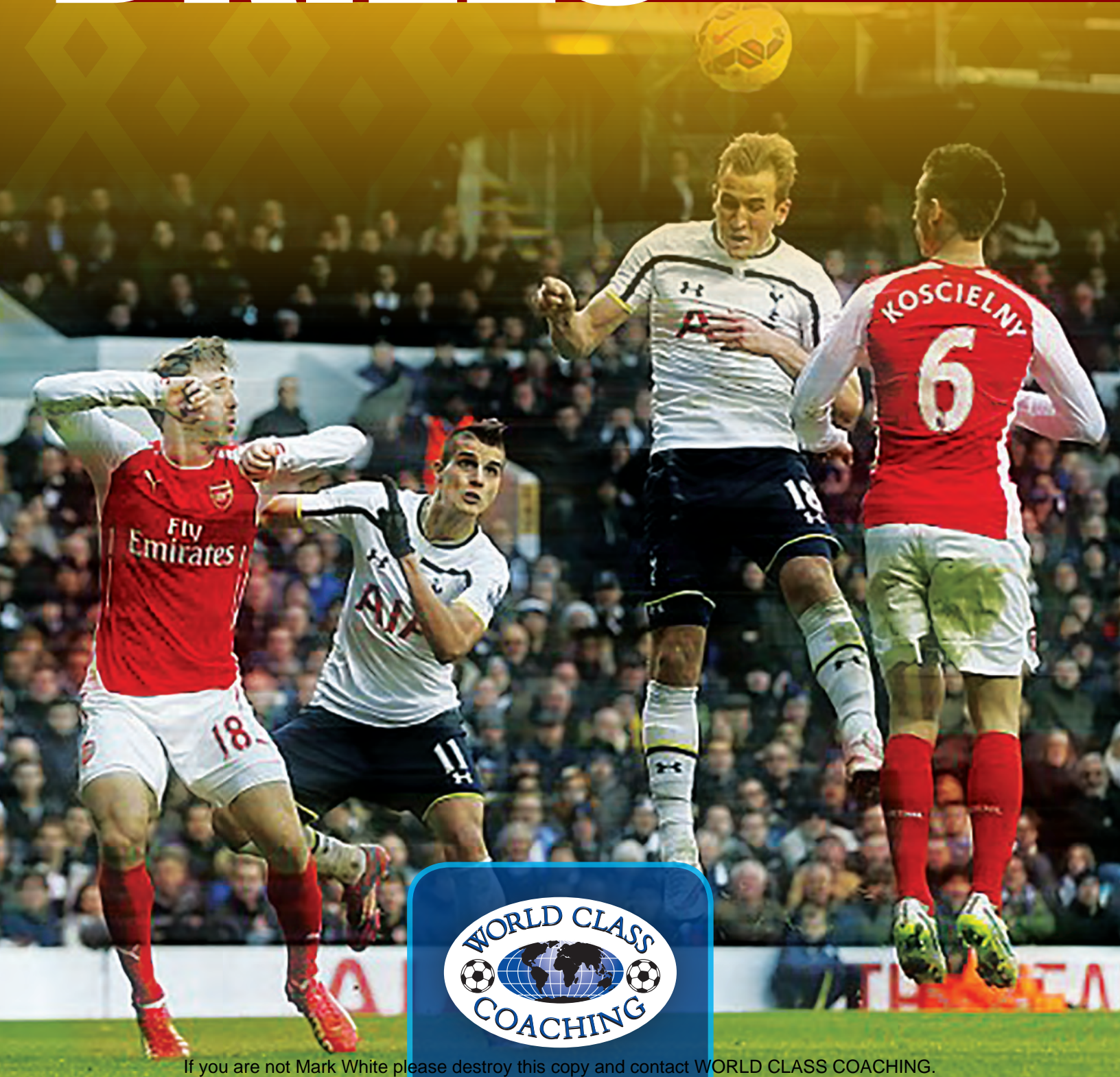


SMEDLEY'S DRILLS

BY DON HERLAN



Smedley's Soccer Drills

by
Don Herlan

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PREFACE

*"The best laid plans of mice and men
Often go awry...."*

-Robert Burns

When I first decided to write this book, I had a very clear picture in my mind of what I wanted to produce. Above all, I wanted to write the kind of book that every coach would find interesting and easy to use. Not a book that leaned heavily on jargon and pretty words and a whole lot of what I call "Coachspeak". Coachspeak is saying things like "The rigidity of the 3-5-2 system—particularly when it was based on man marking—was clearly exposed when facing an opponent with a 3-4-3 attacking system." No, that was not the kind of stuff that I wanted to produce. I just wanted to put together a book of really good soccer drills and include a short, clear, concise guide that coaches could use to plan and organize their own practice sessions. I wanted this to be the kind of book that I wish I'd had when I first started out in coaching.

That's really what motivated me to write this in the first place—the struggles that I had with my own coaching early on. Because in the beginning of my career (I started coaching college soccer while I was still in college), I was pretty much all over the place with my practices. I had a lot of ideas and a ton of enthusiasm, but I didn't exactly approach my training sessions with a solid structure or an organized plan. And don't get me wrong—I put in a lot of time and energy when planning my practices, but my method of planning was, for lack of a better word, scatterbrained. In fact, my thought process usually went something like this:

"Okay, practice starts in a couple of hours. So what do I feel like working on today? Well, scoring goals is important, and I always did like shooting drills.....so maybe that's what we should do....."

I know! We can play Power/Finesse after we scrimmage! Everybody loves that game...

So yeah, we'll do that. And maybe I'll do a passing drill first. Or some 4 v 2. That's always a good drill.....Sure, that'll work. Alright, so let me figure out who's gonna be doing what today...."

And from there I'd go about putting players in groups and teams, placing certain players with certain teammates, trying to create the kind of matchups that I wanted to see. And I did try to get players into the roles that would benefit them the most—putting backs into

the defensive roles and putting certain midfielders into the attacking roles—but this certainly wasn't the best way of deciding what a team should work on from day to day. Sure, I'd hit on some important topics along the way, but it wasn't based on what my team needed to improve upon. Plus, I'd pick two or three different topics to work on during the same practice session, which was another huge mistake.

For instance, in that hypothetical practice that I had planned, there are three different topics—finishing, passing, and group attacking. And this really created a problem, because along with those three topics came a list of about thirty coaching points that I wanted to get across during the session. Three or four coaching points should be enough to get anyone's message across, but I was determined to get in ALL of those points by the end of practice. And I did, but only by stopping the practice every two seconds to bore the heck out of people. This habit of over coaching ruined a lot of our practices and made it agonizing for the players in the process. But I did it almost every day. I'm sure that you can see that this was not an ideal situation for my players.

The lack of structure and the mistakes that I made in planning resulted in me doing far too much talking. Over time, the players became totally frustrated with me. And they didn't get a whole lot of touches on the ball, either. As you might expect, there were a lot of days when practice fell flat, and a few days when we did okay. When you use this kind of 'hit or miss' approach, that's what you're going to get—some hits and some misses. And the unpredictable nature of our results made it hard for us to get any consistency from day to day, and that's rough on a team. Our confidence was shaken every time we practiced poorly, and that was a lot of the time. Worst of all, the practices weren't geared towards the things that the team needed to work on. And so we never improved upon those things, which is the whole point of practicing in the first place.

It wasn't until I got deeper into my coaching career that I started to read and research and watch the work of others. And as I moved up the line from coaching at the Division III level up to coaching in Division I, a clearer picture of how to structure and create effective practice sessions finally came into view. Like I said, I had a lot of energy as a youngster and my heart was in the right place, but what I needed was some experience and a better method. A method of constructing and conducting practice sessions that was totally based on what my team really needed to improve upon. And now I have that.

And so with that in mind, here is the book that I wish that I'd had when I was first starting out—a book full of really good drills, along with some guidelines on how to plan your practices, choose your drills, and get the most from your players each and every day.

Enjoy. I hope that it's helpful.

-Smedley

INTRODUCTION

“All things are created twice. We create them first in our minds.”

-Steven Covey

I know myself pretty well. There are things that I'm good at, and things that I'm not. I can eat a lot, but I can't cook. I love going on road trips, but I get lost all of the time. And even though I'm very organized, I sometimes forget where my organizer is and so I have to plan my day all over again. But hey, nobody's perfect.

I've enjoyed being a teacher and a college soccer coach for the past 30-plus years, but it's not something that comes easily for me. I'm a lot more self-conscious than most people realize. And that's because I'm very good at *acting* like I'm a self-confident person. Even though I'm always anxious before speaking in front of large groups, I just step up to the lectern and start acting like I own the place. And so nobody knows that I'm as nervous as a rookie on his first day. But within five or ten minutes, I loosen up a little bit and I get rolling. Even so, it's awful at first. The only thing that gets me thru it is being well prepared.

As much as I hate to admit it, I'm a nut for preparation. I rehearse my lectures beforehand. I double check my notes two or three times. And I don't leave anything to chance because I know that things don't always go according to plan. On one very sad occasion, I forgot to bring my flash drive with me and I had to wing it for an entire class. And that was a loooong fifty minutes, believe me. I felt like a ten-year-old giving his first speech in front the class—and halfway thru the speech, I'd dropped all of my 3 x 5 cards on the floor and mixed them up. It was that bad. And I'm positive that the whole room could see how uncomfortable I was, which made it that much worse. Somebody even asked me if I was feeling okay, like I had a bad case of the flu or something. No, I am not the kind of guy who can make things up on the fly and look cool. No way.

And the same goes for me when I'm on a soccer field. If someone came up to me out of the blue and asked me to do a practice session on dribbling, it would not go very well. A hundred different drills would be buzzing thru my head and I wouldn't be able to pick out the ones that I wanted. And I'd be struggling thru my explanations during the session as well, because I'd be so unorganized. I have always been a person who needs structure, some kind of a framework to work off of. And so I always make sure that I'm set up in well in advance before each and every practice.

And if I could be so bold as to say this—I don't think that any coach should simply show up to practice and try to wing it. The players deserve a lot more of our time and effort

than that. Plus, they need to know that we care about them. Being prepared shows them that you care about the team and the people on it. Making it up as you go or just scrimmaging a lot tells them that you don't. The players will know right away if you're just mailing it in. And they'll know that coaching the team really isn't all that important to you. I've always got a practice plan, or a new drill, or a small notebook in my front pocket. I have them because I'm always thinking about the team and the next practice. I have them because I want the team to do well. I have them because I care.

The rest of this chapter should give you a good idea of what should go into the planning and organization of a successful practice, starting with how to choose your practice session topics. As you read the text, take a look at the practice plan that I've included along with the drills that I've used, and then steal as much of it from me as you like. I'll be flattered if you do.

Choosing a Topic for Your Practice

The first week of pre-season has always been my favorite time of the year. It's a brand new year, and I get to see all of my favorite players again. New players are coming in too, and I can't wait to see how they're all going to do. Everyone is so excited to be in camp and to make a great first impression. It doesn't matter whether it's a Division III team or Division I, like the university I'm at now. Regardless of the talent level, it's still the week when everybody tries their best at everything. You practice twice a day, you eat your meals together, and you spend the whole day talking about soccer and the guys on the team. It's soccer nirvana.

But with so many new faces and so many questions to answer, it's often hard to know where to start. The same questions come up every year: What should we work on first? Should we start with attacking or defending? Should we decide on the formation we want to use and then put players into those slots, or should we decide on a formation based on what the players can do? These are all very important questions, ones that need to be answered before getting very far into the season. And the first step in the process of deciding where to start is to go to the sidelines, take a knee, and watch the team play.

To me, this is the best way to accurately assess what your players are capable of. You just put them out there and let them play. As the game goes on, you'll start to see the big picture, and get an overall impression of what the players are capable of. Their level of ball control will soon become apparent. Their ability to play 1 v 1 defense or to cross a ball will be easy to evaluate. Other issues such as how much they talk or how hard they work will also be noticeable. By simply watching them play, you can identify the areas that need improvement right away and the ones that don't.

So by the end of this first day, I'll have two lists in my possession—a list of the things that the team did well, and a list of the things that weren't so wonderful. And the first order of business for me is to take the 'not-so-wonderful' list and prioritize it. I put the

items on the list in order, with the most urgent items at the very top. It could be 1 v 1 attacking, or group defending, or even a fundamental skill that my team might be lacking in. Hopefully, I won't have more than five or six weak spots to address, but whatever jumps out at me as the biggest concern goes to the top of my list.

For instance, let's say that during my initial scrimmage, two different players scored three goals apiece, all on long dribbling runs. The good news is that I've got some goal scorers on my team, which is always a big plus. The not so good news is that my 1 v 1 defending is pretty anemic. If one player can dribble right thru my entire defense, then that's a big red flag for me. So that's exactly where I would start—with 1 v 1 defending.

And then?

Then I go to the office and plan my first practice session, using a set framework to help me keep it organized from start to finish. I'll choose my drills, I'll pick out the teaching points that I want to cover, and I'll put the players in the groups and positions that I want to see them in that day. During the rest of this chapter, I'll go thru this process from beginning to end and use an example practice plan to help me illustrate this organizational framework.

Planning a Practice Session

Once you've chosen a topic for the practice session, it's imperative that you devote the entire practice session to that topic and nothing else. If the topic is finishing, then there shouldn't be any passing drills or games that emphasize dribbling in your practice. The topic for the day is finishing, and so all of the drills, games, comments, and corrections that you make should be all about finishing. Resist the impulse to try and fix everything. As I said earlier, I made that exact same mistake when I first started coaching, and I stopped practices WAY too often. Big mistake. Pick your topic and base everything that you do on that one very important subject. Leave the other issues for another day and stick to your plan.

Also, there are certain types of drills and games to include in each practice session. And they should be done in a certain order, progressing from simple to complex. Your practice session should also include a warm up and a cool down. You can find an example of a practice session—one that I wrote on finishing for my team at Longwood University—starting on the next page. I've included a practice planner (the first page) and the first three drills that I used during the practice session. Refer back to it as you read thru the descriptions of each phase of practice in the text:

Team: Longwood University

Session Topic: Finishing

Dynamic Warm Up:

Time: 15 m

Fundamental: Finish, Defend

Time: 20 m

Notes:

-Watch the first touch. Shooters tend to be late in defending, so emphasize going straight to the cone after shooting.

-Watch the decision making. If the defender closes in, does the attacker shoot or fake it?

Match Condition: 6 v 3, Penalty Area

Time: 20 m

Notes:

-Use three groups of three players and rotate the defenders after 2-3 minutes.

-Look at decision making of each player: Do they shoot, dribble, or pass?

Match Related: 4 v 4 Plus Two

Time: 30 m

Notes:

-Set up two fields. Use midfielders as the two neutrals.

-Look to see who's shy about shooting and who will pull the trigger.

Free Play 9 v 9 to 11 v 11:

Time: 30 m

Notes: Play the starting strikers and two starting mids versus two starting mids, the starting back line, and the starting goalkeeper. After 15 minutes, put the starting midfield together and switch goalkeepers.

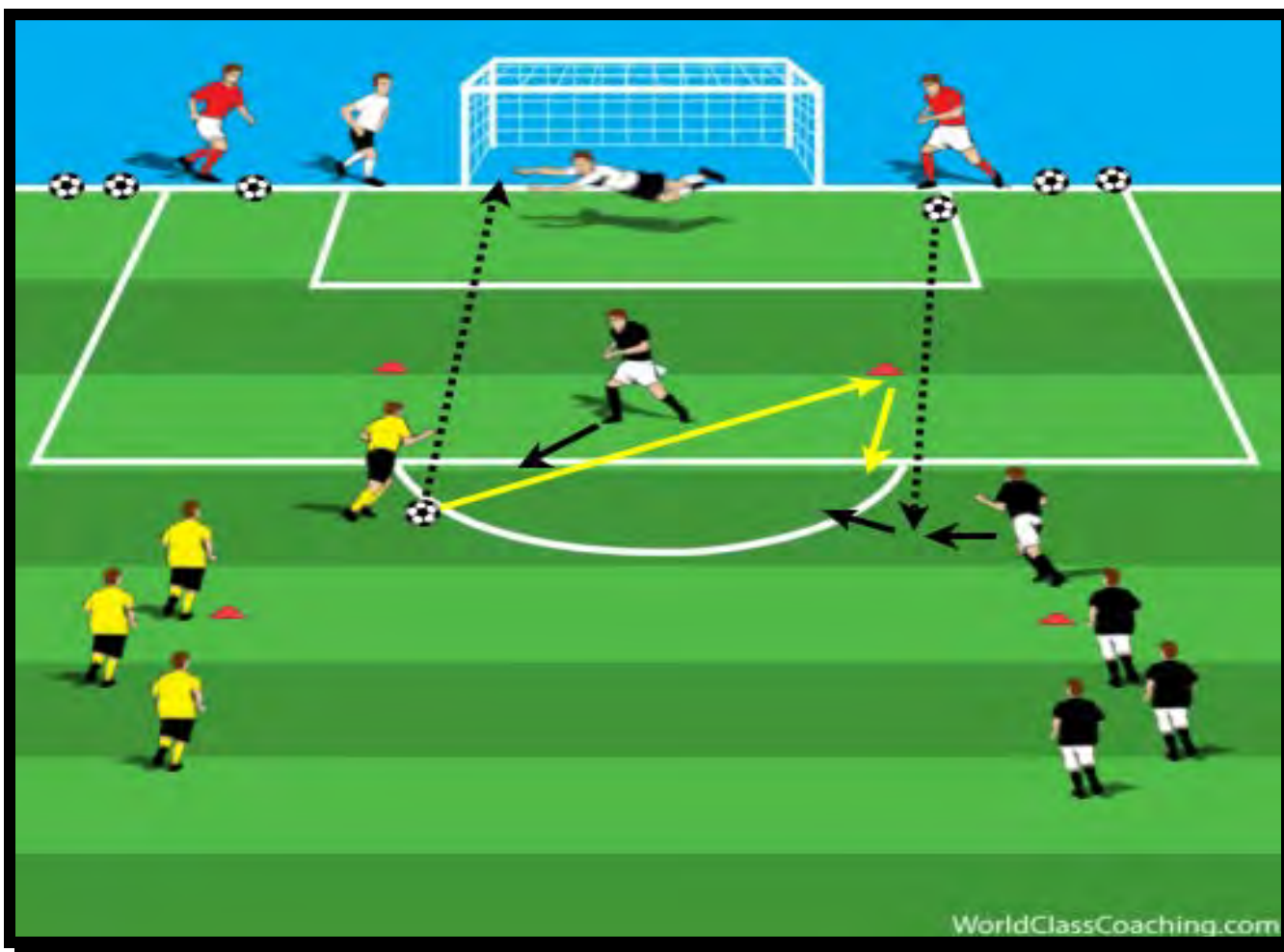
Cool Down:

Time: 15 m

Finish, Defend

Fundamental

Finishing



Set Up: There are 8-10 players set up in the attacking third, starting at the cones.

Procedure: The Feeder passes to the attacker (in yellow). The attacker shoots, runs to either cone, and then runs back to defend against the next shooter (in black). From there, play continues 1 v 1. Each of the Feeders works with one team, varying the service (see Progressions) and the amount of time the players have to shoot. After five minutes, the two teams switch to the other side of the field.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Finishing.
- 2 Fake shots.
- 3 First touch.

Progressions:

- 1 Air ball to service.
- 2 Driven ball service.

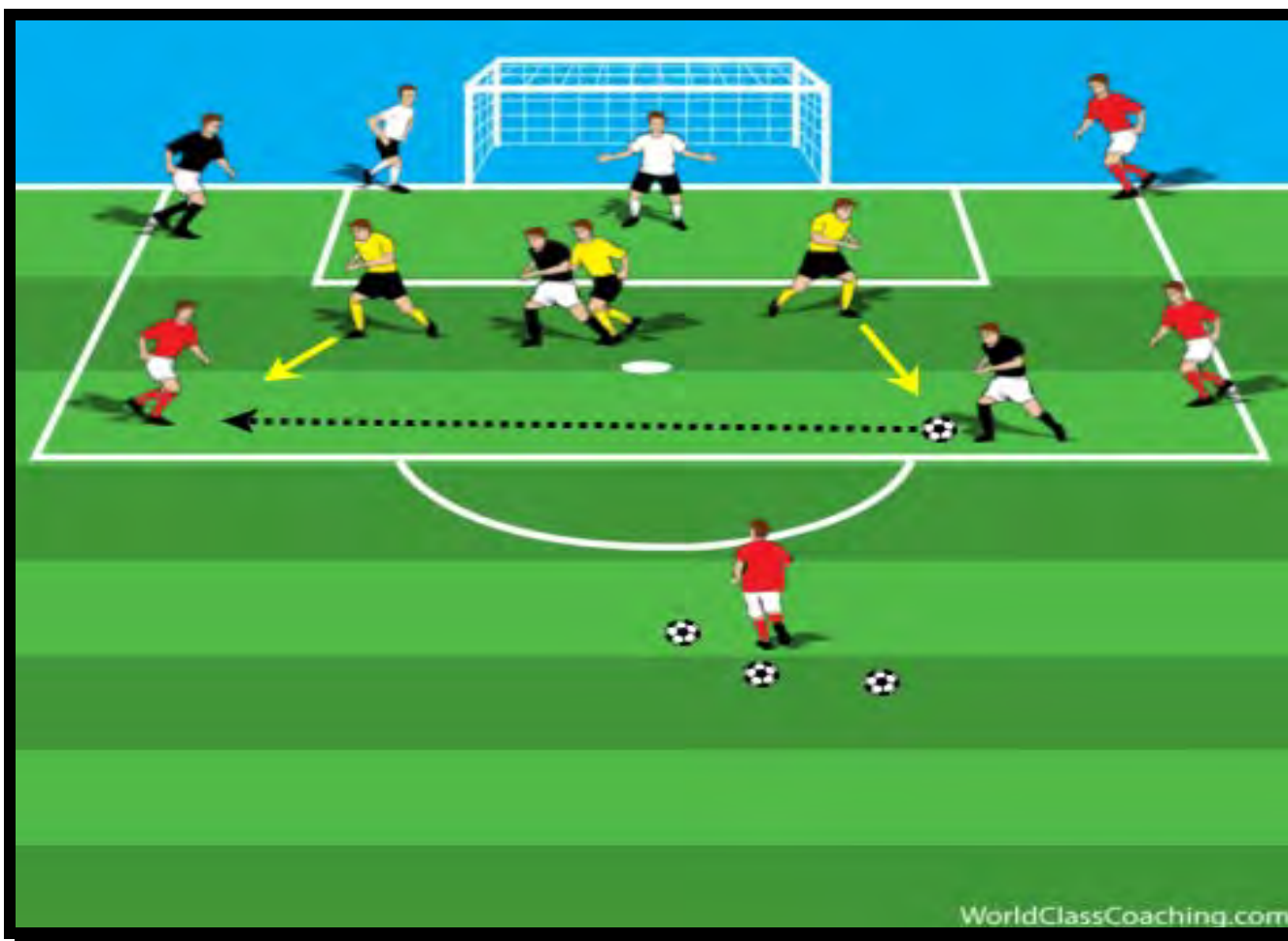
Coaching Points:

- 1 If the shot is there, take it. No one will go for your fakes unless you shoot.
- 2 If the defender charges in, fake the shot and push the ball past him.
- 3 If your first touch is poor, you will have to improvise the rest of your 1 v 1 attack.

6 v 3, Inside the Box

Penalty Area

Group Attacking



Set Up: There are nine players set up inside of the penalty area, playing 3 v 3 plus three.

Procedure: The attacking team tries to maintain possession inside of the penalty area and finish on goal. If the defenders win the ball, they become the attacking team. When goals are scored or when the ball is put out of play, the game is re-started by the Feeder. The three neutral players switch out with one of the teams every five minutes.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Finishing.
- 2 Second chances.
- 3 Expanding the field.

Progressions:

- 1 First time finishes only.

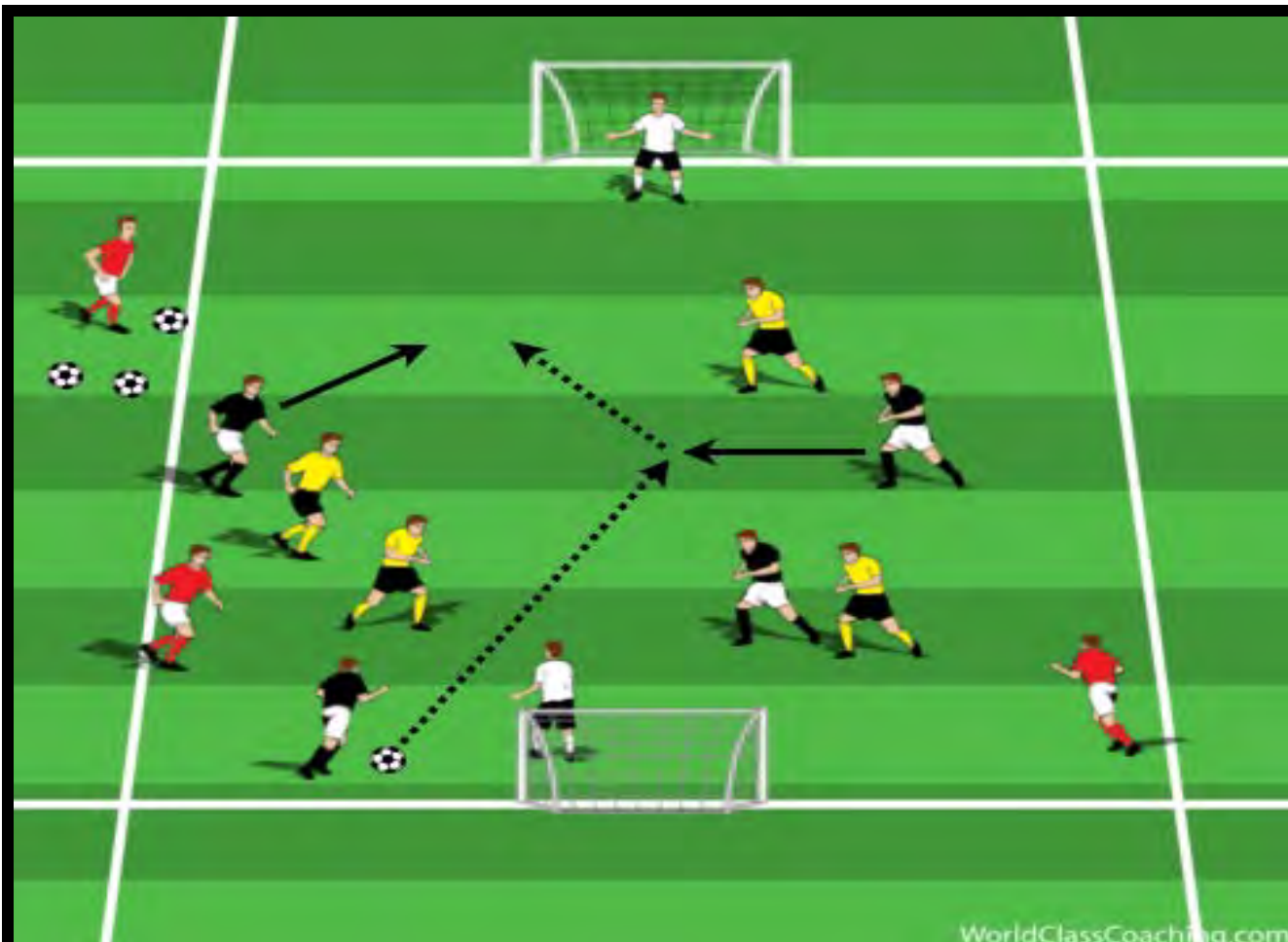
Coaching Points:

- 1 Look for first time shots from passes set back from the end line.
- 2 Look for rebounds on shots pushed wide of the goal posts.
- 3 The attackers should shoot from the outside, and force the defenders to come out.

4 v 4 Plus Two

Small Sided

Group Attacking



Set Up: Ten players are set up on a small field, playing 4 v 4 plus two.

Procedure: The two teams play 4 v 4 with two neutral attackers. When a goal is scored, the attacking team keeps the ball and reverses direction. The Feeder re-starts the game on goals and balls put out of play.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Expanding the field.
- 2 Transition.
- 3 Decision making.

Progressions:

- 1 Play 5 v 5 plus one.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Use the entire field and look to play passes in behind the defense.
- 2 Anticipate changes of possession in order to get a quick transition.
- 3 Change the point of the attack away from the crowded areas of the field.

The Framework of a Practice Session

1) Dynamic Warm Up

This warmup includes a five minute jog, followed by dynamic stretches done on the move across the width of the field. The dynamic stretches are followed by individual static stretches, 3-5 minutes set aside for whatever the player thinks he needs.

2) Fundamental Drills

These drills are designed to work on basic fundamental techniques and tactics by giving each player a large number of repetitions during the course of the drill. Defenders are not used. Players simply perform the technique or pattern of play over and over, with an emphasis on being able to perform them at game speed.

3) Match Condition

This is a drill or game that involves playing against opposition and/or playing towards one goal. Many of the drills are 'numbers down' type of drills, such as 5 v 3 or 6 v 4. This type of situation allows for more repetition of the intended practice topic. For instance, if the session topic were crossing, the attackers would see many more crossing opportunities during a 6 v 4 drill than they would a 6 v 6.

4) Match Related

These drills and games can be small-sided or large-sided, and involve playing with two goals in game-like situations. Many of these will also be 'numbers down' type of drills to create more repetitions of the intended practice topic.

