



WORLD CLASS COACHING Magazine Sample Article

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Ajax Academy Training

This session is contributed by Terry Michler, longtime subscriber, author and the NSCAA's all time winningest high school coach. Michler observed the session while in Holland earlier this year. A second session will be included in the November/December edition of WORLD CLASS COACHING. This session focuses on receiving the ball under pressure.

You can see more of our [Dutch coaching books here](#).

And more books from Terry Michler [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Organization

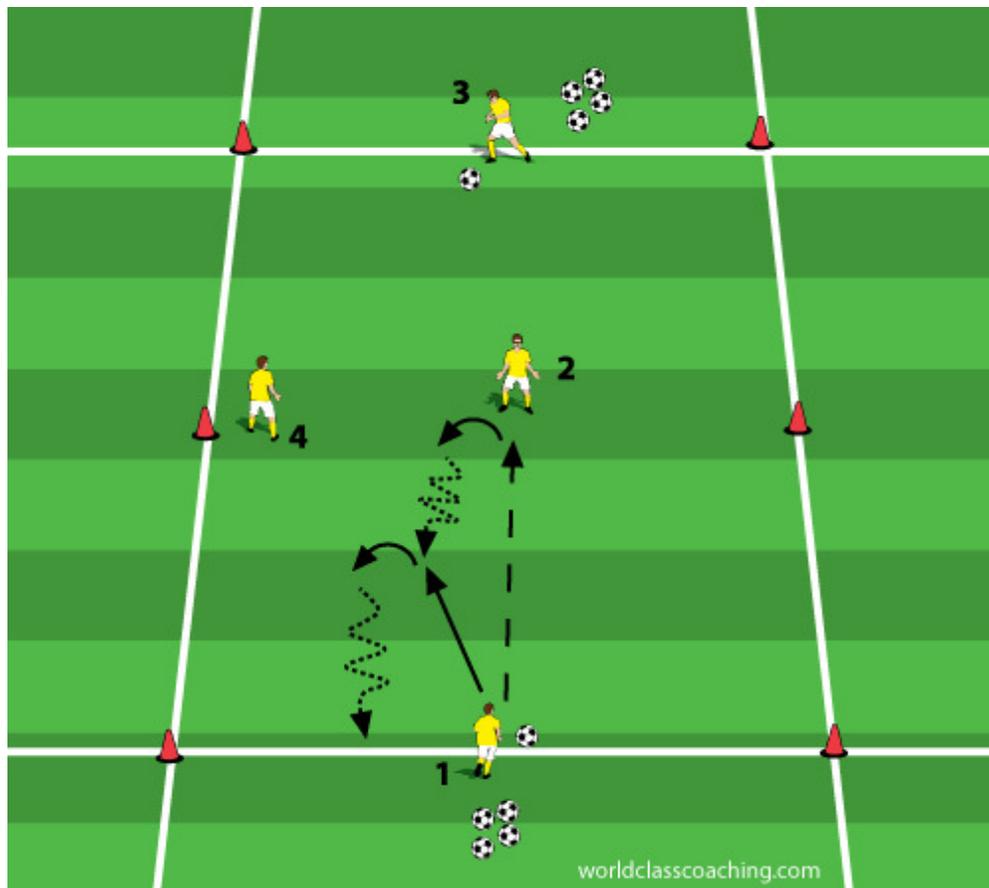
There are four playing areas on half of a field. Each one is a 6 x 10-yard grid. There is one group of four players in each grid. Each group does a particular activity and then they move to the next area and a new variation. Each activity lasts 10-12 minutes.

The objective is to receive the ball under pressure, take on a defender in a 1v1 duel and dribble the ball over the opposite end line. The players are encouraged to try different moves to unbalance the defender. The players attack both down the right and the left side. It is very important in the Ajax philosophy to develop both sides of the body equally well.

The first pass is ALWAYS hit with good pace. The receiving touch is clean and the player is moving as he receives the ball. The pace is very quick and each player has a number of opportunities. The duels are all very intense and competitive.

