



# 27 Soccer Specific Conditioning Drills



# **27 Soccer Specific Conditioning Drills**

Technical and tactical sessions all with a  
conditioning element using a ball.

*By*

Lawrence Fine

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Author – Lawrence Fine  
Edited by Tom Mura



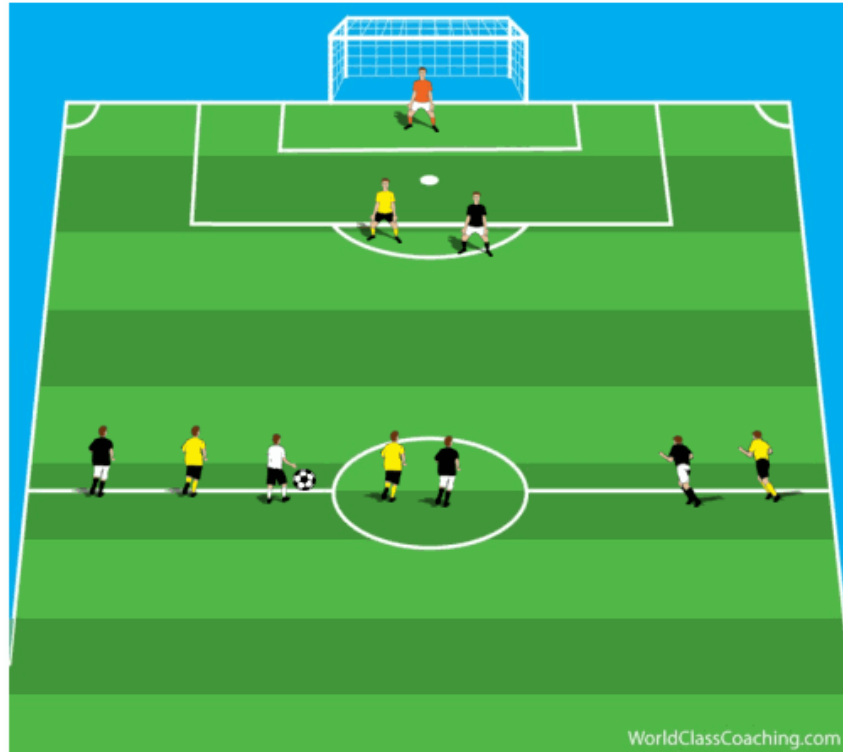
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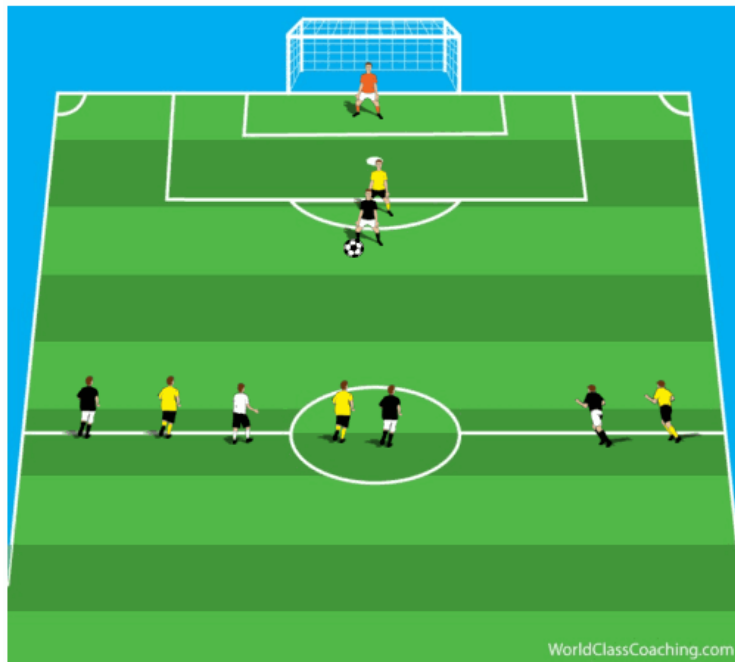
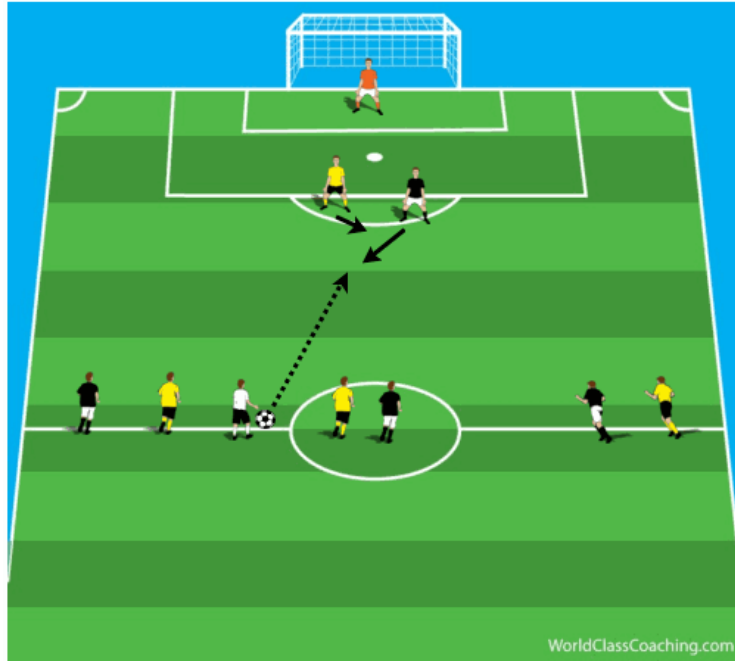
## Anaerobic 4v4 Small-Sided Game

Here is a 4 v 4 game working on target player and transition while giving a nice anaerobic workout.

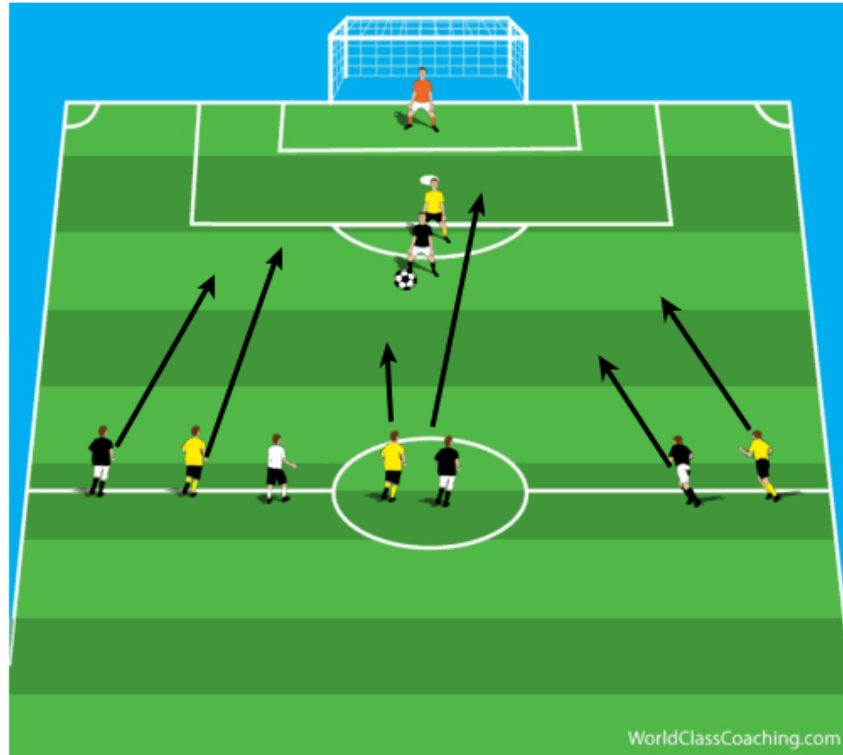
This activity uses half a field with a full sized goal and a keeper in goal. Two players start in the D and 3 yellow and 3 black players start at midfield. A coach starts at midfield with a ball.



The coach calls either “yellow” or “black” and whichever color he calls is the attacking team. In the example below, he calls “black” and the black target player checks back to receive the ball and the yellow player defends



The players at midfield join in with the yellow players trying to get back to defend and the black players trying to get into the attack

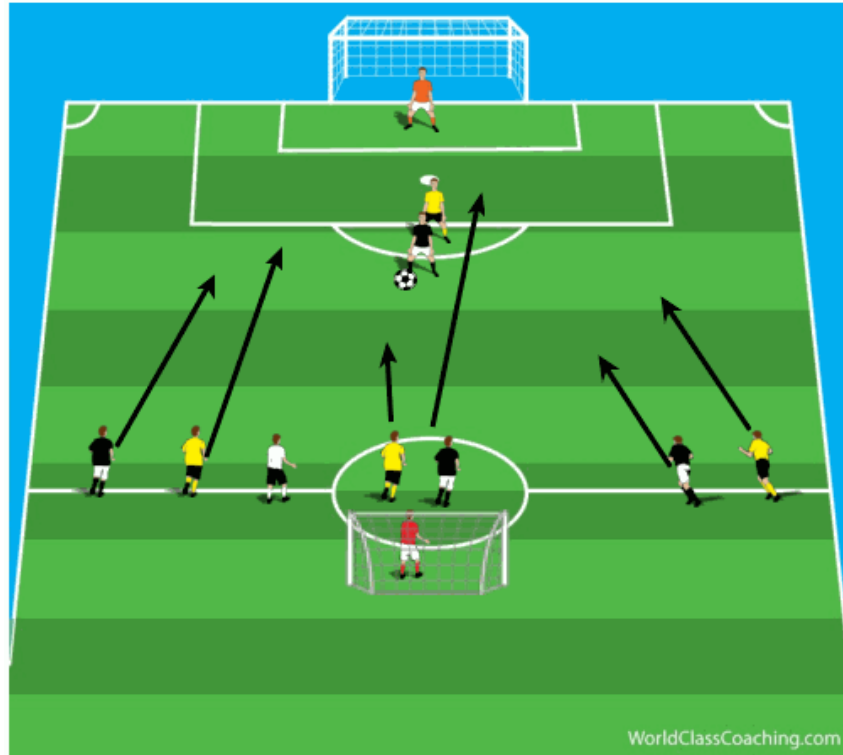


The target player can lay the ball off, or he can turn and shoot or he can play the ball wide. Play continues until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play or until the defending team wins the ball.

The players would then sprint back and start again (having two groups is ideal as one works and the other rests and recovers).

You also can add a counter attack goal so now, if the defending team wins the ball they try to score in the other goal.





You can also add a second target player from each team and also have players joining in from different angles but however you do it, if you play this at full speed it's a wonderful workout in a game environment



## **Fitness, Change of Direction and Finishing**

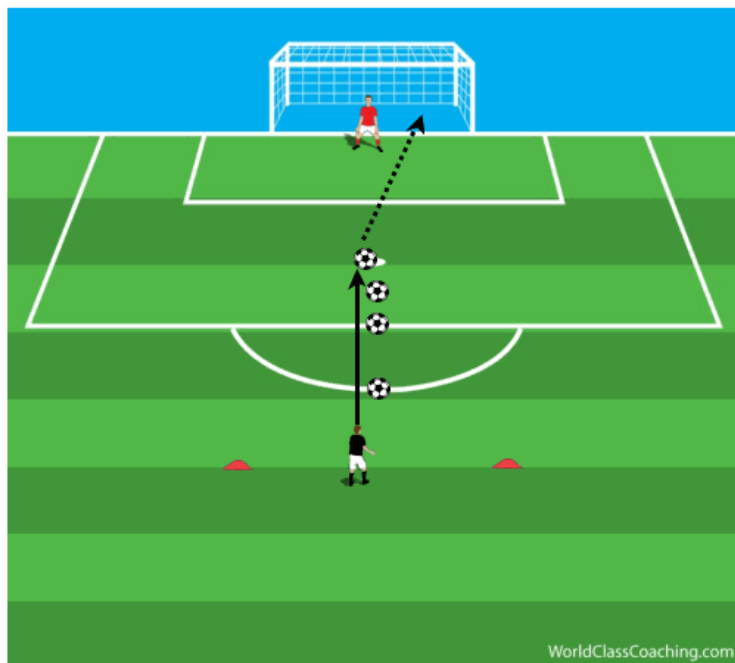
Here is a shuttle activity that works on fitness, change of direction and finishing.

Start with 4 balls in a line. One is on the 12 yard spot, one is halfway from the 12 to the 18. One is on the top of the 18 and one is at the top of the D. A keeper is in goal and the player is at a

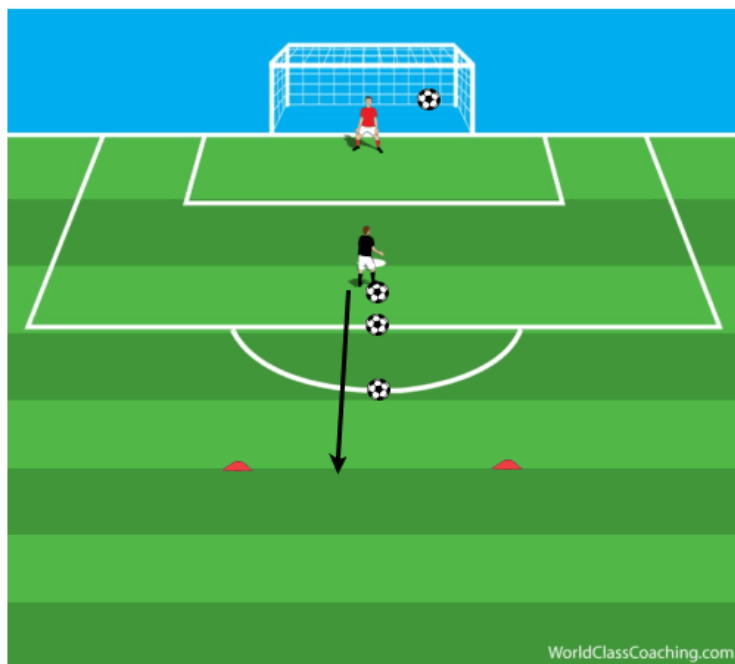
line 10 yards from the closest ball.

The player starts by sprinting to the ball at the 12 yard spot and hitting a first time shot.

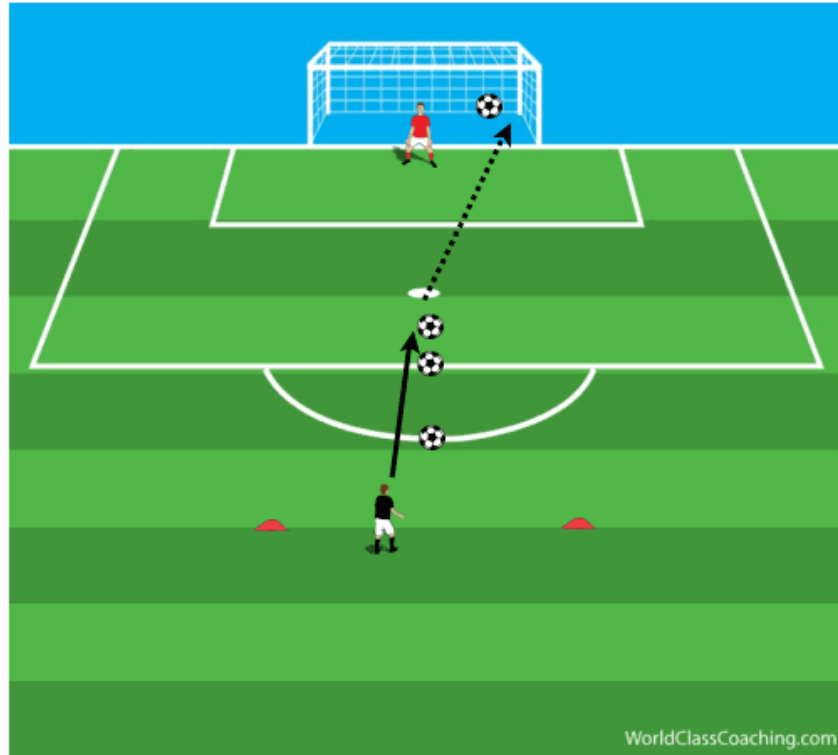




The player then runs backwards back to the starting line.



The player then sprints to the next ball and shoots first time



This is repeated through the third and fourth ball. Really emphasize the importance of sprinting both forwards and backwards at full speed and changing direction from backwards to forwards as quickly as possible.

The one thing to be careful of in this activity is to encourage the player to follow through properly and not cut their follow through short in order to get back quicker. Also, make sure they are focusing on making sure all shots are on goal. As they get tired their third and fourth shots will get more erratic. Make sure this doesn't happen and really work on them to focus as much as possible to keep their shots on goal.

## Integrating Sprints Into Your Training Session

Few players enjoy sprints for conditioning. However, if you turn it into a soccer related activity you can get them to work even harder and enjoy themselves while doing so.

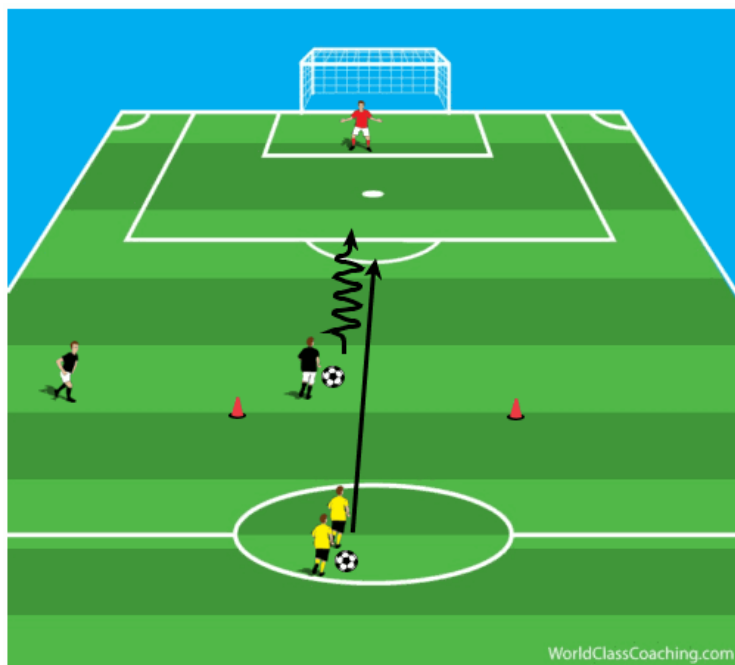
Start with a keeper in goal, two cones 15 yards from the midfield line, a player on the line between the cones and a player with a ball at midfield. There are a few players ready to replace the field players.



