

LWYSA

Training Program

Book 1

Games for Soccer Training



Written by Jimmy Gabriel

**Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association
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Games for Soccer Training

This booklet has been written to instruct coaches on how to organize their training programs in game form. My reasons are simply these; players are attracted to soccer playing because it presents a number of wonderful challenges to them in the form of a game. Yet, in our desire to improve our players, we coaches have broken the game down into the simplest of drill forms in order to concentrate on making them better technical players. Unfortunately for the kids these simple drill forms take the shape of one or two-dimensional drills and when these types of drills are overdone, which they invariably are, they can become boring. Let me explain. Drills advance from simple drills to complex drills and then into games and we can track this advancement by the number of dimensions required to advance the drill. A “one” dimensional drill would be sprinting without the ball or passing a ball to a teammate who would then pass the ball back or any movement drill without the ball being used or any technical drill with a minimum of movement. A “two” dimensional drill would combine the technique practice with movement. A good example would be dribbling the ball or passing and moving to receive the return pass. A “three” dimensional drill would add purpose to the drill like running with the ball towards goal in order to shoot on the goal or overlapping a teammate to receive a pass that will enable you to cross the ball for another teammate to head or shoot for goal. The “fourth” dimensional drill involves opposing players who in the case of an attacking coaching session would threaten to disrupt the drill by winning the ball before the goal can be threatened or in a defensive coaching session would threaten to penetrate the defense and score a goal. Of course the coach can add or subtract opposing players to allow some bias for the group being coached but even in the most competitive drills when it breaks down the coach halts the action explains the reason for the breakdown and re-starts the drill all over again.

The main problem with this method of coaching is that it eliminates the need for immediate transition, which is the corner stone of great game playing in soccer. Immediately the ball is lost the players must try to win it back and therefore are required to form some sort of defensive team shape to give themselves a

chance to do this. Similarly, immediately the team has regained possession of the ball the players must form an attacking shape so that they can advance the ball into their opponents' defensive area and attempt to score a goal. Only in the playing of games are immediate responses from attack to defense or defense to attack required, therefore to train our players to make these responses at the appropriate time we should design our practices to involve more game playing activities.

As I see it, the main purpose of any drill is to give the players a chance to practice the technical and tactical requirements of a specific play and I have no problem with using drills as a lead in to games that emphasize that type of playmaking. In fact I believe that practicing these plays in drill form before playing a game allows the coach the opportunity to isolate and correct any technical or tactical flaws the players may have and therefore prepare them better for the specific demands of that particular game.

The use of drills to highlight techniques such as shooting, crossing and heading are normal parts of most coaches training sessions but these sessions are usually kept going too long keeping most of the players inactive for overly long periods of time. These drills although necessary should be kept shorter and whenever possible become lead-ins to finishing games.

Our kids play soccer because they love to play the game and that means that they will retain their enthusiasm for soccer as long as they are allowed to play. Used wisely drilling our players is a way to warm them up both mentally and physically before they play soccer games but good coaches know that too much drilling takes the fun out of the game. Allow them to enjoy their practices to the max by limiting the practice drills and advancing the "game practice" idea.

Four two-hour sessions are planned consisting of:

- Defending Games

- Build-up Games

- Attacking Games

- Combining all three in one session

Each of the first three sessions concentrate on one particular aspect of the game whereas the fourth session attempts to provide a balance to the practice by combining defending, midfield and attacking play into that one session.

Defending Session

The first thing a defender needs to know is how to pressure the ball carrier. This is done by the defender who gets close enough to the ball carrier to worry him about his chances of losing possession of the ball. This forces the ball carrier to concentrate on the ball and the challenger and takes away the ability to preview his next play options. The defender's position can be achieved by quickly advancing on the ball carrier before stopping suddenly some five feet from the ball. When the defender stops he should have his weight on his back foot to enable him to turn and retreat quickly should the ball carrier attempt to dribble the ball past him. If the defender's approach and positioning has been successful he will have adopted a position called the control/restraint position. This position should allow him to dictate the forward movement of his opponent by forcing him either left or right. It will also give him some opportunities to strip the ball from his opponent should he decide to challenge for the ball. In many cases the opponent will try to turn backwards and away from the defender rather than engage him by attempting to dribble the ball by him. If this should happen the defender must press the attacker close enough that he cannot turn again with the ball but instead is forced to pass backwards.

The successful ingredients to first defending are,

Close the ball carrier down quickly

Stop close enough to threaten a challenge for the ball

This should take the ball carrier's eyes down to the ball and away from passing or shooting options

Keep your weight on your back foot to allow a quick turn

Position your body side-ways on with both knees bent to allow for explosive movement forward sideways or backwards

Position your body in a way that encourages your opponent to go either to the right or to the left

Adjust your position to counter your opponent's moves if necessary

Be ready to make an immediate challenge for the ball should the opportunity present itself

First Defender Training Drill

Three players A, B and C with one ball between them

Two players A and B with the ball stand 20 yards away from the third player C

The player B with the ball passes it 20 yards to his teammate C who controls it

The passer B then sprints the 20 yards to put the control/restraint position on C his teammate with the ball

The ball carrier C allows the defender B to set the position before side stepping by him

The ball carrier C then passes the ball 20 yards to his other teammate A and sprints forward to repeat the procedure

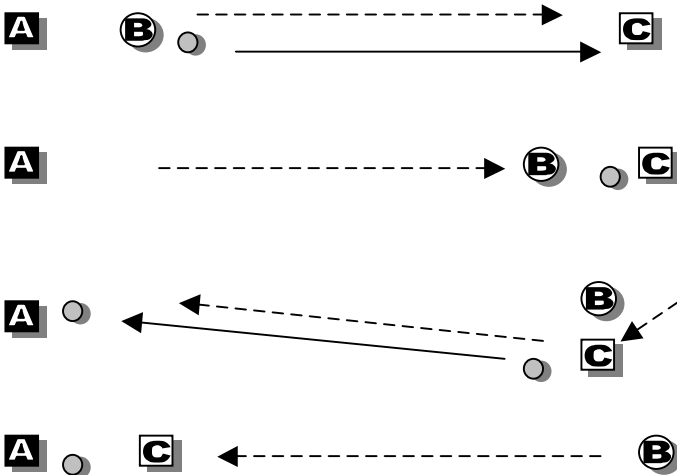
This drill continues under the coach's direction with additional tasks being asked of the players when adopting the position

One requirement could be to show the ball carrier to the left or the right

Another might be for the defender to retreat a couple of yards with the ball carrier without actually challenging for the ball

A third way would be to make it a live drill with the challenger genuinely attempting to win the ball from the ball carrier

