



WORLD CLASS COACHING

For the World's Most Innovative Soccer Coaches

Complete Soccer Coaching Guide



73 Soccer Drills, Exercises and Tips for Better Coaching

COMPLETE SOCCER COACHING GUIDE

73 Soccer Drills, Exercises and Tips for Better Coaching

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WELCOME

As coaches, we know that there are many things that contribute to a young soccer player's success. Our job becomes one of identifying where individual players (as well as our team) are at in terms of their developmental abilities and then choosing the right activities to help them improve their skills. When I say "good activities" I mean ones that are fundamentally sound, keep the kids moving, develop good habits, and make them think about the game as a whole. This book provides you with 180 activities designed to work on warming-up, dribbling, passing, receiving, communicating, spacing, supporting, possessing, passing, conditioning, heading, goal keeping, finishing, defending, offending, and many other techniques and tactics.

I feel these activities are suitable because they've been tried and tested by many soccer coaches and teams. You'll notice that this is a collection of material gathered from my experience as a coach, my summer soccer camp experiences, talking with other coaches, and from coaches who subscribe to my soccer newsletter available at finesoccer.com.

In addition to specific drills, there are many activities designed to be used as scrimmages at the end of practice. I highly recommend spending some time during or towards the end of your practice to play games that include the skills your players were working on. The kids will have more fun and you will be surprised at how the carry over from practicing these skills in a small or adapted version of the game improves the players overall real soccer game performance.

I hope you find these activities helpful, fun, and effective in achieving your desire to have the best team you can have. As you begin to try them, I would enjoy hearing your feedback regarding which ones you found most helpful as well as the ones the kids liked to do the most.

Have a great season,

Lawrence Fine

GETTING PRACTICE STARTED QUICKLY WHILE BUILDING TEAM UNITY

To make the most of practice time, getting organized quickly for drills is essential. One thing I've noticed is that when players are asked to get into small groups for a particular activity friends will always look for friends to practice with, while some of the kids are left out or left to be assigned to groups by the coach. Because I strongly believe that all players should feel a part of the team, here is a trick I use to get going quickly and to build team unity at the same time.

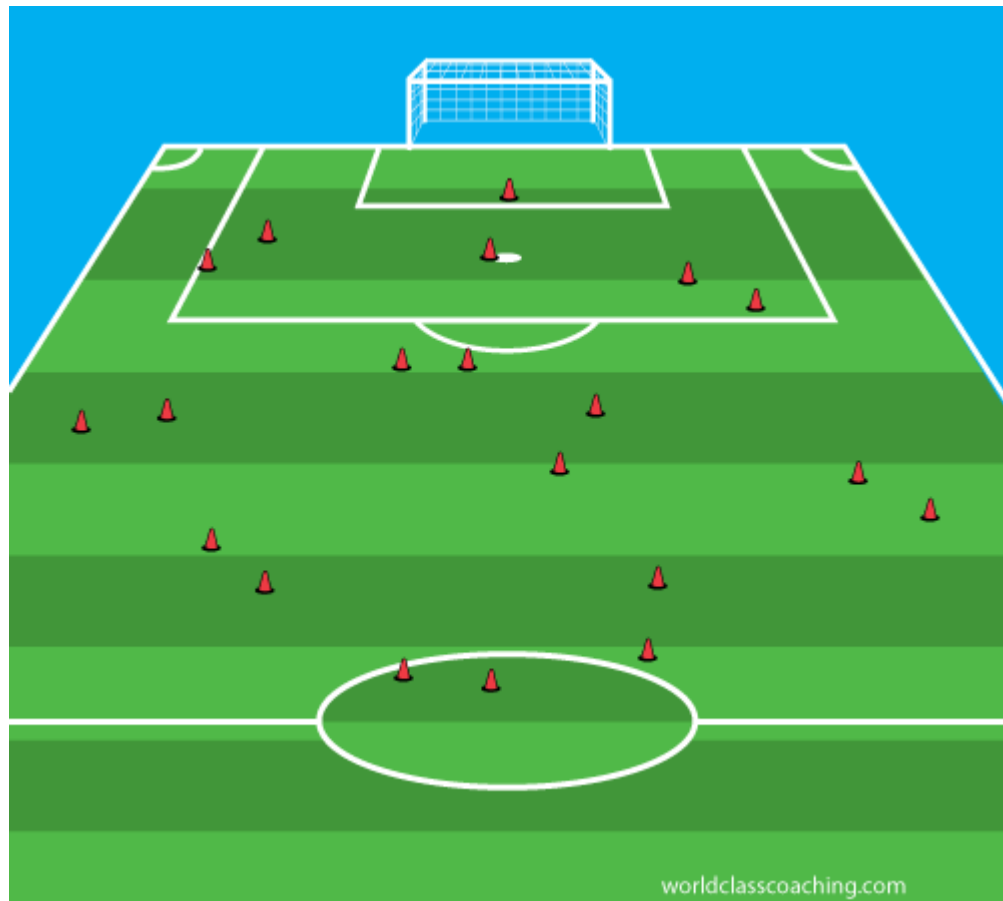
I call this method the numbers game. I use it as a season long game. Whenever I call out a number, the players must get into groups of that number as soon as possible. Whoever isn't in a group "loses". For example, if there are 16 players at the training session and I call out "4" the players will quickly get into 4 groups of 4. However, if I call out 3, they will get into 3 groups of 5 and one person "loses." When I first introduce the game, I give the kids some examples of consequences for the loser. For example, she might have to do 5 push-ups or 5 donkey kicks. Players learn very quickly that whenever they hear me call out a number that they need to grab whomever is closest to them without regard for whether they are an old friend or a new friend.

This is also a great way to get players to work together with different teammates throughout a training session or season. It even works in large numbers (if you want to split 16 players into groups of 11 and 5, just yell 11 and those 11 become the first group right away. If a player wants to be in the group of 11 they will do so and if they don't that is her decision. This is a great way to find out who wants to do things because the players will frequently figure out what you are thinking with the numbers and will get into the bigger group to participate.

Sometimes I will assign players into groups, but most often I will yell out the number and let the players do it, which saves time and avoids potential conflicts. Next time you need to break your players into teams, play the numbers game and see how many potential problems are avoided.

FineSoccer Drill 1

Start with a warm up before this drill. Set a number of gates up throughout half of the field like below. Each gate should be 2 yards wide.



Have half the players wear white and the other half blue. Have a white and a blue player match up with each other with one ball per pair. This is simply a 1v1 game where the players try to score points by dribbling through as many gates as they can. The white player starts with the ball and tries to score as often as possible in the first 1 minute half. If the blue player wins the ball, then she tries to score goals. The only restriction is that the players can NOT dribble through the same goal two times in a row. After 1 minute half, they rest (and stretch) for a minute, then play the second half with the blue player starting with the ball. With

a team of 16 players, there will be 8 games of 1v1 going on at the same time. This will encourage the players to dribble with their heads up (or run into each other). At the end of the second half, you might let the winner rest for a minute while the loser suffers some type of consequence such as burpees. The key is to turn this into a very competitive match. The next game should feature a white winner matching up with a blue winner and also have the losers match up with each other. You can do this three times and get a very strenuous work out going which will continue into the next drill.

The next progression of this series (which will begin to work with spacing and switching fields) is set up exactly the same way with the gates remaining the same. It's essentially the same game with the major change being that there is only one ball for the whole team. Now it's all of the whites against all of the blues. In order to score a goal, the ball must be passed through a gate and received by a teammate. Those are the only rules that need to be explained. Start them off playing a 6 minute game with a 1 minute break at "halftime". This break is very important because typically, the first 3 minutes of this drill are dreadful. It has been my experience that players will try to dribble to a gate and then pass the ball through to a teammate who inevitably is marked up. During this one minute break, explain to the players that it actually takes 3 players to score a goal and not just the two they are trying to use (the player with the ball and the target through the gate). The three players are the player with the ball, and then two other players who are working together to find an open gate. Once they find an open gate, the player with the ball can drive (or chip) the ball to one of these open players who then play it through the gate to the other one). Once they start to think in terms of needing three players to score a goal and that two of them must find an open (or unmarked) gate, then they will start to experience success in this game.

As the players get accustomed to this game, they will get more comfortable with playing with their heads up and looking to players who have proper support and spacing. This drill is a great way to prepare for the next drill that will continue to work on getting better spacing and the switching of fields in the attack.

FineSoccer Drill 2

The second part of this progression is to set a field up as shown in the following diagram.



The dimensions will depend upon the numbers playing but with 16 or so players, you would use half of a full-sized field. The corners have a small area designated by cones (the two sides of the triangle that make up the right angle should be 3 yards long).

The 16 players are broken up to two teams (team A and team B). Team A would place one player in the upper right corner and also one in the lower left corner. Team B would place one player in the upper left corner and the lower right corner.

Team A scores a goal by passing the ball into either of the players in their corners and then that player must one touch the ball to a third player for the goal

to count. If the goal is scored, the player who originally passed the ball into the triangle then goes in the corner and the player who originally was in the corner joins the others on the field.

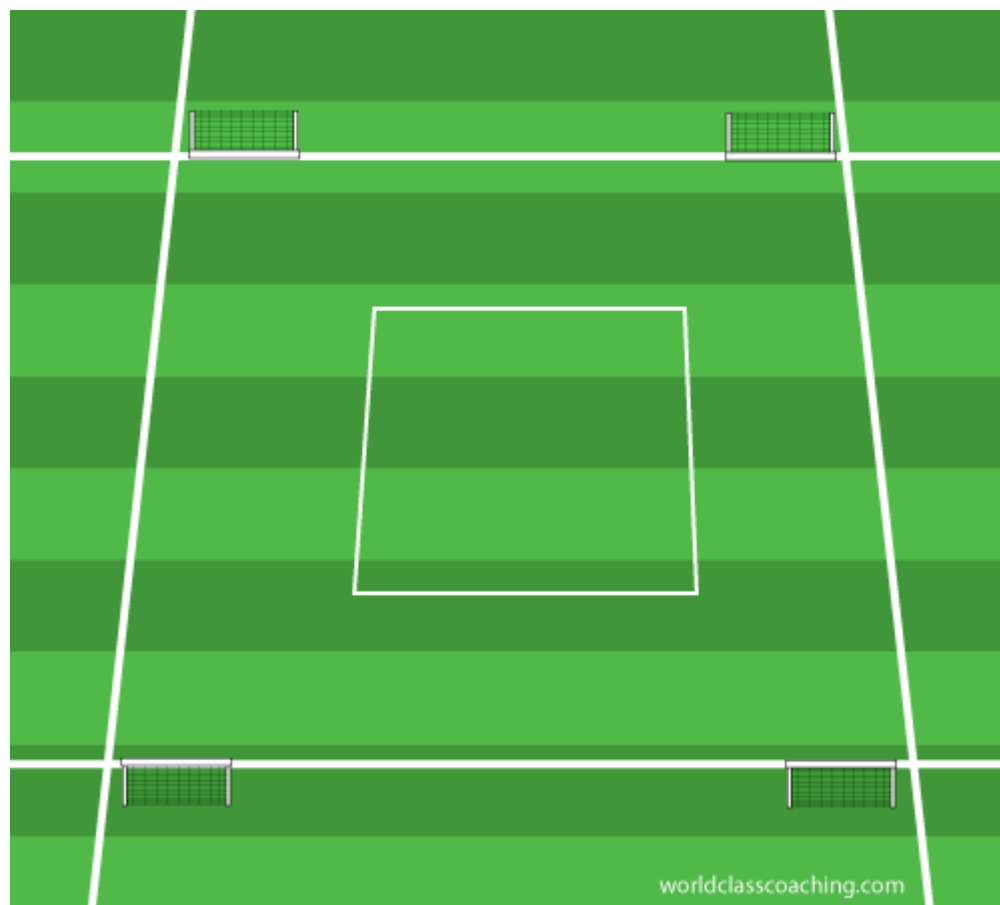
Just like in the previous drill, players will originally try to dribble toward the goal and then pass it to their teammate. Also, just like the previous drill, this will NOT be effective. Building on the last drill, explain how to score a goal, there must be three players involved (however, now it's almost four players). Instead of trying to dribble the length of the field, the player with the ball should look for two players working together and play the early first pass to them. Then those two players will play the ball into the corner and make the proper runs in order to get open. (pretty cool progression!)

As the players get more accustomed to this game, they will automatically start to get better spacing as they realize that instead of forcing the ball into one corner, they can change directions and go the other way if they have proper balance.

Any balls that go out of play are kick ins and even a kick in can be played into the corner to initiate a goal.

Of all of the drills that I have ever used, this might be the most enjoyable for me because of how quickly I tend to see improvement. When combined with the next drill, I can watch how well they are able to take this improvement and actually apply it in a game situation.

The next step in this progression is to change the field slightly to look like the one in diagram below.



This field has the same dimensions but now, instead of triangles in the corners, there are small 2 yard wide goals (just place a goal in each corner and then another one 2 yards in on the end line). Also, there is a square in the middle.

Again, there are 2 teams but now to score, the ball must be played through the goals. Team A would be scoring into either the top left goal or the bottom left goal and Team B would be scoring into either the top right goal or the bottom right goal (this part is set up like a standard 4 goal game). The rectangle in the middle represents a one touch zone (for younger players this can be a two touch zone). By having the goals in the corners, it encourages the players get wide early and by putting in the one touch zone, it discourages the players from trying to dribble from one side of the field to the other. You will start to see players doing a much better job of spacing with players running through the center to receive the ball and play one touch soccer.

The other thing this central zone does is encourage both width and depth. Instead of playing all balls either square or forward, they will realize the advantages of playing balls back and around the zone (just like you want them to switch balls around the back of the field in a real game).

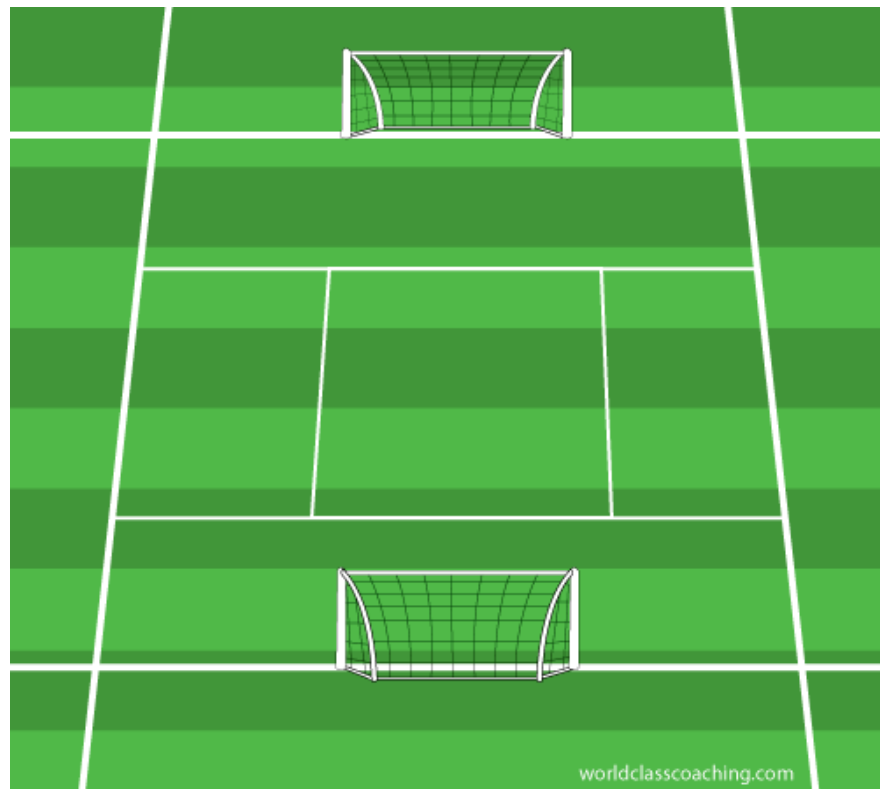
One of the reasons I like this game so much is that the spacing comes almost naturally. I believe the more a player can realize on their own, without it having to be explained in great detail, the more she will really progress.

To make this game even more difficult, you can also put in a one touch finish restriction. This simply means that to score a goal, it must be played one touch into the goal. This will help them to get back to thinking about working in 2's and 3's instead of just playing by themselves.

FineSoccer Drill 3

This is last in the progression on switching fields and providing proper balance.

The next step is to take the field as laid out in the following diagram.



The dimensions will depend upon the numbers involved in the drill, but can be the same in the previous drill. The center rectangle from the previous drill still is there and has the same restrictions of one touch (or two touches for younger players). Instead of the 4 small goals, we now add two full-sized goals centered on the end lines. Now the rules are quite simple. One touch in the middle and before you can go to goal, the ball must go into the offensive third of the field (in most cases, the field will be set up so that it is reasonable to be able to shoot from the middle third of the field). Those are the only restrictions (the dotted lines in the diagram above are ways to represent the middle third and the other thirds).

By using these two restrictions, it will force players to use width (since it's one touch in the middle third) because the box will encourage the use of width. The restriction of having to get into the offensive third will force the use of depth in the attack.

To start with, you can allow players to be offside in the attack since you the depth, but gradually, force the players to stay onsidess.

The last step in this progression is to pick up the center cones and let them play unrestricted but encourage them to maintain width and depth, proper balance and shape.

This series of drills has been very successful when I used them together.

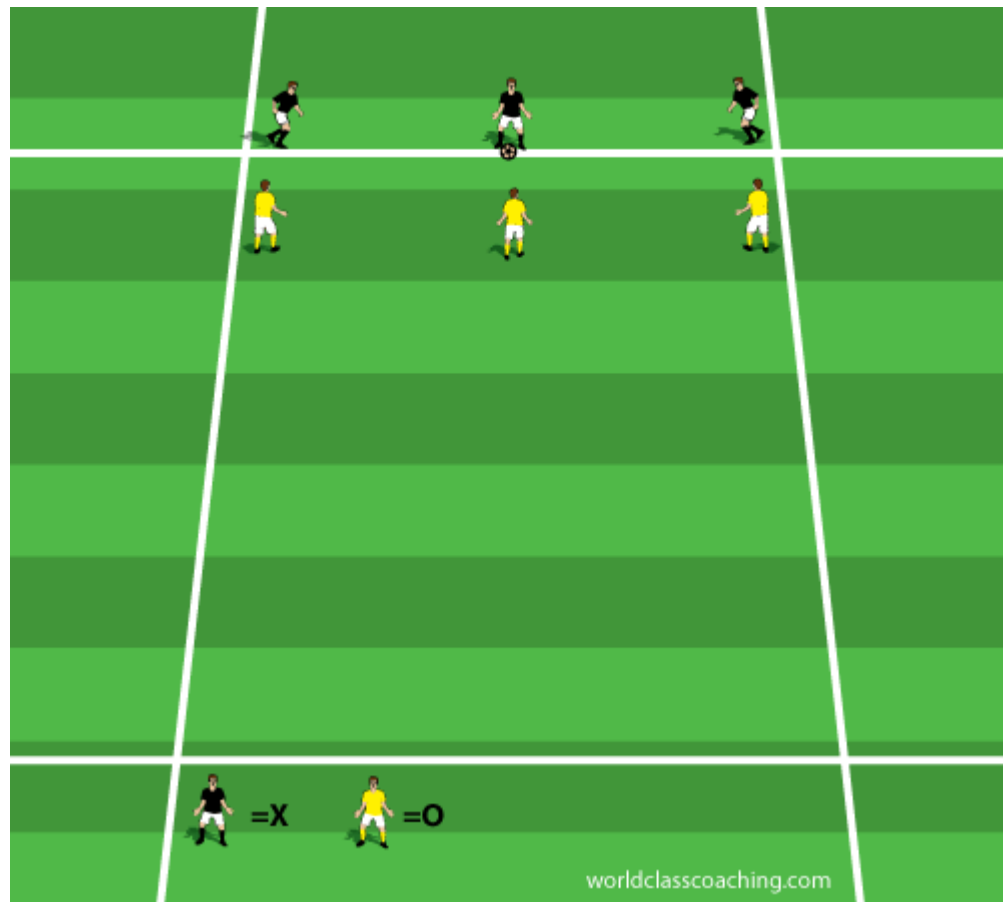
FineSoccer Drill 4

As a warm up to this team defense series, you can have the team start in groups of two with one ball per group. Have the player with the ball start on one sideline and dribble all of the way to the other sideline working on various moves as they go along. The second player would be working on a proper defensive stance with their feet constantly moving and feinting as if they are going to go in for a tackle. At no point should the defender actually try to win the ball. When the player with the ball gets to the far sideline, they switch and now she works on her defensive footwork and the other player works on moves.

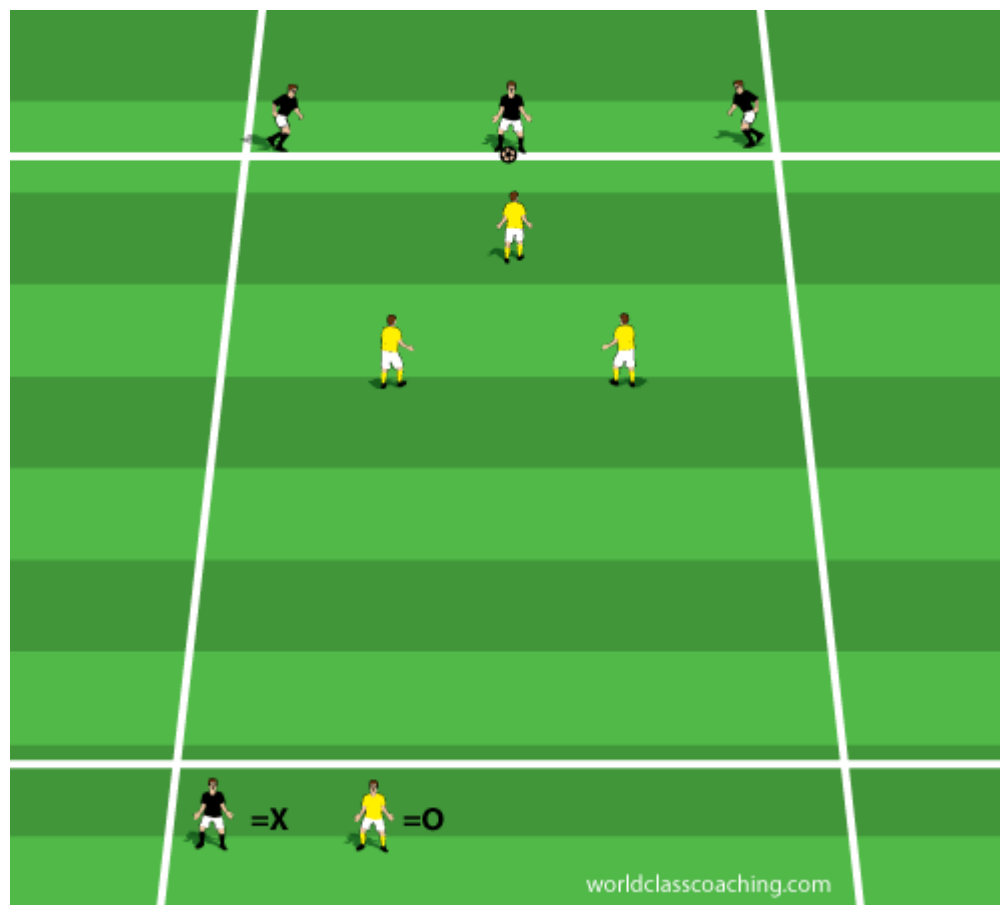
Next the player with the ball dribbles at the defender just like before, but now when the coach yells "switch" the player with the ball steps back into a defensive position and the other player becomes the attacker. This does a good job of

working on quick transition from offense to defense and is a great way to warm up for the team defense series.

The first progression in this series requires 6 players split in teams of two. The field is 15 yards wide and 25 yards long and 3 players are on offense as set up like the X's in the diagram below and three like the O's on defense.

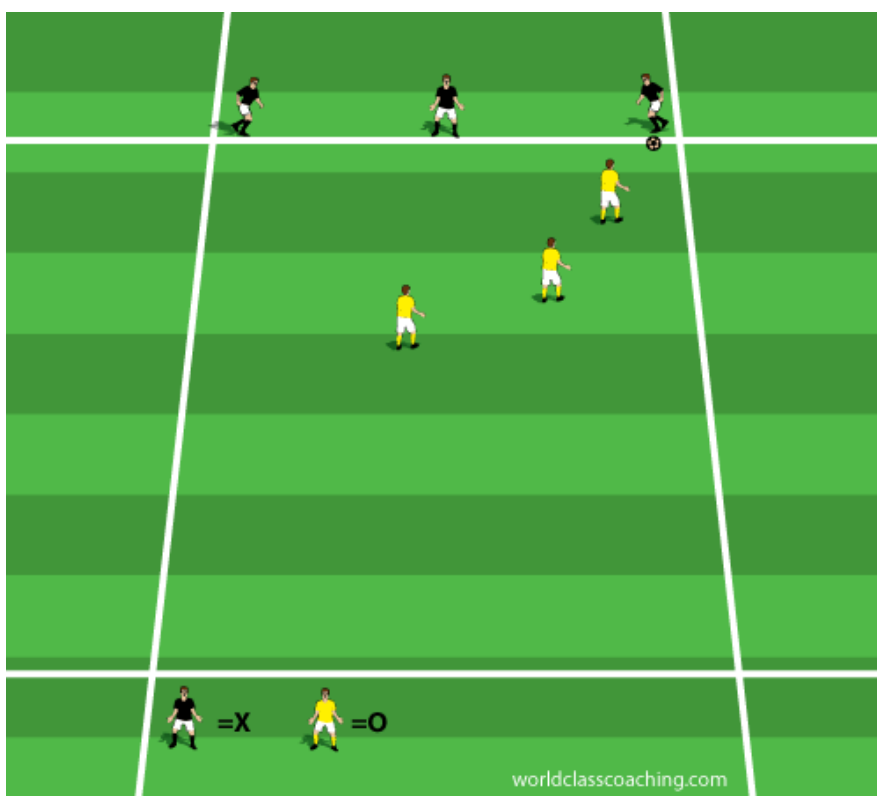
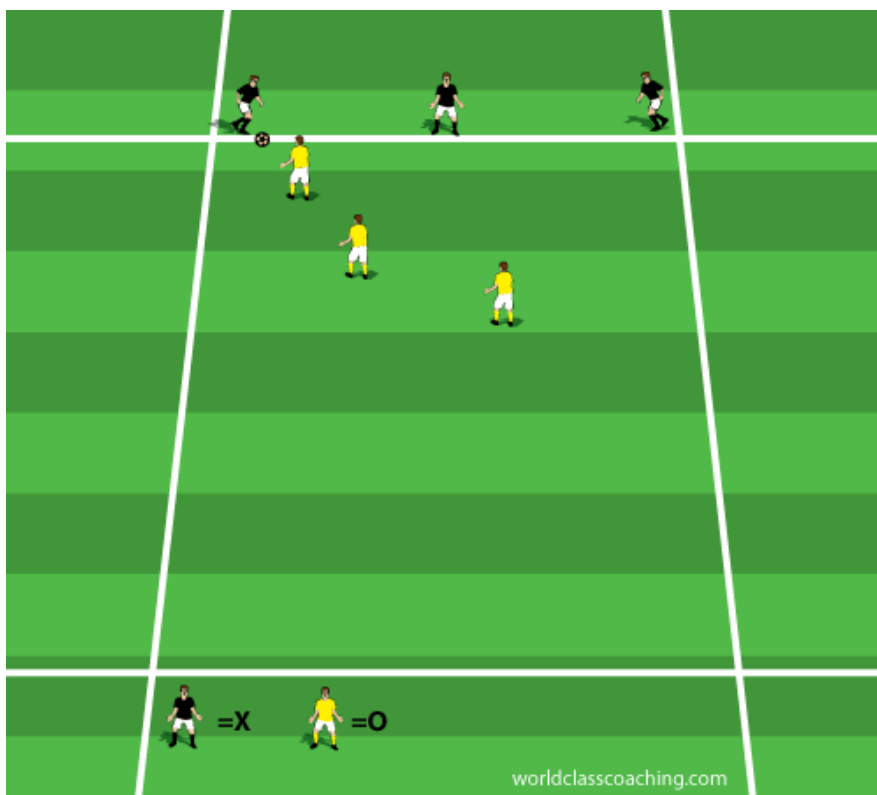


In the beginning, the X's are stationary and pass the ball back and forth taking three touches. When the ball is in the center, the defense needs to adjust as shown in the diagram below:



This allows the first defender to pressure the ball and the two outside defenders to take on the role of the second defender and offer support. The X's are NOT permitted to go forward but they want to take their touches as quickly as possible to make the defense move quickly.

When the ball goes to the outside players, the defenders adjust accordingly as shown in the diagrams below:



After the defenders work hard for 2 minutes, they should places switch with the offensive players.

Once the players are confident in their movements, the next step is say that after 5 passes, the offensive players may leave their positions and try to get the ball from one side of the field to the other. The defense is still not allowed to try to win the ball and the only thing they can do is maintain proper positioning to prevent the attackers from getting to their intended point.

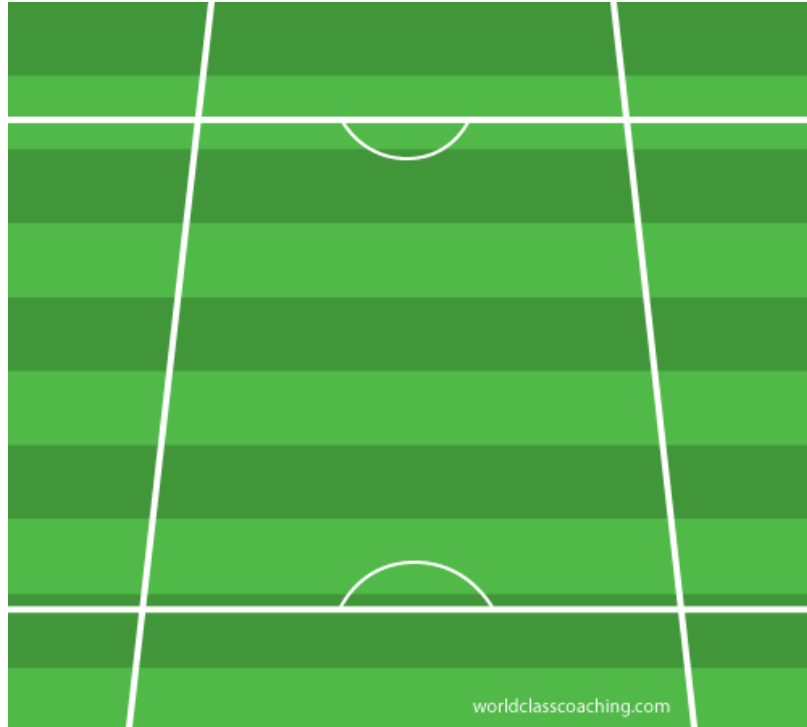
Next the players can go live with the offense doing anything they want to get across the end line and the defenders allowed to win the ball.

There are a lot of other variations that can be built into this drill such as putting a keeper on the far end line and having them work on communication by telling the defenders what to do. Also, while working on communication, you can have the keepers be the intended target of the offensive players. In order to get a point, they must chip the ball into the keepers hands (besides working on communication and chipping, this also forces the defense to get the players heads down so they can't find the keeper).

Be creative and this drill can be an entire training session or you can use the rest of the drills in this progression.

FineSoccer Drill 5

The next step in this progression requires a field 25 yards wide and 35 yards wide. There needs to be a small semi-circle on each end line as shown in the following diagram:



The ideal number for this drill is 12 players who would be broken into 3 teams of 4. Whichever team is resting puts 2 players in each semi-circle.

The two other teams play 4v4 with a goal scored by passing the ball into the semi-circle and having the ball received by the resting players. If team A is trying to score in the goal to the left, and is successful then they get to retain the ball and go in the other direction.

By setting up the field this way, it will force the defending team to maintain proper defensive support positions or else it's easy to score. Also, if the team does get scored upon, they are forced to respond quickly and get back in the other way to defend or else they will keep letting up goals.

Some variations on this include mandating that in order to score a goal, the ball must be chipped (and received) into the semi-circle.

Play 3 minute games and rotate the teams into resting area.

This game can be played with as few as two players per team or as many as you want. The number of variations are only limited by your creativity.

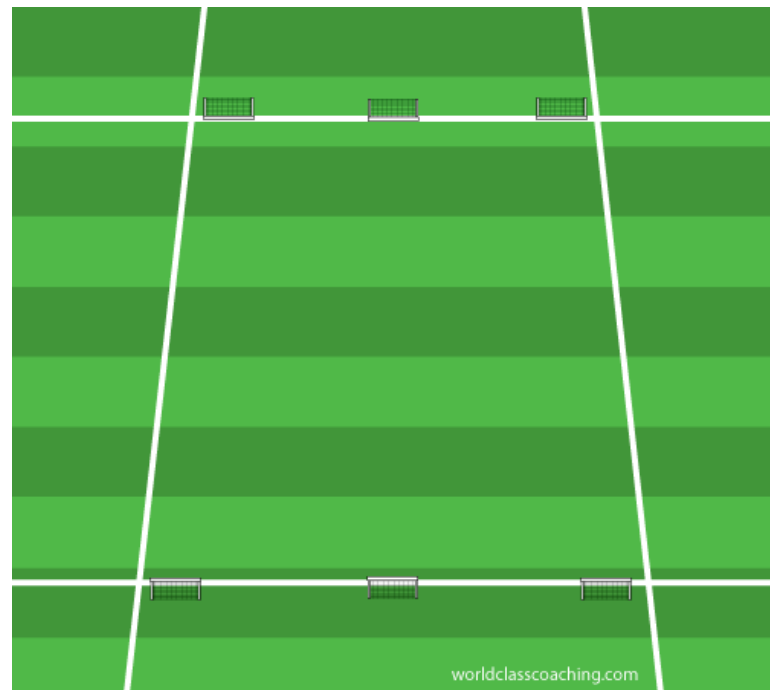
Constantly reinforce the need for the defense to get behind the ball and maintain proper support at all times.

While this is a simple drill to set up, it works on defensive support, defensive recovery, offensive runs and support, chipping, receiving balls in the air, and many more things. It can also be turned into a very competitive game with the team that lets up a goal having to step off and be in the goals. Use this to encourage players to always want to win.

With all of the possible variations on this drill, this can be a complete training session, or you can use it with the drills from the previous progression or you can wait for the next drills which are the end of the progression.

FineSoccer Drill 6

The last step in this defensive progression requires a field set up like the diagram below.



The end lines are 30 yards long and the side lines are 40 yards long. On each end line are three goals (each are 3 yards wide).

Two teams of three participate in this drill with each team attacking an end line. Since they are allowed to score in any of the three goals, it requires quick shifting and support. All three players have to defend all three goals so the shifting must be done in unison and quite quickly.

The neat thing about all of these drills is that while they are working on defensive positioning, they also work on so many other things such as conditioning and offensive spacing.

The next step in this progression is to remove the 3 goals on each end line. Now the rule is that a goal can be scored anywhere on the end line with the one requirement being that the ball must be stopped on the end line by the offensive team in order for the goal to be counted. By expanding the area that the defense has to protect, it forces them to concentrate on getting behind the ball (or get scored upon). You can revert to the rule from an earlier drill and if a team scores a goal, they retain possession of the ball and now attack the other end line.

The last step in this progression is to add two, full-sized goals and keepers and simply play soccer with the emphasis on getting behind the ball.

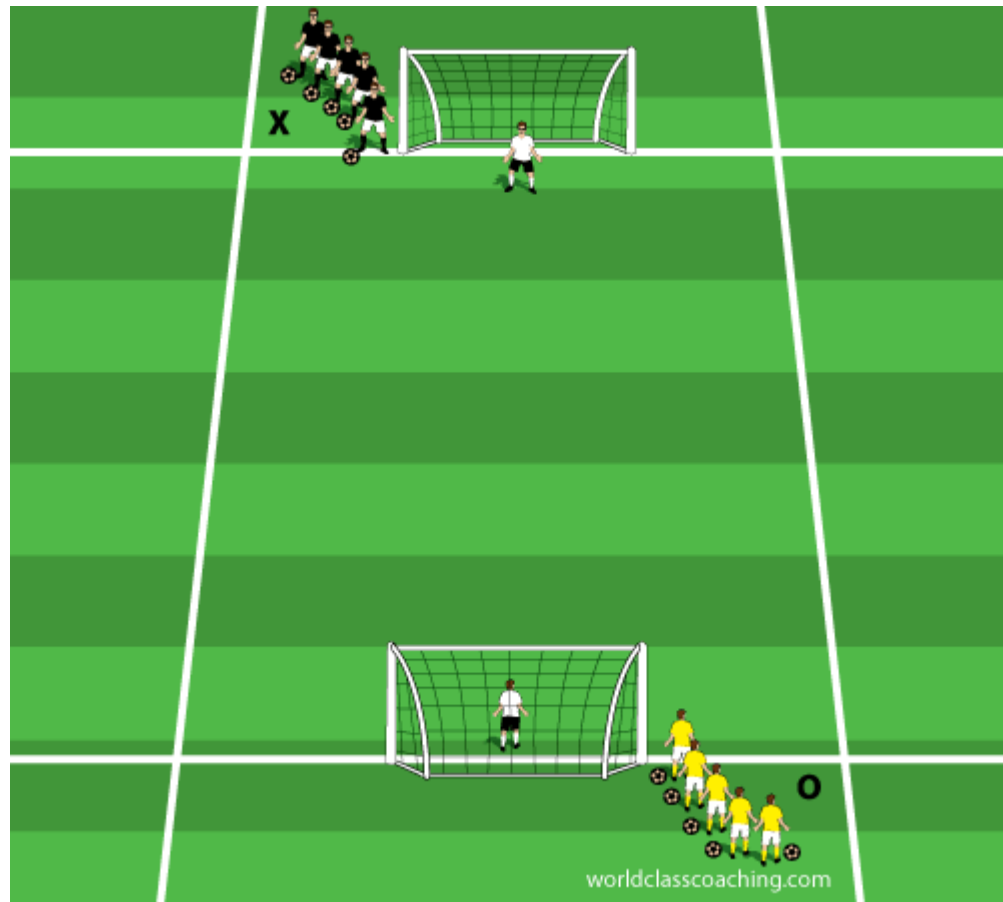
By reminding the players how each of these drills tie together, they should be able to concentrate on getting behind the ball and maintaining proper defensive shape.

Fine Soccer Drill 7

The first drill in the finishing progression is one of my favorites because it combines finishing, defending, and an incredible amount of conditioning. I simply call it the breakaway drill.

The set up of the field is quite simple. If available, use a full field with two full-sized goals. The minimum number of players needed for this drill is 10 with two keepers, although 12-14 is ideal.

Split the team into two groups. One group should be 10 yards outside of one goal with balls and the other group should be 10 yards outside of the other goal (opposite post). See the diagram below.



Each player has a ball. The first player in the X line takes off on a full field breakaway at full speed (consider having a coach or player chase her from behind to put pressure on this one player). As soon as she finishes the breakaway, the first player in line O takes off on her breakaway. The X player who just finished her breakaway then becomes the defender and must chase the O player down to pressure her on her breakaway. As soon as the O player finishes her breakaway, then SHE becomes the defender and the next person in the X line takes off. This drill can be done for 8-10 minutes and while it might seem like there is a lot of standing around while waiting for a players turn, the truth is that the players are making TWO full field sprints in a row and need the time to recover.

Players will try to cheat in this drill to make it easier for themselves. One way will be to take off on offense before the opponent finishes her breakaway. If necessary, the coach can be the one who says "so" before is allowed to take off. Another way to cheat is for the player who is on offense to shoot from a far distance so she can get back quicker on defense. If this starts to happen, make the players touch the goalpost that they are finishing on before they are allowed to get back and defend.

The great thing about this drill is that it works on finishing breakaways in a game like situation (under pressure of lack of time as well as while suffering from exhaustion) and it is a great way to end a training session instead of doing something that involves plain conditioning. It has been my experience that after doing this drill a few times, teams become much more comfortable with finishing in actual games.

You can turn this drill into a competition between the two teams. If you do that, however, you really must guard against players starting early to cheat.

Give this drill a try but be aware that this is not an easy drill and the players must really be pushed as they get tired.

FineSoccer Drill 8

These crossing drills are an easy way to combine passing, finishing, defending, and conditioning.

Set up cones in a semi-circle as shown in the following diagram:



The cones start on the end line and stay outside the 18 yard box. All of the players, except the first two players have soccer balls.

The first player starts sprinting around the cones and as she gets to the second to last cone, the third person in line passes the ball (on the ground) toward the last cone. When the first player gets around the last cone, she attacked the ball and finished it into the back of the net. When the first player is half way around the semi-circle, the second player starts her run.

