

TOUCHLINE TALES THE RIGHT HALF-TIME TEAM TALK

# SOCCER COACH WEEKLY

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< **NEYMAR AND LIONEL MESSI**  
SUCCESS AS  
INDIVIDUALS AND  
AS A TEAM

## TEAMMATES

**TOGETHER EVERYONE ACHIEVES MORE**

SPACE TO ATTACK • THREE BALL PRESSING TEST • HANDBALL OVERLAPS

### THE GREAT WALL

CREATE A DEFENSIVE WALL WITH YOUR PLAYERS

### INIESTA KEEP BALL

IMPROVE TEAM POSSESSION INVOLVE YOUR KEEPER

# Say The Right Thing At Half-Time



Soccer Coach Weekly Issue 414



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## Touchline Tales

Half-time team talks are important and they do have an effect on the players... the hard part is you have to make sure your team talk is addressing the right problems.

I was with one of the older age groups this week and there were a number of coaches with us. I don't want to identify the coach involved but I thought it was a tale that needed telling.

The team was running the game, and they were controlling the match when they hadn't got the ball by allowing their opponents to take a touch but by positioning the defence and midfield in such a way that the only pass that was on was either sideways or backwards.

**“It was a tactic that worked well as the players in the opposition midfield were a much bigger build”**

It was a tactic that worked well as the players in the opposition midfield were a much bigger build so immediately challenging for the ball resulted in the bigger players winning it.

Andres Iniesta in a recent interview with *FourFourTwo* magazine said: “If I play against a big player, I play the ball quickly on the ground. Playing a quick one-two is also very effective as bigger



players are slower to react and turn. I also keep a distance from them so that I can turn quickly and we don't find ourselves going for the same ball. I only weigh 63 kilos so I don't have weight to throw around. If you can get the ball past them a few times using a one-two they will be more reluctant to rush in and tackle, so you have more space to play. Barça is a small team, so we use our height well. It's good for me to take corners, not just because I'm unlikely to win the ball in the air.”

And this is how the players were playing in the first half of the game. So the half time team talk should have been pure encouragement, allowing the players to take control of the team talk because they were controlling the match.

Covering was good; the midfield was being clever – keep it going. The coach praises the hard work and knows in his mind he has three subs to help rotate

and give tired players a rest.

But this didn't happen. The talk initially started well with a discussion about what was going right and some well-deserved praise. Then the coach talked about how he wanted more pressing on the balls into the midfield area making play much tighter. Here he played into the hands of the opposition.

The game was lost in the second half because players were jumping in and being easily turned by their bigger opponents. It didn't work and the game was thrown away.

It's not easy giving half time team talks but don't think you have to change it when things are going right – that is the problem your opponents have to solve, not you.



David Clarke



## ASK DAVE GOT A COACHING PROBLEM? LET ME SOLVE IT FOR YOU!

It's good to have somebody to ask for advice when you encounter a problem with your team – and whatever your coaching problem, I'm sure I can help.

I'm delighted to offer you a personal service exclusive to SCW subscribers. Just email me your query on any soccer coaching matter and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. I'll give you the advice you need to solve your particular problem, and I'll even send you the resources you need from our archive of coaching sessions.

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Suarez, Neymar and Messi – destined to become the most successful teammates ever...



# Barca's Three Amigos

Their rivals had better beware... Luis Suarez has clicked with his team mates and that spells trouble for any team facing the fearsome front three of Suarez, Neymar and Messi

**T**he theme of this issue is Teammates – and I don't think you will find a better front three teammates than the present one at Barcelona. I hope my defenders never have to face up to a front three with the creativity they each possess in the final third of a pitch.

Barcelona have played 4-3-3 for a long time and do so under manager Luis Enrique – which means the three front men can play happily alongside each other. But it hasn't always been a happy alliance. The three are similar players – skilful on the ball, prolific goalscorers and great dribblers and passers – and it has been a problem to create great teammates from these brilliant individual players.

All three are accustomed to being the main man in their side, either at their previous club or at international level, and it's difficult to play to the strengths of three players simultaneously.

Recently, though, Barcelona have been playing brilliantly – apart from the blip against Malaga.

And Suarez has featured more regularly on the scoresheet and he makes a lot of lateral runs dragging defenders out of position to create space for Messi and Neymar. This has allowed Messi to shine in his old right-sided position.

Although he became renowned as a centre-forward, it's arguable Messi doesn't quite have the acceleration to get away from markers as he did during his peak years.

That has also impacted his ability to simultaneously play as a false nine and a proper nine, getting into goalscoring positions to score poacher's efforts.

On the right he's afforded more space, is easier to locate and, unlike a couple of years ago, Barca are not depending solely upon him for goalscoring, with Neymar and Suarez also in the side.

Messi and Neymar can cut inside from their wide positions and while this looks like a side based more around individual talent than in the Tika Taka days of Barcelona the movement



of teammates to create space for each other is team work at its best.

If Suarez can get himself up to speed – as he did at Ajax and Liverpool increasing his goals scored tally every season – then this could become a world-beating front three. They could even be one of the best forward lines ever seen.

# Space To Attack

When teams get chance to counter attack they should look for the spaces in the opposition defence and exploit them because there will always be one defender out of shape

## WHY USE IT

This session looks at making the most of overload situations in attack by targeting the areas of the pitch where defenders are out of position and exploiting it.

