

The Center Mid Link in a Possession Game

The center midfielders (CMs) are the links between the backs and the forwards. They provide the angled positions for passes into the center and back out wide. They are the turning point of switching fields. They deliver the through balls behind the defense. In other words, they are critical to the success of a team's possession and attacking play.

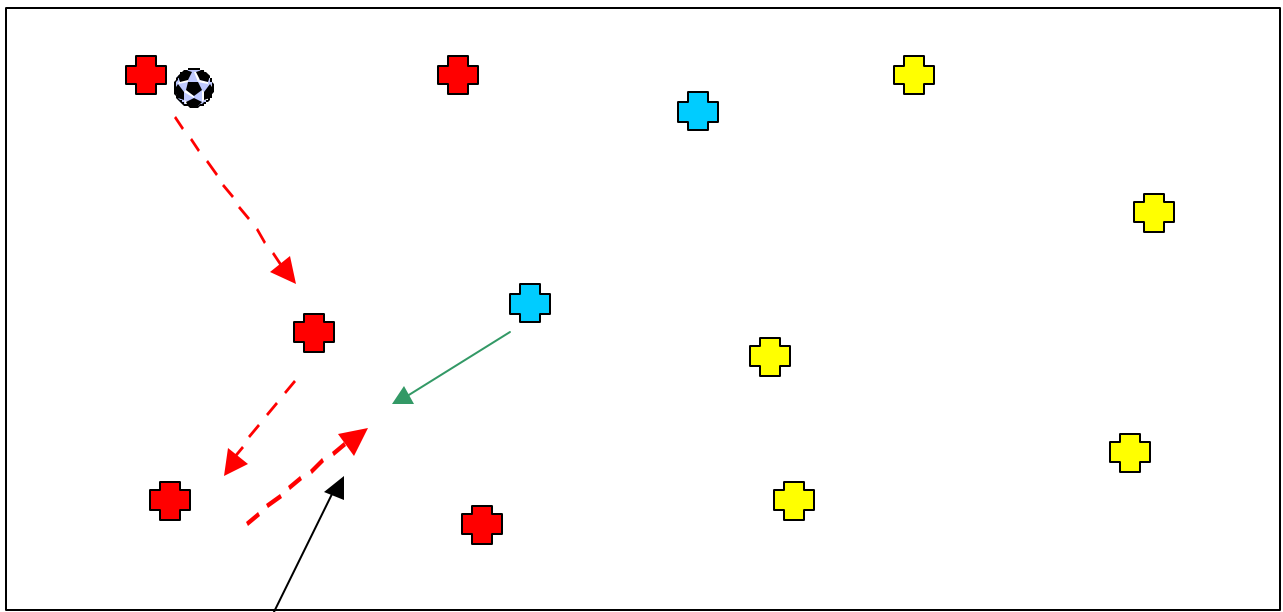
The following exercise, suggested by Gary Rue, a Frankfurt Kentucky high school coach, can be used to focus on the movement and passing of the CM. It is based upon systems that use at least two center halfbacks, such as a 4-4-2 or a 3-5-2.

Setup:

Teams can be either 5v5+2 or 6v6+2 or 7v7+2; the (+2) are neutral attacking players;

The field is 60x45 field with two small goals (or a large goal with GK) on each goalline.

Play is normal except the team in possession must pass the ball to one of the 2 neutral (center halfbacks) players every third pass.



Third pass is to the neutral player

Coaching Points

- The CMs should be centrally located.
- They should change their positioning based upon ball and the movement of their partner CM.
- When one CM is back the other is forward.
- The play should be restricted to one or two touches.
- They should be asked to play the way they are facing.
- Their prime objectives should be to find opportunities to switch the point of attack or to find penetrating forward passes. Otherwise, they should maintain possession with conservative and simple passes.

Variation

2v2+1 or 3v3+1 or 4v4+1 can be used for smaller sided games. The coach may want to restrict the CM from scoring in the small sided games. Also, he may or may not want any defensive pressure to be applied to the CMs, depending upon the level of skill.