



**Evolving Roles in the Modern Game:
The no. 9 in the 1-4-3-3 system.
“too lonely and too difficult” ?**

**Nigel Best
Coach Education Manager
UEFA Pro Licence Coach
Irish Football Association**



“ There is a danger that this job will become too lonely and too difficult.

In many cases, the striker is not just expected to act as a target and to hold the ball up but also to do a lot of chasing and to work hard as the first line of defence”

Roy Hodgson



The trend towards a (1)-4-2-3-1 team structure is becoming a regular feature at UEFA's youth age tournaments, meaning the lone striker has become a common sight. This has implications for UEFA Champions League and Senior International football.

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



Is European football developing a sufficient number of strikers to guarantee a supply of ‘predators’?

Or is the modern day coach being pushed towards a strikerless formation simply because there is a shortage of strikers?

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



After watching the Barcelona attacking trio of Lionel Messi, Luis Suárez and Neymar (122 goals between them during the season) in action at the Berlin Final, the UEFA chief technical officer Ioan Lupescu, renewed debate by remarking “The reliance on South American strikers is becoming a problem in Europe.” Seven of the ten leading scorers in the 2014/2015 Champions League were South American

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



“The Evolution of attacking play had been marked by successes for the strikerless formations deployed by Barcelona and Spain. It has become noticeable that the youngsters’ role models are not the sort of players that they used to be. Nowadays everybody wants to be Xavi or Iniesta. Were developing a lot of midfielders.”

Ginés Meléndez

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)





Following the Berlin Final, Mixu Paatelainen commented

“The fact that so many top strikers come from outside Europe obliges you to ask questions. Are we, as coaches, focusing too much on collective organisation of defensive and attacking play?”

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



“Has training become too tactically orientated? Are we devoting enough time to practising finishing?”

Has the time come for us to offer more specific coaching to strikers?”

Mixu Paatelainen

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



“Its becoming clear that we are not developing players who go direct for goal”

Jean-Francois Domergue

**(UEFA Technical Observer and also
responsible for UEFA’s Academy Project)**

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



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The Role of the Lone Striker

- Show in front but especially in behind the defence
- A link player in attacking play
- A wall or target in and around the “18”
- Avoid being marked by CH’s
- Or alternatively engage and distract the CH’s



The Role of the Lone Striker

- A provider for others in scoring range
- Be in a scoring area
- **GOAL SCORER**



**What are the
attributes /requirements
of the single striker?**





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- **Tactical**
- **Technical**
- **Physical**
- **Mental**





Tactical Attributes

- **Blind – side running to disappear and reappear later**
- **Timing of runs**
- **Choice of run**
- **Set up tight markers before losing them**
- **Speed/direction change on the run**
- **Understanding others' movement (aligning with no. 10)**
- **Understand moving of defenders for others to exploit**



Technical Requirements

- **First touch (including on the move at speed)**
- **Hold and protect the ball**
- **Escape front and rear pressure**
- **Use of body strength**
- **Running with the ball and keeping control**
- **Create for others including on the move at speed**



Technical Requirements

- **Clever quick feet in tight situations**
- **Decisive/correct finishing technique**
 - (faints, swerve, placement, 'dink' over GK)
- **Scoring in 1v1 with GK**
- **Scoring from distance, under pressure and on the run**
- **Instant scoring (1/2 touch)**



Technical Practise

- **Body work to retain the ball when under pressure**
- **Running with the ball**
- **Receiving the ball on the run at speed going towards goal**
- **Specific calculated runs to elude defenders**
- **Passing under pressure from behind (varied distances and disguised)**



Technical Practise

- Lay of passes (minimal touches)
- Combination plays in approach situation
- Short range passing in and around the box
- Chest and head work when passing
- Long range striking at goal 25/30 yards
- Striking at goal with minimal touches off diagonal and spin type runs



Technical Practise

- **Deceiving opponents before and in striking at goal**
- **Evading marking players**
- **Pressing opponents in possession**
- **Showing direction to and containing opponents in possession**



Physical Attributes

- **Speed**
- **Acceleration**
- **Agility**
- **Body Strength**
- **Feet Speed (with and without the ball)**



Physical Attributes

- **Change of speed + direction instantly**
- **Spring**
- **Ability to change 'stride'**
 - length, rate + direction
- **Ability to adjust body to ball height, bounce, flight, on the move at speed**



Mental Attributes / Requirements

- **Courage**
- **Concentration**
- **Confidence**
- **Anticipation**
- **Game intelligence**
- **Awareness**
- **Determination**
- **Guile**
- **Composure**



Ideal No. 9

- Rarely receives with back to goal, but can!
- Stretches opponent's back line both ways
- Always searching for the diagonal or through pass
- Attacks the back of opposition's defences
- Understands the effects of movements
- Can play with others and create
- Efficient 1v1
- Has pace, acceleration, agility and body strength
- Scores at around .75 goals per game/ 1 goal per 1.5 games?

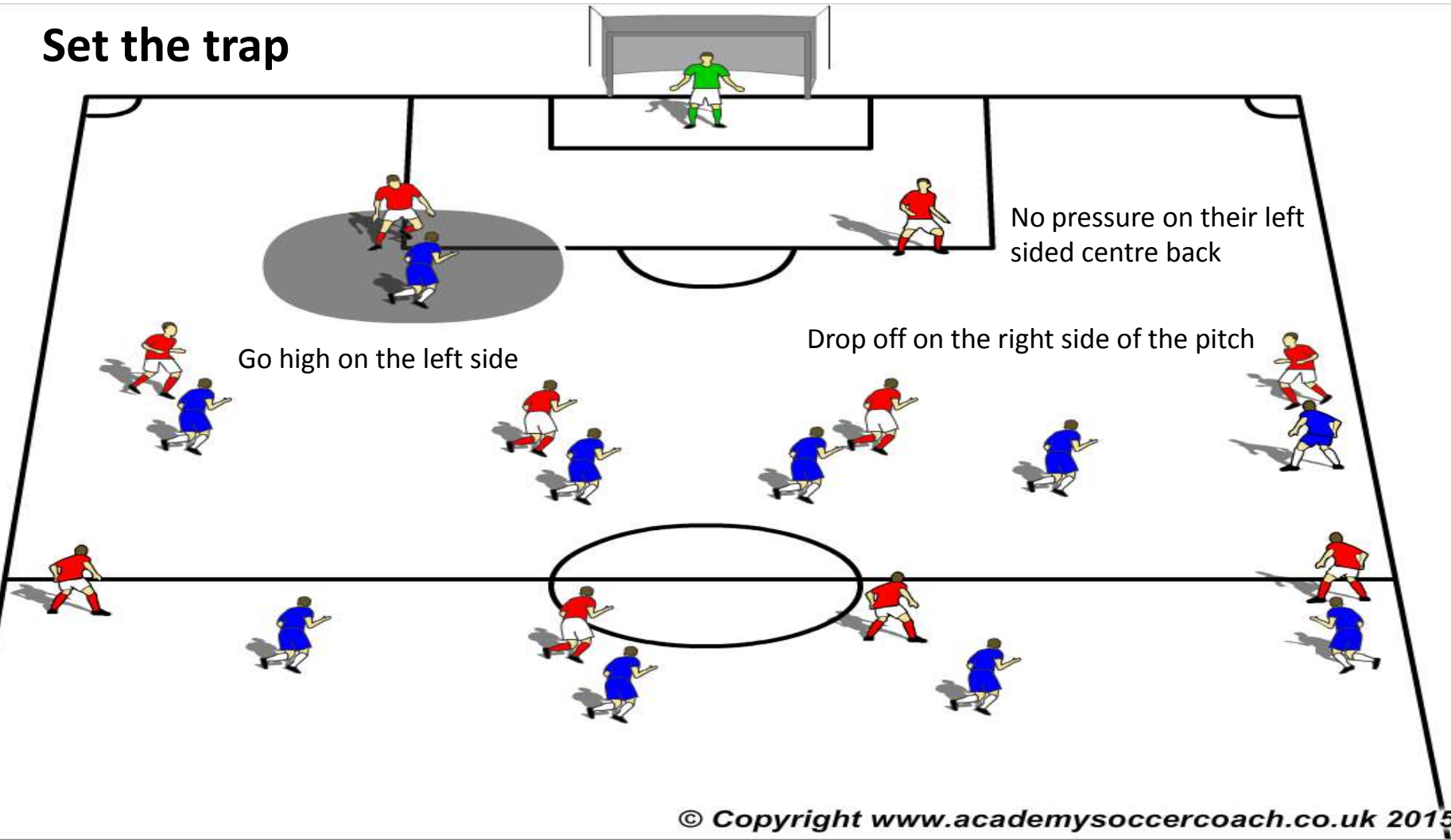


“ There is a danger that this job will become too lonely and too difficult.

