



National Soccer Coaches
Association of America

SMALL-SIDED GAMES: 4v4

Excerpts from the NSCAA Special Topics Diploma Manual



WALL PASS - FUNCTIONAL

Why use it?

This activity is a great way to work on combinations between attackers and midfield players and to introduce a wall pass. Teaching combination play in the final third is time well spent. Providing players options to beat an opponent 2v1 in different areas of the field allows for success and overall enjoyment. Doing this at a young age helps to create a solid base knowledge to build upon.

Set up

The area is half a 4v4 field - 15x20 yards. An appropriate size goal is at one end and the coach stands in the center with a large supply of balls. A defender starts 5 yards from goal and pairs of attackers stand either side of the coach on the halfway line.

How to play

The coach starts each sequence with a pass to either attacker. The attackers play 2v1 against the defender and attempts to score in the goal. The defender earns a point by winning possession and passing the ball to the coach. The coach can keep the same defender for 5-6 sequences, or the attacker receiving the pass from the coach becomes the next defender.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Teach midfield and attacking players to recognize when a wall pass is available and how to execute the combination. Players will learn visual and spatial cues that indicate that a wall pass is an option. For example, if the defender drops back towards the goal the receiver should dribble at pace. If the defender applies pressure to the ball carrier close to the halfway line a pass is likely the best option.

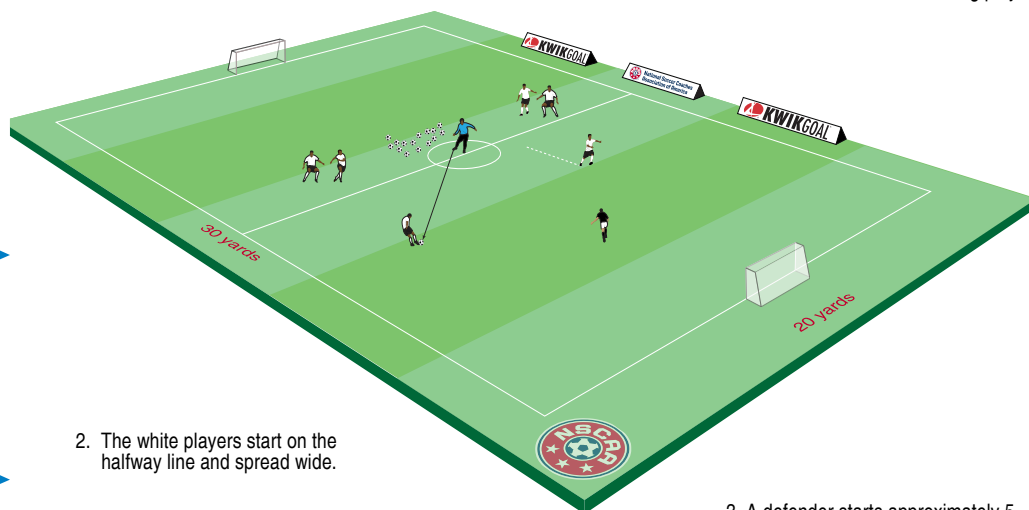
Coaching Tips: The coach can adjust the speed of attack and establish different starting points when serving the balls.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Encourage your defender to be overly aggressive. An overly aggressive defender will create more space for the attackers to perform a wall pass around and behind the defender. Patient or low pressure defending will make it hard to recognize the times when a wall pass is on. The coach can also start the activity without a defender.

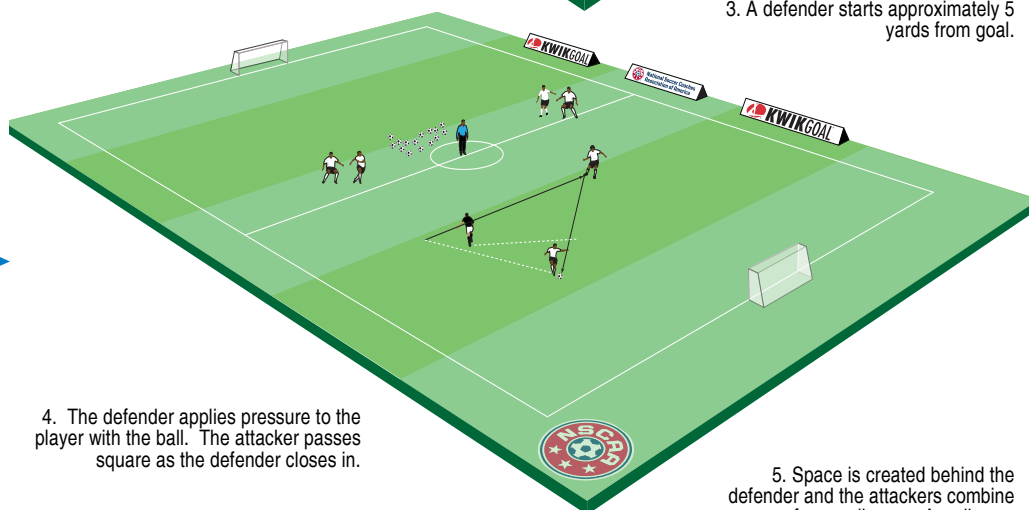
More Challenging: Add a second defender to make teams even 2v2. This adjustment will result in less space and time for the attackers. Dribbling at the first defender and timing the wall pass will become even more important. If the activity becomes too challenging, consider starting one of the defenders behind the goal to provide more time for the attack to build up steam.

1. The coach starts play with a pass to either white attacking player.



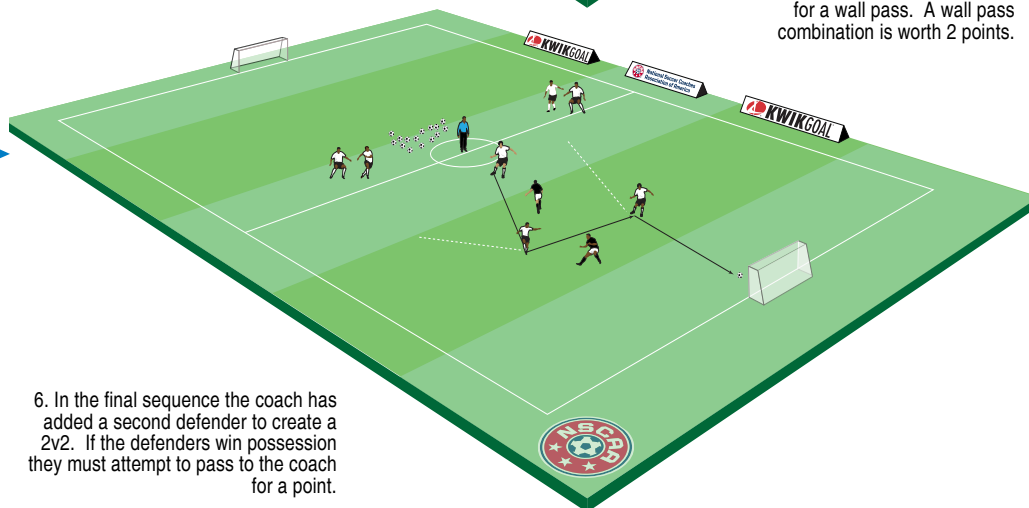
2. The white players start on the halfway line and spread wide.

3. A defender starts approximately 5 yards from goal.



4. The defender applies pressure to the player with the ball. The attacker passes square as the defender closes in.

5. Space is created behind the defender and the attackers combine for a wall pass. A wall pass combination is worth 2 points.



6. In the final sequence the coach has added a second defender to create a 2v2. If the defenders win possession they must attempt to pass to the coach for a point.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2 & 3 - 6-11 year old players.

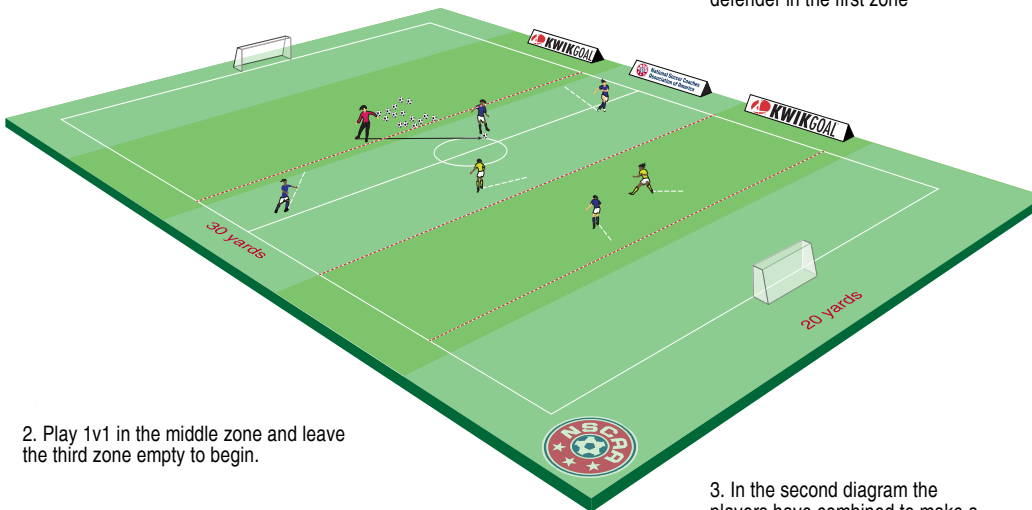
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing over short distances, passing combinations and defending as an individual.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing, receiving and support with and without the ball.

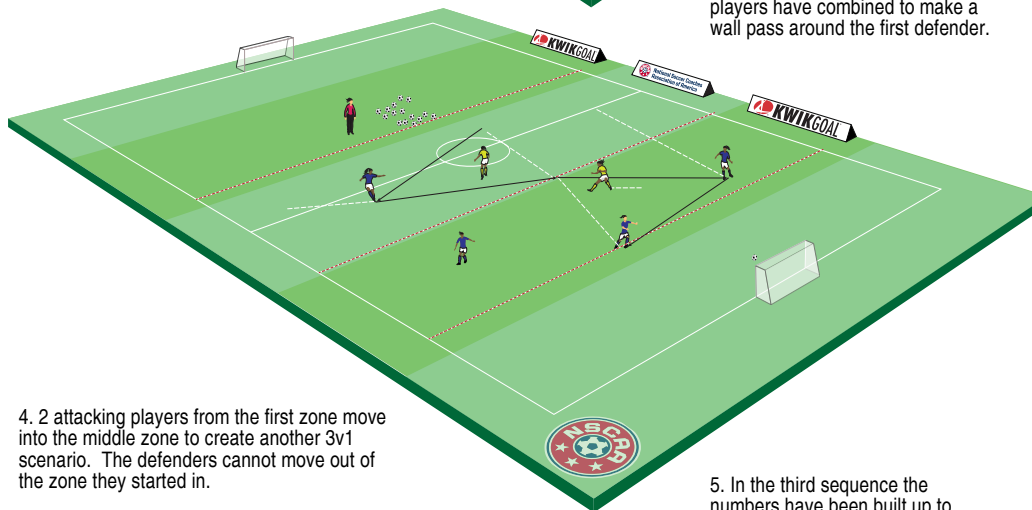
WALL PASS - PHASE OF PLAY

1. The coach passes to one of the 3 attacking players playing against 1 defender in the first zone



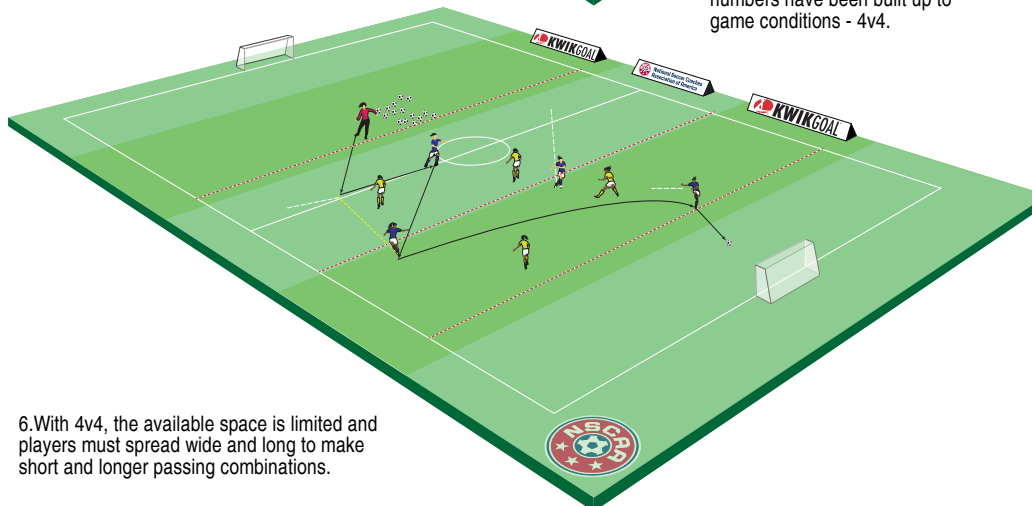
2. Play 1v1 in the middle zone and leave the third zone empty to begin.

