

A Rhythm For Teaching Possession

If there is one key to building a great team it is keeping possession of the soccer ball. Put simply this means that if your team has the ball and can keep it away from the opposition then the opposition cannot possibly score and you cannot lose the game.

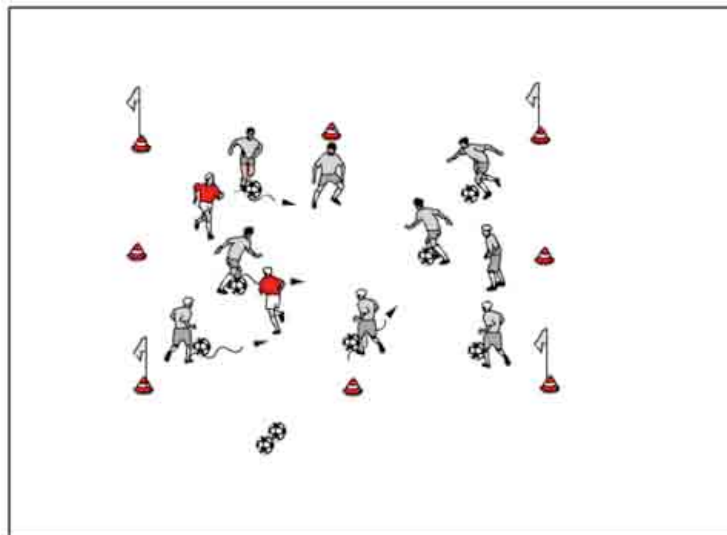
Possession is a combination of both good technical skills on the part of the individual who has the ball, combined with good vision, positioning and movement on the part of the supporting teammates.

The following possession work is presented in a logical progressive format ranging through 4v1, 3v1, 4v2, 5v2, 7v4, numbers up and directional work with target players.

With younger players, you should attempt to give the practices names that excite the players, while older players should be encouraged to play within a more competitive environment. For all practices the size of the area, touch restrictions, and the amount of initial pressure should depend on the age and ability of your group. It is essential in reviewing your possession work that you attempt to make it as realistic and game like as possible. eg. *Defenders that rotate in from other playing areas as opposed to defenders who start within the grid and defend in a staged manner.*

PRACTICE 1-SMASH & GRAB

In an area appropriate for the size of the group, each player will begin with a ball. Two defenders, 'Smash' and 'Grab', will work against the rest of the group attempting to kick all of the soccer balls out of the area. When a soccer ball leaves the designated area, the player whose ball has been kicked out, joins the rest of the players who still have balls in the form of a supporting player and offering themselves as a passing option. Eventually, there will be one ball left. The score against Smash and Grab is the total number of passes that the group manages to play. All players take it in turns to defend.



Coaching Points

1. *Use the game to analyze key possession characteristics and consequently determine where to begin your possession work.*
2. *Analyze first touch, different techniques for short passes, decision making, confidence on the ball, movement off the ball etc.*

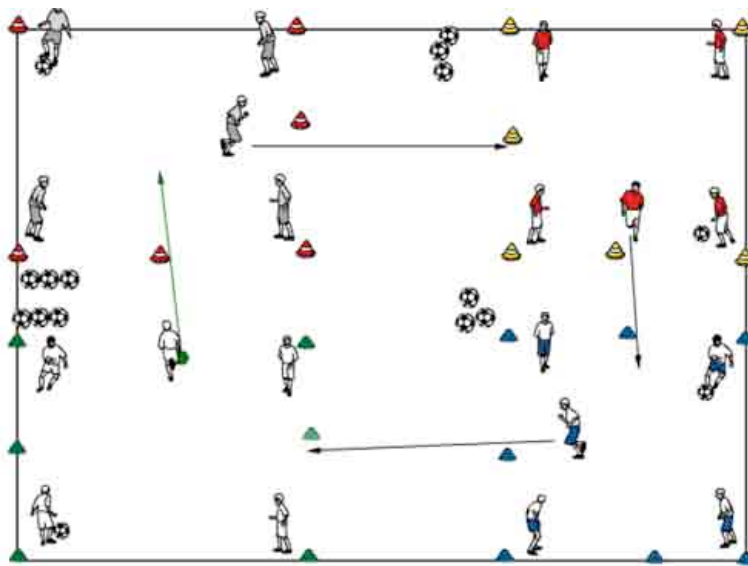
PRACTICE 2- 4V1-WORLD CUP KEEPAWAY

Set up a series of grids approximately 15-20 feet by 15-20 feet in size with a space of about 10 feet between each grid. Place 5 players in each grid and have them simply pass and move. They are playing against an invisible team who can only score if the ball leaves the grid; the ball stops moving or one of them stands still.

This effectively creates a good learning environment!

As a progression tell them that while passing and moving they must organize themselves so they all have a number 1.2.3.4.and 5.

When the coach calls a number that player rotates into another grid and becomes the defender.



Rotate defenders between grids to keep the practice realistic.