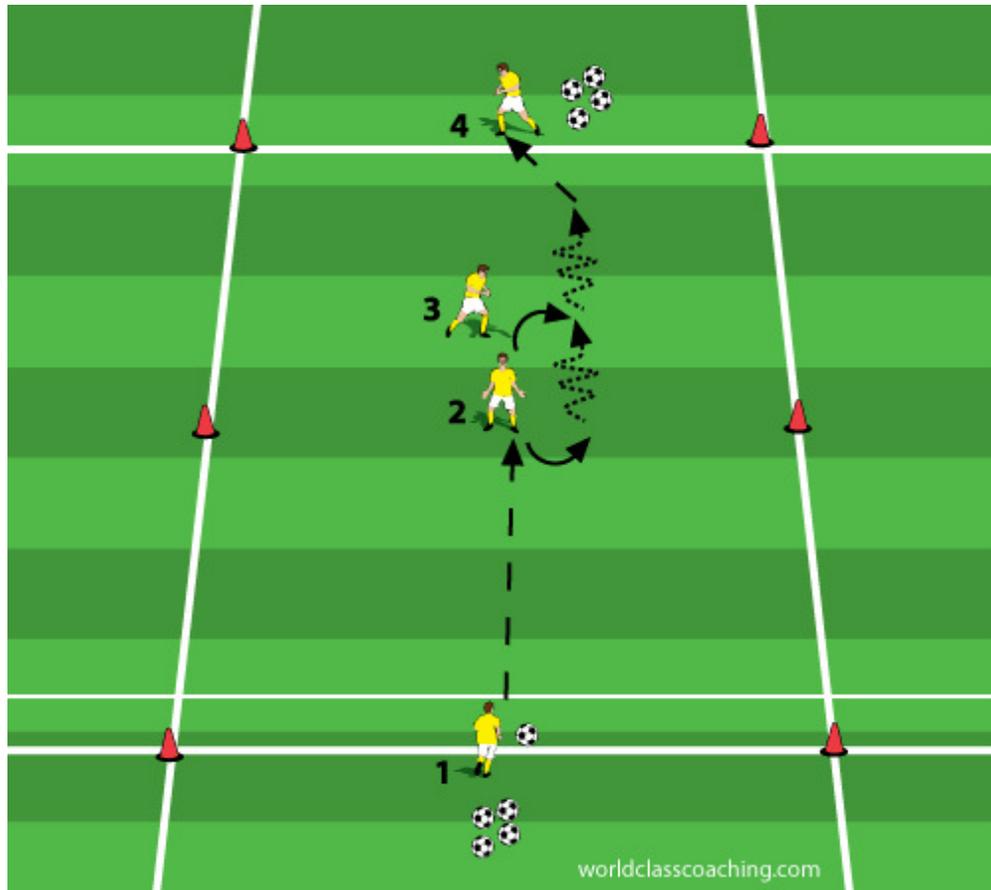
Frontal Pressure

Play starts with a pass to the receiving player at the midway line. The passer immediately follows the pass and challenges receiving player. The receiving player controls the ball tries to beat the on-coming defender and get to the end line. Players 1 and 2 switch roles as did Players 3 and 4.



The play starts as it did with frontal pressure but now the defender starts behind the receiving player. The receiving player controls the ball and turns to take-on the defender and get to the opposite end line.

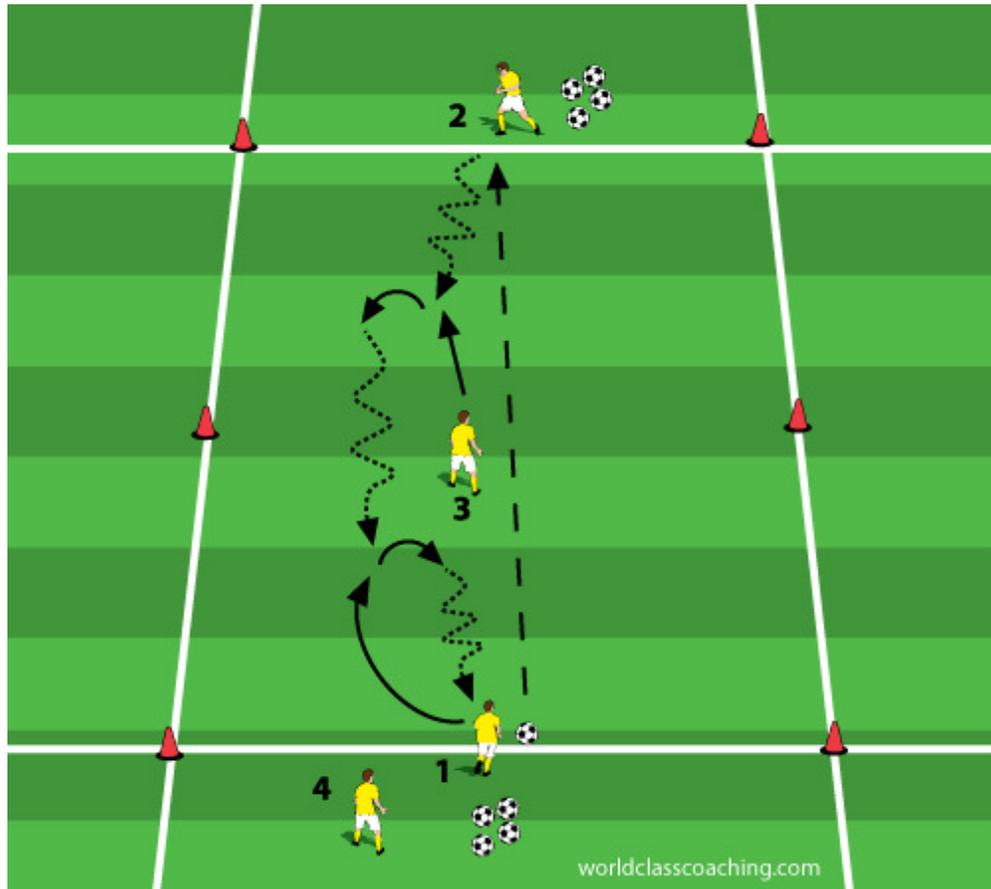
The rotation is as follows: 1-2, 2-4, 3-1, 4-3.