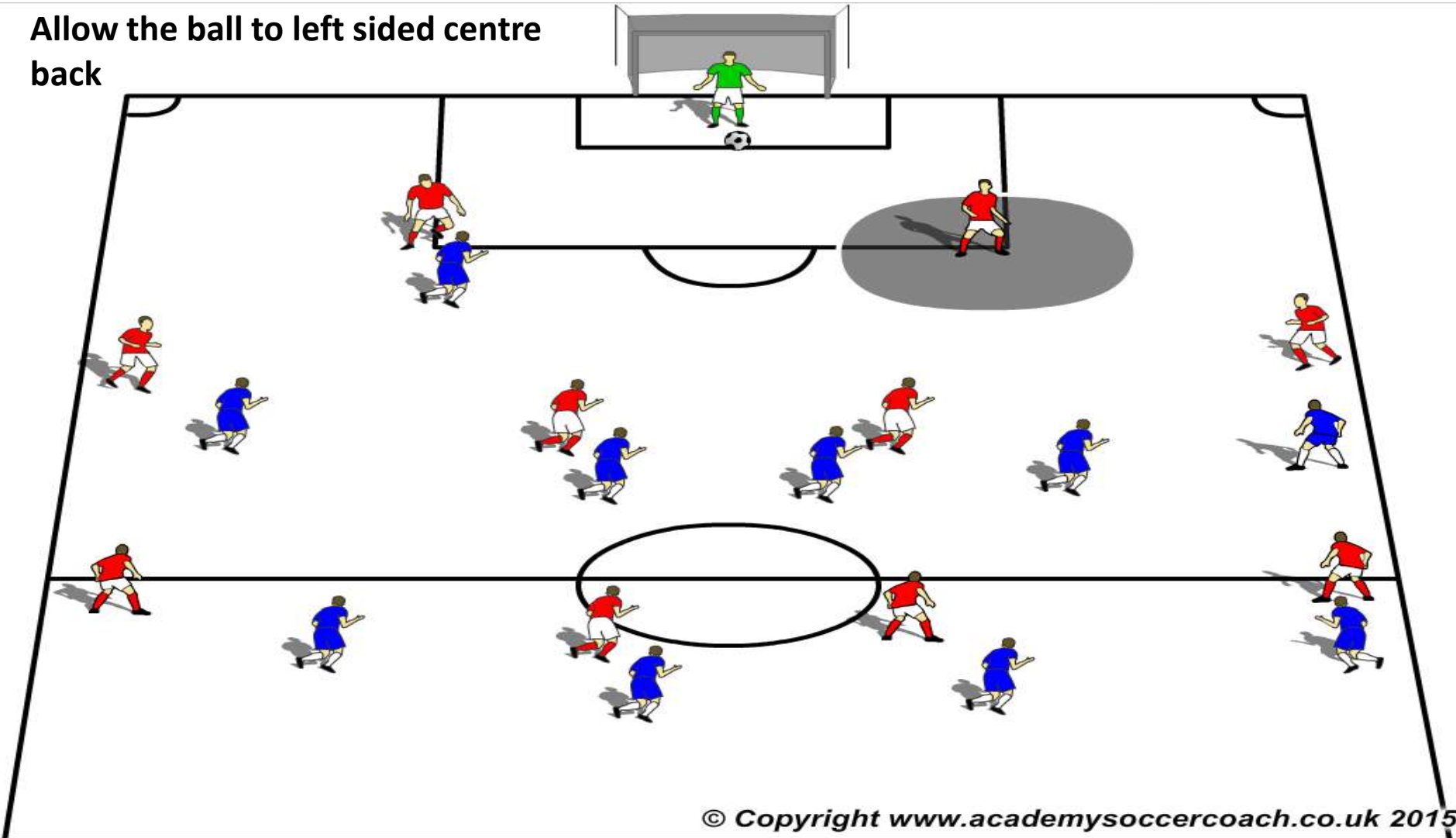
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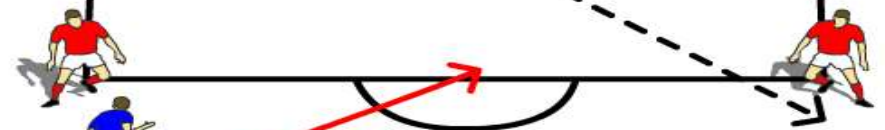
Set the trap



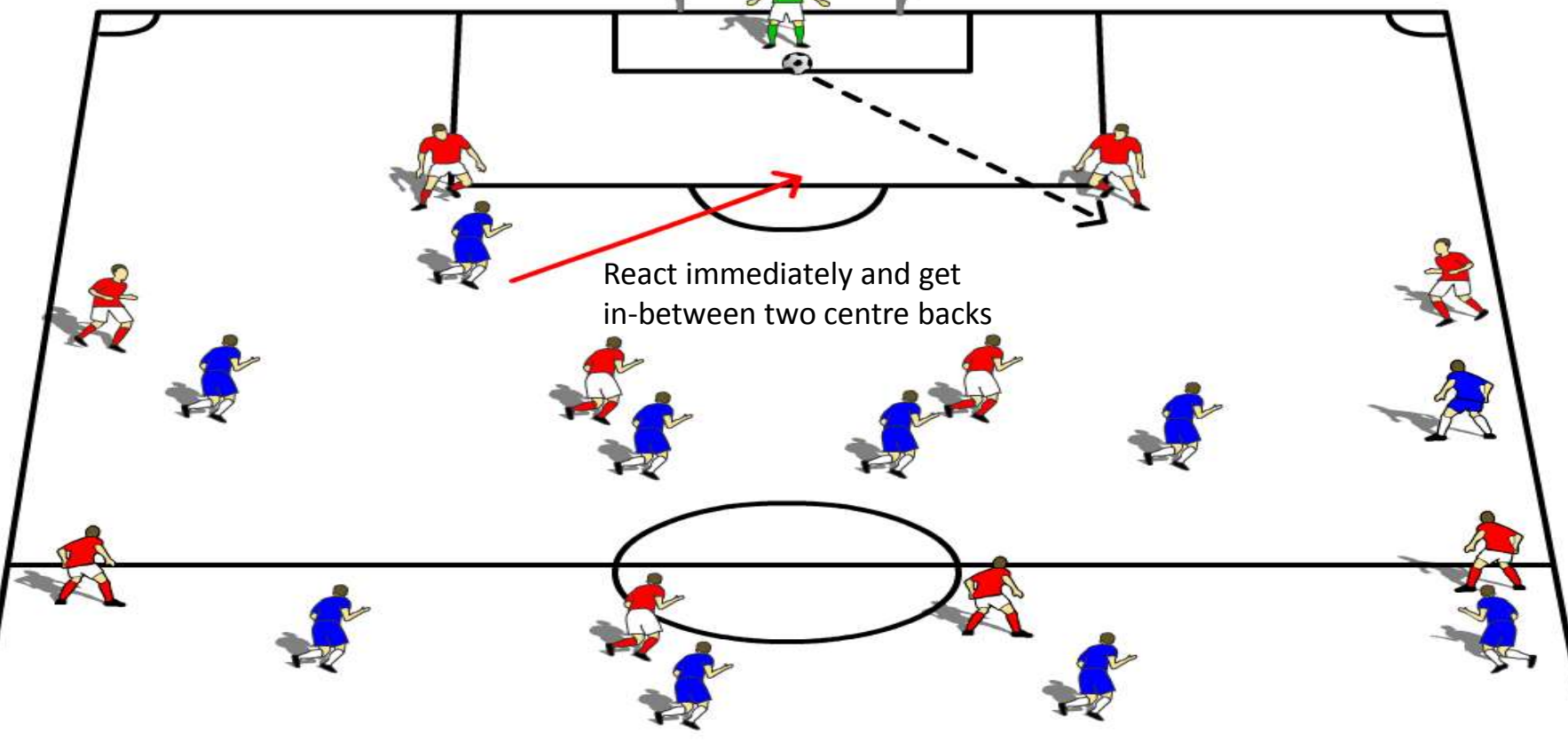
Allow the ball to left sided centre
back



