

CROSSING AND FINISHING SESSIONS

Session 122: Developing Drills To Improve Crossing And Finishing

Session 123: Crossing And Finishing

Session 124: Crossing And Finishing Practice Ideas And Striker Movement

Session 125: Crossing And Finishing Game

Session 122: Developing Drills To Improve Crossing And Finishing

Head Up: Glance from the crosser, an awareness using the Awareness principles of: where are the players (attackers, defenders, and the keeper) . Sometimes they don't have time to do this they just get the ball into the danger area and expect players to be there?

Decision: When, Where and How to cross. Do this as early as possible to give defenders as little time as possible to position themselves.

Technique of the Cross:

1. A good first touch out of your feet to set the cross up but looking also to where the ball is going and where the attackers are to receive to cross.
2. Balanced position with the non kicking foot alongside the ball pointing in the direction you want the cross to go. Use of techniques to produce the type of delivery below, kicking through the ball with correct timing.

Types of Cross – They can include:

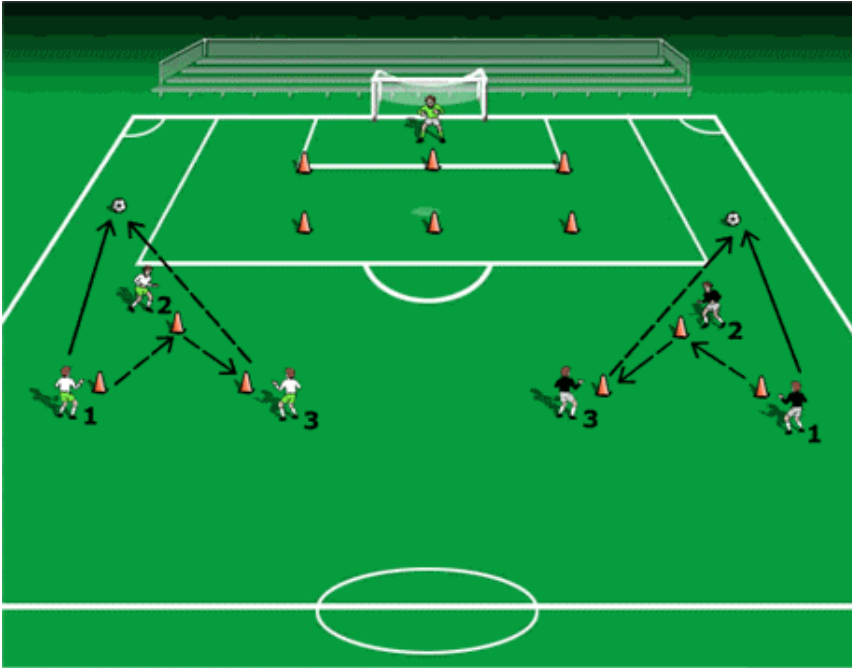
1. Crosses that are driven low with power (usually to the near post).
2. Swerved crosses for example around a defender using the body position as a guide .
3. Chipped crosses from the goal line (usually to the far post).
4. Longer, higher trajectory crosses to the far post and past it (to opposite wide player who can shoot at goal or head or pass it back into the danger zone).
5. Pull back crosses or passes to a midfield player coming in late.

Runs of the Players: Near post / Far post, away from the ball initially to come back if possible (to lose markers). When a striker runs away from the ball the defender has the problem that when they look at the ball, they can't see the player they are marking or that player's movement; when they look at the player, they can't see the delivery of the ball. Anticipation of where the ball will arrive.

Timing of the Run: As Late as possible and as Fast as possible (so you are difficult to mark plus you don't get into the correct position too early). The player making the near post run must use the post as a guide. If they run past the near post to receive then it's difficult to get a shot or header on target. Try to time the run so the ball is arriving as you are arriving then it's a straight shot or header. The only time it should happen is if the near post players run beyond that post is designed to pull a defender out of position to create space for a teammate coming in behind.

Angle of the Run: Into the line of the crossed ball not across it.

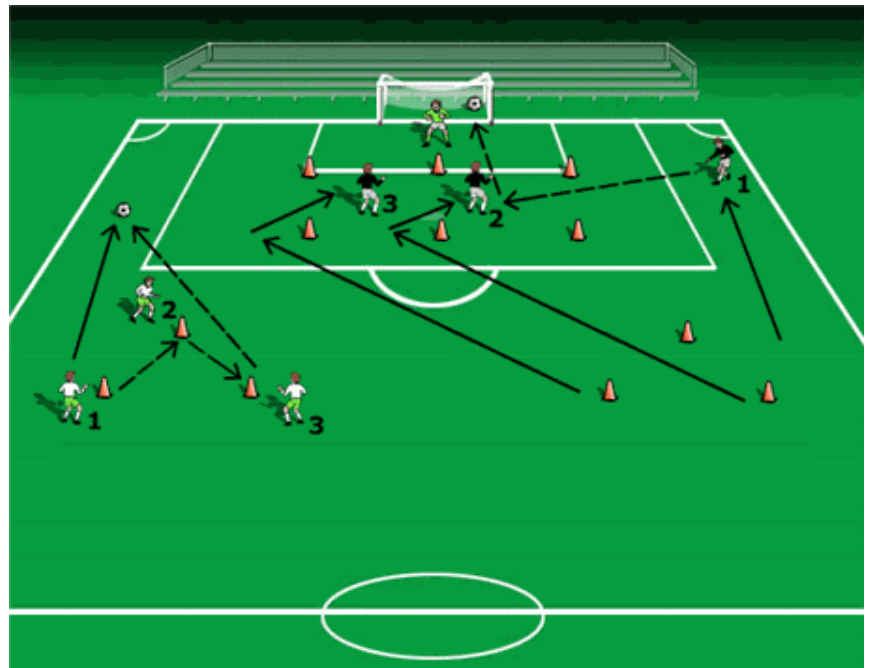
The Attacking Finish: Contact on the ball is probably one touch only using the head or foot. Use the momentum of the crossed ball for power so you time the contact almost let it hit your foot rather than the player forcing it.



Second six yard box is the target area for the crosser.

Crossing area means it's difficult for the keeper to come and claim the ball. Crossover run can be on too where (2) is far (3) is near.

1. Do both sides. (2) And (3) get into near post / far post positions quickly. Alternate the positions of the players.
2. "Second six yard box" is the target area for the crosser where the keeper is just out of range to go and catch the ball without being vulnerable. If it is into the actual 6 yard box then the keeper should be the favorite to win the ball.



Activity #1

Set Up: Players are organised on a half pitch as shown below in Diagram (a). Groups are (B, C) Central midfield players, Groups (A, D) wide midfield players. A supply of balls is placed with the coach as shown. A goalkeeper(s) is positioned in goal.

NOTE: The setup is replicated on the other half of the pitch so that 2 groups are going simultaneously. The assistant coach maintained the flow of this second group.

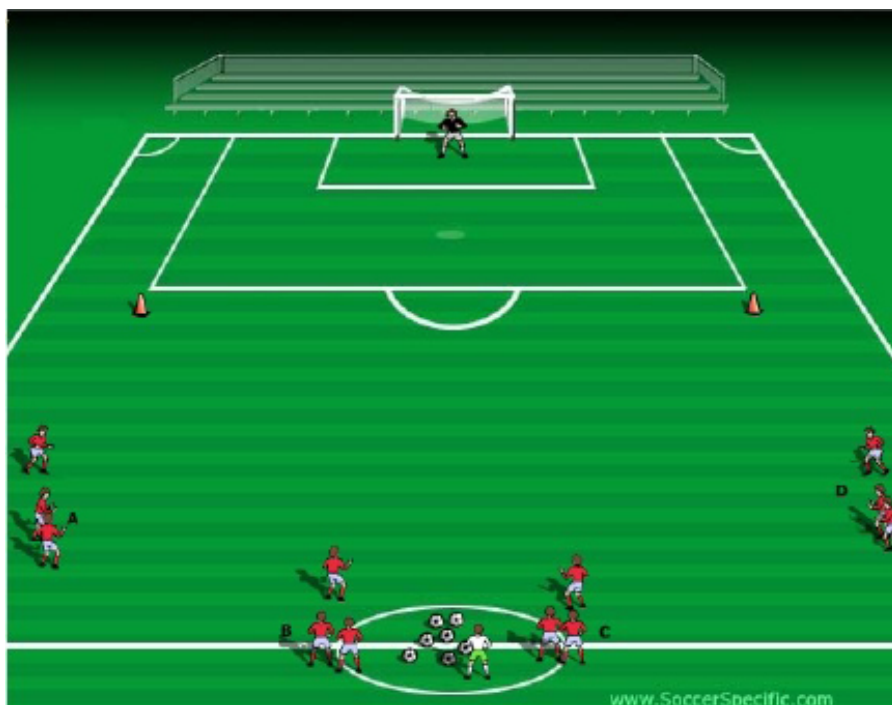


Diagram (a)

The pattern begins with a pass from the coach to either central midfield player.

The central midfield player must receive the ball in a half-turn and quickly pass to the wide midfield player.

The wide midfield player must “drive” down the line before crossing into the box. The central midfield players and opposite side wide midfield player must attempt to get in the box for the cross.

The next group of players begins on a pass from the coach. Alternate sides – play is continuous on coach's command. This pattern is illustrated in Diagram (b) below.

