

Fundamentals of attacking and defending

Session overview

Warm-up: 2 phases

Part 1: 1v1 progressing into a 4v5

Part 2: 6v6 small-sided game

Part 3: 4v4+2 neutral players

Key coaching points

- Shoot every time the opportunity presents itself rather than passing to a team-mate, checking inside or taking extra touches.
- Play forwards and support forwards at all times to create more goalscoring chances.
- Adapt the defensive approach based on whether defending alone or as a unit.
- When defending in 1v1 scenarios, stay tight to opposition players and force them onto their weaker side or the outside.
- When defending, stay compact and tight to opposition players and shift across as a unit to limit the opposition's shooting opportunities.
- Use quick combination and link-up play to create the space for shots. Attackers can drop deep to draw defenders out and create space in behind.

WARM-UP

Phase 1: dynamic stretches and sprints

The warm-up consists of two phases that look to incorporate work both with and without the ball. The goal is to enhance the players' ability to play quickly, which is a skill that they will need to call on in the subsequent exercises.

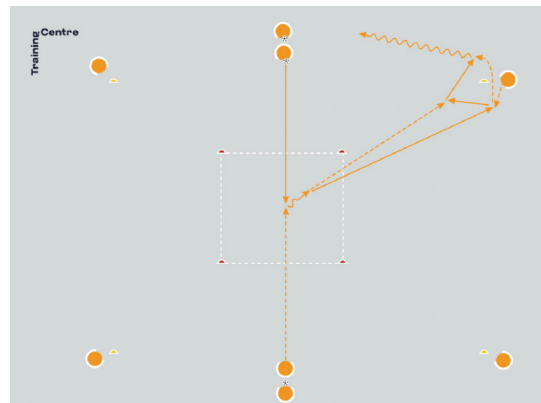
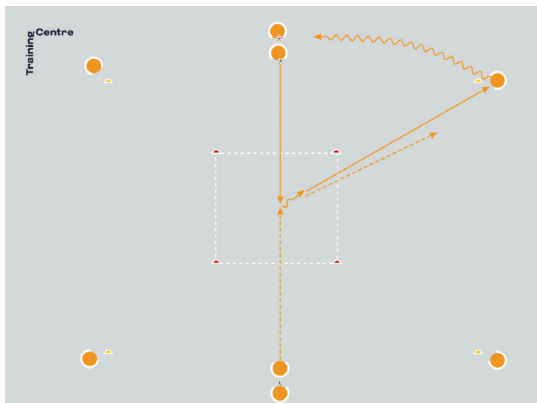
Organisation

- Mark out four parallel lanes, each made up of three cones.
- Split the players into four groups and assign one group per lane.

Explanation

- The players begin by performing a series of dynamic stretches as they jog from the first to the last cone.
- Once they have done all of the stretches, the players perform a series of sprints from the first to the last cone.
- The warm-up should last approximately 20 minutes.

Phase 2: passing drill



Organisation

- Mark out a 15x15m playing area using four cones.
- Mark out a 5x5m area in the middle of the playing area.
- Split the players into two teams and line them up at either end of the playing

area, facing each other.

- Place two players from each team at the two corner cones (stations) at their end of the playing area, one player on the left and one on the right.

Explanation

- The exercise begins with the first player in the line at one end of the playing area with the ball.
- This player plays a pass into the square that is met by the run of the first player in the line at the opposite end of the playing area.
- This player receives the ball and takes a touch before playing a pass between the cones that make up the square to any of the players positioned at the four corner stations.
- The player receiving the ball at the corner station performs a directional control towards the line of players closest to them before dribbling the ball to the back of that line.
- As soon as the player at the corner station receives the ball, the sequence is repeated from the opposite end of the playing area.
- The player who passes the ball out from the square to the player at a corner station follows their pass and takes up a position at the corner station.

