

# 15 TRAINING SESSIONS FOR **COUNTER ATTACKING**

**UNDERSTANDING  
THE COUNTER  
PRESSING  
REVOLUTION**

by **Chris Kouns**



# **15 Training Sessions For Counter Attacking**

*by*

*Chris Kouns*

*Published by*

**WORLD CLASS COACHING**

First published April, 2016 by  
WORLD CLASS COACHING 12851 Flint St Overland Park, KS 66213 (913) 402-0030

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Authors – Chris Kouns

Edited by Tom Mura

Cover Art By – Barrie Smith



This is a free eBook that is a companion to [‘Counter Attacking in the Modern Game’](#).

***Counter-Attacking in the Modern Game – Understanding the Counter Pressing Revolution*** is a special guide focused on how to harness counter attacks like the top Bundesliga sides. Inspired by the teachings on conflict resolution in Sun Tzu in ‘Art of War’ and the tactics of four elite coaches, Counter-Attacking in the Modern Game is a special guide that will turn you into a soccer shogun and your players samurai warriors with a sharpened tactical edge on how to win.

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In terms of the NCAA Division III Women's Soccer world Capital University (Ohio) was a relative unknown. Although Capital had won a hand full of Ohio Athletic Conference Championships in their 20 year history they had not done anything of prominence on the regional or national stage. However, with my arrival at the head of the Crusader program prior to the 2011 season that was about to change.

Focusing on the strength of the players we had in the program I felt that a counter attacking approach would fit us well. We had some quick players, but no one that was blazing. We had some technical players, but no one that was going to skate through defenders like Messi. We had some solid defenders, but no one that was going to shut down an All-American all game long. However, what we did have, was a desire to compete and a chip on our shoulder... and those are really big parts of counter attacking!

As with any coaching change it takes time to implement a new style and system of play. That process started us off the 2011 season 1-4 and with a lot of concern. However, as the players began to buy into the merits of what we were asking them to do they found success. By the end of the season we were OAC Champions, earned the first NCAA Tournament win in program history over Alma College (MI) and had the OAC Striker, Midfielder and Goal Keeper of the Year. After making a little noise in 2011 NCAA Tournament we hoped for the momentum to continue in 2012. Unfortunately losing both captains, and our leading scorer, to injuries prior to preseason there would be no progress on the big stag in 2012. Yes, we equaled the previous year goal total of 45 for the season, but, we did not make the splash we wanted.

With all of that in mind we entered the 2013 season even more determined and with even more of a chip on our shoulder. Our two captains were returning from their injuries. We added a pair of very good attacking players from California and Florida who made us a bit more dynamic on the counter attack. We also added in a holding midfielder from California who was terrific at breaking up play and starting our attacking corps on their way. Coupled with the fact that our team had eight seniors who had now been immersed in this counter attacking system for three years we felt like we had the potential to do something really special... and we did!

2013 was a coming out party for Capital University Women's Soccer. Early in the season we came from a 2-0 halftime deficit to tie nationally ranked Carnegie Mellon 2-2 before surrendering a late goal for a 2-3 final. We went on the road and defeated nationally ranked Thomas More 1-0 for one of our first wins over a ranked opponent. Then, as the season rolled along we beat our cross town rivals, Otterbein University OH), to win both the OAC Regular Season and Tournament Championships. Along the way we also upped our goal total to 50 for the season with yet another OAC Striker of the Year.

Our opening rounds of the NCAA Tournament took us to Whitewater Wisconsin where we knocked off nationally ranked University of Chicago (IL) and then handed nationally ranked UW-Whitewater (WI) their only loss of the year for our first NCAA Sectional Title in program history. As we moved onto the Sweet Sixteen we met up with nationally

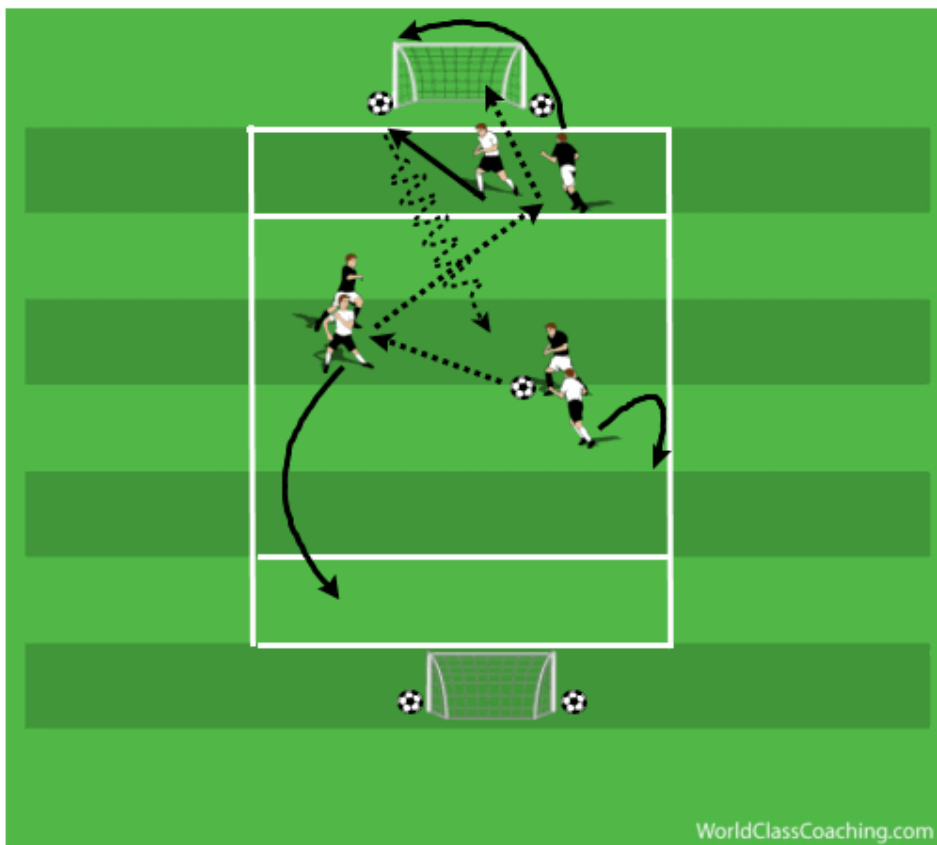


ranked Thomas More (KY) again and handed them only their 2<sup>nd</sup> loss of the season (both to Capital) and set up a showdown in the Elite Eight with the #1 team in the nation Washington University (MO). Although they were also the #1 seed in the entire NCAA Tournament we utilized our counter attacking approach and won! With that victory we headed to San Antonio and the NCAA Division III Final Four with everyone asking “How did they get here?”

As I was interviewed by the NSCAA College Ratings show, and heard from coaches all over the country, that question kept coming up but there was no secret formula. It was really quite simple... we valued counter attacking. As a result of counter attacking we were fortunate enough to have two of our players earn All American status, one as a striker and one as a goal keeper. As a result of counter attacking we had the opportunity to fall in the National Semi-Final to eventual National Champions William Smith (NY) 0-1. As a result of counter attacking we achieved the first national rankings ever for Capital Women’s Soccer with a final ranking of #8 NSCAA and #9 D3Soccer.com. In addition, as a result of counter attacking there were also not very many people who had not heard of Capital University left in the NCAA Division III soccer world!

That notoriety was thanks to the dedication of our players to maximize their talents using the activities contained in the following pages. Each session was an important part of our team success and ultimately I am confident with the right mix of players, and luck, they can do the same for you and your team.





- Field Size: 50 x 35
- At each end there will be a 5 yard scoring zone
- On the end line there will be a small goal on each end

### **Activity: 3 v 3 to small goals**

Inside the main portion of the field you will play 3 v 3. Players can go anywhere in the main field, but, only one (1) attacking player and one (1) defending player are allowed in the scoring zone at a time. When a player scores from the scoring zone then they must run around the outside of the goal they just scored on before they are allowed to re-enter the field of play. In the meantime the defending player can grab a ball and begin the counter attack going 3v2 in the other direction.

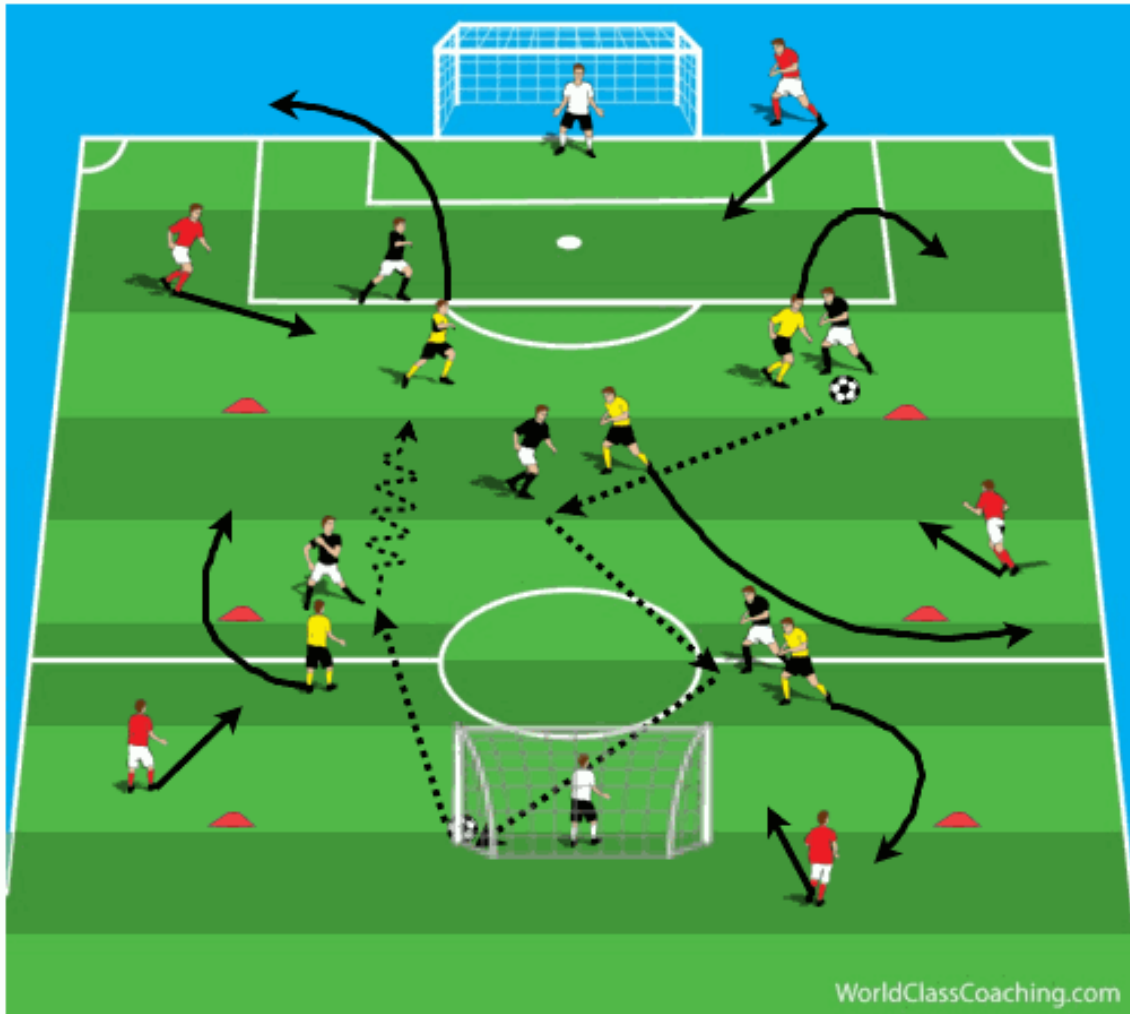
### **Potential Progressions for 3 v 3 to small goals**

