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12 Week Syllabus

12 – 16 Year Old Players

This is a 12 week syllabus for 12 to 16 year old players from grassroots standard to elite levels. Each session can be adapted slightly to be appropriate for the quality/age of the players.

All sessions are based around a 4-4-2 formation. Change sessions if you use a different formation.

As the players are 12+, focus should be on the opposed part of the practice. Technical work can be involved briefly during the first part of the session and the warm up.

The importance of nutrition, fitness and injury prevention (warming up/cooling down) will increase as the players get older. Please check out articles on The Football Coaches Library's website for more details.

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All sessions are designed via Academy Soccer Coach's software. Please visit their website at:

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Here are the session topics:

Week 1: Attacking - Switching play

Week 2: Attacking - Build up play

Week 3: Attacking - Playing out from the back

Week 4: Attacking - Movement of the strikers

Week 5: Defending - Back 4/Midfield

Week 6: Defending - Strikers/Midfield

Week 7: Defending - As a team

Week 8: Defending transition

Week 9: Attacking transition

Week 10: Attacking - Support play

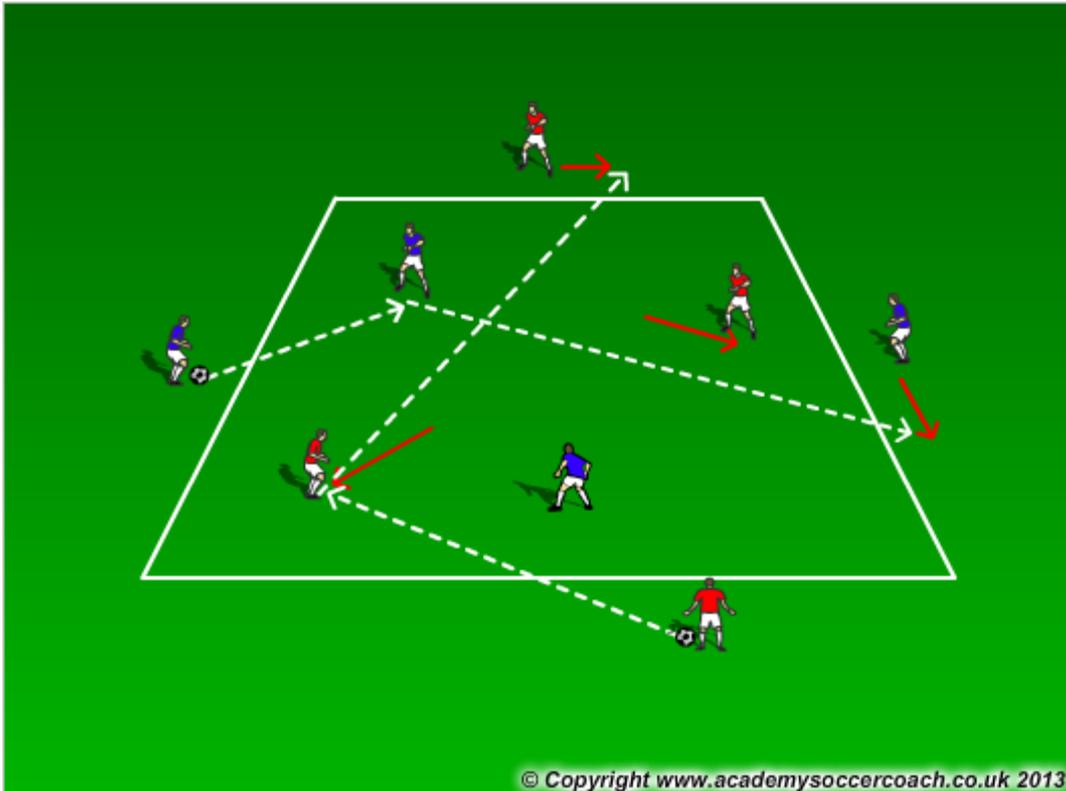
Week 11: Attacking - Through balls/playing into space

Week 12: Attacking - Crossing and finishing

Thank you for viewing, using and sharing!

Ben King @ The Football Coaches Library

Week 1: Attacking – Switching Play



Week 1 - Switching Play - Technical

Each team has 2 players in the middle and 2 on the outside. Teams have to get the ball from one side to the other to score a goal. Each team has a ball so no tackling.

Key points - Make angles, open up, receive on the back foot, play quickly, take a touch/pass back or to another player if you can play to target player etc.



Week 1 - Switching Play - Skill

4 V 4 with 4 goals. Team that don't have possession of the ball are not allowed into the other teams half (as above blue team can not go into the red teams half).

Key points - Closest CM drops to support/act as pivot point, that CM opens up on back foot to play to the other side, other CM makes a blind side run forward (to attack/act as a forward pivot point), be patient etc.

Progressions - Players are only allowed to dribble through the goals, 1 defender can go into the other half etc.



Week 1 - Switching Play - Conditioned Game

6 V 6 in the middle with 2 neutrals in each end zone. Each team sets out in a 4-2 formation. Teams have to get the ball into the neutrals at the other end to score. Once a goal is scored, the ball is played into the other team.

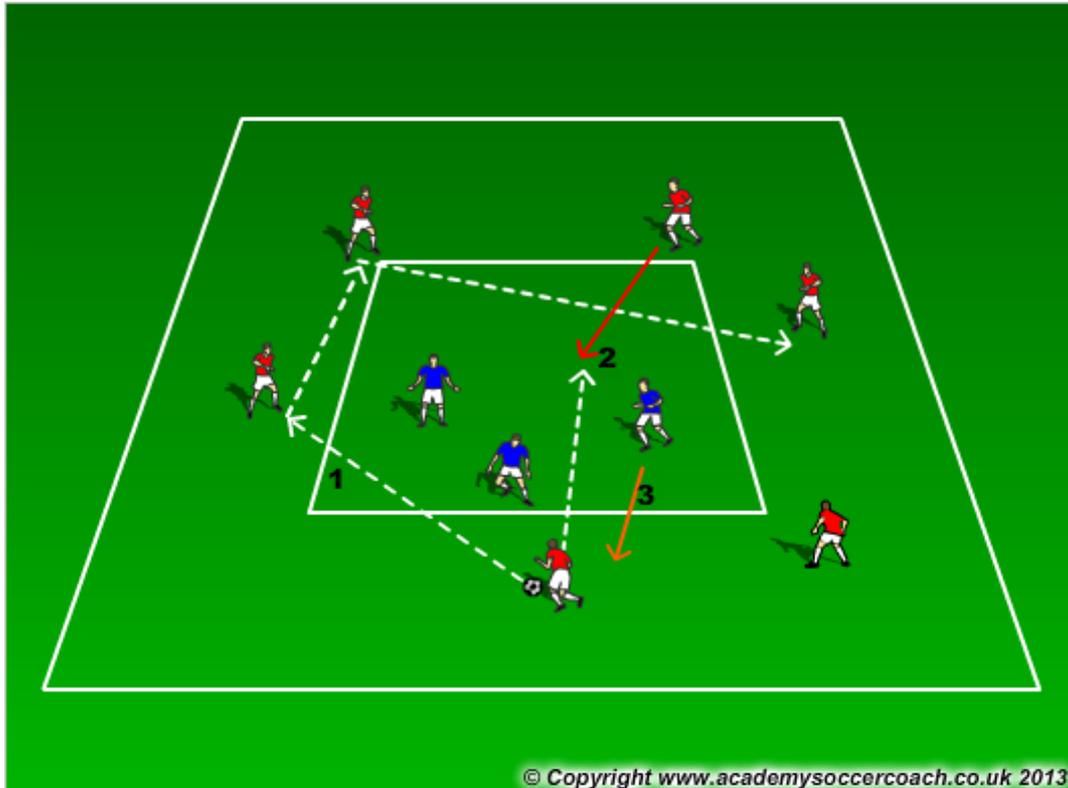
Pivot Points

- 1 - From LM to CM who opens up and plays to RM
- 2 - LM plays into the neutral (CB) who plays wide to RM
- 3 - LM passes forward into the striker who opens up and plays to the RM

Key points - Pivot points as above, switch quickly, play forward, play side ways, play backwards, be patient etc.

Progress into a 8 V 8 game with teams playing a 3-3-1 formation.

Week 2: Attacking – Build Up Play



Week 2 - Build up play - Tech into Skill (part 1)

Red players have to pass through the middle area to score. The blue players have to intercept to score. (1) Blue players must stay in the middle area while red must stay in the outside area.

Progressions - (2) Red players can go into the middle area to receive the ball and then pass or dribble out to score. (3) After this progression then 1 blue player can come out the area to try and win the ball.

Key points - Play quickly, give the player on the ball options (angles), minimal touches, don't force the play, keep the ball moving etc.



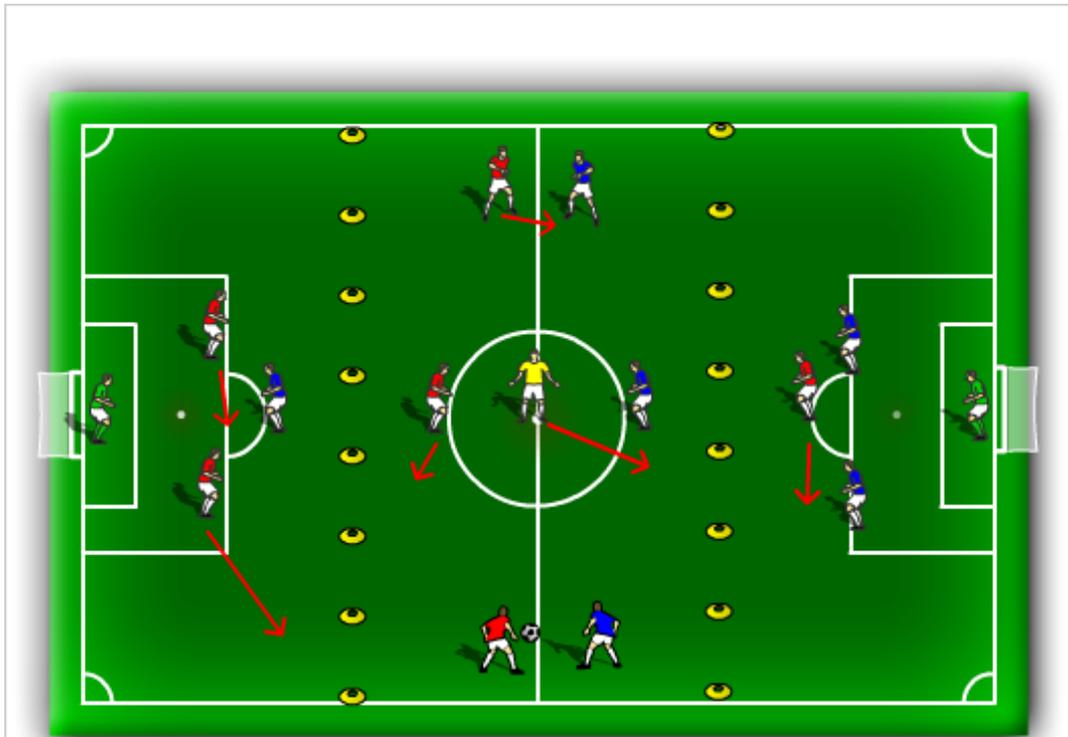
Week 2 - Build up play - Skill (part 2)

Players are now all free to go where they want. Red team still score by playing the ball through the middle area either by dribbling through, passing through, passing into someone in the area etc. Blue team now score by dribbling the ball out of the big area (must be in possession of the ball to score, cant just kick it out and chase it).

Progressions - Ask the defenders to use different tactics (like high pressure, sit deep, 2 stay 1 goes etc), add more defenders, make the middle area smaller etc.

Key points - Same as part 1 plus: Blindsided runs into middle area, making the field big, getting the ball back quickly if lost etc.

With both part 1 and 2 of this, it is important to remind players to be patient. If the defenders get the ball there is a high chance they will score. Also tell them that while the attacking team is passing the ball around, they are not using much energy. The defending team will be using loads of energy chasing after the ball. They will then become tired which means a) they will be slower so players will have more time on the ball b) mistakes will be made and gaps left c) if they win the ball then they will be tired meaning they will have less chance of scoring.