5) Free Play

Every practice session concludes with playing 9 v 9 to 11 v 11 games on a full field. This is a chance for the coach to evaluate the effectiveness of the practice session. If the topic that day was 1 v 1 defending, then the coach should be paying close attention to the quality of the 1 v 1 defending during this last part of practice.

6) Cool down

After practice, the team devotes 15 minutes to static stretching. Tired athletes often tend to skip stretching when left to their own devices, but since this is the best time for an athlete to stretch, coaches should always include this after practices and games.

In the practice planner above, you'll notice that there are sections reserved for notes, points of emphasis that the coach wants to touch on during practice. Many of these are taken from the drills that are included within the practice session. As you'll see, each drill comes with teaching topics and coaching points to concentrate on. And again, it's

important to keep this list of points down to three or four at the risk of stopping practice too often. The notes section can also be used for reminders of how the coach wants to set up groups, teams, scrimmages and so on.

Okay, so that's how to go about using the framework to plan a practice. You pick a topic, and then you pick drills that are specifically designed to work on that topic. From there, you put them in order from simple to complex. But how do you go about picking the drills that you want or drawing up drills of your own? So glad you asked...

Choosing Your Drills

There are a few things to consider when you choose the drills that you're going to use during your practice session:

- 1)** The drill has to be within your team's technical ability. The players have to be capable of performing the drills that you've drawn up. If it's beyond their technical or tactical abilities, then everyone is going to fail and get frustrated. Including the coach.
- 2)** On the flip side, the drill has to be challenging. If it's not, then folks are going to get bored. And bored players don't play very hard. As a result, the drill isn't run at game speed, and that makes it a waste of time. The best drills challenge the players in all four aspects of soccer—technical, tactical, psychological, and physical. So make sure that you don't aim too low.
- 3)** The players have to approach the drills with enthusiasm. This is always a big concern for me. Wouldn't it be great if your players got charged up about every drill the way they do Power/Finesse or World Cup? I wish. But since we can't play World Cup every day, the least we can do is come up with drills and games that the players find interesting. So find drills that require them to play hard but also allow them to have fun at the same time. It's always good to put in an element of competition as well to get the players fired up. Anything that they approach with enthusiasm, they will do well. But if they aren't enthusiastic, then your drills will fall flat.
- 4)** Pick drills that you can modify to fit your team's level of ability. Having this kind of flexibility gives you a chance to use your judgment and to do some good coaching. Anybody can go thru a book of drills and pick one, but good coaches will know what to do with that drill. They'll know when to make a drill easier or harder. Your players need to find success on a daily basis, and if you require them to perform something that they're not yet capable of, you set them up to fail. Instead, make the drill a little easier. Let them succeed first. Success breeds more success, because it builds up their self-confidence. So give them a chance to have some success early on and let them get into the flow. Then when the players are ready, you can increase the difficulty.
- 5)** The drills you choose have to address the things that you really want to address. Take a look at the coaching points that I've listed on each of the drills in my practice

session. They are very important and very specific points about finishing that I want to address that day. If I have the right drills, then these coaching points should come up over and over during play. And when I get a great example of one of these points—like when a player makes a terrific finish—I can use that as a ‘teachable moment’. If these teaching points never come up during the drill and I don’t get any good examples, then I must have the wrong drill.

To summarize, the best drills to use are the ones that are challenging and competitive and fun. The players will attack these drills with enthusiasm, and the longer the drill runs, the better they’ll play. When you can see your players improve and really get what you’re trying to teach, then you know that you’ve got a great drill. If there’s no energy, and the quality of play simply goes from mediocre to poor, then you’ll know when you’ve got a stinker. And you’ll have to fix this drill or get rid of it entirely.

Conducting a Practice Session

Okay, now that you know how to write a practice plan and how to pick a good drill, we can talk a little more about how to execute these plans of yours. As coach, you are the one that will make your practice sessions go. You will be the deciding factor on whether your practice sessions are productive or not. There is an awful lot that can be said about what goes into being a successful coach—enough to fill an entire book shelf—and so I’m not going to try to write another book right here. But what I will do is share a few thoughts with you on what works and what doesn’t work when coaching today’s young soccer players. So here we go:

1) It’s all in your approach.

You know that old saying about “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it”? Whoever said that must have had coaching in mind when he came up with that expression. There aren’t too many athletes out there—male or female—who respond positively to yelling and verbal abuse. I’ve coached All-Americans and I’ve coached folks who are playing in the pros right now. And they don’t care for it any more than the next guy. As far as I’m concerned, the most important part of a coach’s job is to figure out what each player will respond to. And how do you do that? By listening. By building a rapport and a relationship. By showing empathy and understanding. That’s what I go with.

2) No lines, no laps, no lectures.

I heard this phrase for the first time at an NSCAA coaching license course a while back, and I’ve been repeating it ever since. Soccer players come out to the field to play, not to listen to long lectures. And nobody wants to stand in line, waiting to kick a ball. Hence the expression, no lines, no laps, no lectures. There is a time to stop and instruct, and a time to play. And effective coaching is all about knowing how to pick your spots and how to get your point across before the players start to tune you out. So get your coaching points across, but don’t overdo it. As they say, sometimes less is more.

3) The game is the best teacher.

This is really an extension of the previous thought. Let your drills and games run for a while and let the players get into the flow of the practice. After a few minutes, their lights will start to go on and it will start to look like something. But if you stop your players too often early on, they may never get it going. So again, let them play. Don't feel like you always have to be doing something or saying something in order to be effective. Let them figure things out for themselves. Let your team leaders take over. They'll have to fend for themselves during the games, so let them get used to doing so in practice.

4) Catch them doing something good.

Tony DiCicco co-authored a book under this title about the 1999 World Cup squad, and I think that the title is fairly self-explanatory. Instead of spending your practice time pointing out all of the things that your players do wrong (and give them a complex in the process) why not let that stuff go and use positives to make your point. Why not spend your practice pointing out all the things that they get right? Interesting concept, eh....?

5) If it's broke, or at least a little bit defective, then fix it.

All too often, you can bring a good drill to practice that just doesn't work. Even after you explain it, it's still confusing to them and they make a real mess of it. Their technique is sloppy, and no one seems to be putting in much of an effort. And this can be very frustrating, especially if you get stubborn about it. I used to get like that. When a drill wasn't working, I'd just keep running it until I'd deflated the entire practice. Luckily, I learned a few things over the years. Now when a drill doesn't work, I take a look at the drill. Maybe it's too complicated. Maybe it's beyond their technical ability. Whatever the reason is, the drill needs to be tweaked if I'm going to get anywhere. So I make it a little easier. I take some pressure off or give them a bigger space to play in. Or I slow it down. But I try to turn things around by helping them get some things right. I don't blame the players or beat that drill into the ground if it's not working. I fix it.

6) Answer the question.

If someone puts a ball a million miles over the crossbar, I don't think that they need me to tell them that they shot it too high. In that same spirit, when my team has a bad game, they don't need me to tell them how lousy they were. I'm pretty sure that they already know. But what they do need from me is to tell them why. I should be able to tell them why their shot keeps sailing over the bar, or why we didn't play our best game. I'm supposed to be there to come up with solutions, not create more problems. I shouldn't have a player go home from practice saying, "Great. I played lousy, Coach yelled at me about it all day long, and I still don't know why I can't keep my shot down. That's real helpful." Players will tune you out pretty quickly if you criticize them too much. So rather than be their harshest critic, be their answer man instead. When they start coming to you with their questions, then you'll know that you're on the right track.

7) If it's important, be direct.

The most effective method of teaching someone is one on one. If I have something important to say to my players, I rarely do it in a group setting. Because if I'm talking to a whole group, I don't know whose attention I have. You say to your team, "We need to work harder." And if it's a bunch of guys, they all think that you're talking to someone else. If it's a women's team, they all think that you're specifically talking to them. So it's not really effective with either group. But when you call someone over to have a quick chat, you'll have their attention. And it will be much easier to get your point across.

8) Bring your sense of humor to practice every day.

I don't know about everybody else, but my sense of humor helps me to keep my perspective. As a coach, you should never lose sight of the fact that you're doing this because it makes you happy. And that your athletes are playing the game for the same reason. Remember that, especially when it's been a while since your last win.

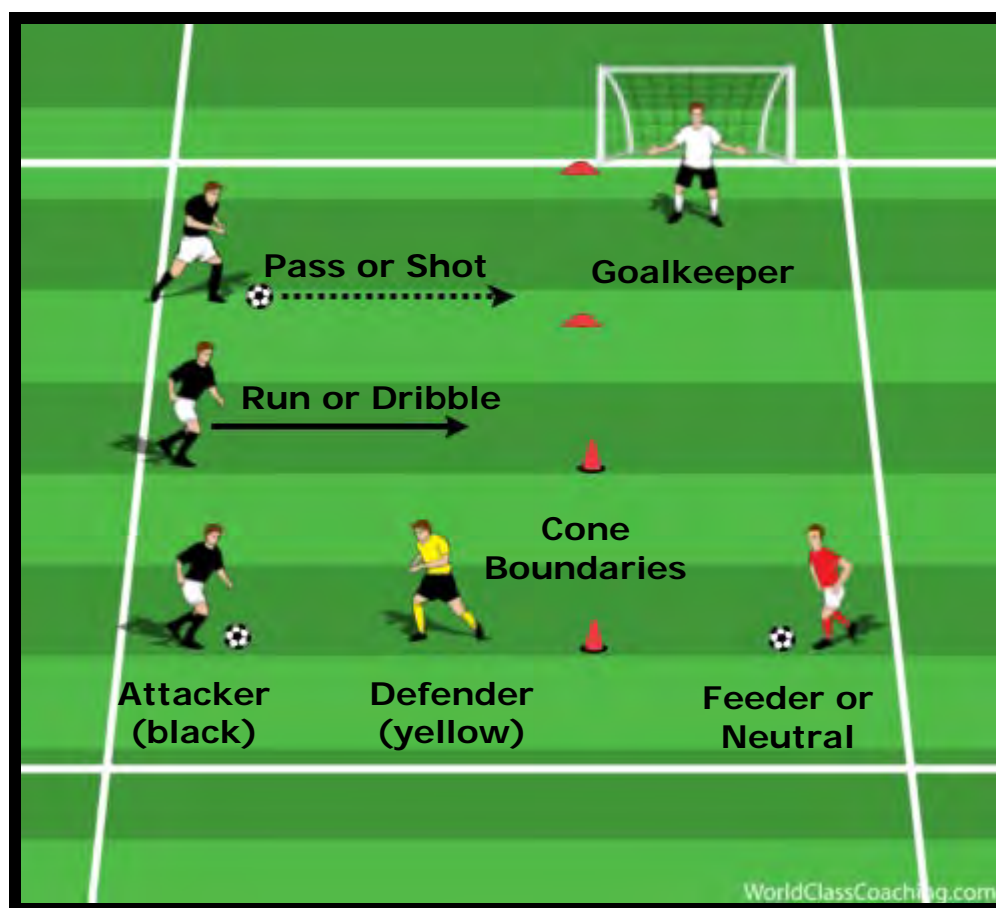
Coaching styles and personalities differ, but there are some things that work well for everyone. Treating your athletes with respect is very important. Understanding them and listening to them is vital as well. But having a consistent, considerate coaching style is something that rarely fails to work for anyone. And if you really enjoy coaching and being around your athletes, it's not that hard to do.

After Practice

When practice is over, it's time to re-evaluate. Did the drills and games that you used work well? Did the players learn and improve? Was the team playing better by the end of the practice session? Answer these questions in the hour immediately following your practice while things are still fresh in your mind. If things went well, then you can move on to a different practice session topic the next day. If things didn't go well and you need more work on the same topic, do so as soon as possible. Each day, you wipe the slate clean and go back to the drawing board. You look at your team, you identify your most urgent needs, and that becomes your next practice. And this process continues, day to day and week to week for the rest of the season.

Finally, there's this: Take the time each day to think your practices thru. I began this chapter with a quote from Steven Covey's book—7 Habits of Highly Effective People. In his book, Covey states that before you can accomplish anything, you first have to picture it in your mind, and see it happen exactly as you want it to happen. Only then can you go about doing it for real. Approach your practices the same way. See it in your mind first. Visualize what you want to see happen during today's practice, right down to the smallest detail. And then sit down and create your practice plan. An hour spent sitting and thinking and problem solving is never a waste of time.

Key For Diagrams



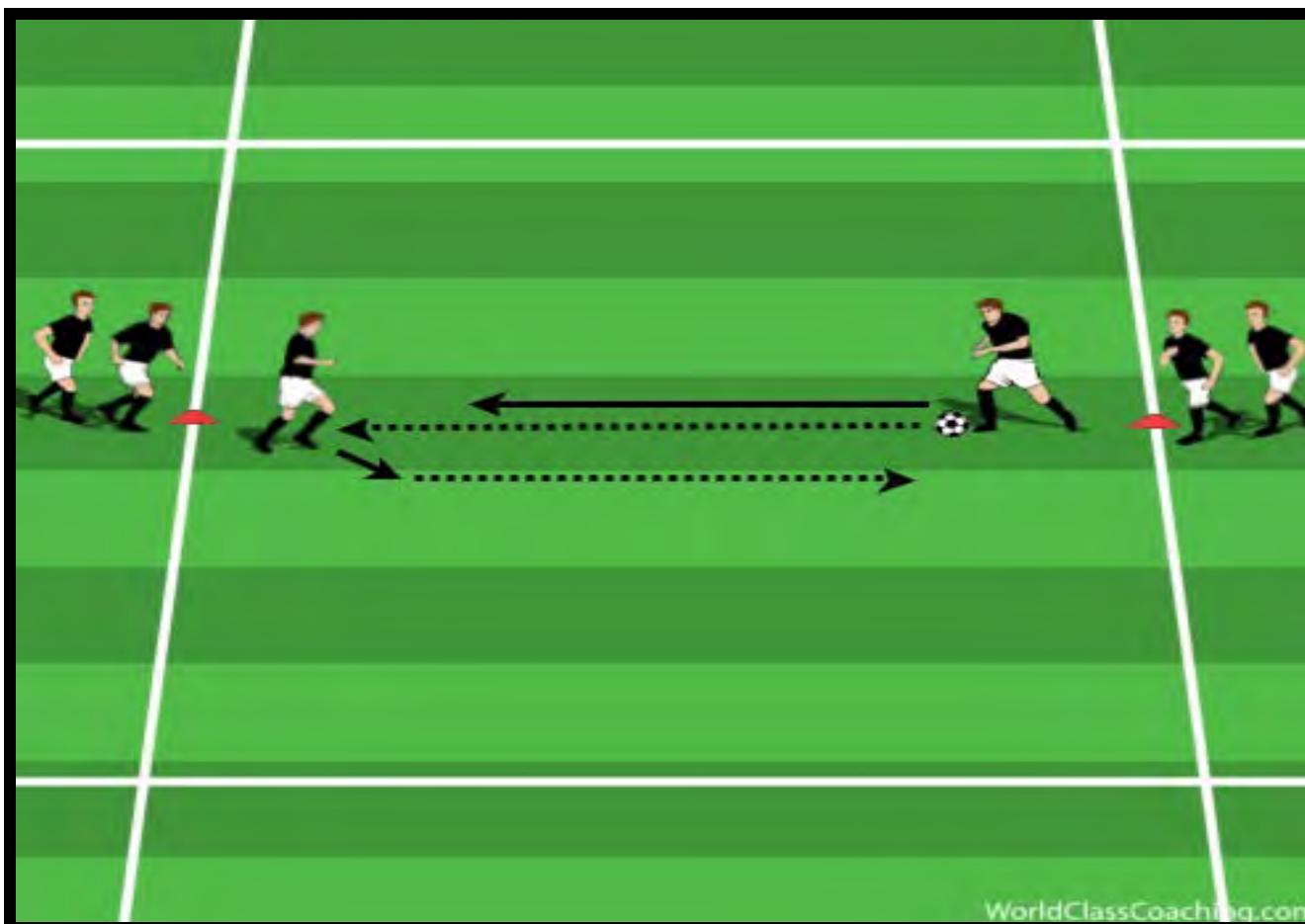
FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS

DRI BBLING

Feed and Pressure

Fundamental

Dribbling



Set Up: There are 6-8 players set up on the small grid, with lines starting at the cones.

Procedure: The players pass and follow their own pass across the grid, putting pressure on the next attacker as he receives. Play continues back and forth across the grid in a shuttle fashion, and the amount of defensive pressure put on by the defender is determined by the coach.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Receiving.
- 2 Dribbling moves.
- 3 Attacking 1 v 1.

Progressions:

- 1 The defender charges in.
- 2 The defender sticks a foot in.

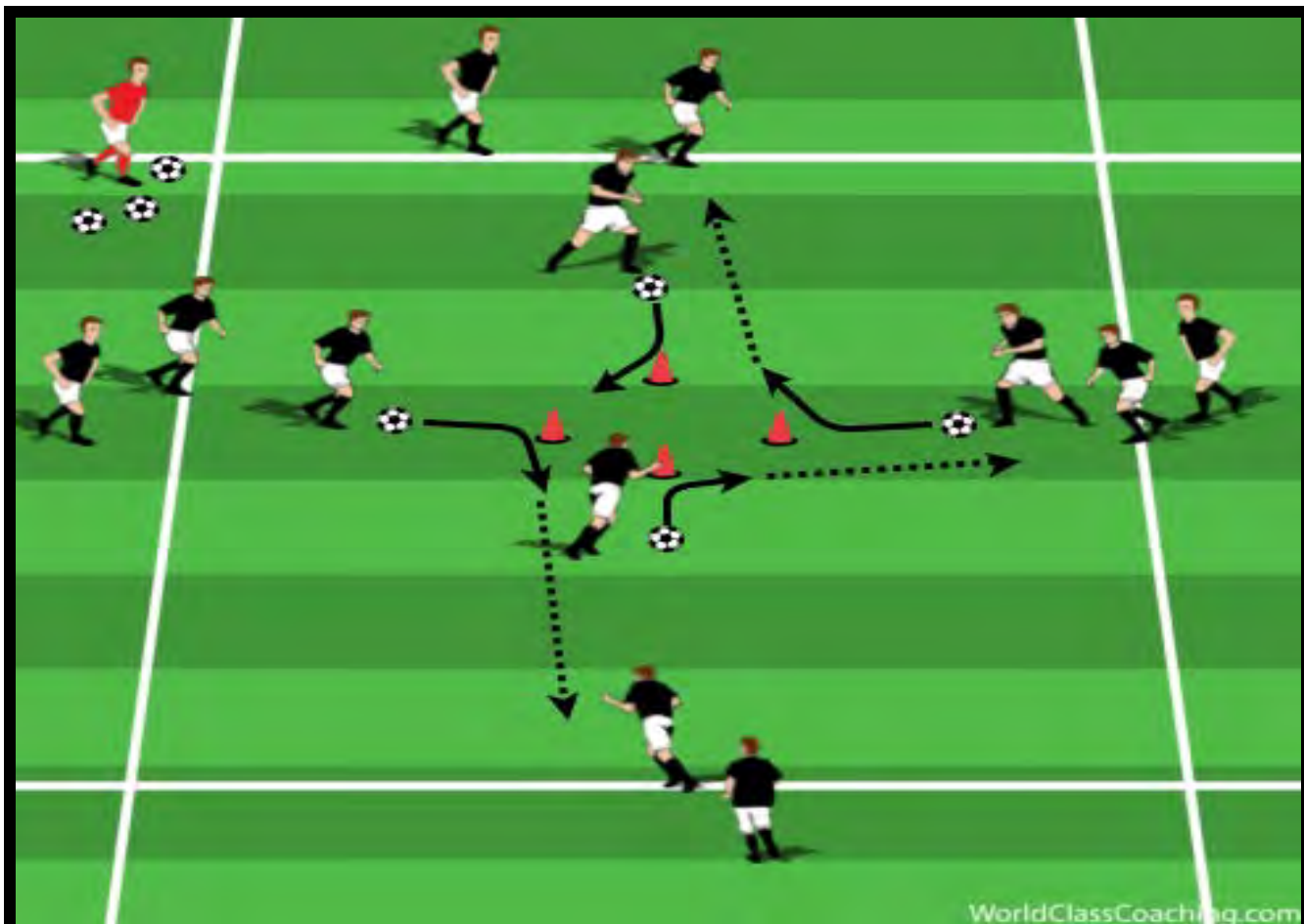
Coaching Points:

- 1 Take your first touch off to the side, not straight ahead.
- 2 When the defender over commits, touch the ball past him as he charges in.
- 3 Use feinting moves behind the ball in order to slow down the defender's run.

Turn Left, Turn Right

Fundamental

Dribbling



Set Up: Twelve players are set up inside the grid, with lines starting on the outside of the grid.

Procedure: During the drill, the first player in line dribbles towards the cones at speed, turns to the left (or right when the drill changes direction), and then passes the ball to the first player in the line facing them. The drill continues in this pattern with the players performing different turning moves at the cones. Possible moves: Side Roll, Chop with the inside or outside of the foot, Maradona, Pull behind the leg, etc.

Teaching Topics:

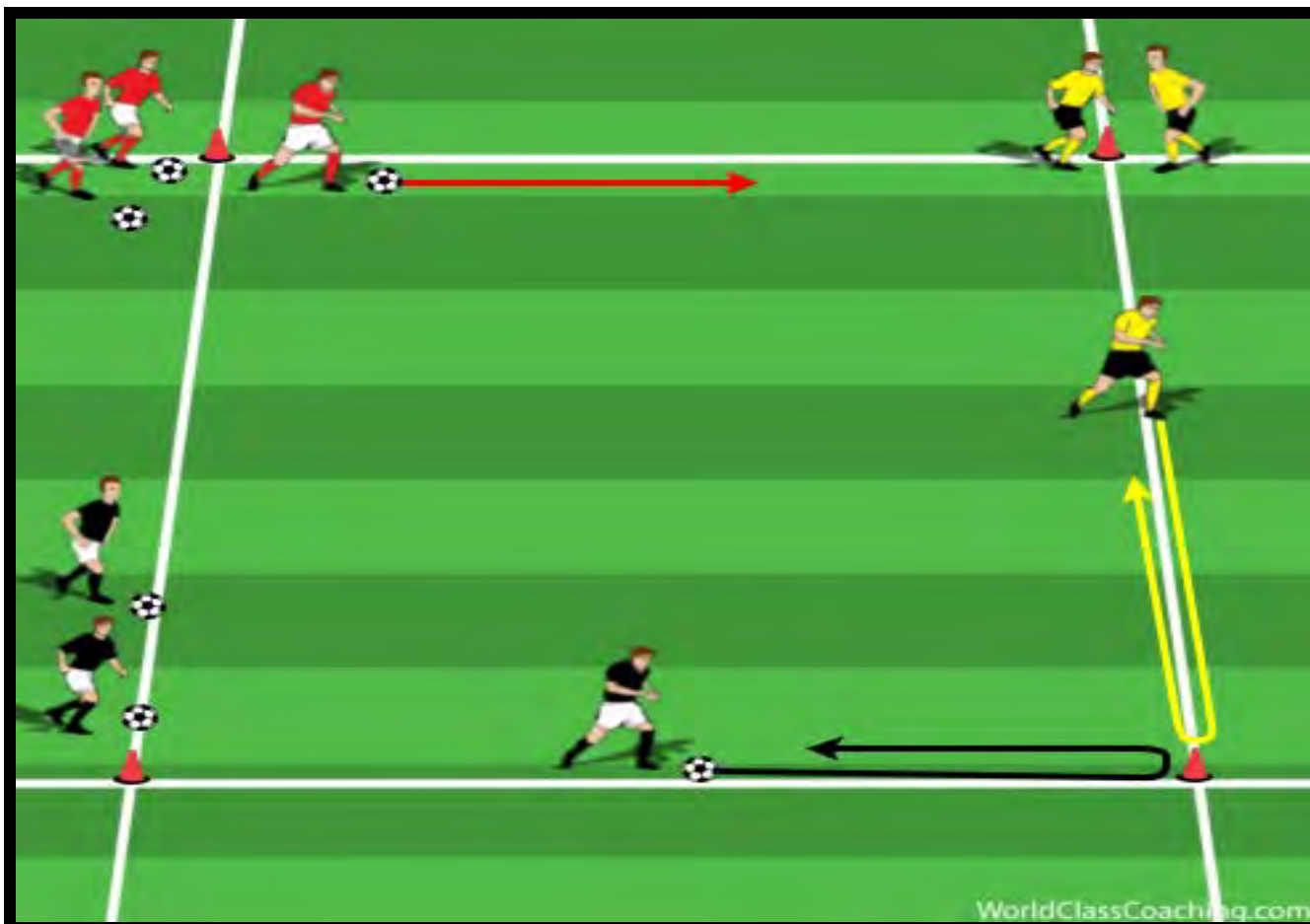
- 1 Turning moves.
- 2 Feinting moves.
- 3 Ball control.

Progressions:

- 1 Turn at two cones, pass across.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Accelerate out of your turning move in order to create enough space to pass.
- 2 'Sell' your turning moves with ball and body feints.
- 3 Keep the ball close to your foot and be able to turn away from pressure at any time.

Dribbling Race**Fundamental****Dribbling**

Set Up: Nine players are set up inside of the grid in three groups of three, with lines starting at the cones.

Procedure: The three groups start in the corners of the grid, leaving one corner open. The attacking team (in black) dribbles towards the open corner, racing the defender to the open cone. When the players reach the cone, they both turn and run back to their original corners. The new attacking player (in red) starts his dribbling run when the defender turns, racing him back to the defender's corner. Play continues in this pattern, and the defending team switches out after five minutes.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Dribbling.
- 2 Shielding.
- 3 Turning.

Progressions:

- 1 Defenders kick the ball away.

Coaching Points:

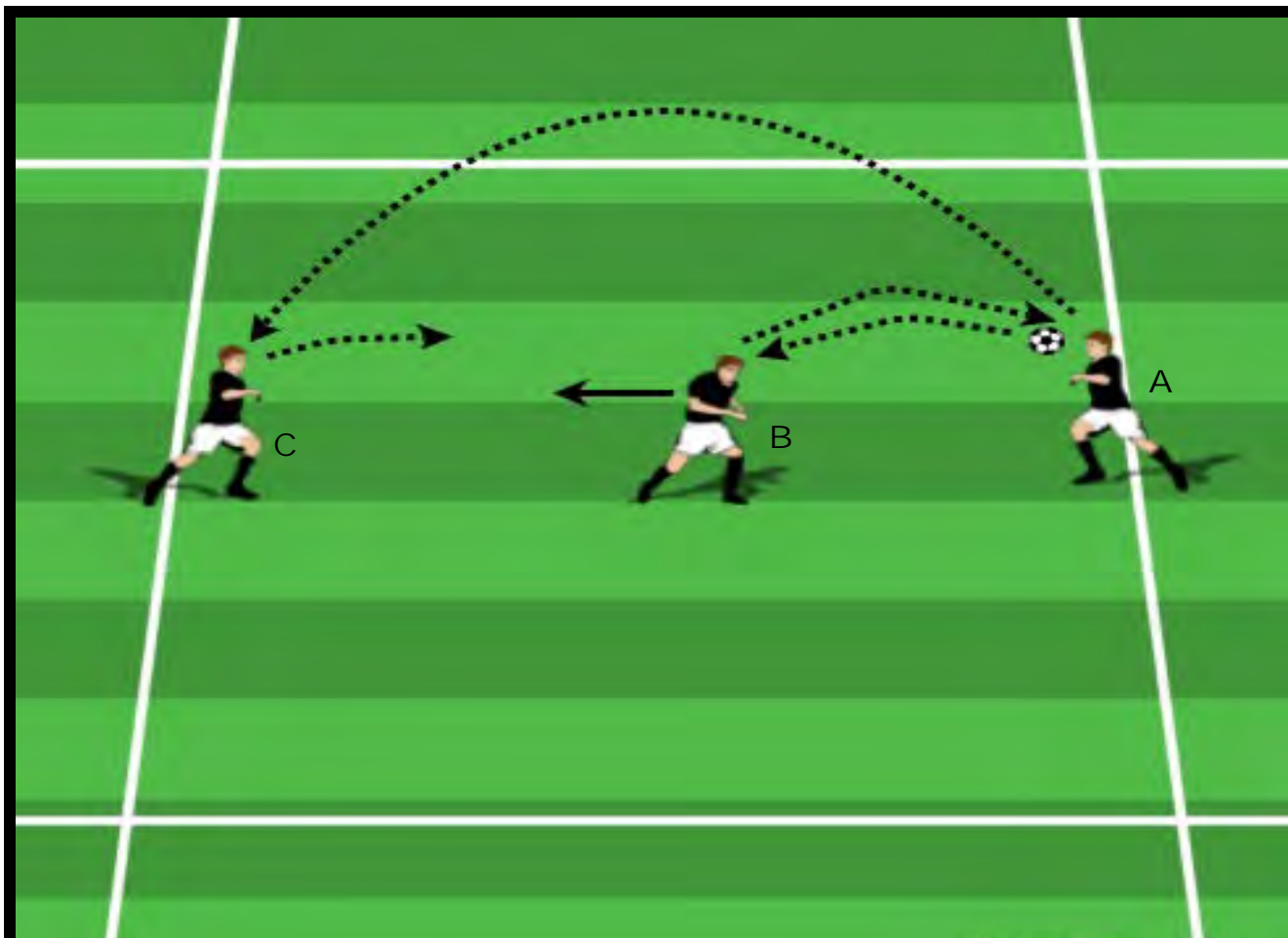
- 1 Touch the ball with the instep, sprint between touches, and dribble with your head up.
- 2 As you approach the cone, get the ball onto your outside foot in order to shield.
- 3 Accelerate out of the turn and create some space between you and the defender.

