

Training twin strikers

Developing the necessary techniques and tactics for attacking with two strikers

by Greg Maas, director, Real Salt Lake Utah Development Academy

Game formations with two strikers, such as the 4–4–2 or 3–5–2, offer the advantages of more versatile combination play up front and more pressure on the goal. They also make it easier to launch attacks up the middle. However, this style of play is only effective with forwards who have received the necessary training in tactics and technique.

Player types

In these types of formations, one of the attackers is more of an all-around forward while the other is more of a target player. The all-around forward is an agile and dynamic runner and dribbler who moves around the target player much as a central attacking midfielder does. He can often be found moving up from the midfield and usually faces the goal, passing to teammates in front of it and also taking long-distance shots of his own. The target player is big and powerful and acts as the main receiver in the front. He is good on headers and especially good at scoring from inside the penalty box.

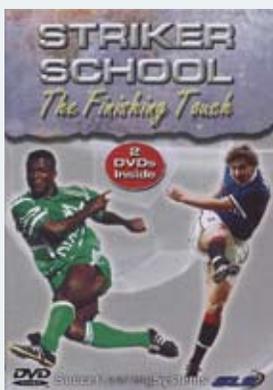
Technical aspects

Obviously, both strikers need to be able to shoot with precision and confidence. For the coach, this means making sure every shot taken at practice is well-aimed and least hits the goal. In terms of combination play, your prime concern is wall passes that are fast and direct, especially from the all-around forward to the target player. The all-around forward should be a powerful and focused dribbler with a strong drive

to the goal. The target player needs to be extremely assertive, with the willpower to overcome multiple opponents and win balls in the air. Both strikers should also have plenty of speed.

Tactical aspects

In play, the two strikers should take up staggered positions, with the target player going for maximum forward penetration and staying ready to receive forward passes. He will often be facing away from the goal. The all-around forward hangs back, making him the target player's most likely receiver. He should either show for passes through gaps into his path or run toward the ball carrier to call for a pass to his feet. To get away from opponents, he can use countermoves, faking a run in one direction and then taking off in the other. The target player can also make runs from behind opponents to receive passes. To do this, he first goes intentionally offsides, dropping out of defenders' field of vision and then popping unexpectedly back into the game. Tactics training should be complex and should include combinations with midfielders in the middle and on the wings.



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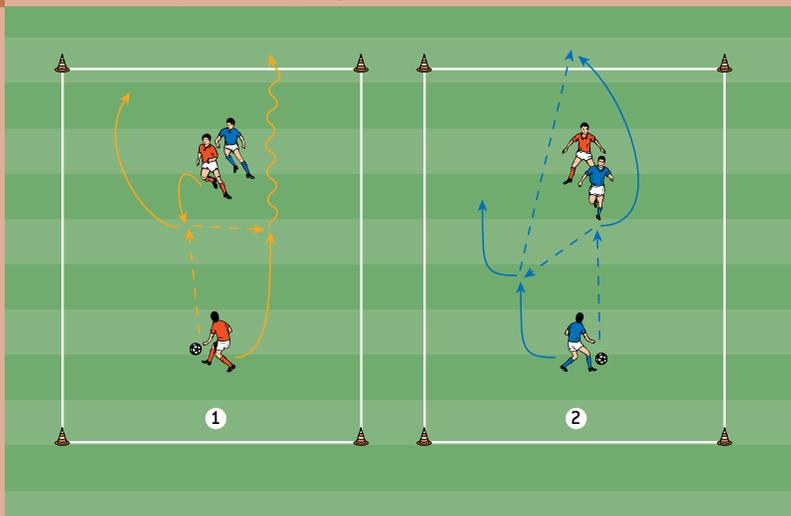
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SAMPLE TRAINING SESSION

Warm-up: Three-player combinations



Setup and sequence

- Mark out several 10 x 20-yard grids. Divide players into groups of three: striker, defender and attacking midfielder.
- Strikers begin by checking away from the defender (1) or to the ball (2), creating space to receive the ball and combine with the attacking midfielder as shown.
- To ensure successful combination play, defenders are initially passive. Gradually increase the defending pressure, progressing to 2 v. 1 and 2 v. 2 to the endline. If the defender wins the ball, he immediately transitions and counterattacks.