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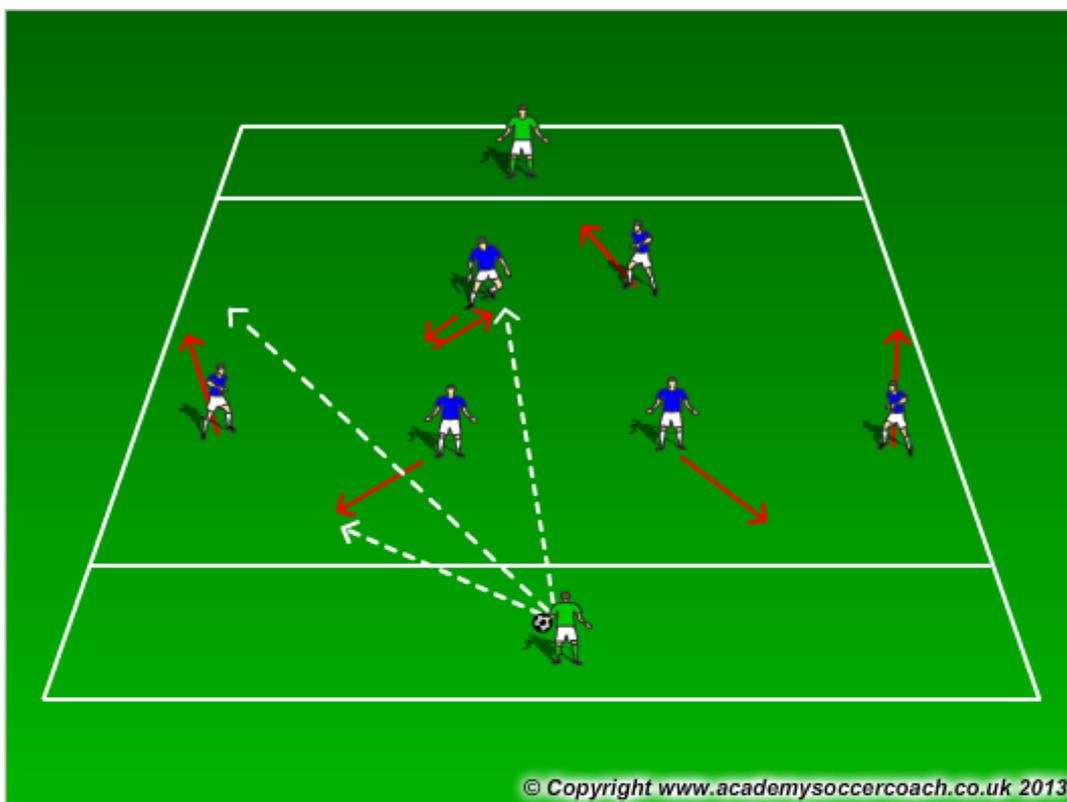
Week 2 - Build up play - Game

Through the thirds game with both teams playing a 2-3-1 (with a GK and 1 neutral). The neutral can go anywhere. So if the reds have possession they have a 3v1 in the defending third, a 4v3 in the middle third and a 1v3 in the attacking third. This will promote the teams to keep the ball and play forward only when it is possible to do so.

Progress so that the attacking team can go anywhere and then into a normal game.

Key points - As mentioned in tech and skill, movements to support play in certain positions (as shown in picture) etc.

Week 3: Attacking – Playing Out From the Back



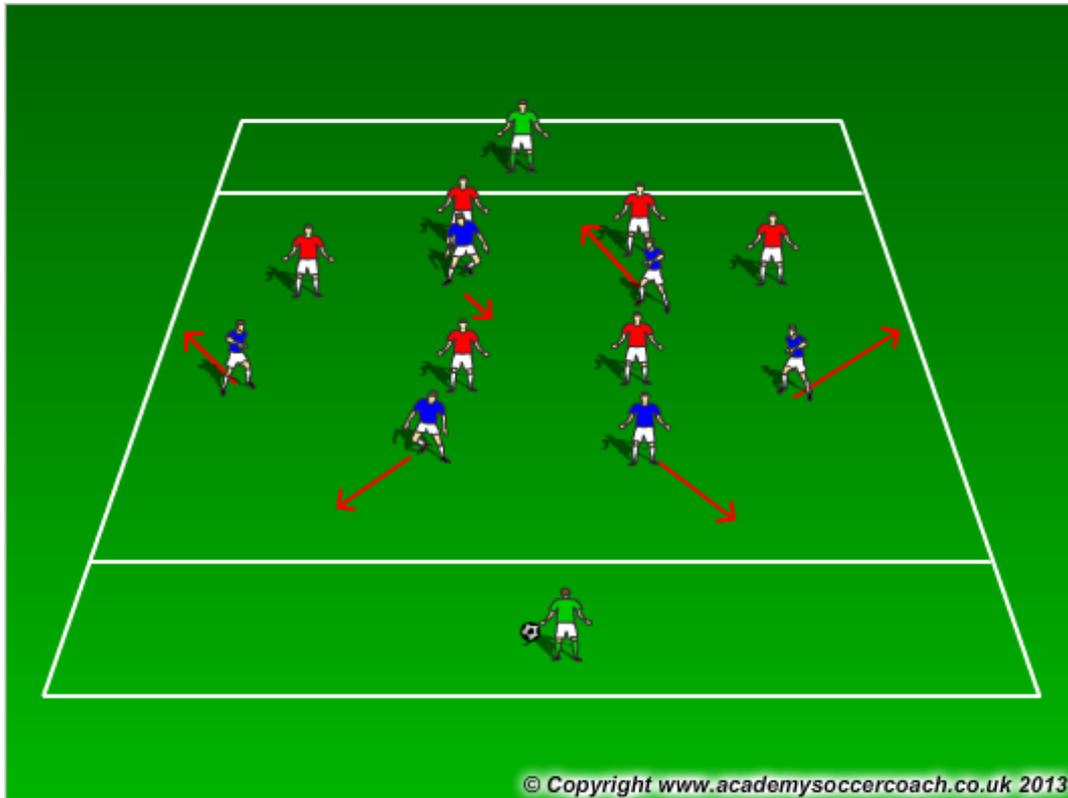
Week 3 - Playing out from the back - Tech

Either use 2 fields of this or use the same field but have the teams going different ways. Players have to get the ball from 1 target player to the other to score.

Key points - Movements off the ball as shown above and in other image (wide players go wide and high, 2 closest central players drop and split and furthest 2 central players make different movements to each other), play the ball quickly, passing tech etc.

Progressions - Ask for different passes to be made. For example ball has to go into the middle area and back to the target player who has passed it in before playing to the other target player.





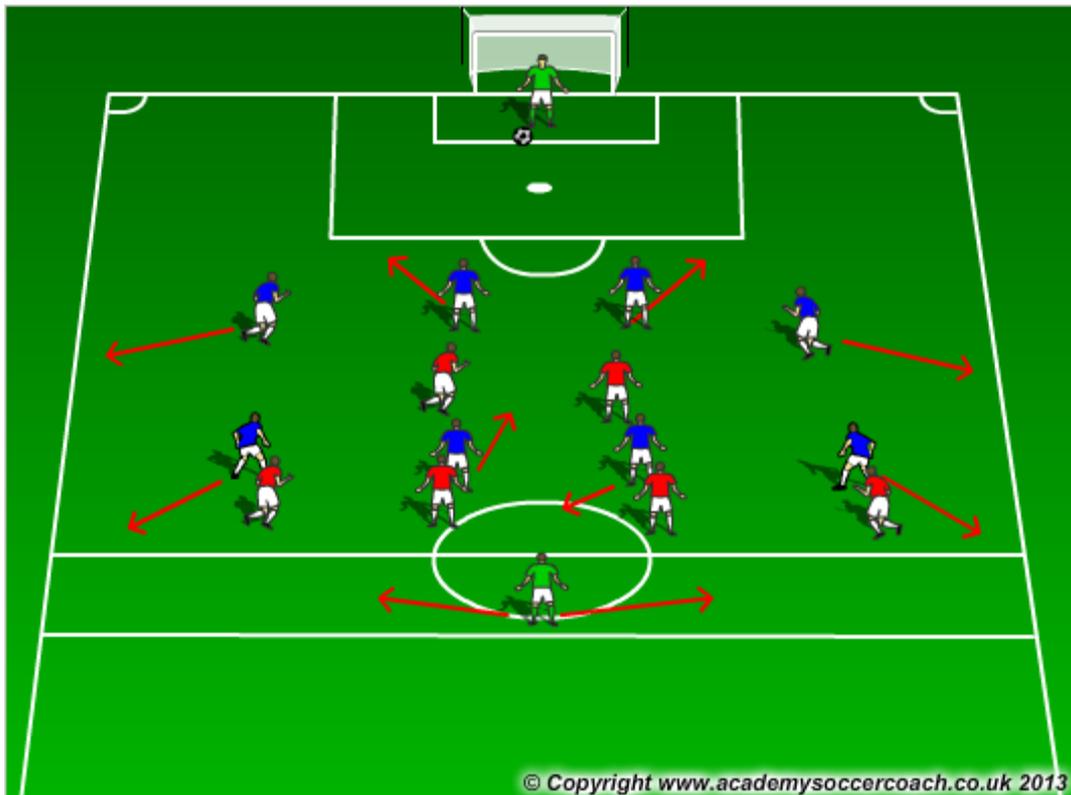
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Week 3 - Playing out from the back - Skill

Play in a bigger area than shown above. Same as tech but now the teams are against each other. Target players can play directly to each other to score (keeps it realistic as then the other team will have to drop allowing space for play into defenders/midfield).

Key points - Movements as shown in tech, quick passing, play back to target player (GK), use passing combinations etc.

Progressions - Certain number of passes before playing into target player, must play into target player twice to score (play in, pass back out and play back in) etc.

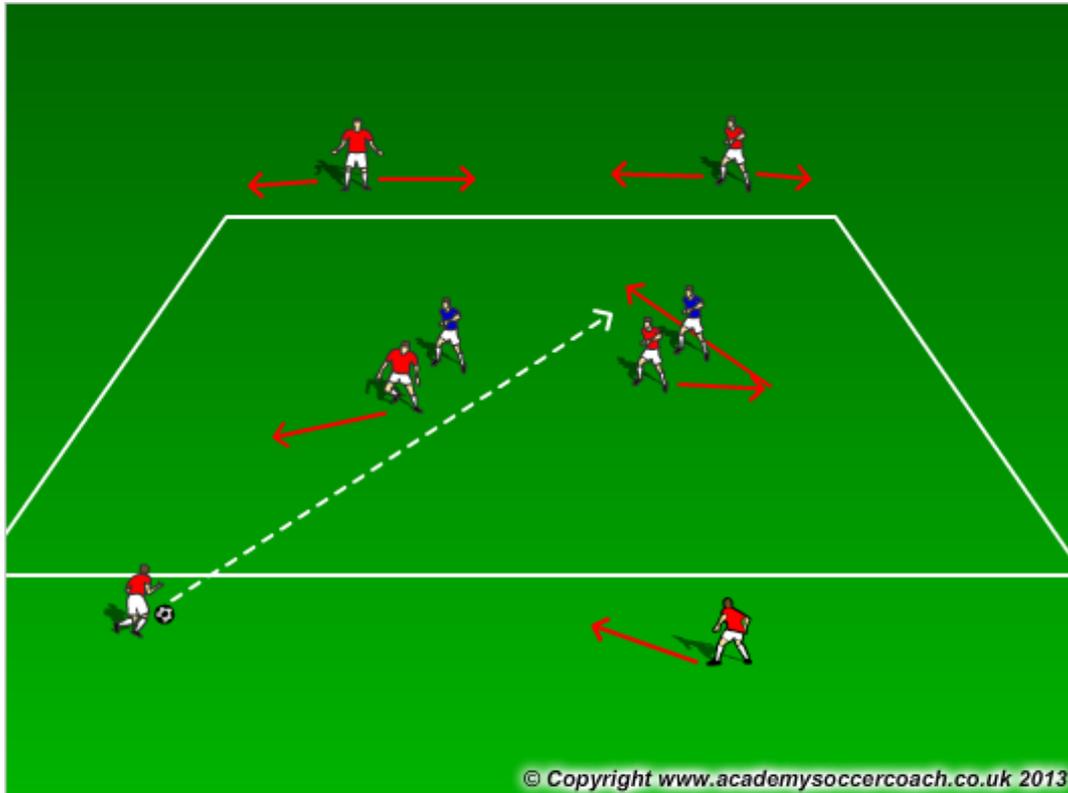


Week 3 - Playing out from the back - Phase of play

Blues score by playing into the target player in the channel over the half way line. Reds can use the target player as a CB when in possession.

Key points - Movements done in tech/skill, quick transition, use GK, don't force play, quick passing, use passing combinations (or own patterns of play) etc.

