

Purpose

To practice running down the through ball, turning the ball away from goal

Organization

Players form 2 lines near midfield. The line of attackers starts 10 yards behind and outside the line of defenders. A server stands to the right of the lines. (Set up duplicate lines on other side of field if lines have more than 5 players each.)

Procedure

1. Two players at the front of each line race to a ball sent toward the end line by the server.
2. Give the defender a slight head start to arrive at the ball first. The objective is for this player to turn the ball away from the goal and pass or dribble it back up the field.
3. If the attacker wins the ball, he or she proceeds to goal.

Key Points

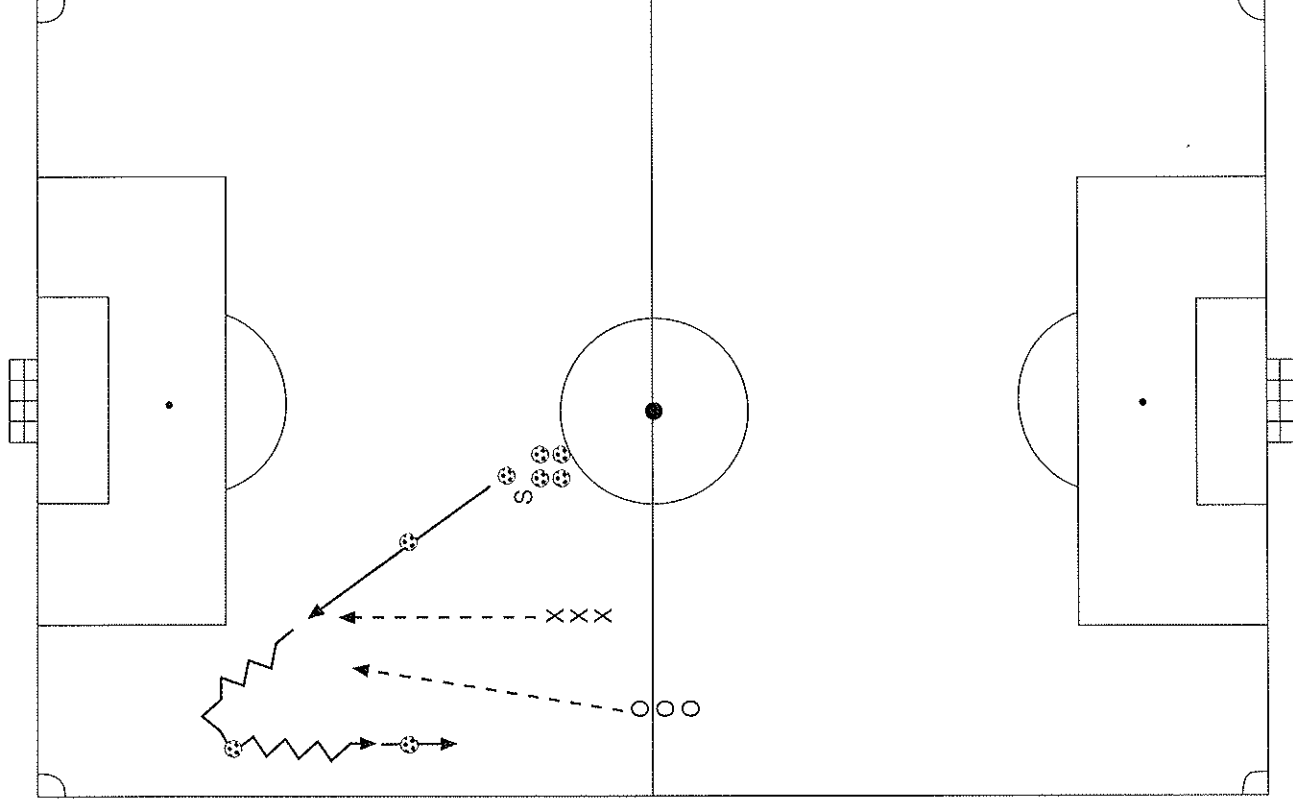
This drill isolates a situation common in games. The defender, running toward his or her goal, is heavily pressured by an attacker from the other team. The defender decides whether to turn the ball and play it up the field or kick it out-of-bounds. A third option is often available if another defender or the goalkeeper is open for a support pass.

As a rule the defender should turn the ball to the outside. Kicking the ball out-of-bounds for a throw-in, or worse, a corner kick is a last option. Skilled players can sometimes turn the ball and deflect it off the legs of the attacker to win possession of the throw-in.

The defender can also let the ball run out-of-bounds if last touched by the other team. This decision is good only if the attacker cannot reach the ball. Often a fake kick is enough to gain the extra time needed for the ball to run out-of-bounds. Note too that the defender can use the body to shield the ball only if the ball is within playing distance.

