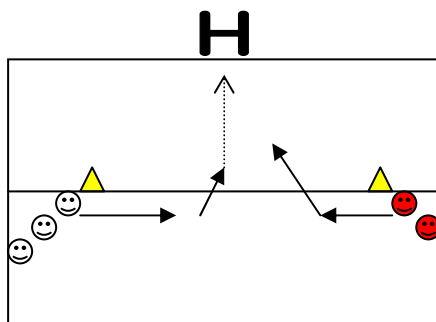


DRILLS FOR THE TRAINING PITCH

Here is a selection of alternative drills to help coaches develop **TECHNIQUE** and **SPEED OF THOUGHT**.

DO NOT BE PUT OFF IF YOU READ THAT A DRILL IS DESIGNED FOR A SMALL GROUP OF PLAYERS. SIMPLY SET IT UP IN A NUMBER OF PLACES ACROSS THE PITCH.

ACROSS THE LINE [shooting]



Set two cones 30m apart along the 20m line. Start some players at each [all with footballs].

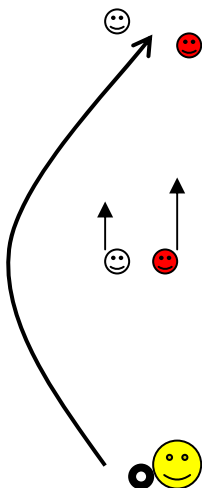
On the whistle let one player solo run parallel to the 20m line. The coach chooses when the player should turn sharply towards goal and shoot for a point once he/she has crossed the 20m line.

This call from the coach is the signal for the next player [coming from the opposite side] to solo across the 20m line, before being called to turn and shoot.

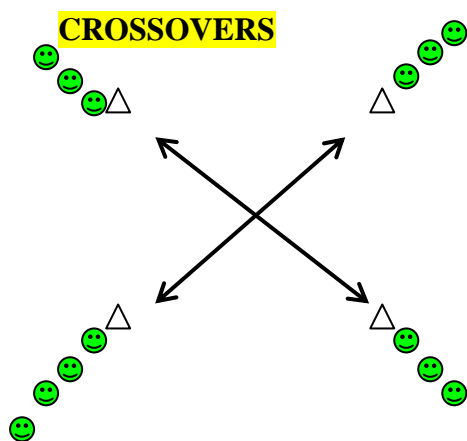
Ensure that players get the chance to retrieve the footballs [perhaps a third group behind the goals] and work from both cones. This should help them develop left and right sides. Coaches should also vary the call to shoot to let players have different shooting angles [e.g. only let the player take one toe-tap before calling him/her to turn and shoot].

Modify this drill by putting pressure on the shooter – let a defender run inside the 20m line, tracking the solo runner.

BREAK THE BALL

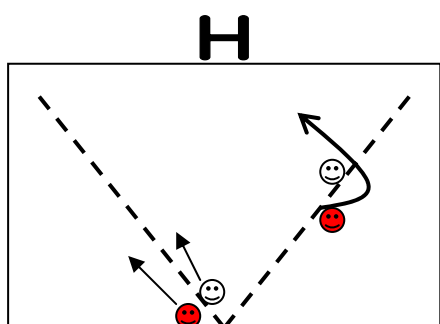


An exercise for 5 players. One player sets the ball on a multimarker [like a tee for kicking off]. The others form two teams of two [e.g. reds and greens]. One player from each team stands approx. 30m from the kicker, ready to contest the catch. The other two players [support runners] stand halfway between the kicker and the catchers. As the ball is kicked, these two turn to run towards the catchers, hoping to pick up any break ball. Should the ball be caught cleanly, the support runner must be ready for a quick pass to end the move. Should the ball be broken to a support runner, the catcher must move to be ready for a quick pass to end the move. Repeat, repeat...swap roles etc.



A simple warm-up drill with a number of players lined up one behind the other at each corner of a 20m square. Groups that face each other across the diagonal of the square work together. One football per two groups. Players first pass to each other and cross over to the opposite side after doing so. With so much movement across the centre players must be ready to make a good pass and change direction if needed.