3. In the second diagram the players have combined to make a wall pass around the first defender.



4. 2 attacking players from the first zone move into the middle zone to create another 3v1 scenario. The defenders cannot move out of the zone they started in.

5. In the third sequence the numbers have been built up to game conditions - 4v4.



6. With 4v4, the available space is limited and players must spread wide and long to make short and longer passing combinations.

Why use it?

This session progresses a simple technical wall-pass activity using all 4 attacking players. For younger age groups, staying connected as a team is important but difficult to achieve. This activity encourages midfield players to get forward to support and connect with the forward. The result should be more scoring opportunities and more players involved.

Set up

Two thirds of a 4v4 field is used and lines/cones denote 3 equal zones. An appropriate size goal is at one end of the field and the coach stands with the balls at the opposite end. Set up the attacking team in a 0-3-1 formation. In the zone furthest from goal play 3 attackers versus 1 defender and in the middle third 1v1. Initially the defenders are restricted to move in the zone in which they started.

How to play

The coach starts the game with a pass to one of the 3 attacking players in the zone closest to the coach. The attackers play 3v1 and attempt to advance the ball into the attacker standing in the middle zone. One of the defenders/midfield players can advance to the middle zone by dribbling or passing into the forward. This creates a 2v1 in the middle third. The final third remains empty until the attacking players either dribble or pass into the zone. The defending team scores a point by winning possession of the ball and passing to the coach.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Stress the importance of midfielders getting in the attack. Teaching midfielders to recognize visual and spatial cues that indicate when to go forward. Teach attacking players to recognize when a wall pass is available and to execute the combination. The support player may be the one on the opposite side of the field. It takes a lot of energy for the players to make support runs so plenty of encouragement and praise is needed.

Coaching Tips: Restricting movements of players to specific zones of the field allows the coach to create overload opportunities. In this activity the attackers have the advantage. In addition, preventing defenders from dropping into the final third provides the attackers with space behind the defense to make a wall pass.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Work on the pattern of play with passive defenders, or remove defenders entirely.

More Challenging: Add a second defender in the middle third and/or add a defender to the final third. Adding defenders minimizes space and consequently reduces time for the attackers. Less time and less space increases the importance of technical precision.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 & 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing over short distances, passing combinations and defending as an individual.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing, receiving and support with and without the ball.

WALL PASS - THE GAME

Why use it?

This activity progresses the passing theme into a 4v4 game played on a full field. To assist young players, the coach takes up strategic positions on the field during the flow of the game to help players better understand their roles. This methodology is called 'coaching in the game' and can be used quite effectively if the coach can stay out of the run of play.

Set up

This activity is played on a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards and two appropriate size goals are at each end. 2 teams of 4 players start in the coach's preferred formations, in this example both teams are set up in a diamond 0-1-2-1. Balls can be placed next to the goals and/or the halfway line so the coach can initiate a restart from the goal line.

How to play

Commence the game with a kick-off and let the players play for a few minutes uninterrupted so they get into the flow of the game. Instruct the players what commands will be used to stop the game and how you wish them to react. The coach may wish to remain on the sideline and enter the playing field with an announcement of "FREEZE". The player should stop immediately allowing the coach to recreate the previous sequence and then instruct and correct the play. The coach should seek to rehearse one good example before restarting the activity. It is important to use the game to draw out the main themes of the session, so the coach should seek opportunities to coach the wall pass. With young players in particular, the coach must expect players to forget the themes as they get engrossed in the game. To this end, be prepared to step in and demonstrate situations where a wall pass may be possible. Play for 10 minutes, take a break and go again.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Help players to recognize when a wall pass is available, timing of the pass and movement to support a teammate. Teach visual and spatial cues that tip off the dribbler and teammate when a wall pass is appropriate.

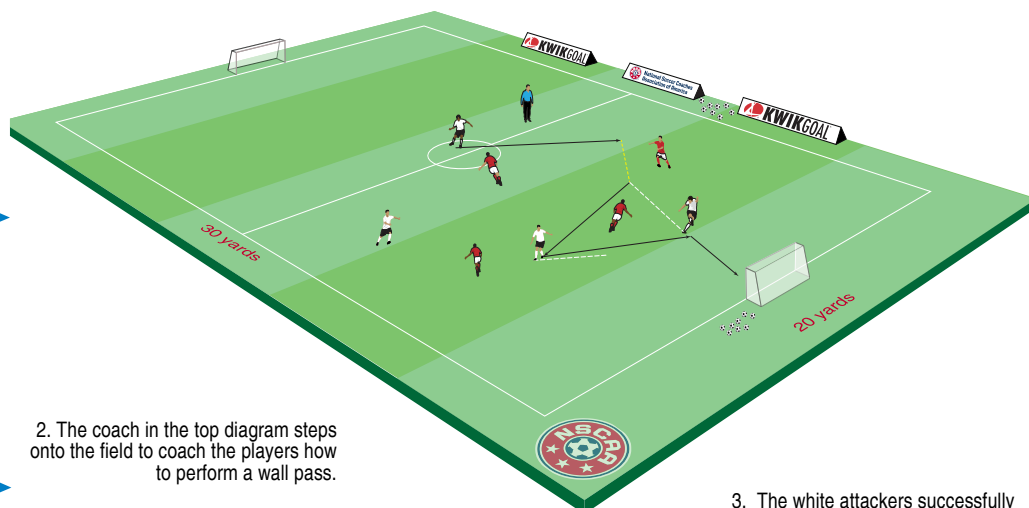
Coaching Tip: A good coaching strategy during a game-like activity is to speak with players when there is a natural stoppage in the game, such as a goal kick, throw in or free kick. Keeping the game flowing and avoiding too many interruptions will be appreciated by the players.

How to modify

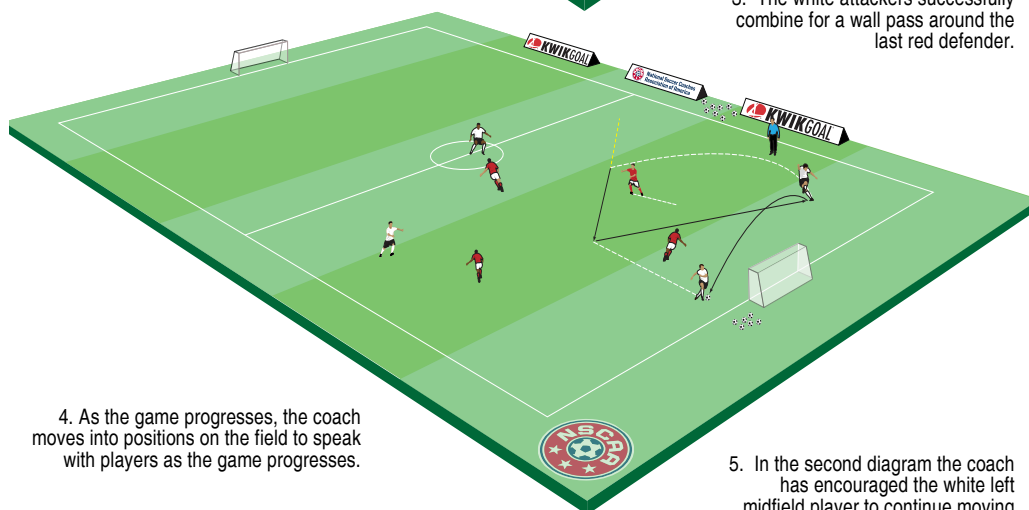
Less Challenging: To increase the likelihood of the attacking team achieving a wall pass combination the coach can remove 1-2 defenders to create an attacking overload. The coach can also restrict 2 players from each team to stay in the attacking half.

More Challenging: Place a time restriction on the attacking team to get the ball forward and/or add 2-3 touch restrictions for each player.

1. Two teams or 4 play game on a full size 4v4 field.

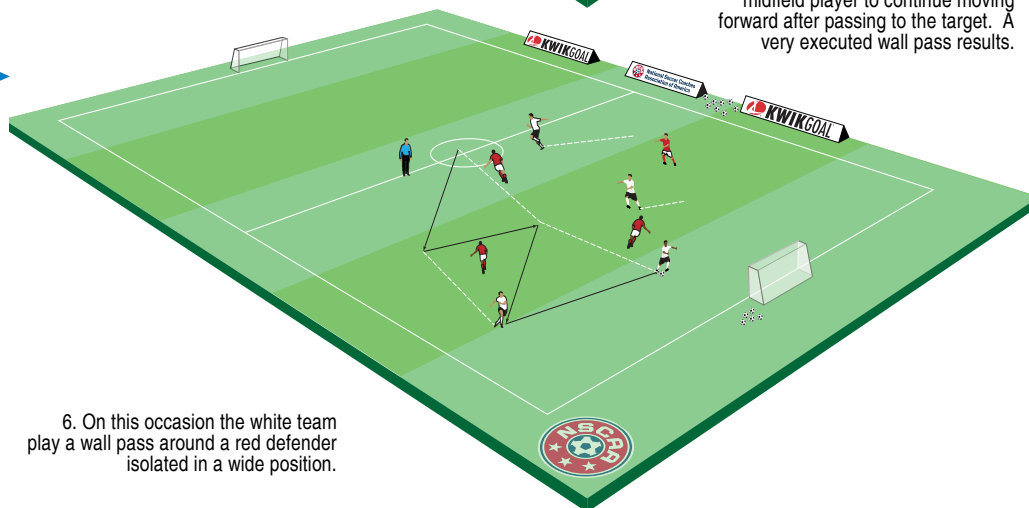


2. The coach in the top diagram steps onto the field to coach the players how to perform a wall pass.



3. The white attackers successfully combine for a wall pass around the last red defender.

4. As the game progresses, the coach moves into positions on the field to speak with players as the game progresses.



5. In the second diagram the coach has encouraged the white left midfield player to continue moving forward after passing to the target. A very executed wall pass results.

