

SOCCER DRILLS AND SMALL-SIDED GAMES



Soccer Drills and Small-Sided Games

Topics include switching the point of attack, midfield combinations, possession to penetrate, staying compact defensively and much more

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Edited by Tom Mura



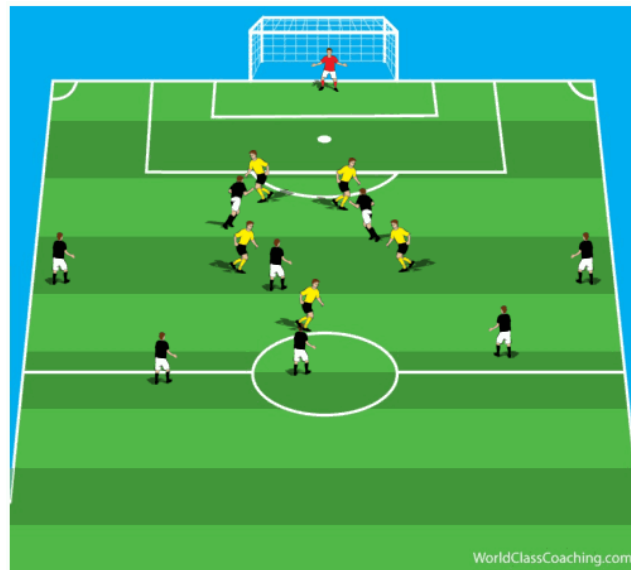
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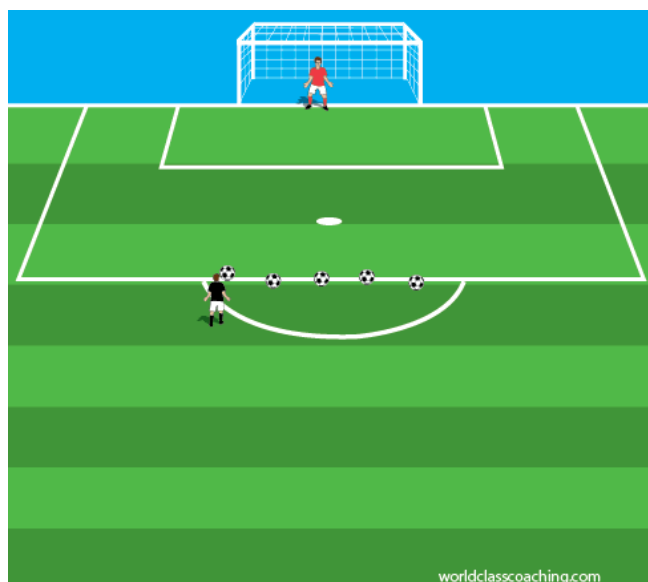
Switching the Point of Attack

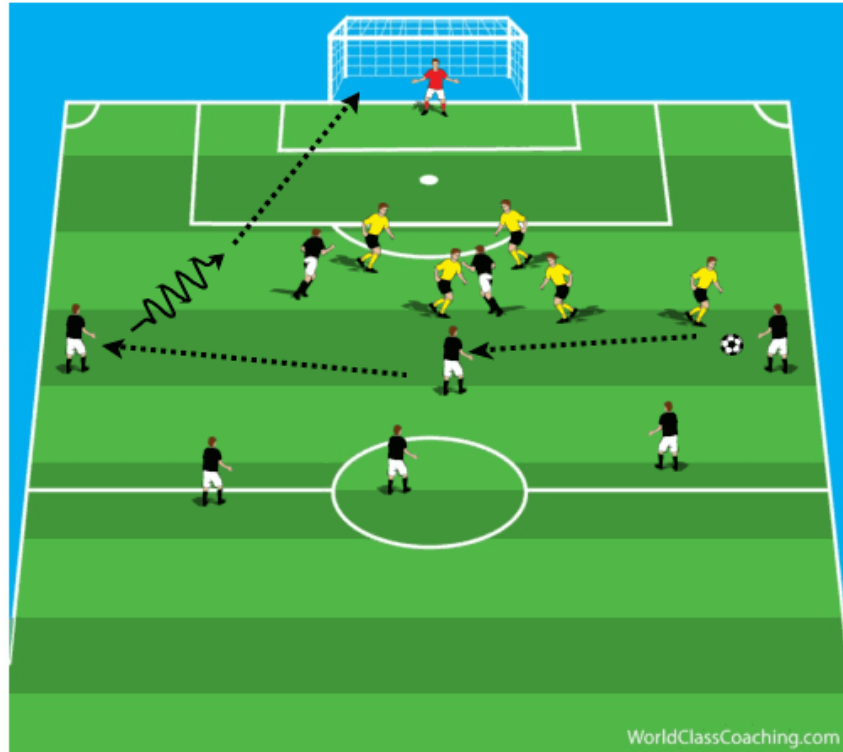
This activity works on switching the point of attack and getting to goal.

Start with a team attacking with a 3-3-2 and a team defending the goal with a keeper and playing a 2-2-1



This is an unrestricted scrimmage except the teams are put into these formations. If the attacking team plays quickly and is willing to use the width of the field and change the point of attack they should be able to get to goal easily





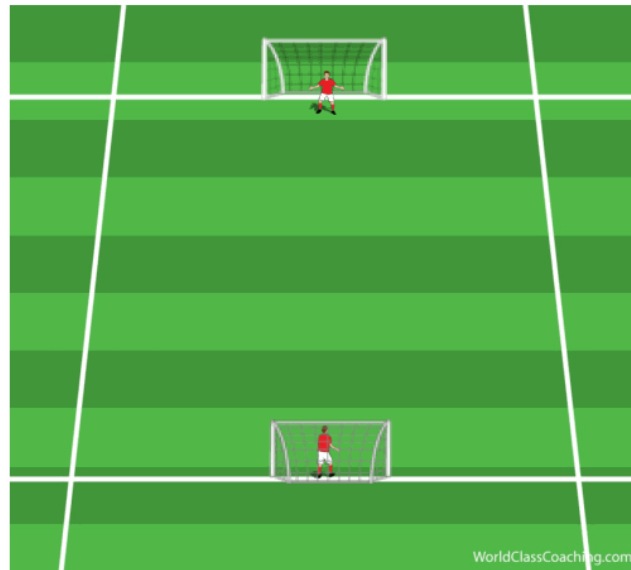
If the defending team wins the ball they try to work the ball out past midfield. If they are successful they leave the ball and defend again.

By controlling the numbers and the formation you can really emphasize the switching of the point of attack.

Attacking Transition With Numbers Up

This activity works on numbers up attacking, numbers down defending and offensive transition.

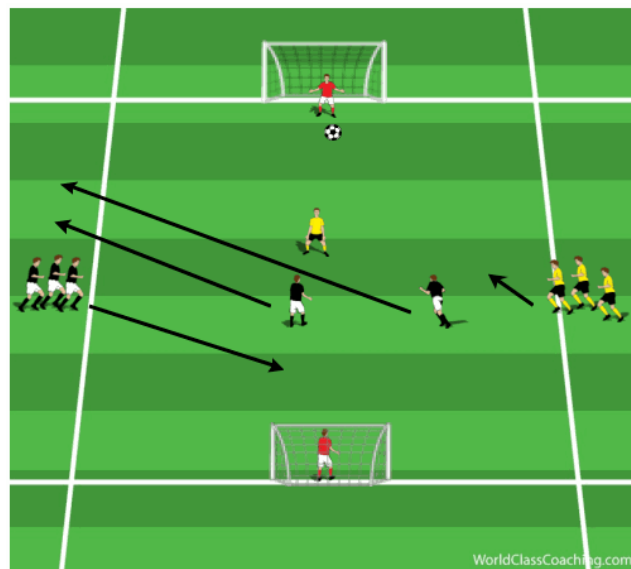
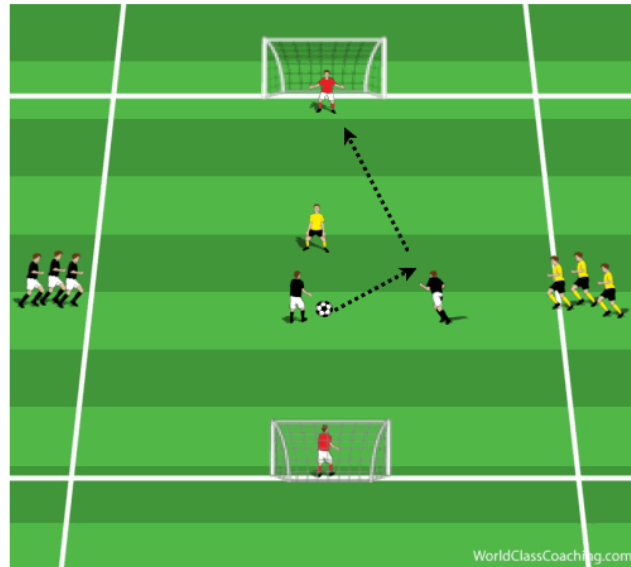
Start with a 40 x 30 grid with two full sized goals and a keeper in each goal.

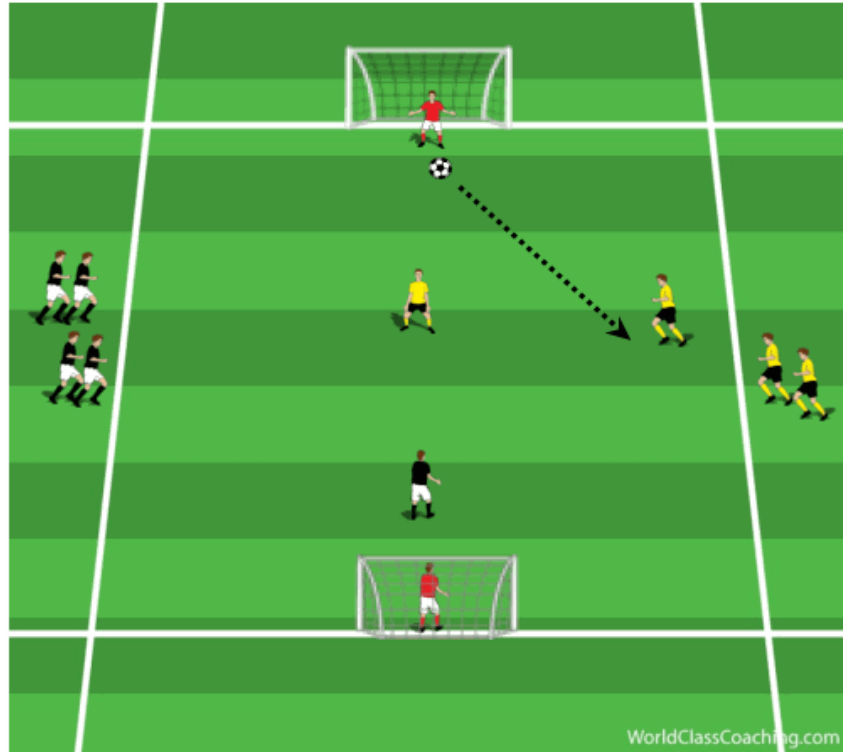


Two attacking players and one defending player starts on the field and additional players from each team start on the side.



Using this example the black team attacks the top goal and when they lose possession (by scoring, by shooting and it going over the goal or wide, or by the other player or keeper winning the ball) the two attacking players leave the field and are replaced by one defending player and a second attacking player adds on and the attack goes in the other direction





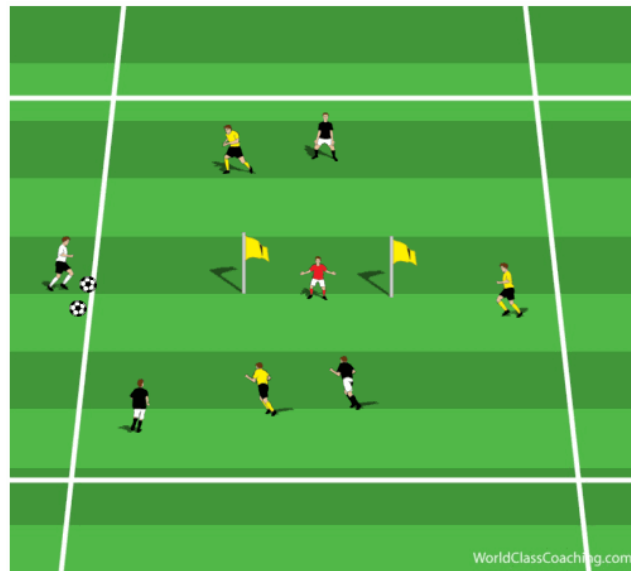
This becomes a very fast moving, free flowing game of soccer and the quicker the transitions from defense to offense the more effective the attacks.

You can do this same thing with 3 v 2, 4 v 3 or even 5 v 4. The key is to emphasize the fast transition and the importance of getting to goal quickly.

3 v 3 Small-Sided Game to Goal

This activity is a 3 v 3 game to one goal.

Start with a 40 x 30 grid with a goal in the middle made up on cones or flags. A keeper is in the goal and a server is off the field with some balls. There are 3 players for each team.

