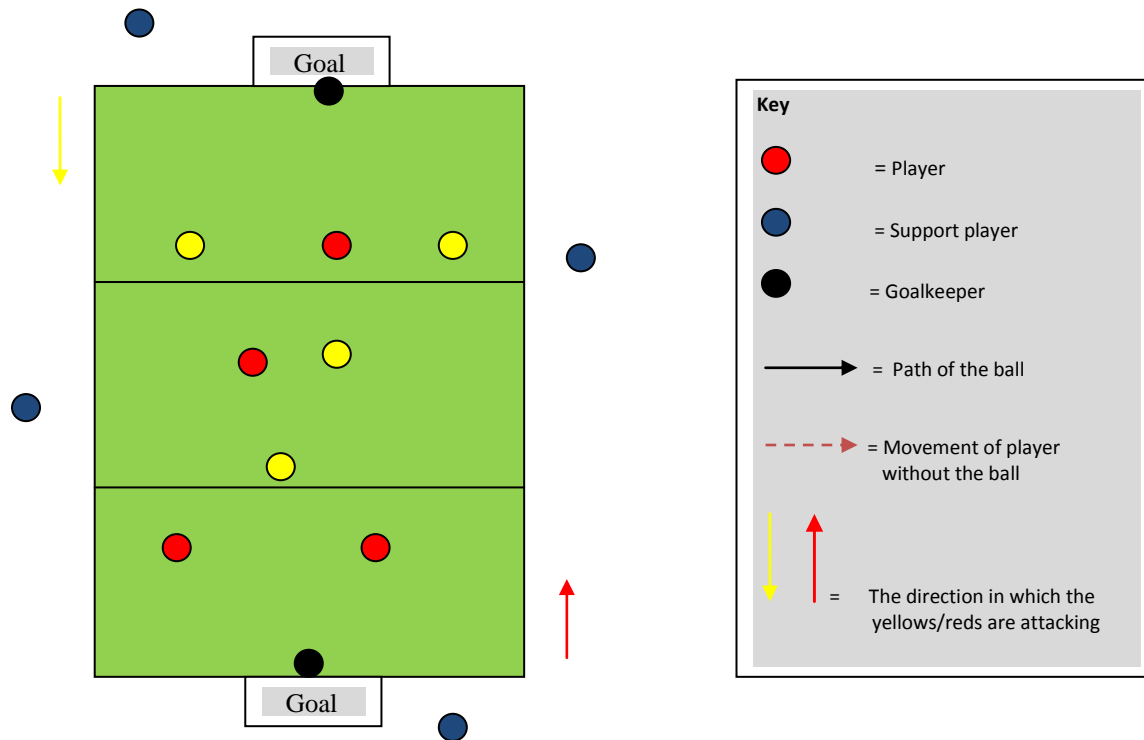


'The 4 R's' – a discussion for designing coaching practice

The intended purpose of this session-plan is to create a debate around effective ways of recreating the demands of the *game* in coaching practices for young players. Outlined here is a practice session template and two challenges for the players to master – in doing so the players will have an opportunity to practice the '4 R's' – receiving, releasing, retaining and running with the ball. Following this are some suggested ideas of how to emphasise each of these four aspects of the game by changing parts of the practice.



Organisation

- Set out a pitch and split into thirds (see diagram).
- Use goals and goalkeepers if available.
- Split the players into three teams.
- Each team is given a colour (yellow/blue/red).
- Two teams organise themselves to play on the pitch (red and yellow), with one team as 'support' players on the outside (blues).

The size of the area and goals, and the number of players used in the practice, should be relevant to the age, and ability, of the players you are working with.