The player with the ball starts by passing to the player on the line.



The receiving player must touch the ball before it gets to the line. The player must turn with the ball and go to goal. The passer becomes the defender and tries to run the player down.



The dribbler must take the ball into the 18 before trying to shoot.



The players would then jog back and switch roles.

The player defending is making roughly a 40 yard sprint at full speed and then jogging back to become the attacker. The attacker is dribbling at full speed approximately 30 yards and then jogging back to become the defender. With the right number of players, they will have to rest while jogging and will get a lot of fitness in while working on passing, turning, dribbling, pursuing and finishing.

## **Fitness, Focus and Finishing**

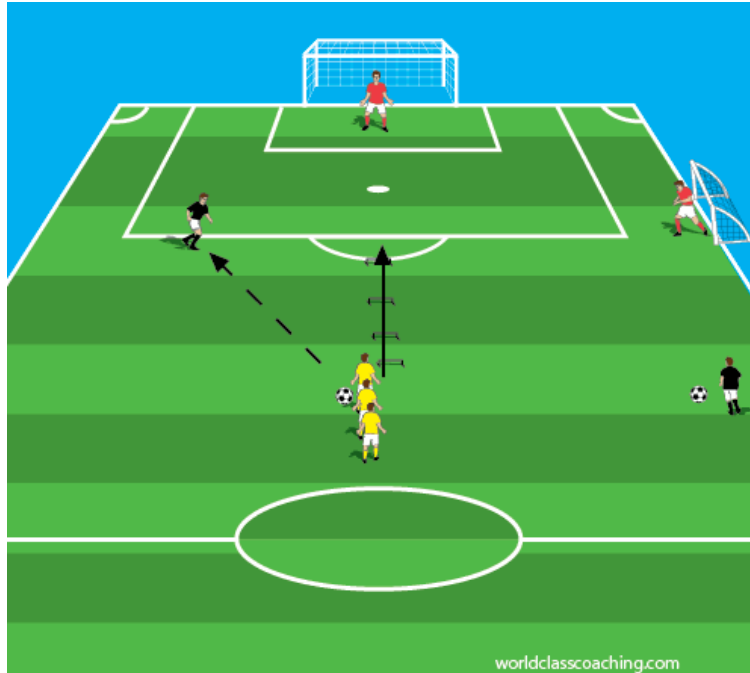
Here is a great activity that works on fitness, focus and finishing.

Start with a keeper in one goal, a second goal on the sideline also with a keeper. There is a server on the 18 and another server on wide of the second goal. The players start behind 5 hurdles which are 1 yard apart 25 yards from goal.



The player starts by passing the server and then jumping over each of the hurdles.





The server makes a square pass to the player who then finishes with a first time shot.



The player then makes a bending run to receive a cross for the other goal and finishes first time



As soon as the first player shoots the second player would start,

Done at full speed this activity is a wonderful workout and allows players to work on their fitness, focus and finishing

## **Combining Strength Endurance**

### **With Technical Training**

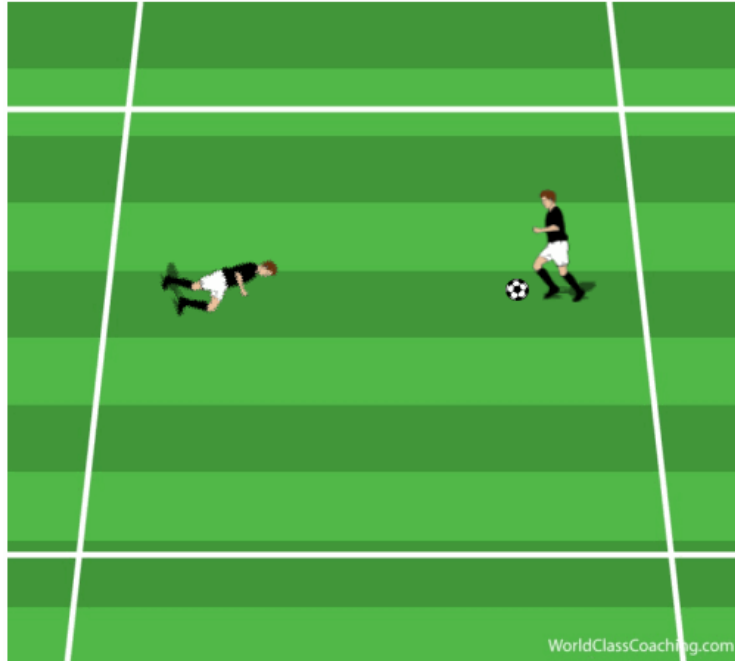
Developing whole body strength is essential for peak performance in soccer. How effective you are at shielding the ball from an opposing defender, getting up quickly from a fallen position and constantly withstanding shoulder to shoulder and other physical contact will depend on your whole body strength. Increased whole body strength also improves your ability to perform explosive movements such as jumping and sprinting that play a key role in soccer.

Strength for soccer can be categorized into three main types: basic strength, maximum strength, and strength endurance. Building basic strength is a precursor to developing maximum strength and strength endurance, and should be a focus of the early part the off-season. Maximum strength refers to the ability of a muscle or muscle group to produce the greatest amount of force. Training for maximum strength should only be done by well-trained and experienced players and is not necessary for all levels of play. Strength endurance refers to your muscles' ability to produce force over an extended period of time. Increasing strength endurance will improve the overall work capacity in your players and is very important for soccer, which involves continuous activity over a 90-minute (less for younger players) period. In this article we will focus on basic strength and strength endurance.

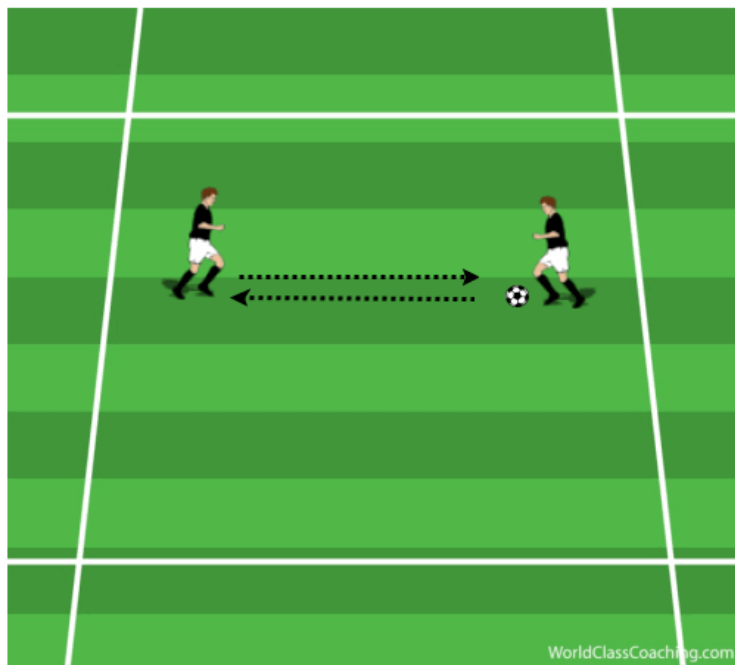
Contrary to what many coaches believe, developing basic strength and strength endurance do not require weights or fancy gym equipment. Doing body weight exercises such as push-ups, squats and lunges can be just as effective. Importantly, these exercises can be done right there on the field and modified to incorporate ball work. Include the following exercises in your training program to improve your player's basic strength or strength endurance while simultaneously working on their technical skills.

#### **1) Push-Ups With 1-Touch Passing**

For this exercise, divide your players into groups of 2 with 1 ball between the pair. Have them stand approximately 5 yards apart. One player starts in a push-up position and the other will start with the ball at their feet.



On the coaches call, the player without the ball does a push-up and then immediately rises to a standing position, receives a pass from their partner and returns the pass with one touch.



He or she then immediately drops down, does another push-up and rises again to receive another pass. Repeat this process for a total of about 8 - 15 repetitions or for a specified time period and then have your players switch roles. (Younger or female players with less developed upper body

strength may need to do the push-up in a position where their knees and not their feet are in contact with the ground).

## **2) Squats With Side-Foot Volleys**

Use the same set-up as before. This time however, have the players stand 3 yards apart and the player with the ball should start with it in their hands and not at their feet. The other player will start in a standing position. On the coaches call, the player without the ball squats down until their thighs are parallel to the ground and then returns to the starting position. At this point, the player gets the ball tossed to them at knee height which they should return with a side-foot volley. Ensure that the player uses both feet to return the toss. It is important that the player tossing the ball gives a good throw each time. Coach the quality of the volley as well as the player's body position when receiving the ball.

For both exercises you can vary the technical component as you like.

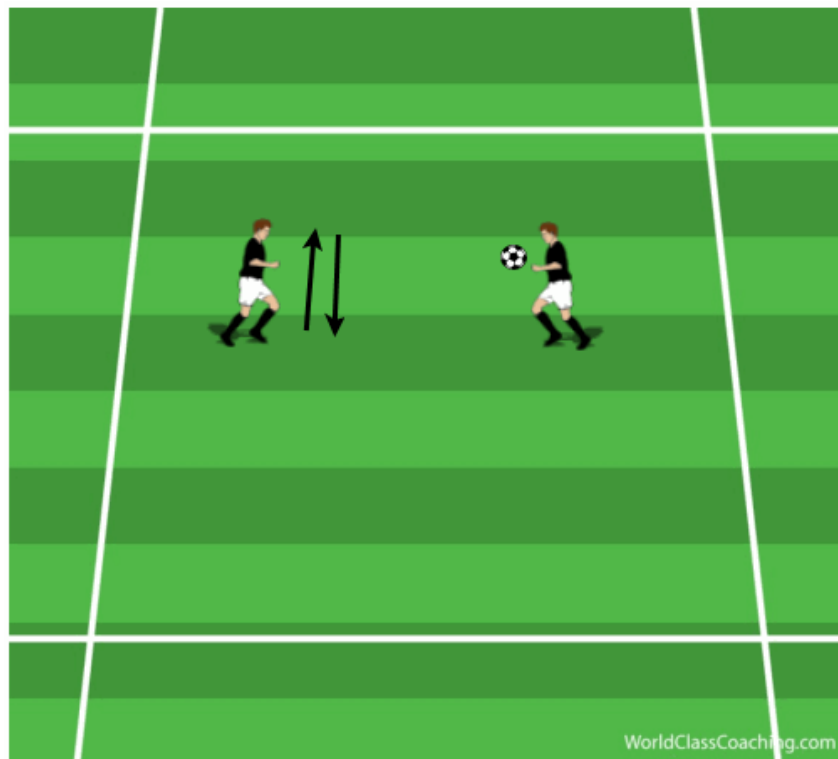
If you are focusing on building basic strength, start with 5 to 10 repetitions then change roles. If you are focusing on strength endurance, have your players do 12-15 repetitions or work for 90 seconds before changing roles. Perform 3 sets for both exercises.

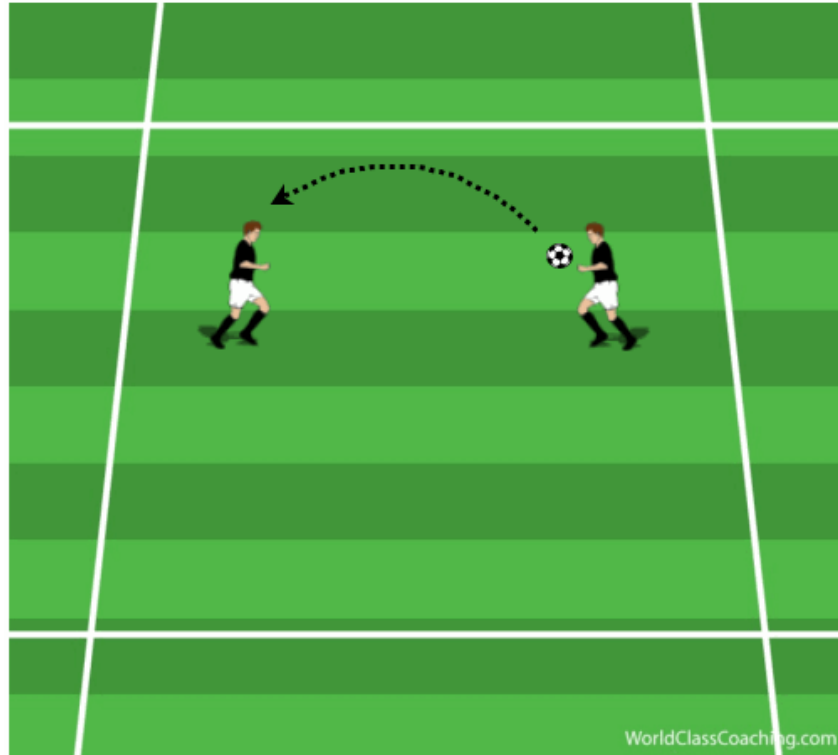
*Justin Cresser - Has coached soccer at various levels both in North America and abroad (Hong Kong and Africa). His most recent position was as the Assistant Technical Director at the Soccer Club of Toronto. He has his National Diploma from the NSCAA and is also a certified strength and conditioning coach*

## **Integrating Balance Exercises Into Technical Training**

Balance training should be a fundamental part of a soccer conditioning program, but it is a component of conditioning that is frequently neglected by coaches. Developing good balance is essential for soccer players as it improves co-ordination and body awareness that is required in many game situations such as changing direction quickly or receiving passes under pressure. Balance training is also very important in the prevention of injuries. Think of the many instances where a player lands awkwardly after jumping to make a header or after a poor challenge. Having good control of the body lessens the chances of a player getting hurt.

One good thing about balance training is that you don't need to do many exercises to get a beneficial effect. Doing a few sets of just one or two exercises at the start of your conditioning or regular training session will be sufficient. Consider doing the following simple exercise at your next practice to improve your player's dynamic balance.





Divide your players into pairs with one ball to use between the two. Instruct them to stand about 3 yards apart and have the player with the ball hold it in his hands. The player without the ball starts by standing and balancing on one leg (the balancing leg should be slightly bent at the knee). When ready, direct this player to hop off and land on the balancing leg and hold this position for three seconds (Figure 1A). At this instant, have the other player toss the ball to the player on one leg so that he returns the ball with a header (Figure 1B). They must try and remain balanced while heading. Continue this process until you have completed 5 - 10 hops followed by headers, then switch legs. When finished, have the players switch roles.

*You can progress this exercise by having the player hop laterally instead of just upwards, or by increasing the distance between the two so that a more forceful header is required.*

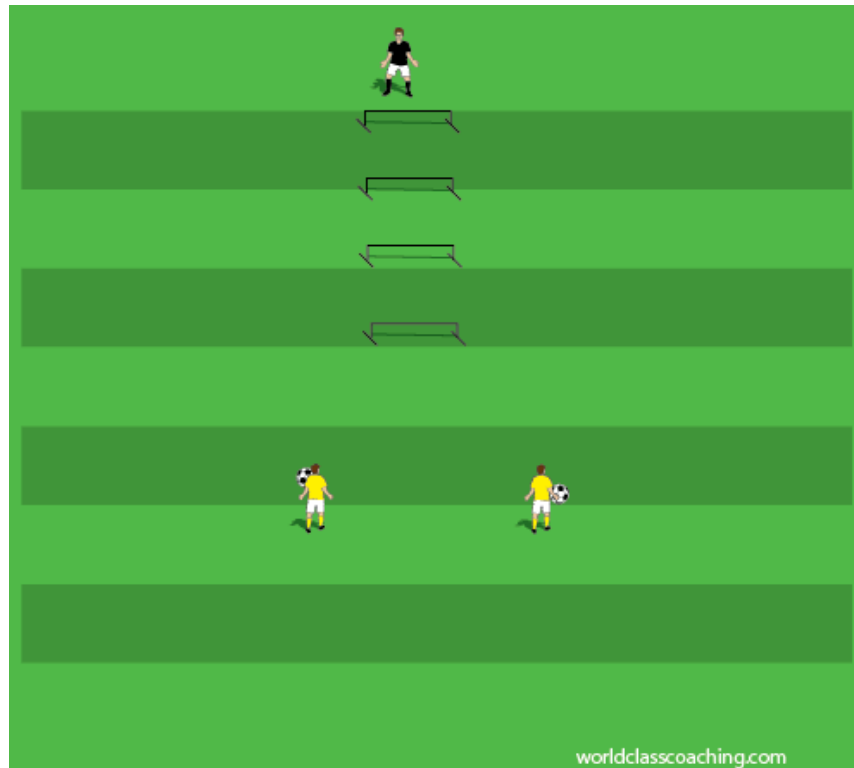
The technical component of the exercise can also be varied.



