

AWARENESS TRAINING SESSIONS

For small sided game situations emphasizing Awareness Development see the SSG section

At these young ages, players must focus on many touches on the ball to get great at their technical ability, a great first touch brilliant dribbling and turning moves and passing technique.

When we begin to get them comfortable on the ball we can then address what later become the most important aspect of the game to teach; soccer awareness training for the “thinking part” of the game.

Much of soccer awareness involves playing one touch to teach each player a one touch mentality. It's not to exclusively teach players to just play one touch.

The following describes what one touch teaches in the long term:

FOCUSING ON ONE TOUCH TRAINING TO DEVELOP THE MIND

So what does one touch play help to teach?

Not just one touch; that is for sure.

For the individual receiving player it teaches:

- 1. Quicker Thinking:** The game is getting much faster so players need to think much more quickly to be able to cope with this increase in pace; which means they have less time to make decisions. So...1-touch creates “quicker thinking players.”
- 2. Body and Foot Preparation:** One touch means getting the body / feet into appropriate position to receive. So...1-touch develops body positional awareness (e.g. may need to let ball “run across the body” to “save” the touch).
- 3. Quicker Play:** The game is getting faster so players have less time on the ball so a natural progression to cope with this is to use fewer touches of it. This means using one touch more; and acting more quickly particularly in tight situations; hence observation BEFORE receiving the ball is a necessity. One touch play forces the player to do this if they want to be successful. This means “LOOKING BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL, ASSESSING OPTIONS EARLY.” It requires a look over the shoulder, to the sides and behind the player; BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL.

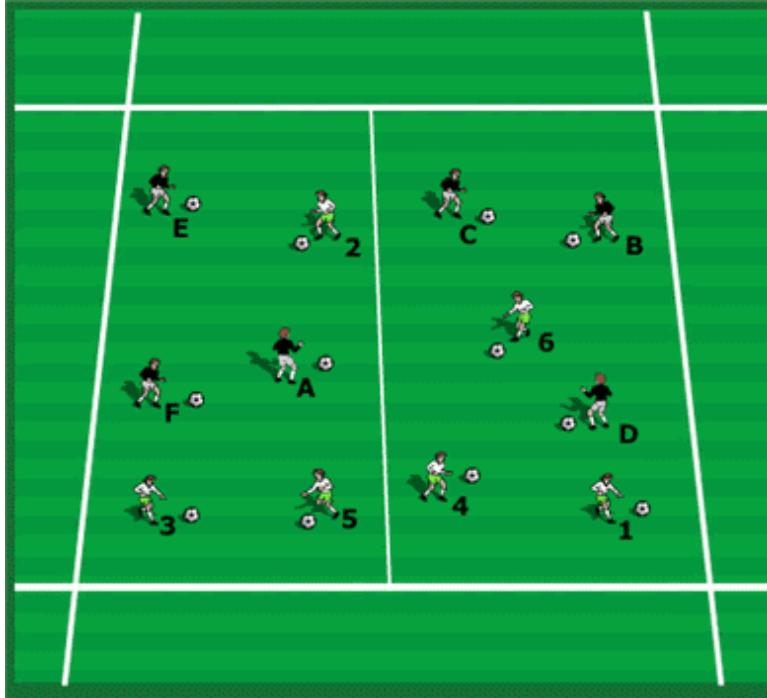
4. **Improved TECHNIQUE:** One touch demands / promotes technical excellence when distributing passes (using 1-touch) received in the air (foot, thigh, chest, head) It also improves the first touch by lots of practice relying just on it. Improves and speeds up the SKILL Factor: This is “decision making” awareness “when and where” situational play. Skill is the end product of technique, the how, why, when and where of the technique.
5. **Faster Ball Movement:** The ball is moving faster too; as well as the players move faster which suggests quicker passing sequences. So, faster ball movement, faster running of the players; quicker closing down by opponent’s means everything is quicker; so thinking and decision making has to match this. Hence being very good and successful at one touch play is an essential part of a modern day player’s makeup.
6. **Limited Space Possession and Tight Situational Play:** One touch teaches players how to maintain possession in tight spaces or when closely marked:
7. **Ball Mastery:** One touch requires players to demonstrate ball mastery when receiving (cushion pass to teammate in close support vs. hard pass to teammate supporting at a distance) So...1-touch teaches players how to correctly “weight” their passes.
8. **Fitness:** More frequent and quicker movement off the ball means players have to work harder to support the player on the ball as they have little time with it and need instant help. If the ball is being passed consistently by one touch then the ball is travelling faster and more frequently so the players have to work just as quickly and frequently off the ball to cope with this and maintain possession of the ball; thus it improves specific football fitness.
9. **Time Management:** One touch play means thinking quickly identifying options early so this in many instances can give the player more time on the ball because they have already seen where the space is to play before they have received the ball. So, it creates Time on the ball to allow for more touches; if needed; by identifying options earlier.
10. **Identification of Players and Space:** It offers the means to a faster identification of players positions; both teammates and opponents. Offers the means to a faster identification of when and where to pass to feet or to space and where the space or player is to pass to.
11. **On the Ground Patterns of Play:** One touch encourages passing on the ground to maintain possession so it is easier for the next player to control the ball.

For the Attacking Team:

1. **Movements OFF the Ball:** Training with one touch means the player receiving the ball has to move it on quickly therefore players have to move OFF the ball more quickly to help support the player receiving it. This is a VERY IMPORTANT aspect of one touch training as it involves all the other players off the ball and their positioning to help the player on the ball, preferably before they receive it so it can happen more quickly.

2. **Style of Play:** Encourages a fluid, attractive style of play and develops a good tempo / speed of play
3. **Combination Play:** Encourages combination play (wall-passes, set-up passes, third man runs). There is no better play than a give and go one touch pass combination to beat defenders so it is difficult to defend against, especially in and around the attacking third / penalty area when quick play is applied
4. **Aesthetic Effect:** Is “pleasing to the eye” (Arsenal / Barcelona / Manchester United)
5. **Counter Attacking Play:** Useful when teaching the counter-attack as fewer touches means the ball travels’ faster
6. **Ultimately:** One touch play is designed to improve the player’s first touch in the redirection of the ball, to help players identify their options before they receive the ball, and thus know which option next is best. This next option may not be a one touch pass in the actual game situation but may be a dribble with many touches, a turn, a run with the ball, a cross; a pass or a shot. By learning one touch passing; which to be successful needs the player to be able to identify options before receiving the ball; the players develop an awareness of many things including teammates positions, opponents positions, where the space to play to is etc. One touch is challenging mentally, physically, technically and tactically.
7. **Better players will thrive on “one touch sessions”**, and rise to the challenge of it
8. **Facts:** Statistics show that 1 touch play is a significant factor in the build up to scoring goals, for example; goals scored by Manchester United from one touch build up play was almost 50% last season. So now without Ronaldo; who was a great dribbler; and so had lots of touches on the ball when creating and scoring goals, and was the heart of the team having much possession of the ball, you could theorize that this percentage should rise, perhaps significantly; with the current players making one touch play even more significant in their development of play and also in your training.
9. **Scoring Goals:** 70% of all goals are one touch finishes.
10. **Defending Team Shape:** It may be compromised because of the speed of play. Defenders can’t slide, drop; press etc in time to create defensive blocks. And this creates frustration because defenders always seem to be reacting to the ball’s rapid movement often one step too late because of the speed of play. Thus, it offers less time for defenders to close you down. It moves players around (because it is physically demanding thus it creates gaps to play in / through).

Session 69: Improving Awareness With A Ball Each

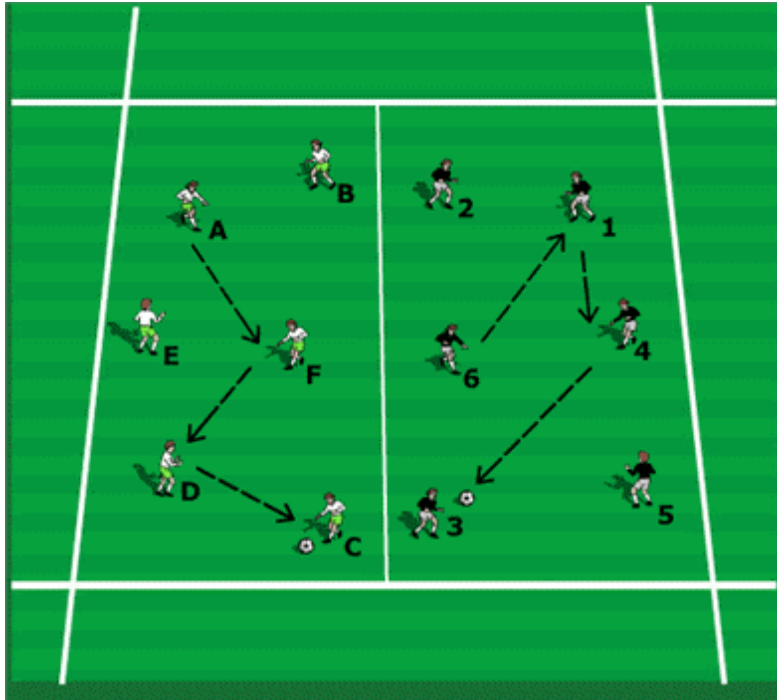


Moving around with the ball, staying in space. Stop and check positions. Check how spread out players are, discuss the implications of being in possession of the ball in a game and making it hard for the opposition to mark you by using as much width and length as possible. Therefore the players must use the spaces as effectively as possible.

Continue with dribbling but emphasize keeping the head up and not looking at the ball but looking around, in front, side to side and behind (for younger players equate it to a bird on a fence, that is, a bird on a fence just spends time looking around). The players can see the ball in their peripheral vision without looking at it directly.

Emphasize awareness of where other players are who are working in the same area by looking around; in front, to the side, and behind. You can include switching play by the coach calling “switch” where balls are stopped and players must take someone else’s ball and continue dribbling. This determines who has quick awareness of where the free balls are.

Session 70: Identifying Levels Of Awareness



Start with one team only to simplify the process for the players as an easy introduction to the idea. Then divide them into two teams later once they are starting to master the idea.

Have the players stand still and pass the ball around the group. They must look before they receive the ball to see where they are passing to. Make it 2 then 1 touch.

To ensure they are looking have them call the name of the player they are passing to before they pass the ball. When they don't call the name you know they haven't looked ahead of the ball.

Observe which players can't do this and allow them 2 touches and more time and look to see how they improve with practice.

Develop – Have two teams and have them pass to opposite colors so the choices are halved so the players have to be even more aware of where they are passing to before they receive the ball.

Introduce 2 balls to the session then 3 and so on but players continuing to stand still and not move to keep it simple to get success.

Have them begin to move around the area slowly to make the decision making more difficult as players are harder to find because of this.

Identifying Levels Of Awareness

Coaching Points:

1. Looking around even if you do not receive the pass (always aware of others' positions, just in case)
2. Looking before receiving the pass, knowing what to do next
3. Decision: When and where to pass
4. Quality of Pass (especially the pace of the pass in one touch passing)
5. Good support positions of players off the ball

Start with two teams but separate in their own grid as above to simplify the process and then mix the two teams later in the same area once they are starting to master the idea.

Have the players stand still and pass the ball around the group. They must look before they receive the ball to see where they are passing to.

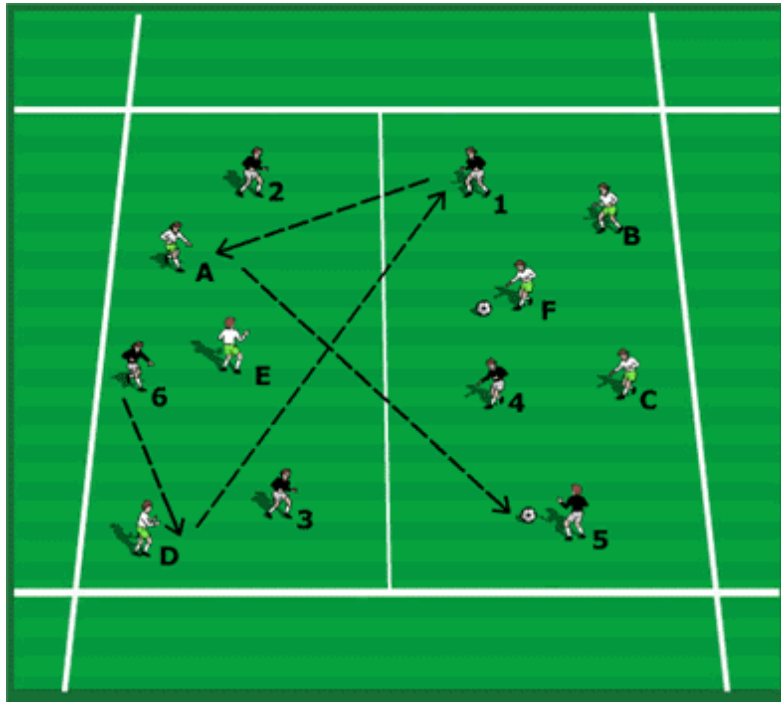
Make it 3 then 2 then 1 touch. This is particularly good for the younger end of the player spectrum where it often takes a few touches to just control the ball. Start with that; just passing it and not moving, then get them to look and then pass and so on and develop the idea this way.

To ensure they are looking, have the players call the name of the players they are passing to before they pass the ball. When they don't call the name you know they haven't looked ahead of the ball.

Observe which players can't do this and allow them more touches and more time and look to see how they improve with practice.

This is THE most basic introduction to the awareness coaching method and you only do it with THE most basic of young players starting to learn the game.

Progression – Now have two teams in the same area and have them pass to opposite colors so the choices are halved. Have the two teams play through each other but not against each other.



Introduce 2 balls to the session then 3 and so on, but start with players standing still and not moving to keep it simple and to get initial success.

Have them begin to move around the area slowly like before but now with 2 or 3 balls to focus on to make the decision making more difficult as free players are harder to find.

Development:

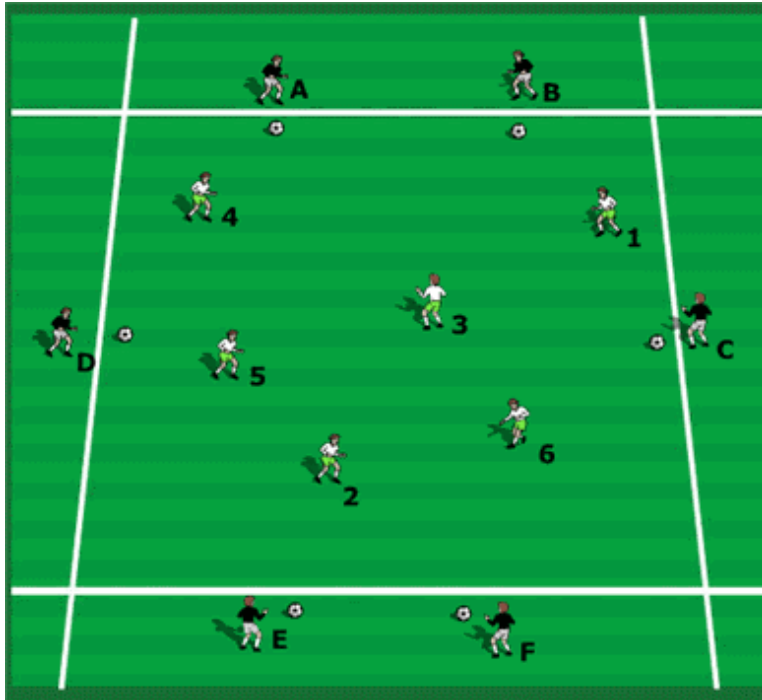
1. Here we have all the players moving freely, passing and moving within their own team. Begin with one ball being passed around a team and as they become proficient introduce another ball to increase their awareness.
2. Have the teams play throughout both grids to spread the play out and get the players comfortable and composed. As they improve you can change it to all players from both teams playing in one grid only so there is less room to work in and things happen more quickly. This is a test of their Awareness ability.
3. The Technical / Tactical Design within the framework of the clinic is described below and this information will get you started.
4. As they get proficient you can introduce new situations for them to deal with, all of which will be covered later. You may need to spend time repeating this basic set up before you move on to the other situational work. Be patient and ensure they get the basics right first.

Progression: Have 4 teams playing through each other, players passing to their own teammates.

Simple Introduction To Awareness Training

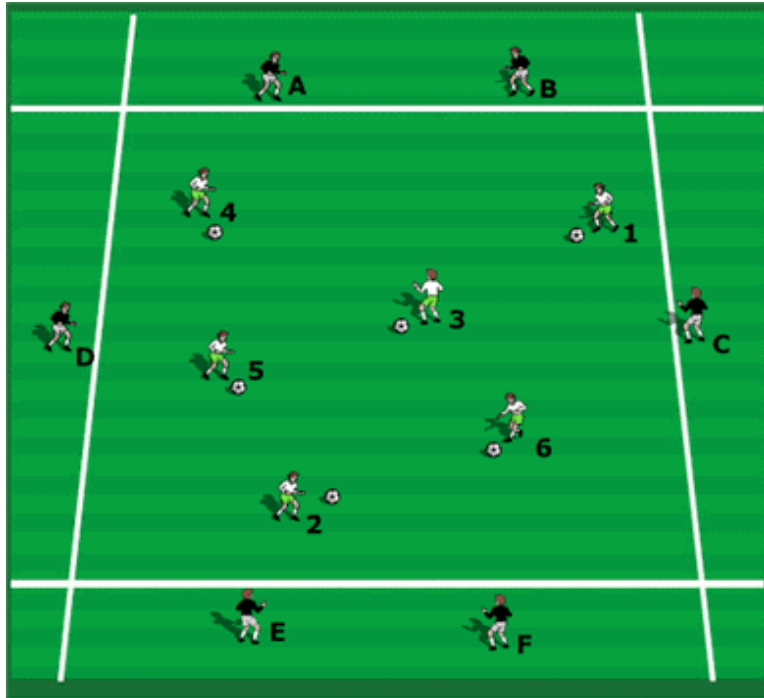
This practice is designed to allow the players to be gently introduced to the fundamentals of the Awareness session enabling them to practice without too much movement.

Two Team Set Up



1. One team inside, one team outside. A ball is with each outside player to begin.
2. Pass to an inside player who receives and turns and finds another outside free player with a pass. Then look to receive from another outside player.
3. The outside player receives and moves the ball side to side until another inside player is free to receive a pass. This ensures all the players are working both inside the grid and outside it.
4. Change the practice to all soccer balls starting with the inside players. These players now look to pass and receive a give and go from an outside player.
5. Rotate the players so both teams have the chance to play in the middle of the grid. Move both teams to the middle; divide the grid into two with each team passing to their own team within their own grid area keeping teams separate to begin.

Awareness Changeover Session



Inside team a ball each, look to find a free outside team player and pass to them. Outside player brings the ball back in, inside player moves outside the zone waiting to receive a pass from someone else.

Set up second touch with a good first touch. Awareness of who is free to pass to. Work on:

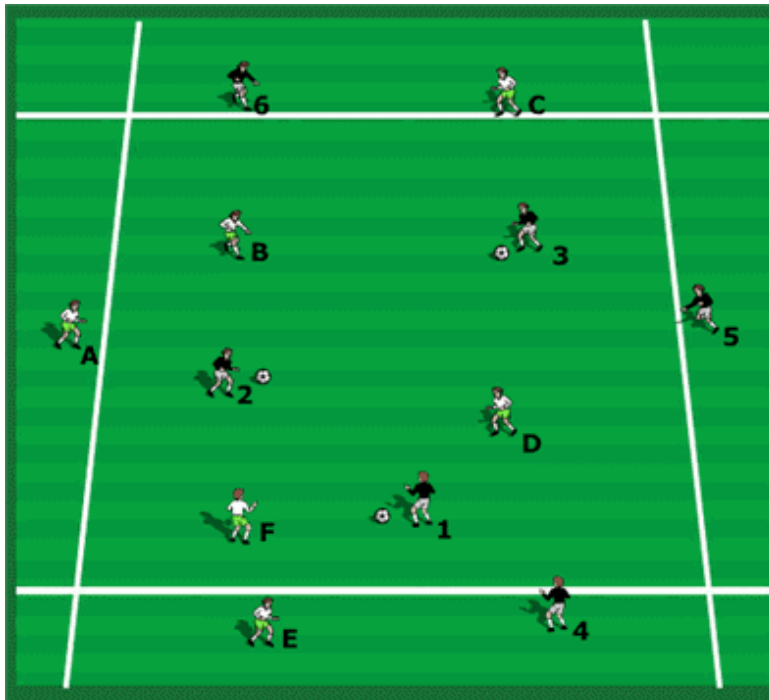
1. First touch of outside player
2. Decision making of inside player in terms of when and where to pass and technique (quality) of pass.

The Coach can create conditions:

1. Get a turn in or dribble before passing.
2. All in (many) touches, 3 then 2 touches.
3. Play 1- 2 with inside player then go outside.
4. Do a crossover with outside player rather than make a pass.

Inside player passes to outside player and closes down quickly simulating a defensive movement, the receiver has to make a good first touch away from the pressure ie to either side of the pressuring player. It's a good session because everyone is working but they get short intermittent rests, so maintaining quality.

A Game Situation Within The Theme



Numbers team can only pass to numbered players on the outside. Letters team the same only passing to lettered players on the outside.

Develop: Play one v ones in the middle (same players against each other). Have it passive to begin the defending players shadow the attacking players as they receive and turn and move. The set-up of this ensures the players have to receive, turn and change direction to find a new player on the outside to pass to.

Make it competitive. A lot of receiving and turning under pressure can occur now in the playing area.

Develop: Have a 3 v 3 small sided game in the middle using the support players on the outside to make it a 6 v 3 when each team has possession of the ball.

Session 71: Awareness Training Emphasizing Quick Decision Making (The Skill Factor) And Peripheral Vision Development

This Is Essentially Training The Mind For Fast Decision Making

This is quite an easy way to develop; and be successful at; one touch passing and decision making (developing the SKILL FACTOR)

Initially the receiving player always has his options IN FRONT OF HIM but as the drills become more sophisticated the receiving player has to have greater peripheral vision to be successful with situations changing BEHIND HIM that will affect his decision making

It helps develop peripheral vision (awareness) and stimulates quick reflexes making players PROACTIVE AND NOT REACTIVE

This training also forces the receiving player to identify his options BEFORE he receives the ball, which is what awareness training is all about

The benefit of this training is it is “drill orientated” so is easier to perform, players being in fairly static positions, and so they can have success with no pressure of having the ball taken off them.

When defenders are introduced they are told to play passively and can only press, not take the ball.

So, as the ball is travelling to the receiver he is forced to assess his options early so that when he receives the ball he is already aware and able to make the correct decision.

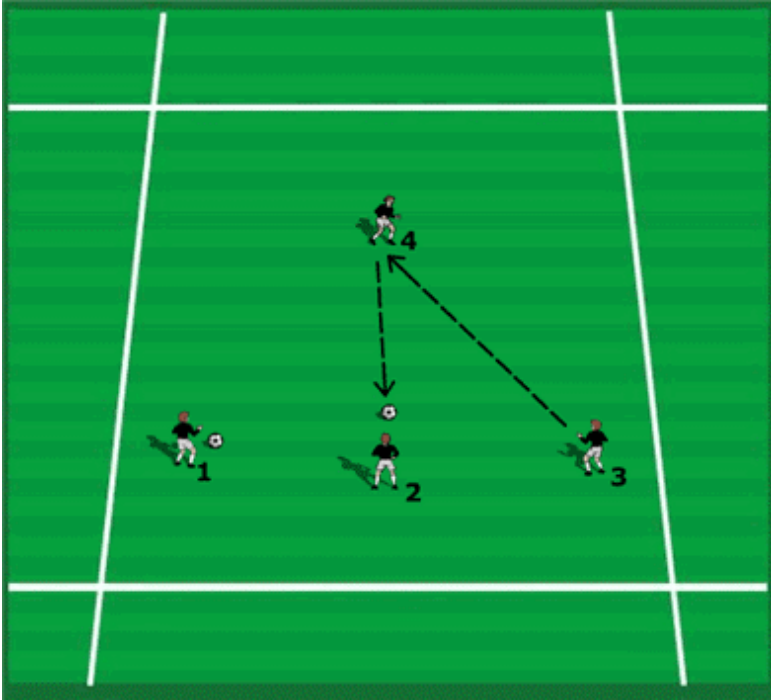
Playing one touch means he has to make the decision more quickly, you may begin with two touches to make it easier to gain initial success with these awareness drills.

Develop these decision making ideas between the developmental stages of learning forming the middle link between technique training and tactical training.

This drill training also leads into the dynamic movement training where players have freedom of movement and the movements are not predetermined; as with many drills.

The latter drills on this sequence have to be used ONLY with players with a high soccer IQ at these ages but likely you will have several who can do it successfully.

Spare Man Passing



Using a 10 yard grid and two balls and three players. Two players with balls feed player 4 one after the other. Player 4 passes to the spare player each time that is without a ball.

