

South Carolina Youth Soccer Association
Recreational Coaches Handbook



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South Carolina Youth Soccer (SCYS) is the National State Association for the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) and United States Youth Soccer (USYS). The purpose of SCYS is to develop, promote, and administer the game of soccer among players under the age of 19 years. South Carolina Youth Soccer and our members are dedicated to promoting and improving soccer for everyone in the state of South Carolina. SCYS created this informational tool in order to help educate our recreational coaches so that they may in turn develop more efficient soccer players for our great state.

The South Carolina Youth Soccer Recreational Coaches Handbook is a basic guideline for the first time and returning recreational soccer coach. The coaching methodology and philosophy you will find in this handbook is based on our recreational soccer players learning and developing their abilities in a relaxed and enjoyable environment in which you the coach are responsible to provide.

The handbook will focus on the fundamental stages of the 4 components of soccer, technical, tactical, physical and mental/emotional

Role of the Recreational Soccer Coach

- Teacher and facilitator of the game of soccer
- Positive role model and influence on your athletes
- Display enthusiasm and energy towards your players
- Provide a positive, enjoyable and safe learning environment
- Always aim for individual player success
- Understand who you are coaching and the level you are coaching at

Principals of Youth Coaching

- Developmentally Appropriate
- Clear, Concise, Correct Information
- Simple to Complex activities
- Safe & Appropriate Training Area
- Allow for Decision Making
- Implications of the Game

Age Appropriate Training

One of the most important points that all coaches need to remember is that all players are not created equal and that all players learn and develop at different stages and at their own pace. We as coaches cannot force players to learn techniques or tactics if they are not prepared to do so. Below is a guideline for age appropriate training. The guideline is based on a player's chronological age and not their soccer age. The four components of soccer, technical, tactical, physical and mental/emotional are all present and take on different levels of importance at different age groups. If we are to emphasize one component over any other then it needs to be the mental/emotional component of the game. As coaches we must allow and encourage our players to have fun while they are developing new techniques and tactical knowledge about the game. This will allow players to feel ownership of and attachment to the game as well as develop the passion that will allow them to succeed at all and any levels they aspire to.

Practice Organization

The following information is to be used as a descriptive continuum in practice organization for the different age groups. It is important to remember that players develop at different speeds and levels. As coaches we should work to elevate each player's confidence and comfort level with the ball. The following developmental outline is not a definitive answer but a guideline for the coaches to follow and to make the appropriate and necessary changes when needed.

Elements of Practice

- Organization
 - Space and size of field, realistic to game situations, adjust to the players abilities.
- Activities
 - Too easy or too hard, adjust to the players abilities.
- Coachable Moments
 - Opportunities during training to provide instruction.
- Starts and Re-Starts
 - Re-start where the play was stopped, allow player to make correction, practice the correction without pressure and then re-start with pressure
- Always have an objective for the players to reach, number of passes, number of goals etc

Practice Session Organization

- Stage 1 (Warm Up) **10 minutes**
 - Dynamic warm up, tag games, technical work
 - Individual Activities
 - Technical work, fitness
- Stage 2 (Fundamental) **15 minutes**
 - Small Group Activities
 - Technical and tactical sessions
- Stage 3 (Match Related) **15 minutes**
 - Large Group Activities
 - Tactical sessions and games
- Stage 4 (Match Condition) **10 – 15 minutes**
 - The game of soccer 6 v 6 to 9 v 9
- The Coaching Grid
 - Rectangular shape to mirror the actual playing surface of a soccer field.
 - Adjust size to accommodate number and ability.

Technical and Tactical Together

- Warm-up - Lack of pressure from *opponent*. Pressure comes from the ball, space, time and imposed demands.
- Small Sided Activity - Introduce pressure / some elements may not be realistic. Does not have to be directional as in having teams go to goal or in a specific direction.
- Expanding Small Sided Activity – close to the “big picture”. *Directional*.
- Match Conditions – Game, with all rules (7v7)

Avoid the following:

- Lines that are stagnate
- Lectures
- Laps
- Excessive coaching.
- Incorrect or inappropriate activities.
- Training sessions that don't flow and are frustrating.
- Game and activities that are unrealistic.

Age Appropriate Practice Elements

- U6 – U7
 - FUN
 - Free play with very little structure
 - Fun games that develop
 - Ball awareness & body awareness
 - Agility & coordination
 - Individual time with the ball
 - 3 v 3 games
 - 30 -40 minute practice
- U8- U9
 - FUN
 - Free play with different scoring options
 - Fun games that develop
 - Ball awareness & body awareness
 - Agility & coordination
 - Individual time with the ball
 - Competitive or cooperative activities with another player
 - Introduction of passing/teamwork
 - Introduction of competing
 - 3 v 3 to 5 v 5 games
 - 40 – 50 minute practice

- U10
 - FUN
 - Free play with different scoring options
 - Individual technical development
 - Specific skills and techniques
 - Continued physical development
 - Speed, agility, endurance
 - Competitive environment at practice
 - Small group tactical activities
 - Introduction of playing in match form
 - 60 – 75 minute practice

- U11
 - FUN
 - Free play with different scoring options
 - Individual technical development
 - Specific skills and techniques
 - Continued physical development
 - Speed, agility, endurance, strength
 - Competitive environment at practice
 - Small group tactical activities
 - Playing in match form
 - 60 – 80 minute practice

- U12
 - FUN
 - Free play with different scoring options
 - Individual technical development
 - Specific skills and techniques
 - Possession games
 - Continued physical development
 - Speed, agility, endurance, strength
 - Competitive environment at practice
 - Small group tactical activities
 - Playing in match form
 - 60- 90 minute practice

- U13 – U14
 - FUN
 - Individual and group warm up
 - Individual technical development
 - Soccer specific fitness
 - Physical Development
 - Tactical functional development
 - Possession games
 - Team concepts
 - 90 minute practice

- U15 – U16
 - FUN
 - Individual and group warm up
 - Technical and tactical functional development
 - Soccer specific fitness
 - Physical development
 - Possession games
 - Team concepts
 - 90 minute practice

Goalkeeping

This section is vital as most coaches do not understand the basic techniques and tactics of the goalkeeper position. This outline/guideline will help to simplify the goalkeeper position so the coach may better understand the position and be more confident and comfortable coaching this specialized position.