6. On this occasion the white team play a wall pass around a red defender isolated in a wide position.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

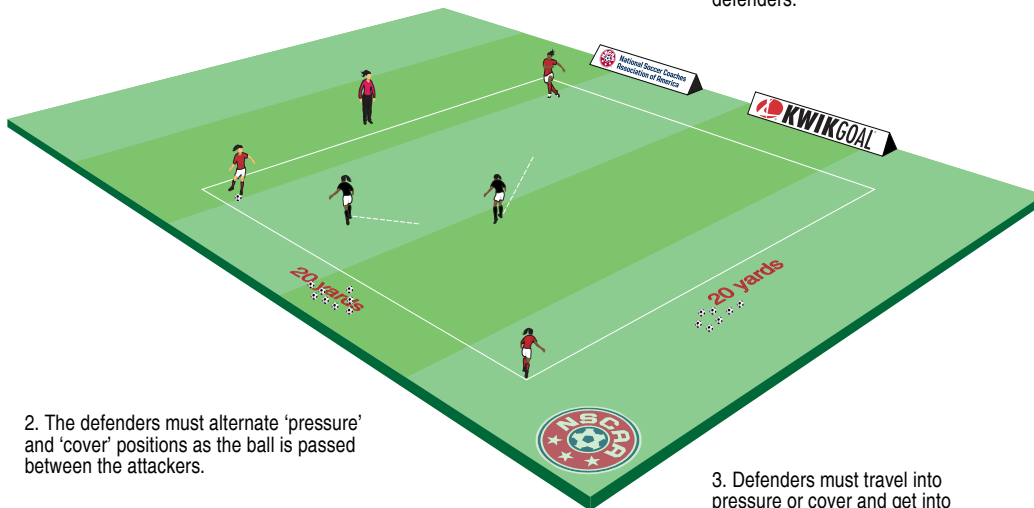
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing over short distances, passing combinations and defending as unit.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing, receiving and support with and without the ball.

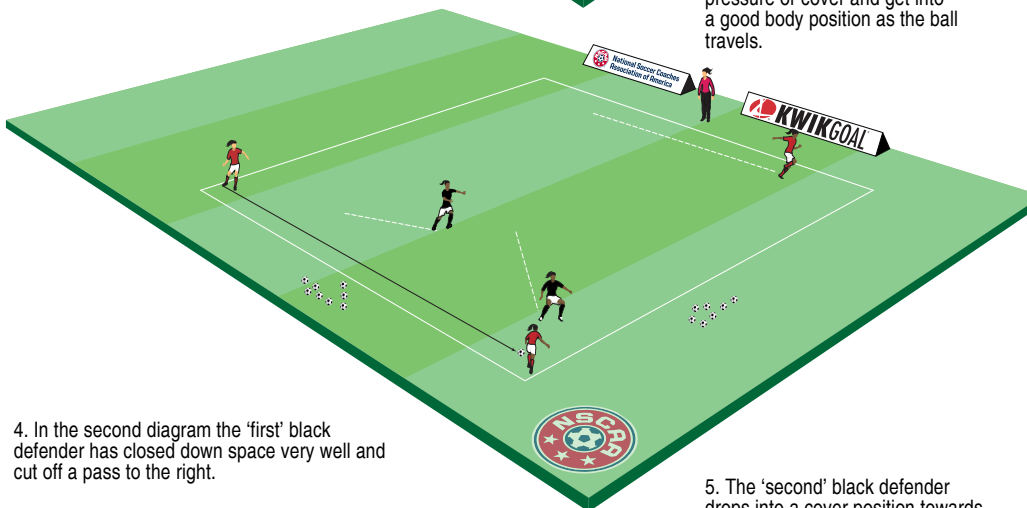
PRESSURE & COVER DEFENDING - FUNCTIONAL

1. 3 red attackers attempt to keep possession away from the black defenders.



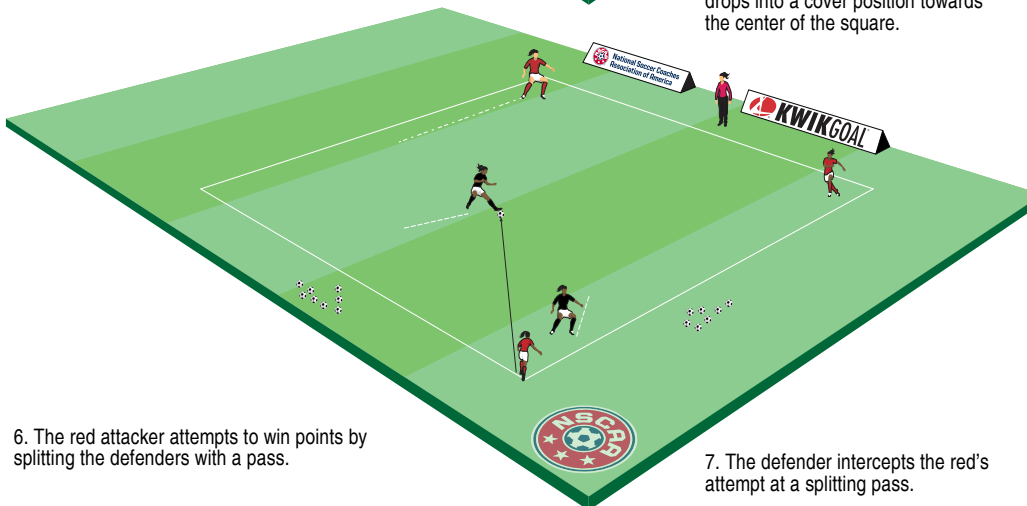
2. The defenders must alternate 'pressure' and 'cover' positions as the ball is passed between the attackers.

3. Defenders must travel into pressure or cover and get into a good body position as the ball travels.



4. In the second diagram the 'first' black defender has closed down space very well and cut off a pass to the right.

5. The 'second' black defender drops into a cover position towards the center of the square.



6. The red attacker attempts to win points by splitting the defenders with a pass.

7. The defender intercepts the red's attempt at a splitting pass.

Why use it?

This activity introduces players to the role of the first and second defenders - pressure and cover. It also demonstrates clearly what it looks like when two defenders 'get split'. It will help the defenders to understand the importance of communication, angle of the approach and body positioning.

Set up

The area is a 20x20 yards square with balls conveniently located outside the area. The coach can move around the edge of the area to coach individuals.

How to play

3 attackers stand in three corners of the area and 2 defenders are in the middle of the area. Attackers pass the ball to each other trying not to let the two defenders steal it; ultimately trying to 'split' the defenders down the middle with a pass. After 2 minutes change the defenders.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Defenders must communicate. The closest defender (1st) says 'BALL', and 2nd defender says 'COVER'. They move so they don't get 'split'. The covering defender must adjust distance and body angle depending on 1st defenders positioning.

Coaching Tips: One way the coach can keep the game moving and reduce the number of stoppages for changeovers is to have the defender hold a training vest. Once the defender has intercepted the ball or the attackers have lost possession, the defender drops the vest and exchanges positions with the offending attacker.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Insist the attackers must wait for the defenders to get in a good position before passing. Force the attackers to take at least 2 touches before making a pass - giving the defenders more time to get into a good defensive position.

More Challenging: Add an additional attacker to create a 4v4. Play in a circle - this condition will allow the attackers to move freely and harder for the defenders to visualize the split. Keep score for attackers v defenders - attackers get a point if they split the defense and defenders get a point if they steal the ball.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2,3 & 4 - 6-14 year old players

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Defending positioning - pressure and cover, 1v1/pairs defending and small group defending.

Top 3 Competencies: Defensive stance, applying defensive pressure and communication.

PRESSURE & COVER DEFENDING - PHASE OF PLAY

Why use it?

Using multiple goals encourages the attacking team to switch the point of attack. Consequentially, the defenders are required to constantly adjust their defensive positioning to apply pressure and cover. The attacking players attempt to dribble and penetrate through the goal or recognize when to change direction with a pass.

Set up

This activity is played in the middle of a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards. The width of the field is 20 yards and the depth of the area 15 yards to create a rectangle. 3 goals are created across the width of the field for both teams to defend using cones approximately 2 yards apart. Both teams commence with 3 players and the coach stands on the side of the field with a large supply of balls.

How to play

The activity starts with a pass from the coach to either team. As the focus is on the defenders, the coach may wish to start with a 'pattern of play' - the central attacker passes the ball side to side to the wide players. The attackers do not attempt to penetrate at first and the defenders do not attempt to win the ball. Instead, as the ball is passed to the wide attacker the defenders move into pressure and cover positions. The coach can insist on the receiver 'holding' the ball for 2-3 seconds to allow the defenders to move into the correct positions. Once the coach is happy both teams understand their defensive roles, the game goes live. The attacking objective is to score in any of the 3 goals with a dribble or ground pass. The defenders attempt to win possession and attack the opponents goals. Restarts are from the coach.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: The coach must work with the 3 defenders to create correct defensive shape - pressure and cover. When the ball is central the middle defender applies pressure and the wide defenders drop into a cover position. Cover defenders should be able to challenge an attacker if the pressure defender is beaten. When the ball is wide, the nearest defender applies pressure, the central players drop into cover and the furthest defender also drops deeper.

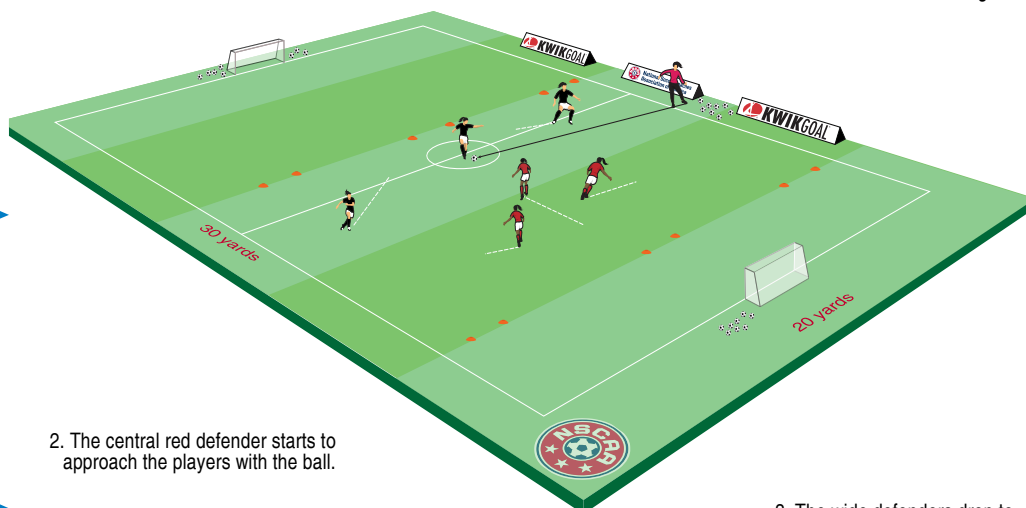
How to modify

Coaching Tip: Using multiple goals enable the coach to create multiple points of attack. This strategy is great for teaching young defenders how to move as a defensive unit.

