



# 44 Small-Sided Games

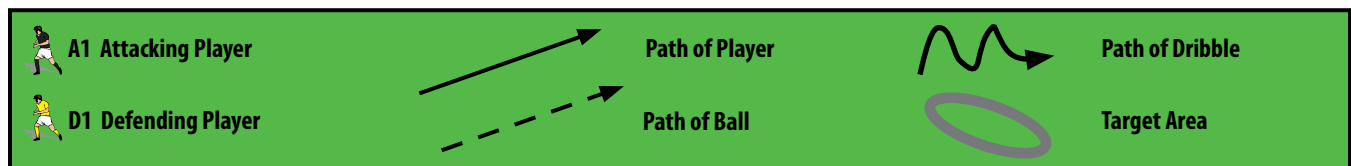


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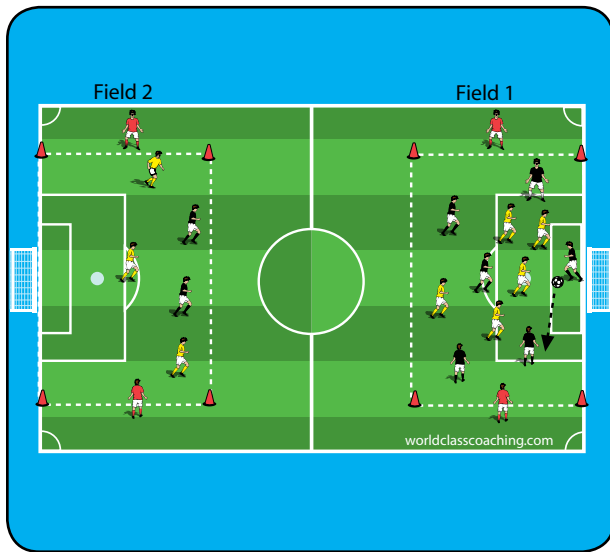
WORLD CLASS COACHING recently conducted a contest where coaches contributed their favorite small-sided games. We received many interesting and useful small-sided games. Rather than finish the contest and discard the sessions, we decided to offer them to other coaches for free.

The sessions were presented in many formats. We reconstructed the diagrams using our Session Designer and included the set-up, descriptions, coaching points and progressions that were provided by the coach. We've included the coach's name if it was on entry.

Thanks to all of the coaches who contributed games.

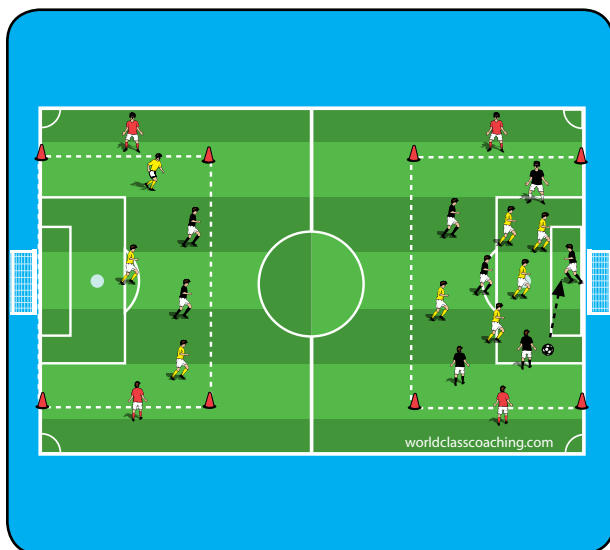


## Transitioning from goal to goal



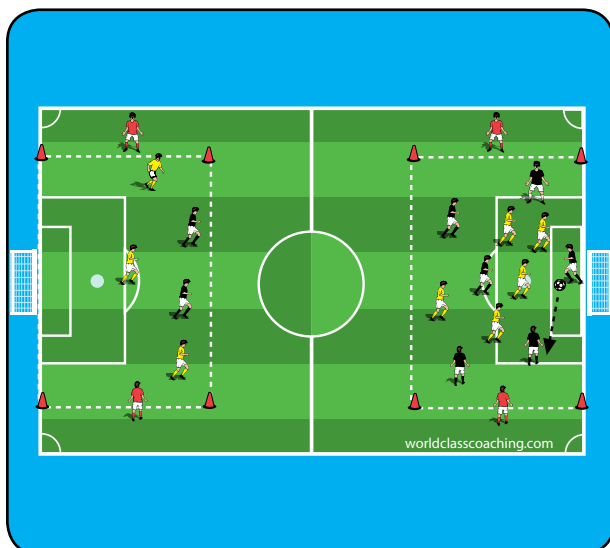
### Set-Up

- Full pitch (divided into 2 small sided fields, 30 x 40 m, field 1 and 2)
- 20 balls
- 20 players
- 8 cones
- 20 bibs (4 red, 8 black, 8 yellow)