The Challenge for the players

- The team in possession must try and combine with, at least, two blue 'support' players on the outside of the pitch before a goal is scored. (In order to create passing angles, the blue team are free to move around the outside of the pitch, and do not have to occupy only one side throughout the practice)

And/or...

develop play 'through' the three thirds to score a goal. *(This means the ball must be passed/dribbled through all three zones – in opposed to the ball being played directly from zone one to zone three)*

After every goal is scored, the team which has conceded the goal, swaps roles with the support players on the outside of the pitch – this can be changed to every 2/3 goals at the coaches discretion

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Once the game is up and running, changing the 'challenge' will emphasise different demands of the game. For example;

Receiving – the central area of the pitch is used as a 'receiving zone'. When the ball is out of play, or the goalkeeper, support players or the players in the defensive third are in controlled possession– no attacking player can occupy the central area; the challenge, therefore, is for a player to 'drop into' (diagram 1) or 'break forward' (diagram 2) into the central area to receive the ball. In order to encourage the rotation of players in this zone and the continual interchanging of positions, the players may be challenged to have only one receiving player in the central zone at any time (see below).

Diagram one: 'dropping in' to receive

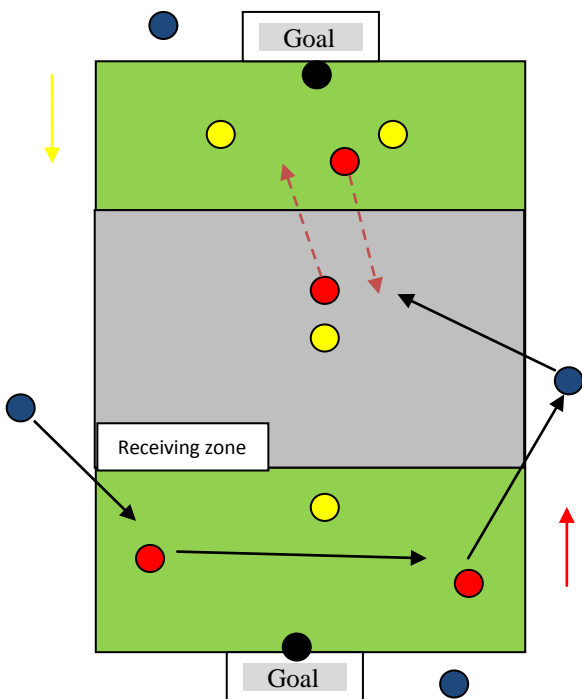
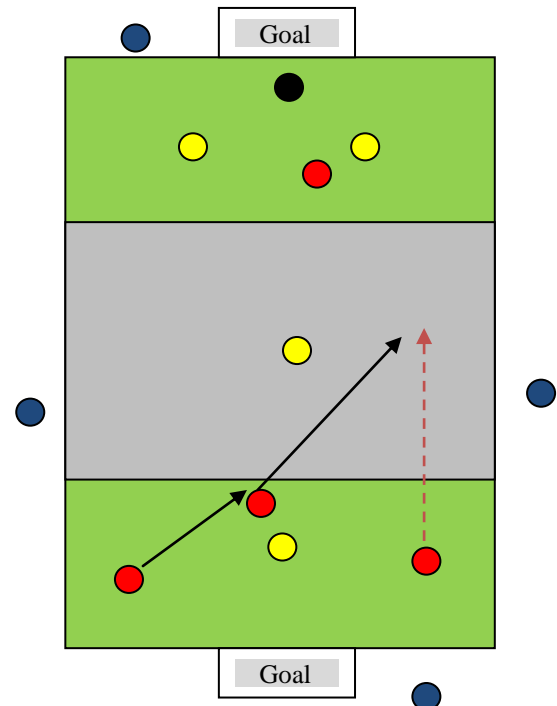
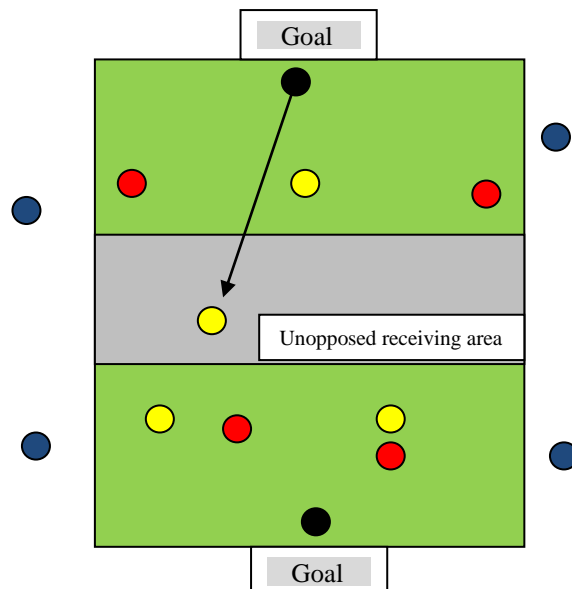


