

# 55 UK ACADEMY SMALL-SIDED GAMES



**SOCCER COACH** WEEKLY



Improve your team's  
all-round tactical awareness  
guided by leading academy  
coach **Michael Beale**



# FIVE ISSUES FOR 97P

Become a better coach and win more games with 5 issues of **Soccer Coach Weekly** for just 97p!

### Leave Defences Standing

Coach your players to improve their first touch and soon they could be leaving defences standing and scoring as many goals as Robin van Persie.

**FIRST TOUCH**

At present he is a player who doesn't need to have lightning quick reflexes to beat his opponent and get a shot in on goal. And if they don't believe me, just watch him in action. Robin van Persie, the Dutchman, uses clever movement, quickness of thought and precision to beat his defender and get his shot on goal. And as we've seen, he's a player who doesn't need to have lightning quick reflexes to beat his opponent and get a shot in on goal.

**FIRST TOUCH TIPS TO BEAT DEFENDERS**

- 1. Look for the defender's feet and eyes to see where they are going to move.
- 2. Use your body to shield the ball from the defender.
- 3. Use your feet to keep the ball close to your body.
- 4. Use your eyes to look for the defender's feet and eyes.
- 5. Use your feet to keep the ball close to your body.

### Sharp Shooters

Executed at speed this is a dangerous attacking move that will help your players use a set of defences and set up goal scoring opportunities.

**FIRST TOUCH**

When you see a defender in front of you, you need to be able to beat them. This is a dangerous attacking move that will help your players use a set of defences and set up goal scoring opportunities.

**FIRST TOUCH**

When you see a defender in front of you, you need to be able to beat them. This is a dangerous attacking move that will help your players use a set of defences and set up goal scoring opportunities.

### Strike In Pairs

Help your strike partners develop an effective understanding with each other in order to score goals like Robin van Persie.

**FIRST TOUCH**

Help your strike partners develop an effective understanding with each other in order to score goals like Robin van Persie.

**FIRST TOUCH**

Help your strike partners develop an effective understanding with each other in order to score goals like Robin van Persie.

Start your trial now – Click <http://bit.ly/Zc0nbb>

# Play first – coach later



55 UK Academy  
Small-Sided Games



This book is published by Green Star Media Ltd, Meadow View, Tannery Lane, Bramley, Guildford GU5 0AB, UK.

#### Telephone

+44 (0)1483 892894

#### Head Coach

Michael Beale

#### Illustrations

Mike Ronald

#### Pictures

Action Images

#### Production

ATG Media Production

#### Designer

Jamie Leeson

#### Customer Services

Duncan Heard  
duncanh@greenstarmedia.net

#### Managing Director

Andrew Griffiths  
(c) Green Star Media Ltd.  
All rights reserved.

Go to [www.greenstarmedia.net/](http://www.greenstarmedia.net/) legal-notice to read the full disclaimer.

## Dear Coach

*UK Academy Small-Sided Games* is my most advanced coaching manual yet and provides an in-depth insight to the training I use on a daily basis.

Focusing specifically on 11v11 and tactical development, the aim of this book is to help prepare players for challenges faced in a match.

I have split this book into four categories:

1. Playing out of defence
2. Building through midfield
3. Final third/creating chances
4. Defending

Each game develops key areas of play and progresses in sequences to improve tactical understanding. Games are realistic, easy to follow and players learn through activity rather than your constant instruction.

This guide is a natural progression from the 4v4 *64 Small-Sided Games* and the multi-player learning outcomes of *64 More Small-Sided Games*.

Each manual has followed my progression as a coach in academy football. At the time of writing *64 Small-Sided Games* I was working in the foundation coaching phase of U6-U10 and my key message was that young players need to learn through playing games and having maximum touches of the ball.

As I progressed to the youth development phase (U12-16) my focus moved towards multi-player learning and so the launch of *64 Small-Sided*

**“We have a great responsibility when coaching young children”**



Let children learn through playing – don't constantly coach them

*Games* followed the pathway of player discovery and decision making.

Nowadays, I am working with elite professionals aged U17-U21 who are at very good technical and physical levels. Their focus is the improvement of individual game awareness and team tactical development – the final step on the development pathway to equip them with the tools to play as part of a winning team.

My key message is that we have a great responsibility when coaching young children. It is crucial we understand what players need at each stage of their development and provide practices that enable them to improve step-by-step.

I am a big advocate of small-sided

games and active playing within training sessions. We must have players who love to be on the ball – this is the dream starting point for a coach. Until we reach this ideal, are we not just managing our players' limitations?

Expression must be developed in young players from the moment they begin playing. As they mature, this expression must be aligned to good decision making, an essential process for young players learning the game and building their “bible” of football beliefs and values. We as youth coaches must be aware of their role in this process and drive the learning.

I would like to personally thank you for purchasing this book and wish you well on your coaching journey.

Regards,

Michael Beale

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For 12 years, Michael Beale (pictured right) has worked full time in leading English Premier League academies at Chelsea (10 years) and currently Liverpool (two years).

During this time, he has worked within all phases of youth player development: Pre-academy (6-8s), foundation (9-11s) youth development (12-16s) and now the professional development phase (17-21s).

He holds the prestigious UEFA A Licence coaching qualification and has travelled extensively to develop the next generation of youth

coaches via workshops in USA, Canada, Australia, England, Scotland, Ireland and the middle east.

This is Michael's sixth book for Green Star Media and his previous works were:

- *The Ultimate Warm-Ups Manual*
- *64 Small-Sided Games*
- *64 More Small-Sided Games*
- *Perfect Defending*
- *Soccer Attack*.

In addition, Michael contributes weekly *Smart Sessions* for our advanced core skills programme.



To subscribe to Soccer Coach Weekly call Duncan Heard on +44 (0)1483 892894

# Contents

## 4 PLAYING OUT OF DEFENCE: BUILD FROM THE KEEPER

The first rule of possession football is to play out of defence to build attacks. Your goalkeeper is vital in this process and must possess good passing and receiving techniques.

## 5 DEFENSIVE DIAMOND

Improve playing out of defence using the goalkeeper, two central defenders and a supporting midfielder to create a diamond.

## 6 SECOND LINE

Develop your defenders' abilities to play out of defence and make positive forward passes to midfielders or forwards.

## 7 FIND THE NUMBER 6

Develop the use of the holding player (6) who always looks to find space to receive a pass from the keeper, defenders or midfielders.

## 8 MAN TO MAN

Improve player willingness to receive the ball when being marked, general movement to make this possible and the ability to beat opponents 1v1 to pass forward/dribble.

## 9 FULL BACK INTRODUCTION

Full backs can provide width in possession to get the ball out of high pressure areas in the middle. This also encourages team mates to move off opponents and receive a pass.

## 10 FULL BACK OUTLET

Improve the use of full backs in your build-up process. This game also enables you to improve your full backs' decision-making.

## 11 ATTACKING FULL BACKS

Improve the effectiveness of attacking full backs to give your team additional fire power when in possession.

## 12 THREE ZONE BUILD-UP

Develop your team's ability to build attacks through the centre of the pitch.

## 13 PLAYING OUT V HIGH PRESS

Play an attack v defence game where both teams utilise different tactics to be successful.

## 14 ZOMBIE BUILD-UP PLAY

Practise your team's build-up play in a semi-opposed environment.

## 15 BUILDING THROUGH MIDFIELD: COMPLETE MIDFIELDERS

Midfielders link the defence to attack – they are the most complete players in the team and must create goals, score goals and also prevent opponents creating/scoring.

## 16 THE TEAM'S HORSESHOE

Quick possession football to unlock defences.

## 17 FIND THE NUMBER 10

Use 10 as an advanced midfielder/shadow striker and increase the ability of your team to move the ball through defenders and midfielders to find him in attacking space.

## 18 FIND ATTACKING MIDFIELDERS

Develop your team's ability to play positive forward passes between the lines of the opposition midfield and defence and to your attacking midfielders.

## 19 THROUGH THE MIDFIELD

Improve the movement of central midfielders and the ability to play through them to build effective attacks.

## 20 QUICK PLAY IN MIDFIELD

Improve build-up play through the midfield channels using quick combinations.

## 21 EXTRA MIDFIELDER

Improve the use of a three-man midfield when playing against a team with two midfielders.

## 22 PLAY THROUGH THE DIAMOND

Implement the 4-4-2 diamond formation to provide a more potent goalscoring threat.

## 23 ROTATING DEFENCE

Develop defending in open play and stop the opposition having any forward momentum.

## 24 MIDFIELD ROTATION

Improve midfield rotation when using a three-player midfield.

## 25 XAVI & INIESTA POSSESSION

Improve team possession and work on goalkeeping passing and receiving skills.

## 26 PIRLO THE PLAYMAKER

Improve quick combination play in midfield like the Italy World Cup winner.

## 27 CENTRAL OVERLOAD

Improve quick combination play in midfield.

## 28 RUNNING OFF THE BALL

Improve player movement off the ball to create space to receive a pass.

## 29 DRIBBLE OR PASS FORWARD

Develop the switching of play to dribble or pass forward.

## 30 FORWARD PASS, FORWARD RUN

Improve your midfielders' ability to make runs off the ball to create space to play forward and set up attacks.

## 31 ZIG-ZAG THROUGH THE PITCH

Improve quick combination passing to zig-zag through the pitch.

## 32 QUICK PASSING SQUARE

Develop fast combination play in central areas of the pitch.

## 33 PLAYING THROUGH TRAFFIC

Improve your players' movement off the ball to receive a pass.

## 34 CREATING CHANCES IN THE FINAL THIRD: SCORING TO WIN

The final piece in our build up play is to create and score goals. Do you attack down the wings or build through the centre?

## 35 INVERTED WINGERS

Implement the use of inverted wingers – wingers who take the ball inside and off the line to combine with overlapping full backs or dribble infield.

## 36 LINE-BREAKING RUNS

Develop line-breaking runs from your team's wide players.

## 37 LINE-BREAKING PASSES

Improve the use of defence-splitting passes that break the defensive line and put attackers through on goal.

**38 INIESTA ZONE (BETWEEN THE LINES)**

Improve your attackers' understanding of how and when to arrive in the space between the opposition midfield/defence.

**39 BETWEEN THE LINES/ BEHIND TO SPACE**

Develop your team's ability at passing into the space between the line of defence/midfield or into the space behind your opponents' defence.

**40 CENTRAL V WIDE ATTACK**

This session develops two teams using different tactics. Team 1 has lots of width and looks to the wings while team 2 plays quick combinations through central areas.

**41 PLAY FORWARD OR SWITCH?**

Improve your players' decision-making on how to build the team's attack – through the centre or out wide?

**42 1V1 DOMINATION**

Use this session to improve 1v1 attacking and defending.

**43 PLAY OFF YOUR FORWARD**

Improve link up play between your midfielders and centre forward.

**44 THIERRY HENRY FINISHING**

Improve finishing inside the box.

**45 TWO TOUCH/ALL IN**

Develop decision-making as to when exactly to pass or dribble the ball.

**46 DEFENDING: DEFEND AS A TEAM**

As soon as the ball is lost, all players must react quickly to stop the opposition's forward momentum.

**47 HIGH PRESS**

Develop the ability to press high up the pitch.

**48 LOW PRESS**

Develop your team's ability to play with a low press and counter attacking style.

**49 CONTROLLING THE OPPONENT**

Develop defending in open play. The aim is to stop opponents having forward momentum.

**50 DEFENSIVE SLIDE**

Improve your defenders' ability at sliding across the pitch to defend.

**51 DEFEND AND COUNTER**

Improve your team's ability at steering play to one side of the pitch then storming the surrounding area to regain possession and launch a counter attack.

**52 KEEP PLAY IN FRONT**

Improve team defending and the art of keeping your opponents away from goal.

**53 FORCE PLAY TO ONE SIDE**

Improve your team's understanding of defending and forcing play to one side of the pitch to negate attacking threats.

**54 LOCK IN**

Improve defensive pressing in order to regain possession.

**55 PRESS AND PASS**

Improve defensive pressing and reaction to regaining the ball.

**56 PRESS AND 1V1**

Improve defensive pressing and reactions when regaining possession.

**57 MIDFIELD 3V3**

Develop a three-player midfield both in attack and defence.

**58 DEALING WITH DIRECT PLAY**

Improve your team's defending against long direct balls.

**59 RECOVER TEAM SHAPE**

Improve your team's focus on defending and regaining team shape when possession is lost.

**60 HIGH PRESSING DEFENCE**

Improve high press defending – rushing the attackers and giving them little time to react and create openings.

**61 POSSESSION V COUNTER ATTACK**

Create a match scenario of one team playing possession football and one team playing high-pressure, counter attacking football.

**62 DEFEND/ATTACK THE CROSS**

Improve your team's effectiveness when attacking or defending crosses.



John Stones (Everton) slides in to regain possession as Arsenal's Lukas Podolski counter attacks

England  
U21 keepers  
Jonathan  
Bond and Sam  
Johnstone  
(inset) are  
happy with the  
ball at their feet



# Build from the keeper

The first rule of possession football is to play out of defence to build attacks. Your goalkeeper is vital in this process and must possess good passing and receiving techniques.

**P**laying out of defence enables your team to keep possession. It is the alternative to your keeper making a long kick forward for a 50/50 challenge in midfield.

It takes some nerve and confidence to build from the back, especially when you first start, but it is a key part of the possession game. Here are my five pro tips for playing out of defence successfully:

**PRO TIP 1** When your **goalkeeper** places the ball, his **right and left backs** push into high and wide positions to force opposing wide players backwards.

**PRO TIP 2** His **centre backs** split to the corners of the penalty box to increase the distance between themselves and the opposing centre forward. If there are two forwards, the centre backs go to the corners of the box then slide down the side in line with the penalty spot or if necessary the six-yard box.

**PRO TIP 3** Your **midfielders** push high up the pitch to take opposition midfielders away and increase the space for your defenders to play out. If the opposition have two forwards, one midfielder drops deep to help the goalkeeper and central defenders play out in a 4v2 – creating a diamond shape.

If the opposition has one forward, your central defenders and goalkeeper can play out in a 3v1 situation.

**PRO TIP 4** Your goalkeeper must be heavily involved in the process of playing out. He can do this by passing out to a defender then moving to a new angle to receive a return pass.

**PRO TIP 5** Try to play forward as quickly as possible. Once your defenders

are in possession, can they pass to a midfielder or forward? Can they dribble into midfield to create an overload?

In all scenarios, your goalkeeper and defenders must be positive and want to be on the ball and playing it out.

If the players lose composure or become nervous, encourage them to continue playing.

It's obvious that playing this way can lead to some mistakes in training games or real matches.

However, the many positives will soon outweigh these relatively few negatives as with each session your players

will become technically better and your goalkeeper will be comfortable using his feet.

The sessions featured in this section will develop your teams' ability to play out of defence in a number of scenarios.

**Words and activities by:**  
Mick Beale

## TELL THEM...

1. Full backs high and wide
2. Centre backs split
3. Midfielders push high
4. Keeper passes/moves
5. Play forward quickly

# Defensive Diamond

Improve playing out of defence using the goalkeeper, two central defenders and a supporting midfielder to create the defensive diamond.

## WHY USE IT

It teaches playing out of defence. The goalkeeper and defenders are supported by a midfielder player to create a defensive diamond.

## SET UP

A 30x22-yard pitch divided into two halves. A goalkeeper and two defenders start in each half. A midfielder starts on the halfway line between two mannequins/poles. Finally, four opposing strikers line up as in the top picture and work in pairs to pressure defenders.

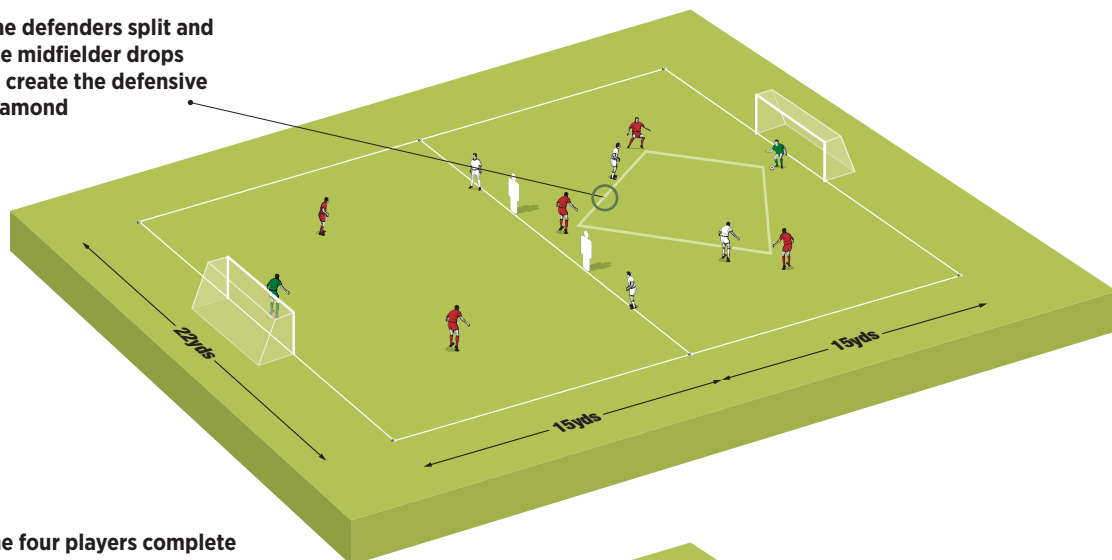
## HOW TO PLAY

One goalkeeper starts with the ball. Two defenders and two opponents move into position and the midfielder drops back to create the diamond. The aim for the four defensive players is to complete three passes under pressure from the nearest strikers and transfer the ball to the opposite half with either a pass (middle picture) or the midfielder dribbling through. The other strikers enter the game once the ball is given to the keeper at the other end to restart. If strikers win the ball, they try to score.

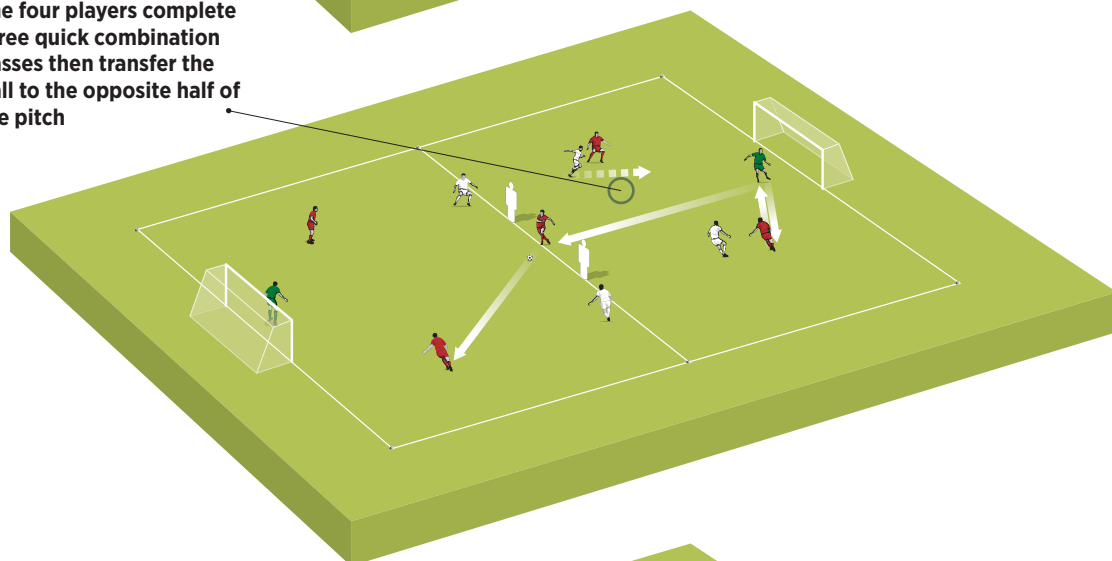
## TECHNIQUE

- Facing forward with an open shoulder stance to be able to see both goals.
- Accurate short passing using one/two touches.

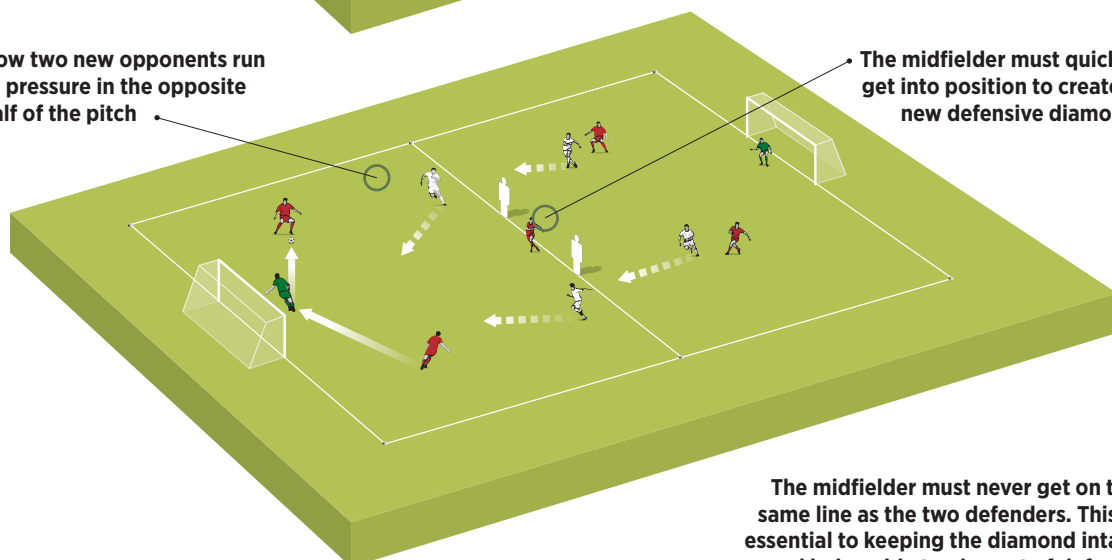
The defenders split and the midfielder drops to create the defensive diamond



The four players complete three quick combination passes then transfer the ball to the opposite half of the pitch



Now two new opponents run to pressure in the opposite half of the pitch



The midfielder must quickly get into position to create a new defensive diamond

The midfielder must never get on the same line as the two defenders. This is essential to keeping the diamond intact and being able to play out of defence

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Second Line

Develop your defenders' abilities to play out of defence and make positive forward passes into the team's midfielders or forwards.

## WHY USE IT

This progresses the *Defensive Diamond* session to a game involving a goalkeeper, two central defenders and midfielder playing out of defence.

## SET UP

Play 4v4 plus goalkeepers on a 30x22-yard pitch divided in half with two mannequins/poles on the halfway line. Each team has a goalkeeper and two defenders in their half and two attackers in the other half.

A neutral player acts as the midfielder (M) creating the diamond and can enter either half.

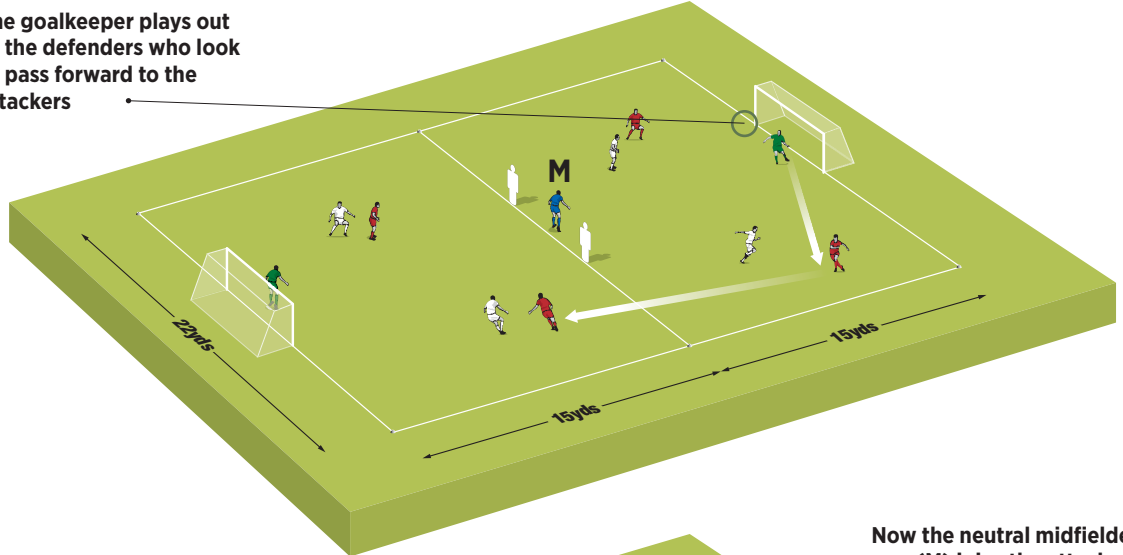
## HOW TO PLAY

The keeper, defenders and neutral midfielder combine to make a defensive diamond and play out of defence as a 4v2. The aim is to quickly play forward to the two attackers inside the opponents' half. If successful, the midfielder joins the attackers, creating a 3v2 to score.

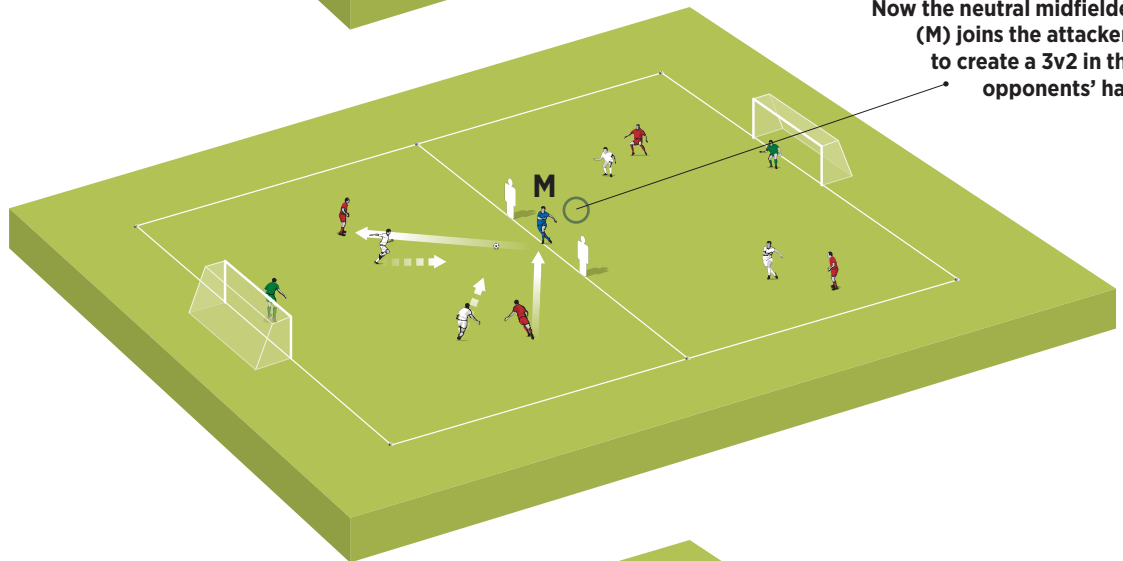
## TECHNIQUE

- Control the ball and play with an open body stance to receive and move forward.
- Accurate passing skills over both 5-10 yards and medium range 10-20 yards.
- Close dribbling skills to go past defenders.
- Accurate shooting.

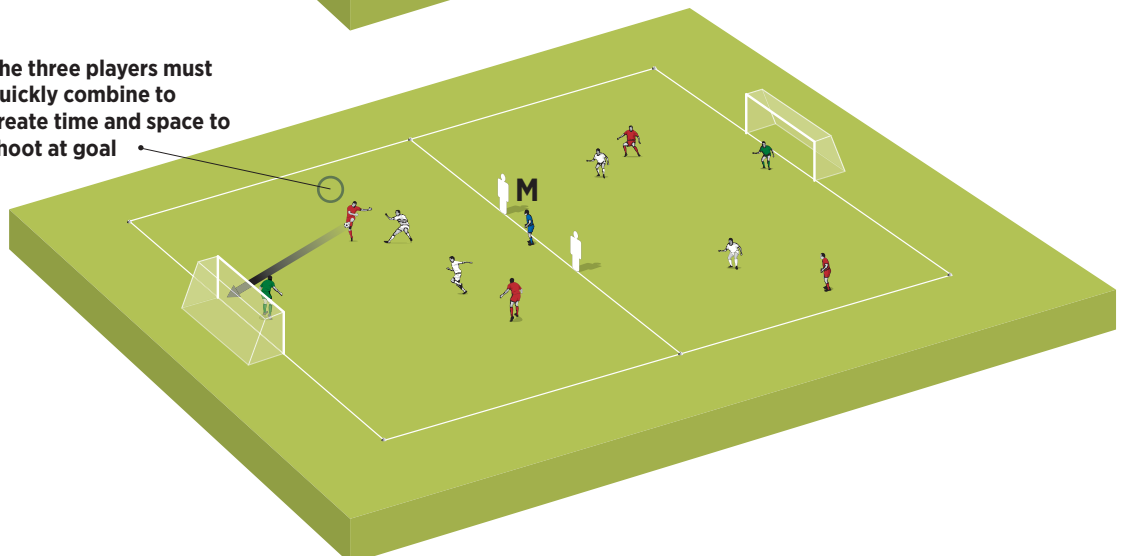
The goalkeeper plays out to the defenders who look to pass forward to the attackers



Now the neutral midfielder (M) joins the attackers to create a 3v2 in the opponents' half



The three players must quickly combine to create time and space to shoot at goal



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 



# Find The Number 6

Develop the use of a holding midfielder (6) who always looks to find pockets of space to receive a pass from the goalkeeper, defenders or attacking midfielders.

## WHY USE IT

One midfielder drops deep to help defenders build from the back, encouraging central defenders to move forward with the ball to attract opponents and create space.

## SET UP

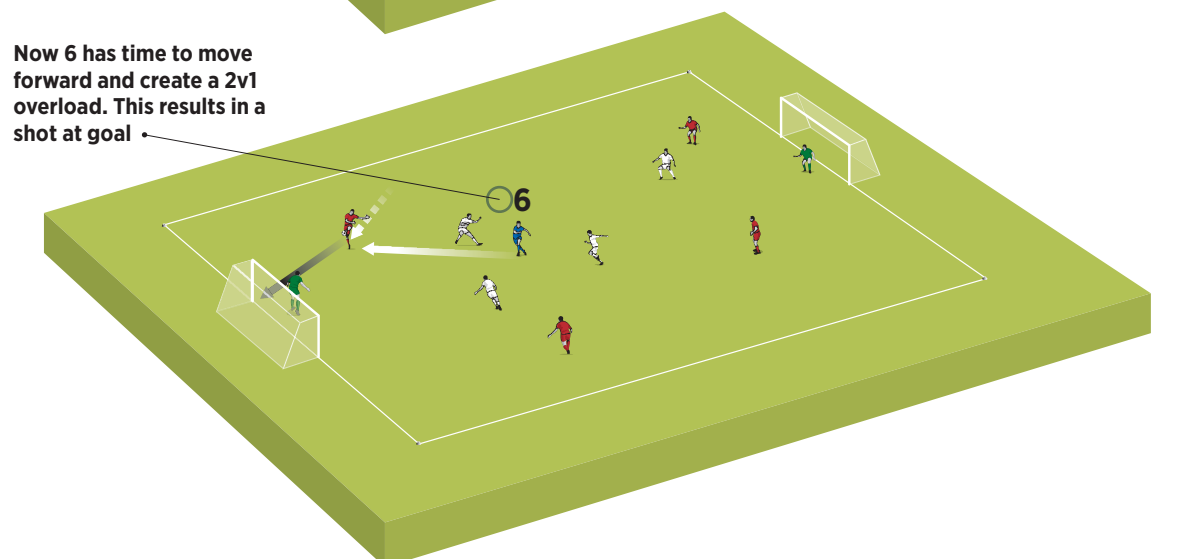
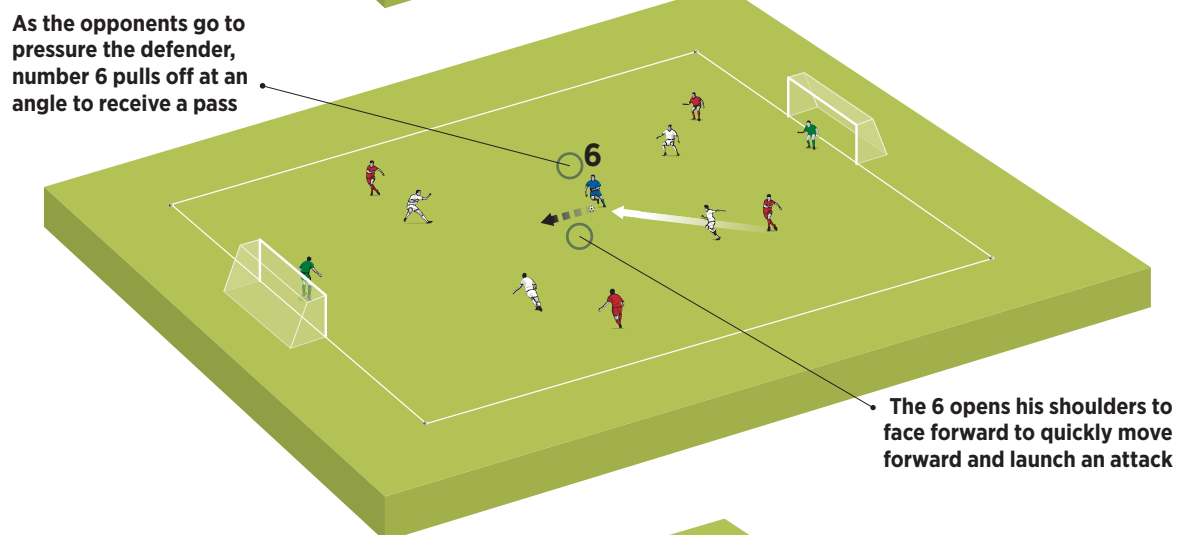
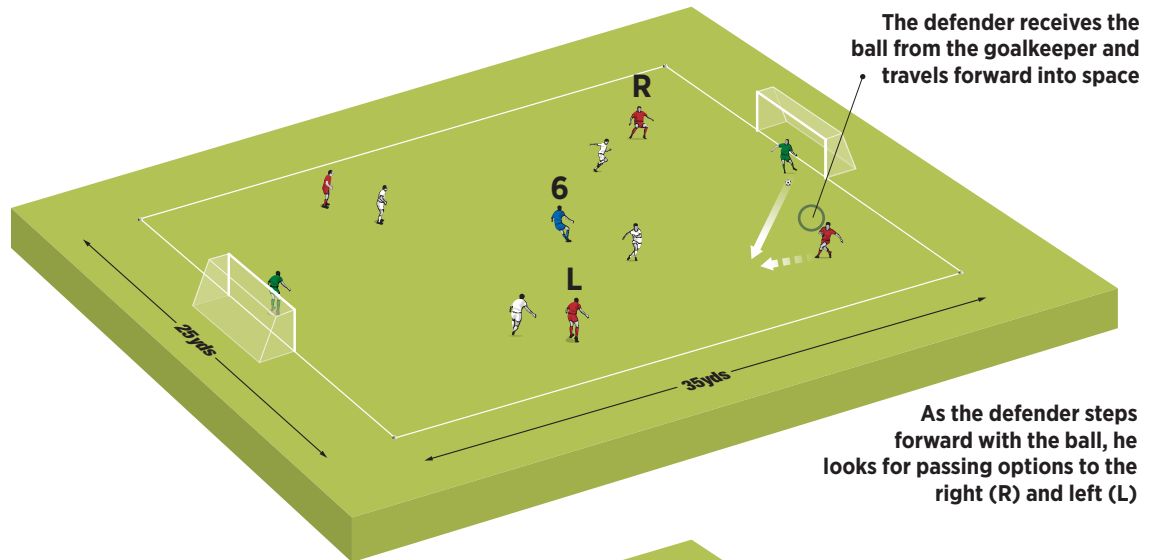
Play 4v4 plus goalkeepers on a 35x25-yard pitch. A neutral player acts as number 6 and plays for the team in possession.

## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession have a one player overload – the number 6 in midfield. The goalkeeper starts the game by passing out to the defenders. The aim is to use your additional player to build up and score a goal.

## TECHNIQUE

- Play with head up to work out whether to dribble or pass.
- Accurate passing.
- All players on the move and looking either to get forward or pass forward.
- An open body position so players can see both goals.
- Midfielders create angles, right or left, to offer two passing options to the defender and free up a playing-out defender.



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Man To Man

Improve player willingness to receive the ball when marked, general movement to receive the ball and the ability to beat opponents 1v1 to pass/dribble forward.

## WHY USE IT

Players must be comfortable receiving the ball when marked tightly and under pressure. Players must also trust each other and pass to a team mate that is marked and believe that he can remain composed and skilfully manoeuvre himself away.

## SET UP

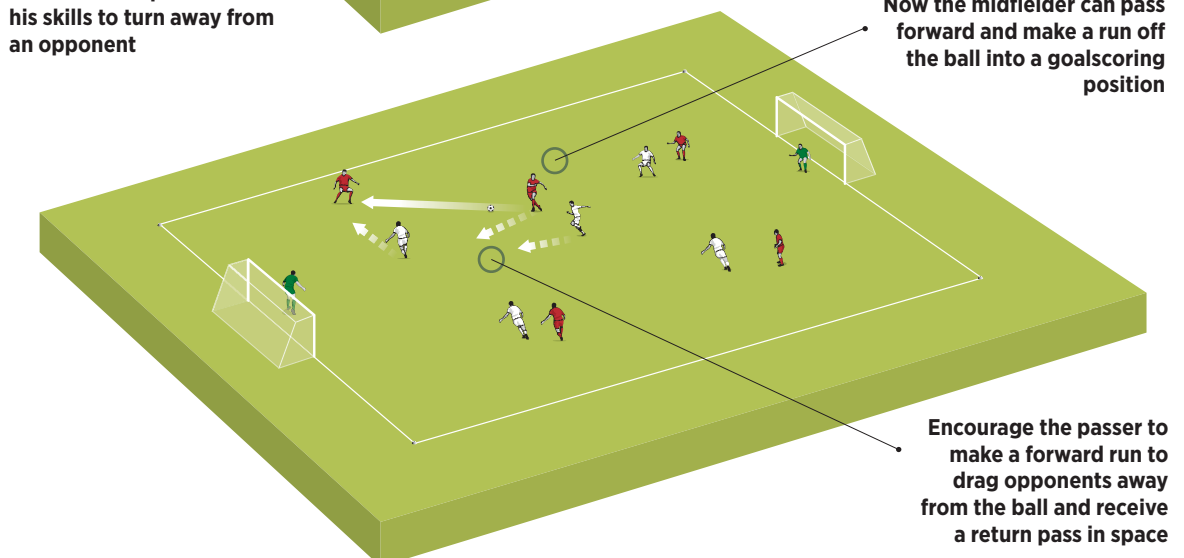
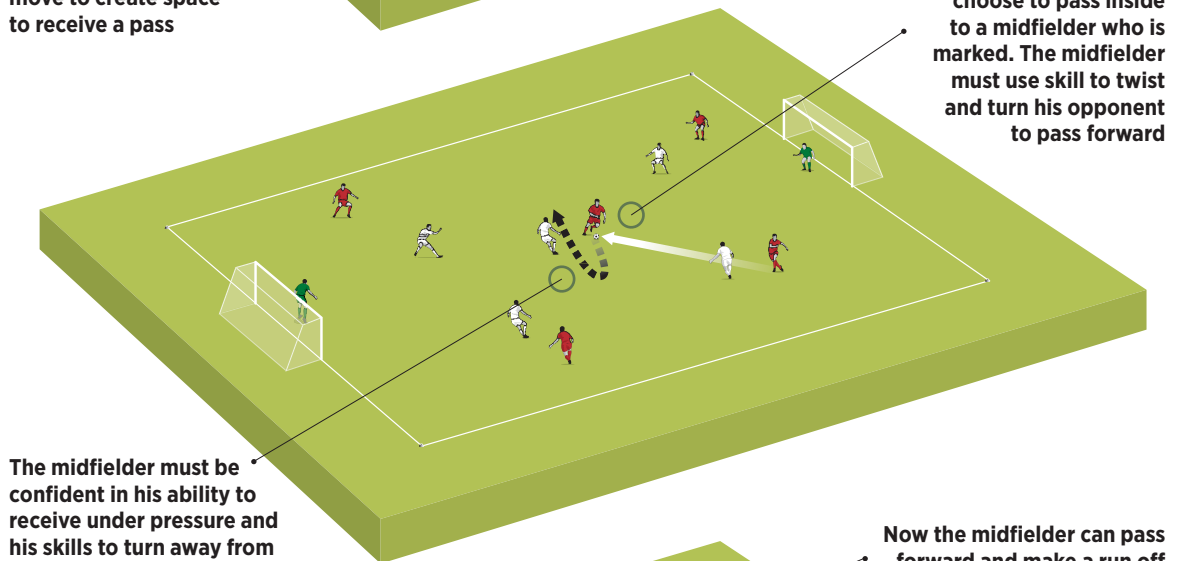
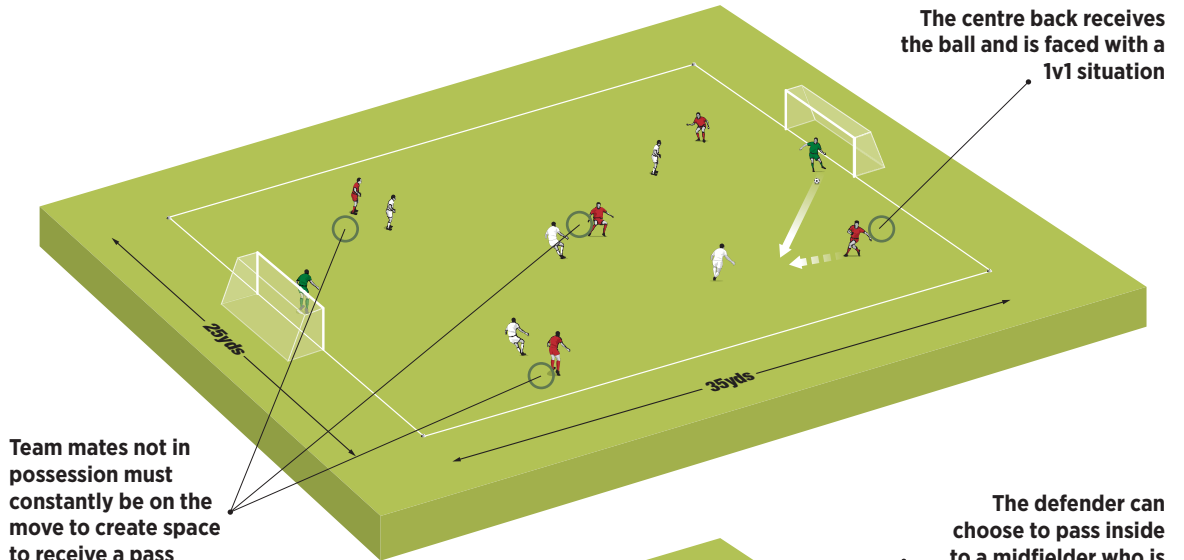
Play 5v5 plus keepers on a 35x25-yard pitch. Play in a 2-1-2 formation.

## HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper starts the game. The aim is to build from the back and score a goal. There is no offside. Players are all closely marked so good movement off the ball is essential in order to make space to receive a pass.

## TECHNIQUE

- Good movement and disguise to create space to receive the ball.
- Composure to stay calm under pressure.
- The ability to turn and go past an opponent.



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Full Back Introduction

Full backs can provide width in possession to get the ball out of high pressure areas in the middle. This also encourages team mates to move off opponents and receive a pass.

## WHY USE IT

Full backs often find themselves free to receive passes with time and space to play forward. This game shows how to get the ball away from packed central areas and out wide.

## SET UP

Play 5v5 plus goalkeepers on a 35x25-yard pitch. Play in a 2-1-2 formation with neutral full backs (N1 and N2) limited to two touches working on both touchlines.

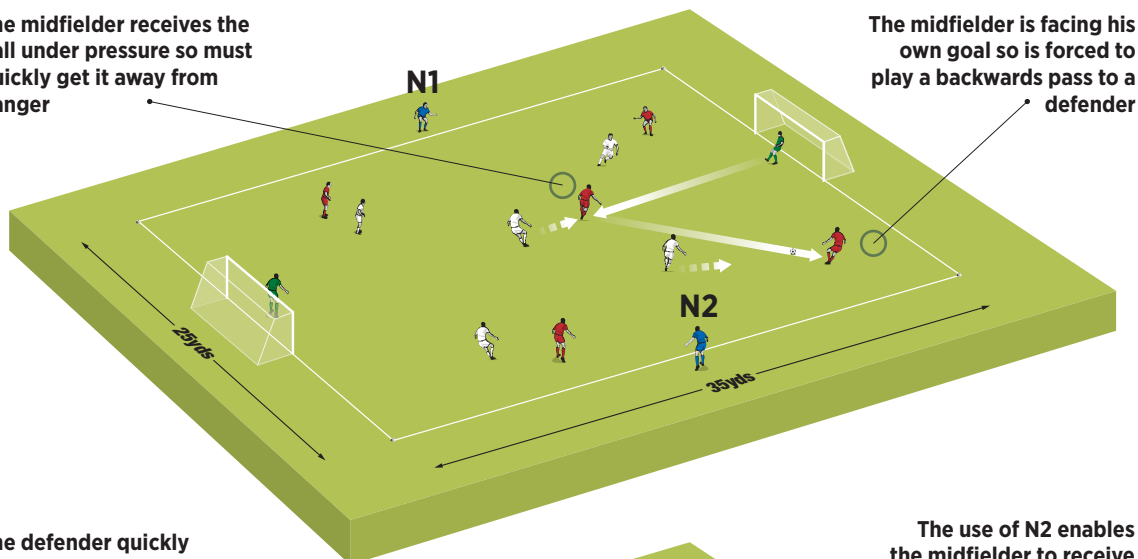
## HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper starts the game. The aim is to build up and score a goal. All players on the pitch are tightly marked so the neutral full backs provide a good opportunity to pass outside to relieve pressure and allow attackers time to make runs off the ball to receive a pass in space. Do not play offsides.

## TECHNIQUE

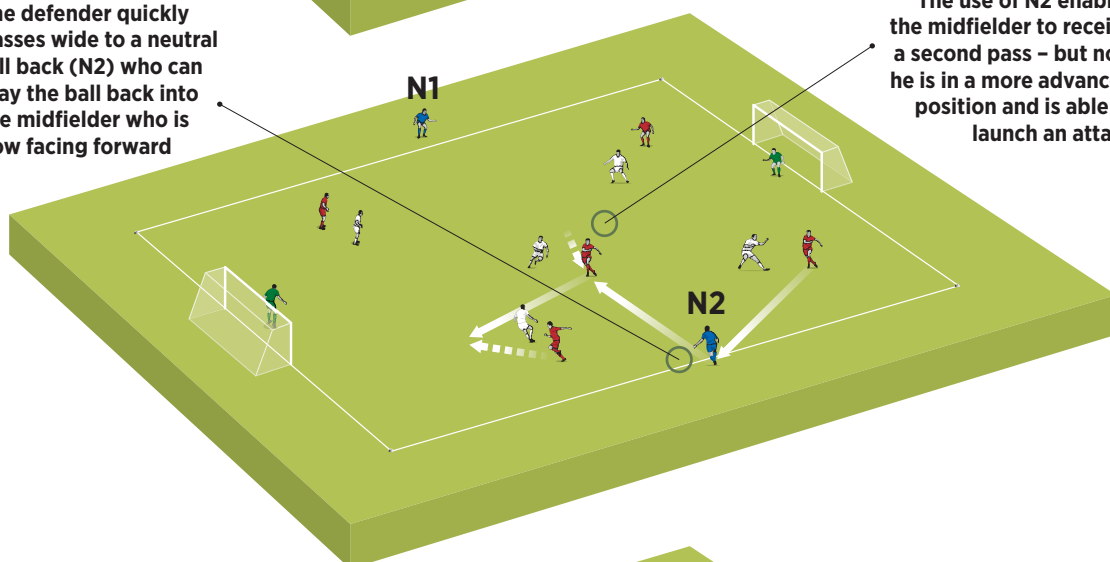
- Good close control and accurate passing.
- Movement off the ball and playing with the head up.
- Look to switch positions with a team mate and offer angle to receive/give pass.
- Stay calm under pressure.

The midfielder receives the ball under pressure so must quickly get it away from danger



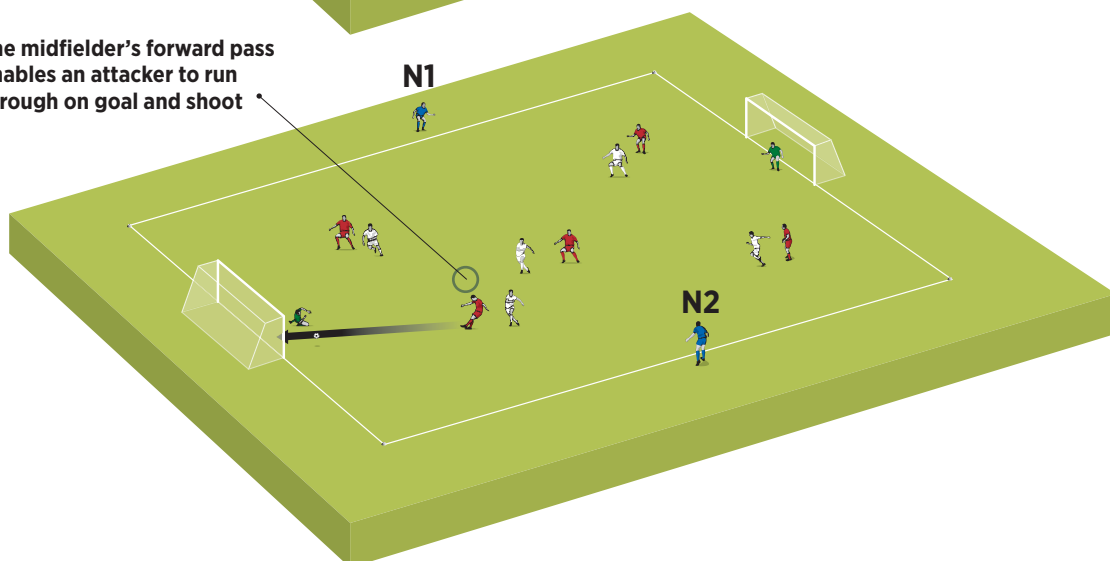
The midfielder is facing his own goal so is forced to play a backwards pass to a defender

The defender quickly passes wide to a neutral full back (N2) who can play the ball back into the midfielder who is now facing forward



The use of N2 enables the midfielder to receive a second pass – but now he is in a more advanced position and is able to launch an attack

The midfielder's forward pass enables an attacker to run through on goal and shoot



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Full Back Outlet

Improve the use of full backs in the team's build up process. In addition, this game enables you to improve the full back's decision making on the ball.

## WHY USE IT

When in possession, a full back often has time to look up and choose the best passing option or whether to dribble forward into space. Coaching decision making in this situation is important.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 55x45-yard pitch with additional five-yard channels on the flanks. Both teams have a full back in each channel to make it 8v8. Play a 2-3-1 formation with full backs out wide.

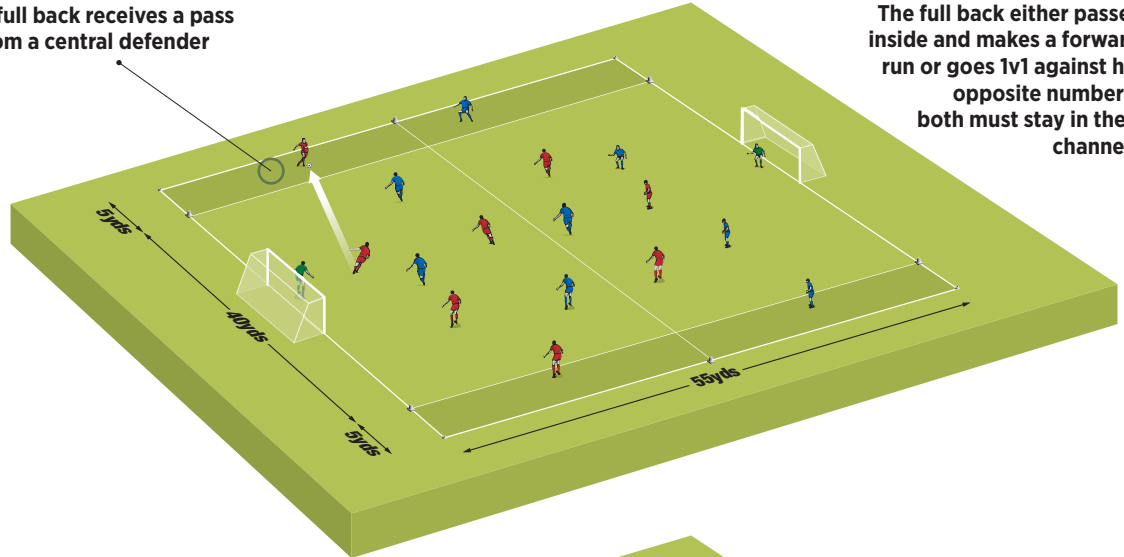
## HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper starts the game and the aim is to build from the back and score. Teams can pass wide to a full back who is unopposed in the channel. The full back is allowed unlimited touches and must choose between passing back inside or dribbling forward to go 1v1 against his opposing full back. The opposing full back is not allowed to tackle until the ball is in his half. Offside rules apply.