HEADING

Up, Back, and Over

Fundamental

Heading



Set Up: Three players are set up inside of the small grid, playing head balls only.

Procedure: Player A tosses the ball up and heads to Player B. Player B heads back to Player A, and then Player A heads long to Player C. Player B then turns around to combine with Player C on the same short, short, long sequence. The group counts their consecutive touches during the drill.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Clearing headers.
- 2 Footwork.
- 3 Heading for distance.

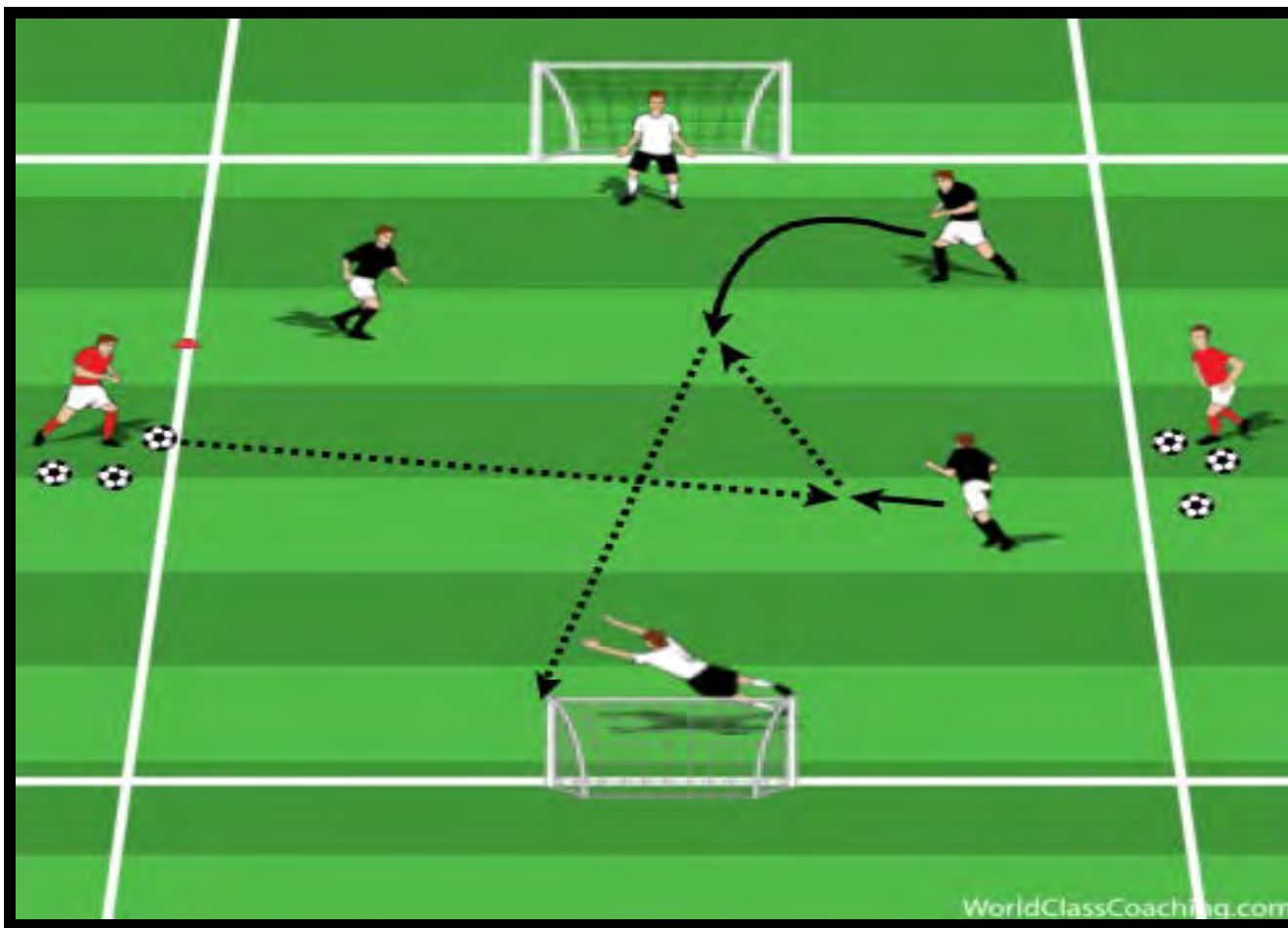
Progressions:

- 1 Juggle the ball for 2-3 touches before passing.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Direct the ball up at an angle when clearing as opposed to heading the ball downward.
- 2 Keep your feet active in your stance, with one foot forward and one foot back.
- 3 Bend backwards at the waist and step into the header in order to generate power.

FINISHING

Ten Shots, Drill #7**Fundamental****Finishing**

Set Up: There are three players set up on a small field, starting in the center.

Procedure: The Feeder begins the drill with a pass in to any of the three attackers. The attackers combine in the center of the field for a shot on either goal, using two and three-player combinations. After each shot, the attackers re-set and receive the next pass from the other Feeder. After the attackers finish ten passes, two of them switch out with the Feeders.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Support.
- 2 Dribbling run.
- 3 Finishing.

Progressions:

- 1 Air ball service.
- 2 Driven ball service.

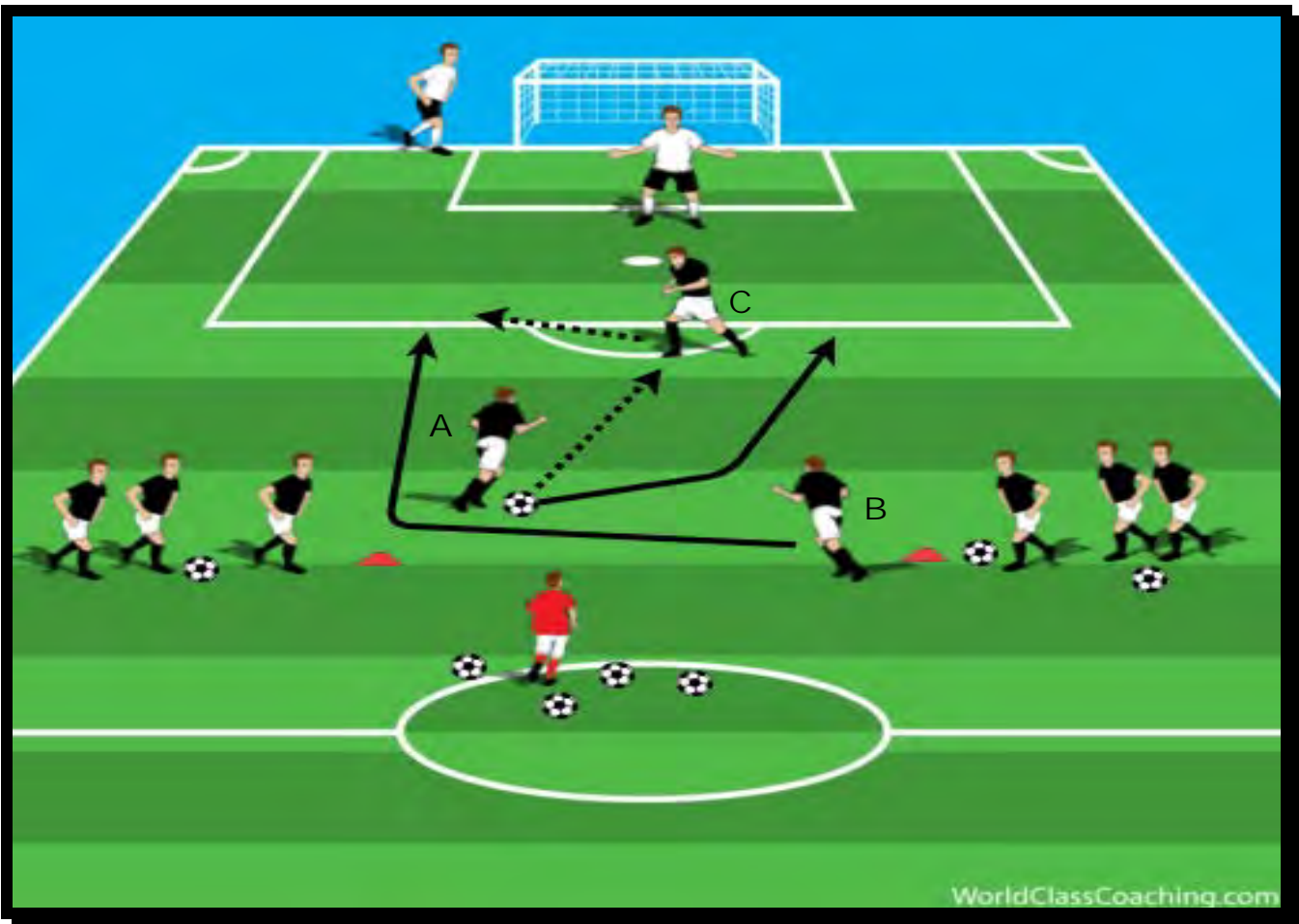
Coaching Points:

- 1 The two supporting players have to read the first pass and show themselves.
- 2 Approach the goal at an angle as opposed to a straight line.
- 3 Take the last dribble touch off to the side so that you can shoot at all four corners.

Overlaps to Goal

Fundamental

Finishing



Set Up: There are 6-10 players set up in the attacking third, starting at the cones. A support player is stationed inside of the 'D'.

Procedure: To begin the drill, Player B runs an overlap around Player A. Player A passes up to Player C, and runs an overlap around the other side. Player C lays the ball off to either player for a shot on goal. The players alternate lines during the drill, and after five minutes, a new player rotates in for Player C.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Quality first touch.
- 2 Timing the runs.
- 3 Speed of play.

Progressions:

- 1 Add a defender inside of the penalty area.

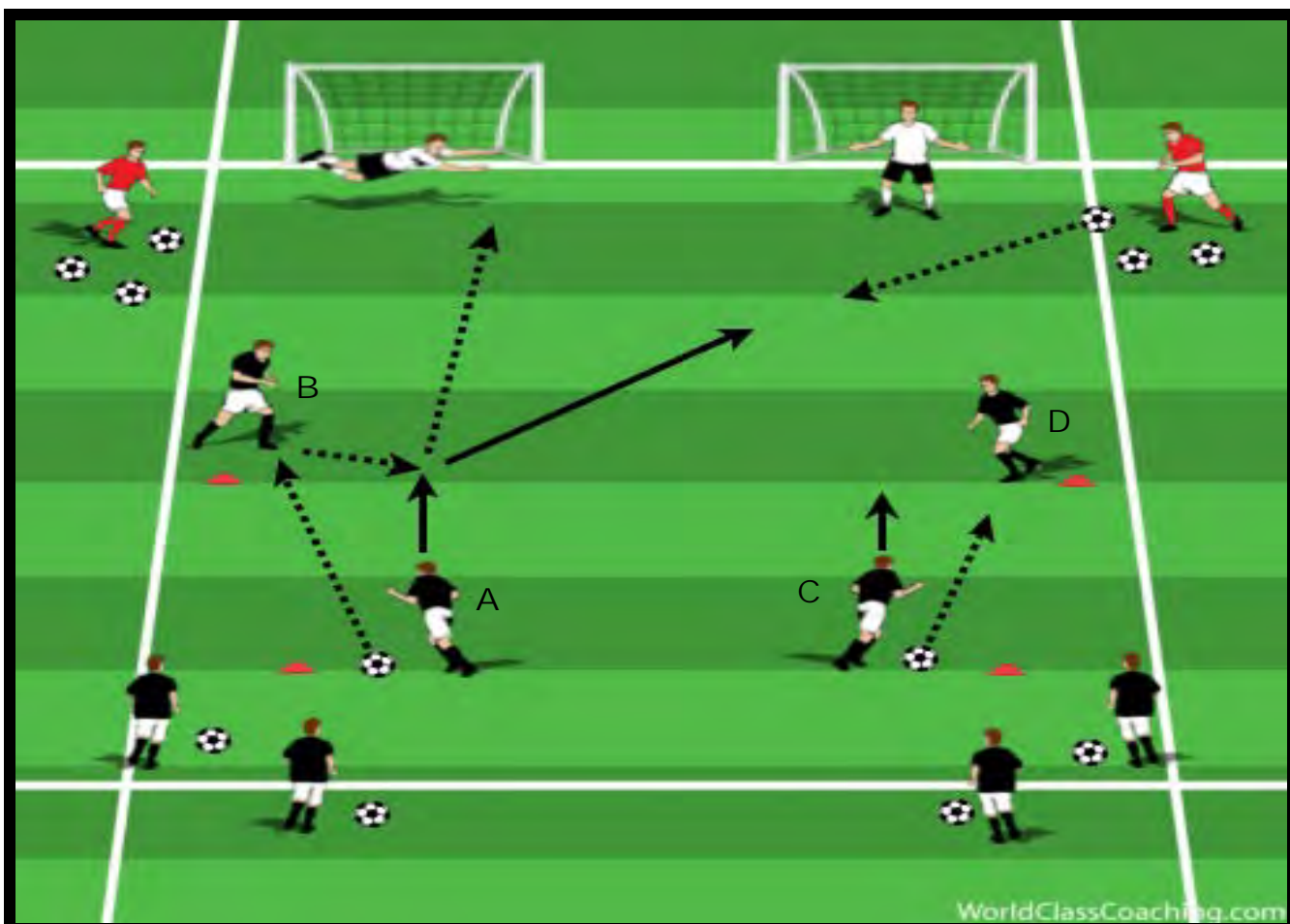
Coaching Points:

- 1 A poor first pass will throw off the timing of the entire combination.
- 2 Hold the run and maintain the correct distance in case the ball is played backwards.
- 3 Use as few touches as possible, and don't slow down the run with a weak pass.

Two Shots, Two Goals

Fundamental

Finishing



Set Up: There are 8-10 players set up on the small field, with players starting at the cones.

Procedure: Player A wall passes with Player B and then finishes on goal. After shooting, Player A runs to the other goal to finish a cross from the Feeder. After Player A hits his second shot, Player C starts the same sequence on the other side, combining with Player D on the wall pass. The players stay on the other side of the field after their second shot, and the passers (Players B and D) rotate out after five minutes.

Teaching Topics:

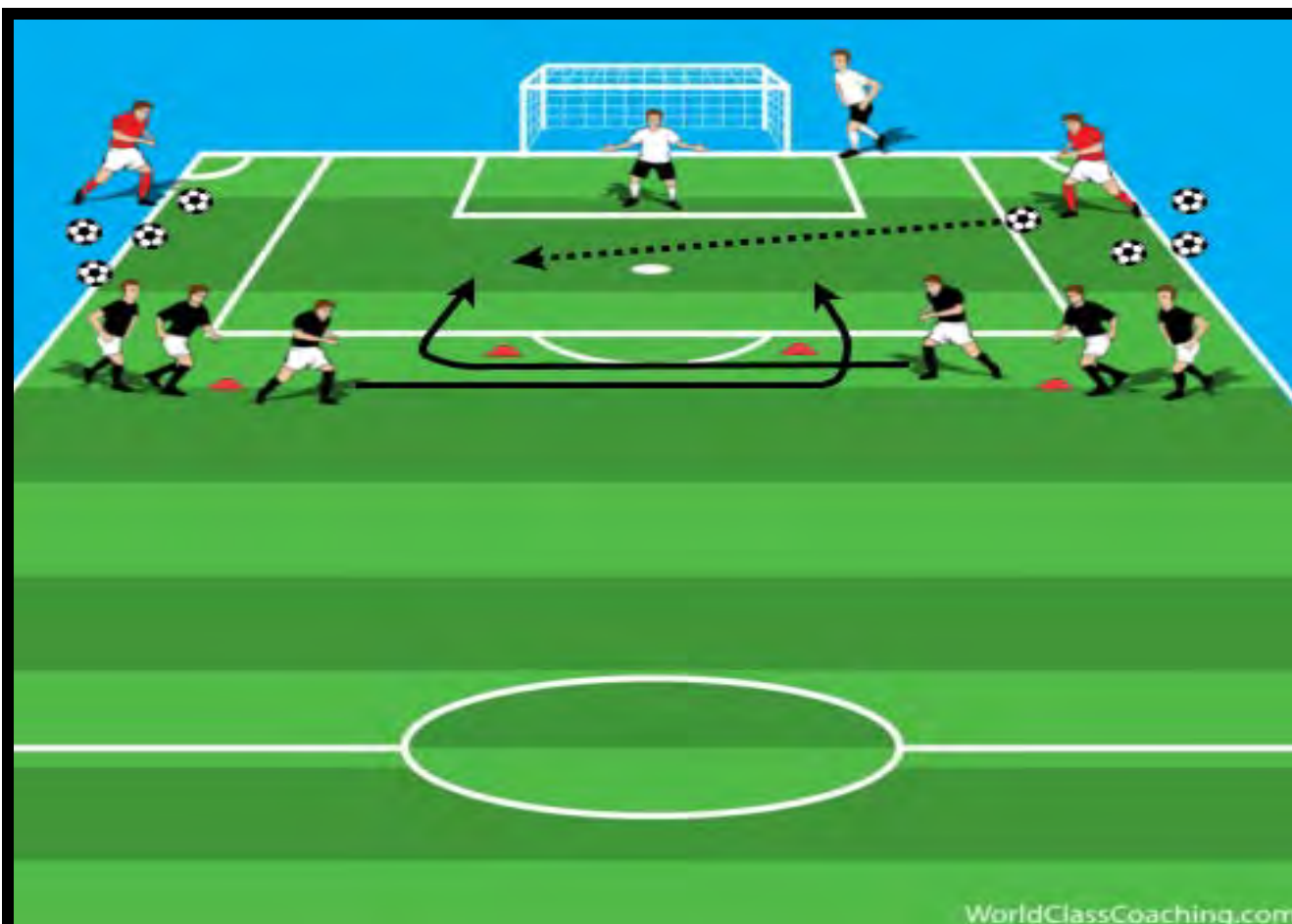
- 1 First time shooting.
- 2 Finishing runs.
- 3 Angle of approach.

Progressions:

- 1 The second shot must be a volley.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Delay the finishing run in order to finish the cross at sprint speed.
- 2 Slow down the approach so that you can adjust to a back pass.
- 3 Make a curved run to the ball in order to create a better shooting angle.

Far Post, Near Post #2**Fundamental****Finishing**

Set Up: There are 6-8 players set up in the attacking third, starting at the cones.

Procedure: To begin play, the attackers make horizontal runs into the center, and then circle the cones before making their runs to the near and far posts. The Feeder crosses the ball, and the attackers finish. Upon completion, the attackers return to the other line. Service alternates between the two Feeders during the drill.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Runs to goal.
- 2 Finishing.
- 3 Decision making.

Progressions:

- 1 The second player in line can finish rebounds.

Coaching Points:

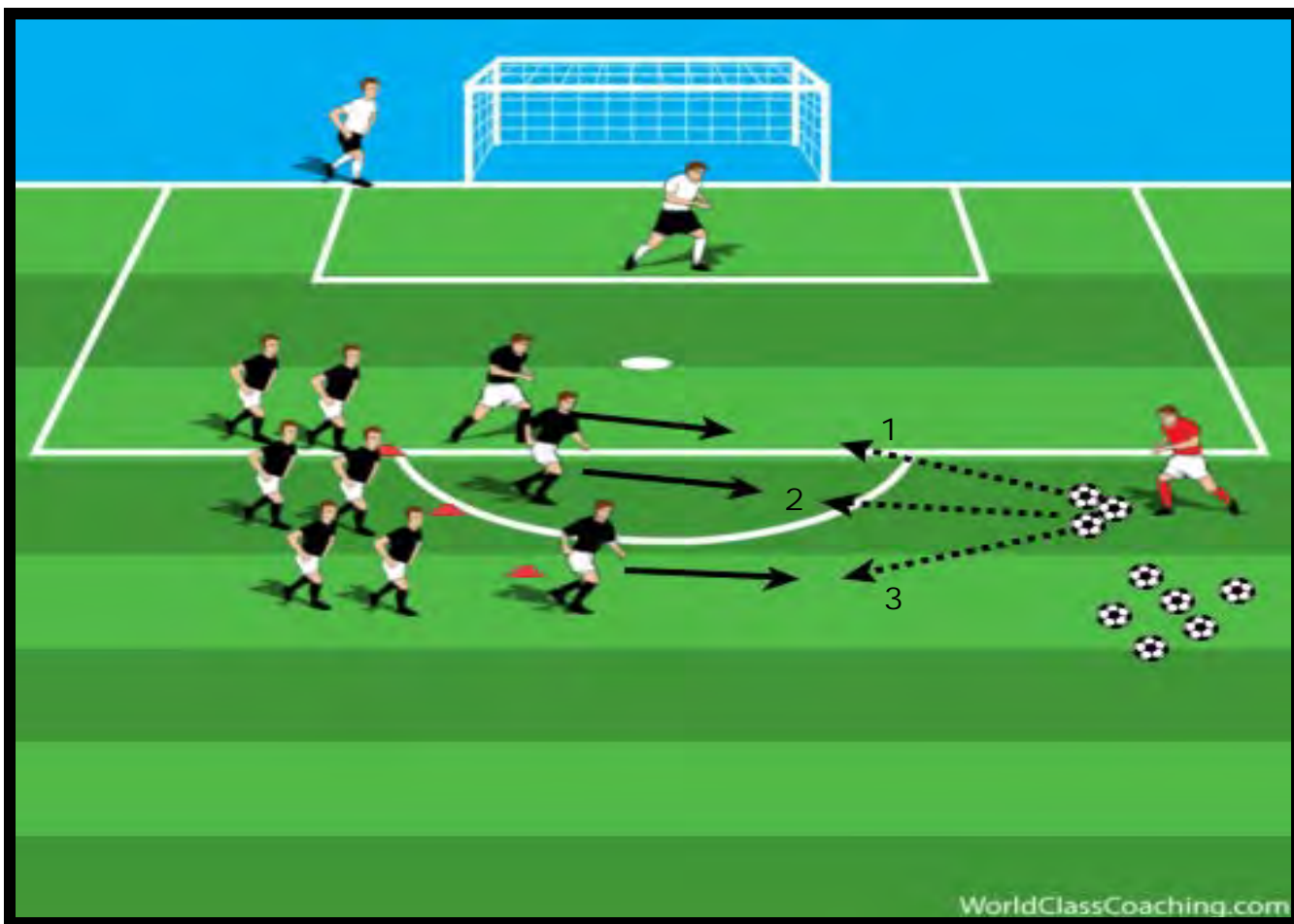
- 1 Time your run so that you can finish the header at sprint speed.
- 2 Circle your run and approach the cross at an angle.
- 3 If you can't score with the header, head it back across to the other post.

GOALKEEPING

Save Two

Fundamental

Goalkeeping



Set Up: There are 6-9 players set up in the attacking third, starting at the cones.

Procedure: The Feeder places three balls in a tight bunch and plays all three onto the field with one kick. Each of the three shooters collects a ball, and they finish in this order: (1) A first time shot from close in. (2) A finish from outside of the penalty area. (3) A breakaway finish. The goalkeeper scores a point if he saves at least two out of three, and games are played to five points.

Teaching Topics:

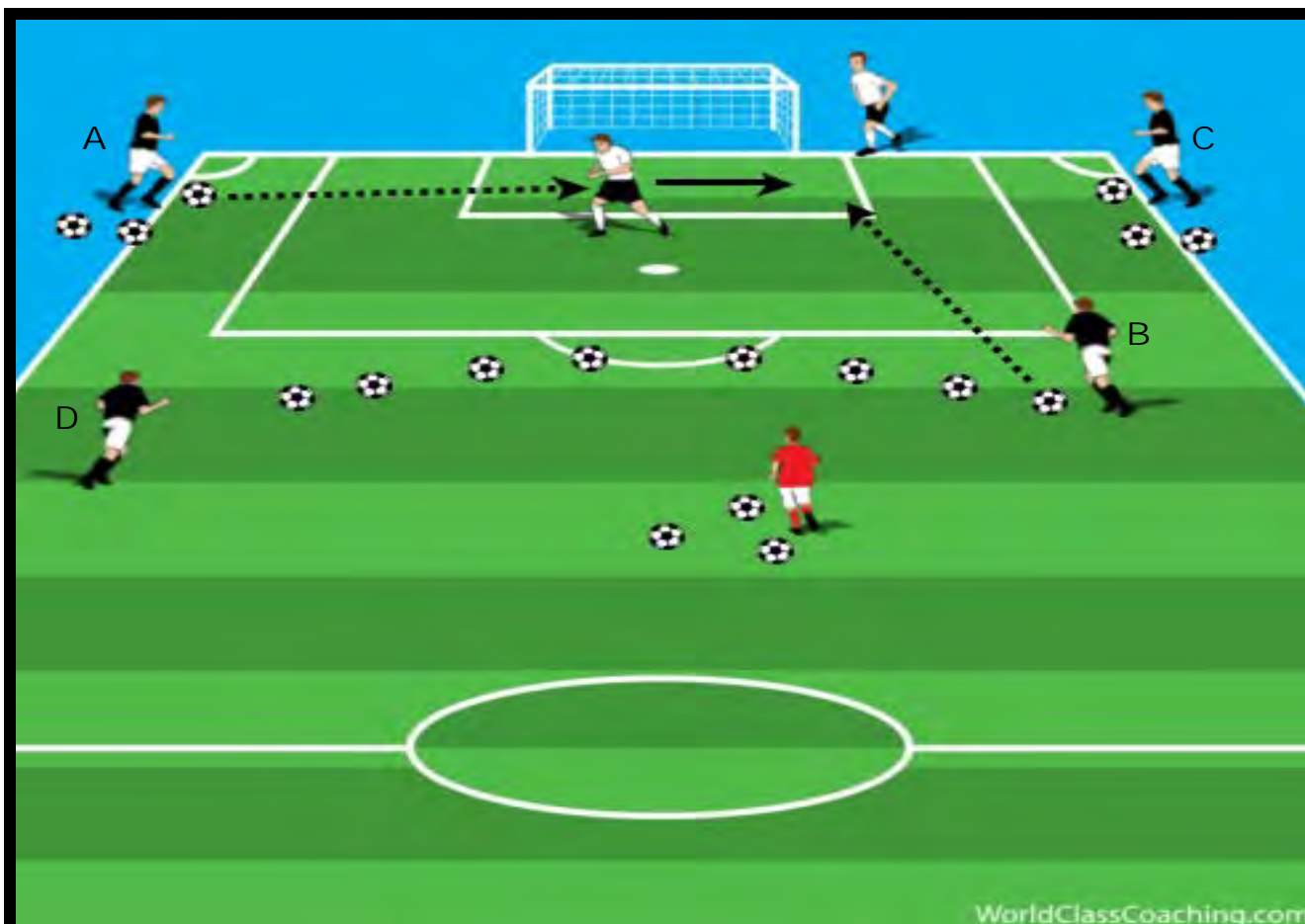
- 1 Coming off the line.
- 2 Diving at the feet.
- 3 Quick recovery.

Progressions:

- 1 All three attackers try to dribble over the goal line.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Make the decision to come off your line early and aggressively.
- 2 Dive thru the ball and make contact with the attacker.
- 3 After each save, bounce back up to your feet and return to the set position.

Cross, Shot**Fundamental****Goalkeeping**

Set Up: There are four players set up in the attacking third, with two goalkeepers.

Procedure: Player A begins the drill with a cross into the penalty area. The goalkeeper catches, and then moves over to play the shot from Player B. Player C follows the shot with his cross, and after the goalkeeper catches, Player D shoots. The goalkeeper saves and re-adjusts his position with each ball, and the players give him just enough time to recover in between saves. The goalkeepers switch out after four balls.