Diagram two: 'breaking forward' to receive



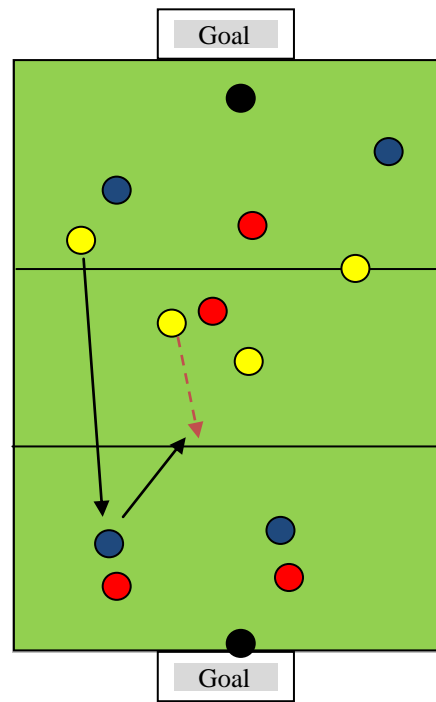
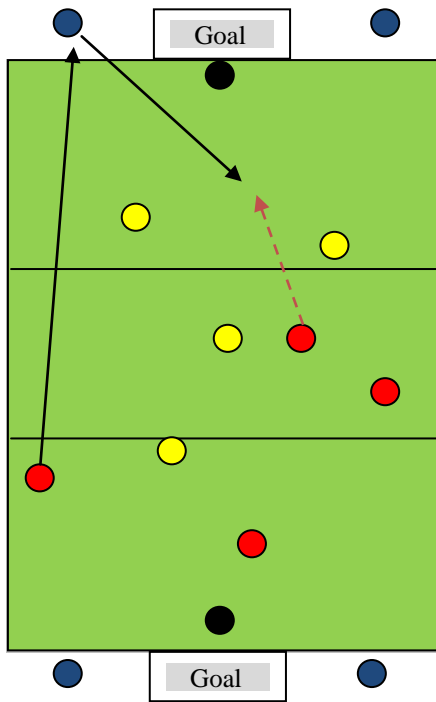
If one, or a number, of players require unopposed receiving technique work – the central zone may become an unopposed area in which focused receiving work can be done. In this way, the goalkeeper can feed directly into this unopposed area – alternatively, the players in the defensive third can build play up, in order to play into the central area. The receiving player may be changed after every attack. See below:



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Releasing - Opportunities to work on releasing (passing and shooting) are covered in all of the sessions. In order to create different demands on the players passing, the role of the 'support' players can be amended. For example two support players must work on the 'end lines' at both ends of the pitch, giving the players the opportunity to play longer passes and make supporting runs (see diagram one) to receive the return pass. Alternatively, the support players could be deployed in the same role but actively in the end zones as target players (see diagram two).