### Procedure

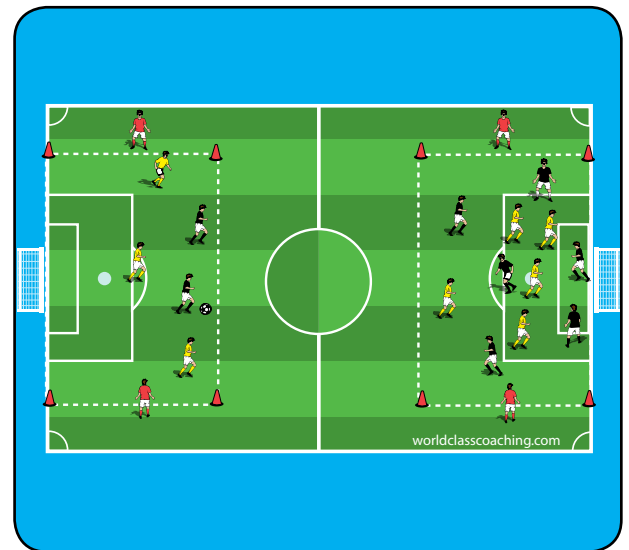
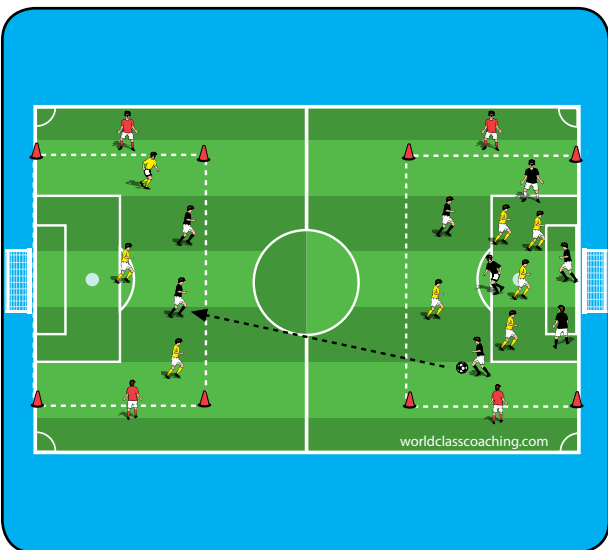
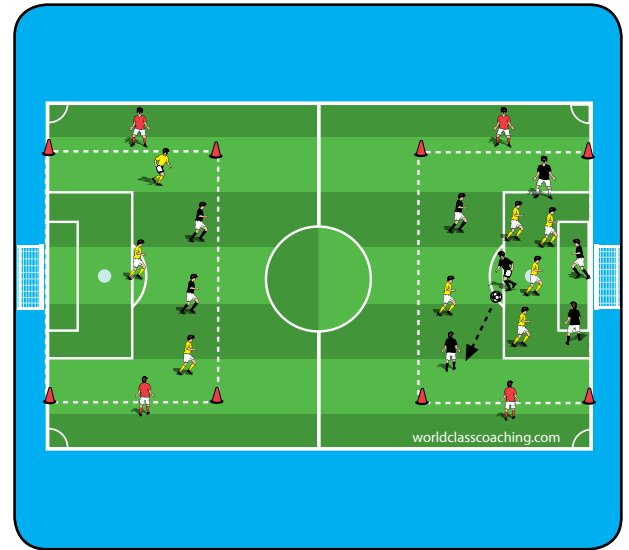
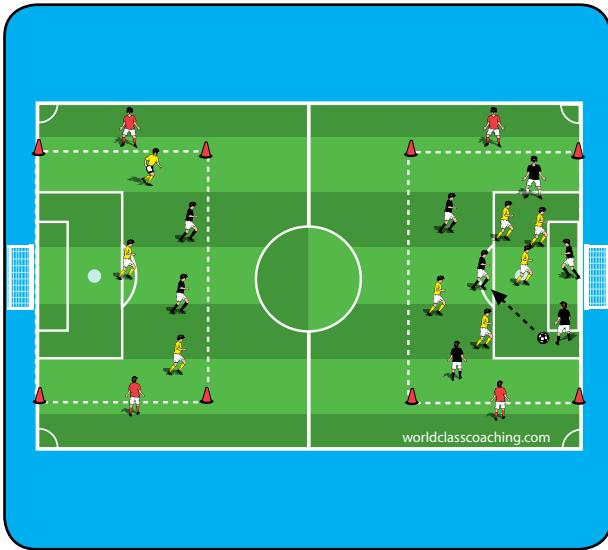
Play possession of the ball 6 v 5 + 2 (6 black, 5 yellow + 2 red) as on Field 1. Black team, upon completing 5+ passes play long ball towards Field 2 where 3 v 2 + 2 (3 yellow, 2 black + 2 red) are located. 3 black and 3 yellow players have to follow the long pass to field 2 (fast transitioning from one side to the other). The black players play passing the team in possession.



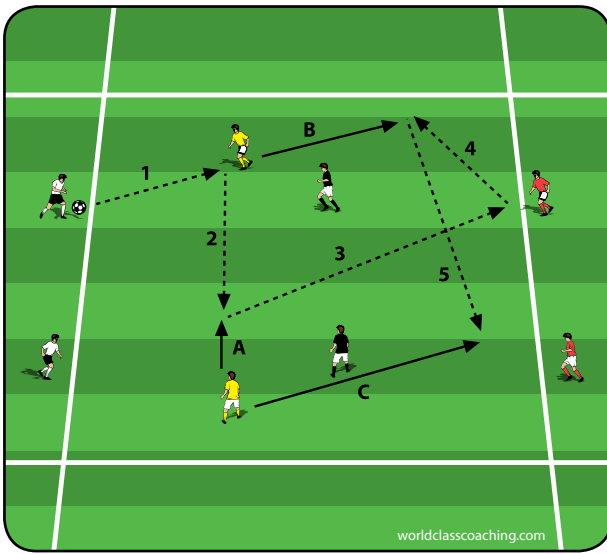
### Variations

- 1 touch play
- 2 touch play
- Introduce big goals and goalkeepers so players can score
- Red team plays only with one team, etc.





## 2 v 2 + 2 Support Play



### Set-Up

- 20 x 20 m box
- 4 teams of 2 players each
- 2 teams play inside of box for 3 minutes, then switch with outside players

### Instructions

The game is about scoring goals by getting a pass to the players at the opposite end of the box. If scoring a successful pass, players must immediately be in a position for a return pass and score at the opposite end once more. This means that the team scoring successful passes retains possession from the team receiving the ball outside of the box. If defenders win the ball, they must immediately play the same game by playing to the appropriate players outside of the box and continue to retain possession. The game is to teach passing forward, movement to support and retain possession of the ball, as well as transition. Also teach defenders to cover and stop successful forward passes to players outside of the box.

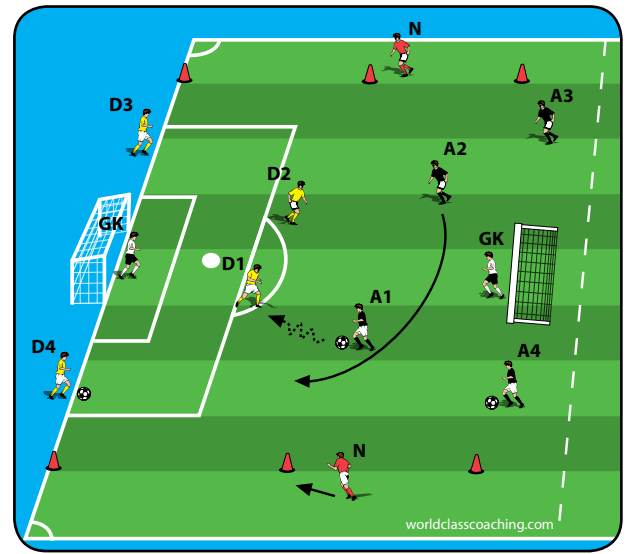
### Coaching Points

- Body shape when receiving.
- Support player with the ball to create easy passes forward (a).
- 3rd man running scenarios to retain possession (b).

## 2 v 2 Continuous with Transitional Outlet Players

### Set-Up

- Half-Pitch
- 12 players
- U11+



### Instructions

A1 and A2 attack D1 and D2's goal. If they score or the ball leaves the area, they immediately defend against D3 and D4 attacking A goal. If D1 and D2 win the ball, they look to either attack the A goal directly or utilize the N players to relieve pressure and organize an attack. Note that the N players can move up and down the field but cannot enter it. They are limited to 1 touch.

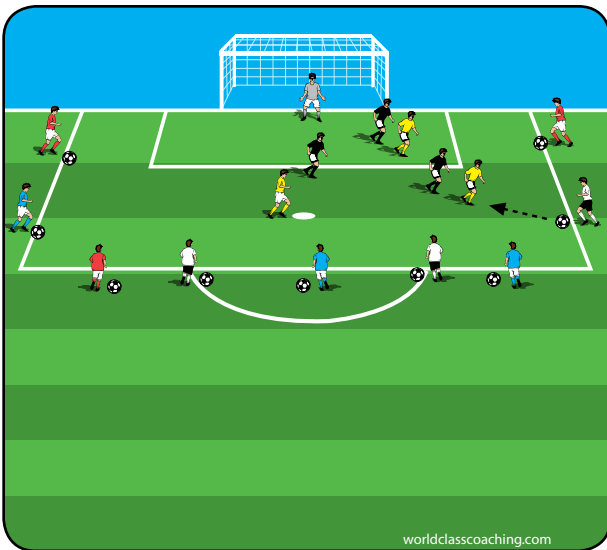
### Objective

- To develop attacking and defending in a small sided game.

