

Attacking

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY



**GOALKEEPER & DEFENDERS
IN ATTACKING PLAY**

**DEVELOPING STRIKERS IN
TODAY'S GAME**

**WAYS TO ATTACK THROUGH
THE MIDFIELD**

Gwynne Williams (Executive Director, Issaquah Soccer Club); Charlie Slagle (Chief Executive, Capital Area Soccer League); Rene Miramontes (Director of Coaching, San Diego Crusaders); Robert Parr (Director of Coaching, Arkansas State Soccer Association) and Ian Barker (Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA)



**National Soccer Coaches
Association of America**

ILLUSTRATIONS
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This session emphasized the role of central strikers and wingers in attacking the final third of the field. Presented by Charlie Slagle

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Targets and restrictions in different areas provide an exciting challenge for players to overcome in this intense game

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Wide midfielders have to be switched on in order to get forward and support the forwards when the defense is penetrated. Get them rehearsed in this simple game

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Penetrating attacks through the middle can be devastatingly effective. If you can create wave-after-wave of attack you'll give the opposition centre backs no time to rest

35 MASTERING TRANSITIONS

In fast paced matches, transitions can be the difference between victory and defeat. Get your team working on both sides of the ball with this effective game

36 FINAL GAME: 11V11

Wrap it up with a straight-up game of 11v11 to see the different elements combined and your players' decision making tested in a match situation

37 THE REVIEW SESSION

The Attacking Principles Webinar series concluded with a review of the previous 4 presentations delivered by Ian, Gwynne, Charlie and Rene. Presented by Robert Parr

The Principles Of Play

An introduction to the principles of attacking play. By David Newbery



DAVID NEWBERY

Coordinator, NSCAA Club Standards Project

For 25 years David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches and club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching.

David was appointed to lead the NSCAA Club Standards Project in January 2012. David has been providing consultant services and support to volunteer based youth programs for the past 10 years, helping clubs to become more serious about player and coach development. He contributes articles regularly to soccer publications, has written books focusing on player and coach development and presents at national soccer events. In his spare time David operates a youth soccer program for players age 3 to 8 in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Soccer is an invasion game. The objective is to breach another team's defense to score. Invasion games rely upon the concepts of attack and defense and to that end, transferring knowledge between sports such as Basketball, American Football, Rugby and Soccer is significant. It can be a real advantage when planning coaching education, to have coaches with previous teaching/coaching experiences in other sports, particularly when training coaches new to soccer. Establishing an in-house coaching education program based on Attacking and Defending Principles of Play can provide a Director/Educator with an ideal framework to deliver meaningful training building upon (for most people) prior knowledge and experiences.

Principles of play are the underpinning concepts of the game and can be coached from the first stage of development (3-5 year old players) onwards. The principles relate to attacking and defending and should not be confused with systems of play – the formation of the team on the field. The principles of play are the same in any system of play.

I have found that coaches with working understanding of these principles make better decisions on which skill, technique and tactic to select. Removing the guesswork from coaching allows the coach to focus on methodology, personality and performance with a good appreciation of the principles of play and excellent technique a team will be able to play any system and style.

As we witnessed during the webinar presentations, the most experienced

and respected educators sometimes differ in their perspectives on the key principles. For example, Swynn introduced the principle of 'Possession' and Charlie discussed the principle of 'Transition' – both very important concepts for coaching attacking play. But neither make the most common list of 5 Principles outlined in the introductory presentation by Ian. Depending on your frame of reference, the number and organization of the principles may vary from these 5 Principles of Attack.

As a note, due to significant differences in the development pace of young players of the same age, I prefer to focus on developmental stages than age of players when planning coach training. To this end, I have made reference above and below to 'Stages of Development' in an effort to provide the reader with guidance on when it is feasible to commence teaching a particular Principle. In the 5 stage of development model – a soccer adaptation of the Canadian Long Term Athletic Development Model – development occurs on a continuum where the age of the player is not as important as developmental readiness. The stages are loosely based on the following: Stage 1 (3 - 5 year olds), Stage 2 (6-8), Stage 3 (9-11), Stage 4 (12-14) & Stage 5 (15-18). Each stage of the model promotes a different development focus – the interplay between physical, cognitive, emotional, psychological and social variables.

To learn more, please contact me – dnewbery@nscaa.com.

ATTACKING PRINCIPLES

1. PENETRATION

In simplistic terms penetration is the act of breaking through the defense by dribbling, shooting, running or passing. We can start to coach penetration at the 1st stage of development.

2. SUPPORT

A player in possession of the ball receives help to maintain possession. Support attackers provide forward, backward and sideways options to the attacker in possession. We can start to coach support at the 2nd stage of development with an introduction to passing and receiving.

3. MOBILITY

Attackers make runs into different areas of the field in order to draw defenders out of their positions. A coach can commence teaching this principle late 2nd stage for advanced learners and stage 3 for others.