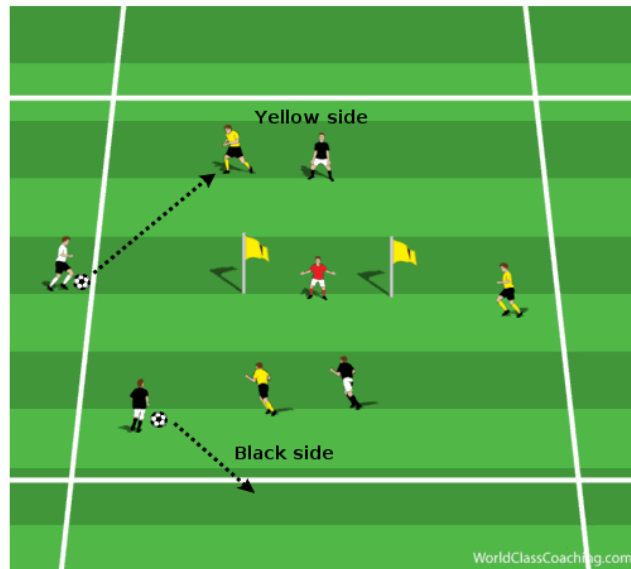


Each team is assigned an attacking side of field and that is the side they must score from

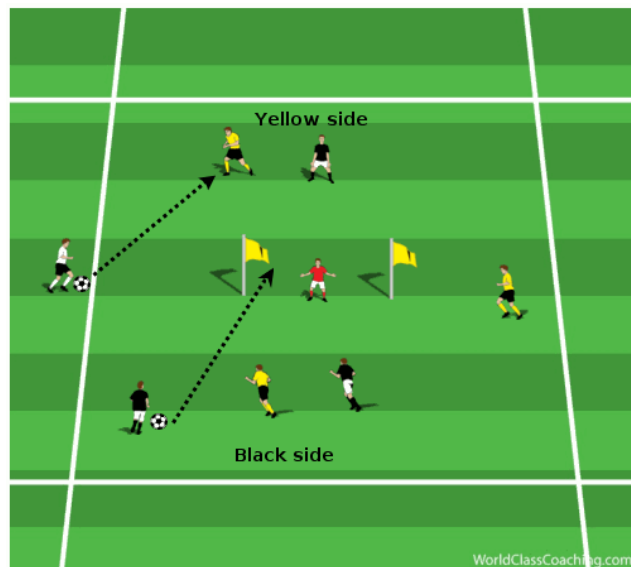


This is a regular game of 3 v 3 except for the field configuration. Any player can go on any side of the field at any time BUT only the keeper may run through the goal.

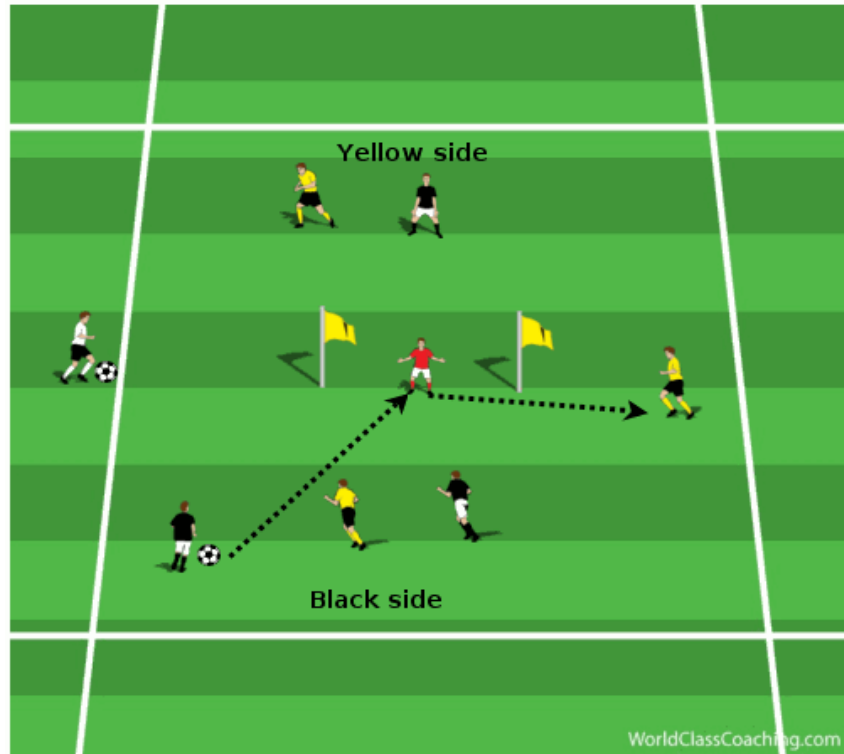
If the ball goes out of play, the server plays a new ball into the team who it didn't go off of.



If a goal is scored the server plays the ball to the other team.



If the keeper makes the save, he plays the ball to the other team



This is a very fast moving game that will require the players to think, communicate and move a lot in order to maintain some type of shape and balance on offense and defense.

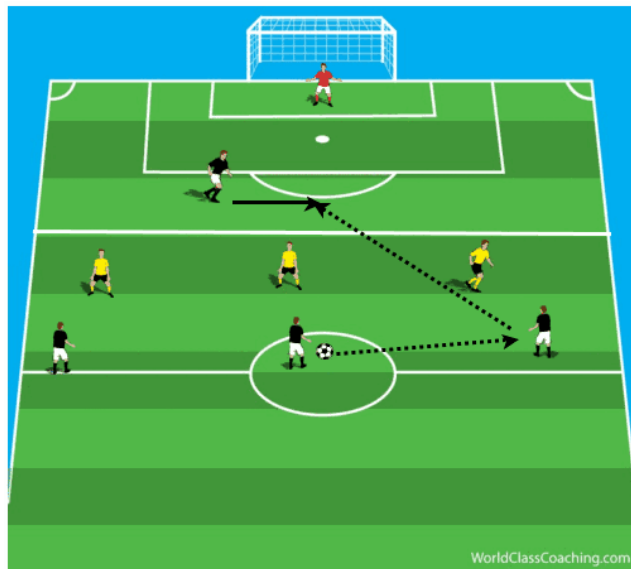
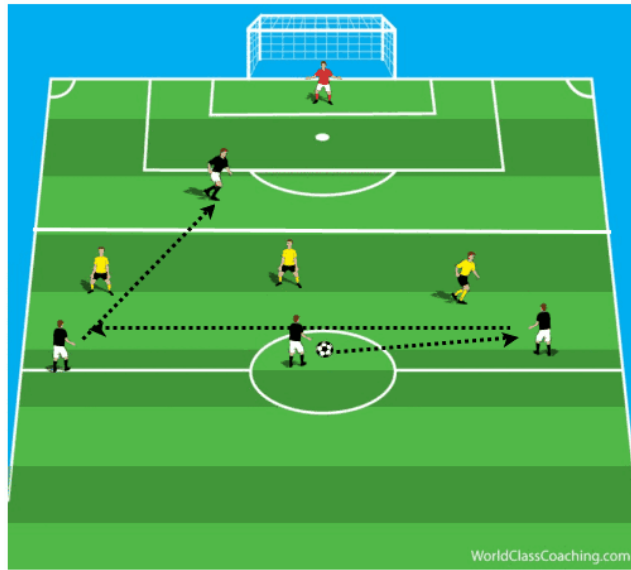
How To Find "The Hole" to Pass In To

This activity works on midfielders finding holes to pass into.

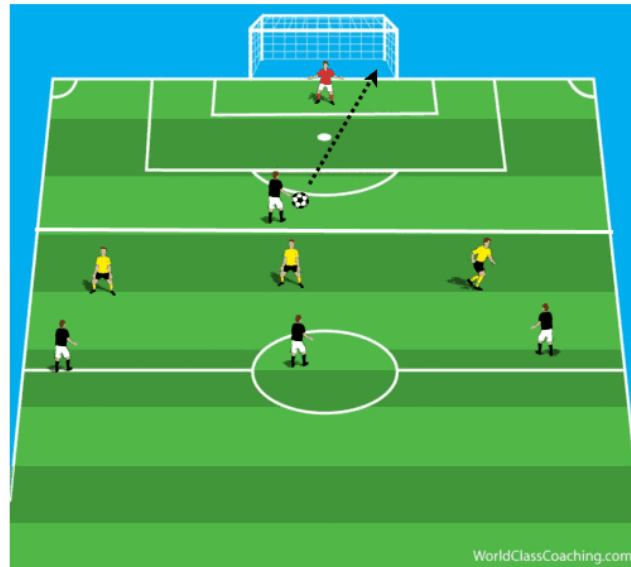
This activity uses half a field and has a full sized goal with a keeper in it. There are 3 midfielders on attack and 3 midfielders defending. They are restricted to an area from the midfield line to another line 25 yards closer to goal. There is one attacking forward between the top of the 18 and the midfielders restricting line



The attacking midfielders pass the ball between them while looking to find a hole to pass through to find the forward.



The forward receives the ball and tries to hit a quick shot on goal.



The defending midfielders try to shift to make it more difficult for the attackers to find the holes

Once the players get comfortable with this, next add a second forward and also a defender in back



Now the attacking players have to play quicker since the defenders can put more pressure on the forwards.

Once this has been done for awhile, add a second defender in back



Next, add a third defender in back and remove the constraining line to allow for a 5 v 6 attack on goal.

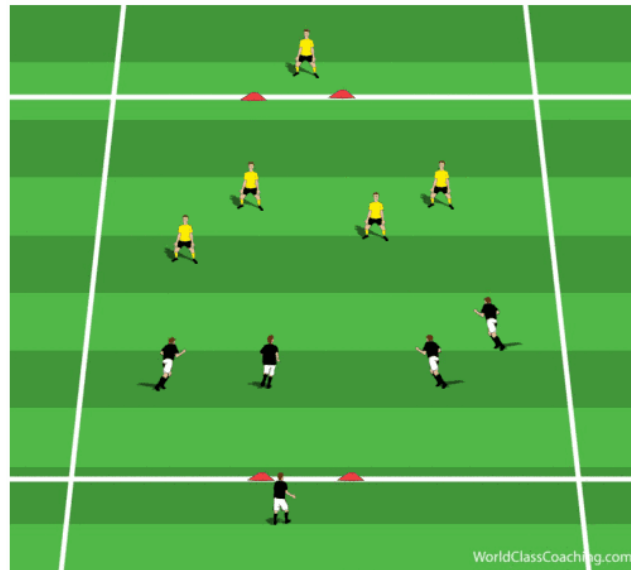


This type of a progression will allow the players to understand the concept of looking for holes and trying to make penetrating passes to the forwards.

A 5 v 4 Defending Small-Sided Games

This article works on 5 v 4 defending.

We are using a 40 x 30 grid with a small goal on each end line. There are two teams of 4's on the field and an extra player behind each goal.

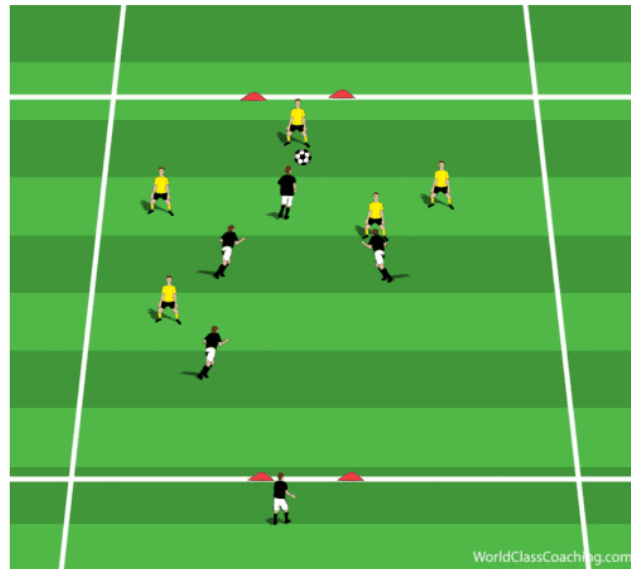


Whichever team has the ball their extra player join in. So if yellow starts with the ball, the yellow add on joins in and it's 5 yellows vs 4 blacks

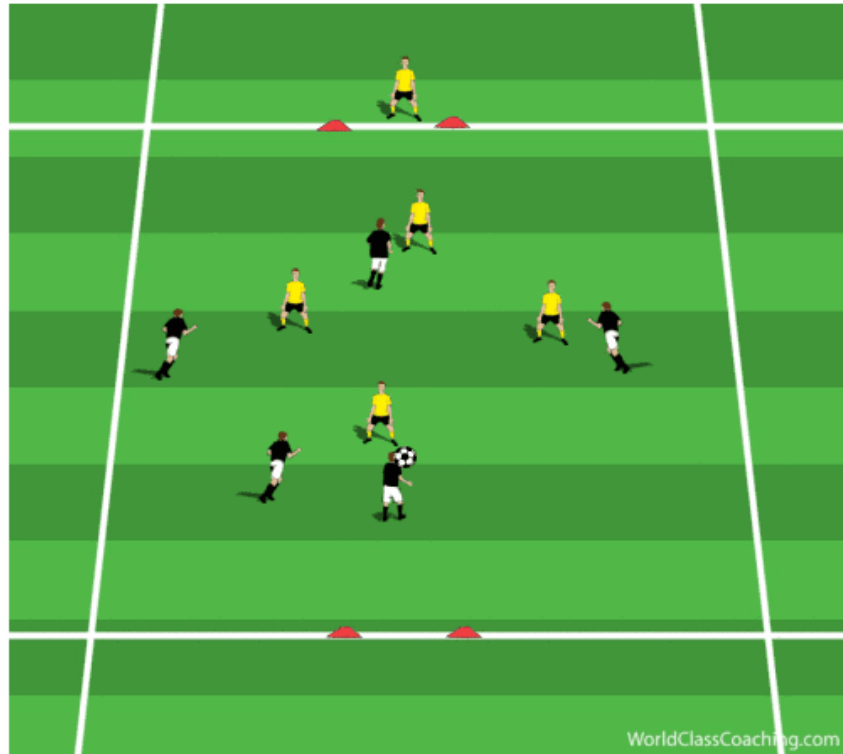


The defending team must adjust based on who has the ball, where players are on the field etc.

