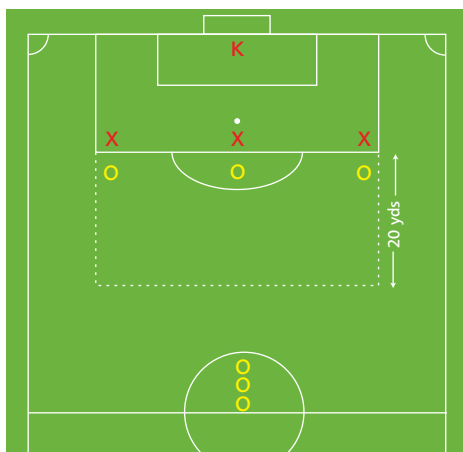


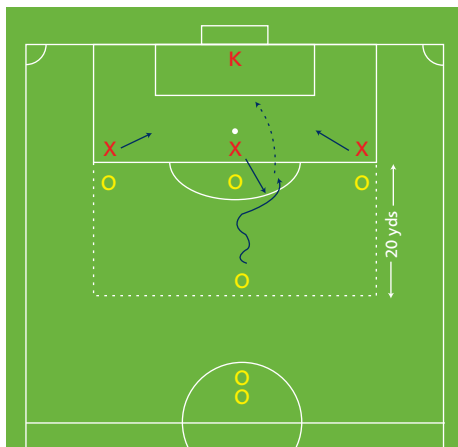
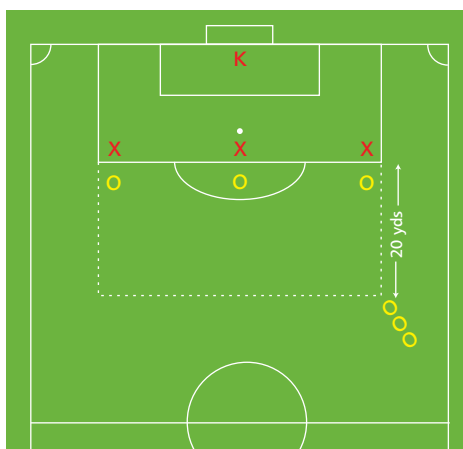
PLAYING IN THE FINAL THIRD

Butch Lauffer is Head Men and Women's Coach at West Texas A&M University and takes an opportunity to discuss Playing in The Final Third.



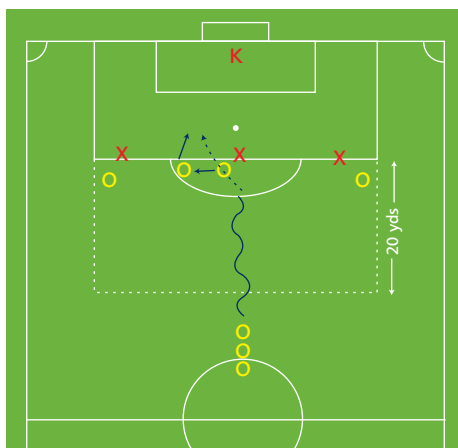
The organisation of this practice starts out by playing 4v3, with the four attackers trying to break down the three defenders and create goal-scoring chances.

The four will create goal scoring chances by (1) dribbling, (2) long-range shooting from the attacking midfielder, (3) creating 2v1 situations, (4) through passes, and (5) 1-3 movements.



The attacking midfielder who has the attitude to run at the defence and the ability to shoot from distance will put fear into the defending three. The only way for the three to deal with this situation is for the nearest defender to leave the line and close down this player. This defensive action will create defensive lines, which will make it hard to play the tactic of offside and create space in between and behind the two lines for the attacking team to exploit.

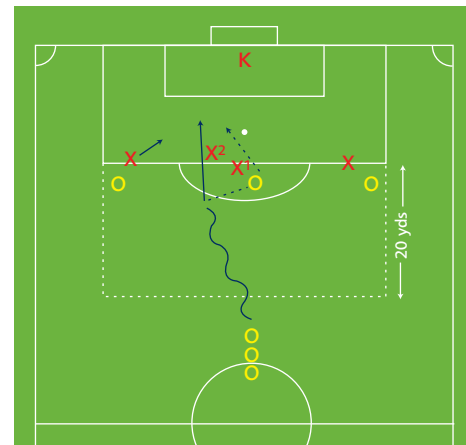
- Dribble at defence.
- Shoot from distance.
- Follow up shots.



