



SPANISH STYLE

POSSESSION

SOCCER

VOLUME 2

**ANALYSIS OF TOP SPANISH TEAMS
IN THE POSSESSION PHASE**

by Philip Cauchi



Spanish Style Possession Soccer

Volume 2

By

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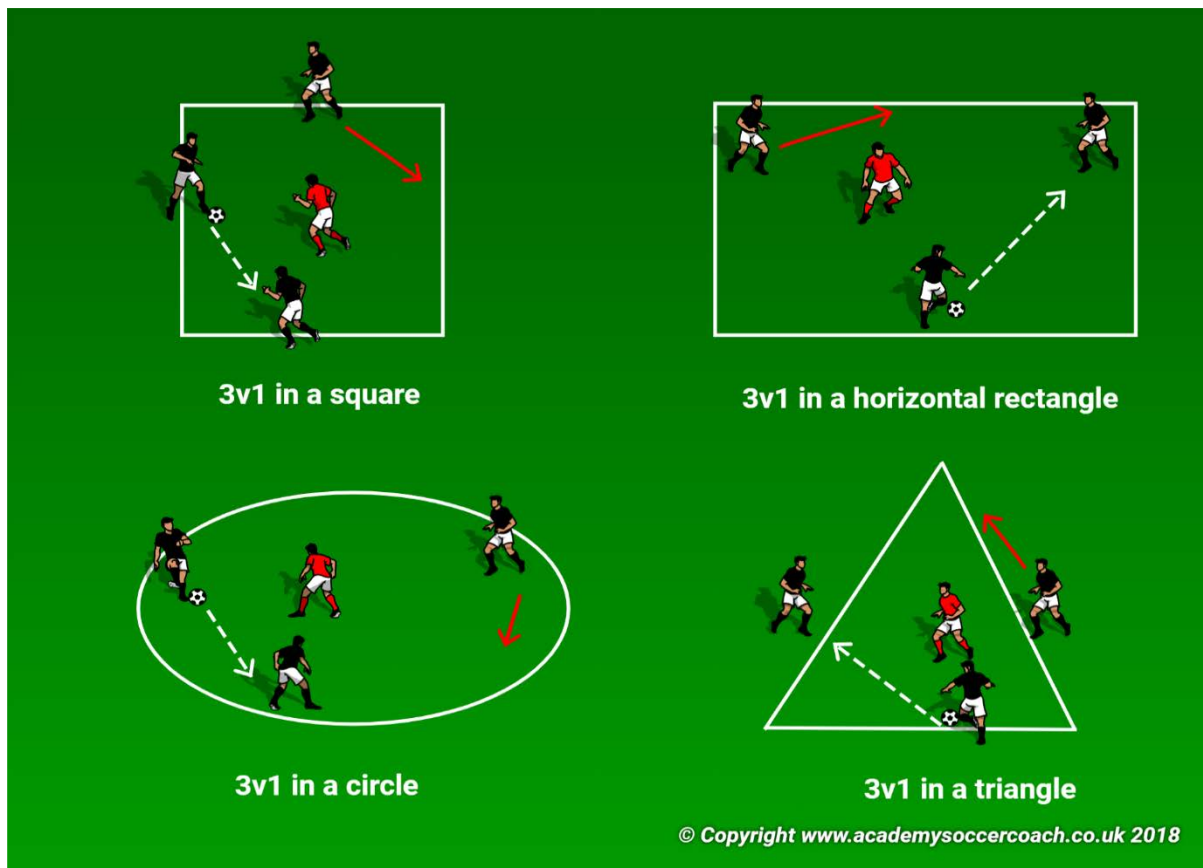
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Introduction

These activities are a companion to the concepts described in Volume 1 of this series.

Rondo exercises to develop positional awareness

3v1 Rondo



The diagram above shows various situations to practice the 3v1 rondo. In these situations we work on the technical ability of the players to receive and play the ball quickly. The players' stance, first touch and passing quality are being continuously stressed.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: square 8 yards x 8 yards; rectangle 5 yards x 10 yards; triangle 8 yards x 8 yards x 8 yards; circle diameter of 10 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 30 seconds.

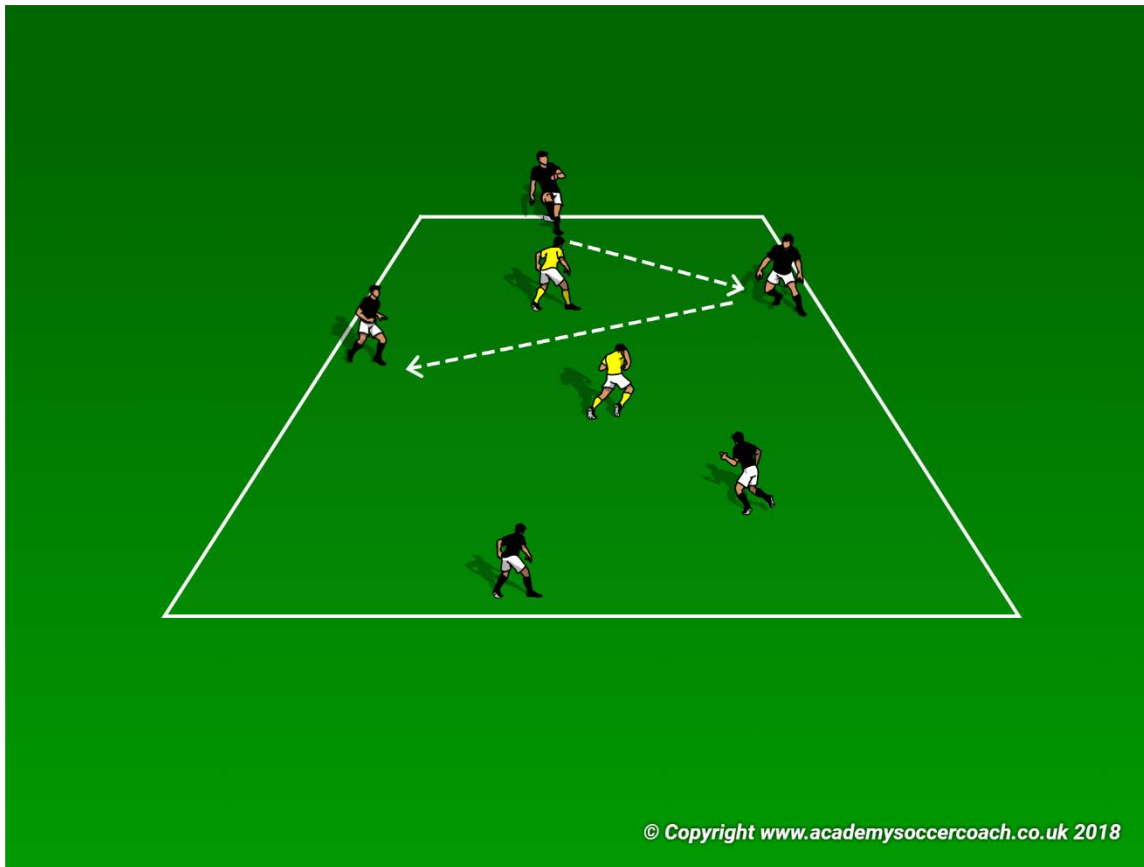
Rest between repetitions: 15 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the defender after every repetition.

Make it competitive. Which defender can intercept the most balls in thirty seconds? Give some kind of forfeit to the defender that makes the fewest interceptions.

5v2 Rondo



Play 5v2 with the attackers aiming for a target pre-set number of sequential passes to score a point. If a pass splits the two defenders as in the diagram, the attackers score an extra point. The main aim of this rondo other than keeping possession of the ball is to look for defence splitting passes that will enable us to eliminate lines.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 12 yards x 10 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 45 seconds.

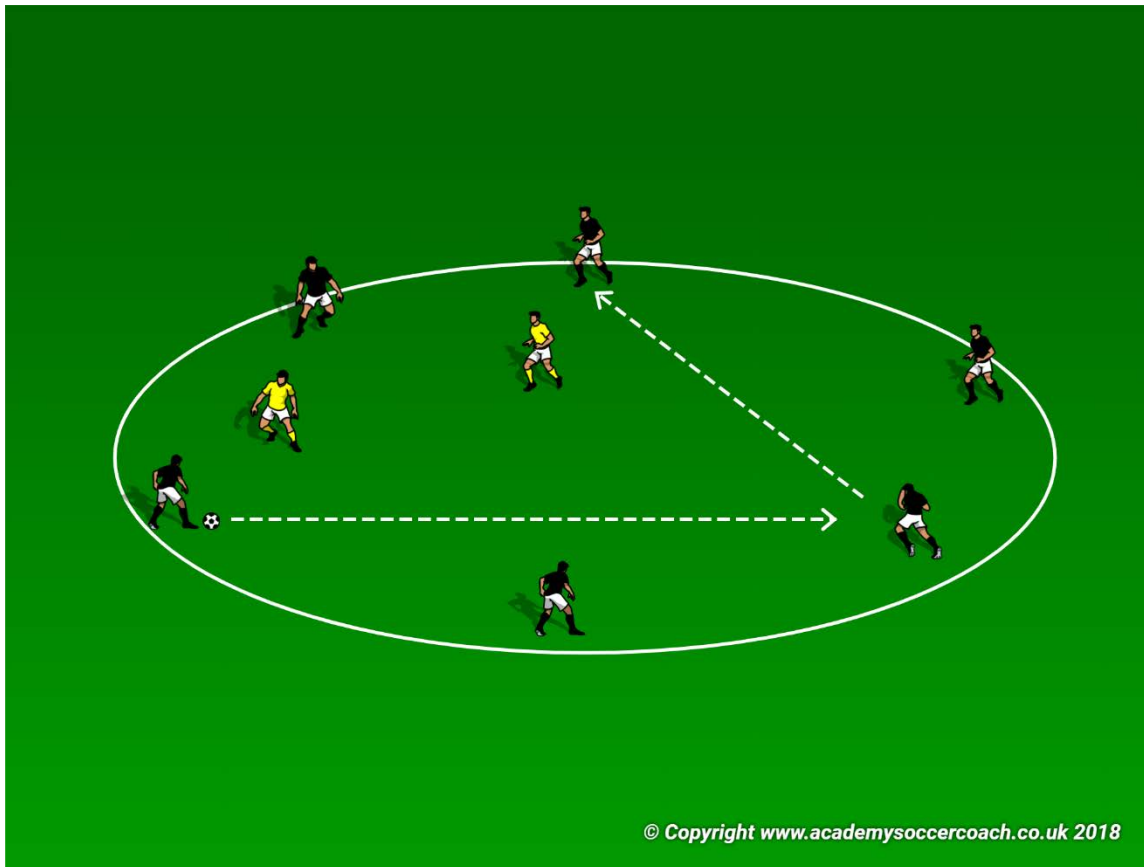
Rest between repetitions: 15 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the two defenders after every repetition.

Make it competitive. The pair of defenders who allowed the attackers to make the most number of points must do burpees at the end of the exercise.

6v2 in a circle



The six attackers aim to keep possession of the ball but may not pass to the player next to them. This forces the players to be quick and look for longer passes such as when we try to verticalize play in a match. As a progression, the coach may add a restriction that requires the players to play the ball within two touches. Increasing speed of play may also be acquired by reducing the area of the circle.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: Diameter measuring 12 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 45 seconds.

Rest between repetitions: 15 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the two defenders after every repetition.

Make it competitive. Have two circles, therefore two teams competing of who of them will intercept the ball first. The first team to do so wins a point!

5v2 Knock the cone over



The five attackers aim to circulate the ball with the intent of earning the required space and time to knock the cone over with the ball. This simulates a game situation where we keep possession until a gap to penetrate opens up and we play that line breaking pass! If the defenders win the ball, they score by dribbling it out of the area.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 12 yards by 8 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 45 seconds.

Rest between repetitions: 15 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the two defenders after every repetition.

Make it competitive. Have two grids, therefore having two teams competing against each other of who of them will knock the cone over the first to score a point.

Combine with the target player



Five attackers play against three defenders with the aim of creating the right opportunity to combine with the player inside the centre circle. To score a point it is not only important to play the ball to the player inside the centre circle but for this player to pass to another player – three men combination. To develop mobility in attack, we might have players rotating roles randomly as target players. If the three defenders win the ball they attempt to make three consecutive passes to score a point.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 15 yards x 12 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 1 minute.

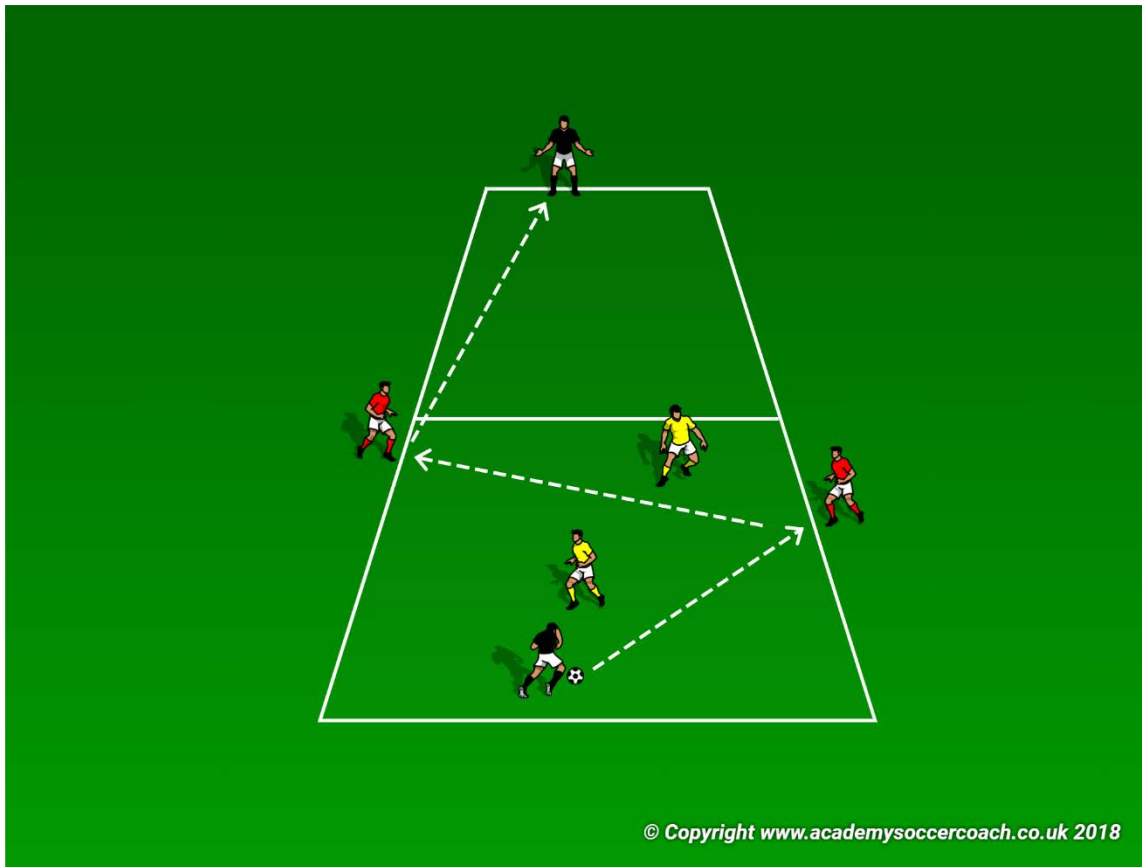
Rest between repetitions: 30 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the two defenders after every repetition.

Give the attackers a target to aim for. Can they score a pre-set number of targeted passes made to the central player?

2v2+2 Rondo



In the ball zone it is a 1+2v2 situation with the other attacker remaining high in the opposite zone. The attacking player together with the two neutral players aim to make a string of five passes before playing the ball into the opposite zone where the same situation takes place. If the defenders win the ball they immediately switch places with the attackers.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 20 yards x 10 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 1 minute.

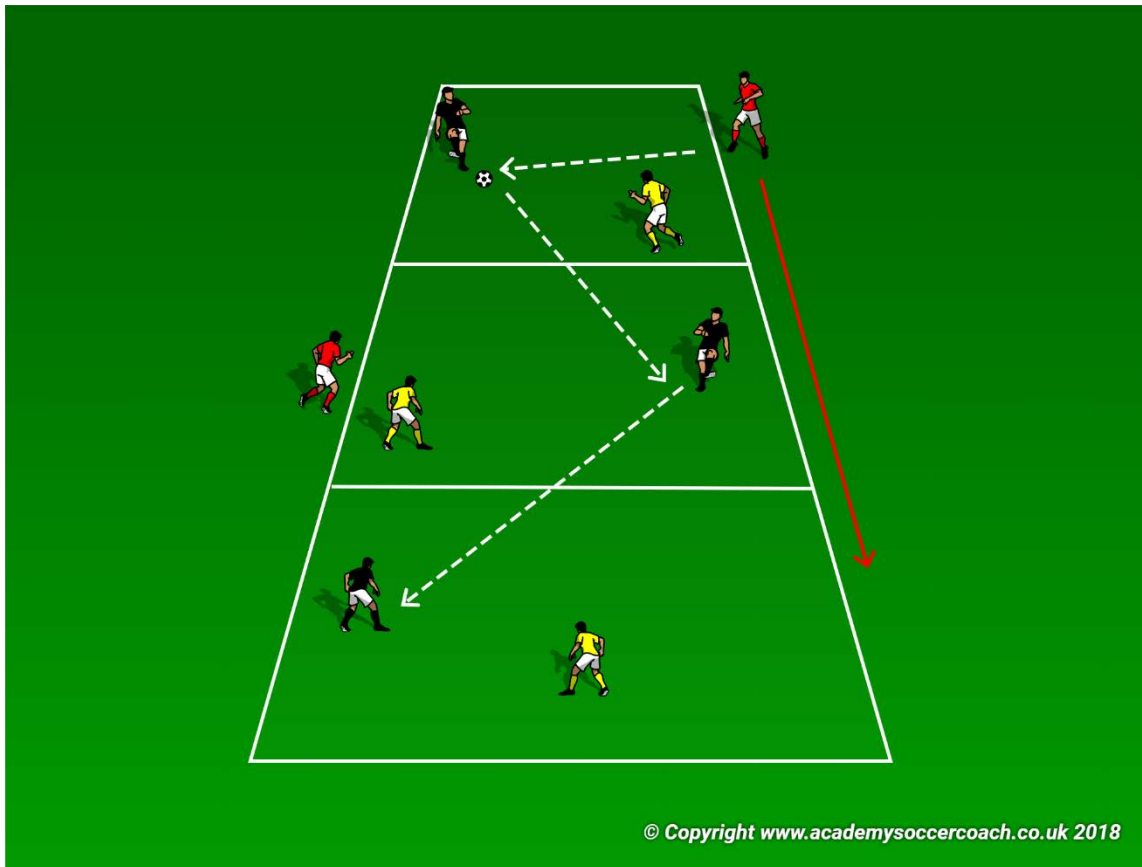
Rest between repetitions: 30 seconds.

Approximate work load: 2 sets of 6 repetitions with a two minute active rest between sets.

Change the two neutral players after every repetition.

To work on reacting quickly to the negative transition, the defenders must dribble the ball out of the area upon winning it. This forces the attackers to immediately apply pressure with the intent of regaining possession.

3v3+2 in three zones



We have a 1v1 situation in each zone and a neutral player on each side providing support. The attackers and defenders must remain inside their assigned zones while the neutral players move anywhere along their respective side. As a variation we may have the neutral players moving between zones internally. The aim is for each team to play the ball from one end zone to the other. The ball must be played through the middle zone however, otherwise there will be a turn-over in possession.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 24 yards x 8 yards divided into three equal zones.

