

Diagonal and vertical passing

Session overview

Part 1: Passing circuit

Part 2: Zone passing

Part 3: 6v6 plus 6 with four mini-goals

Part 4: Diagonal passing game

Key coaching points

- Well-timed and parallel movements are essential for playing successful diagonal passes.
- Step or pull away from defenders to create diagonal passing lanes.
- Horizontal passes can slow down attacks and make things too predictable.
- Penetrate the defensive line by making vertical and diagonal runs on the blind side of defenders.

PART 1: PASSING CIRCUIT



The first exercise aims to get the players accustomed to making parallel movements so that the diagonal passes are played efficiently.

Organisation

- Set up two identical rows of cones.
- In each row, place a blue and yellow cone adjacent to each other and 2m apart.
- Diagonal to the blue cone, place another blue cone about 2m away.
- The two rows need to be about 5m apart.
- Position a player at each of the yellow cones in each row.
- One player must be positioned at the top of each row.

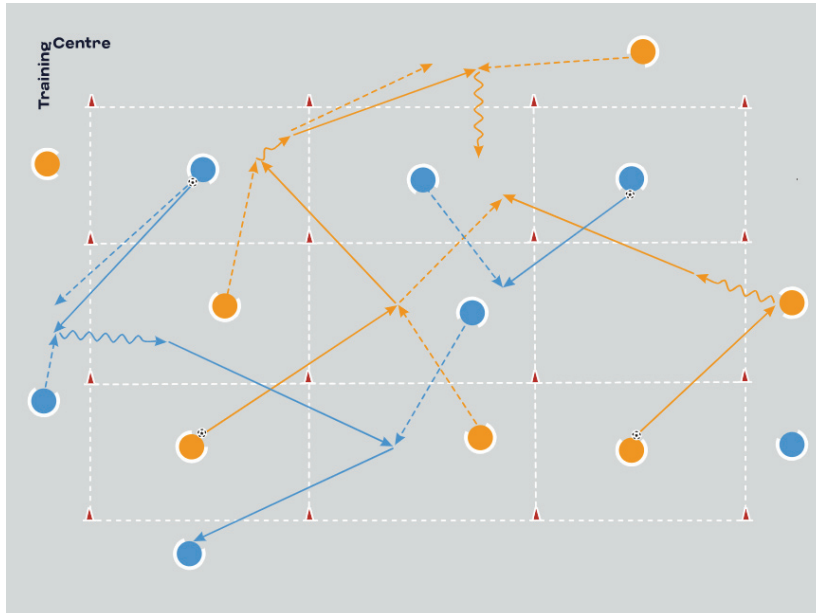
Explanation

- The player at the top of each row starts by dribbling into a position to open up a passing lane between the two blue cones.
- The player at the yellow cone moves into the space so that they are parallel to the second blue cone.
- As they arrive into the space, the first player plays a diagonal pass to them.
- After receiving the pass, the player dribbles into a position to open up a passing lane between the next set of blue cones and passes to the next player who has moved from the yellow cone and into the space.
- The sequence is repeated in each row.

Coaching points

- Dribbling and running parallel to one another helps to facilitate diagonal passes between players.
- Playing and receiving the ball while moving helps to improve the efficiency of the sequences and facilitate defence-splitting passes.

PART 2: ZONE PASSING



The second exercise is designed to help players think about how parallel movements can facilitate well-timed diagonal passes.

Organisation

- Mark out a 36x30m playing area and divide it into nine equal zones.
- Divide the group into two teams.
- Distribute both teams across the playing area with two balls each.
- Ideally, one player should occupy one zone at any given time.
- Position three players from each team around the outside of the playing area.

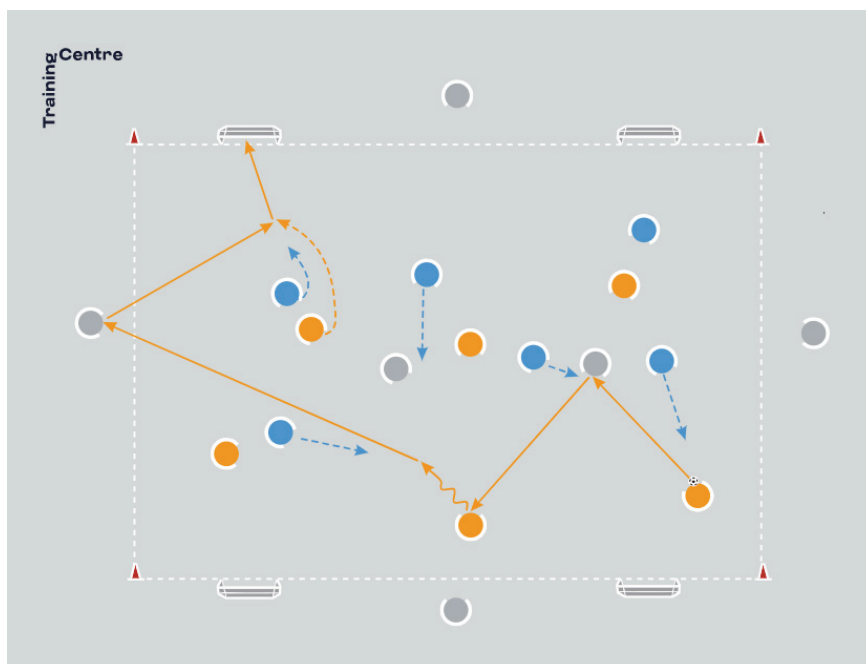
Explanation

- Players pass to their team-mates in zones diagonal to them.
- Players without the ball move into zones to make themselves available for a diagonal pass.
- When a pass is played to the outside of the playing area, the receiving player enters the playing area, switching places with the player who played the pass.
- Passes are only permitted between zones that are diagonal to each other.

