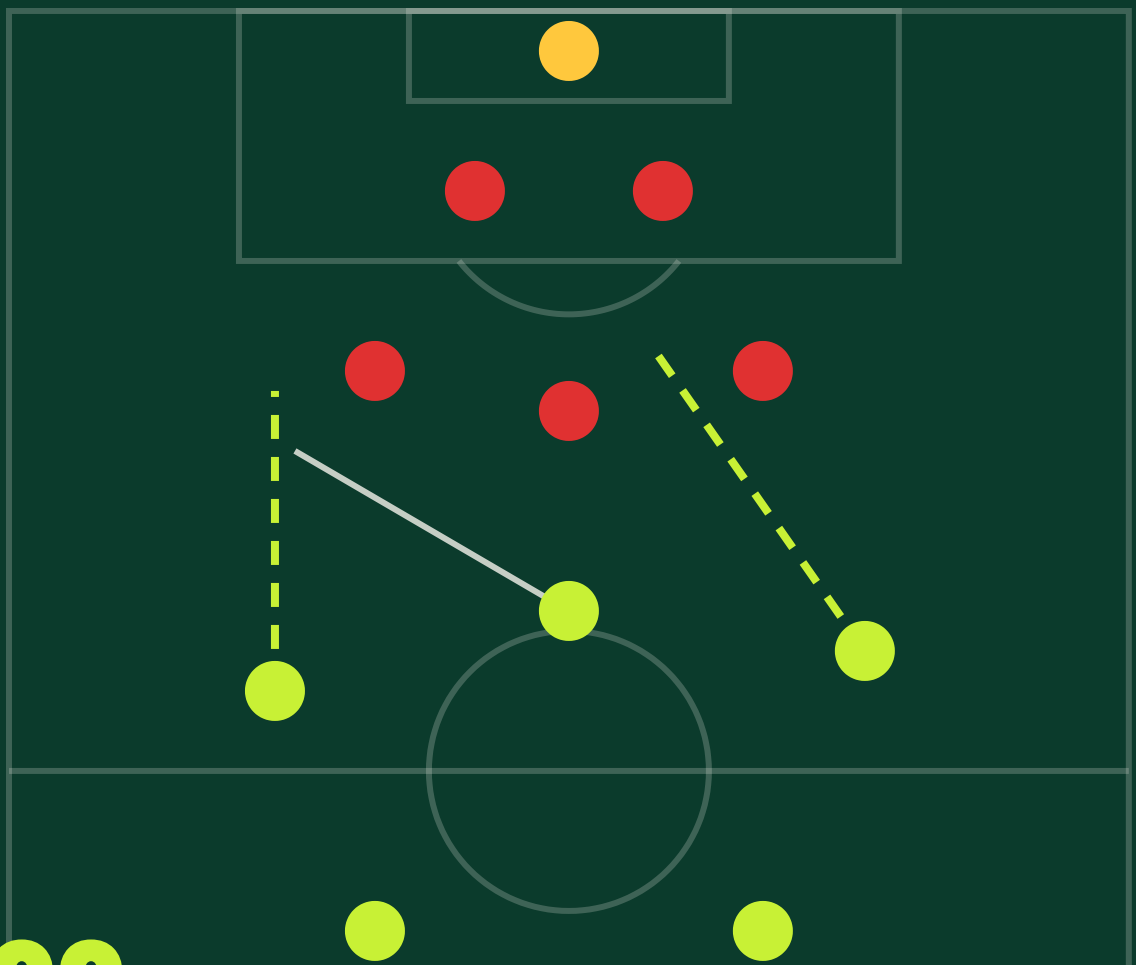
2 COACHING NOTEBOOKS

COACHING 11-A-SIDE FOOTBALL

Drills for U15, U17, U19, open-age and veteran players.



500+

ANIMATED DRILLS

DorsalCUP

dorsalcup.com

Title	Coaching 11-a-side football
Series	DorsalCUP Coaching Notebooks · Volume 2
Edition	First edition · November 2026
Animations	dorsalcup.com/ex — every drill has its own code
Contact	dorsalcup@dorsalcup.com

All drills and diagrams were written and drawn from scratch for DorsalCUP. The training ideas behind them (rondos, small-sided games, positional play, counter-pressing) are free to use; the specific form of each drill is original.

Youth match formats (number of players, pitch size) vary between associations. Always check your local rules.

© 2026 DorsalCUP. All rights reserved. This book may be used in the buyer's and their club's training sessions. It may not be reproduced or distributed, in whole or in part, without written permission.

Contents

PART I · DRILLS 6

A1 Build-up and playing out from the back · 28 drills 7
A2 Positional play and rondos · 36 drills 36
A3 Chance creation and progression · 62 drills 73
A4 Finishing · 57 drills 136
B1 High press · 27 drills 194
B2 Mid-block · 54 drills 222
B3 Low block and box defending · 27 drills 277
C Defensive transition · 38 drills 305
D Attacking transition · 48 drills 344
E Set pieces · 38 drills 393
F Goalkeeping · 30 drills 432
G Football-specific conditioning and technique · 58 drills 463

PART II · ARTICLES AND READY-MADE SESSIONS 522

GAME MODEL AND PLANNING 523
Tactical Periodisation: The Game Model and the Weekly Morphocycle 523
Opposition Analysis in Football: From Scouting Report to Game Plan 529
In-Game Tactical Changes: Switching Systems and Managing the Score 535