### Coaching Points

- 1st defender - Immediate pressure on the ball, deny and block shots, prevent dribbling, prevent forward pass.
- 2nd defender - Provide cover and communication to 1st defender, set tactical offside line, work to prevent break-away pass to 2nd attacker, box marking tight on any cross attempt.

## 3 v 3 Inside the Penalty Area



### Set-Up

- Select Pitch Area
- U5 - 18 +

### Instructions

Consists of teams of 3 and 1 keeper. Either team inside the penalty area receives the ball played by a member of another waiting team. Both teams are trying to score or defend. When ball goes outside of 18 yard box or keeper controls, another ball is served in. Continuous play until all the balls have been served once. Teams record their goals scored. After which, 2 different teams play each other.

### Objective

- Teams try to control the ball until they can get a shot off through various offensive tactics. Opposition tries to win the ball or channel shot to keeper.

### Coaching Points

- Play in triangles on both sides of the ball.
- Players need to show for the ball right away to receive initial pass in.
- Use overlaps on offense or wall passes to create shooting opportunities.
- Look to open space for teammate by moving to a different spot; could create a pass or shot.
- High pressure on ball defensively, and move into support positions constantly.

### Progression

- Team that wins gets to stay on to take on all comers until they lose. Tie score goes to the team on the longest.



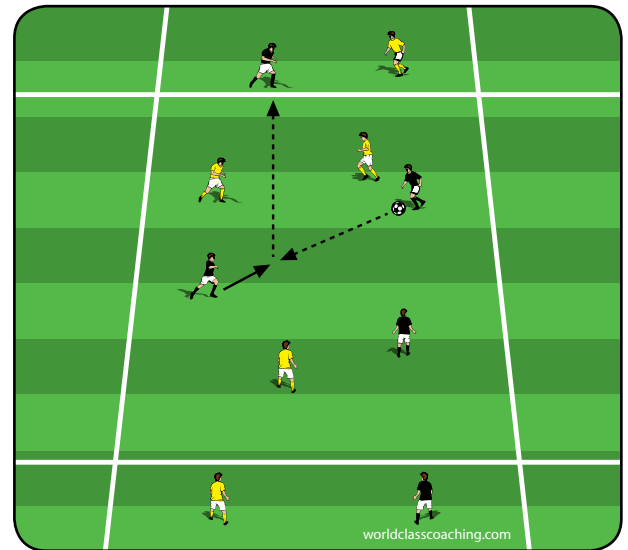
## 3 v 3 Plus Target Players

Two teams play 3 v 3 in a grid with end zones. Each team has a target player in the end zones. Teams play keep-away for eight three minute games.

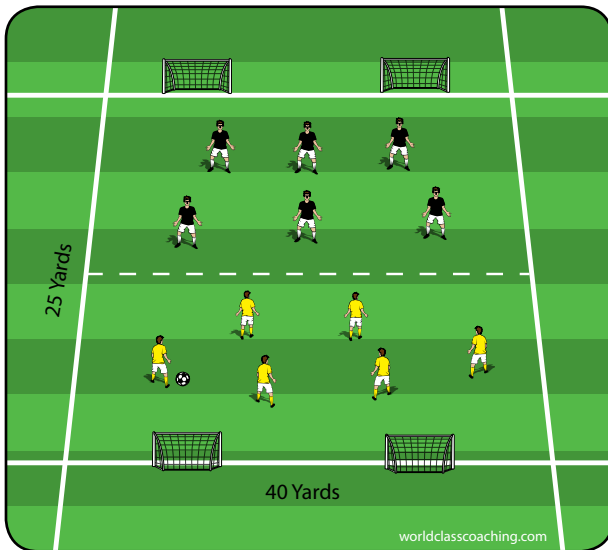
### Coaching Point

- Keep the ball
- Change direction
- Unbalance the defense
- Only use target players when needed

Target player receives the ball then enters the grid and commits the defenders; players rotate.



## 4 Goal Game



### Exercise

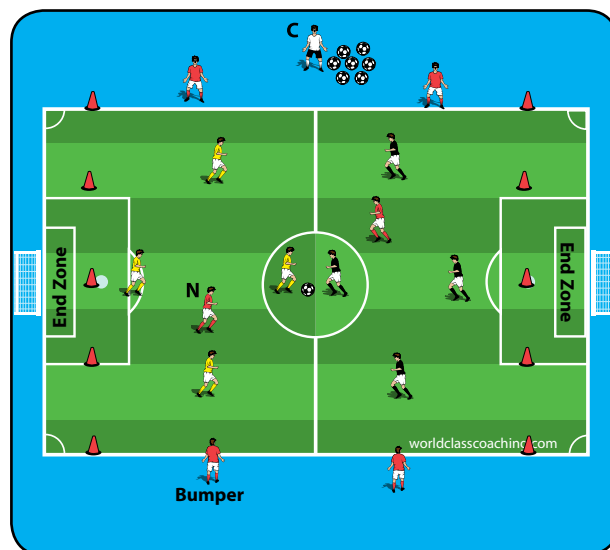
My favorite small sided game is the 4 goal game using a wide by shallow field (i.e. 40 yards wide x 20 yards deep). This is the best game for teaching switching the point of attack. It's not particularly imaginative but it "looks like the game" and forces the playes to make creative decisions.

Be patient and you will eventually hear commands from players to "switch the ball" or "switch the play."

## 4 v 4 plus 2 to End Zones (15 - 20 minutes)

### Introduction

A dynamic, possession oriented activity that can be expanded or restricted to accommodate a wide range of ages and abilities. Gives players a lot to process mentally. Really cultivates "Total Football", opportunism, and encourages creativity on and off the ball. Can be adjusted to emphasize the focus of your session.



### Set-Up

- A 25 x 30 yard grid plus two roughly 5-7 yard end zones on each end, making the full sized area 25 x 40
- 10-14 players
- 2 teams of 4 in pennies
- 2 neutral players in red
- Up to 4 additional players used as neutral bumpers in red around touch lines
- 1 ball, plus a supply of balls for the coach who is outside the playing area

**Note:** This is a "next to last" activity I often use just prior to "scrimmage time" where the players get to play the full unrestricted game with game rules and full sized field.

**Note:** This activity can work from U8 – U18 years of age, with varied field size and with restrictions on neutral players and bumpers.

- 8 year olds, allow up to 4 touches for neutrals, bumpers 2 touch.
- 18 year olds, limit neutrals to 2 touch, bumpers to 1 touch back to player who gave it to them.
- Apply offsides as appropriate for age and variations (locking players in end zones or not).

### Gameplay

One team starts with ball and can leverage bumpers and neutral players to keep possession. Single points are scored through X consecutive passes without the other team getting a touch (5 passes for U9s, 10 passes for high school, etc.). Three points for completing a pass to teammate in end zone. Play throw-ins, including long throw-ins, for High School aged players.

