



50 COACHING DRILLS

50 Fine Soccer Coaching Drills



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COMPLETE SOCCER COACHING GUIDE

**50 Soccer Drills, Exercises and
Tips for Better Coaching**

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WELCOME

As coaches, we know that there are many things that contribute to a young soccer player's success. Our job becomes one of identifying where individual players (as well as our team) are at in terms of their developmental abilities and then choosing the right activities to help them improve their skills. When I say "good activities" I mean ones that are fundamentally sound, keep the kids moving, develop good habits, and make them think about the game as a whole. This book provides you with 180 activities designed to work on warming-up, dribbling, passing, receiving, communicating, spacing, supporting, possessing, passing, conditioning, heading, goal keeping, finishing, defending, offending, and many other techniques and tactics.

I feel these activities are suitable because they've been tried and tested by many soccer coaches and teams. You'll notice that this is a collection of material gathered from my experience as a coach, my summer soccer camp experiences, talking with other coaches, and from coaches who subscribe to my soccer newsletter available at finesoccer.com.

In addition to specific drills, there are many activities designed to be used as scrimmages at the end of practice. I highly recommend spending some time during or towards the end of your practice to play games that include the skills your players were working on. The kids will have more fun and you will be surprised at how the carry over from practicing these skills in a small or adapted version of the game improves the players overall real soccer game performance.

I hope you find these activities helpful, fun, and effective in achieving your desire to have the best team you can have. As you begin to try them, I would enjoy hearing your feedback regarding which ones you found most helpful as well as the ones the kids liked to do the most.

Have a great season,

Lawrence Fine

GETTING PRACTICE STARTED QUICKLY WHILE BUILDING TEAM UNITY

To make the most of practice time, getting organized quickly for drills is essential. One thing I've noticed is that when players are asked to get into small groups for a particular activity friends will always look for friends to practice with, while some of the kids are left out or left to be assigned to groups by the coach. Because I strongly believe that all players should feel a part of the team, here is a trick I use to get going quickly and to build team unity at the same time.

I call this method the numbers game. I use it as a season long game. Whenever I call out a number, the players must get into groups of that number as soon as possible. Whoever isn't in a group "loses". For example, if there are 16 players at the training session and I call out "4" the players will quickly get into 4 groups of 4. However, if I call out 3, they will get into 3 groups of 5 and one person "loses." When I first introduce the game, I give the kids some examples of consequences for the loser. For example, she might have to do 5 push-ups or 5 donkey kicks. Players learn very quickly that whenever they hear me call out a number that they need to grab whomever is closest to them without regard for whether they are an old friend or a new friend.

This is also a great way to get players to work together with different teammates throughout a training session or season. It even works in large numbers (if you want to split 16 players into groups of 11 and 5, just yell 11 and those 11 become the first group right away. If a player wants to be in the group of 11 they will do so and if they don't that is her decision. This is a great way to find out who wants to do things because the players will frequently figure out what you are thinking with the numbers and will get into the bigger group to participate.

Sometimes I will assign players into groups, but most often I will yell out the number and let the players do it, which saves time and avoids potential conflicts. Next time you need to break your players into teams, play the numbers game and see how many potential problems are avoided.

FineSoccer Drill 75

Here is one of the simplest and most commonly played games by coaches of youth teams, "World Cup".

World Cup is a game where a group of players will break off into a bunch of teams of 2's players each. So, if you have a team of 15 players, you would have 7 teams of 2 players each plus one keeper. The server (usually the coach) plays a ball into the middle of the teams and each team tries to get the ball and score on the one goal (with a keeper in it).

There are a lot of variations to this game. Some people play it where each team picks a country that they represent and each time they score a goal, the team who scored must call out the name of the country they represent (so if the Brazilian team scores, they would yell "Brazil"). This could be a game where the first team to score steps off the field and each subsequent team to score steps off. The last team on the field loses. Or, you could do it where the first team to score 5 goals wins (remember, for each ball that is out there it's basically 2 v 12 plus a keeper because whichever team has the ball, all of the others are trying to stop them from scoring). Other variations would be to allow more than one ball on the field at a time. Or, you could have the balls served in from different angles (for example, have the ball served in like a corner kick).

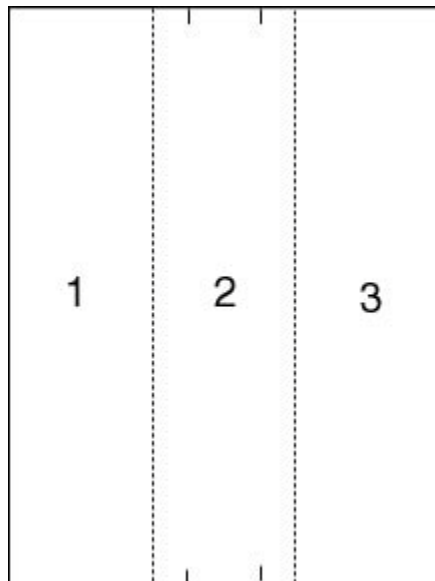
Playing World Cup encourages players to look to take a chance and hit a shot because the likelihood of getting a perfect shot in that type of game is very slim so kids are willing to hit a shot the first opportunity they get. The willingness to hit a shot is one of the qualities that separate the true goal scorer from the rest so playing games that encourage this trait will help to develop goal scorers. However, most kids don't see this game as working on developing the habits of a true goal scorer. The best thing to do is let kids play World Cup (or other games like this) and afterwards ask them if they hit any shots in these games that they wouldn't hit in a real soccer game. Almost every one of them will say they did. Emphasize that there are very few "bad" shots in soccer and the only way to score goals is to take shots. Then, have them go out and play it again. Follow this up with a regular scrimmage and encourage them to take as many shots as they can.

Use games like World Cup to develop the goal scorer's mentality. Then do everything you can to take this attitude that is developed in these training games and transfer it onto full-sided games.

FineSoccer Drill 76

Working on shape and balance is something that many coaches like to talk about but many don't actually seem to know how to actually train teams to work on this. Here is a way to work on both offensive and defensive shape at the same time.

First, you need to break the field into thirds as shown in the diagram below.



The rules are actually quite simple. You want to play a regular game of soccer (if possible, actually play 11 v 11 or if that doesn't work get as many players on the field as you can). A goal counts as 4 points. Anytime the team with the ball DOESN'T have a player in each of the three sections, they lose a point. (the key here is that it shouldn't always be the same players out wide). As an additional incentive a team can win points by quickly switching the ball. The way this works is that anytime the ball is in section 1, if the defense has any players in section 3, the attacking team gets a point. If the ball gets switched to section 3 and the defense has anyone in section 1, the attacking team gets a point. When the ball is in the middle (section 2), all defensive players must be in the middle section or the attacking team gets a point (you have to give a 1

second period from the time the ball gets played from the outside to the middle to give the defense time to shift).

This activity encourages the attacking team to provide proper support with width and also it encourages them to switch the ball through the midfield as well as around the back. Defensively, this works on proper defensive rotation as well as proper support and balance.

The size of the sections can be changed depending upon the numbers you are working with as well as their understanding of the concepts.

Some of the variations to consider include rewarding a team for switching the ball from one outside section all the way across to the other (this will help a team switch the ball quickly but will also help them learn when NOT to do it). For the more experienced teams, one of my favorite things to add is that no player can be in either of the two wide sections for more than 5 seconds without the ball. This means that if a player is out wide and not being used, she must get out of that section and someone must take her place in that section (or the team loses a point). If you implement this, the players must understand the roles of different positions or else it turns into pure chaos.

Remember, this activity is best with 7 a side or more and should also be done after a team has gone through a fair bit of shadow training to understand the proper responsibilities of the different roles.

Give this activity a try the next time you want to work on shape and balance (and as a bonus it's great conditioning).

Fine Soccer Drill 77

Here is a simple possession game that works on possession, defending in groups, and also taking responsibility.

Let's assume you have 15 players at your training session. Set them up in a circle (you could use the center circle for this).

Three players start in the middle and the players on the outside are playing one touch keep away. While the players on the outside can move around the outside of the circle, they may NOT move inside or outside the circle.

The simple objective is for the players on the outside to keep the ball away from the players in the middle.

One problem with possession games such as 3 v 1 or 5 v 2 is that the person who loses possession of the ball is actually NOT the one who is at fault. Rather, the supporting players didn't do their job properly which results in the loss of possession. The way this game tries to work on this is that if a player loses possession of the ball, not only does she go into the middle, but so does the player on each side of her (the three players who were in the middle rotate OUT at this time). This encourages the players around the ball to provide proper support because if they don't, they will most likely become defenders as a result. The other thing this rule accomplishes is that it encourages the player on the ball to look further than the players next to her. Since we want to encourage our players to keep their head up and look further than the closest player, this is an excellent way to accomplish it (if the ball was coming to you and you knew that by playing the ball first time to the player right next to you might result in the loss of possession and you have to go play defense, wouldn't you start looking further first?).

As an added incentive to get the defense working hard (and working together) is that if the offensive players can string together 10 consecutive passes, it results in an extra turn on defense for the players in the middle. This means that if the players on the circle make 12 successful passes and then a player loses possession, the defense stays in for another turn. If the players on the outside can make 20 successful passes, then the defense gets two extra turns. It is for this reason that the circle must be very small (adjust it for the ability of the players as well as the numbers).

The great thing about this activity is that it gets quite exciting as the players try to keep other players in the middle as long as possible and also start providing proper support and better decision making.

FineSoccer Drill 78

This is a different type of version of the popular game "kick out". The difference is that this is more game related and also does a better job of keeping all of the participants involved.

Start with a restricted space (for 15 players maybe 25 x 25 would do). If there are 15 players have 10 start dribbling soccer balls. The other 5 are working independently trying to win a ball from one of the 10 who started with a ball. If a player wins a ball, she tried to keep it and the player who lost the ball can try to win that ball back or to go after someone else's ball. At the end of a pre-determined time period, the players who end up NOT having a ball lose.

This activity works on dribbling, moves, shielding, conditioning, field vision, and defense. Plus, kids will have a blast playing it.

Consider playing this game 5 times for 2 minute periods each and keep track of the number of times each player ends up with a ball. This could give you, and the team, an idea of who is best at both holding onto the ball as well as who works the hardest.

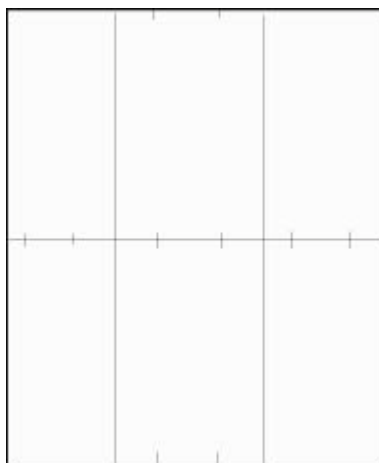
One thing to consider is to keep changing the time periods or else smart players might allow themselves to lose the ball early and only work the last 30 seconds or so. If they don't know when the game might end, they have to work the whole time (however, the time must be pre-determined or else it's easy to pick on one player and always end it when she doesn't have a ball).

While this might seem like a game more geared toward young players, try it with older players as well and I believe you will see that they get a great deal out of it as well.

FineSoccer Drill 79

Here is an activity that could be considered a continuation of the exercises described in Drill 76. It works on space and balance as well as finishing, defense, goalkeeping, and goalkeeping conditioning as well as many other things.

Split the field into vertical thirds with an 8 yard wide goal (made with cones) at the center of each zone . See the following diagram..



This game is best with 7 on a side or greater (11 on a side works great if you have the numbers) and if you have 3 keepers it is wonderful but two works well also). The field should be full-sized for 11 on a side and only slightly smaller for less numbers.

You play a regular game of soccer. If a ball is dribbled through any of the three goals at midfield, it's worth 1 point each time. If a ball is PASSED through any of these goals and received by a teammate it's worth 2 points. A goal scored into the regular goal (at the end of the field, remember we are still playing a regular soccer game here) is worth 5 points. A team can score as many points at a center goal as they want and a point can be scored going in either direction (young players will get caught up going back and forth through the side goals for points so it becomes important to remind them that the ultimate goal is to score in the real goal). There should be a keeper in each of the regular goals.

This game will encourage teams to stay spread out offensively and will also encourage them to try to compress the field defensively (it's hard to be chasing from side to side in defense when the attacking team simply has to play a long switching ball to get either 1 or 2 points).

If you are fortunate to have three keepers, two keepers play in the regular goals and the third keeper is responsible for the goals on the midfield line. Any time a regular goal is scored (the 5 point goals) the keeper who gets scored on switches with the keeper in the middle. This should encourage the keepers to do whatever they can to not let in goals because the keeper in the middle is responsible for three goals in both directions. This will require a great deal of

conditioning on the keepers parts but again, they need to know how important it is to NOT give up goals in a game.

This game can be played for time (for example it could be a 20 minute game) or it could be played to a certain score (first one to 20 wins). It works on so many important facets of the game that I think if you give it a try, you will soon find yourself using this game (and variations of us) frequently throughout the season.

FineSoccer Drill 80

Here is a simple activity to set up to work on passing, receiving, and conditioning.

Two players start approximately 20 yards apart and player A passes the ball to player B. As soon as player A passes the ball to payer B, she sprints BACKWARDS away from the ball. Player B sprints forward to get to the ball and plays the ball first time back to player A. The key is that after each pass, there is a HARD 5 yard sprint BACKWARDS and when the ball is played to a player, she then sprints FORWARD to meet the ball. Do this for 2 minutes hard and you will really have to concentrate to keep the ball in play (the burning of the legs will be a nice reminder).

Next, do the same thing except now take two touches. The first touch should take the ball to the side and the next touch should be a hard driven ball. Again, once the ball is played, sprint back away from the pass. Also, once a ball is played the other player should sprint to the ball to receive it as soon as possible.

If the inside of the foot was used to receive the balls in the previous exercise, next use the outside of the foot. Everything else still applies.

There are numerous variations that can be added to this activity such as chips, turns and so on. The key is going to be to make sure the players are stretched properly (if not, there can be problems with pulls and cramping of the legs) and to have them work as hard as they can at all times. Give ample time to rest between sets.

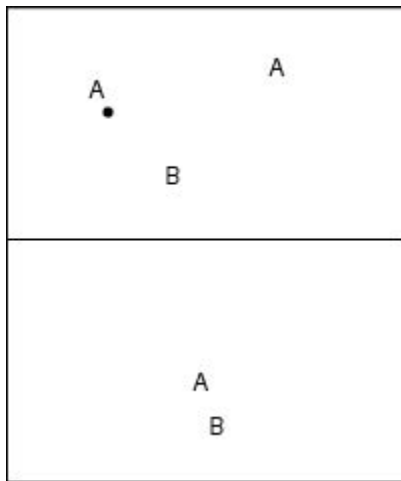
Going to meet the ball is one of the biggest problems in youth soccer. This simple exercise works on doing this over and over again which will help to make it a good habit. Emphasize to your players that they must go and meet the ball but right before the ball gets to them, they must slow down in order to control the ball properly. Have them alternate feet for each of the passes and receptions.

Do this exercise 2-3 times a week over the course of an entire season and I believe you will see a noticeable improvement in your teams passing and receiving (it should only take 12 minutes per session or so).

Fine Soccer Drill 81

This is a great exercise that works on both possession and penetration.

Start with a 10 x 20 grid with a midway line. Have two players from team A in one section along with one player from team B. In the other section, have one player from each team (see diagram below for setup).



The two players from team A play keep away while the player from team B tries to win the ball. After X number of passes (X can be anything from 3-5 depending on level of play) the two players from team A try to find their teammate in the other section who is making runs to get open while the player from team B tries to prevent this pass from being played in successfully. When the ball is played into the player from team A, one of her teammates may join her in that section and they then begin playing 2 v 1 in that section until X number of passes are completed at which point they try to play the ball back into the original starting section.

