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50 Small-Sided Games That Make a Difference



50 Small-Sided Games that Teach the Vital Skills of the Game

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» This DVD contains many small-sided games used by the world's top teams and their academies like Manchester United, Juventus, Liverpool, U.S. Women's World Cup Team, Chelsea, Glasgow Rangers as well as MLS teams and USYSA National Champions.



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This collection of 50 small-sided games hand picked from the last 10 years of our books magazines and journals. They are taken from training sessions that have been contributed by some of the worlds top teams and coaches like: Manchester City, AS Cannes, PSV Eindhoven, FC Inter Milan, Juventus, FC Porto, Chelsea F.C., Newcastle United, Steve McClaren, Howard Wilkinson and many more.

The small-sided games are divided into five catagories: Warm-Ups, Conditioning, Crossing and Finishing, Shooting, Passing and Possession. From this selection you could create a season's worth of training sessions focused on games that will help teach the game.

50 Small-Sided Games

Warm-Up Games

Four Team Warm-Up

Field size – 50 yards long, and the width of the penalty area. Use a goal at each end with a goalkeeper in each. The session is based on having 16 to 18 field players and two goalkeepers, but can be modified to just about any number of players.

Organize your field players into groups of four (with different colored bibs) with one ball between each group. They begin by passing the ball with short passes. When either goalkeeper calls your team color, the player on the ball strikes the ball easily into the goalkeepers arms. The keeper then throws the ball out to another in the same group and the passing continues.

Stop every few minutes to stretch dynamically, making sure all muscle groups are stretched.

Continue and move to longer passes, followed by driven strikes, with more power, but still into the goalkeepers arms.

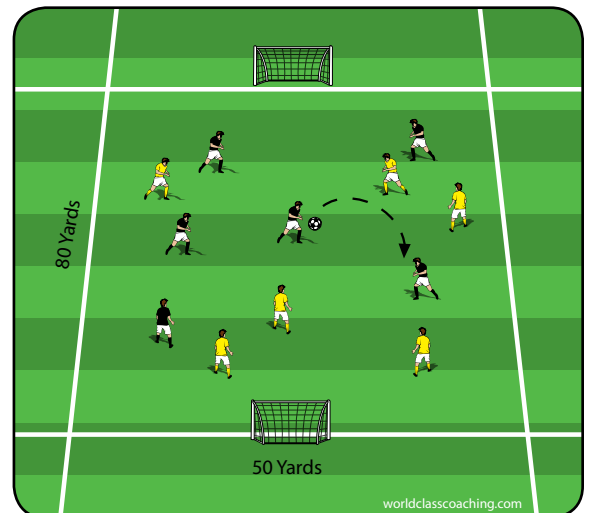


Team Hand Ball to Goal

The players move the ball by passing it with their hands. They aren't allowed to move with the ball in their hands. A goal is scored by throwing the ball to a teammate who heads it into the goal. The other team is given possession if a pass is dropped or intercepted.

Variation

The players pass the ball by volleying it to a teammate.





Objective

1. Improve Team's ball control, passing and quick directional change.
2. Improve space and distance of supporting players.
3. Improve the defensive shape of the back four's cover and movements.
4. Improve organization in attack.

Warm-Up

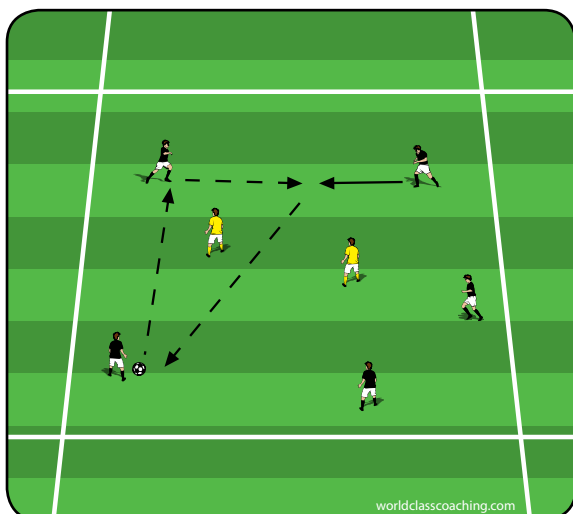
The players perform a series of dynamic stretches a five-minute run.

Throw - Head - Catch

Players must pass with the head and score goals with the head. Two teams are divided up to play 10 v 10 on a field 65 x 35-yards. Players start the game with a throw then proceed to head-pass or head-shoot to goal. If the ball hits the ground, the team on attack loses possession. The defending team now has possession and begins to go in the opposite direction starting with a throw.

Variations

- Players catch the ball and volley to teammate who heads the next ball to a teammate to catch.
- Players must pass the ball to a teammate while in mid-air who also must then pass the ball while in the air and so on.
- Goals can only be scored using headers.



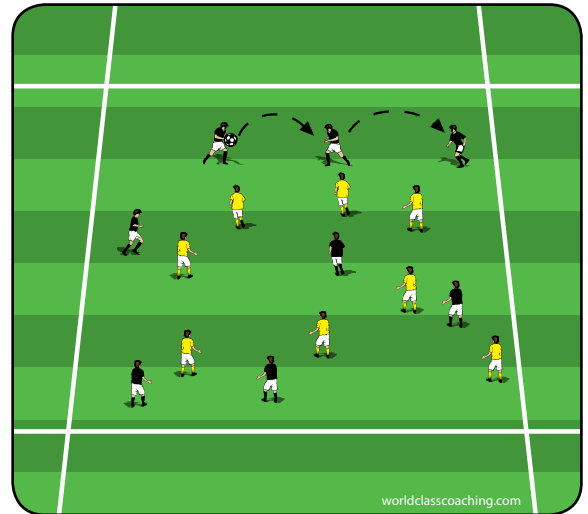
5 v 2

The trainer leads the players through a series dynamic stretches in a 20-yard area. The movements include: jogging, skipping, shuffling, heels up, knees up and touch the inside of the feet, and touch the outside of the feet. The physical warm-up ends with some static stretching.

In the second part of the warm-up, the field players divide into three groups of seven and play 5 v 2 in 10-yard squares. The game is played one touch from the beginning. The attackers are encouraged to split the defenders whenever possible. The are also expected to anticipate the player who will receive the ball and support him early to allow the speed of play to be quick.

Hand Ball Warm-Up (10 Minutes)

The players jog and stretch for the first five minutes. The players then progress to playing a possession game using only their hands. Ten passes equal a goal. The players are not allowed to move with the ball in their hands. Players must move off the ball to create passing options. The players are only allowed to hold the ball for three seconds.

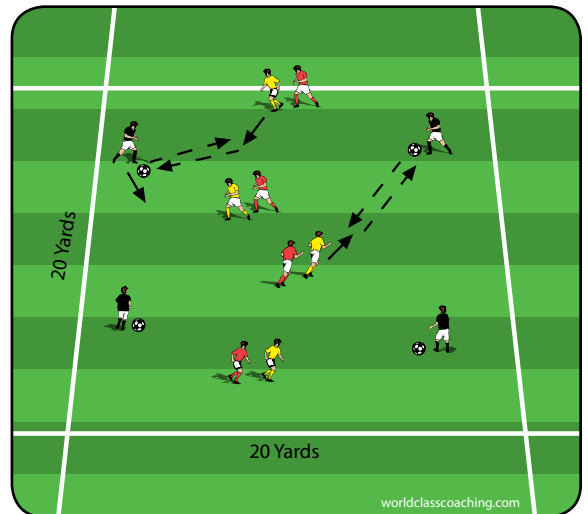


Warm-Up Passing and Moving Game

Each team has four players. The Dark Team players each have a ball. They try to pass the ball to the Yellow Team players who pass it back one-touch. The Red Team must mark the White Team.