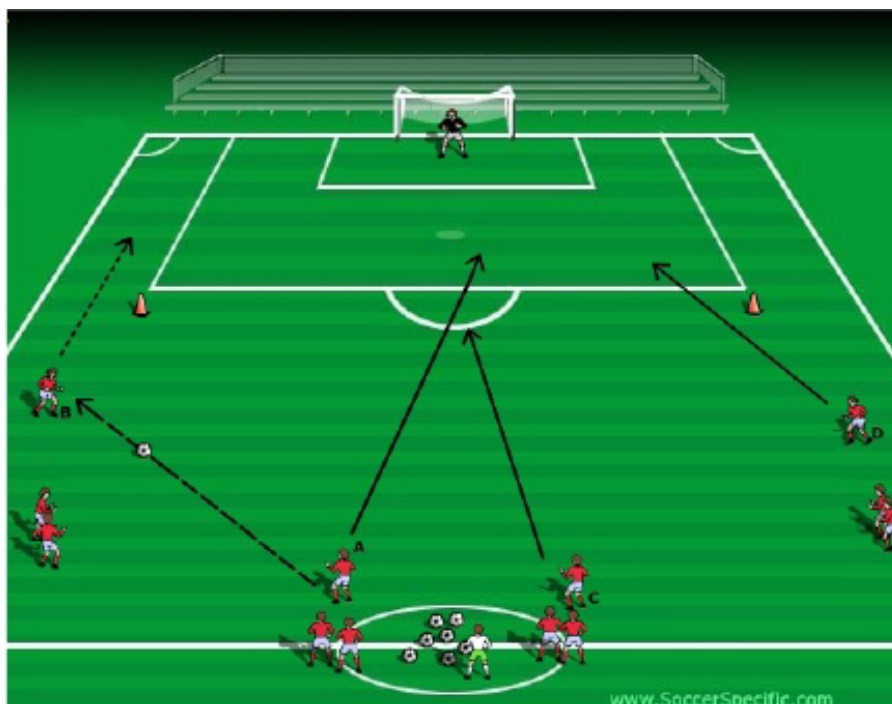


Diagram (b)

Coaching Points:

1. Sharp accurate passing in build-up play.
2. Movement to receive ball must be realistic – game speed.
3. Wide midfield players are encouraged deliver balls with pace into the box.
4. Finishing must be of high quality.

Progression #1

Same setup as above but 2 cones have been added slightly outside the corners of the 18-yard box as shown below in Diagram (c).

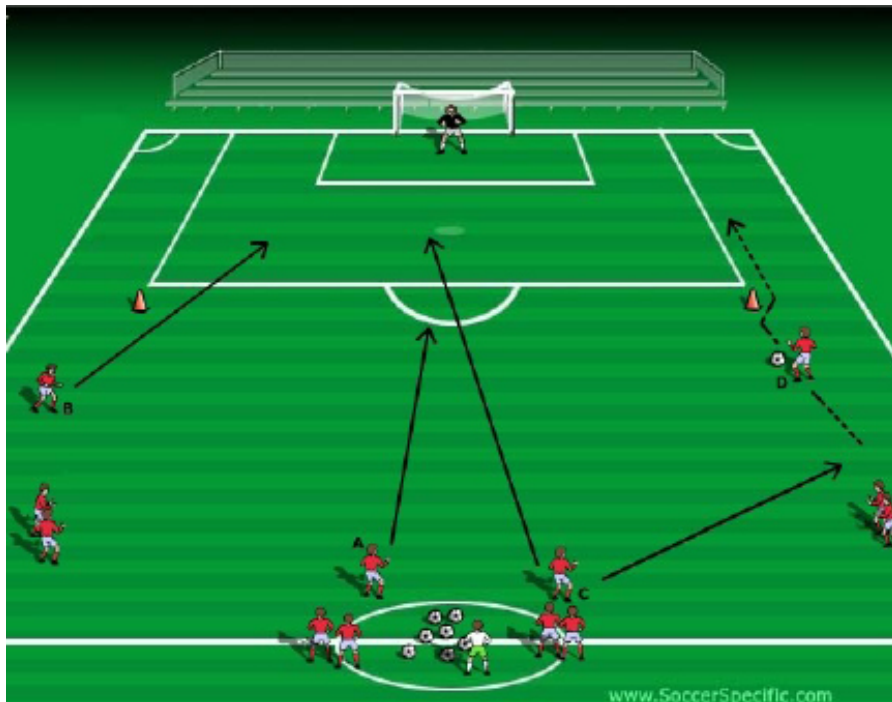


Diagram (c)

The pattern begins with a pass from the coach to either central midfield player (A, C). The central midfield player must receive the ball in a half-turn and quickly pass to the wide midfielder.

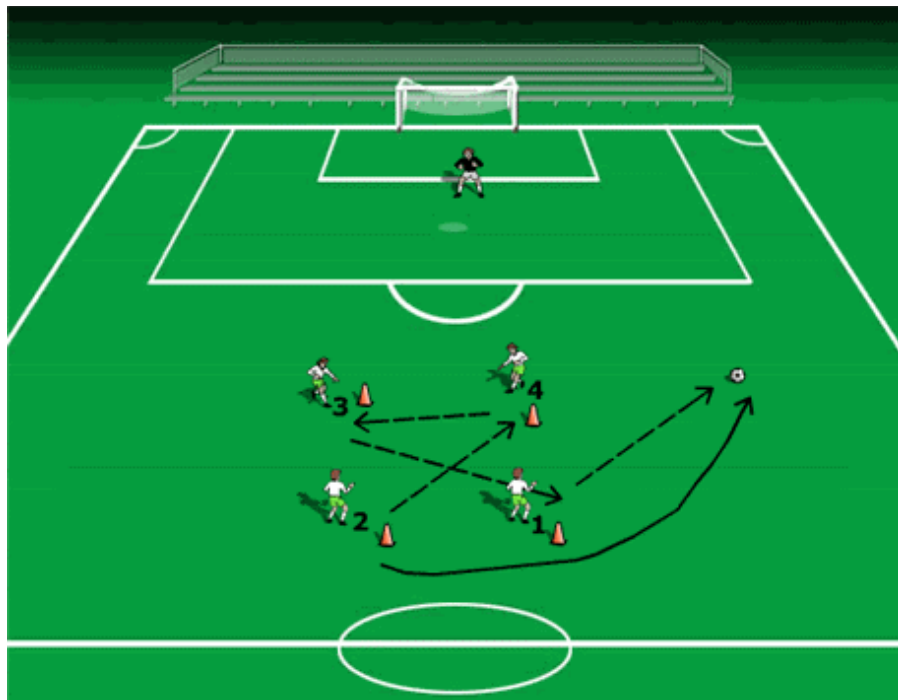
The wide midfielder must “drive” inside at the cone (imaginary opponent) before cutting back down the line to deliver a cross into the box.

The central midfield players and opposite side wide midfielder must attempt to get in the box for the cross.

Coaching Points:

1. Wide midfielder must be encouraged to be “positive” – drive at the cone with pace!
2. Sharp accurate passing in build-up play.
3. Movement to receive ball must be realistic – game speed.

Session 123: Crossing And Finishing (Introducing VERY BASIC movements into the box)

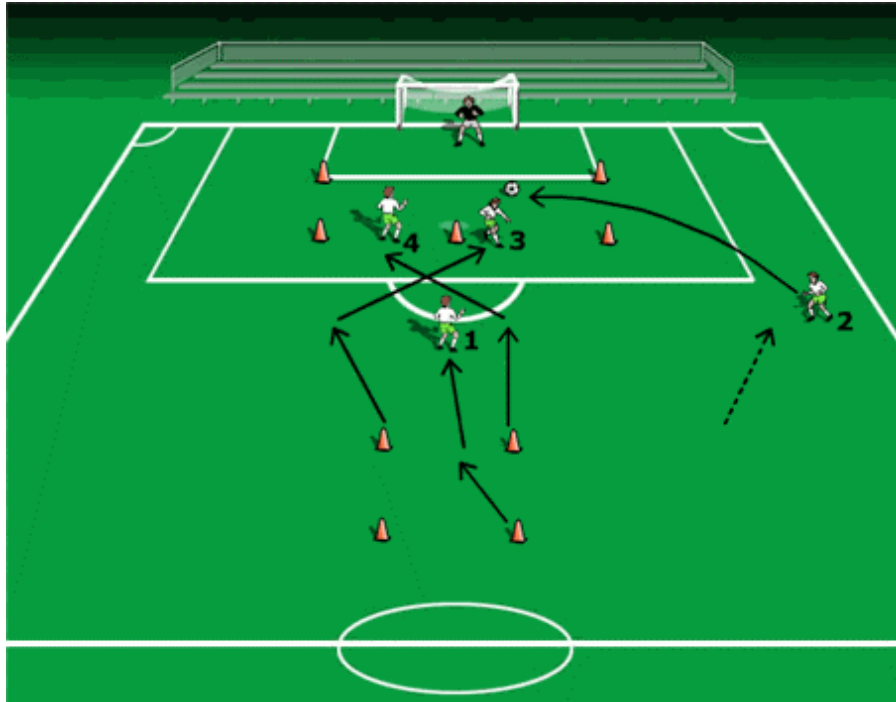


All the players are involved in the build – up, inter passing then an overlap by (2) and they attack the goal with three players.

Making runs to the near and far posts, and having one player holding back for a potential pull back pass / cross by (2).

Rotate the players through each position.

Have other players at each cone ready to go next so the session is continuous. Once one group of four finishes the next begins.