Week 4: Attacking – Movement of the Strikers

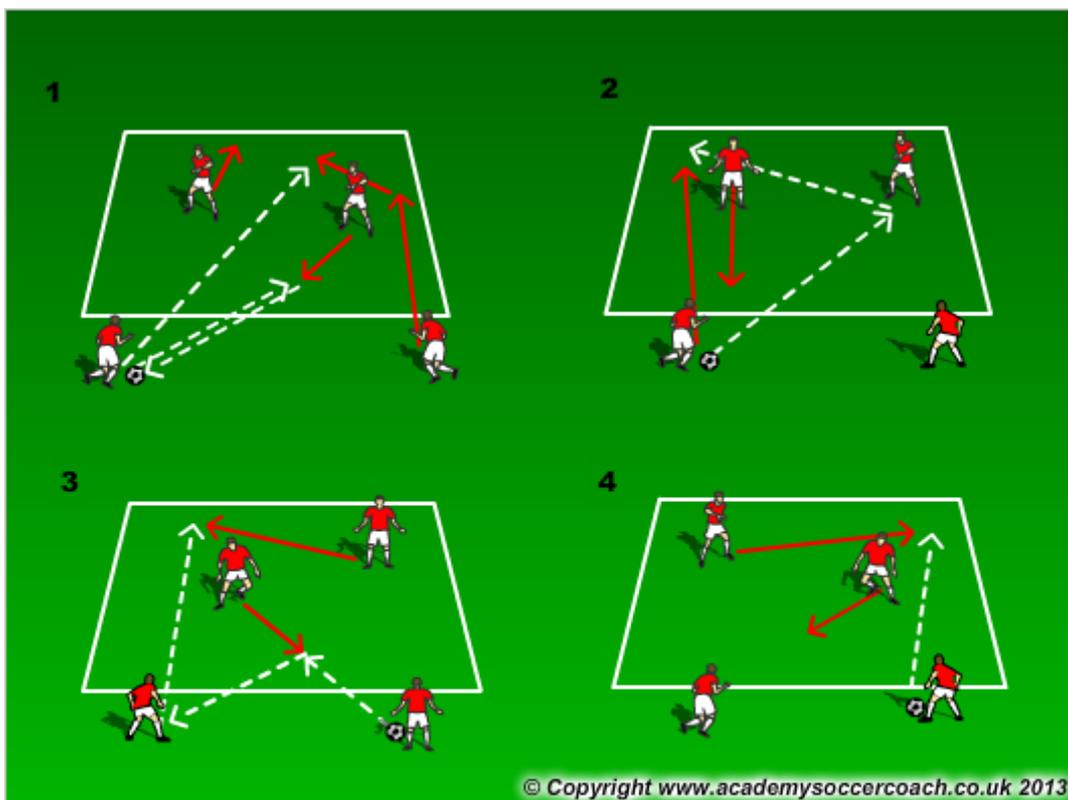


Week 4 - Movement of the Strikers (midfield into strikers) - Tech into Skill

Reds on one side have to pass into the middle red players (strikers) who then have to play to the other side to score. Repeat. The ball can be passed back. Outside players have to keep the ball moving to keep the game realistic. Tell the strikers to relax and then make big changes in speed and direction (its not a fitness session, don't let them keep running around in circles). Defenders are passive at first.

Progressions - Defenders are then live, ask the defenders to use different tactics (drop, press, show inside, show outside etc), allow a outside player to go into the area to make third man runs, add a defender (so they play a 2-1 formation in the area) etc.

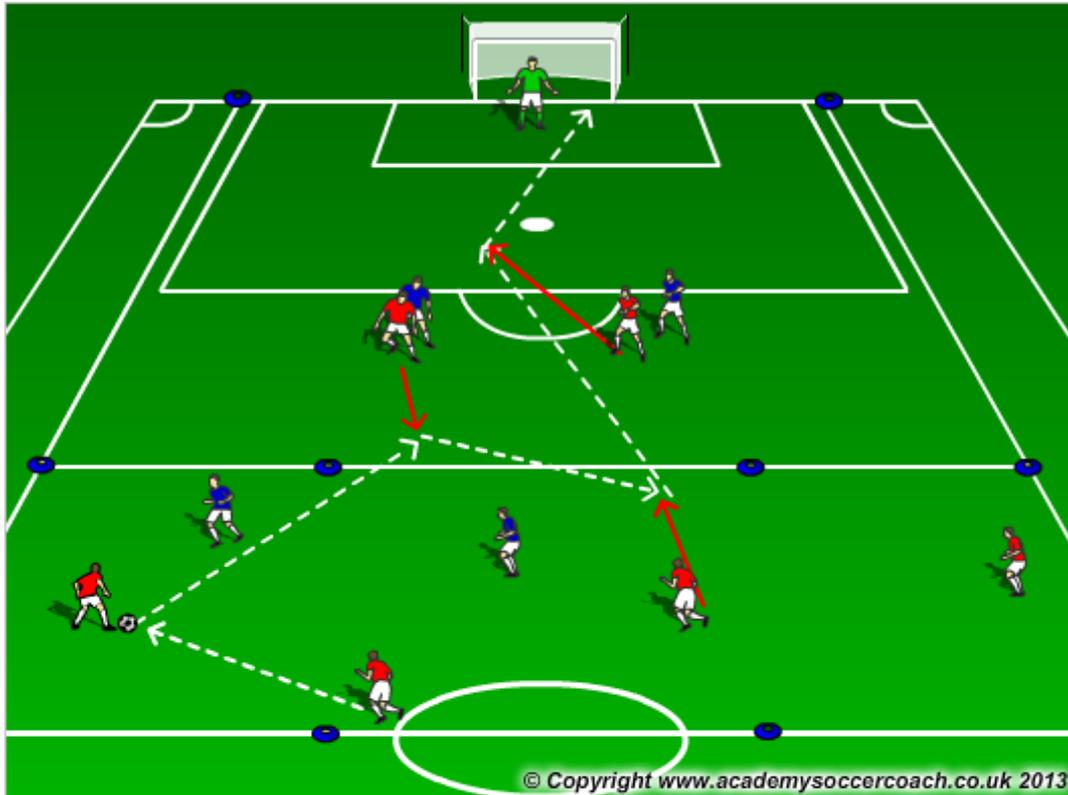
Key points - Change speed/direction, fake/feint/drop the shoulder, use different patterns of play (for example, if the ball is on the left, the closest striker drops/goes wide while the furthest striker goes wide and then cuts in - as shown above), trigger points (when the outside player moves the ball forward, the strikers should make their movements) etc.



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Week 4 - Movement of the Strikers - Tech into Skill - Patterns of Play

Few ideas for patterns of play involving just the strikers and third man runs by the other outside player (CM)



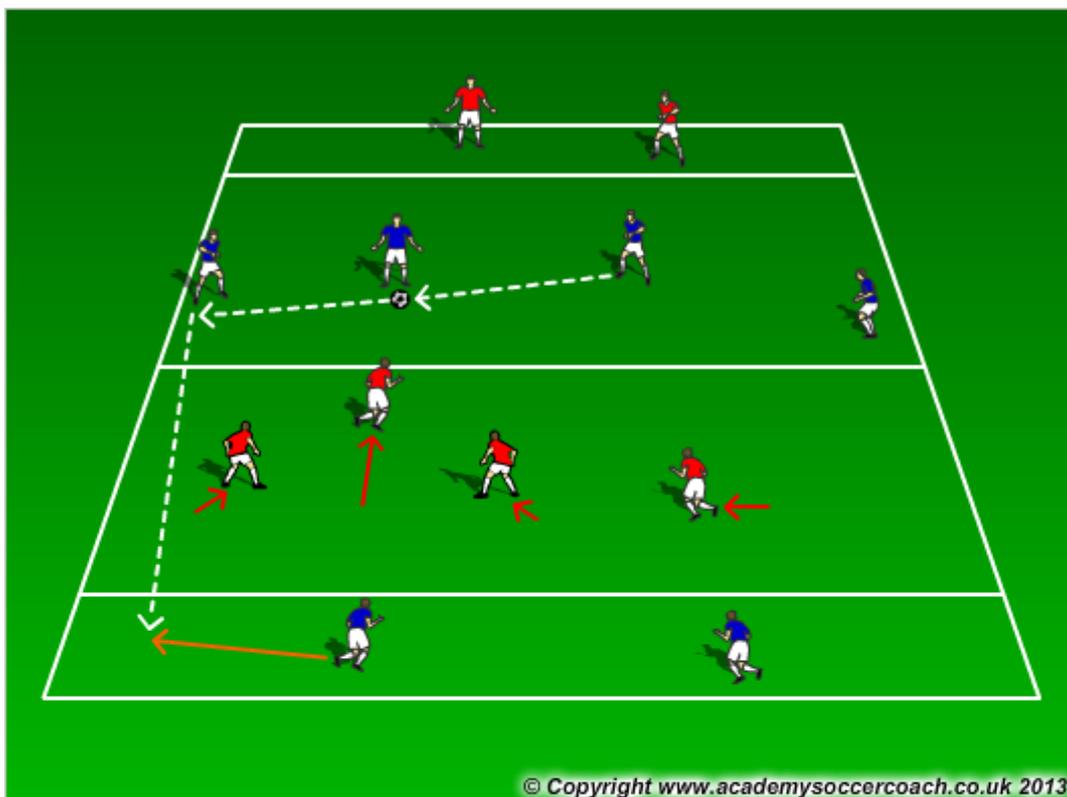
Week 4 - Movement of the Strikers (midfield into strikers) - Skill/Functional

4 V 2 in the area furthest from goal and a 2 V 2 excluding GK in the area closest to goal. Players have to stay in the area they are in (to start with). Reds have to try and score while the blues have to play the ball over the half way line to score.

Progressions - Allow one midfielder to go into the other area, open up to allow all players anywhere, add more defenders, change into a phase of play or SSG etc.

Key points - As in Tech/Skill, movement of midfield (shown in the last session - playing out from the back), keep the ball moving, change speed/direction, use patterns of play etc.

Week 5: Defending – Back 4/Midfield

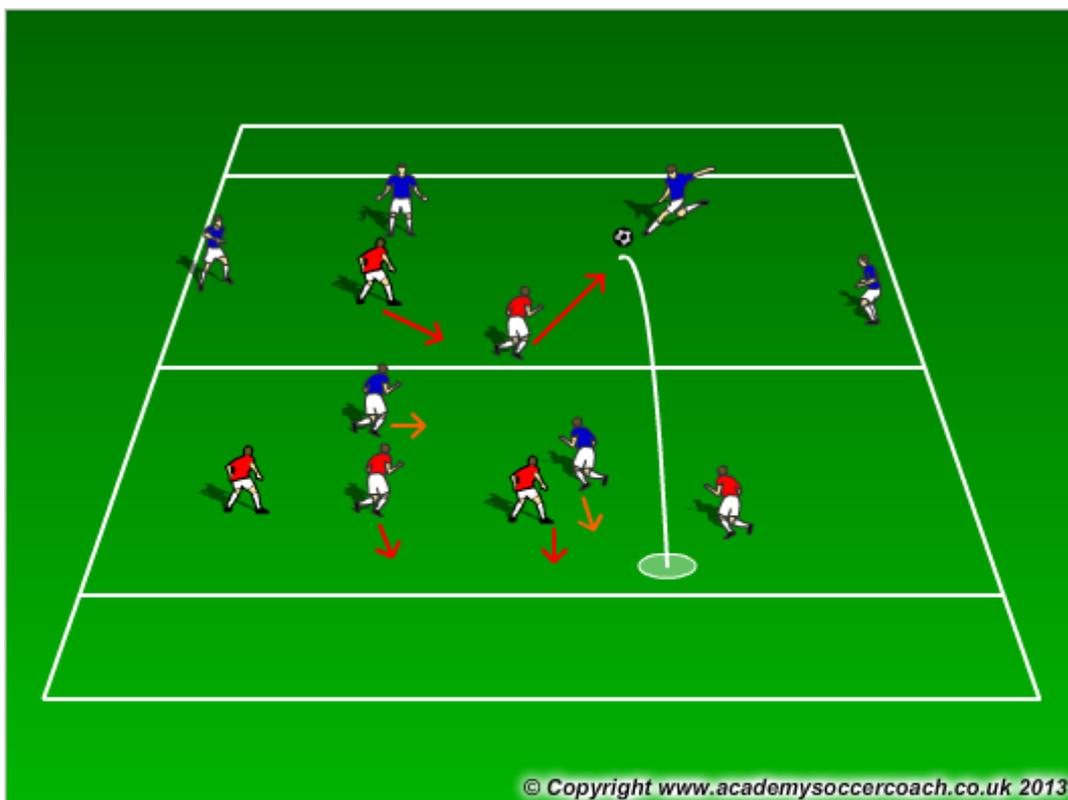


Week 5 - Defending (Defence/Midfield) - Tech into Skill

All players must stay in the area they are in. Blues (midfield) have to pass into the blue target players (strikers) to score. After this the blue target players pass into the closest red player. Reds do the same.

Progression - Allow the blue midfielders into the reds area (tackles can now happen)

Key Points - Closest defender puts pressure, second/third defender offer cover, fourth pulls across, move quickly to prevent pass, communicate etc.



Week 5 - Defending (Defence/Midfield) - Skill

...If there is no pressure on the ball, then defence/CBs should drop and stand side on just in case the ball is played through or over the top.