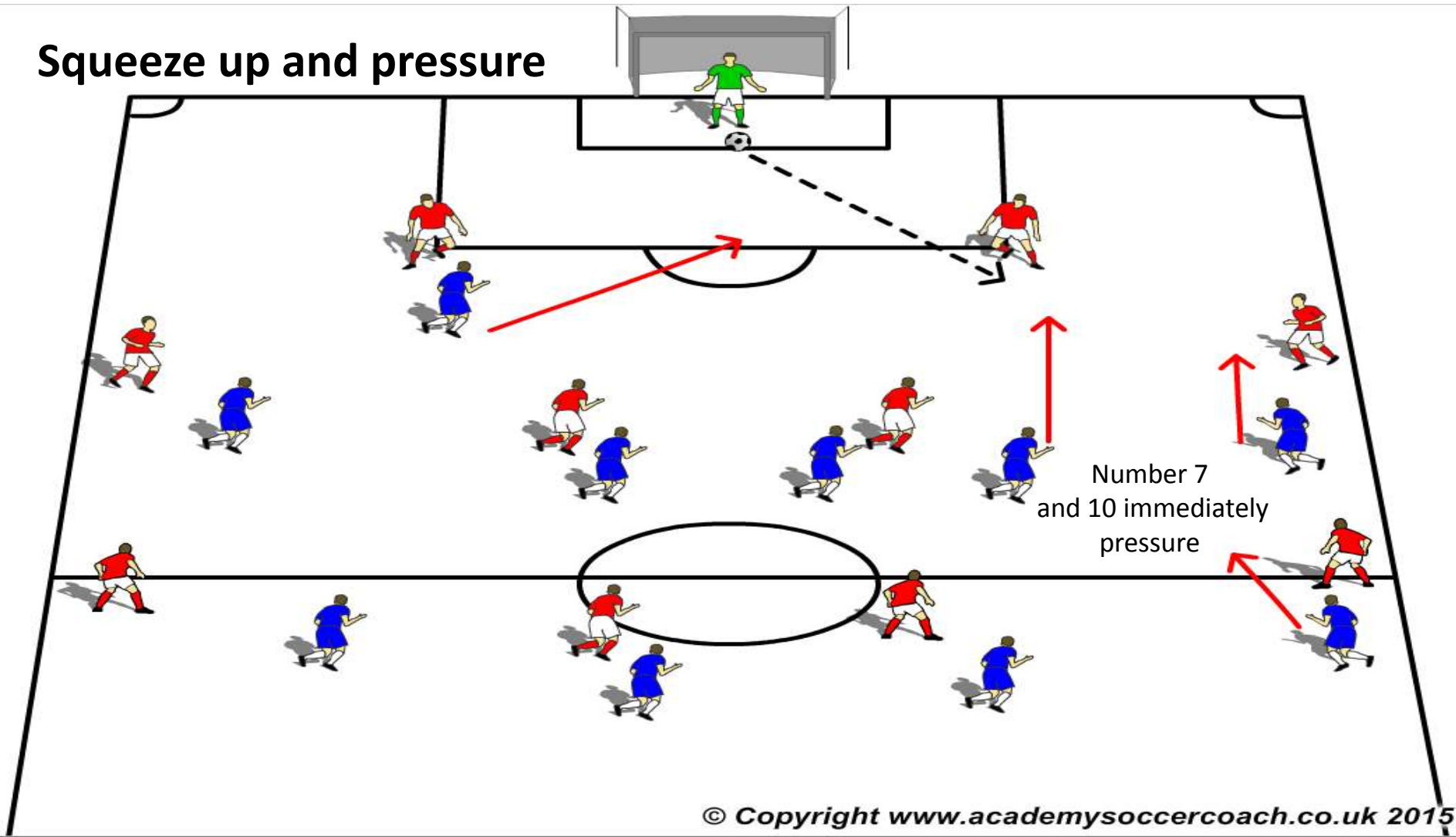
Number 9 keep play to the left



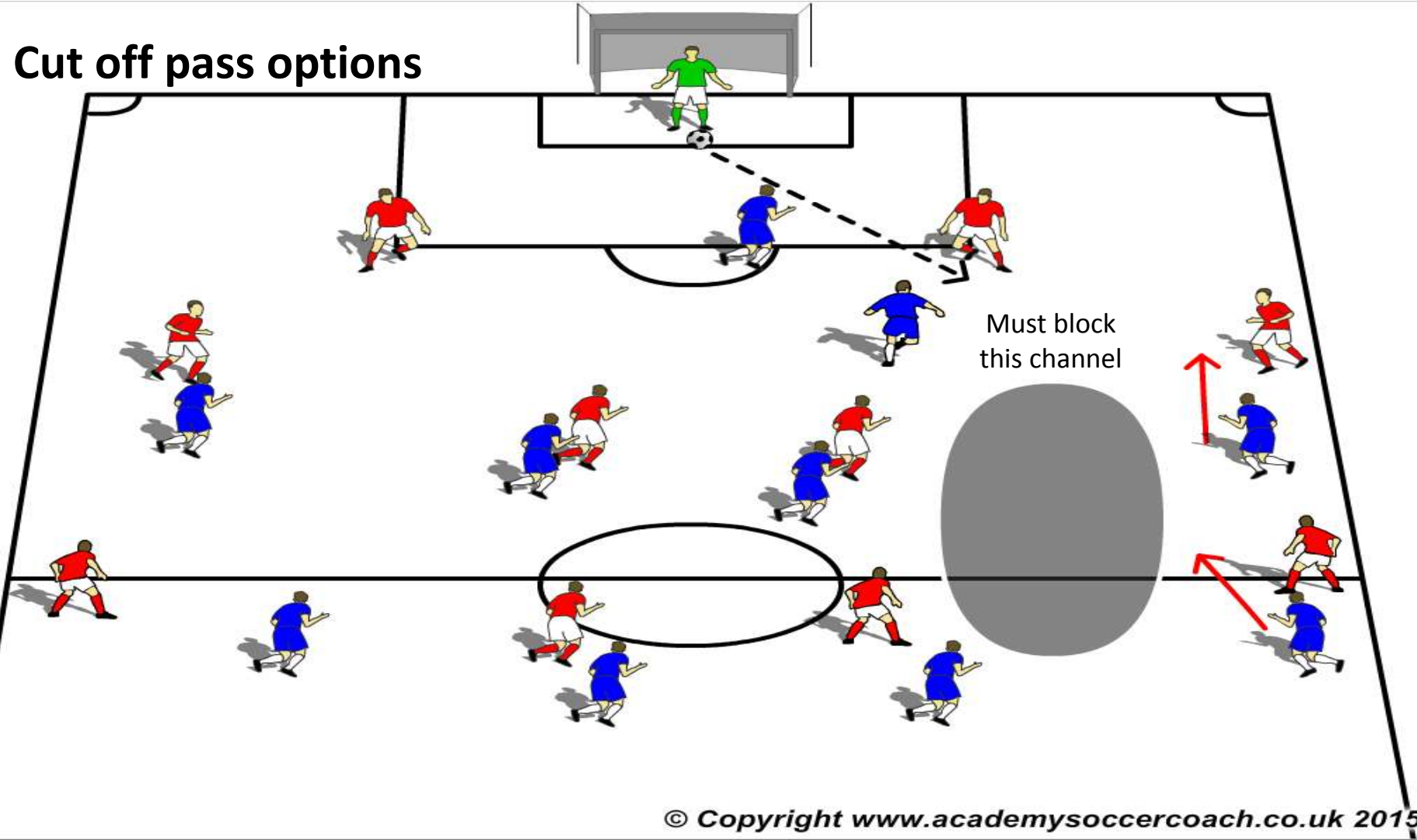
React immediately and get in-between two centre backs