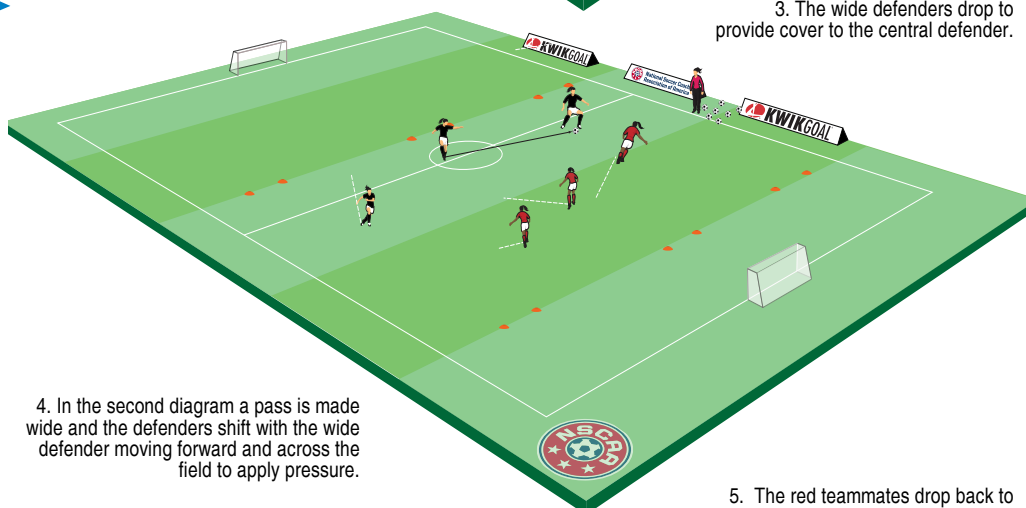
Less Challenging: Start the activity with patterns of play and/or passive defending. Require attackers to play 3 touches minimum to slow down the play and allow defenders to adjust.

More challenging: Transition to free play. Add an extra attacker to the field to provide the defenders with more challenge.

1. The coach passes to the black attacking team.

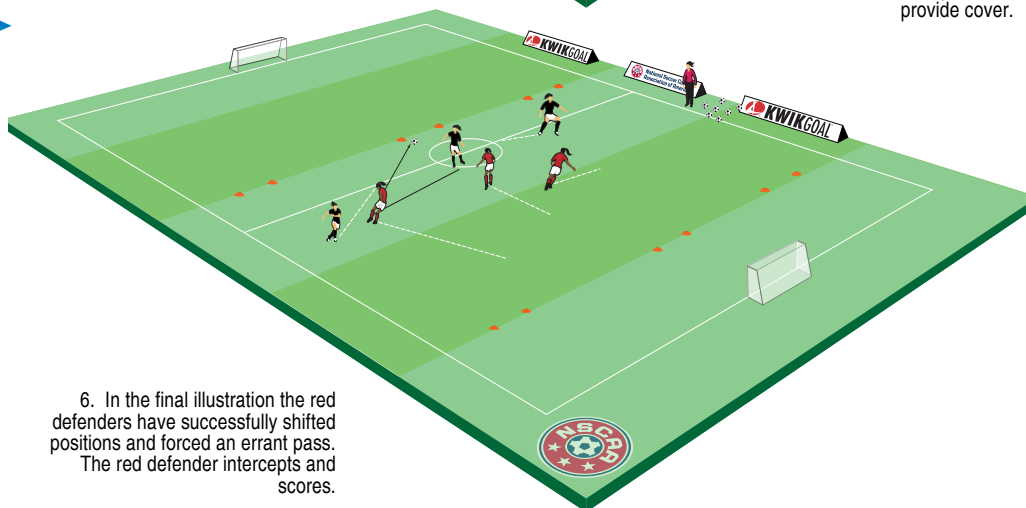


2. The central red defender starts to approach the players with the ball.



3. The wide defenders drop to provide cover to the central defender.

4. In the second diagram a pass is made wide and the defenders shift with the wide defender moving forward and across the field to apply pressure.



5. The red teammates drop back to provide cover.

6. In the final illustration the red defenders have successfully shifted positions and forced an errant pass. The red defender intercepts and scores.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

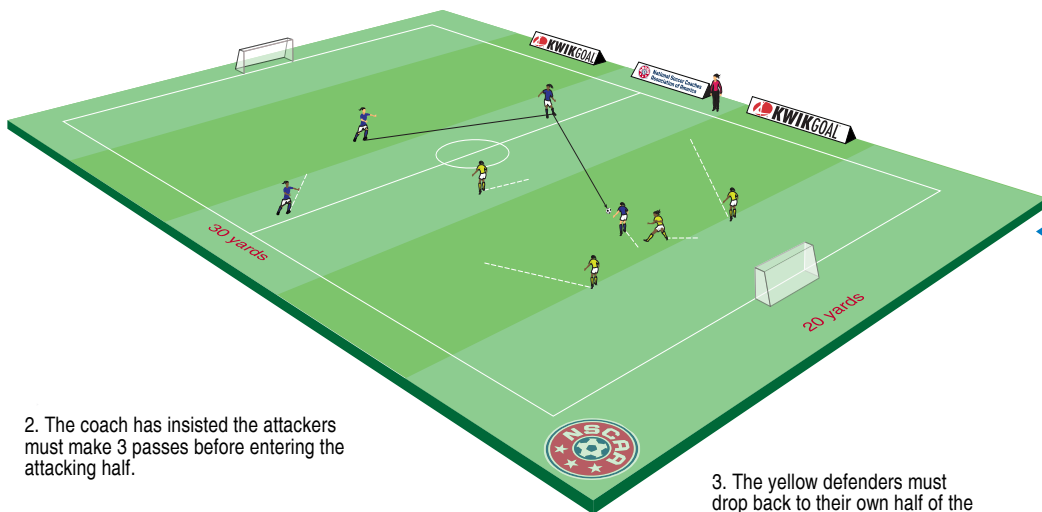
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Defending positioning - pressure and cover, Defending as an individual, in pairs and small groups.

Top 3 Competencies: Defensive stance, applying defensive pressure and communication.

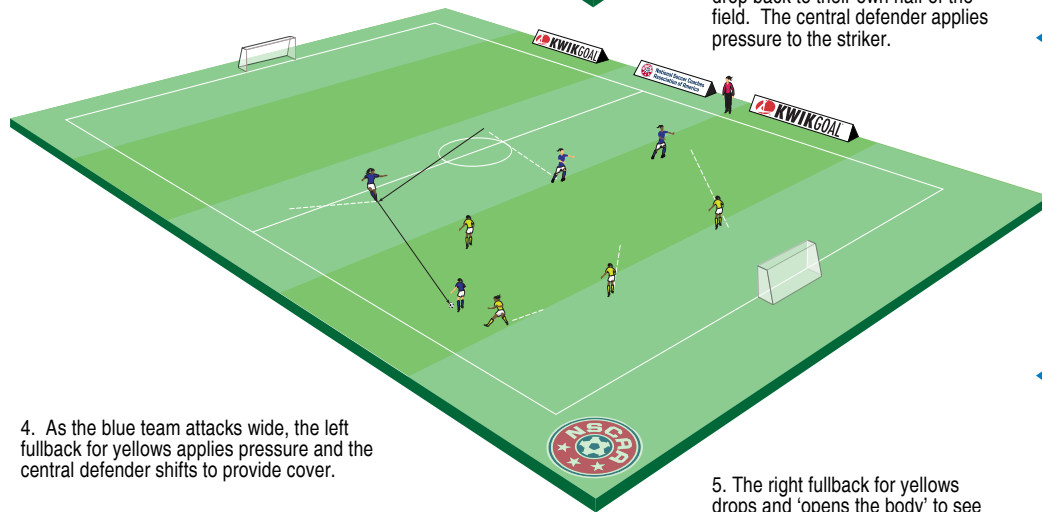
PRESSURE & COVER DEFENDING - THE GAME

1. The blue team of 4 attack the yellow team of 4.



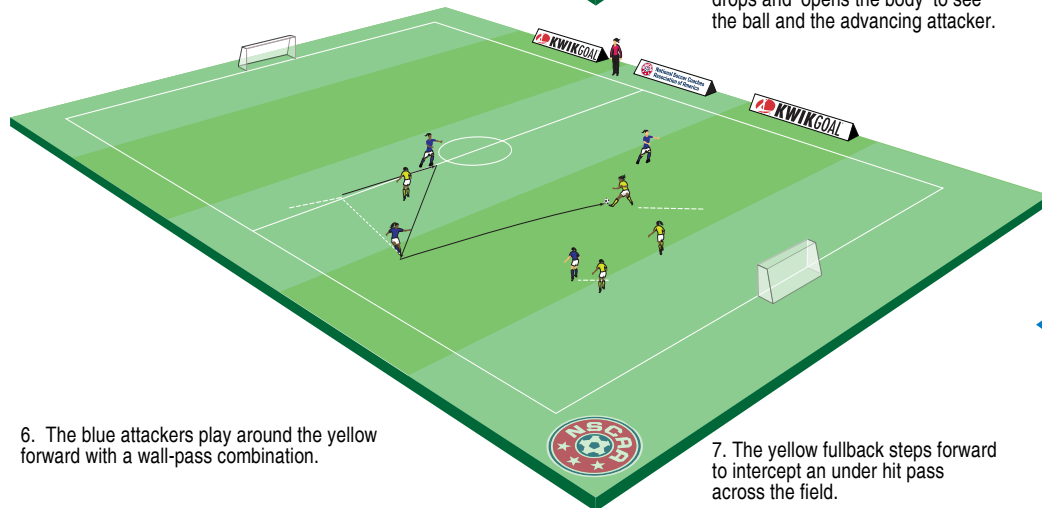
2. The coach has insisted the attackers must make 3 passes before entering the attacking half.

3. The yellow defenders must drop back to their own half of the field. The central defender applies pressure to the striker.



4. As the blue team attacks wide, the left fullback for yellows applies pressure and the central defender shifts to provide cover.

5. The right fullback for yellows drops and 'opens the body' to see the ball and the advancing attacker.



6. The blue attackers play around the yellow forward with a wall-pass combination.

7. The yellow fullback steps forward to intercept an under hit pass across the field.

Why use it?

It is paramount for defenders and midfielders to know how to apply pressure and cover. Reacting the visual cues is important. Employing 'coaching in the game' methodology allows the coach to provide timely advice and guidance for the players.

The coach is able to show real game situations and tie them to topics and activities from previous practices.

Set up

This activity is played on a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards and two appropriate size goals are at each end. 2 teams of 4 players start in the coach's preferred formations. In this example the blue team is set up in a diamond 0-1-2-1 and the yellow team in 0-3-1. Balls can be placed next to the goals and/or the halfway line so the coach can initiate a restart from the goal line.

How to play

Play a full complement of players for both teams - 4v4. Players are instructed the coach will stop the flow of play a few times to make a point or correction based on the topic. The coach will remain on the sideline and will enter the playing field with an announcement of "FREEZE", and with the players frozen the coach will make the coaching point. Play normal rules and seek opportunities to reinforce the roles of pressure and cover defenders.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Help players to recognize the visual cues to shift defensive positions and know who is the first (pressure) defender and who are the 2nd and 3rd defenders. Demonstrate the importance of collective defending in the defensive third. Stress the importance of all 4 players getting into good defensive positions..

Coaching Tips: Pressure should be applied as quickly as possible and this is often done while the ball is in flight. Assist players to move as the ball is travelling and not wait for the ball to arrive before moving. Often, timely movement by the defenders will place the receiver under sufficient pressure to force a turnover.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Require an attacking player or two to remain in their half of the field when transitioning to the attack. This condition will give the defenders more time and less space to cover. A similar result can be achieved by insisting the defending team retreats to defend from halfway, or the attacking team must pass back to the central defender before advancing forward.

More Challenging: As the ball transitions, reduce the number of defenders to 3, with the player furthest forward dropping off the field. Alternatively, speed up the attack by giving the attacking team 5 seconds to score.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Defending positioning - pressure and cover, defending as an individual, in pairs and small groups.