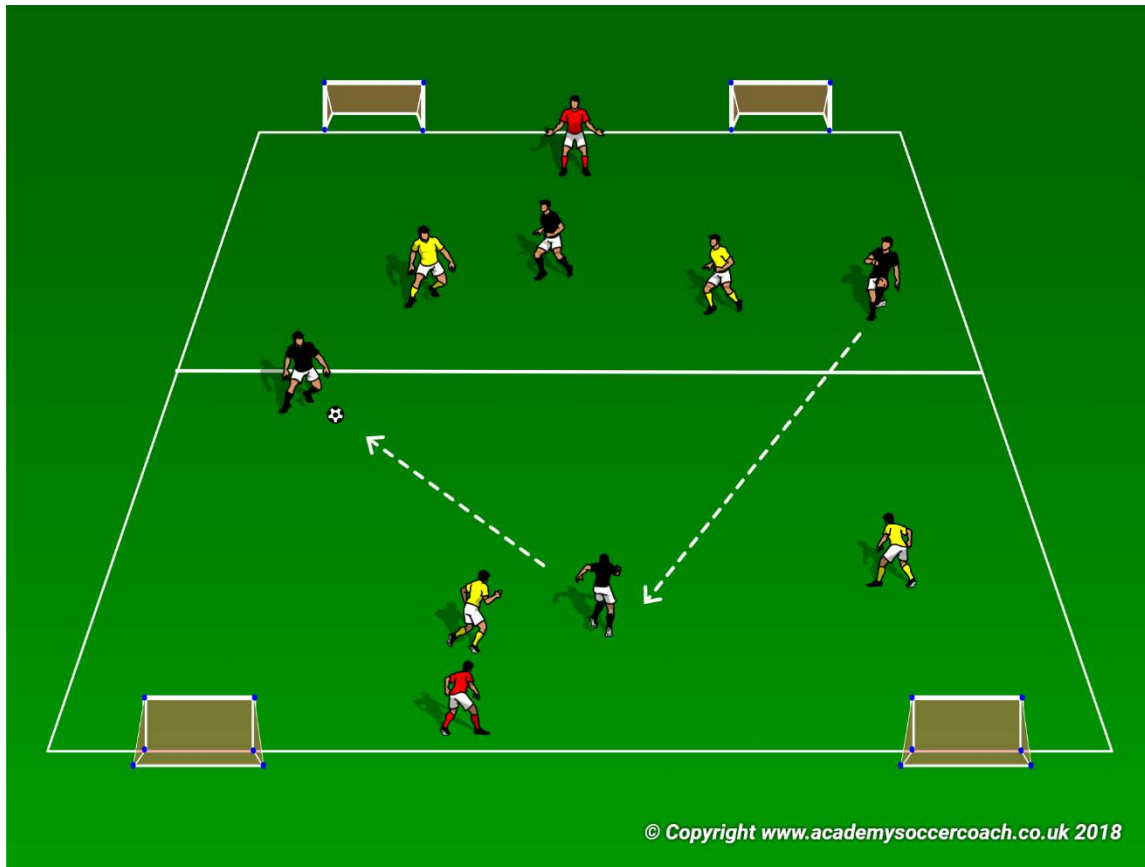
Duration of each repetition: 2 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 30 seconds.

Approximate work load: 6 repetitions.

Change the two neutral players after every two series.

2v2+1 in each zone



In each zone there are two attackers, two defenders and a neutral player. All players must remain inside their assigned zone. The attackers aim to complete 10 sequential passes with the help of the neutral players to score a point. Passes may be played between zones as shown in the image above. If the defenders win the ball, they try to score in any of the two mini goals inside the area where the ball was won. If they score they switch places with the attackers.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 20 yards x 12 yards divided into two equal zones.

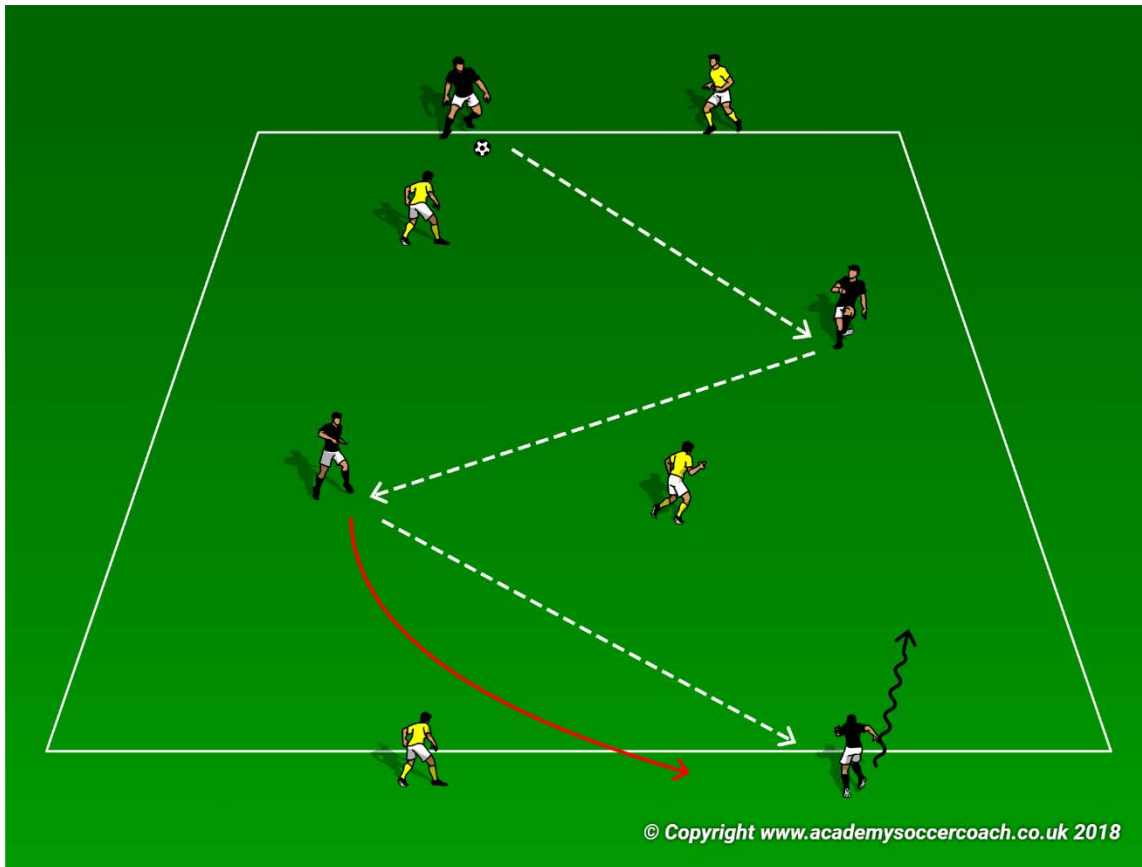
Duration of each repetition: 2 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 4 repetitions.

Change the two neutral players after every two series.

4v2+2 switch positions



Both teams aim to play the ball from one side to the other to their target player. The aim is to play deep which in turn requires good use of communication, positional awareness and passing and receiving skills. After passing the ball to one side the player passing the ball and the target player switch roles. Players of opposing teams on the end lines are not allowed to tackle each other. The latter can be progressed by having the two opposing target players tackle each other and randomly changing positions with an inside player.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

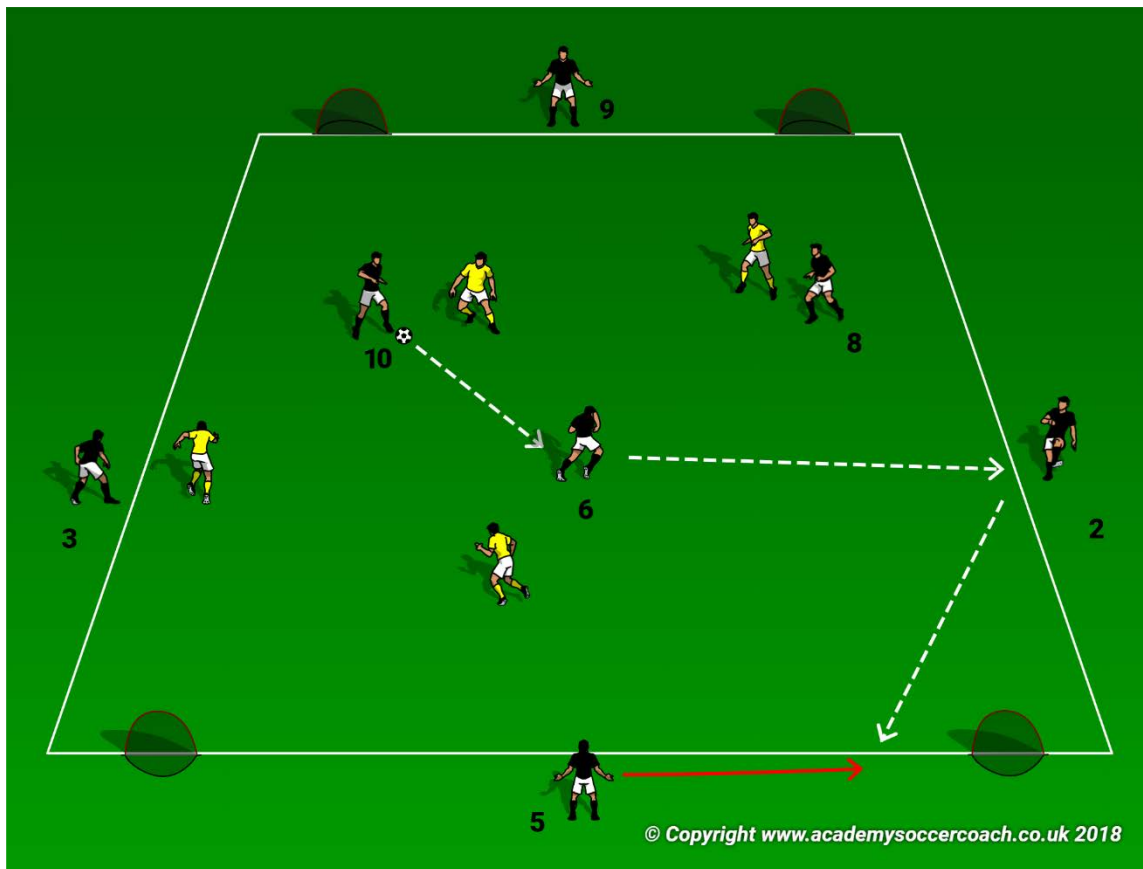
Area: 15 yards x 10 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 1 minute.

Rest between repetitions: 30 seconds.

Approximate work load: 6 repetitions.

7v3 Positional play



Players of the attacking team (blacks) play in their regular position. Their aim is to make a string of at least ten passes to score a point. If the defenders win the ball they aim to score in any of the four mini goals. The main aim of this training situation is to increase the level of communication and tactical cooperation between the attackers during the possession phase. Furthermore, if possession is lost the team learns to work together to press and recover the ball.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 25 yards x 20 yards.

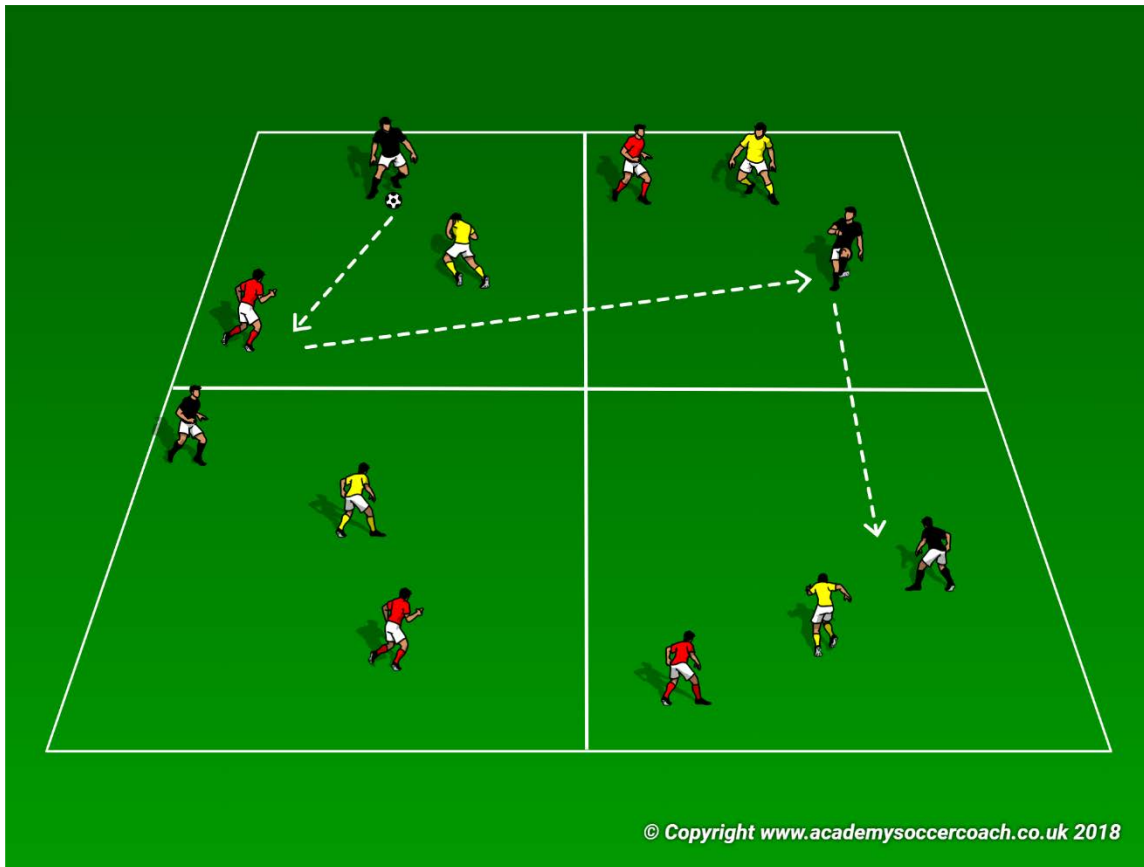
Duration of each repetition: 2 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 6 repetitions.

Change the defenders after every repetition.

Four quadrant 8v4 rondo



All players are restricted to remain inside their assigned quadrant. Two teams which in the above example are the blacks and the reds play against the third team, the yellows. The team responsible for losing possession change places with the defending team. During the run of this rondo we as coaches should pay attention to the creation of various angles of play both near and far from the ball. Inside their grid, players should move to create an option for a possible pass. As a progression the teams who are in possession of the ball must pass to alternate colours. In the above image it would be black to red and vice versa.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

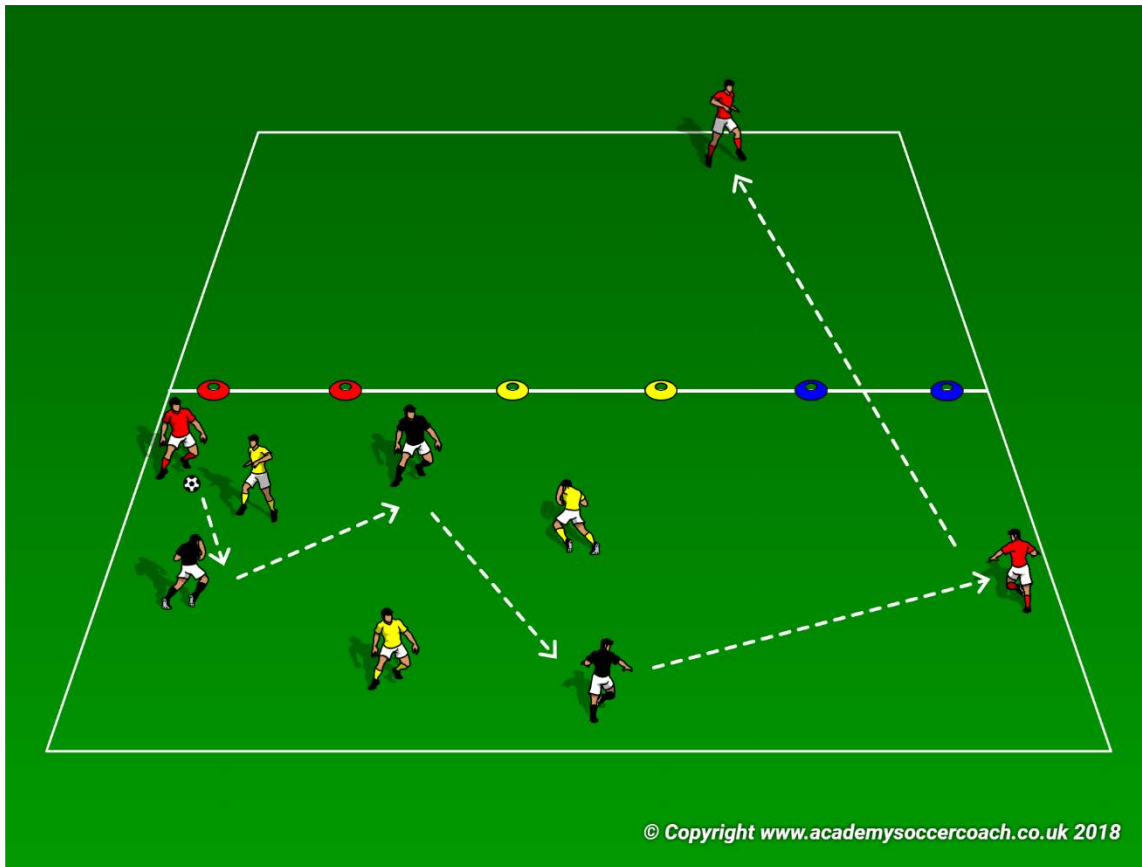
Area: 20 yards x 20 yards divided into four equal quadrants.

Duration of each repetition: 3 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 4 repetitions.

3+3v3 switch zone through the gates



Play is 3v3 plus two neutral players on the ball zone while another neutral player is on the opposite zone. Teams aim to either make a string of ten consecutive passes or pass directly through any gate (red, yellow and blue) to score a point. Once the ball is passed to the opposite zone, all the players except one of the neutrals move to continue the sequence. This rondo simulates keeping possession until the right moment to verticalize play emerges.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

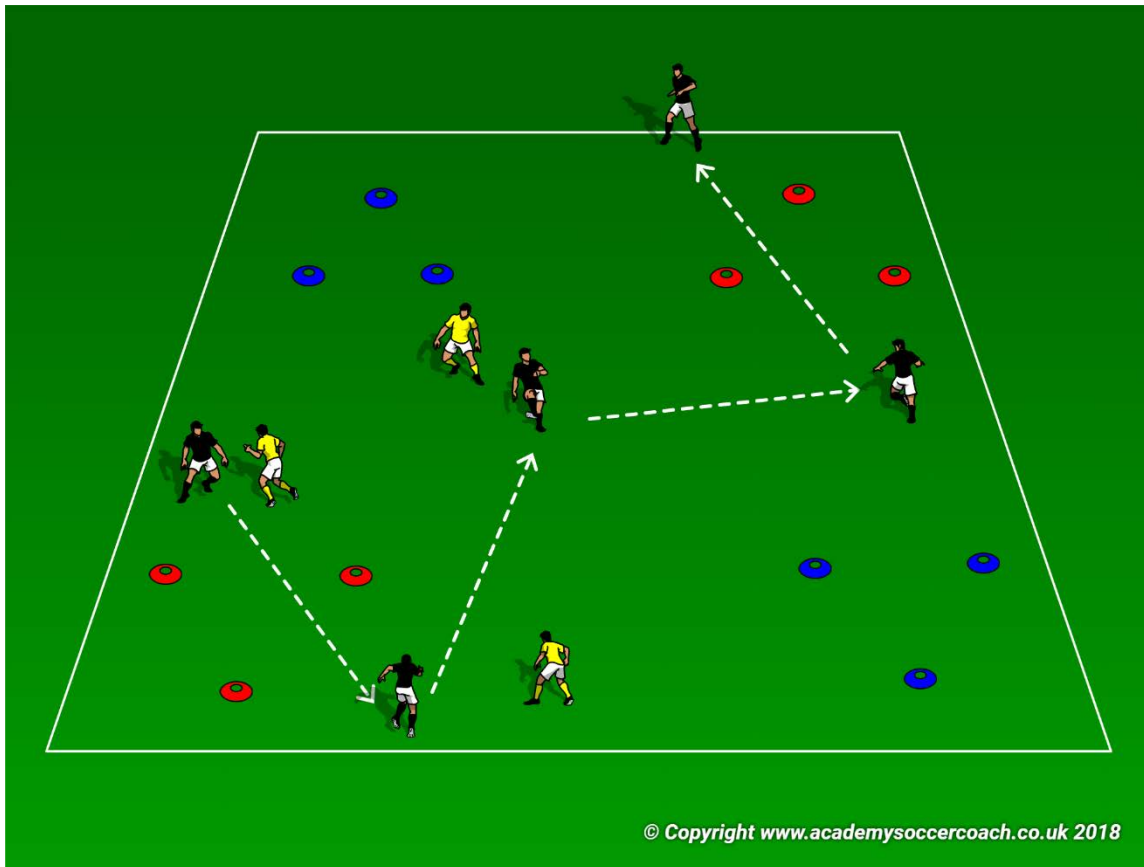
Area: 30 yards x 25 yards divided into two equal zones.

Duration of each repetition: 2 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 6 repetitions.