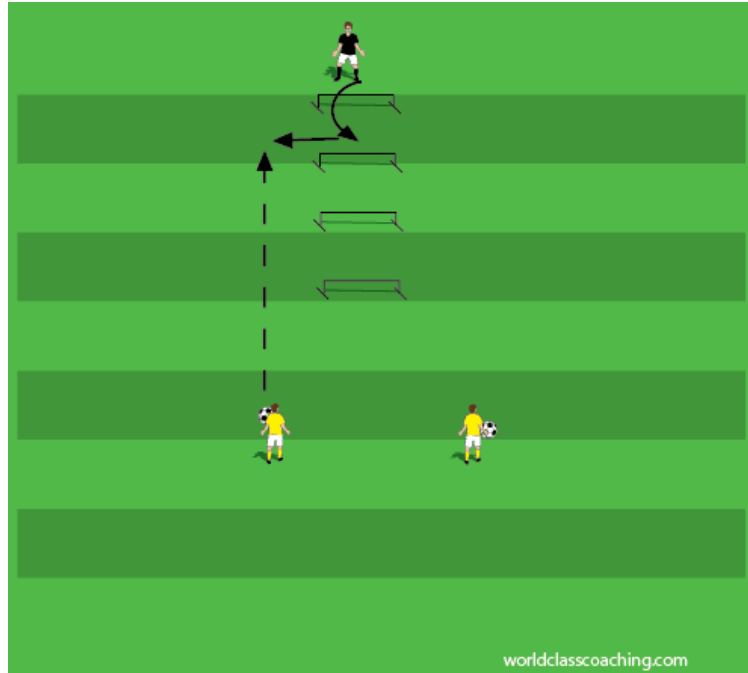
## Explosiveness, Agility and Ball Skills

Here is a simple activity that works on explosiveness, agility and ball skills.

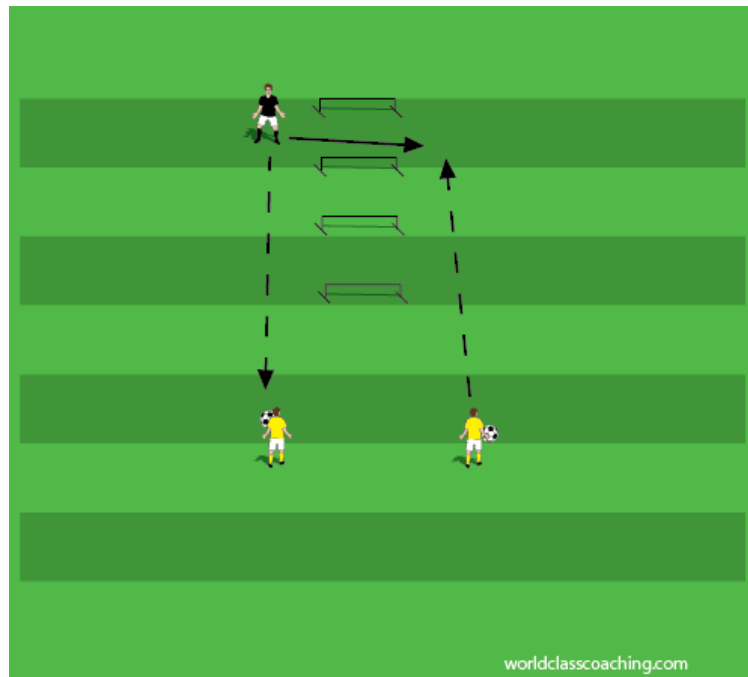
Start with 4 hurdles (height can vary depending upon the player but 1-2 feet high work fine) spaced in a line 1 yard apart. The player starts behind the last hurdle and there are 2 servers 5 yards from the first hurdle each slightly off to the side. The servers each have a ball.



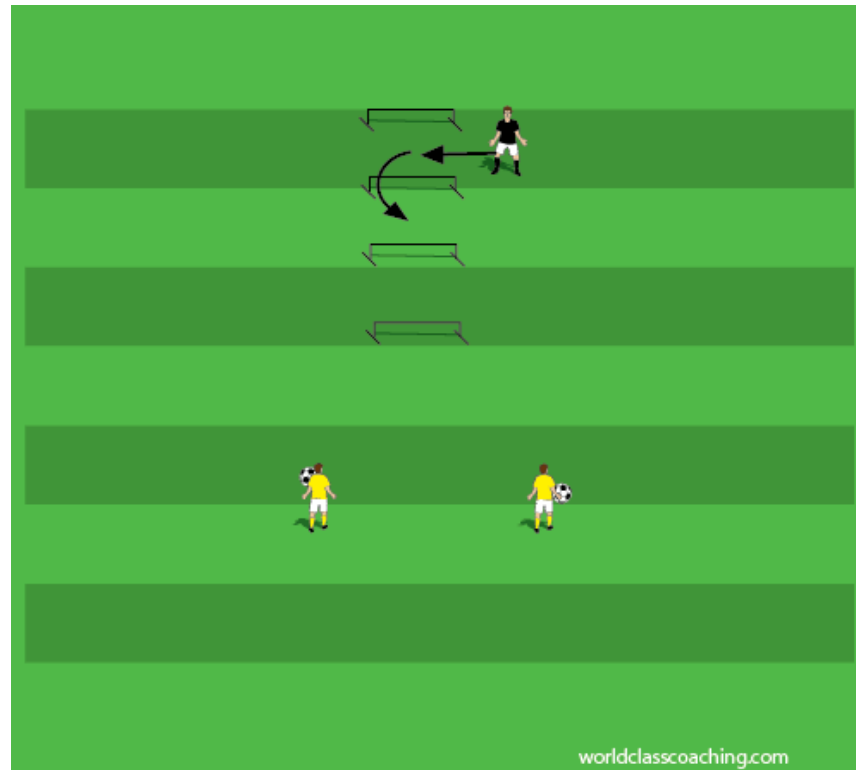
The player starts by jumping over the first hurdle then quickly slides to his right and receives a pass from the server.



He passes the ball back one touch and then slides to the other side and receives a pass from the other server.



After returning that pass one touch he slides back to the middle jumps over the hurdle and does the same in the other direction.



This continues all the way down the line (you can also add more hurdles to make this more difficult).

This can be repeated working on different skills (headers, volleys, two touch passing etc).

There are many other options to this so your greatest limitation on this will be your creativity.

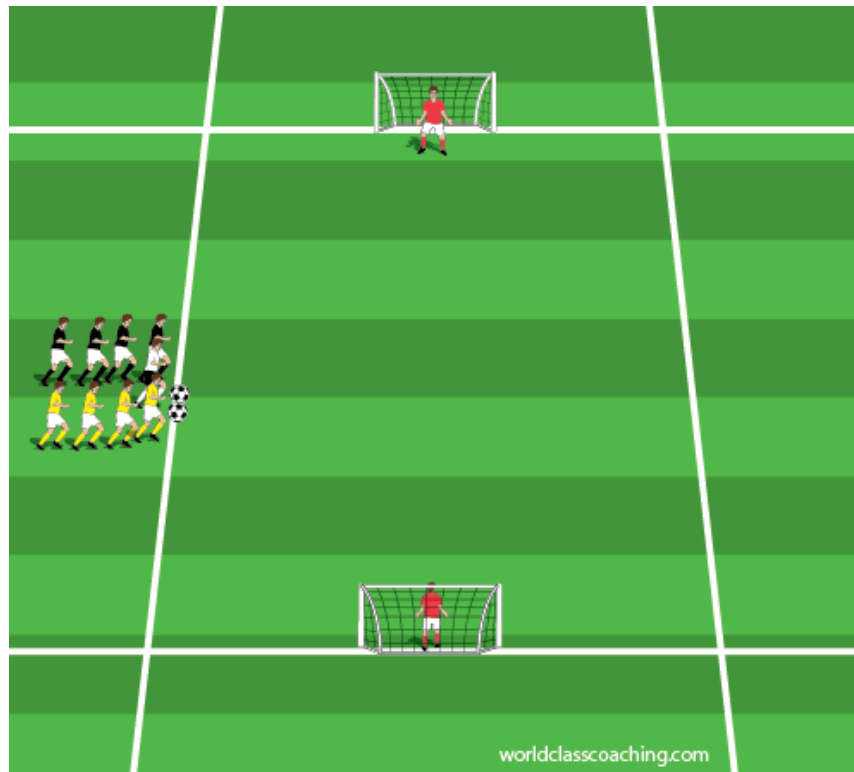
Combining work on explosiveness, agility and skills is a great way to get a lot done in a short period of time.

## Conditioning With a Technical and Tactical Element

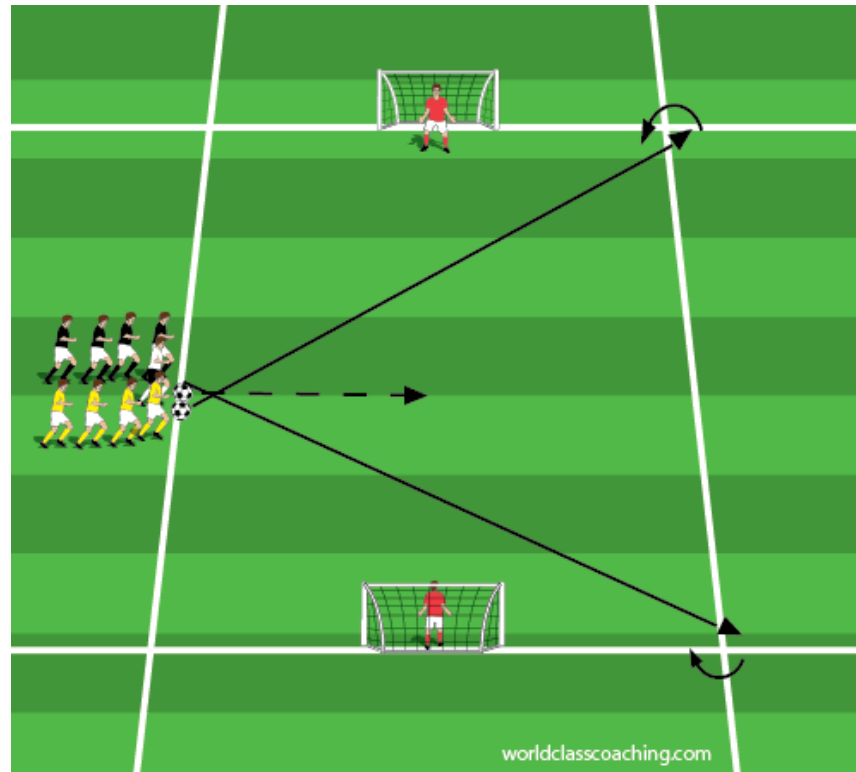
Here is a fun game for young soccer players that involves a lot of running and also technical and tactical aspects. While it's great for young players it's interesting to do with older players as well. They will work just as hard, get just as much out of it and have a blast playing.

This game can be played with full sized goals and keepers or smaller goals without keepers. In this example the game will have keepers. The size of the field can vary but here the field is 40 x 30

Start with two teams lined up on one of the sidelines with a coach between them with balls.



The coach plays a ball to the middle of the field and the first player in each line starts by sprinting around the far corner of the field



The players then sprint to the ball and try to score on the far goal. This turns into a 1 v 1 game after a hard sprint. If either player slows the ball down, the coach calls time and the next two players start. As soon as the play is over the players sprint to the back of the line.

Each player would go 4 times.

Next do the same thing but instead of the first player in each line going by themselves it's the first 2 players in each line. Each players must sprint around the corner and then play starts. As soon as the play is over the players sprint to the back of the line.

Next the same thing is done with 3 players each.

When playing 1 v 1 the players have a little bit of standing around while waiting for their turn but when it gets to 2 v 2 and then 3 v 3 and then 4 v 4 the players are having to sprint back to the line to get ready for their next turn.

You can also do it where the coach serves the ball and then calls a number. If "1" is called the first player in each line plays. If "2" is called the first 2 players in each line is called and so on.

There is a lot of running, a lot of communicating and a lot of technical and tactical aspects of the game in this activity. Young players love it...so do older players.

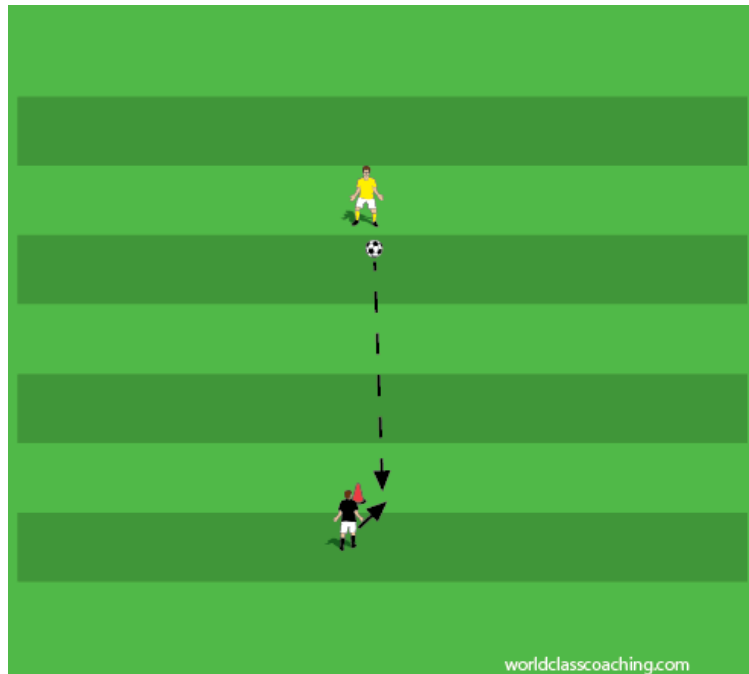
## Combining Agility and Skill Work

Combining fitness, agility and skill work is a great way to get a lot done in a short period of time.

A simple example would start with a server with a ball and a player 10 yards away behind a cone.



Play would start with a ball to one side of the cone, The player comes forward 1 touches the ball back to the server and then goes back to do the same thing on the other side.



This could be done for a one minute period at full speed.

Next we add the real challenge. Do the exact same thing but this time while on one leg only.

This means the player hops forward to receive the ball, passes it back one touch and then hops back around to do the same from the other side. This would be done for one minute and then a one minute rest and then do the same thing with the other leg.



As you can imagine, this same could be done with instep volleys, inside of the foot volleys, headers and many other combinations (chest trap volley back etc). The balance required to do these things will really challenge the players and encourage them to maintain proper technique throughout.

This is an excellent example of how you can take a relatively easy activity and make it much more difficult so that it encompasses many more aspects of the game and fitness with just a little bit of thought.

## **If You Need To Condition Without the Ball**

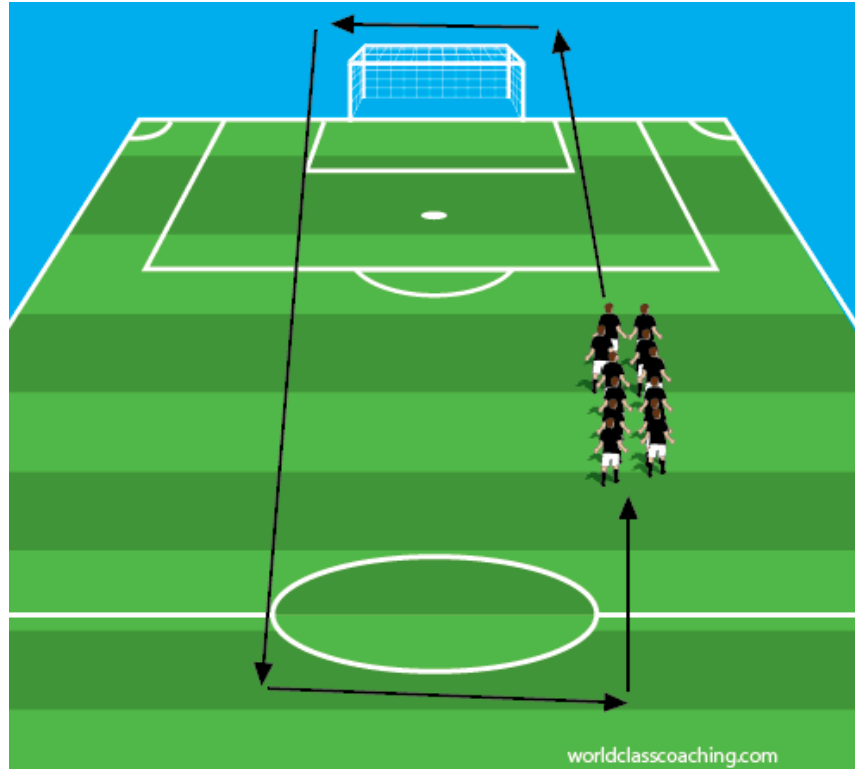
Ideally we would like to do all fitness with a ball but the reality is there are times when pure running is helpful. Some players (and teams) simply are not capable of pushing themselves all out in soccer related activities and for those players it's best to use activities where using fitness specific running is valuable.

In this activity you can vary the distances. I have done this with distances as short as 20 yards and as long as 120 yards. The thing I like about this activity is the faster the players run, the less distance they have to sprint. This is their incentive to really push themselves..