- 1) If the ball is dribbled into the scoring zone and then finished the player must run around the net and replace the ball on the side of the goal before rejoining their team.
- 2) If the ball is passed into the scoring zone then the player who played the pass into the zone is not allowed to defend until the goal scorer is behind the goal on their recovery run.
- 3) As the ball is played into the net and the goal scorer is running around the goal they just scored on have one of the two defenders on the field go back and touch their own goal before they can defend too. This option would be good for players who seem to be struggling with taking players on as there will only be one defender to deal with as the counter attack is initiated.

### **Coaching Points for 3 v 3 to small goals:**

- Recognize that the moment the ball appears headed into the net is the beginning of their mental transition to attacking.
- The defender who grabs a ball for the counter attack should not waste any time in turning and counter attacking the other goal.
- As soon as possible look and recognize if there is a player who can eliminate all defenders by receiving a pass.
- If there is no obvious pass to eliminate all defenders take big touches on the dribble to engage a defender and create numbers up with your teammates.
- It is vital that the entire team transitions to the counter attack at once as the numbers up situation of a counter attack is temporary.
- The players off the ball must move away from their defenders as the ball appears headed into the net so that the new defending unit will have to find both the ball attacking them and the options for the player on the ball.
- The teammates in transition will want to offer angled support for the player bringing the ball onto the field. That can best be achieved with the two players staggered diagonally from one another so the two defenders trying to stop the counter attack will have to make choices on what to do.
- Make the defenders think! Don't stand in front of them and make their job into simple reaction.





- Field Size: 70 x 45
- At each end there will be a large goal with a goal keeper
- There will be three teams of five involved with one off and two on the field

**Activity: 5 v 5 to large goals with transition team**

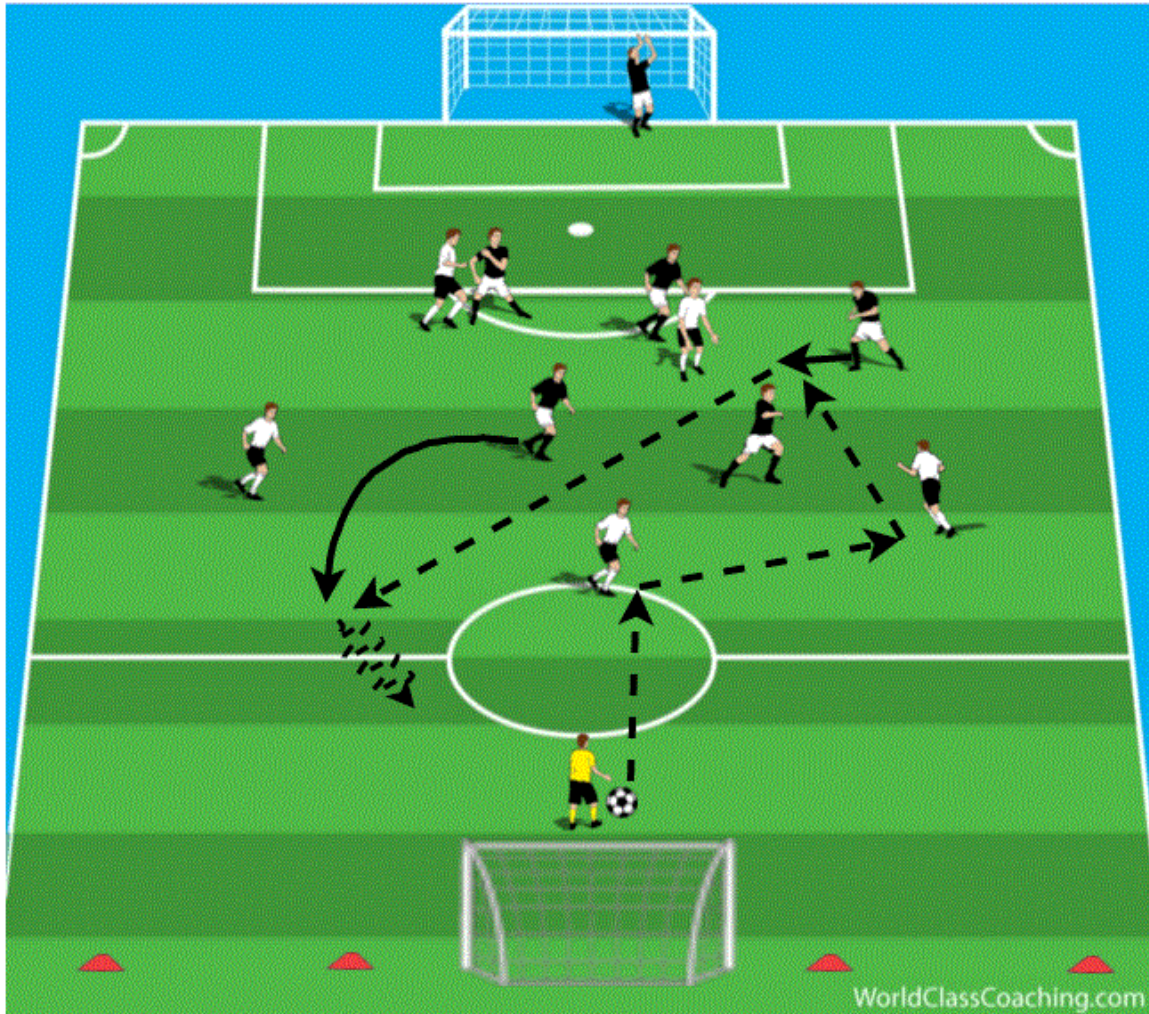
Within the field of play there will be two teams playing 5 v 5 with all rules of the game in play. Outside of the field will be a third team that must be spread in all different directions. That third team cannot bunch together or all be positioned near the goals or else that will kill the counter attacking opportunities created in the transition. When a team scores they will get a ball from the same goal they just scored on and then attack the opposite direction. The team that allowed the goal will exit the field and the team in waiting will enter the field in an attempt to stop the counter attack.

### **Potential Progressions for 5 v 5 to large goals with transition team**

- 1) Have injured or additional players beside the goals with extra balls. When a goal is scored have those players initiate the counter attack by playing it to a team member of the scoring team.
- 2) If you have multiple goal keepers have an extra keeper in the net with a ball already in their hands. Then, when the goal is scored have them begin the counter via hand or foot distribution. Remind the goal keepers they play a role in counter attacking as well because the first pass is the most important.
- 3) Make it so that the team coming onto the field will have to mark up man to man on the team who is on the counter attack. This can lead to more space to attack as well as the potential of chasing defenders which can replicate a different element of pressure for the counter attack.

### **Coaching Points for 5 v 5 to large goals with transition:**

- The player on the ball must understand the first pass of the counter attack is the most important. If the first pass is able to eliminate multiple players, or put their team in a goal scoring situation, then they are more likely to be successful.
- As a whole the team must transition into counter attacking mode as soon as they believe the ball is headed into the net. That transition takes the form of making their team shape big, giving their team depth and finding a clear path from the player with the ball to their feet.
- In transition waste very little time moving the ball East and West. When passing on the counter attack vertical balls will offer the best opportunity to eat up space and possess the ball with a focus towards goal.
- Players not on the initial ball in the counter attack must not run away from their teammate. Rather, they should shape their bodies side on so that they can get the ball running towards their objective.
- Body position for all players should be open to the attacking part of the field. It will be very seldom that a player with their back to the goal is a good counter attacking option (unless they are a striker holding the ball and waiting for help).



- Field Size: 70 x full width
- At each end there will be a large goal with a goal keeper
- Teams will be in a 1-3-2 formation

#### **Activity: 6 v 6 to large goals**

Within a six (6) minute game of soccer the two teams will be given different roles to assume. One of the teams will be dropping off and looking to spring a counter attack from their defensive end. The other team will be playing a high pressing style and may find that their counter attack comes from different parts of the field when they are able to win the ball back from the other team in transition. Rotate roles as you repeat six minute games.