Variations

1. Change the position of the server.
2. Allow for a pass to the goalkeeper or a sweeper.
3. Have the defender receive the ball closer to the end line.



Purpose

To develop the ability of maintaining possession in a confined space

Organization

Grid 10 by 10 yards, 6 players (2 teams of 3) per grid.

Procedure

1. Each team tries to keep the ball away from the other team in a confined area.
2. A point is scored if the opposite team kicks the ball out of the grid. Restart play by dribbling in from the side.
3. Award the team with possession at the end of a designated time (one minute) three points.
4. Have the losing team sprint three times across the grid.

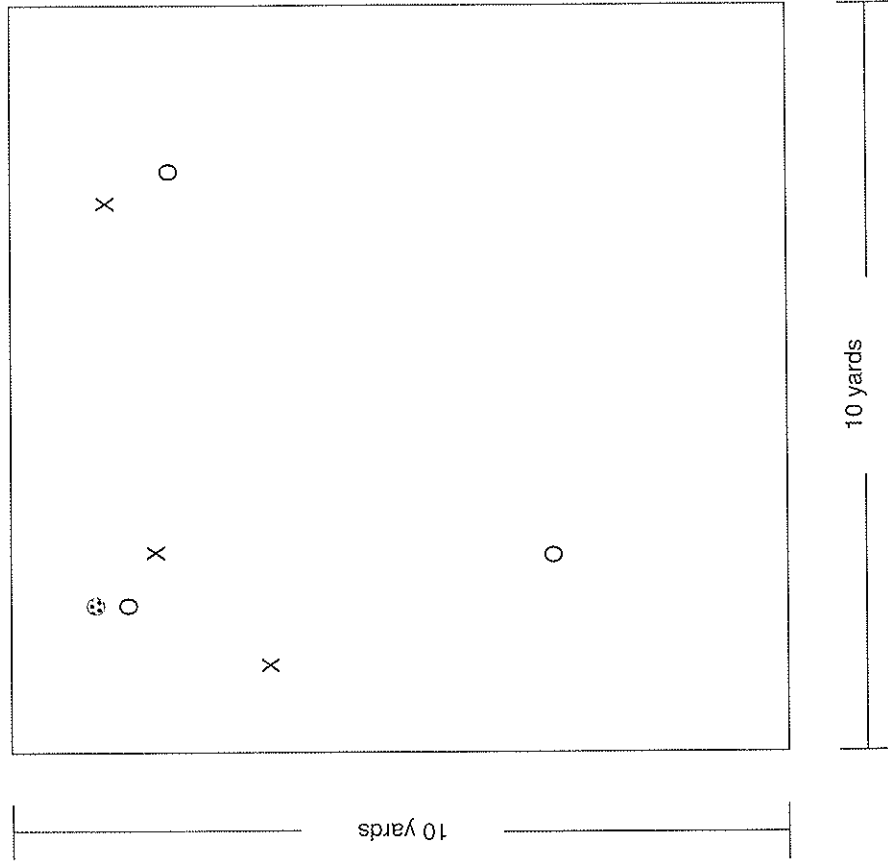
Key Points

Shielding is a way of retaining possession of the ball against a defender under pressure until a positive move is possible. The body, facing almost sideways, remains between the ball and the opponent. The ball is played with the foot furthest from the defender. It is rolled to either side depending on the position of the defenders.

Players decide how long to hold, when to pass, and what direction to move the ball. The dribbler is in trouble if pinned in a corner or against the side. Supporting teammates will need to make quick runs or perform takeovers to help the player shielding the ball (especially if the player is double teamed).

Variations

1. Allow two players (one from each team) to move on the outside of the grid as support players.
2. Place a small goal or single cone in the center of the grid. Award additional points if a team can hit the target with the ball.
3. Require each player to match up with one other player on the other team. Only matched up players can tackle the ball from each other.



Purpose

To recognize and create opportunities for shooting on goal

Organization

Place 2 cones inside the penalty area (alter the position of the cones from time to time). Attackers' line is 35 yards out from goal; servers' line is to the side of the penalty area. A defender starts in the penalty area; a goalkeeper is in the goal.

Procedure

1. The player at the head of the line on the servers' line serves a ball to the first player in the attackers' line. This player dribbles past the defender and shoots on goal.
2. The player who shoots then plays defense against the next player in line. This new defender has to touch either cone before challenging for the ball. (The old defender goes to the end of the servers' line.)
3. It is important that the next ball be served into play moments after the prior shot is taken. (After this pass, the player serving the ball jogs to the end of the attackers' line.)

