

Playing Through The Thirds Rondo: Part 2

Written by The Coaching Manual

6v7+4 Playing Through The Thirds Rondo Game

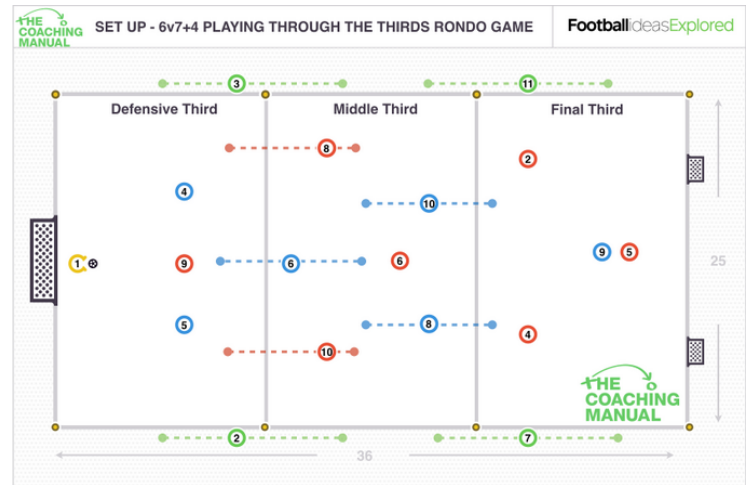
Set Up

Area 36x25 divided in thirds (12x25) to provide the Blue team with reference points for when, where and how they can take up positions to maintain possession and advance forwards through the thirds.

The Blue players are set up with a Goalkeeper and 2 x Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) locked into the defensive third. 3 x Central Midfielders (Blue 6, 8 and 10) occupy the middle third, however the Pivot (Blue 6) can move to drop in the defensive third, and Blue 8 and 10 may advance into the final third. 1 x Centre Forward (Blue 9) can play anywhere in the final third.

The Red players are set up with 1 x player in the defensive third (Red 9), 3 x players in the middle third (Red 6, 8 and 10) and 3 x players in the final third (Red 2, 4 and 5). Red players are not permitted to move out of their designated third to begin with, except Red 8 and 10 who can move between the middle and defensive thirds.

The Green players on the outside of the Rondo play for the team in possession and can move along their line but must stay in their designated two-thirds (Green 2 and 3 defensive and middle third. Green 7 and 11 middle and final thirds).



Task

Blue Team (Attackers): Maintain positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing forwards through the thirds and penetrate effectively to the Centre Forward Blue 9, to score in the small goals.

Red Team (Defenders): If the ball is won, maintain possession 7v6 and attempt to score as quickly as possible in the opposition large goal.

Green Team (Support Players): Take up positions to offer passing options and combine with the team in possession, towards their designated goal.

Key Coaching Points

Movement and timing to create numerical and positional superiority in each third of the pitch

Angles, distances and areas of structure to penetrate effectively and patiently through the thirds

Support play of Central Midfielders and support players (Wide) to provide opportunities to switch play, stretch opposition and make runs from deep to get into goalscoring positions

Detail

Decision making of player in possession - penetrate, play around or retain possession

Incorporate principles of playing out from the back, midfield 3 connections and attacking overloads to successfully play through the thirds

Body angle to receive the pass and play forwards

Ability to secure possession of the ball and link up with team mates

Receiving areas of foot or body

Understanding slow and quick play through the thirds to exploit space

Timing of passes - "La Pausa"

Use the 3 passing lines (in front of Defenders, around the Defenders and through the Defenders) to create opportunities to penetrate the opposition and advance forwards utilising the Midfielders