As a general rule of thumb, the most dangerous player on the field is the one with the ball so he must always be contained/delayed/pressured. Next is the player closest to goal and then each other player based on distance to goal.



When the black team loses the ball the yellow add on player leaves the field and the black add on player joins in



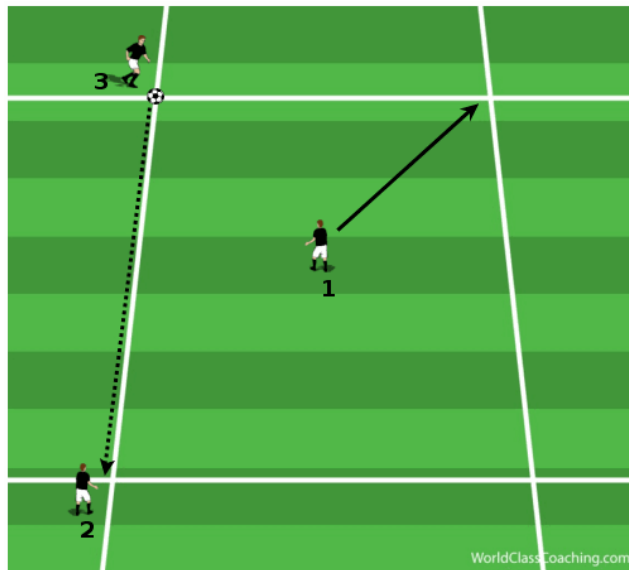
There are two ways to do the add on players. If it's a 10 minute game each player would be the add on player for a two minute period. The other way, which requires more thinking and communication, is to assign each player a number and the first time they defend, player 1 is the add on. When they defend the second time, player 2 is the add on and they keep rotating from there.

This is an excellent way to get players to work on defending with shape and balance and communicating throughout.

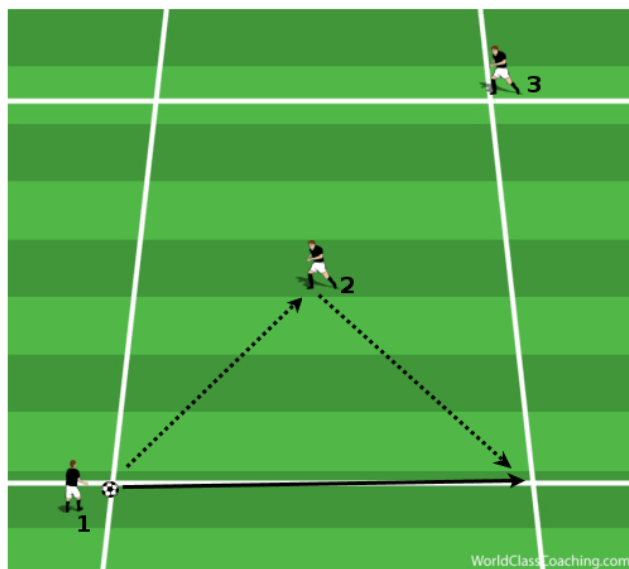
Pass and Move in Three's

This activity is a 3 person passing combination working on passing and movement.

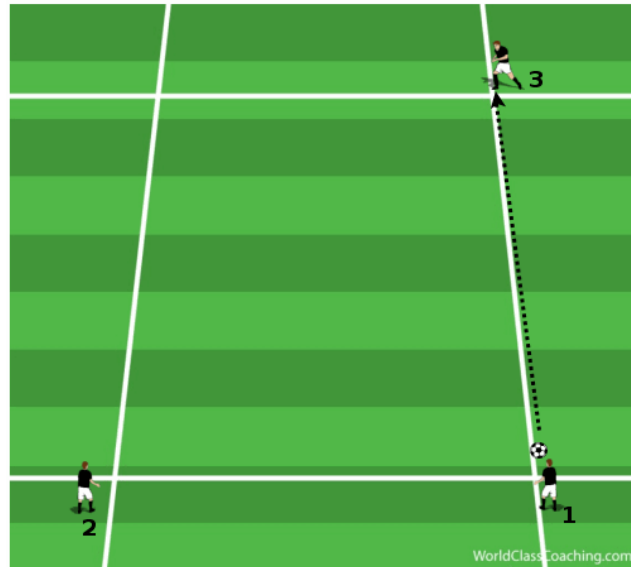
Start with a 20 x 10 with two players in opposite corners and one in the middle. Player 1, on the outside starts with a ball.



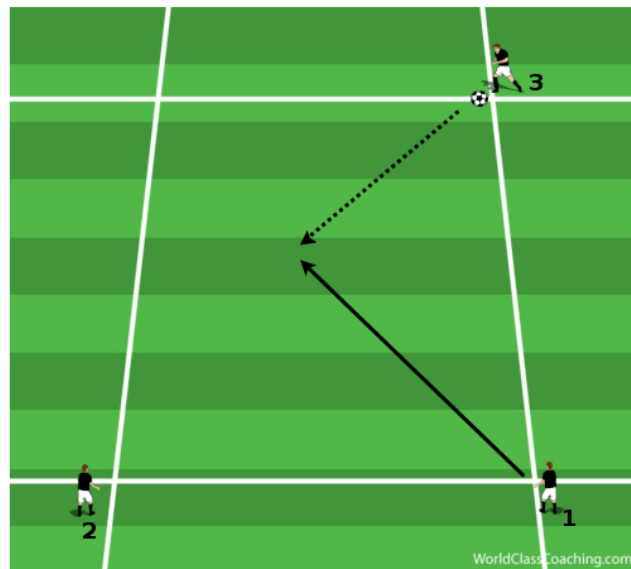
Player 1 passes to player 2 and then sprints to the nearest corner and receives the ball back from player 2



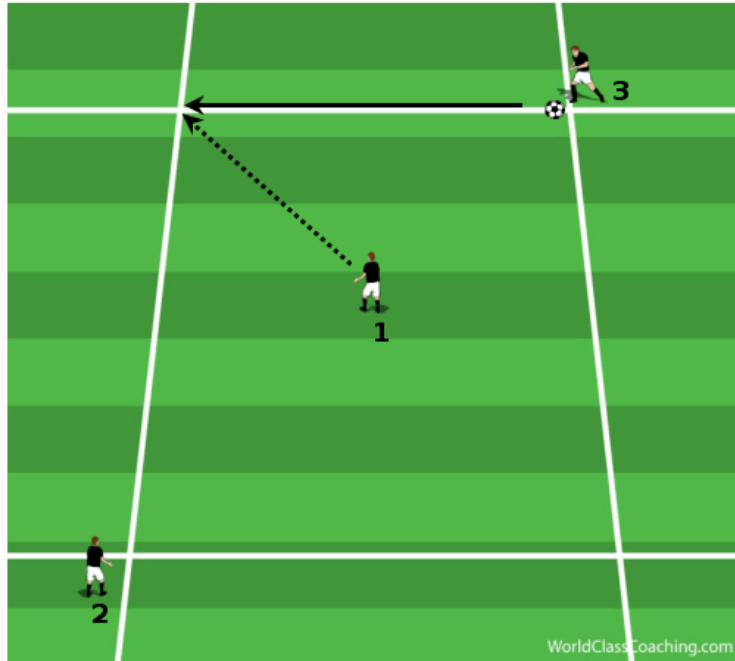
Player 2 then sprints to where player 1 started and player 1 plays a longer ball to player 3



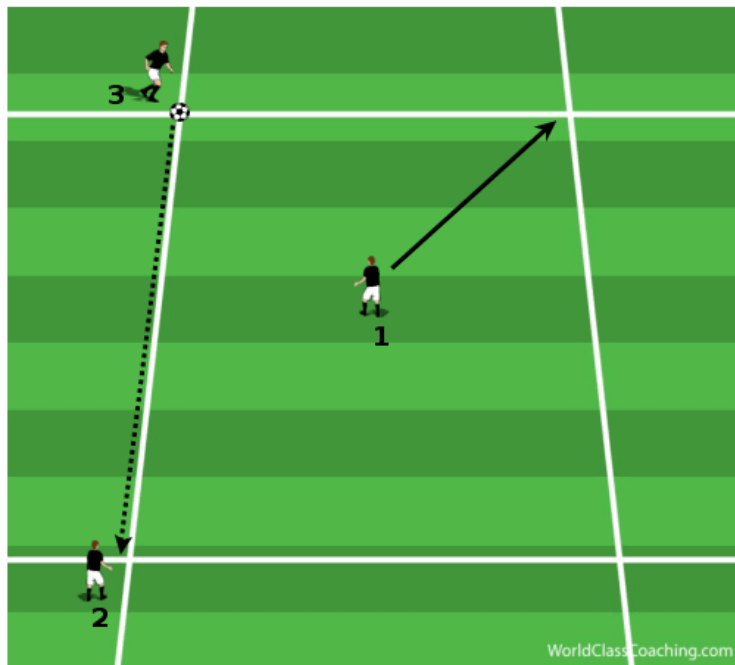
Player 1 then sprints to the middle and player 3 passes to player 1



Player 3 then sprints to the near corner and player 1 passes to player 3



Player 3 then passes to player 2 and player 1 goes where player 3 started



The players continue this pattern.

You can do this activity for 3-5 minutes and the players get a lot of touches in while doing a good deal of short sprints.

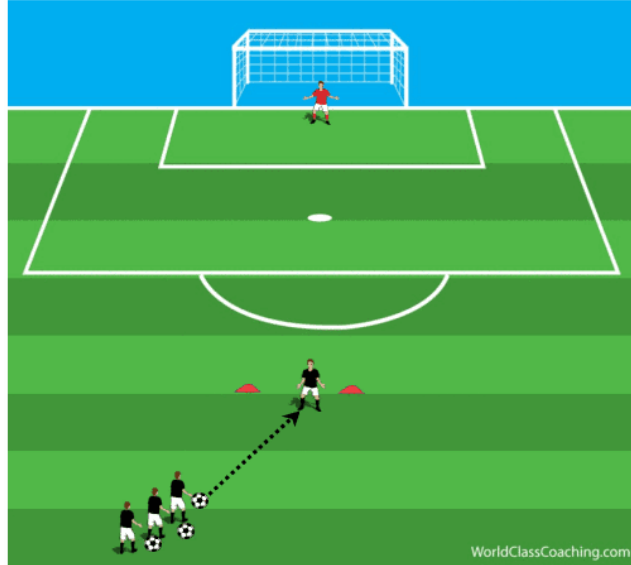
Midfield/Forward Combination Play

This activity works on a midfielder playing into a target player and then a quick combination.

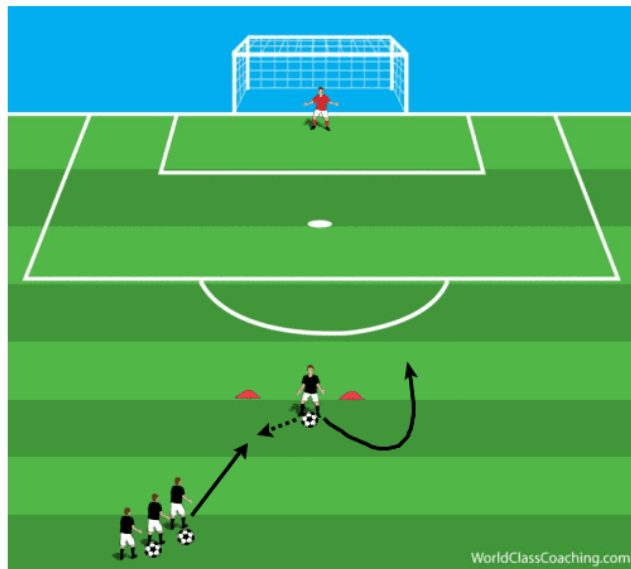
A line of players with balls starts around 40 yards from goal. A target player started 25 yards from goal between two cones. A keeper is in goal.



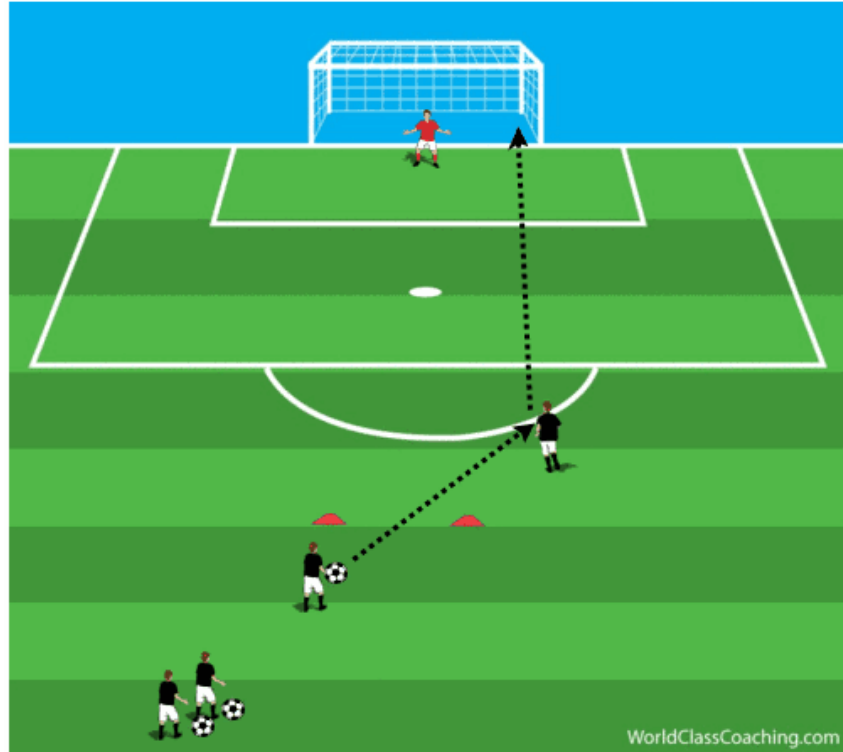
The first player with the ball plays it into the target player.