Basic Catching Technique

- Starting Stance (set position)
 - Weight should be forward and balanced on the balls of the feet
 - Feet shoulder width apart
 - Knees and waist should be bent
 - Hands should be in front of the mid section with the palms of the hands facing each other
 - Elbows slightly bent and in front of the mid section

- Basket Catch (ground ball and/or ball played below or at waist height)
 - Hands and arms are parallel
 - Fingers point towards the ground
 - Keepers stance is split, with one foot in front of the other for a well balanced and strong position to attack the ball on the ground
 - Body behind the ball
 - Ball is scooped and brought into the body for protection
 - Basket is formed by the upper body

- Contour Catch (driven ball chest to head height)
 - Hands are in front of the body, slightly apart with fingers pointed up
 - Hands should form the shape of the ball
 - Back half and top of the ball should be caught
 - Elbows are bent with hands out in front. This allows the arms to act as shocks
 - Ball is caught out in front, not close or into the body

- High Contour Catch (crossed or flighted balls over the head)
 - Same technique as the contour catch
 - Catching the ball over the head and in front of the body

- Side Contour Catch (diving for a ball)
 - Same technique as the contour and high contour catch
 - Fingers and hands are pointed outward toward the ball

Technical Coaching Points

Dribbling

- Head up to read the game
- Keep ball close to body and under control
- Stay on the balls of the feet
- Change of speed and change of direction
- To beat an opponent
- Change of speed and direction
- Shielding
- Body between the ball and the opponent
- Keep body sideways
- Low center of gravity
- Use arms to get big and keep your space
- Spin away from opponent to get away from pressure

Receiving

- Place body in line with the direction and or flight of the ball
- select a body part to receive the ball with
- present the body part/surface to the ball
- relax the controlling surface and give with the ball, cushion the ball
- watch the ball onto the controlling surface
- receive the ball into space or away from pressure
- use first touch as a preparation touch

Passing

- Inside of the foot
- Plant/standing foot next to the ball pointed in the direction of the pass
- Toe up, ankle locked
- Push through the center of the ball with the inside of the foot
- Bend the knees
- Follow through – step through the ball when passing it
- Accuracy and pace of the pass need to be correct
- Outside of the foot
- Toe pointed down and inside, ankle locked

Shooting

- Approach the ball at an angle with hips open to the field
- Head down, toe down, ankle locked
- Plant foot/standing foot comfortably placed beside the ball
- Strike the center of the ball with the center of the foot (laces)
- Strike through the ball
- Follow through and land on the kicking foot
- Proper power and accuracy

Defending

- On the balls of the feet
- Knees bent, center of gravity down low
- Eyes on the ball
- Arms length away from opponent
- Side step, do not shuffle
- Patience, don't try and take the ball
- Tackling
- Do not reach for the ball
- Lock the ankle and go through the ball with the inside of the foot
- Watch the ball
- Time the tackle
- Low center of gravity

Heading

- Get in line with the flight of the ball
- Watch the ball
- Make contact with the forehead
- Arms out for balance and protection
- Head through the ball
- Eyes open and mouth closed
- Attacking
- Head the ball down towards the target
- Defending
- Head the ball high and wide away from pressure

Tactical Coaching Points

Individual – Group – Team - understanding the practical applications of the principals of defense, attack and transition as well as promoting better decision making and intuitive thinking.

- Principals of Defense
 - Roles of 1st, 2nd and 3rd defenders
 - Pressure, cover, balance, support
- Principals of Attack
 - Roles of 1st, 2nd and 3rd attackers
 - Depth, width, support, creativity
 - Speed of play
- Transition
 - How quickly does a player, group and team move from defense to attack or attack to defense

Model Training Sessions

Bingo (U4 – U8)

