



ESSENTIAL SOCCER POSSESSION DRILLS

20

FUNDAMENTAL DRILLS
TO KEEP THE BALL MORE

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INTRODUCTION

Ball possession in soccer is very important. Keeping the ball for long periods of time or long passing sequences has many advantages and benefits for your team.

Here's just two of the biggest advantages:

- Prevent the other team from scoring because they can't score without the ball and if your team has the ball, then the other team doesn't.
- Patiently wear down the defense, physical and mentally, forcing them to overextend and allowing your team to create opportunities to attack and score.

Good coaches' help players recognize these benefits and also help players see that every time they pass the ball, whether or not it is forward or back, progress is made as a team.

Keeping possession of the ball effectively involves a wide range of skills and abilities. Players must be able to properly dribble, pass, receive the ball, space out, support each other, communicate, and more.

Essential Soccer Possession Drills provides 20 drills that will help you work with your team on all those important aspects. Both individual skills and team skills will be highlighted.

It's also important to remember that in games players will be forced to deal with high tempos. You must re-create pressure scenarios in practice to force quick thinking and allow players to be properly prepared for games.

DRILL #1 – DRIBBLING IN SPACE

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

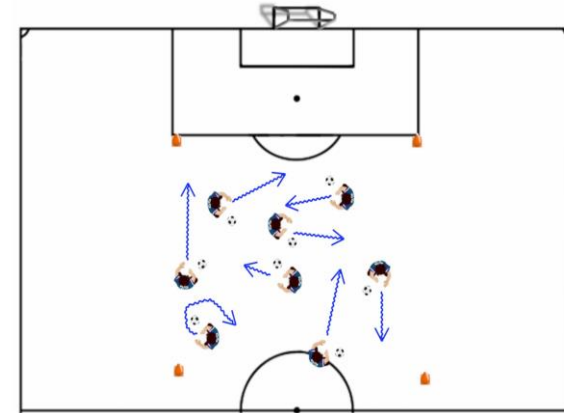
For this drill you will make a square with the 4 cones on one half of the soccer field. The size of the square you make should depend on the number of players you have to go inside the square.

Execution:

1. All players will be inside the square. They will each have a ball.
2. The players need to dribble around inside the square without losing control of their ball and without running into each other.
3. Players should have enough space to move around but they should be forced to be close enough to each other so that they need to watch where they're going.

Coaching Tips:

- It's important for players to keep their heads up while dribbling the ball. This drill will force them to do just that.
- Instruct your players to work on turning with the ball, speeding up with the ball, and making moves with the ball.



This drill will help players develop their moves and their ability to keep possession of the ball.

DRILL #2 – DRIBBLE RELEASE

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

Two lines of players facing each other with about 15 yards between them. You may want to have more than one set of two lines depending on the size of your team so that every player keeps moving.

Execution:

1. The first player in one line will dribble as fast as possible toward the other line.
2. When the player gets close to the other line that player will signal for the first player in the other line to start forward.
3. Then a short pass will be made to the other player and the other player will then dribble the ball back toward the other line.
4. Players should communicate so that one player knows when the other player will give the ball up.

Coaching Tips:

- This is a great drill to teach keeping possession of the ball while dribbling quickly. This drill also helps teach players to communicate with each other.



Players will learn communication as a key element to keeping possession of the ball.

DRILL #3 – DRIBBLING WITH SPEED

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

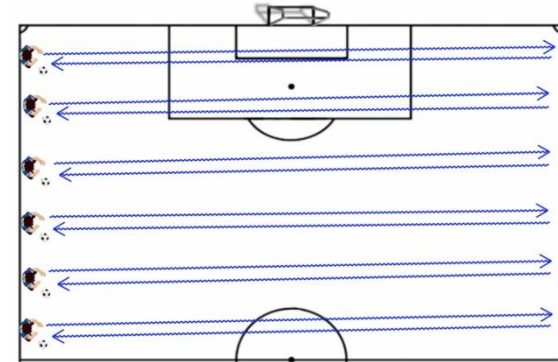
Line up your players on the sideline facing the other sideline and make sure each player has a ball.