Some of the things you want to emphasize to the two players trying to maintain possession of the ball are:

Get a look up to the person in the other section every time.

Try to receive the ball with the body opened up to the field whenever possible.

Play the ball to the correct foot in order for the player to receive the ball opened up.

Communicate every time to make sure someone goes over into the other section upon successful penetration.

The player from team A in the section should be looking to time her runs to get open when her teammates can get her the ball. She also is working on being able to hold the ball under pressure to allow her teammate to join her in that section upon a successful penetrating pass.

Defensively, the player defending the lone attacker should start goal side to make it more game realistic. Also, make sure this defensive player (and the offensive player as well) realizes that this is a situation on the field (defending a target player) where there is a lot of physical contact and while it should be done within the rules, if it's not practiced in a situation like this, it will never be handled well in a real game.

Do this for 2 minutes and then rotate the players so everyone gets to play offense and defense.

To get more success, you can start with a 3 v 1 in one section and 1 v 1 in the other or even 3 v 1 and 2 v 1.

There are numerous options that can be added, so give this a try and adapt it to meet the needs of your players.

FineSoccer Drill 82

This drill is one that is used by many, many youth coaches out there and has so many things WRONG with it that I feel it should be addressed.

The activity I am referring to is "Knock Out". For those of you who are not familiar with this game, it's where everyone has a ball in a small area and each player tries to dribble the ball around while trying to knock everyone else's ball out of the area. When a player's ball has been knocked out, she must leave the area. The last person with a ball in the grid is the winner. While there are many variations of this game, this is the way the game is normally played.

Almost every time I have seen this game played, I see the same pattern happening over and over again. The same couple of kids are almost always the first ones to have their ball kicked out (simply because they might not be as athletic or because they don't have as good skills as the others). These players are the ones who need the MOST touches on the ball but instead, they get punished for not having the skills and is that they don't get to work on the skills that they need most (I am sure some would argue that by getting knocked out early it would give them an incentive to work on these skills so as to not get knocked out in the future. I don't believe this is being realistic at all). Rather than limiting the touches of the players who need it the most, shouldn't we be finding ways to maximize their touches?

Also, from a defensive standpoint, this game does NOT teach players how to tackle a ball and keep possession but rather it teaches them to get someone else's ball and knock it out of bounds. Is that what we want our players to be practicing?

Inevitably, the players who are left at the end of the game are the ones who found ways to hide in the corner so no one went after their ball. This means they let the other players knock each other out and then they come out as winners at the end. Is this helping to create the risk takers we want in soccer?

When teaching dribbling, we should be encouraging our players to dribble at a defender (more specifically dribble at their front foot) but instead this game encourages players to dribble AWAY from the defenders and not worry about direction at all. How is this helping our players?

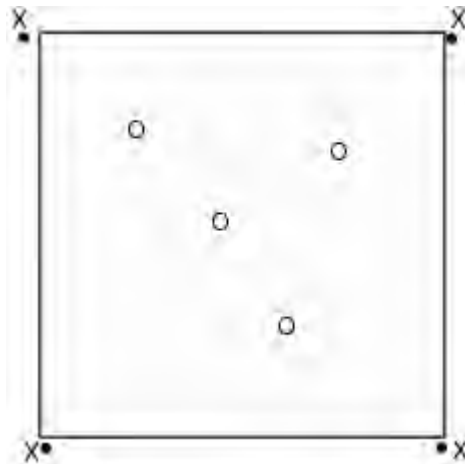
I have seen one variation of Knock Out that was a LITTLE bit better. In this version the rule is put in that if your ball gets knocked out, you must sprint to your ball, juggle it 5 times, and then come back in the grid or something like that. This still doesn't deal with the other issues.

There are so many other games that can be played that accomplish the same thing, are fun for the players, and DON'T come with the negatives that I don't understand why so many coaches are so adamant about wasting their teams time on this game. If you want a simple alternative, take a look at Drill 78.

FineSoccer Drill 83

Here is an excellent activity to work on passing and receiving as well as communicating.

Start with a square-shaped grid with a player on each of the corners. Each of the four players should have soccer balls. There should be another 4 players in the middle of the grid (see diagram below for set up).



The players in the middle of the grid go towards one of the players in the corners who have a ball and call for the ball. The ball is played into the feet of the players calling for the ball and then the ball is played right back to the corner and then the player EXPLODES to another corner to do the same thing. The balls should be played properly with good pace and the players should communicate ("Jeff, Ball" and "Back"). Do not have the players going in a certain pattern (for example, the players in the middle should NOT go in a clockwise rotation to make it easy). This will force the players to keep their heads up to see who has a ball and is available. Do this for 1 minute and then rotate the players (players in the corners go to the middle and players in the middle to the corners).

Next, get rid of one ball and now the players receive the ball from a person in one corner and with their second touch play the ball to a person in another

corner who does NOT have the ball. Now all of a sudden, it becomes important to receive the ball and keep the ball moving. It also requires the player to take a look around before receiving the ball in order to see which corner is open to pass to. Also, there is a lot more communication in this version as the person passing the ball from the corner should be instructing the person receiving the ball which person to pass to next. There also will be communication between the players in the middle as to where each is going to run next.

You also can do this with one touch but that gets quite complicated as all balls must be played perfectly for there to be success.

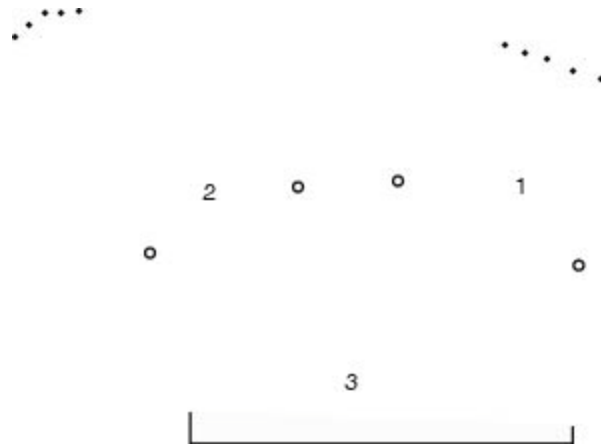
The next progression in this series would be for the ball to be served from the hands of the corner people so that the person in the middle must receive the ball with the thigh and bring it down to the ground before playing the ball to the next corner. From there, you can go with receiving the ball with the chest as well as receiving the ball with the head and then playing it to a corner.

Once a group gets proficient at this activity, you can add defenders so that now the players in the middle must do the exact same thing, but now under pressure. Please do NOT progress up to this level until the players are comfortable with receiving the ball without pressure because otherwise you are putting them in a position to fail. Let them get the basics down before putting too much pressure on them.

FineSoccer Drill 84

Here is a goalkeeping activity that works on deflections, conditioning, shot blocking, angles, and footwork. It does require a minimum of two keepers and two servers but optimally, you would have 3 keepers and 1 server.

Start with a full-sized goal and then two other goals made up of cones or flags. These two other goals (goals 1 and 2 in the following diagram) are on angles. A server is stationed 10 yards from goals 1 and 2 with six balls each (if there are three keepers, one of the servers should be the resting keeper).



Keeper A is responsible for shots on goal 1 and keeper B is responsible for shots on goal 2. When the server is shooting on goal 1, keeper A tries to save those shots while keeper B is trying to keep any deflections out of goal 3 (the full goal). As soon as this shot is done, the other server gets ready to shoot and now keeper B is responsible for goal 2 while keeper A slides back into the big goal. This goes on until all 12 shots have been hit. If there are three keepers, keeper B would go shoot and the resting keeper (keeper C) would go where keeper A has been and keeper A would replace keeper B.

Not only is this an excellent activity for working on shot blocking and deflections, but it's a good conditioning exercise. It also works on developing good footwork even though the keepers don't necessarily realize this. When they are cutting off an angle (similar to what they are doing from the server in this activity) and then all of a sudden the ball gets played across, there is a tendency for keepers to sprint straight across. However the truth is that this is the wrong approach. Instead they need to bend their runs back to the goal (in a U shape almost) and this exercise gets the keeper in the habit of going back towards the goal before trying to cut off the angle on a ball that has been switched.

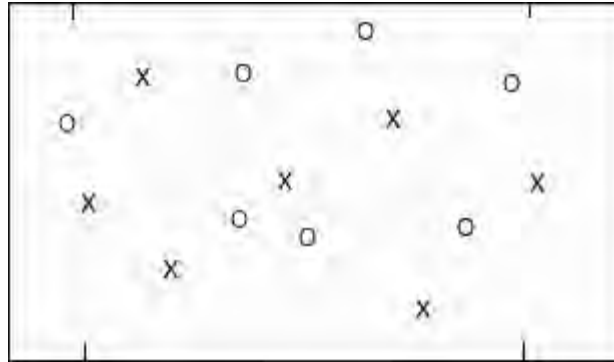
This is also a good way for field players to work on hitting free kicks because they can try to bend balls around the first goal and into the second goal. Or they can work on shooting low and trying to score in both goals on the same shot.

FineSoccer Drill 85

Here is an excellent exercise to work on possession, penetration, finding a target player and being organized defensively.

Many people play various types of 4 goals games but this one has a couple of different twists to it.

This is best as a 7 v 7 game. Set up the field to go across the entire width of a soccer field. The length of the field is from the 18 yard box to the midfield line. The goals are from the corner of the 18 to the side line (this is assuming it's a full-sized field of at least 68 yards wide) See diagram below for the set up.



In this diagram, the O's are attacking the two lower goals and the X's are attacking the two upper goals. In order to score a goal, the teams must dribble through one of the goals they are attacking.

So far there is not much difference with the way that most teams play their four goal games. However, one of the differences is going to be that each player on each team is numbered from 1-7. The first time X's are on defense, the player assigned to number 1 must take a knee (meaning assuming a kneeling position) while her team defends. This forces the defense to be more organized since they are a player down. They will be forced to try to keep the play on one side of the field in order to avoid constantly chasing the ball and the open players, which is one of the purposes of the activity. Then, when the X's win the ball, they must get the ball to the player who had been kneeling before they can get to goal (this player might represent a target player up front or possibly a central midfielder who has most of the attack go through him). While they are doing this, O's number 1 must take a knee. All of a sudden, you can see where this will force a great deal of communication to make sure the right players are marking up, the right players are getting into the attack, and the right players are being found early in the attack. The next time the X's lose the ball, player number 2 takes a knee and so on.

Other options you can throw into this would include having a neutral player who is full-time offense. This means that whichever team has the ball the neutral player is on that team and they will then be up two players. Since the attacking team always is numbers up they should be able to maintain possession and also look to penetrate on almost every touch.

Other options include putting a rectangle in the middle of the playing area to limit the touches in the middle of the field to either one or two touches. By doing this, you encourage better spacing offensively.

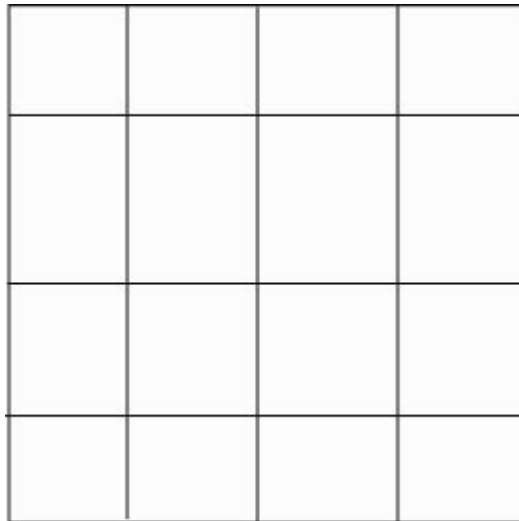
There are many other options that could be put in depending upon what exactly you are wanting to work on.

FineSoccer Drill 86

One of the problems with a teams intent on maintaining possession of the ball is that they end up playing in very tight spaces and are always looking for the player closest to them instead of looking further away and getting the ball away from pressure.

This activity is designed to get players to look beyond the closest player on the field.

Take an area 40 x 40 (or a little more or less depending upon what you have available), and break it into smaller 10 x 10 grids. See diagram below.



With a team of 16 players break them into 2 teams of 7 and then have two neutral players who are always on offense. The game is a simple game of keep away so that if the X's have the ball, they try to keep the ball away from the O's. The rules are as follow:

- A pass can't be made to a person in the same grid as the passer.
- A pass to a person in a bordering grid counts as 1 point.
- A pass to a person in a grid two away is worth 2 points.
- A pass to a person in a grid three away is worth 3 points.
- A one touch pass doubles the passes value (which means a one touch pass to a person two grids away is worth 4 points).
- A loss of possession results in a loss of 1 point.

When a team loses possession, if they can win the ball back in the same grid, it's worth 1 point.

First team to 100 points (or whatever you choose) wins.

This game encourages players to maintain possession of the ball, look further than the closest player and spread the field. It also works on defensive transition (winning the ball back as soon as possible).

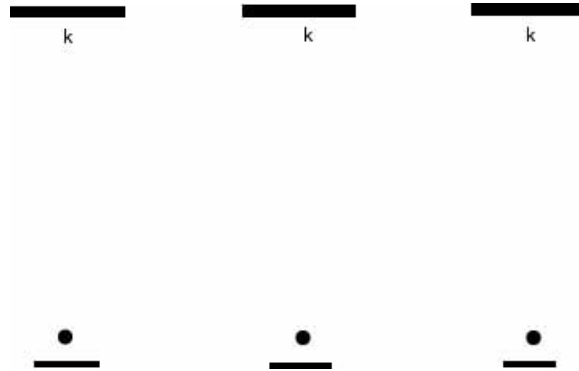
The hardest part of this game is keeping score. It's MUCH easier if you have two scorekeepers (one for each team). If you have a couple of injured players this is a great way to keep them involved.

There are a number of variations you can add in including points for combinations, having to play the ball in the direction the player is facing when they receive the ball, and much, much more.

FineSoccer Drill 87

This exercise works on conditioning, shooting and goalkeeping.

This works best with one gate, three soccer balls, and one goal for every 3 field players, and 1 goalkeeper. The gate is made up of two tall cones approximately 3 feet apart, with a pole keeping them together that is 2 feet high. The gates are 15 yards from the goal (Coerver goals work well with this) and the three balls are 1 yard from the gate closer to the goal (see diagram below).



There are many options that can be done with this exercise and I am going to describe three of them.

First, the player starts between the gate and the balls and jumps over the gate and back (three times) and then hits a quick shot one goal. As soon as the shot is hit, she starts jumping again for the second shot. Three shots are hit (which means 9 jumps over and back real quickly) and then the second player goes. Do this set 2-3 times each.

Next, the player starts on the other side of the gate (away from the goal) and jumps over and back 3 times and then quickly crawls through the gate and shoots. Not only does this work on jumping but it also is a way to encourage the players to stay low on the shot. This is done for three balls and then rotate.

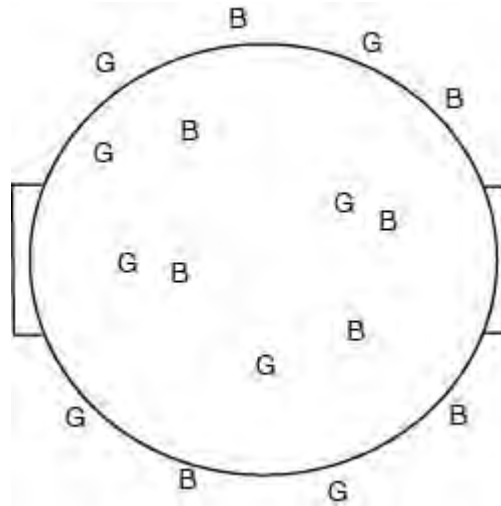
Next, the balls starts on the side of the gate and the shooter starts 5 yards behind the goal. A server plays the ball toward the goal and the shooter runs to the gate, hurdles over it, and quickly shoots the ball. She then turns, hurdles back over the gate turns, and goes again. If you have two or three groups going at the same time, this can be turned into a race (although the shots MUST be on goal).