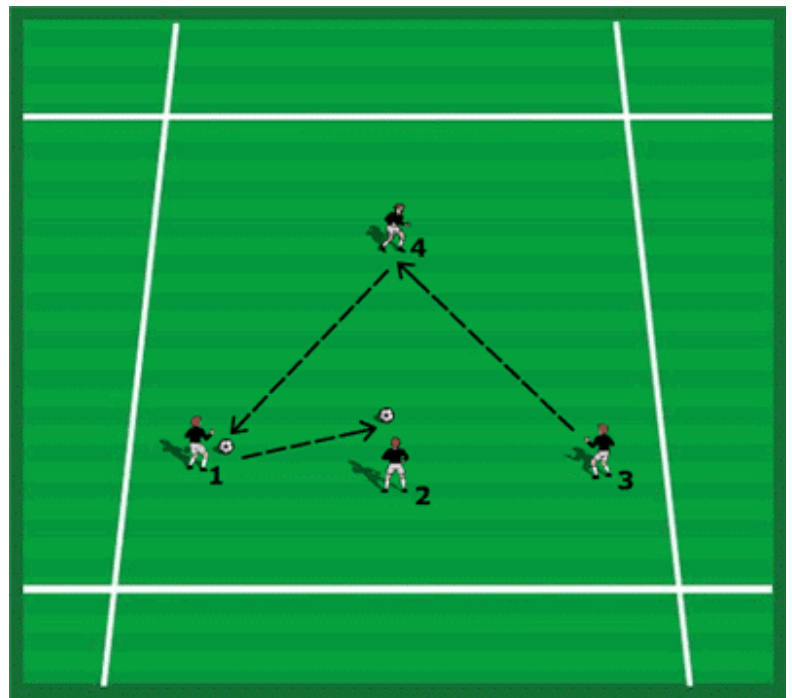
This practice develops playing off the back foot as well as quick decision making and can be enhanced by adding a 5th player and third ball.

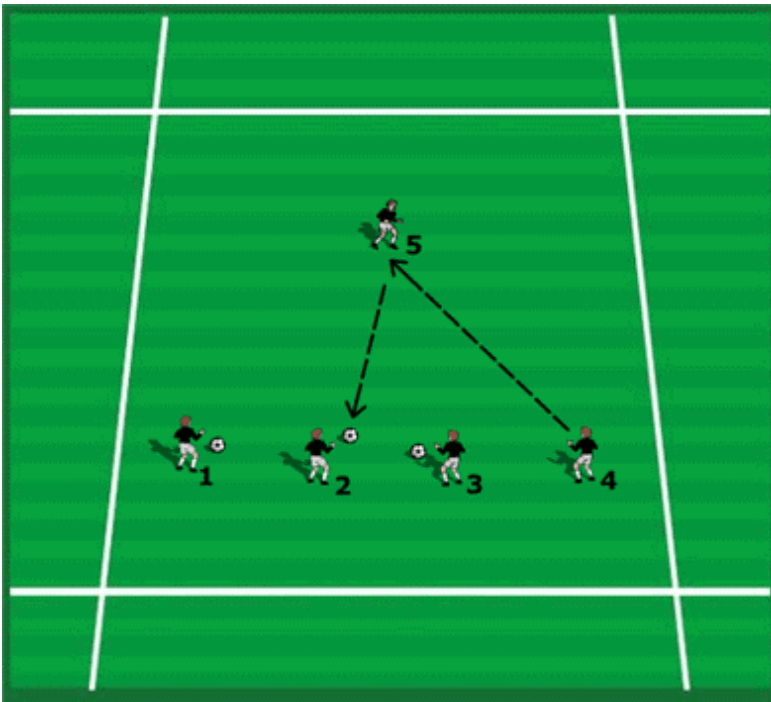
Speed up or slow down the practice as the ability of the player allows. Allow three touches (control, touch or push, and pass) then two touches (control and pass) then one touch (pass).

Increasing the difficulty. As player 3 passes to player 4, player 1 who has the other ball, passes to player 2. This means as the first ball is traveling to player 4, that player has to identify the movement of the 2nd ball from player 1 to player 2 and thus pass the receiving ball to player 1.

Sometimes the 2nd ball is not passed and player 4 has to see that and pass accordingly.

It gets more challenging when you add another player and another ball.

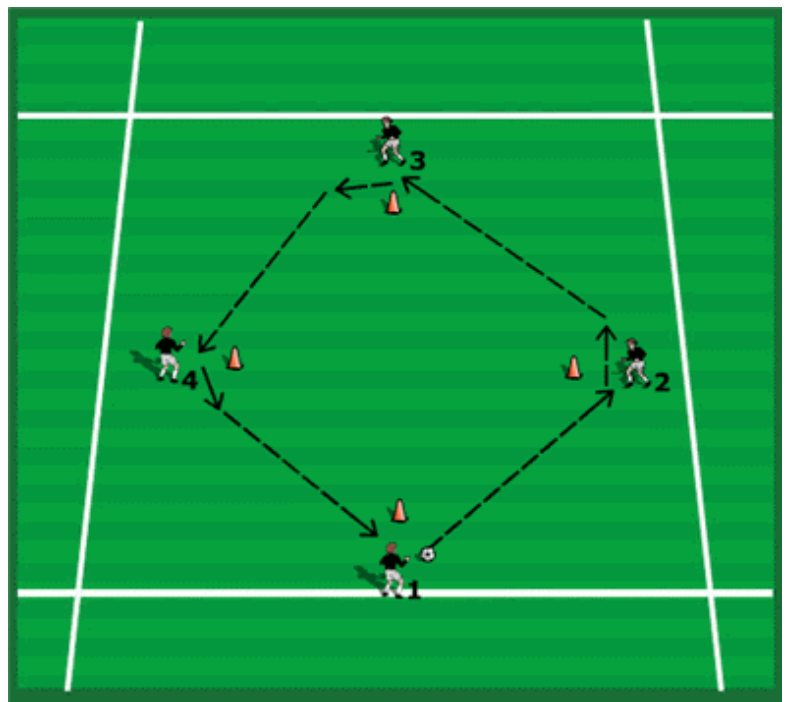




Adding another player and another ball.

Player 1 moves the ball from the left to the right side of the cone and passes it firmly to player 2. Player 2 will control it with the inside of the right foot i.e. the back foot.

Player 2 adopts an open stance (half turned) to do this and cushions the ball with their right foot, into the direction it has to go. Thus, we are moving the ball out of the feet with this touch to the right, to pass to player 3 on the 2nd touch, and so on around the diamond.



Reverse the direction so both feet are used.

If the angle and pace of the pass is good try to move the ball one touch only.

This is a simple way of teaching the players to open their bodies to receive, have a good soft and cushioned first touch into the direction they are going and encourage them to look before they receive to focus on the direction of the next pass early.

Drop off the cone to allow more space between the player and the cone and move the ball in the first touch with the front foot (left foot) behind the cone to pass to the next player, so moving the ball across the body with the first touch. Passer now passes to the left foot not the right foot.

Compare the two.

Develop:

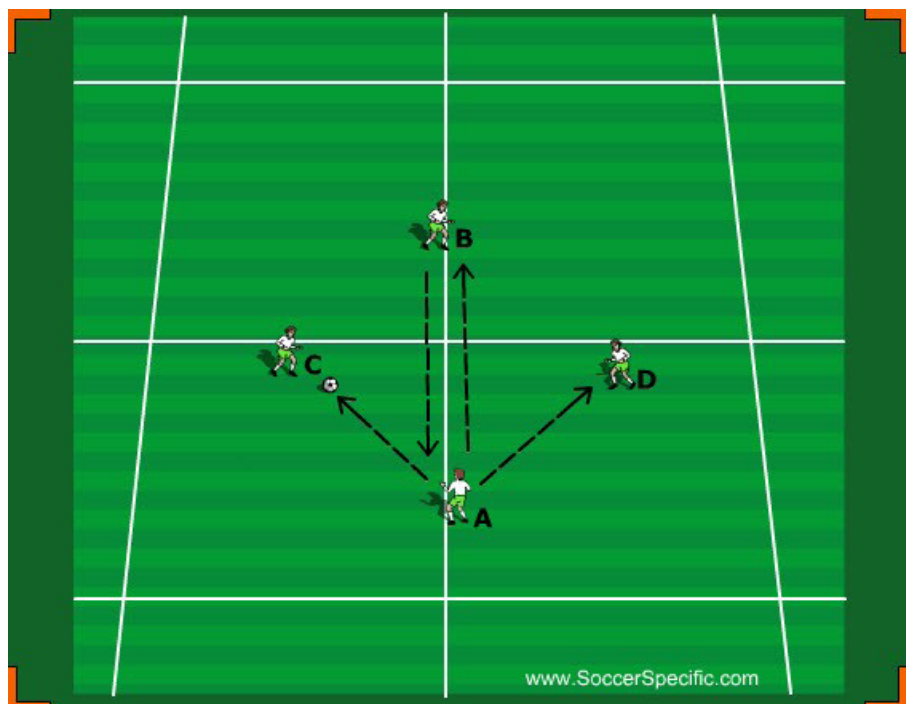
1. Throw the ball to the next player who has to control and sweep it to the side on the half volley and around the cone and pass to the next player. 2 balls can be going at the same time. It can be with the inside of the left foot or outside of the right foot, then a right foot pass going anticlockwise. It is a controlled half volley we are looking for keeping the ball close so the first touch has to be accurate.
2. The same with a volley into space.
3. Different parts of the body.

A Four Player Drill With No Defenders Developing The Skill Factor

Four teammates: Players (A) and (B) play the ball by giving direct passes (one touch play), (A) has to play the ball back to (C) or (D).

If a player turns their back to the ball this signifies to the receiver he is not available for a pass. So; provided they are not turned around with their backs to him the players are available to pass to. Liken turning the back to not making eye contact so that player is not ready to receive the pass in a game situation or is not open.

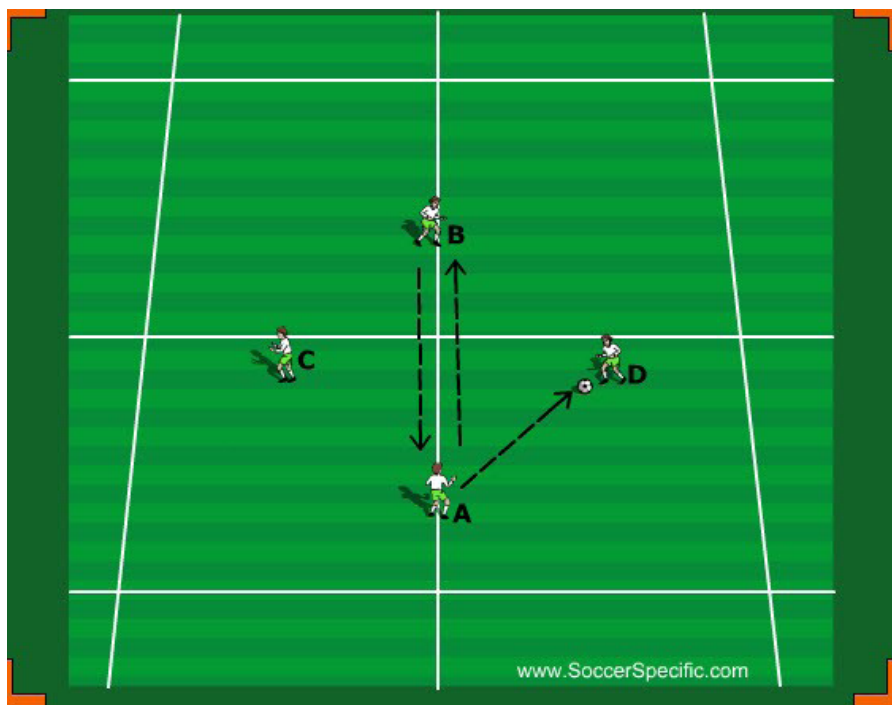
So, initially two choices of a pass if neither turn their backs to the ball.



Example: (A) to (B), back to (A), neither player turns their back to (A); so (A) has the two choices of passing to (C) or (D) then getting the ball back AND PASSING TO (B) TO CONTINUE THE SEQUENCE..

(C) or (D) on receiving must pass back to (A) who passes to (B) and the sequence continues.

Another way to do this is to have players put their hands up instead of turning with their back to everyone this is actually easier to do and more effective.



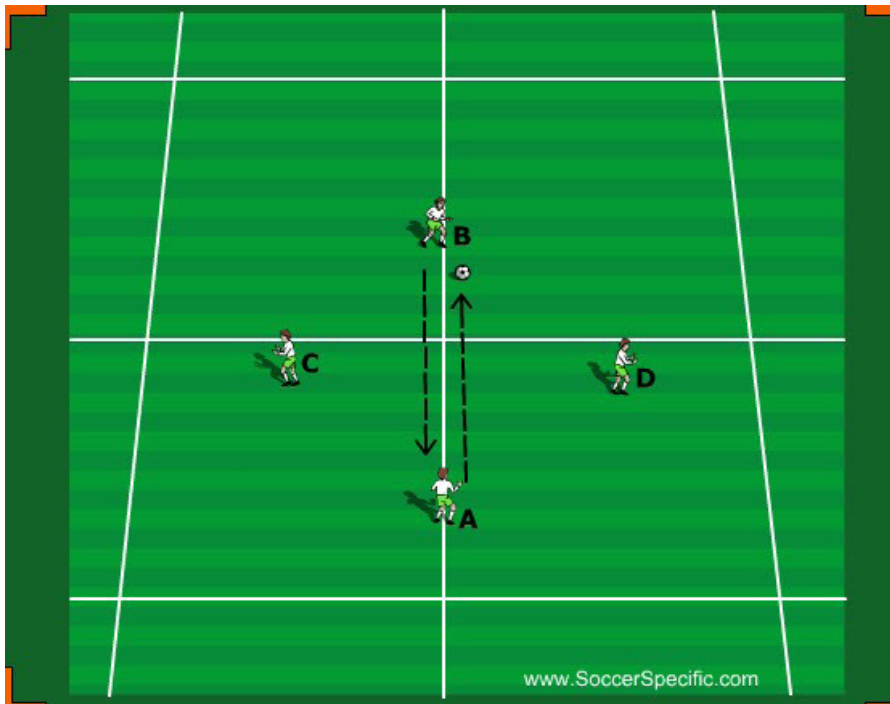
Here (C) has decided to turn their back so (A) has to pass to (D). If (C) and (D) both turn their backs then (A) passes back to (B) and the sequence starts again. Try to get a rhythm going with continuous one touch passes where possible (allow two touches if this is too fast for the players initially and they cannot identify the options quickly enough).

Example: (A) passes to (B) and (B) passes back to (A), the reactions of (C) and (D) must happen based on the return pass to (A). As the ball is travelling, (A) is watching the ball but also at the same time assessing the next option (so looking away from the ball), which will be determined by the actions of (C) and (D).

Thus peripheral development develops with the receiving player practicing awareness in assessing options before they receive the pass and thus decision making before receiving the ball and not after.

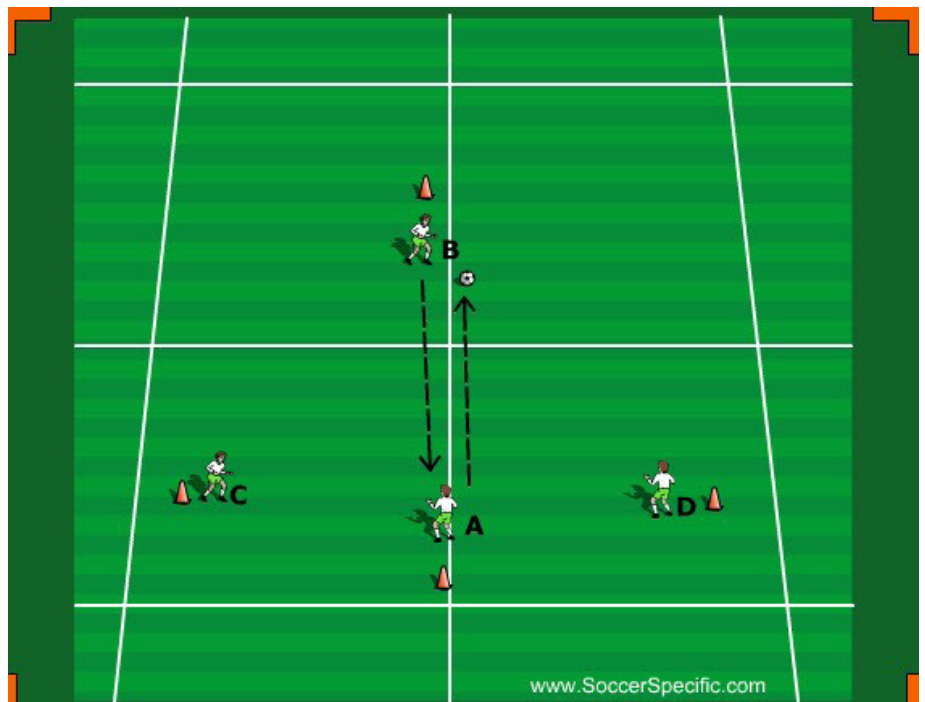
In a game situation if they did not make these early assessments it may be too late a decision; based on the pace of the game today, and consequently they lose possession. Obviously the quicker the decision the fewer touches used, the less chance of being closed down by a defender in a game, hence one touch passing develops through faster decision making and faster decision making develops through one touch..

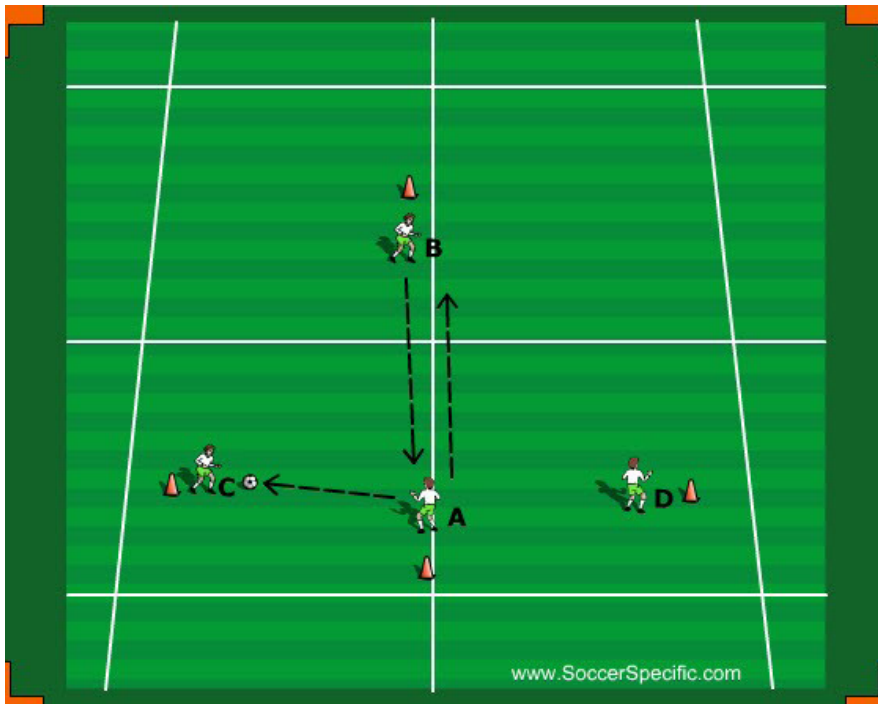
As previously mentioned all the play is in front of the receiver so it is an easy introduction to skill development (decision making / where and when) through awareness training.



Here both players turn their back so (A) has to pass back to (B) with a quick one touch decision making pass.

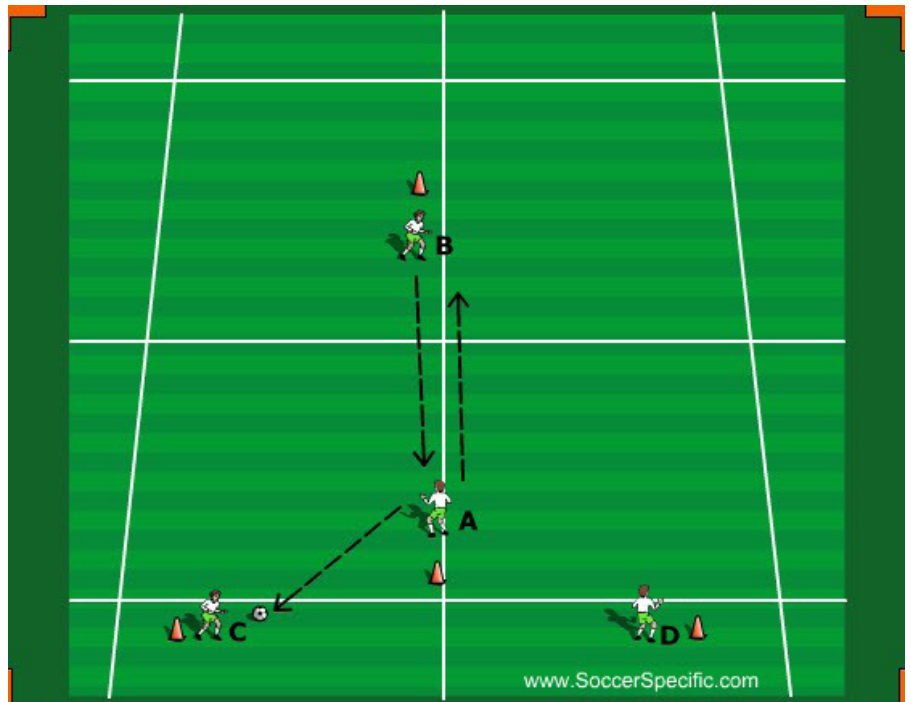
Observation and passing to the side so the receiving player does not have the support players directly in front of him now but to the side so he has to look sideways making the task slightly more difficult.



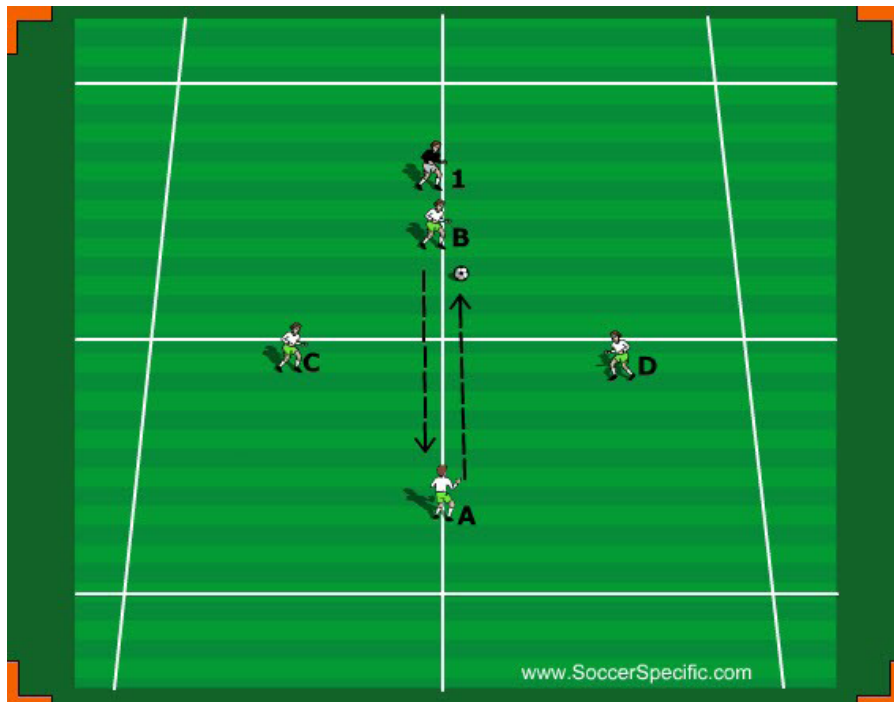


Player (D) turns his back and the receiver (A) passes the ball to (C).

Observation and passing behind (like a midfield player receiving and turning and passing) so now the player has to look BEHIND him to know which pass to make. It is best to do this two touch (one to control and turn and one to pass) though very good players may be able to play one touch.



Bring A Defender In



The defender can only pressure; not win the ball, so the player receiving knows he can relax on the ball during the decision making process.

These factors are vitally important to develop when a player is young:

1. Calmness on the ball so the player does not panic when pressure is exerted on him.
2. Developing the ability to look at the player closing and where they are closing from and also assessing where the next pass has to go at the same time.
3. These exercises also specifically train peripheral vision.
4. They stimulate quick reflexes in the player so their decision making speeds up.

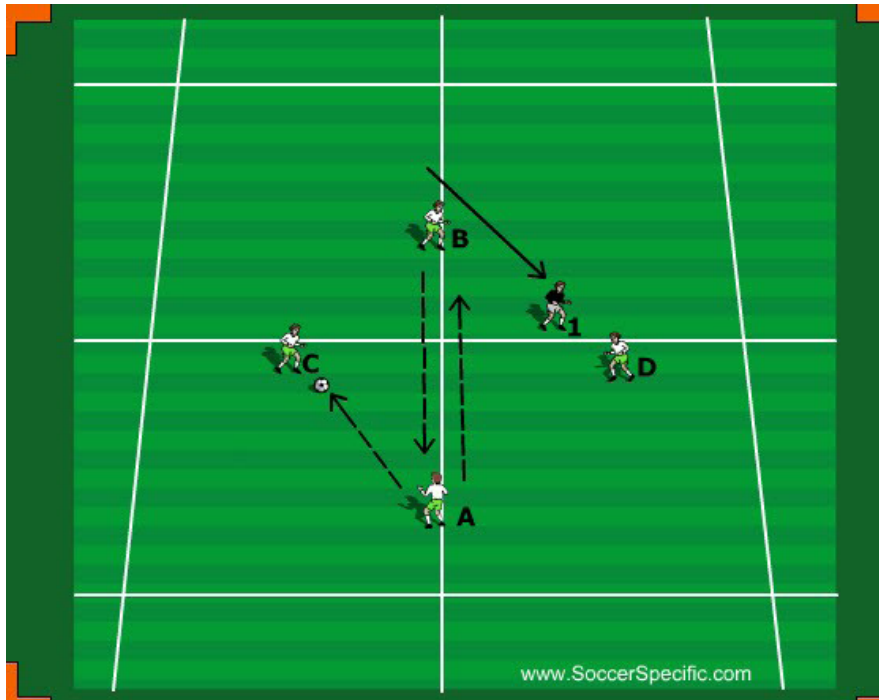
By there being pressure but no taking of the ball or tackling, the player develops a calmness that otherwise may not develop.

