

The Game Training Phase - 13 to 17's

FORMAT OF SESSIONS

WARM UP:

Starting points for the Warm Up are:

- Preferably with ball (e.g. passing practices);
- If possible 'theme related' including a level of decision-making;
- Avoid warm-ups that are more like conditioning sessions!

POSITIONING GAME:

The main conditions for quality positioning play are:

- Maximal use of space in order to create more time on the ball (stretching the opponent)
- Triangles (no players in straight lines)
- Support play to create options for the player on the ball
- Anticipation and communication (verbal and non-verbal).

These basic principles form the foundation for proactive possession based football and this explains the importance of the positioning games in training practices.

Through positioning games young players:

- Learn to always create at least 3 options for the player on the ball (through proper positioning)
- Improve their decision-making (by learning to choose the right option)
- Increase their handling speed (less space and time forces quicker thinking and acting)
- Improve their technique (passing and first touch are essential technical skills)
- Learn to communicate both verbally (e.g. calling for the ball) and non-verbally (e.g. through ball speed and ball direction).

This is the reason why positioning games are on the menu of every Game Training Phase and Performance Phase session.

THE GAME TRAINING COMPONENT:

This is the part of the session where conscious teaching and learning of the designated Team Task takes place. For a proper Game Training practice the coach must therefore:

- Create the proper scenario (organize the practice in such a way that the focus is on the designated Team Task);
- Organize the practice in the right area of the field (where this particular situation takes place during the real game) and with the appropriate dimensions
- Create the proper level of resistance (too easy = no development; too difficult = no success)
- Make effective interventions and provide quality (specific) feedback
- Ask smart questions to develop player understanding and enhance learning

TRAINING GAME:

This is the traditional game at the end of a session. In our approach however it should not just be a 'free' game. The definition of a Training Game in the context of a Game Training Phase session is:

A game at the end of the session that contains all the elements of the real game but with rules and restraints that see to it that the designated Team Task is emphasised.

During a Training Game the players are playing and the coach is observing if learning has taken place (little or no stop-start coaching but preferably coaching 'on the run').

Clearly, quality coaching is not as easy as it may look!

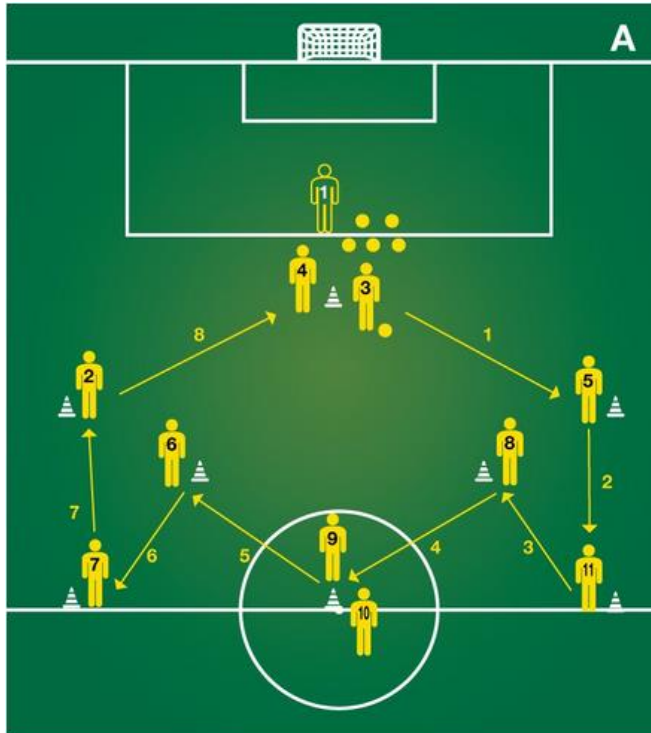
The coach must also be mindful of the Growth Spurt. Players going through this stage of maturation will have varying energy levels and are injury-prone. Proper managing of training loads to avoid over-training is essential.

Therefore we consider 3 sessions of 75-90 minutes and one game a maximum safe weekly work load, with the following session planning guidelines:

- Welcome/explanation: 5 minutes
- Warm Up: 15-20 minutes
- Positioning Games: 20 minutes
- Game Training component: 25-30 minutes
- Training Game: 20-25 minutes
- Warm Down/wrap up 5-10 minutes

Week	Session
1	Playing out from the Back Session 1
2	Midfield play Session 1
3	Attacking Session 1 (Central Areas)
4	Disturbing and Pressuring Session 1
5	Defending / Recapturing the ball Session 1 (Zone Defending)
6	Transitioning (BP>BPO) Session 1
7	Playing out from the Back Session 2
8	Midfield play Session 2
9	Attacking Session 2 (Wide Areas)
10	Disturbing and Pressuring Session 2
11	Defending / Recapturing the ball Session 2 (Long Ball / 2nd Ball)
12	Transitioning (BPO>BP) Session 2

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (POFTB 1)



Players in game positions #2; 3/4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9/10; 11 as shown in diagram A

If the number of players allows/requires: a similar organisation on the other half of the pitch.

Players #3 & #4 as well as the goalkeeper(s) at the starting position.

The players pass the ball around in a 'logical' sequence (1-8).

Possible Coaches Remarks

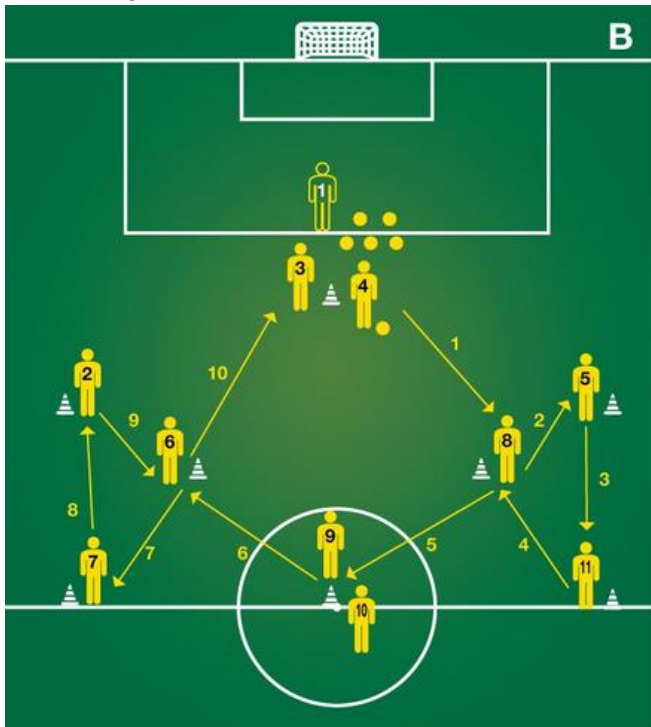
"Follow your pass to the next position"

"Pass precision and ball speed"

"Now we go in the opposite direction" (to the right)

"Gradually increase your running speed"

VARIATION



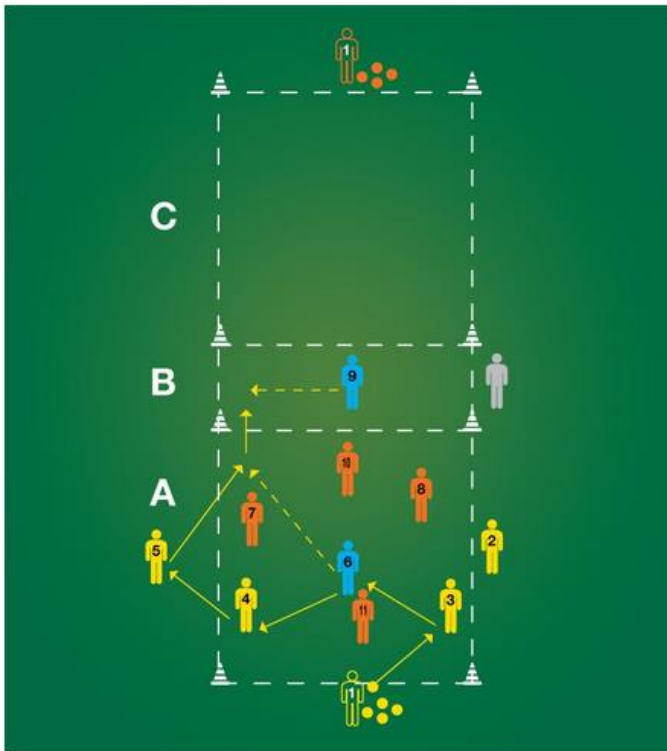
"Here is another variation" (see diagram B)

"Now just improvise but use a logical order and every player must touch the ball"

Progression

A 2nd ball can be introduced when the first ball reaches the #9 position.

POSITIONING GAME: 7v4 (POFTB 1)



2 grids of approximately 30m x 30m (A & C) separated by a grid of 10m x 30m (B).

2 groups of 4 outfield players.

Yellow consisting of the players #2-3-4-5.

Orange consisting of the players #7-8-10-11.

#9 and #6 are neutral players who always play with the team in possession; #9 in grid B; #6 in the grid where the positioning game takes place (see diagram)

2 goalkeepers positioned on each back line.

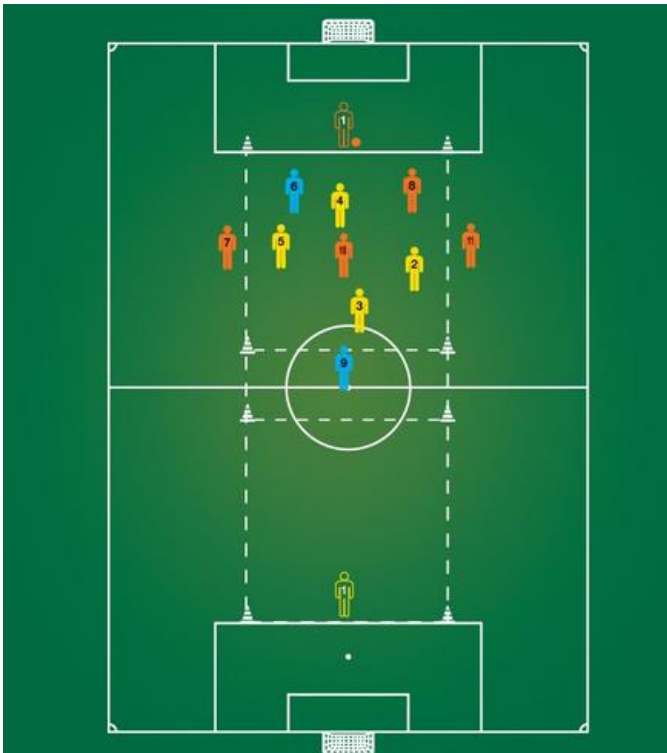
Players #3-4-6 as much as possible in their game positions with #2 and #5 positioned on the edge of the grid.

#1 yellow starts the game and yellow must try to get the ball to #9 but only #3; 4 or 6 can pass to #9.

If yellow succeeds: start again with #1 yellow.

If orange wins the ball in grid A, they must try to pass to #9 in grid B or their goalkeeper at the far end. All players then cross over to grid B where the game restarts with orange in possession and yellow defending.

VARIATION



Now the orange team in prescribed positions (see diagram)

Steps up or down

Make grids bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

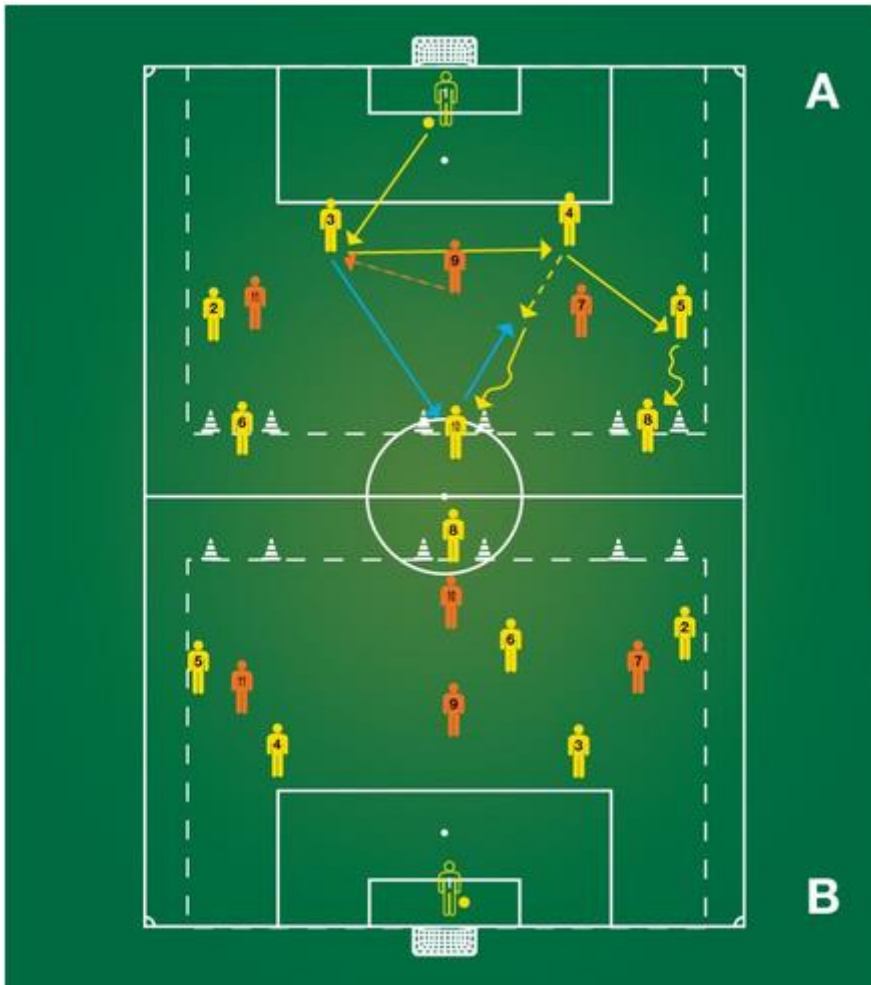
Stop-start change of grids/'flying' change of grids

#9 must pass the ball back in to the hands of #1.

Remark/Hint

Position the grids in 'game realistic' areas of the field (see diagram).

GAME TRAINING: (POFTB 1)



Yellow defence (#1-2-3-4-5) playing out from the back against orange attack (#7-9-11).

Goalkeeper (yellow #1) starts by serving the ball to one of the defenders.

The objective for the yellow defenders (#2, #3, #4, #5) is to dribble the ball through one of the three gates (see yellow lines in diagram A).

Yellow team can also use #6, 8 and 10 as bouncers (see blue lines in diagram A).

If orange wins the ball, attack the goal and try to score (one attempt only) if orange loses the ball, the action has ended.

Every restart is from yellow goalkeeper.

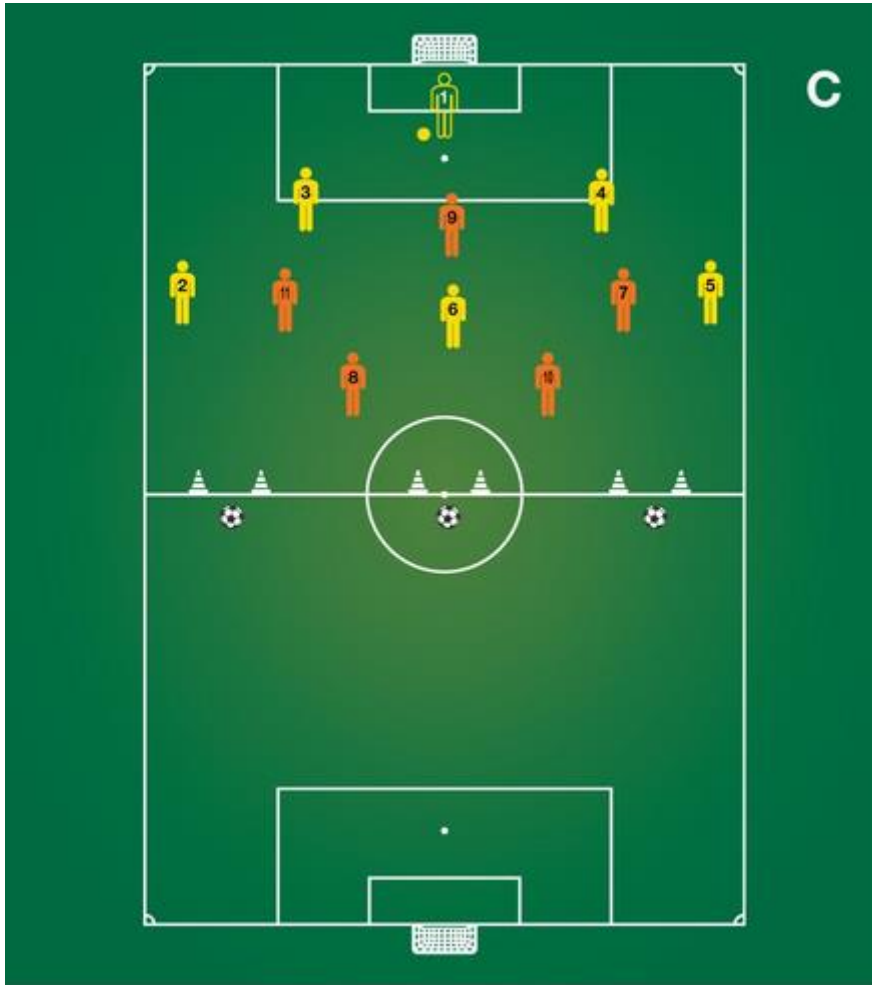
Progression (see diagram B)

Yellow #6 comes in as a player to help the yellow achieve their objective.

Yellow #10 joins the orange team as a direct opponent of yellow #6 in the field.

This leaves yellow #8 as the only 'bouncer'.

TRAINING GAME: 5v5 + GOALKEEPER (POFTB 1)



Yellow defends the big goal; orange defends the three gates on the halfway line.

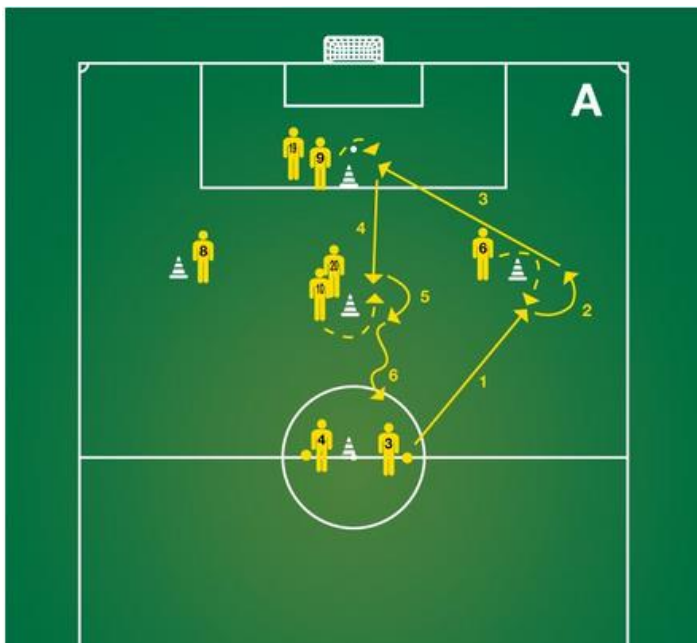
Orange: try to score in big goal.

Yellow: try to score in one of the gates.

Offside rule applies.

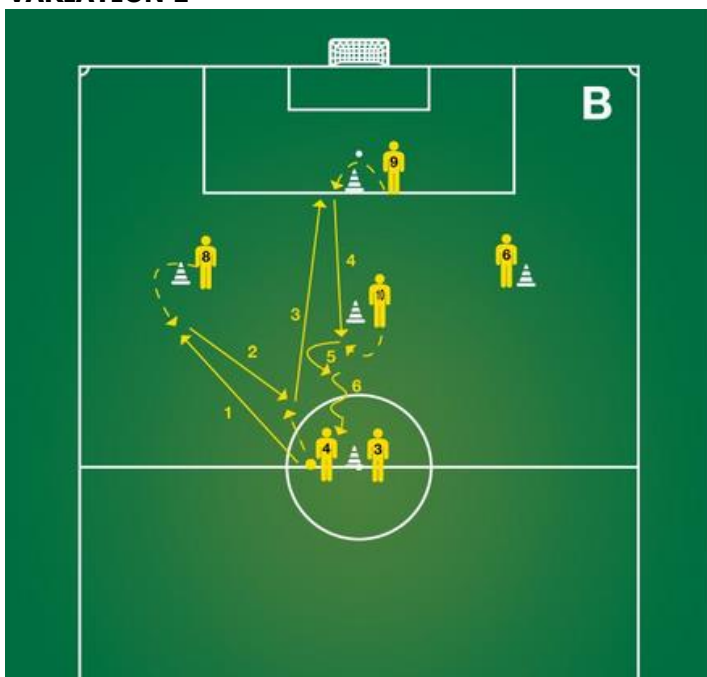
Maintain the organisation/formations.

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (MP 1)



Players in game positions as shown
 At least 2 players in positions #3/#4, #10 and #9
 #6 checks off and asks for the ball; #3 passes to #6 and coaches "turn" (1)
 #6 receives & turns (2) and passes to #9 (3)
 #9 bounces the ball to supporting #10 (4)
 #10 turns away (5) and dribbles to the starting position of #3 (6)
 All players move to the next position ("follow your ball")
 Now the same via the left side starting with #4 passing to #8

VARIATION 1



#8 checks off and asks for the ball; #4 passes to #8 and coaches "man on" (1)
 #8 bounces the ball back to #4 (2)
 #4 passes to #9 (3) who bounces to the supporting #10 (4)
 #10 receives and turns (5) and dribbles to the starting position of #3 (6)
 Player rotations are as follows: #4 then goes to where #8 was, #8 goes to #9, #9 to #10, and #10 ends up at the beginning where the sequence was started

Coaching points

Pass precision and pass direction (to proper foot; proper ball speed)
 Tuning of actions
 Anticipation & movement without ball
 Verbal and non-verbal communication

VARIATION 2

Choice of two options for #6 and #8 depending on whether number 3 and 4 say "turn" or "man on".
 Early cue from #3 and #4 is now essential

Coaching points

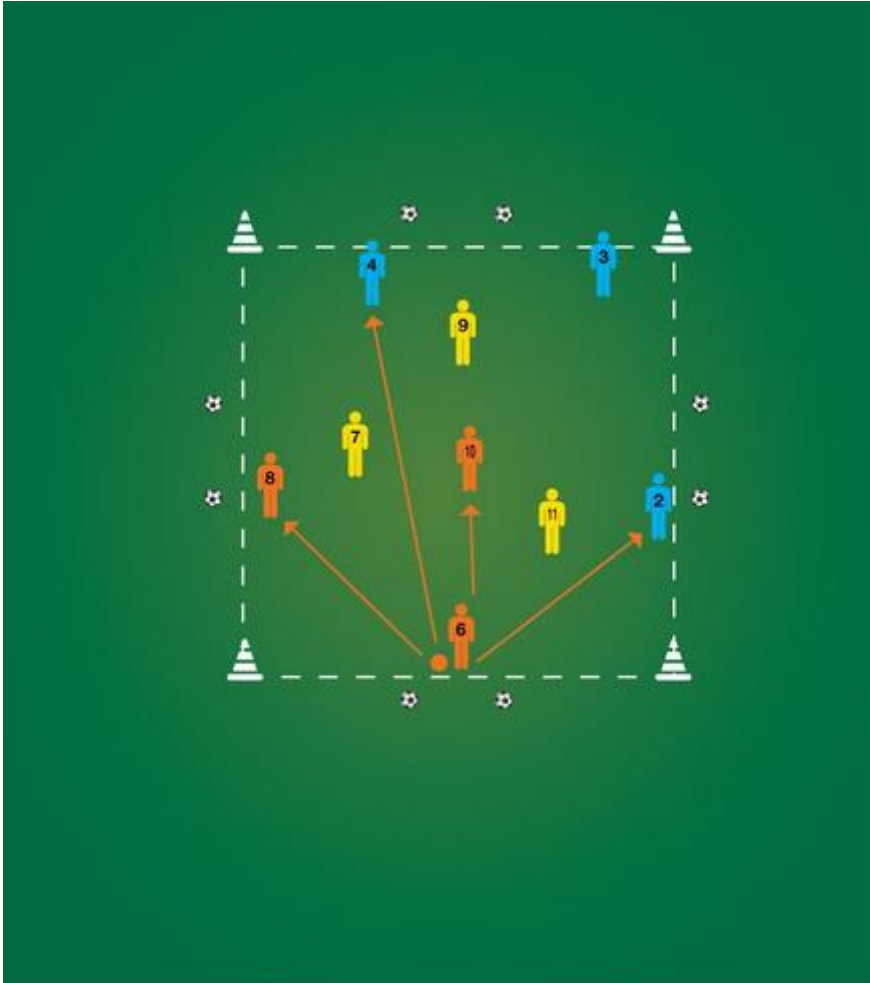
Pass precision and pass direction (to proper foot; proper ball speed).