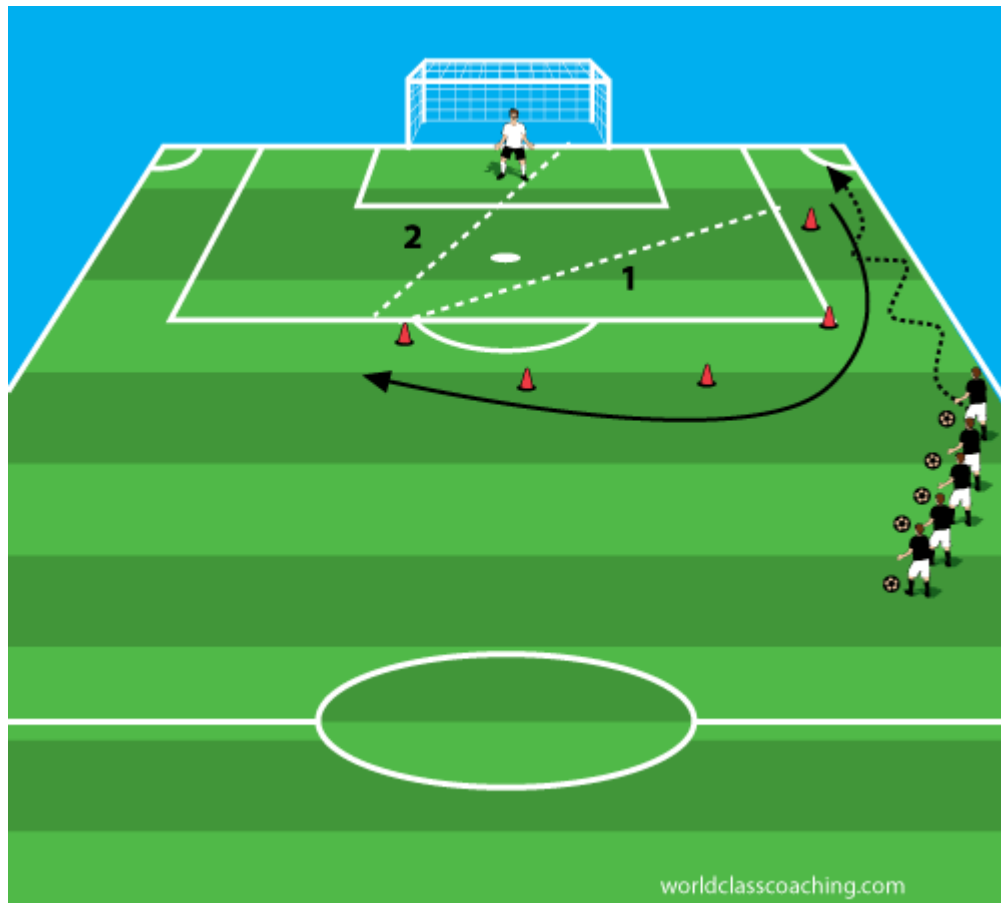
From this point on, as soon as a player passes the ball, she starts making this run around the semi-circle. While it might seem like there would be a lot of standing in line, if you can get the players running at a full sprint, by the time they get back in line, it's time for them to go again.

The next step is for the ball to be crossed in the air so that the finishes are done either with a volley or header.

This drill should be done from both sides and a keeper should be in the goal at all times. Ideally, you would have two keepers who are rotating on every 5 shots.

Each shooter is responsible for retrieving his/her own ball and this should give players an incentive to get all shots on goal (it's more tiring to sprint after a ball that went over the goal then it is to get one out of the back of the net).

The next step is to set up the field the same way as in the previous drill except now the players start on the sideline (as can be seen in the diagram below).



The first difference is that the players must take the ball down the sideline and then take a touch toward the near post in order to cross the ball away from the keeper. After serving the ball, she continues on the same semi-circle run as the previous drill to become the finisher.

The other difference is that after finishing the run, she then becomes the near post runner for the next serve. If the server sees the keeper cheating toward the far post, she may serve it to the near post.

In other words, a player takes the ball down the line, serves the ball, becomes the far post runner, then becomes the near post runner before going to the back of the line to start again.

One of the things you will notice is that I do use lines. However, I have the drills going non-stop so that at no point does a player spend any time standing in a line.

The next variation is to add a second line 2 yards behind the first line. This line becomes the defensive player and starts defending the server as soon as she touches the ball down this line. This will force the players to go at speed at all times.

Another player can be a designated defensive player who either goes with the near post or far post runner which will force the server to pick out a target based on what the defender is taking away.

This should be done from both sides and can have many other variations added to it.

FineSoccer Drill 9

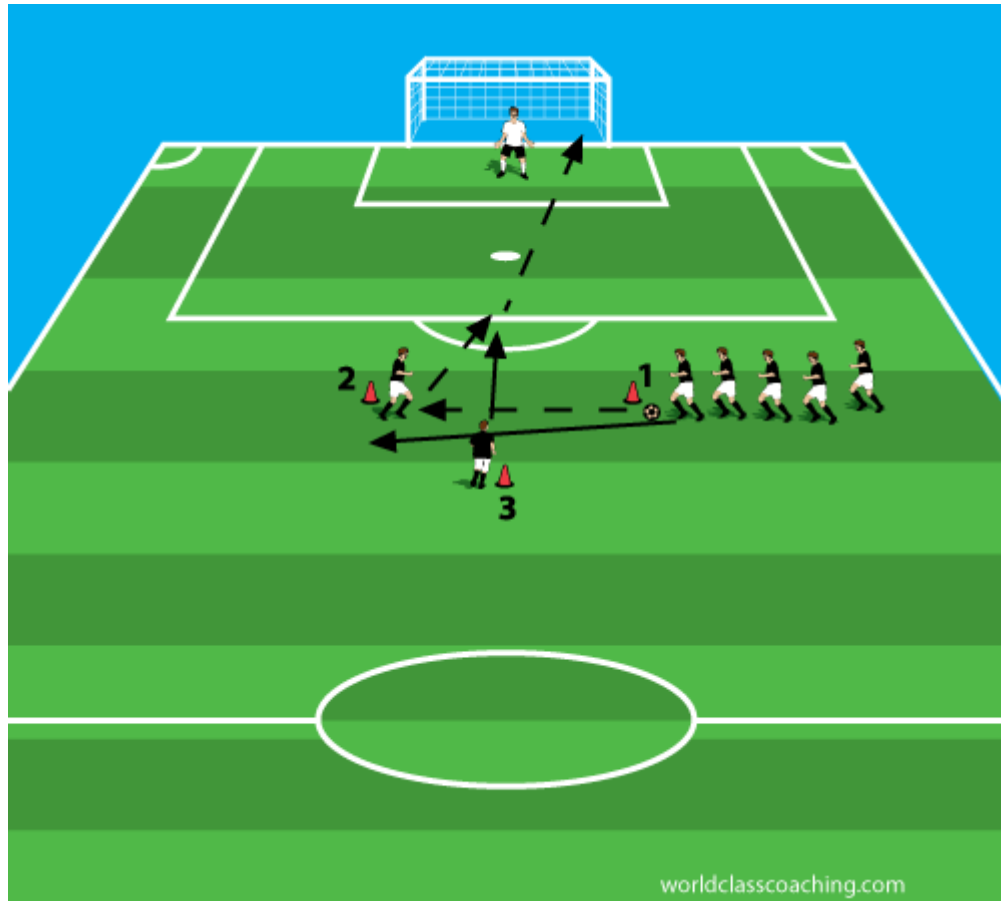
This is a simple shooting drill that includes shooting, passing, receiving, timing runs, goalkeeping, and conditioning.

Put three cones down as shown in the diagram below.



One player is at cone 2 and one is at cone 3. Everyone else is at cone 3 with balls. The first person in line passes across to the player at cone 2 and then sprints directly behind her. The player at cone 2 one touches the ball toward the 18 and then goes to cone 3. The person at cone 3 receives the ball and finishes it first time. Everything is done at full speed and one touch.

You can see the movement in the diagram below.



Dotted lines are the path of the ball and solid lines are the path of the players.

One of the keys to this drill is to require a full speed sprint after each pass and shot. Also emphasize that the first pass has to be hit with pace. Do NOT let the first pass run around cone 3 to get to cone 2. This slows the drill down.

As soon as player 2 touches the ball, the next person in line 1 should be ready to go. This is a very fast paced drill and after the player shoots, she must follow the shot and then quickly get to the back of the line.

If you have enough players (16 or so), you can turn this into a competition where there are two teams. The first team does this drill for 3 minutes while the other team retrieves balls. After 3 minutes, they switch roles. Whichever team scores the most goals in this time period wins. If, at any time, the shooting team doesn't have a ball, they get credit for a goal since the other team didn't get the balls back in time.

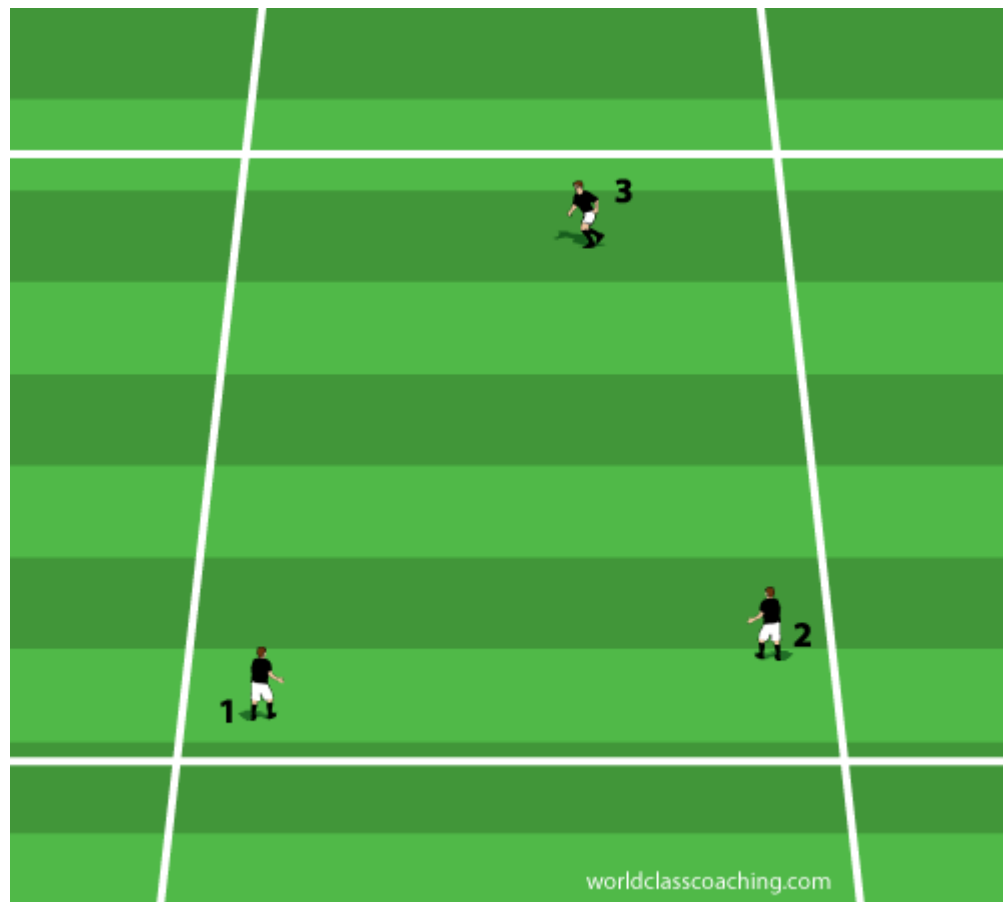
This is a fast paced drill with many positives and no negatives.

FineSoccer Drill 10

This is the first step in the progression on developing patterns in the attack. In order for a pattern to work properly (and for it to be incorporated into an actual game situation), passes must be hit with the proper pace and to the proper foot.

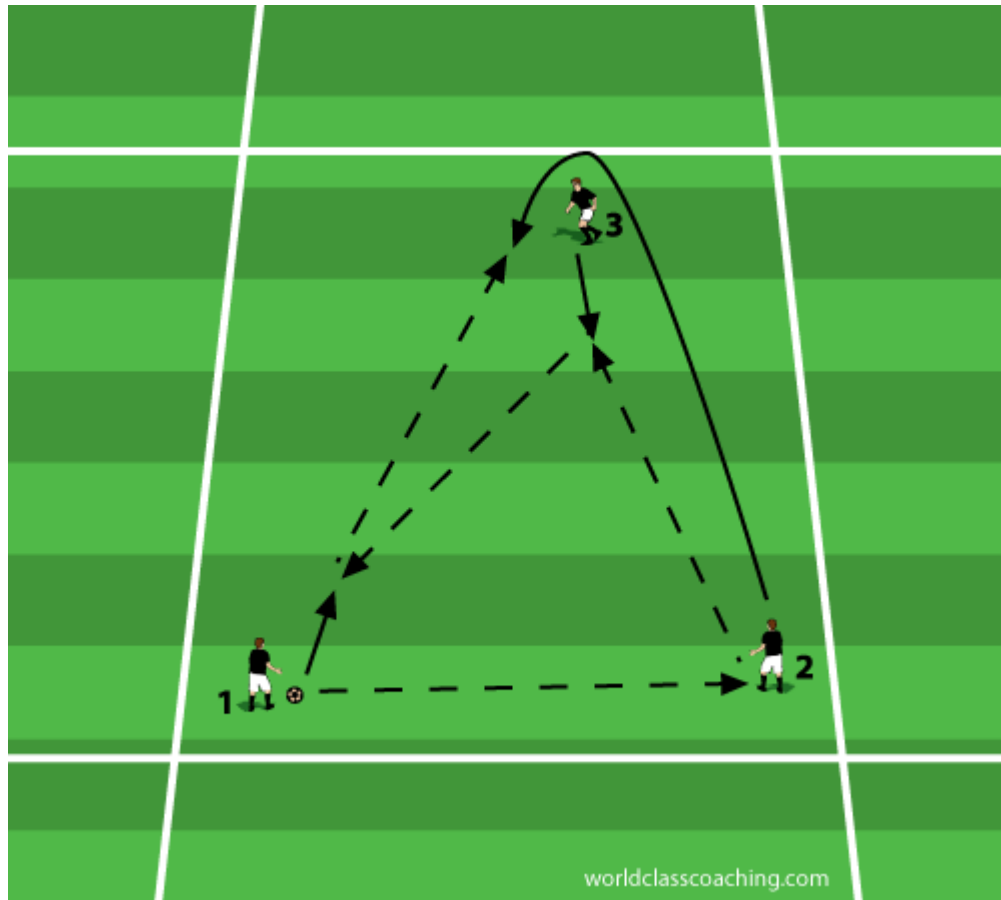
Work in groups of threes as a warm up. In the second set of drills of this progression we will add more players to some of these patterns and take it to goal.

Start out with the three players in the positions shown in the diagram below.

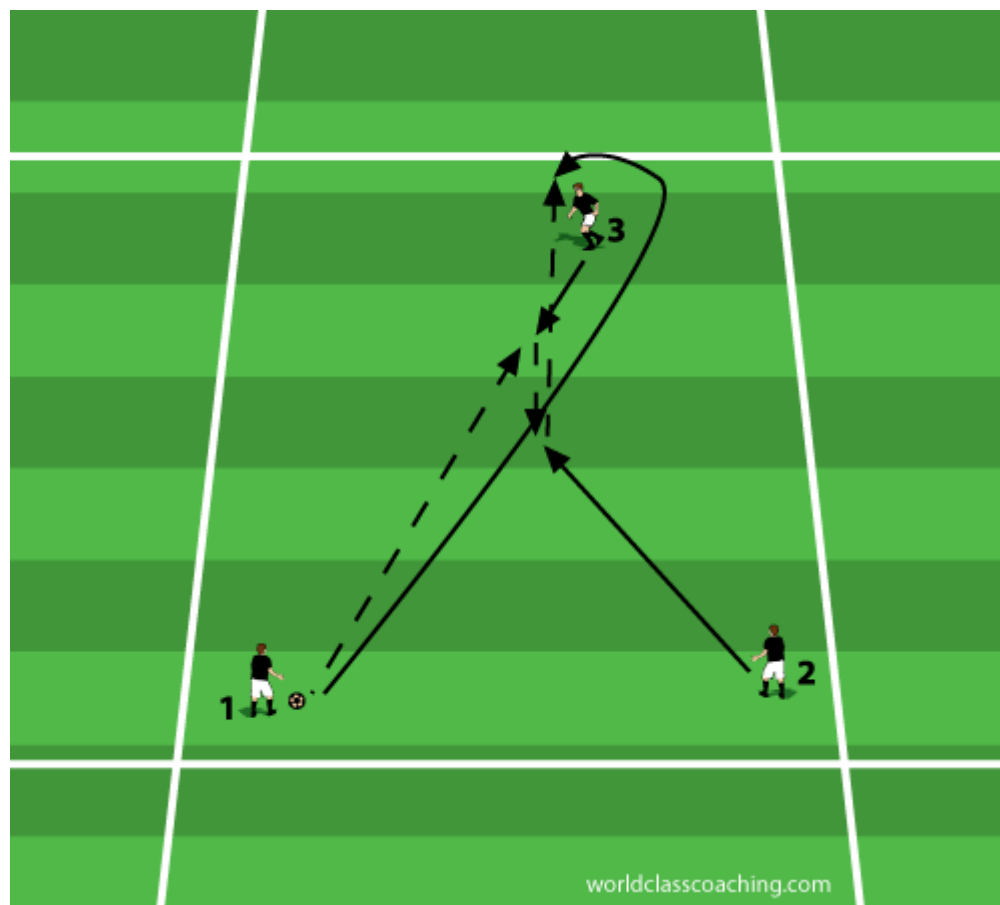


Player 1 plays a square ball to player 2's right foot and then steps up toward player 3 who is checking back to the ball. Player 2 one touches the ball to Player 3 and then overlaps around player 3. Player 3 one touches the ball to Player 1

who then finds Player 2 on the overlap. This is a very simple three person overlapping pattern. See the pattern in the diagram below.



The next step in this progression starts with the players in the same positions as before. Player 1 plays the ball to player 3 who is checking back to the ball. Player 1 then overlaps around player 3. Player 3 one touches the ball back to player 2 who has gone to meet the ball. Player 2 then one touches the ball to the overlapping player 1. See the diagram below for the pattern.

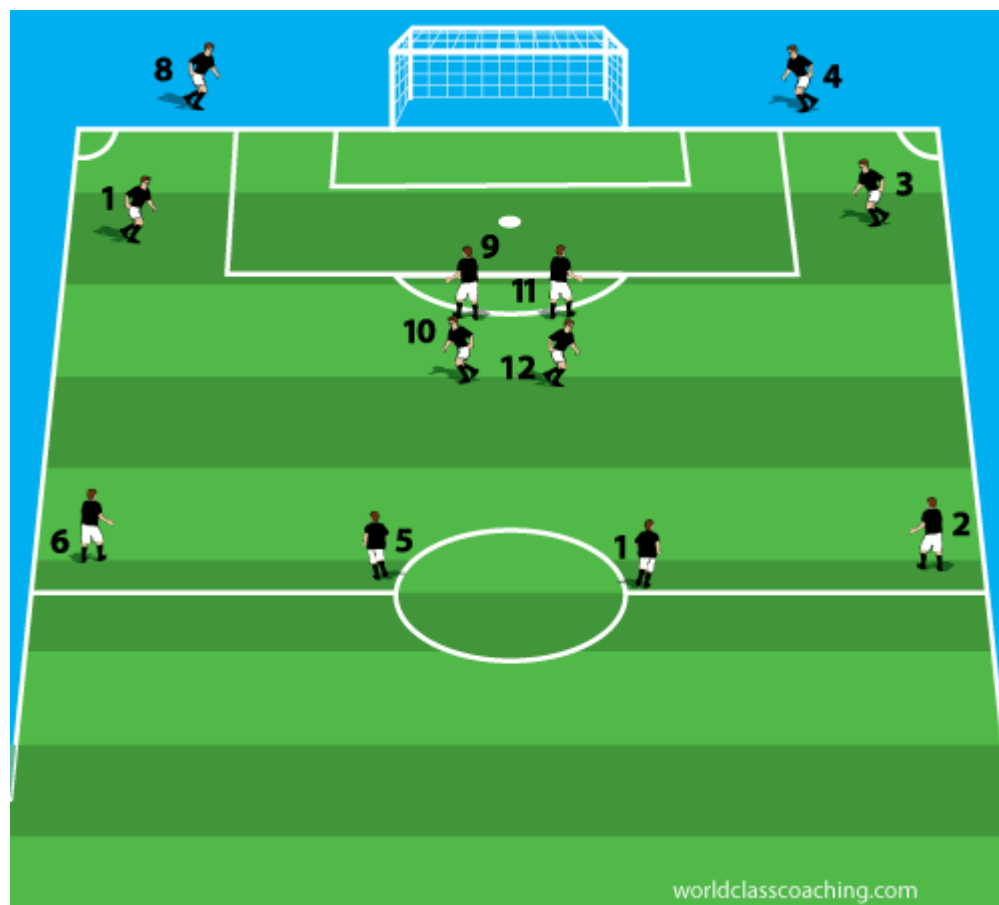


With both of these simple patterns, you will want to have the players rotate positions so each player gets experience doing each of these roles.

There are many alternatives and options you can add to these patterns. As you will see in the next set of progressions, this can easily go from a simple warm up to an entire team session.

FineSoccer Drill 11

The next step in the progression is to take these same patterns and have them going to goal. The ideal number for this drill is 12 field players and 2 keepers, but it can be adjusted to most any number. Set the 12 players up as shown in the following diagram.



Players 1, 2, and 3 do the exact same pattern as was shown in the previous pattern. Player 1 passes to 2 then 2 passes to 3 who has checked back to the ball. Player 2 then overlaps around 3 and 3 plays the ball back to 1 who now finds 2 on the overlap. When player 2 receives the ball on the overlap, she takes it down to the end line and crosses the ball back out to players 9 and 10 who are making near post runs. Once this pattern is over, player 4 steps on the field to give 2 a break, 3 goes to where 1 was and 1 goes to where 2 was.

As soon as 2 receives the ball on the overlap, the exact same pattern starts on the left side with 5 passing to 6, 6 passing to 7 who has checked back to the ball and 6 overlapping around 7. Player 7 passes the ball back to 5 who now finds 6 on the overlap. Player 6 takes the ball to the end line and crosses back to 11 and 12. Then 8 steps on the field to give 6 a rest and the players rotate and continue.

After a certain period of time (I frequently do this for 4 minutes at full speed), the middle group (9,10,11,12) goes to the right side, the right group (1,2,3,4) goes to the left and the left group (5,6,7,8) goes to the middle.

This can be turned into a competition where a group gets a point for every goal scored on their serve or that they finish themselves. This gives everyone the incentive to try to be successful on every scoring attempt.

While there isn't an age limit for this drill, it does require players being able to pass accurately, move quickly, and cross and finish crosses. There is a need for a lot of balls since there is not time to constantly be getting them back to the middle of the field.

With a talented group, this is an extremely fast moving and fun drill that challenges them to do many things well and at speed.

FineSoccer Drill 12

It's more accurate to call this a game with points awarded for different skills than to call it a drill. The idea is to simply play a regular small-sided game of soccer with keepers and everything else being normal. The additional rules are that anytime a regular goal is scored, it counts as 2 points and anytime any pattern (or really any combination play involving three players) occurs, it counts as 1 point.

If a goal is scored off of a pattern or combination play, then it counts as 5 points.

One way to encourage these combination plays is to have a white team and a red team and then have two neutral blue players who are always on offense. In other words, when white has the ball, blue is on the white team and when red has the ball, blue is on the red team. This will allow the attacking team to always outnumber the defensive team which should make it easier to do things.

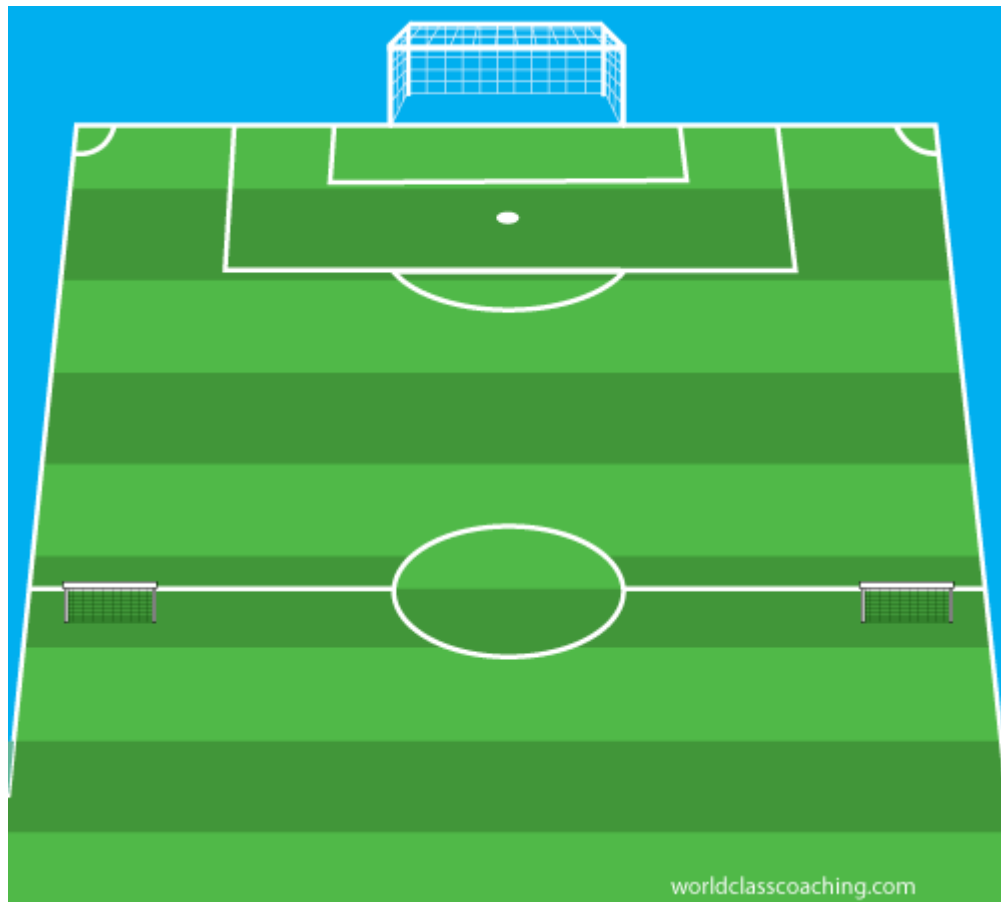
As it gets easier, assign one neutral player to each team.

At the very end of practice, if there is time, lift all rules other than normal soccer ones and let them play. Make this a reward for working hard during the

training session and you will find them staying more focused knowing there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

FineSoccer Drill 13

Here is a simple game that emphasizes defensive intensity at the same time working on attacking soccer. Set up the field as shown in the following diagram with one big goal and two small goals.



Break the team into two even teams with one team going to the big goal and the other team going to the two small goals (the small goals are only 2 yards wide). Inevitably, the players will want to be attacking the big goal so the rules are quite simple. If team A starts off attacking the small goals and they score a goal, then they keep the ball and change direction so that they get to attack the big goal. This gives the team attacking the big goal an incentive to make sure they never get scored upon since they will not want to be "punished by making them have to defend the big goal.

You can add the rule that if you score on the big goal, that gives you a free pass so that if you score two goals on the big goal and then get scored upon, they can still keep attacking the big goal since they can use this free pass to offset the goal.

Another option is to put a time limit on the game. Whichever team is attacking the big goal at the end of the time period, wins. If it's a 10 minute game, then whichever team has earned the right to attack the big goal is the winner. To be fair, you should play two games like this since this will allow both teams the right to start attacking the goal in the beginning of the game. This restriction will force the team attacking the big goal to really play hard to keep this right to attack the big goal and will also work on possession as it will be in this team's best interest to keep possession of the ball unless a great scoring opportunity arises.

There are numerous other variations of this drill but as you can see, it allows you to work on defensive intensity as well as building on the competitiveness of all of the players.

FineSoccer Drill 14

Here are two more drills that can be used to work on both offense and defense but really put a tremendous emphasis on defensive intensity.

First start with a standard small-sided game but on a very large field. For example, this could be a 6v6 game on a full-sized field with two keepers in the goals. Each player on Team A is assigned a player on Team B. The rules are quite simple for this game. A player can only mark the player they are assigned on the opposing team. This means that there is no defensive support at all. If the player you are assigned beats you, then she can go to goal unhindered. This forces a player to really work hard to get back on defense because there are no ifs, ands or buts about whose fault it is when a goal is scored. If the player you are assigned to scores a goal, everyone will know it was your player and you were at fault. This is a great conditioning drill plus it will quickly show who wants to win more (some players will turn this into a game of full field sprints where they get back on defense and go forward on offense at full speed). Other players will stand around talking to the player they are marking thinking that if neither runs very hard, they will both look good.

I like to use this game for a couple of reasons. First, it shows me who will make a commitment to defend. It also works on defensive footwork and attacking 1 v 1.

Another thing it works on is conditioning which will quickly become apparent. However, emphasize that the players should play normal soccer and not turn this into a complete game of 1v1.

As this game continues, switch the defensive responsibilities around so that players are constantly being challenged. This could mean having a fast player match up with another fast player or a forward match up with a marking back (or have a forward match up with a forward and see who wins the battle). Players are allowed to intercept passes, just not interfere with a player with the ball.

The next step in this progression is to do the exact opposite. Instead of having players pre-assigned to marks, do not allow them to mark anyone until a pre-determined captain or the keeper assigns them to the mark. This means that after each loss of possession, the keeper and captain must quickly assign marks so that the players can slow the ball down and start to defend properly. This is a GREAT way to get keepers and sweepers to work on communication. When possession is lost, the defensive team can sprint back toward their own goal but may not do anything more until they have been assigned their marks. This encourages both better talking as well as better listening than most players are accustomed to.

It is not good enough for the keeper to say "you get Lisa on every loss of possession" rather this responsibility must be reassigned after each change of possession. Offensively, teams should play normal soccer (although the quicker they can pass the ball around, the harder it is for the team to defend).

Please realize that players will get discouraged playing both of these games. They will try to find ways to get around them, but they really do work well once you sell the players on their value.

FineSoccer Drill 15

The last set of games in this progression is also a great way to work on both high pressure and low pressure defense.

This game works best with two keepers and two full-sized goals on a field that is appropriate for the number of players (for example, a 6 v 6 game would work well on half of a full-sized field).

The game is simple. Team A starts with the ball and is up 1-0 with 5 minutes to play. All soccer rules apply (throw ins, offsides, etc). Team A should play a patient type of possession soccer and if/when they lose the ball they should work on playing a very safe, low pressure type of defense, never allowing the opposing team to penetrate their defense.

Team B is to play a high pressure attacking type of defense with an emphasis on winning the ball at all costs.

Increase your players desire to win by having the losing team be in charge of getting water for the winning team. Team B will have to work hard throughout this 5 minute game in order to win since they have started a goal down. Not only will this work on high/low pressure it also works on proper time management and maintaining possession vs. taking chances.

After the 5 minute game (and break afterwards), have them switch and play another game with Team A starting behind a goal and Team B up a goal.

This drill is easy to set up and start but really takes a great deal of coaching in order to get it to work well. Too many players don't understand how to use a clock effectively (either when up or down a goal) and this is a great way to teach a team how to win (this might sound like an easy thing but many teams have no idea how to win a game in the last few minutes of a match).

Playing this game (you might have noticed that I use the terms game and drill interchangeably sometimes) on a regular basis (couple of times per month) will really help your team understand how to play high/low pressure defense as well as how to play against it.

Use this drill regularly and you will quickly see your players gain a more clear understanding of the game.

FineSoccer Drill 16

This is a short drill to explain, but takes up a decent amount of time in a training session. It also accomplishes a great deal in terms of intensity and conditioning.

Assuming you have 16 players, you will need 8 cones and 8 soccer balls. Spread out the cones so there is plenty of room to go around each one. Two players are assigned to each cone and they play a 2 minute 1 v 1 match. A goal is scored by having the ball touch any part of the cone. Both players are attacking the same goal. At all times there would be 8 games going on at the same time.

The only condition for this game is that the defenders **MUST** play high pressure at all times. At no time can they sit back by the cone and defend that way. If the attacking player takes a chance and hits a shot from 10 yards away and misses (which results in the ball going 20 yards from the goal on the far side), then **BOTH** players must sprint after the ball. This is a very intense game that should be done at full speed.

After the 2minute period, everyone meets in the middle of the field and says whether they win or lose. The players switch opponents and they start back into game two.

If there are 16 players, it is best to play 15 matches (each player plays against each player once) and keep track of the won/loss record. This would take 45 minutes and be a great workout with 2 minutes of hard work followed by a 1 minute rest and reorganization period. At the end of the 15 matches, you will have a true champion.

At first, the best 1 v 1 players will win but as the games go on, the fittest and most competitive players will prevail. Coaches must really emphasize the importance of trying to win every match and work hard for the whole period.

Having done this series a number of times, I would strongly recommend that a fun and slower paced drill be done next. Remember, this is a very intense and very tiring series and the players will need some time to recover.

An alternative drill to this one is to do the exact same thing except the players are going 1 v 1 full field to the big goals. There can be as many as 8 games going on at the same time (no keepers). Have some servers stay on the

side of the goals so that when a goal is scored, they can play another ball back in play for the two to fight over.

This is even more tiring since the players are racing full field in order to win the game. You can add the rule here that if a player never crosses into her offensive half of the field during the entire 2 minute game, she must do a full field sprinting during the 1 minute rest period (another form of positive motivation).

In sessions when you play games like these, there is no need to do "conditioning" in addition to the training.

FineSoccer Drill 17

Another high intensity drill (most of my drills involve high intensity and conditioning) is also a great way to work on getting the defense back and behind the ball at all times.

The rules are simply, anytime a team loses possession of the ball, everyone (EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO LOST THE BALL) must sprint back and touch the goal post before they can defend. The person who lost the ball must chase after the ball going on a one person, high pressure campaign until possession is regained. By doing this, the person who lost the ball will get into the habit of trying to win it back (and taking responsibility for their actions) right away. At the same time, the rest of the team will be getting back and behind the ball quickly and are also learning how important it is to give proper support to their teammates (because if they don't, they will have to do the running).

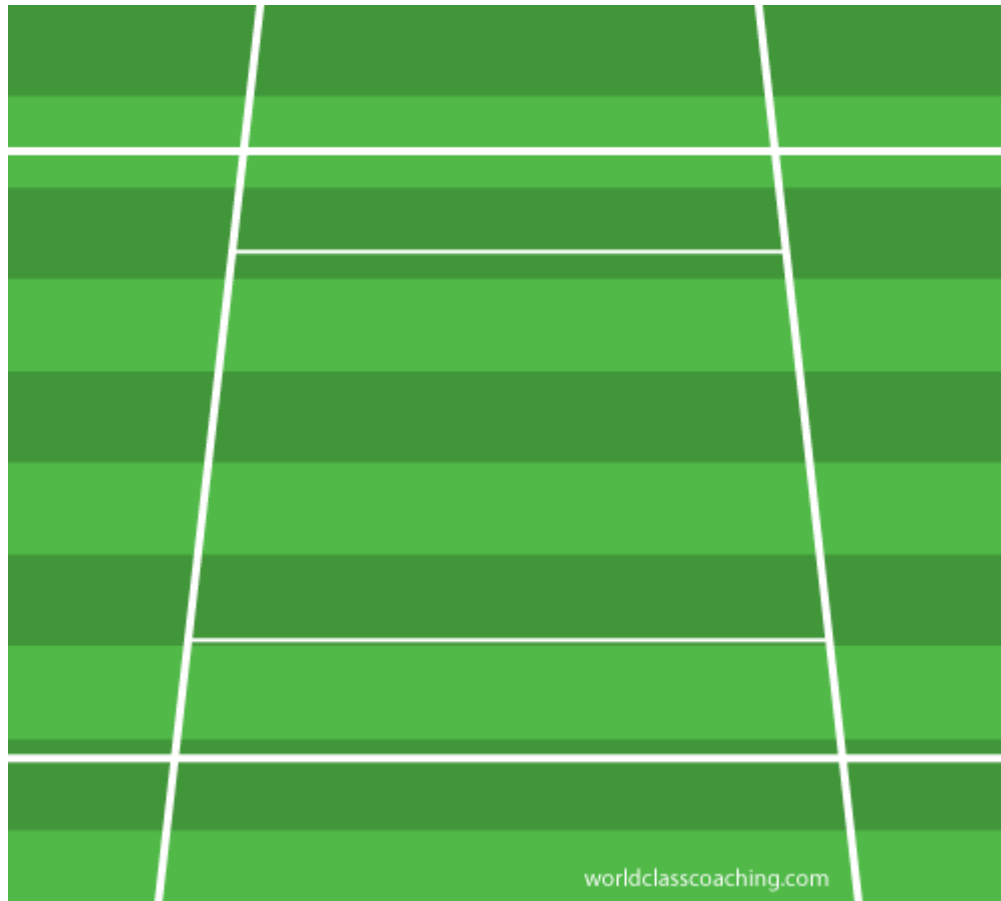
If this is done with a 8 v 8 game on a full field, there will be an incredible amount of conditioning going on. Other things worked on include possession (who wants to lose the ball knowing the consequences?) and communication (the first defender back will probably have to go to the ball to slow down the first attacker and the keeper will be responsible for assigning all of the other marks).

If you want to place an emphasis on possession, you can also put in a requirement that the team that wins the ball must make 5 passes before they can go to goal (remember this is a 8 v 1 until the rest of the team gets back and then finds their marks). By doing this, you work on spacing, possession, communication (it's important to know when the defenders are getting near so hopefully, your teammates will communicate this) and many, many more things.

Play this game for 10 minutes and you will have some really tired players on the field. Follow this up with some free play (or possibly let them go to free play with the understanding that if you don't see good defense you will put these restrictions back on). Normally, you will see an improvement in play pretty quickly.

FineSoccer Drill 18

The last drill in this progression is actually quite simple. Set up a field like an American football field with 10 yard end zones. See diagram below.



To score a goal, a team has to receive a ball in the end zone they are attacking. A player can NOT dribble into the end zone. The thing that makes this game extremely interesting is that off sides does apply.

Both teams will be encouraged to try an offside trap. This will allow players to see the advantages (and disadvantages) of this.

After a goal is scored, there is a kick off just like in American football.

One variation on this drill include not allowing any players to dribble forward at all. Another is you can put a limitation of 2 touch to eliminate this problem completely.

Have someone calling offside from the sidelines as this becomes an extremely important part of the game. You can play to a certain score (first team to 5 wins) or for a specified time period.

Some of the things this drill works on are through passes, offside traps, beating offside traps, communication, conditioning, short passes, support, and much, much more. An added bonus is that it's a fun game and the players will have no idea just how hard they will be working.

FineSoccer Drill 19

This drill initially works on combination play, finishing, and goalkeeping and ends in an interesting game.

Set up a field that goes from one sideline to the other and from the end line to the mid line. Make a goal using either cones or corner flags in the middle of the field. Have three X's on one side of the field and three O's on the other. See the diagram below to get a better understanding.



A keeper should be in the goal. He plays the ball out to the middle O1 who then plays a one touch pass to O2 and overlaps around O2. O2 plays a one touch ball to O3 and then O3 finds the overlapping O1 who can either shoot on goal or cross the ball to O2 and O3 who are making near post far post runs. If the keeper saves the ball, he turns and throws the ball to X1 who then starts the same routine on the opposite side of the field. If the shot is missed high or wide, then the X's have to work the ball to X1 to start this rotation.

After the O's have done this once, O1 rotates to O2, O2, rotates to O3, and O3 goes to O1.

In case of poorly executed shots or passes, there should be some spare balls on the sides to keep everyone moving.

Done properly, this can be quite a fast moving drill that works on passing, overlaps, crossing, finishing, and goalkeeping with some conditioning thrown in for fun. The two sides can also compete to see who can score more goals in a certain time period.

FineSoccer Drill 20

This is a continuation from Drill 19. Start the exact same way (see diagram below).



This time, O1 has the ball and dribbles at O2. O2 does a takeover then passes to O3 and overlaps around O3. O3 has the option of either finding the overlapping O2 or O1 on the other side. Either way, the player takes the ball to the corner and then crosses to near post / far post runners.

As soon as there is a loss of possession, the same thing starts up on the X's side. If there is a bad shot, this will force the X's to work on receiving balls as well as doing all of the other work.

There are so many advantages to this series of drills. If you think about it, there is an unlimited number of variations you can do from this set up. I simply wanted to introduce these two drills and let you create the rest on your own.

FineSoccer Drill 21

Have a field set up just like in the previous drills but now have all 3 X's spread out on their end line and all three O's spread out on their end line.

The first game has the keeper kicking the ball anywhere on the O's side of the field. Whoever gets to the ball first for the O's is trying to score against the other two O's. The neat part of this game is that it encourages risk taking because a player is not supposed to be successful taking on 2 defenders so if they try something and it doesn't work, it's no big deal, but if it does work then it's great. This is one of the best ways to encourage players to become take on artists. If the ball goes on the other side of the field then the X's are playing 1 v 2. Players will have to work very hard to be successful.