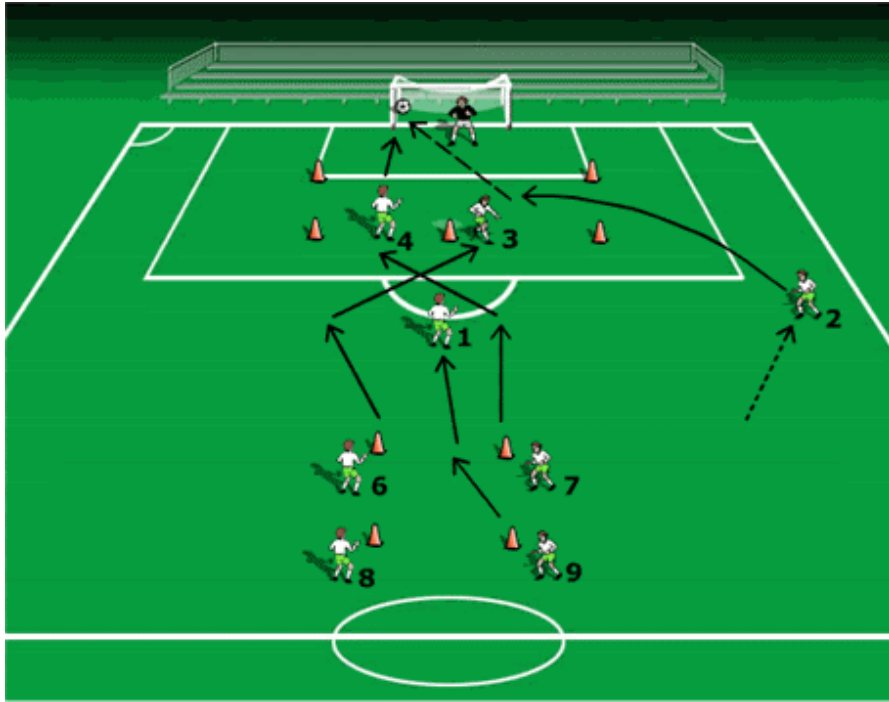


The movement of the four players has now been advanced to the next stage.

(2) is in a crossing position and strikers (3) and (4) have advanced forward quickly down the shortest route to goal then changed direction to attack the near and far posts.

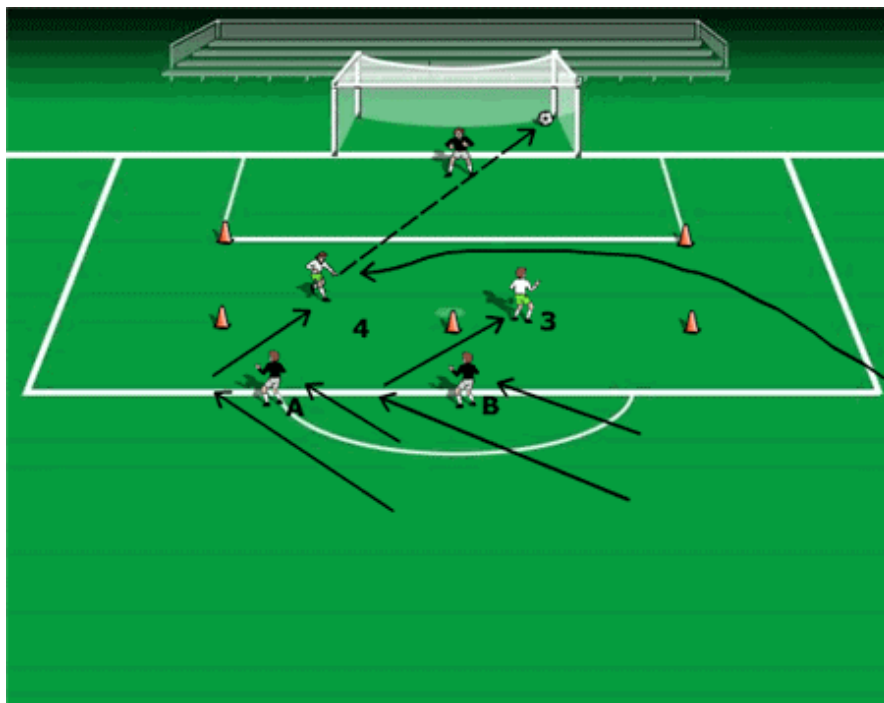
This movement is designed to confuse defenders; if they continue to run in a straight line to goal then they are more easily marked.

This movement is especially effective against man marking defenders.



Alternative movement can be both strikers moving away from the ball and the goal to check back at the appropriate time. The run is “off the shoulder” of the defender to check back across them in a game situation. This is designed to take defenders away from the goal and into areas they do not want to go and then checking back either behind or in front of them to get first to the crossed ball. Next group is ready to go once the first group have finished.

Progression: Bring in defenders to challenge them but only once you have established the timing of the runs, angle of the runs, timing of the crosses, quality of the crosses, quality of the finishing and so on and scored some goals. Defenders start with the strikers as if they are recovering back and tracking their runs.



Strikers run AWAY from the goal to draw defenders away from the target area and into areas they do not want to go. They take up a position “off the shoulder” of the defender.

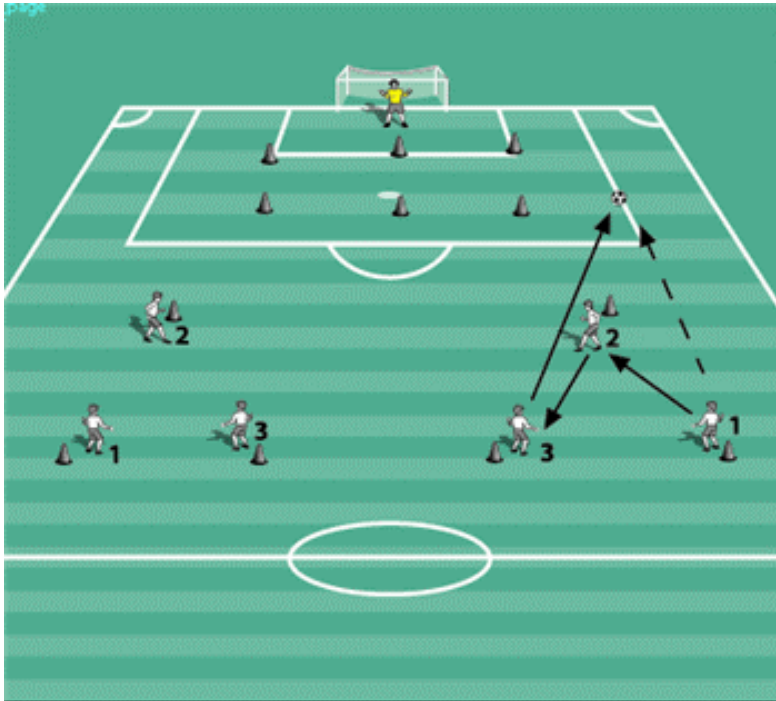
Here the strikers run behind the defenders and across them to attack the delivery and the goal. The cross is coming from the right. Their movement is short and sharp based on the timing of the cross; they need to time their runs and the angles of them to coincide with this. The strikers are watching and waiting for the cross to come in and will time their runs off the delivery.

Moving away from the goal and taking the defender with them causes the defender to be in a disadvantaged position. If they look at the striker they can't see the ball, or when and where it is delivered, looking at the ball then can't see where the striker is or when they make their move.

All these moments are just split second differences as to looking at the ball, then the striker, but not both at the same time. This gives the striker a split second advantage and may be all they need. From the strikers perspective these runs are the best ones to make in terms of moving defenders into unfavorable positions and away from the danger area.

But if there is little time then they just need to get into the attacking zone if the cross is coming in early. Then the shortest route is employed to get them there quickly, i.e. a straight line run. Players tend to want to run towards the ball not away from it so it is important they get used to this concept and understand it.

Session 124: Crossing And Finishing Practice Ideas And Striker Movement



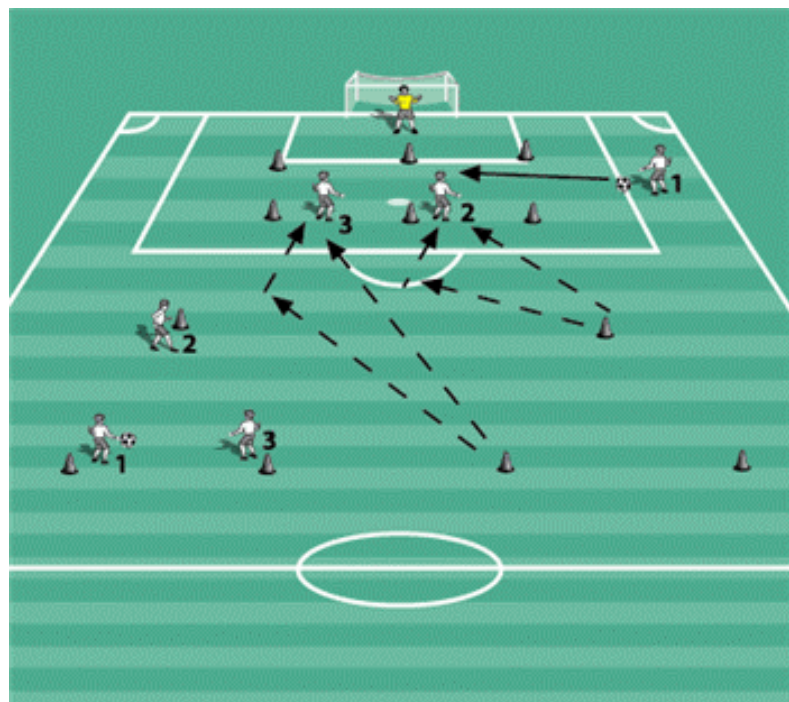
Second six yard box is the target area for the crosser where the keeper is just out of range to go and catch the ball without being vulnerable. If it is into the actual 6 yard box then the keeper should be the favorite to win the ball.