## TECHNIQUE

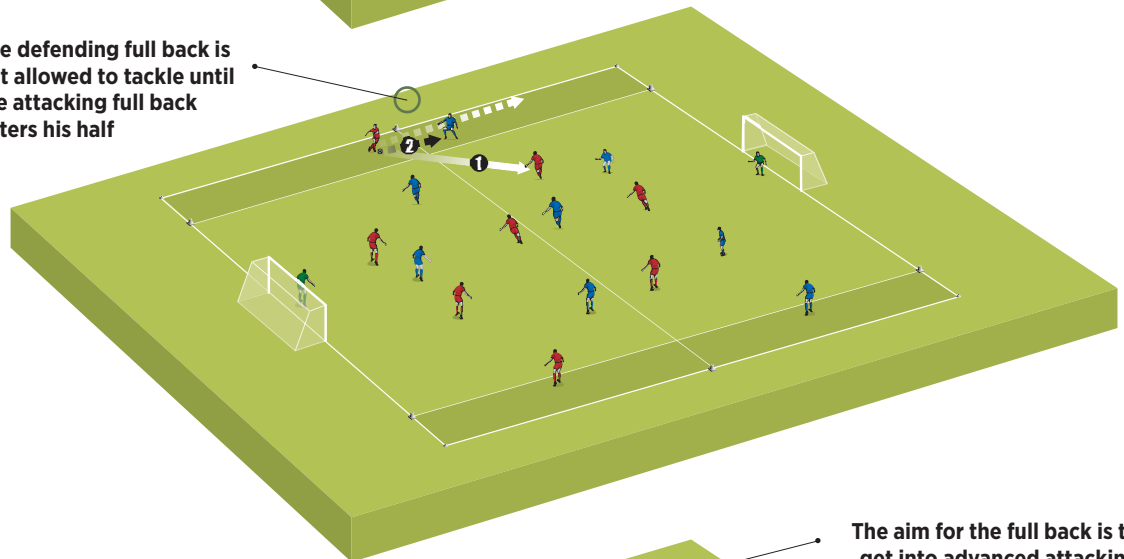
- Full back plays with head up to survey play.
- Full back needs to either pass accurately or good close control to dribble past opposing full back.
- Good crossing technique when in position to deliver.
- Other players looking to create angle and space for a pass with constant movement.

A full back receives a pass from a central defender

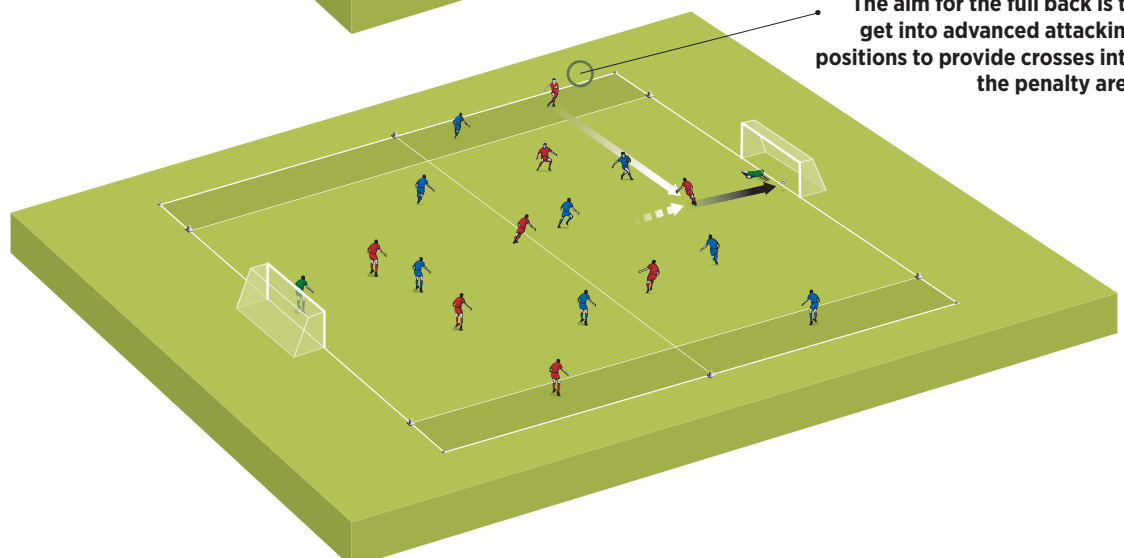


The full back either passes inside and makes a forward run or goes 1v1 against his opposite number – both must stay in their channels

The defending full back is not allowed to tackle until the attacking full back enters his half



The aim for the full back is to get into advanced attacking positions to provide crosses into the penalty area



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Attacking Full Backs

Improve the effectiveness of attacking full backs to give the team additional fire power when in possession of the ball.

## WHY USE IT

Attacking full backs add an extra dimension and create 2v1 overloads in wide areas or the chance to go 1v1 with a defender.

## SET UP

Play 7v7 plus goalkeepers on an 60x50-yard pitch. Place three mannequins/poles at regular intervals on the halfway line. These provide "traffic" for defenders to avoid when making a pass.

Both teams play with four defenders in their own half and three attackers in the other half.

## HOW TO PLAY

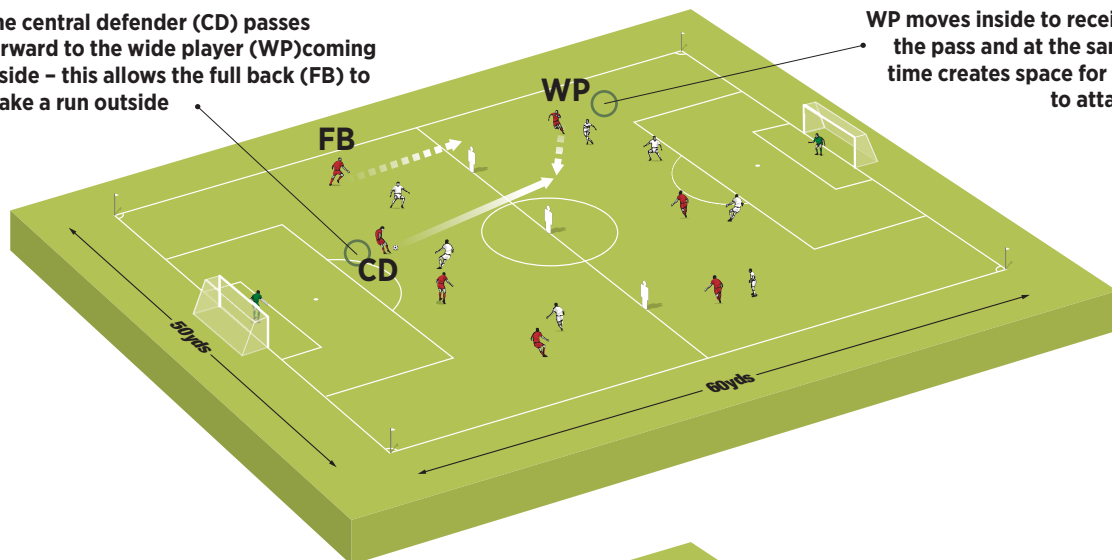
Play starts with a goalkeeper using his four defenders to play out of defence with a 5v3 overload with the aim for getting forward quickly. One of the full backs is free to break forward and join the attack to create a 4v4. The opposite full back must now tuck in and join the two centre backs to give the team defensive balance behind the ball.

## TECHNIQUE

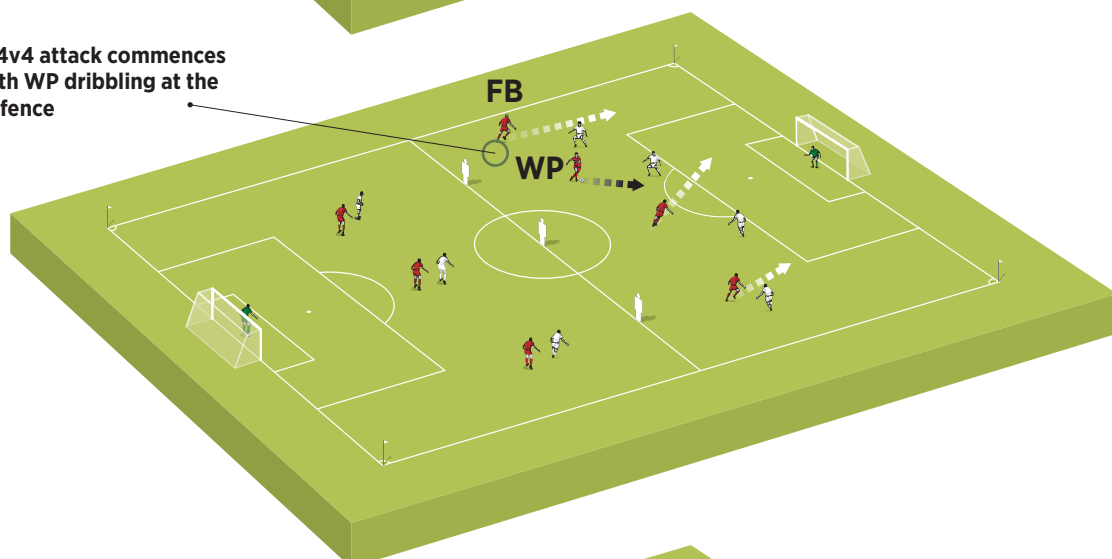
- Constant movement off the ball to receive and turn from the forwards.
- The full back finds space at pace to create an attacking option.
- Accurate passing and crossing.

The central defender (CD) passes forward to the wide player (WP) coming inside – this allows the full back (FB) to make a run outside

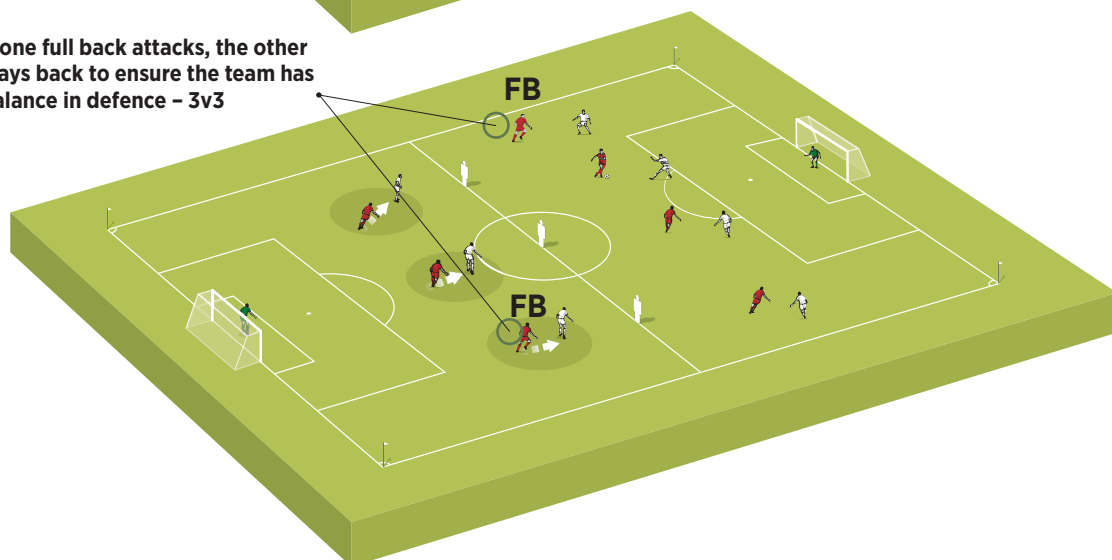
WP moves inside to receive the pass and at the same time creates space for FB to attack



A 4v4 attack commences with WP dribbling at the defence



If one full back attacks, the other stays back to ensure the team has balance in defence – 3v3



Player movement ■■■▶

Ball movement —▶

Run with ball ■■■▶

Shot —▶

# Three Zone Build-Up

Develop your team's ability to build up attacks through the centre of the pitch.

## WHY USE IT

This game develops build up from the goalkeeper, through the centre backs, midfielders and central striker. The use of three zones enables players to learn how to build the attack.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 40x30-yard pitch divided into 8-yard defensive zones and a 24-yard central zone. Place two mini goals at each end. Play two defenders and one attacker in each 8-yard zone and 3v3 midfielders in the centre.

## HOW TO PLAY

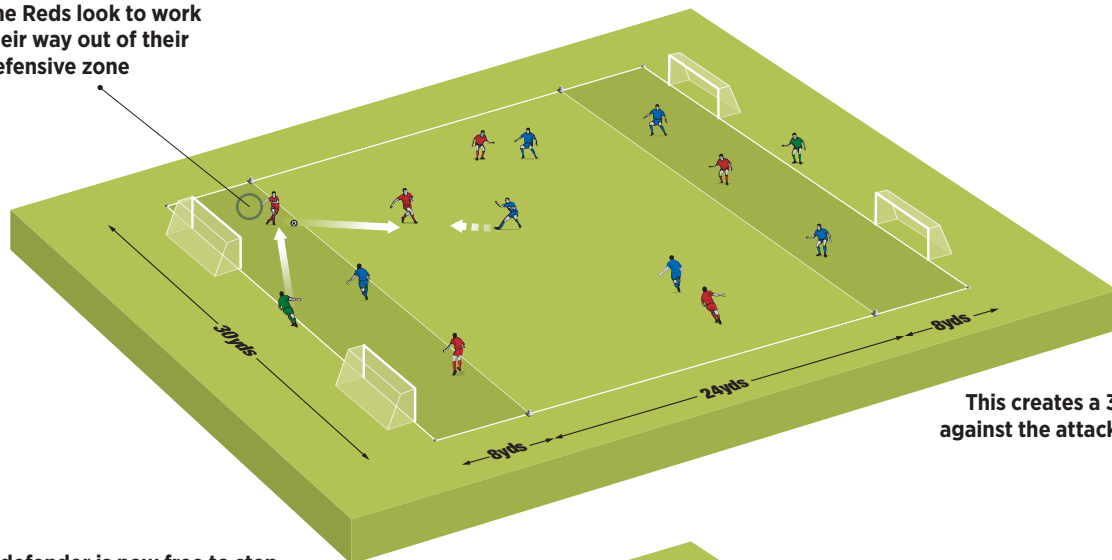
The goalkeeper passes to a defender in the end zone. This 3v1 allows them to dribble into the central zone. The defender has created a 4v3 in the middle zone and a striker drops back to make it 5v3.

The aim is to now to free a player to dribble into the attacking zone and get 1v1 to score in a mini goal. If the defending team regains the ball, they attack.

## TECHNIQUE

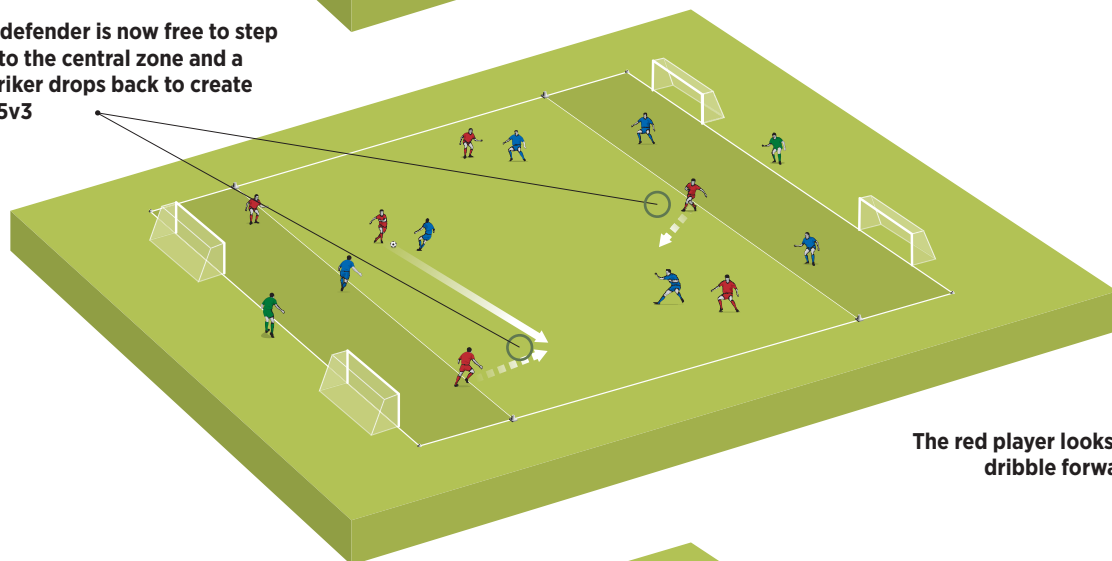
- Receiving to go forward.
- Close dribbling and passing skills.
- Movement and rotation to receive – quick combination play.

The Reds look to work their way out of their defensive zone



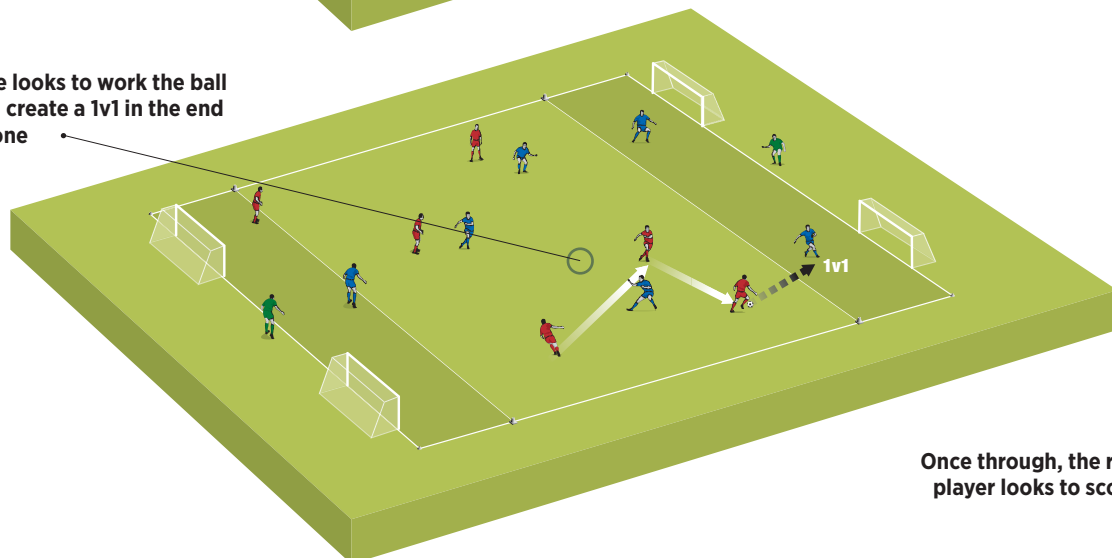
This creates a 3v1 against the attacker

A defender is now free to step into the central zone and a striker drops back to create a 5v3



The red player looks to dribble forward

He looks to work the ball to create a 1v1 in the end zone



Once through, the red player looks to score

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Playing Out v High Press

Play an attack v defence game where both teams are utilising different tactics.

## WHY USE IT

This game develops two areas of tactical play:

1. Commitment to playing out of defence.
2. Pressing opposing defenders high up the pitch.

## SET UP

Play 5v5 on a 50-yard square – as shown in the top picture. Have one normal sized goal at one end and two mini goals at the other end. The team defending the big goal have a goalkeeper to make it a 6v5. Both teams play a 2-3 formation. Three neutral players (N) outside the square as shown play for the team in possession. They are only allowed two touches.

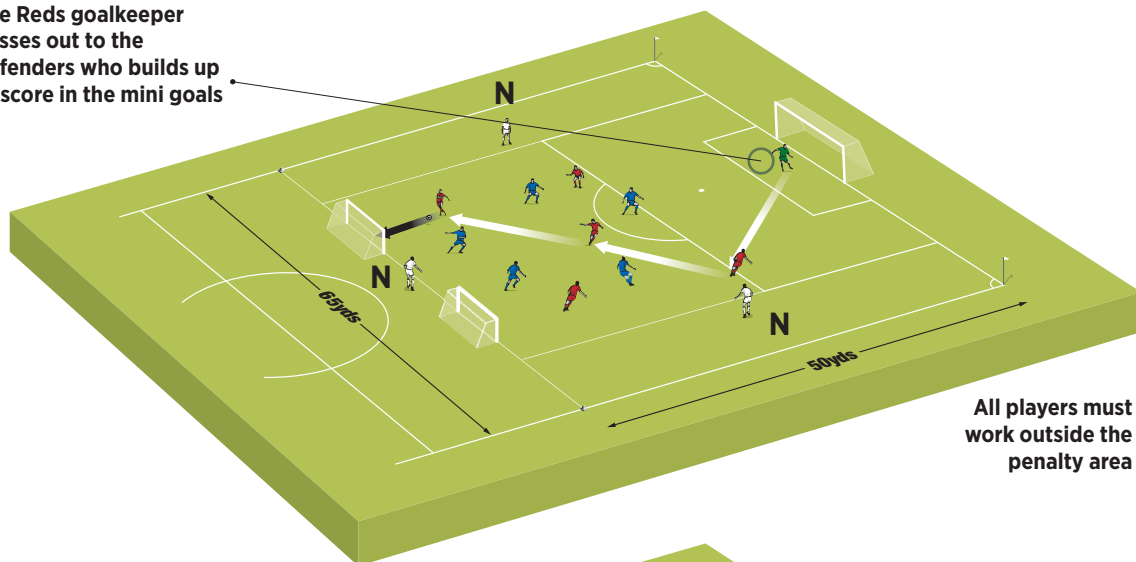
## HOW TO PLAY

The Red goalkeeper starts with the ball. The aim is to play out of defence and score in the mini goals. Red defenders are not allowed to drop back into the penalty box so must move to receive a pass outside the box in order to play forward. Blues try to stop Reds playing out of defence and regain the ball to counter attack and break into the box to go 1v1 against the keeper.

## TECHNIQUE

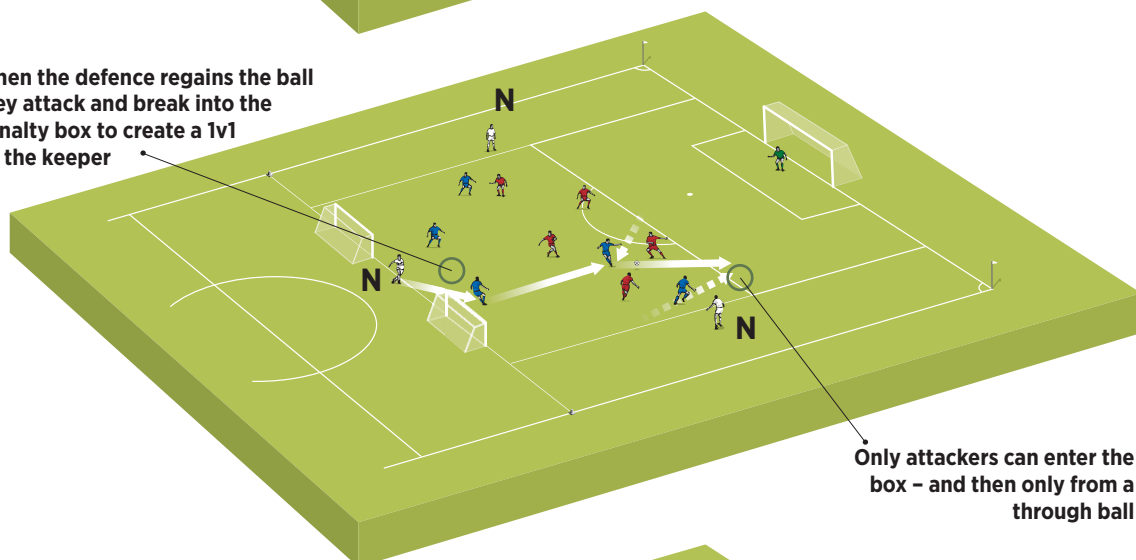
- Composure under pressure.
- Accurate forward passing.
- Movement to receive.
- Team defending.

The Reds goalkeeper passes out to the defenders who builds up to score in the mini goals



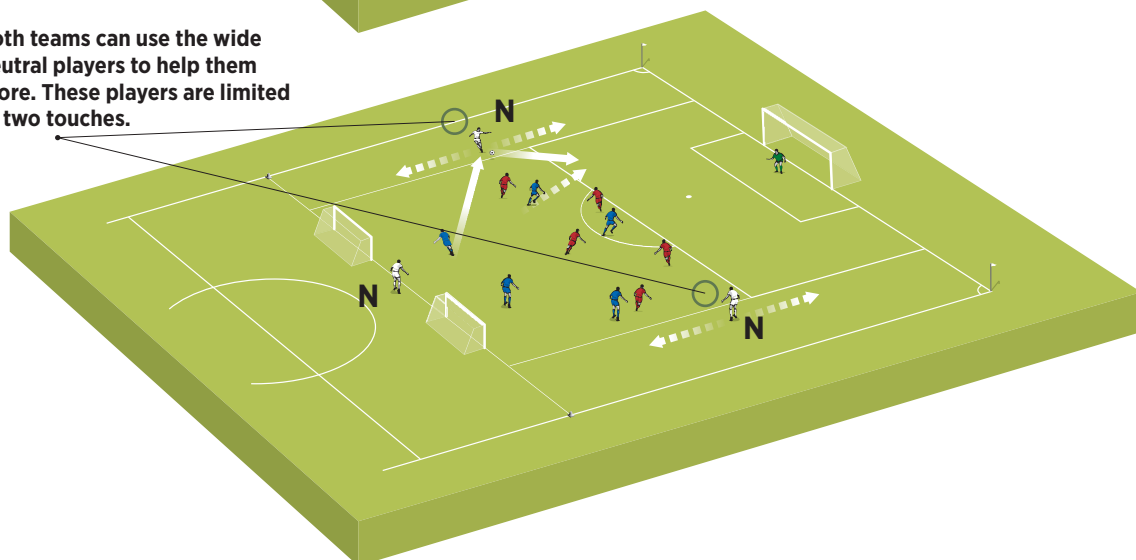
All players must work outside the penalty area

When the defence regains the ball they attack and break into the penalty box to create a 1v1 on the keeper



Only attackers can enter the box – and then only from a through ball

Both teams can use the wide neutral players to help them score. These players are limited to two touches.



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Zombie Build-Up Play

Practise your team's build-up play in a semi-opposed environment.

## WHY USE IT

This develops build-up play against moving, semi-passive opponents. "Zombies" apply a high press but cannot tackle, providing enough competition to move the ball at realistic speed.

## SET UP

Play 11v11 on a full size pitch with an offside line 10 yards in each half. Play a 4-3-3 formation.

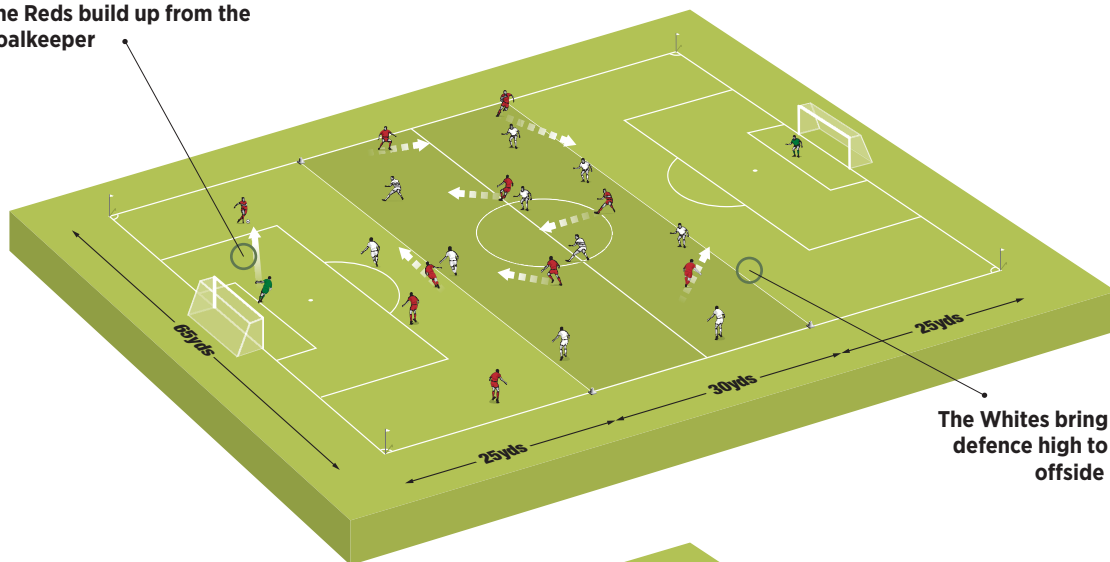
## HOW TO PLAY

Teams take turns at building from the goalkeeper through the pitch to score a goal. The opposing team play as "zombies" who can apply full pressure but cannot tackle. The defending team bring their four defenders to the offside line to make things more difficult. After one team build up, possession changes hands. Play the zombie rule for eight minutes to build confidence on the ball and a good rhythm - then play a normal, live game.

## TECHNIQUE

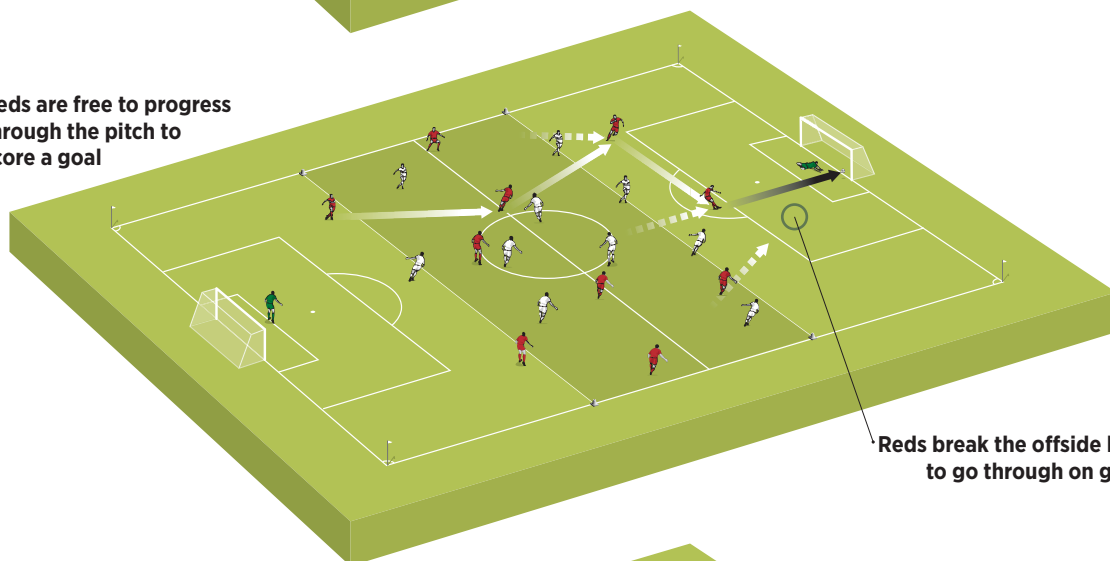
- Work the ball through all areas of the pitch.
- Movement on and off the ball.
- Clear communication.
- Accurate passing.

The Reds build up from the goalkeeper



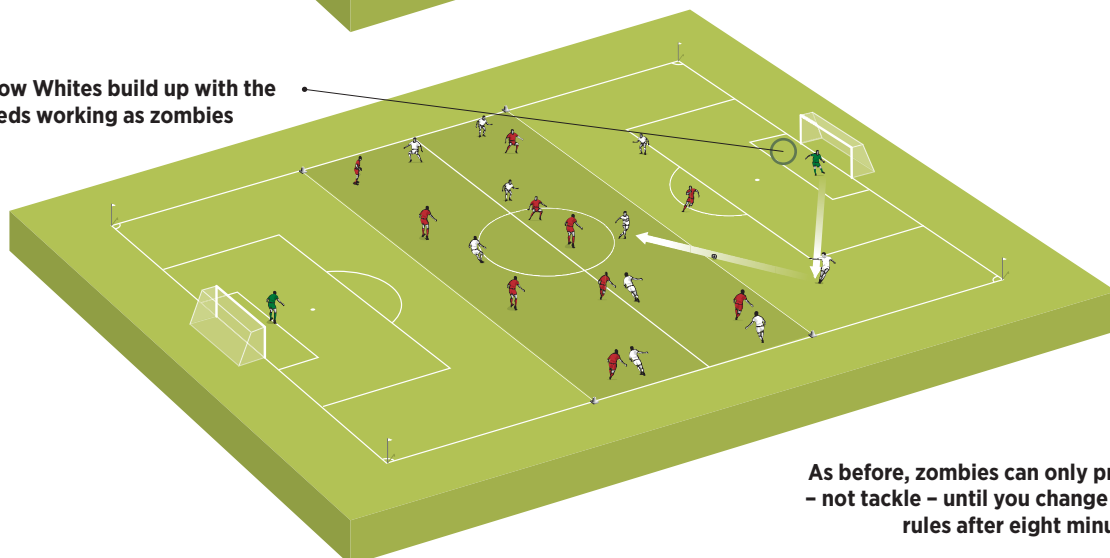
The Whites bring the defence high to the offside line

Reds are free to progress through the pitch to score a goal



Reds break the offside line to go through on goal

Now Whites build up with the Reds working as zombies



As before, zombies can only press - not tackle - until you change the rules after eight minutes

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 





Everton and England's Ross Barkley is an all-action midfielder

# Complete midfielders

Midfielders link the defence to attack – they are the most complete players in the team and must create goals, score goals and also prevent opponents creating/scoring.

**N**ow we have played out of defence, we must take the next step in attack by building through congested midfield areas.

Whether you set up with two players in the centre of midfield or three (two holding and one attacking or one holding and two attacking) your midfielders must build an understanding with each other based on their strengths.

Players must complement each other and make movements to receive the ball or create space for a pass to go through to the team's forwards. Here are my five pro tips for midfield play:

**PRO TIP 1** When your **defenders** are in possession, your **midfielders** must be constantly adjusting position and angles to receive.

**PRO TIP 2** Your **midfielders** must use an open body stance so they can receive the ball to turn and go forward. If a midfielder is being marked closely, he can now receive on the foot farthest from the opponent and protect the ball.

**PRO TIP 3** Don't be static, either when receiving a pass or after making one – top midfielders are always on the move.

**PRO TIP 4** Scan the pitch and know which players you are looking to pass the ball to and why! If you have a fast wide player, you need to pass to space for him. If you have a skilful, attacking midfielder, play

passes between the lines to get the midfielder on the ball in time and space.

**PRO TIP 5** Be positive – try to go forward as much as possible. This can be with a pass or with skill to beat an opponent 1v1. Understand that sometimes you can take an extra touch to draw an opponent to the ball before passing but also recognise when to combine with other midfielders using one - or two-touch passing.

The games that follow in this section will begin to shape your midfield and provide a smooth transition when looking to move play quickly from defence to attack.

## TELL THEM...

1. Create good angles
2. Open body stance
3. Don't be static
4. Scan pitch for options
5. Go forward at all times

**Words and activities by:**  
Mick Beale

# The Team's Horseshoe

Improve quick possession football in order to unlock the opponents' defence.

## WHY USE IT

When opponents sit deep and block forward passes, use your four defenders to create a horseshoe to quickly transfer the ball from one side of the pitch to the other. This will force the opposition to run across to cover the space, creating gaps to exploit

## SET UP

Three teams of five in a 35x20-yard area with two mini goals on one side.

## HOW TO PLAY

Referring to our pictures, teams are labelled red, white and blue.

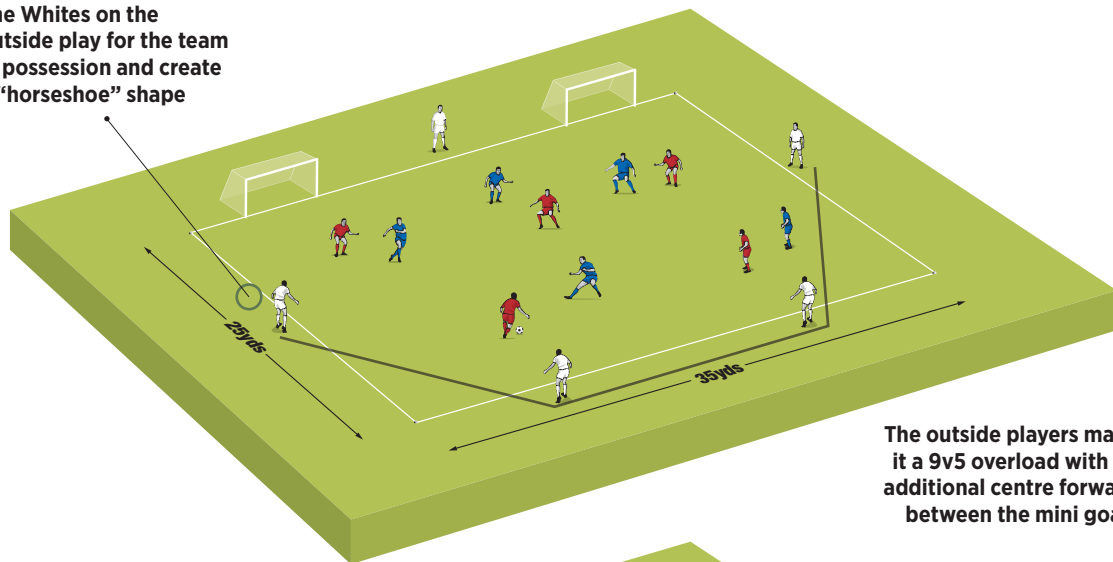
Reds team start in attack with Whites around the outside. To score, Reds must pass off the white centre forward and receive a return pass to score in a mini goal. Reds can use all the outside players to transfer play around the area and form a horseshoe.

If Blues regain the ball, they must pass forward to a White on the line opposite the goals. Now Blues attack and Reds defend.

## TECHNIQUE

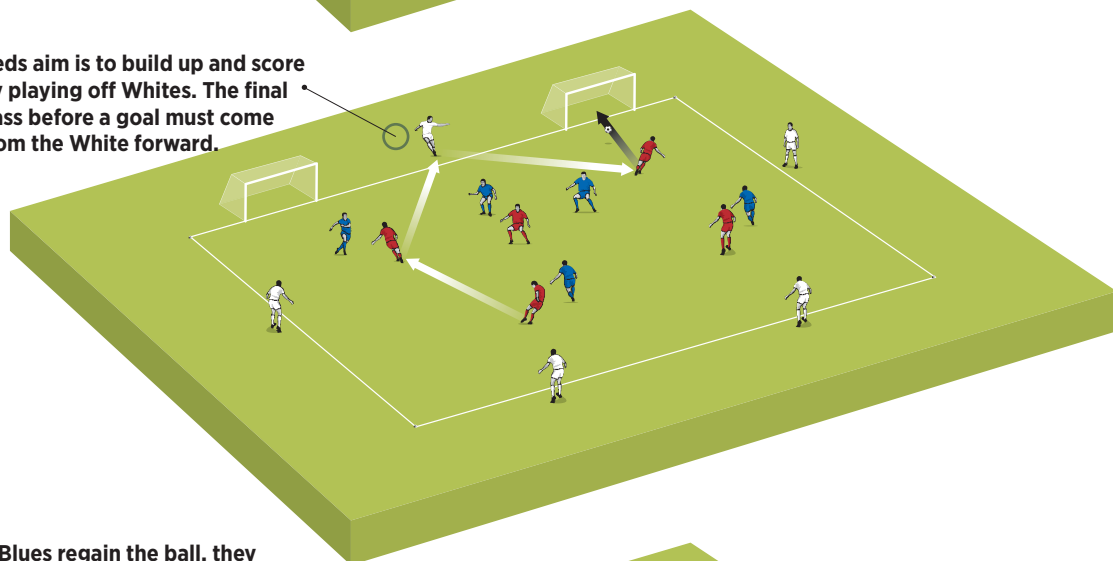
- Switch play quickly.
- Forward passing.
- Movement off the ball to receive.
- 1v1 ball manipulation to go forward.

The Whites on the outside play for the team in possession and create a "horseshoe" shape

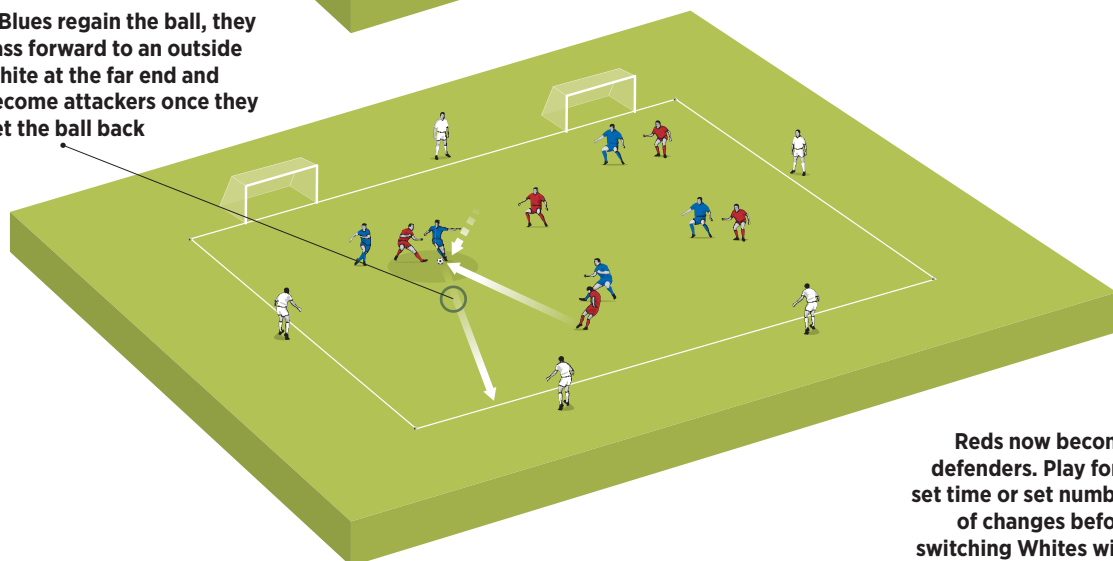


The outside players make it a 9v5 overload with an additional centre forward between the mini goals

Reds aim is to build up and score by playing off Whites. The final pass before a goal must come from the White forward.



If Blues regain the ball, they pass forward to an outside White at the far end and become attackers once they get the ball back



Reds now become defenders. Play for a set time or set number of changes before switching Whites with Reds or Blues

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Find The Number 10

Use 10 as an advanced midfielder/shadow striker and increase the ability of your team to move the ball through defenders and midfielders to find him in attacking space.

## WHY USE IT

A constantly moving 10 creates space in attacking areas and gets your players passing through defence and midfield to find him beyond the opposition midfield and in front of the defence (between the lines).

## SET UP

Play 6v6 on a 30x22-yard area. Play in a 4-2 formation with a number 10 outside the area beyond his two midfielders.

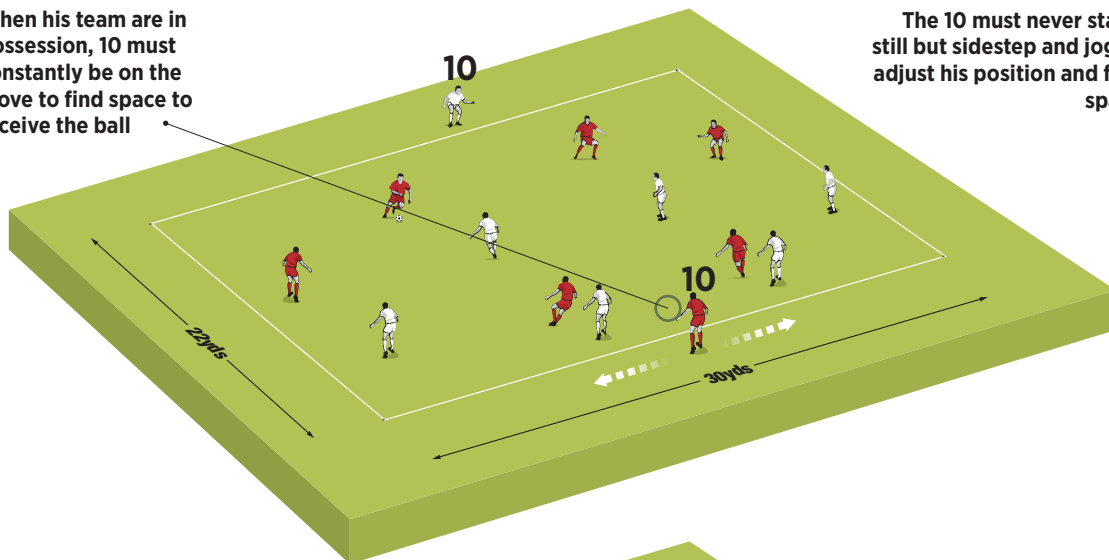
## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession plays forward to the number 10 to score a goal. After each goal, you pass a new ball to the same team and they try to repeat the process. If the opposing team regains possession, they have to find their number 10 to score.

## TECHNIQUE

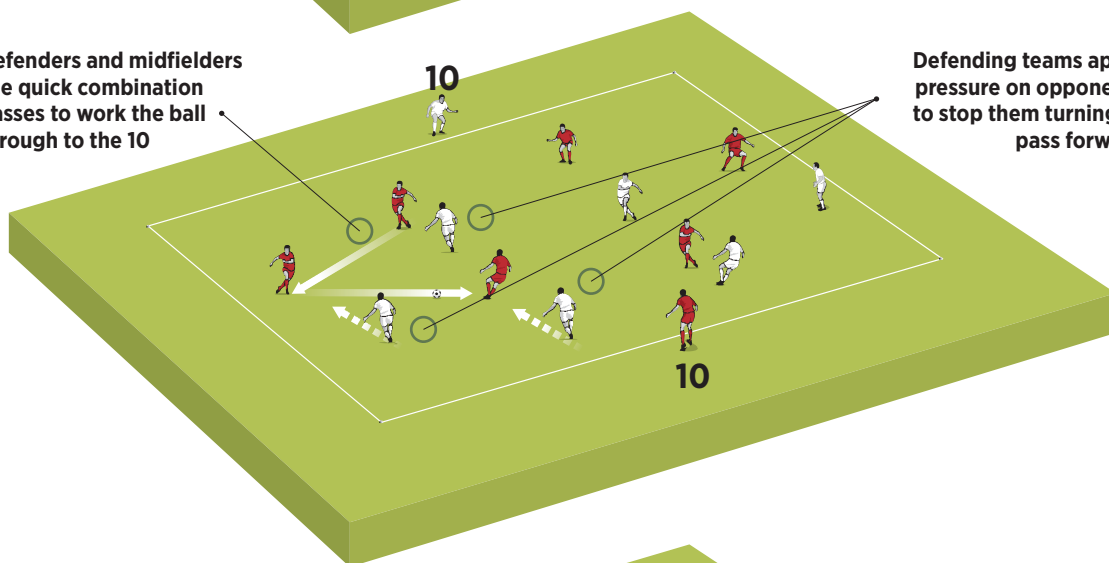
- Move the ball quickly from defence to midfield to drag opponents out of position.
- Number 10 must always be on the move, looking to receive a pass "between the lines".

When his team are in possession, 10 must constantly be on the move to find space to receive the ball



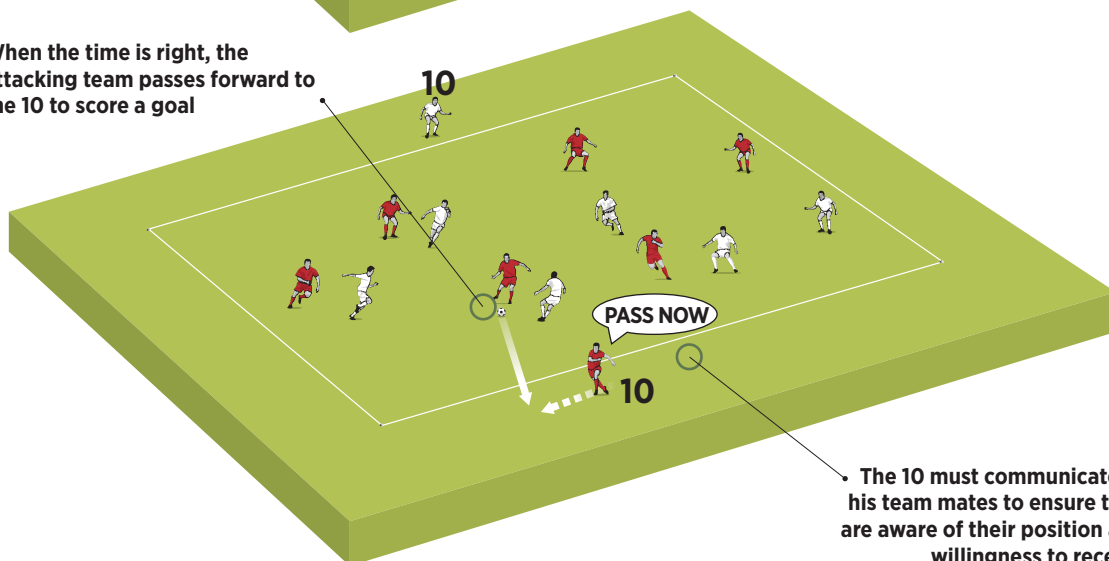
The 10 must never stand still but sidestep and jog to adjust his position and find space

Defenders and midfielders use quick combination passes to work the ball through to the 10



Defending teams apply pressure on opponents to stop them turning to pass forward

When the time is right, the attacking team passes forward to the 10 to score a goal



The 10 must communicate to his team mates to ensure they are aware of their position and willingness to receive

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Find Attacking Midfielders

Develop your team's ability to play positive forward passes between the lines of the opposition midfield and defence and to your attacking midfielders.

## WHY USE IT

This session focuses on the movement of your attacking midfielders in and around their opposite numbers, developing the final pass between the lines with a fast-paced possession game.

