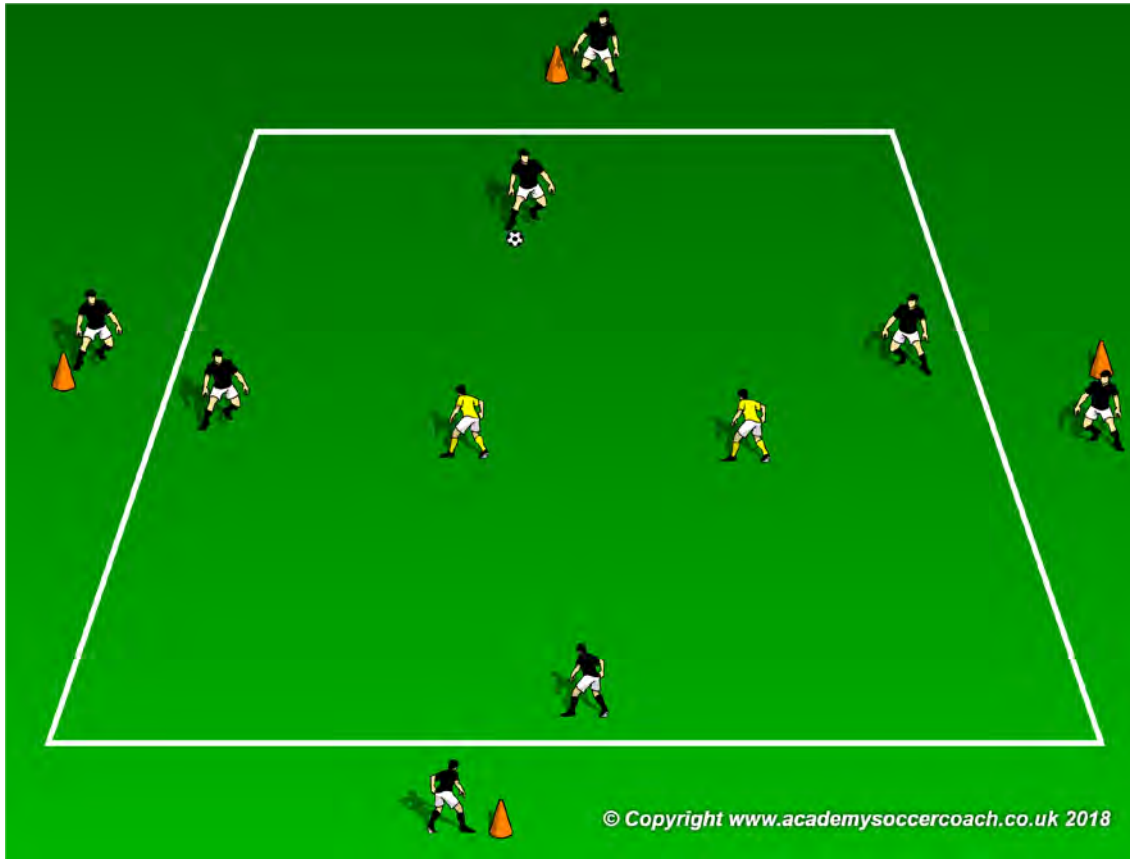
### **Variations:**

- . You can vary the number of players involved;
- . You can increase or decrease the game field area;
- . You can vary the number of touches on the ball by each player at any Field;
- . You can increase or decrease the number of Jokers;
- . You can vary the Jokers area.



## CHAPTER 5 – Other game situation

### 8x2 Run, Run, Run – 4x2 situation – possession game



#### Setup:

10 players  
15x10 meters game field.

