



# Building up speed

A complete sample practice session for improving speed of play  
by **Greg Maas**, state technical director, Utah Youth Soccer Association

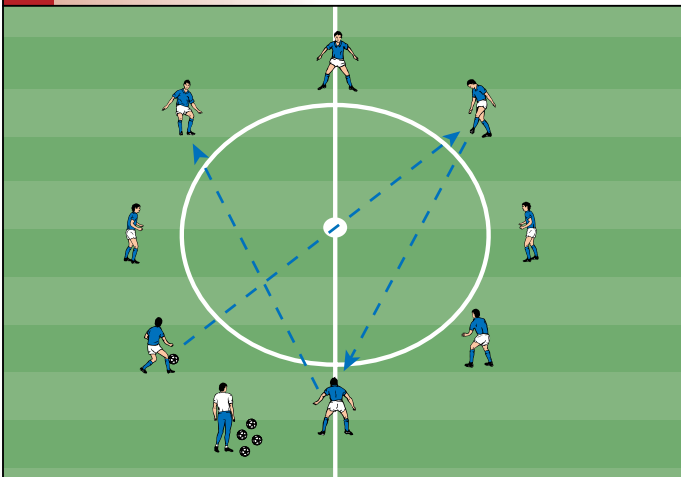
Speed is unquestionably a performance-limiting factor in soccer, but it is often interpreted as pure running speed. In soccer, however, speed is considerably more

complex. Game action speed and speed of play are especially important, demanding mental, technical and tactical abilities in addition to physical qualities.

In this article, Greg Maas gives us plenty of ideas for improving speed of play, with a complete practice session from warm-up to cool-down.

## SAMPLE PRACTICE SESSION: Speed of play

### 1 Circle passing



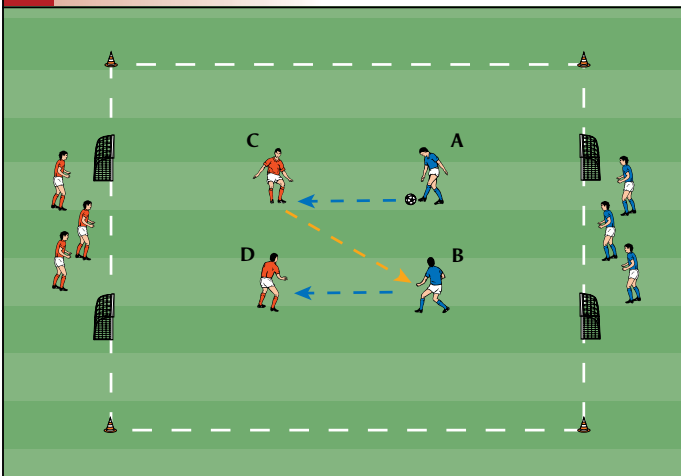
#### Setup and sequence

- Divide players into two groups of equal size (one group shown at left) and position them in a circle approximately the diameter of the center circle.
- Players start out passing one ball around with a two-touch limitation.
- Once they are comfortable with the space, add a second ball and restrict them to one touch.
- Next, switch back to one ball and have passers start following their passes and replacing the receivers. Players can pass to any available receiver.

#### Coaching points

Body mechanics and general technique; accuracy and weight of passes; first touch and ball control; movement off the ball; verbal and visual communication

### 2 Passing plus 2 v. 2



#### Setup and sequence

- Mark out at least one 20 x 30-yard field with four small goals. If space allows, create a second field to increase the number of repetitions.
- Divide players into two teams.
- Play begins with a direct pass from A to C. C then passes directly and diagonally to B, who passes directly to D.
- Once this sequence of one-touch passing is done, teams immediately start playing 2 v. 2, each one attacking on two small goals and defending two.
- Teams rotate after each round. Play for time or points.

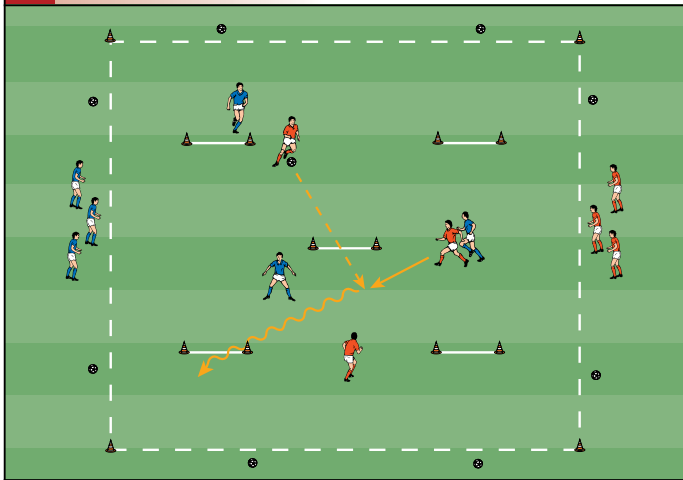
#### Coaching points

Correct attacking shape and balance; awareness of passing lanes in the defensive line, angled passes and timing of attacking runs; speed of play and decision-making; finishing technique and confidence in scoring