The next variation is that whichever of the X's gets the ball, she can call out one of the other two X's names. That person is now on her team and they play 2 v 1 going to goal. If the 1 gets the ball then it's 1 v 2 to goal. This now adds communication and spacing a defense. Again if the ball goes to the other side of the field then the O's are in play.

The last variation I want to introduce is the X's versus the O's. The X's can only score on their side of the goal and the O's can only score on their side of the goal. This is a very high speed intense, game and also provides a tremendous workout to the keeper (there is only one keeper in at a time for each of these

drills). To some extent there is no boundary and the first team to the ball gets to keep it.

In each of these games, the keeper must play fairly and not pass the ball to her friends. Instead she must play the ball out to open space to give each person an opportunity to win the ball.

FineSoccer Drill 22

There are a number of fun games you can play to give your team a break during practice while still accomplishing some things. A favorite of many players is Soccer Golf.

Pick 9 targets around the field or complex at which you are practicing. The players have to hit each of these 9 targets (in the proper order) in the fewest number of shots.

To make this a more interesting game, play with teams of two where the two players alternate shots.

A basic rule I tend to add is that the entire course must be played while the players are jogging (even in fun games, I need to get in some conditioning). Also, I will allow keepers to punt their "tee shot" for each hole.

Pick holes that are going to be a challenge (for example, if there is a sign on a fence, they must hit the sign in order to build chipping into the game).

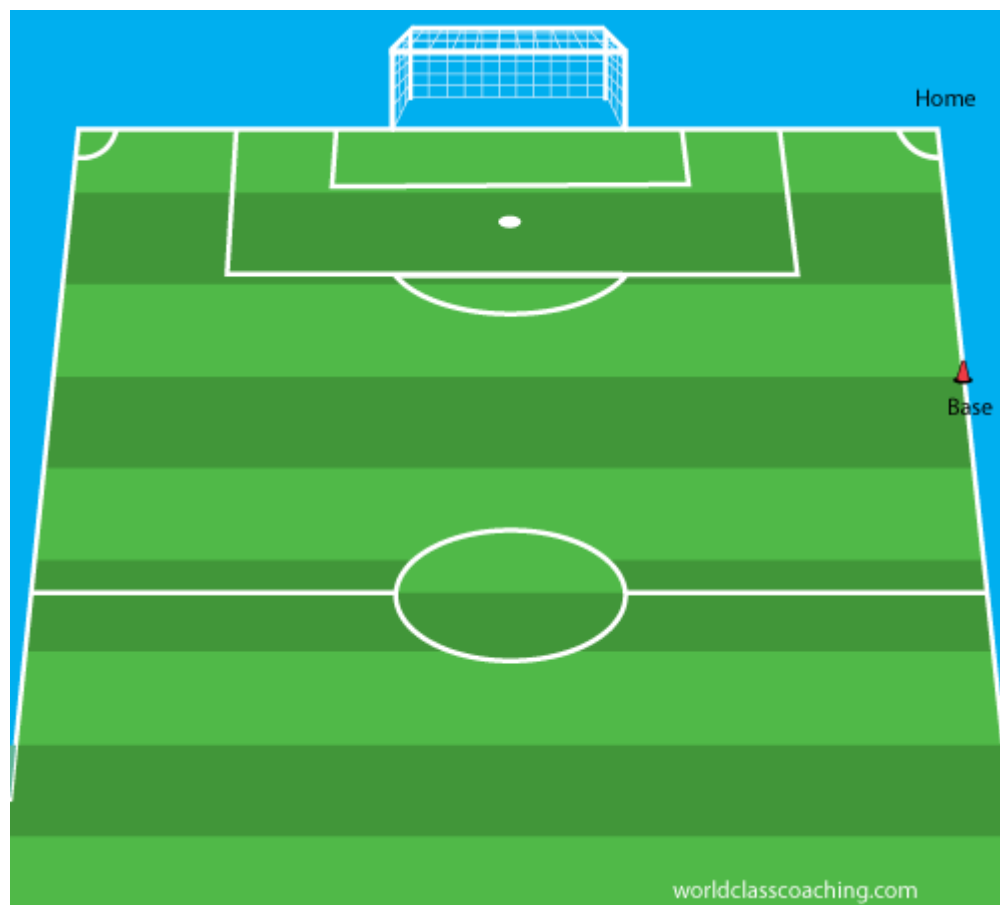
The players have a great time and usually don't realize that they are working on driven balls, chips, conditioning, and various other types of passes.

There are many variations you can do with soccer golf. When done correctly, the players can have a blast and the coach can accomplish his goals as well.

FineSoccer Drill 23

Soccer kickball is another one of my favorite games to play with teams (older teams will complain at first but end up having fun anyway).

Start with home plate in the corner of a field (using the corner arc is effective) so that the goal is where first base normally would be and the only other base is where 3rd base normally would be See the following diagram.



The pitcher (usually the coach) rolls a ball to the batter at home plate and the batter kicks away. If it's a foul ball then it's an automatic out. There are no balls and strikes so the batter has to take whatever pitch they are given. If the team in the field heads the ball out the air, it's an automatic out. If the ball bounces without a header, then the batter must run to the one base and back home before the team in the field can score a goal in the big goal where first base normally would be.

The team at bat can put a player in goal and that person will be whoever made the last out for their team. You can put in the rule of no bunting or not, it's your choice.

This can be a slow moving game but since the pitcher controls the pace, the coach can keep it going pretty quickly.

Typically, I play with only two outs per inning and will play for a pre-determined time period rather than a number of innings.

While the players think this is loads of fun, they are working on driving balls, chipping balls, heading, shooting and goalkeeping. This is a game I use at camps when the players need a break but I want them to keep moving.

FineSoccer Drill 24

Another fun warm up drill I like to use is called rock, paper, scissors.

Maybe you're familiar with the kid's game rock, paper, scissors. If not, it begins with two people standing 2 yards apart with a ball between them. They each say "rock, paper, scissors, shoot" and then each player puts out either two fingers (for a scissors) or makes a fist (for the rock) or leaves their hand flat (for the paper). Since a rock can break scissors, a rock will win that contest. Scissors will cut paper so scissors wins that contest and paper covers a rock so it wins that contest. Whoever wins tries to kick the ball into the loser's legs. If she is successful in doing this, then she gets a point. If she is unsuccessful in hitting the other player's legs with the ball, the other player gets the point. The first one to five points wins. The objective for the other player is to avoid getting hit with the ball by moving her feet as quickly as possible.

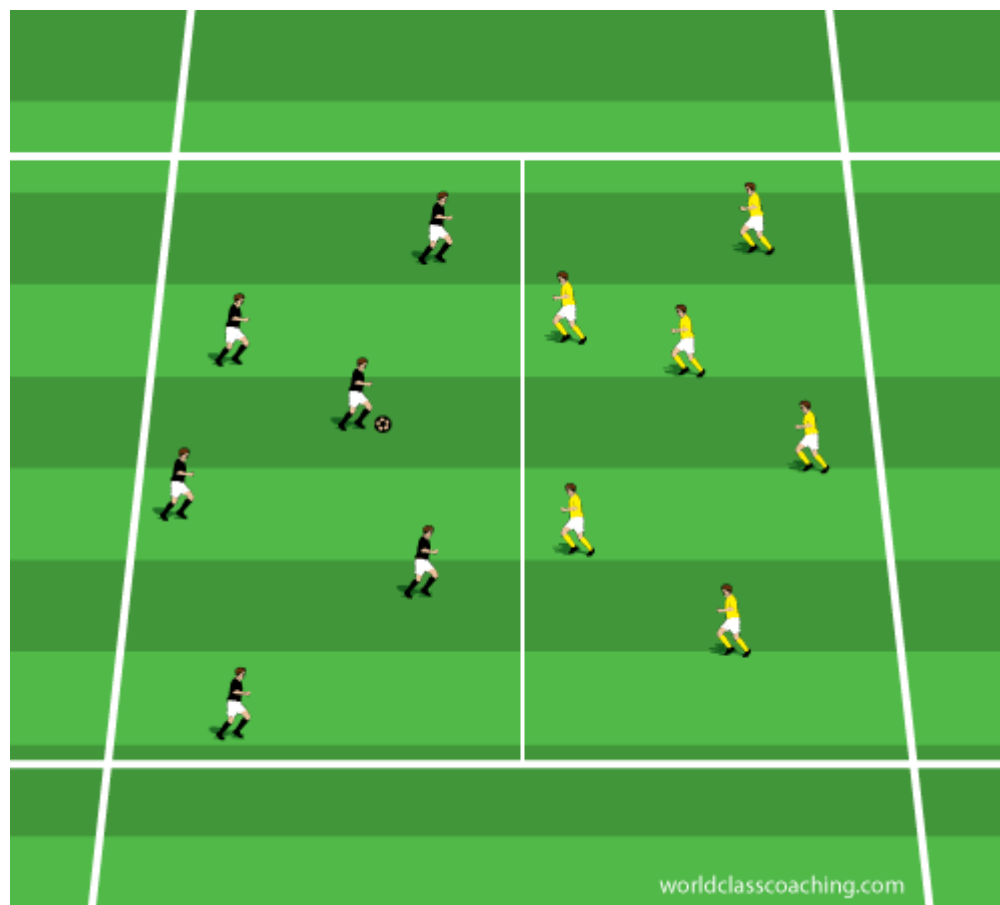
This might seem like a pretty simple game that doesn't accomplish much but if you think about it, it works on decision making (the players have to try to react to the outcome of the individual contest to either avoid getting hit or to hit the opponent). I have spoken with a couple of sports psychologists who say they use this game to work with kids on quick reactions. Other things this game works on is quick footwork and conditioning (if the winner of the individual contest kicks the ball at the other player and misses, both players must spring after the ball and start playing again right away from wherever the ball ends up).

The first time I saw this game being played was during a coaching course I was working at and I initially it was incredibly foolish. However, the next week I was running a camp for keepers and was looking for a fun game to use as a warm-up. I tried rock, papers, scissors and the players LOVED it.

FineSoccer Drill 25

This first drill in this progression simply works on maintaining possession while under pressure.

Start with two teams of approximately 6 players each set up as shown in the following diagram.



Team X starts with the ball and Team O can send 2 players over into the other zone to try to get the ball. If Team X can complete 6 passes in a row and then pass the ball over to Team O's side, then Team X gets a point. The first team to 5 points wins. If Team O intercepts the pass or Team X loses possession by playing the ball out of play, then Team O gets the ball in their half of the field. If Team O can get 6 passes in a row before Team X can get organized and get their two defenders over, then they get a point.

Besides working on possession and support, this also works on defense as well as team organization and communication in deciding who will be the next two players to go over and defend (it cannot always be the same two players).

Variables that can be changed are the number of players needed to go over, as well as limiting the number of touches an individual may have on the ball. For example, to add pressure, you can put in the restriction of one touch soccer or to really make things difficult, make a player touch the ball 3-5 times before they

can pass the ball (this will force them to work on receiving the ball into space and shielding as well as constantly changing the support positions).

This is a great way to prepare the team for the next drill, which works on both possession as well as penetrating passes.

FineSoccer Drill 26

This drill adds penetration into the possession. By penetration, I mean a pass that allows the attacking team to get behind the defense (penetrate the defense).

Start with three teams of 5-6 in different color pinnies. Place them in a grid as shown below.



The ball starts with Team X and Team Y can send 2 players over to defend. Team X tries to possess the ball for a predetermined number of passes (lets say 4 passes) then will get a point if they can successfully pass the ball to Team O

without Team Y being able to win the ball. If Team Y wins the ball from Team X, then the ball goes to Team O and Team X becomes the middle team and defends . By adding this middle zone with a third team, it adds the part of penetrating into an already successful drill. By lowering the number of passes needed to get a pass (assuming a successful penetrating pass) it forces the team to constantly get their heads up because the defending team in the middle can move around their area trying to prevent a successful through pass.

There are many other things you can add into this game. Try putting in the restriction that if the receiving player doesn't take a look at making a penetrating pass before she makes a pass, it's a loss of possession. Or, you can put in the rule that the defending team can send as many or as few players into the defensive third as they want but this would make it even easier to make a penetrating pass.

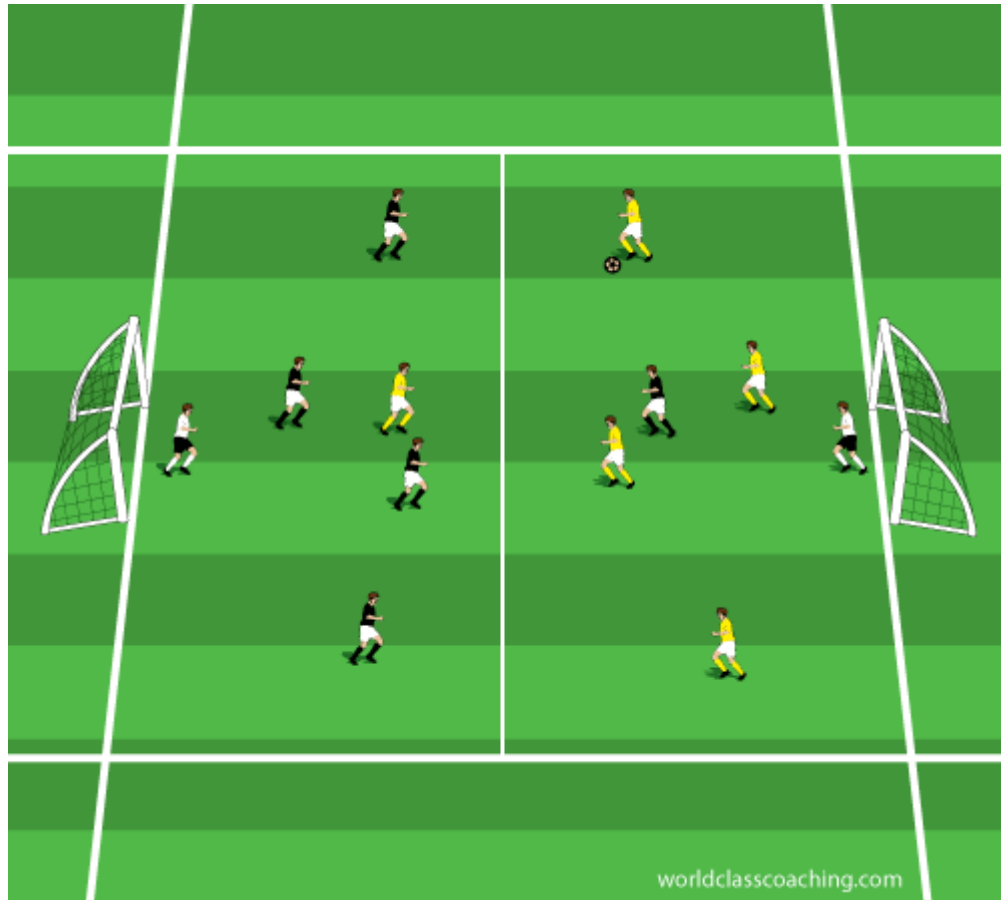
Another rule is to require or prohibit chips in order to play the ball across the middle third (this just depends on what you are looking to accomplish).

I have done this one drill for an entire training session by changing the restrictions and rules to keep the game fresh and to keep working on different things. I do not recommend doing this, but there are so many changes that can be made to this one drill, that it is something to consider.

FineSoccer Drill 27

This is the last drill in this particular progression on possession and penetration. The variable added in this drill is finishing.

Set up with two teams and two full-sized goals with keepers on a small field (approximately 30 yards long and 40 yards wide). Set the two teams up as shown in the diagram below.



Team X starts with the ball and is shooting on the goal being guarded by Team O. Team X needs to get three (or whatever pre-determined number you choose) passes before they are allowed to shoot. They are not permitted to cross the middle line so there is only 1 defender allowed to prevent this from happening. The lone O stays up there for a 2 minute period trying to win the ball or at the very least to prevent a good shot from being hit on her goal.

The rest of Team O can step up to the middle line to take away shooting lanes for Team X, but they have to be careful of the lone X player who can receive the ball and finish herself.

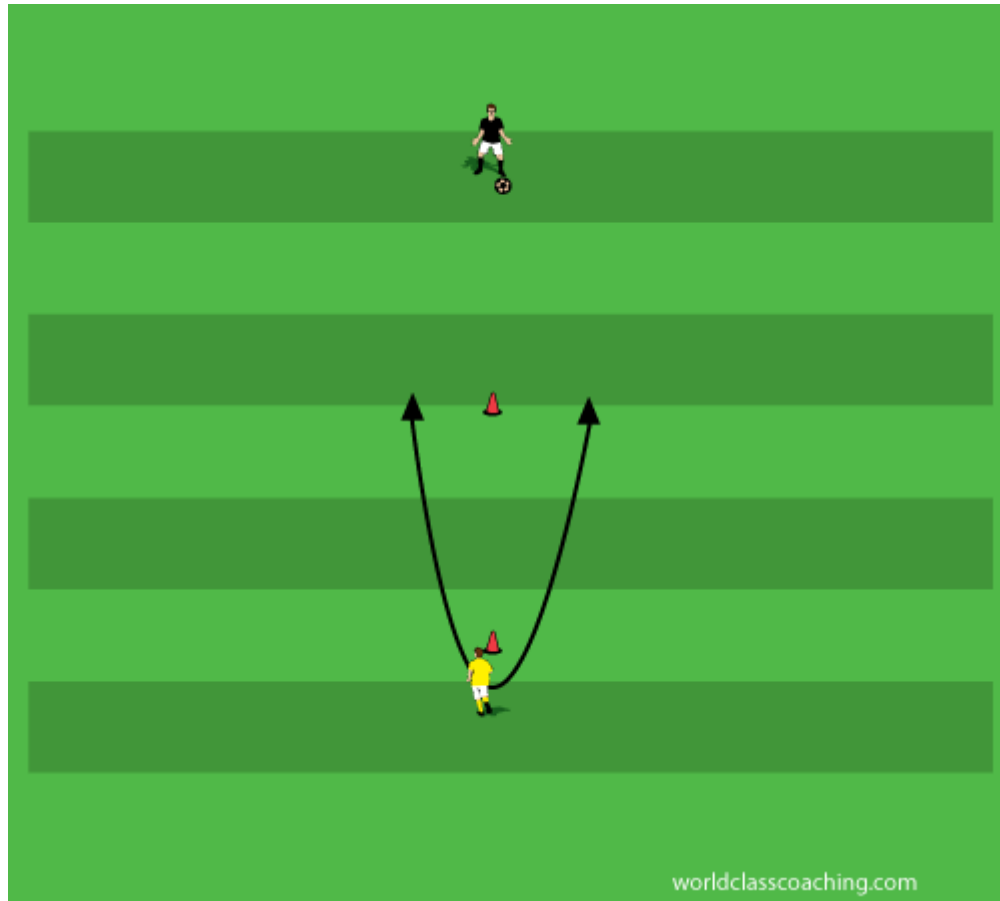
This drill works on goalkeeping, defending, possession, penetrating passes, finishing, and conditioning (the lone player in the opposing zone will have to work extremely hard for 2 minutes before rotating back and letting someone else run hard. It also works on communication (the keeper must organize things from the back and all of the players must make sure they rotate the player upfront properly). This also works on proper balance and spacing as well as movement off the ball. There are actually very few parts of the game of soccer that are not worked on in this drill.

FineSoccer Drill 28

This is the first in a series of three drills that works on individual skills. Too many coaches overlook the technical side of the game and don't seem to understand that without being able to use proper technique under pressure, they won't be able to do much in terms of tactics.

Every training session should start with some type of skill work even if it's only done as a warm up drill. This is one of my favorite drills to do whether working with an individual or with an entire team.

Have a server be at a specific spot. There should be two cones the first one 5 yards away and then next one 3 yards away. See diagram below.



Start with the server playing the ball to the player as she gets besides the middle cone (the cone closest to the server). The player will one touch the ball back to the server and then spring BACKWARDS around the back cone and then forward to the other side of the front cone for another serve. This should be done at full speed for 1 minute. If there is only one player, they can do 1 minute of work and then 30 seconds of a break. Start with balls on the ground and then serve for volleys, thigh traps volley backs, then chest traps volley backs, then chest head backs, and then headers. There are a number of other variations such as two touch passing and so on.

While this promotes excellent conditioning, if you are doing this with an entire team, you can have them go in groups of threes. One player serves the ball, the second player does the work, and the third player is behind the server doing conditioning (1 minute of ab work, lunges etc). This is a great way to start a teams training session off to get a lot of touches on the ball, work on some conditioning, and get an intense training session going right away.

Over the years, I would guess that I have done this series of drills more than any other soccer drills between individual training sessions and team practices.

FineSoccer Drill 29

The second drill for individual training is simple to set up but quite difficult to do successfully.

Many players like to juggle the ball but very rarely do I see this done with a purpose. Simply challenge the players to juggle the ball 1000 times in a 10 minute period. If they are on 26 and they lose possession of the ball, they start back counting at 27 (don't count by consecutive juggles but total juggles in a 10 minute period).

I have never been a big fan of juggling but this is a good way to get many touches on the ball and also get some conditioning in at the same time. If you don't think this involves any conditioning, take 10 minutes and give it a try. I think you will change your mind real quickly.

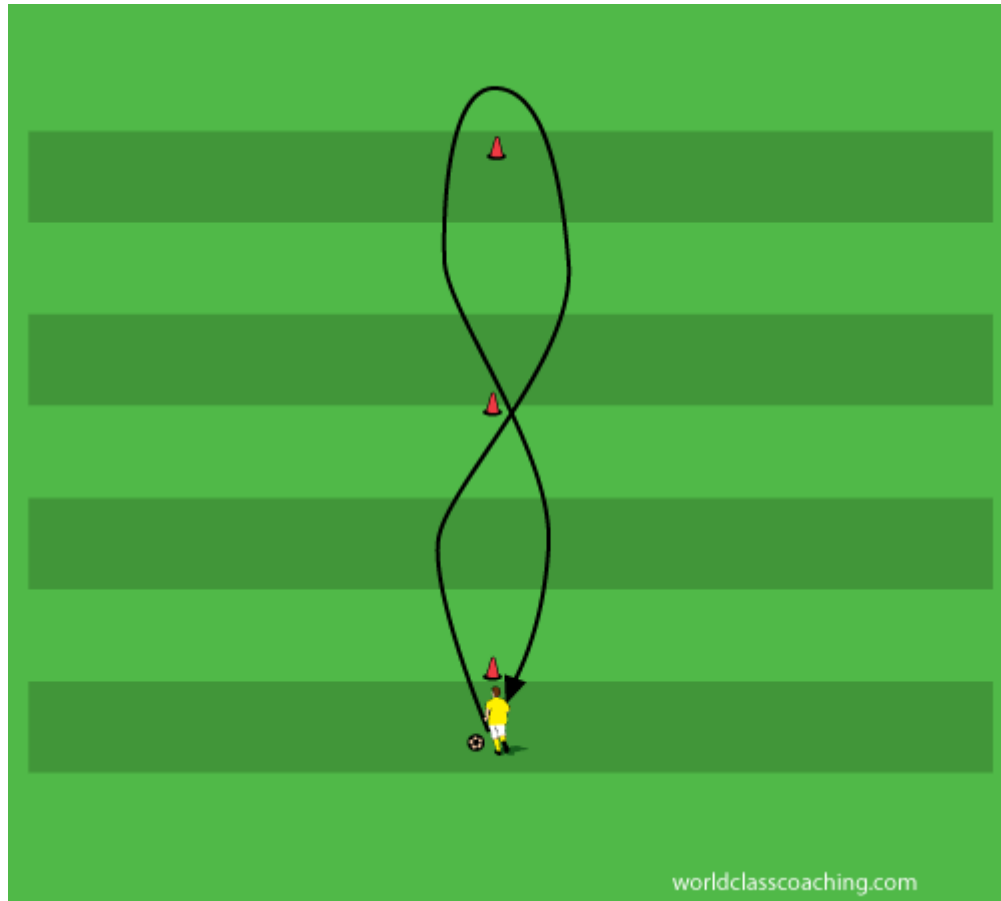
Explain to your team that if they lose possession of the ball, they must sprint to get it back in order to be successful.

If because of age or skill limitations, the players aren't able to come close to 1000 touches in a 10 minute page, then lower the number of touches (not the time) and challenge them to work their way up to 1000

FineSoccer Drill 30

The last drill in this series is one that can be done by a single player or with a whole team.

Have three cones set up in an L shape as shown in the following diagram.



Start at one of the outside cones and dribble to the central cone and cut the ball sharply with the inside of the foot to go hard at the other outside cone. When you get to the next outside cone, turn and go back to the central cone and cut with the other foot. Do this for 1 minute and then rest for 1 minute. The keys here are to accelerate on each turn and really push yourself at all times.

After each break, make a small change such as cutting with the outside of the foot or changing the turns on the outside. You can add things like circling each of the cones before moving on, using the right foot and then left foot only, adding moves to get around the central cone (for example, a pull cruyf must be done between each).

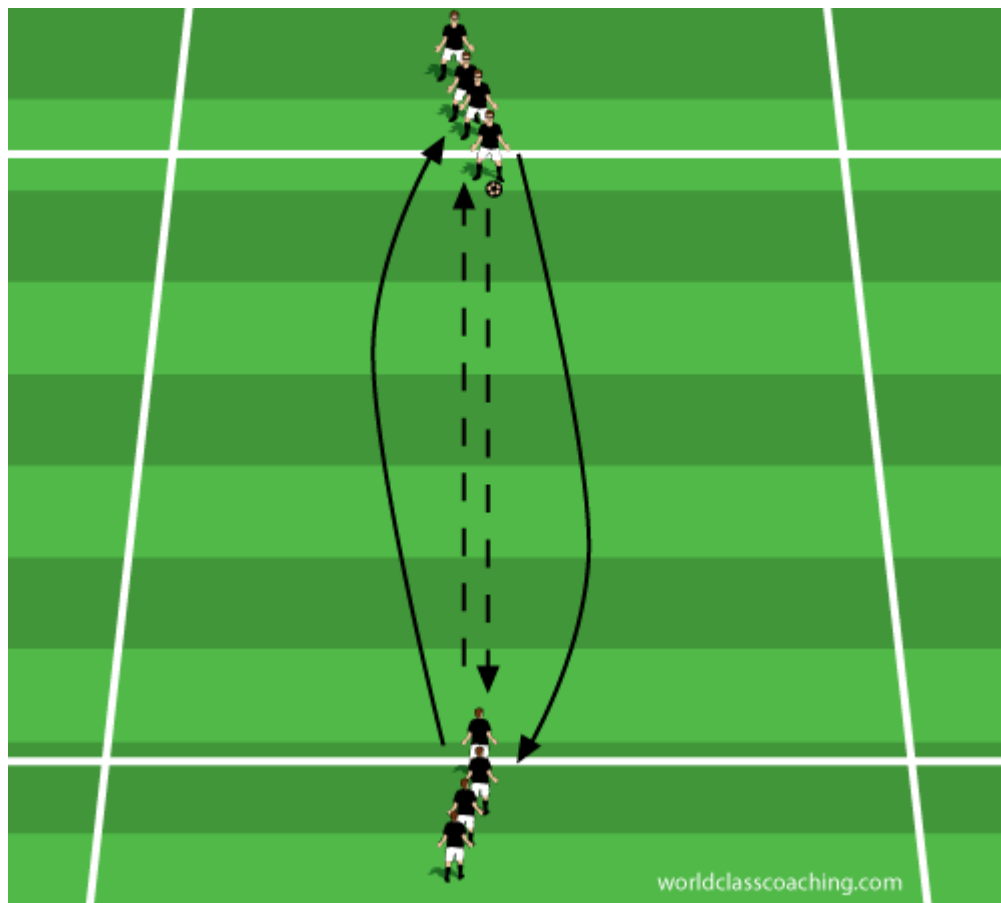
The closer the cones are to each other, the more moves and turns. I recommend starting with them being 10 yards apart and then gradually moving in towards 5 yards.

Done properly, this can be a very intense drill and proper rest periods must be taken in order to ensure quality work.

FineSoccer Drill 31

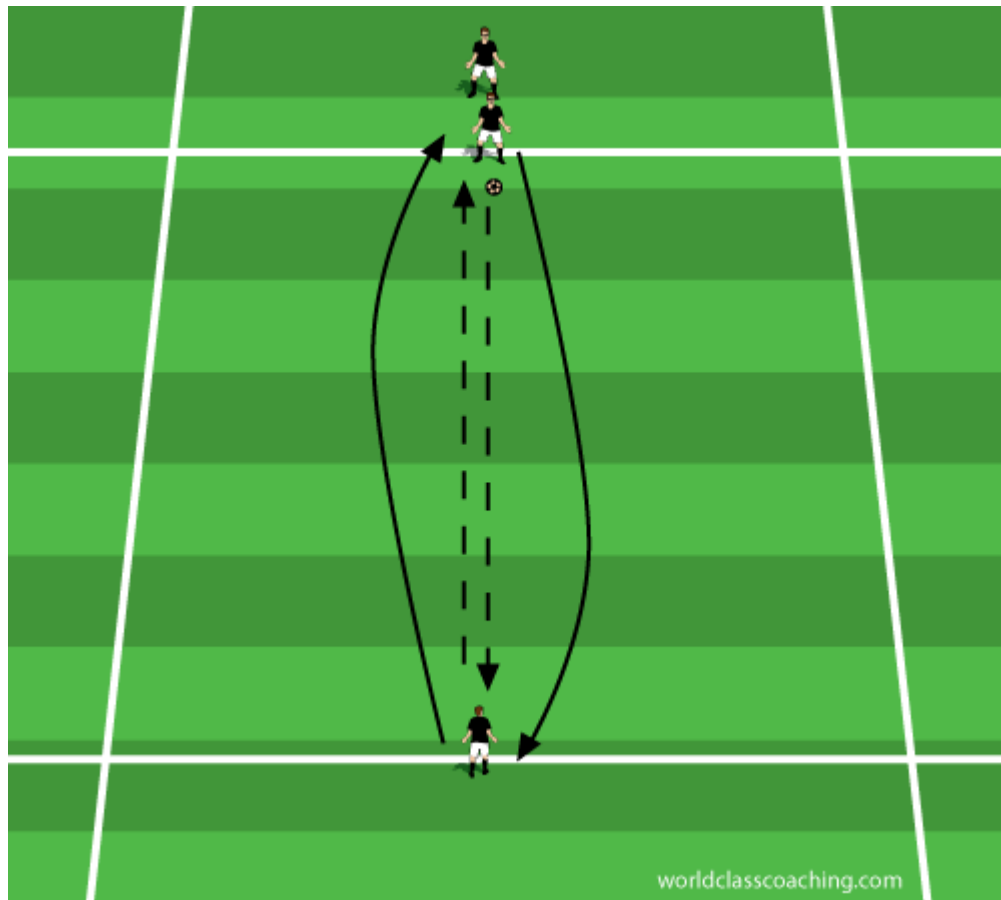
This is a very common drill but with an interesting twist that adds a great deal of conditioning to an otherwise slow moving drill. The most commonly used name for this drill is the tunnel drill.

Normally, you would have a group of players (anywhere from 4-8) in two lines facing each other (see diagram below).



The first player in line A passes the ball to the first player in line B and then sprints to the back of line B. The first player in line B then passes to the first person in line A and then sprints to the back of line A. A very simple drill and somewhat boring.

To increase the number of touches per player and to increase both the intensity and conditioning part of the drill, do the exact same thing in groups of 3. Have two players together and then the third player is 15 yards away. The first person in the group of 2 passes the ball to the third player and then sprints behind her. It ends up being just like a bigger tunnel (and in fact can be done utilizing the same space) but now each player gets every third touch. By keeping the players 15 yards apart, the players will have to really sprint to get to the spot to receive the ball next. Do this drill at full speed for 1 minute periods and you will find that this conditioning is very relevant to soccer fitness.



Other variations on this drill include, playing two touches with the first touch away from pressure (the sprinter runs right at the receiver). This touch can be done first with the inside of the foot and then with the outside of the foot. Also, you can move the players back to 30 yards apart and have them play 2 touch chips to each other. This requires both a great deal of conditioning as well as working on chipping and receiving high balls. Do 5 different variations of this and it takes a mere 10 minutes of the training session (1 minute of intense work and 1

minute of rest per variation) and you will find this is a great example of economical training.

FineSoccer Drill 32

Here is another simple drill made quite intense (I prefer that drills be done for short periods of time at intensity rather than for longer periods without the concentration and intensity).

Have two players stand 15 yards apart passing a ball back and forth one touch. Now the twist is to really emphasize that when the ball is played to a player, they must sprint to meet the ball at the earliest point possible. As soon as the ball is played away, the player must sprint backwards as fast as possible.

This might not seem like a strenuous thing to do but if done at full speed, it will really get their heart rates up and produce a burning feeling in their calves.

Give it a try for 3, 1 minute periods with 30 seconds rest between sets. I think you will like the results.

FineSoccer Drills 33

When people ask me what type of conditioning program I recommend for soccer players, inevitably I start telling them about plyometrics. I am NOT an expert on plyometrics but what I do know about them is that the players who do them seriously and correctly, tend to have a better first step, jump higher, and also are less prone to knee injuries. I recommend that people do this particular set of plyometrics three times a week with 48 hours between each time. One of the neat things about this program is that unlike many other programs, no equipment is needed except for a line between 18-20 yards long. It is more important to do each of these things correctly than to do a lot of them. In other words, start slow and do them correctly rather than rushing through them.

PLYOMETRIC PROGRAM

- Slalom jumps back and forth down the line. Small quick jumps.
- Knees to chest maximum height jumping down the line.

- Facing the line, jumping back and forth doing as many as possible moving quickly down the line.
- Same as #3 but facing other direction.
- Hop on right foot going down the line. Go for maximum height.
- Same as #5 but hop on other foot.
- Long jump down the line. Go for maximum distance. Feet must stay together the whole time.
- Lunge walk down the line.
- Slalom run. Long stride, arc, and jump. Must be fluid.
- Sprint to end of line and back.
- Use a line 18 yards long.
- Do 5 sets of the 10 exercises.

After each exercise, except the sprint, jog back to the beginning.

Feel free to take a 1 minute break between each set of 10 exercises (each set, NOT each exercise)

Give plyometrics a try and I am confident you will be pleased with the results long-term

FineSoccer Drill 34

While most coaches say that all conditioning should take place with a ball, in my opinion, some conditioning has to be done without it. The reason for this is that it's extremely difficult to generate the exact same amount of intensity in training as you can in a game (it's just hard for the players to get as excited in training which helps to get the adrenaline going). Since it's so hard to get the same amount of intensity in training, the only way to get the heart rate up as high is to force it in conditioning without the ball. Here are a couple of quick ways to accomplish this.

You will notice that there are no long runs in this drill. The reason for this is that if you want to get in shape to run long distances, then run long distances. If you want to get in shape to do the short sprints needed in soccer, then do shorter sprints.

Break your team into three groups (A, B, and C) and have them set up as shown in the following diagram.

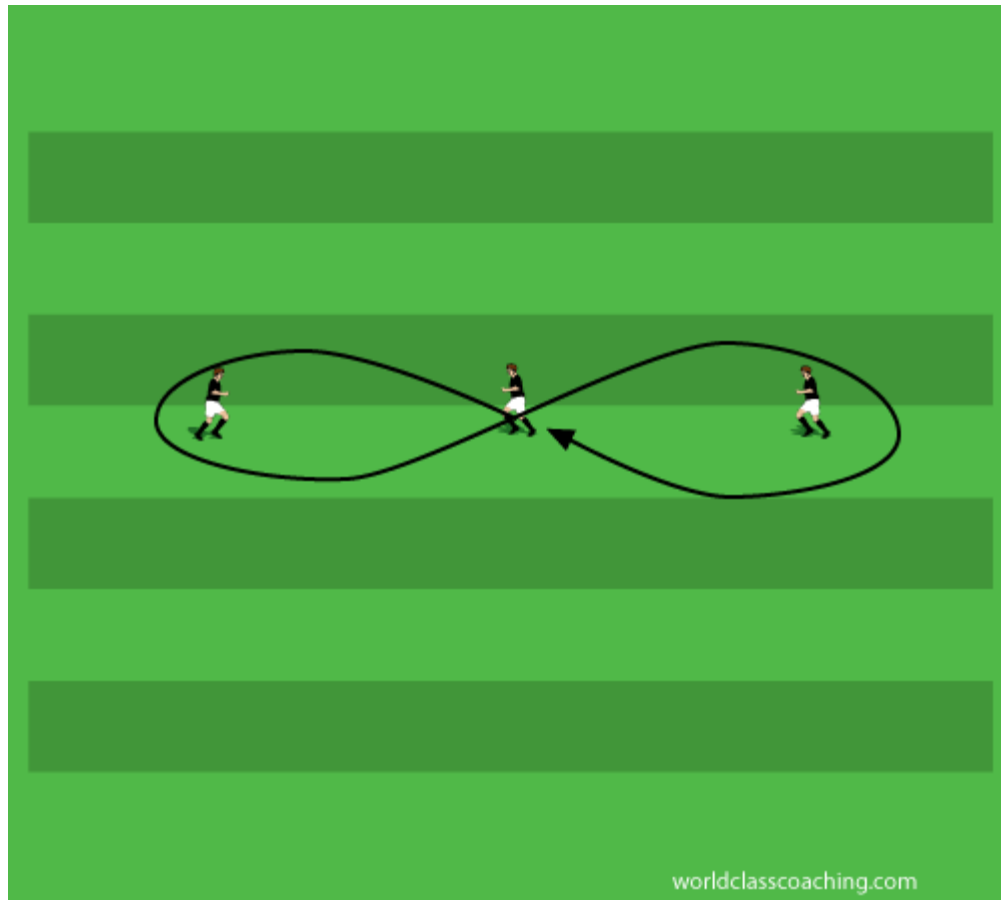


The groups should be 44 yards apart (this is the width of the 18 yard box). Assign each group a leader. Group A sprints past the line where Group B is waiting. As soon as the last person in Group A passes the line, the leader of Group B says "go" and they sprint toward the other line. When the last player in Group B passes the line, the leader of Group C says "go" and they start their sprint. The thing that is great about this conditioning drill is that it allows for a 1:2 work to rest ratio which allows the players to work on developing the "second wind" that is so important in the game of soccer. Do this until group gets in 20 sprints and you will find that they have had a tough little workout.

FineSoccer Drill 35

Here is another easy drill that actually can be done with or without a ball. The reason I recommend that it be done without a ball is that the players can be "pushed" to go faster and their skills won't allow them to slow down.

This can be done with three players (or multiples of threes). Two players stand 10 yards apart and rest. The third player is the worker and runs figure 8's around the two resters (see diagram below).



One of the keys to this conditioning drill is to get the worker to touch the ground directly behind the resters' feet and then explode as she turns the corner. Really emphasize that it's important to stay low as you turn (since the lower a player gets while changing directions in soccer, the quicker she will be able to accelerate). It's not until the runner is in the middle of the run should she be upright if even then. Also, make sure the run is done as a figure 8 and not as a circle or else they will only be turning in one direction.

Each runner should do this for a 1 minute period and then one of the resters starts her run. If each person does this 5 times they will get a good work out while only taking 15 minutes with each person getting a 1:2 work to rest ratio. When one person ends her run, the next person starts hers which allows for no time in transition.

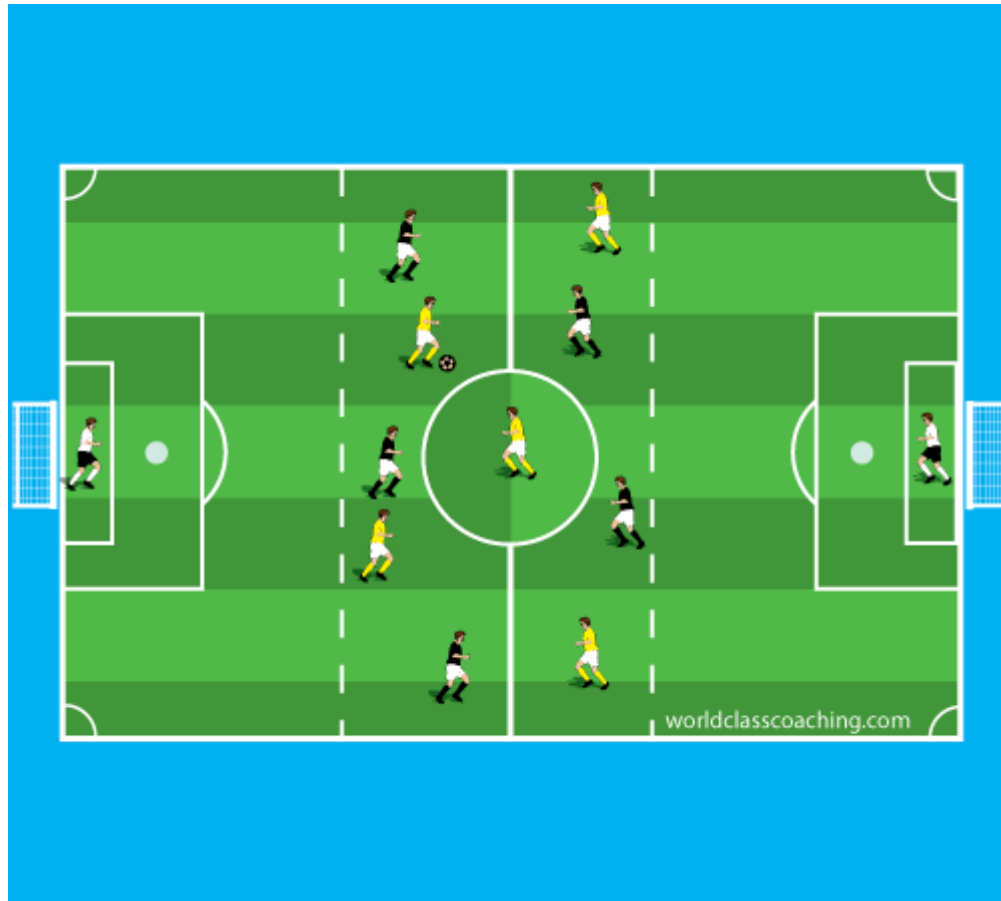
If you alternate between this drill, Drill 33 and Drill 34, you will get a team working hard without wasting time.

