COUNTERPRESSING IN MIDFIELD

An example of connected session design for 18 players

THE GAME PROBLEM

A pass toward the forward is intercepted. The wide players stay outside and the opposition escapes through midfield.

Develop the response: react to the loss, bring the wide players inside, and apply pressure together.

FOUR ACTIVITIES. ONE DEVELOPING RESPONSE.

01 REACTION PASSING

Prepare passing quality and immediate movement after the action.

02 4v2 RONDO

Give the turnover a consequence: defenders must carry the ball out.

03 7v7 PLUS FOUR

Add width, team relationships and a planned change of possession.

04 9v9 TO LARGE GOALS

Let turnovers happen naturally and observe the team response.

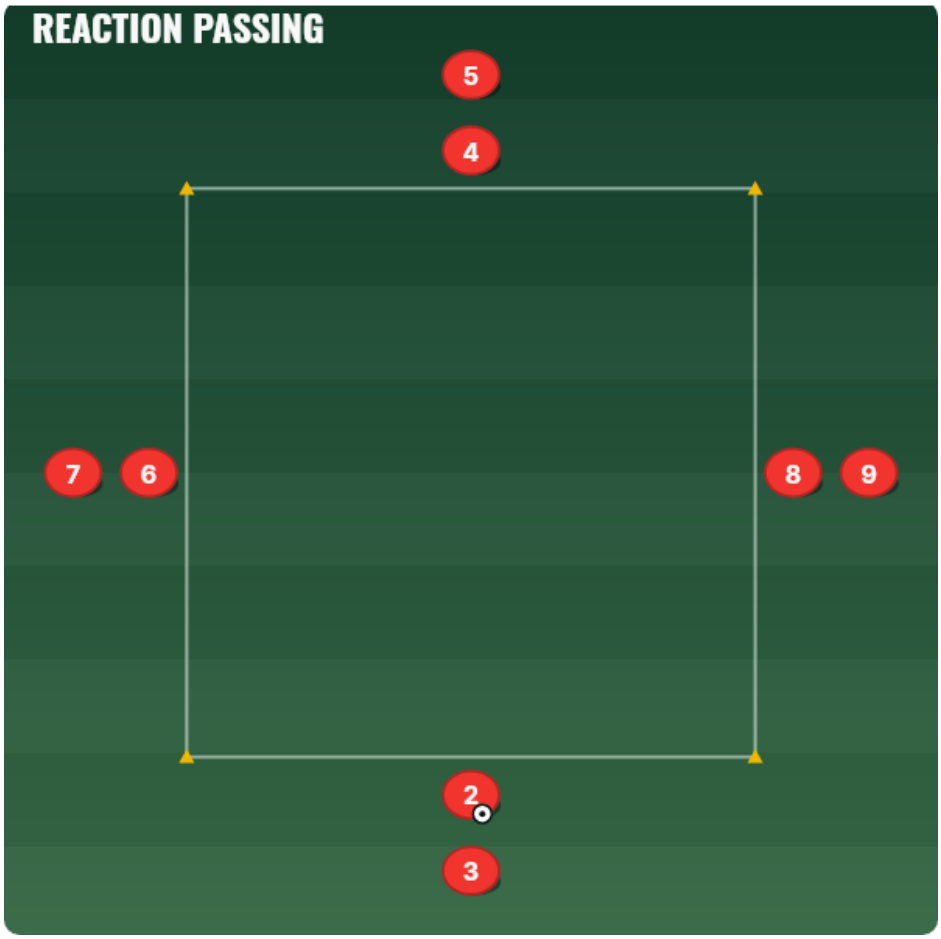
CHECK WHETHER THE LEARNING CARRIES OVER

- ☐ Players react promptly when possession is lost.
- ☐ The wide players come inside to help the pressure.
- ☐ The response appears without an immediate instruction from the coach.

Plan work and recovery for the age, intensity and training week. The final game includes goalkeepers. In reaction passing, groups of nine adapt the original eight-player diagram; keep the extra wait short.

01 REACTION PASSING

15 x 15 yards



HOW TO RUN IT

1. Arrange players evenly at four cones. Use one active ball at a time in each group.
2. Dribble forward about four yards, pass across, then immediately sprint to the side.
3. Follow the assigned direction: one group turns left, the other turns right.