The target player lays the ball back softly and then spins away



The initial passer plays the ball through to the target player for a first time shot



The initial passer then becomes the target player, the initial target player retrieves the ball and goes to the back of the line and the activity starts up again.

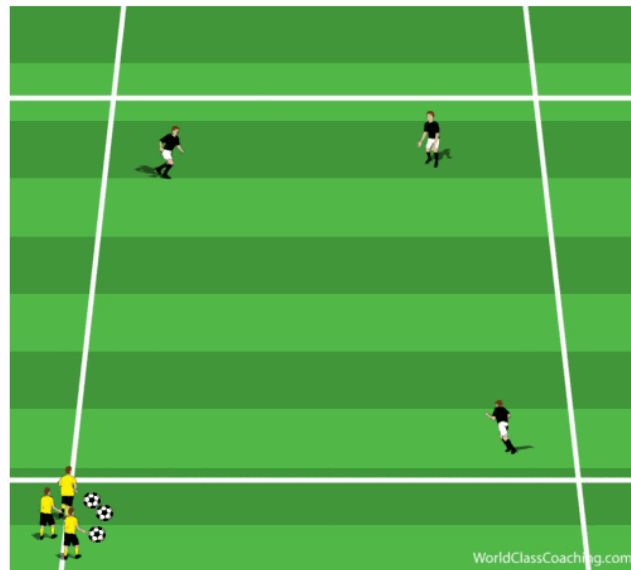
While this might seem like a slow moving activity with a lot of standing around, done properly, as soon as the shot is hit, the next pass is played and pretty soon, players are sprinting to get back to the line so they are there for their next turn.

There are many variations you can do with this but it's a simple example of having a fast moving shooting activity in a warm up.

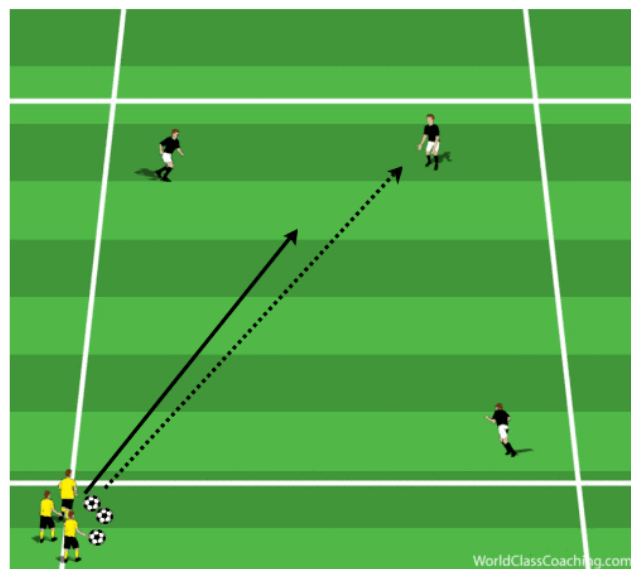
3 v 1 Possession Small-Sided Game

This activity is a 3v1 possession game with rotating defenders.

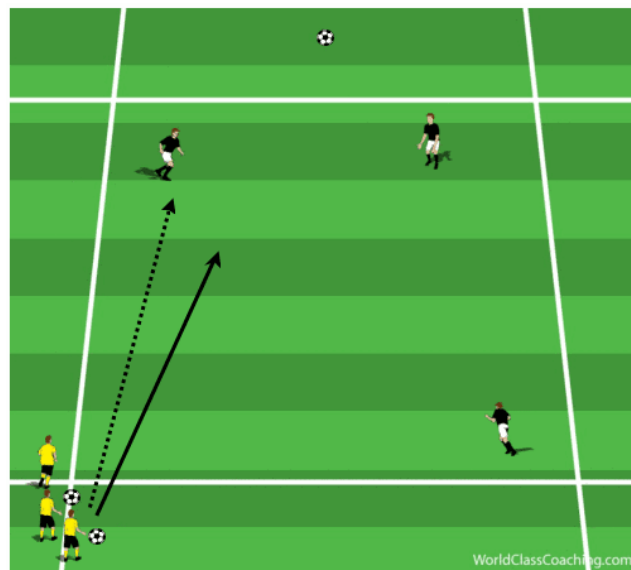
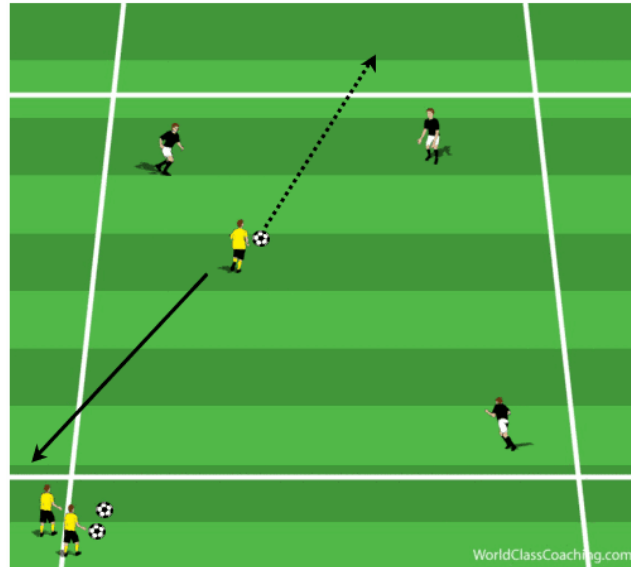
Start with a 10 x 10 grid and 3 players on offense inside the grid. Three defenders are just outside of one corner with balls.



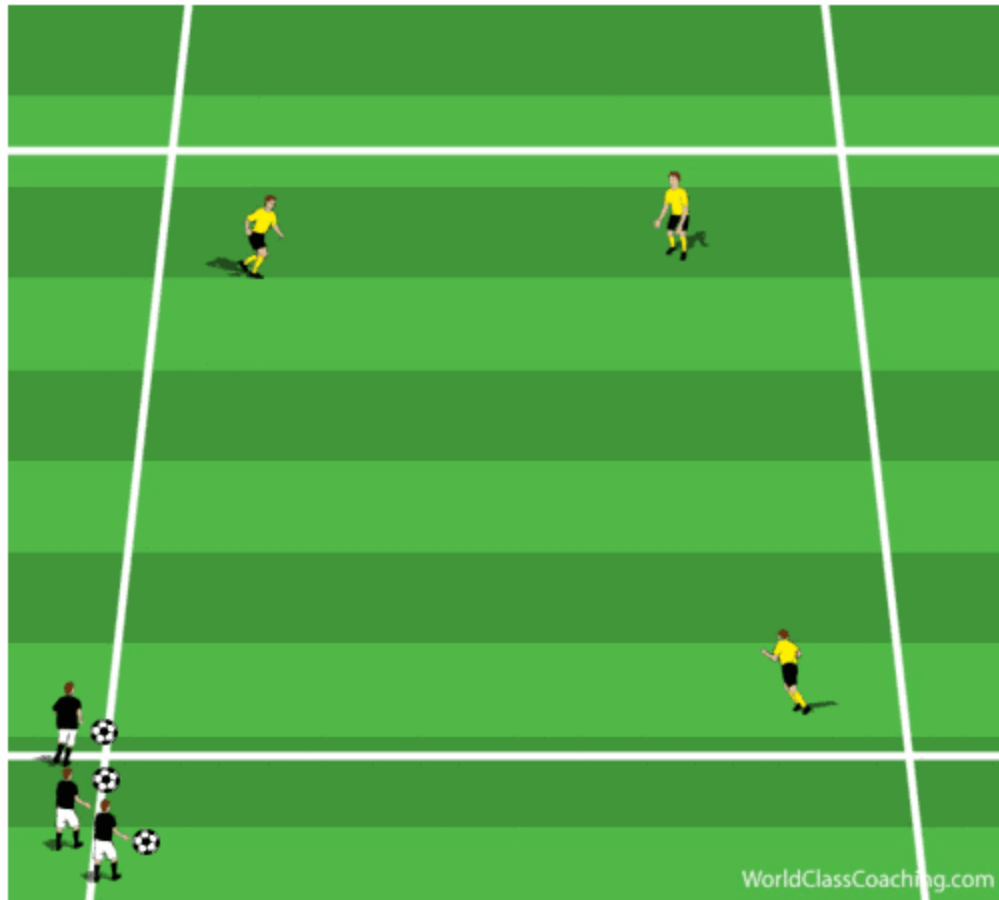
The first player in the corner passes the ball out to an offensive player and then enters the field to defend



It's 3 v 1 until either the ball goes out of play or the defender wins the ball. As soon as the defender wins the ball, he leaves the field and a new player plays the ball in and defends



When all three defenders have won the ball, they switch roles



The team that makes the most successful passes in their three possessions wins.

To make this easier you can make the grid bigger or to make it more difficult you can make the grid smaller.

You also can do this as a 4 v 2 activity.

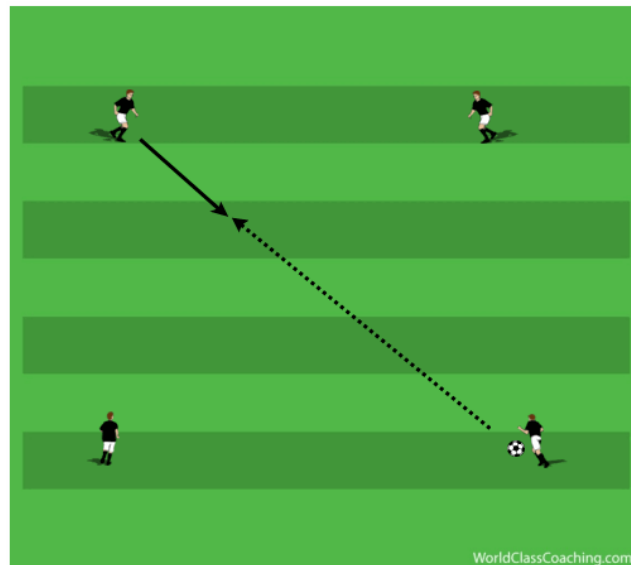
A Passing and Overlap Exercise

This activity is a passing and overlap exercise.

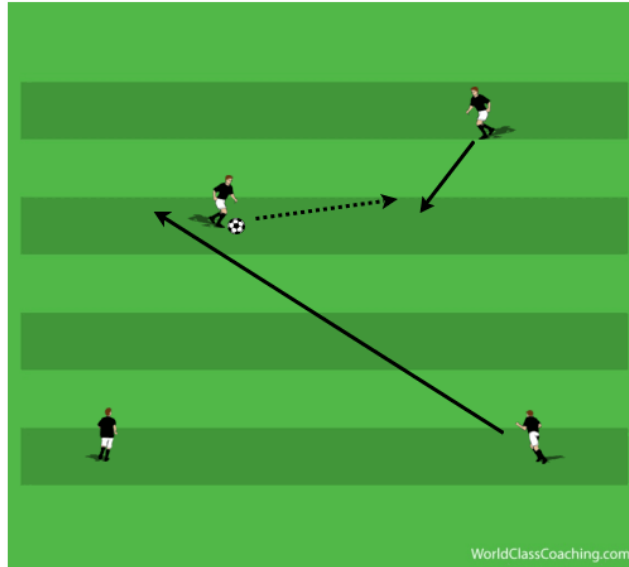
Start with 4 players in a square approximately 20 x 20. One player starts with the ball.



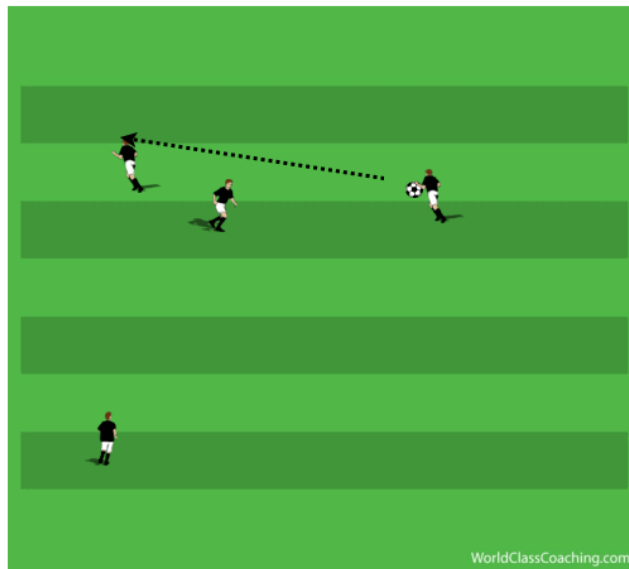
The player in the opposite corner checks to and the pass is made to that player.