CUT and DRIVE [shooting]

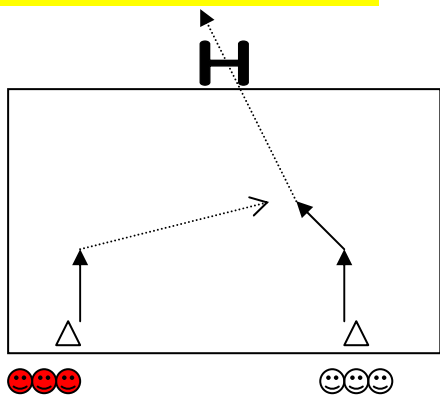


To do this, take about ten white markers and ten yellow markers. Stand on that mid-point on the 45m line. As you walk towards one corner flag, set out a line of white markers. Do the same towards the other corner flag with the yellow markers. Your stage is now set.

Ask an attacker and a defender to stand beside each other on the mid-point of the 45m line. The attacker should solo run along a line of markers, staying on the outside of these. The defender should shadow his run on the inside of the same markers.

When the attacker decides, he should cross the line to run towards goal and take a shot. Once the attacker crosses the line, the defender can tackle. The attacker can use different types of evasion skill to make the cut [e.g. side step / roll / swerve].

DIAGONAL PASS & SHOT



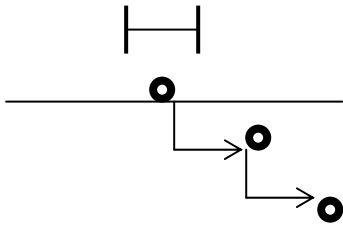
Start two lines of players [no more than 5 in each line] along the 45m line and at two cones, 30m apart. Set two other cones on the 13m line, still 30m apart.

Each player in the left line has a football. On the coach's signal, the first player in each line runs towards the nearest cone on the 13m line.

The coach calls 'Pass' and the solo runner kicks a cross-field pass to the support runner. He/she receives and shoots for a point.

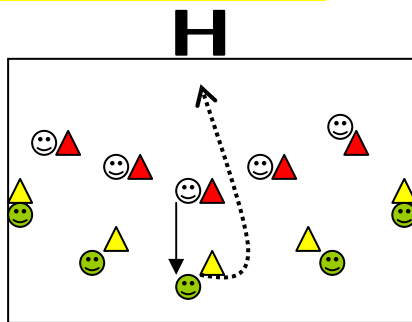
The shooter retrieves the ball from those behind the goals and jogs out to become the solo runner etc. etc. The 'pass' call is also the signal for the next pair to start. A coach should change the ball from the left group to the right group every few minutes to allow players to practise on the weak-side.

EIGHTEENS DRILL [frees]



A drill for a 'free' taker where the player takes 5 shots from the 13m line, directly in front of goal. If successful, the player steps back five metres and to either left or right five metres. From here the player hits 5 more 'frees'. Only if successful, the player steps back a further five metres and to either left or right five metres. From here the player hits 5 more 'frees'. If successful, the player may hit 3 'frees' from any wide position [18 in total]. A coach can gauge how successful a player has been by the number given at the end of the practice. [e.g. 12 means the player hit the first five, the second five and only failed on the third kick of the next five]

FIST, FEINT & SHOOT



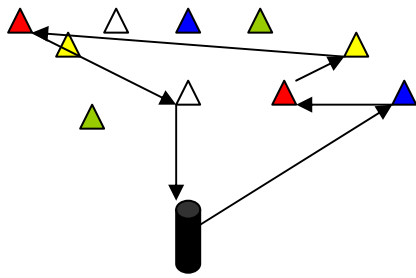
A simple drill to let players practise quick shooting after they have feinted and side-stepped to evade an opponent.

Set out 5 cones in a shallow arc along the 13m line. Set out 5 more to match these on the 20m line. A player stands at each cone. The five along the 13m line have a football each and are facing those on the 20m line. Five more are behind the goals to retrieve.