Each defender defends for 2 minutes; each time they force a mistake or win the ball they score a point for their team.

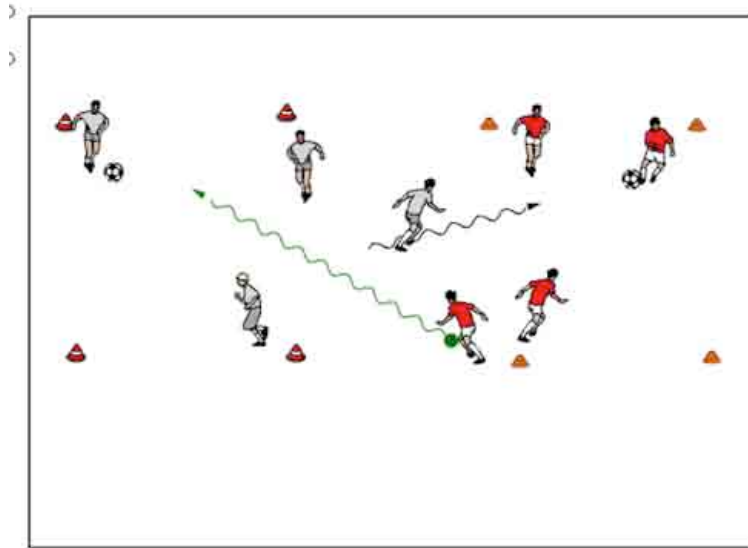
Coaching / Teaching Points:

- 1. The size of the grids should be such that learning takes place, i.e., techniques should be executed under pressure.*
- 2. Emphasize both the quality and the timing of the pass;*
- 3. Commit the defender before passing;*
- 4. Quality of the first touch;*
- 5. Quality of decision making;*
- 6. Player movement both on and off the ball.*

PROGRESSION - 3v1

Using the same environment as above put the players into groups of four and play 3v1. The emphasis is now placed on the movement off the ball and the decision making of the players and how quickly they can make game decisions themselves. The coach can now work on the weighting of the passes and the support runs made by the players. The players should be aware that the player with the ball should always have two supporting players who have created two short passing options ready to receive the ball.

Remember to rotate defenders between grids to keep the practice more game like.



Teaching Points:

Throughout the grid work use the following commands;

“Open” – players pass and move within their grids with no restrictions.

“Weak” – players pass and move within their grids using only their weak foot.

“Wizard” - players pass and move within their grids using the sequence 1 touch, 3 touches, 1 touch, and 3 touches.

“Brazilian” - players pass and move within their grids with the ball off the ground.

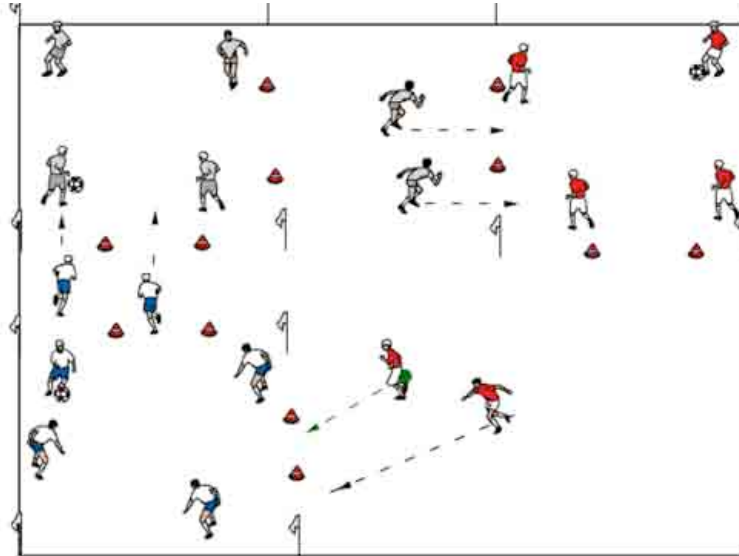
Coaching / Teaching Points:

1. *The player on the ball should*
 - a) *Be composed on the ball constantly manipulating it with his head up.*
 - b) *Be encouraged to draw the defender in only passing when he has committed the defender to the ball.*
 - c) *Be able to play chosen short pass with anyone of five surfaces with pace and disguise.*
2. *Player receiving the pass should*
 - a) *Receive the ball into an open space away from pressure.*
 - b) *Move and receive in such a manner that their body is open to the field.*
 - c) *Be composed on the ball constantly manipulating it with his head up.*
3. *Players without the ball should*
 - a) *Be moving and supporting as the ball rolls to ensure being available for the next pass.*
 - b) *Always attempt to give good shape around the ball.*

PROGRESSION 4V2 POSSESSION

Set up the organizational progressions for 4v2 in exactly the same manner as you did for 4v1 and 3v1. i.e groups of 6 passing and moving and defenders who rotate into the grids to pressure.

Make the grids at least 10 feet apart, this distance and consequent delay in pressure arriving will allow the team trying to maintain possession to get their "shape".