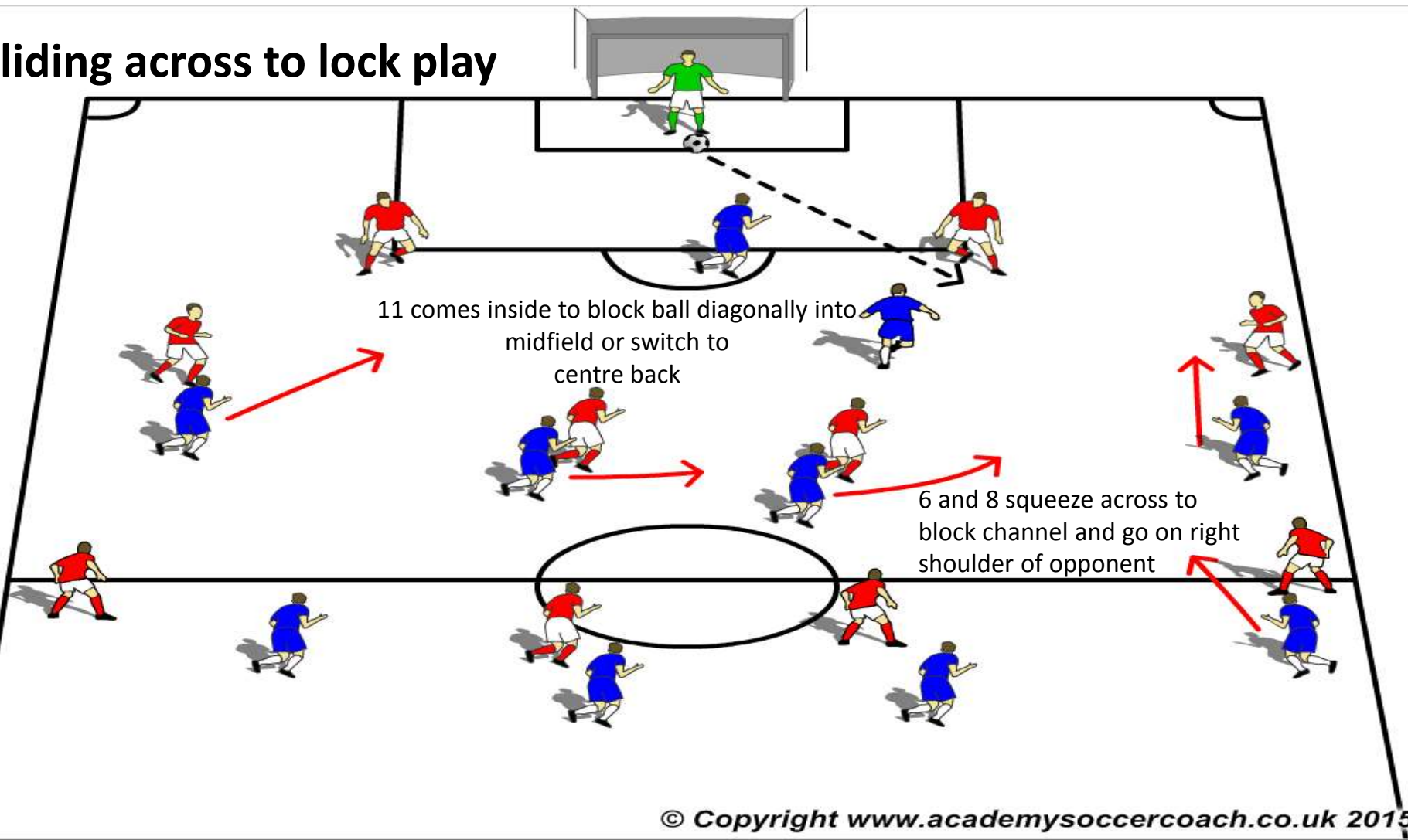
Squeeze up and pressure



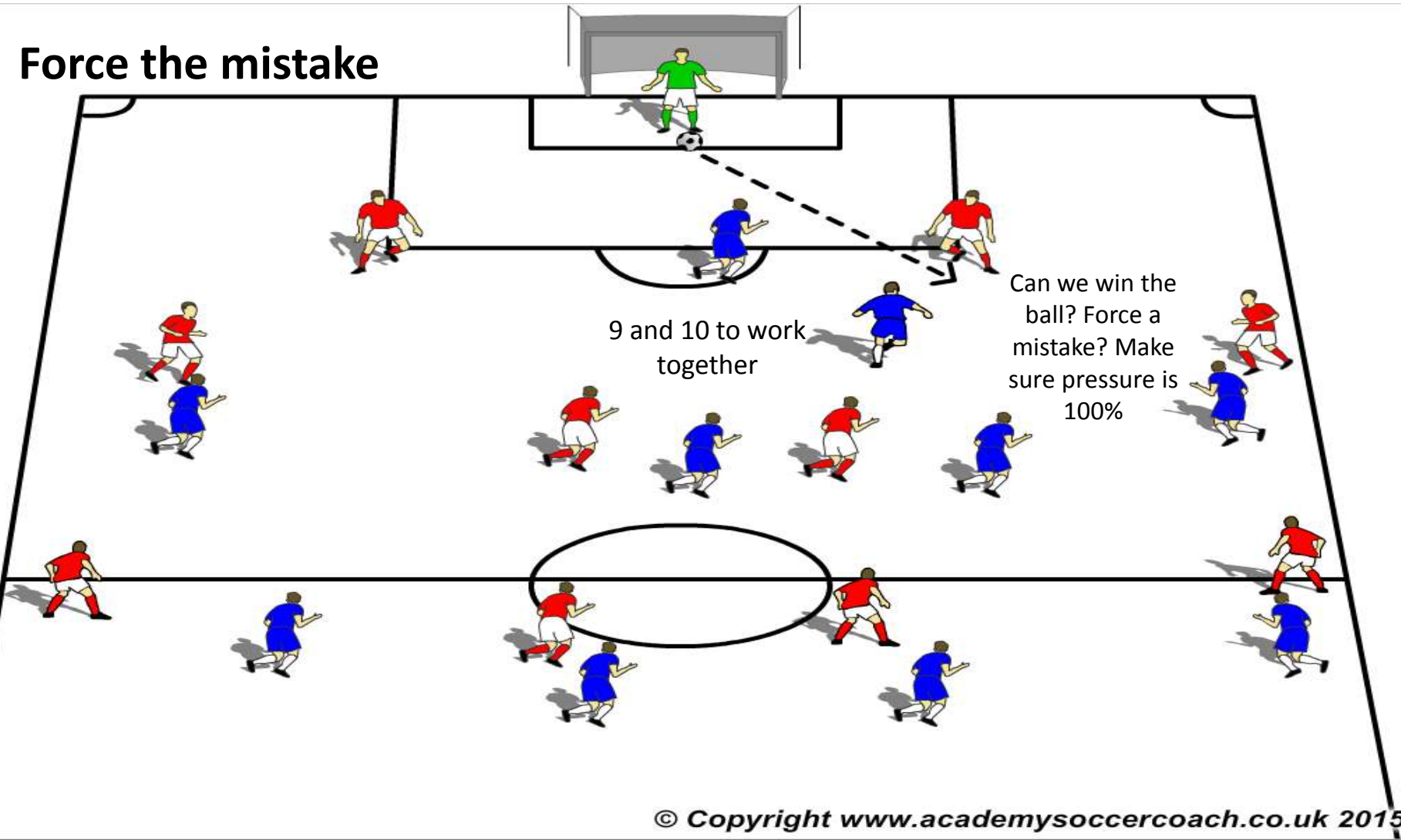
Cut off pass options



Sliding across to lock play



Force the mistake





Following the Berlin Final, Mixu Paatelainen commented

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(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