## SET UP

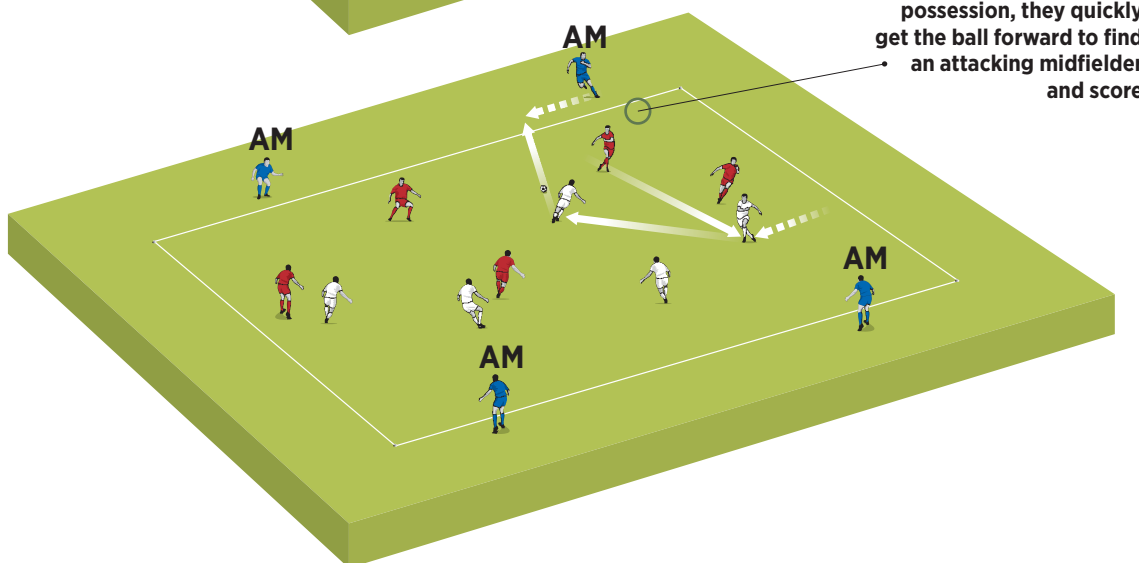
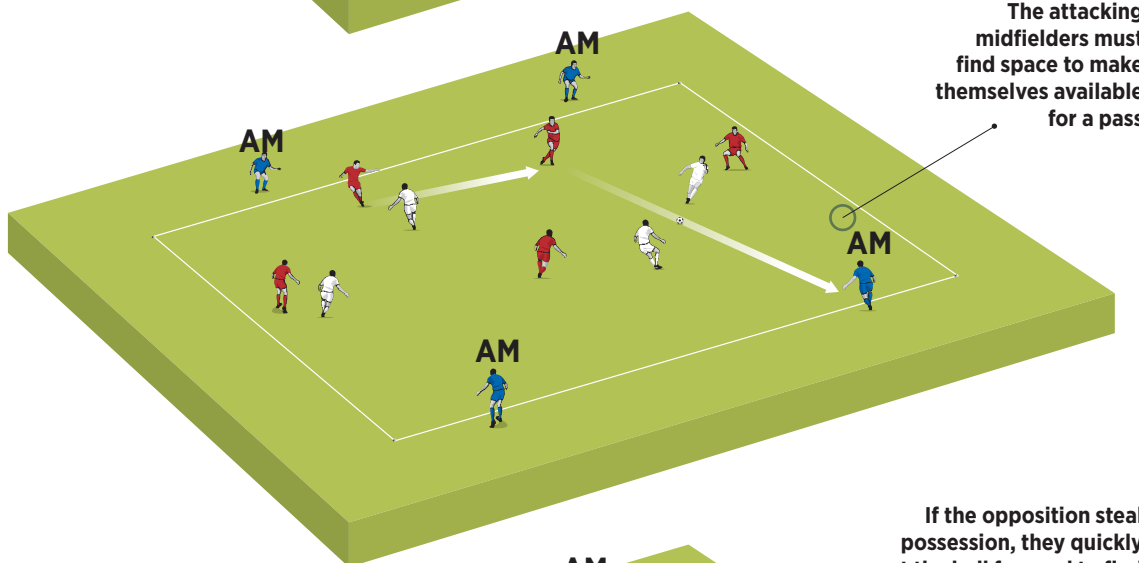
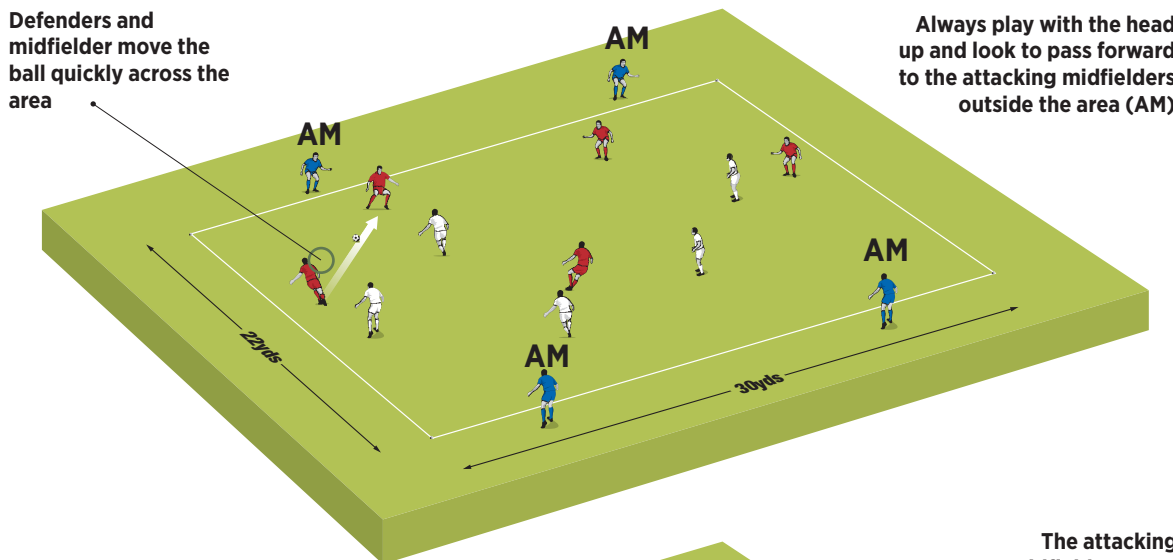
Play 5v5 on a 30x22-yard area with two attacking midfielders (AM) outside the area at both ends. Play a 4-1 formation to replicate four defenders and one deep-lying midfielder in a match.

## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession plays forward to their attacking midfielders to score a goal. After a goal, the coach passes a new ball to the same team and they try to repeat score again. If the opposing team regain possession, they aim to score at their end.

## TECHNIQUE

- Play off the shoulder of your opponent and constantly adjust position before getting a pass.
- Move the ball quickly between defence and midfield to get opponents chasing and leaving spaces.
- Play with an open body stance and head up to see every opportunity and angle for passing.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Through The Midfield

Improve the movement of central midfielders and the ability to play through them to build effective attacks.

## WHY USE IT

Playing through midfield is essential to teams looking to play a short passing game. The midfielders must know how to combine movements in order to open space to receive or to zig-zag pass through the pitch.

## SET UP

Play 7v7 plus goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard pitch. Each team plays with four defenders in their own half and three attackers in the other half. There are two neutral midfielders (M1 and M2) who play for the team in possession. Three mannequins/poles are placed on the half way line to provide "traffic" for teams to play through.

## HOW TO PLAY

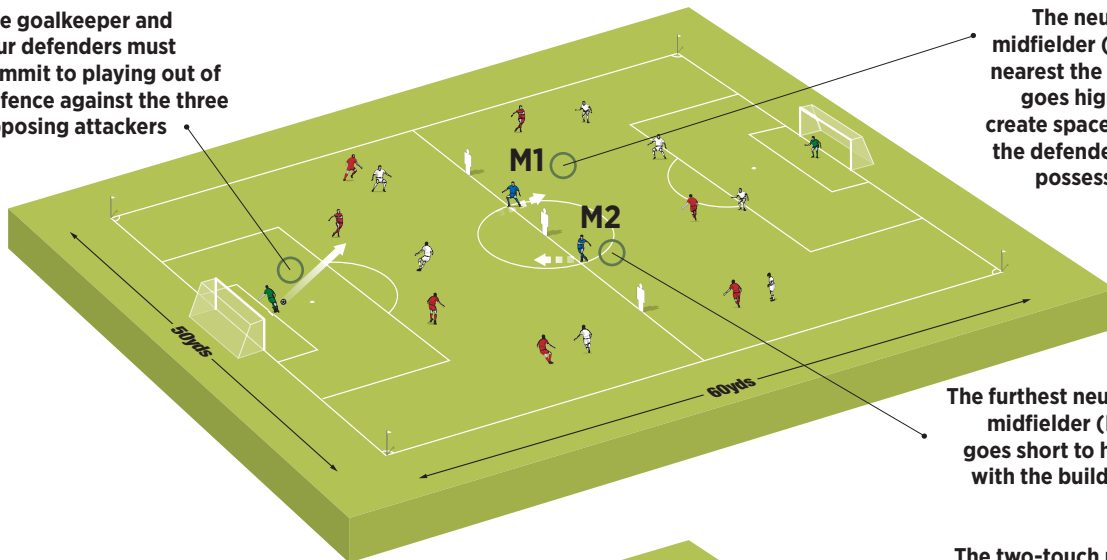
Teams play out of defence to two neutral midfielders who are limited to two touches so they must combine quickly to go through the mannequins and create a 4v4. Only one midfielder is allowed to join the attack, while the other one remains on the halfway line to add balance. Play offsides.

## TECHNIQUE

- Play head up with an open body stance.
- Midfielders co-ordinate – one going high and one low to work on angles.
- Midfielders use one-two or line-breaking passes through the mannequins where possible.

The goalkeeper and four defenders must commit to playing out of defence against the three opposing attackers

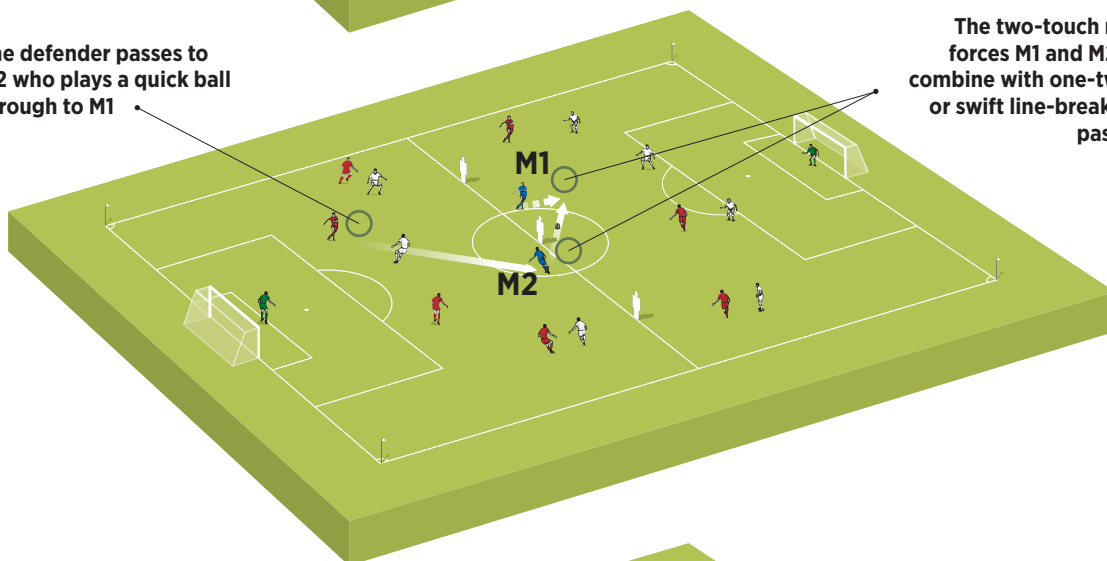
The neutral midfielder (M1) nearest the ball goes high to create space for the defender in possession



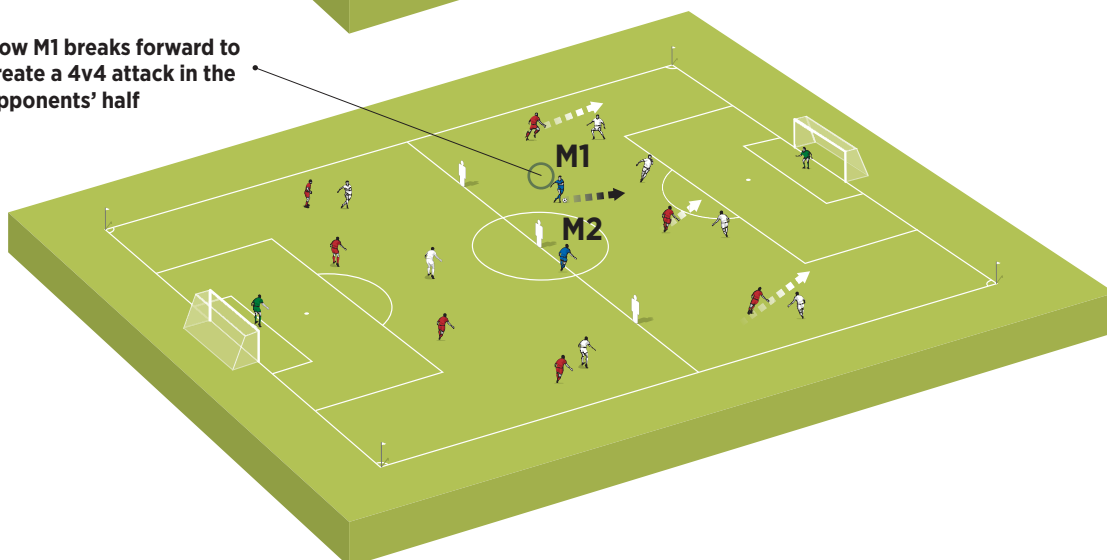
The furthest neutral midfielder (M2) goes short to help with the build-up

The defender passes to M2 who plays a quick ball through to M1

The two-touch rule forces M1 and M2 to combine with one-two or swift line-breaking passes



Now M1 breaks forward to create a 4v4 attack in the opponents' half



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Quick Play In Midfield

Improve build-up play through the midfield channels using quick combinations.

## WHY USE IT

This session progresses *Through the Midfielders* and introduces live opposition to prevent your team playing through midfield.

## SET UP

Play 9v9 including goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard pitch. Play a 4-1-3 formation with two neutral midfielders (N) playing for the team in possession to create a 3v1 in midfield.

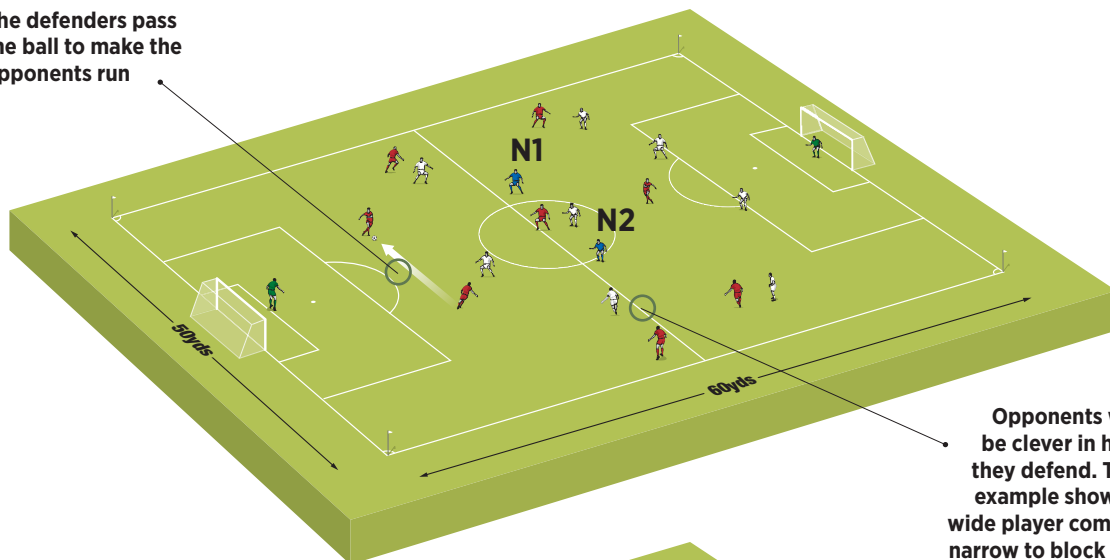
## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession builds and uses the neutral midfielders to give them midfield superiority and launch attacks. The neutrals are limited to two touches but will cause the opposition to drop deep or squeeze up. This creates gaps and places importance on quick ball circulation and good movement off the ball in order to make the space to receive a pass

## TECHNIQUE

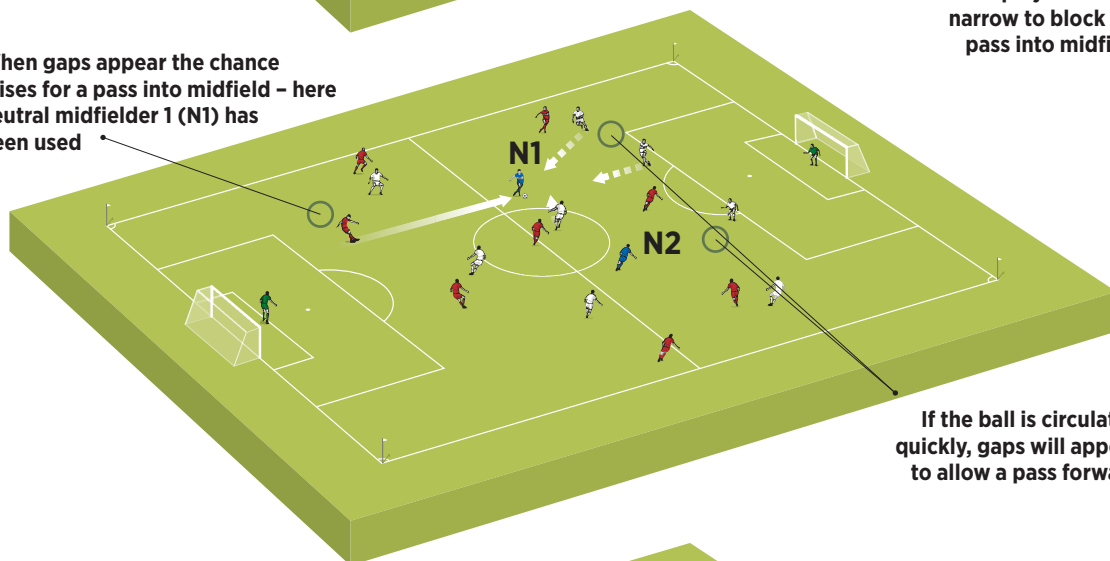
- Play with an open body stance to receive and see passing options.

The defenders pass the ball to make the opponents run



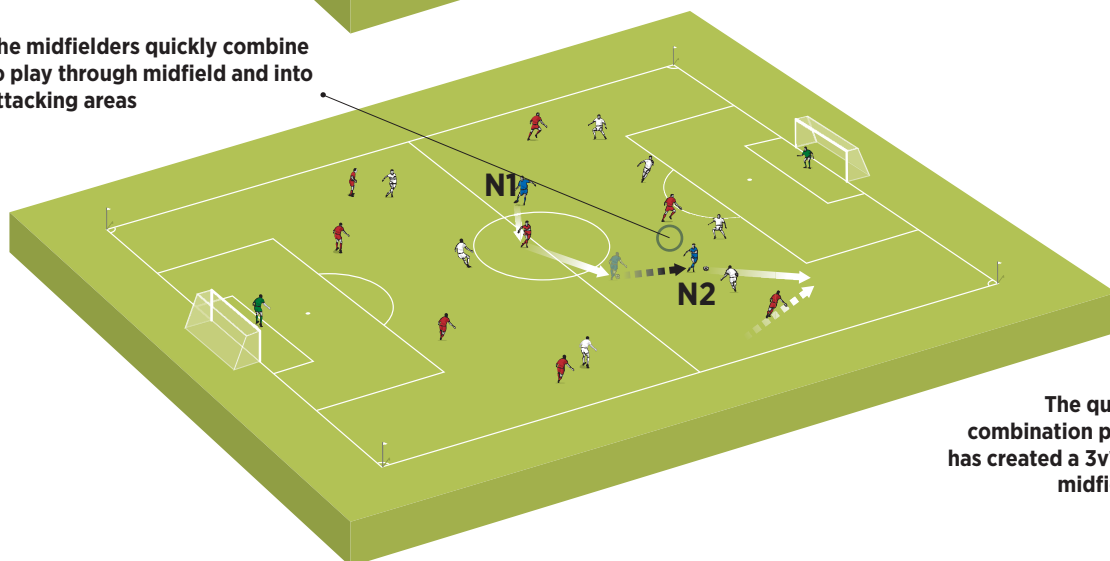
Opponents will be clever in how they defend. This example shows a wide player coming narrow to block the pass into midfield

When gaps appear the chance arises for a pass into midfield – here neutral midfielder 1 (N1) has been used



If the ball is circulated quickly, gaps will appear to allow a pass forward

The midfielders quickly combine to play through midfield and into attacking areas



The quick combination play has created a 3v1 in midfield

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Extra Midfielder

Improve the use of a three-man midfield when playing against a team with two midfielders.

## WHY USE IT

This session progresses *Quick Play In Midfield* by creating a one-man advantage in midfield. The aim is for the three-man midfield to have good movement and combination play to dominate the centre of the pitch.

## SET UP

Play 10v10 including goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard pitch. Play in a 4-2-3 formation. A neutral midfielder (N) plays for the team in possession to create a midfield 3v2.

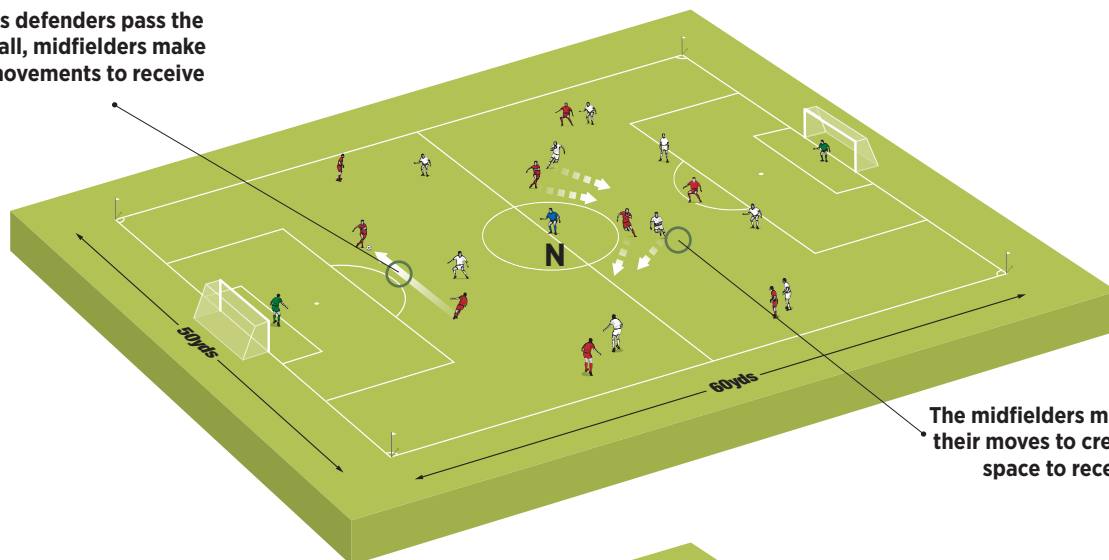
## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession attempts to build from the defence through midfield to create a goalscoring opportunity. The neutral player gives them a one-man advantage in the centre of the pitch but to make full use of this, the other two midfielders must combine movements to create space for one of them to receive in space and create an opening in which to attack.

## TECHNIQUE

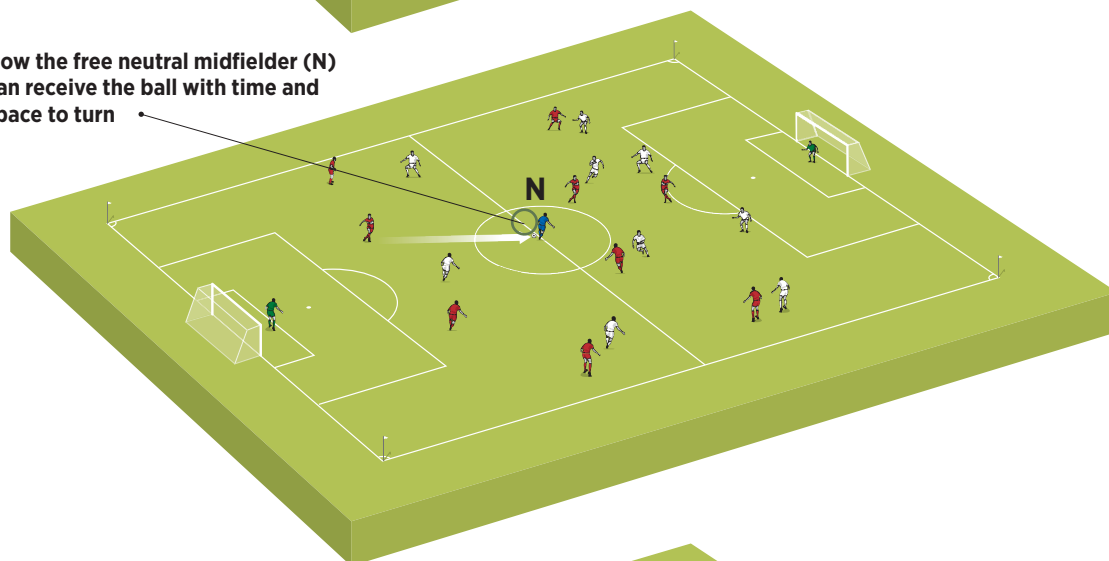
- Constant movement off the ball by attacking midfielders.
- Player in possession drives forward to commit opponents before sliding a pass to an unmarked team mate.

As defenders pass the ball, midfielders make movements to receive

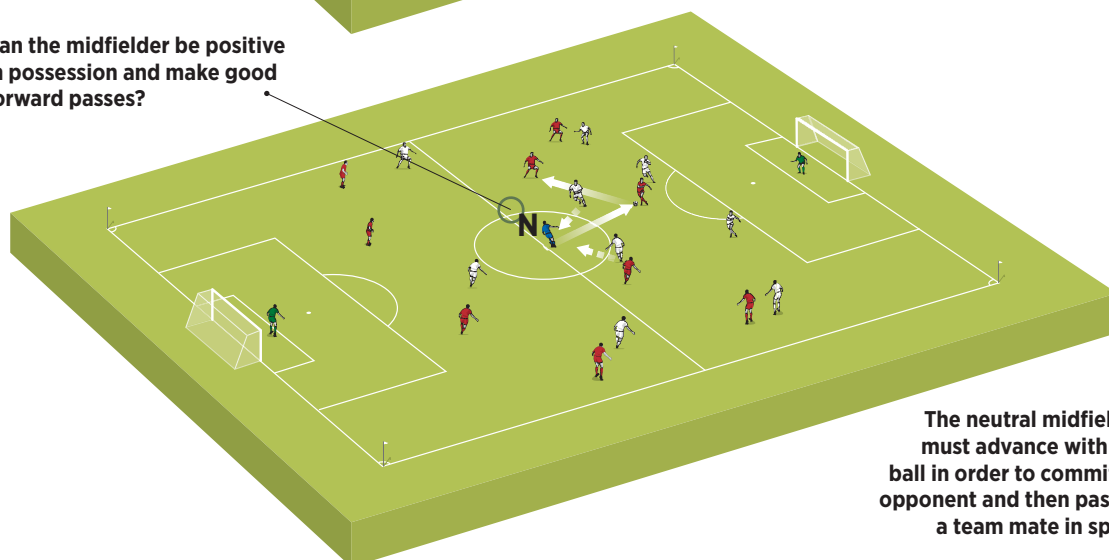


The midfielders make their moves to create space to receive

Now the free neutral midfielder (N) can receive the ball with time and space to turn



Can the midfielder be positive in possession and make good forward passes?



The neutral midfielder must advance with the ball in order to commit an opponent and then pass to a team mate in space

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Play Through The Diamond

Implement the 4-4-2 diamond formation to overload opponents in midfield.

## WHY USE IT

Using a diamond midfield allows you to play four midfielders in central areas to overload opponents and play with two central strikers which will provide a more potent goal threat.

## SET UP

Play 8v8 plus keepers on a full-sized pitch. Play a 4-2-2 formation with two neutral midfielders (N1 and N2) playing for the team in possession to provide a two-man overload.

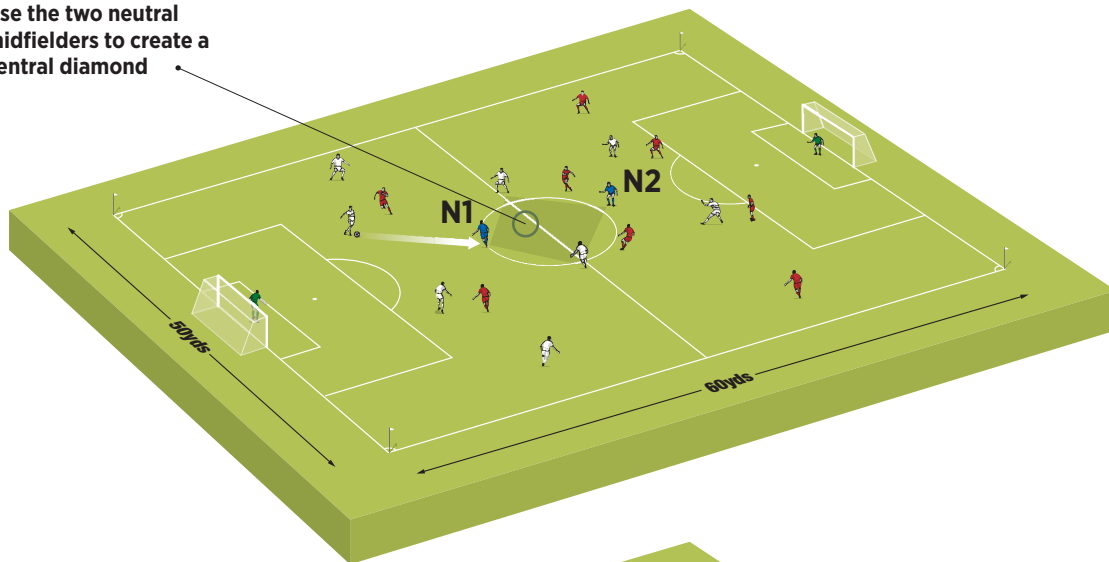
## HOW TO PLAY

The neutral midfielders play in the middle for the team in possession. Midfielders place themselves at opposite ends of the diamond to create a 4v2 overload in the central area. Neutral players are limited to three touches, - this encourages them to pass quickly to take advantage of the 11v9.

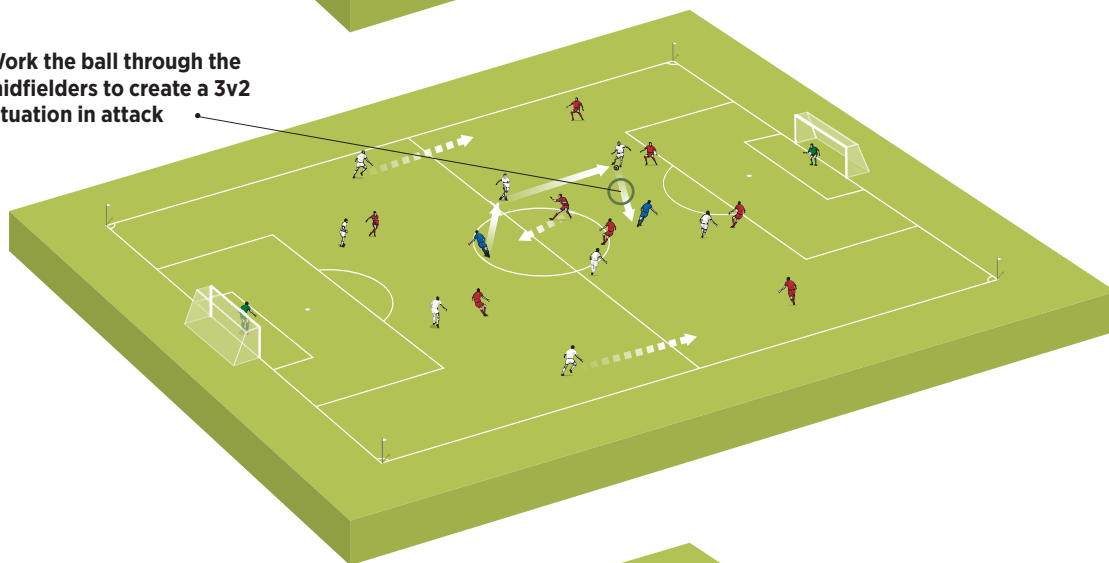
## TECHNIQUE

- Tight combination passing.
- Receiving to turn.
- Dribbling forward.
- Running forward off the ball to support the pass.

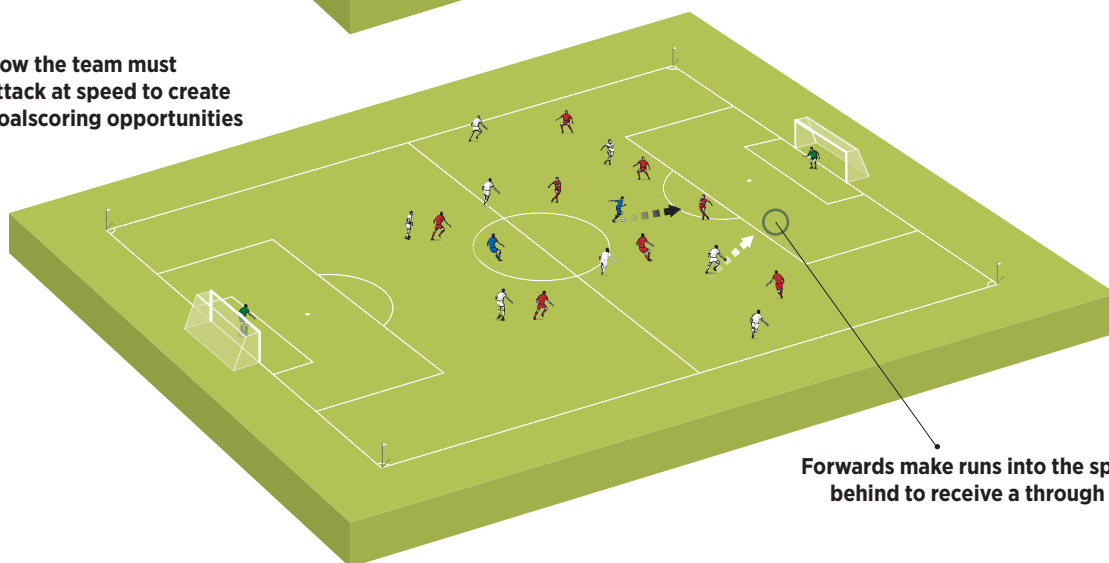
Use the two neutral midfielders to create a central diamond



Work the ball through the midfielders to create a 3v2 situation in attack



Now the team must attack at speed to create goalscoring opportunities



Forwards make runs into the space behind to receive a through ball

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot



# Rotating Defence

Develop your team's defending in open play. The aim is to stop the opponents from having forward momentum.

## WHY USE IT

When full backs attack, their opposite numbers remain in deep defence. However, by sliding a midfielder between the two central defenders, defending full backs can stay advanced and press. In addition, a forward can drop back to support as an additional midfielder. This game develops this by using two neutral players

## SET UP

Play 7v7 including goalkeepers on a full-size pitch (or smaller for younger players) in a 4-2-0 formation with two neutral players acting as an extra midfielder and attacker for the team in possession. Neutral players are limited to two touches

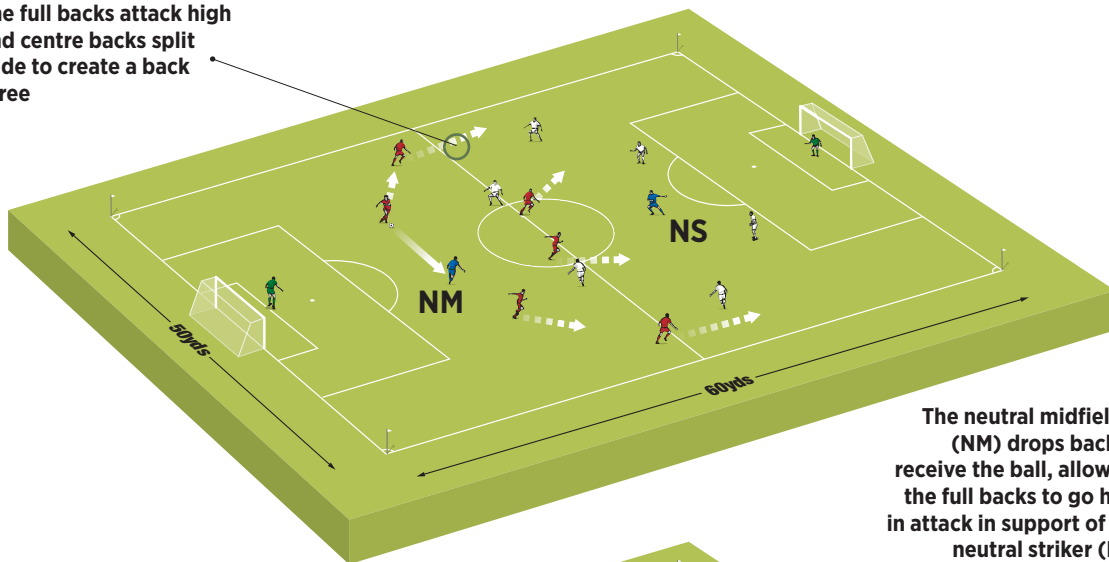
## HOW TO PLAY

Start with the keeper. Early in the attack, the neutral midfielder drops down between the centre backs who now push wide. This enables the two full backs to attack high and wide. From this formation, the attackers create a 9v7. However, if the ball is lost, the four defenders must quickly chase back as the neutral players will be on the opposing team.

## TECHNIQUE

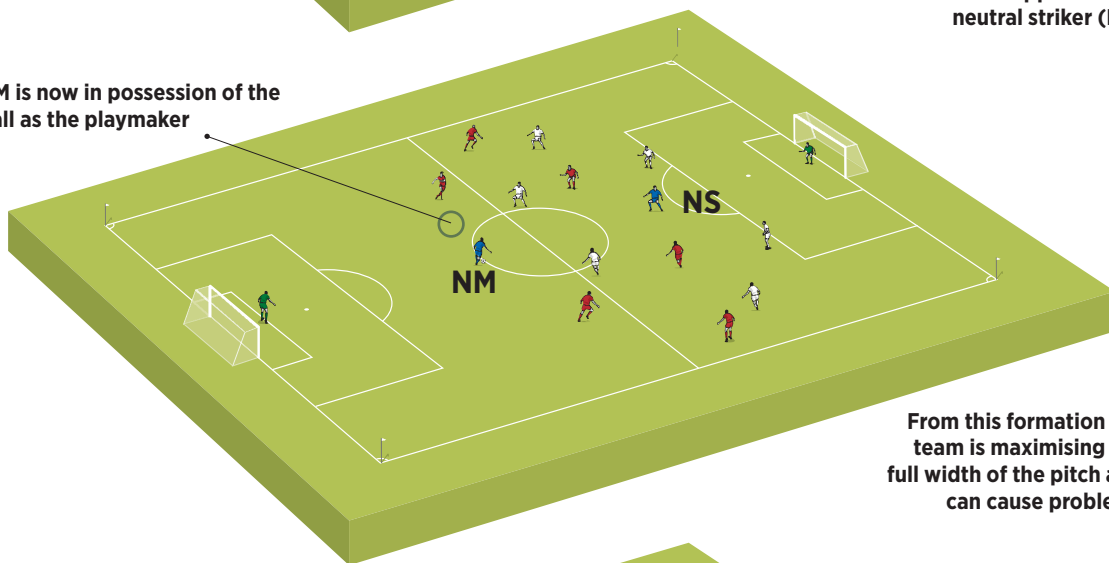
- Quickly rotate from one position to another.
  - Move the ball at pace with accurate passing and strong running.
- \* Good 1v1 skills leading to attacking crosses.

The full backs attack high and centre backs split wide to create a back three

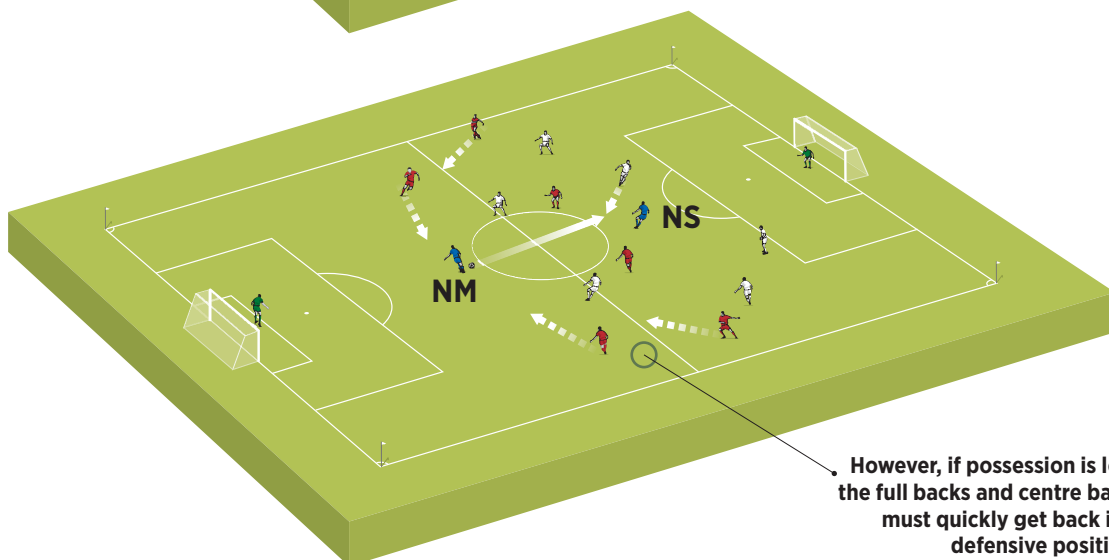


The neutral midfielder (NM) drops back to receive the ball, allowing the full backs to go high in attack in support of the neutral striker (NS)

NM is now in possession of the ball as the playmaker



From this formation the team is maximising the full width of the pitch and can cause problems



However, if possession is lost, the full backs and centre backs must quickly get back into defensive positions

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Midfield Rotation

Improve midfield rotation when using a three-player midfield.

## WHY USE IT

This game improves the understanding between a three-man midfield and centre forward. Players learn how to open up space and rotate in movement to pass forward.

## SET UP

Play 3v3 on a 20-yard square with two mini goals at one end and an additional five-yard channel at the other. Two neutrals work in the five-yard channel as defenders with another neutral playing as a striker between the goals.

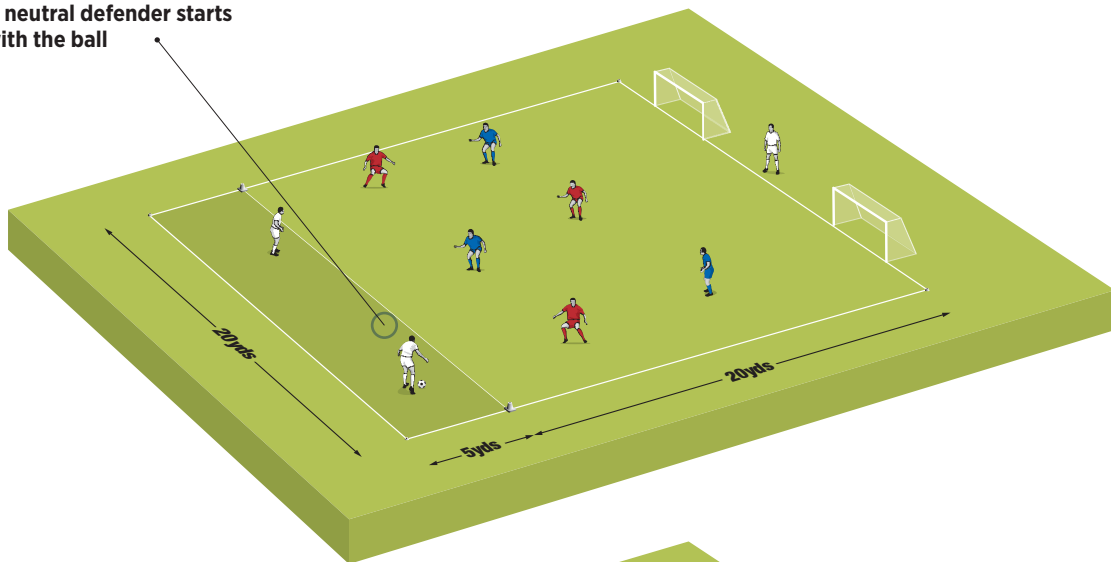
## HOW TO PLAY

A neutral defender passes to an attacking midfielder. To score a goal, the midfielders must combine with the neutral striker and receive a return pass. If the defending team regains the ball, they reverse roles by returning the ball to the defenders from where a fresh attack is launched.

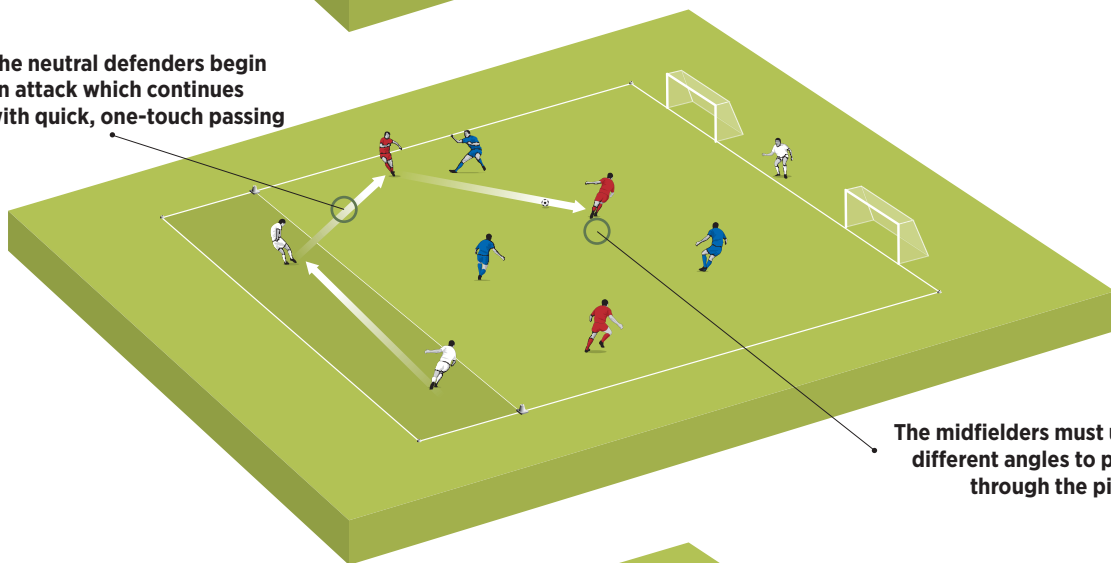
## TECHNIQUE

- Close control when being marked tightly.
- Accurate passing from congested areas.
- Movement off the ball to support the neutral striker before scoring.

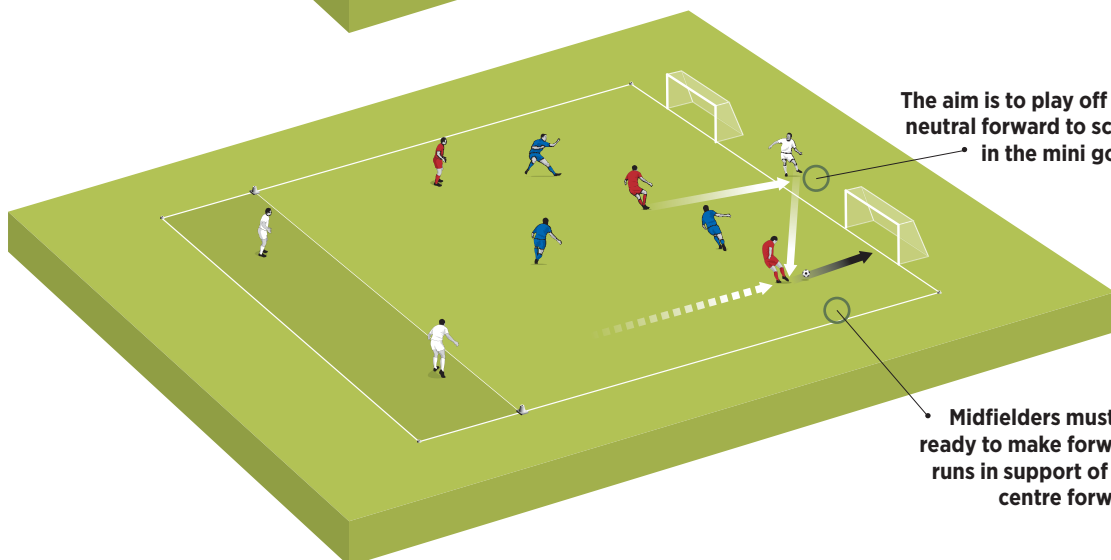
A neutral defender starts with the ball



The neutral defenders begin an attack which continues with quick, one-touch passing



The midfielders must use different angles to play through the pitch



The aim is to play off the neutral forward to score in the mini goals

Midfielders must be ready to make forward runs in support of the centre forward

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Xavi & Iniesta Possession

Improve team possession Barcelona-style and also work on your goalkeeper's passing and receiving skills.

## WHY USE IT

This improves the ability to circulate the ball quickly through the team by spreading wide to open up the centre of the pitch for midfielders who combine to take the ball from one side of the pitch to the other (like Barcelona duo Xavi and Iniesta). Goalkeepers are also needed to play this style of possession football and this game develops their passing and receiving skills.

## SET UP

Set up a 30x25-yard pitch with two manned goals. Inside, play 2v4 with the two playing the Xavi/Iniesta roles. Goalkeepers help them keep possession as do four players around the pitch.

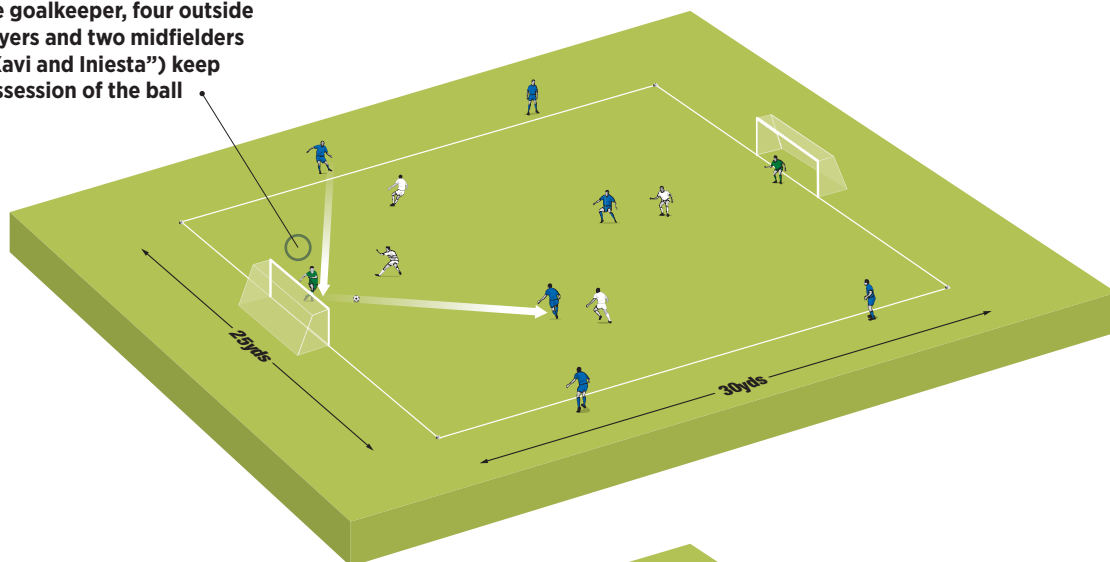
## HOW TO PLAY

Outside players are limited to two touches and pass inside to "Xavi and Iniesta" or the goalkeepers to keep possession. They cannot pass to the outside player on the same side but can pass to one on the other side. The four defenders apply pressure. If they gain possession, they play 4v2 against Xavi and Iniesta and look to score. If successful, defenders and outside players switch roles.

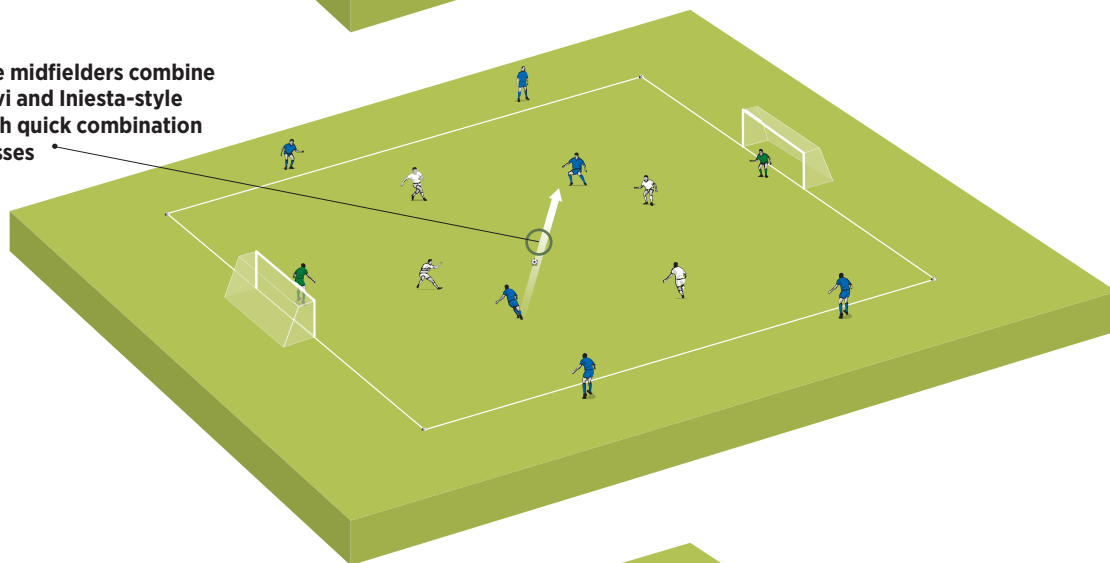
## TECHNIQUE

- One/two touch passing.
- Receiving skills and close control.
- Ability to use both feet.
- Constantly on the move.
- Clear communication.