Focus on:

- Countermovements to create space; deception; accuracy, weight, quality and timing of passes; verbal and visual communication; attacking mentality

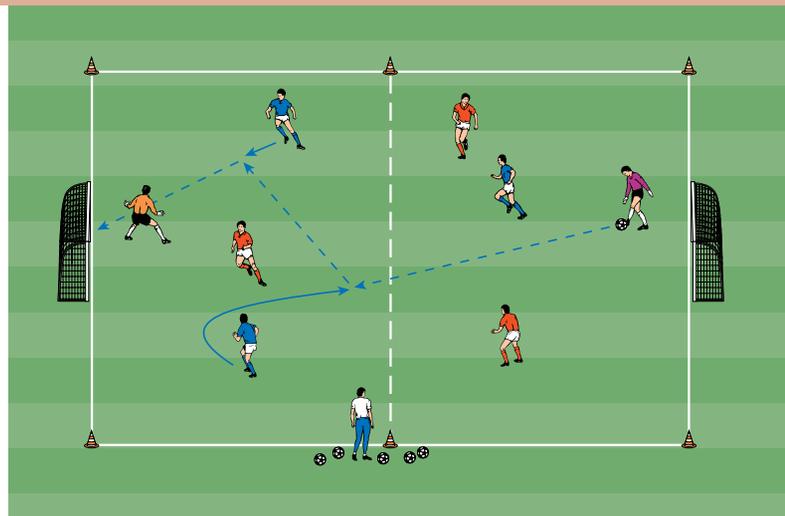
Main session: 2 v. 1 + 2 v. 1

Setup and sequence

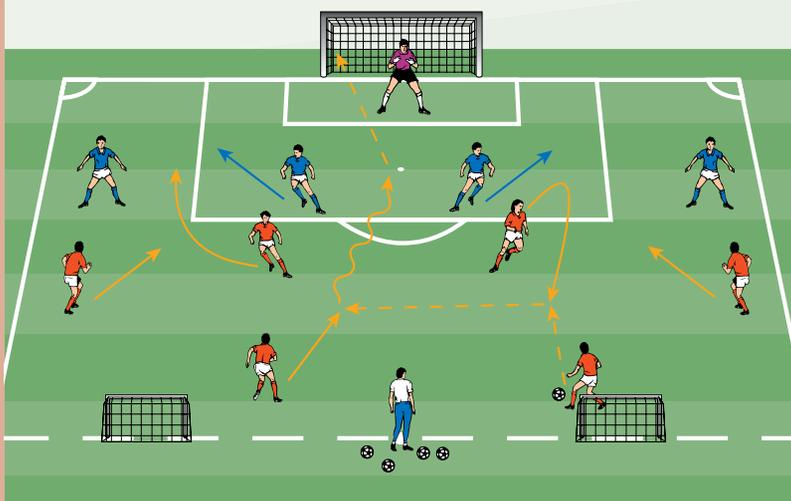
- Mark out a 20 x 30-yard field with a centerline, two goals and goalkeepers. Divide players into two teams of three, positioned as shown to create a 2 v. 1 in each half.
- Play begins with a goalkeeper serving to a striker who has created space. Players are restricted to their assigned halves and play 2 v. 1 until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play.
- Create a competition between the two teams: Who can score more goals in a set amount of time?

Focus on:

- Movement off the ball to create space (countermovements); deciding when to go 1 v. 1 against the defender, when to pass to the supporting player and when to combine with the other striker; maintaining possession; combination play; finishing



Main session: 6 v. 4



Setup and sequence

- Field is a third of a standard field, with one standard goal and two small countergoals.
- Position attacking team A (two central midfielders, two central strikers and two wide midfielders) and defending team B (four defenders and a goalkeeper) as shown.
- Play begins with Team A attacking 6 v. 4 on the large goal. If the defending team wins the ball, they counterattack on either countergoal. Teams play until a goal is scored or the ball goes out, then start over.

