



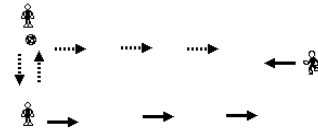
# Combination Play (3 or more players combining)

by Laura Ray, Mass Youth Soccer Development Coach

**Objectives:** To help players to recognize combination play with two to three players, as well as movement off the ball from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> players.

## 1) Short-short-long (15 to 20 minutes):

Players pass the ball within their group. Two of the players position themselves about 5-10 yards apart and pass the ball back and forth to each other (short passes), while the third player (long player) drifts about 20-25 yards away. After about 4-5 short passes, the long player calls for the ball. The ball is played into the long player. The player that played the ball into the long player stays home, while the other player joins the long player.



They begin to (short) pass to each other until the new “long” player calls for the ball. The activity continues in this manner for 2-3 minutes to develop a smooth rhythm in the passing sequence. Players consistently keep themselves and the ball moving. (Develop a triangle shape)

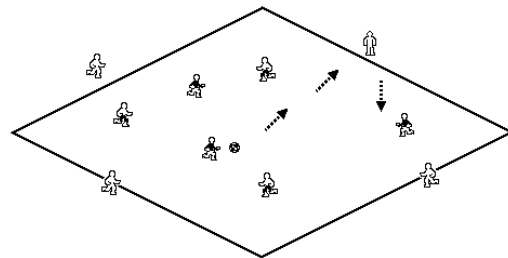
**Groups of 4:** Same setup as above, but three players make short passes to each other, while one player drifts away. When the ball is played long, the passer stays home and the other two players join the “long” player. (Develop a ‘kite’ type shape)

## Coaching Points:

- Intelligent movement off the ball
- Head up, preparing body to receive the ball (ball across body to see all options)
- Surveying the area, looking for target early, anticipation
- Passing accuracy and pace
- Keeping appropriate individual and group shape
- Playing in the direction you are facing

## 2) 3v3 plus 4 Neutrals (15-20 minutes):

In a grid 35yds x 25yds, three players are in Red and three players are in Yellow on the inside of the grid, with the four neutral players positioned on the four sides (free movement up and down the sidelines). Red team tries to keep possession and can use neutral players on the outside. To get points, the team in possession must find neutral players on outside and neutral player must find that player back or another one on their team to get a point. First team to 10 points wins. Yellow does the same when they have possession of the ball.



*Version 2:* Neutral player tries to play it back to another player on the team (besides the one who passed it to them) to get a point. Neutral player on outside should not force the ball into a third player, important to keep possession, so can play it back to the person who passed it to them (they just do not get a point, but do maintain possession). **Note:** Must find one Target player to get a point, then to get the next point, must find another target player.

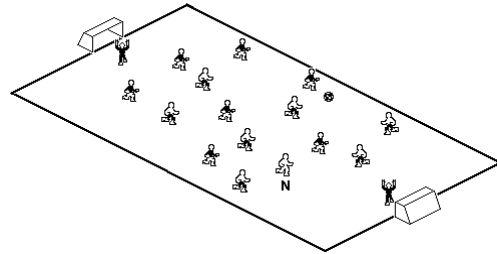


### **Coaching Points:**

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in activity #1
- Looking for timing of runs into receive ball from neutral players
- Communication (asking for ball)
- Inside player receiving ball across body to see all options if possible
- Players reading each other to see who is making the run in to get ball
- Movement of the other two players off the ball

### **3) 7v7 plus Neutral to Goals with Goalkeepers (15-20 minutes):**

In a field approximately 60 yards long by 50 yards wide play 7v7 to big goals, with goalkeepers, and position one neutral player on the field. Play a regular game...the one neutral player always plays with the attacking team (team in possession of the ball). This activity will stimulate combination play and movement off the ball.



### ***Sample Combinations to look for:***

**1** – (Wall Pass with 3 players) Center midfielder passes to a forward; center midfielder then holds their run. Forward then plays it to an outside midfielder making the overlapping run down the flank.

**2** – (Up-Back-Through) A central forward, with back to goal, checks on a slight angle toward the center midfielder. The center midfielder passes to the forward; the forward one touches the ball back to the center midfielder; the center midfielder plays a one touch through ball into the space created by the central forward to a third player.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in activity #1 and #2

### **4) 8v8 Scrimmage (25-30 minutes):**

Depending upon numbers, space will change and numbers may change. Ideally, finish with the number you normally play with in games. Play a regular game with goalkeepers.

### **Coaching Points:**

- Reinforce positive decision making opportunities (decision to combine or not, look for opportunities to play up-back-through & wall pass with 3 players, and when to keep possession vs. long penetrating pass, etc.).

### **5) Cool-down (5-10 minutes):**

**Groups of 3:** One player is the server and has the ball in their hands and the other two are ready to juggle. Server says 2 and 2 which means the server tosses the ball to the first player who has to juggle the ball two times before getting it to the next player who has to juggle the ball twice and get it back to the server (ball should not touch the ground). Server can change numbers of juggles to 1 and 1, 1 and 5, 3 and 4, 4 and 2, etc.