Tuning of actions

Anticipation & movement without ball.

Verbal and non-verbal communication.

POSITIONING GAME: 6v3 (MP 1)



Grid of approximately 30m x 30m (dependent on level of players).

3 groups of 3; one group consisting of the midfield players #6-8-10.

6 players (orange and blue) keep possession against 3 defenders (yellow).

Always one 'link' player in the centre (preferably a midfielder).

Provide 4 options (left; right; central and far) for the player on the ball through proper positioning.

When the group of 6 loses possession, the whole team of the player that turned over the ball must now defend.

Steps up or down

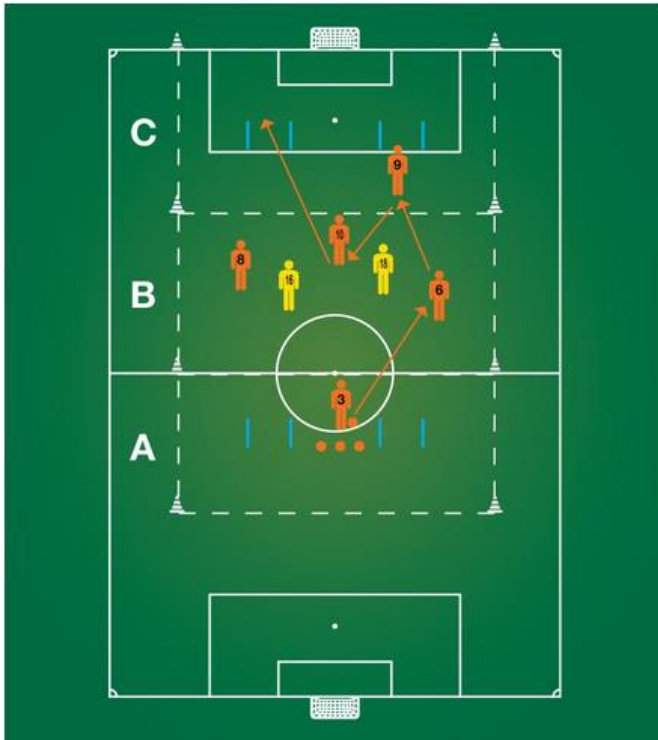
Make grid bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

Stop-start change of defenders.

'Flying' change of defenders.

GAME TRAINING: (MP 1)



Starting situation: 3 grids (A;B;C) players must stay in their designated area
Every attack starts with a pass from orange #3 in grid A to one of the midfielders

Orange midfielders #6-8-10 play in grid B against 2 opponents (3 v 2) and can use orange #9 in grid C as a 'bouncer'

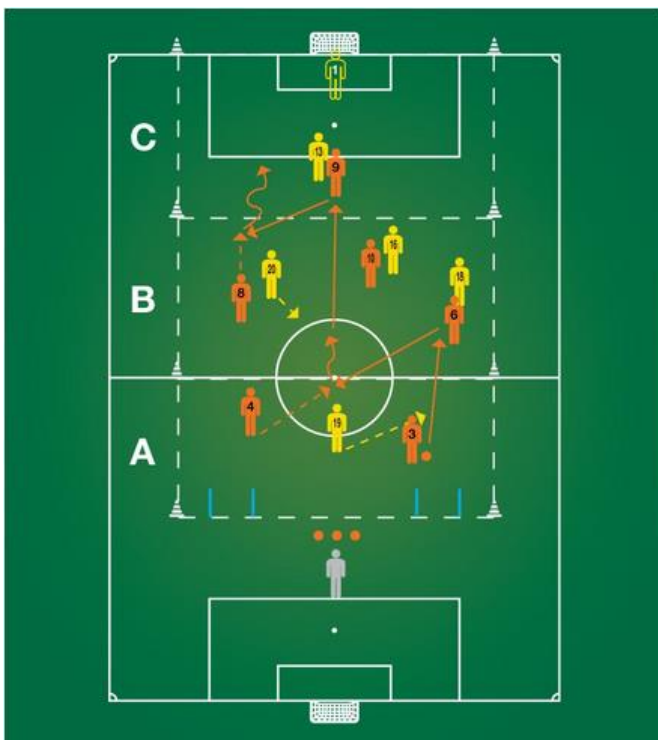
When one of the midfield players is free on the ball facing forward, they try to pass through one of the gates in grid C

When the yellow midfielders #16 or #18 win the ball, they try to pass through one of the gates in grid A

Progression

Add another yellow player in grid B (3 v 3)

3 v 3 in grid B. #3 orange is now allowed to dribble into grid B and create a numerical advantage (4 v 3)



Progression 2

Remove the gates from grid C

Add a yellow defender (#13 yellow) in grid C against #9 orange.

One player from grid B can now enter into grid C to create a 2 v 1 situation

Finish on goal against a goalkeeper

Progression 3

Place the gates in grid A on back line

Add #4 orange and #19 yellow in grid A (2 v 1)

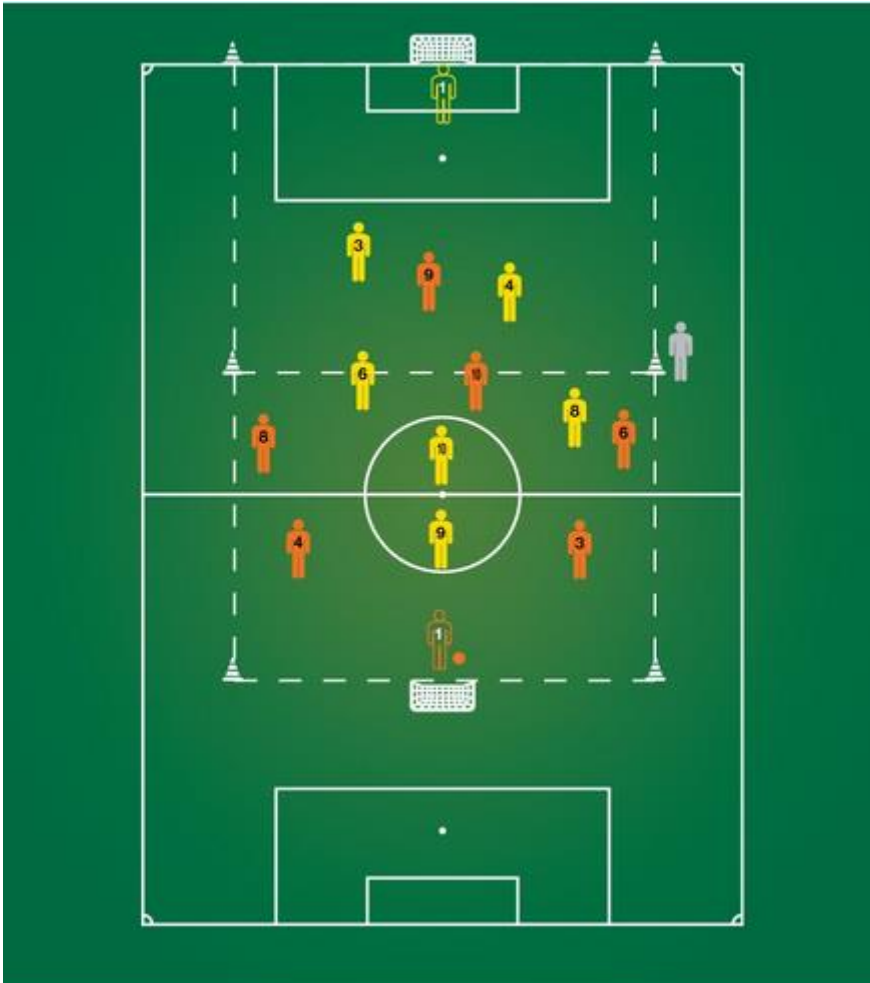
Every new action starts with the coach now serving the ball to orange #3 or #4 (see diagram)

If yellow recaptures the ball in grid A or B, #19 can score through the gates

Progression 4

Narrow the grids (width of the box)

TRAINING GAME: 7v7 INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS (MP 1)



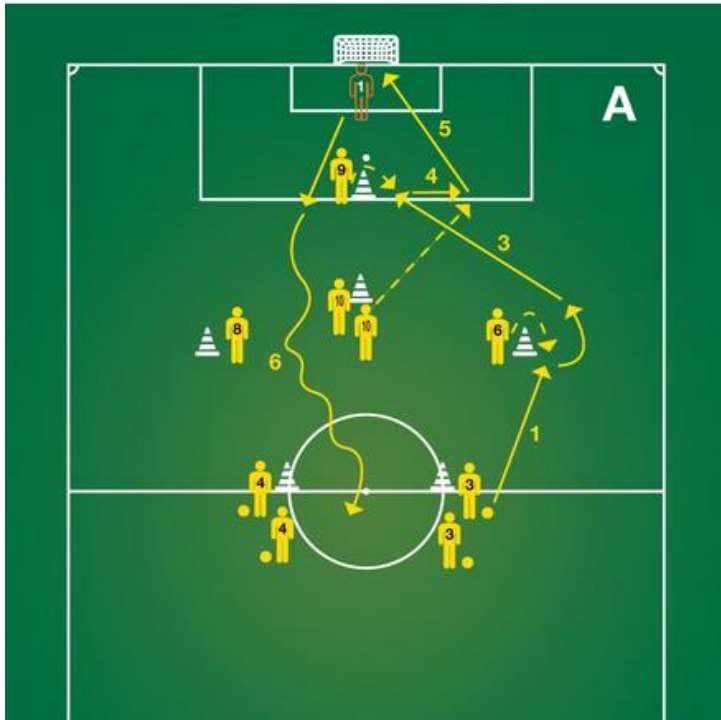
Field long and narrow to emphasise midfield play through central axis

Both teams in a 1 (GK)-2-3-1 formation

Offside rule applies

Coaching 'on the run'

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (A 1 CENTRAL AREAS)



Players in game positions as shown in diagram A

At least 2 players on positions #3, #4 and #10 (also possible on the other positions)

#6 checks off and asks for the ball; #3 passes to #6 and coaches "turn" **(1)**

#6 receives and turns **(2)** followed by a pass to #9 **(3)**

#9 bounces with '3rd man' #10 **(4)** who shoots at goal **(5)**

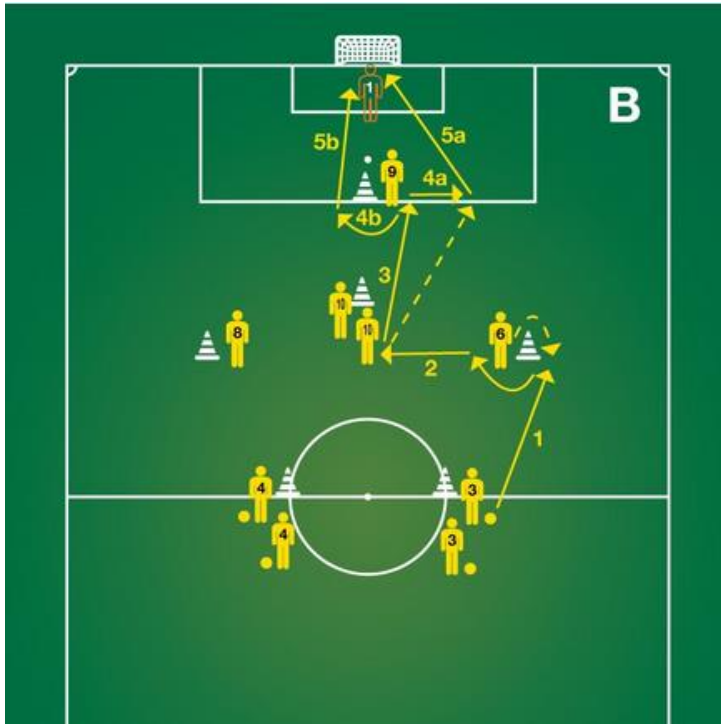
Players move to the next positions: #3 to #6; #6 to #10; #10 to #9; #9 jogs back to position #3

At the beginning the shot must be aimed towards the hands of the goalkeeper who rolls the ball back to #9, who dribbles it back to the starting position **(6)**.

Now repeat the same with #4 passing to #8, etc

Gradually increase the shooting power (it's still warming-up!)

VARIATION



Introduce a variation (see diagram B)

Give #9 the option to bounce with #10 (4a/5a) or turn away and finish themselves (4b/5b)

Coaches focus points

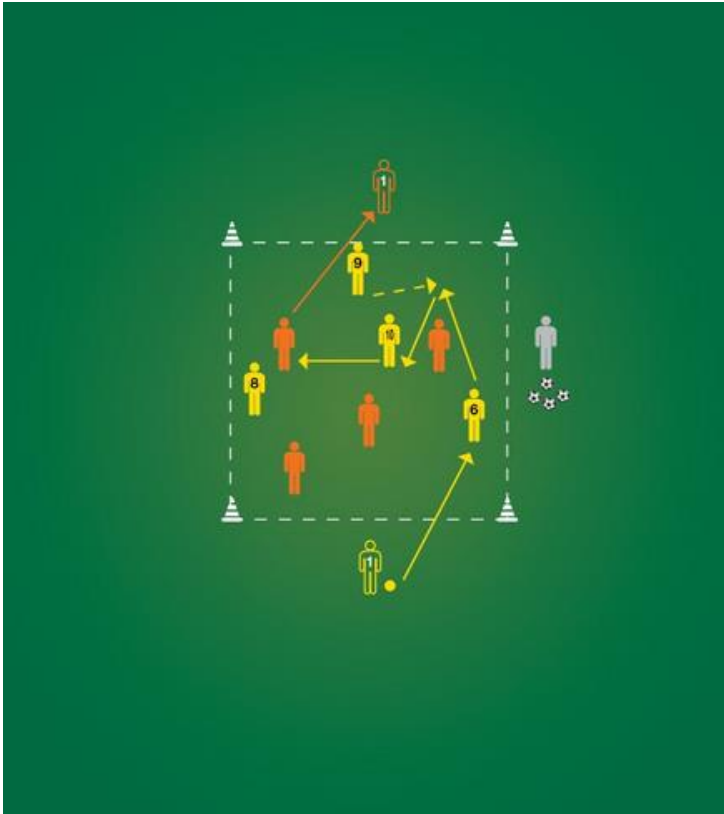
Pass precision and pass direction (to proper foot; proper ball speed)

Tuning of actions

Anticipation & movement without ball.

Verbal and non-verbal communication.

POSITIONING GAME: 6v3 (A 1 CENTRAL AREAS)



A grid of approximately 30m x 30m (dependent on level of players)
2 groups of 4 outfield players; one group consisting of the players #6-8-9-10

2 goalkeepers positioned behind each back line

5 (yellow) keep possession against 4 (orange)

Players as much as possible in their game positions, with #10 in the middle

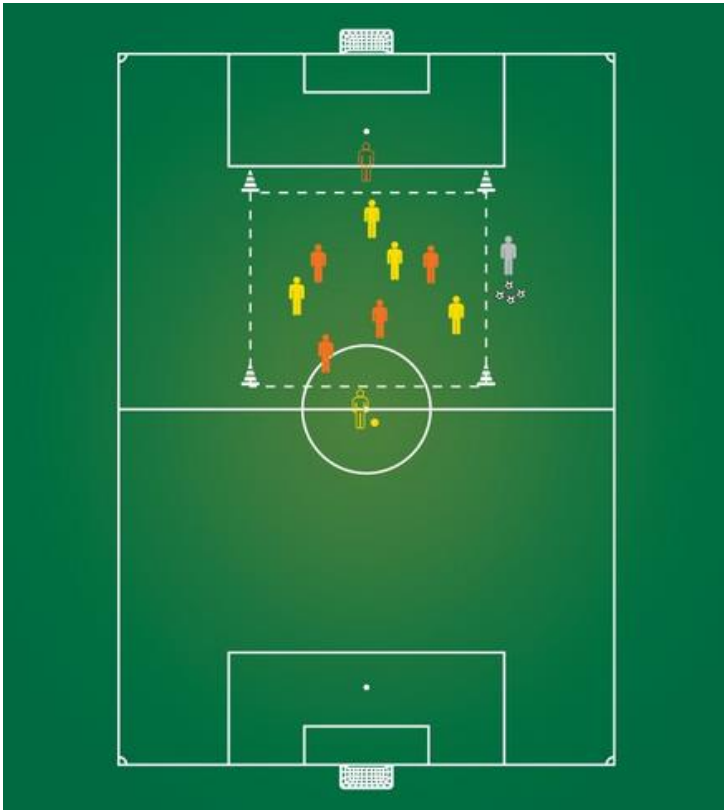
(see diagram)

Provide 4 options (left; right; central and far) for the player on the ball through proper positioning

When orange wins the ball, they must try to pass to their goalkeeper, the game continues with orange in possession and yellow defending

If a yellow player passes the ball out of the grid, the coach immediately serves a new ball to the orange goalkeeper

VARIATION



Steps up or down

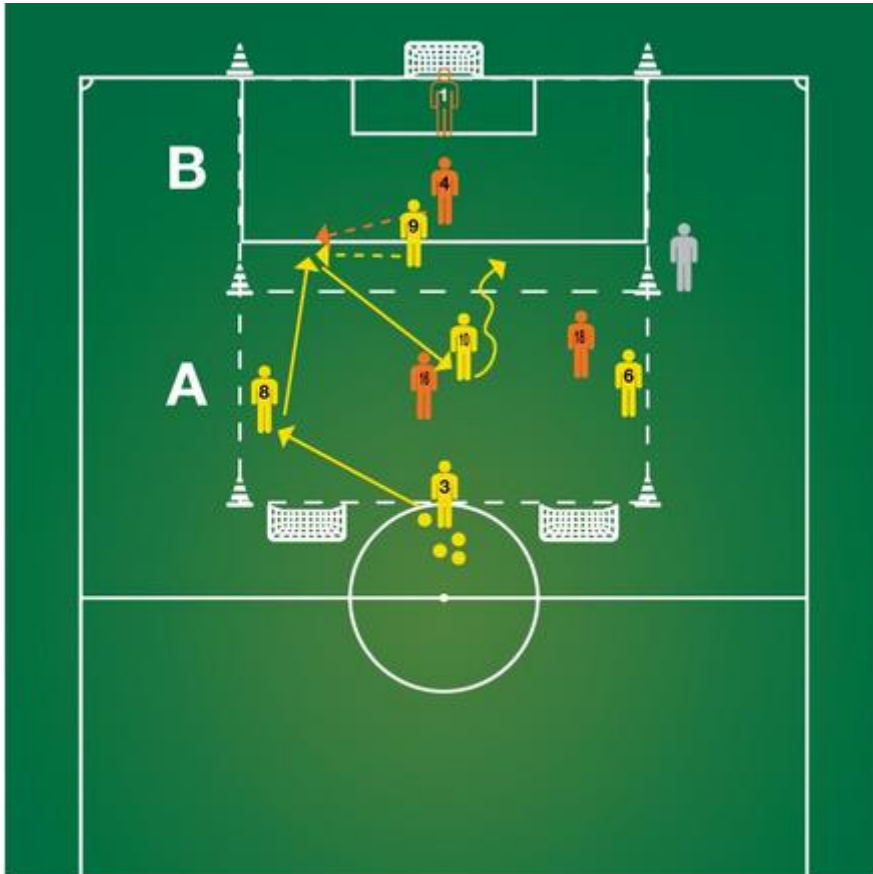
Make grid bigger/smaller

Free/limited touches

Remark/Hint

Position the grid in a 'game realistic' area of the field (see diagram)

GAME TRAINING: (A 1 CENTRAL AREAS)



Starting situation: two grids A & B with the players positioned as shown in diagram on the right.

The players must stay in their designated areas.

An attack starts with a pass from #3 to one of the yellow midfield players #6-8-10.

They play in grid A against 2 orange opponents (3 v 2) and must try to get one player into grid B.

In grid B stands yellow striker #9 and one orange defender.

The yellow midfielders can dribble into grid B (when free) or use #9 as a bouncer.

In grid B yellow must utilise the 2 v 1 numerical advantage and score.

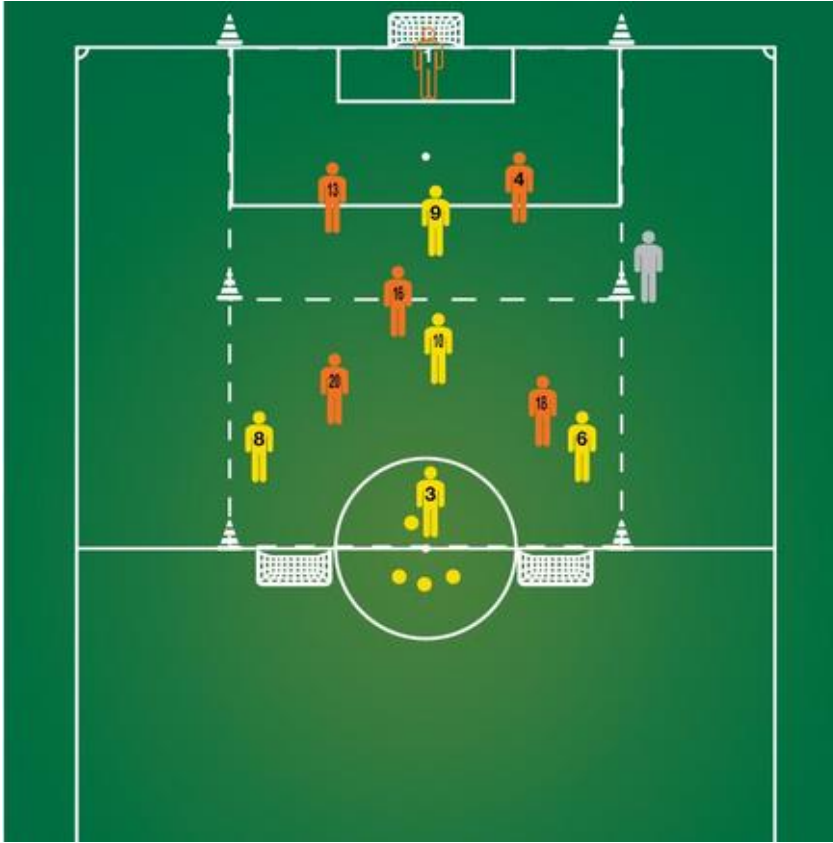
Offside applies in grid B.