Focus on:

- Timing of countermovements; creating space for midfielders; playing off the other central striker; linking and connecting with wide midfielders; finishing technique and composure

Main session: 8 v. 8 with flank channels



Setup and sequence

- Two teams of eight (including keepers) play in a half. Two target players from each team start in the flank channels.
- A goalkeeper plays the ball to his striker in the attacking half. Teams play 4 v. 3 in that half until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of play. Attackers may not enter the flank channels.
- If the defenders win the ball, they pass to their strikers.
- In the final phase, remove restrictions and flank channels and let teams play 8 v. 8.

Focus on:

- Intelligent runs with and without the ball; countermovements to create space for teammates; playing off the central strikers to combine with wide midfielders; timing of runs and finishing technique; finding efficient and effective ways to score

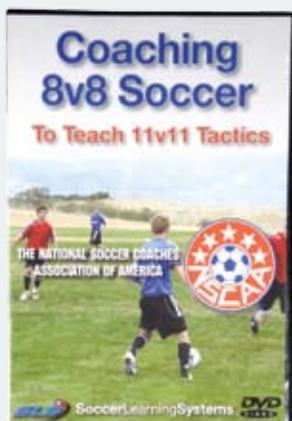
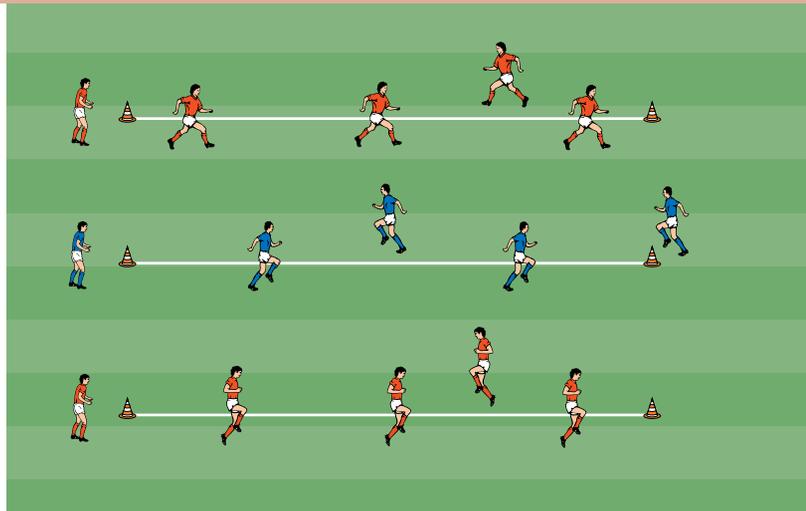
Cool-down: Running variations

Setup and sequence

- Mark out a 20 x 30-yard area with three cones on each endline.
- Players line up in three lines, with a team captain for each line.
- Players begin by jogging back and forth between the cones.
- They then progress to various dynamic exercises involving flexibility movements chosen by the captains. These may include: skipping, lunge walks, squats, toe touches, leg swings, side-stepping, grapevine, gate (groin) movements, knee hugs, heel kicks, etc.
- After 10 minutes, players slow down to reduce heart rate and conclude with a final stretch.

Focus on:

- Reviewing the session; reinforcing the training of the twin strikers; discussing upcoming training, games, or events



NSCAA COACHING 8v8 SOCCER

As an interim step between small-sided games and 11 v. 11, 8 v. 8 soccer has enough numbers to provide a clear picture of how to implement the principles of the game within various team shapes. The 8 v. 8 game also presents many technical and tactical teaching opportunities for coaches and older players, depending on which system is utilized. This DVD illustrates how different playing systems within the 8 v. 8 format enable coaches to teach attacking and defending principles of the game. Various systems of play are covered, including how they relate to the 11 v. 11 game.

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