Front Pressure from Deep Pass

The first pass goes to the deep end of the area with a defender starting at the midway line. The defender challenges the receiver as the ball approaches. The receiver must beat the first defender and then take-on the passer as the second defender in order to get to the end line.

The rotation is as follows: 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-1.



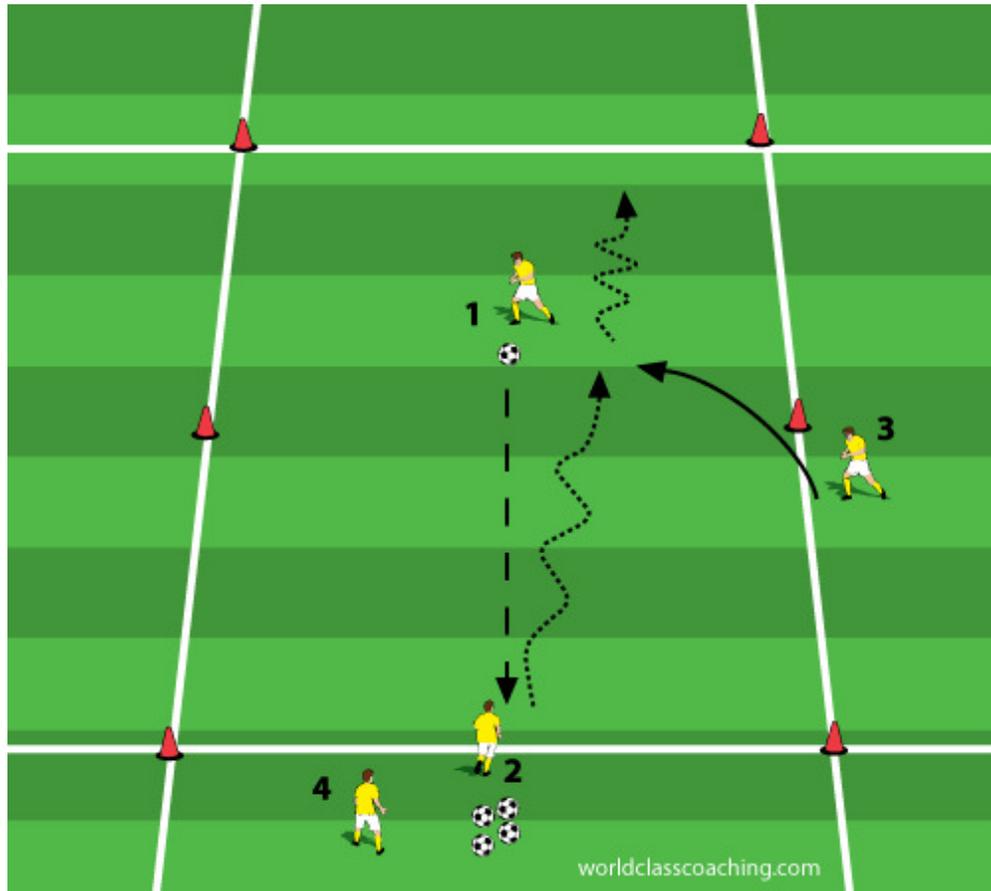
Pressure from the Side

The defender is positioned on the right near the midway line and attack on the angle. The defender moves to the other side once each player has had their turn.

Progressions

The defender is lined up next to the receiving player on the back line and chases the attacker from behind
The defensive position (right, left or chase) changes as the coach dictates

The rotation is as follows: 2-1, 1-2, 3-4, 4-3.



To finish off the session, they play 4 v 4 in two groups, with different aims. One group plays with full goals and two keepers and the other plays to mini goals, without keepers. The area are 40 x 25-yard grids.

The group with the keepers shoot early in each possession and the shots are hit hard and well placed. They have a definite attacking mentality and they shoot to score, and they are not happy when they miss. This group of U10 players are already showing signs of Ajax development as they are very comfortable on the ball, confident in the 1v1 duels, and are looking to advance the ball quickly into scoring positions. As soon as the chance to score is there, they unload!!

I have the impression that defense is only about getting the ball back quickly in order to have a chance to score. Their defensive mentality seems to be very attacking minded. They don't want to get beat, but they also want to win the ball back as soon as possible, and then try to score. The creativity and the willingness to take people on is evident throughout the session. The players are encouraged to battle hard on both sides of the ball and the intensity is very high throughout the entire training session.

This session focuses primarily on the individual player skills of receiving and taking on. Playing under pressure is constant and the players freely try many different moves to beat their man. The pressure is from all directions and the players play both from the right and from the left. There is no rest interval as the rotation was constant and as soon as one play ended, the next one began. The young players have great enthusiasm and seem to be really enjoying themselves.