Coaching Points

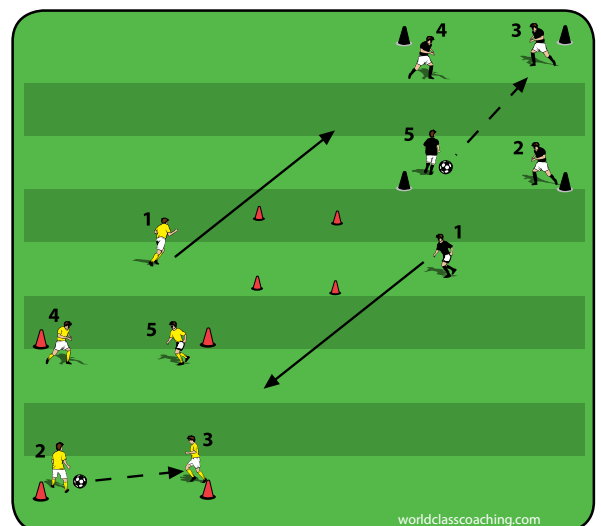
- Get tight, prevent passes
- Decision to stay with man or pass him on to another defender
- Communicate
- Rotate

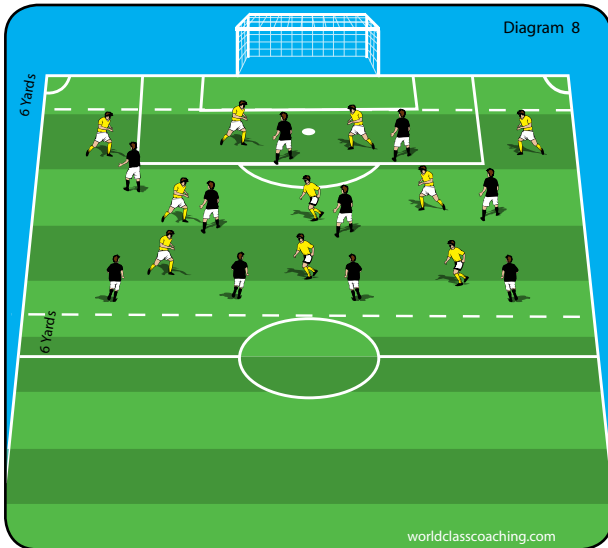


Keepaway Game

This time when the coach shouts the player's number they sprint into the other teams square and play 4 v 1 (in this case) until the defender wins the ball.

Whichever of the two numbered players win the ball first get a point for their team.



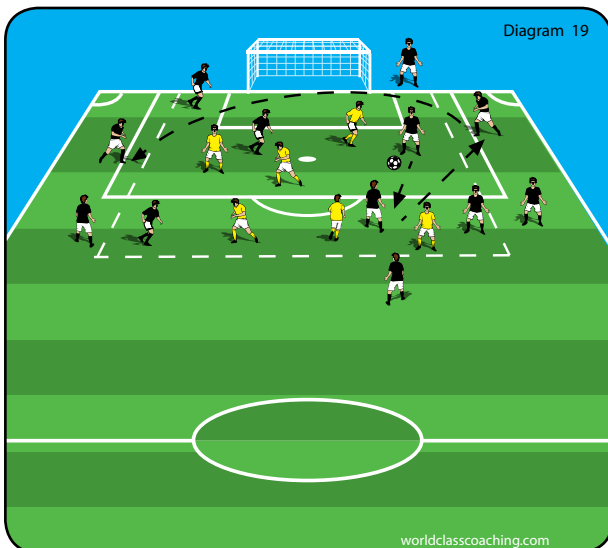


Postional Warm-Up

Following casual passing and juggling in pairs, all the field players line up in a 4-3-3 formation and play keep-away with 10 consecutive passes counting as a goal.

Line Game

With the same formation, now play with the “goals” being two lines set up six yards from each end of the half-field. The objective is to dribble the ball under control into the “end zone” following a minimum of four passes. Players are not allowed to pass the ball over the line and it is a “make it take it” situation, i.e. the team keeps possession once a goal is scored. Conditions include no lofted passes or only one or two touches.



Possession Exercises 6 v 6 + 6

Play 6 v 6 keep-away in the marked area with the six remaining “neutral” players on the outside of the field supporting the team in possession. The aim of the game is for the six players to maintain possession before playing to one of the neutral players who then plays a one-touch pass to the perimeter player opposite. The receiving players’ successfully controlled long pass equals one point. The neutral team alternates with one of the inside teams on a time basis.

Coaching Point

The level of passing technique, control, speed of defending and concentration required is extremely high for this drill to succeed.



Four Goal Warm Up

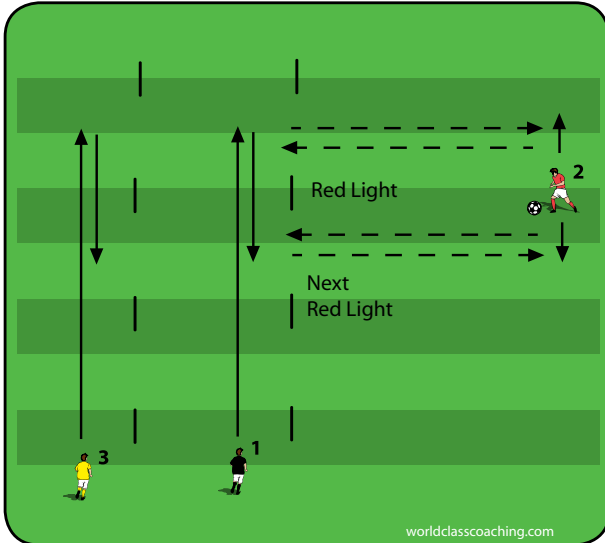
Using three quarters or half a field, with four small goals as shown in diagram 12, three teams play using a rubber ball. The objective of the warm-up is to develop the speed of thought of the two teams. With the drill starting slowly, the teams switch after every three goals.

Points

- A rubber ball allows for better quality of touch
- After a time, two balls are introduced to allow more repetitions
- Four goals reinforce the concept of switching play
- The team that is not playing stretch on the sidelines

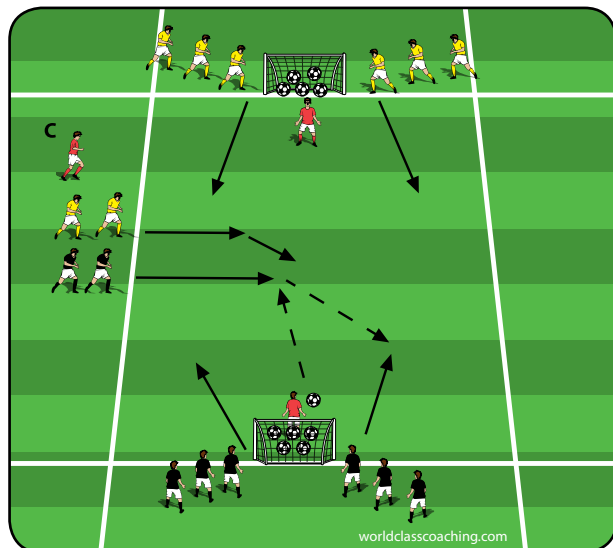
50 Small-Sided Games

Conditioning



Sprinting

The exercise has aspects that are focused on the different activities of each position, Forwards, Defenders and Midfielders. It begins when Player 1, a forward, sprints to the first red light. Player 3, a defender, tries to beat the forward to the red light. When the forward breaks the beam and the red light turns off, the forward receives a pass from Player 2, a midfielder then quickly passes back and sprints to the next red light that turns on. The defender tries to beat the attacker to the next light. The midfielder moves with the ball to a spot where he can pass to the forward again.



3 v 3

Each goalkeeper has a ball while a player from each team races to the middle. The coach calls a color and that team is given the ball by their goalkeeper. The team then attacks and tries to score as quickly as possible. The defending team can score if they get possession but it must be within the 20-second time limit.

Coaching Points

- The ball is played to the player who is working the hardest to win the race in the middle
- You have 20 seconds to score so attack quickly and find solutions quickly



6 v 4 + Goalkeeper

Four defenders and a GK defend a goal versus six attackers (two forwards and four midfielders) on a 75 x 45-yard field. The attacking group tries to score on the big goal while the GK and defenders try to win the ball and score by passing to one of two target player standing near mid-field. This is how high quality GK's stay so sharp; Training in small-sided matches with constantly changing stimuli (cues) that must be processed and reacted on quickly by the GK!!! This is truly Functional SAQ training for Goalkeepers!!