#### Execution:

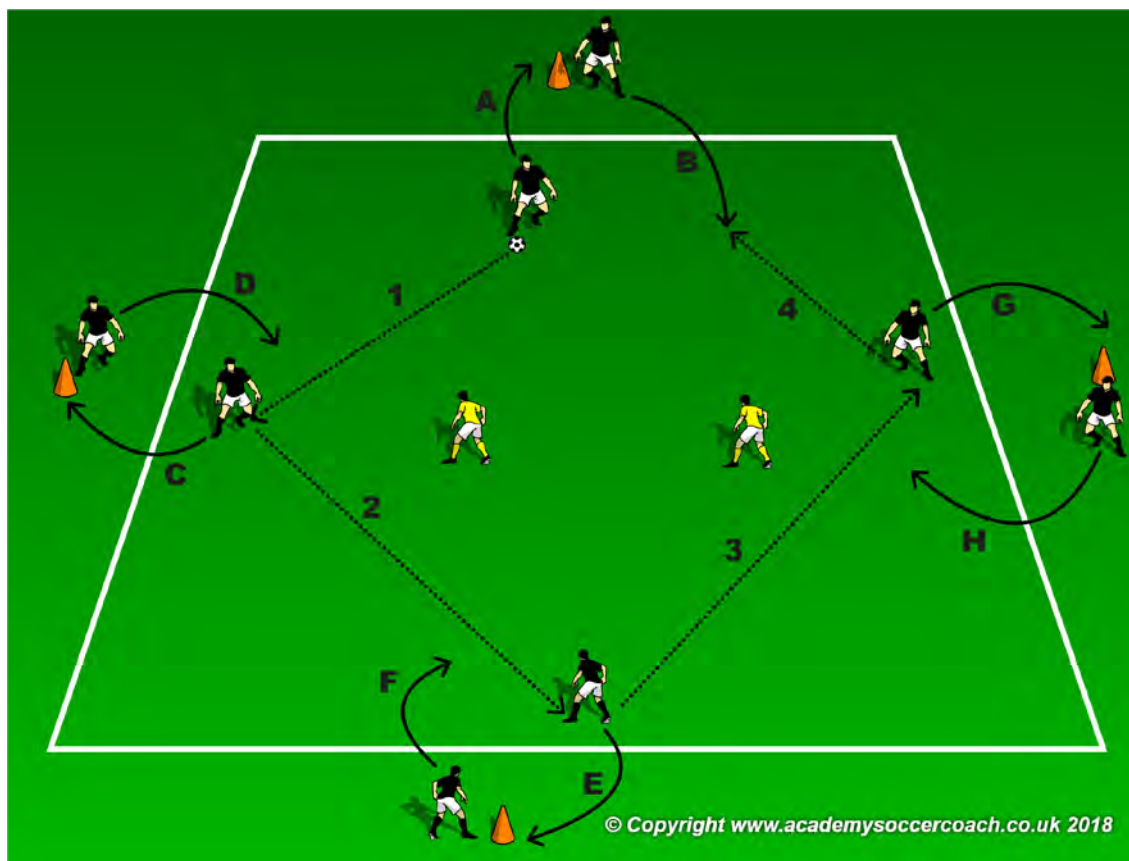
Four players will start playing inside the game field, touching the ball while four will start outside the game field waiting;

The player who made the touch on the ball has to run to the cone outside the game field, changing places with the player outside;

While the player is doing this he is not an option for the pass for his teammates. He cannot receive any touch while he is outside the field.

The player outside has to run inside the game field, filling a possible empty space and creating a pass line for the attack.

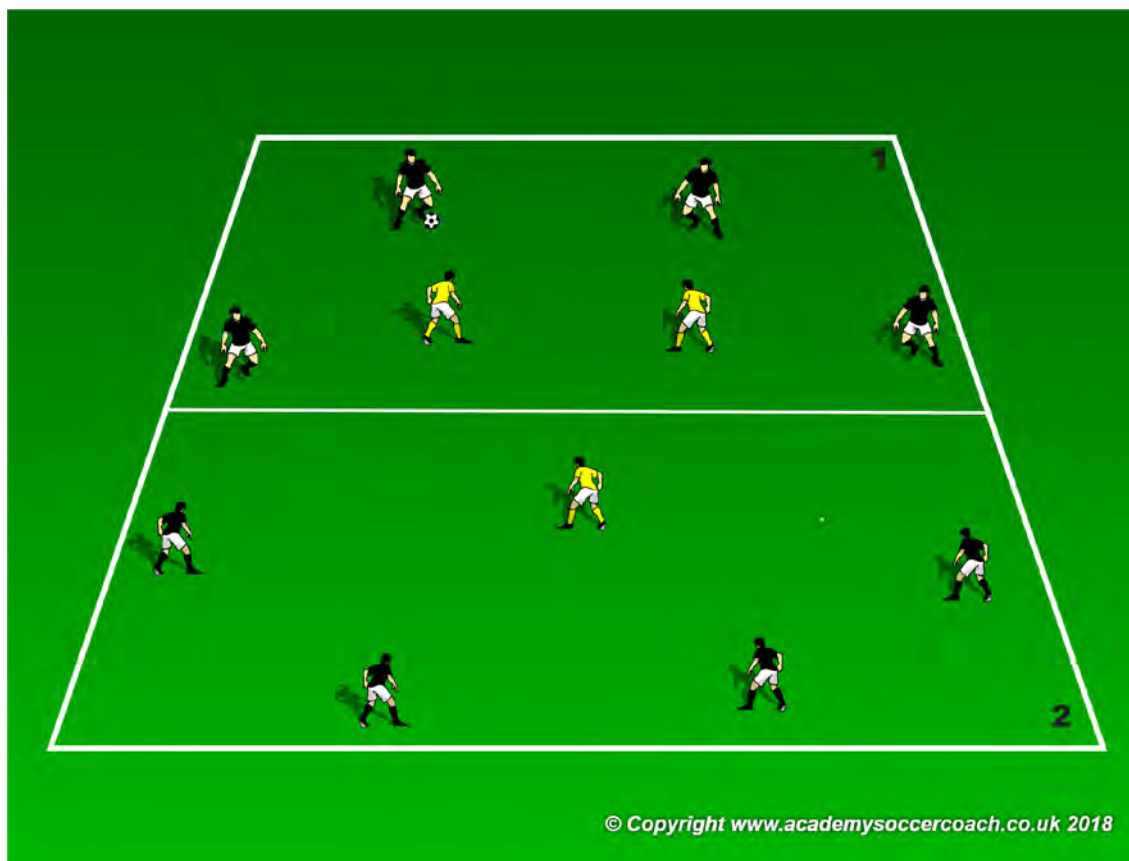
If the defender recovers the ball possession he switches position with the player who lost the ball.