5v3 Gate rondo



The five attackers score by passing the ball to another teammate through the triangles or gates. Throughout the execution of this rondo the players will practice providing support, applying the correct stance to receive and play quickly, and spatial and positional awareness. Off-the-ball movement and timing is crucial as it is to apply quick and short fakes to get rid of marking. Playing short and sharp passes to feet is a must considering that we are practicing in a small space.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

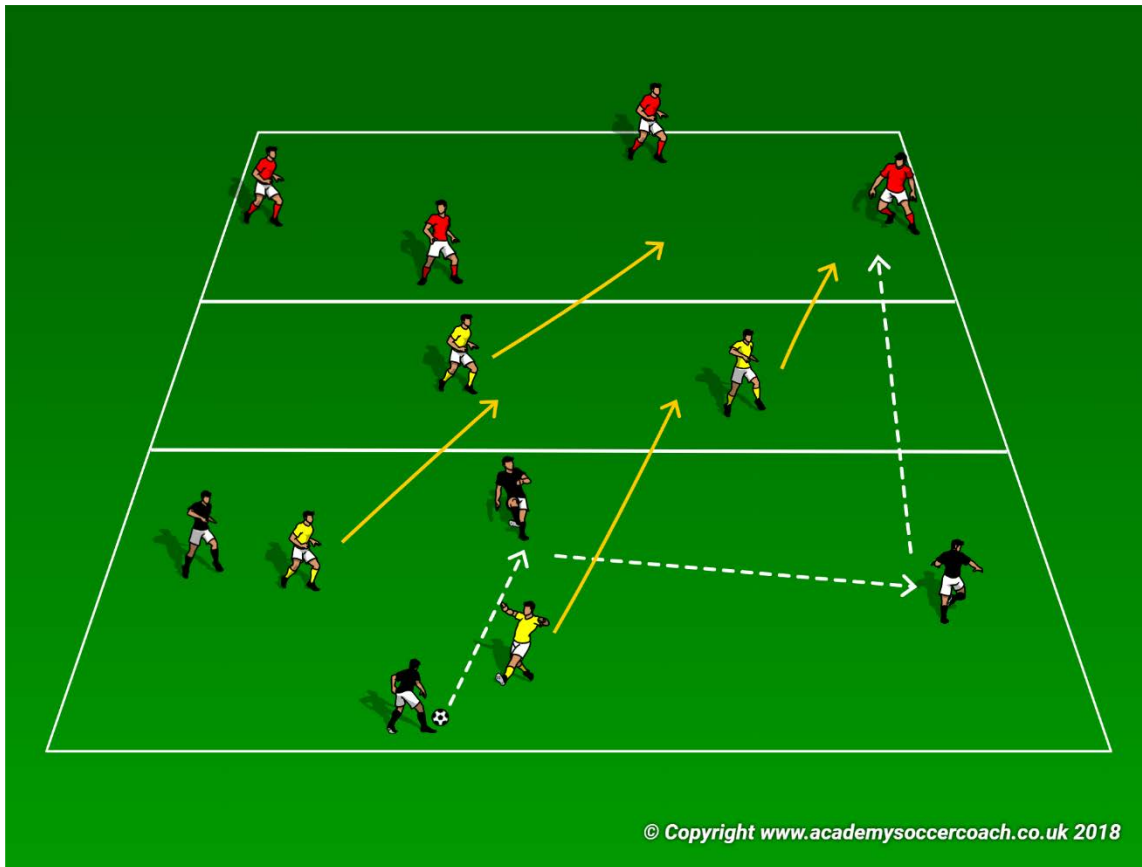
Area: 20 yards x 15 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 1 minute.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 6 repetitions.

Three zone transition rondo



In the outside zone play is 4v2 where the attackers (blacks) aim to pass the ball to the reds in the opposite zone through the middle zone. The two defenders (yellows) put pressure on the ball while the other two defenders cover the middle zone to prevent the ball from reaching the reds. If the defenders intercept the ball, they quickly switch places with the attacking team responsible for the loss of possession. If the ball reaches the opposite zone, the two defenders inside the middle zone apply pressure while the two who previously were applying pressure now cover the central zone. Progress to having the players play the ball only on the ground. This requires faster circulation of the ball.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

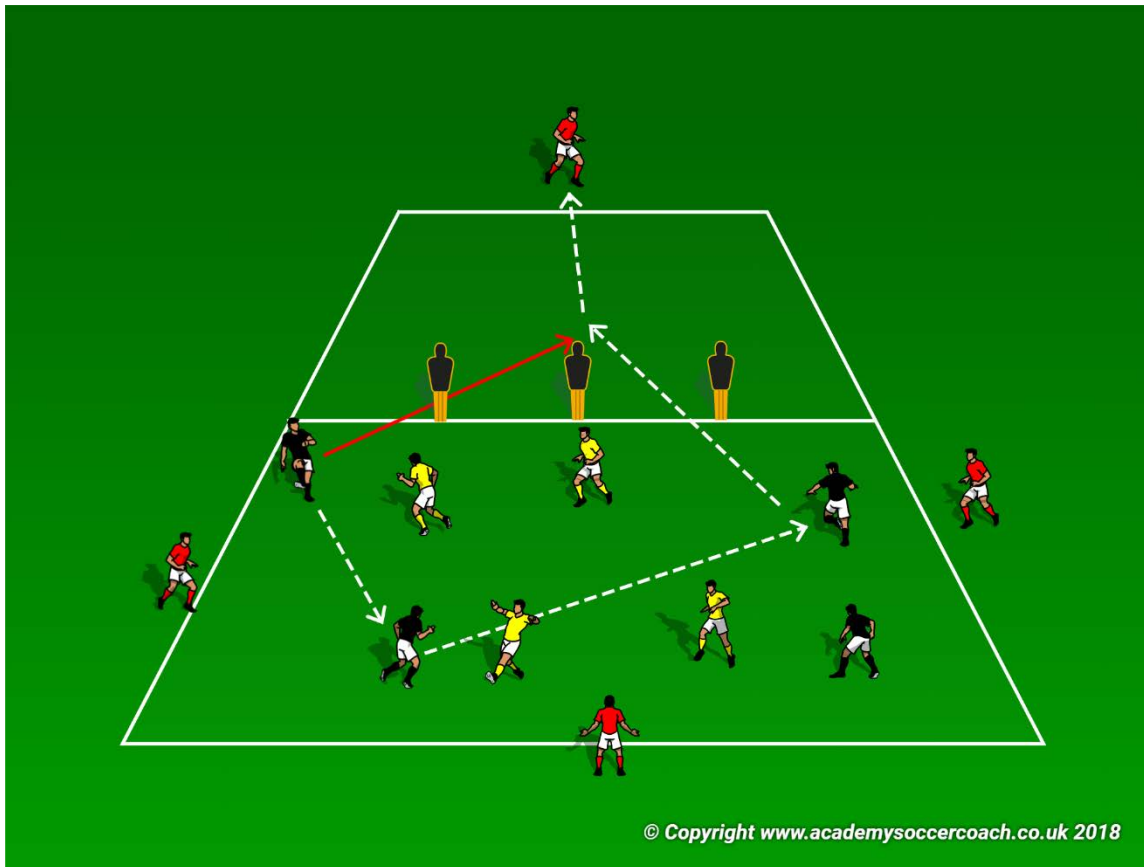
Area: 25 yards x 15 yards. Outer zones are 10 yards in length while the middle is 5 yards.

Duration of each repetition: 3 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 4 repetitions.

Through pass rondo



In one half of the grid play is 4v4+3. The team which has the ball must make at least five consecutive passes prior to playing a through pass into the other half. The player receiving the through pass must not be waiting for the ball in the other half, otherwise he will be in an offside position. The ball must leave before the receiving player sets foot inside the other half. When the ball is inside this zone the same situation takes place with the team in possession aiming for a string of five passes prior to playing the through pass. The outside neutral players may also be allowed to play through passes.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

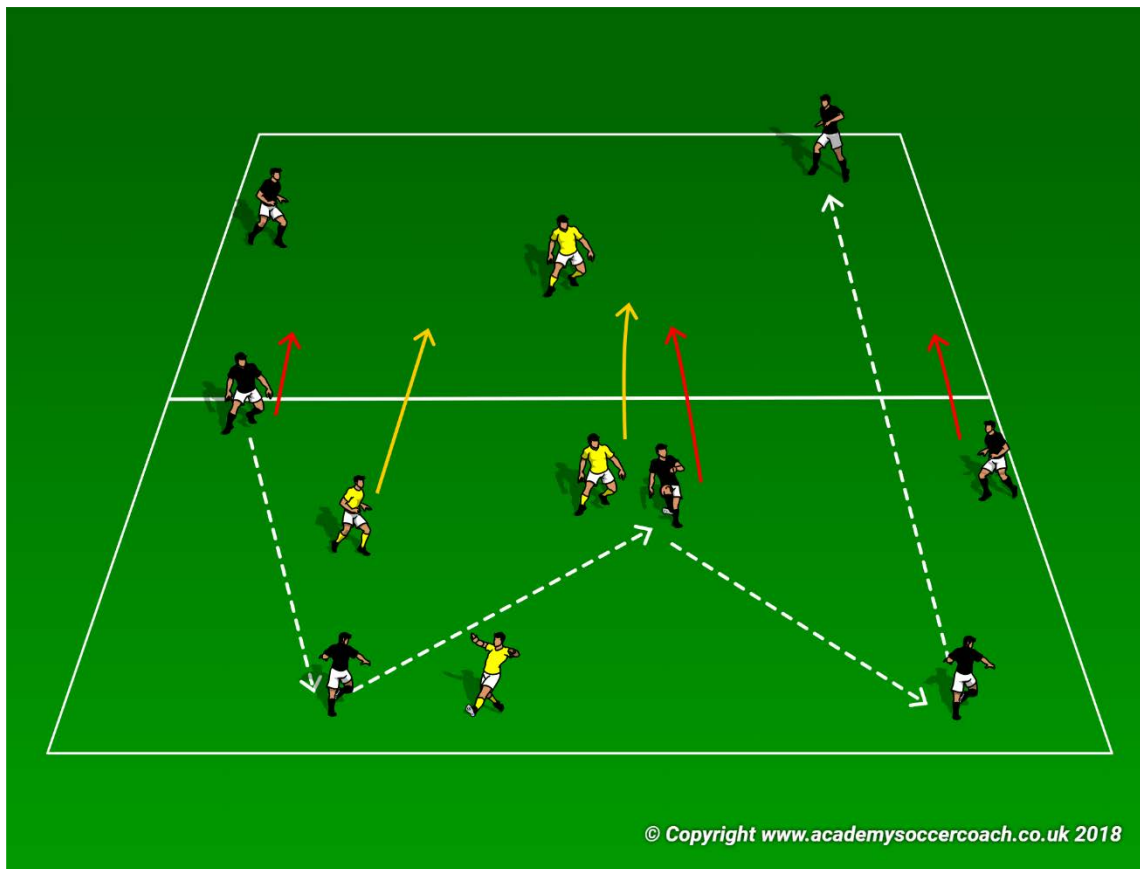
Area: 40 yards x 20 yards divided into two equal zones.

Duration of each repetition: 3 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 4 repetitions.

5v3 to 5v3 on two zones



In one half of the grid play is 5v3. The attacking team (blacks) aim to perform six consecutive passes before they play the ball into the opposite half. If the ball is played into the opposite half, the same situation is re-created as three attackers and two defenders follow the ball. If the defenders win possession they aim to combine four passes to score a point. This requires the blacks to press immediately upon losing possession.

Recommended training volume and guidance.

Area: 40 yards x 25 yards divided into two equal zones.

Duration of each repetition: 2 minutes.

Rest between repetitions: 1 minute.

Approximate work load: 5 to 6 repetitions.

Training sessions

Session 1

Aim: Secure possession in midfield.

Outcomes:

1. Staggered angles of support.
2. Awareness of space.
3. Stance to receive and play quickly.
4. Off-the-ball movement to create passing angles.
5. Length, depth and width in attack.
6. Quality of passes.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Team tactics – collective.

Equipment:

Bibs: Four reds and eight yellows.

Balls: Eight.

Poles: Four.

Cones: Four reds and two yellows.

Mini goals: Eight.

Description: In this session we work towards forming passing options, support and off-the-ball movement. The players should see the relevance of the practices with how we want our behaviour on the pitch to be. In this case we want to secure possession with the aim of penetration. It is therefore of high importance that all the lines of the team collaborate together towards achieving this aim. All players within their positions should understand the role they play in our game model and what their movements should be with respect to the position of the ball while the team is in possession.

Warming Up – Passing activation.

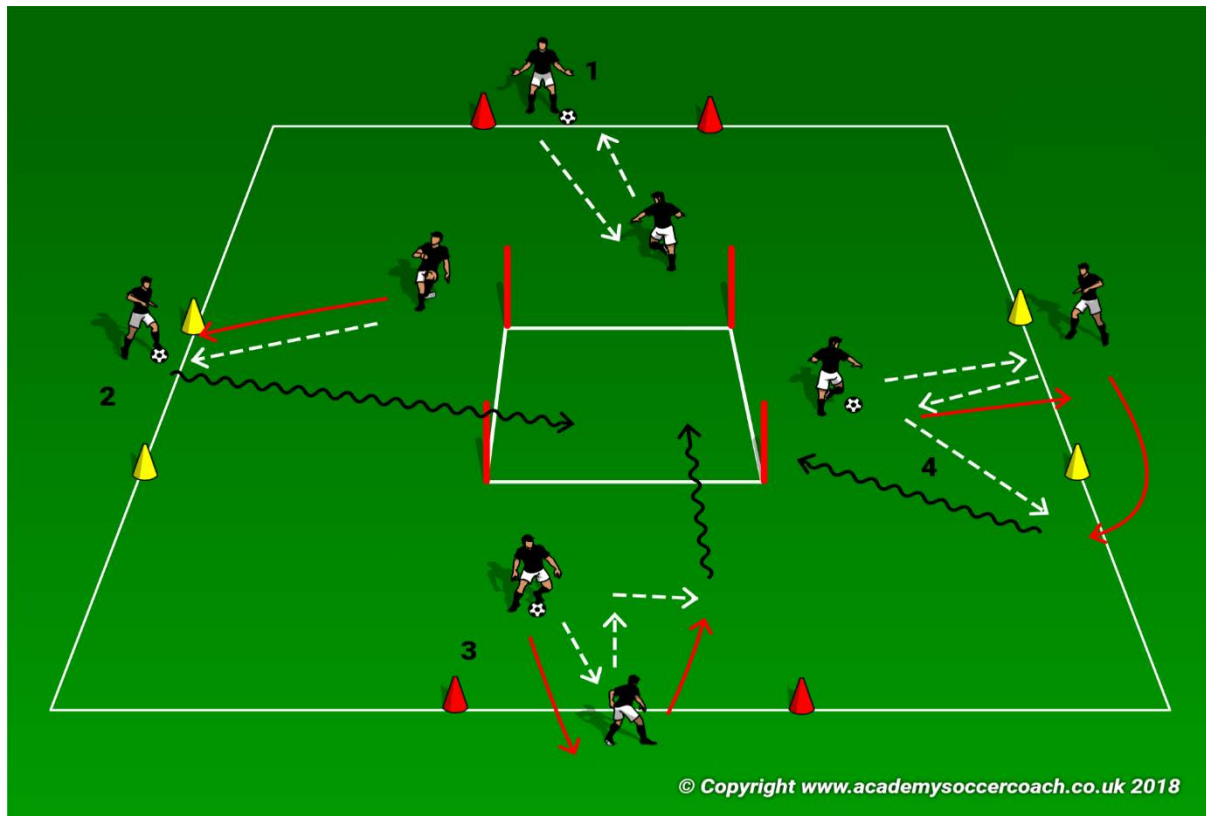
Area: 20 yards x 15 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Players go through the central area prior to combine passing with any of the perimeter players which are “free”. If the perimeter players are not “free” they must look for another player to combine with. Players are encouraged to both verbally and non-verbally communicate with each other. The below are the progressions of the first part of the warm-up.

1. Move without the ball through the central area to receive and pass back with a perimeter player.
2. Pass to a perimeter player and switch places.
3. Play a wall pass with a perimeter player and switch places.
4. Dribble the ball, pass to a perimeter player, receive back and pass at an angle to the perimeter player to the side indicated by the latter prior to switching places.



Between progressions players should dynamically stretch and also work on articular mobility, especially around the pelvic area.

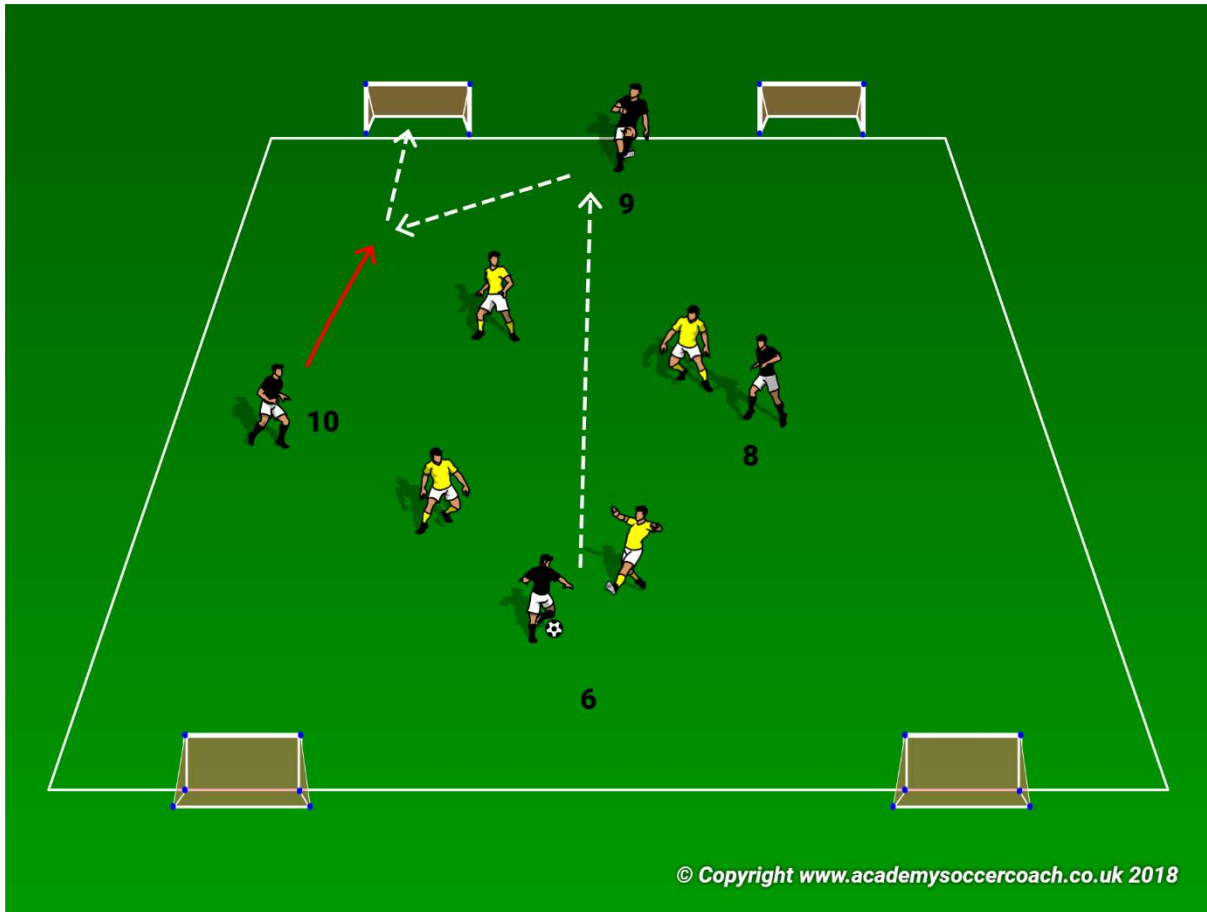
Main Part: Global Game 1 – Inter-sector situational play within a small sided game.

Area: 20 yards x 15 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

4v4 game but with both teams trying to score on any of the opposite two mini goals. We play in a small area to increase the speed of play. Players are therefore required to think quickly and accurately. The main focus of the game is on the positioning of the black team players. We want to create length through striker 9 and off-the-ball movement to create options to play forward. For the latter we require timing of movements and angles of support from the number 6, 8 and 10 and proper weight and direction of passes. The black team should always have a safe option to play back with the number 6 remaining deep. If a goalkeeper is available he should play for the yellow team, thus making the game more realistic for the black team by creating chances to score on goal. More advanced players play with the offside rule in effect.