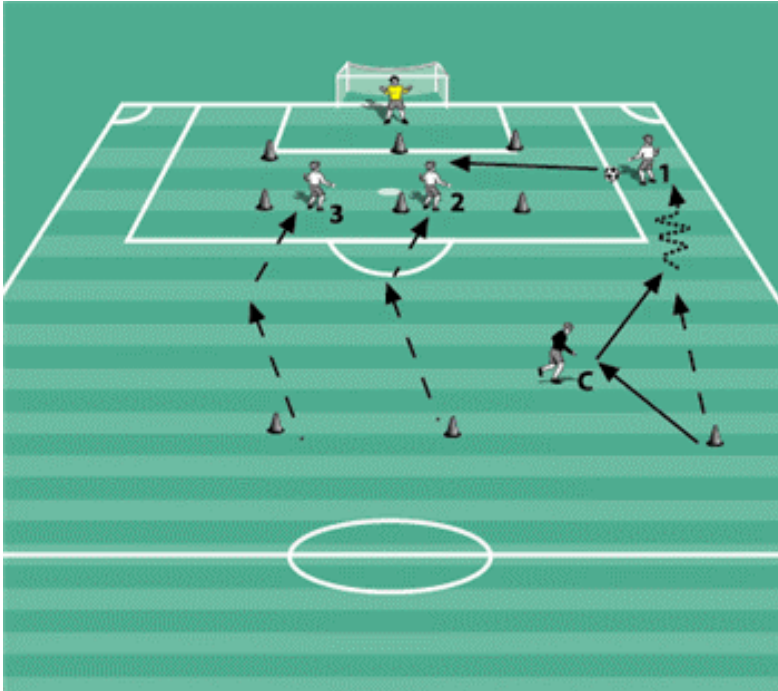
Do both sides. (2) And (3) get into near post / far post positions quickly.

If they can make the angled run then do it, time will dictate it probably will be the straight run. The main thing is they just get into the correct scoring positions.

Crossing area means it's difficult for the keeper to come and claim the ball.

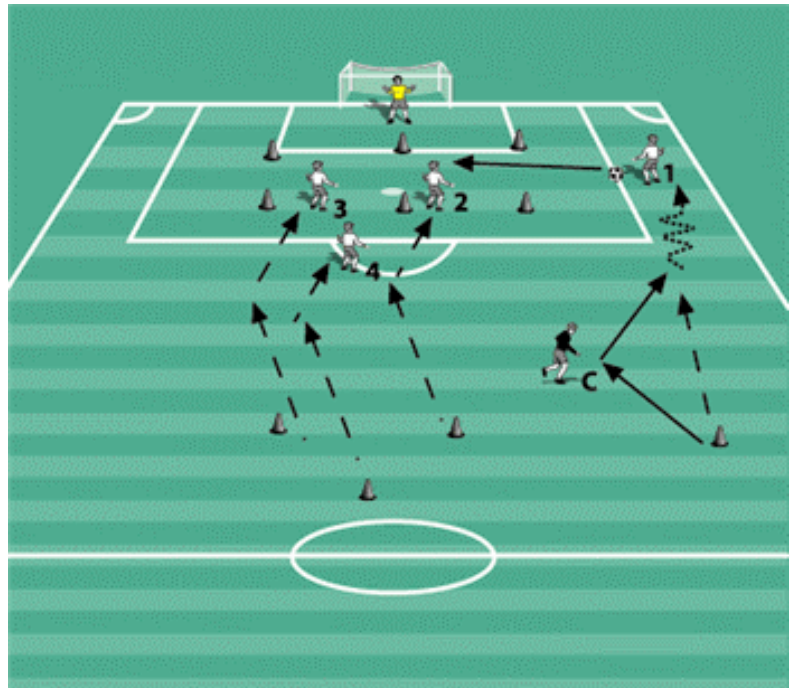
Crossover run can be on too, where (2) is far (3) is near.

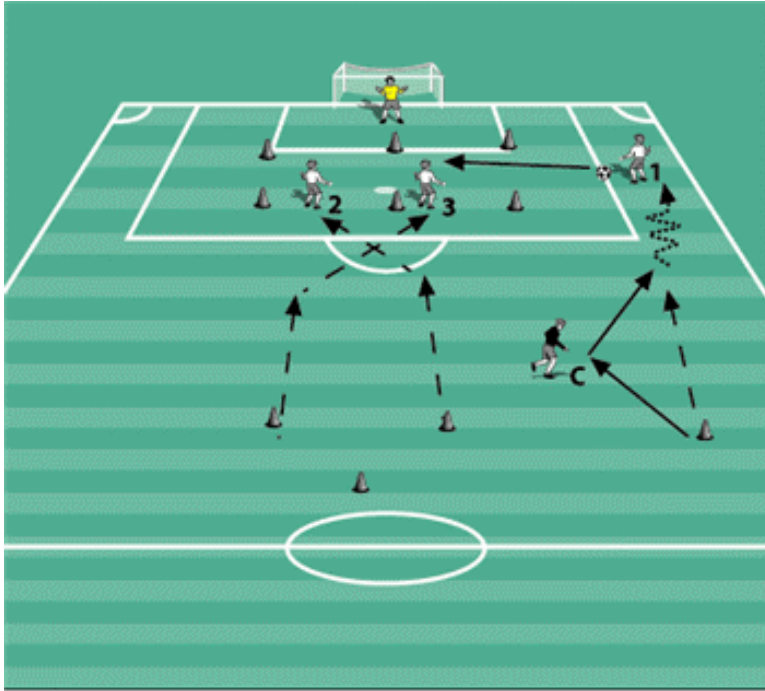




(1) plays a 1 – 2 with the coach and crosses, (2) and (3) can time their runs accordingly.

Develop: (4) joins in. Service is (1) to coach who passes it back and (1) takes it on with a good first touch into a crossing position. There are three main areas to aim for from the cross. Use other side also.

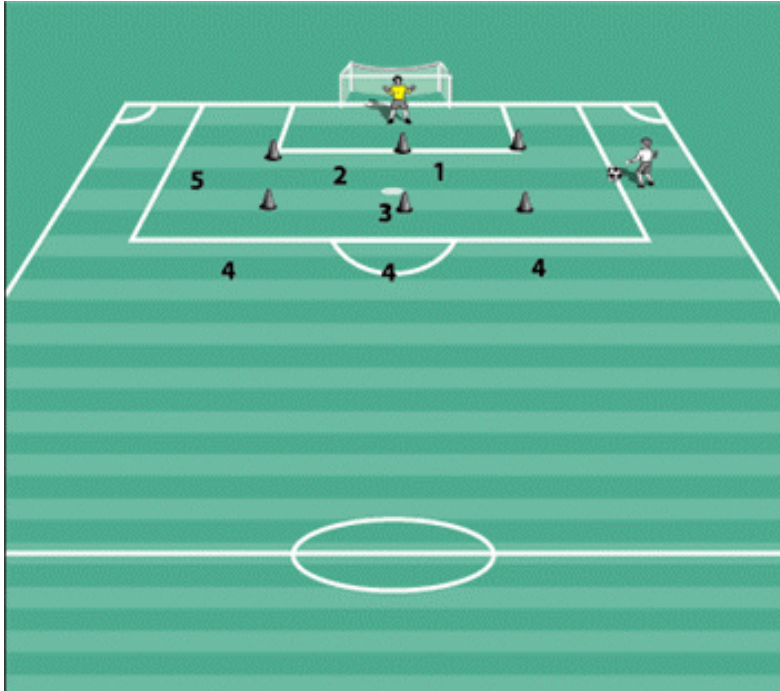




Here (2) and (3) perform a crossover run with each other as another means of fooling defenders with their attacking runs.

Double crossover runs. When you add defenders here watch how these runs can affect their recovery runs

Areas To Attack In The Box To Receive The Cross



Second six yard box is the target area for the crosser.

Areas of support are shown inside and outside the penalty area. It is always best to start crossing sessions with no opposition just attacking players making runs to areas at the near post (1), far post (2) the middle area and just in behind the two strikers; (3), regaining possession areas outside the penalty area (4); and beyond the far post (5).

We are asking players to attack certain areas within the penalty

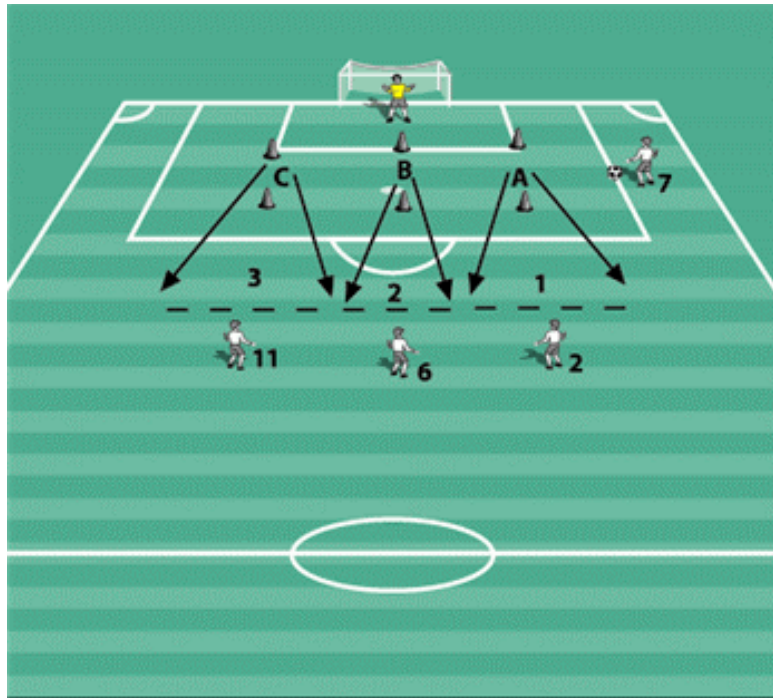
area where the ball is most dangerous for the opposition and we are also giving direction to the crosser as to where they should deliver the cross.

So now we are in a situation where the crosser knows the best areas that the ball should be delivered to and the attackers know the best areas where they should go to receive the cross. In each instance though, defenders positions can influence where the ball is delivered or the runs are made but the approximate areas to deliver to will always be the same.

Timing of runs should be to arrive at the positions at the same time as the ball so players can work out from the cross when and where they should go. If they cover all areas with a player in each one and the cross is effective then there is an increased chance that we can score a goal. If the cross isn't as effective and the defender wins the ball first then we have our players in area (4) in "anticipation positions" to win the ball back (the second ball).