On the call, each of the players in possession fist passes the ball to a player on the 20m line and advances to close him/her down. The receiver has time only to feint, side-step the opponent and kick for a point. The opponent can provide passive resistance or may try to get a block in [whatever the coach decides].

After each shot, the kicker moves along the 20m line to the next position, ready for a fist pass from another opponent. This gives players the opportunity to evade different opponents and shoot from different positions. The players behind the goals feed the footballs to those on the 13m line. After a few minutes the groups rotate.

FIVE TOUCH SCATTER RUN.

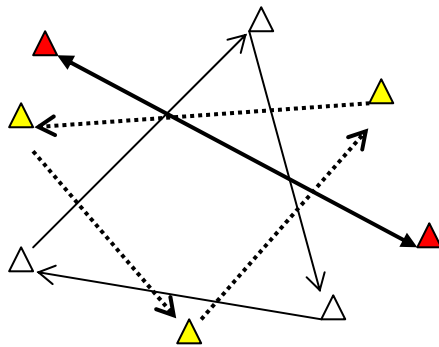


Ten multimarkers [2 blue, 2 red, 2 green, 2 yellow and 2 white] are scattered over a small area. Five metres from this area, the starting post is set up. Players line up behind it. The player second in line determines the sprints made by the player first in line [e.g. he/she calls blue, red, yellow, red, white as a combination. The runner must race to touch these five markers in that order, before returning to base. Etc. etc.]

FOLLOW THE LEADER

A warm-up exercise where 5 or 6 players jog one behind the other anywhere on the pitch. The lead player always has the ball and performs a simple technique [e.g. 3 toe-taps] before the next player runs through to take a pass and become the leader. Vary the techniques as players jog for 10 minutes.

INCREASING THE TRAFFIC

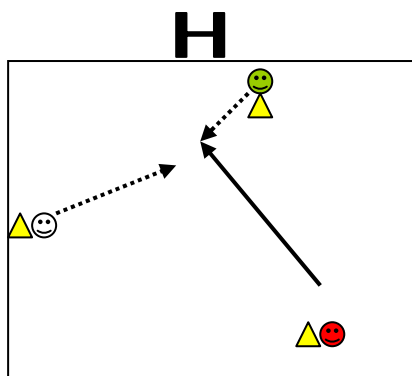


Many drills and practice exercises on the pitch are excellent, but often they do not mirror reality. For example: A coach may run two or three drills in different areas of the pitch, all involving passing or catching or solo running or lifting etc. and all happening at the same time. Small groups of players take part in each and there is always plenty of space in which to work. This is fine up to a point.

If coaches took two or even three drills, let players get used to them first and then moved the cones to superimpose the exercises one on top of the other in the same area of the field, this would allow players to practise skills and techniques while others moved among them and around the same area.

Players who can learn to cope with 'increased traffic' in a smaller area will be able to carry this through to a game, where there are team-mates and opponents getting in the way of passes etc.

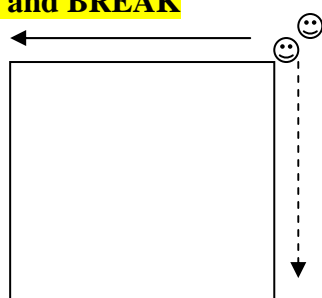
INSIDE SUPPORT & SCORE



A drill set up to simulate a full forward running out to receive a kick pass from a midfielder, then laying the ball off to a half-forward who has cut in from the left wing to support and shoot. On the diagram, **Red** kicks for **Green** to run and collect while **White** times his/her run to support and shoot. Coach decides on distances to suit skill level and pitch conditions.

Drill best run with four players max. on each cone and four to retrieve footballs. Groups swap every few minutes.

KICK and BREAK



25m square set out with tall cones. Two players at each corner.