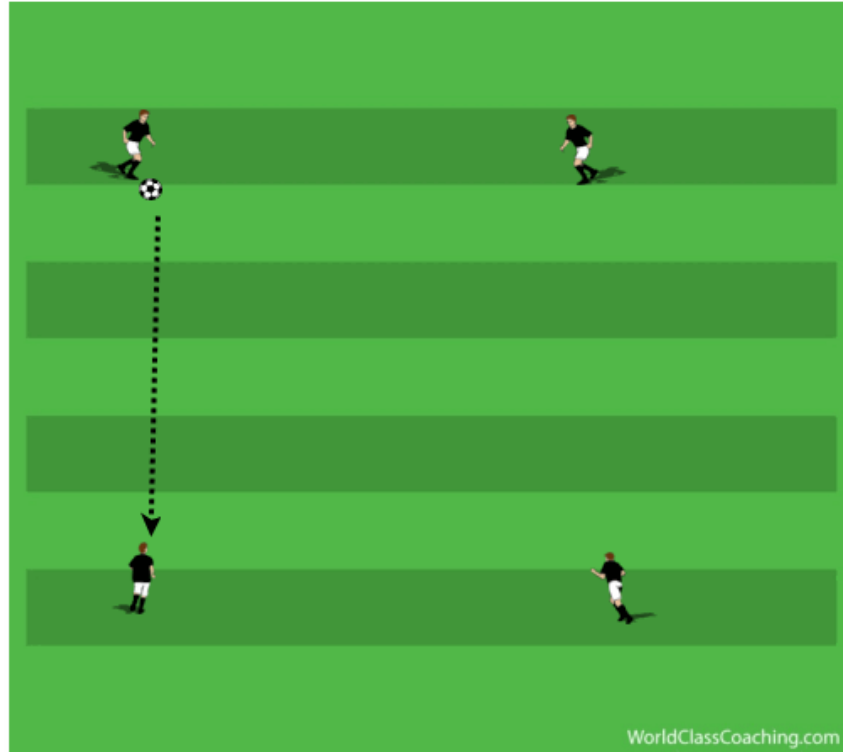
The passer follows his pass and overlaps the receiver while one of the other players positions himself to receive a short drop



The player who receives the short drop pass plays the ball through to the overlapping runner



The players reset to the nearest corner and the ball gets played to the 4th player who starts the rotation back up

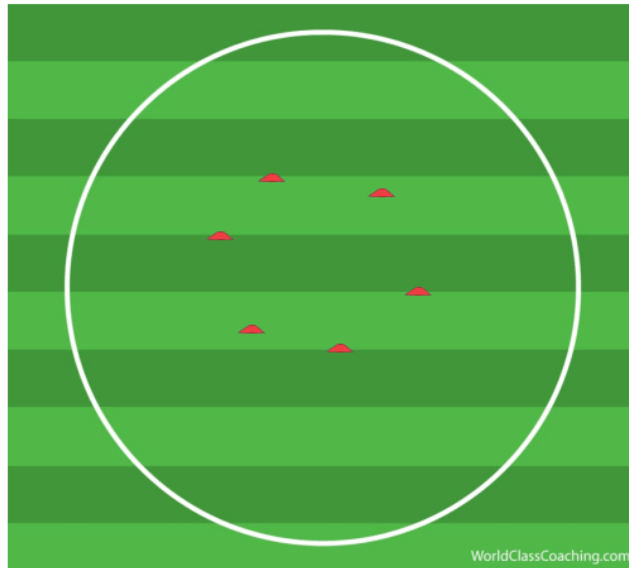


Done in groups of 4's this activity has a lot of movement, a lot of passing, a good deal of communication and requires some thought to make sure everyone does their roles.

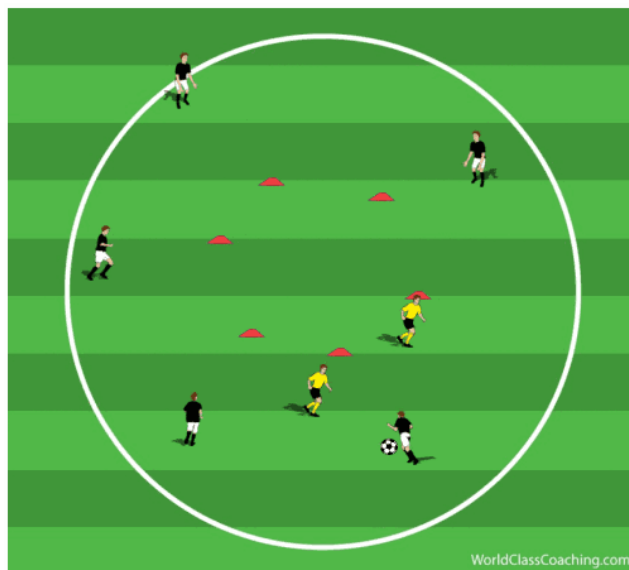
Possession to Penetrate

This activity works on possession while looking to penetrate the defense.

Start with a circle with a 20 yard diameter and then have a circle inside with a 10 yard diameter.

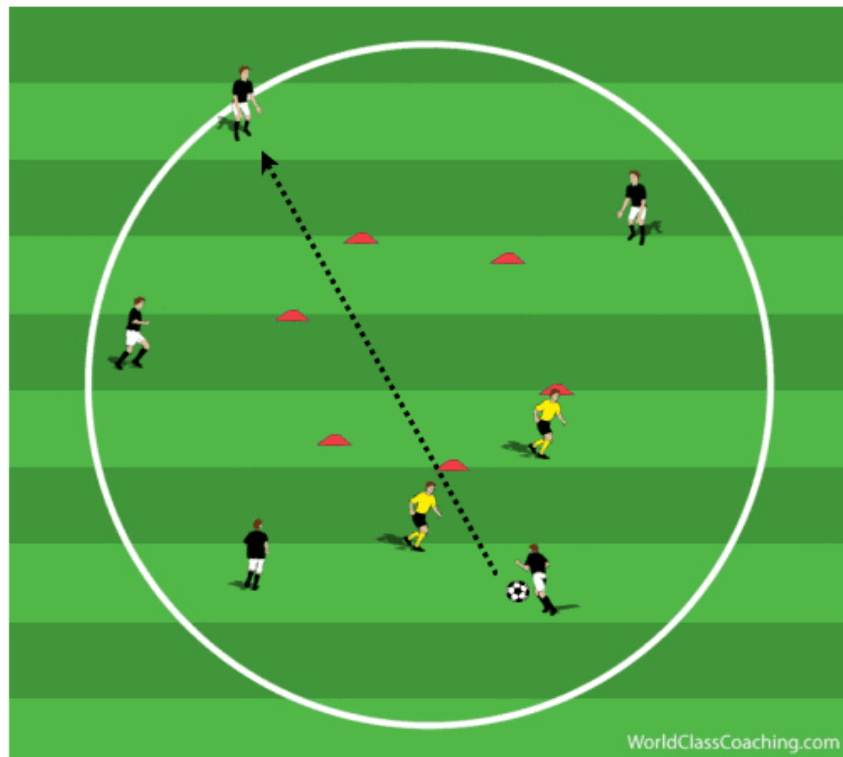


This is a 5 v 2 possession game where no players are allowed inside of the center circle.



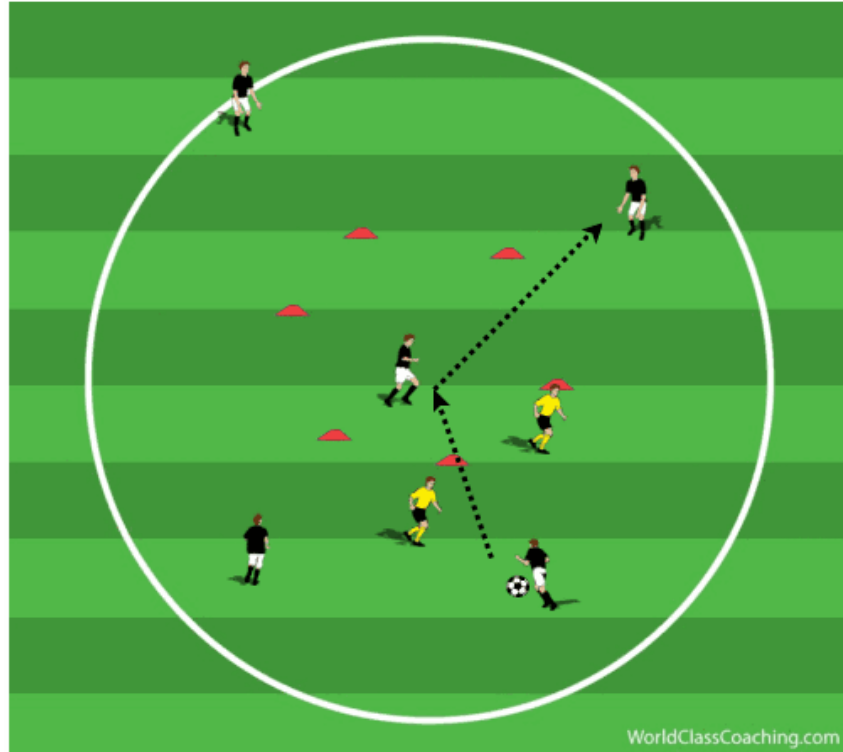
In many possession games, players tend to look toward the closest player to pass to and while this might be effective in terms of relieving responsibilities (I don't want to lose the ball, here you lose it) it's not effective when it comes to looking to penetrate.

With this game it encourages the players with possession of the ball to look to play the ball further since it makes it easier to split the defenders



5 consecutive passes would result in a point for the team with the ball. Any ball played through the center circle also counts as a point. Any time the defending team wins the ball it's a point for them.

In the beginning, if you want to make it easier for the attacking team you can allow them to go into the middle circle

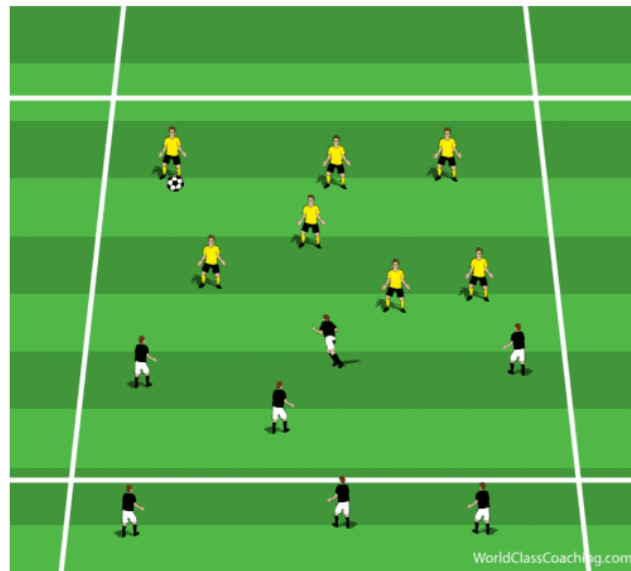


Encouraging the attacking players to look to penetrate with their passes will open up many opportunities when they get into a full sided game situation.

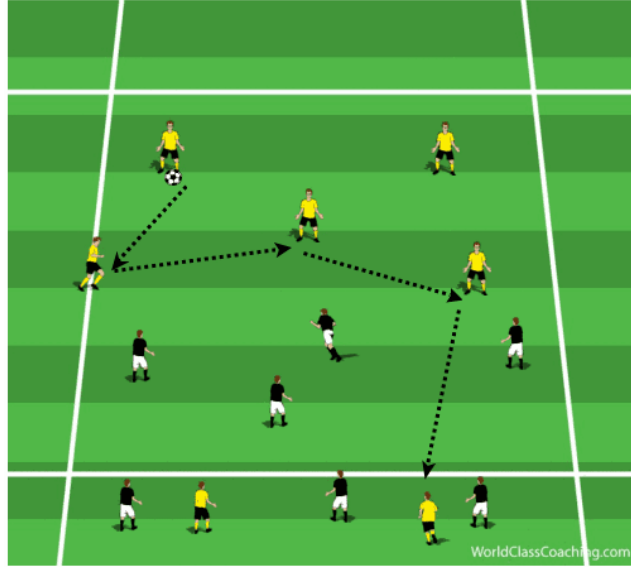
The Attacking Fourth of the Field

This game works on possession while looking to find a player in the attacking fourth of the field.

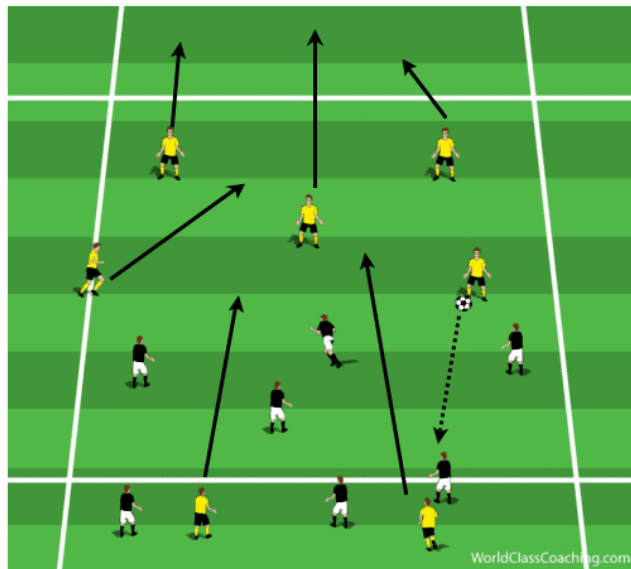
Start with a 40 x 30 grid with two 10 yard end zones. The attacking team has all of their players in the grid and the defending team has 4 players in the grid and the other 3 in the end zone.

