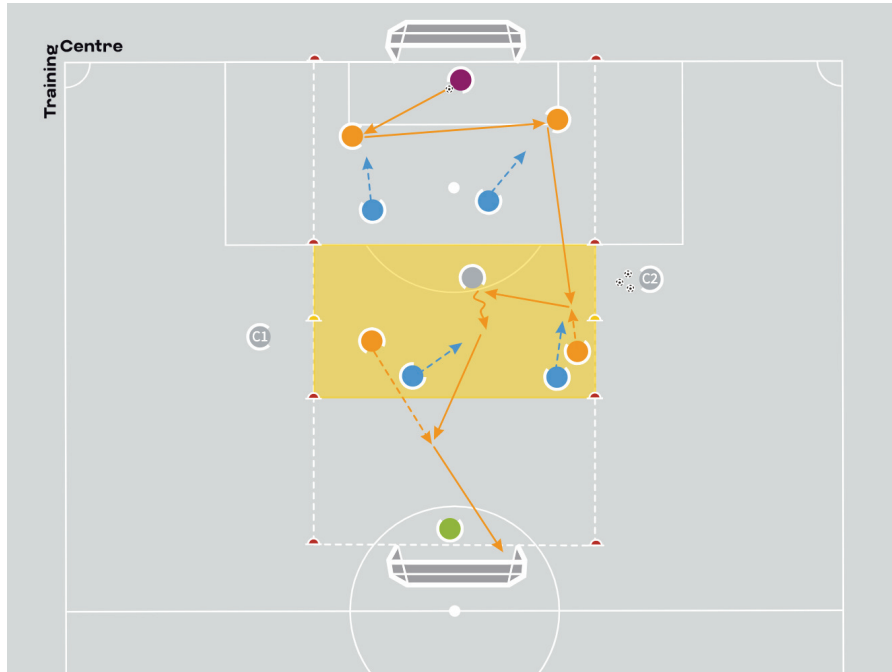


# FIFA Talent Coach Programme

## Small sided game: Progressing through the thirds



### Organisation

- Use half of a full-size pitch.
- Mark out a halfway line with cones and divide the exercise area into thirds.
- Place a full-size goal at either end of the exercise area.
- Position a goalkeeper in either goal.
- Set up a 4v4+1 inside the exercise area, with the attacking team arranged in a 2-1-1 formation and the defending team organised in a 1-1-2 system. The neutral player plays for the in-possession team and operates in the middle third.

### Explanation

- Play begins with one of the goalkeepers in possession.
- The goalkeeper plays a pass to an orange player positioned in the first third or to the neutral player in the middle third.
- The orange team's objective is to progress the ball through the thirds and score in the opposite goal.
- The blue team press from the front and try to win the ball and score in the opposite goal.
- Each time a goal is scored, play restarts with the team that scored in possession.

### Variation 1

- Reduce the width of the exercise area by 3 metres to increase the focus on playing in central areas.
- Introduce offside lines, which are marked by the end lines of the middle third.

### Variation 2

- Make the halfway line the offside line.
- All members of the in-possession team have to be inside the opposition's half for a goal to count.

## **Key coaching points**

- Against a high defensive press, if the defending team block passing lines to progress play through their defensive shape, then players can also break lines by playing around.
- Similarly, players should take advantage of gaps that open between defending players to break lines and into a teammate positioned behind the first line of pressure.
- Players in-between lines should try to position themselves in space and away from opposition intervention, both in-front and on their backs. This way they can turn, and progress play forward.
- Receiving in-between lines can encourage defenders to jump out of position to apply pressure on the ball. This can open spaces to exploit and create situations of numerical superiority for the attacking team.
- If the defenders decide to hold position rather than jump out to press, the player receiving possession between the lines has time and space to turn, drive forward and look for passes that break the opposition's defensive line.

## **Roles of coaches**

- First coach: leads the exercise and intervenes on a number of occasions to introduce variations or to help players to perform their actions more efficiently.
- Second coach: offers players support and encouragement from their position at the side of the exercise area and, when required, plays the ball to the goalkeepers to restart play.