### **Point Structure for 6 v 6 to large goals:**

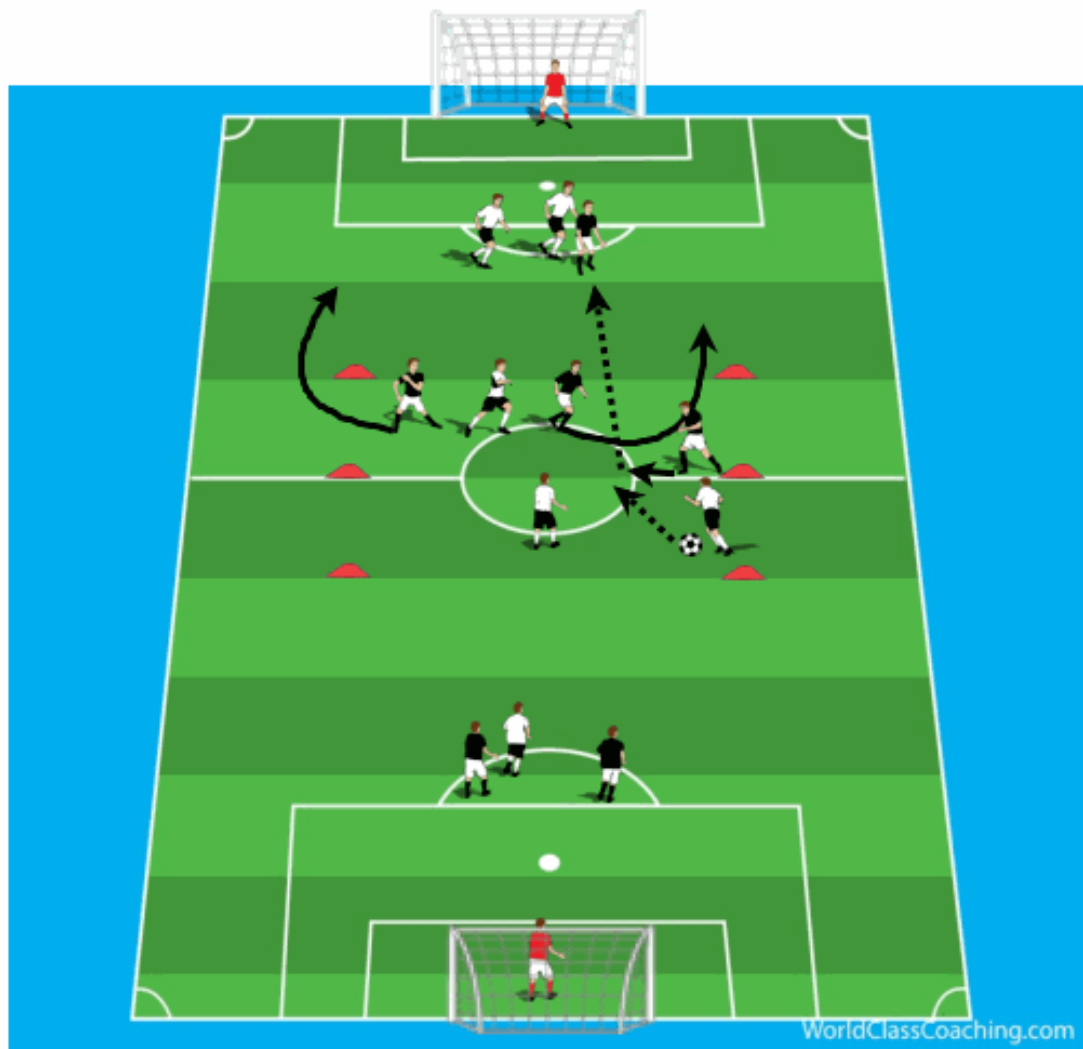
- 1) A team scoring a goal in the normal flow of play will get 1 point
  - 2) A team scoring a goal on a counter attack of 10 seconds or less will get 3 points
- You may want to address the timing of your “counter attack” based on the technical ability of your players

### **Potential Progressions for 6 v 6 to large goals:**

- 1) Institute an off side line for the team that is sitting in and trying to counter attack.
- 2) Make the activity a (+1) activity by having a player off the field at the midway point who can come on and receive the first pass of the counter attack from the deep lying team. However, you may or may not want to allow that player to continue to goal or have a chance to score.

### **Coaching Points for 6 v 6 to large goals:**

- The team that is sitting in and looking to spring the counter attack must address the following considerations in order to be successful:
  - a) What type of passes will they allow and what will be triggers for a press?
  - b) Where and how will they press?
  - c) What is the priority list of options on the counter attack...high, wide then dribble?
  - d) Where do the players off the ball go when they see the counter attack occur?
- The counter attacking team must have a collective understanding that their speed and endurance will be tested and necessary for success.
- The counter attacking team must be cognizant of the best types of passes that can begin their counter attack.
- Both teams should recognize that any turnover is a counter attack opportunity.
- Technically all qualities of both passing and receiving must be addressed as one misstep in either area will derail the counter attack.
- Communication at the moment of transition and during the counter attack is vital. It must be specific as to what parts of the field are available or what options are on. In addition it must be confident and without hesitation.
- Ensure that all players understand the cues for passing vs dribbling on the counter attack.



- Field Size: Full Field (as long as fitness allows)
- In the 20 x 20 central grid on the field is a 3 v 3
- On each attacking end there will be two (2) defenders and one (1) attacker plus goalkeepers in each net.

#### **Activity: 6 v 6 full field**

In the central grid there is a 3 v 3 battle going on for possession. When one of the teams is able to play their striker two of the players from the grid may join the striker to make it a 3 v 2 to goal.

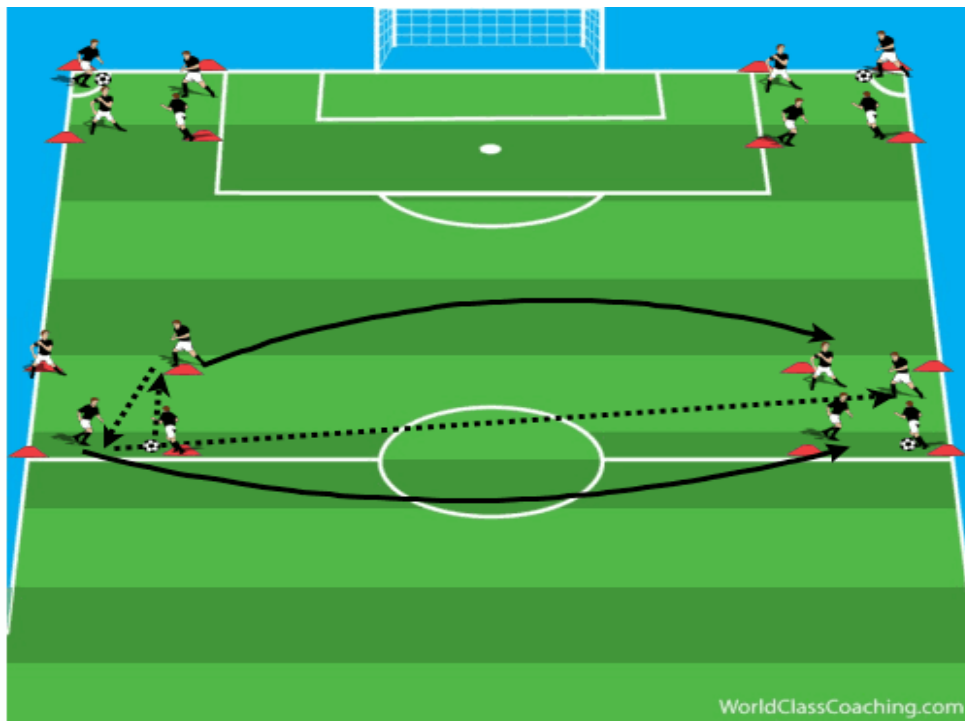


### **Potential Progressions for 6 v 6 full field:**

- 1) Put a three second delay on a defender in the central grid and allow them to recover making the counter attack negating the man advantage of the counter.
- 2) Allow a defender to come from the grid with the two attacking players so the counter attack advantage has time and decision considerations for players.
- 3) Allow a goal keeper who makes a save to play directly into the box so that it will become a 4 v 3 counter attack going to the opposite goal these numbers come from the fact that two players from the center grid joined the initial counter attack which left a 3 v 1 in the grid. If the GK gets the ball to one of those three all players in the box and other attacking end become live going the opposite direction which makes it 4 v 3.

### **Coaching Points for 6 v 6 full field:**

- Attack with speed, conviction and a willingness to fail
- Address the movement of players off the ball so that they will be able to maximize their numeric advantage
- Due to the distance covered by the players the striker will need to adjust their position receiving the ball to make joining easier. They should start deeper and then check at angles closer to the ball if they want to go numbers up.
- If one of the defenders steps to the players entering the field to make it numbers up the striker should make the decision of taking their player on the dribble versus holding and waiting.
- If the defenders stymie the attack they must instantly consider the opportunity for them to counter attack with the following considerations:
  - a) What type of passes will they allow and what will be triggers for a press?
  - b) Can they play it back into the central grid with one pass or would it take several?
  - c) If they win the ball close enough to dribble would to the central box what types of movements should the players in the box make to spring the counter attack?
  - d) If there is a counter that occurs during play should the opposite striker check towards their midfield teammates to open more space for the runs or check deeper to force the defenders to make a choice on what to do?
- For goal keepers who save the ball and or pick up an errant pass what types of service should they look for to start the counter attack



- Field Size: Half field with 12 x 12 boxes in the four corners as shown

#### **Activity: 4 player counter attack ball**

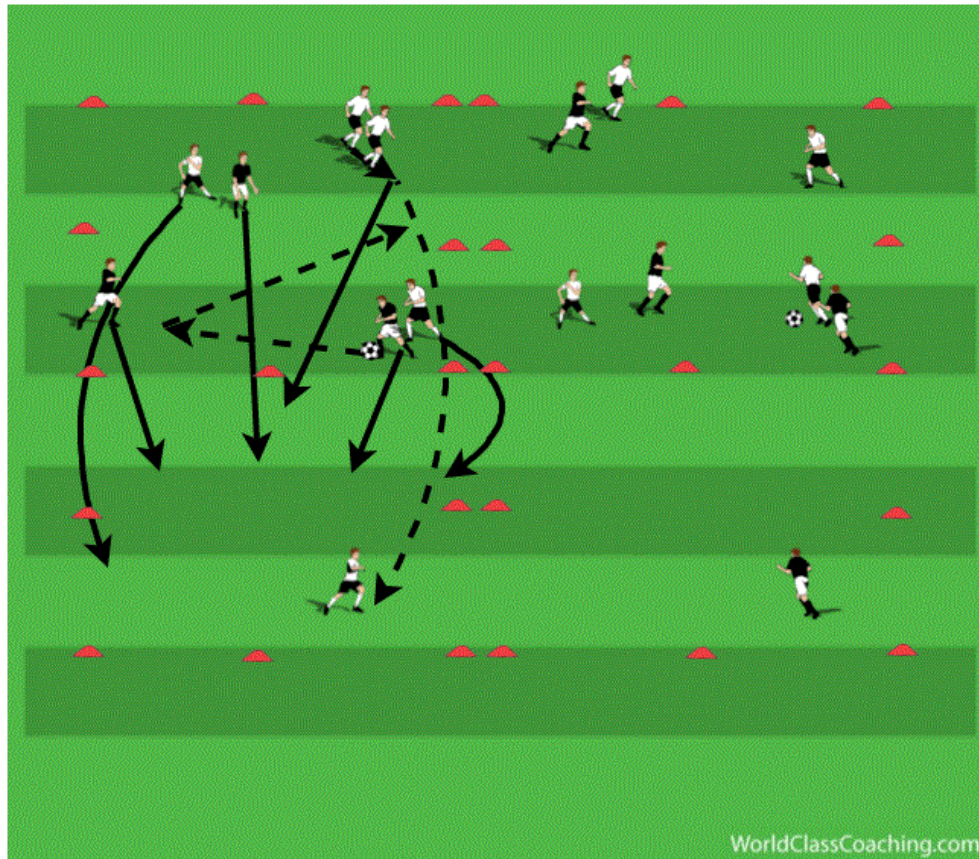
In each box there will be four players keeping possession of their ball. On the coaches signal one player will lay a ball back to another who will strike a driven ball to a player in the counter clock wise box. The players who lay the ball off and the strike it will travel with the ball to the new box and begin possession again.