The Basic Drill



Session One – Defense

Circle Possession Game

Two teams of eight players positioned in two equal sized squares

Two players from each team switch into their opponents' square

This turns the game into two 6v2 contests

The coach times the exercise at one minute per session

The coach compares the mistake count of each team per session

The losing team does five push-ups

The coach then changes the defensive players and starts again

Coaching Points

Working as a pair to pressure the ball

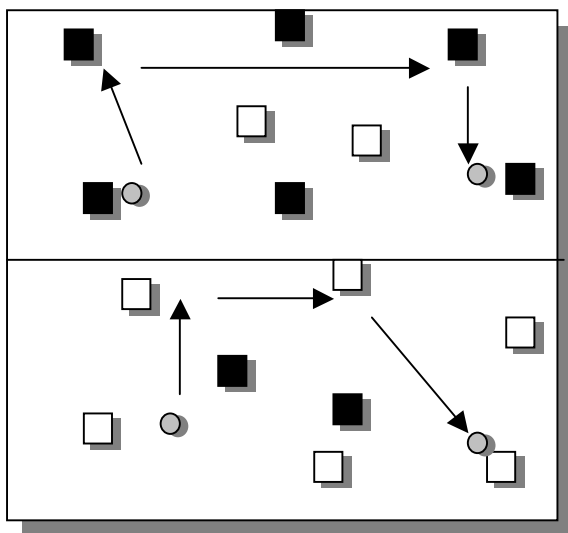


Diagram D-1

Two v One Ratio Game

The coach assembles fifteen players in a 30 yd by 30 yd square pitch

The players are split into three groups, each group wearing different bibs

The coach nominates one team to start of as the defensive team

The other two teams combine to form the possession team

The defensive team attempts to get a touch of the ball or to pressure the possession team into making an error

The team whose player is adjudged to have made the error becomes the defending team

Coaching Points

Working as an organized group to pressure the ball

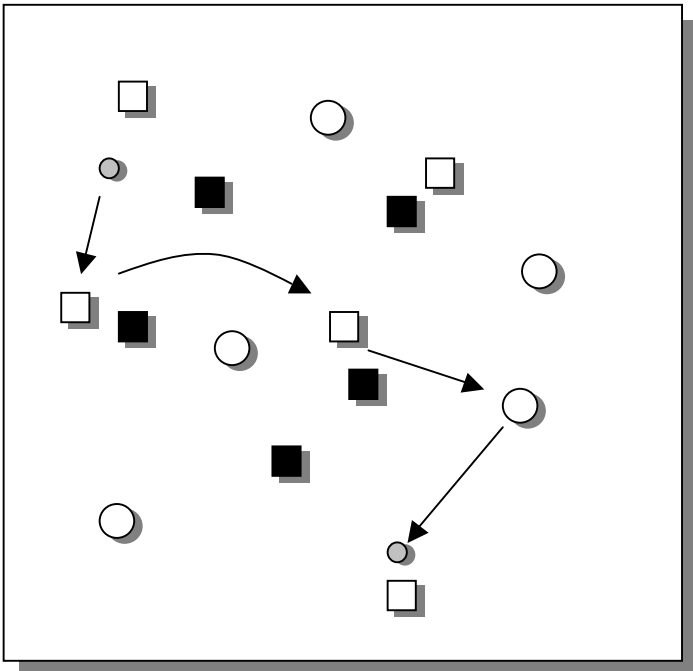


Diagram D-2

Even-sided Possession Game

This game is played eight versus eight in the same field and directly after the 2v1 ratio game

The object of the game is for each team to attempt to retain possession of the ball for as long as possible

This should challenge the defenders to pressure the possession team so that they can win the ball back

Coaching Points

Working together as a large group to pressure the ball and the intended receivers

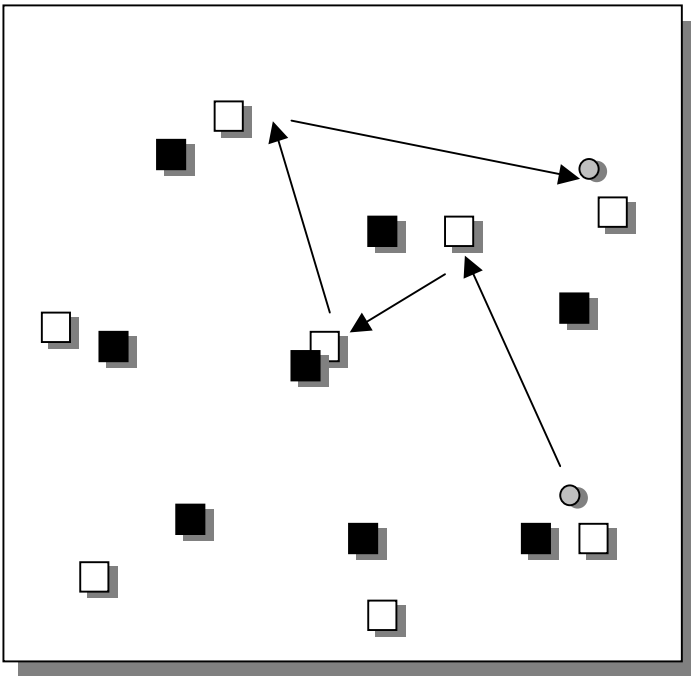


Diagram D-3

Soft Target Game

Two teams of eight players played across half a pitch

A half way line further divides the field area

The object of the game is for either team to score a point by dribbling the ball over the opponents end-line

Each team has one defensive sweeper to protect the scoring line

All other players are matched up against nominated opponents and are the only players apart from the sweepers who can challenge their nominated opponents

Coaching Points

Working on the discipline involved in man for man marking

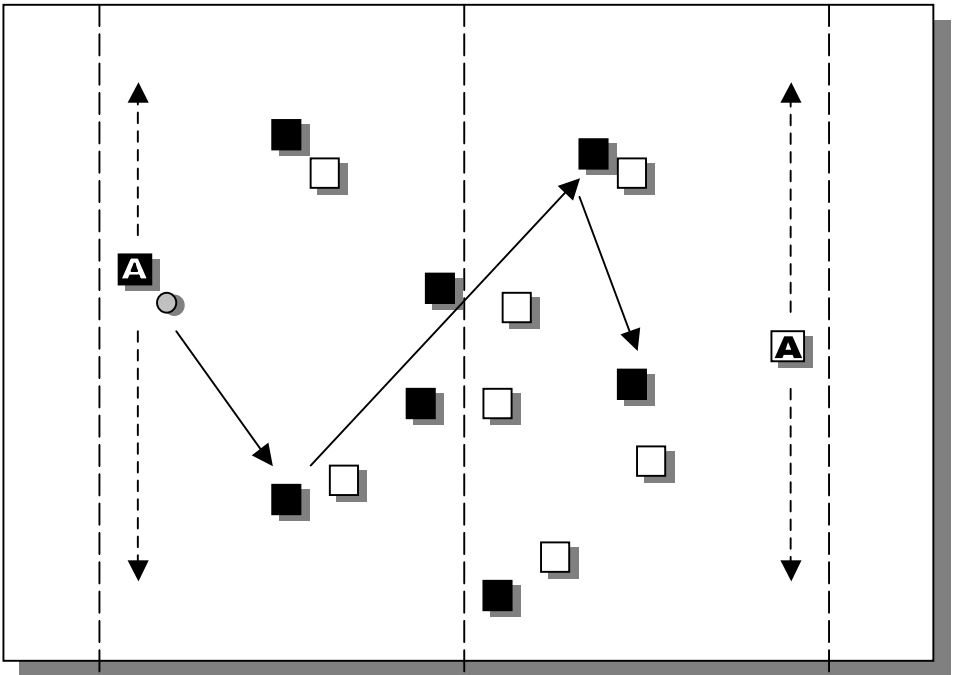


Diagram D-4

Conditioned Game

Two teams of seven players plus a goalkeeper

The game is played across half a normal sized pitch

A half-way line is marked across the pitch

Players cannot advance the ball by passing it over the half-way line into their opponents defensive half