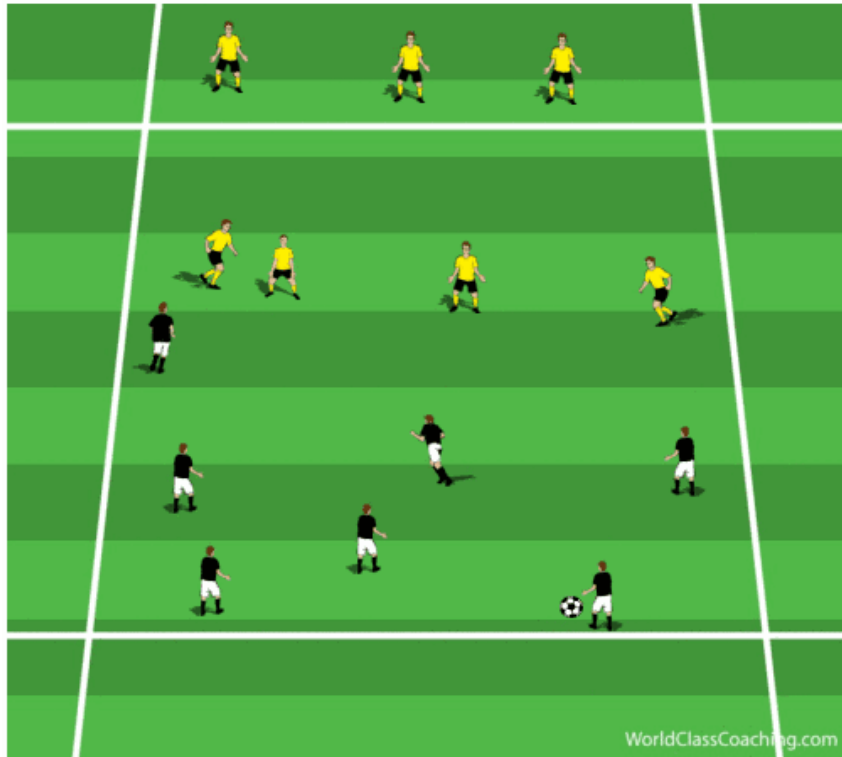


The attacking team must make 3 passes in the grid and then earns a point by passing to a teammate in their attacking end zone. Any of the attacking players can go into their attacking end zone but the 3 defending players in the end zone can not leave the end zone until their team wins the ball.



If the defending team wins the ball, three of the new defending team must sprint back into their end zone and plays resumes in the other direction.



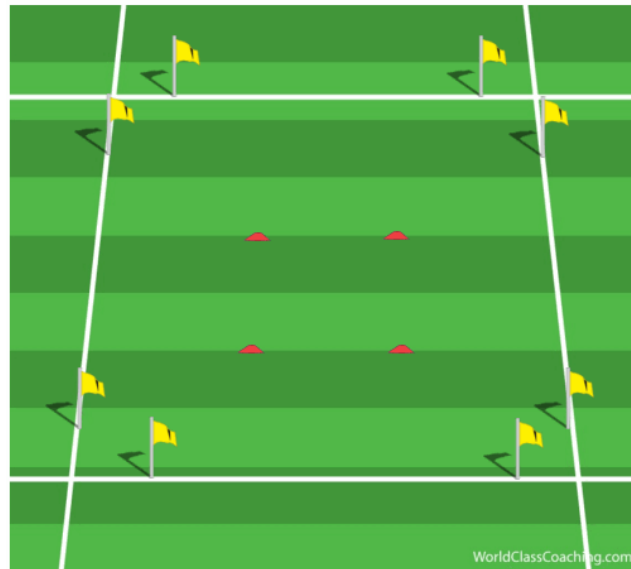


This is an excellent activity to work on possession and finding a player in the attacking fourth of the field.

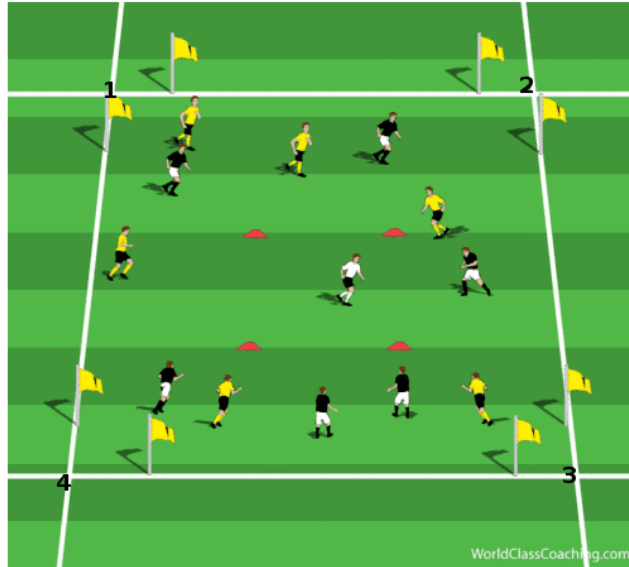
How To Improve Decision Making

This activity is a game that involves decision making, spacing, movement and much more.

Start with a 40 x 40 grid with a 10 x 10 area in the middle. There is a 4 yard wide goal in each corner.

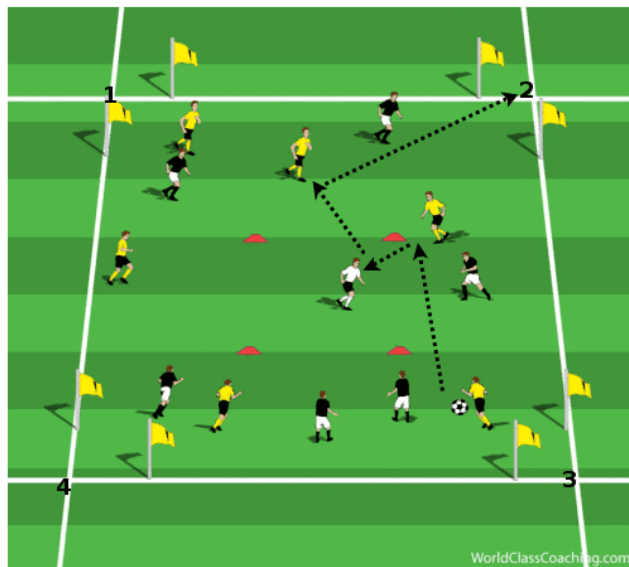


This is a 6 v 6 game (the numbers can vary) with a neutral player in the middle. Each team is assigned 2 goals opposite of each other (in the diagram below the yellow team defends goals 1 and 3 and the black team defends goals 2 and 4)



The only player allowed in the 10 x 10 grid is the neutral player.

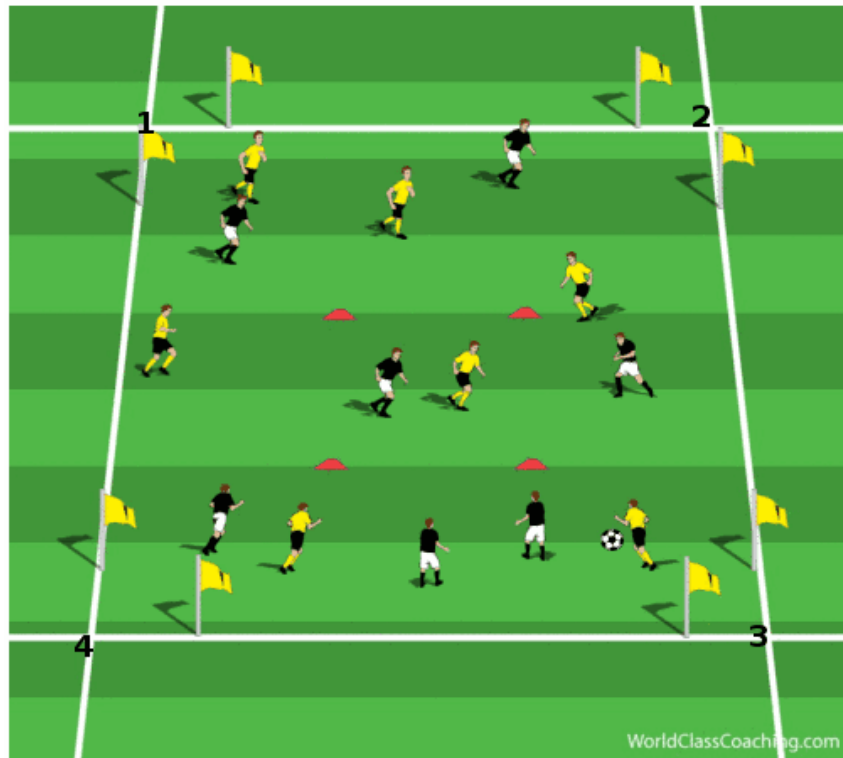
To score a goal a team must pass into the neutral player and then the neutral player (who is limited to one touch) must find a player on the attacking team who scores by passing through either of their goals they are attacking



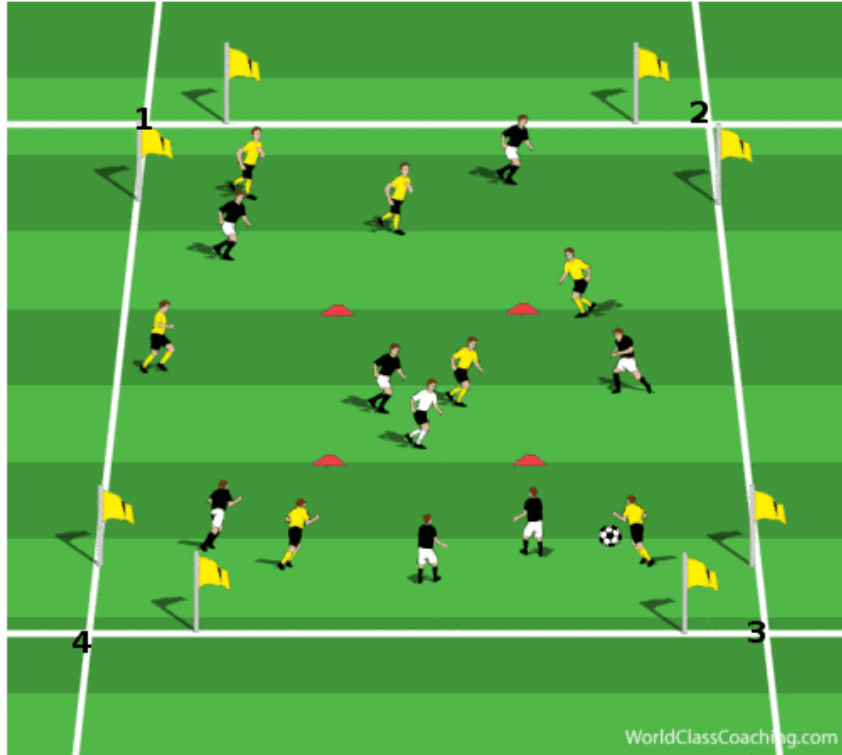
If the other team wins the ball, they also must play through the neutral player to score.

The team that scores gets the ball again.

To make this game even more difficult replace the neutral player with a player from each team. This means there is a player from each team in the neutral area and the ball still must go through them. It's more difficult because now the central player has a defender. If you make this change, you might want to get rid of the one touch limitation.



If the transition to two players in the middle is too difficult you can add a neutral player into the middle as well. This means it will always be 2 v 1 in the middle so while it's more difficult than just a neutral player, it's not as difficult as the 1 v 1. The neutral player would always be on offense.

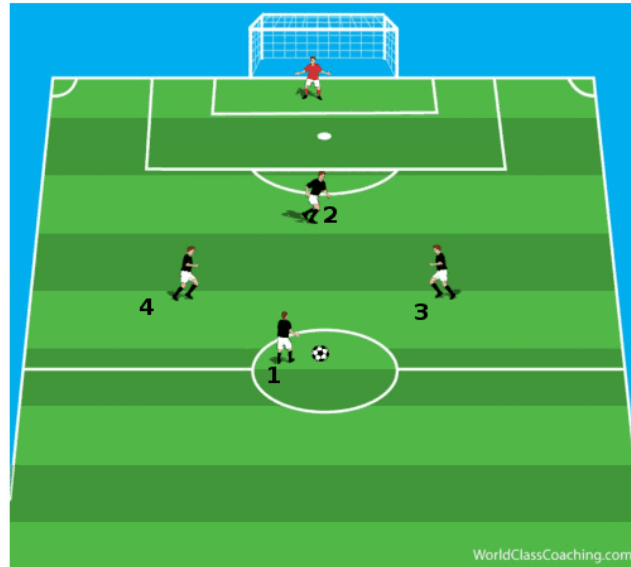


These are great activities to work on spacing, finding a central midfielder to play through, movement off the ball and much more.

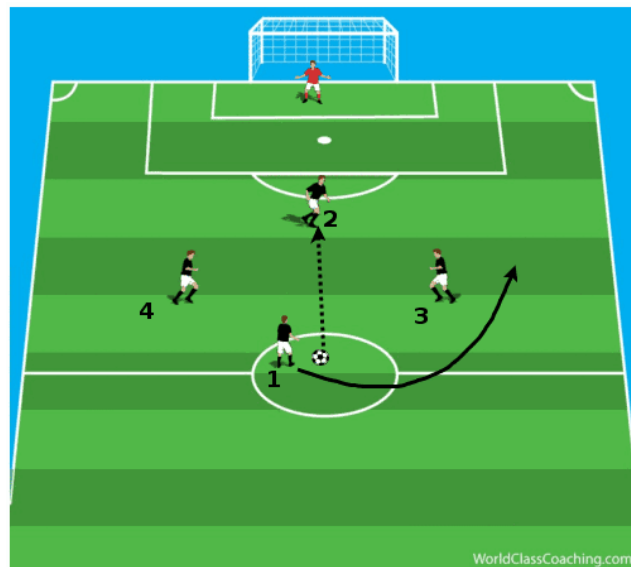
Attacking Combinations

activity works on midfielders and forwards combining to get to goal.