4. WIDTH

The attacking team attempts to stretch the opponent's defensive shape. The attacking players use the width of the field to tempt defenders from a compact shape covering the dangerous areas in front of goal and in so doing create space. The attackers move the

ball to change the point of attack in an effort to find a seam or space between or behind the defense. We can start coaching width in late stage 2 and early stage 3.

5. IMPROVISATION, CREATIVITY & SURPRISE

Attackers will try to break down defenses by employing the element of surprise. Skills such as back-heels, cut backs, flicks, feints and fakes are all used to this end. Comfort on the ball is critical and this training starts in the 1st stage of development.

Introduction To Attacking Principles

The main focus of this session was to provide an overview of the 5 principles and how a coach can introduce them with youth players. Presented by Ian Barker



IAN BARKER

Director of Coaching Education, National Soccer Coaches Association of America

Ian is somewhat unique having held leadership positions with US Youth Soccer and NSCAA and he has had extensive experience at youth and college levels. Ian coached for 21 seasons with the men's programs at the University of Wisconsin and Macalester College, before becoming NSCAA Director of Coaching Education in 2012.

Ian was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Minnesota Youth Soccer Association for 10 years and is a Head Coach of Region II Boys Olympic Development Program

Ian's qualifications are extensive and he holds the USSF A License, NSCAA Premier Diploma and NSCAA Master Coach Diploma.

Penetration

To introduce young players formally to the principle of penetration, Ian suggested using 'transition' - the moment in the game when possession is transferred from one team to the other. Start by asking the players what they should be doing when they have won the ball back from the opposition. The first objective is to get the ball forward by the using a shot, dribble or pass. As players become more technically proficient, we can then start to work on team play using combinations to move the ball up the field. A couple of issues the coach will need to address, are firstly the technical proficiency of the players and secondly decision-making when in possession of the ball. Both components need to be addressed in tandem, as it is difficult to foresee a successful outcome of good decision making without the technical ability to execute the decision.

Support

The objective of support is to create space in front, behind and to the sides of the player in possession of the ball. Simply, the principle of support means creating options for the person in the ball. The coach's role is to help players understand the importance of angles of support and distance of support. One method proposed by Ian is to discuss the importance of creating triangles. He challenged coaches to pose the question to players 'how can 2 players create a triangle?' This question is intended to stimulate thought and hopefully the players conclude that in order to create a triangle with 2 players one player has to move into a support position.

Mobility

Mobility becomes a more advanced concept as we add numbers to the field. Mobility is about creating space and movement of players on and off the ball. The objective for support players must be to make the field as big as possible and understand that effective mobility is away from the ball to stretch the opponent's defense. Coaches are advised to start with, 1) the person on the ball, 2) the person in the immediate vicinity of the ball in support and 3) players away from the ball. Consider 2 specific types of movement. Firstly, 'elusive movement' - movement by a player to find space behind or in front of an opponent - one objective being to distract the defenders concentration. Secondly, 'Velcro' movement - whereby the attacking player tries to drag the opponent out of the space and create room for a teammate with the ball or another teammate

off the ball. With older players the coach can work on more advanced concepts like 'timing of the run' and 'economy of the run'.

Width

Ian referred to width being the brother/sister principle of mobility. In simple terms width refers to taking up as much of the available space as possible and coaching the players to move towards the touchline in support positions when the team is in good possession of the ball. Width can have a dramatic effect on the opponent's defensive compactness. If the defense remains compact then there will be more opportunity to attack down the wings. If however, the opponent spreads out in response to the attacking team's width, passing lanes/seams will appear allowing penetration.

Improvisation/creativity

Ian put forth the case that although creativity is not as easy to coach in the same way as some of the other principles, improvisation still can be highly encouraged and must be coached. There are areas of the field where improvisation should be encouraged and discouraged. Benefits to the team can be extremely high in the attacking 3rd of the field, but the risks can be equally as profound when improvising in the defensive 3rd. Ian urges coaches to 'brave the percentages', suggesting that a coach must be willing to accept that in order to reap the benefits of exciting and creative players, there will likely be a fair amount unsuccessful attempts at first.

Questions asked by participants and answered by Ian Barker

Q1: Are changes to the formation of a team during the game potentially too difficult for younger youth players to properly execute? Marc Campoverde

Marc, this is an excellent question reflecting the need to be sensitive to the ability of the players to execute what we ask of them. If in doubt I would not make potentially complex changes and rather help the players to sort things out within the formation they have practiced. If, however, you have worked in training to sometimes mix things up and worked on a few variations then the players are prepared. This may not be earth shattering changes, but they could be meaningful and helpful. I would suggest making changes at half time for two reasons, to let the coach be sure upon reflection that they make sense and to allow the players

Support

This good attacking and defending session from Team USA will teach your players the importance of keeping possession and helps with beating the offside trap

WHY USE IT

Possession is key with players tactically keeping position in the midfield focal point of the pitch. Movement is vital to keeping the ball and fast breaks will result.

