Developing Speed of Play

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Speed of play has many components. Physically, it is affected by the quality of our first touch. From the mental side, it is affected by the type of pressure that is applied and how we react to this pressure. Speed of play is affected by our situational awareness of the field, i.e., the decision process made by the player as to when to turn and take on an opponent, when to combine with another player, when to play a forward pass, etc.

The following exercises are some examples of how to improve the speed of play of your team. As you can see the organizational setup for these exercises involves a three-team format. The numbers used will vary with the size of the team being trained. Obviously the atmosphere created in training a national team is a competitive one but by adding some type of transitional play element to a possession exercise will create a competitive situation.

1. 6 v 6 + 6

### Set Up
• Mark off field (you can use cones) 30 yards wide by 44 yards long.
• Three teams of six players

Sequence
• Two teams play 6 versus 6 in the middle of grid; the third team is utilized as neutral players on the outside of the grid
• Outside players must play a long ball back into the grid if they have to take two-touches; they can play a short ball or long ball with one-touch.
• Team in possession must complete at least three consecutive passes before playing to a neutral player. When the opportunity arises to combine with a neutral player the sequence is as follows: first neutral player has two touches to play a ball to a second neutral player (across the grid), who must play it one-touch to the team in the grid in possession of the ball.

Option
• Seven pass transition option: When the team in possession completes seven consecutive passes, they remain in the middle while the other two teams switch roles (play is continuous).
• Two goal option: A completed sequence equals one goal; after scoring two goals, that team remains in the middle while the other teams switch roles (play is continuous).
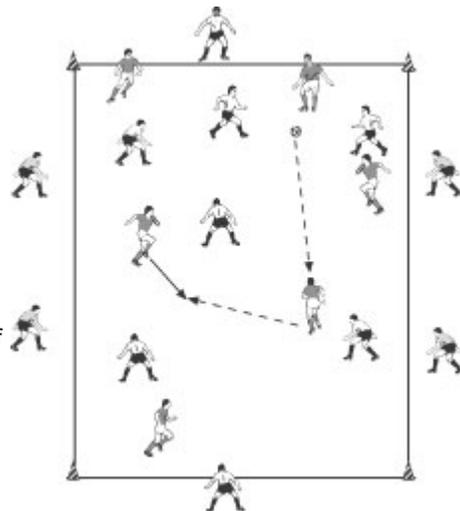
2. 6 v 6 + 6 w/short corner/long corner
Set Up
• Three teams of six players on a field 40 yards by 50 yards
Note: Teams are expected to move the ball from one side of the field to another while in possession. You do not have to play a short corner from the side of the field where possession is regained but you must always follow the sequence of short corner-long corner.
Sequence
• Two teams play 6v6 in the middle of the gird; the third team is placed on the outside of the grid as follows:
- Ball must be played within five yards of either side of corner
- The third team (w) occupies the four corners (which have cones placed five yards from each corner), and the other two players are responsible for keeping balls in play from the mid-line.
- Every time a team regains possession they must play a short corner first (that is determined by the ball being in that half of the field).
- After completing a short corner to complete a sequence you must complete a long corner by passing from the far half of the field to either of the other two corners on the other side of the mid-line.
Option
• Two goal option: Award a goal for a complete sequence. After two goals the winning team stays in the middle while the other two team switch roles (play is continuous).
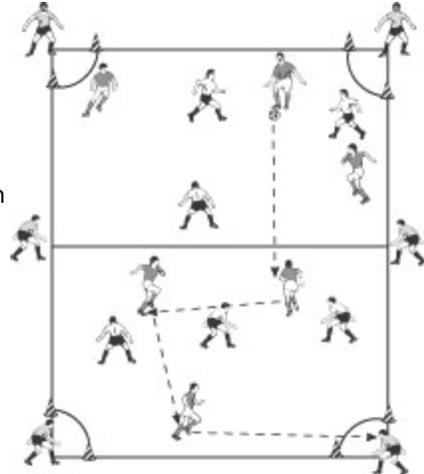
3. 6 v 6 + 6 + GKs
Set Up
• Use specified field size.
• Three teams of six players.
• Two teams play 6v6 in grid while the third team is resting at midfield on the outside of the grid
Sequence
• A team stays on the field if it scores a goal or takes a shot that the opposing GK has to save (the shot must be on frame)
• The team that allows the shot on goal or the goal is immediately replaced by the resting team.
• Play is continuous - so the team which has scored must receive a new ball from their GK; the oncoming team must enter the field quickly and match up.
Option
• Another option for this exercise is to simply play one goal games with the winning team staying on the field.