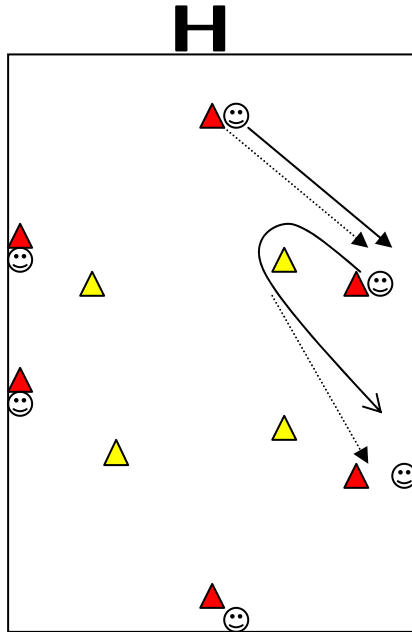
First player at one corner has the only ball. He/she kick passes along one edge of the square and runs along the other edge to join another group and line up [**the kicker does not follow the ball**]

The receiver kick passes along the next side of the square and breaks off to run back to where the kick came from.

This drill forces players to change direction immediately after kicking and not let their attention be drawn to the flight of the ball. In a game situation it is akin to kick passing to a team-mate and then breaking quickly to mark an opponent.

A coach may vary the drill by placing 1 player on each corner or even 3 players on each corner and introducing a second ball. He/she may also get players to break diagonally after kick passing. Make no mistake – this drill will confuse many, but is well worth perfecting.

CATCH, TURN & KICK



A drill to be set up using at least half of the pitch and involving up to 24 players.

Set out the red cones 25-30m apart. All players will start from these [e.g. 4 at each].

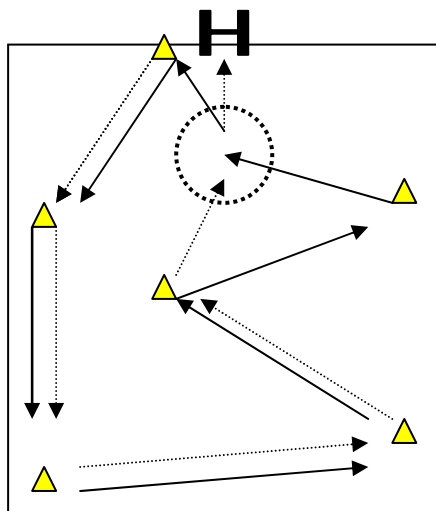
The yellow cones are set approx. 5m from the four wide red cones. These force receivers to move for the pass and turn quickly around a yellow before kick passing to the next red cone.

All kickers follow their passes to the next red cone and get ready for a pass.

The two red cones at the end have no corresponding yellows. Any player at one of these simply receives and kick passes as if taking a 'free'.

The solid lines show sample runs made. The dashed line shows the ball path. Start the drill with two footballs at each end cone. Players kick pass when path to a receiver is clear. This drill calls for accurate kick passing [off the laces – not in the clouds] and swift running between cones. **BEST RUN AS A COMPETITION BETWEEN TWO GROUPS!**

LONG KICKING/SCORING



A drill to cope with big numbers of players and offer plenty of chances to deliver 35-40m passes and runs to match.

Dashed lines show the kicks. The runs made after the kick are shown as solid lines.

Stand 4-5 players at each cone. Number the cones 1-6. Cone 1 is on the goal line. Start a ball at each of the first five cones. No ball at cone 6. On the whistle each player with a ball kicks and moves.

1 kicks to 2.....2 kicks to 3.....3 kicks to 4.....4 kicks to 5.....5 kicks into the circle [= scoring zone] for the player at 6 to run onto, collect and shoot. The shooter then runs to Cone 1, collects the ball he kicked and gets ready to start again.

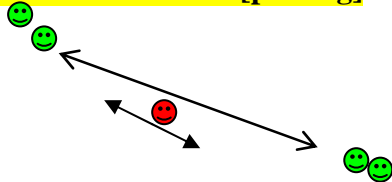
Remember, all footballs at each of the five cones should start at the same time, then let the drill flow for five minutes. Keep a few extra footballs behind the goals to allow for those that miss the ball catch.

The coach may modify this drill by setting the cones up in a reverse pattern to that shown above.