Regaining possession areas are very important because if the opposition in a game situation win the ball initially from the cross in the form of a defensive header where is the ball from that header going to go? As above; players must position themselves outside the penalty area where they have the best chance of winning the ball back. Area (5) can be covered by a player should the cross go beyond the first line of attack or the crosser may see everyone is marked in the box and can pick out this wide player as the free player to attack the goal.

Anticipation Areas Around The Penalty Area

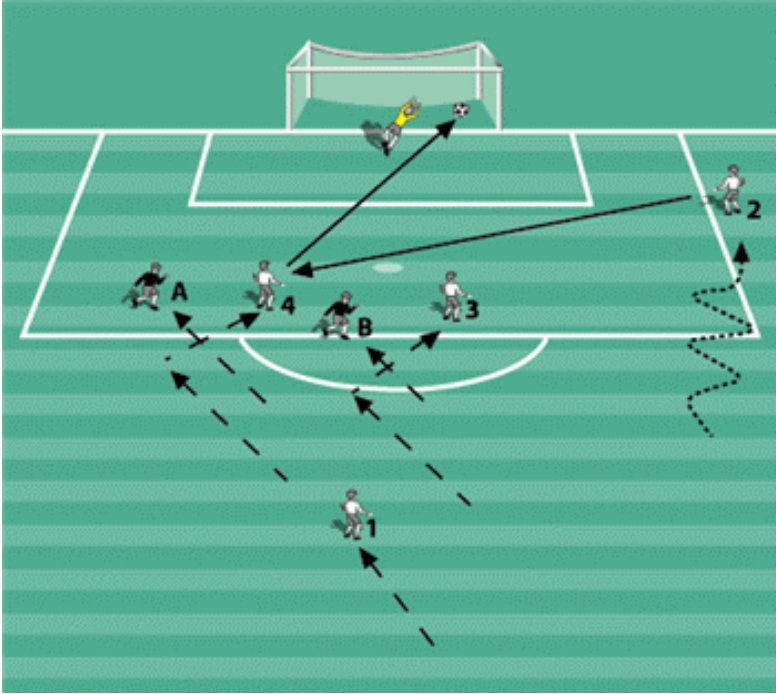


I haven't put the three attackers on the diagram to enable us to see where defenders may win the ball as we are working on the "anticipation area" players here and not the attacking players in the box. Defender (A) wins the header and "generally" will clear the ball into area (1). The same applies to the other defenders and their areas.

The three second line player's position where they anticipate the ball will go in order to regain possession from the 2nd ball. They watch the line of flight of the ball and adjust right or left depending on where they think the ball will be cleared to e.g. the ball travels to the far post area; defender (C), so it's likely it will be cleared into area 3 so (6) and (2) shuffle across to help (11).

It's important that if attackers can't win the first header they don't let defenders get a clean header so the ball doesn't travel very far from a clearance i.e. beyond the second line of attack.

Movement Away To Come Back

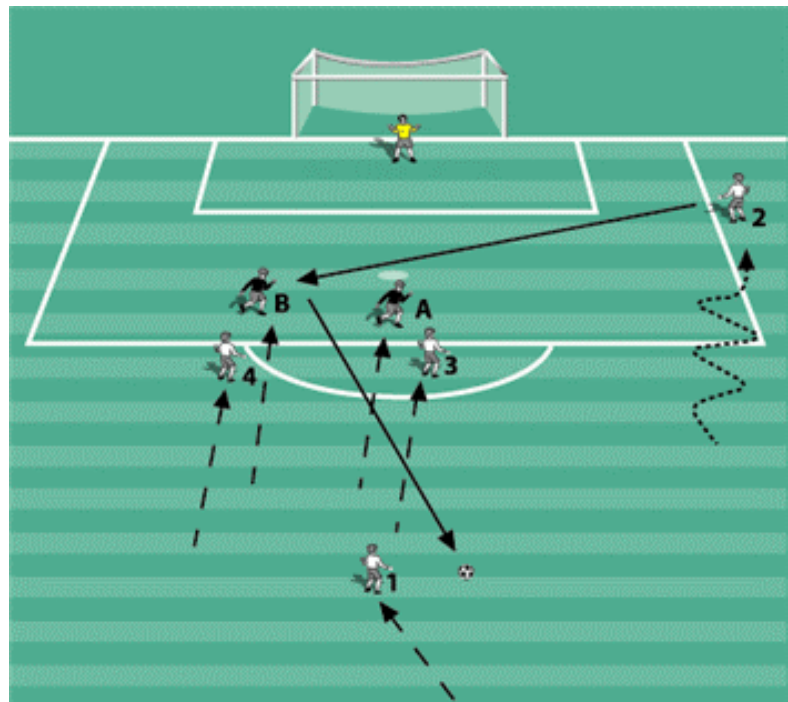


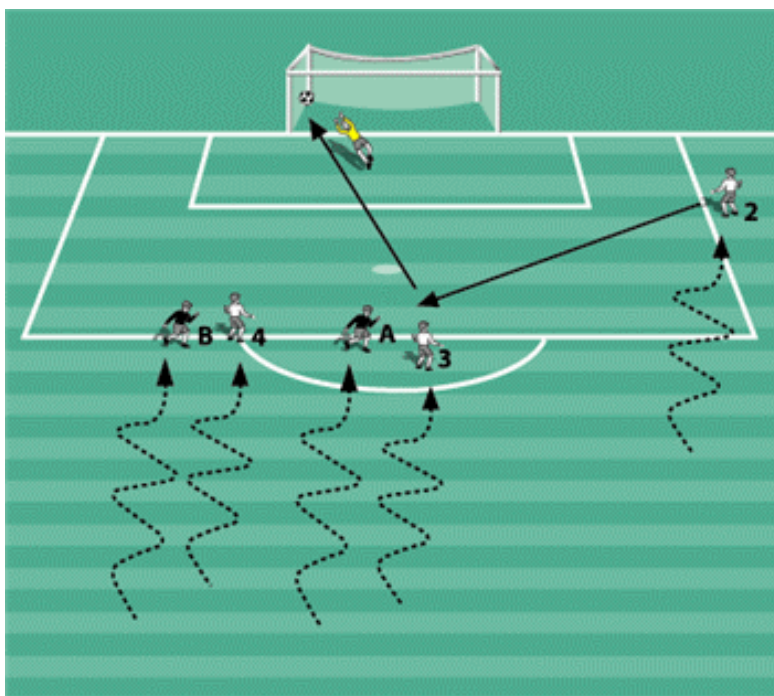
Here the strikers run in front and across the defenders, again short and sharp with correct timing based on the cross.

It is best to cut across the defender in a tight checking action, not run in an arch as the arched run takes too long and is too wide so it is easier for the defender to track it.

It is exaggerated here to show the movement and getting away from the defender; in reality it may only be half a yard or even less but enough to get the first contact on the ball.

If they run forward in a straight line then the defenders can see both the ball and the player at the same time and it is easier to defend against the cross. Here Defender (B) gets to the ball first and makes a good clearing header.





If there is time to do it as the striker attacks the defender and the goal with a sharp solid run, the striker can do a zig - zag pattern of run to try to escape and / or confuse the defender as to where they anticipate they are going to end up attacking the goal.

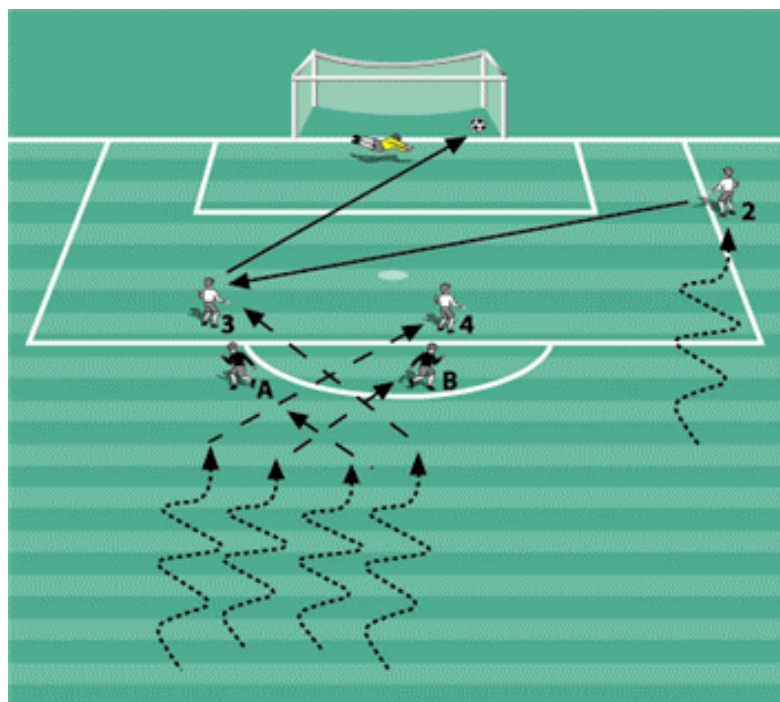
Running behind the defender, then running in front of them, then behind again, then in front again and so on, the defender may be thinking “Is he going to attack the far post behind me, or the near post in front of me”?

All this movement is good to make to help the striker get away from the marking of the defender and may result in a chance to score a goal by getting space they otherwise may not have had if they had just run forward in a straight line attack on goal.

Here is an example of the runs made & the possible end product & positions the two strikers finish in. It may only be a couple of checks back and forth by the strikers but it can be effective.