COACHING FOCUS

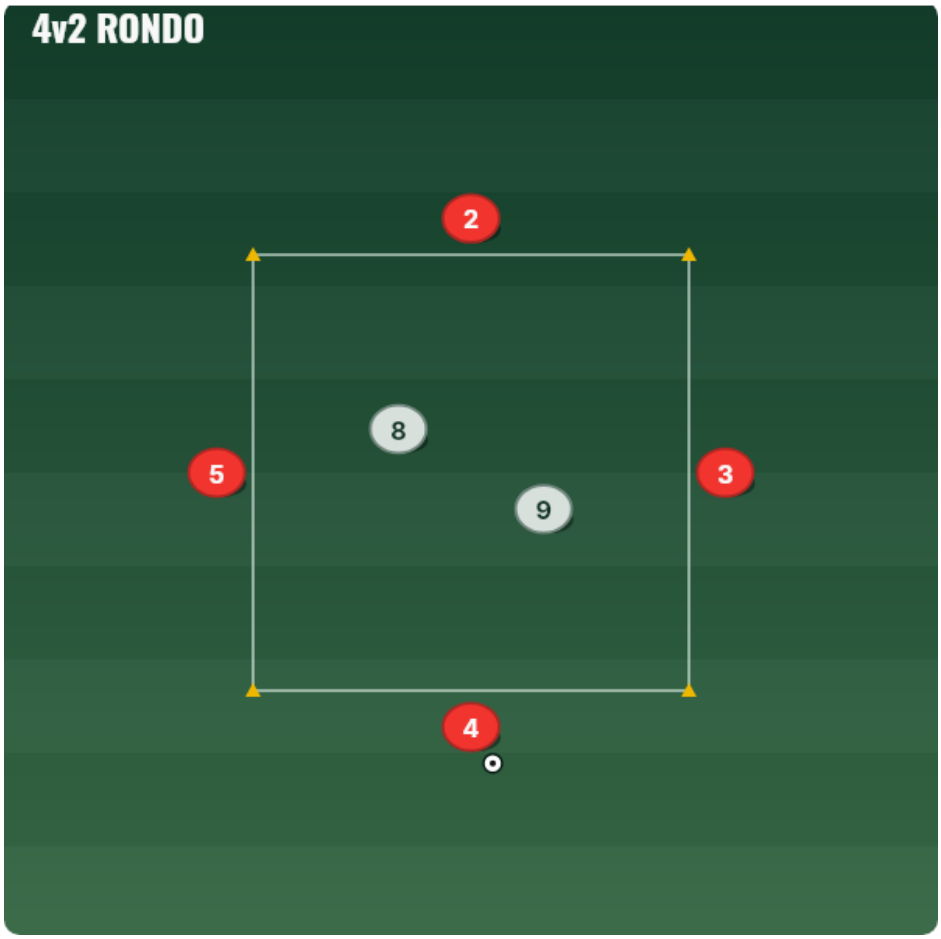
Quality of the pass

Speed of movement after the action

For 18 players: use two groups of nine. The base diagram shows eight; add one player to a short queue and rotate fairly.

02 4v2 RONDO

6 x 6 yards



HOW TO RUN IT

1. Four outside players keep possession against two defenders.
2. When a defender wins it, carry the ball out under control. A clearance does not earn an escape.
3. The outside players react and try to prevent the escape. If the defender escapes, both defenders swap with the player who lost possession and the player who passed to them.