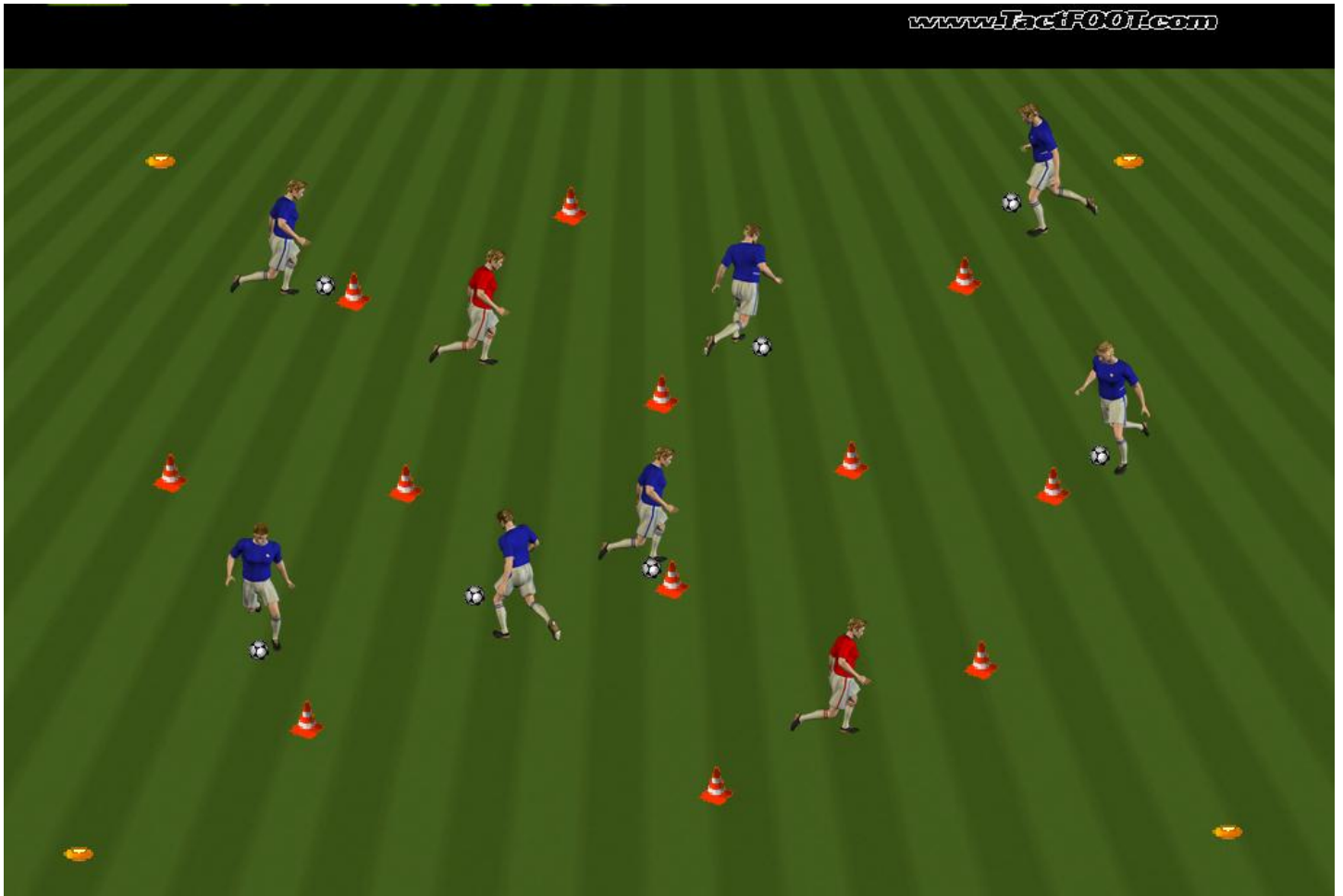
Set Up

- Set up a grid that is approximately 30 yards wide by 25 yards long.
- Set up a number of cones throughout the grid.
- Two placers act as the “replacers”
- The rest of the players on the team each has a ball at their feet

Sequence

- The players with the balls try to knock down as many cones as possible with their balls.
- The “replacers” (all players take turns at this role) set up the cones as fast as they’re knocked down.
- When a player knocks down a cone, that player yells “BINGO!” (the sound adds to the excitement). Who can score the most “Bingos?”
- Games should last for 1 minute before switching.

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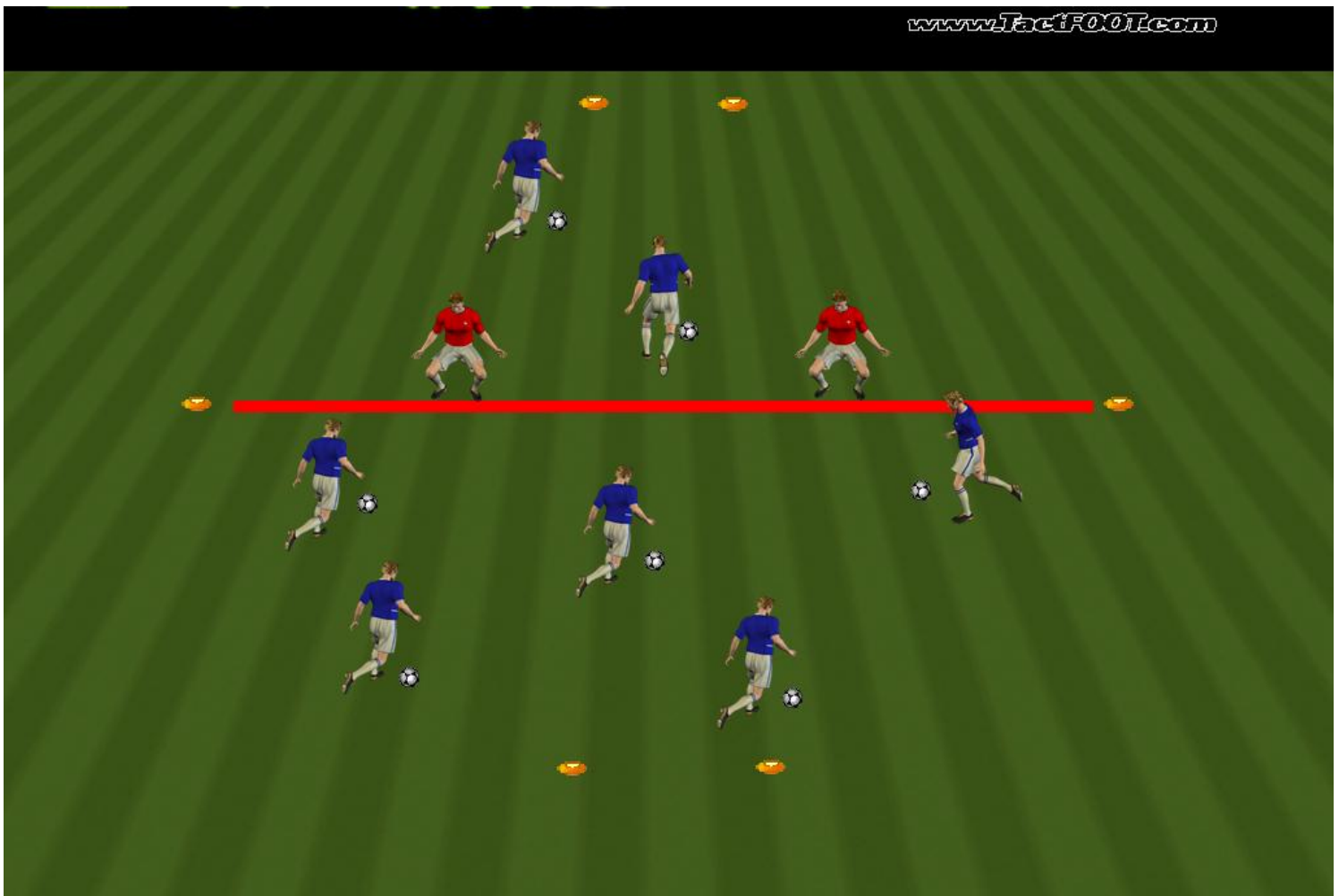
Great Wall of China (U4 – U8)

Set Up

- Each player has a ball
- The “great wall” is two defenders, who move back and forth along the line.
- A goal is marked on each end line.

Sequence

- Each player has a ball and tries to dribble from one goal to the other while the defenders move back and forth along the line trying to block them from crossing.
- Players must wait for a hole in the wall and explode through on the dribble.
- Each time a player scores a goal it equals a point, but if the defenders touch or steal the ball the attackers lose a point.
- Each round should last for 2 – 3 minutes.