#### **Potential Progressions for 4 player counter attack ball:**

- 1) Have one player follow the ball and one player go the opposite direction to that next box
- 2) When ball is laid back that player drifts out and up, the receiving player plays them a diagonal ball forward and then they find their target in next box

#### **Coaching Points for 4 player counter attack ball:**

- Quality of: pass, support angles, speed of service and awareness of which player in next box available to receive the ball



- Field Size: Four (4) 15 x 15 yard boxes which are side by side in pairs
- The top box on each side will have a 4 v 3 to begin with
- The bottom box will have one (1) player from the defending team (3)

### **Activity: 4 v 3 Transition Boxes**

There will be a total of 16 players working in the activity a 4 v 3 +1 in each vertical pair of grids. The four players will work to keep possession as long as they can. If they lose possession the three players will try to switch the ball to their teammate in the other box and then travel to support them and help keep possession. The team that just lost possession will then send three players to defend and leave one in that box for the counter attack target.

### **Point Structure for 4 v 3 Counter Boxes:**

- 1) 1 point for 7 consecutive passes by the team in possession.

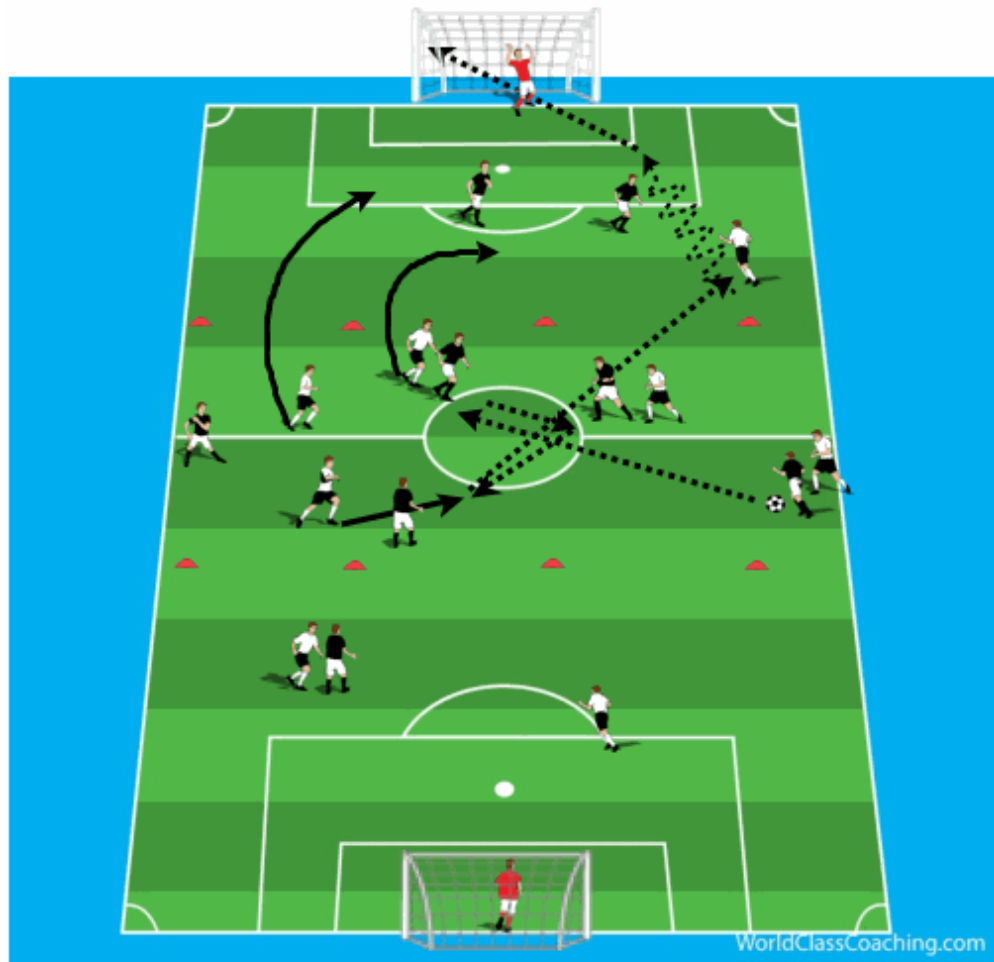
- 2) 1 point for the team of three if they can successfully win ball and counter to their teammate.
- 3) 2 points for the team of three if they can win the ball and counter to their teammate in two touches or less

#### **Potential Progressions for 4 v 3 Counter Boxes:**

- 1) Instead of 4 v 3 you can do 4 v 2 if you would like to work on a specific pair and their defending together. However, be careful that the quality of defending and transfer does not go down due to increased work load demands.
- 2) Combine the four grids to make just two grids of 30 x 30. Then combine the teams so you will have an 8 v 6 in the top grid with two counter attacking options waiting in the other box to receive the ball from the team of six.

#### **Coaching Points for 4 v 3 Transition Boxes:**

- There must be an urgency to the fact as soon as the ball is won it is transferred to the counter attack player. Any delay could kill the counter attack and lead to the team in possession regaining possession.
- The team of three (or six) must work as a unit to find the opportunity to win the ball and counter attack.
- After winning the ball and switching it to their teammates the team of three (or six) must travel quickly to support the players receiving the ball.
- The supporting angles should be based off:
  - a) Where will the player(s) receiving the ball be facing when they get it?
  - b) What type of ball will they be dealing with when it arrives? (air, rolling, bounce, etc.)
  - c) How close are the recovering defenders to the players getting the ball?
  - d) What is the technical ability of the player receiving the ball?
- The position of the player(s) in the other box should assist their teammates by making it easy to find them as an option. That means there is no set position for the counter attack target player. They may need to drift high or they may need to move laterally in order to be a viable option for a counter attack.



- Field Size: Full field with a central zone 30 yards deep and full width marked off
- In the 30 x 70 central grid on the field is a 5 v 5
- On each attacking end there will be two (2) defenders and one (1) attacker plus goalkeepers in each net.

### **Activity: 8 v 8 Transitions**

In the central zone the 5 v 5 will be working to keep possession for three passes (initial start). After a team gets three passes they can either a) play the ball into the attacking third and have a player run from the box onto it b) dribble the ball into the attacking third or c) serve their target striker the ball. No matter which type of entry ball two players can enter the attacking zone to make it a 3 v 2 going to goal. This will leave a 5 v 3 in the central box.



### **Potential Progressions for 8 v 8 Transitions:**

- 1) Have a “ball master” at the edge of the central grid with a supply of balls. If the team attacking misses a shot or the ball is saved that ball master can play an immediate ball into the team of five in the central grid where they will be 5 v 3.
- 2) Allow the goal keeper to start the counter attack with any ball they save. This can be done by playing the ball to the central grid team of five or by playing their defenders who could serve the ball back up into the central grid.

### **Coaching Points for 8 v 8 Transitions:**

- The top priority for the counter attacking team is to travel fast and without hesitation.
- Players must be cognizant of the correct decisions in terms of travel with the ball
  - a) If there is space available or if doing so would create a 2 v 1 opportunity to goal immediately then dribbling is an option
  - b) If the space is tight near the ball or our supporting player can eliminate the defenders by receiving a pass then passing is an option
- The team on the counter attack must pay attention to their spacing. Since the defenders will be focused on the ball you do not want to have too many players too close to the ball.
- Make sure those players supporting the counter attack off the ball work to get on the back shoulder of the defenders so they would have a hard time recognizing the danger behind them.
- Players should always keep in mind that the goal of the counter attack is to score. In order to score you must get a shot off. So, the recognition of the space required and the distance from goal that allows a legitimate scoring opportunity should be discussed.