COACHING FOCUS

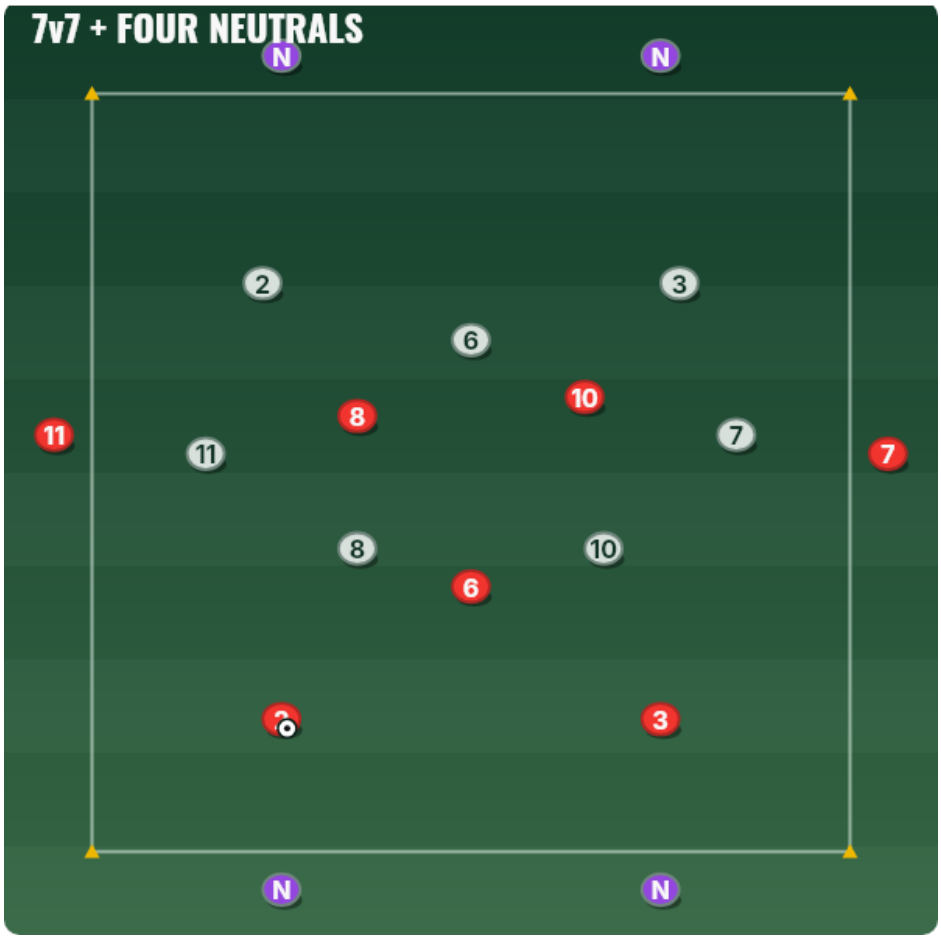
Angle of pressure

Speed of the reaction to the loss

For 18 players: use three groups of six. Show the difference between clearing the ball and carrying it out before the first round.

03 7v7 PLUS FOUR NEUTRALS

40 x 40 yards



HOW TO RUN IT

1. Use two teams of seven and four end neutrals.
2. In possession, the wide players move outside the grid. The defending team stays inside.
3. Find an end neutral at the far end. The neutral immediately gives the ball to the other team.
4. The team that lost possession reacts, with the wide players coming inside to help apply pressure.

COACHING FOCUS

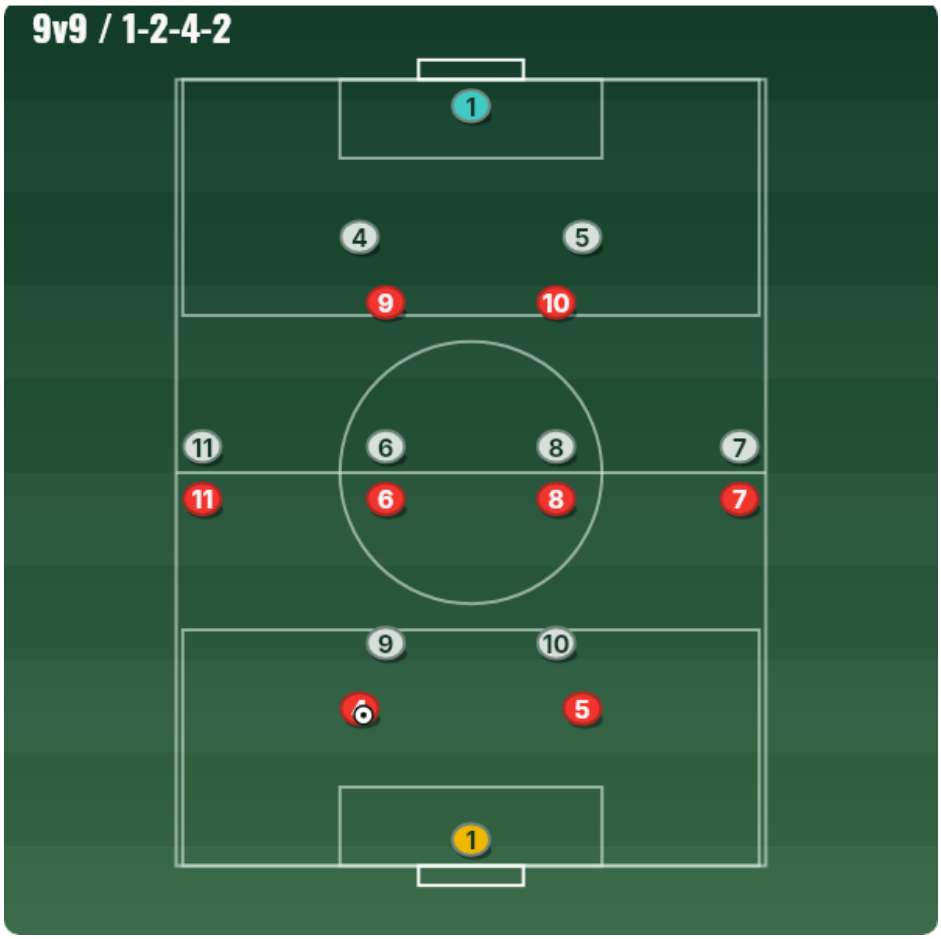
Balance while attacking

Numbers around the ball after the loss

All 18 players have a role. Rotate the neutral roles. Watch how supporting positions change as the ball moves.

04 9v9 TO LARGE GOALS

45 x 60 yards



HOW TO RUN IT

1. Play nine versus nine, including goalkeepers, in a 1-2-4-2 shape.
2. The two forwards help create the match picture used in this example.
3. Let attempted passes and changes of possession happen naturally.
4. Remind players of the objective, then observe a block without immediate prompts.

COACHING FOCUS

Reaction to a pass being intercepted

Wide players coming inside

The team applying pressure together

Look for the response in later practices and matches too. One successful repetition is useful evidence, rather than a final verdict on learning.