Variation

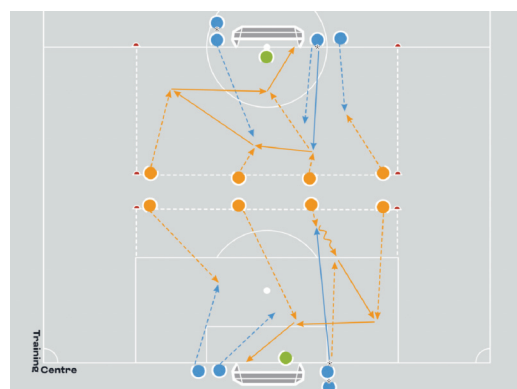
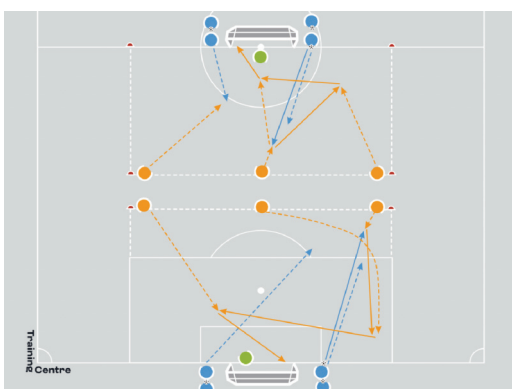
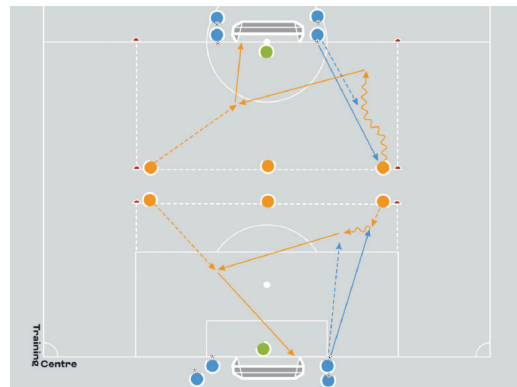
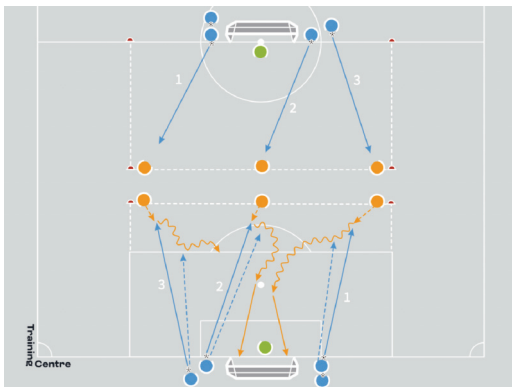
- The player who plays a pass out of the square follows their pass and plays a one-two with the player at a corner station.

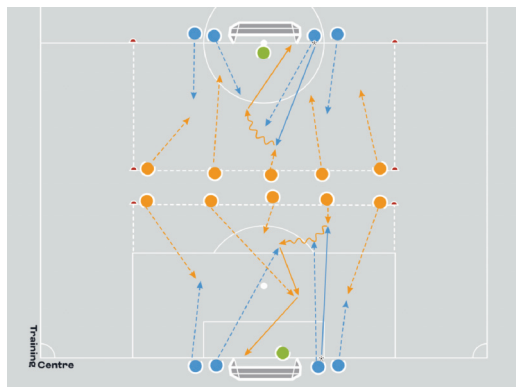
Coaching points

- When receiving the ball at a corner station, move away from the cone before the pass is played to simulate creating space to get away from a marker and then move towards the ball to receive the pass.
- Ensure that the first touch to control gets the ball out of the feet to aid the fluency of the passing sequence.
- Adopt an open body position and perform a directional control towards the player to whom the pass is to be played.
- Time passes to the team-mate's runs to ensure that the player receives the ball as they enter the square, as this gives players a clearer picture and more space to move and pass into.
- Decide which corner station the pass is to be played to before entering the small area and receiving the ball, as this will speed up the passing sequence.

PART 1: 1V1 PROGRESSING INTO A 4V5

The first exercise focuses on the fundamental principles of defending in 1v1, 1v2, 2v3, 3v4 and 4v5 scenarios. Defenders have the opportunity to work on principles such as delaying and identifying when to engage with the attacker, both when defending alone and as part of a back four.





Organisation

- Use one half of a full-size pitch
- Position a goal and a goalkeeper at either end of the playing area.
- Divide the playing area in half.
- Split the group of players into two teams, placing each team in one half of the playing area.
- Assign five defenders and six or seven attackers in each of the teams.
- In each half of the playing area, set up three stations 25m from goal, one on the left, one centrally and one on the right.
- Place a minimum of two attackers at each of the three stations.
- Place the five defenders either side of the goal.

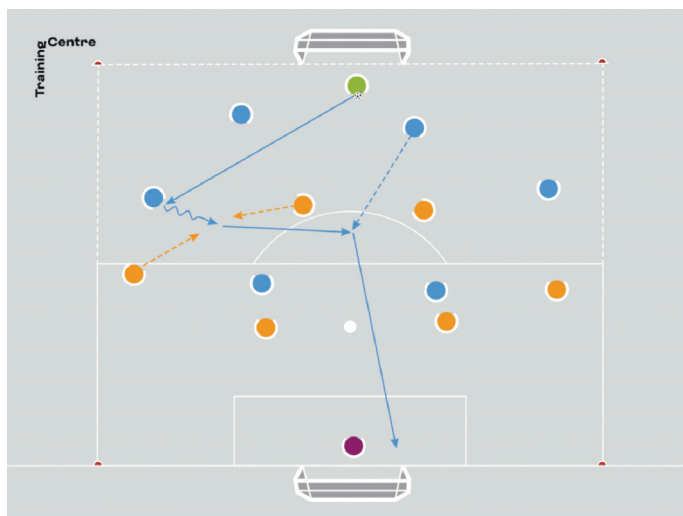
Explanation

- Play starts with one of the defenders positioned beside the goal passing the ball to an attacking player occupying one of the three stations.
- The attacker receives the defender's pass and tries to beat them and score in a 1v1 scenario.
- After playing the pass to the attacker, the defender closes the attacker down as quickly as possible.
- As soon as the sequence is over, i.e. when the defender blocks the shot, wins the ball or a goal is scored, the next defender passes the ball to the next attacker to create another 1v1 scenario.
- The exercise progresses into the following four scenarios, all of which involve attacking overloads:
 - 1v2
 - 2v3
 - 3v4
 - 4v5