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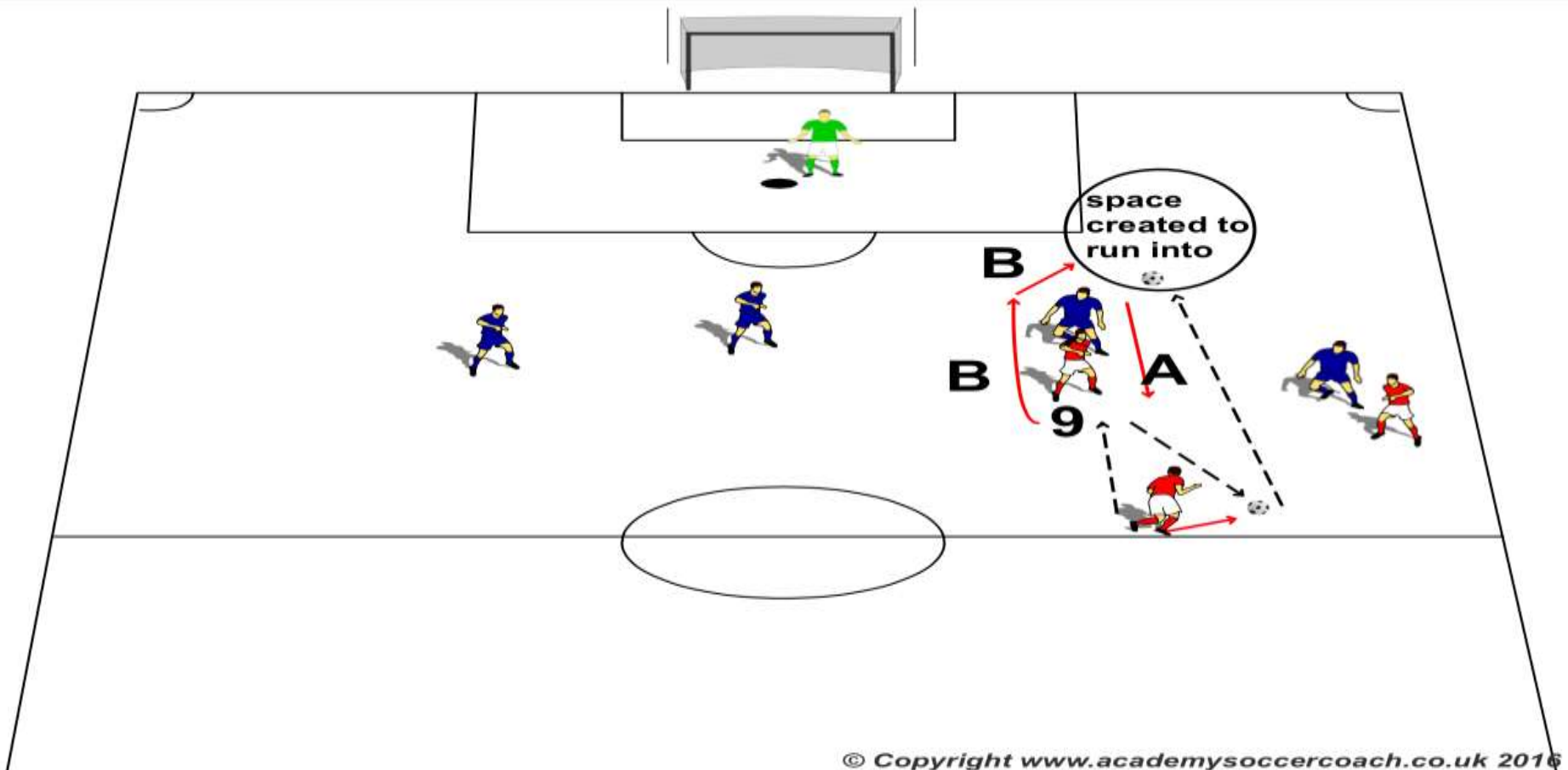
Mixu Paatelainen

(UEFA Champions League Review 2014-2015 Technical Report)



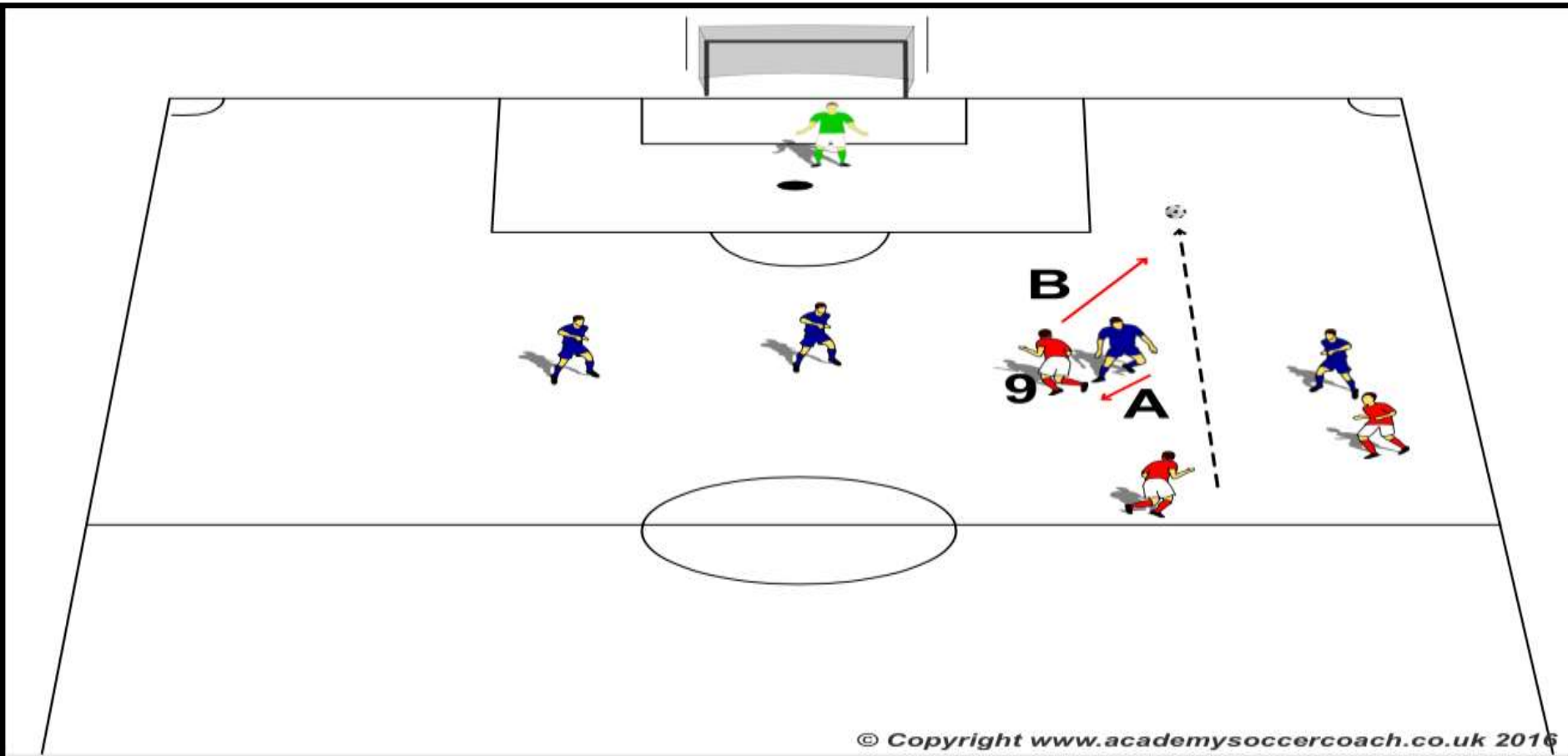
Strikers Movements

- **Ball side movements**
- **Far side movements**
- **Around the penalty box**



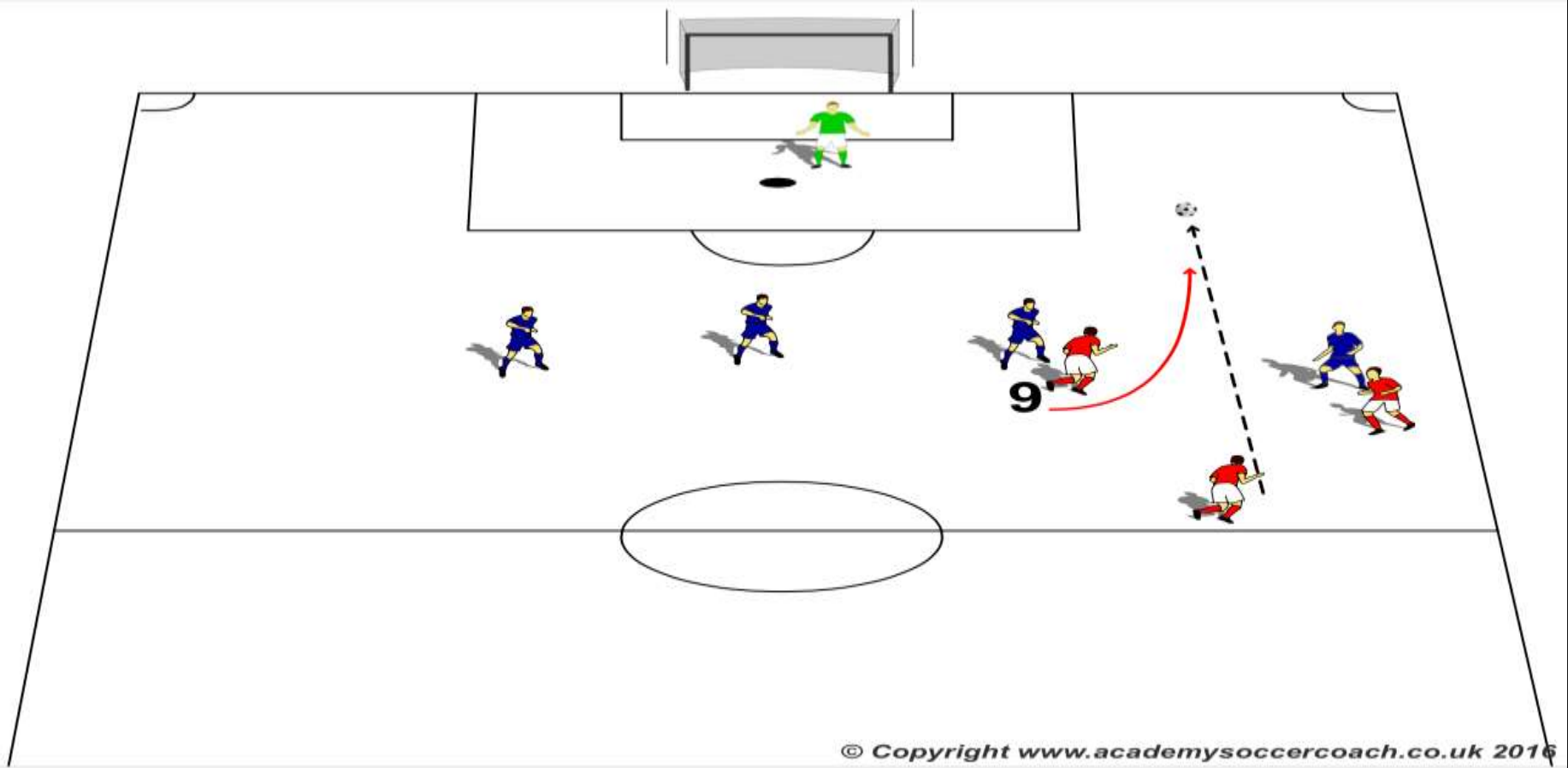
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BALL SIDE MOVEMENTS – CF 9 comes down the line A to link play with MF, sets ball back, and spins B into space created behind CH for pass