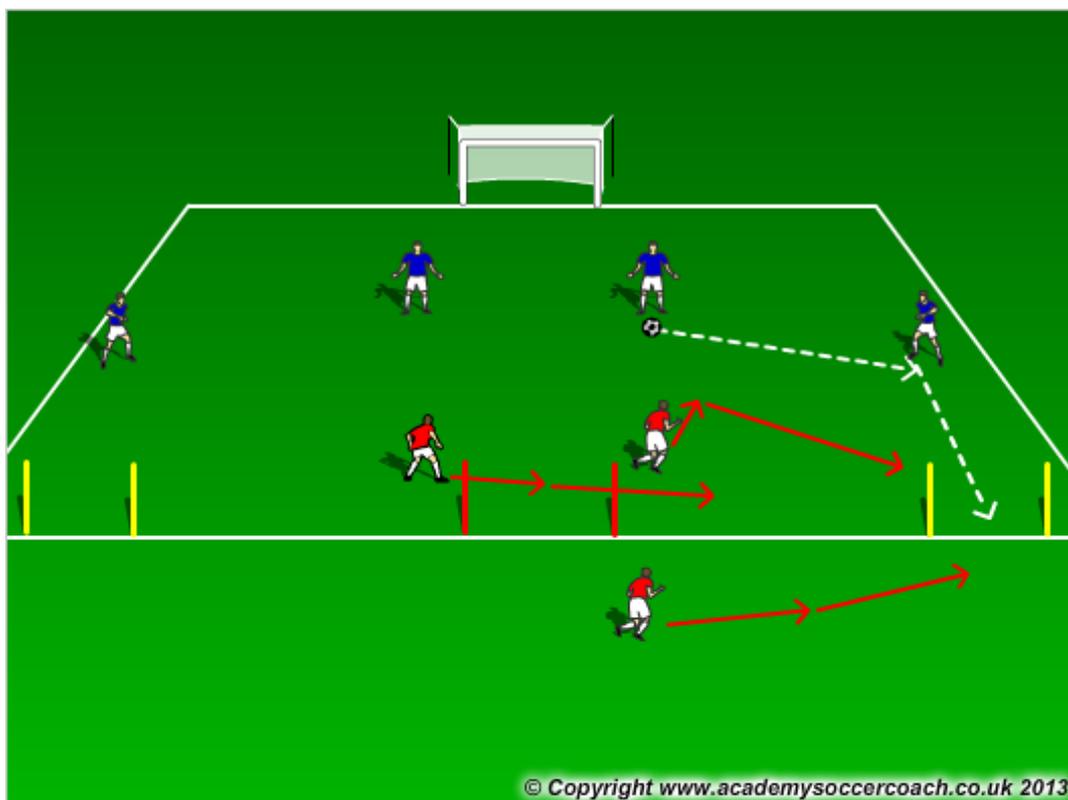
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Week 5 - Defending (Defence/Midfield) - Phase of Play

This phase of play has been done with the numbers involved in the whole session (12), if you have more players, change the phase of play to have a 4 defenders and 4 midfielders for the reds and 2 strikers, 4 midfielders and 2 fullbacks for the blues.

Ask the defending team to use different tactics like pressing high, dropping deep, show inside, show outside etc. Ask the attacking team to use different tactics like try to play into the strikers feet/over the top, try to keep the ball etc.

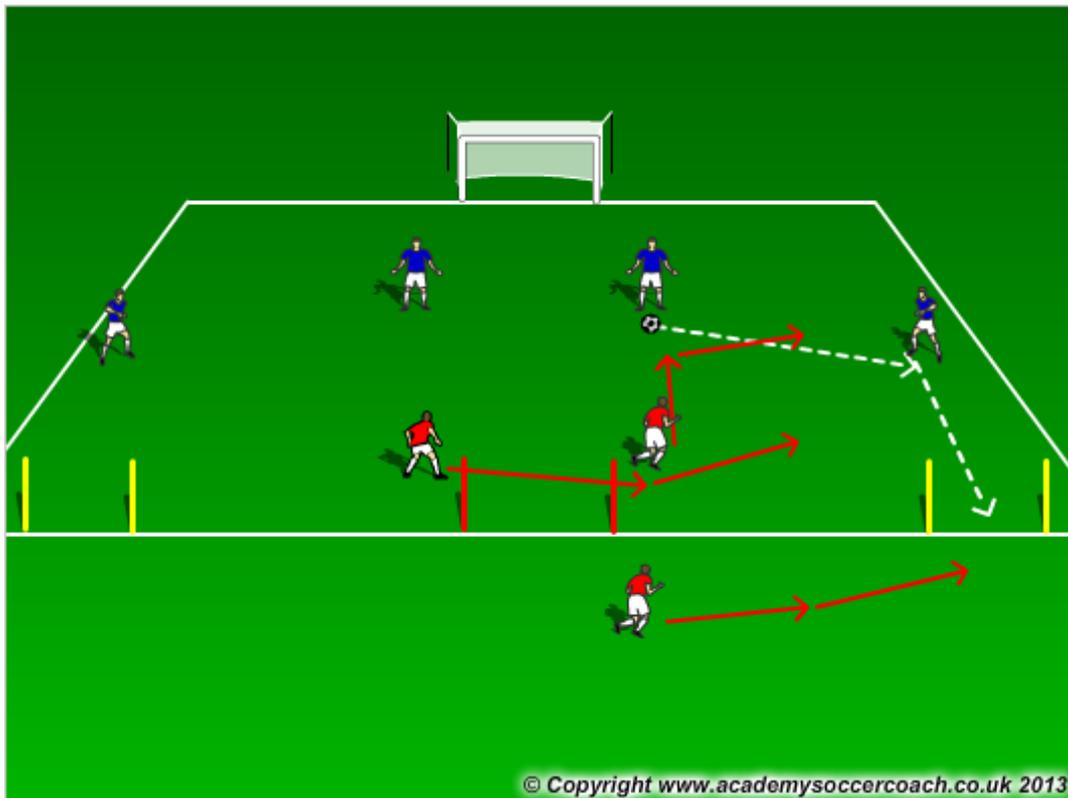
Week 6: Defending – Strikers/Midfield



Week 6 - Defending (Midfield/Strikers) - Tech/Skill - Low Pressure

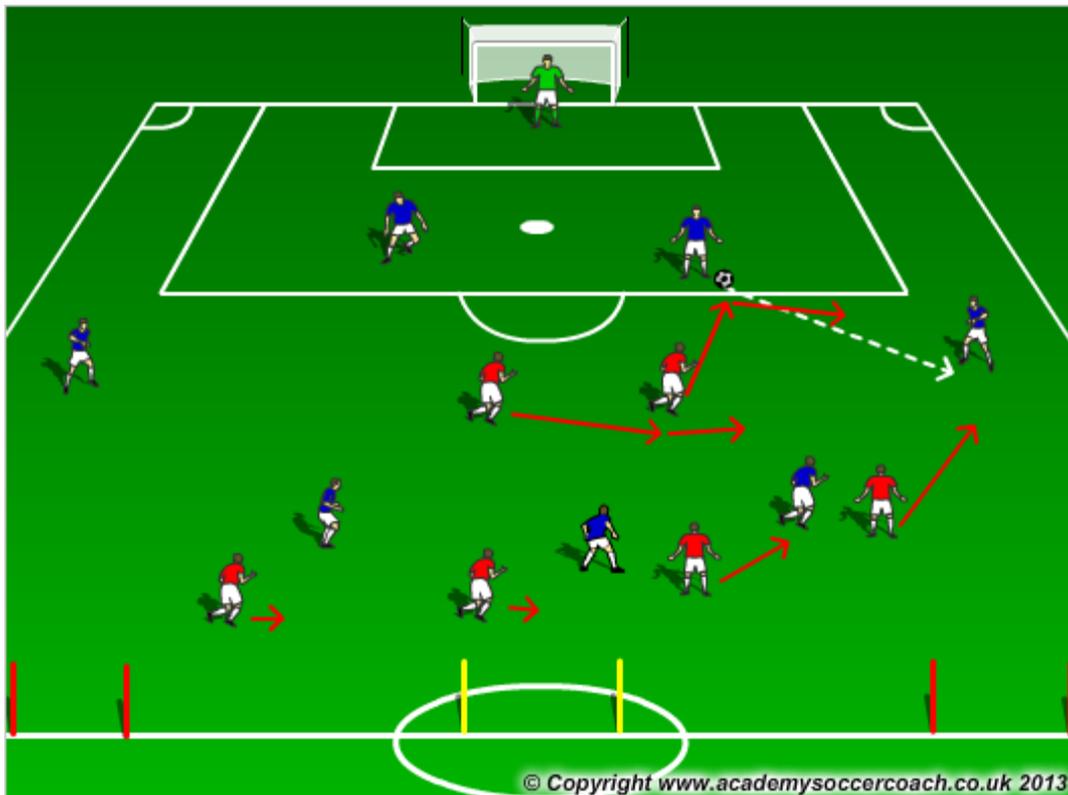
Blue team have to try and pass the ball through one of the 3 goals (poles). The reds have to prevent them from doing this. If the reds win the ball then they can shoot on goal. Red player who is behind the goals can only move behind them but can step into any goal to block. No tackling at first, just intercepting.

Low Pressure - As above, the defenders should be looking to prevent the other team scoring by stopping them going forward. This is their priority, not winning the ball (as above there is 3 players between the player on the ball and the closest 2 goals).



Week 6 - Defending (Midfield/Strikers) - Tech/Skill - High Pressure

High Pressure - While using low pressure there is a high chance they will pass back to the other defenders (try to switch play). Using high pressure, the defending team is trying to win the ball so they must try to force them into one area (as above). The striker who puts pressure on the central defender then pressures the wide from behind to prevent the ball going back. The other striker pulls across and puts pressure from the side (prevent the ball going across). The defender behind the goal goes across and prevents the player going forward. that player on the ball will be boxed in that area.

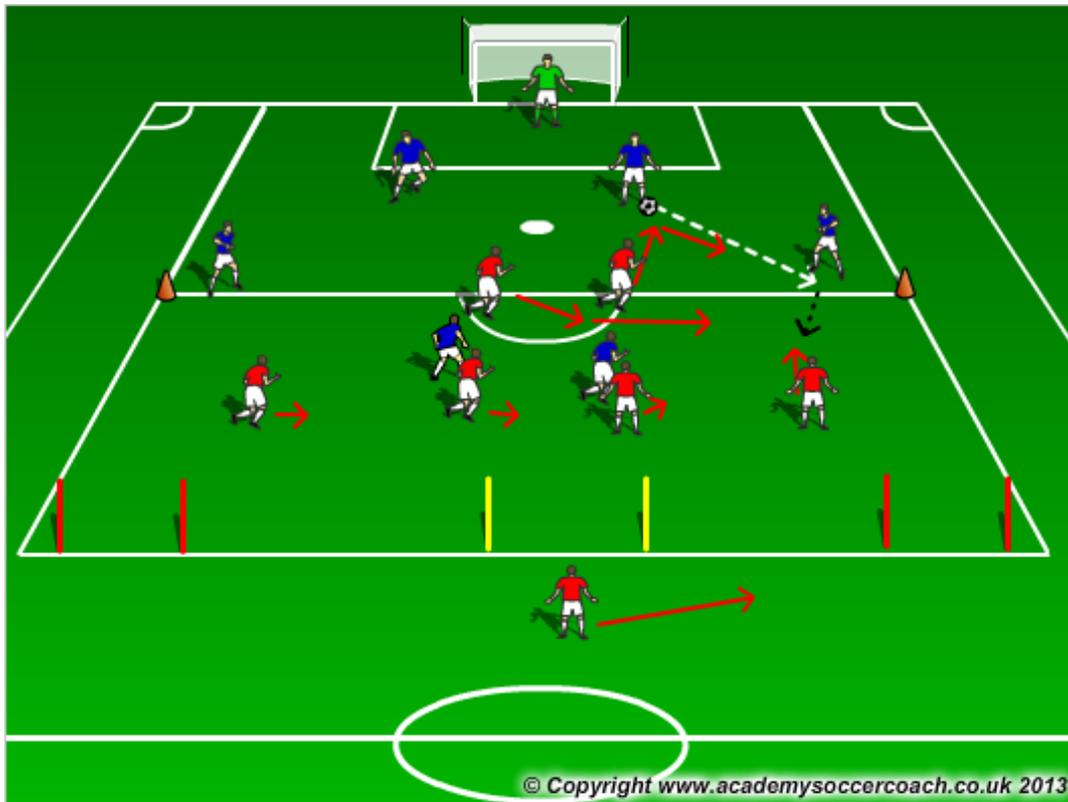


Week 6 - Defending (Midfield/Strikers) - Phase of Play

Phase of play with increased numbers on the blue team (to make it more realistic). The blue team plays a 4-3 formation with a GK. The reds play a 4-2 formation.

Key points - As in other parts of the session, tactics (high or low pressure) may have to change depending on the situation.

Progressions - Take away the middle goal (get reds to show inside), take away outside goals (get reds to show outside) etc.