MATCH RUNNING

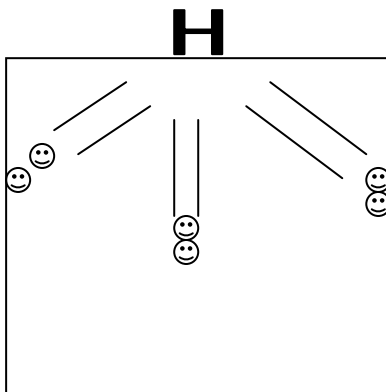
Drills/exercises without cones, where players work in groups of 2 or 3 and complete the activities anywhere on the pitch. This simulates the running that happens in a game proper and means that groups will work through each other, increasing the traffic and forcing players to look for team-mates.

MOVING PIVOT [passing]



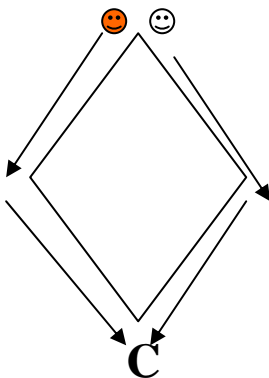
The player who is placed in the middle of a line drill to receive a ball and pass it on is normally called the pivot. A moving pivot must stay on the move between two cones while still acting as a link between the players at both ends of the line.

OFF THE LACES [shooting]



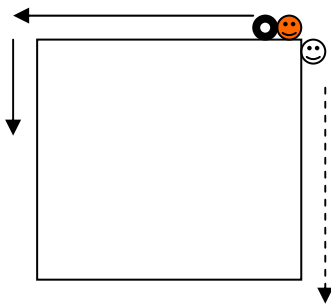
A drill to let players practise running straight for goal and shooting **off the laces** for a point. The 3 narrow channels are set out using fleximarkers. They should only be 1 metre wide and up to 10 metres long. Each must be positioned pointing right at the centre spot on the crossbar. The shooting end of the channel may be set on the 13m line or 20m line. Players take turns to solo run at pace and shoot when they reach the end of the channel. A good drill to set up with four groups [e.g. 4 at each channel and 4 retrieving footballs. Groups swap positions every couple of minutes.

OPPOSITES RACE



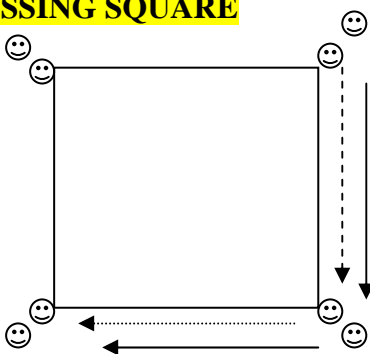
30m square set up as a diamond. Players in pairs stand at one cone. Coach stands at opposite cone. Whistle start. Pair splits to race towards coach, around the perimeter. Coach can gauge who is leading the race. Coach steps a few paces left or right to make race more even and ensure that players do not give in. Winner is first to reach coach.

PAIRED RUNNING SQUARE



15m square set out with tall cones. Pair of players at each corner. One player in each pair has the ball. Whistle signals start. Player 1 sets off solo running at pace around perimeter. Player 2 goes opposite direction, jogging. When they meet, they swap the ball and the pace. Same for other pairs. Change of role, change of pace.

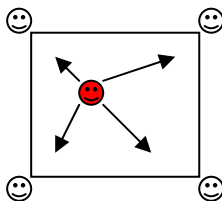
PASSING SQUARE



10-25m square set out with tall cones. Two start players at each corner.

First player at one corner has the only ball. He/she kick passes along one edge of the square and follows the ball to join the next group and line up. The next player does the same etc. etc. This can be a fist passing or kick passing drill.

REACT & INTERCEPT



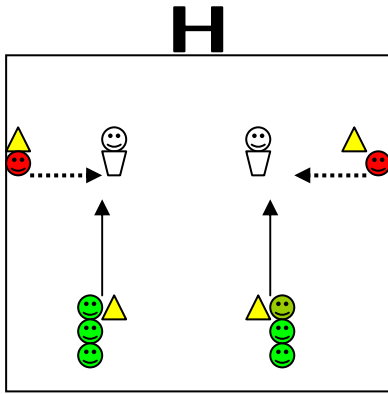
5m square set out with tall cones. One player at each corner: One has the ball. Defender starts in the middle of the square.