Do these drills and have the players work hard in their other drills and they should be in good shape when it comes to conditioning.

FineSoccer Drill 36

This is the first in a series of three drills which will work on everything from possession to attacking an offside trap, to finishing, to defending a target player, to breakaways to finding one hole vs. two hole passes.

Start with a field split into thirds. Your number of players can vary in these drills but I will start with 5 v 5 in the middle third with a keeper in each goal (see diagram below).



The rules of this first drill are simple. Whichever team has the ball needs to make 5 passes in a row within the middle third of the field before they may attack the goal. Once a team has their 5 passes in a row, they may go to goal, HOWEVER, the ball must enter the attacking third of the field via a pass before anyone on either team may go into that zone. This means a player cannot dribble into the offensive third as a pass is required to gain entry. Also, another player cannot run into the offensive zone before the ball has been played into the area. Likewise, no defender is allowed into their defensive zone until the ball is played into the zone.

Initially, this will result in a bunch of players standing on the line between the middle third of the field and their offensive waiting for the ball to be played. Luckily, players will quickly learn that this is quite ineffective as the defender will be waiting beside them. As the attacking players come to this realization, they will start to make runs off of their passes and try to slip passes through to players who are making one and two hole passes. This is a wonderful way to work on possession and movement off of the ball.

If the players are having problems getting to 5 passes before they can penetrate, there are a couple of things you can do. First you can reduce that number from 5 to 3 or even get rid of the requirement all together (I recommend keeping a requirement even if you have to reduce the number somewhat.). Another option which is quite effective is to add an additional neutral player or two. These neutral players are on whichever team has the ball so there is always a numbers up situation for the attacking team.

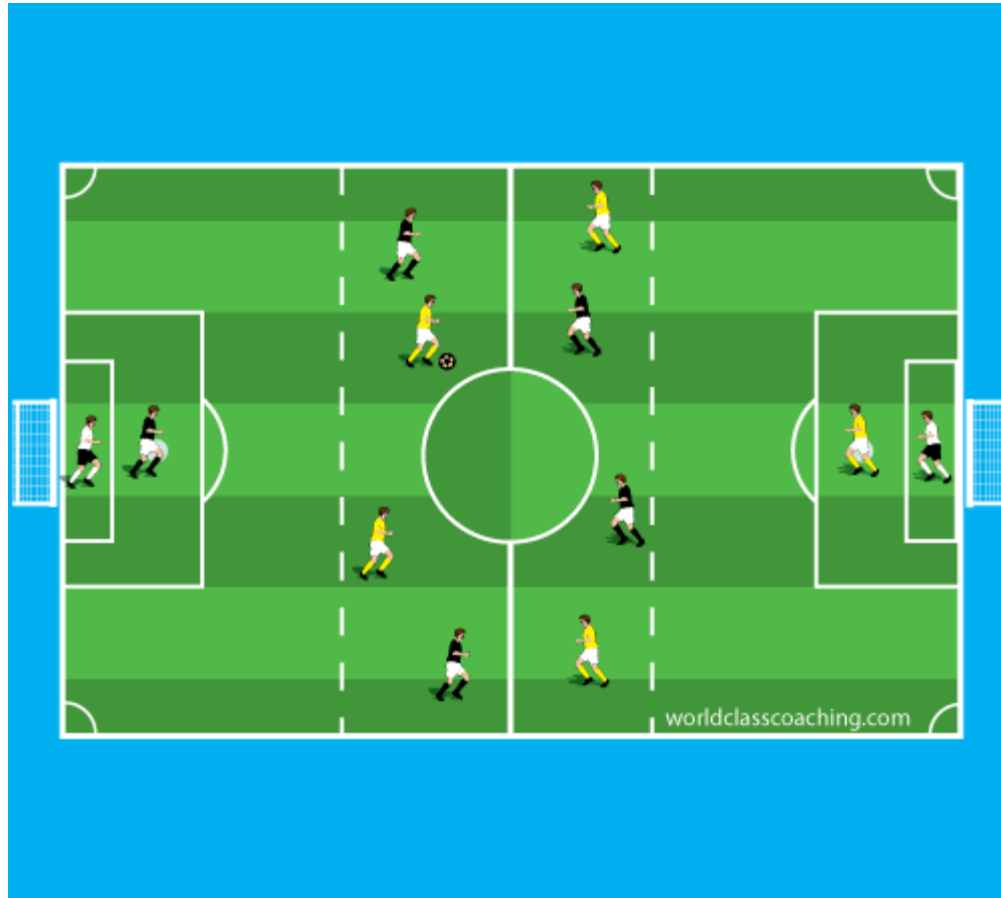
It is also important to limit where the keepers can stand when the ball is in the middle third of the field. Because this is a small field, if they stand far off of their line, the keeper will be able to win most of the through balls that are played into the box. Make the keepers start on their line and then if they want to come out hard and take away some of the through balls they are more then welcome to do so.

Try this drill out and once the players can do it well, then they are ready to progress to the next step.

FineSoccer Drill 37

This is the next step in the progression. If you haven't done Drill 36, do it first.

Take the same field layout as in Drill 36 but now add a target player for each team. (see diagram below)

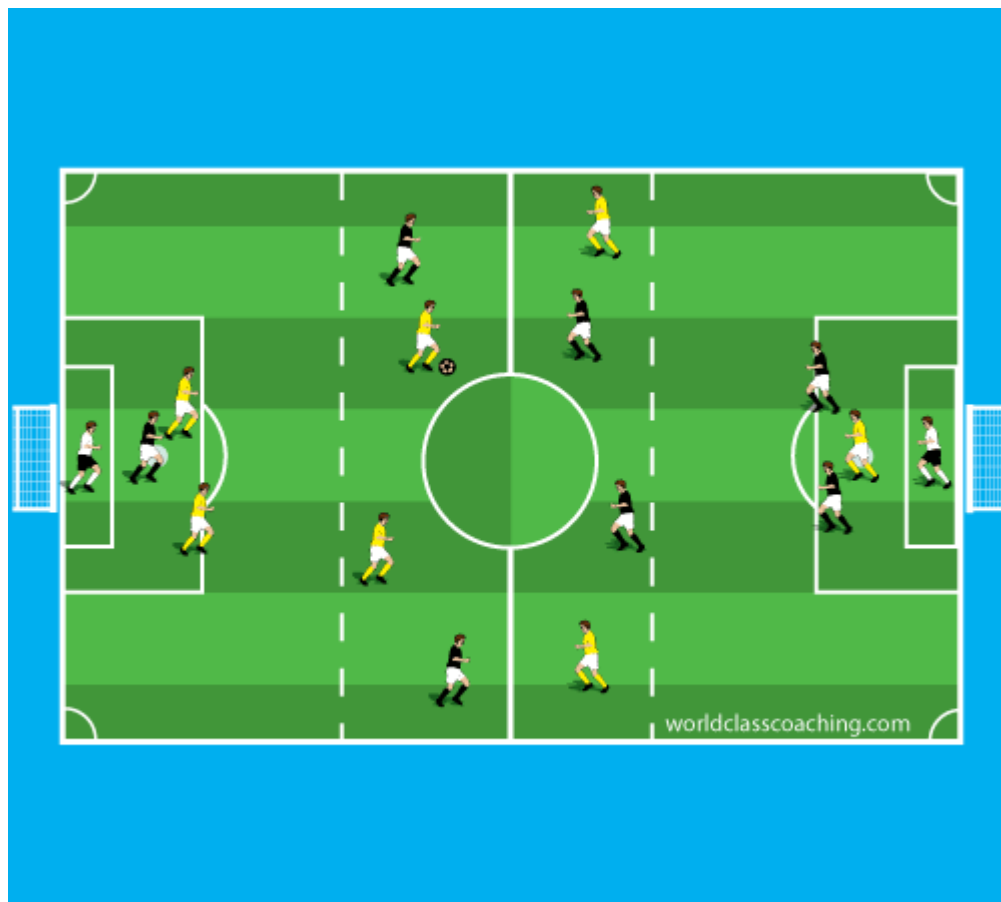


The target player starts in her teams offensive third and once the players in the middle get their required passes for possession in the middle third, the target player starts looking to check into space to receive through ball. The main rule on this target player is that she is **REQUIRED** to play one touch only. This will force her to become more comfortable with playing with her back to the goal and laying balls off and spinning off to goal.

By restricting the target player to one touch soccer, this also forces the attacking team to work on attacking with numbers because if the ball is played into the target player and there is no support, she will have nothing to do with the

ball other than lose it.. This is a wonderful way to get the midfielders to work on supporting their through passes. This also helps with various types of near post/far post runs as what will frequently happen is that when the ball is played into the target player, she will one touch it back to a midfielder who due to pressure from the defenders (remember the defenders can come into the third of the field as soon as the ball is played in), will then play a wide ball to a runner who will be able to serve in a cross from the side. Now we have the target player receiving a ball, one touching it back, and then spinning off and timing her run for a near post run.

Once this drill starts to go by successfully, add a defender on the target player in each zone (see diagram below).



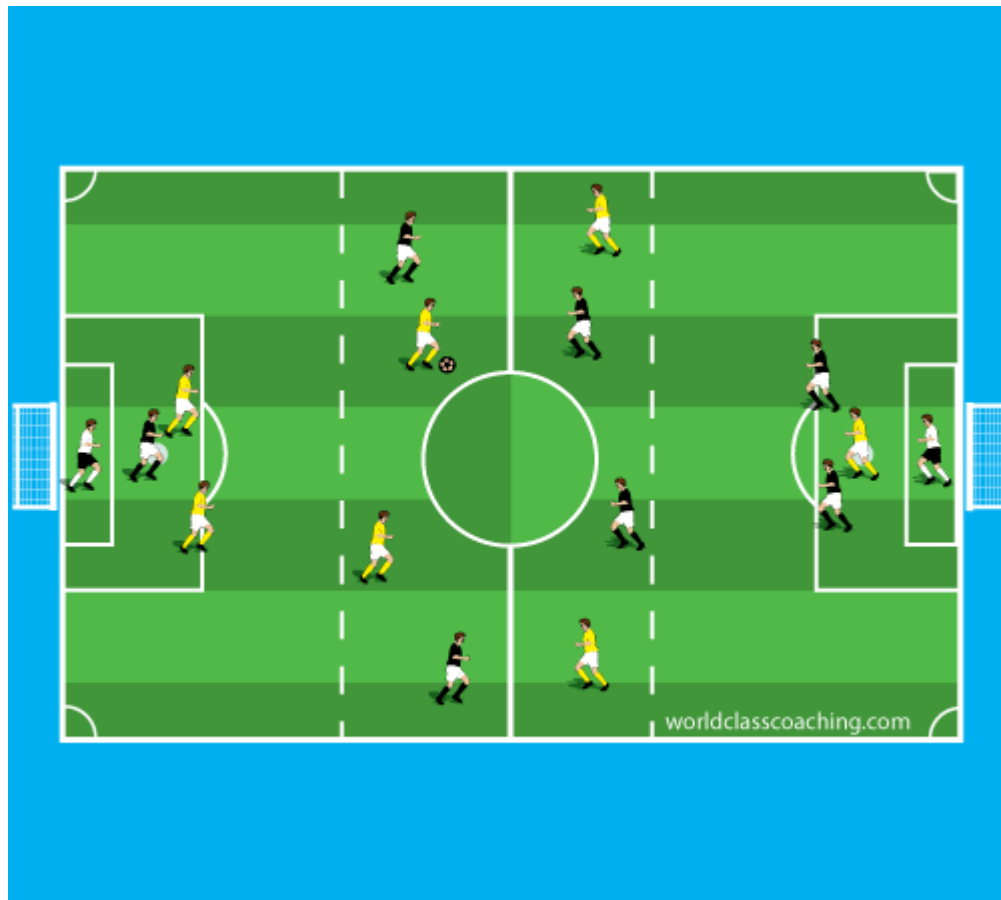
Everything stays the same except for the added pressure of a defender who **MUST** stay goal side until the ball is played into her zone.

If necessary, to get more success, add both a defender and a second target player at the same time who could then be working on the two runs of the targets players in a 4-4-2 type formation.

After this drill works successfully, move on to the last drill in this progression.

FineSoccer Drill 38

The last part of this progression is set up the same way as the end of Drill 37 (see diagram below)



The difference now is that after the required number of passes in the middle third of the field, a player can dribble into the offensive third (still, no one else is allowed into the offensive third except for the designated players until the ball has been played in). This forces the defender and the attackers to figure out the appropriate runs to clear or cover space. You might want to consider adding a second defender when you change to this part of the progression.

Lastly, remove the thirds and the restrictions and let the players play a free game. It has been my experience that you will start to see a lot more thought going into their play at this point.

FineSoccer Drill 39

This first drill is a slight variation of a standard 4 v 2 keep a way game. Start with a 12 x 12 grid and 6 players. Have two wear red, two wear blue, and two wear white. Start with red on defense. It's now white and blue vs. red. If red wins the ball, whoever's team lost the ball then goes on defense. If white loses the ball, then all of a sudden, it's blue and red vs. white. The thing that makes this different than most 4 v 2 games is that there is nothing like "first pass is free" or anything like that. In order for the defense to switch to offense, there must be complete possession of the ball. If the ball is knocked out of play, then the team it went off of is on defense. Also, if you lose the ball, you are to immediately work to get it back (if I am on white and I lose the ball to red, I am allowed and encouraged to take it right back on the very next touch). This encourages the player who won the ball to immediately get the ball away from pressure and the player who lost the ball (and her teammate) to give immediate chase upon loss of possession. Either the coach or someone else should be on the side to serve balls in as soon as they go out of play. Done properly, this can be a very intense and very demanding game.

Next, this same game can be played with larger numbers which will emphasize this quick transition from offense to defense even more. Keep the space small (if you have 12 players a 20 x 20 grid is great). Really emphasize this quick transition and have people on the side to serve in new balls as well as to encourage the players to work harder and harder.

These drills work on a number of things including transition, offensive support, passing, receiving, movement off of the ball, conditioning, defensive support and much more.

FineSoccer Drill 40

This is one of the more complicated drills I do, but it is an extremely effective drill that with patience can be quite effective.

A minimum of 12 players is needed for this although it is best with 16 including 2 keepers. The field should be 70-80 yards with two goals. Start with two red defenders defending one goal and two white defenders defending the other goal. Then add three attackers from the white team in the middle of the field with a ball. All of the other players should be on their respective sides of the field near the middle (see diagram below).



The three white attackers go to goal and try to get a shot hit. If the red defenders win the ball, then they quickly attack the other goal and get another player to add on to their attack from the side. As they attack the white defenders, two new red defenders go on the field for the next attack. Anytime the ball is lost or a shot is hit, the ball goes in the other direction (keep a supply of balls in each goal).

The players will be working on attacking at speed, diagonal runs, defending with the purpose of taking away penetration and delaying, distribution, and much more. In the beginning, the players will try to dribble the ball up the field when

they win possession but will quickly learn to pass the ball up to the add on player in order to advance the ball quickly.

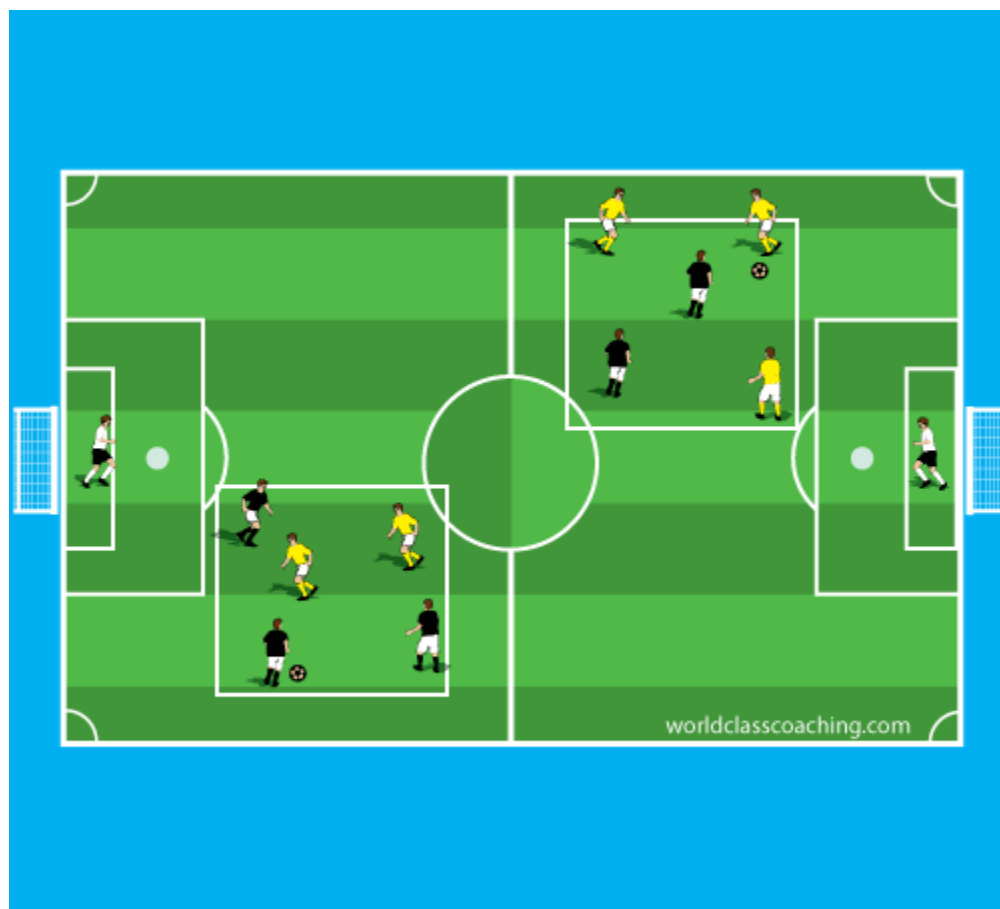
An option you can add is that when the three attackers lose possession of the ball, they can high pressure in the offensive third of the field and if they win it there, they go to goal. This way, players are working on both the transition from defense to offense but also from offense to defense. Also, you can go 4 v 3 instead of 3 v 2 although I would strongly suggest starting small and then building up.

Typically, for this drill to work, you will have to explain it, then walk them through it a couple of times before they will understand it completely. Give it a try and let them really work on transition the right way.

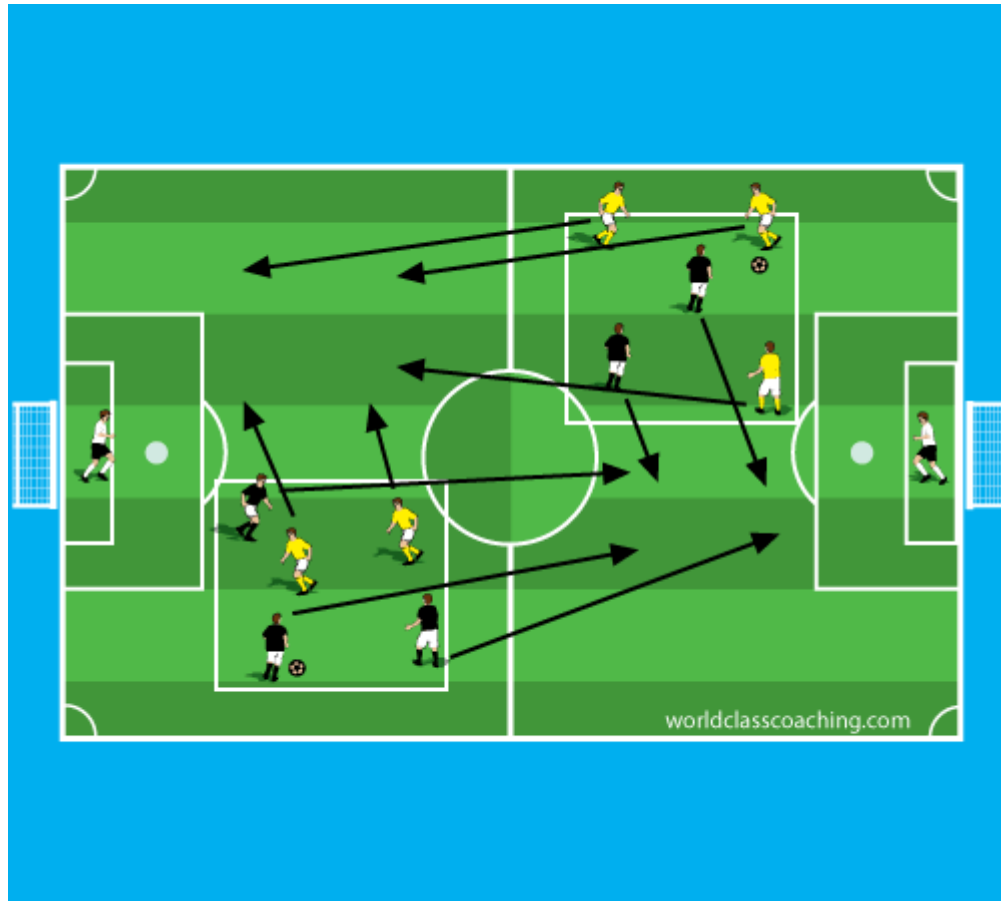
FineSoccer Drill 41

This drill works on so many things it's unbelievable. It will work on possession, defending possession, conditioning, transition, communication, bending runs, serving long balls, receiving long balls, goalkeeping, and much more.

Start with two 15 x 15 grids set up on a full-sized field as shown in the diagram below. The size of the grids can be changed depending upon the numbers in the drill. Have a keeper in each goal.

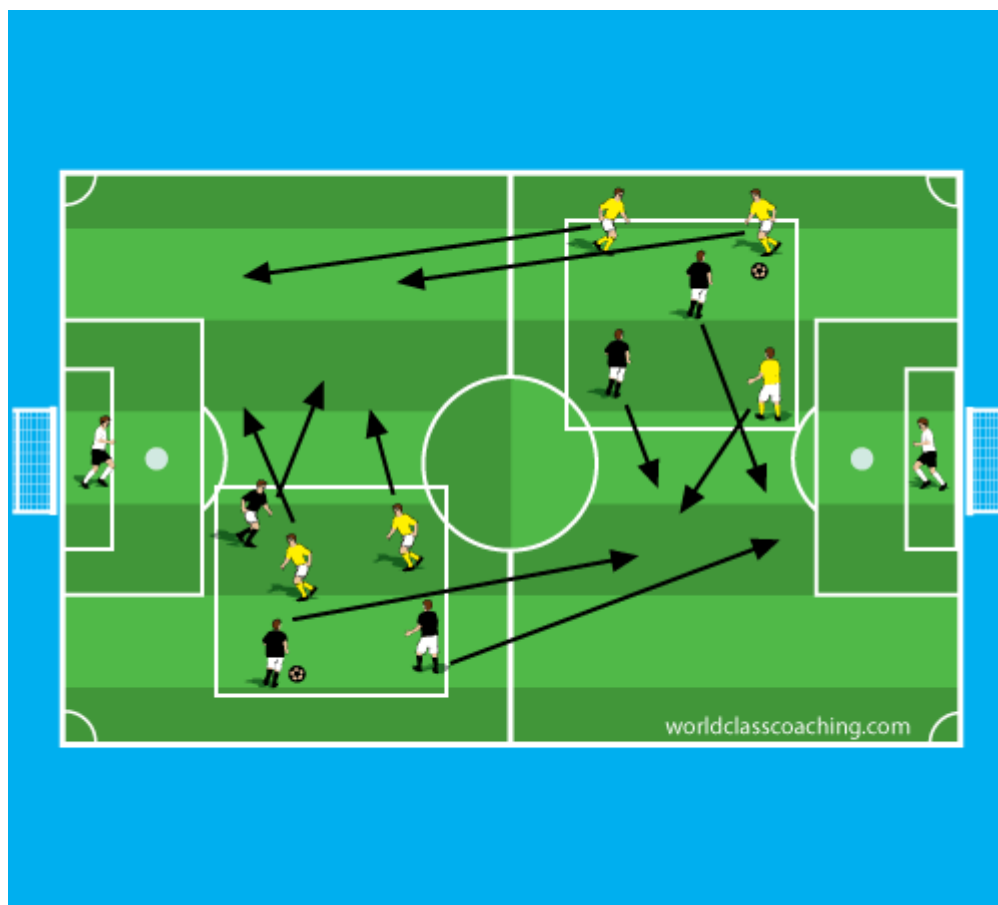


This drill works best with a big group of 22 but can be done with as few as 14. Start with a 3 v 2 keep away game going in each grid with the rest 5 other players by each grid waiting. When the coach blows his whistle, the three players on offense attack the far goal and the two players on defense defend the near goal (in other words, the three attackers will be defended by the two defenders from the opposite grid). The key is for the attackers to organize their runs to unbalance the defense and the defenders are trying to prevent penetration and simply delay the attack. If they successfully delay the attack, then it's over. See diagram below:

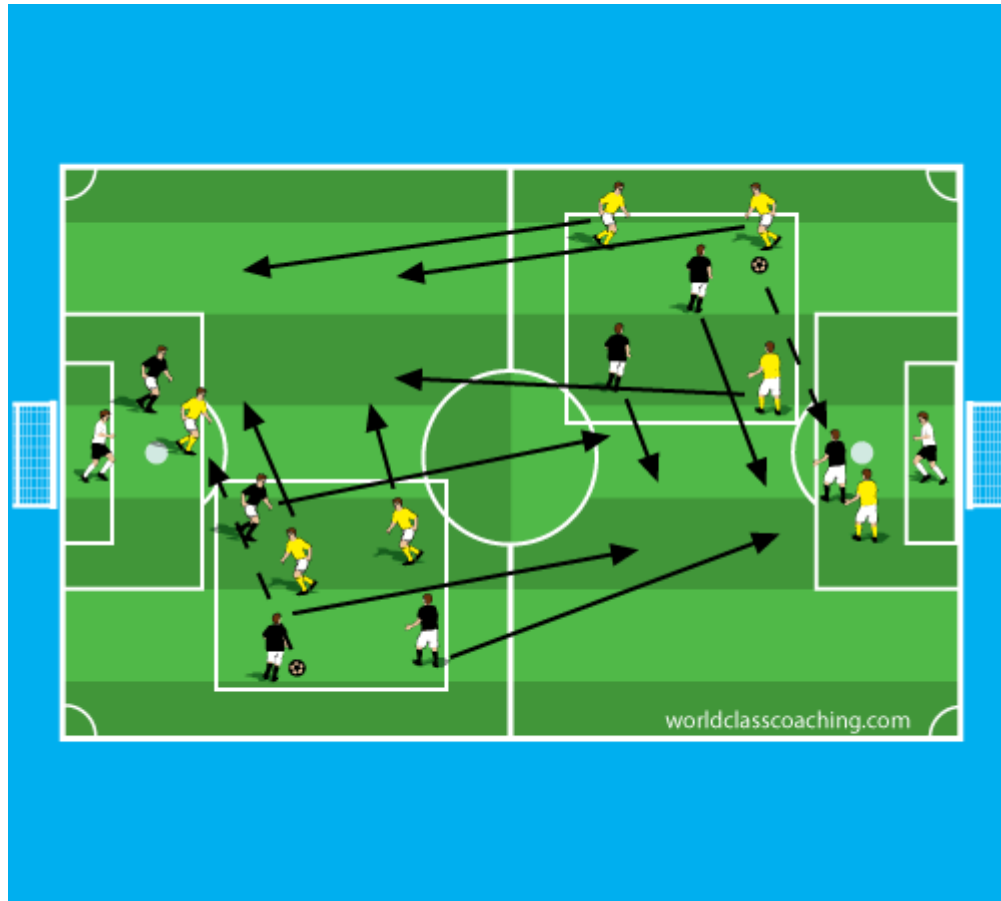


As soon as those 5 players leave the grid, the next 5 enter and start their keep away game. When the attacks are done, those players all go to the opposite grid from which they came and wait their turn.

The next step is when the coach blows the whistle, the player with the ball in each grid plays a long diagonal ball across to the other three attacking players and then continue their attack. This will give the defense a little more time to get organized, adds in working on long serves and receiving long balls and forces more organization on the attackers' part.



Another variation is adding a target player and defender near the goal. The way this works is that when the coach blows his whistle, the ball gets played across to the other attackers and then they can try to find the target player up front (who is being marked by the defender). This variation will vastly alter the runs being made since everything will be predicated by the target players runs.

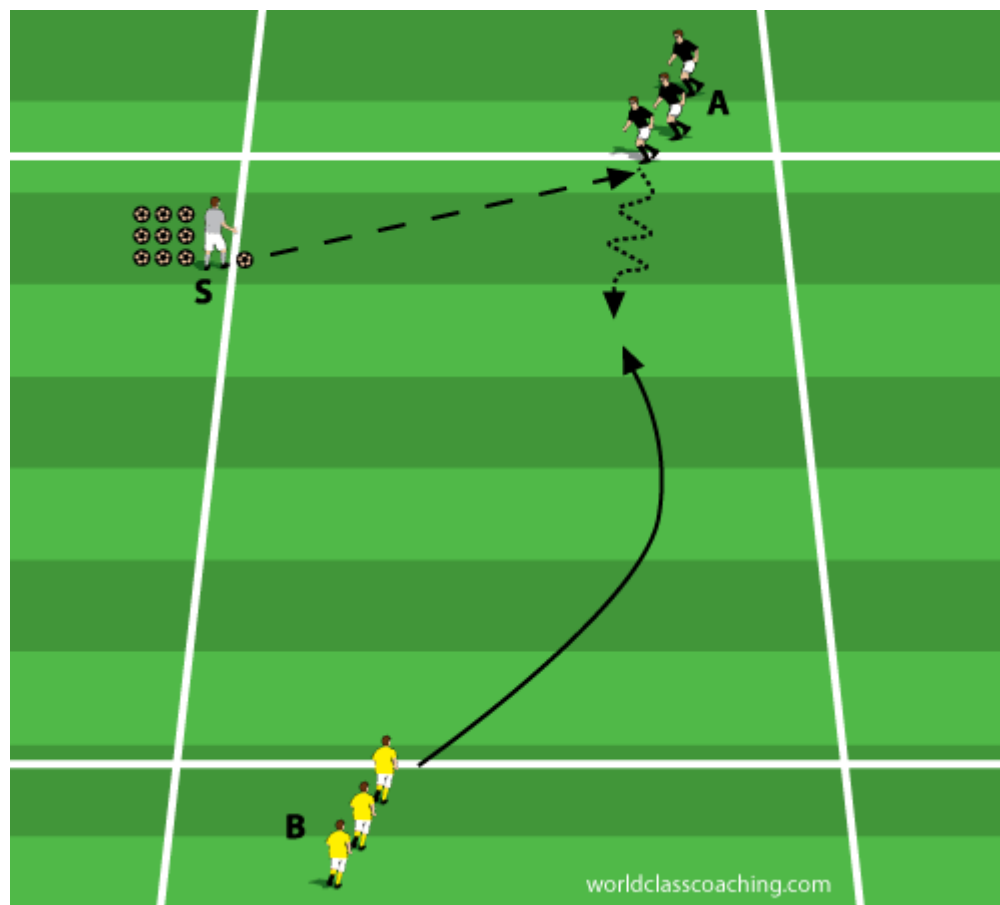


As you can imagine, there are many more options that coaches can create. This is a very intense drill (done properly) and can take up most of a training session if you keep changing things up.

FineSoccer Drill 42

This series of drills works on first defender, second defender, first attacker, second attacker, communication, conditioning, and much more. I would recommend that it be coached from a defensive perspective but the rest should be kept in consideration as well.

Start with a grid 10 yards wide by 20 yards long with two groups of players and a server (see diagram below).



The first part of the drill has the server playing the ball to player A who then tries to beat player B off of the dribble. The defender's primary responsibilities are to stop the attacker from crossing over the end line she is defending by simply slowing down the attacker. If the defender can simply slow down the attacker, **THE DEFENDER WINS!** I am capitalizing on this because coaches don't emphasize this enough. **THE DEFENDER WINS BY SLOWING DOWN THE ATTACK.** There is no need to win the ball or stab or anything like that, simply slow the attack down. One of the things you will notice about this drill is that unlike many coaches, I don't have the defender initiate the drill by passing the ball to the attacker but rather have the server start it with a pass. The reason for this is it's not realistic for a play to start with a pass from a player to an opponent. Players can rotate from A to B to server.

Next, we will add a second defender. Here the key is that the second defender starts 5 yards behind the first attacker. When the ball is played from the server to the attacker (player A), the first defender will come out and slow the attack down to give time for the second defender (player C) to have time to get

behind the first defender and provide support or coverage. The keys here defensively are to get the first defender out quickly because we would rather defend in the offensive half of the field rather than the defensive part. Communication also becomes huge here. The first defender should start right off by saying she has ball, then the second defender encourages her to delay and then lets the first defender know when she is in proper position to provide support. Next the second defender tells the first defender which direction to push the attacker and supports to that side. If the attacker beats the first defender, the second defender steps up and becomes the first defender and the beaten player steps back to become the second defender (this is where communication becomes vital). One of the things I emphasize when the second defender is communicating to the first defender is that directions must be specific. Too often you hear a second defender yell "push her right" and there is confusion regarding whose right. Should it be the attacker's right or the defender's right? I would like the defenders to talk in terms of "your right or your left" or "push them wide or to the middle". The more specific, the less confusing. See the following diagram for the setup of this phase of the drill.



The next step in this progression is to add a second attacker (player D). By doing this, we have now built up to 2 v 2. The other thing we will add is a keeper. The keeper in this part of the drill is somewhat artificial as she is sort of playing on both teams. She is on the attacking team (players A and D) in that they score by chipping or passing the ball into her hands. She is to remain somewhat stationary at first. She is also on the defensive players team (players B and C) in that the keeper is working on communication by telling them who should step to ball and who should fall back in support. If the defensive team wins the ball, they can score by dribbling over the opposite end line. See the following diagram for a better understanding of how this looks.



The next step in this progression can be a couple of things. We could add a third defender to provide balance or we could add a third attacker to attempt to unbalance the defense. As you can see there are many options, however the next step I would recommend is to take this to goal. Everything stays the same

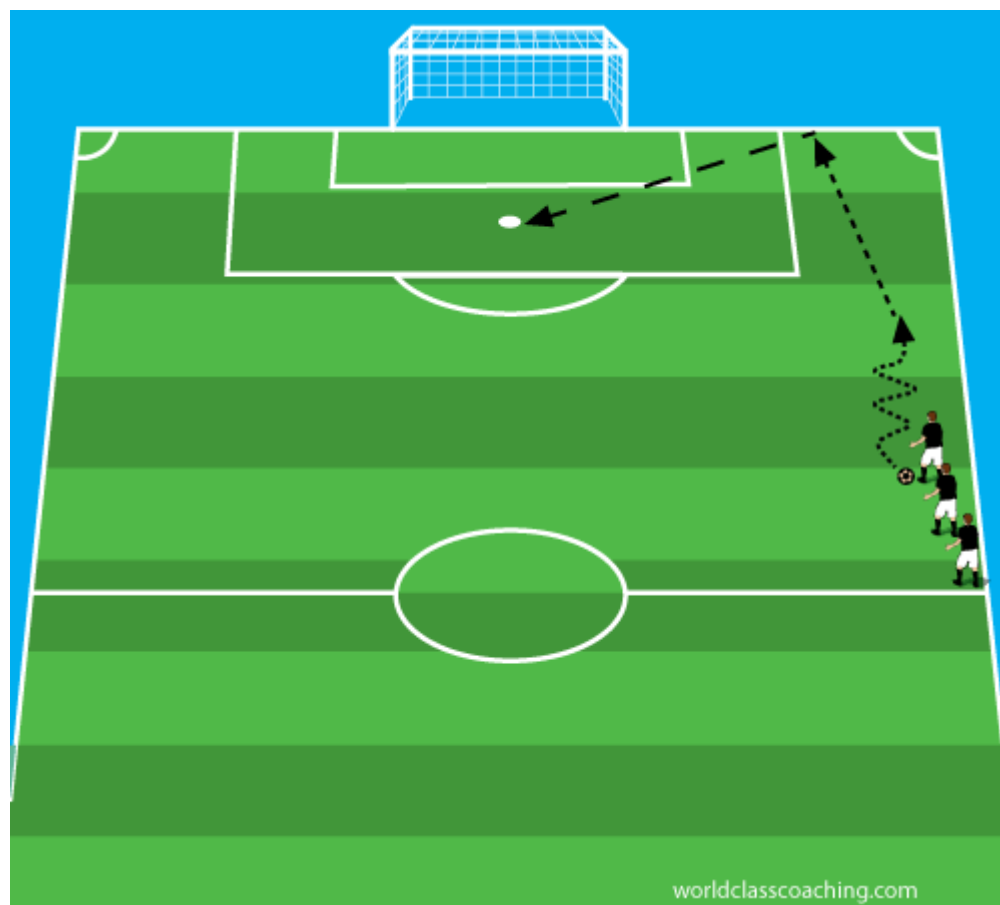
except that now instead of the keeper standing on an end line, we can expand the field and add a full-sized goal. Everything else stays the same except that the attacking team is trying to score rather than simply to chip to the keeper.

Lastly, I would add a second goal and keeper and let them scrimmage with an emphasis on getting behind the ball at all times and providing proper defensive support at all times.

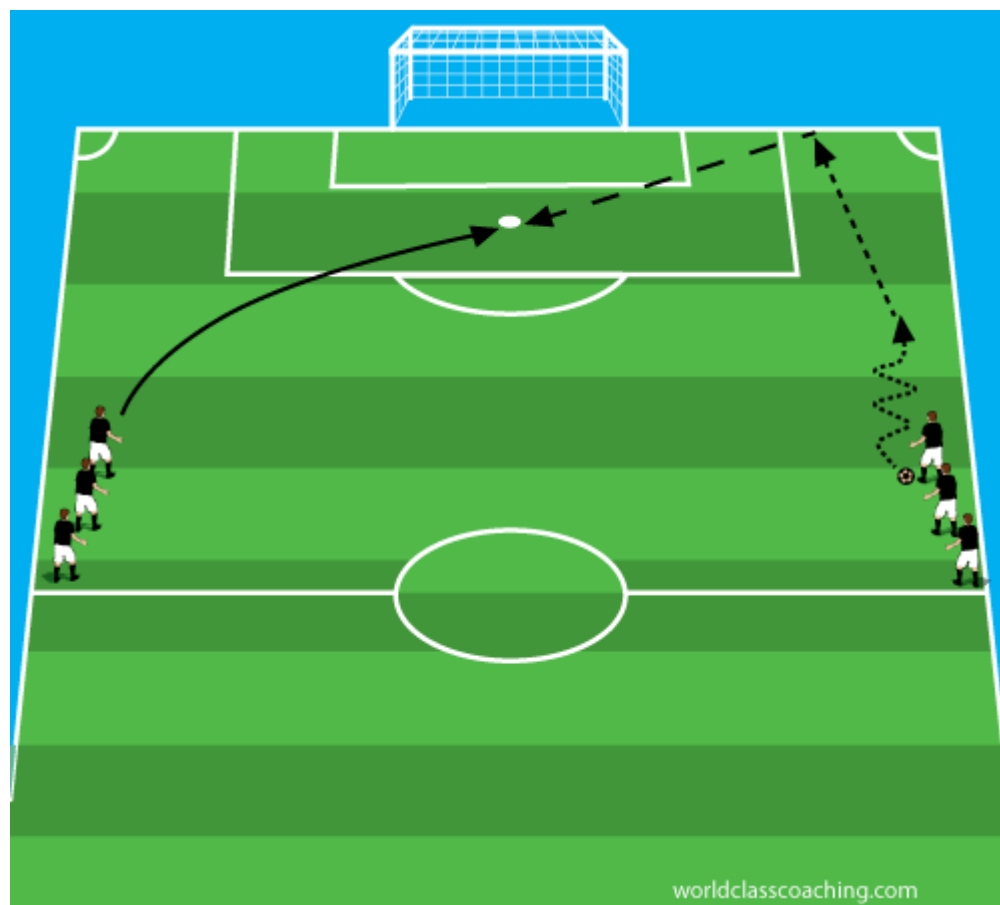
FineSoccer Drill 43

This progression will work on finishing and crossing and finishing crosses. It starts kind of slow but the last couple of progressions are quite fast paced and hectic.