Therefore they must advance the ball by dribbling it over the half-way line

Coaching Points

Working on pressing the opponents in their own half of the field

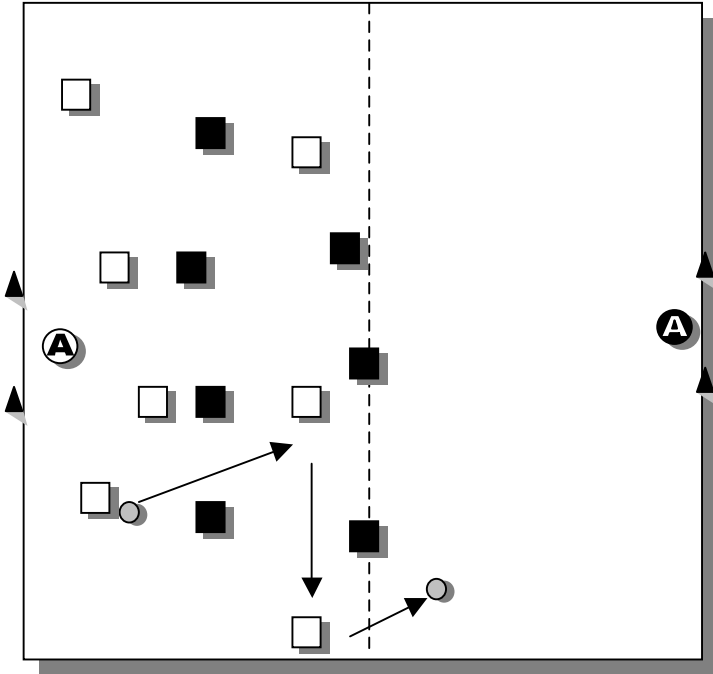


Diagram D5

Build-up Play Session

The tactical thinking that goes into build-up requires the ball to be advanced through the midfield area of the field and into the attacking area without loss of possession. To enhance a teams' chances of doing this successfully the shape of the team must open to provide the players with more space to play in. This space should allow a team more passing and dribbling options and that should increase their chances of advancing the ball successfully. The quicker the ball is advanced the less time the defending team has to organize their players into a solid defensive shape, however advancing the ball at speed and under control requires a great deal of technical, physical and tactical skill. Let's take a look at the tactical awareness issues for starters. Players are required to select their play options before they even come into possession of the ball when playing at the highest levels. This means that they must survey as much of the playing area as possible so as to get a clear picture of all the available play options. To do this consistently they must develop habits such as turning their body sideways so that they can move either forward or back more easily once they have the ball under control. This sideways position will also allow them to see more of the play leading to their acquiring the ball and that should help in their decision making.

In addition to the sideways body position the player must continually ask himself the question "Can I get the ball?" and if the answer is "Yes" he must ask himself "What will I do with it?" This sequence of question, answer and question will alert his mind to the play making possibilities that await him when and if he receives the ball.

To prepare the player to make the necessary physical, visual and mental adjustments I would start the session with this Vision and Ball Control Drill before I began any Conditioned Games.

Vision and Ball Control Drill

Three players A, B and C with one ball

The players' line up some ten yards apart

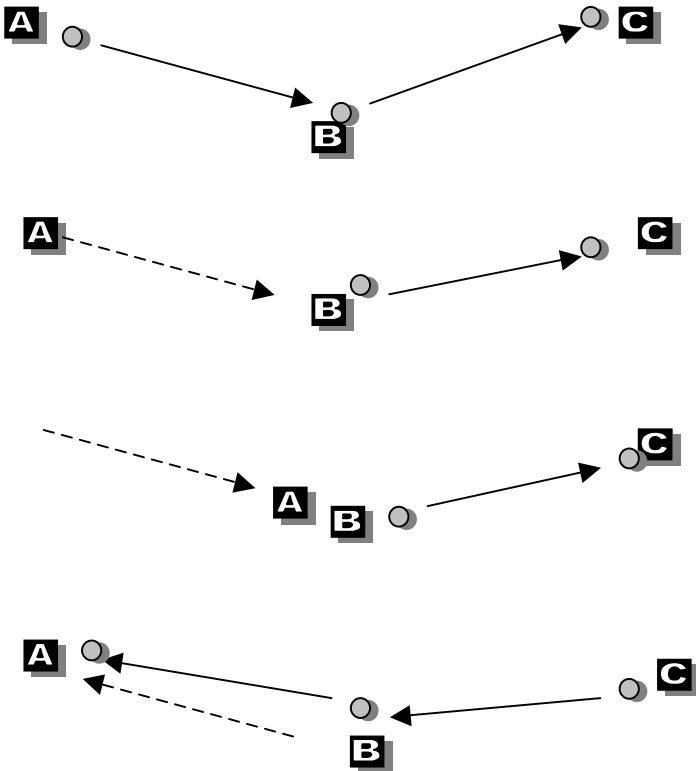
A passes the ball to the middle player B

B passes to C and gets the return before passing to A

When the ball is on its way to B the far player can close him down as a defender

If this happens then B should return the ball to the original passer and continue the drill

The drill continues until the coach changes the middle player



Session Two – Build-up

Circle possession

Ten players pair up and eight form a circle

Two players are in the center of that circle

The eight on the outside try to retain possession of the ball through one touch passing

The two players in the center try to either intercept the ball or force a player into making an error.

When either of these two things occurs the player who made the error and his partner change roles with the central defenders

Coaching Points

Working on choice and quality of a first touch pass

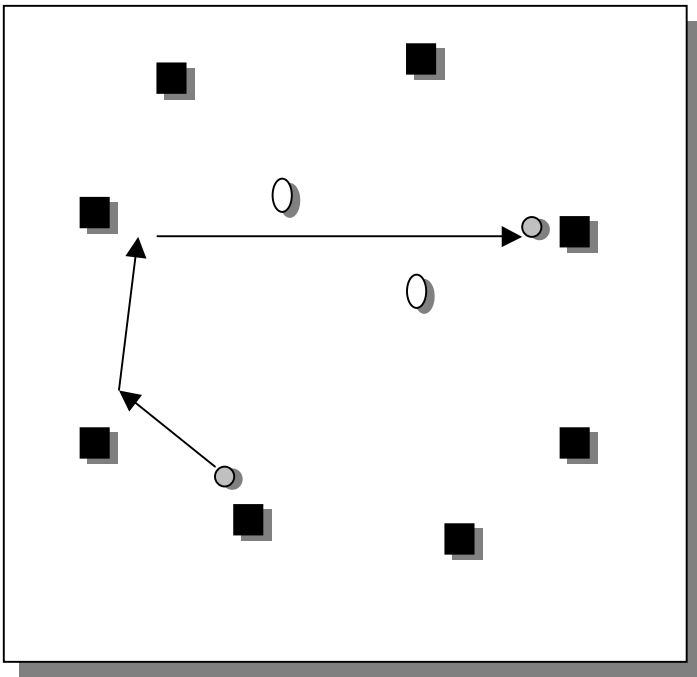


Diagram M1

Two v One Ratio Game

The squad is divided into three teams

The field size is 30 yds by 30 yds square

Two of the teams compete to retain possession of the ball

The other team positions themselves around the outside of the field

The team in possession of the ball can use the team on the outside

The team on the outside is allowed one touch only and must use that touch to return the ball to the team that served it to them