Execution:

1. On the coaches whistle or signal the players will sprint across the field to the other sideline and then they'll sprint back.
2. They must dribble the ball and stay in control while they sprint. They can't just kick the ball to the other side and then run after it.
3. Players should concentrate on keeping their heads-up and running as fast as they can.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill will teach players to move faster with the ball and to keep their heads up while dribbling.



Players learn to move fast while maintaining control of the ball.

DRILL #4 – ANGLE OF SUPPORT

Skill Level: Beginner

Setup:

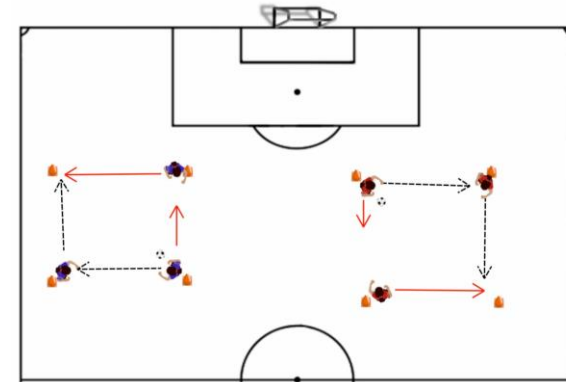
Set the cones up in a square with each side being about 10 yards in length. Three players will be inside the cones with each player being next to one of the cones.

Execution:

1. The ball will start with one player.
2. The other two players must be at the cones next to the player with the ball.
3. The player with the ball will pass to one of the other players.
4. Once the pass is made, the other player not receiving the ball must sprint to the other cone so that once again there are players on each cone next to the player with the ball.
5. To make this drill a little more challenging, a defender can be put inside the cones.

Coaching Tips:

- Too often in games players fail to provide the proper support to the player with the ball. This drill will teach them to always provide proper support so that possession is kept and players always have teammates available to pass to.



Players will learn to sprint to the open position next to their teammate with the ball so that they can maintain possession of the ball as a team.

DRILL #5 – CONTROL THE VOLLEY

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

Arrange your players into groups of three players and make sure each group has two balls.

Execution:

1. There will be a player in the middle of two players.
2. There should be about 10 yards separating each of the players.
3. The two players on the ends should each have a ball.
4. The player in the middle will step toward one player on the end.
5. That player will serve the ball through the air to the player in the middle.
6. The player has to volley the ball back to the server.
7. Then the player in the middle turns and goes back toward the other player on the other end and repeats the process.
8. Have them repeat several times and then rotate positions so every player gets a chance to take the volleys in the middle.

Coaching Tips:

- Part of keeping possession of the ball is being able to take a ball out of the air and volley it to a teammate. This drill allows players to practice volleying with all parts of their body.



Players learn how volley control plays a role in both individual and team effort to maintain possession of the ball.

DRILL #6 – WEAK FOOT DRIBBLE

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

On half of the soccer field set-up two sets of five cones. The cones should be placed in a straight line. There should be about five yards between each cone. Players will form a line about 5 yards away from each set of cones.

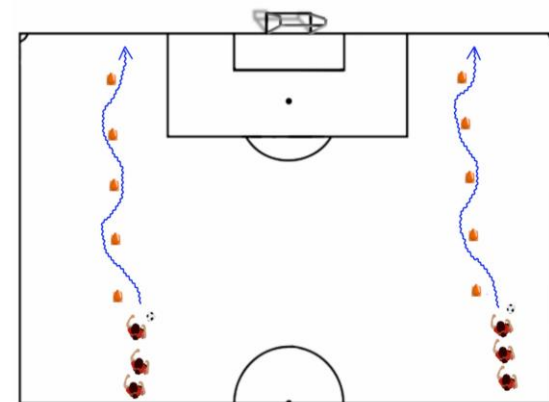
Each player in the line should have a ball or at least a few balls for the first few players in each line.