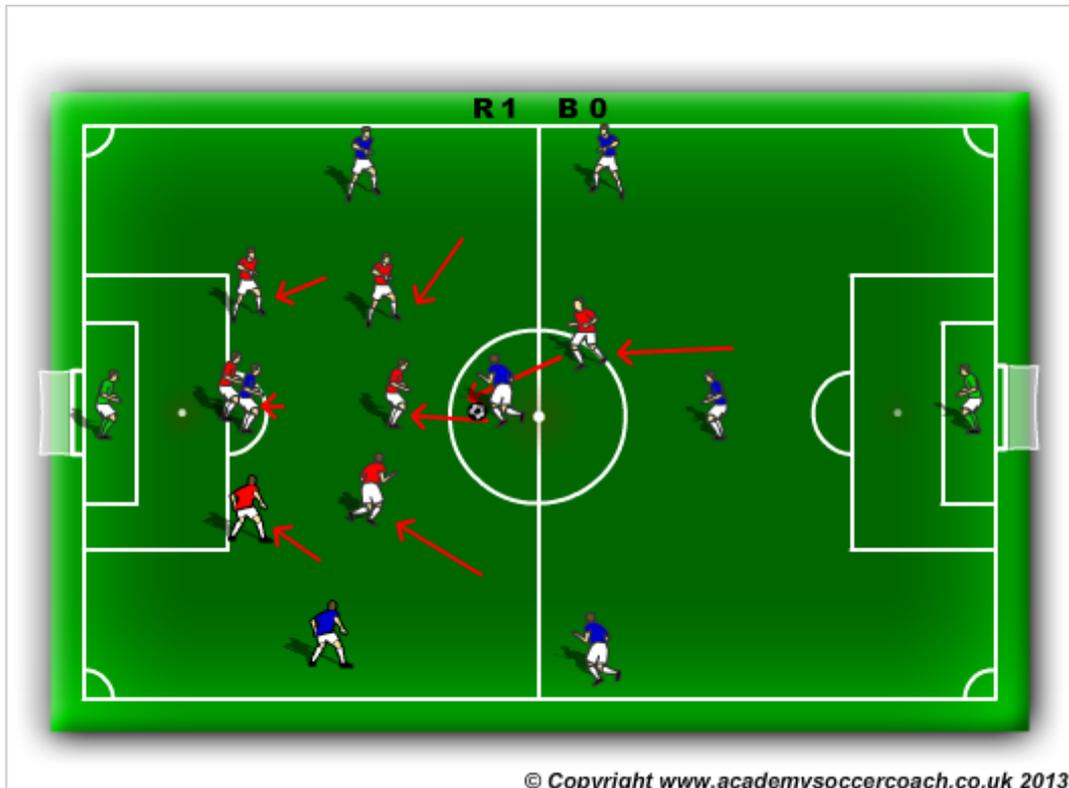
Week 6 - Defending (Midfield/Strikers) - Skill/Game

Each team plays a 4-2 formation in the area with a GK for the team defending the goal and a defender outside the area for the other team. As in the first tech/skill, the blue team have to try and score through one of the 3 goals. The reds have to stop them either using high or low pressure. If they get the ball they have to try and score within 15 seconds.

Progressions - Make the area a bigger length to promote defending deep (low pressure), make the area a smaller length to promote using high pressure etc.

Key points - As in Tech/Skill, other midfielders pull across when the ball goes wide to make that area compact, midfield/outside defender be aware of ball over the top into one of the goals (if there is no pressure on the ball, drop slightly and be on the half turn and vice versa if there is pressure on the ball) etc.

Week 7: Defending – Defending as a Team

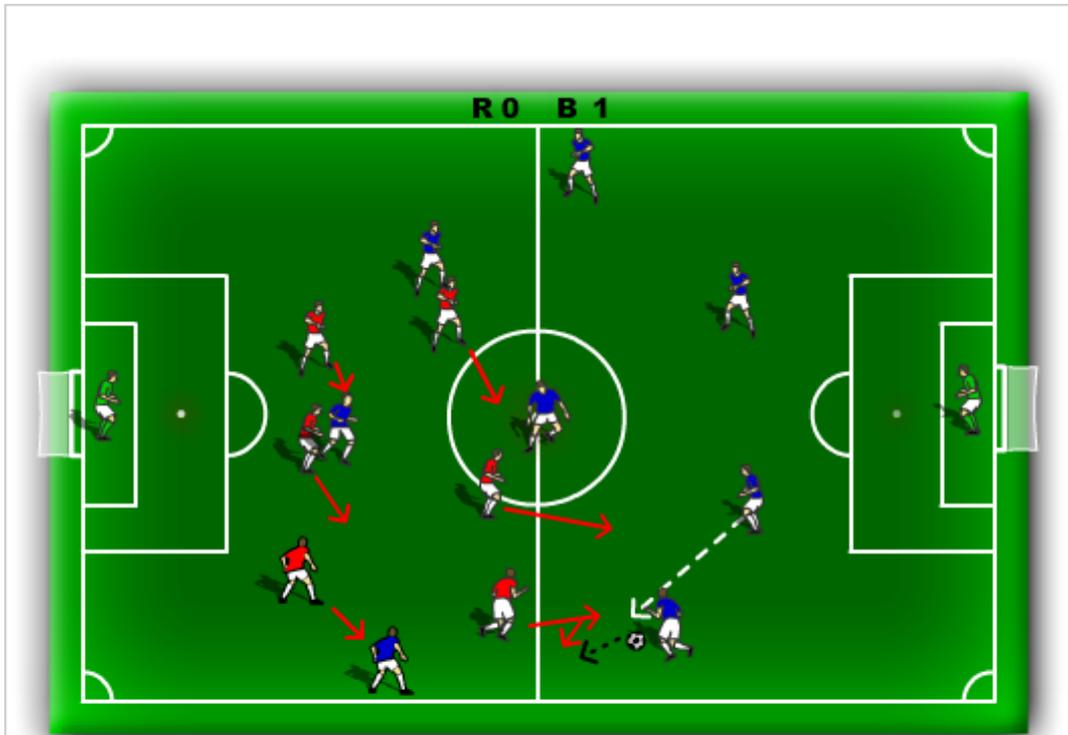


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Week 7 - Defending as a team - Problem Solving Game

Scenario 1 (as above)- Reds are winning 1-0 (this scenario can be combined with any other) - Unless there is another scenario involved, the reds should try to focus on preventing the other team playing the ball forward and not on trying to win the ball. This will involve sitting slightly deeper and allowing the blues to have the ball in the blues half without pressure from the reds.

Scenario 2 - Reds are losing 1-0 (again, can be combined) - Reds need to try and win the ball as they are losing. This involves high pressure and trying to win the ball in the middle/attacking third. Like the first scenario, this may change depending on the other teams tactics etc.



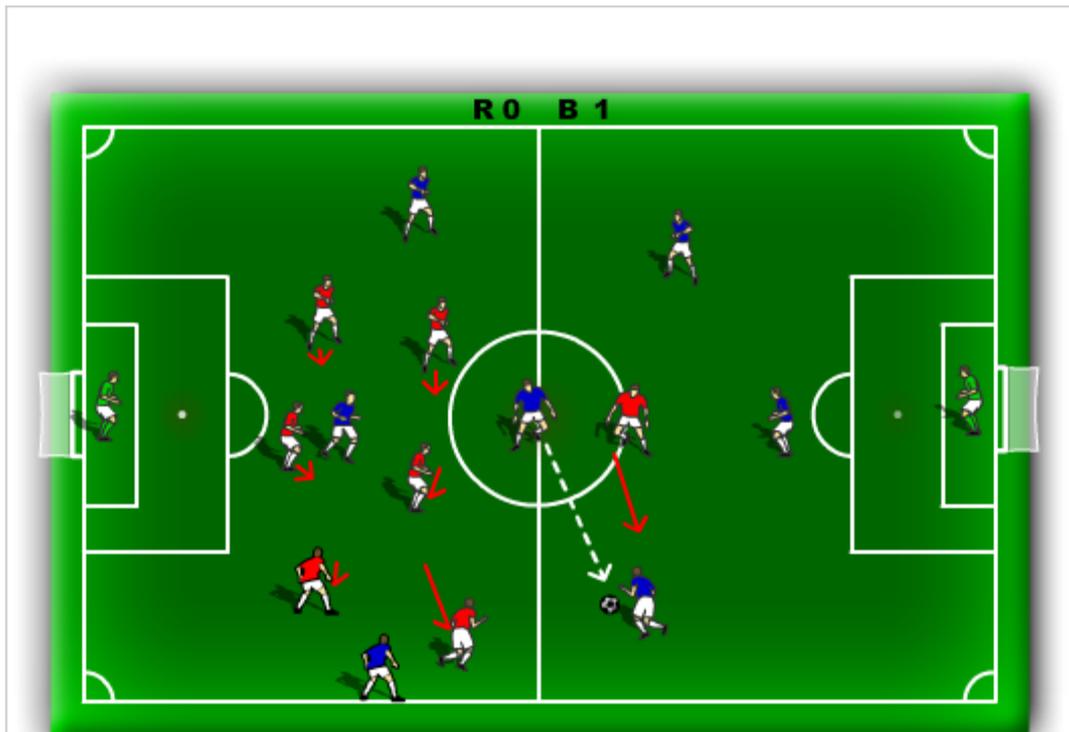
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Week 7 - Defending as a team - Problem Solving Game

Scenario 3 - Team is a player or two down (red card/injury etc) - Either put a player on the other team (7v9) or have one player as neutral. If the red team is:

A) losing/drawing (as above), then they have to try press the other team to win the ball. As they are a player down though, they will have to smart when pressing. If there is a chance they will win the ball the whole team should press and try to win the ball in that area. When they do this they should force the other team down the line/outside to cancel out the numerical advantage by making that area compact. If the ball is played out of that area (switched) they should drop, organise and then press again when/where they think they will win the ball.

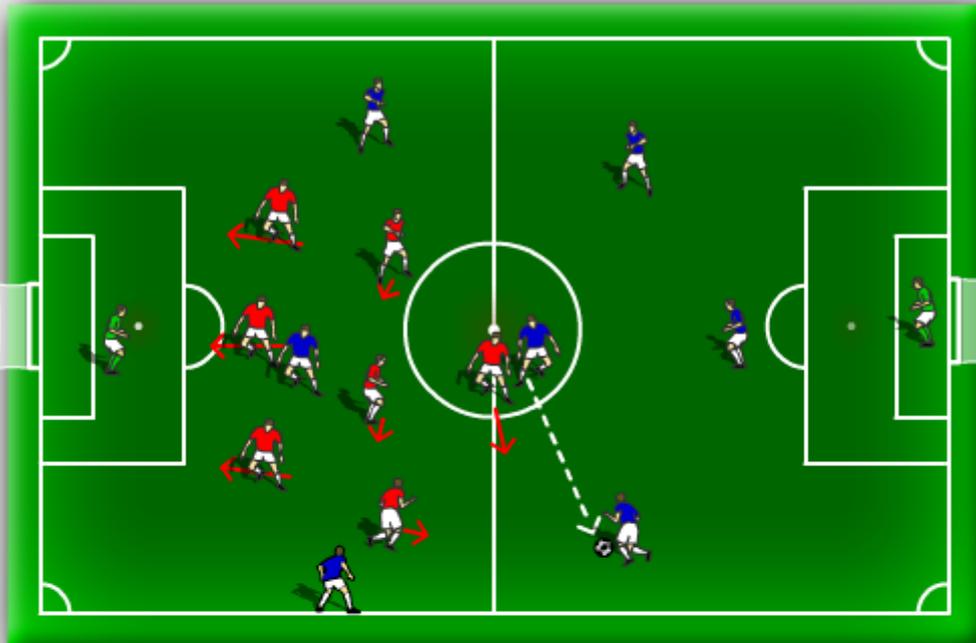
B) winning/drawing, then they should just focus on preventing the other team scoring and playing forward. This involves sitting deep and not pressing in the other teams half.



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Week 7 - Defending as a team - Problem Solving Game

Scenario 4 - A team with a tall striker/a striker with good aerial ability. Or a team with good wide players that can cross the ball well - Whether winning, drawing or losing, this tactic can be used. Show the other team inside and don't allow the wide players to get the ball or if they do, don't let them go down the line. Push up the defence to prevent the chance of crosses being made/played into dangerous areas.

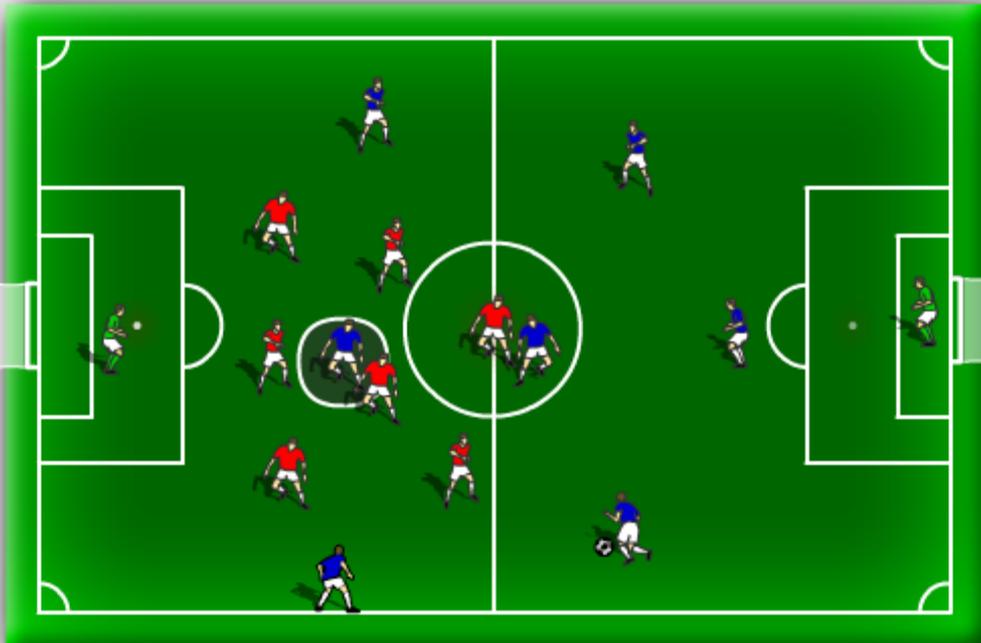


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Week 7 - Defending as a team - Problem Solving Game

Scenario 5 - The blues have a fast striker and they keep playing the ball over the top/through - There are a few main ways to combat this, the first way is to drop the defence and push the goalkeeper up high so if the ball goes over the top/through, the reds will get there first. Another way is to use the offside trap to try to catch that player offside by stepping up just before the ball is about to be played over the top/through. This way is very risky though.