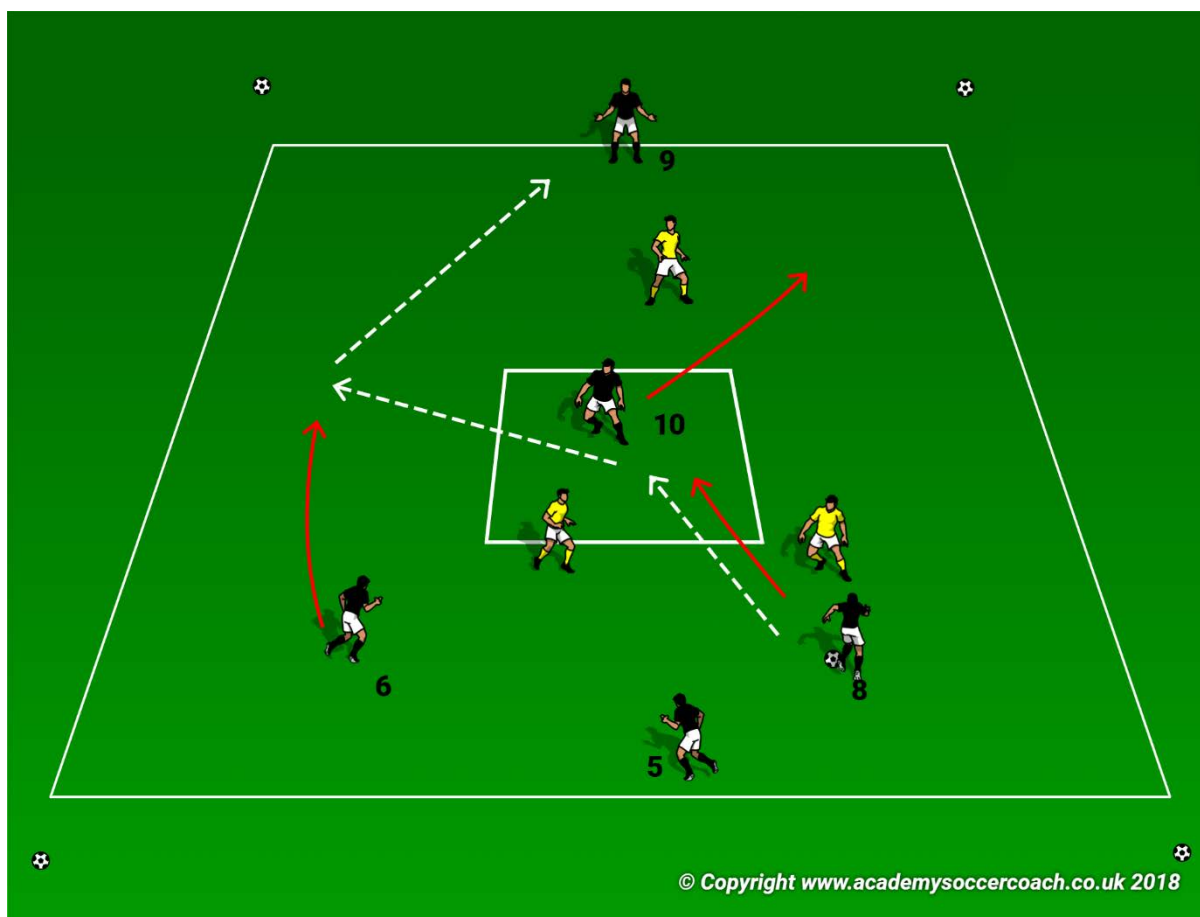
Main Part: Analytical Situation 1 – 5v3 Rondo with a central zone.

Area: 20 yards x 15 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (5 x 1 minute with one minute rest in between series).

The black team aims to keep possession of the ball while at the same time score a point for every pass made to a player situated inside the central area. As a progression, to score a point another player is required to receive the pass from the player inside the central area. The yellow defenders are not allowed to enter the central area. To further progress the exercise, a point only counts if the pass from inside the central area is made to a third player as in the diagram below. After passing, the player who previously occupied the central area must move out of it and a new attacker occupy this space. This develops the behaviour of the players to rotate positions during an attack.



Main Part: Global Game 2 – Play to the opposite target player.

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 18 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Both teams play with the aim of passing the ball to the opposite target player – the goalkeeper. If this is acquired, they retain possession and aim to play to the opposite goalkeeper. We use this exercise to integrate the team collectively to secure possession with the ultimate aim to play vertically. Players play in their natural position so they develop the ability to move both with and without the ball to create passing options and to support play. The use of width through players 2 and 3 is emphasised. This is a prerequisite in order to create space in the middle of the field and thus create vertical passing lanes. With our number 9 we should focus on having length thus creating vertical gaps in the opposition's defence. Central defenders 4 and 5 should give us depth and options to recycle the attack if forward penetration is not possible. Midfielders 6, 8 and 10 should create movement in search of providing options to circulate the ball at speed.



Main Part: Analytical Situation 2 – Securing possession 6v6+6.

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 15 minutes (2 x 6 minutes with three minutes rest in between series).

We focus on the black team to secure possession with the help of the neutral players – the goalkeepers and wingers (reds). The yellow team keep possession should they win the ball. As coaches we aim to correct the distances and angles between the players. We should ask the players the following questions: Do we have depth? Who is giving the team length? Are we using both width and depth in order to secure possession of the ball? When should we play wide and when should we aim to penetrate through the middle? How can the goalkeeper (the one behind the defenders) help us keep possession of the ball? To make these coaching points clear, during the rest periods run the practice in a slow and freeze motion so to ask the players what they think about the team’s positioning, their angles and distances from each other.



Main Part: Global Game 3 – Game 9v9

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 15 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with three minutes rest in between series).

In this game we analyse what the players have understood and what we need to develop further. This part of the session resembles the real match with all the rules of the game in it. During the three minute break between series we should re-ask the players questions regarding their positioning, angles and distance from each other.



Conclusive Part – Cool down

Duration: 10 minutes.

Players pass and move in groups of four while keeping the shape of a rhombus. End the session with static stretching exercises focusing particularly on the quadriceps, hamstrings, adductors, calves and lower back.

Session 2

Aim: Build-up from the goalkeeper.

Outcomes:

1. Central defenders 4 and 5 to provide options.
2. Midfielder 6 to create a numerical superiority near the ball.
3. Staggered positions of the midfielders.
4. Compass movement (one drops while the other goes high) of midfielders 6 and 8.
5. Width provided by full backs 2 and 3.
6. Preventive marking.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Team tactics – collective.

Equipment:

Bibs: Eight yellows.

Balls: At least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Cones: two sets of ten for the cool down.

Mini goals: Eight.

Description: During this session emphasis will be on creating options for the player with the ball while creating possibilities for the team to verticalize play. It is therefore of extreme importance to have options in front of the ball where the player continuously move to create passing lanes. The players closest to the ball must immediately provide support to the ball-carrier. If a player has the ball he must always have support and cover behind him, thus a safe option to play back if forward passing options are not available.

Warming Up: 3v1 to 3v1 Rondo.

Area: 16 yards x 8 yards divided into two equal zones.

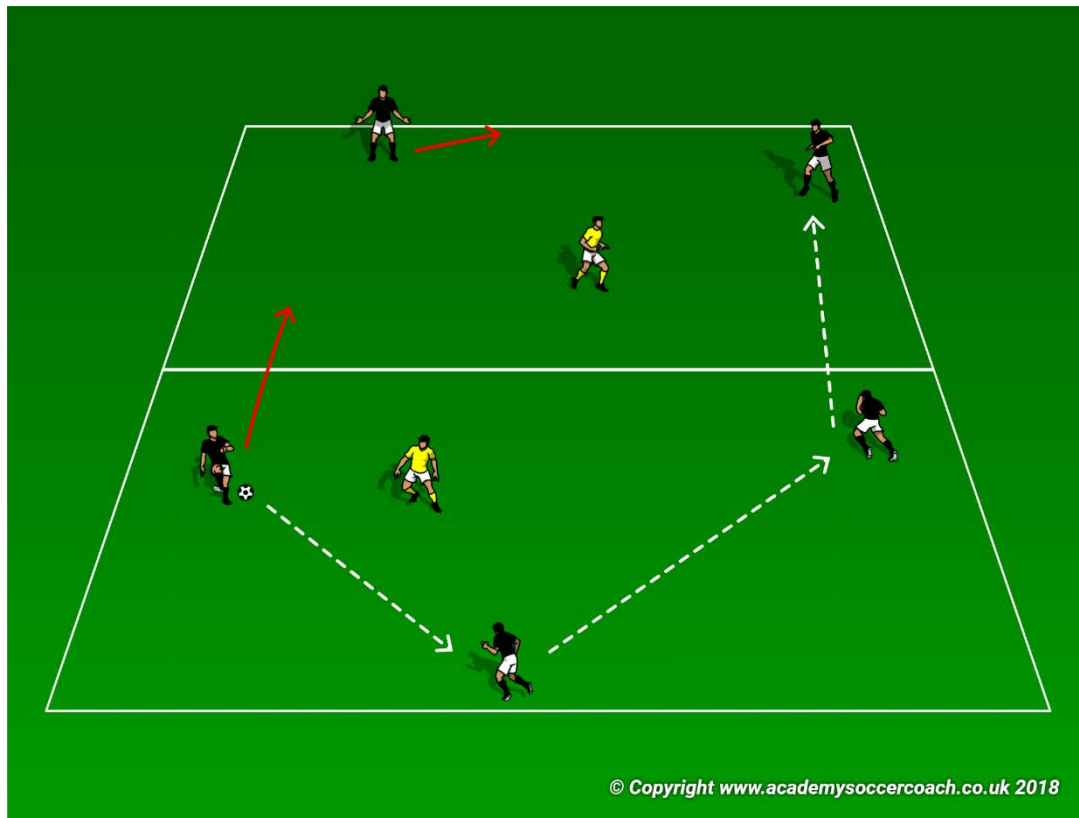
Targeted outcomes: N/A.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Prior to this exercise players perform some short passes and dynamic movements in order to activate the neuro-muscular system. In this exercise there is a 3v1 situation with the ball in one zone and a 2v1 without the ball in the adjacent zone. In the ball area, players must perform a string of at least six passes prior to passing the ball to the opposite zone. A player who did not play the pass joins the other zone to make it a 3v1. The same situation with the same objectives takes place in this zone. Play for a maximum of forty second series and if the defender wins the ball, he switches places with the responsible attacker.

Easier variation: There is no defender inside the opposite zone.

Harder variation: Slightly increase each zone to measure 10 yards by 10 yards. Play 3v2 in the ball zone and 2v1 in the adjacent zone.



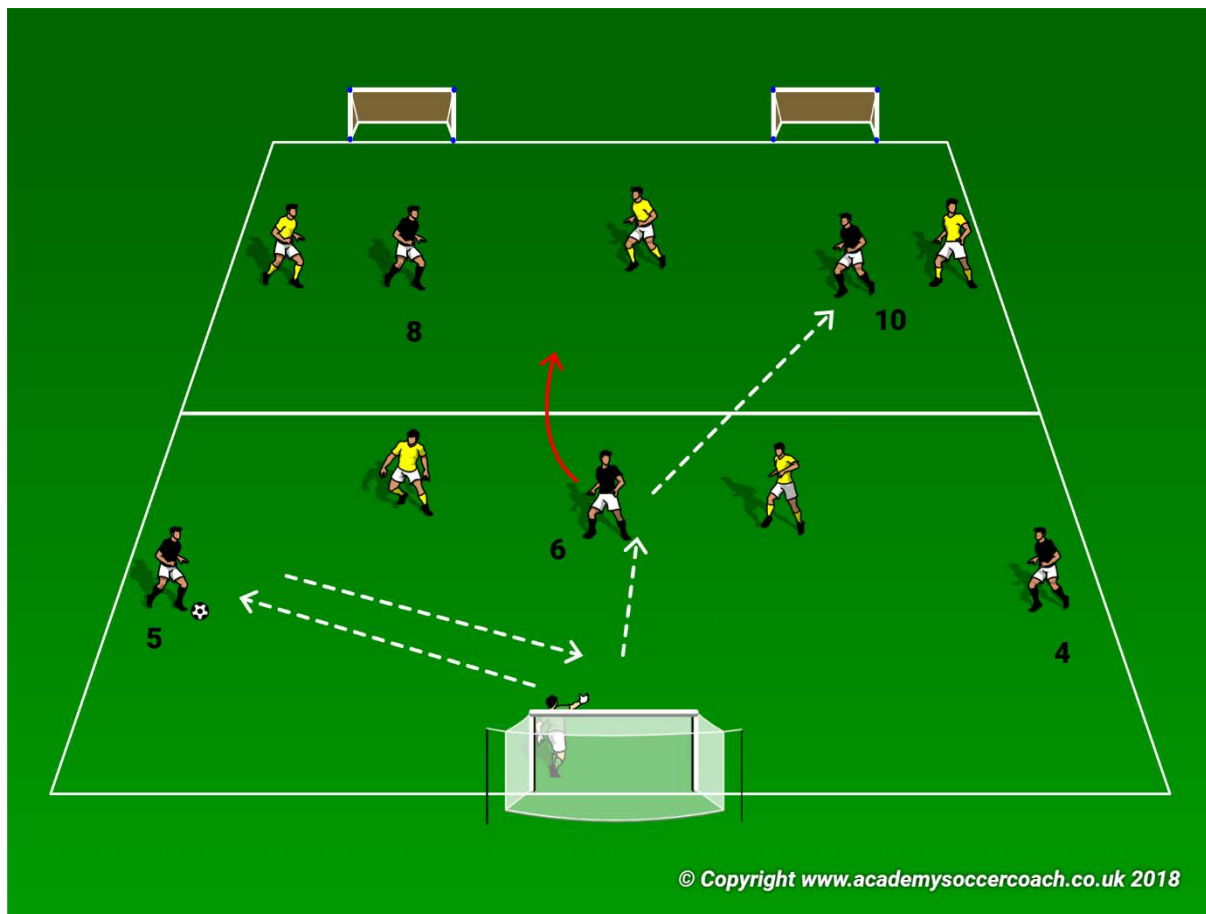
Main Part: Global Game 1 – GK+5v5 two zone build-up game.

Area: 30 yards x 25 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Both teams line up with two central defenders and three midfielders. The team we are coaching (blacks), also have a goalkeeper in goal. In both teams, players must remain inside their assigned half of the pitch. Therefore, we have the two central defenders (4 and 5) and the defensive midfielder (6) in the low zone, and midfielders 8 and 10 in the high zone. Each team however have an assigned player who may move between zones. In the black team this is the number 6. We want to use this player to create a numerical superiority at the back. Teams may only score from inside the opponents' half of the pitch. Ball may only be played from the goalkeeper to another player positioned inside the low zone. In the second block of work, play in a single area without zones and assess the way the players perform in relation with each other (angles, distances, off-the-ball movement and support). If the ball goes out of play restarts always take place from the goalkeeper, thus working on build-up.



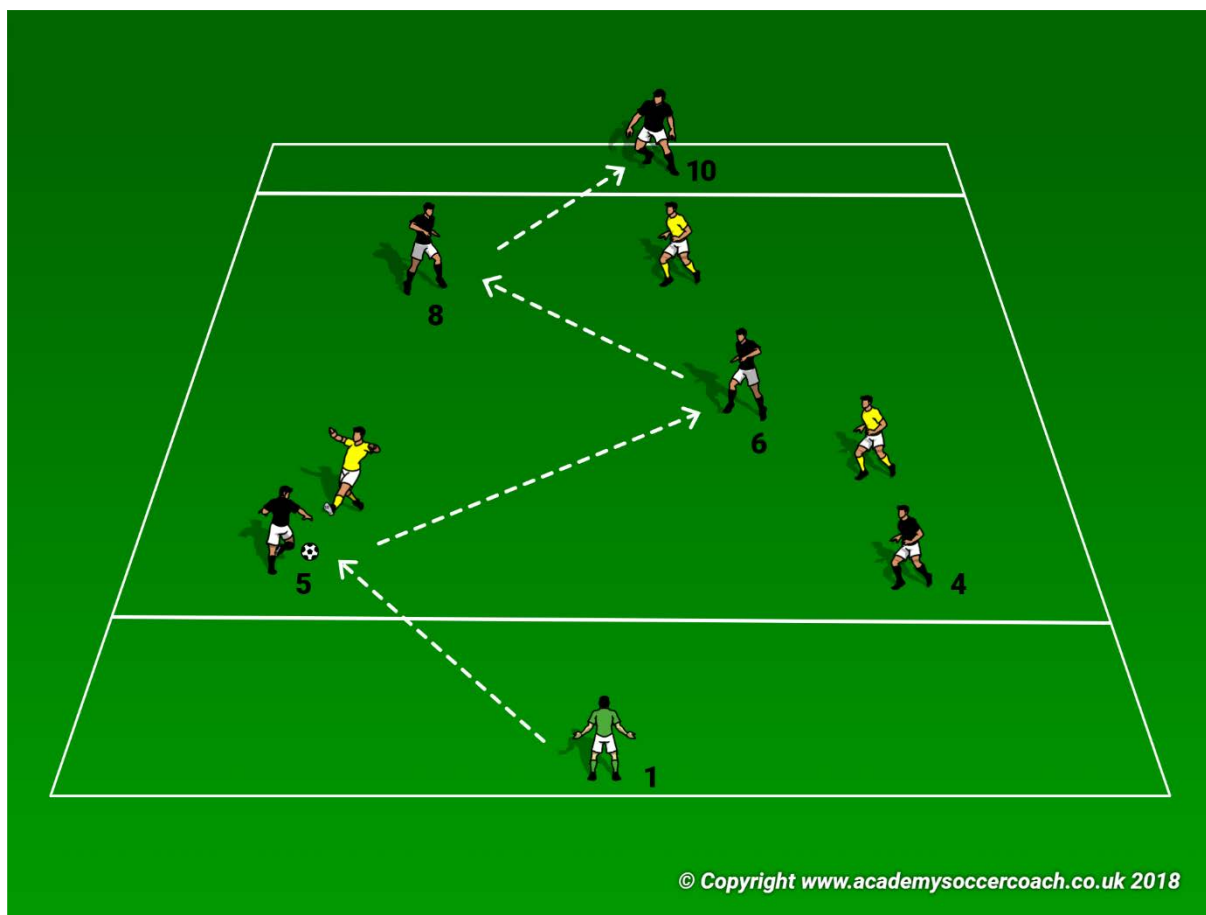
Main Part: Analytical Situation 1 – 6v3 Rondo with targets at both ends.

Area: 20 yards x 15 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (5 x 1 minute with one minute rest in between series).

Positions in this rondo refer to the system of play we use in our games. The black team which is the team we are coaching, aims to play from one target player to another. In this case the targets are the goalkeeper and the offensive midfielder (10). We work on angles and encourage our players to play deep. The ball-carrier's team mates must work to create support. To develop mobility in our team, interchanging of positions during the run of play may be carried out. As an example, target player 10 may drop deep and 8 may take his place. The ball should then be played to player 8. This training situation helps us develop the ability to play deep while at the same time create movements and rotations in search of creating and exploiting space.



Main Part: Global Game 2 – 9v9 Match.

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 18 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

The black team plays in a 1-4-3-1 formation while the yellow team lines up in a 1-2-3-3 system. We coach the black team where the ultimate aim is to build-up play through the middle. It is important to note that now we have integrated the full backs and the striker into our system. We encourage the striker to give us length while the full backs give us width. Movement in midfield and quick circulation of the ball are at the front of our minds. We should constantly remind the players to make use of short clear cues during the practice, thus mutually coaching each other. We should resist the temptation to stop the practice very often as this will reduce the flow and intensity and also jeopardise the players' motivation and concentration levels. Prior to the start of the practice we should explain to our players what we are looking for and review and provide short examples during the rest period.



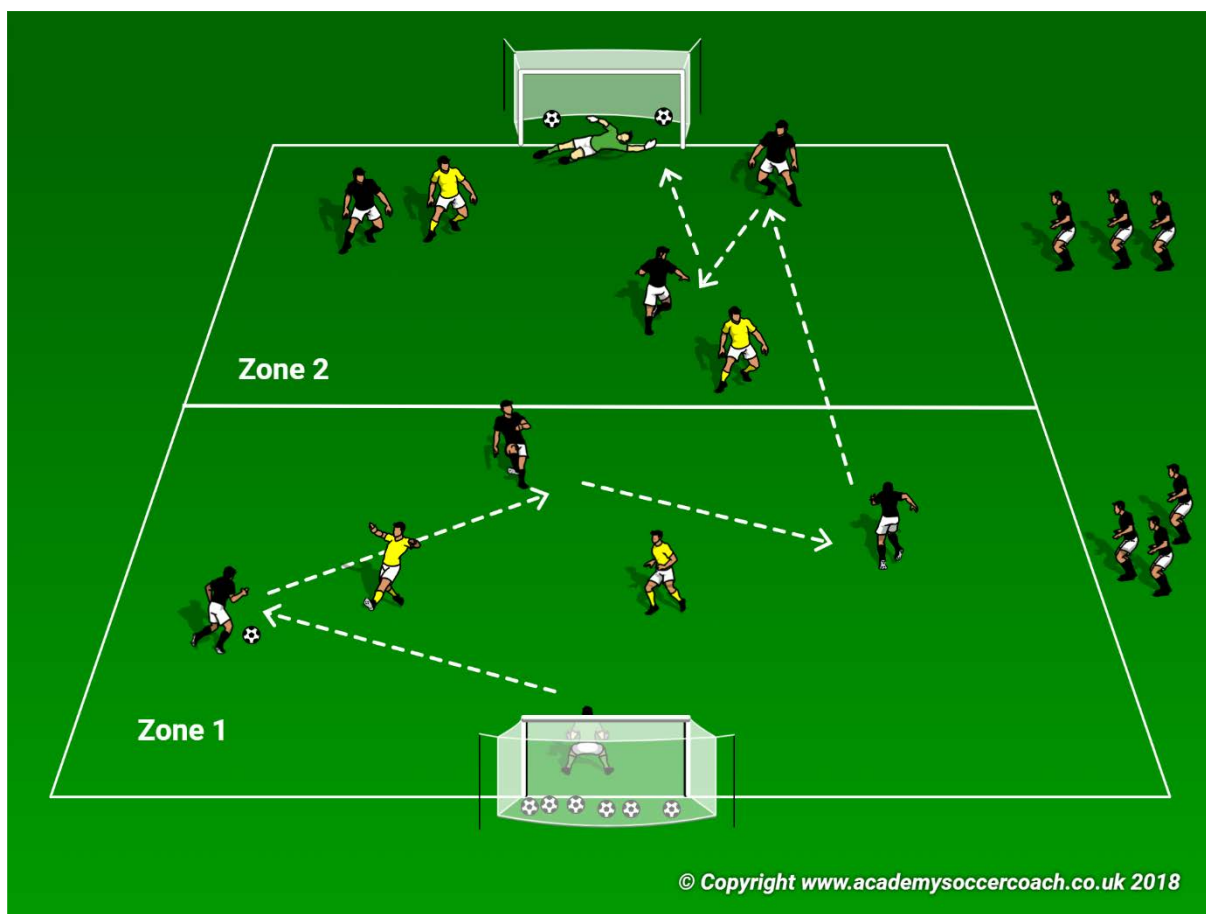
Main Part: Analytical 2 – 3v2 in each zone to build-up play.