Teaching Topics:

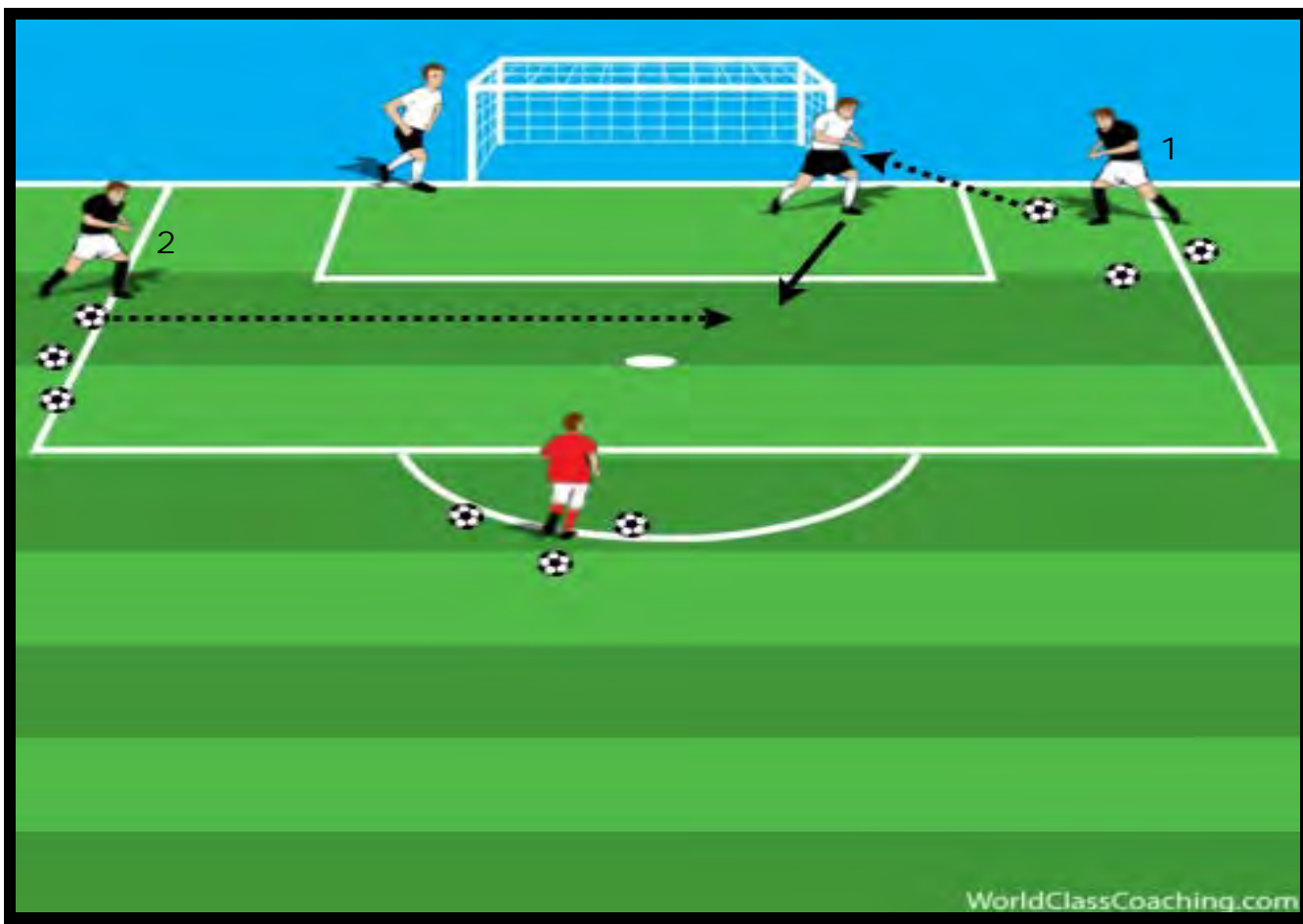
- 1 Set position.
- 2 Recovery runs.
- 3 Save technique.

Progressions:

- 1 Add an attacker in the penalty area.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Come to a set position before the ball is struck, regardless of where you are.
- 2 Use small, quick steps to get across the penalty area.
- 3 Parry or punch the crosses you cannot catch, and send the ball out wide.

Keeper Recovery, #2**Fundamental****Goalkeeping**

Set Up: Two shooters are set up in the attacking third of the field, along with two goalkeepers.

Procedure: The goalkeeper comes off of the near post and the 1st shooter hits the goalkeeper in the hands from close in. Then the 2nd shooter drives a ball on the ground between the six-yard box and the penalty spot. The goalkeeper must recover back towards the center and then cut out the second ball. The speed of the drill can be increased to make the second save more difficult.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Set position.
- 2 Recovery run.
- 3 Save technique.

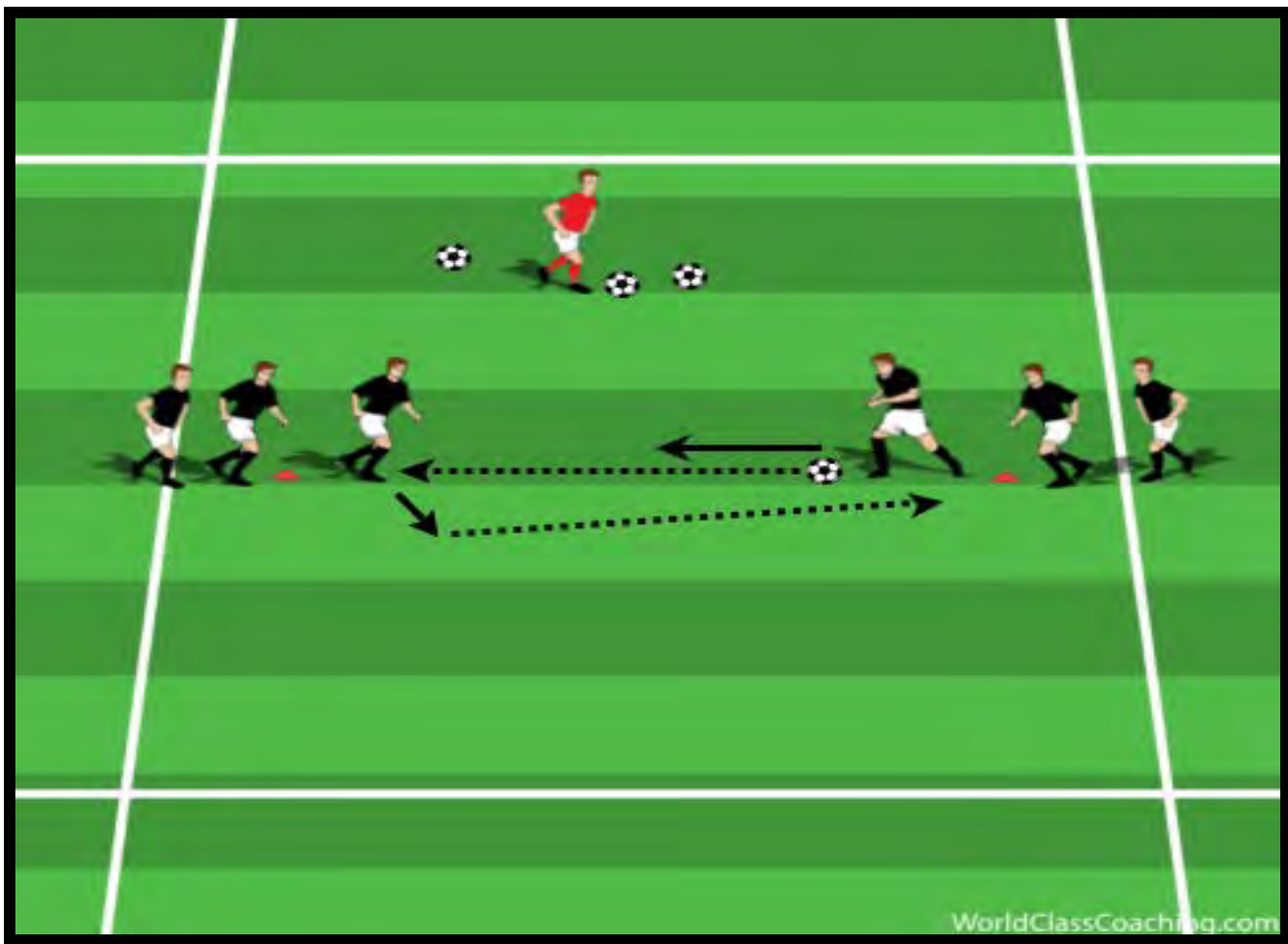
Progressions:

- 1 The goalkeeper must dive on the first ball.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Come to a set position before the ball is struck, regardless of where you are.
- 2 Use small, quick steps to get across the penalty area, and run towards the ball.
- 3 Choose to catch or punch as early as possible. Parry hard shots from in close.

PASSING

Two Touch Shuttle**Fundamental****Passing**

Set Up: There are 6-8 players set up on the small grid, with lines starting at the cones.

Procedure: During the drill, the players pass the ball back and forth across the grid in two touches and follow the ball over to the other line. The type of service can vary during the drill (see Progressions)

Teaching Topics:

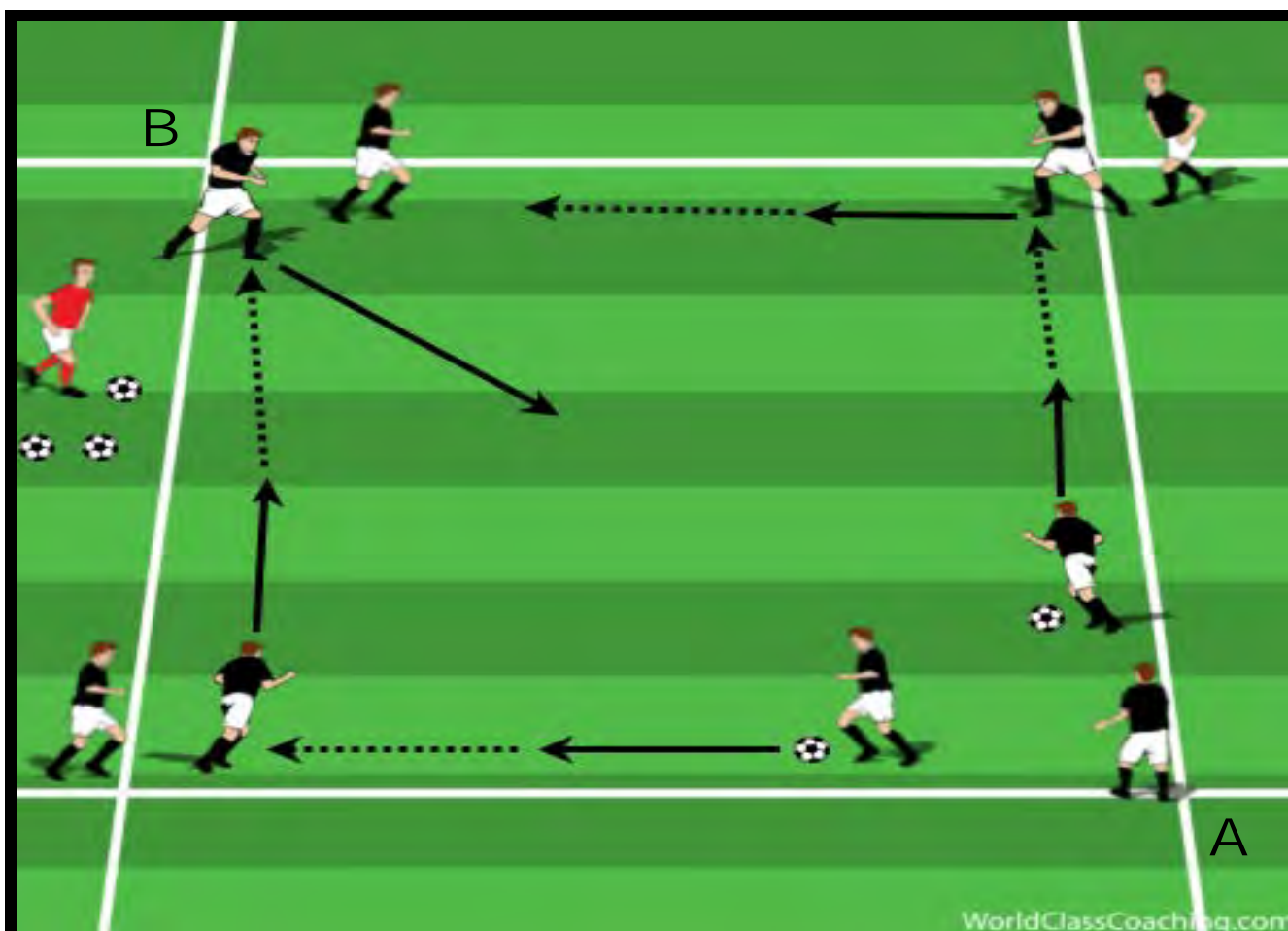
- 1 First touch.
- 2 Vision.
- 3 Passing.

Progressions:

- 1 Very hard passes to feet.
- 2 Driven air ball.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Set the ball off to the side at the correct angle and distance.
- 2 Pick your head up and check the target at least once before passing.
- 3 Play the ball to the correct foot so that the receiver can play the ball off quickly.

Smedley's Square**Fundamental****Passing**

Set Up: There are 8-10 players set up inside the grid, starting at the corners. Two balls are used during the drill.

Procedure: At the start of the drill, two players dribble out of the same corner (A) in opposite directions. From there, the players dribble halfway across the grid and pass to the next corner. When the ball reaches the corner across from the start (B), play moves diagonally across the square and back to the start. The drill continues in this pattern, with one player going left at the start (A), and the next one going right.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Positive first touch.
- 2 Footwork.
- 3 Speed dribbling.

Progressions:

- 1 Two touch passes out of the corners.

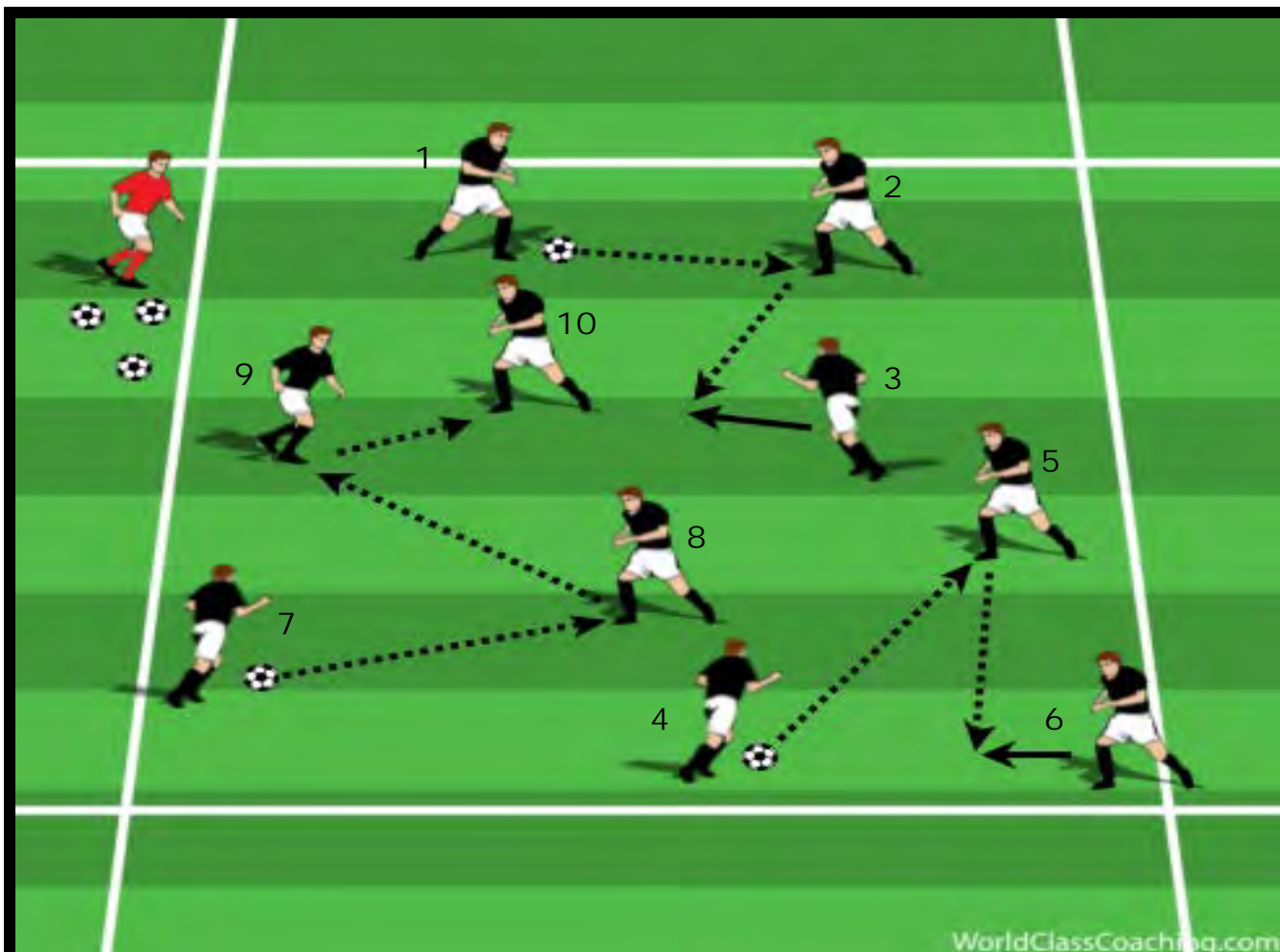
Coaching Points:

- 1 Run out of the corner, making the first touch straight at the next corner.
- 2 Get your feet set early when receiving, and be up on your toes.
- 3 Move the ball at game speed—dribble at full speed and strike game speed passes.

By The Numbers

Fundamental

Passing



Set Up: Ten players are set up inside of the large grid.

Procedure: During play, the ten players pass three balls around the field in sequence, with Player 1 passing to Player 2, Player 2 passing to Player 3 and so on, until the ball reaches Player 10. Player 10 then passes to Player 1, and the cycle continues. The conditions of the drill may vary during play (see Progressions), and the direction of play can be reversed at any time.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Verbal and visual cues.
- 2 Preparing to pass.
- 3 Runs without the ball.

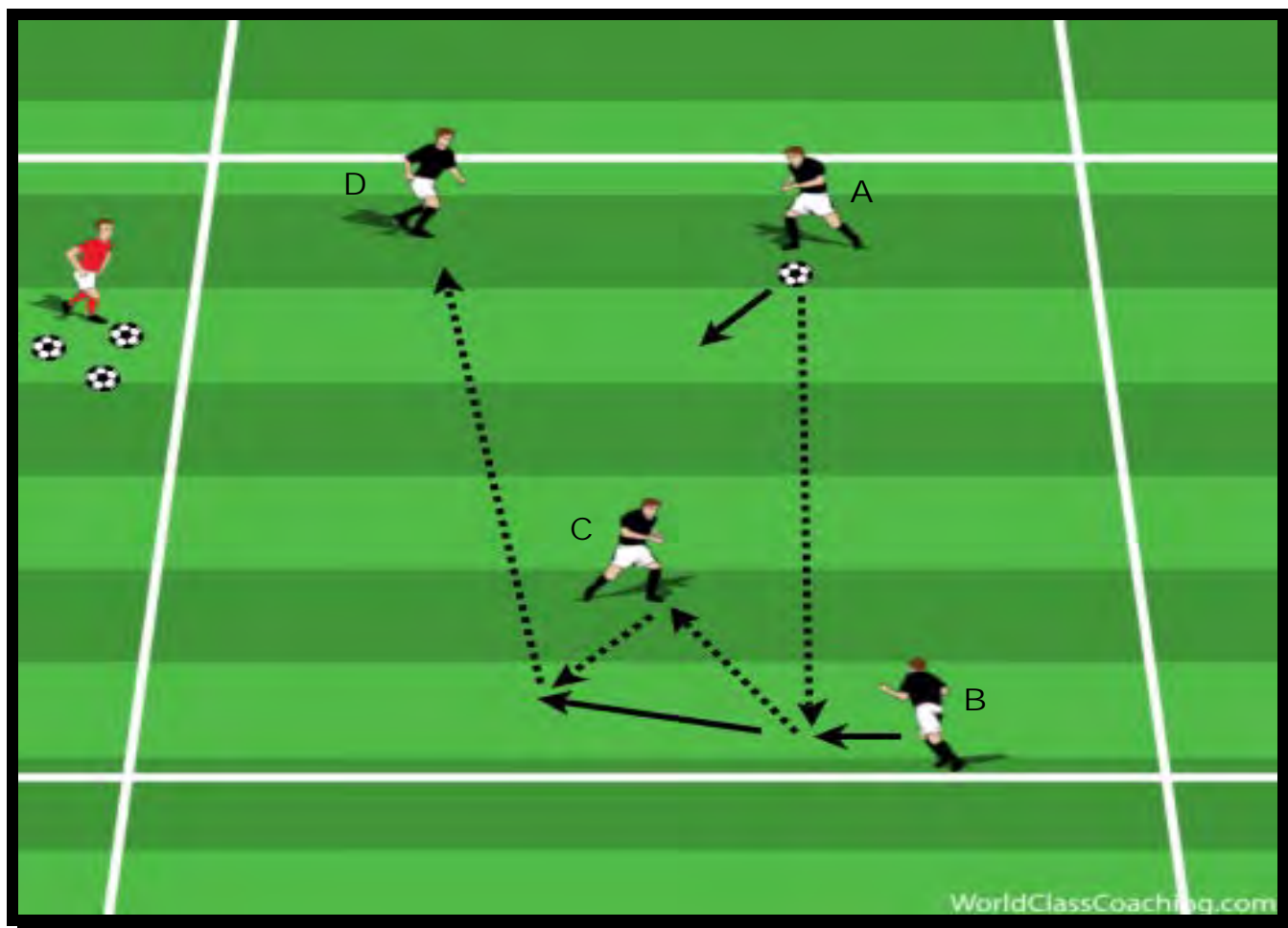
Progressions:

- 1 One or two touch limit.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Players should make eye contact and talk on every pass.
- 2 Players waiting to receive should not hide in traffic (aka 'hiding in dead space').
- 3 The passer should look up and check the target again just before striking the pass.

PASSING PATTERNS

Short, Short, Long #1**Fundamental****Passing Patterns**

Set Up: There are four players set up in the large grid, with two players starting at each end.

Procedure: Player A begins the drill with a long pass to Player B. Player B plays it short to Player C and makes a run into space. Player C lays the ball off for Player B, who drives the ball back across the grid to Player D. Play continues back and forth across the grid in this short, short, long pattern. Players A and D change positions each time they play the ball long, as do Players B and C.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 The long pass
- 2 The back pass.
- 3 Support play.

Progressions:

- 1 Add a third player at each end of the field.

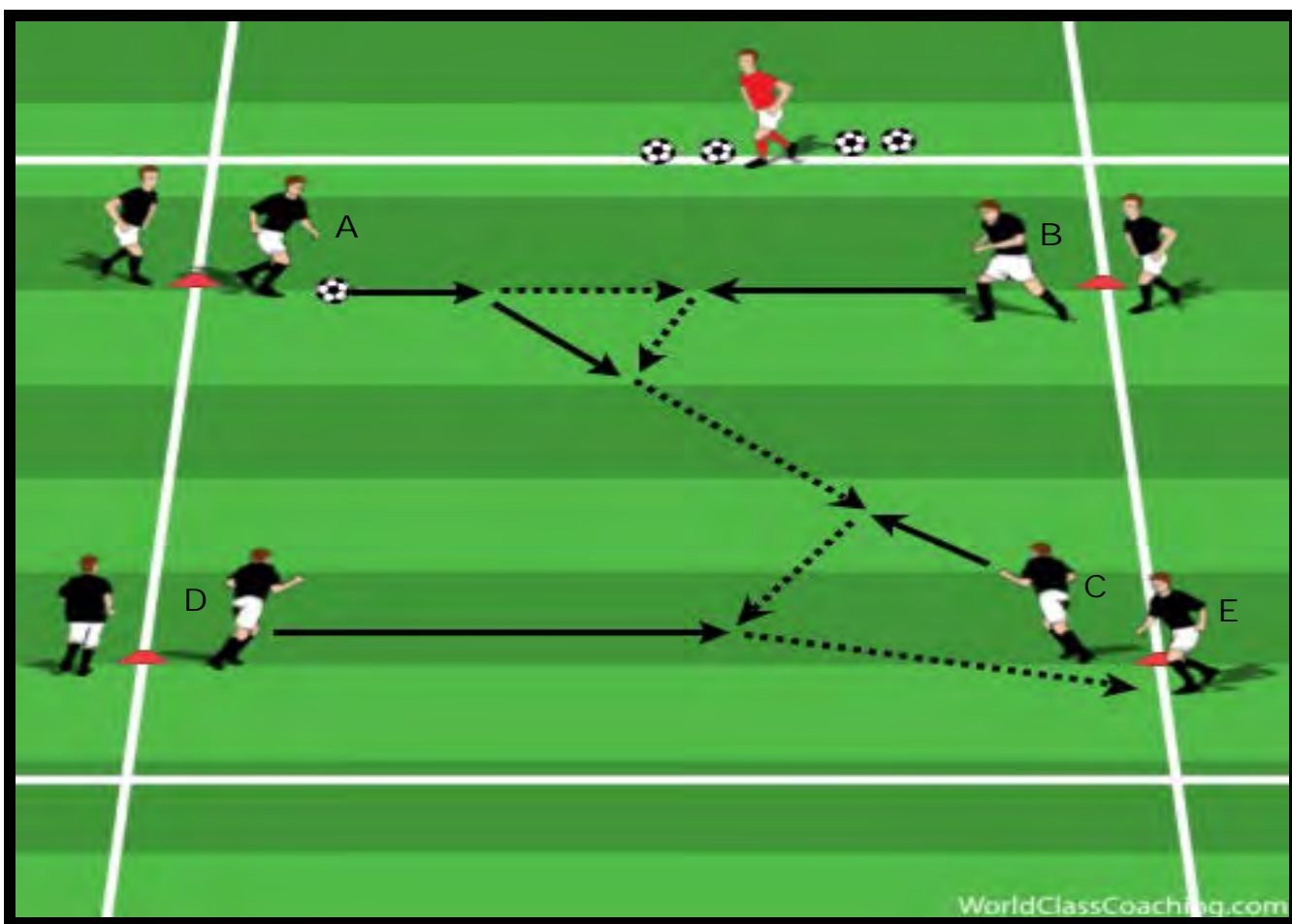
Coaching Points:

- 1 The long pass is a driven ball, struck with the instep. It stays low and has backspin.
- 2 The short pass should settle to the ground and take most of the pace off of the long ball.
- 3 While the long pass is in the air, show yourself and communicate with your partner.

Up, Back, and Thru Grid

Fundamental

Passing Patterns



Set Up: 8-12 players are set up inside of the large grid, starting at the cones.

Procedure: Player A plays up and back with Player B, and then plays the ball thru to Player C. Player C lays the ball off for Player D to run onto, and Player D passes the ball up to Player E to re-start the drill in the opposite direction. During the drill, the players rotate to the opposite end of the grid, and after ten minutes, the starting position is switched over to the other side (starting the ball with Player D's line).

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Timing the runs.
- 2 Passing.
- 3 Speed of play.

Progressions:

- 1 Run two groups at the same time.

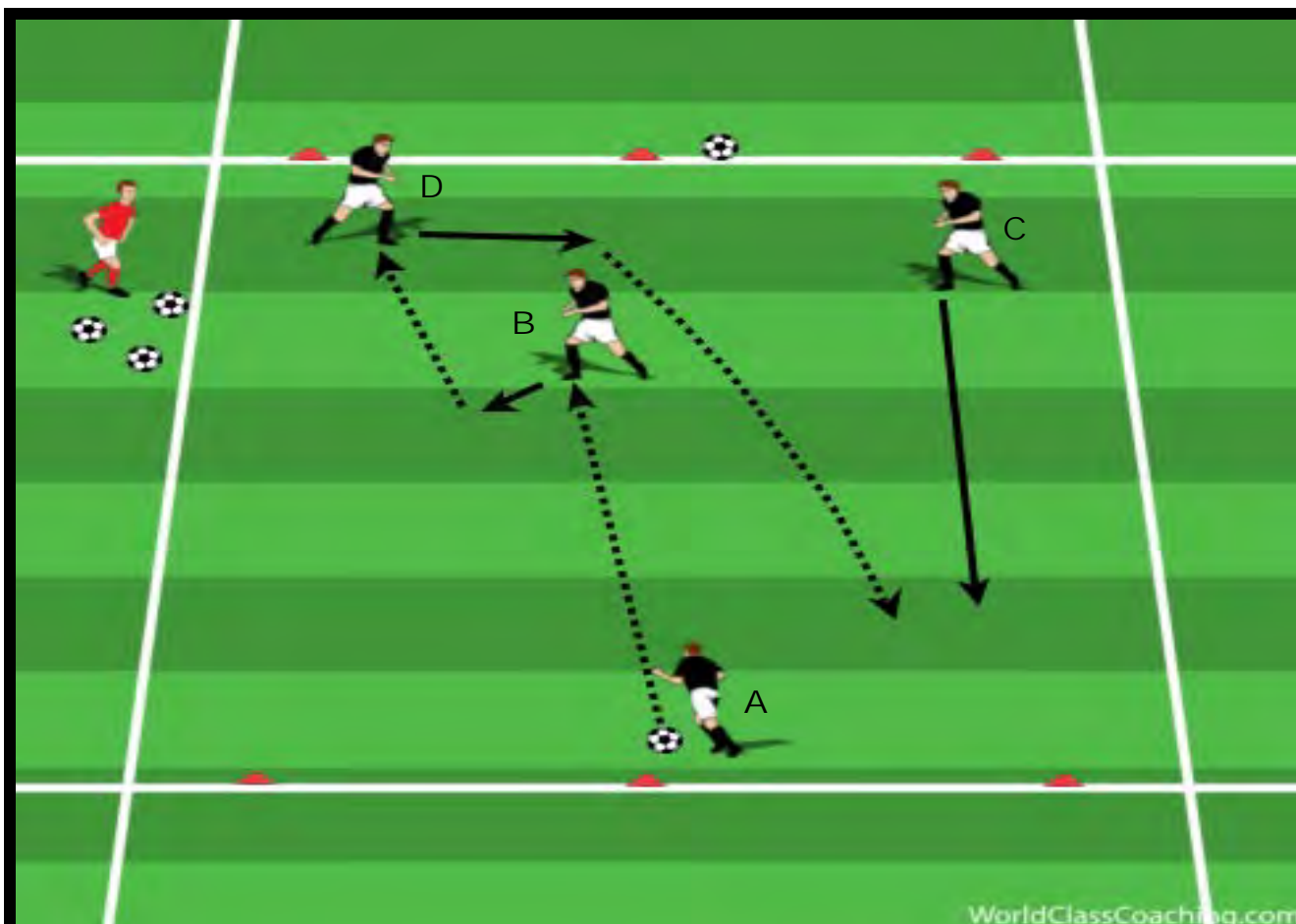
Coaching Points:

- 1 Players C and D must hold their runs until their teammates are prepared to pass.
- 2 The second pass must be played backwards and not square.
- 3 Play one touch passes whenever possible, use two touches when you have to.