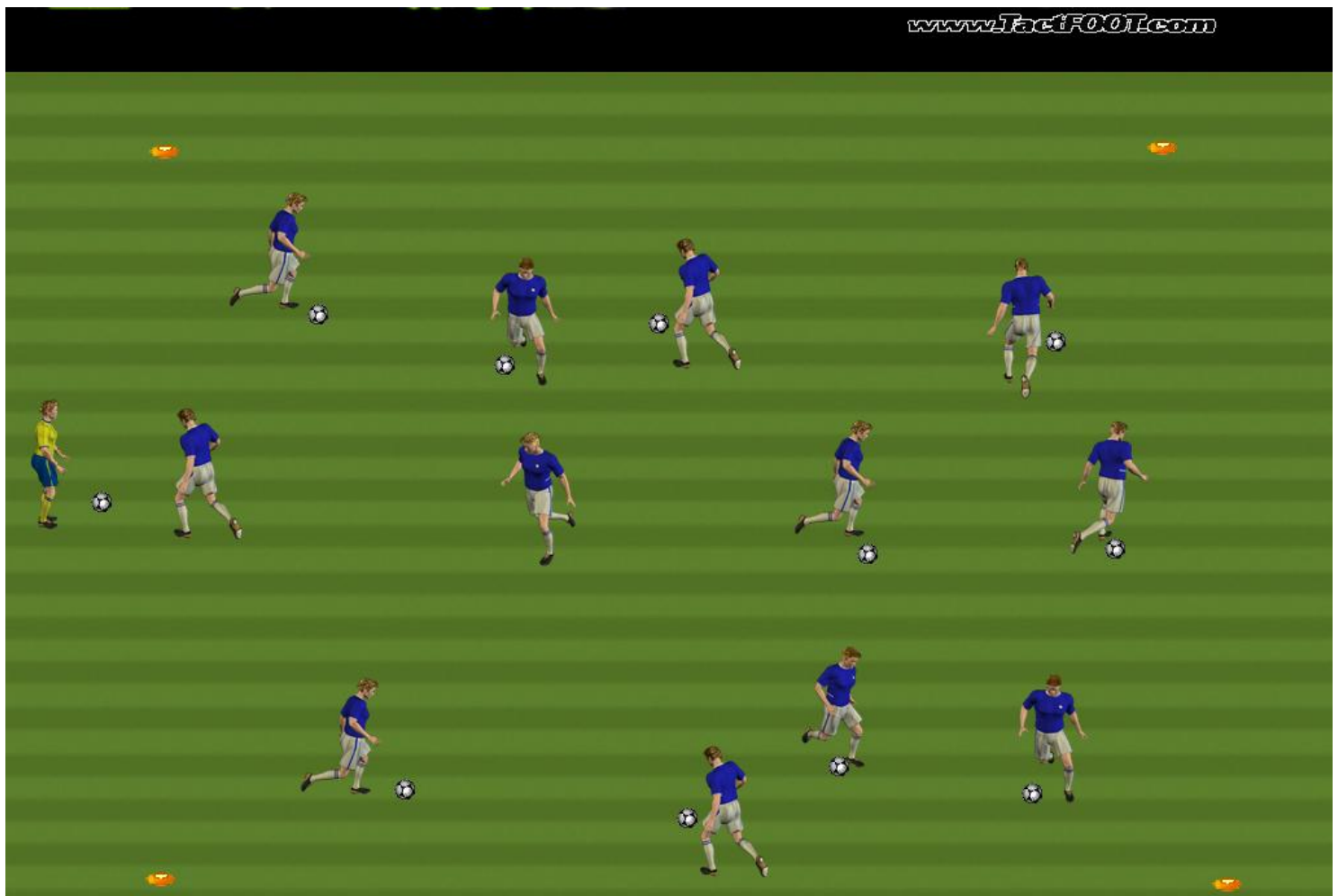
Tiger Ball (U4 – U8)

Set Up

- Grid size is approximately 35 yards long by 25 – 30 yards wide. (will depend on how many players you have)
- Each player has a ball except for the “tiger.”
- The coach is off to the side of the grid in the center.

Sequence

- At the coach’s signal, the “tiger” tries to steal a ball from one of the other players.
- To win the ball the “tiger” must steal the ball and dribble it back to the coach with his feet.
- The player who lost the ball can attempt to win the ball back before the “tiger” gets the ball back to the coach.
- If the stolen ball is successfully returned to the coach then the player that lost the ball becomes a “tiger” too.
- The last player with a ball is the winner.



Dribbling Exercises (U8 – U16) – Excellent Warm Up Activity

Set Up

- Grid size is approximately 20 yards wide by 30 yards long
- Each player has a ball and is inside the grid

Sequence

- Dribble freely inside the grid
- Players react to coaches instruction
 - Turn – players turn with the ball and dribble in a different direction
 - Stop – players put a foot on top of the ball and stop as quick as possible
 - Go – players speed up and dribble faster for 5 seconds
 - Switch – players switch balls with another player
 - Body part – coach calls out the body part for the player to stop and put on the ball
 - Right foot, left foot, right knee, left knee, elbows, head etc



Dribbling with Gates (U8 – U16) – Excellent Warm Up activity

Set Up

- Grid size is 30 yards by 30 yards
- Set up a number of two-yard gates inside the grid
- Each player has a ball and is inside the grid

Sequence

- Players dribble freely inside the grid
- On coaches command players have 45 seconds to dribble through as many gates as possible
- Players must dribble through a different gate each time

Variations

- After dribbling through a gate players must dribble around the left or right cone of the gate they just dribbled through
- Pass the ball through the gate, run around the gate and resume dribbling with the same ball.
- Have players dribble with only 1 foot the entire time
- Players must dribble through a gate and immediately turn and go back through the gate to score a point
- Approach the gates from the side and dribble a figure eight around the cones to score a point



