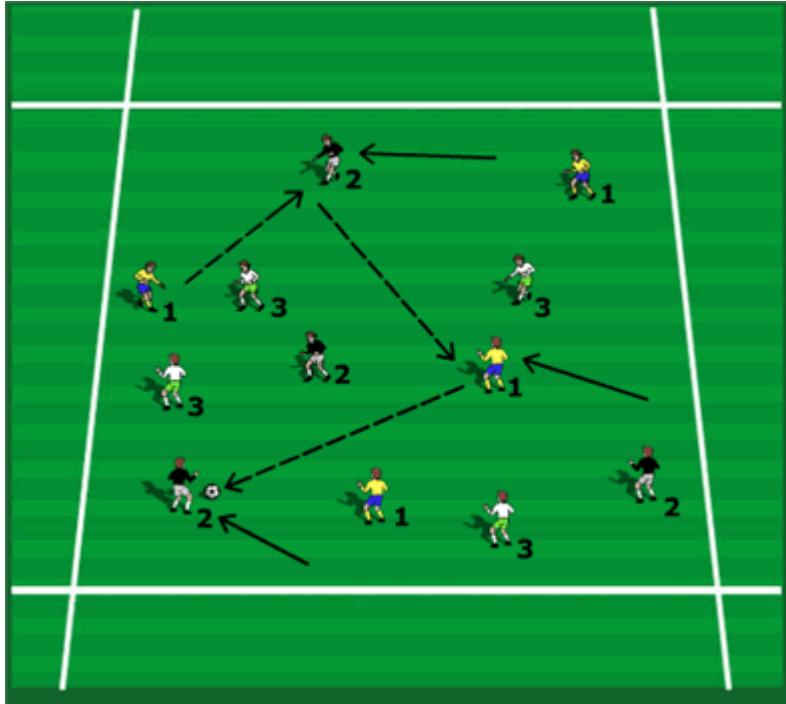


## THREE TEAM AWARENESS GAME



40 x 40

1. Working with three teams (numbers depends on how many players you have, e.g. it can be 4 v 4 + 4 or 5 v 5 + 5 etc). Teams (1) and (2) work together to keep the ball from team (3). If team (3) regains possession the team who gave it away becomes the defenders. The defenders reward is they keep the ball and link with the other team.

2. **Rules:** Once possession is gained, to establish who gave the ball away the player who gave the ball away calls the color of his team and then everyone knows they are now defending and the game continues without a stoppage.

With younger players it may be best to do this (because the ball may be given away a lot more for one thing); whoever won the ball puts his or her foot on the ball to stop play and the coach can call out the team who gave it away. Play begins again working on transitions.

3. **Develop:** Increase difficulty for attackers by:

a) Reducing the zone size.

b) Decreasing the number of touches on the ball of each player.

c) Conditioning the passing to be only to the other attacking team's players e.g. (1) only passes to (2) and vice versa, therefore only half the numbers of passes are available per player.

e) Using two balls so that as they pass one ball they are now increasing their awareness and vision by looking for the other ball coming.

f) Asking players to take off their pinnies so they really have to look and can't rely on color identification.

g) No talking or pointing, so players have to rely on their own vision.

h) Prohibiting verbal communication

i) **ULTIMATELY PLAY ONE TOUCH**

**Three team Possession game:** Three teams, two teams work together, one defends, creates an overload situation in attack, for example 15 players, three teams of 5, a 10 v 5 game.

Possession changes as one of the two team's players gives the ball away to the defending team then they become the next defending team this is a good transition game also from attack to defense and defense

to attack. This game can be in an area of 40 x 40 yards for example and the challenge to the players can also be to move inside to outside (outside being just inside the touchline) and outside to inside to ensure they avoid standing in one area. Plus it takes greater vision or awareness inside the area; where they need to look around and open their stance up to potentially change the direction of play; than on the outside where they can see everything easily.

Encourage players who play centrally on the team to get in the middle of the area and dictate the play, be the pivot for the team, the player who transfers the ball from one side to the other, the link player, this can be one, two or even three players at a time, but they can rotate between themselves too.

