

ELITE SOCCER

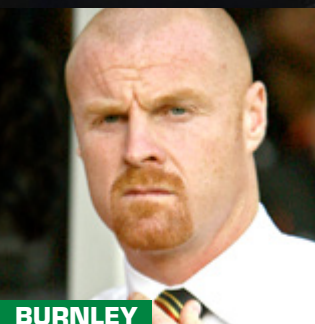
COACHING PRACTICES FROM THE WORLD'S
LEADING MANAGERS AND COACHES

Exclusive
Training practices from top
professional managers

QPR

STEVE McCLAREN

TRANSITIONS AND ROTATIONS



BURNLEY

**SEAN
DYCHE**

Simple pressing
as a team



SHEFFIELD
WEDNESDAY

**DAVE
JONES**

Crossing and
finishing



ROCHDALE

**KEITH HILL &
CHRIS BEECH**

Improving
attacking players



AFC WIMBLEDON

**SHAUN
NORTH**

Short pass
switching



PORT VALE

JIMMY BELL

Possession and
finishing session

EXTRA-TIME:

WITH QPR MANAGER HARRY REDKNAPP



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ISSUE 37 / AUGUST 2013: FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Bespoke training practices from some of the biggest names in football

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the August issue of Elite Soccer.

It's a really exciting time for everyone concerned with soccer. With most of us kicking off new campaigns, we'll all have aims and ambitions for the season ahead. And whether that main desire is a title shot, mid-table comfort or simply survival, Elite Soccer be bringing your way another brilliant cross-section of sessions that tackle every position and speciality.

So to kick off the new season, we're delighted to be showcasing a session from former England national team manager Steve McClaren. Currently coaching alongside Harry Redknapp at QPR, the 52-year-old, who has extensive experience in English and European club football, presents for us a practice that features transitions, rotation and attacking play – a blueprint that represents a great way of fine-tuning the all-round abilities of your players.

From the Sky Bet Championship, Burnley boss Sean Dyche offers a detailed pressing session, while experienced Sheffield Wednesday manager Dave Jones details a positive attacking practice that builds in phases.

Rochdale coaching duo Keith Hill and Chris Beech have put together a session that looks at capitalising on chances in and around the penalty area, while new AFC Wimbledon Development Manager Shaun North examines the skill and impact of short pass switching.

And to conclude, vastly experienced Port Vale coach Jimmy Bell details a positive possession session that also encompasses overloads in the box.

We hope you find these quality sessions interesting and stimulating, and look forward to bringing more your way next month. Enjoy the season ahead!

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

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3
**STEVE
McCLAREN**

QPR
**Transition
rotating
and
attacking**



5
SEAN DYCHE
BURNLEY

**Simple
pressing
as a team**



8
DAVE JONES
SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

**Crossing
and
finishing**



10
KEITH HILL & CHRIS BEECH
ROCHDALE

**Improving
attacking
players**



12
SHAUN NORTH
AFC WIMBLEDON

**Short pass
switching**



14
JIMMY BELL
LMA AMBASSADOR

**Possession
and finishing
session**



16 **EXTRA-TIME:**
... with Harry Redknapp

17 **BOOKED**
Elite sports book review

QPR

Steve McClaren Transition, rotating and attacking

Overview:

This session is about counter-attacking, transitioning, and players rotating in their positions.

It relies on good link-up play and positive attacking, combining fast-paced and measured attacks on goal.

Defenders benefit from dealing with overloads in this session, which we always find important to practise, given that there are 200 turnovers per team in each game.

TRANSITION, ROTATING AND ATTACKING

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 11v9

SESSION TIME

Transition and rotation drill 3 x 12mins,
11v9 3 x 12mins

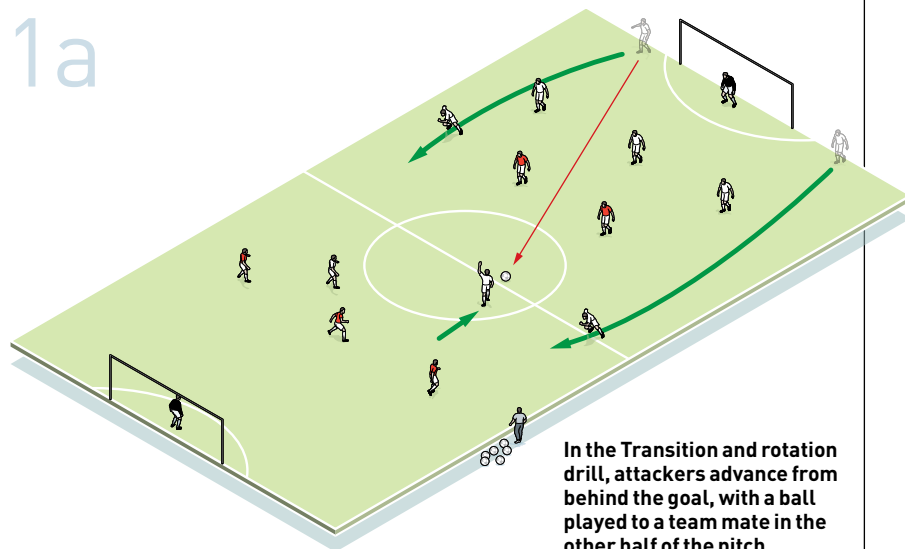
What do I get the players to do?