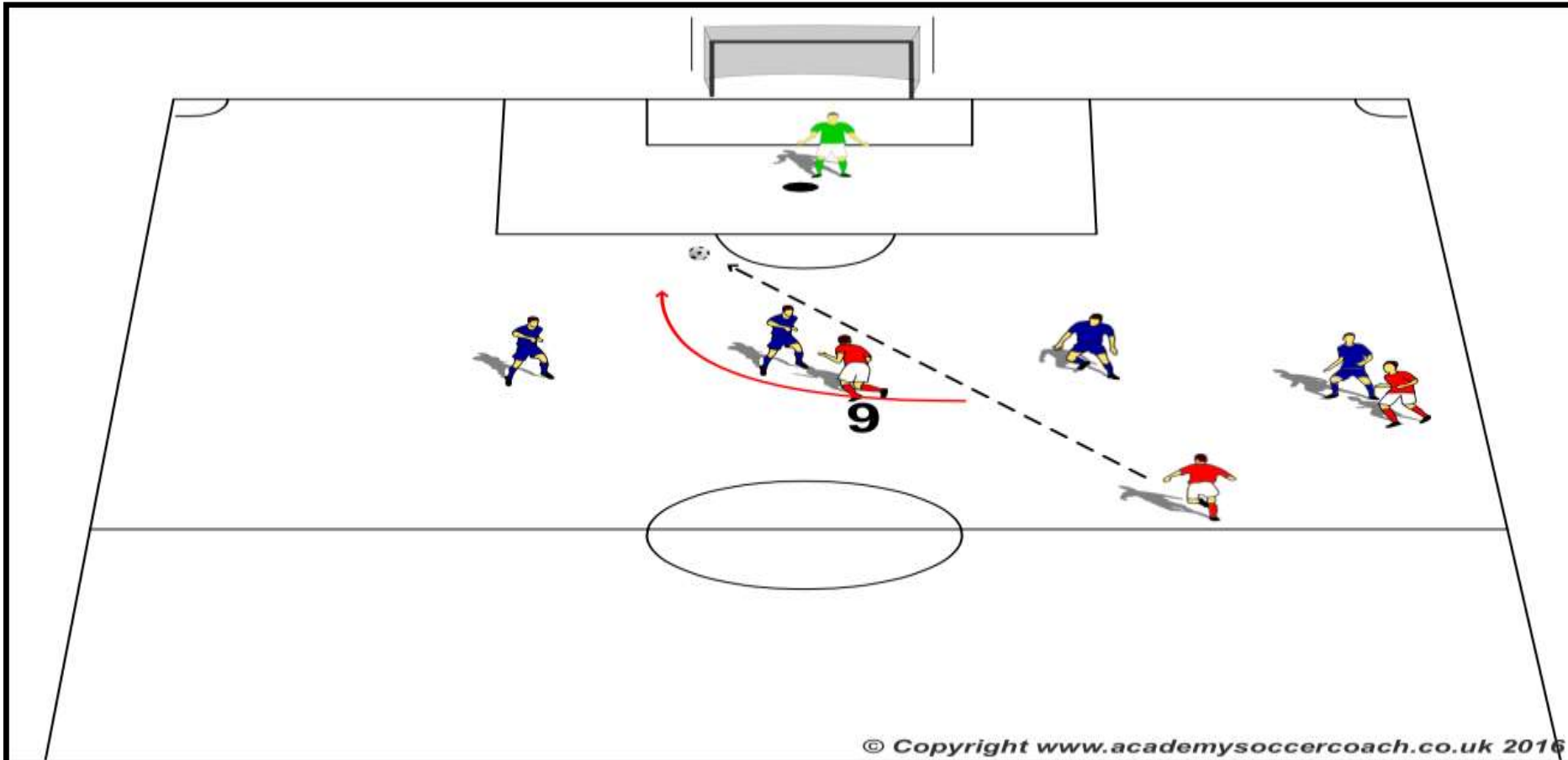
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BALL SIDE MOVEMENTS – CF 9 steps A and spins quickly B for run behind CH



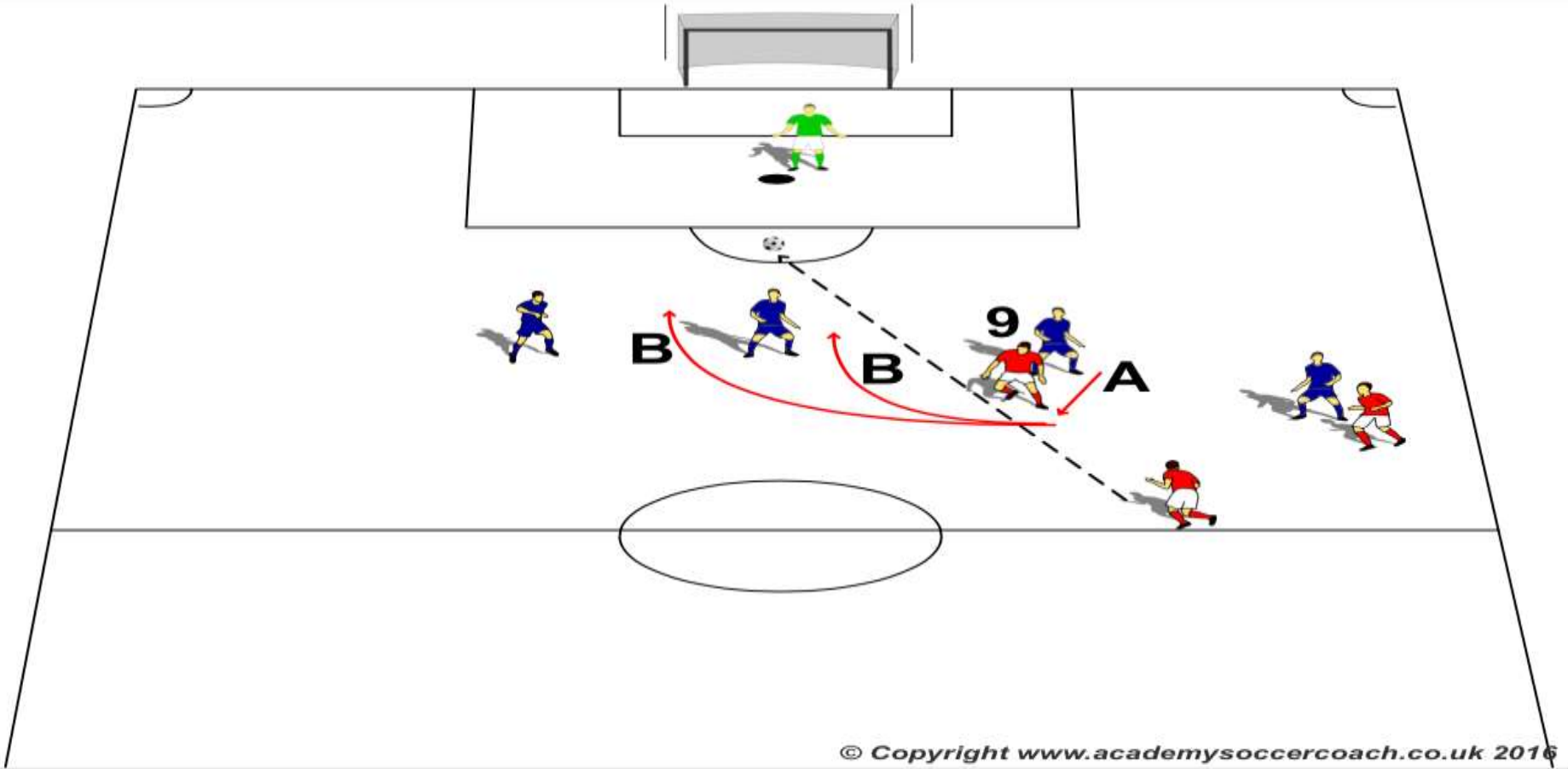
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BALL SIDE MOVEMENTS – CF 9 pulls across CH and spins quickly behind