One important thing for the players to remember is that if there is pressure on the ball, the ball cannot be played long (so the defence can step up) and vice versa, if there is no pressure on the ball it can be played long (defence should drop and be on the half turn). This was covered in the week 6 session.

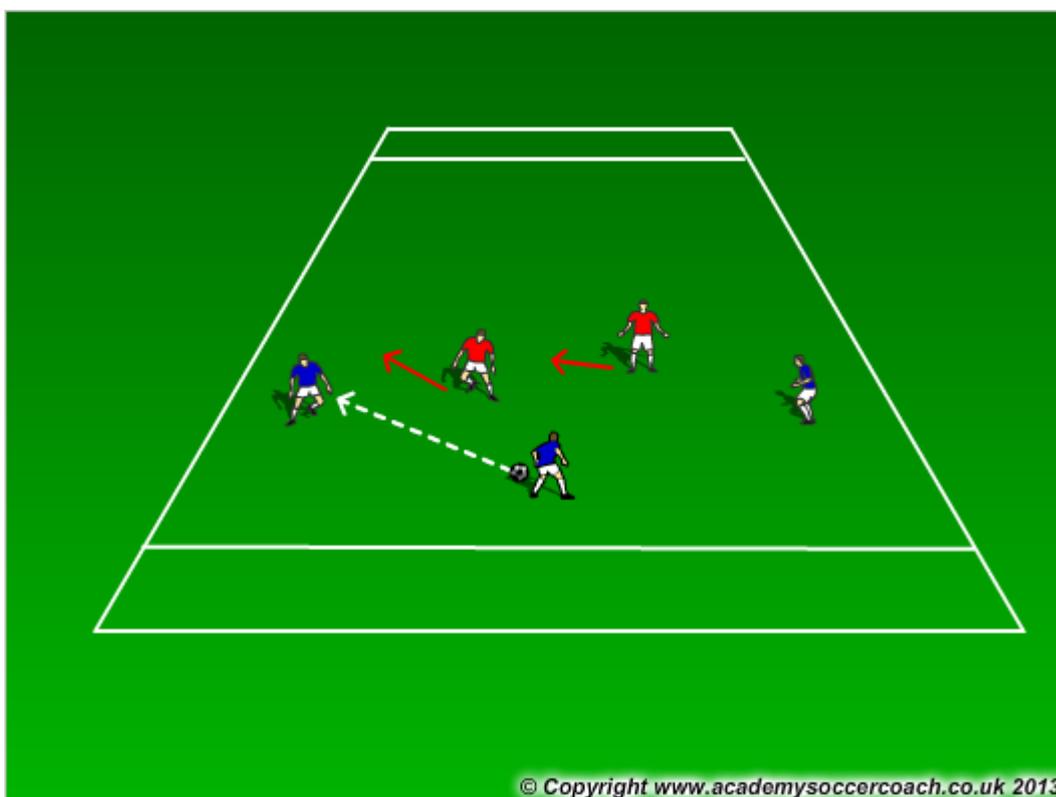


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Week 7 - Defending as a team - Problem Solving Game

Scenario 6 - The other team has a extremely good striker or midfielder (put a condition on the game that this player cannot be tackled unless in the penalty area if need be) - Show the other team away from this player and make it compact in that area. If it is a striker then have a midfielder drop to stop the ball going into them. If it is a midfielder then man mark that player. With both of these a high level of communication is required.

Week 8: Defending – Defending Transition

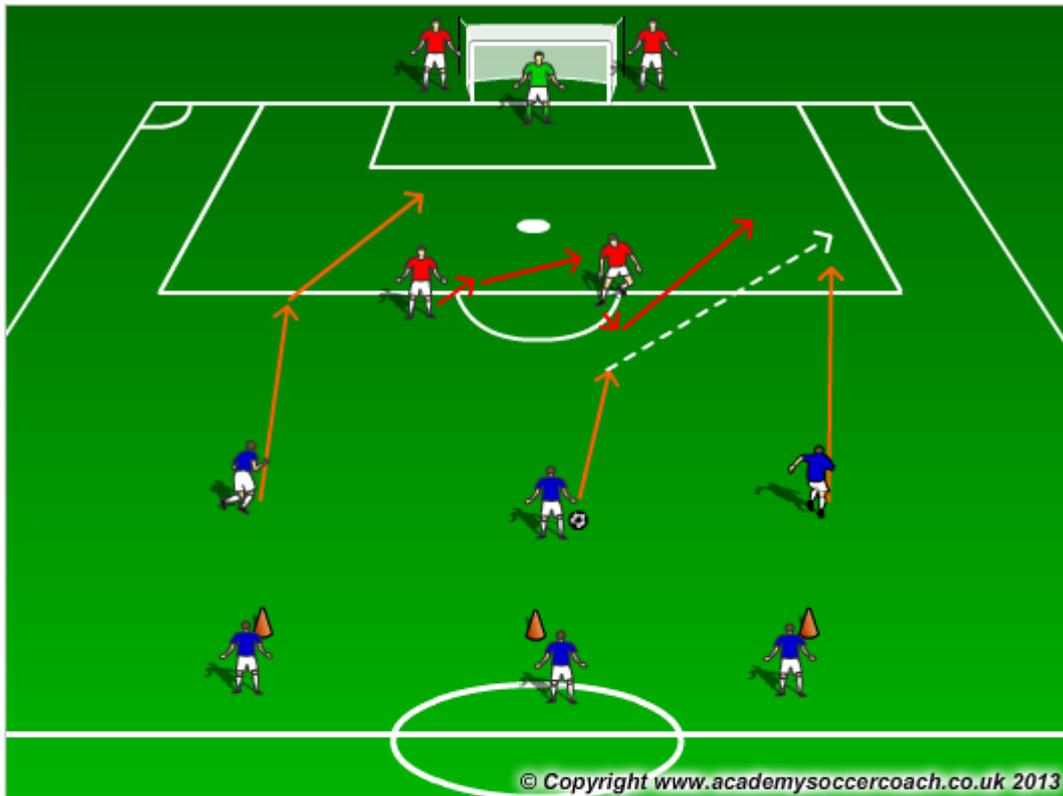


Week 8 - Defending Transition - Tech/Skill

2 defenders vs 3 attackers. Attackers score by dribbling/passing into the end zone. Defenders score by stopping the attack (it goes out of play) or winning the ball and dribbling out of play. Repeat each time with different players in different roles.

Progressions - Have a 2v2 plus a neutral to make the game continuous, add more attackers etc.

Key Points - Dont commit to the player on the ball but keep slight pressure, show them wide to create a 1v1 wide, slow them down, covering player needs to be in a position to be able to block the ball going forward etc.



Week 8 - Defending Transition - Skill

3 attackers against 2 defenders and a goalkeeper. Attackers have to try and score in the goal in 15 seconds. The defenders have to stop them scoring and if they win it, play it to the 3 attackers waiting. Once one team wins, the next group of players step on.

Progressions - After 15 seconds another defender and attacker step on (as if in a game with players recovering back/supporting the attack), add more attackers etc.

Key Points - Players shouldn't commit until the ball has been played wide, keep enough pressure to block a early shot, when the ball goes wide the closest player pressures, the other player gets in a position so they can block the ball across goal and if it goes back, the goalkeeper gets ready for the shot and the ball across goal, etc.

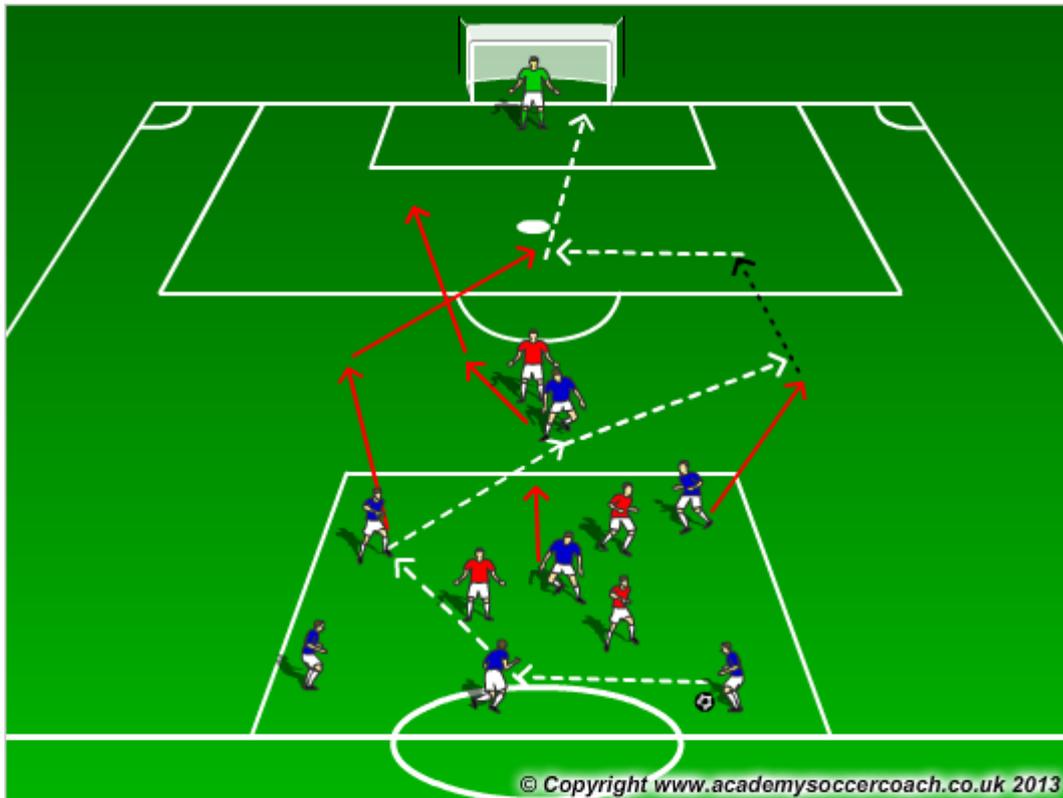
Week 9: Attacking – Attacking Transition



Week 9 - Attacking Transition - Tech/Skill

6v3 in the middle area with 3 defends on the outside. The blues have to make 6 passes and then break out the square to score in 1 of the goals. Once this happens then start again. If the red team wins the ball, then they can play out to one of the outside reds to score on goal. For the tech part have the defenders only passive (can only intercept passes, not tackle). For the skill have the other team live.

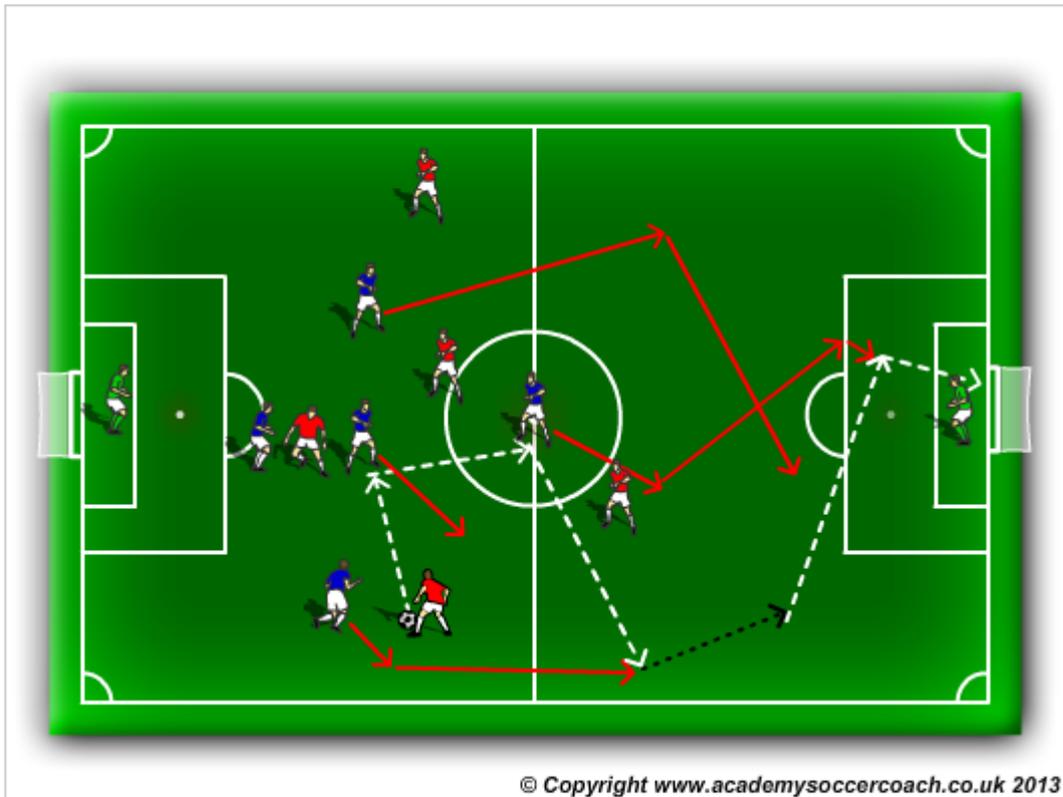
Key points - Play the ball quickly, make options/angles for the player on the ball, score/play forward as soon as possible, pass (the ball moves faster than a player), make the field big (make runs wide and give depth) etc.