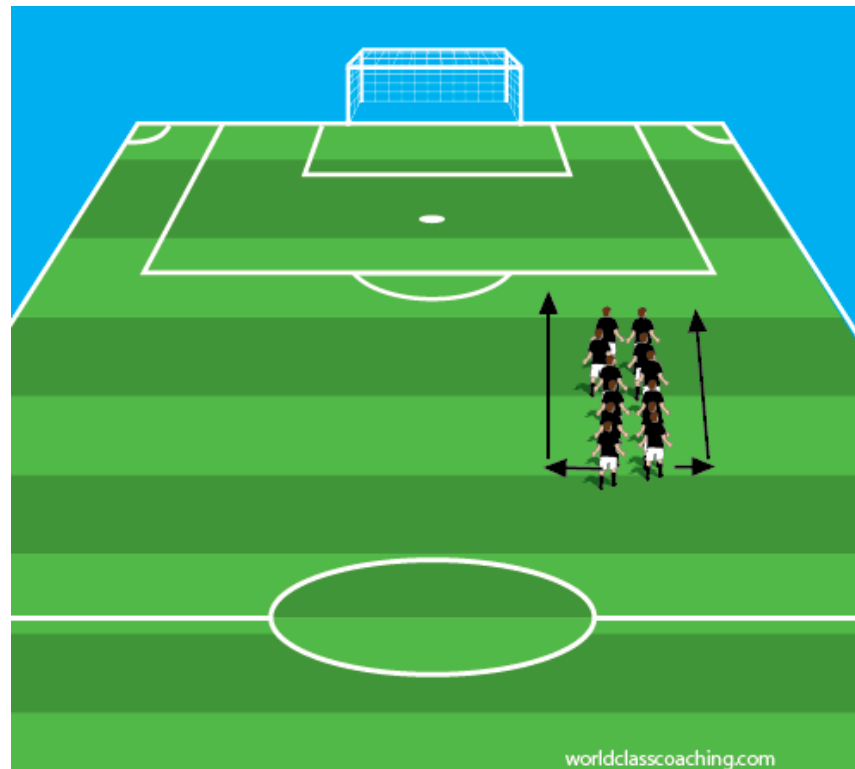
In the example below, we are going to use half a field for the distance. We could use a cone at each end but instead will use the goal for one end and the center circle for the other. Players start in two lines side by side



The players start by jogging around the around.



The “traditional way” to do this is the coach yells “go” and the back 2 people sprint to the front.



While this is certainly one way to do it, it's NOT the way I do it. I go the other way so that the first 2 people in line sprint ahead and must go all the way around the field and then catch the group from the back. Keep in mind the group is jogging around the field the entire time so the slower the sprint the further the sprinters have to run to catch up to the group. The faster the sprint, the quicker they catch up to the group and the less they have to sprint. The faster the sprint the more time to rest up (which jogging) as well.

The coach is going to want to spread out the sprints so when the first 2 are  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way done he might have the second 2 start. If the coach isn't careful, everyone will be sprinting and no one jogging and at that point there isn't a jogging group to sprint to.

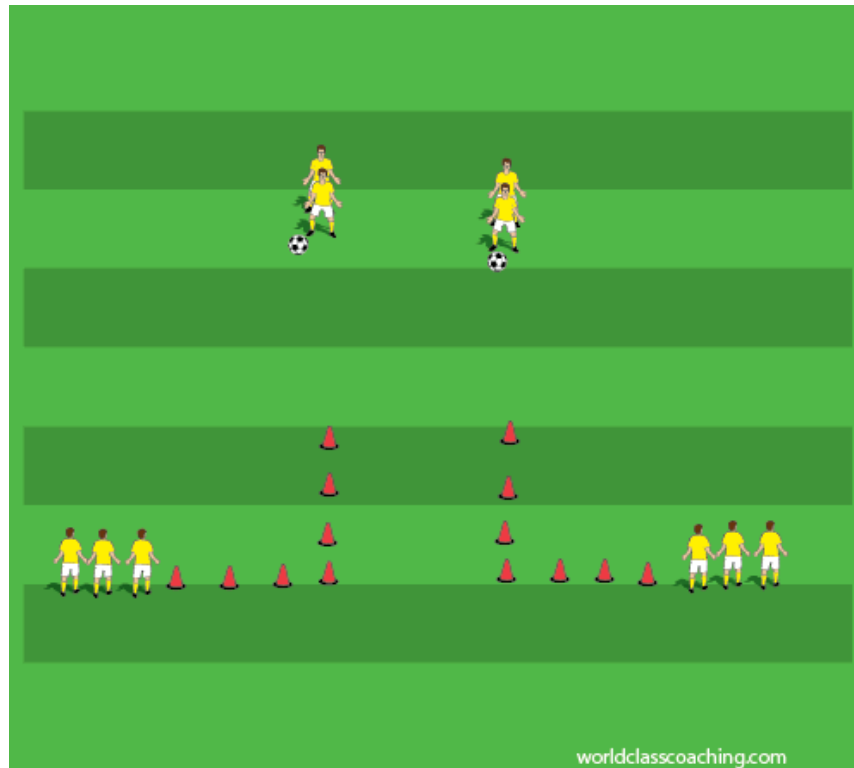
The coach should determine ahead of time how many sprints each player should make. Using the example of the half field, it's important to keep in mind it's close to 180 yards of sprinting per sprint (60 yards in each direction plus 8 yards around the goal and 20 yards around the center circle plus the distance the group has jogged). If you go full field it's 256 yards of sprinting plus the distance the group has jogged.

This is a very tiring and very effective way to work on endurance, sprinting and competitiveness (each sprint could be a race between the two runners as well as trying to catch the group ahead)

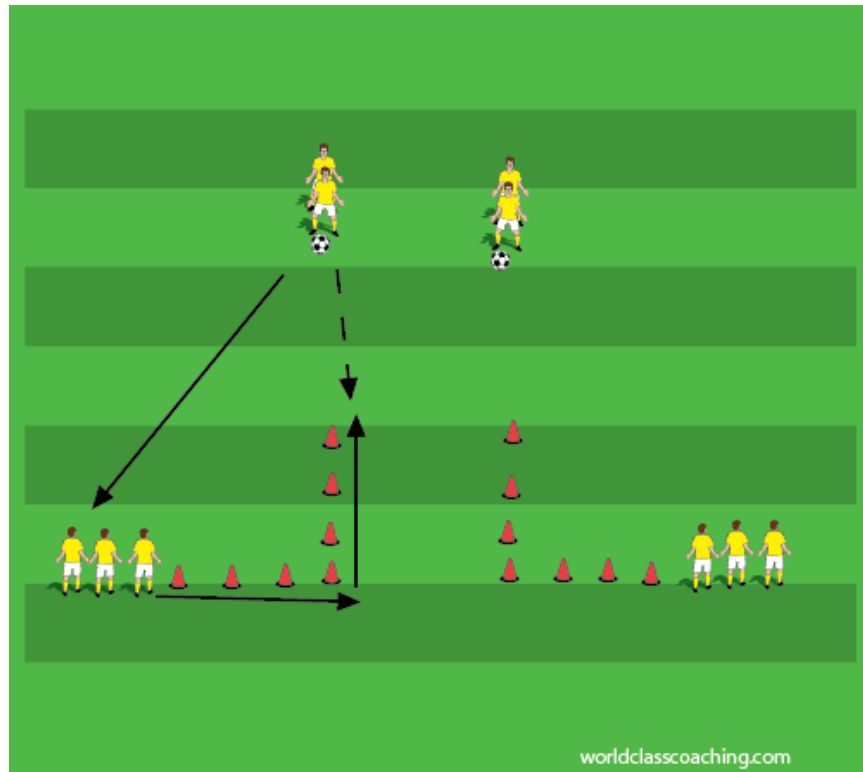
## Agility, Sprinting and One-Touch Passing

Here is a simple activity that works on agility, sprinting and one touch passing. This uses L shaped movement with passing

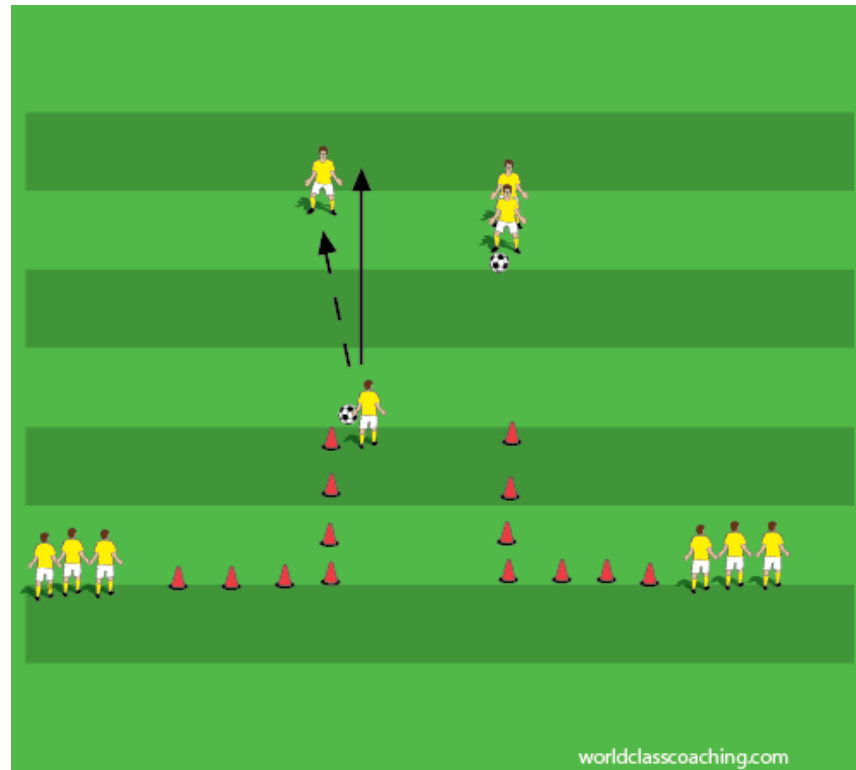
Start with 7 cones making up and L (or a reverse L) and 3-4 players to the side. Two players start 10 yards from the last cone with 1 ball.



The first player in line “slaloms” through the cones sideways and then forward until getting to the last cone at which point the player with the ball passes the ball and sprints to the back of the other line.



The player receiving the pass makes a one touch pass to the next player in line and then follows the pass to take that players spot.



All passes are done one touch so the second person in line will have to time their start to make sure they are ready for the one touch pass from the server starting with the ball.

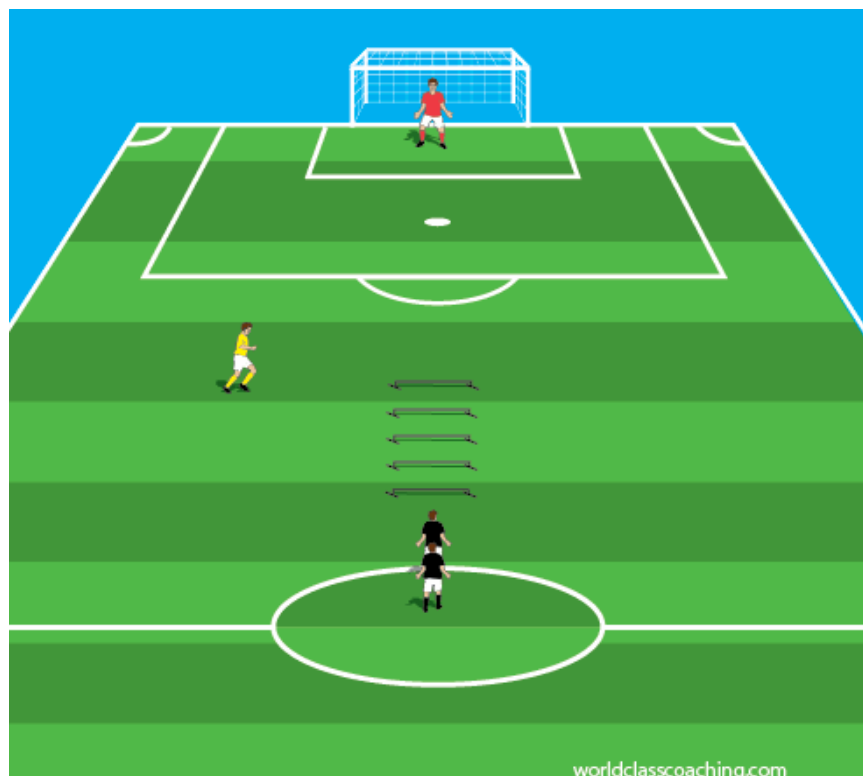
You can start with slalom runs through the cones and then add in two legged hops, one legged hops and many other variations.

This is an excellent way to work on agility and sprinting while getting in one touch passing.

## Conditioning With Technical Training

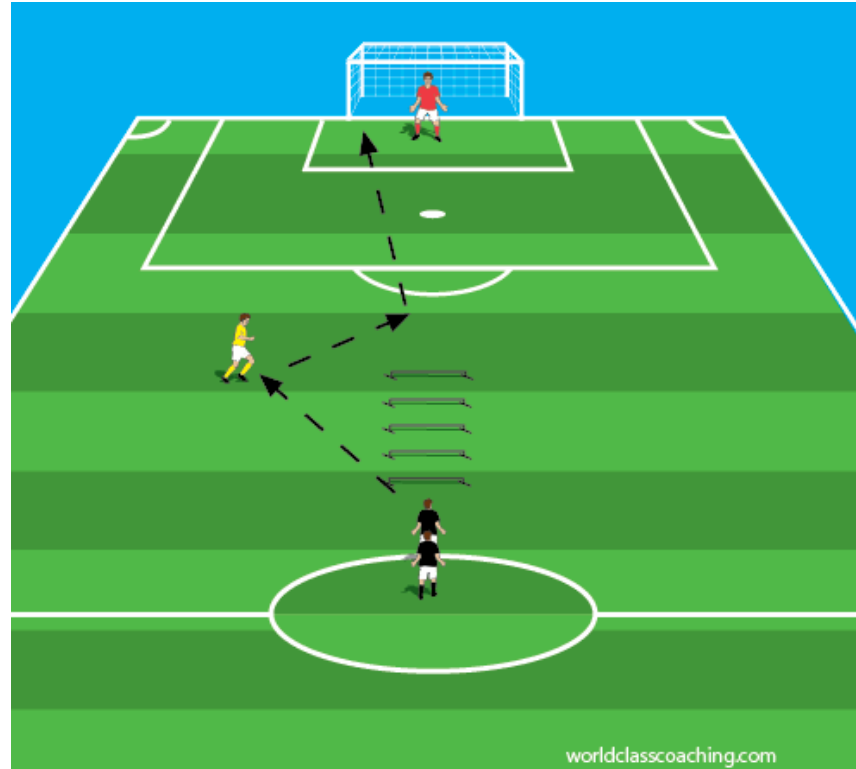
Adding technical training into conditioning is a great way to ‘kill 2 birds with 1 stone’. This activity will first show you an example of this and then add a second bit of technical work to really challenge the players.

Start with some low hurdles 1 yard apart starting 40 yards from goal. There is a keeper in goal and the field players are in a line each with a ball. The server (or a resting field player) is to the side of the hurdle closest to the goal.



The first player in line passes to the server and then goes over each of the hurdles as fast as he can. He then shoots (either first touch or second touch).

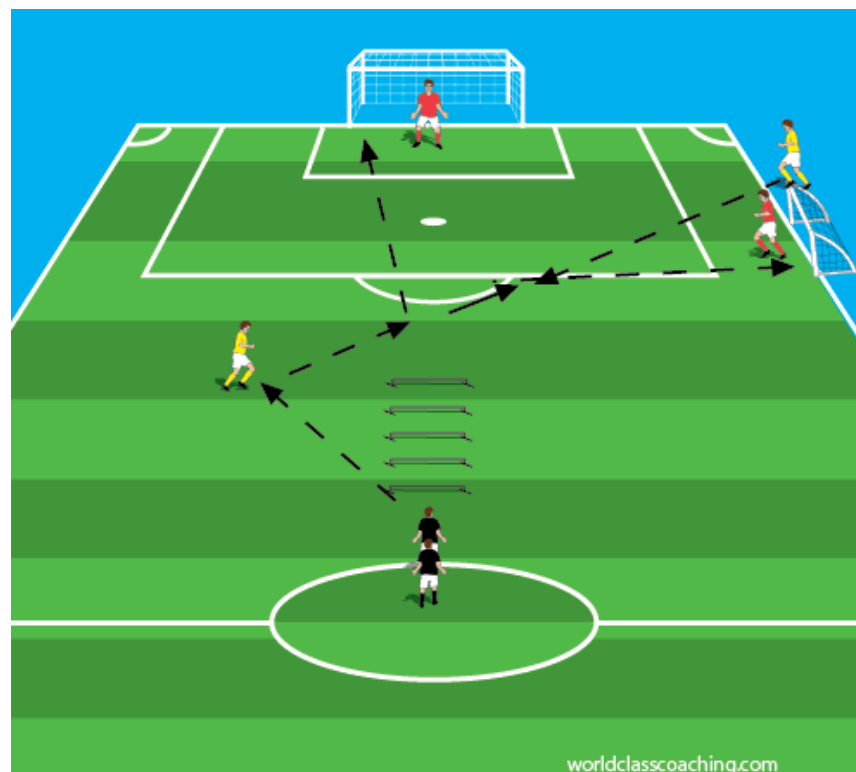




As soon as the player is over the last hurdle the next player starts. By adding the technical part after the conditioning part, it challenges the player to maintain their focus and concentrate throughout the activity.

When going over the hurdles you can vary the method. It could be simple knees up and sprint through or on legged hopping or two legged hopping or any number of variations.

Next we add the second goal. There is a goal and a keeper on the side line and after the first shot the player must then sprint toward the second goal, receive a pass from a server and shoot to this second goal.



By adding this second goal and second shot it adds a little bit more conditioning and a lot more focus.

## Adding Intensity To Your Training Sessions

One way to add conditioning to a training session is to simply add intensity. Below is a 6 v 4 plus keepers protect the lead game that lasts 8 minutes and done at full speed has a lot of fitness work built in.

This game uses a half field and has a goal on each end line and a keeper in each goal. There are four midfielders and two forwards on one team and four backs on the other team.



This is an 8 minute game and the yellow team starts off up one goal. Their objective is to “kill off” the remaining time to win the game and when available, to counter attack to increase their lead.