Top 3 Competencies: Defensive stance, applying defensive pressure and communication.

ATTACKING WITH WIDTH - FUNCTIONAL

Why use it?

Establishing field awareness and options for attackers is important in solving the games evolving situations. This activity gives the players numerous patterns and the coach plenty of opportunities to work with players on support movement. The wide players need to be aware of the timing of their runs forward.

Set up

The set up is a 20x20 yard square with a 4 yard end zone stretching the width of the area at each end. The coach stands at outside one end of the area with a large supply of balls. Only the attacking players are allowed to enter the end zone closest to the coach. There are 3 attackers and 2 defenders to start the activity.

How to play

The attacking objective is for the 3 players to pass the 2 defenders and stop the ball in the opponent's end zone. With a numerical advantage the attacking team should attempt to play around the 2 defenders. To achieve this objective one player should start in a central position and the other two players stretch the attack by getting as wide as possible. The coach always starts with the ball and plays to the central attacker, who must decide to either pass to a teammate or dribble towards the opponents end zone. If a defender applies pressure to the central attacker there will be at least one wide player available to pass to. If the defenders drop back or split to mark the wide players the central player can dribble. Each time the attackers are able to stop the ball in the end zone they win a point. If the defenders win possession they must play a pass to the coach for a point.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: The coach can teach the players various options to penetrate space behind a defense, such as, dribbling, passing around the side of the defenders and passing between defenders. The coach can also impress upon the players the need to maintain good team attacking shape and spacing. The players will have to decide whether to penetrate or switch the point of attack.

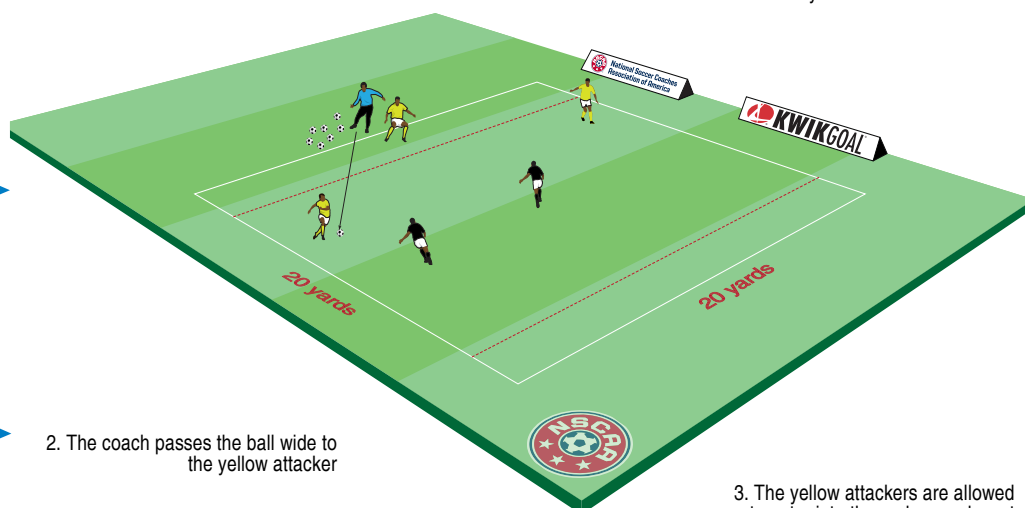
Coaching Tip: In a relatively straight forward activity the coach can allow players some time to attempt different solutions to the challenge. If players struggle to find solutions, offer some options and patterns and allow the players more attempts.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Reduce the number of defenders. With less pressure on the ball, the attacking team should have more success in moving the ball and into the end zone.

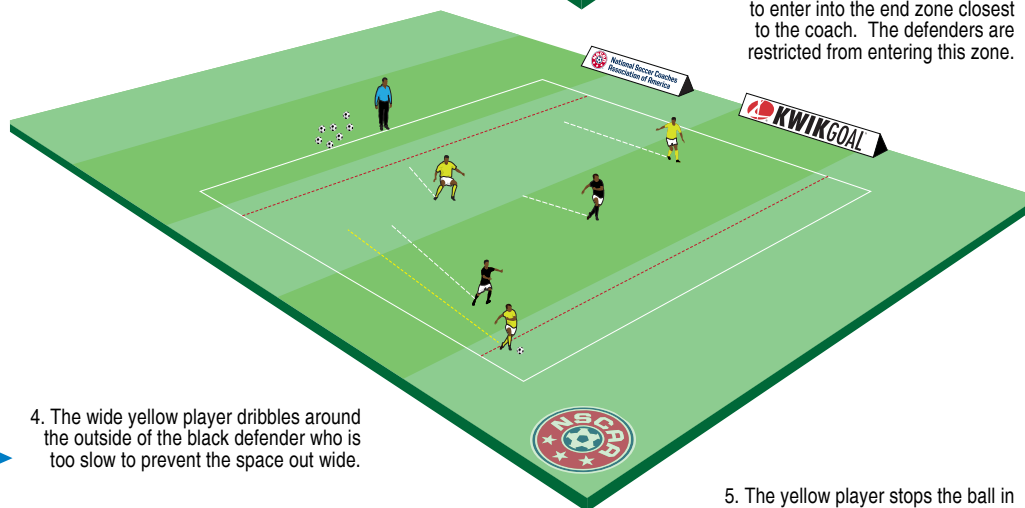
More Challenging: Add a third defender. This will make the activity more game like and will increase the pressure on the attacking team. Restrict the number of touches to two. This will make the attacking team pass the ball and emphasize the importance of the first touch being positive and purposeful.

1. 3 yellows attack 2 black defenders in a 20x20 yards area with 2 end zones.



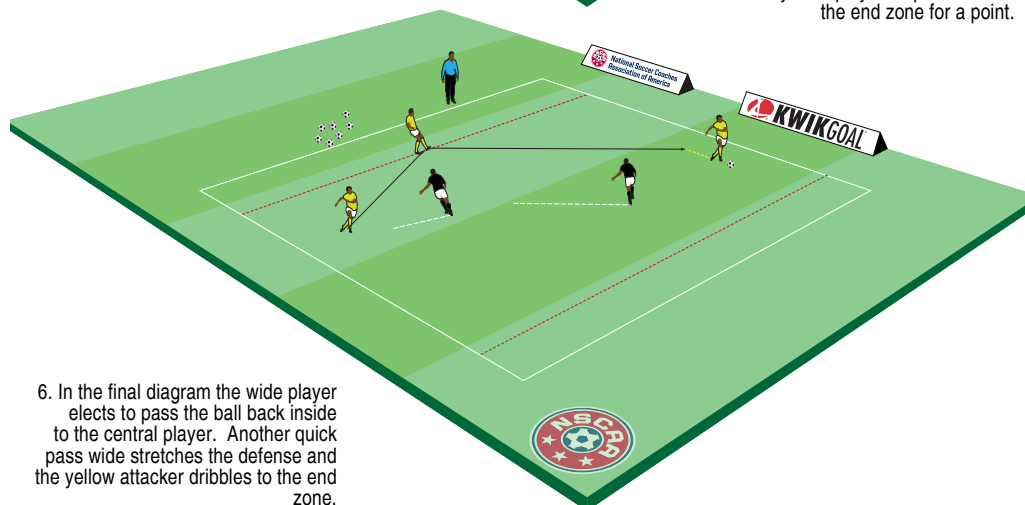
2. The coach passes the ball wide to the yellow attacker

3. The yellow attackers are allowed to enter into the end zone closest to the coach. The defenders are restricted from entering this zone.



4. The wide yellow player dribbles around the outside of the black defender who is too slow to prevent the space out wide.

5. The yellow player stops the ball in the end zone for a point.



6. In the final diagram the wide player elects to pass the ball back inside to the central player. Another quick pass wide stretches the defense and the yellow attacker dribbles to the end zone.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

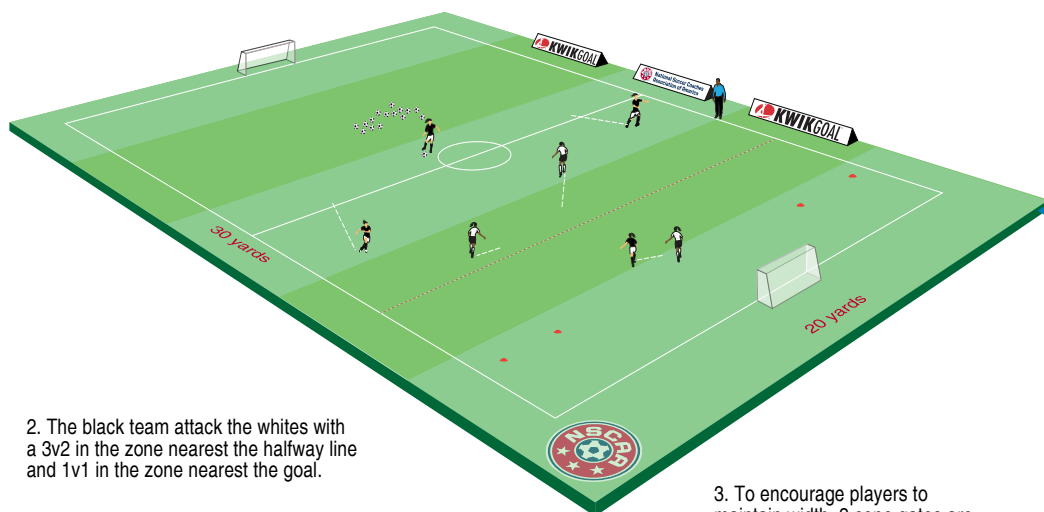
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Dribbling, passing over a short distance and creating space.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing and receiving, movement off the ball and providing width in support of the ball carrier.