Field inside a field (U10 – U16) – Excellent Warm Up activity

Set Up

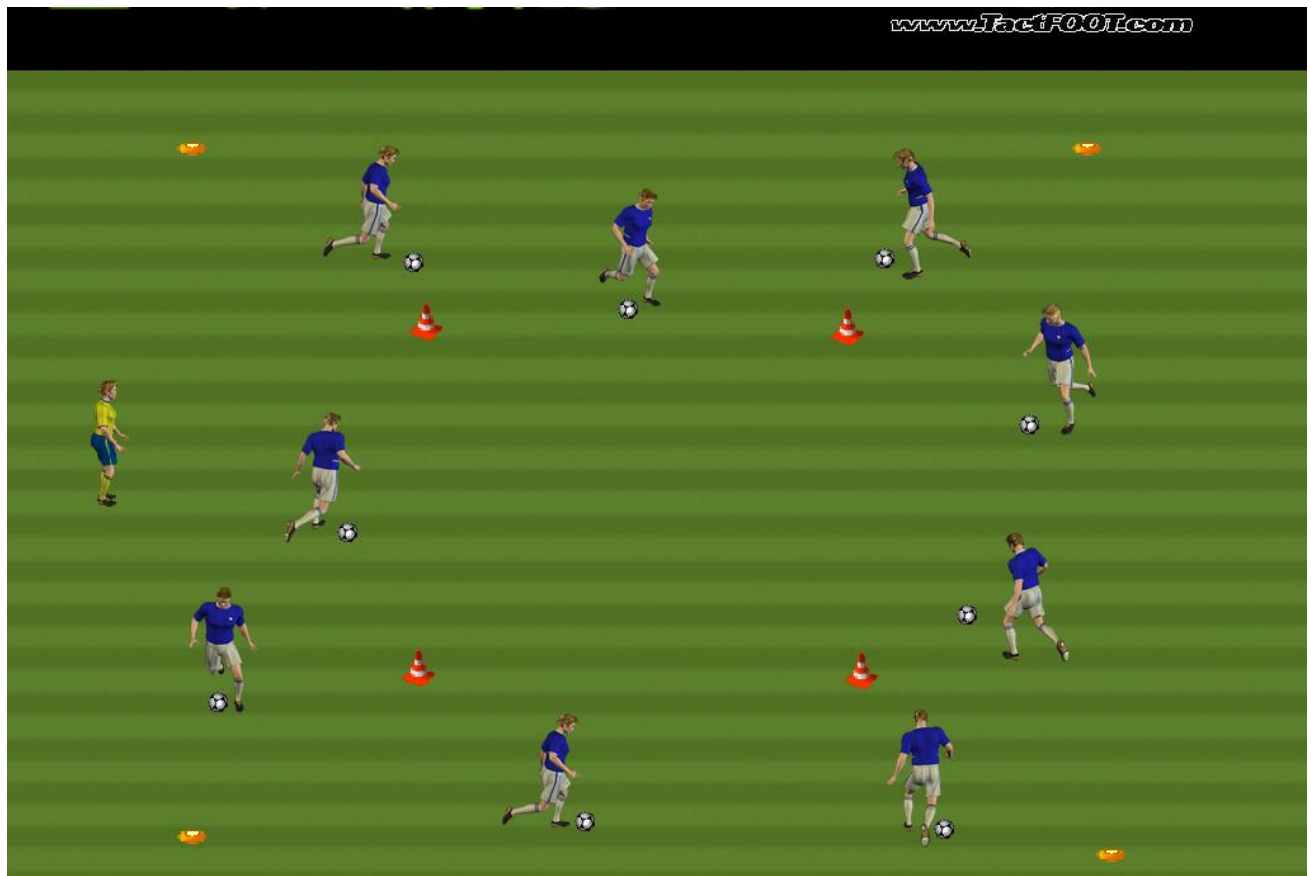
- Grid is 25 yards by 25 yards
- Make a 10 yard by 10 yard grid on the inside of the 25 x 25 grid
- Players each have a ball and spread out inside the big grid and the small grid

Sequence

- Players dribble freely inside of the grid
- On coaches command players either dribble into the outer grid or the inner grid
- Dribble with frequent changes of direction in the outer grid
- Dribble with frequent fakes/moves in the inner grid
- Players dribble in the outer grid only, on coaches command players sprint dribble through the inner grid to the other side of the outer grid and then continue to dribble
- Split players into two groups, one in the outer grid and one in the inner grid
 - On coaches command the groups change grids

Variations

- Add a defender to the inner grid
 - On coaches command players must dribble from the outer grid through the inner grid without having their ball stolen by the defender in the inner grid.



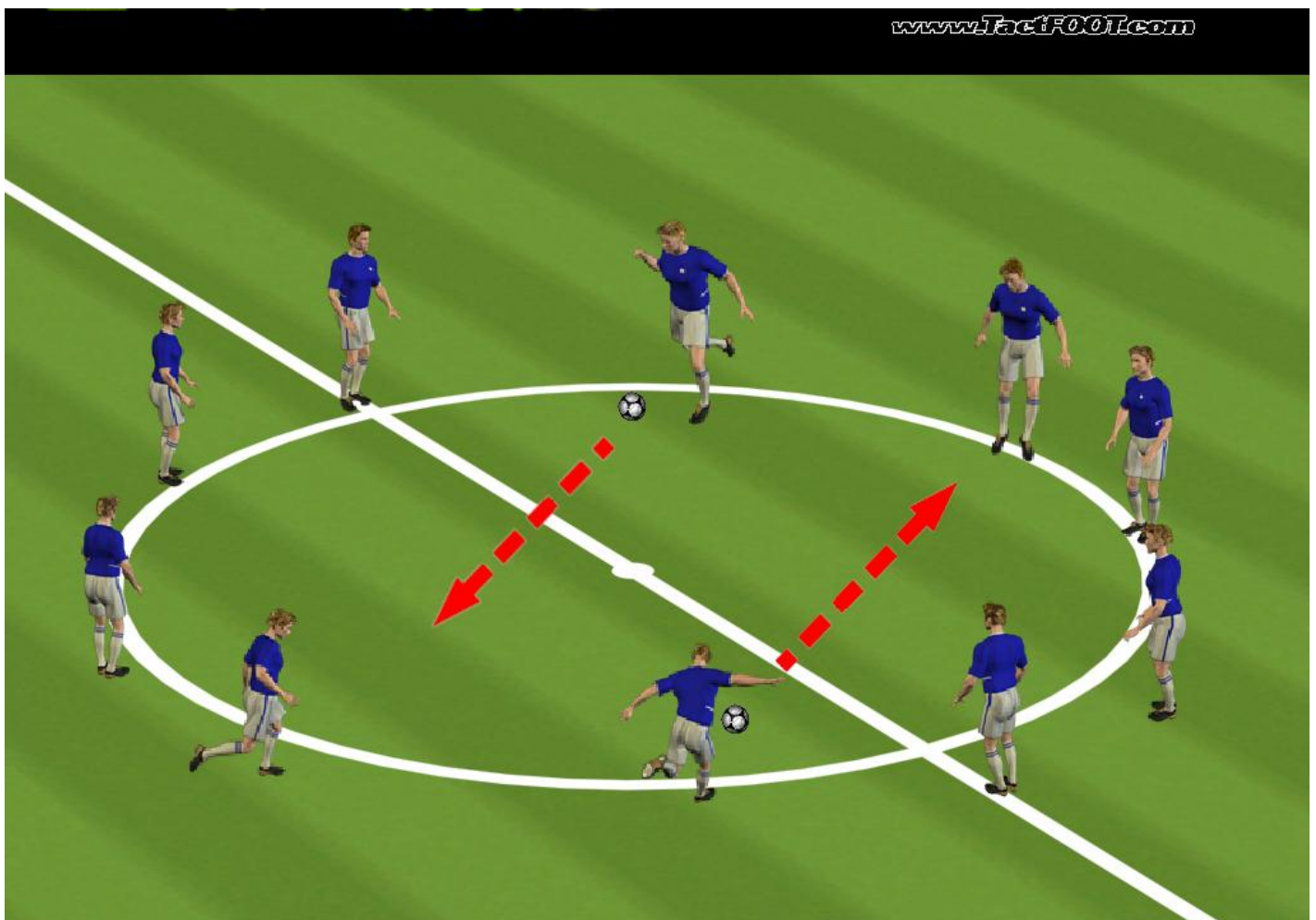
Circle Passing (U12 – U16) – Excellent Warm Up activity