# ***How to Absorb Pressure and Attack the Space Behind***

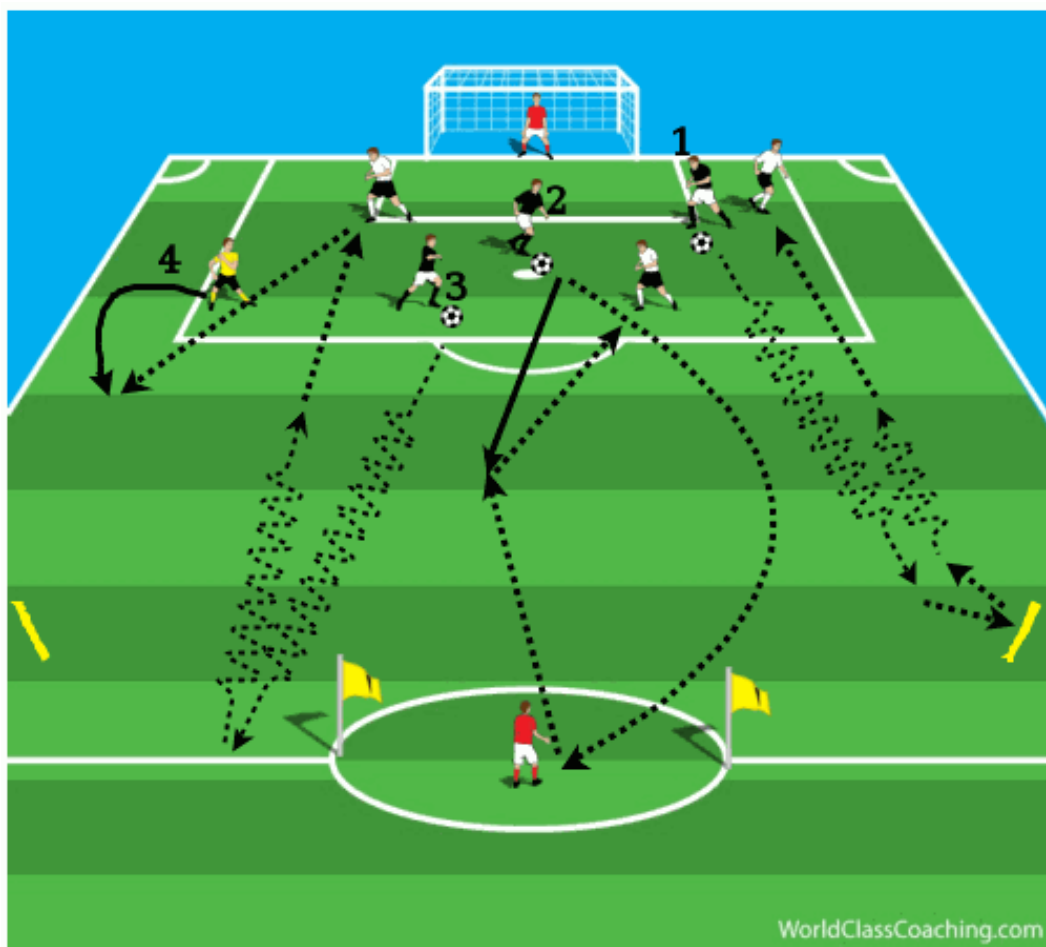


If you've ever imagined yourself to be a general on the sidelines marshalling your players like troops, you'll love this book on Counter-Attacking. Inspired by Sun Tzu's 'Art of War', Counter-Attacking in the Modern Game gives you the tactics, mindset and drills to create a team that beats even the most technically gifted teams with the ferocity of aggressive counter pressing.

Counter-Attacking in the Modern Game – Understanding the Counter Pressing Revolution is a special guide focused on how to harness counter attacks like the top Bundesliga sides. Inspired by the teachings on conflict resolution in Sun Tzu in 'Art of War' and the tactics of four elite coaches, Counter-Attacking in the Modern Game is a special guide that will turn you into a soccer shogun and your players samurai warriors with a sharpened tactical edge on how to win.

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- Field Size: Half field with a flag target goal at midfield (goal keeper as target)
- At half field on the width there will be rebound boards (one on each side)
- There will be a goalkeeper in the big goal

### **Activity: Counter Attack Speed Training**

Within the 18 yard box you will have pairs of players with one person having a ball and one without a ball. On the coaches command the player with the ball will have six (6) seconds to break from the box and do one of three things for 1 point:

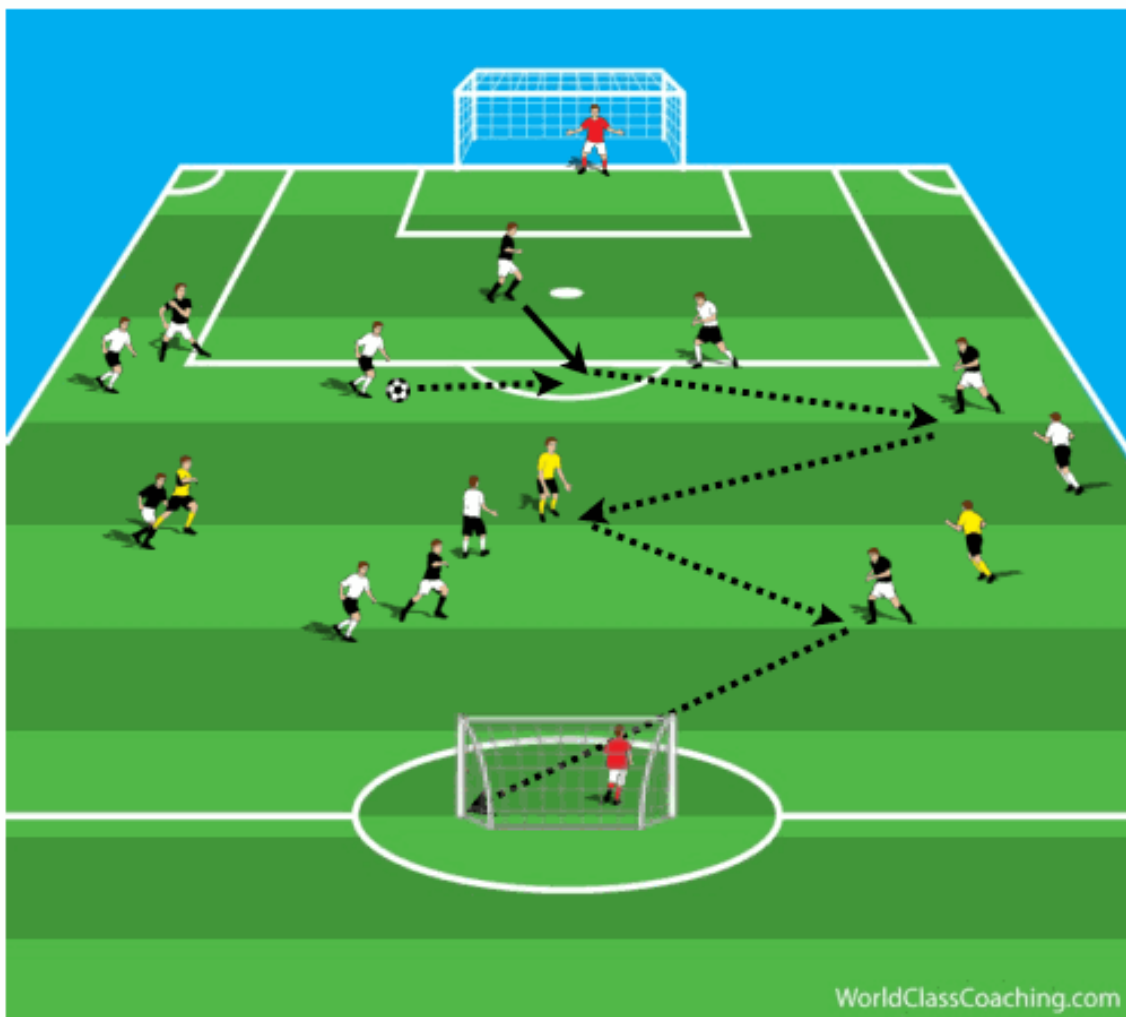
- 1) Dribble ball to rebound board, play off board, dribble back and pass to teammate
- 2) Play driven ball to target keeper, support ball, get it back and pass to teammate
- 3) Speed dribble to the midline, turn with the ball and then dribble back to a point where you can play a sound ball to teammate in the box

### **Potential Progressions for Counter Attack Speed Training:**

- 1) (4) on the diagram – Have groups of three inside the 18 yard box passing and moving. On the coaches command one player will break out with the ball to perform any of the three options from the start of the activity. However, when the ball is played back in to a teammate in the box the third person in their group will now get involved as a third man running for a one (1) touch ball to begin the process all over again.
- 2) Can also include the goal keeper in the big goal by requiring the teammate who receives the ball inside the box will pass to the goal keeper who will use a one (1) touch ball to hit the third man running to begin the process all over again.

### **Coaching Points for Counter Attack Speed Training:**

- In order to be successful accomplishing the task in a 6 second period for the point the player must have an incredibly high work rate. This replicates the expectation of being on the break in a counter.
- If the player chooses to speed dribble to midfield and perform a turn or to speed dribble to the rebound board and then turn they should take big touches that allow them to maintain their speed and stride.
- If the player chooses to break using the long driven ball to the target goal keeper they must pay attention to the following:
  - a) They must support while the ball is travelling making sure they are in the field of vision for the player receiving the ball.
  - b) They must be on the half turn so that they can take the return ball and move forward with their first touch.
- The ball played back into the teammate in the box should be driven on the ground if possible and at a pace that will allow their first touch to move forward.
- Players receiving a ball (whether from the goal keeper or a partner) must focus on taking the ball with their front foot so they will be in a natural running motion.
- When using a three player combination the third man running must make their run into an area where the player passing to them can do so with one (1) touch.
- Their first touch to re-initiate the process must be explosive and eat up ground.



- Field Size: Half field with two full size goals
- Two teams of six (6) players in a 1-3-3 formation
- Three neutral midfielders

#### **Activity: 6 v 6 + 3 Break Out**

On the field the two teams of six (6) players will be limited to two touch or less. The three (3) neutral midfielders will be limited to one touch. The goal keeper for each team will be limited to four touch or less in case they need to evade a player chasing a back pass. The game itself is regular soccer, complete with throw in's and corner kicks. However, when a team is in possession (whether on the counter attack or just building after a turn over) they must connect through at least one of the midfielders prior to going to goal in order to score.