SET UP

Use your full pitch, marking out the midfield area between the Ds of the penalty area and cutting off the wings by eight yards. Create two end zones that run along the six-yard lines. We've used 20 players.

HOW TO PLAY

Play 10v10 in the marked out box in the centre. Teams have a back four plus two midfielders in their half of the box, with three attackers and a midfielder in the attacking half of the box.

When defending, the centre backs can drop back out of the box to defend the area in front of the end zone. When attacking, two players from the back half can join the attacking half.

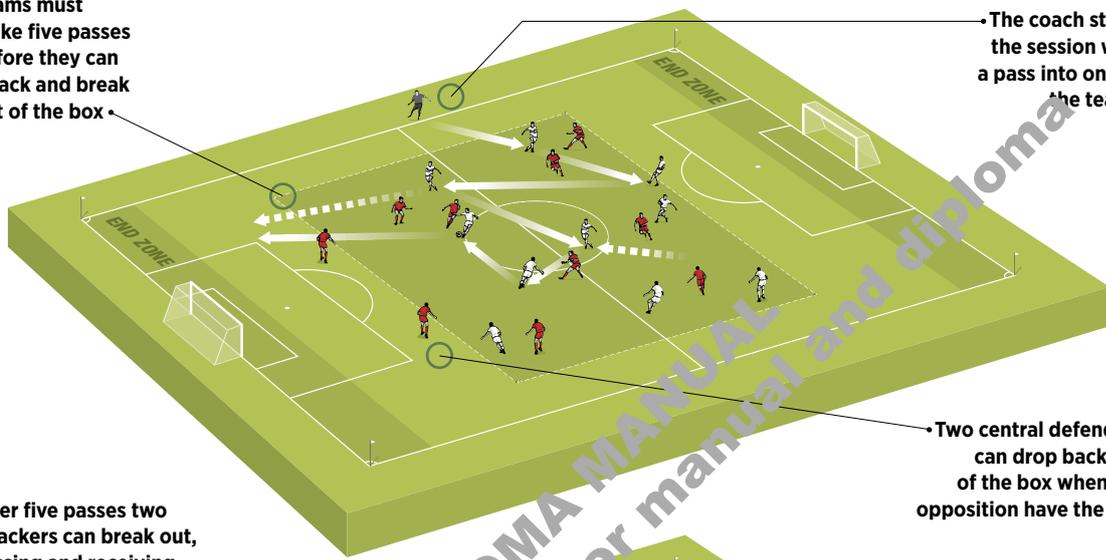
No more than six players from each team are allowed in either half. Teams can attack after making five consecutive passes and two attackers can break out of the box. Score by passing and receiving in the end zone. Play offside.

TECHNIQUE

It is important for positional sense all over the pitch and winning the midfield battles.

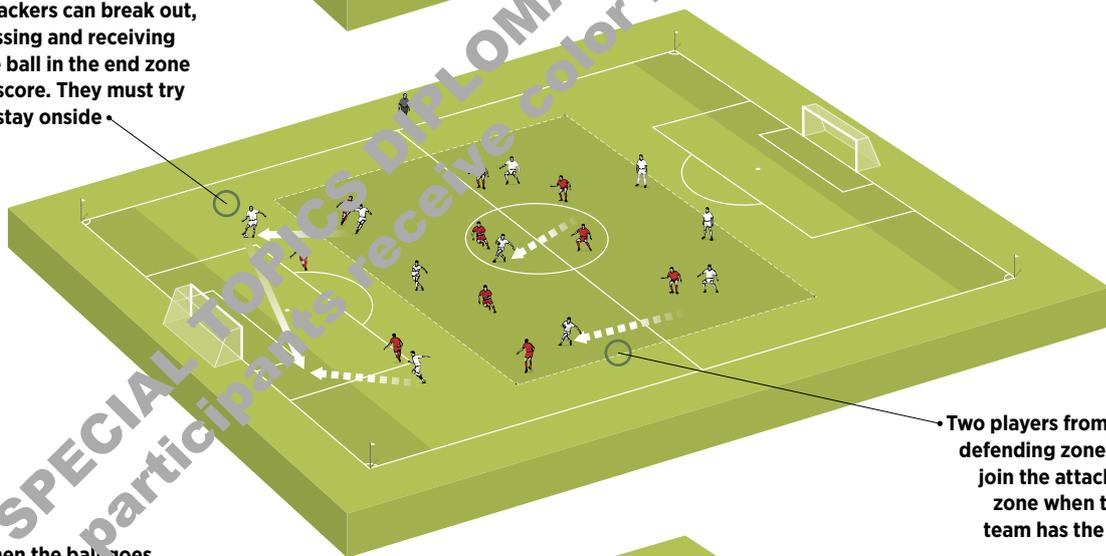
Teams must make five passes before they can attack and break out of the box

