

# YOUTH U14–U18

## From defense to offense

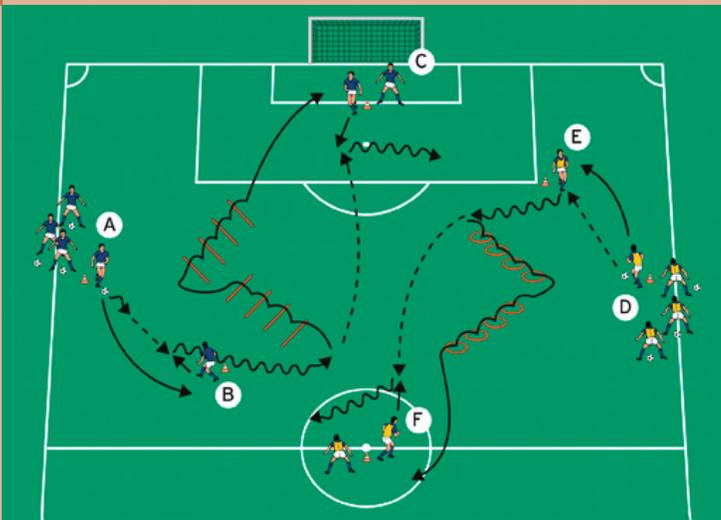
A sample practice session for ages U14–U18

by Horst Hrubesch, head coach, German U18 boys' national team

The new year is well under way. With winter break behind them, players and coaches alike have recharged their batteries for the second half of the season. Now that the weather is warm again, you can devote more of your practice time to tactics training. Spring provides all kinds of opportunities to try out new ideas or continue practicing and polishing the old ones. The agenda for this practice session includes outnumbering opponents, winning the ball and switching immediately to offense. The object is to move the ball forward as fast as possible and take your opponents by surprise while they're still moving back into their positions.

### WARM-UP

#### Warm-up 1: Technique and coordination 1



#### Setup

- Mark out a coordination course.
- Set out cones and have players line up at them as shown in the diagram.

#### Sequence

- Player A passes to B and runs after the ball.
- B controls the ball while taking it forward and then passes to C.
- Then B runs over the poles and lines up behind C.
- C dribbles across the field and lines up behind D.
- Meanwhile, D, E and F execute the same sequence, except E runs over the tires after passing to F.
- As soon as C and F have received the ball, the sequence repeats.

#### Variations

- Have players do various running and jumping exercises at the poles and tires: hopping on one foot, taking two steps in each space, running backwards, etc.
- Run the sequence in the opposite direction.

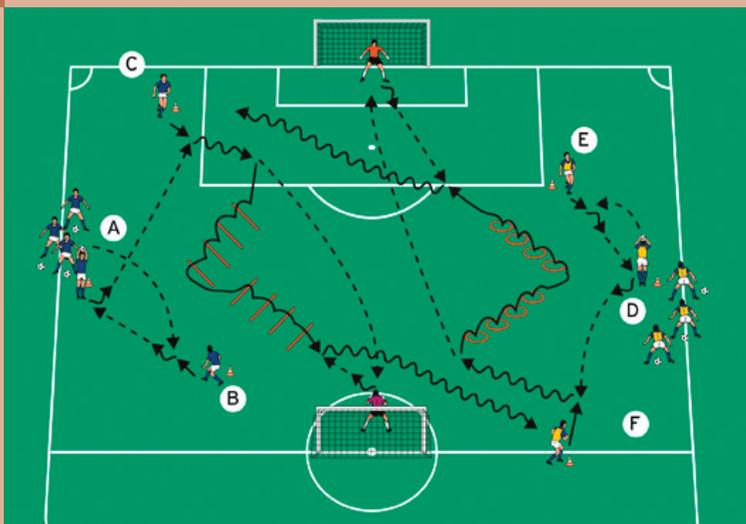
#### Tips and corrections

- All passes should be played while in motion.
- Receivers should step forward and actively call for the ball, then receive and control it while moving forward.
- Make sure players practice with both feet.

## From defense to offense

### WARM-UP

#### Warm-up 2: Technique and coordination 2



#### Setup

- Setup is the same as in the previous exercise, except there are goals with goalkeepers on the endline and centerline.

#### Sequence

- Basic sequence remains the same as well, except now the players

start out holding the balls in their hands.

- Player A throws the ball to B, who controls it and passes it back.
- Next A passes to C, who controls the ball while moving forward.
- C plays a flighted ball to the goalkeeper on the centerline, who passes it back to him when he gets to the end of the poles.
- C dribbles across the field and lines up behind D.
- D, E and F execute the same sequence. F plays his flighted ball to the goalkeeper on the endline and ends up at position A.
- All other players also move to the next position.

#### Variations

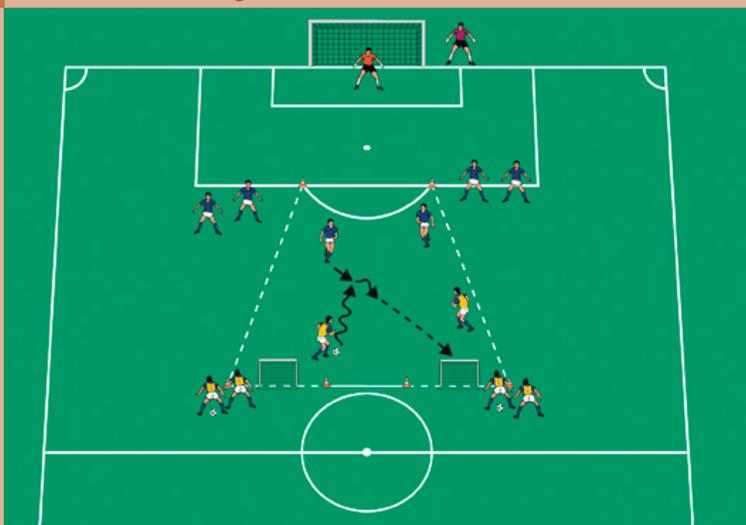
- The goalkeepers catch the flighted balls and roll or throw them into the receiver's path.
- C and F receive the ball from the other goalkeeper when they get to the end of the poles or tires.
- Replace the poles and tires with other obstacles.