- Variation 1 (first 5 mins): Upon 3 point goal, non-scoring team gets ball and starts play attacking in the opposite direction.
- Variation 2 (5 - 10 mins): After 3 point goal, scoring team keeps possession and attacks the other direction. Pass or dribble out of end zone.
- Variation 3 (10 – 15/20 mins)

Scoring players, upon receiving pass, must exit end zone and be replaced by player who passed to him.

U9s, dribble the ball out

High School, execute a 1-2 with teammate, bumper or neutral to get out

Can require advanced players to arrive at end of pass in end zone, vs. entering end zone without ball.

Coaches keep track of points to maintain competitive intensity!!!

Swap bumpers and neutrals as appropriate.



## Coaching Points

- KEEP POSSESSION FIRST, but If you can play forward to score . . . you should!
- Player in possession needs 2 - 3 options at all times . . . "how can you move to help the ball???"
- Neutrals – "stay central!", "Support the ball"
- Don't get caught in possession, counterattacks are deadly here and lead to quick scores.
- "Look to combine!" One-two's are everywhere. Can you find them?
- "No Sleep till Brooklyn" . . . Everyone can be an option. You just cannot go to sleep in this game. Have to stay connected to what's going on!!!
- In the end zone . . . check to the ball to get open, find space, don't sit at the end zone line, create your own space with creative movement.



## 4 v 4 + 4 Corner Targets

### Set-Up

- 4 corner goals approximately 6' x 6' within a playing area approximately 36' x 42' (penalty area lines convenient to mark space; adjust area according to number/age of players, desired spacing)
- 2 teams of 6 are attacking diagonally opposing goals with a target teammate located in each (4 v 4 within the playing area).
- Teams score when target player in goal area successfully combines (wall pass) with any teammate coming out of the goal. The teammate playing the ball into the goal replaces the player in the goal ONLY if they successfully possess the combination pass coming out of the goal, otherwise that player must return to the goal.
- Teams cannot play to the same goal twice while still in possession of the ball (teams attempt to alternate the attacking target while maintaining possession).
- Excellent pace and competitiveness for high school teams, with a 3rd team participating, replacing the winning team after 3 goals are scored.



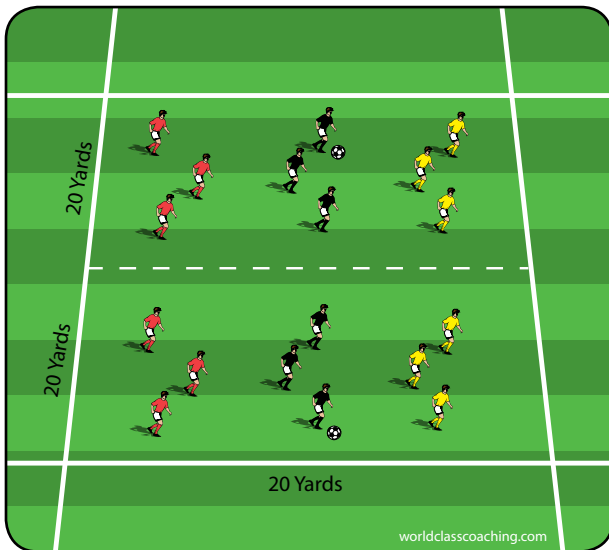
### Objective

Great game for economical training designed to improve awareness, speed of play, fitness, movement, positioning and communication – particularly organization and decisions away from the ball (1st attacker/1st defender).

### Coaching Points

- Awareness – all players must constantly be aware of the ball, players, and space in an effort to anticipate their role and responsibilities.
- Positioning – emphasis should be placed on the roles of 2nd and 3rd attackers and defenders (check attacking shape for width and depth, angles of support, timing of runs).
- Movement - because of the opposing diagonal directional play the importance of effort and movement away from the ball is easily highlighted (challenge players to quickly adjust their play with an open body position in attack and defend goal and ball side).

## 6 v 3 Battles - Possession Based Small Sided Game



### Set-Up

- 2 - 20 x 20 yard grids
- Each grid has 3 Blacks, 3 Yellows, and 3 Reds
- Each game consists of three, one minute rounds

### Instructions

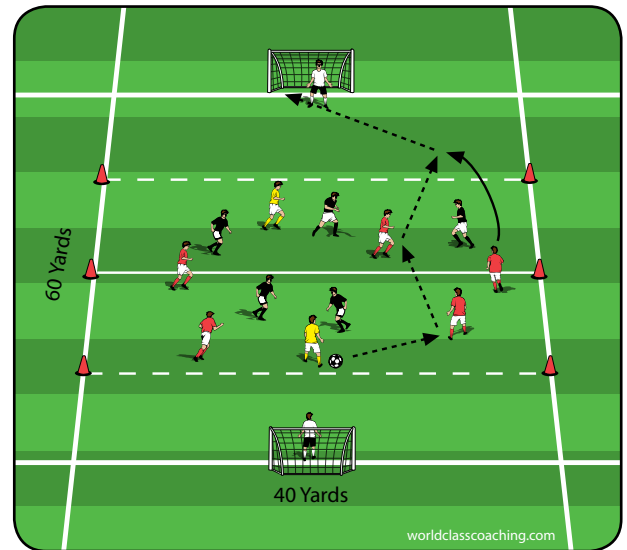
- To begin round 1, pick a team that will start in the middle defending.
- The other two teams will work together creating a 6 v 3 game.
- The objective of the game is for the team of 6 to complete a certain number of passes before the end of the 60 second round.
- At the end of the 60 seconds, the losing team (either the team of 6 that completed X amount of passes or the team of 3 that prevented it) must sprint a figure eight around both fields.
- Switch teams after each round until all 3 teams have defended for a minute.
- Colors keep track of every round that they "won" with 3 points possible. The 3 Yellows from grid one combine their total with the 3 Yellows from grid two. Blacks and Reds also combine totals to determine the overall winner.
- Prepare some sort of fitness pyramid where winning teams are rewarded with a smaller pyramid or reps.



## Attack in Behind the Defense

### Set-Up

- 60 x 40 Yards
- 15 minutes
- 14 players
- U11 - 18 +



### Description

The attacking team works with the two neutral players to break the defensive line and try to score. The players are encouraged to look for give-and-goes, through passes, and overlapping runs.

Practice taken from WCC Online Magazine, Feb 2012 issue, contributed by Michael Beale, U10 Chelsea Academy Coach.

### Objective

To develop attacking from deep and getting in behind the defense.

### Coaching Points

- Player movement - create space before receiving
- Body shape - see all players and playing options
- Good weight of pass
- Good timing of runs

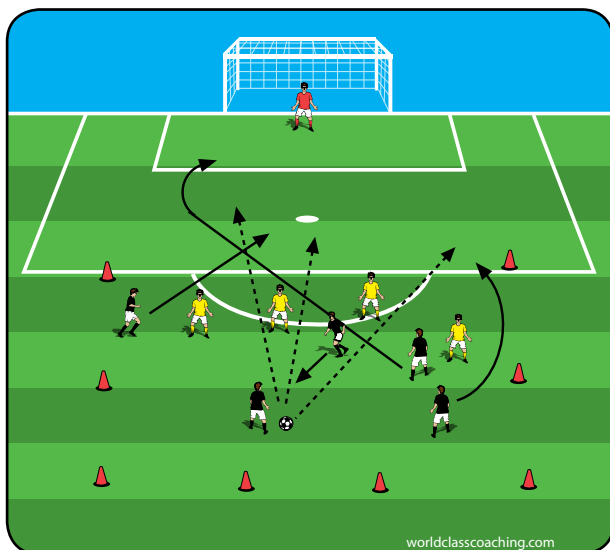
## Small Sided Attacking

At Capital University, we pride ourselves on quickly transitioning into the attack from the defensive side of the ball. We spend a great deal of time focusing our players' movements from the midfield third to the final third and just in that area. This season we tallied more than 20 goals as a result of that focus. Below is an exercise that we use to help train our players mentally and physically to be able to carry out that level of proficiency.