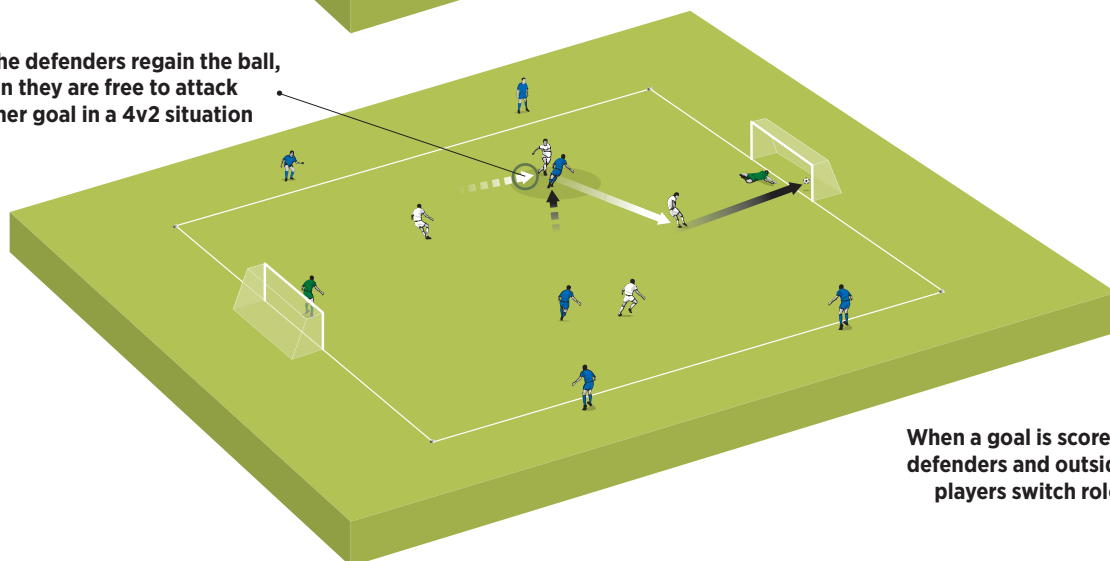
The goalkeeper, four outside players and two midfielders ("Xavi and Iniesta") keep possession of the ball



The midfielders combine Xavi and Iniesta-style with quick combination passes



If the defenders regain the ball, then they are free to attack either goal in a 4v2 situation



When a goal is scored, defenders and outside players switch roles

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Pirlo The Playmaker

Improve quick combination play in midfield by using a dedicated playmaker.

## WHY USE IT

This game improves quick combination play in midfield. Using a dedicated playmaker, overload the opponents in central areas to keep possession and keep them chasing the ball. Andrea Pirlo (Italy World Cup winner) is a master at receiving the ball in highly pressurised situations then calmly keeping possession.

## SET UP

Play 2v2 along with a neutral player in a 20-yard circle. Each team also has three players outside the circle. The neutral - "Pirlo" (P) - plays for the team in possession.

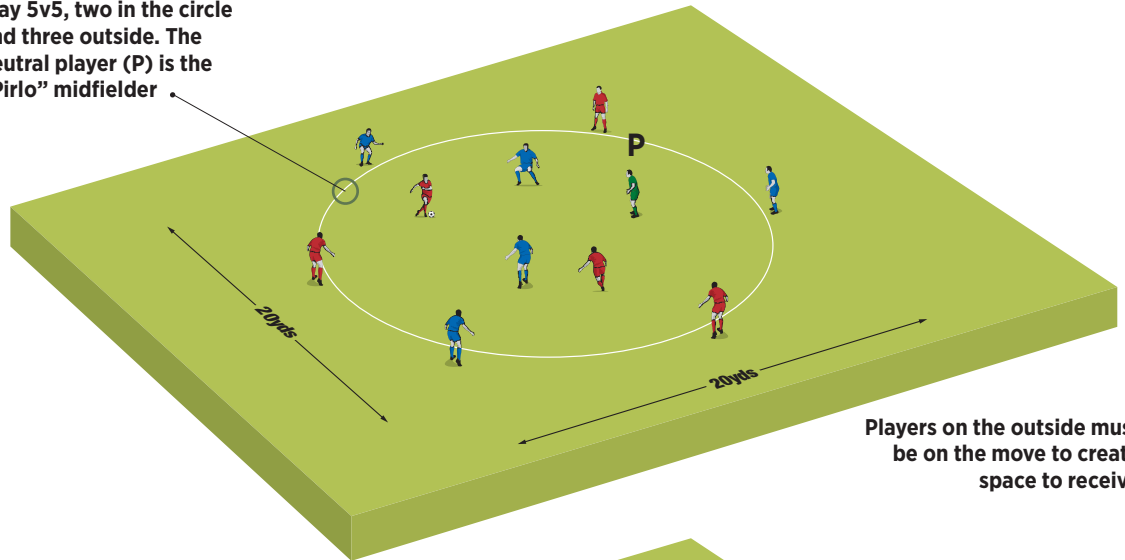
## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession must complete 10 passes to score a goal. They can use inside players, outside players and "Pirlo" to keep the ball. The outside players are man on man and, therefore, must constantly be on the move to lose the direct marker and create space to receive a pass. Inside the circle, "Pirlo" creates a 3v2 overload.

## TECHNIQUE

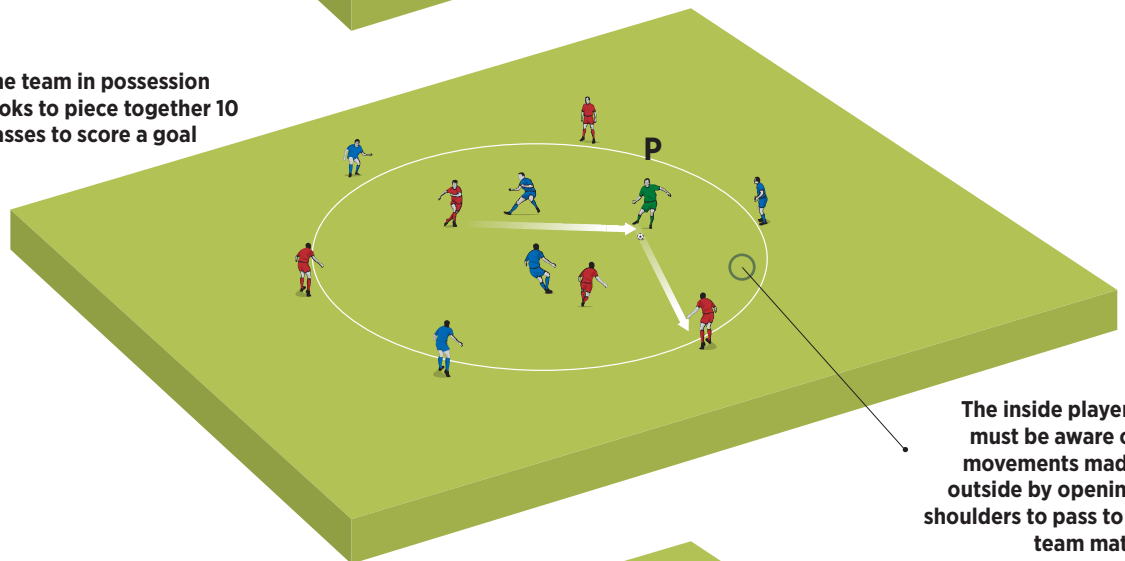
- Vision and spacial awareness at all times.
- Close passing and receiving skills.
- Play with open body stance to see everything.

Play 5v5, two in the circle and three outside. The neutral player (P) is the "Pirlo" midfielder



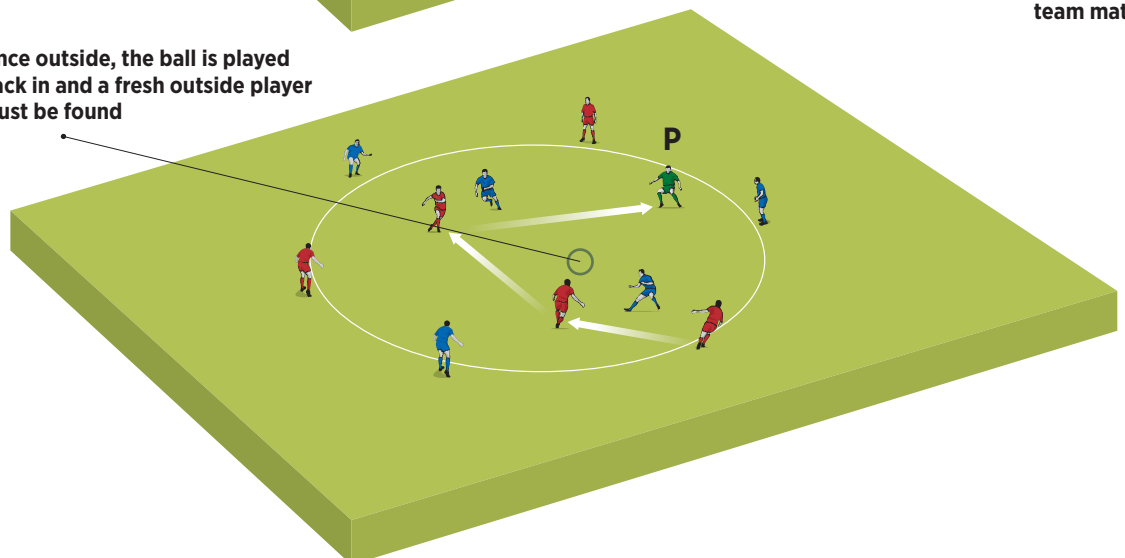
Players on the outside must be on the move to create space to receive

The team in possession looks to piece together 10 passes to score a goal



The inside players must be aware of movements made outside by opening shoulders to pass to a team mate

Once outside, the ball is played back in and a fresh outside player must be found



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Central Overload

Improve quick combination play in the centre of midfield.

## WHY USE IT

This improves quick combination play and attacking movement in central areas.

## SET UP

Play 5v5 plus goalkeepers on a 55x40-yard pitch divided into two 15-yard attacking zones and a 20-yard central zone. Two neutrals (N) who are limited to one or two touches play for the team in possession to create a 7v5 overload.

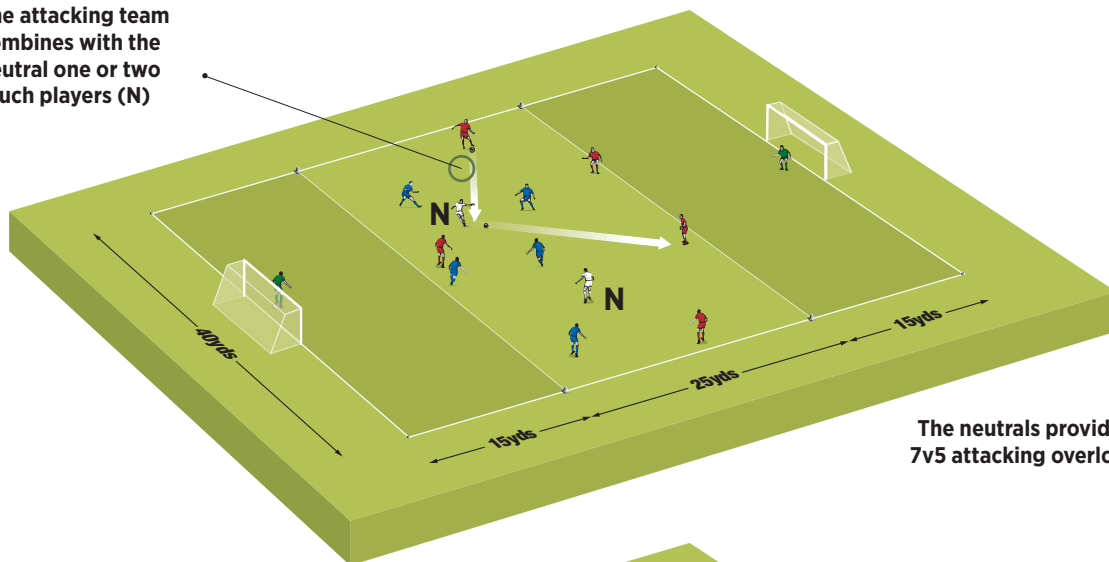
## HOW TO PLAY

Play inside the central zone and try to slide a through ball for a team mate to run into the end zone and go 1v1 against the goalkeeper. There are no offsides.

## TECHNIQUE

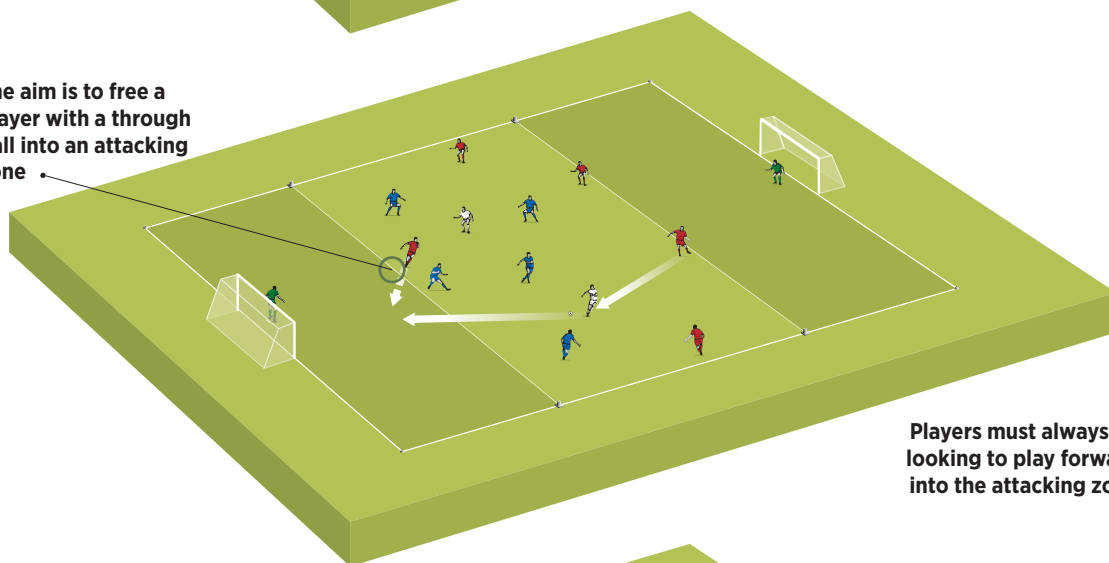
- Movement off the ball.
- Pressing/1v1 skills.
- Accurate passing.
- Dribbling skills.
- Shooting and finishing when clean through.

The attacking team combines with the neutral one or two touch players (N)



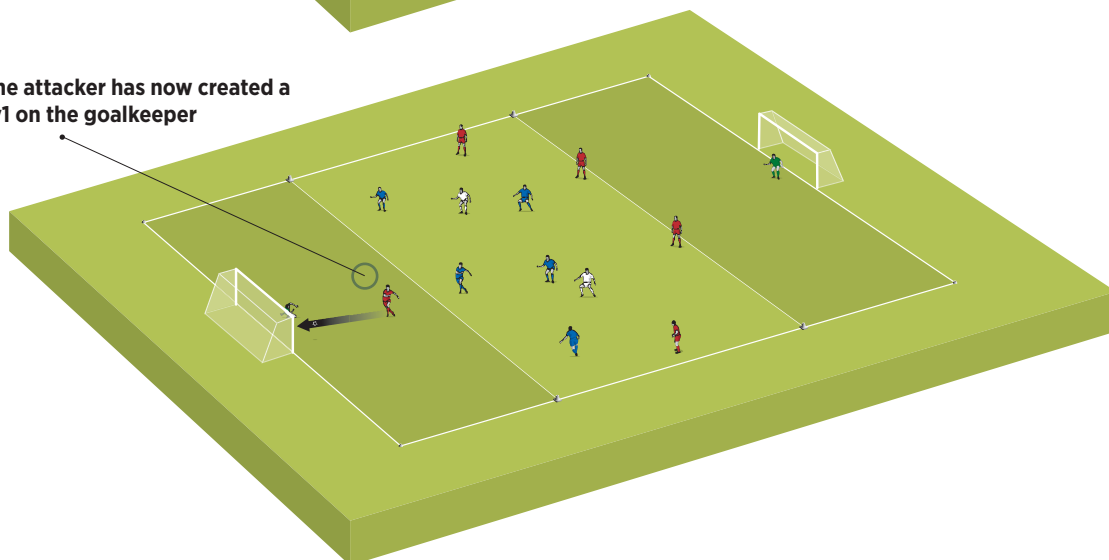
The neutrals provide a 7v5 attacking overload

The aim is to free a player with a through ball into an attacking zone



Players must always be looking to play forward into the attacking zone

The attacker has now created a 1v1 on the goalkeeper



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Running Off The Ball

Improve player movement off the ball to create space to receive a pass.

## WHY USE IT

To improve movement and combination play. After passing, players will learn to move off the ball to give the player in possession different options. A player who has three options when receiving a pass plays in a very good team.

## SET UP

Play 3v3 in a 22-yard square. Each team has four players as two pairs on opposite sides of the square.

## HOW TO PLAY

Work the ball from one sideline to the other, to the players outside the square, then:

1. The player who passes outside the square follows his pass. There are now three outside players on that side of the square.
2. The receiver passes to the third player.
3. He overlaps the third player and enters the square.

Player in possession now:

- a) Passes to the overlapping player... OR
- b) To another player... OR
- c) Dribbles onto the pitch if a space has been created by decoy runs.

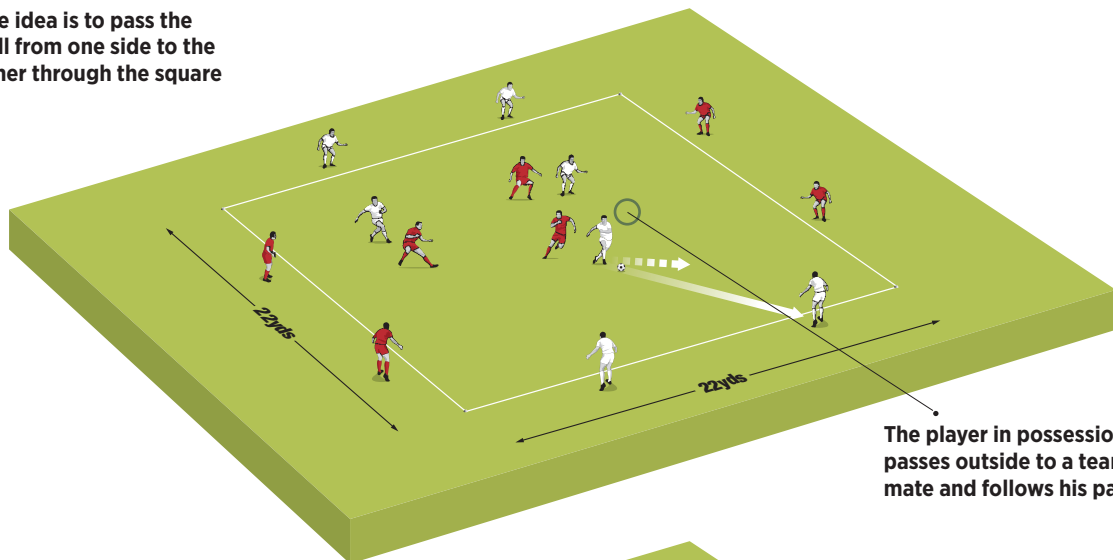
If he dribbles onto the pitch, a team mate must replace him outside the square.

A point is scored for each successful overlap.

## TECHNIQUE

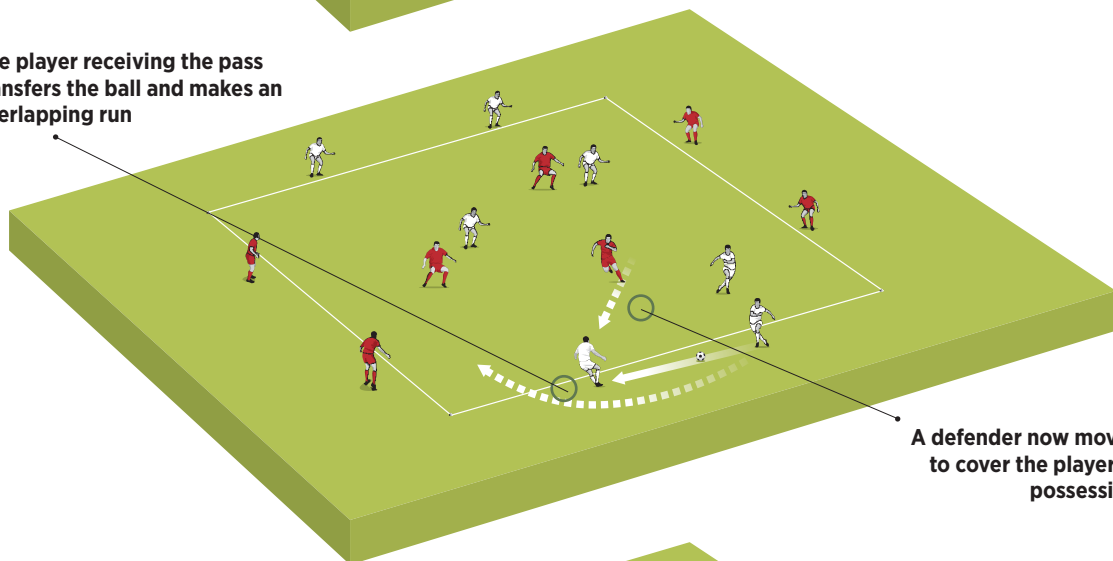
- Good movement off the ball for overlapping runs.
- Disguise on the pass or dribble to evade the opposing defenders.

The idea is to pass the ball from one side to the other through the square



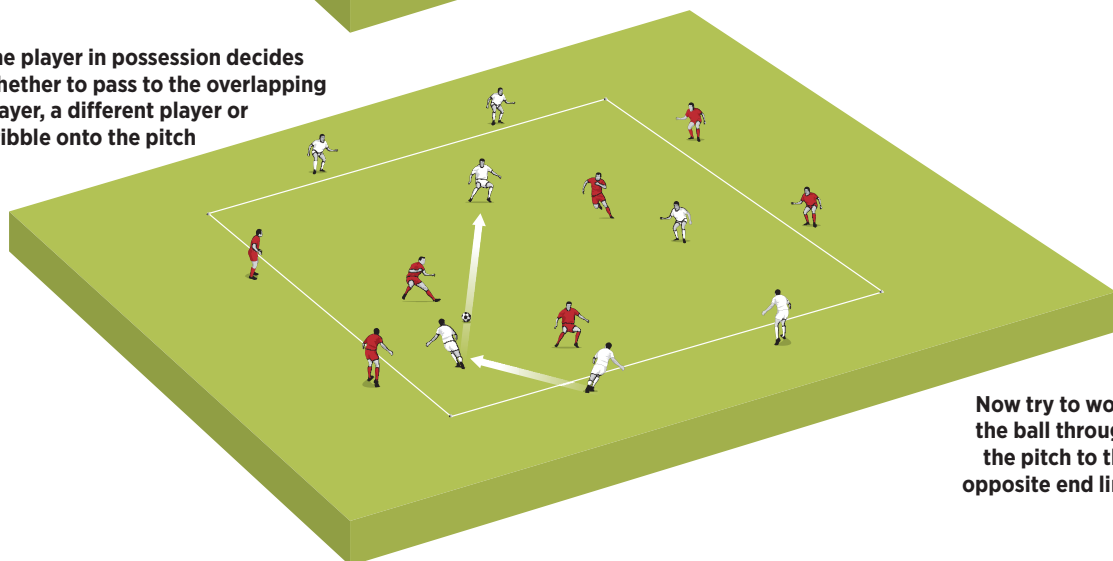
The player in possession passes outside to a team mate and follows his pass

The player receiving the pass transfers the ball and makes an overlapping run



A defender now moves to cover the player in possession

The player in possession decides whether to pass to the overlapping player, a different player or dribble onto the pitch



Now try to work the ball through the pitch to the opposite end line

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Dribble Or Pass Forward

Develop the switching of play to pass or dribble forward.

## WHY USE IT

This teaches players to recognise where space is to advance up the pitch. When regaining possession, players are often close to opponents and have to make a quick decision on whether they can pass forward immediately or build the attack by switching play. This is due to opponents looking to apply quick pressure to defend.

## SET UP

Play 5v5 on a 22x30-yard area. Set up a mini goal and gated goal at both ends as shown in the top picture.

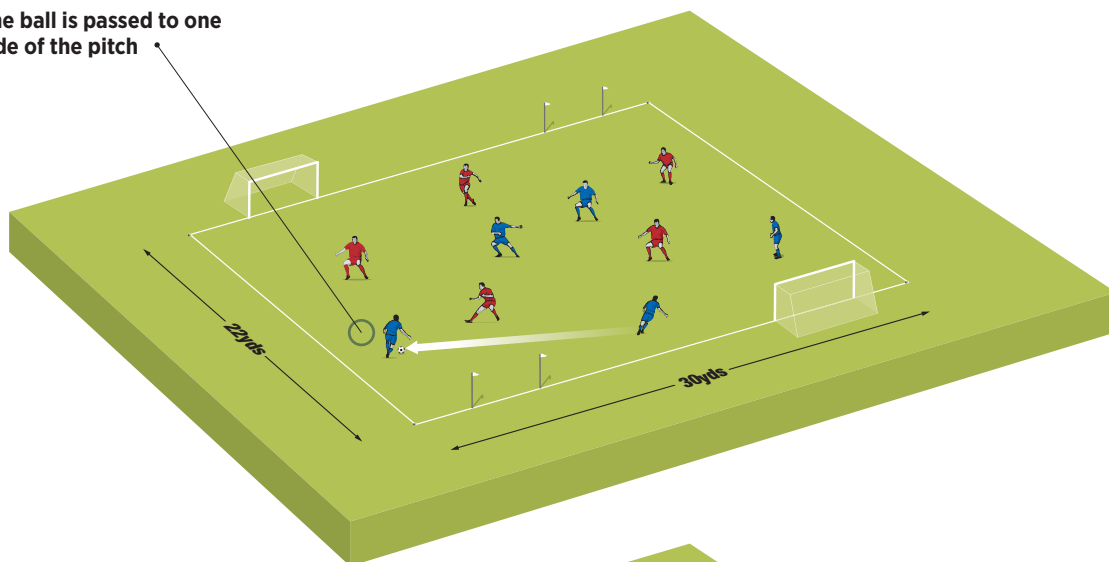
## HOW TO PLAY

The aim for each team is to score in the mini goals with a pass or by dribbling through the gates marked by poles or mannequins. The team in possession must constantly switch play from right to left and vice versa to create opportunities to score.

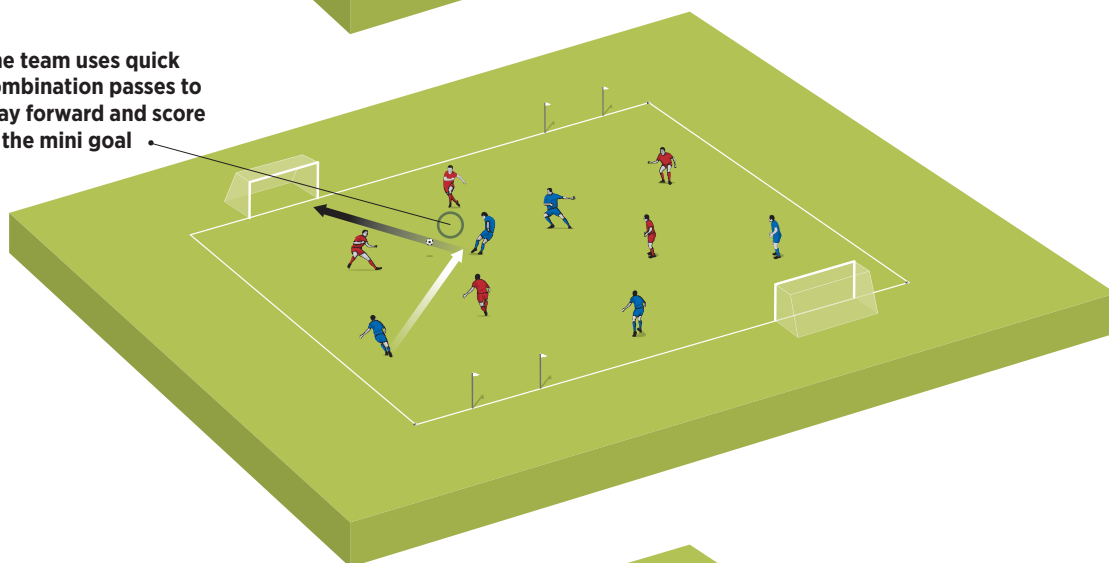
## TECHNIQUE

- Composure on the ball.
- Play with head up to scan the pitch and assess options.
- Good dribbling skills to beat direct opponents.

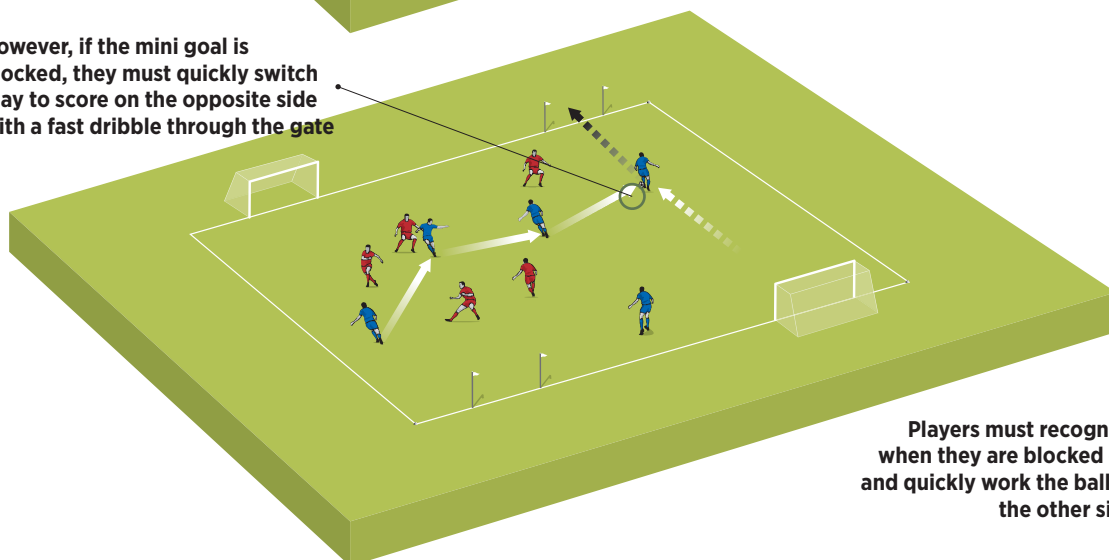
The ball is passed to one side of the pitch



The team uses quick combination passes to play forward and score in the mini goal



However, if the mini goal is blocked, they must quickly switch play to score on the opposite side with a fast dribble through the gate



Players must recognise when they are blocked off and quickly work the ball to the other side

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Forward Pass, Forward Run

Improve your midfielders' ability to make runs off the ball to create space to play forward and set up attacks.

## WHY USE IT

This forces players to quickly pass the ball through a packed midfield. After a pass, encourage players to make forward runs to drag opponents away from the player in possession. Now the player on the ball is left 1v1 and must use skill and disguise to create space to pass forward between opposing midfielders.

## SET UP

Four teams of four players on a 40x30-yard pitch divided into two halves with two mini goals at each end as shown in the top picture. Six mannequins/poles are set up as three evenly-spaced gates on halfway. Play 4v4 in one half, with four players outside acting as neutrals (N) and four more in the other half.

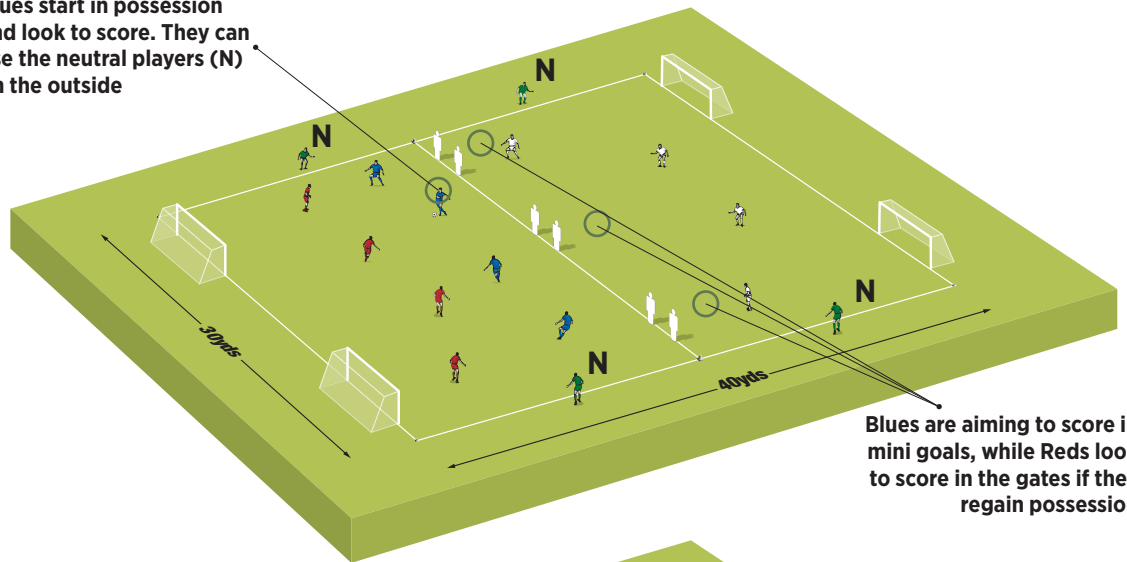
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a 4v4 game in one half. If a team scores, they get the ball back and look to score at the other end. However, if defence regains the ball, they look to score with a pass or dribble into the three gates on halfway. If they do, they move forward into the opposite half and a new 4v4 begins. The teams are free to use the neutral players.

## TECHNIQUE

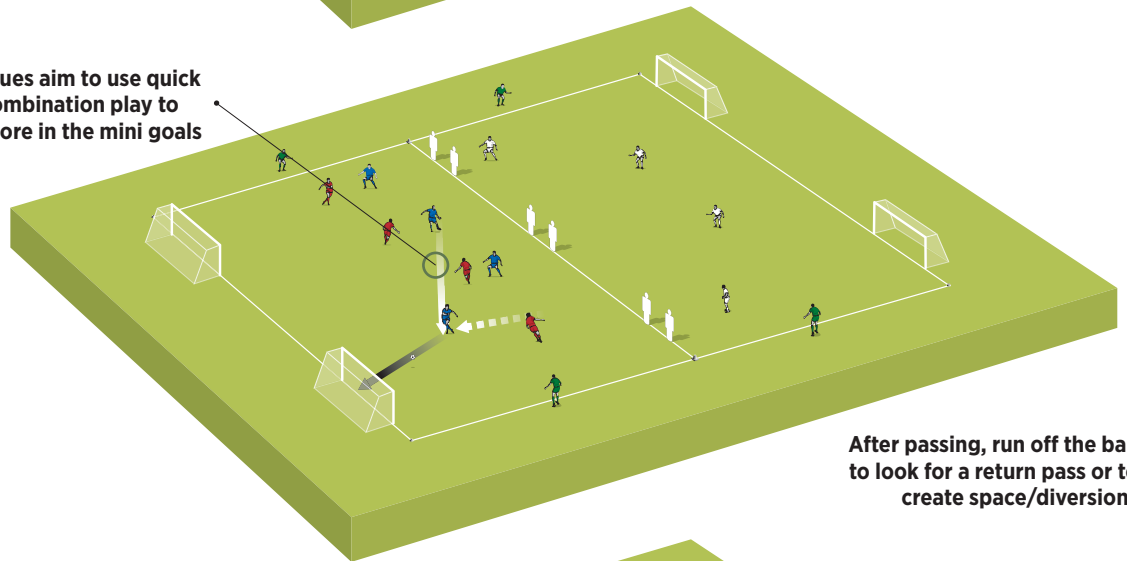
- Short combination passes.
- Look for a return pass immediately.
- Movement off the ball.
- Play with head up.

Blues start in possession and look to score. They can use the neutral players (N) on the outside



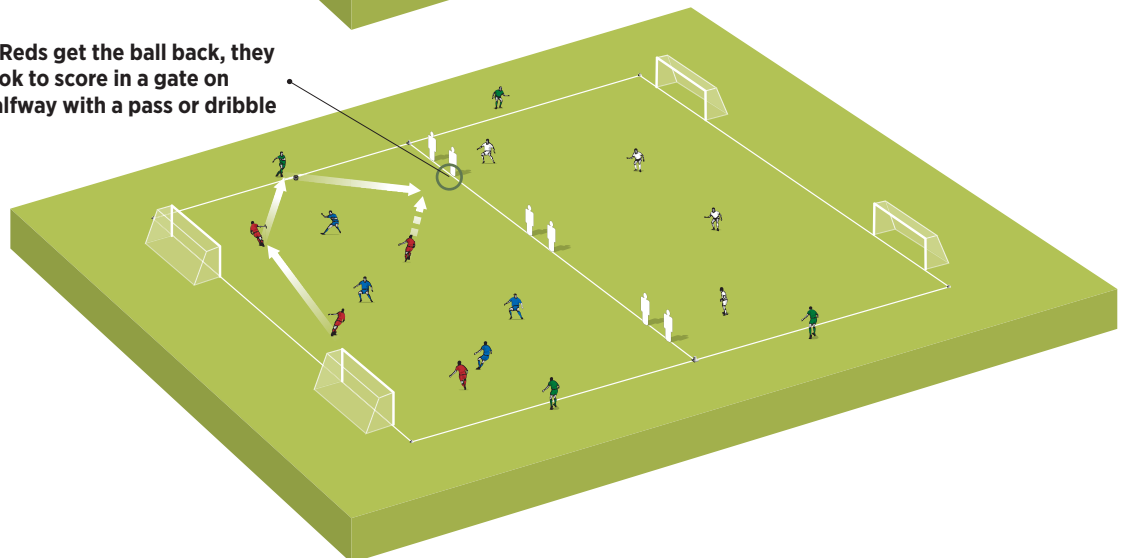
Blues are aiming to score in mini goals, while Reds look to score in the gates if they regain possession

Blues aim to use quick combination play to score in the mini goals



After passing, run off the ball to look for a return pass or to create space/diversions

If Reds get the ball back, they look to score in a gate on halfway with a pass or dribble



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot



# Zig-zag Through The Pitch

Improve quick combination passing to zig-zag through the pitch.

## WHY USE IT

This session develops possession football with zig-zag passing through an opposition midfield. The midfielders quickly learn to pass at different angles to improve the opportunity to play forward.

## SET UP

Play 2v4 in a 30x20-yard area with a neutral player on each side of the area.

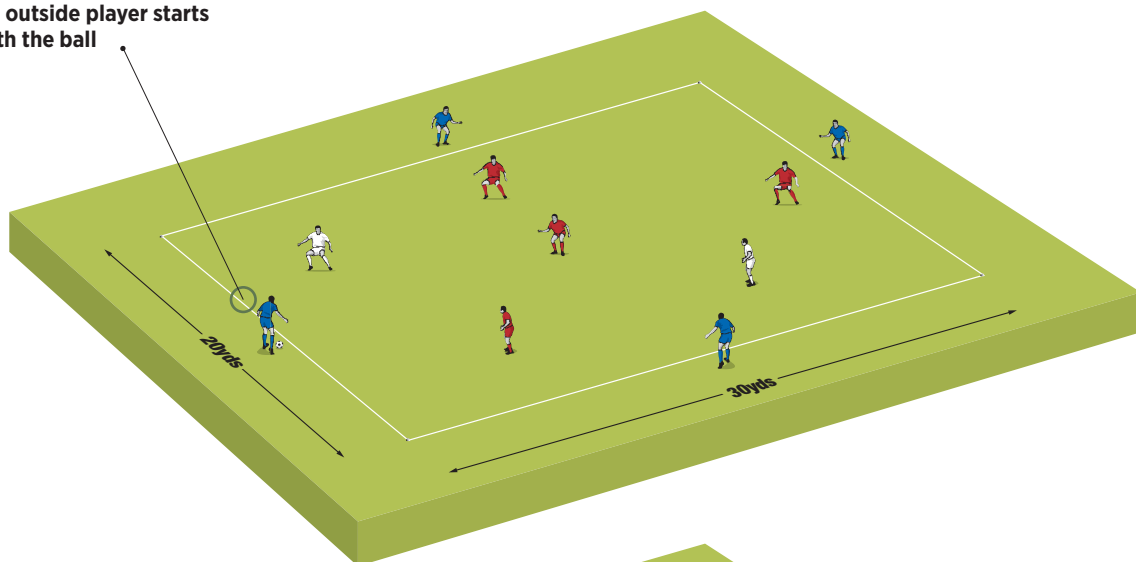
## HOW TO PLAY

A neutral player passes to an attacker who zig-zag passes to his team mate who feeds another neutral player outside the area to complete the side-to-side switch. In effect, the outside four are using the team of two inside the area to keep possession. Outside players are limited to two touches, inside players have unlimited touches. A goal is scored with 10 consecutive passes. The defending team pressure the opponents in order to regain the ball. If successful, they dribble outside the pitch and reverse roles with the passing players on the outside.

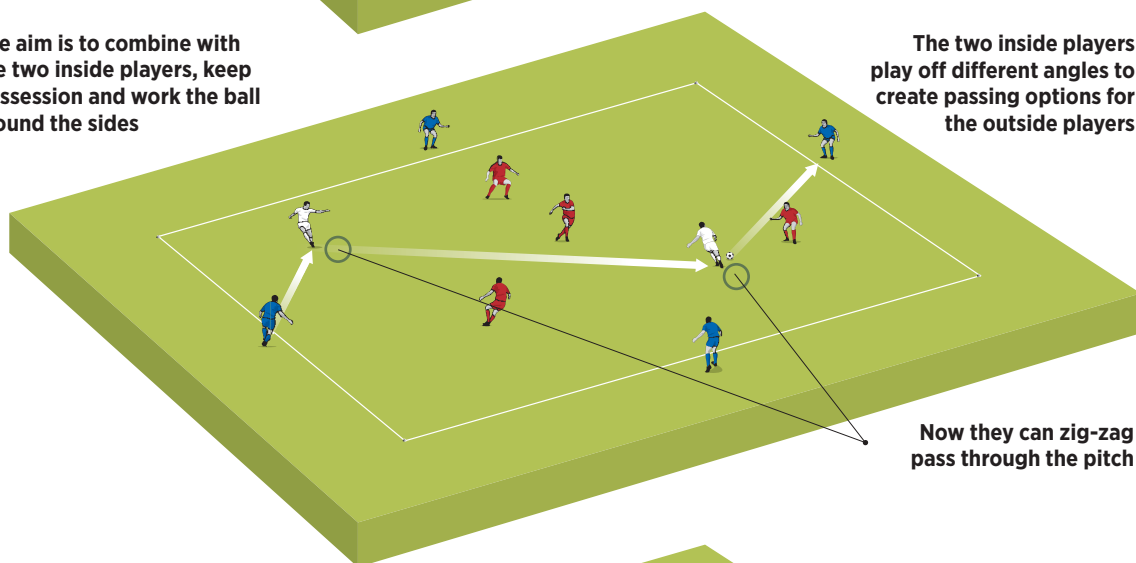
## TECHNIQUE

- Close, quick passing.
- Good receiving and close control skills.
- Movement off the ball to create passing angles.
- Composure on the ball.

An outside player starts with the ball



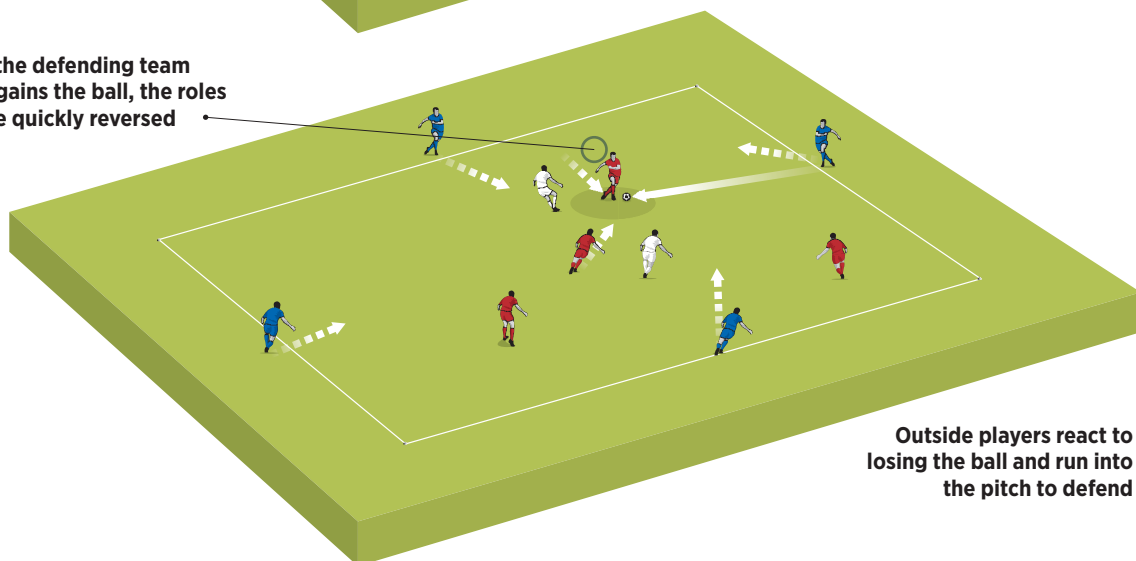
The aim is to combine with the two inside players, keep possession and work the ball around the sides



The two inside players play off different angles to create passing options for the outside players

Now they can zig-zag pass through the pitch

If the defending team regains the ball, the roles are quickly reversed



Outside players react to losing the ball and run into the pitch to defend

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Quick Passing Square

Develop fast combination play in central areas of the pitch with this touch restriction game.

## WHY USE IT

A touch restriction game develops good habits and improves decision making about when to play quickly through congested areas or when to dribble forward into space.

## SET UP

Play 8v8 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch divided into two halves. A 20-yard “two-touch square” is placed halfway as shown in the top picture. Play a 3-2-3 formation with the two midfielders having to remain in the square.

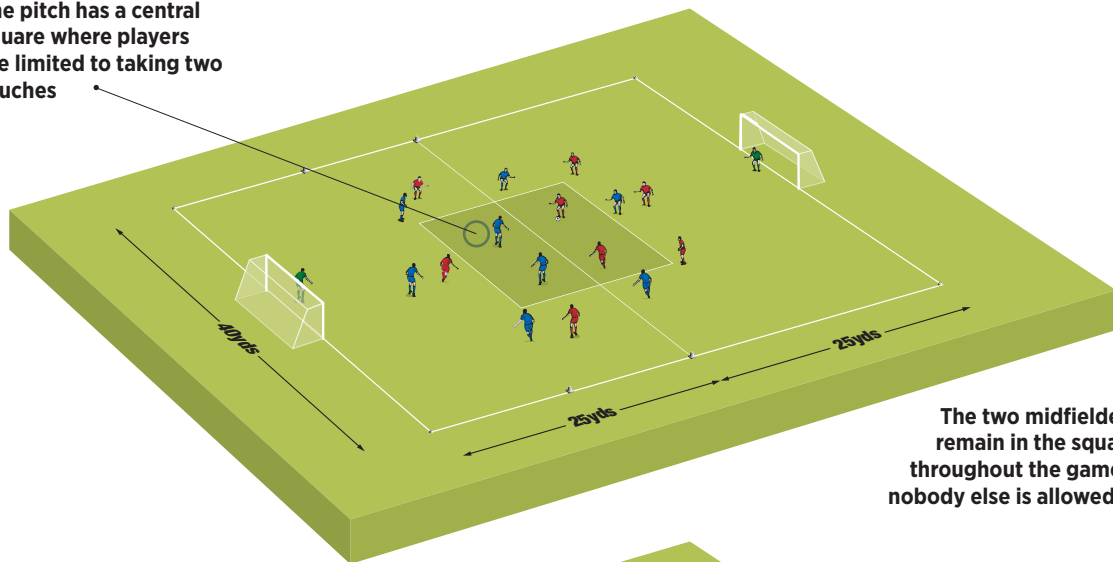
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a normal game but impose a two-touch limit when the ball enters the 20-yard square. This will encourage players to combine with quick passes in congested midfield areas. Outside the square, players can have as many touches as they like. To take advantage of this rule, teams must switch play through the square from one side to the other in order to gain space to dribble or attack 1v1.

## TECHNIQUE

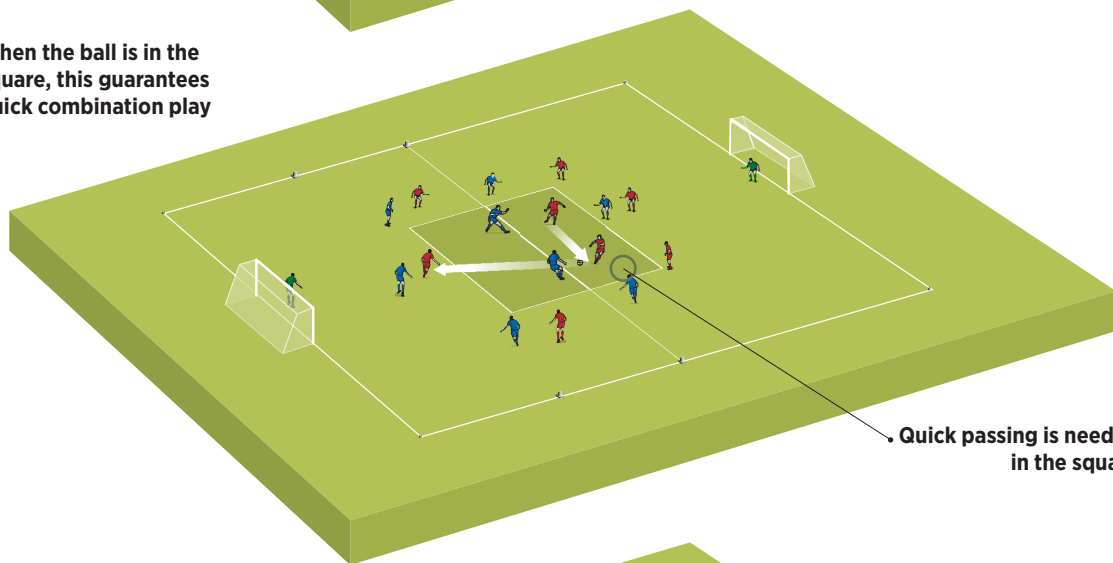
- Awareness – playing with head up.
- Killer first touch.
- Snappy passing when in the square.
- Dribbling and attacking 1v1.