Each of the activities can be done with or without a keeper in goal and you can add an extra ball or two to make it that much harder.

FineSoccer Drill 88

This activity is a great warm up that will get the players working hard and playing quickly while having a blast.

Use the center circle as boundaries and put two U10 goals on two sides of the circle facing each other. If you have 16 players, have a 4 v 4 game in the middle and the other 8 on the outside broken into two teams (see diagram below).



The players on the inside are trying to score in the goal and can use the players on the outside who are on their team. The players on the outside are restricted to one touch only and the last defender back for each team is the keeper (this will be constantly changing depending on who is the last player back). While there is no restriction of touches in the middle, because of the limited space involved, they have to play quickly or get stripped of the ball.

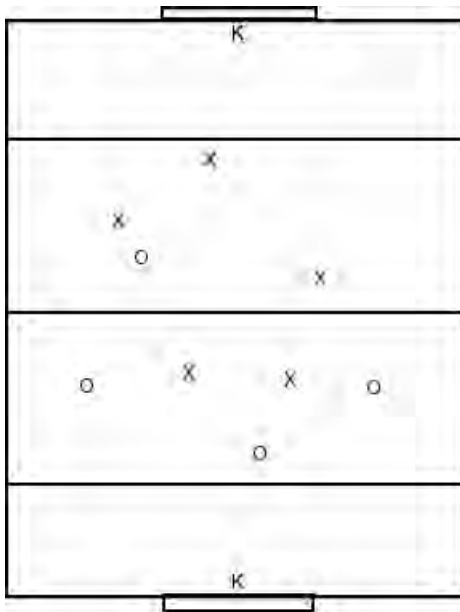
When a team scores, the other team must switch (meaning if the B's score, the G's on the inside go to the outside and the G's on the outside go to the inside). As long as your team keeps scoring the players on your team stay on.

Not only does this game require quick play from all (whether inside or out) it also requires quick transitions and gets a lot of shooting in a short period of time. Play for awhile and you will see your team really get into it.

FineSoccer Drill 89

Here is a great game that works on combination play as well as scoring (and every other aspect of the game as well).

Use a 60 x 44 area (basically half a field using the sides of the 18 as a sideline). There is a goal on each end line and the field has a line 12 yards from each goal and also a line at midfield. There are three players in the defensive half of the field for each team and two players in the offensive half. See diagram below for basic set up.



The basic rules in the beginning are that no one can cross over the midfield line and the 12 yard lines are the offside lines. To score, a team can either shoot from the midfield line or find one of the players in the offensive half of the field to go to team (for this reason, younger groups might want to use a smaller field). This is working on defensively pressuring in the offensive half of the field as well as offensively looking for shooting opportunities as well.

Once the players understand the game, you can modify the rules to allow a player from the defensive half of the field to cross over the midfield line if it results in a scoring opportunity. The way this might work is the ball gets played forward to one of the players in the offensive half of the field and then a player from the back joins her to get a ball laid back for a first time shot (this is recreating playing the ball into a target player and then laying the ball to a midfielder for a first time shot). If the keeper makes a save from this situation, it would be in her best interest to try to counter quickly because now there is a 2 v 2 in the attacking half of the field.

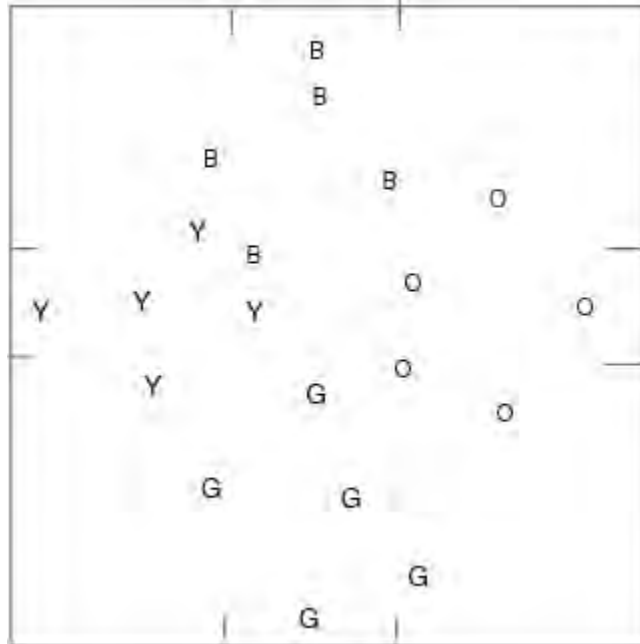
Other options could include allowing a player to come back to defend when an attacking player has crossed over the midfield line or possibly allowing more than one player to cross over midfield to get into the attack (realizing that subjects their team to a quick counter attack).

There are many options that can be added to this game. Consider the various possibilities and you will find ways to help any team.

FineSoccer Drill 90

This activity is a four team and four goal game.

This can be used with a minimum of 16 players and while it's great if you have 4 U10 goals, cones can be used if needed. The dimensions of the field can vary but recently I did it on a 60 x 40 field with a goal centered on each line. A team is assigned to each goal . See the following diagram.



A ball is played into the middle and the teams try to score on any goal EXCEPT the one they are assigned to. So the objective is to score on any of the three goals without giving up a goal. When a goal gets scored, all teams rotate to the right and now are responsible for defending a different goal. Also, each time a goal is scored an additional ball is added onto the field. After the second goal, there would then be 3 balls on the field. Never have more than 3 balls on the field at a time.

You can keep score a number of ways. You can just keep track of goals against or you can do it where a goal counts as 2 points, an assist counts as 1 point, and a goal against counts as -2 points.

Another option is to have it where when a goal is scored, the team that scores and the team that is scored upon switch goals and the other two teams stay where they are.

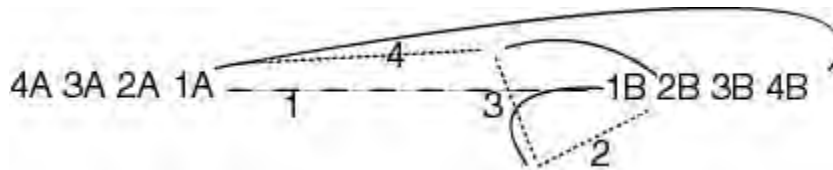
The purpose of this game is to force players to think and always keep themselves balanced defensively.

This is a game that needs to be played a few times for a team to get used to, but they will have fun from the very beginning and will also learn a great deal about the game of soccer.

FineSoccer Drill 91

Here is a simple activity that works on the weighting of passes, the accuracy of passes, movement off the ball, and communications.

Start with two lines (4-5 people per line) approximately 20 yards apart (while everyone says you shouldn't use lines in training, if you keep people moving quickly enough they work). The first person in line A passes the ball to the front of line B and follows the pass and ends up in the back of line B. The first person in line B (player 1B) starts toward the ball as if she is going to receive it but instead steps over the ball and quickly goes wide. The second person in line B (player 2B) plays the ball first time out wide to the 1B who then plays it back to 2B for a wall pass. 2B then passes the ball towards the front of line A and follows the pass at which time it starts over in the opposite direction. 1B goes to the second spot in line B and becomes the next 2B. See diagram below for the movement.



In this small sequence, we have players passing and moving, players dummies balls, showing proper support with angles, proper pacing of passes, and communication. With 4 people per line, the players will get plenty of touches and movement.

Other variations you can do with this activity would include overlapping runs (2B overlaps around 1B to get the ball back), double passes (1B could receive the ball from 2B, spin off and get the double pass) and almost any other combination you want.

This is just a simple example of how you can take a common exercise and accomplish so much more with it by using some creativity.

FineSoccer Drill 92

Many teams don't know how to prepare goal kicks and punts from the keepers (for either team). These are two situations that teams will see quite often over the course of a game, and they need to prepare for them.

One way to practice for these situations is through shadow play. Here is a simple way to work on goal kicks (attacking and defending) as well as punts (attacking and defending).

Start 11 v 1 using 3/4 of a full field with the 1 player being a keeper for the opposing team. Any time there is a stoppage of play, the ball goes to the opposing keeper who alternates between taking punts and goal kicks. When she punts the ball, the other 11 must play as if there is opposition and NOT let the ball bounce but instead, must attack the ball. Also, while one goes for the ball, the others around her must provide proper support. As soon as the ball is brought down and controlled (frequently meaning brought down by one player and controlled by a different player), they then attack the goal at full speed to get used to proper supporting runs and passes. As soon as they get a shot hit (whether it results in a goal or a save or a goal kick) the 11 players must sprint back and prepare for the next ball. One of the things this activity does is get them in the mindset of getting back quickly and into proper spaces. It also is a way for keepers to work on their kicking game.

After a while of doing this, you can do the exact same thing but this time the punts and goal kicks are coming from the attacking teams keeper. This requires different positioning and different ways to receive the ball so, it must be practiced as well.

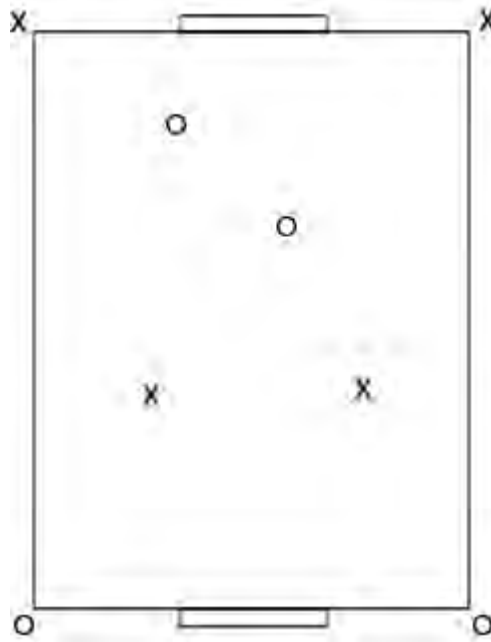
Once you are happy with a teams handling of these balls, the next thing to do is put some more opposition in. Don't go 11 v 11 at this point but rather, start with 4-5 players so there is still success but now it's done under some pressure. Gradually build up to 11 v 11 with the same thing taking place.

A game can be played where each team gets 10 goal kicks and 10 punts and they see who can score more goals. Anytime the ball goes out of play, the next punt or goal kick occurs. While this might not seem like it, if you play this game correctly, there is a LOT of conditioning built into it because you get your keepers playing balls quickly and you have players sprinting back into position before the balls get played.

FineSoccer Drill 93

Here is an excellent game that works on possession, penetration, runs off the ball, and defense.

It's a 2 v 2 game with 4 players in the corners of a field that is 30 x 20 with full-sized goals and keepers. (see diagram below)



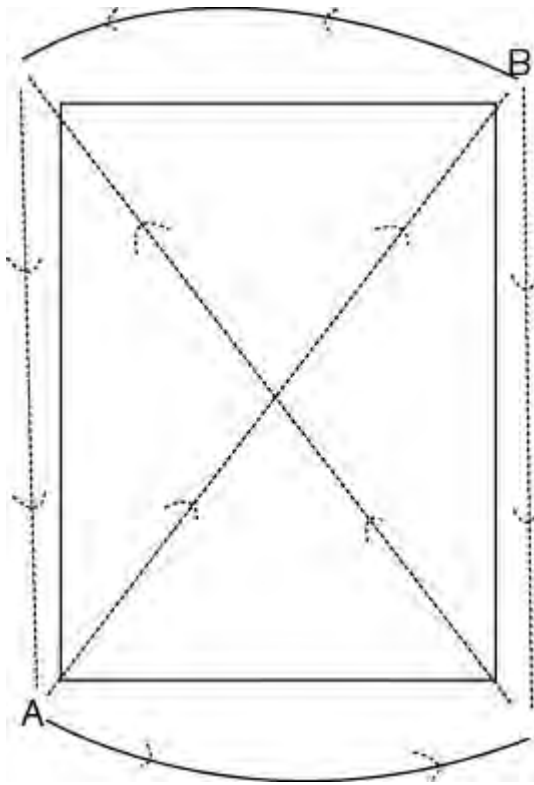
The rules are that a player can go to goal playing 2 v 2 or they can play a ball into the corner. The players in the corner are restricted to one touch AND once the ball is played into a corner in the offensive half of the field and played back, there must be a first time shot. This forces the two players in the middle to make hard runs to get in a position to finish (they could be near/far runs or one of those runs and then the second player could run into a position of support for a shot from a distance). A player can play a ball back to a player in the corner in the defensive half of the field and is NOT required to shoot first time.

The reason I like this activity is that once a ball is played into the offensive corner, both the attacking and defending players must really work hard with the attacking players making hard runs and the defending players trying to beat them to space. It's just like is SUPPOSED to happen in a real game but doesn't seem to very often. By playing this game with these restrictions, you can condition your players to stay "on" in these situations.

FineSoccer Drill 94

Here is a great way to work on passing to the correct foot and with the correct pace.

This is best using a 15 x 8 area. There are two players and one ball. The key is the players must stay outside of this 15 x 8 area. One player makes diagonal passes and the other player makes straight passes. For example, in the diagram below, player A makes diagonal passes to player B who then makes a straight pass down the line back to player A who has made the proper run to get to the spot early. The keys here are that the passes must be made to the outside foot on each pass and also it must be hit with the proper pace to challenge the other person to get to the space in time.



Not only does this activity work on passing, but it also gets the players in the habit of making runs following the pass. As you can see in the diagram above, the runs are not straight but instead are bent runs to increase the angle to receive the ball as much as possible.

Do this for two minutes and then have the players switch roles so player A makes straight passes and player B makes diagonal passes.

There are many variations you can add such as one side chipping the ball and the other bringing it down and playing it on the ground back.

FineSoccer Drill 95

Here is an interesting alternative to traditional shadow training.

Instead of having 11 players on the field for shadow training, put your whole team (could be as many as 22 players) on the field at one time. Put your starters in one color (blue) and the second team in a different color (red). They are all on the same team going the same direction so there will be two right backs, two left backs and so on. The ball starts with a keeper and everyone moves into what they THINK is the proper position. Now there is some pressure on each player to get to the proper position as quickly as possible in order to beat the other player in the position to the spot. The ball can be played to any of the players. You will see players moving quickly to spots because otherwise they will very rarely get the ball.

This activity gets interesting when you see two players playing the same position making completely different runs in the same situation. This is when you, as a coach, should consider stopping play and finding out what each of the players is thinking (the key here is to not assume that one is right and one is wrong but rather for them to use these opportunities for each to learn different options that are available and the thoughts behind each of the options).

From a coaching standpoint, it's extremely important to be open minded in your thinking because you will see things that you had NOT anticipated and you can't jump to the assumption that it's wrong since it's not what you had thought of. It's also important for a coach to know when to stop things and when to let things go because if you stop them too often, you will lose the focus of your players.

