



National Soccer Coaches
Association of America

SMALL-SIDED GAMES: 7v7

Excerpts from the NSCAA Special Topics Diploma Manual



4v2 TO 4v4 ATTACKING WIDTH - FUNCTIONAL

Why use it?

Creating space in attack can be achieved with a combination of player movement, dribbling penetration and intelligent passing. Attackers are encouraged in this activity to utilize the available width and create opportunities to play 'around' the defenders.

Set up

The set up is 35x30 yards with two cone goals located at both end of the field approximately 5 yards from the center. A good supply of balls are placed just outside the 4 corners of the area and the coach observes from the sideline. Commence the activity with a 4v2 and progress to 4v4.

How to play

The team with 4 players starts with one of the players collecting a ball from a pile in a corner. The player on the ball dribbles into the area and the game is live. The objective for both teams is to score through the opponent's cone goals. As a consequence of the goal location, it is likely the 2 defenders will drop deep and become compact around the goals allowing the attackers time and space. Providing the defenders with an attacking objective is important to 'draw' the defenders out to the ball carrier. Using the full width of the field the attacking team should attempt to move the ball quickly and attack around the outside of the defenders. If the defenders win possession they must counter attack and attempt to score at the other end. The activity is played in 8x2 minute intervals, with a 30-60 second break in between each interval. During intervals 1-4 the goals have different point values - 1 point for passing through the left goal and 2 points for dribbling through the right goal. For intervals 4-8, the coach imposes a rule that a player receiving a ball with back-to-goal cannot turn.

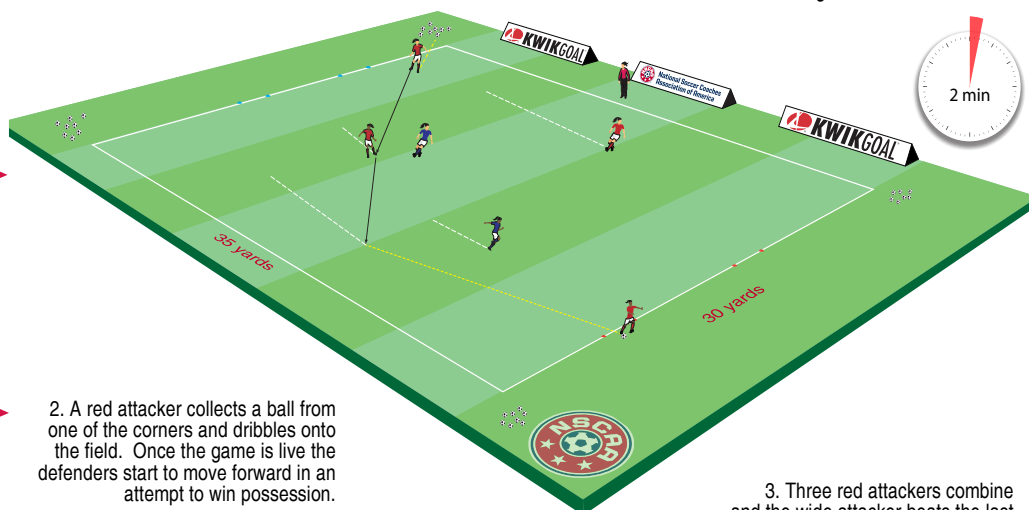
Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Creating space as an individual and team is the main theme of the activity. Wide players should move to the perimeter and open their bodies on receipt of the ball. The central attacker should move 'high' up the field to create depth and height. **Coaching Tip:** Positioning balls in the corners allows the attacking team to restart the game and establish an attacking tempo. On occasions a quick restart may catch the defenders in transition.

How to modify

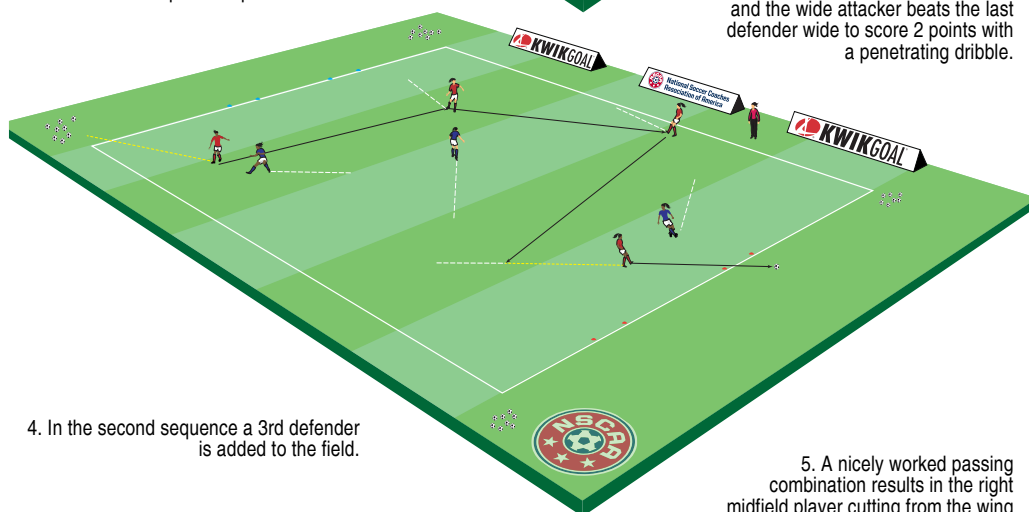
Less Challenging: Commence the activity with a numerical advantage for the attacking team. Create more space by moving the boundaries of the area wider. **More Challenging:** Add minimum touch restrictions for the attackers to slow down the attack and allow the defenders to recover. Also impose the 'no turn' rule to force the striker to play 'high'.

1. The red team attack with 4 players against the 2 blue defenders.



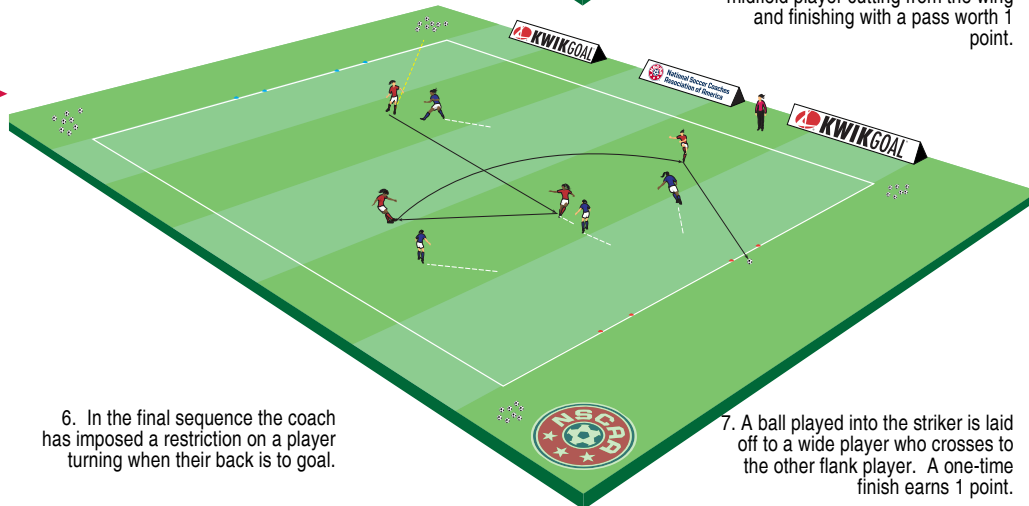
2. A red attacker collects a ball from one of the corners and dribbles onto the field. Once the game is live the defenders start to move forward in an attempt to win possession.

3. Three red attackers combine and the wide attacker beats the last defender wide to score 2 points with a penetrating dribble.



4. In the second sequence a 3rd defender is added to the field.

5. A nicely worked passing combination results in the right midfield player cutting from the wing and finishing with a pass worth 1 point.



6. In the final sequence the coach has imposed a restriction on a player turning when their back is to goal.

7. A ball played into the striker is laid off to a wide player who crosses to the other flank player. A one-time finish earns 1 point.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, creating space as an individual/team and defending (pressure and cover).

Top 3 Competencies: 1v1 attacking, passing over short/medium distances and movement off the ball.

5v3 TO 5v6 ATTACKING WIDTH - PHASE OF PLAY

1. The white team attacks the full size goal on a 7v7 field.



Why use it?

This is a phase of play activity involving midfield and forward players on the attacking team. The attacking focus is to build up play through 2 lines of the team by playing around the defenders.

Set up

The set up is 47x30 yards full 7v7 field. Played in approximately two thirds of the field, a large supply of balls are placed at one end of the field close to the restraining line. 2 small goals are set up as counter attacking options for the defending team midway between the restraining line and halfway and an appropriate size goal is at the other end. The restraining line, 16 yards from the end line separates 2 zones of the field. In the zone closest to the small goals commence with 4v1 in favor of the attackers and in the attacking zone play 1 attacker against a defender and a goalkeeper.

How to play

One of the attackers collects a ball from the pile and dribbles or passes to a teammate. Playing 4v1 should result in high passing success for the attackers. The attacking objective is to pass the ball to the striker and then for the midfield players to join into the attack. To begin the coach imposes a restriction on the defender in the attacking third - if a pass is made to the striker, the defender must permit the striker to receive the ball before playing high pressure. 2 midfield players are permitted to support the attacker once a pass is made to create a 3v2 overload. Play 4 intervals each 4 minutes in length. Intervals 1 & 2 - allow 2 attackers to join the striker, 3 - allow 2 defenders to recover, 4 - remove zonal restrictions and allow defenders to deny the pass.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Stress the importance of stretching the defenders wide and high to create more space.

Coaching Tip: Imposing a condition preventing a defender denying a pass to the striker ensures the defender in the other half will 'press' the ball in an attempt to win possession before the pass is made.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Start with patterns of play and remove the defender.
More Challenging: Add more defenders and remove all restrictions on the defenders.

2. The black team attempt to win possession and counter attack into 2 small goals.

3. In diagram 1, the white team combine to play into the strikers feet.

4. As play progresses, 2 white players continue into the attacking zone and create a 3v2 overload. A cross is finished on the volley by the striker.