The ball always starts with the attacking team's keeper so any dead ball results in the ball starting with the attacking keeper.

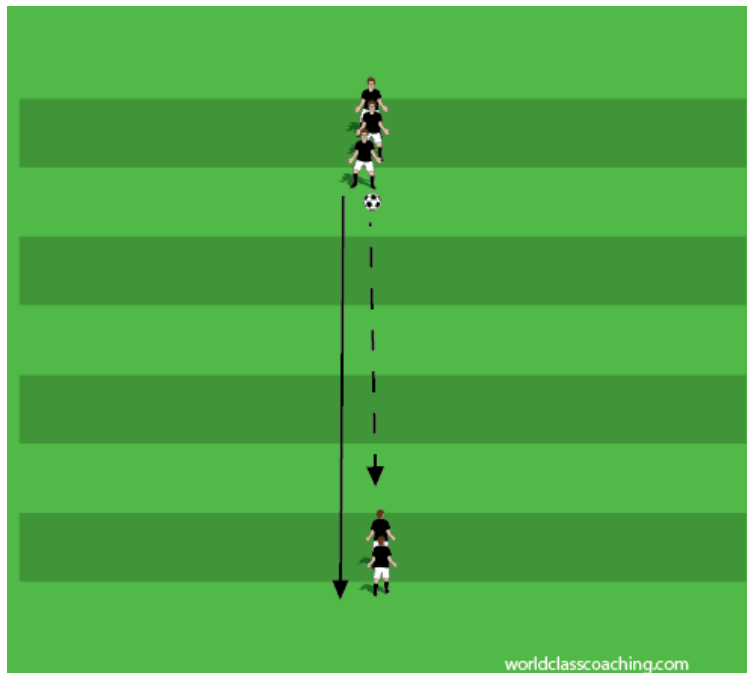
As long as the score stays 1-0 for the defending team, they can afford to sit back and defend and keep the ball in front of them. The attacking team has to play quickly. If the score gets tied up, the defending team will have to start more aggressively which will result in them using even more energy.

When the ball goes out of play, the attacking keeper would rush to get a new ball and the field players would sprint to get into position (the attackers to position themselves for the next attack and the defenders would rush to get back into position to be behind the ball).

Play this game for 8 minutes and then give a 1 minute break and then start up again with new defenders (everyone should get experience being up a goal as well as down a goal. If you play this a total of 3 times it's great fitness while working on a tactically important game situation.

## Technical Training Including Sprints

A common (and simple) passing activity would be a 5 or 6 person passing activity with one touch passing between two lines and a sprint after each pass.



Done at full speed this can be used to work on passing as well as some fitness.

We can also add in some agility to this activity by adding three cones to one side.

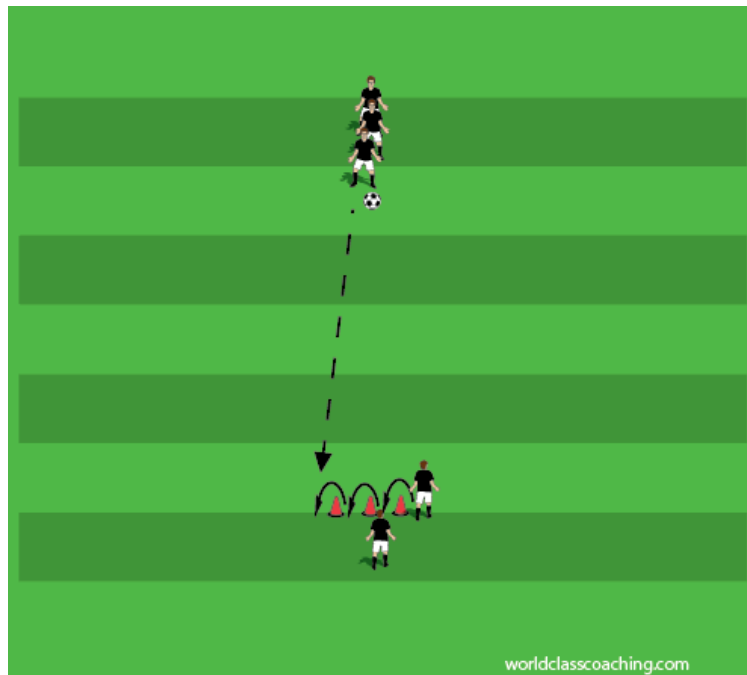
The first person on that side starts to the side of the cones which are 2 feet apart.



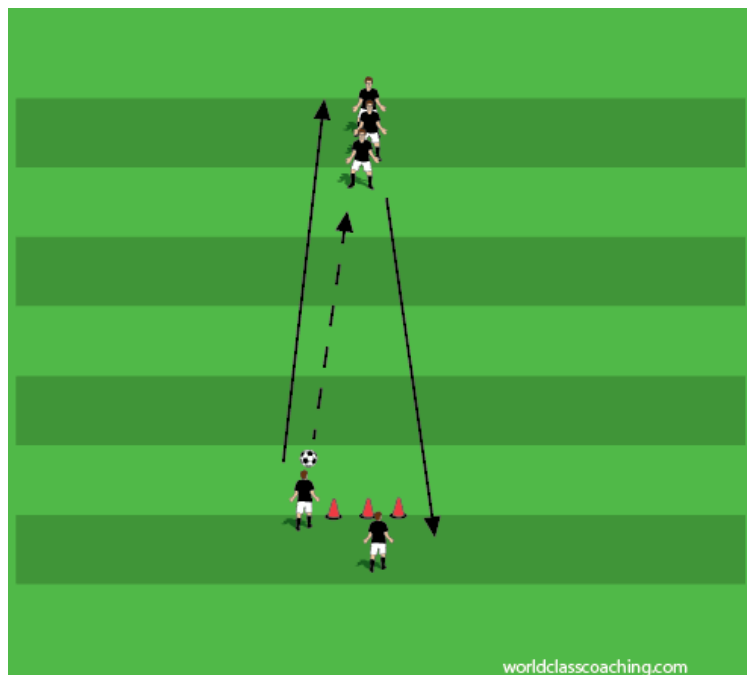
The ball gets played to the first person who one touches the ball back.



The player then jumps sideways over each cone (so 3 quick jumps) and the ball gets played to the other side of the cones.



The original passer sprints to the back of the other line and the “jumper” one touches the ball back and then follows the pass to the back of the opposite line.



The next two in line then do the same thing.

This continues for a set period of time (anywhere from 2-5 minutes depending upon the type of workout you want to do

Other options would include one legged hopping, front to back hopping etc.

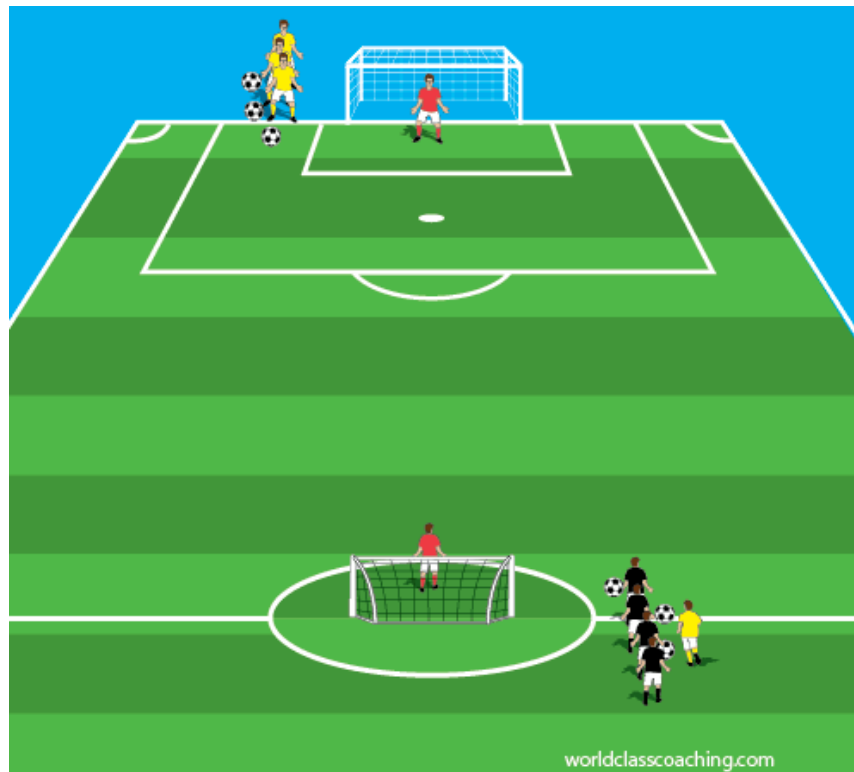
This is yet another example of how you can take a simple activity and build other types of conditioning into it with just a little bit of creativity



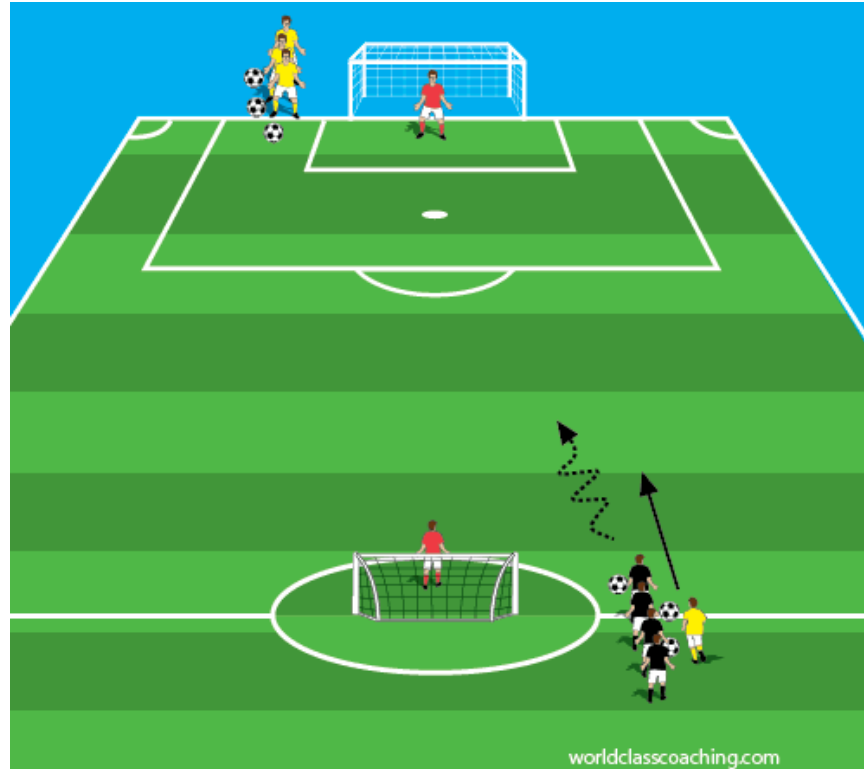
## A Favorite Conditioning Activity With a Ball

Many years ago, when I first created FineSoccer.com I described one of my favorite fitness activities. It's a combination of breakaways, sprints, defending and goalkeeping and over 10 years later it's still one of the best conditioning activities I know.

This activity requires two full sized goals, a keeper in each goal and 4-6 players to the right side of each goal. The size of the field can vary as the further the goals are from each other the greater the distance of each run but the closer they are together the more runs each player will get in a given time period. I have done this with goals as close as 35 yards apart and as far apart as 120 yards. In this example we are going to go with the goals 60 yards apart.



This is a breakaway activity with a defender chasing. To start, one player from the opposite line starts beside the first player. In this diagram, one yellow player starts by the first black player. Everyone, other than this one player, starts with a ball. When the coach says “go” the first black player starts dribbling at full speed toward the other goal. The yellow player has a 3 second “delay” and then starts chasing.



The player with the ball is trying to score on a breakaway so when they start approaching the 18 the keeper is approaching.





## Small-Sided Game With Aerobic Conditioning

Here is an aerobic activity incorporated into a small sided scrimmage.

This is a 5 v 5 game plus keepers on a field 36 yards long and 44 yards wide. There is a full sized goal on each endline. There are 3 cones 5 yards outside of each sideline.



A server starts with balls around midfield and calls “go”. Upon hearing “go” each field player must sprint around the nearest cone and returns to the field of play.

The team that gets all of their players on the field first receives a pass from the server and tries to score. This turns into a regular scrimmage. The big difference is that every 30 to 45 seconds the server yells “go” again and they start their sprint again.

The key to this game is that it goes on for 5 minutes straight and the coach must push the players to go at full speed. It’s not only the sprinting that is done at full speed but also once they get on the field they must push themselves and go hard the entire time.

After the 5 minute period is over the players get a 2 minute break and then play a second 5 minute period.

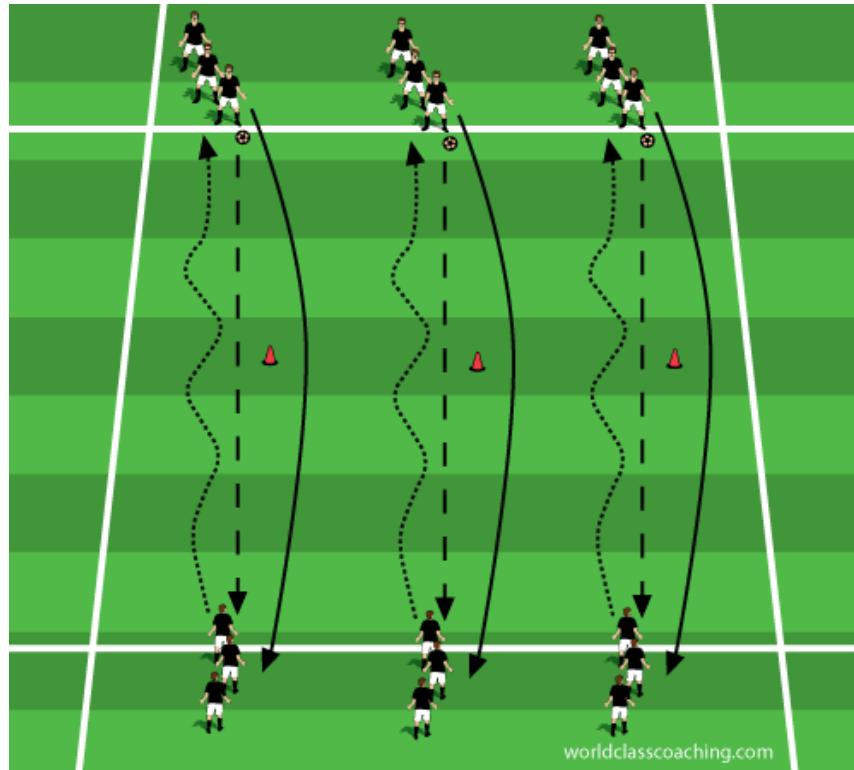
In this second period, it's even more important to encourage the players to go faster, work harder and play quicker. They are going to want to slow down (just like they will want to slow down in a game) and this is where they need to really be encouraged to push things hard.

These short sprints built into small sided games are a great way to work on fitness and soccer at the same time.

## Technical Conditioning With a Ball

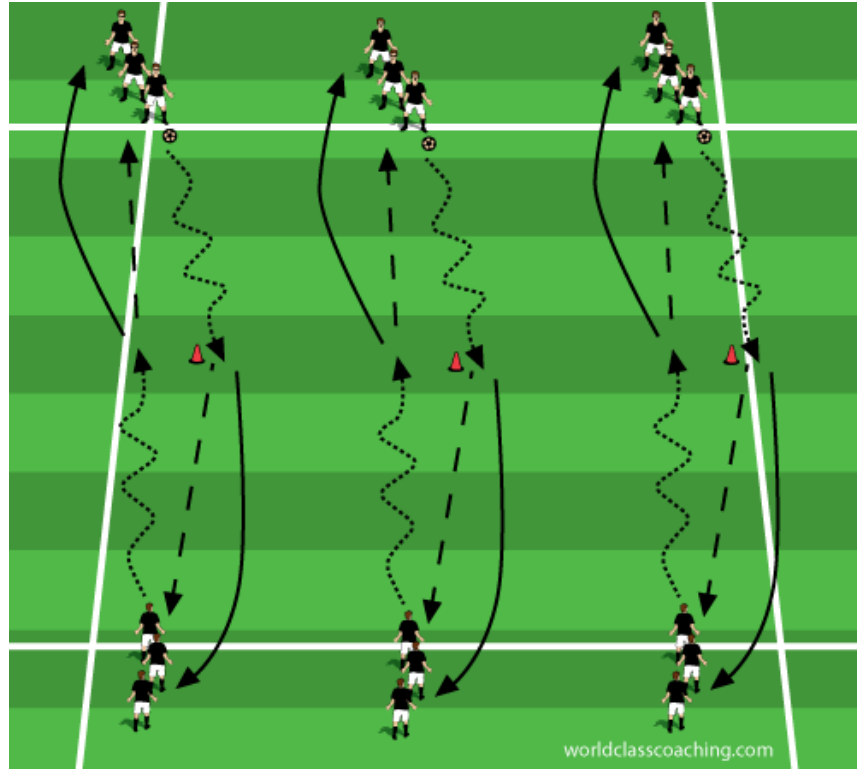
Today's article is from Dr. Mouwafak Majeed Mola of the Aspire Academy, Qatar.

Players distribute as in the figure and each group met a second group with a ball and separates by a distance of 10-20 yards according to the age and efficiency of the players.