Back Pass, Thru Pass

Fundamental

Passing Patterns



Set Up: There are four players set up inside of the grid, starting at the cones.

Procedure: Player A passes up to Player B. Player B turns and plays it back to Player C, and Player C makes a thru pass to Player D running down the line. After receiving, Player D dribbles the ball to the center cone and leaves it. Player C re-starts play on the other end with another ball, and Players A and D move to the outside cones to re-form the 'Y' shape. After 2-3 minutes, the players rotate to new starting positions.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Turning.
- 2 Timing the runs.
- 3 Speed of play.

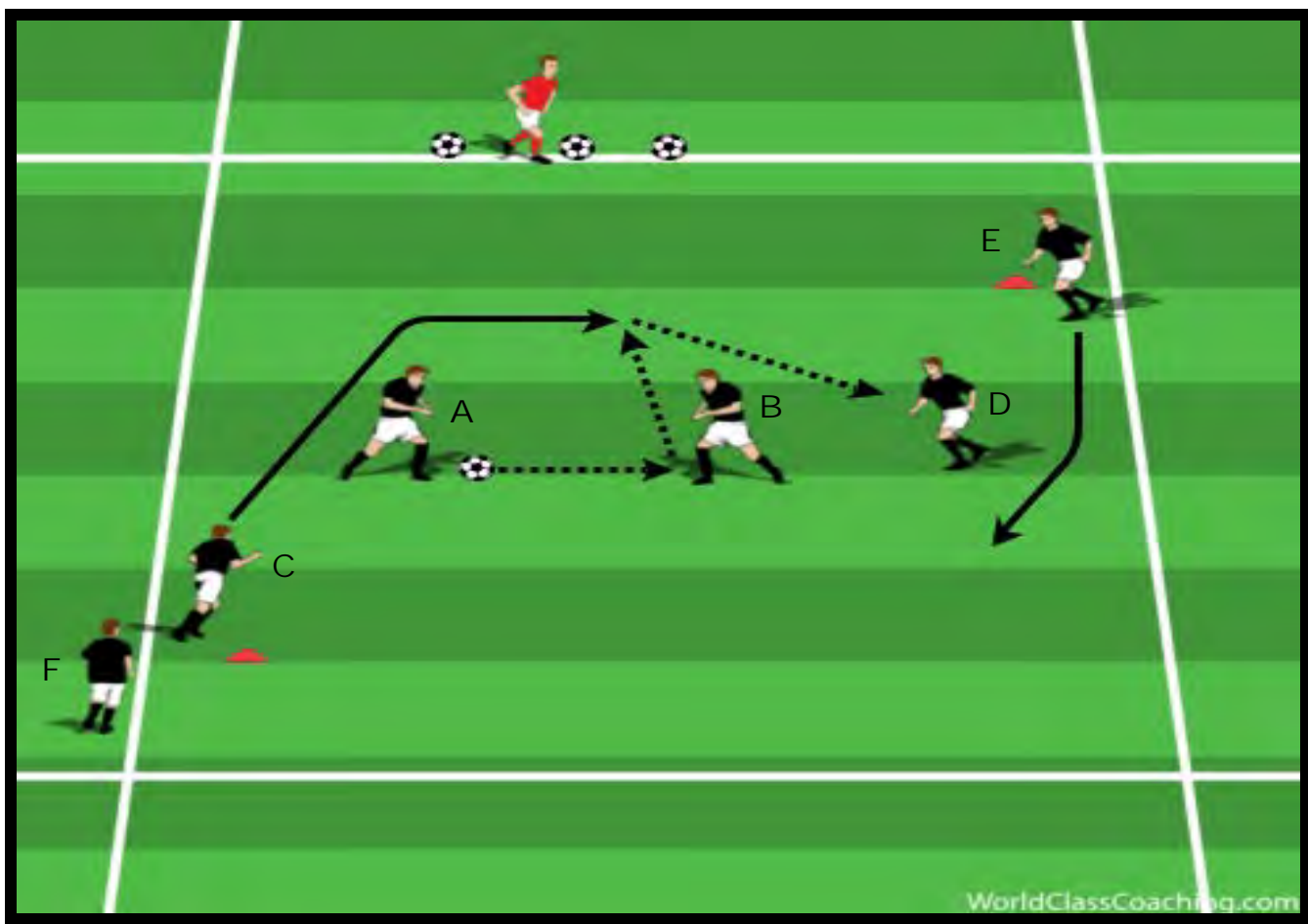
Progressions:

- 1 Run two groups at the same time.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Player B must be able to turn and pass accurately in two touches.
- 2 Player D should hold his run until Player C is prepared to play the thru pass.
- 3 Play a one touch thru pass so that Player D doesn't have to wait for the ball.

COMBINATION PLAY

Overlap Shuttle, #3**Fundamental****Combination Play**

Set Up: Six players are set up inside of the grid, working back and forth across the field.

Procedure: Player C runs an overlap around Player A, and Player A passes to Player B. Player B lays the ball off for Player C, who passes to Player D. Player E then restarts play with the overlap run around Player D. During the course of the drill, Players C, E, and F continue to run overlaps across the grid, while Players A, B, and D shuttle back and forth in the center. After 3-5 minutes, the players change positions.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Timing the run.
- 2 Feinting.
- 3 Passing.

Progressions:

- 1 Add another support player.

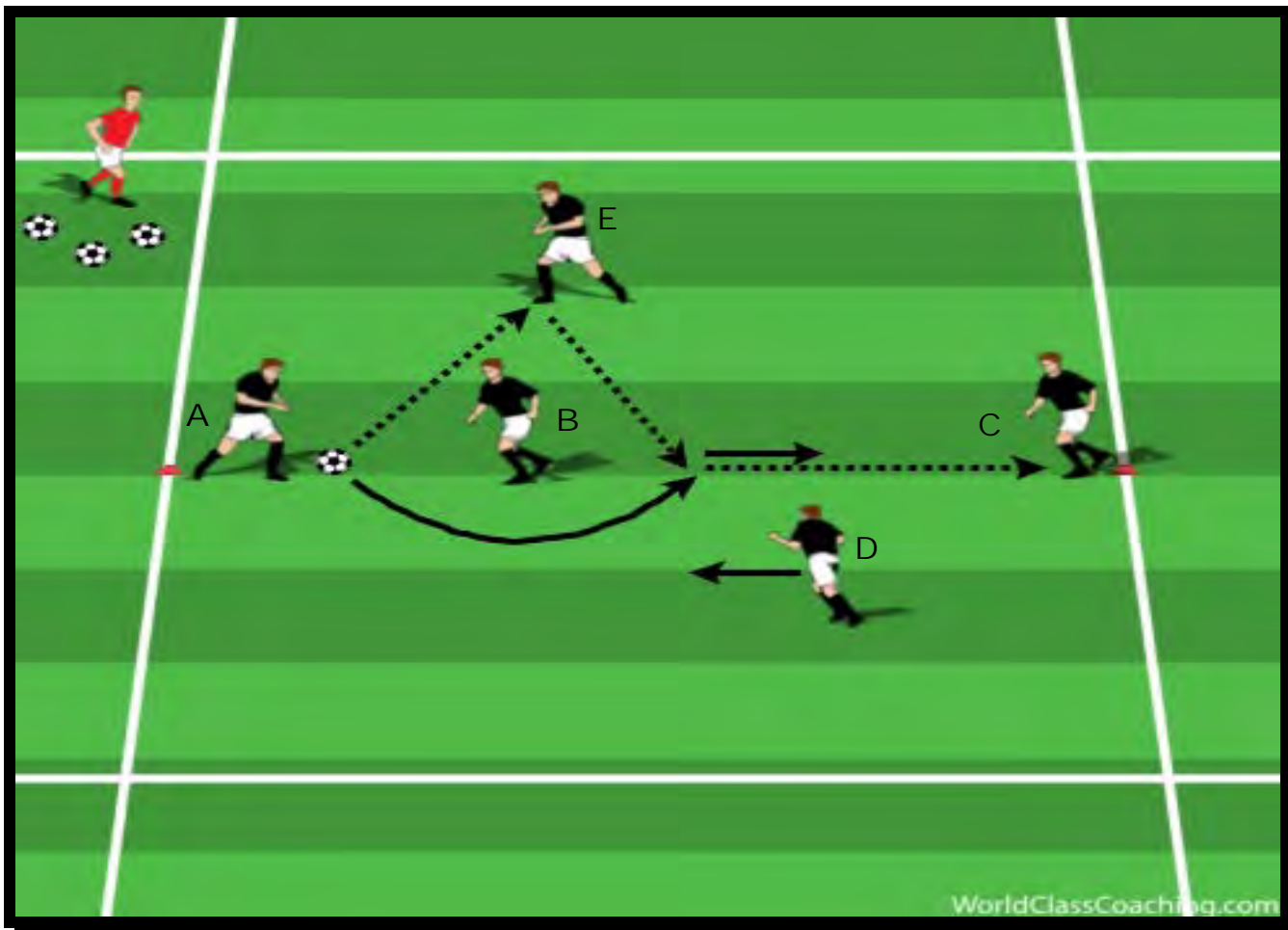
Coaching Points:

- 1 The player making the overlap run must hold his run and let the play develop.
- 2 Fake away from the player running the overlap before laying the ball off to him.
- 3 Pass to the player's feet, not out into space for him to run onto.

Wall Passes in Fives

Fundamental

Wall Pass



Set Up: Five players are set up inside of the grid, working back and forth between the two cones.

Procedure: Player A wall passes with Player D as Player B comes to the ball (B is a passive defender). After the wall pass, Player A passes up to Player C and follows the pass. Player C then looks to wall with Players D or E. The pattern continues with Players A, B, and C working in a shuttle fashion, while Players D and E run back and forth in support of the ball. Every 30-60 seconds, the players should rotate to new positions.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Attacking 2 v 1.
- 2 Speed of play.
- 3 Supporting runs.

Progressions:

- 1 Limit the players to one touch.

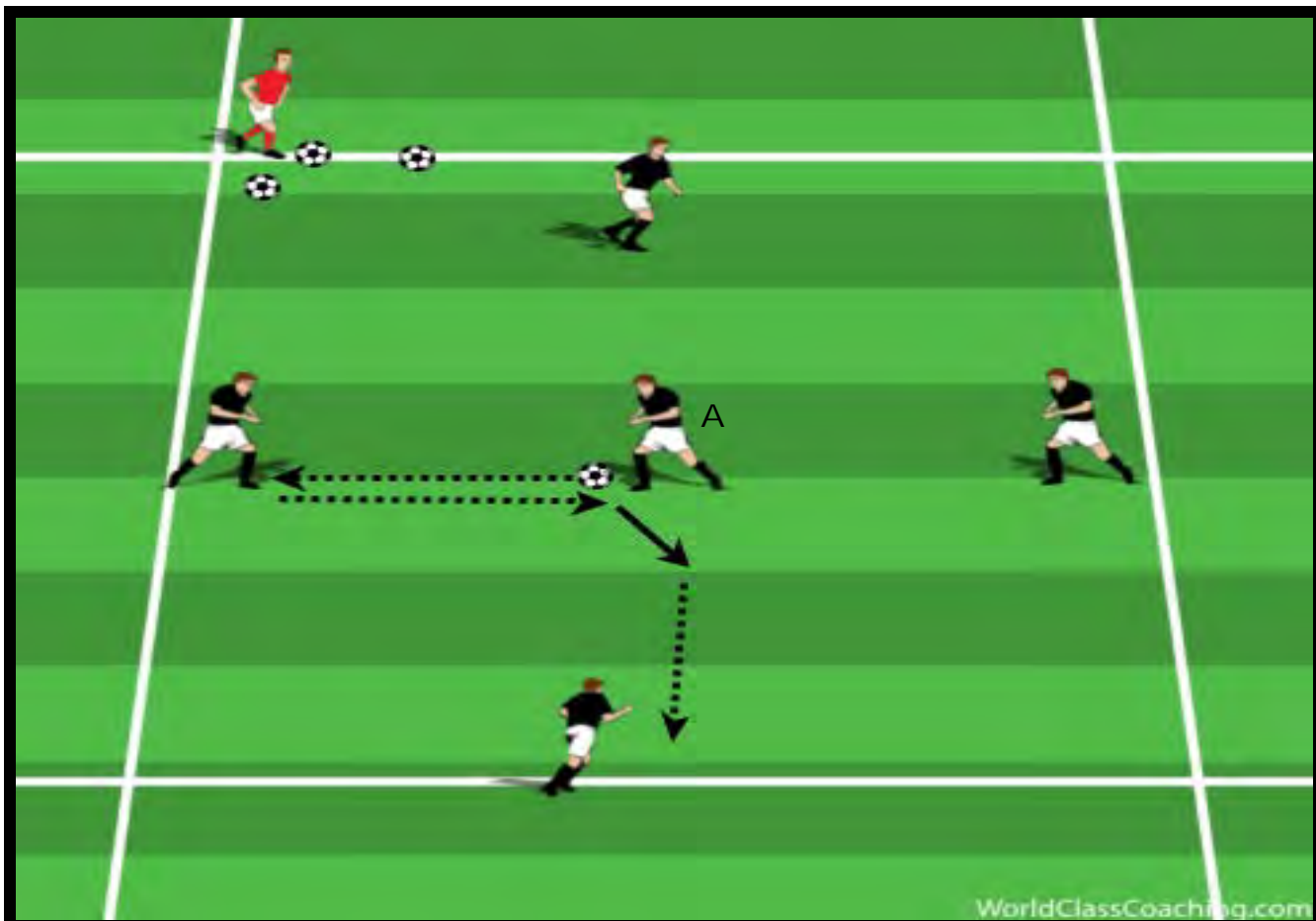
Coaching Points:

- 1 Player A must commit the defender by attacking him at speed with the dribble.
- 2 Accelerate after making the first pass and run by the defender.
- 3 The wall player should set up slightly behind the defender, out of his field of vision

Double Pass, Turn

Fundamental

Combination Play



Set Up: There are five players set up inside of the small grid.

Procedure: Player A starts in the center with the ball and distributes it around the grid, double passing with each player in a random order. Each time Player A receives a return pass, he must take a dribble touch away from the passer before playing the ball back outside. A new player switches into the center after 30-60 seconds.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Passing.
- 2 Turning moves.
- 3 Receiving.

Progressions:

- 1 Very hard service.
- 2 Reduce the size of the grid.

Coaching Points:

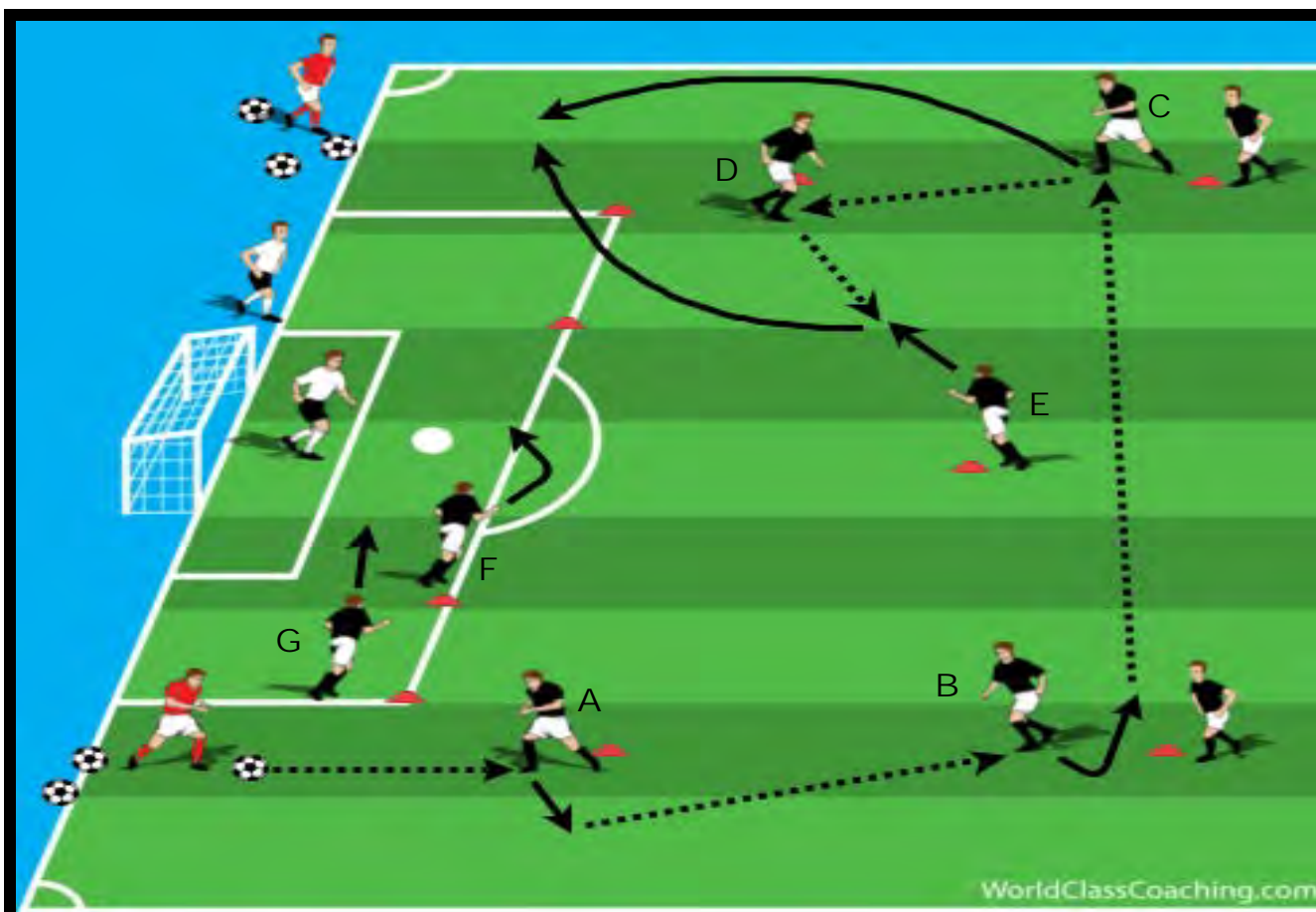
- 1 Strike the top half of the ball in order to keep it on the ground.
- 2 Use both the inside and outside of the foot on your dribble touch.
- 3 Get your feet set as quickly as possible, and choose your technique early.

PATTERNS OF PLAY

Change and Finish, #3

Fundamental

Patterns of Play



Set Up: 8-12 players are set up in the attacking half, starting at the cones.

Procedure: The Feeder passes to Player A, who turns and plays it up to Player B. Player B opens up and changes the ball over to Player C. Players C, D, and E play up, back, and thru to the corner, and Player C crosses to Players F and G for a finish on goal. Upon completion, play re-starts on the opposite side of the field. A new player comes on for Player C, and Players F and G start on the other side of the penalty area.

Teaching Topics:

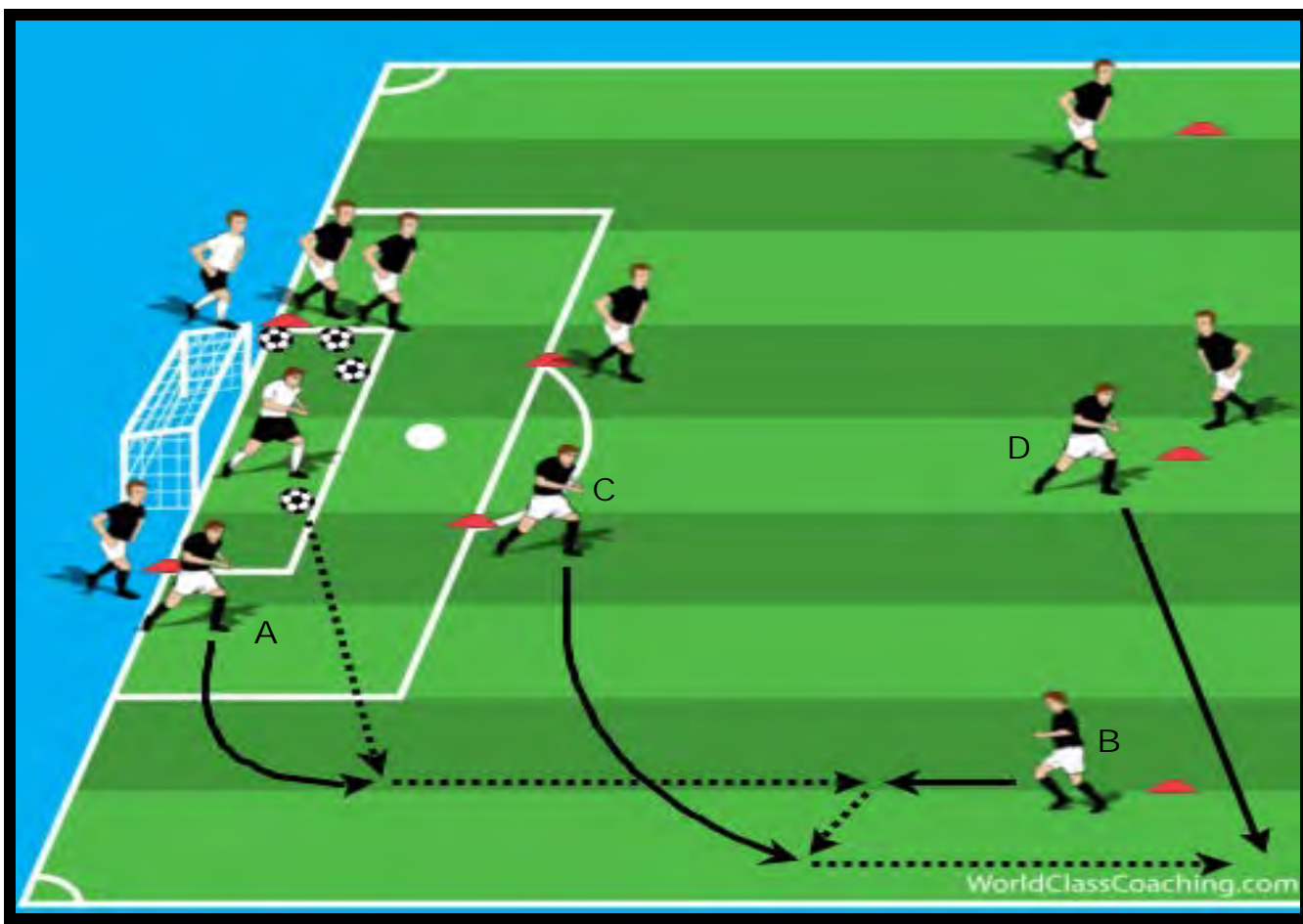
- 1 Changing the field.
- 2 The Overlap.
- 3 Timing the runs.

Progressions:

- 1 Finish with an end line setback

Coaching Points:

- 1 Player B opens up with the first touch and changes the ball with the second.
- 2 Player D looks away from Player C as he overlaps, so as not to telegraph the play.
- 3 Player E must hold his run until the play from C → D develops.

Breakout Drill #1**Fundamental****Patterns of Play**

Set Up: There are 12-15 players set up in the defending half, starting at the cones.

Procedure: The goalkeeper outlets to Player A. Player A passes up to Player B as Player C overlaps down the line. Player B lays the ball off to Player C, and he passes the ball up the line to Player D, making an inside out run from the center. Player D dribbles the ball back to the end line, and the players rotate from A → C → B → D. During the drill, the goalkeepers alternate service to both sides of the field.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Checking runs.
- 2 Timing the runs.
- 3 Speed of play.

Progressions:

- 1 Limit players to one or two touches.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Player B must check away from the ball before coming back to receive the pass.
- 2 Player C has to watch the play develop before making his overlapping run.
- 3 Play in a one and two touch rhythm, and don't slow the attack down.

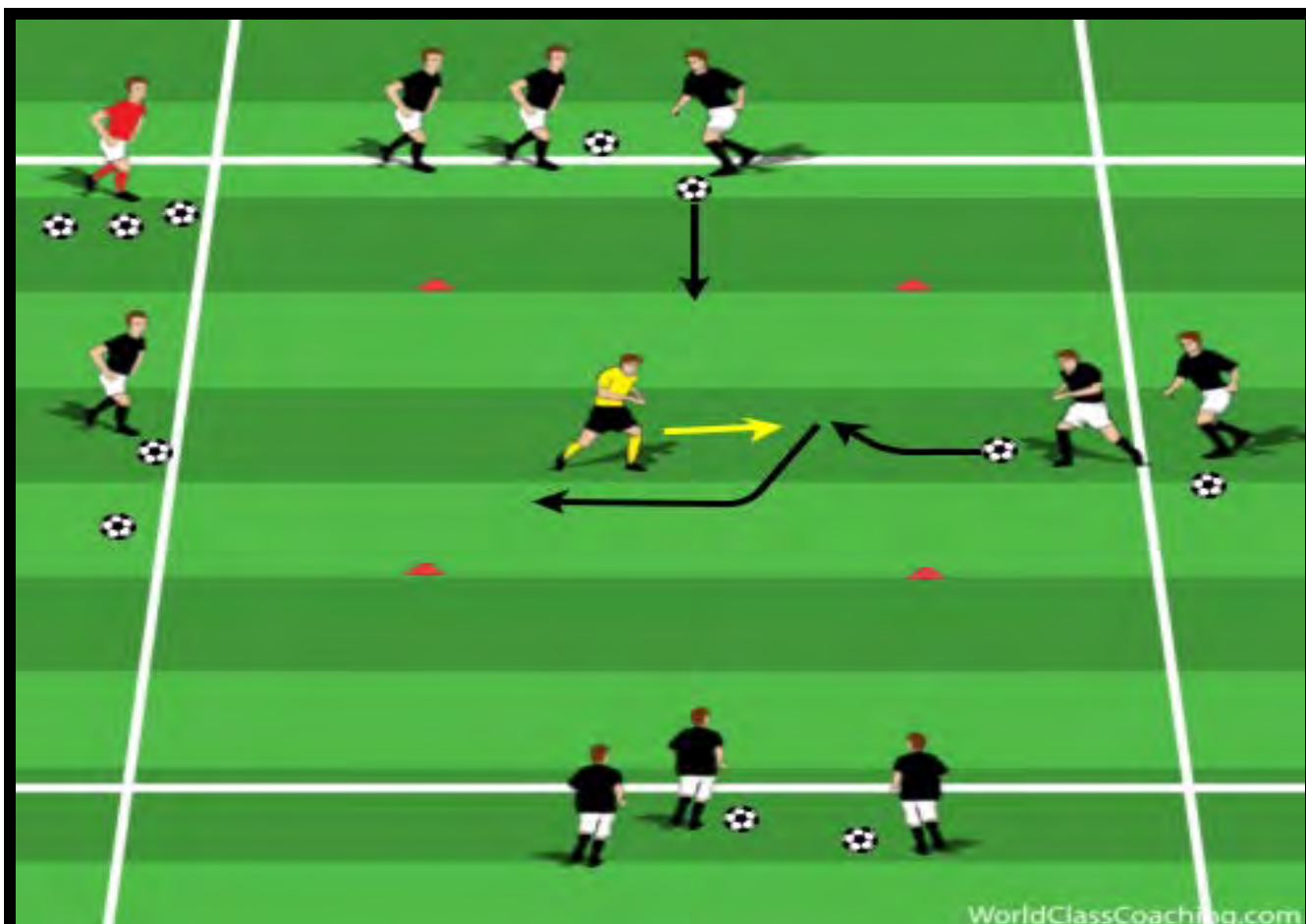
SMALL SIDED DRILLS

1 v 1 to 3 v 3

1 v 1 Both Ways

Small Sided

Defending 1 v 1



Set Up: There are 8-10 players set up around the four sides of the small field, each with a ball.

Procedure: The defender steps into the center, and players attack him 1 v 1, trying to dribble all the way through the grid. If the defender wins the challenge, the attacker becomes the new defender. If not, the defender must stay in the middle. Play moves in a clockwise direction around the grid during the drill, and each new attack begins as soon as the ball is out of the grid.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Speed, angle, distance.
- 2 Delay, disrupt, destroy.
- 3 Tackling.

Progressions:

- 1 Reduce the size of the smaller grid.