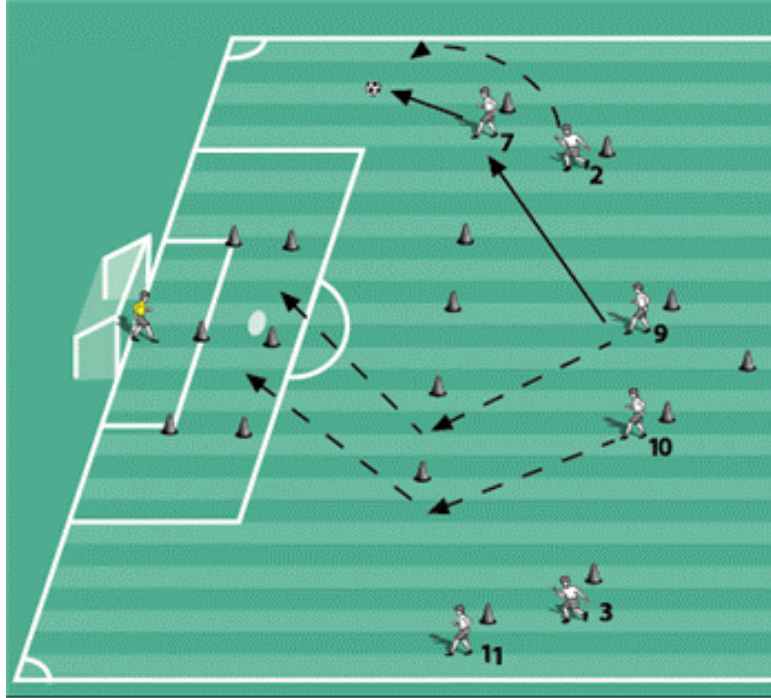
They have had time to make these movements always watching the crosser & anticipating from the crossers body language when the cross is coming & where it is coming to.

They must make their final move as Late as possible and as quickly as possible to again try to get away from their marker.



The cardinal sin is to get in too early, better to be slightly behind the play then be able to make up for it with a burst of speed than be in front of the play and therefore much more easily marked out of the game and potentially in too early and standing waiting for the cross and consequently easily marked..

Functional Crossing And Finishing Session



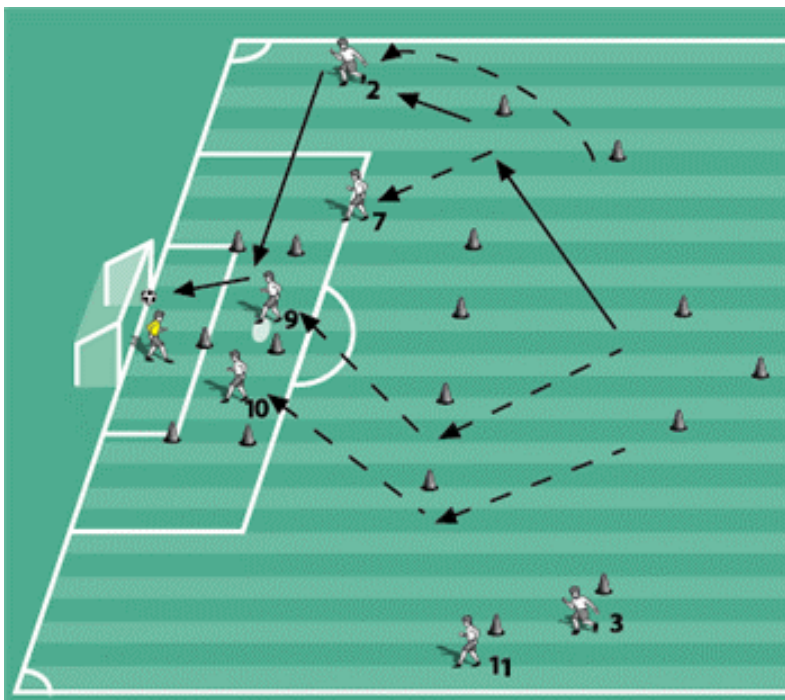
The Set Up

Shadow Play to begin. Attack in two's to begin. Movement away from the ball initially if there is time in the buildup. We are working on the timing of the runs. Attack near post and far post areas. Cross from both sides.

Position off the near post and don't go beyond it to meet the ball; unless drawing a defender out of position for the second striker to attack.

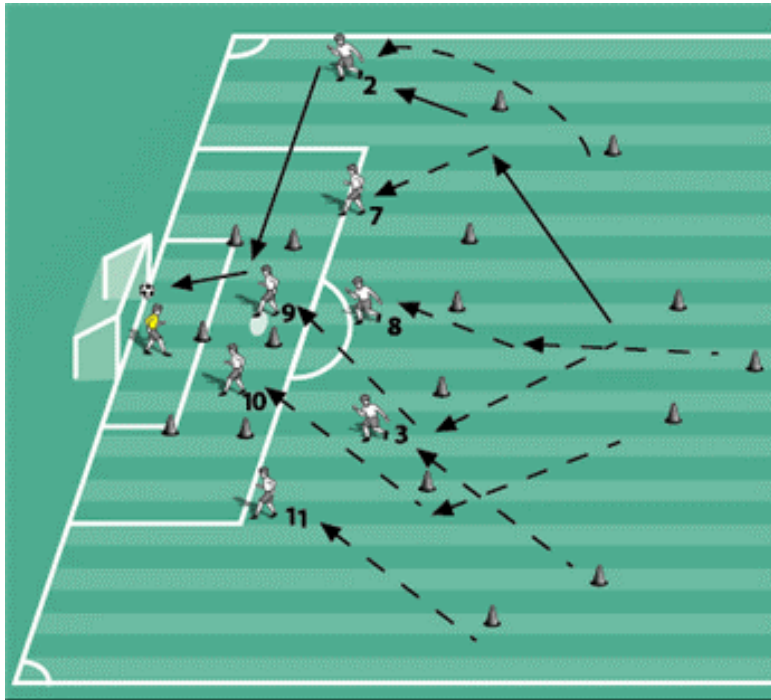
Winger (7) receives the pass and plays it into the overlapping run of the fullback (2) who crosses as early as possible. Strikers know this and must get in position to meet the cross. The cross should be between knee and head height.

Service could be a driven pass from a striker to a wide player or the play starts wide (timing is better).



Develop:

1. Introduce a defender who must choose a striker to mark. The defender starts from the same area as the striker as if retreating back towards goal. The crosser finds a free player.
2. Introduce a third attacking player in behind the front two for the pull back.
3. Have the opposite wide player coming inside as an additional attacker to cover the area beyond the far post, and the crosser has another player to pick out (now it is a 4 v 1 situation).
4. Introduce another defender to mark up another attacker (4 v 2).



Players have made their runs into the correct positions to receive the crossed ball. The crosser has four choices of cross to make, near post, far post, and pull back for the midfielder and past the far post for the opposite wide player. See who is free or just get the ball in if there's no time to look (for example in a game where the defender puts the crosser under pressure).

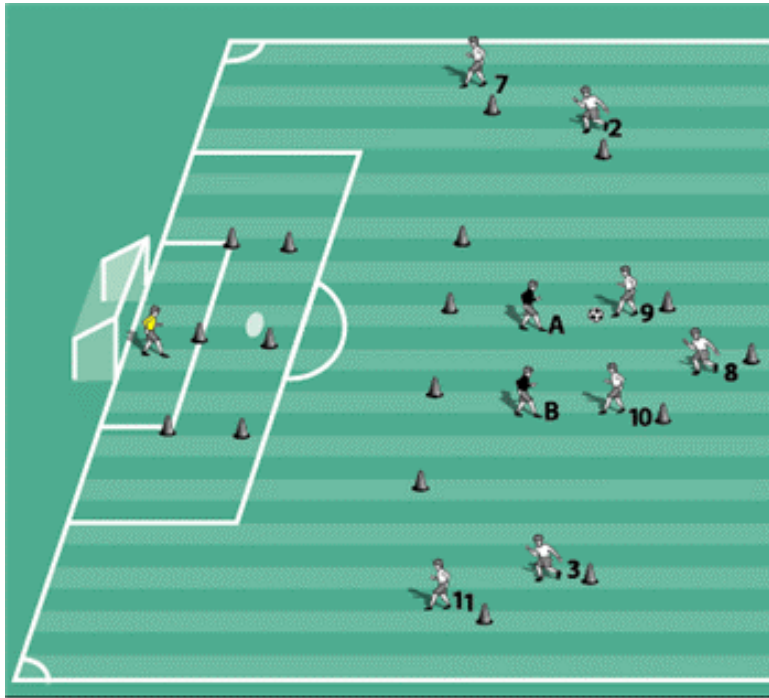
Take the set up ten yards closer so the wide players are crossing from the goal line and the striker's runs are shorter and sharper. Include a chipped cross to the far post if the keeper is at the near post.

This is a great routine to practice as it on going and you can keep a lot of players working. As soon as the three central attackers have made their runs and got back to the start they are ready to go again. Rotate defenders and wide players.

You can have fifteen players and more working constantly (two sets of strikers, two sets of defenders or even more sets of players etc).

Once (3) and (7) have played the wide player in to cross, they can take up anticipation area positions around the box to receive any second ball possession from defenders clearances. They can shoot or pass to someone in a better position (this keeps the pressure on).

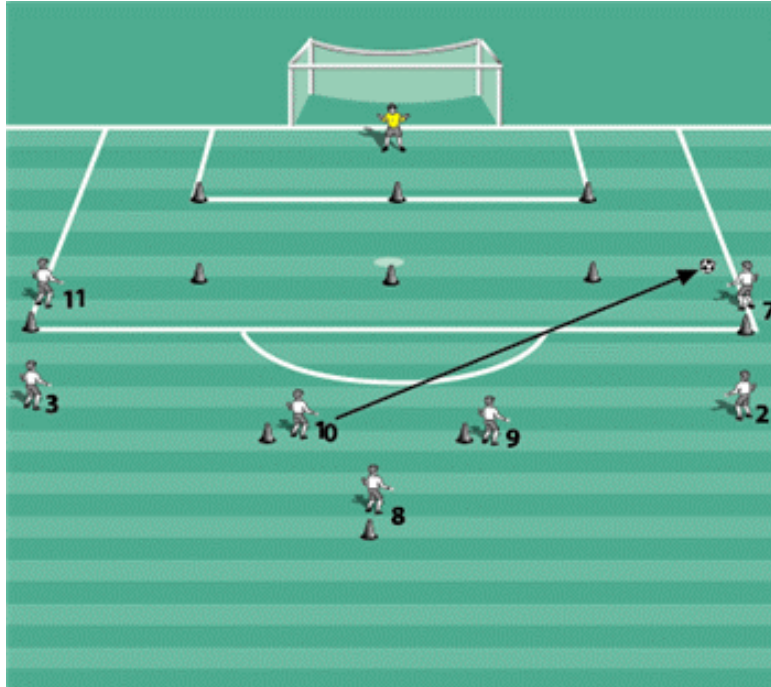
These are the positions they need to be in to make it easy for the crosser to deliver the ball. This provides four options so wherever the crosser plays the ball in there could or should be someone fairly close to the ball to affect a finish on goal.



