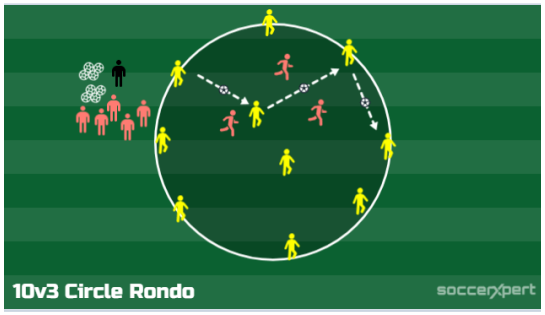

10v3 Circle Rondo: Pressure, Cover, Balance

Objective:
This circle rondo gets your whole team working in one game. Eight attackers ring the circle and two more play in the middle. Together they keep the ball away from three defenders who come in as a unit. For the attackers, it is all about sharp passing, a clean first touch, and using the two middle players to break pressure. For the defenders, it is one of the best ways I know to teach pressure, cover, and balance. One player closes the ball. One covers behind. One balances and shuts off the far side. Three defenders cannot win the ball by chasing alone, so they must work as a team. When they win it, three fresh defenders sprint in and the game rolls on. The pace stays high, nobody stands for long, and every player gets a turn on both sides of the ball.

Drill Quick Glance

Age: 10+	**Field:** 20x20
Players: 13-20	**Time:** 15 min.
Difficulty: Medium	**Focus:** Possession
Keeper: No	**Type:** Team
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Equipment

Disc Cones/Markers | Scrimmage Vests | Soccer Balls

Setup

- Use the center circle or mark a circle about 20 yards across with cones.
- Place eight attackers evenly around the outside of the circle.
- Place two more attackers inside the circle. They play as the middle link players.
- Put the remaining players in a different color bib. They are the defenders.
- Split the defenders into groups of three and line them up just outside the circle near the coach. With fewer defenders, some players will go again in a new group.
- Keep a supply of balls with the coach for fast restarts.
- No goals or goalkeepers are needed.

Instructions

1. The coach plays a ball to any attacker on the circle and sends the first three defenders in.
2. The ten attackers keep the ball away from the three defenders. The eight outside players stay on the circle and the two middle players move freely inside it.
3. Attackers can pass around the circle, across the circle, or through the two middle players.
4. The three defenders work as a unit. The closest defender puts pressure on the ball, the second covers behind, and the third balances to cut off the far side.
5. Attackers score one point for every 10 passes in a row.
6. When the defenders win the ball or knock it out of the circle, they score one point and run out.
7. The coach plays a new ball in at once and the next three defenders sprint in.
8. After each group of defenders has had three or four turns, switch roles so the defenders become attackers. If the numbers are not even, swap as many as you can and rotate the rest in on the next switch.
9. Change the two middle players every few minutes.
10. Play for 15 minutes and keep score between the two teams.

Coaching Points

- Attackers should move the ball fast. One or two touches will pull the three defenders apart.
- Open the body to receive so the next pass can go either way.
- Middle players must find gaps between the defenders and check their shoulders before the ball arrives.
- Use the middle players to bounce the ball out to the other side of the circle. Do not force a pass into them when they are marked.
- The first defender presses with speed, then slows down and shows the passer one way. No diving in.
- The second defender covers at an angle behind the first and takes away the pass into the middle.
- The third defender balances on the far side and reads the next pass to step in and steal it.
- Watch for three defenders all chasing the ball. Freeze play, set the pressure, cover, and balance shape, and restart.
- Defenders must shift as the ball moves. The roles change with every pass, so they need to talk.

Variations

- Limit the outside players to two touches and the middle players to one touch.
- Play with one middle player to make it harder for the attackers.
- Send four defenders at a time for strong attacking groups.
- Make the circle bigger to help the attackers or smaller to help the defenders.
- Give the attackers a bonus point for a pass that goes through a middle player and out to the far side of the circle.
- Put a time limit on the defenders. They have 30 seconds to win the ball or they come out

with no point.

- When the defenders win the ball, let them score by dribbling out of the circle. The attackers must react and win it back.