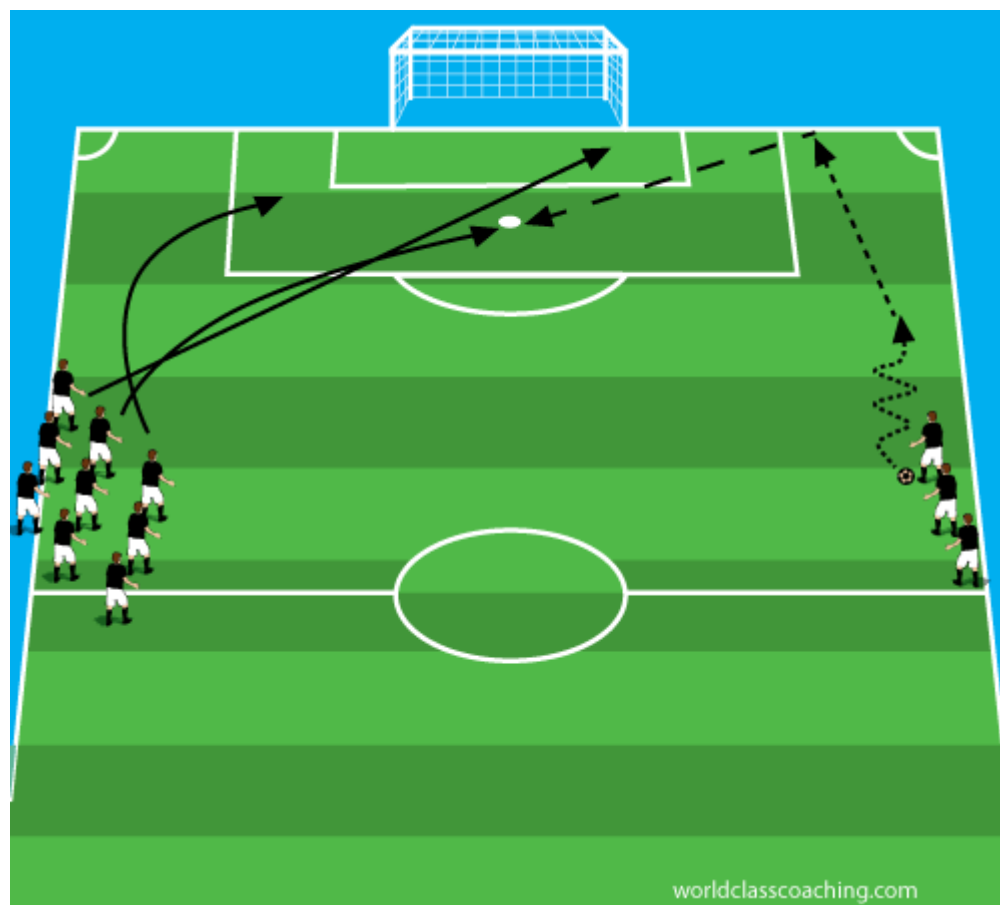
First start with a line as shown in the following diagram. Player A takes a hard touch down the line, then with her second touch takes a touch in towards the near post and crosses the ball out to the 12 yard spot where a coach is standing. If it's a good hard cross on the ground, then the coach knocks it back to the end of the line. If it's a bad serve, then the player has to sprint to get the ball and take it to the back of the line. This simply reinforces the proper approach for the cross and striking the ball properly. Do this 4 times from each side and then move on.



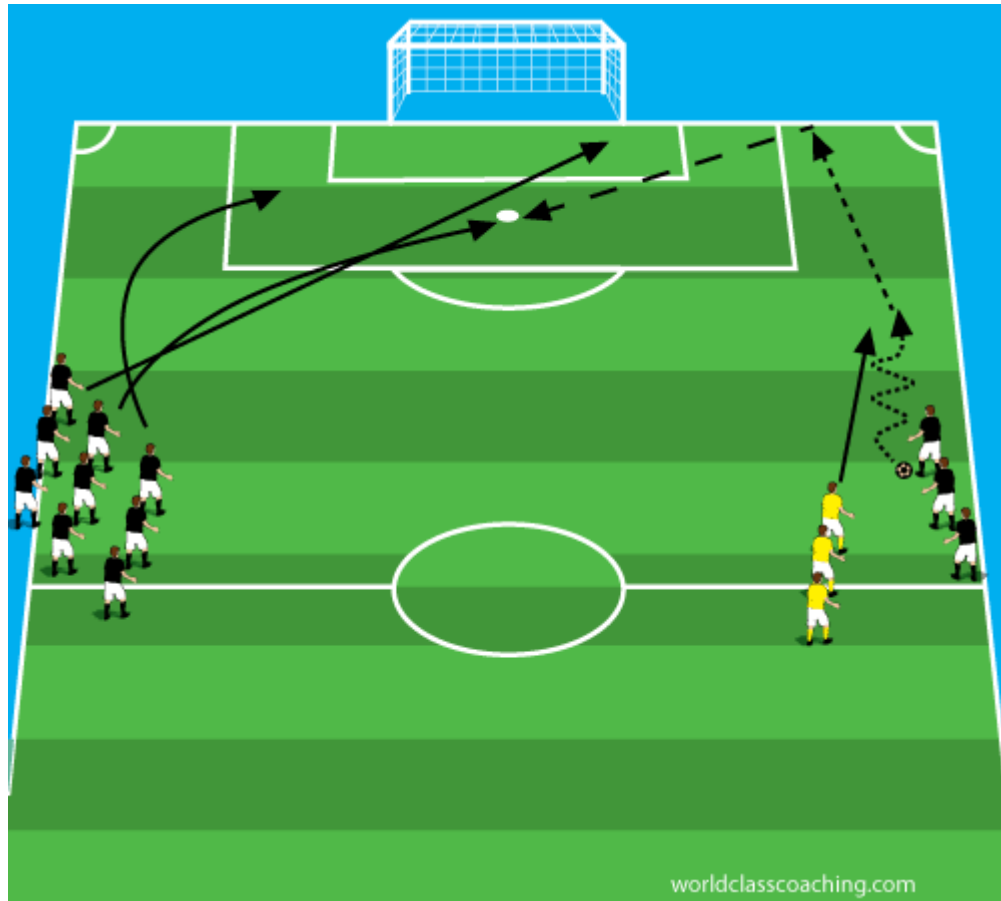
Next we add a second line who is timing their runs from 30 yards out and on the sidelines. This runner wants to get to the 12 at the same time as the ball and this person simply puts the ball in the back of the net. The two players then switch lines. This is working on the 12 yard run, the finish, and the serve. See the following diagram.



Next we add a near post runner and far post runner into the equation. The server now can elect to serve to any of the three runners who are making properly timed and bent runs. See diagram below.

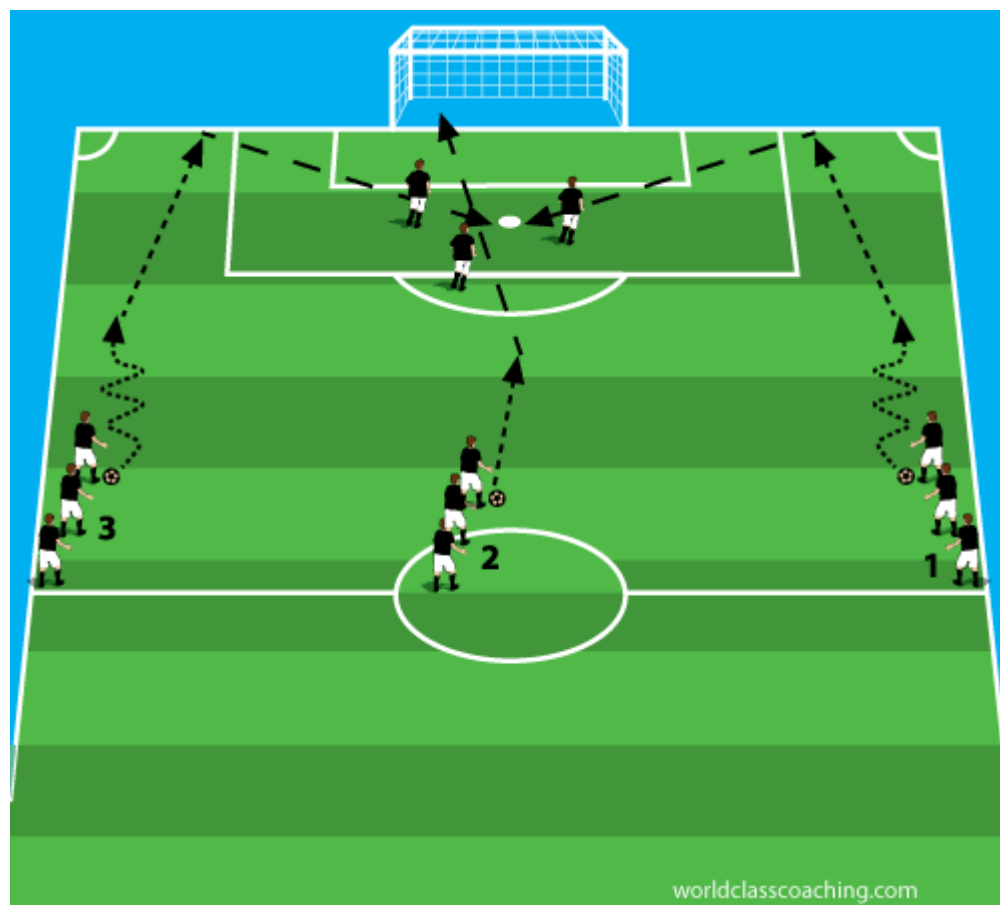


From here you can add defenders on the server and in the middle to speed up the serve and make the server pick a target rather than just serving the ball into the box aimlessly. The key to adding the defenders, is to have the defender pressuring the ball start behind the server to simply make them speed up. Have the defender in the box overplay one of the runners to make it obvious where the serve should go. See the diagram below to see the setup.



Each of these drills should be done from both sides to work on finishing crosses from both sides as well as serving balls with either foot.

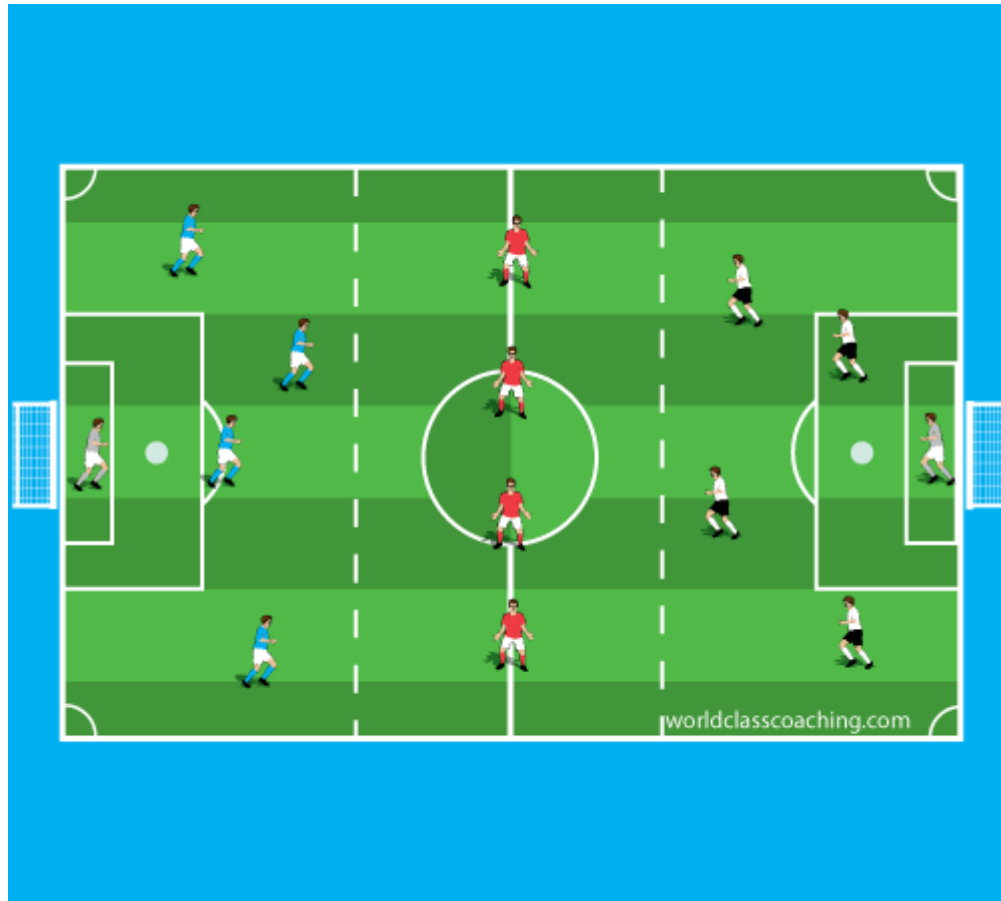
The next step is quite different. Start with three runners in the box making near/far/12 yard runs. Have a line with balls out wide on each side and a line in the middle. First the person in the right line takes a hard touch down the line and then another touch in and serves the ball to the runners who try to finish first time. As soon as this is done, the middle line takes a hard touch and hits a shot (the runners get out of the way of the shot, frame the goal, and finish any rebounds). Then the left side takes their hard touch and a serve followed by another shot from the middle. The runners can stay in for a hard 2 minutes then rotate them. The rest of the players rotate through the three lines. This drill has a lot of movement, communication, serving, finishing of crosses, long distance shots, conditioning and goalkeeping. You can also add some defenders if you want. This is best done if you have two keepers, as it's quite hectic and tiring for them to stay in there for any length of time.



Fine Soccer Drill 44

This is a 4 v 4 v 4 game that works on attacking at speed, defensive organization, and both offense to defense and defense to offense transition.

Start with a full-sized field (if possible) broken into thirds with the middle third 10 yards long and the others of equal size to each other (see diagram below)



The red team starts in the middle third and attacks the blue team (there is a neutral keeper in each goal). If the blue team wins the ball, the red team starts defending to keep them in that third of the field. This is working on the quick transition from offense to defense. If the red team wins the ball back in the offensive third of the field, they continue to attack the ball. The blue team tries to win the ball and get out of their defensive third of the field. If they succeed in getting into the middle third of the field, they then attack the white team in the other third. With constantly changing opponents, a team must reorganize quickly which works on communication (especially from the keepers).

If the blue team scores on the red team, then the ball starts in that keeper's hands and they change directions and the blue team tries to work the ball out of the back with the white team defending (in other words, if a team scores, they are rewarded by getting to keep the ball and attack the other goal).

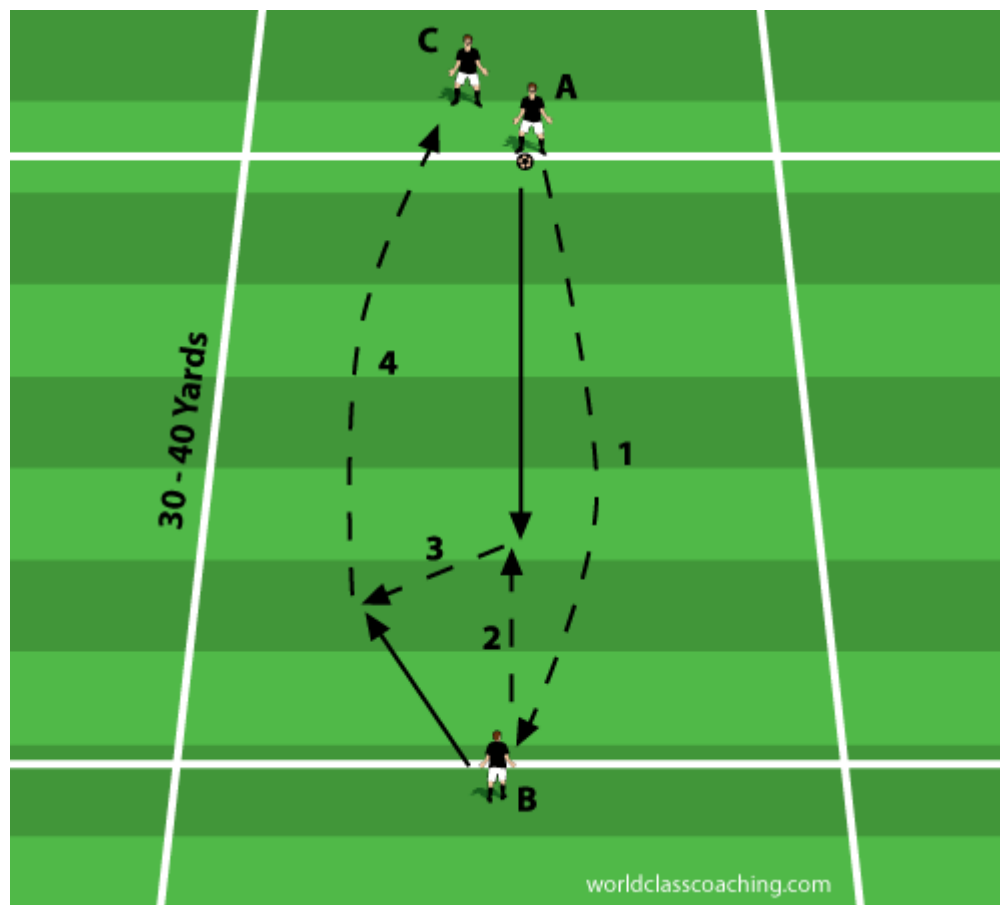
With older, more skillful teams, you can make the middle third as small as you want while with younger players you can make this middle third bigger (the

bigger the middle third the easier it is to pass to a teammate in that middle to get out of the back). To really put pressure on the team trying to get out of the back, completely take away the middle third. This means that the team coming out of the back must cross over into the other half of the field to be clear of the first defensive team and as soon as they do that, the second defensive team is there to go against them. Without skillful, controlled players, this can turn into total chaos. Start with the middle third and then if that is successful, progress to a smaller middle and then no middle.

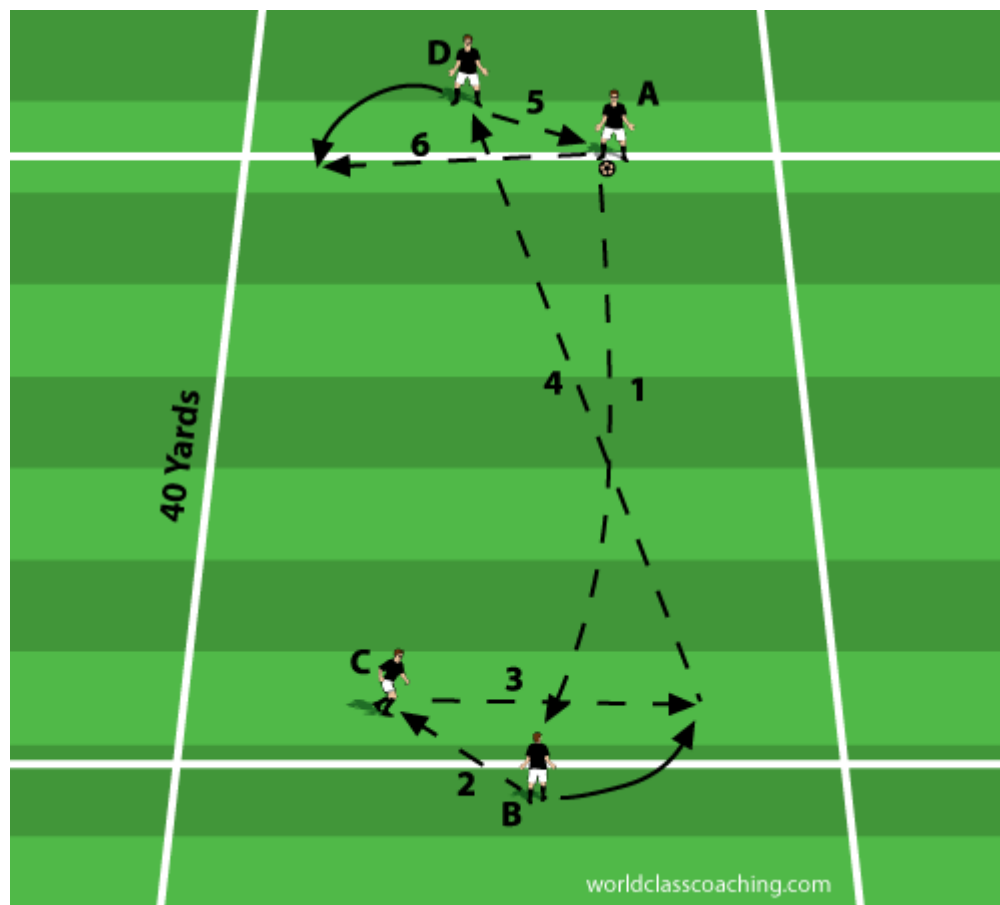
FineSoccer Drill 45

The drills shown here are designed to work on both playing and receiving long chips and driven balls which are integral parts of the game at the higher level.

First start with 3 players in two lines 30-40 yards apart (distance will depend on the abilities of the players). Player A chips the ball to player B and then runs right at player B. Player B receives the ball and one touches the ball back to player A who one touches the ball softly to the side for player B to then chip the ball to player C and then player B sprints toward player C and player C one touches the ball to player B who lays it off for player C's chip back to player A. See the following diagram. This is working on chipping, receiving, laying balls off and following your pass (how many times do you see a player clear a ball from the back and then stand or slowly jog up the field when they should be sprinting up to support their pass. This simple short-short-long passing drill can help to develop a lot of really good habits.



The next drill requires 4 players in two lines 40 yards apart or so. Player A drives the ball to player B. Player B one touches the ball to player C who is slightly in front of her. Player C one touches the ball to the side for player B to drive the ball to player D who is slightly behind player A. Player D one touches the ball to player A who one touches the ball to the side for player D to run onto and drive the ball to player C. This rotation continues. See the following diagram.. One of the keys here is that while at first this might seem like a very static drill, in order for it to work properly, the players will be constantly moving and communicating as the player who wants to receive the ball must get somewhat behind the other player. There also must be communication between the two players regarding which side to lay the ball off to and where the players should be positioned. Done properly, this is a very quick moving and difficult drill.

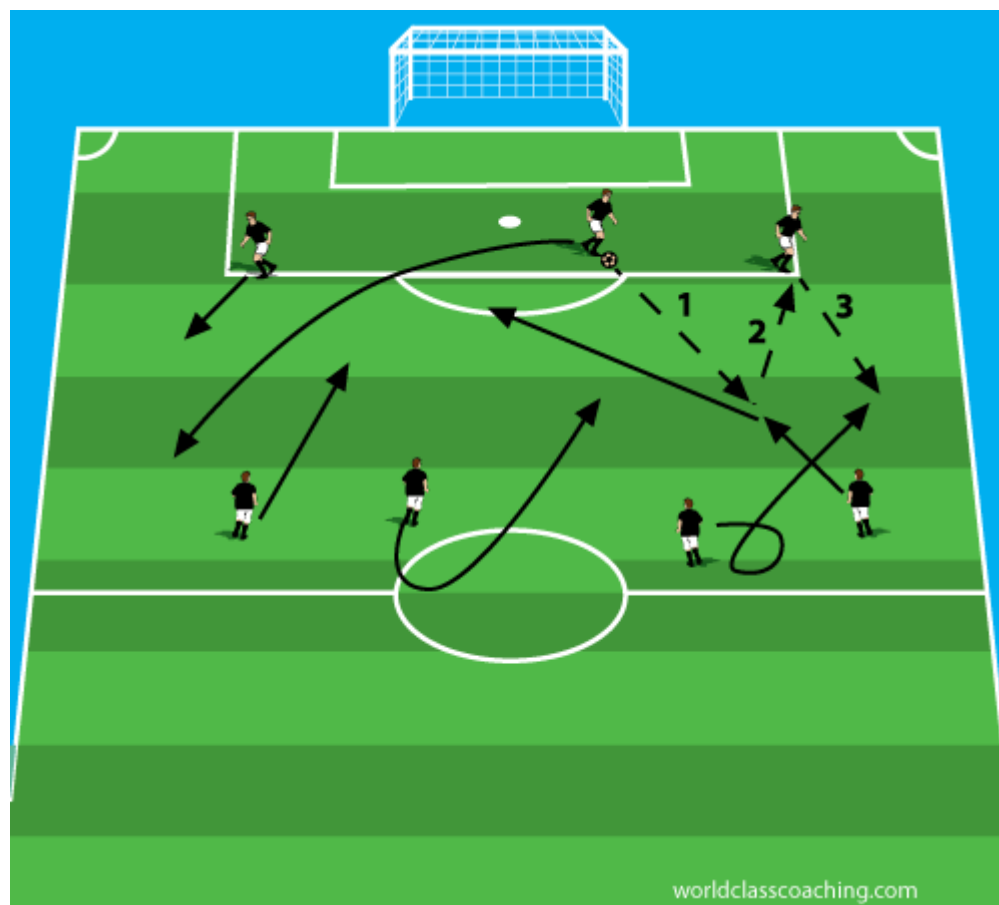


Some variations you can add to the above drill is to put a goalkeeper in the middle. Each of the chips or driven balls must be done over or around the keeper. Also, you can add some conditioning by saying that once the ball is played away from your side, both players have to do 5 push ups or any type of conditioning exercise which will force them to move quickly and think a bit more.

FineSoccer Drill 46

Keeping possession of the ball while moving up the field is a simple concept, but from watching many games it's obviously much more difficult to actually apply. This drill will show you how you can take what the defense gives you and use it against them.

Start with the 7 player set up as shown in the following diagram with 4 players around midfield and 3 back by the 18.



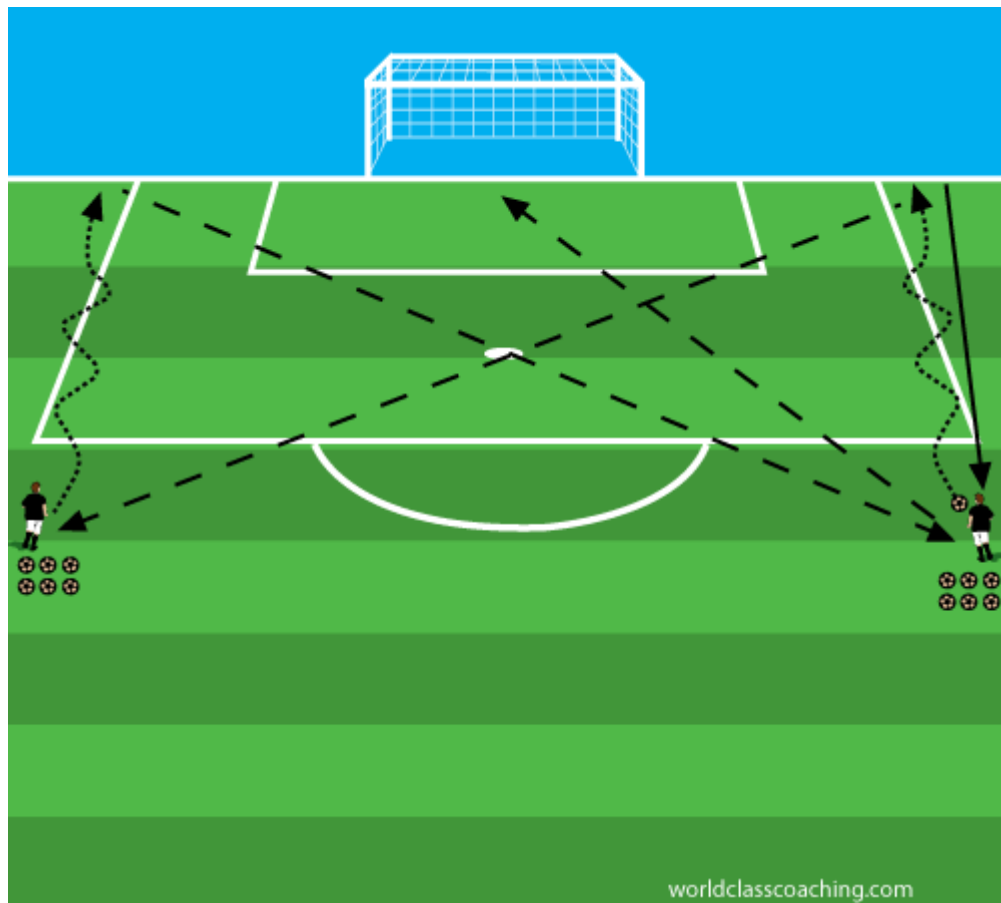
One of the three players starts with the ball, then 2 of the 4 players check to the ball from midfield while the other 2 players go away. The ball is played to one of the checking runners and the player who passes it forwards follows her pass with a hard sprint to get up by the two players who checked away. The player who checked to the ball but didn't receive it, spins off and goes away as well. The player who receives the ball will one touch it BACK to one of the remaining two players who are slowly jogging forward. The player who played the ball back follows her pass and gets in a line with the two who are jogging forward. Next, the two players who originally were running away from the ball now check to the ball and we start up again. The general rule is two players check back to the ball, everything is one touch, always play the ball in the direction you are facing, and follow your pass.

This becomes a very simple pattern of players checking back to the ball, receiving the ball with their first touch, and playing the ball in the direction they are facing at all times. Also, this drill develops the habit of sprinting in after each pass, and supporting at angles. It takes a while for a group to do this properly.

FineSoccer Drill 47

This is a great drill for working on goalkeeping footwork, shot blocking, handling crosses, shooting, serving balls, dribbling, and conditioning.

All that is needed is two field players, a goalkeeper, the offensive third of the field (with goal) and several balls. Player A starts with a ball and if the keeper isn't in a good position can shoot. If the keeper is in a good position, she dribbles down to the end line and crosses the ball back out to player B who can either shoot or do the same thing, dribbling down and crossing the ball back out to player A. The other option either player A or player B has is to attack the goal on a breakaway at any time. (see diagram below for the setup)



This drill works on a field player making the correct decision regarding whether she has a good angle to shoot from, it also works on getting her hips turned if she decides to take the ball down to the end line and serve the ball back

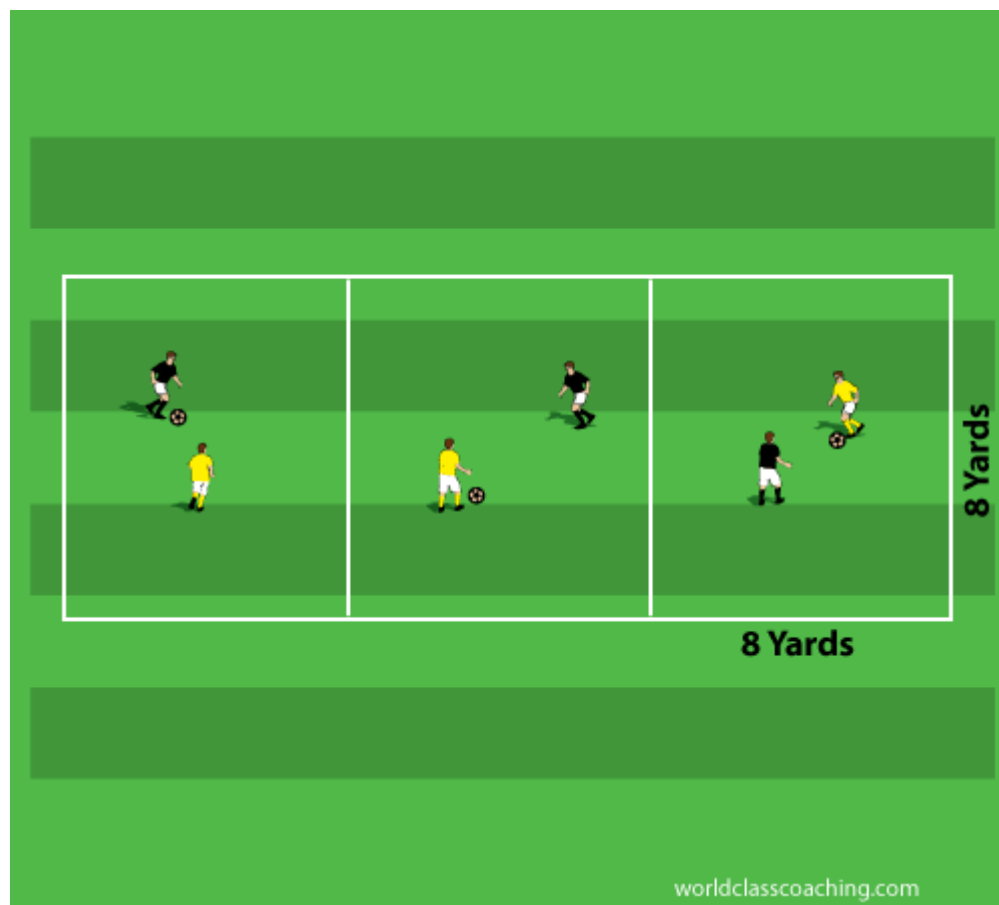
to player B. Player B is working on positioning her body to be able to receive the ball and finish it first time or take a good touch down the line for her serve.

From the keeper's perspective, this is an excellent drill to work on proper footwork. When I first saw this drill done, it was actually done solely for the benefit of the keeper which should give you an idea of how much work it is for a keeper.

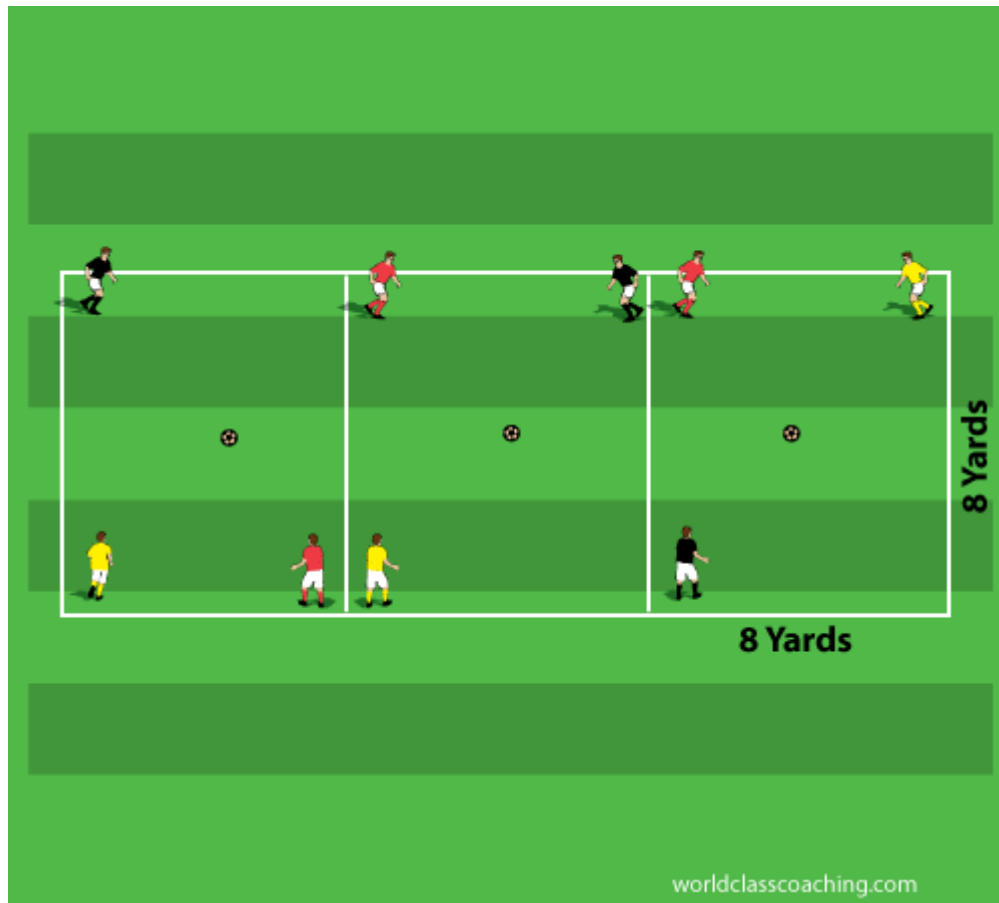
The next step in this drill would be to add a third field player at the top of the D. This player can either receive the ball back out from a serve back or can also add in a near post run at any point to add another variable for the keeper to consider.

FineSoccer Drill 48

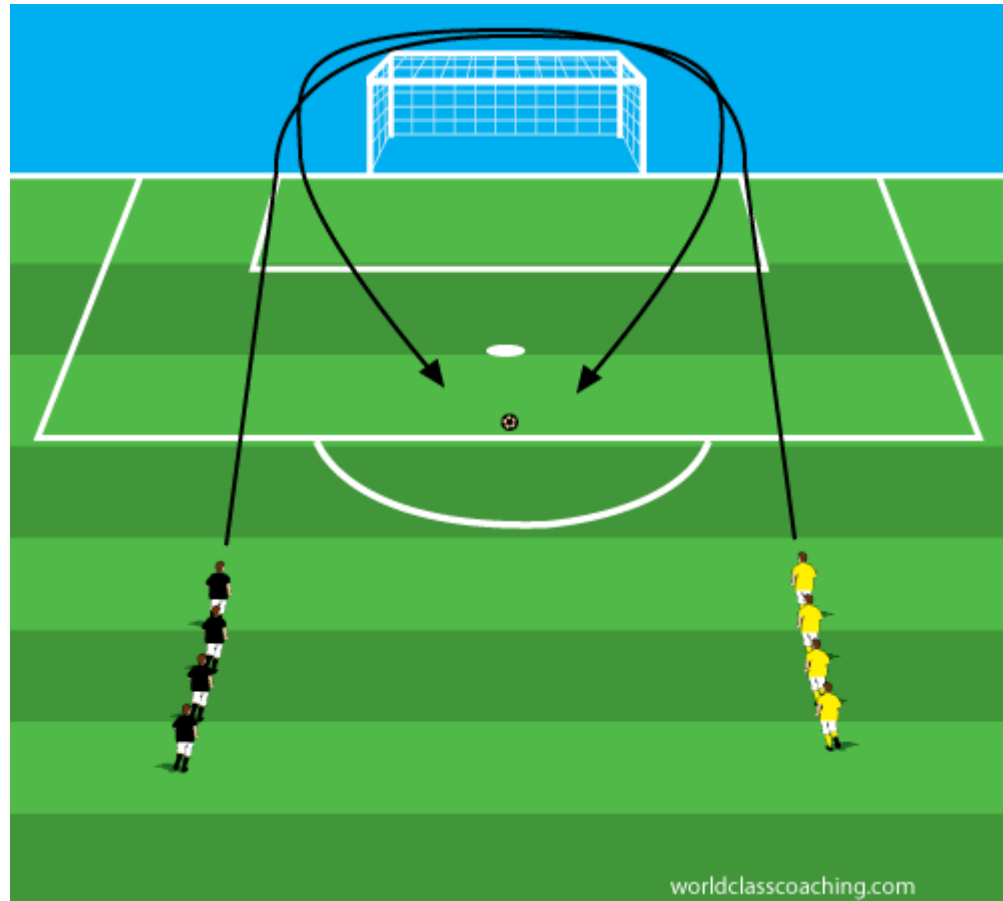
The first part of the aggressiveness drills is to have an 8 x 8 grid for each two players in your group. The two players are working on shielding. One player starts with the ball and when the coach says "go" the other player tries to win the ball from the first player who is trying to keep the ball by shielding. If the second player wins the ball, then she tries to shield the ball for the remainder of the 10 seconds. The key is to emphasize that the player without the ball is trying to legally win the ball and that soccer is a CONTACT sport. This can be done as a competition where each player starts with the ball 10 times and then sees who has the ball the most times at the end of the 10 second periods. See the following diagram for the setup.



Next, switch from 2 players to 3 players in a grid. Start with a player in each corner with the ball in the middle. When the coach says "go" each player tries to win the ball and keep it by shielding it from the other 2. This could also be done as a contest. If the ball goes outside of the grid, they all lose that battle. See the diagram below for this setup.



Now that the players are used to winning the ball and keeping it, we now add winning the ball, keeping it, and then going to goal. Start with two lines approximately 25 yards from the goal. When the coach says "go" the first player in line A sprints around the goal going toward the post nearest her first. At the same time, the first player in line B goes around the goal toward the post closest to her. The ball is on the top of the 18 and the first player to the ball, wins it, shields it until she can find the opportunity to turn and then goes to goal. If the second player then wins the ball, she goes to goal. This drill works on conditioning, aggressiveness, shielding, finishing, goalkeeping, and defense. The coach should have the next two players in line start as soon as the two in front of them get near the ball. This drill can have as many as 12 field players going to one goal without there being too much standing around. See the diagram below for the setup.