If you have enough players, you can also add defenders to this activity to force the attacking players to make decisions based on defenders positioning. The only problem with this is that not many teams have enough players to do this. If you can combine two teams to work on this, it's definitely worthwhile. You

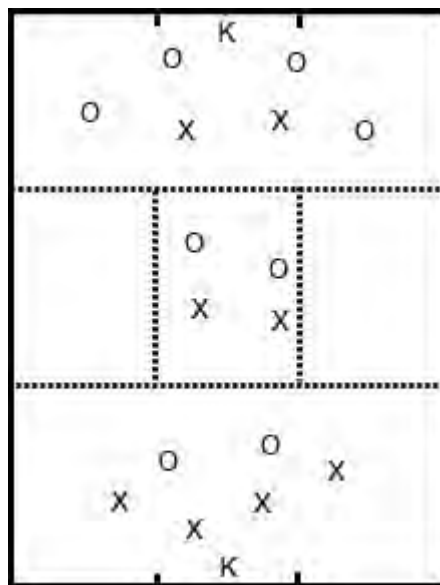
do NOT have to have 22 players on the field either. You might just decide to have your midfielders and forwards doubled up or really, it could be any position that you want to emphasize.

FineSoccer Drill 96

This game is a great way to work on getting your outside backs into the attack as well as emphasizing the importance of the center-midfielders making themselves available at all times.

Start with a field that is 60 x 44 (which is half the length of a full-sized field and the width of the 18 yard box) with full-sized goals on each end. Put a 20 x 20 box in the middle of this field. I am going to set this up with the assumption that you play a 4-4-2 but it could be adapted for your teams formation.

Have four players in each back 3rd of the field, two players from each team in the middle 20x20 box, and 2 players upfront for each team. Plus put a keeper in each goal. (see diagram for set up)



The rules are that the 2 center players for each team must stay in the middle area. The two forwards for each team must stay up front. The outside backs are allowed to go forward which encourages them to get into the attack and make early serves. The forwards on the defending team are allowed to go back and defend IF an outside back goes forward. Another rule is that a team can't go to

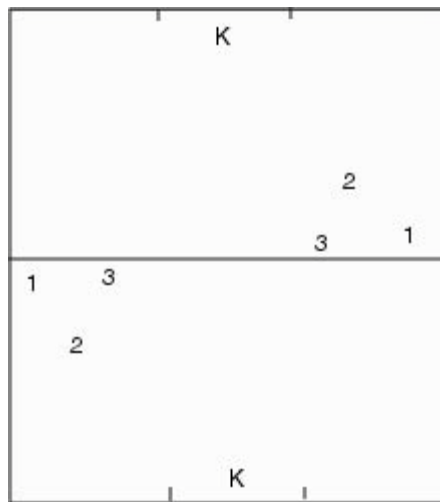
goal until a center midfielder has touched the ball (it can either come from the back or be played back from a forward).

This game works on runs from the forwards, backs defending, forwards defending, midfielders showing for the ball, backs going forward, shots, goalkeeping, combination play, and much, much more. Deviations are easy to make by changing formations, or the size of the box in the middle.

FineSoccer Drill 97

Here is a good activity for working on simple combinations as well as finishing and goalkeeping.

Start with two goals on a 60 x 44 area (this can be adjusted depending on team size and also field space). Three players are working in each half of the field at a time and players rotate quickly. (see diagram below for set up)



First, 1 passes to 2 who lays the ball back for 3 to shoot. Two follows the shot and then 1 goes to 2 and 3 goes to the line behind where 1 started.

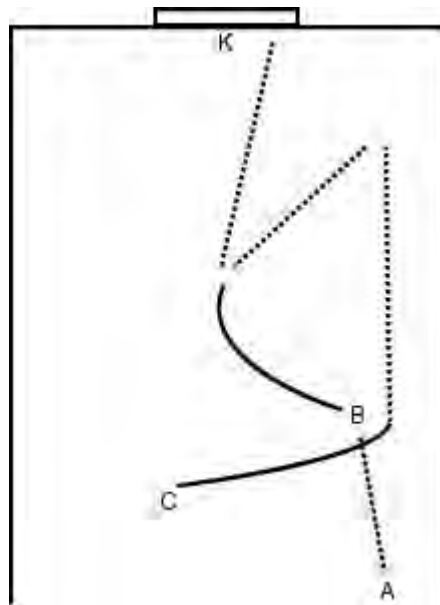
Another variation involves 2 checking to the ball, and 1 plays a soft pass in. Two plays it back to 1 and spins off to receive the double pass back, then 1 pushes the ball down the line and 2 runs it down and chops it back to 3 for a shot. The key here is for the initial pass into 2 to be soft to "sucker" the defender into trying to win it for the double pass to work. Also, 3 must hold back as this is NOT a cross but rather a ball that is chopped back for the shot.

There are many other variations you can use with this set up and with two groups going at one time, you can have a team of 18 players staying very active working on passing, movement off the ball, finishing, goalkeeping, crossing and so on.

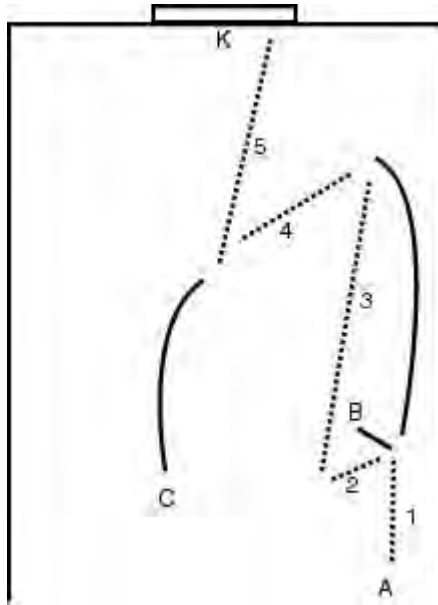
FineSoccer Drill 98

Here are some excellent ways to work on combinations and finishing as well as chopping balls, and goalkeeping

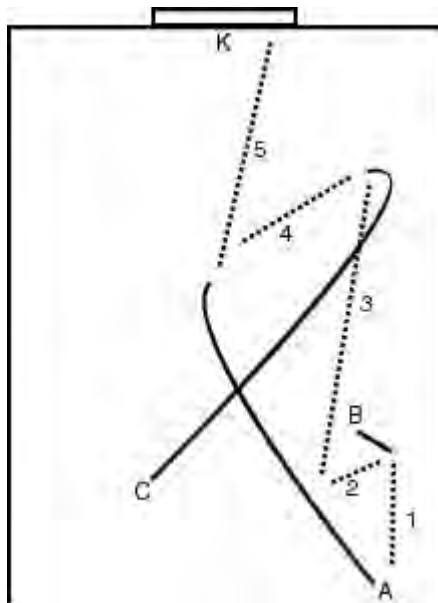
The first activity involves a three person combination with a pass, takeover, hard push and a chop back to a shot. Player A passes the ball to player B who then executes a takeover with player C. Player C then takes a hard touch down the line and chops the ball back for player B to finish. They rotate with A going to B and B going to C and a new player coming on for A. (see diagram below)



Next is a similar combination with a double pass. Player B checks back to the ball and receives a soft pass from player A. Player A then gets closer to B and B passes the ball back to A and then spins off for a double pass. Player B then chops the ball back to C for the shot . See the following diagram.



Next Player B checks back for the ball just like he did in the previous exercise and then plays the ball back to player A. Player C makes a diagonal run to the corner receives the ball and chops the ball back to player A for the first time shot. (see diagram below)



There are many other options that are available using this type of configuration. Be creative and have fun.

FineSoccer Drill 99

This is not a drill, per se, but a suggestion to make all of your drills relate to a soccer game.

Instead of having players stand in line and wait to stay within the rules of the drill, I prefer to keep my players involved in different types of games and exercises that keep the players more involved and even more importantly, keep the players thinking in terms of playing the game as opposed to doing the drill. An excellent example can be seen in the game described in Drill 89. Here you will see that according to the rules of the game, the players can't cross over the midfield line. When most people would do this activity, if a player crossed over the line even slightly, the coach would stop the game and award the ball to the opposing team. That would be an example of playing the rules of the drill. However, if you are trying to work on a given situation in a game, it doesn't always come out exactly as you planned. In the game mentioned above, if a ball gets played back to a player who slightly crosses the line to get a first time shot hit, we let that go because while it violated the rules of the drill, we want them to get into the habit of playing the game and too many "drills" are done at the expense of the game of soccer.

In creating your training sessions, look to find games that are soccer related in order to create teaching opportunities. If you can do this on a regular basis, you will be more successful as a coach.

FineSoccer Drill 100

Here are a couple of simple things to do in bad weather in a small space to work on individual skills. These can be done in a basement or garage with just one player and one ball.

Start by putting a line on the floor approximately 10 yards long (use tape or chalk so it won't permanently mark up the floor). Start on the right side of the line with the ball by the outside of the foot. Take a soft touch with the outside of the right foot so that the ball goes slightly forward and across the line. Very quickly, touch the ball the second time with the inside of the right foot and go down the line with as many quick touches as you can using just the inside and then the outside of the right foot. When you get to the end of the line, turn and return. Do

this for a 1 minute realizing that the speed of moving down the line doesn't matter but the number of touches does.

Next do the exact same thing using the inside and outside of the left foot. Do this 5 times with each foot.

Next, go with the outside of the right foot, inside of the right foot, outside of the left foot, and then inside of the left foot.

These activities work on quick cuts and fast footwork.

Next do the exact same thing but instead of cutting the ball with the inside and outside of the foot, you would roll your foot over the ball dragging it with the sole of your foot (just like as is done with a role-catch move). Start with the ball on the outside of the right foot and roll your foot over the ball so that it crosses the line and is not at the inside of your right foot. Then roll it back with the right foot again. Do this for a 1 minute and then switch and do the same with your left foot.

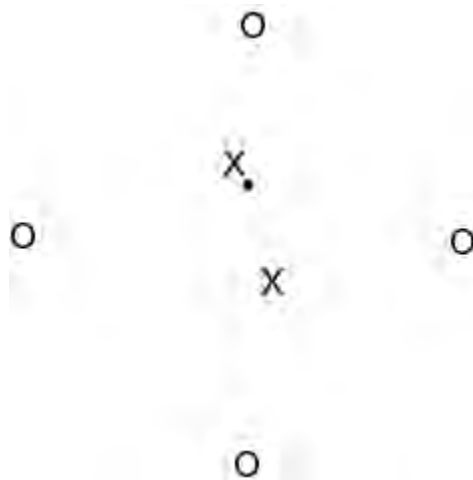
You can do most of the moves described indoors using this line and the quicker you can do them, and the more you do them, the more comfortable you will be doing them in a game under pressure.

Like most activities, the only limitations on variations is your imagination.

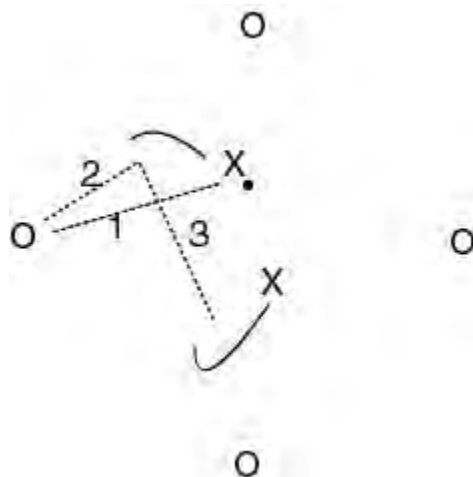
FineSoccer Drill 101

Here is a simple warm up activity to work on pairs of players (primarily midfielders and forwards) working together.

Start with 4 players on the outside and 2 groups of 2's in the middle (the diagram is only going to show 1 group of 2 in the middle to make it easier to understand).



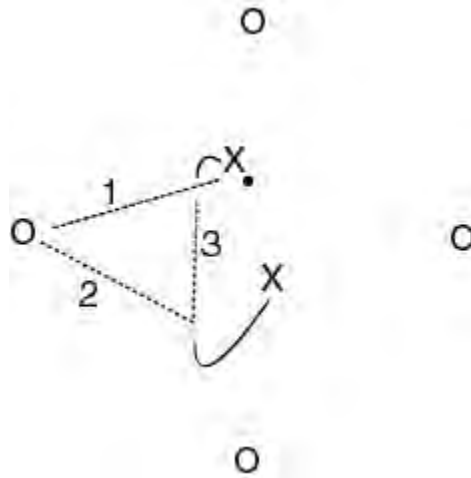
The X with the ball plays the ball to an outside O and then moves to make herself available for the return pass. The second X must move with the first X to receive this second pass. Everything is done one touch. (see diagram below)



This forces each of the players to play the ball with the correct pace as well as the correct direction because each of the balls must be played to the proper foot in order for it to be successful with one touch passes.

Next we start with the same set up but with a different pattern. Now the first X plays the ball to an O and the ball gets played to the second X who then finds the first X. The keys here are for the two X's too support each other in a way that they are close enough together for support but not too close to make it easy to mark both with one player. Also they must support each other on the correct side and the balls must be played with the correct pace and accuracy for this to work. With two groups in the middle, the players must keep their heads up at all time

and communicate effectively to avoid running into each other. (see diagram below)

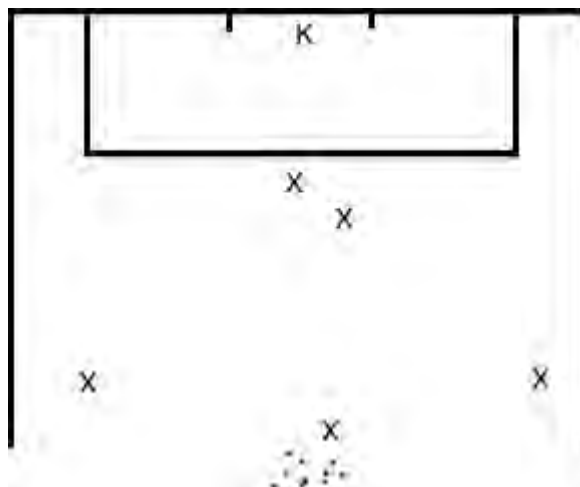


There are numerous options that can be run off of this simple warm up limited only by your imagination.

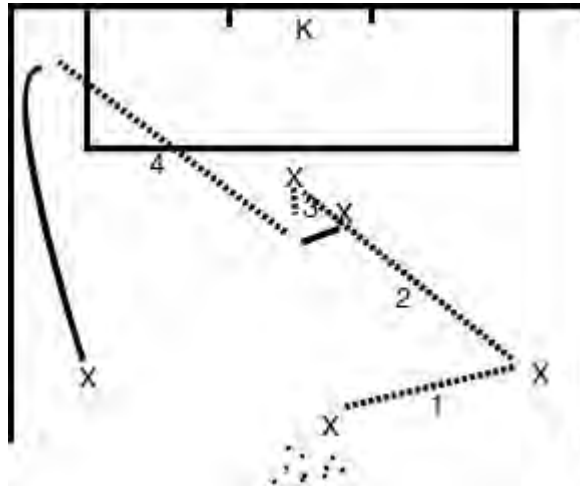
FineSoccer Drill 102

This is a continuation of the training session started in Drill 101.

Now we go with 5 players going toward goal (with a keeper in goal). Two are forwards and three are midfielders. (see the diagram below for set up)



Next is the same pattern but now they use the opposite midfielder as well.



Each of these patterns would end with a cross and a finish. Next, we would add defenders (one marking the two forwards and one marking the 3 midfielders). Gradually add more defenders to where you are even numbers or even attacking one short.