Passing options around, behind and ahead of the ball

Communication

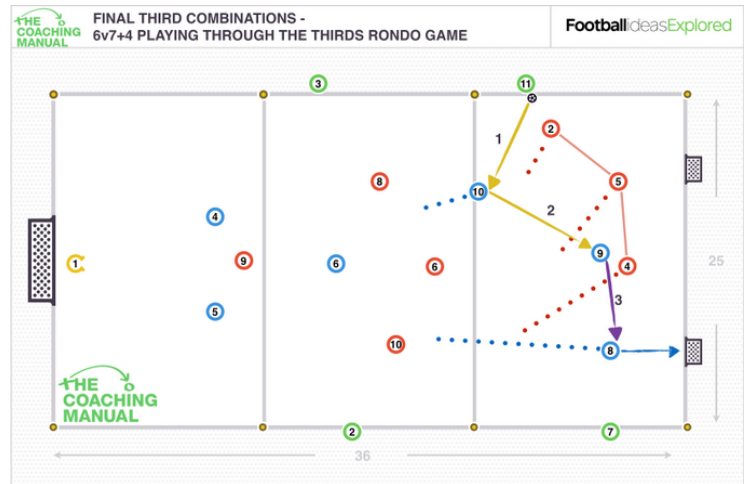
Focus - Combination Play in the Final Third

Whilst many Rondo's are focused on build up play towards the final third with secured possession, this practice allows the Coach to work with players in all three areas of the pitch.

The movement and inclusion of the Centre Forward (Blue 9) in the final third facilitates combination play and develops connections between the front line (Blue 9, Green 7 and 11). Relationships with the attacking and midfield units can also be fostered, as the positioning and movement of the Attacking Midfielders (Blue 8 and 10) can support the play in the final third.

The above scenario shows Wide Forward (Green 11) in possession, forcing the Defenders (Red 2, 4 and 5) to slide across and protect the small goal on that side of the area. Centre Forward (Blue 9) stays central to occupy Red 4 and also be an option to switch play and attack the goal on the far side.

As Blue 10 offers a passing option behind the ball and passes to Centre Forward (Blue 9), the Attacking Midfielder (Blue 8) performs a run on the far side as Blue 9 secures possession and plays the ball onto the run of Blue 8 to finish in the small goal.



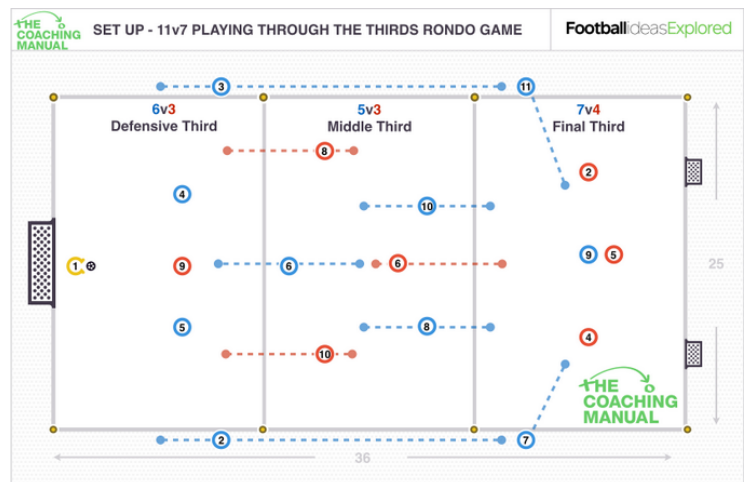
Progression - 11v7 Playing Through The Thirds Rondo Game

Once the players are familiar with the concepts and principles of playing through the thirds, the practice can be progressed to included the whole team in an 11v7 Rondo game.

The key coaching points, detail and area set up remains the same as the 6v7+4 game, however player movements are now progressed for both teams as Red 6 can now recover into the final third.

The Blue teams Wide Forwards (Blue 7 and 11) may also invert into the final third as the Full Backs (Blue 2 and 3) move along the full length of their designated 36 yard line.

These player movements allow overloads to be created in each third of the pitch. Coaches can focus on developing positioning and movement of players and the ball, in order to create space and passing options for the team to have superiority behind the line of pressure and progress through the thirds; a key principle of Juego de Posicion.