### Set-Up

We play a 4-3-3 formation, so we will often work with two of our midfielders and three of our attackers to break down defenses. This recognizes that the other midfielder will normally stay home in order to maintain a strong defensive presence in the center of the pitch.

In this exercise we will have our five attacking players aligned in a three striker and two attacking mid formation to mimic the real game for us. They will be going against a back four (plus a GK) because that is what we most often face.



### Field Size

18 deep x 25 wide and located centrally at the top of the 18 yard box. The top of the 18 yard box will be a restraining line for the attacking players, which means they cannot cross it until the ball has crossed the line. This will stop our players from just kicking the ball behind the four defenders and it will also allow them to work with the restriction of an offside line without actually having the defenders run an offside trap. You can have players work on the honor system or have an offside judge watching the line, depending on your focus for the session.

### Instructions

- The attacking five players will get a ball from a "ball master" (injured player, coach, etc.) and then they will look to break through the defenders into the 18 yard area and finish with a goal or they can create a shot from outside the 18 (but within their true scoring range.)
- The defending four players will look to compact space and make it difficult for the five to break through. Their main focus is defending as a unit and limiting penetrating balls. If they win the ball, they will look for the ball master.
- Attacking team scores on goal = 1 point & defending team scores on pass to ball master = 1 point.

### Attacking Options

- Ideally looking for "numbers up" situations to combine around defenders or for gaps to play ball through vertically cutting out the maximum number of defenders with one ball.
- Look to create space, for yourself or for another player, with your movement and one of the three foundation runs. This space should allow for a ball to be played that you can shoot in one touch or that another player can finish one touch.
- Work to maintain possession, but do so with the purpose of finding a finishing opportunity and if need be continue to recycle the three foundation runs till opportunity arises.
- Utilize combination play to create opportunities to break down a defense.

## Coaching Points

- Attacking players must move off of one another in three basic runs (slash, check and drift). Movement must be made with thoughtful purpose which is to find the space vacated and available.
- Play with head up to increase speed of play and to see options available (who can shoot first time.)
- Limit touches as the majority of goals are scored with limited passing and dribbling.
- Have a firm grasp that we play vertical balls to diagonal runs and diagonal balls to vertical runs.
- Recognize visual cues for movement and attacking opportunities:
  - a. When defender turns head to see the ball, that is the cue to make run in behind vertically.
  - b. When you have the ball and see players who are “zoned in” on the ball, look for space vertically where you can put the ball and players can run onto it and finish.
  - c. When you see two or more defenders “flat” or even with one another that is the cue to look for a vertical or penetrating ball.

## Run Foundation Exercises

The foundation for all runs in the exercise, is to utilize the three runs of checking for the ball, drifting to create space and slashing into the space. So, we give them a general blue print and then work within the small sided exercise to help them recognize when each run is on and how they will affect the other runs going on around them.

## Progression

- Central striker check to ball to initiate runs for other strikers and offer support for the ball.
- Wide striker drifts outside flattening out defenders.
- Other wide striker will slash into the area vacated by the central striker check .
- Attacking central mid will make diagonal run into space vacated by wide striker and then bend run back in to goal.
- This will isolate far back and create vertical gap to exploit and will also allow other attacking players to fan out giving options.
- The figure shows the three different types of balls available to break the defense down off of the foundation runs.

## Attacking the Offside Line

### Objective

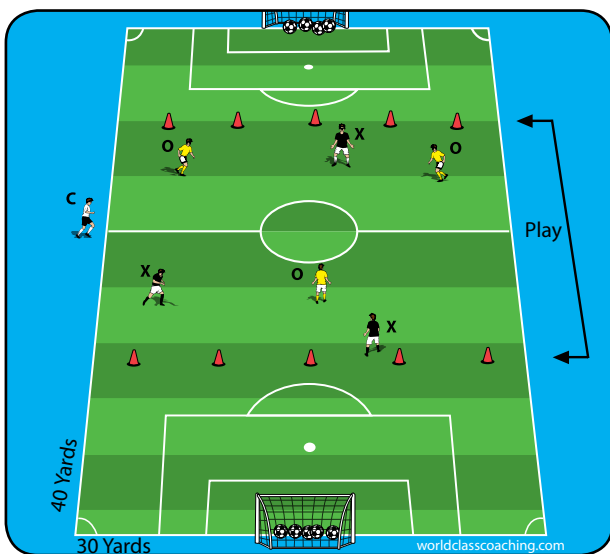
To develop penetrating runs and passes while maintaining awareness of offside.

### Set-Up

- Teams: 3 v 3
- Field: 30 x 40 yards
- Play: All play occurs inside the offside lines.

### Drill

Teams play regular game with the exception of offside lines. Once play successfully occurs past offside line, no more offside. Encourage forwards to win the ball back in the offensive side of the field.



### Directions

Coach encourages players to look for penetrating runs and passes behind the offside line.

If offside is called, opposing team plays indirect free kick at offside point.

(If appropriate, use out of bounds to teach players throw-in rules.)

### Variations

- No touch restrictions
- One/two touch pass restrictions
- The penetrating pass must be a one touch
- The penetrating pass must come from a give and go play
- The penetrating pass must be played/one touched from a back pass (from the "forward")
- Attacker must beat defender and/or dribble through line
- Add goalie

## Objective

To develop penetrating runs and passes while maintaining awareness of offside.

## Set-Up

- Teams: 6 v 6
- Field: 60 x 40 yards
- Play: All play occurs inside the offside lines *closest to goal*.

## Drill

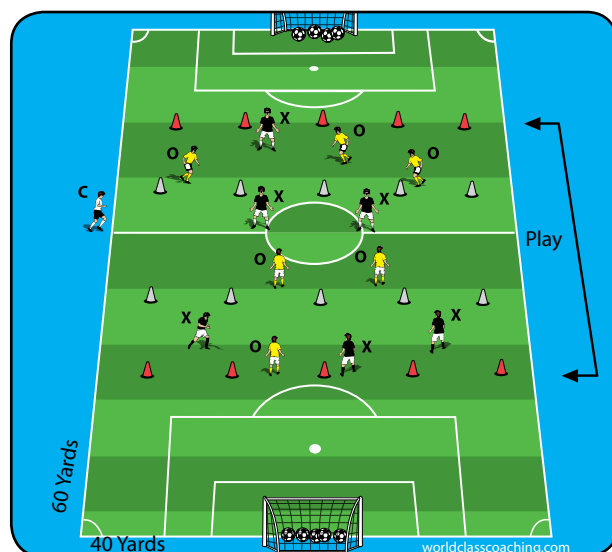
Teams play regular game with the exception of offside lines. Once play successfully occurs past offside line, no more offside. Encourage forwards to win the ball back in the offensive side of the field.