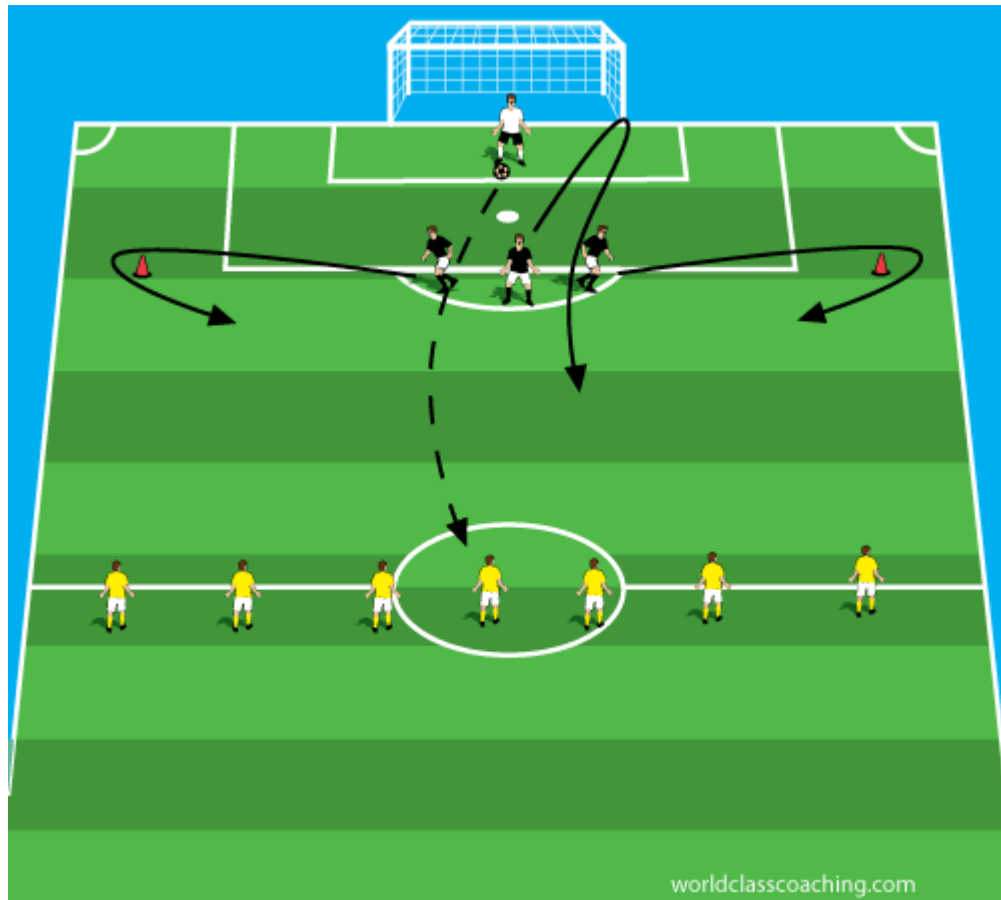
The last step in this progression is to have a 6 v 6 game with two goals on a small (40 x 30) field. The ball gets served into the middle and either team can win the ball and score on either goal. This will encourage the players to fight to win the ball since defending in this game is very difficult. Carefully watch for fouling as this game can get out of hand if not monitored properly.

FineSoccer Drill 49

This is a defensive organization and discipline drill that also works on communication.

There will be three defenders going against seven attackers. The three defenders start at the top of the D and the seven attackers are on the other side of midfield. The keeper punts the ball out toward midfield and as soon as the ball is punted, one defender has to run out and touch a cone out on the left side of the field, one has to touch on a cone on the right side of the field and the third defender has to sprint and touch the goalpost. No attacker can cross midfield

until the ball does (for younger groups this can be moved in somewhat). See the following diagram for the setup and runs.



Once the defenders make their sprints they must organize themselves so that one goes toward the ball to slow them down and the other two provide proper support and balance. If the defense either wins the ball or simply slows down the attack, they win.

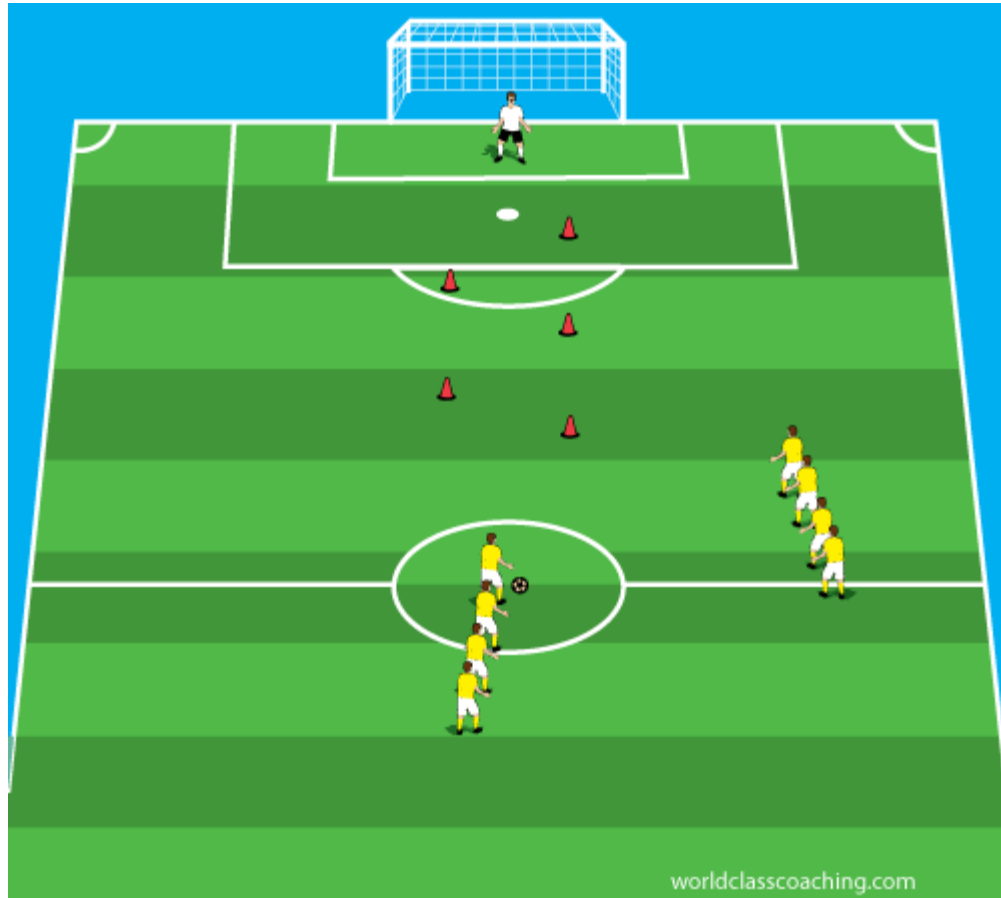
This drill works on goalkeeper communication as well as organization. Also it works on a teams shape and balance. I would recommend doing this as the last step in a progression from Drill 4, Drill 5, and then Drill 6.

As a warning, remember that this is a defensive drill. It would seem that the attacking team would be successful almost every time because of the number superiority. Please realize however, that this is an unnatural attacking formation and if the defense does their job, the defense will win all (or at least most) of the attacks.

FineSoccer Drill 50

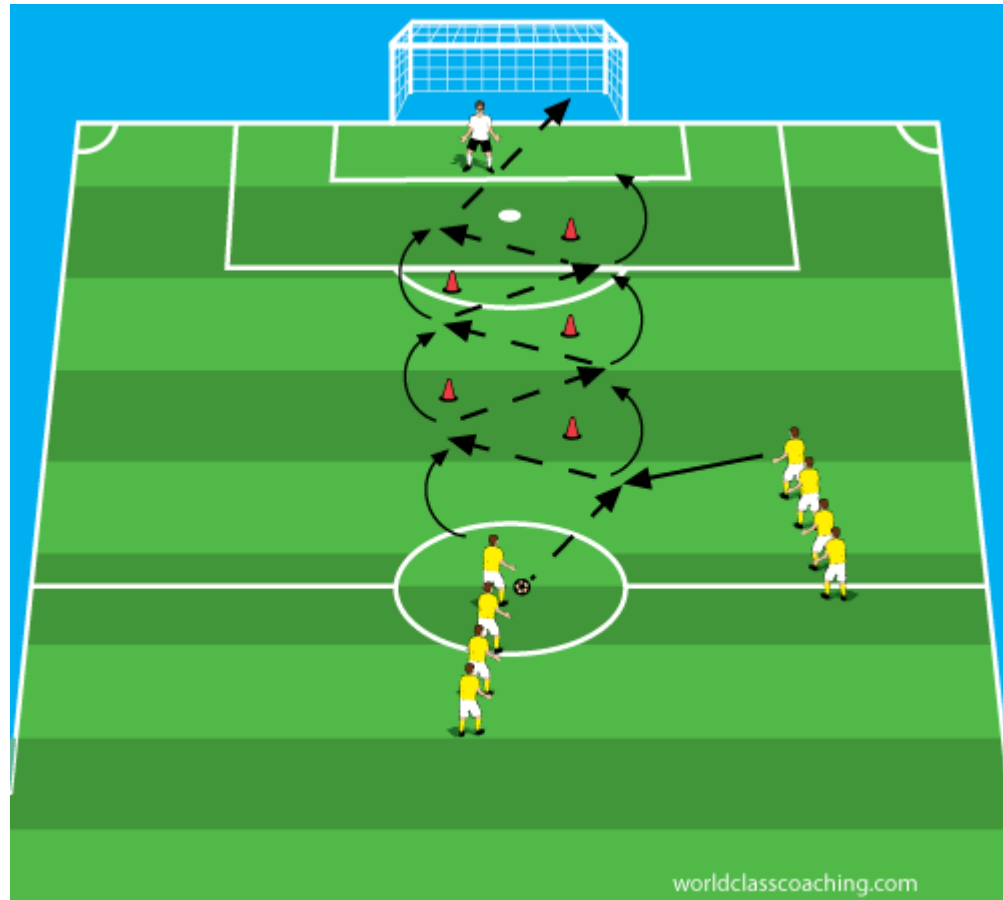
This series of drills works on using a target player and playing off of this target player.

Start with a layout of cones as shown below. The cones should be staggered approximately 8 yards apart.

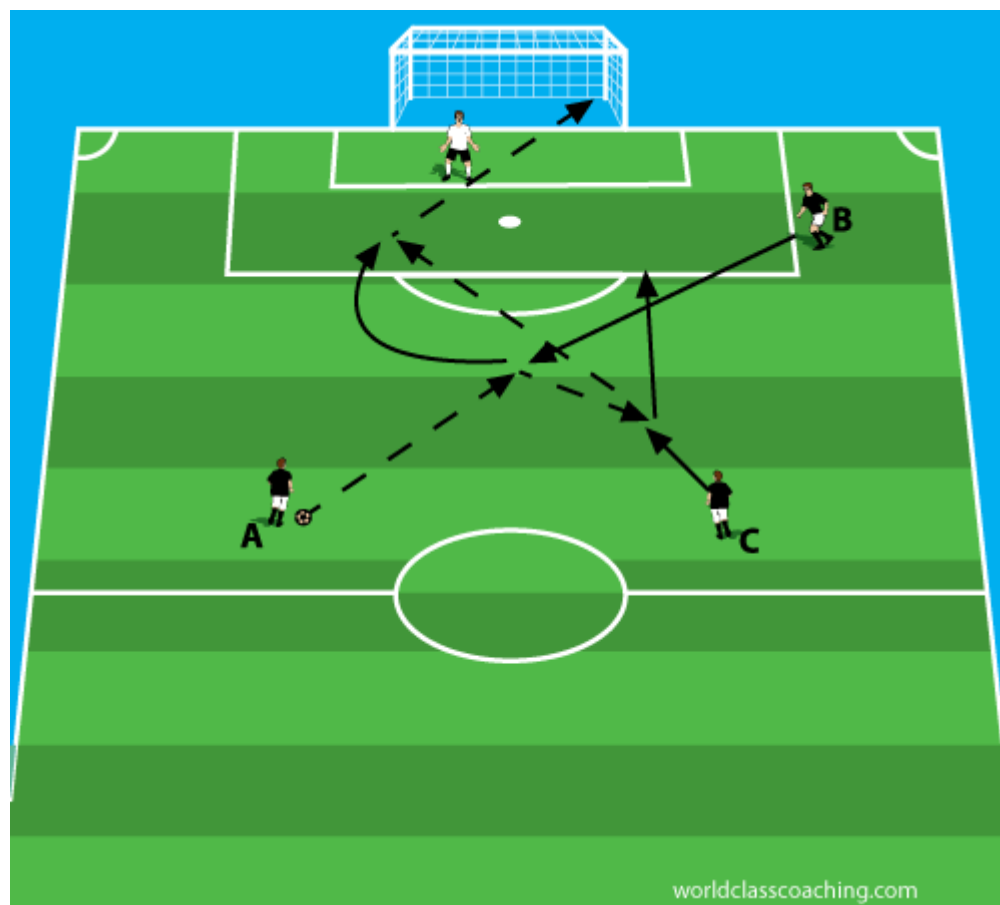


Player A checks into the space right in front of the first cone. Player B plays her the ball and then supports to her left. Player B plays the ball back to player A and then spins off in the opposite direction. The two players then proceed through the cones playing one touch wall passes. If they make it through all of the cones without making a mistake they are rewarded with the opportunity to hit a shot. Any mistake (missing a cone, two touches, popping the ball up, spinning the wrong direction etc) means they must start over (or go to the back of the line). The keys here are for player B to spin AWAY from the direction she passes (among other things this makes it more difficult for the defender to watch both the

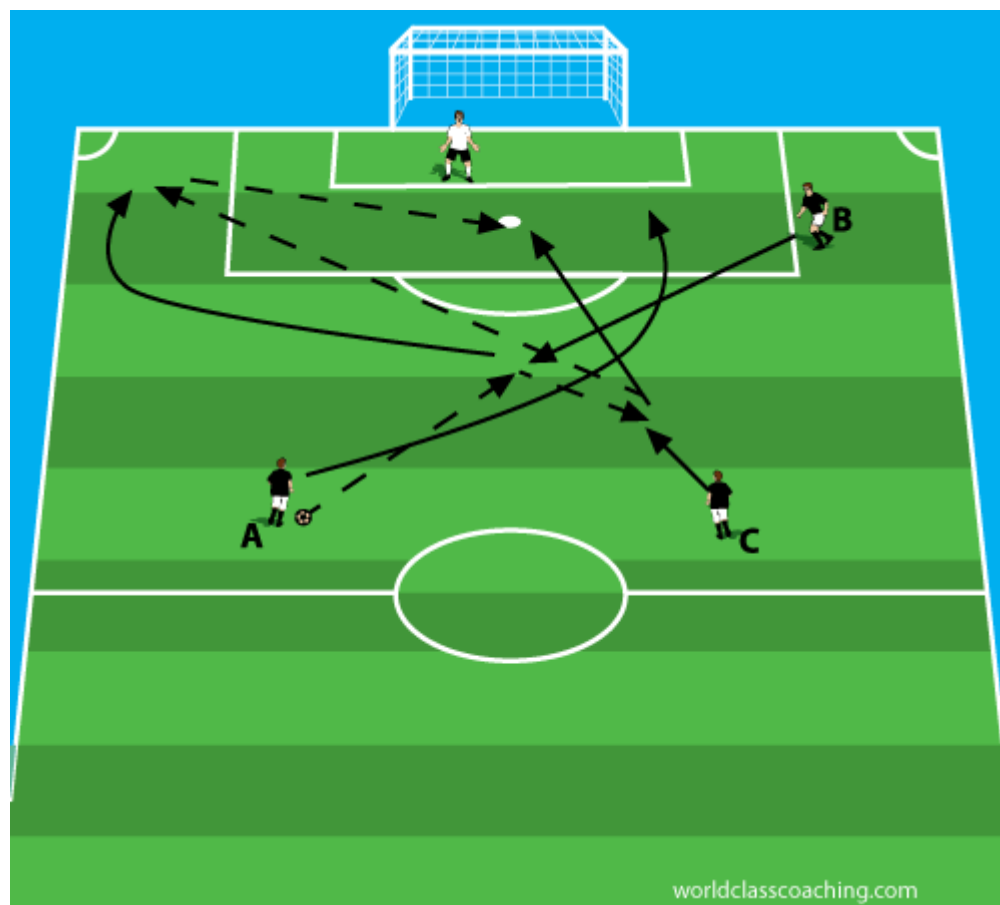
ball and the player in a real game). Also, the players want to make bent runs to meet the ball and then go away to increase the angle for the next pass. See the diagram below for an example of this drill.



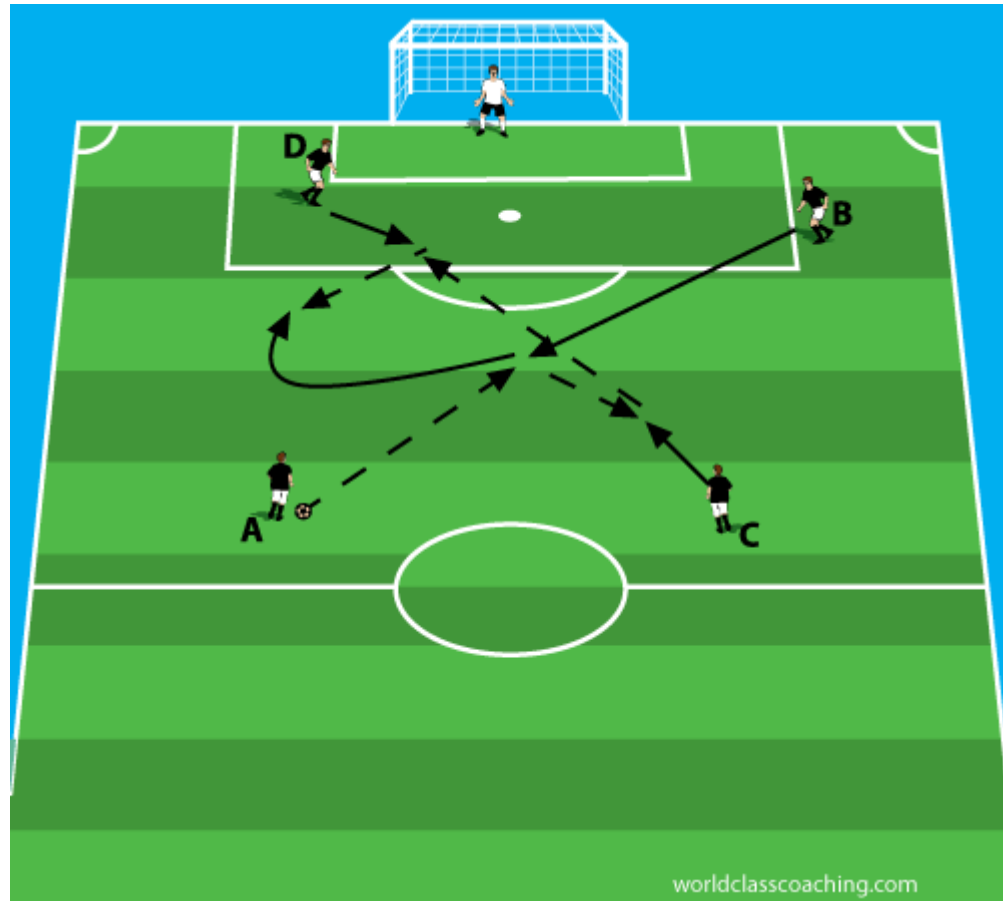
The next step is to add in some other players. We will start with a three person combination. Player A plays the ball to player B who has checked to her. Player B plays the ball back to player C who has made a supporting run. Player B spins off and receives the ball back from player C for a one touch shot. See the diagram below:



Next, we can do the same thing but instead of player B getting the shot, she bends her run out wider and receives the ball and takes it to the end line for a cross while players A and C make near/far post runs. See diagram below.



Lastly, add a second target player. Player A plays the ball to player B who has checked back for the ball. She plays the ball to player C who now finds player D who is checking to the ball. Player D can now find player B or even player A. See diagram below.



As you can see, there are almost an unlimited number of variations for these patterns using a target player. You can add more players coming from the midfield and also add a couple of opponents to make it more realistic. If you add the opponents, simply give the players the options that are available to them and let them decide which is the best depending upon the situation.

Try this whole progression and I think you will find that your team will have a better understanding of their options when using a target player.

FineSoccer Drill 51

Today's drills are really just a progression of one big drill called THE MAZE. Very simply, it's a drill that will allow the players to get a large number of touches on the ball and also get a good deal of conditioning as a bonus.

The keys to this drill are that space can range from a full-sized soccer field to a small gym (I have done this progression in some of the smallest spaces that you can imagine and it still works if you can keep the work rate up). It does

require one ball per player and a minimum of 6 players, but the more the merrier (I have seen it done with up to 30 players at one time). This drill can be done by players of all ages (while it's wonderful for young players to get this amount of ball work, I have seen this done by a college team for a 45 minute period and the players looked like they were about to pass out from working that hard).

Start with all of the players in a line 5 yards apart near the outside of the area you have to work with. Each player should have a ball and be spread out evenly. Each player starts to get quick touches on the ball that is between their feet (just real simple touch-touch on the side of the ball). The player in the back of the line starts by slalom dribbling through the line as fast as she can while maintaining control of the ball. As soon as this dribbler gets three people in front, then the new player in back of the line begins. When a dribbler gets to the front of the line, she goes 5 yards in front of the previous front person and starts with her touches on the side of the ball. Obviously, the fewer people in line, the more times they will go through the line, but when you consider that each player is getting touches on the ball throughout the entire progression you can see that the work has already begun. Once you feel like they have done this enough (with 30 players you might want to do this one time through and with 6 you might want to do it 5 times through). The next step would be to do various moves while going through the line. The last person would go straight at the player and then do a cut-catch to the right. As soon as she goes past this player she goes directly at the NEXT player and does a cut-catch to the right.

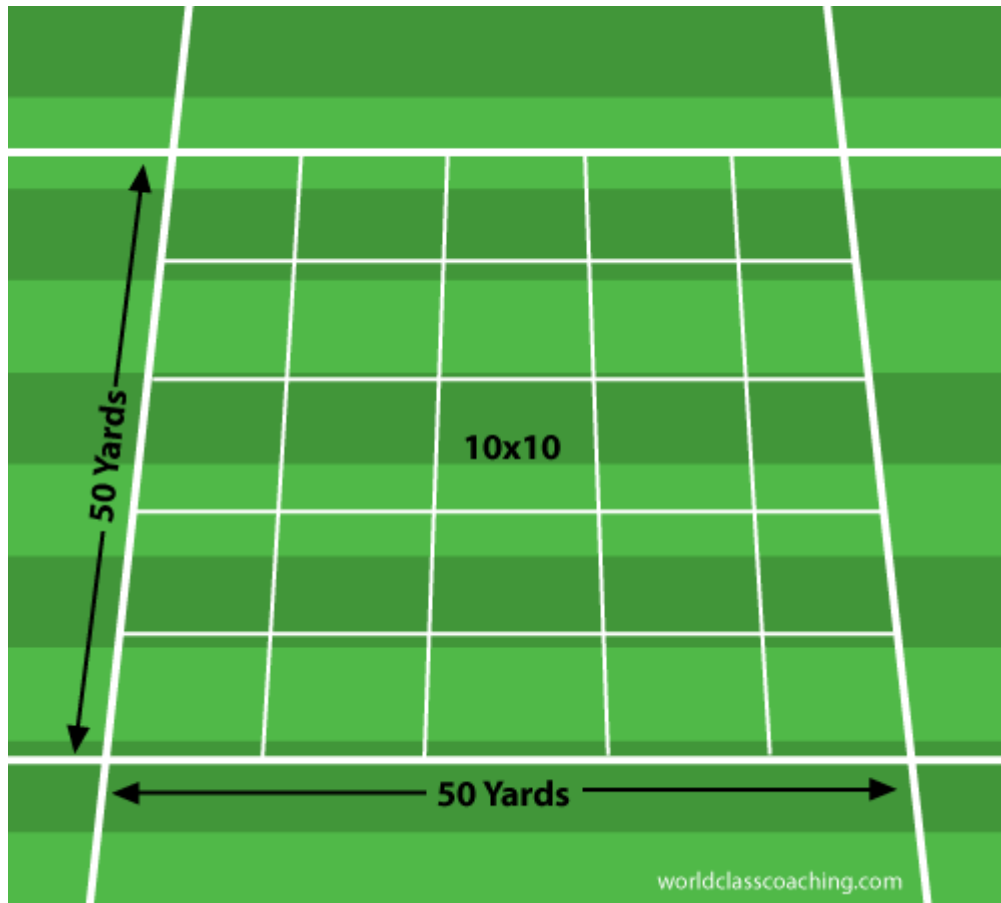
Another thing that can be done in the maze is to have the players dribble around the players using the inside of the foot only, or even the left foot only (when I say dribble around the players, I mean a complete 360 degree circle around each player). Have the players alternate the direction of the circle with each player in front of them. Other options are to do it one touch through each player (meaning slalom dribbling where you really have to push the ball through since it's only one touch to go past each player). This really forces the players to go fast through the lines.

At any point you can make the change from touches on the side of the ball to touches on top of the ball or any other variation that you want. Done properly, this can be a wonderful progression working on individual ball skills and conditioning. I don't think there is a player in the world that couldn't benefit from some of this type of training.

FineSoccer Drill 52

This progression works on possession and changing the point of attack.

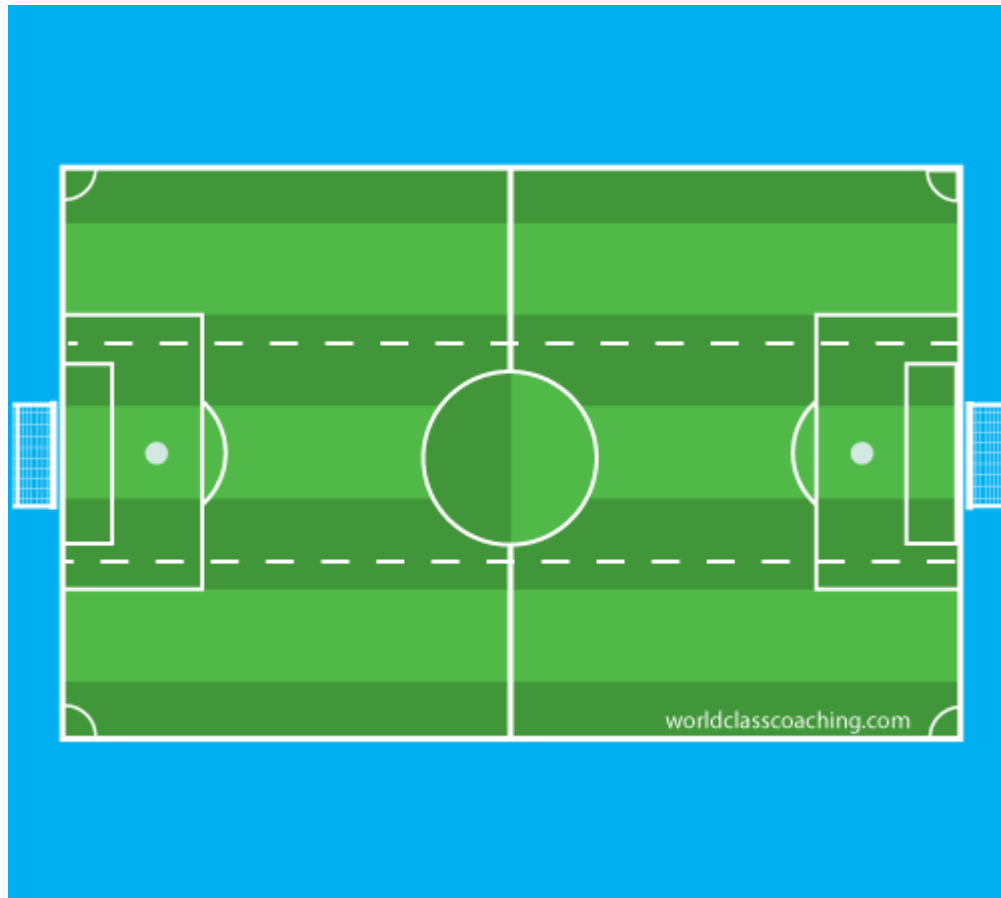
Start with an area of 50 x 50 area. Break this area into 10 x 10 zones (see diagram below).



Two teams (8 v 8 would be ideal) and it's a simple keep away game. The difference between this game and any other keep away game is that the players are encouraged to both keep possession of the ball as well as look far first. The way this is done is to reward every pass that goes into different zones. For example, if a ball is passed from one zone into the zone right next to it, that pass is worth one point. If it travels to a player two zones away, then it's worth two points. However many zones a ball goes through on a pass (this is assuming the pass is successfully completed) the team gets that number of points. The one other rule that must be used is that a player must sprint OUT of her zone after she makes the pass. In order to make this more successful, you can have one or

two neutral players that are always on the team that is on offense in order to give them a numbers superiority. First team to 50 points wins. It is much, much easier if you have someone other than yourself keep score.

Next start with a full field (or smaller if you have limited numbers) and break it into the thirds as shown in the diagram below).



This is a simple game of soccer with one rule added: the ball must go through all three zones before the team can attack the goal. This will force a team to maintain proper balance and shape and works on changing the point of attack. Any time a team loses possession of the ball and then regains it, they must go through all three zones again before attacking the goal. If you want, you can put in a rule that if a team wins the ball in their offensive third of the field, they don't have to switch the ball through the vertical thirds. A ball that is played from the right side over to the left side is considered to have gone through all three thirds even though it didn't touch down in the middle third.

The next step is to take up the middle lines and simply play soccer. It has been my experience that the ball will be switched much more often than before simply by playing this game first.

FineSoccer Drill 53

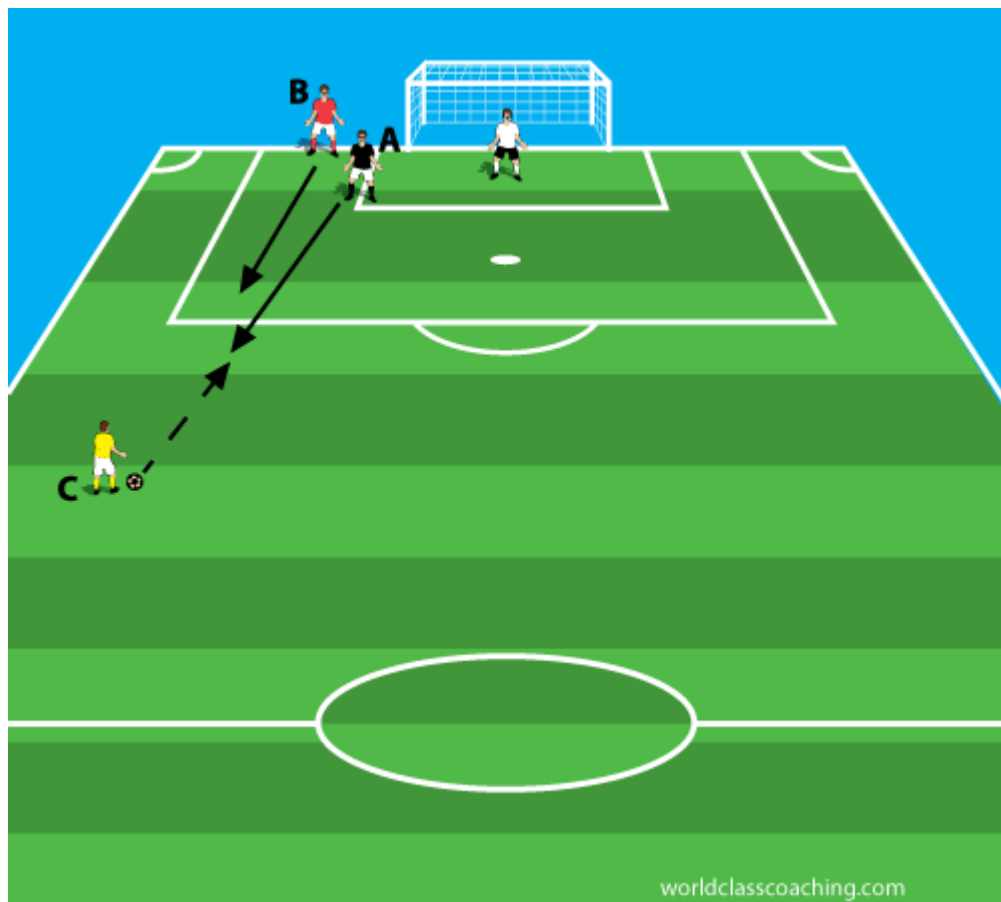
Start with two "grids" set up on angles going toward the 18. See the following diagram.. At the top of each grid, are a line of players who will attack the goal (line A). The defenders will be at the bottom of the grids (line B). Player A tries to beat player B off of the dribble and if she can cross over the end line into the 18, she tries to get a shot hit. If the defender can stop the attacker, then the play is over.



Some of the points of emphasis here are that the attacker should go at speed, she should work on her 1 v 1 moves, and look to finish as quickly as possible. Defensively, the players work on their first defender role and force the player wide or to her weaker foot. The keeper works on communication, angles,

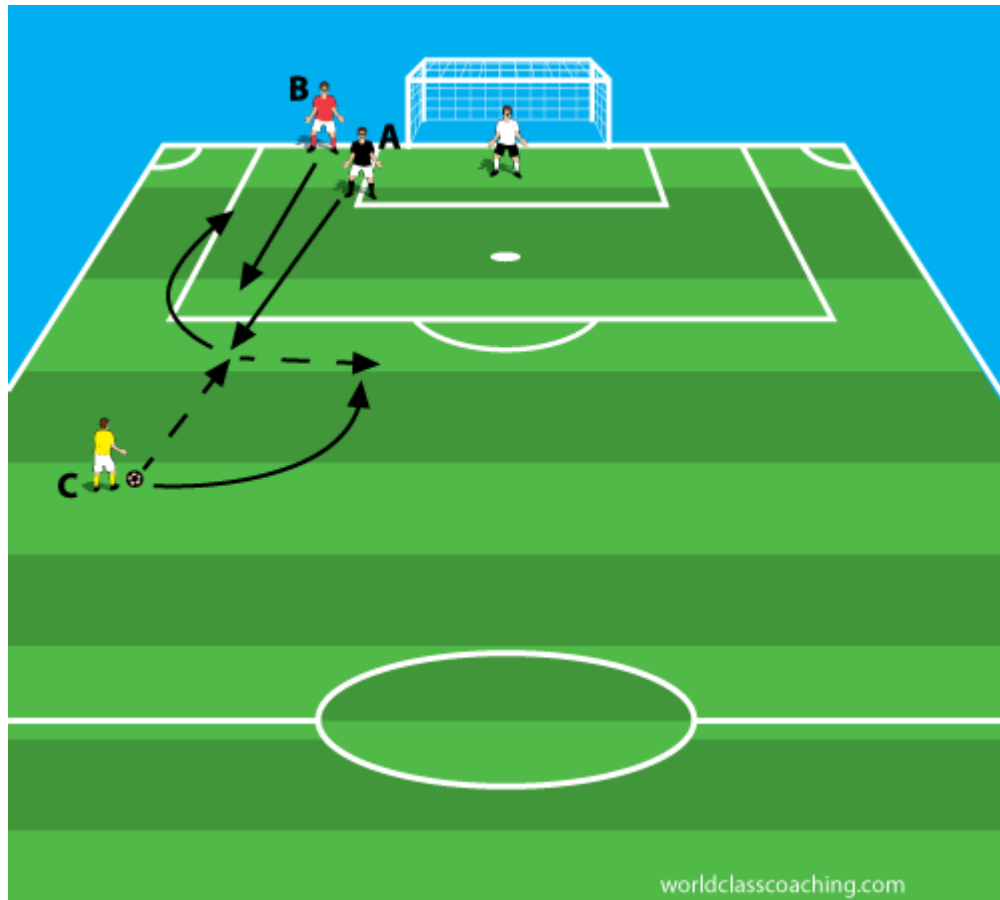
and shot blocking as well as holding balls (if there is a rebound, the ball is live). As soon as the play is over, the attacker in the other grid begins to attack. This should be a fast moving drill and the players should rotate to all four lines.

The next drill has two lines. The first player in line A sprints out to the server with the ball (C). The server plays the ball to her feet. As soon as player A gets a two step start in her sprint to the ball, the person in line B sprints out and defends. The player with the ball must receive the ball, hold it, and turn as soon as possible. The defender simply tries to prevent the turn and slow the attack down. As soon as the play is over, the defender becomes the next target player, the next person in line becomes the defender and the previous target player becomes the server in line C. See the following diagram..



The last step in this progression is to allow the player in line C to play the ball in and then support the pass. The target player has the option of either finding the supporting player or turning and shooting. All of a sudden, this becomes a great drill for both offensive and defensive communication. The key

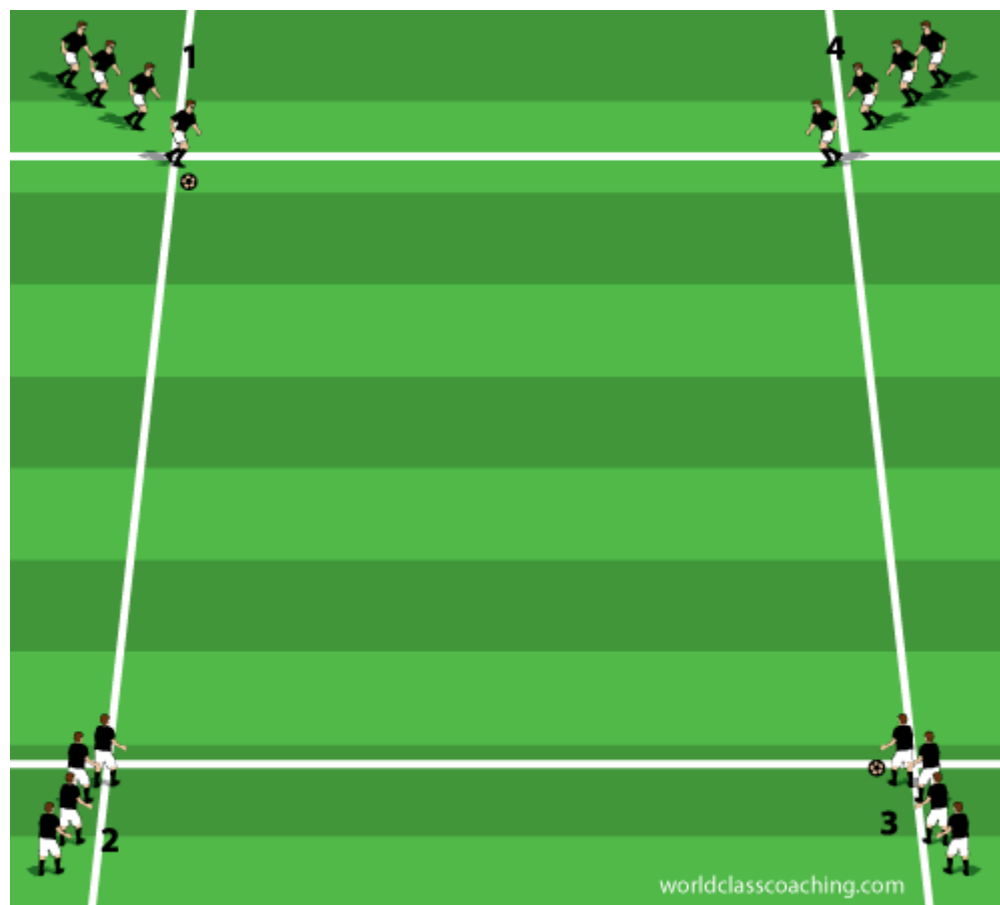
here is to make the offense go at speed and NOT let them slow the ball down and turn it into a slow paced 2 v 1 competition. (see diagram below)



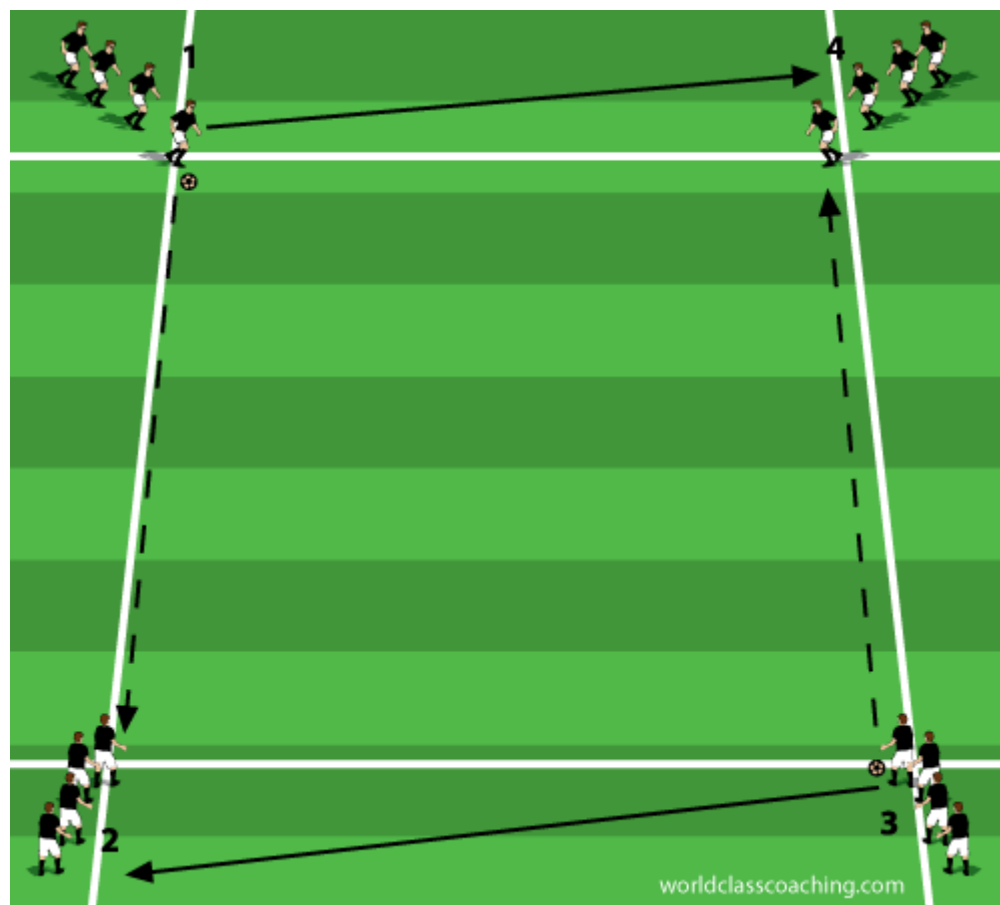
Fine Soccer Drill 54

These series of drills work on passing, dribbling, communication, and teamwork. These are NOT necessarily a progression but rather some options to use as a warm up.