This leads to the next stage and that is the organisation of the three high attackers. As a group I want the three attackers to push as high

as possible. This will help to flatten out the three defenders and destroy the possibility of defensive cover. Next, I want the three attackers to play off the opposite shoulder of their marker based on the position of the defender and the ball. This attacking will require some lateral movement in relation to the position of the ball. This positioning will allow the striker and the player playing the ball to eliminate the defensive line with one pass. This first option is to pass into space, and not into the body of the striker. The second option is to play to the front foot where the first touch can beat the defensive line.

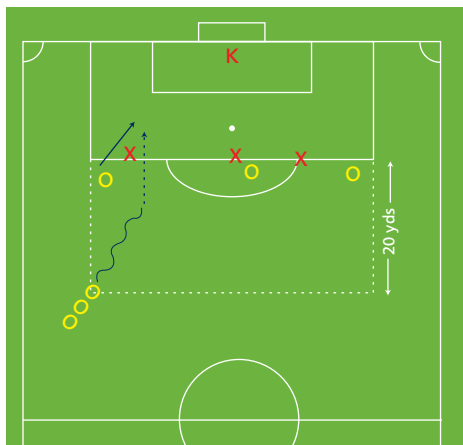
- Attackers push high as possible.
- Playing off the opposite shoulder of the defender - split vision.
- Strikers sideways on - come off angle.
- Move as the ball moves.
- Pass into space, not the body.
- Can the striker turn and face up?
- 1st touch finishing, if can.



When creating 2v1 situations, the player on the ball is encouraged to engage the space between the defenders. By engaging that space this will force the defenders to make decisions on whether to pressure the ball or stay and mark the attacking player.

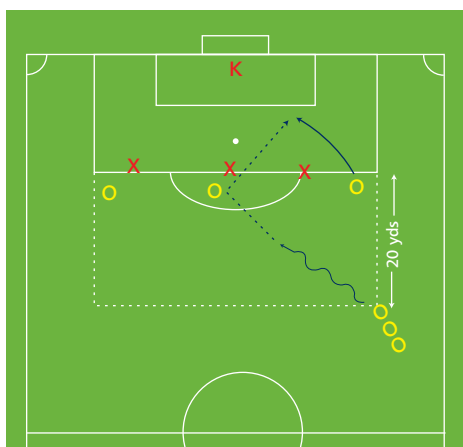
- Engage space at speed.
- Striker coming off at an angle.

- Qualities of a good pass - Accuracy, Pace, Timing, Disguise and Angle.
- Change running speed.
- 1st time finishing.



The through-pass seems very simple but can be hard for some players to conceptually understand. The pass in behind can be very effective when playing in and around the penalty box. In this movement, the timing of the pass and the run are critical to break the line and stay on side. The player running off the ball can run behind or even in front of his marker.

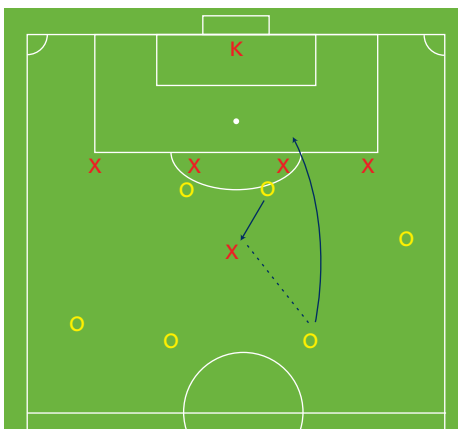
- (Passing Sequence) Head up - Show - Pass.
- Qualities of a good pass - Accuracy, Pace, Timing, Disguise and Angle.
- Timing of runs.



The final movement is a 1-3 or 3-man movement play.

