

SESSION PLANS

Combination Play & Finishing

How to use this guide

Understanding the session

This session guide assumes you have 60 minutes with 16 players but as our guidelines point out, this can be adapted based on the number of players you have in your team.

As your confidence grows you may adapt or experiment with the practices provided, but these tasks are designed to follow a process which gradually ramps up the challenge for the players from minute one to minute sixty.

The key below outlines what the images mean on the diagrams. We have created a series of themed practices which allow players to experiment on the ball under no pressure, limited pressure and full pressure.

From a coaching perspective, understanding the level and needs of your players will help you decide when you should ramp up the challenge, or potentially reduce it.

If you have questions about the practices, contact the PDP Team or share your views on the [Player Development Project Slack Community](#).

Interpreting the diagrams



Cone



Pancake/Disc



Pole



Ball



Mannequin



Goals



Ball movement/pass



Without the ball



Varied movement



Curved run



LESSON

Combination Play & Finishing

Combination play and finishing can often be highly engaging and enjoyable topic for players. By ensuring the practice contains game realistic information, you can help players develop their skills under pressure to create and score.

It's most likely that fast combination play and finishing will take place in the attacking third, or around/inside the opposition penalty area. Therefore, when setting up your practices, try and replicate these areas if possible. It's also worth noting that when trying to create and score in these attacking areas, players usually have less time on the ball, are up against more opponents and need to make fast decisions. Try to ensure your practices simulate these kind of scenarios. Avoid players standing in lines waiting for their turn to shoot at goal, and keep the practice realistic to the game.

In the sessions that follow, you will see a combination play/positional game to get the practice going, followed by two small sided games.

The positional game is designed to get players attuned to moving the ball quickly and receiving in space and facing forward (if possible).

The small-sided games are designed to replicate realistic goal scoring moments from close range where the ball may be delivered at varying angles/speeds, or where players have to unlock the opposition defence.

Adapt the practices to the age, stage and ability of the players you are working with and don't be afraid to experiment with different area sizes or rules within the game. Importantly, be patient as the players learn the task and allow time for them to establish understanding.



COMBINATION PLAY & FINISHING

4v4+4 Positional Game

Topic: Positional Play

Practice type: Positional Game

No. of players: 8-16

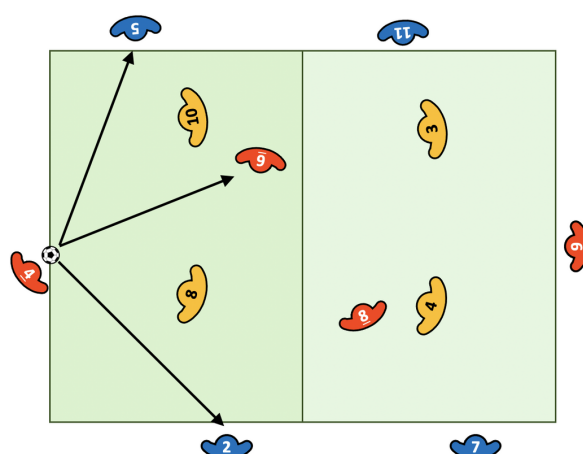
Offsides: N/A

Timing: 15 minutes

Goalkeepers: N/A

Pitch Size: 20 x 10m

Age group: All Ages



Objectives

Red players (neutral) work with team in possession (blue) to play end to end. Yellow team defend outnumbered. If yellow win the ball off blue/red, yellow secure possession and quickly react, moving to outside of box and joining reds in keeping the ball. Blue transition quickly to defend (counter press) inside the box. Defending team can defend inside or outside the box. Blue players to stay outside the box. Can progress to allow red targets to dribble in or allow blue wingers to roll inside or rotate roles.

Organisation

Set up an age appropriate area. 20 x 10 is usually a good guide for youth players age 12 – 18. This image shows 12 players. If you have more or less players adapt as follows. The + number always indicates neutral players (red).

8 players 3v3+2

11 players 4v4+3

15 players 6v6+3

9 players 3v3+3

13 players 4v4+5

16 players 7v7+2

10 players 3v3+4

14 players 5v5+4

Observations & Interventions

What you might see

Players playing wide when they could play through the middle, players not maintaining width.

Actions you might take

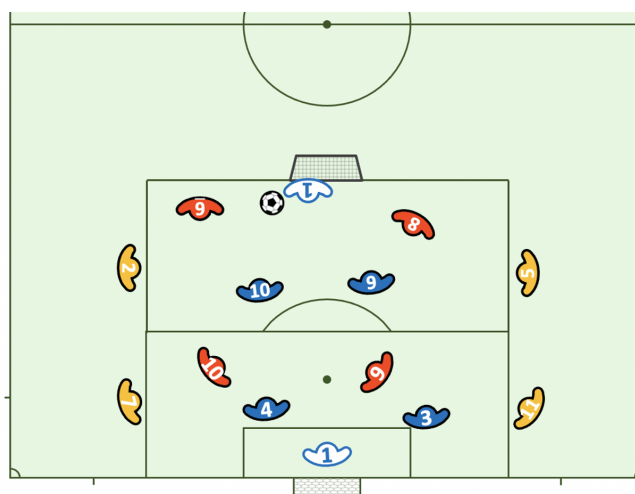
- Make the area bigger (to make passes through the middle easier and defending harder)

Adaptations:

- Make the practice position specific (e.g. central midfielders playing in red 6/8).
- Adjust the size of the area
- If you have GKs in your group, use them as target players (red) to work on their forward passing and playing out.