When the defenders win the ball in grid A, they can score in two small goals (one counter attack only, then restart).

Progression

Add 3rd orange player in grid A, #3 yellow now either passes or dribbles with ball into grid A to create a 4 v 3 situation.

TRAINING GAME: 7v7 INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS (A 1 CENTRAL AREAS)



Yellow team attacks the big goal, orange can score in the small goals.

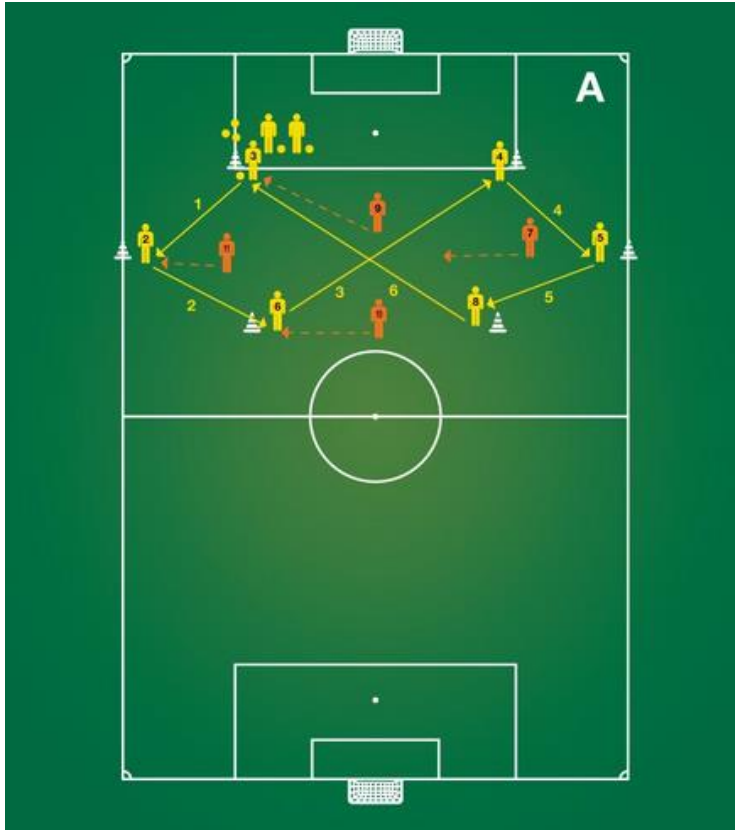
Normal rules, including offside.

Yellow team in 1(DF)-3(MF)-1(FW) formation.

Orange team in GK-2(DF)-3(MF) formation.

Coaching 'on the run'.

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (D&P 1)



Players #2; 3; 4; 5; 6 & 8 yellow and #7; 9; 10 & 11 orange position themselves as shown in diagram A. At least two players at the starting position (yellow #3).

At the coach's signal, #3 starts the passing drill as shown (1-6) with the yellow players following their pass to the next position/cone.

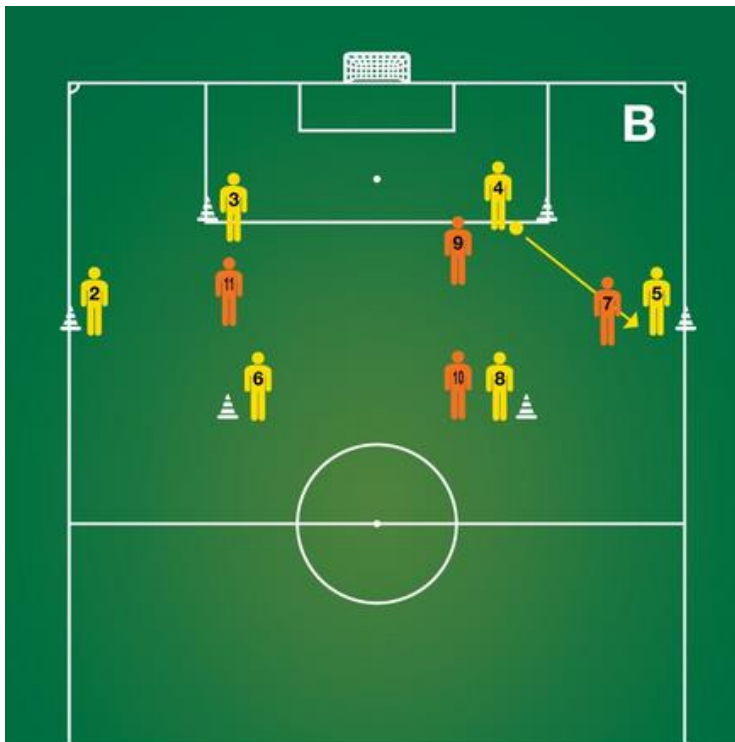
As the ball moves the orange attackers must move as a unit too, keeping their relative distances the same.

After pass 1 they must be in the positions indicated by the dotted arrows in diagram A.

Orange #7 must be in a position where they can pressure both #4 and #8 yellow when the ball is on the opposite side (e.g. with yellow #2).

Every new pass all four orange players shift and adjust their positions.

VARIATION



At pass 4 the positions of the orange players are as shown in diagram B.

Progression

Increase passing and running speed.

Sudden change of pass direction on coach's call (#3 yellow to #4; #4 to #5 etc).

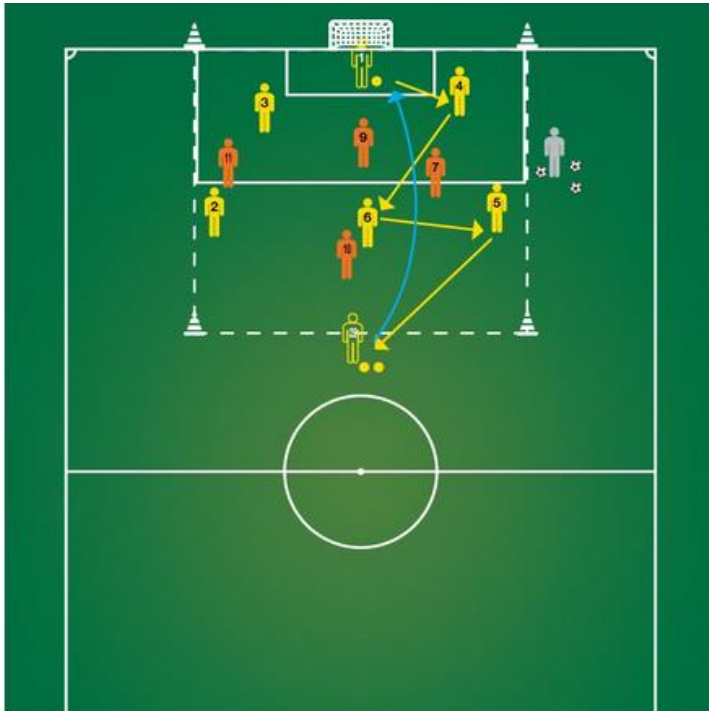
Introduce a second passing sequence.

Free instead of prescribed passing sequence.

Remark

Rotate the four attackers regularly with another group of attackers.

POSITIONING GAME: 7v4 (D&P 1)



A grid of approximately 40m x 40m.

2 teams, orange and yellow.

Yellow consisting of the outfield players #2-3-4-5-6 and the goalkeepers #1 and #22. Orange consisting of the players #7-9-10-11.

Goalkeeper #1 in the goal; #22 positioned on the opposite back line (see diagram on the right).

Players as much as possible in their game positions.

#1 yellow starts the game and yellow must try to pass the ball on the ground to #22.

#22 must pass the ball back to #1 who must catch the ball inside the 6 yard box.

If they succeed, #1 starts again (1 point for yellow).

If orange wins the ball they try to score (2 or 3 points for a goal).

If #1 yellow doesn't catch the ball inside the 6 yard box, the coach immediately serves a ball to orange.

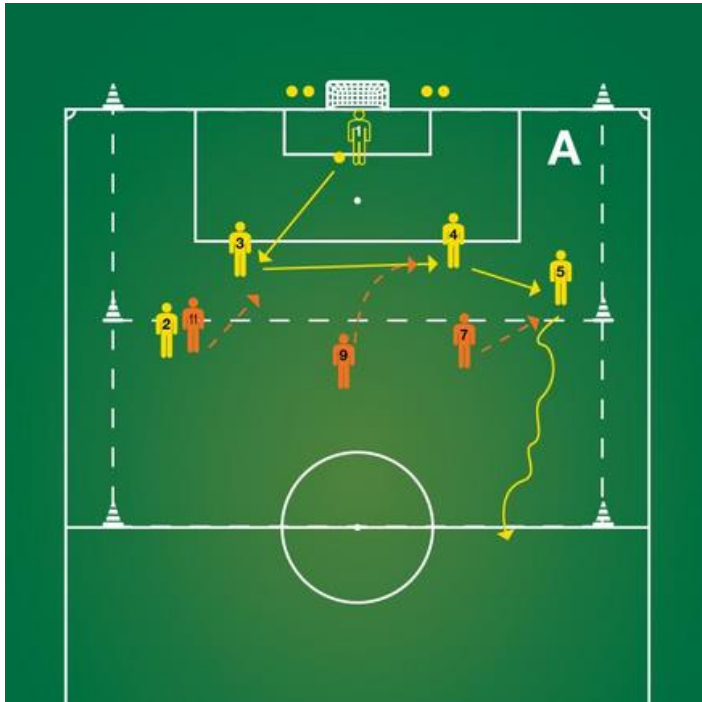
Steps up or down

Make the grid bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches for the yellow outfield players.

Free/limited touches (1/2) for yellow #22.

GAME TRAINING: 5v3 (D&P 1)



A grid of approximately 50m x 50m divided by a halfway line (see diagram A).

Yellow defence (#1-2-3-4-5) playing out from the back, orange attack (#7-9-11) must disrupt and pressure yellow's possession.

Goalkeeper (yellow #1) starts every action by serving the ball to #2-3-4 or #5.

The defenders combine till one player can run with the ball across the back line.

The orange team must prevent this and try to win the ball.

If orange wins the ball "attack the goal and try to score" (one attempt only).
If orange loses the ball the action has ended.

The offside rule applies.

Step up/down (for orange!)

Make the pitch wider/narrower.

Free/limited touches (2/3) for yellow.

Free/limited time for yellow to get the ball across the back line.

Progression

When the ball has crossed the halfway line of the grid, yellow can now score by passing through one of the two gate(s) positioned on the back line.

Possible Coaches Remarks

"Work as a unit, keeping your relative distances short"

"Press the player with the ball"

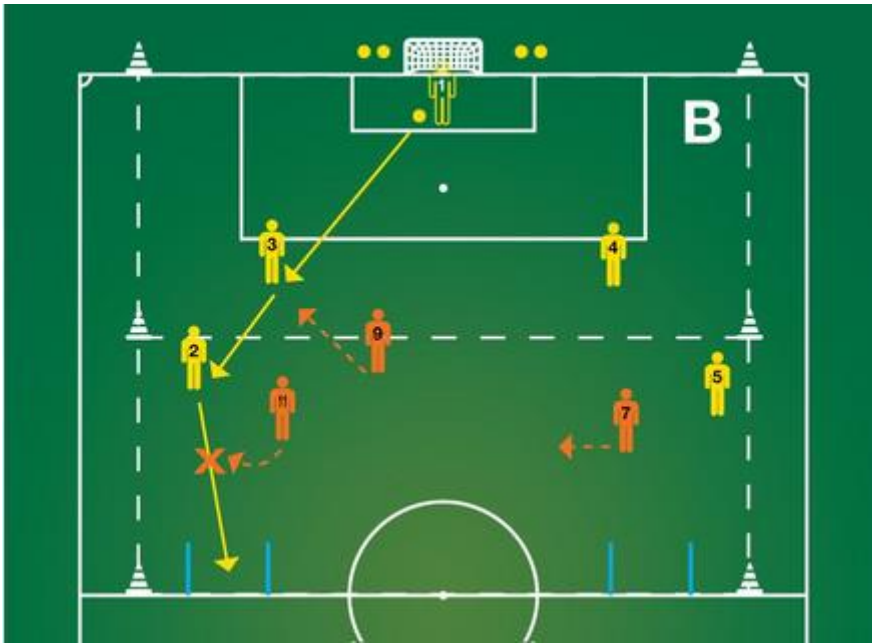
"Mark/pressure the players closest to the ball and leave the ones which are the furthest away free"

"You must stay in your positions and keep your formation"

Remark/hint

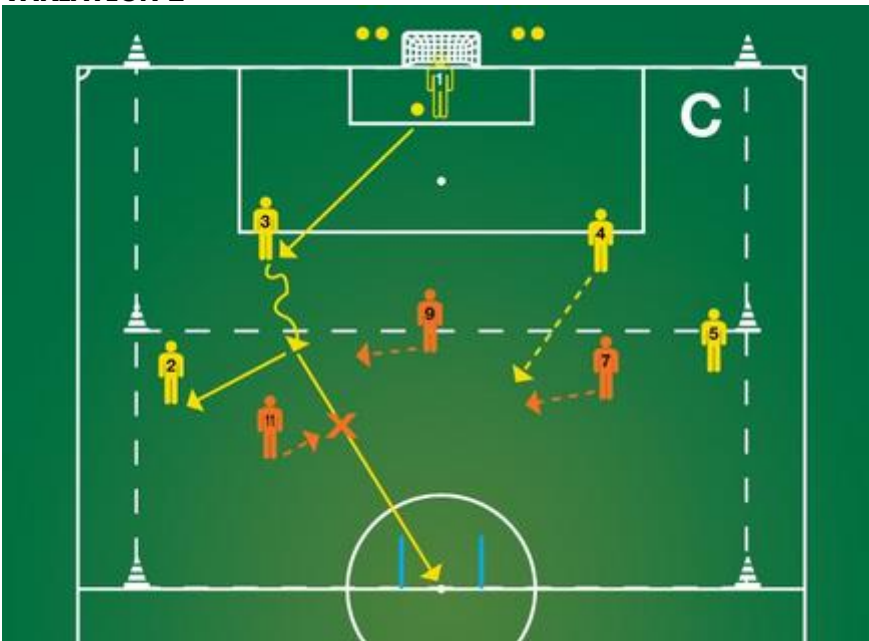
Yellow is not allowed to go back once the ball has crossed the halfway line of the grid

VARIATION 1



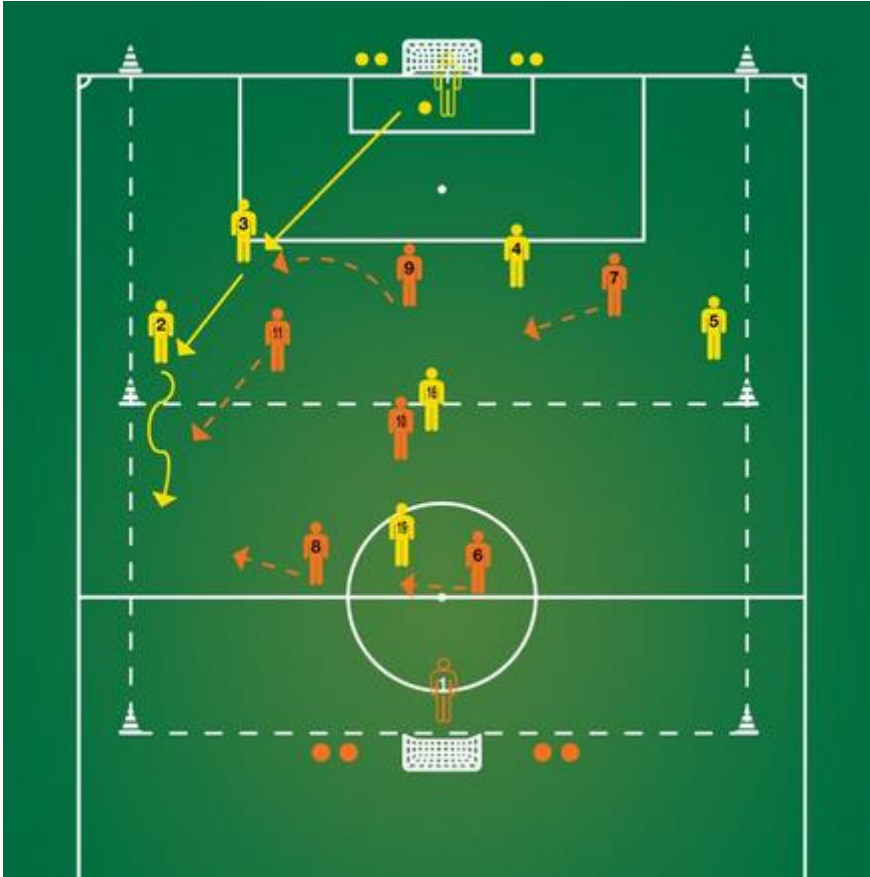
Two 5m gates on the wings: this invites yellow to play out using their full-backs. The coach focuses on coaching orange how to prevent/disrupt this

VARIATION 2



One central 5m-7m gate (diagram C): this invites yellow to play out using their central defenders. The coach focuses on coaching orange how to prevent/disrupt this

TRAINING GAME: 6v6 + GOALKEEPERS (D&P 1)



Orange is the team the coach focuses on with regards to disrupting/pressuring. It consists of a GK and the MF's #6, 8 and 10 and the FW's #7, #9, and #11 (formation 1-3-3).

Yellow consists of a GK and the DF's #2, 3, 4 and 5 plus a holding MF #16 and the FW #19 (formation 1-4-1-1).

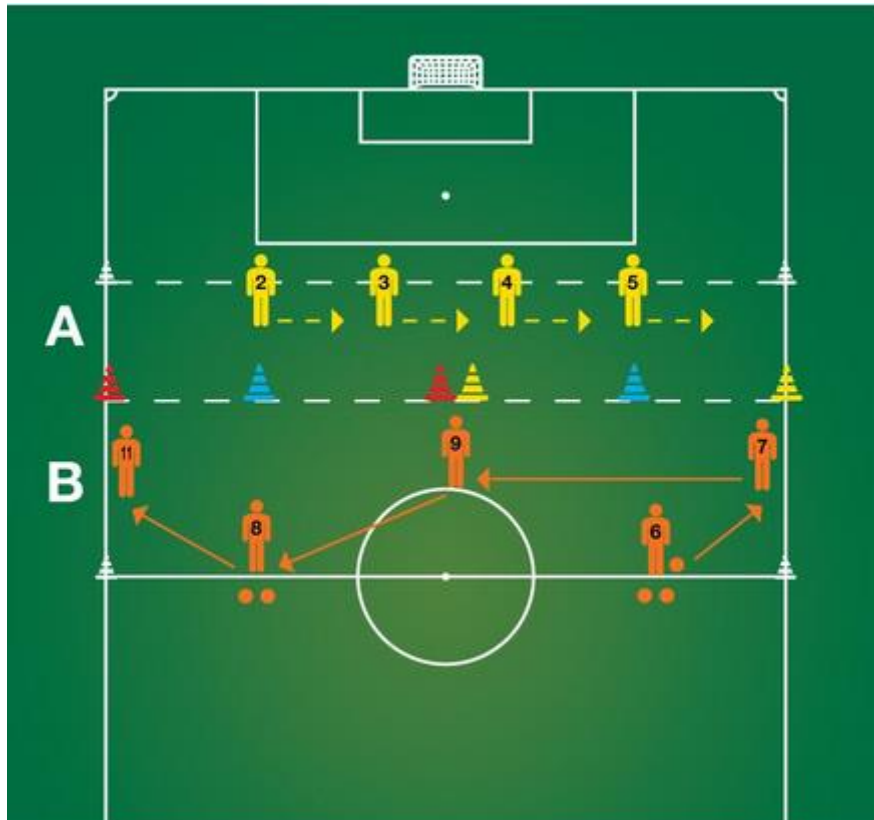
It is important that the coach sees to it that the formations stay intact.

Offside rule applies.

Variation

Orange defends two small goals in wide areas instead of the big goal.

WARM-UP: (D/R 1 ZONE DEFENDING)



Two grids (A and B) are positioned as shown in the diagram.

Grid A is 10m -15m long and pitch wide. Grid B is approximately 20m long and also pitch wide.

Grids A and B are divided by a line of 3 x 2 cones of different colours positioned across the width of the pitch.

The position of the cones must be exactly as shown in the diagram.

Blue cones; width of the penalty box.

Red and yellow cones; sideline-central axis.

Four yellow defenders #2, 3, 4 and 5 position themselves in grid A, spread between the blue cones at an equal distance.

Five (or more) orange players are positioned in grid B, spread across the width of the pitch.

At the coaches signal, the orange players start passing the ball in a random order/direction.

As the ball moves, the yellow defenders must move as a unit too, keeping their relative distances the same.

When the ball goes to #7 orange, they must all be between the yellow cones.

When the ball goes to #9 orange, they must all be between the blue cones.

When the ball goes to #11 orange, they must all be between the red cones.

When the ball is played backwards (to #6 or #8), they must also move slightly forward.

Points of attention for Orange

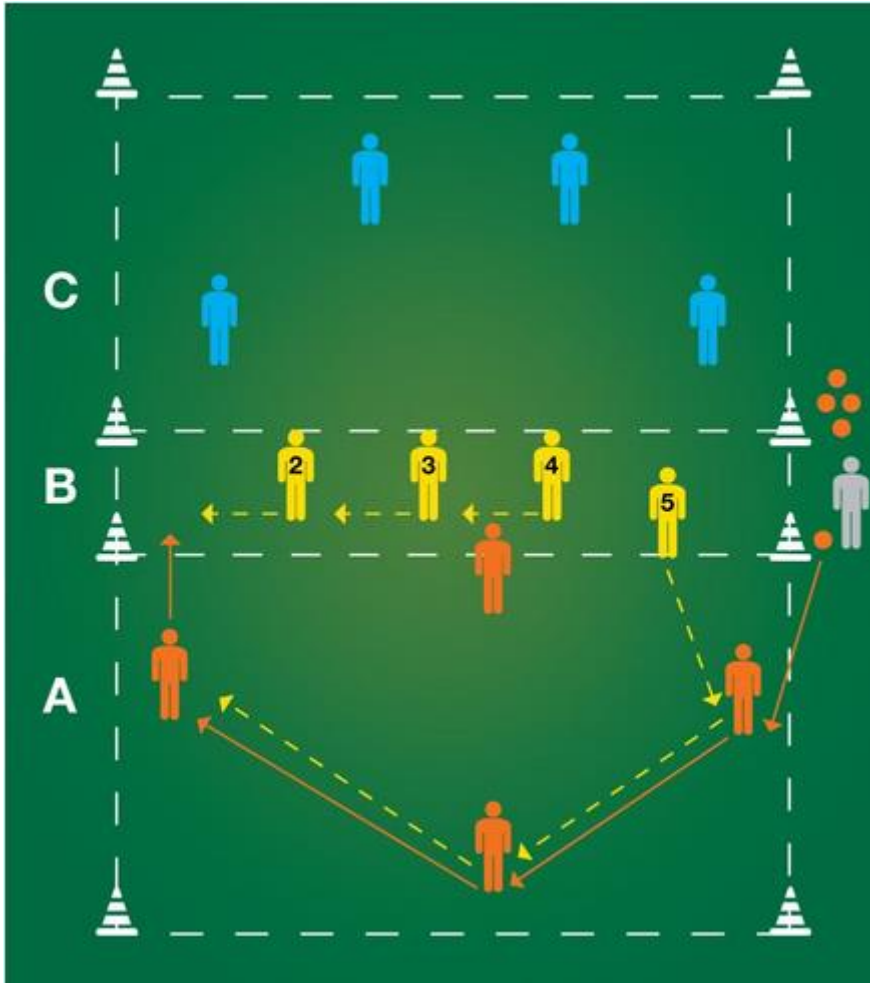
High ball speed

Accurate passing

Quick change of direction

Change defenders regularly.