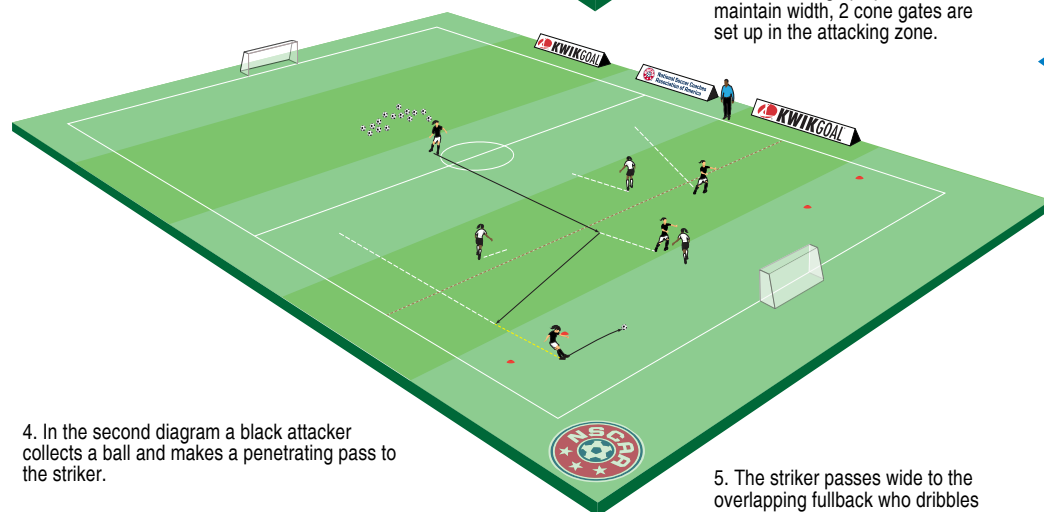
ATTACKING WITH WIDTH - PHASE OF PLAY

1. The activity is played in just over half a 4v4 field.



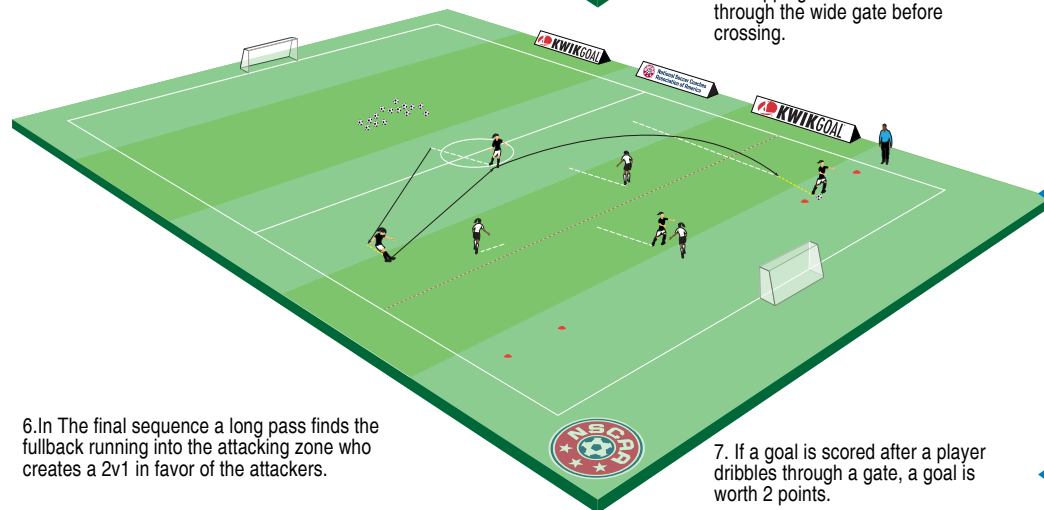
2. The black team attack the whites with a 3v2 in the zone nearest the halfway line and 1v1 in the zone nearest the goal.

3. To encourage players to maintain width, 2 cone gates are set up in the attacking zone.



4. In the second diagram a black attacker collects a ball and makes a penetrating pass to the striker.

5. The striker passes wide to the overlapping fullback who dribbles through the wide gate before crossing.



6. In the final sequence a long pass finds the fullback running into the attacking zone who creates a 2v1 in favor of the attackers.

7. If a goal is scored after a player dribbles through a gate, a goal is worth 2 points.

Why use it?

Excellent activity for training the wide players in the attack. This activity gives players many different patterns for attacking from the flanks in combination with the midfield and forward players. All 4 players are involved and the action occurs in the attacking half of the field.

Set up

This activity is played in just over half a 4v4 field measuring 20x20 yards. An appropriate size goal is at one end. Two zones split the field. Start with 4 attackers against 3 defenders, with a 3v2 in the zone closest to halfway and 1v1 in the zone closest to the goal. In the attacking end zone, place two 2 yards wide gates approximately 3 yards off the end line. A large supply of balls are situated 5 yards over the halfway line.

How to play

The attacking objective is score in the goal by building up play for the defense/midfield to the forward and create an overload of attackers in the attacking zone. The play commences with an attacker collecting a ball from the pile and dribbling across halfway. Once the attacker dribbles across the halfway line the game is live and the 2 defenders can attempt to win the ball. With a 3v2 numerical advantage the attackers should attempt to play around the defenders or pass into the forward. The defenders are restricted from leaving their assigned area, but the attackers can move freely. The attackers should attempt to overload the last defender and score in the goal. To encourage the attackers to maintain the width, a goal scored after a player dribbles through a wide gate is worth two points. If the defenders win possession they must dribble across the halfway line for a point.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Quick ball movement should result in the attackers exploiting the numerical advantage in each area. Keeping the width stretches the defenders and creates more attacking space.

Coaching Tips: Adding the wide gates offers an additional incentive for the wide players to remain wide.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Start with 1 defender in the midfield zone. By reducing the number of defenders in the first zone, the attacking team will have more success moving the ball forward.

More Challenging: Add a second defender into the final zone.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Dribbling, passing over a short distance and creating space.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing and receiving, movement off the ball and providing width in support of the ball carrier.

ATTACKING WITH WIDTH - THE GAME

Why use it?

We now progress the theme of creating width in attack into a game-like environment. This activity would be ideal at the end of a session to complement a technical or functional session to teach players when and how to support in wide positions.

Set up

This activity is played on a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards and two appropriate size goals are at each end. 2 teams of 4 players start in the coach's preferred formations, in this example both teams are set up in a diamond 0-1-2-1. Balls can be placed next to the goals and/or the halfway line so the coach can initiate a restart from the goal line.

How to play

Play a full complement of players for both teams - 4v4. Players are instructed the coach will stop the flow of play a few times to make a point or correction based on the topic. The coach will remain on the sideline and will enter the playing field with an announcement of "FREEZE", and with the players frozen the coach will make the coaching point. Play normal rules. The attacking players to the left and right of the diamond should stay as wide as possible to 'stretch' the defense horizontally. This shape will create 'seams' between the defenders allowing space for a penetrating pass to the striker. If the defenders remain in a compact shape, the attackers exploit the width and play 'around' the defenders. During the game the coach can freeze the play, demonstrate a preferred sequence and then restart play.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: The primary objective is for the attacking team to make the field as 'big' as possible by spreading wide and long. Creating space on the field typically favours the attackers.

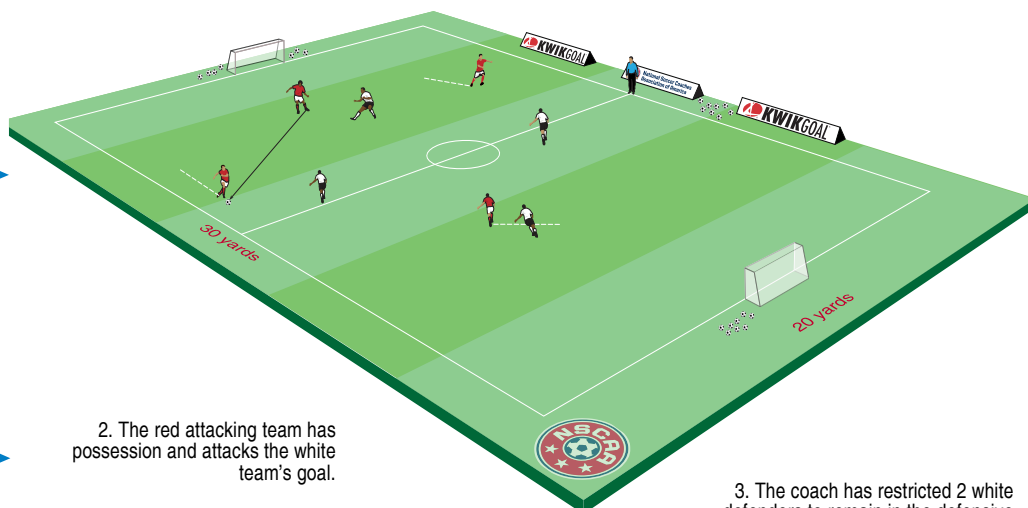
Coaching Tip: Try to make stoppages to the game short and instruction concise. Ideally, the coach is able to identify a good example of a passing combination in wide areas to compliment and reinforce. If not, manufacture a sequence so the players can 'see' what you are looking for them to repeat.

How to modify

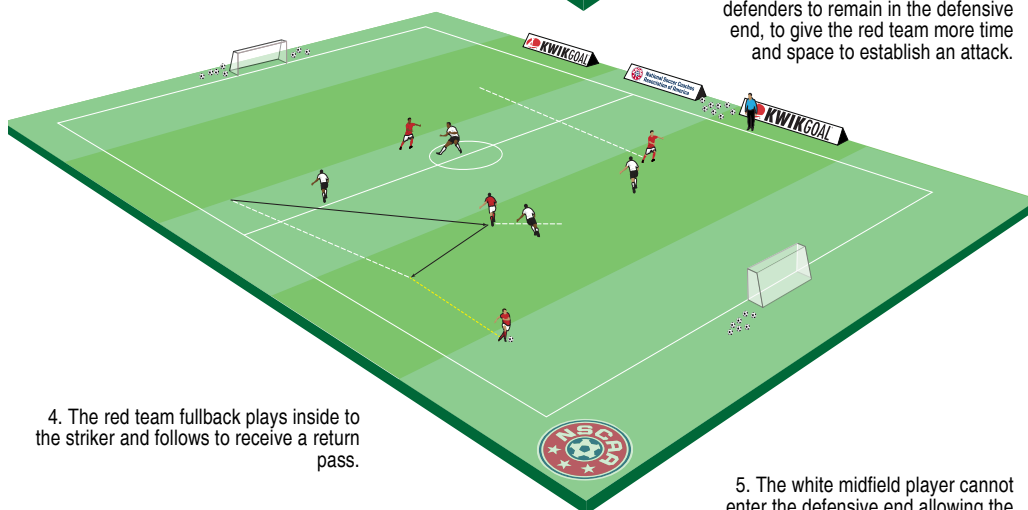
Less Challenging: To increase the likelihood of the attacking team achieving a wall pass combination, the coach can remove 1-2 defenders to create an attacking overload. The coach can also restrict 2 players from each team to stay in the attacking half.

More Challenging: Place a time restriction on the attacking team to get the ball forward and/or add 2-3 touch restrictions for each player.

1. Play 4v4 on a full 4v4 field.

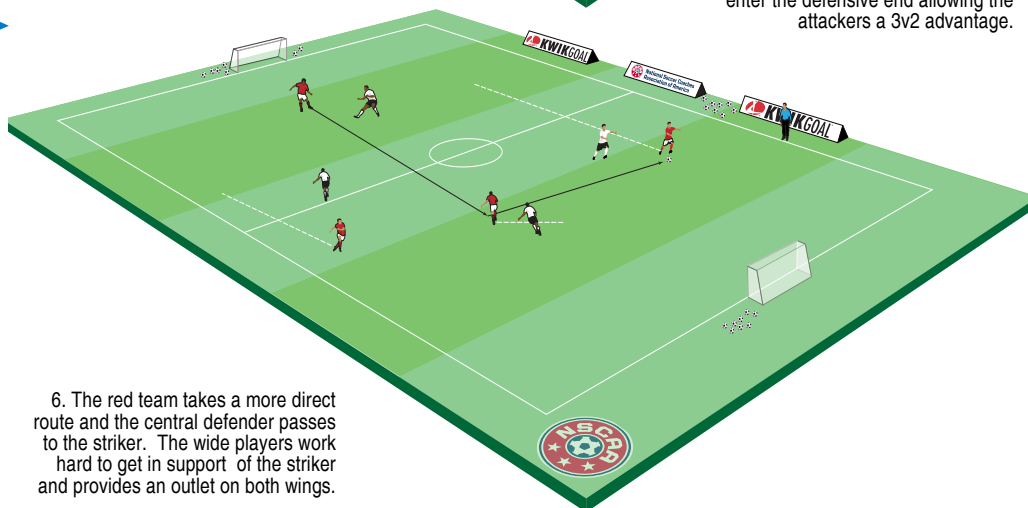


2. The red attacking team has possession and attacks the white team's goal.



3. The coach has restricted 2 white defenders to remain in the defensive end, to give the red team more time and space to establish an attack.