1 v 1

In 10 metre squares, 1 v 1, with 4 players on the outside providing balls when the ball goes out, to ensure non-stop work for 1 minute. To keep possession is the aim of the exercise, or to win possession of the ball if your opponent has it. Repeat for each player, 4 repetitions each player.

In the same 10 metre squares, 2 v 2, again with 4 players on the outside providing balls, this time the work is for 2 minutes, with 4 repetitions for each player.

Finally in 30 metre squares, 4 v 4, this time with balls all around the pitch, 4 minutes work, repeated 4 times (this game is man/man marking). This is very high intensity training, and requires total concentration and focus.



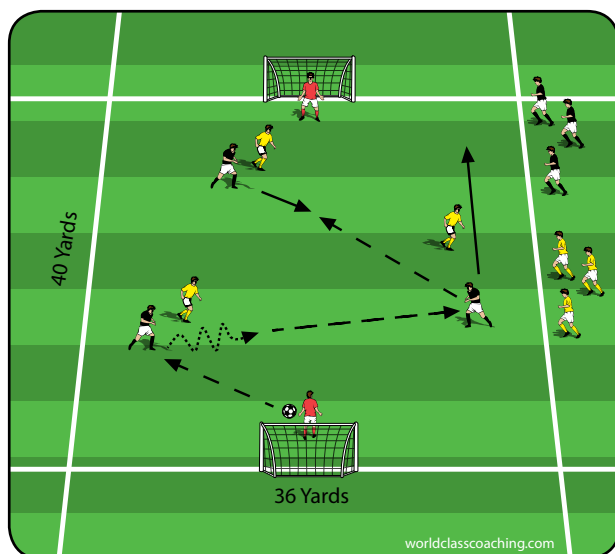
3 v 3

Two teams of three play while two teams rest. Each group of six players compete in eight short games. The resting and working teams switch between each game. The first four games last 90 seconds while the last four games last between 60 and 75 seconds.

If one team scores they get another ball from their goalkeeper and attack again. All restarts come from the goalkeeper who has only five seconds to release the ball.

Coaching Points

- All movements are at full speed
- Finish quickly
- Fast transition

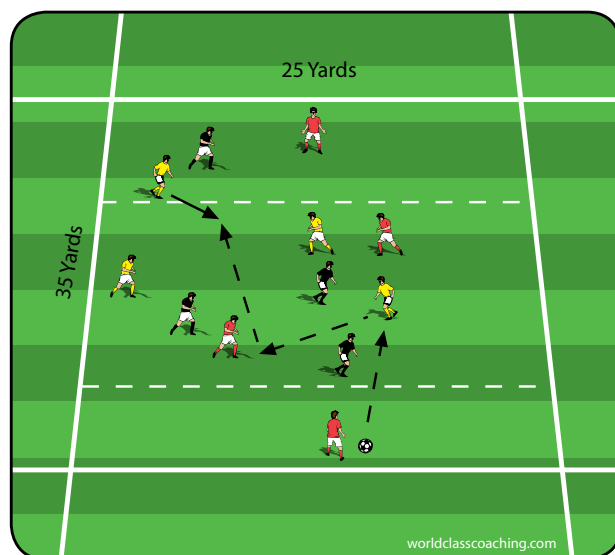


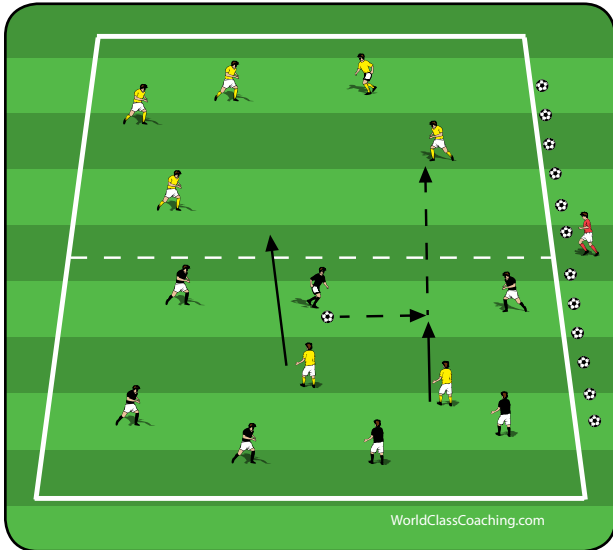
4 v 4 + 4 (15 Minutes)

Two teams of four play keep-away with the help of four neutral players. One neutral player is at each end while two neutrals are in the central area.

Coaching Points

- Eight passes is worth one point
- Neutral players are only allowed to play one-touch
- Neutral players can not pass to each other
- Restart quickly if the ball goes out of play





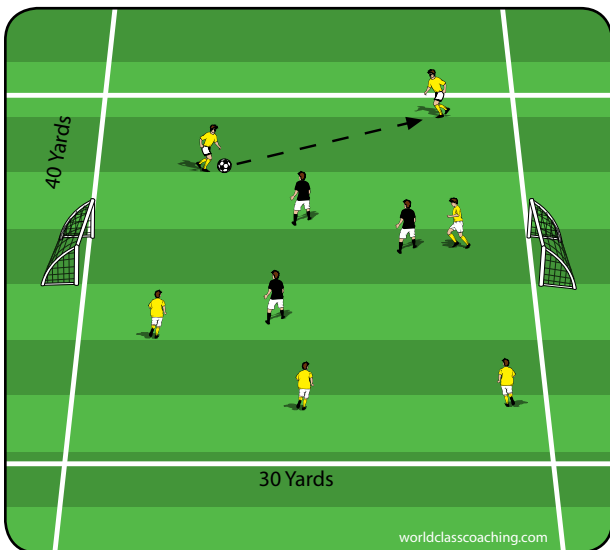
7 v 7 Transfer Game

Two teams of players are assigned one half of the field. They're also numbered one to seven. The coach passes the ball into one half of the field and two defenders move from the other half to try to win the ball. The team in possession receives one point for every five consecutive passes. The defending team is allowed to send an extra defender to pressure the ball each time the team in possession completes five passes.

Defenders win the ball

If the defenders win the ball they pass it to their teammates on the other half and start to connect passes. Only passes made in their attacking half of the field count. The attacking team should work to keep the ball in their half if a defender gets a touch or wins the ball.

When the ball goes out of play for the first time player number one from each team sprints to a ball near the sideline. The first player to reach a ball starts passing to their teammates. Player number two sprints the next time and so on. The game continues for a set period of time or until a team reaches a certain score.



6 v 3

Six defender keep possession away from three attackers. If the defenders make six passes it equals one goal. When the attackers win possession they can score in either goal. The game always restarts with a ball served by the coach.

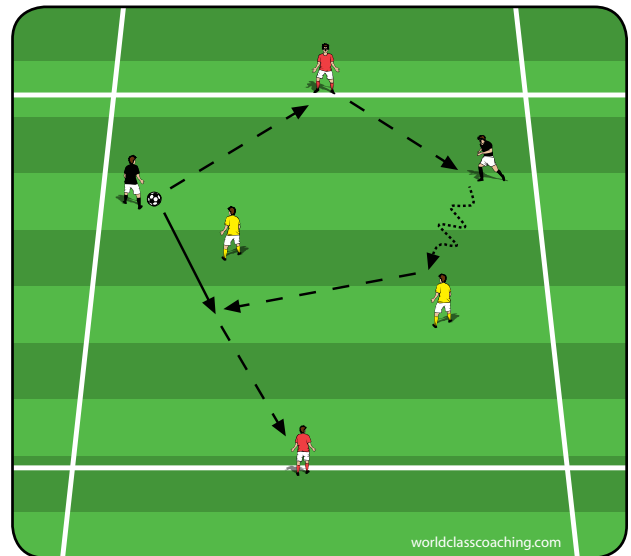
Change the three attacking players every 45 to 60 seconds.

The service from the coach can manipulate how hard both attackers and defenders must work.