**Equal numbered teams** in a possession keep away game; this would be the next progression from the overload game being a more difficult challenge of the players. Same principles and ideas as above apply.

**Transition games:** In two halves, creating overloads in each half as each team gains possession. Team A have to get the ball in one half and play a 7 v 3 for example, team B have to win it back with the 3 defenders and get it back to the other half and have a 7 v 3 in their favor, and so on.

**Shown below are many variations of the theme but the simplest theme to use is focusing on ONE TOUCH PASSING AND MOVING OFF THE BALL**

**Many may struggle with this but in time and with patience and practice you will be amazed how much improvement comes in quick decision making using this game. As each player only has one touch to pass the ball this should improve players movement off the ball to support due to this as they know the player receiving needs immediate help and as many options as possible. The two aspects of play go hand in hand, one touch play and movement off the ball.**

**THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING ONE TOUCH PLAY: IMPROVING ONE TOUCH PLAY MAINTAINING AN AWARENESS OF WHAT IS IN ADVANCE AND BEYOND THE BALL**

Linking foot preparation, body position and mental preparation to the technique involved in making a one touch pass leads us to a discussion on **one touch play** and its benefits.

One touch play teaches the **value** of being able to take your **eye off the ball** when keeping your eye on the ball can be a **disadvantage**.

To make this work, players need to have **good teamwork and positional sense** and therefore must work hard for each other.

**A Gradual Training Introduction training the psyche of the players through one touch play**

Introduce the training in a gradual way; don't jump straight into a scrimmage. Set it up so it is easy to do initially. For example, one touch passing in two's. Here, no great amount of awareness is needed because they are facing each other, but they must look **into each other's eyes** and **not** at the **ball**. This is teaching them to get their heads up, and is the first most basic stage. It is also working on the pace and direction of the pass, getting foot sensitivity started in terms of that first touch on the ball that is now in effect a pass.

Then move to groups of three where a little more **peripheral vision** is needed. Then ask them to pass **and move** in a small area.

Next, add more players so there are more passing options and more awareness is needed. Now introduce the Numbers Game, passing in sequence; this really starts to introduce the awareness concept, but with one touch only.

**Communication:** Good communication is a must, so have players talk to each other, passing messages on to help each other all of the time.

Also, have them do this without any verbal communication as they then have to rely on themselves alone and in games unfortunately as much as we try, this very often happens anyway.

So do this WITH communication and WITHOUT communication. Even compare the two, some may get so good at this they can work it out for themselves most of the time as their peripheral vision improves.

So practice one touch with your team, then play games / scrimmages with your team and insist on it being **ONE TOUCH ONLY**.

There will be times when 2 touches are needed but do not allow it. Force the error if need be by insisting on one touch only.

**Example:** A player does not get his feet ready to receive and as a result does not make correct contact with the ball and possession is lost. Everyone can see that his feet were the problem, especially the player involved, and this will register in his mind for the next time.

**Example:** The ball is passed too heavily and quickly (pace and timing of the pass is wrong) and the receiver needs a touch to control the pass initially and then make a 2<sup>nd</sup> touch pass to keep possession. That is the passer's fault, not the receiver's; and they will learn that from this single pass. It is likely that a one touch play at this moment will not work, which is fine, because this will help them learn why it didn't work for the next time.

**Example:** No teammates move to give the player receiving the ball an option to pass it one touch. This is the fault of the player or players **off the ball** and not the receiving player, but you must insist it is passed one touch still so they pass it into the space the player should have moved into. Again, this will probably result in giving the ball away, but they will learn from that. The players will recognize if possession was lost because there was not enough support off the ball, the pass was too heavy, or if it was the fault of the player's first touch if there were options off the ball.

When you first do it, particularly in a competitive scrimmage situation whether within your own team training or against another team, you may find it is **incredibly ugly play**; the players will more than likely really struggle with it (or maybe not, they may surprise you).

And it may be **ugly** for **quite a while**; but just let it go.

Do not be disheartened and don't let your players get discouraged.

And **do not coach**, just let them play and work it out for themselves. Tell them you **expect it to go wrong** more than go right to relax them about it...