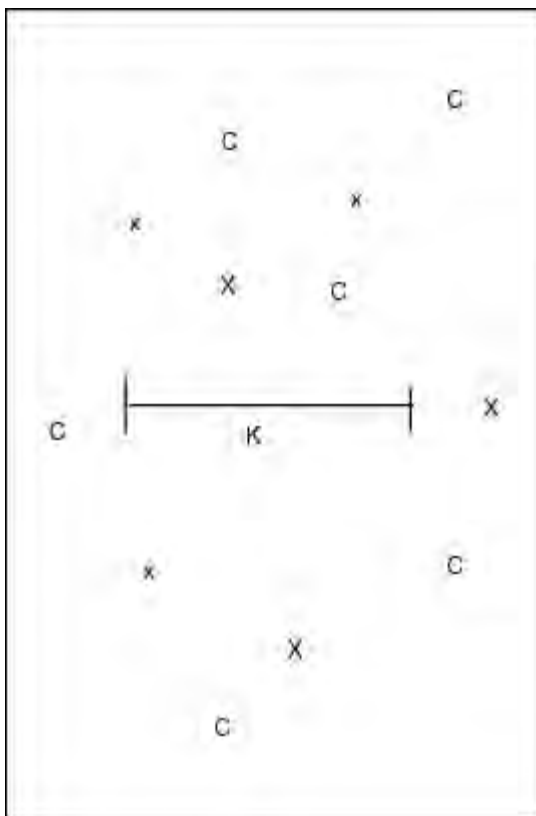
There are many other options you can try and it's this type of pattern work that can make a team more effective in their attack.

FineSoccer Drill 103

This drill works on passing, defending, finishing, goalkeeping, and most importantly, vision.

There are two teams (X's and C's) and a field approximately 60 x 40 (the size can vary greatly depending on what is available and also the number of players). In the middle of the field is a Coerver Goal (or two goals back to back if that is all that is available).

In the example below, it's 6 v 6 with one keeper. The rules are simple. Either team can score on either goal. If there is only one keeper she has to protect both sides or, if you have two keepers, one can be assigned to each goal. See the following diagram for the setup.



The way this usually starts is that all players end up on one side of the field so both teams underutilize spacing. Real quickly, one player will catch on and offensively stay spaced correctly. This allows this one player to take advantage of a long pass or an errant pass. There are no restrictions in terms of number of players on a side although at any point you can add restrictions to improve the game.

I have used this game a number of times and can't even begin to tell you how much the players enjoyed themselves while at the same time working on different aspects of the game.

FineSoccer Drill 104

Here is a fun way to work on chipping, receiving, and volleying. Two players are a little over 35 yards apart standing in a 5 yard buffer zone (see the following diagram for layout).



Player 1 starts with the ball and chips the ball to player 2's chest. If the ball goes into the buffer zone that player 2 is in on the fly, it counts 1 a point. If player 2 is able to make contact with the ball with his chest, it counts as 2 points. If player 2 is able to receive the ball on his chest and then make contact with the ball and the foot before the ball hits the ground, it's 3 points. If player 2 cannot only make contact with his foot after receiving it with the ball but can also volley the ball back over player 1's line, it's a 4th point. If player 1 is able to receive the volleyed ball with his chest, it's a 5th point. So, on any chipped ball, there can be anywhere from 0-5 points awarded to the team of 2. Each player should take 10 chips and then switch.

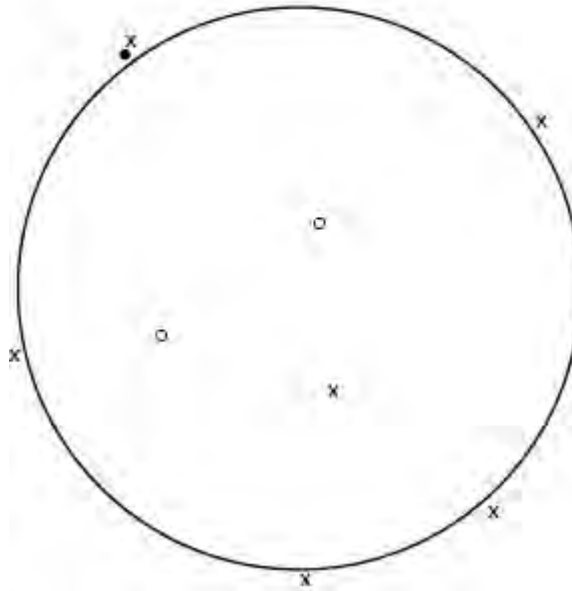
This is a great way to turn chipping and receiving into a contest within a team. You can do it where teams of two compete against each other to see who can get the most points on 20 chips total (10 each) or if you want them to work really hard, play the game for a time period to force them to go quickly as well.

The distances and points can be altered for different age groups and abilities but for an older age group, really challenge them to become proficient in their ability to play a ball (and receive a ball) over a long distance.

Fine Soccer Drill 105

Here is an easy way to work on maintaining possession and also look for penetration. As a bonus, it works on a central midfielder or forward creating space and getting open.

Start with 5 offensive players on a circle and 2 defenders in the circle. Then add a 6th offensive player in the middle of the circle acting as a target player (see diagram below but realize the circle is just so you see the layout, it's not really necessary).



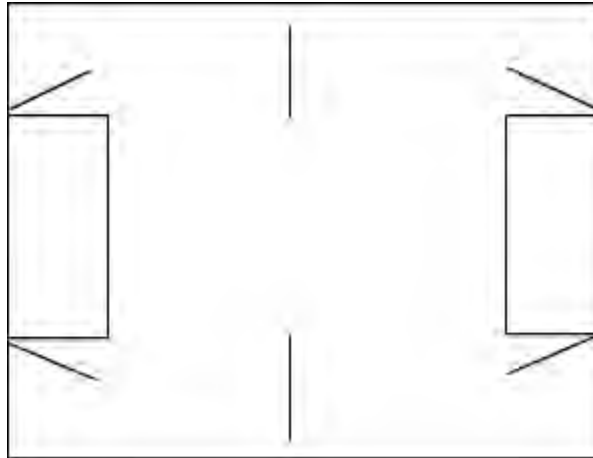
Like a normal 5 v 2 situation the players on the outside try to maintain possession of the ball while also looking to split the two defenders with a pass. The X in the middle is trying to put herself in a position to receive the ball (this player represents either a central midfielder or a forward). To turn this into a competition, have the players pair up so that each pair plays defense for 2 minutes straight. Every time there is 5 consecutive passes on the outside it's a point. Every time the two defenders get split it's a point. Every time the middle X gets the ball it's 2 points and every time the middle X gets the ball via a split it's 3 points. After the 2 minutes, the next two defenders go in the middle.

The next step in this progression could be as simple as going 3 v 2 in the middle instead of 2 v 1 with all of the other rules staying the same.

FineSoccer Drill 106

Here is a great game to emphasize width in attack as well as taking the ball to the end line and serving the ball.

Start with a full field (or smaller if you don't have enough players) with two full size goals in the normal area. Next, with coaching poles (or corner flags or even cones) make 6 more goals on the field as shown in the diagram below.



There are numerous rules you can use in this game.

Let's start with the rule that each time the ball goes through the two goals on the midfield line it counts as a point (it doesn't matter which way the ball goes through as they will be rewarded for playing a negative pass through the goals to relieve pressure).

Next is the rule that if a ball is taken down to the end line (of the goal the team is attacking) and serves the ball to a teammate through the goal, it's another point.

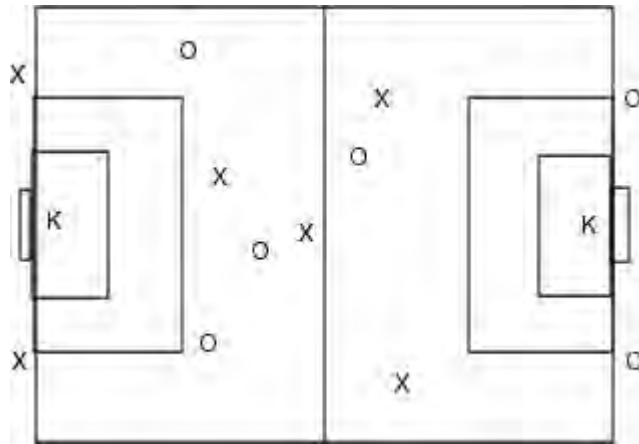
Next a goal scored in the real goal counts as 3 points (the important thing to remember is that while possession and serving balls is nice the ultimate goal is to still score a goal).

Other variations include changing the rules so that instead of rewarding a team for playing a ball through the side goals, you require them to do so before attacking goal. Or require that the ball go through two of the field goals (any two) before a team can attack the real goal.

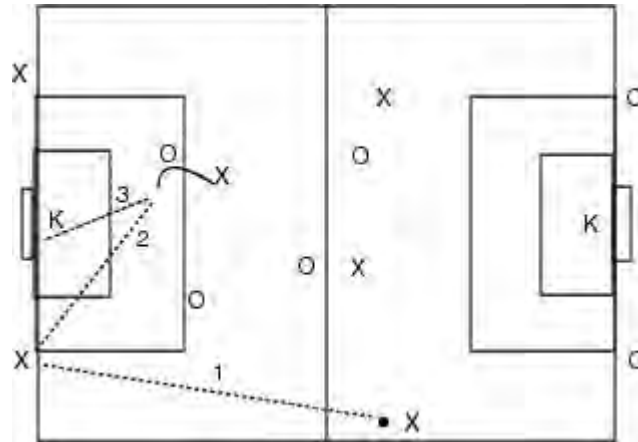
There are numerous options depending upon what you want to emphasize but this game allows you to make minor rule changes and work on many different aspects of the game

FineSoccer Drill 107

Here is an excellent way to work on possession, penetration, and runs inside the box. Start with a 4 v 4 (plus keepers) in a 60 x 40 area with two full sized goals (you can use more players on the inside by adding space). There will be 4 players on the end lines (2 on each end line). See diagram below for the set up.



The basic rules of this game are that it's a normal game of soccer with the exception being that a team can use the players on their offensive end line. The players on the end line are limited to one touch. The idea of this game is for the field players to look to maintain possession until they have set up a situation where they can either go to goal or find a player on the end line to initiate the runs in the box. To see an example of the type of scoring opportunities that can be created, see the following diagram.



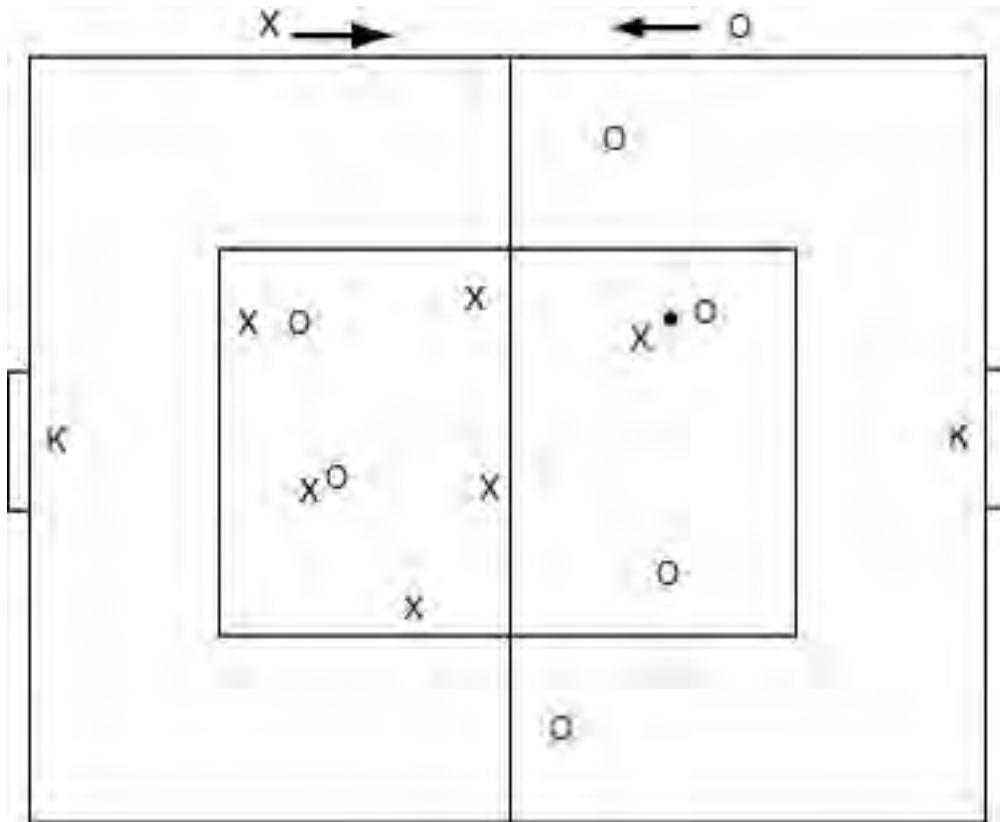
There are many other options that can be added into this activity (including putting players on the side lines as well who can provide support for either team).

This is a great way to work on many different parts of the game.

FineSoccer Drill 108

Here is a great way to work on team defense and forcing players out of the middle of the field.

This is actually a simple game. The rule is that anytime the attacking team makes a touch of the ball in the box in the offensive half of the field, they get a point. Looking at the following diagram, if O can touch the ball in the box on the left hand side of the field, they get a point. This encourages the X's to force the O's play the ball wide and to defensively compress the field. When the X's win the ball, the O's attempt to defend the right hand box area in this diagram.



In order to prevent a team from cheating defensively, a goal counts as 6 points. From an offensive view, it's still in a team's best interests to attack the goal.

Not only does this game work on defense, it also helps prepare a team offensively for when an opponent packs it in defensively.

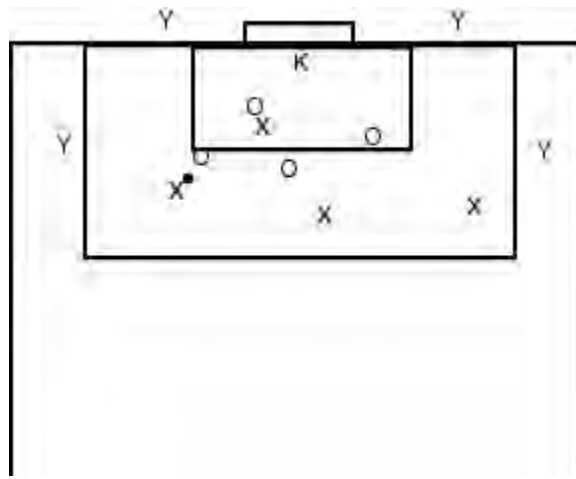
This is a great way from a coaching standpoint to emphasize one thing (staying compressed defensively) while also working on all of the other aspects of the game.

FineSoccer Drill 109

Here is an interesting way to work on runs in the box and finishing under pressure.

This works best with 12 field players and 1 keeper although it certainly can be adapted for other numbers. Break the field players into 3 teams (X's, O's, and

Y's). The X's and O's start inside the 18 with a keeper in goal. The Y's are on the outside of the 18 as shown in the following diagram



The X's start on offense and attack the goal with the O's defending. The X's can either go straight to goal or play a ball to any of the Y's who are restricted to one touch. The Y's can either play back to the X's or to another Y who then can find the X's making a run. If the O's win the ball they must take the ball over the top of the 18 at which point they turn and become the attacking team. If the keeper wins the ball (either by making a save or intercepting a pass) she plays the ball to the team that was on defense.

Play a 5 minute game and then rotate so either the X's or O's go on the outside and the Y's play in the middle.