The pitch has a central square where players are limited to taking two touches



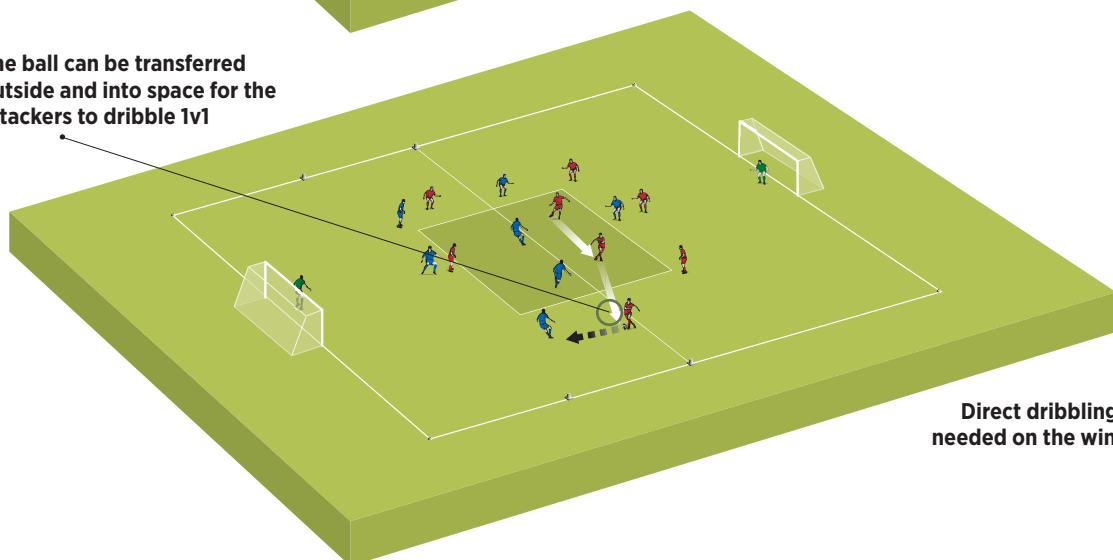
The two midfielders remain in the square throughout the game – nobody else is allowed in

When the ball is in the square, this guarantees quick combination play



Quick passing is needed in the square

The ball can be transferred outside and into space for the attackers to dribble 1v1



Direct dribbling is needed on the wings

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Playing Through Traffic

Improve your players' movement off the ball to receive a pass.

## WHY USE IT

When a player is in possession, team mates must constantly be on the move to make angles to receive or to create space for a pass. This game exaggerates the need for player movement by using mannequins to provide added obstacles to work through when in possession.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch. Play a 3-2-1 formation. Five mannequins/poles placed on the pitch provide passing obstructions.

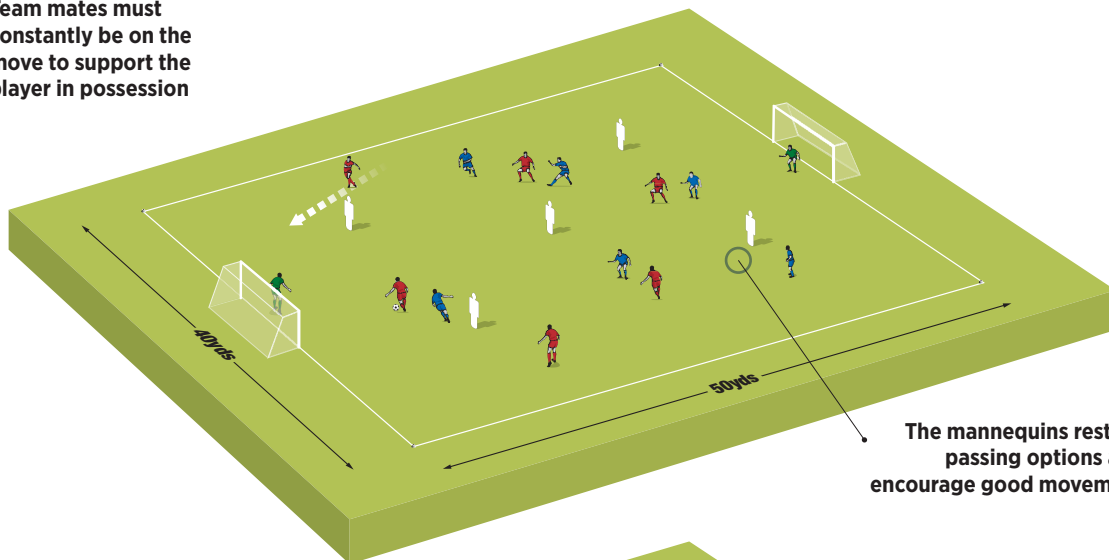
## HOW TO PLAY

The mannequins decrease space and help defenders block passing channels. This forces the team in possession to be constantly on the move to support the team mate on the ball. In addition, the player on the ball must also be able to go 1v1 with the direct opponent to beat him and create an overload.

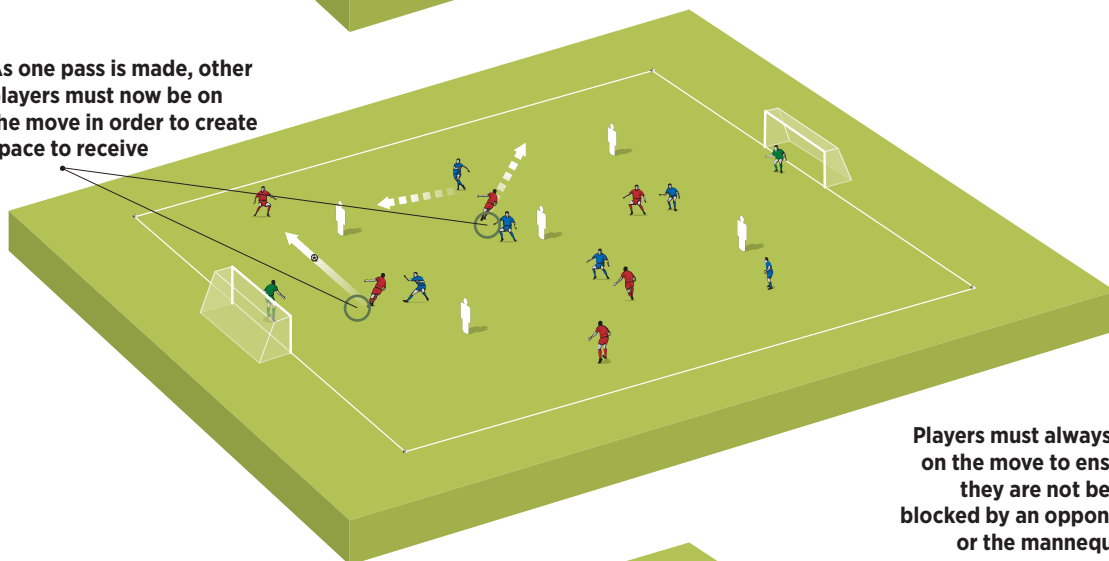
## TECHNIQUE

- Accurate passing.
- Quick combination play.
- Movement off the ball to receive.
- 1v1 attacking.

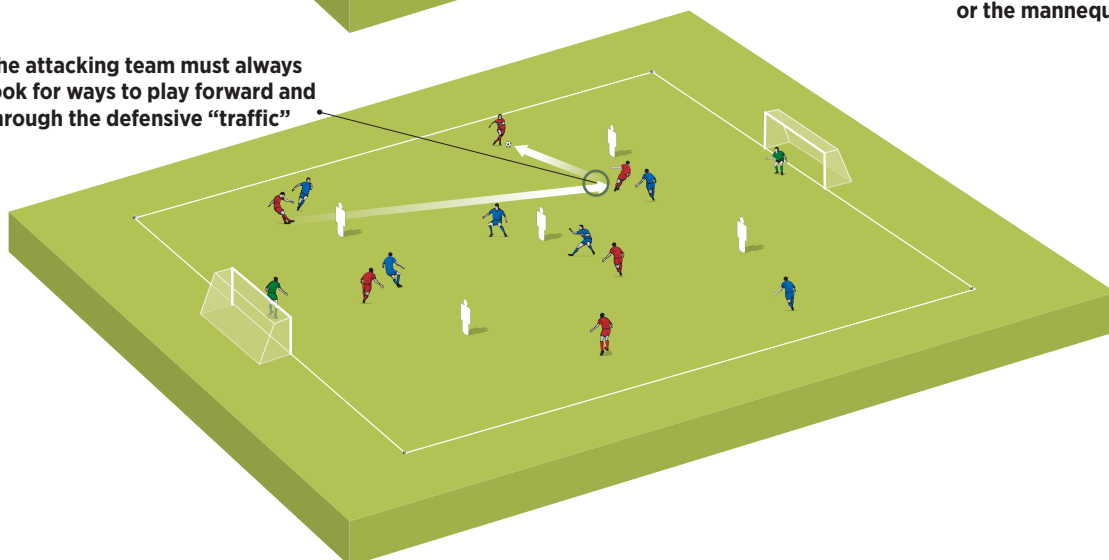
Team mates must constantly be on the move to support the player in possession



As one pass is made, other players must now be on the move in order to create space to receive



The attacking team must always look for ways to play forward and through the defensive "traffic"



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot



# Scoring to win

The final piece in our build up play is to create and score goals. Are you a team that attacks down the wings? Or do you like to build through central areas?

**W**e have now developed play through midfield and into the final third, which you can enter in three different ways:

- 1) A pass between the lines of midfield and defence.
- 2) A dribble past an opponent
- 3) A pass into the space behind the opposing defence.

Your players must act quickly to create a chance as the defence will be retreating fast! Your players must be unpredictable and try something different using skill or disguise. It's vital to use good movement off the ball to receive a pass or create space, out wide or centrally. Use these pro tips to improve your team's attack:

**PRO TIP 1** Know the strengths of your **forwards** and play to them. It is pointless hitting high crosses into the box to a forward who needs the ball played to feet or either side of defenders. These players like the ball worked into the penalty box with quick combination play.

**PRO TIP 2** Have width in attack. Defending teams will pack central areas so move the ball from wing to wing to draw defenders and create gaps. Encourage 1v1 dribbling, variety in crossing techniques and **full backs** to overlap/underlap to create 2v1s. Decide whether to play with wide players on their best foot or inverted and coming inside.

**PRO TIP 3** Your **midfielders** must also play a big role. One or two can get into an advanced positions to shoot from distance or get into the box with a forward run.

**PRO TIP 4** Over 75% of goals are scored within five seconds of receiving the ball and within three passes or less. This tells us that on regaining possession you can

catch your opponents sleeping and launch a quick counter attack. You must have players making lung-busting runs to break the defensive line and get into the space behind them – or pass beyond them.

**PRO TIP 5** Encourage players to shoot at every opportunity. You have worked the ball through to a good attacking position so must see the reward with a shot on goal. When the ball is wide, encourage players to fill the penalty area with forward runs to maximise the chances of scoring. Go near post, centre of goal, far post and edge of the box

The games in this section will develop these tips in an opposed environment. The games are realistic so your players must work hard to exploit every scoring opportunity they create in a game.

**Words and activities by:**  
Mick Beale

## TELL THEM...

1. Play to strengths
2. Have width in attack
3. Midfielders get forward
4. Attack quickly
5. Have lots of shots

# Inverted Wingers

Implement the use of inverted wingers - wingers who take the ball inside and off the line to combine with overlapping full backs or dribble infield.

## WHY USE IT

Using inverted wingers is a tactic used by the world's top teams. The inverted winger takes the ball inside and off the line to combine with team mates in the final third. This allows attacking full backs to attack outside to create 2v1 situations.

## SET UP

Play 9v9 including goalkeepers on a full size pitch (or smaller for younger players). Play a 4-3-1 formation with two neutral inverted wingers (IW) who play for the team in possession.

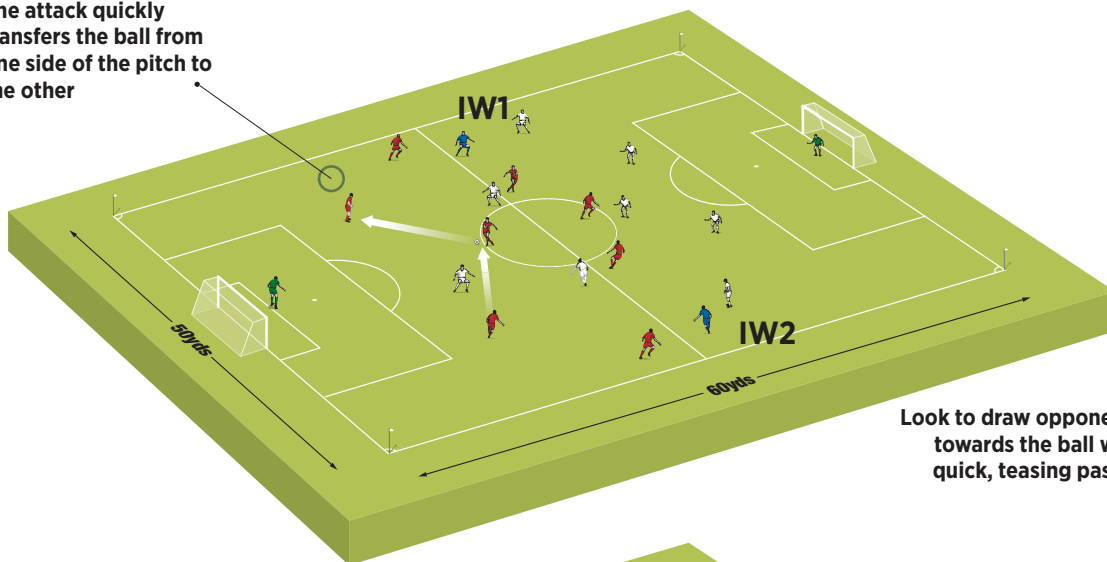
## HOW TO PLAY

Build from defence. The neutral wingers play in attacking wide areas to provide an 11v9. The focus for the attacking team is to quickly switch play from side to side to get the winger in possession and a full back overlapping outside. Now the winger can use the 2v1 to good effect by either passing to the full back to cross or dribbling inside to combine with a team mate.

## TECHNIQUE

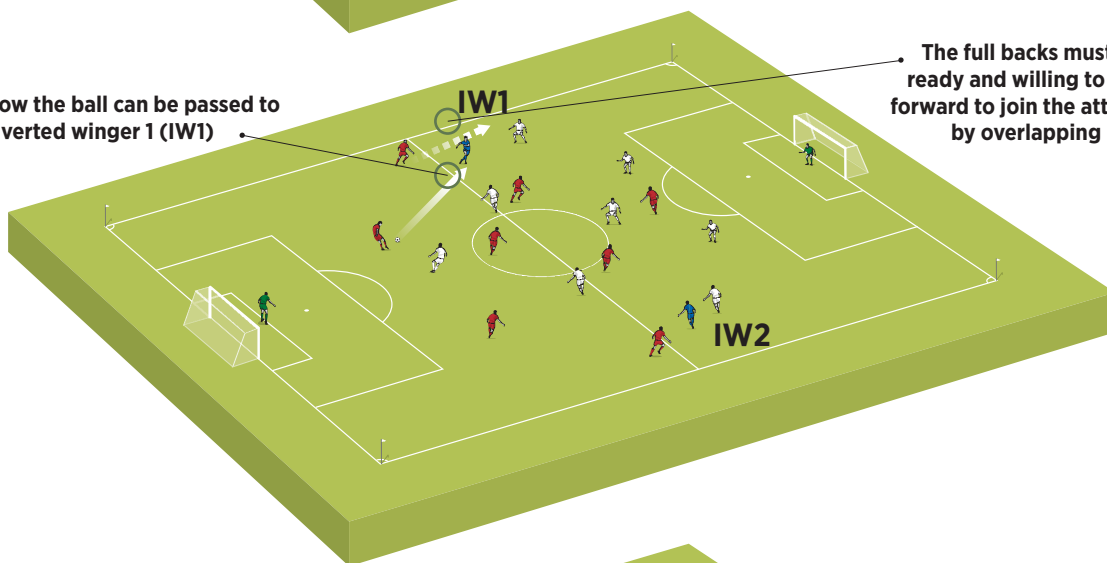
- Good dribbling skills.
- Play with both feet.
- Accurate passing, crossing and shooting skills.
- Forward runs at pace off the ball.

The attack quickly transfers the ball from one side of the pitch to the other



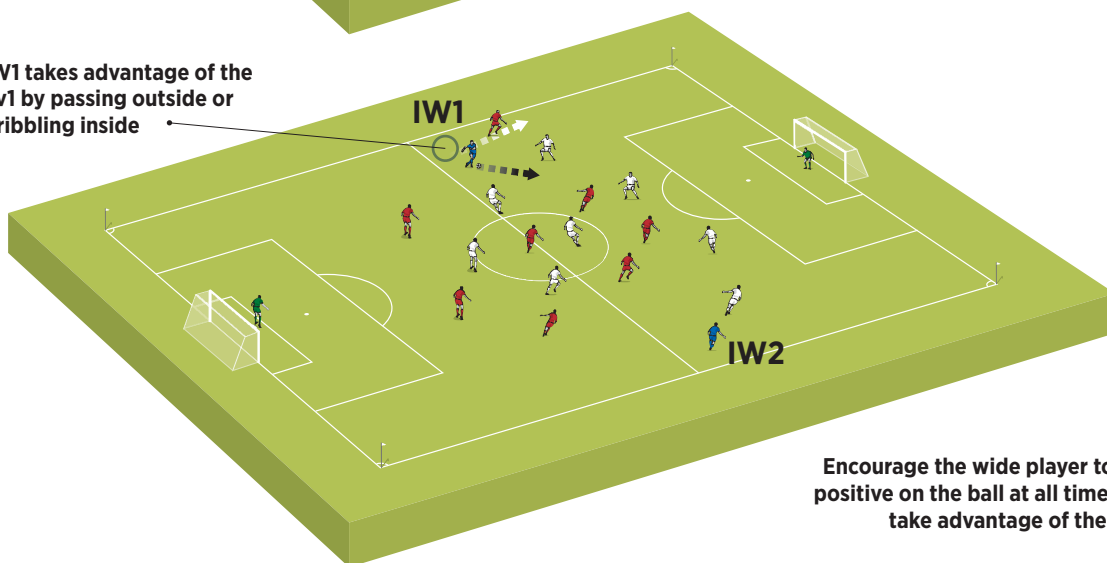
Look to draw opponents towards the ball with quick, teasing passes

Now the ball can be passed to inverted winger 1 (IW1)



The full backs must be ready and willing to run forward to join the attack by overlapping IW1

IW1 takes advantage of the 2v1 by passing outside or dribbling inside



Encourage the wide player to be positive on the ball at all times to take advantage of the 2v1

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Line-Breaking Runs

Develop line-breaking runs from your team's wide players.

## WHY USE IT

This develops line-breaking runs that take you behind opponents, into advanced crossing positions. Gareth Bale and Cristiano Ronaldo are two players that excel in making line-breaking runs.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 55x40-yard pitch divided into two 15-yard and a 25-yard zone lengthways. The defensive 15-yard zones are split widthways into flagged 8-yard channel and a 24-yard central zone (see top picture).

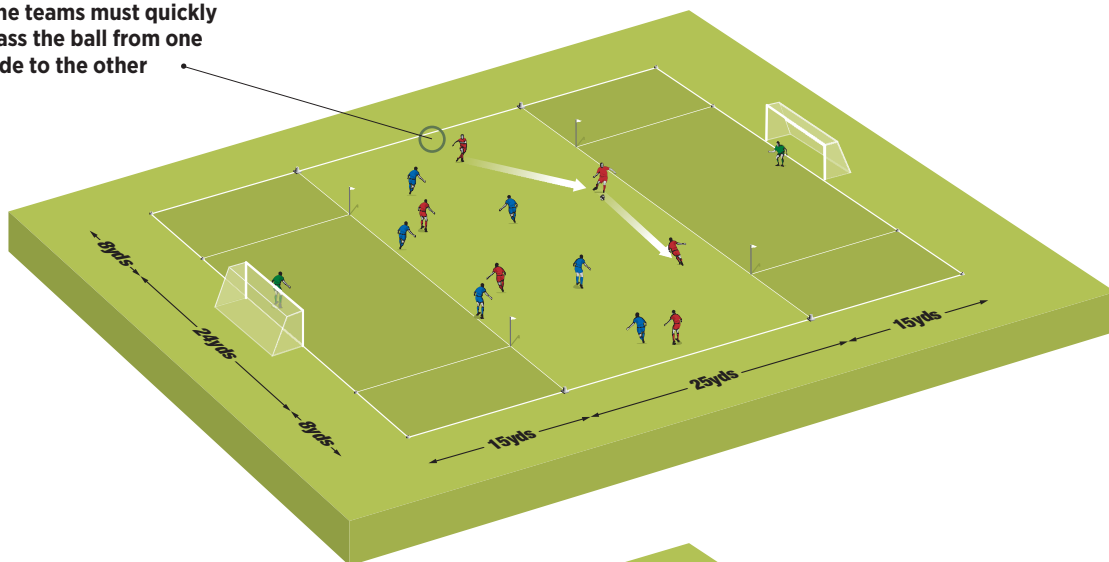
## HOW TO PLAY

Every player starts in the 25-yard zone. To score a goal, a pass must be played to a player making a line-breaking run into an 8-yard channel. The player making the run is now free to cross the ball inside the central zone. Two attackers can leave the 25-yard zone to attack the cross and one defender can drop back.

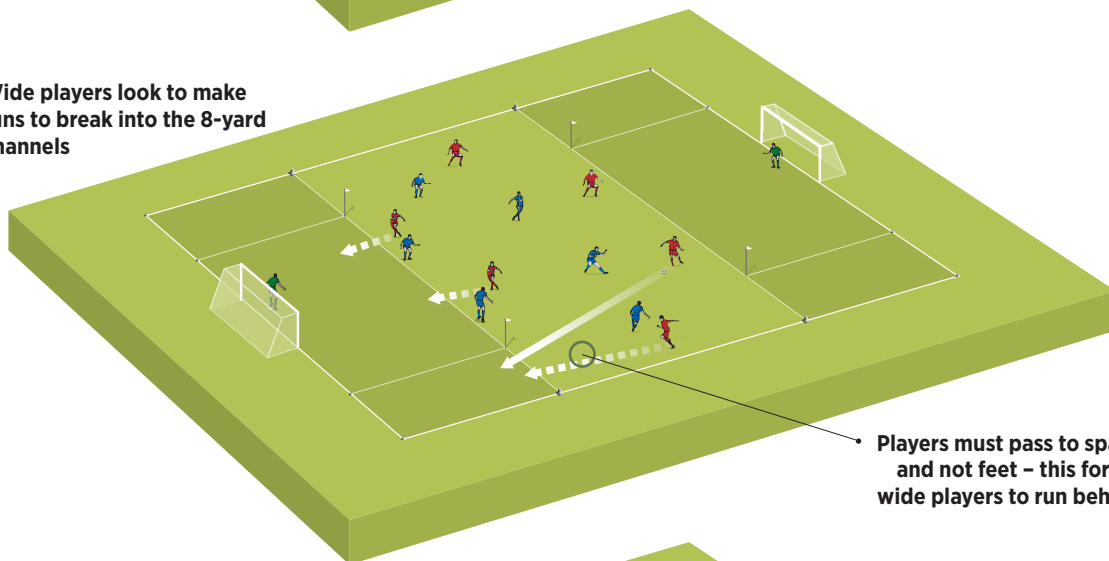
## TECHNIQUE

- Pass into space, not feet.
- Wide players need to draw opponent then spin into space behind defence.
- Encourage overlapping runs.
- Accurate crossing.

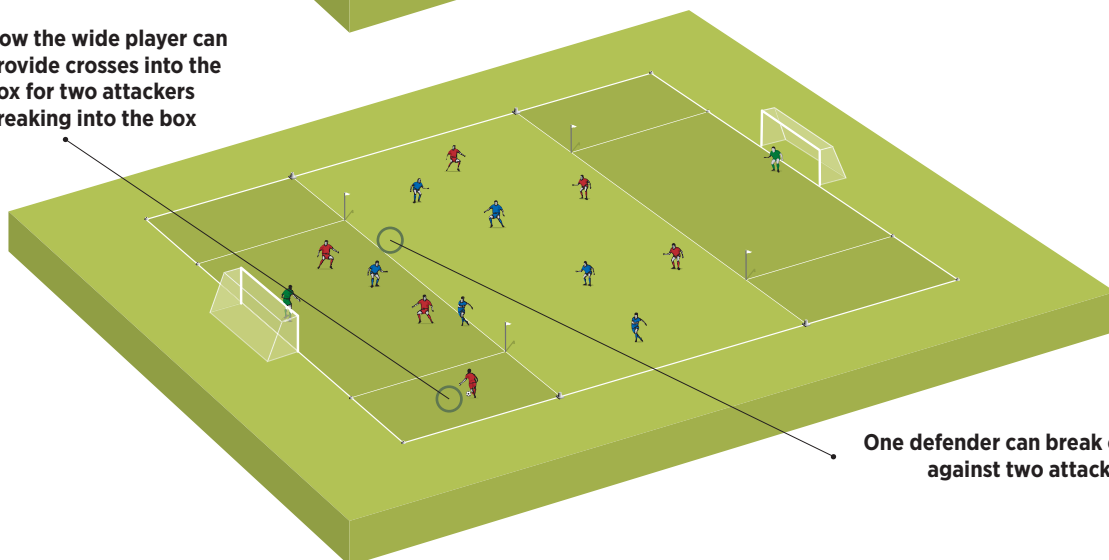
The teams must quickly pass the ball from one side to the other



Wide players look to make runs to break into the 8-yard channels



Now the wide player can provide crosses into the box for two attackers breaking into the box



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Line-Breaking Passes

Improve the use of defence-splitting passes that break the defensive line and put attackers through on goal.

## WHY USE IT

Young midfielders must learn how to make killer passes that break the defensive line and send a team mate through on goal. Players will learn to keep possession and play a positive line-breaking pass when the time is right.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch divided into two halves. Four mannequin/poles are evenly spaced out on the halfway line to add traffic and make a through ball more difficult.

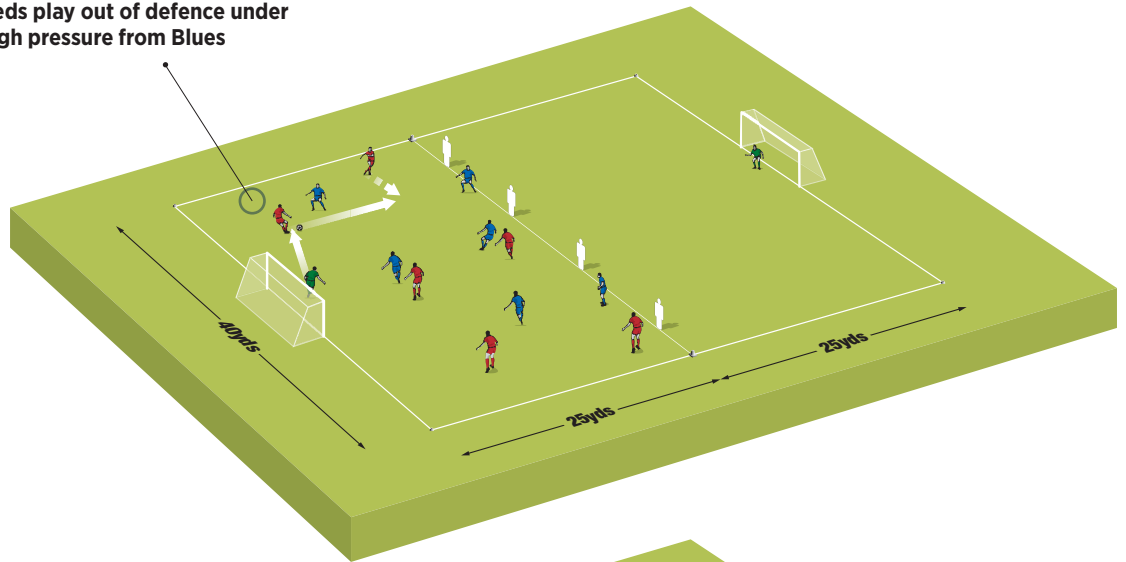
## HOW TO PLAY

Play in one half. The team in possession builds up to score looking to make a line-breaking pass for an attacker to go 1v1 against the goalkeeper. After the 1v1, all players go into the opposite half and the other team looks to build up and score. If the attack loses possession, the defence are free to counter attack. Therefore, encourage defenders to apply high pressure at all times.

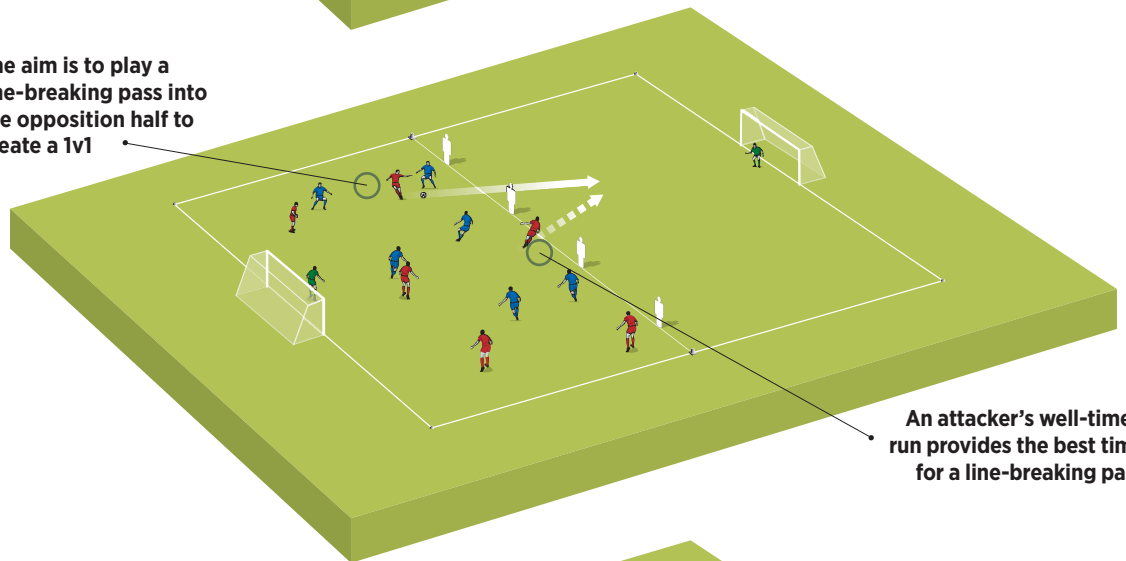
## TECHNIQUE

- Passing techniques (inside, lofted, curled, disguised).
- Movement off the ball.
- High pressure defence.
- Play with head up to pick the right time to break the line with a pass.
- Finishing/shooting skills.

Reds play out of defence under high pressure from Blues

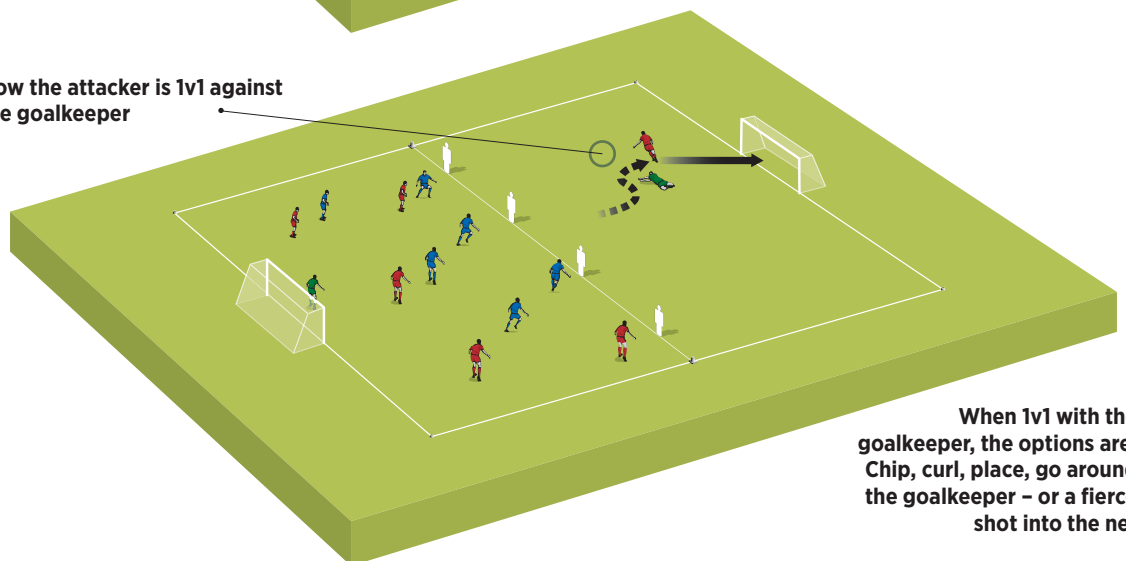


The aim is to play a line-breaking pass into the opposition half to create a 1v1



An attacker's well-timed run provides the best time for a line-breaking pass

Now the attacker is 1v1 against the goalkeeper



When 1v1 with the goalkeeper, the options are: Chip, curl, place, go around the goalkeeper – or a fierce shot into the net

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Iniesta Zone (Between The Lines)

Improve your attackers' understanding of how and when to arrive in the space between the opposition midfield/defence ("between the lines").

## WHY USE IT

This develops positive passing, good movement between the lines and combination play inside the final third.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch with a six-yard "Iniesta Zone" dividing the pitch in half as shown in the top picture. Play 3v3 in each half and leave the zone clear.

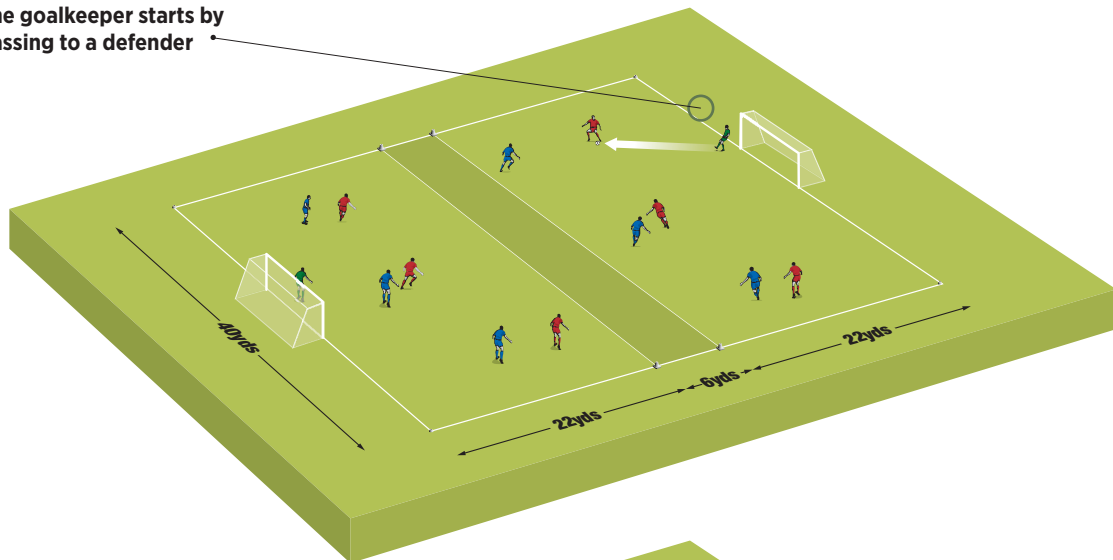
## HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper starts the game. The aim is for the defence to pass to a forward inside the "Iniesta Zone". An attacker retreats into this zone and cannot be tackled there. Once the attacker has received the ball, he turns, dribbles forward and creates a 3v3.

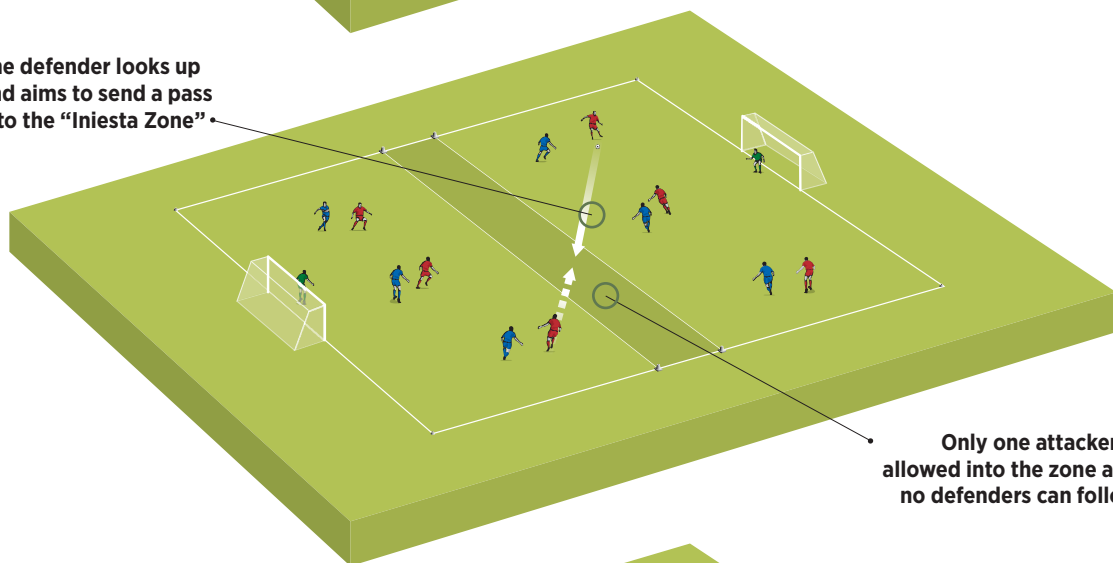
## TECHNIQUE

- Movement into the zone at the right time.
- Defence play with head up to play pass at right time.
- Receiving skills to turn and face forward, then 1v1 dribbling.

The goalkeeper starts by passing to a defender

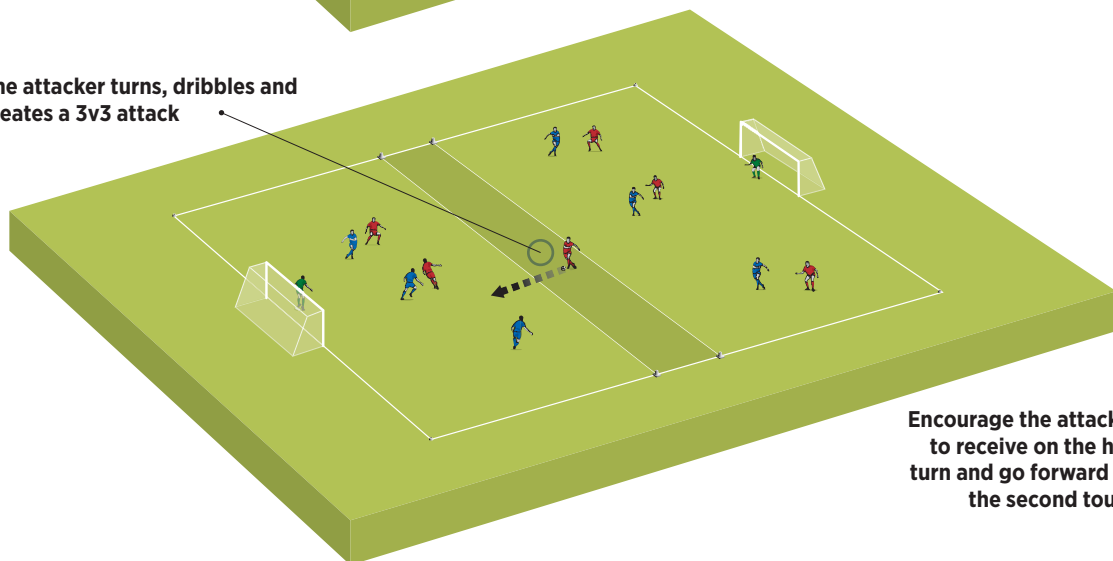


The defender looks up and aims to send a pass into the "Iniesta Zone"



Only one attacker is allowed into the zone and no defenders can follow

The attacker turns, dribbles and creates a 3v3 attack



Encourage the attacker to receive on the half turn and go forward on the second touch

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot



# Between Lines/Behind To Space

Develop your team's ability at passing into the space between the lines of defence/midfield or into the space behind your opponents' defence

## WHY USE IT

This works on getting the ball into two keys areas:

1. Between the line of the defence and midfield.
2. Into the space behind the opponents' defence.

## SET UP

Play 7v7 plus goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard 50yds pitch divided into two halves. On the halfway line, set up two 2m flagged gates 10m apart. Play a 4-2-1 formation.

## HOW TO PLAY

Teams score in two ways:

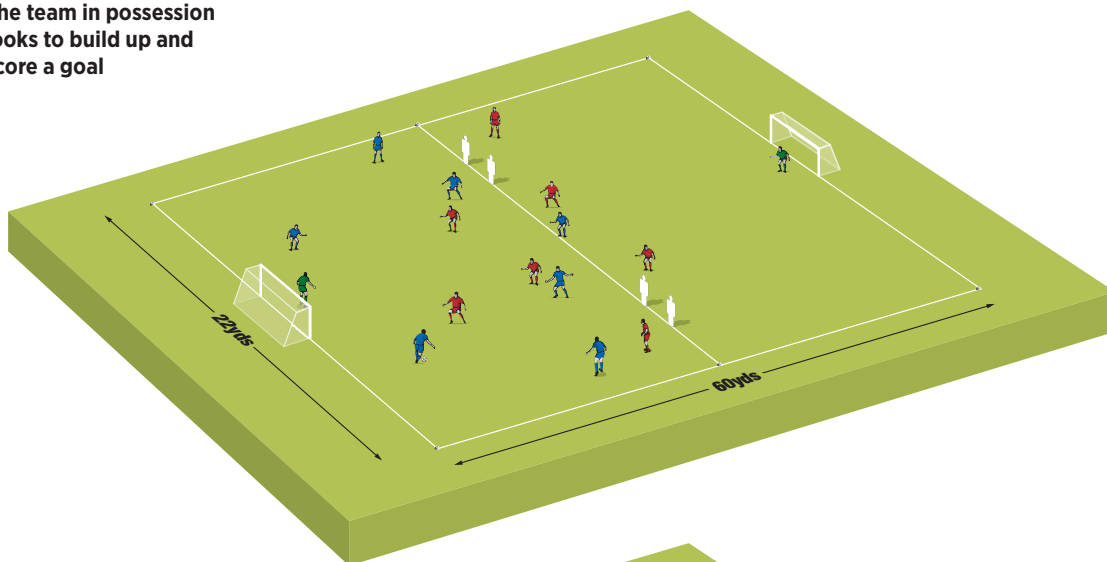
1. In the goal.
2. By passing or dribbling through the gates on the halfway line.

Possession starts with the full backs being encouraged to go wide in a 1v1 against opposing full backs. If the full back can run behind the defence, then the opposition full back decides whether to hold the defensive line to play offside or to drop deep and leave the space in front. This decision will create either a chance to pass behind or thread a ball into a midfielder between the lines of midfield/defence. The midfielder can now turn and go through the gate to score.

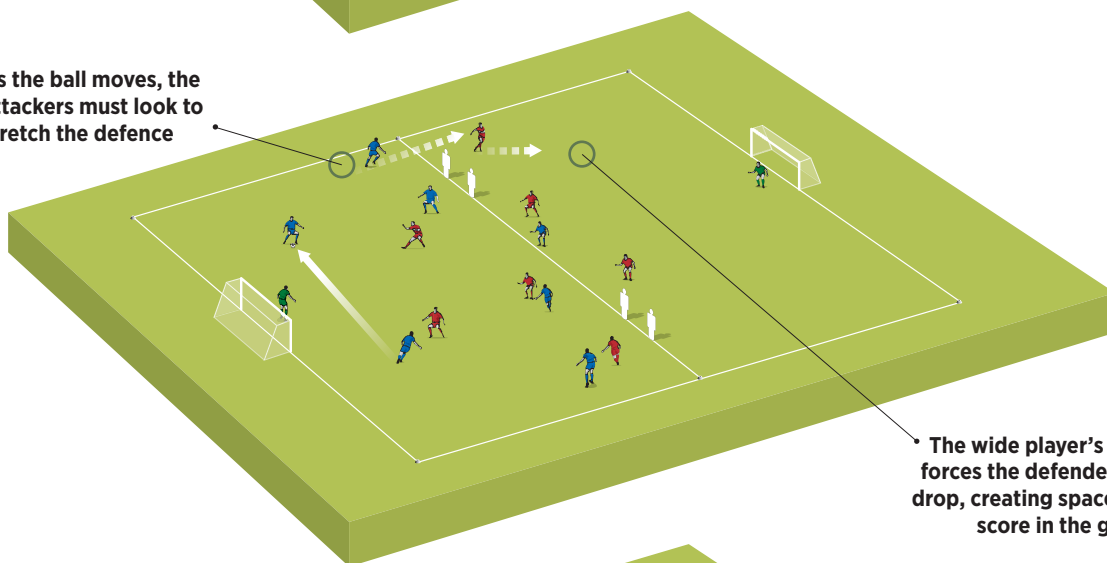
## TECHNIQUE

- Play with head up.
- Attack when in possession of the ball.
- Remain constantly on the move even when not in possession.

The team in possession looks to build up and score a goal

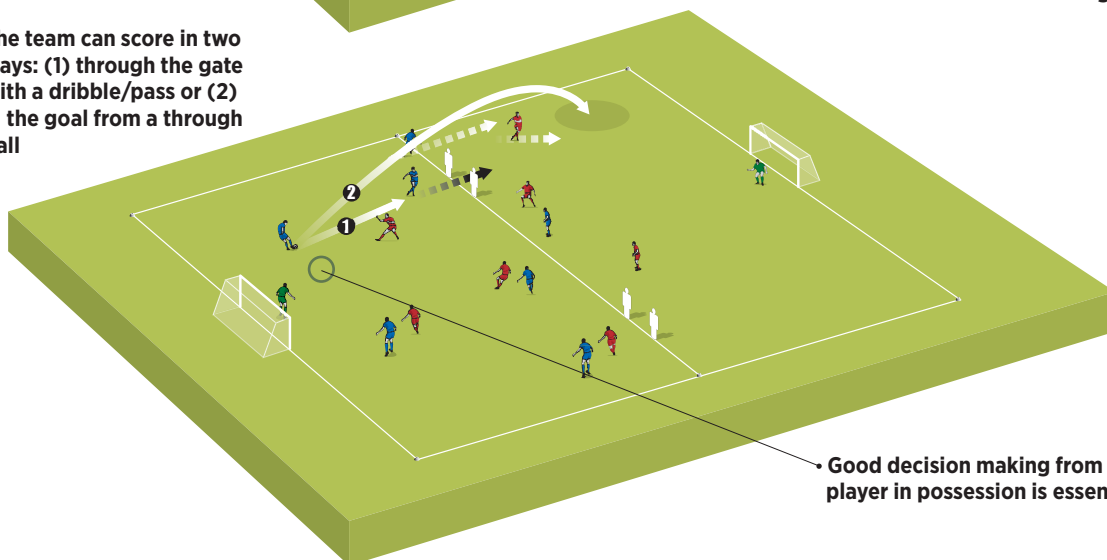


As the ball moves, the attackers must look to stretch the defence



The wide player's run forces the defender to drop, creating space to score in the gate

The team can score in two ways: (1) through the gate with a dribble/pass or (2) in the goal from a through ball



Good decision making from the player in possession is essential

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Central v Wide Attack

This session develops two teams using different tactics. Team one has lots of width and looks to the wings. Team two plays quick combinations through central areas.

## WHY USE IT

This type of two-way game replicates the problems teams face in matches – different formations with different ideas – and gives players time to solve problems.

## SET UP

Play 8v9 plus goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard pitch. The width at one end is reduced by placing cones to the penalty area from the touchline as in the top picture.

The team with eight players plays a 2-3-3 formation, the nine plays 4-3-1.

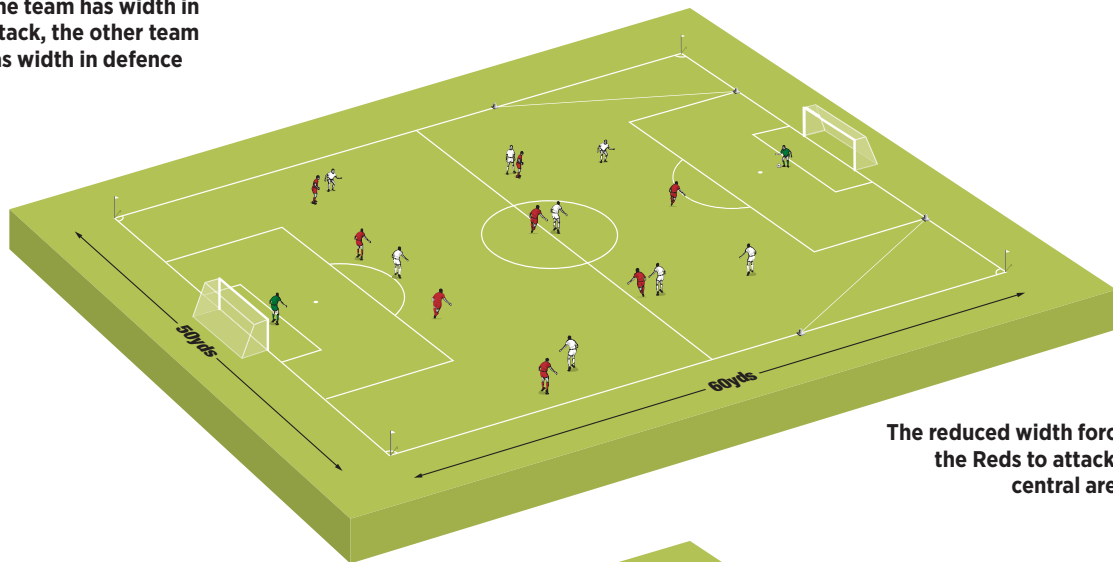
## HOW TO PLAY

Play normal rules including offside but with no corners or throw-ins. Play restarts from the goalkeeper. The aim for each team is different due to the formation played (Whites have wide forwards) and the restriction in pitch width at one end, forcing the Reds to combine in central areas.

## TECHNIQUE

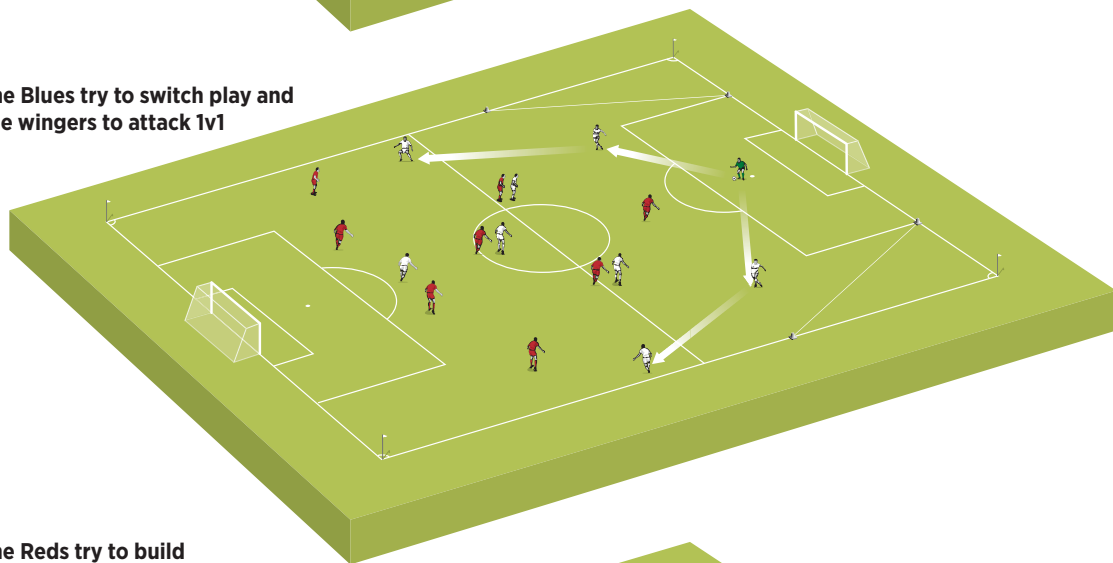
- Good problem-solving – dealing with different tactics.
- Play with head up, scanning the pitch, for greater awareness of passing options.