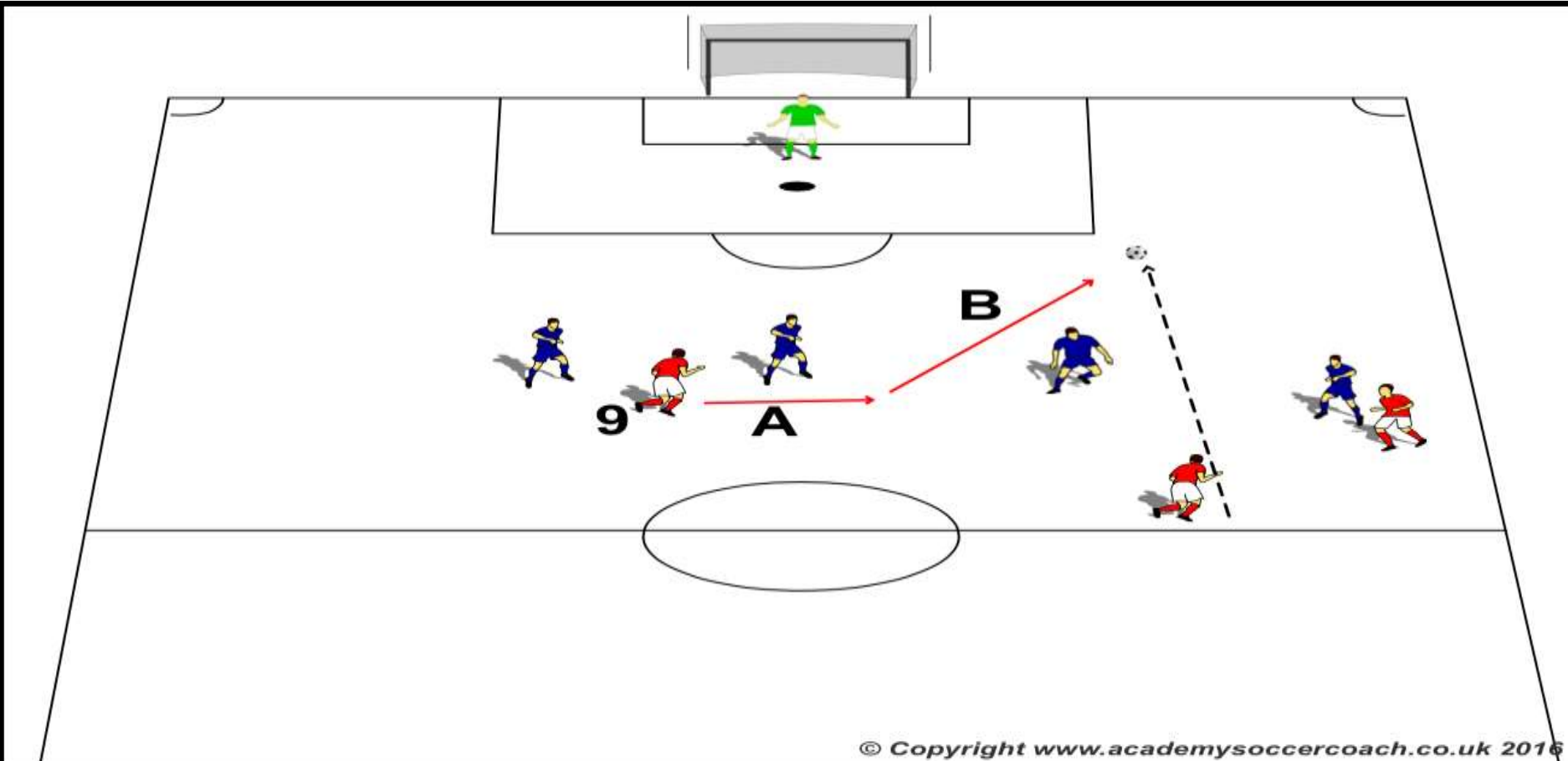
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FAR SIDE MOVEMENTS – CF 9 pulls away on blind side of second CH



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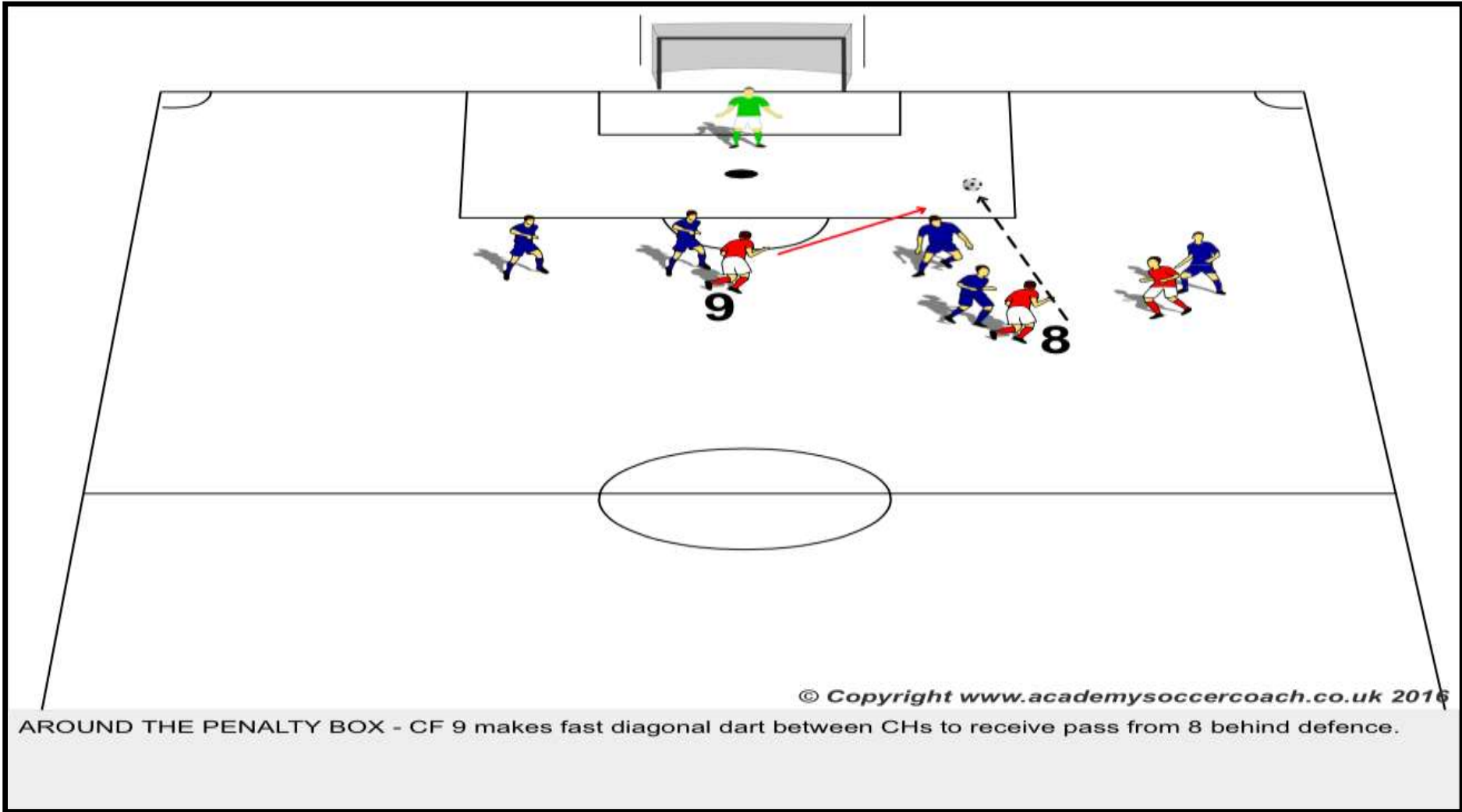
FAR SIDE MOVEMENTS – CF 9 steps off CH A and spins quickly B between defenders