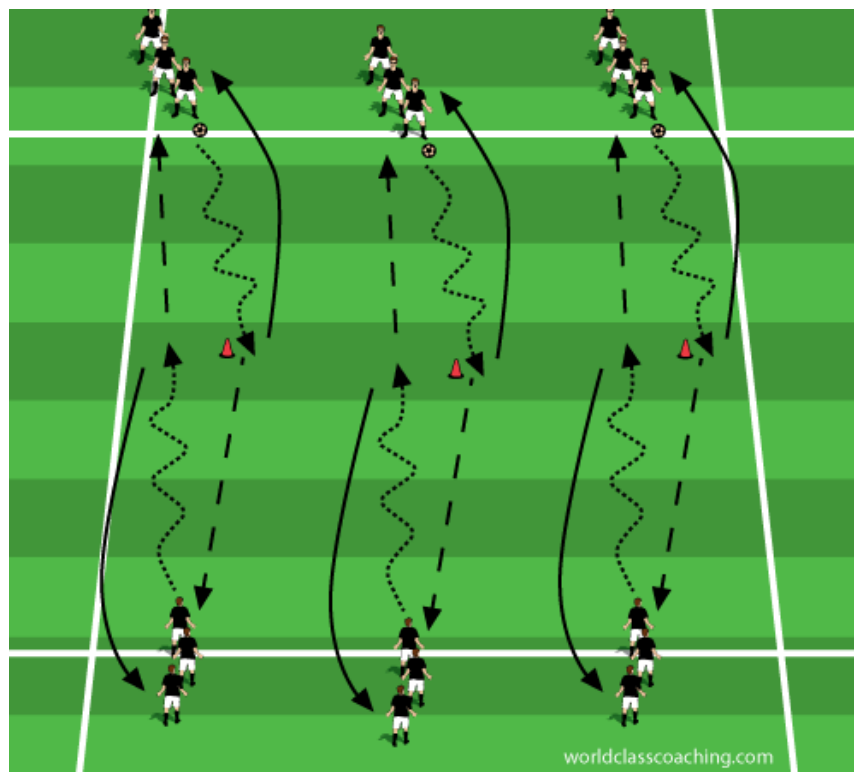
### **1<sup>st</sup> activity:**

- 1- Player 1 passes to player 2 and sprints the middle distance (75% effort) to end up behind the other group.
- 2- Player 2 receives the ball behind the line and executes a fast dribble all the way to the other side, leaving the ball on the line and joining the new group.
- 3- Players continue this technical-physical work for 3 minutes only, then they have 1 minute rest.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> activity

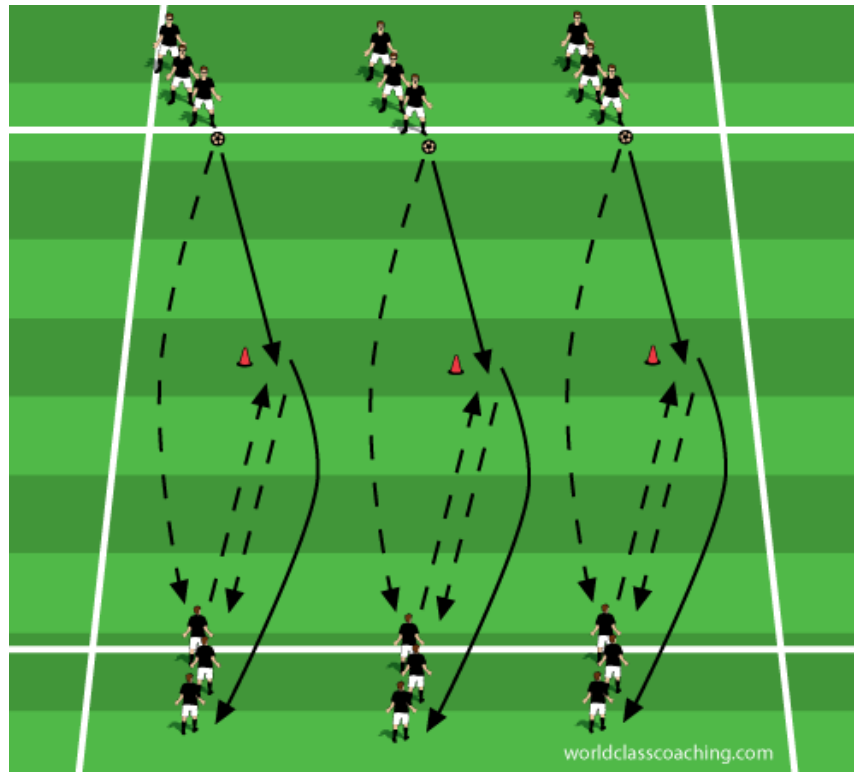
- 1-Plaer 1 dribble to the mark and pass to player 2 then sprint the rest distance(80% effort) To end up behind the other group
- 2- Player 2 receives the ball behind the line and does the same work in the other direction
- 3- Players continuous this technical- physical work for 3 minutes only then they have 1 minutes rest



### 3<sup>rd</sup> activity

- 1- Player 1 dribble to the mark and passes to player 2 then turns and sprint back(90% effort) To end up behind his group
- 2- Player 2 receive the ball behind the line and does the same work at the opposite direction
- 3- Players continuous this technical- physical work for 3 minutes only then they have 1 minutes rest



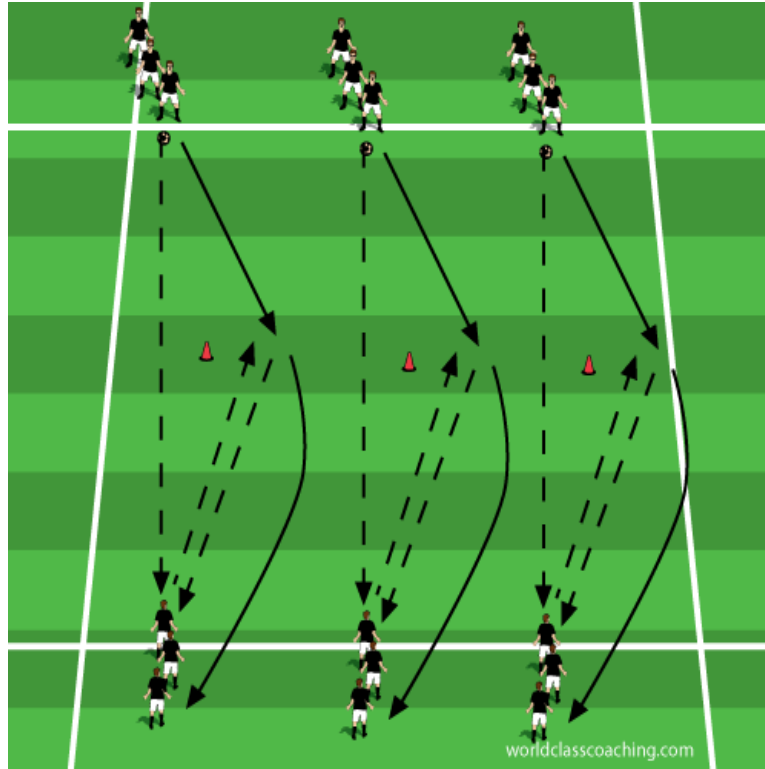


#### 4<sup>th</sup> activity

1-Player1 executes a chip ball to player2 and move to the side of the mark to receive the ball and to pass it back to player 2 then sprint(95% effort) To end up behind the other group

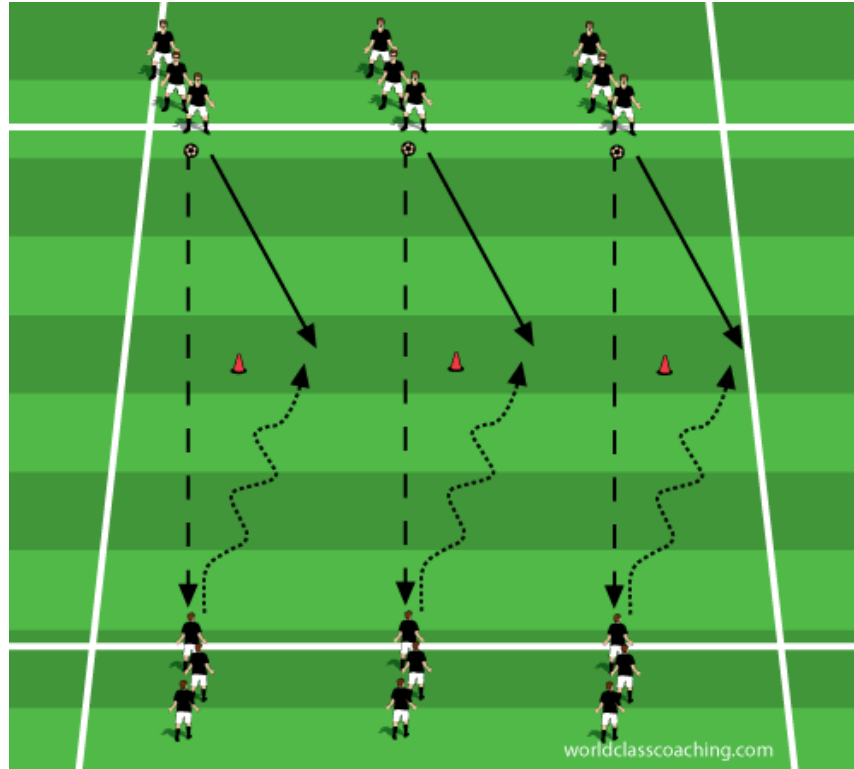
2-Player 2 receive the ball behind the line and does the same work at the opposite direction

3- Players continuous this technical- physical work for 3 minutes only then they have 1 minutes rest



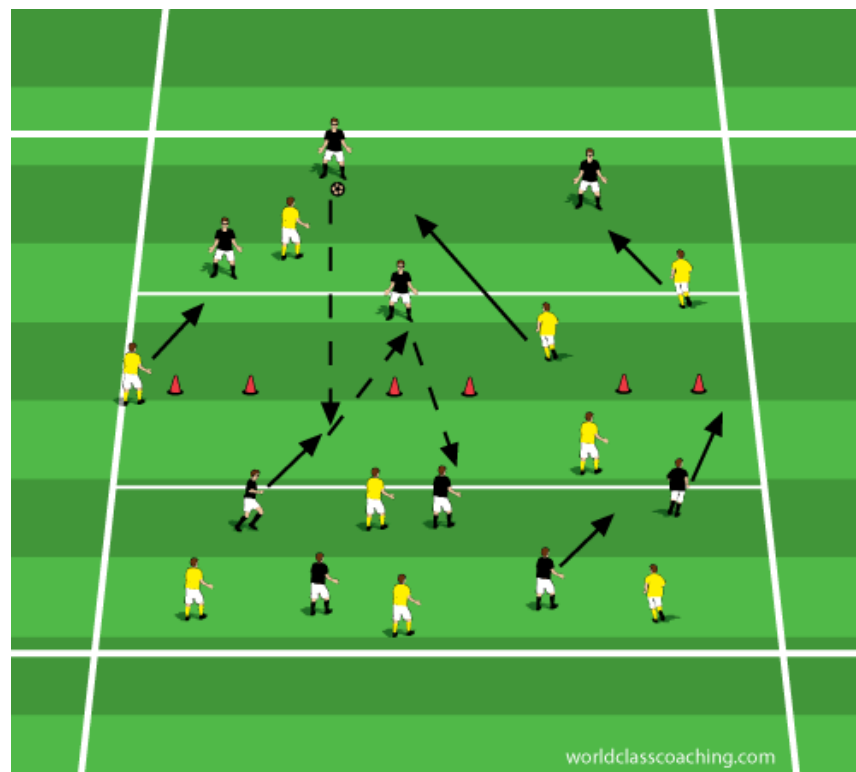
### 5<sup>th</sup> activity

- 1- Player 1 passes to player 2 and performs 1V1 situation
- 2- Player 2 attack player to beat player 1 to score on his line& player1 try to stop and to regain the ball possession to attack player 2 line
- 3- Players continuous this technical- physical work for 3 minutes only then they have 1 minutes rest



**Final activity:**

- 1- Two team of 9 players each plays 9V9 in the same field(40×60) yards with 3 small goals(2 yards wide) in the central area.
- 2- Players with the ball allows to score in the three goal from both direction
- 3- This game executes with 2 condition the 1<sup>st</sup> is to play with no more than two touch in the outside areas and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is to play free in the central area
- 4- 30 minutes is enough to get the full benefits of this game



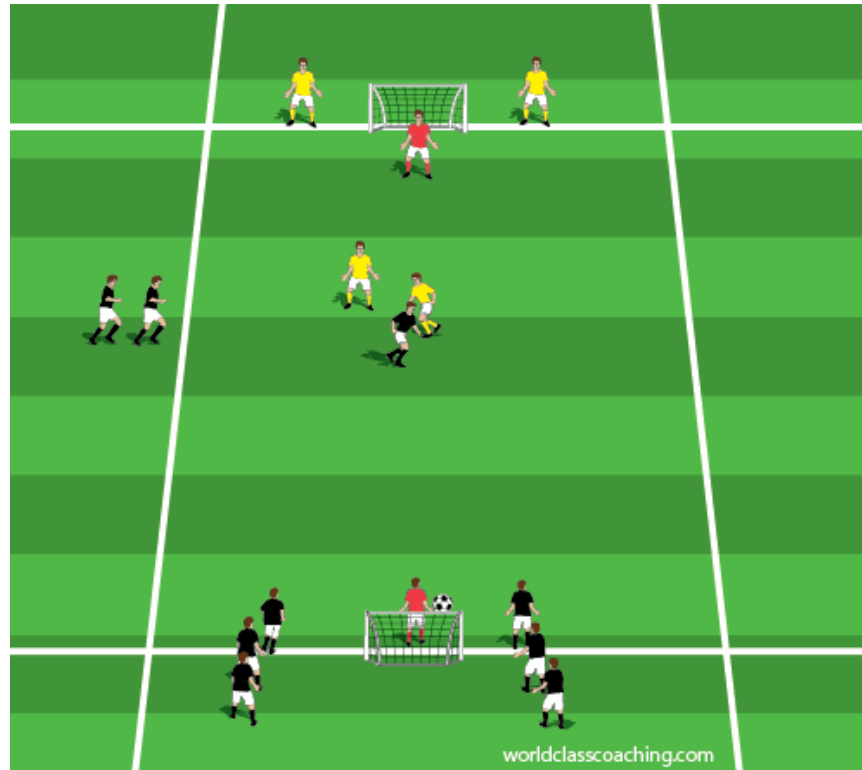
### Coaching points

- Positive attitude
- Good 1<sup>st</sup> touch
- Passing accuracy & timing
- Head Up assess situation
- Early decisions
- communication
- Good sprinting execution

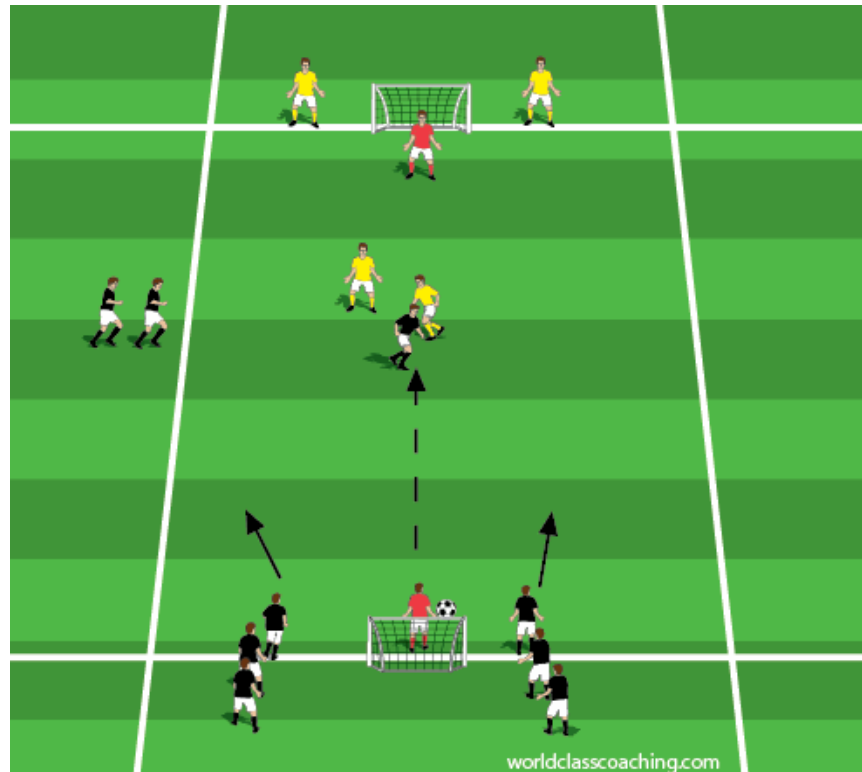
## Conditioning Within a Small-Sided Game

Here is an interesting 3 v 2 exercise which, when done at full speed works on attacking, defending and a lot of fitness.

The game is on a 40 x 30 grid with full sized goals and a keeper in each goal. One attacking player is at midfield with two defending players. Two attacking players are on the end line. There are players ready to take each players position.



One keeper starts with a ball and starts by rolling the ball into the targets feet. The two other attackers join in and they go 3 v 2.



The attacking team is limited to 5 touches total so this is very much of a quick pass and shoot activity (if you want, start with a 7 touch limit). If the defending team wins the ball they go to goal 2 v 3.

As soon as the ball goes out of play the first keeper gets another ball and all new players get on the field. The attacking team is trying to score as many goals in a 2 minute period as possible (if the defending team scores the attacking team loses a point). At the end of the 2 minute period the players switch responsibilities (attackers go to defenders and defenders go to attackers) and play resumes.

The key to this is it MUST be a fast moving game. The coach needs to encourage the players to go faster and faster and when the ball a new ball is needed, it must be played FAST.

Is this an attacking exercise? Yes

Is this a defending exercise? Yes

Is this a transition exercise? Yes

Done correctly this is also a GREAT conditioning exercises working with players on fitness speed of play and mental speed.