Execution:

1. The first player in each line will dribble in and out of the cones using only their weak foot.
2. Once they get to the end, the players should sprint back to the end of the line while still dribbling only with their weak foot.
3. The next player in line should begin once the player in front is two cones into the drill. This way the drill keeps moving and players don't stand around too long.

Coaching Tips:

- Too often players, especially younger players, dribble almost exclusively with their dominant foot. However, to keep possession of the ball players need to be able to dribble with both feet. This drill forces players to get better with their weak foot which will help them keep possession of the ball in games.



This is an easy but important drill that helps players improve their dribbling with their non-dominant foot.

DRILL #7 – AROUND THE WORLD

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

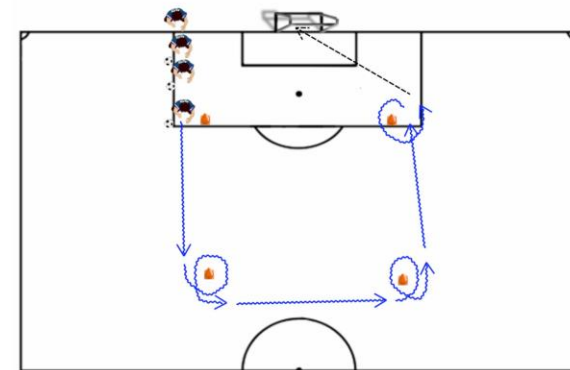
Set up four cones in a square. The square should be about 20 yards long and 20 yards wide. One end of the square should be on the 18 yard box or penalty box.

Execution:

1. This drill will begin at one of the cones that is set-up on the 18 yard box.
2. The first player in line will sprint to the next cone, circle around the cone, and then sprint to the next cone and circle again.
3. Once the player circles around the third cone, the other cone that's at the other end of the 18 yard box, that player should fire the ball into the goal.
4. Send the next player in line once the first player has passed the first cone and is on their way to the second one.
5. To make it a little more challenging you can put a goalie in the net. If you do use a goalie, players shouldn't dribble in but they should take their shots from around the last cone.

Coaching Tips:

- Players often need to change directions with the ball. This drill will help with that since players are required to dribble in three circles. This drill will also help players keep possession of the ball while dribbling quickly.



Players learn to move in a variety of directions while dribbling the ball.

DRILL #8 – DRIBBLE DIRECTION

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

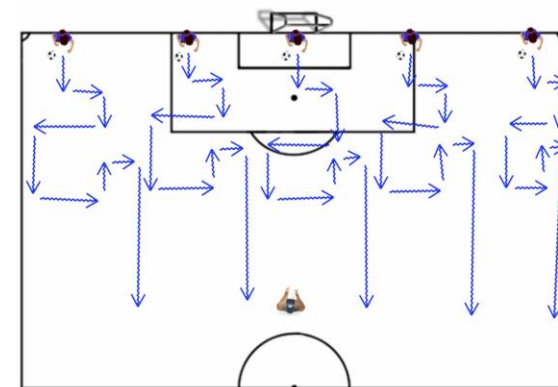
On one half of the field, line-up the players on one end facing the other end of the field. Each player should have a ball and should be about five yards away from their neighbor.

Execution:

1. The coach will stand out near midfield.
2. The coach will then signal for the players to dribble in a specific direction.
3. So the coach might first point for the players to move forward then to the left, to the right, back, forward again, and so on.
4. The players must keep their heads-up to see which way they are supposed to go and they must keep their dribble while looking at the coach the entire time.

Coaching Tips:

- To be able to keep possession of the ball and see other players on the field, dribblers must keep their heads up at all times. This drill will help the players learn to dribble and change directions while keeping their heads up.



Players will learn to follow the coach and dribble the ball while staying aware of what's going on around them.