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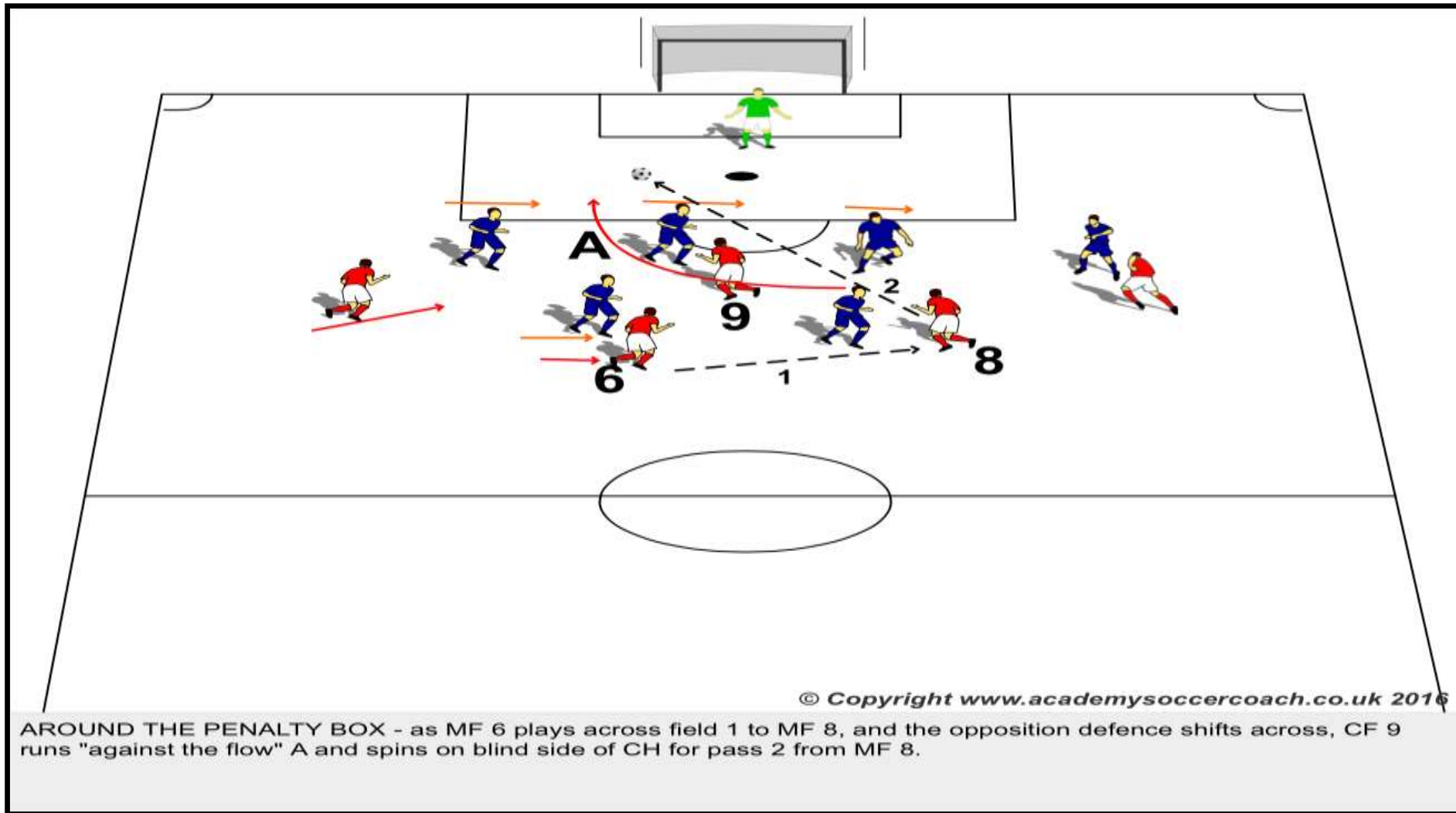
FAR SIDE MOVEMENTS - "flat" A and "in" B runs across and between CHs, getting behind near-side CH on his "blind side".

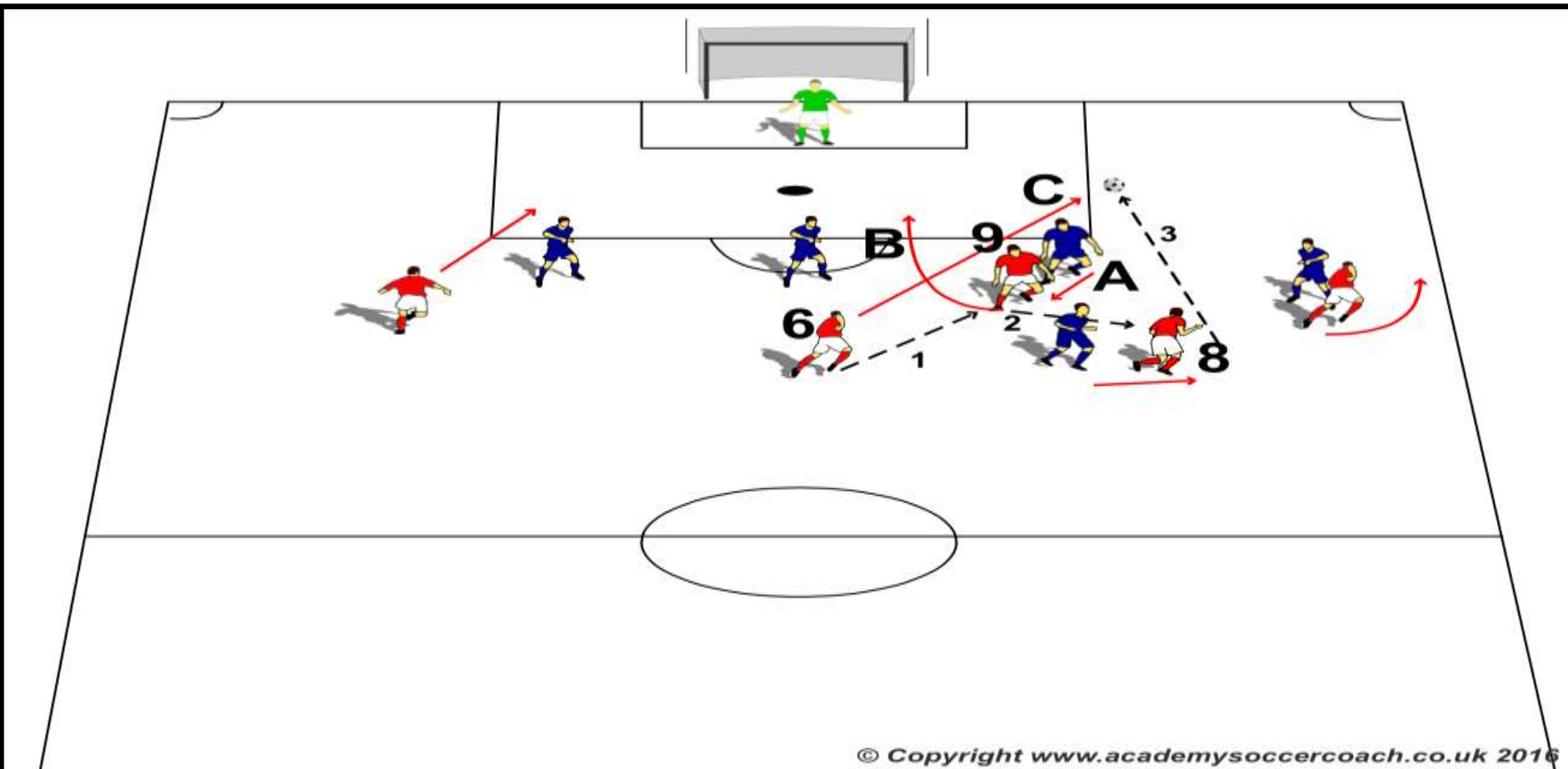




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AROUND THE PENALTY BOX - CF 9 makes fast diagonal dart between CHs to receive pass from 8 behind defence.





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AROUND THE PENALTY BOX - CF 9 drops off A to receive pass 1 from MF 6. MF 9 sets pass 2 for MF 8 to play pass 3 for "third man run" C by MF 6. CF 9 should spin B into box.



Questions?