POSITIONING GAME: (D/R 1 ZONE DEFENDING)



2 grids of approximately 15m wide and 10m long (A & C) separated by a grid of 15m x 5m (B).

3 groups of 4 outfield players in each grid.

Yellow, consisting of the defenders #2-3-4-5, in grid B.

The coach starts the game by passing the ball to an orange player in grid A.

One yellow defender (who is closest) sprints into grid A and chases the ball (4 v 1).

Orange combines and must try to pass through grid B to a blue player in grid C (ground pass only!).

The 3 yellow defenders in grid B must work as a unit and adjust their positions depending on the position of the ball.

Steps up or down

Make grids wider/narrower (if too easy/difficult for the defenders)

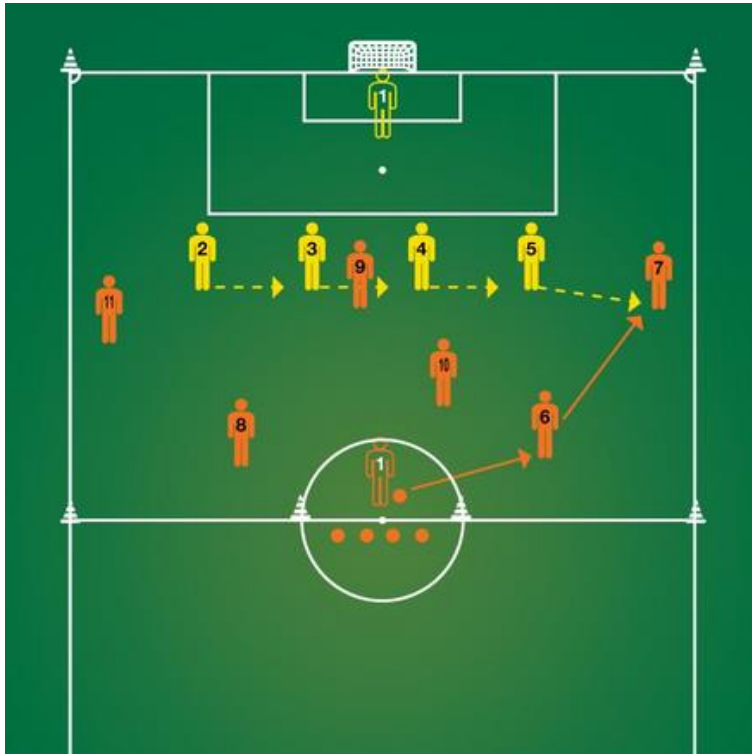
Make grids A & C shorter/longer (if too easy/difficult for the attackers)

Free/limited touches for the attackers

Remark/Hint

Encourage attackers to play the killer pass into the opposite zone as often as possible

GAME TRAINING: 7v5 (D/R 1 ZONE DEFENDING)



Organisation: 1/2 of a full pitch
Yellow team consists of (#1-2-3-4-5) defends zonally against orange team (#1-6-7-8-9-10 & 11)

The orange must try to score by beating yellow's zonal defensive line through combination play; individual actions and/or runs off the ball
They can use #1 to change the point of attack

Yellow must stop them by moving as a unit in the direction of the ball ('ball-oriented defending') and pressuring the ball carrier

The offside rule applies

Possible Coaches Remarks (focus on yellow)

"Keep your relative distances"

"Cover each other"

"Press the ball if you can get close to it"

"Drop as a unit if you see orange is going to play a ball behind the defensive line"

"Move up if the attackers play the ball backwards"

"Communicate and coach each other"

VARIATION

If yellow wins the ball: try to pass it into the hands of the orange goalkeeper who must stand in the front half of the centre circle (one attempt only: if yellow loses the ball the action has ended)

Every restart from the orange goalkeeper

Step down (if too difficult for the defenders)

Narrow the pitch

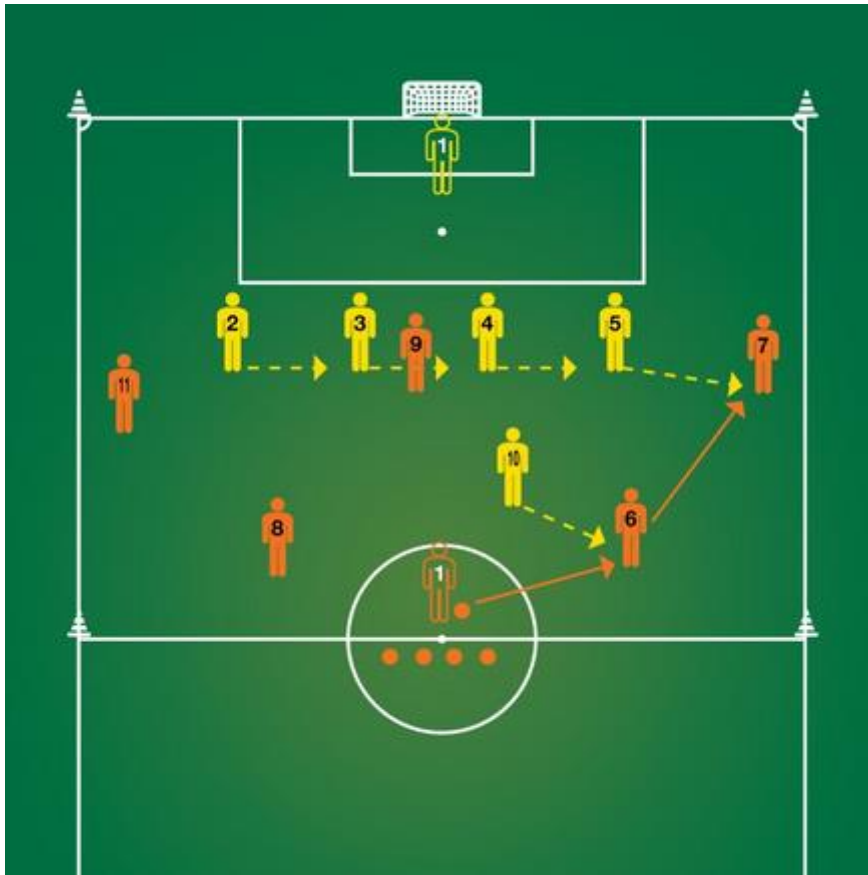
Limited touches for the attackers

Progression

8 v 6/9 v 7

TRAINING GAME: 6v6 (D/R 1 ZONE DEFENDING)

6v6 YELLOW DEFENSE



Organisation: 1/2 of a full pitch

Formation yellow: 1-4-1

Formation orange: 1-2-3

The orange goalkeeper has a dual role ('joker')

Offside rule applies

The orange team must score in the goal defended by yellow #1

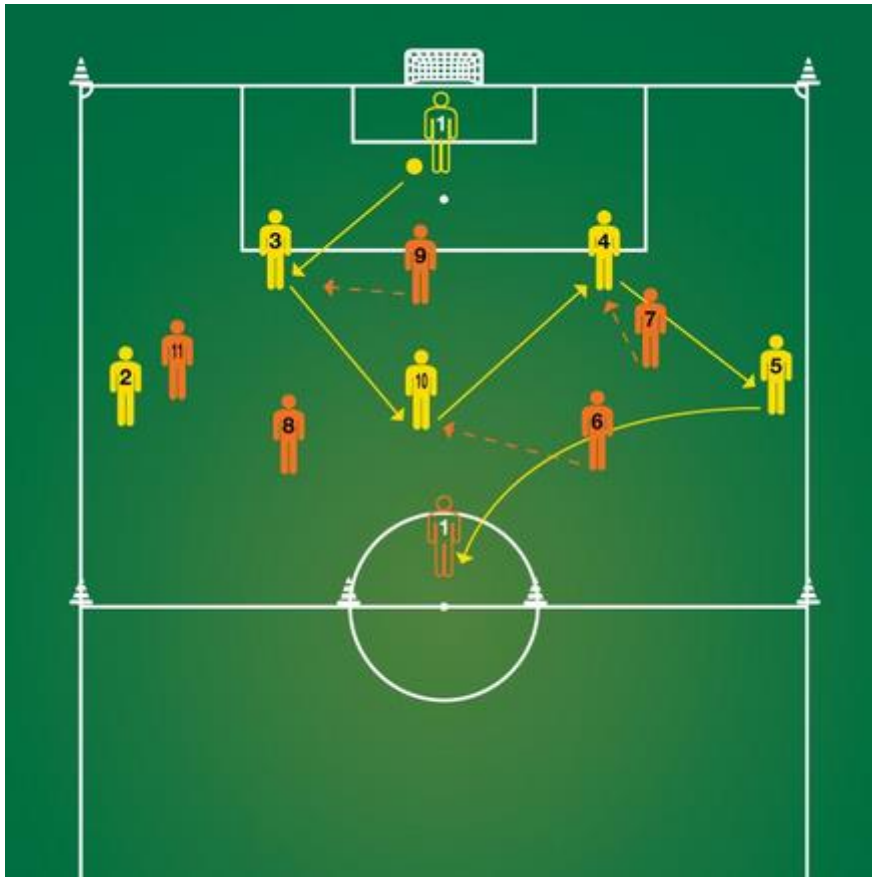
The yellow team scores by passing into the hands of the orange goalkeeper who must catch the ball inside the front half of the centre circle

The coach must focus on the zonal defending of the yellow team

If it turns out to be easier for yellow to score than it is for the orange team:

-Limit the number of touches for yellow

6v6 ORANGE DEFENSE



Organisation: 1/2 of a full pitch

Formation yellow: 1-4-1

Formation orange: 1-2-3

The orange goalkeeper has a dual role ('joker')

Offside rule applies

The orange team must score in the goal defended by yellow #1

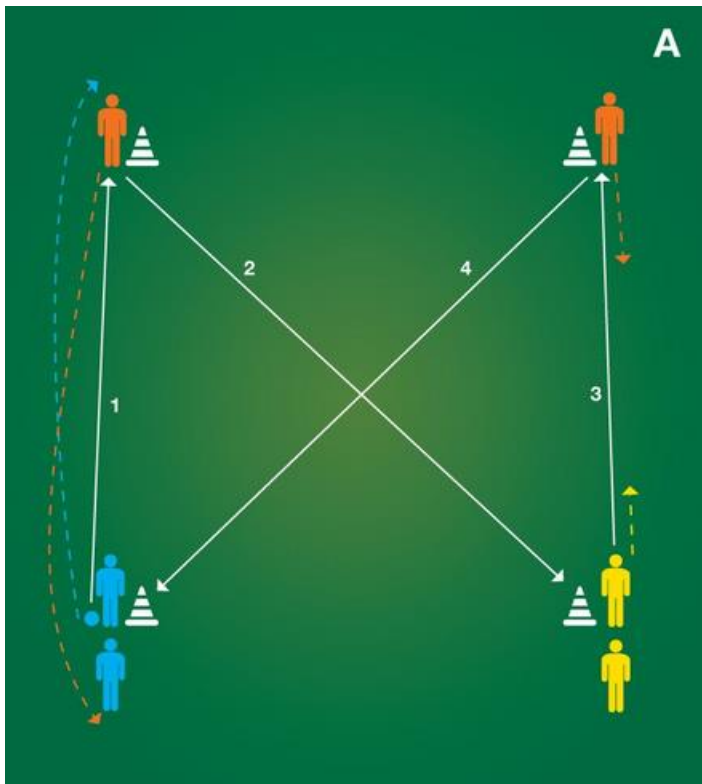
The yellow team scores by passing into the hands of the orange goalkeeper who must catch the ball inside the front half of the centre circle

The coach must focus on the zonal defending of the yellow team

If it turns out to be easier for yellow to score than it is for the orange team:

-Limit the number of touches for yellow

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (T1 BP>BPO)



4 cones placed in a 15m x 15m square.

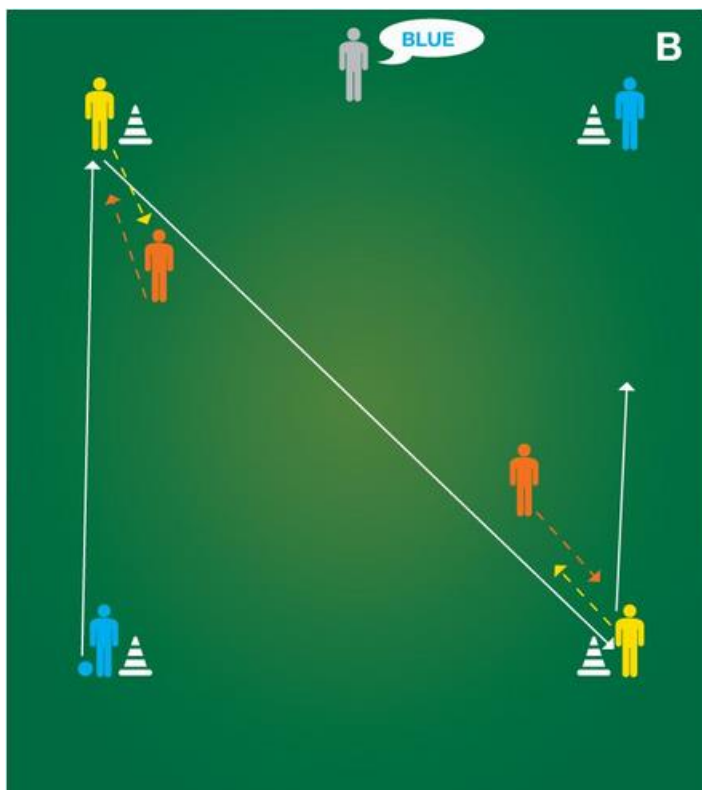
6 players divided in 3 pairs (different colours) and positioned as shown in the diagram.

Players pass the ball in sequence (1-4). Players only run to their opposite side (as indicated by the dotted lines) after passing.

Change direction regularly (pass in opposite directions).

“Precision and ball speed”

VARIATION



Next step 4 players perform the passing drill while 2 players (one pair) defend passively (see diagram B).

The players now stay in the same position.

On the coach's call (colour) the pair that are 'defenders' change with the pair that's been called by the coach: 'Flying' change over; no/minimal stop.

Progression (advanced only)

Regularly change the direction on the run (orientation).

Players run to opposite cone after passing.

Faster change of defenders.

Are the players able to transition and adjust immediately?

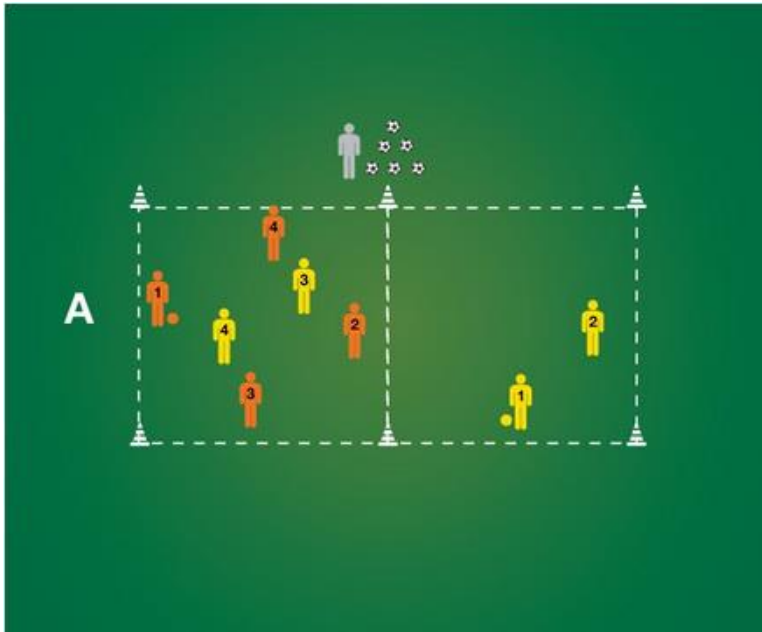
Possible Coaches Remarks

“Immediately focus on your new task”

“Know where you have to pass”

“Which pair makes the least mistakes”

POSITIONING GAME: 4v2 WITH 8 PLAYERS (T1 BP>BPO)



8 players divided in two groups of four (yellow and orange).

Two adjacent squares of 10m x 10m/15m x 15m (dependent on ability of players).

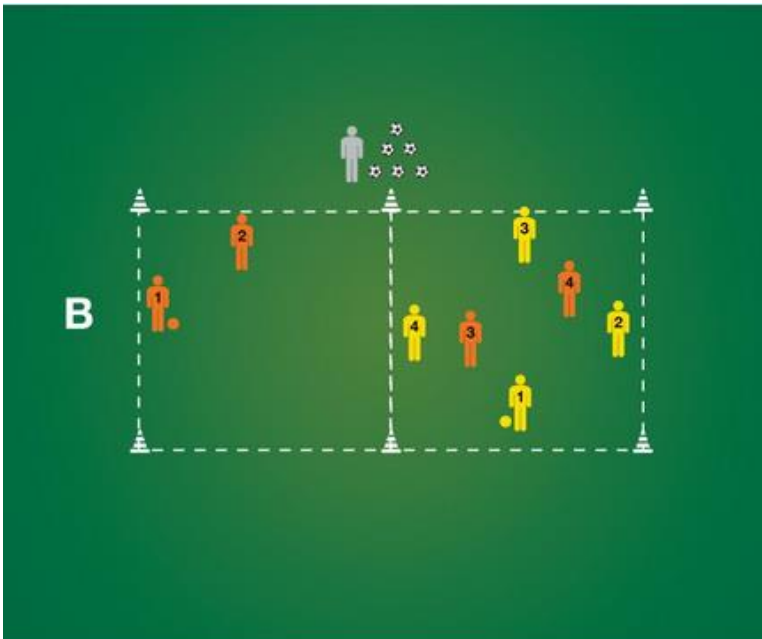
4 (orange) v 2 (yellow) in one grid; 2 yellow waiting with a ball at the end of the adjacent grid (situation A).

As soon as orange makes a mistake (interception yellow or ball out of grid) the game moves to the adjacent grid (situation B) using the ball that the two spare players have.

Orange #3 & #4 can immediately pressure yellow #1 & #2; this forces yellow #3 & #4 to also make a quick transition to BP.

If orange makes a mistake everyone goes back to their initial starting positions in situation A #3 & #4 (of both teams) are the 'shifting' defenders; swap with #1 & #2 (of both teams) every two minutes.

VARIATION



8 players divided in two groups of four (yellow and orange).

Two adjacent squares of 10m x 10m/15m x 15m (dependent on ability of players).

4 (orange) v 2 (yellow) in one grid; 2 yellow waiting with a ball at the end of the adjacent grid (situation A).

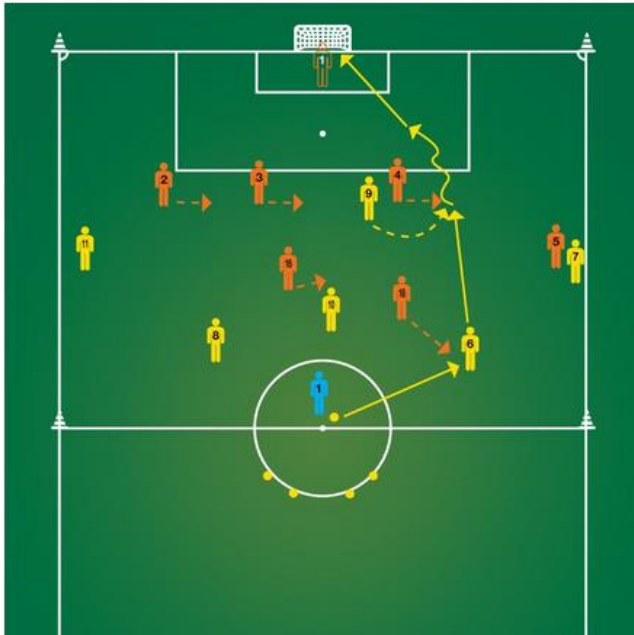
As soon as orange makes a mistake (interception yellow or ball out of grid) the game moves to the adjacent grid (situation B) using the ball that the two spare players have Orange #3 & #4 can immediately pressure yellow #1

& #2; this forces yellow #3 & #4 to also make a quick transition to BP.

If orange makes a mistake everyone goes back to their initial starting positions in situation A.

#3 & #4 (of both teams) are the 'shifting' defenders; swap with #1 & #2 (of both teams) every two minutes

GAME TRAINING: (T1 BP>BPO)



Transitioning BP > BPO for attackers (yellow) and BPO > BP for defenders (orange).

6 attackers/midfielders (yellow) against 6 defenders/midfielders + goalkeeper (orange) on one half of a full pitch, everyone in their usual 'game positions'.

The blue goalkeeper on the halfway line has a dual role of playing for both teams in BP. The 'neutral' goalkeeper starts an attack for yellow by playing to one of the yellow players. As long as the yellow team is in possession, the goalkeeper can stay involved as an outfield player but positioned in/around the centre circle (see diagram).

Yellow tries to build a successful attack and score in the goal defended by the orange goalkeeper.

When orange wins the ball, they must immediately open up, move into proper BP

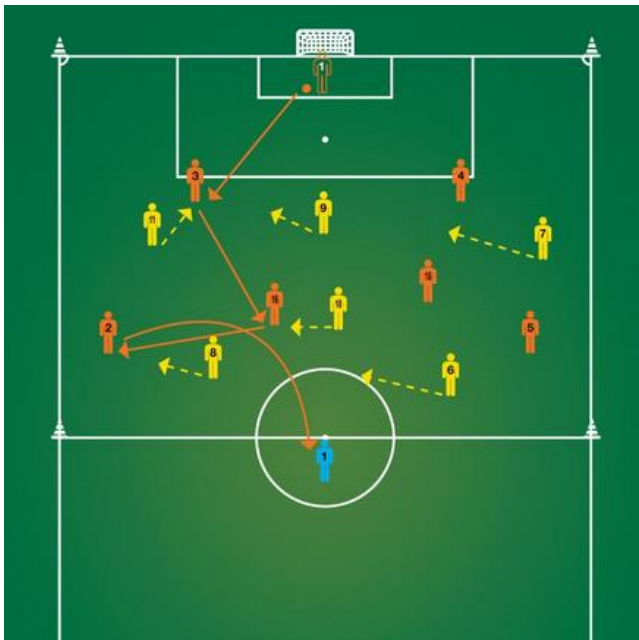
positions and try to pass into the hands of the neutral goalkeeper who must catch the ball inside the centre circle.