DRILL #9 – CHECKER BOARD

Skill Level: Intermediate

Setup:

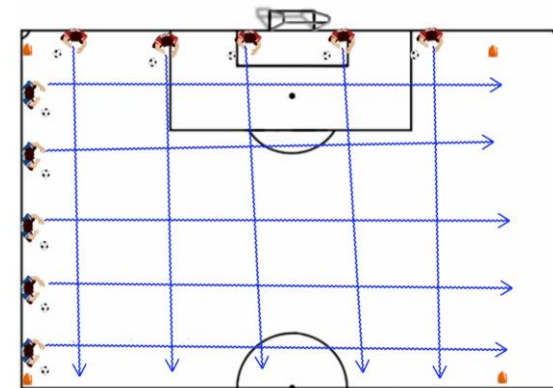
Put four cones up in a large square that's about 40 yards by 40 yards, about half of the soccer field. Have players line-up even with the cones on two adjoining sides of the square.

Execution:

1. On the whistle the players will dribble their ball to the opposite side of the square.
2. Since there are two lines the players and they are going to different ends they will have to watch-out for each other as they cross the square.
3. Once they reach the other side, blow the whistle again and have them return.
4. Repeat several times.

Coaching Tips:

- It's important to encourage players to move at a good pace but also remember to teach players to keep control of their dribble by keeping their head up.



This drill teaches players to keep their heads up as they dribble.

DRILL #10 – 3v3 PLUS THREE

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

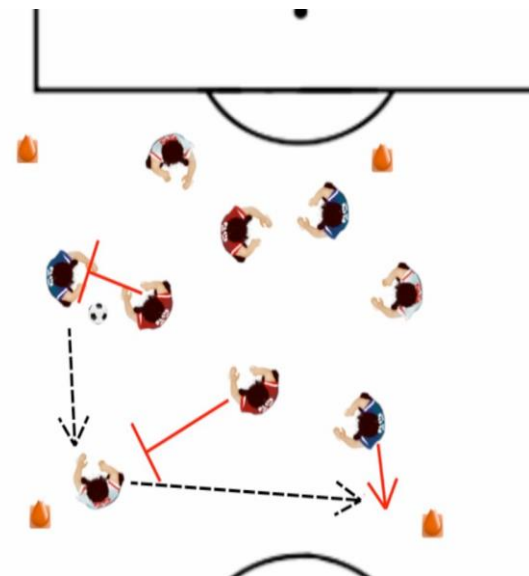
Arrange four cones into a square that's about 20 yards by 20 yards. Divide the players into three teams. There will be three players from each team inside the cones.

Execution:

1. To begin have two teams, six players, with possession of the ball and the other team, three players, as defenders.
2. The two teams must pass the ball around and keep possession of it.
3. The defensive team is trying to gain possession.
4. Once the ball is stolen they then have possession and the team of three players that lost the ball goes on defense.
5. The defensive team and the other team will now have possession and try to maintain it.

Coaching Tips:

- You can make it more competitive and fast paced by giving points to the team that doesn't lose the ball as much as the other teams.
- This drill is also a great one for conditioning the defenders.



This is a great drill for teaching players how to move and communicate so that they keep possession of the ball.

DRILL #11 – 2v1 POSSESSION GAME

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

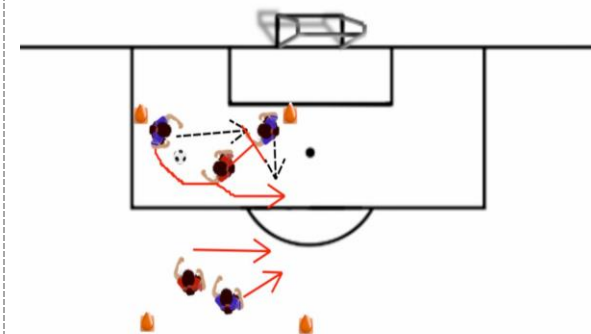
Set up four cones so that they form a rectangle that's about 20 yards long and 10 yards wide. There should be a line running through the middle of the rectangle so that two sections are created that measure about 10x10 each. You could use the sideline, goal line, or anything else. Divide the players into groups of five.