2 v 2 + Targets

The dark team has one minute to play against the white team. The team in possession try to work the ball from one red target player to the other. If the dark team plays the ball to one target player then they cannot play back to that player, they must try and get the ball through to the other target player. If the yellow team wins the ball they keep the ball and try to move it from one target to the other.

After one minute, one player from each team trades places with a target player. The game focuses on the turning and dribbling techniques used in the previous conditioning practice. This game is played with a high level of intensity so each game must only last a short time, usually one minute.



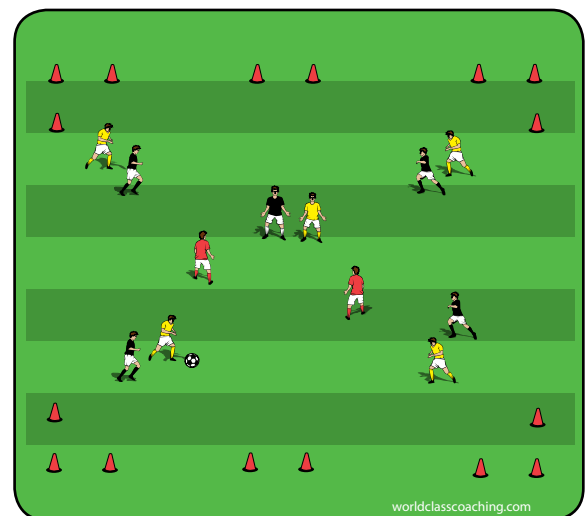
Quick Play and Pressing

Game is played in a 20 yard by 30 yard area and is 5v5 with two neutral players. The grid has two small goals that are one yard wide are set in the middle of each end line of the grid. Additional, each corner has a small goal that is one yard wide. The possessing team tries to get 6 passes to score. If the defending team gets possession they look to score right away on one of the small goals to switch roles.

Coach Tenney emphasizes that the players must move the ball away from pressure. If they get 2-3 passes in the same area, then they need to move it away to another area right away.

Progression

One teams tries to maintain possession for 90 seconds. If the ball goes out of bounds it goes back to them right away. For every six passes they complete they get 1 point. The defending team tries to win it and score quickly to one of the small goals.



50 Small-Sided Games

Passing & Possession

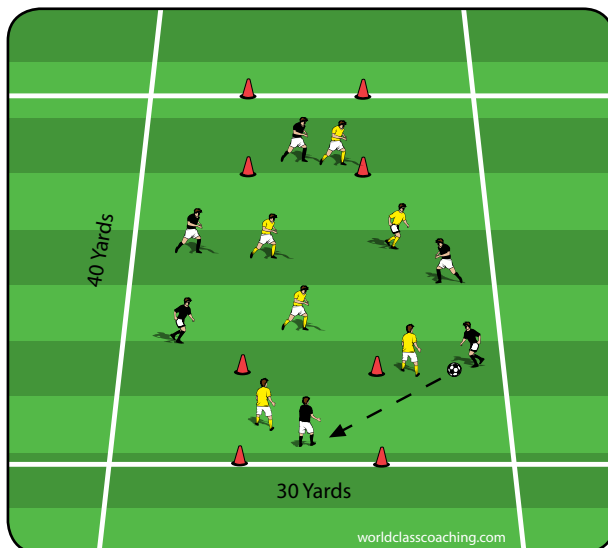
Newcastle United FC

Passing and Receiving #3

This 6 v 6 game is played in a 40 x 30-yard grid. One player from each team are positioned in each end zone and play unopposed. When a player passes into his team mate in either end zone, he runs into the end zone and the receiving player dribbles into the central area.

Coaching Points

- The 'killer' pass is to a teammate, not into space
- To improve pass accuracy, look up before passing
- Correct communication is key to success

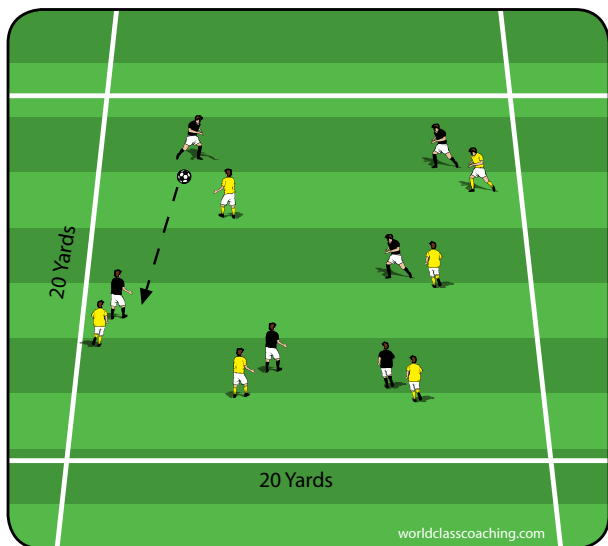


6 v 6

This is a possession game where each player picks a partner on the other team. Players are only allowed to tackle the person they are matched-up with.

Coaching Points

- Same defensive points as previous game
- Encourage attackers to dribble to create passing opportunities

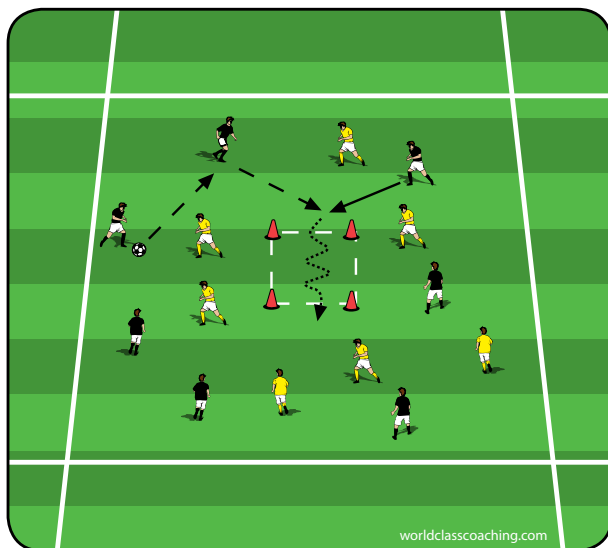


7 v 7 with Center Square

Two teams of seven players work to possess the ball and score by passing it through the box in the center to a teammate on the other side.

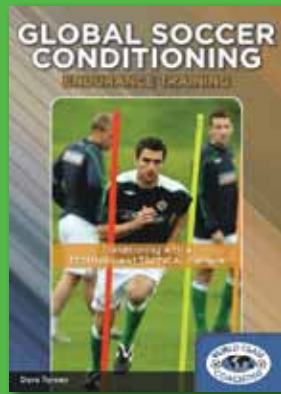
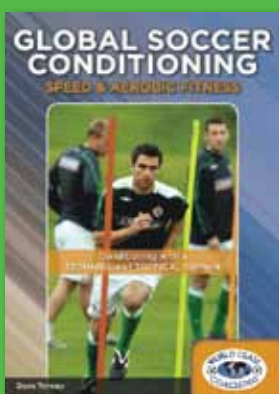
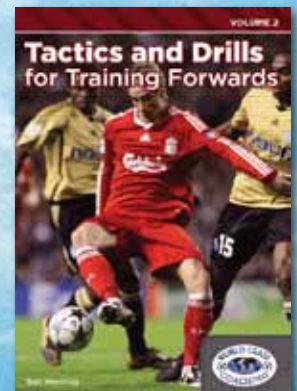
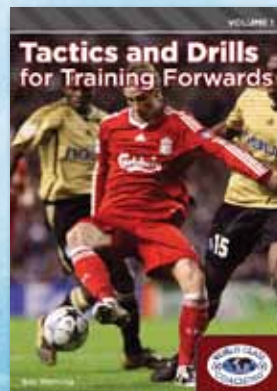
Progression

- Run the ball through the square
- Dribble or pass through to score
- Add a player in the middle of the square who the team plays to and then receives the ball back from