## Directions

Coach changes offside line color at any time during play (for both teams or different lines for each team) at which point those colors become the new field of play.

If offside is called, opposing team plays indirect free kick at offside point.

(If appropriate, use out of bounds to teach players throw-in rules.)



## Variations

- No touch restrictions
- One/two touch pass restrictions
- The penetrating pass must be a one touch
- The penetrating pass must come from a give and go or overlap play
- The penetrating pass must be played directly from a back pass (from the "forward")
- The penetrating pass must be played to the opposite side runner
- Attacker must beat defender and/or dribble through line
- Add goalie



# Coaching the 4-2-3-1 Videos



If you've been looking for a way to coach your team how to play the 4-2-3-1, you've just found it. Coaching the 4-2-3-1 is a special 12-part video series which provides a comprehensive tactical and training guide to this exciting formation. Utilized by Real Madrid, Chelsea and the most successful sides in the Euro 2012 tournament, the 4-2-3-1's flexibility and attacking power is fast becoming the formation of choice for leading coaches all over the world.

Click on this page to learn more about  
Winning Soccer Tactics

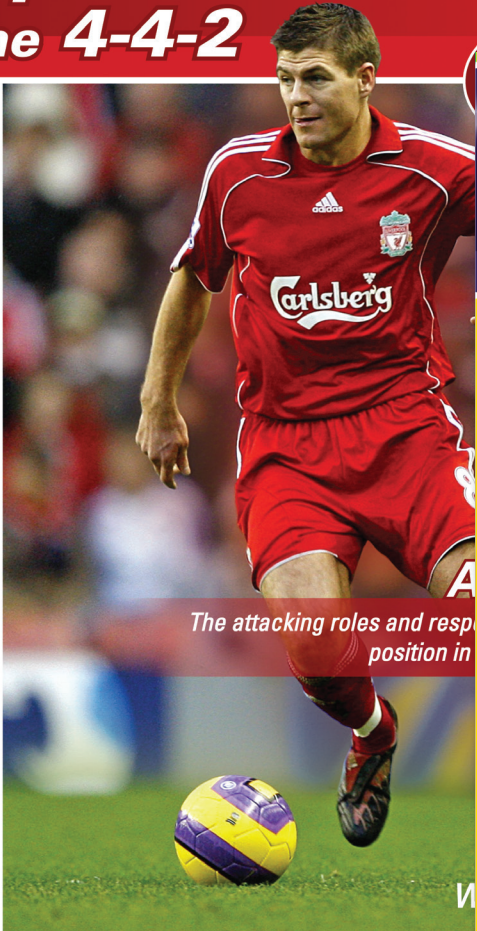




# World Class Coaching Resources

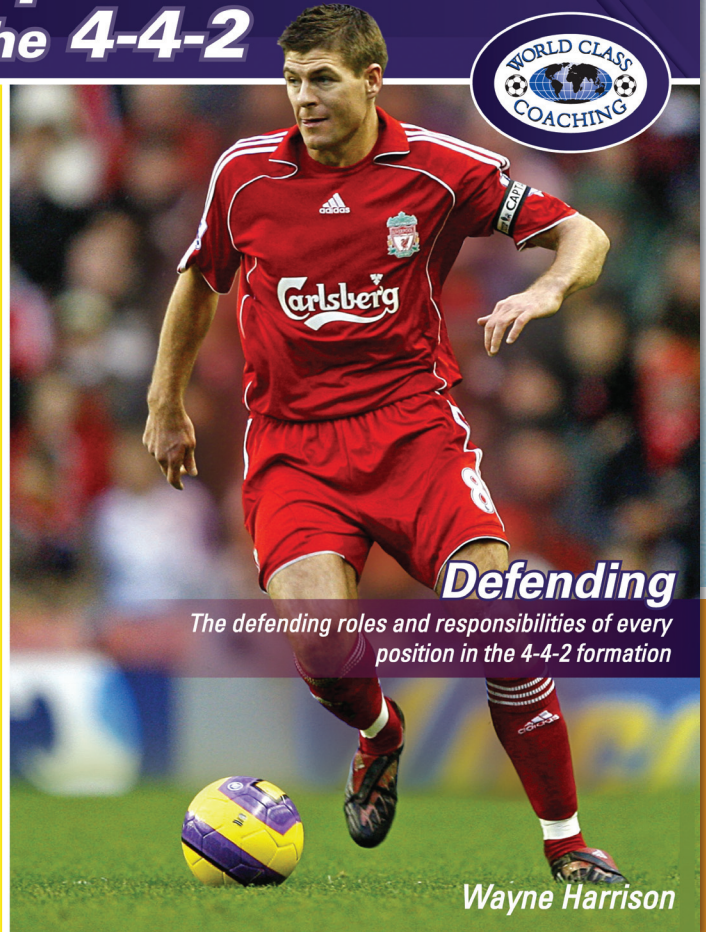
## Players Roles and Responsibilities in the 4-4-2

BOOKS AVAILABLE  
NOW!



The attacking roles and responsibilities of every position in the 4-4-2 formation

## Players Roles and Responsibilities in the 4-4-2



### Defending

The defending roles and responsibilities of every position in the 4-4-2 formation

Wayne Harrison

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## Objective

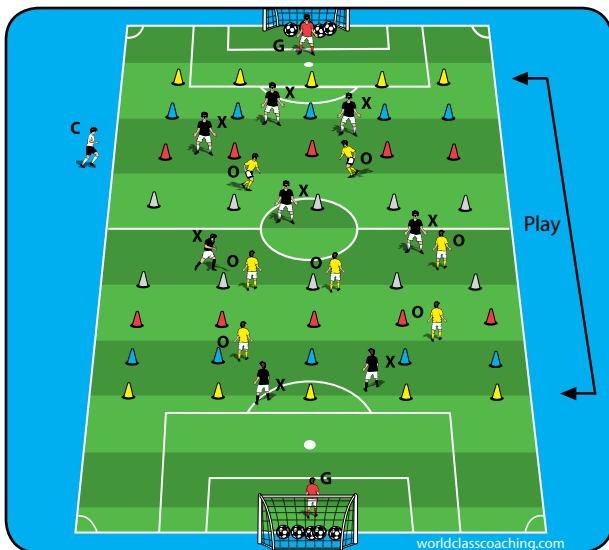
To develop penetrating runs and passes while maintaining awareness of offside.

## Set-Up

- Teams: 8 v 8 to 11 v 11
- Field: Tops of 18's, pk to pk
- Play: All play occurs inside the offside line *closest to goal*.

## Drill

Teams play regular game with the exception of offside lines. Once play successfully occurs past offside line, no more offside. Encourage forwards to win the ball back in the offensive side of the field.



## Directions

Coach changes offside line color at any time during play (for both teams or different lines for each team) at which point those colors become the new field of play.