ARTICLES BY THEME 542
Build-Up Against a High Press: 3+2, 2+3, the 4+2 Box and the GK 542
Inverted Full-Backs: From 4-3-3 to a 3-2-5 in Possession 549
Positional Play in Football: Five Lanes, Staggering and the Third Man 557
Attacking the Half-Spaces: Cut-Backs, Underlaps and Box Occupation 563
Overload to Isolate: Switching Play to Create the 1v1 569
Pressing Traps and Triggers: Cover Shadows, Curved Runs, Jumps 575
Mid-Block Defending: How to Coach a Compact 4-4-2 and 4-1-4-1 581
Low Block Football: Defending in a 5-4-1 and Counter-Attacking 588
Defending Crosses: Zonal, Man-Marking and Mixed Systems 596
Counter-Pressing in Football: Organising the First Five Seconds 603
Rest-Defence in Football: 2+3, 3+2 and 3+1 Structures Explained 609
Set-Piece Routines: Attacking Corners, Free Kicks and Throw-Ins 616
Goalkeeper Training Session Plan for U11, U15 and Senior Keepers 623

READY-MADE SESSIONS 629
Transition Drills for U14–U15: Counter-Press and Counter-Attack 629
Playing Out from the Back Session Plan: U16 vs a High Press 635
U18 Football Training Session: An Acquisition Day in the Game Model 641
Football Drills for Adults: An Amateur Team's Training Week 647
Pre-Season Football Training: The First Week, With the Ball 654
Day-Before-Match Training (MD-1) and the Recovery Day After (MD+1) 661
Veterans Football Training Session: A Safe 75-Minute Plan 667

GLOSSARY AND INDEXES 675

Glossary 675
Index by number of players 676
Alphabetical index of drills 678

How to use this book

The drills are grouped by moment of the game: attacking organisation, defensive organisation, transitions, set pieces, goalkeeping and fitness. In each theme they follow the order of a training session: activation and technique first, then overloads, positional and small-sided games and, at the end, the game and the cool-down. Each drill takes one page, always in the same order: what you need to set it up, what happens on the pitch and how to adapt it to your group. The articles and ready-made sessions are gathered at the end of the book; each theme opener gives their page numbers.



1. **Code and title.** The code (EX-00123) links the page to the animation and the indexes.
2. **Tags.** Moment of the game, type, level, intensity, training week (MD) and age groups.
3. **Set-up.** Players, space in metres, sets and rests, equipment.
4. **Animation steps.** Each step on the tactics board, with its caption.
5. **The drill.** Set-up, rules and scoring; what to look for, common mistakes, how to make it harder or easier and questions to ask the players.
6. **QR and page.** Opens the animation on your phone.

DIAGRAM SYMBOLS

- Team A
- Opponents
- Goalkeeper
- Neutral or support
- Pass
- Run
- Dribble
- Pressure

AGE GROUPS

U15	Under-15s
U17	Under-17s
U19	Under-19s
Open age	and veterans

MD = match day; MD-4 = four days before; MD+1 = the day after.

QR Point your phone's camera at the code at the bottom of each page. The animation opens on the dorsalcup.com tactics board, step by step, and you can show it to the players on the pitch.

A1 BUILD-UP AND PLAYING OUT FROM THE BACK

Playing out from the goalkeeper against a high press, a mid-block and man-to-man pressure.

IN THIS THEME · 28 DRILLS, IN SESSION ORDER

Activation and warm-up	1	p. 8
1v1, 2v1, 3v2… situations	2	p. 9–10
Patterns with progressive opposition	5	p. 11–15
Conditioned small-sided games	5	p. 16–20
Unit work and phases of play	13	p. 21–33
Conditioned final game	2	p. 34–35

ARTICLES ON THIS THEME

ARTICLE · P. 542

Build-Up Against a High Press: 3+2, 2+3, the 4+2 Box and the GK

ARTICLE · P. 549

Inverted Full-Backs: From 4-3-3 to a 3-2-5 in Possession

Shadow activation: change shape according to the number of pressing players coming on

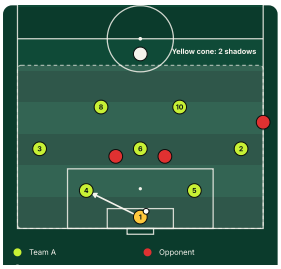
EX-00034

GK+7 move the ball while the coach sends on 2, 3 or 4 passive shadow players. Each time, the team changes shape (2+1, 3+1, box) without stopping the ball. Rehearses the build-up references the day before a game.

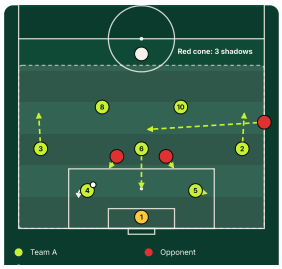
attacking organisation | activation / warm-up | Level intermediate | Intensity low | Training week MD-1 · MD-2

U15 · U17 · U19 · Open age

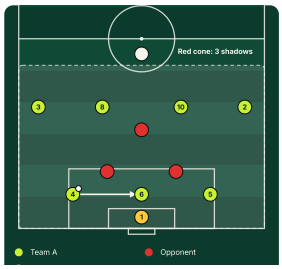
PLAYERS	SPACE	DURATION	EQUIPMENT
GK+7 v 2 to 4 passive shadows 10–14 (ideal 12) · 1 GK	**68 × 45 m** From the goal line to 45 m, full width. The coach stands by the halfway line, in the centre.	**3 × 3 min** rest 1 min · total 11 min	full-size goal 3 large cones in different colours (2, 3, 4 shadows) bibs for the shadows 6 balls by the goalkeeper



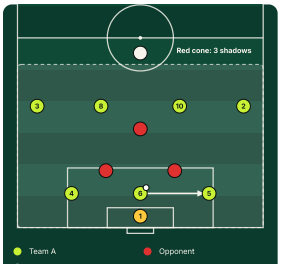
1 Yellow cone: 2 shadows, 2+1 shape; the keeper plays out to the 4.