Execution:

1. Begin with two attacking players on one side and one attacking player on the other side.
2. There should be one defender in each half.
3. The ball will begin with one of the two attacking players.
4. These two players must pass the ball to each other five times.
5. Then they have to look to pass the ball to the other attacker on the other side.
6. Once that pass is made, one of the two attackers goes into the other half of the field and a 2v1 is created there.
7. The defenders try to steal the ball from the attackers and if they are successful the drill moves to the other side of the rectangle.
8. The process repeats it-self.

Coaching Tips:

- This is an excellent exercise that teaches players to make runs to get open and to communicate with each other.
- It also helps defensive players develop needed skills in a 2v1 scenario.



Players learn how to keep possession of the ball and how to look to pass the ball up the field.

DRILL #12 – SUPPORT DRILL

Skill Level: Advanced

Setup:

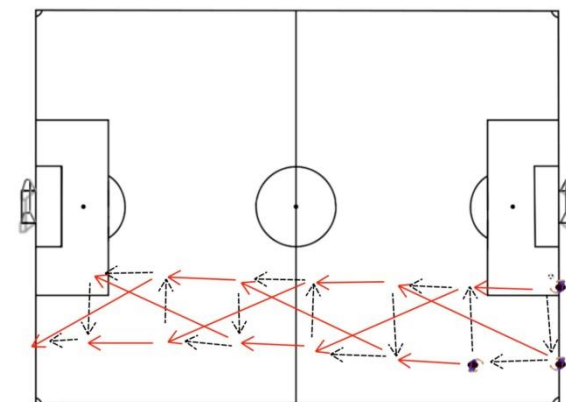
Make sure you have an entire field to use. Divide your players into groups of three and give each group one ball. Two players will begin on the end line and one of those players will have a ball. The third player will be about 10 yards up the field in front of the player that doesn't have the ball on the end line.

Execution:

1. Each group will go down the field passing the ball and supporting each other.
2. The player with the ball will pass to the other player on the end line.
3. After they make the pass they will run up the field to be square with the other player who is already about 10 yards up the field.
4. The player who just received the ball will pass it to the player who is 10 yard up.
5. Then that player who just passed the ball will run diagonally up the field so that he or she is 10 yards ahead of the ball.
6. As the player is running diagonally, the ball will be passed square to the player that originally started with the ball.
7. Basically a player will receive the ball and pass it to the player that is either square or up the field in support (whichever player is supposed to get the ball).
8. Then that player will either run straight up the field to get square for the next pass or that player will run diagonally to lend support up field.
9. The drill ends when the group of three reaches the other end line. Once a few passes are made, another group of three players should begin the same drill.

Coaching Tips:

- Remind your players that passes should be crisp and the players receiving the pass should either one touch the ball to the next player or trap the ball and then make a crisp pass.
- This drill is great for teaching players how to provide support to each other in order for the team to keep possession of the ball.



Players will learn to run to open space and to always provide support to the player with the ball.

DRILL #13 – KEEP AWAY

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

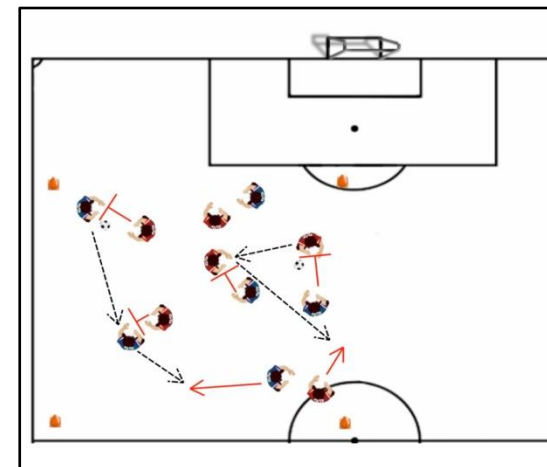
Divide players into two teams of six. Give each team one ball. Form a small area with four cones; a square with sides 25 yards in length should work.

Execution:

1. The goal is for each team to keep possession of their own ball and try to take away possession from the other team.
2. Every time a team steals the ball that is a point.
3. When a team reaches 5 points they win.
4. For more advanced games one or two more balls can be used.