Fast Finishing

Topic: Fast Finishing**Practice type:** Small Sided Game**No. of players:** 10-16**Offsides:** N/A**Timing:** 20 minutes**Goalkeepers:** Yes**Pitch Size:** 44 x 36m**Age group:** All Ages

Objectives

This game is designed to provide players an opportunity to create and score from close range and at speed. The practice takes place in an area of the field which is often congested and decision making needs to be quick.

Organisation

Set up a pitch using two penalty boxes (if working with senior players). Consider narrowing the area with younger players. Smaller areas can create a higher tempo game so experiment with this. If you are working with players who play 7v7 or 9v9, ensure the space replicates what they would see on a pitch.

Observations & Interventions

What you might see

Players not showing confidence to shoot, players playing too slowly on the outside, players taking too many touches in front of goal.

Actions you might take

- Encourage players to be brave and confident to shoot inside the area
- Restrict outside players touches to speed play up. For examples 2 touch if you are in the yellow group
- Reward players with double points for a one touch finish

Adaptations:

As outlined in the organisation, experiment with pitch size to speed up or slow down the game as well as provide different types of crosses from yellow team. If your players are capable, you can restrict passing players (yellow) to one touch, or restrict players to a one touch finish only inside the area. You can also focus on short range finishing by restricting teams to only score in the attacking half. Lastly, you can lock players in areas initially if you want to ensure balance/structure and encourage deeper players to work on forward passing (instead of dribbling) before unlocking the game to free play.



Forward Passes & Combination Play

Topic: Forward Passing / Forward Running

Practice type: Small Sided Game

No. of players: 8-20

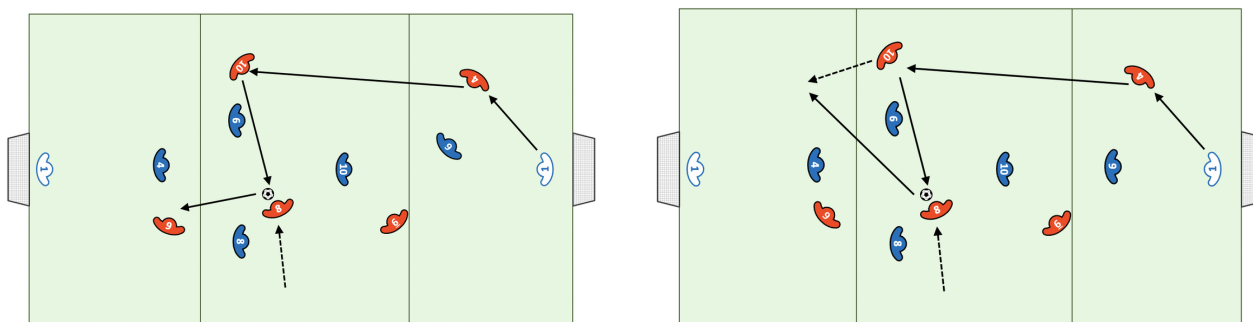
Offsides: N/A

Timing: 25 minutes

Goalkeepers: Yes

Pitch Size: 44 x 36m

Age group: All Ages



Objectives

This game is designed to help players with forward passes and forward runs to unlock an oppositions defence. By creating a space behind for players to run in to and locking players into zones (initially), you facilitate the challenge of combination play, forward runs/movement, support play and scoring.

Organisation

Divide the pitch into thirds. If working with senior players 50 x 30 is a good guide, so work backwards from there with younger players. Try to avoid making the pitch too wide, this will reduce the likelihood of switching play and increase the chances of forward passing. Ensure enough space in the final third for players to run in to. Players are locked into their areas. You can begin with all players locked and when the striker receives the ball they must go 1v1 or allow a midfielder to run forward (defender is not allowed to track/recover) to create 2v1 finishing opportunities. Further adaptations below.

Observations & Interventions

What you might see

Players lacking confidence 1v1, players failing to make quick forward runs, players playing safe.

Actions you might take

- Ensure players are rewarded for different types of goals (e.g. 1 point for central, 3 for switch)
- You can create a rule that in possession, the team in possession must have a player in each channel

Adaptations:

- Allow midfield player to run forward when the pass is played into the striker. This could be the player passing the ball (forward supporting run) or a midfield team mate (third man run). Do not allow defending midfield player to recover.
- Allow defensive midfield player to recover
- Allow striker to come short (into middle third) to receive and midfielder to run beyond
- Allow defender to dribble in to middle third or run forward into middle third in build up
- Unlock all players