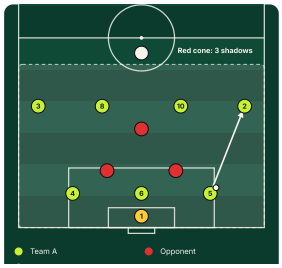
2 Red cone: the 3rd shadow comes on. The 6 drops between the centre-backs, they split and the full-backs push on.



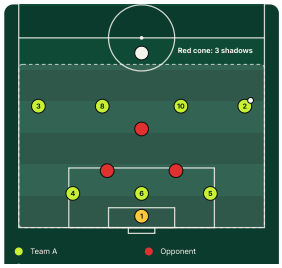
3 Without stopping the ball, the 4 finds the 6, already between the centre-backs.



4 The 6 switches play to the 5, split to the width of the box.



5 The 5 plays into the 2, high in the wide channel.



6 The ball goes to the coach and back to the keeper: new colour.

Team A · Opponent · GR · Coach · Pass · Run · Dribble / carry

SET-UP

The goalkeeper, back four, the 6 and two No. 8s circulate the ball. Up to four players from another group act as shadows: they come on and off when the coach holds up a cone (yellow: 2, red: 3, blue: 4). Every 4–6 passes the ball is played to the coach, who returns it to the keeper.

RULES

1. The shadows walk or jog and block passing lines, without contesting the ball.
2. Against 2 shadows: centre-backs split and the 6 in front (2+1). Against 3: the 6 between the centre-backs and full-backs high (3+1). Against 4: full-backs deep and a box with the 6 and one 8 (4+2).
3. The ball never stops while the shape changes.
4. Maximum 2 touches; always pass to the foot furthest from the nearest shadow.

SCORING

No scoring; the coach counts the shape changes made in under 3 seconds and gives the number at the end of each set.

COACHING POINTS

- The 6 decides where to stand from the number of shadows, before the ball arrives.
- The centre-backs split to the width of the box when the 6 drops in.
- Firm passes to the far foot; directional first touch towards the next player.
- Talk: whoever sees the new shadow calls the number out loud.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Stopping the ball while waiting for everyone to change position.
- The 6 and a centre-back in the same space after the change.
- Low tempo: the activation turns into a stroll.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- Shadows at 50% intensity, trying to touch the ball.
- One touch for the centre-backs and the 6.
- The coach holds up the cone without speaking; whoever sees it first tells the team.

↓ REGRESSIONS

- No shadows: just change shape on the signal.
- Unlimited touches.
- Only two shapes (2+1 and 3+1).

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

With three shadows, where did the 6 need to be?

Who called the change of shape, and when?

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00034?l=en

Build-up 3+2v2+2: centre-back carries it until a midfielder steps out, then finds the gap

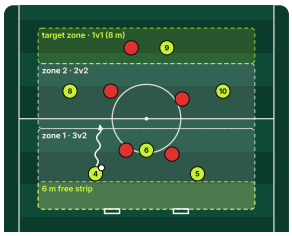
EX-00697

Playing out in three zones against a mid block that leaves the centre-backs alone. The free centre-back carries it into midfield; if a midfielder steps out, they find the free player. Works on drawing the second line to play through it.

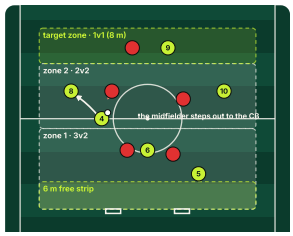
attacking organisation | overload / underload (1v1, 2v1, 3v2...) | Level advanced | Intensity high | Training week MD-4

U15 · U17 · U19 · Open age

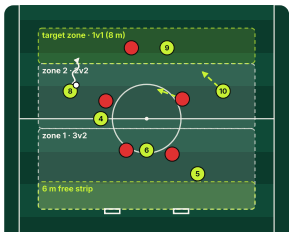
PLAYERS	SPACE	DURATION	EQUIPMENT
2 centre-backs+6+2 No. 8s+9 v 2 strikers+2 midfielders+1 centre-back (3v2, 2v2, 1v1) 11–14 (ideal 11)	**44 × 40 m** 44×40 m rectangle in three zones: zone 1 is 18 m (with a 6 m free strip by the starting line), zone 2 is 14 m and the target zone is 8 m. Two mini-goals on the starting line, for B. About 160 m² per player.	**6 × 3 min** rest 1 min · total 23 min	2 mini-goals 20 cones in 3 colours bibs in 2 colours balls by the centre-backs



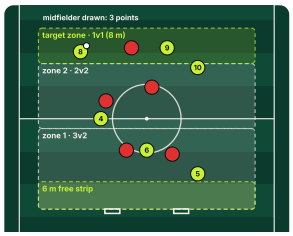
1 B's striker cannot enter the free strip: No. 4 has time and carries it into zone 2, towards the midfielder.



2 The midfielder steps out to No. 4. No. 8, the player they left, is free; No. 4 passes to them the moment the midfielder commits.



3 No. 8 takes a directional first touch and drives into the target zone; B's other midfielder shifts across late and No. 10 comes inside.