Coaching Points

- 1. Reiterate all pertinent points from 4v1 and 3v1 – i.e. good controlling touch away from pressure, drawing the defender to the ball, technically perfect passes with pace and disguise, good movement off the ball.*
- 2. Stress the importance of quick movement off the ball and maintaining an effective shape - shape should be that of kite or diamond.*
- 3. Stress that their movement should be such that they effect the position of the defenders when they do not have the ball.*

PROGRESSION

In an area approximately the size of the 18 yards box have 18 players start moving "like soccer players" without any balls. As soon as realistic movement is achieved start adding soccer balls, the aim of the group is to keep the level of movement high with as many soccer balls as possible being played within the group.

Coaching points:

- 1. Encourage the players to be as economical as possible with their number of touches they take. If they can do a job in 1 touch they should do so.*
- 2. Stress all players making quick decisions.*
- 3. Encourage the players to be more inventive with their passes. They should be trying to play and have their teammates receive balls in the air.*
- 4. Explain that you will be using the exercise to pick three players who are most careless with the ball.*

PROGRESSION - 15 v3, 14v4, 13v6....

Using the same environment as above present the 3 players who have been judged as most careless with the ball with a pinnie which they must carry. These 3 defenders attempt to force mistakes playing 15v3. If they force a mistake they give their pinnie to the player who made the mistake. If the group possessing the ball manage 20 successful passes in a row add an additional defender. Each time 20 passes are reached a defender is added until eventually 12v6 is achieved.

Coaching points

1. *Stress speed of play and moving the ball quickly.*
2. *After each mistake insist the ball is kept moving as the pinnie is passed from player to player. There should be no down time within this environment.*
3. *As defenders are added and the space to play in becomes tighter the players attempting to possess the ball will have to be more creative with their pass selection. The ability to lift, chip and curl the ball as well as the ability to receive and play one touch in the air will become crucial.*

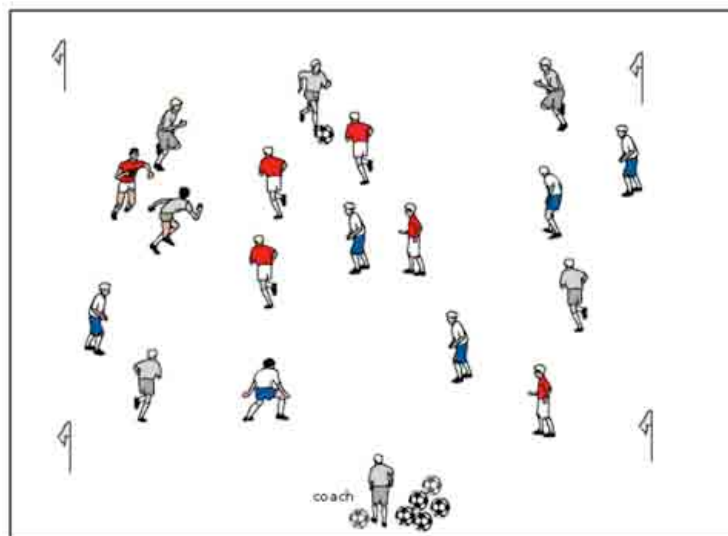
PROGRESSION 6v6v6 quarter field

Arrange 12 players in a quarter of field with one ball passing and moving. These 12 should be divided into two groups (6 red pinnies 6 blue pinnies). An additional six players distinguished by another color pinnie should start the practice standing with the coach. Upon the instruction from the coach the six initial defenders enter the area and attempt to force a mistake or win the ball. Whichever team (set of pinnies) makes the mistake have to run around the coach prior to becoming the defensive unit. The group possessing the ball needs 20 consecutive passes to score a goal.

Coaching points

In the tight space available the keys to success will be based upon the player's ability to

1. Be as economical as possible- Play quickly.
2. Be deceptive with pass selection.
3. Be able to play and receive off the ground.
4. Constant and intelligent movement.



PROGRESSION – 6v6v6 three sections half field

Divide half a field into three equal sections and place six players identified with pinnies in each section. The coach begins the practice by playing a ball to one of the teams in the end sections. This group of players possesses the ball until at least 4 of the players from the middle section are drawn into their area. As this 4th players enters the area this team may play a long lofted pass to the six players at the far end of the field.

For the original six “defensive” players to switch positions with either of the attacking units in each end section they must win the ball and play four passes in a row.

Coaching points:

- 1. Use this practice to emphasize the attacking principle of drawing a team in and then playing accurate long passes into spaces or players behind them.*
- 2. Stress the vision required, players trying to possess the ball must be able to see both the small and big pictures.*
- 3. Analyze the player’s ability to play long out with different surfaces and small preparation space.*

PROGRESSION – 8v8 with GKs

Play 8v8 with Gk in half field using the following restrictions:

- 1. All players in the team must touch the ball before a goal can be scored.*
- 2. There are two ways to score 7 passes in a row and through the goal.*
- 3. Open game.*