Each session should be approximately five minutes long

Coaching Points

Working on the players' choice of safety and risk passes

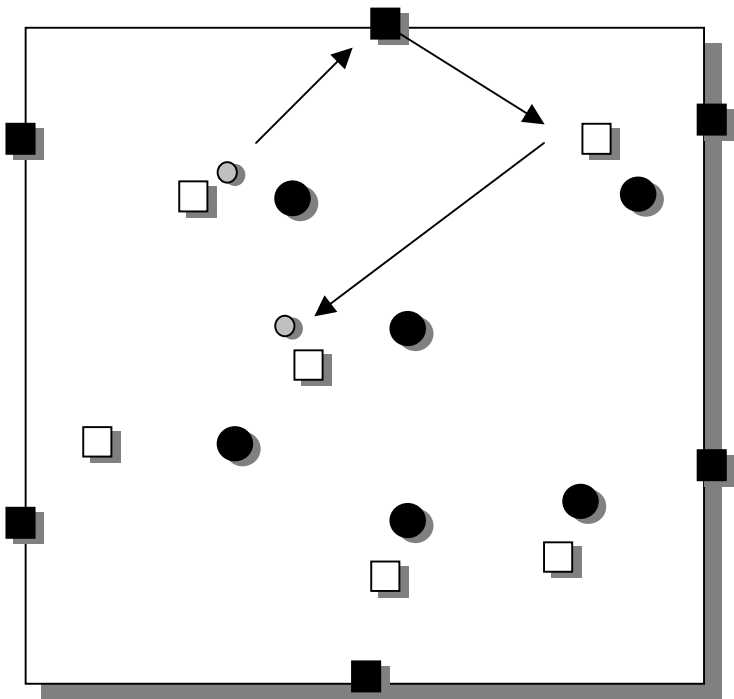


Diagram M-2

Even-sided Possession Game

Two equal sides

The field size should allow the players comfortable control

Normal soccer rules plus coach's restrictions

1) One touch per player

2) Two touches only per player.(Each player must touch the ball twice)

3) One or two touches per player

Coaching Points

Working on touch and timing of control and passing techniques

Also working on the players' choice of first touch control or pass

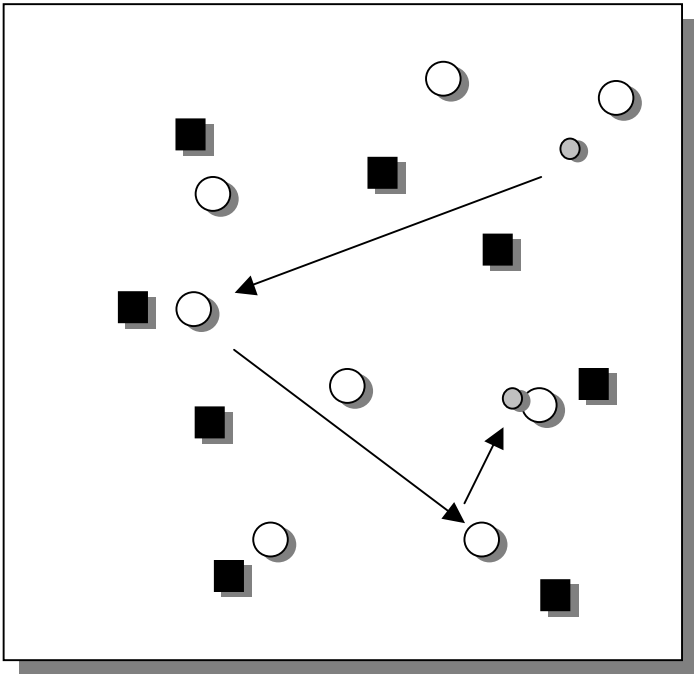


Diagram M -3

Soft Target Game

The field size should be half of the normal soccer field

The sidelines would now become the end lines

Two teams of equal numbers will oppose each other

A goal is scored when the attacking team dribbles the ball over their opponent's end line

Also a halfway line could be formed using cones and a goal would only count if all of the goal scorer's teammates were over the halfway line when the goal is scored. An extra goal is awarded if any defending player is not in their defending half of the field when a goal is scored against their team.