4 Ball under control in the target zone after drawing the midfielder: 3 points.

Team A | Opponent | Pass | Run | Dribble / carry | Press

SET-UP

Zone 1: centre-backs 4 and 5 and No. 6 against 2 strikers. Zone 2: No. 8s (8 and 10) against 2 midfielders. Target zone: No. 9 against 1 centre-back. Every player stays in their zone. The ball always starts with a centre-back. With 14 players, 3 rotate each set (2 strikers and 1 midfielder).

RULES

1. B's strikers defend in a mid block: they cannot enter the 6 m free strip by the starting line.
2. The centre-back on the ball can carry it into zone 2 (only one at a time). No other player changes zone; No. 9 and B's centre-back stay in the target zone.
3. B's midfielders can step out to the centre-back who comes into zone 2, but only inside zone 2.
4. A score when the ball arrives under control in the target zone (pass or carry).
5. If B win it back, they have 6 s to score in a mini-goal.
6. Unlimited touches.

SCORING

A: 3 points if the ball reaches the target zone after a midfielder has stepped out to the centre-back on the ball; 2 points if the centre-back carries it into the target zone without anyone stepping out; 1 point for any other arrival. B: 2 points per goal in a mini-goal.

COACHING POINTS

- First find the free centre-back: quick 4–6–5 circulation to take B's striker away from the ball side.
- The centre-back carries it at the midfielder, not into empty space: the carry is there to force someone to make a decision.
- Head up while carrying it: the pass goes the moment the midfielder commits, not before and not after.
- The No. 8 who is about to be free gets their body open before the midfielder steps out.
- If nobody steps out, the centre-back keeps going into the target zone: a block that doesn't jump pays for it.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A centre-back carrying it sideways, away from the midfielders: nobody gets drawn in.
- Passing before the midfielder commits: the midfielder gets back and intercepts.
- No. 8s dropping into the centre-back's zone to ask for the ball: they take away space for the carry.
- No. 6 standing still in the striker's cover shadow during the circulation.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- B's striker can chase the centre-back who comes into zone 2: the centre-back has to decide earlier.
- A 3rd B midfielder in zone 2 (2v3): only the carry can pin a player and free a team-mate.
- No. 9 has to receive facing forward to score: the pass goes to No. 9's side away from the centre-back.
- No. 6 is limited to 2 touches.

↓ REGRESSIONS

- Zone 2 is 18 m deep.
- B's midfielders can only step out to the centre-back after they have taken 3 touches in zone 2.
- No B centre-back in the target zone.

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

> *When the midfielder stepped out, who was left free?*
> *If no midfielder steps out, what should you do with the ball?*

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00697?l=en

B1 HIGH PRESS

Pressing in the opponent's half with triggers, stepping out to press and cover.

IN THIS THEME · 27 DRILLS, IN SESSION ORDER

Activation and warm-up	1	p. 195
1v1, 2v1, 3v2... situations	3	p. 196–198
Rondos	1	p. 199
Patterns with progressive opposition	1	p. 200
Conditioned small-sided games	5	p. 201–205
Unit work and phases of play	12	p. 206–217
Transition games	1	p. 218
Set pieces	1	p. 219
Conditioned final game	2	p. 220–221

ARTICLES ON THIS THEME

ARTICLE · P. 575

Pressing Traps and Triggers: Cover Shadows, Curved Runs, Jumps

Shadow high block: ten players react to the ball and three coloured cue cards

EX-00724

High-press activation: the 4-4-2 block moves together against six passers moving the ball. Three cue cards from the coach (long pass, back pass, open ball) change the height of the line and of the press.

defensive organisation | activation / warm-up | Level intermediate | Intensity medium | Training week MD-2 · MD-1

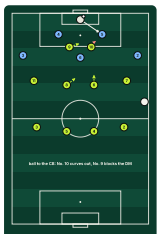
U15 · U17 · U19 · Open age

PLAYERS
10 (4-4-2, no GK) against 6 passers (GK, 2 centre-backs, 2 full-backs, holding midfielder)
14–17 (ideal 16) · 6 neutrals

SPACE
68 × 65 m
From the passers' goal line out to 65 m, full width. Two mini-goals behind A's midfield line for the opposed phase.

DURATION
3 × 4 min
rest 1 min · total 14 min

EQUIPMENT
3 coloured cue cards (red, yellow, blue)
10 balls next to the passers' goalkeeper
2 mini-goals
bibs in 2 colours



1 The keeper plays to centre-back No. 5: No. 10 curves out, No. 9 blocks the holding midfielder and the midfielders move closer.



2 The ball goes to the full-back: No. 7 jumps, No. 6 tucks in and the whole block shifts across to the ball side.



3 Red cue card (long pass): the line drops 10 m and the midfielders turn towards the second-ball zone.



4 The full-back plays back to the centre-back: everyone steps up at the same time.

Team A | Opponent | GR | Neutral | Coach | Pass | Run | Press

SET-UP

Six passers (goalkeeper, two centre-backs, two full-backs and a holding midfielder) take up their build-up positions and pass the ball among themselves, 2 touches and at low tempo. Team A, in a high 4-4-2 without the ball, move as a block according to where the ball is, without tackling. Every so often the coach, on the touchline, holds up a cue card: red = long pass (the line drops 10 m and the midfielders turn for the second ball), yellow = back pass (the whole block steps up), blue = open ball (the press stops and the line takes a step back).