One team has width in attack, the other team has width in defence

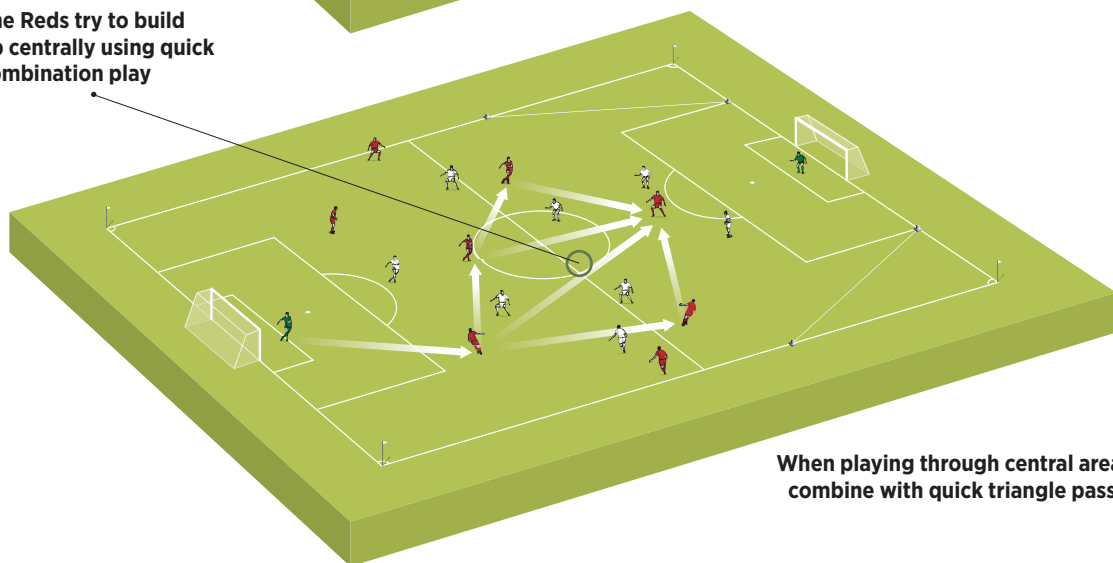


The reduced width forces the Reds to attack in central areas

The Blues try to switch play and use wingers to attack 1v1



The Reds try to build up centrally using quick combination play



When playing through central areas, combine with quick triangle passes

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Play Forward Or Switch?

Improve your players' decision making on how to build the team's attack – through the centre or out wide.

## WHY USE IT

This develops decision making when regaining possession – which players are free and the best way of working the ball to them.

## SET UP

Play 9v9 plus goalkeepers on a 50x45-yard pitch divided into two halves. Play a 4-3 formation with an additional player out wide to the left and a centre forward to the right of the goal as shown in the top picture.

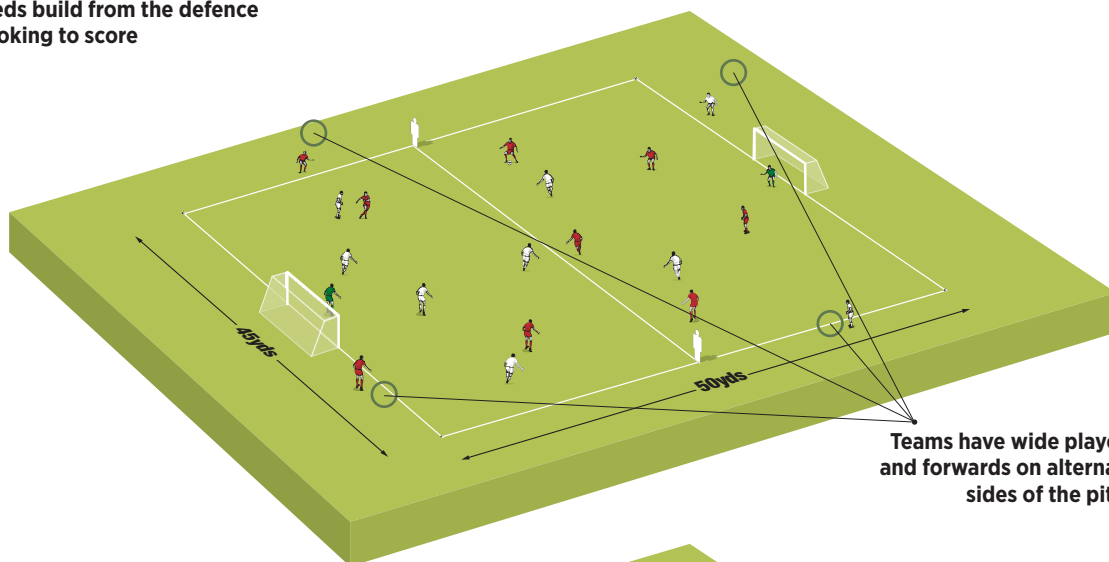
## HOW TO PLAY

Build from the back and score a goal – but the attack must combine with one of the outside players before being allowed to shoot. The decision of what player to use will depend in which position your team has the ball: Can they pass forward or does the ball have to go wide?

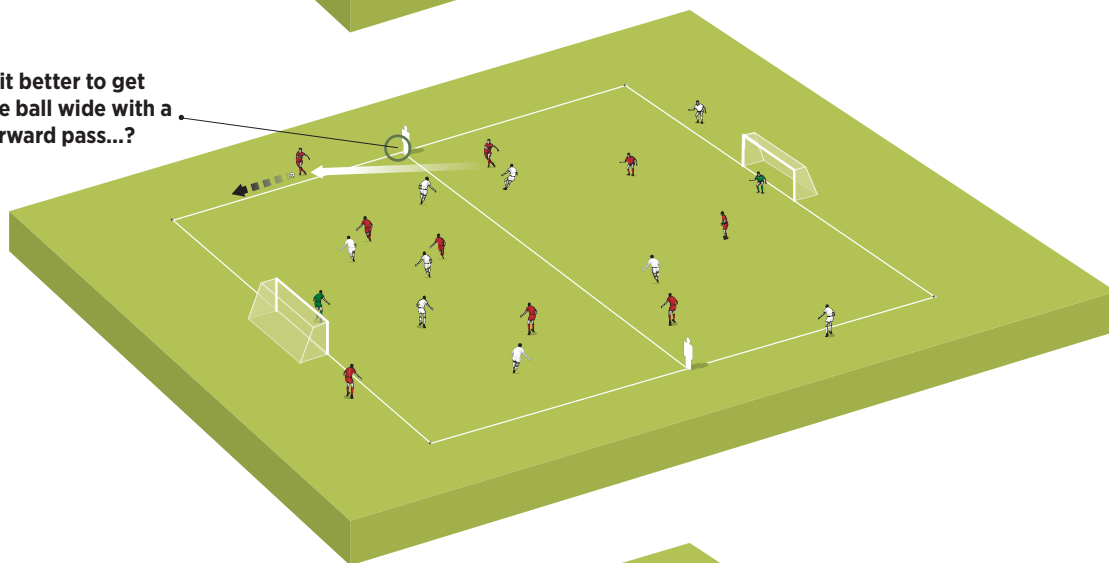
## TECHNIQUE

- Read the game and play with head up to assess the best route to attack and score.
- Accurate forward/sideways passing/switching play.
- Vision and spacial awareness.
- Switch play when needed.

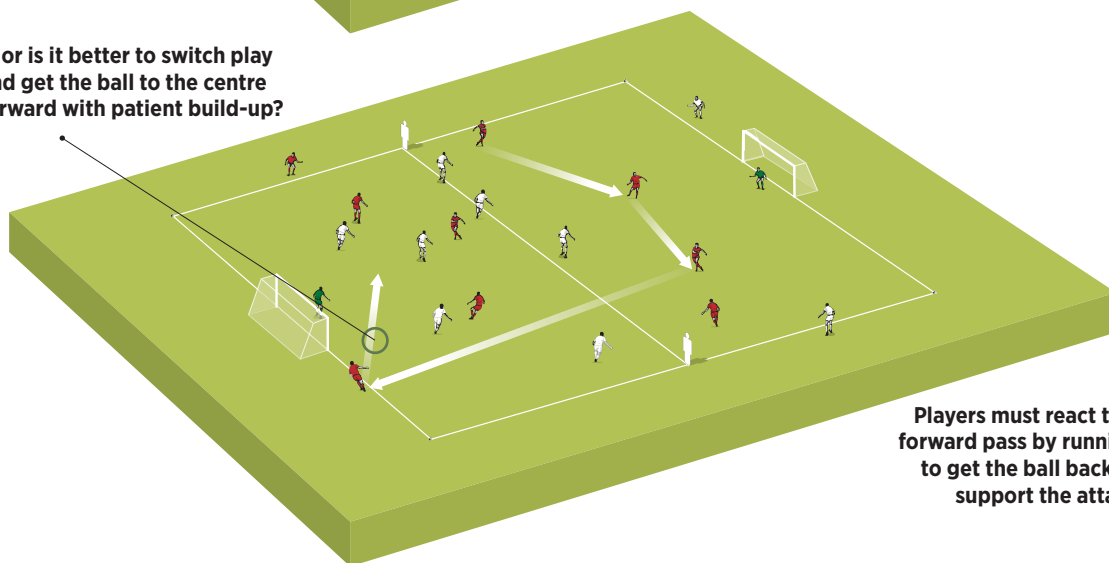
Reds build from the defence looking to score



Is it better to get the ball wide with a forward pass...?



... or is it better to switch play and get the ball to the centre forward with patient build-up?



Players must react to a forward pass by running to get the ball back to support the attack

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# 1v1 Domination

Improve the effectiveness of your team's 1v1 attacking and defending.

## WHY USE IT

Improves effectiveness in 1v1 in attack and defence.

To win these duels, players will need good attacking/defending techniques, a strong winning mentality and desire to not be beaten.

## SET UP

Play 4v4 plus goalkeepers on a 35x25-yard pitch. One player acts as sweeper (S) while the others form 3 1v1s.

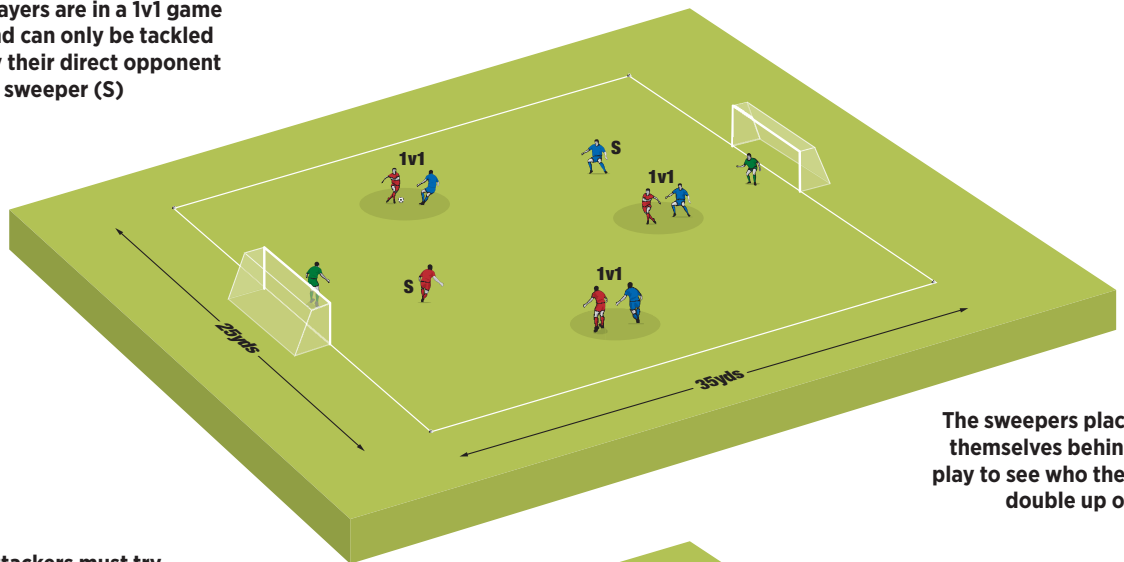
## HOW TO PLAY

Players can only attack and defend against their direct marker. The sweeper is allowed to support a team mate defending 1v1 to create a 1v2. The attacker must beat his direct opponent then the sweeper to score a goal but can pass to a team-mate making a run into space to receive a pass.

## TECHNIQUE

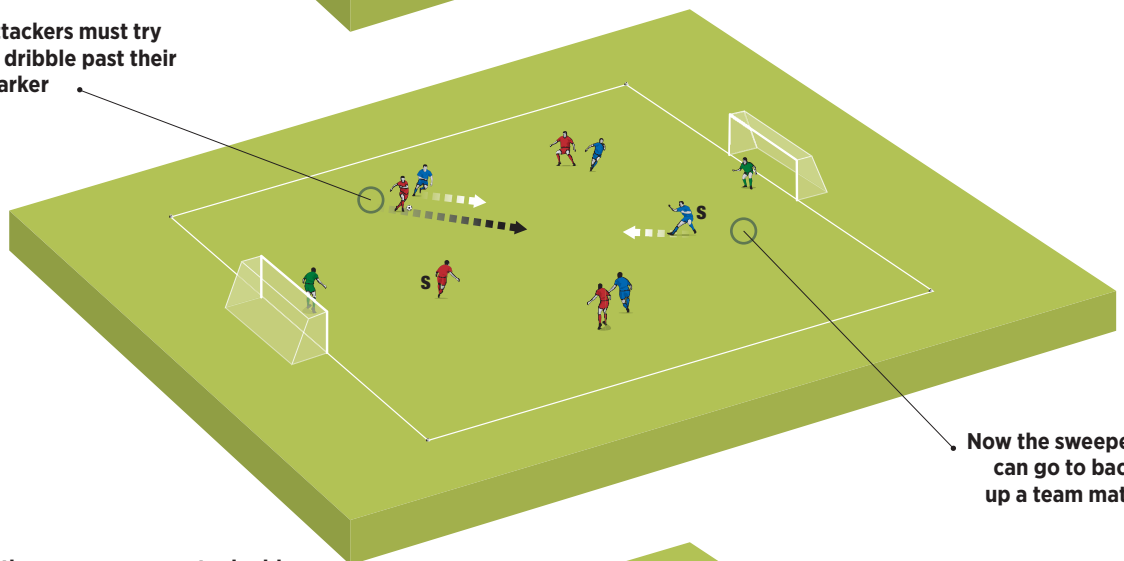
- Close dribbling/ball protection skills.
- Close 1v1 defending.
- Accurate passing/shooting.
- Movement off the ball to receive a pass.

Players are in a 1v1 game and can only be tackled by their direct opponent or sweeper (S)



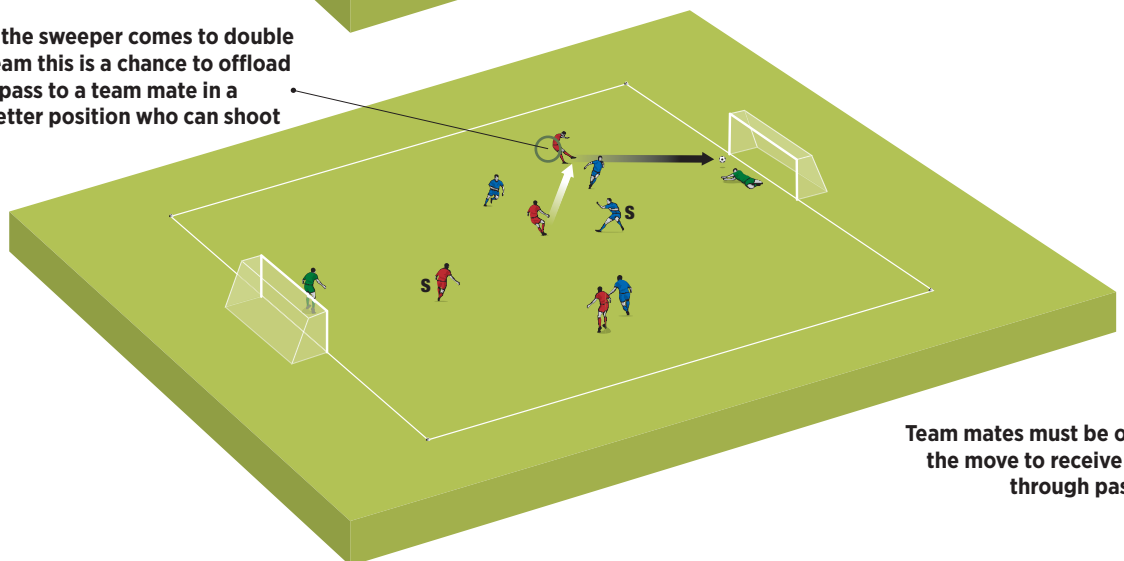
The sweepers place themselves behind play to see who they double up on

Attackers must try to dribble past their marker



Now the sweeper can go to back up a team mate

If the sweeper comes to double team this is a chance to offload a pass to a team mate in a better position who can shoot



Team mates must be on the move to receive a through pass

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Play Off Your Forward

Improve link up play between your midfielders and centre forward.

## WHY USE IT

This session improves the relationship between midfielders and the centre forward. Midfielders learn how to create space for a forward to receive a pass and then get into scoring positions themselves.

## SET UP

Three teams of three on a 40x22-yard pitch divided into 5, 20 and 15-yard zones.

**Team 1:** Two centre backs and a centre forward.

**Team 2:** Three midfielders.

**Team 3:** Three defenders.

Place two mannequins/poles 15 yards from a manned full-sized goal with a mini-goal on the 5-yard line.

## HOW TO PLAY

The centre backs start with the ball in the 5-yard zone. They look to pass to the centre forward. The midfielders run to create space then play a wall pass with the forward, dribble into the 15-yard zone and shoot. The defenders look to prevent the through ball, regain possession and score in the mini goal.

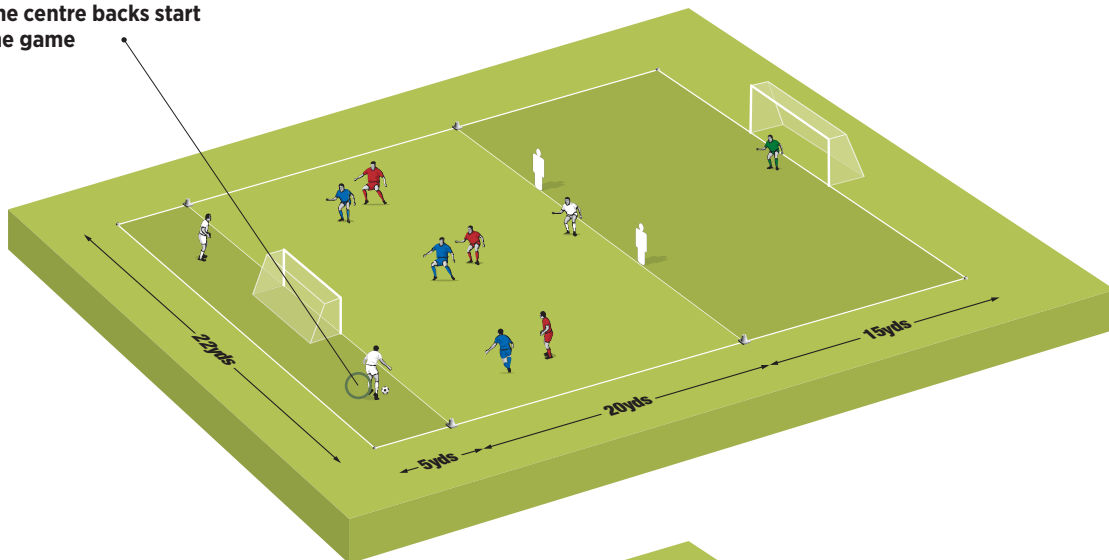
If a midfielder scores, they attack again. If the defence scores, switch roles.

## TECHNIQUE

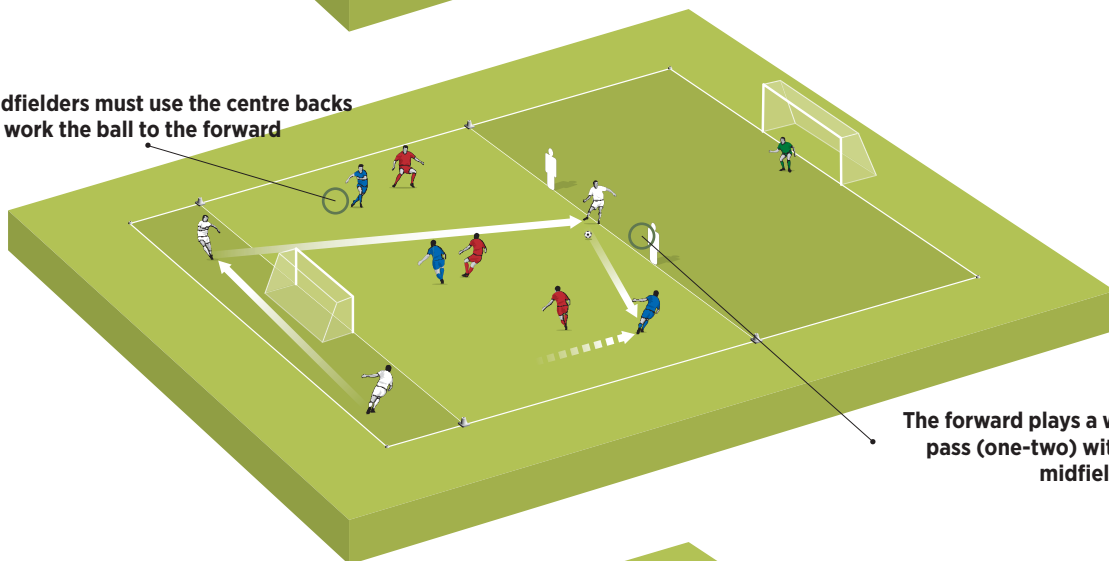
- Movement off the ball to create space.
- Accurate passing forward.
- Controlled wall pass from centre forward to midfielder.

\* Control, dribble and shot in two touches.

The centre backs start the game

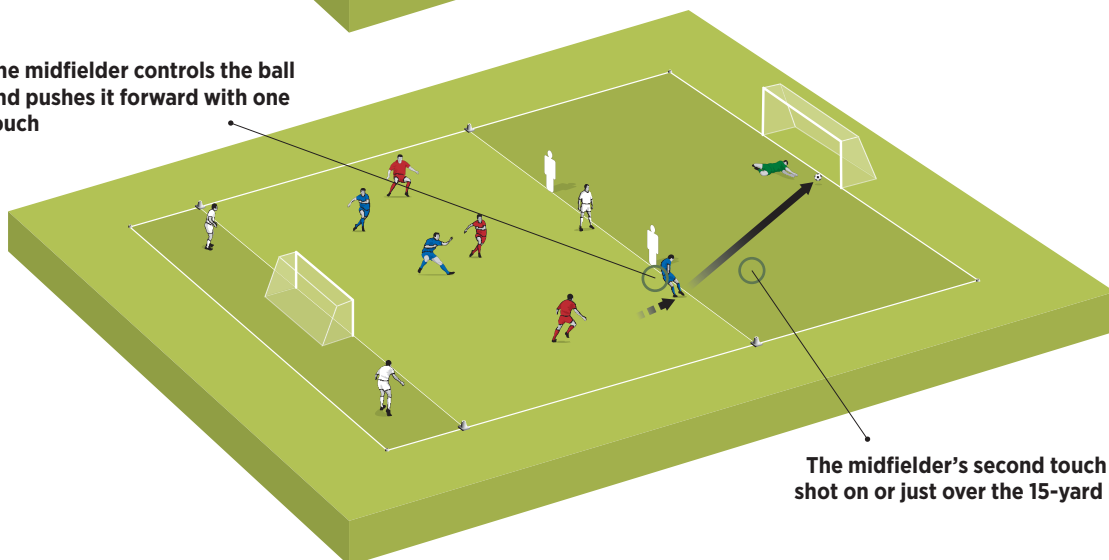


Midfielders must use the centre backs to work the ball to the forward



The forward plays a wall pass (one-two) with a midfielder

The midfielder controls the ball and pushes it forward with one touch



The midfielder's second touch is a shot on or just over the 15-yard line

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Thierry Henry Finishing

Improve finishing inside the penalty box and perfect different methods of scoring.

## WHY USE IT

This works on composed finishing inside a crowded penalty box. This game develops side-foot finishing and the use of placing or curling the ball into the corners of the net. Thierry Henry was a master of this while playing for Arsenal, Barcelona and France.

## SET UP

Play 3v3 plus goalkeepers on a 20x12-yard pitch with two mini goals at both ends. Keepers have a four-yard exclusion area, compressing play into 12 yards.

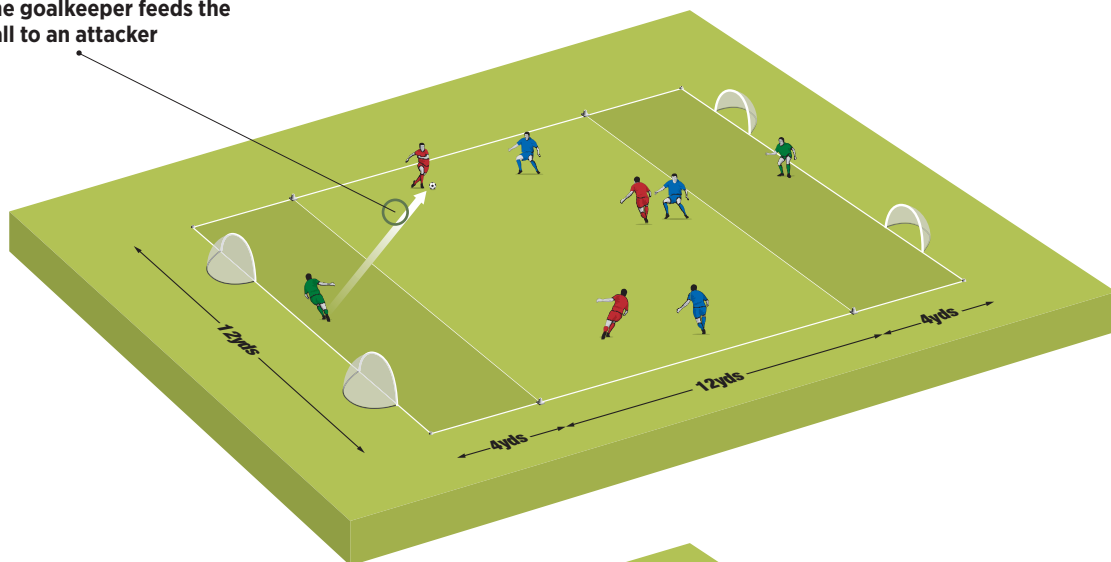
## HOW TO PLAY

The goalkeeper passes to an attacker. Quick combination play now creates an opening for a shot. If the ball goes out of play, the team in possession restart from their goalkeeper.

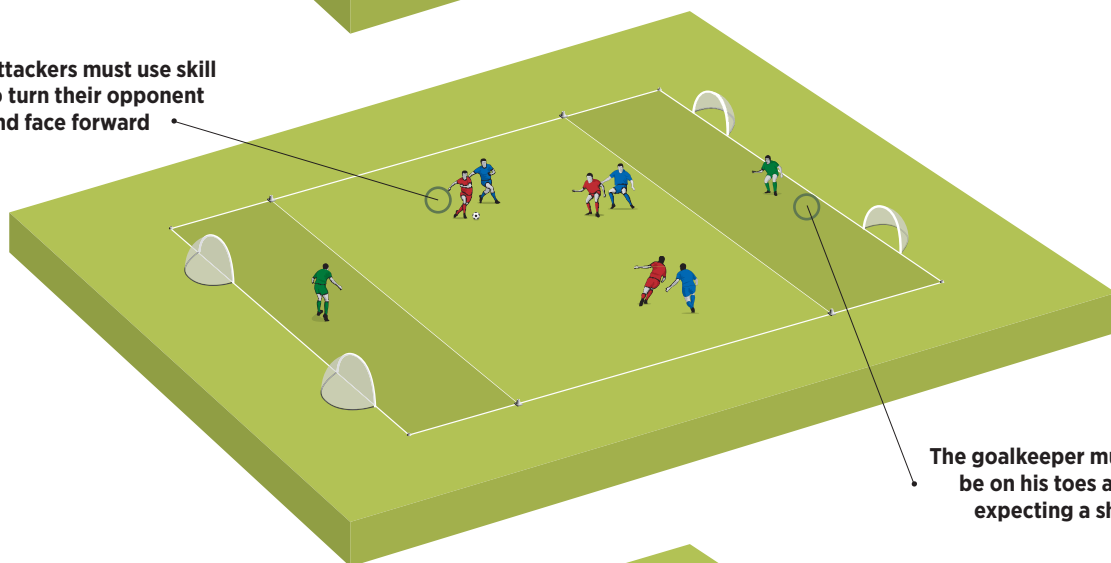
## TECHNIQUE

- Good close control and strength to protect the ball.
- 1v1 confidence with good turning ability.
- Play with head up to scan options and look to side-foot or curl home a shot.

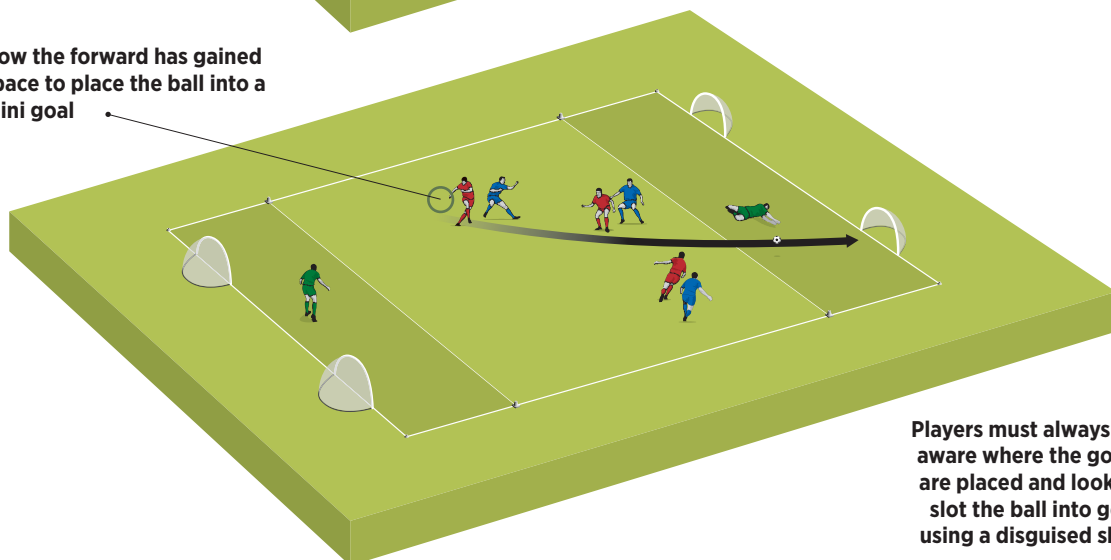
The goalkeeper feeds the ball to an attacker



Attackers must use skill to turn their opponent and face forward



Now the forward has gained space to place the ball into a mini goal



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Two Touch/All In

Develop decision making about the correct time of when to pass and when to dribble the ball.

## WHY USE IT

This touch restriction game helps players develop good habits and improve their decision making as to when and where it's better to dribble or pass.

## SET UP

Play 8v8 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch divided into two halves. Play a 3-2-3 formation.

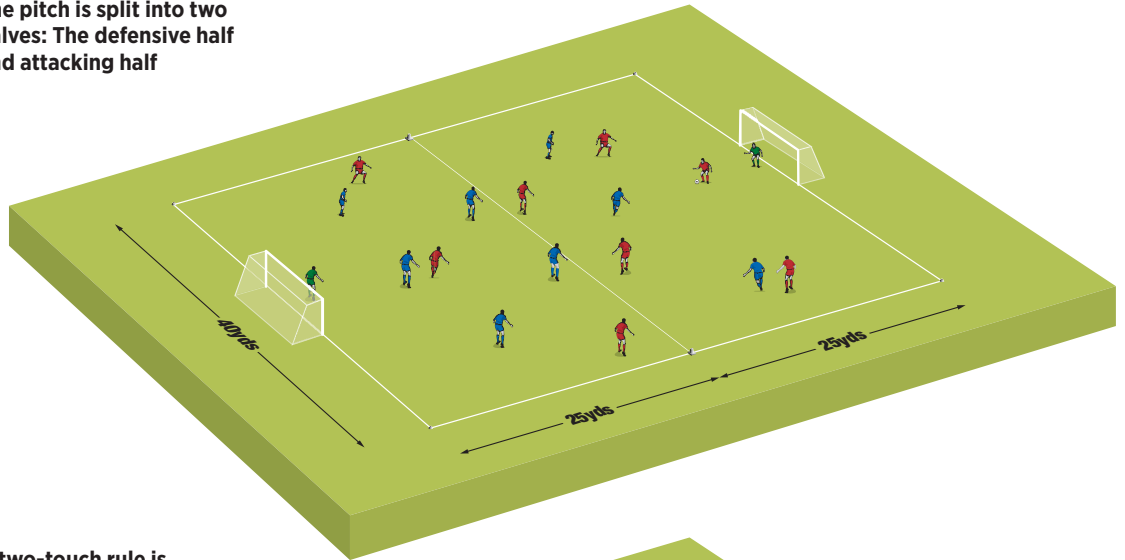
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a normal game but with a two-touch restriction on teams inside their own half. When in the opponents' half, players have as many touches as they like – "all in".

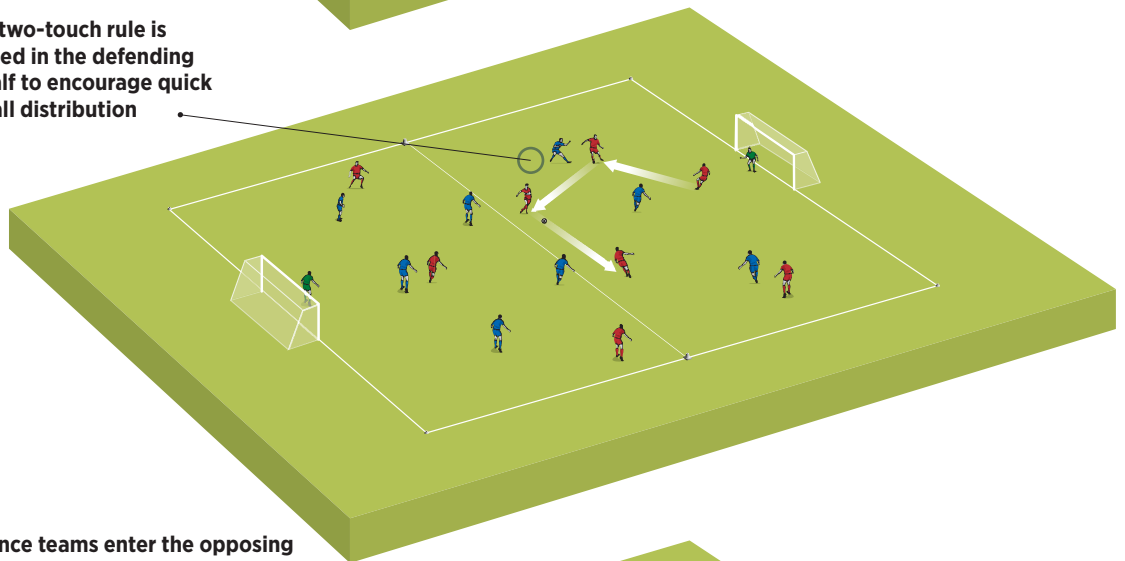
## TECHNIQUE

- Close control and accurate passing.
- Play with head up for pitch awareness.
- Killer first touch, especially in own half.
- Dribbling at pace.

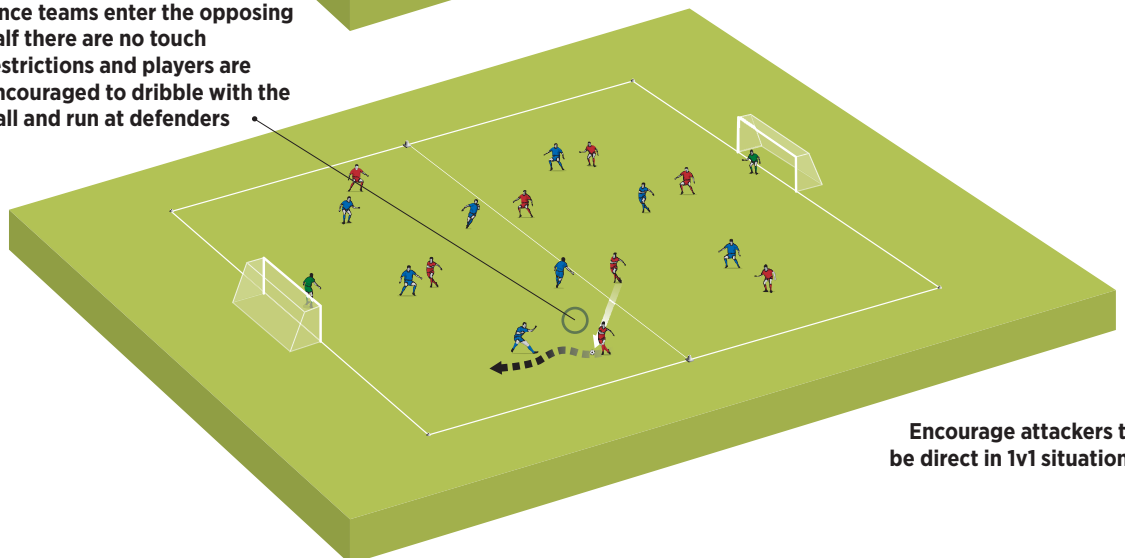
The pitch is split into two halves: The defensive half and attacking half



A two-touch rule is used in the defending half to encourage quick ball distribution



Once teams enter the opposing half there are no touch restrictions and players are encouraged to dribble with the ball and run at defenders



Encourage attackers to be direct in 1v1 situations

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

Connor Wickham closes down Vincent Kompany after losing the ball



# Defend as a team

As soon as the ball is lost players must react quickly to stop forward momentum. Your forwards are just as important as defenders in the role of stopping an opposing attack.

**A**ll successful teams are built on a solid defence and hard-working players. Top level footballers must work with “light switch” reactions when losing possession and commit fully to stopping the counter attack.

When building your defence, have clear, simple guidelines. Follow these pro tips and your defence will become watertight.

**PRO TIP 1** Opponents will have full backs attacking like wingers and centre backs stepping into midfield, so your **forwards** must play an increased role in defending. They must be as switched on as the rest of the team and commit themselves fully to stopping an opponent.

**PRO TIP 2** Will you apply a high pressing defence where forwards constantly harass opponents and your **defenders**

push forward into the opposing half? Or will you play a low press where your team drops deep to invite opponents into a trap where they lose the ball and are caught by a quick counter attack? Choosing the right defence for player strengths is important.

**PRO TIP 3** When losing possession, the player nearest the ball applies pressure to delay the attack. This allows team mates to recover defensive positions. Is your preference to force wide or inside and into the congested central areas?

**PRO TIP 4** Your team must work as a single defensive unit to prevent gaps and

ensure cover. Your players must adjust their defensive positions to block forward passes and the path to goal

**PRO TIP 5** Once the ball enters your final third, players must “defend ugly” if needed. Do whatever it takes to clear the ball – use height and distance as all top defenders do when under high pressure and the risk of passing out of defence is too great. However, defenders must remain calm and not dive into tackles or go to ground too easily.

The games in this section develop full team defending and place the success of the team in the hands of each player and his willingness to help in defence.

**Words and activities by:**  
Mick Beale

## TELL THEM...

1. Forwards must defend
2. Defend to your strengths
3. Press to delay attacks
4. Defend as a single unit
5. “Defend ugly” if needed



# High Press

Develop your team's ability to press high up the pitch.

## WHY USE IT

Applying high pressure defence wins possession close to your opponents' goal. This not only increases your chances of scoring but keeps your own goal safe.

## SET UP

Play 11v11 on a full size pitch (smaller for younger players). A break out line is placed 45 yards from the attacking team's goal, five yards into the other half. Play a 4-3-3 formation.

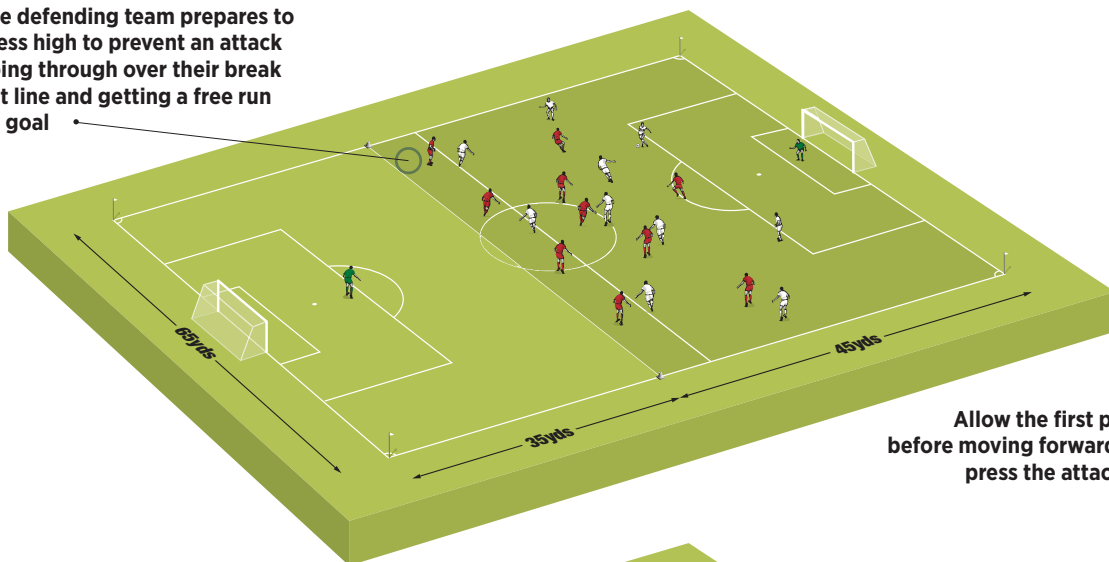
## HOW TO PLAY

The attack starts with the goalkeeper. The aim is to play out of defence and get past the break out line where they are free to go through on goal to score. The defence exerts high pressure on the ball to get attackers' heads down to prevent longer passes into the space behind and force play into isolated wide areas. The defending team aims to regain the ball near the opposition goal to quickly counter attack to score.

## TECHNIQUE

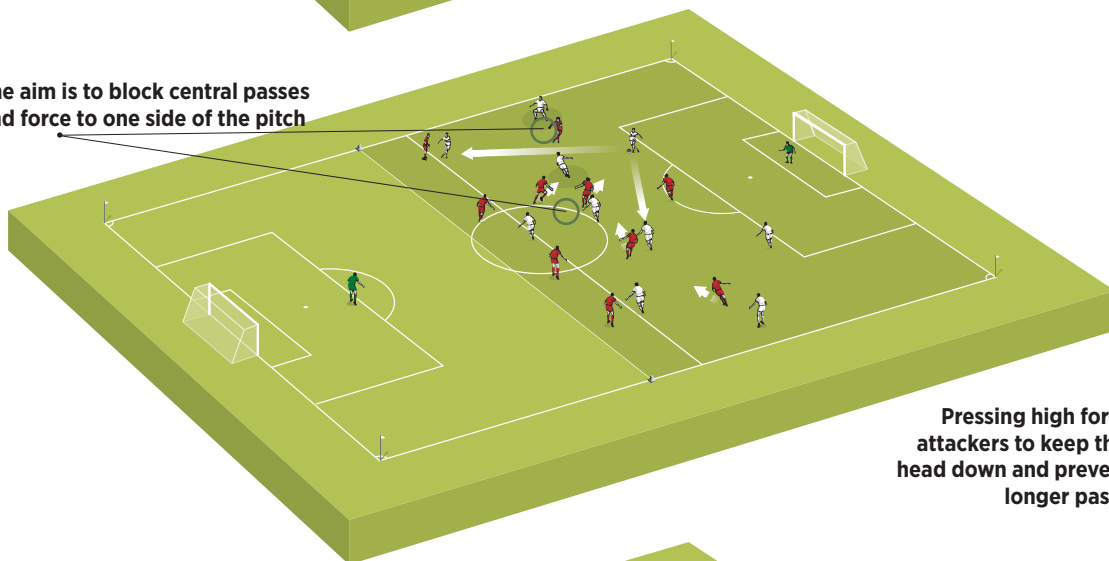
- The defending team presses high up the pitch to close down space.
- On regaining the ball, players immediately switch focus in order to attack at speed using good dribbling, passing and shooting.

The defending team prepares to press high to prevent an attack going through over their break out line and getting a free run on goal



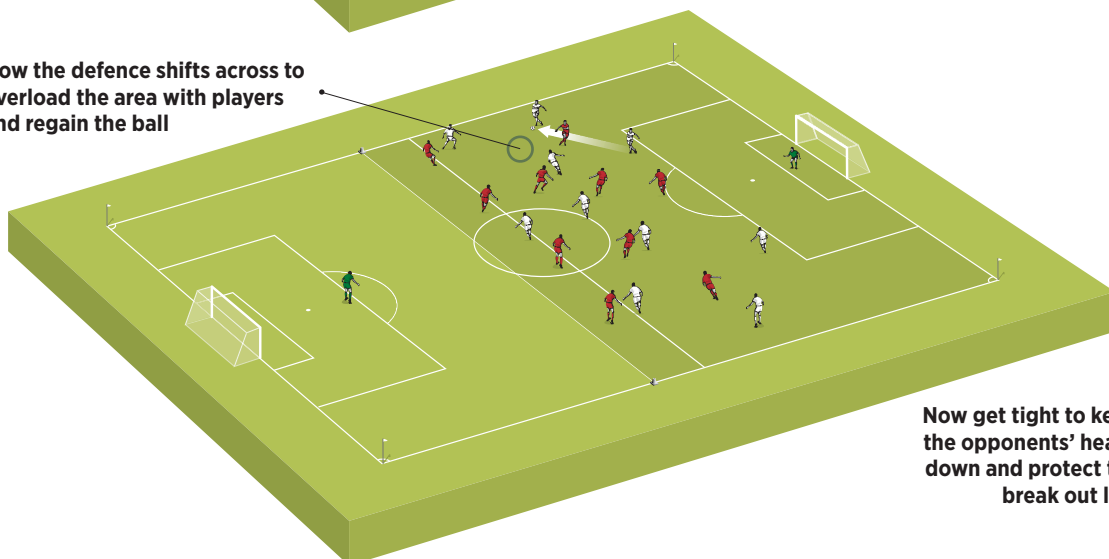
Allow the first pass before moving forward to press the attacker

The aim is to block central passes and force to one side of the pitch



Pressing high forces attackers to keep their head down and prevents longer passes

Now the defence shifts across to overload the area with players and regain the ball



Now get tight to keep the opponents' heads down and protect the break out line

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Low Press

Develop your team's ability to play with a low press and counter attacking style.

## WHY USE IT

Low pressure defence enables your team to compact the space around your goal and keep defenders close together. This makes it hard for opponents to create chances and when regaining the ball increases your chances of a quick counter attack.

## SET UP

Play 11v11 on a full pitch (smaller for younger players). A drop back line is 45 yards from the defending team's goal, five yards in their half. Play a 4-3-3 formation.

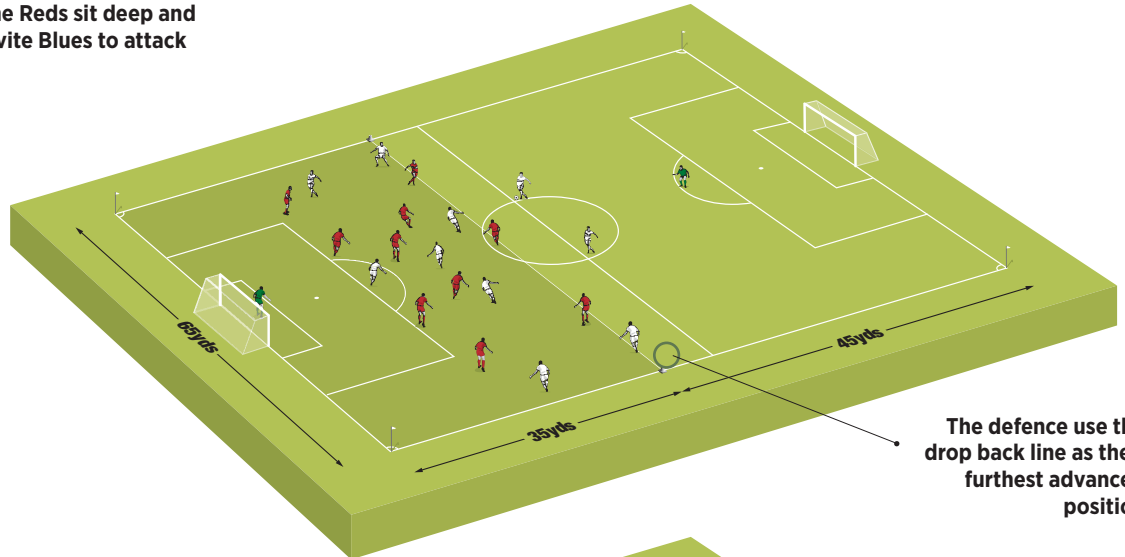
## HOW TO PLAY

The defending team advances no further than their drop back line which also acts as an attacking springboard. The attacking team tries to build from the back and score while the defending team looks to regain possession and quickly launch a counter attack. Offside laws apply.

## TECHNIQUE

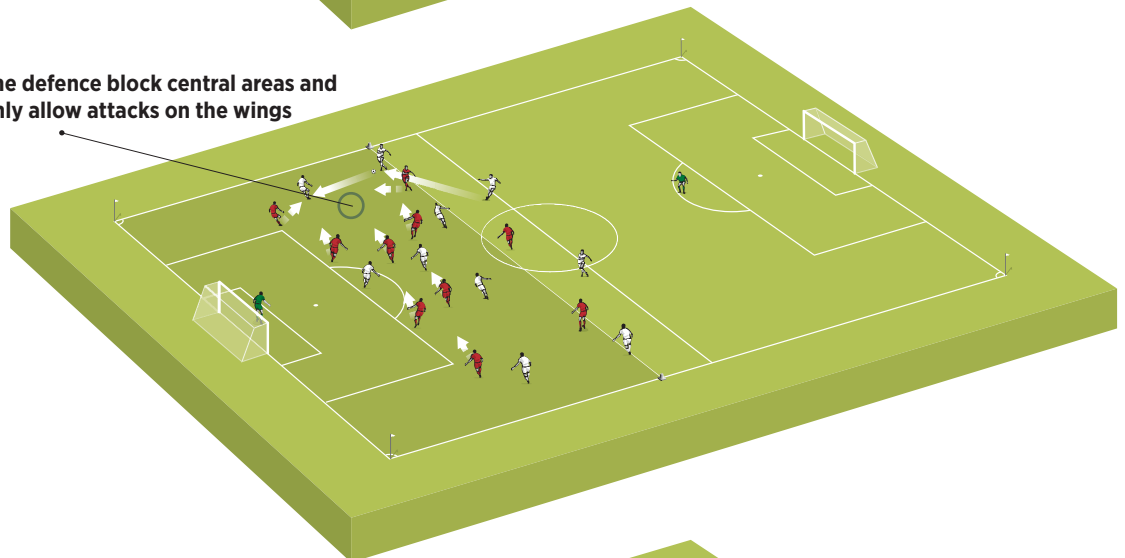
- Good sliding and storming by defenders.
- Strong 1v1 defending.
- Movement off the ball.
- Accurate passing skills.
- Time the final pass and run to beat the offside line.

The Reds sit deep and invite Blues to attack

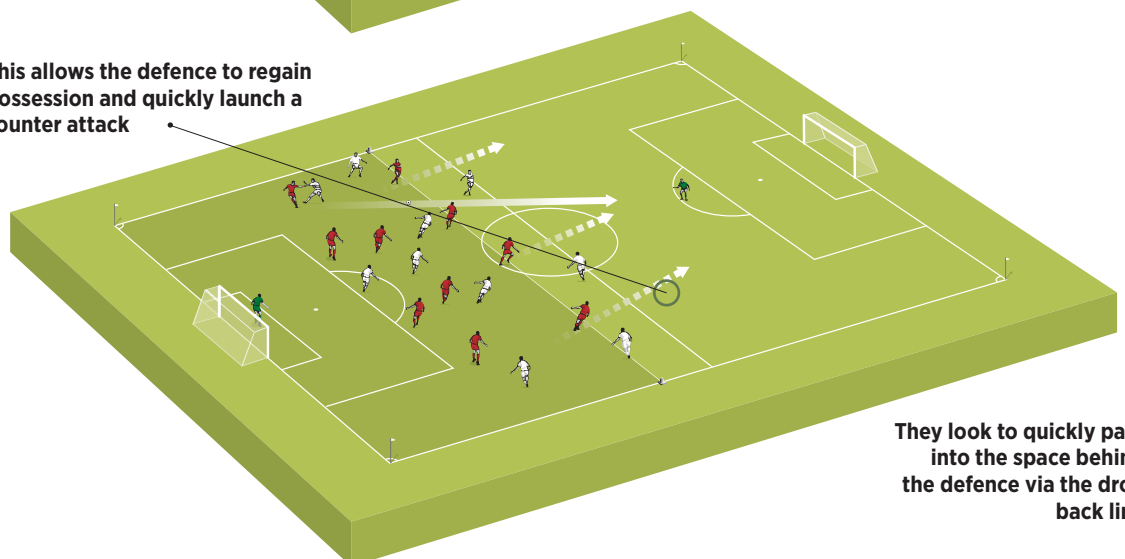


The defence use the drop back line as their furthest advanced position

The defence block central areas and only allow attacks on the wings



This allows the defence to regain possession and quickly launch a counter attack



They look to quickly pass into the space behind the defence via the drop back line

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Controlling The Opponent

Develop your team's defending in open play. The aim is to stop the opponents from having forward momentum.