Set Up

- Use the center circle or mark out a circle using cones (radius: 10 – 20 yards)
- Two balls amongst the players

Sequence

- Player work on passing and receiving with the insides of their feet.
 - After the player passes the ball to a teammate they follow their pass and replace the teammate that received the ball
- Add touch restrictions
 - Mandatory 3 touch
 - Mandatory 2 touch
 - Mandatory 1 touch
- Players must call out the name of the player that they are passing to BEFORE they pass the ball to them



Dribbling and Faking (U10 – U16) – Excellent Stage 2 – 3 activity

Set Up

- Grid size is approximately 30 – 35 yards wide by 20 – 25 yards long
- Two goals or gates at each end of the field, blue team attacks two goals on the same end and the red team attacks the opposite goals on the other end
- Two cones marking the center of the field
- Players separated into two even teams
- Coach in the middle with all of the balls acting as the server

Sequence

- The coach plays the ball out into the grid, 1 player from the blue team and 1 player from the red team race out to win the ball.
- Once the ball is won and under control the player must dribble past the middle cones before they can attack the two goals that they have been designated to score on.
- The two players play 1 vs. 1; either one can score on their designated goals
- A new ball and two new players play when a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds
- Which team can be the first to score 10 goals?

Variations

- Play the same game going to 1 full size goal on one end and two small counter attack goals on the other end. Have teams switch goals after 5 minutes
- Play the same game going only to 2 goals on the same end
- Play 2 vs. 2
- Coach can throw the ball onto the field instead of passing



1 vs. 1 to 4 vs. 4 (U10 – U16) – Excellent Stage 2 -3 activity

Set Up

- Grid size is 20 yards wide by 30 yards long
- Place a goal on each end line
- Divide players into two equal teams
- Coach is in the middle of the sideline with plenty of soccer balls
- The teams line up next to the coach

Sequence

- Game 1
 - The coach plays a ball onto the field and calls out a number between one and four
 - Depending on the number called, one to four players from each team will take the field
 - Players or teams play until a player scores or the ball goes out of bounds
- Game 2
 - The coach plays a ball onto the field and calls out the name of the team (shirts, pinnies)
 - The first four players from the team that was called take the field to play 4 vs. 3 against three players from the opposition
- Game 3
 - The coach plays a ball onto the field and calls out the name of the team and a number between one and 4
 - The corresponding number of players from the team whose name was called take the field and play numbers –up (2 vs.1, 3 vs. 2 or 4 vs. 3)



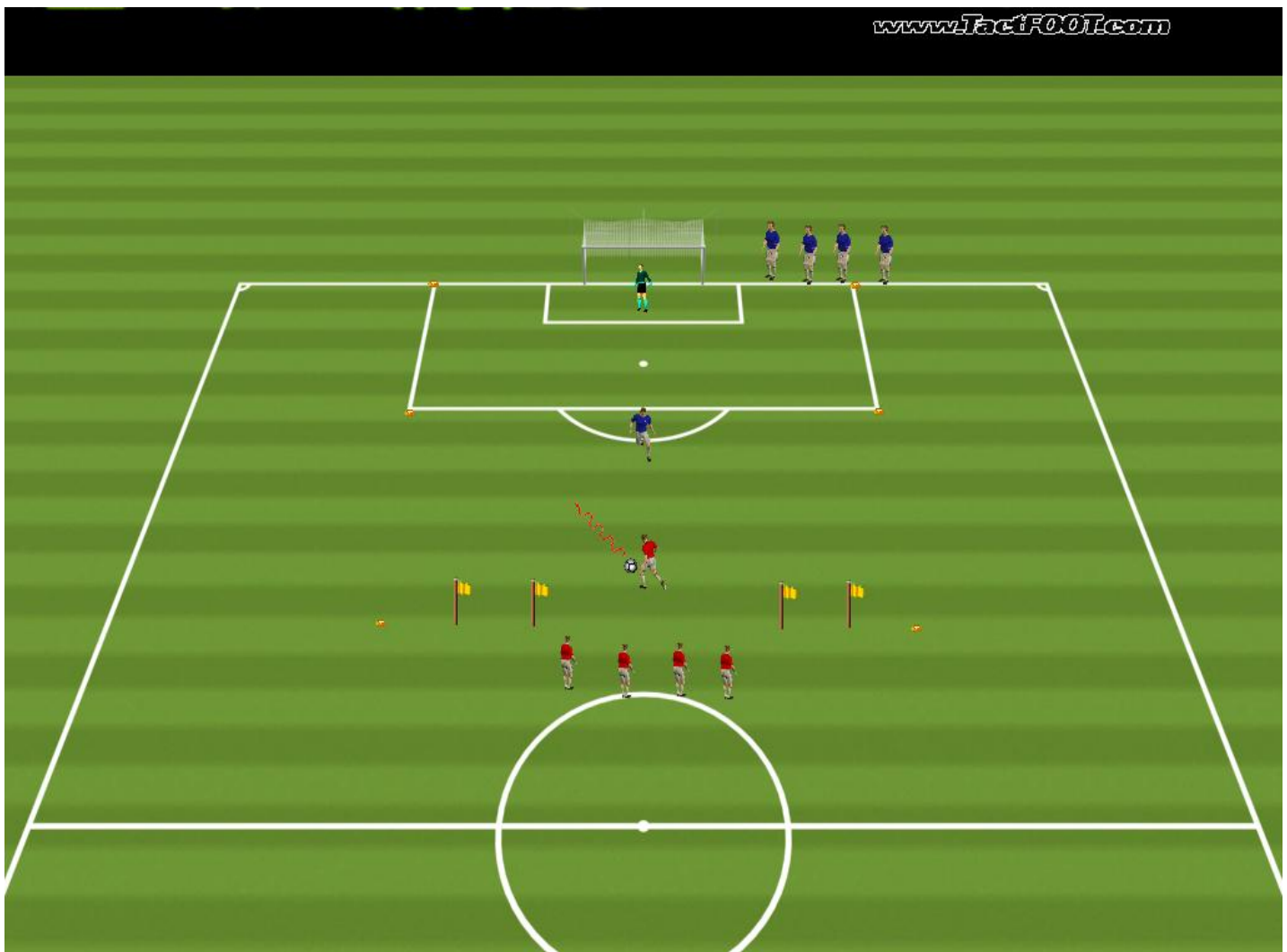
Growing Teams (U10 – U18) – Excellent Stage 2 – 3 activity