So when we advance and pressure is applied in the form of tackling and the opponent being able to take the ball off him, the training with pressure (but without losing the ball) hopefully will have taught the player to play with clamness under pressure and therefore they will not panic.

Panicking under pressure means the player loses focus on their next option focusing only on the player pressing them.

This training is designed to teach them to do two things at once, not just one, which many players suffer from and which limits their ability and performance.

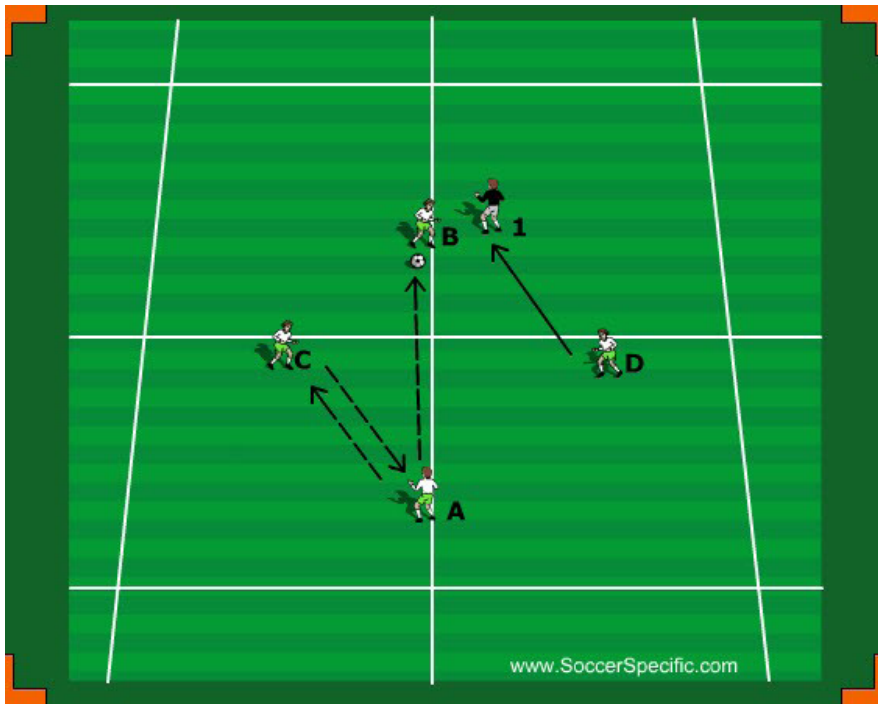
Developing Peripheral Vision From In Front Of Play



The same exercise but in this case there is an opponent who decides the player he is going to mark each time, according to the situation. Players (C) and (D) play in the same way as previously.

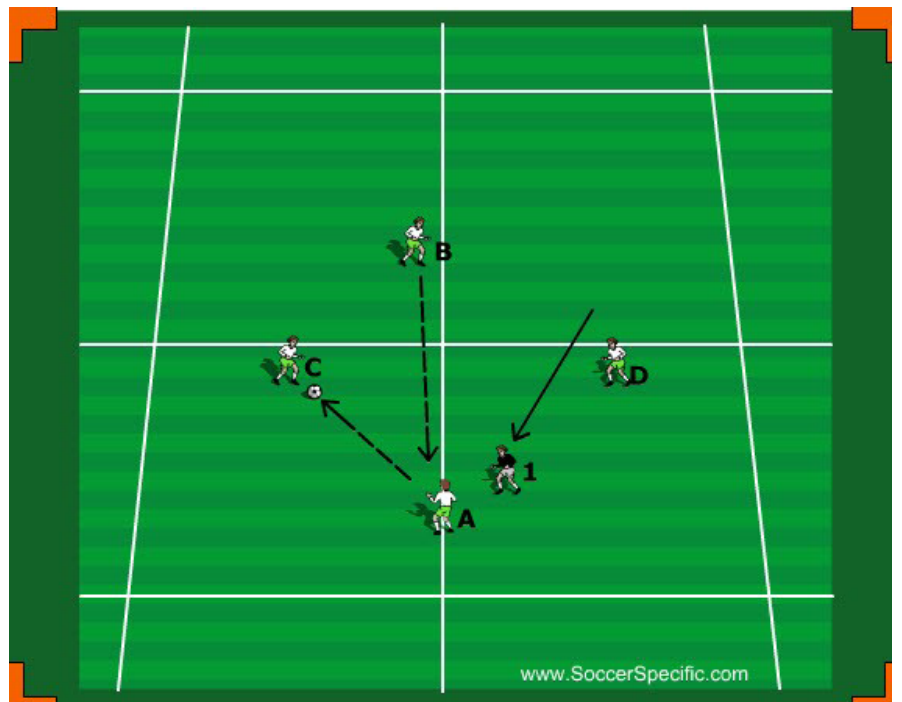
Since the marking player controls a different opponent each time, the direction of the action constantly changes.

Above, the defender closes down (D) so (A) passes to (C). (C) passes back to (A) who takes two touches to allow the defender to be ready (but 2 quick touches now, one to control and then the 2nd as an immediate pass), and then (A) passes to (B) and we start again.

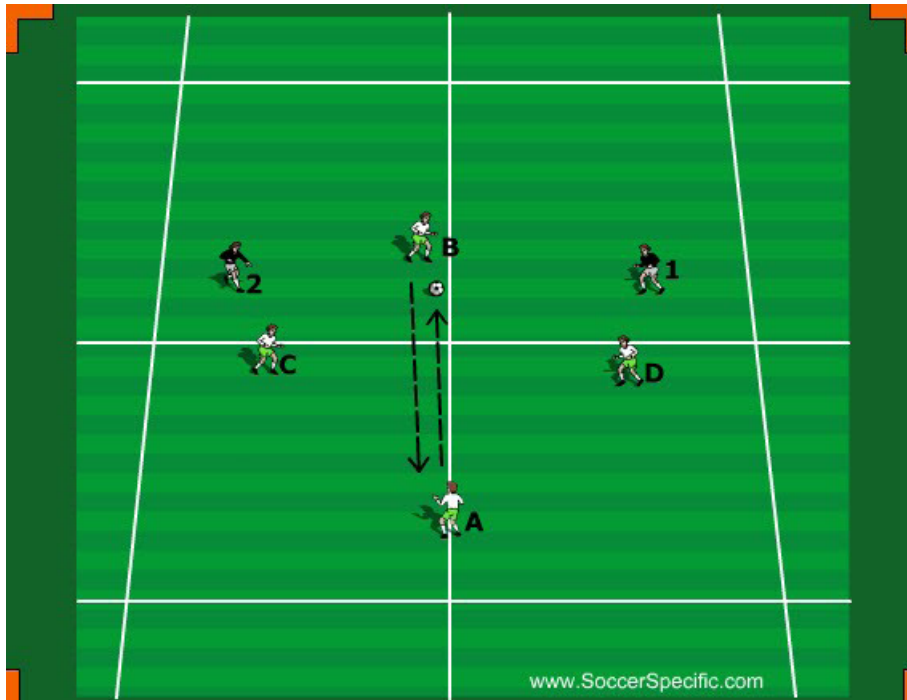


Showing the defender recovering back to the start position.

The defender closes down (A) so (B) passes to (C).



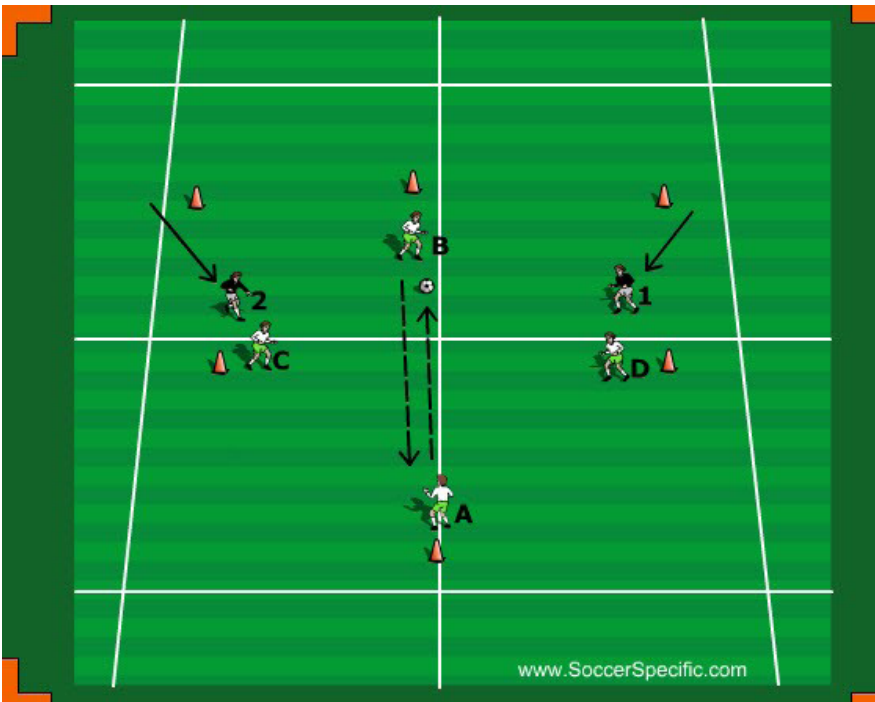
A Four Against Two Situation



Four teammates and two opponents. (A) and (B) are facing each other, whilst (C) and (D) position on the two sides.

The start positions of the two opponents (E) and (F) are 3 yards behind (C) and (D) (according to their marking positions) and force player (A) to always pass the ball to an unmarked team mate. (E) and (F) can also mark player (B).

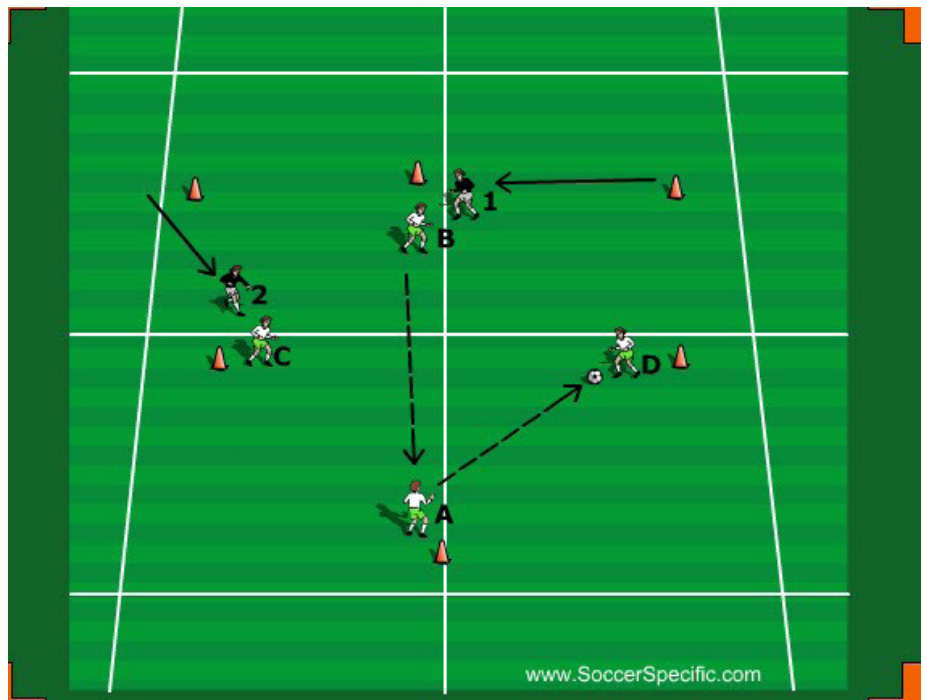
Only one pass is on now out of 3 possibilities before two players are marked. The open pass continually changes as the defenders move to mark different players each time. So the receiving players first touch, accuracy of pass (which is the actual first touch as a pass not as a controlling touch; unless you allow two touches), peripheral vision and decision making (skill) are all tested under pressure through time but without the immediate pressure from an opponent which results in the receiving player who's ability we are testing is able to play relaxed knowing the ball cannot be taken from him. The pressure is exerted on his team mates which will affect the decisions he then is forced to make.



The edition of cones showing the start positions of each player may help them understand the exercise more easily. You can allow the passing player to communicate initially but then do not allow it so the receiving player has to use his own awareness without help. (C) and (D) are marked so the pass must go to (B). (B) passes back and the sequence begins again. Players can stand still and mark the same player also in the next sequence which in itself tests the awareness and peripheral vision of the passer (A).

Here both (B) and (C) are marked so the pass is to (D). Then pass back to (A), who passes to (B) to get it back one touch and the sequence starts again.

As the ball is travelling back to (A) to pass to (B) (who will then pass to (A) again to test him in his decision making) the two defenders need to be assessing their options of whom to mark next and be moving to do so (unless they decide to stay put this time).



Peripheral Vision Development From Behind The Play

Develop: Have (A) as the passing player and (B) as the receiving player so as previously players are making defensive movements from behind and the receiving player (B) has to act accordingly.

Three Team Mates Against One Opponent

Otherwise if the opponent follows him, players (A) and (B) go on playing the ball with ground passes, lobs or headed passes.

You are experimenting with the defender facing the ball; so the movement is on his blindside or he is facing the player so he does not see where the ball is going. Both give the receiving player an extra moment on the defender.

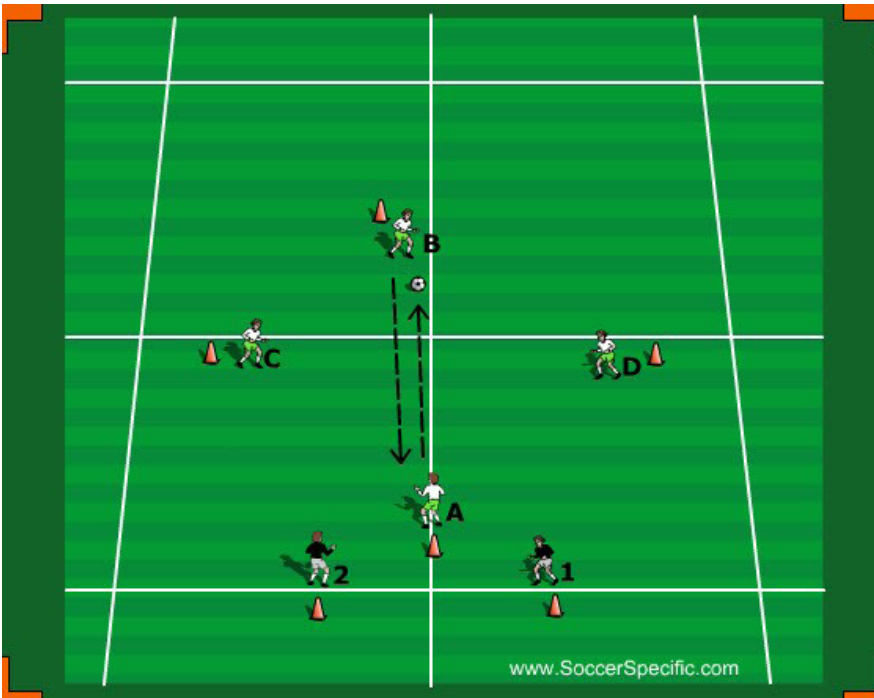
Four Against Two

Developing Peripheral Vision For Movement From Behind

Now we are testing player (A)'s peripheral vision. It was easier for the player before as everything happening was IN FRONT OF HIM, now for (A) it is happening with pressure from behind.

At the same time his supporting players in front of him make decisions to force him to think quickly.

So, a lot of stimuli to test him and he has to develop a VERY PROACTIVE MIND to have success.

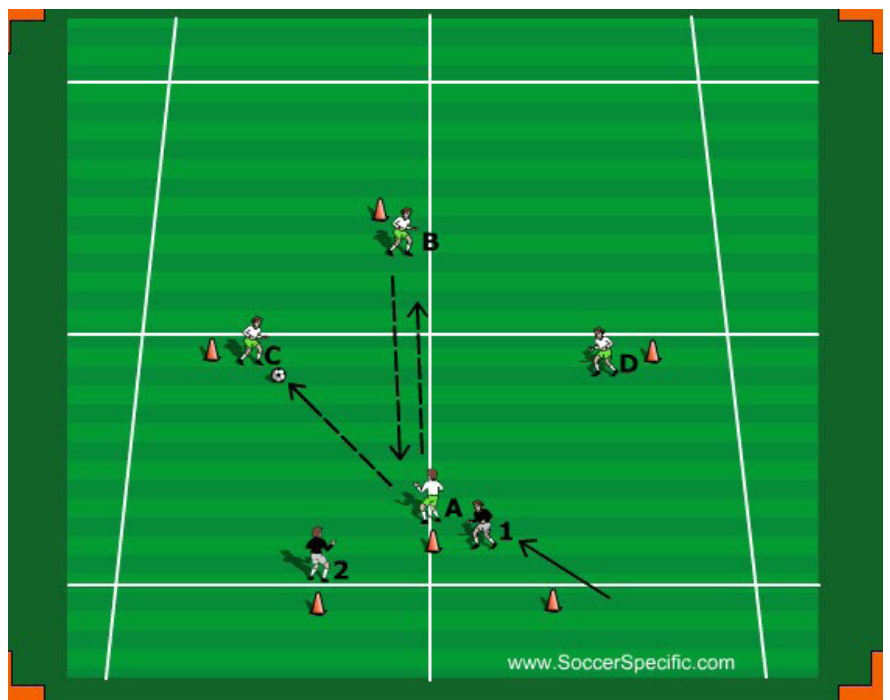


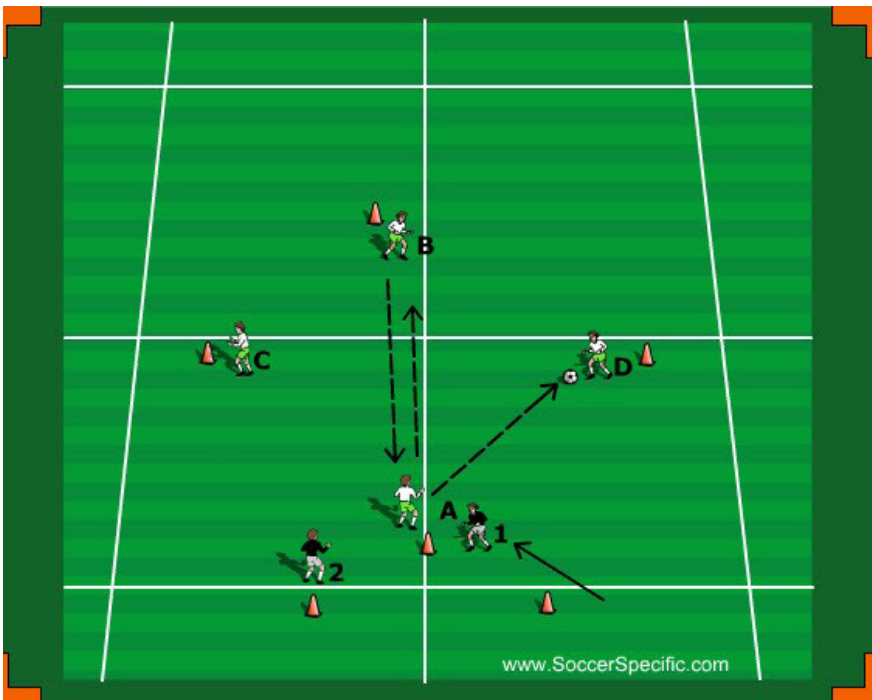
Players (A) and (B) pass the ball back and forth. If (A) is challenged by a defender he has to pass the ball to the opposite side supporting player. So, if he is closed down by defender (1) he passes to supporting player (C), if closed by defender (2) he passes to supporting player (D).

Players have now to look BEHIND them over their shoulders to see where defenders are as the ball travels, thus identifying the pressing player BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL.

If (A) is marked by the two opponents at the same time he has to give a pass to his unmarked team mates, provided that he is not turned around with his back to him (WHICH SIGNIFIES HE IS NOT OPEN TO RECEIVE A PASS).

Players (A) and (B) pass the ball back and forth. (A) is challenged by defender (1) and so he has to pass the ball to the opposite side; (in this case to player C).





A Player Turns Their Back To Play Signifying They Are Not Open For A Pass

Here player (C) turns his back on the player receiving the pass so (A) has to pass to (D) instead of (C), even though the pressure has come from that side.

So now the receiver has to process two quick decisions in his mind to be successful.

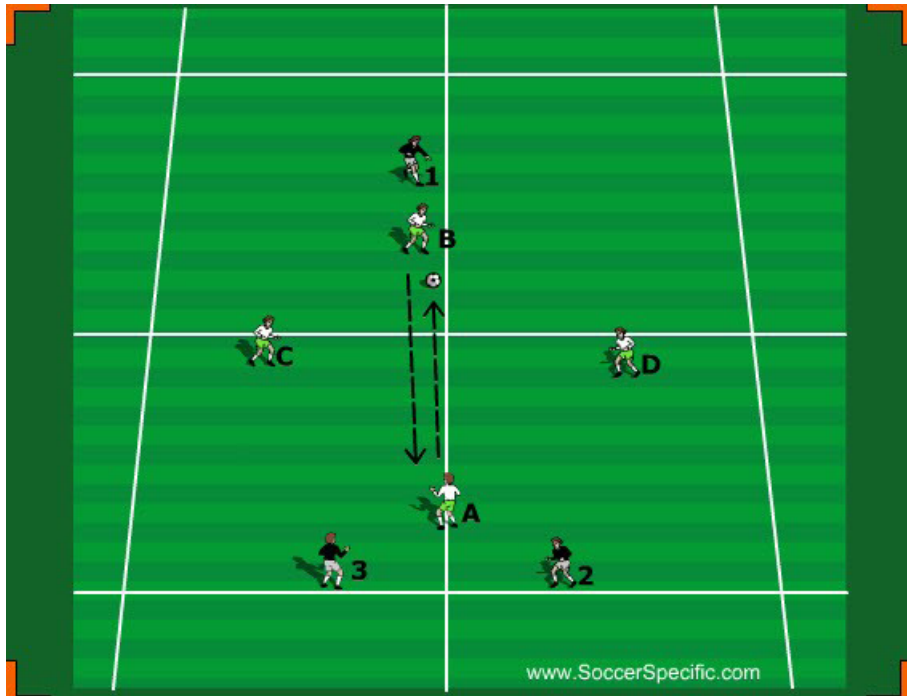
So now we have stimuli from behind play and from in front of play in terms of the decision making of opponents and teammates alike.

Both (C) and (D) turn their backs so player (A) has to pass back to (B). This would happen even if the defenders (1) and (2) did not close him down.

This means in a game situation only player (B) is open to receive a pass from (A).



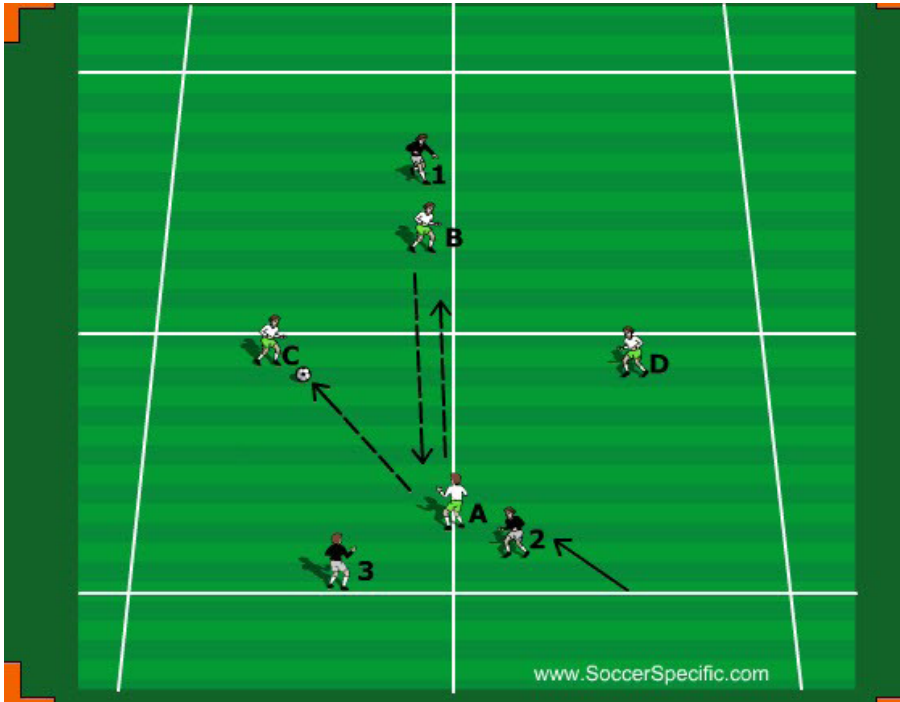
Four Team Mates Against Three Opponents



Bring in an extra defender. Players (A) and (B) play the ball and are always in the center of the action. This exercise is very similar to the previous one but includes some variations. As previously, if (A) is challenged by an opponent, he has to play the ball to the opposite side; but only if his team mate is unmarked and is looking at him, otherwise, he plays the ball back to (B). If (A) is marked by the two opponents at the same time he has to give a pass to his unmarked team mate, provided that he is not turned around with his back to him. Player (B)'s defender is also free to mark whoever he wants. Try to have the players do one touch training but if they struggle at first; allow two touches (particularly with this exercise) but the second touch has to be immediately after the first touch with no dwelling on the ball otherwise it defeats the objective of the practice which is to develop quick thinking and create great peripheral vision.