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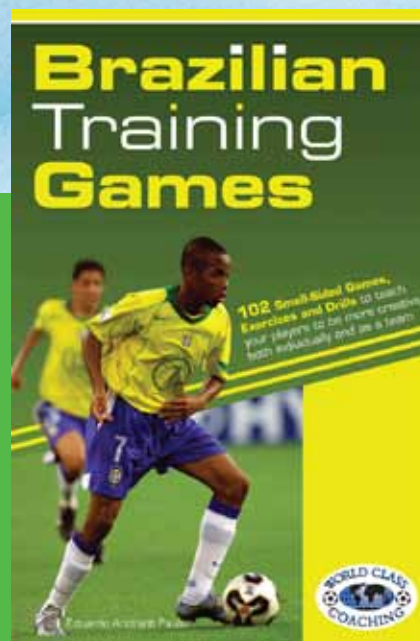
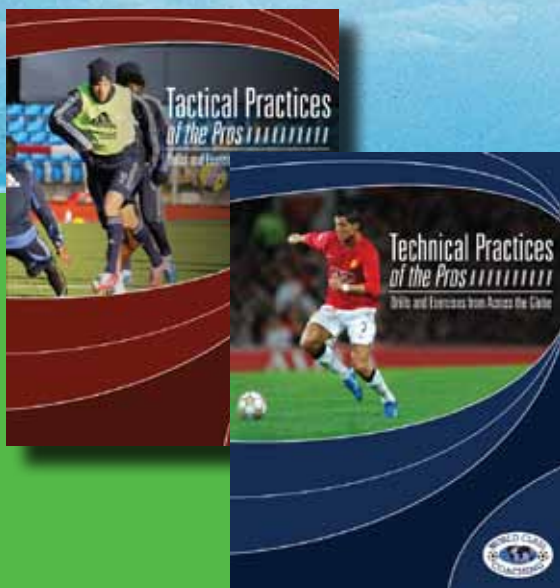
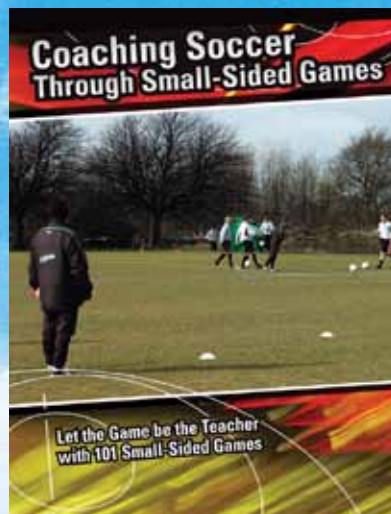
Great New DVDs

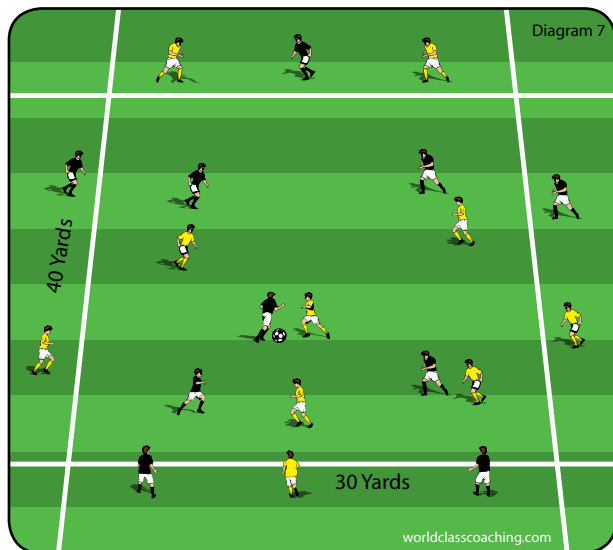


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Fitness Exercise: 5 v 5 + 5 Keep-Away

Play 5 v 5 in the middle of a rectangle with a one-touch restriction. Each team is supported by five 'resting' teammates who are available for one-touch return passes, but restricted in movement to about one yard up and down the line. The teams rotate regularly.

Progression

Replace the one-touch restriction with a three-second time limit and with the outside players allowed to move freely up and down the touch-line.

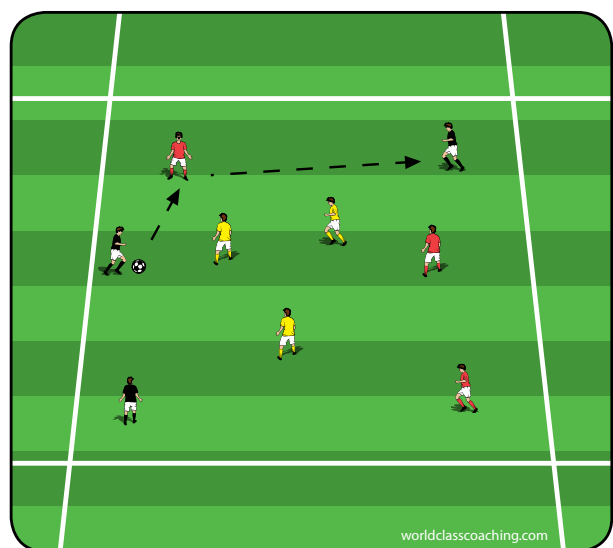


7 + 4 v 7 + 4

Six field players and a goalkeeper from each team are on the field with four players from their team on the touch line. Two of the players are on the end of the field they are attacking and two are on the side line of the attacking half. The objective is to get the ball forward quickly and create scoring chances.

Coaching Points

- The outside players are limited to one touch
- Speed of play
- The end line players set the ball for a shot by a field player
- Crosses from the wide players



3 v 3 + 3

Two teams of three keep the ball away from the third team. If the defending team wins the ball, the team that lost possession becomes the defending team. The teams in possession are limited to two touches.

Coaching Points

- Take your first touch away from pressure
- Don't 'kill' or stop the ball with your first touch
- Support the player who is receiving the ball

Progressions

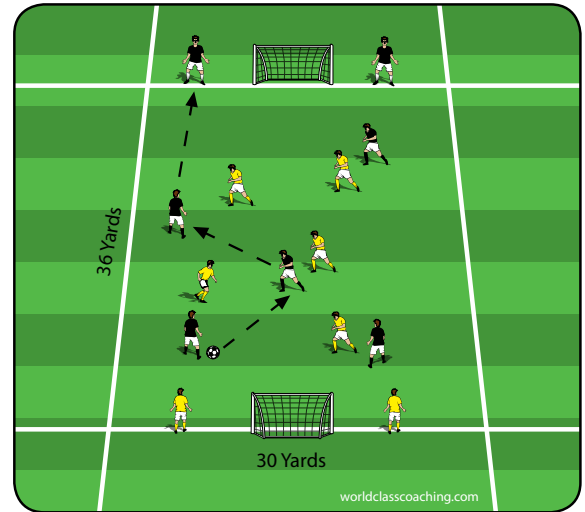
- You can't pass to the person that just passed to you
- You can't pass to your teammates

5 v 5 + 2

Two teams of three play on a 14 x 25-yard field with a neutral player on each end. A goal is scored by moving the ball from one neutral player to the other. (Not shown)

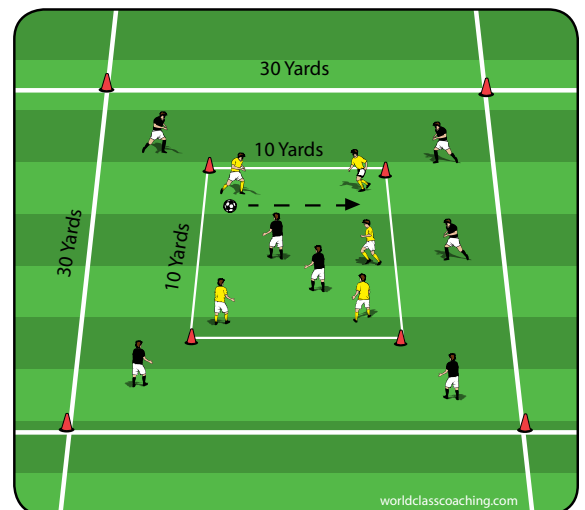
In the other game, each team has five players on a 30 x 36-yard field and two supporting players on the end of the field that they are attacking. The players look to pass to one of the supporting players to score. If a team intercepts the ball in the opponents half of the field, then they can shoot on goal and score. The emphasis is on immediate pressure when possession is lost. The outside players have only one touch.

The session ends with the players jogging and stretching on their own.