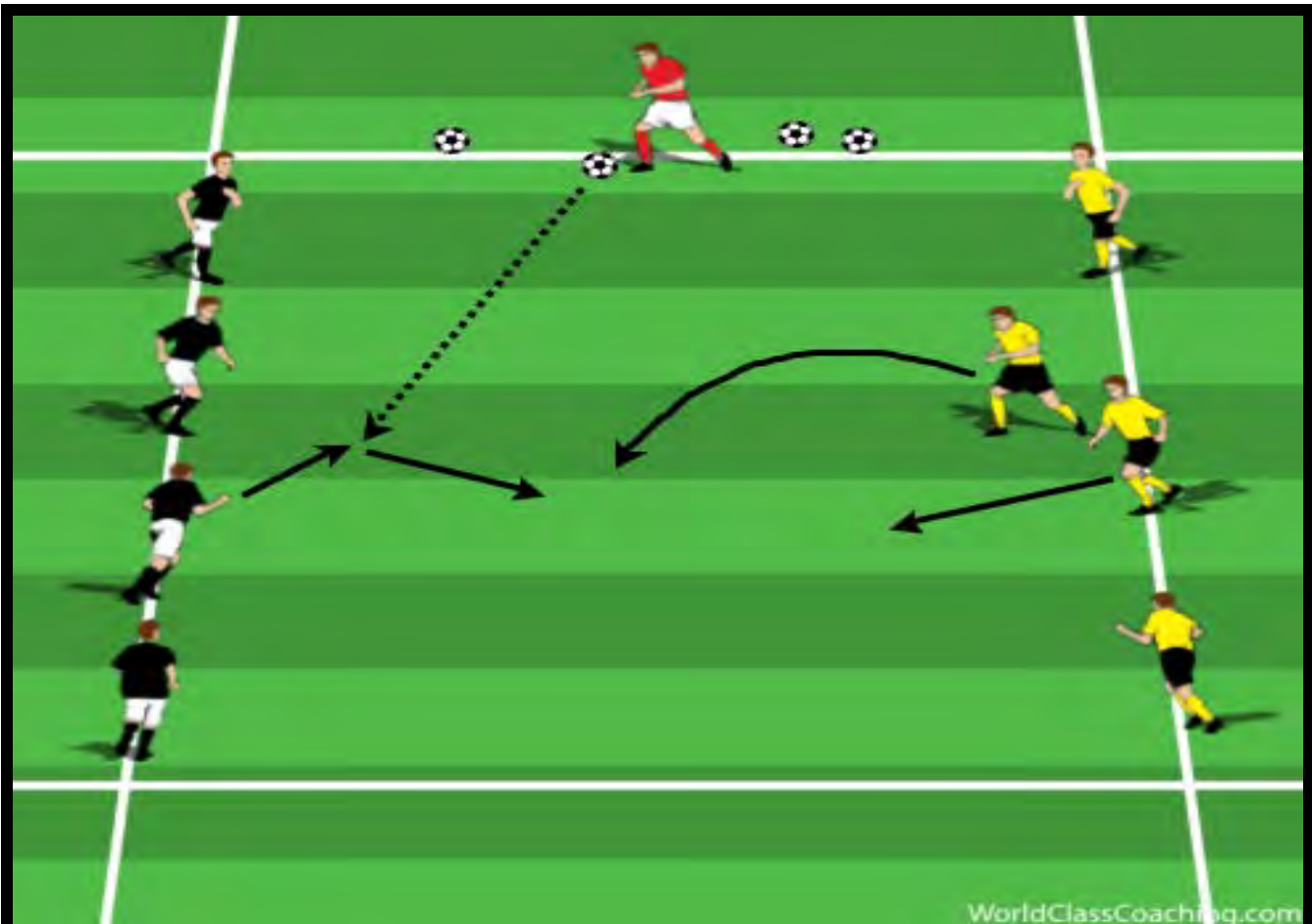
Coaching Points:

- 1 The defender must control the speed of his initial run and not charge in.
- 2 The decision to tackle or not depends on how well the attacker controls the dribble.
- 3 If possible, the defender should win the ball as opposed to kicking it out of bounds.

Pressure, Cover

Small Sided

Group Defending



Set Up: There are eight players set up in the small grid, playing 1 v 2.

Procedure: The Feeder begins play with a pass to the attacker, who tries to dribble across the grid versus the two defenders. If the defenders win the ball, they return it to the Feeder. If the attacker scores or the ball is put out of play, the Feeder restarts the drill with a new set of players. The Feeder alternates service to the two teams during the drill.

Teaching Topics:

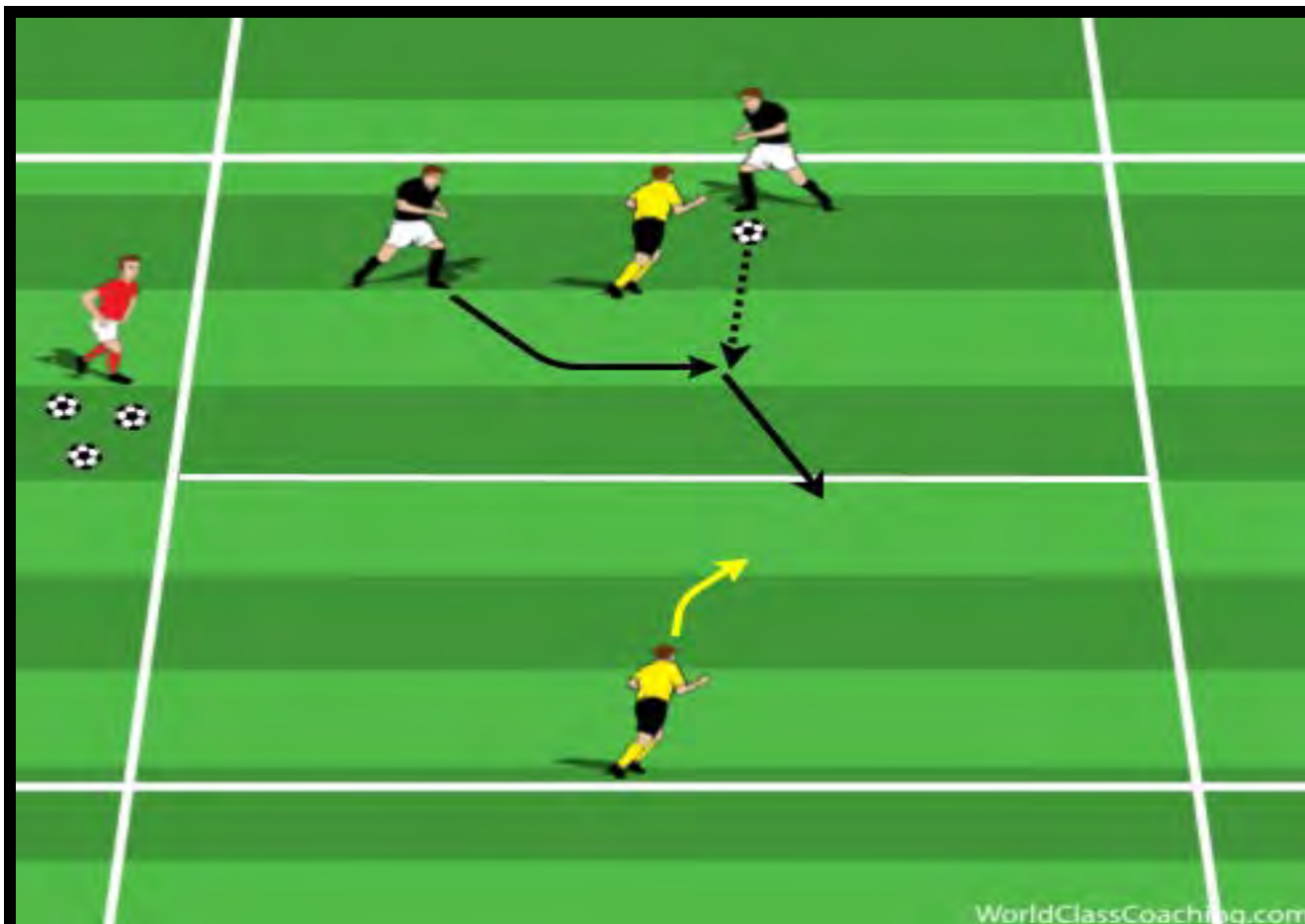
- 1 Speed, angle, distance.
- 2 Delay, disrupt, destroy.
- 3 Covering position.

Progressions:

- 1 Progress to 2 v 2.

Coaching Points:

- 1 The first defender must angle his approach and force the attacker towards the sideline.
- 2 The decision to tackle or not depends on how well the attacker controls the ball.
- 3 The 2nd defender must be ready to step up in case the 1st defender gets beat.

2 v 1 → 1 v 1, #2**Small Sided****Group Defending**

Set Up: There are four players set up on a small split field, playing 2 v 1 on one half, with a second defender stationed in the other half.

Procedure: The attackers score by dribbling the ball across the midfield line. When they cross midfield, the second defender releases from the end line, and the attacker tries to beat him 1 v 1. If the defender wins the ball, he starts a 2 v 1 attack in his own defensive half. Games are played to three points, and the players switch teams after each game

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Blind side runs.
- 2 Combination play.
- 3 Feinting skills.

Progressions:

- 1 Dribble thru the small goals to score.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Use the width of the field to make blind side runs in behind the defender.
- 2 The passer should look and feint away from the second attacker before passing to him.
- 3 Use feints with the dribble or the pass in order to slow down the defender's approach.

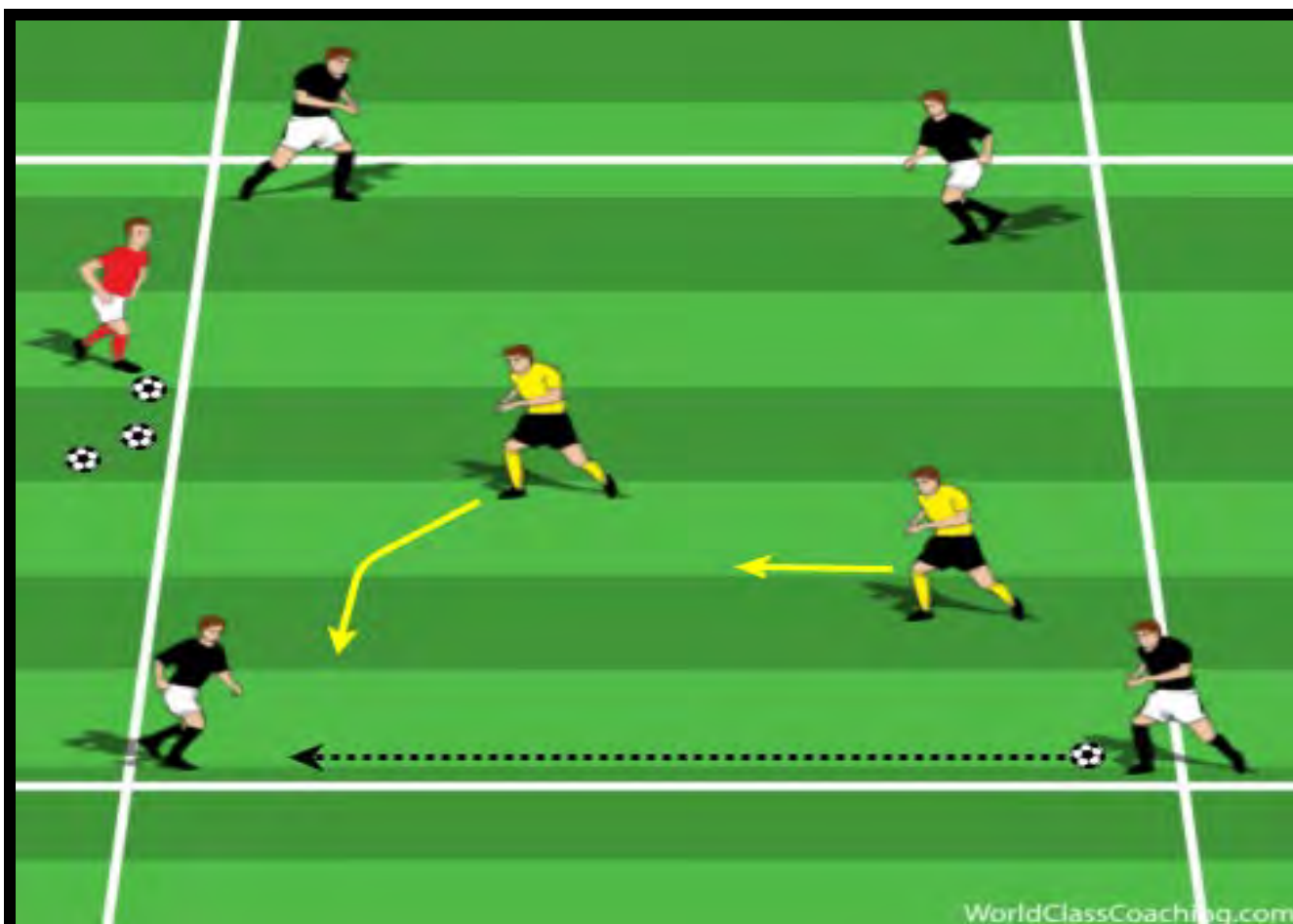
SMALL SIDED DRILLS

4 v 1 to 6 v 6

Defending the 4 v 2

Small Sided

Group Defending



Set Up: There are six players set up inside of the small grid, playing 4 v 2.

Procedure: The four attackers play keep away from the two defenders. When an attacker loses the ball or plays it out of the grid, he becomes the new defender. If the defenders have not won the ball within 30 seconds, a new pair of players rotates into the middle.

Teaching Topics:

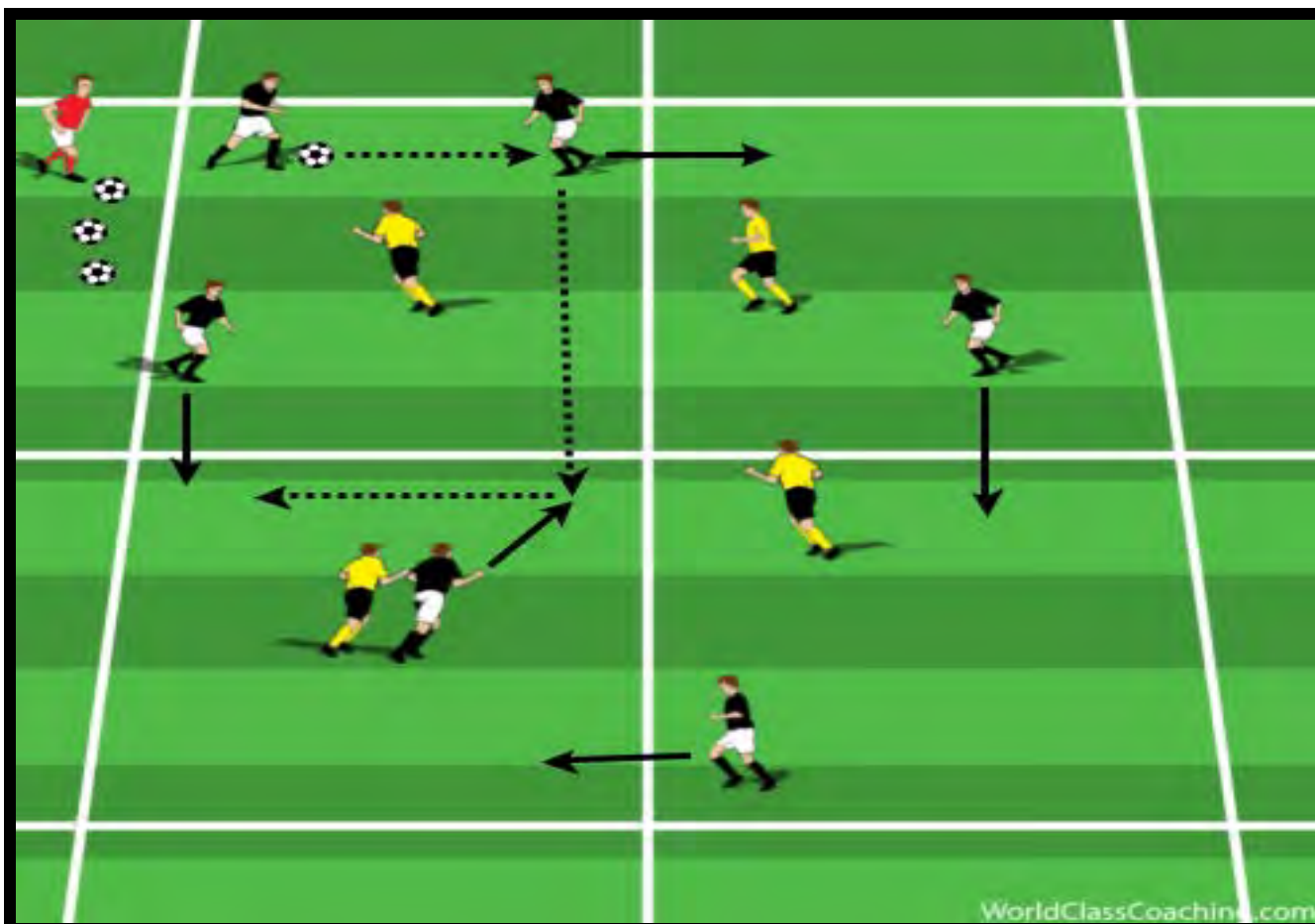
- 1 Angle of approach.
- 2 Covering position.
- 3 Recovery runs.

Progressions:

- 1 Reduce the size of the grid.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Curve the approaching run and force the play in one direction.
- 2 The second defender can 'cheat' towards the next pass by reading the first defender.
- 3 When your man passes the ball, recover straight back into the center.

Balance the Squares**Small Sided****Possession**

Set Up: There are ten players set up on a small field split into four zones, playing 3 v 1 in one zone, and 1 v 1 in the other three zones.

Procedure: The three attackers maintain possession and move the ball into an adjacent zone. Each time the ball moves into a new zone, attackers from each of the adjacent zones cross over to re-form the 3 v 1. The other attackers rotate into the empty zones, creating new 1 v 1's. When the defenders win the ball, they play 4 v 3 inside one of the zones. The Feeder re-starts the drill on balls put out of play.

Teaching Topics:

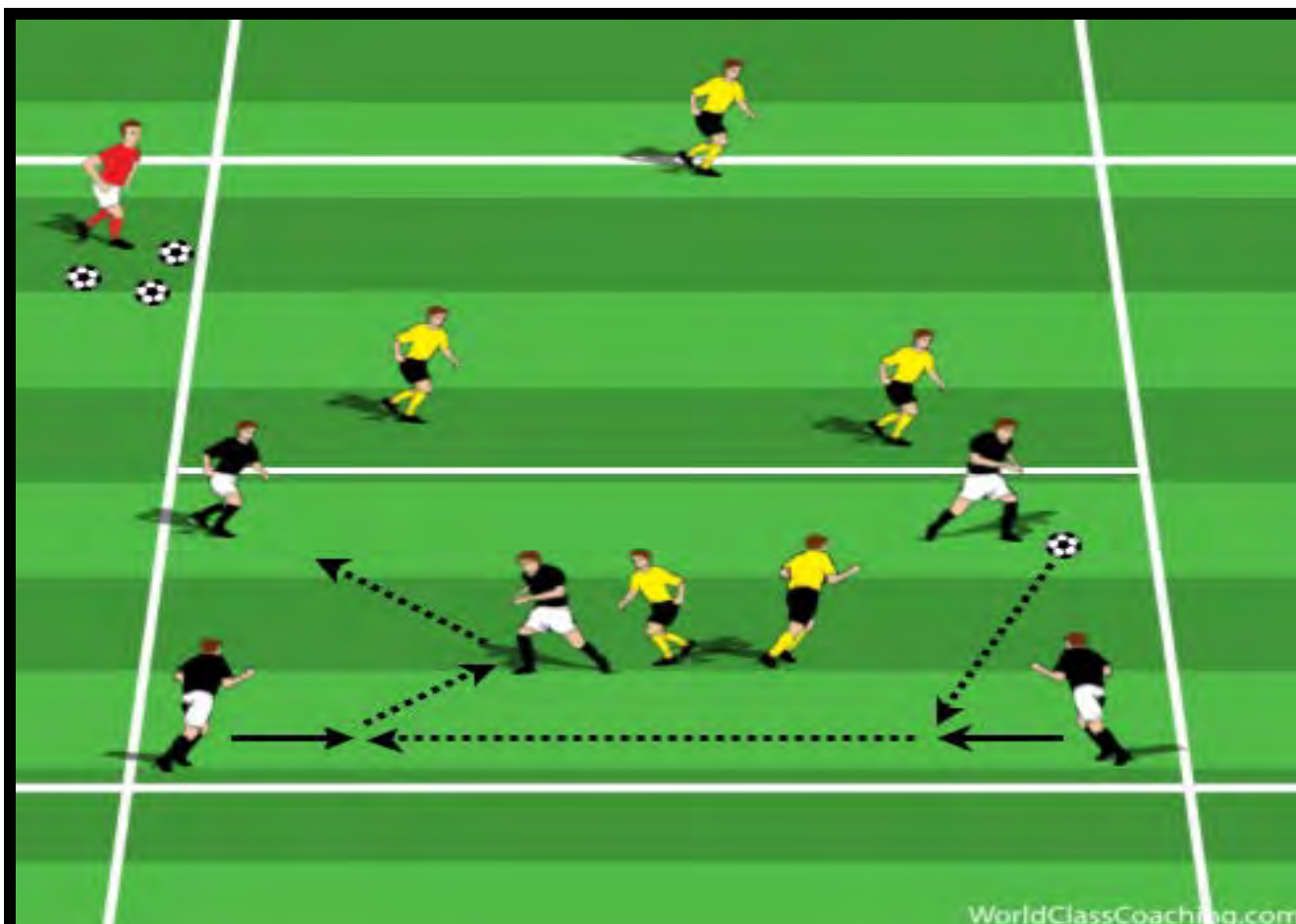
- 1 Speed of play.
- 2 Supporting runs.
- 3 Expanding the field.

Progressions:

- 1 Three pass limit in every zone.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Play one touch whenever possible, and use two touches when necessary.
- 2 Anticipate the play moving into a new zone and make the supporting run early.
- 3 Use the entire zone and force the lone defender to chase the ball.

5 v 2, One Touch**Small Sided****Possession**

Set Up: There are ten players set up on a split field, playing 5 v 2 in one half of the field, with three defenders starting in the other half.

Procedure: The five attackers maintain possession in their half, but they are limited to one touch. When the defenders win the ball, they change it over to their teammates in the other half. Then they follow the pass over along with two attackers, creating a new 5 v 2. The Feeder re-starts the drill when balls are put out of play.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Receiving.
- 2 Communication.
- 3 Expanding the field.

Progressions:

- 1 Progress to 5 v 3.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Open up your stance and be able to see both sides of the field.
- 2 Communicate with your teammate before he receives the ball.
- 3 Use the entire space and force the two defenders to chase the ball.

***SMALL
SIDED
DRILLS-
PENALTY
AREA***

1 v 1 to 2 v 2

1 v 1, Thru the Gate**Small Sided****Attacking 1 v 1**

Set Up: There are 8-12 players set up in the attacking third, starting at the cones.

Procedure: The Feeder starts the drill with a pass to either attacker, and the two players release with the first touch. The attacker must beat the defender and dribble thru the gate in front of him before finishing on goal. If the defender wins the ball, he can score in the small goal set up outside of the penalty area. Players should rotate to all positions during the course of the drill.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Attacking 1 v 1.
- 2 Feinting moves.
- 3 Finishing.

Progressions:

- 1 The attacker can dribble thru either gate.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Put the defender under pressure by taking the ball at him at speed.
- 2 Change speed and direction while feinting. Get the defender to stick a foot in.
- 3 A positive touch towards goal creates a better shooting angle.

2 v 2 to Goal, #7

Small Sided

Group Attacking



Set Up: Twelve players are set up in the attacking third, with players starting at the cones.

Procedure: The Feeder begins play with a pass in to the deepest attacker, and all of the players release from the cones with the first touch. Play continues 2 v 2 to goal from there. If the defenders win the ball, they can score in the two small goals set up just outside of the penalty area. On goals and balls put out of play, the Feeder re-starts play with the next set of attackers and defenders.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Attacking 1 v 1.
- 2 Combination play.
- 3 First touch.

Progressions:

- 1 Add a neutral player.
- 2 Progress to 3 v 3.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Take the first touch towards goal and force the deepest defender into a bad decision.
- 2 As soon as the first touch is made, the second attacker should look for the overlap run.
- 3 Make a positive first touch towards goal and look for the quick shot.

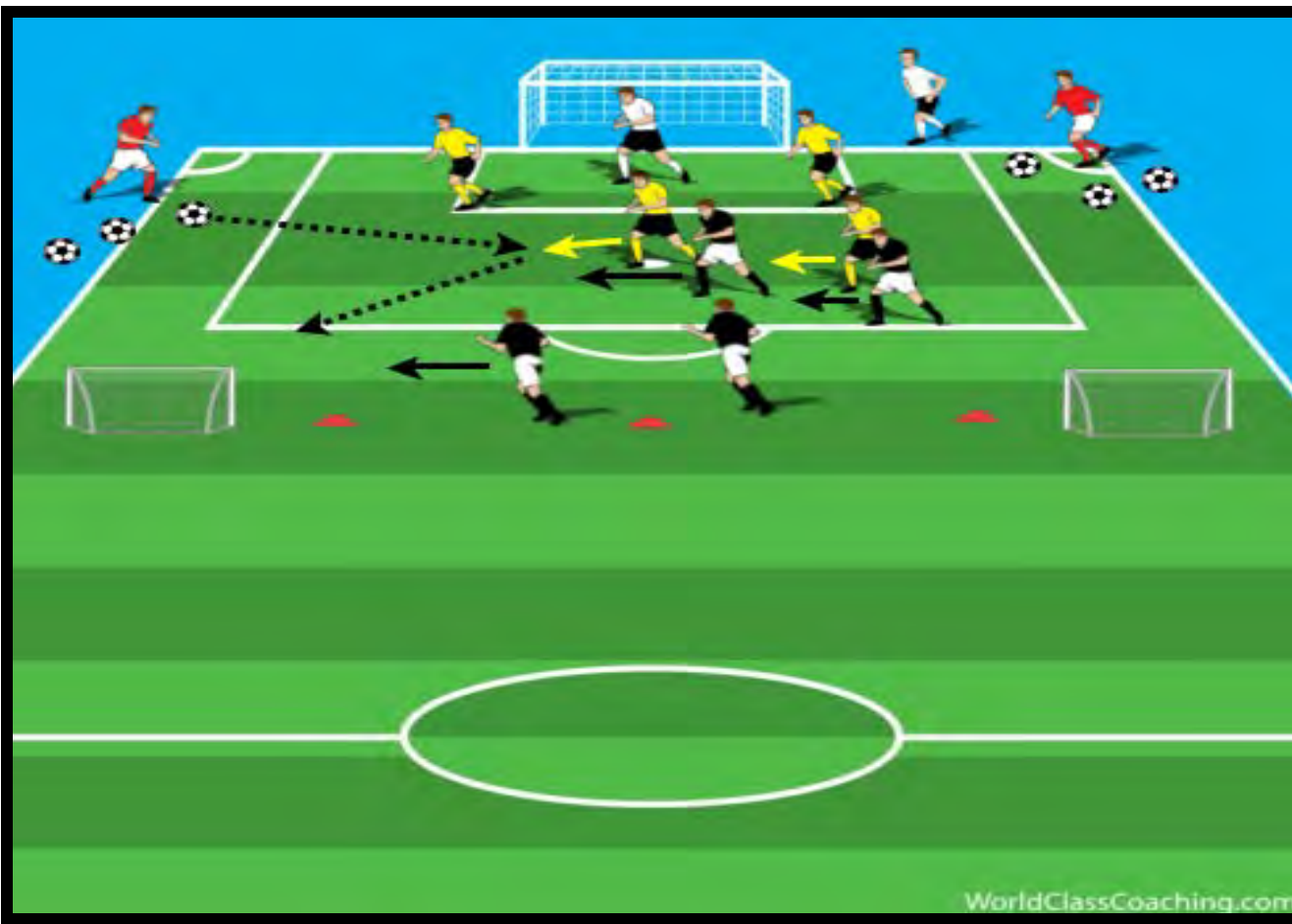
***SMALL
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PENALTY
AREA***

3 v 1 to 6 v 6

Clearing the Box

Small Sided

Group Defending



Set Up: There are eight players set up in the attacking third, playing 4 v 4.

Procedure: During the drill, the defenders are 4 v 2 in the penalty area, with two attackers playing outside of the area. The Feeder begins play with a cross, and the defenders try to clear the ball beyond the boundary line and into a small goal. If the clearing attempt is short, the attacking team can take it right back to goal. When goals are scored or the ball is put out of play, The Feeder re-starts the drill with the next cross. The two groups switch places after ten crosses.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Heading.
- 2 Defensive position.
- 3 Marking.

Progressions:

- 1 Add two attackers and play 6 v 4.