Coaching Tips:

- Players will need to move and help each other out based on how the other team is moving. Also, players need to remember to try to steal the other teams' ball too. Therefore this is more complicated than a game situation so it will make things seem easier in the game.



This drill helps players learn to keep possession of the ball.

DRILL #14 – BALL WINS

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

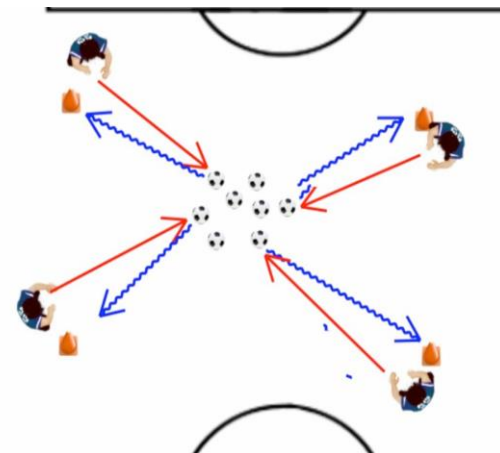
Set-up four cones in a square with the sides being about 15 yards long. Set eight balls directly in the middle of the square. Make four lines of players, one line at each cone.

Execution:

1. One player will start at each cone.
2. On the whistle players will sprint to the balls in the middle and then dribble the ball back to their cone.
3. When the cones from the middle are gone then players should start stealing balls from other players' cones.
4. The first player to have 4 balls at a cone wins.
5. If you have enough balls you can set-up multiple groups to go at the same time, otherwise you will need to rotate the players so that each player gets the chance to perform the drill.

Coaching Tips:

- This helps players learn to dribble with speed. It also teaches the players to keep their heads up so they know who has more balls. Finally, it makes players plan their next move so that they can take balls from those with three balls already at their cone.



This is a fun drill that will teach players to dribble with possession and speed.

DRILL #15 – MOVING GAUNTLET

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

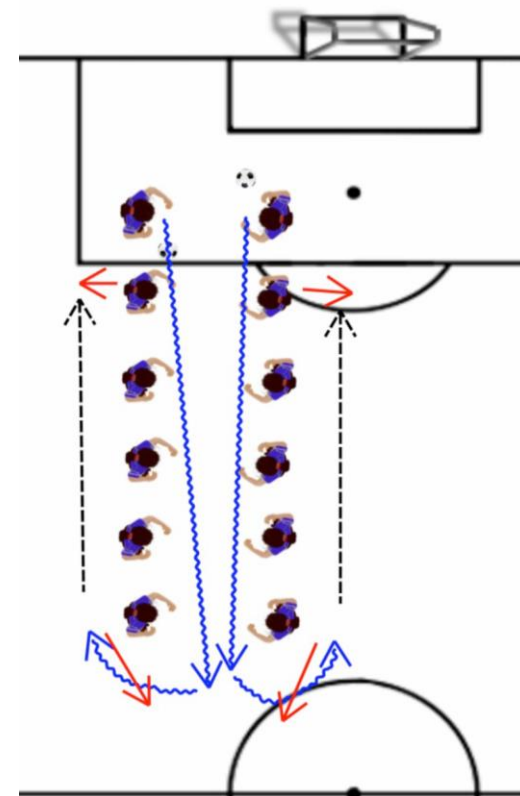
Players should form two lines and face each other stretching all the way down the field. There should be a little more than a yard between the lines. The space between the lines will be a chute where players dribble through.

Execution:

1. This drill will start at one end of the field and go all the way to the other end of the field.
2. The first two players in the lines will have a ball and they will dribble down through the other players.
3. The players forming the lines can't move forward but they can try to kick the ball away from the players dribbling through the chute.
4. The player dribbling through must try to dribble straight through without allowing the other players to kick the ball away.
5. One player should go first and then the other player should go once the first player is half way through the chute.
6. The players with the balls will finish the drill by curling to the outside and then passing back to the next two players at the beginning of the line.
7. The passing players will then take their place at the end of the gauntlet. So the gauntlet will slowly move down the field.
8. The drill doesn't end until the gauntlet reaches the other end of the field.