5. The defenders are stretched by the decision of the white team to play around the sides of the defense.

6. In the final sequence the white team has worked the ball well from one side of the field to the other.

7. With 3 more defenders added space is tight, but a pin-point cross finds the striker who finishes with a volley.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, creating space as an individual/team and defending (pressure and cover).

Top 3 Competencies: 1v1 attacking, passing over short/medium distances and movement off the ball.

7v7 ATTACKING WIDTH - GAME

Why use it?

The third activity in the 'creating space series' is played on a full 7v7 field with both teams at full strength. Players must attempt to build up play from the goalkeeper to the striker whilst maintaining width, depth and height of the attack.

Set up

The set up is full 7v7 field with an appropriate size goal at both ends. The restraining lines at both ends are used to split the field into 3 zones. Play 3v1 in favor of the defenders in the defending end zones and 3v3 in the middle zone. The coach observes from the sideline and is supported by 2 assistants monitoring offside.

How to play

To begin the activity all players are restricted to the zones they start in. However, if an attacking player is successful in passing to the striker in the end zone that player is permitted to join the attack. The objective for both teams is to score in the opponent's goal. With a numerical advantage in the defense end, the attacking team should attempt to build-up play around the 'outside' of the defensive team. To increase the likelihood of the attack reaching the striker, the coach can restrict the defenders from denying a pass from the middle zone. Play 6 intervals each lasting 3 minutes. Intervals 1 and 2 maintain zone restrictions. Intervals allow 1-2 players to move freely between zones and Intervals 5 and 6 remove all restrictions.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: A player's body position as the ball is travelling will often determine the choices available once the ball arrives. An 'open' body position maximizes a player's options and increases a player's ability to scan the field. A pass made into the path of a player can permit the attacker to penetrate into space with one touch. Moving to the sideline further reduces the amount of 'dead space' and typically creates more time for decision making.

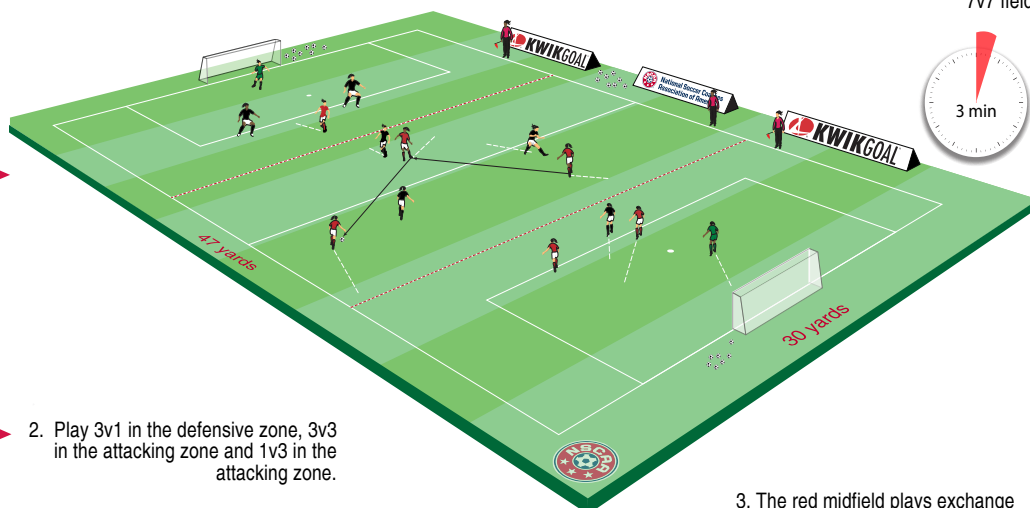
Coaching Tip: If the players are unsuccessful in playing the ball 'around' the other team, consider adding some cones to create a wide channel on one or both sides. Allow only attacking players to enter the wide areas to provide some time and space for the attack to develop.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Commence the activity with a numerical advantage for the attacking team. Allow the attacking team only to move freely between zones. Add wide channels to encourage players to get wide.

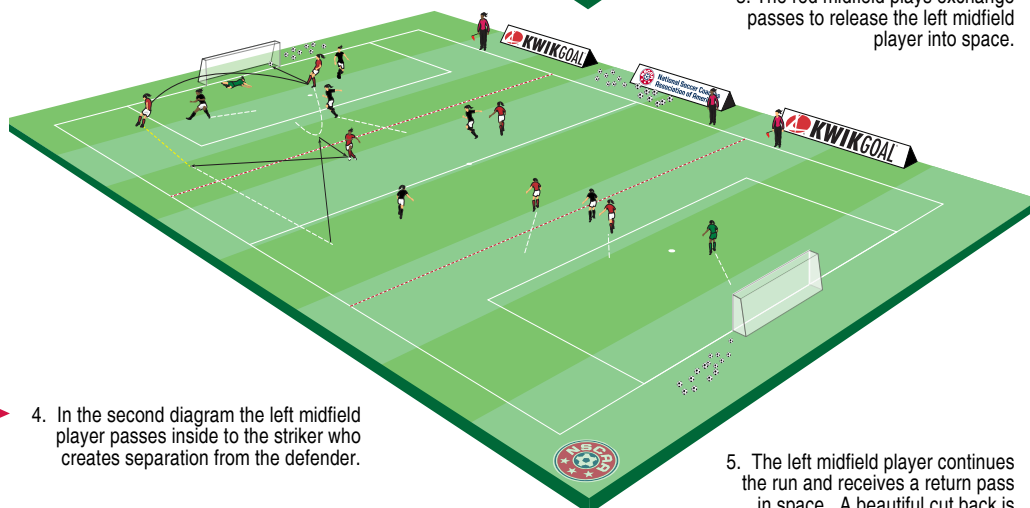
More Challenging: Play with both teams at full strength with no restrictions.

1. The Red team has position against the black team in a 7v7 game on a full 7v7 field.



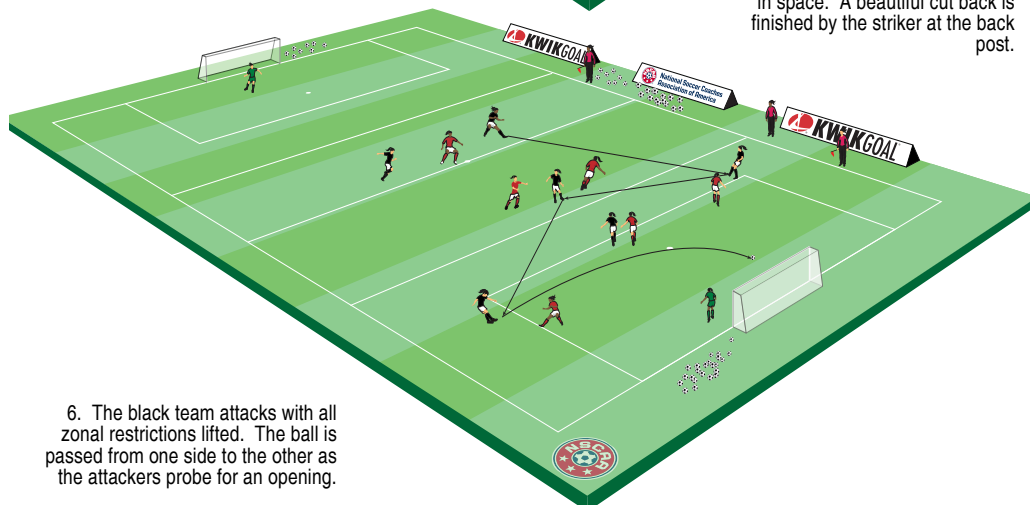
2. Play 3v1 in the defensive zone, 3v3 in the attacking zone and 1v3 in the attacking zone.

3. The red midfield plays exchange passes to release the left midfield player into space.



4. In the second diagram the left midfield player passes inside to the striker who creates separation from the defender.

5. The left midfield player continues the run and receives a return pass in space. A beautiful cut back is finished by the striker at the back post.



6. The black team attacks with all zonal restrictions lifted. The ball is passed from one side to the other as the attackers probe for an opening.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

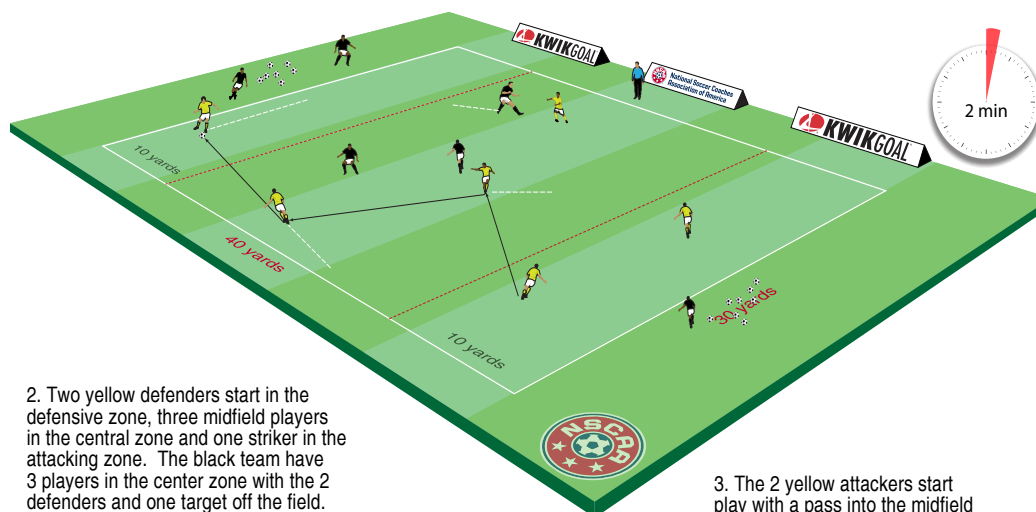
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, creating space as an individual/team and defending (pressure and cover).

Top 3 Competencies: 1v1 attacking, passing over short/medium distances and movement off the ball.

