



Five Favourite Practices of Chris Apple University of Rochester Playing in the Penalty Area

My five favorite practices all deal with teaching players how to play in the penalty area. With its close proximity to the goal, this special place on the field has various implications for technique, mentality and decision-making. Rather than a progression, these five separate exercises can be used at the end of any training session for competition, motivation and developing confidence around the goal.

I would like to add that during the past 15 years I have stolen almost every exercise I know from friends and colleagues and adapted them to fit my team's needs, so what you see below is far from original. Coaching points to consider when training players for penalty area play:

On attack

- Play the way you face
- Close ball control for tight spaces
- Going 1 v. 1
- Quick decisions.
- Technical/tactical considerations for finishing and serving such as surface of foot, accuracy, pace of pass/shot, beating the goalkeeper
- Heading to goal
- Deception
- Taking risks - be confident
- Taking chances (don't wait for the perfect shot)
- Shaking defenders and cutting in front of defenders/goalkeeper
- Screening the goalkeeper
- Vital spaces - near post, far post and central
- Runs in the box - timing, pace, angles
- Expect the best - rebounds, deflections, balls that sneak through a crowd
- Be dynamic - always moving and scheming

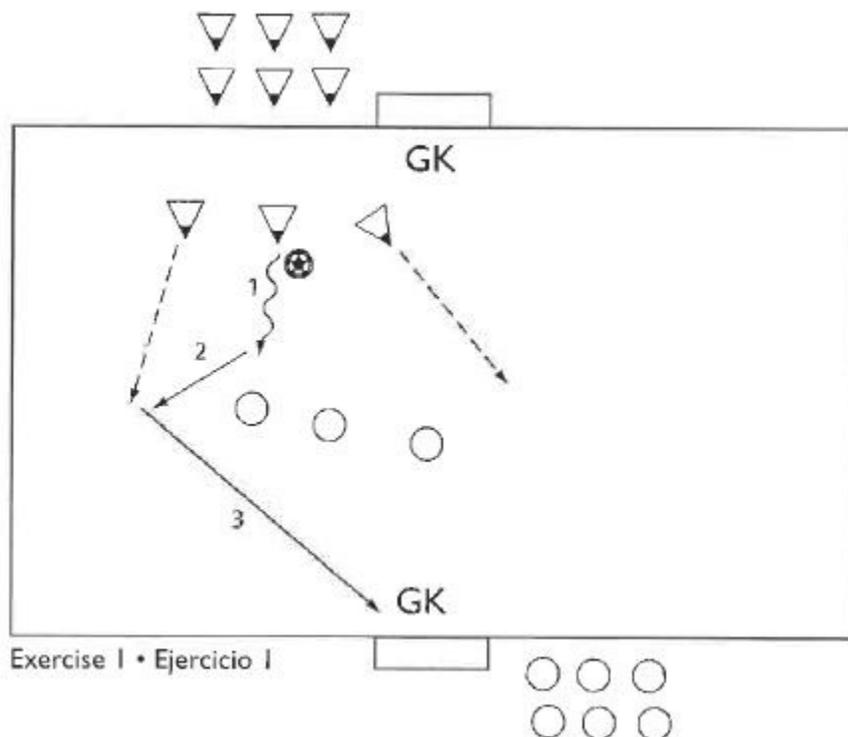
On defense

- Touch-tight marking and staying with mark
- Immediate high pressure on ball
- Cover and compactness Double-teaming
- Blocking shots/serves
- Clearances - headers and volleys
- Be brave
- Be first to the ball - step in front of attacker's path
- Dealing with knock-downs and second balls
- Stepping/clearing the zone as a unit
- Defenders working in conjunction with the goalkeeper
- Communication