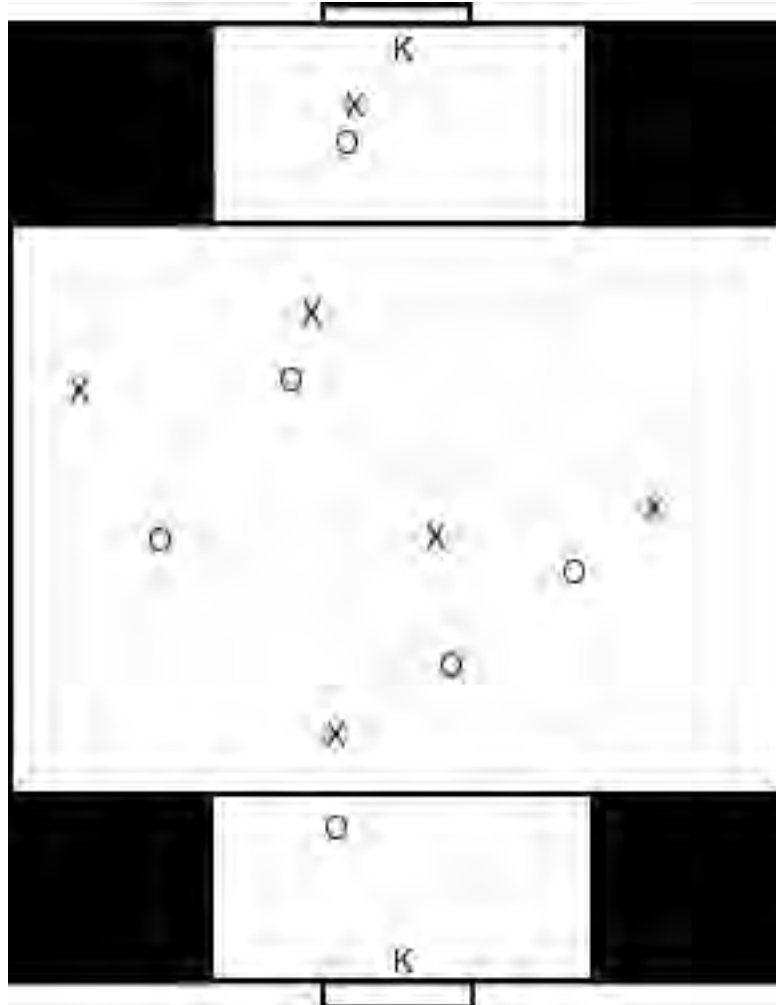
There are numerous variations in this type of game such as requiring some type of combination play in order to score a goal or an extra point is awarded for goals off of headers and so on.

This exercise is a great way to work on runs in the box and not only is it a fun game to play but there are a lot of coachable moments being created regarding runs in the box in a short period of time.

FineSoccer Drill 110

This is a bit of a continuation of the exercises in Drill 109.

Start with a 6 v 6 or 8 v 8 game on half a field with two full goals and keepers. The areas from the end line to the 18 extended outside of the penalty area are designated as safe areas (the safe areas are represented by the shaded black areas in the following diagram). This means that the team defending in their defensive half, cannot go into safe area. The purpose of the game is to encourage the attacking team to get the ball wide into the safe area and then make the appropriate runs in the box to create scoring opportunities.



One thing to consider in this type of set up would be to not allow the attacking player in the safe area to play too slowly which would create too much of an artificial situation. This can be done either by limiting the touches in the safe area or limiting the time allowed in the area.

Some rules that can be added are that a goal that is scored from a cross from the safe area counts as 2 points and a goal from any other area counts as 1

point. Or, you can put in the rule that a certain type of goal can count as more than others (for example, if there has been an emphasis on near post runs, a goal coming from a near post run gets a bonus point).

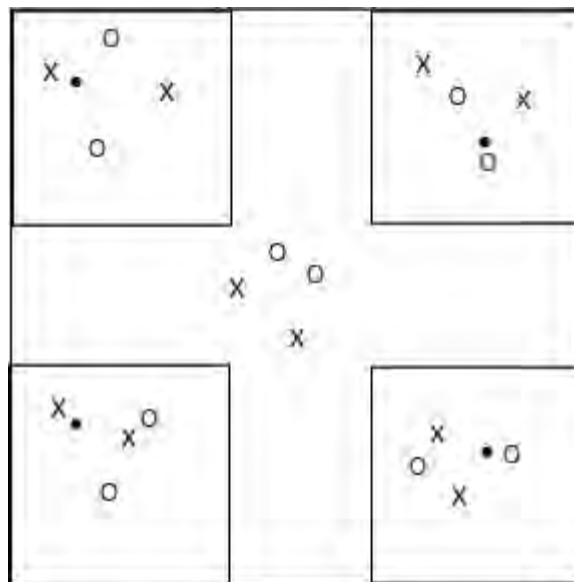
For younger ages who don't always see the importance of attacking from the flanks, a team can be awarded a point simply for getting the ball into the safe area and getting a cross him.

There are many variations that can be added to this activity only limited only by your imagination.

FineSoccer Drill 111

Here is an interesting exercise that works on possession, communication, and helping midfielders determine when to support and when it's not needed both offensively and defensively.

Start with 4, 10 x 10 grids with some space between each grid. There should be two X's versus two O's possession games going on in each grid. There are also two extra X's and O's in the middle. See diagram below for the set up.



The objective in this game is for a team to have possession in all four grids at the same time. To help accomplish this, the four players in the middle (two X's and two O's) can go into any grid that they want to help their teammates. If one of the X floaters sees that her teammates are losing their battle in one of the

grids, she can go in and turn it into a 3 v 2 instead of 2 v 2. Or, she can join a grid to help her teammates maintain possession if they are down a player in a 2 v 3 type situation.

Not only does this work on possession in the 2 v 2 games, but the 2 teammates who are floating will be working on communicating to decide who goes where (or maybe they would decide to both go to the same place). Players in the grid would also be working on communicating (if they need help, they should communicate with the floaters to get help).

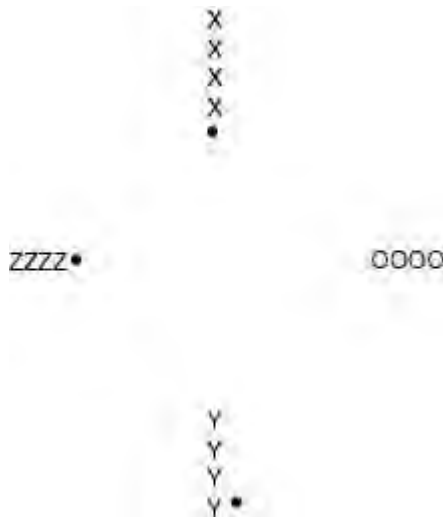
One of the hardest things in this game is for the coach to determine when a team has possession of all four balls at any one time. Injured players can help with this aspect of the game.

This type of an exercise takes some time for it to work because in the beginning it will be mass confusion. However, once they understand how to play this game, it can really help in many different aspects of the game.

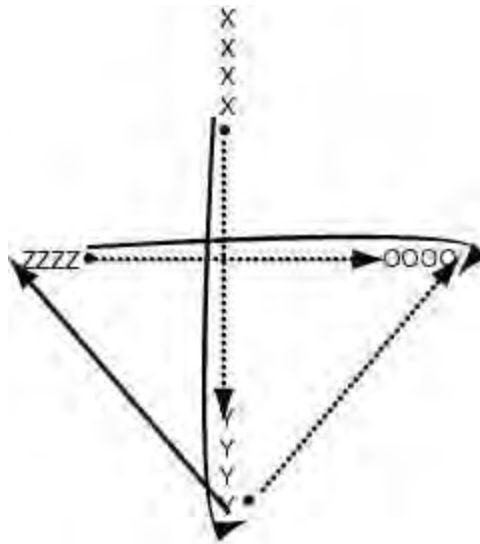
FineSoccer Drill 112

Here is an activity that works on passing, receiving, movement after passing, and communication. Before even describing it, I should warn you that when you first try it, you might see mass confusion. Let the players work it out and it will force them to think.

Start with four lines of 3-4 set up as shown below.



There are three balls (one in the front of line Z, one in the front of line X, and one in the back of line Y). The first player in line X passes the ball to the first person in line Y and then sprints to the back of line Y. At the same time, the first person in line Z passes to the first person in line O and sprints to the back of line O. The important thing for them to work on is getting a good sprint in after the pass. Everyone will have to keep their head up to make sure they don't run into each other or get hit by a ball. At the same time this is taking place, the last player in line Y passes the ball to the last player in line O and then sprints to the back of line Z. In other words, the pass is made counter clockwise and the run is made clockwise. See the diagram below to get a better understanding of all of the movement.



The balls played from the front players keep going back and forth between the two lines and the ball being played in back goes around in a circle.

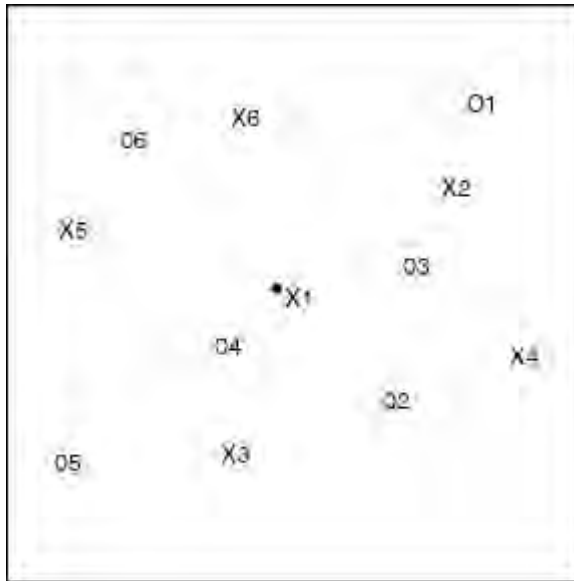
There will be three balls moving at all times (the two that are going back and forth should be one touch and the one that is going in a circle can be two touch) as well as at least three players running at all times. Players will have to constantly be communicating to know who to pass to and where to go next.

This is a fun warm up activity that includes the whole team (anywhere from 12-20 players can keep active in this activity) and can be used for various age groups.

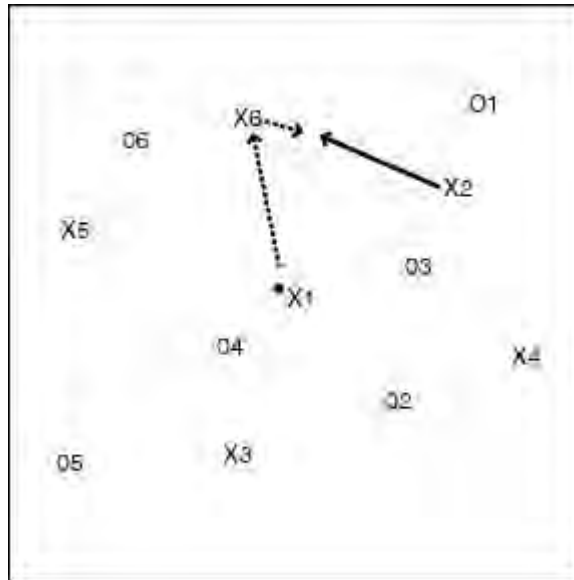
FineSoccer Drill 113

Here is an activity that works on different aspects of heading.

12 players are broken into two teams (X's and O's) and are in a 40 x 40 grid (the numbers and size of the grid can vary) See the diagram below for setup.



X1 starts with the ball in her hands (the players aren't actually numbered but this is just for demonstration purposes). She throws the ball (proper soccer throw in) to any of her teammates who will then head the ball to a third teammate who receives the ball with using the normal laws of soccer (no hands). Any time there is a successful throw, head and reception under control, it's 1 point for the team. The definition of a successful reception should be defined ahead of time but might be a ball that is controlled at the feet and then dribbled two times. To see an example, in the following diagram X1 throws the ball to X6 who heads the ball down to X2 who receives the ball. This would result in a point for the X's.



If the ball hits the ground after the ball is thrown and before it's headed, the ball automatically goes to the opposing team. If the third player gets possession of the ball and takes two touches under control, she is allowed to pick the ball up uncontested (otherwise you are risking injury of players trying to pick the ball up while defenders are trying to kick it away).

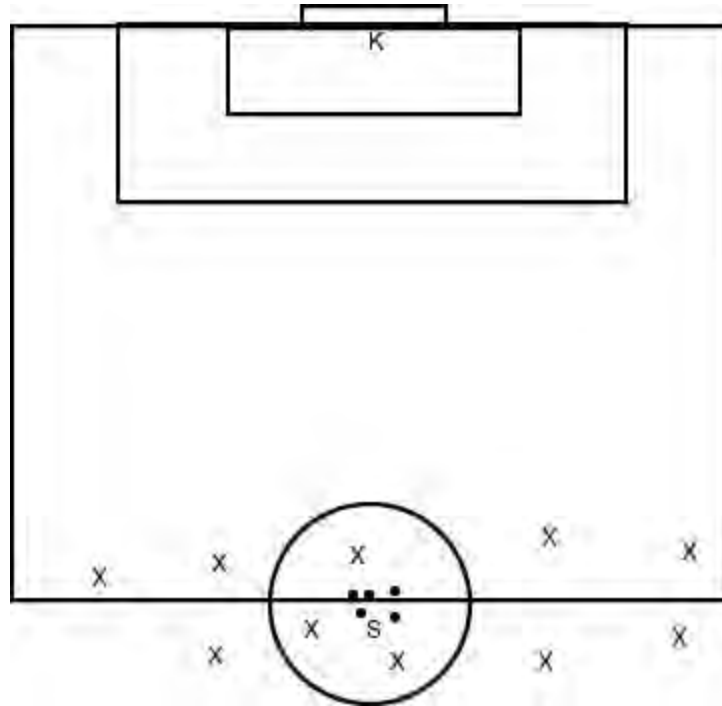
While this might seem like a game geared primarily toward younger players, you would be surprised at how effective it is for more experienced players as well. With the younger players it works on proper throw-ins and not being too afraid to head the ball and so on. For the more experienced players, it works on the above as well as proper spacing and support (it doesn't do you any good to be open by yourself so the players are working together and communicating) as well as learning how to not just head the ball but also head the ball down to feet for a teammate to handle when it's appropriate. For older players, you can also allow double headers which, if then controlled, would count as 2 points.

There are many variations of this activity. Give it a try and see how many different things you are working on while the team has fun!

FineSoccer Drill 114

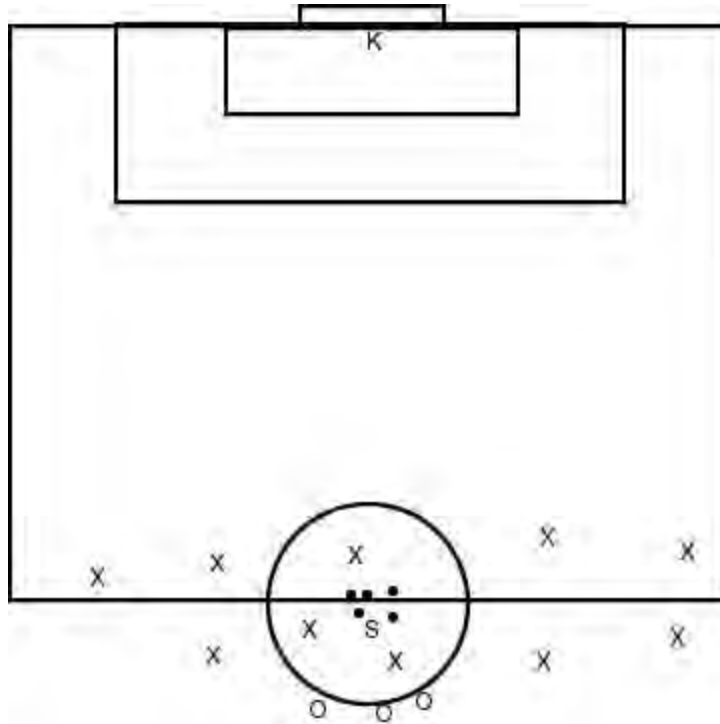
Today's activity works on making the transition from offense to defense and then back to offense in the defensive half of the field.

Start with all 10 field players on the starting team within 10 yards of midfield and the keeper in goal. A server (the coach) should be in the center circle with a number of soccer balls (see diagram below for set up).