Coaching Points

Controlling the ball while advancing it towards the opponents defensive area

Working on the team depth while advancing the ball

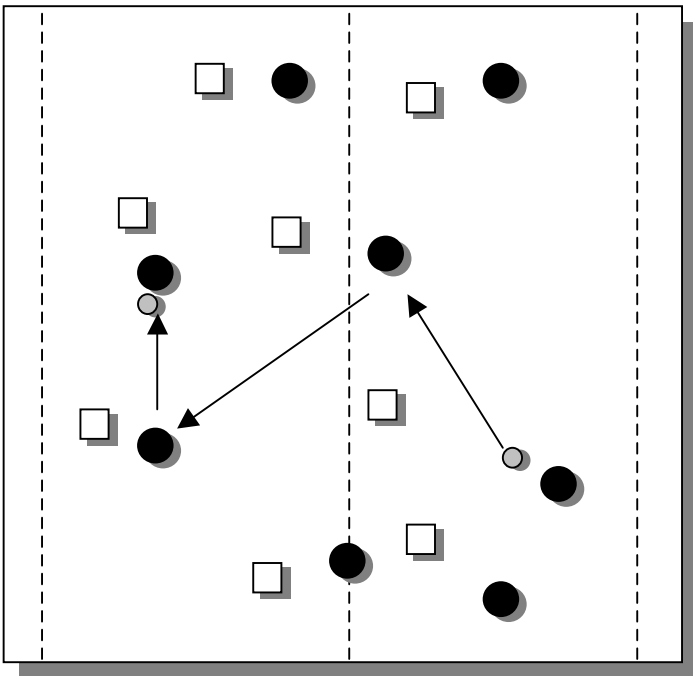


Diagram M-4

Conditioned Game

Two equal teams

The field is divided into three sections with a goal at each end

The central area limits players to two-touch soccer

The other two areas allow players unlimited touches

Coaching Points

Encouraging quick passing and moving in the midfield area

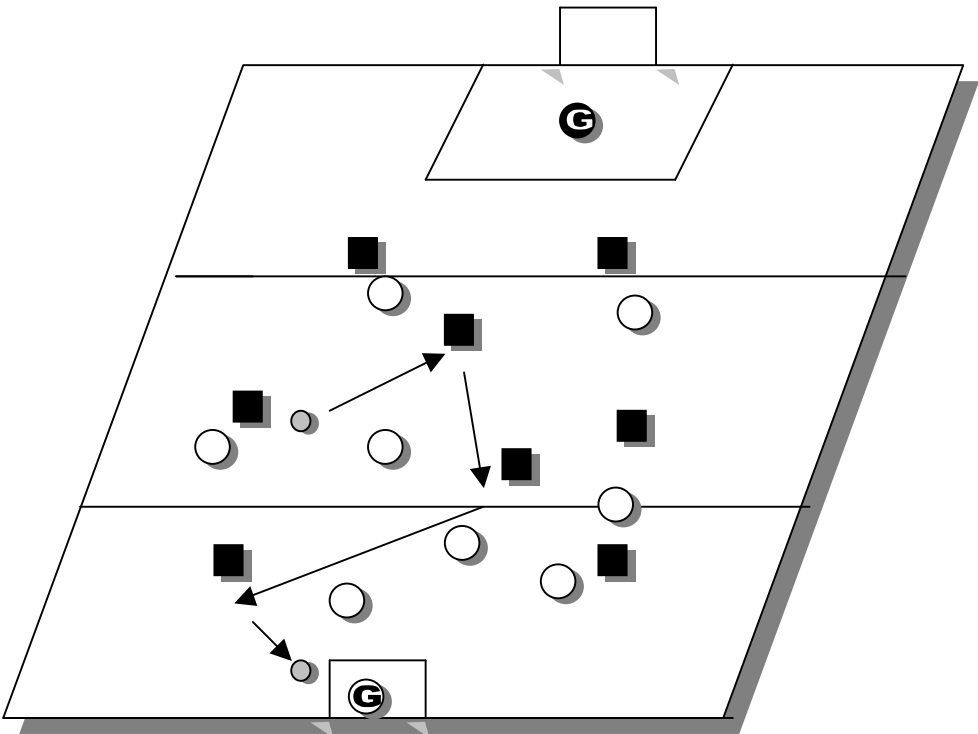


Diagram M-5

Attacking play

Once the team has advanced the ball into the attacking area of the field the players must look for ways to attack the opponents goal.

There are three ways to do this, first they can attack directly down the middle of the opponents' defense or they can attack down either of the wing areas.

Whichever way they choose to go they must adopt an aggressive attitude if they hope to penetrate their opponents' defense. Don't get me wrong, this aggressive attitude should not manifest itself in foul play but it should encourage a more direct approach towards attacking the defenders with skillful dribbles, quick give and go passing moves and well timed forward runs to space. Also the attacking players are required to release shots and crosses quickly with skill and accuracy in order take advantage of the chances that they or their teammates have created.

As you will see in this session we have some shooting and crossing drills that lead into conditioned games for finishing. However the session should start with a group of three players warming up their shooting and heading with this simple drill.

Shooting and Heading Warm up Drill

Three players with one ball between them form a triangle

Between each player there should be a gate made up of two cones that represents a shooting target

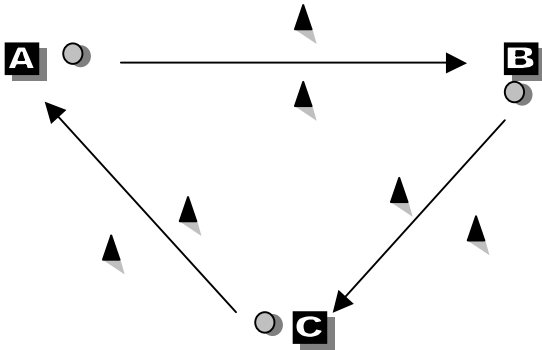
The first player A shoots the ball through the target to player B

Player B collects the ball and in turn shoots through his target to player C

Player C continues the drill by shooting through his target to player A and the drill continues on

This drill format can also be used as a warm up for heading by having player A throw the ball in the air to player B who would head it through the target to player C

Player C continues the drill by throwing the ball in the air to player A who heads through the target to player B and so on.



Session Three – Attack

Circle Game

One goalkeeper in the center of the circle

Surrounded by five players with a ball

Each player in turn shoots the ball at the keeper

The keeper saves the ball and returns it to the shooter

Coaching Points

Warming up the shooters and the goalkeepers

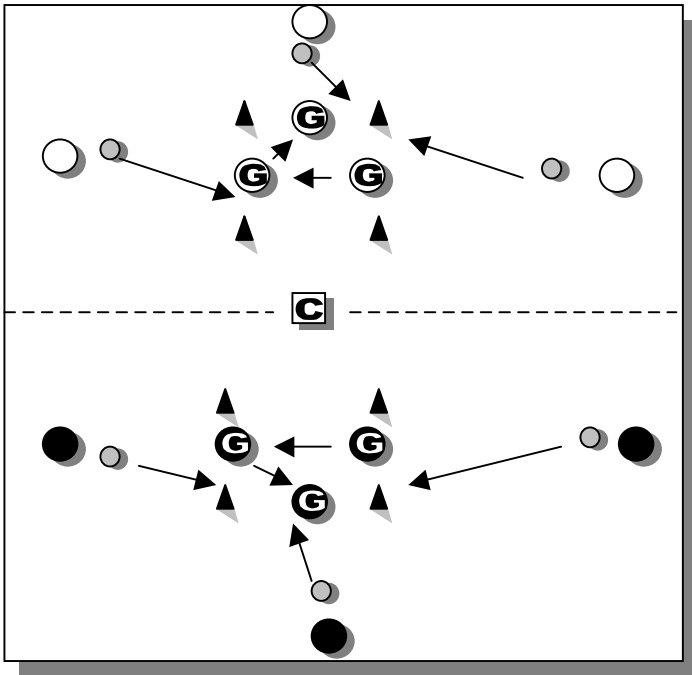


Diagram Att-1

Attack One Goal Game

Eight v eight on half a field

The field consists of one goal on the end line and a line of cones 5 yds in front of the half way line

Two teams of eight players compete to score a goal

A goalkeeper who defends against both teams guards the goal

One team attacks the goal while the other team defends it

If the defending team advances the ball into the 5 yd zone then they become the attacking team