RULES

1. Set 1: no real opposition. The passers move the ball and A only shadow (they never touch the ball).
2. When a cue card goes up, the block has 2 s to reach the new height; the coach counts out loud.
3. Set 2: A's pressing players can intercept; the passers can pass into the mini-goals behind A's midfielders.
4. Set 3: the red cue becomes a real long pass from the goalkeeper to a B striker who comes into the game.
5. Each set ends with 30 s of free play at high tempo.

SCORING

No scoring in set 1. In the others: A 1 point per interception; passers 1 point per mini-goal; the coach takes 1 point off A for every signal the block didn't react to within 2 s.

COACHING POINTS

- Ball to the centre-back: the near-side forward curves out and the other blocks the holding midfielder. The whole block takes a step towards the ball.
- Ball to the full-back: the wide midfielder jumps, the central midfielder tucks in and the line shifts across with 10–12 m between defenders.
- On red: the defenders drop side-on, watching the ball; the midfielders turn and close the drop zone.
- On yellow: everyone steps up at the same time, and the line never steps up faster than the midfielders.
- The ball-side centre-back always talks: “Up!”, “Drop!”, “Tuck in!”.
- Short distances between the lines: 10–12 m between midfielders and defenders, 30–35 m from the No. 9 to the last defender.

COMMON MISTAKES

- The line moves when the pass arrives, not when it is played.
- The forwards step up and the midfielders stay: a split block.
- Dropping with your back to the ball on red.
- An activation done at walking pace: the response to the signals has to be quick even without opposition.
- Only the players on the ball side shift across; the far side stand still.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- The passers play one-touch (the block has to read faster).
- The cue cards become verbal calls only, made by an A player (the centre-back).
- Two B strikers come in between the lines from set 2.

↓ REGRESSIONS

- Only the back four and the two deeper midfielders (no A forwards).
- Only two cue cards (red and yellow).
- The passers stop the ball for 1 s before each pass.

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

> *What was the first signal you saw before you moved: the ball or the cue card?*

> *Where was the player next to you in the line when you stepped up?*

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00724?l=en

Reading the pass 2v2 off a coach: step in on a bad pass, delay on a good one

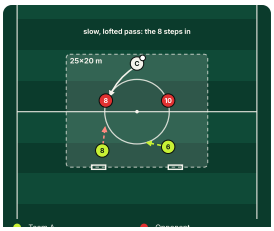
EX-00151

Works on reading individual pressing triggers. The coach serves two opposition midfielders with passes of varying quality; the two pressing players decide whether to step in or delay, based on the pass and the receiver's body shape.

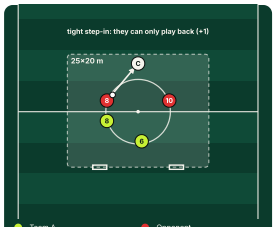
defensive organisation | overload / underload (1v1, 2v1, 3v2...) | Level intermediate | Intensity maximum | Training week MD-2

U15 · U17 · U19 · Open age

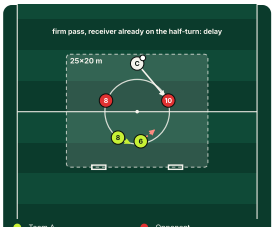
PLAYERS	SPACE	DURATION	EQUIPMENT
2v2 + coach serving; 3 groups of 4 rotating 4–12 (ideal 12)	**25 × 20 m** 25×20 m. Two mini-goals on the defenders' end line. Coach on the opposite side, 6 m from the receivers.	**4 × 3 min** rest 2 min · total 18 min	2 mini-goals 15 balls beside the coach 4 cones bibs in 2 colours



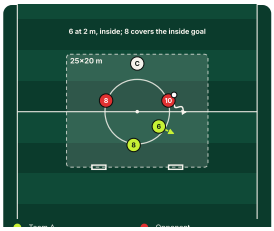
1 The coach plays a slow, lofted pass to B's 8: A's 8 steps in and the 6 moves across to cover.



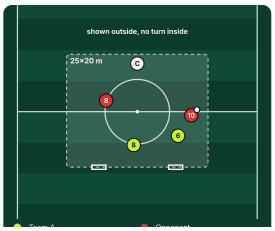
2 A's 8 gets tight to the receiver, who has their back to goal and can only play it back to the coach. Point to A.



3 Now the pass to the 10 is firm and they are already on the half-turn: A's 6 closes in to delay.



4 The 6 stops 2 m off, on the inside, and the 8 covers the inside mini-goal. The 10 tries to turn.



5 The 10 is shown outside and cannot turn inside.

Team A · Opponent · Coach · Pass · Run · Dribble / carry · Press

SET-UP

Two B receivers face the coach (C on the board), about 6 m away. A's two pressing players start 6 m behind the receivers, between them and the mini-goals. The coach varies the pass without warning: firm to feet (good); slow, bobbling, in the air or onto the inside foot with the receiver's back to goal (bad). Each rep lasts up to 8 s. Three groups rotate: one works, two rest.

RULES

1. B score 2 points if they turn and score in a mini-goal, either running with the ball or with a pass.
2. B can play it back to the coach; the rep then ends with no points for B.
3. A score 1 point if they force the receiver to play backwards with their first or second touch.
4. A score 2 points if they win the ball and run it to the coach's line.
5. If a pressing player steps in on a good pass and the receiver turns, B get 1 extra point.
6. Each pair does 6–8 reps per set; swap roles after every set.

SCORING

A: +1 ball played back; +2 regain. B: +2 goal in a mini-goal; +1 extra for turning after someone has stepped in on a good pass.