### Variations:

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can vary the game situations putting 4x3 instead of 4x2 for an example;
- . You can add more cones outside;
- . You can define which cone every player will run;
- . You can limit the number of touches on the ball by each player.

## 8x3 – 4x2 game situation – possession game



### Setup:

11 players  
20x10 meters game field

### Execution:

Divide the game field into two small fields.

Divide the attacks into two small teams with four players;

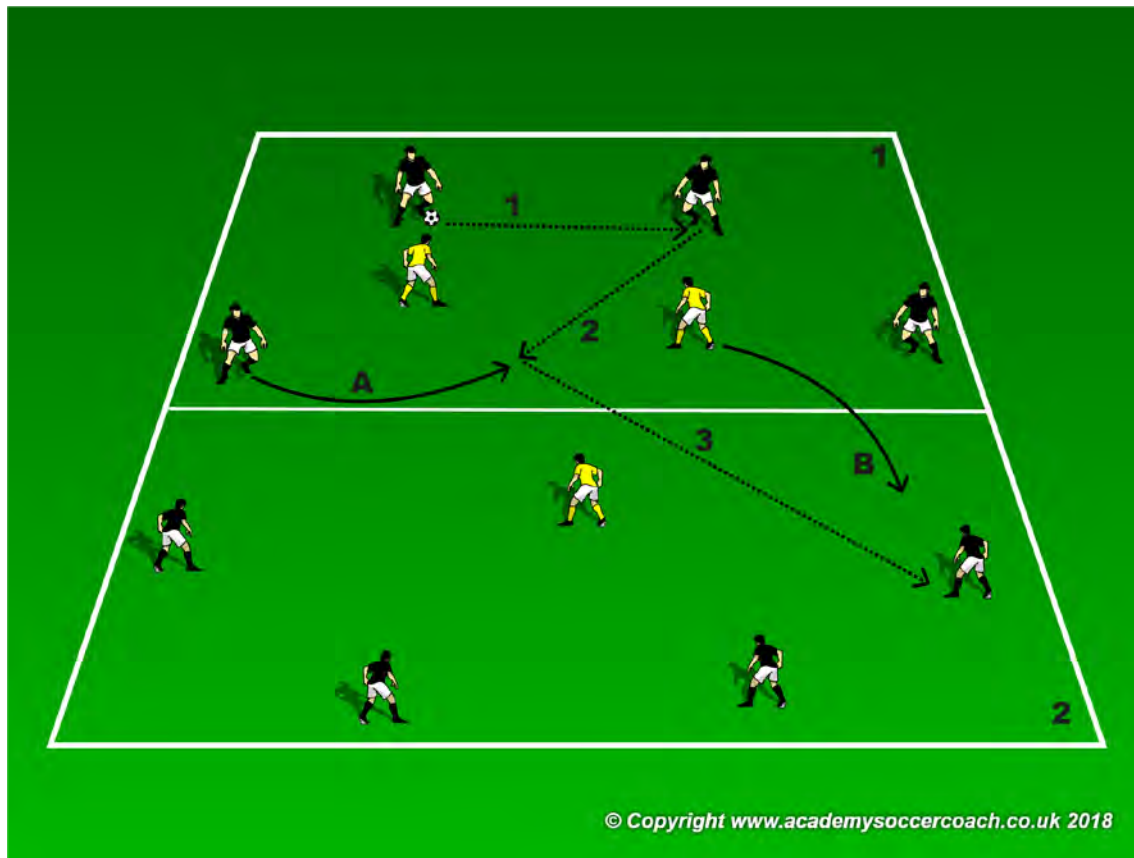
Put two defenders inside small field 1 and one defender into small field 2;