## SAMPLE PRACTICE SESSION: Speed of play

### 3 Five-goal game



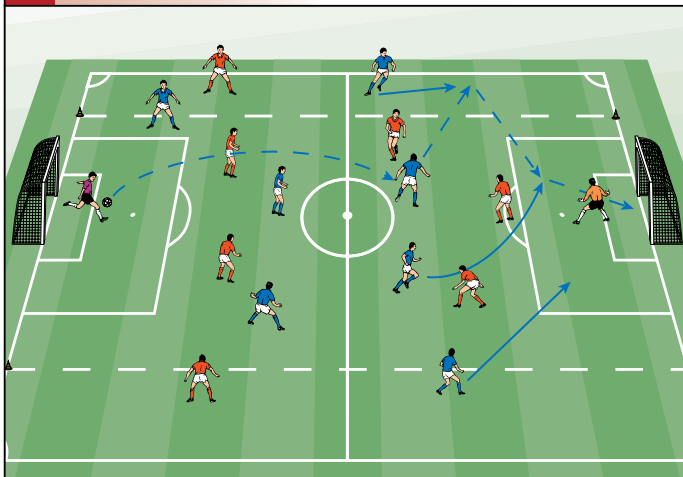
#### Setup and sequence

- Mark out a 30 x 40-yard field with five small goals inside it.
- Divide players into teams of three.
- Spread plenty of balls around the field to keep the activity moving.
- Teams play 3 v. 3 and can score by dribbling (one point) or passing (two points) through any goal. To score on a pass, the receiver must keep possession of the ball.
- Players are not allowed to score on the same goal twice in a row.
- The first team to score 10 points (or on all five goals) wins.
- Variation: Play with larger teams (e.g. 5 v. 5) or add a neutral player.

#### Coaching points

Accuracy, weight and timing of passes; creating space off the ball and improving supporting angles; group shape and balance in possession; speed of thought and play; general decision-making

### 4 4 v. 3 with target players



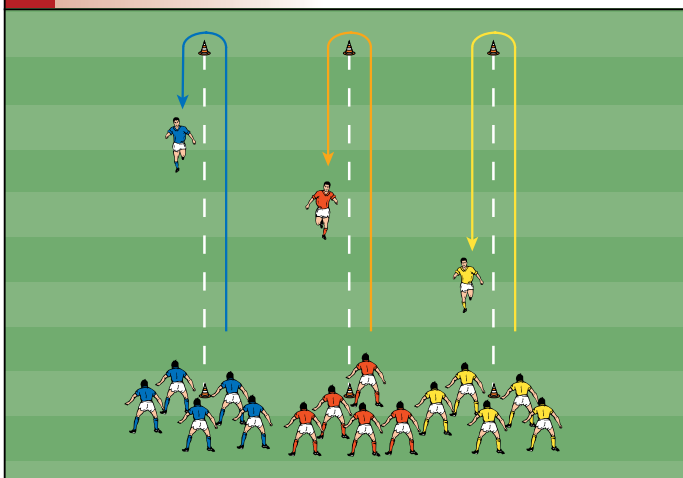
#### Setup and sequence

- Field is a standard field with wide flank channels marked.
- Divide players into two teams of eight (including goalkeepers).
- Two target players from each team start out in the flank channels.
- Play begins with a pass from a keeper to a striker in the attacking half.
- Teams then play 4 v. 3 until a goal is scored or the ball is out of play.
- Attacking players may not enter the flank channels.
- If defenders win the ball, they pass to their strikers in the other half.
- Variation: One defender is allowed to enter the attacking half.
- Final phase: Teams play 8 v. 8 without restrictions or flank channels.

#### Coaching points

Intelligent runs with and without the ball; creating space for teammates to join the attack; linking central strikers with wide midfielders; timing of runs and finishing technique on crosses; scoring efficiently and effectively

### 5 Cool-down runs



#### Setup and sequence

- Using cones, mark out three 20-yard-long lines spaced 15 yards apart. Position six players on each line.
- Goalkeepers are designated team captains for the cool-down exercises.
- Players begin by jogging back and forth along the lines, then progress to various dynamic exercises and flexibility movements. These may include: skipping, lunge walks, squats, toe touches, leg swings, sidestepping, grapevine, gate (groin) movements, knee hugs, heel kicks.

#### Coaching points

General topic of speed of play/review of session; reminders of upcoming training, games or events