They will find with **practice that** they need to adjust the **weight of** the pass to help the next player, so **foot sensitivity** in passing will improve.

They will **learn** this through their **own trial and error**, not necessarily just what you tell them.

So say nothing; let them **FEEL** it.

They will find they **can't** make it work if they just **focus and look at the ball** all the time.

They will find they **can't** make it work if their **body shape** is not right to receive the ball.

They will find they **can't** make it work if their **feet** are not ready to receive the ball.

They will find they **can't** make it work if their teammates **off the ball** are not alert.

They will find they **can** make it work if they start to learn to **look away from the ball** before they get it; and scan their options in advance of it.

They will find it **will** work if they get both their **body shape** and **foot preparation** right, and in **advance** of the ball.

They will find it **can** work if the players **off the ball** offer early options of support.

They will find they **can** make it work if their **first touch is good** (which is a **passing touch**)

If they only have one touch then it has to be a good one. There are no second chances.  
This will **focus their mind and their body**.

**So what will this teach the players; without you even saying a word:**

1. **Looking before receiving the ball:**
2. **Looking away from the ball as well as at it:**
3. **Knowing options in advance of receiving:**
4. **Weighting the pass correctly to help the receiver:**
5. **Getting their foot preparation right (how many play flat footed?? This won't let them if they want to be successful).**
6. **Getting their body shape right, facing where the next pass is going; in advance of the ball:**
7. **Getting into position quickly "Off the ball" to help the player receiving; and it has to be before the receiver gets the ball as they only have one touch to move it on again either to feet or to space:**
8. **They will recognize if the fault and failure to maintain possession was in the weight of the receiving pass, or in the next first touch pass by the receiver, or because of poor off the ball support. It is not difficult to identify which it is.**

**It will not be because of pressure or interceptions by defenders because in the early stages there will not be any defenders so the players can play without pressure.**

**It is easy to see for everyone why it works (or not) if they are honest with themselves and do not look for excuses for failure.**

I would do this for 30 to 45 minutes without interruption and then play a non - conditioned game afterwards and see how it changes their play.

It may not happen in the first instance. In fact it may take several attempts to make it work, but it will work. They may not be able to string 3 passes together initially; do not give up on this. It will develop at a different pace depending on the age group and level of ability of the players, so some will take longer than others.

It is a **MENTAL GAME**; players need to work hard mentally as well as physically to make this work. If you have a friendly scrimmage against another team, do not worry about beating the other team, do not worry about how ugly it looks, do not care about the score, and have them do it. Do not care what the other coach thinks you are doing or not doing.

**Do not try it once only and then give up.**

Finally; am I discouraging dribbling and turning and individual skills development? **Absolutely not!** But players need to be able to do it all, and this conditioned training will help them recognize in offense:

1. **When and where to Dribble and keep the ball in their possession (when the conditioned game is not being played and they are allowed to be free):**
2. **When and where to Pass:**
3. **When and where to receive and turn (when the conditioned game is not being played and they are allowed to be free):**
4. **When and where to shoot one touch or take more touches:**
5. **When and where to cross:**

**Yes, learning one and two touch play will also help them become better at dribbling and turning because it will help teach them when and where to do it, and each skill will need to be learned, one touch, two touch, dribbling and turning, for them to become better all round players.**

I do see players who can dribble and beat players; and that is great. But I also see the same players doing it when the pass is a better option and they lose possession because they did not recognize the moment to release the ball. They were not aware of the options and thus ended up dribbling for the sake of dribbling, likely with their heads down so they can't see their support, to the detriment of the team.

This training will help them know **when and where** to choose the **right skill to use**. In an indirect way perhaps it helps their dribbling and turning decision making as well as their one and two touch decision making.

The next question from you will be: **At what age do we start this?**

I think you can do it with technically good players at 6 but as they get older it will of course get easier and the more you do it the easier it will get.

Remember, **still do** all the **individual skills training**, they absolutely need that! But most kids learn skills naturally just by playing with a ball on their own or in make up games with friends.

Soccer Awareness using one and two touches is not so naturally or easily developed, which is the reason for this book.

There will be **much more failure than success when initially implementing this one touch training**, but players will be **forced** to think more quickly, move more quickly to support, get in position more quickly to receive, and focus on their first touch (pass).