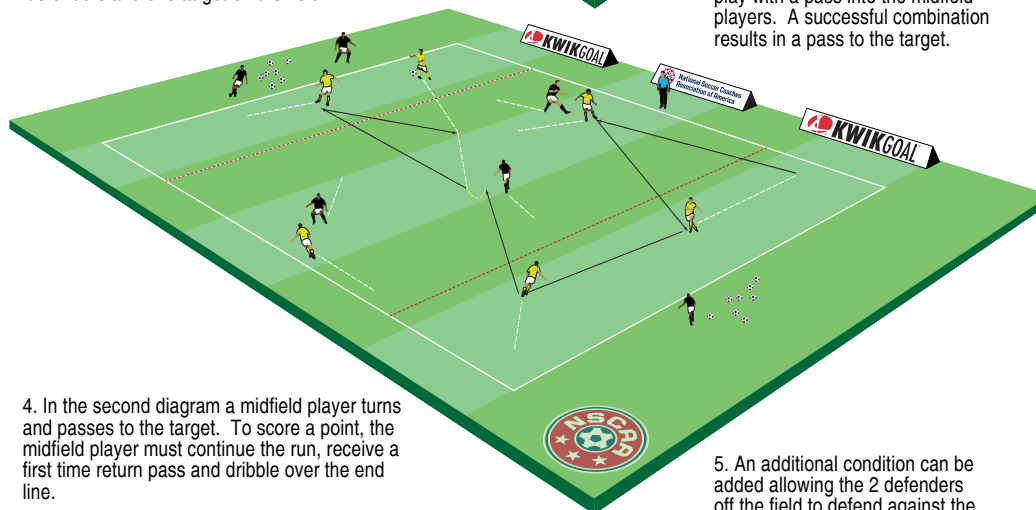
PENETRATION 6v3 TO 6v6 - FUNCTIONAL

1. The yellow team are attacking the black team.



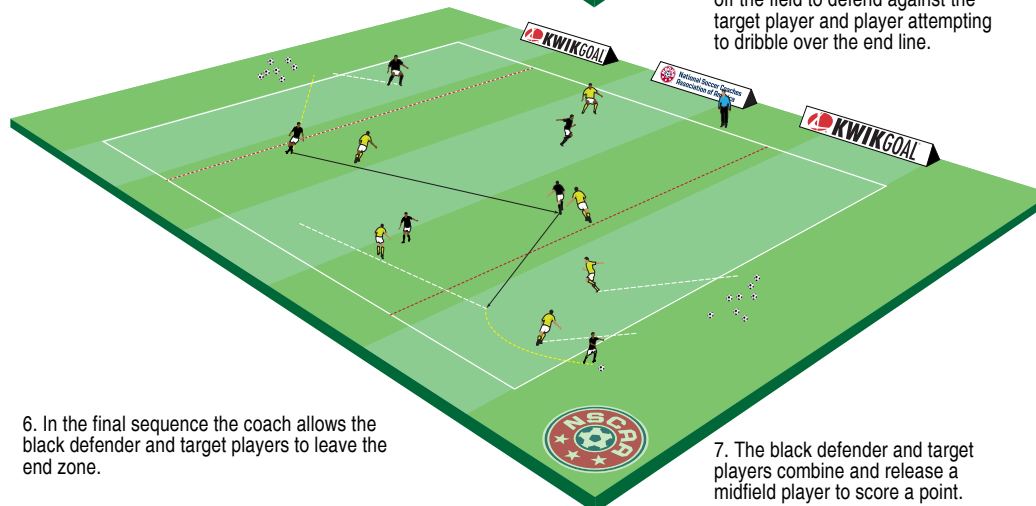
2. Two yellow defenders start in the defensive zone, three midfield players in the central zone and one striker in the attacking zone. The black team have 3 players in the center zone with the 2 defenders and one target off the field.

3. The 2 yellow attackers start play with a pass into the midfield players. A successful combination results in a pass to the target.



4. In the second diagram a midfield player turns and passes to the target. To score a point, the midfield player must continue the run, receive a first time return pass and dribble over the end line.

5. An additional condition can be added allowing the 2 defenders off the field to defend against the target player and player attempting to dribble over the end line.



6. In the final sequence the coach allows the black defender and target players to leave the end zone.

7. The black defender and target players combine and release a midfield player to score a point.

Why use it?

The players will enjoy this fast paced, back and forth activity focusing on penetration and possession. The coach can introduce a number of variations to increase the complexity and challenge as players become more competent.

Set up

The set up is 40x30 yards rectangle with a 10x30 yards end zone at each end of the area. A supply of balls is located outside the 2 end zones and the coach stands on the sideline to observe. 2 teams of 6 players attempt to play to a target player to score a point. The team in possession of the ball starts with 2 players in the defending end zone, 3 players in the middle zone and 1 target in the attacking end zone. The team without possession has a similar set up, although the players in the end zones must step out of the end zone when the opponent has the ball.

How to play

The coach determines which team has possession and one of the defending players collects a ball from the pile outside the end zone. At the start, all the players must remain in the zone in which they started. The team with possession has a 6v3 numerical advantage. The attacking objective is to play around, through or over the central defenders and play the ball to the target player. If the defending team is able to intercept the ball, the players in the end zone quickly transition, with one team entering and one team leaving the area. Each time a pass is made to the target player the team earns a point. Play is restarted with the 2 defenders after a successful pass is made to the target - teams only attack in one direction. As the game progresses, the coach can add additional conditions to challenge the attacking players.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Attacking players must work to create space with quick ball movement and runs off the ball. Faced with a compact defense the attackers should seek to play 'around' the outside. The target player should be encouraged to move along the end zone.

Coaching Tip: Zones are useful for a coach to provide time and space for decision making.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Start with pattern play.

More Challenging: Make the area narrower and allow players to leave the zones.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, possession and creating space as an individual/team.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing over short/medium distances, communication and movement off the ball.

PENETRATION 5v4 THROUGH, AROUND OR OVER - PHASE

Why use it?

This is a phase of play activity involving three lines of the team, namely, defense, midfield and forwards. The attacking team must use a numerical advantage to score in three goals with varying points value.

Set up

The set up is a 40x30 yards area with 3 mini goals placed along the end line at each end. One goal is in the center of the line and the other 2 wide goals are 4 yards from the sideline. The team with possession has a numerical 5v4 advantage. The coach observes from the sideline.

How to play

The primary objective is for the team in possession of the ball to determine the best strategy to score goals. To add an extra degree of challenge the goals are worth different points values. The attacking team should seek to maximize the size of the area sending players wide, high and deep. The options are to play around the 'edges' and penetrate wide, pass down the seams between defenders and/or play over the defense into space vacated behind. If the defenders win possession a player from the attacking team steps off the field and a player for the defending team steps on to create a 5v4. Play 6 intervals each lasting 2 minutes. Intervals 1-2 maintain 5v4 numerical advantage. Intervals 3-4 add an extra defender to create 5v5 and intervals 5-6 make the central goal worth 3 points and the outside goals worth 1 point.

Coaching notes

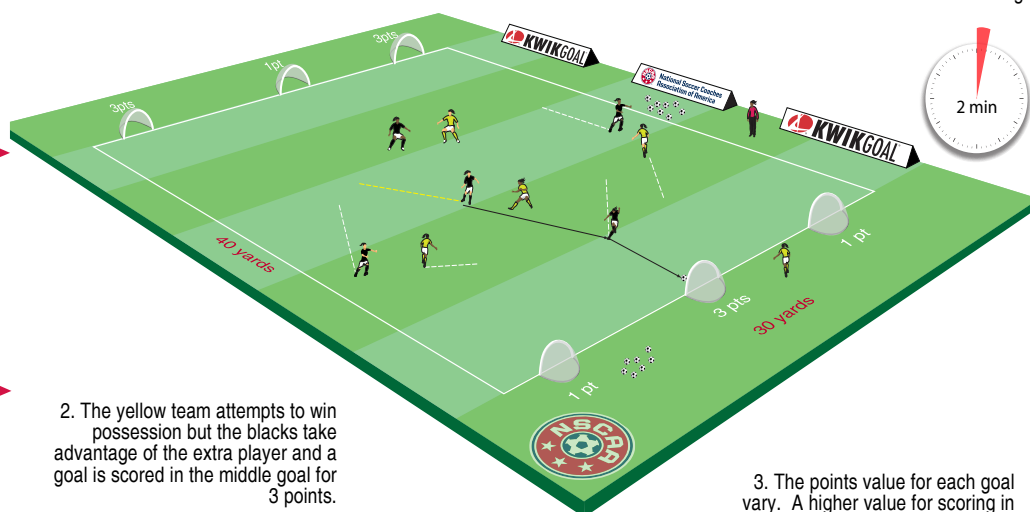
Coaching Objectives: Assist players to read the visual cues that determine which is the best strategy to exploit weaknesses in the defense. With only 4 players, the defense is outnumbered so the attackers must communicate effectively to coordinate ball and player movements.

Coaching Tip: Providing a points system will help the coach to direct a particular game strategy. For example, telling the players that a goal scored in a wide goal is worth 3 points and a goal scored in the center is worth 1 point should lead to the attackers spreading play wide.

How to modify

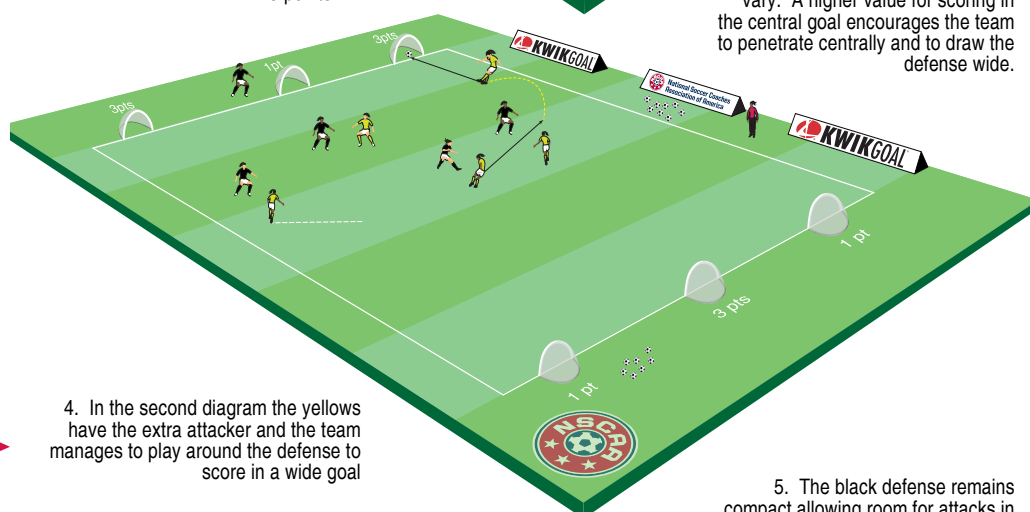
Less Challenging: Reduce the number of defenders further. The coach can also add a restraining line to prevent the defenders pushing too high, wide or dropping too deep.
More Challenging: Change the values of the goals and only inform the attacking team.