The coach starts the session with a pass into one of the teams



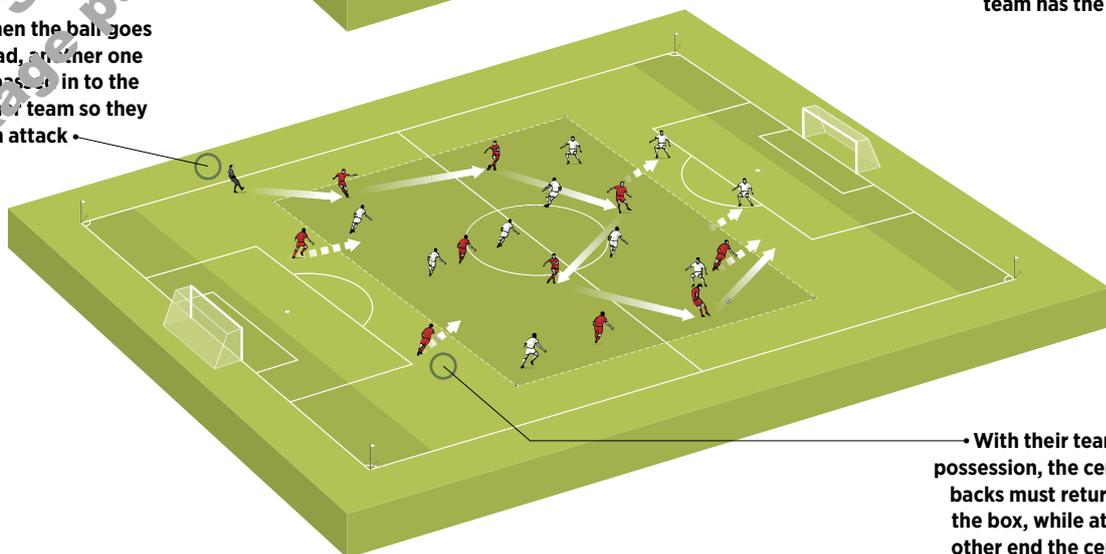
After five passes two attackers can break out, passing and receiving the ball in the end zone to score. They must try to stay outside

Two central defenders can drop back out of the box when the opposition have the ball



When the ball goes dead, another one is passed in to the other team so they can attack

Two players from the defending zone can join the attacking zone when their team has the ball



With their team in possession, the centre backs must return to the box, while at the other end the centre backs can drop out of it

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Goalkeeper Possession Game 2

The modern goalkeeper must be able to control and pass effectively in order to launch attacks and retain possession as emphasized in this activity

WHY USE IT

This activity emphasizes the role of the goalkeeper in supporting the attack. It encourages goalkeepers to combine with defensive players and develops confidence in using their feet.

SET UP

For realism, the activity is setup on the field adjacent to one of the penalty areas. One of the goalkeepers operates inside the penalty box and the other goalkeeper operates from the edge of the playing area at the other end. The playing area measures 30x20 yards. The squad is organized into three teams of four with two neutral players playing for the team in possession.

HOW TO PLAY

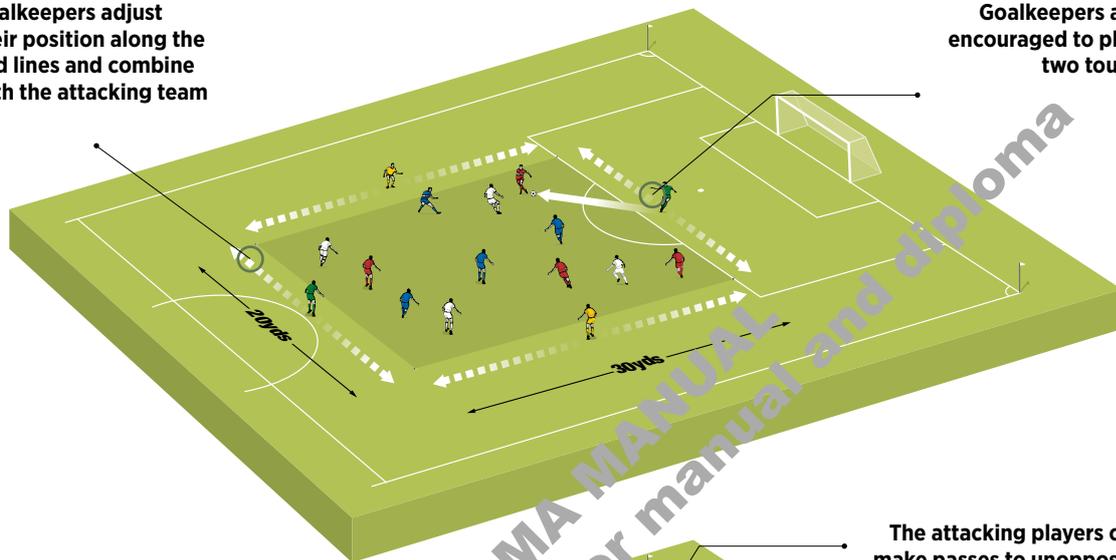
To begin the activity select one of the teams to be the defenders. The other two teams combine to create an 8v4 possession activity. When the defenders win possession, the team that gave the ball away automatically switch and become defenders.