The coach will see who can do it, who needs work with it, and who is willing to work hard and get open to help a teammate on the ball.

Strength, speed and ball dribbling skill mean very little in one touch play. The lesser skilled players will learn very quickly how they can play a more useful role in the team, while the more highly skilled players, who often think "dribble" first, will be forced to develop anticipation and passing skills which will make them more complete players.

As I said before, it is no use being a great dribbler if you can't make it fit into the team concept.

This type of training helps this aspect of team play develop.

It is a win-win situation; **"over time"**.

It is a marathon, not a sprint we are talking about here; so **persevere**.

Think about the opposition, what does it do to them when you play one touch successfully?

For one thing, they haven't time to close you down and win the ball as easily as they would if the receiving player took 3 or 4 touches, because as soon as they get tight to the player on the ball it has been passed on already, and they are out of the game, and our player is past them looking for the next phase of play. Also, the opponents have to work much harder off the ball to win it back, as the ball moves much more quickly passing it than with a player running and dribbling with it.

Ces Fabregas of Arsenal and France, Frank Lampard of Chelsea and England and Paul Scholes of Manchester United and England are wonderful examples of players adept at this type of play.

**MANY OF THE SESSIONS IN THIS BOOK CAN BE DEVELOPED TO EVENTUALLY USE ONLY ONE TOUCH TO TEST THE ULTIMATE AWARENESS OF THE PLAYERS.**

## COACH PARTICIPATION

Coaches, **do it yourself**, play one touch with your players and **feel** what it is like, **think** what they think, and tell me; **"what does it make you think about as the ball is coming to you"??**

**What do you have to do to make it work for you?**

It will help you understand how it works and why it is so important.

If you do this and come up with answers, 99% of the time it will be what the players are thinking and learning from it too.

So you will know, in a **psychological sense**; what your players are thinking; you will know, from a **physical standpoint**, what your players need to do with their bodies in terms of their positioning, body stance, first touch, and so on; which is to your advantage as a coach, don't you think?

## TWO TOUCH PLAY

**Follow the same format above for two touch play also and have practices and games where you use two touches only as a development from one touch conditioning play. One touch to control the ball and place it in the direction you need to go, the second to pass or cross or shoot.**

## FIRST AND SECOND TOUCH TRAINING DEVELOPING BOTH FEET

I have shown this by introducing the concept of **fast footwork and coordination without the ball**; as the players have to **GET THEIR FEET RIGHT** before they can make a good first touch on the ball.

Then by addressing basic individual technical skill training, first incorporating dribbling and turning with the head up so that players develop an awareness of their surroundings, thus knowing where teammates and opponents are as they dribble the ball or turn with the ball.

This leads the coach into the Awareness Coaching aspects of the book.

The players need to be able to have reasonably good technical ability before they move onto using the Awareness Coaching Method.

The book includes many coaching clinic session plans the coach can use to reinforce what we are trying to establish in the players' minds and bodies. **Individual skill development goes hand in hand** with this training program and time should be devoted to teaching the players important skills on the ball. These include a great first touch for a one or two touch pass, or setting the ball up with a great first touch to then run or dribble, shoot or cross, turn or pass.

I have tried to introduce an approach to soccer coaching that allows the players to develop their skills in a non – competitive environment to begin and building up to working more competitively when they are ready to progress to that stage. Initially each exercise should be practiced without opposition, building up to exercises with opposition to test the composure the players should have gained by following the program.

Once you have covered all the aspects of the coaching exercises presented in this manual you will be able to keep the training of the players in this work fresh by using different exercises at different times but still with the same results in mind: to develop **composure in possession, to decrease the time and number of touches needed to move the ball**. By having **total awareness of all players** around them, your players will be able to use their **imaginations** in their **use** of the ball and be better able to make their **own decisions**. There will also be developmental training for the awareness of players **Off the Ball** within the training sessions.

The idea is not to have players playing at 100 miles an hour and playing one touch all the time but to teach them to be aware of the options **before they receive** the ball (and have their feet positioned correctly to receive with comfort), then they can decide:

Does the ball need to go one touch?