#### Tips and corrections

- Players should control thrown balls on the first touch and ideally pass back on the second one.
- Passers and receivers should make eye contact before every pass.
- Encourage players to run the poles and cones as fast as possible while still maintaining precision (fast footwork).

### MAIN ACTIVITY

#### Main activity 1: Funnel 2 v. 2



#### Setup

- Mark out a funnel-shaped field between the 18-yard-line and the center circle (see diagram).
- Set up a standard goal with goalkeeper on the endline, opposite two mini goals and a goal line.
- Divide players into two teams.

#### Sequence

- Two players from each team play 2 v. 2 in the “funnel” while their teammates sit out.
- Blue attacks on the standard goal; yellow counterattacks on the mini goals and goal line.
- When a goal is scored or the ball goes out, the round ends and two new pairs take the field.
- Which team is the first to score five goals?

#### Variations

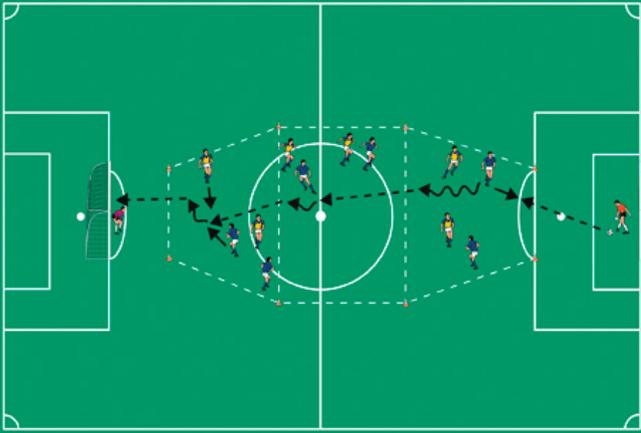
- The attacking team stays on the field at the end of the round and switches to defense for the next round.
- Assign time limits: If the defenders win the ball, they have just 10 seconds to finish.

#### Tips and corrections

- If the attackers succeed in getting to the opposition's goal, the field opens up to the full width of the penalty box. The bottleneck leading to the penalty box is meant to help the defending team win the ball.
- Defenders should try to double-team the ball carrier while simultaneously blocking potential passing lanes.
- If they do win the ball, they should counterattack aggressively and try to finish as fast as they can.

## MAIN ACTIVITY

### Main session 2: Double funnel



#### Setup

- Set up two goals with goalkeepers on three-quarters of a field.
- Mark out two funnel shapes between them with a 30 x 20-yard grid in the center.
- Teams are the same as in the previous exercise.

- Assign two players to each zone.

#### Sequence

- Teams play 2 v. 2 inside the two funnels and the center grid.
- For the attackers, the object is to pass to their teammates in the next zone.
- Play begins with a throw-in from a goalkeeper to one of the attacking players.
- Which team can score more goals in 10 minutes?

#### Variations

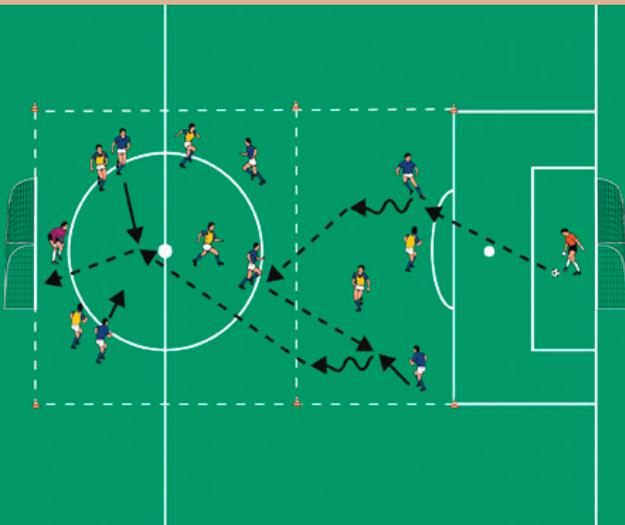
- Rotate players to different zones every few rounds.
- If the attackers succeed in passing into the next zone, one of them is allowed to cross over with the ball.

#### Tips and corrections

- Defenders should exploit the advantages of the funnel by not attacking too soon.
- They should defend as a compact unit and launch a fast counterattack if they win the ball.
- The offside rule is in effect.
- Goalkeepers should stay focused and try to intercept through passes.

## CONCLUSION

### 6 v. 6



#### Setup

- Set up two goals with goalkeepers on two-thirds of a field limited to the width of the penalty box.
- Mark out a centerline.
- Teams are the same as in the previous exercise.

#### Sequence

- Teams play 6 v. 6.
- If a player on the defending team wins the ball, he has no more than five seconds to pass it to a teammate in the other half.
- If he fails, the ball goes back to the other team.
- Which team can score more goals?

#### Variations

- Any goal scored within 15 seconds of the attackers' winning the ball counts triple.
- Finish with a regular 6 v. 6 (no special rules).

#### Tips and corrections

- Defenders should try to stay compact, outnumbering opponents near the ball and trying to force a turnover.
- If they succeed, they should quickly switch to offense, immediately fan out and get the ball to their opponents' goal as fast as they can.
- Attackers should look for potential receivers in forward positions and finish aggressively.