Small-Sided Game Progression

The drill uses two coned squares. A small 10 x 10-yard inner area within a 30 x 30-yard outer square. The players are divided into two teams. The ball starts with one team who plays 5 v 2 within the inner square. If the defenders win the ball or the ball comes out of the small square then all of the dark team become active and they play 7 v 5 using all of the area within the larger square. If the white team wins the ball back or it goes out of the larger square then the drill begins again with the white team in possession within the 10 x 10-yard inner square.



Multiple Goal Possession Game

The game is played on the whole pitch with eight cone gates spread around the field. The objective is to maintain possession while scoring points by passing the ball through the cone gates but they only get the point if the pass is received by a teammate on the other side of the gate. They are not allowed to score in the same gate directly after a point is scored, they must look for a different gate to score.

Progression

Play with a one or two-touch restriction.





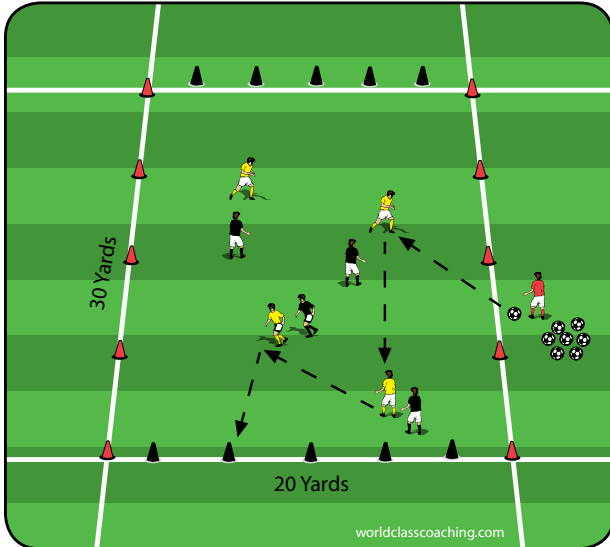
Team Possession Game

In this game there are two options to score; you can score a goal with 12 consecutive passes or score a goal with all of your teammates in the attacking half of the field.

To end the session, all offensive players must still be in the attacking half of the field when their team scores but now the defensive team must all get back into their defensive half or any goal scored against them counts as two.

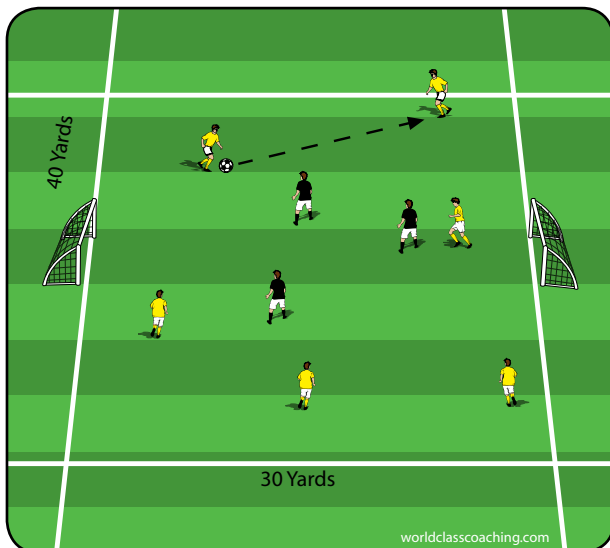
50 Small-Sided Games

Shooting



Cones as Goals

Use a 20 x 30 yard rectangle set out with marker cones down each side, and pointed target cones along each end. The players are split into two teams, in this case 4 v 4. The two teams then play against each other as normal. But instead of scoring in a goal, the idea is to score by knocking over one of the target cones at the other end of the rectangle. This drill should be used to promote the accuracy of our players shooting and their close range side foot shot.



6 v 3

Six defender keep possession away from three attackers. If the defenders make six passes it equals one goal. When the attackers win possession they can score in either goal. The game always restarts with a ball served by the coach.

Change the three attacking players every 45 to 60 seconds.

The service from the coach can manipulate how hard both attackers and defenders must work.



Possession Play to Finishing Game

Two teams of eight, plus goalkeepers, play on half of a full field. The two teams play keep-away while the goalkeepers wait. On the coaches signal, the team in possession can attack either goal. The defending team must reorganize quickly to prevent the goal while the team in possession must quickly evaluate which goal to attack. If the defending team wins the ball or it goes out of play, the teams resume playing keep-away until the coach next signal.

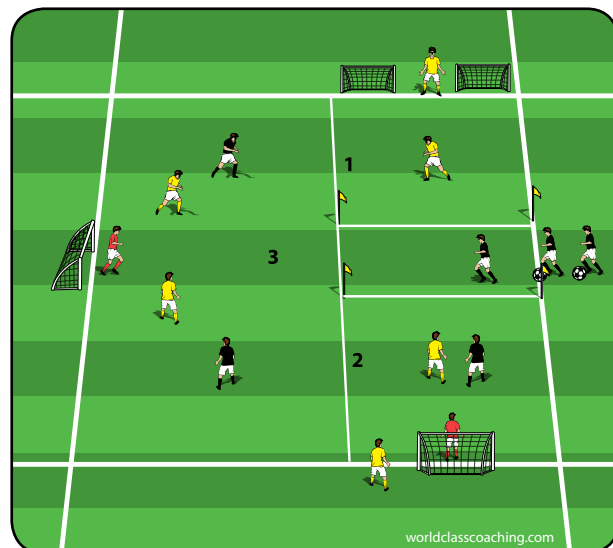
Shooting and Finishing Games

The group is divided into two teams of six. One team works as attackers and one as the defenders.

The first player in line attacks the defender 1 v 1 in Area 1. When that matchup is finished. The attacker moves to Area 2 and plays 2 v 1 to goal. In the final stage both attacking players from Area 2 move to Area 3 and play 4 v 2 to score.

The teams change roles once all of the players have had a chance to move through all of the stations.

This is not a small-sided game strictly speaking but a creative combination of games so we included it here.



Shooting vs Possession

Two teams of eight compete but each team has different objectives. The dark team plays possession and is able to use their teammates that are positioned on the side lines of the area. The white team attempts to score on either goal while using their teammates who are positioned on each end line.

The two teams change objectives and positions after four minutes.

Coaching Points

- The white players must work hard to get the ball away from the dark team
- Move into shooting positions quickly once the ball is won
- The dark team keeps the ball as long as possible

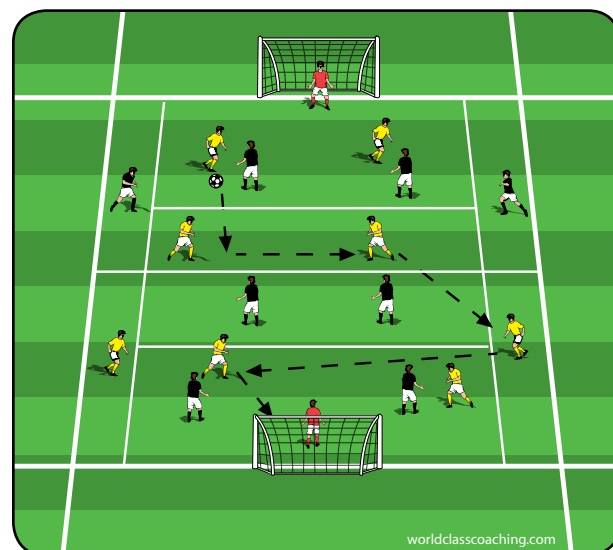


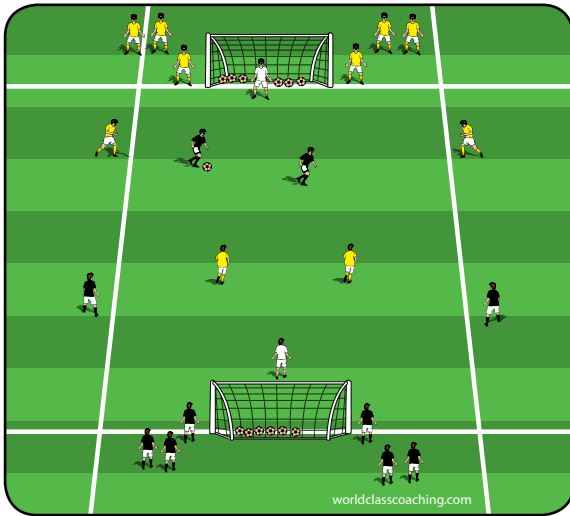
Switching Play to Score Small-Sided Game

The object of the game is to pass the ball into one of the two flank areas and score from a cross. One player from the midfield zone can move into the attacking third and attempt to score. When the play breaks down the ball can be played directly into the midfield zone to create a 2 v 1 situation as the midfielder is recovering to help defend.