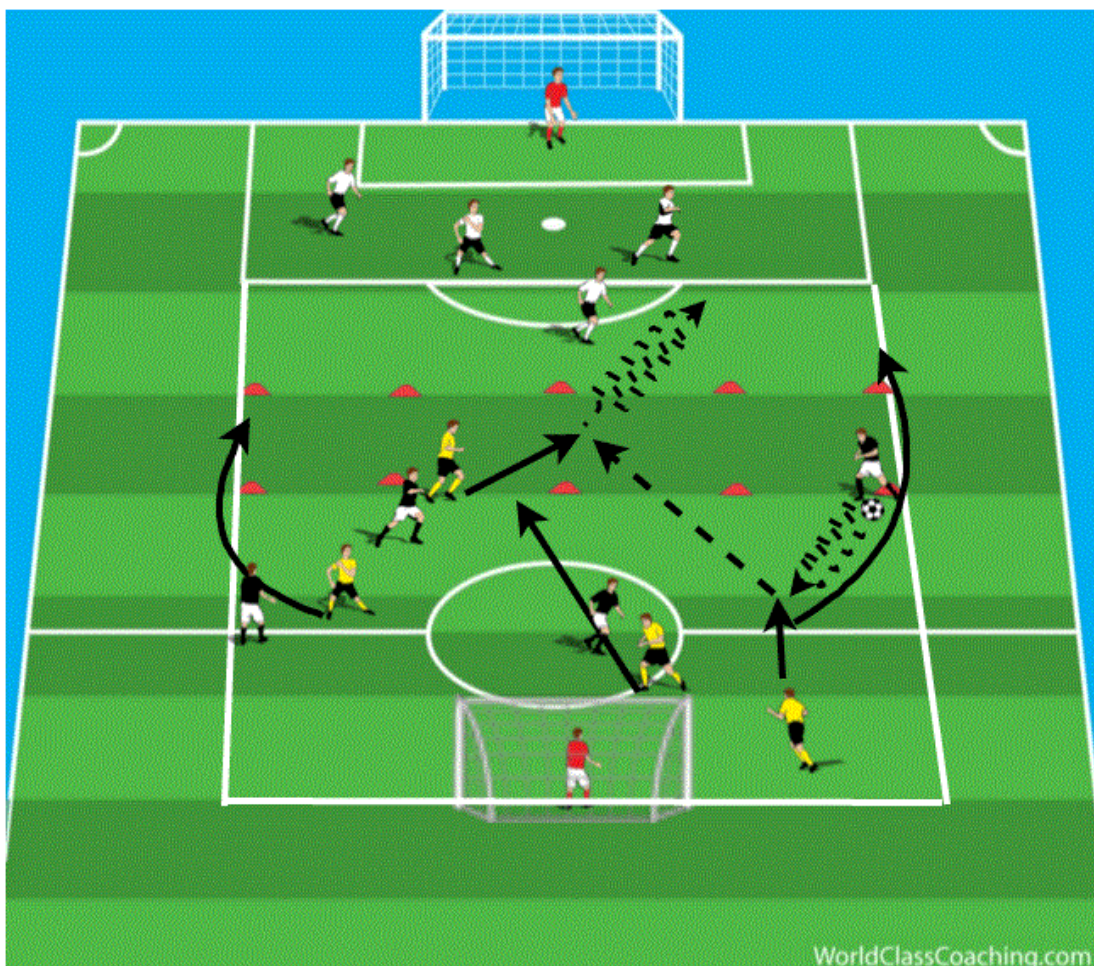


### **Potential Progressions for 6 v 6 + 3 Break Out:**

- 1) Any goal that is scored within 5 seconds of a one (1) touch pass from a midfielder it will count 2 points.
- 2) Any goal that is scored in two touches or less off a double midfield pass will be worth 5 points.
- 3) Any goal scored by a player coming from the back line of three will count as double its normal point value.
- 4) Assign specific players to the units. For instance the three neutral midfielders may all be #8 and/or #10 type players as they will be key to spring the attack. The three up top may be all #7 and/or #11 type players so that you can open the field and attack from the wings. The teams can be designed to fit your individual team needs.

### **Coaching Points for 6 v 6 + 3 Break Out:**

- Complete and total team involvement in the attack. Do not allow the three backs to sit. They must be making attacking runs when their team has the ball so they will begin to recognize opportunities to get forward on the counter.
- Speed of play in all possession and counter attack transition opportunities is key.
- With all players at two touch, minus the midfielders at one touch, technical qualities of the exercise are vital for counter attacking success.
- Body position in all attacks must face forward or to goal, anybody position facing out of bounds will disrupt the flow of the counter attack.
- There must be runs made off the ball and on the backside of the defenders because they will be focused on the ball and the speed at which it is moving towards their goal.
- Players should “drift away” from their defenders and get “lost in plain sight” when their team is in possession. The key to doing this is to watch your defenders head and when it turns to look at the ball that is the cue for your movement.
- Any ball which ends up being played backward, with the exception of a target strikers playing a ball back to an attacking player near goal, should be switched with the next pass. This ensures the defenders could not get comfortable while the play stalls.



- Field Size: 75 x 44 with a 5 yard safe zone in the middle
- There are three teams of four (12 players plus two goal keepers)
- Play four (4) eight (8) minute games

### **Activity: 3 Team Counter**

The team in the central safe zone will start with the ball. On both sides of the field the other teams are stationed as defenders with a GK behind them. The team in the center attacks one of the sides attempting to score a goal. If they score a goal then they will get the ball from the GK they scored on and go in the opposite direction to attack the team on the other end. However, if the defending team wins possession and can get to the central safe zone then they will now become the attackers against the other team and the team that had been in possession will stay where they lost the ball.

### **Point Structure for 3 Team Counter:**

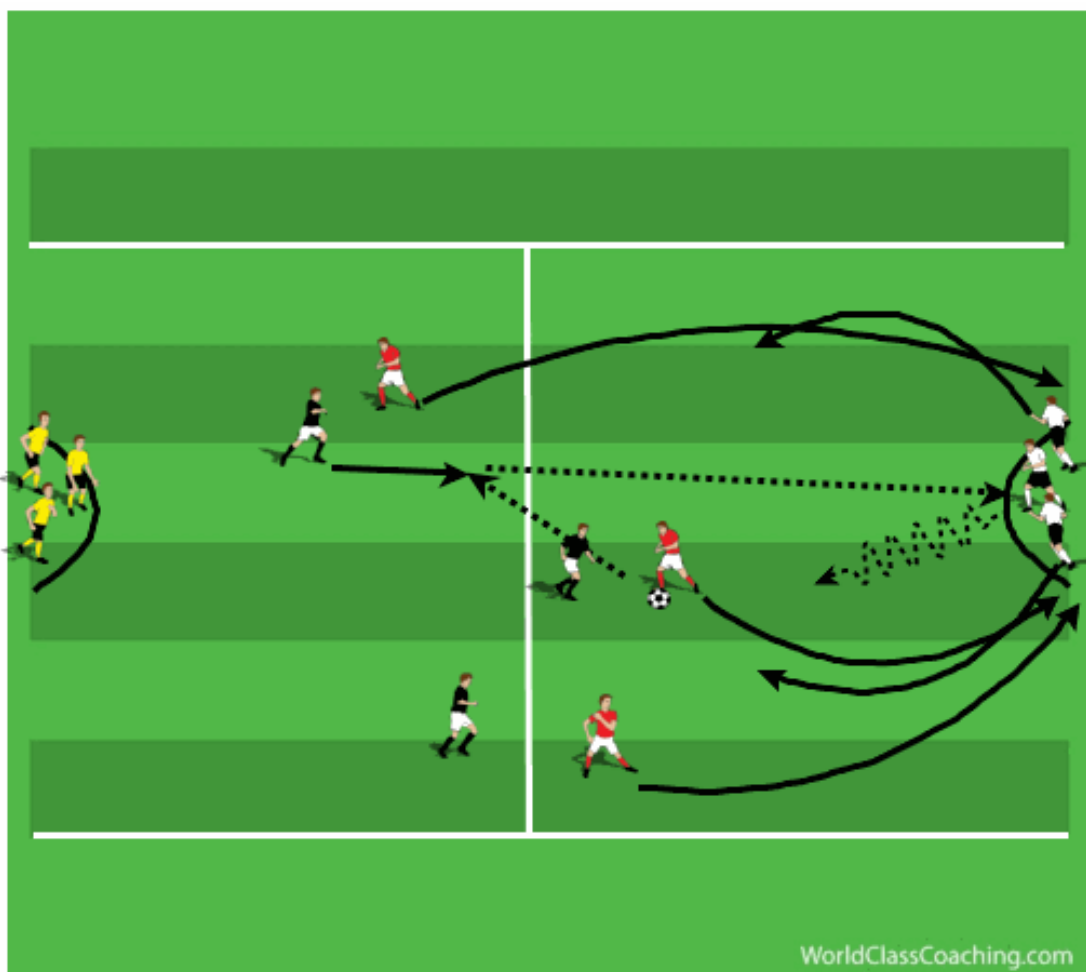
- 1) 1 point is awarded for any goal scored in the game
- 2) 1 point is awarded for any counter attack transition that can win the ball and get into the safe zone within three seconds
- 3) 5 points can be awarded for scoring a goal as described in the potential progression (d)

### **Potential Progressions for 3 Team Counter:**

- 1) Increase the numbers (and the distance between the goals) to 5 v 5 v 5 up to about 8 v 8 v 8. This will allow you to introduce other tactical considerations and more counter attacking options with the ball.
- 2) Limit the ways that the counter attacking team can get to the safe zone after a turnover to work on specific aspects of the counter attack.
  - a) Must get there in 6 seconds or ball will be returned to the attacking team via throw in.
  - b) Must get there only using a pass or only using a dribble.
  - c) The player who wins the ball may not be the one that carries it into the safe zone.
  - d) If a team does not stop in the safe zone to allow their teammates to catch up, and they are able to score a goal directly off their counter attack, then that goal will be worth five points.

### **Coaching Points for 3 Team Counter:**

- When the team wins possession the players off the ball must get both in advance of the ball and beneath the ball to allow for an escape option.
- The quicker the ball can get into the safe zone the more ground you would eat up on a normal counter attack – quicker is better!
- Decision making whether to go ahead and attack or to wait in the safe zone for help should be clarified with cues for both
- Work as a unit to win the ball with an interception rather than a tackle. If that interception can move the ball with your first touch it is even better.



- Field Size: 20 x 40 with two cone arcs (5 yds) marked off centrally on each end
- There are four teams of three (12 players total)
- Play four (4) eight (8) minute games

### **Activity: 3 Man Weave**

On the main field there are two teams playing 3 v 3. They each have a specific direction and they are both trying to get the ball into one of the two arcs located on the ends of the field. Within each arc is another team of three waiting to come on the field. When a ball is played into the arc the team that allowed the ball into their arc will all step off the field of play and retreat back. The team that was in the arc will now break out and transition counter attack the team that passed the ball in to them (that team is now defending).

