

Squeeze and stretch

Defenders often squeeze high up the pitch when their team is attacking. If your players can stop an attack, they have the opportunity to capitalise on the space behind the opposition defence. The key is in the quality of the forward pass and movement from your attackers to break the offside trap.



What you tell your players the session is about

1. Regaining possession to counter attack.
2. Passing into the space behind the defence.
3. Developing the forward's role in the team.

Session planner

Warm up 10 mins	Session 10 mins	Developments 20 mins	Game 15 mins	Warm down 5 mins
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Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm up	Ball	Players are passing the ball at top speed. From <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual</i> , exercise 90
The session	Balls, cones, goal and poles or mannequins	The midfielders pass into the space behind the defence for the forward to run on to
Development	Balls, cones, a goal and poles or mannequins	Regaining the ball and passing early into the space behind the defence, or into the forward's feet
Game	Balls, cones and a goal	On regaining possession, quicker passes are played into the forwards
Warm down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



Where it fits

Individual skills: Defending skills, passing, movement off the ball, shooting, hold up play

Team skills: Defending as a team, communication, movement off the ball, combination play in attack

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What to think about

- Do your players recognise the opportunity to exploit the space behind the defence after regaining possession?
- Can the players look to play the ball into this space?
- If not, can they pass to the forwards? Can a midfielder look to make a supporting run behind the defence?
- Ensure the goalkeeper has a realistic starting position.





Set-up

Create a 60 yards 40 yards playing area.



What you get your players to do

Have your defenders, or mannequins, 35 yards to 40 yards from goal.

The server passes the ball into the midfielder, who must take a quick touch to receive and then play a pass behind the defence (mannequin) for the forward to run on to.

Forwards must ensure they disguise their runs and stay inside in order to get in behind the defence and score.



What to call out

- “React to winning possession”
- “Look to pass into the space behind the defence”
- “Look to run into the space behind the defence”



Development

- Include a 25 yards by 30 yards grid within the larger playing area for the development.
- Develop these skills in a small-sided game starting in the smaller playing area.
- The white team attempt to keep possession in the small area (second picture right).
- If the grey team win possession it looks to play a quick pass beyond the opposition defence for their forward to run on to and shoot.
- Develop further by instructing the forward to receive the ball to feet, forcing a midfielder to make run behind the defence to add a new attacking option (third picture right).

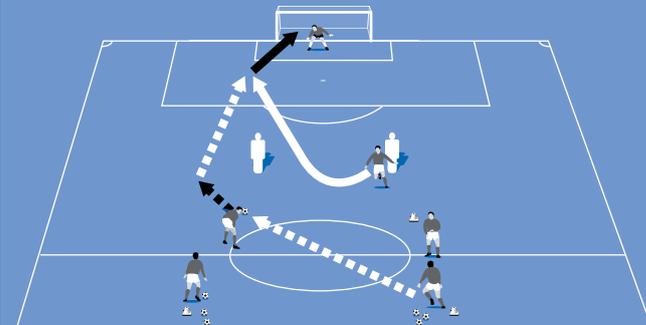


Game situation

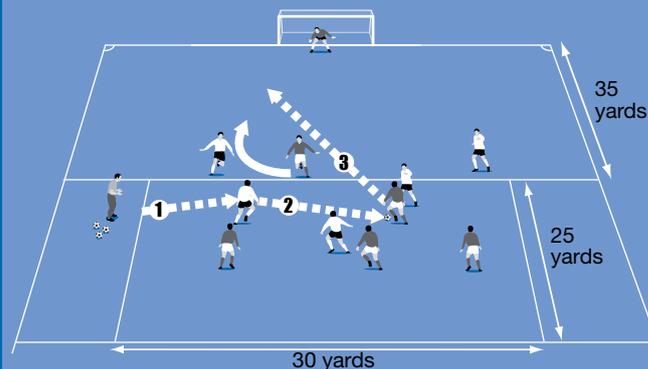
Play a normal game with the following rule. On regaining possession, players must immediately look to pass to one of their forwards – whether in the space behind the defence, or into the forward’s feet.

Squeeze and stretch

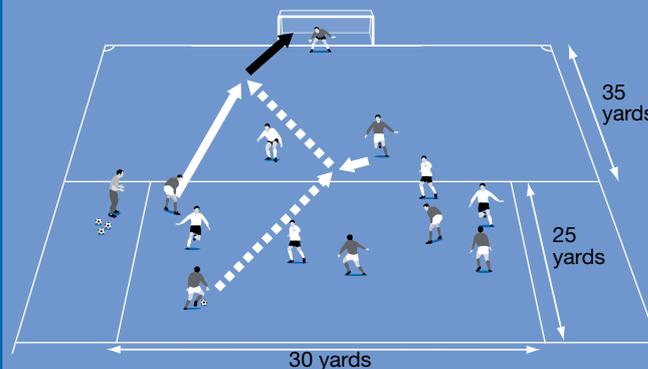
direction of run \Rightarrow pass $\square\square\square\Rightarrow$
 run with ball \dashrightarrow shot \rightarrow



The midfielder plays a quick pass behind the defence for the forward to run on to and score.



The grey team dispossesses the white team and play their forward behind the defence.



The grey team now plays into the forward’s feet and a midfielder runs in behind to receive a pass and score.