1. The black team has possession and a numerical 5v4 advantage.



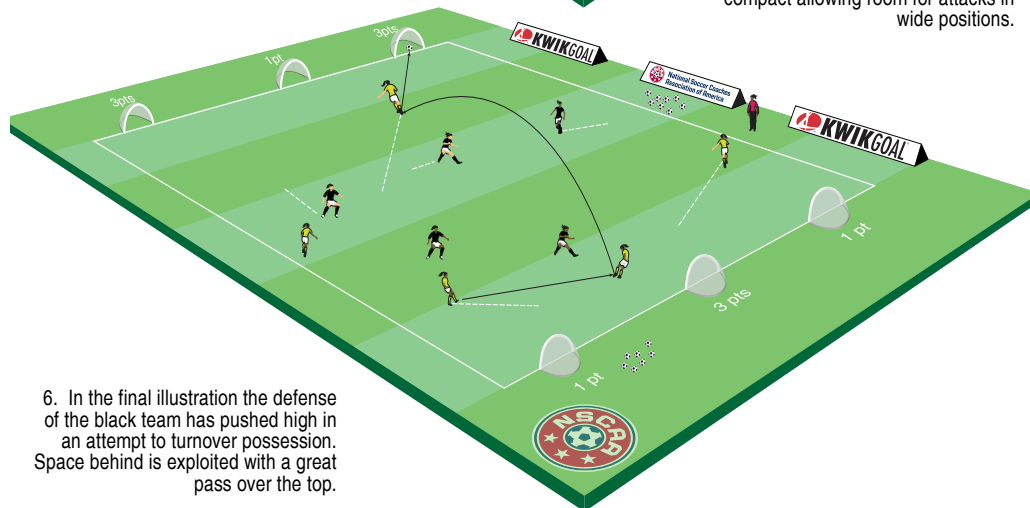
2. The yellow team attempts to win possession but the blacks take advantage of the extra player and a goal is scored in the middle goal for 3 points.

3. The points value for each goal vary. A higher value for scoring in the central goal encourages the team to penetrate centrally and to draw the defense wide.



4. In the second diagram the yellows have the extra attacker and the team manages to play around the defense to score in a wide goal

5. The black defense remains compact allowing room for attacks in wide positions.



6. In the final illustration the defense of the black team has pushed high in an attempt to turnover possession. Space behind is exploited with a great pass over the top.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

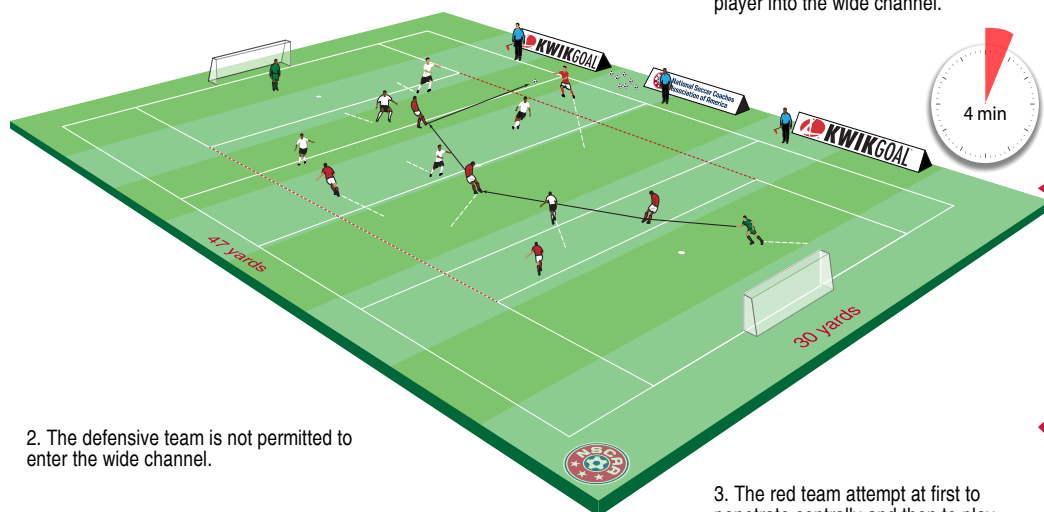
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, possession and creating space as an individual/team.

Top 3 Competencies: Passing over short/medium distances, communication and movement off the ball.

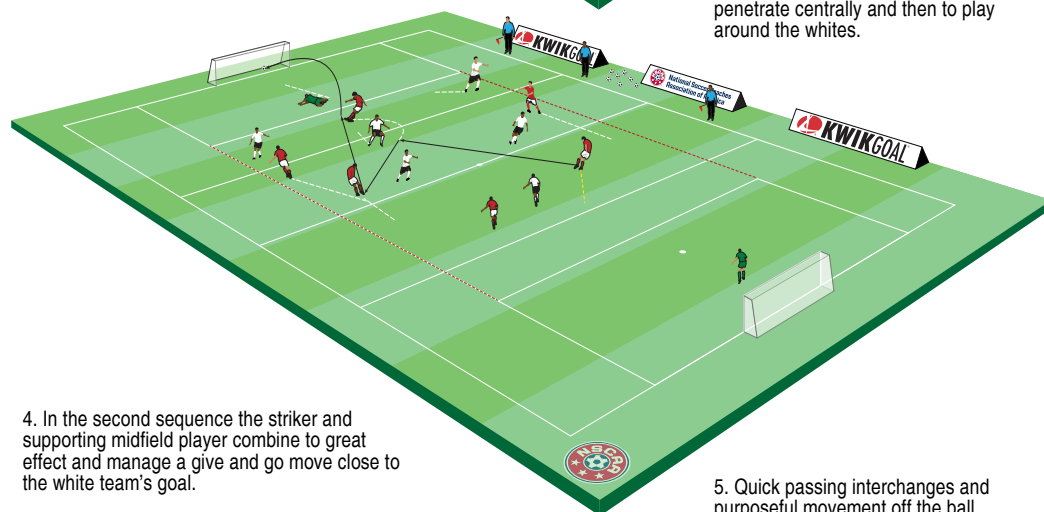
PENETRATION 7v7 THROUGH, AROUND OR OVER - GAME

1. The red team have possession and combine to release the right midfield player into the wide channel.



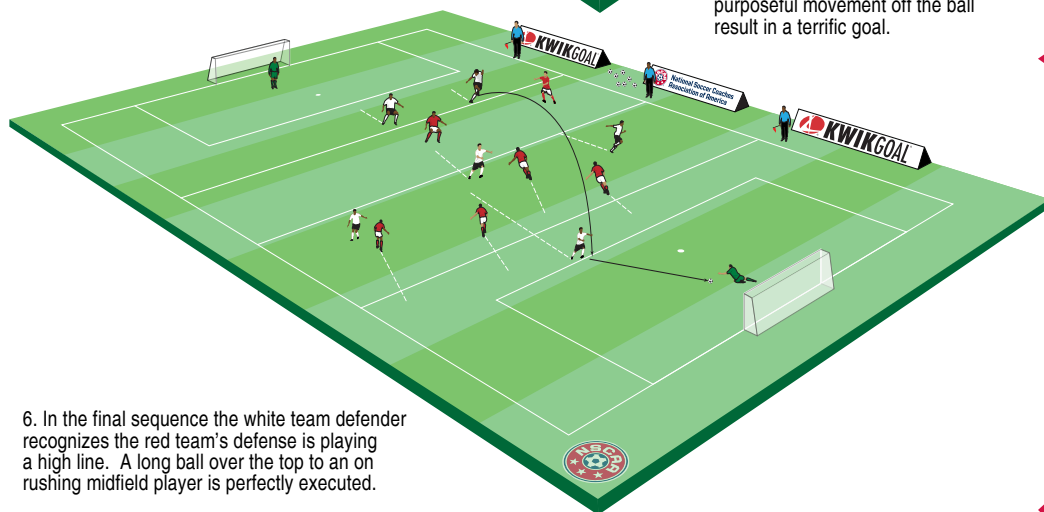
2. The defensive team is not permitted to enter the wide channel.

3. The red team attempt at first to penetrate centrally and then to play around the whites.



4. In the second sequence the striker and supporting midfield player combine to great effect and manage a give and go move close to the white team's goal.

5. Quick passing interchanges and purposeful movement off the ball result in a terrific goal.



6. In the final sequence the white team defender recognizes the red team's defense is playing a high line. A long ball over the top to an on-rushing midfielder is perfectly executed.

Why use it?

This activity emphasizes wide play and the opportunity to deliver crosses into the opponent's penalty area. The coach can simply modify the challenge by increasing or decreasing the magnitude of defensive pressure.

Set up

The set up is full 7v7 field with an appropriate size goal at both ends. A wide channel is marked on both sides of the field with cones. The coach observes from the sideline and is supported by 2 assistants monitoring offside.

How to play

Commence the game playing with the typical rules for this 7v7 game format. The objective is for each team to penetrate the opponent's defense by playing 'around', 'through' or 'over'. The attacking channels emphasize the importance of width and provide the attacking team with a goal of stretching the defense wide. Allow only attacking players to enter the channels to begin as the ball is played. It is likely the defending team will be stretched horizontally to press the attacking team's width and this will create space to play into the central midfield players and striker. To highlight the attacking role of the center midfield player, the coach can award 2 points for a goal scored when the central player is involved in the attack. This change of focus will also raise the importance of playing 'through' and between the seams of the defense.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Attacking players must work to create space with quick ball movement and runs off the ball. Faced with a compact defense the attackers should seek to play 'around' the outside.