COACHING POINTS

- Read the pass as it travels: height, pace and which foot it is going to.
- Read the receiver's body: back to our goal, receiving foot away from the ball = step in.
- Finish the step-in tight, side-on, with your front foot between the receiver's legs.
- Delay 2 m off, on the inside, on your toes; the covering player shuts off the inside mini-goal.
- When one steps in, the other drops in to cover and blocks the pass between the receivers.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Stepping in every time out of habit, even on a good pass.
- Always sitting off and letting a receiver with their back to goal turn unopposed.
- Arriving square-on without braking and being beaten by the receiver's directional first touch.
- Cover too far away (more than 6 m) or flat with your team-mate.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- The coach can also play to a third receiver in the wide channel, forcing the pair to slide across.
- Receivers can come short to show for the ball before the pass, changing their body shape.
- Reps limited to 5 s.

↓ REGRESSIONS

- In the first sets, the coach calls “Good!” or “Bad!” as the pass is played.
- 1v1 with one receiver and one pressing player.
- 20×20 m area.

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

> *What did you see in the pass that made you step in? And in their body shape?*

> *If it was a good pass, which side did you need to be on to stop them turning inside?*

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00151?l=en

D ATTACKING TRANSITION

Attacking after winning the ball: the first pass, runs in behind and quick finishing.

IN THIS THEME · 48 DRILLS, IN SESSION ORDER

Technical circuits with decisions	1	p. 345
1v1, 2v1, 3v2... situations	3	p. 346–348
Patterns with progressive opposition	2	p. 349–350
Finishing	3	p. 351–353
Conditioned small-sided games	5	p. 354–358
Unit work and phases of play	9	p. 359–367
Transition games	22	p. 368–389
Conditioned final game	3	p. 390–392

Interception, open-body first touch and a first pass forward: decision-making circuit

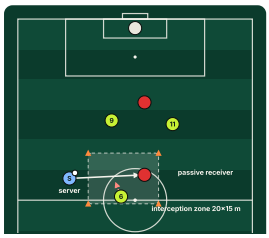
EX-00117

Works on intercepting and playing forward against partial opposition: intercept, take a first touch forward and choose the short option or the run in behind, depending on which lane the defender closes. Finish within 6 s.

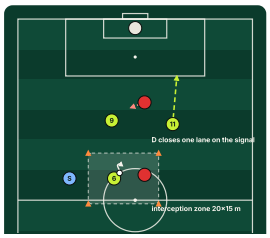
attacking transition | technical circuit with decisions | Level intermediate | Intensity medium | Training week MD-4 · MD-2

U13 · U15 · U17

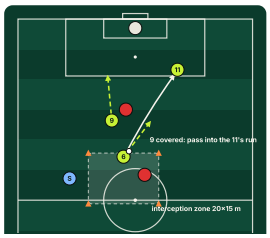
PLAYERS	SPACE	DURATION	EQUIPMENT
server + interceptor (queue) v passive receiver; 2 strikers v 1 defender + GK 9–14 (ideal 10) · 1 GK · 1 neutrals	**45 × 55 m** 20×15 m interception zone 50 m from goal; ahead of it, 45×40 m up to a full-size goal with a goalkeeper.	**4 × 5 min** rest 1.5 min · total 24.5 min	full-size goal 4 cones for the interception zone 15 balls by the server bibs in 3 colours



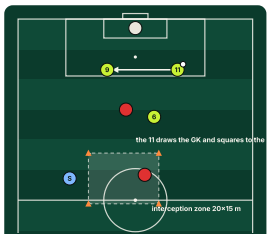
1 The server passes to the receiver; the 6 gets there first and intercepts in front of them.



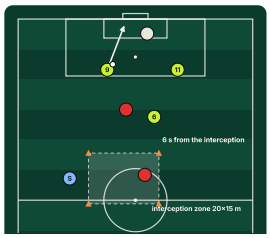
2 First touch forward; the defender closes the 9's short option and the 11 sets off in behind.



3 With the 9 covered, the 6 plays in behind to the 11 and follows.



4 The 11 draws the keeper and squares it to the 9, who has attacked the far post.



5 The 9 finishes within 6 s of the interception.

Team A · Opponent · GR · Neutral · Pass · Run · Dribble / carry · Press

SET-UP

A server (S) on the left of the interception zone passes to a passive opposing receiver. The interceptors (a queue of 3 or 4) start from behind the receiver. Ahead, two A strikers and one B defender, with a goalkeeper. The coach, behind the defender, shows them one of two colours as the pass is played: the defender closes either the 9's short option or the 11's run in behind. Rotation: interceptor becomes striker, striker becomes defender, defender goes back to the queue.

RULES

1. The server always passes at medium pace to the passive receiver; the interceptor must cut it out before the receiver touches it.
2. After the interception, 2 touches maximum: a first touch forward and a forward pass.
3. If the defender closes the 9, the pass goes into the 11's run in behind; if they close the run, the pass goes to the 9 showing short, who plays first time.
4. The interceptor always follows the pass and joins the finish.
5. 6 s from the interception to the shot.
6. Missed interception: the passive receiver dribbles and passes to the defender; the interceptor tries to win it back within 3 s.

SCORING

Each interceptor scores: 1 point for a clean interception, 1 point for a forward pass into the right lane, 2 points for a goal within 6 s. The top scorer in each set chooses the starting side for the next set.