TECHNIQUE

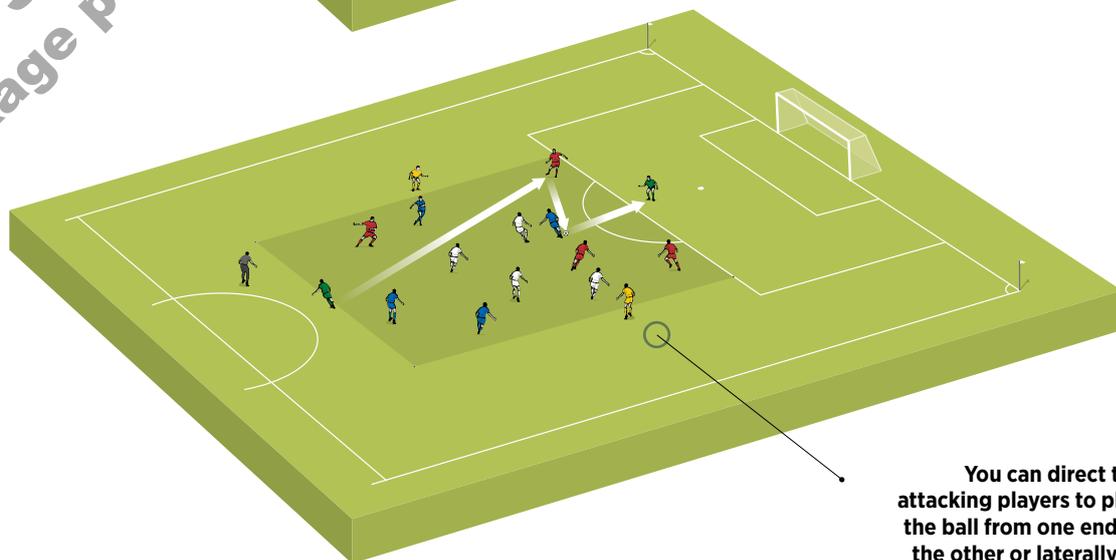
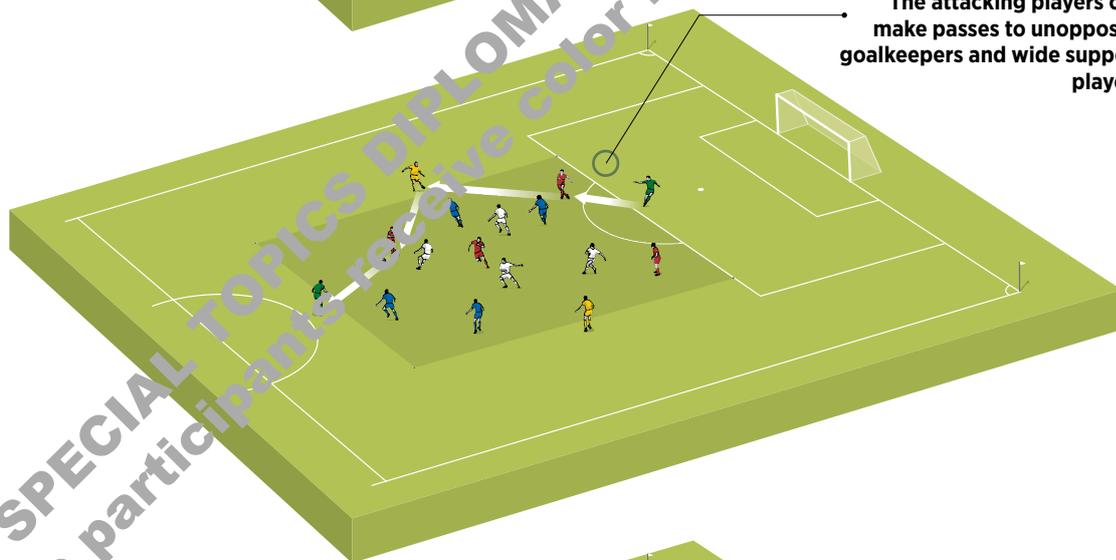
The goalkeeper should be prepared to receive a pass back from any of the attacking players. Naturally, the quality of pass back will vary and will present the goalkeeper with challenges to receive the ball and play quickly to maintain speed of attack.

Goalkeepers adjust their position along the end lines and combine with the attacking team

Goalkeepers are encouraged to play two touch



The attacking players can make passes to unopposed goalkeepers and wide support players



You can direct the attacking players to play the ball from one end to the other or laterally to the wide players

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Tight Space Give And Gos

The give and go is a vital tool for picking a route through tight defences. This activity will help your players master the skill

WHY USE IT

This drill teaches players to play in tight spaces near goal. The challenge of time makes it important to play in the tight space. Competition also adds to the importance of doing this in as tight of space as possible in order to not waste time.