The server plays a long ball and the X's have to quickly organize themselves to win the ball and then work the ball back down the field (this is a form of shadow play but done from an unusual starting point). This is good preparation for when a team is dispossessed in midfield and the opponent plays a long ball over the top. Rather than having all players go to the ball, they would work on getting into good supporting position as well.

Once they are able to make this quick transition effectively, the coach could then add a couple of opponents who start just on the other side of the center circle. As soon as the ball is played by the server, these opponents try to pressure and win the ball. Start with three opposing players and gradually build up to 11 v 11 if the numbers are available.

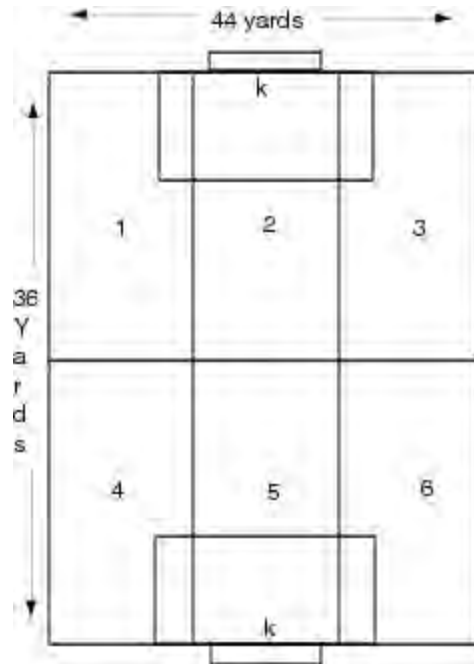


This is a great way to work on transition, support, communication (especially from the keeper), conditioning, and much, much more.

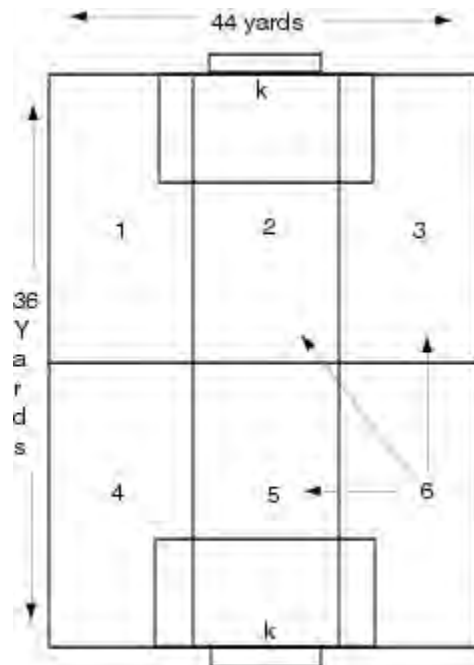
FineSoccer Drill 115

Here is an activity for younger players to work on maintaining some shape and balance. Try to discourage them from just "chasing the ball".

Start with a field that is 36 yards long and 44 yards wide with two full-sized goals (this would be two 18 yard boxes). Then break the field into 6 even grids inside of the field. The game will be a 3 v 3 game plus keepers. Each field player is assigned a grid. See the following diagram for the set up.



The game is very simple. Players 1,2, and 3 are playing against 4,5, and 6. The main rule is a player can only go into another grid that touches their original grid. For example, player 6 can stay within her own grid and can go into the grids where 2,3, and 5 start but can't go into the grids of 1 or 4. See diagram below for allowed movement.

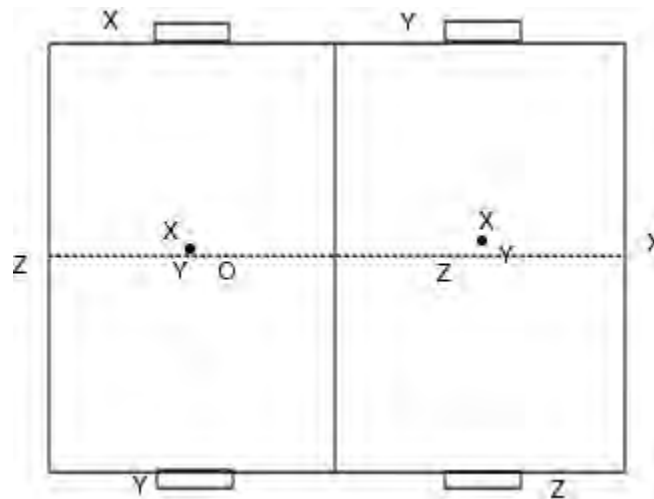


This activity allows movement and support while also emphasizing some discipline and balance.

Fine Soccer Drill 116

This exercise is a great way to work on soccer fitness, taking players on, and shielding as well as tackling and much, much more.

The game is basically 1 v 1 v 1 going from one sideline to the other with small goals. There are three players on the field and whichever player has the ball attacks and the other two players defend. If a player wins the ball, then she must attack the furthest goal. If there are 12 players involved in training, you would have two groups playing and two resting for 90 second periods and then they would switch. The resting players would be in charge of making sure there is always a ball in play. See diagram below for an example of the set up.



By going sideline to sideline for 90 seconds, the players get a tremendous amount of conditioning in while also working on many other aspects of the game.

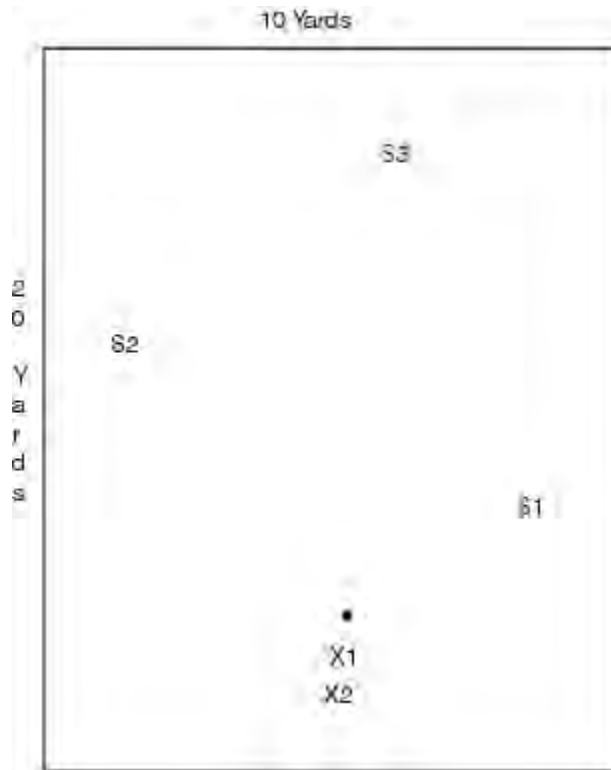
Other variations can include allowing the player with the ball to attack either goal or allowing them to use the players on the outside who would be restricted to one touch. Also, instead of three players playing at a time, there can be 4 so it's always 1 v 4.

This is a great way to work on fitness while maintaining the soccer feel. If each group gets 5 turns and the transitions between games can be held to 30 seconds, in a 20 minute period, you can accomplish many things.

FineSoccer Drill 117

This activity is done in groups of 5 so if you have 15 players do this in three groups.

The area is 10 x 20 and the set up is as shown in the diagram below.



X1 begins the activity by passing the ball to S1

X1 then moves forward

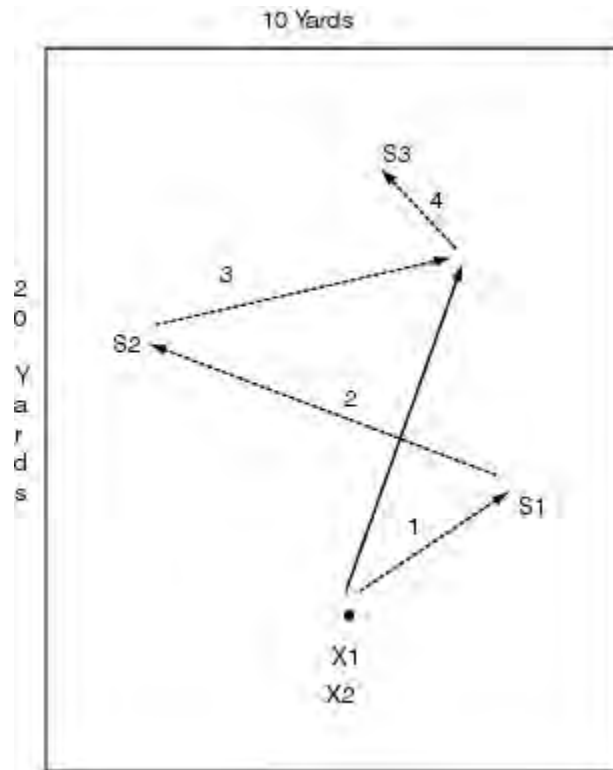
S1 passes the ball to S2

S2 passes the ball to X1

X1 passes the ball to X2

X2 passes the ball to S1 and the whole pattern reverses directions

See the following diagram to see the pattern.



Another variation is:

X1 begins the activity by passing to S2

S2 passes to S1

S1 passes the ball into the path of X1 who passes to X3 and so on

The thing I like about this activity is that it encourages a run after the initial pass and also works on three player combinations which is something that is lacking in a lot of players games.

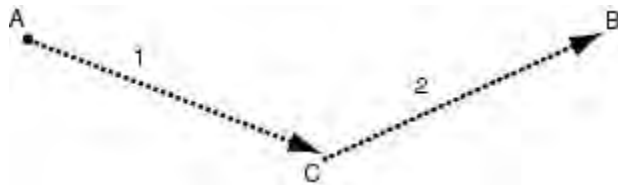
Fine Soccer Drill 118

This is a great activity to work on first touch, short passes, and movement to open your body up to receive a ball properly.

Start with three players in a triangle close enough together to make the players work hard. See the following diagram for an example of the starting positions.



Players A and B are 10 yards apart on a line and player C is 5 yards off the line. Player A starts with the ball. A passes to C (and in this case, passes specifically to C's right foot) and C must move her feet so that she lets the ball roll past her left foot and plays the ball to player B's right foot with a first time pass. Player B then one touches the ball back to players C's left foot and C plays the ball to A's left foot. See diagram below for an example.



Since every pass is hit one touch, player C will have to be constantly moving her feet in order to get opened up and play the ball with the correct foot and to the correct foot.

Player C does this for 1 minute and then they rotate and each player gets a turn to go. Once each player has gone twice, they move on up to the next step in the progression. Player A will next play the ball toward C's left foot. C will reach across her body with her right foot, and with the outside of the right foot play the ball back across her body so that she can next play the ball to player B's right foot using the inside of the right foot. B then plays the ball back toward C's right foot and C reaches across with the outside of the left foot to receive the ball and player it across her body so she can pass the ball with the inside of her left foot to A's left foot. Again, this requires accurate passing by all players and constant movement by the player in the middle.

Next, the player in the middle can do inside of the foot volleys then side volleys, then thigh traps to a volley then chest trap to a volley then headers. There are many different options in doing an activity like this to keep them working on their touches while also doing some fast footwork and some conditioning.

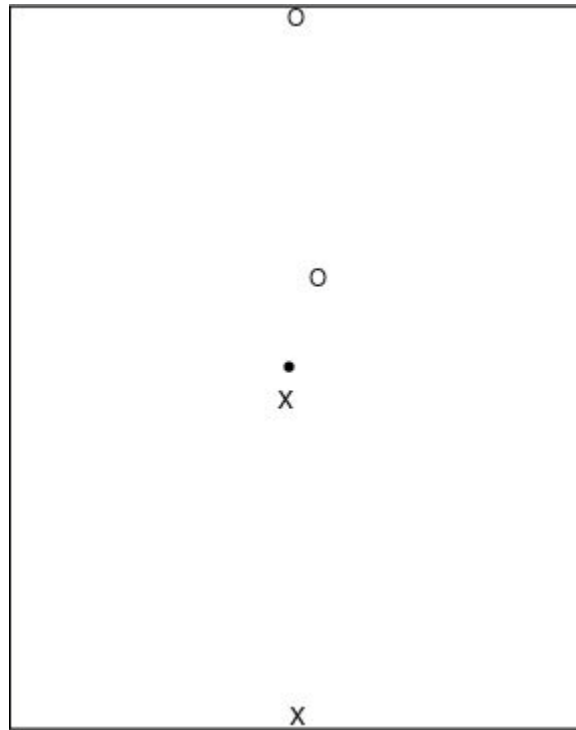
Even when the players are resting, they are still working on their passing (playing first touch) and still having to concentrate at all times.

The thing I like best about this progression is you can do it with an entire team (with 18 players you would have 6 groups of 3 players working at the same time) or you can do it with just two players and a coach. It works on some of the most important parts of the game yet is so simple to do. The one thing I would like to emphasize is that if the passes aren't being hit with proper accuracy and pacing, they HAVE to be corrected in order to help the players get better.

FineSoccer Drill 119

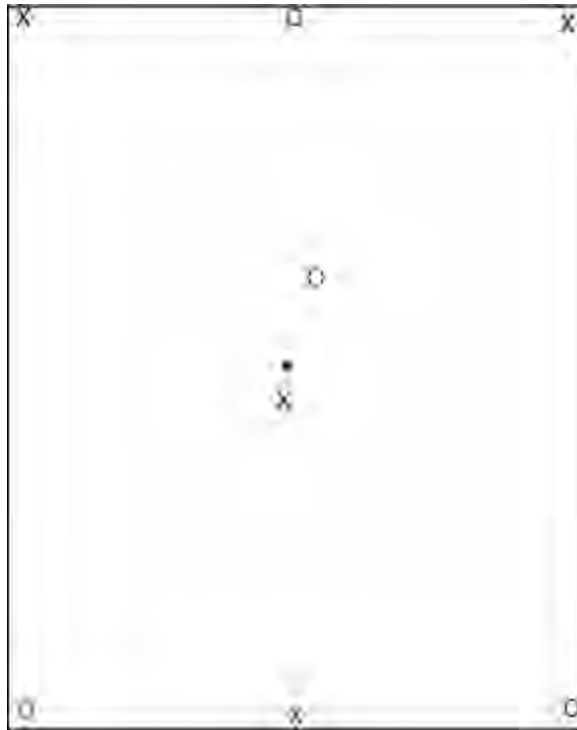
These activities are actually a simple progression that works on taking players on, defending, conditioning, and much, much more.

Start with a small grid (20 x 10 is a good size for most) and 4 players per grid with one ball per grid. The players split into two groups. One player from each group stands on the center of the end line and is the goal and the other player starts in the middle. To score, the center player must pass the ball through the legs of the other players "goal". The players who represent the goal do NOT try to defend and do NOT try to move to prevent a goal from being scored. The "goals" must stand with their feet far apart to make it easy for the players to score. The game lasts for 1 minute and then the players switch. See the following diagram for the set up.



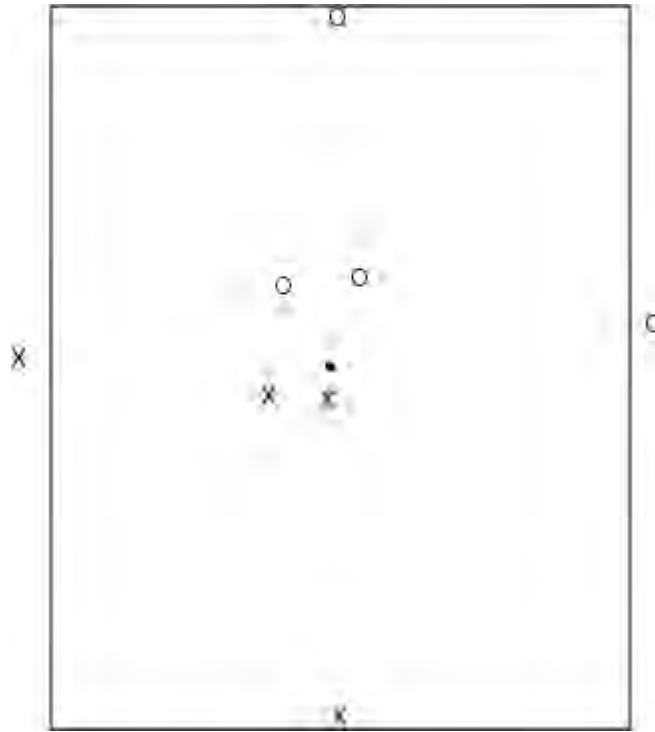
As soon as 1 minute is up, the players switch roles and the two players who were goals now are in the middle and the two who were working are now goals. They should play 4 times each (the players can rotate opponents). If there are 16 players to a team, there would be 4 fields going at one time.