COACHING POINTS

- Go as the server shapes to pass, outside the receiver's line of sight.
- Attack the ball in front of the receiver, with your body between ball and opponent.
- First touch forward and away from where the pressure came from.
- Look at the strikers before you receive, so you already know which one is covered.
- Pass for the run in behind into space, ahead of the striker; pass for the short option to the foot away from the defender.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Waiting for the ball behind the receiver instead of anticipating.
- A first touch sideways or backwards that kills the counter.
- Always passing to the same striker, without reading the defender.
- Standing still after passing.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- The receiver becomes active: they try to shield the ball and the interceptor can lose the duel.
- The coach only shows the colour after the interception.
- A second recovering defender sets off from the interception zone.
- Interception with a compulsory forward first touch (no stopping the ball).

↓ REGRESSIONS

- The server passes more slowly and further from the receiver.
- Passive defender, only blocking the lane.
- 8 s to finish.
- Only one striker, always showing short.

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

When did you decide to go for the interception? What did you see?

Which lane was free? Where was the defender when you passed?

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00117?l=en

4v1 counter-attack with a shrinking overload: a defender joins every 3 s

EX-00111

Works on urgency and decision-making on the counter: four attackers break against one defender; at 3, 6 and 9 s another defender joins through a different gate. The bigger the overload at the moment of the shot, the more the goal is worth.

attacking transition | overload / underload (1v1, 2v1, 3v2…) | Level intermediate | Intensity maximum

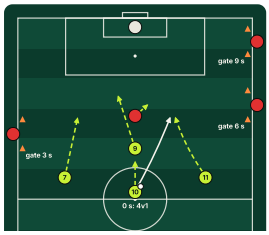
Training week MD-2 · MD-3 | U13 · U15 · U17 · U19 · Open age

PLAYERS
GK + 4v1, building to 4v2, 4v3 and 4v4 (2 groups of 4 attackers rotating; with 17, 2 groups of defenders too)
9–17 (ideal 13) · 1 GK

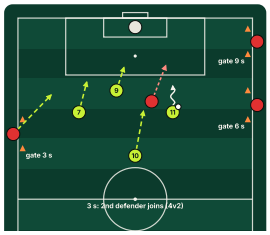
SPACE
64 × 52 m
From halfway to goal, almost the full width. Three gates where defenders come on: left touchline 33 m from goal, right touchline 25 m from goal, and right touchline near the goal line (5–10 m).

DURATION
4 × 5 min
rest 2 min · total 26 min

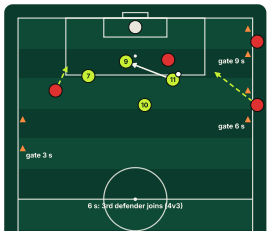
EQUIPMENT
full-size goal
6 cones for the three gates
15 balls on halfway
bibs in 2 colours
whistle



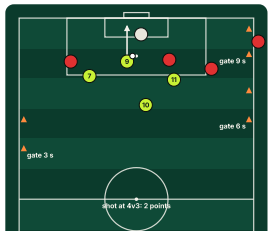
1 First whistle: the 10 plays forward into the 11's diagonal run; the 9 and the 7 fill the centre and the left channel.



2 At 3 s the left-hand defender comes in; the 11 drives at goal and commits the first defender.



3 At 6 s the right-hand gate opens; the 11 releases to the 9, away from the incoming defender.



4 The 9 shoots first time, with the 3rd defender already in but still far from the ball: a goal at 4v3, 2 points.

Team A · Opponent · GR · Pass · Run · Dribble / carry · Press

SET-UP

Four attackers on the halfway line, spread across three channels, with the 10 on the ball in the centre. One defender 30 m from goal. Three defenders waiting, each behind their own gate. The coach blows the whistle on the first pass and again at 3, 6 and 9 s: on each whistle a defender comes in through the next gate. With U13s, the gates open at 4, 8 and 12 s. Two groups of 4 attackers alternate on each rep; with 17 players, the defenders also split into two groups of 4.

RULES

1. Start: the 10 receives from the coach on halfway (simulating the regain) and plays straight away.
2. Whistle at 3 s: the defender at the left touchline gate comes in; at 6 s, the one at the right touchline gate; at 9 s, the one by the goal line.
3. Defenders come in at a sprint and can defend from the moment they pass through the gate.
4. No offside.
5. The action ends with a goal, a save, the ball going out or a regain. If the defenders win it, they dribble it to the halfway line.
6. The gates rotate from set to set, so the attackers have to read where the defensive help is coming from.

SCORING

Goal at 4v1 or 4v2 = 3 points; at 4v3 = 2 points; at 4v4 = 1 point.
Defenders: 2 points per regain carried to halfway. Running total per set.

COACHING POINTS

- The first pass goes within the first two touches and forwards: every second costs you a player's advantage.
- Three channels filled: a wide player on each side and a striker in the centre.
- Attack the side away from the gate about to open: the incoming defender ends up far from the ball.
- The player on the ball runs straight at the defender and releases when they commit.
- Shoot at the first clear chance: waiting for the perfect pass gives the next defender time.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Sideways passing around halfway, as if it were build-up play.
- All the attackers in the same channel.
- Always dribbling to the end, even with a team-mate free.
- Ignoring the incoming defender and passing towards their side.

↑ PROGRESSIONS

- Whistles every 2 s.
- The first defender starts from halfway, alongside the attackers (pressure from behind).
- A goal only counts if there is at least one forward pass before the shot.
- The gates change order without warning within the set.

↓ REGRESSIONS

- Whistles every 4 s.
- Only two gates (4v3 maximum).
- Start closer: attackers 40 m from goal.
- 3v1 building to 3v3 in an area 45 m wide.