Running with the ball – in order to progress through the central third of the field, the team in possession of the ball must run with the ball/dribble through this area. This will put a greater emphasis on: dropping off and controlling possession in the defending third, switching the play, recognising and exploiting space, as well as seeking opportunities for fast and incisive counter attacks. The size of the thirds may be experimented with to help achieve this objective. (see diagram 1 below). Alternatively the practice could be changed so that, instead of solely running with/dribbling the ball in the designated area, the players must find a way of combining to run with the ball over the 'end line' into the final third before an attempt at goal is made. (See diagram 2 below)

Diagram 1

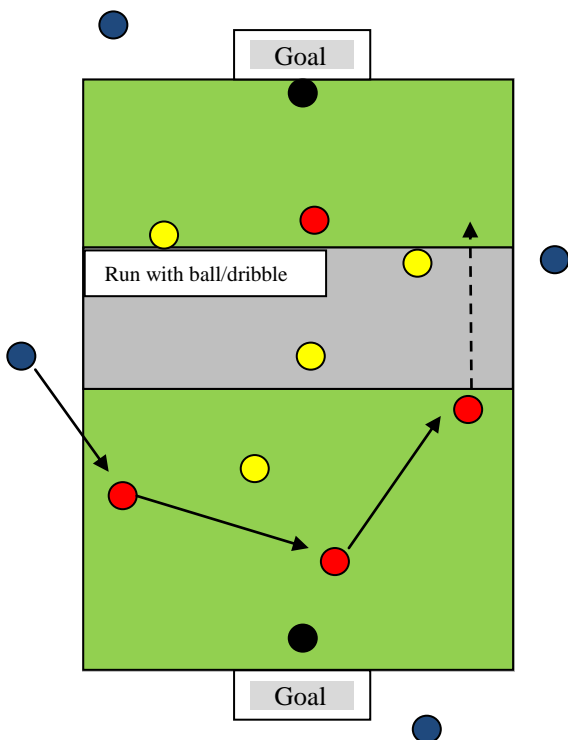
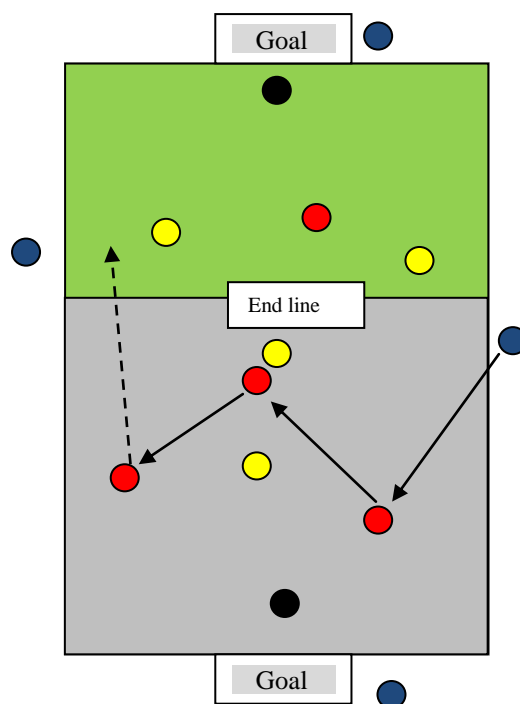


Diagram 2



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Retain – in order to emphasise the importance of retaining possession, challenge the players to combine with all four 'support' players before a goal is scored. This challenge will encourage the players on the outside to continually refine their position and angle of support. If this challenge is too difficult, the number of combinations required may be lowered.

In order to create discussion and debate with other **FACA coaches**, please consider, and feedback, on the following questions;

- How would you structure a practice to achieve the outcomes of **releasing, receiving, retaining and running with the ball**?
- Would you usually work on these aspects in isolation or in combination?
- How could you use these practice templates for your group of players?
- What would you change to make them appropriate to the age, maturity, development and 'ability' of your group?

Please share all ideas on this subject on the FACA discussion forums elsewhere on this site. Likewise, please download the coaching session document and send all your own session plan ideas and progressions through to insightjournal@thefa.com and we will upload the best sessions on the site.