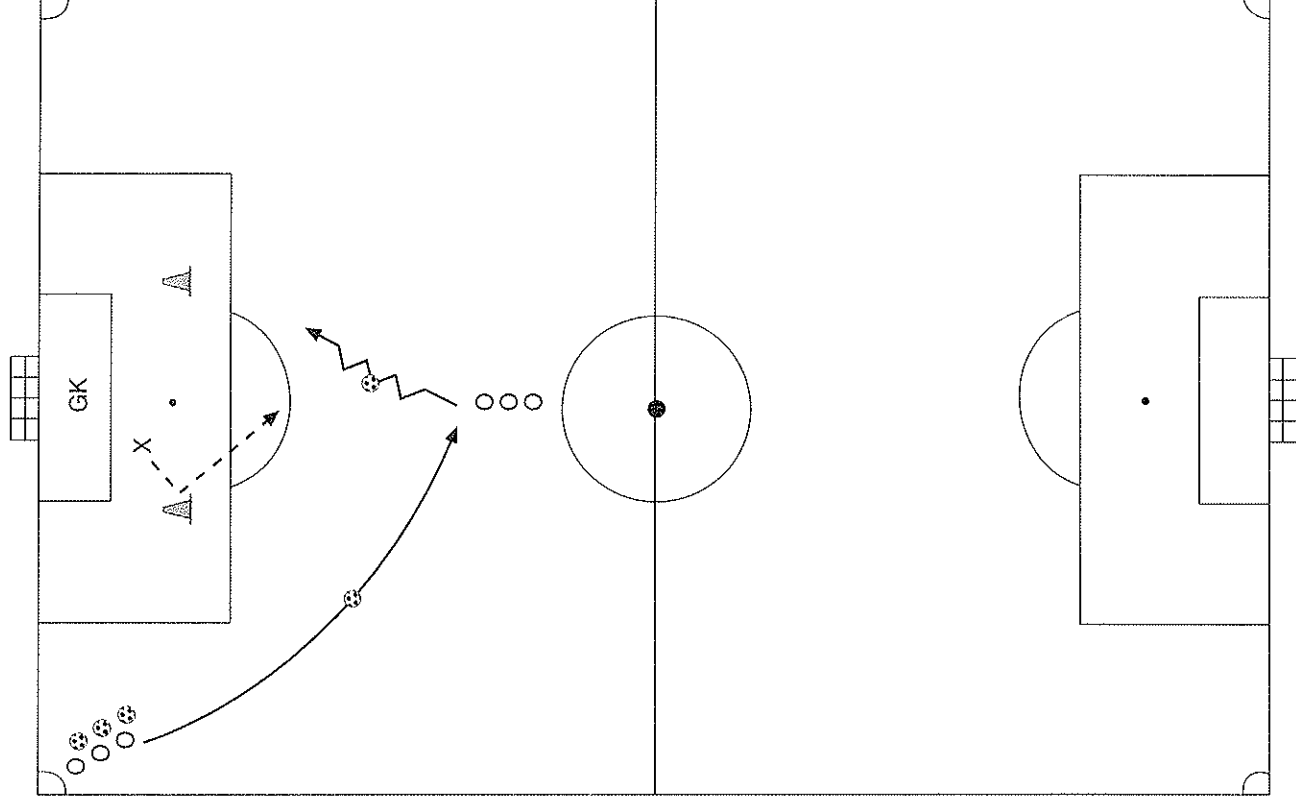
Key Points

Depending on how you organize the drill (the position of the lines and the cones), players experience different levels of defensive pressure while setting up for a shot. In any case, the player must settle the ball and advance to goal. The defender might challenge from straight on or come in from the side.

The dribbler maximizes time and space by heading straight to the penalty area. The player should take a shot at the first opportunity. Have players work on placement. The shot must be on target. The opportunity cannot be wasted.

Variations

1. Alter the position of the cones.
2. Require defender to touch both cones.
3. Have the server play defense (1 vs. 2).
4. Require the defender to touch the near cone and the dribbler to go outside the far cone (or vice versa).
5. Start play with a chip pass or throw-in.



Purpose

To focus on finishing the breakthrough

Organization

Position 1 line 30 yards out from goal; 2 goalkeepers take turns inside the goal.

Procedure

1. The player at the front of the line dribbles toward goal and tries to score.
2. The goalkeeper starts on the line and can advance toward the ball at any time.

