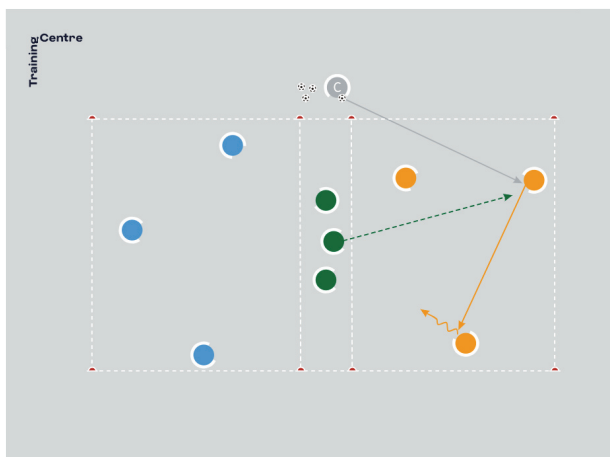


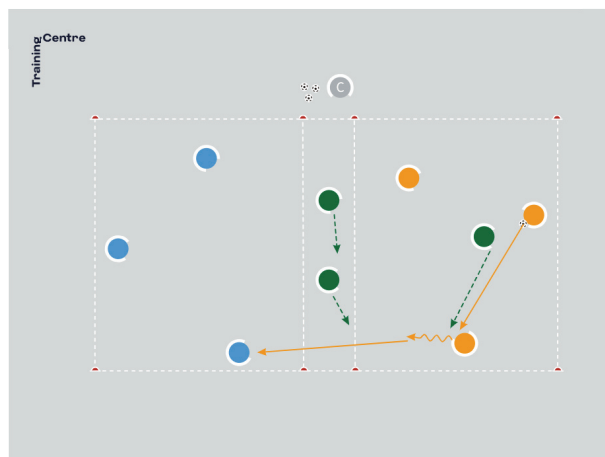
Roger Schmidt: — Tactical activation through possession and transition III

Setup

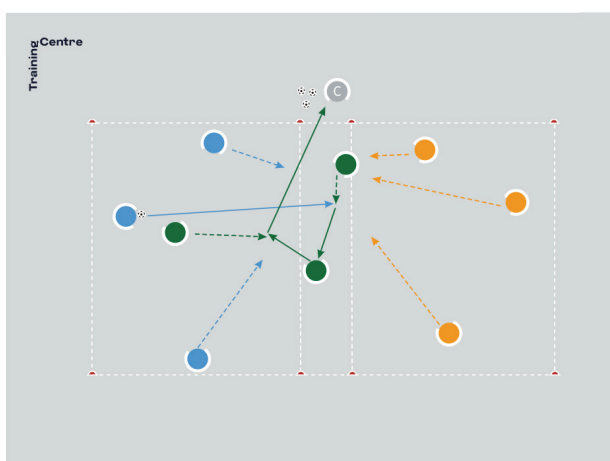
This activation features three teams of three players — a smaller, more individualised setup compared to the four- and six-player teams used in earlier sessions. The game unfolds across three zones, with one team in each. The middle team acts as defenders, while the other two occupy the outside zones.



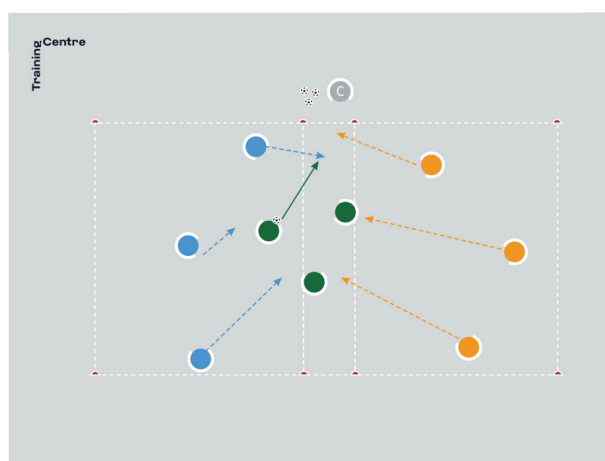
(1/4) The coach initiates play by serving a ball to one of the outside teams. As the ball travels, one defender from the middle zone presses into the wide area, creating a 3v1 situation.



(2/4) The attacking trio must try to play a forward pass through the central zone to the team on the opposite side. They may do so at any time, but are limited to a maximum of five passes.



(3/4) If the defending team wins the ball, either through interception or direct challenge, they can score a point by ensuring that each player touches the ball before passing it back to the coach.



(4/4) During this phase, the attacking players are encouraged to counter-press and win the ball back before the sequence is completed.

Deliberate practice and design

Small adjustments in rules, structure or coaching can dramatically change what players experience. In this version, Schmidt introduces two subtle but deliberate rule changes that shift the emphasis toward decisive forward play and immediate counter-pressing.

1. Passing constraint

The key distinction in this version lies in the passing constraint. While previous activities required a minimum of ten passes before switching play, giving defenders time to organise and apply coordinated pressure, this exercise limits the attacking team to a maximum of five passes. As a result, players are compelled to think vertically, act quickly and take calculated risks in search of penetrating passes.

2. Scoring system

A more subtle but important change in this tactical activation lies in the scoring system. As in previous versions, attackers earn one point for each successful forward pass into the opposite outside zone, rewarding decisive, line-breaking passes that outplay defenders.

However, defenders can no longer score immediately. To earn a point, they must now complete a short passing sequence: all three players must touch the ball before it is returned to the coach. This acts as a minimum passing constraint, demanding control and composure immediately after regaining possession.

More significantly, this rule creates a clear window for counter-pressing. By delaying the defenders' ability to score, it allows attackers to react and apply pressure, making counter-pressing more frequent and realistic, and helping players to internalise it as a natural response during transitions.

Coaching and focus and player development

This variation of the tactical activation is deliberately designed to individualise the learning experience. With smaller teams, each player becomes more involved, receiving more touches, making more decisions and carrying greater responsibility for driving the play forward. This shift enables coaches to place a sharper focus on individual development.

Throughout the session, Schmidt consistently challenges players to treat the exercise as a genuine opportunity for growth. His coaching interventions go beyond tactical instructions, aiming to shape mentality and mindset. He reminds players that forward passes that break lines and eliminate opponents are decisive actions in football. Rather than settling for square or backwards passes, he urges them to play with ambition, intent and courage.

Schmidt encourages risk-taking as a necessary part of development. Players are told to trust their abilities, to look for the smallest gaps, and to exploit them with speed and precision. The emphasis is on playing with purpose, not simply maintaining possession, but using it to progress and make a difference.

Main coaching objectives

- **Decision-making:** Players must quickly assess when and how to break lines, weighing the available options and acting with urgency.
- **Technical precision:** Penetrative passes must be delivered with the right speed, timing and accuracy to exploit narrow spaces.
- **Risk-taking and confidence:** Players are encouraged to take initiative and embrace the responsibility of being the one who changes the game.