

Playing through the thirds

Practice organisation

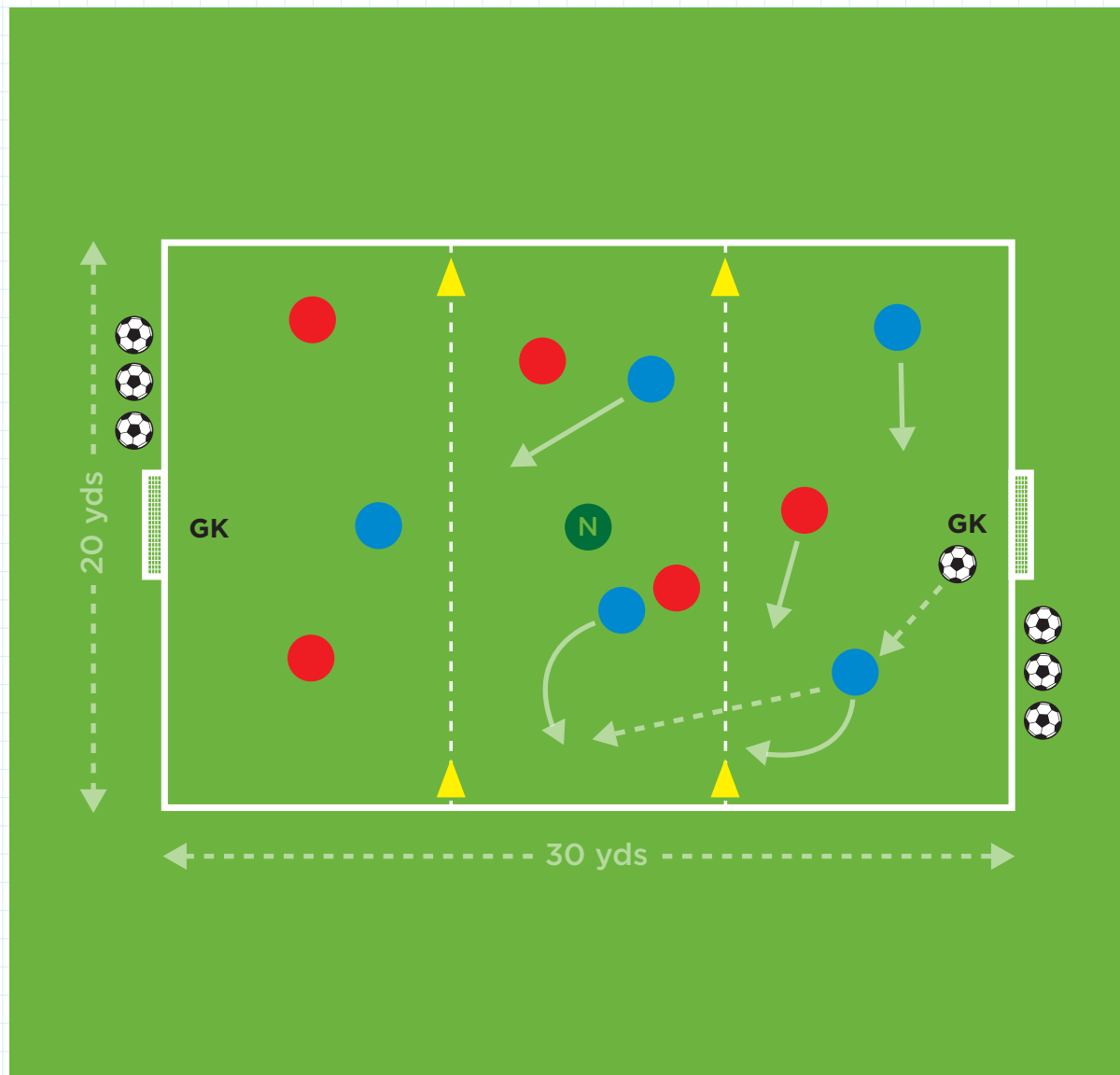
- Area 30x20yds, divided into equal thirds & goals at each end, as illustrated.
- 13 players (incl. 2GK's) arranged 6v6 plus a Neutral player who plays for both teams (2v1, 2v2 & 1v2 in each third), as shown in diagram.
- Supply of balls by each goal.
- Practice starts with: ball rolled out by GK.
- Objective of practice: each team attempts to score in opponent's goal whilst playing ball through each third.
- Attacking team receives ball from GK & is able to transfer 1 player into mid-third to combine with N to make 4v2.
- Other A stays back & marks D who is not allowed to retreat into mid-third.
- Ball is played into attacking third & an A can move up to make 2v2.
- If D's gain possession: they become attackers & roles are reversed.

Detail

- Area can be modified depending on age & ability of players.
- Passing, moving & dribbling techniques.
- Individual defending techniques.
- Making early decisions & selection on retaining ball or combining with team mate.
- Reaction to loss of possession to prevent opponent taking ball on & scoring.
- Understanding when to be patient in build-up & retain possession & when to attack positively with purpose.
- Simple progressions for this practice are:
 - D's can move one player up the field to nullify/dilute attacking overload in each third.
 - D's can operate within 2 thirds of the field.
 - Open play with condition that possession must be established in each of the thirds.

Key coaching points

- Moving forward with ball or passing forward quickly to combine with N & create overload in mid-third.
- Selection & execution of passing, receiving & dribbling techniques.



- Spreading-out, angles & distances of support by mid-third players to exploit overload.
- Patience & selection of correct time to move ball forward with quality & precision.
- Creating space to beat opponent & exploiting space in behind when advancing into next third.
- Good balance & concentration, both individually & collectively in

- defensive role.
- Not committing to tackle & channelling play away from goal.
- Maintaining good defensive position between ball & goal.
- Blocking shots & recovering possible rebounds.
- Seizing on counter-attack opportunities on changes of possession.