Coaching Tips:

- Make sure your players understand that this isn't a drill to just kick the ball away from the players running the gauntlet but it's important to focus on dribbling down field with distractions.



This drill will help players keep good control of the ball while being pressured by the opponent.

DRILL #16 – CIRCLE DRILL

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

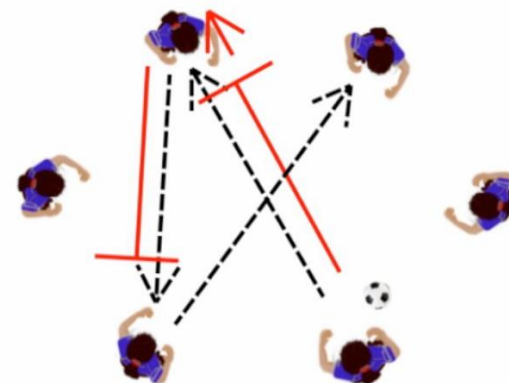
Organize the players into groups of six players and have them form a circle. Make sure each group of six has one ball.

Execution:

1. One player will begin by passing the ball across the circle to another player.
2. The passer will then run across and put pressure on the player who just received the ball.
3. The player who received the ball must either one touch the ball to another player or trap the ball and pass to another player.
4. Then that player goes to put pressure on the next player who is receiving the ball.
5. This continues until every player has touched the ball at least once.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill helps players learn to keep possession by forcing players to make good traps and good passes. It also forces the players to make quick decisions just as they'll need to do in a game.



This is a great possession drill that can be done anywhere as long as there's a ball.

DRILL #17 – FOUR CORNERS GO

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

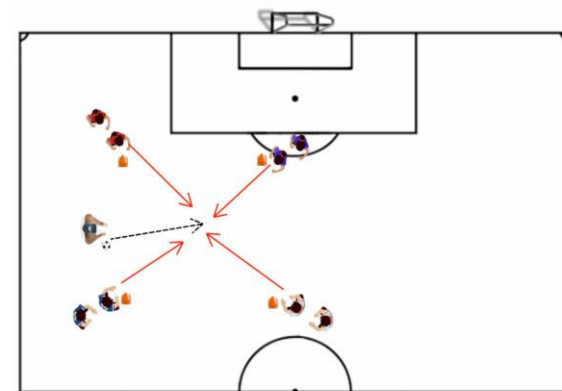
Set-up four cones to form a square that's 30 yards by 30 yards. Divide your players into four teams with each team lining up at a separate cone. The coach will have a bunch of balls and will stand in the middle of one of the sides of the square.

Execution:

1. The coach will throw a ball into the middle of the square and yell "Go!"
2. Each player at the front of the line will sprint to get the ball. One player from each team for a total of four players.
3. The first player to the ball will try to keep possession for 5 seconds.
4. The other players will try to steal the ball. When a player steals the ball then that player will try to keep possession for 5 seconds.
5. When a player keeps the ball for 5 seconds that team will get a point and the ball will be kicked back to the coach.
6. Repeat with new players from each team. The winning team is the first one to reach a certain number of points or the team with most points after a certain amount of time.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill is great because players must try to keep possession while facing three opponents. It puts them in a tight situation and really makes them work hard to win.



Players learn to keep control of their dribble and they also learn to shield the ball from their opponents.

DRILL #18 – 5v2 GRID

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

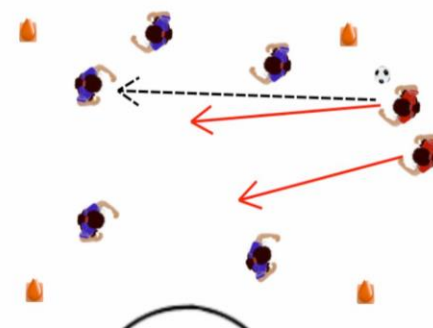
Set-up four cones to form a square that's about 12 yards by 12 yards. Five attackers will be inside the cones (grid) and the rest of the players will pair up and be defenders.

