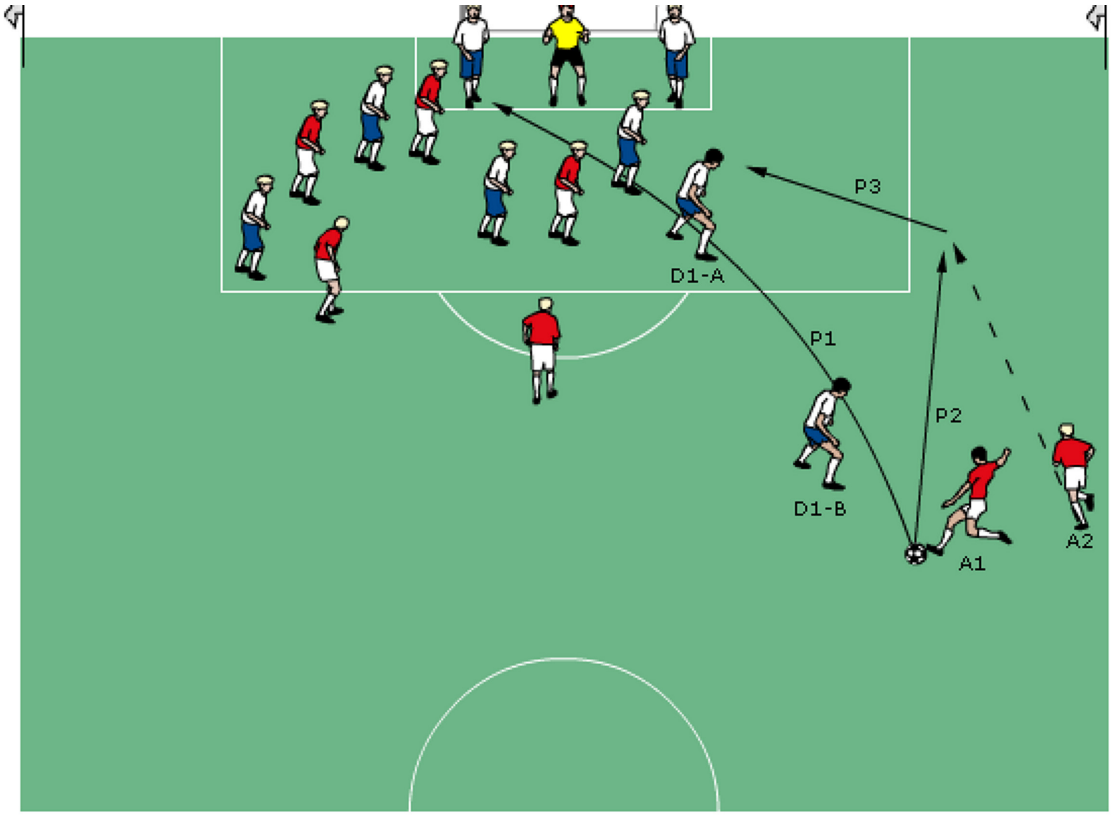
Attacking Third – Free Kick from the Flank

Far too often it is seen that the team awarded a free kick in a wide position in the range of 20 to 35 yards from the goal line simply loft the ball into the penalty area and usually toward the far post. Both attacking and defending players crowd into the penalty area and the chances of the attacking players getting a good attempt at goal is quite low. At the youth level this is regularly compounded by the attacking players standing still waiting for the ball and they are therefore easily marked by the defenders. In this situation the odds are in favor of the defending team to make a good clearance since they are already facing up field, where they want to go. So in essence the attacking team is setting up a counterattack against themselves! This free kick is seen in the diagram below where attacker 1 (A1) makes pass 1 (P1). In essence this is just dumping the ball into the mixer and hoping for the best.

If defender 1 (D1) stays in position A (D1 – A) then the lofted ball into the penalty area may be a decent option, but only if the other attackers make runs to shake off markers and to meet the flight of the ball.

If D1 takes up a position closer to the ball, position B, (D1 – B) then A1 could choose pass 2 (P2) for attacker 2 (A2) to run onto and then he passes into the penalty area, pass 3 (P3) or perhaps a shot at the near post. Indeed P2 often is a good choice regardless of the position of D1. P3 is a better passing option as it will draw opponents to the near post side of the penalty area and thereby open space in the middle and far post space of the penalty area for attackers to exploit. If the defenders do not move toward the ball in reaction to P2 then A2 can dribble into the penalty area to create his own chances, draw defenders and pass the ball off or take a shot at goal from where he receives P2 or dribble and then shoot.



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