The yellow team must try to avoid this by quick transitioning and pressing the ball (see diagram)

After every sequence (attack yellow; counter attack orange) there is a new restart from the neutral goalkeeper.

The coaching focuses on the speed of transitioning from both teams but yellow in particular (BP>BPO).

PROGRESSION



Transitioning BP > BPO for attackers (yellow) and BPO > BP for defenders (orange).

6 attackers/midfielders (yellow) against 6 defenders/midfielders + goalkeeper (orange) on one half of a full pitch, everyone in their usual 'game positions'.

The blue goalkeeper on the halfway line has a dual role of playing for both teams in BP. The 'neutral' goalkeeper starts an attack for yellow by playing to one of the yellow players. As long as the yellow team is in possession, the goalkeeper can stay involved as an outfield player but positioned in/around the centre circle (see diagram).

Yellow tries to build a successful attack and score in the goal defended by the orange goalkeeper.

When orange wins the ball, they must immediately open up, move into proper BP

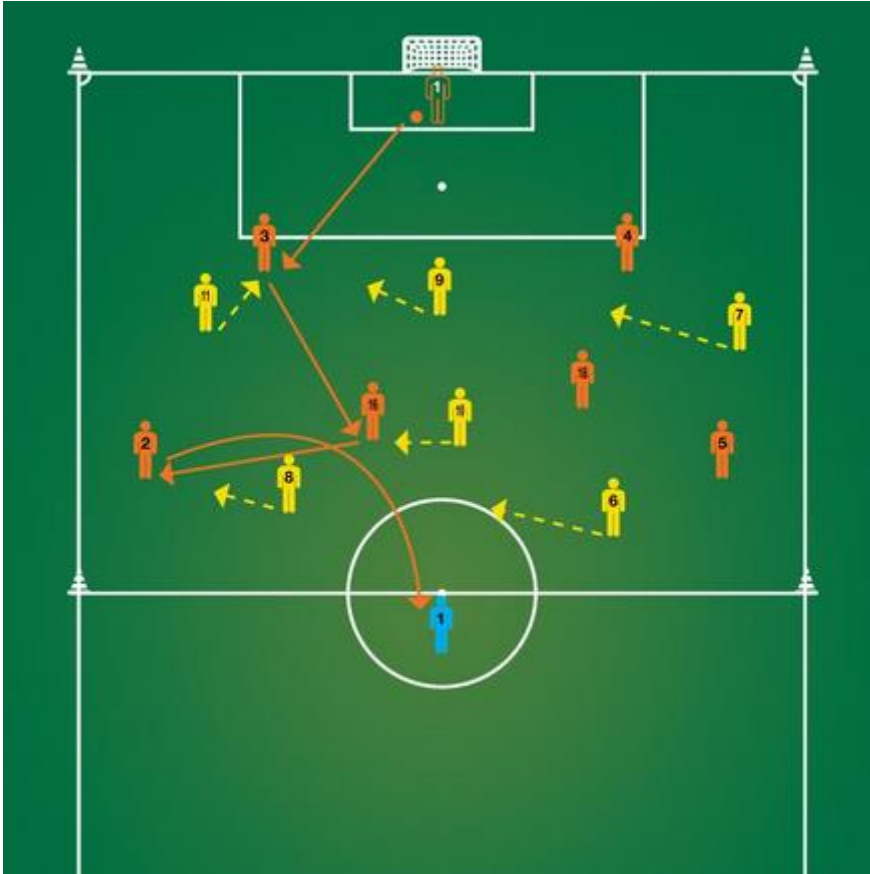
positions and try to pass into the hands of the neutral goalkeeper who must catch the ball inside the centre circle.

The yellow team must try to avoid this by quick transitioning and pressing the ball (see diagram)

After every sequence (attack yellow; counter attack orange) there is a new restart from the neutral goalkeeper.

The coaching focuses on the speed of transitioning from both teams but yellow in particular (BP>BPO).

TRAINING GAME: (T1 BP>BPO)



The same organisation but now as a non-stop game with 'coaching on the run'.

3 points for every goal scored by yellow; 1 point for every time orange succeeds in passing the ball into the hands of the neutral goalkeeper.

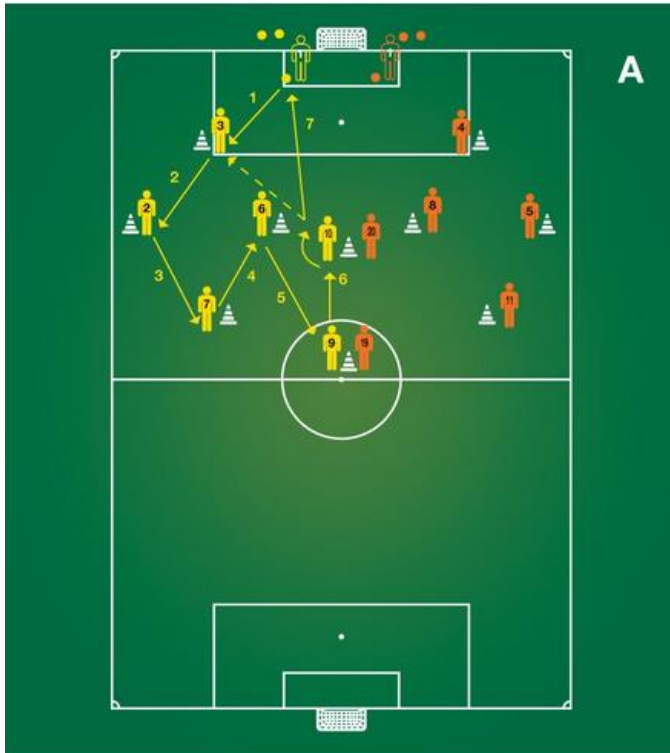
Offside rule applies.

If too easy for orange.

Limited touches (2-3) only for orange.

Decrease the area where the neutral goalkeeper can catch the ball (i.e. only the back half of the centre circle).

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (POFTB 2)



Players in game positions as shown in diagram A.

The passing sequence starts with the two goalkeepers (can be simultaneous); one to the right side; the other to the left side.

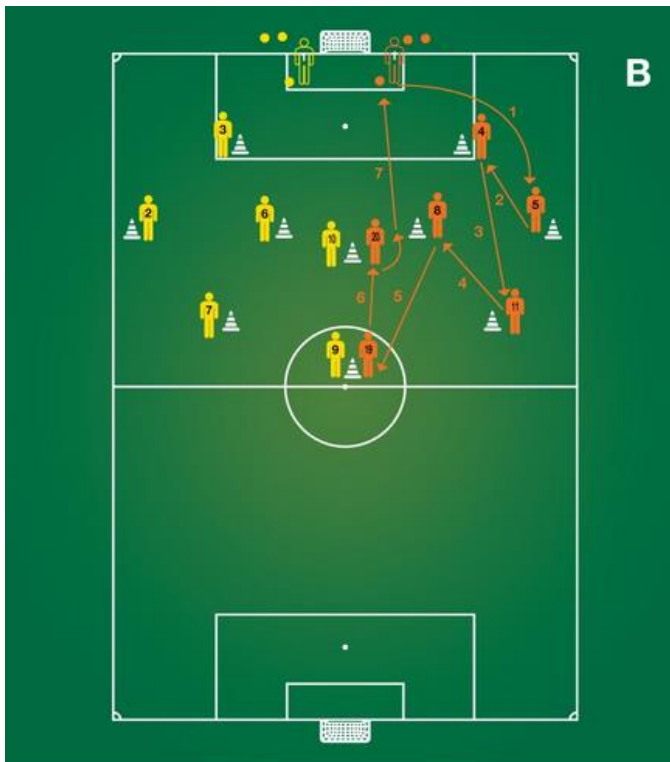
The players pass the ball in a 'logical' order (1-7) while staying in their positions.

"Pass precision and ball speed".

"Now follow your pass to the next position" (NB: #10 goes to position #3/4).

"Gradually increase your running speed".

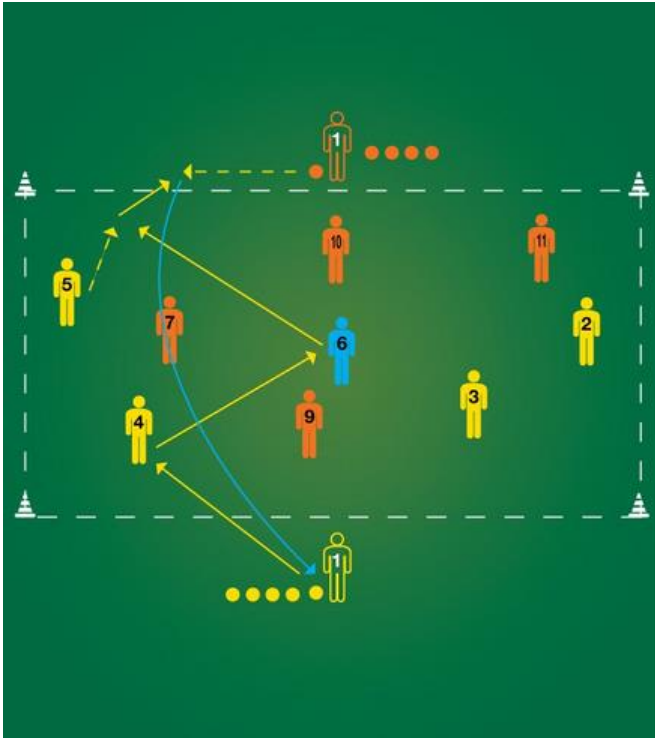
VARIATION



"Here is another variation".

"Now just improvise but use a logical order and every player must touch the ball".

POSITIONING GAME: 5v4+2 (7v4) (POFTB 2)



A grid of approximately 40m wide x 30m long.

2 groups of 4 outfield players (orange + yellow).

Yellow consisting of the players #2-3-4-5.

Orange consisting of the players #7-9-10-11.

#6 is a neutral player who always plays with the team in possession.

The 2 goalkeepers are neutral players who always play with the team in possession and are positioned just behind each back line.

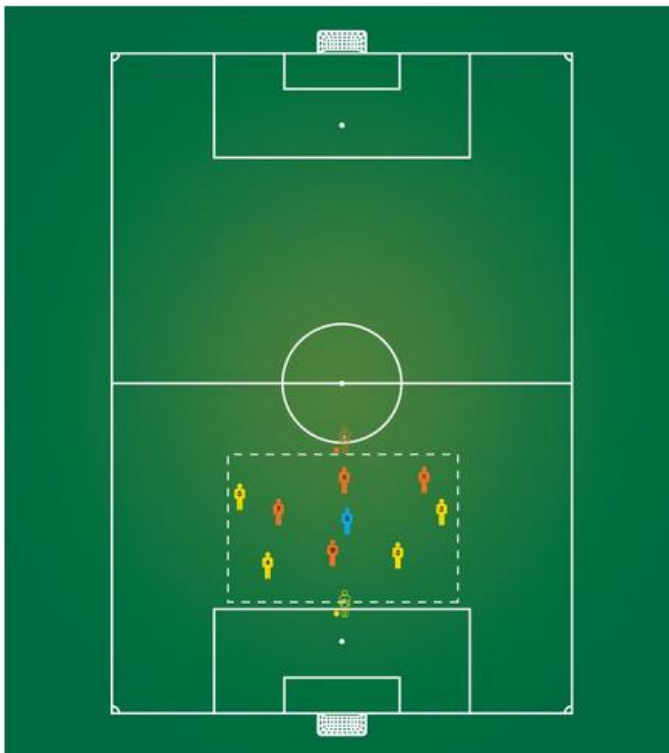
The players as far as the game allows in 'logical' positions.

Yellow #1 starts the game for the yellow team, who must try to pass the ball to orange #1 on the opposite side (see diagram).

If they succeed, orange #1 must now pass the ball across the grid back to yellow #1 on the opposite side, who must catch the ball and start again.

If orange wins the ball, they must try to pass the ball to orange #1 who restarts the game with orange in possession and yellow defending.

VARIATION



Steps up or down

Make grid bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

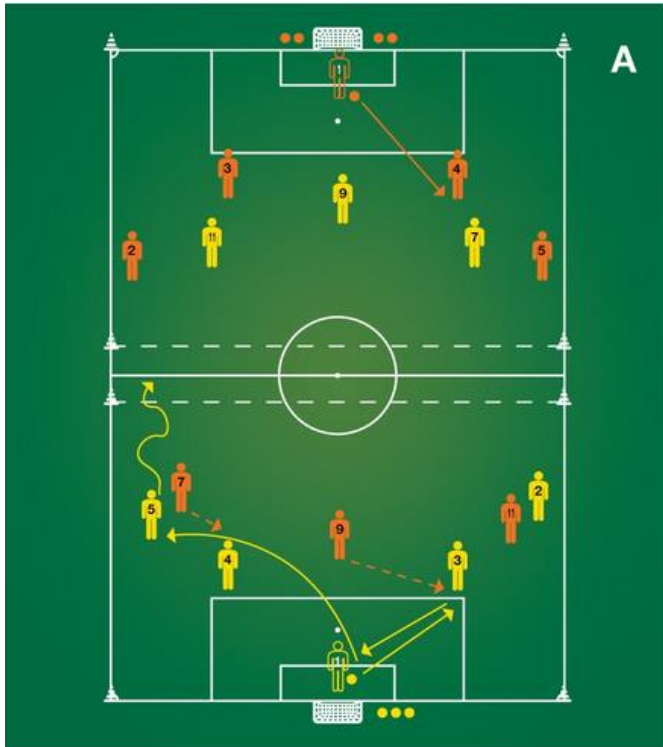
Free/minimum number of passes before you can pass to #1.

1 point for every successful pass from goalkeeper to goalkeeper.

Remark/Hint

Position the grids in 'game realistic' areas of the field (see diagram).

GAME TRAINING: (POFTB 2)



Two teams of 8 players each consisting of a full defence line (#1-2-3-4-5) and attack line (#7-9-11).

2 grids approximately the width of a full pitch and 45m long as shown in diagram A.

In both grids the defenders of one team play against the attackers of the other team.

The goalkeepers start by serving the ball to one of the defenders (enough balls next to both goals).

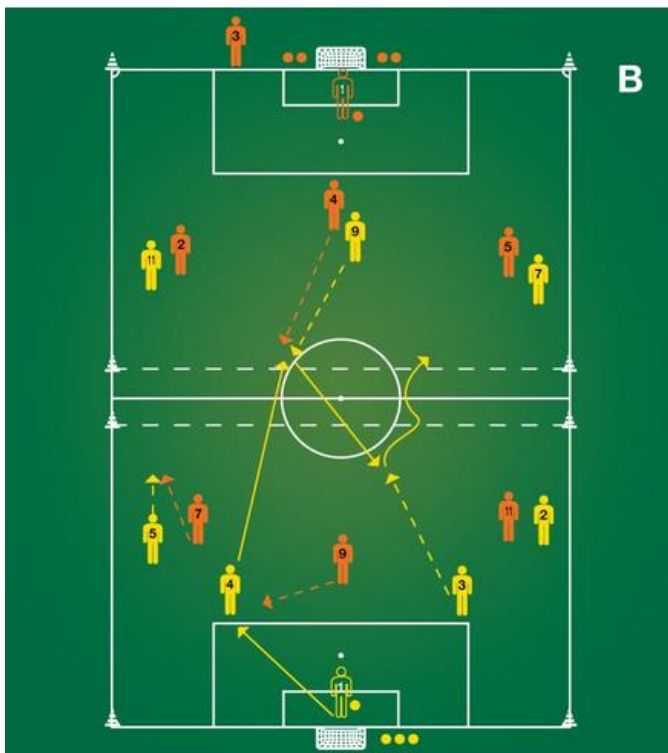
"Get the ball to the 'free' player who must run with the ball across the end line".

If the attackers win the ball, attack the goal and try to score (one attempt only).

If the defenders win the ball back, the action has ended.

Every restart from the goalkeeper

PROGRESSION 1



Now we 'connect' both grids (see diagram B).

Yellow starts playing out from the back and tries to get one defender across to the other grid.

They can now also use the yellow attackers in the other grid as bouncers (offside applies).

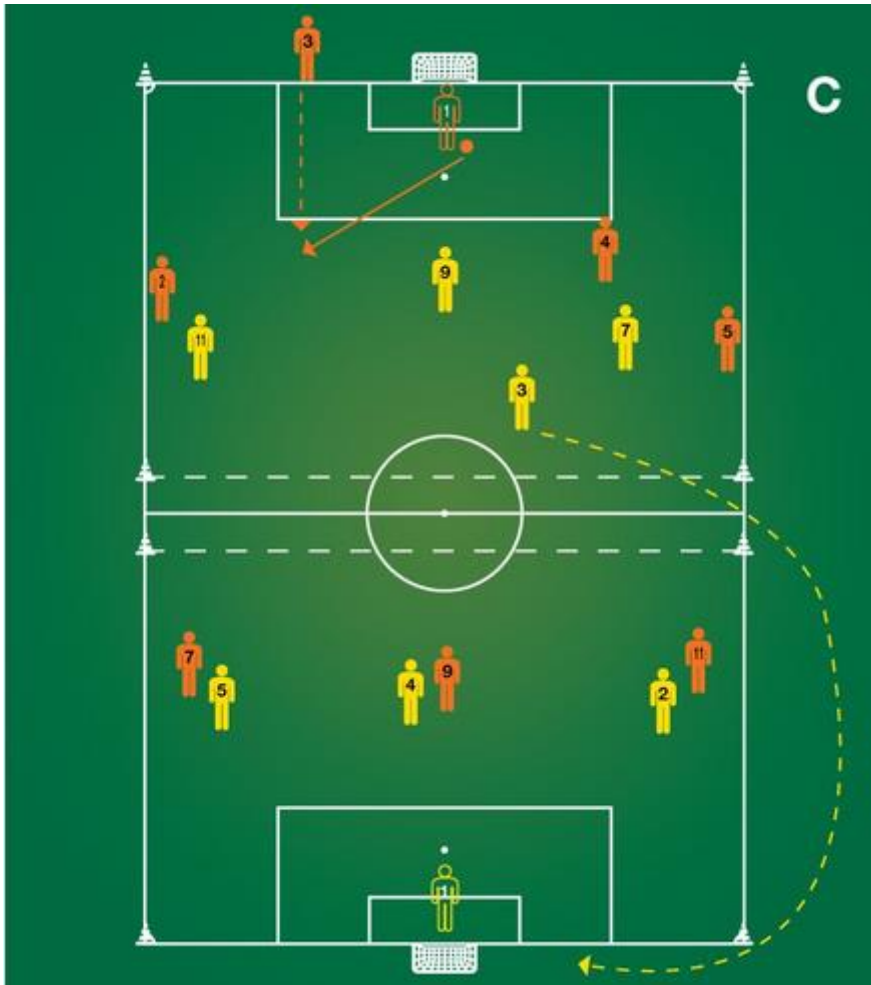
One orange defender waits next to the goal.

So yellow has a numerical advantage (4 v 3) and tries to score.

If the yellow team loses the ball in their defensive grid, orange can try to score (1 attempt only).

If yellow loses the ball in the attacking grid, orange play back to their goalkeeper and the action has ended.

PROGRESSION 2



Now the orange defender (#3), who was waiting next to the goal, comes on to the pitch and the yellow defender (#3) that had joined the attack steps out and jogs back to wait next to the goal.

The same action starts again but now with orange playing out and attacking while the yellow team defends (see diagram C).

The next step up would be to decrease the size of the grids, with portable goals on the edge of each box and narrowing the pitch 5m each side. The halfway line now divides the attacking and defensive halves.

TRAINING GAME: 8v8 (POFTB 2)



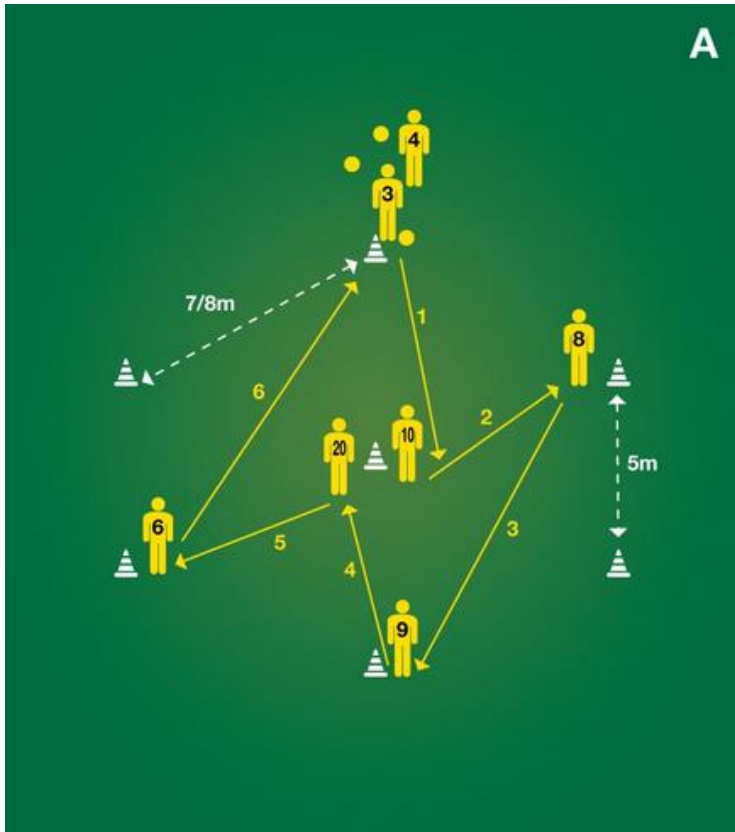
Formation of both teams 1-4-3.

All players can move across the whole field.

Normal rules, offside applies.

Pitch size depends on player's ability (see diagram D).

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (MP 2)



Cones and players positioned as shown in diagram A.

If the number of players allows/requires: 2 players per position or a similar organisation on the other half of the pitch.

At least 2 players at the starting position and 2 at the central cone.

The players pass the ball around in a 'logical' sequence (1-6).

Players follow their pass to the next position.

Now go the other way around and players #6 and #8 adjust accordingly.

Possible Coaches Remarks

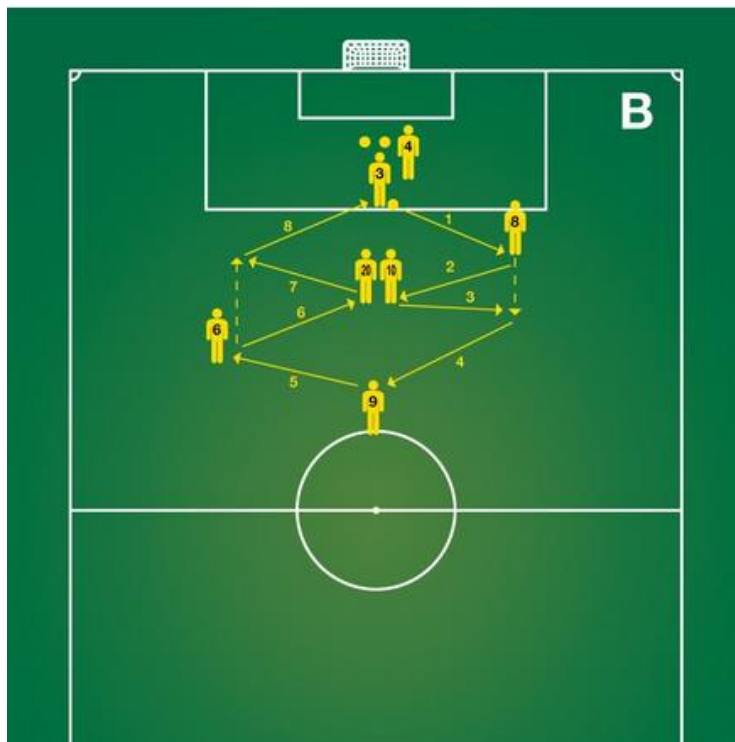
"Pass precision and ball speed".