EXERCISE #1: 3 V. 3 CONTINUOUS ACTION

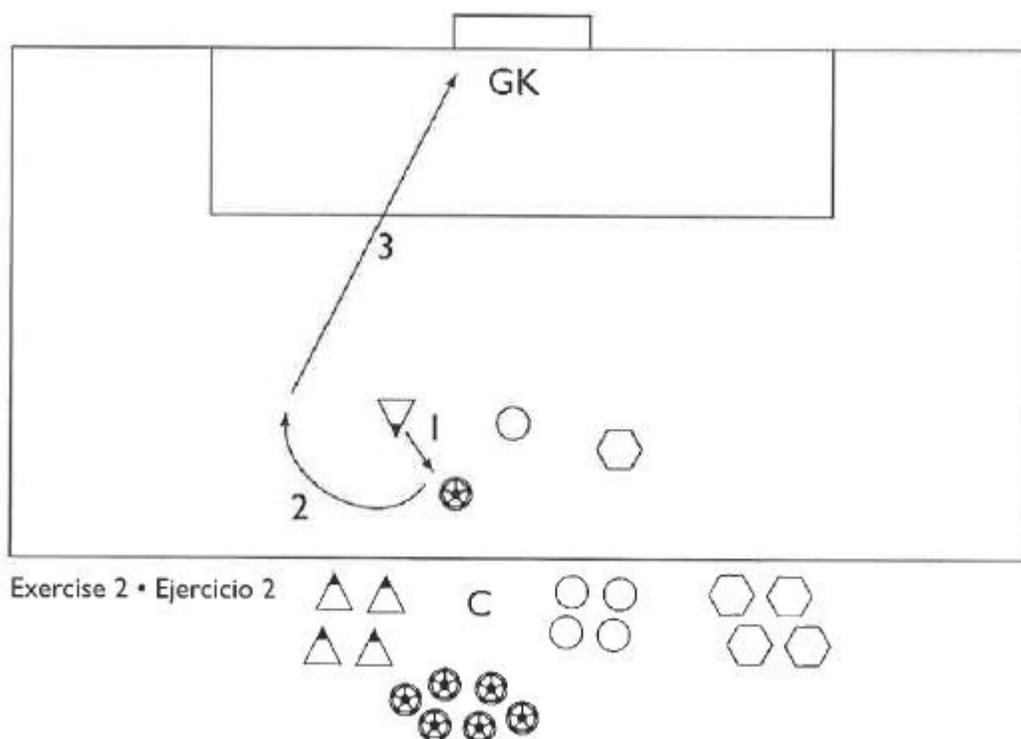
Set-up: Space is 44 yards wide by 30 yards long, 18 field players and two goalkeepers. Opposing players and balls are diagonally opposite each other beside the posts. First three ▲'s attack first three O's and try to score. If O's win ball, they counter and try to score. If a shot crosses either goal line at any time (scores or goes wide) a new group of three

attacks with speed from the goal line the ball just crossed. The three who shot the ball across the goal line stay on the field and defend the oncoming counter. If the ball crosses a touchline a throw-in is awarded. First team to 10 goals wins. This is a back and forth game of high intensity and fun.



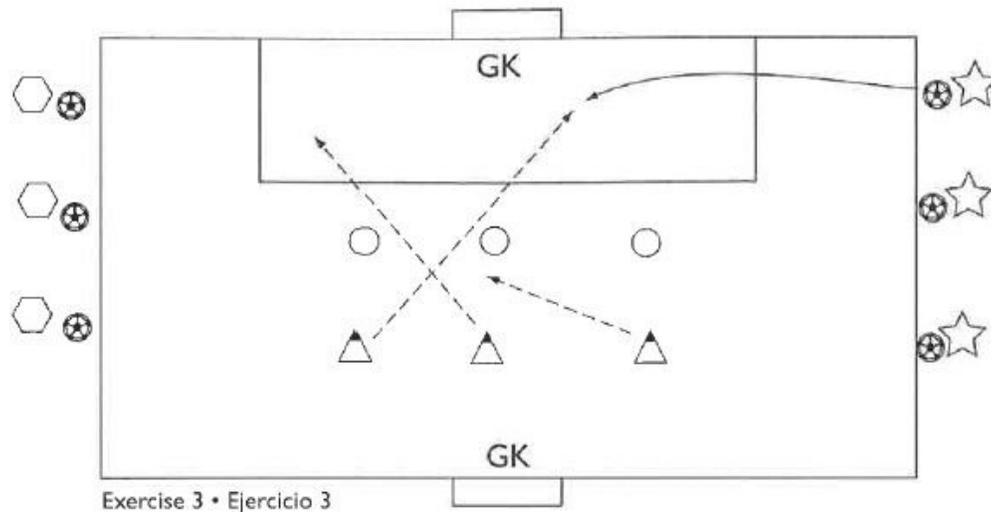
EXERCISE #2: 1 V. 1 V. 1 IN THE PENALTY

Set-up: Space is the penalty area, 12-18 field players and two goalkeepers (Who rotate in goal). Three teams and the coach are at the top of the area with several balls. First players from each team enters the penalty area and coach serves a ball in. The tree players battle for possession and try to score in an "every player for himself/herself" contest. First player to score wins a point to his/her team. Change all three players afer each goal.