Area: 40 yards x 20 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 18 minutes (6 x 2 minutes with one minute rest in between series).

Play starts from the goalkeeper in zone one. The three attackers (blacks) must combine between them while being pressured by two defenders (yellows). Their aim is to play the ball into zone two for their teammates to finish on goal. If the defenders win the ball, they counter on the goal in zone one. After three attacks the attackers switch with the ones resting outside of the area. Change the defenders every two minutes, at each rest. To progress, reduce the width of the area to 15 yards. The attackers now have less time and space available for them to play the ball. This requires them to anticipate play, thus be in the right position at the right time and adapt the right stance to receive and play quickly. This progression aims to develop technical speed, where accurate first touch, one touch play and passes are required. Again the players are grouped with reference to their position in the system of play utilised by the team.



Main Part: Global Game 3 – 9v9 Match.

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

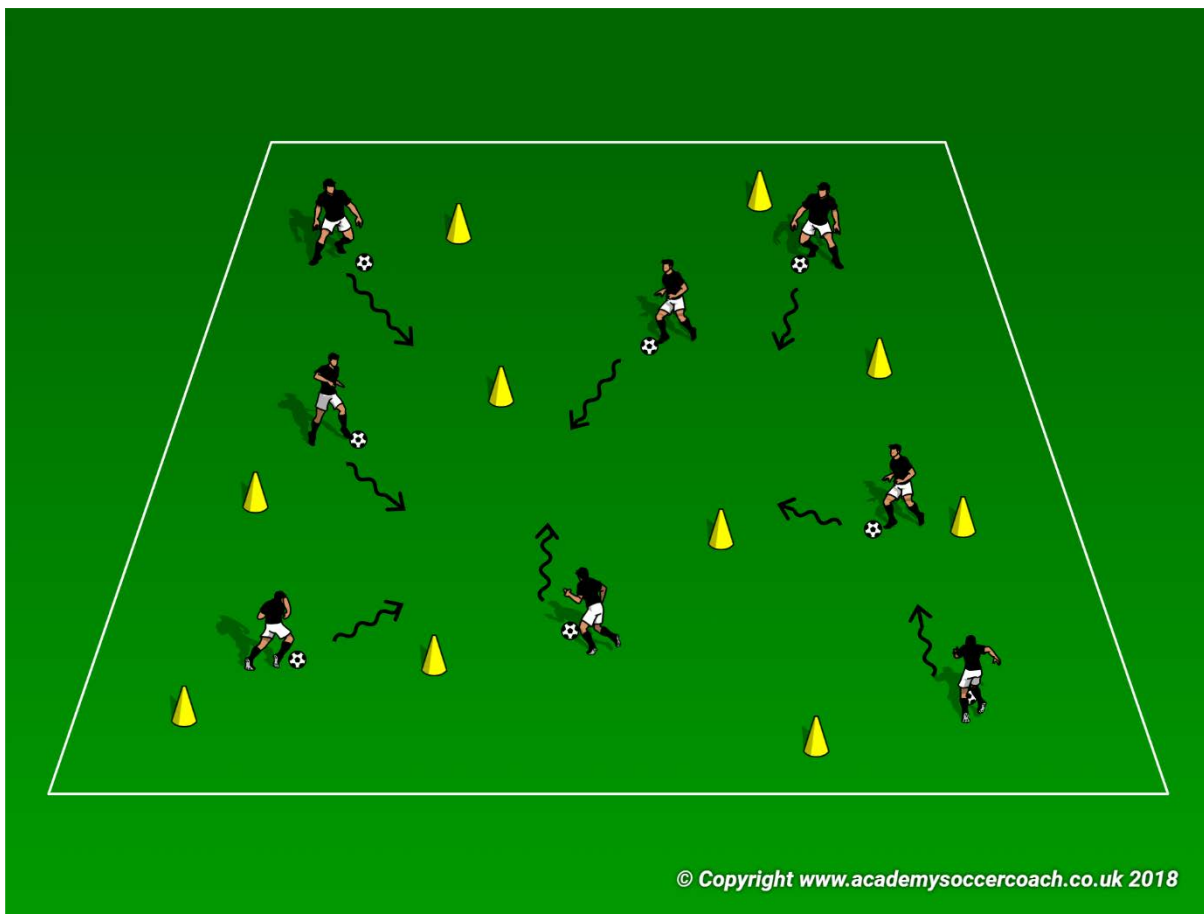
Duration: 18 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Return to the match and emphasize on the main points (outcomes) of the session. Review these points with the players and stress them out during the run of play. We might need to remind these outcomes to individual players during the session, without stopping the flow of the session and especially during the rest period.

Conclusive Part – Cool down

Duration: 10 minutes.

Players perform light exercises by dribbling the ball inside a marked area without hitting each other or any of the cones (see below image). End the session with static stretching exercises focusing on the quadriceps, hamstrings, adductors, calves and lower back.



Session 3

Aim: Create space and options to circulate the ball in midfield.

Outcomes:

1. Staggered positions of midfielders 6, 8 and 10.
2. Compass movement of the offensive midfielders 8 and 10.
3. Central defenders to support the midfield from behind.
4. Striker to create options to verticalize.
5. Off-the-ball movement to support the player in possession.
6. Press immediately upon losing the ball.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Inter-sectoral (middle chain).

Equipment:

Bibs: Eight yellows and two reds.

Balls: At least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Mannequins: Four

Flat Markers: Four for analytical exercise 1.

Markers: Twenty to mark areas.

Mini goals: Two.

Description: The midfield is the engine of the team. It is therefore of utmost importance that the level of relationship with the rest of the team is high. In this session we focus on the off-the-ball movement and angles created in midfield with special emphasis given to the compass movement. The compass movement is when one of two players drops while the other either remains in the same position or moves to a higher position. Timing of passes and support to the player with the ball are two other fundamental outcomes required for the success of ball circulation in midfield in search of penetration.

Warming Up – Passing combinations.

Area: 30 yards x 15 yards.

Targeted outcomes: N/A.

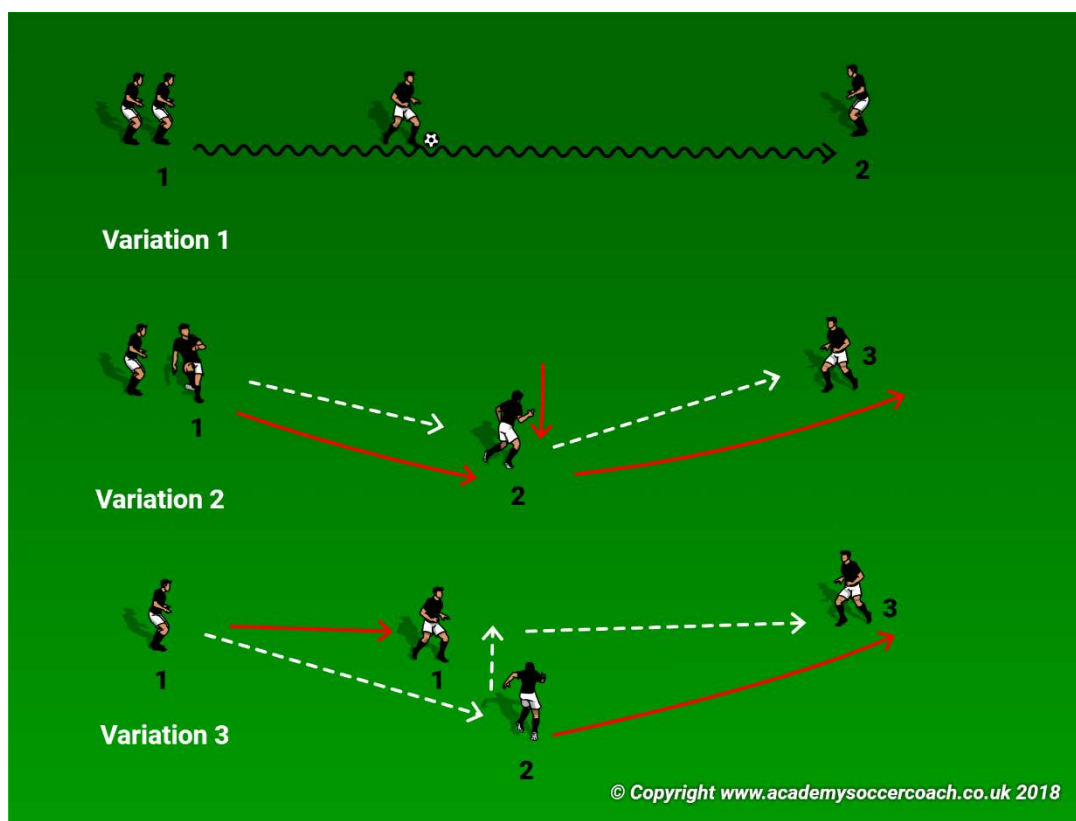
Duration: 20 minutes.

We start the warm-up with activation exercises and dynamic flexibility. These are followed by the exercises described below. The warm-up ends with quick footwork and short sprints of ten to fifteen meters in length.

In variation 1 the ball-carrier dribbles to the opposite player who is situated twenty yards away. Players perform take-overs and dribbling at speed.

In variation 2, player 2 opens up at an angle to receive the pass from player 1. Player 2 then directs the ball to player 3. Players follow their pass to rotate positions.

In variation 3, player 1 wall-passes with player 2 prior to passing the ball to player 3. Again players follow their pass.



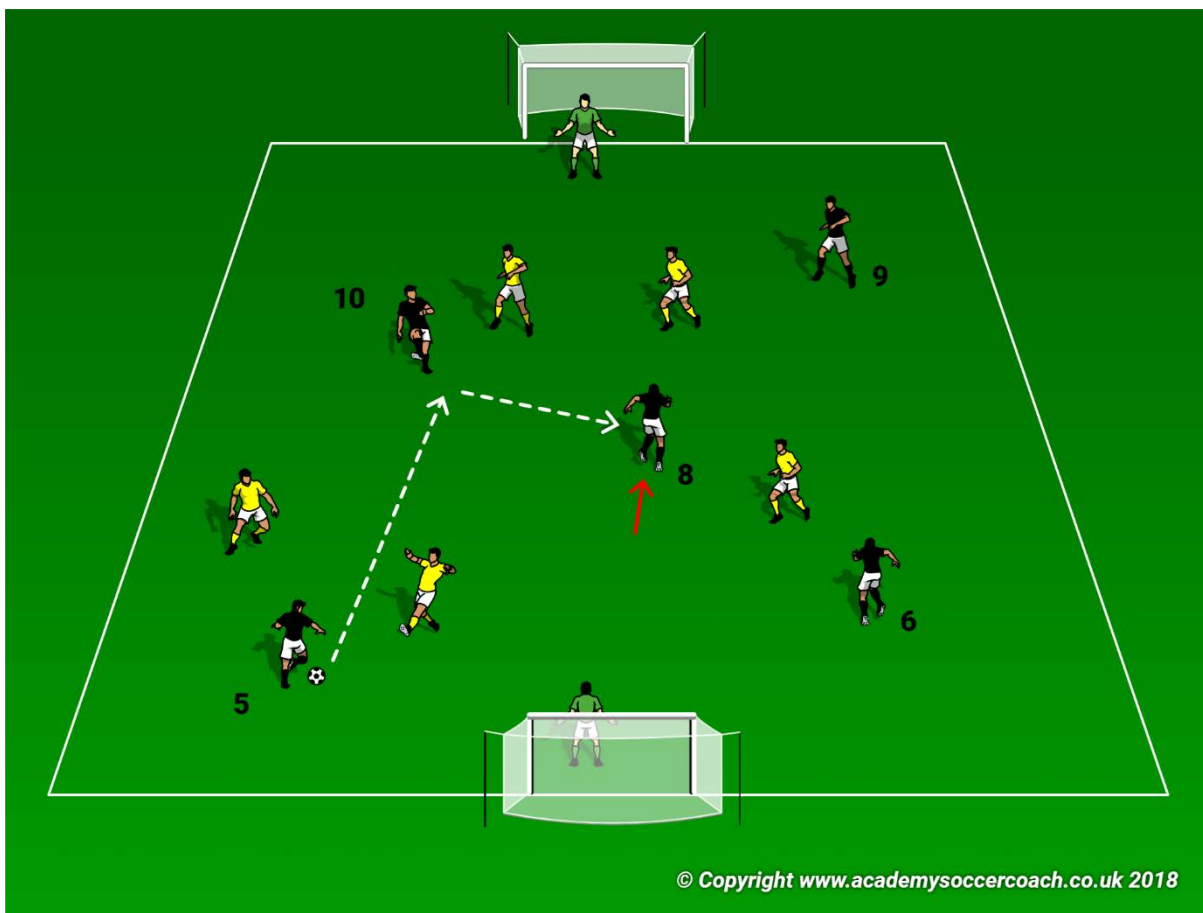
Main Part: Global Situation 1 – 5v5 + GKs.

Area: 40 yards x 30 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

This is a normal fluid game where the emphasis is on developing communication in the middle sector of the team. There are not corner kicks or throw-ins. Restarts always take place from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. Even if the game is without any restrictions, we should constantly remind the players to take note of their position with respect to their teammates and opponents. In the image below we have a typical movement between midfielders 8 and 10. This is the compass movement where the 10 moves up while 8 drops diagonally behind him. This creates a possible two passing options for central defender 5. The image below shows that player 5 passed to 10 while 8 provided support by coming from a deeper position. The other midfielder 6, dropped centrally thus providing both cover and support.



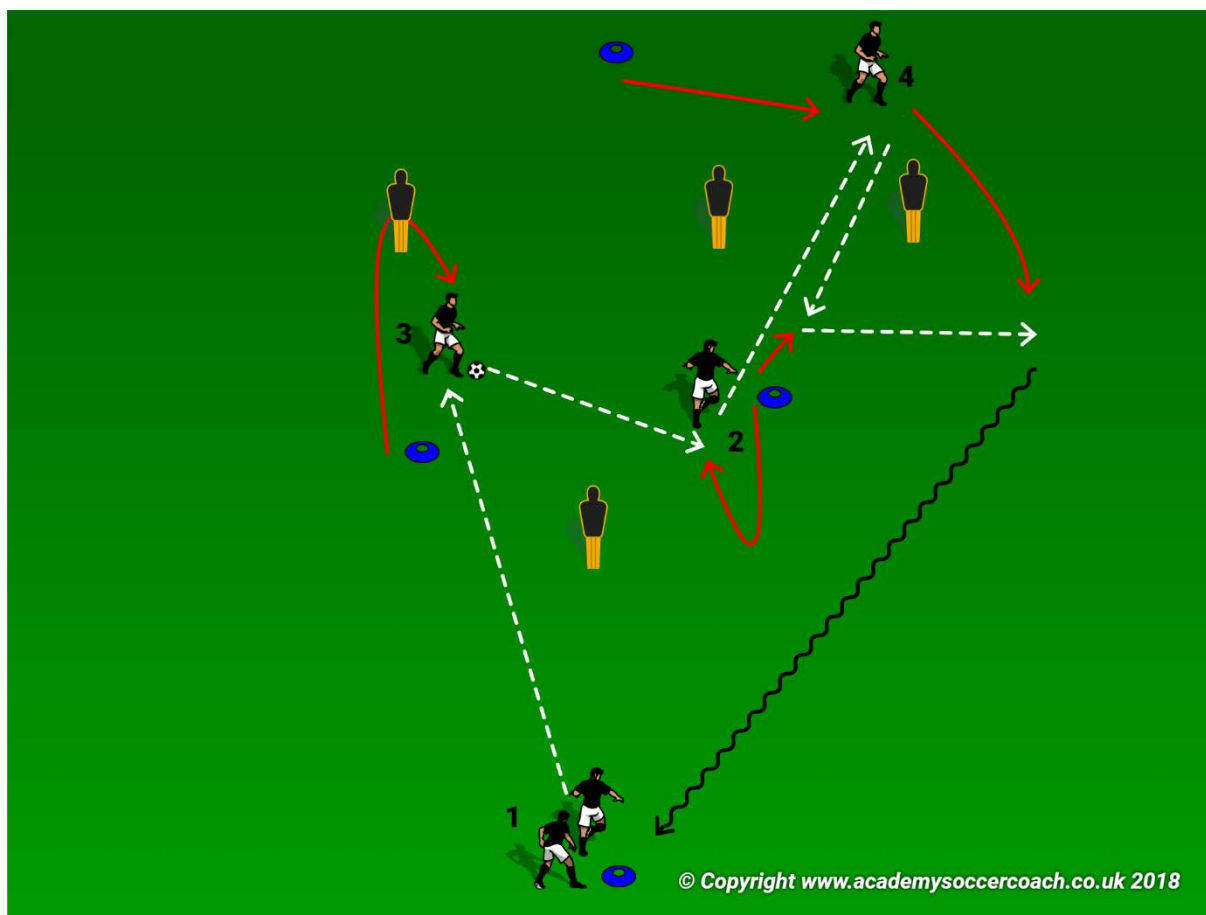
Main Part: Analytical 1 – Compass movement passing combinations.

Area: 40 yards x 30 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2 and 5.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

The setup in the image below depicts a typical situation in midfield. We have the player at position 1 who could be the central defender and who passes to the player at position 3. Prior to this pass however, player at position 3 goes high while the player at position 2 goes deep (compass movement). Player at position 3 goes behind the mannequin as if to lose the defender, and then comes short to receive a pass from player 1. Player 3 lays the ball for player 2 who passes to player 4 in the space between and behind the mannequins. Player 4 plays a wall-pass with player 2 prior to dribbling the ball back to position 1. Another option would be for player 1 to play to player 2 who will then play a wall-pass with player 3 prior to passing the ball to player 4.