Coaching points

- 1v1 – Force attackers onto their weaker side or the outside by pressing on the inside and getting tight to them.
- 1v1 – Reduce the distance to the attacker when they show too much of the ball or have taken a touch, as this is the ideal time to deny them space and to recover possession.
- 1v1 – Do not stand too far off the attacker. As soon as the attacker receives the ball, the defender should be within 2-3 metres of them.
- 1v2 – The defender should close the ball carrier down quickly but delay engaging and stepping in, as rushing in may make it easier for the other attacker to gain space to receive the ball with the time to shoot.
- 2v3 – Step out quickly, with one defender engaging with the ball carrier and the other ready to close down the possible receiver.
- 2v3 – Deal with the overload by getting tight to the attackers.
- 3v4 – Defenders should organise themselves so that one player closes the ball carrier down and the others look to shut off passing options.
- 4v5 – The defensive line can prevent dangerous passes from being played through central areas by remaining compact.
- 4v5 – The defensive unit should shift across when the opposition switch play from one side of the playing area to the other to prevent them from having a clear sight of goal.

PART 2: 6V6 SMALL-SIDED GAME



Part 2 of the session, which involves a small-sided game, is designed to work on the players' ability to combine to break the lines and create goalscoring opportunities. The exercise allows players to combine to both set up long-distance shots and to get in behind on goal.

Organisation

- Use one half of a full-size pitch.
- Place a full-size goal and a goalkeeper at either end of the playing area.
- Set up a 6v6 game.
- Organise both teams in a 4-2 formation.

Explanation

- Play starts with the blue team's goalkeeper.
- The blue team try to build up play and score in the orange team's goal.
- If the orange team win possession, they attack the blue team's goal.

Variations

Variation 1

- Goals can only be scored from outside the area.

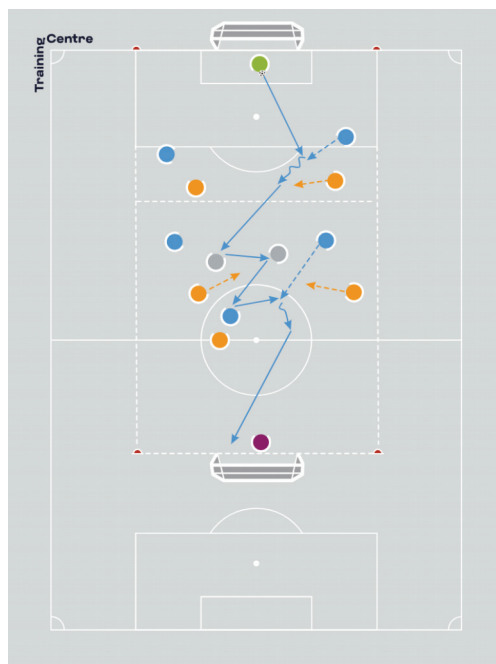
Variation 2

- Goals can only be scored when the attacking team get in behind the opposition's defence.

Coaching points

- When attacking, play forwards and support forwards to avoid having possession for possession's sake or slowing the build-up down.
- When shooting from distance, attacking players should come short, drawing defenders out with them before laying the ball off to create space for team-mates to shoot.
- Play short, quick combinations to create the space for clearer shooting opportunities.
- When trying to get in behind the opposition's defence, attacking players should drop deep to receive to enable team-mates to run into the spaces in behind.
- Players should avoid taking touches towards their own goal or infield when they have a sight of goal.

PART 3: 5V5+2 NEUTRAL PLAYERS



The final exercise of the session brings together all of the principles worked on in the previous drills. Attacking players are asked to combine quickly to create shooting opportunities in 2v1 or 3v2 scenarios, while the defenders should remain compact and make good decisions in terms of their responsibilities.

Organisation

- Mark out a 75x30m playing area.
- Place a full-size goal and a goalkeeper at either end of the playing area.
- Set up a 5v5 plus two neutral players, who play for the in-possession team.
- Organise the teams so that the two neutral players play in the middle third at all times and the remaining five players occupy the defensive, wide and forward positions.

Explanation

- Play starts with the blue team's goalkeeper.
- The blue team aim to combine to create shooting opportunities.
- If the orange team win possession, they try to combine and score into the blue team's goal.
- Both teams can only score with shots taken from inside the middle third.
- Players can enter the final thirds.

Variation

- Players can score from inside the final third but only two attackers and one defender are allowed to enter this area.

Coaching points

- Shoot on goal every time the opportunity presents itself.
- Avoid taking unnecessary touches and if space opens up to shoot or drive at defenders it should be exploited.
- Avoid areas of the playing area becoming congested by opening play up and switching play quickly to create the space for shooting opportunities.
- When looking to get in behind the defence, players should focus on playing one-twos and bursting into the penalty area.