## SET UP

You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Using half your normal pitch place four cones spread across the pitch near the half way line, four on the edge of the penalty area and create two gates either side of the goal. We used 10 players and a server in the session.

## HOW TO PLAY

Split your players into two teams of 5 players and a server. One team has a goalkeeper and four defenders the other has five attackers. The attackers stand on the cones on the halfway line with a receiver nearer the penalty area in the middle. The server plays to the receiver who has his back to goal and at the same time the server calls out a number or numbers and the corresponding defender(s) runs through the nearest gate by the goal and back to defend. The receiver passes to the player he wants to attack the space left by the defender. Play 5 balls then switch defenders and attackers.

## TECHNIQUE

Passing, movement and communication is vital to the attackers exploiting the space.

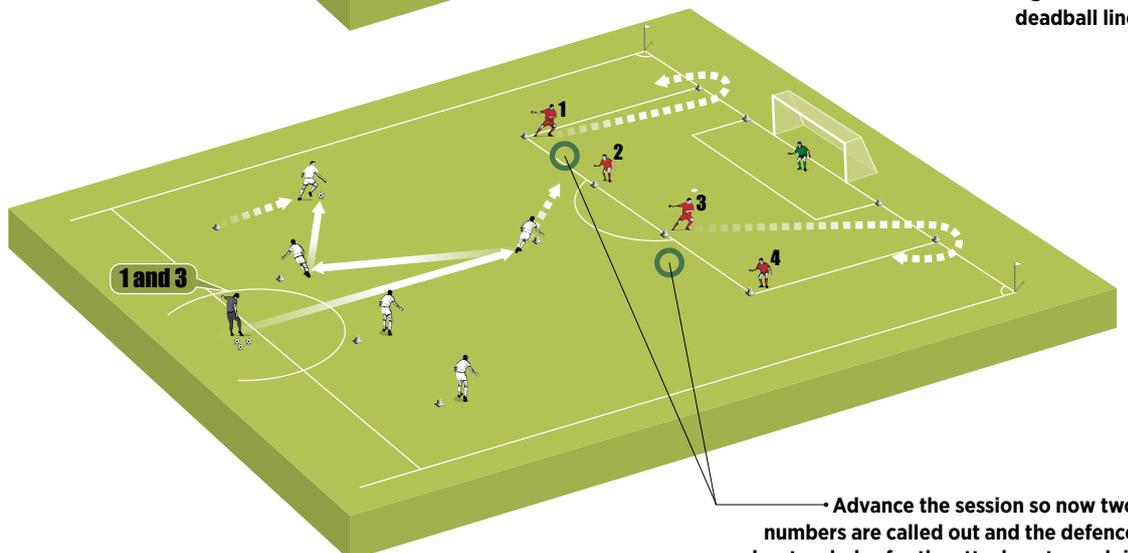
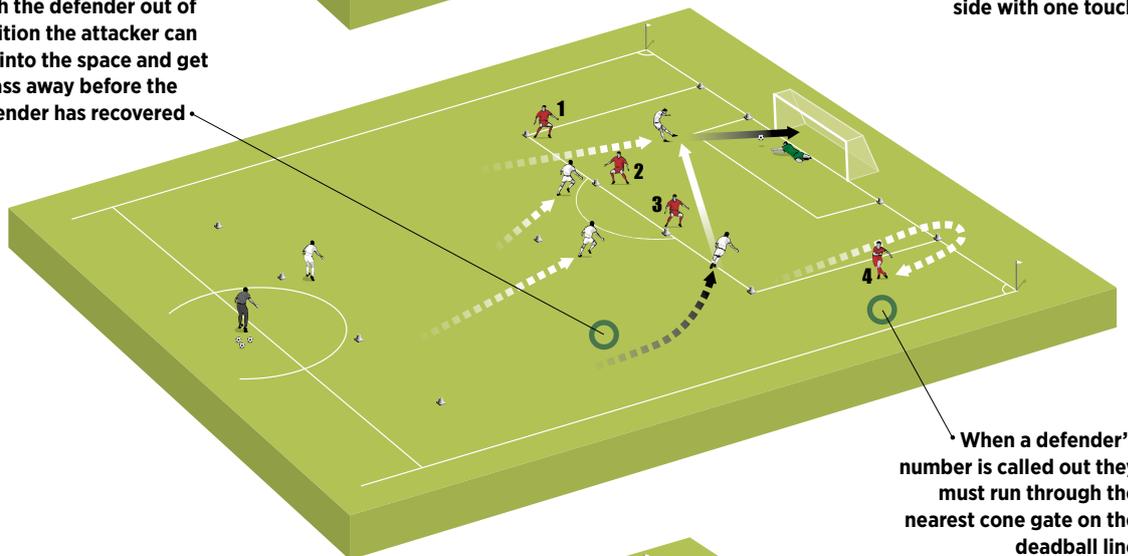
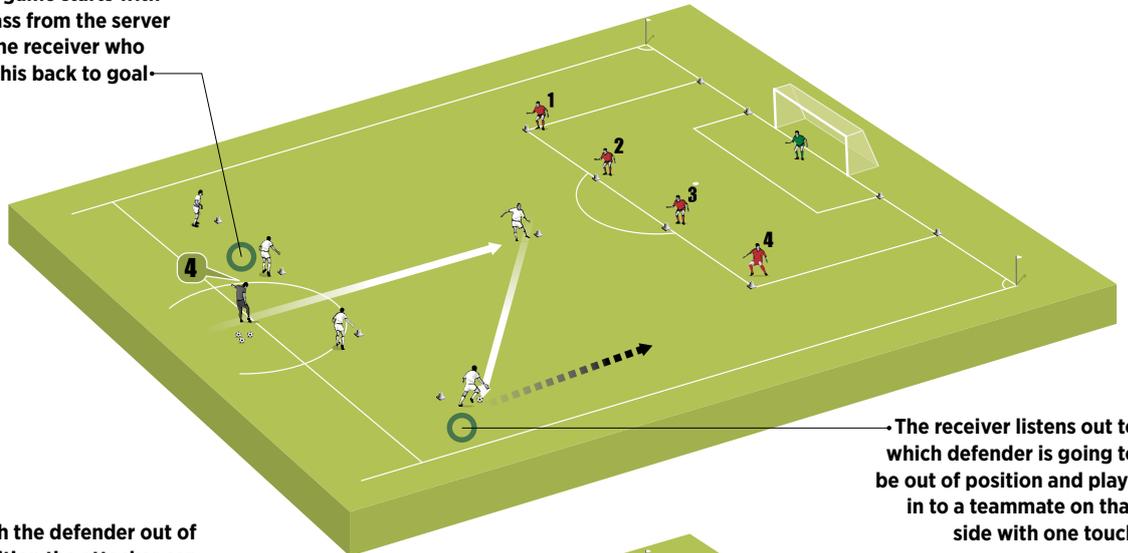
The game starts with a pass from the server to the receiver who has his back to goal