The next step in the progression is to combine now into two groups of 8 using just two fields. Now you have the same set up as before but now there are also players in the four corners who can be used as teammates for the attacking player. See the following diagram for set up.



The players in the middle can pass the ball to any of the four players in the corners and the four players are restricted to one touch passes. The middle players do NOT have to use a player on the outside before going to goal. Play for 1 minute and then rotate. This should be done for a total of 8 times.

Next there are two players in the middle, a player on each end for goals and a player on each sideline providing support for the attacking team. Again, the outside players are restricted to one touch and now it's much more of a combination type game. See the following diagram for set up.



Each player would get 4 turns in the middle for a total of 8 minutes of total play.

The key to this type of progression is that absolutely no time needs to be built in for rotation of players within the games. When the coach says switch, the players on the outside should already know who goes where and when. So, in a matter of 24 minutes, each player would have played for 10 minutes at a very high rate of intensity and also acted in a supporting role for a few more minutes. It's extremely important that the coach explain the proper rotation and everyone knows what to do next.

This is an example of how a few different games can be tied together into an extremely effective progression.

FineSoccer Drill 120

Too often, coaches think that effective training sessions must resolve around good “drills”. Today’s activities are designed to show you how to work on specific phases of the game by incorporating certain restrictions into your scrimmages.

If the emphasis of a training session is going to be getting back on defensively and providing proper support, you can do this by playing a small sided game on a big field (for example, 4 v 4 with or without keepers on a 60 x 40 field). The two restrictions are that when a team loses possession of the ball (unless it's due to an attempted shot) all 4 players must sprint back and touch their own goal posts before they can defend. Before the team that won the ball can attack, they must make 4 consecutive passes of over 10 yards to each other. By forcing the players to sprint back and touch their goal post before defending, it gets them in the mindset that they must get back behind the ball upon losing possession of the ball. This rule also encourages the team with the ball to cherish possession and not accept just giving the ball away. The reason for the exception to the rule on attempted shots is you never want to do anything to discourage a player from looking for their shots.

An alternative to the above activity might occur if you want to encourage getting back and behind the ball defensively while also pressuring the ball. This can be achieved by having the person who lost possession of the ball to go high pressure and chase the ball wherever it goes while the rest of her team must go back and touch the goal posts before helping. Again, this accomplishes the objectives defensively while also putting in a strong incentive to maintain possession of the ball offensively.

Both of the two activities also work on strong communication in back (and this is why it's preferred that there be regular keepers in goal).

Another option is to have the player who lost possession of the ball to step off the field (or take a knee) until his teammates regain possession. This gets the players accustomed to shifting and covering for each other while a player is down. It also gives the player who lost possession time to think about their mistake and also to try to figure out how they can fix it in the future.

Using the same numbers, you can play with big goals and no keepers with the rule being that the player furthest back can use their hands inside the penalty box. By putting in this rule, it encourages players to think about providing defensive support from behind (since in this game that player can act as the keeper).

There are so many ways to work on the various aspects of the game while playing small or full sized games. Not only are they usually more game realistic, but they are also much more fun for the players. Next time you are looking for a “drill” to work on something, think about whether there is a way to incorporate the activity into a small-sided game to get more out of it.

FineSoccer Drills 121

This activity is a different variation on the dribbling activity discussed in Drill 78.

While this works on all of the things that drill 78 does it also is an excellent test to determine who are the “personality players” on a team.

If there are 15 players, start with 10 players with soccer balls in a 30 x 30 grid (or whatever size you choose). The difference between this activity and drill 78 is that now it's not good enough to just end up with a ball. A team can play five 2 minutes matches and a player gets one point for having a ball at the end of the 2 minute. If they can get two balls at the end of the 2 minute period they get 3 points and if they have none, they get no points.

By adding this wrinkle into the activity you can learn a great deal about the players. The ones who try to get two balls on a regular basis are the risk takers and in most cases this will carry over into a regular game. These are the types who will be the attacking center midfielders or strikers. The player who is more interested in ending up with 1 point after each 2 minute period is more likely to be the safe solid player (possibly the defensive midfielders).

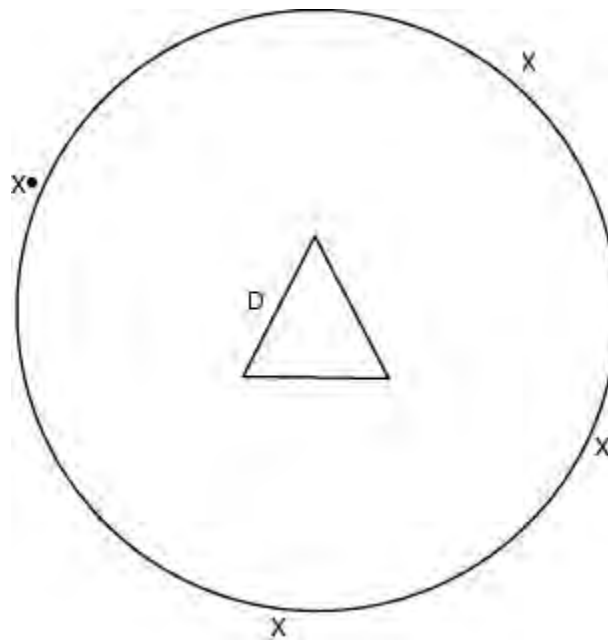
Sometimes playing a simple game like this can not only work on individual skills and conditioning but also give a coach a much greater idea on who the personality players are on their team.

FineSoccer Drills 122

This activity works on passing, receiving, footwork, and conditioning.

Start with a 4-yard equilateral triangle in the middle of the center circle (use either coaching poles or cones for the triangle). Anywhere from 3-5 players are

on the outside of the circle surrounding the triangle. One player is inside the circle protecting the triangle. See the following diagram for set up.



The players on the outside pass the ball around the circle (or through it) and get a point each time they can pass the ball through any of the sides of the triangle. The defender must keep her feet moving to be in position to prevent this from happening. Each time the ball goes through the triangle, a point is awarded. If the defender wins the ball, she must give the ball back immediately and they start up again. The defender stays in the middle for 1 minute and they rotate after the minute. The defender who gives up the fewest number of points wins. Each player can be a defender for two periods.

The players on the outside can play one or more touches but may not go into the circle. To score, the ball must be below the knees. A ball can be chipped over the triangle to another player on the outside but that would not count as a point unless it's below the knees when going through the triangle.

The defensive player may NOT run through the triangle so she must keep moving around the triangle in order to defend each side.

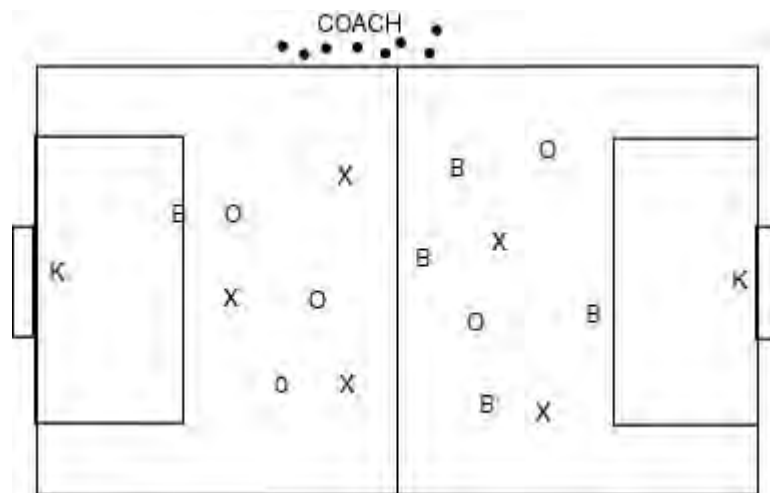
The players on the outside have to play quality quick passes in order to score points and will have to be able to handle these passes as well. The

defensive player will have to be in good shape and really work hard in order to be an effective defender in this game.

FineSoccer Drill 123

Here is a fun game that works on goal scoring, communication, aggressiveness, and teamwork.

Start with three teams and two goals with keepers. All three teams are on the field at the same time and the field will depend upon the number of players on the field as well as how much running the coach wants the players to do. Using a team of 17 as an example, it would be 5 v 5 v 5 with two keepers on a field 60 v 40 or so. The coach has a bunch of soccer balls on the sideline. See diagram below for set up.



The coach serves a ball in and whichever team gets the ball is on offense and can attack EITHER goal. If that team loses the ball, whichever team wins it can also go to either goal. The players learn quickly that they need to get to goal as fast as possible because they will not be able to maintain possession for long periods of time since there are twice as many opponents on the defending teams.

There is no offside rule in this game and anytime the ball goes out of play (or a keeper wins the ball) the coach then serves in a new ball.

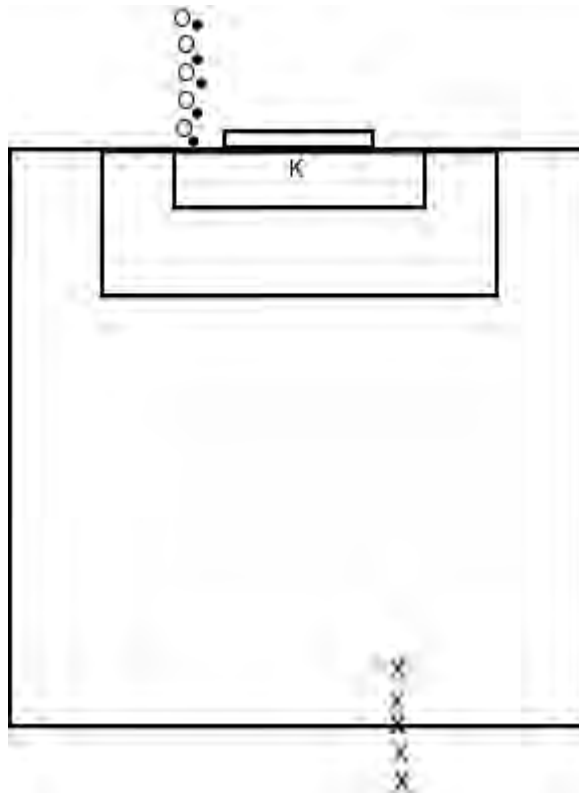
Teams will learn real quickly that if they want to win in this game, they will have to be the aggressor and not sit back and wait for the ball to come to them. They will also learn to spread out offensively and compress defensively.

Other variations are that when a team wins the ball from another team, they must attack the goal furthest from where they are. Also, points can be awarded for head balls won (and the coach can chip balls into play) as well as any number of other options.

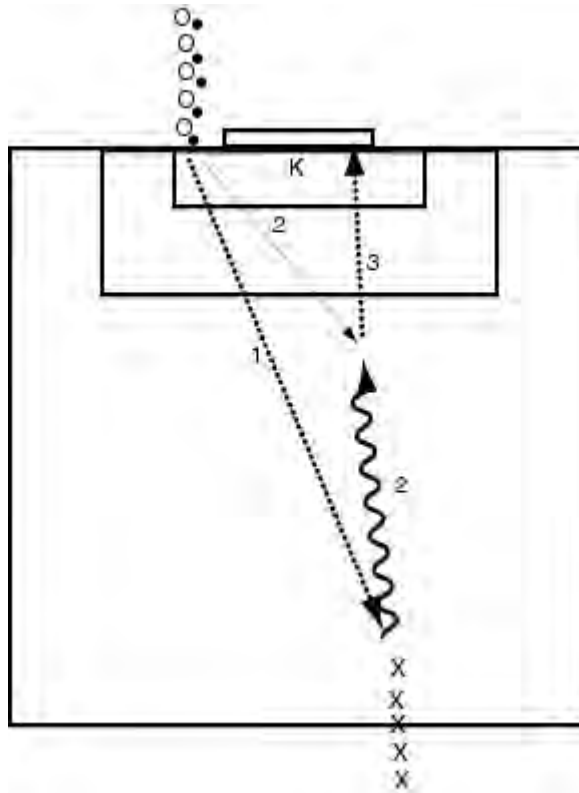
FineSoccer Drill 124

Here is a simple progression to work on attacking at speed and also building in working with a second defender.

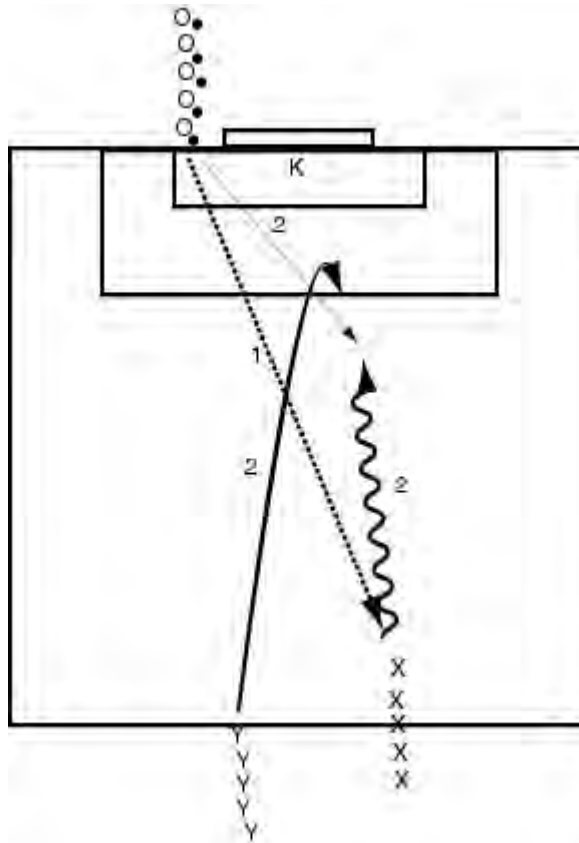
Start with half a field and two lines of players and a keeper. The players in the line nearest the goal have soccer balls. See diagram below for set up.



The first O plays a long ball out to the first X who attacks in a 1 v1 situation. As soon as O plays the ball out, she then goes out and defends. See the following diagram.



Next add in a second defending line who sprints to become the second defender behind the first defender. As soon as the second defender gets behind the first defender, this will allow the first defender to take more chances defensively. The rule in this activity is that the second defender may NOT try to win the ball until she assumes the role of the second defender. See the following diagram In this diagram, O plays the ball out to X and then O sprints out to become the first defender and Y sprints BACK to become the second defender to provide proper support for the first defender.



While it might look like there will be a lot of standing around during this activity, it's actually an extremely quick moving and as soon as the defense slows down the attack, the attack is over (since the role of the defense on a partial breakaway like this is to delay until support arrives). Since each attack should last for less than 5 seconds or so, you can see why there is very little standing around in this activity. The key is the coach **MUST** get the next group going as soon as the previous one ended.

Next you can add a second attacker which can be seen in the following diagram. In this diagram, B and X are attacking and O and Y are defending. The key for the second defender here is to still provide the proper support first and then to worry about marking the second attacker. When you add the second attacker, it forces there to be much more communication between the two defenders and the keeper.