## **Soccer Agility, Lateral One Step and Sprint**

Lateral movement forms a major part of speed during soccer, specifically during ball control. If a player possesses the skill of moving laterally, then opponents can be avoided. It is highly beneficial to forwards who need to make repeated runs with lateral movement in between. Here is an exercise that will help to improve speed and balance while changing direction: **Lateral One Step and Sprint.**



### **Purpose:**

- To teach athlete to maintain speed and balance, while changing direction of movement.

### **Coaching Cues:**

- Push off with outside foot.
- Stabilize with landing foot
- Drive through with inside foot

### **Description:**

- Sprint 5m forward to first cone, at cone driving off outside foot step once laterally off right foot landing and stabilizing on your left and then driving off on your right foot.

### **Athletic Focus :**

- This exercise is an entry level agility drill though is highly specific for soccer athletes. This drill could be implemented first followed by a similar drill with a ball incorporated. This could involve the athlete placing the ball on the first cone and rolling it over the boot to the second followed by the final sprint which would create a more relative environment. However, we believe it is important to teach this movement without the ball first to get the best results.

## Integrate Conditioning Into Small-Sided Games

Today I'm going to show an other interesting way to integrate soccer fitness into small sided games and activities. There are many other options shown in the [DVD Modern Soccer Conditioning: Fitness with a Technical and Tactical Element](#).

This is a 7 v 5 game plus keepers on half a field. There are two full sized goals and one team is working on attacking and the other team is working on defensive shape and counter attacks.

The players start on the field and each of the attackers is assigned a number from 1-7. There are 7 balls on the sidelines.



To start the game player 1 on the attacking team sprints to the sideline gets a ball and dribbles it into play.





All of the players on the field (offensively and defensively) have to react accordingly. If the defensive team wins the ball they quickly counter attack and try to score in the opposing goal.

As soon as a ball goes out of play player 2 sprints to get another ball and play resumes. While the player is sprinting for the ball, all other players are moving to appropriate space (the attackers to spread the field and the defenders to provide proper coverage and support).

This game continues non stop until all 7 balls have been used. It's a quick reaction game because as soon as a ball goes out of play the players must react to the next ball. When all 7 balls have been played, the balls are retrieved and players would switch roles (attacking to defending etc).

To add even more running into this game you could require the player who is retrieving the ball to go get the furthest ball. This will force them to run further and for others to react during this time period.

This is just one example of how to incorporate additional fitness into your training sessions.

There are many other options shown in the [DVD Modern Soccer Conditioning: Fitness with a Technical and Tactical Element](#).

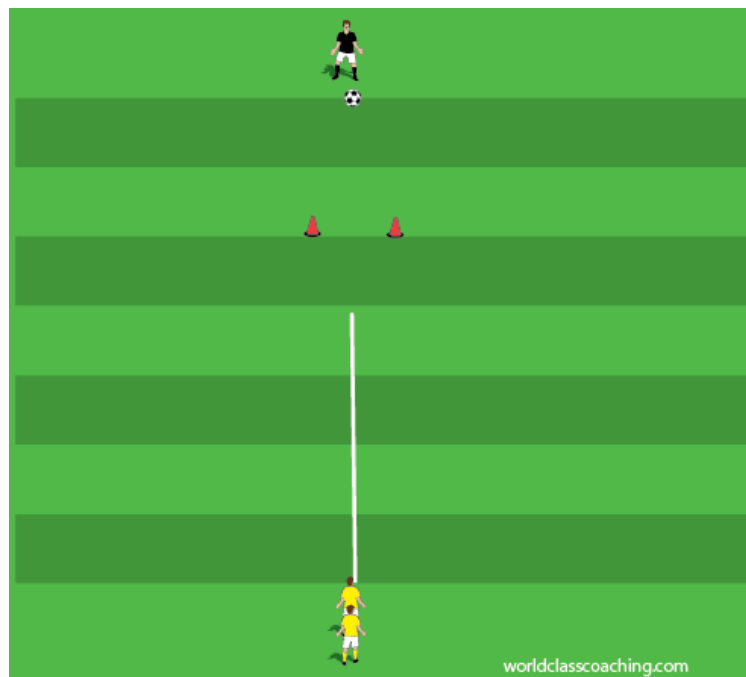
## Integrating Technical and Tactical Training Into Conditioning Workouts

While it would be wonderful if we could focus all of our time in training on technical and tactical parts of the game, the reality is additional fitness work is important. The key is whenever possible, try to integrate either technical or tactical aspects into your fitness work.

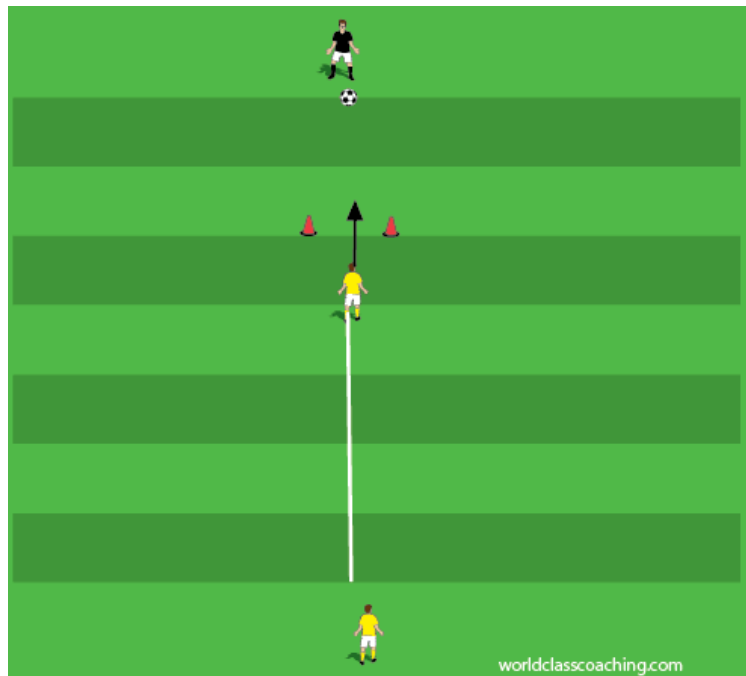
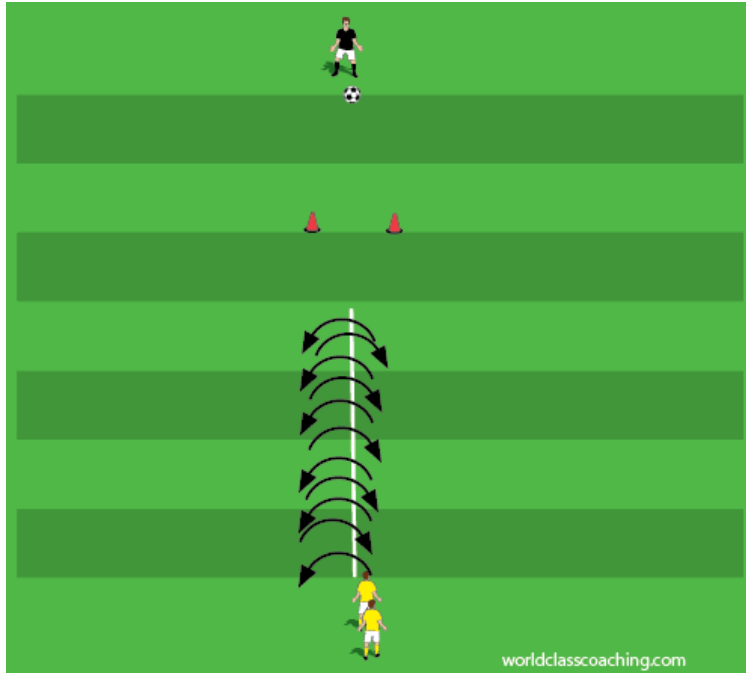
Below is an example of how you can use plyometrics and incorporate quick one and two touches into the activity to get the best of all worlds

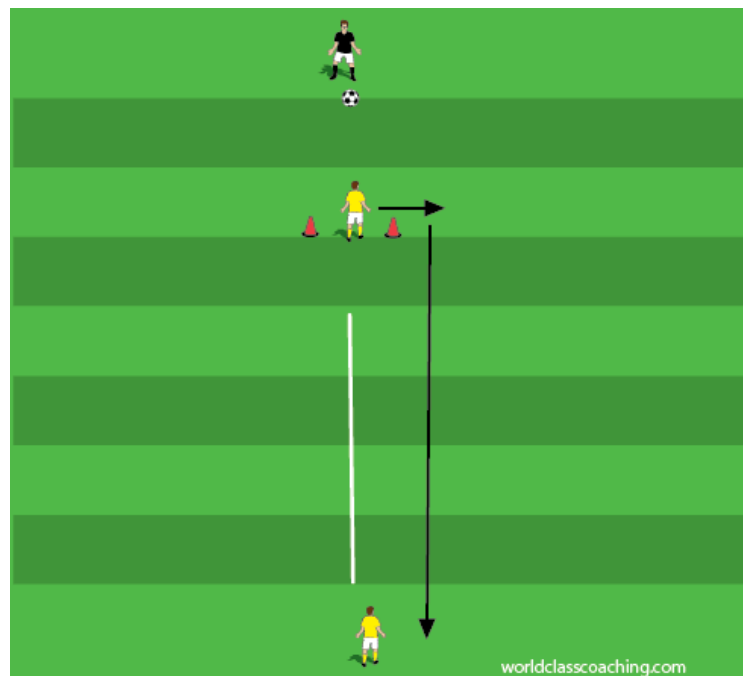
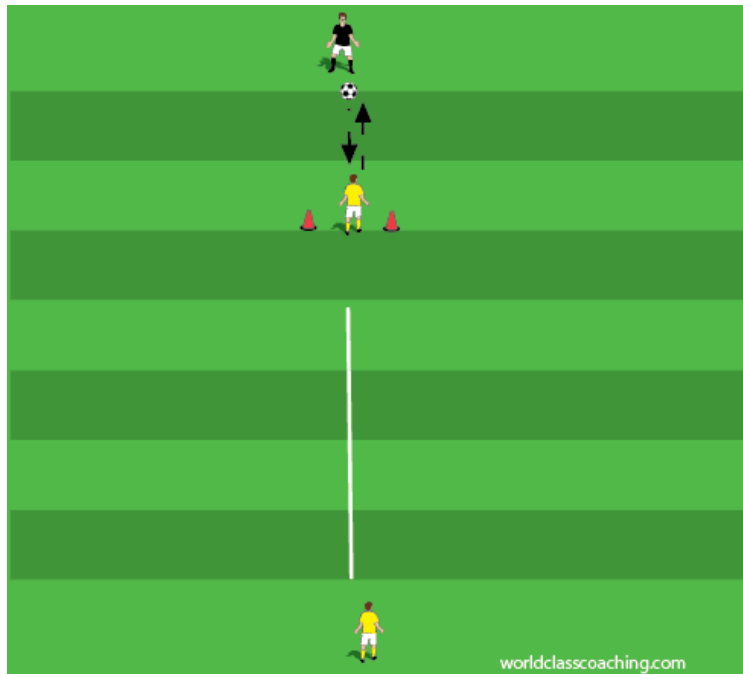
Plyometrics usually involve short quick jumps to improve quickness, explosiveness and to decrease the likelihood of injury. One way to look at plyometrics is they won't make much of an impact on your time in the one mile run but potentially can make a major impact on your first step and since you have a whole lot more first steps than you do one mile runs, they are extremely valuable.

Start with a line 18-20 yards with 2 cones 3 yards apart 5 yards in front of the line. A server has a ball 10 yards from the cones and the players line up on the other side of the line.



The first player in line starts by doing small slalom jumps (small side to side jumps while facing forward and moving down the line). As soon as the player gets to the end of the line, he sprints between the cones and receives a pass to his feet from the server. The player must one touch the ball back to the server and then slide to the side and sprint backwards to the starting point





As the first person is halfway down the line (going forward) the second person would begin.

Once done this would be the end of the first part of the set (there are a total of 10 parts to a set). All 10 parts are listed below

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

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

The server can vary the serves so sometimes it's a simple ball played to feet, other times it might be a tossed ball for an inside of the foot volley, or a tossed ball for a header etc.

The group would do a total of 3 sets of these plyometrics with an emphasis on technique (technique in terms of making sure each part of the plyometrics is done properly as well as making sure the ball touches at the end are done properly).

This is a great activity to work on fitness (it might not seem difficult but give it a try sometime), explosiveness training, strength building and technical touches.

## **Building Conditioning Into Regular Training Routines**

There are many ways to work on a soccer teams fitness. These can range from sprints, to longer runs to ladder work, to plyometrics, to resistance work to weights to any number of other activities. One thing that is often forgotten is much of the fitness work can be built into the various games and activities.

One of the most valuable games I like to play with teams is the 5 yard sprint rule after every pass. This can be a 3 v 3 scrimmage up to full sided 11 v 11. It's a regular game with the only restriction being that after every pass there must be a hard 5 yard sprint by the passer. Any passer who doesn't sprint after they make a pass results in a loss of possession by his team and also that player has to do 5 "burpees" before returning to the game (a burpee is a push up followed by a star jump and any form of "punishment" can be used). The 5 yard sprint can go in any direction so it doesn't have to follow the pass. This 5 yard sprint will create and use space for the runner as well as for the teammates and is one of the most valuable habits a player can develop. In other words, we have soccer fitness as well as tactical development at the same time.

Another tactical game that involves a great deal of fitness is a full field game with anywhere from 5 v 5 to 11 v 11. When a team wins the ball they need to make 3 passes before they can get to goal (this is working on possession as well as giving the attackers the time to spread out). The fitness comes in when a team loses the ball. Upon losing the ball, all players on the defending team must sprint back and touch the end line or goal line. The only exception to this would be if possession is lost on a shot. If a shot is taken and the other team wins the ball the defending team does NOT have to sprint back to the end line (but hopefully they will still sprint back to get behind the ball. This teaches the players the importance of keeping possession (since they have a long run if they don't) and also the benefit of getting a shot hit. A variation you can play is when possession is lost everyone has to sprint back EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO LOST POSSESSION. This player has to chase after the ball until his team gets back and can help.

A small sided game that can be played to encourage shooting on target is a 5 v 5 game with full sized goals and a keeper in each goal. When a shot gets hit, if it goes wide or over the goal the keeper grabs another ball and plays in the other direction while the player who hit the shot has to sprint after the ball, retrieve it, and get it back to the goal before returning to the game. This is not one of my preferred games because I want to encourage shooting whenever possible and not have players afraid to shoot but it's a good example of how you can alter games to add in more fitness work.

A 1 v 1 activity that works on dribbling, defending and fitness is done with 2 players facing each other. One starts with the ball and starts dribbling at the other player who is in a proper defensive stance and works backwards trying to contain the dribbler. The coach calls "switch" and the dribbler becomes the defender and the defender becomes the attacker. The attacker is trying to go at full speed and beat the defender to there is a lot of stopping and starting and changing of direction. This is an intense workout that really works the legs and the lungs.

Most soccer activities can include fitness but it's dependent upon the coach and the players to force things to go at full speed for the fitness part to get included.

Having a good mix of separate soccer fitness and fitness built into each activity will help make sure the players are ready to perform at their optimal level.

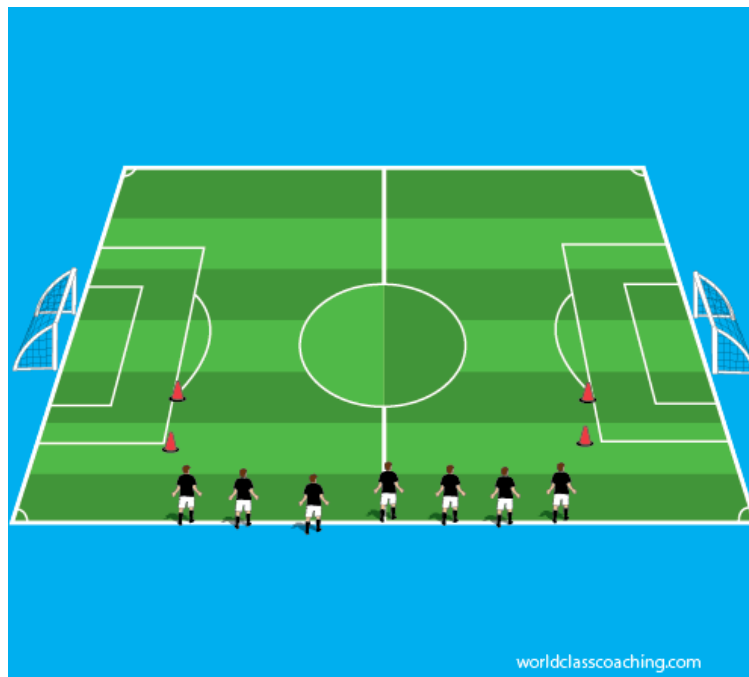
## Dynamic Warm-Up

When talking about fitness and conditioning one of the most important things for players (and teams) to do is make sure they get a proper warm up. If you are a coach, it's vital you make sure your players warm up properly. If you are a player, it's your responsibility to make sure you are warmed up properly. If your team or coach doesn't make sure you warm up properly, you should do it yourself.

Years ago, warming up meant static stretching and then a little bit of jogging. Nowadays, one is much more likely to do some form of dynamic warm up

Below is an example of a dynamic warm up I used for years.

Players start by going for a 4 minute jog and then they start one on one sideline and have a line 10 yards away and then another line 20 yards away.