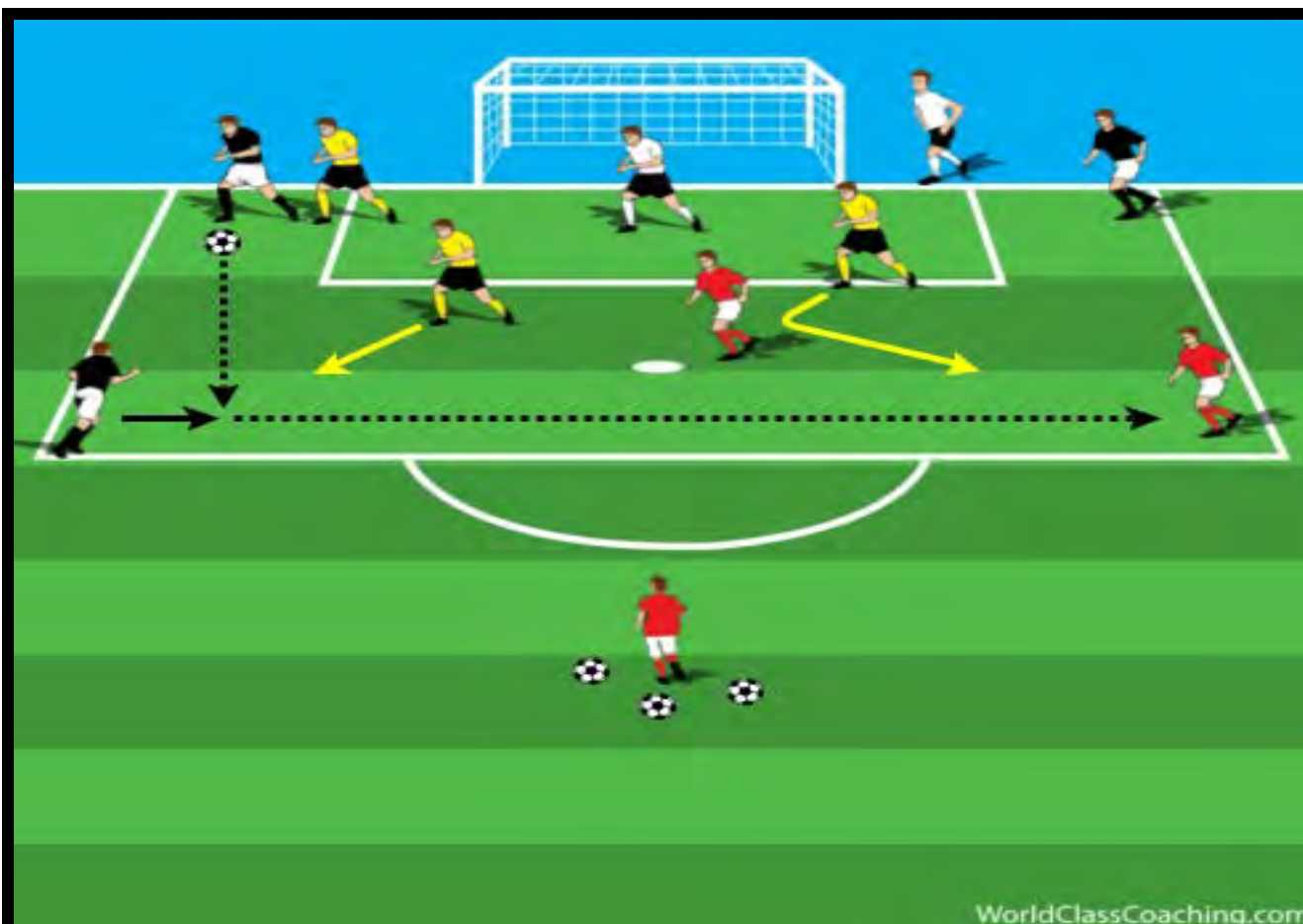
Coaching Points:

- 1 Clearing headers have to be directed up and out towards the flanks.
- 2 Constantly work to be closer to the ball and closer to the goal than your man is.
- 3 See the man, see the ball, and stay touch tight to your man.

3 v 3 Plus Two, #2

Small Sided

Group Attacking



Set Up: There are eight players set up inside of the penalty area, playing 3 v 3 plus two.

Procedure: The attacking team tries to maintain possession and finish on goal. The neutrals are limited to two touches, and they are not allowed to shoot. When the defenders win the ball, they become the attacking team. The Feeder re-starts play when goals are scored or when the ball is put out of play, and the neutrals switch out every five minutes

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Finishing.
- 2 Decision making.
- 3 Expanding the field.

Progressions:

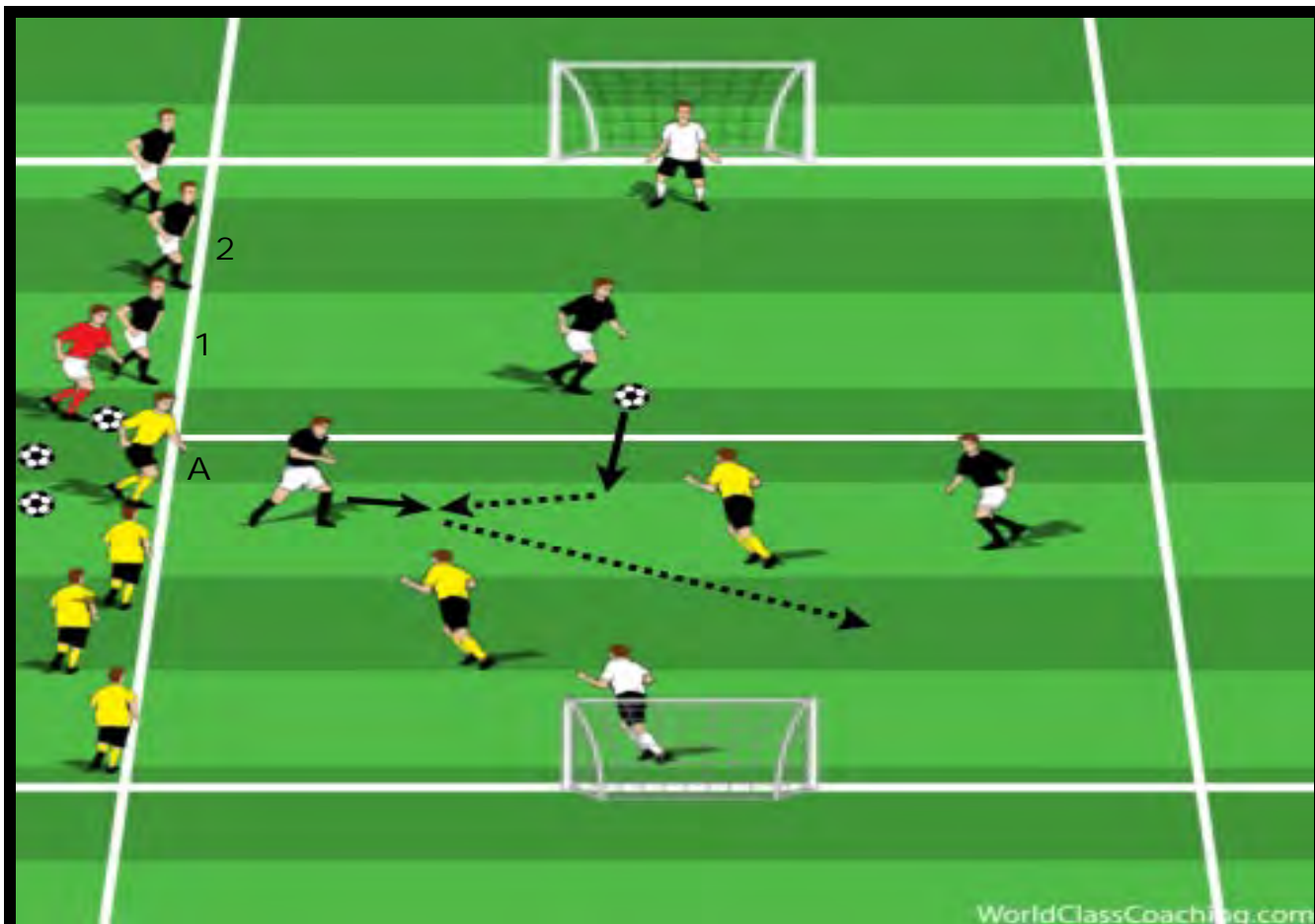
- 1 The neutrals can finish first time shots.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Look for first time shots from passes set back from the end line.
- 2 Fake the shot when the defender charges out, and take the ball to goal.
- 3 The attackers should use the entire penalty area, forcing the three defenders to chase.

SMALL SIDED GAMES

1 v 1 to 3 v 3

3 v 2, Both Ways**Small Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: Twelve players are set up on a split field, playing 3 v 2 with players starting from the sideline.

Procedure: The attacking team starts in their own half, and the defenders may not cross over the midfield line. Play continues 3 v 2 to completion. On a goal or a turnover, play re-starts with the goalkeeper. The two defenders stay on the field and become attackers, and one new attacker (Player A) enters play. Two new defenders (Players 1 and 2) enter the field in the other half, and play continues from there.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Attacking 1 v 1.
- 2 Combination play.
- 3 Finishing angles.

Progressions:

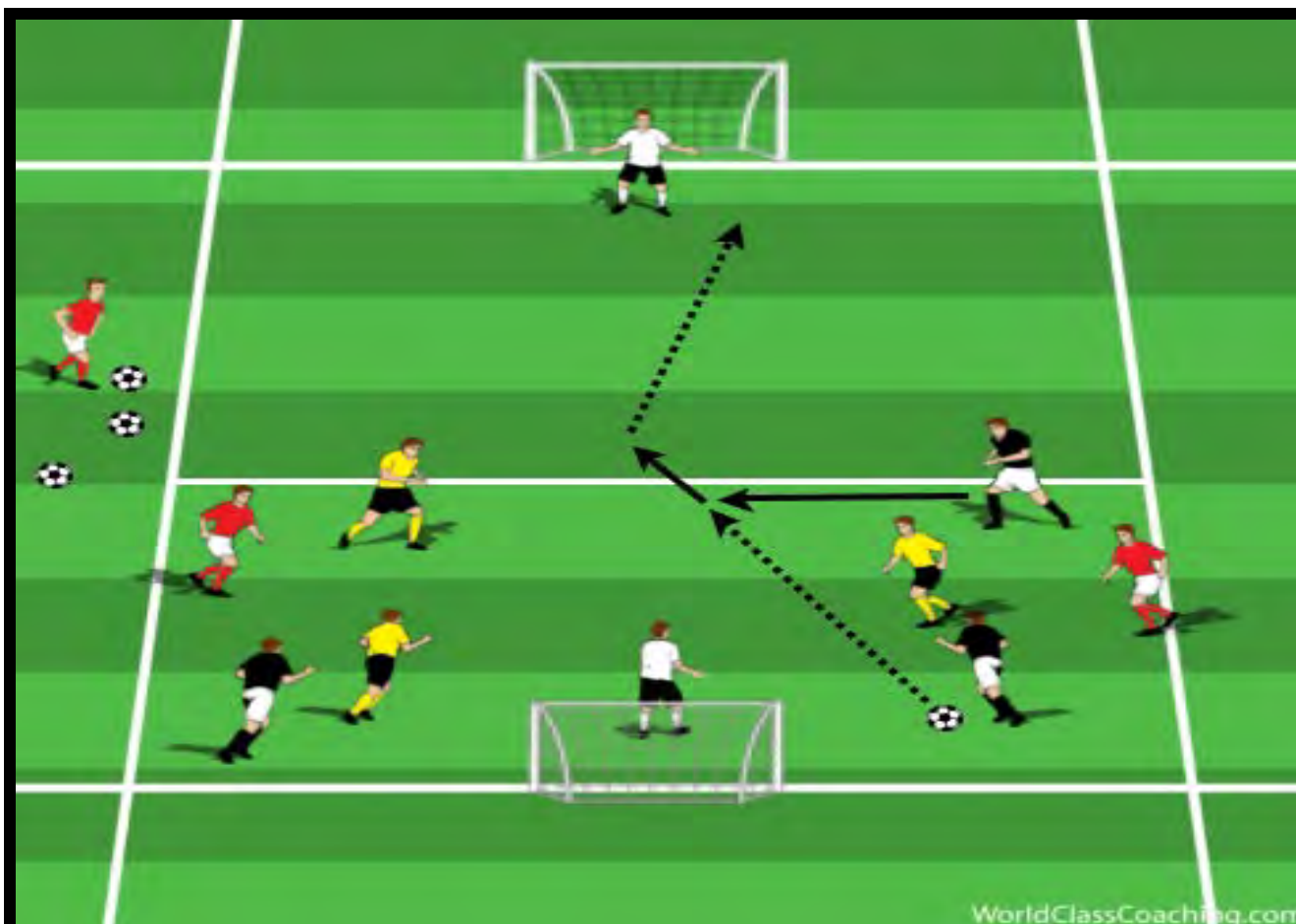
- 1 Add a third defender after the third pass.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Attack the first defender with the dribble and commit him before passing off.
- 2 Look for the third man with a thru pass that will beat both defenders (see diagram).
- 3 Make a positive first touch towards the goal when finishing from a wide position.

SMALL SIDED GAMES

4 v 3 to 6 v 6

3 v 3 Plus Two , #4**Small Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: There are eight players set up on a small field, playing 3 v 3 plus two.

Procedure: Attackers must dribble the ball over the midfield line before finishing on goal. When the attacking team scores, they keep possession and attack in the opposite direction. If the goalkeeper wins the ball, all of the players move into his half of the field to re-start play. Games are played to two goals with a five minute time limit. The Feeder re-starts play on balls put out of touch, and the neutral attackers rotate out after two games.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Transition.
- 2 Width and Depth.
- 3 Speed of play.

Progressions:

- 1 All of the players follow the ball in.

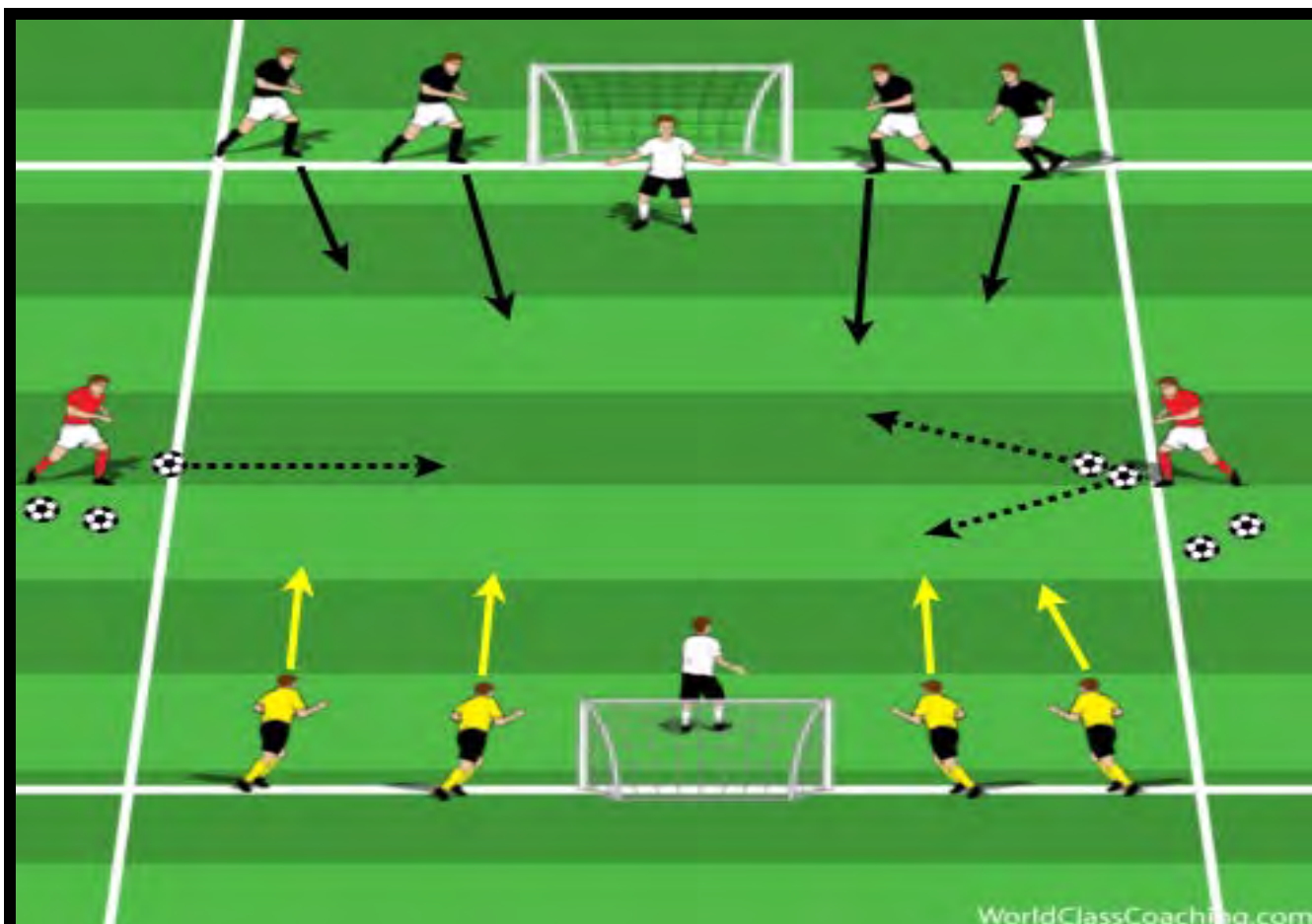
Coaching Points:

- 1 Anticipate changes of possession in order to have a quick transition.
- 2 Attackers should make runs to wide positions and look for blind side runs.
- 3 Move the ball with one and two touch passing as opposed to using the dribble.

Three Ball Game

Small Sided

Group Attacking



Set Up: Two teams of four players are set up on the small field, starting on the end lines.

Procedure: To begin the drill, the Feeders send three balls onto the field at the same time. The players leave their end lines when the balls are played in, and each team tries to score as many balls as possible. Balls put out of play are re-started by the Feeders. The teams get one point for a 2-1 win and three points for a 3-0 win. Games are played to eleven points.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Dribbling.
- 2 Turning.
- 3 First touch.

Progressions:

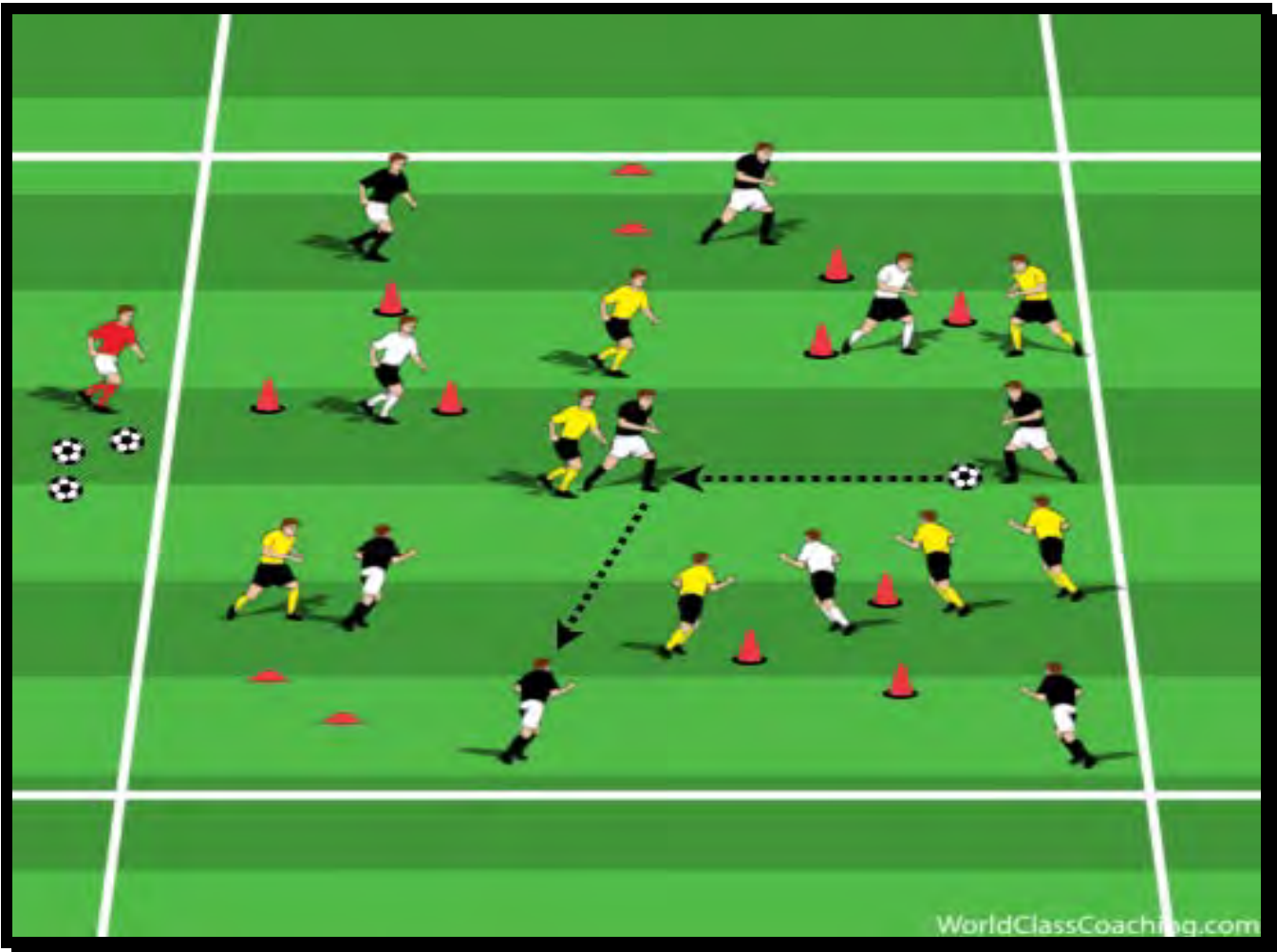
- 1 Play five balls in at the start of the game.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Attack at speed with the dribble. Try not to turn away from goal.
- 2 If you do turn and shield, pass or turn again quickly before you get double-teamed.
- 3 If the defenders are occupied, look to touch the ball forward into space and run with it.

LARGE SIDED DRILLS

7 v 4 to 9 v 9

Five Goal Game**Large Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: There are fourteen players set up on a large field, playing 7 v 7 with three goalkeepers.

Procedure: During play, the teams try to score in the three triangle goals and the two small goals placed around the field. Goalkeepers are stationed inside of the triangle goals. Goals can be scored in any direction and players can score consecutive goals at the same goal. Balls put out of play are re-started by the Feeder. Games are played to 11 points, win by two.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Changing the field.
- 2 Transition.
- 3 Decision making.

Progressions:

- 1 The goalkeepers must cover five triangle goals.

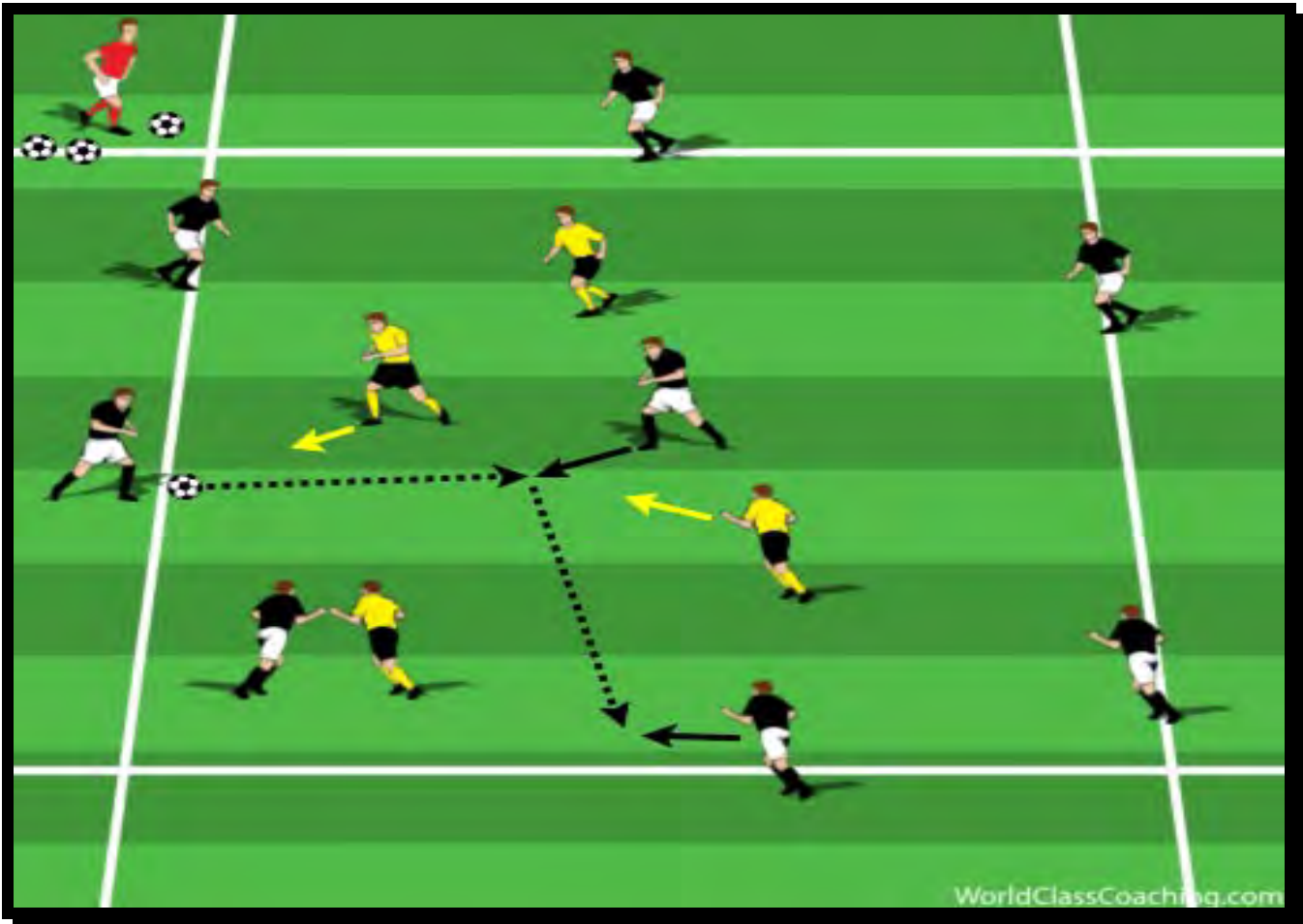
Coaching Points:

- 1 When a goal closes down, pull the ball out and change the point of the attack.
- 2 Anticipate changes of possession in order to have a faster transition than the opponent.
- 3 Maintain possession until a good scoring chance presents itself.

6 v 4 v 2

Large Sided

Possession, Transition



Set Up: Twelve players are set up inside of a large grid, playing 8 v 4.

Procedure: Eight attackers play keep away from the four defenders, with six attackers on the outside, and two on the inside. When the defenders win the ball, they play keep away from the two attackers. If the two attackers cannot win the ball within 30 seconds, two new attackers switch in. Balls put out of play are re-started by the Feeder, and the six players on the inside of the grid switch out after 10 minutes.

Teaching Topics:

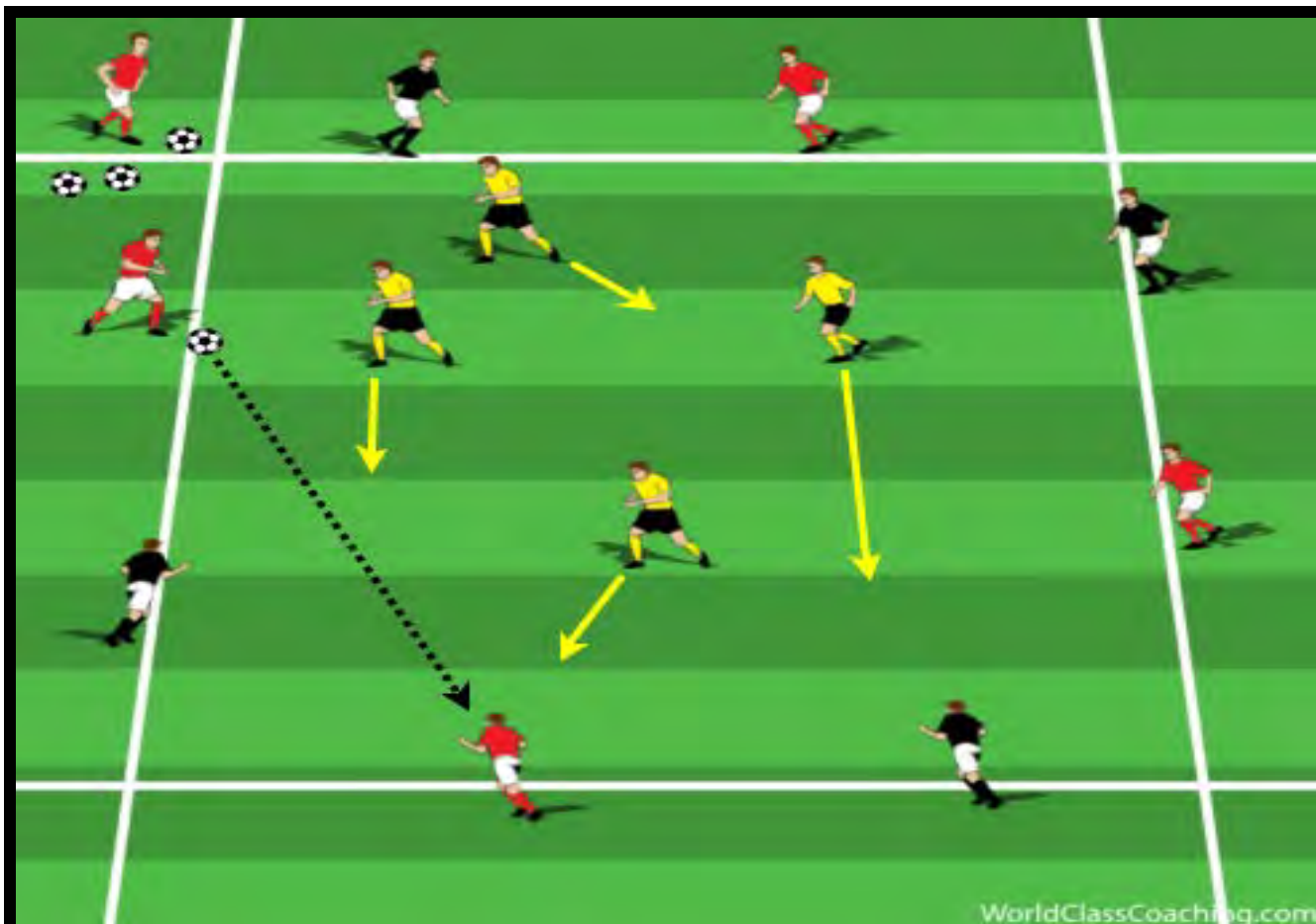
- 1 Speed of play.
- 2 Switching the field.
- 3 Passing angles.