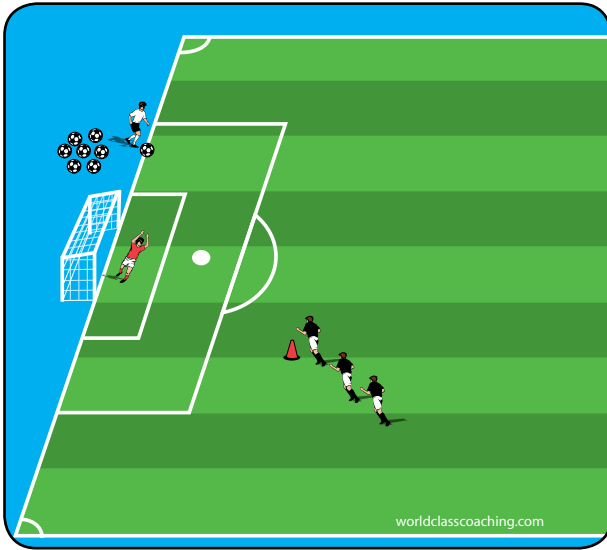
If offside is called, opposing team plays indirect free kick at offside point.

(If appropriate, use out of bounds to teach players throw-in rules.)

## Variations

- No touch restrictions
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- The penetrating pass must come from a give and go or overlap play
- The penetrating pass must be played directly from a back pass (from the "forward")
- The penetrating pass must be played to the opposite side runner
- Attacker must beat defender and/or dribble through line
- Remove goalie for more scoring

## Chaos



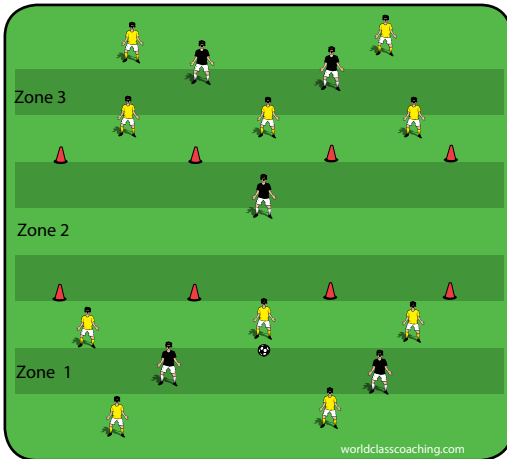
### Instructions

This is a fast paced knockout game that my players beg to play! Coach plays a ball out to the first player who must take a first time shot. If he scores, he goes to the back of the line. If he doesn't score, he goes in goal. If the person in front of you scores, you go in goal. The only way to get out is by getting scored on as the goalkeeper. Players that get out retrieve balls for the coach. I use this as a reward for good and focused effort at practice.



## Complex 5 v 2 Transition

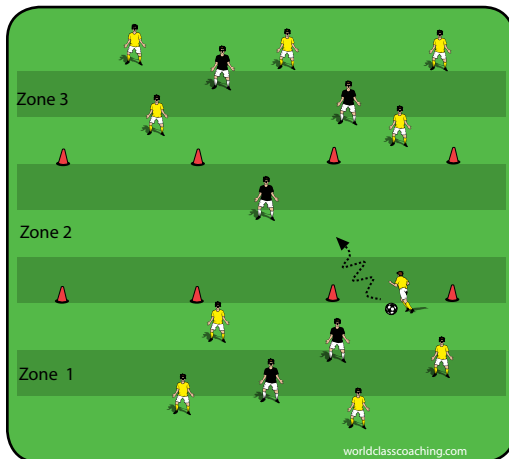
This drill will work on individual and group decision making about where to play the ball, holding possession, and completing a series of passes. This drill also emphasizes switching the point of attack and functional technique in 1v1 situation.



### Organization

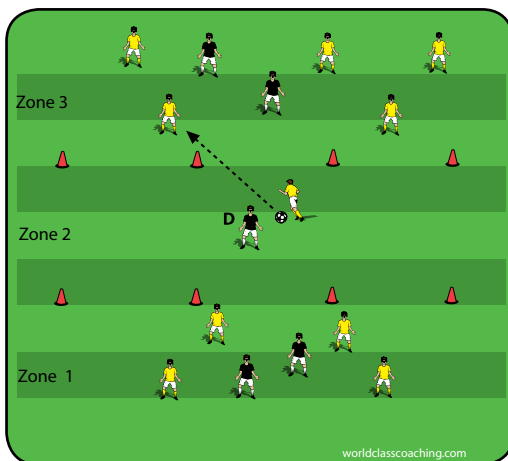
Divide the field in three zones as showed in the diagram.

- Seven players in Zone 1 (Five yellows and two blacks).
- One black player in Zone 2.
- Seven players in Zone 3 (Five yellows and two blacks).



### Instructions

The ball starts with the yellow players in Zone 1. The yellow players keep the ball away from black players by passing to each other. After the fifth pass, whoever receives the next pass moves with the ball to Zone 2.



Once a player moves to Zone 2, he/she plays a 1v1 with the black defender and tries to make a pass to Zone 3. After making a pass to Zone 3, the player moves back to his original team and yellow players from Zone 3 continue the game and try to do the same thing back towards Zone 1.

## Rules

- Every time the yellow players transfer the ball from either Zone 1 to Zone 3 or Zone 3 to Zone 1, they earn one point.
- If the black players steal the ball twice, they will earn one point. When they have made three points, they switch roles with whichever Zone made the last mistake.
- After two unsuccessful attempts in transferring the ball from Zone 1 to Zone 3, the ball goes automatically to Zone 3 (or vice-versa).

## Coaching Points

- Creating and using space
- Verbal and visual communication
- Speed of play and thought
- Supporting play
- Quality of passing

## Variations

- After transferring the ball from Zone 2 to Zone 3, the player joins the Zone 3 group and tries to bring the ball back to Zone 1.
- After the fifth pass, instead of one player moving to Zone 2, two players move to Zone 2 and play a 2 v 1.



## Exercise

Set up a 30 x 40 grid with 10- yard zones on each end (as shown.)  
 Play 4 v 4/5 v 5 +1. Blacks going toward the center line, yellows going toward the 18 yard box. Score a point by passing the ball to a teammate running into the zone. The player receiving the ball must control the ball in the zone. One defender from the opposite team is allowed to defend. Once a point is scored, the other team begins by going in the opposite direction. Offside rule applies.

## Progression 1

Pass to a teammate running into the zone but now the ball and the player cannot travel through the same gate (between the same two cones.) This forces the runner to first move sideways to create space and then to time and make his/her diagonal run.

## Progression 2

- Add GKs on each end.