Players have now to look BEHIND them to see where defenders are as the ball travels, thus identifying the pressing player BEFORE RECEIVING THE BALL.

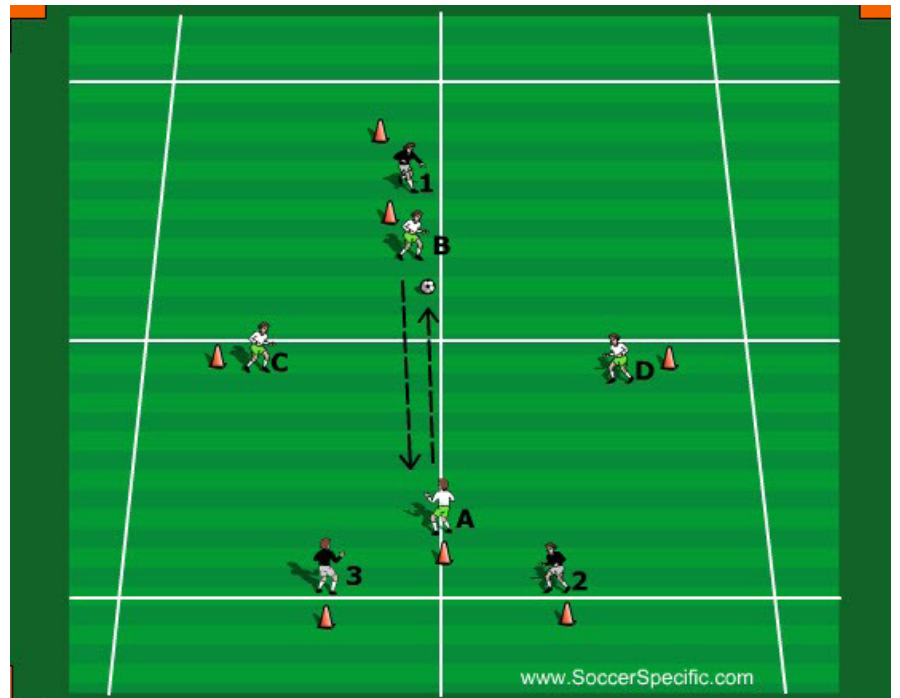
(B) always starts the sequence passing to (A) then receiving a one touch pass back. As the ball is travelling the players react and (B) has to make a decision as to where to pass next; based on these reactions. Once this has been performed successfully and the choice of pass is correct the receiving player immediately passes the ball back one touch to (B) who passes to (A) again (one touch) and the sequence begins again. Once (B) has made the successful pass the defenders recover back to their start positions also ready for the next decisions to be made.

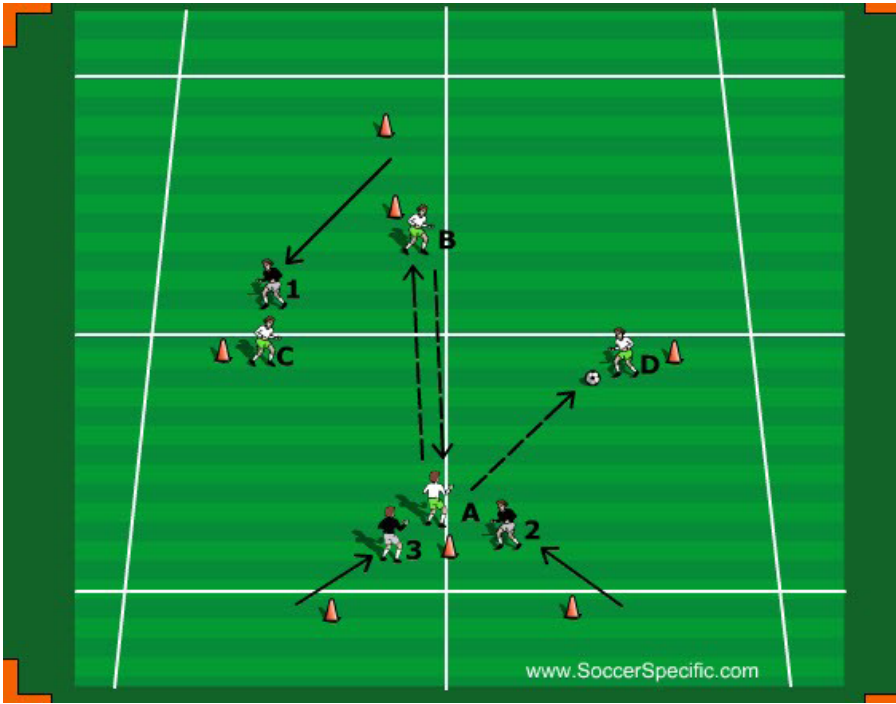


After (B) initially passes to (A) here; we show (A) passes to (B) on the return pass and defender (2) closes (A) down; so (A) has to pass in the opposite direction to (C).

(C) then passes one touch back to (A) who passes to (B) and the sequence begins again, defender (2) immediately dropping back.

As previously suggested it may be easier for the set up if cones are used for the start positions of all the players.

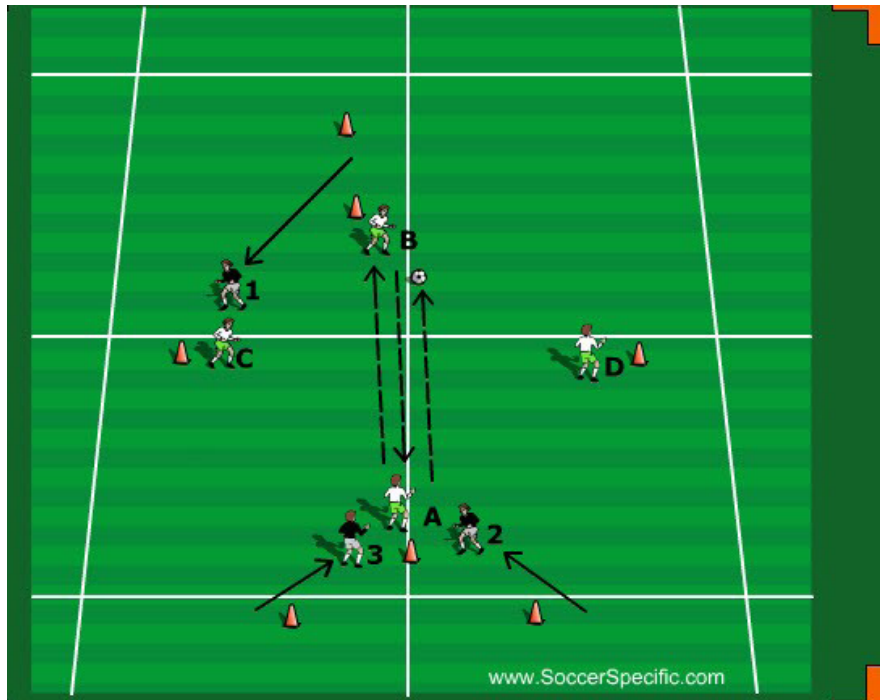


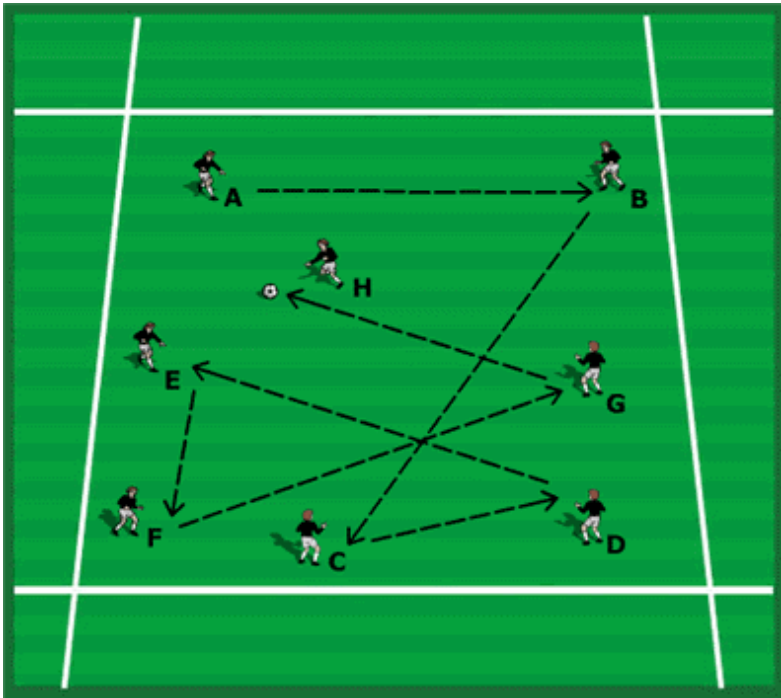


Both defenders (2) and (3) close (B) down and (C) is closed down by defender (1) so he passes to (D).

(B) in this case is the last player to be passed to, and (A)'s priority is to identify (D) as the most open player.

Two defenders (2) and (3) close the player (B) receiving the pass, defender (1) has moved to close down (C) and player (D) has turned his back so he passes back to (B).





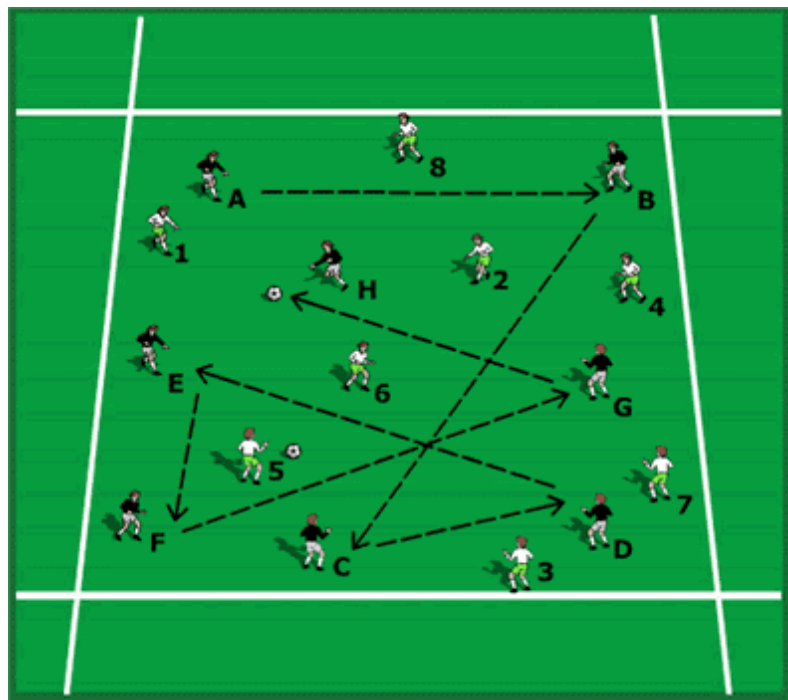
Introduce Another Team To The Same Zone

The team above can be brought into the same zone to work in as the first team, each with a ball.

Coaching Points:

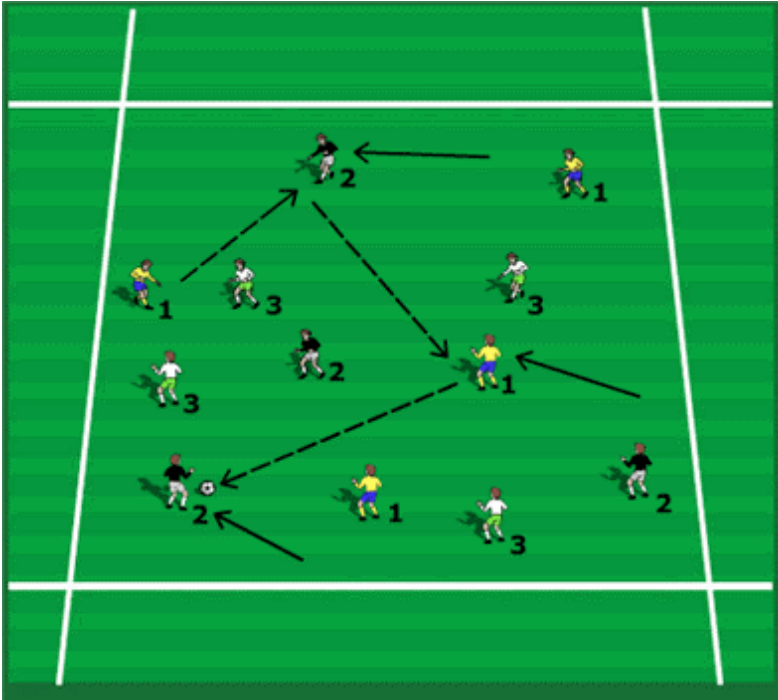
1. Awareness of where the player to receive from is before receiving the pass
2. Getting into position to help the passer make a successful pass
3. Awareness of where the player to pass to is before receiving the pass
4. Open Body position to receive the pass to enable a resulting one touch pass if necessary

Progression 1: Awareness of the position of the player receiving the pass, before the person who passes to you receives it (thinking two moves ahead). If you are player number three then you are watching player number one passing it in anticipation of player two passing to you.



Progression 2: One and two touch condition to see who has good awareness. Try the one touch condition and insist they stay with it and see what happens and see who is good at it and who needs work.

1. You can begin with two teams in the bigger zone (combined zones of each team) and then have them play in the one zone where it's tight and more difficult to work in.
2. Obviously the players move but for simplicity of explanation I have shown it this way.
3. Player (A) is ready to begin the passing of the letters team.
4. Competitive: One ball per team, have a player count the number of passes a "team" makes in a given time period.

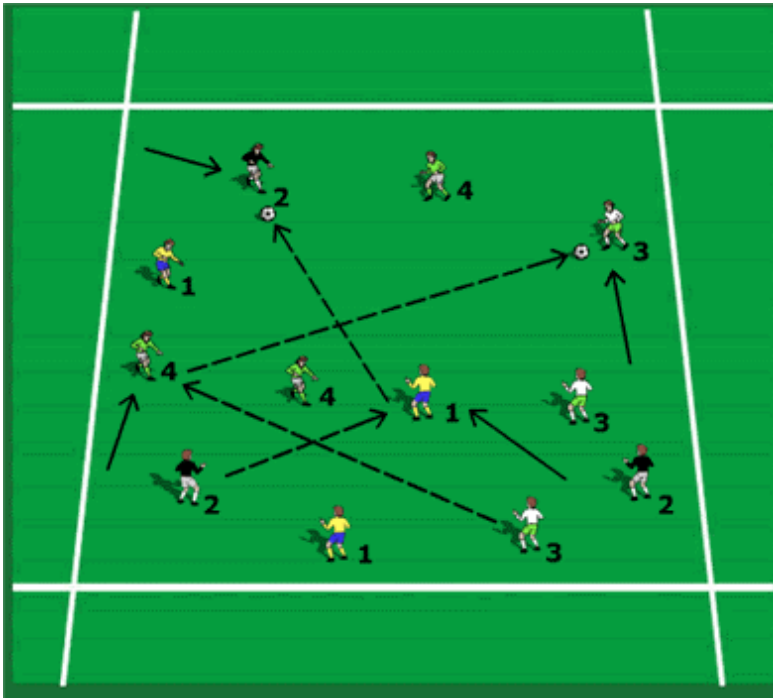


Working with three teams (4 v 4 + 4). Teams (1) and (2) work together to keep the ball from team (3). If team (3) regains possession the team who gave it away becomes the defenders. The defenders reward is they keep the ball and link with the other team. Rules: Once possession is gained, to establish who gave the ball away the defender who won the ball puts their foot on the ball to stop play and the coach can call out the team who gave it away. Play begins again working on transitions.

Develop: Increase difficulty for attackers by:

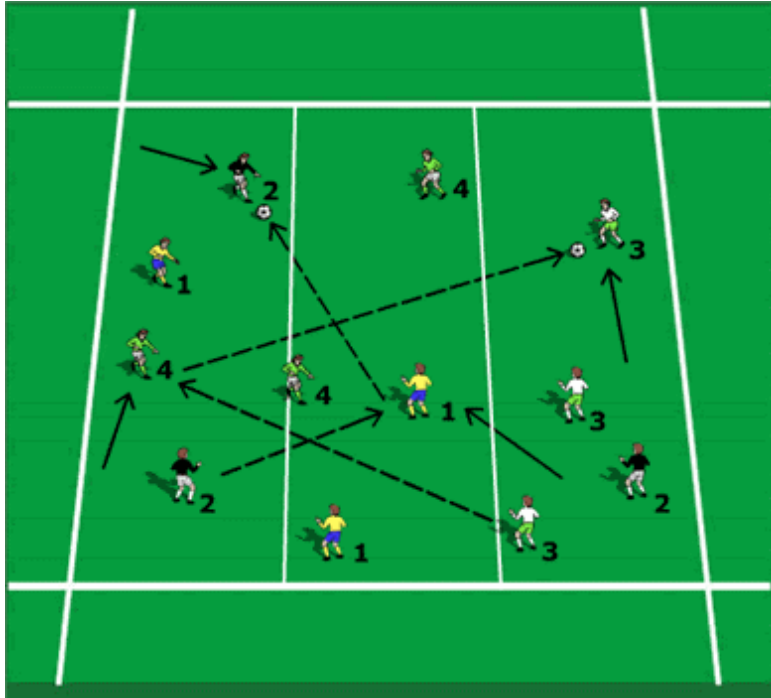
1. Reducing the zone size.
2. Decreasing the number of touches on the ball of each player.
3. Condition the passing to be only to the other attacking teams players e.g. (1) only pass to (2) and vice versa therefore only half the number of passes available per player. increase the numbers to suit how many players you have, e.g. 4 v 4 + 4 or 5 v 5 + 5 etc
4. Have two balls to play with so as they pass one ball they are now increasing their awareness and vision by looking for the other ball coming.
5. Ask players to take off their pennies so they really have to look and not be able to use color identification.
6. No talking or pointing, so players have to rely on their own vision.

Session 73: A Competitive Non - Directional Three Team Awareness Possession Game (4 V 4 V 4)



A Non-Competitive Awareness Numbers Game: Passing In Sequence To Begin

1. This is a great game for forcing players to observe what is ahead of the ball in terms of knowing what they need to do with the ball “before” they receive it. Players (1) and (2) work together and players (3) and (4) work together.
2. Players must pass in sequence i.e. 1 passes to 2; 2 passes to 3; 3 to 4 and 4 passes to 1 and we begin again. You can have players static to begin then have them passing and moving. Player receives from the same person and passes to the same person each time. This develops great awareness of time, space and player positions. This is continuous work on and off the ball.
3. Awareness of: where the player you receive from is and where the player you pass to is. Because of this players begin to anticipate the pass to them and where it is coming from. Also they must look to where it is going to (where is the player they are passing to?).
4. We are trying to create a situation where players are looking two moves ahead not just one. For instance as (1) is about to pass to (2), (3) should be looking to support (2) for the next pass already, looking two moves ahead before the ball leaves (1). Peripheral Vision Development results from this.
5. (3) should recognize if they need to move into a space early or late based on this observation, but know in their mind already what the next best option is. Moving into the space too early in a game situation for example may result in being marked too easily. But knowing in advance “when and where” to move to is an advantage and this game helps players develop this thought process.

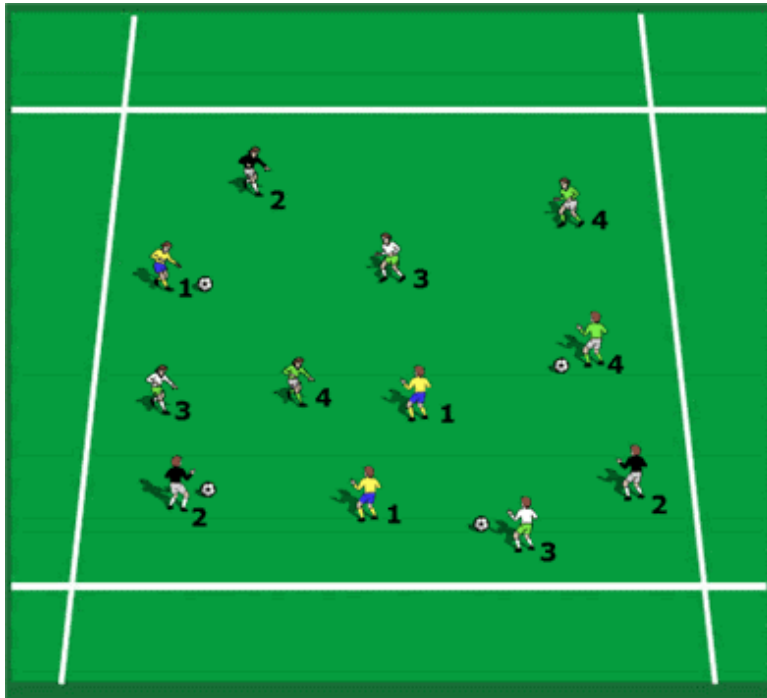


Ask players to make it difficult to find them by lots of movement off the ball to test their team mate's vision.

Progression: Use two balls then three balls at the same time. Start with a ball at (1) and (4) then at (1), (4) and (6). To keep the sequence going players must move the balls quickly with few touches hence their peripheral vision development improves dramatically. As soon as they have passed one ball off the next one is arriving so quick thinking is needed to make the correct decisions.

Divide the field up into third's and ask players to make a pass in one third then they must move to another third to receive the next pass. This can cause players to pass long or pass short and vary the range and distance of the passes and the support.

Here (3) passes to (4) and moves into another zone to receive the next ball that is coming. This ensures players get the idea of passing and MOVING off the ball, not passing and then standing. (2) Does the same with a pass to (1) then moving into another zone supporting the next ball to come along.



Further Progressions: Making it more competitive, have each team be the defending team for a certain time span. If they win the ball they then give it back to the combined attacking teams. Count the number of times they win the ball. The defending team to win the ball the most times wins the game, or alternatively the combined teams which give up the ball the fewest times win the game.

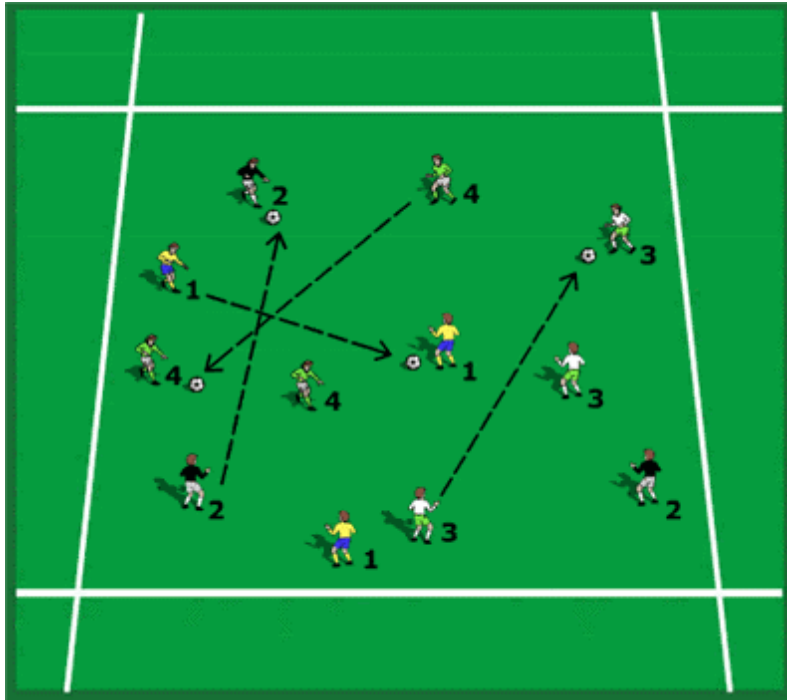
Attacking players individually count the number of times they give the ball away as an indication to each and every one of them how well they can maintain possession under pressure.

Begin with players able to have as many touches as they like, then break it down to 3 touch, then 2 touch with one touch passing the aim if it is on to do so.

Coaching Points:

1. Open body stance to allow a yard or more extra space away from defenders by letting the ball run across the body into preconceived space.
2. Looking before receiving to know in advance of the receiving pass; where the defending players are, where the space is, where team mates are free to receive a pass, how many options there are to move the ball on
3. Movement OFF the ball is a priority both to receive it and after passing it.

Competitive Four Team Game



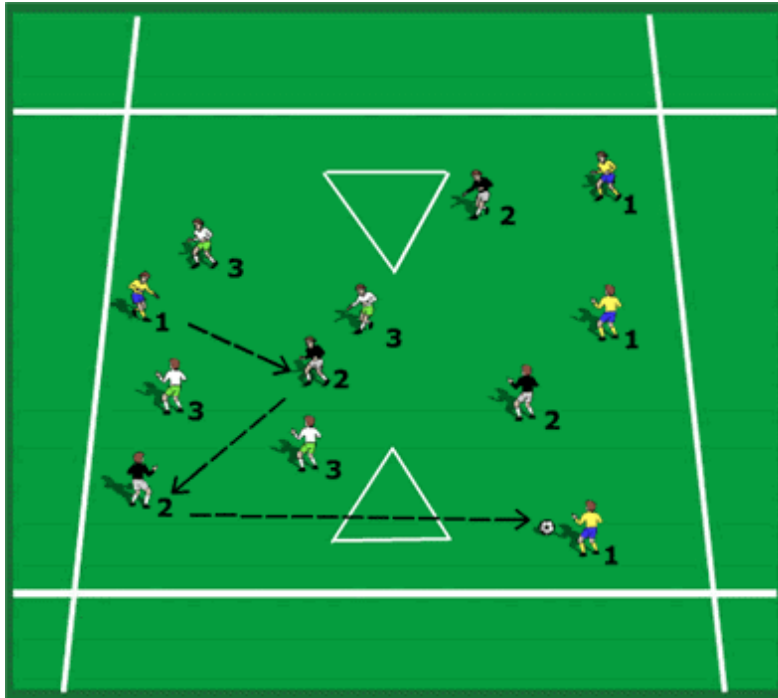
Competitive: The same idea as the introductory session only the player's count the number of passes they make in a given time as a team. Compare the totals. They can't pass back to the same player they received from.