Four players fist pass among each other in anyt combination while the defender moves quickly about the square to try and intercept any pass.

Players rotate every 30 seconds. Coach encourages fast footwork from defender and quick hands from passers.

Set out four of these in a row and cater for 20 players.

ROLL & SCORE



A drill using tackle shields to let players practise receiving a ball and being immediately faced by an opponent. With so little time to react, often the best form of evasion is the ROLL.

The key to the drill is to feed the ball to the attacker only a couple of strides before he/she hits the tackle shield.

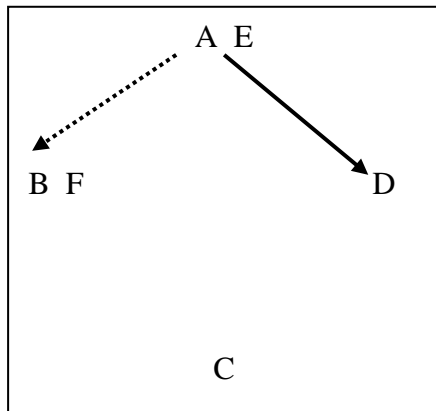
Having rolled out of the tackle, the player must regain balance to shoot without the need for a toe-tap or a bounce.

Best done with two shield holders [white], two feeders [red], six runners/shooters [green] and two retrievers [not shown]. Swap groups of six after a while.

SHUTTLE/STAGGER RACE

Different runs built into race against each other over a variety of combinations of the same distance. Some run a straight 90m, while others run 45m x 2. The final group runs 20m x 4. Each team runs against the others in all three forms of the distance. The target is that the last player in the 90m straight run must finish before any player in either of the other combinations.

SPLIT SECOND WINDOW



Run a simple exercise to speed up the delivery of the pass. Create a situation that is unopposed but forces players to receive and pass the ball on **IN ONE MOVEMENT**. Allow no more than one steadying step to be taken and let players practise receiving the ball and playing it in a split-second. It will be difficult, but it will be worth it.

A starts drill by kick passing to B. Distance between cones must be 25m minimum.

A immediately runs to join D

B receives ball and, in one stride, kick passes on to C

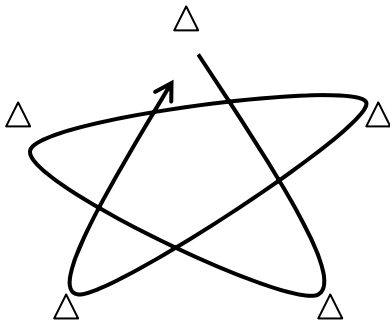
B immediately runs to where the pass came from [i.e. where A was at the start]

C receives the ball and, in one stride, kick passes on to D

C immediately runs to where the pass came from [i.e. where B was at the start] etc.etc..

- **Remember, the key is to force players to receive and pass in one movement [i.e. in as short a time as possible]**

STAR KICKING



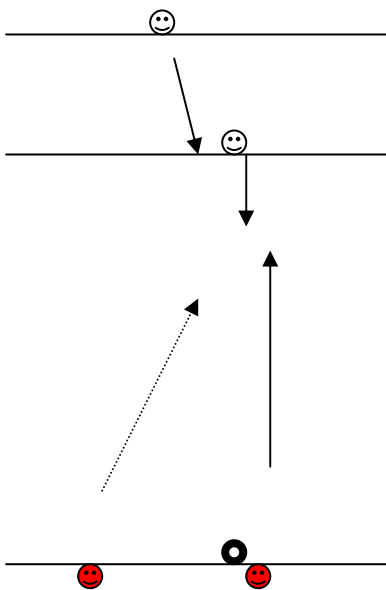
Set up a five-pointed star in a 30m area. Place three players at each cone. Name the points of the star 1-5 in order.

Start a ball at point 1 and a ball at point 2. On the coach's call the drill starts with the two kickers. Any player who kicks a pass must follow his/her pass to that point of the star and get ready for the next pass.

