



SOCCER COACH
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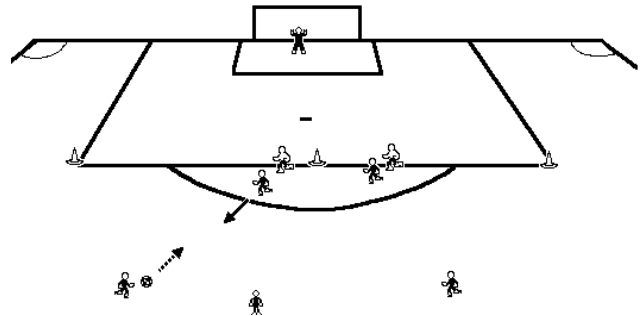
Functional Training of Forwards (2 forwards)

by *Laura Ray*,

Objectives: To help the forwards recognize movement off each other and in relation to the defenders to combine and get through the defense, to create space for self and others, as well as recognizing cues of getting the ball from the midfielders/backs.

1) Functional Pattern Play (30 minutes):

5 v 1 gkpr: three midfielders and two forwards versus one goalkeeper. The 3 midfielders pass 5-7 times between each other about 40-50 yards out from the end line. The two forwards look to receive the ball from the midfielders, combine with each other or with the midfielders and finish on goal. (The forwards must receive the ball 18-25 yards out from the goal, before going to goal).



Possible patterns:

1. As the ball is played to the left midfielder, the left forward makes an early checking run toward the ball and spins out creating live space for the right forward to check into to receive the pass at the appropriate time. The forward can: turn and shoot on goal; combine with the other forward who has recycled his run and finish with a shot; play the ball to the central midfielder who can take a long range shot, etc.
2. The central midfielder can play the ball to the right forward who passes it to the overlapping right midfielder; the right midfielder then serves a ball to the left forward making a well timed run to the far post.
3. Any one of the midfielders plays a ball to the high forward, who plays it back to the other forward, positioned at a slight angle, who shoots on goal.

Version 2: Add in one defender against the two forwards. **Version 3:** Add in two defenders against the two forwards; now when a midfielder plays the ball into one of the forwards, any one of the three midfielders can join in the attack. **Version 4:** Add in a third defender against the two forwards and now when the midfielder plays the ball into one of the forwards, two of the three midfielders can join in the attack. **Version 5:** Add in 1-2 defenders against the midfielders and now let all midfielders combine when the ball is played into the forward.

Coaching Points:

- Combination play
- Cue of passer to forward – looking up – make eye contact and/or verbal communication
- Forwards' ability to create space for themselves and others – timing of runs to either get the ball themselves (recognizing passer's cues) or get in and behind the defense – angles of runs
- Quick 1-2 touch combinations (wall pass/take over/overlap/double pass)
- Intelligent runs by the forwards – diagonal / straight / bent around defender to get ball back



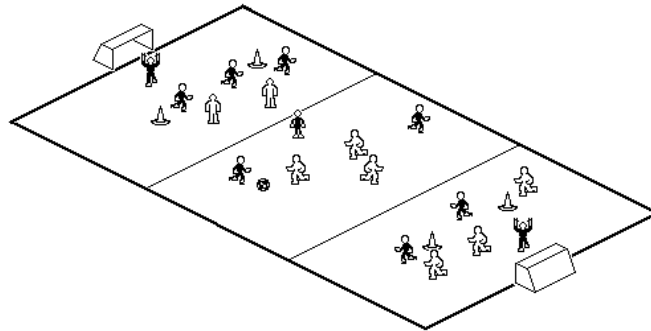
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- Appropriate supporting angles – looking to read the defenders – do they both commit to the forward with the ball, where is the space that just opened up – should the other forward look to make a run in behind defenders or drop off behind the forward with the ball to use as support, etc.
- Forwards should look to work ‘off’ each other; angled positioning of the forwards within playing distance of each other
- As the ball is played from side to side the two forwards may switch roles, but must stay connected

2) Three Zone 8v8 plus GK’s to 2 Big Goals (30 minutes):

In a field 60 yards wide by 80 yards long, 8 red vs 8 yellow plus goalkeepers. Field is split up into three zones (25 yards long on both attacking zones and 25-30 yards long in the middle zone). Again, place an offsides/restraining line about 7 yards in from the middle zone in each attacking zone. If Red goalkeeper plays it to their backs, backs can look to find midfield players or attacking players.



Version 2: If team is unable to get the ball forward through the zones, eliminate them and simply play 8v8 plus GK’s to big goals. Emphasize forward movement, timing of runs and combination play between forwards and with midfielders and/or backs.

Coaching Points:

- Reinforce coaching points from Activity #1

3) 11v11 scrimmage (30 minutes):

Depending upon numbers, space will change. Ideally, finish with the number you normally play with in games. Play a regular game with goalkeepers.

Coaching Points:

- Reinforce positive decision making opportunities (recognizing opportunities of when forwards should check to the ball, what type of run, movement of other forward off the ball – combine/support/get self in for shot, etc.).

4) Cool-down (10 minutes):

Groups of 5 heading challenge. One player in the middle, four players circle around them. Player in the middle tosses ball to player on the outside who heads in back to player in the middle. Player in the middle then heads to next player on the outside, who then heads it back to player in the middle and so on. Give player in the middle multiple chances to get the ball all the way around the circle, then switch up players to ensure everyone gets a chance to be the middle player.

Finish cool-down with static stretching of major muscle groups.