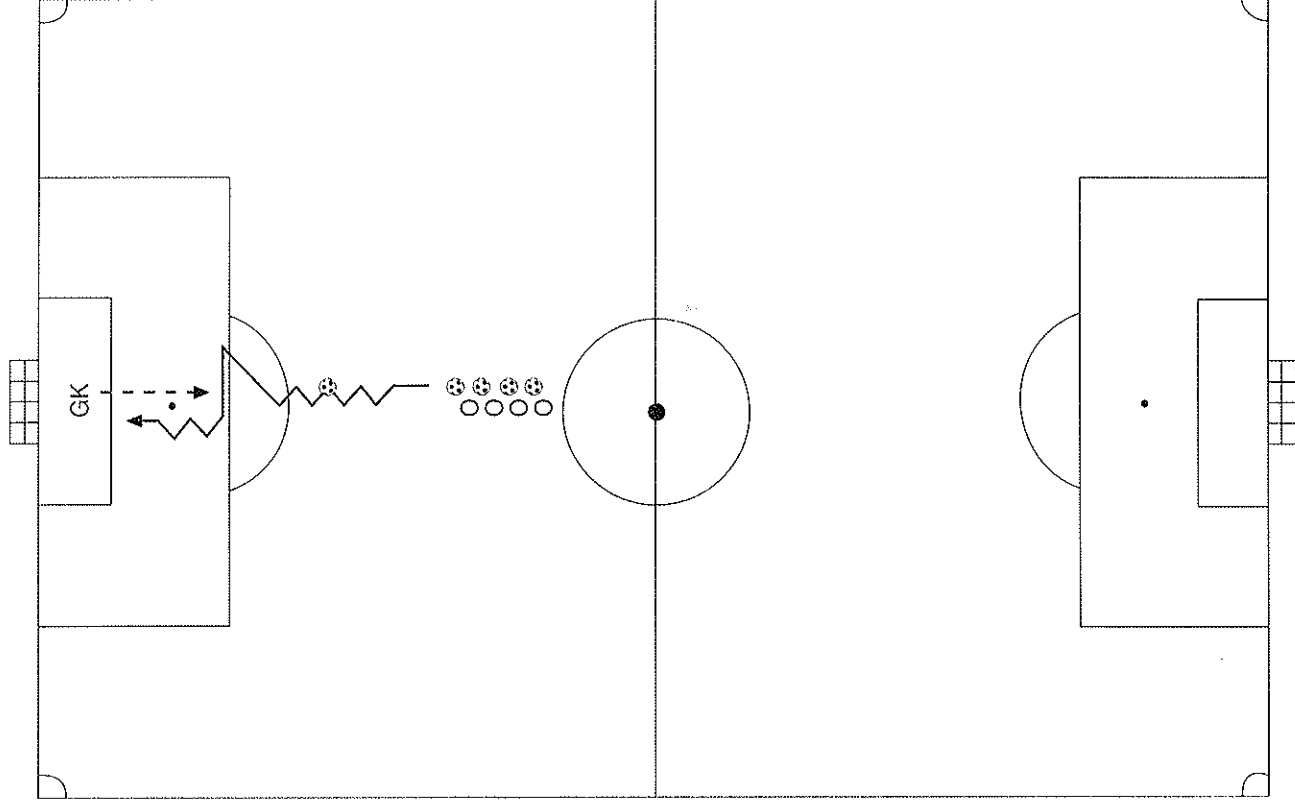
Key Points

Players should dribble straight to the goal. If the goalkeeper charges, the offensive player should dribble around the goalkeeper then shoot on goal. The trick will be to force the goalkeeper to dive or slide in one direction then to quickly push or cut the ball in the other. This is a good dribbling exercise in that it exaggerates what it takes to commit a defender.

If the goalkeeper charges then stops, a shot may be available by lofting the ball over or by directing it to the side. If the goalkeeper stays on the line, the dribbler should proceed until scoring is an extremely likely outcome.

Variations

1. Have player receive a pass then dribble toward goal. Change the position of the server and the type of pass delivered.
2. Put a time limit in effect for the player to take a shot (five seconds).



Purpose

To practice and test 1 vs. 1 skills

Organization

Grid 15 by 20 yards; 2 players stand shoulder to shoulder between a pair of goals 5 yards apart inside the grid. Goals are 2 yards wide. Place 1 ball 5 yards in front of the players. Set up 1 grid per pair of players.

Procedure

1. At the signal, players race to the ball and try to win possession. Either player can score at either goal from either direction.
2. The player with possession continues to score as many goals as possible until the opponent gains possession (then the opponent tries to score).
3. Play continues nonstop for one minute. Allow no ties. Players keep playing until someone scores a goal (sudden death).
4. The winners advance to the next grid; losers go back one. Give a three-minute rest period before the next round. Keep track of wins and losses.*

Key Points

This exercise incorporates a variety of skills for winning 1 vs. 1 situations including speed, strength, and ball control. The drill also measures a player's mental attitude. Are players competitive? What happens when they lose?

Stamina and fitness are important if players are required to perform this drill repeatedly.

Variation

You can incorporate this activity into *ladder training* by creating as many grids as there are pairs of players. After each competition the winner moves up a grid, the loser goes down. (Note that players at the first and last grid might have to sit out a round.)

*See chapter 6 on the 1 vs. 1 challenge for ideas on how to keep score and how to use this game for player selection (tryouts).