Execution:

1. The first pair of defenders will pass the ball into the attackers and step inside the grid.
2. The defenders will try to steal the ball or kick it out of the grid while the attackers will try to pass the ball around and keep possession.
3. Once the ball is stolen or kicked out then the defenders will go off and two new defenders will pass the ball in and step into the grid.
4. The same five attackers will stay on.

Coaching Tips:

- The five attackers will get plenty of practice keeping possession of the ball. They will need to run to get open and they'll need to communicate.



This drill will help both attackers and defenders gain good experience in their respective positions.

DRILL #19 – YOU'RE IT

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

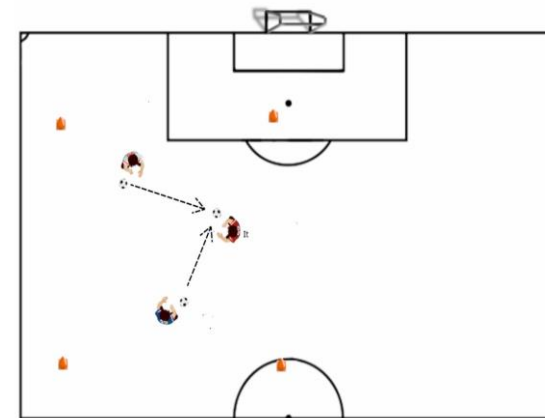
Set four cones up in a square that is about 10 yards by 10 yards. Three players will start outside of the square. Each player needs a ball.

Execution:

1. The coach will call out one of the player's names and that player will be "it".
2. All three players will step inside the square.
3. The two players who aren't it will try to kick their balls into the ball of the player who is "it".
4. After 1 minute the players come out of the square and a new player is it.
5. You can set-up multiple squares and have multiple groups go at the same time.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill teaches players to keep control of the ball for a designated amount of time and to shield the ball from the opponents.



Players will be practicing ball control in a confined area which will help them develop the need skills for individual ball possession.

DRILL #20 – CIRCLE THE CONE

Skill Level: All Skill Levels

Setup:

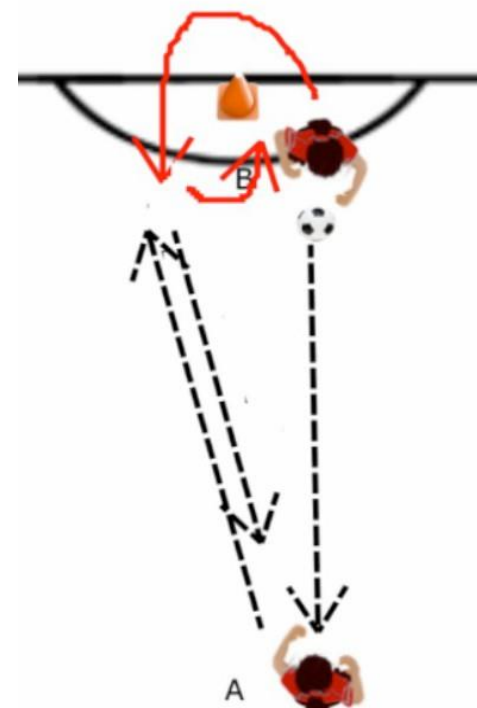
For this drill you need one cone, two players, and a ball.

Execution:

1. Set one player about 15 yards from the cone.
2. Another player should stand with the ball right next to the cone.
3. The player with the ball will pass to the other player.
4. Then the player who just passed the ball will circle the cone and get a crisp return pass.
5. The player should receive the ball and kick it back and then repeat the process several times.
6. Rotate players to the side of the cone so they get equal rotations and reps.
7. You can make this more difficult by requiring the players to do one touch passes.

Coaching Tips:

- This drill will help teach players how to receive the ball on the move and how to trap and make good passes. It will also help with footwork and conditioning.



Players will learn to make quick crisp passes .

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