Coaching Points

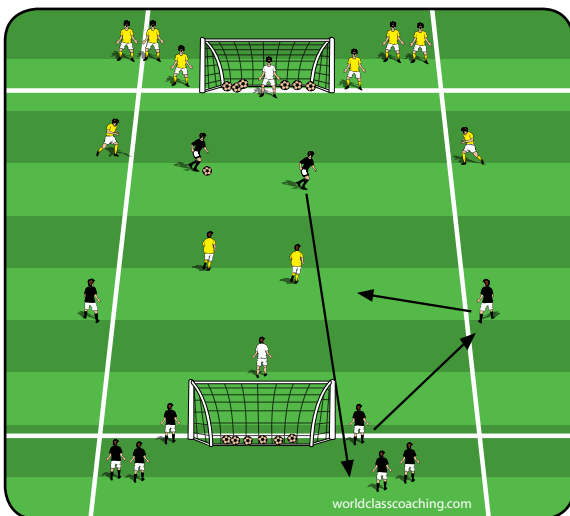
- Speed of play and thought
- Control
- Timing of all runs





2 v 2 + 4

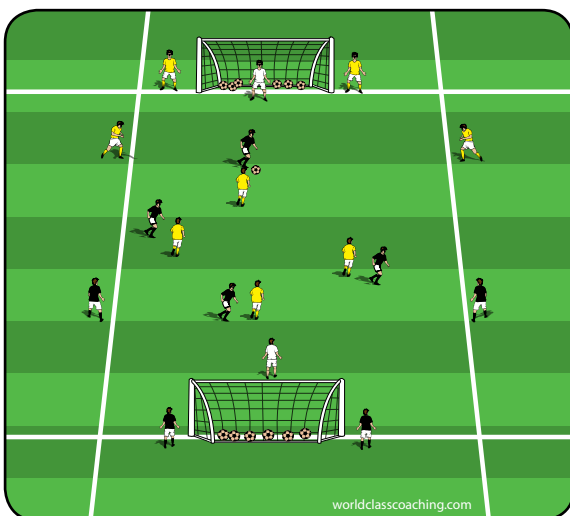
The exercise is set up in a grid size that is approximately 20 yards wide by 30 yards long. There are two full-sized goals and goalkeepers included in the drill. Play is 2v2 with four support players per team on the outside. Outside players have 1-touch.



The following diagram illustrates how the players rotate in the drill when a goal is scored or a shot is taken. If a goal is scored, the team that scores must run back to their own goal to retrieve a ball. The other team rotates their players while this is happening. The two players in the playing area go to the end of the line for their team by each post (one player each post). The two players that are first by the post acting as supporting players take the positions as supporting players wide. The two wide players enter the field of play.

Coaching Point

Outside players have only 1-touch to play the ball into their teammates



4 v 4 + 4 Progression

Progression- The grid size is expanded to 44 yards wide (the width of the 18-yard box) by 36 yards long (twice the length of the 18-yard box). Play inside the grid is 4v4 with the same number of support players on the outside. Players don't rotate, though, as they did before. Play for approximately 3 minutes, then switch the players on the inside with the support players on the outside.

Coaching Point

Outside players have 1-touch. All re-starts start with the goalkeeper in the half where the ball went out of bounds.

9 v 9 Offside Shooting

I devised this practice to solve the problems I had with players having a tendency to run too early and thus into an offside position to receive a pass, plus to teach players to pass the ball into space rather than to the player.

The practice is 9 v 9 in the middle third of a full field that is marked into thirds with lines also extending from the penalty area as shown in diagram 13. Two coaches are positioned on the lines to see if a player runs into an offside position. The game starts with a coach serving the ball to the dark team who has to make a minimum of three passes before they can pass over the line and into space for a teammate who then goes 1 v 1 against the goalkeeper. Following an attempt at goal, the coach serves a ball to the white team and the game continues.

Points Of Observation

- The following are the tendencies of the players that this practice will help overcome.
-
- Rushing the final pass
- Attempting the final pass even when the opportunity is not there
- Play tends to be squeezed in a tight area instead of using the full width of the field
- The final pass is played to the player instead of to space
- The running player (A1) will run too early - offside
- The running player (A1) will run to the wrong area



6 v 6 + Goalkeepers

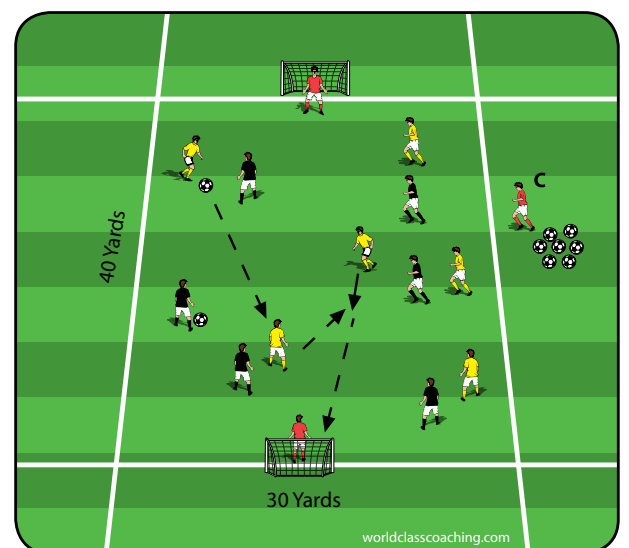
Similar setup as previous exercises but now with goals placed at each end of grid. Players set up with a 2-2-2 formation. A shot on goal results on the team getting the ball back and attacking the other goal.

Coaching Points

- Can you keep possession and attack with purpose?
- Shoot whenever possible
- Close down ball carrier and apply pressure

Progression

Play two-touch and then one-touch if possible.



50 Small-Sided Games

Crossing and Finishing

4 v 4

Two teams of four plus goalkeepers play in an area twice the size of the penalty box. A third team of four players waits outside the area.

The play always starts with one goalkeeper throwing to the other who then plays the ball to his teammates.

The team that scores stays on and plays the team that was off.

Defensive Coaching Points

- Early pressure on the ball
- Cover around the first defender and the ball
- Balance
- Commitment - Desire to win the ball - Desire to defend your goal



Progression #1

The third team now become crossers, one in each corner grid. The attacking team must make four passes before playing the ball to a crossing player. One of the passes MUST be to the goalkeeper.

Defensive Coaching Points

- Pick up a man and get goal side
- Body shape one - see man & ball
- First to the ball - attack the ball
- Defend the goal - priority!
- Be ready for second ball
- Clear your box

Keeper's Coaching Points

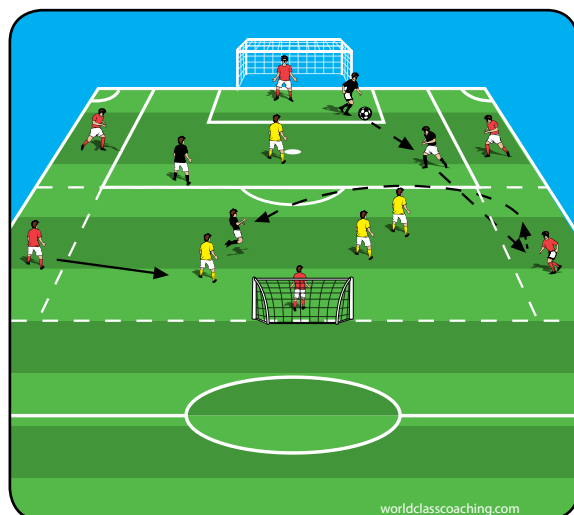
- Starting position - related to ball
- Positive body language
- Judge the flight of the cross
- Decision: talk and take control
- Angle of approach and timing



Progression #2

The crossing players now cut the ball back away from the endline, and serve an in-swinging cross with the other foot. The weak side crosser can leave his box and attack the cross.