1. Players start by walking to the first line with each step they bring their knee up toward their chest. They do this to the first line and back.
2. Next the players walk and on each step they bend their leg inward and grab their foot with their opposite hand. For example, they step with their right foot and lift up their left foot so they can grab their left foot with their right hand. Then they let go, step with their left foot and grab their right foot with their left hand. They do this to the first line and back.
3. Next they do the "Frankenstein" to the first line and back. This means as they are stepping with their right foot, they keep their right leg straight and extend their arms straight in front of them and reach up with their leg so their right foot hits their right hand with both straight



- in front of them then they put their left foot out in front and up and then touch their left foot to their left hand straight in front.
4. Next they start with their back to the field and take a 45 degree step backwards with their right foot and touch the ground with both palms and then take a 90 degree step back with their left foot and touch the ground with both palms and then 90 degrees again. They do this to the first line and then back.
  5. Next they do carioca to the SECOND LINE and back. Carioca (called by some as grapevine) is when they start sideways let's assume they have their right foot closest to the field) and they cross their left foot in front of their right foot and then their right foot behind their left foot and then their left foot behind their right foot and then their right foot behind the left foot.
  6. Next is tapioca which is just like carioca but with extremely small steps and much quicker.
  7. Next the players jog to the second line and back rotating their arms in a circular manner as if they are swimming.
  8. Next the players jog to the second line and back rotating their arms backwards in a circular manner.
  9. Next they jog to the second line rotating their arms (and upper body) sideways.
  10. Next the players lie down on the ground (on their back) and put their right leg over their left leg and reach with their right leg toward their left while keeping their shoulders on the ground. They hold this position for 15 seconds and then change to the other direction. This is done 4 times each.
  11. Next they go on their right knee and extend their left leg straight in front of them and reach back with their left hand and hold their right heel for 15 seconds. They then do the same thing in the opposite side. This is done 4 times each.
  12. Next the players do anything they want for 1 1/2 minutes.
  13. Next for a two minute period the players will jog 5 steps and then sprint five steps (with a change of direction) and then jog 10 steps and then sprint 10 steps and then back to 5 and 5 then 10 and 10.

This type of dynamic warm is something the players can do at the start and end of every training session on their own. In the beginning of the season I would have them do this as a team but gradually each player will do this at their own pace.

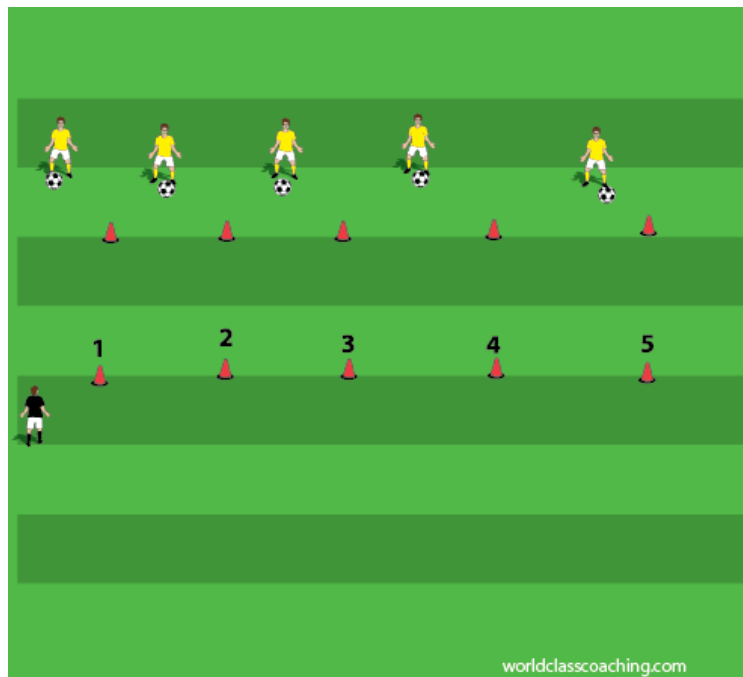
This type of dynamic warm up and cool down will help the players be better prepared for their training sessions and games

## Combining Technical Training With Fitness Work

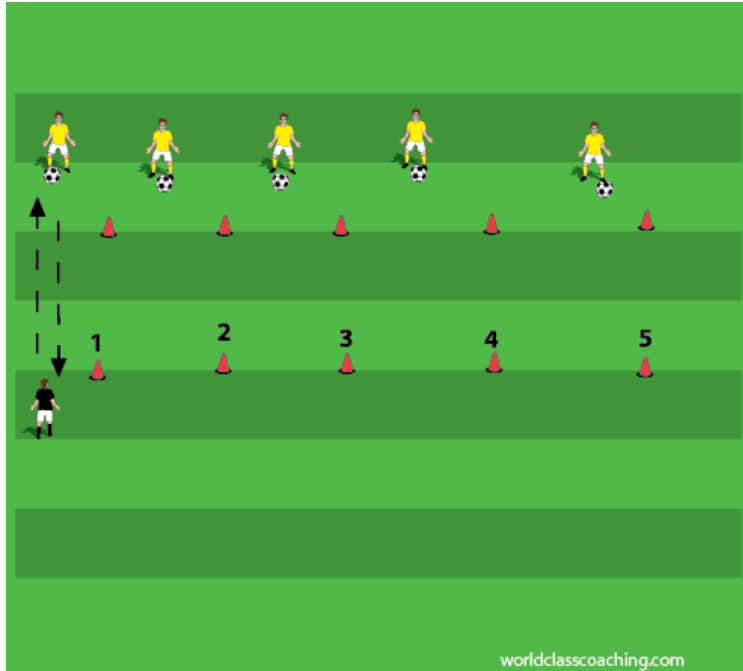
Combining technical training with fitness work is a great way to be efficient in your training as well as to force the technical work to be done at speed and under pressure.

Here is a simple way to work on fitness while also doing technical training.

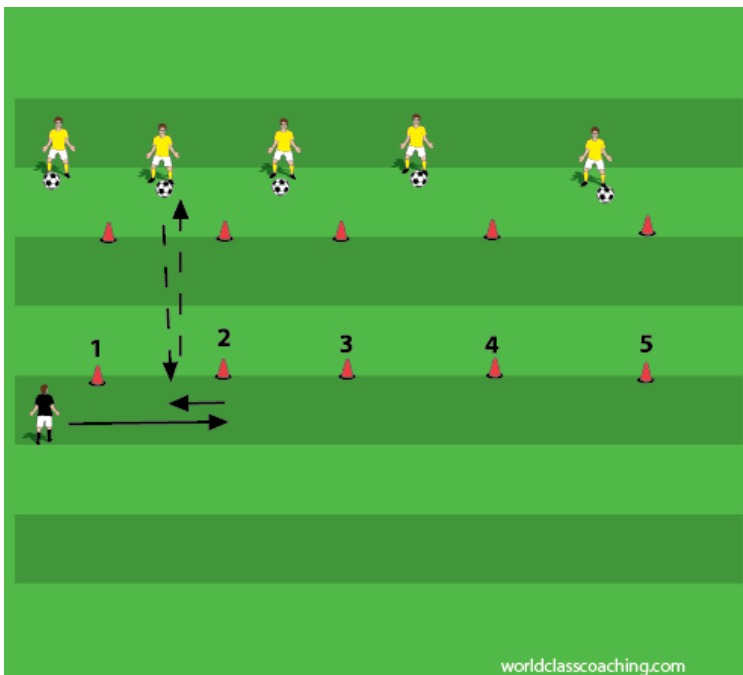
Start with 2 lines of 10 cones. The lines are 5 yards apart and each cone is 5 yards apart (in the example below I'm only using 5 cones in each line due to space issues). There is a player on the outside of one line and a server with a ball behind each of the opposite openings.



The server starts by passing the ball on the ground to the player who must one touch the ball back to the server. As soon as the ball is played back one touch



As soon as the player passes the ball back to the server he sprints to the second cone and then back to the opening



This is repeated all the way down the line. The key to remember is the player must sprint to the

next cone and then back to the middle. This is adding just a little bit more running but also adds a change of direction which is very important to work on.

As soon as the first player is at the 3rd cone, the second player would start.

After each player has gone they go again from the other direction (this forces them to turn in the other direction on the change of direction).

Next the same thing is done but now the server tosses the ball for an inside of the foot volley.

This is repeated for instep volleys, thigh traps and volley backs, chest traps and volley backs and headers.

This is just one example of how to incorporate fitness work into your technical training.

## 1 v 1 Games to Improve Fitness

Most players love playing 1 v 1.

Most players hate doing fitness work.

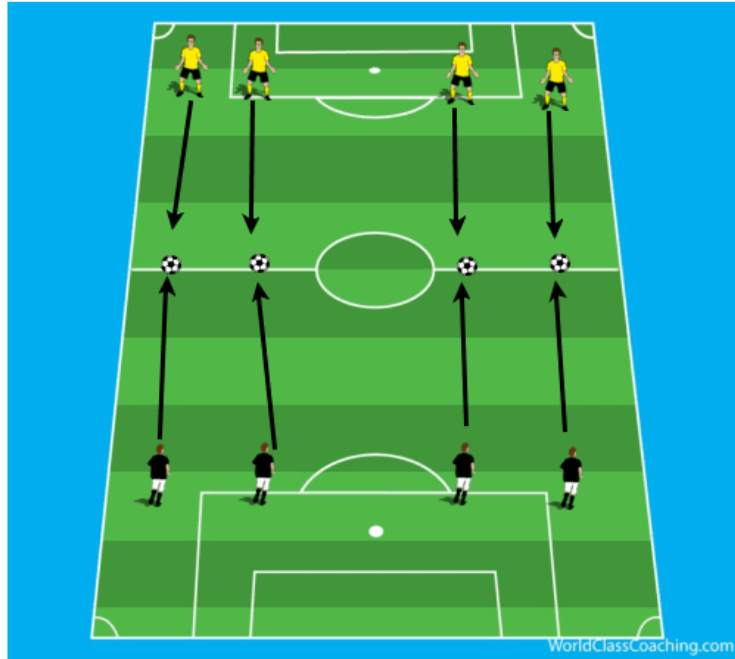
Why not combine them?

The key to these games of 1 v 1 is to keep the intensity of the games up even as the players get tired.

These are just a series of 1 v 1 games with the big difference being that they are played on a full sized field. The ball starts at midfield and each player starts on the 18. You can have multiple games going at one time (in the example below there are 4 games going at once)



When the whistle is blown the players all sprint to try to win their ball. The thing to remember is even though there are 4 balls here, each set of 2 players are assigned one ball so they can't go after other balls.



Whichever player wins the ball is on offense and the other player is on defense. To score a player must stop the ball on the end line. At any given time different games are going in different directions.



While the players are working on 1 v 1 moves and defending they are also covering a great deal of space. If a yellow player is about to score and the black player wins the ball and beats the yellow player, they are off on a 110 yard sprint to the other side.

Play this game for 4 minutes at full speed and then have the players switch opponents. Play 4-5 games and in 20-25 minutes the players get a LOT of touches, work on a lot of moves, work on their defense and work on their fitness.

It's really important that the coach keep the players connected during the games. If a player gets beat and his opponent is going on a 100 yard sprint, the defender HAS to make an effort to catch him. With certain players there is a tendency to let the attacker go and for those players the coach needs to work with them to encourage them to keep working.

This is a physically exhausting activity that is also a great deal of fun.

## Figure 8 Running

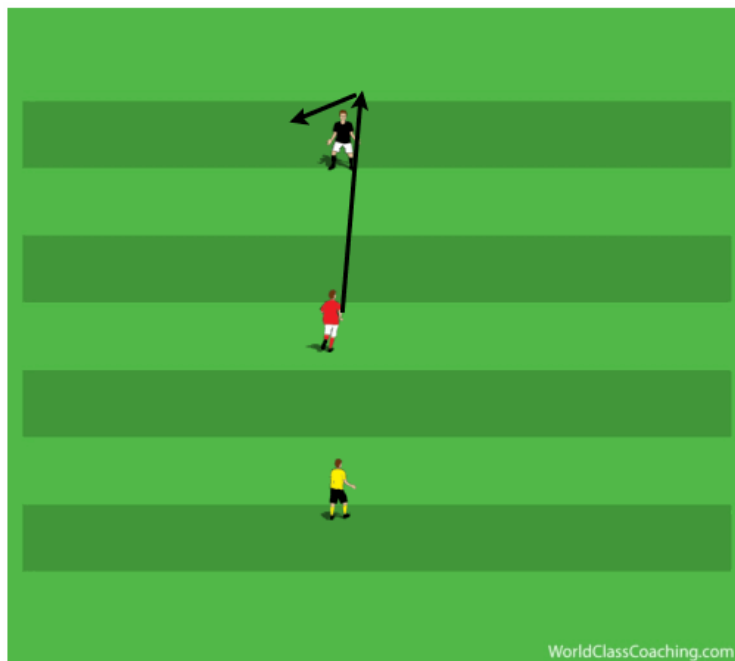
Figure 8's are a great way to work on fitness, short bursts, change of direction and much more.

Start with 2 players standing 10 yards apart (you can vary the distance) and a 3rd player in the middle.

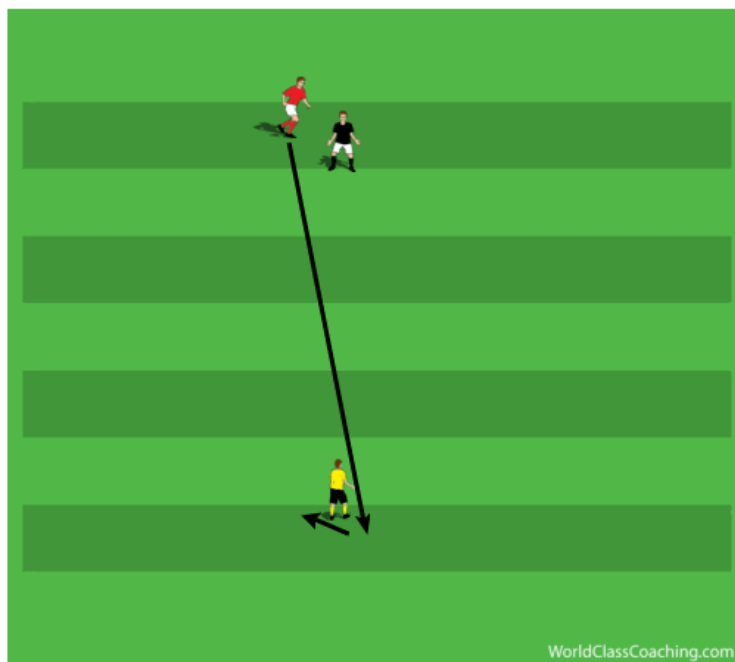


The player in the middle is the worker and the other two are resting. The player starts by sprinting around one of the players, cutting the turn as close as possible by getting low on the turn.





The player then sprints to the other side and turns around the other player



This run continues for a full one minute period with the player trying to make as many turns as possible in that time period.

When the minute is up, the player switches with one of the outside players who begins right away.

After each player has had a turn they start up again and do this 5 times each (this is a total of 15 minutes with a 1:2 work to rest ratio)

Next do the same thing but now the player doing the work has to dribble a ball and make turns in very tight spaces. On the one hand this is more difficult (because of having to keep control of the ball the whole time) but there will be a loss of fitness work because they have to go a bit slower.

Do this three times each

This is a great workout working on fitness, short bursts, change of direction, dribbling, turns and much more.

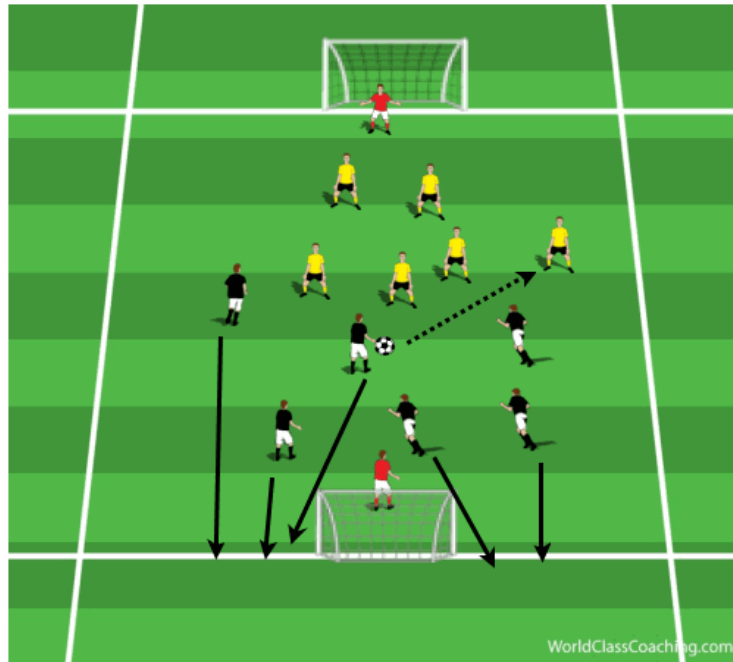
## Small-Sided Game that Develops Fitness

Putting in simple conditions (simple to say not necessarily to do) can change the emphasis of a game to add a great deal of fitness into small sided or full sided games.

As an example, in a 7 v 7 game including keepers on a 50 x 40 field players will get a fair amount of fitness



If we put in the rule that when a team loses possession all players on that team must sprint back and touch the defensive end line before they can defend it adds a great deal of fitness while reinforcing (albeit artificially) the need to get back to defend.



As soon as a player gets back he can step up and defend (this means that a player doesn't have to wait for his teammates to get back for him to start defending).

If you find that there isn't enough time for the players to get back you can put in the rule that when a team wins the ball they must make 3 passes before attacking. By doing this, one team works on quick passes and the other team is sprinting to get back.

There are many variations you can do with this activity (and it happens to be one of my favorite games to then add variations to) and it's an excellent example of how you can take a simple small sided game and with one rule change turn it into a game that also emphasizes fitness

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