The final set up for a functional crossing session is as above. The Scenario is as follows:

1. We have a four versus two overload situation with wide players working 1 – 2's or receiving diagonal passes from central strikers to create a crossing position.
2. Strikers make runs away from the ball initially to confuse defenders. By running away from the ball defenders who mark them can see either the player or the ball, not both at the same time. This gives the striker the edge. Defenders must pick a player out and track their run.
3. Four players attacking the cross and expecting that they will be the one to receive it so they make sure they get into the correct attacking positions.
4. An attempt is made to score a goal. Whatever the outcome the central attackers and the defenders move back around the outside of the practice to start again and the next two lines begin their attack. We are generally working on one touch finishing from attackers.
5. Develop this session by opening it out into a phase of play and bring in a back three or four plus a midfield to defend taking it into a game situation but only when you are getting constant success with the overload situation.

Functional Crossing And Finishing: Short And Sharp One Touch Play



Move the session closer to the edge of the box and have the players attack with pace.

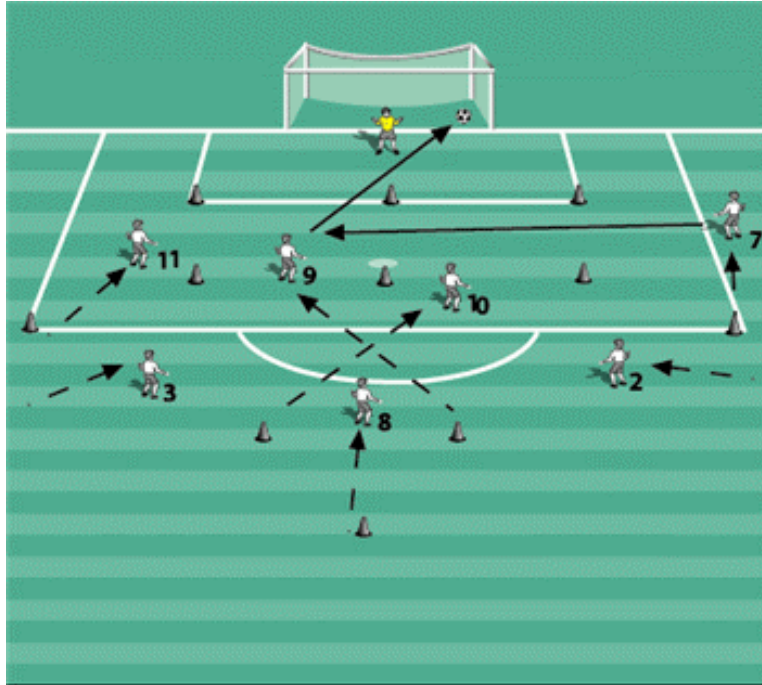
(10) can play the ball wide and (7) must try to play it in first time. (10), (9) and (8) make runs, near, far and in the middle but (8) is staggered if the ball goes behind the two strikers so they don't attack in a straight line and it goes behind all of them and the opportunity is missed.

(11) or (3) can attack the area beyond these three as a fourth player.

It is all short and sharp and mainly one touch play if possible.

If there is time, strikers can make their runs away to come back or cross over as they attack, if no time then they just get into the position to score. We should then have a player in most areas the ball can be played into and this takes the pressure off the crosser.

End Product



This shows the end product of the short and sharp finishing in this session.

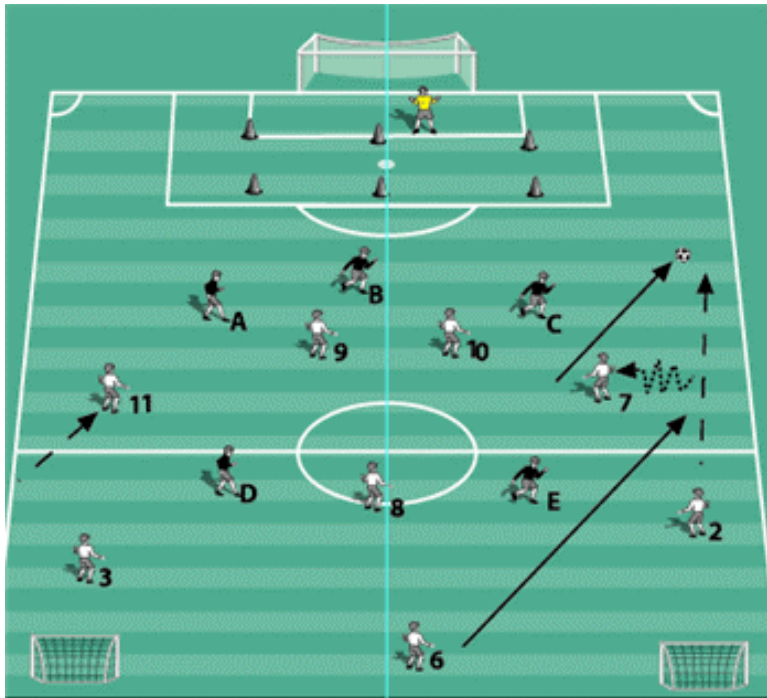
The session is great work for one touch play both from the crossers and the receiver's points of view.

Other players follow in for rebounds off the keeper.

This session builds confidence in the players as there is no opposition and they can relax and shoot at goal.

Progression: To develop it you can add a defender or two in the box to challenge the attacking players and put them under pressure in their finishing ability.

A Crossing Phase Of Play Including An Overlap



Introduce this and the crossing and finishing game following this when you think the players are ready to follow and understand it fully.

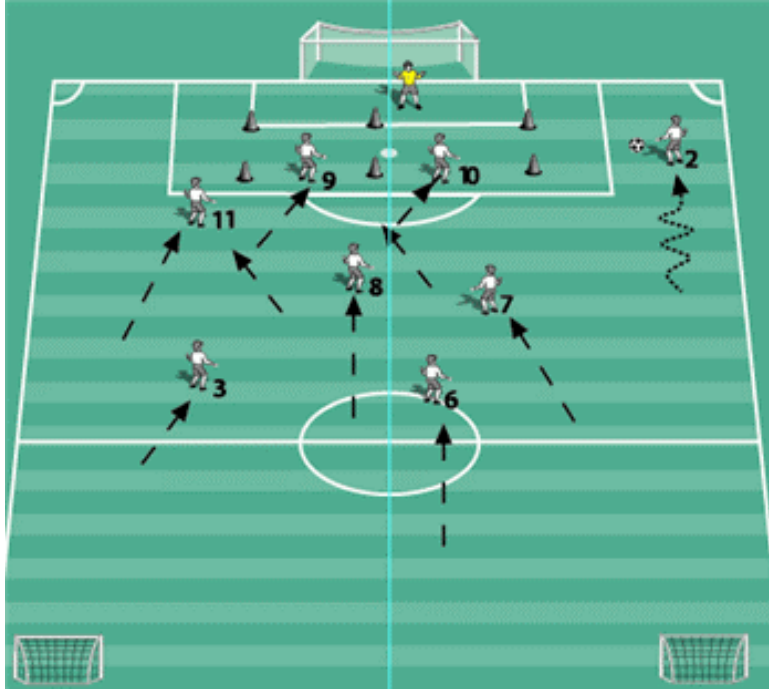
Start with the overload situation to help gain success and breed confidence in the players. If defenders win the ball they pass to the targets and the play starts again.

We are looking to get the ball wide in this phase of play so overlap work comes in. Primarily working with wide players and how they create positions to cross the ball from. For your preparation you can play against a back four or a back three depending on what the opposition play like (better to plan for both).

Coaching Points of an Overlap:

1. Does the player need support behind or in front?
2. Create Space – Move inside with the ball to open it up outside.
3. Communicate – Support player can call “hold” to gain time to get into position
4. Timing of the Run – Go wide (angle and distance).
5. Player on the ball passes or uses the run as a decoy to come inside and attack.

The End Product



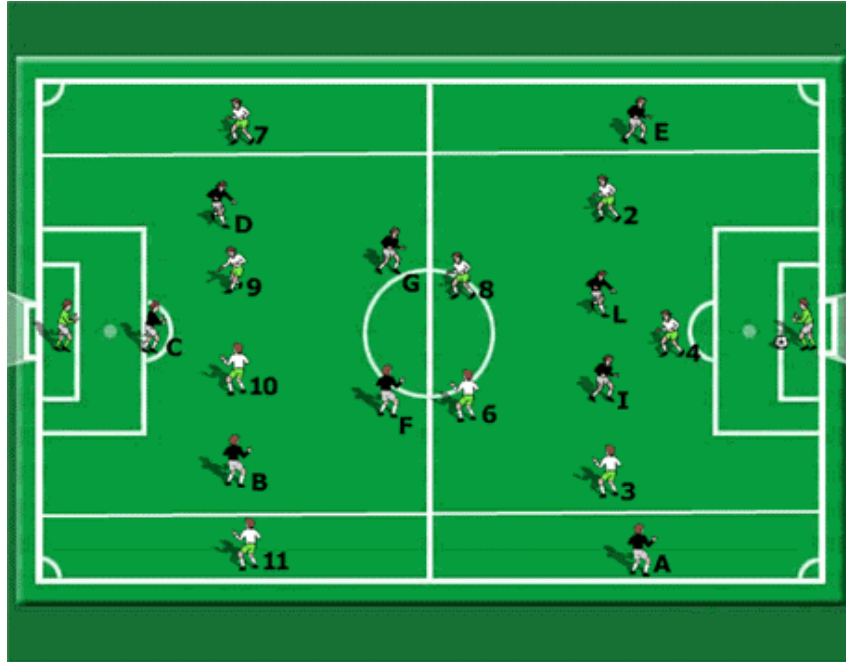
The end product of the attacking movement.