4. The red team fullback plays inside to the striker and follows to receive a return pass.



5. The white midfielder player cannot enter the defensive end allowing the attackers a 3v2 advantage.

6. The red team takes a more direct route and the central defender passes to the striker. The wide players work hard to get in support of the striker and provides an outlet on both wings.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

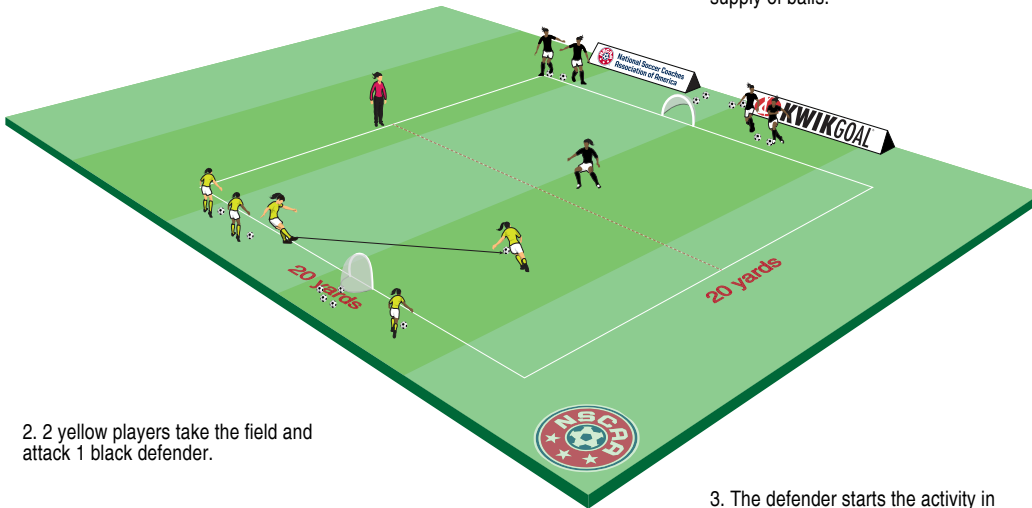
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Dribbling, passing over a short distance and creating space.

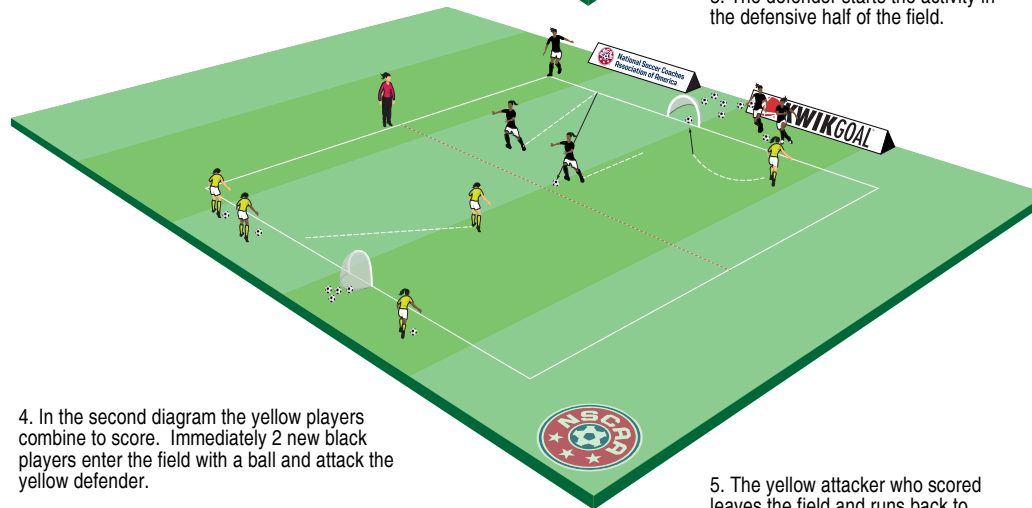
Top 3 Competencies: Passing and receiving, movement off the ball and providing width in support of the ball carrier.

DEFENSIVE STOP WITH ATTACKING TRANSITION - FUNCTIONAL

1. 5 black players and 5 yellow players start behind the end line with a large supply of balls.

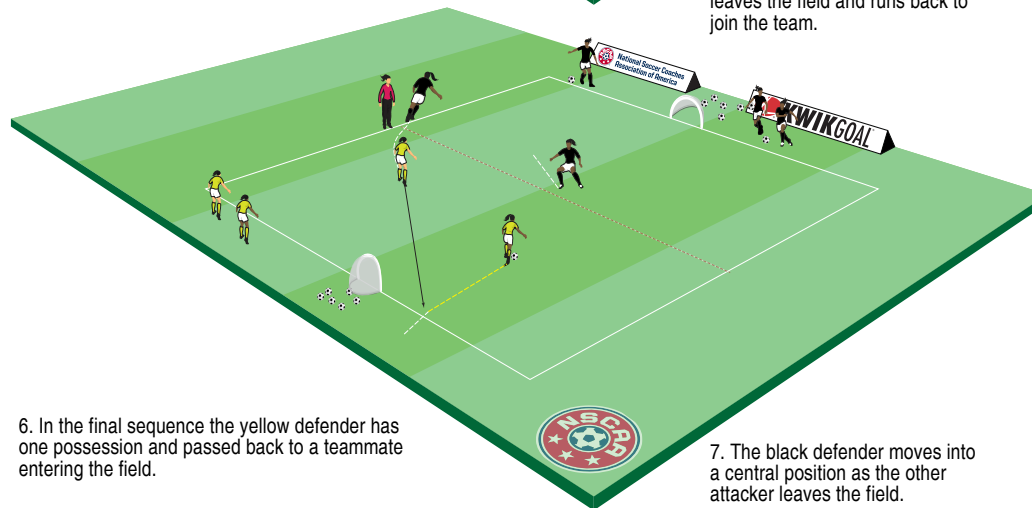


2. 2 yellow players take the field and attack 1 black defender.



3. The defender starts the activity in the defensive half of the field.

4. In the second diagram the yellow players combine to score. Immediately 2 new black players enter the field with a ball and attack the yellow defender.



5. The yellow attacker who scored leaves the field and runs back to join the team.

6. In the final sequence the yellow defender has one possession and passed back to a teammate entering the field.

7. The black defender moves into a central position as the other attacker leaves the field.

Why use it?

This is fast paced and continuous activity creating a full game like environment. Focus on communication, distance and angles of the pressure defender. Working hard to win the ball back and then giving it right back to the other team is a common challenge for coaches. This activity raises the importance of keeping the ball after winning it.

Set up

The set up for this activity is a 20x20 yards area with 2 mini goals placed along 2 sides. A line of cones are used to split the field into 2 zones. 5 players start on each team and the coach stands on the sideline to view the action. Each team should collect and maintain a good supply of balls behind each goal to allow the game to flow continuously.

How to play

The focus of the activity is to work on individual defending, with particular emphasis on applying pressure to the ball carrier. 2 players from the attacking team start the game against 1 defender. The attackers must attempt to beat the defender and score in the mini goal. If the defender wins possession a new teammate joins the defender and an attacking player leaves the field to create a 2v1 in the opposite direction. If the defender manages to 'stop' the attack and retains possession of the ball, the defender must pass backwards to a teammate entering the field from the end line. A backwards pass provides time for one defender to retreat into a good position and the other player to leave the field. It also reinforces with the players that a pass does not always need to be played forward. If a goal is scored or the ball leaves the field, a new attacker joins from the end line dribbling or passing the ball.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: In a transitional moment where the team has lost possession of the ball, the coach should help players to make good decisions and quickly assess the danger. In this activity the defender must be encouraged to run back into the defensive half of the field whilst facing the ball. Once the defender has minimized the risk from a long shot, the defender can then start to close down space and apply pressure on the ball.

Coaching Tips: It is important for the coach to manage different variables increasing the likelihood of success. In this situation the coach creates zones, enforces a back pass by the attackers and insists on the defender retreating to the defensive zone in an effort to highlight the main defensive theme.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Lengthen the field by 5-7 yards to give the defender more time to recover. If the defender is getting beaten regularly add a 2nd defender.

More Challenging: Lift the restriction of the back pass before commencing the attack. This change will speed up play and result in the defender having to move with greater urgency.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual defending - pressure and patience, short passing and transition.

Top 3 Competencies: 1v1 defending, support and dribbling.

DEFENSIVE STOP WITH ATTACKING TRANSITION - PHASE

Why use it?

In this phase of play activity we continue the theme of creating a defensive stop and transitioning into an immediate attack. The game is played on a modified 4v4 field with a full complement of players on both teams.

Set up

This activity is played on a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards. An end zone is created at both ends of the field approximately 4 yards in depth and stretching the width of the field. A line of cones is placed 3 yards from each side line to narrow the field to begin the activity. The coach starts on the side line with a large supply of balls. One player from each team starts in an end zone and in the center play 3v3.

How to play

The coach starts play with a pass to either team in the center of the area. The attacking objective is to pass to the target player to score a point. The focus of this session is defending and both teams must attempt to win possession and transition with a counter attack to the other target player. Cones placed inside the sideline reduce the available space and consequently limit the amount of space the defenders have to cover. The defensive objective is to force a turnover of the ball by working on individual pressure and in pairs as 'pressure' and 'cover' defenders. As the defenders start to experience success, lift the cones to provide the attackers with more space.

Coaching notes

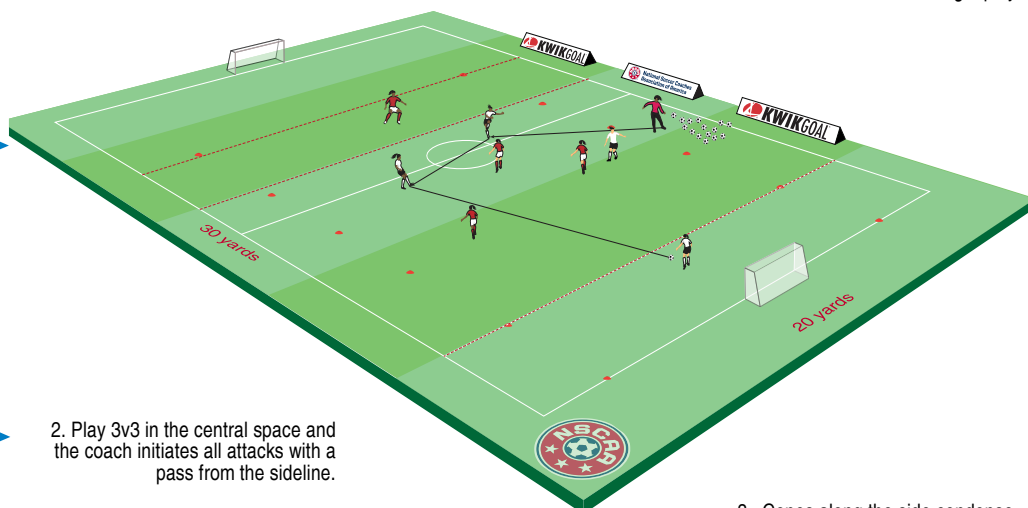
Coaching Objectives: When the defending team wins possession encourage the team losing possession to attempt to win the ball back. A pass back to the target player can alleviate pressure and provide the attacking team with controlled possession. Sometimes the players can pass directly to the target and in other situations the players can combine with another teammate before playing to the target. **Coaching Tip:** The quick transition from attack to defense necessitates clear communication between the defenders.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Do not play continuously. After an attempt to score by one team, stop the play and teams set up again, switching offensive and defensive roles. Slow down the passing by the attackers - add a minimum touch restriction. This will enable the defenders to move into position before having to move again. The coach could also make the width of activity smaller, creating compactness to benefit the defenders.