Coaching Tip: On occasion, a wide channel may unintentionally result in unrealistic play, such as, slowing down for a measured cross without a threat of losing possession to a defender. To this end, the coach can add additional conditions such as an allowable time limit for an attacker with the ball or a touch limit inside the channel.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Reduce the number of defenders and maintain the channel restrictions in favor of the attackers.
More Challenging: Remove the wide channels and require a player to be included in all attacking sequences.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Passing technique, possession and creating space as an individual/team.
Top 3 Competencies: Passing over short/medium distances, communication and movement off the ball.

1v1 TO 2v2 PRESSURE AND COVER DEFENDING - FUNCTIONAL

Why use it?

This is an introductory activity to teach young players the role of the first or pressure defender. As the player becomes more proficient at defending, the coach can add an additional attacker and defender. This development enables the coach to also teach the role of the second or cover defender.

Set up

The set up is a 38x30 yards area separated into two adjacent fields 38x15 yards. Each field has 3 zones with the end zones 12 yards in length and the middle zone 14 yards in length. A supply of balls is placed outside the end line of each area to allow the players to restart the game continuously. On each field there are 4 players, 2 in the middle zone and 1 at each end acting as a server. The server must remain outside the area to begin the activity. The coach is on the sideline.

How to play

The focus of this activity is individual and pairs defending, although the activity will work equally well with an attacking theme. The objective for the attacking players is to score by dribbling over the end zone lines. The game commences with a pass from one of the servers to the feet of the attacker. The attacker must attempt to turn and dribble to the opposite end. The first defender must try and prevent the attacker turning and dribbling. In the event of an interception the defender should pass to the server to score a point. If the attacker is successful in beating the first defender in the middle zone, the server at the back of the end zone should come forward and try to deny the attacker dribbling across the back line. The first defender in the middle zone is not allowed to enter the end zone. If the defending player in the end zone successfully wins the ball the team of 2 should counter attack and attempt to score at the other end. Play 10 intervals each lasting 30 seconds. Intervals 1-4 play 1v1 and switch roles each interval. Intervals 5-7 allow the attacking team to have two players in middle zone to create a 2v1. If the defender in the middle wins the ball, the teammate joins in and the attacking team sends a player back to the end zone to create a 2v1 the other way. Intervals 8-10 play 2v2.

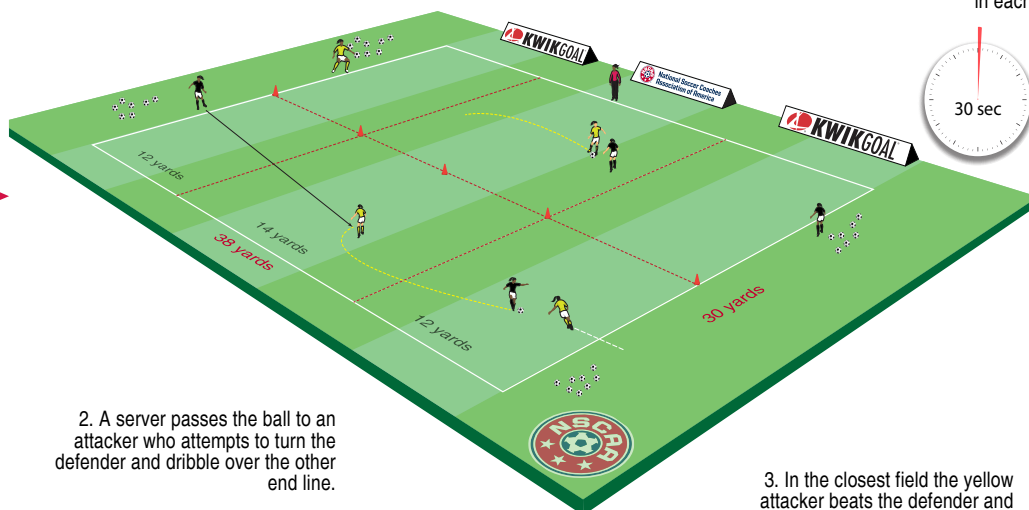
Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Teach the first defender to close space, lower body, side ways positioning and patience.
Coaching Tip: Time working on defending is well spent. Young players will often 'fly' into a challenge to win the ball and will be off balance.

How to modify

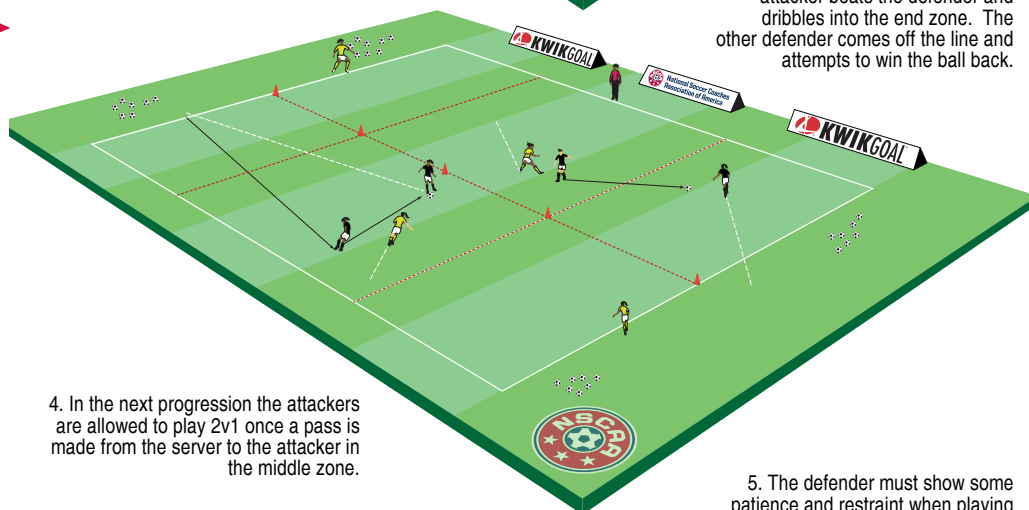
Less Challenging: Keep the activity 1v1 until the player has achieved some success.
More Challenging: Move to 2v1 in favor of the attackers and work on the defenders decision making.

1. Two similar size areas are set up adjacent to each other with 4 players in each.



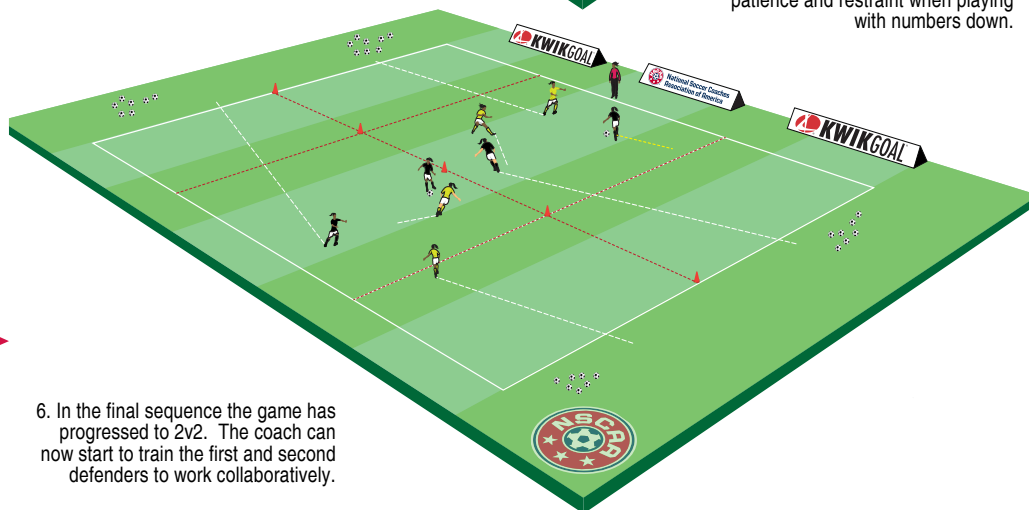
2. A server passes the ball to an attacker who attempts to turn the defender and dribble over the other end line.

3. In the closest field the yellow attacker beats the defender and dribbles into the end zone. The other defender comes off the line and attempts to win the ball back.



4. In the next progression the attackers are allowed to play 2v1 once a pass is made from the server to the attacker in the middle zone.

5. The defender must show some patience and restraint when playing with numbers down.



6. In the final sequence the game has progressed to 2v2. The coach can now start to train the first and second defenders to work collaboratively.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 - 6-18 year old players.

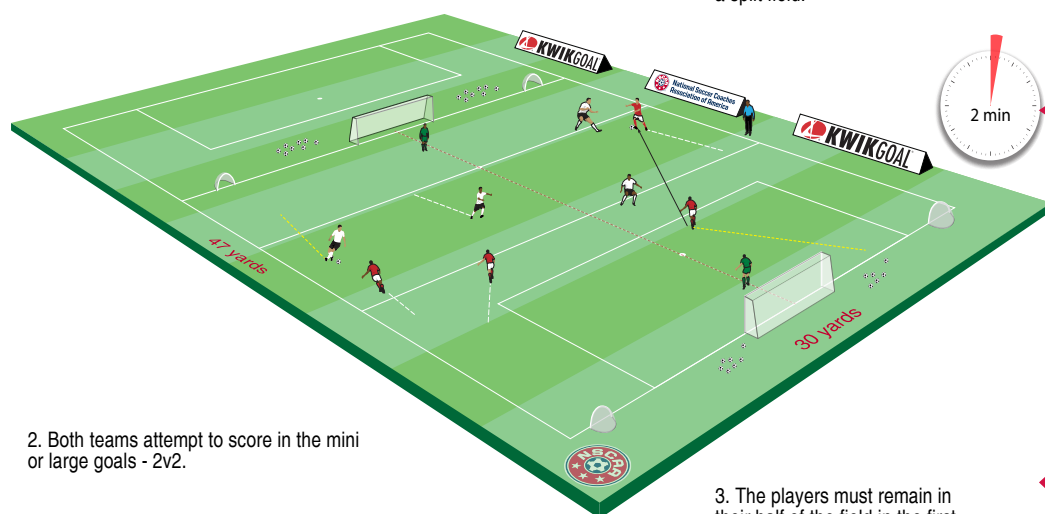
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual and pairs defending, 1v1 attacking and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending recovery.