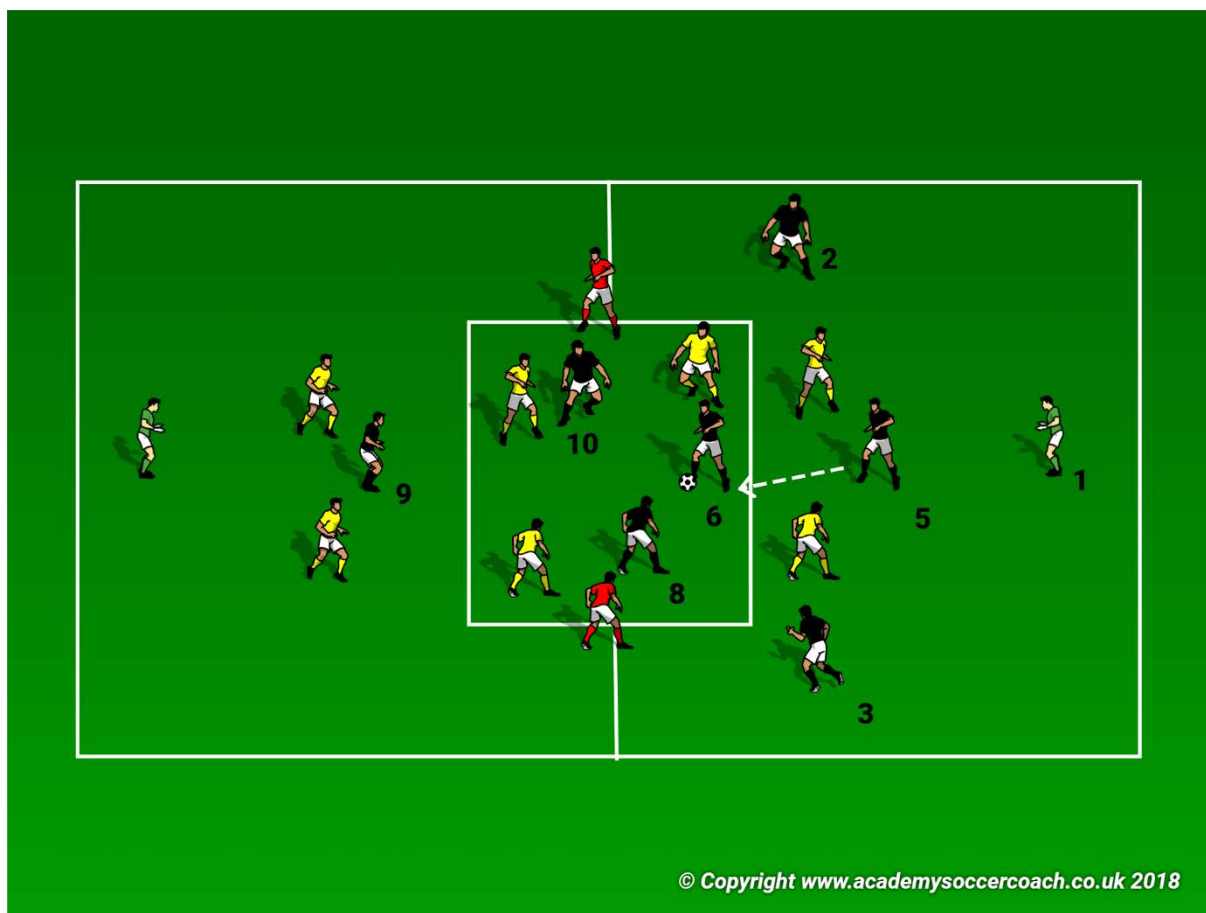
Main Part: Analytical 2 – Playing through the central zone.

Area: 65 yards x 40 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Duration: 22 minutes (4 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Players practice playing in their respective positions within the team. In this training situation, both teams aim to keep possession of the ball and play to the target player – the goalkeepers. The ball must however be played through the central zone where a 3v3 plus two situation takes place. The aim of having this zone is to work on the off-the-ball movement and angles of support of the midfielders. The neutral players help the team in possession keep the ball while we work on the creation of staggered angles of the midfielders. The full backs are the only two players from both teams who can move between zones.



Main Part: Global Situation 2– 9v9 Match.

Area: 80 yards x 60 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

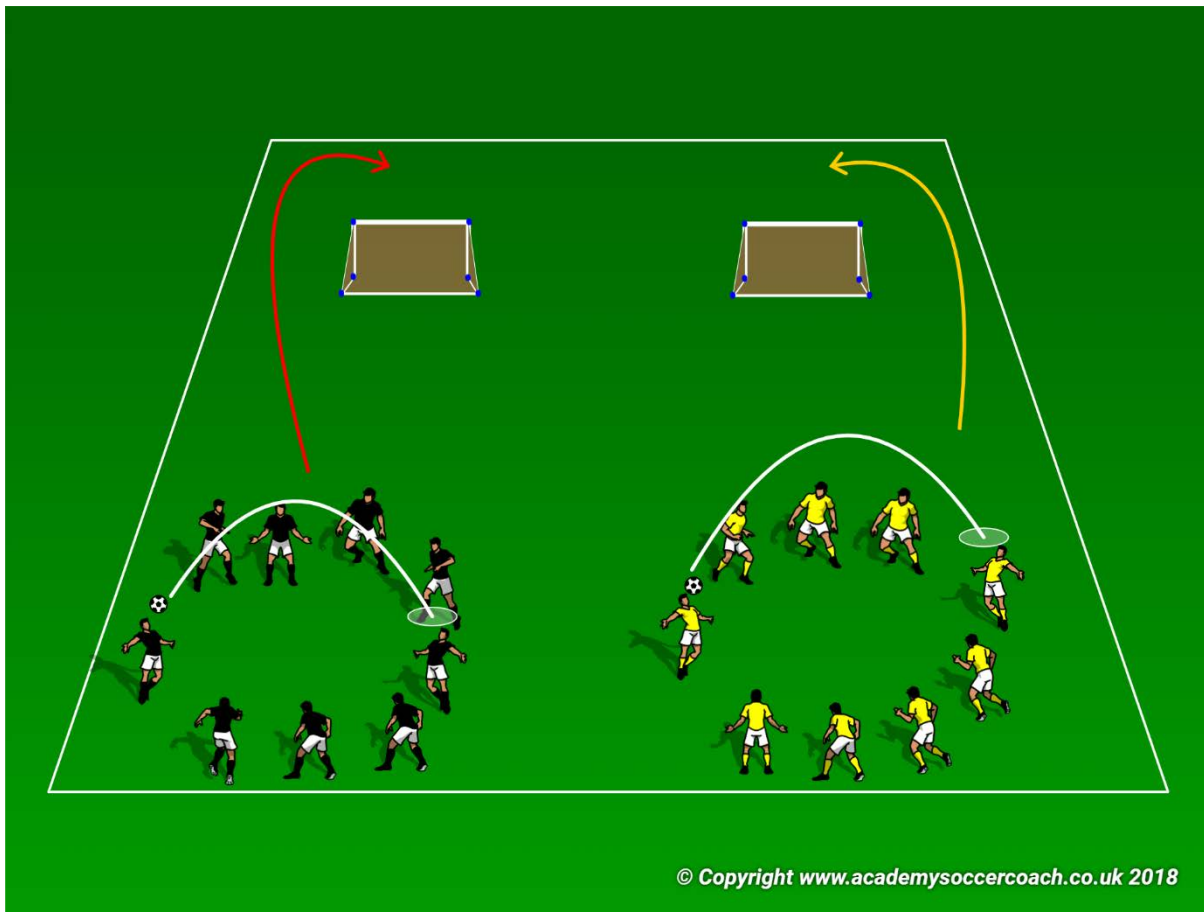
Duration: 18 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Play a normal match but review with the players the key outcomes worked on during the previous activity. Work with the midfielders to support the build-up from the back and the striker to create options for the midfielders to verticalize play.

Conclusive Part – Cool down

Duration: 10 minutes.

Both teams juggle the ball and aim to score in their assigned goal which is positioned facing the opposite way. If teams drop the ball, they have to start from the beginning. End the session with static stretching exercises.



Session 4

Aim: Build-up from the back using the defensive midfielder as the low-playmaker.

Outcomes:

1. Staggered angles of support.
2. Have a safe option to play backward.
3. Create width and forward playing options using the fullbacks.
4. Build-up with three at the back – use of defensive midfielder.
5. Off-the-ball movement to create space to circulate the ball.
6. Have passing options around and in front of the ball.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Inter-sectoral (goalkeeper, defence and midfield).

Equipment:

Bibs: Ten yellows and four reds.

Balls: At least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Markers: Twenty to mark pitch.

Mini goals: Three.

Description: We work towards developing communication between the goalkeeper, back four and midfield sectors in the creation of space in order to play vertically. Our main principle is to build from the back and with the use of constructive short passes which require focus and off-the-ball movement from the players to receive the ball in space and with various options to play. The goalkeeper plays a crucial role in this practice as he is usually the first player to initiate an attack and should always be available for the defenders to receive the ball and help them secure possession. The defensive midfielder should be the one who creates numerical superiority and more options at the back to build-up play.

Warming Up: 3v1 in two zones.

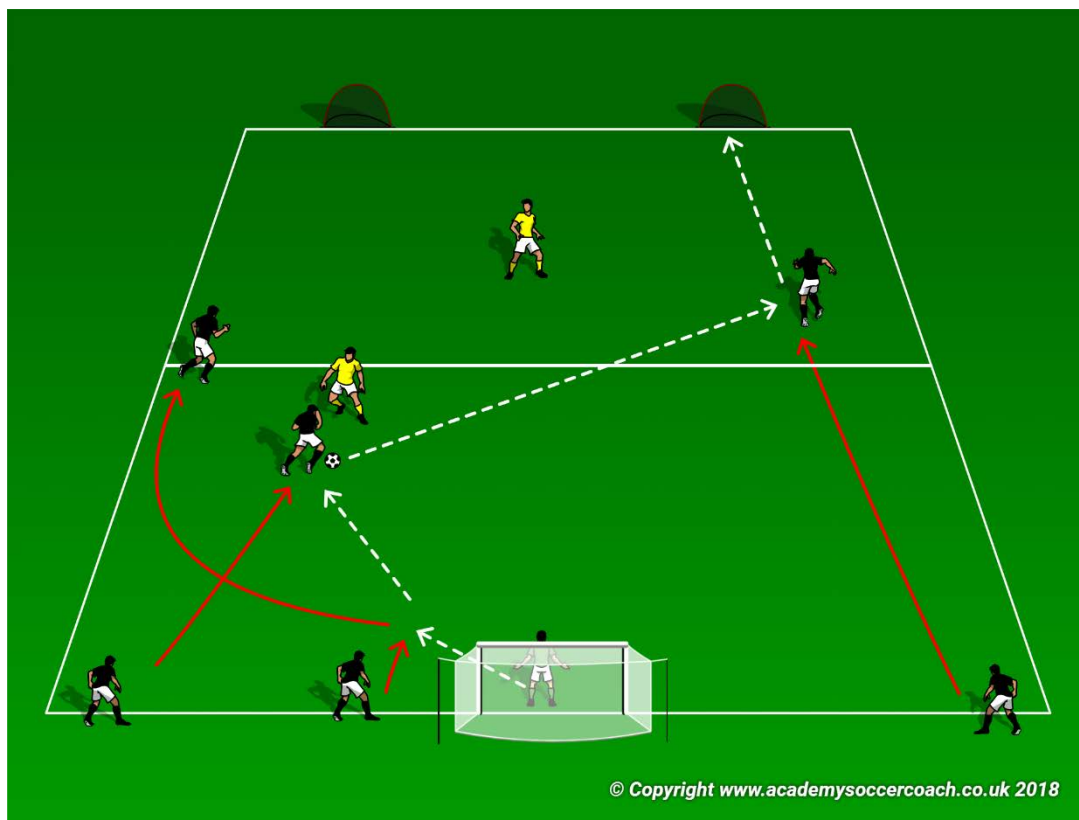
Area: 25 yards x 12 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 5 and 6.

Duration: 20 minutes.

Session starts with activation exercises and dynamic flexibility to increase the heart rate, blood circulation, and articular mobility and muscle flexibility. This should take approximately ten minutes. We then move on to a 3v0 three men weave, pass and overlap. The main focus being the quality of passes, passing angles, movement after passing the ball, and bearing a mentality to play forward.

Progression takes place after three minutes performing the three men weave. We now play 3v1 in each zone with play always starting from the goalkeeper. To increase mental intensity, concentration levels, as well as technique, we play with a two touch restriction. The final three minutes of the warm-up should be played as a 3v1 in the first zone and a 3v2 in the second zone. In all variations, the attacking team (blacks) aim to conclude in the mini goals, while the defending team (yellows) attack the regular goal whenever they win possession.



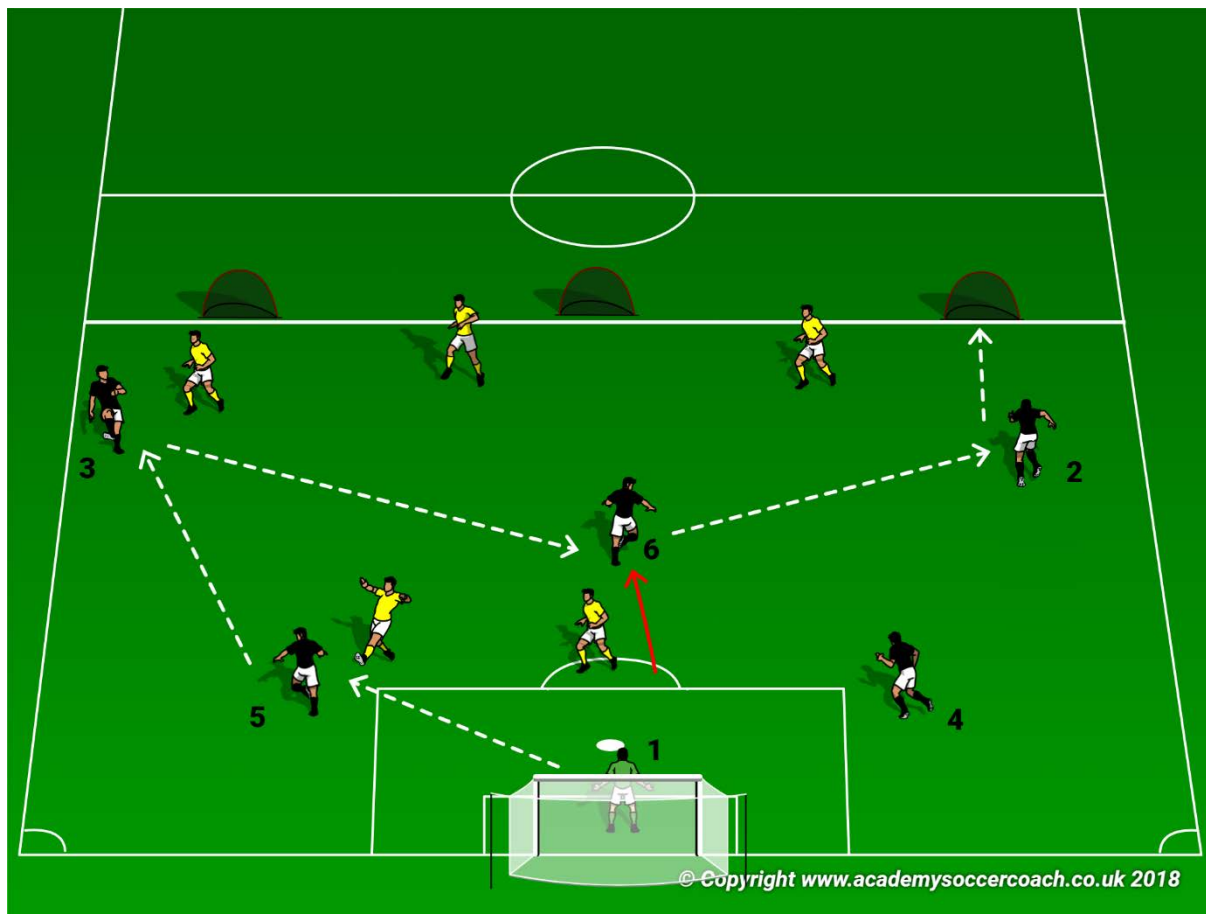
Main Part: Global Situation 1 – GK+5v5.

Area: 40 yards x 50 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

We have one group playing this game while the other group performs the rondo described in analytical situation 1. After the allotted time, groups switch activities. In the below described activity we have a game with one team playing with a goalkeeper, four defenders and one midfielder (blacks) while the opponents play with three midfielders and two attackers (yellows). The focus of this activity is to create the necessary width and also depth using the two full backs (2 and 3) while having the number 6 (defensive midfielder) providing support to both central defenders and full backs. The goalkeeper plays an important role in this game as he should always provide support to the central defenders to play him the ball back whenever they are pressured. However, we need to encourage our central defenders to find the opportunity to pass the ball forward. This requires the players in front of the ball to create and move into the right spaces at the right time.



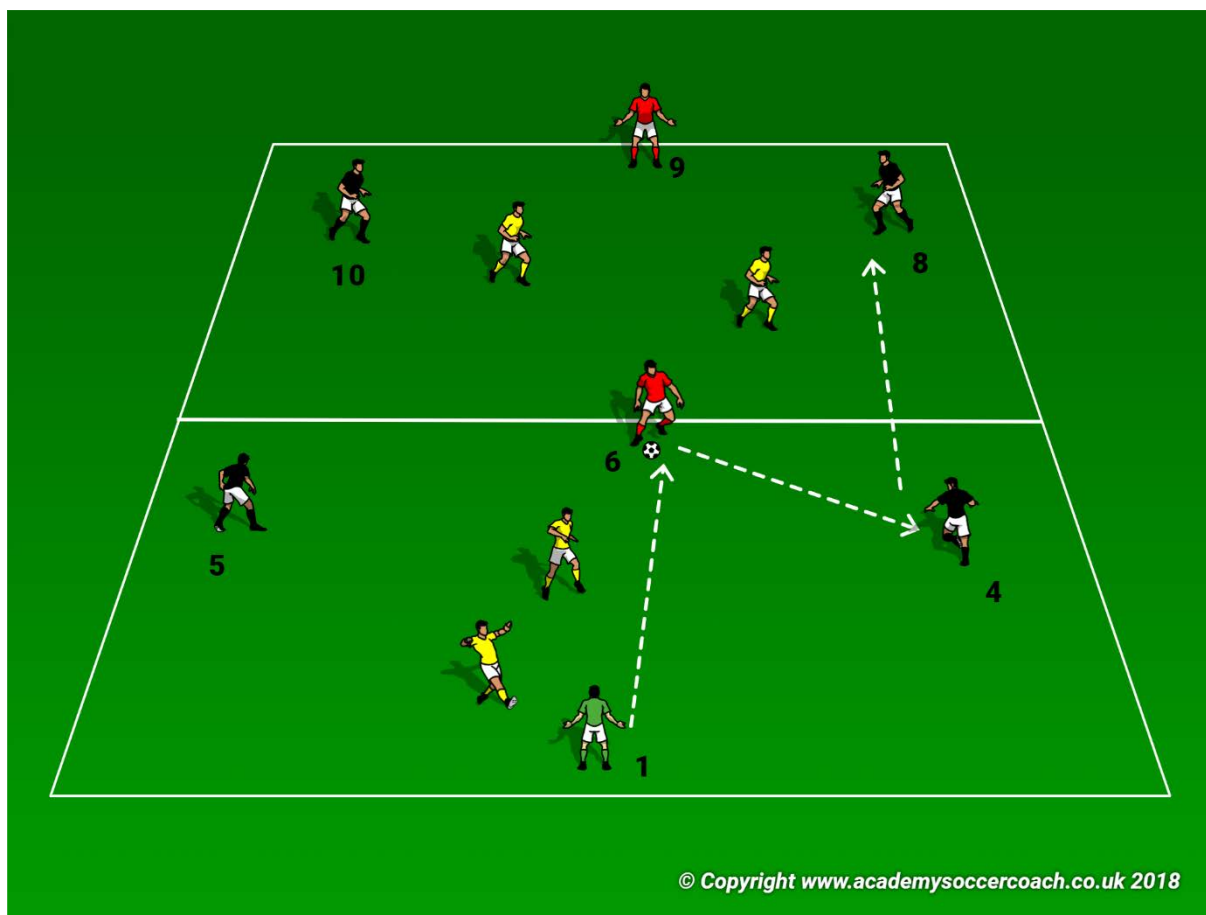
Main Part: Analytical 1 – The number six rondo.

Area: 25 yards x 15 yards divided into two equal zones.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (5 x 1 minute with one minute rest between series).

In this rondo we have two zones. In the lower zone we have a goalkeeper, two central defenders and two opponents. In the upper zone we have two midfielders, a neutral player and two opponents. We also have a defensive midfielder – the number 6 – who is neutral and thus plays with the team in possession. The number 6 may move freely between the lower and upper zones. The goalkeeper is also neutral. Focus is mainly on the defensive midfielder who must continuously support the players in possession of the ball and looks for space to receive the ball. Further to this we work on the technical details for this player to be able to receive and play the ball at a high speed. This player must also be able to perform decoy runs to attract opponents, pull them out of positions and create space for teammates to receive the ball.