QUESTIONS FOR PLAYERS

> *How many defenders were there when you shot? What did you do in the first 3 seconds?*

> *Which side was the next defender coming in from? Where did you play the ball?*

Watch the animation step by step on the tactics board
dorsalcup.com/ex/EX-00111?l=en

GAME MODEL AND PLANNING

Tactical Periodisation: The Game Model and the Weekly Morphocycle

Tactical periodisation organises all training around the team's game model: the way the team should play in each moment of the game. Every exercise trains a principle of that model, and the week is structured as a morphocycle that alternates the type of effort between matches. Physical, technical and mental work are not removed; they are trained through tactical exercises. This article covers how to build the game model, how to plan the morphocycle, how to design exercises with a tactical purpose and how to control the load.

What tactical periodisation is, and what it is not

Tactical periodisation was developed by Vítor Frade at the University of Porto and became widely known through Portuguese coaches who used it at the top level. Its main idea is that the tactical dimension leads: the team's way of playing defines what is trained, and the other dimensions (physical, technical, psychological) are trained inside exercises that reproduce that way of playing.

It is not a weekly calendar copied from a top club, and it is not the absence of physical training. A team that uses tactical periodisation still runs at high speed, still does strength work and still has days of low load. The difference is that the high-speed running, for example, happens inside an attacking-transition exercise that the team uses in games.

The method rests on a few working principles:

- **Specificity:** every exercise is linked to the game model. Generic drills with no link to the way the team plays are left out or kept to a minimum.
- **Propensity:** exercises are designed so that the target behaviour happens many times. Rules, space and numbers create the conditions.
- **Horizontal alternation:** the type of effort changes from one day to the next (tension, duration, speed), so that players can recover from one demand while training another.
- **Complex progression:** the model is learned from simpler to more complex situations, and the most important principles appear first and most often.

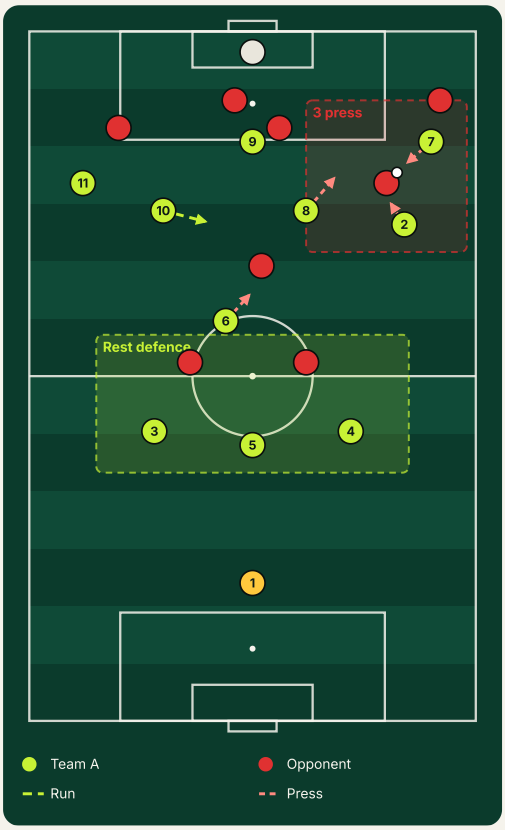
Building the game model: principles, sub-principles and sub-sub-principles

The game model describes how the team plays in the four moments of the game (organisation in possession, organisation out of possession, the transition to defence and the transition to attack) and in set pieces. It is shaped by the coach's ideas, the players available, the club's culture and the competition.

Each moment is organised in levels:

- **Principles:** the main behaviour of the team. Example for the transition to defence: 'after losing the ball, we try to win it back immediately in the zone of the loss'.

- **Sub-principles:** the behaviour of a sector or group. 'The three players nearest the ball close the ball carrier and his closest passing options; the rest defence controls the opponent's strikers'.
- **Sub-sub-principles:** the individual behaviour. 'The nearest player arrives with a curved run that blocks the back pass; the 6 steps forward to close the pass into the centre'.



A principle on the pitch. The ball is lost on the right: the three players nearest the ball press immediately, the 6 closes the central passing lane, the far-side midfielder narrows and the back three hold the rest defence.

Moment	Example principle	Example sub-principle
Organisation in possession	Build up through the centre with a free player behind the first line	Back three plus a double pivot against two strikers
Organisation out of possession	Mid block that protects the central lane	Strikers screen the pivot; wide midfielders stay narrow
Transition to defence	Counter-press for 5 seconds in the zone of the loss	Nearest three press; 6 closes the central lane
Transition to attack	First pass forward if it is on	Far-side winger runs behind on recovery
Set pieces	Attack the near post and the six-yard box	Two blockers, one runner to the near post

ONE PAGE PER DRILL.
ONE ANIMATION FOR EACH.

Drills for coaches from U15 to open-age and veteran players, organised by moment of the game. Each drill shows how to set it up, what to look for, which mistakes to correct and how to adapt it to your group. The QR code on every page opens the animation on your phone, to show the players on the pitch.

500+	original drills for 11-a-side football
12	themes: build-up, positional play, chance creation, finishing, high press, mid and low blocks, attacking and defensive transitions, set pieces, goalkeeping and fitness
7	ready-made sessions: U15, U17, U19, amateur open-age teams, pre-season, the day before a match and veterans
MD	every drill shows where it fits in the training week
QR	on every page, to open the animation on the dorsalcup.com tactics board