Coaching Points

Working on a balanced attacking shape

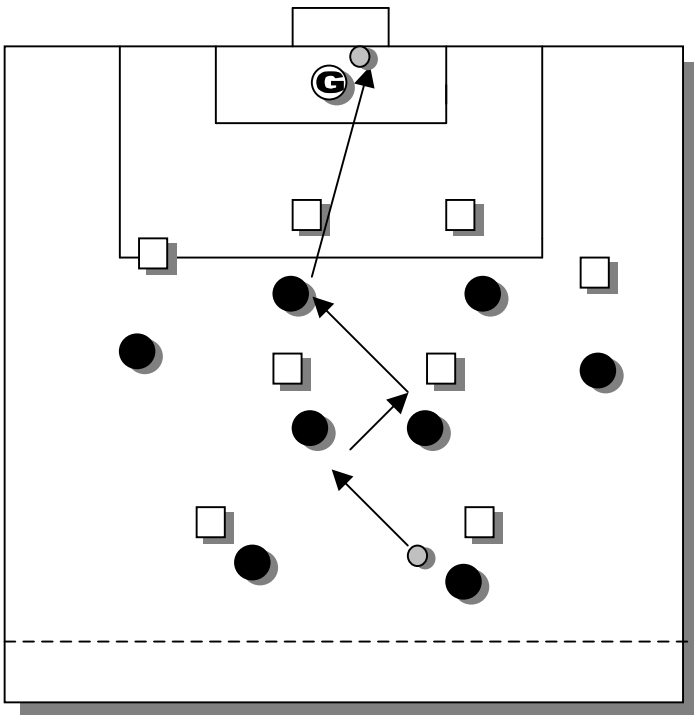


Diagram Att-2

Drill to Finish with a Shot

Two goals 40 yds apart with two goalkeepers

Two dribbling obstacles on the 20 yd line

Two lines of players dribble through the obstacle and shoot

After they shoot the players collect their ball and join the other line

Coaching Points

Off balance shooting

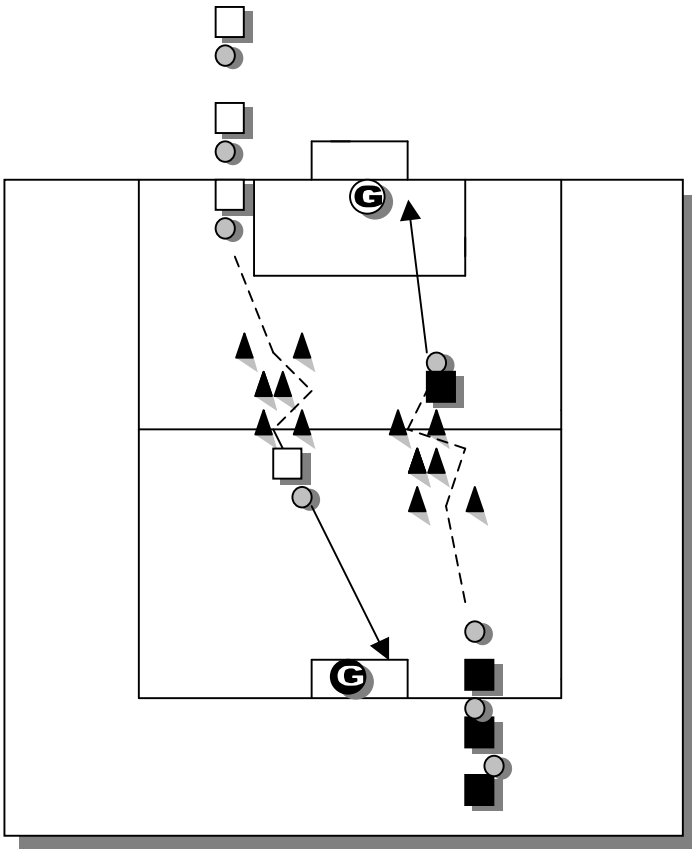


Diagram Att-3

Finishing Shooting Game

Two goals 40 yds apart plus two goalkeepers

Two teams of six players 2 defenders, 2 mid and 2 attackers.

The defenders and attackers must stay in one half of the field

The midfielders can work in either half

Coaching Points

Shooting accuracy in a realistic setting

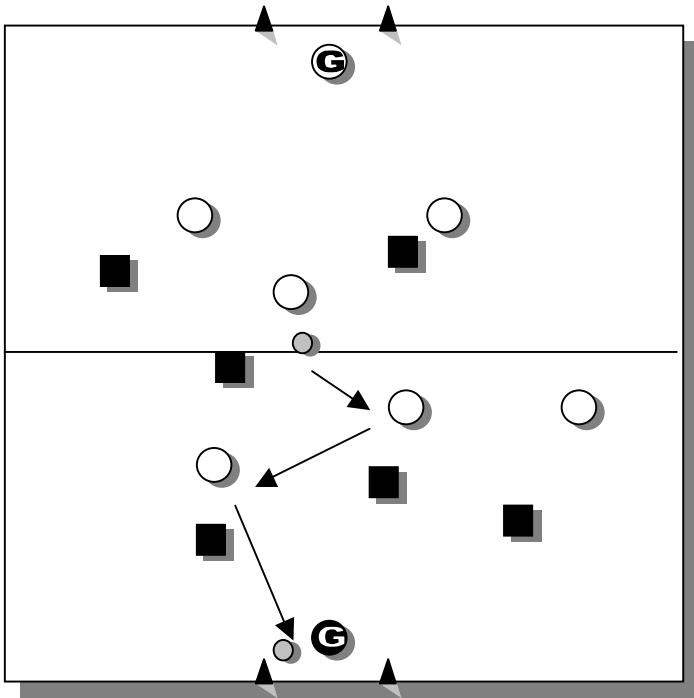


Diagram Att-4

Drill to Cross and Finish

Three lines of players some 25 yds from goal

A center line player passes the ball to a wide player

The wide player runs forward to cross the ball into the penalty area

Both the center line player and the opposite wide player make runs into the penalty area to meet the cross

Coaching Points

Quality in both crossing the ball and in redirecting it towards the goal

Timing of runs into the penalty area to meet the cross

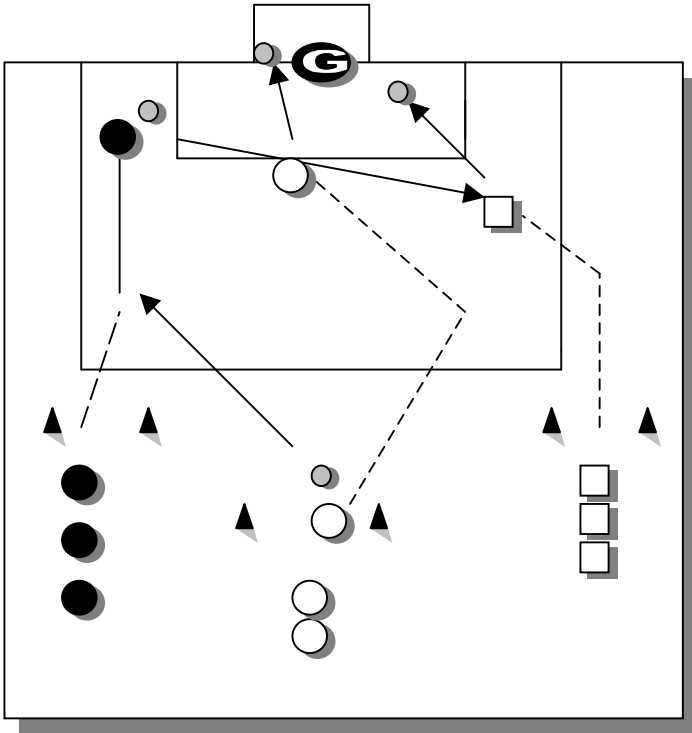


Diagram Att-5

Cross and Finish Game

A field the width of the penalty area and 50 yds long is marked out
Two teams consisting of six central players and two crossing players oppose each other