## WHY USE IT

Often when one team is in possession, all opposition players are within 30 yards – meaning all 20 outfield players are inside a compact channel across the pitch. By stopping forward momentum, you can lead opponents into a dead end to regain the ball and launch a counter attack.

## SET UP

Play 11v11 on a full pitch (smaller for younger players) with break out lines 25 yards from each goal to create a 30-yard central zone. Play a 4-3-3 formation.

## HOW TO PLAY

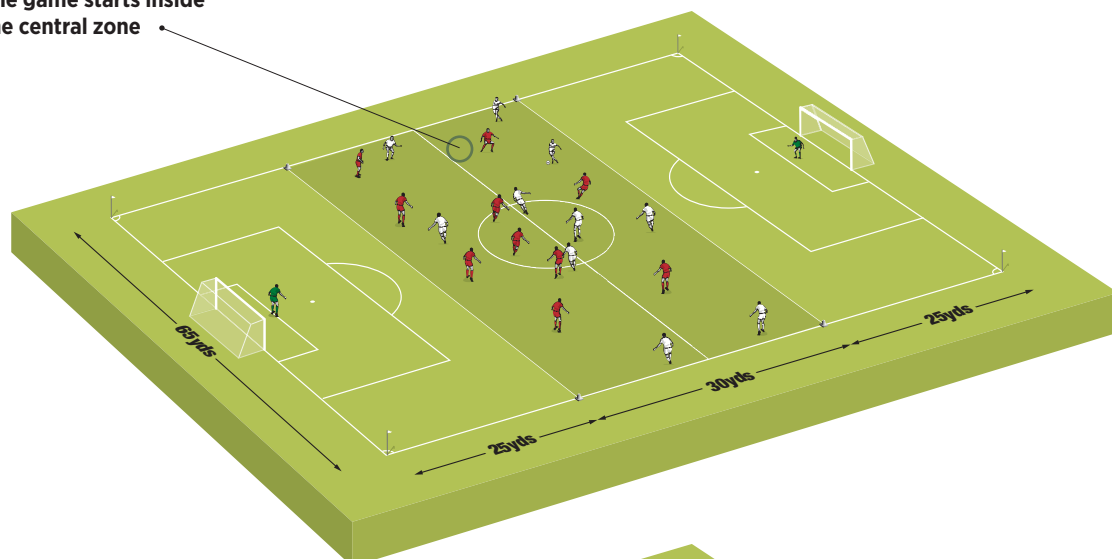
The game is played inside the central zone to replicate the compact nature of a real match. The aim is to work the ball through the pitch in order to break into the opponents' end zone and through on goal.

To control opponents, defenders must remain compact and slide across to lock play to one side of the pitch. Defenders must forget opponents on the opposite side and storm the players nearest the ball, outnumber them, regain possession and quickly counter attack.

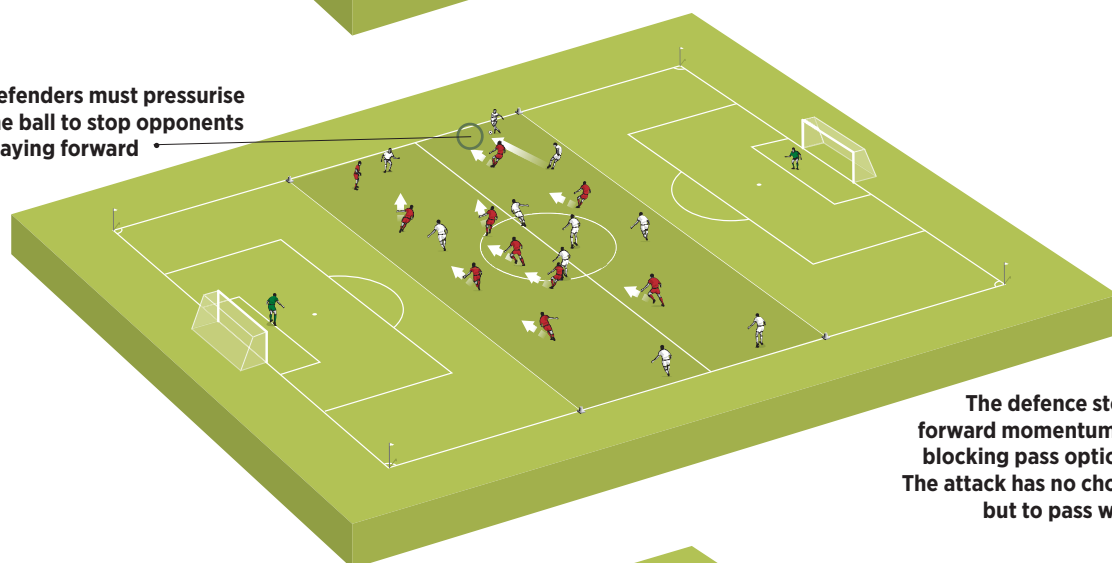
## TECHNIQUE

- Good 1v1 defending and pressing.
- Concentration at all times to keep possession.
- Accurate passing when counter attacking.

The game starts inside the central zone

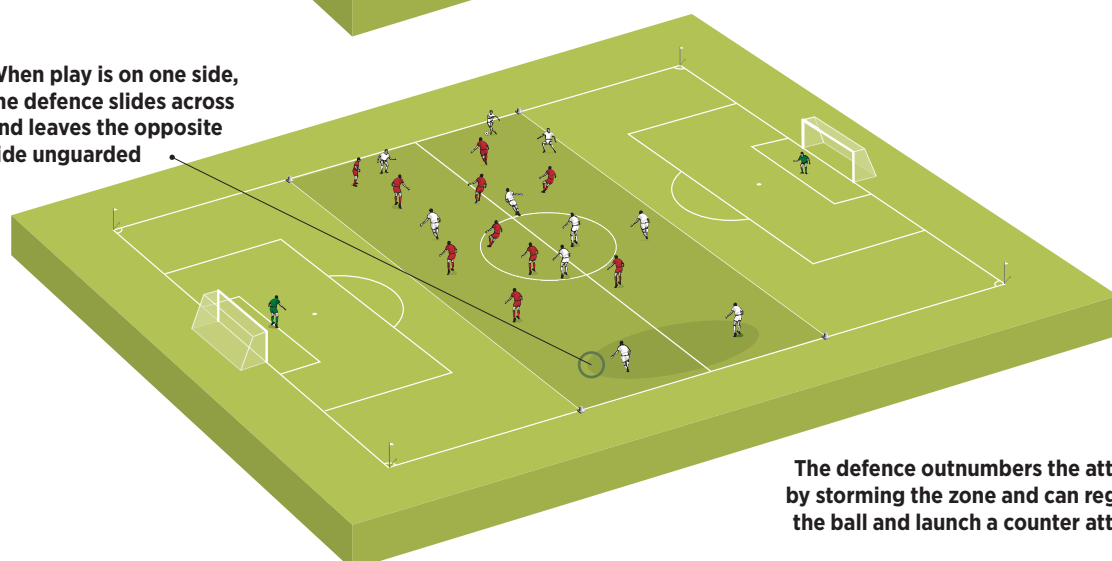


Defenders must pressurise the ball to stop opponents playing forward



The defence stops forward momentum by blocking pass options. The attack has no choice but to pass wide

When play is on one side, the defence slides across and leaves the opposite side unguarded



The defence outnumbers the attack by storming the zone and can regain the ball and launch a counter attack

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Defensive Slide

Improve your defenders' ability at sliding across the field to defend.

## WHY USE IT

Improves defensive organisation and understanding between the goalkeeper, four defenders and two anchor midfielders.

## SET UP

Play 6v7 on a third of a pitch (50x40 yards) with channels either side of the penalty area as shown in the top picture. The defending team has a goalkeeper and both teams play a 4-2 formation. Two neutral servers/target players work at one end.

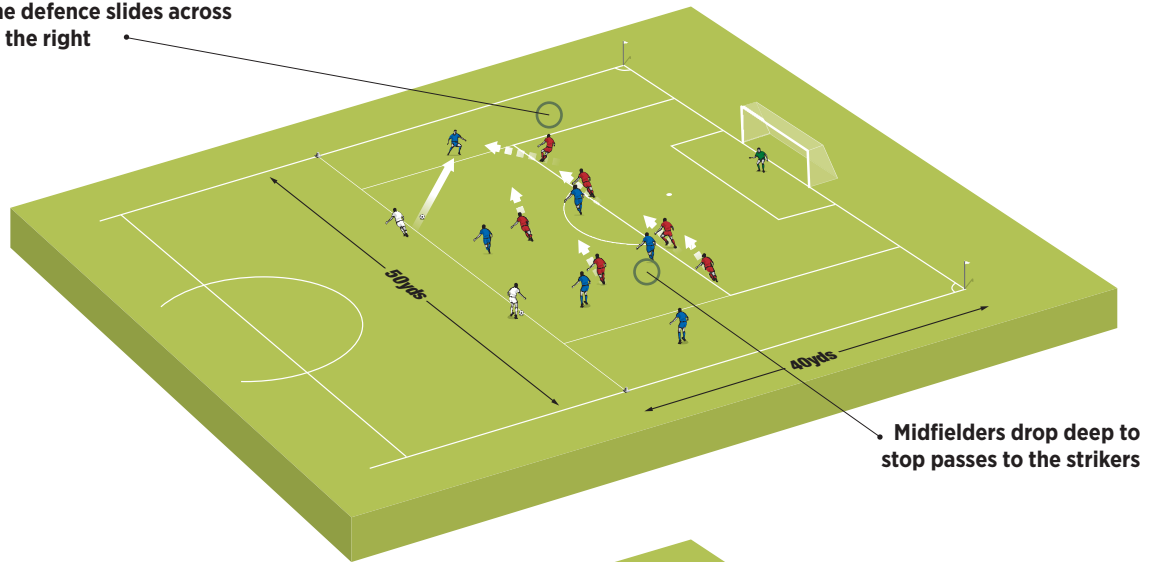
## HOW TO PLAY

A server passes to an attacking channel. The defending team must prevent a goal by sliding across to compact the space and keep attackers at bay. If defenders win the ball, they score by passing to target/server. Play offsides.

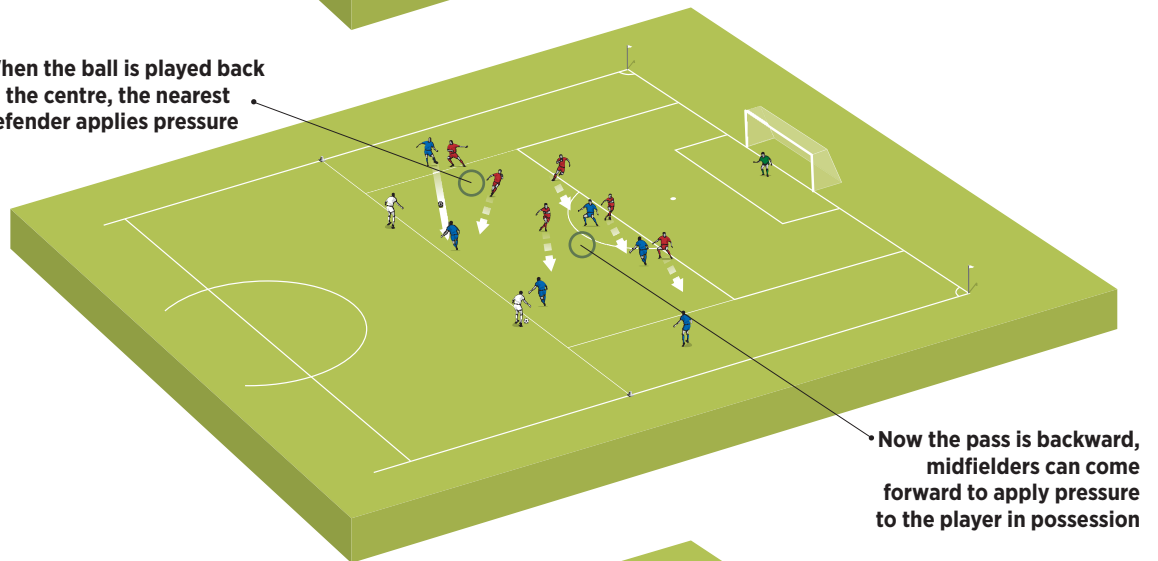
## TECHNIQUE

- Good 1v1 defending, pressing for the ball.
- Defence works as a unit and slides across to plug any gaps between them.
- The goalkeeper must communicate loudly to give information to his defenders.

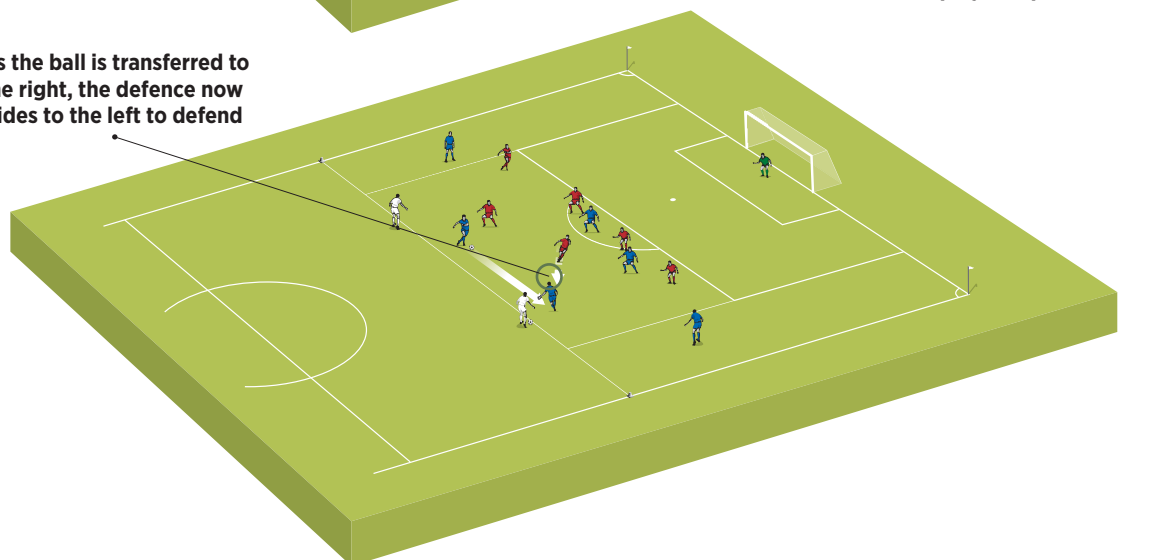
The defence slides across to the right



When the ball is played back to the centre, the nearest defender applies pressure



As the ball is transferred to the right, the defence now slides to the left to defend



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Defend And Counter

Improve your team's ability at steering play to one side of the pitch then storming the surrounding area to regain possession and launch a counter attack.

## WHY USE IT

This develops the ability to hem opponents in on one side and avoid switches of play. It also encourages fast transitions when regaining the ball to counter attack.

## SET UP

Play 6v9 plus goalkeepers on an 80x65-yard pitch. Have a five-yard breakout area just inside the half of the team with fewer players. The defending team plays a 4-2-3 formation, the attack plays 3-3 and starts on the halfway line.

Two mannequins are placed on the breakout line as traffic for the defending team to counter attack past.

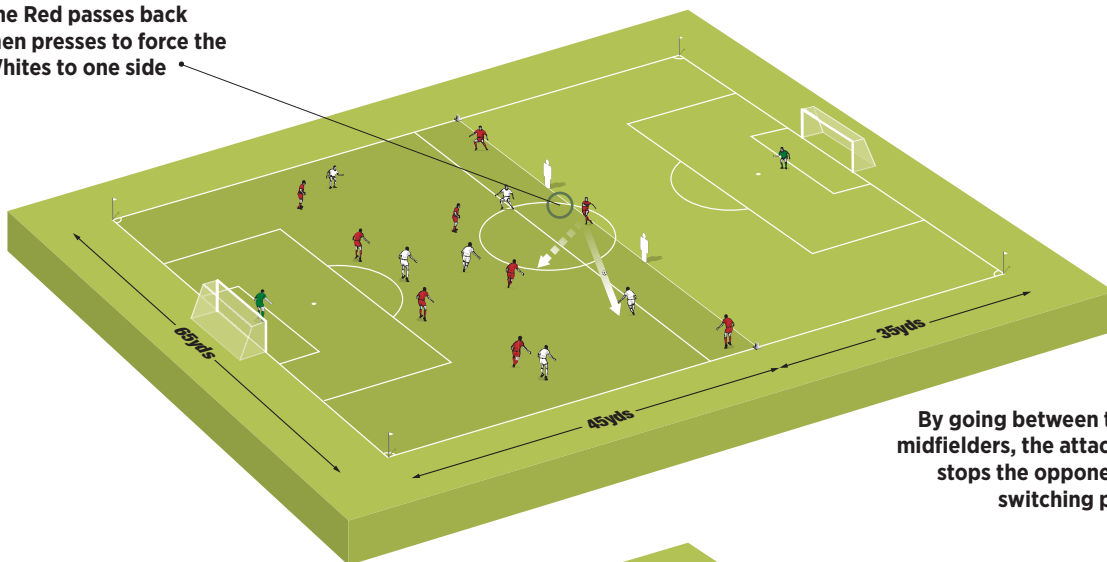
## HOW TO PLAY

A central attacker for the defenders starts by passing to an opposing midfielder then drops back to cut off the switch pass and force play to one side of the pitch. The attackers are now free to build and score. Defenders look to force play to one side then storm the area to outnumber the attacking team, regain the ball and launch a counter attack. The defending team have two wide attackers on the halfway line looking to break into the space behind the defence to score.

## TECHNIQUE

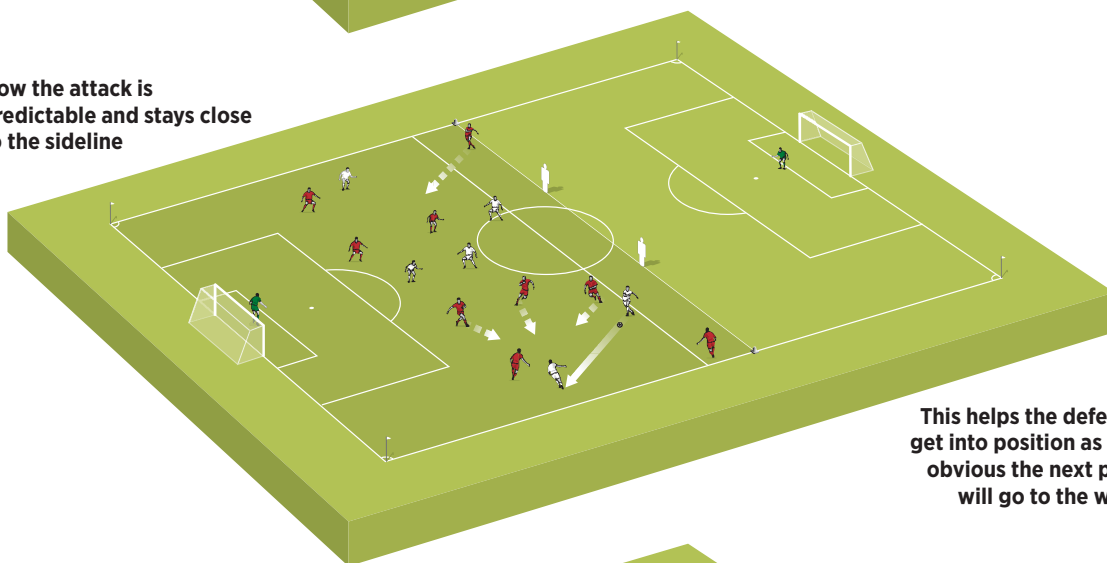
- Good 1v1 defending – tackle on your feet rather than going to ground.
- Quick forward passes to launch the counter attack.

The Red passes back then presses to force the Whites to one side



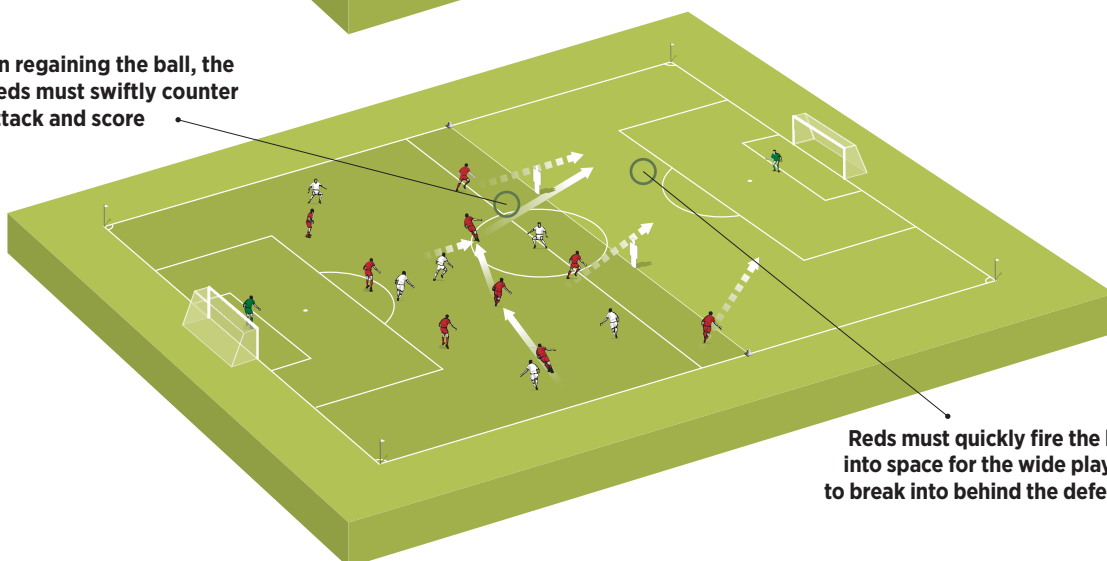
By going between two midfielders, the attacker stops the opponents switching play

Now the attack is predictable and stays close to the sideline



This helps the defence get into position as it is obvious the next pass will go to the wing

On regaining the ball, the Reds must swiftly counter attack and score



Reds must quickly fire the ball into space for the wide players to break into behind the defence

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Keep Play In Front

Improve team defending and the art of keeping your opponents away from goal.

## WHY USE IT

This develops full pitch defending. By placing goals in central and wide areas, defenders must work together to stop opponents scoring. The aim is to stop passing or dribbling towards your goal. Forcing opponents to pass backwards or inside keeps play in front of the defence.

## SET UP

Play 7v7 plus goalkeepers on a 60x50-yard pitch. Have a normal goal and two mini goals at each end. Play a 4-2-1 formation.

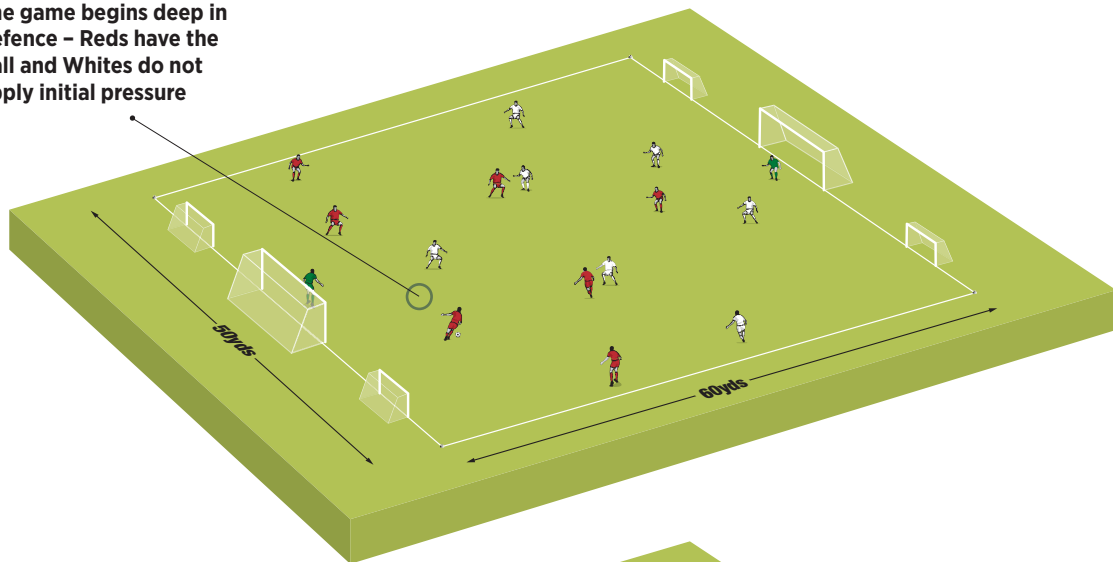
## HOW TO PLAY

With three goals to score in, your team are forced to defend both the length and width of the pitch to stop the opponents getting behind to score. Play offsides to enable your defence to push out and catch opponents out. The placement of wide goals, forces defenders to steer attackers inside, into crowded areas of the pitch.

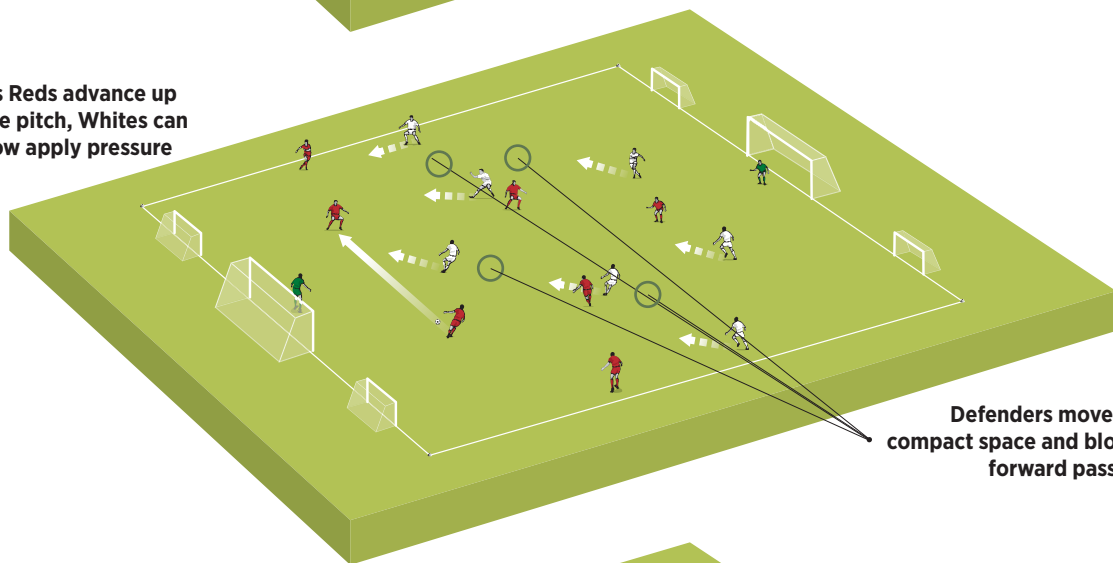
## TECHNIQUE

- Pressing technique/good 1v1 defending.
- Force play inside into crowded areas.
- Clear communication.

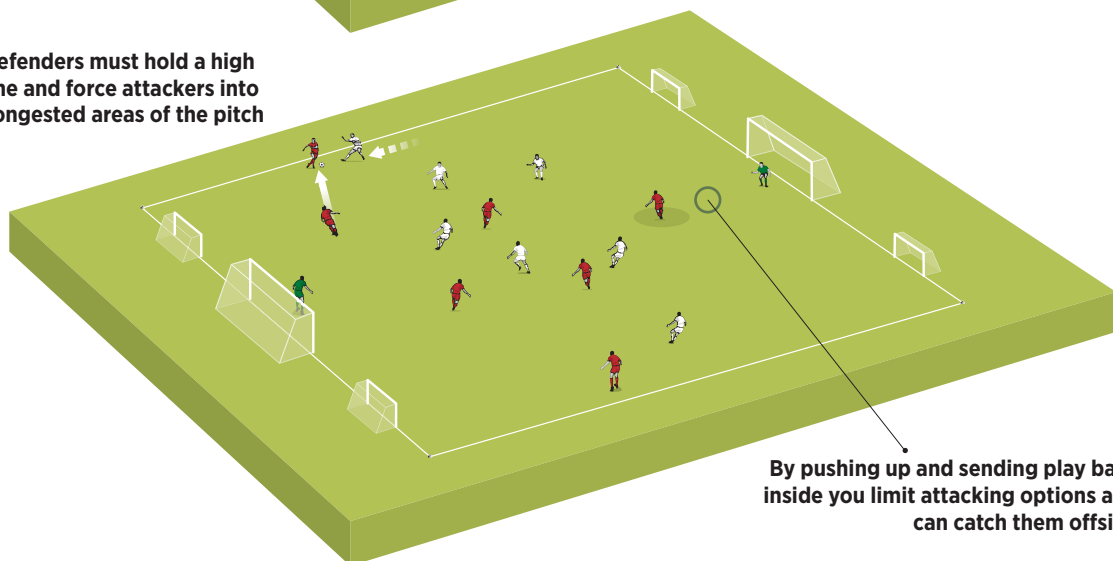
The game begins deep in defence – Reds have the ball and Whites do not apply initial pressure



As Reds advance up the pitch, Whites can now apply pressure



Defenders must hold a high line and force attackers into congested areas of the pitch



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Force Play To One Side

Improve your team's understanding of defending and forcing play to one side of the pitch to negate the threat.

## WHY USE IT

Forcing play to one side of the pitch keeps opponents under control and away from goal. The aim is to then lock the play to the sideline where options are limited and more predictable.

## SET UP

Play 6v7 on a 40x30-yard pitch divided into two halves. There are two mini goals at one end set out as shown in the top picture. The defence plays a 4-3 formation while the attack plays 3-3 but can use the neutral server working outside the pitch.

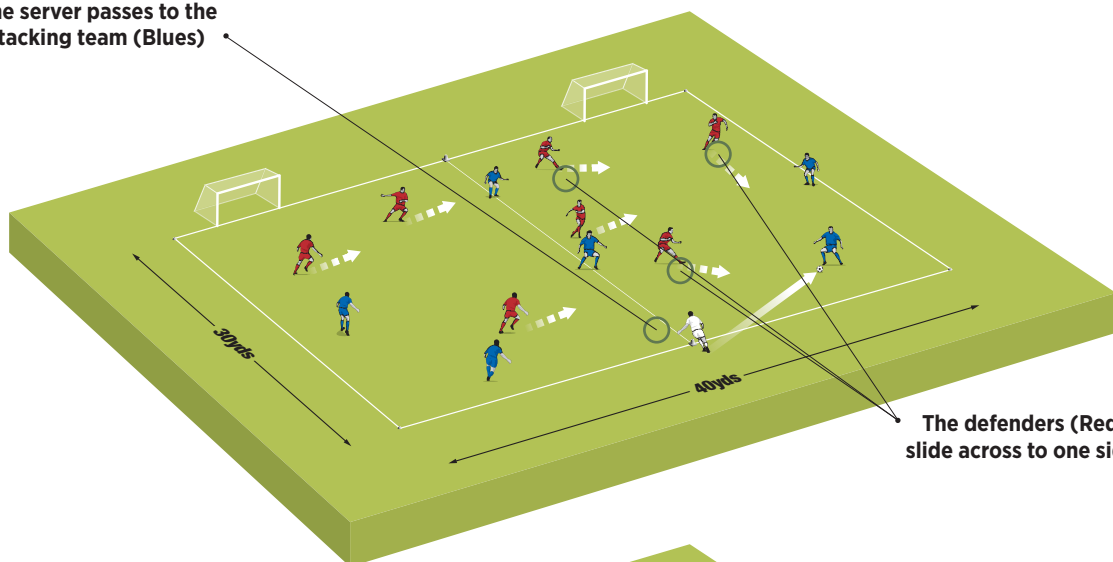
## HOW TO PLAY

The attack receives a pass from the server and looks to build up to score in either goal. Defenders try to force play to one side by using the central line as a guide. Once play is locked to the side, defenders can now squeeze closer to overload attackers in that area and force a mistake. Now possession is won, defenders must clear the ball to the server.

## TECHNIQUE

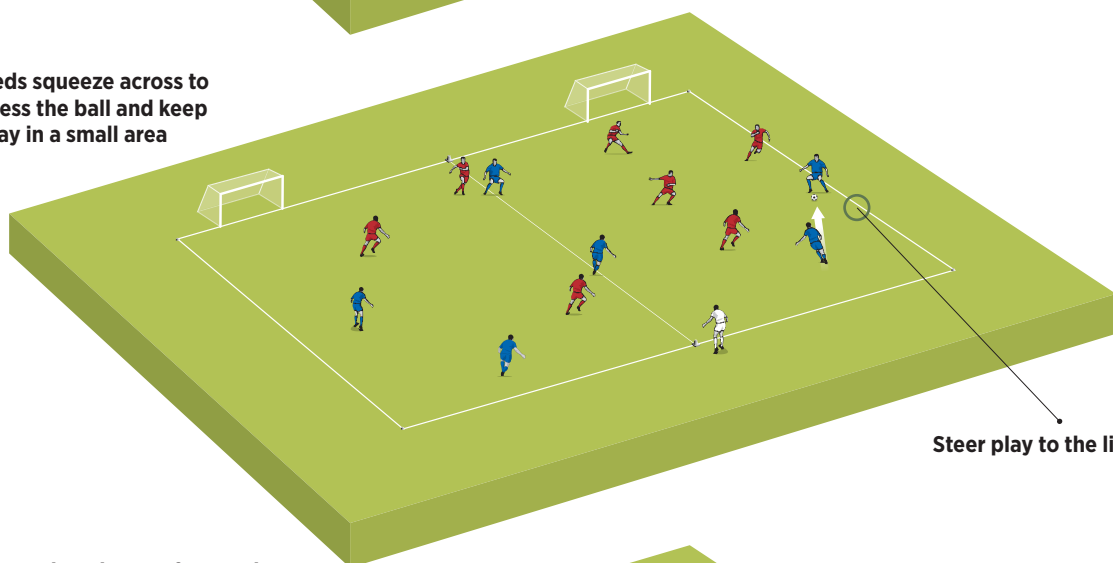
- 1 v1 defending skills – then move attackers wide.
- Physically strong to compete for the ball.
- Quick reactions to winning the ball.
- Passing and receiving skills.

The server passes to the attacking team (Blues)



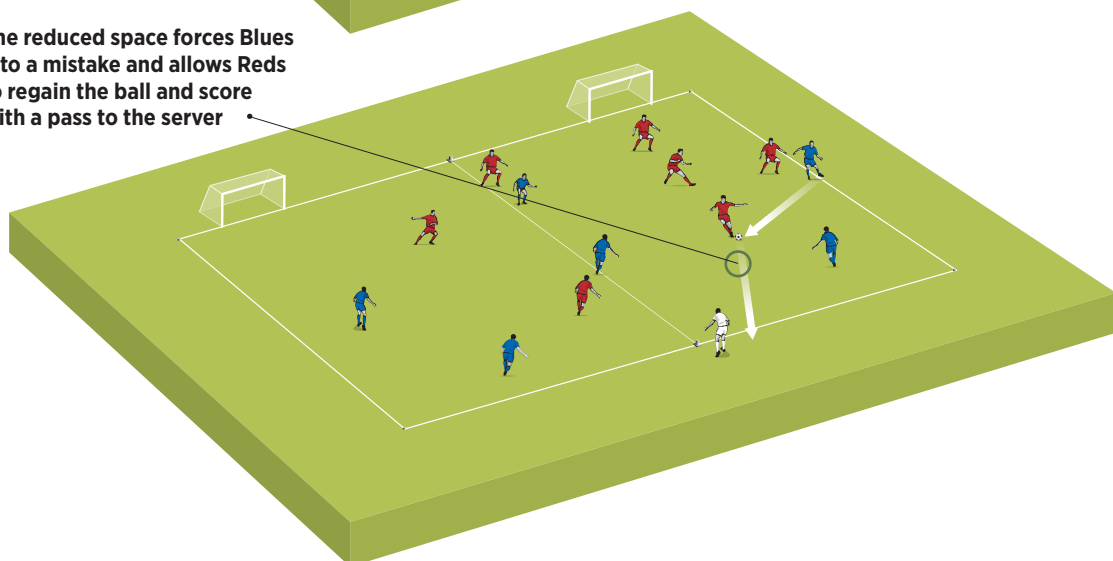
The defenders (Reds) slide across to one side

Reds squeeze across to press the ball and keep play in a small area



Steer play to the line

The reduced space forces Blues into a mistake and allows Reds to regain the ball and score with a pass to the server



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Lock In

Improve defensive pressing in order to regain possession of the ball.

## WHY USE IT

This improves both defensive pressing and possession skills under high pressure. Defenders must steer opponents into a corner then quickly storm the surrounding areas to regain the ball. In possession, combine with quick passes to evade pressing defenders.

## SET UP

Have a 25-yard square inside a 30-yard square. Play 4v4 inside the 25-yard square with four more waiting as shown in the top picture between the squares.

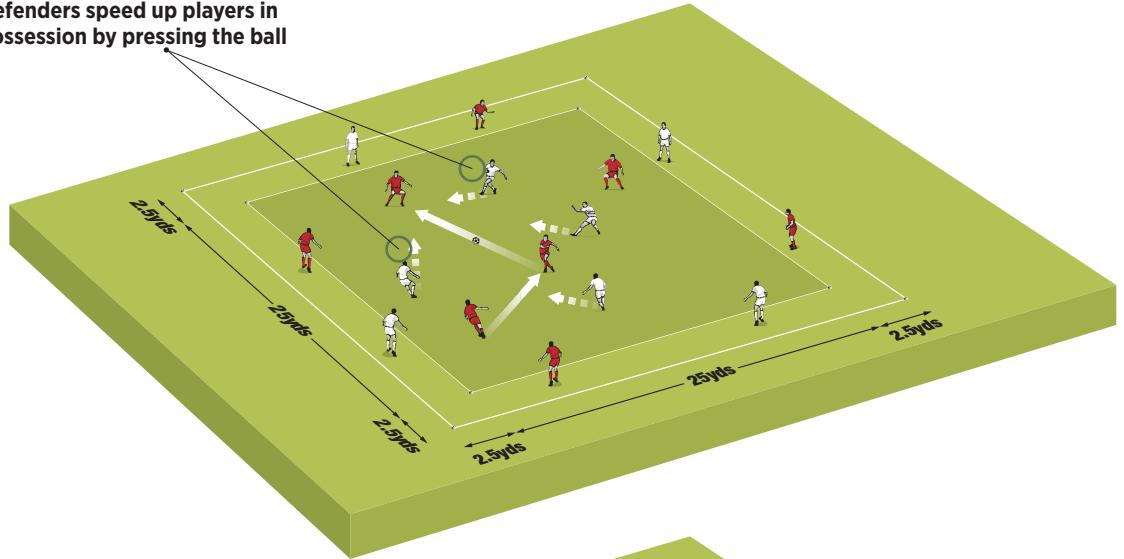
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a 4v4 possession game inside the 25-yard square. Use the four team mates just outside the square to keep possession. The aim is to make five consecutive passes to score a goal. The outside players can be pressed from the right and left by the opponents on the outside so they must quickly control the ball and look to pass back to team mates in the middle.

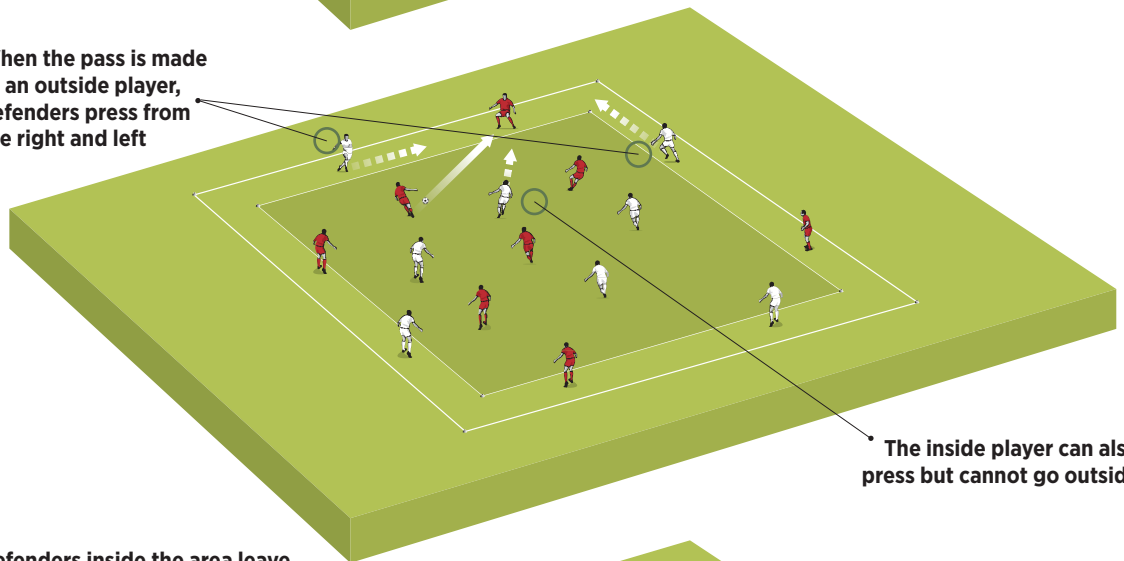
## TECHNIQUE

- Crisp, accurate passing.
- Great first touch/control.
- Movement off the ball.
- Defensive pressure.
- Play with head up.
- Loud communication.

Defenders speed up players in possession by pressing the ball

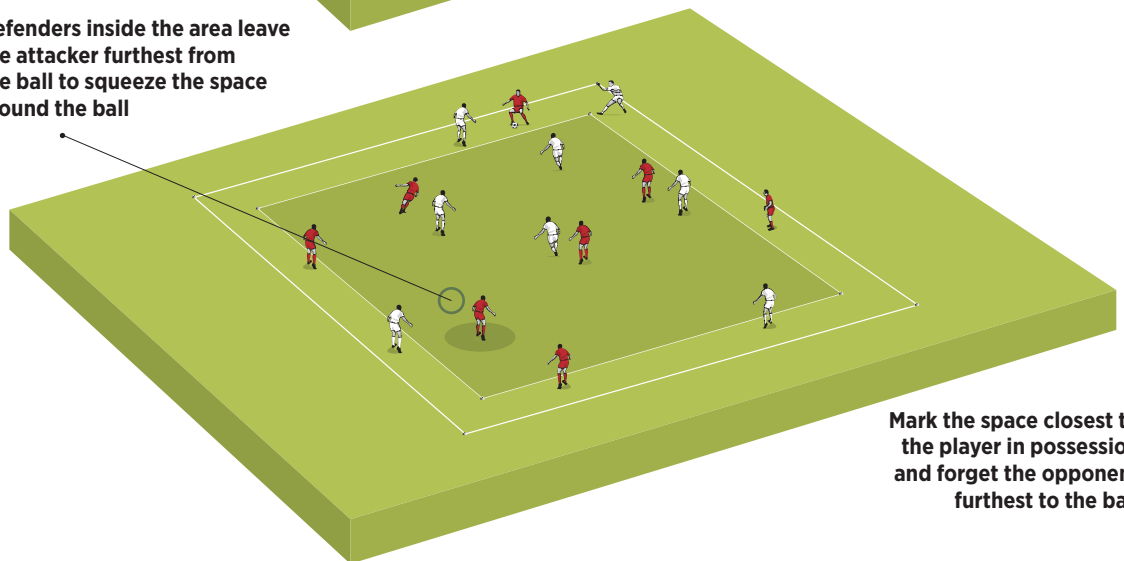


When the pass is made to an outside player, defenders press from the right and left



The inside player can also press but cannot go outside

Defenders inside the area leave the attacker furthest from the ball to squeeze the space around the ball



Mark the space closest to the player in possession and forget the opponent furthest to the ball

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot



# Press And Pass

Improve defensive pressing and reaction to regaining the ball.

### WHY USE IT

When losing possession, your team must react immediately to make the pitch small and apply pressure to regain the ball. When possession is regained, quickly pass to the space and away from congested areas of the pitch.

### SET UP

Three teams of four on a 30x25-yard pitch with two mannequins on each corner to form a passing gate. Two teams play against each other with one team outside used as bounce passers and limited to one touch.

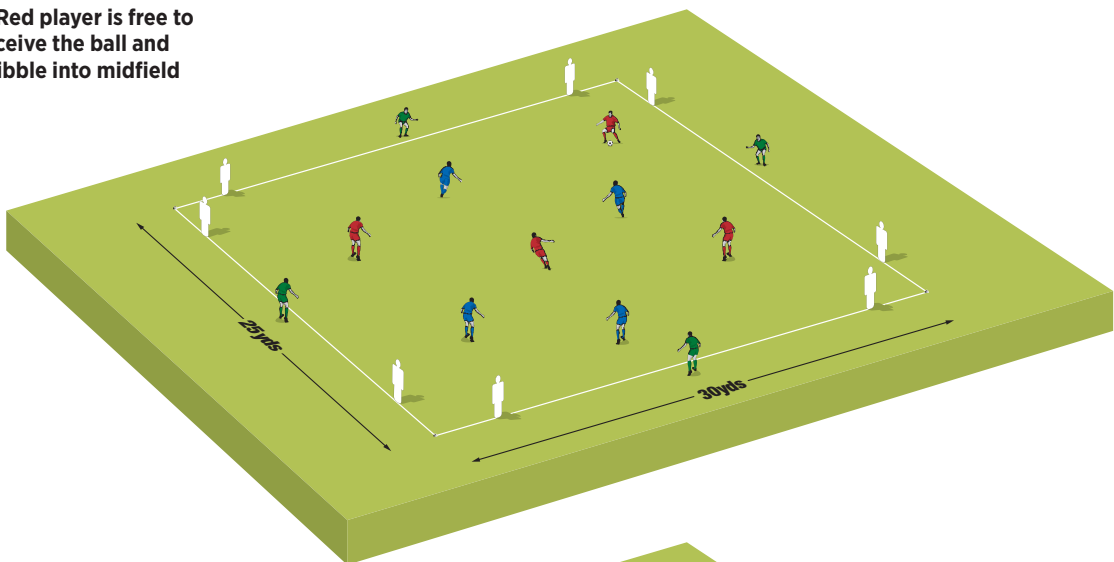
### HOW TO PLAY

The Reds keep possession using the four Greens. The Blues must apply pressure to regain the ball and then pass through a gate to score. If Blues score, they become the bounce passers, the bounce passers come inside to keep possession and the passers become the new defending team. When defenders win the ball everyone else tries to stop them passing through the gates by quickly closing the space to make the pitch small.

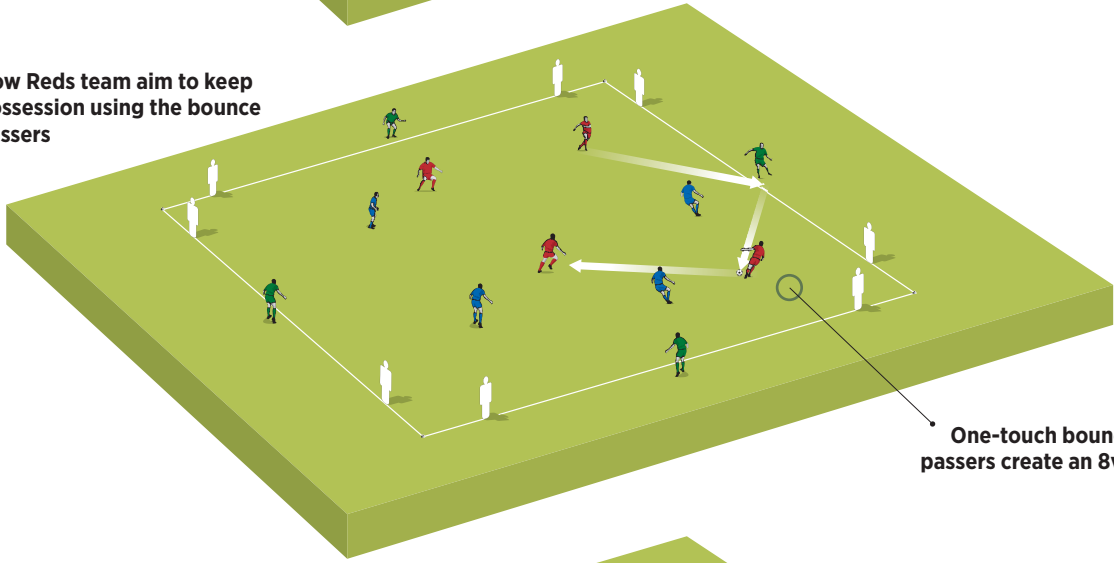
### TECHNIQUE

- 1v1 defending and team pressing at all times.
- Defenders make the pitch small, attackers make the pitch big.
- Good passing and receiving skills.

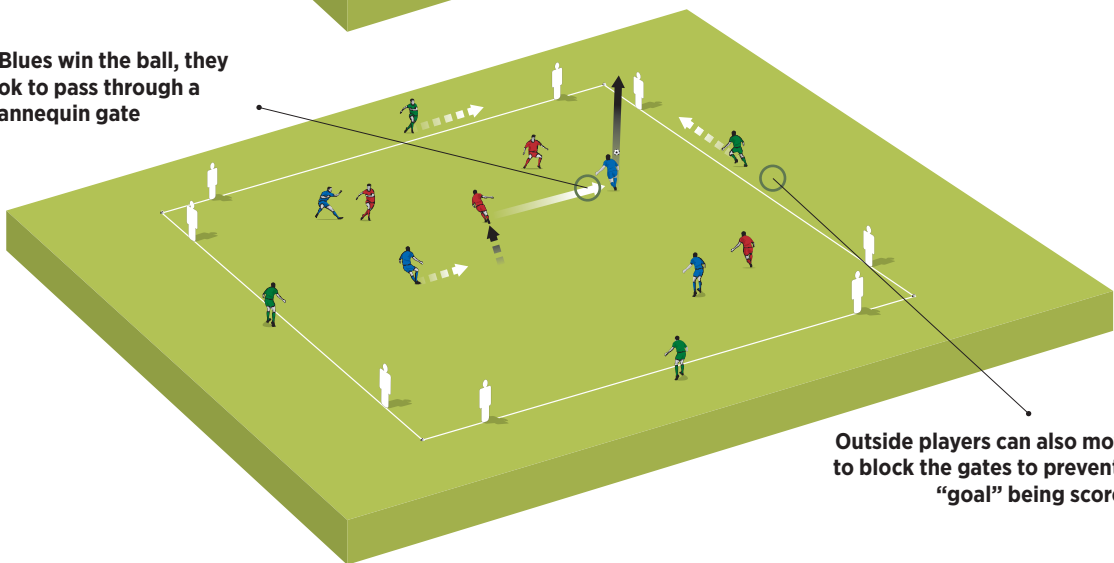
A Red player is free to receive the ball and dribble into midfield



Now Reds team aim to keep possession using the bounce passers



If Blues win the ball, they look to pass through a mannequin gate



Player movement
Ball movement
Run with ball
Shot

# Press And 1v1

Improve defensive pressing and reactions when regaining the ball.

## WHY USE IT

This develops the ability to force passing mistakes from opponents by constantly harassing and pressing them to pass the ball quicker. It then teaches the best way to counter attack.

## SET UP

Set up a 25-yard square inside a 35-yard square. Have a mini goal on every side of the 35-yard square. Play with three teams of four: A 4v4 in the 25-yard square with the other team waiting between the squares as neutral, two-touch players.