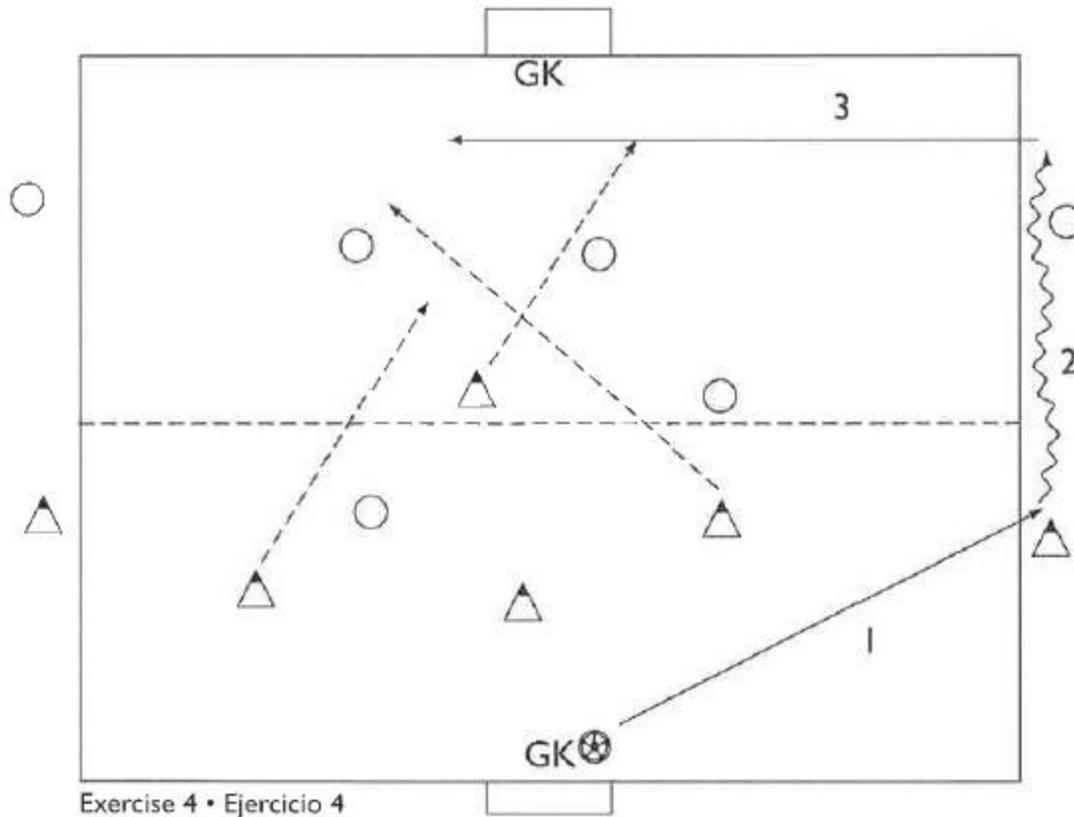
EXERCISE #3: 3 V. 3 BATTLE IN THE AREA

Set-up: Space is the penalty area, 12 or 16 field players and two goalkeepers (change to 4 v. 4 for 16 field players). Four teams of three compete for supremacy in the penalty area. Six players outside of the box act as servers as ▲'s and O's each defend their own goal and attack the opponent's goal. Vary the service from side to side. Each team attacks twice, then defends twice. Counterattack goals are encouraged. Play a round robin tournament, then semis and finals. Play for time or number of goals. Variations: one-time goals count double; point to service team for an assist; forced man-to-man marking; score only on headers. This game requires teamwork, vision and communication (both verbal and visual) to make sure all the responsibilities are covered on both offense and defense.