SET UP

Mark out an area measuring 15x38 yards with a goal at either end. Use cones to mark an 8-yard channel across the middle. Place two cones in each goal. Play with multiples of three players.

HOW TO PLAY

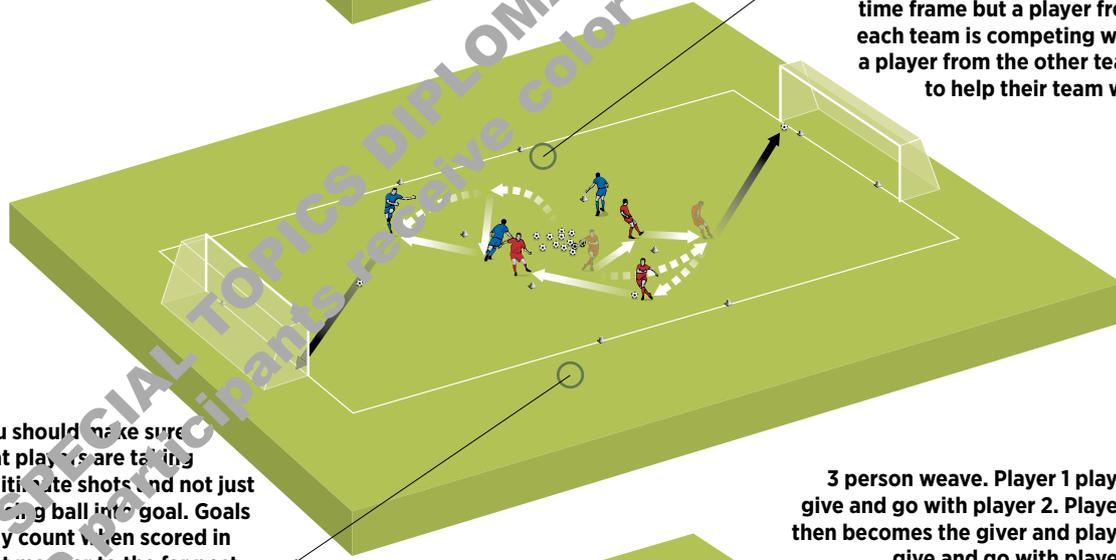
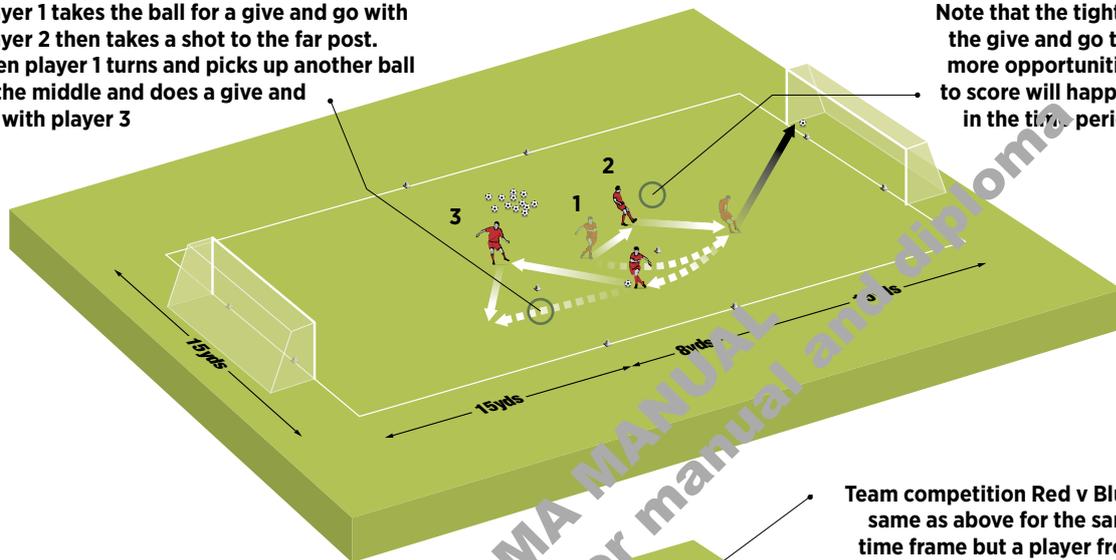
One player working at a time (1 minute). The player uses team mates for give and go and shots, trying to score as many times as possible in a minute. The player must shoot every ball, even if it gets away at the give and go. All shots need to go far post. Progress to one player working at a time but competing against another group of 3 (middle picture). Finish with a 3-person weave where each player will be in each of the 3 spots.

TECHNIQUE

Ball control, passing, receiving, shooting off pass.