When the goalkeeper comes to win the ball the defenders should cover around the back of the keeper assuming he will make a mistake.





9 v 9 Crossing And Finishing

The same organization as the previous game except this time the final pass is played into the wide area for A3 who attacks the end-line and crosses for two players, A1 and A2 who have made runs into the penalty area.

Coaching Points

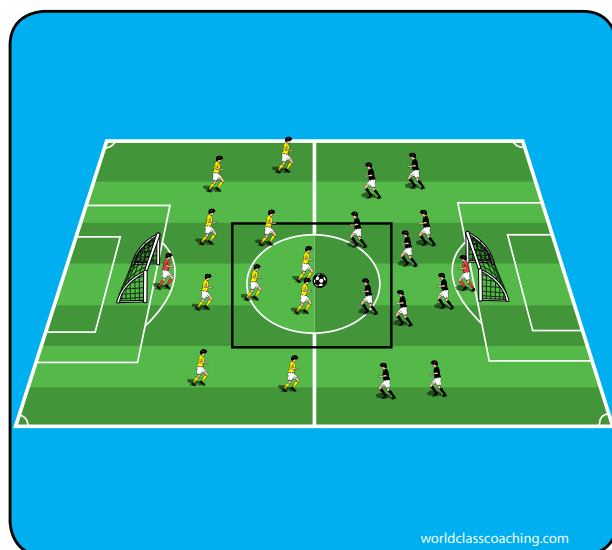
- All previous coaching points including timing of runs and weight of passes
- Players A1 and A2 should time their runs so they don't arrive too early
- Players A1 and A2 should stagger their runs as shown, with A1's near post run arriving first and A2's far post run arriving second
- Hit the target with the shot



Variation

The final pass can be made to the opposite flank area to A4 as shown in diagram 16.

A conditioning element can be introduced by asking A1, A2, A3 and A4 to make recovery runs back into the middle third playing area as quickly as possible. To make this effective, the coach should serve a ball back into play as soon as the players have made their attempt on goal.



Game to Finish

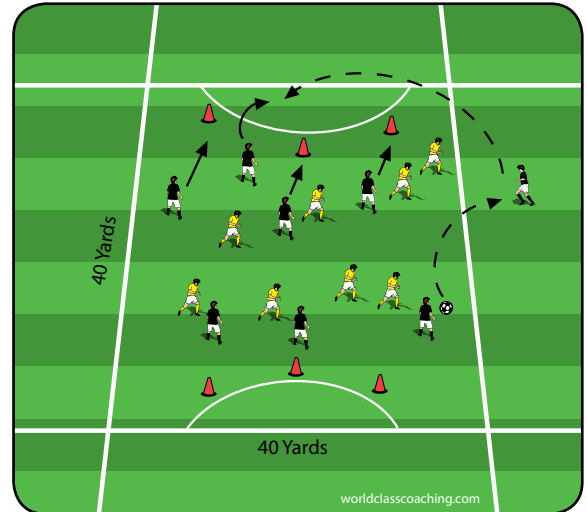
The sessions ends with a game where the goals are placed at the top of the penalty area. A 15-yard grid is placed around the center circle. The ball must be played with one touch in this area to encourage wide play and crosses.

Flank Handball

Players play regular handball. However, the ball must be served (thrown) to a running target in the arc from a player in the open flank channel. In order for the goal to count, three other players must get to the three cones outside just outside of the arc. This encourages getting numbers into the box, spacing and/or “framing” of the goal box.

Variation

Players on cones can flick/tip ball to player in arc if the serve is off.



Three Zone To Goal

Teams play 8 v 8 + GK (3-4-1 formations). A 25-yard wide central zone is sectioned off (pinnies tend to be better markers on the field than cones). Players are restricted to two-touch in center zone and unlimited touches otherwise. This encourages “East/West” soccer and gets the ball wide.

Coaching Points

- Central players must position/prepare body early to get early balls out to flanks
- Passes to flank players must be out in front (in stride) of player
- Encourage overlapping and interchanging of WMF and outside backs. Runs forward must be timed and width must be established by flank players as ball is switched
- The Center Midfielder must get into box and join strikers



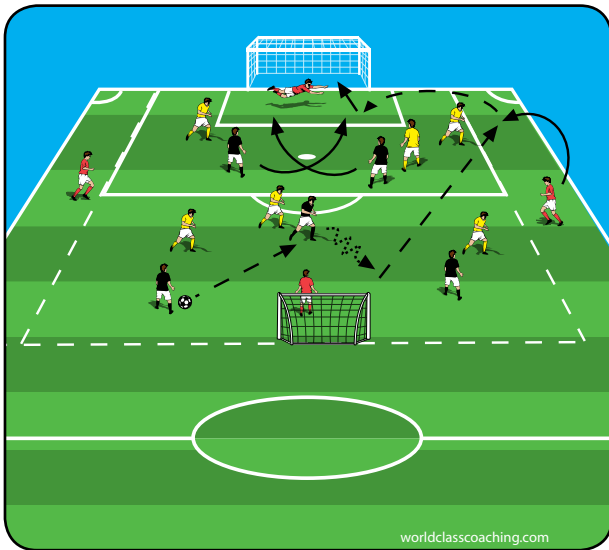
“Magic Box”

8 v 8 + GK (3-4-1) is once again played. Now a 25 x 15-yard coned box is placed on the middle of the field. Players can not pass or dribble forward through the box. This encourages more switching of the ball and also pulls central players wider for angled passes towards outside channels (which will force flank players out to the touch line.)

Coaching Point

Discourage long build-ups and encourage early balls wide and quick switches, especially to final 1/3.





Flank Zones

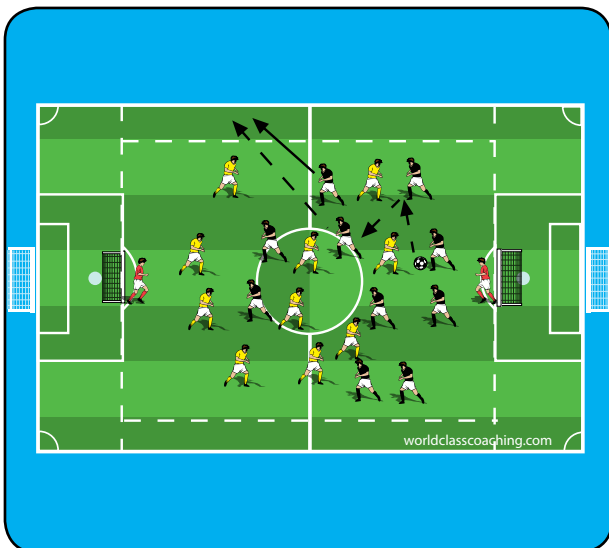
The field is now smaller to provide more repetitions and put the teams in their attacking third at all time. Each team has attacking players in wide channels. The ball is played to the flank player in the channel who prepares and serves it into the box.

Coaching Point

- Players organize runs, communicate and frame goal/ box
- Flank player can serve early (30 yds) or closer to end line (based on the pass he receives and runners)
- Encourage variety of cutbacks to 18, near post and far post service.
- Aggressive first touch into space by flank players

Variations

- Award three points for one-touch finishes/goals directly off crosses
- Allow overlapping player into channel (if flank players 1st touch is onto playing field)



11 v 11 with the Flanks Free

Two teams of 11 on a marked out pitch with the flank areas free. The teams adopt a specific playing formation (4-4-2 / 4-3-3 / etc.)

Procedure

- Normal play in the central area of the pitch
- One player may enter the marked-out areas on the flanks by running onto the ball there; they are allowed a maximum of three touches and then they come back into play again (control, pass, cross)
- Play two or three touch depending on the quality of the players
- One point for each goal, two points for a goal from a cross

Variation

A defender can enter the area to try to prevent the cross.