Set Up

- Blue team lines up beside the standard goal. Red team lines up between the small goals opposite the blue team.

Sequence

- One player from each group takes the field to play 1 vs. 1.
- Whenever a goal is scored or the ball goes out or is won by a defender, each team gains a player.
- This leads to a 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 etc.
- Play 3 minute games and restart. Go through 5 progressions and then switch sides and start over at 1 vs.1 with the Blue and Red team switching sides.



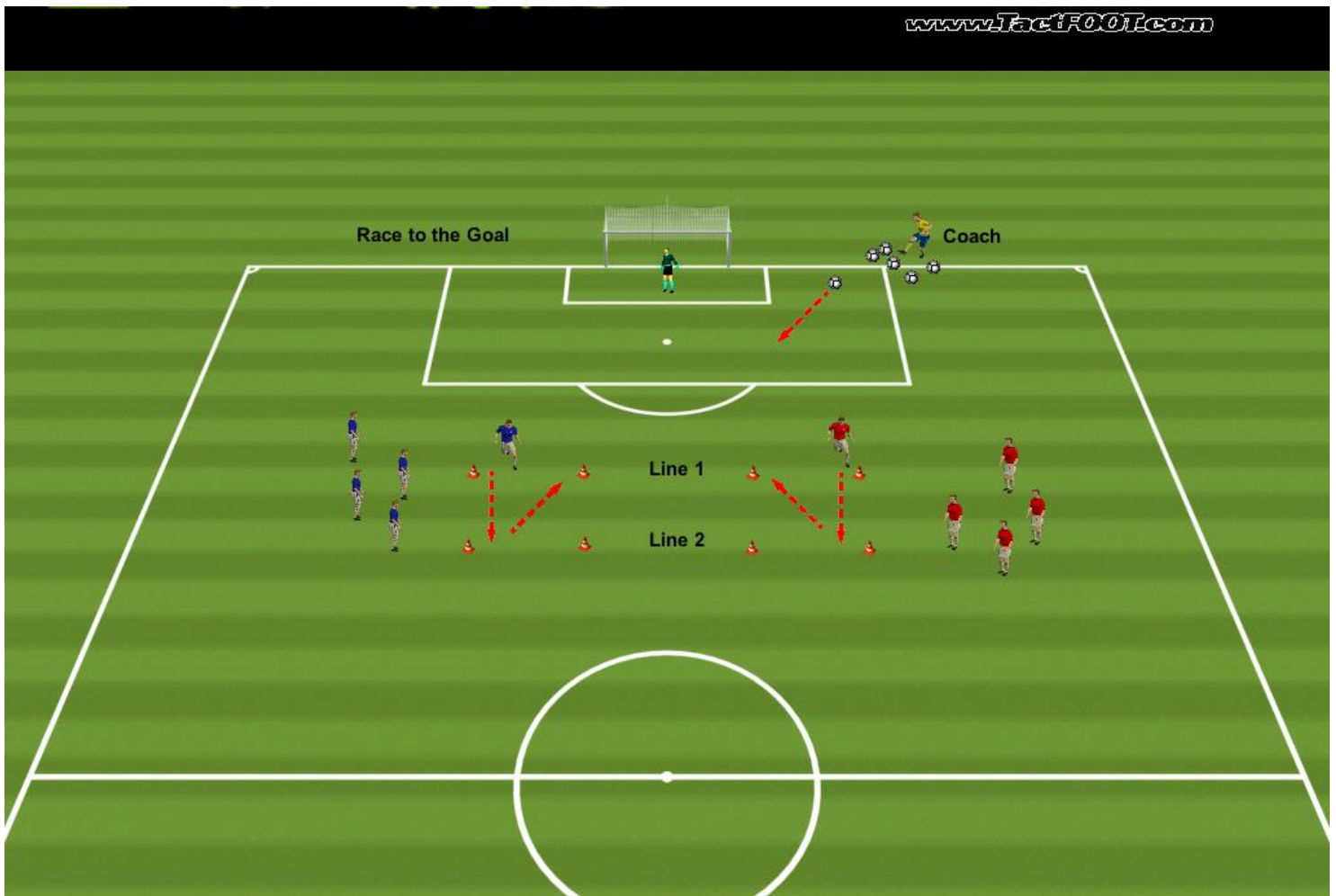
Race to the Goal (U10 – U16) – Excellent Stage 2 – 3 activity

Set Up

- Mark Lines 1 and 2 at 20 and 25 yards in front of the goal.
- Split players into two teams, Red and Blue at Line 1 with a keeper in the goal.
- The Coach stands in the middle of the 6 yard box and the 18 yard box and serves/crosses the ball.