1 passes to 3 as 2 passes to 4.....3 passes to 5 while 4 passes to 1.....5 passes to 2 as 1 passes to 3.

So the order of passes is always 1 to 3 to 5 to 2 to 4 to 1 repeat, repeat etc. The drill takes a while to perfect, but it improves concentration and speed of thought.

STOP THE RUN



An exercise for 4 players; 2 defenders and 2 attackers, set up between the 13m line and the 45m line and in an area not more than 10m wide.

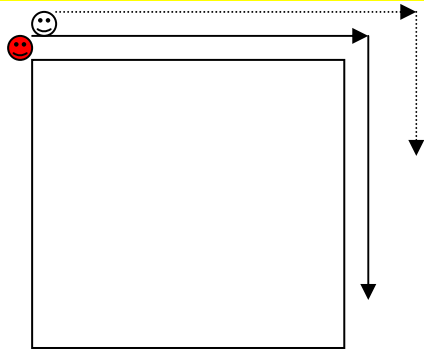
Attackers start at the 45m line. Defenders start, one on the 13m line and the other on the 20m line, facing the attackers.

One attacker starts to solo run at pace towards defenders. The defenders may move to engage the ball carrier. The other attacker must lag behind and run in support of the solo runner.

If the first defender holds up the ball carrier, the support runner must time his/her burst to take the pass, break the tackle and make ground. The second defender should be in position to stop the attacker's run towards the 13m line.

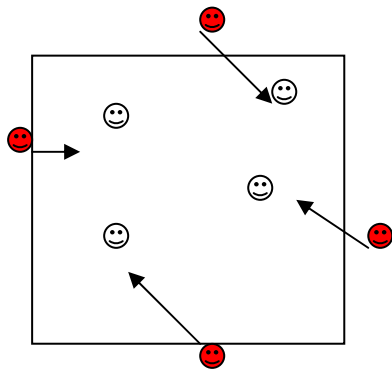
Swap roles, reverse, ask players to think up strategies for attacking, defending in such situations.

SUPPORT RUNNING SQUARE



20m square set out with tall cones. Pair of players at each corner. One has the ball. Whistle to start. Player 1 sets off at pace around perimeter. Player 2 goes in the same direction, jogging while solo running. When Player 1 catches up with Player 2, they swap the ball and the pace.

TACKLING SQUARE



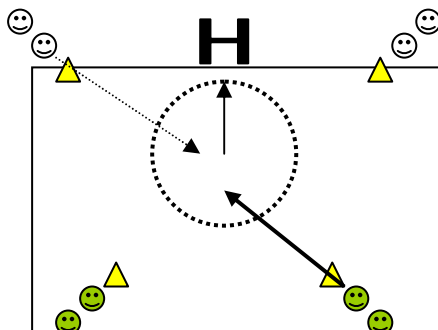
20m square set out with tall cones. Four solo runners move freely inside the square. Four tacklers wait along the perimeter.

On a signal, the tacklers close in on the solo runners. Without fouling, they aim to dispossess the ball players as quickly and effectively.

The coach times them until the last player is dispossessed. Then the groups swap roles and the new tacklers try to beat the previous time set.

Coaches may use this idea to practise frontal tackles, near-hand tackling and/or blocking.

TURN TO SCORE



A drill set up to allow forwards to come out from close to the end line, collect the ball and turn sharply to shoot while still in the scoring zone.

Set up a circle of markers in front of goal [approx. 20m diameter and centred 15m from goal]. This is the scoring zone.

Start four shooters on the cones set along the end line and four passers on the cones set approx. 30m from goal [as shown]. A third group of four may retrieve footballs from behind the posts.

Each of the passers has a ball. He/she takes turns to kick or fist a diagonal pass to a shooter who is coming out to run into the scoring zone. The shooter takes the ball, turns quickly and attempts to score a point.

The shooter should then break off to join the shooting group on the other side of goal, so that he/she gets a variety of angles and can work off both feet.

The coach rotates groups every few minutes. The same drill may be set up with a goalkeeper and instructions to shoot for goal instead of points.