It's not allowed to have three defenders inside the same field;

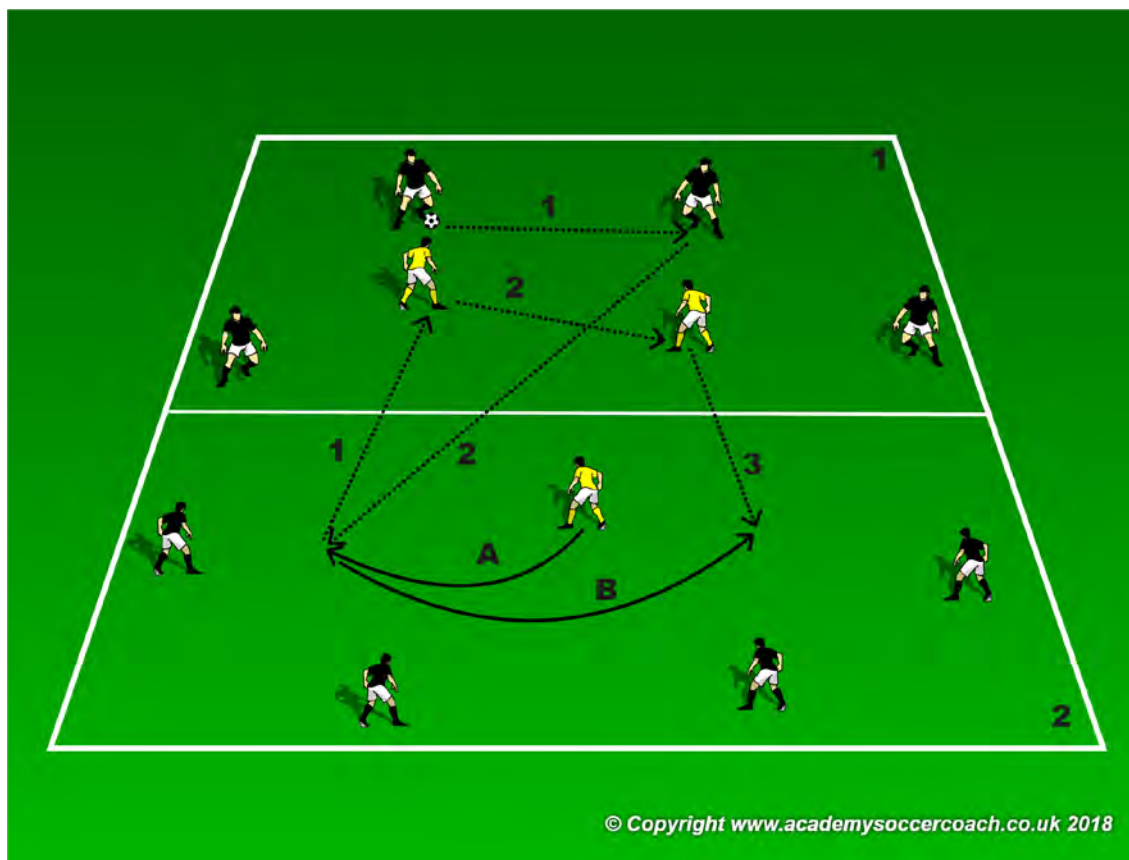
Two defenders will try to get the ball while the attackers pass the ball between them;

The attackers don't have to make any specific number of passes to move the ball between the small fields 1 and 2.

If any defender recovers the ball possession, he will quickly pass the ball to his teammates.



If the defense makes three consecutive passes, they will exchange place with the attacker who lost the ball and two other attackers.



**Variations:**

- . You can increase or decrease the number of players involved;
- . You can define a number of touches on the ball by each player;
- . You can define a number of passes to move the ball between the fields;
- . You can vary the number of passes between the defenders.

## 10x10 possession game



### Setup:

20 players  
80x40 meters game field.

### Execution:

Divide the pitch in how many sectors you want;

The game will be playing in a 10x10 game situation.

The attackers must maintain the ball possession for as long as they can;

The attackers must occupy all the small sectors into the pitch avoiding having many players in a single sector;

If the defenders get the ball possession, they automatically start to move the ball around.

### Variations:

- . You can vary the number of players involved;
- . You can add Goalkeepers;
- . You can vary the system of play.
- . You can vary the number of sectors inside the pitch.