Sequence

- At the coaches signal the first blue and red player sprint from Line 1 to Line 2.
- The first one to cross Line 1 on the way back receives a cross/pass from the coach and attempts to finish/shoot on goal with the chasing defender pressuring.



6 Goal Game (U12 – U16) – Excellent Stage 3 activity

Set Up

- Teams can play anywhere from 5 vs. 5 - 9 vs. 9.
- Field size should be about 45 – 55 yards wide by 30 - 40 yards long
- Goals are 3 yards wide
- Team is divided into 2 equal teams

Sequence

- Teams play 5 vs. 5 to 9 vs. 9 depending on the number of players
- Attackers score one point for dribbling through a wide goal and two point for dribbling through the middle goal.
- Offside rule is in effect

Variations

- Attackers must pass through the goals; scoring remains the same



Dribbling, Shooting & 1 vs. 1 (U12 – U16) – Excellent Stage 2 activity

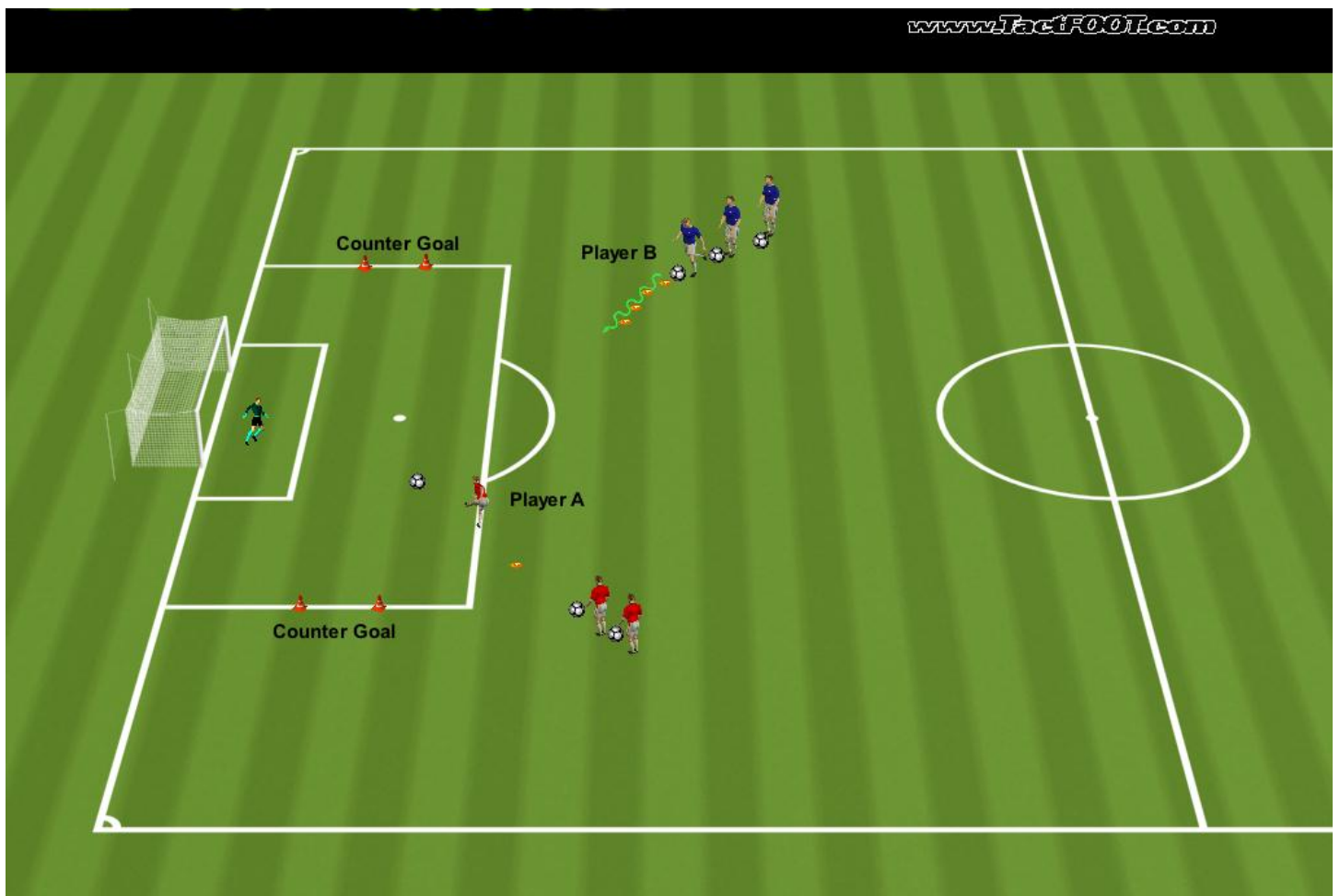
Set Up

- Use the width of the 18 yard box with a full size goal and a goalkeeper
- Place two counter attack goals on both sides of the 18 yard box
- Set up a slalom line of cones on one side of the 18 yard box diagonally approximately 30 yards from the goal
- Set up a starting cone on the other side of the 18 yard box diagonally approximately 20 yards from the goal
- Separate players into two teams with each team lining up behind the starting cone

Sequence

- The first players from A and B start dribbling at the same time
- Player A dribbles at speed into the 18 yard box, shoots at the big goal and turns to defend
- Player B dribbles through the slalom course, then dribbles into the 18 yard box and plays 1 vs. 1 against player A and attempts to score on the big goal
- If player A steals the ball they may attack and score on either of the counter attack goals
- Play continues until a player scores or the ball goes out of bounds (outside of the 18 yard box)

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End Zone Game (U12 – U16) – Excellent Stage 3 activity

Set up

- Grid size is approximately 40 yards long by 30 yards wide
- Mark out a 5 yard end zone on each end of the field
- Separate players into two even teams

Sequence

- Teams play against each other in the grid
- The attacking team must try to dribble the ball into the opponent's end zone and stop it to score a point. The first team to 5 wins
- The attacking team must pass the ball to one of its players inside the opponent's end zone.
 - The player must receive the pass within the zone, but he may not run into the zone until the pass is all ready on the way