First start with four groups in four lines with a ball with the first person in lines 1 and 3. (see diagram below)



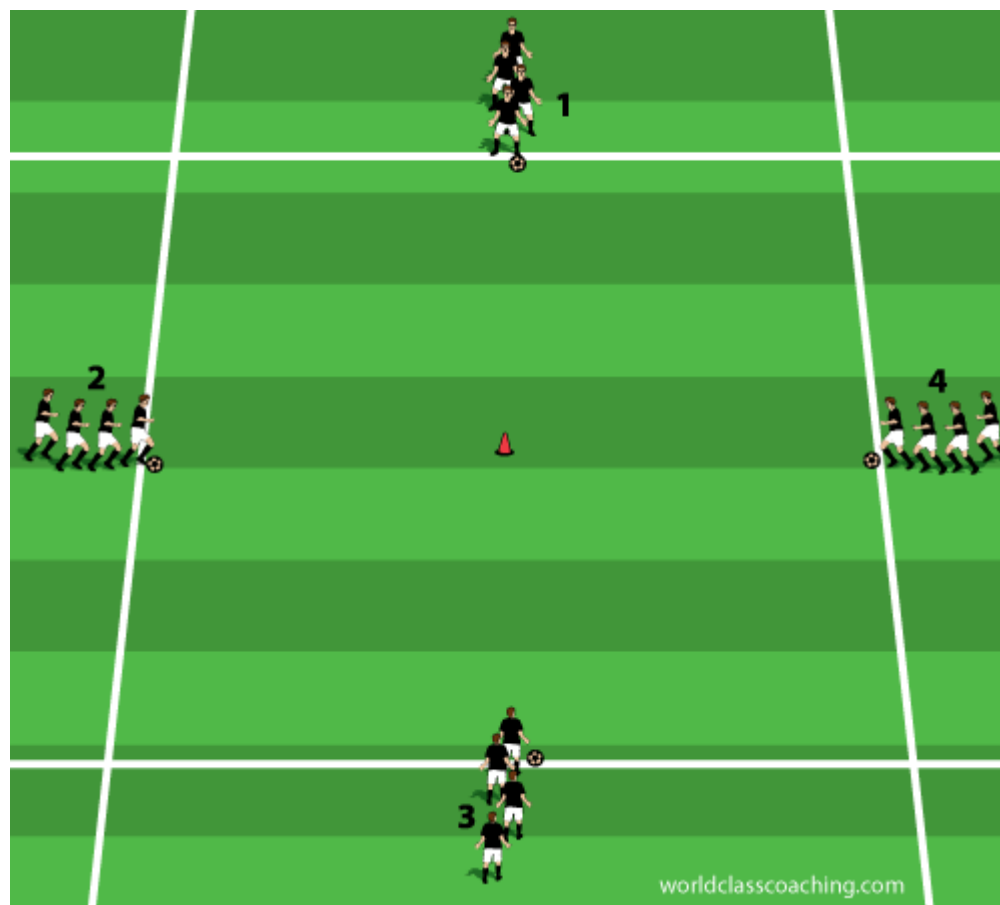
The first player in line 1 passes to the first player in line 2 and then sprints to the back of line 4. At the same time, the first player in line 3 passes to the first player in line 4 and sprints to the back of line 2. In other words, pass counter clockwise and sprint clockwise. (see diagram below)



The emphasis in this drill is in passing not only in the right direction but actually passing to the correct foot (in this case the pass would always be played to the right foot). After doing this for a short time, change the direction of the pass and sprint. If you want to add some additional conditioning, have them pass to the right and then sprint to the left but ending up where they passed (in other words line 1 passes to line 2 but then sprints behind line 4 and line 3 to get to the back of line 2). If you do this, the sprints will have to be run hard in order to get ready for your next turn.

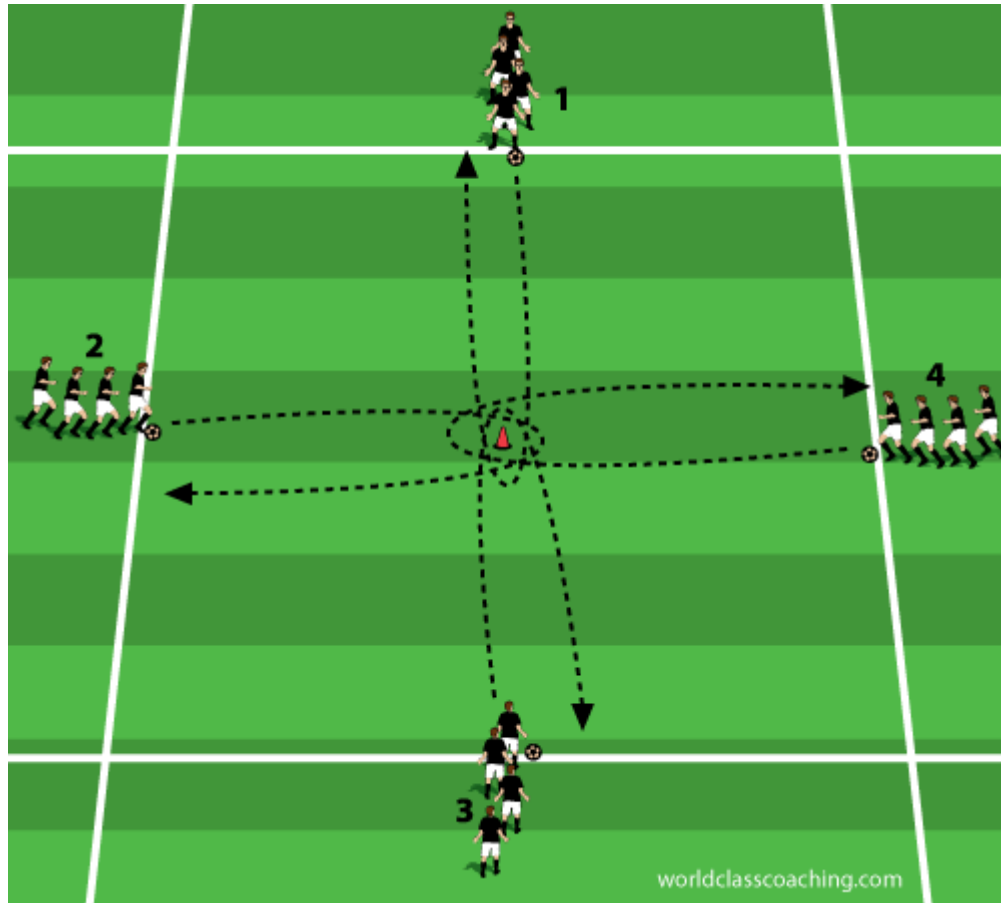
There can be a lot of variations to the drill. You can have the lines go far apart and have chipping to the lines followed by a sprint. Or, have a player receive the ball, do a move, and then play the next ball. The only thing limiting you in this drill is your imagination.

The next drill works on dribbling, vision, and communication. Start with four lines as set up below with a cone in the middle.



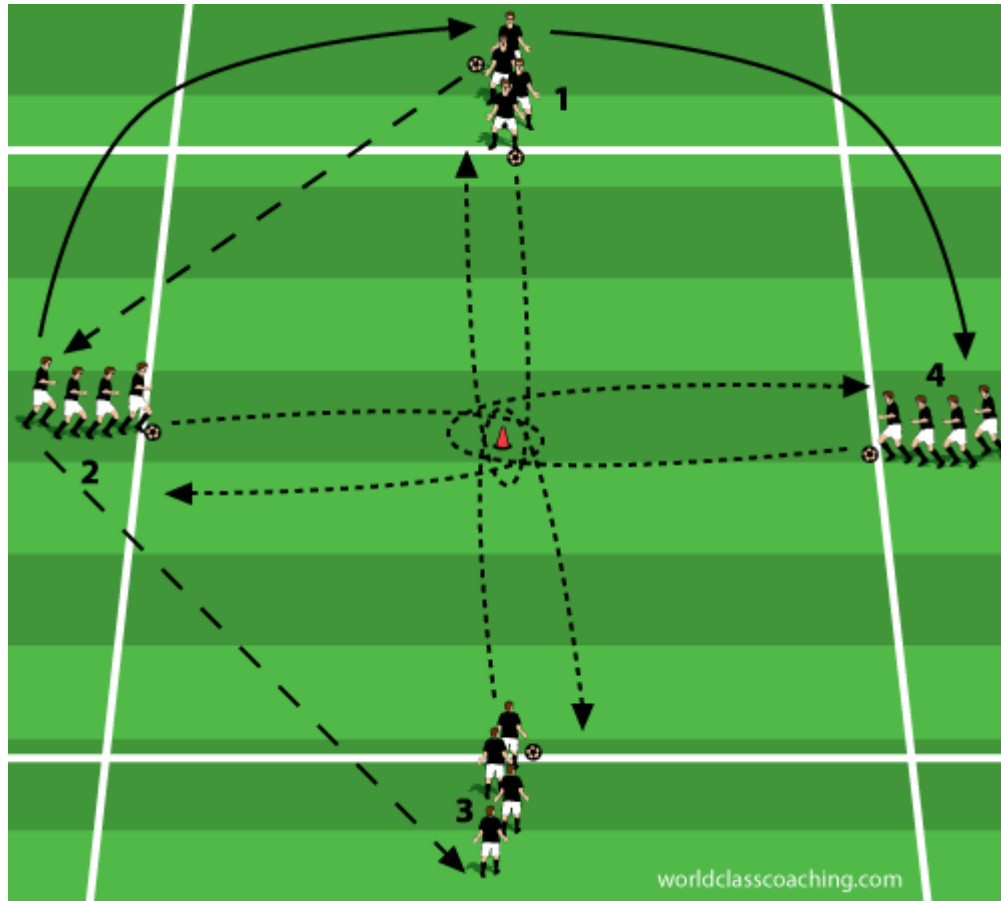
The first player in each line starts with a ball. The first set is for all 4 players to dribble to the middle cone and then turn and go back. As soon as they get back, they do a takeover with the next person in line and this keeps on going until each person has gone a few times. You can work on different turns this way but have each player doing the same thing.

Next, the first player in each line dribbles to the center cone and then dribbles around the cone clockwise. If they time this correctly, they will be going around the cone at the same time as the other 3 dribblers. This will force them to work on ball control as well as vision and communication (sometimes it is necessary for a player to ask the others to speed up or slow down) See the diagram below to show you how this is done.



From here, you can do counter clockwise dribbling, takeovers, moves, changing lines, and so on.

If you want to combine this series of drills with the first ones, you take this series and then add another ball at the back of line 1. While the first person in each line is doing the dribbling, the last person in line 1 passes the ball to the last person in line 2 and then sprints behind the last person in line 4. By doing this, it keeps everyone busy and concentrating because either they are passing, dribbling, or getting ready for one or the other.



Fine Soccer Drill 55

One of the best ways to train small groups is to let them play small-sided games in a controlled environment.

For instance, if you have three players and one of them is a keeper, play a 1 v 1 game going to a big goal. They start outside the 18 and whoever has the ball first goes to goal with the other player defending. If the player with the ball wins the ball, she must take the ball outside of the 18 before she can go to goal (for those of you not raised playing soccer, it's just like one on one in basketball where you must take everything back past the foul line before trying to score). The keeper is trying to prevent both players from scoring. This works on 1 v 1 attacking and defending and from a goalkeeper's standpoint, works on shot blocking as well as positioning and breakaways. You can play games to 5 and with two good field players and a good keeper, they will get an excellent

workout. Some of the rules you can put in are if you score, you get the ball back which really gives the players the incentive to score since most players would rather be attacking then defending. Plus you can say no free backs which means that if player A has the ball and player B wins it, player A can automatically go into a high pressure defense to try to win the ball back and go to goal. If player A has the ball and hits a shot that the keeper saves, player B must get open and receive the ball from the keeper before player A recovers. Now all of a sudden you are working on transition and distribution as well.

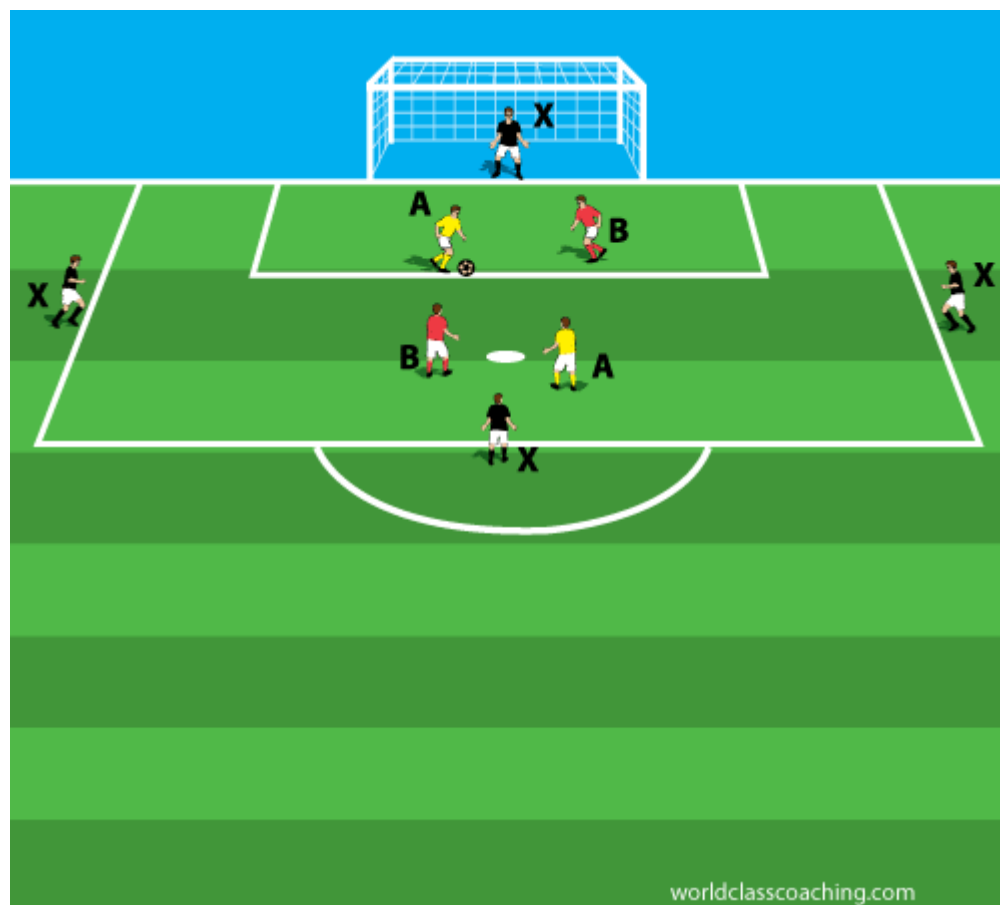
If you have 4 players and two of them are keepers (or even if you have two who enjoy playing goal and know the basics of the position), you can play 2 v 2 to two full-sized goals. The designated keeper for each team can use her hands to make saves but once she has possession, she becomes a regular field player. This really turns into a 2 v 1 game with a keeper which works on attacking, defending, balance, communication, finishing, goalkeeping and much more. Plus, the keepers are working on their field skills as well as their keeper skills which they certainly will enjoy.

With any greater number than 4, just keep adding in field players to the small-sided games. This is where the saying that the game is the best teacher comes into play. By playing small-sided games where teaching takes place on breaks and also where restrictions can be used to simulate different situations, you can accomplish more then any "drill" that is out there.

FineSoccer Drill 56

This short series of drills works on two frontrunners learning to make and use space for each other in the 18 yard box.

Start with 8 players and the 18 (or set up a grid to represent the 18). Play 2 v 2 inside the box with the other 4 players spread out around the box (see diagram below).

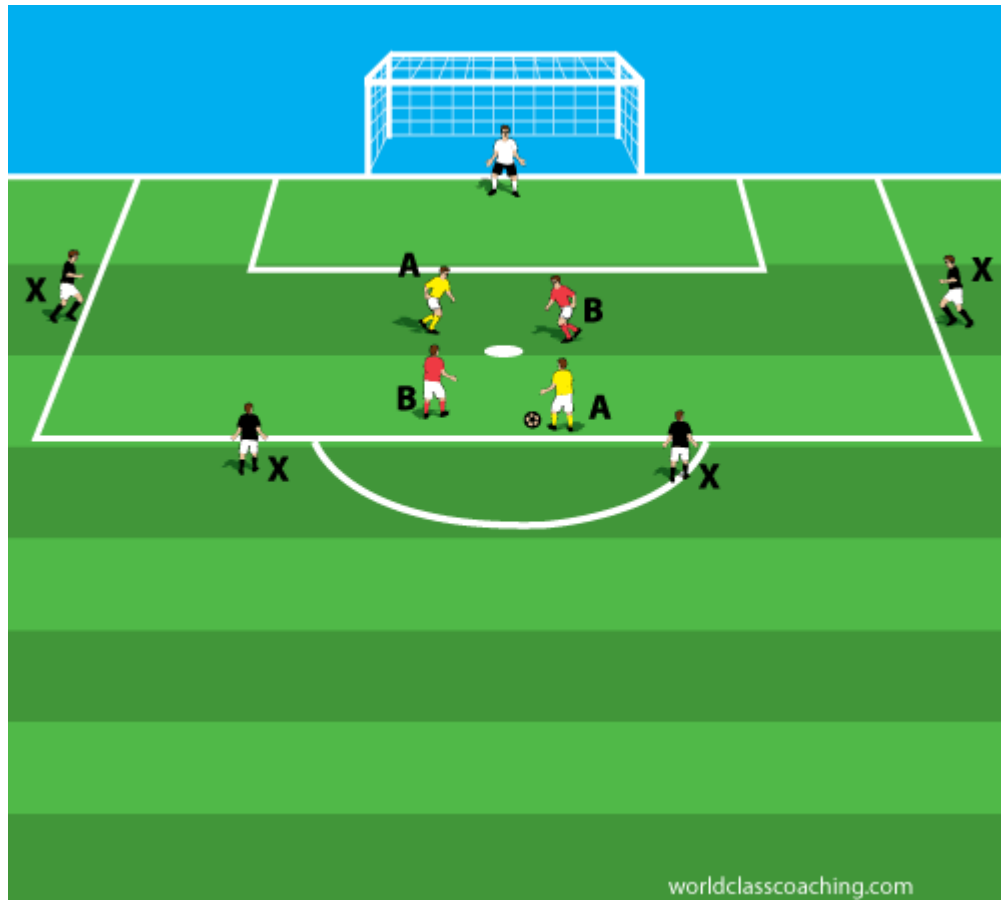


The two A's in the grid are trying to keep possession. They do this by either dribbling, passing to themselves, or they may use any of the 4 players on the outside who are restricted to one touch soccer. The players on the outside must play the ball back to the team that played it to them. If the B team wins the ball, then they are on offense and try to keep possession of the ball. Done properly, this will get the players in the grid looking to make runs off of each other especially when they play the ball to a person on the outside. You can play 2 minute games and then have them switch so the 4 players who were on the outside then become the center players and the players that started in the center become the outside players.

If you want to turn this into a competition, have a contest to see which team (A or B) has the most passes after the 2 minute period.

Next we take this same game to goal. It's a similar setup except we do it inside the 18 and the two teams are trying to score and we add a keeper. The

outside players are not only trying to get the ball to the proper team but also in a way that the player can get a shot hit. See the diagram below for the set up.



Points of emphasis are that the two players must work together and they must be willing to make runs to create space for each other. Also, remind the other players that they must make good passes as those same players will be passing to them next.

The next step is to play 4 v 4 in a small area where the only restriction is that all finishes **MUST** be first time. By doing this, you encourage the runners to work together and continue to make the same type of runs that were made earlier. An ideal size for this grid would be 44 yards wide (the width of the 18) by 50 yards long. If you have two keepers for this game, this would make it ideal.

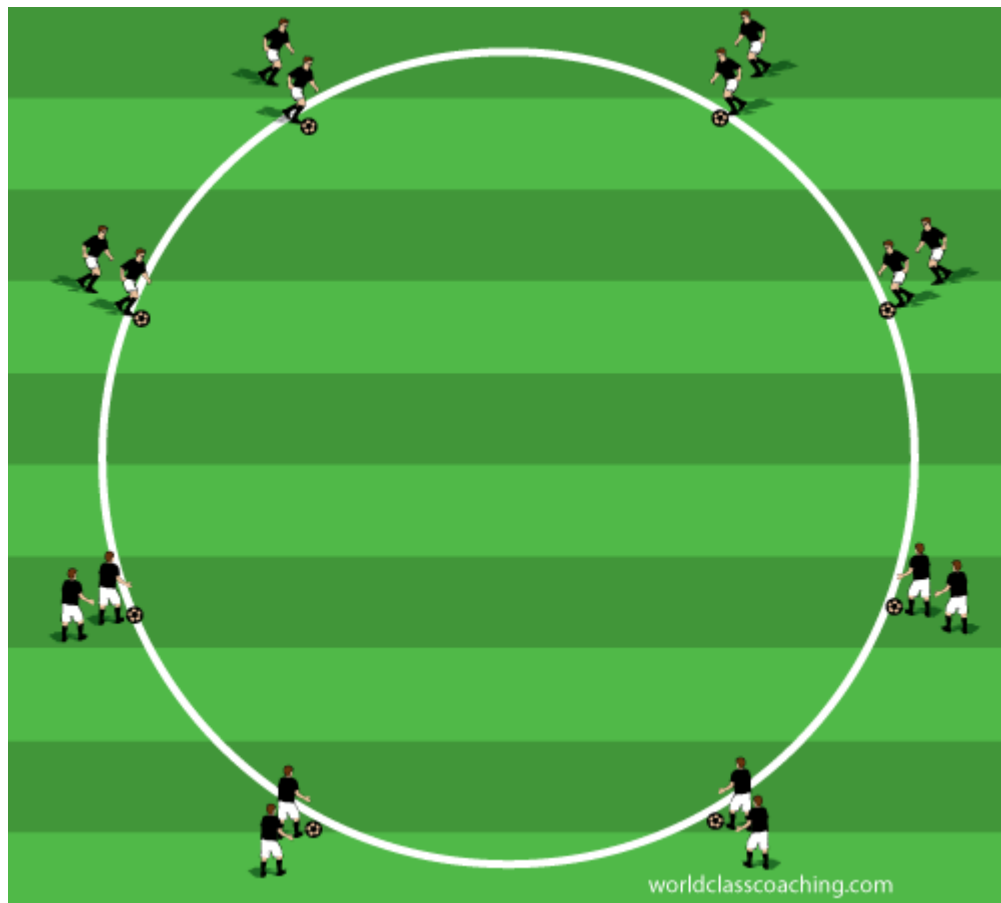
Finish up this session with a 4 v 4 game with no restrictions but encourage the players to continue their runs.

This progression is a great way to get players moving off the ball in the offensive third of the field.

FineSoccer Drill 54

Stock exchange is an excellent drill to use for ball skills as well as a good way to set the tone for a training session with regards to movement and communications.

Assuming we have 16 players (it can be more or less) start with 8 players around a circle with balls and each of the other players behind a player with a ball. See the following diagram..



The players with the ball start dribbling toward the center of the circle and then toward a different player on the outside. She then passes the ball to the player on the outside and calls for it back. The player on the outside one touches the ball right back to the player and she the player in the middle then goes toward another player on the outside. Do this for 1 minute and then switch roles.

The keys to this first step are for the person in the middle to dribble with her head up so that she doesn't dribble to the same player on the outside that another player is dribbling to. Also, she must play a hard, accurate pass so that it doesn't hit anyone else. The players on the outside should be keeping their feet moving as well as communicating to let the players know if they are available.

Next, everything is the same but now instead the player on the outside should play the ball in front of the player in the middle instead of right back to her. This is the difference between a 1-2 pass vs. a wall pass. The player on the outside should be the wall and play the ball off in the same angle that it came in. Everything else is the same.

Next, the player in the middle plays the ball and yells for the player on the outside to hold the ball. While the player holds the ball, the player in the middle runs around the player on the outside and then receives the ball back. This adds even more communication and conditioning.

Next we add them all together. The player in the middle should tell the player on the outside what she wants. If she says "1-2" then the ball gets played directly back to the player. If she says "wall" then it is to be returned in a wall pass. If she says "hold" then it's a hold and overlap. This is where you start to see the difference between talking and communicating because now, not only does the player in the middle have to say something but the player on the outside has to listen, understand, and execute.

There are many other variations that can be added by using your creativity but this should give you a good start.

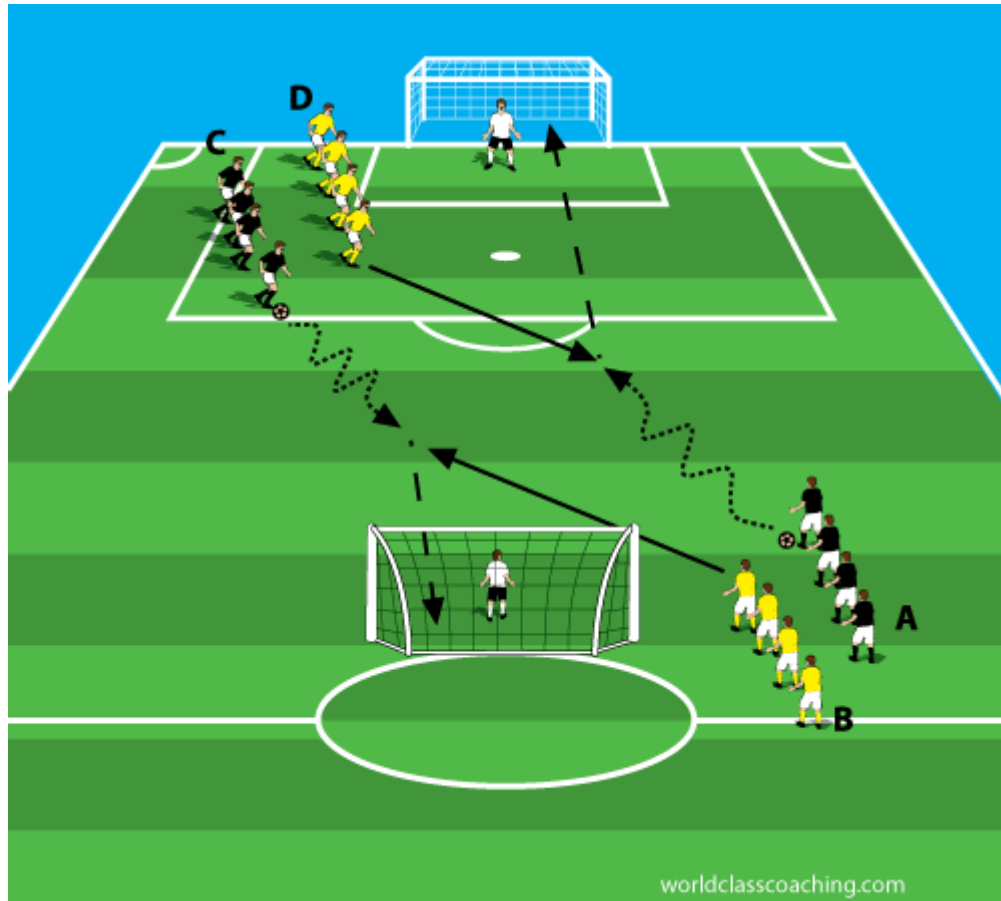
FineSoccer Drill 58

This is a shooting drill that has 4 lines, 2 goals, and 2 keepers. The goals are approximately 50 yards apart. The set up is shown below.



As soon as the player in line A touches the ball going to goal 1, the first player in line D takes off to defend against her. The whole purpose of this drill is to work on taking an early shot and really get to goal quickly and hard rather than slowing down and trying to turn the game into a 1 v 1 contest with the defender.

While lines A and B are going to goal 1, lines C and D are doing the same thing to goal 2. Players should rotate lines.



The lines can be moved around a bit to create different angles to work from.

By using this exercise, you can work on dribbling at speed, hitting a shot when the opportunity arises, finishing and following, closing the space when defending, angles, communication between a defender and keeper, as well as goalkeeping. Plus, if done at speed, it can have a great deal of conditioning built into the exercise as well.

Fine Soccer Drill 59

This is a drill that works on chipping, receiving, and finishing as well as goalkeeping.

The setup requires two goals and approximately 50 yards of field as well as 16 players and two keepers. This drill is for older age youth players because younger ones will have some difficulty doing this drill successfully.

The two goals are back to back with a keeper in each goal. There are four lines of four players with lines 1 and 2 with balls. The first player in line 1 chips the ball over the goals to the first player in line 3. The player in line 3 receives the ball and either hits a first or second touch shot on goal. At the same time that this is happening, the first player in line 2 serves the ball to the first player in line 4. Players rotate from line 1 to line 2 to line 3 to line 4. See the following diagram.



If you start this drill allowing the players to take one touch to finish, you can then have it as a one touch finish which works on finishing with the head or volley.

There are many other options that can be chosen in using this drill. For example, you can add defenders who starts by the keepers on each side and they can challenge for the served ball or put pressure on the shooter after her first touch.

This is an excellent way to work on chipping, receiving balls in the air, and finishing. Do realize that the player receiving the ball is receiving a ball from an "unnatural position" so it will take some time to get accustomed to doing this well.

FineSoccer Drill 60

This exercise works on free kicks (both offensive and defensive). It's real brief but for those of you coaching at the older ages, if you are not doing something like this, you are not maximizing your team's opportunities to win (at the younger ages, there are many more important things to be working on then winning but even with them, it's a good idea to do this occasionally).

The game is really simple. Separate into two teams and play a regular game of soccer going to full-size goals. The only difference in this game, than in any other game is that any time a team makes 5 consecutive passes (successfully) they are rewarded with a free kick. The key here is that the free kick is NOT taken from where the 5th pass was completed, but is done in a more random way. The first time 5 passes are completed successfully, the team gets an offensive corner kick. The second time, the team is awarded a direct kick from 20 yards out (the angle should vary). The third time is an indirect kick again from around 20 yards out (the distance and angles can vary, but it has to be consistent for both teams). The fourth time results in a penalty kick.

Each goal off of a free kick results in 1 point and a goal in the general flow of the game results in 3 points. Play this game for 10-15 minutes and you will find that both teams intensity will be extremely high both offensively and defensively (after a few times defending free kicks in a row, watch how the keeper becomes more of a leader because she will NOT want to face anymore of these while her counterpart is relaxing).

Too many teams seem to either ignore dead ball situations all together, or even if they do know what to do on dead ball situations, they practice them under pressure of a game like situation. I have heard different numbers regarding the percentage of goals scored off of dead ball situations over the course of a season and don't know the actual number, but I do know, teams that work on dead balls on a regular basis are usually more successful in the long run.

Give this game a try and watch how this can have a positive impact on your team.

FineSoccer Drill 61

This drill works on transition and it involves having three teams (equal numbers) playing a possession game where two teams are trying to maintain possession of the ball and the other team is defending. Whichever team loses possession of the ball becomes the defending team against the other two teams. This is an excellent way to work on possession, defending, and communication.

This new exercise is the next step in this same series. Instead of simply playing for possession, now you play toward two goals. If it's red and blue vs. white, red and blue are attacking one goal while white defends that goal. If a red player scores, then they defend the other goal and it's white and blue attacking. If a blue player loses possession during this attack, then they defend against red and white going the other way. Now all of a sudden, you have possession, penetrating, finishing, defending, transition, communication, and even goalkeeping if you want.

It's extremely important for the players to look to attack the opposing goal at speed (for this reason it's also extremely important for the coach to enforce off-sides so that all of the teams play fairly).

In playing this game, smart teams will always be thinking about proper shape and balance (both offensively and defensively) and also communication is a huge part of this game.

Give this game a try and once the players (and coaches) get accustomed to this, I believe you will find this to be a great way to work on many aspects of the game.

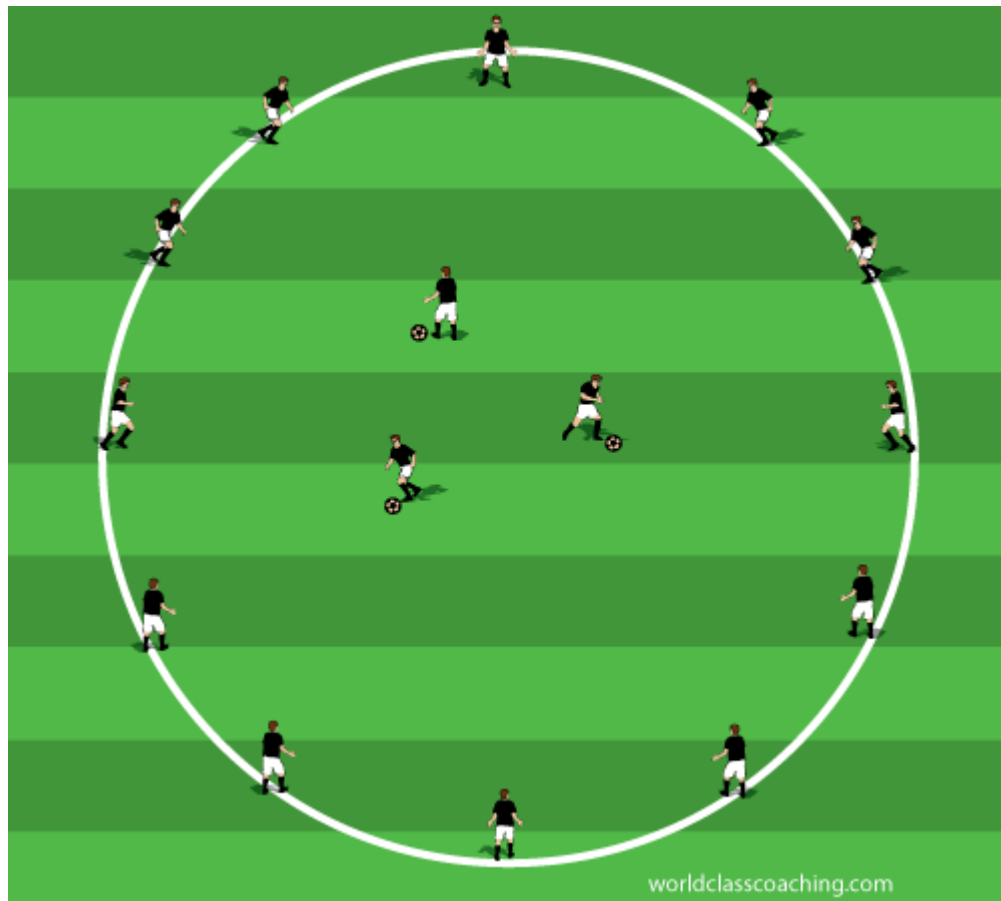
If your team uses a zonal defense, this is an excellent way to work on it as well. Put your 3 or 4 defenders on the same team and since on the defensive side they can't match up man to man, they will be forced to work on zonal defending.

FineSoccer Drill 62

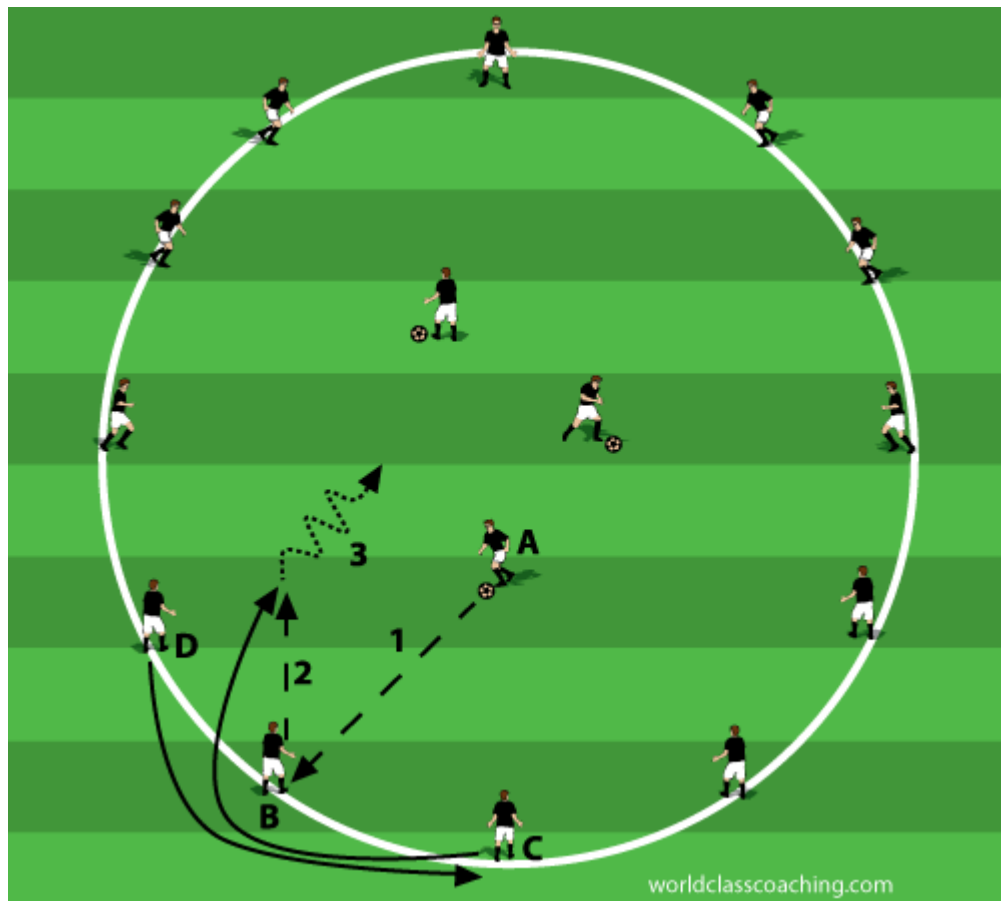
This series of drills is an excellent way to begin a training session.

Start off by breaking the team into two groups wearing two different color pinnys. Have each member of the white team with a ball and everyone on both teams jog around in a specified area (possibly half the field or slightly smaller). You can start with a wall pass and the basic rule is that the white players are dribbling around looking to use the red players for wall passes. Do this for 1 minute or so and then have them switch so that the red players are starting with the ball. Encourage the players to look beyond the closest player of the other color to expand their vision. After each group has had an opportunity to try this, you can then change it from a wall pass to a double pass, then a takeover, then a double wall, and you can add as many variations as you want.

Next, have all but three players make up a circle. The three players are inside the circle with balls. See the following diagram..



Start by having the three players doing wall passes with any of the players on the outside and you can go through the whole progression again. However, you will find this is a bit static so quickly add an interesting twist. When the player in the middle plays the ball to a person on the outside, the players on each side of the person on the outside overlap her. See diagram below. By adding this twist, you now have many more options. For example, the ball gets played from the center person (player A) to the person on the outside (player B). Players C and D overlap and player B now plays the ball to either C or D who then goes and finds another person on the outside to do this with. Or you could do it where A plays the ball to B who then finds C who then finds D. The options are somewhat limitless.