- Qualities of a good pass - Accuracy, Pace, Timing, Disguise and Angle.
- Timing of runs.
- Playing passes in behind.
- Up - Back - Through movements.
- Clever running off the ball.
- Playing off the opposite shoulder of the defender - Split vision.

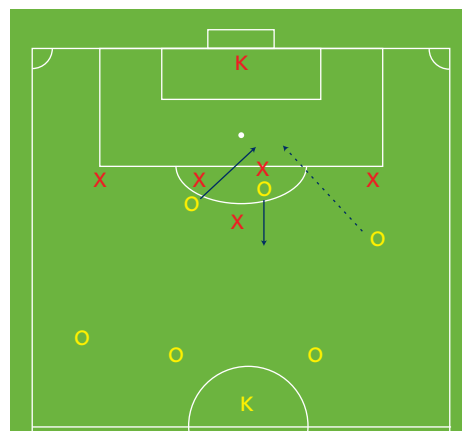
6 V 5



When playing **central** combinations on the top of the box, the attacking player should understand that the pass needs to be played first and is followed by the striker's movement. The reasoning is that the defender will only react to the movement of the ball and will be cautious of being dragged out of position by the strikers making runs. When the striker comes off the defender, they need to come off at an angle. Again, this will put the defenders in a situation of being forced to make decisions.

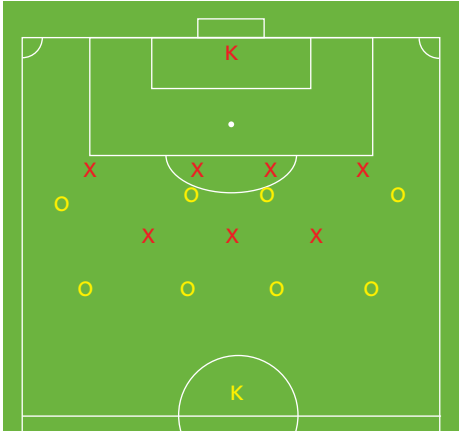
- Qualities of a good pass - Accuracy, Pace, Timing, Disguise and Angle.
- Striker comes off at an angle.
- Supporting position of other attacking players.
- Double pass.
- 1-2's.
- 1-3's.

- Through-passes between LCB and LFB - Most teams have a true left-footed left-back and not a true left-footed centre-back. This pass puts both players on their weaker foot.
- 1st time finishing.
- Crossing in behind the back line - find space.
- Crossing from end line - find players.



If the ball is in a wide position, the striker's movement is down the field with the striker's body position sideways on. Again, the will put the defender in a situation of a question (do I stay or do I go?) If the defender goes then the ball can be played into the space vacated by the defender.

- Passing Sequence - Head up - Show - Pass.
- Striker comes off sideways on.
- Playing off the opposite shoulder of the defender - split vision.
- Double pass.
- 1-2's.
- 1-3's.
- Turning.
- Dummy Movements.
- 1st Time movements.
- 1st Time finishing.
- Crossing understanding - if defending team is organised, cross to back post.
- Crossing Understanding - if defending team is unorganised, cross to near post.
- Crossing early, behind backline - find space.
- Crossing from end line - find player, striker repositioning.



In the 9v8, we encourage the nine to try and spread out and stretch the defenders through proper attacking shape (depth & width). The wide midfield should take up positions so that, if they are given the ball, they can run at the nearest defender or cross the ball into the box. You can also work on the full-backs overlapping and crossing as well.

- Proper shape - depth/width.
- Play where they are NOT.
- Full-back's able to initiate attacks.
- 2v1 possibilities in wide areas.
- Good possession - Reduce the possibility of counter attacks.
- Patience is vital factor - Make an extra pass if necessary.
- Can you get a through-pass in between the Left Centre-back and Left Full-back.
- Early crossing in behind the back line (space).
- Late crosses from the end line (players).
- Coordinated movement of strikers.
- 1st time finishing.

Butch Lauffer is Head Men and Women's Coach at West Texas A&M University. Lauffer has spent his entire University Coaching career with WTAMU while earning a long list of accomplishments within the soccer profession, including several foreign and domestic coaching licences. Lauffer received his bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and his Masters Degree from Texas Christian University.