"Check off before asking/receiving the ball".

"Now we go in the opposite direction".

"Gradually increase your running speed".

VARIATION



"Here is another variation" (see diagram B).

Player rotations are now as follows: #3 goes to #8, #8 to #9, #9 to #6 and #6 back to #1 (then recommence).

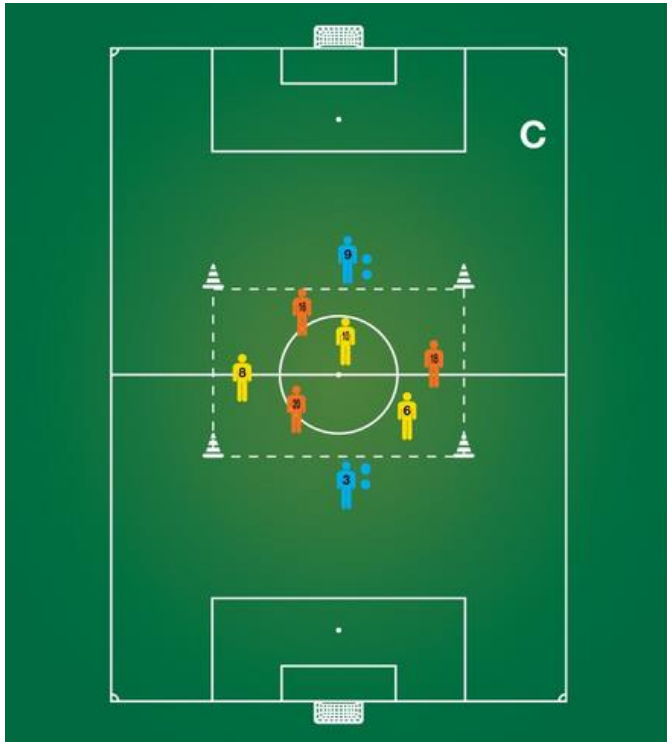
#10 and #20 stay in the middle.

"Now just improvise but use a logical order and every player must touch the ball".

Remark/Hint

Position the exercise in a 'realistic' area of the field.

POSITIONING GAME: 3v3 + 2 (MP 2)



A grid of approximately 30m x 25m, positioned in 'game realistic' area of the field (see diagram C).

Two groups of 3 outfield players.

One team consisting of the midfield players #6-8 and #10 (yellow in diagram).

#3 and #9 are neutral players, positioned on each back line.

The players, as far as the game allows, in 'logical' positions.

#3 starts the game for yellow who must try to pass the ball on the ground to #9 on the opposite side.

#9 must now pass the ball back across the grid to #3, who starts again.

If orange wins the ball, they must try to pass to #9 who restarts the game with orange in possession and yellow defending.

If the pass across the grid is intercepted (or #3 is not able to properly control it), the game restarts with #9 and possession for orange.

Steps up or down

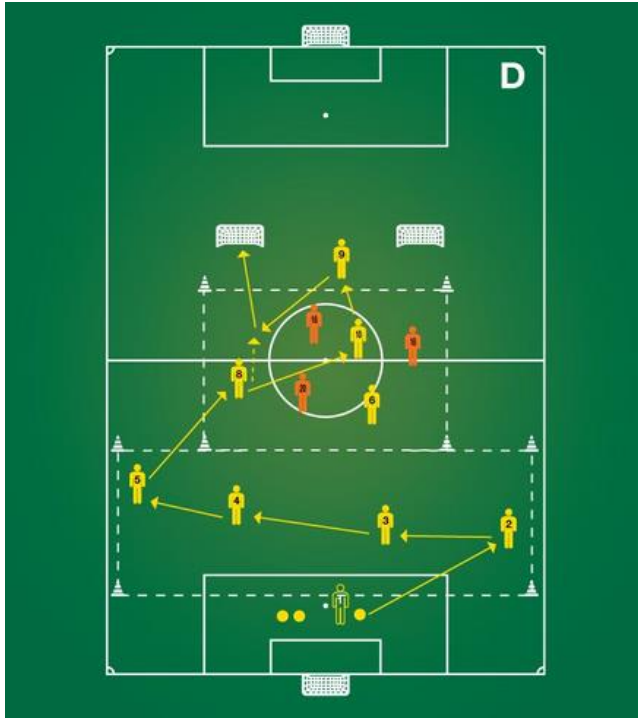
Make grids bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

Free/minimum number of passes before you can play to #3 or #9.

1 point for every completed sequence.

GAME TRAINING: (MP 2)



Position a second 25m-50m grid adjacent to the one of the positioning game, as shown in diagram D.

Inside this grid are the defenders #2; 3; 4 and 5 of the yellow team.

Goalkeeper #1 serves them a ball and they combine amongst each other till there is a good situation to pass to one of the midfielders in the adjacent grid.

The midfielders try to pass into one of the two small goals, using #9 as a bouncer.

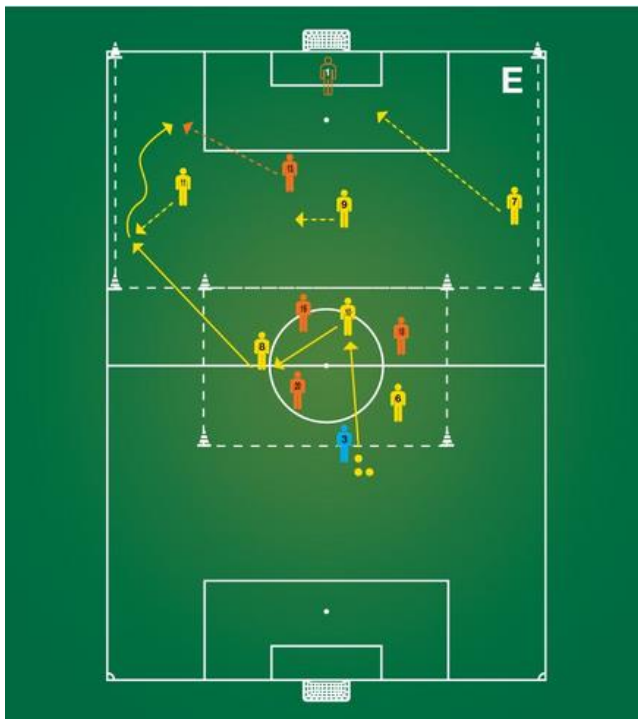
If the orange team intercepts the ball, they try to pass the ball into the hands of #1.

After every successful/unsuccessful attempt: #1 restarts again.

Next step is to introduce 1 or more opponent(s) in the grid of the defenders.

This organisation is aimed at practicing midfield play in relation to building-up

VARIATION



We can also apply the same principle to practice midfield play in relation to attacking by placing the adjacent grid at the opposite end of the midfield grid (see diagram E).

The midfielders must create/use the right opportunity to pass to one of the 3 attackers in the adjacent grid, who must try to score against 1, 2 or 3 defenders.

Progression

One midfielder can join the attack (with or without the ball).

TRAINING GAME: (MP 2)



8 v 8, normal rules apply (diagram F).

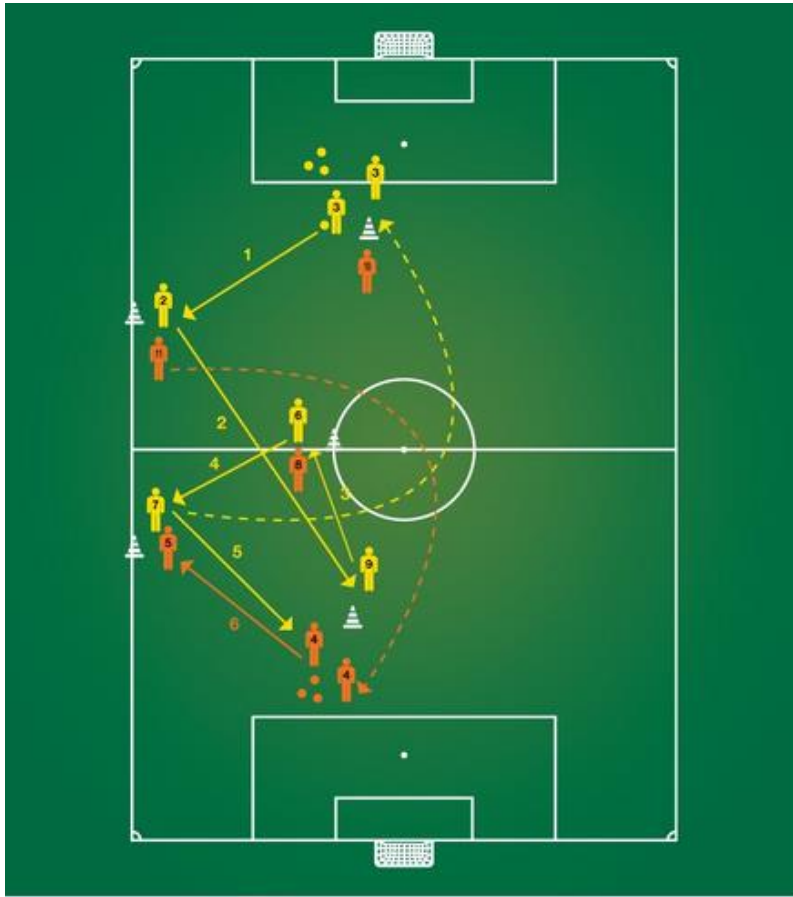
Formation yellow: 1-4-3-1.

Formation orange: 1-2-3-3.

If our training aim is to improve midfield play in relation to building-up we focus on the execution of the yellow team.

If our training aim is to improve midfield play in relation to attacking we focus on the execution of the orange team.

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (A 2 WIDE AREAS)



Players in their game positions (see diagram).

Right side players (yellow) and left side players (orange) opposite of one another but not interfering with each other.

Minimum 2 players in the positions #3 & #4.

In case of bigger numbers: set up a similar organisation on the other wing.

Yellow works from top down; orange from bottom up (#7 yellow passes to #4 orange who starts the same combination in the opposite direction till #11 orange passes the ball again to yellow #3).

All players follow their pass to the next position but only on their own team. i.e. After pass 5 to orange #4, yellow #7 goes to the position of yellow #3 (same for orange #11: to position #4).

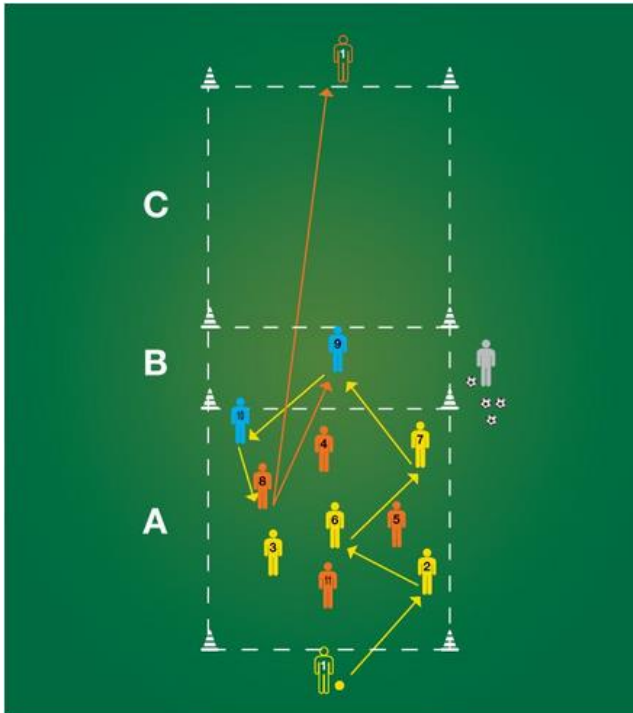
Start with prescribed pattern (as shown).

Introduce a 2nd (3rd?) pattern.

Progression

Now yellow passes with passive resistance of orange: choose the right option depending on the defensive positioning of the opposing players (this option is for advanced players only).

POSITIONING GAME: 6v3 (A 2 WIDE AREAS)



2 grids of approximately 30m x 30m (A & C) separated by a grid of 5m x 30m (B).

2 groups of 4 outfield players.

Yellow consisting of the players #2-3-6-7.

Orange consisting of the players #4-5-8-11.

#9 and #10 are neutral players who always play with the team in possession; one in grid B the other in the grid where the positioning game takes place (see diagram).

2 goalkeepers positioned on each back line.

#7 (yellow) keep possession against #4 (orange).

Players as much as possible in their game positions (especially the team in BP).

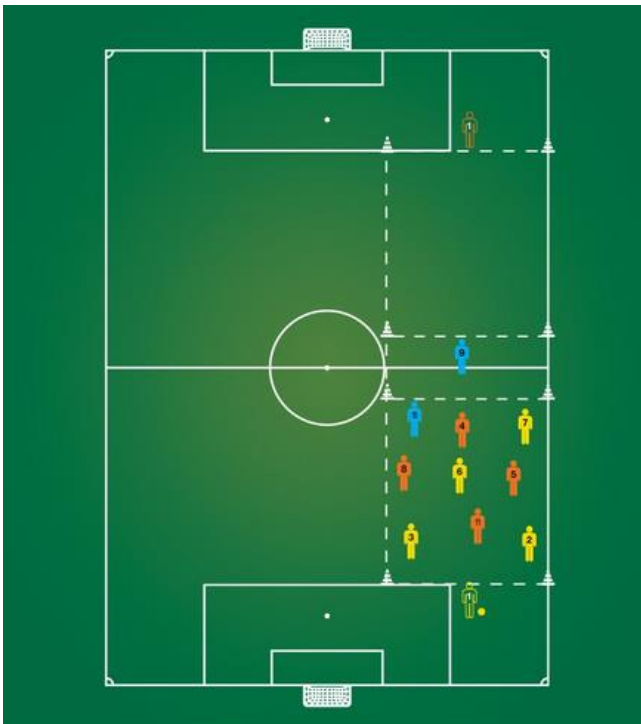
Provide 4 options (left; right; central and far) for the player on the ball through proper positioning.

When orange wins the ball in grid A, they must try to pass to #9 in grid B or their goalkeeper at the far end.

If they succeed, all players cross over to grid C where the game continues with orange in possession and yellow defending.

If a yellow player passes the ball out of the grid, the coach immediately serves a new ball to the orange goalkeeper and the game restarts in grid C with possession for orange.

VARIATION



Steps up or down:

Make grids bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

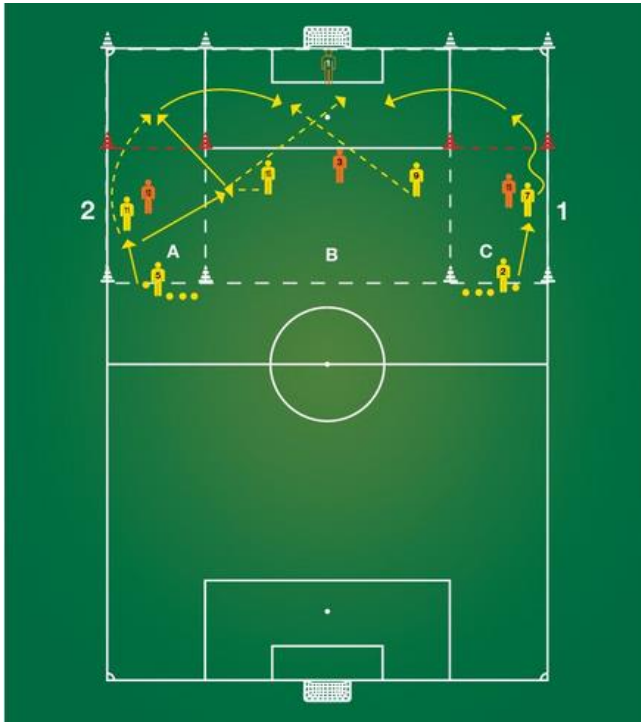
Stop-start change of grids.

'Flying' change of grids.

Remark/Hint

Position the grids in 'game realistic' areas of the field (see diagram on the right).

GAME TRAINING: (A 2 WIDE AREAS)



Three grids A, B and C as shown in diagram on the right.

In grid A, #11 yellow and an orange defender (#12); #5 yellow is positioned outside the grid with plenty of balls.

In grid B, #9 & #10 yellow and an orange defender (#3) plus a goalkeeper.

In grid C, #7 yellow and an orange defender (#15) with yellow #2 outside the grid.

#2 & #5 yellow alternately serve a ball to respectively #7 & #11.

#2-7 and #5-11 must beat the orange defenders in their respective grids through effective wing play and deliver a cross to #9 & #10 in grid B who try to finish 2 v 1.

The defenders in grids A & C cannot defend

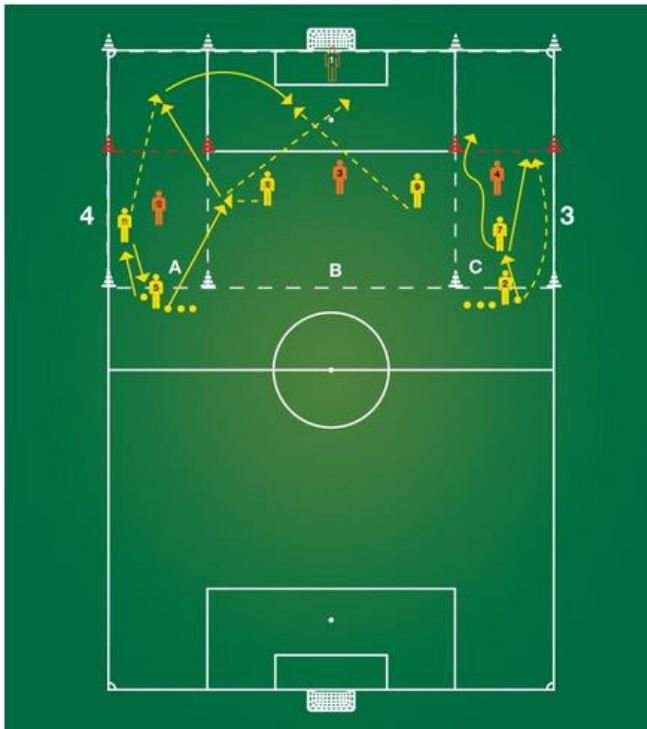
beyond the red dotted line.

Wing play options

The winger beats the defender 1 v 1 (situation 1).

The winger plays a wall pass with #9 or #10 (situation 2).

MORE WING PLAY OPTIONS



The full-back overlaps the winger to create a 2 v 1 (situation 3).

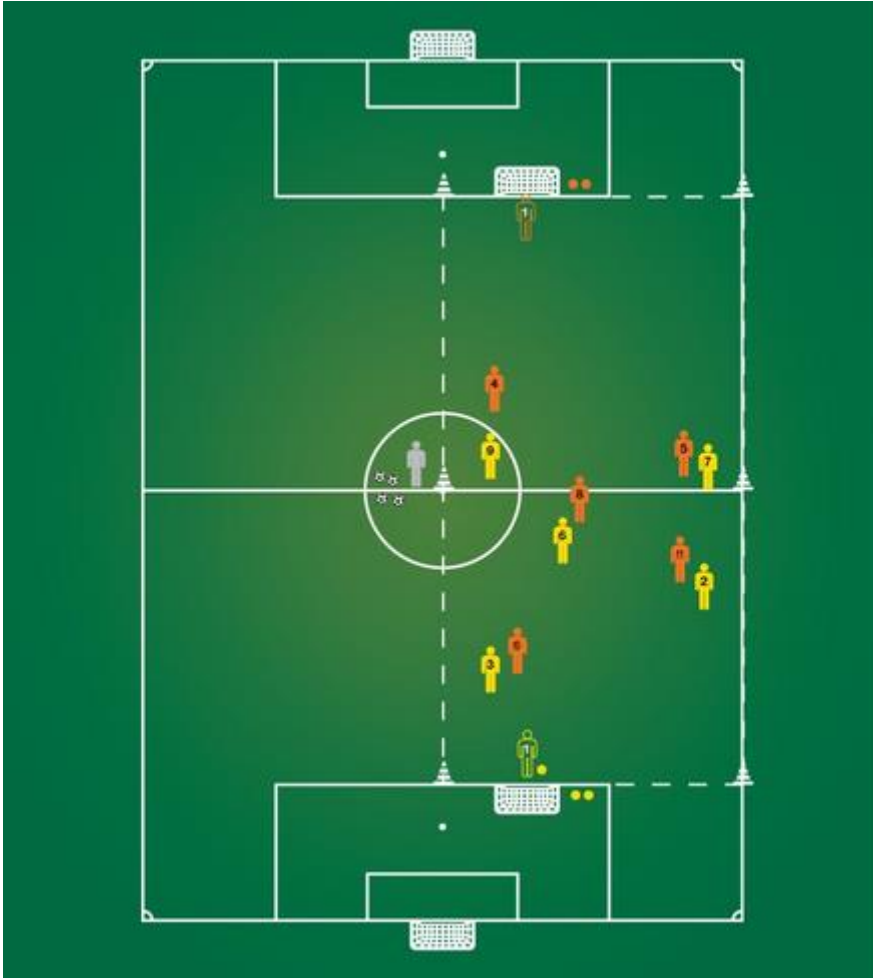
The winger bounces with the full-back and becomes the 3rd man via a combination with #9 or #10 (situation 4).

The option selected by the attacking player often depends on the action of the defender. The coach may need to help the players develop their awareness and insight to select the most effective option.

Communication between the players is essential.

Also pay attention to the positioning and finishing of #9 & #10

TRAINING GAME: 7v7 INCLUDING GOALKEEPERS (A 2 WIDE AREAS)



The field is positioned in a wide area of the full pitch (see diagram).

Pitch length: box to box (70m).

Pitch width: central axis to sideline (35m), divided by the halfway line.

Two portable goals (or poles) placed as shown (balls next to the goals).

The coach with balls on the halfway line.

Offside rule applies!