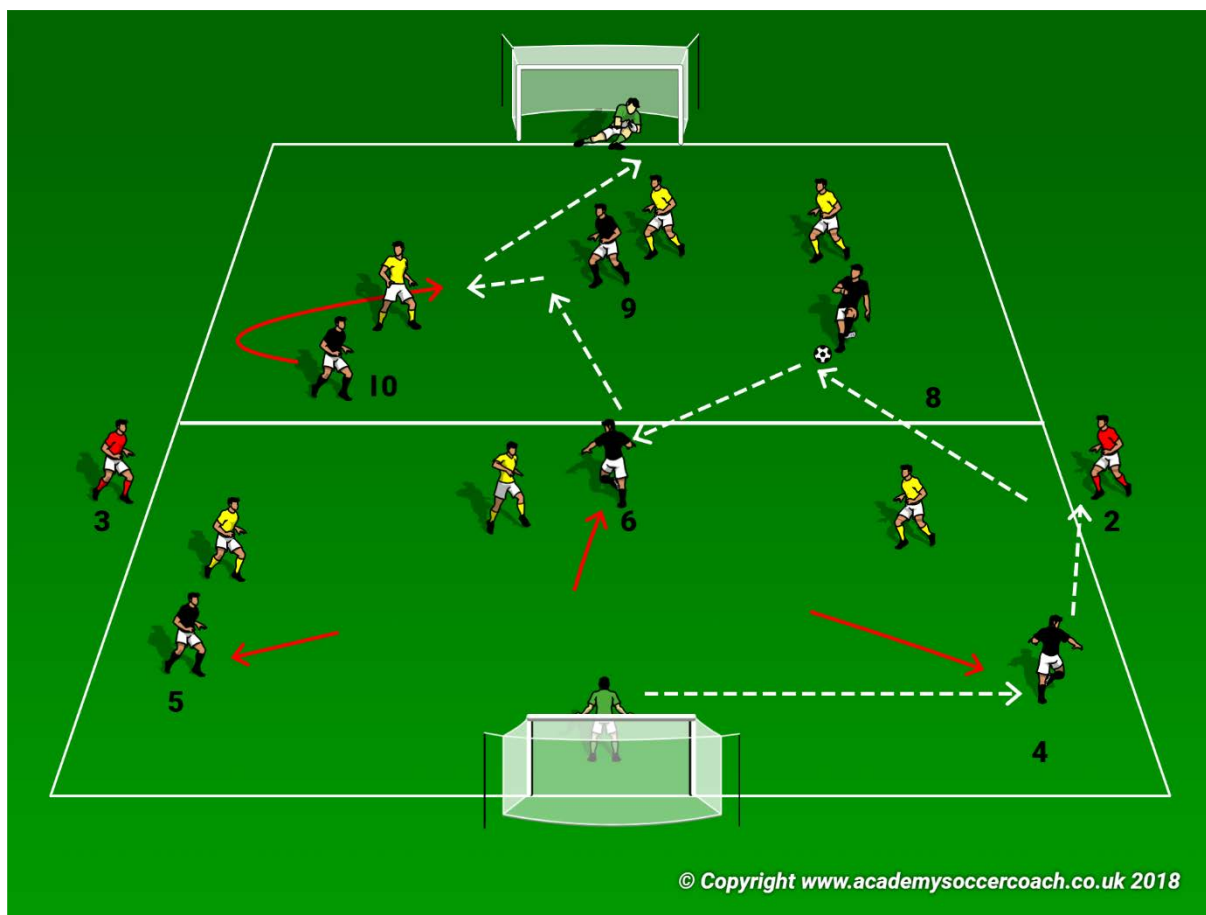
Main Part: Analytical 2 – 7v7+2.

Area: 50 yards x 40 yards divided into two equal zones.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 20 minutes (4 x 4 minutes with one minute rest between series).

We now present the players with a situation where they have to build-up play in restricted space. In each half we have a 3v3 with players playing in their usual positions. We also have two neutral players on the flanks who provide the team in possession with a numerical advantage and thus more options to play the ball. All players are restricted to remain inside their assigned half of the pitch while the neutral flank players may move along their assigned side. Teams may only score from inside the opposing team's half. The other remaining players play a basic rondo. These players are then rotated with other players participating in the activity just described. The major aim of this activity is to put the players in situations where they have to make the right decisions while being pressured with time and space.



Main Part: Global Situation 2– Build-up through the thirds game.

Area: Full pitch.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 20 minutes (2 x 9 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

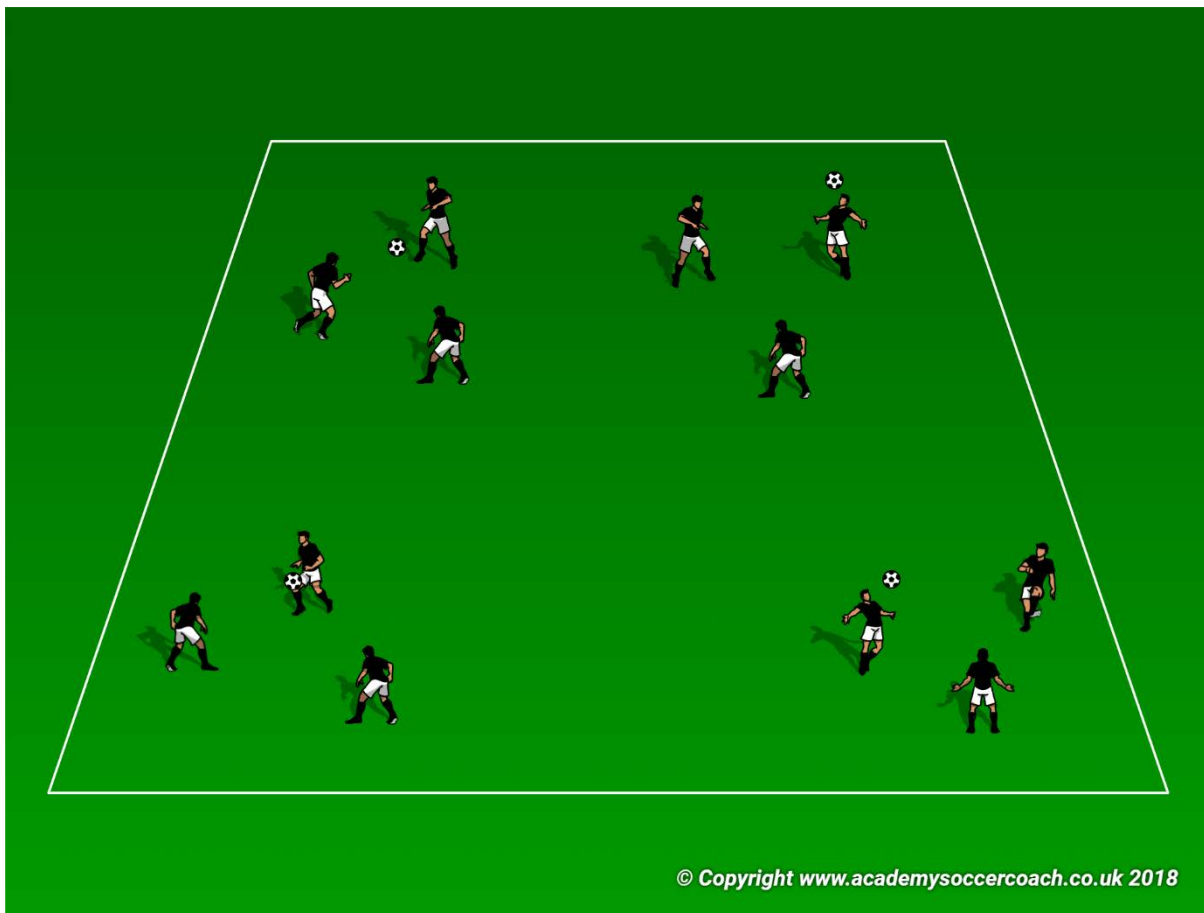
In the first of the two series we play with three horizontal zones as shown in the diagram hereunder. We play without corner kicks and throw-ins, so that the ball always starts from the goalkeeper of the team in possession. A goal is also worth a point. If the ball reaches the final third after being played through the central horizontal zone, an extra point is awarded to the scoring team. However teams may opt to play direct balls if the situation is on, thus by-passing the midfield third. Therefore, it is not necessary to play the ball through this zone, and if a favourable option for direct play exist, players are encouraged to do so. Furthermore, players are allowed to move freely between thirds. This makes the game more realistic. The offside rule is in effect as it is in normal soccer matches!



Conclusive Part – Cool down

Duration: 10 minutes.

Team is divided into groups of three or two players each. In each group players juggle the ball aiming to reach a specific number of juggles; for example twenty. As a progression each player is allowed to juggle the ball twice or even touch it only once. We can further progress this to juggle the ball using only the head or thighs and feet. The reason for giving the players a fun cool down at the end is to relax them from a mentally intensive training session. End the session with static stretching and core stability exercises.



Session 5

Aim: To switch the point of attack when vertical play is not possible.

Outcomes:

1. Overload ball zone.
2. Staggered angles of support near the ball.
3. Safety option behind the line of the ball.
4. Opposite full back gets wide and ready to receive the ball to attack from the opponents' weak side.
5. Preventive marking at the back.
6. Movement to receive the ball behind the defence.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Team tactics – collective.

Equipment:

Bibs: Ten yellows and six reds.

Balls: At least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Cones: Six

Markers: Twenty to mark pitch.

Description: The aim of this session is to overload the area around the ball thus creating more playing options while at the same time attracting more opponents towards one flank (ball zone) while freeing the opposite. If we are able to play the ball quickly into the opponents' weak zones, we have a high probability of getting around their defence. This requires a high level of cooperation and collective effort from the whole team to quickly support and overload the other flank once the ball is played into this zone.

Warming Up – 4v4+3 switch zone rondo.

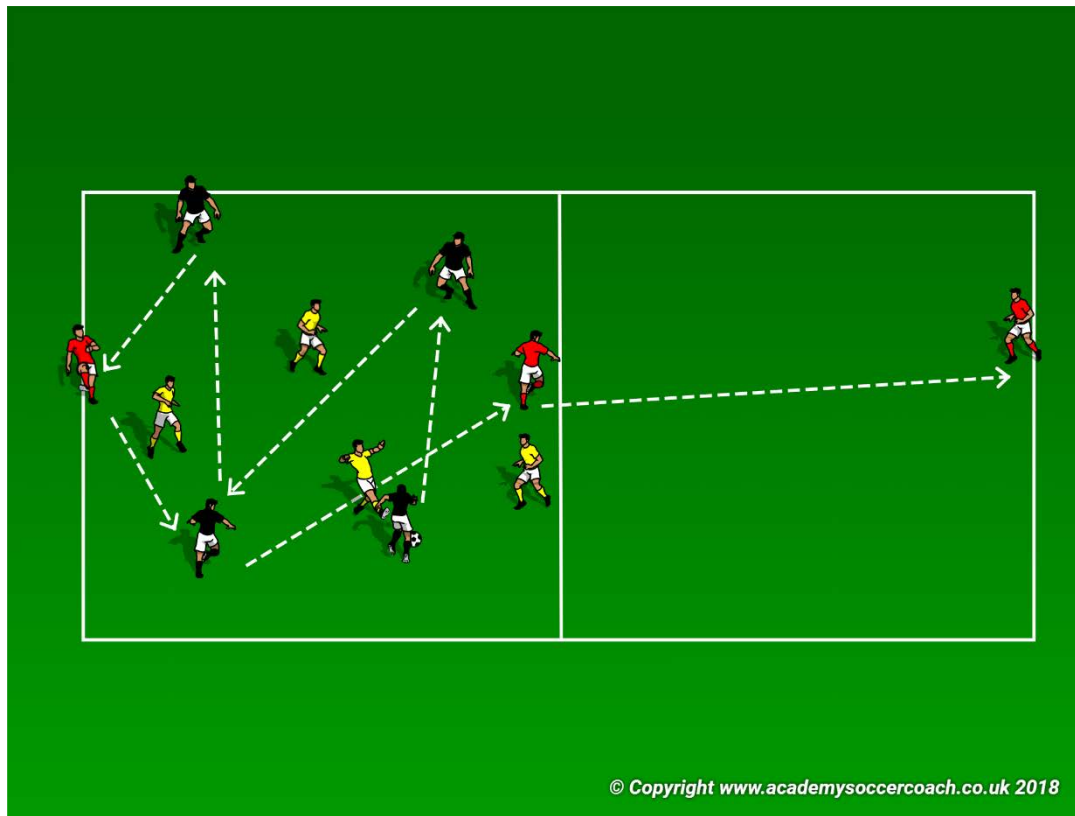
Area: 15 yards x 30 yards divided into two equal zones.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2 and 3.

Duration: 20 minutes.

We start the warm-up with short passing between players while on the move. We increase the tempo of the warm-up by introducing more balls and require the players to perform a short run of a higher intensity after passing the ball. The passing exercises are interspersed with mobility exercises and dynamic stretching.

After assuring that the players' neuro-muscular system is engaged, we move on to the below described rondo. Players play 4v4 plus two neutrals who play with the team in possession. After making a pre-set number of consecutive passes, the ball is played to the adjacent zone where the same rondo takes place. The team who had possession of the ball retains it. Rotate the neutral players every three minutes. The goalkeepers also take part in this warm-up as in the main session as is also the case in a match they are required to play under pressure using their feet.



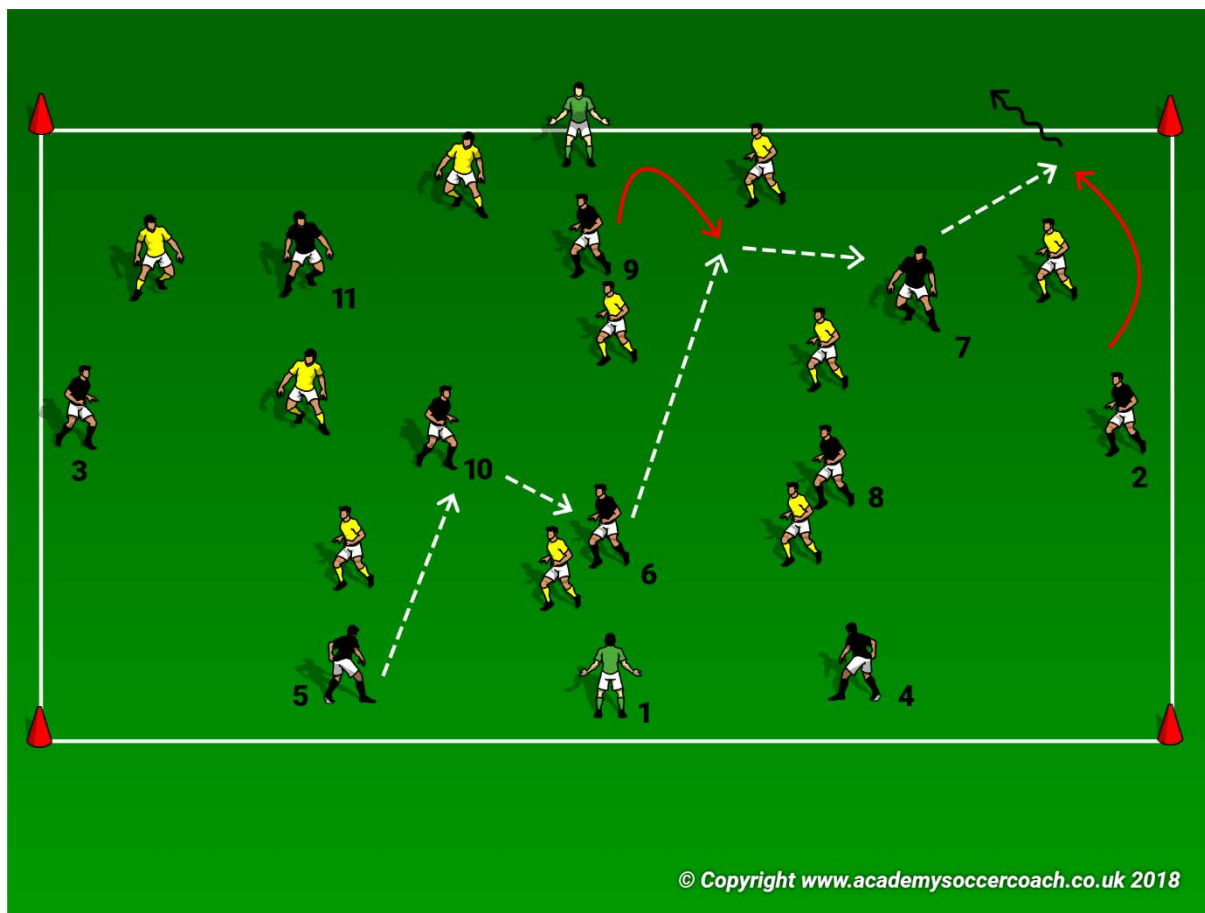
Main Part: Global Situation 1 – 11v11 line soccer.

Area: 45 yards x 50 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

We play on a short and wide pitch with the intention of switching play quickly to the opposition's weak side whenever direct penetration is not possible. The aim of both teams is to pass or dribble the ball and stop it over the opposition's line. The goalkeepers take part in this game as during a match they will be asked many times to support the team to retain possession and to also switch the point of attack. As the pitch is short and wide the team in possession is forced to make use of the width and circulate the ball rapidly so to open up gaps in the opposition's defence. Players are instructed to provide length (forwards 7, 9 and 11), depth (central defenders 4 and 5), and width (full backs 2 and 3). The midfield trio (6, 8 and 10) must continuously move to create angles and passing options for quicker and more precise ball circulation.



Main Part: Analytical 1 – Possession vs transition.

Area: 45 by 50 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest between series).

The black team which is the team we are concentrated on, aims to keep possession of the ball. Full backs 2 and 3 remain wide inside their assigned flank zones. They are instructed to remain inside these zones so that width in attack is provided and the team has more space where to circulate the ball. The black team plays against six yellow players (defenders). They score a point by making ten consecutive passes and stopping the ball behind the yellow team's goal line. Should the yellow players win the ball, they pass it to any of the outside yellow players marked with a circle to score a point. This forces the black team to immediately press upon losing possession of the ball. The four outside yellow players may move between cones to receive the ball. They are changed with other four yellow players from the inside after five minutes. The goalkeepers also take part. The goalkeeper at the bottom of the diagram plays with the black team while the other plays with the yellow team.



Main Part: Global Situation 2 – 11v11 line soccer.

Area: 45 yards x 55 yards within a regular soccer pitch.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

We play the same as in the global 1 but now the team in attack aims to score by playing the ball behind the line of restraint of the opposite team. No player is allowed except the goalkeeper to remain beyond this line. However, when a team is in possession they try to play the ball behind this line for another player to run onto. When this happens players are allowed to enter this zone and the team in attack aims to score while the defending team defend their goal. When the ball goes out of play, the team in possession restarts the game from the middle horizontal zone. Although it seems easy to play behind the line of restraint, in reality it is not. There are twenty players within a space measuring 45 by 55 yards. The player on the ball must have good positional awareness and be able to play quickly and with accuracy, otherwise he will be easily dispossessed of the ball. At a team level, good strategic positions and use of space is a pre-requisite.



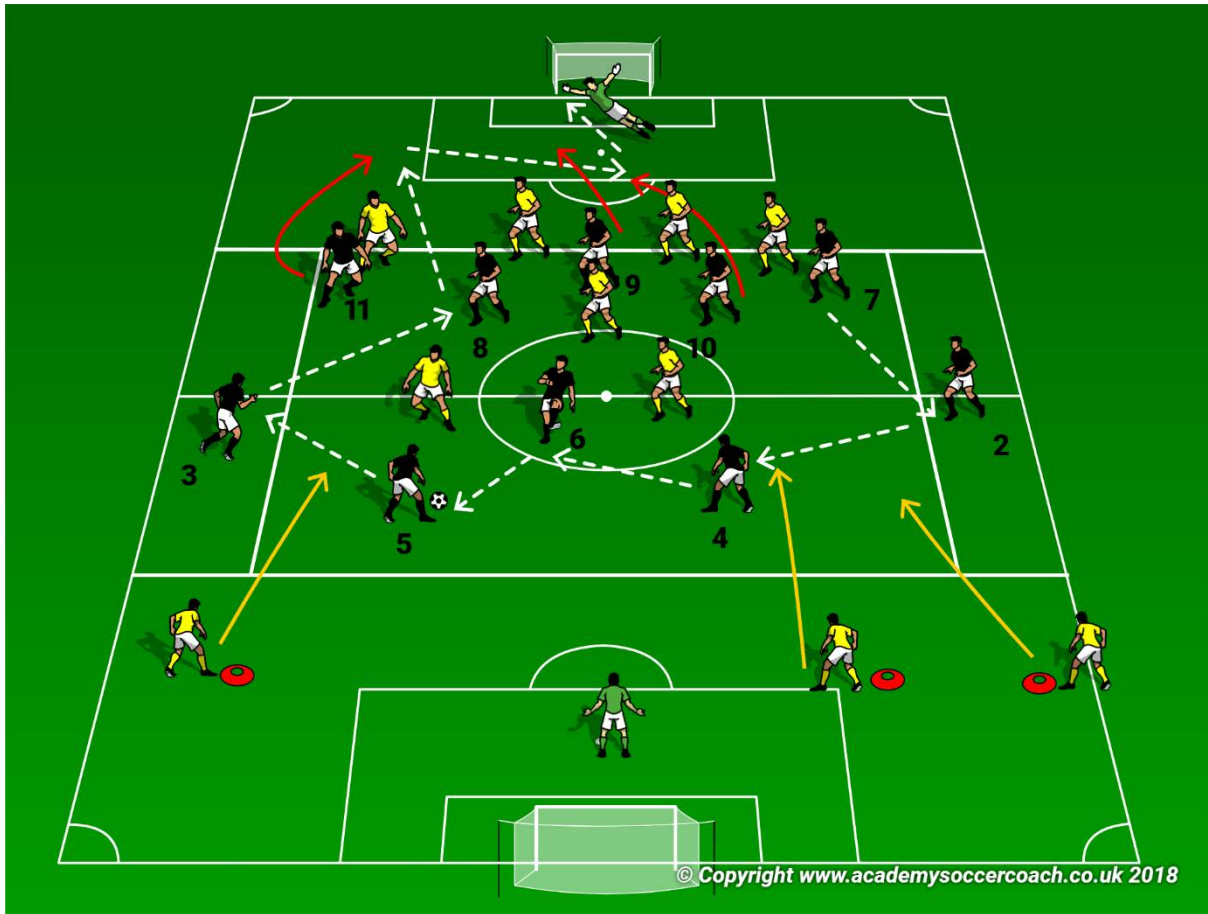
Main Part: Analytical 2 – Switch with rapidity and attack.