Progressions:

- 1 Allow attackers to switch into the grid.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Look to play one touch passes when under pressure.
- 2 There must be enough time and space in order to play long passes across the grid.
- 3 Show yourself and call for the ball. Do not hide behind defenders in dead space.

4 v 4 Plus Four, #1**Large Sided****Possession**

Set Up: Twelve players are set up in the large grid, playing 4 v 4 plus four neutrals.

Procedure: During the drill, the attackers and neutrals stay on the outside of the grid, playing keep away versus the four defenders. When the defenders win the ball, the attackers switch into the middle. Defending teams rotate out of the middle if they are unable to win the ball within one minute. The Feeder re-starts the game when the ball is put out of play, and after five minutes, the neutral players switch with one of the teams.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Switching the field.
- 2 Communication.
- 3 Field of vision.

Progressions:

- 1 Play with three teams and no neutrals.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Change the ball away from a crowded area of the field before it closes down.
- 2 Call for the ball early, well before your teammate receives the pass.
- 3 Open your stance when receiving and be able to see both sides of the field.

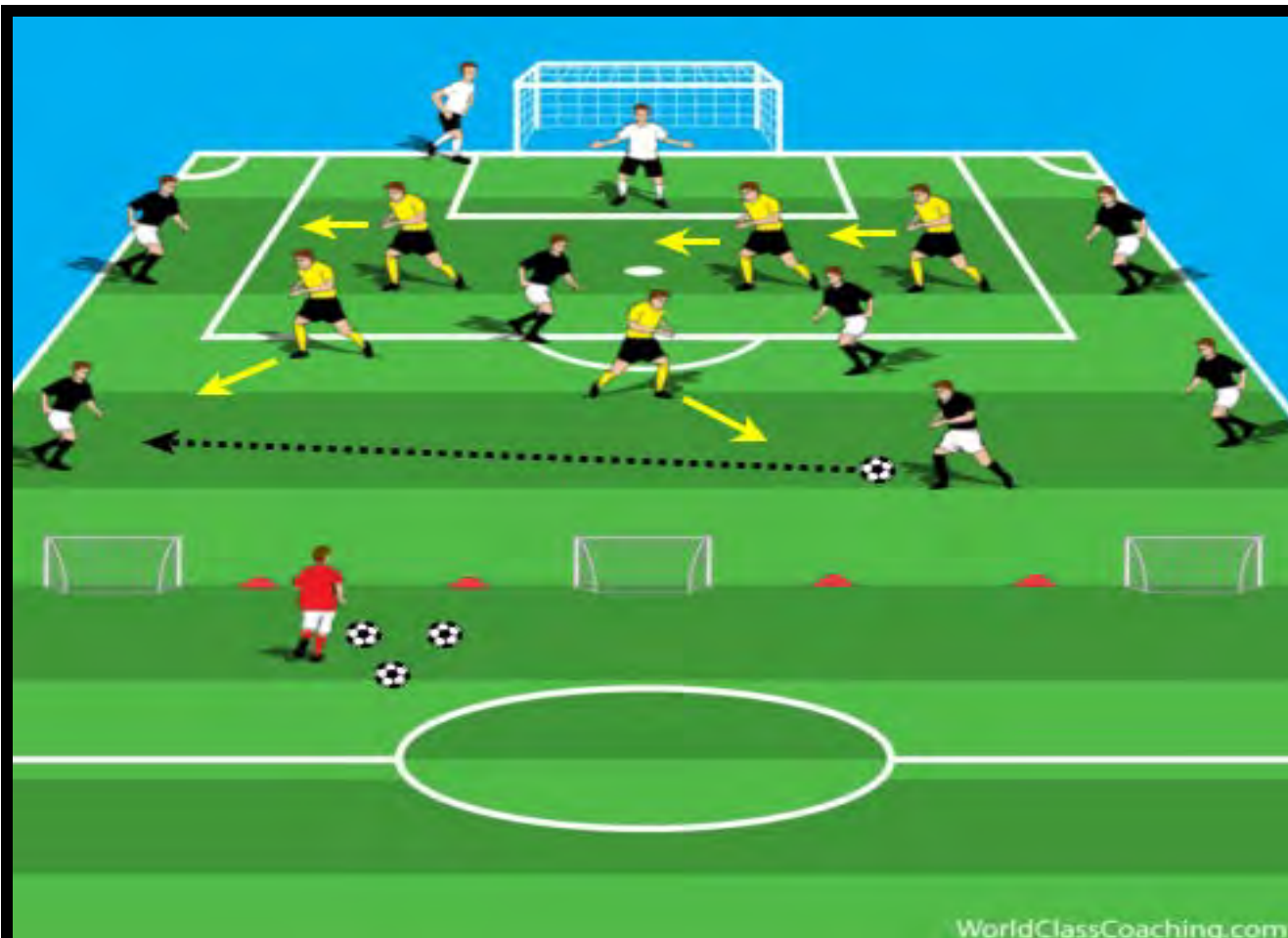
***LARGE
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7 v 4 to 9 v 9

7 v 5, Final Third

Large Sided

Group Defending



Set Up: There are 12 players set up in the attacking third, playing 7 v 5.

Procedure: During the drill, the attackers play towards the large goal, and the defending team plays towards the three small target goals. Balls played out of bounds are re-started with a throw in, and corner kicks are given. After goals, the Feeder re-starts play with a pass to the attacking team.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Pressuring the ball.
- 2 Individual defending.
- 3 Defensive shape.

Progressions:

- 1 Progress to 7 v 6.

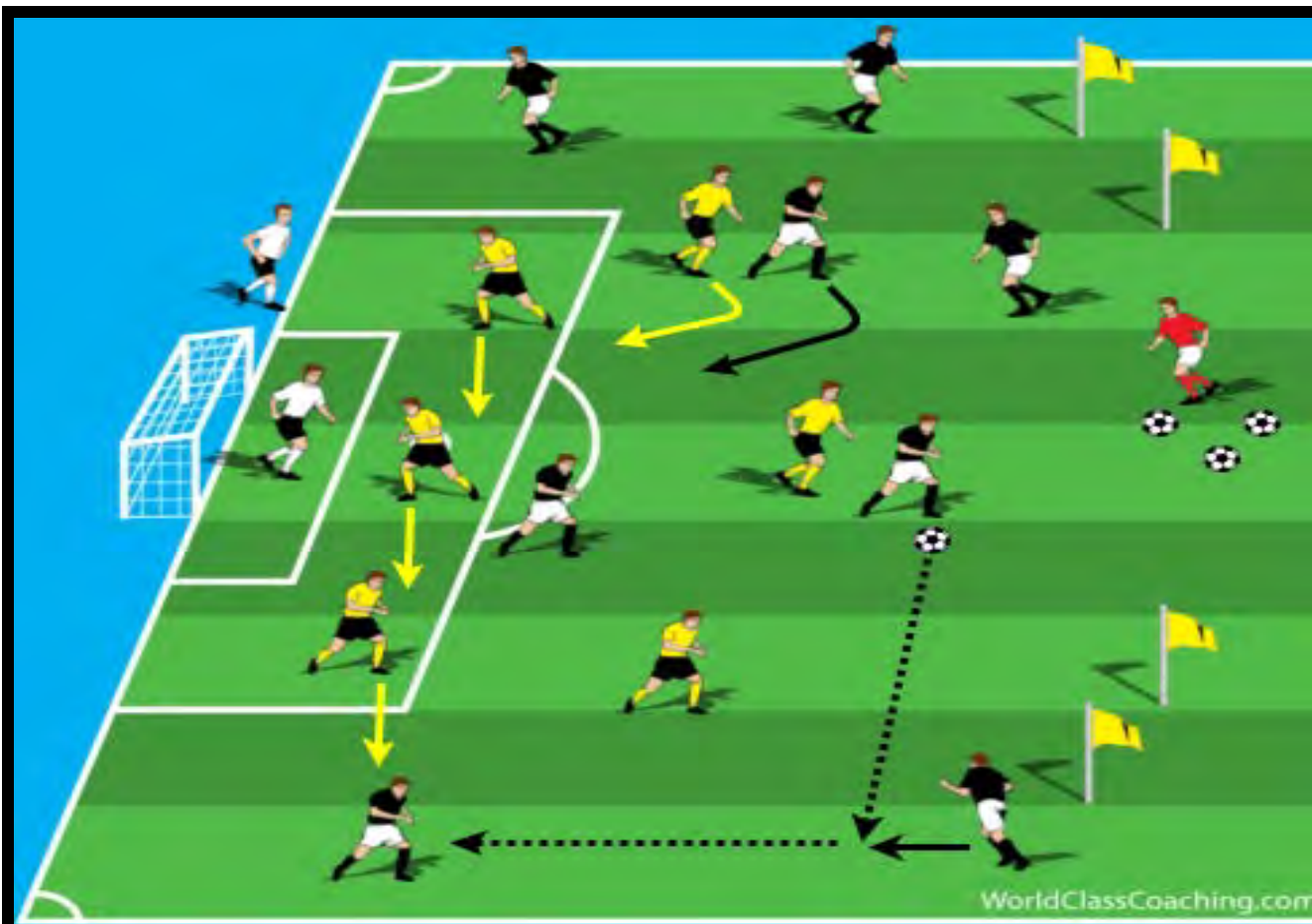
Coaching Points:

- 1 The goalkeeper must send a defender to the ball every time it is passed.
- 2 The defender pressuring the ball must contain the play. He cannot get beat 1 v 1.
- 3 As the ball moves from sideline to sideline, the entire defense must slide left or right.

8 v 6, Half Field

Large Sided

Group Attacking



Set Up: There are fourteen players set up in the attacking half of the field.

Procedure: Play begins with a pass from the Feeder into the attacking team, and then continues 8 v 6 to goal. Balls played out of bounds are re-started with a throw in. If the defenders win the ball, they attack the small goals set out on the flanks. When a goal is scored or the ball is put out of play, the Feeder re-starts play with the attacking team.

Teaching Topics:

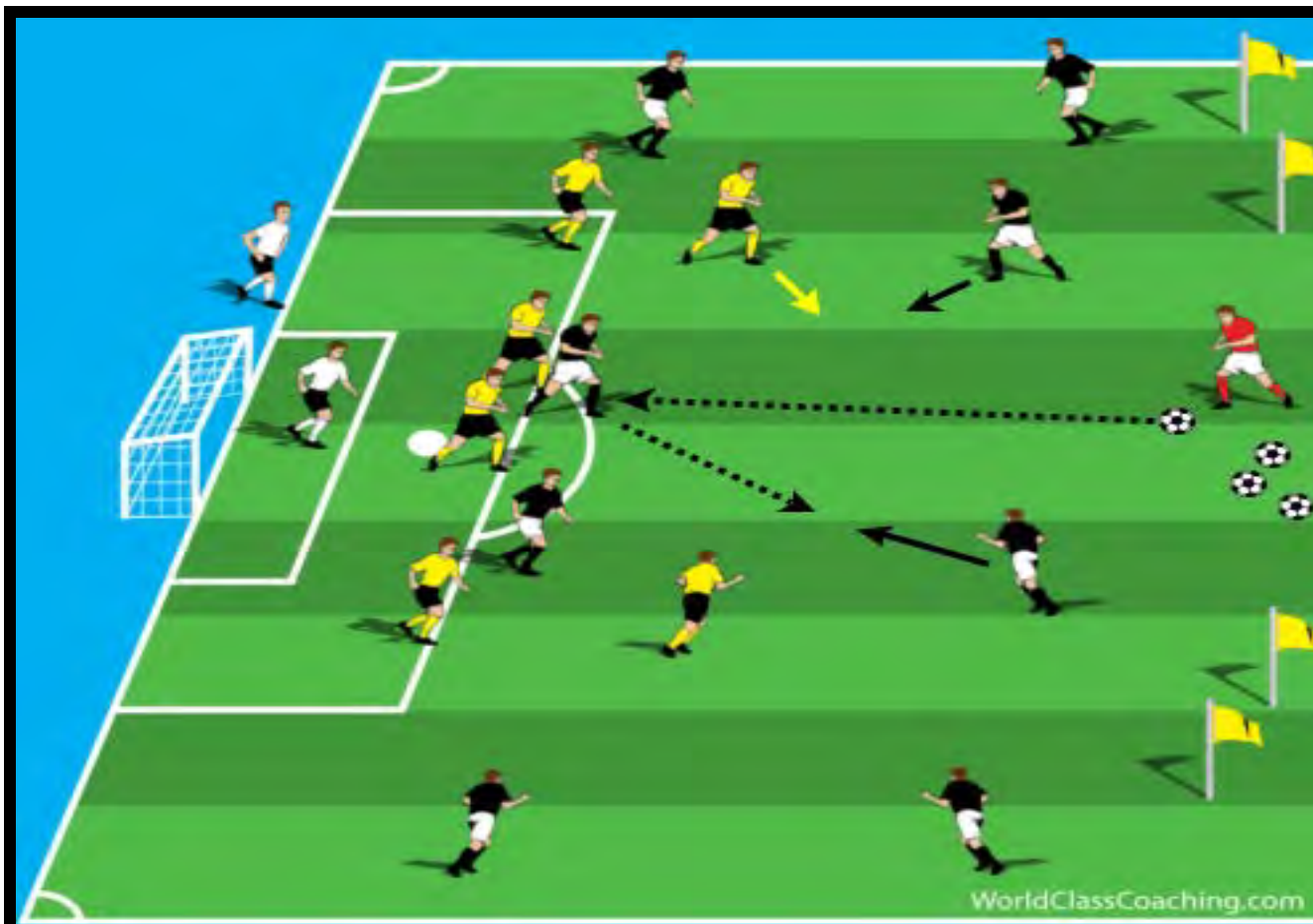
- 1 Expanding the field.
- 2 Combination play.
- 3 End line play.

Progressions:

- 1 The Feeder begins play with a pass to the defense.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Stretch the defense and open up the center by using the entire width of the field.
- 2 When the defense stretches, attack isolated defenders 2 v 1.
- 3 Create good scoring chances by getting to the end line for setbacks and crosses.

8 v 6, Deep Pass**Large Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: There are fourteen players set up in the attacking half, playing 8 v 6.

Procedure: Play begins with a deep pass from the Feeder to a central striker, who touches the ball back to a midfielder. The two teams play to completion from there. When the defenders win the ball, they can score in the two small goals placed out on the flanks. Throw-ins and corner kicks are used on balls played out of bounds. After a goal is scored, play is re-started by the Feeder.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Rhythm of play.
- 2 Expanding the field.
- 3 Speed of play.

Progressions:

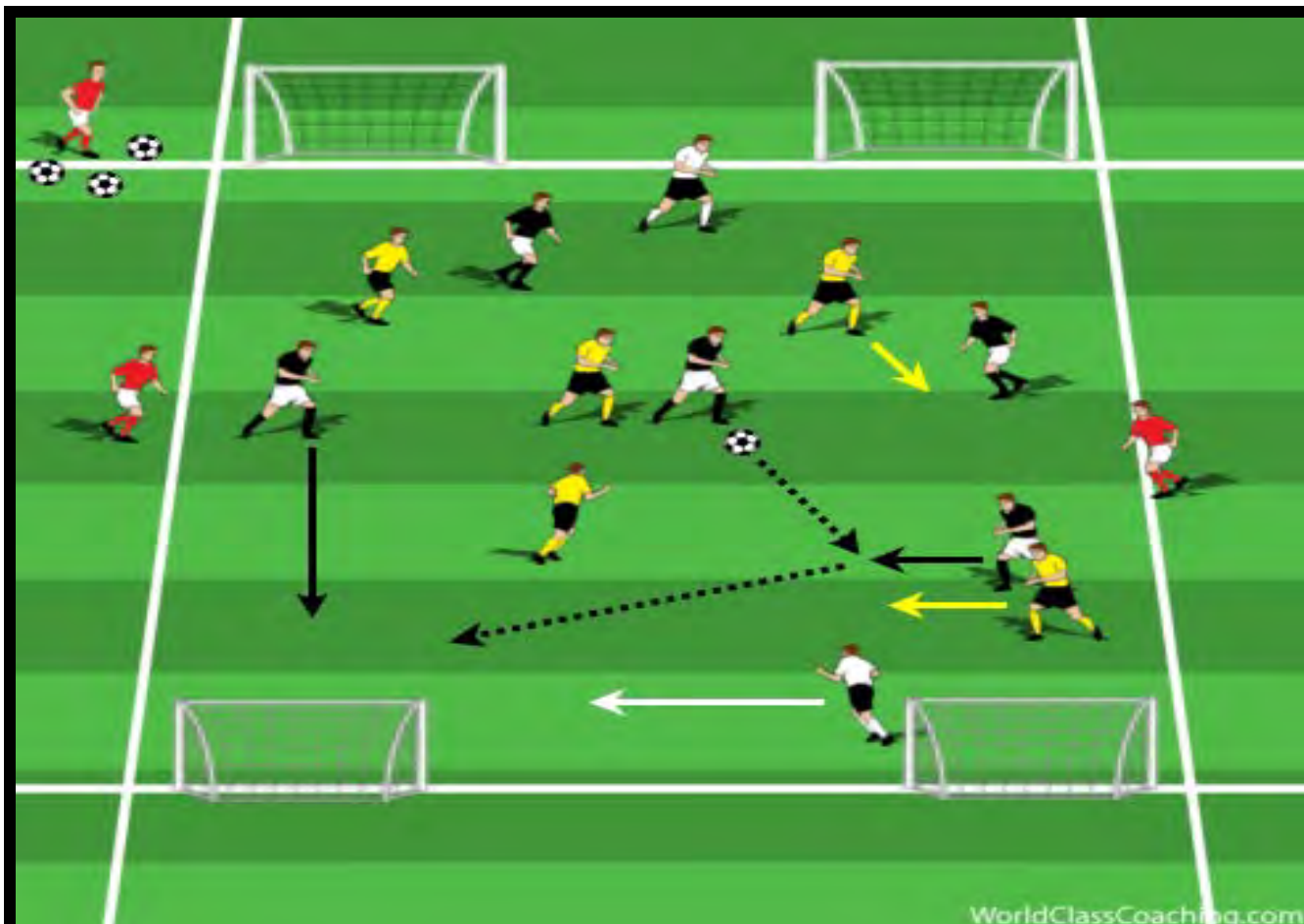
- 1 Play 6 v 6 plus two.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Play in a one and two touch rhythm and get the ball off of your foot quickly.
- 2 Connect both sides of the field with hard, driven passes.
- 3 Do not slow down the attack with extra touches. Time is on the side of the defense.

LARGE SIDED GAMES

7 v 5 to 11 v 11

5 v 5 Plus Two, #2**Large Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: Twelve players are set up on a small field, playing 5 v 5 plus two.

Procedure: Each team has two goals available for scoring, and the goalkeepers must cover both goals. The two neutrals play on the outside of the field, moving up and down the sidelines. Balls played out of touch are re-started with a kick in, and balls played over the end line are re-started by the goalkeeper of the team in possession.

Teaching Topics:

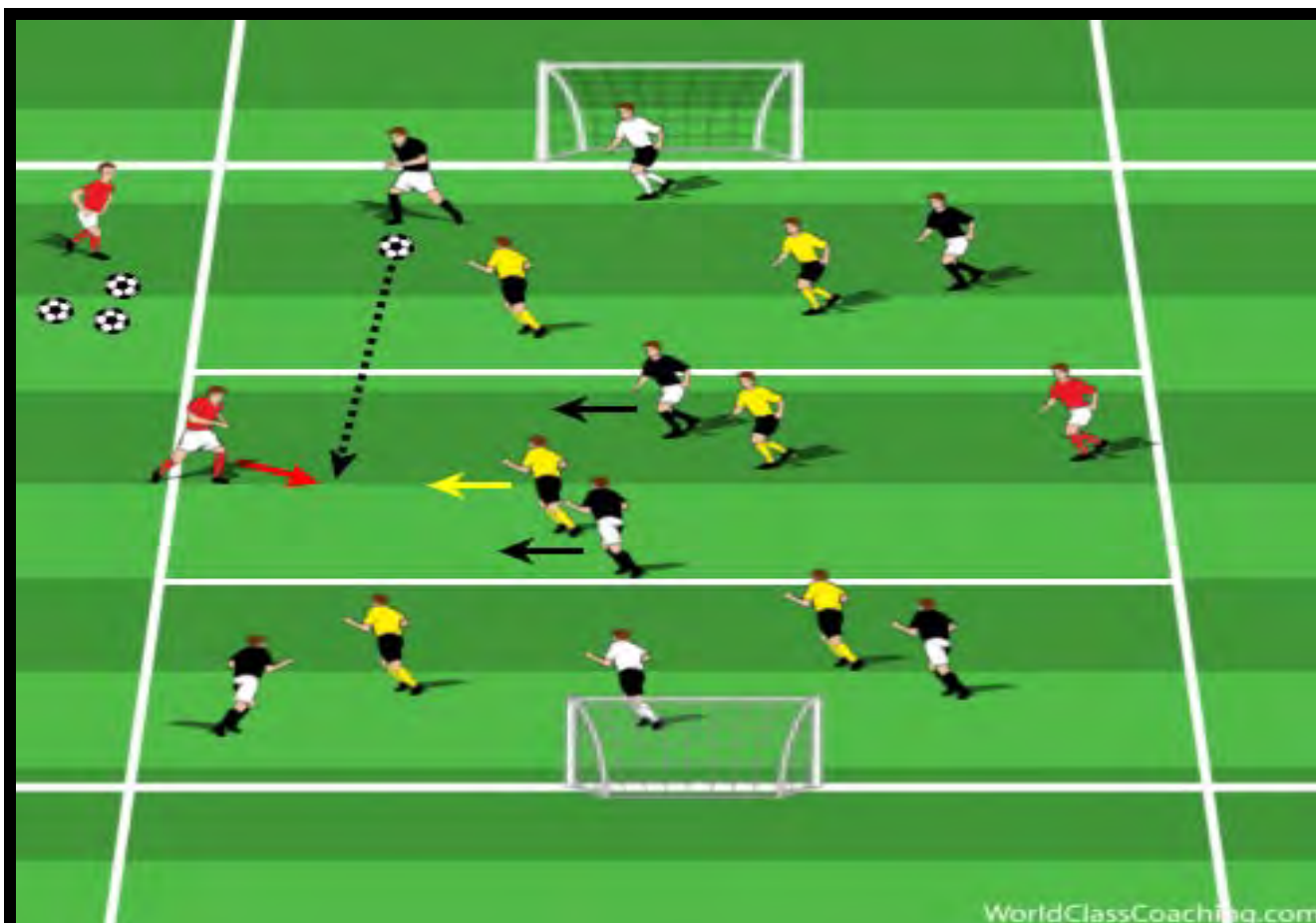
- 1 Expanding the field.
- 2 Decision making.
- 3 Changing the field.

Progressions:

- 1 The scoring team keeps the ball and changes direction.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Use the neutrals and move the ball quickly from one sideline to the other.
- 2 Look to change the ball away from a crowded area and attack the other goal.
- 3 Open up with the first touch and turn away from the sideline.

2 v 2 On the Ends**Large Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: There are fourteen players set up on a large field split into three zones.

Procedure: During the game, the two teams play 2 v 2 plus two in the central zone, and 2 v 2 in both of the end zones. All of the players must stay inside their zones during play. Balls played out of bounds are re-started with a throw in. On goals and balls put out of play, the Feeder re-starts play in the central zone.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Checking runs.
- 2 Turning moves.
- 3 Attacking 1 v 1.

Progressions:

- 1 Limit the neutrals to one touch.
- 2 Neutrals follow the pass over.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Check away from the ball in order to create enough space to receive passes.
- 2 Touch the ball away from the defender as you receive, and create space to turn.
- 3 After turning to face the goal, attack the defender aggressively with the dribble.

8 v 8, Knock Off**Large Sided****Group Attacking**

Set Up: There are sixteen players set up on a full field, playing between the penalty areas. Balls are set up on top of the cones placed along the end lines.

Procedure: During play, the attacking team scores by knocking a ball off of the cone. After scoring, the attacking team keeps possession and attacks in the other direction. A defender retrieves the ball and sets it back up on top of the cone before re-joining play. Throw-ins and corner kicks are used on balls played out of bounds.

Teaching Topics:

- 1 Speed of play.
- 2 Expanding the field.
- 3 Group attacking.

Progressions:

- 1 Add a neutral attacker.

Coaching Points:

- 1 Play in a one and two touch rhythm along with the rest of the team.
- 2 Connect both sides of the field with hard, driven passes.
- 3 Exploit the temporary man up situation that exists right after you score a goal.

About the Author

Don Herlan is a former Assistant Coach/Goalkeeper Coach of Men's Soccer at Longwood University, a Division I program playing in the Big South Conference. He coached at Longwood while serving as a Lecturer in the Department of Health, Athletic Training, Recreation, and Kinesiology from 2005-2012.

Prior to his years at Longwood, he worked as an assistant with the Men's and Women's Soccer teams at Buffalo State College, and was from the Head Coach of Women's Soccer at Juniata College and Saint Francis University. He began his career as an Assistant Coach at the University of Buffalo, coaching with the women's team as they made their move from Division III up to Division I. During their transition, they were ranked as high as #5 in the nation in Division II.

As a player, Don was a first team All-Conference player for Kenmore West High School and played for four years at SUNY Geneseo, a Division III program in Western New York. He was named team captain during his senior year, and won the Outstanding Senior Award in 1981.

Don earned a Bachelor's degree in Management Science from SUNY Geneseo, a Bachelor's degree in Exercise Science from the University of Buffalo, and a Master's degree in Exercise Physiology from the University of Akron. He also holds a USSF 'C' License, and is a member of the NSCAA.

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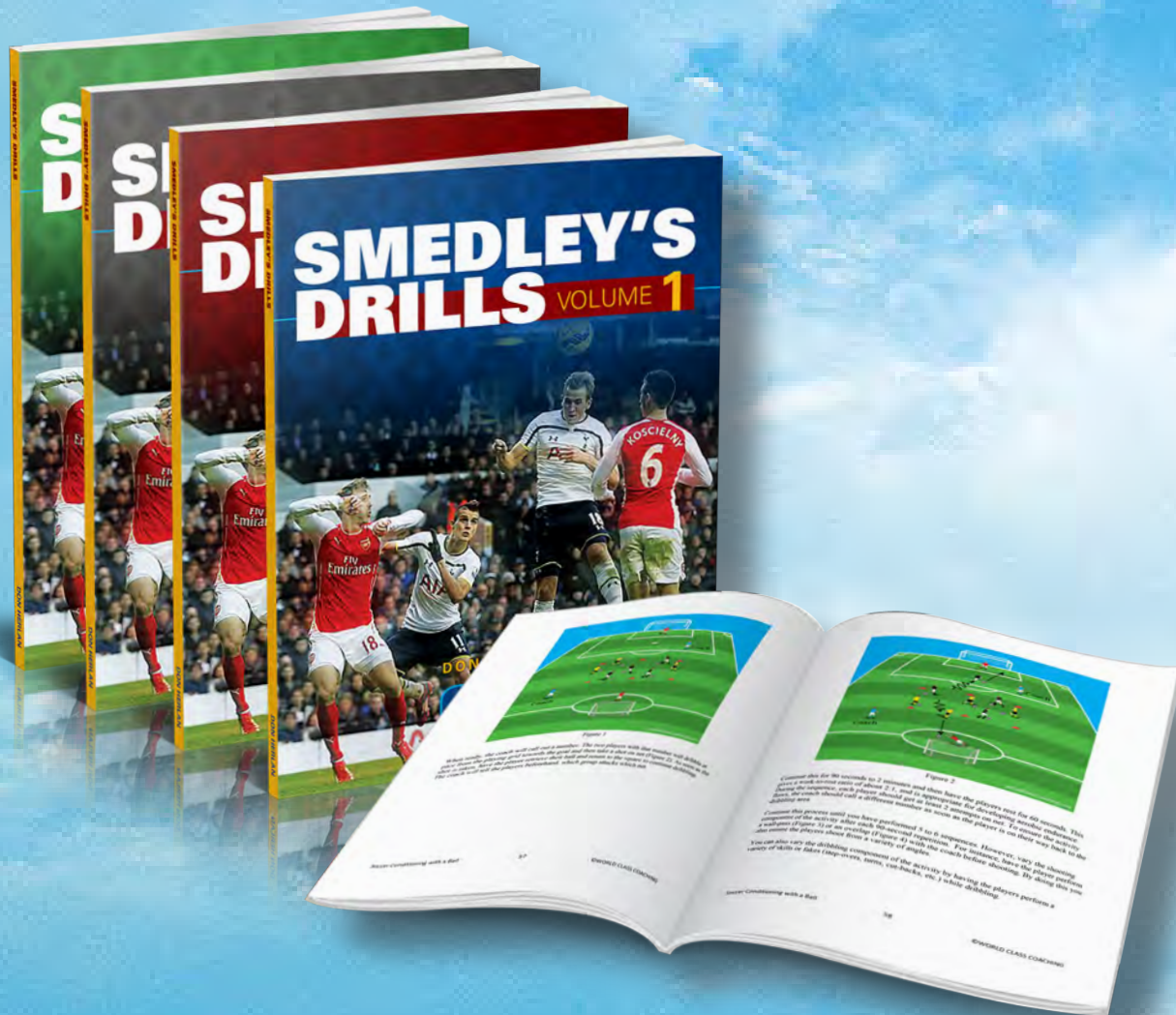


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