Do I need to hold onto the ball until another option opens up?

Is this the time to run with the ball, dribble with it, to shoot, to cross or to pass?

For the player on the ball, this training will allow him to be able to control it quickly one or two touch, to see the options so he does not need a 3rd or 4th touch, to see where opponents are so he does not need extra touches to get out of trouble. We are training their **bodies for the footwork** and their **minds for the decision making**.

For the player **off the ball, awareness training will teach him** to help the player on the ball by offering **options** of a free pass or perhaps a cross into the box as an example, via good positioning in different parts of the field, either in front, to the side, or behind the player on the ball. It is vital as a coach to stress the importance of this aspect of awareness training to the players.

Without good movement and positioning by teammates off the ball, the player in possession, even if he possesses outstanding awareness, will be limited in his options.

The coaching ideals are designed to help the players give themselves as many options as possible and then decide which one to use at any given moment. This method is **not** designed to discourage dribbling with the ball or running with the ball to keep possession, but to help identify when dribbling or running with the ball would be the right option to use.

A problem I see in youth soccer is that when there is a moment to play one or two-touch, it is lost because the player isn't yet aware of this next option, does not have his feet ready in the first place, or is too busy controlling the ball and **then** looking to see where players are. This is **too late**. Good awareness involves recognizing when the right time arrives to dribble or run with the ball and this book is designed to help players decide what is needed in these moments.

Each chapter covers methods of coaching with built in progressions that complement this learning program, beginning with the most basic introductory exercises to enable players to get an easy understanding of how to gain success in their application.

**Again coaches, try it with the players and feel what you have to do to make it work in terms of your peripheral vision and the need to look in advance of the ball to gain the most success.**

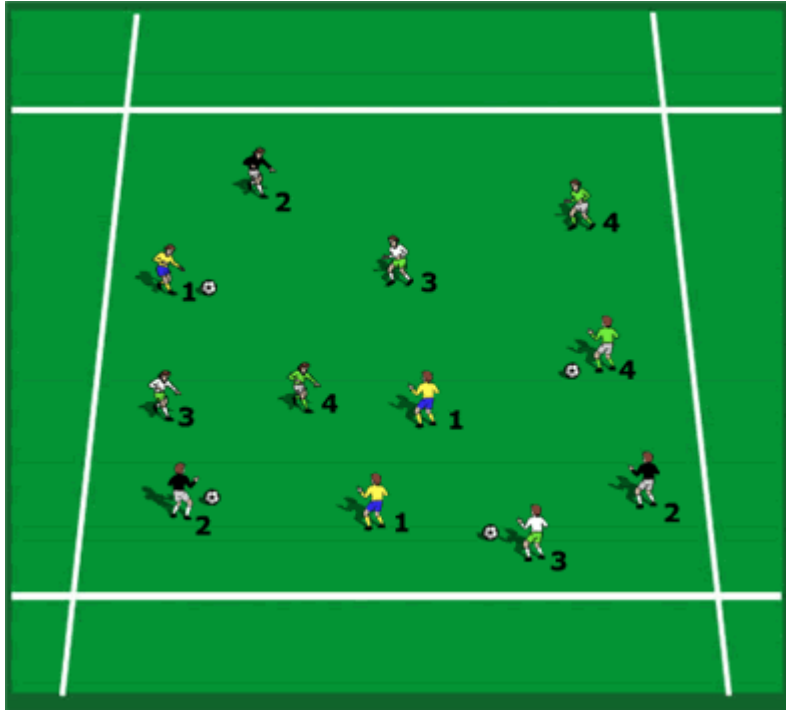
**Knowing what they have to do to make this work, both physically and psychologically, can only enhance your coaching methodology and your understanding of how players learn.**

### **THREE TOUCH PLAY**

Three touches incorporate a first touch control, a second touch set up, a third touch pass, shot, cross and so on. Work backwards from this starting with three touches in teaching the awareness training, then going to two touches and ultimately to one touch where the players' awareness has to be razor sharp to make it work.