Introduce several small goals for the players to pass through and count the number of goals scored. Ensure the players arrive at the goal (timing of the run) as the ball is passed through the goal (timing of the pass).

Players must not stand by a goal waiting for a pass as in a game they would not stand still like this to receive the ball as they would be easily marked.

Progression: Increase the number of balls per team (two balls per team). Combine two teams and have them passing to the other color and have three balls going at once, the variations can be numerous.

Competitive Directional Three Team Awareness Game Introducing Goals As Targets



Here is an interesting way to work on awareness training and passing, movement off the ball, fitness and looking for the penetrating pass. Add triangular goals to score through, this means the game continues after a goal is scored as the ball must be received and possession maintained by another player on the other side of the triangle to count as a goal. This ensures continuous play.

It is a more directional method of playing and more specific to the game in general. The defenders are NOT allowed inside the triangle so they must be constantly working their way around the triangle trying to cut off the penetrating passes.

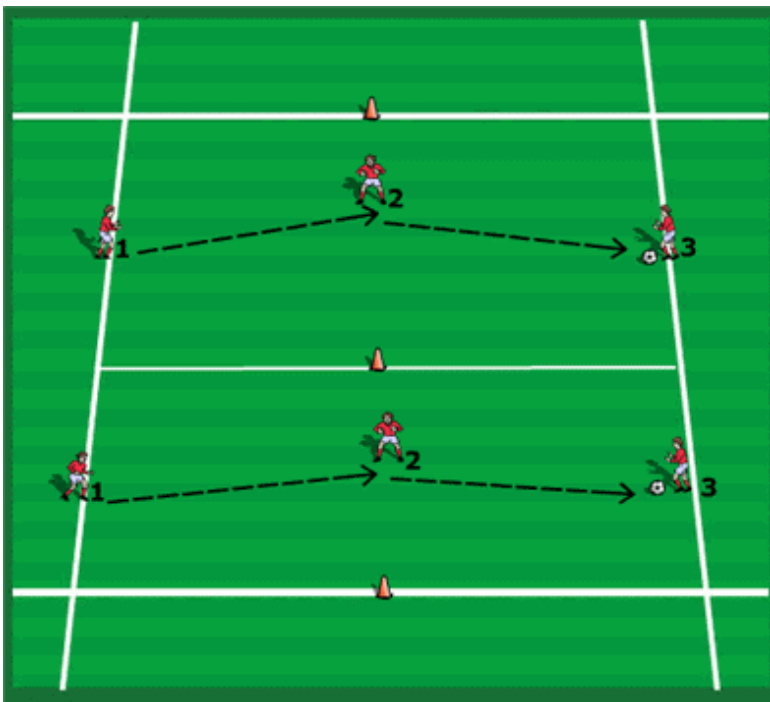
Team (3) defends teams (1) and (2) work together. The combined attacking teams can attack both goals alternatively. Attacking both goals encourages “Switching the Field”.

Ultimately reduce the game to two equal number teams for the greatest challenge and begin with as many touches as possible reducing the number of touches each is allowed as they improve and are able to keep possession effectively. Reducing the number of touches allowed inevitably increases their awareness and forces them to look for options earlier and improves and speeds up their decision making. This should result in them keeping possession more effectively.

Session 74: Practicing Basic Passing Awareness In Three's

Objective: Teaching Awareness In Three's Or Fours Developing Movements Off The Ball To Receive

Coaches are trying to develop the concept of the player recognizing options before receiving the ball. This exercise is a very simple idea and tests the players to see if they looked over their shoulder away from the ball or not before they receive the pass. Development can be monitored and progression can be clearly judged and the coach can move the players onto the next level when they recognize the time is right. I have carefully developed the levels of progression of these sessions to ensure each level is addressed at the correct time. Teaching very simple but important movements off the ball to get free in the game situation



Coaching Points:

1. Look over shoulder before receiving (where you are passing to).
2. Body Stance – half turned (can see behind).
3. Support at an angle.
4. Save a touch – let weight of ball determine this- let it run across the body and move one touch.

Develop: Opposite player stays or closes the middle player down. If closed down, middle player passes back to same. If not closed the middle player turns and passes to opposite player.

Go through each progression in the order it is presented here, do one at a time and have each player practice it in the middle at every stage of the progressions.

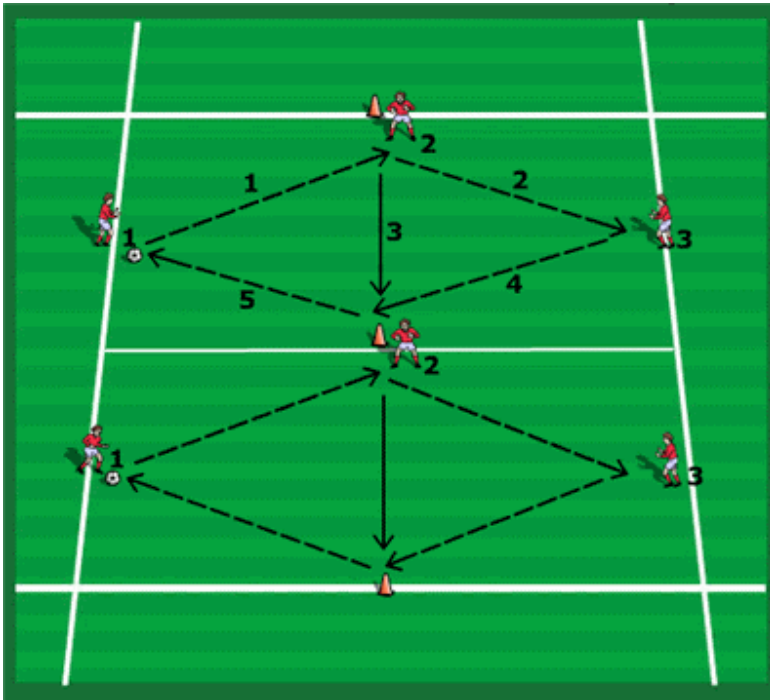
You can liken this to a defender passing to a midfielder passing to a striker.

Begin by passing the ball from player (1) to (2); to (3) and back. (2) Receives and turns and passes. Passing must be sharp and accurate, one or two touch.

You can receive with the furthest foot away from the passer and pass it with the nearest foot, or save a touch and move it one touch with the inside of the nearest foot or the outside of the furthest foot. Let the weight of the pass determine this, let it run across your body and move it one touch.

The player in the middle must open their body stance up by going side on so they can see what is behind them and it makes it easier to receive and pass the ball on.

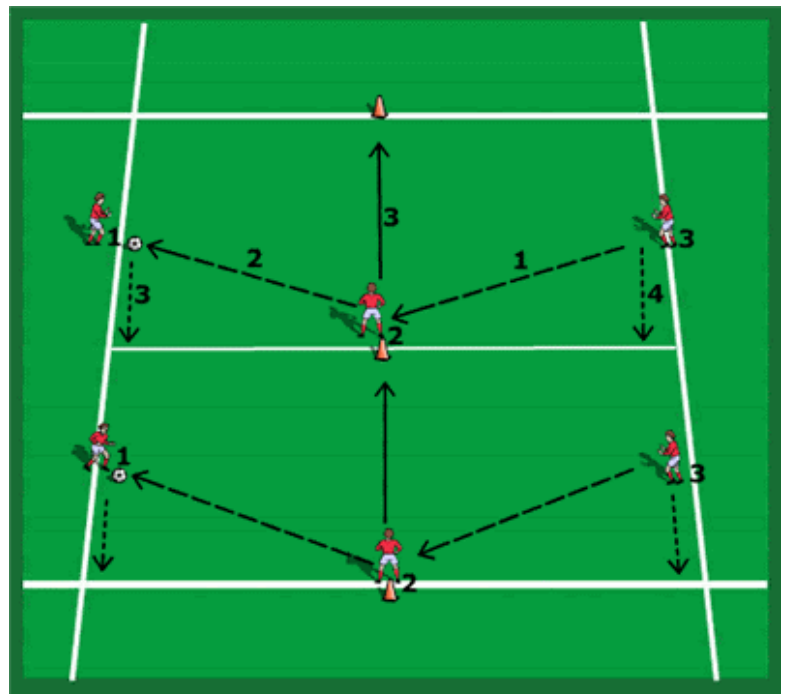
Look over the shoulder to see what's behind, do this before receiving the ball not after. Position in the middle off at an angle to receive, this makes a triangular support position and opens up the field of vision. Once the ball has been passed on the middle player moves to the other side off at an angle again (can use cones to run to both sides). This forces the players to receive and pass with both feet.

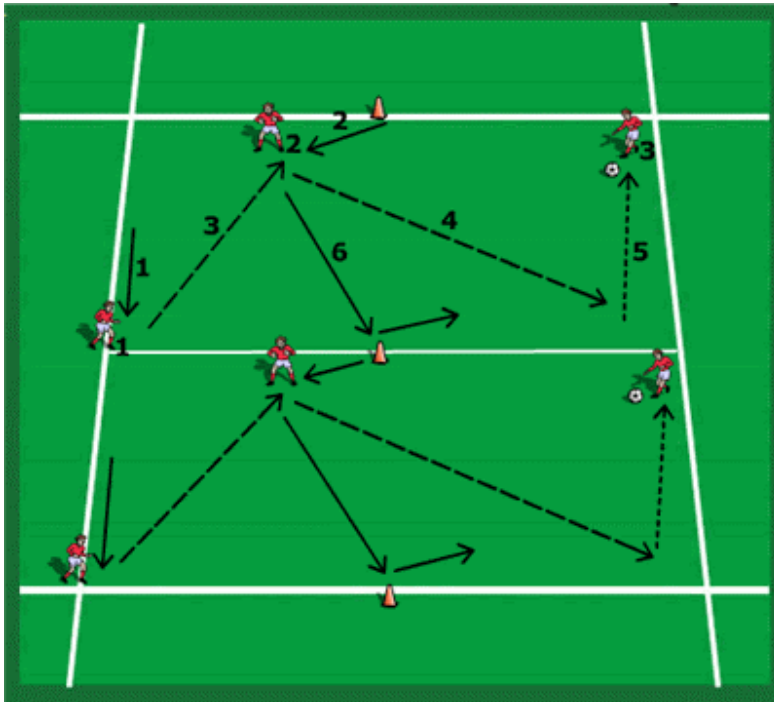


Develop: Can have 4 players working at the same time with two balls for a more intense practice.

Now working on the movement of the outside player to create a bigger angle to pass and receive the ball. (2) passes to (1) who moves the ball into space with a good first touch to pass the ball back with a second touch.

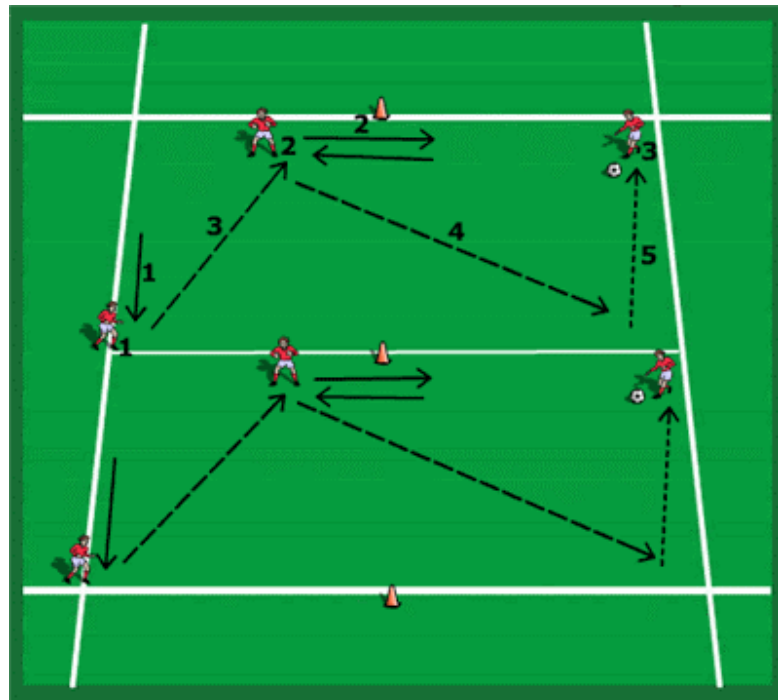
The movement is shown below. Likewise (3) receives and moves the ball off at an angle and the cycle continues.

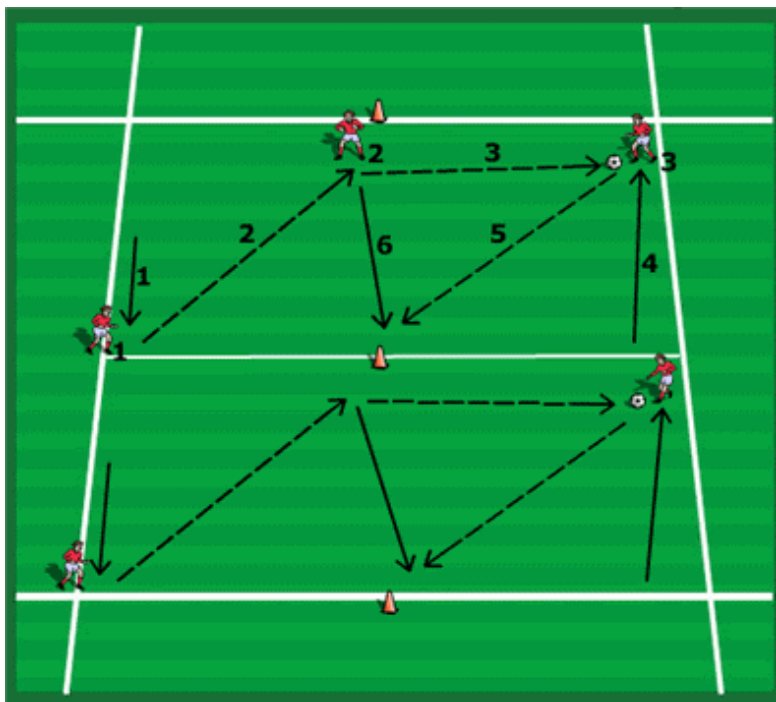




Develop by the middle player moving away from the ball to take a defender away from the space and then checking back to receive the pass in time and space. With these movements the passer must be aware of the receivers movements to get the timing of the pass right. The receiver must be aware of how quickly the passer has control of the ball and is ready to pass it to get the timing of the run right (therefore always looking).

These movements in a game are dictated by how much time on the ball the passer has, if no time then coming short to receive the first pass, if time on the ball then the receiver can run a defender off the check and receive to feet.





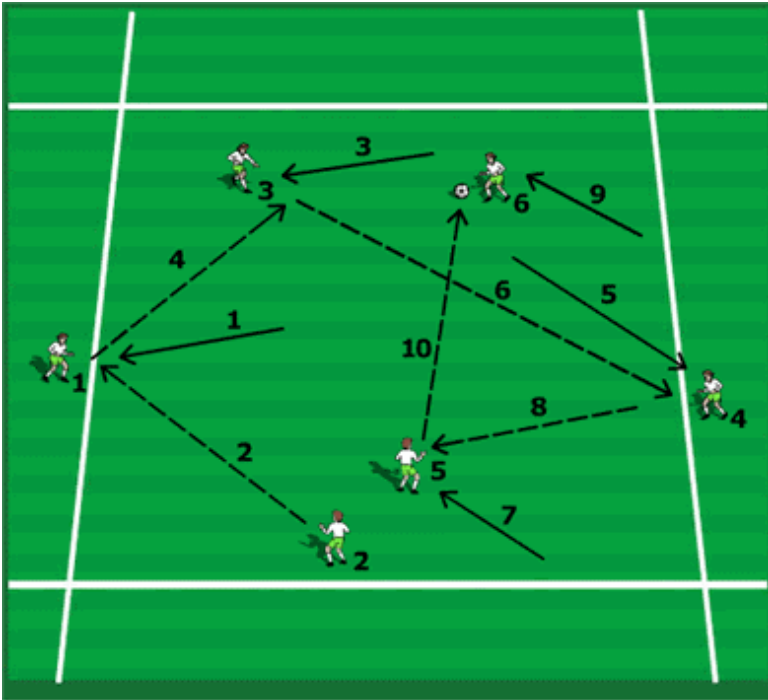
The middle player receives the ball and passes into space to move the outside player. Previously it was a pass to feet and the outside player moved the ball.

The opposite player can still close down; or not; to keep the middle player “looking” behind them.

Session 75: Specific Peripheral Vision Coaching Session

The following activity can be used to improve the overall game awareness of individuals within a team concept.

Set Up: A 40x30 area is organized as shown in Diagram (a) below. Six players are used within the activity. Repeat the setup to accommodate the entire team.



Objective:

1. Players pass and move inside the playing area. After several passes ANY player may run out of the grid to receive a pass.
2. Teammates must recognize this player early and attempt to complete a pass to this player.
3. This player is the free player (unmarked).

1. The session goes as follows and letters are used as a reference only, the players can pass to anyone, in any order, but always looking for that vital penetrative run by a player to the outside area. Player (A) runs outside the area (perhaps after several passes within the zone).
2. Player (B) on the ball sees the run and must pass to (A).
3. As (A) is about to receive (as the ball is traveling to him or her) (C) moves into a position to support (A) showing anticipation and awareness.
4. As (C) receives the pass, (D) makes a run out the area.
5. (C) Has already seen the run by (D) and passes. (D) brings the ball back in and the game continues, (D) passes to (E) who has moved into position in anticipation and (E) passes to (F) who also has done the same.

Why is developing Specific Peripheral Vision Important?

This session is an indicator of how quickly players recognize the “correct run off the ball” by a teammate and consequently they make the “correct pass”.

Hence players are beginning to look one and two moves ahead of the ball.

The run can be likened to a penetrating run into the attacking third where the player hasn't been picked up or tracked and is in a great position to attack and score if the passer sees them and makes that pass.

Coaching Points:

1. Timing and coordination of runs
2. Quality of passing
3. Recognition of passing options
4. Support play – angles, distance and timing

Coach's Notes: Further development, ideas and ideals of this practice leading to the introduction of defenders as opposition but in an attacking overload situation.

Within the zone there are many choices of pass but as soon as a player makes the run outside that is “the” pass to make.

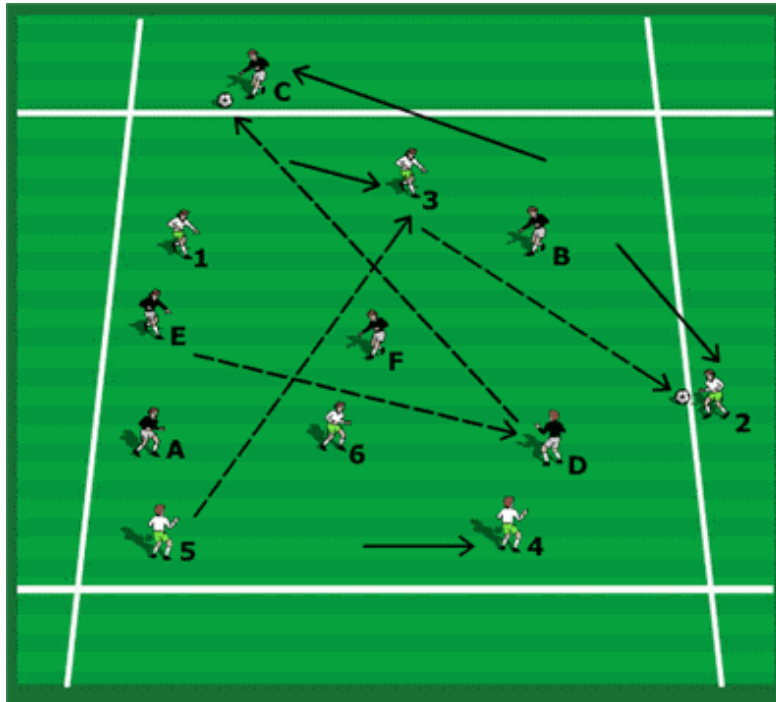
Coach can determine the tempo of the game e.g. to avoid too many running out at the same time the coach can signal to an individual player to move out without the others knowing so only one at a time goes out.

Once the free player is outside and waiting for a pass see how many passes are made inside the zone before someone sees the right pass i.e. to the outside player.

This is an indication of which players play with their heads up (and hence have good peripheral vision) and which don't, (hence have poor peripheral vision or even none at all).

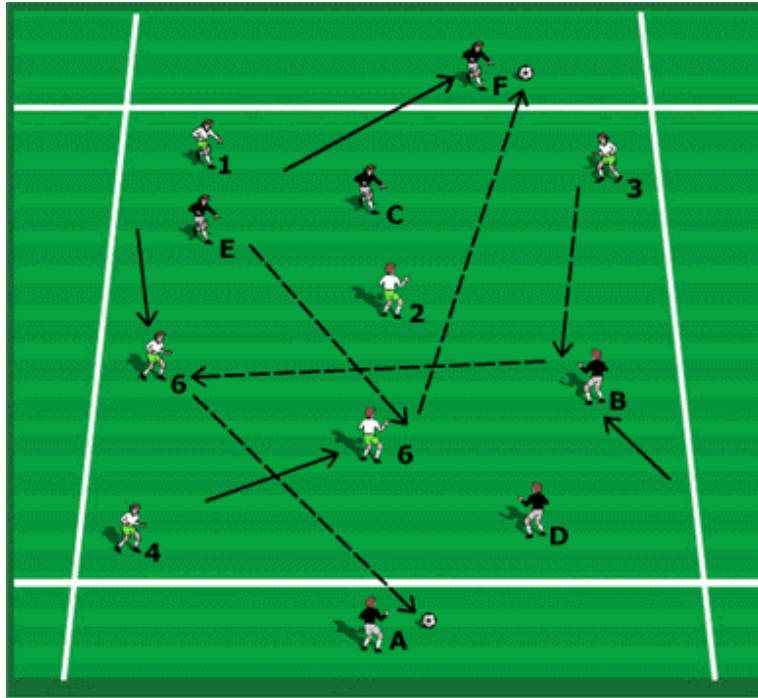
The fewer touches on the ball the player needs to get the ball there the greater their anticipation of the run. (One touch is the ultimate aim to develop whereas the ball is traveling to the player, at the same time another player makes their run out; they see the run and make the pass at the same time).

More touches means more reaction time needed and in a game situation this may mean the player being caught in possession before they get around to making the pass.



Here we have two teams playing in the same area, player (5) passes to player (3). Player (2) as the ball is traveling runs outside the area, player (3) has to see this movement and make the next pass to that player. If (3) makes it with a one touch pass that is excellent as it shows they have seen the run as the ball is arriving and made the quickest pass possible to get the ball to (2). Player (2) then brings the ball back into play and the passing sequences start again.

Likewise player (E) on the other team passes to player (D), player (C) runs out of the area and the set up continues.

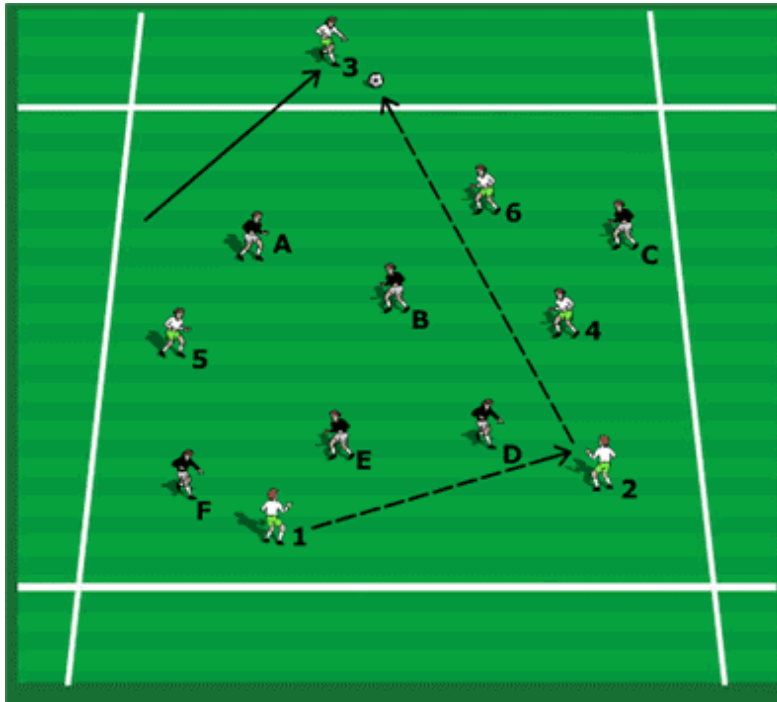


Progression: Passing to opposite colors so now a red player (numbers team) is looking to make a pass to a gray player (letters team) running out of the area and a gray player looking to make a pass to a red player running out of the area. This really sharpens up the awareness capabilities of the players. Here Grey (E) passes to Red (6) and Grey (F) makes a run outside the area, (6) spots the move and best case scenario makes a one touch pass to (F).