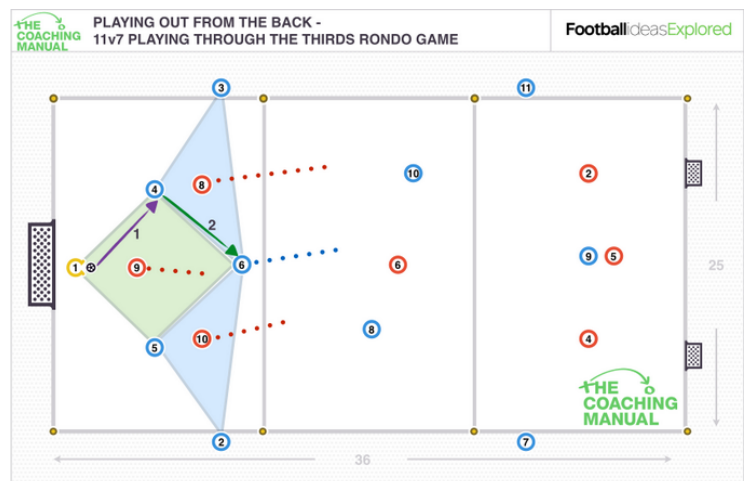


Focus - Playing Out From The Back

A 6v3 overload can be created in the defensive third as the Goalkeeper (Yellow 1), Back 4 (Blue 2, 3, 4 & 5) and Pivot (Blue 6) create passing options in front, around or through the opposition Centre Forward (Red 9) and Attacking Midfielders (Red 8 and 10).

Positioning and shape of the back 4 is crucial to provide width and depth when the Goalkeeper has possession. The Pivot (Blue 6) can then assess the situation in that moment of the game to take up a position to receive a penetrating pass or combine as the third man.

This positioning also creates diamond and passing shapes to play out of the defensive third. If the opposition press is aggressive, the Centre Backs (Blue 4 and 5) can drop even deeper to be an option to receive or allow the Goalkeeper to play through/over the press to the Pivot or Full Backs.



Focus - Playing Through The Middle Third

As the Pivot (Blue 6) brings the ball into the middle third, and the opposition Midfielders (Red 8 and 10) recover, a 5v3 overload can be created as the Full Backs (Blue 2 and 3) continue to advance forwards.

Again, a number of triangle passing shapes are created as the Attacking Midfielders (Blue 8 and 10) position themselves on different horizontal and vertical lines. In the above situation, an up-back-through play unbalances and penetrates the opposition midfield, as the Pivot (Blue 6) combines with Blue 8 before penetrating through to the run of Blue 10 behind the line of pressure.

Focus - Playing In The Final Third

As Blue 10 enters the final third in possession, the Wide Forwards (Blue 7 and 11) invert to offer passing options inside and the Full Backs continue to advance creating a 7v4 overload.

In the created example, the Centre Forward (Blue 9) holds a central position to occupy the opposition Centre Back (Red 5) and also be an option to switch play and combine with the advancing Attacking Midfielder (Blue 8).

With the opposition defence tracking movements of the ball in front of them, the Wide Forwards can play on the shoulders of the deepest Defender and make runs in behind. Wide Forward (Blue 7) moves inside to receive a penetrating pass from Blue 8 before combining with Blue 11 to finish in the small goal.

Progression - 11v11 Playing Through The Thirds Rondo Game

The final progression would then be to an 11v11 Rondo game with the playing area increased to 60x40 and a goal and Goalkeeper at each end of the area.

Both teams are tasked with maintaining positions and possession of the ball with the emphasis on playing forwards through the thirds to create goalscoring chances.

The player movements and thirds allowed in are highlighted above, and Coaches can then observe and reinforce the key concepts of playing through the thirds in an 11v11 opposed Rondo game.

To Conclude...

Playing through the thirds requires the coach and all players within the team to understand where, when and how to take up positions to create passing options that unbalance and overload the opposition to create superiority behind lines of pressure, meaning that the team can play forwards with secured possession.

This series of Rondo practices gradually develops play from a 9v5 through to an 11v11 Rondo game so that players can be exposed to game-related situations and acquire the necessary skills and understanding to play through the thirds as a team.