With the defender out of position the attacker can run into the space and get a pass away before the defender has recovered

The receiver listens out to which defender is going to be out of position and plays in to a teammate on that side with one touch

When a defender's number is called out they must run through the nearest cone gate on the deadball line

Advance the session so now two numbers are called out and the defence has two holes for the attackers to exploit



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Three Ball Pressure

This is all about teamwork and teammates using the ball or stopping opponents from winning it. Press hard and the defenders will win the three balls in the fastest time

## WHY USE IT

This session is all about possession versus pressing with a three ball game which mimics the pressures teams face on match day.

## SET UP

You need balls, bibs and cones. Set up an area 25 x 25 yards (smaller is harder bigger is easier) with a 5 yard square in the centre. We used 13 players in the session (but it works with any number you choose).

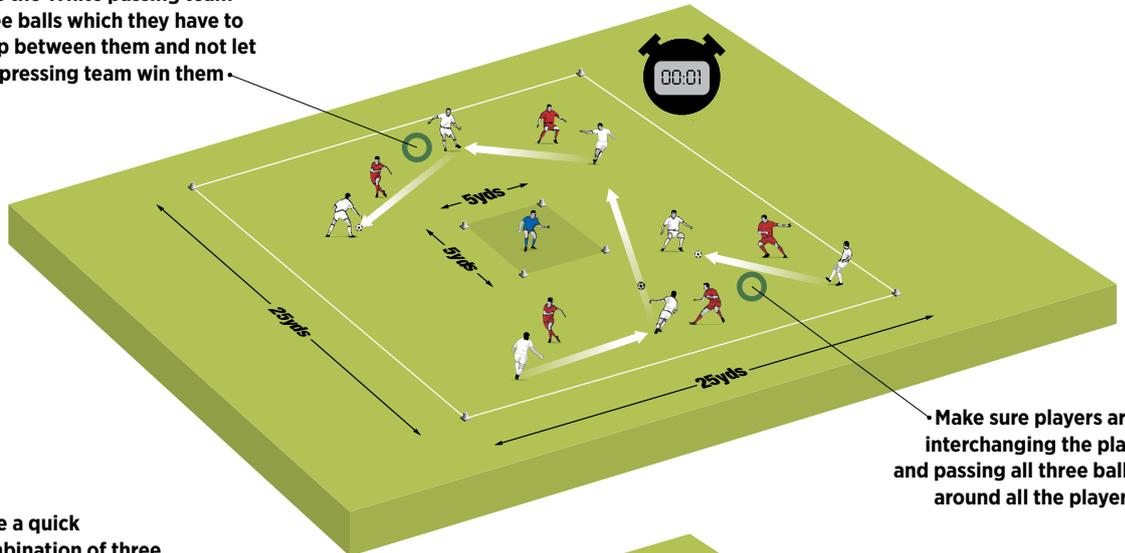
## HOW TO PLAY

Split your team into 7 possession players (White) and 5 pressing players (Red) plus one player who stands in the centre square. The White team has to play with three balls and the Red team must win the balls and get them to the Blue player in the centre square. Time how long it takes to win all three balls and switch teams to see which set of players does it the quickest.