Likewise red (3) passes to grey (B) who spots the outside run by red (2) and passes to that player.

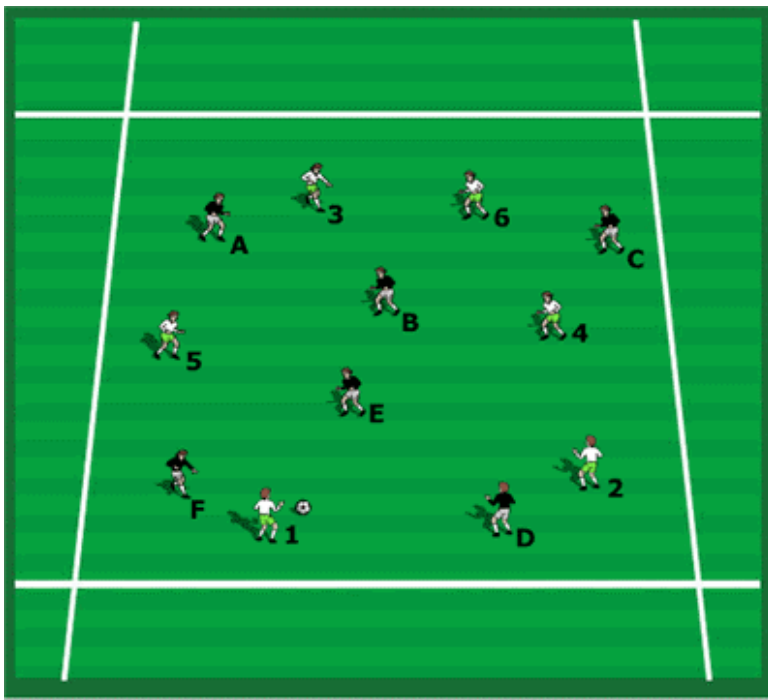
This is all designed to sharpen the awareness of all the players so they keep their heads up with and without the ball and to be able therefore to observe their options as quickly, efficiently and (especially) as effectively as possible.

The ultimate challenge is to ask them to play 1 touch only and make it work.



Game Situation: We will use a 2 team game here for ease of transition but an overload three team game can often be a better progression moving to the two team game eventually.

1. A two-team game for ease of transition in this clinic with limited time (you can use neutral players to make it easier to work initially it is always best to begin with an overload situation to help them make it work). Five passes a goal. The winner is the team who scores the most 5 pass - goals, you may do the first to score ten goals.
2. Develop: Include running out of the area in the game and if a player does this and receives a pass successfully they get three goals for it. Defending players can't track them outside the area.
3. This will encourage players to make outside runs as there is a reward and it will also test the players on the ball as to their peripheral vision and how quickly they identify that particular run. This must happen in less than 6 seconds though and if after a short time the player does not receive a pass then they come back into the game.
4. Player (3) makes a run out of the area as (1) passes to (2). (2) Sees the run and passes and scores 3 goals. (3) Brings the ball back in and the game continues.
5. You are looking for players to anticipate where (3) needs support and move into position to help.
6. Other players need to move off the ball to get into open positions for the first pass or in anticipation of the next ones.
7. You can also reward a one touch pass with a goal to encourage quick play.



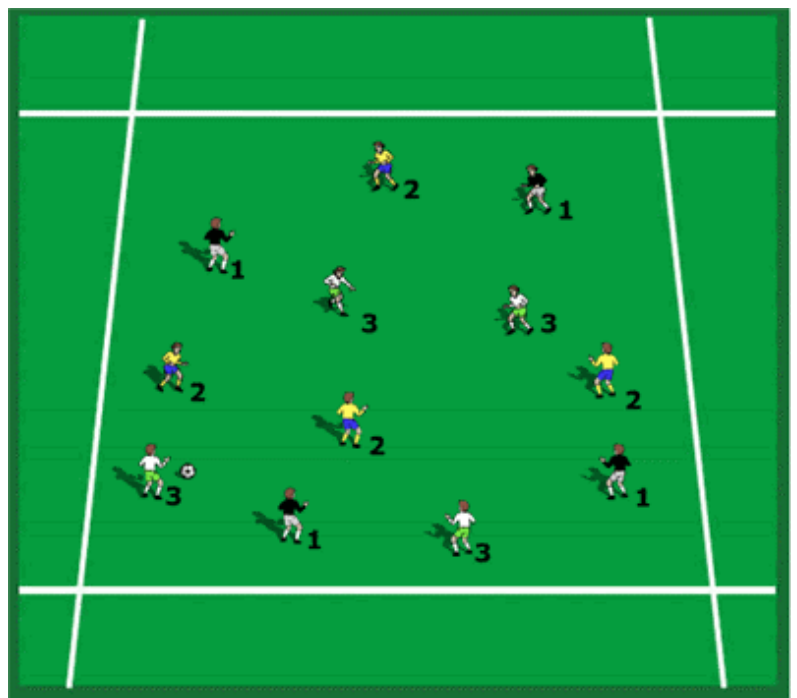
Game Situation

Three team game, two teams combine and play together against one team. It is always best to begin with an overload situation to help them make it work. Once they are successful go to two equal numbered teams. Count how many occasions the combined teams give the ball away in a set period of time. Have each team be the defending team. The winner is the team who defend and have the most gains during their time defending (can include winning possession, forcing opponents to kick the ball out with pressure etc). If

they win possession they give it back to the two attacking teams (or reward them by letting them try to keep possession).

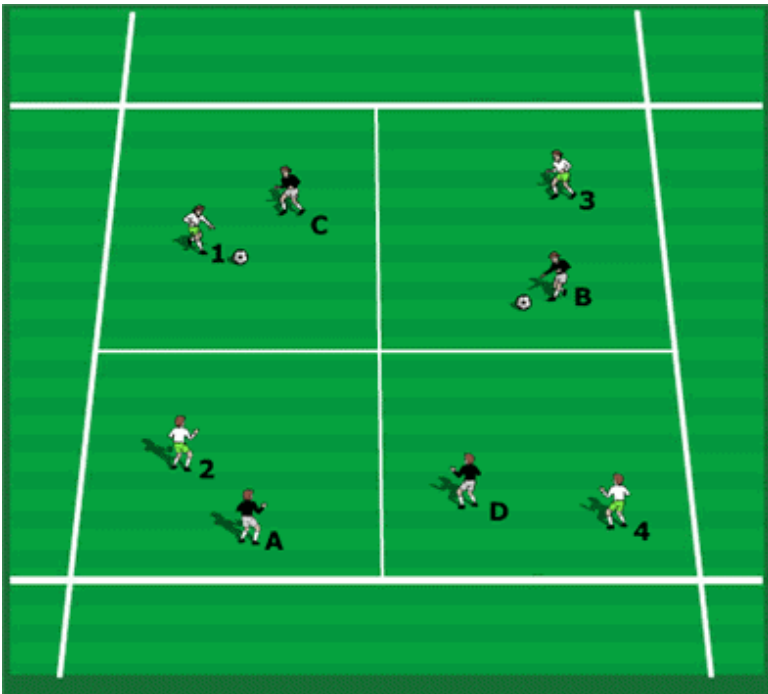
Develop: Include running out of the area in the game and if a player does this and receives a pass successfully that cancels out two give a ways. Defending players can't track them outside the area. This will encourage players to make outside runs as there is a reward and it will also test the players on the ball as to their peripheral vision and how quickly they identify that particular run. This must happen in less than 6 seconds though and if after a short time the player does not receive a pass then they come back into the

game. Numbers and letters team work together. It is an 8 v 4 overload. (2) Makes a run out of the area, (A) sees the run and passes. (2) Brings the ball back in and the game continues. You are looking for players to anticipate where (2) needs support and move into position to help. Here (1) runs off the defender to create space for (C) to run into and support (2). (B) Also makes a run between the defenders to offer close help. Other players need to move off the ball to get into open positions for the first pass or in anticipation of the next ones. Finally equal number teams but with the same rules.



Session 76: Improving Awareness Of Spacing And Movement “Off” The Ball

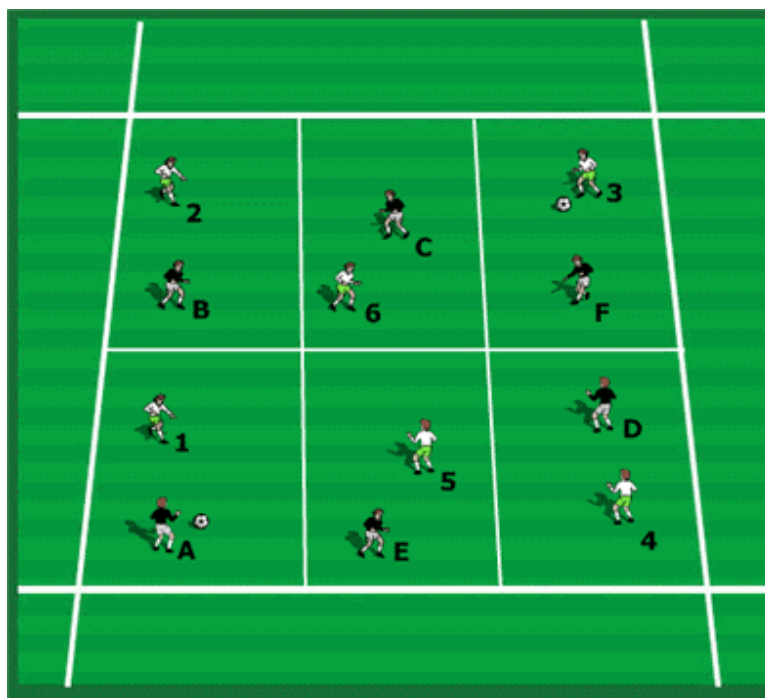
Movement Off The Ball Keeping Balance In Zones / Two Teams Of Four Players In Four Zones

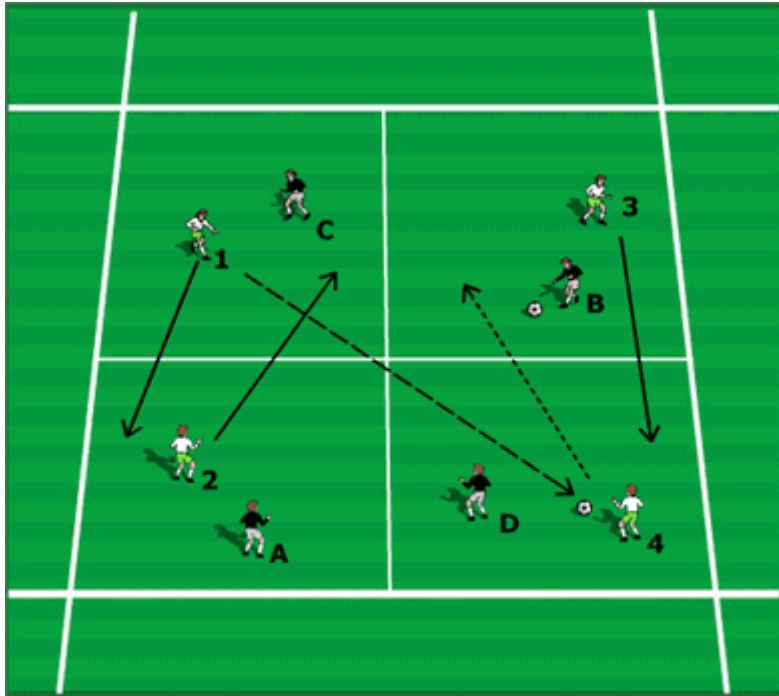


20 x 20

A player must be in each zone so as one move in, one move out ensuring movement on and off the ball. Players pass then move, move with the ball or just move off the ball.

In the diagram below (1) passes to (4) who runs with the ball into another zone. This forces (3) to change zones. (2) Moves up a zone forcing (1) to move down to keep the balance between all four zones.



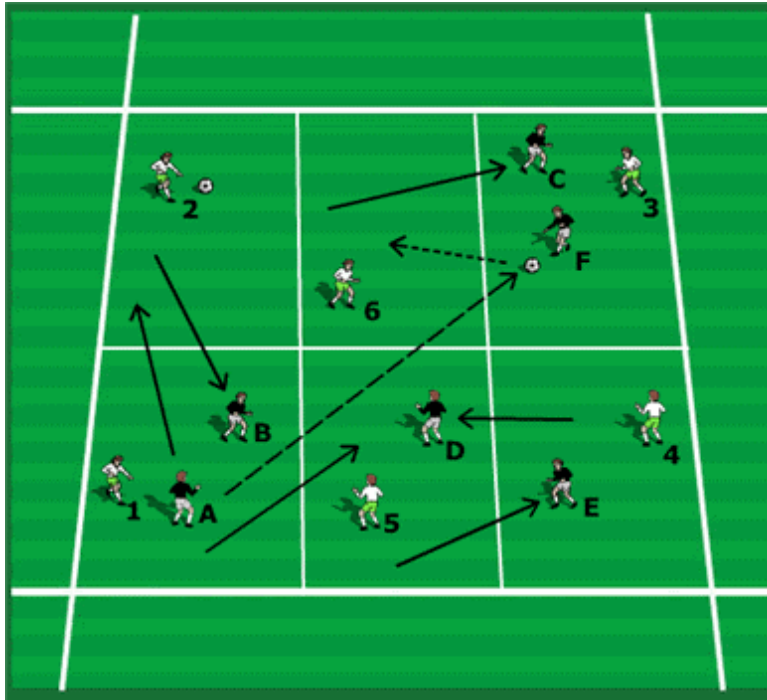


In this, players need to look around and find a space to go in, if an area is free then a player can go into it. This is designed simply to get players appreciating how to find space in an area and can be used as a useful warm up. Conditioning zones within an area starts the process of finding space off, as we develop the sessions they become more dynamic with few if any restrictions on where to go within the designated area.

Coaching Points:

1. Quality Passing (accuracy, pace and timing).
2. Support Positioning: Movement off the ball after passing and to get in position to receive.
3. Observation and identification: of where space and team mates are to pass to or receive from or to move into space to help the player on the ball pass to another player.

Two Teams Of Six Players In Six Zones



30 x 30

This is a six-zone game with more potential movement from the players due to more choices of area to move into. Observation has to be sharp here.

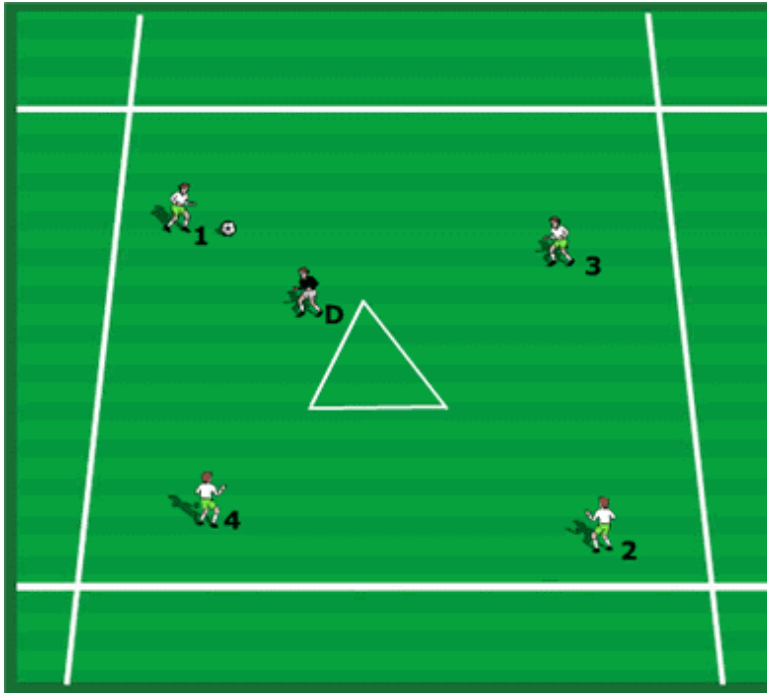
Showing the movement of one team only, there is constant interchange of players between zones ensuring they get the idea of moving with and without the ball.

Competitive: Have each player count the number of passes they make in a given time. Obviously moving the ball one touch will make it faster.

Game Situation: Possession game emphasizing movement off the ball through setting conditions of players moving into other zones once they have passed the ball and players off the ball interchanging between the zones to get free to accept a pass. Players must make these movements and these should be in their thoughts at all times, as that is the Condition / Theme (zone transfer).

The coach cannot penalize players for not being in different zones all the time because this is impossible in such a dynamic game, but the theme will help the players focus on the need to move on and off the ball and should help them to make sure they do it.

Session 77: Development Of Awareness And Of Movement “Off” The Ball

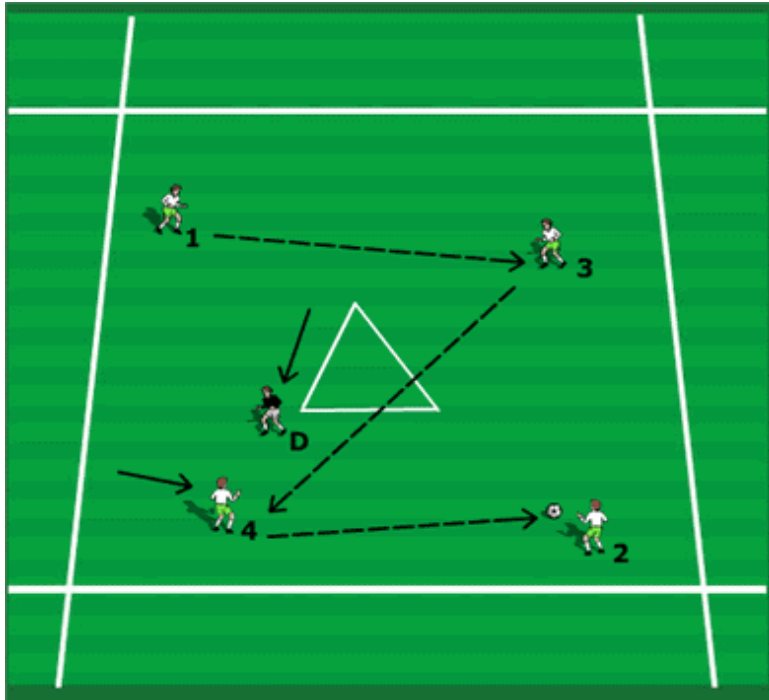


20 x 20

Here is an interesting way to work on passing, movement off the ball, fitness and looking for the penetrating pass. Start with a 20 x 20 yard grid and have a 4 yard equilateral triangle in the middle made up of cones. There are 5 players in the activity with one being a defender and the other four being on offense. The 4 players try to maintain possession while also looking to score goals by playing the ball through the triangle to their teammates. The defender is NOT allowed inside the triangle so he or she must be constantly working their way around the triangle trying to cut off the penetrating passes. See the diagram above for the set up.

The thing that makes this such an interesting activity is the required movement off the ball by the offensive players. On every pass they are moving in order to get into a better position to either make a penetrating pass or to receive one (as opposed to the norm in possession games when players wait till they receive a ball before thinking what to do next, in this game the players have to be thinking ahead of the passes because it's not good enough to just play the ball through the triangle, a teammate has to be there and receive the ball for it to count.

Movement “Off The Ball” In Passing And Support



Play this game for a 5 minute period with each player having a one minute turn on defense. It gets the players working hard, thinking and competing while having fun trying to beat their teammates. The player who gives up the fewest number of goals on defense wins the game.

There is a tendency in this game for the offensive players to get too close to the triangle that takes away the passing angles (just like in a regular game where they come too close to the middle). This is easy to correct and is a good learning opportunity for the players.

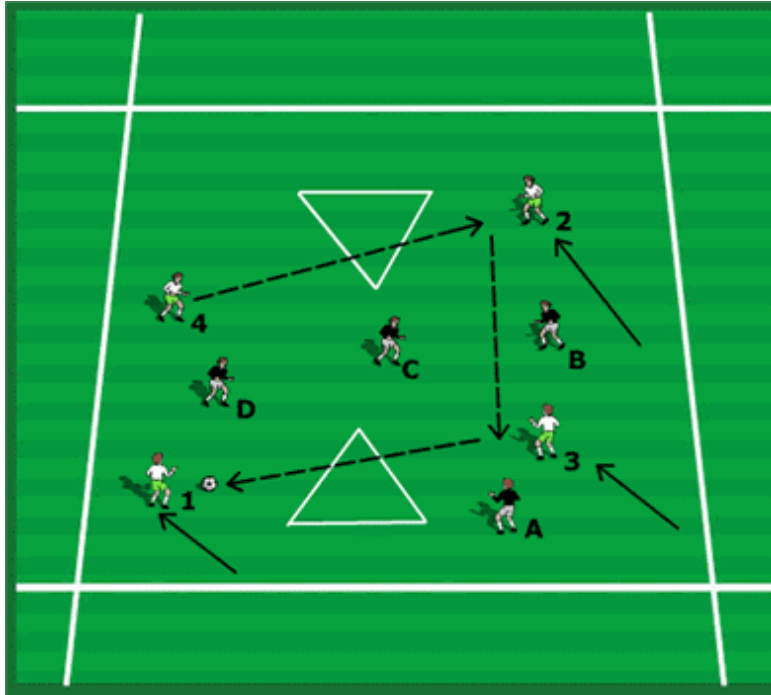
Above (D) stops the immediate pass from (4) to (3) through the triangle so (4) passes to (2) and (1) makes a run off the ball to receive the next pass through the triangle and a goal is scored. (D) tries to get back and around to prevent this.

Coaching Points:

1. Creating Space for yourself or for a team mate by movement off the ball
2. Quality of Passing (weight, accuracy and timing).
3. Quality of Control and first touch
4. Effective maintenance of possession

Progression: Change to 4 v 2, or 2 v 2 v 2. Keep the overload initially until players get good at this before you move on. Experiment with numbers increasing the difficulty of the session as you go.

Using Two Triangular Goals In A Small Sided Game



Coaching Points:

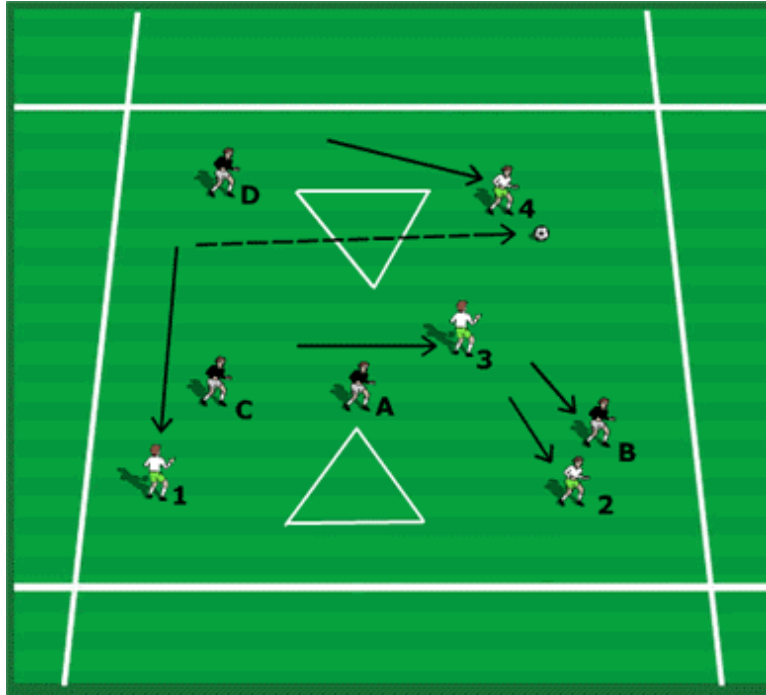
1. Head Up (looking into the other players eyes).
2. Ability to look at the player AND see the ball also in their peripheral vision
3. Good first touch to set up the second touch / pass
4. Technique of Passing

Increase the area to 30 x 30 and have a 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 game (as above) and two triangular goals. (Numbers team attack one goal and letters team attacks the other).

Progression: Each team can score through both goals but it must be a pass and receive from one player to another through the middle of the triangle. This brings more switching the point of attack into the game.

Condition it where once you score through one you need to try to score through the other. You can't go back to the goal you score previously until possession has changed and you have regained possession again. Players can also score a goal by keeping possession and making 5 consecutive passes without an interception

Movement Off The Ball To Create Space For Another Player To Receive



Here (4) receives the pass into space from (1) after (2) has created the space by a run away from it.

Looking ahead, (3) makes a run into space to now help (4) and gets away from marker (A).

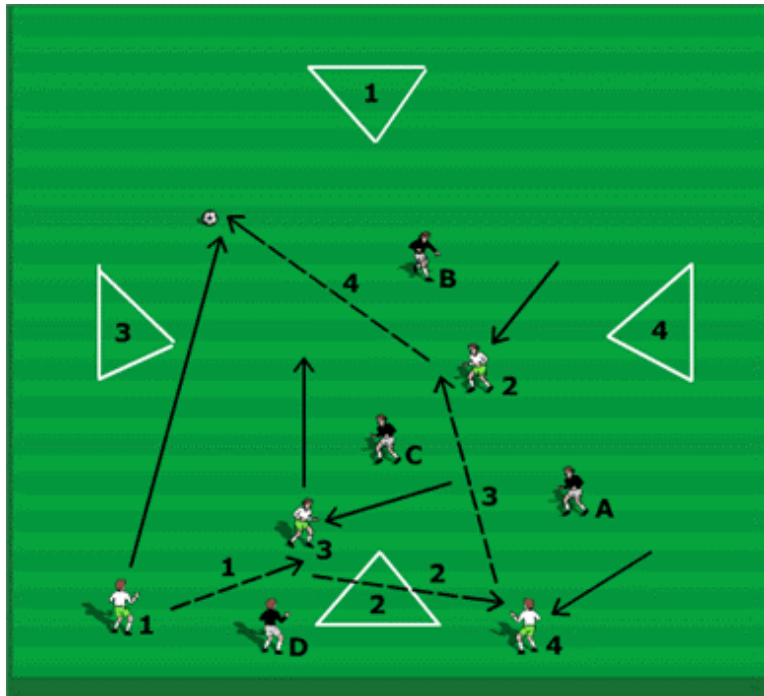
(1) makes a blind side run behind (C) to help (3) if he or she should receive the next pass, either as a pure pass or a pass through the goal to score.