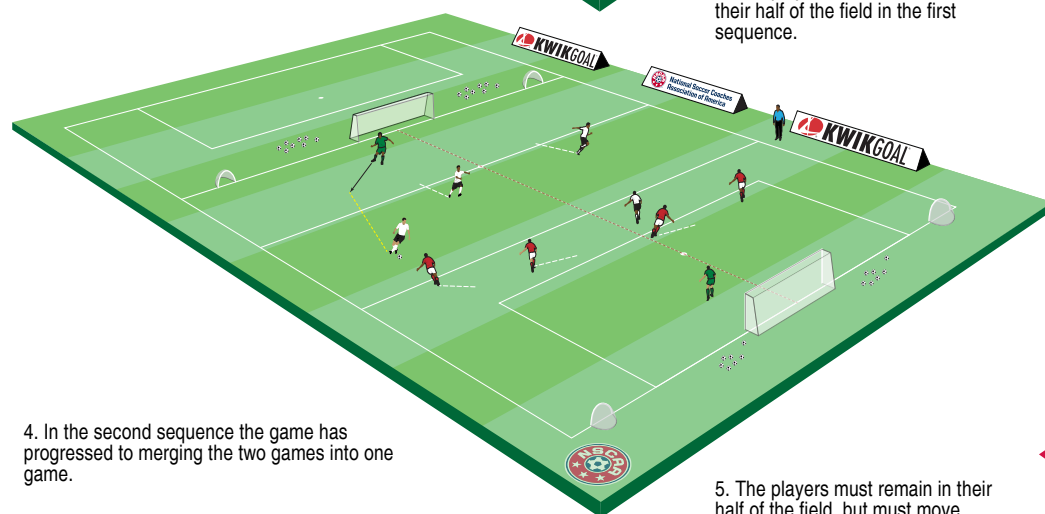
4v4 PRESSURE, COVER, BALANCE DEFENDING - PHASE

1. Two games are played currently on a split field.



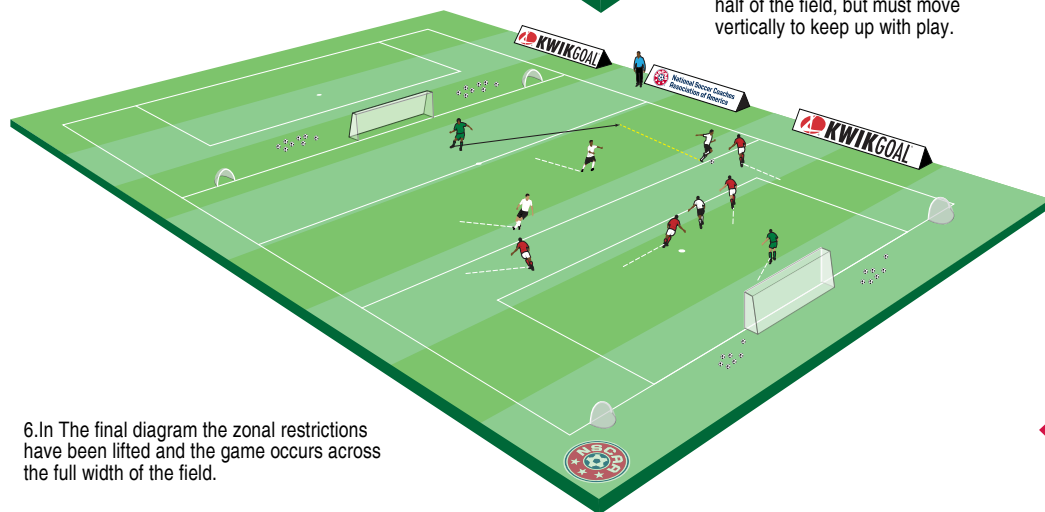
2. Both teams attempt to score in the mini or large goals - 2v2.

3. The players must remain in their half of the field in the first sequence.



4. In the second sequence the game has progressed to merging the two games into one game.

5. The players must remain in their half of the field, but must move vertically to keep up with play.



6. In the final diagram the zonal restrictions have been lifted and the game occurs across the full width of the field.

Why use it?

This activity continues the theme of pressure and cover defending with specific focus on defending in wide areas.

Set up

The set up is a 30x30 yards area played on a 7v7 field - use the restraining line at one end as the end line. The field is also divided into two to create a 'left' and 'right' field. On each end line are 2 mini goals close to the sidelines and a full size goal with a goalkeeper. On each side of the field play 2v2. A supply of balls is placed near each goal to allow the keepers to restart the game continuously. The coach observes from the sideline.

How to play

The focus of this activity is individual and pairs defending, although the activity will work equally well with an attacking theme. The objective for the attacking players is to score in either mini goals or large goal on one side of the field. The objective for the defending team is to win possession and counter attack to the other goals. Play 6 intervals each lasting 2 minutes. Intervals 1-2 play a game of 2v2 in each half of the field. Intervals 3-4 play with one ball but players are restricted to the side of the field in which they started. Intervals 5-6 remove the zonal restrictions and play 4v4 in the full width of the field.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Coaches can teach the roles of the first and second defender with particular emphasis on preventing the opponent from penetrating the defense. As the games are merged the coach can also introduce the role of the 3rd and 4th defenders in providing cover and balance.

Coaching Tip: Encourage the young defenders to apply pressure high enough up the field to prevent the opponent from entering shooting range. When the player has an opportunity to force the attacker away from goal they should apply high pressure. This is often sufficient for a young attacker to give up possession.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Start with 1v1 and progress to 2v2 once the defenders are experiencing success.

More Challenging: Progress by removing the zonal restrictions earlier in the session and impose a time restriction on the attack.

This condition will add urgency to the attack and will require on more intense effort from the defenders.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual and pairs defending, transition and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending recovery.

7v7 PRESSURE, COVER, BALANCE DEFENDING - GAME

Why use it?

A 7v7 game designed to teach the players to play high and low press defense as an individual and team. Working with the players to recognize visual cues and communication between teammates are key considerations.

Set up

The set up is full 7v7 field with an appropriate size goal at both ends. The field is separated at halfway into two zones. Around each goal is a 5 yards 'keeper only' zone. Play 7v7. The coach observes from the sideline and is supported by 2 assistants monitoring offside.

How to play

Each team is allowed 2 central midfield players to move freely between the 2 zones and all others are restricted to the zone they started in. The attacking objective is to pass the ball to the other team's goalkeeper, either on the ground or in the air. Goalkeepers are restricted to the 'keeper zone'. The goalkeeper earns a point for each ball they catch or collect clean. The primary objective for the defense is to prevent the attacking team from passing to the goalkeeper. Play 6 intervals each lasting 3 minutes. To encourage the defense to press early and high up the field, award the attacking team 3 points if the ball is passed to the goal keeper from the defending half. Award 1 point if the ball is played from the attacking half (Intervals 1-2). To encourage defenders to deny space in the attacking half reverse the scoring - 1 point if the ball is passed to the goalkeeper from the defending half and 3 points if the ball is played from the attacking half (Intervals 3-4). Remove all the restrictions for intervals 5-6 to see if the players can read the cues.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: The coach should encourage defenders to press the player in possession early and for the team to remain compact. Work with players to recognize the visual cues to determine if the player on the ball will play short or long.

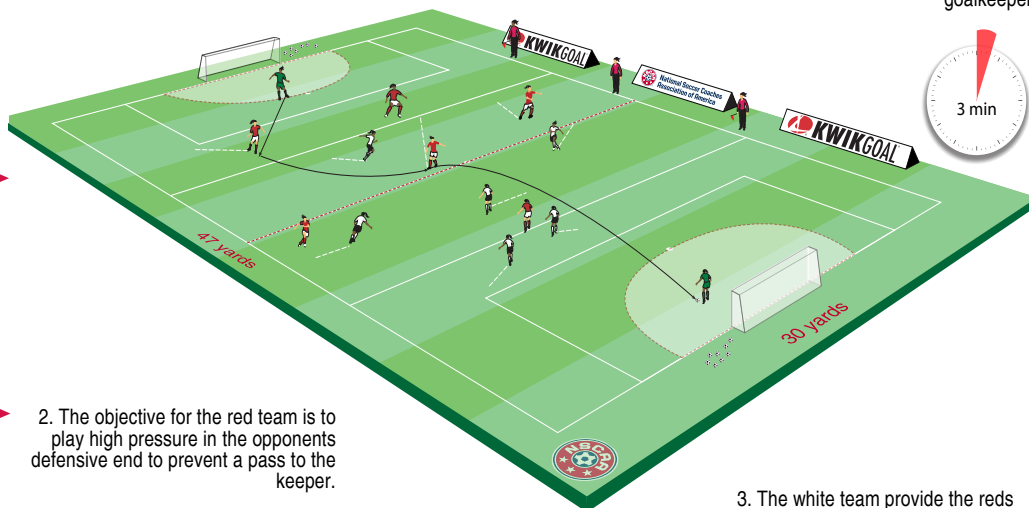
Coaching Tip: The coach can introduce a points system (as described above) to provide extra emphasis on the type of strategy the coach wants to see employed. Introduce the idea of defending early or later.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Reduce the number of attacking players and reduce the size of the field.

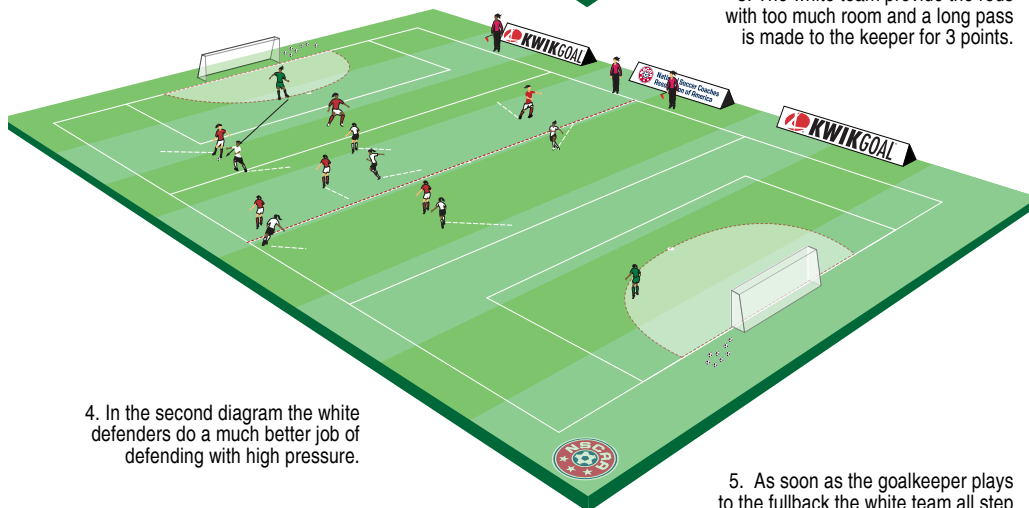
More Challenging: Use the larger penalty box as the 'keeper zone' and play with full 7v7 teams.