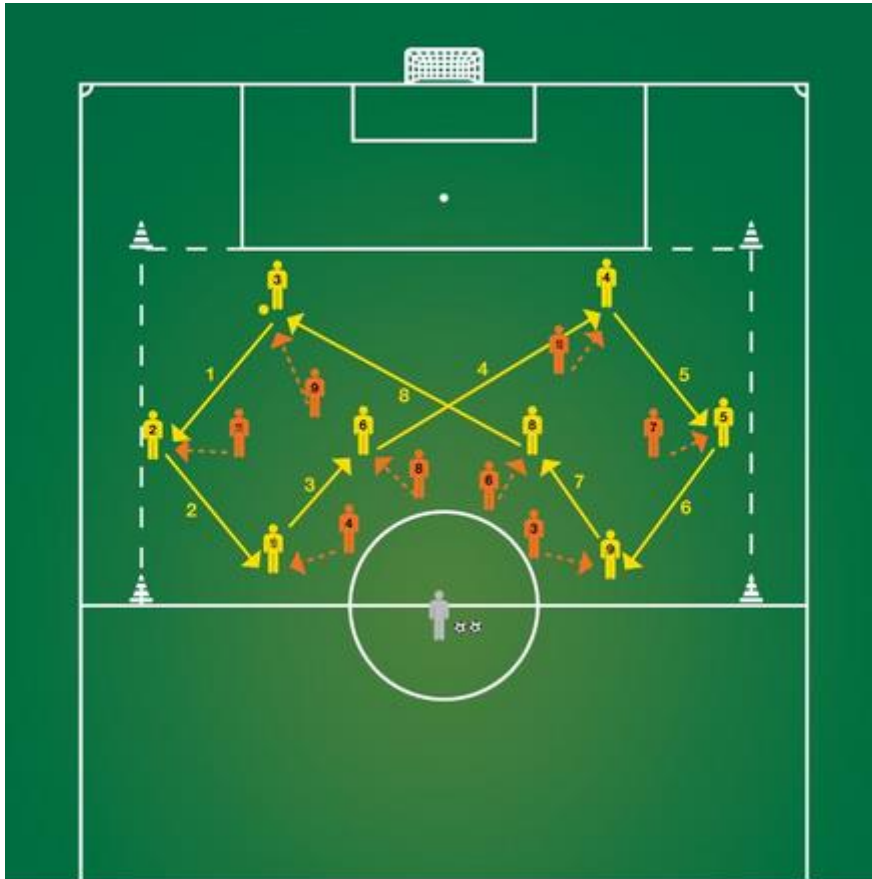
Players in their usual 'game positions'.

In this particular game, it means that the right side of the team (#2-3-6-7) + striker #9 plays against the left side of the team (#4-5-8-11) + central midfielder #10. It is essential that the coach maintains realistic positions relative to a full field game (this explains the positions of the goals).

#9 and #10 to change teams halfway through the game.

By setting the game up this way, wing play will automatically be emphasised!

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (D&P 2)



Two groups of 8 players position themselves in a grid of approximately.

35m x 50m as shown in diagram on the right.

Yellow #3 starts the passing exercise.

Yellow players pass the ball in a prescribed order as shown (1-8).

Although the players stay in their positions, they must not be 'static' but check off and anticipate.

The orange players 'pressure' the ball as a unit without intercepting the ball or disrupting the passing sequence.

Progression

To the left and to the right.

Change the role of the yellow and orange team.

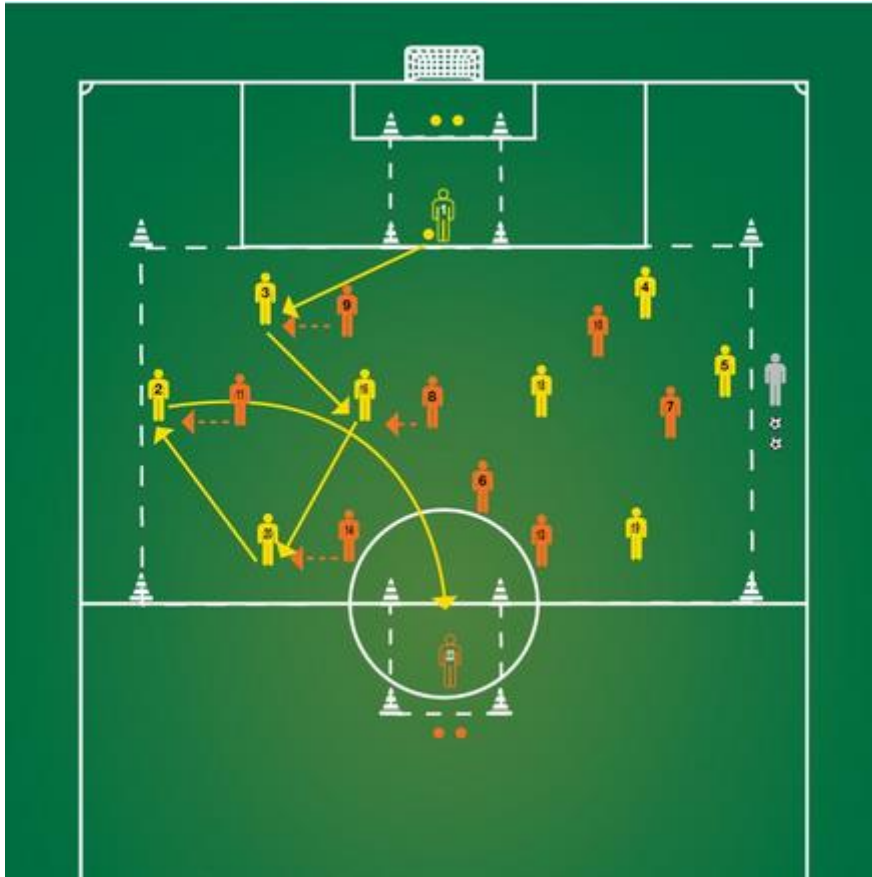
Include intervals with dynamic stretches.

Increase the passing and ball speed.

Introduce a second passing sequence.

Free instead of prescribed passing sequence.

POSITIONING GAME: 8v8 + GOALKEEPERS (D&P 2)



Use the grid from the passing exercise.

2 goalkeepers on each back line in a 10m x 10m grid.

The GK starts the game for yellow team who must try to pass the ball into the hands of the GK on the opposite side.

Orange must prevent this by pressuring the ball.

Change of roles if orange wins the ball.

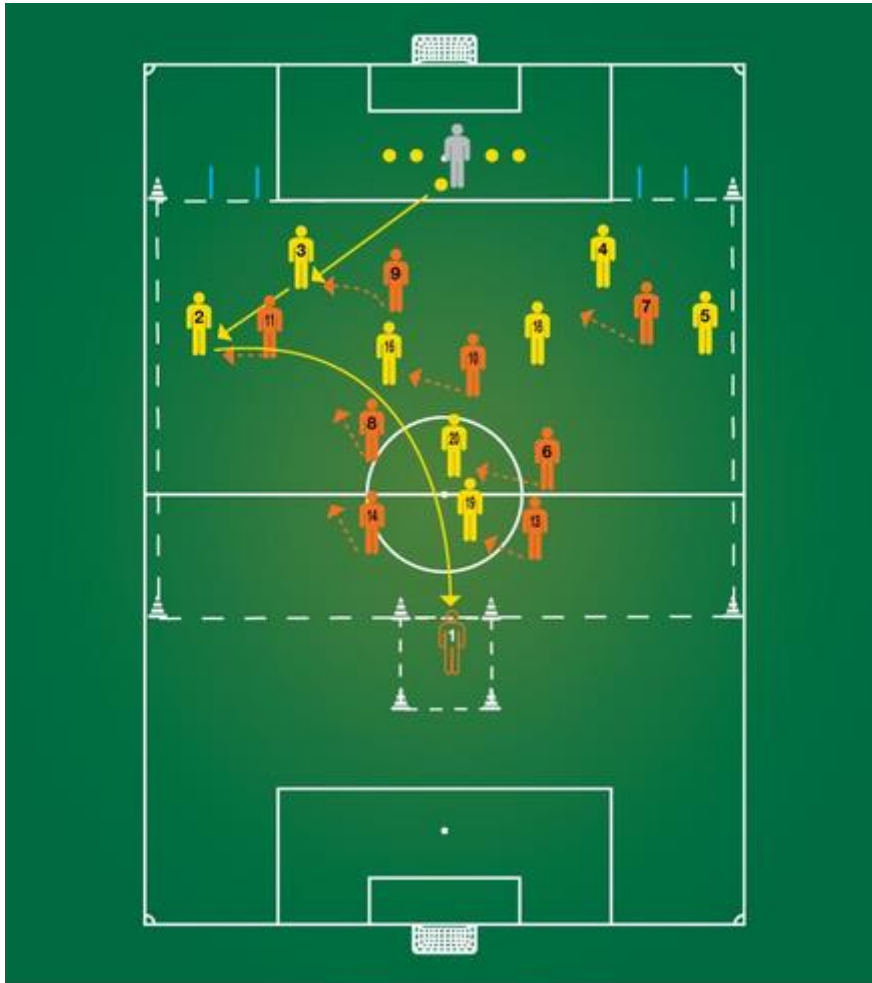
Steps up or down.

Make the grid(s) bigger/smaller.

Free/limited touches.

1 point for every successful pass into the hands of the goalkeeper.

GAME TRAINING: (D&P 2)



A grid of 50m (length) x 60m (width), with two 5m gates on one byline and 10m x 10m box on the other byline (as shown in the diagram).

Yellow team consists of the DF's #2, 3, 4 and 5, MF's #16, 18 and 20, and FW #19 (formation 4-3-1).

Orange team consists of FW's #11, 9 and 7, MF's #10, 8 and 6 and DF's #13 & 14 (formation 2-3-3).

The coach starts by serving the ball to one of the yellow defenders.

The yellow team must try to pass the ball into the hands of the goalkeeper who is standing on the opposite side in the 10m x 10m box.

The orange team must prevent this by collective, coordinated pressure.

Offside rule applies.

If orange wins the ball they try to score in one of the two goals (one attempt only). If the defenders win the ball back the action has ended.

Every restart from the coach.

Step up/Step down

Free/limited touches for yellow.

Free/minimum number of passes before yellow can play to #1.

Possible Coaches Remarks

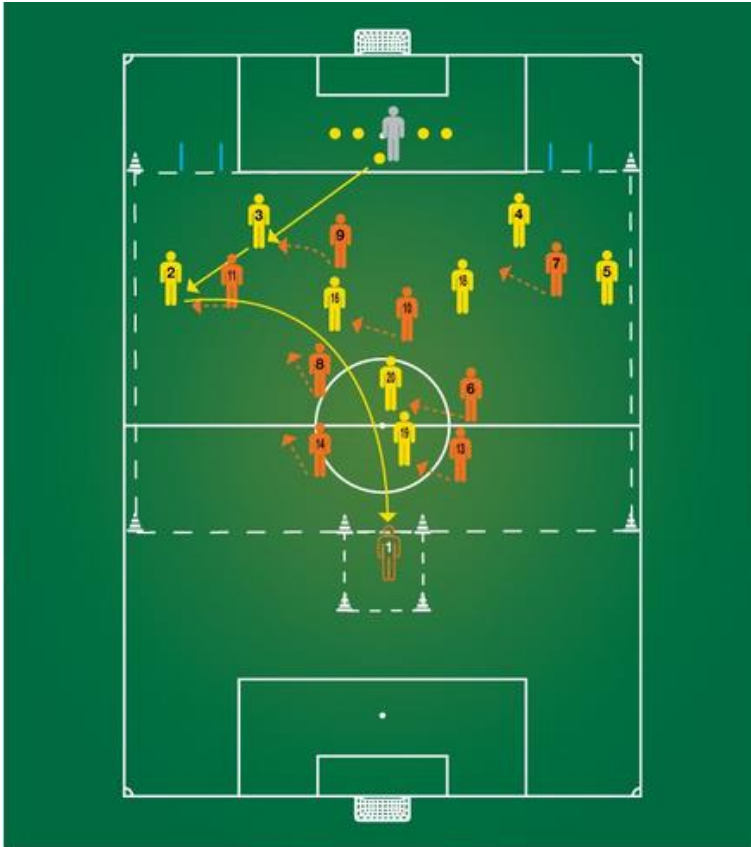
"Immediately press the player with the ball"

"Do not allow time and space to pass to the goalkeeper"

"Mark/pressure the opponents close to the ball"

"Work as a unit and keep your relative distances short"

TRAINING GAME: (D&P 2)

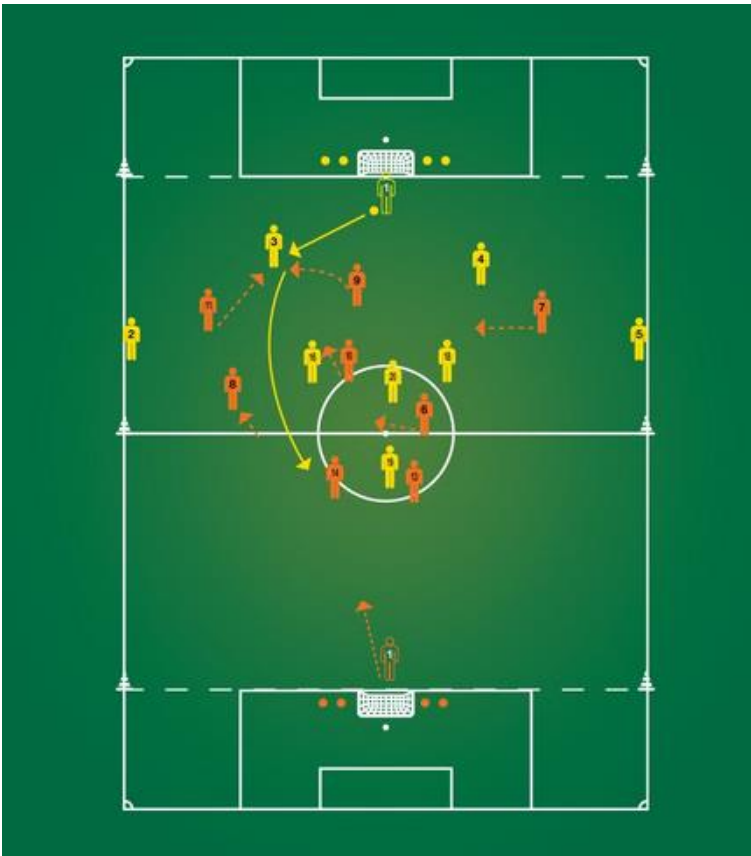


Continuing from the game training exercise on the previous page:

Yellow team gets 1 point for every successful pass into the hands of the goalkeeper.

Orange gets 2 points for every pass through one of the two gates.

OPTION 2

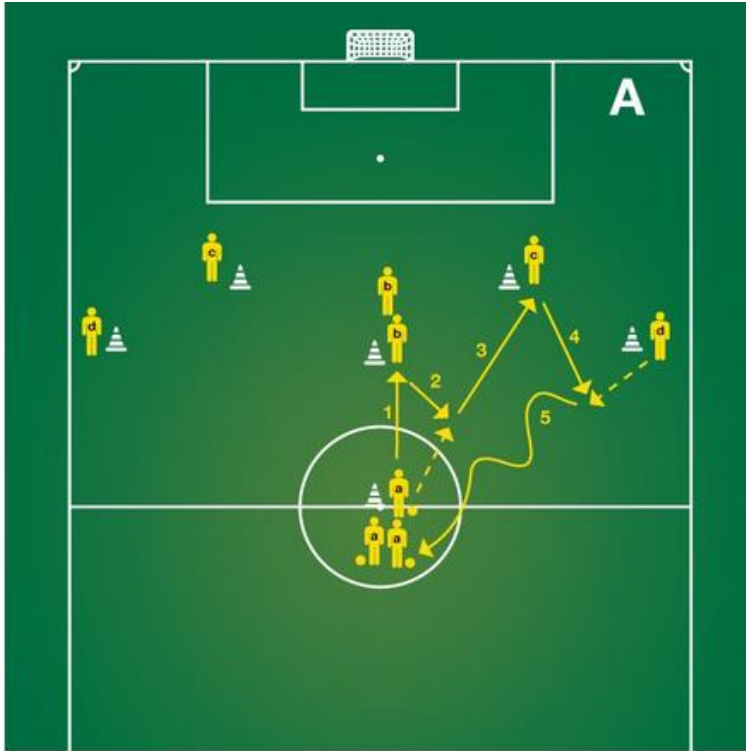


8 v 8 + goalkeepers on $\frac{3}{4}$ of a full pitch (box to box) divided by the halfway line.

The coach's focus is on the orange team with regards to disrupting/pressuring the yellow team's ability to play out from the back.

The orange team must pressure yellow as early as possible and try to win the ball back in the yellow team's half. Every time they succeed in winning possession in the opposition half they will receive one bonus point. The offside rule applies.

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (D/R 2 LONG BALL / 2ND BALL)



Players in the positions as shown in diagram A.

Three or more players at the starting position (a) and two players at the next position (b). At least one player at the other positions (c & d).

The players pass the ball in the order 1-4 and move to the next position (a-b-c-d).

The player who receives pass 4 dribbles back to the starting position (5).

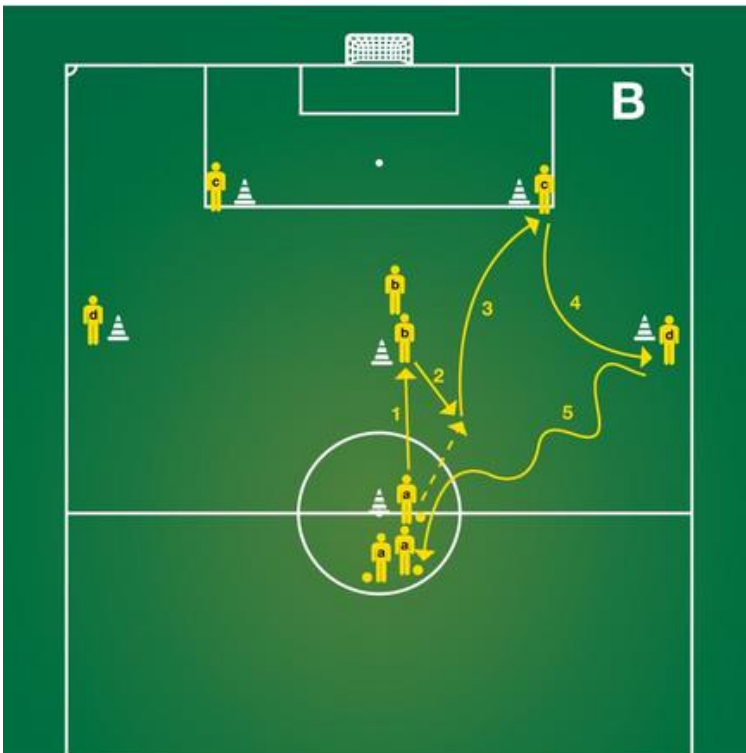
Alternate from left to right.

Possible Coaches Remarks

"Pass precision and ball speed"

"Gradually increase your running speed"

VARIATION

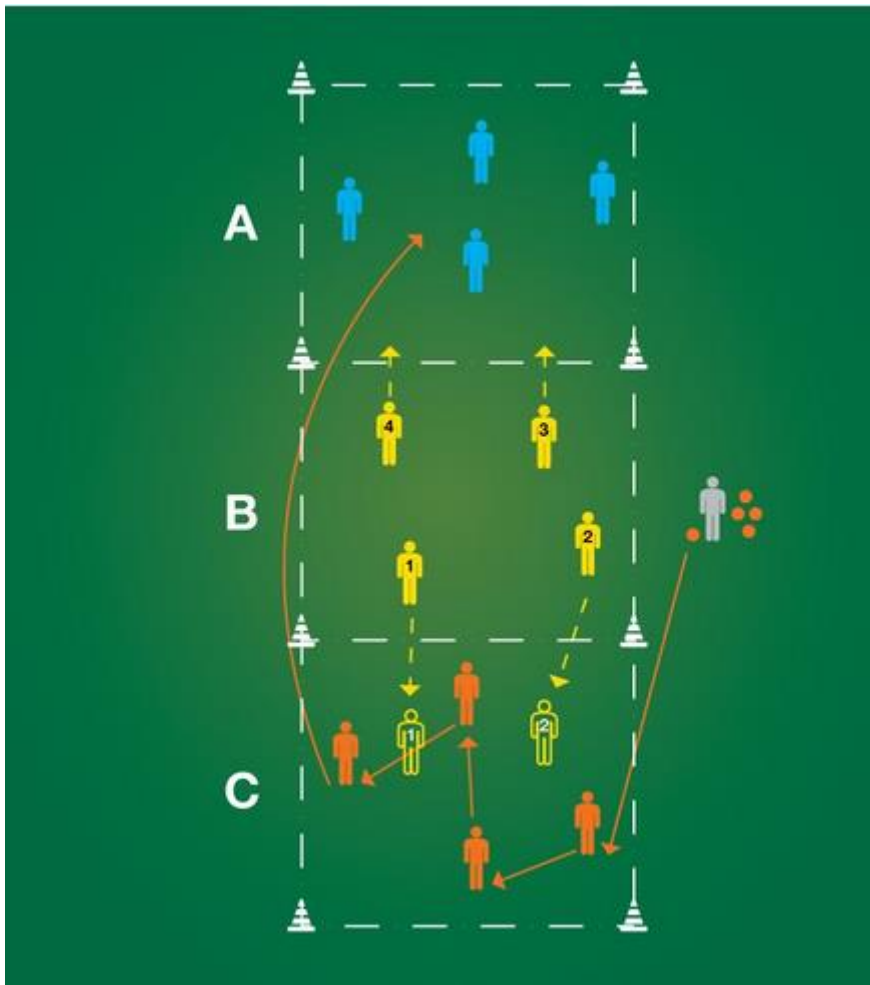


Progression

The next step is moving back the players/cones of positions (c) (see diagram B).

Pass 3 now becomes a lofted pass that player (c) must head or volley to player (d).

POSITIONING GAME: 4v2 WITH 12 PLAYERS (D/R 2 LONG BALL / 2ND BALL)



Organisation (see diagram):

3 adjacent squares (A-B-C) of 15m x 15m/20m x 20m (depending on player's ability).

3 groups of 4 players with different colour bibs position themselves in one of the grids.

The coach with sufficient balls next to grid B.

The coach starts the game with a pass to the orange team in grid C (or blue in A).

At that moment players #1 and 2 from the yellow team in grid B immediately start defending in grid C: 4 v 2.

Orange must try to play a pass across grid B to the blue team in grid A.

Then yellow players #3 and 4 start defending in grid A and yellow #1 and 2 go back to grid B.

If the orange or blue team makes a mistake (lose possession or a pass out of the grid) they must change with yellow and defend.

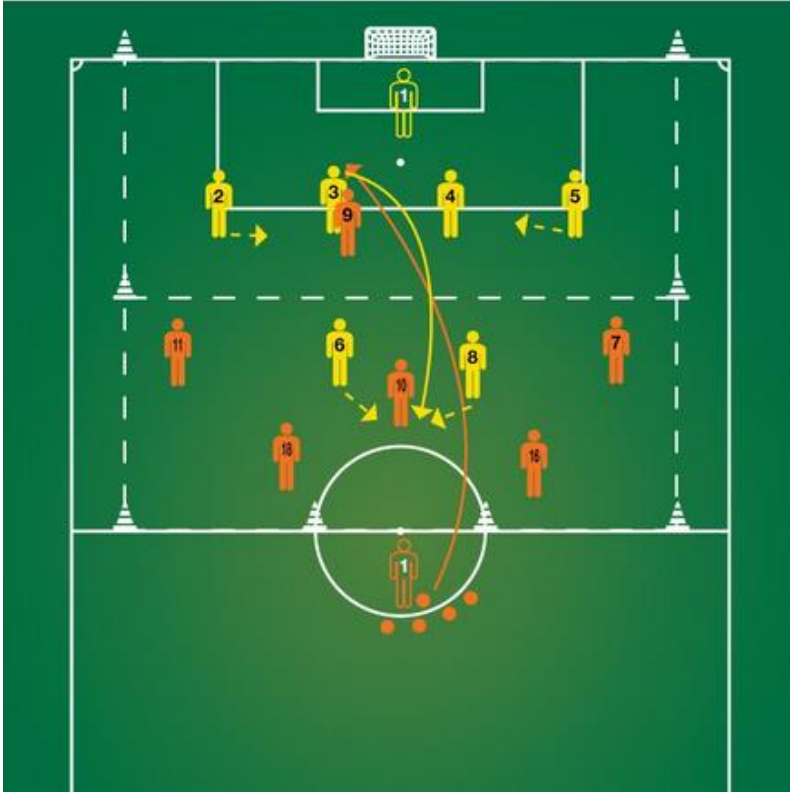
Steps up or down

Bigger/smaller grids.