## TECHNIQUE

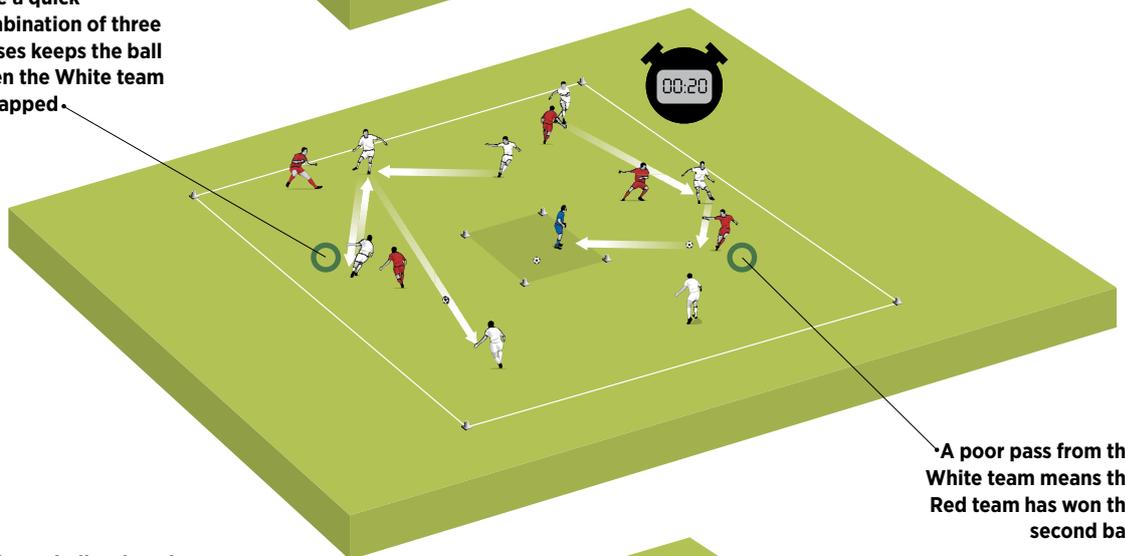
Fast passing and receiving, pressing skills to force mistakes and win the ball. Game is played at a high tempo making it harder to keep the ball.

Give the White passing team three balls which they have to keep between them and not let the pressing team win them.



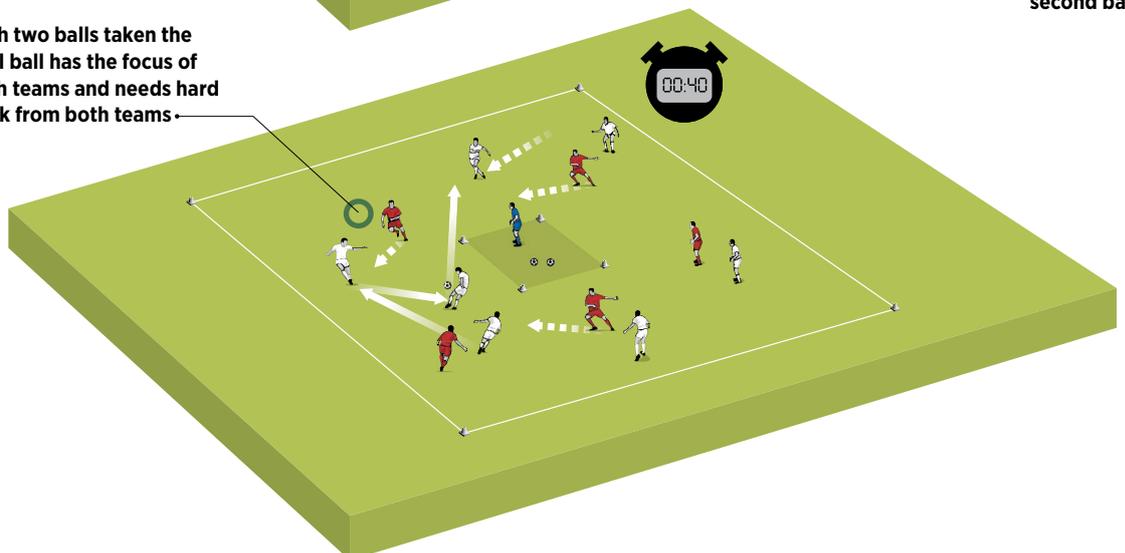
Make sure players are interchanging the play and passing all three balls around all the players

Here a quick combination of three passes keeps the ball when the White team is trapped.



A poor pass from the White team means the Red team has won the second ball

With two balls taken the final ball has the focus of both teams and needs hard work from both teams.



Player movement Ball movement Run with ball Shot

# Handball Overlaps

This is a game to be played like basketball or rugby style passing the ball in the hands to show how players make one-twos and third man runs

## WHY USE IT

This session gets players on the move, quickly enhancing their understanding of combination play in preparation for a match.

## SET UP

You need balls, bibs, cones and goals. Set up on a 30 x 30 yard area - this is a 6v6 possession game which is, at first, played with the ball in players' hands. We used 12 players in the session.

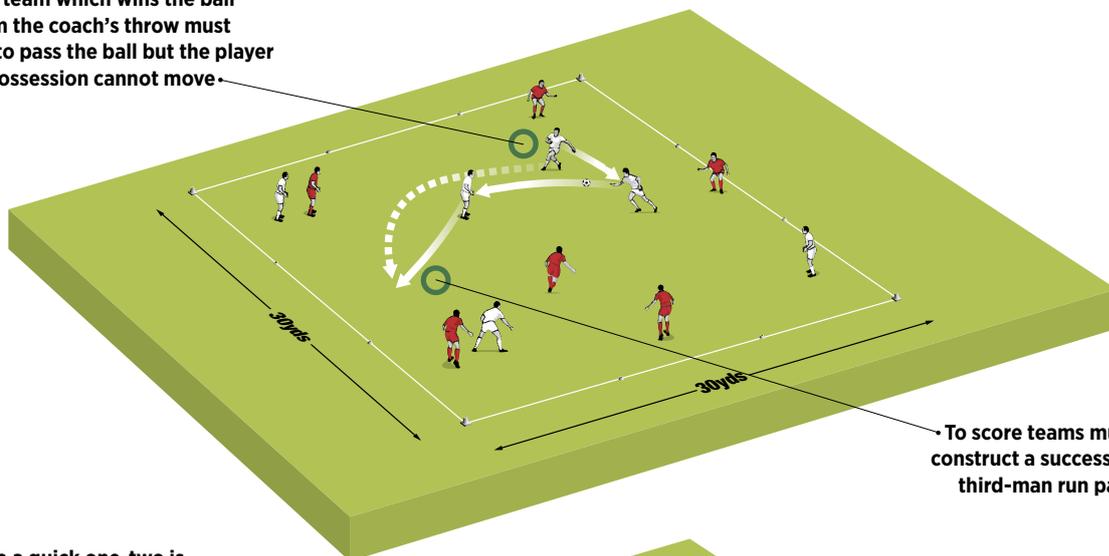
## HOW TO PLAY

Split your squad into two teams of 7 players. The coach launches a high pass into the area which the players attempt to take control of. A player in possession of the ball cannot move, but can pivot in order to send passes around the area. Teams score a point by successfully constructing a third-man run pass - in other words the player who starts the move combines with two others, making a run and receiving the ball back. It's the other team's job to intercept passes. They'll also take possession if their opponents mislay a pass. To add a second scoring element, players can make one-twos. However, the return pass must be instant. The first team to score 10 points is the winner.

## TECHNIQUE

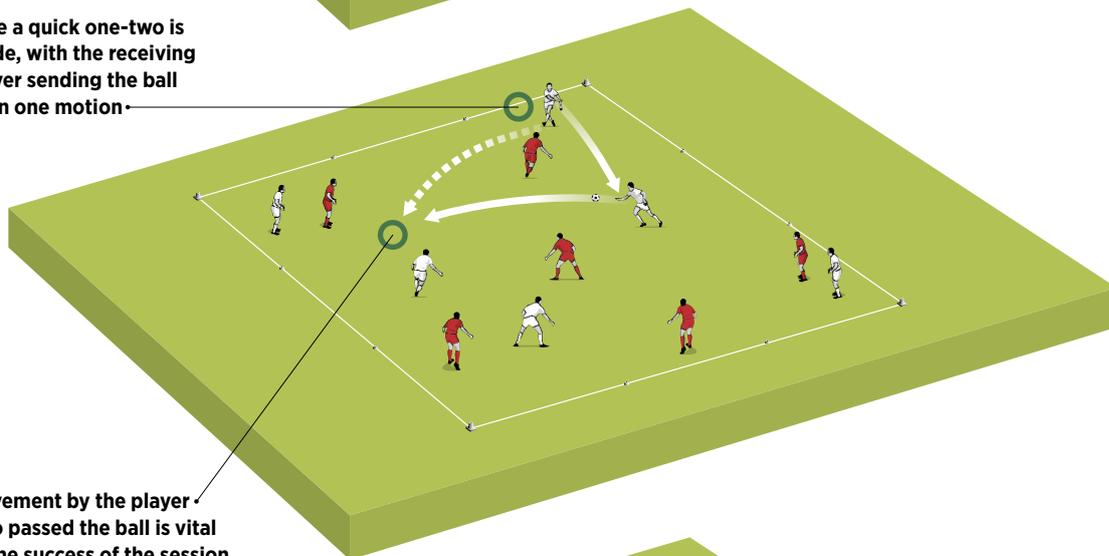
This session relies on good teamwork and good communication. Players both in and out of possession must stay alert to supporting runs.

The team which wins the ball from the coach's throw must try to pass the ball but the player in possession cannot move.

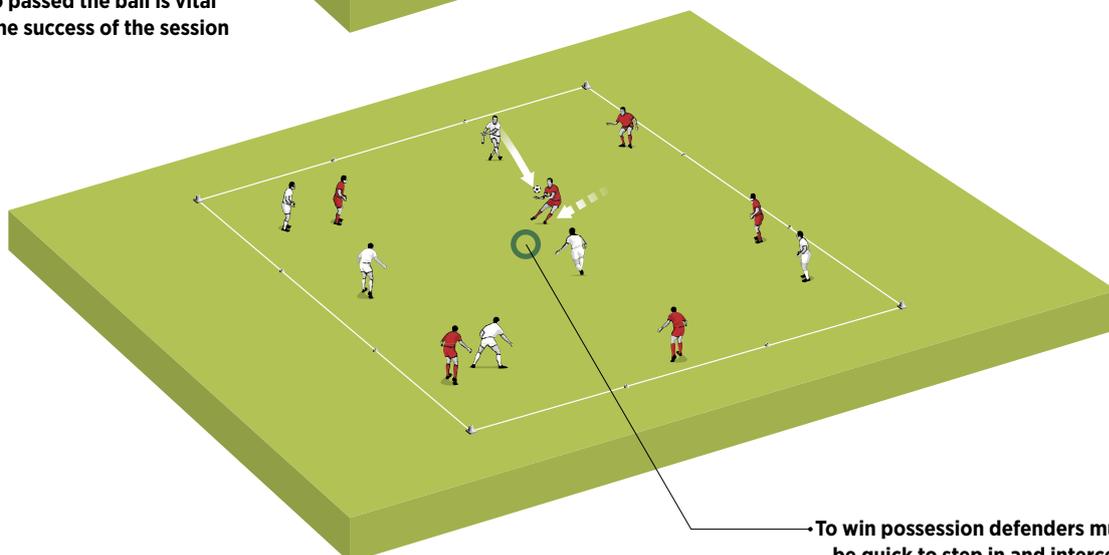


To score teams must construct a successful third-man run pass

Here a quick one-two is made, with the receiving player sending the ball on in one motion.



Movement by the player who passed the ball is vital to the success of the session



To win possession defenders must be quick to step in and intercept

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Xavi & Iniesta Possession

Improve team possession Barcelona-style and also work on your goalkeeper's passing and receiving skills. A great possession versus attack session...

## WHY USE IT

This improves the ability to circulate the ball quickly through the team by spreading wide to open up the centre of the pitch for midfielders who combine to take the ball from one side of the pitch to the other (like Barcelona duo Xavi and Iniesta). Goalkeepers are also needed to play this style of possession football and this game develops their passing and receiving skills.

## SET UP

Set up a 30 x 25 yard pitch with two manned goals. Inside, play 4v2 with the two playing the Xavi/Iniesta roles. Goalkeepers help them keep possession as do four players around the pitch.

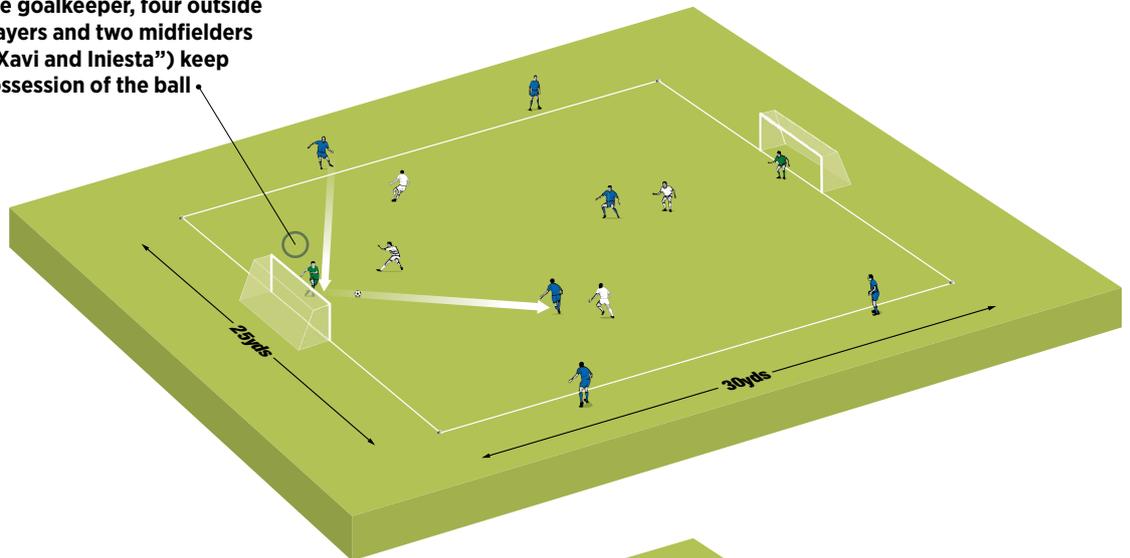
## HOW TO PLAY

Outside players are limited to two touches and pass inside to "Xavi and Iniesta" or the goalkeepers to keep possession. They cannot pass to the outside player on the same side but can pass to one on the other side. The four defenders apply pressure. If they gain possession, they play 4v2 against Xavi and Iniesta and look to score. If successful, defenders and outside players switch roles.

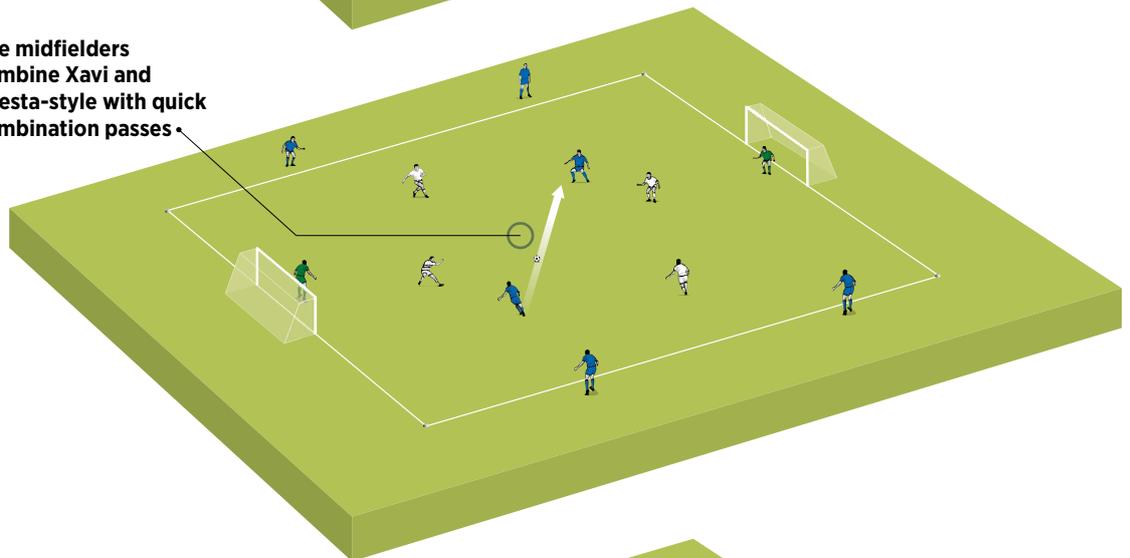
## TECHNIQUE

- One/two touch passing.
- Receiving skills and close control.
- Ability to use both feet.
- Constantly on the move.
- Clear communication.

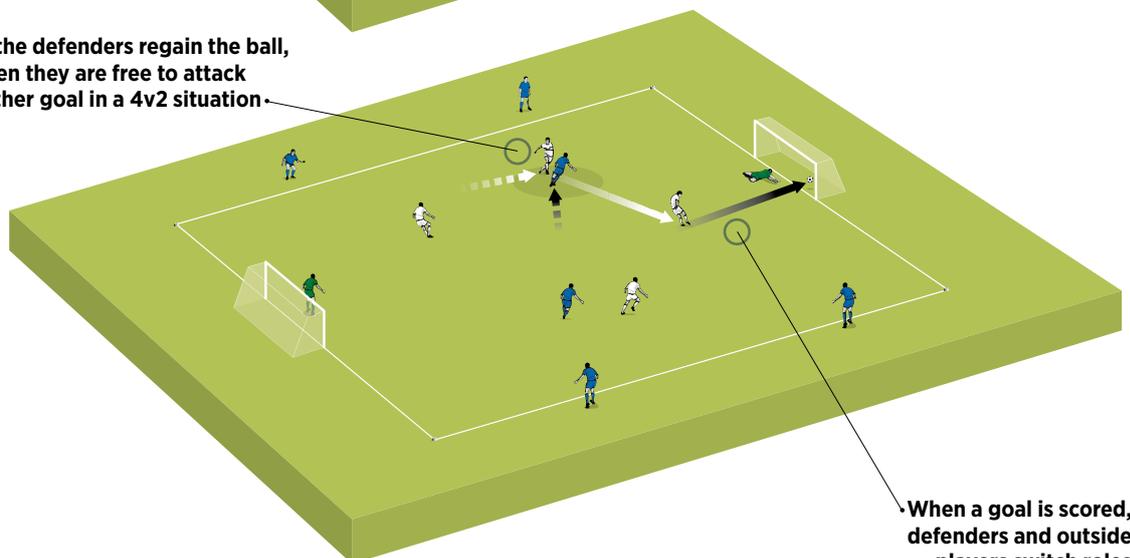
The goalkeeper, four outside players and two midfielders ("Xavi and Iniesta") keep possession of the ball.



The midfielders combine Xavi and Iniesta-style with quick combination passes.



If the defenders regain the ball, then they are free to attack either goal in a 4v2 situation.



When a goal is scored, defenders and outside players switch roles

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Great Wall

If you want your team more resistant to set pieces, this useful exercise will encourage them to form a wall capable of withstanding direct free-kicks

## WHY USE IT

We've all seen direct free-kicks win matches in both professional and youth games, but a well placed wall will cut out a very high percentage of goals from free-kicks at youth level. That is what you should aim to achieve with this session.

## SET UP

Use the penalty area of your pitch. We have used six players plus the goalkeeper for this session. You will need balls and a goal.

## HOW TO PLAY

You need to use players who are not afraid to be in a wall and try to select the tallest. Use between two and four players for the wall. Number them one to four in the order they should stand in the wall. Use one of your free-kick takers. Players should stand on the goal line and on your call run to get into position. Play six free-kicks, three on each side of the area.

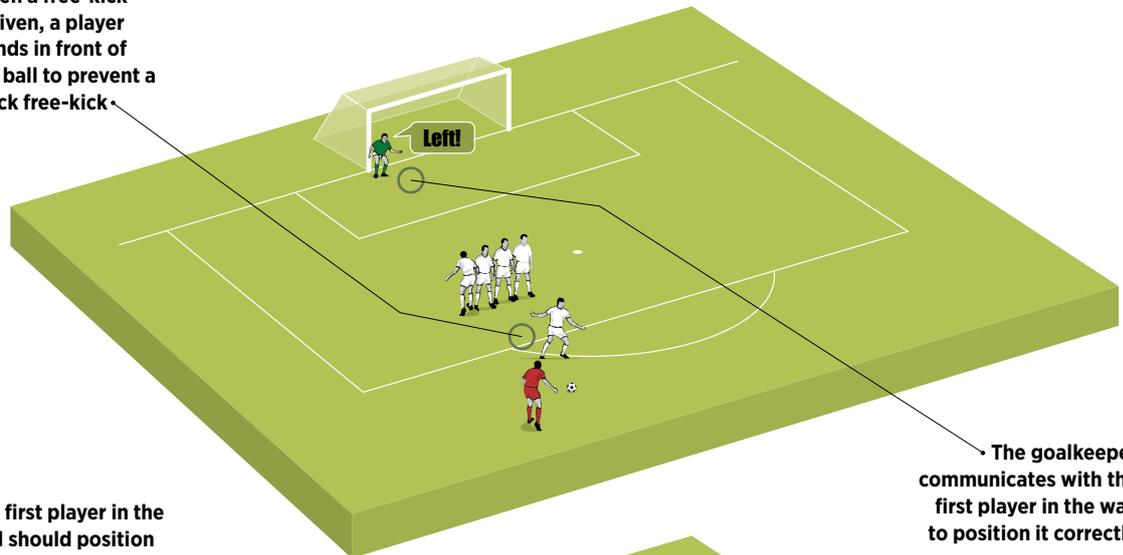
## TECHNIQUE

By following this session teams are less likely to get punished from quick free-kicks or from direct shots at the goal. The positioning of the wall and the keeper are key to successfully defending free-kick set pieces.