1. The Red team attacks the white team attempting to pass to the white team's goalkeeper.



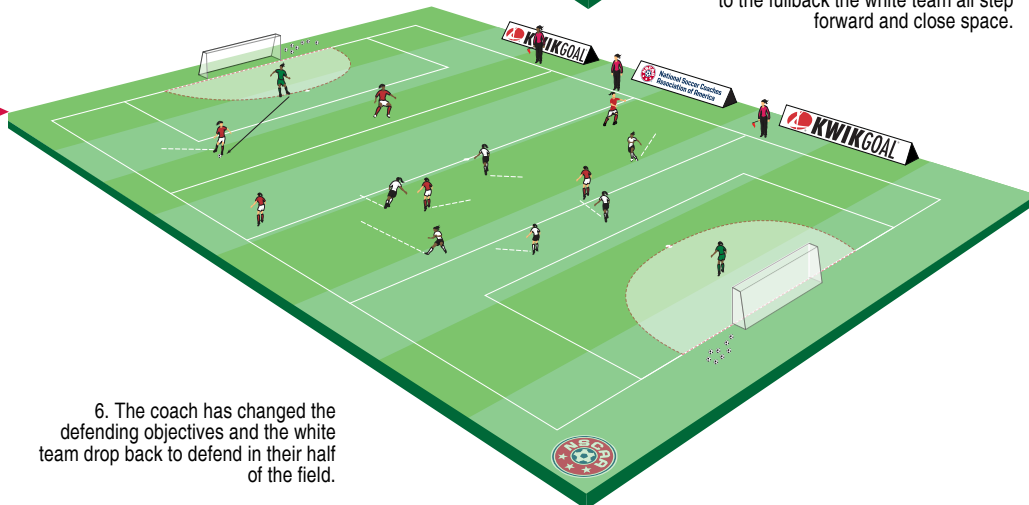
2. The objective for the red team is to play high pressure in the opponents defensive end to prevent a pass to the keeper.

3. The white team provide the reds with too much room and a long pass is made to the keeper for 3 points.



4. In the second diagram the white defenders do a much better job of defending with high pressure.

5. As soon as the goalkeeper plays to the fullback the white team all step forward and close space.



6. The coach has changed the defending objectives and the white team drop back to defend in their half of the field.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 - 6-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual and pairs defending, when to press and when to hold and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending recovery.

4v3 TO 5v5 DEFENDING IN SMALL GROUPS - FUNCTIONAL

1. The black team attack the yellow team and attempt to score through the gates.



Why use it?

A common defensive shape for a 7v7 is to have 3 defenders - left, right and central, and a holding midfield player. This activity helps the 4 players to work together as a defensive unit, trading roles as the first (pressure), second (cover) and third/fourth (balance) defenders.

Set up

The set up is a 35x30 yards area with 3 flag goals on each end line. The goals are approximately 3 yards wide and each goal is awarded a different points value. Play 4v4 in the main area. A supply of balls are placed in each corner of the field to allow the players to restart the game continuously. The coach observes from the sideline.

How to play

The focus is on defending as a unit and adjusting the defensive shape to counter the attack. As the ball moves from one player to the next the defenders must adjust their positions and trade roles as the pressure, cover and balance defenders. If the defenders win possession of the ball they can counter attack. The coach should inform the teams the value of scoring in the opponents goals, but this should not be shared with the opponents. At the end of the game the players can reveal how many points they scored and which goals were worth 1, 2 or 3 points. Play 8 intervals each lasting 2 minutes. Intervals 1-4 dribble or pass through the gates to score. Intervals 5-8 add a player/keeper behind the end line - if the player can control the ball that is played through the gates the points value is doubled.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Work with the players to adapt the shape of the defense based on the position of the ball and the opponents.

Coaching Tip: To help players with positioning and decision-making the coach may wish to freeze play, step onto the field, move players around, rehearse and then play live.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Reduce the size of the field so the defenders have less ground to cover.

More Challenging: Impose a time and/or touch restriction on the attackers. This condition will add urgency to the attack and will require more intense effort from the defenders.

2. The gates have different point values and only the attackers know those values.

3. The yellow defenders set up well to defend with good cover and balance.

4. In the second diagram the black team are close to goal. The yellows have worked well to support their teammate.

5. As the black team get close to goal the yellows must close space and apply pressure to prevent the shot.

6. In the final sequence the yellow defender is beaten and the other yellow players are playing too high up the field to provide any cover.

7. The black attacker passes through the gate and the target player is able to control the ball for double points.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual, pairs and small group defending, transition and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending balance.

6v7 DEFENDING IN SMALL GROUPS - PHASE

Why use it?

This activity builds on the previous activity and the theme of defending in units - pressure, cover and balance.

Set up

The set is approximately two-thirds of a 7v7 field with an appropriate size goal at one end and 2 mini goals on the other end line. The field is separated into two zones. Play 6v7 - a goalkeeper and defender against 1 attacker in the defensive zone and 5 attackers against 5 defenders in the attacking zone. The coach observes from the sideline.

How to play

The primary objectives for the defending team is to prevent the attacking team from entering the defending zone, to win possession and then counter attack to score in one of the mini goals. The attackers must attempt to get the ball to the striker in the defensive end and then 2 players can support to create a 3v2. To begin, the two defenders must allow the striker to receive the ball if the attacking team is able to get a pass through. Play 4 intervals each lasting 4 minutes. Intervals 1-2 allow 2 attackers to join the attack if a ball is played to the striker. Intervals 3-4 remove all the restrictions and let the defenders deny a pass played to the striker.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Communication between the defenders is key. The defensive shape should change based on the location of the ball. When the ball is central one defender applies pressure and 2 defenders cover to create a compact triangle. When the ball is wide one defender presses, the 2nd defender covers and 3rd defender offers balance - hips open, able to see both ball and far side defenders.

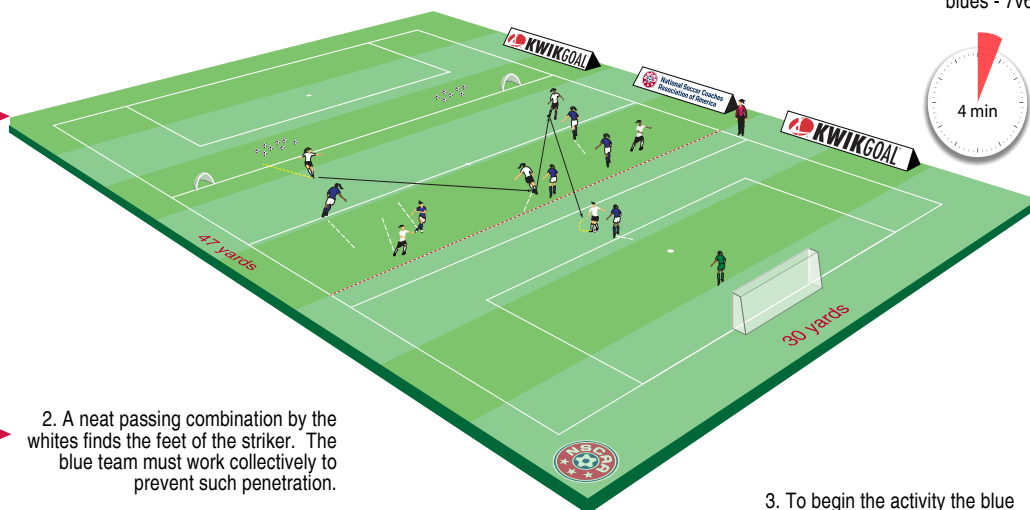
Coaching Tip: Patience must be taught to defenders in this numbers down activity. Defenders need to know that sometimes they don't have to win the ball immediately to be successful.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Reduce the size of the field. Allow the defenders to deny the pass into the striker.

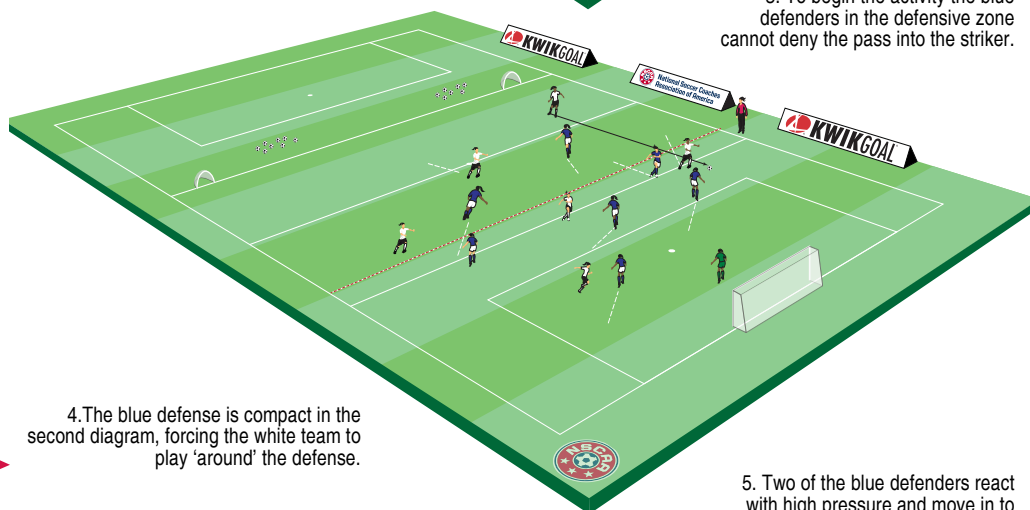
More Challenging: Reduce the number of defenders.