Player 1 takes the ball for a give and go with player 2 then takes a shot to the far post. Then player 1 turns and picks up another ball in the middle and does a give and go with player 3

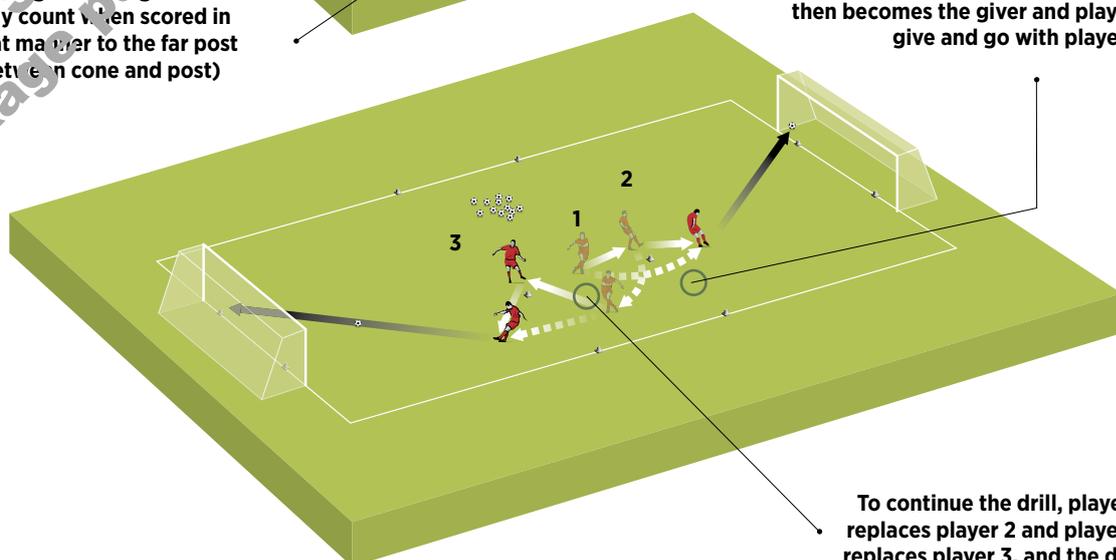
Note that the tighter the give and go the more opportunities to score will happen in the tight period



Team competition Red v Blue; same as above for the same time frame but a player from each team is competing with a player from the other team to help their team win

You should make sure that players are taking legitimate shots, and not just passing ball into goal. Goals only count when scored in that manner to the far post (between cone and post)

3 person weave. Player 1 plays a give and go with player 2. Player 2 then becomes the giver and plays a give and go with player 3



To continue the drill, player 1 replaces player 2 and player 2 replaces player 3, and the drill continues for 4 minutes

Player movement
Ball movement
Run with ball
Shot

Possession Game

This non-directional possession game provides a solid foundation for any possession-based session

WHY USE IT

This game allows players to get into the rhythm of the session in a competitive situation. It emphasizes good technique and good decision-making as far as keeping possession of the ball in the midfield area.

SET UP

Mark out a playing area measuring 40x60 yards (wider than longer).

HOW TO PLAY

Serve a ball to either of the teams.

The team in possession attempts to complete 6 passes without the opponents intercepting the ball.