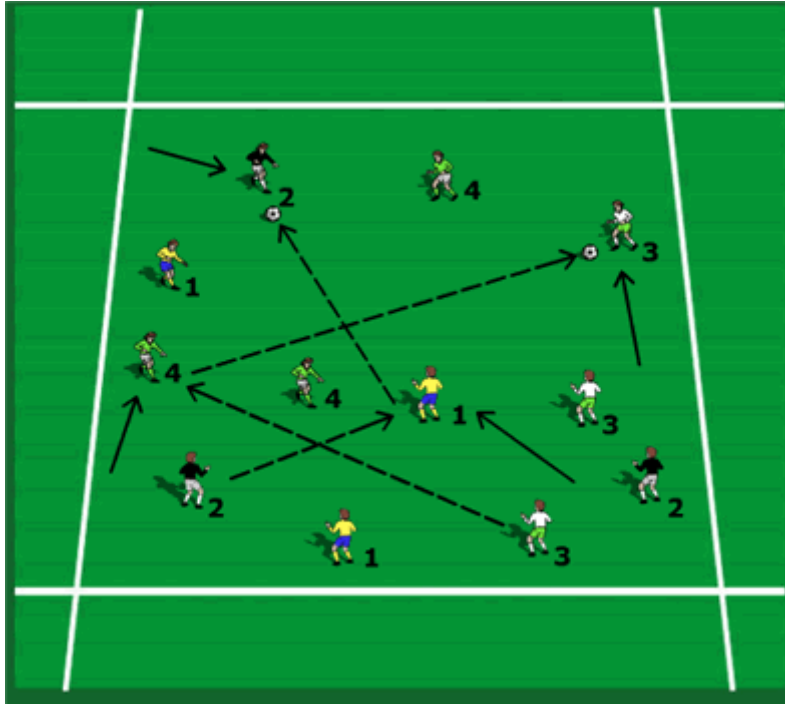
The development of good soccer awareness involves knowing what to do with the ball before getting it, what to do with it when you get it and what you do after it has left you.