The field is segmented into a defensive area, a midfield area and an attacking area

The wingers are positioned off the field outside their teams attacking area

The players can only pass to the wingers from the midfield area of the field

A goal can only be scored from a shot or header directed from a cross

Coaching Points

Timing of runs into space to meet the cross

Accuracy of one touch finishing

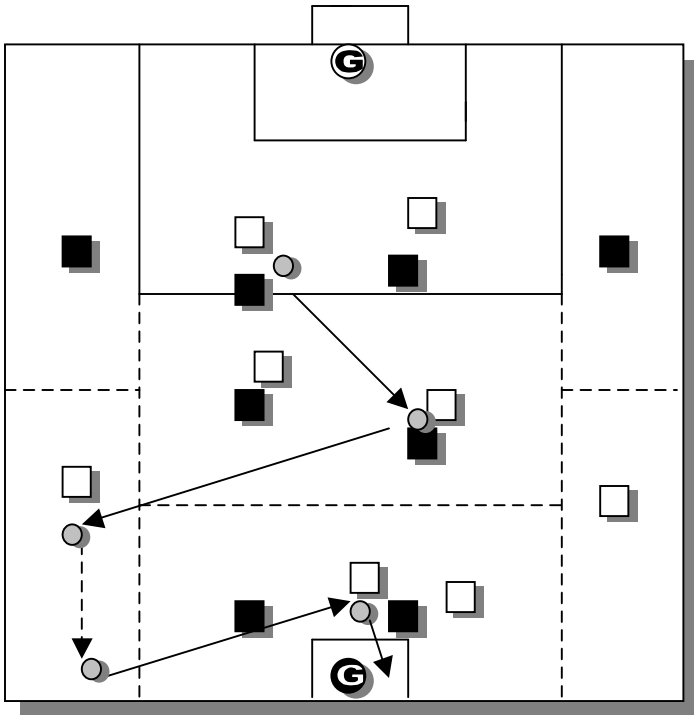


Diagram Att-6

Game with First-touch Finish Area

The field is the approximate length of three penalty areas

A goal can be scored after unlimited touches if the shot is taken outside the penalty area

Any shot on goal from inside the penalty area must be a first touch shot

Coaching Points

Positioning of the shooters body to get an accurate first touch finish

Hitting power shots from outside the penalty area

Following up on shots that may rebound off the keeper or the woodwork

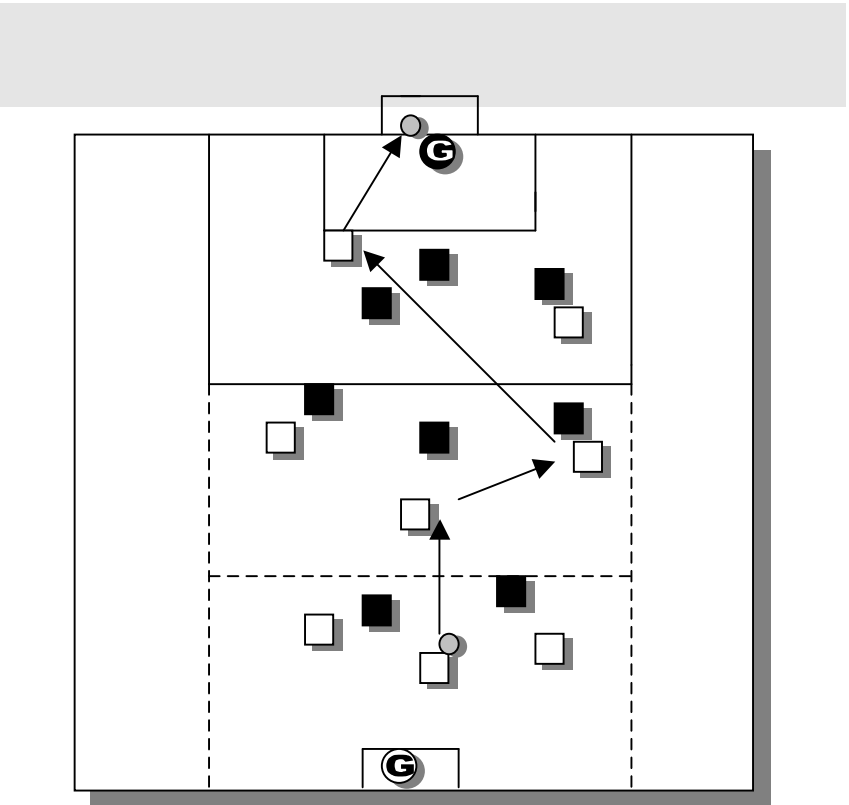


Diagram Att-7

Combination Session

This session provides balance to the coaching practice because it combines the three major elements of soccer coaching namely defensive play, midfield play and attacking play. If we consider the various circle games to be part of the warm-up session then we start our main session with a defensive game. The reason I do this is because the tempo of the session will be set by the intensity of our defending. If the players' approach to this session is lackluster then the whole of the training program will invariably continue on that note. To prevent this from happening the coach must demand a certain level of intensity from his players during this part of the practice because the tempo of the practice will match the defensive appetite of the players. Once the intensity of the practice has been established the coach can start to concentrate on the quality of the players' decision making under pressure in build-up and attacking play.

At no time should the defensive pressure be allowed to slacken because of the effect that this would have on the speed of play. Every practice session should be played in game like conditions whenever possible and although there are some difficulties involved in accomplishing this task we must continually keep our eye on the tempo of the game.

Soccer is a power game that can be played with skill, it is also a team game that allows individual players the chance to express themselves within the team concept. It is a beautiful game on offence and at times ugly on defense but it is always challenging.

Let the kids enjoy their sessions, give them back their game so that they can learn to play soccer with the same enthusiasm that we had when we were as young as they are. Many of the old professional players who taught me this great game have passed away but it is their wisdom and knowledge that I pass on to you.

