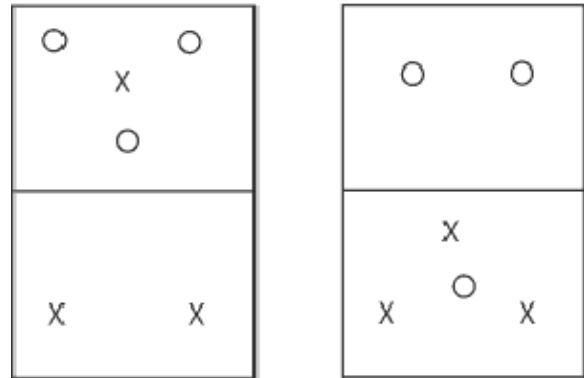


## Coaching Corner: Teaching Side Support and Penetration

By Jeff Tipping, NSCAA Director of Coaching Education

Arguably the best pass in soccer other than the one that goes in the goal is the one that eliminates the most defenders. Pressure on the ball however prevents penetrating passes. When there is a significant amount of pressure on the ball, the ball must be played sideways and if necessary, backward. Two good exercises for teaching side support and penetration are the 3v1 and 4v2 activities.



**3v1**

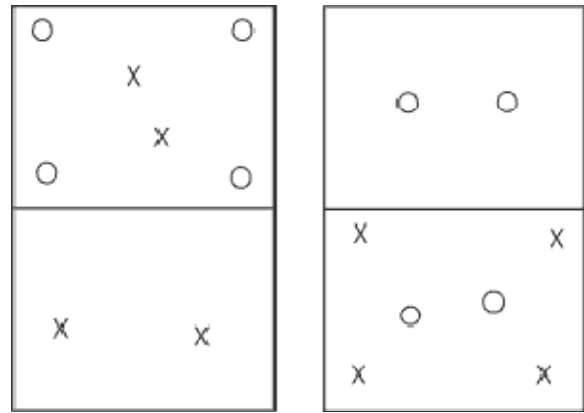
The 3v1 exercise is basically a possession game keeping the ball away from the defender in an area approximately 15 yards long by 10 yards wide.

The organization of this exercise is 3 attackers and one defender. Two separate exercises can occur simultaneously to incorporate more players.

The defender tries to regain possession either by intercepting a pass or tackling an attacking player. The game can be given a transition element if a similarly sized playing area is created adjacent to the ball, which contains two teammates of the player who is defending. When the defending player wins the ball the ball is immediately played to the two teammates, the defender goes to join them to form three attackers and one of the attacking players in the first playing area goes in to the second playing area to become a defender.

The key element in this exercise is that the player with the ball must always have support on both the left and right. As the ball is rotated around the area the support players must anticipate where the next pass is going to go and move into a supporting angle before the player receives the ball.

The next logical progression from 3v1 is 4v2. The organization of the exercise is similar to the 3v1 except with slightly larger playing areas. Two adjacent playing areas each approximately 20 yards by 15 yards are appropriate for this exercise. Four red players play against two blue defenders in one half of the playing area, while two blue players wait in the other half. When the two blue players win the ball they play the ball into the adjacent playing area for the two blue teammates and then go and join them. Two of the red players follow and become defenders.



**4v2**

The main purpose of this exercise is for the four attackers to try and split the two defenders with a penetrating pass. The ball is rotated between the four attackers until a clear space develops between the two defenders and that is when the penetrating pass occurs.

It is important to play the 3v1 before the 4v2 because frequently the player with the ball cannot play a penetrating pass and needs the kind of side support developed in the 3v1 exercise. The exercise can also be used to teach defenders cover and balance and of course, both exercises are excellent for teaching transition.