Week 9 - Attacking Transition - Skill

As in previous part of the session, blue team have to make 6 passes before breaking out the square to goal. They have 10 seconds to score once breaking out of the area. Red team can leave the area once the blues break out. Reds have a GK and 1 defender outside the square marking 1 blue striker. If reds win the ball they have to dribble out the square to score.

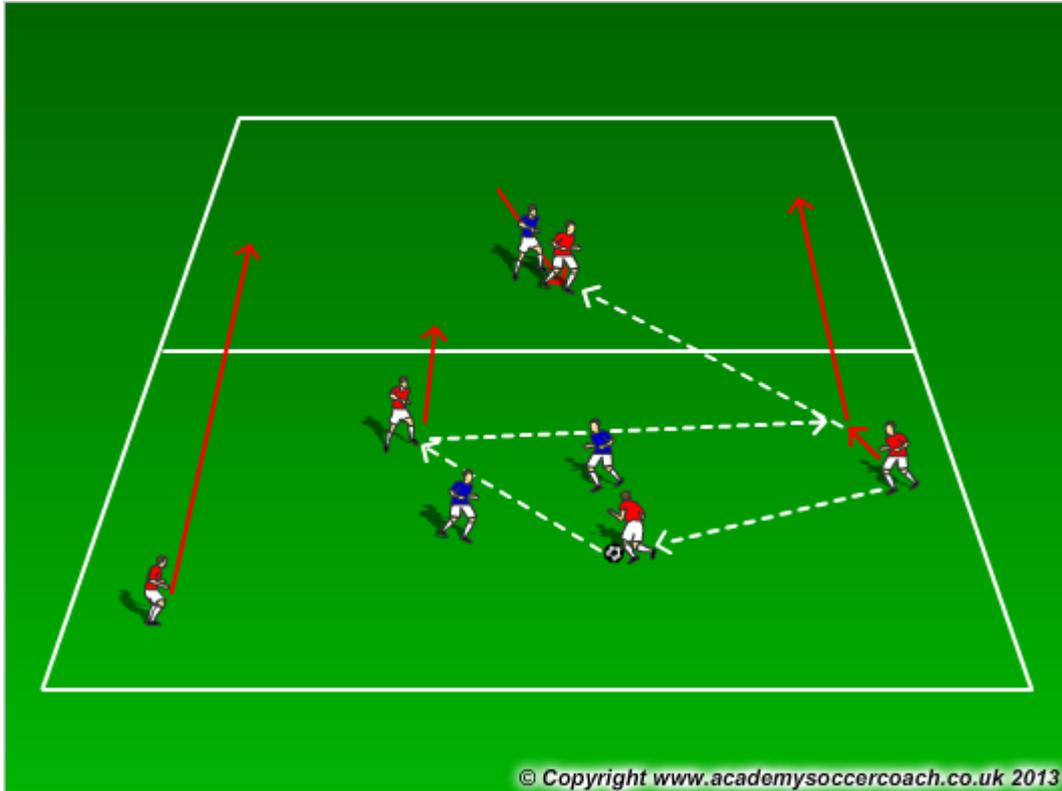
Key points - As before, play into striker, make support runs, deceiving runs into the penalty area, blind side of the defender(s), run across the front of defenders to drag them out of place for another player to make a run into etc.



Week 9 - Attacking Transition - Game

Normal game however once a team gains possession, if they score within 10/15 seconds they get 3 goals. OR the coach counts down from 15 to 1 and whatever second they score on is how many goals they get. For example, score when the coach gets to 6 seconds and that team gets 6 goals.

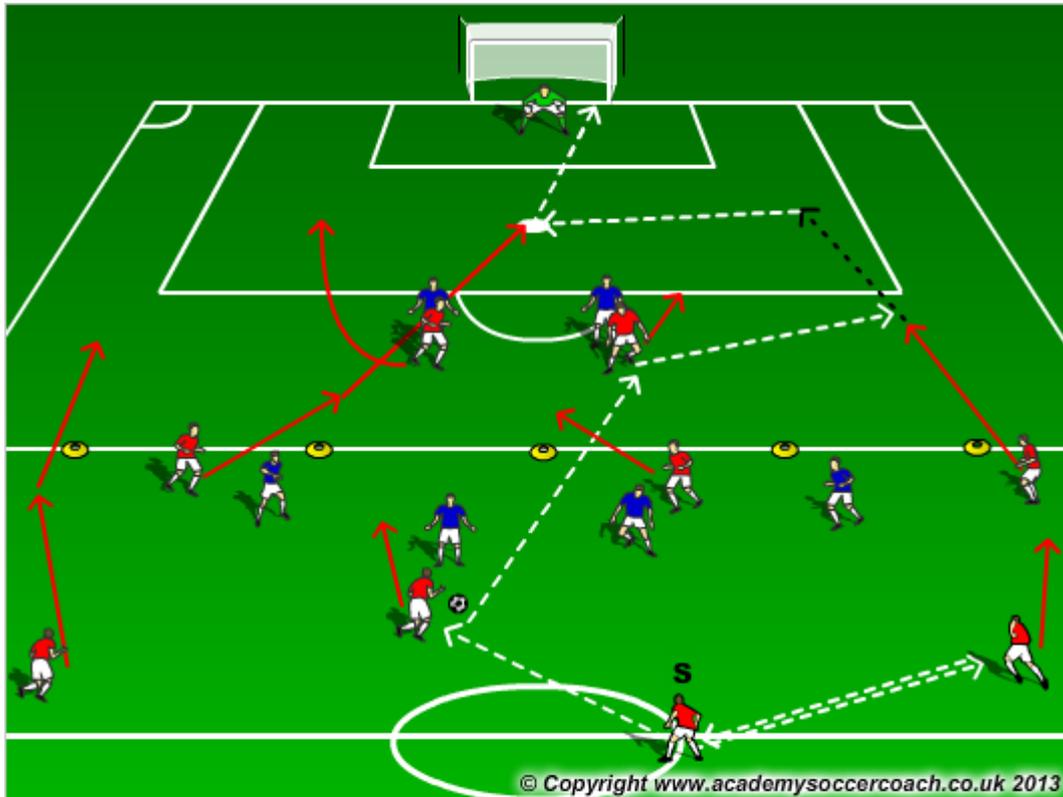
Week 10: Attacking – Support Play



Week 10 - Support Play - Tech/Skill

4v2 in one half and 1v1 in the other. The 4 have to make 3 passes and then play into the other half into the 1 player. 3 of the players then make runs in to support the player on the ball and then begin again. The defenders have to try and win the ball and then play into the other half to score. the side with the ball should always have 2 defenders in it. No tackling at first and the defender in the 1v1 cannot put pressure/tackle till the player takes a touch. Progress so the defenders can do what they want.

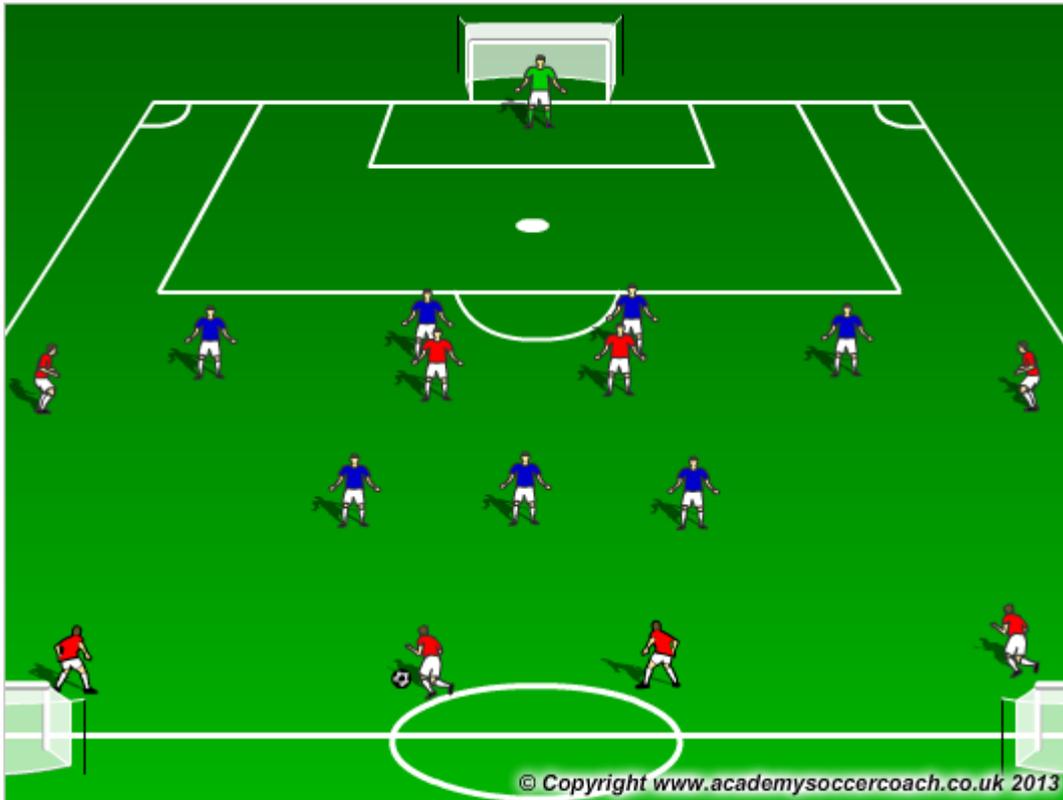
Key Points - Quick passes, support runs into gaps, support runs both wide and one in behind (this offers both forward, sideways and backward passes), use different passing combinations etc.



Week 10 - Support Play - Skill/Phase of Play

A 2v2 with a GK in the final third and a 6v4 plus a server in the middle third. The red team must make 3 passes in the middle third before playing into the final third. Once the ball goes into the final third the reds can go in there and make support runs and try to score in the goal. If the blue team gets it they have to try and play into the server to score.

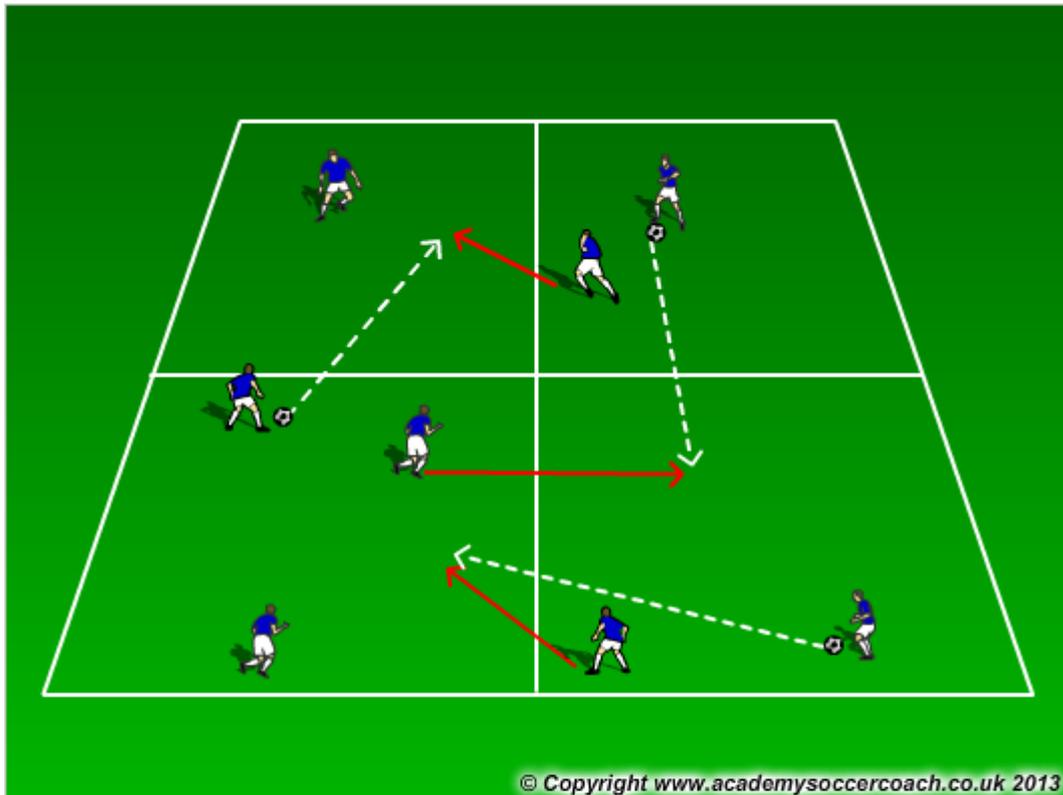
Key Points - As in tech/skill, quick movements to get away from defenders, making blind side runs, dragging defenders out of position and opening up gaps for midfield players to run into (as shown above), always have a option back etc.