Lots of movement off the ball by the players to either get it themselves or to help another player receive the pass.

I have made it look easier by not having defenders always track the runs but I do this to help emphasize how the movements off the ball can work.

Progress to using three then four goals.

Using Four Triangular Goals In A Small Sided Game



40 x 40

Using four goals now and increasing the area to a 40 x 40. The numbers team attack goals one and two, letters team attack goals three and four.

Above (D) blocks the straight pass so (3) makes an angle for a pass off (1); receives it and scores a goal passing through the triangle to (4).

(4) Sees (2) in position for the next pass as the ball is traveling and plays this player a one touch pass into space.

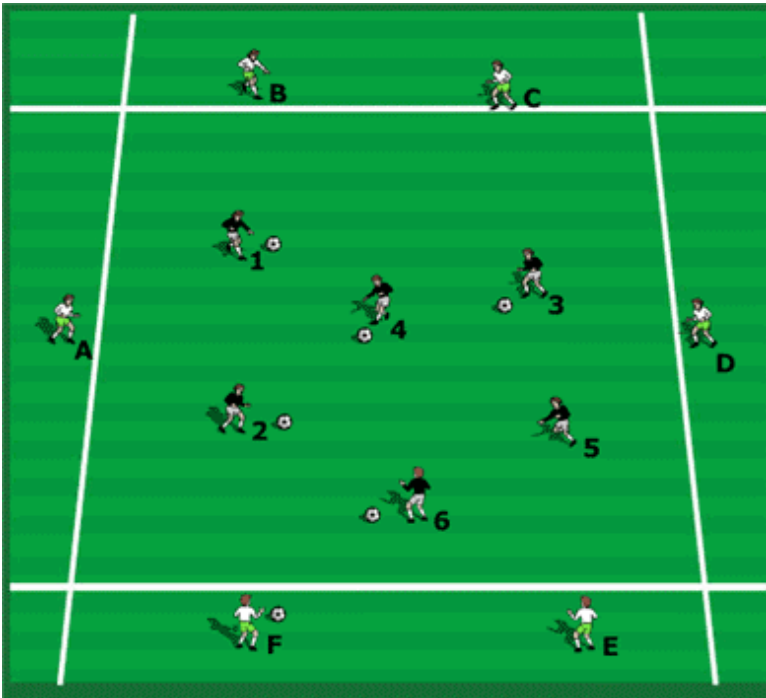
(1) is already on a run off the ball to attack the other goal and give (2) a new passing option. (3) Also is on the move after passing to join in the next build up.

Session 78: Developing Awareness, Passing And Dribbling Skills

This practice is designed to allow the players to be gently introduced to the fundamentals of the AWARENESS COACHING METHOD with both many touches on the ball in possession, and few touches on the ball in possession, enabling them to practice in a more dynamic way.

They can move anywhere in the area. Players practice controlling techniques with various parts of the body, also dribbles and turns and one and two touch passing.

Two Team Set Up: Awareness Changeover Clinic: The Theme Focuses Are Dribbling, Turning And Then Passing



The balls start with the Inside Players

Inside team a ball each, look to find a free outside team player and pass to them. Outside player brings the ball back in, inside player moves outside the zone waiting to receive a pass from someone else. Inside player going out must pressure the outside player coming in with the ball (but not win the ball) they passed to and act like a defender simulating a defensive movement; so that the player receiving the pass coming in has to change direction with their first touch to avoid

the defender, making a good first touch away from the pressure i.e. to either side of the pressuring player.

Differentiate between moving the ball to the side with the outside of the foot and then the inside of the foot next time so both sides of the foot and both feet get practice with their first touch control and pass.

Develop: Do a Fake – Take (Matthews) as you receive the pass, fake one way take the ball the other.

Set up second touch with a good first touch. Immediate awareness of whom is free to pass to is a necessity to speed up the passing.

Coaching Points:

1. Quality first touch of outside player coming back in with the inside and outside of the foot.
2. Decision making of inside player in terms of when and where to pass and good technique (quality) of pass.
3. Control (with the feet and the body), Dribbling and turning skills with both feet.

The Coach can create conditions for Dribbling and Turning:

Get a turn in or dribble before passing. Various turns and dribbles:

1. Matthews Dribble (fake and take)
2. The Rivelino / Harrisano (Outside to In).
3. Scissors Dribble (Inside to Out)
4. Step Over Turn
5. The Outside Hook Turn
6. The Inside Hook Turn
7. Drag Back Turn
8. Twist Off turn
9. Double Touch Dribble
10. Maradona Dribble
11. Cryuff Turn

Choose from these which ones you want to have them practice.

All in (many) touches, 3 then 2 touch when:

1. Passing then dribbling and turning.
2. Play 1- 2 with inside player then go outside
3. Play 1-2 with the inside player and keep the ball.
4. Do a crossover with outside player rather than make a pass.
5. Pass to outside player and do an overlap around them, receive the ball back and continue.

The balls are with the Outside Players

Control and Pass Back (the balls stay on the outside of the grid with the outside players)

1. Foot trap and pass back using both feet
2. Foot trap and pass back using the INSIDE of the foot then the OUTSIDE of the foot
3. Foot trap can be with the side of the foot, the top of the foot or the bottom of the foot.
4. Chest and volley back

5. Chest and half volley back
6. Thigh and volley back
7. Thigh and half volley back

It's a good session because everyone is working but they get short intermittent rests, so maintaining quality.

ENSURE THE PLAYERS DO NOT GET TOO CLOSE TO THE PLAYER WHEN RECEIVING AND THUS CLOSING THEIR OWN SPACE DOWN.

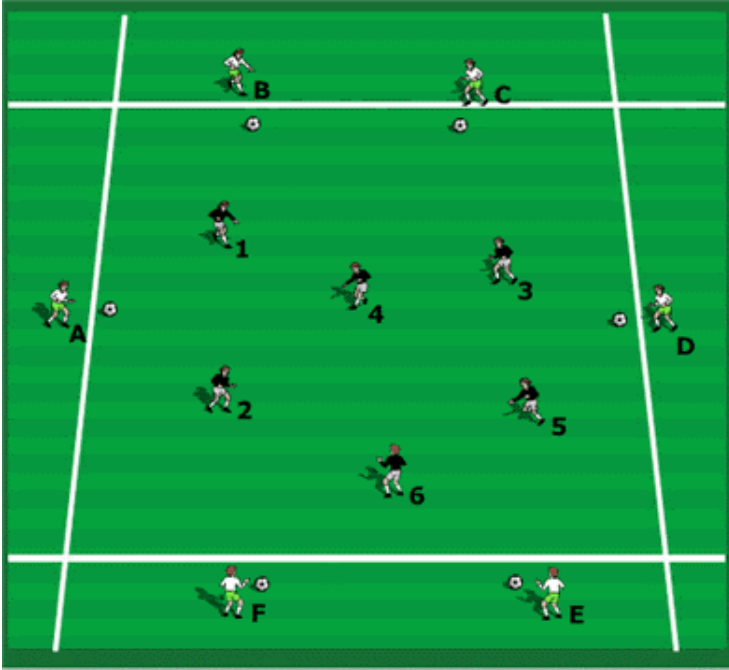
Competitive: Have each player count the number of successful passes they make in a given time and see who makes the most.

Progress by introducing Combinations of Skill Development:

In the Air Control, then turn, dribble and pass: Outside players lift the balls up into their hands and throw the ball for the inside player to control and turn, then dribble to then pass to another outside player. Find another player to receive another ball from and continue. Throws are to different parts of the body to control the ball in one touch, can be to the:

1. Feet on the volley control; turn and dribble and pass
2. Feet on the half volley control; turn and dribble and pass
3. To the thigh control; turn and dribble and pass,
4. To the chest control; turn and dribble and pass,
5. To the head; control; turn and dribble and pass

The Theme Focus Is Passing



The balls start with each outside player

Coaching Points:

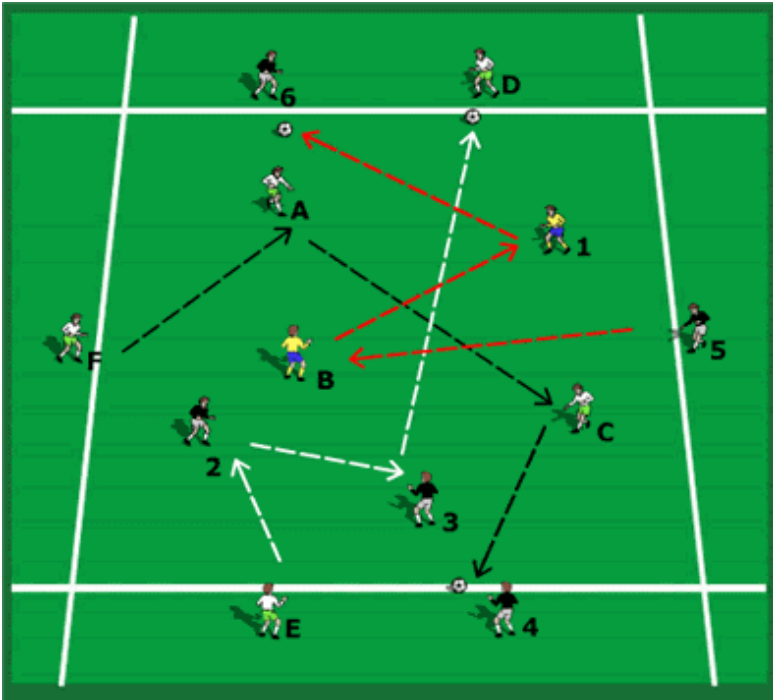
1. Head up (awareness of the arena and the players in it).
2. Looking before receiving to receive and turn; to see who is free, to see where other players in the area are, to see where the space is to take the ball.
3. Body position open to receive,
4. Focus on the first touch and where to take the ball; for more touches or maybe a one touch pass if it is available.
5. Concentrate on the quality of the pass to the outside receiver.

One team inside, one team outside. Pass to an inside player who receives and turns and finds another outside free player with a pass. Then look to receive from another outside player. The outside player receives and moves the ball side to side until another inside player is free to receive a pass. This ensures all the players are working both inside the grid and outside it.

Competitive: Have each player count the number of successful passes they make in a given time and see who makes the most. Observe and comment on those who try to do it too quickly and lose control of the ball and lose the momentum of the session (for example they rush the pass, it is not accurate and the receiver ends up running away retrieving the ball which wastes precious time). Change the practice to all soccer balls starting with the inside players. These players now look to pass and receive a give and go from an outside player. Rotate the players so both teams have the chance to play in the middle of the grid.

Develop: Start with one ball per team then go to two balls each team, players on the outside have one touch but can take two if needed if players on the inside have not made an angle for them to receive the ball back inside the area. Two touches on the inside. This speeds up the decision making on the inside and outside particularly as previously the outside players could control it and wait until an inside player was available; now they can't. And so now the inside players need more awareness to help the outside players too. Hence as one is passing to the Outside, another inside player must be looking to support the next pass back inside. Move both teams to the middle; divide the grid into two with each team passing to their own team within their own grid area keeping teams separate to begin.

Working In Pairs



Now we pair players up in the middle so they are working together and making angles off each other. Start all in then condition it to two touches only.

In a group of 12 players there will be two to three pairs in the middle at any one time. Here for example, F passes to A who is working with C, A passes to C, who passes to outside player 4, and A is already on the move to support 4 for the next pass. You can ask them to make it one touch where it is possible so their awareness is tested. Do 2 minutes in

and two minutes out. Use three colors of pinnies to do this for clarity.

Coaching Points:

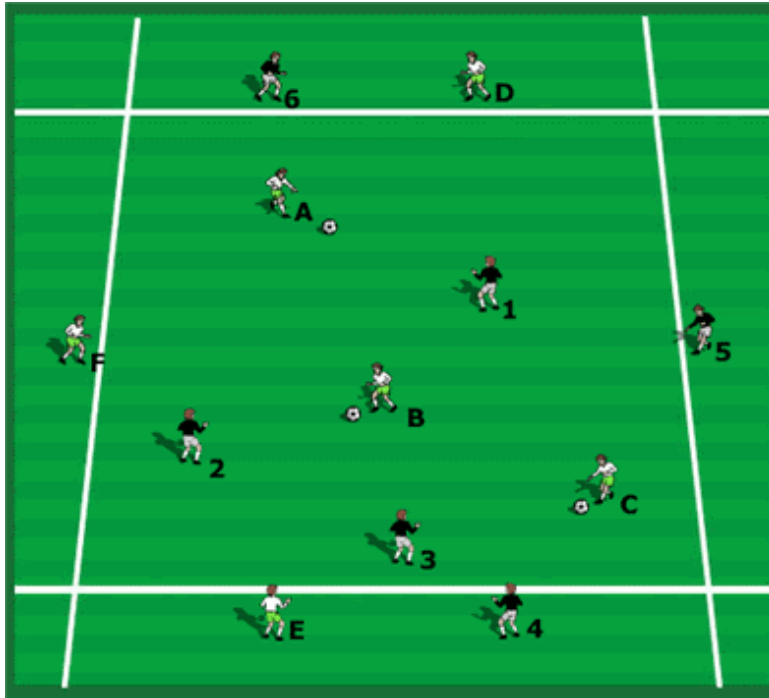
1. Body shape when receiving.
2. Quality (weight and accuracy) of pass.
3. Support angles.
4. Good first touch.

Creating awareness of where the other pair are positioned (so they don't bump into them in restricted space) causing players to look away from the ball and observe their surroundings. We have one ball between two players now; it is an outside player passes to an inside player who passes to their inside partner who then passes to a different outside player.

Example of what is expected: As the ball is going to (2) from (E) he or she have already looked to see where (3) is to pass to. (3) Has already got into a support position to be ready to help (2) and at the same time is viewing the field to see who is available to receive a pass on the outside. As the ball travels to (3) ask them to call the name of the player they intend to pass to, before the ball gets to their feet. To do this they need to look at (2) as the ball arrives at (2), get in a support position, look to see who is free; then look back to see the ball coming.

Mix it up with dribbles and turns or one and two touch passing.

Competitive 1 V 1 Games



Have three balls and anyone can have the balls and keep them

1. Initially using any players on the outside of the grid so it is easier.
2. Then only using their own color on the outside so there are fewer options of support making it more difficult.

Now have three 1 v 1's in the middle practicing various dribbling and turning and passing skills trying to maintain possession of the ball:

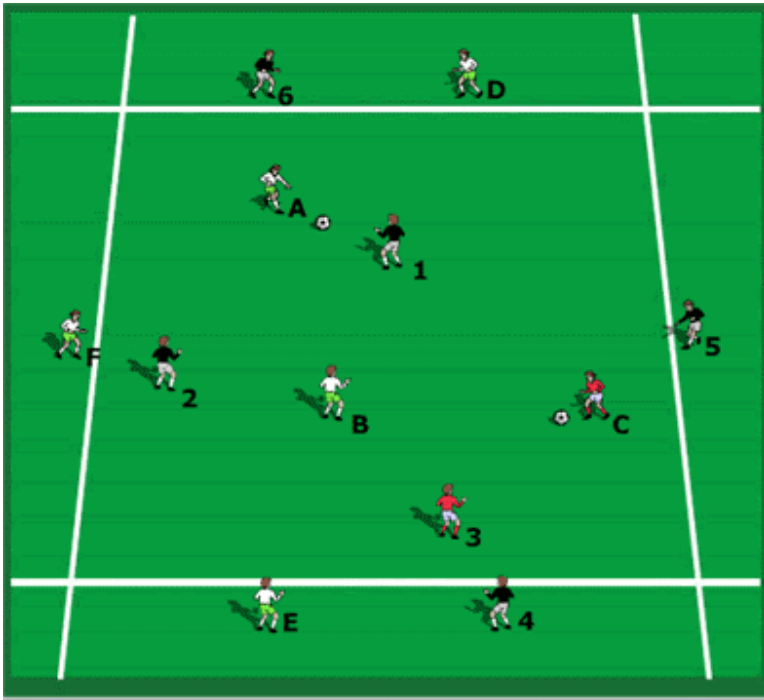
1. Initially using any players on the outside of the grid so it is easier.
2. Then only using their own color on the outside so there are fewer options of support making it more difficult.

Play for one or two minutes then rotate the outside players in for their turn.

Good conditioning too if they work properly.

Each competitive pair use the same ball at all times to avoid confusion

Within this you can have variations of games and themes, depending on your numbers, if 12 players then you could advance this to two 2 v 1 situations going at the same time, or a 2 v 2 and a 1 v 1 then go to a 3 v 3 finally.



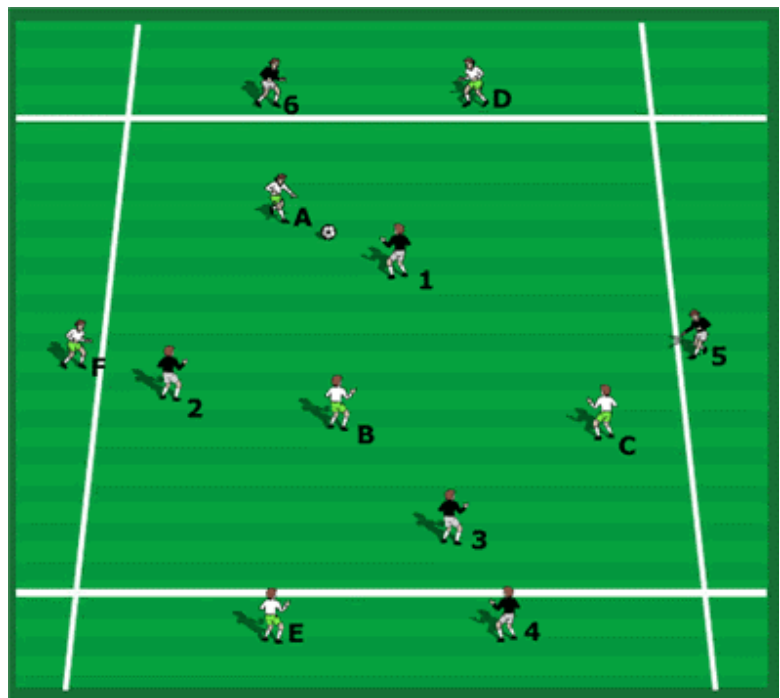
A 2 V 1 And A 1 V 1 In The Same Area

In this game the players on the inside can use all the players on the outside. A 1 v 1 game is usually more physically challenging than a 2 v 2 game.

Three V Three Game Situation

Now we have a 3 v 3 competitive game encourage dribbles and turns and one and two touch passing, try to get it all in here.

1. Initially using any players on the outside of the grid so it is easier.
2. Then only using their own color on the outside so there are fewer options of support making it more difficult.



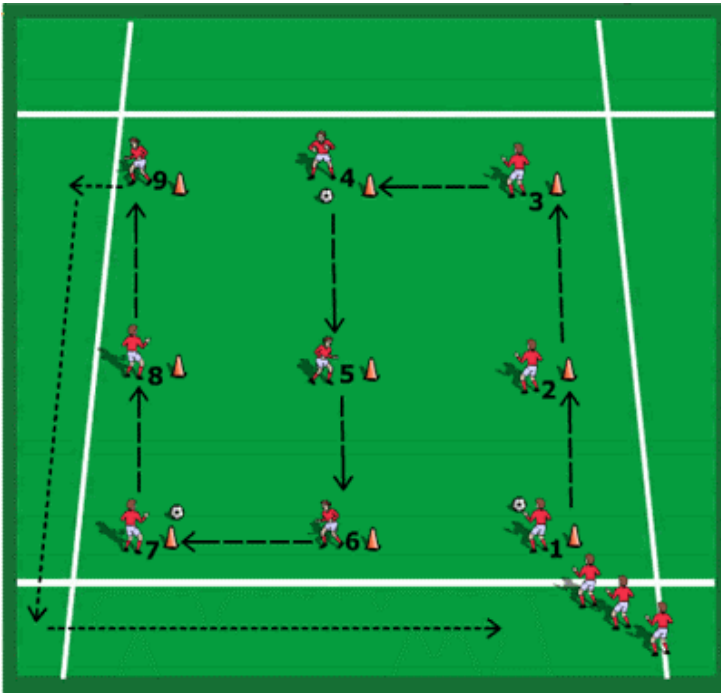
Outside players can be conditioned to 1 or 2 touches on the ball when supporting.

Inside players can play at various stages depending on their level of ability and what you are trying to get out of the session with conditions of all in (as many touches as they like), 3 touch, 2 touch and 1 touch where it is on to do so.

All in touches encourages dribbles and turns, fewer touches encourages quick passing.

Session 79: Receiving, Turning And Angled Passing Developing Awareness On And Off The Ball

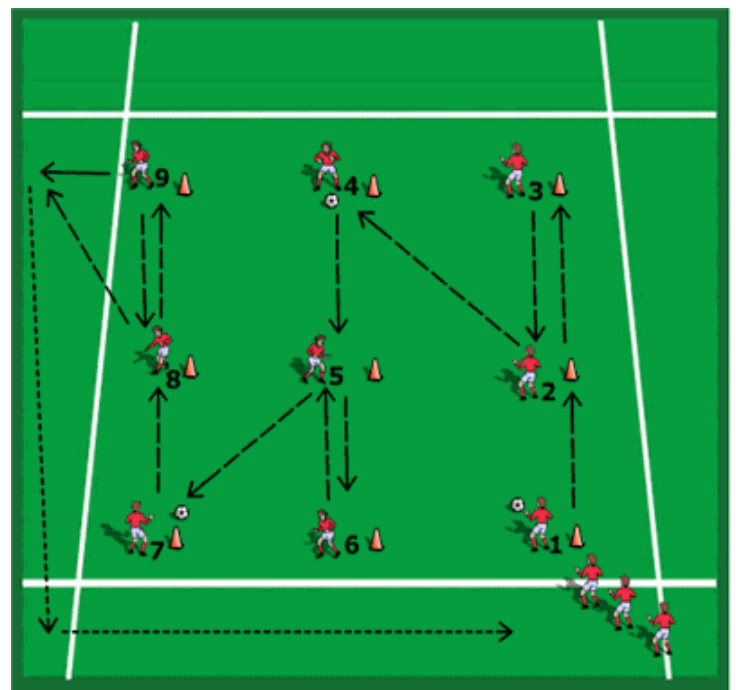
A player is at each station and (1) starts the exercise by passing to (2) and following the pass (short sprint), (2) passes to (3) and follows and so on until the first ball is at player (4) then the second ball starts at the beginning. Get to (4) again and a third ball starts. Try for as many balls being passed at the same time as you can but get a realistic rhythm going (maybe four or five at once being passed). Once the ball is at (12) then we start again (12) going to the start position.



This ensures everyone is moving and passing the soccer balls. The quality of the pass is important as if it breaks down anywhere the whole process may be stopped. This develops a pattern of continuous passing with players following their passes to the next station and then waiting for the next ball to come. Work on looking before receiving, receiving and turning, body stance half turned, good first touch to set up the second touch etc. You can make it two or three touch to ensure rapid movement of the ball. Work up to controlling with one touch and setting it up for a pass with the second touch.

Finally have an open body stance to move the ball in one touch in the middle from (1) to (2) to (3) but two touches at each end. We are working on the quality, weight and timing of the pass; angles and distances of the pass, timing of the run to support, angles and distances of support and so on.

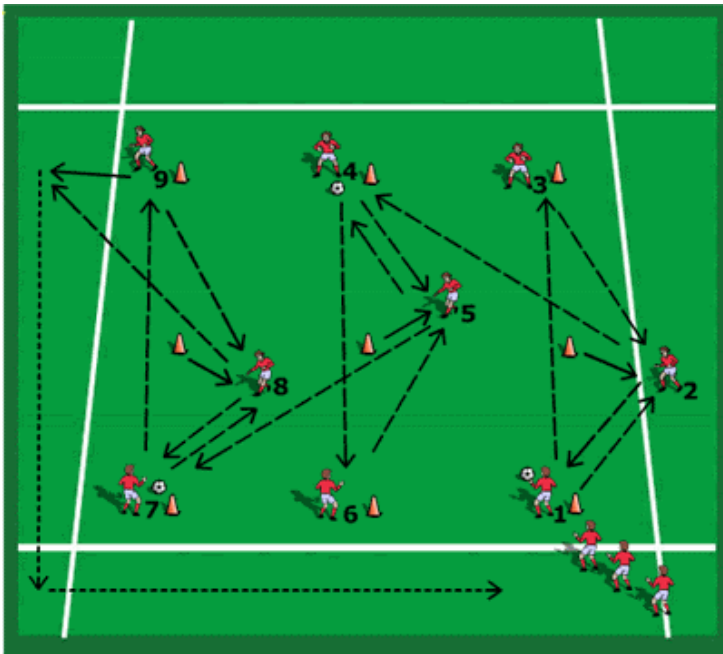
Simple one to start, (1) to (2), (2) to (3), (3) to (4) etc Two touch each time the ball is passed between players. (1) Passes to (2) then to (3); back to (2) across to (4). So forward and then diagonal passing. Liken passing from a defender to a midfielder to a striker



Angles of Support

Work on middle player coming off short to receive at an angle in these developments. Again (2) checks to the ball at an angle (this is as if in a game a defender is challenging and the receiver is getting away from the challenge).