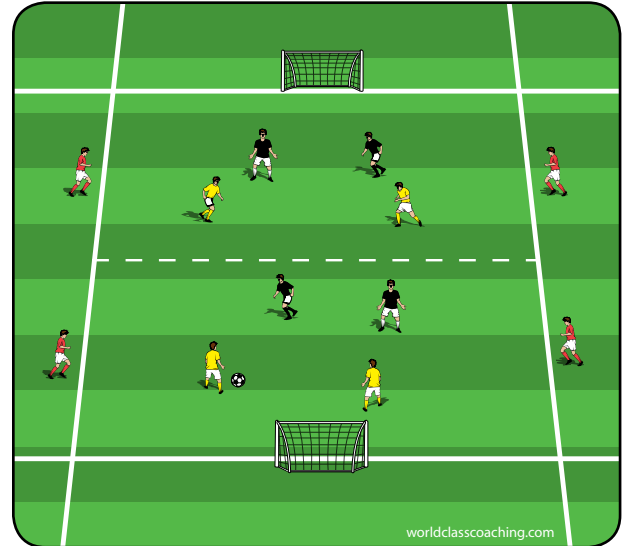
## Coaching Points

- Do not force play.
- Keep possession until the run is on.
- Combination play to get behind the defense.
- Time of the run/pass.
- Sideways movement off the ball to create space.



## Three Team Game

- Have 3 teams – 2 teams play, 1 team acts as neutral.
- Play 4 v 4 in the field (with small goals) or 5 v 5 with a GK.
- Each team has 2 players in the defensive half and 2 players on the offensive half. Players cannot cross the half-way line.
- Neutral players have 1-touch restriction.
- Start with unlimited touches for the field players but add in touch restrictions to help in speed of play.
- If a goal is scored, losing team switches with the neutrals – provides an incentive to stay on the field the longest. If no score after 4-5 minutes, coach chooses which team switches with neutrals.



## Progression

Allow 1 defensive player to cross the half-way line to help in the attack, making it a 3 v 2 in the attacking half. As soon as possession is lost by the attacking team, defender has to track back to the defensive half.

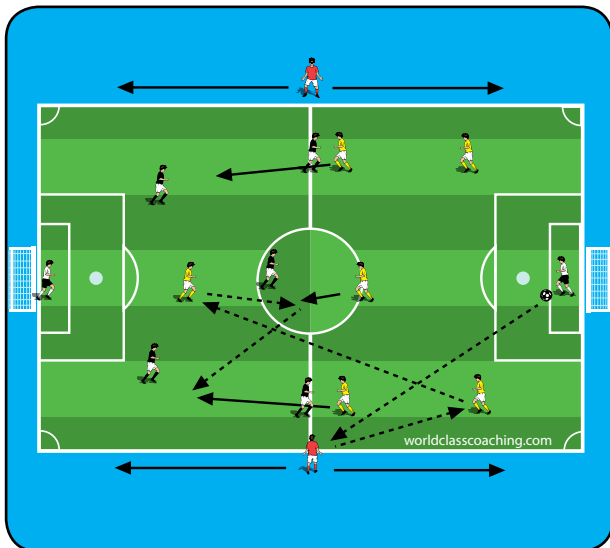
## Support Behind and Beyond Striker

### Objectives & Aims

- Develop players' abilities to support behind and beyond centrally touch into each attacking area striker.
- Develop one touch play and passing combinations.
- Develop a variety of finishing techniques.

### Organization and Set-Up Coaching Point

- 14 players
- 25 minutes
- Split pitch into 3 areas
- 3 v 3 in central area, strikers playing against 1 or 2 defenders in outside areas.
- Defenders cannot track runs into final third.
- Ball starts from goalkeeper and players attempt to work it through thirds and play into striker for teammates to support
- Defenders cannot defend until first touch in each area.



### Coaching Points

- Angles to receive and support
- One touch play and third man support
- Do not waste a touch, think what the next player will have to do
- Timing and decisions when supporting central striker
- Decision making
- Finishing

### Progression

- Initially play 1 v 1 in end zones
- Allow defensive team to track runs.
- Remove zones and develop within free play environment.

## Four Goal Game

### Set-Up

- 30 x 25 yards
- 4 goals in the center of each outside line
- 3 teams of 4 players each in different colors

### Exercise

Two teams face off keeping possession in the center, with the third team on the outside (neutral players with 1 touch only and the ball can't go from an outside player to another outside player.) Unlimited touches for inside players is allowed. The first team with 5 consecutive passes can score by dribbling through any of the 4 goals. After one team scores, switch with the neutral players.

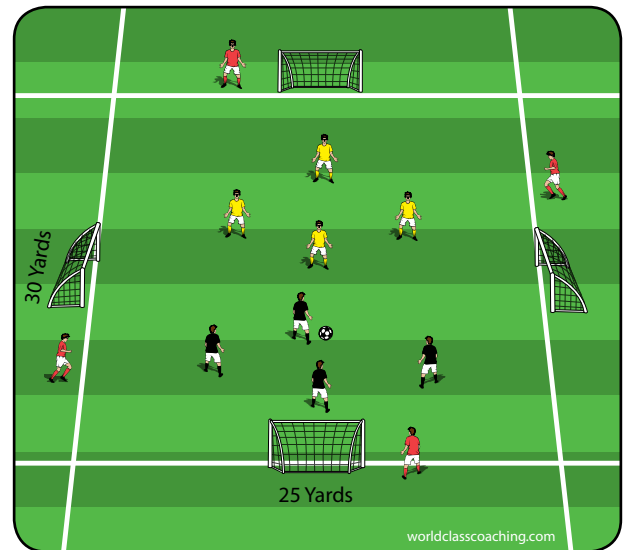
### Progression

Add restrictions such as

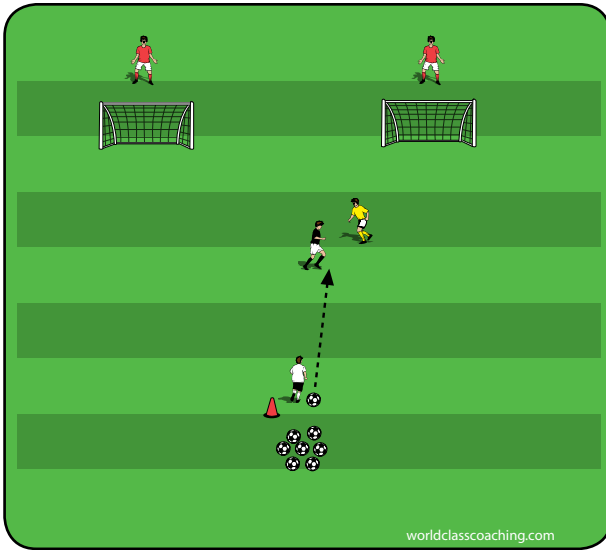
- Two touches only on the inside.
- Players on the outside have to pick up the ball with their hands and toss it back in to work on trapping in the air while moving.

### Coaching Points

- Use the inside to coach players to receive the ball sideways to see the whole field.
- Focus on good vision.
- Take the first touch away from pressure to Set-Up the second touch.



## 1 v 1 to Two Goals



### Set-Up

- Make 2 goals, about 2 yards wide each.
- Place goals about 8 yards apart.
- Attacking player (black) plays 1 v 1 against defender (yellow) for 60-90 seconds.
- Server (white) continuously feeds attacking player as ball goes out of play.
- Chasers (red) chase balls and return them to server.
- After 60-90 seconds, attacker and defender change rolls.
- Attacker must dribble the ball to beat the defender before playing the ball to goal on the ground.

### Coaching Points

- Keep score to make the game competitive.
- Attacker needs to check into space to quickly receive ball.
- Encourage attacker to change direction and use both goals.
- At younger ages, server can be a coach (ensures good service).