I have left the defenders out to be able to show more easily where the attacking players need to finish up, (obviously they will track the players back towards their own goal). (9) And (10) may switch positions as to where they attack and do a crossover between them.

We have players attacking: the near post (10), the far post (9), beyond the far post for anything over hit from the crosser (11), around the edge of the box and in the center for the pull back (8), (3) and (7) in anticipation areas around the box also and (6) naturally moves forward to maintain the shape of the attack and fill spaces in behind (8).

The cross arrives at the far post area for (10) to try and score.

Session 125: Crossing And Finishing Game



Working both ways this is a quick transition play session using wide players as the focal points to ensure we get lots of crosses in. You can overload areas where you want for instance; if your players are particularly poor in finishing have only one defender against two attackers and so on. You can determine any strategy you like and tailor the session to the number of players you have to work with. Here we have 20 players working constantly. Wide players perform in channels and no defenders can encroach into these zones ensuring a constant supply of crosses both ways. They stay in the attacking half of the field. The field is short and tight to make sure lots of crossing and finishing takes place at both ends of the field.

Coaching Points In Crossing And Finishing

Head Up: Glance from the crosser, an awareness using the Awareness principles of: where are the players (attackers, defenders, and the keeper) .Sometimes they don't have time to do this they just get the ball into the danger area and expect players to be there?

Decision: When, Where and How to cross. Do this as early as possible to give defenders as little time as possible to position themselves.

Technique of the Cross:

1. A good first touch out of your feet to set the cross up but looking also to where the ball is going and where the attackers are to receive to cross.
2. Balanced position with the non kicking foot alongside the ball pointing in the direction you want the cross to go. Use of techniques to produce the type of delivery below, kicking through the ball with correct timing.

Types of Cross – They can include:

1. Crosses that are driven low with power (usually to the near post).
2. Swerved crosses for example around a defender using the body position as a guide .
3. Chipped crosses from the goal line (usually to the far post).
4. Longer, higher trajectory crosses to the far post and past it (to opposite wide player who can shoot at goal or head or pass it back into the danger zone).
5. Pull back crosses or passes to a midfield player coming in late.

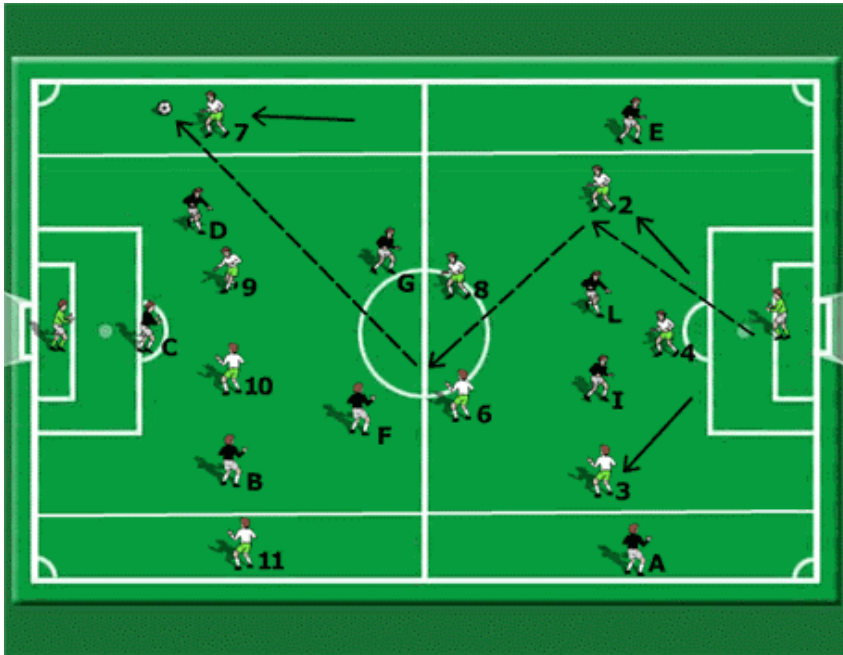
Runs of the Players: Near post / Far post, away from the ball initially to come back if possible (to lose markers). When a striker runs away from the ball the defender has the problem that when they look at the ball, they can't see the player they are marking or that player's movement; when they look at the player, they can't see the delivery of the ball. Anticipation of where the ball will arrive.

Timing of the Run: As Late as possible and as Fast as possible (so you are difficult to mark plus you don't get into the correct position too early).The player making the near post run must use the post as a guide. If they run past the near post to receive then it's difficult to get a shot or header on target. Try to time the run so the ball is arriving as you are arriving then it's a straight shot or header. The only time it should happen is if the near post players run beyond that post is designed to pull a defender out of position to create space for a teammate coming in behind.

Angle of the Run: Into the line of the crossed ball not across it.

The Attacking Finish: Contact on the ball is probably one touch only using the head or foot. Use the momentum of the crossed ball for power so you time the contact almost let it hit your foot rather than the player forcing it.

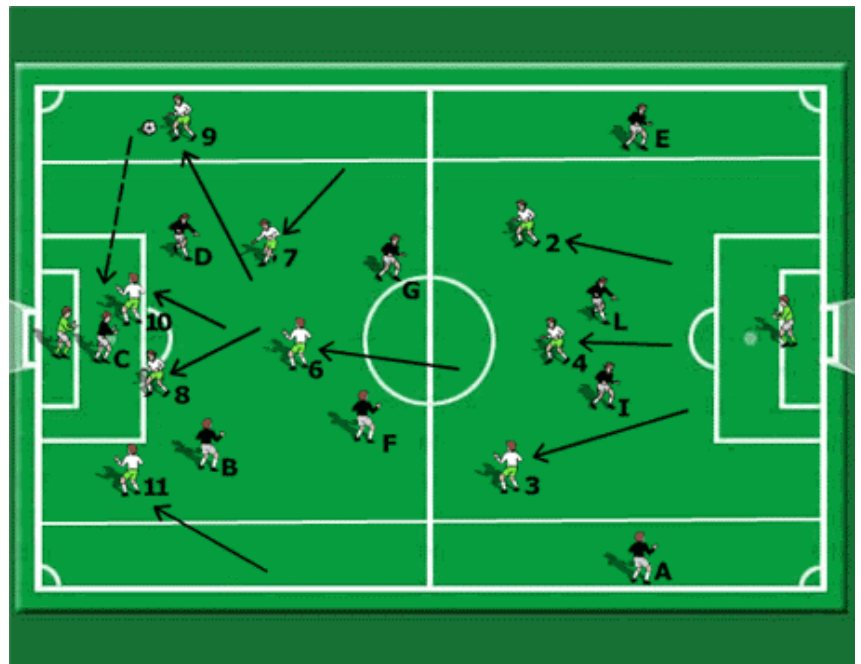
Examples Of Types Of Plays



Keeper to full back, a diagonal pass to a midfielder who passes to a wide player to cross.

Keeper to full back to a striker who is closed down and can't turn, so plays the ball wide for a cross. Look at movement of strikers and support players from this. If the ball is played into a striker who can shoot when it hasn't gone wide yet the striker should shoot as that is the right decision. Generally work the session using width but not to the extent where decisions become false.

An example of a striker (9) moving wide to receive a pass to end up crossing the ball. The cross arrives at the far post area for (8) to attack and hopefully score a goal from the move. Striker (10) becomes the near post area player, Midfielder (8) becomes the player attacking the far post area, (11) attacking beyond the far post, the initial passer (6) attacks the central area around or just inside the box, (7) moves into an anticipation area around the box also, and the attacking defensive players (2), (3) and (4) all move up the field as does the keeper, maintaining their compactness as a team from the back to the front.



Game Conditions

1. Start with the keeper who serves the ball to the wide defenders creating space breaking wide. They must find a wide player with a pass; it can be a player on the same side or a diagonal pass to the other side. Wide player gets a cross in.
2. The ball to midfield players then to wide players.
3. The ball to forwards, then to wide players.
4. To forwards who must link with midfield with a pass who must then pass to wide players. You can mix this up depending on how you want to play. It helps focus the player's minds on how to pass and support and who to pass to and support. Finish with free play and see how they do it for themselves and spend most time keeping it free so they decide.
5. Teams must stay in their thirds to get an idea of team shape but can work up to the edge of each third of the field. Once a clear shape is established let it go free and observe movement between the thirds. See if players fill in for one another for example a defender makes a run forward does a midfielder fill in. Where does the defender recover to when that team loses the ball?
6. To ensure teams work up and down the field; condition the game so the team in possession can't score unless the defenders of that attacking team are up and over the defending third line. Play offside from this line. This pushes midfield players forward into anticipation area positions closer to goal thus creating a better chance to regain possession should a defender head the ball clear.
7. Crossers only have two touches to make them concentrate more on their first touch which sets them up for the cross.
8. Have no one in wide areas but when they go in to receive a pass or run the ball in they are unopposed. Once the cross is made they come back into the game. This ensures most players get a chance to get in wide areas to cross, for example a forward makes a run wide and the second forward and wide midfielder player become the two forwards to receive the cross or maybe a full back gets into a crossing position.