Coaching points

- Ask for diagonal passes to be played while on the move (also applies to the players around the outside of the playing area).
- Emphasise the importance of passing accuracy and precision.
- Players need to identify when to make parallel runs so that they can receive the ball in the diagonal zone with perfect timing.

PART 3: 6V6 PLUS 6 WITH FOUR MINI-GOALS



This small-sided game looks to take the fundamental elements learnt in the first two drills and put them into practice in a game scenario. By using neutral players and mini-goals, the players can now recognise diagonal passing routes more easily.

Organisation

- Mark out a 36x30m playing area with four mini-goals, two at each end.
- Divide the group into three teams of six players (blue, orange and neutral).
- The blue and orange teams play a 6v6 inside the playing area.
- Four neutral players position themselves around the outside of the playing area – one on each side of the area – and two neutral players join the 6v6 inside the area.

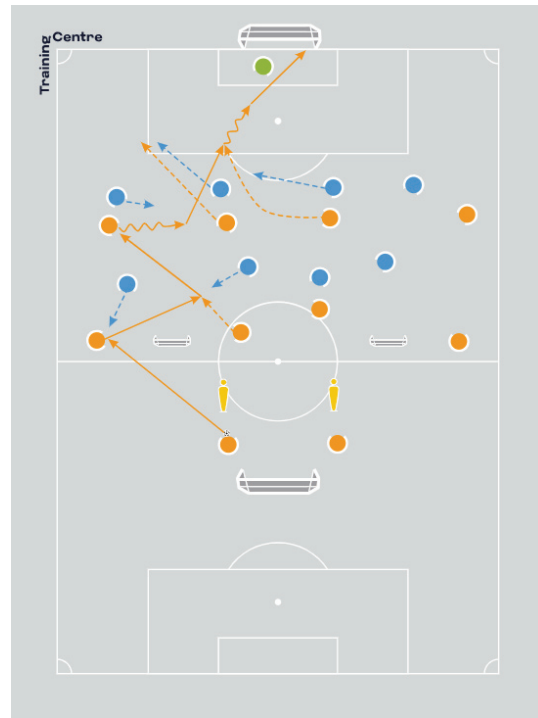
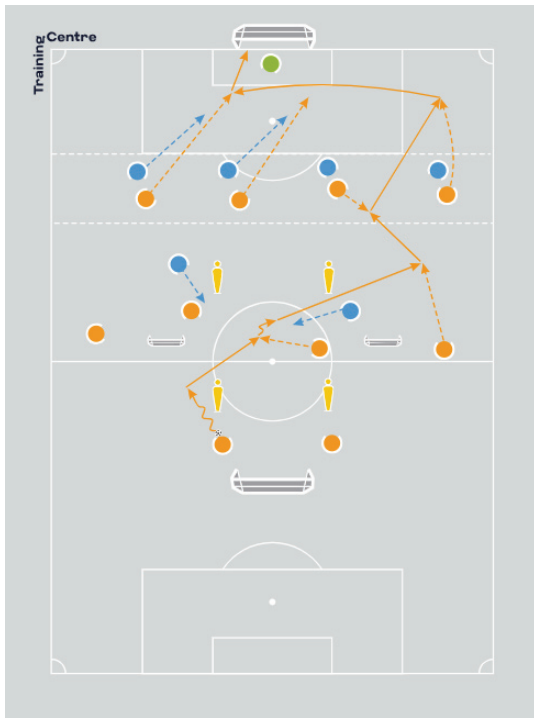
Explanation

- The blue team attack one end and the orange team attack the other.
- The team in possession should use the two neutral players inside the playing area.
- The team in possession try to take advantage of their numerical superiority and score in one of the two mini-goals (the direction of play is predetermined).
- The neutral players around the outside of the playing area provide additional vertical and diagonal passing options for the team in possession.

Coaching points

- Avoid playing risky horizontal passes, as they are easy to predict and make it harder to progress the ball or maintain possession.
- Continually involve the neutral players with diagonal and vertical passes.
- Vertical movements off the ball and into space help the players in possession to pull defenders out of position

PART 4: DIAGONAL PASSING GAME



Variation: 10 v 8

The final exercise aims to bring together all the fundamental elements learnt in the previous exercises and apply them in a game scenario. Players must create diagonal passing angles and make vertical runs to facilitate the passes.

Organisation

- Mark out a 40x70m playing area with two full-size goals, one at each end.
- Position a goalkeeper in the goal at one end of the playing area.
- In the same half, mark out two horizontal lines across the full width of the playing area to create a defensive zone. One line should run along the edge of the penalty area, while the second line should be a further 10m infield.
- Inside the defensive zone, position a defensive line of four blue defenders against four orange attackers.
- Position two blue midfielders against four orange midfielders in the middle zone.
- Position two orange defenders in front of the goal at the other end of the playing area.
- Position two dummies in the middle of the playing area to act as obstacles.
- Position two more dummies in front of the orange team's goal to act as obstacles.
- Position two mini-goals around 15m in front of the orange team's goal, one to the left and one to the right.
- Play a 10v6 game.

Explanation

- The ball starts with the two orange defenders, who must play a diagonal pass out of the backline.
- The orange team try to progress the ball past the two blue midfielders and four dummies and into the final zone for an attempt at goal.
- If the blue team win the ball, they can counter-attack towards the two mini-goals or the full-size goal at the opposite end.
- If a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play, the exercise restarts with the two orange defenders.

Variation

- Remove the dummies and play a 10v8.

Coaching points

- Ask for diagonal passes to be played while on the move, as this is key to splitting defences open.
- Avoid making risky and ineffective horizontal passes, as these will cause attacks to break down.
- Emphasise passing accuracy and precision and maintain a high tempo.