Free/limited touches.

3 v 1 (9 players); 2 v 1 (6 players).

GAME TRAINING: (D/R 2 LONG BALL / 2ND BALL)



Organisation

A 50m x 50m pitch divided by a 'halfway line'.

Two teams of 6 outfield players plus a goalkeeper each.

Plenty of balls on the edge of the far end of the centre circle.

The yellow team consists of the defenders (#1-2-3-4-5) plus the midfielders (#6-8).

The orange team is made up of the attackers (#7-9 & 11) and midfielders (#10-16-18).

The orange goalkeeper has a 'dual' role.

Orange #1 starts the exercise with a long aerial pass to the attackers (the pass must go across the 'halfway line').

Orange tries to win possession (1st and 2nd ball) and score.

Yellow must defend their goal and, when they win the ball, pass it into the hands of the orange goalkeeper who must stand in the back half of the centre circle (one attempt only: if yellow loses the ball the action has ended, and orange #1 restarts).

Offside rule applies.

Coaching Focus

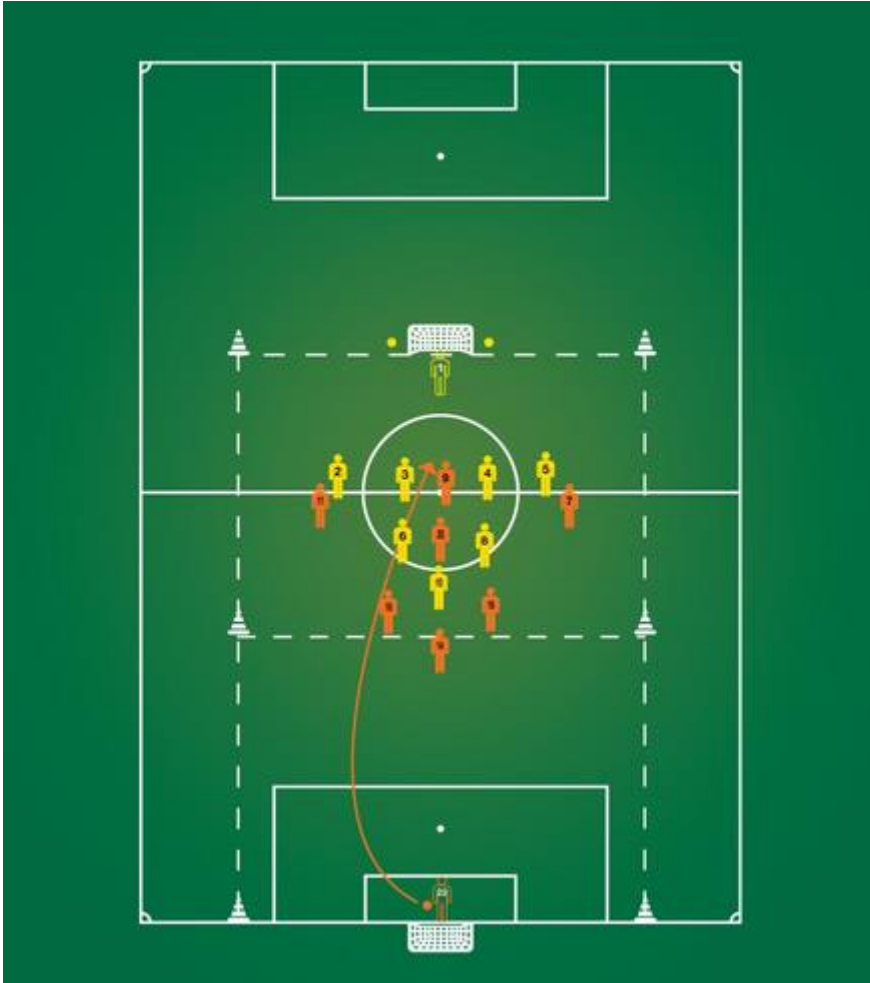
Marking/duelling (1st ball).

Positioning/timing (2nd ball).

Communication (covering/offside).

Transitioning (BPO>BP).

TRAINING GAME: 8v8 (D/R 2 LONG BALL / 2ND BALL)



Organisation

A pitch of approximately 70m x 50m with two big goals and divided by a halfway line (see diagram).

Two teams of 7 outfield players plus a goalkeeper.

Orange consists of GK #22, DF #14, MF's #16-18-20 and FW's #7-9-11 (formation 1-1-3-3).

Yellow consists of GK #1, DF's #2-3-4-5, MF's #6-8-10 (formation 1-4-3).

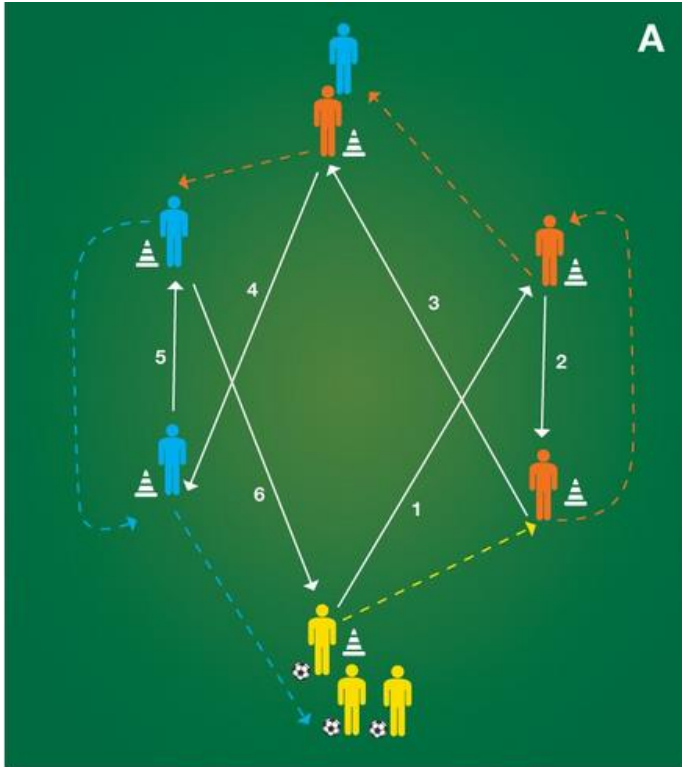
Offside rule applies.

Special rule

Every time the orange GK #22 gets the ball (also in open play), they must start with a long ball to the strikers (across the halfway line).

For the rest it's a normal 8 v 8 game, but the coaching focuses on defending the long ball and 2nd ball by the yellow team.

WARM-UP: PASSING EXERCISE (T2 BPO>BP)



Cones positioned as shown in diagram.

Distance between the cones 5m-10m depending on ability.

9 players divided in 3 groups of three (different colours).

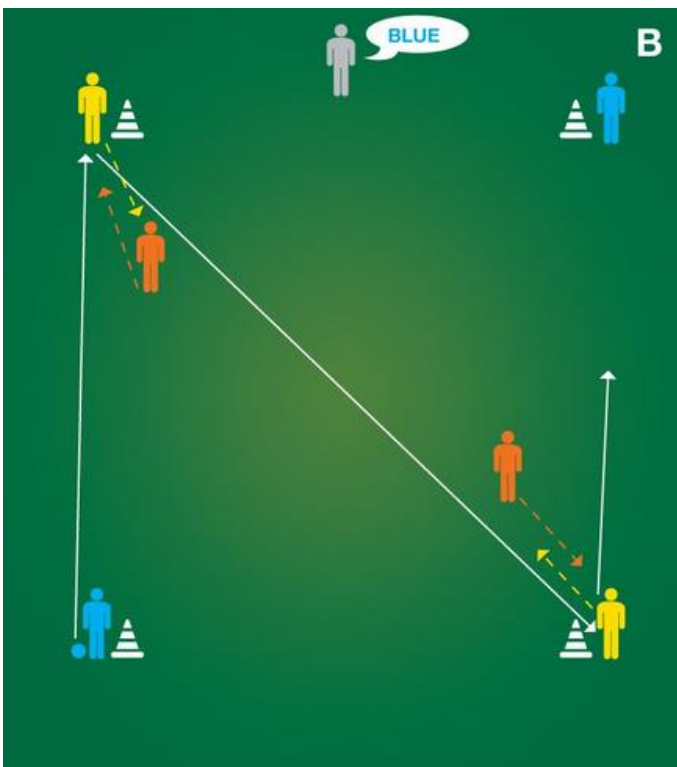
Each group with a ball, 3-5 min random passing and moving in the area between the cones.

Next they perform the passing drill shown in the diagram.

Players move to the next cone after each pass.

Change direction regularly (to left/right).

VARIATION



Progression

6 players perform the passing drill without following their ball, while 3 players (one group) defend passively (yellow in diagram B).

On the coach's call (colour) the group that are defenders change with the group that's been called by the coach: 'Flying' change over; no/minimal stop
Further Progression (advanced only)
Regularly change the pass direction on the run (orientation).

Change defenders roles at random intervals.

Are the players able to transition and adjust immediately?

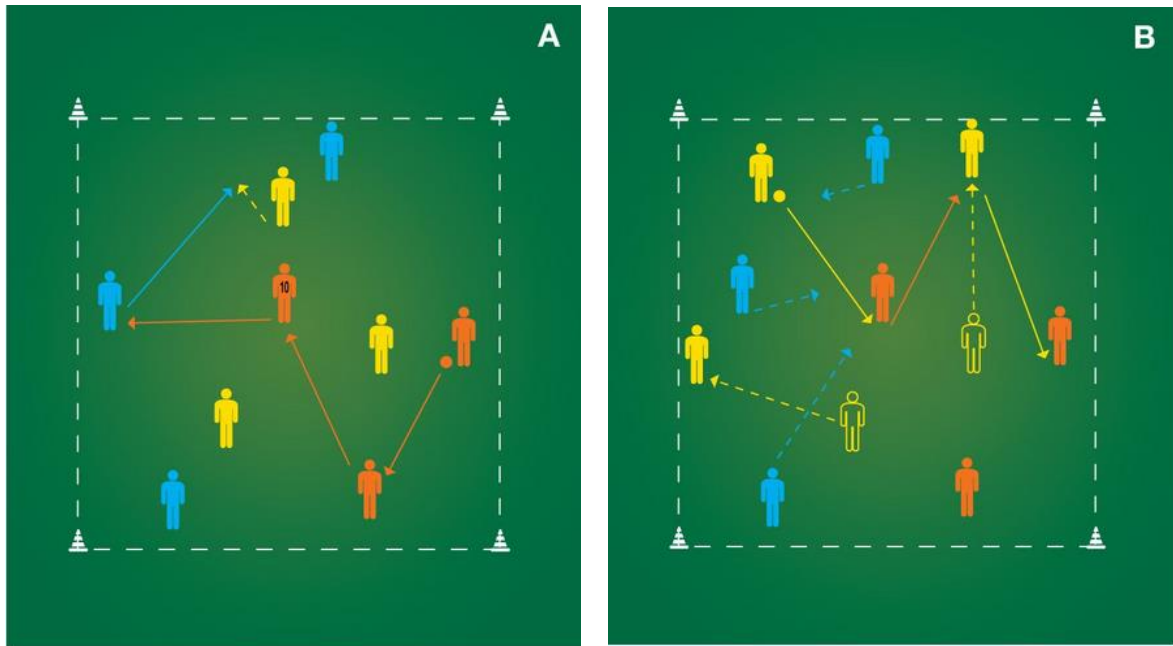
Possible Coaches Remarks

"Immediately focus on your new task"

"Know where you have to pass"

"Which group makes the least mistakes"

POSITIONING GAME: 6v3 (T2 BPO>BP)



9 players divided in three groups of 3.

A grid of 30m x 30m (dependent on ability of players).

Orange and blue (6) keep possession while yellow (3) tries to win the ball (diagram A).

6 v 3 always requires a 'link' player in the centre (orange #10 in diagram as an example).

As soon as an orange or blue player makes a mistake (interception by yellow defender or ball out of grid) the defenders swap roles with the team of the player that made the mistake (blue in diagram A).

Blue must immediately start defending which forces yellow to also make a quick transition to BP (see diagram B).

Play in series of 3-4 minutes.

Step down (too difficult)

Allow a stop to change roles when the 6 players in BP make a mistake and gradually reduce the duration of the stop.

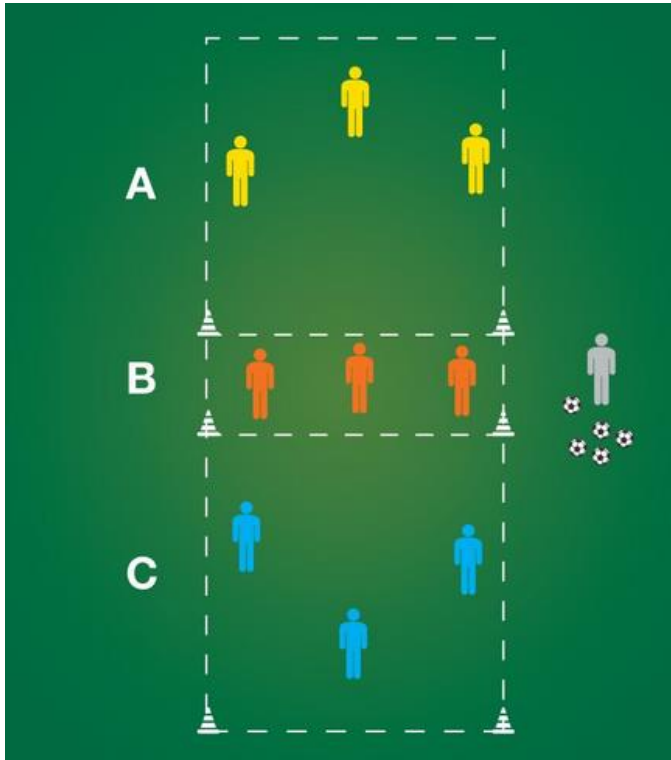
Make the grid bigger.

Step up (too easy)

Reduce the size of the grid.

Limit the number of touches (2-3).

GAME TRAINING: (T2 BPO>BP)



3 v 1 with 9 players.

Emphasis on quick transitioning.

Organisation

Two grids of about 12m x 12m (A & C) separated by a grid of 12m x 5m (B).

Three teams of 3 players with different colour bibs, one team in each grid as shown.

The coach is positioned with the balls centrally, next to grid B.

Exercise development:

The coach starts the game with a pass to a yellow player in grid A.

At that moment one orange player from grid B sprints into grid A to defend: 3 v 1 in grid A.

Yellow must now look for the right moment to play a killer pass through grid B (with the two remaining orange defenders) to a blue player in grid C.

Then immediately another orange player sprints into grid C to defend while the defender from grid A returns to grid B.

- If either team in BP passes the ball out of the grid, or
- the defender wins the ball, or
- the defenders in grid B intercept the killer pass then the team that lost possession immediately changes grids/roles with the defending team (emphasis on transitioning)

Step up or down

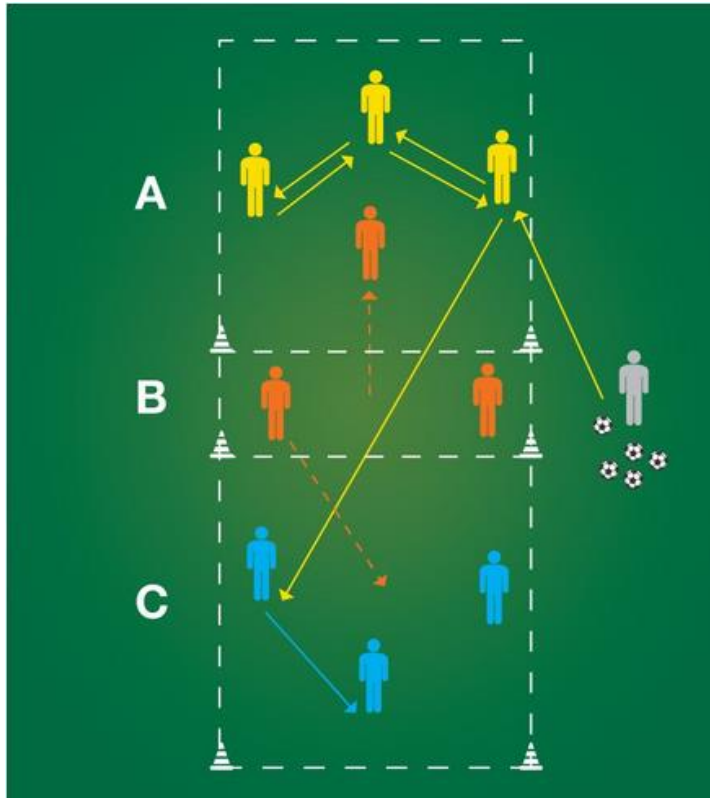
Make easier: 6 players (2 per grid: 2 v 1), or more difficult: 12 players (4 per grid: 4 v 2).

Make the grids bigger/smaller.

Limited (2/3) or free touches.

Killer pass: only on the ground or lofted pass allowed as well.

CONTINUED



3 v 1 with 9 players.

Emphasis on quick transitioning.

Organisation

Two grids of about 12m x 12m (A & C) separated by a grid of 12m x 5m (B).

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Step up or down

Make easier: 6 players (2 per grid: 2 v 1), or more difficult: 12 players (4 per grid: 4 v 2).

Make the grids bigger/smaller.

Limited (2/3) or free touches.

Killer pass: only on the ground or lofted pass allowed as well.

TRAINING GAME: (T2 BPO>BP)



'Transitioning game' 6 v 6 + 1 goalkeeper (smaller/bigger teams: adjust pitch size).

Pitch 40m x 40m divided in two equal halves (see diagram on the right).

A 'neutral' goalkeeper in the goal with plenty of balls next to the goal.

Two 5m -7m 'gates' on the back line.

The coach with plenty of balls on the halfway line between the gates.

The coach serves a ball to the yellow team who try to score in the goal with the goalkeeper.

If orange wins the ball they must pass the ball through one of the gates.

If yellow scores, the score is 1-0 and the coach restarts the game by serving the next ball to yellow.

If orange passes the ball through one of the gates, the score remains 0-0 but the teams change sides on the run with the coach immediately serving a ball to orange (transitioning).

Now orange attacks the goal and defends the 2 gates (players must get back in their proper positions ASAP).

If too difficult (not enough transitioning happening).

Make the gates wider.

If too easy.

Make the gates narrower.

Limited touches (2/3) for one team or both.

RECOMMENDED FORMATION AND POSITION REQUIREMENTS



Competence profile - Goalkeeper #1

The goalkeeper is of course a special position in any playing system or formation. First and foremost it's the goalkeeper's task to keep the opponent from scoring in any possible way within the rules of the game. Some goalkeepers do that by making spectacular saves, others are great at organizing their defence and anticipating situations. Top keepers possess all these qualities as well as the physical and mental characteristics required.

A condition for our preferred playing style is that goalkeepers must be able to play with their feet as a prerequisite for possession-based football and the goalkeeper is an indispensable link for that.

As a consequence of defending high up the park, there will regularly be a big space behind our defence. This requires a goalkeeper to be able to play as a 'sweeper' which is another characteristic specific to the playing style.

Competence profile - Full-backs #2 & #5

Full-backs in modern high-level football must be very versatile.

Defensively sometimes they have a direct opponent (winger) which requires strong defensive 1 v 1 skills. Sometimes they have no direct opponent so they have to defend 'positionally' which requires awareness and tactical insight. The role of modern full-backs in playing out and especially in attacking wing play has become vitally important.

When playing out, it's often the full-backs that can receive the ball from the goalkeeper because they do not have a direct opponent and are therefore unmarked.

In attack, more often than not it's the overlapping full-backs that provide the decisive crosses and assists. Especially in possession of the ball it's favourable if #2 is right footed and #5 is left footed.

Competence profile - Centre-backs #3 & #4

Just like the full-backs, modern centre-backs also need to be more versatile than before.

Of course a centre-back still needs to be defensively strong and good in the air. But today's centre-backs also need to be tactically aware and know what to do when the opponent plays with one striker or with two, when to close down and mark an opponent and when to drop off and give cover.

In ball possession, a good cross-field pass to the wingers is still an important asset for any centre-back. But modern centre-backs should also be able to move into the midfield with the ball at their

feet and create a numerical advantage. It's also important for a centre-back to have leadership skills and to coach and organise the team. Centre-backs usually have all the other outfield players in front of them which gives them an ideal view of the game.
Playing out is much easier if #3 is right-footed and #4 left-footed.

Competence profile - Midfielders #6 & #8

The right (#6) and left (#8) midfielders are the 'engine room' of the team.

Their task is to stay centrally and support the back four during BPO as well as feed and support the attack in BP.

It's important they can 'read' the game (meaning they are tactically aware) and have a good passing range.

Defensively they must assist the defence by creating a block with the centre-backs and screen the passing lines to the opponent's central striker(s).

In BP they must be the link players that receive the ball from the defenders and deliver it to the attackers without turning it over unnecessarily.

One of the two should always join in to support the attack while the other one stays behind the ball to keep the defensive balance. If #6 is right footed and #8 left footed it's easier to quickly change the point of attack which increases the chance of successful attacking play.

Competence profile - Attacking Midfielder #10

In the 1-4-3-3 formation the role of the #10 is of vital importance for successful attacking play.

The #10 must be a versatile, creative player that can combine, dribble and take on opponents.

A good #10 recognises the right moments to play a killer pass and has the ability to score goals.

The #10 tries to get on the ball in the space between the opponent's back four and midfield ('playing between the lines').

Although the attacking contribution of #10 is vitally important, it's a midfield position (not a 2nd striker).

Defensively the attacking midfielder should therefore connect with #6 and #8 to form a compact unit that presses the opponent in the central midfield area.

Competence profile - Wingers #7 & #11

The task of the right winger (#7) and left winger (#11) is to stretch the opponent's defence and, together with the full-backs, create openings in the wide areas. Although wingers can (should) also cut inside, it's important to do this at the right moment which means not too early and not all the time.

Their starting position should always be high and wide.

A moment when they should always come inside is when a cross is delivered into the penalty area from the opposite wing. Wingers must have good attacking 1 v 1 skills, be able to run with the ball at speed and to deliver good crosses. Creative combination skills as well as goalscoring abilities are also important attributes.

Defensively the wingers play an important role in pressuring the opponent's back four and, together with the full-back, protect and defend their designated wing.

Competence profile - Central Striker #9

Traditionally the central striker or centre forward is the 'target man' that plays as high as possible. This is still the most common interpretation although there are also variations.

Of course the primary task of the central striker is to score goals. That means #9 must have a good shot with both feet and be a good header of the ball.

The #9 must also have a keen spatial awareness and excellent timing. Other important skills are creative combination play, the ability to keep the ball under pressure from an opponent and the ability to take on defenders.

Defending in modern football starts with the attackers. The central striker in particular has an important role in determining when and where to start pressuring the opponent's back four.