## COMPETITIVE NON - DIRECTIONAL THREE TEAM AWARENESS POSSESSION GAME (4 v 4 v 4)

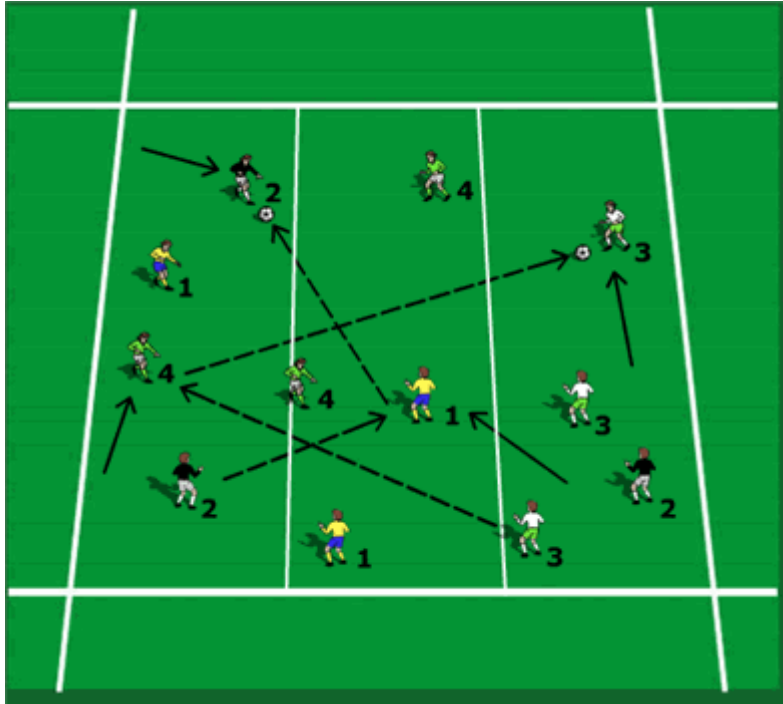


1. **Further Progressions:** Making it more competitive, have each team be the defending team for a certain time span. If they win the ball they then give it back to the combined attacking teams. Count the number of times they win the ball. The defending team that wins the ball the most times wins the game, or alternatively the combined teams which give up the ball the fewest times win the game.
2. Attacking players individually count the number of times they give the ball away as an indication to each and every one of them how well they can maintain possession under pressure.
3. Begin with players able to have as many touches as they like, then break it down to 3 touch, then 2 touch with **one touch passing the aim** if it is on to do so.
4. **Coaching Points:**
  - a) **Open body** stance to allow a yard or more extra space away from defenders by letting the ball run across the body into preconceived space.
  - b) **Looking before receiving** to know in advance of the receiving pass: where the defending players are, where the space is, where teammates are free to receive a pass, how many options there are to move the ball on
  - c) Movement **OFF** the ball is a priority both to receive it and after passing it.

## NON-COMPETITIVE AWARENESS NUMBERS GAME: PASSING IN SEQUENCE



1. This is a great game for forcing players to observe what is ahead of the ball "before" they receive it.  
Players (1) and (2) work together and players (3) and (4) work together.
2. Players must pass in **sequence** i.e. 1 passes to 2; 2 passes to 3; 3 to 4 and 4 to 1 and we begin again. Players are **static** to begin then get them passing and **moving**. Player **receives** from the same person and **passes** to the same person each time. This develops great awareness of time, space and player positions. This is continuous work on and off the ball.
3. **Awareness of: where** the player you **receive** from is and **where** the player you're **passing** to is. Because of this players begin to **anticipate** the pass to them and where it is coming from. Also they must look to where it is going (where is the player they are passing to?).
4. We are trying to create a situation where players are looking **two moves** ahead, not just one. For instance, as (1) is about to pass to (2), (3) should be looking to support (2) for the next pass already, looking two moves ahead before the ball leaves (1). **Peripheral Vision Development** results from this.
5. (3) should recognize if he needs to move into a space early **or** late based on this observation, but know in his mind already what the next best option is. Moving into the space too early in a game situation, for example, may result in being marked too easily. But knowing in advance "when and where" to move is an advantage and this game helps players develop this thought process.



1. Ask players to make it difficult to find them by incorporating lots of movement off the ball to **test** their teammate's vision.

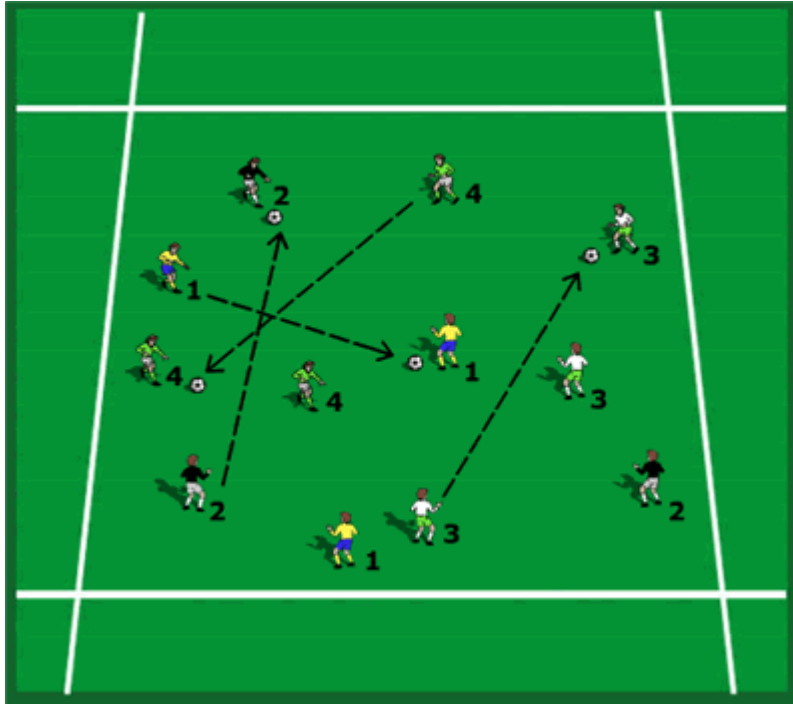
2. **Progression:**

Use **two** balls then **three** balls at the same time. Start with a ball at (1) and (4) then at (1), (4) and (6). To keep the sequence going players must move the balls quickly with few touches hence their peripheral vision development improves dramatically. As soon as they have passed one ball off, the next one is arriving, so **quick thinking** is needed to make the correct decisions.