Week 10 - Support Play - Phase of Play

Normal phase of play with the red team playing with 2 wingbacks, 4 midfielders and 2 strikers. The blues play a 4-3 formation with a GK. Blue score by playing into the 2 wide goals on the half way line while the reds have to score in the other goal.

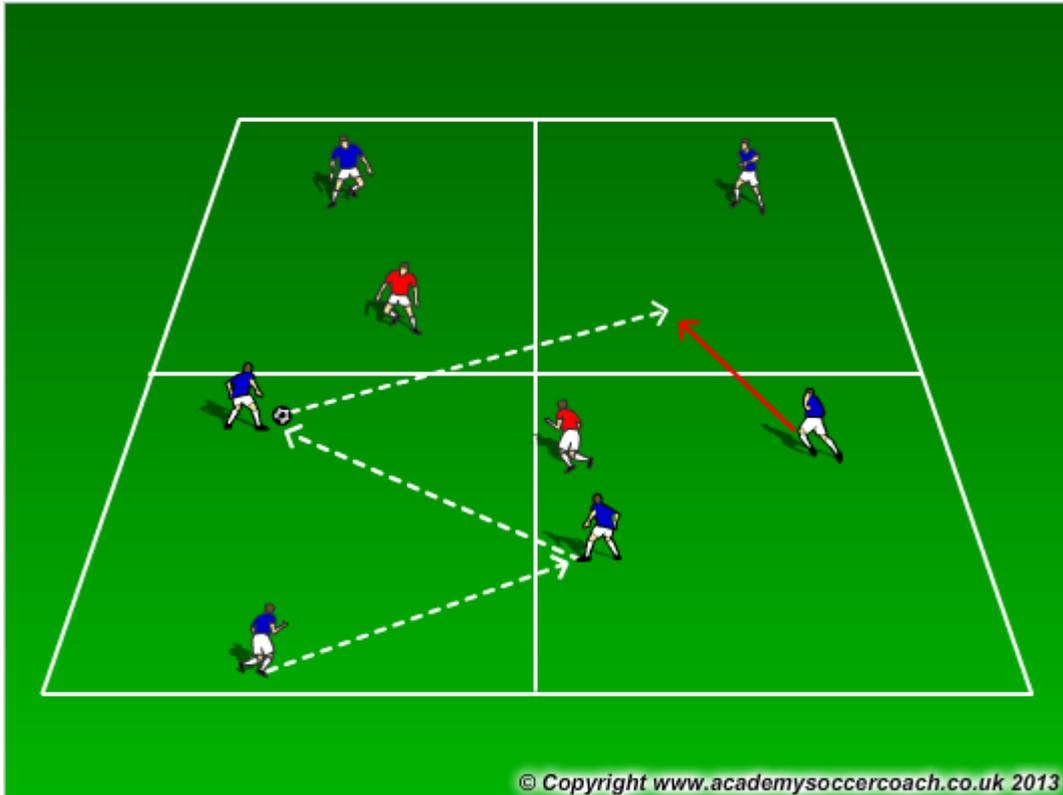
Week 11: Attacking – Through Balls/Playing into Space



Week 11 - Through Balls - Tech

Large area split into 4. Players have to pass to another player but they cannot start in the area that they receive the ball (must run onto the pass).

Key Points - Weight of the pass, angle of ball, communication (pointing where you want the ball), meeting the ball in stride, checking the run etc.

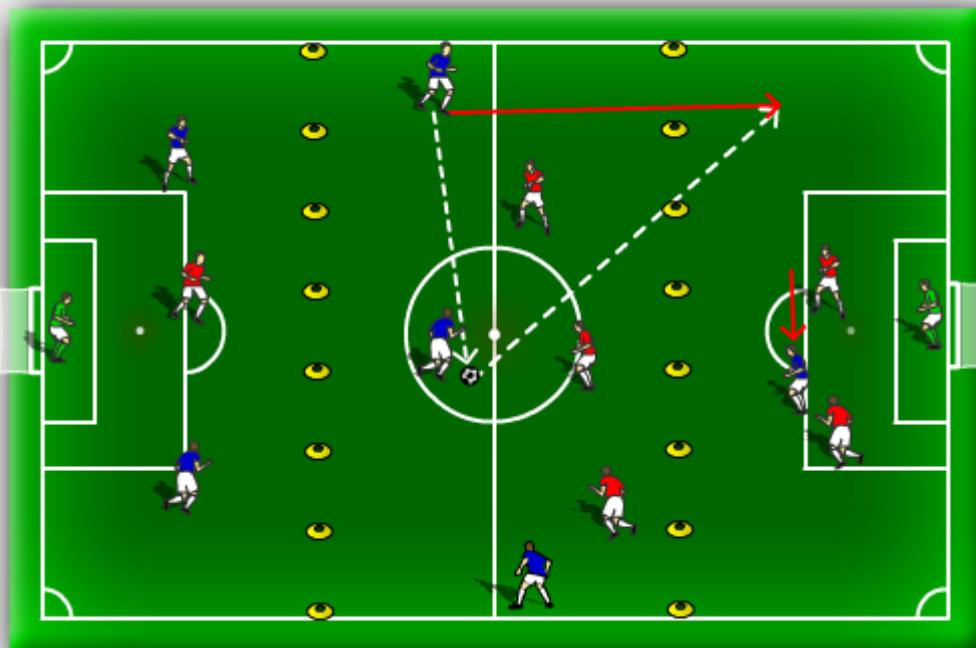


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Week 11 - Through Balls - Skill

As before, the area is split into 4 and the blues have to pass to a space for a player to run onto to score. The 2 defenders have to try and win the ball and try and dribble out the area to score.

Key Points - Weight of the pass, angle of ball, communication (pointing where you want the ball), meeting the ball in stride, checking the run etc.



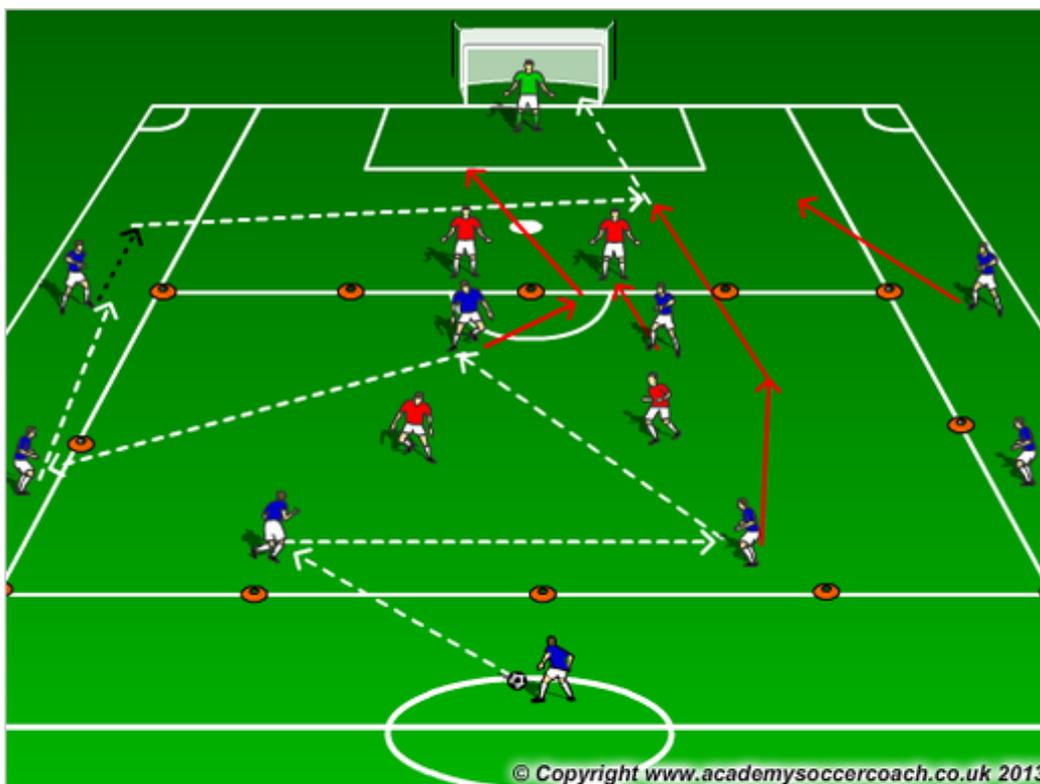
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Week 11 - Through Balls - Game

A through the thirds game with the team in possession being allowed to move anywhere. Once they lose the ball they must go back to the area they started in before they can defend. Progress into a normal game.

Key Points - Weight of pass, angle of run, blind side runs, one-two passes, movements off the ball to open up space for other players, overlapping runs etc.

Week 12: Attacking – Crossing and Finishing



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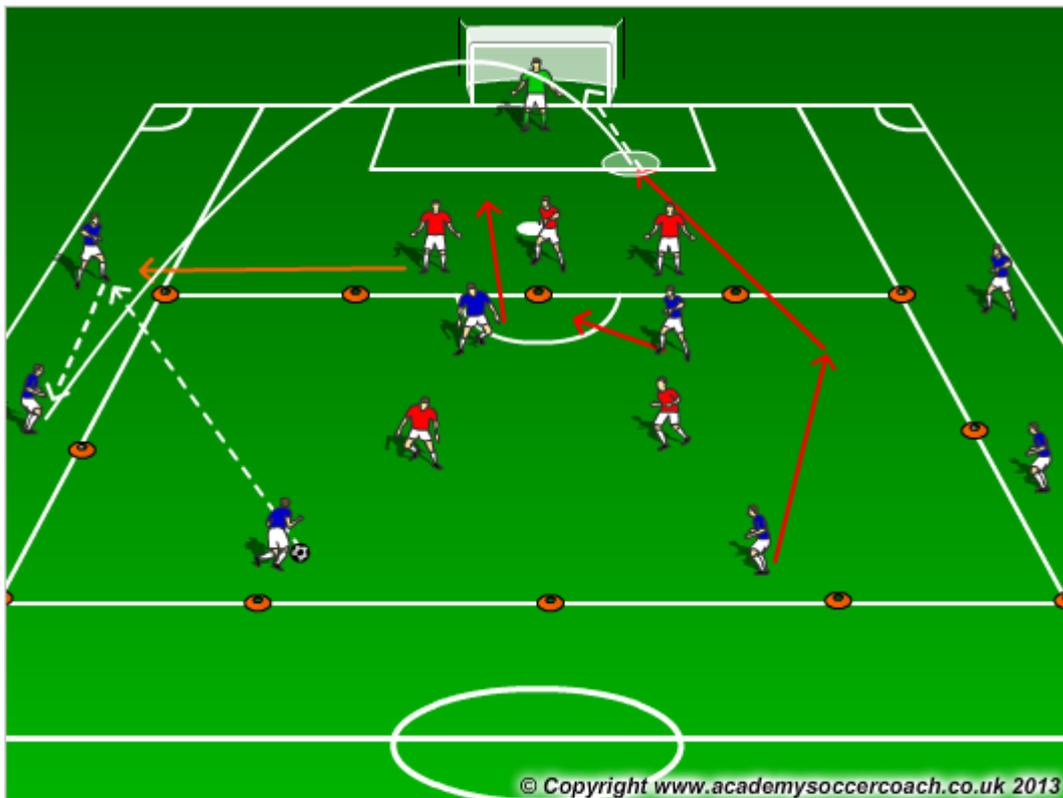
Week 12 - Crossing and Finishing - Tech/Skill

Set up: Either start with poles or have defenders who can't tackle and put light pressure. In the penalty area there is a goalkeeper and 2 defenders who can't leave that area. The wide areas each have 2 attackers (WB and WM) who can't leave that area unless the ball is about to be crossed in. In the middle is a 4 V 2 (2 CMs and 2 STs for the attackers). The middle area, only the attackers can leave and push forward. Just outside of the middle area is a server who can be passed back to.

Targets: Attacking team has to get 3 passes in the middle area before playing out wide and then crossing the ball back in to finish (breakout game). Defenders have to win the ball and play to the server.

Progressions - Add more defenders, let the defenders tackle/put high pressure, the attackers have to get more passes, the attackers only have 10 seconds after breaking out to score, the wide players have to do an overlapping run and then cross etc.

Key points - Timing of the runs, decoy runs, blindside runs, running front/back post, running to the middle front/back, early cross, late cross, cutback, driven cross, lofted cross, spinning cross towards/away from goal, timing of meeting the ball, wide players passing the ball back for the WB to cross etc.



Week 12 - Crossing and Finishing - Tech/Skill

Example of progressions: Add extra defender at the back and allow one of them to put pressure on the wide player (wide player then passes the ball back and the left back crosses to back post while the furthest centre midfielder makes a blind side run to the back post)



Week 12 - Crossing and Finishing - Phase of Play

The blues have 2 strikers, 2 wide midfielders, 2 centre midfielders and 2 fullbacks. The reds play with 4 defenders and 3 midfielders. Blues have to score in the main goal and the reds have to score in the 2 smaller goals on the half way line. Focus on getting the blues to attack by using the over load on each side to cross in and finish.