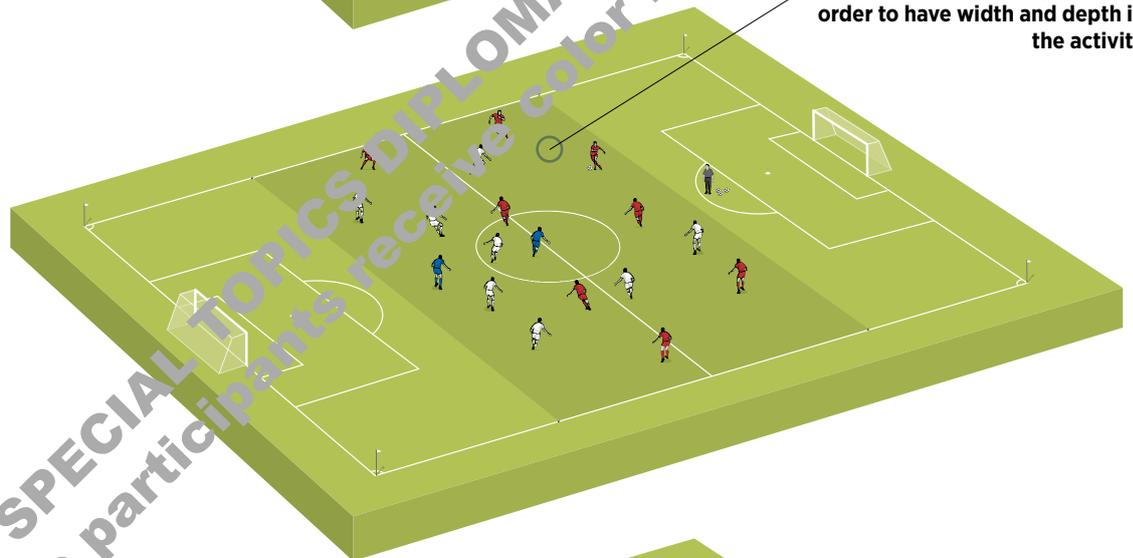
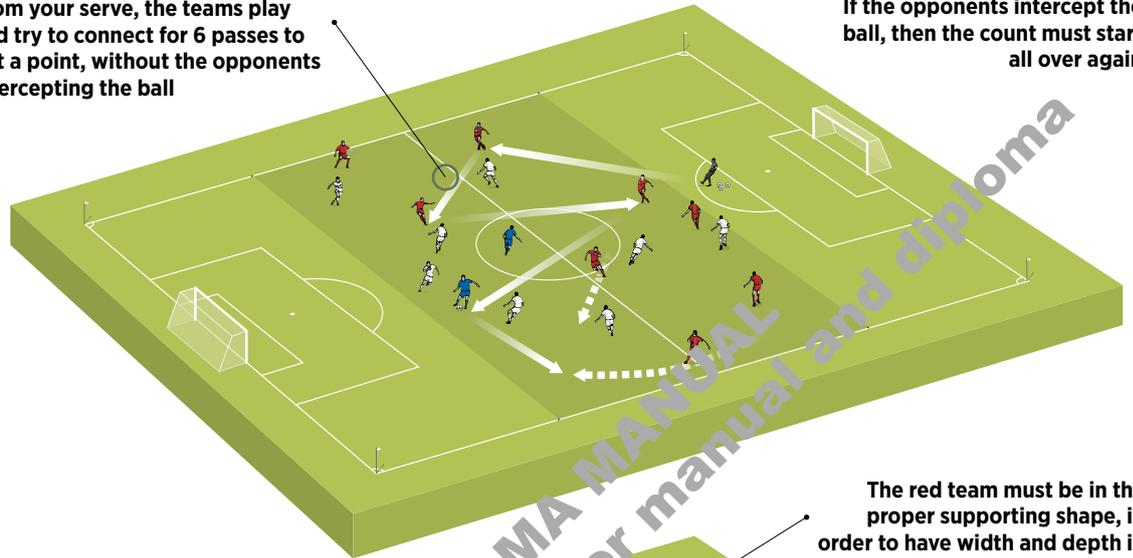
The teams have the support of the neutral players who have a 2-touch restriction. This is non-directional activity that emphasizes good team shape on both sides of the ball.

TECHNIQUE

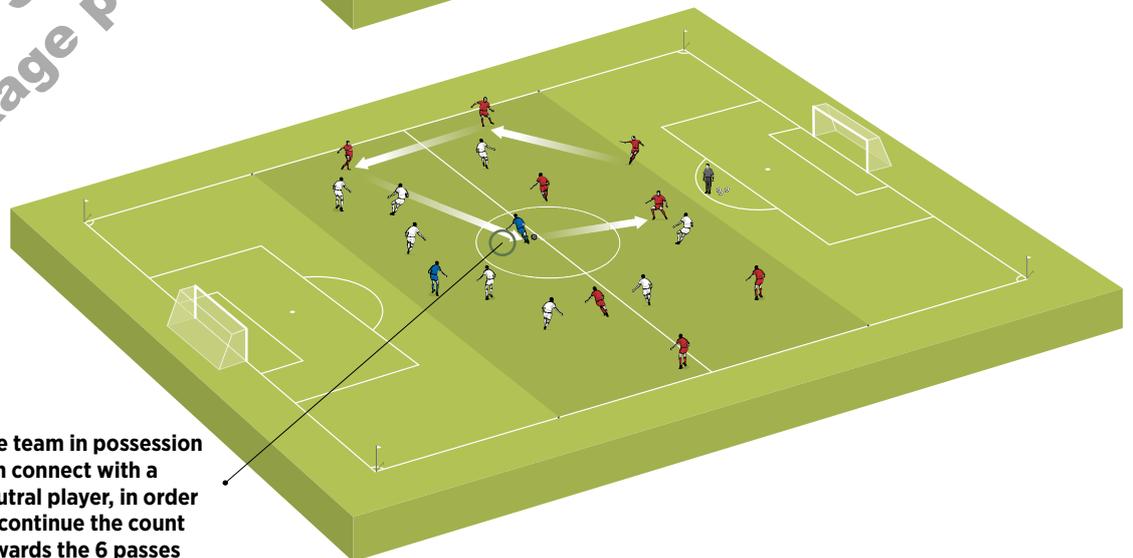
Good short and long passing and receiving of the ball. Good tactical awareness with proper support and switching the point of the point of attack.

From your serve, the teams play and try to connect for 6 passes to get a point, without the opponents intercepting the ball

If the opponents intercept the ball, then the count must start all over again



The red team must be in the proper supporting shape, in order to have width and depth in the activity



The team in possession can connect with a neutral player, in order to continue the count towards the 6 passes and get the point

SPECIAL TOPICS DIPLOMA MANUAL and diploma Full package participants receive color manual and diploma

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot