

Passing and Receiving

Fundamentals Of Passing

There are many different ways to pass the ball in soccer. Some of them are basic and some more advanced. You can pass with the inside of the foot, the outside, the toe and even the heel (back pass). You can lay the ball out flat, make it curve in or out, chip it, loft it etc.

What we'll be concerned with here initially are the fundamentals of basic passing, what you would teach to a 7 year old (and up) to build a foundation for more advanced techniques.

The basic coaching points for basic *inside of the foot passing* , ***From the Nose to the Toes*** are:

1. Head down – eye on the ball
2. Plant non-kicking foot along side the ball
3. Pick a spot near the center of the ball, strike ball at, or slightly above, this spot. Properly struck (in this manner) the ball should turn away from the passer and towards the receiver
4. Follow through

Sounds simple right? Well lets break them down one by one and then suggest methods for teaching this technique.

First, head down...you always hear coaches tell the players to play with their head up right? And of course that is right in most situations. The "head up" component of passing precedes the actual execution of the skill.

In other words the player must already have his target picked out before he executes the pass. Why head down? Because your eyes cannot affect the flight of the ball. It is more important that you strike the ball correctly and that is done by eye-foot coordination. In the best case, and with a lot of practice, the head is down for only a split second. As the players get older, peripheral vision comes into play and only the eyes move.

Second.. the plant foot. Important because if you plant your foot behind the ball your kicking foot is coming up as you strike leading to undercutting the ball. Now in advanced passing that is *sometimes* what you want to do but when we're teaching the younger ages we just want the ball to travel in a straight line with some "weight" on it.

Third.. picking a spot on the ball. Again if you kick too low you'll undercut the ball, pick too high and you'll "top" it. With a lot of practice a child will automatically pick the sweet spot on the ball.

Last.. follow through. A common mistake made at the younger ages is the lack of a follow through...kick through the ball. They tend to jerk back as they strike the ball and consequently do not get a lot of power on the pass.

Teaching the Fundamental Skill of Passing

Have the players form two lines facing each other. One line goes down to their knees and holds the ball with both hands on the ground. The hands are safely together and **BEHIND** the ball. It is best if you demonstrate this technique before someone's fingers are accidentally kicked.

The kicking players are to strike the ball moderately hard, without trying to kick the ball out of their teammates hands.

Coaching Points

1. Break the skill into simple steps.
 - Show where to strike the ball
 - Show where to plant the non-kicking foot
 - Show the head down position (eyes-on-the-ball)
2. Make sure that the players take their time in "resetting" after each kick. It is more important that technique is perfected than they get done with the drill. A lot of the younger players view everything as a race or a contest.
3. *Listen* for the sound of a ball being struck correctly. This is a very overlooked cue in sports. A well struck ball in any sport has a distinct sound to it. It is a very good way to get feedback on how a player is doing and once they recognize it, it is a powerful motivational tool that does not require "outside" (i.e. you the coach) intervention.
4. Make sure that both the dominant foot and the **non-dominant foot** are used. As the skill is acquired, try spending twice as much time on the non-dominant foot in order to build it up.

Once the fundamental technique is acquired it is time to move on to actual passing. At this point coaches tend to amplify the lesson into both passing *and* receiving. As the players get older this is more and more appropriate since they have been exposed to both. In addition you really need to be able to do both to effectively work the passing skill but at the real young ages if you introduce a second skill you will dilute what you are trying to get across. In general, teaching one skill at a time is the better course of action **at the younger ages**.

In addition, and I cannot stress this enough, use of the non-dominant foot has to be stressed during each and every exercise.

Progression of the Passing Skill

Basic Passing Progression #1

Have the players form two lines about 10 yards apart facing each other. Each player in one line starts with the ball. Make sure there is adequate room between the players for errant passes. If you find that the distance between the lines is too great stop the drill and bring them closer together. The drill must be geared for success to build confidence.

Have the players begin passing to their partner. As with the static drill mentioned above watch for proper striking technique, proper foot placement, eye-foot coordination (head down) and follow through.

But now in addition to these coaching points you must look for:

- 1) Proper “*weight*” on the ball. Weight is the speed, spin and/or pace of the ball. Too little weight and the ball doesn’t reach the target....too much and it is difficult to receive.
- 2) Accuracy. The plant foot is a big determiner of where the pass will go. Generally the pass will go where the plant foot toes point. You’ll see a lot of toes turning outward at the beginning. This should be corrected.
- 3) Stress that the player should not step back to kick the ball. A common error at the young ages is for the player to stop the ball, take one or two steps back and then pass it.

Again work both the dominant and non-dominant foot. Build success first with the dominant foot and then begin to work the non-dominant foot at a rate equal to twice that for the dominant one.

Basic Passing Progression #2 –The Triangle

The basic “shape” on the soccer field is the triangle. And the first basic tactical concept, which we will not go into in depth here, is the concept of *support*. In its simplest form the concept of support should find the ball carrier with players to his/her right and left giving him passing options. One coach I know used the approach of having the players “*draw his six-shooters*”, holding their hands out at approximately 45° from their bodies. The fingers of the *six-shooters* then point at the two support players.

The easiest way to start the support triangle is to set up cones as markers where the players should stand. Start with the ball at the apex (center) of the triangle. Have this player pass to the left and then receive the ball back. Then pass to the right and receive the ball back. After 10 repetitions change the center player and repeat.

Coaching Points

- 1) Watch for body position on the pass. The plant foot is still the biggest determiner of where the ball will go.
- 2) The receiving player should take the ball on the foot **opposite** the direction from which the pass is coming. (i.e. if the pass is coming from the left, the right foot receives, and vice versa.) This is called opening up to the field of play, another concept that we will go into in more depth later.

Basic Passing Progression #3 –One Touch Passing

Have the players form two lines about 10 yards apart facing each other. Each player in one line starts with the ball. Make sure there is adequate room between the players for errant passes. If you find that the distance between the lines is too great stop the drill and bring them closer together. The drill must be geared for success to build confidence.

Have the players begin passing to their partner. At the youngest age you may want to have the ball served by hand, i.e. have the ball rolled to the kicking partner who now has to one touch (or one time) the ball back to their partner who picks it and rolls it back.

Once everyone is comfortable with one-touch you can progress to having both partners kick the ball one touch to each other. Make a game of it. Have them count how many times they can keep the ball going without either missing. Progress to a game where on each successive kick the players take one step closer to each other until the ball is ricocheting back and forth at a rapid pace.

Below are some basic passing games you can have a lot of fun with your younger players while teaching the fundamental skill.

Basic Passing Game U7: Keep Your Yard Clean

Create a 5 - 10 yard neutral area that no player can enter. Use a minimum of one ball per two players (for best results use a ball for each player). On command, each team tries to keep it's side free of balls by kicking through the neutral zone to the opposite side. Play for a specific time limit.

Progressions

- Must use two touches.
- Only use inside of foot.
- Only use instep (laces) when kicking.
- Increase size of neutral zone for more advanced players.
- Use fewer balls.

Basic Passing Game U7: Rabbits

Create a grid 10 yards wide by 30 long. Line players up on both sides of the short side of the grid. Each player has a ball. One player starts on one end of the long side of the grid without a ball. Place a cone at the opposite end. The player without the ball has to run to the other end, grab the cone and return. The players with the balls have to try and hit the player carrying the cone with their ball below the waist.

Progressions

- Place several cones within the grid. The player has to retrieve them all one at a time.
- Advance to retrieving two cones at a time so that the player stays in the grid longer.

Basic Passing Game U7: Bowling

Place cones within a 10 x 10 yard grid. Each player has a ball. The object is to pass the ball into the grid and knock over a cone.

Basic Passing Game U7 to U12: Numbers Passing

Create a field about 20 x 30 yards. Players are numbered 1 to 5. (Make multiple teams and keep the numbers low so each player gets multiple touches on the ball.) Players pass the ball to the player with the number one higher than their own. (e.g. 1 passes to 2, 5 to 1). Ball travels through the entire team.

Progressions:

- Initially, allow unlimited touches, players in static positions
- Then two touches, not allowing the ball to stop
- Then one touch.
- Try playing with left foot only
- Outside of foot only
- With movement through a designated area

Coaching Points

- Look for players making eye contact.
- Good passing technique.
- Angles of support.
- Proper weight of passes.
- Keep body open to the field of play

Fundamentals of Receiving

As with passing, there are many different ways to receive the ball in soccer. Some of them are basic and some more advanced. Receiving, *and then preparing the ball for the next action*, is possibly the single most important skill in soccer. So important that it has been given its own terminology, ***the first touch***.

What we'll be concerned with here initially are the fundamentals of basic receiving, what you would teach to a 7 year old (and up) to build a foundation for more advanced techniques.

The coaching points for basic *foot receiving*, ***From the Nose to the Toes*** are:

1. Head up – make eye contact with the passer and “request” the ball
2. Knees flexed – be ready to move in any direction
3. Heel down – toe up
4. Play the ball outside of your “footprints”.
5. Soft touch – give a little as the ball hits the foot

Sounds simple right? Well lets break them down one by one and then suggest ways and means of teaching this technique.

First, head up...the opposite of what you do just before you pass. Requesting a pass, non-verbally, is an important and overlooked aspect of receiving the ball. Players at the young ages will probably shout for a pass to be sent to them. And that is all right when they are young, but as they progress the non verbal cues, eye contact, starting a run to space, etc. etc., become more important.

Second.. knees flexed...if the player stands rigidly, with the knees locked, in order to move after an errant pass he/she must first flex the knees and then move. This wastes valuable time and often results in the player not being in a good position to receive the ball. Remember, not every pass is going to be right on the money.

Third... heel down, toe up. This is a common mistake. Many young players will leave the foot flat on the ground. The result is that many balls will just run over the toes and keep going. Balls that take a slightly bad bounce will do the same. The pass in this case is received on the inside surface of the foot.

On very young players you can have them receive a pass with the heel down toe up on the **sole** of the foot. A common mistake here is that the player tries to step on the ball, timing exactly when the pass will move underneath their foot. Obviously this requires a degree of eye – foot coordination that is not necessary if the child would simply plant the heel on the ground and raise the toe.

Fourth...Play the ball outside of your footprints. Have the players visualize where their footprints are as they prepare to receive the ball. If you are working

in a gym you can outline the footprints with athletic tape to illustrate the point. The training technique is to set the ball outside of where they are standing, i.e. outside of their footprints. A common mistake that young players make is to stop the ball dead at their feet. They then have to take a step or two backwards to get set to play the ball to the next player.

Last.. soft touch. Many young players are too rigid when the ball is played to them. Many even “attack” the ball. The result is that the ball bounces away and is lost. The foot has to give a little, moving back away from the direction the ball is coming, ball so that it can be set up for the next action, either another pass, a shot or some dribbling move.

With more advanced players you will see them actually lifting the foot and then bringing it down in a slight “slicing” motion to bring the ball to a standstill.

Teaching the Fundamental Skill of Receiving

Have the players form two lines facing each other, pairing up with a partner across from them. Assuming that basic passing has been taught, have each pair pass the ball back and forth.

Start out simple by using a sole of the foot trap. Make sure that the non-dominant foot is used as well as the dominant one.

Progress to an inside of the foot receive using first the dominant foot and then the non-dominant one.

Allow multiple touches on the ball to start, then progress to two touches and finally to one touch.

Basic Receiving Progression #1 –The Triangle

The basic shape on the soccer field, as was discussed in passing, is the triangle. Now we use the same passing progression to work the receiving skill. Here instead of the player at the apex being the distributor of the balls have the players pass around the triangle.

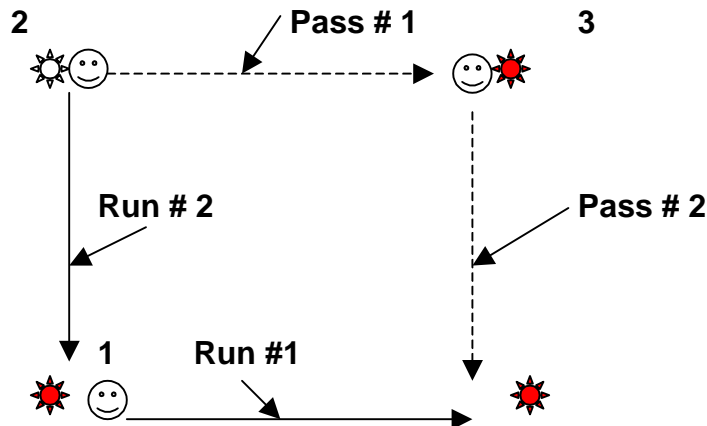
Initially all balls come from, lets say, the left. The receiving player receives the ball on the inside of the right foot, i.e. plays the ball across their body and opens up to the field prepared to pass to the next player.

The direction is then reversed and the ball comes from the right. The receiving player then receives the ball with the left foot and opens up to the field prepared to pass to the next player.

Remember to emphasize the points discussed previously, heel down – toe up, play the ball outside of your “footprints”, soft touch – give a little as the ball hits the foot.

Basic Receiving Progression # 2 – The Triangle with Movement

Set up a square grid with cone and place players at three of these cones. **Player # 2** starts with the ball. He initially has support to his right and left from **Players # 1 and # 3**. He now passes to **Player 3**. **Player 3** now only has support from **Player # 2**. **Player #1** therefore must recognize this and run to the unoccupied cone and re-establish support in two directions for the ball handler



So the basic idea is to pass and have the player *off the ball* react to the pass and provide support by running to the open space, in this case, the unoccupied cone.

Coaching Points

1. Since there is no pressure stress technical excellence
2. The *off the ball* player should be alert to make his run.
3. The passer should make eye contact with the player to whom he is passing. That not only alerts the receiver, but it cues the off the ball player to make his supporting run.
4. Passes should be received open to the field. For example, in the diagram above, if **Player # 3** received the ball from **Player #2** with his right foot, he would have to either play the ball across his body to **Player # 1**, (the *off the ball* player making his run), or two-touch it to his left foot, or play it back to **Player # 2**.

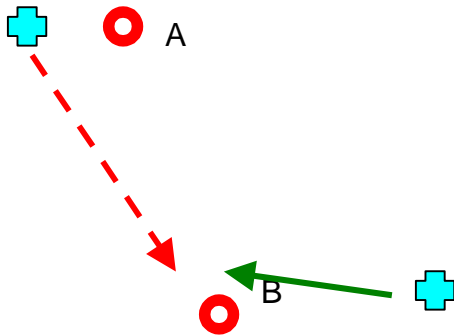
Effectively by playing the ball with the wrong foot he has limited his passing options. When there is no pressure, he will have time to adjust. However under pressure the extra second that it takes to adjust may mean the difference between a completed pass and a loss of possession.

Dynamic Receiving

Coach Peter Gratton, a USSF D License coach that I know from the soccer coaching list makes some additional good points about passing and receiving on the move.

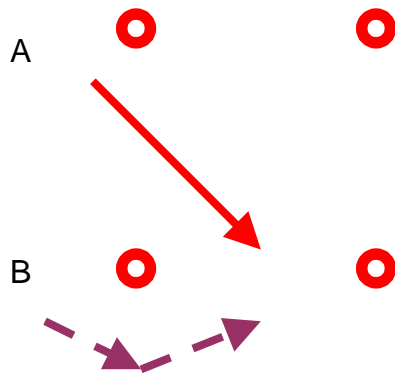
One of the things that many players without good receiving skills "**good first touch**" do is to **wait on the ball**. They actually stand still and allow opponents to close down on them. Many times they are completely open - stand still and allow the defender to close on them. For most this static version is how they were taught to receive a ball/pass. This needs to be changed to "**DYNAMIC RECEIVING.**"

One simple technique ESPECIALLY for younger players U-5 - U-10 is to NOT pass to the player doing passing drills/activities. Cones are very easy to use to cause this "moving to the ball/DYNAMIC RECEIVING."



Simply have A pass to the cone beside B. B must receive the ball before it reaches the cone. Go back to original position and pass back to A's cone and then repeat.

Another version,



Again A passes between B's cones. In this version B moves behind, receives and then returns to their original position and passes through A's cones. Another version is to increase the distance and require the player to run through the cones to receive the ball. Then the player moves back through the cones to their original position and passes to their partner.

Basic Types of Passing

Now that we have introduced the basic pass and receive concepts, there are several basic types of passing that we would like to acquaint you with along with basic drills to teach them. The basic pass types are:

1. Square
2. Diagonal
3. Through
4. Wall Pass (Give and Go)

A key ingredient of a good passing game is player movement. There are two types of positive movement. The first type is *towards the ball*. This is also called "**showing**" for the ball. The second type of movement is *away from the ball*. This type of movement stretches out the defense or causes the defense to have to adjust.

Showing for the ball is characterized by a quick burst of movement towards the ball at the time. This type of run demands the ball to be played to the feet of the player showing.

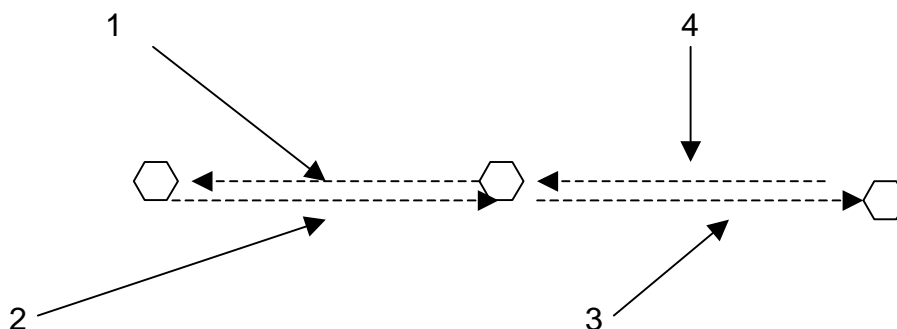
Runs away from the ball are often into undefended space. These runs usually provide a long pass opportunity. Passes should be targeted into space for the player to run onto.

Players must be trained to constantly adjust their position based on the ball position and location of the other players. When one player moves, this generally creates space for another player to move into or exploit.

The Square Pass

A pass is defined as "square" when the passing and receiving players are basically in line with each other shoulder-to-shoulder.

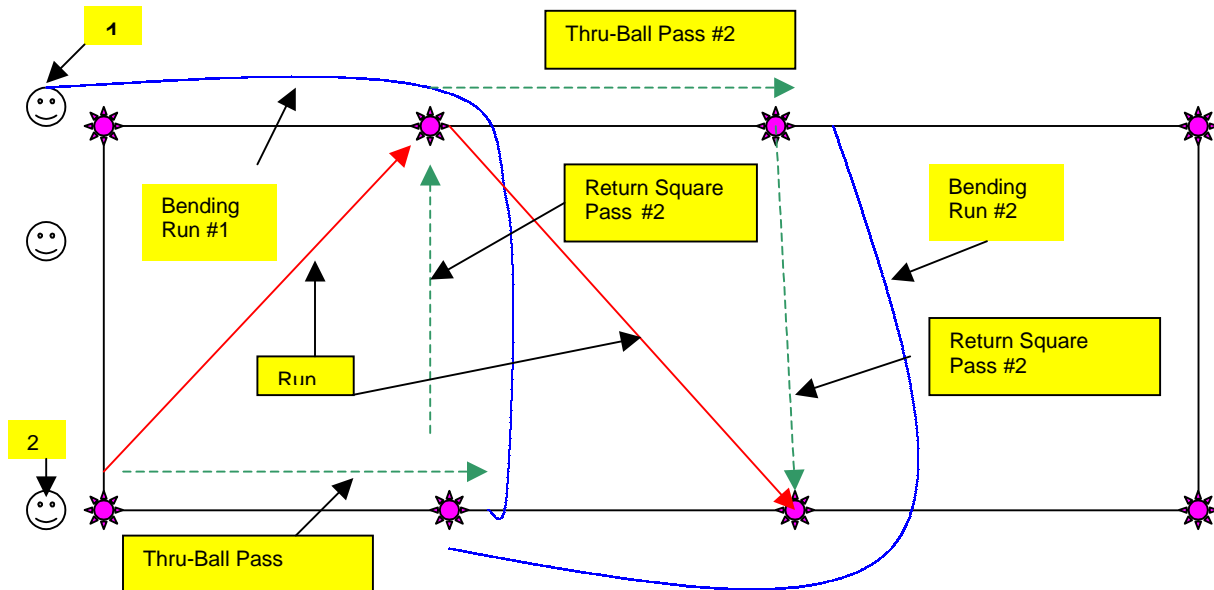
The three players below are square to each other. The pass sequence is 1-2-3-4, pass and return.



8. Emphasize that this is not a race and that just receiving the ball and “bombing” it down field is not the goal of the exercise

The Through-Ball Pass

In the simplest form of the through-ball pass the receiver will make a *bending run*, initially around a static defender, and then receive the ball.



Player #2 has a ball. **Player #1** makes eye contact with **Player #2** and then starts out on a bending run around the cone directly in front of him/her. The run ends at the cone directly in front of **Player #2**. **Player #2** passes the ball to player one at this cone (leading him into the cone).

Again this pass is to space. Space is exploited by the person making the run and causes the defense to adjust.

Player 2 then makes a diagonal, cross-field run and receives a square pass back from **Player #1**.

Player #1 then repeats his bending run in the opposite direction and receives another through ball from **Player #2**. **Player #2** repeats his diagonal, cross-field run and receives back a square pass.

This sequence is repeated for as many times as the coach wants and then is reversed so each player gets to make the bending run and the through-ball pass.

Coaching Points

1. Eye –Contact before the pass – *Request the Ball*
2. Timing – Have player and ball arrive at the cone at approximately the same time
3. Receiver must open up to the field of play. This is a difficult concept at times, particularly in this drill. The receiver naturally has their back to the field of

play unless they turn their hips as they receive the ball and face back in towards the field.

- Receiver of the square pass must also open up to the field

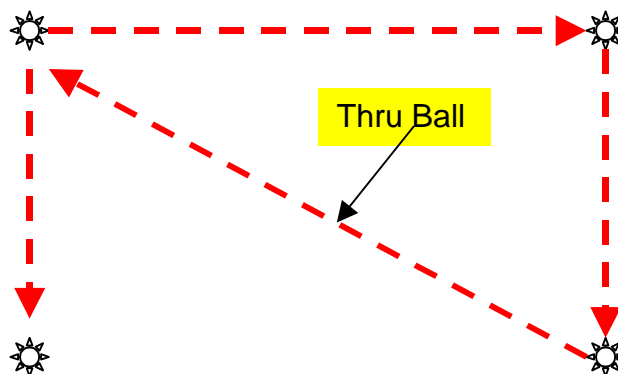
Progressions

1. Add a static defender in each of the passing zones so that there is a visual cue as to where the pass has to go to clear this person
2. Add a second static defender around which the bending runner has to maneuver
3. Have the defenders become semi-active, placing pressure on the passer and receiver but NOT being allowed to intercept the ball
4. Move the game to a free-flow style (remove the cones and boundaries). Play with numbers up on offense and have the players make bending runs throughout the field and receive the ball. Start this with semi-active defenders and progress to $\frac{3}{4}$ active and full pressure as #3 above.
5. Make sure in the free-flow drill that the players are bending their runs behind defenders.
6. Can make this drill a run towards the ball by having the receiver “show” at the cone at which he is receiving the pass. The play still makes the bending run but at the end checks back towards the passer and receives the ball.

In this case, instead of making a square pass back to the original passer, the player receiving the ball should two-touch it to the player making the diagonal run

Through-Ball Pass in the Triangle

We now want to introduce the through ball pass and relate it to the basic shape the team takes on the field, that is, the triangle. In order to perform this exercise we set up a rectangular grid of cones, approximately 10 yards by 15 yards. Place a player at each cone. What you effectively have here are two triangles.



The ball is passed from player to player in any order. Every third (or every fifth, you decide) pass is a through ball. The through ball is to the player diagonally across from the passer. Initially, players should yell through ball as they let the pass go so that the concept becomes ingrained.

Coaching Points

1. Two touch passes to start. Emphasize all of the proper receiving and passing techniques discussed.
2. Players should be thinking ahead, knowing that if the ball is coming to them where they want to go next with the ball.
3. Make sure that they open up to the field of play.
4. Since there is no pressure, stress technical excellence.

Progressions

This is a good drill for working progressions from easy to difficult while teaching the concept of a through-ball pass.

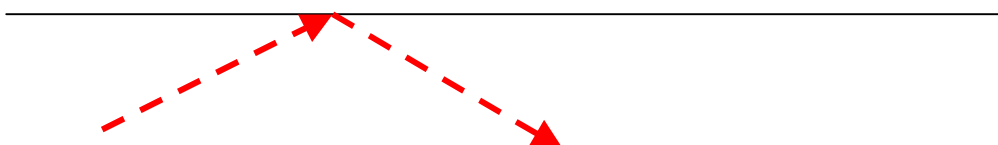
1. Progression 1 is to have two players in different color pennies on the field, inside the grid. These players are entirely passive. They are there to give the ball handlers visual cues as to where pressure is coming from.
2. Have the ball handlers decide now when they should split the defenders with the through pass
3. Let the defenders become semi-active, i.e. be allowed to intercept a ball but not steal it, or pressure the players, once the pass is past them.
4. Have the defenders become fully active allowing them to pressure all over the field.
5. Switch players often.
6. **Praise good decision making**

The Wall Pass

One of the most effective passing techniques/tactics for soccer is the give-and-go pass. The give-and-go (or wall pass) is basic to the games of basketball, hockey as well as soccer. In simple terms, the player with the ball passes to their teammate, who, at the beginning, is stationary. The receiving player is, in essence, the wall.

And what happens when a ball hits a wall? It rebounds. If it hits it at an angle it rebounds at the same angle. And that is all we are trying to do here.

Perhaps the easiest way to introduce the wall pass is to use a wall. If you have a gym you can spread players out along the walls and just have them pass to each other as shown below.

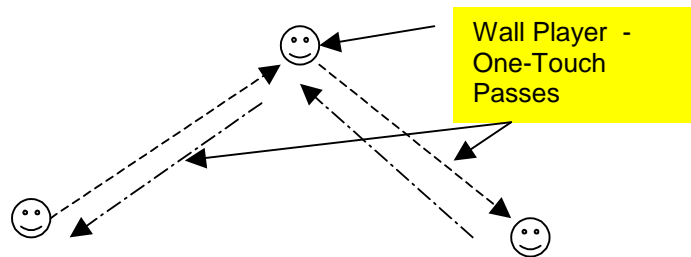




If you are outside start the fundamental skill by putting three people together in a triangle. The player at the apex of the triangle is now the wall.

In order to teach this skill correctly, you want the center player to truly act like a wall. In order to do this you want this player to one-touch the ball on to the next player. With the younger ages the wall player should start out as a coach or a parent so that the drill builds success.

One of the good coaching points about wall passes at the younger ages is that when the pass is given it always moves on and /or comes back. Skilled players sometimes tend to hold the ball longer than is prudent simply because they think that when they give it up, it will never come back to them.



Coaching Points

1. Switch the center player after every ten passes.
2. Receiving players can use two touches. Since they are under no pressure, stress technical excellence. They should play the ball to the wall player so that he/she doesn't have to move for the ball.
3. The wall player has the "pressure" of having to one touch the pass on to the next player. Stress that he/she should play the ball with the foot that is open to the field. For example, a pass coming from their left, and moving on to their right, should be played with the right foot.

Failure to do so causes the ball to be chopped across the body, either as a pass, or as a "prelude" touch so that the right foot can send the ball onward.

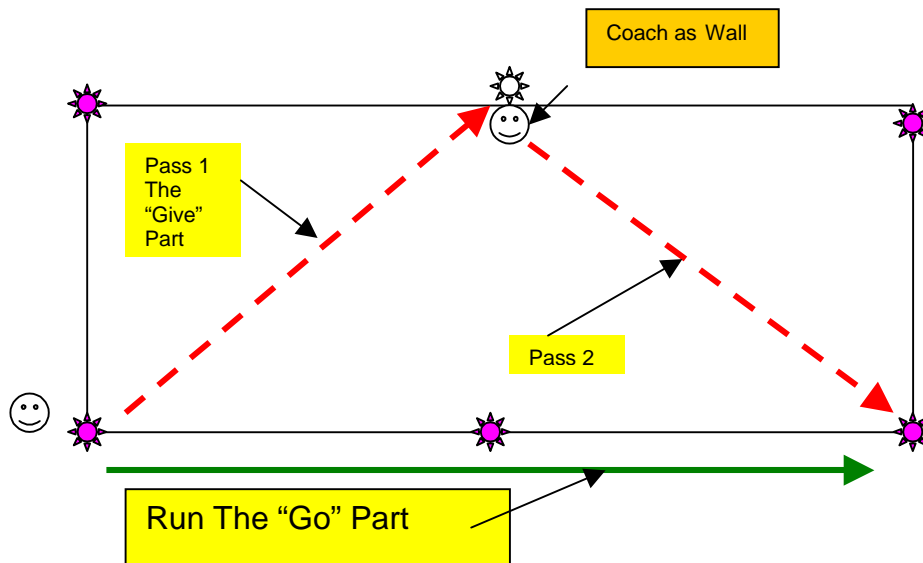
The first instances causes the ball to be struck as the foot is moving usually leading to a more inaccurate pass. The second "wastes" time since you are now two-touching the ball.

4. With regard to #2 above, every pass will not be perfect. The wall player must be prepared to move laterally to open themselves up to the field of play. They do this by 1), being on their toes with their knees flexed, ready to move and

2), swiveling their hips so that they get around the ball and take it on the correct foot.

Wall Pass with Movement (The Give-and-Go)

The next progression of the wall pass is to add player movement. I would suggest for the younger levels that you start this drill with a coach acting as the wall to build success. Timing the run of the player is critical and takes a lot of demonstration and a lot of practice. The basic setup is shown below:



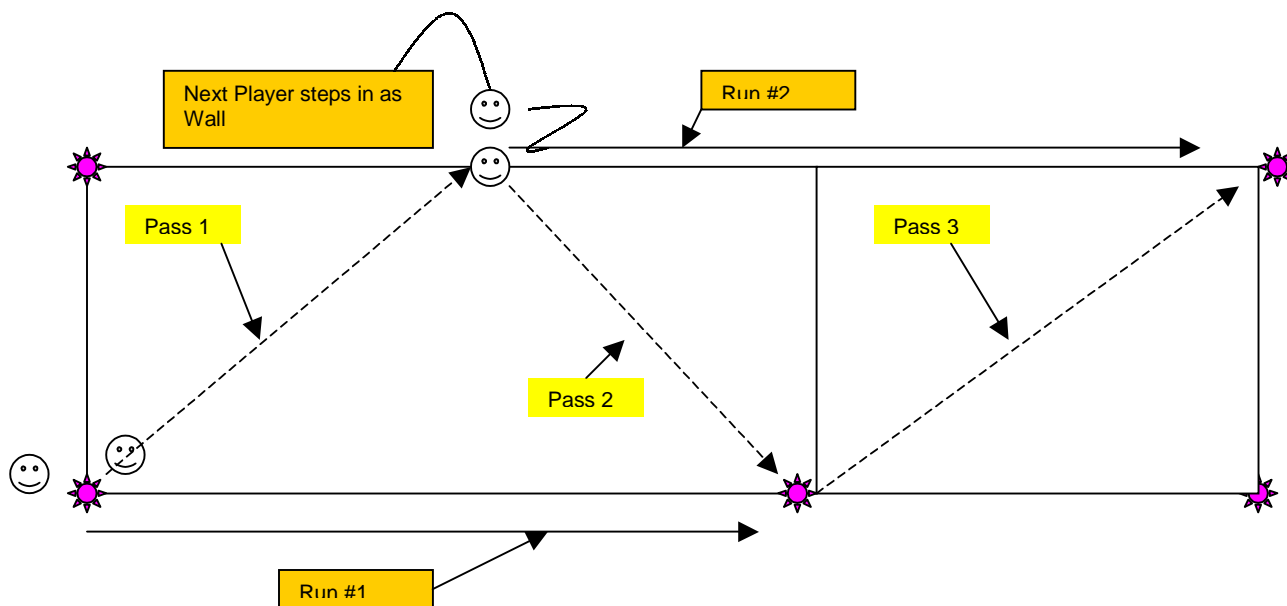
Player passes to the coach and **immediately** makes his run to the second cone on his side. The coach times the run so that the ball and the player arrive at the same time. If there are two coaches repeat the process. Otherwise have the players pull a move after they receive the ball and rejoin the line at the end.

Coaching Points

1. Stress that the run is immediate. Do not watch the pass since once it has left your foot, there is nothing your eyes can do about affecting the flight of the ball
2. Stress that the ball must be played with the proper weight so that it gets there, but doesn't get there with so much pace that it cannot be handled
3. Stress that the ball should be played to the foot that is open to the field. In the illustration above this would be the coach's left foot. In that way the coach does not have to chop the ball across his body.
4. Stress receiving the ball on the foot open to the field. In the illustration above that would be the receiving player's right foot.
5. Switch sides often so that both feet are used by the wall player and by the receiving player

Progressions

1. Once the timing aspect of the drill is understood and the players have achieved some measure of technical proficiency receiving the ball “on the fly”, it is time to make a player the wall.
2. Start the drill in the same manner and work both feet.
3. Switch the wall player often
4. Add movement of the wall player as shown below.



After wall player makes his pass he makes a run to get the wall pass back from whom he passed it to. A second player steps in as the wall. This minimizes standing around.

5. Add a passive defender so that the players can see where the pass has to go and how the run affects the defender.. Generally the pass goes past the defender's front and the run is made behind his back
6. Allow the defenders to attempt to intercept the pass. However since the defender "knows" the drill you now have to add movement on the player making the pass so that the defender has to concentrate not only on the pass but on the fact that the ball handler might dribble past them.

More Games/Drills To Put the Passing and Receiving Skills Together

Basic Pass/Receive Game : Passing Warm Up

Divide the team in two. Place players in a 20 x 20 yd grid without a ball. Place an equal number of players on outside of the grid each with a ball. Inside players move around the grid freely, receive a ball from an outside player and return it as quickly as they can. Switch positions after a while.

Progression

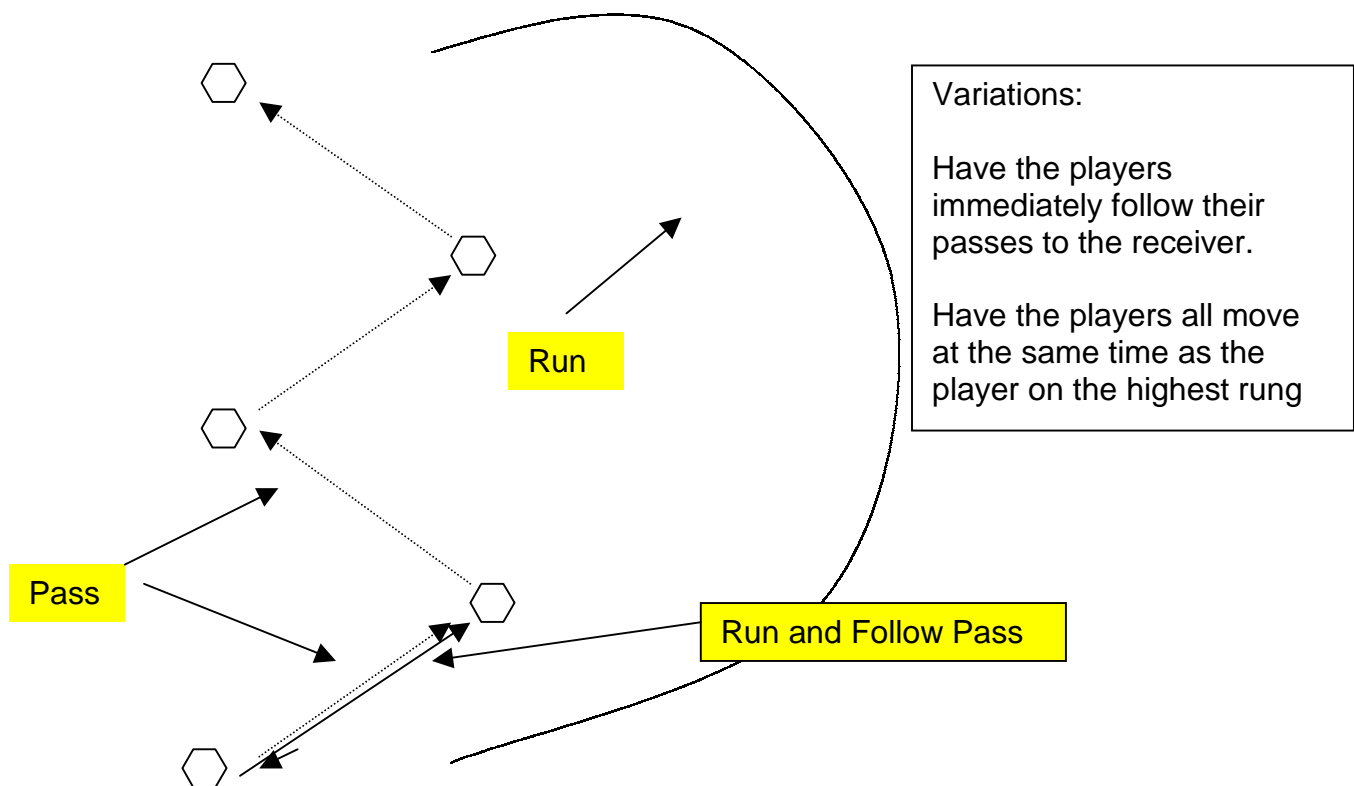
- Return with one touch, then two touches,
- Receive with outside of the foot, inside of the foot, left foot only...
- Receive balls out of the air.
- Receive, turn and find a different target

Coaching Points

- Quality of first touch. Keep it outside your "footprints" so that it can be returned quickly.
- Prepare the receiving surface as soon as possible.
- Be first to the ball, get into the line of flight of the ball.
- Make "eye contact" with the server.
- Changes of speed and direction.
- Do not run "across" the server, check back at an angle. This makes it easier to turn and look back over your shoulder.

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U7: The Ladder Relay

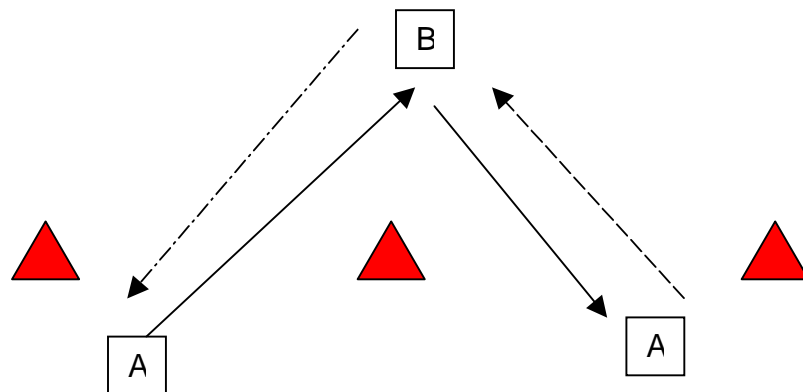
Divide the team into two or three groups depending upon how many players are at practice. Set up a "ladder" of cones as shown. Players pass and receive moving the ball up the ladder. Last player in ladder dribbles ball to bottom and re-starts the passing. When the original bottom rung player gets back to the lowest rung the team "wins".



Basic Pass/Receive Game: U8 Triangle Goals

This is a simple game wherein you set up two (2) goals next to each other with three (3) players as shown. The object is for the players labeled "A" to make a wall pass to Player "B" through the goals.

Have several goals set up and see who can make the most passes in one minute. Eventually the players will understand that to “win” the game they have to be able to accurately one-touch the pass through the goal and be able to use both feet equally well.



Basic Pass/ Receive Game U9: The Circle

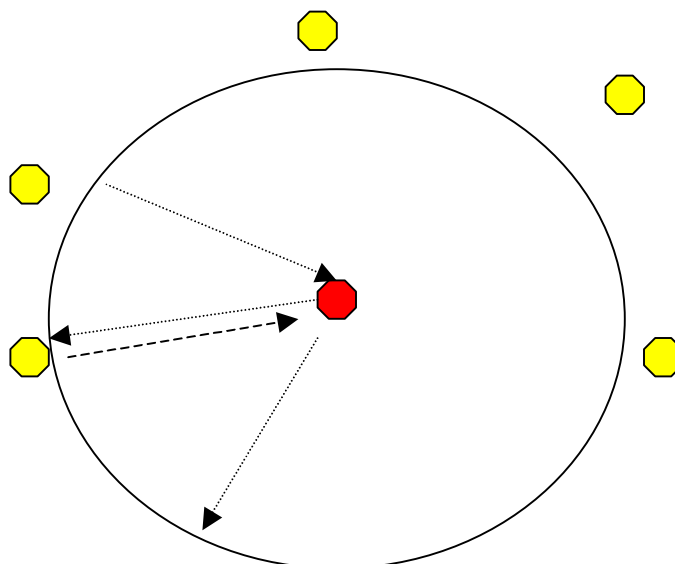
Set up a circle of players and place one player without a ball in the middle. All of the outside players have to have a ball.

Start simply by going around the circle and having each player, in turn, pass to the player inside. The player inside must either multiple touch, two touch or one-touch the ball back to the same player depending upon what the coach has chosen.

If the player inside misses he/she is replaced by the player who passed them the ball.

Progression of the Circle Game

1. Have the player return the ball to the next player in the circle:



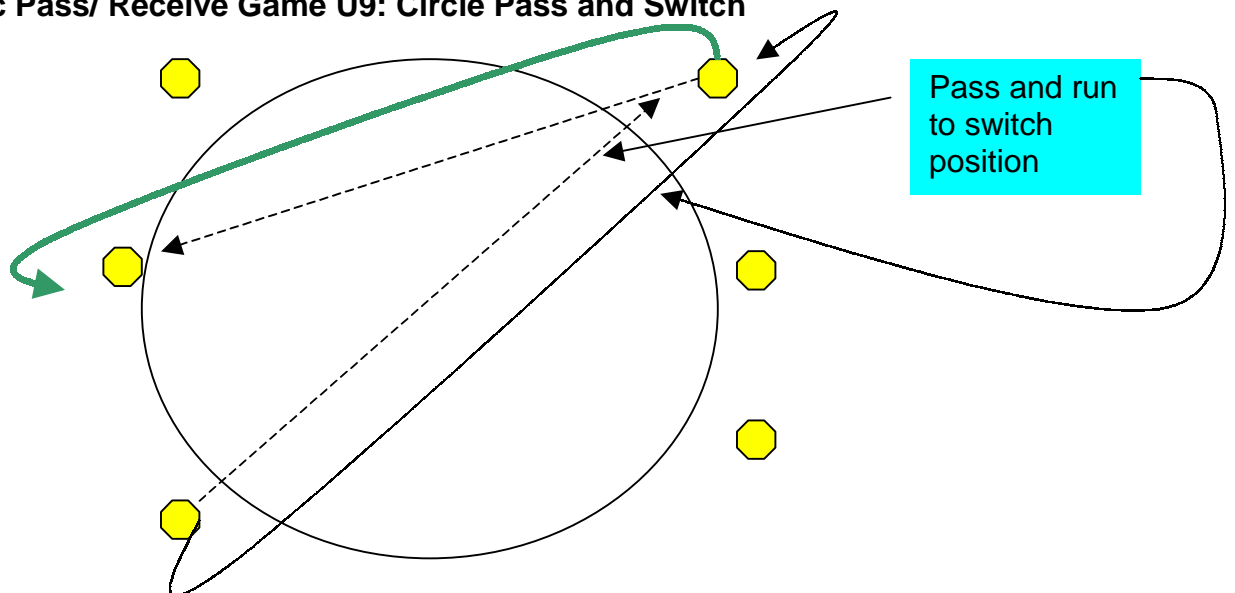


Have the player in the center call out the name of the person he/she is going to return the ball to.

Have the player in the center play first with the right foot and then with the left continually alternating.

Have the player in the center shout 'Through ball' and let the ball pass by them to a waiting player on the outside of the circle.

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U9: Circle Pass and Switch



Organization:

- Five or six players in a circle 10 to 15 yards wide
- One ball. Player one picks out a teammate and passes the ball to him/her.
- She then runs to that teammate place and switched with her.
- Teammate with the ball makes the next pass and run.

Coaching Points:

1. Players must prepare the ball outside of their footprints
2. Players must have proper weight on the ball
3. Players should check back to short passes

4. Players must have their heads up at all times to be ready for the pass
5. Players should know where to go with their pass next **BEFORE** they receive it

Basic Pass/Receive Game U10 The Name Game:

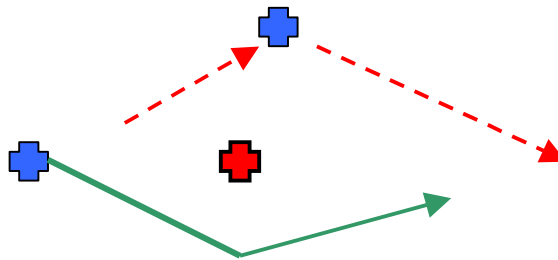
Players in a circle. One ball to a group. Players call out the name of the player to whom they are passing. Progression of this drill is to have them pass and switch. Have them pass with only the non-dominant foot.

Basic Pass/Receive Game U10: Free Form 3 Man Passing

You can use either of these two drills as a basic warm-up exercise. What is a little more advanced about them is that they are free form. The player making the pass has to read off the receiving player and move to space. The player receiving the pass must read the run. The third player is a passive defender who, as the skill level increases, becomes more and more active.

One-Two Give and Go

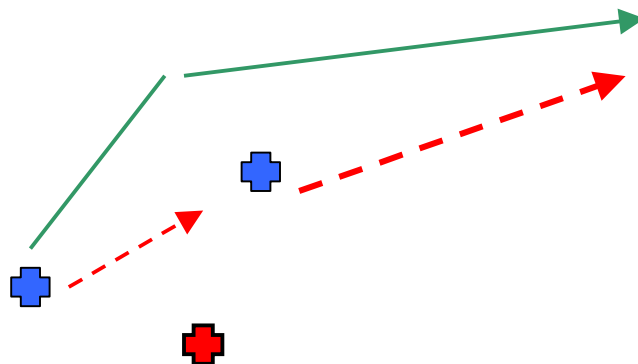
Offensive players play give and go until they complete a specified number of pass and run combinations in a row.



Coaching Points

- Run must be behind the defender
- Pass should be a one touch off the stationary player if possible

Overlap



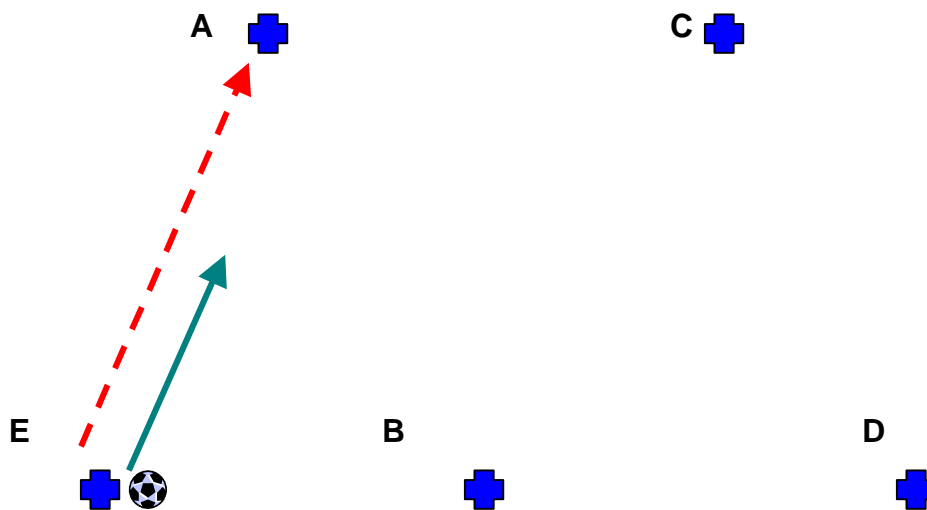
Offensive players play the overlap until they complete a specified number of pass and run combinations in a row.
The difference between the drills is in the first the run is **away from the receiver** and **behind the defender** and in the second one it is **away from the defender** and **toward the receiver**.

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U10: Pass and Move

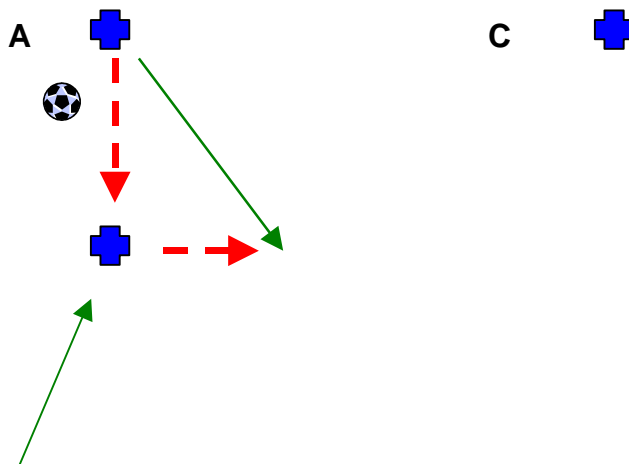
This is a no-pressure passing pattern that incorporates checking back, laying off in a one-two and movement




Set Up

Set up players as shown with a distance of about 20 yds between each

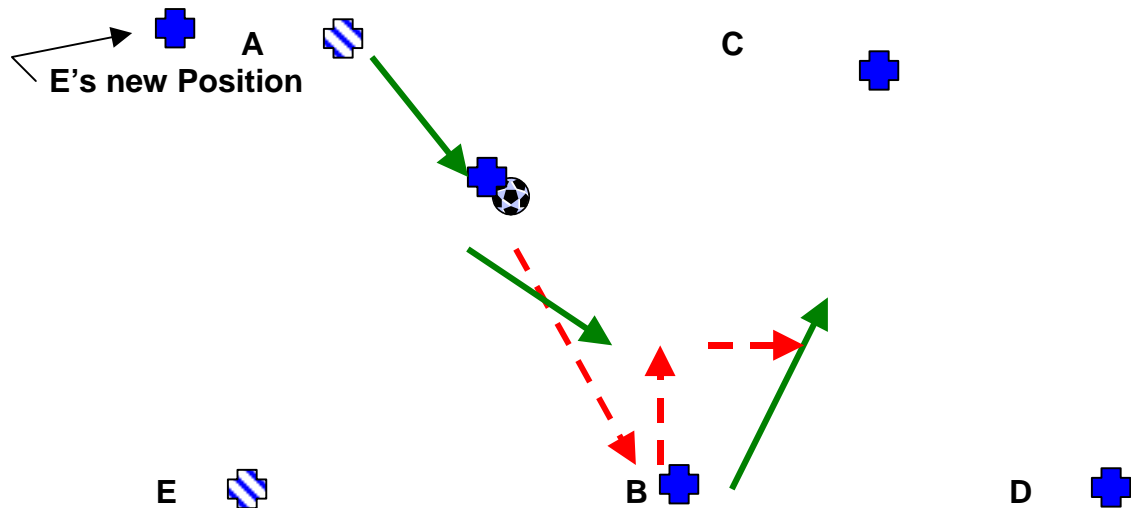


Ball starts at E. Player E makes a pass to player A. Player E then check diagonally to Player A



E  B  D 
 Player A receives and hits Player E checking. Player A then immediately runs towards Player B. Player E lays a 1-2 off to A.

A then re-starts the sequence by passing to B, checking to B, receiving a one touch back from B as shown below.



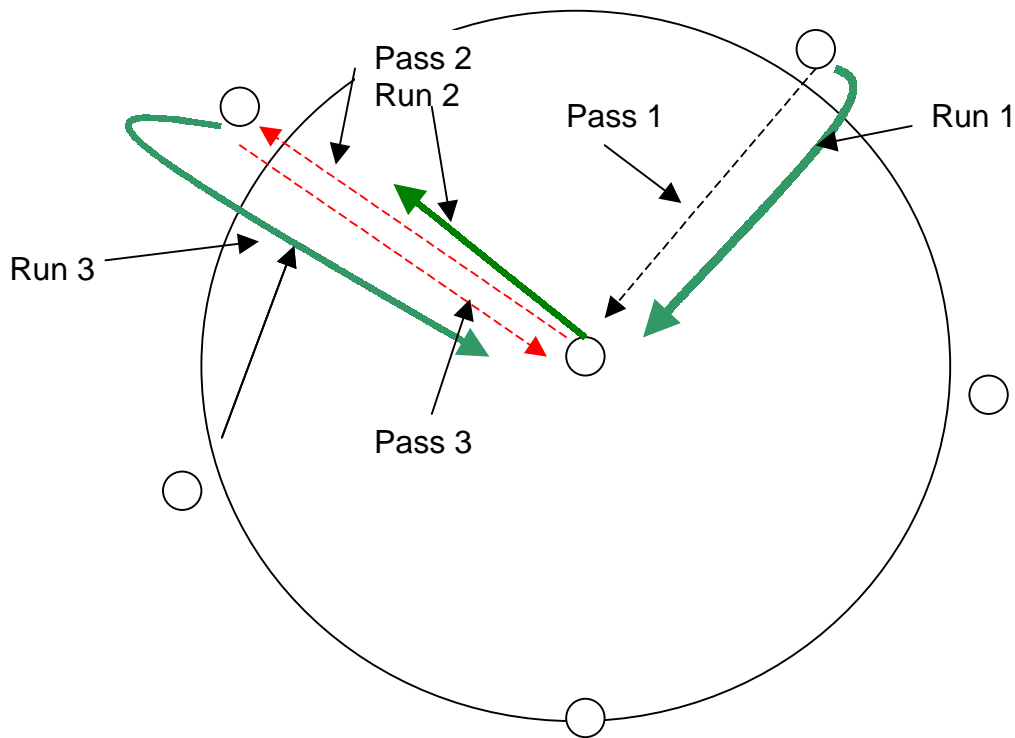
B then re-starts the sequence again, hitting C, checking to C, receiving a one touch from C and then laying the ball back off.

The last player ends up with the ball and no one to pass to so he or she dribbles around the outside past position A and back to the start at position E where they can restart the sequence.

Now it probably is a good idea to have two players or more at position E with balls. That will minimize the standing around and always have a ball at the start of the line.

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U10: Circle One Touch and Go

This is a drill that I picked up from Gary Rue (NSCAA Coach in KY). It is a more advanced drill than the one above and similar, though not as complex, as the Pass and Move shown later in this section.



Organization

- Five or six players around a circle with a player in the middle.
- Ball starts on the outside.
- Ball is always played to the middle from the outside and then from the middle to the outside
- Player always follows their pass, whether running to the outside or to the center.

Coaching Points

1. One touch passing is preferred but start with two touch if you have to
2. Players on the outside should adjust their positions as required to receive the pass.
3. Players should know in advance where they are going with the next pass

Progression of the Circle One Touch and Go

1. Instead of having the player in the middle one touch the ball have them turn and play the ball to the opposite side. Have all of the players yell **“TURN”!** This gets them used to providing direction to a player on their team playing with their back to the opposition

2. Have the player in the middle dummy the ball, (i.e. pretend to play it but let it go by to the opposite side)

You will see some of these drills repeated as part of the Possession and Increasing the Speed of Play section further on in this manual.

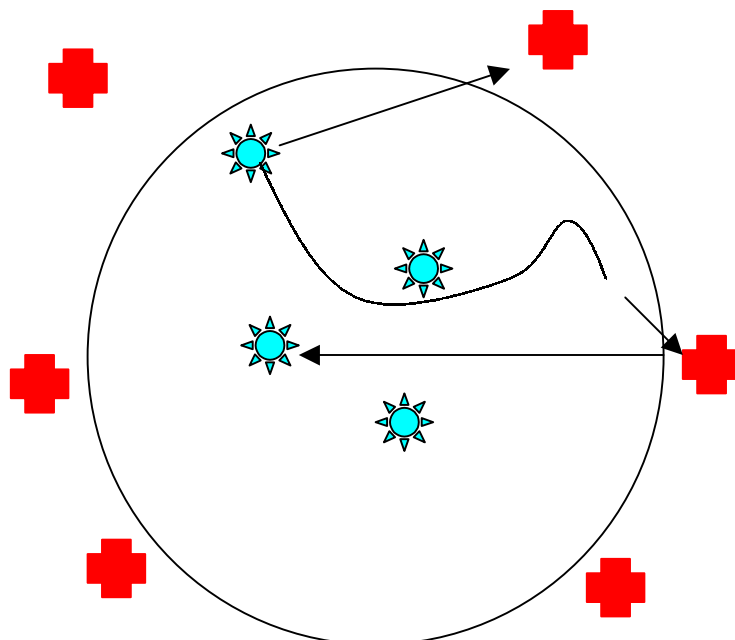
Basic Pass/Receive Game U10: Chaos in the Circle

The following game is used as a warm-up by the U.S. Women's National Team as a way to work receiving skills in a match related type of environment.

Four (4) players are inside a 15 yard diameter circle with the rest of the team outside. Four (4) of the outside players have a ball. The inside players have to run around within the circle and free themselves for a pass coming from the outside.

Initially let them just return the ball to the outside player and then move on to take another pass from **another** outside player. After they have become relatively proficient at receiving the ball have them receive it and perform a three touch move and then return it to another outside player.

The quick movements within the circle, the heads up required so that you don't run into a teammate all help to simulate match type conditions.



Basic Pass/Receive Drill U10: No Where to Hide

This is an exercise for reinforcing moving to space, good passing and receiving skills, and communication. It was suggested by Pam Konrad of the soccer-coach-I e mail list.

Split your group into 2 teams, give each a different color pinnie and play in one half of the field with a keeper.

The goal is for **EVERY** player to first make a good reception from a teammate (not just win a 50/50 ball), then make a good pass to a teammate.

Once the player has done this s/he can flip the front of the pinnie behind their neck. Players who have already "flipped" their pinnies and the GK can be used for passing to relieve pressure, but EVERY player must have his or her pinnie flipped before their team can shoot on goal.

This game has a very good work rate, especially when each team gets down to one or two players left who need to receive/pass.

Basic Pass/Receive Drill U10: Width – Depth - First Touch Away From Pressure

The following drill is a simple pass and move that gets players thinking about width of the field, depth of the field and preparing the ball from a pass with their first touch away from pressure

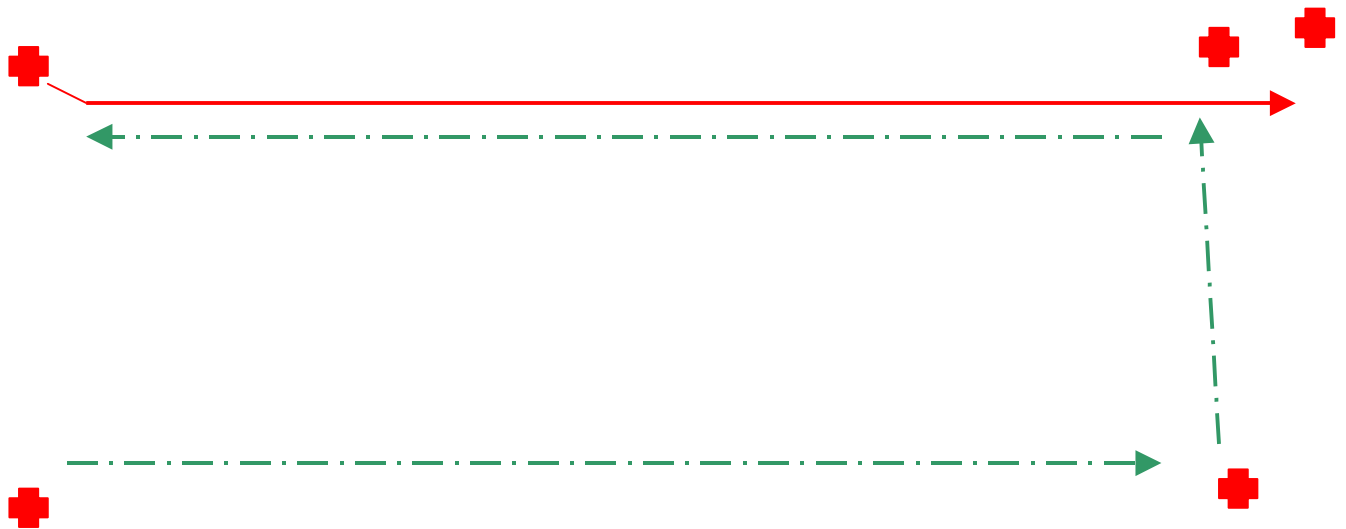
Set Up and Execution

Start the exercise with four (4) players, one at each corner and a spare player behind each. Use one ball to start. The field should be rectangular (since a soccer field is rectangular) and s you should adjust it to the passing abilities of your players.

Ball goes down the long side of the field first. Tell your players to think of this as a pass back to a midfielder. The midfielder now wants to play the ball away from oncoming pressure. The first touch **prepares** the ball to her right. The second touch makes the pass to her support player. This switches the point of the attack and widens the field.

The player receiving the ball follows the same pattern... first touch away from pressure, second touch to make the pass. In this case tell your players that they are a midfielder looking to hit a target player, a forward, down the field. This creates depth.

After the players make their passes they follow them, switching their position in the exercise so that everyone plays the midfielder and target player positions

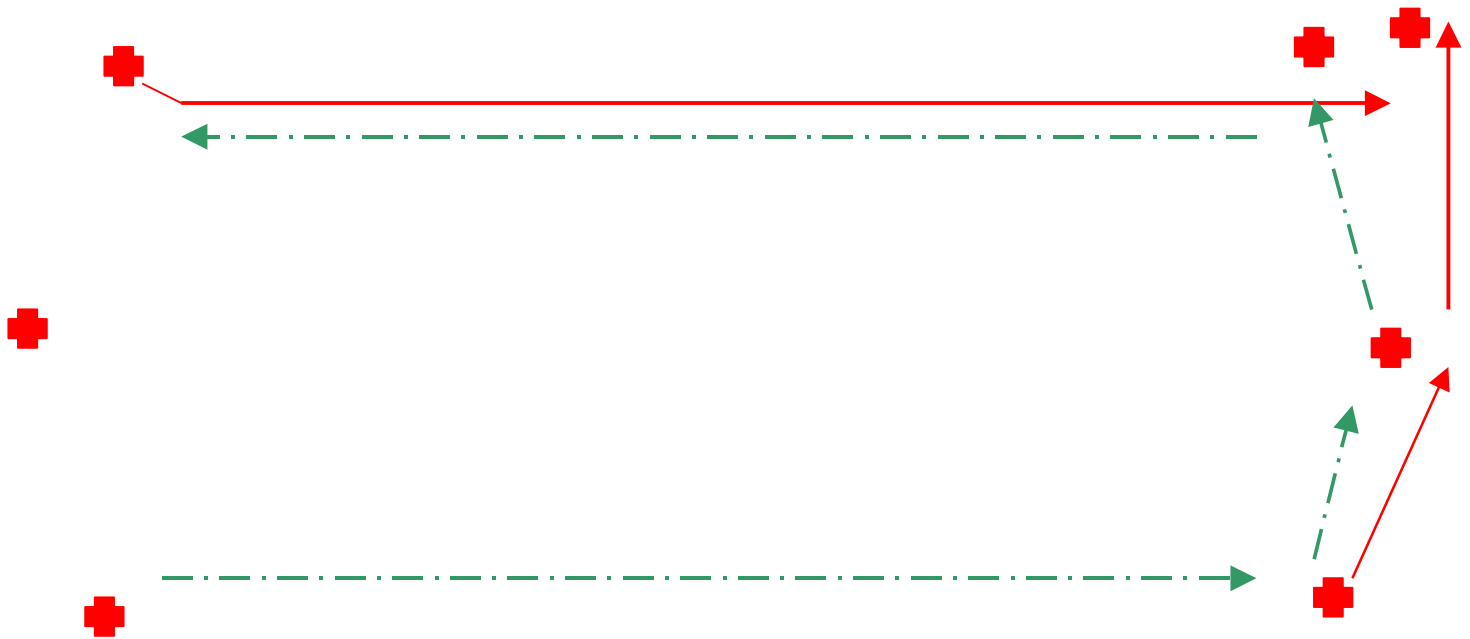


Coaching Points

- Players run after their pass, not jog
- Players MUST two-touch
- Pass to the target player must be driven with the instep.
- Play going both ways so that the players learn to open up both ways and use both dominant and non-dominant foot

Progression of Width – Depth – First Touch Away From Pressure

- Add a center midfielder to the short side of the rectangle.
- The midfielder passes now switch the point of attack twice before the ball is driven down field
- If you watch high level soccer games, (college, pros) you'll see this midfielder switching of the fields all of the time
- Add a defender to put pressure on the passers



Basic Pass/Receive Exercise U10: Color Sequence

This is an exercise that coaching colleague Gary Rue (Kentucky) picked up at the 1999 NSCAA convention. In order to do this you have to have enough pennies of different colors. This exercise is great for working particular technique, plus the awareness side of the game.

Set Up and Execution

Divide into four groups of different colors. Set up the color sequence (e.g., Red – Green – Yellow – White - Red). I.e. each group has four players each with a different color penny.

Now give each passing combination a technique. For example:

- Red works overlaps with Green
- Green hits long ball to Yellow
- Yellow one touches to White
- White receives and turns, does a dribbling move (e.g., Stepover or scissors) and front foot passes to Red

Initially, the players should do this in their own group of four; however, quickly progress to where all players are in the same area and Red (for example) does an overlap with a different Green player, etc.

Without pennies, the last progression would not work as well, but the exercise can remain in the groups of four and just number the players. For fairly young players, just start off with regular inside of the foot passing until they understand their combination responsibilities.

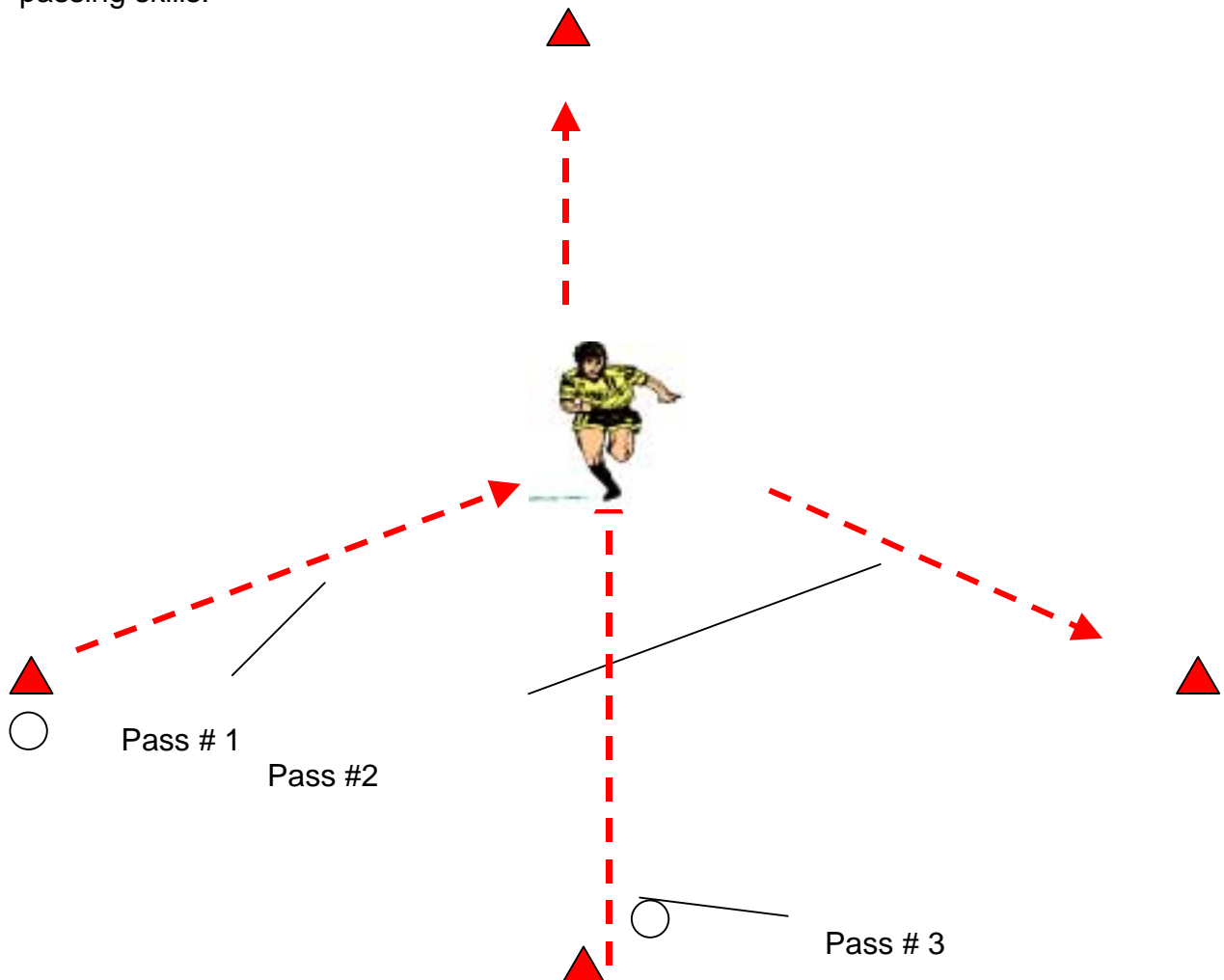
As a side recommendation, the coach should have his passing sequences (and color combinations) worked out on paper. I like to rotate the same techniques down a player to ensure everyone gets a go at it, but that is not extremely important. This can be a great warm-up exercise for EVERY practice and you can effectively incorporate it into the third 10 minutes of a 10-10-10 practice. (see related section later in this manual)

Basic Pass/Receive Exercise U10 : Diamond + 1 – The Midfield Link

This is a passing pattern where a central player has to receive balls from the four (4) points of a diamond using both feet to pass and receive. It stresses opening to the field (taking the ball on the correct foot) and preparing the first touch away from pressure. It also stresses controlling the ball when it comes head on to you and then turning the ball and hitting a down field target player

Set up and Execution

Two (2) balls to start. One at one support position, the other at one point of the diamond. The “field” is about 15 to 20 yards “point-to-point” depending upon passing skills.



Coaching Points

- Have the support players (passes one and two) in a triangular shape, not square to the central player
- Make sure that the pass is taken across the body opening to the field
- Stress two touch passing, first touch to receive and prepare, second to pass
- Stress technical excellence in this phase because there is no pressure
- Have the player turn the ball both ways (left and right) to play to the target player
- Once the initial two pass sequence is done the midfielder then receives the ball back from the players she has passed to in effect reversing the sequence

Progressions

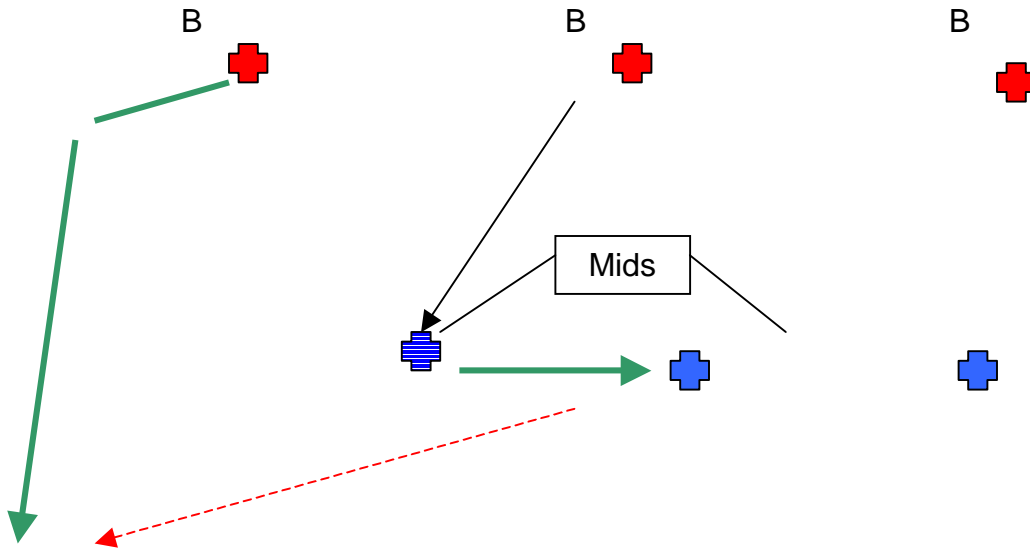
- Have the player execute a move, like a step over right (or left) as they turn the ball and then pass it
- Put a player behind the central player to provide 50% pressure
- Use one ball and change up the pass sequence. You can make it support to midfield to target ,back to other support to midfield to second target. Use what ever pattern you want but use the midfielder to link the support players and the target players.

Double Overlap Passing Pattern

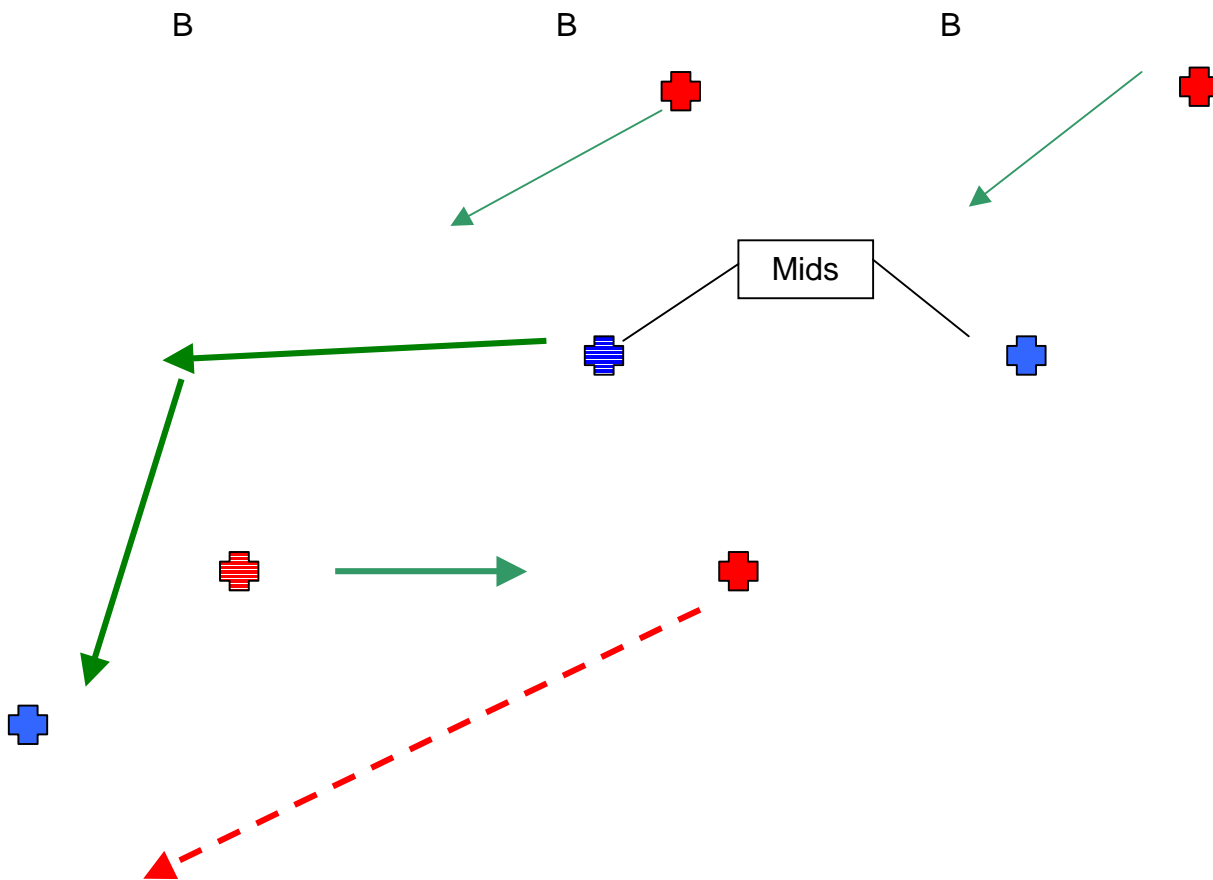
The following is a passing pattern suggested by Gary Rue (Kentucky). The overlap is arguably the most difficult to defend tactic. Toss in this simple double overlap pattern and the defense has its work cut out.

Set Up and Execution

To describe it, I will use a specific (but not restrictive) pattern of play that involves the interaction between the Backs and Midfielders. The first pass is from the center back to the midfielder. As the mid gains control of the ball she then carries towards the center. At this time the outside back overlaps to the outside and the mid passes the ball to that player.



The back, now with the ball, must now move towards the center of the field drawing pressure from the defensive team. The mid who made the first overlap pass, now overlaps the back and receives the ball back



When the back plays the ball forward to the overlapping mid, the current team shape is now exactly the same as it started and the back and the mid are essentially in their original positions and the ball has been moved down the field. Of course, the other fullbacks should be moving forward in support of the ball.

Coaching Point

- The receiver of the ball needs to create space for the overrapper by taking the ball towards the center.

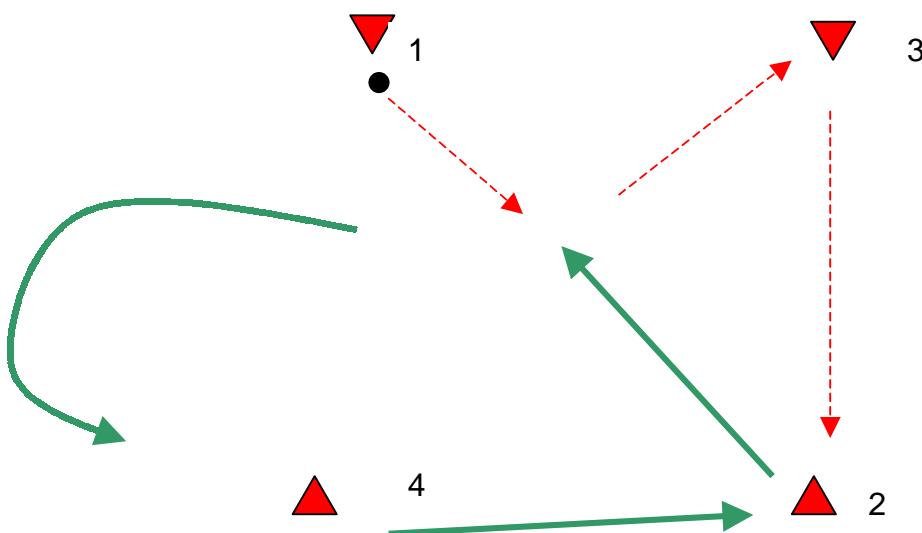
L Shape Passing Pattern - Under 12

This is a passing pattern suggested by Gary Rue, a high school coach from Kentucky . It is what is sometimes referred to as a Quad-Tri, a four man passing patter with three passes in the sequence.

The **L** movement by strikers (forward players) is one of the basic patterns you will see in a two-man front. As one striker checks to the ball, the other striker diagonals into the space vacated by the checking striker. The name of the movement obviously comes from the L-like shape. The following passing pattern can help to train this movement.

Set Up and Execution

Start with 4 players in a rectangular grid of 12x20 (increase to 15x30 for longer



passing). The players are numbered 1,2,3,4 as shown. The ball starts with player #1. Player #2, opposite the ball as shown , checks to the middle and receives the pass from player #1. Note this is the checking striker.

Player #2 drops the ball to player #3 (on the same endline with #1) and player #2 spins away from his pass. Player #4 (who started on the same endline as player 2) runs into the space created by player #2 when he checked and receives a long pass from player #3.

The sequence is re-started with player #1 (who is now opposite the ball) checking into the center for a pass from player #4. Player #1 plays the ball to player #2 who diagonals the ball to player #3 who has moved to the area vacated by a checking player #1.

Coaching Points

- checks to the center should be timely (e.g., as the ball is traveling from 3 to 4 in the top diagram, 1 should be showing for the next pass.
- the diagonal run should be timely (e.g., 4 does not want to start his run too soon and arrive at the receiving point early
- the checking player needs to spin AWAY from his drop pass immediately after making it; he needs to clear area for the next player to check into. This also helps to emphasize the drop and spin for through balls
- coach the checking player to look behind just prior to receiving the ball (establishes a good habit)
- be sure to emphasize the checking and diagonal runs made as forward movements

Progressions:

- switch directions (start the ball with player 3 in our example)
- one touch play
- increase the space for longer passes and runs;
- decrease the space for quicker ball movement
- ask the checker to check sideways on and play the drop with a front foot flick

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U10: 4 versus 2

Set up a square about 15 yards to a side. 4 players, one ball, each side of the square occupied by one player. Two (2) players in the central part of the square

The players on the outside try to complete passes and the central players defend and try to steal. When a ball is stolen it is immediately returned. Encourage the players to watch for the opportunity to "split" the defenders and reward correct decisions with GREAT praise. Switch the central players often as these are the ones that will get the least from this. No scoring is needed and the kids will play this for extended periods of time without getting bored.

Progression of 4 versus 2

- Add a second and then a third ball
- Restrict passes back and forth between the same player
- Make the passes two touch
- Make the outside players complete two passes without letting the ball come to a halt

Progress to a 5 versus 3

Similar to the 4 versus 2 game in that it is keep away but it should move in a larger area about 30-40 yards on the side for U10. This is more of a freeform game with the players allowed to move to open space. However attempt to keep the basic "shape" on the field, in this case a 5 sided pentagon. Use a single ball to start.

Allow scoring in this game. Give the defenders 1 point for an intercepted pass. Interception must include possession of the ball. Kicking the ball out scores no points.

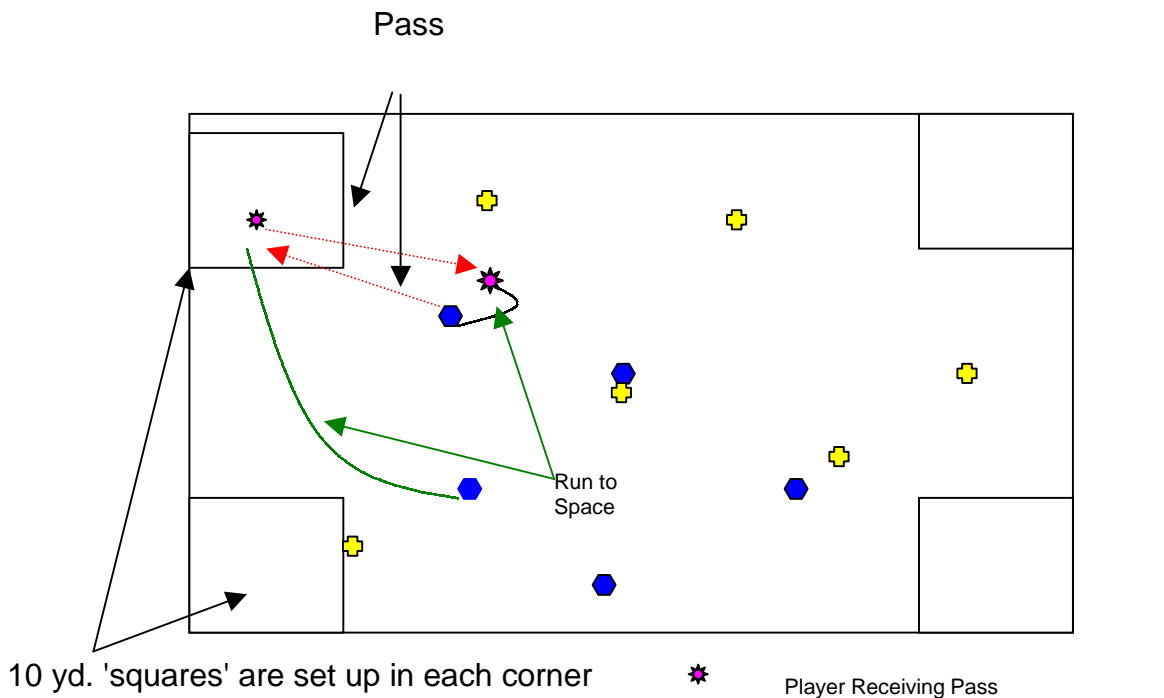
Give the offense 1 point for 5 completed passes. Adjust the number of completed passes required based on the ability of the players.

Make sure that the players are moving to space and receiving the ball so as to protect it.

Basic Pass/ Receive Game U12: Corner Goal Game

Here is a game that can be used in the middle phases of the training session. This game involves passing and receiving skills and is also a good activity for showing players the benefits of 'spreading out'. It is a dynamic game with a lot of running. It provides a lot of 'puzzles' for players to figure out and demands that they cooperate.

Set up the field as shown on approximately half-field, depending on how many players are on your team. (If there is an odd # of players on the team, that gives the players a different puzzle to solve.)



- Goals are scored when the ball is passed into the square **and then out to a teammate.**
- Each team can attack any one of the four goals.
- Whoever has the ball is on offense until they lose possession, including if they kick it out of bounds.
- Score can be kept.
- No camping in the circle, use a three second rule,

Progression of the Corner Game

- Play with two balls at once to make the game exciting. (This will actually make the game two, separate smaller games going on at the same time.)
- Make the rules for scoring that there have to be two consecutive completed passes before the ball can enter the box and be returned.
- Make the rule for scoring that the return pass has to be a one-touch

Coaching Points

- Make sure that the players keep spread out and to try to attack the goal that is 'open'.
- Keep possession, make the other team earn the ball.
- See if the players can recognize where pressure is coming from
- Look for players that are requesting the ball (hopefully non-verbally)
- Recognize that players should open to the field of play (i.e. receive the ball with the correct foot so that they are able to see the field and all of their options.

- Within each game look for that coaching moment where you can stop the game and point out some technical or tactical aspect of the skill you are teaching.

More Advanced Passing Drills and Patterns

Technical Excellence in Passing Phase 1

Frank Schmidt, head coach of two time NY State High School Class A champions Sachem advocates the following as part of any practice session.

This series of pass and receive drills are also done by the U.S. Women's National Team as part of all practice sessions. The Women's team calls them ***Pele's*** after the Brazilian star who also did them every single practice session.

Place two players ten (10) yards apart, each with one ball. One player tosses the ball (underhand and with both hands) to his partner. Player plays the ball back to the server as follows:

1. Receive with top of the foot, play back with the inside
2. Receive with the inside of the foot, play back with the inside
3. Receive with the outside of the foot, play back with the inside
4. Play one touch with the laces back to the server
5. Play one touch with inside of foot back to the server
6. Receive with the thigh, second touch foot back to the server
7. Receive with the stomach, second touch foot back to the server
8. Receive with the chest, second touch foot back to the server

Coaching Points

- Stress technical excellence. There is no pressure. Ball must be served correctly and played directly back to server
- Stress the non-dominant foot
- Switch server and passer every 60 seconds
- Work at high intensity

This type of drill can also be done on the move. Have the players go end line to end line with one serving and the other making crisp, sharp return passes. Players switch roles at the other end line and then return.

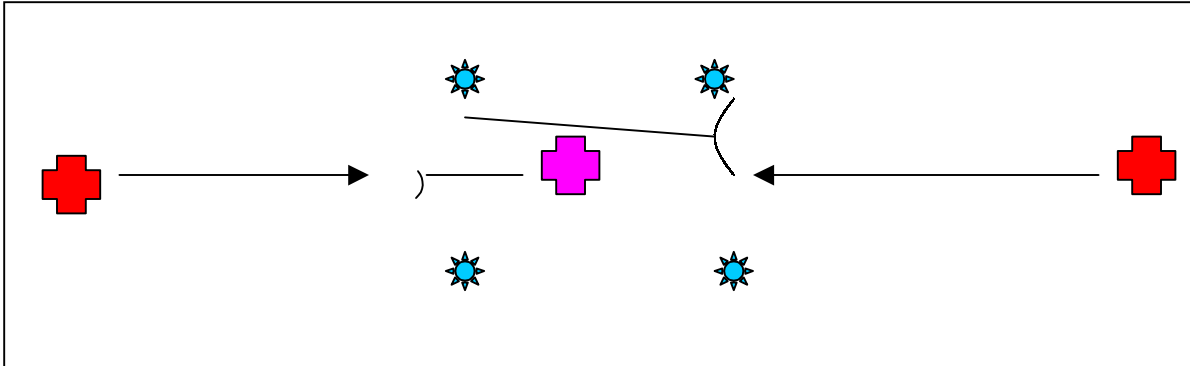
Coaching Points

- High work rate
- Prepare the ball for the second touch

➤ Crisp return to the server, don't just leave it for the server to advance and pick up

Technical Excellence in Passing Phase 2

This drill utilizes three players on a “field” as shown below:



The player in the middle shuttles between the two sets of cones. Players at the ends, each with a ball, send him passes which he then returns to them. The shuttling between cones “reminds” the player in the middle that he has to check back to the ball carrier.

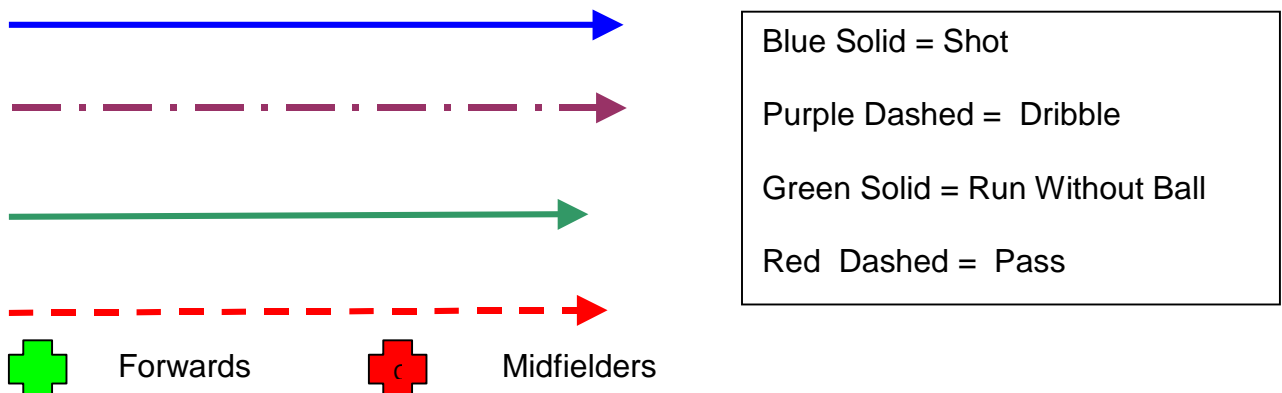
This is a high intensity drill. Switch the center player often. The end players do not serve the ball with their hands *unless* it is necessary to serve the ball to the chest, thigh etc. and the players have not reached that level of technical proficiency yet.

Use the same sequence as the previous drill. Again stress technical excellence since there is no pressure on the passer or the receiver.

Three Man Front Passing Patterns-Options

Here are a couple of the attacking tactical setups used by the US Women three man front and the options off these setups as described by Gary Rue , a high school coach from Frankfort, Kentucky.


The following convention is made.



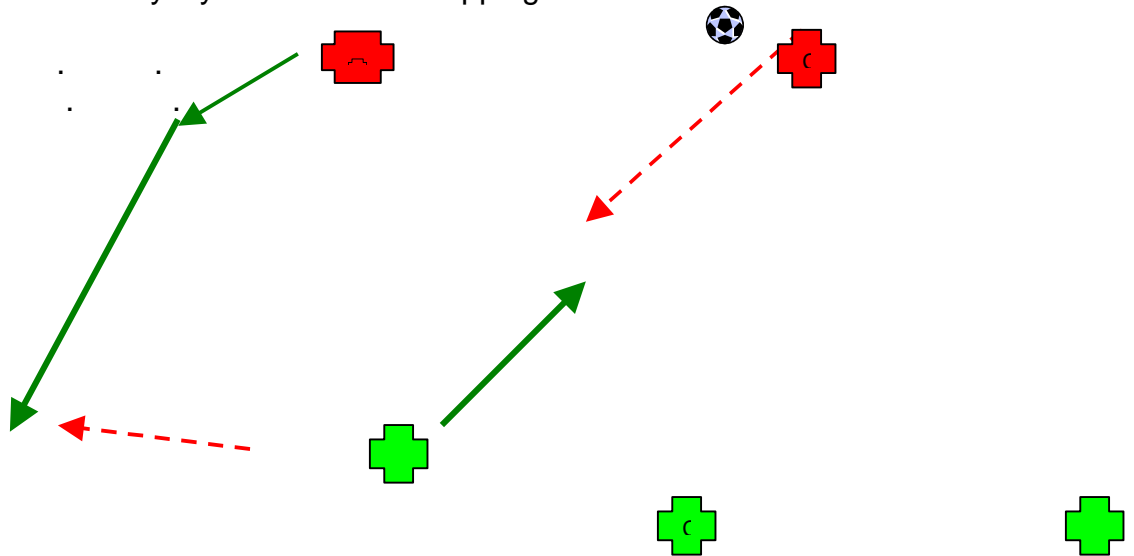
General Coaching Notes About a Three Man Front

- For the 3 man front to be effective, it is their movement that is critical. For instance, as the wing forward checks and receives, the center forward should be diagonaling into his space. The other wing forward can either diagonal across to the center or look to open up with a C run wide.
- In general, the 3 man front should constantly be looking to check one man into the "hole" and send the other two on wide runs or diagonals across the middle.
- There should be at least one forward stretching out the defense forward with at least one checking back. As with the two man system, the forwards should work off of, and with, one another.
- The biggest problem with a three man front is the tendency to stay in one spot and moving vertically instead of laterally.

Option 1 Ball in Central Midfield

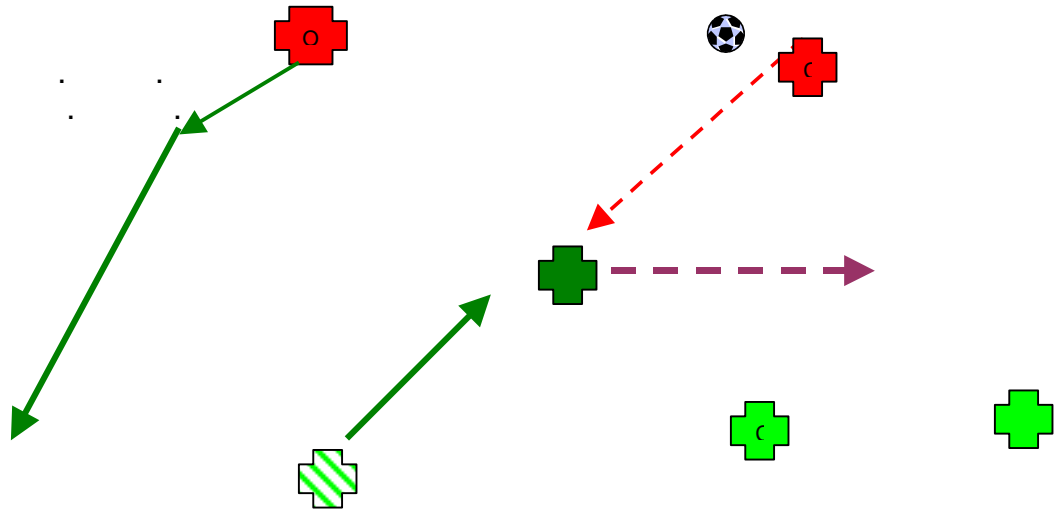
When ball is in the central midfield, a wing forward  checks to the ball

The forward immediately lays off to the overlapping Outside Mid



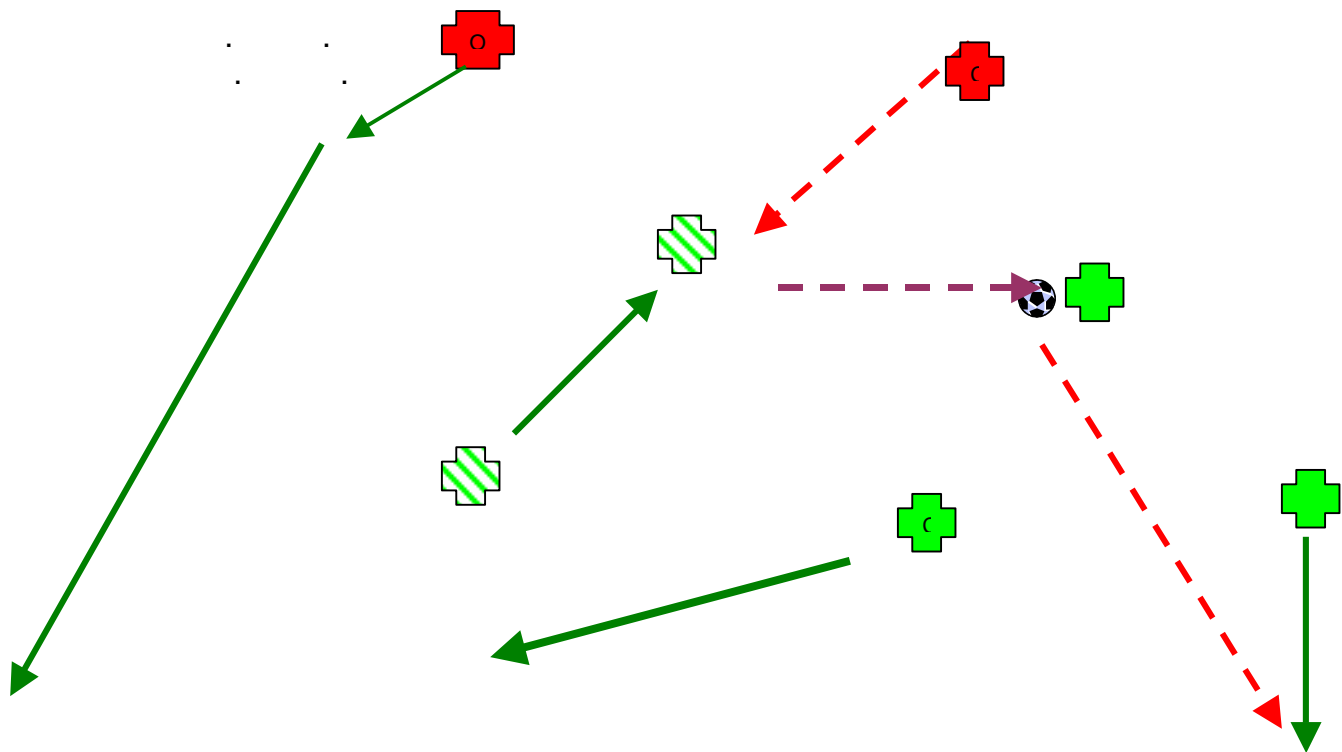
Option 2: Wing Forward Carries the Ball

Alternatively the wing forward could carry the ball toward the middle of the field

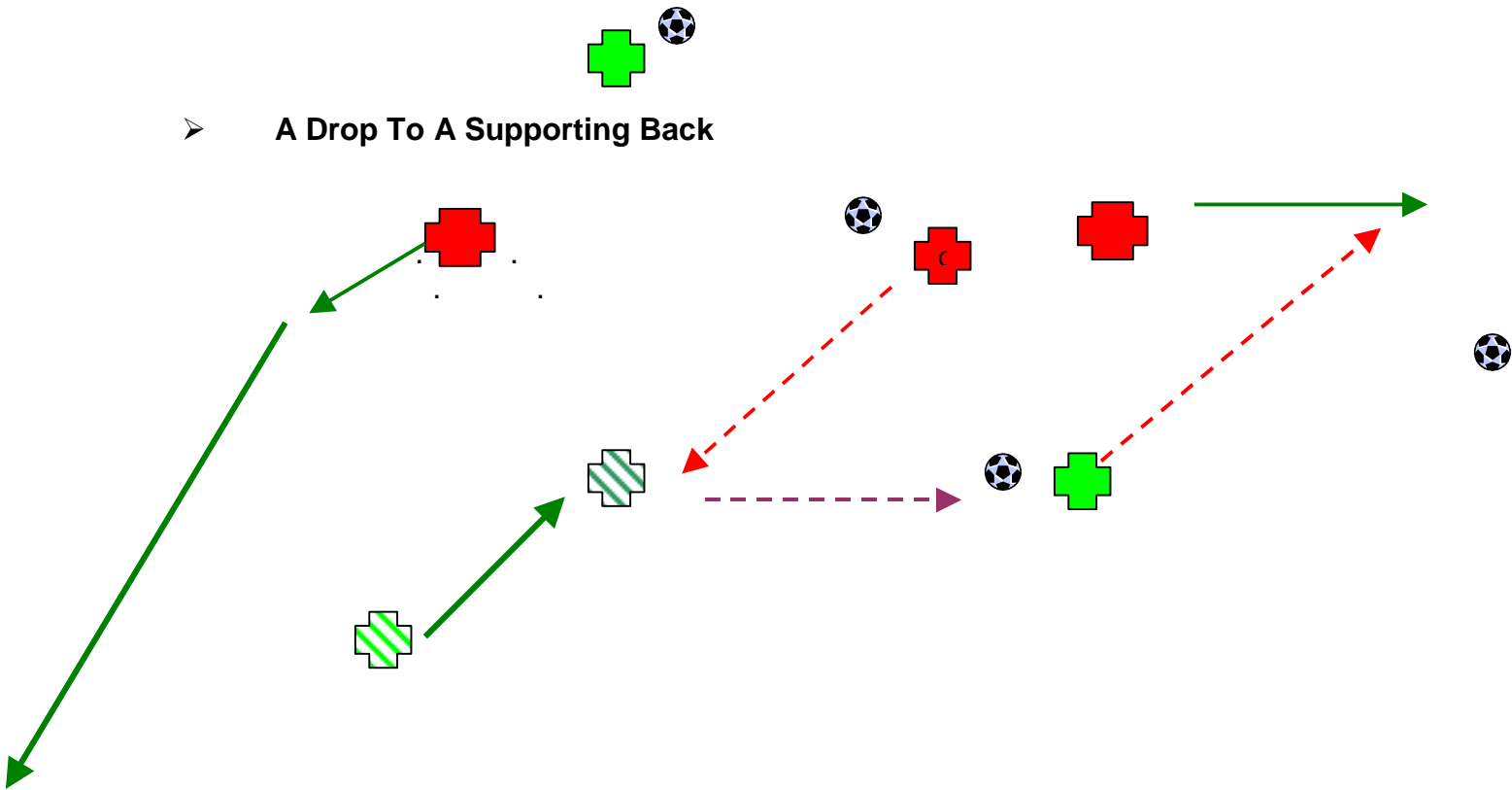


If the forward carries the ball, the options are:

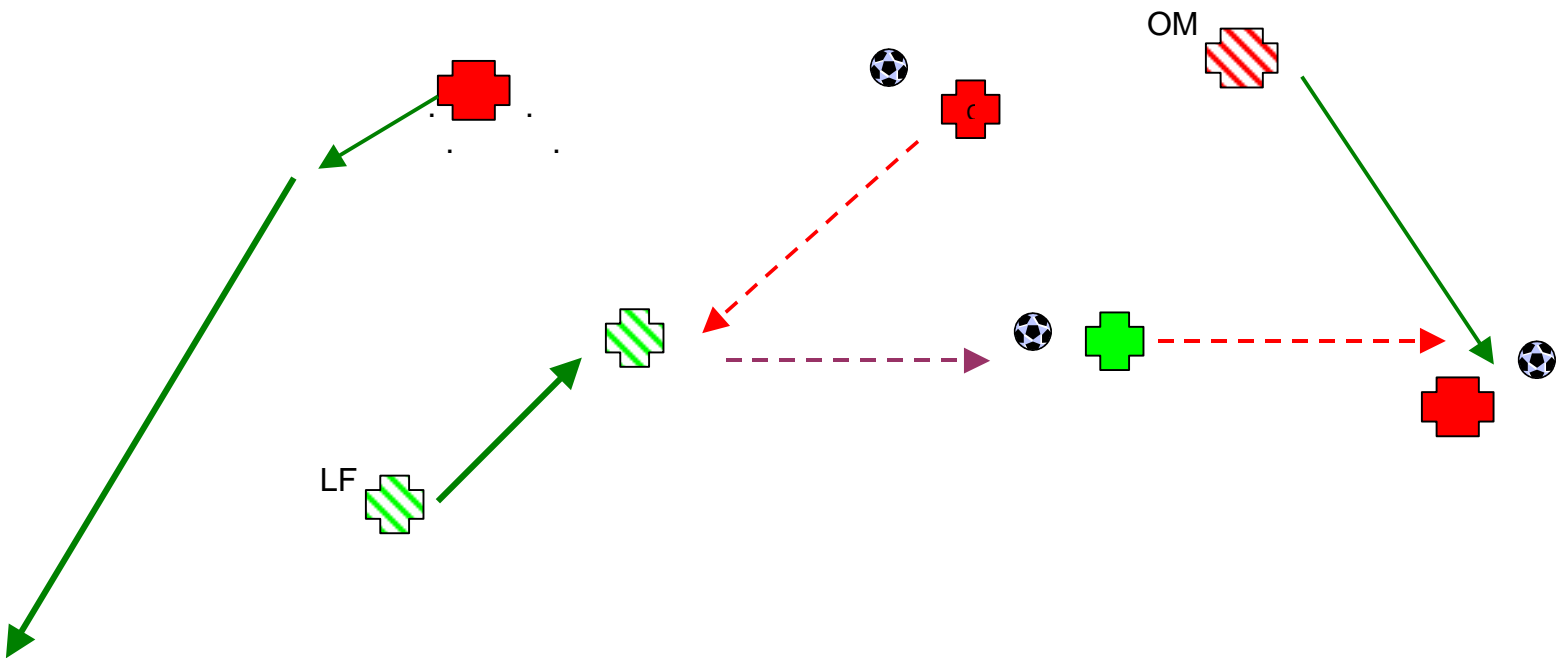
➤ A Forward Pass To The Overlapping Player



➤ **A Drop To A Supporting Back**

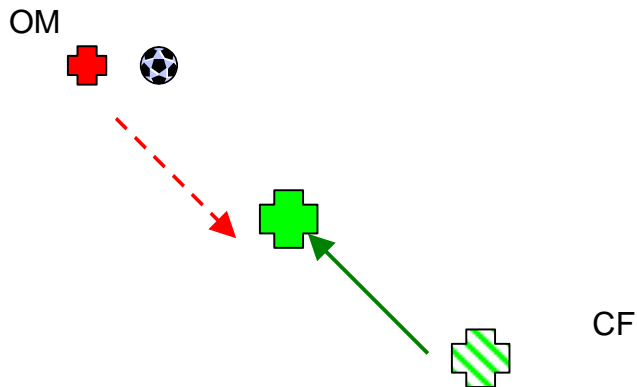


➤ **Or A Long Square Ball To A Back Coming Forward Into Space.**



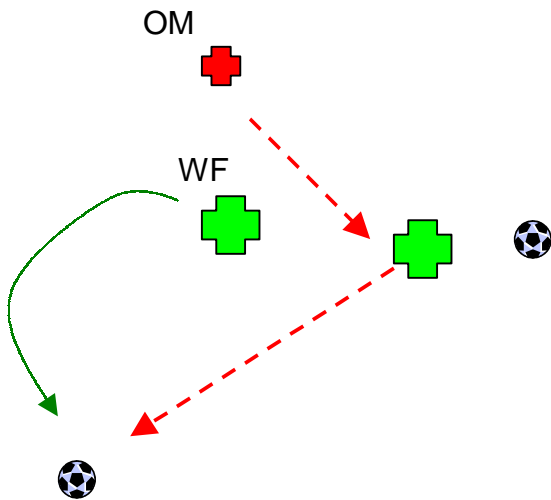
When The Ball Starts At The Outside Mid

When the ball is at the outside mid, the center forward checks to ball.