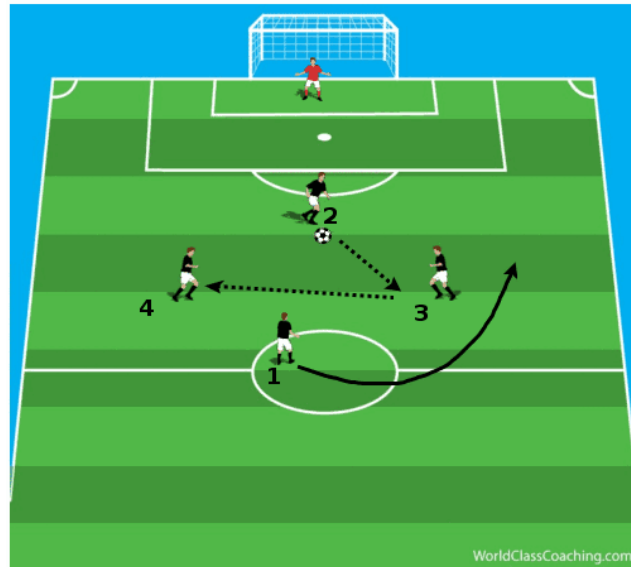
Start with a midfielder in possession of the ball around midfield. Two other central midfielders out a bit wider and 10 yards in front and a forward just outside the top of the D. A keeper is in the goal they are attacking.



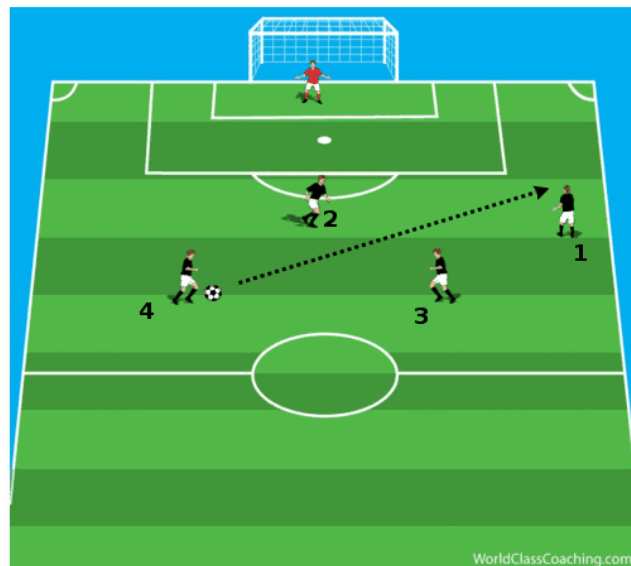
Player 1 finds the forward with a pass. He then starts overlapping around player 3



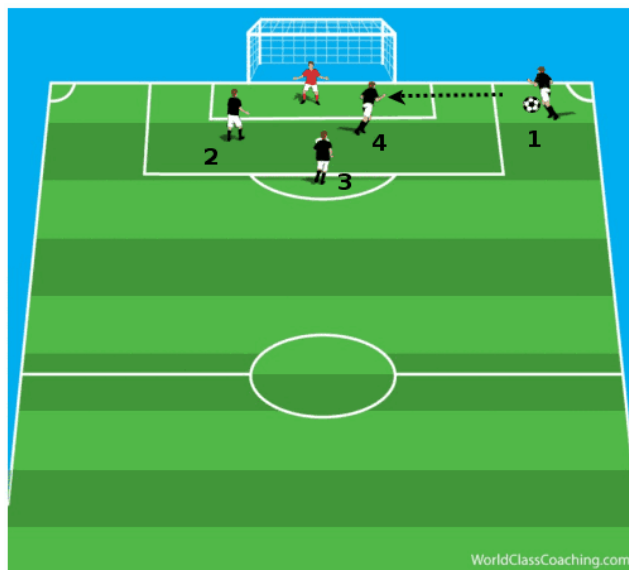
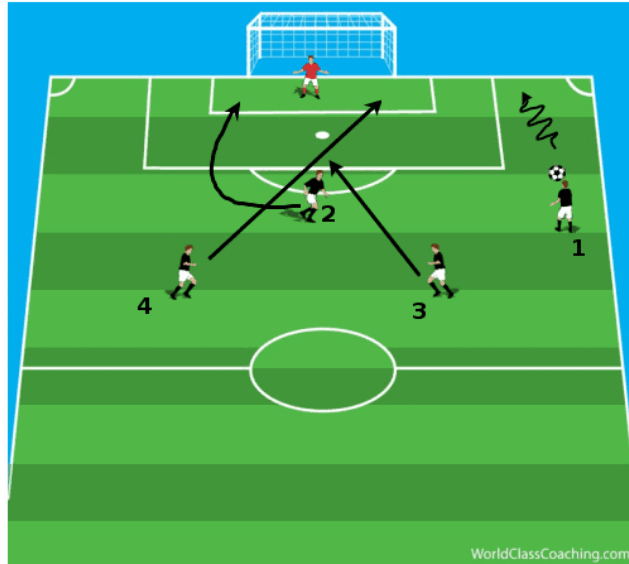
Player 2 passes to player 3 one touch and then player 3 one touches to player 4



Player 4 finds player 1 on the overlap.



Players 2,3 and 4 then make runs to finish players 1 cross. If player 1 has to take a touch to get the ball down closer to the end line and also to allow the other players to make their runs, that is fine.



As soon as the first group has gone, 4 new players take their place.

When the first group goes again, they rotate positions so player 1 now starts where player 2 was, player 2 starts where player 3 was, player 3 starts where player 4 was and player 4 starts where player 1 was.

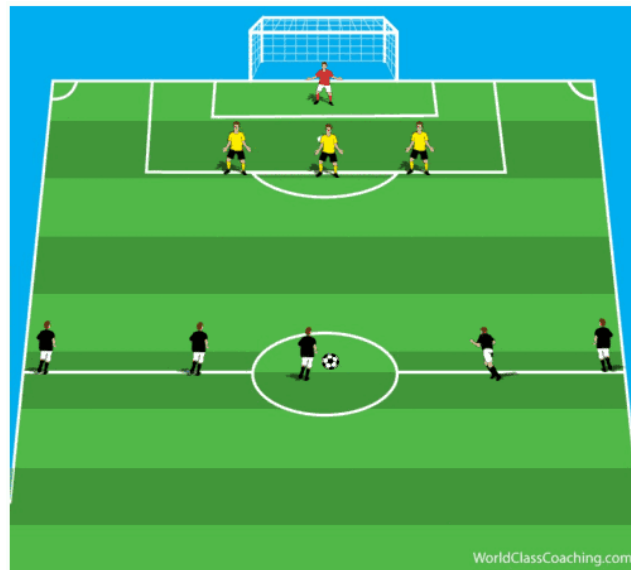
This is a great activity working on combination play, crossing and finishing.

If you want, you could add a defender or two into the penalty area so the runs and crosses would have to be adjusted based on where the defenders are.

Staying Compact Defensively

activity works on staying compact defensively.

This is a 5 v 3 game to goal with a keeper in the goal. The 3 are defending the goal. The 5 attacking players start at midfield with a ball

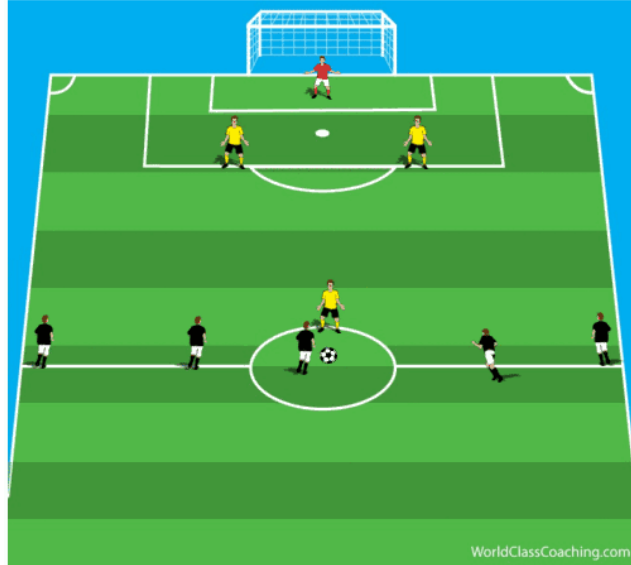


The attacking team gets a point by scoring a goal OR any time the defending team has a player more than 10 yards apart from another player.

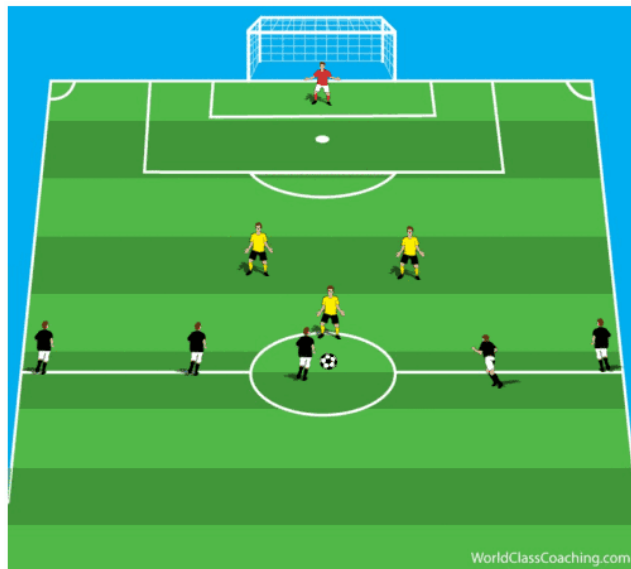
The defending team gets a point any time they win the ball, the attacking team loses the ball or they cause the attacking team to take more than 30 seconds to get to goal.

The concept behind this game is for the defending players to stay together, stay compact and slow the game down.

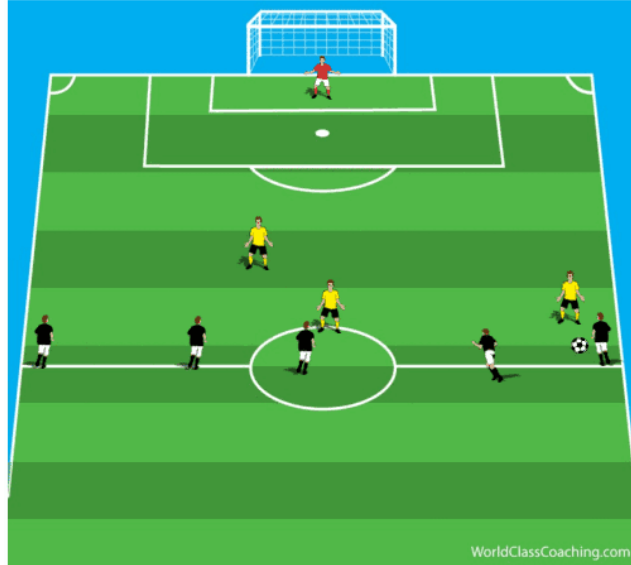
If one defender comes out far and the other two stay back, there are too many holes so they lose



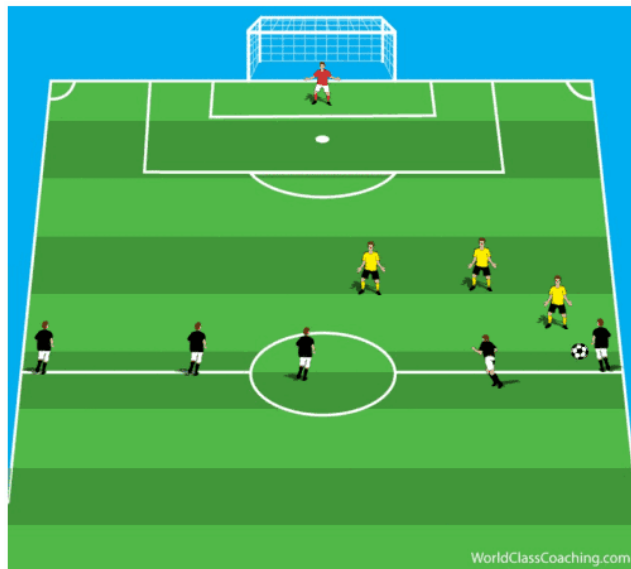
If come out together, they can close those holes and be much more effective



If the ball goes out wide and one defender pressures the ball and the other two stay central, there are too many holes so they lose



If they work together they can make it much more difficult



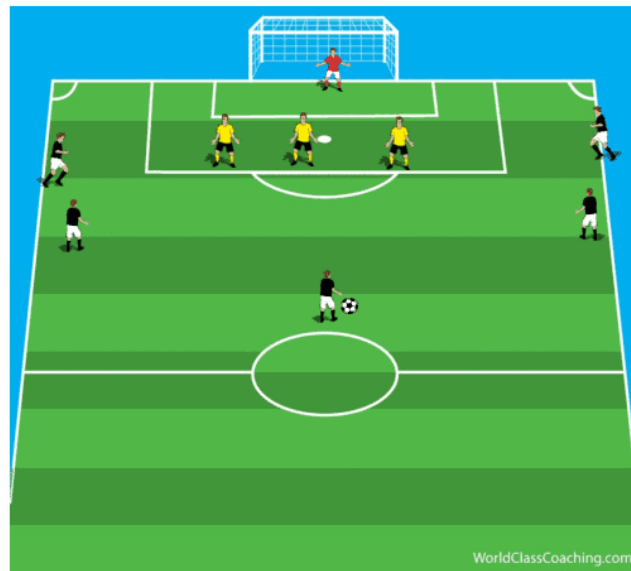
Working together, 3 defenders should be able to slow down 5 attackers. It's when they get spread out that problems occur.