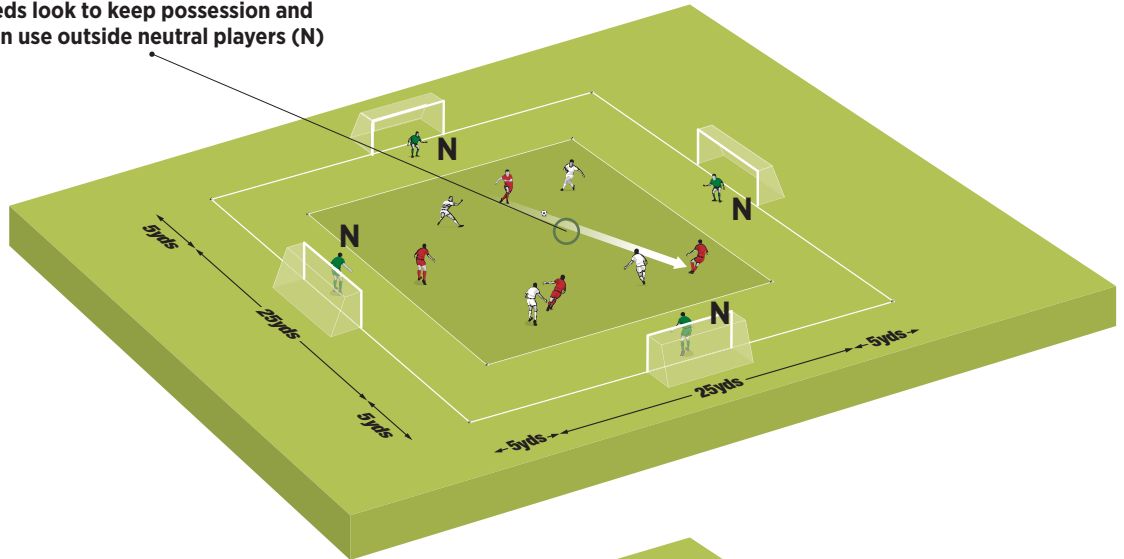
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a 4v4 possession game in the 25-yard square. The team in possession can use the two-touch outside "bounce players". The defending team apply pressure in order to regain the ball and if successful can dribble outside the square to go 1v1 with a bounce player to score in a mini goal. If the player scores, all three teams switch roles.

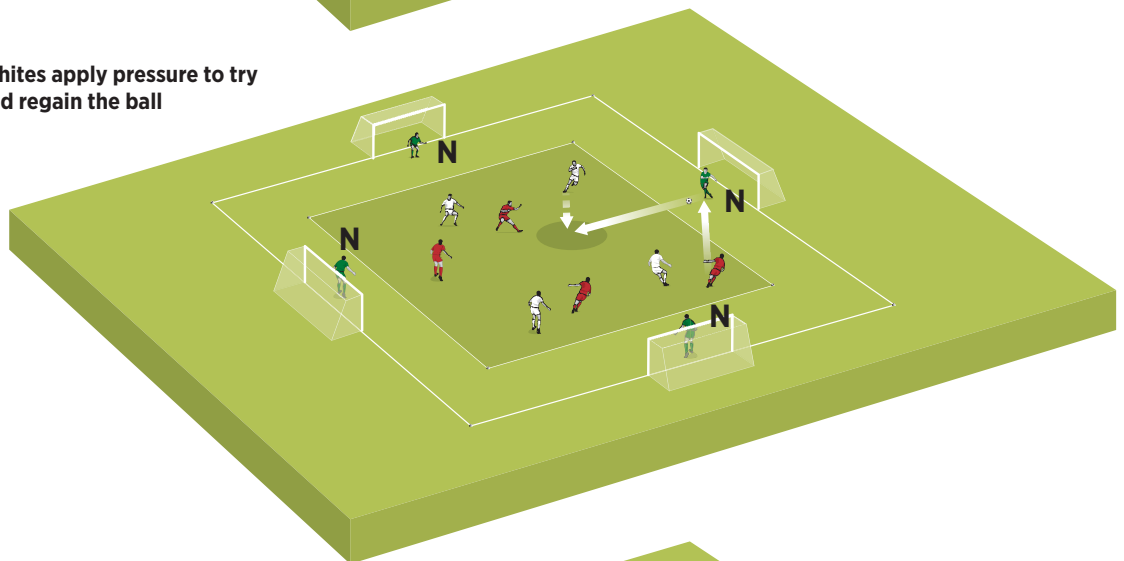
## TECHNIQUE

- Close passing skills.
- Great first touch.
- Loud communication and movement off the ball.

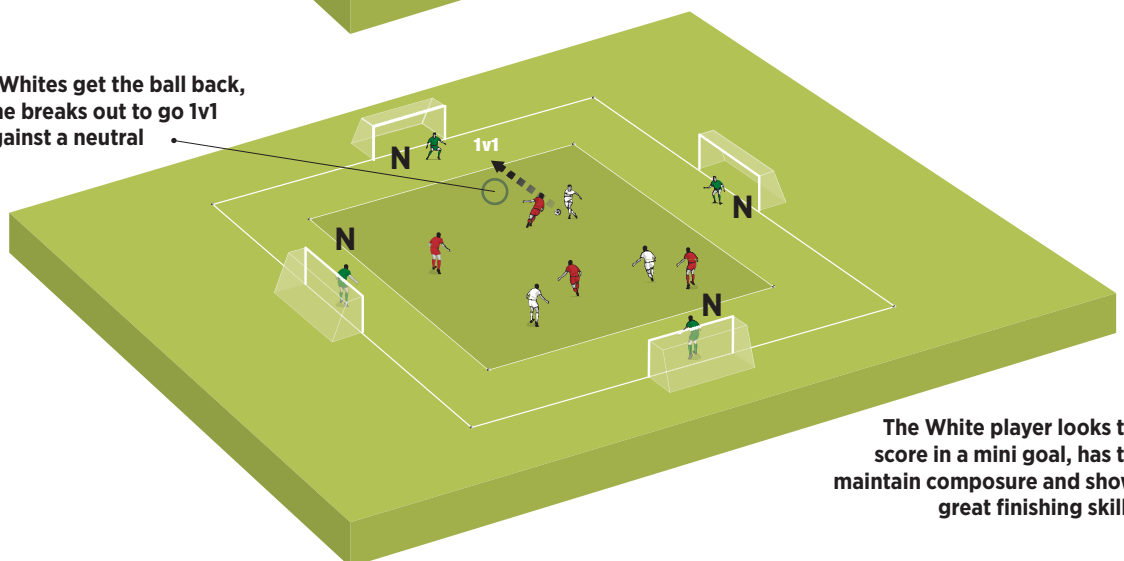
Reds look to keep possession and can use outside neutral players (N)



Whites apply pressure to try and regain the ball



If Whites get the ball back, one breaks out to go 1v1 against a neutral



The White player looks to score in a mini goal, has to maintain composure and show great finishing skills

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Midfield 3v3

Develop a three-player midfield both in attack and defence.

## WHY USE IT

The majority of teams use a three-player midfield with the growing popularity of the 4-3-3 formation.

## SET UP

Play 3v3 on a 22x20-yard pitch with two mini goals at both ends. Two neutral players at the side work play for the team in possession.

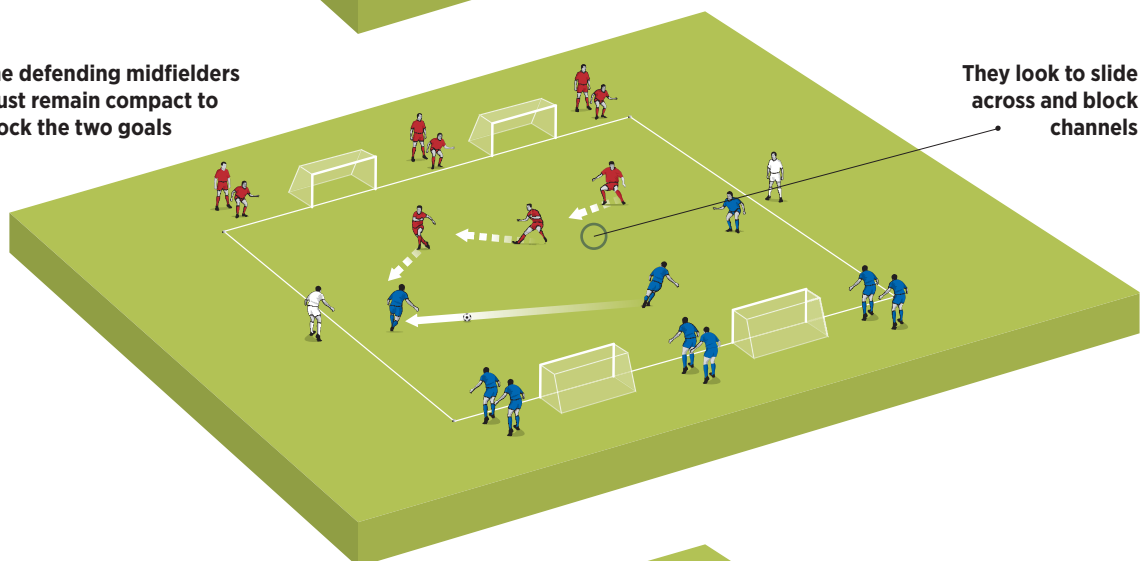
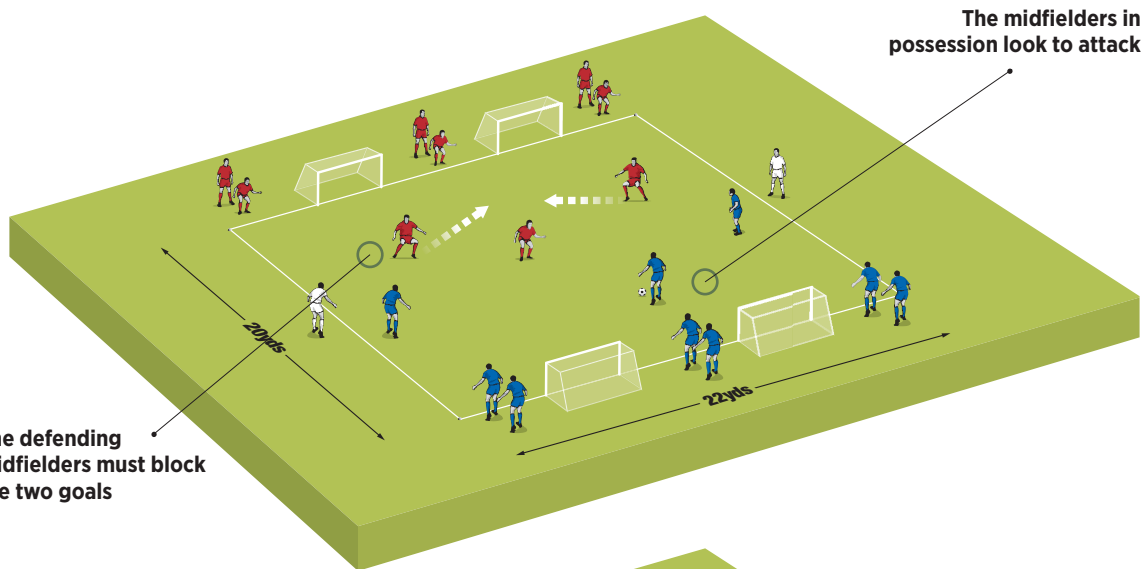
## HOW TO PLAY

The attacking team look to score in a mini goal. They can use the wide neutrals to play give and go passes but neutrals are limited to two touches.

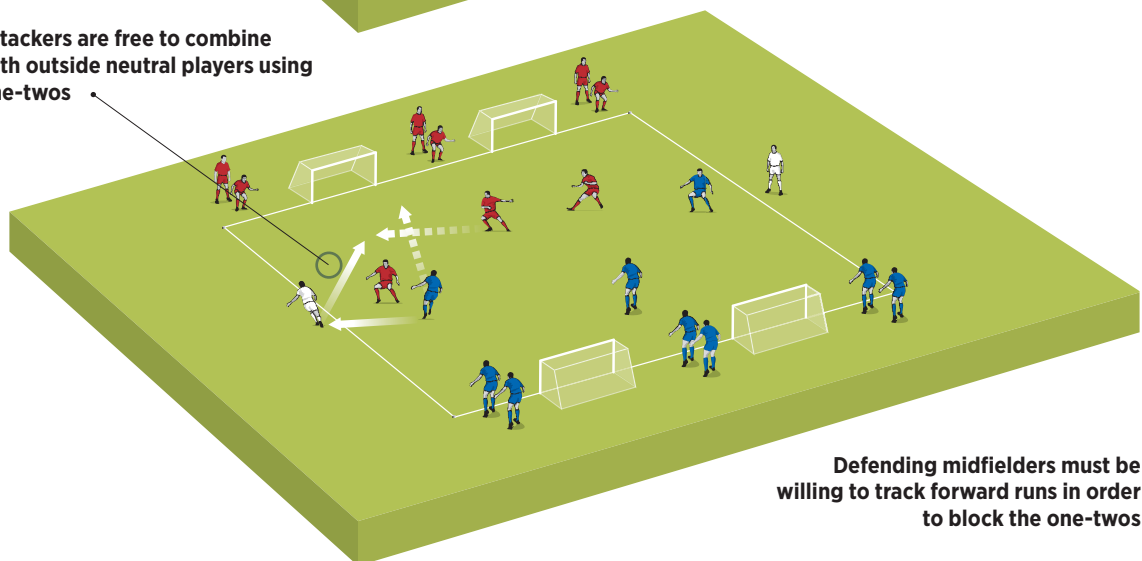
The defending team must send one player to pressurise the opponent in possession. The remaining two players support the pressing player and stay in a position to block the two mini goals should the attack pass forward and break. The game lasts until one goal is scored, then three new attackers and defenders enter the pitch.

## TECHNIQUE

- Team defending.
- Pressing, covering, supporting.
- Passing.
- Movement off the ball.
- 1v1 attacking and defending.



Attackers are free to combine with outside neutral players using one-twos



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Dealing With Direct Play

Improve your team's defending against long direct balls.

## WHY USE IT

This develops your ability to deal with long, direct balls into dangerous areas. It also develops your midfielders' ability to track runners to stop opponents picking up knockdowns and lay offs.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 50x40-yard pitch. Two neutral players wait on the goal line either side of the attacking team's goal.

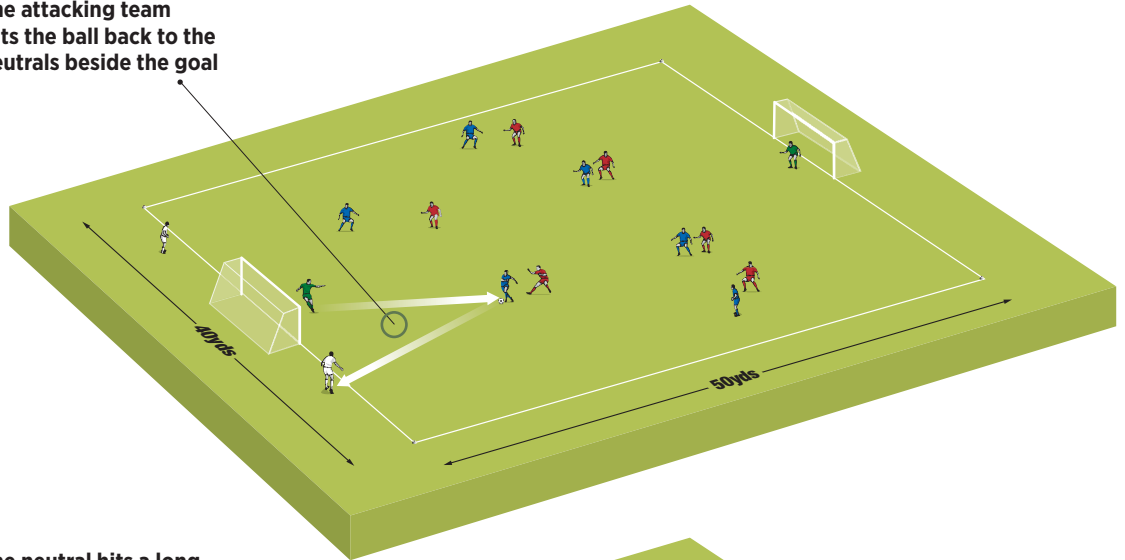
## HOW TO PLAY

The attacking team gets the ball back to a neutral player in a bid to create an attacking overload. When receiving a pass, the neutral player must play a long pass in the direction of the defending team's goal. Defenders must challenge forwards to win the aerial battle and regain possession. Once the ball is regained, the defending team can now change the focus to attack by passing forward to the neutrals and running to receive a lay off pass.

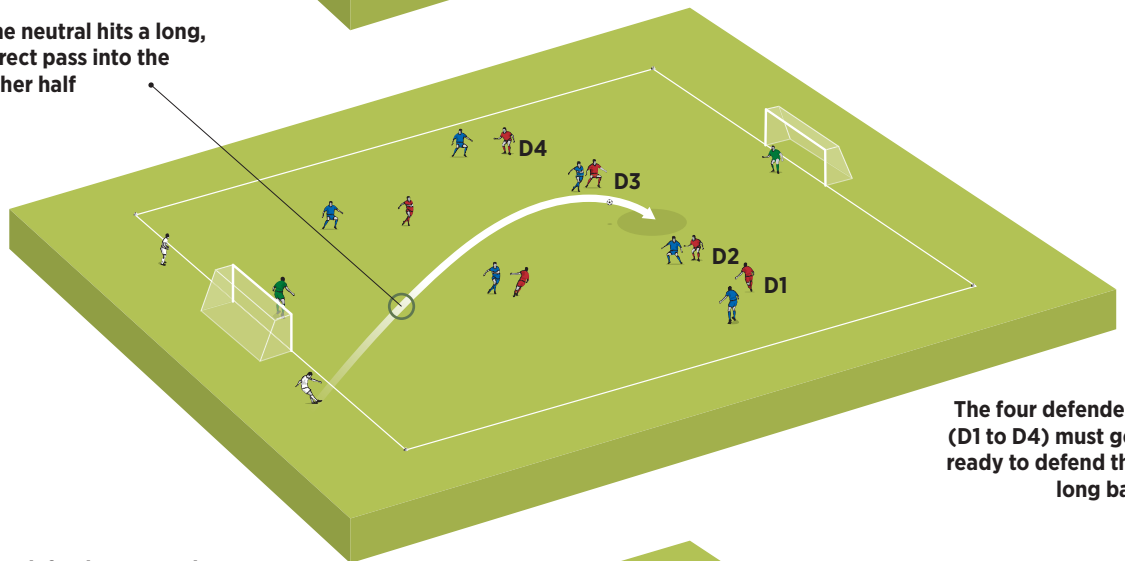
## TECHNIQUE

- Longer passing.
- Defensive heading and clearances.
- 1v1 defending.
- Team defending.
- Counter attacking.

The attacking team sets the ball back to the neutrals beside the goal

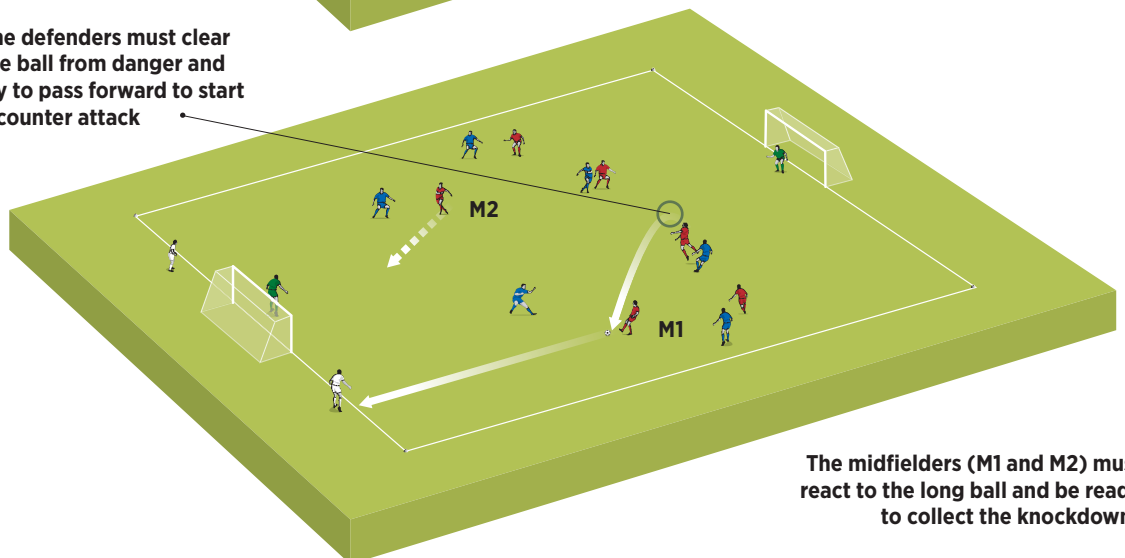


The neutral hits a long, direct pass into the other half



The four defenders (D1 to D4) must get ready to defend the long ball

The defenders must clear the ball from danger and try to pass forward to start a counter attack



The midfielders (M1 and M2) must react to the long ball and be ready to collect the knockdowns

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Recover Team Shape

Improve your team's focus on defending and regaining team shape when possession is lost.

## WHY USE IT

This game develops your team's ability to remain compact and in a strong defensive shape when opponents are in possession.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 55x40-yard pitch divided into defensive zones of 15 yards and a 25-yard central zone.

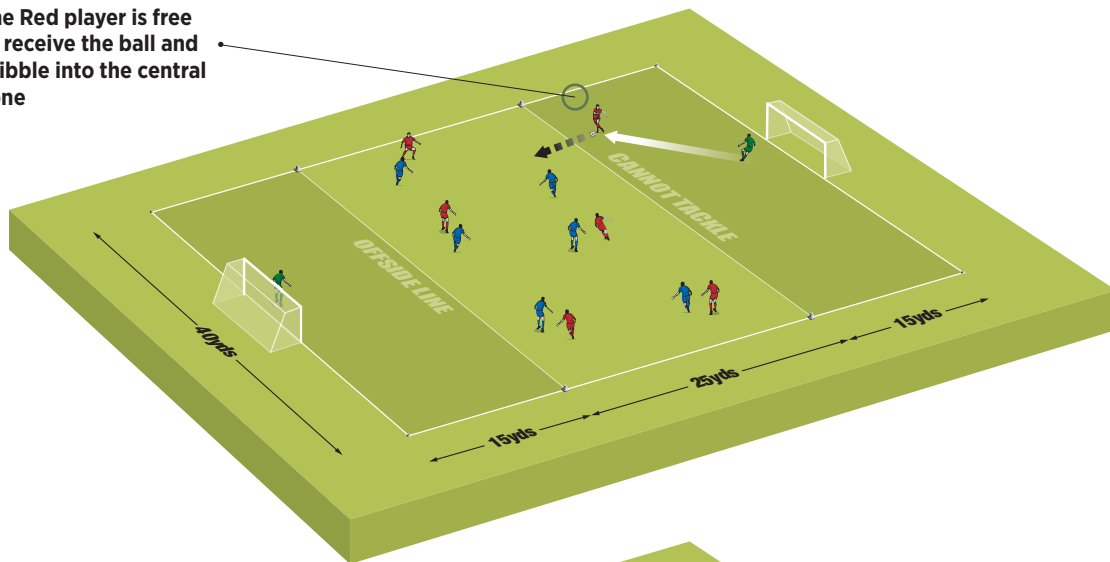
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a normal small-sided game. Each team has a defensive zone where they are free to drop back and receive the ball to begin the build-up process. Defenders cannot be tackled when in their own defensive zone so a defending team must drop back into the central zone when their attackers lose possession. From the centre they are in a good position to defend as the ball is brought forward. They aim to regain possession and break quickly to score – but the 15-yard lines are also offside lines so timing of runs and passes are crucial.

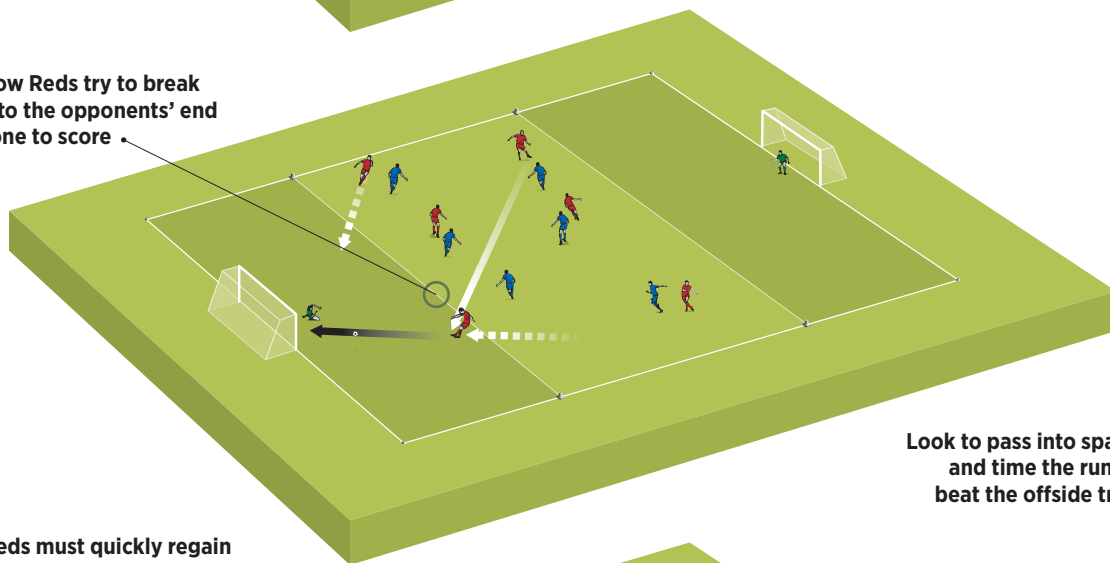
## TECHNIQUE

- Defending as a team and as individuals at all times.
- Quick reaction to transition – counter attacking, swift passing and chasing back.
- Timing runs and passes to beat the offside trap.

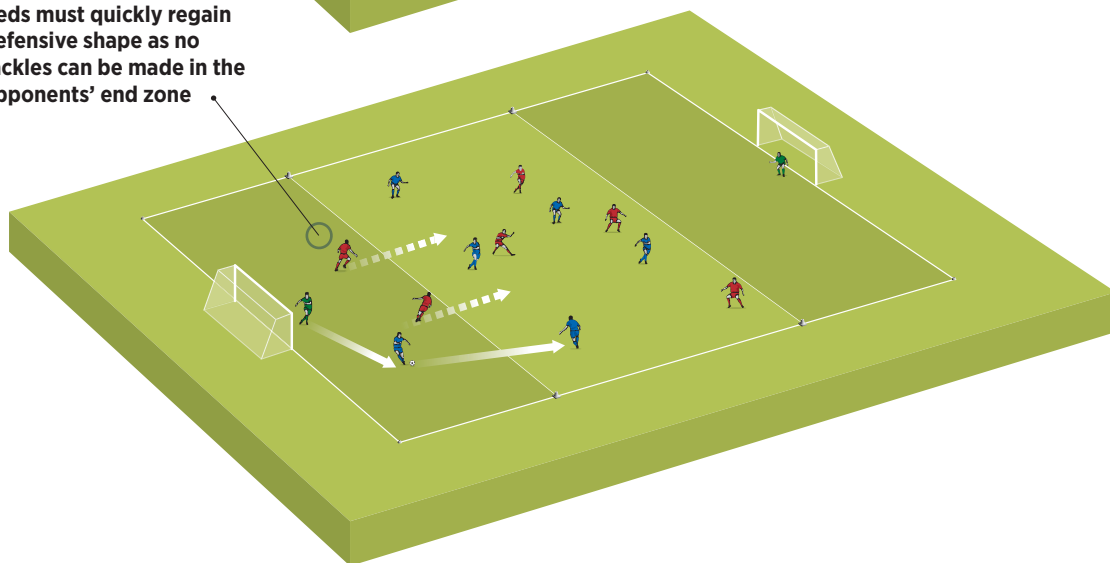
The Red player is free to receive the ball and dribble into the central zone



Now Reds try to break into the opponents' end zone to score



Reds must quickly regain defensive shape as no tackles can be made in the opponents' end zone



Look to pass into space and time the run to beat the offside trap

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# High Pressing Defence

Improve high press defending - rushing the attackers and giving them little time to react and create openings.

## WHY USE IT

The ability to apply a high pressing defence is effective in blocking forward momentum.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 on a 44x35-yard pitch which is divided in half to form two 22-yard halves. Place a mini goal at the centre point on all four sides. Play a 4-2 formation.

## HOW TO PLAY

Teams attack three goals: In front, right and left) and defend three: Behind, right and left).

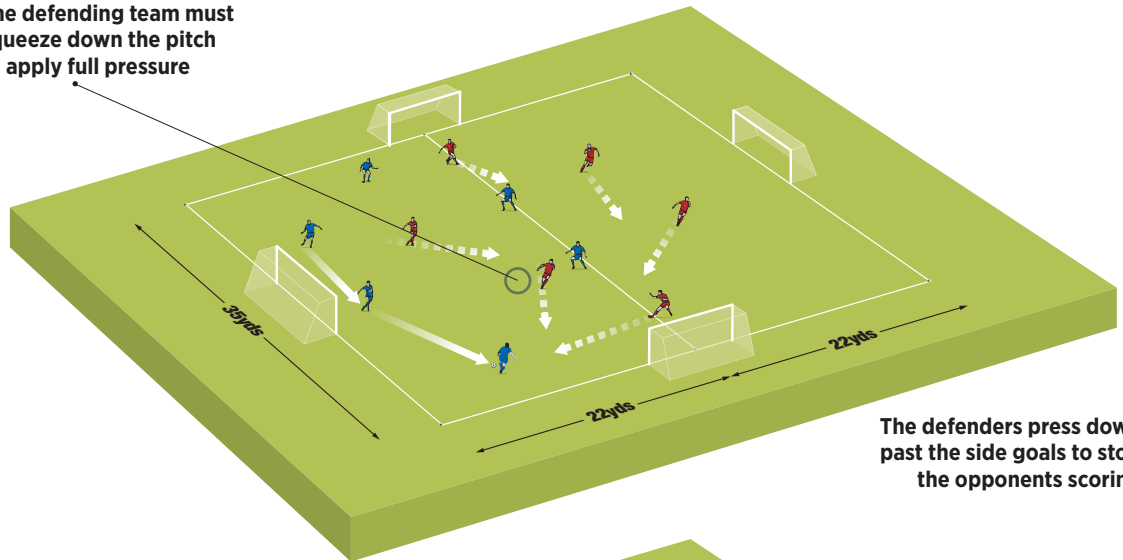
Before trying to score, teams must complete three passes. This enables the defending team to apply a high press. Teams do this by moving to the halfway line to squeeze the space and then into the opponents' half to steal possession.

The danger for defenders is the space behind. The offside rule is used so defenders must ensure they hold a good line.

## TECHNIQUE

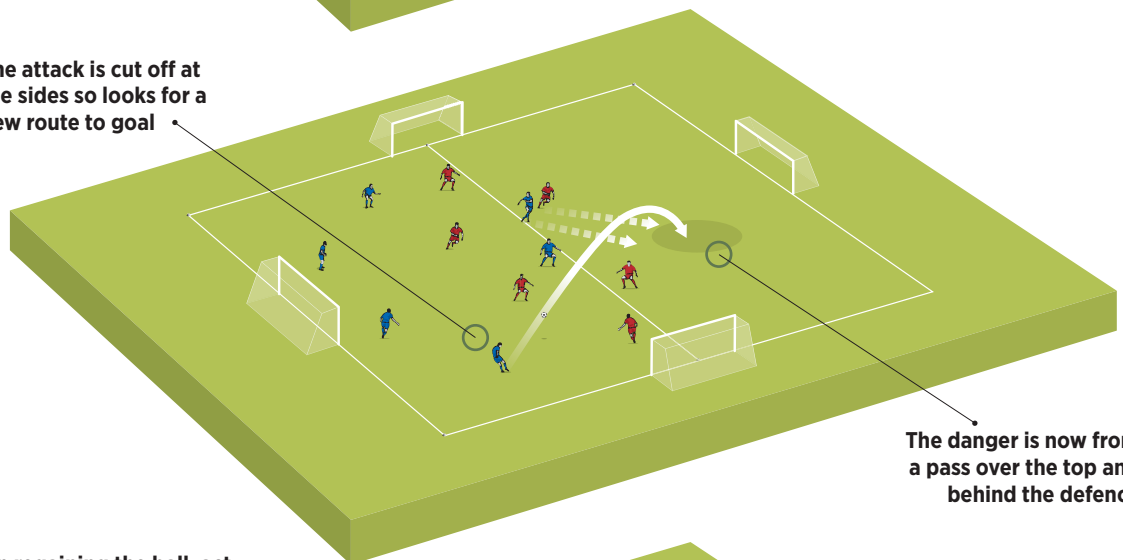
- Hi-tempo pressing at all times as well as team defending.
- Quick passing after regaining possession.
- Hold the offside line.

The defending team must squeeze down the pitch to apply full pressure



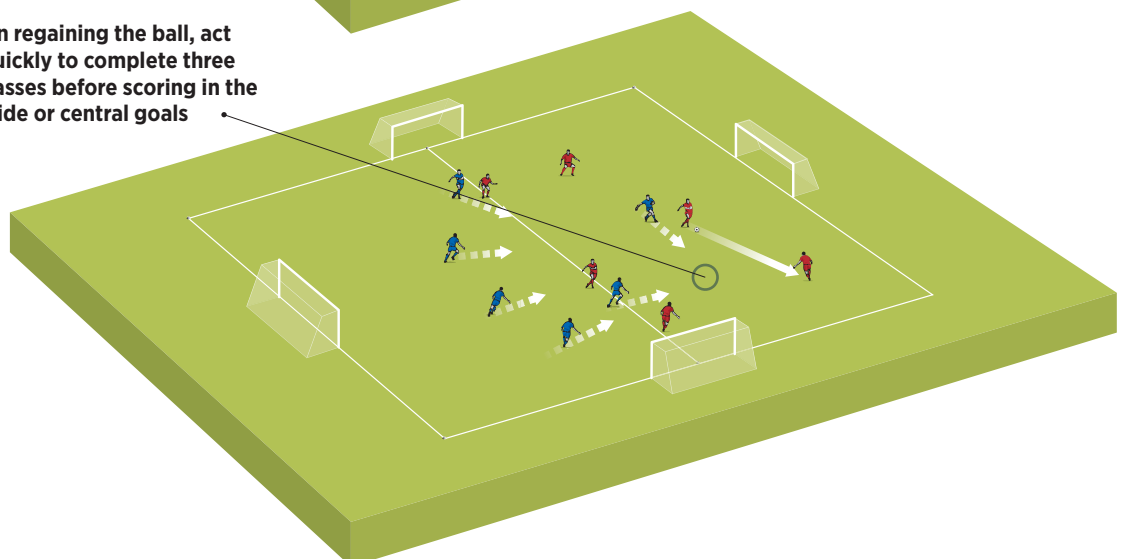
The defenders press down past the side goals to stop the opponents scoring

The attack is cut off at the sides so looks for a new route to goal



The danger is now from a pass over the top and behind the defence

On regaining the ball, act quickly to complete three passes before scoring in the wide or central goals



Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Possession v Counter Attack

Create a game scenario of one team playing possession football and one team playing high pressure, counter-attacking football.

## WHY USE IT

This session works on controlled possession football and the reaction to transition – both in attack and defence.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 including goalkeepers on a 55x40-yard pitch divided into 15-yard defensive zones and a 25-yard central zone. Two neutral players work outside the pitch with three evenly-spaced mannequins placed on both 15-yard zones.

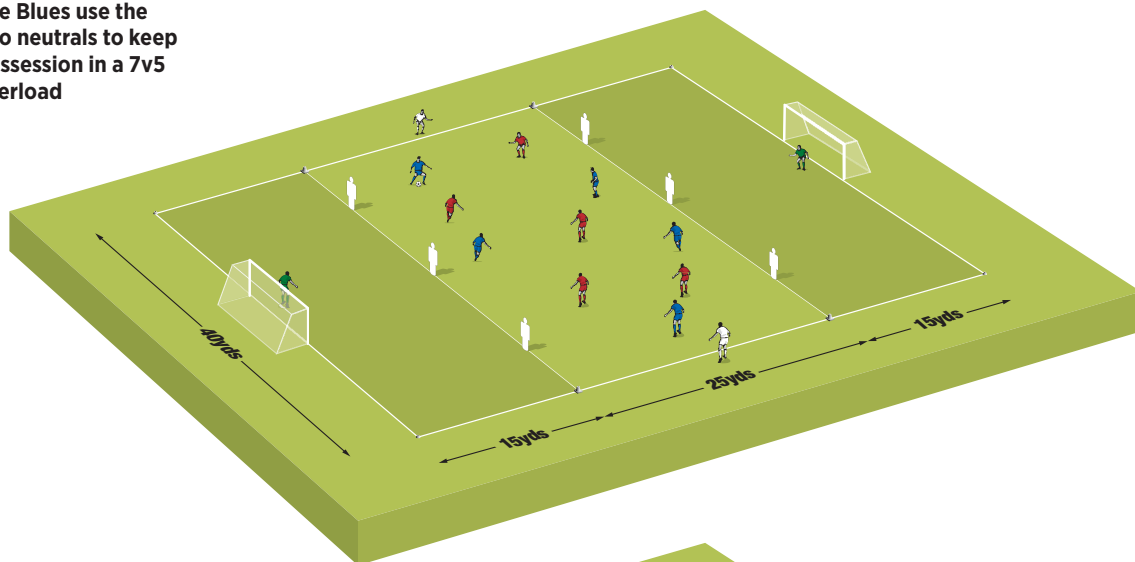
## HOW TO PLAY

The team in possession start with a one-goal lead. The aim for them is to use the two outside neutrals in a 7v5 situation to keep possession of the ball. The defending team try to regain possession and score by sliding a pass through the mannequins to a team mate. The player now goes 1v1 with the goalkeeper. If the player scores, the game roles are reversed with the defending team now leading 1-0 and keeping possession.

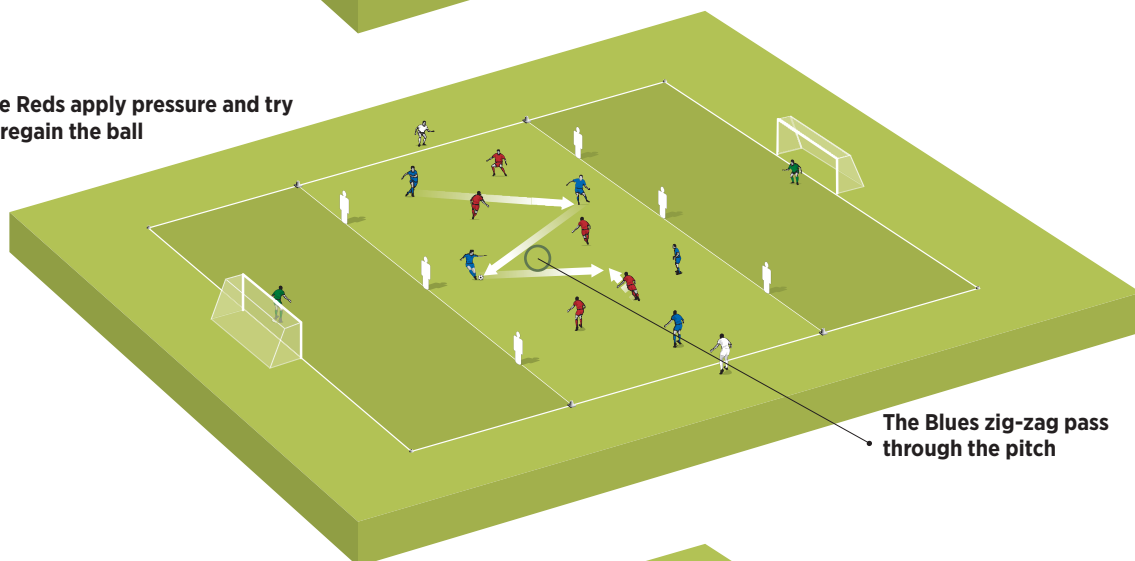
## TECHNIQUE

- Good passing and receiving skills.
- Play with an open body stance, keeping the ball moving with the first touch.
- Good pressing and defending skills.
- Good shooting technique.

The Blues use the two neutrals to keep possession in a 7v5 overload

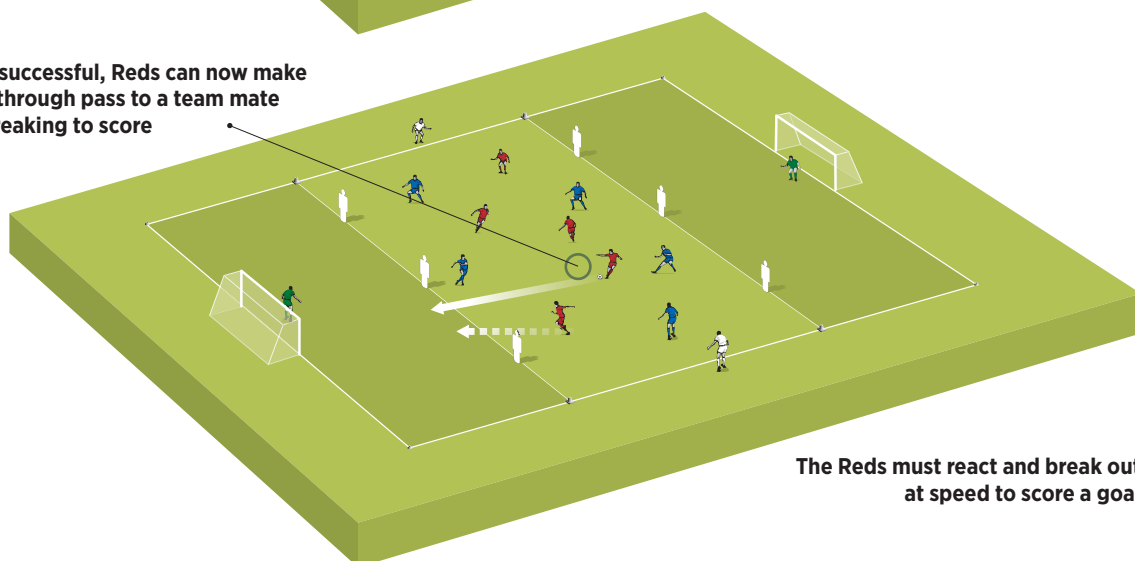


The Reds apply pressure and try to regain the ball



The Blues zig-zag pass through the pitch

If successful, Reds can now make a through pass to a team mate breaking to score



The Reds must react and break out at speed to score a goal

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Defend/Attack The Cross

Improve your team's effectiveness when attacking or defending crosses.

## WHY USE IT

This develops:

1. Wide players' ability to go 1v1 and provide crosses.
2. Forwards and opposite wide player movement in the box to score.
3. Finishing from crosses.
4. 1v1 defending.
5. 1v1 marking in the box.
6. The ability to remain composed and clear the ball from danger under pressure.

## SET UP

Play 6v6 plus goalkeepers on a 40-yard square divided into two halves. Add a five-yard channel to both flanks. Each team has a wide attacker in the channel flanks, making the game 8v8 plus goalkeepers. Play a 4-2 formation.

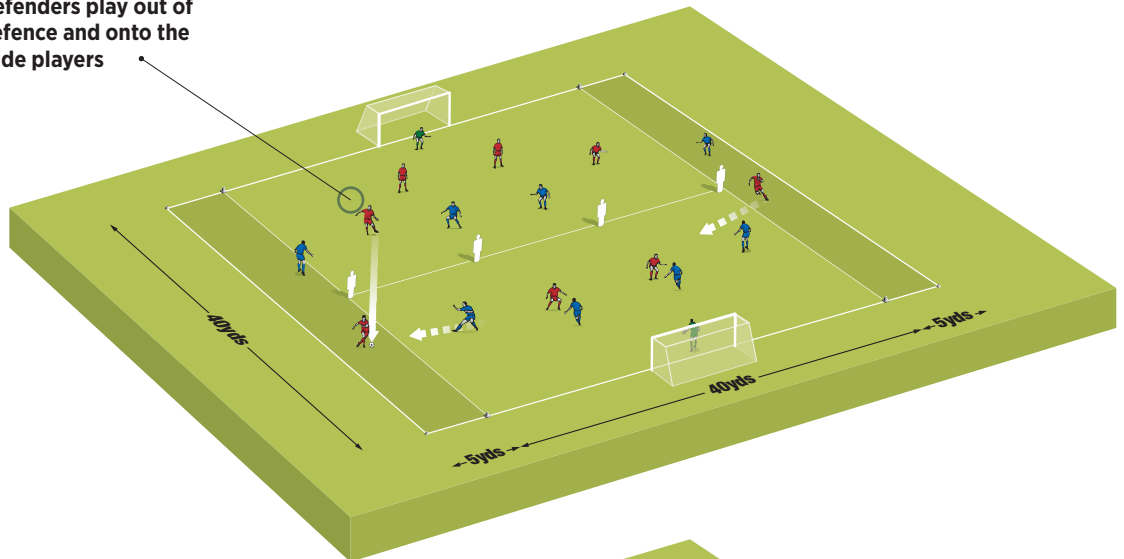
## HOW TO PLAY

Play out of defence with a 5v2 overload to provide service to wide players and forwards. Teams can only score after a cross, so, if a ball is played directly to a striker, he must pass outside to a wide player. The nearest defender can enter the channel to defend 1v1 and block a cross. The opposite wide player can come onto the pitch to attack the cross.

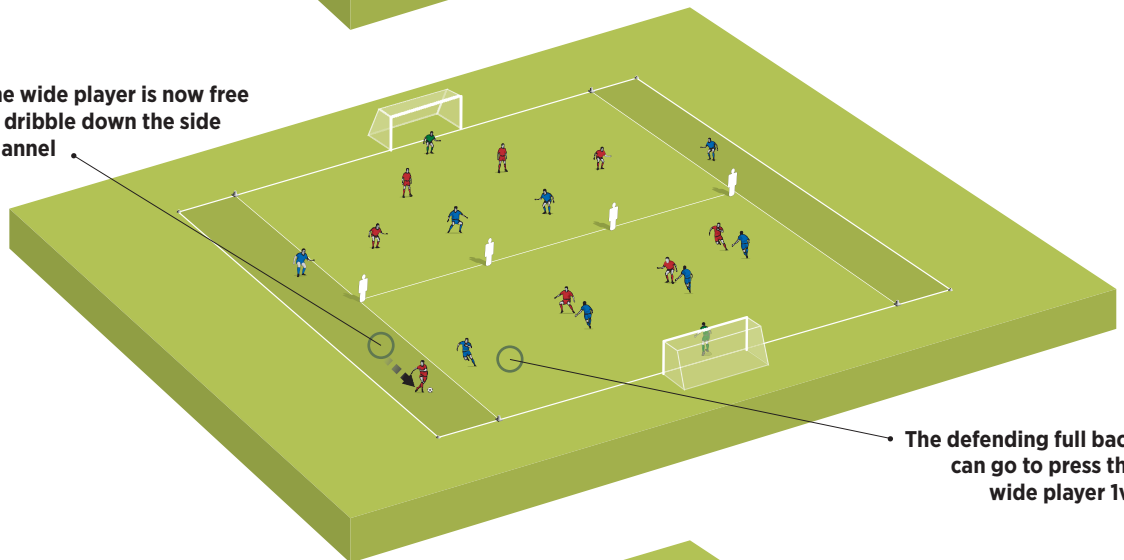
## TECHNIQUE

- Good passing, receiving, dribbling, crossing and finishing techniques.
- 1v1 defending, man marking and heading skills essential when defending.

Defenders play out of defence and onto the wide players

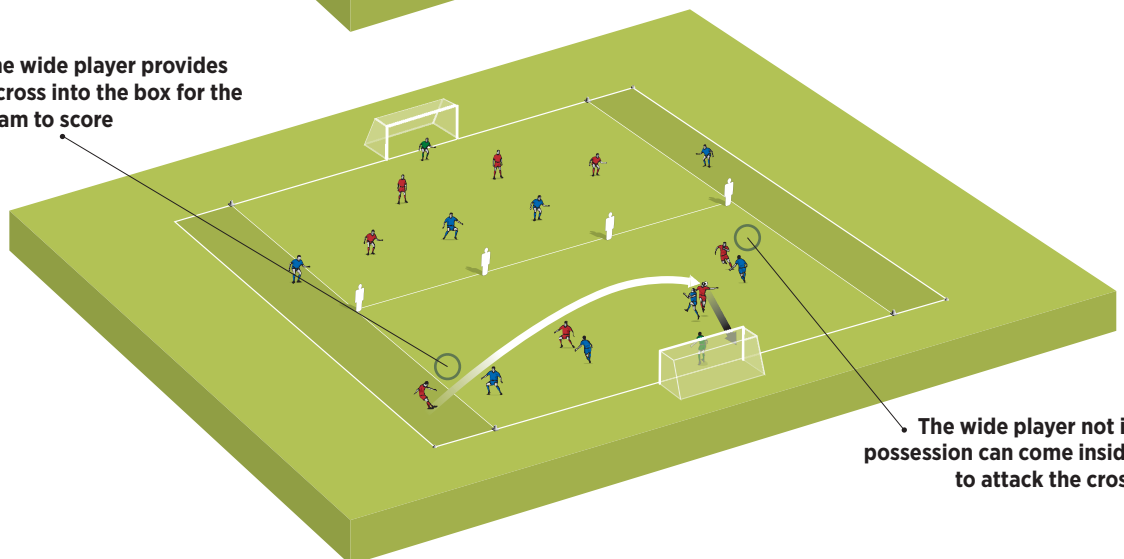


The wide player is now free to dribble down the side channel



The defending full back can go to press the wide player 1v1

The wide player provides a cross into the box for the team to score



The wide player not in possession can come inside to attack the cross

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

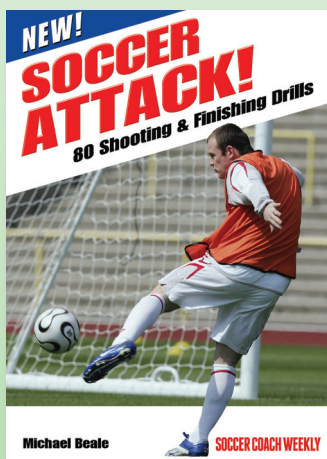


# More Great Manuals from Michael Beale



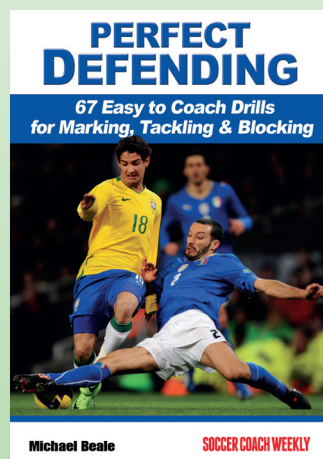
## About me

For 12 years, I have worked full time in the leading English Premier League academies of Chelsea FC (10 years) and in my current role at Liverpool FC (2 years). During this time, I have experienced working within all phases of youth player development. This includes pre academy (6-8 years), foundation (9-11 years) and youth development (12-16 years). I am currently in the professional development phase (17-21 years), so I am ideally positioned to help coaches get the best out of their young players – and have fun doing it.



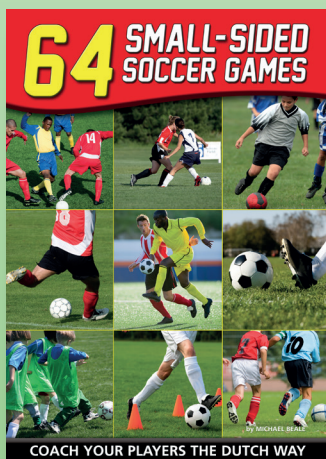
### Score more goals with Soccer Attack!

Crammed with 80 tried and tested scoring drills, this is the manual to get your players banging them in.



### Win back possession with Perfect Defending!

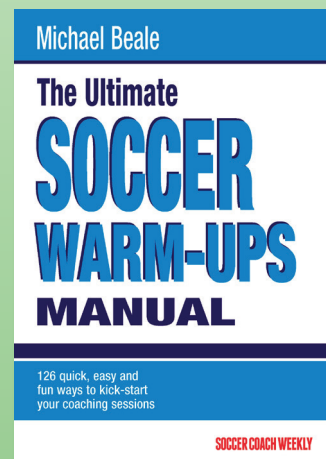
Perfect for coaches who want to develop defensive technique without losing their players' interest.



**Keep the ball better!** Small-sided games are the best way to coach soccer skills. Use the 64 games in this manual and your team will keep the ball better.



**Use this manual to develop multi-player learning outcomes.** Rotate players through games to keep everyone learning – including you!



**Get off to a flyer!** With this warm-ups manual your players will come out of the blocks far quicker than your opponents, get ahead of the game now.

**Order your copies now –  
and when you order all five, you'll save £52!**