Divide the field into thirds. Players have to make a pass in one third then move to another third to receive the next pass. This can cause players to pass long or pass short and vary the range and distance of the passes and the support.

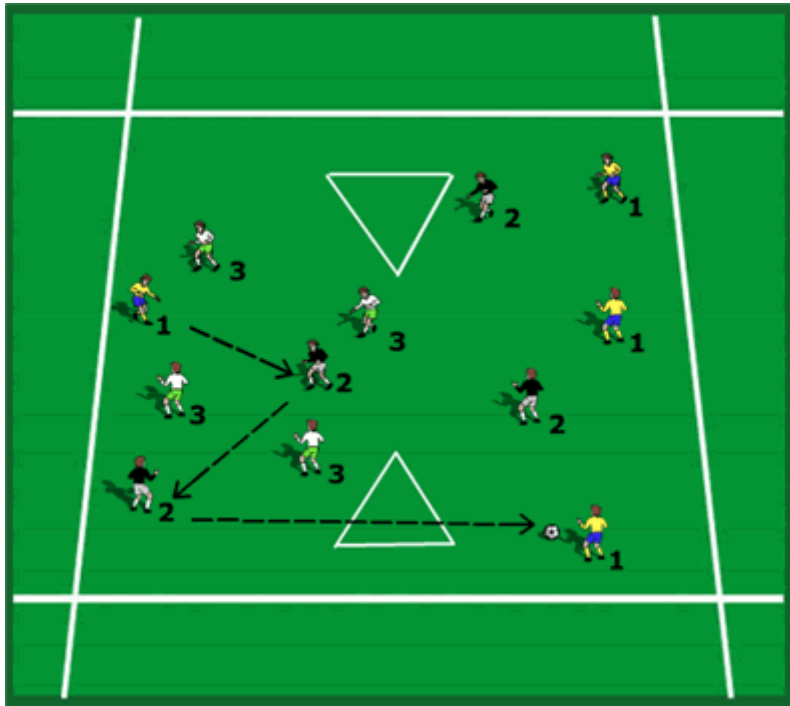
3. Here (3) passes to (4) and moves into another zone to receive the next ball. This ensures players get the idea of passing and **MOVING** off the ball, not passing and then standing. (2) does the same with a pass to (1) then moving into another zone supporting the next ball.

## COMPETITIVE FOUR TEAM GAME



1. **Competitive:** The same idea as the introductory session only the players **count the number** of passes they make in a given time as a team. Compare the totals. They can't pass back to the same player they received from.
2. Introduce several small goals for the players to pass through and count the number of goals scored. Ensure the players arrive at the goal (timing of the run) as the ball is passed through the goal (timing of the pass).
3. Players must not stand by a goal waiting for a pass as in a game they would not stand still like this to receive the ball.
4. **Progression**– Increase the number of balls per team (two balls per team). Combine two teams and have them passing to the other color and have three balls going at once, the variations can be numerous.

## COMPETITIVE DIRECTIONAL THREE TEAM AWARENESS GAME INTRODUCING GOALS AS TARGETS



1. Here is an interesting way to work on awareness training and passing, **movement off the ball**, fitness and looking for the penetrating pass. Add triangular goals to score through. This means the game continues after a goal is scored as the ball must be received and possession maintained by another player on the other side of the triangle to count as a goal. This ensures continuous play.
2. It is a more directional method of playing and more specific to the game in general. The defenders are **NOT** allowed inside the triangle so they must be constantly working their way around the triangle trying to cut off the penetrating passes.
3. Team (3) defends while teams (1) and (2) work together. The combined attacking teams can attack both goals alternatively. Attacking both goals encourages "Switching the Field".
4. Ultimately reduce the game to **two equal** number teams for the greatest challenge and begin with as many touches as possible, reducing the number of touches as they improve and are able to keep possession effectively. **Reducing the number of touches inevitably increases their awareness and forces them to look for options earlier and improves and speeds up their decision making.** This should result in more effective possession play.