Session Four – Combination of the three

Circle Possession Game

Normal circle possession rules with players pairing up to provide a defensive duo

Coaching Points

First touch passing control and pressure defending

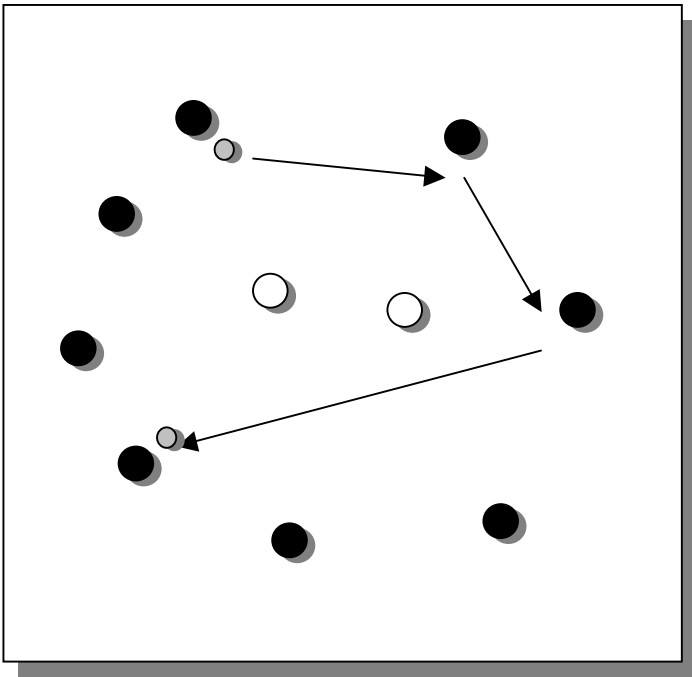


Diagram Mix-1

Soft Target Game

Use a half field for this game with the sidelines being the end lines

Using markers split the field into two equal halves

This halfway line will also be the offside line

Two ways to score

- 1) By stringing eight consecutive passes together
- 2) By dribbling the ball over the opponents end-line

Coaching Points

Controlling the ball while waiting for a penetrating passing opportunity to develop

Using high pressure defending tactics in the opponents defensive half of the field

Timing forward runs to beat the offside trap

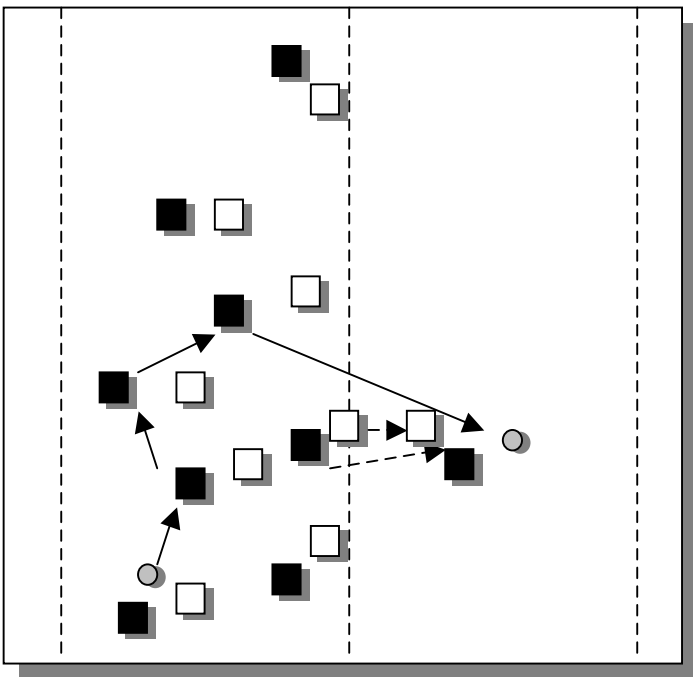


Diagram Mix-2

Midfield Break Game

Set out a soccer field with a goal at each end

Two teams of seven or more players compete.

The field is split into three areas.

These areas are the midfield area and two attacking areas.

The teams compete in the midfield area attempting to dribble the ball into their attacking area where they can attack the goalkeeper one versus one.

Coaching points

Using passing and dribbling skills to aggressively attack the opponents back line

Switching the point of attack to create penetration space for the receiver to attack

One v one situations for attackers and goalkeepers

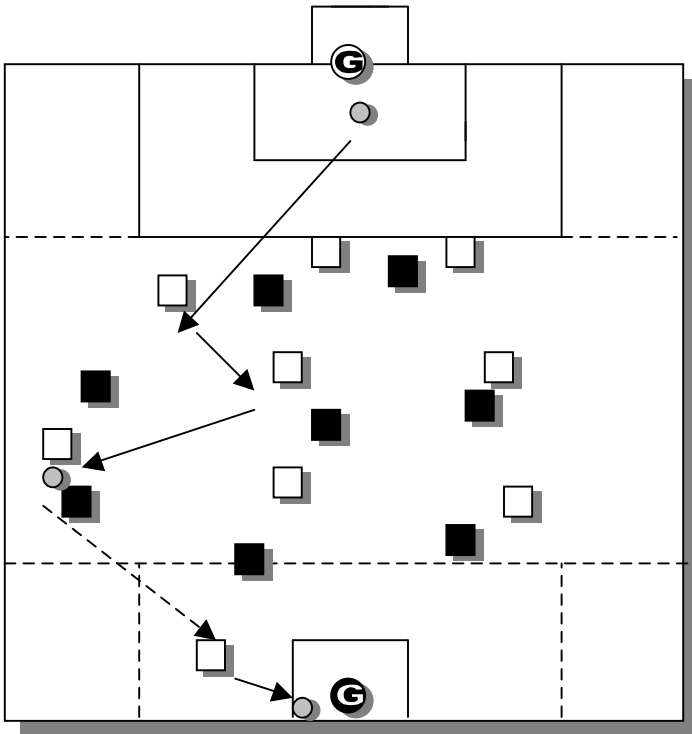


Diagram Mix-3

Finishing Game

Mark out a field 44 yds wide by 50 yds long

At each end of the pitch there is a goal and a goalkeeper

Select three teams in different colors

Two teams match off against each other. The other team sits out.

The team that scores the first goal stays on and the other team is replaced by the one waiting off the field

The game continues in this manner until the coach calls a halt to it

Coaching Points

Realistic finishing practice under pressure from defenders

Realistic deep defending practice against hungry attackers

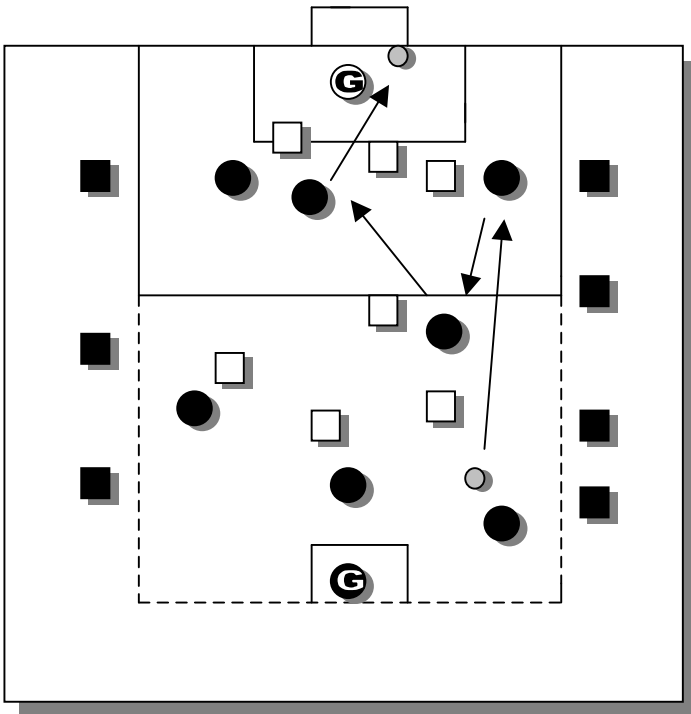


Diagram Mix-4