Area: 45 yards x 50 yards inside a whole soccer pitch.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 4 minutes with two minutes rest between series).

The attacking team (blacks) have thirty seconds at their disposal to score playing against seven defenders (yellows) and acquire two points. Full backs 2 and 3 are to remain wide inside their assigned flank zones. They could however move towards the inside while the inside forwards 7 and/or 11 remain wide. If the thirty seconds are over, the yellow players waiting outside the area come into play. From this moment if the black team scores a goal equals one point. If during the first thirty seconds of play the yellow team wins the ball, they counter on the opposite goal. However, the three players waiting outside the area must first get into an onside position prior to receiving the ball. Training situations like these force the team to adapt correct positional play and to also apply pressure on the ball immediately should possession is lost.



Main Part: Global Situation 3 – 11v11 Match.

Area: Full pitch.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

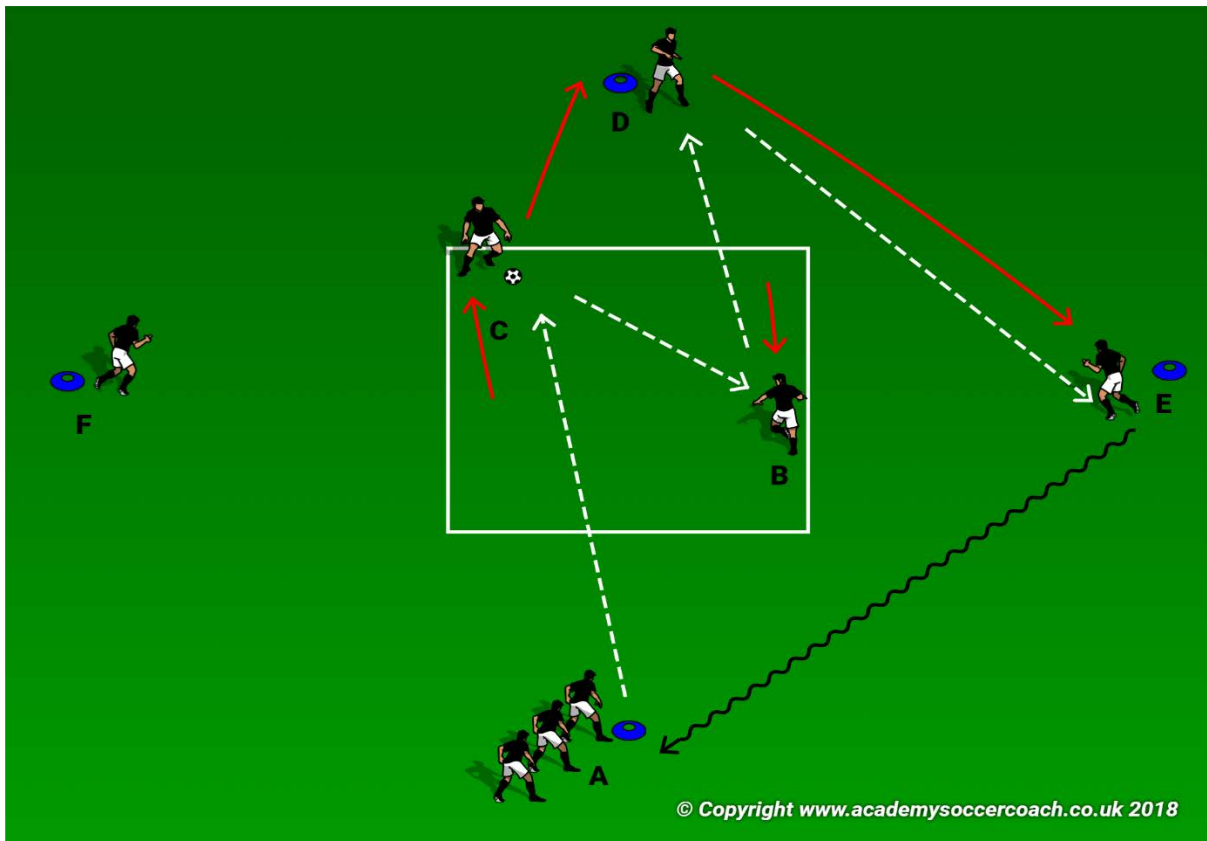
Duration: 18 minutes (2 x 8 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Play a normal match but review the key outcomes worked on during the previous activity with the players. The key points to remember are to overload the ball zone, have staggered passing angles, and support and cover behind the ball to switch the ball quickly.

Conclusive Part – Cool down.

Duration: 10 minutes.

Player A passes to player C inside the grid who performs a compass movement with player B prior to receiving the ball. Player B passes to player D, and the latter passes to player E who dribbles to the starting position. Perform the next repetition by playing the ball to player F instead of to player E. End the session with static stretching exercises.



Session 6

Aim: To verticalize play and support the attack.

Outcomes:

1. Length and space created by the striker.
2. Staggered passing options.
3. Support the forward pass.
4. Off-the-ball movement to create space to play behind the defence.
5. Timing of passes and movement to attack the space behind the defence.
6. Support and cover behind the player with the ball to be able to apply immediate pressure in case of a turnover.

Total duration of session: Approximately 90 minutes.

Formation based on: 1-4-3-3.

Complexity level: Inter-sectoral (midfielders and forwards).

Equipment:

Bibs: Eight yellows.

Balls: At least eight to allow for a better session flow.

Markers: Twenty to mark pitch.

Markers: Two yellow and two red to mark starting positions in the analytical exercises.

Description: In this session we work with the midfield and forward sectors in order to create and exploit space when playing against a high line. To be able to accomplish this, we need the striker to create movement and thus options either for him to receive the ball or for the ball to be played to his teammates. Insertions from midfield into the attack are also encouraged. As the striker's movements create space, the midfielders or inside forwards are required to make the best use of it by attacking the lanes created to receive the ball played behind the opponents' back line.

Warming Up: Staggered passing angles to play deep.

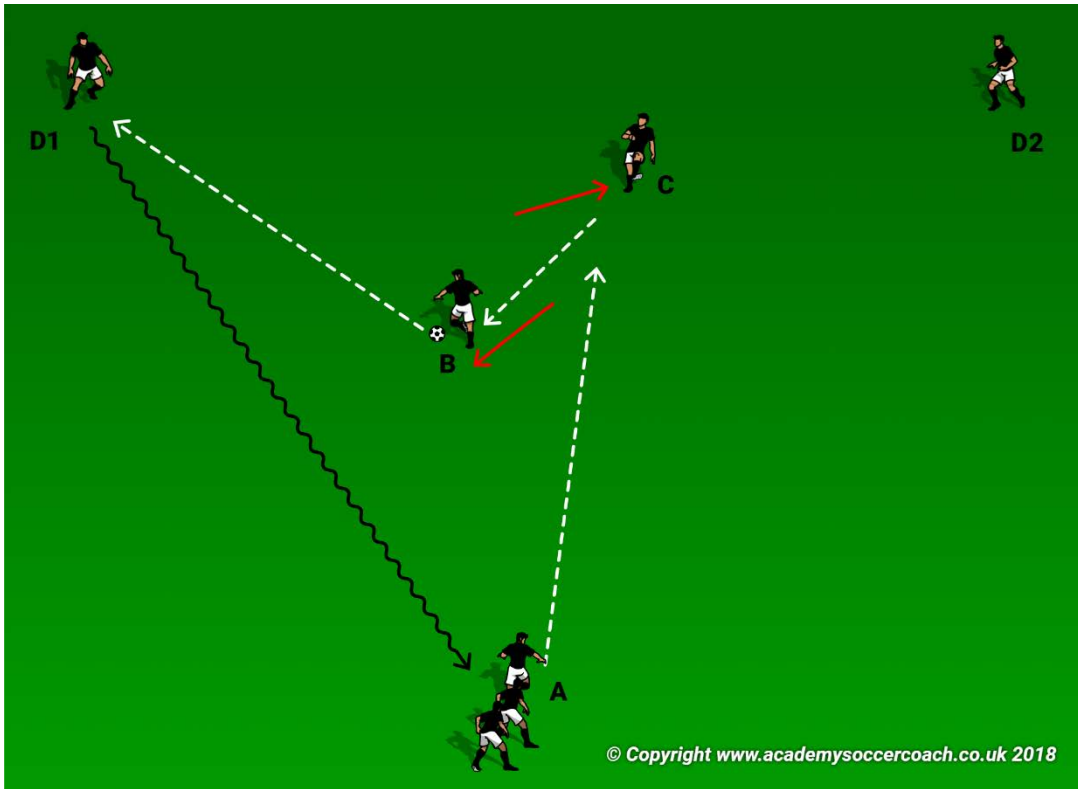
Area: 20 yards x 30 yards divided into two equal zones.

Targeted outcomes: 2 and 3.

Duration: 20 minutes.

We start the practice with activation exercises and footwork using various tools and mediums such as agility ladder, hoops and very low hurdles. These exercises are interspersed with dynamic flexibility and mobility and take approximately ten minutes to complete.

After the activation part we move on to the exercise described and illustrated below. This exercise prepares the players for the off-the-ball movements required to create staggered angles of support. Focus is on the quality and timing of movements performed by players at positions B and C. The exercise starts by player A who passes to player C after the latter and player B have moved to create staggered passing angles to support each other. Player C lays the ball off the player B to play the ball to Player D1. Player D1 dribbles the ball back to start. After each play, players move one position forward, from position A to position B, from position B to position C, and from position C to position D. Alternate playing the ball to players at positions D1 and D2. We can further progress this exercise by having Player D1 switching play to player D2 and the latter dribbling the ball back to start.



Main Part: Global Situation 1 – 9v9 with a high line.

Area: 40 yards + 25 yards x 40 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 20 minutes (2 x 9 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

Play starts inside a 40 yard by 40 yard area. We have one team playing in a 1-2-3-3 formation formed by a goalkeeper, two central defenders, three midfielders and three forwards (blacks) against a 1-4-1-2-1 formed by a goalkeeper, back four and four midfielders positioned in a diamond shape. The team with the defenders and midfielders (yellows) defend in front of a pre-assigned offside line. The other team, the one we are coaching, must try to score after playing the ball behind this offside line. Timing of passes and attacking balls played behind this line is crucial for a successful attack. Once the ball is played behind this line, all players can attack or defend. Restarts always take place from the goalkeeper of the attacking team (blacks), therefore recalling the same situation to reoccur several times and thus mould our team's behaviour in this phase of the game.



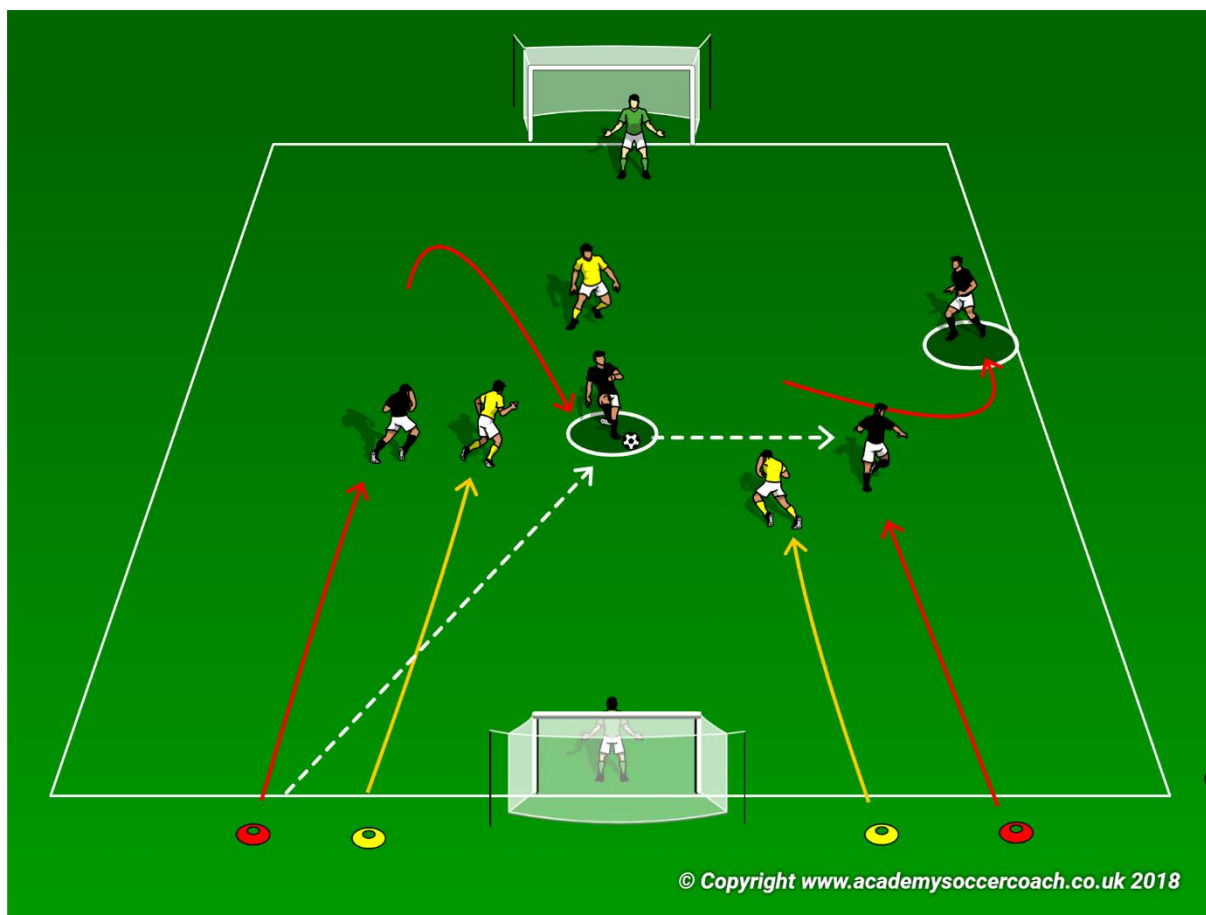
Main Part: Analytical 1 – Attack at speed.

Area: 40 yards x 25 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 10 minutes (2 x 5 minutes with two minutes rest between series).

The attacking team (blacks) aims to score in the upper goal while being pressured by the defenders (yellows) who aim to prevent the attackers from scoring, win the ball and counter in the opposite goal. The situation starts by having two attackers (encircled) moving to off-set each other and create space. The ball is then played from one of the attackers on the outside of the area to one of these two attackers. Situation becomes 4v3 in favour of the attacking team. In this exercise we focus on the off-set movements created by the two forwards before the ball is played. Speed and correct execution of the attack through proper timing of passes and off-the-ball movement is of extremely high importance.



Main Part: Global Situation 2– 9v9 with normal rules.

Area: 65 yards by 50 yards.

Targeted outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Duration: 20 minutes (2 x 9 minutes with two minutes rest in between series).

This game takes place on bigger pitch than in the global 1. The reason being that now as we play a normal game with no specific zones and that we have more space, the players should make better use of this space to stretch the opponents to create the vertical gaps needed to verticalize. We pay particular attention to the positioning of the three forwards to give us both height and width, the staggered angles of the midfielders, and stability given by the defenders. Communication between players playing at close proximity with each other should be encouraged, thus giving us a higher chance of penetration. As an example, inside forward 7 goes wide taking the full back with him, striker 9 remains central and midfielder 8 identifies the correct time to insert himself into attack as a result of the space created by the latter two players.

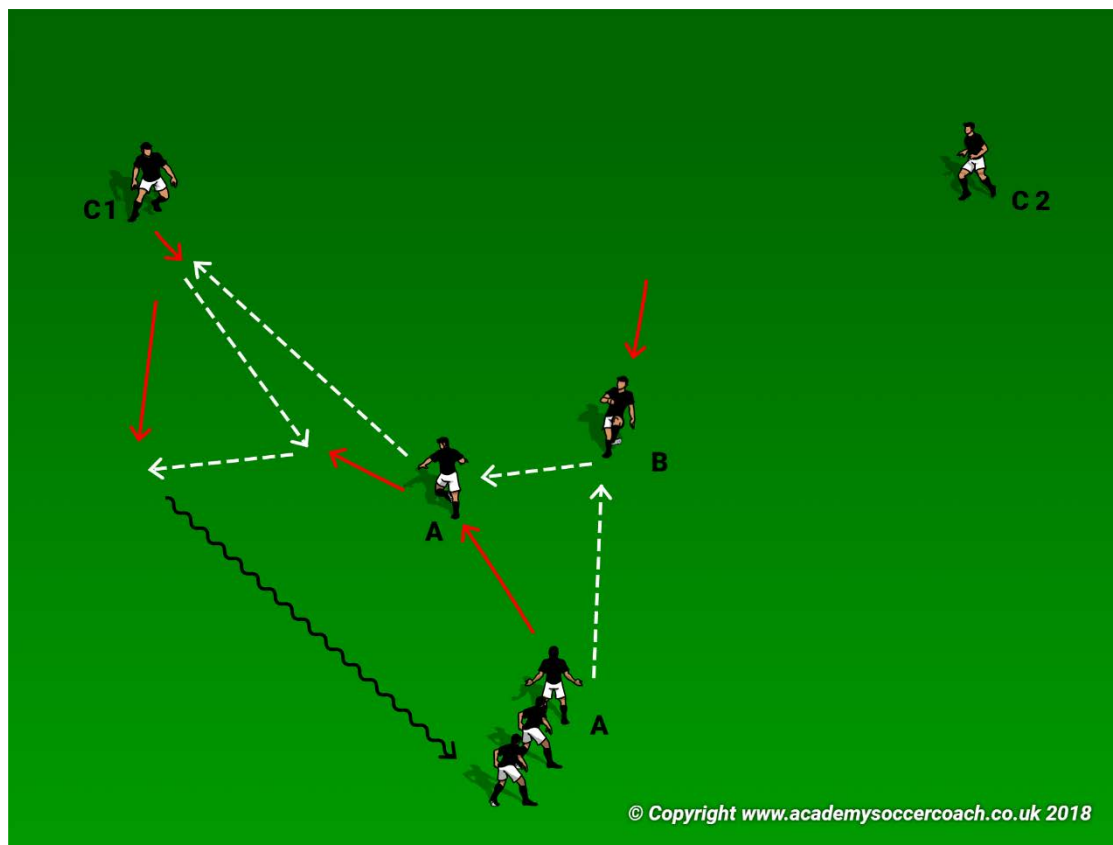


Conclusive Part: Cool down

Duration: 10 minutes.

Player A passes to player B who lays the ball back to player A prior to playing it to player C. Player C wall-passes with player A and dribbles back to start. Alternate passing to positions C1 and C2.

If we feel that the session was highly demanding from a mental point of view, we perform a simple variation of this exercise. In this case player A passes to player B, player B passes to player C, and player C dribbles back to start. After each repetition players move one position forward. Player A moves to position B, player B moves to position C (C1 or C2) while player C dribbles back to position A.



End the training session with static stretching exercises paying particular attention to the quadriceps muscles, hamstrings, glutes, calves and lower back.

Conclusion.

This book analyses the technical and tactical aspects required to play a possession dominant style of play taking Spanish soccer as a main source of reference. In order to dominate play, highly skilled players who are able to read the game at an exceptional level is required. Playing top level soccer, the players must not only be able to react quickly to continuously changing game situations, but must also be able to recognise the right stimuli to anticipate play. Therefore, always being one or two steps ahead of the opponent.

The training activities and sessions presented in this book are targeted to improve correct decision-making and speed of play. Players are thus all the time being stretched cognitively to make the right decisions. In soccer, decision-making, although performed by a single player, combines for a collective team effort. If a player has the ball, another player must make the right movements to get free of marking and receive the ball in space. The ball-carrier must also be able to select the right solution from a number of options, thus increasing the team's chances of scoring.

This heavily involves team communication, which should therefore be present in all training situations. It is through such training situations that players develop strong relationship links between them. These links refer to the positions that are at close proximity with each other and in which players develop an awareness and an understanding of how they will behave as a group or sector in a particular moment of the game.

About the Author

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