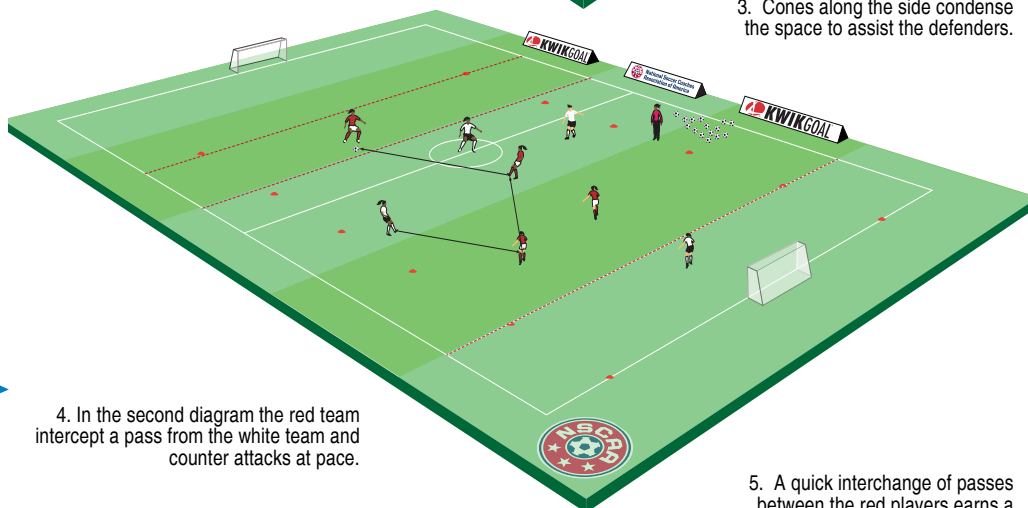
More Challenging: Limiting touches for the attackers will speed up the play, forcing defenders to think and move more quickly. The coach can also widen the field.

1. A player from each team starts in an end zone as a target player.



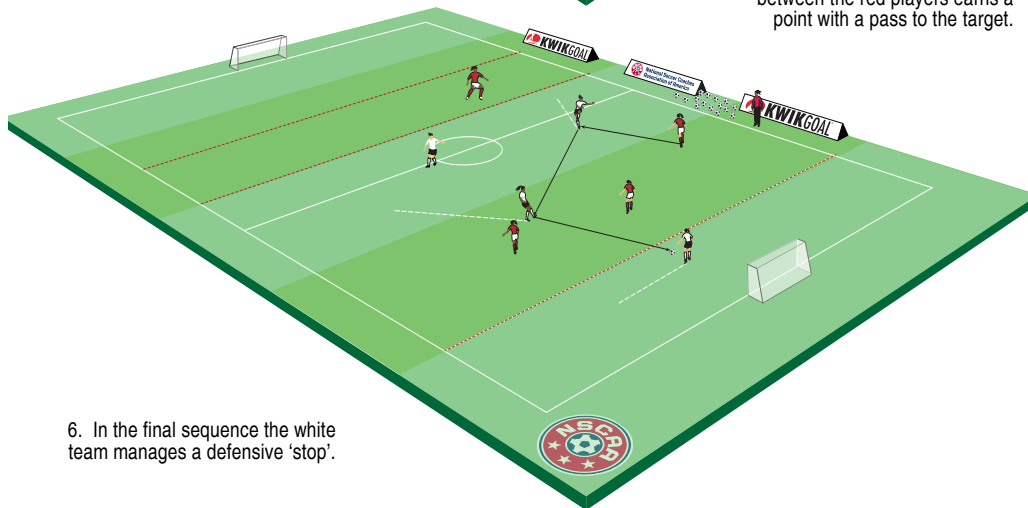
2. Play 3v3 in the central space and the coach initiates all attacks with a pass from the sideline.

3. Cones along the side condense the space to assist the defenders.



4. In the second diagram the red team intercept a pass from the white team and counter attacks at pace.

5. A quick interchange of passes between the red players earns a point with a pass to the target.



6. In the final sequence the white team manages a defensive 'stop'.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

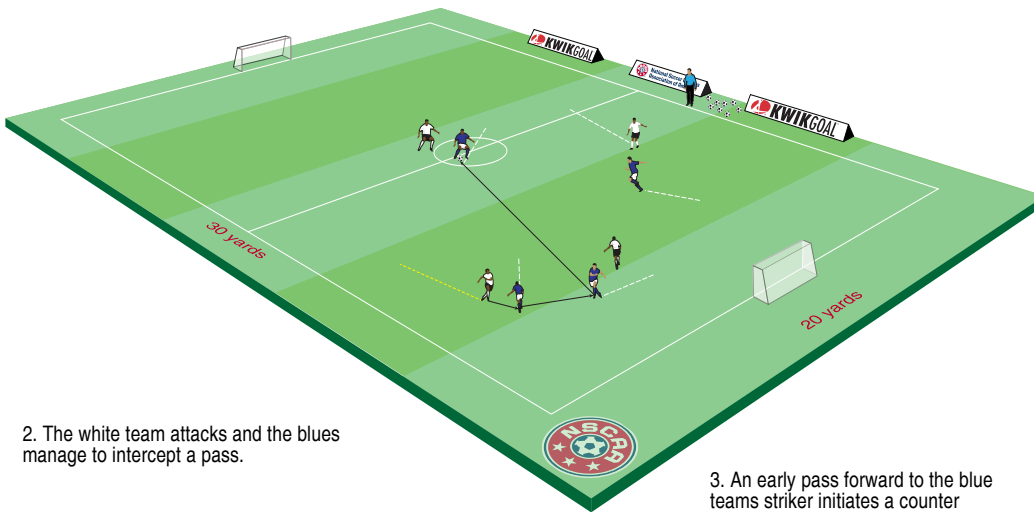
Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual defending - pressure and patience, pairs defending - pressure/cover and transition.
Top 3 Competencies: 1v1 defending, support and dribbling.

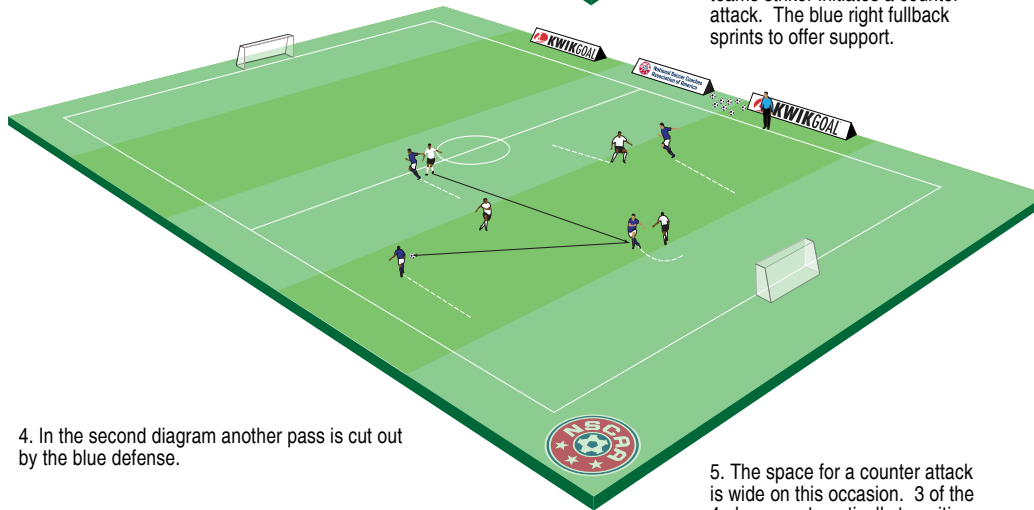
DEFENSIVE STOP WITH ATTACKING TRANSITION - THE GAME

1. 4v4 on a full field. The coach stands on the sideline with the balls.



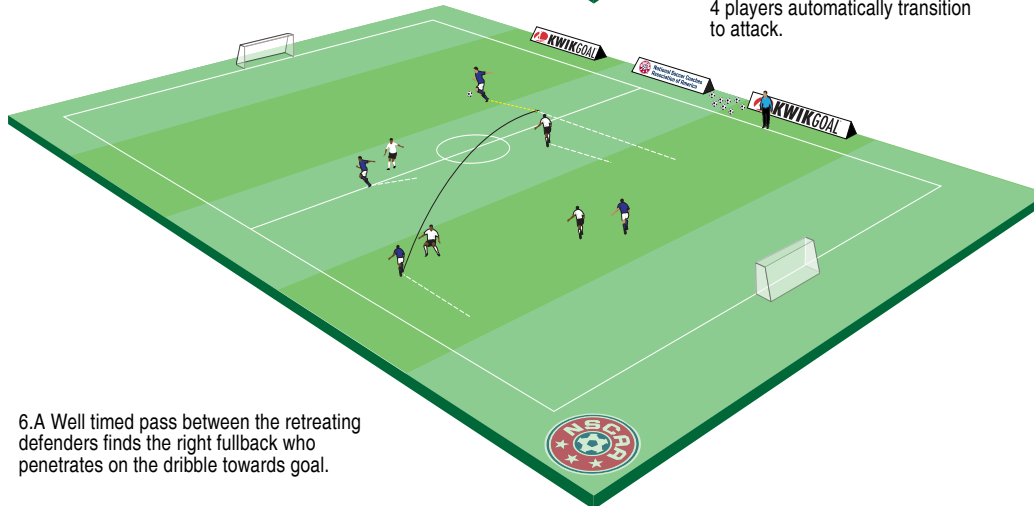
2. The white team attacks and the blues manage to intercept a pass.

3. An early pass forward to the blue teams striker initiates a counter attack. The blue right fullback sprints to offer support.



4. In the second diagram another pass is cut out by the blue defense.

5. The space for a counter attack is wide on this occasion. 3 of the 4 players automatically transition to attack.



6. A Well timed pass between the retreating defenders finds the right fullback who penetrates on the dribble towards goal.

Why use it?

A team without the ball will not be able to win so this game teaches teams how to move together to press the opposition all over the pitch and force a mistake.

Set up

This activity is played on a 4v4 field measuring 30x20 yards and two appropriate size goals are at each end. 2 teams of 4 players start in the coaches preferred formations. In this example the white team is set up in a diamond 0-1-2-1 and the blue team in 0-3-1. Balls can be placed next to the goals and/or the halfway line so the coach can initiate a restart from the goal line.

How to play

Both teams of 4 players attempt to score in the opponents goal. The 4v4 environment is excellent to teach young players to press and cover. Without a goalkeeper as the last line of defense, the players must make decisions whether to press high and attempt to win possession or drop back and protect the goal. All 4 players must work hard to deny space, cover and support their teammates. When a team successfully wins possession, they should spread out to make defending more difficult.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Recovery runs can now be addressed when the ball gets behind the defenders.

Coaching Tips: Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served; attempting to arrive as or before the receiver's first touch. Defenders should be taught to adopt an angle of approach that denies options and protects vulnerable areas (opponents, goal, passing lanes, etc.)

How to modify

Less Challenging: Require an attacking player or two to remain in their half of the field when transitioning to the attack. This condition will give the defenders more time to organize and less space to cover. A similar result can be achieved by insisting the defending team retreats to halfway or the attacking team must pass back to the central defender before advancing forward.

More Challenging: Give the defensive players 5 seconds to apply pressure or the opposition wins a point.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3 and 4 - 6-14 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 themes: Defending positioning - pressure and cover, Defending as an individual, in pairs and small groups.

Top 3 competencies: Defensive stance, applying defensive pressure and communication.