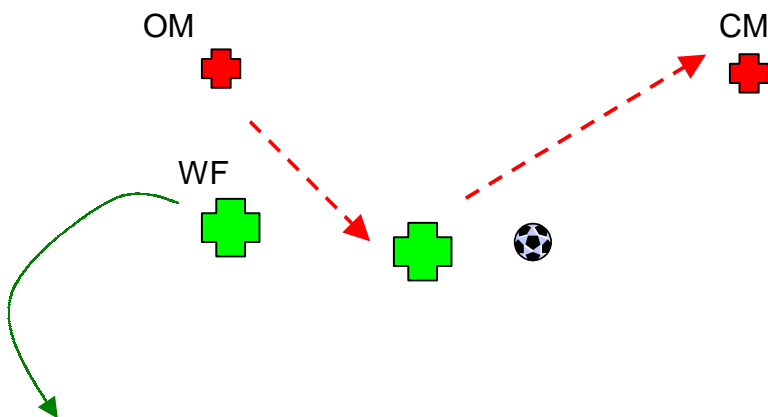


Option 1: Hit the Outside Forward

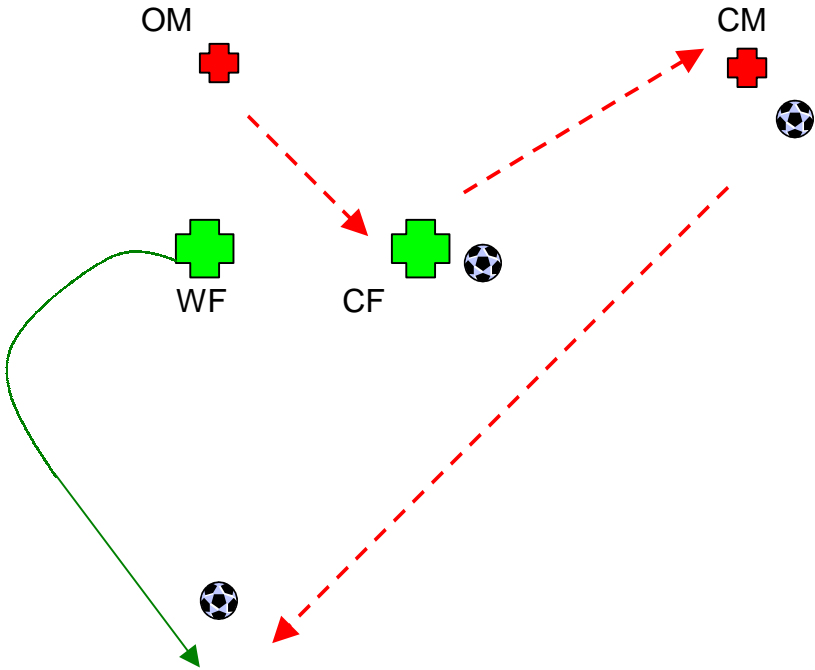
The key option is the forward ball to wing forward C-ing out to the touch.



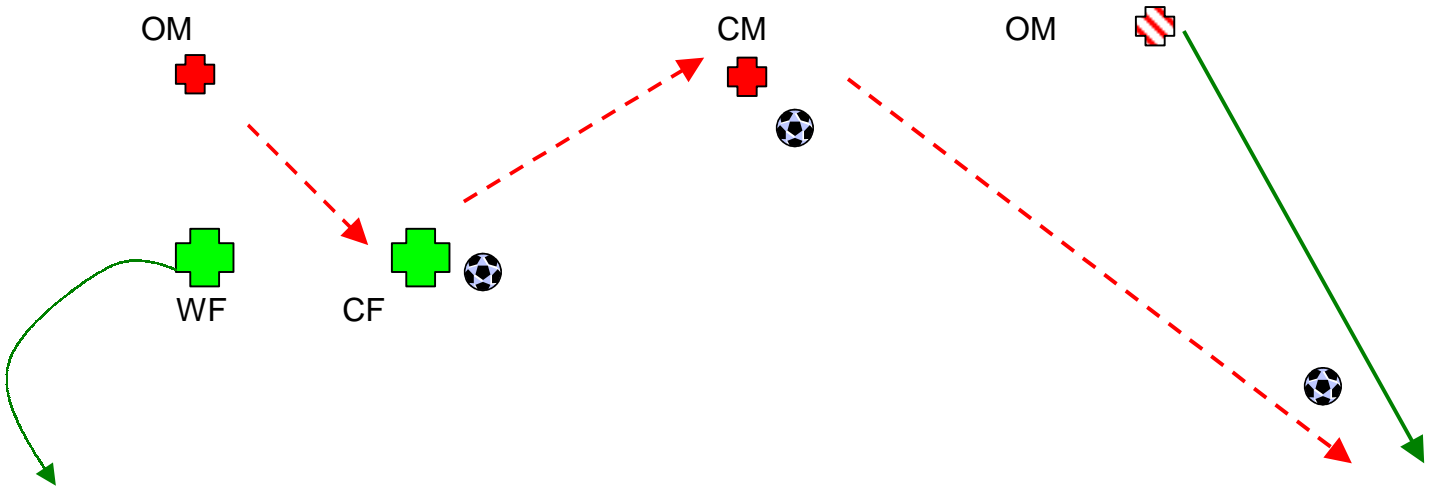
Option 2 The CM Moves To A Short Drop



Option 3 The CM Then Has The Option Of A Through Ball To The WF

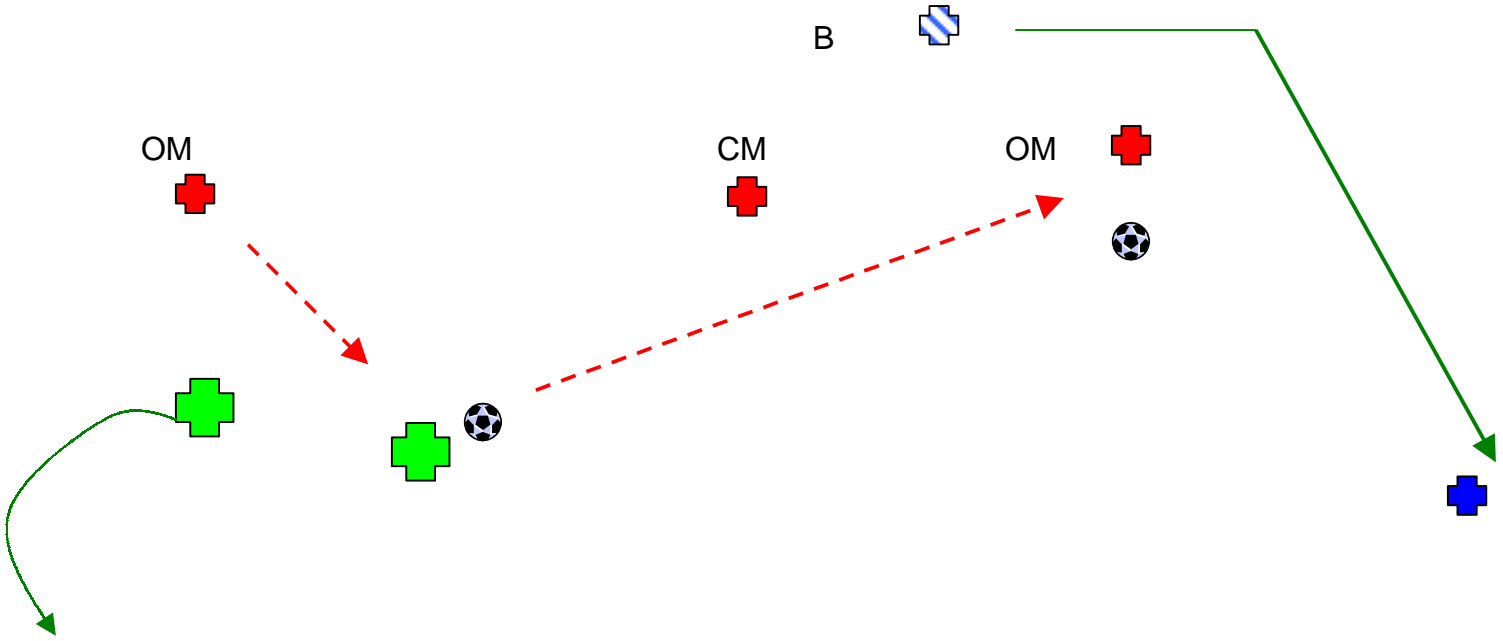


Option 4 Or A Ball To OM In The Opposite Corner

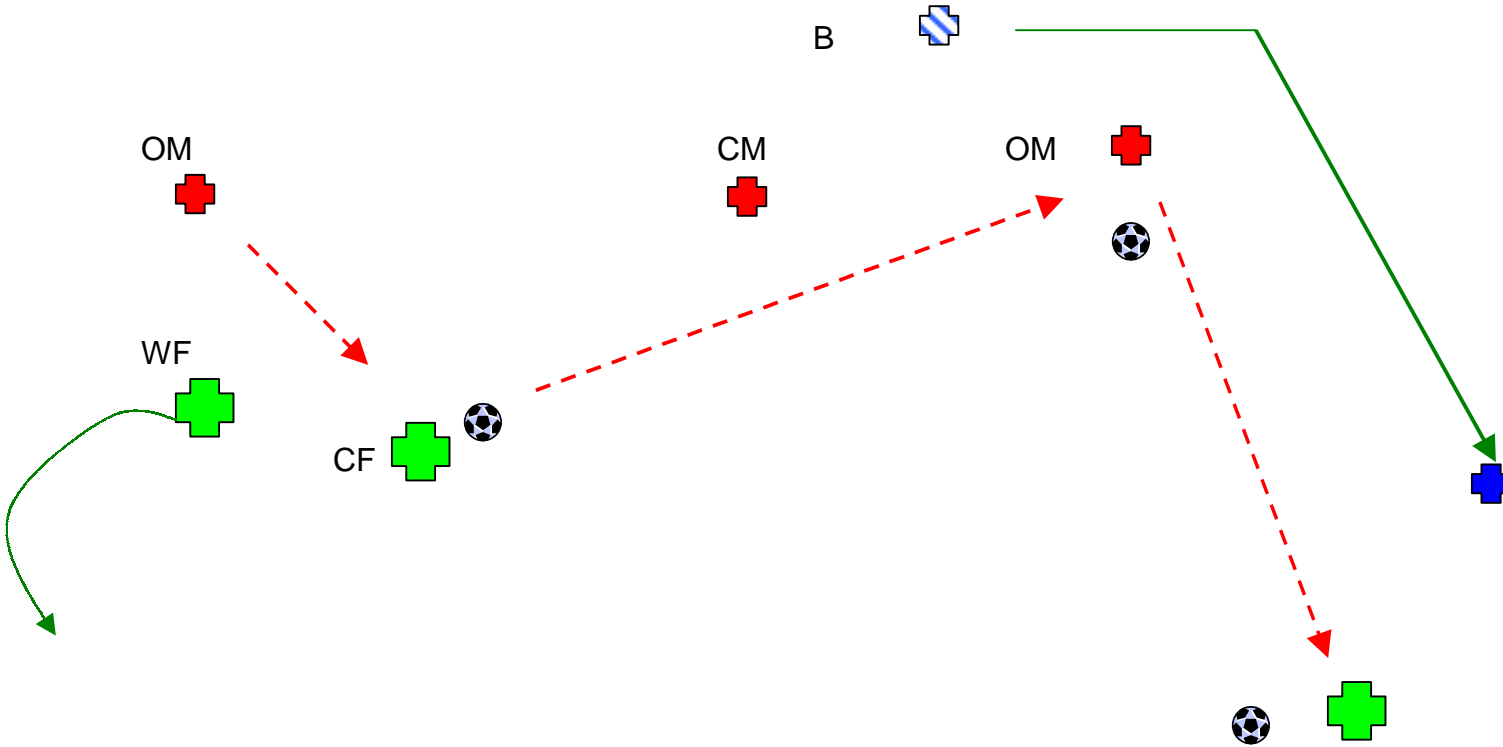


Option 5 Switch to Outside Mid

The CF can also drop to the OM who stays in drop position. Her initial options are to play to an overlapping B



Option 6 Or Forward To The Near Side Wf



Obviously, the possibilities and options are more numerous than what is noted above; however, all of these options were used in the final of the Gold Cup. The two setups are basic patterns for 3 forward play.

In summary, when the ball is on the wing, the center forward checks to ball; when the ball is in the middle, one of the wing forwards check to the ball.

The US utilized its width much better in the final than it did in the preliminary match with Brazil. Once the ball was on the wing, the cross was on. Interestingly, the runners often went into a horizontal line across the face of the goal. Their setup was based on ball position, varying between 6 and 14 yards out.

What this provides is depth variation for the crosser along the horizontal line (parallel with goalline), but requires the accuracy along the vertical plane. Actually, the crosser does not have to pick out one player, but can just play the ball along that horizontal line and someone should be there to pick it up.

Zidane's two corner kick headers in the WC 98 final came off a similar player setup along the 6 yard line.