### **Point Structure for 3 Man Weave:**

- 1) 1 point is awarded every time you win a ball and counter into the team waiting in the arc
- 2) 2 points are awarded if you are able to win the ball and play the ball into the arc within two touches

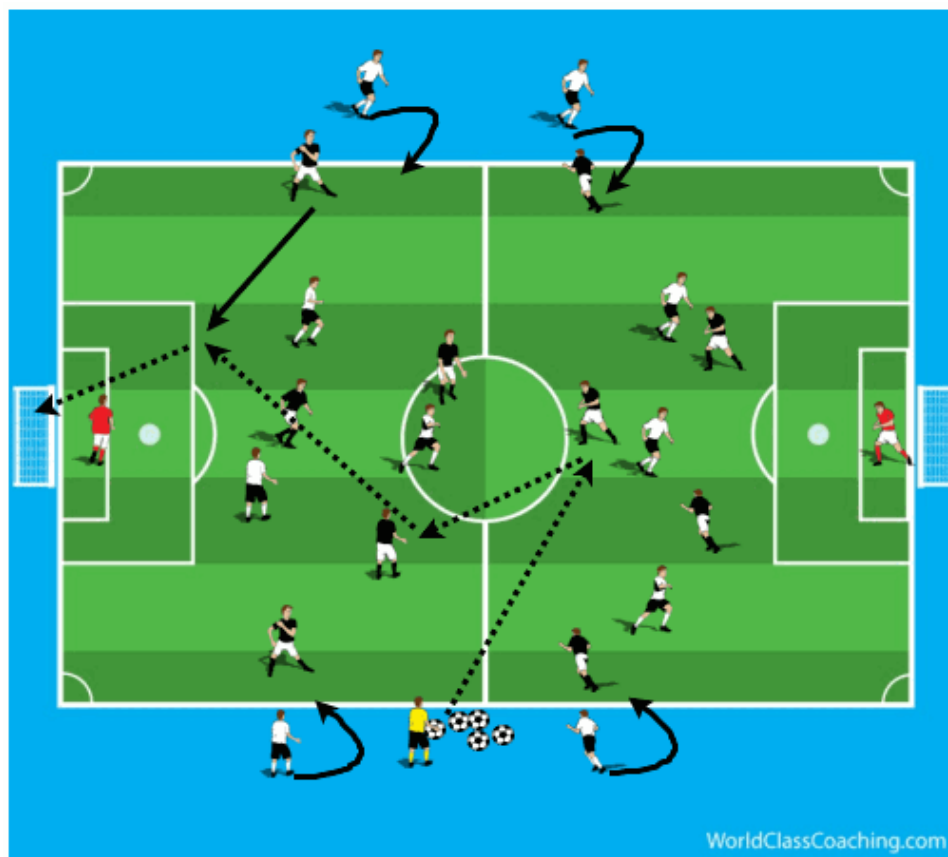
### **Potential Progressions for 3 Man Weave:**

- 1) All players will be three touch on the main field but the touch to gain control of the ball in the arc does not count.
- 2) All players will be two touch on the main field, including the touch to gain control in the arc
- 3) You can only score if the ball you play into the arc is in the air. Otherwise it is just a transition moment.
- 4) There will be a maximum of 7 passes allowed for the ball to get to the arc. If more than 7 passes the team in possession drops off and the team in their arc will bring a ball on the field and counter attack.

### **Coaching Points for 3 Team Counter:**

- All players in the arc must be prepared for a positive first touch. The first touch must include movement of the ball and immediately put the other team on their heels defensively.
- As the players break from the arc they should assume runs and positions that make the defending team make choices as to who they would take.
- The players not on the ball should look for opportunities while the other teams are on the field. For instance if they are about to get the ball from a wide position they must recognize the space to counter attack will be on the other side. Then their runs should exploit that with numbers up.
- If the team in the arc is receiving a ball in the air try to play the ball from the air as a pass in order to expedite the transition process.
- The defending team must communicate clearly to organize their shape based on where their players are retreating from when they scored.
- The defending team should go on the attack to force the team in transition to make a quick decision and not survey all of their options.





- Field Size: Full Field with two large goals
- Two teams of eleven (11) players with each in a 1-4-3-3 formation
- The defending team will begin with the two outside back and two midfielders off the field
- 5 minute games and then teams will change roles

### **Activity: 8 Seconds**

The activity begins when the Ball Master on the side of the field plays a ball into the attacking team midfield. From that point the attacking team has 8 seconds to attack the numbers down defense of the other team. After they shoot or score the Ball Master will then play another ball into the midfield of the attacking team. However, this time the defending team outside backs and midfielders which were off the field are allowed to step on. So, the teams will be even, but, the recovery for those four players into shape will leave a few seconds of indecision for the attacking team to take advantage of on the counter attack.

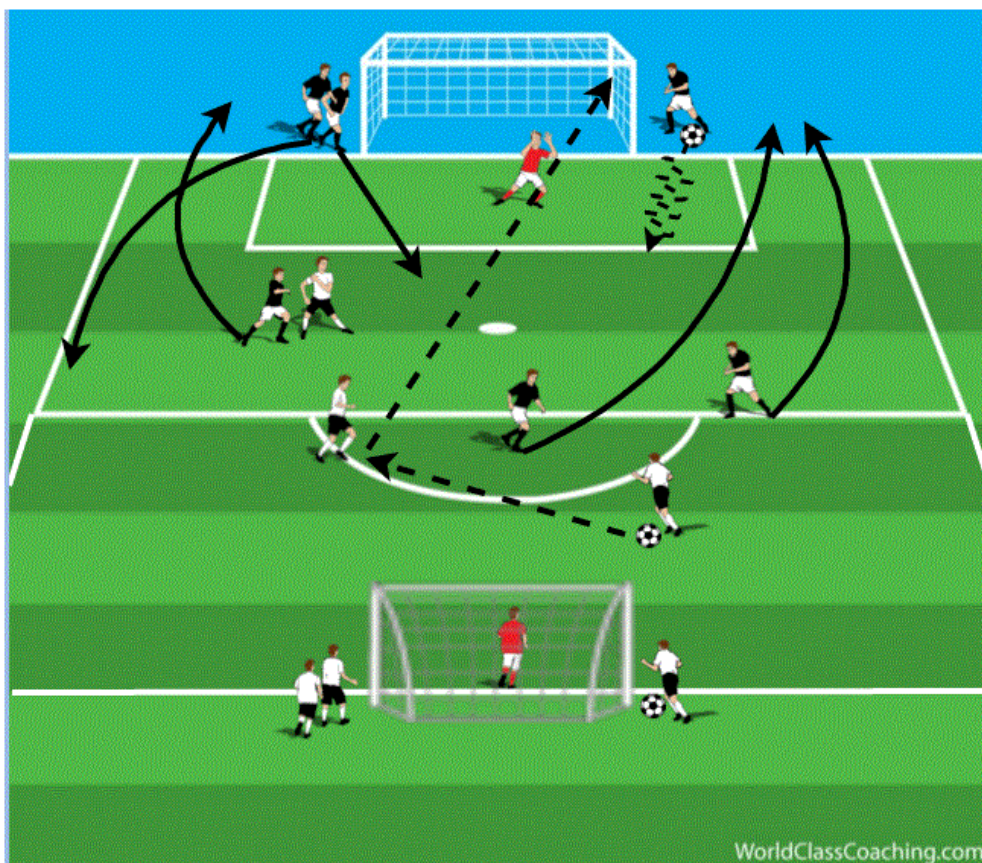
If there is a turnover on the first ball then the defending team's four players are all allowed to step on and the defending team should counter attack utilizing those four players who would be unaccounted for by the defense. Once the defensive counter attack ends then we return to the normal restart process. If there is a turnover on the second ball the same applies in that the defensive team should try to counter attack and then we return to the normal restart process.

### **Potential Progressions for 8 Seconds:**

- 1) You can alter the number of players off the field to vary the amount of pressure the attacking team faces in the counter. For instance the midfielders can face two opponents instead of one if you would like them to increase their speed of decision making
- 2) You can limit the number of balls that the attacking team gets rather than limiting it according to time. This may put more value on the 12 balls they do get rather than knowing they have lots of time to complete the task.

### **Coaching Points for 8 Seconds:**

- As soon as you can gain possession play forward as soon as possible with a pass or with the dribble.  
Focus on attacking centrally when you are numbers up and on the counter attack as wide play will offer the defensive team time to recover.
- Runs off the ball should be at angles to the posts to encourage finishing as soon as option is available.  
On second ball if counter attack is not on recognize the change to a possession attack and communicate that across team lines.
- The speed and tempo of the attack may be different for the first ball and the second ball. Make sure players understand options in each given situation.
- Technically both the pass and receiving of the attacking team must be crisp and the weight of the balls should not slow down the attack. Positive first touch!



- Field Size: 36 x 44 (double the size of the 18 yard box)
- Two teams but only three players on the field at a time for each team
- Goalkeepers in each net
- A supply of balls beside each goal to aid in the transition and counter attack

### **Activity: Rapid Fire**

The activity begins with one team on their post with a ball and a defending team already on the field. The team with the ball will attack the other goal and try to score. If they are able to score they will stay on the field and transition defense while the team that allowed the goal will get off the field. As soon as a goal is allowed by a team their next three players will bring a ball onto the field and attack the team that just scored the goal. However, if a ball goes over the end line, either on a shot or just with a loss of possession that also triggers the transition of players. So, it does not benefit a team to just shoot and miss because if they do they will be getting off the field.

If the goal keeper saves the ball then they should begin the counter attack for the team they are working with. Their distribution should allow that team to quickly move forward. In addition they may choose to carry the ball themselves into the counter attack and even shoot as that will give their team a 4 v 3 counter attack. Any ball that goes out on the sideline will result in a transition with the team that would be taking a throw in, instead have three new players carry a ball onto the field.

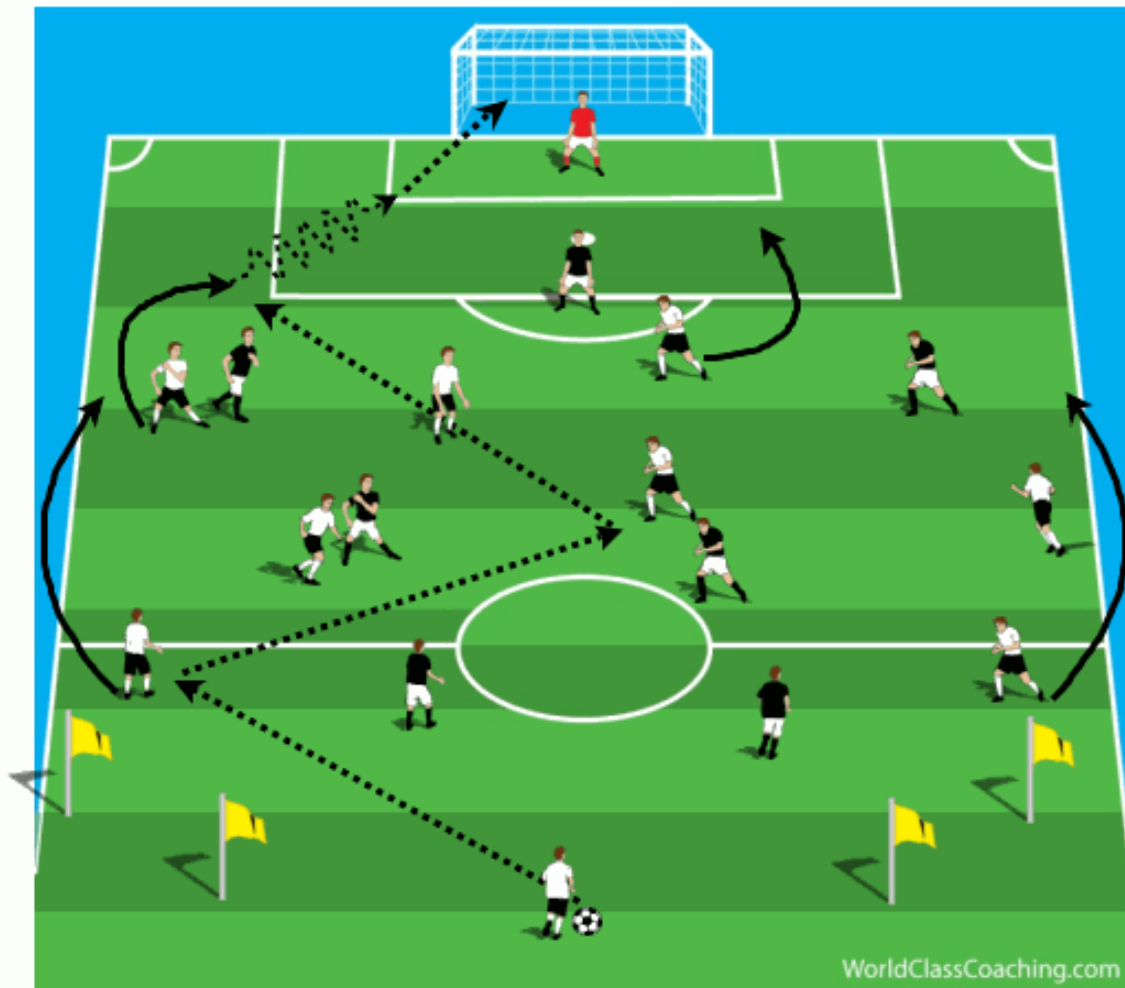
This counter attacking and transition game lasts 5 minutes and each team should keep track of the number of goals that they score.