1. The white team starts with possession and play with numbers up against the blues - 7v6.



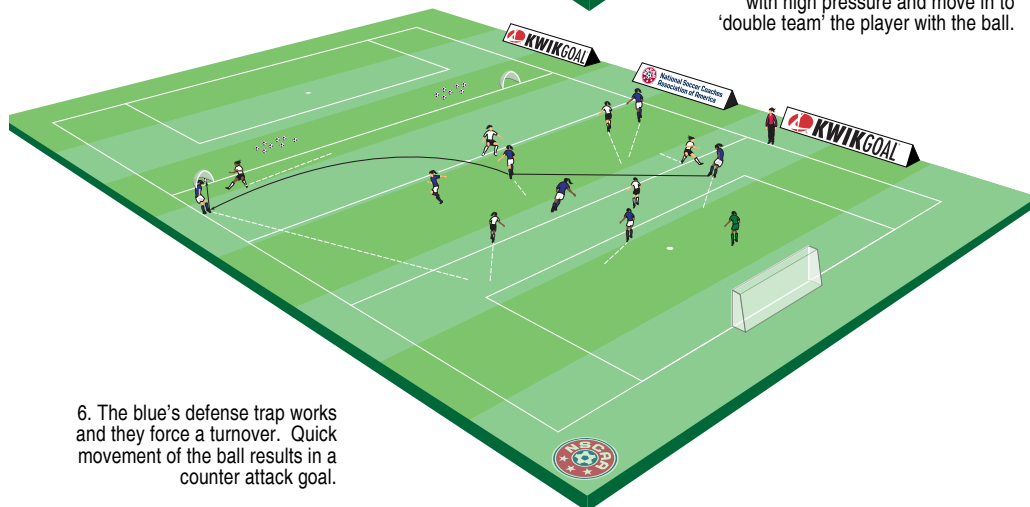
2. A neat passing combination by the whites finds the feet of the striker. The blue team must work collectively to prevent such penetration.

3. To begin the activity the blue defenders in the defensive zone cannot deny the pass into the striker.



4. The blue defense is compact in the second diagram, forcing the white team to play 'around' the defense.

5. Two of the blue defenders react with high pressure and move in to 'double team' the player with the ball.



6. The blue's defense trap works and they force a turnover. Quick movement of the ball results in a counter attack goal.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

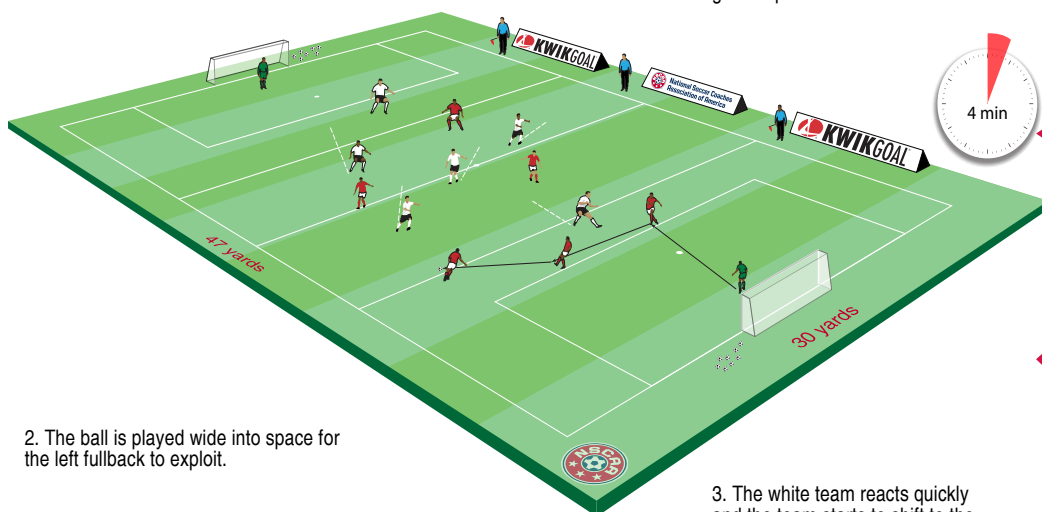
Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual, pairs and small group defending, transition and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending balance.

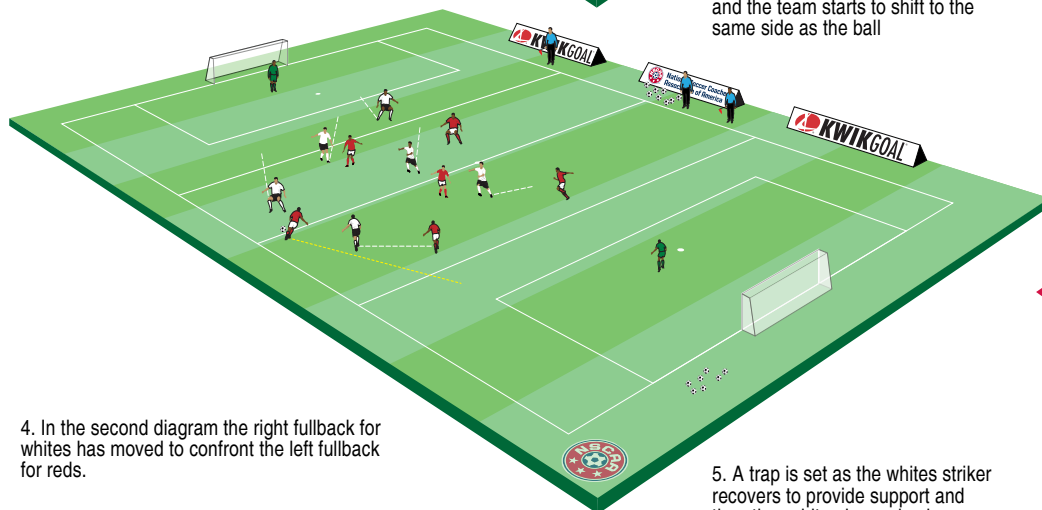
7v7 DEFENDING IN SMALL GROUPS - GAME

1. The red team build up play from the goalkeeper.



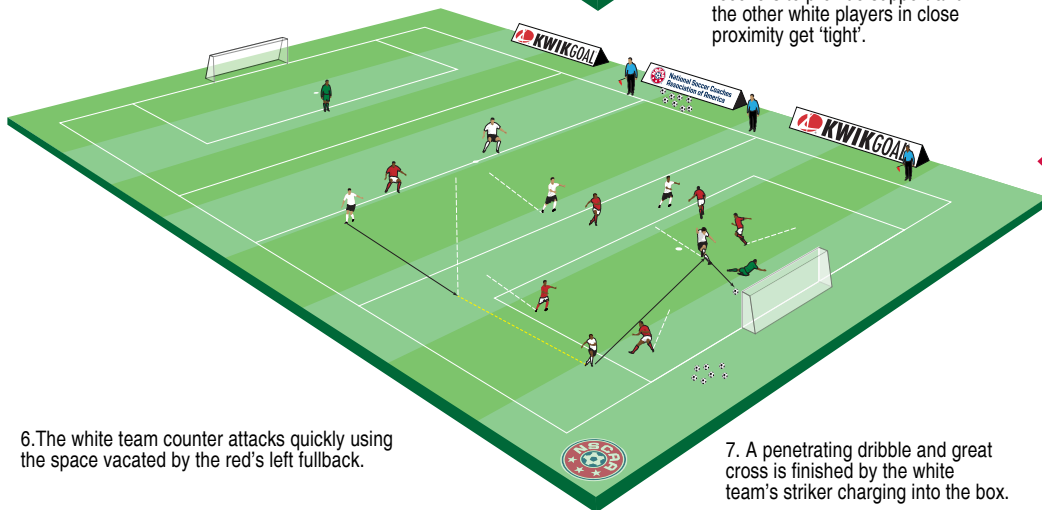
2. The ball is played wide into space for the left fullback to exploit.

3. The white team reacts quickly and the team starts to shift to the same side as the ball



4. In the second diagram the right fullback for whites has moved to confront the left fullback for reds.

5. A trap is set as the whites striker recovers to provide support and the other white players in close proximity get 'tight'.



6. The white team counter attacks quickly using the space vacated by the red's left fullback.

7. A penetrating dribble and great cross is finished by the white team's striker charging into the box.

Why use it?

This game like activity provides the coach with an opportunity to see if learning objectives from the previous activities can be applied in a 7v7 game setting.

Set up

The set up is full 7v7 field with an appropriate size goal at both ends. The coach observes from the sideline and is supported by 2 assistants monitoring offside.

How to play

The coach can set a variety of different objectives for the attacking and defending teams. Set up the formations and team shape to support the defensive objectives - i.e. high/low press, prevent attacks through the middle or around the edge etc. All restarts are from the goalkeepers. If the defense forces and turnover, the team must keep possession or the opponent wins a free kick. When they win the ball the defenders keep possession, stretch the opponent, offer opportunities to keep possession and penetrate to score.

Coaching notes

Coaching Objectives: Focus on whether or not the defense can read the appropriate cues and win possession. If the defender closest to the ball can arrive to apply pressure on or before the receiver's first touch the team should press hard. The second and third defenders must move close attacking options, mark opponents and 'squeeze' the game.

Coaching Tip: Use this activity to imprint a style of defensive shape with your team.

How to modify

Less Challenging: Attackers must take more than 2 touches to slow down the play. This will enable the defenders to get into position before the ball is passed again. Making the area smaller and more compact will also help the defenders, as the attackers will have less space to pass..

More Challenging: Team in possession has a maximum of 2 touches. This speeds up the play and less time for defenders to get into a good defensive shape. Also the coach can manipulate the attacking team to play long balls over the top to try to expose the weak side and defenders caught 'ball watching'.

Stage/s of development covered by activity

Stages 3, 4 and 5 - 9-18 year old players.

Development themes and competencies

Top 3 Themes: Individual, pairs and small group defending, transition and communication.

Top 3 Competencies: Defending pressure, defending cover and defending balance.