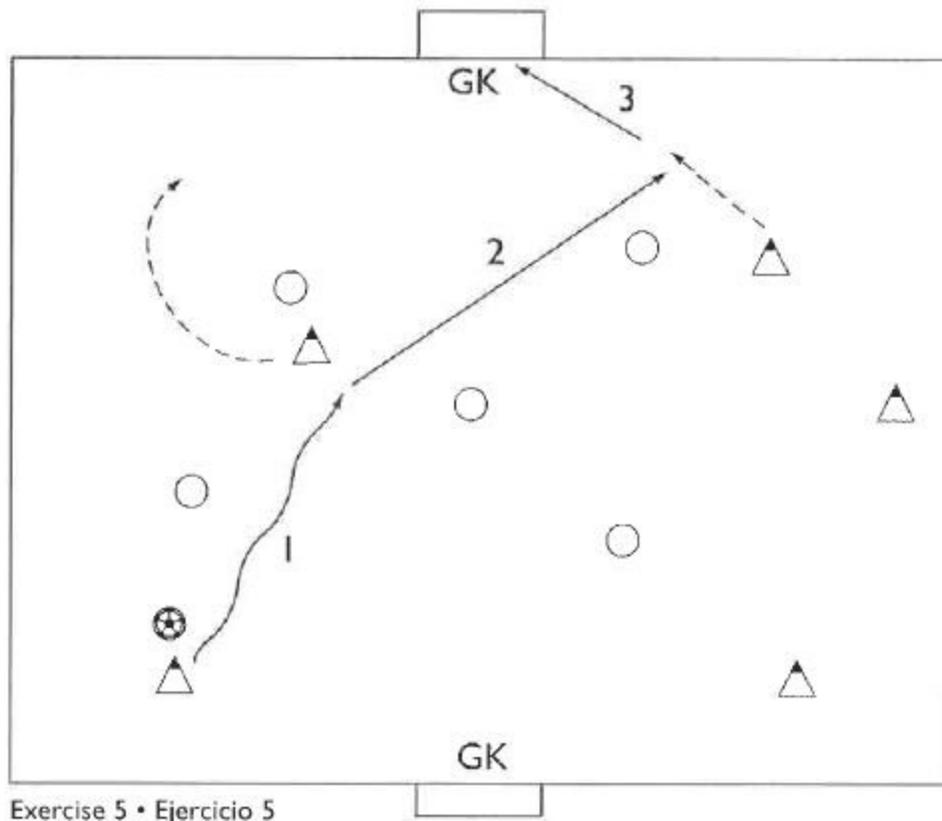
EXERCISE #4: 4 V. 4 + 2 SERVICE GAME

Set-up: Space is a double penalty area (44 x 36 yards), 12-18 field players and two goalkeepers. Play 4 v. 4 inside the grid with free service from the flank players. Initiate play with goalkeeper throwing to a flank player, who dribbles at pace to the end line for a serve. Variations: touch restrictions; one-time goals only; score from headers only; allow flank players to defend each other; allow central attacking player to enter flank to create a 2 v. 1; have a third team of six players shagging balls and when a goal is scored the losing team becomes shaggers. This is a great game for fitness and transition. It is back and forth and very intense. When you play it with a third team that shags balls, nobody wants to go off the field. Another way to play this game is to put the service players on the end lines and give them one or two touches only. This creates a totally different dynamic, focusing on finishing balls that are laid back rather than served from the flanks. This game should result in tons of goals.



EXERCISE #5: 5 V. 5 "YOU SCORE, YOU STAY"

Set-up: 15 field players and two goalkeepers (could also be played with 12 or 18 field players). Two teams of five play a game to big goals with a third team waiting on the sideline. If one goal is scored, the losing team leaves the field and the new team enters. The size of the space will depend on what you want to accomplish. A short, wide field (30 x 60 yards) will encourage flank play, service and runs in the box. A long, narrow field (50 x 25 yards) will encourage penetrating passes, target play and balls laid back for shots. The short and relatively narrow field shown above (36 x 44 yards) will force players to make quick decisions, play small combinations and take quick shots. Touch restrictions can further manipulate the game based on your goals. This is our players' absolute favorite game and they would play it every day if they could.



Exercise 5 • Ejercicio 5

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