Do 8-10 attacks and then rotate in new defenders.

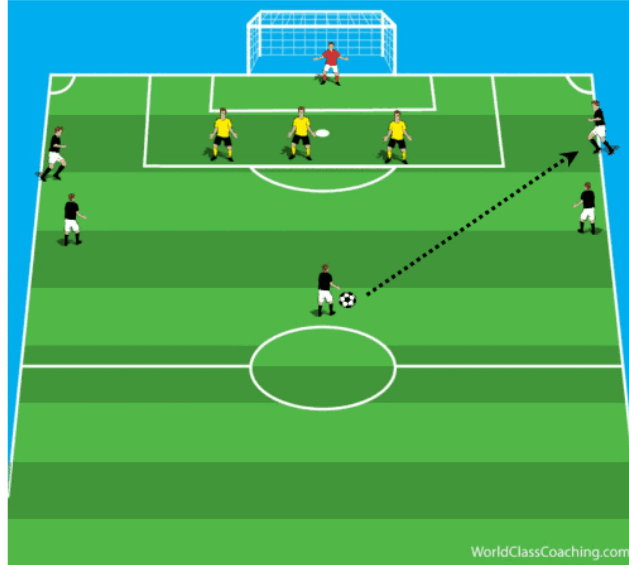
Long Passes

This activity works on playing a long ball, receiving long balls, attacking from width and defensive shape

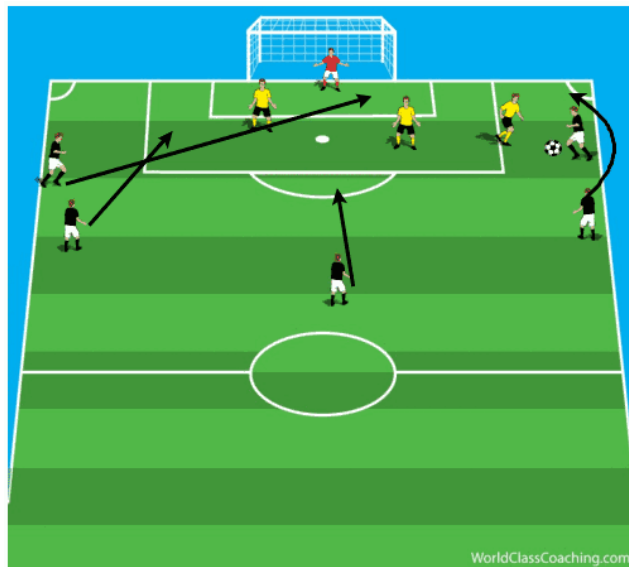
Start with a player with a ball near the center circle. There are 2 attacking players out wide on each side between 18-25 yards out. There are three defenders inside the 18 a keeper in goal.



The player with the ball starts by playing a long ball to either of the most advanced attackers out wide. Unfortunately, this is a lost art these days so really emphasize the importance of being able to play and receive this type of a ball.



The player with the ball then attacks and the game is live. The teammate on the same side might overlap and the two players on the far side would make runs. The player who served the ball also joins in the attack. The defenders adjust accordingly.



The attackers will have numbers up on both sides so the key is for them to attack at speed and take advantage of the situation

Next they do the same thing in the other direction.

Once the players get accustomed to this type of attack, add a defensive midfielder.



To make it even more difficult for the attackers, you can add a fourth back



If you want, you can keep building and add a forward and two backs on the attacking team and two outside midfielders for the defending team.

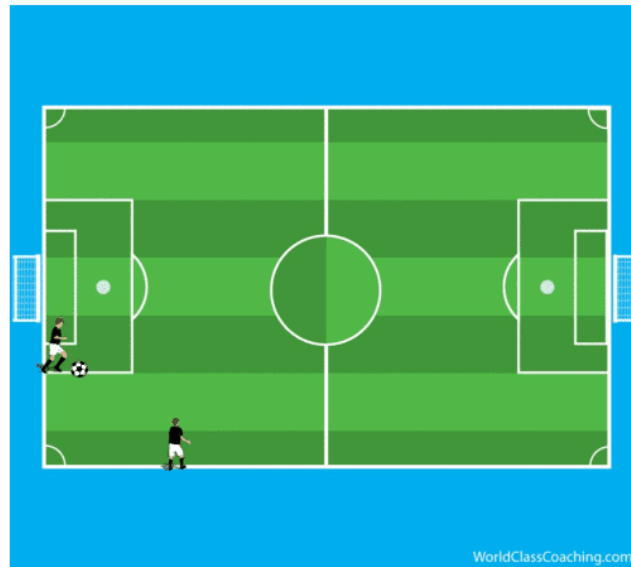


The idea is to get numbers going forward, encourage runs, and force the defending team to adjust on the fly.

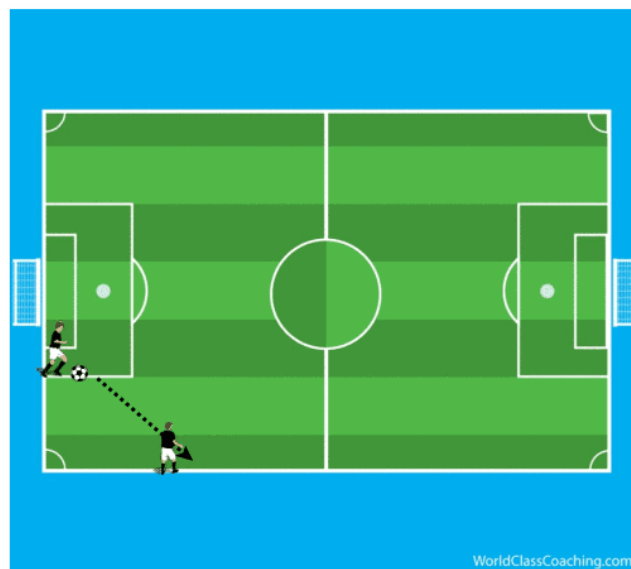
A Killer Overlap Drill

This activity is a two person overlapping drill. It combines passing, receiving, dribbling and fitness.

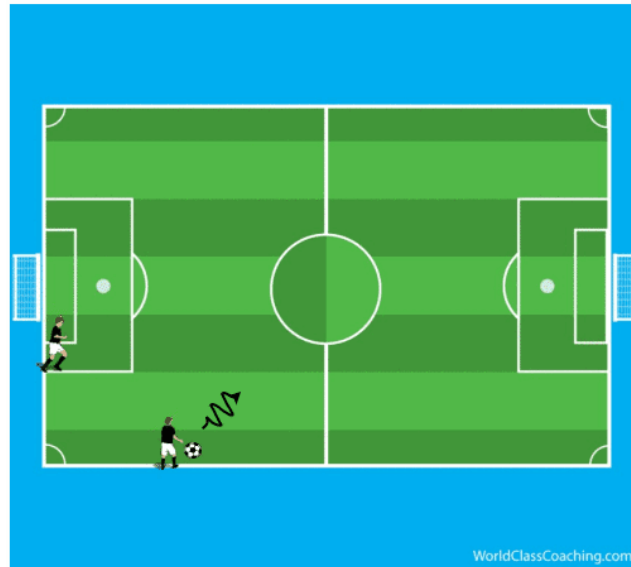
Start with a player on the corner of the end line and the 18 and the second player is on the sideline around 25 yards out.



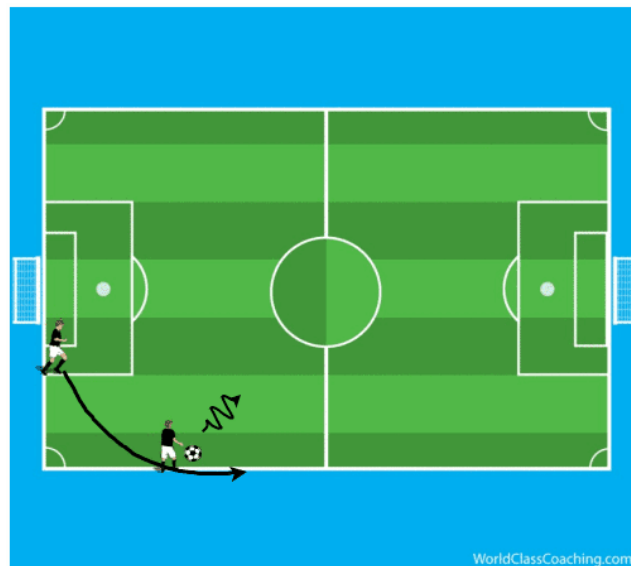
The player with the ball passes out wide to the front foot of the receiving player.



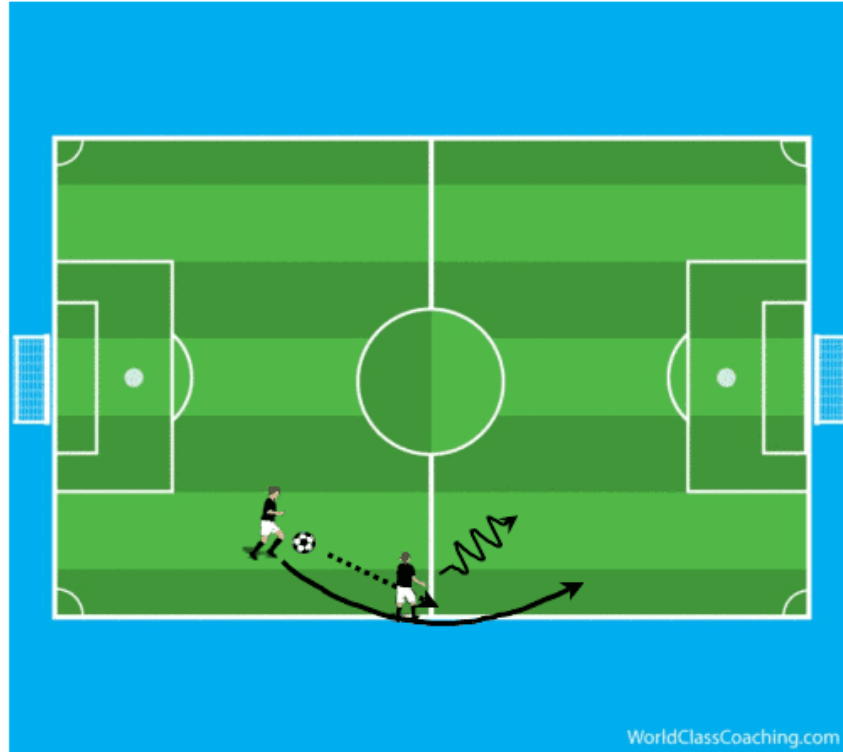
The receiving player receives the ball and dribbles on an angle toward the middle



While this is happening, the original passer makes an overlapping run



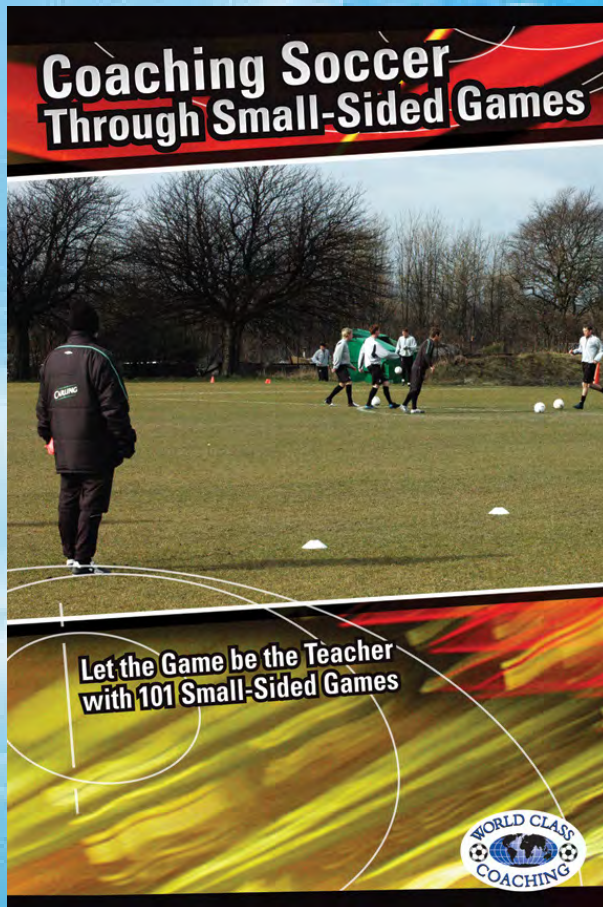
The players then do the same thing again with the opposite roles.



They do this all the way down the field

This activity allows the players to work on passing to feet (or just in front of feet), receiving and attacking with the first touch and then appropriate runs all while building in some fitness.

More Small-Sided Games to Help Train your Team



One of the most important components of a training session is the 'small-sided game'. Whether it's a local youth team, college team or a top professional team, they all use small-sided games to help their players make the transition from drills and exercises to real game situations. It's this transition that translates skills and techniques from practice into your game on the weekend.

Coaching Soccer through Small-Sided Games contains 101 games that incorporate a wide range of topics including: Passing and Possession, Shooting, Crossing and Finishing, Defending, Half Field Games and Full Field Games. Small-sided games are a great way to focus on these topics in a game-like situation. Another benefit of incorporating small-sided games into your training sessions is that players enjoy them.

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