#### **Potential Progressions for Rapid Fire:**

- 1) You can begin with 1 v 1 and increase it to 2 v 2 and beyond.
- 2) As your numbers grow in the activity make sure the field also grows to allow enough space for the players to find a realistic opportunity for counter attack.
- 3) You can allow each team to have one player enter the field from midfield and two enter off the post so that there will be a high options available for a first time entry ball behind the attacking team.

#### **Coaching Points for Rapid Fire:**

- As soon as you have the opportunity to go to goal do it! Do not hesitate and remember you are within shooting range almost as soon as the game begins.
- The decision of the person who brings the ball onto the field for the counter attack is huge. They must have identified the areas available for the counter attack while the other team was still attacking. Once the shot is taken they must know where they are going to attack.
- Take Chances! This game is all out attacking and is very competitive with the right mentality.
- Off the ball the players entering the field for the counter attack should look to make the space big and try to find ways to outnumber the attackers who are still recovering from their previous attack.



- Field Size: 80 x full width with one large goal and two counter goals
- Two teams with an attacking team in a 3-4-2 formation and the defending team in a 1-3-2-2 formation
- 5 minute games and then rotate players within teams

#### **Activity: Midfield Break Out**

The activity begins with the central attacking player in the back playing a ball to either their outside backs or to one of the midfield players. That attacking team will then go to the large goal. The defending team will look to win the ball and then counter attack. If they are able to get the ball through either of the two counter attack target goals in five (5) passes or less then they will get a point. Remember, the goal keeper is part of the defending team, so, if they make a save they should look to begin the counter attack as quickly as possible.

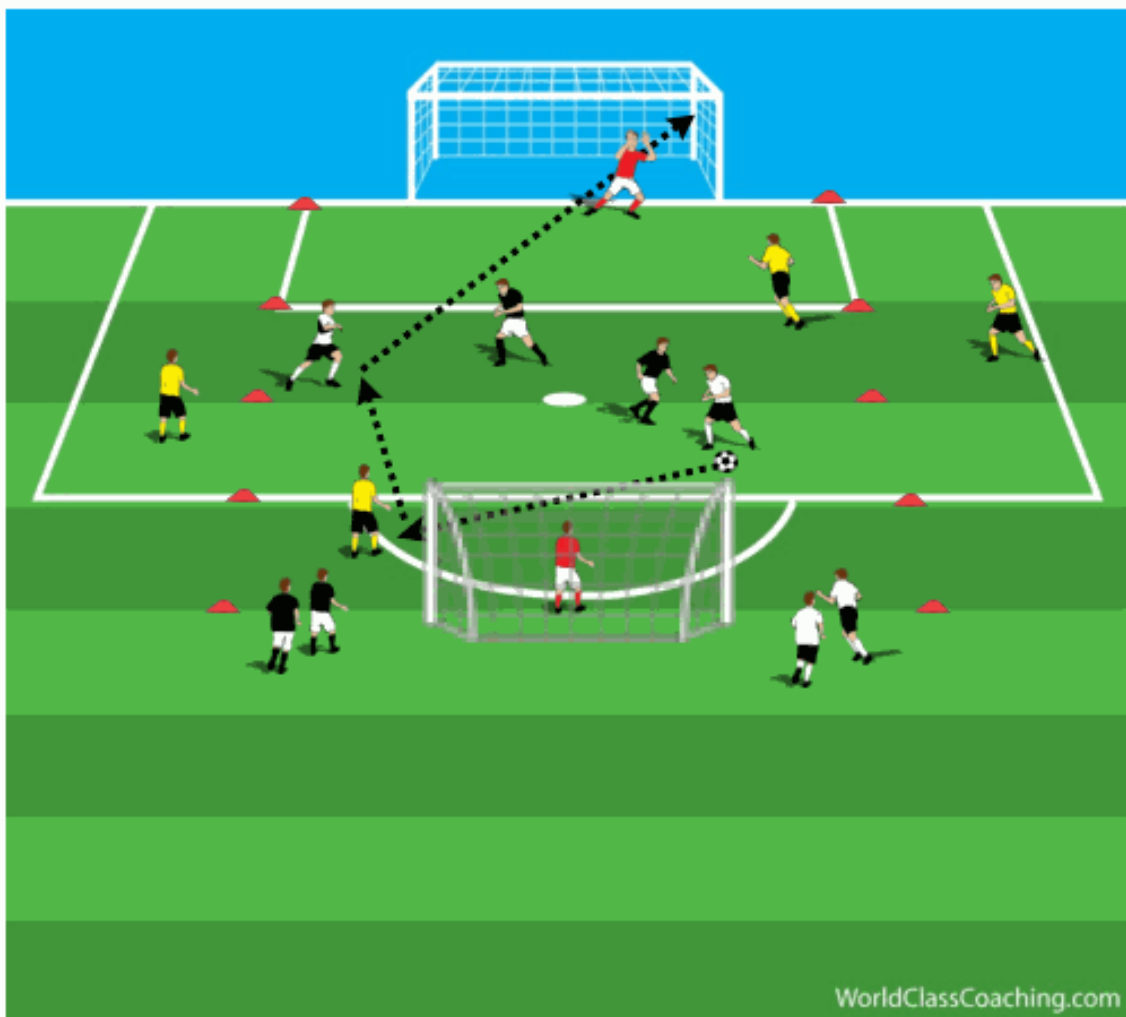
### **Potential Progressions for Midfield Break Out:**

- 1) Allow the attacking team 15 seconds to create their shot on goal. If they do not get a quality shot off in 15 seconds they leave the ball where it is and the defending team picks it up to try to counter in five touches or less (the first touch will not count as it just gains possession)
- 2) Allow the defending team a target player who will step onto the field from between the two counter goals when they gain possession. If this player can get the ball directly from the player who wins the ball give 1 point. If they get it and the team score the counter goal in five touches or less they will get 1 point.

### **Coaching Points for Midfield Break out:**

- Anticipate opportunities for a counter attack when you are on the opposite side of the ball. (i.e. if opposition have the ball and are about to give the ball away or are drawn out of position leaving space you could exploit with movement)
- The attacking team should utilize the ability of their outside backs getting forward via the overlap to create numbers up overloads on one side.
- With numeric superiority the attacking player with the ball must make a quick decision as to the best method to bypass the defending players:
  - a) Is a player in an advance position that can eliminate them... then pass the ball past the defender
  - b) Is there space behind the defender that you could exploit... then wall pass and get into the space behind defender
  - c) Are you 1 v 1 against the defender and within your shooting range... then dribble the ball past the defender
  - d) If you have any type of opening between the defender and the goal (and you are in range) take a shot on goal past the defender.
  - e) TAKE CHANCES!





- Field Size: 23 x the width of the 6 yd. box and two full size goals
- Two teams with a pair of neutrals. Beginning with 2 v 2 + 2 on field
- 1 minute games

#### **Activity: OK Corral**

Inside the area play begins with a ball played to a neutral who must one touch pass to a team. Whatever team they play to is now attacking in their designated direction and the other team is now defending. For the one (1) minute time period look to attack and counter attack as fast as possible using the numeric advantage that the neutrals will allow. After the one minute game have the next set of players come on the field, as well as the next set of neutrals, and continue the game from that score.

### **Potential Progressions for OK Corral:**

- 1) Make the neutral players one touch only and they are not allowed to finish a ball, only set the players up for the counter attack finish.
- 2) Make any goal scored on a counter attack without using the neutral worth 2 points. However, if it was the wrong decision to try to go without the neutral (i.e. poor angle, numbers down, etc.) then take away a point. This should keep the integrity of the game and not just have players hitting useless balls.
- 3) Play for three rounds with each pair on the field. The first 1 minute round is three touch. The second 1 minute round is two touch and the last 1 minute round is 1 touch.
- 4) Increase numbers to 3 v 3 + 2 in the same space to increase the pressure on the players in the game. If you decide to go numbers larger than 3 v 3 + 2 you should also add 5 yards to the area of the game to help achieve goals.

### **Coaching Points for OK Corral:**

- Although the space is tight the players within the space should try to find the widest spaces available to attack from.
- Because the space is so tight the recovery time for a defender will be very quick. That means any exchange of passes or any shot must be done with full speed and quickness.
- When a ball is won in the flow of play the counter attack must be instant and vertical in nature. Do not waste time going laterally unless the one lateral ball can lead to a finishing opportunity.
- Make sure that your movement off the ball and your runs do not bring defenders closer together than they have to be. Really work to overload the defender with a 2 v 1 or better situation.

I hope that you will find these activities useful as you work with your players on their counter attacking. We found that with a healthy dose of these activities each week we were better able to capitalize on counter attacking opportunities when they arose. As with anything practice makes perfect and perfect counter attacks make champions!