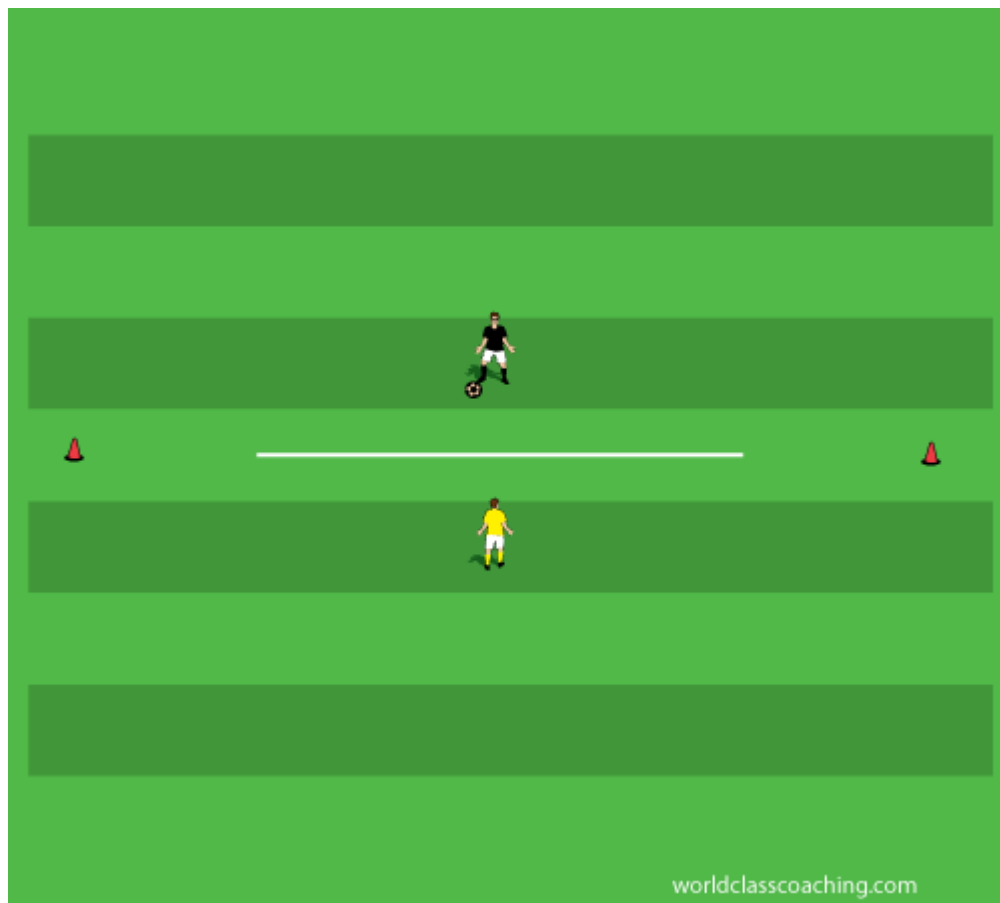


Some of the things you are working on with this series are passing, receiving (although most of the time the ball will be played one touch), communication, vision, and thought. Plus, there is a certain degree of conditioning built into this. It's important that all of the players understand this series before you attempt it, otherwise, it will be pure chaos.

FineSoccer Drill 63

This drill works on defensive footwork, intensity, and anticipating as well as offensive turning with the ball, dribbling, and moves. Plus, it's excellent conditioning for all involved.

Start with a line 20 yards long (if you don't have a line for this, you can always use cones). At the end of each line there should be a 5 yard break and then one last cone (see the diagram below).



An offensive player with the ball is on one side of the line and a defender is on the other side (see diagram below).



The offensive player is given 1 minute to score as many goals as she can by dribbling the ball into the two cones beyond the end of the lines. The defensive player can NOT cross over the line so she must stay even (or slightly ahead of where the dribbler is going). She can only really defend by winning the ball or blocking the dribble once the ball has gone beyond the line and toward the cone that represents the goal. Done properly, the person with the ball will be dribbling at speed trying to beat the defender to the cone and the defender is trying to get there first. If the attacking player sees that she has lost her advantage of getting there first, she should quickly change directions and go toward the other goal. If a goal is scored, the attacking player must go back towards the middle of the line before attacking the same goal again. If the defender wins the ball, she should immediately give it back to the attacker.

Ideally, this drill is done in groups of 4. While two players are working, the other two are resting. If player A is on offense first and player B is on defense, players C and D are resting. After the first minute is up, player C is on offense

and player D is on defense. After that minute, player B attacks and player A defends.

Done properly, this is a very intense game and as the players start to wear down, they must be encouraged to really push themselves (possibly by rewarding the winner which is another way of saying motivating the loser).

After each player has attacked and defended, they should switch partners and go again.

One of the benefits of this drill is that it reminds people just how much hard work is needed to be a good defender.

FineSoccer Drill 64

This drill can be used in training both indoors and outdoors. This drill, called "Get out of here" will be explained here as an indoor activity, but it works exactly the same way outdoors.

This activity is best with 14-17 players including two keepers. Start with big goals (or even U10 goals will work) and use a basketball court as boundaries. Break the group into 3 teams (a red, white, and blue team for our example) and have a keeper in each goal. Assuming you are playing with 17 players, you have 5 v 5 plus keepers. Pick a duration for the game (20 minutes is good) and start with red v white with blue on the side. The rules are very simple. It's regular soccer but anytime a ball goes over a sideline the team that it went out of, "s off the field and the team that is resting plays. So, using our red v white example, the two teams play and if the ball goes over the sideline off of white, it's red ball and they are now attacking BLUE. Red does NOT have to wait for blue to get on the field or set up. This is a game that encourages quick transition as well as possession and shooting (if the ball goes over the end line, it's a loss of possession but the team who knocked it over the end line does get to stay on the field).

The other way to get the opponent off the field is to score a goal. The team that gets scored upon has to leave the field and the team that scored the goal stays on, gets the ball. and attacks the opposing goal.

When you start playing this game, it will seem to be quite chaotic but as the players get used to it, you will see them really adding a great deal of thought to their play. Instead of just getting the ball and kicking it (which will frequently result in them having to get off the field) they must try to maintain possession. Also, in the beginning, the team that is off the field will stand together at midfield waiting for their turn. Real quickly they will learn to spread out because they have to be prepared to defend either goal at any time. You will find that this drill will increase a teams communication dramatically.

Some of the skills that this game works on are possession (teams don't want to have to sit out so they will work on possessing the ball in order to get to play more), shooting (it's in a teams best interest to hit a lot of shots because if they score, they get a point and the opponent has to sit out, plus if it goes over the end line they still stay on, as a bonus, if the shot is blocked by an opponent and it goes over the sideline, the opponent has to sit out), communication, defense, organization, and most of the other things that are used in a regular soccer game.

Not only does this game works on many things, it's fun for the players. To watch a player get caught in a corner with the ball and one or two opponents and see her realize that she can kick the ball off of the opponent so that it goes over the sideline for which knocks the opponent off the field is both fun to watch as well as very gratifying from a coaches perspective in that it encourages a player to really think on the field instead of just kicking or simply doing what they are told.

An added bonus is hearing the players yell to the team that just lost the ball out of bounds "GET OUT OF HERE!"

FineSoccer Drill 65

Today's exercise is a fun way to work on crossing, runs in the box, finishing, conditioning, and goalkeeping.

Break your team into groups of three or four players. The game is pretty simple. One player from each group starts with a ball out wide and must take the ball down to the end line and cross the ball into the box. There are no defenders (except for the keeper). The other players in the group will make near/far runs (if

there are four people in a group, they will make near/far/12 yard runs). The ball must be scored first time. If the ball is played on the ground and scores, it counts as 1 point. If it's scored off of a volley, it's worth 3 points and a header is worth 5 points. The game goes on for a pre-determined time (I usually do it for 8 minutes) and the group with the highest number of points wins. The key here is that while there are no defenders, there is also no set order. If the red team can get two balls served before the blue team gets one served, it increases their chances of scoring. This gives the players an incentive to get their ball and get back to serve.

The only rules are that you can't kick another groups ball, you have to try not to get in other groups ways, a player can only serve three times in a row before one of her teammates serves, and the player who is going to serve the ball must start be beyond the 18 (both in terms of being wide as well as being 18 yards from the end line) and take the ball down to the end line to cross. Also, the runners should start outside the 18 as well in order to recreate the correct runs from a game.

A team of good finishers will be able to score an average of 1.8 points per ball served.

FineSoccer Drill 66

This exercise is a form of shadow training which works on defensive rotation.

This exercise can use anywhere from 4 v 4 to 7 v 7 with one keeper and requires a third of the field. Let's assume that we are going to have the numbers for 5 v 5 with a keeper. Start with the red team spread out in a semi-circle around the offensive third of the field. See diagram below.



The blue team will mark up man to man by initially getting very close to each of their marks. As will be readily seen, if the red team is going to goal, they have a lot of space in the middle to receive a ball with the blue team marking up this way.

Start with the ball R1 and make sure that each member of the blue team is marking up correctly but also is providing proper coverage and balance to her teammates. The further the offensive players (red) are from the ball, the further back and towards the middle the defensive player can be while maintaining proper ball-you-man-goal-side defense.



Once all of the players are in the correct position, the ball can be passed from red 1 to red 2 and each defensive player would then make the proper adjustment to be either the 1st defender, 2nd defender, or 3rd defenders. As the blue players start to make these adjustments quicker and quicker, have the red team start knocking the ball around playing 3 touches minimum (by making the offense take at least 3 touches, it will allow the defense time to shift properly).

This whole time, the red players should be stationary so that the defenders only have to worry about where the ball is since their marks are staying in one place. As the defense gets better at this, allow the red team to start moving (slowly at first). Gradually, allow the red team to play at first speed and see whether the blue team can adapt accordingly.

Do this for 5 minutes or so and then have the two teams switch roles.

This exercise can be used as a great opportunity for teaching proper defense and, as a coach, you have to be extremely careful to balance out the

coaching opportunities with spending too much time talking. With too much talking you are at risk of losing the attention of the entire team so you think you are making a great coaching point, you are in fact teaching nothing at all.

This exercise is a slower moving one than most that I use and really is something that coaches have to spend a great deal of time and energy planning for to get the maximum benefit. Like most shadow training, it has the potential of being a very effective way to work on team defense and the roles of the first defender, second defender, and third defender.

FineSoccer Drill 67

This exercise is a simple way for an individual or small group to work on dribbling, moves, and turns.

Start with three cones set up in an L shaped formation (see diagram below). The players work hard for a 1 minute period and then switch.



Player A starts with the ball at cone A and then dribbles at cone B. Right before getting to cone B, she should cut the ball with the inside of her foot and accelerate to cone C. Right before getting to cone C, she should pull the ball back and head back towards cone B. Right before getting to cone B, she should cut the ball with the inside of the opposite foot and head back to cone A. In starting with this simple set, the player is working on dribbling, acceleration, cutting and turning.

When player A is done with her first minute, she rests a minute and player B does the same thing.

Next, player A dribbles at cone B, she cuts the ball with the OUTSIDE of her foot and heads to cone C. Again, she pulls the ball back before getting all the way to cone C and heads back to cone B. She cuts the ball again with the outside of her other foot and returns to cone A.

In the next step in this progression, player A will dribble at cone B and do a full 360 around cone B with the inside of the foot and proceeds to cone C. This time, she should do a step over in order to turn the ball at cones A and C.

Other steps in the progression could include doing a move between cones A and B and also between cones B and C. The players can do cut/catches, roll/catches etc. Also, the pull back moves (Pull Cruyffs and V Moves) can be done at cone C to replace the cuts).

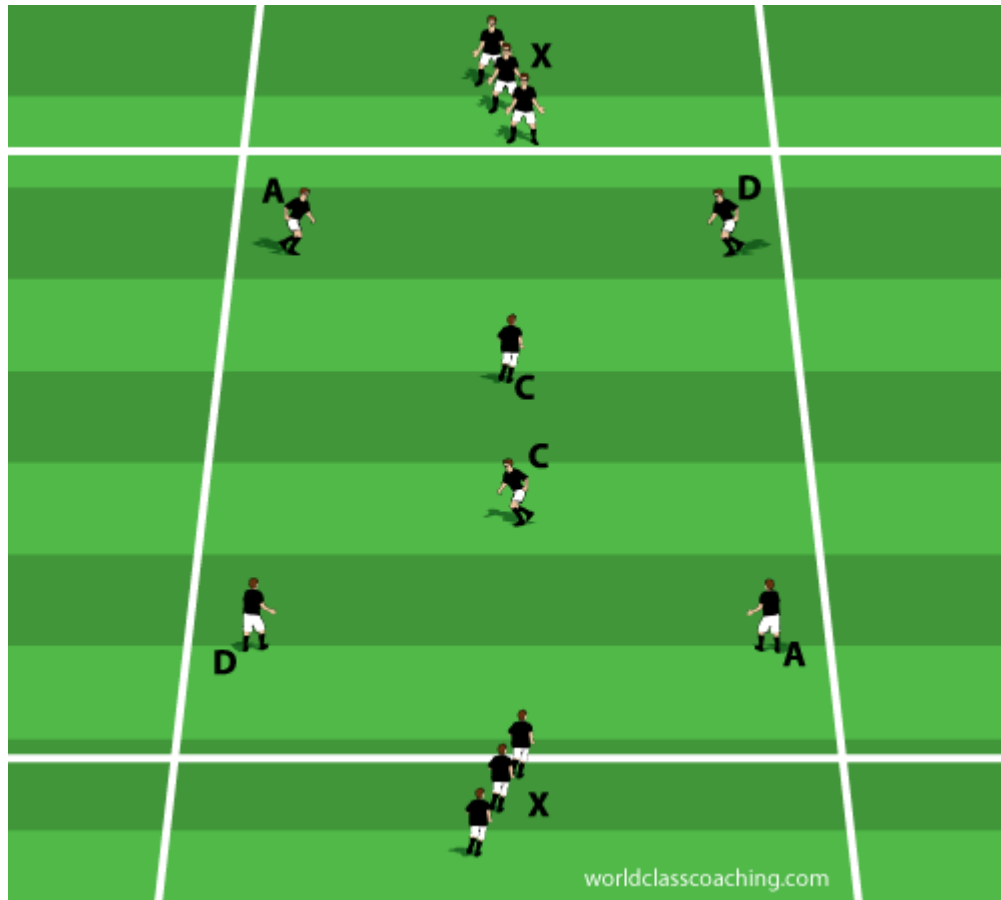
This exercise is a great way to work out on your own or with a partner. It also can be done indoors as well as outdoors so it can be done in a gym, backyard, basement, garage or field.

FineSoccer Drill 68

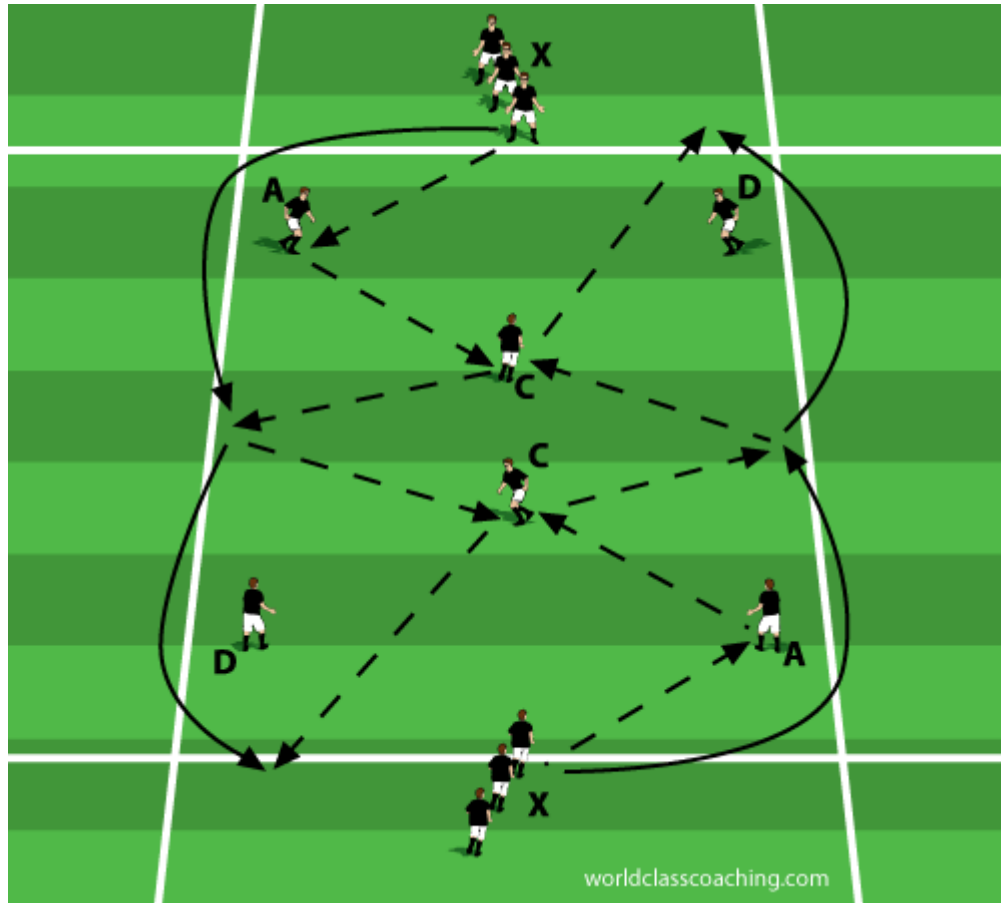
This exercise drill requires accurate passing, good timing, teamwork, and good footwork to be successful. It will take some time to get used to but can be very beneficial to get players to realize the importance of doing the little things correctly.

This exercise requires a minimum of 12 players and 6 soccer balls. It does require a fair amount of skill so some teams will struggle but that is part of the purpose of this exercise as it will show both strengths and weaknesses.

Start with 4 players in a square with two more players in the middle of the square and the rest on each end . See the following diagram..



The players on the end (players X) start by playing the ball to the player on the square to her right (in each case, this player to the right is player A). Player X then overlaps around player A who makes a one touch pass to the player in the middle (players C) and player C returns the ball to player X for a successful overlap. Player X then plays the ball to the OTHER player C for a wall pass around players D who are there merely as dummies (see the following diagram for an idea of what this looks like).



Some of the keys to this exercise being successful are that all passes must be played to the correct foot at the correct time (in other words, it's not good enough to say pass the ball to feet but rather play the ball to the correct foot so that the receiver can play the ball to the next person one touch). The players receiving the ball will have to move in order to get their bodies turned properly to play the ball one touch to the correct foot of the next player as well. Another one of the keys for this to be successful is that the players on each end must start at the same time. This requires both communication as well as teamwork.

Of all of the players in this activity, the players in the middle of the square are doing the most work. They must be constantly moving in order to get themselves in proper position to both receive the ball and play in one touch. These players would represent center midfielders or forwards. If they try to play this role as a stationary player, they will be unsuccessful (just like they would be trying to play the center midfield position stationary).

After doing this activity for a few minutes, have the players switch roles so that the dummy positions can get some work and the players who have been working the hardest can get some rest.

Give this a try but please be patient as it is NOT an easy activity to master.

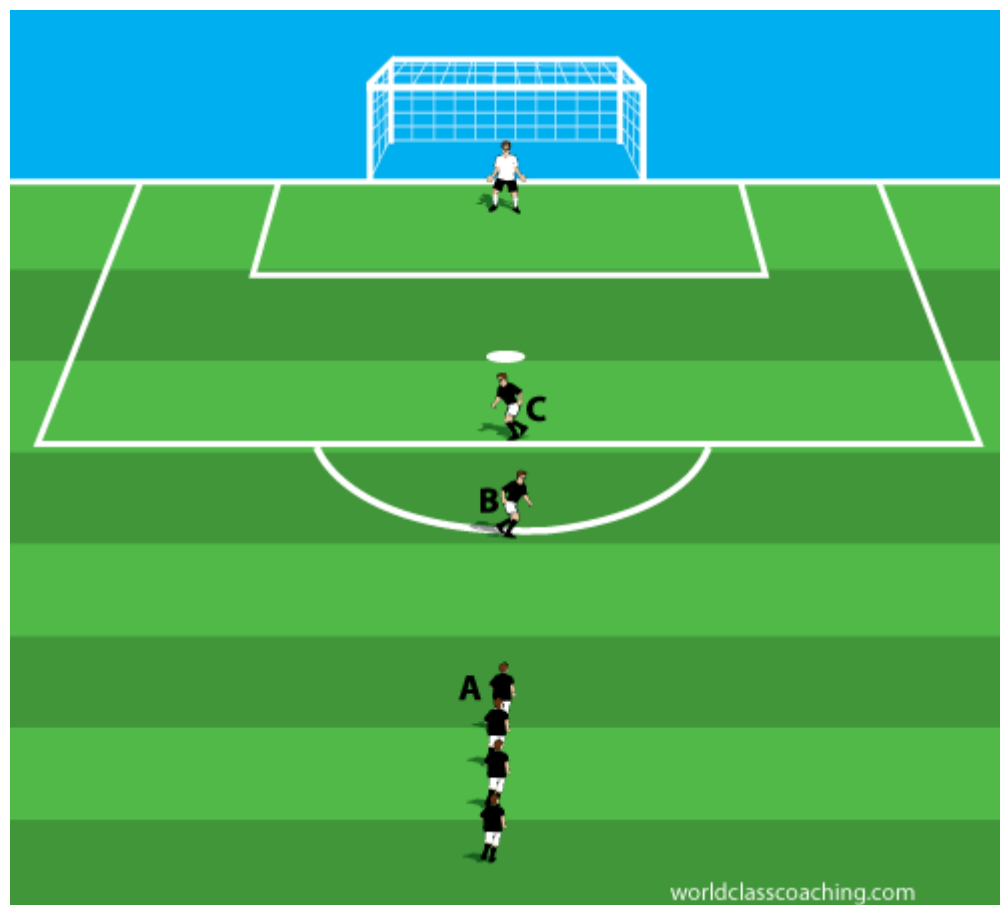
FineSoccer Drill 69

Here is a simple finishing pattern that works on forwards getting used to working together along with getting a lot of good finishing done (plus it's certainly a good way for keepers to get used to reading the games flow and making saves).

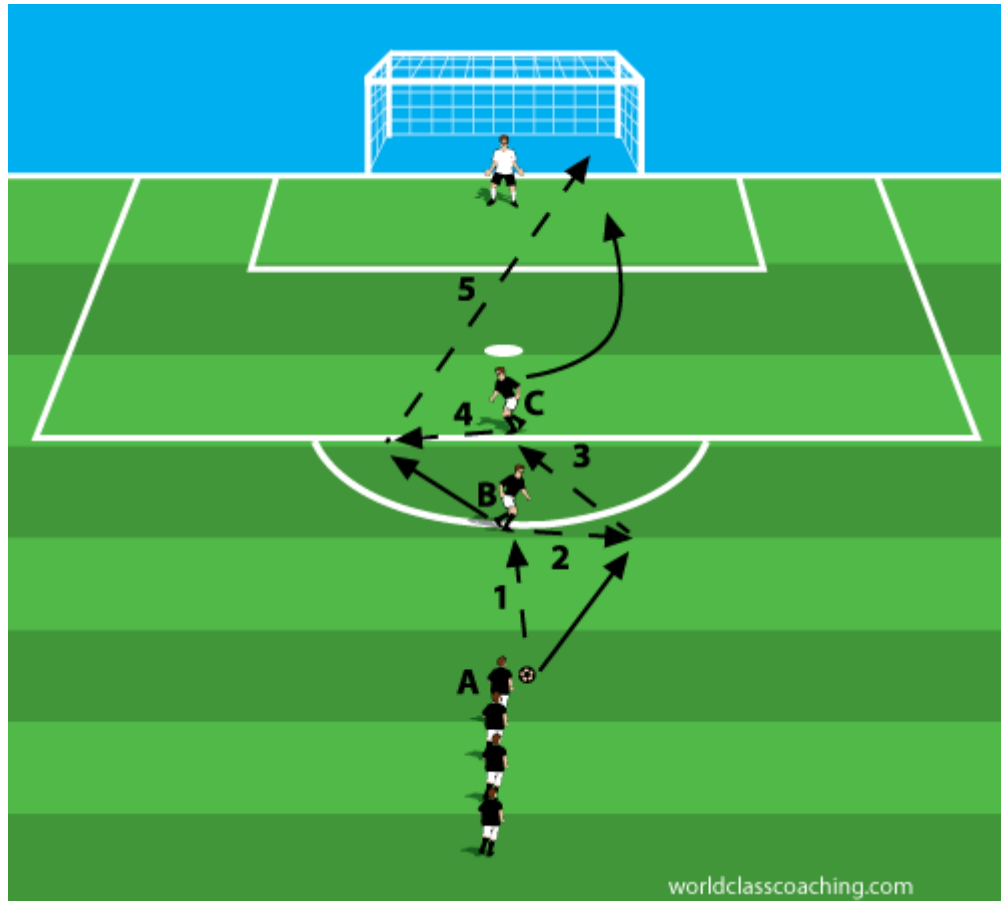
Before doing this activity, you might want to start your team doing Drill 50, which involves some similar concepts but is more of a drill than a pattern like this one.

You should begin with a minimum of 6 field players plus a keeper, a goal, and 8 soccer balls.

Start with a line of 4 players plus two players out in front as is shown in the diagram below.



The first player in line (player A) plays a soft pass to player B who then plays the ball back on an angle to player A. Player B spins off (in the opposite direction than she laid the ball off) and player A find player C with a hard pass. Player C then lays the ball off for player B to finish toward goal . See the following diagram.



Some of the keys to this pattern are that the initial pass in from player A to player B should be a soft pass (and preferably toward the outside). The reason it's soft is to try to draw the player marking player B to the ball in order to create more space to run into. Then, the pass from player B back to player A should be on an angle in order to create even more space to work with as well as to make the next pass as easy as possible. As soon as making this pass, player A must spin off IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AS THE PASS WAS PLAYED. For example, if player B passes the ball to her left, she should spin to her right to get around the player who is marking her (in this activity, there is no one marking her but we are trying to develop good habits here). Then, the ball played into player C should be a driven ball because time is of the essence. Player C will lay the ball off to player B in the direction that player B will have indicated by going in that direction initially. Once the ball is laid off by player C, she then should spin off in the opposite direction to either receive yet another pass in a game situation or to follow up any rebounds.

The players would then rotate and the activity continues.

The spacing of this pattern can be anything from really tight (10 yards between players) to much more spaced out (20-25 yards between players) and rather than thinking that one is correct to do and the other incorrect, work on this with different spacing so the players are prepared for different things to happen.

FineSoccer Drill 70

A very common exercise to do with teams is to play 5 v 2 (5 players trying to maintain possession against 2 defenders in a limited space).

The way it is frequently set up is with 5 players in a circle (or actually a pentagon type shape) with the two in the middle.

However, you will actually find it much more effective to change this to 5 v 2 +1. The difference is now you have a central figure who is playing the role of the target player. While the 5 players are still trying to maintain possession of the ball and the 2 are still trying to win possession (and not get split) the 1 additional player is trying to put herself into position to win the ball. This changes the focus of this activity dramatically because it's no longer good enough to just maintain possession but now you are looking to also split the defense and find a target player. Now, the activity has changed from one of mere possession to one where you are looking to penetrate as well.

This could be made into a game where the 8 players will each spend 2 minutes on defense and the other 6 players will see how many times they can find the target player without losing possession. One way to keep score in this activity would be to give the defense 1 point for each time the target player receives the ball as well as each time the players make 5 consecutive passes and to take away 3 points for each time the offense loses possession (in this activity, points are BAD). After each player has an opportunity to play defense, you would see which two defenders ended up with the fewest points and they would be the winners.

By adding in this one target player, it helps the players get conditioned to finding a specific person in a specific role (whether it be an attacking center mid or possibly a frontrunner).

FineSoccer Drill 71

This activity is called “All Forward and All Back” and works on proper support both offensively and defensively.

This game is better with at least 12 players including 2 keepers and can be played with up to 22 players total.

I am going to assume we have 12 players including the keepers. Play on a field approximately 60 x 40 with full-sized goals on the end lines and also with a midfield line.

The rules are quite simple. The teams play regular soccer with the condition that in order for a goal to be scored all 6 players from the team must be on the offensive half of the field (this includes the keeper). If all 6 players are over midfield when the goal is scored, the team gets a point. If there are any opposing players who have not crossed into their defensive half of the field, the team that scored a goal gets an additional point for each player who did not get back.

This works on transition (both offensively and defensively) as well as conditioning, finishing, goalkeeping, and overall team play.

Why does the keeper have to cross over midfield as well as everyone else? The answer is that it works on the keepers being able to properly support their team. If your team has the ball in the offensive half of the field (in a real game) you don't want your keepers back in the 6 yard box. You will probably want the keeper out 30 yards or so to support her teammates offensively as well as to provide the proper support defensively. This is the same distance that the keeper will be out on this smaller field so you are conditioning the keeper to be in the proper support position.

Why do the forwards have to come back into the defensive half of the field? Again, this will both keep them onside as well as to encourage them to get back and defend (we are trying to create total soccer players here).

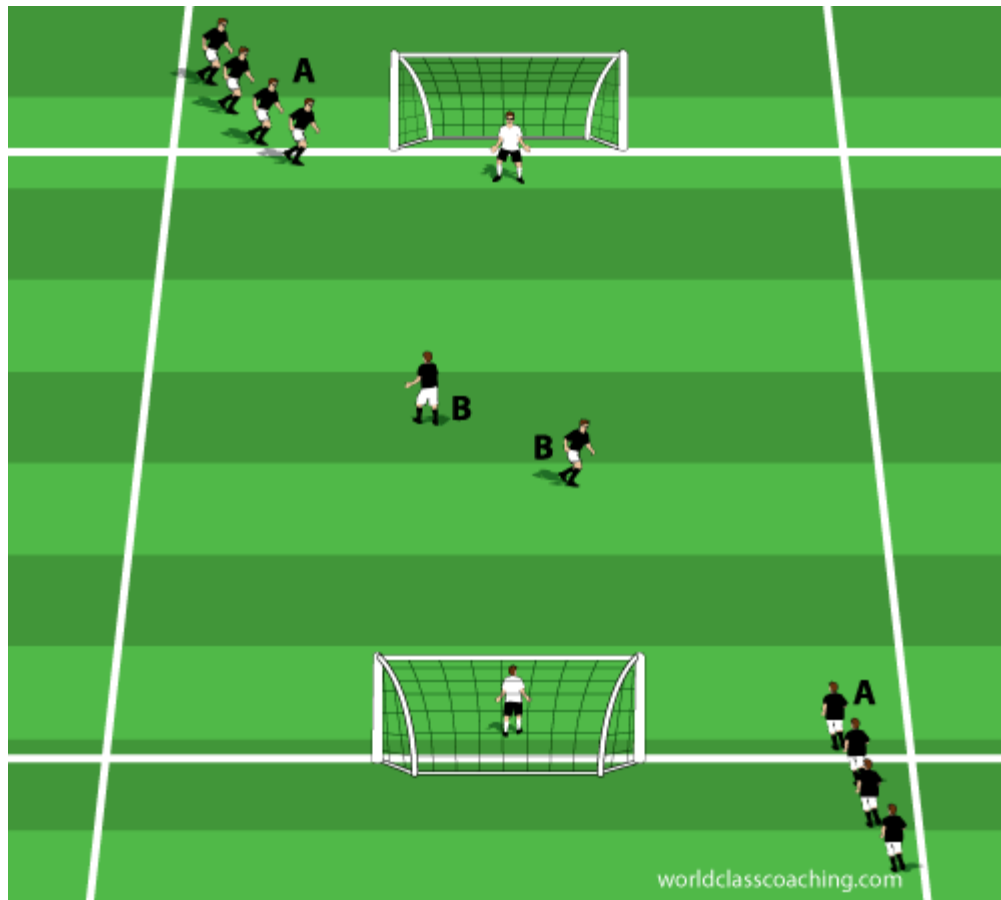
Other variables you can alter in order to speed up the game is to play 2 touch soccer all over the field (with the rest of the rules the same). Or you can play 2 touch just in the defensive half of the field and unlimited touches in the offensive half of the field.

This activity will work on many things but also if done properly will allow the players to have a great deal of fun as everyone is involved at all times.

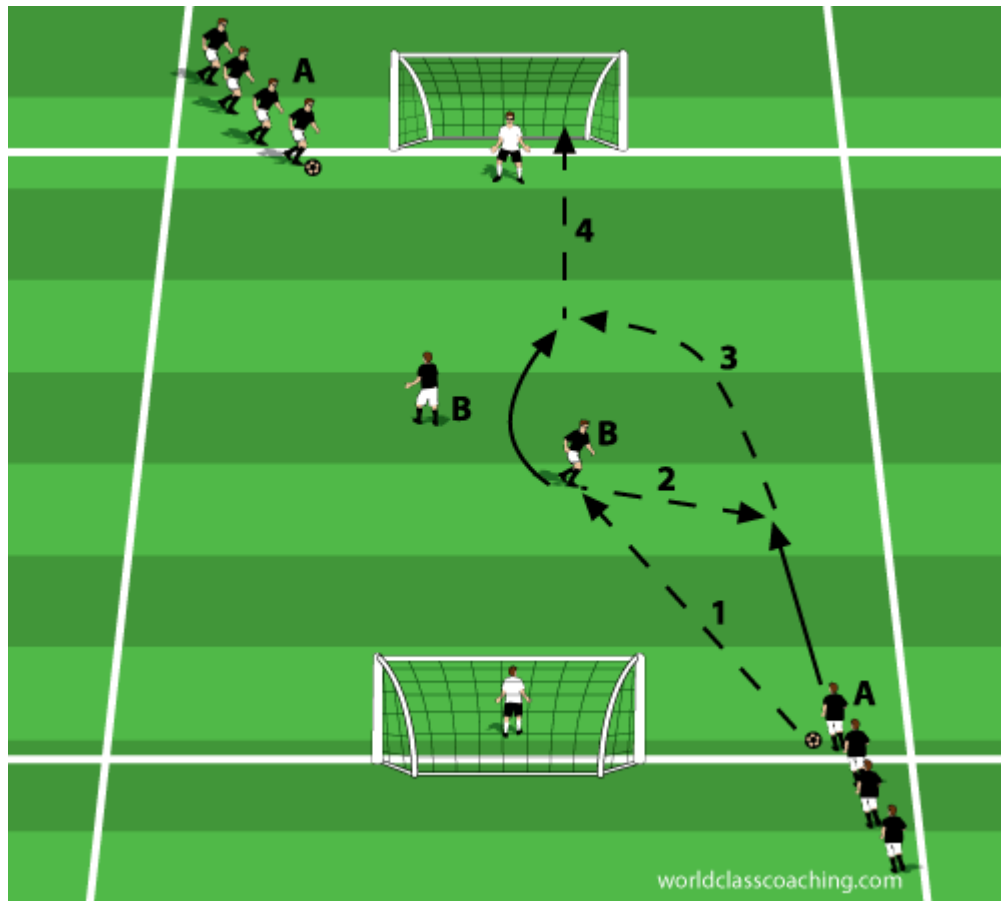
FineSoccer Drill 72

These activities are to give an alternative to the basic finishing activity that too many teams use where the team lines up 25 yards from goal with the coach on the 18 and the first player in line passes the ball to the coach who plays a square ball and the player finishes first time. The problems with this drill is that too many players are standing around doing nothing, the person who gets the most touches on the ball is the coach, the pace of the pass is rarely taken into consideration, and a square ball in this position rarely works. In other words, not only is this drill very inefficient, it also develops some bad habits.

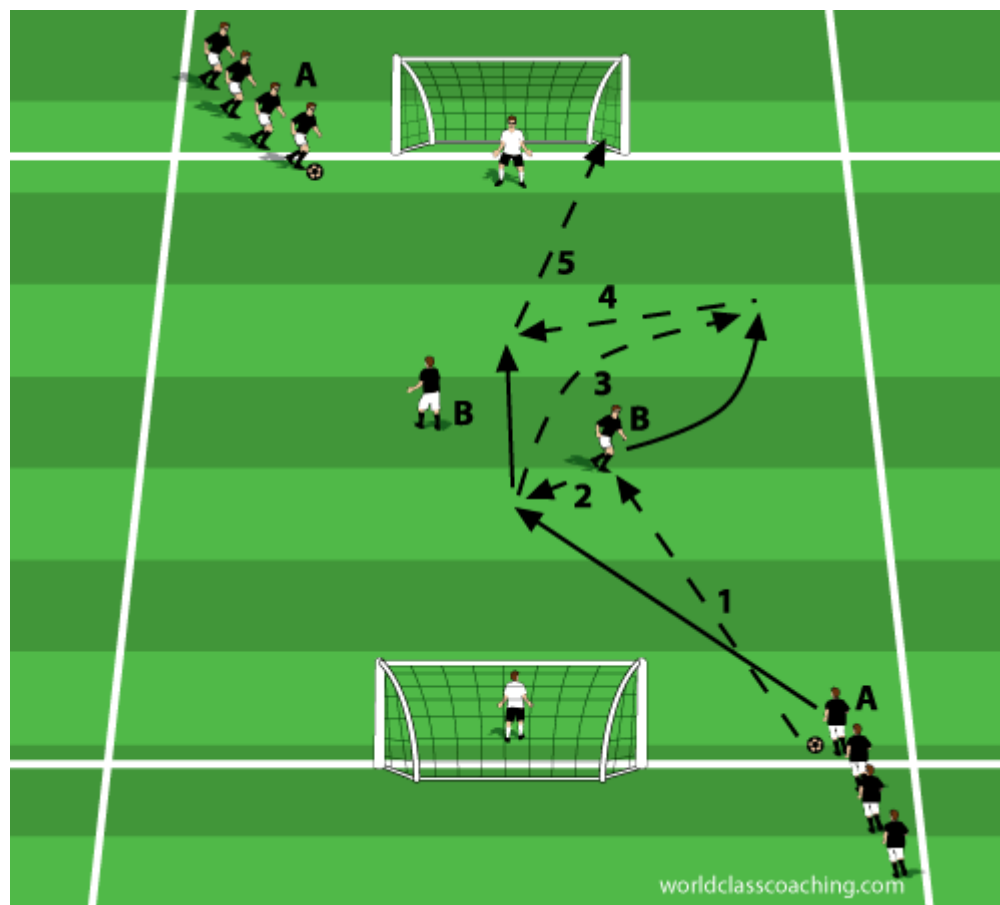
The first alternative requires a 60 x 40 area and two goals (and preferably two keepers but that isn't required). The basic set up has two lines in opposite corners of the field with the first player (player B) out by midfield (see diagram below).



Player A plays the ball to player B who has checked away and then checked back to the ball. Player B plays a soft pass back to player A on an angle and then spins toward the middle and player A plays the ball into the middle for player B to finish first time. Player B gets the ball and goes to the back of the other line. Player A then takes the middle position and the rotation continues. See diagram below.



There are many other options like this such as player B playing the ball back in the opposite angle, spinning toward the sidelines and player A playing a ball down the line and player B chopping the ball back to player A for a first time finish . See the following diagram..



There are many options for this type of finishing exercise. Not only are they more efficient in terms of working on more things in a shorter period of time, but they also will allow you to reinforce good work habits.

FineSoccer Drill 73

These activities are excellent ways to work on transition (both offensive and defensive) as well as attacking and defending.

The first way to do this is to start with two teams of three and a field broken into three parts with the middle part smaller than the other two thirds (the size of the field will depend on the numbers on each team which can range from 3 players per team all the way up to 8 players per team). Start with one team in each of the three sections . See the following diagram..



Team A starts by attacking goal 1 which is defended by team B. If team B wins the ball, team A immediately tries to win the ball back while team B tries to get into the middle part of the field. If team B gets into the center of the field, they then reorganize and attack goal 2 which is defended by team C. If team B scores in goal 2, they get the ball back and try to work out of the back so they can next attack goal 1.

The reason this is one of my favorite activities is that it encourages both offensive and defensive transition which is such a huge part of the game. At the same time, every other facet of the game is worked on as well. Plus if done properly, it is an excellent way to work on conditioning.

To make this even more realistic, get rid of the middle portion of the field. Everything else stays the same with the exception that there is now no safe zone for a group to have time to reorganize. As soon as a team gets out of their defensive half of the field, they are automatically being pressured by the third team so the need to have an organized attack becomes vital. I would strongly

recommend doing this activity with three zones before trying it with two because otherwise, it is an EXTREMELY complicated activity to do.

FineSoccer Drill 74

Here is a fun activity that works on teamwork and heading for finishing.

Start with a field that is 20 yards long by 10 yards wide with a goal on each sideline (this could either be a full-sized goal or a slightly smaller Coerver goal or just use cones to make a full sized-goal). Put a line down the middle for a midfield line.

There are two players on each team and you can have as many games going on at one time as you want.

Team A starts with the ball and must stay on their own side of the field. The players can throw the ball back and forth to each other or even can run with the ball to the midfield line. In order to score a goal, the players must head the ball into the opposing teams goal. If team B saves the ball (both players on each team can use their hands to save the goal) they immediately go on the attack and try to score in team A's goal.

Since the only way to score is with a header, the quicker the counter attacks happen, the greater the probability of scoring. When the opportunity arises, a player might actually save the opponents shot with their head in order to quickly counter with a shot of their own. To watch good players play this game, you see headers, diving headers, two, three, and even four consecutive headers in a row trying to score over the opponents.

This activity works on heading, heading to goal, clearing headers, conditioning, goalkeeping, and is also a whole lot of fun. You can have your team play a 2 v 2 headers tournament by having each team play each other team for a 2-3 minute game and keep track of the records. Not only will they work hard and get a great deal out of this activity, but they will have a blast. If you do this on a rainy day, it makes the games that much more fun.

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