The middle player checks away to come back (as if running off a defender to create space) to receive the pass to give themselves more time.



The passing moves can be the above ones as before. (1) Is a defender, (2) a midfielder, (3) an attacker in a game situation.

The timing of (2)'s run to support (3) is important (don't go too early).

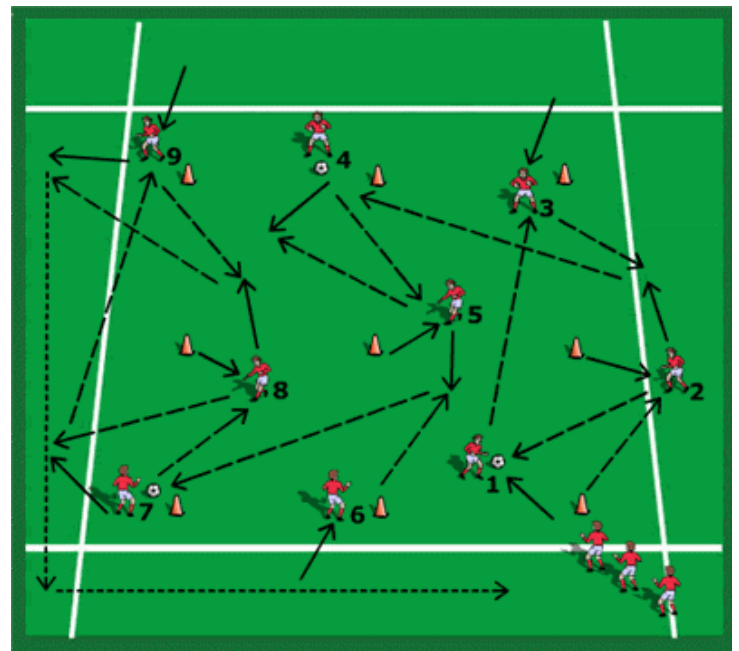
When the ball gets to (3) this player must perform a check away with the ball to come back and pass to (4).

All these developments teach the players to really focus and think about the next movement and passing choice

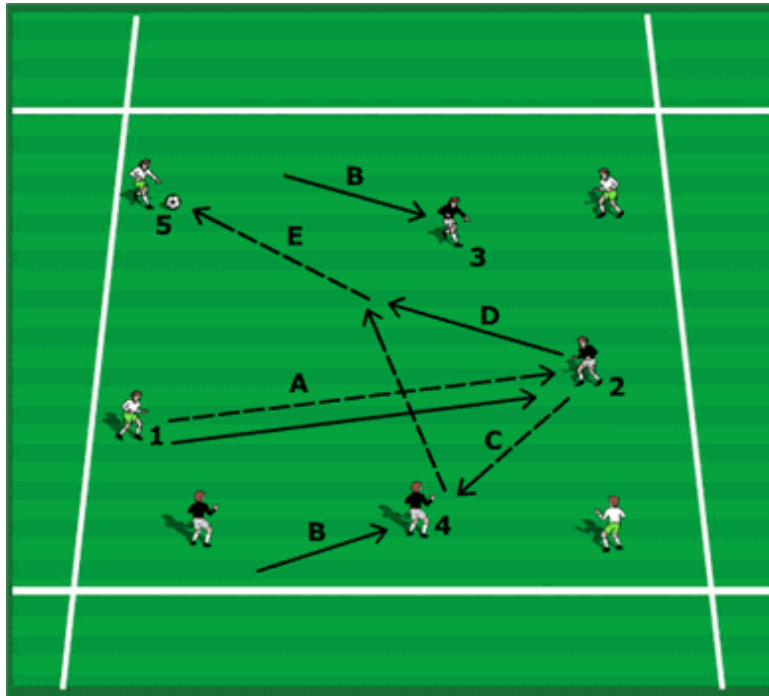
So it goes from simple straight line passing to get the idea of passing and support across to the players.

Then bringing in angles of support everywhere which is what Awareness teaches in terms of greater peripheral vision all over the field of play by players opening up their by stances and improving their footwork.

Try to keep a high tempo 1 and 2 touch passing with timing and angles of runs and passes being a major part of what is taught here also.



Session 80: A Transition Clinic Developing The Players Ability To Recognize The Immediate Changes From Defence To Attack And Attack To Defence And To Act On It Quickly



40 x 40 / Two teams / one ball, passing to anyone

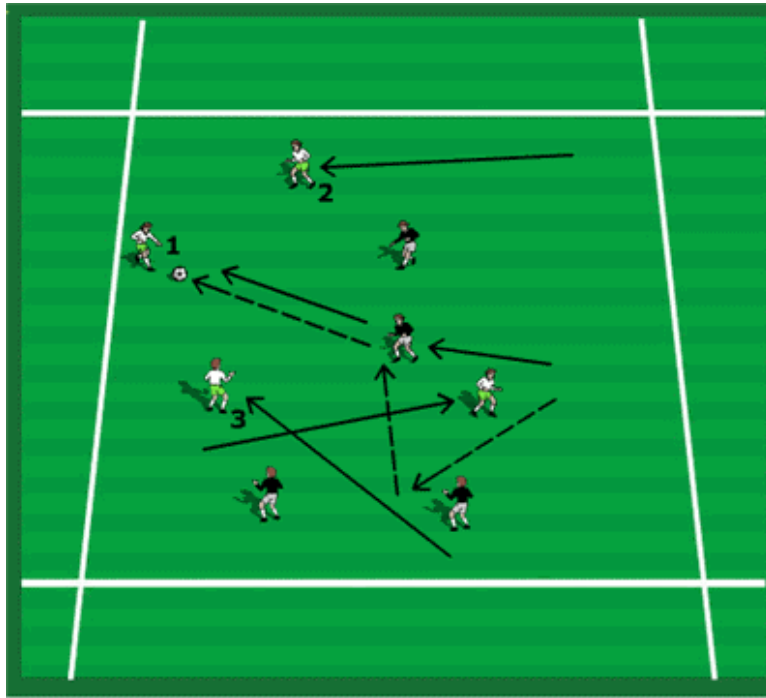
Passer (1) plays the ball to the receiver (2). The passer (1) then becomes a defender and must pressurize receiver (2). Receiver (2) must work a 1 – 2 around the defender (1) with a support player. Try to establish support on both sides of the receiver so there are two options available to support (3 and 4).

Work on angles and distances of support (triangular support), timing of the pass depending on the closeness of the defender, quality of pass, preferably off the front foot to aid the disguise of the pass.

Receiver accepts 1 – 2 from support player (4), passes to a new receiver (5) and becomes the new defender and the cycle begins again.

Routine:

1. 1 passes to 2 and pressurizes.
2. 3 and 4 move to support 1 (thinking two moves ahead).
3. 2 pass to 4.
4. 2 run around 1 to receive (give and go).
5. Now 2 passes to 5 and 2 becomes the defender.



Progression: Increase number of balls, passing to opposite color only but support from same color i.e. pass opposite, support same. Quick decisions required.

Passer plays the ball to receiver and closes down as a defender; receiver must move the ball away first time or draw defender in and move the ball off at an angle away from the pressure.

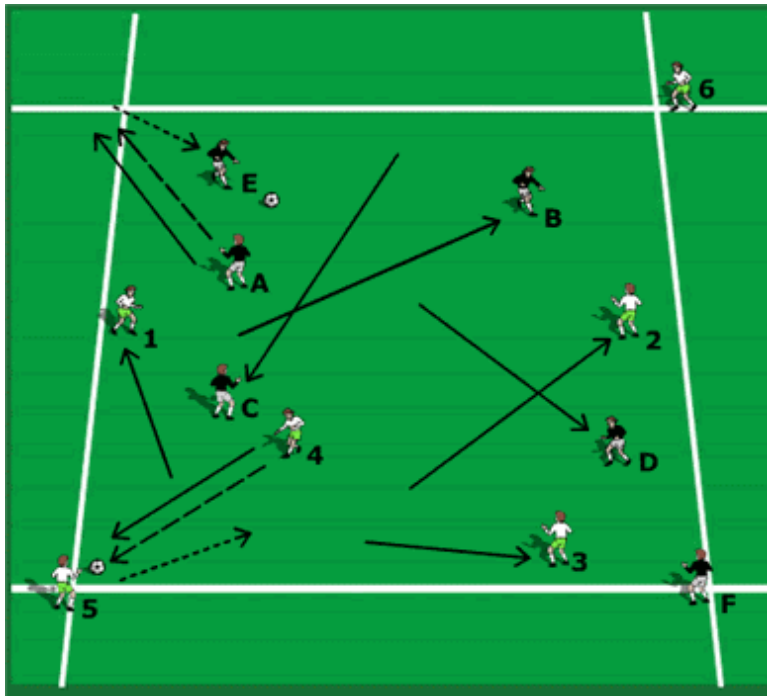
Here player 1 now receives the pass in the next phase of the movement, being closed down by the passer. Players 2 and 3 now must move to support player 1 in order to enable that player to play a give and go around the closing defender. And so the cycle continues.

Coaching Points:

1. Quality passing
2. Quick Pressure following the pass
3. Movement off the ball by supporting players (angle and distance of support)
4. Awareness of the receiver to see the options before they receive the ball
5. Good touch and pass by the receiver of the first pass
6. One touch pass from the support player around the defender with good angle, pace, accuracy and timing
7. Timing of the run of the receiver to accept possession of the ball

Competitive: Take it into a regular game emphasizing movement off the ball to support the player receiving the ball.

Session 81: Switching Play As A Team



Two teams a ball each playing to targets. Once they get to one target they must work to get the ball to the other target. As the player passes to a target they must change over with the target player who comes into play. As above (4) passes to (5) and switches position, already the other players have spread out to attack the other target.

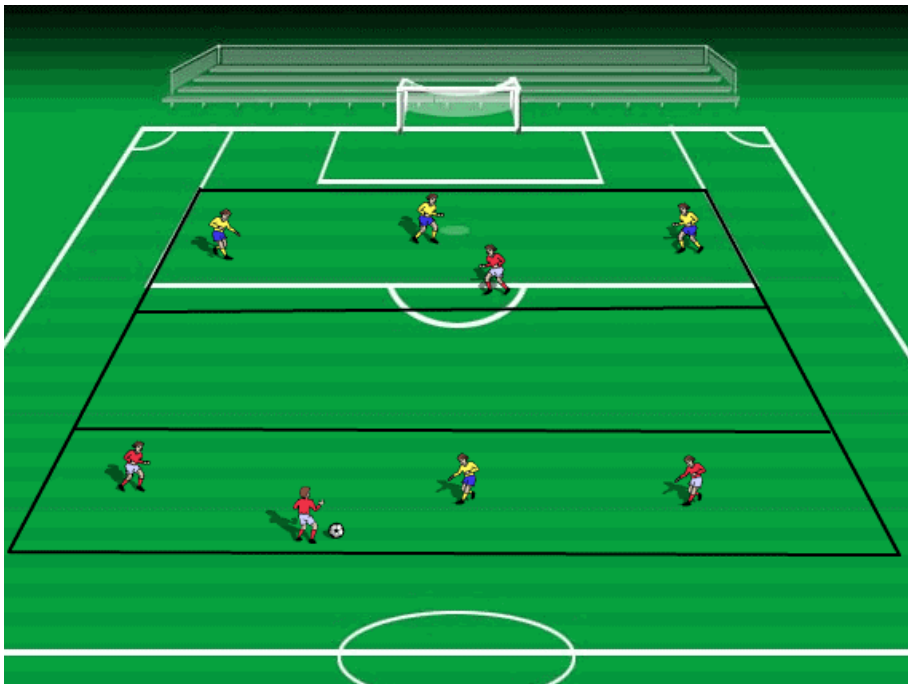
Teams play through each other and must have awareness of where their own players are and where the other team is as they pass through them. Emphasize a good first touch out their feet to set up the next pass or passing first time to a teammate. Always having players realize they must look before they receive the ball.

Ensure as the ball is transferred from one end to the other that all players get a touch on the ball before it gets to the next target.

As the ball is passed to the target and the target player brings the ball out with a good first touch the other players must already be positioning themselves to be in support to transfer the ball to the other target, this means spreading out width wise and length wise to make themselves hard to mark such as in a game. Ensure they don't turn their backs and run away but keep looking at the ball and open their stance up to receive a pass or at least offer an option. Show the movement across the field as they break out, diagonal runs for example (C & B), no breaking in straight lines and hence easy to mark.

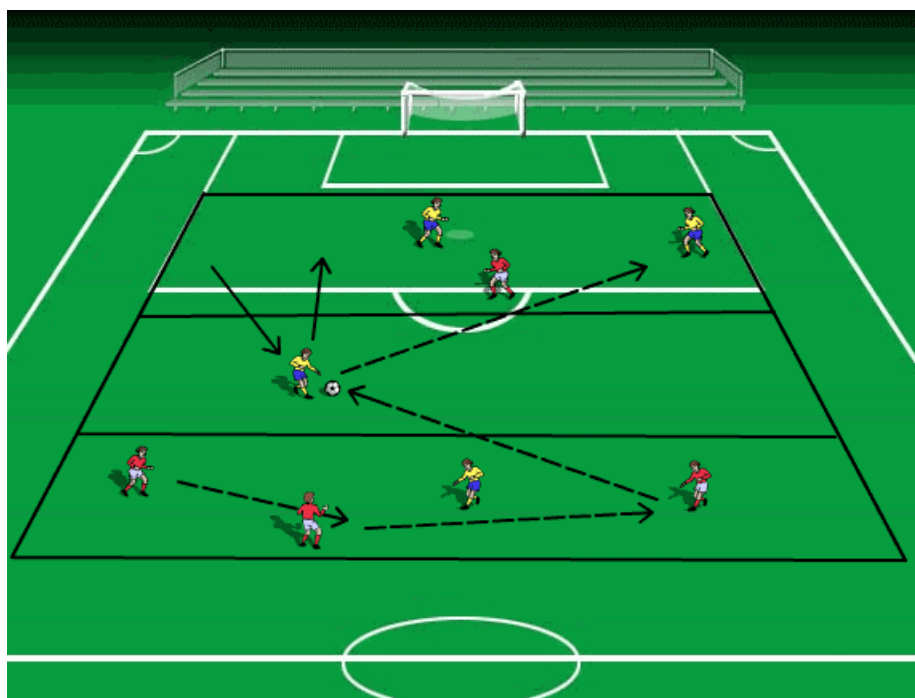
Introduce opposition so the two teams play against each other and make it competitive by keeping score.

Session 82: Creating Movement Off The Ball Between The Units



Two 3 v 1's in the outside areas, the middle area is free and open. Further developing previous ideas of free zones and players moving into space here is another way of doing this that I think is more enjoyable to play in.

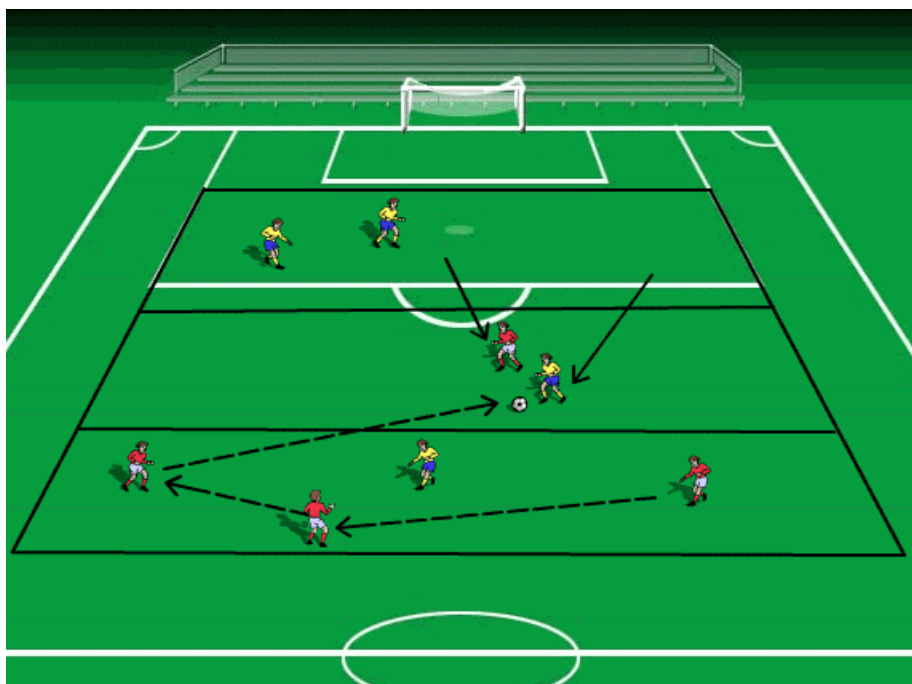
Players are passing and maintaining possession then a player from the other side drops into the middle free zone to be free to receive and turn and pass into the other zone. They then continue there with a 3 v 1 keep away. Can condition it to 1 or 2 touches on the ball to challenge the players.



Players are looking at the teammates in their own zone to pass to but also into the other zone for a player to drop into and support and hence they can switch the direction of play. No pressure to start and the defender must stay in the same zone so the receiving player is always free. Looking for good angles of support at all times avoid straight line support as it limits vision behind the play. Players try to support in a sideways on stance to open up their field of vision.

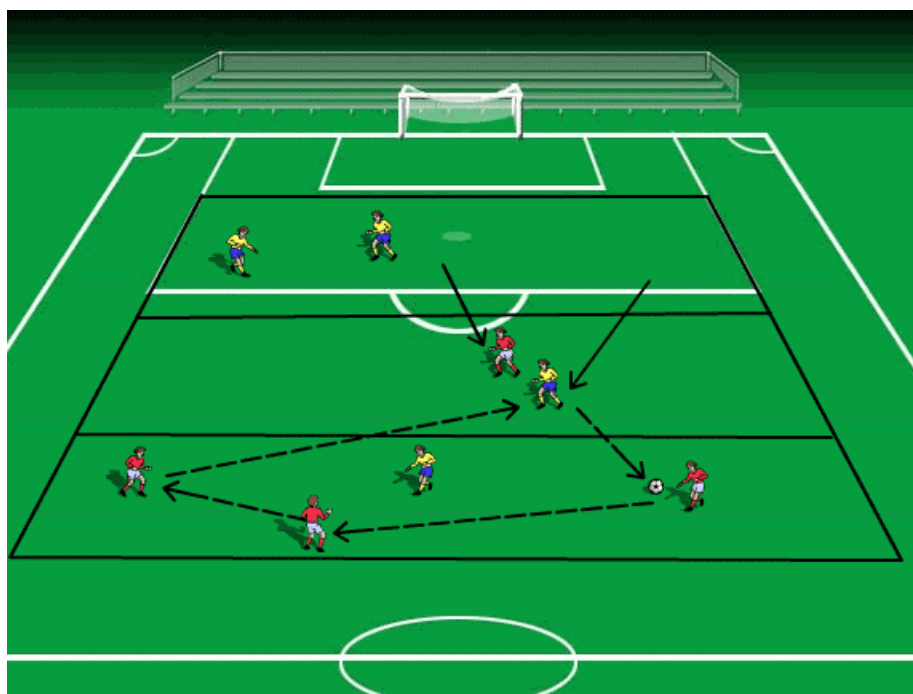
Development 1: Once the receiving player who has checked to the middle receives the ball that is the cue for the defender to close them down and pressure. This should still give the receiver long enough to receive and turn and pass without losing the ball but we are building up the pressure on that player. It is almost a passive movement because the defender has so far to make up to get close.

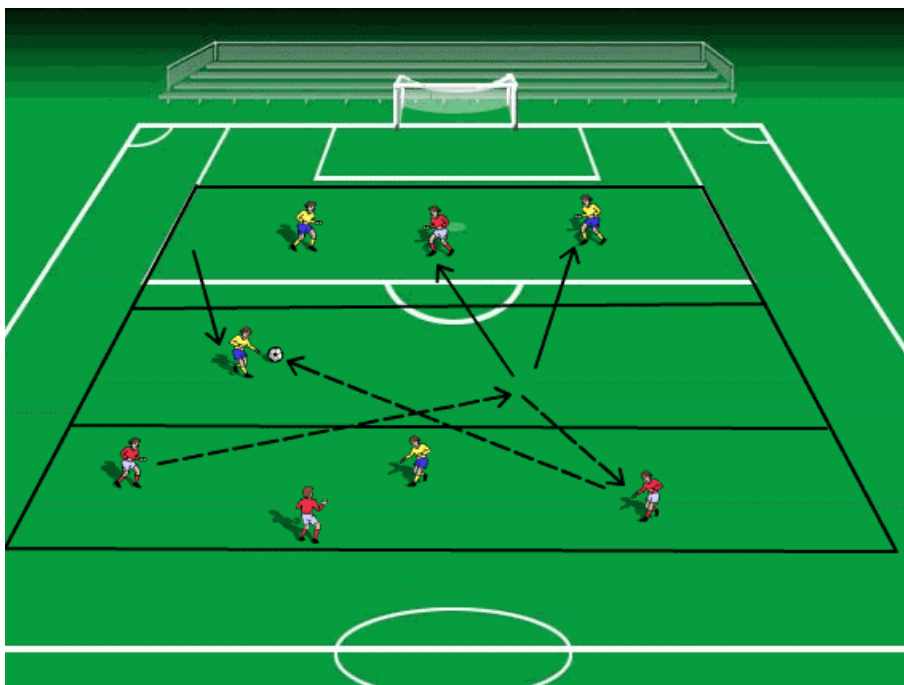
Development 2: The defender can close the ball down as the passer moves so now they do not need to wait for the first touch. This changes the options considerably depending on how good the defender is.



Here we show the defender closing the shadow striker coming short at the same time.

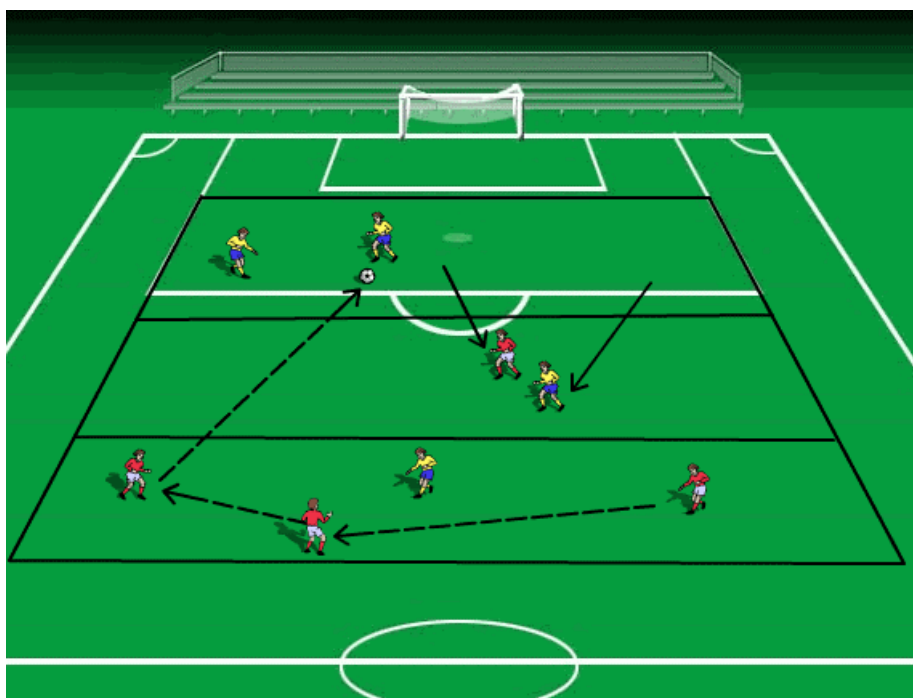
Here we show the shadow striker still receiving the ball under pressure but can't turn so lays the ball off into the same zone it came from to another player in that zone.





Here the shadow striker has laid off the ball and checked back into their own zone taking the defender with them and another player becomes the new shadow striker and gets it to feet in a free area to turn and pass and the 3 v 1 begins again. Rotate the defenders.

Another option for the passer now is to avoid the shadow striker (who is tightly marked now) whose movement has changed the position of the defender and so has opened up a pass to the other players in their other third of the field. Here is the end product above. Two players may go short at the same time don't worry about this as it may happen in a game anyway.



Coaching Points:

1. An Awareness of when and where the shadow striker drops into the free zone.
2. Timing and angle of the run
3. Timing of the pass
4. Good receiving and turning skills with an awareness of what is behind before receiving it
5. Receive or be a decoy for someone else; depending on where the defender is.
6. Watching for visual cues as to when to run and when to pass

Important points with regards to awareness:

The cue for the receiver is seeing the passer on getting the ball having their head up; and seeing the free space and making eye contact even with the receiver.

If the receiver (Shadow Striker) goes to early and the passer is not ready to pass (for example if they have the ball but have their head down looking at it and hence have not seen the potential run) then they can check back out, and open up the space for the next shadow striker having taken their marking defender away from the space; in order to leave it free for the next player.

By then the passer may have their head up and be ready to pass or; maybe even have passed the ball off in their own zone and the next player to get it has seen the 2nd run into the free middle area and they make the pass.

The cue for the 2nd shadow striker to make their run can be the check back of the first shadow striker.

You can also liken this to a central defensive midfield player dropping back into space in front of the back four to receive a pass off them to build the play up.