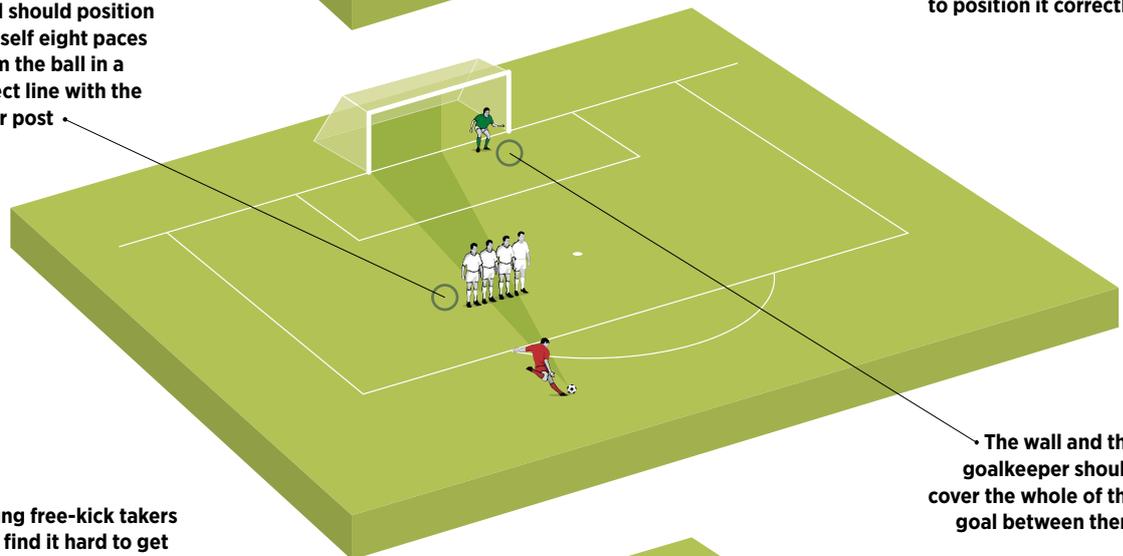
When a free-kick is given, a player stands in front of the ball to prevent a quick free-kick

The first player in the wall should position himself eight paces from the ball in a direct line with the near post

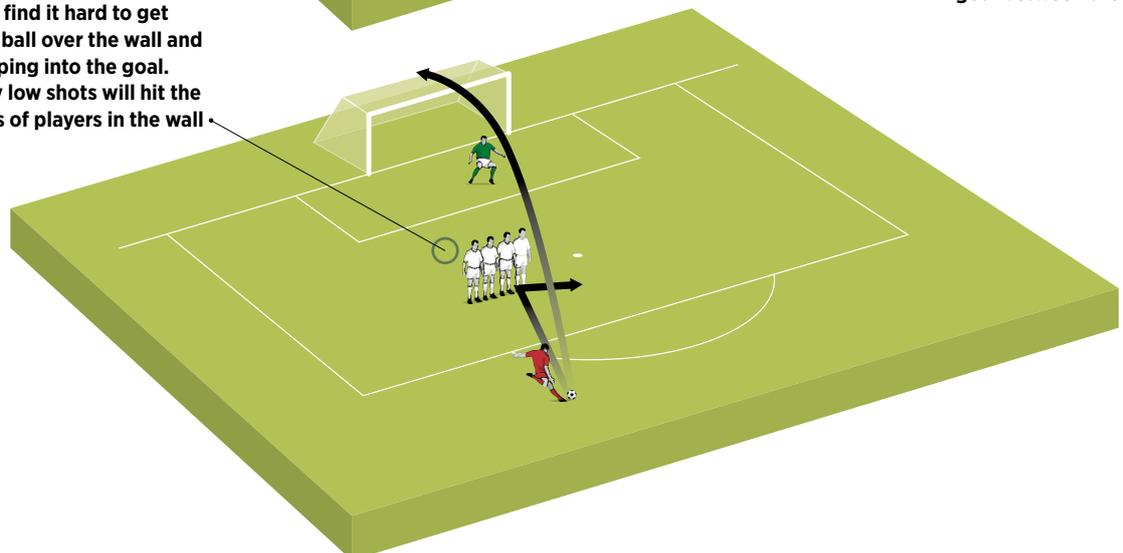
Young free-kick takers will find it hard to get the ball over the wall and dipping into the goal. Any low shots will hit the legs of players in the wall



The goalkeeper communicates with the first player in the wall to position it correctly



The wall and the goalkeeper should cover the whole of the goal between them



Player movement ■■■→

Ball movement →

Run with ball ■■■→

Shot →