Transition and rotation drill

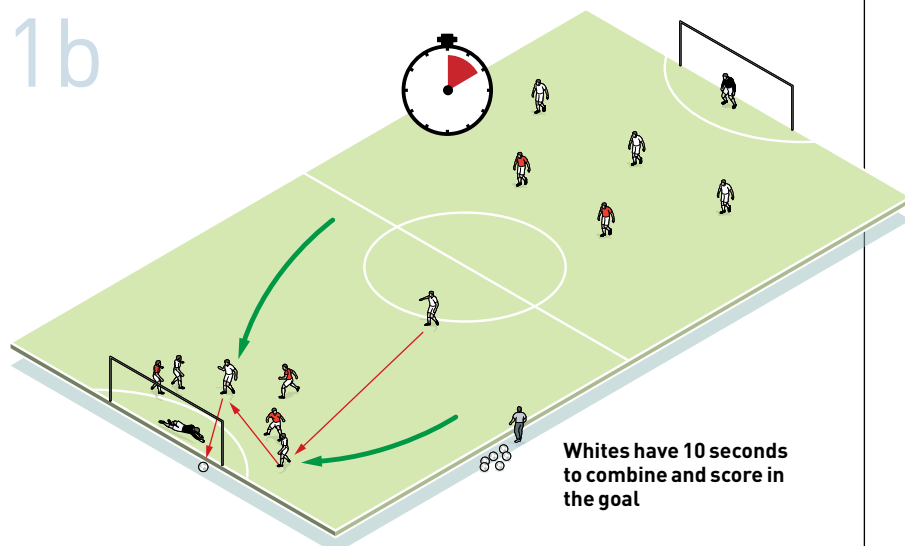
We set this up as shown, using the space in between the penalty areas (1a). To begin, both attackers emerge from behind the top goal - one of them has the ball. This man lays a pass into the feet of one of two team mates in the other half. Both 'start' players then go to support - so four attackers move in on goal against three defenders. Attackers have 10 seconds to score a goal (1b). If after 10 seconds there is no goal, or possession is turned over, the ball is returned to the server.

Straight away, the server puts a second ball into play for another 4v3 (1c), except this time attackers can take as long as they need to find the net.

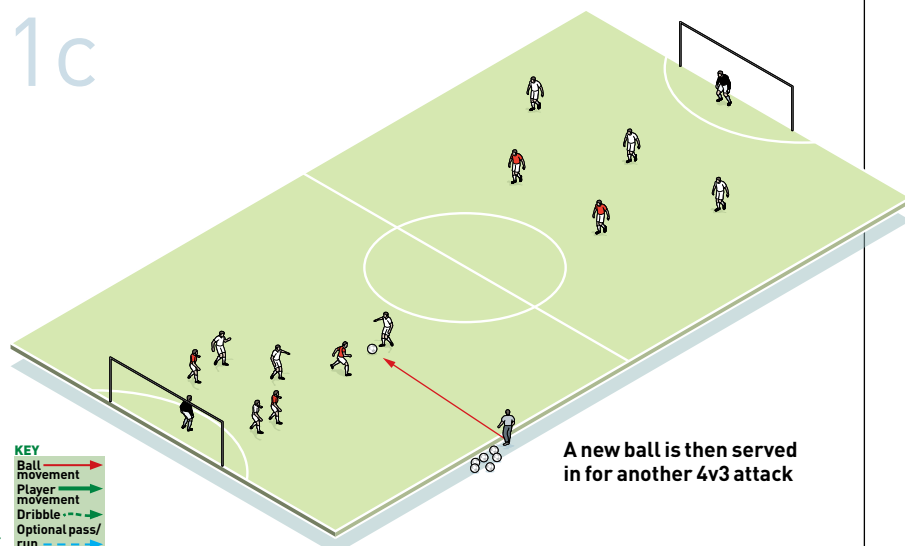
All players reset after the second attack, which begins from the other end of the playing area (2).



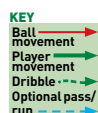
In the Transition and rotation drill, attackers advance from behind the goal, with a ball played to a team mate in the other half of the pitch



Whites have 10 seconds to combine and score in the goal



A new ball is then served in for another 4v3 attack



“Transitioning from attacking to defending and reorganising quickly for this change is essential.”



Steve McClaren

QPR

Former England boss Steve McClaren has a fantastic coaching and management CV, and is currently working under Harry Redknapp at Sky Bet Championship side QPR.

The 52-year-old is best known for his two-year spell in charge of the national team, having previously been assistant manager during Sven-Göran Eriksson's tenure. In McClaren's time leading the Three Lions he achieved a 50% win ratio.

In 2008 he joined FC Twente, helping the Dutch side embark on the most successful in their period, during which they won the Eredivisie title and finished runners-up.

After a spell in Germany with Wolfsburg, McClaren returned to Twente in 2012. He has also managed Middlesbrough - where he won the League Cup and took the club to a UEFA Cup final - and Nottingham Forest, and spent 11 years as assistant to Sir Alex Ferguson at Manchester United.

"This session is great for helping players use the ball in small and compacted areas."

TRANSITION, ROTATING AND ATTACKING

What are the key things to look out for?

Defenders must act exactly as they would in a match situation – so that means organising and communicating well and protecting against offsides.

Each attacker must advance quickly and pressure defenders, whether or not he has the ball. Offensive moves must penetrate in behind the defenders, with attackers always looking to make forward runs or forward passes.

Look to see how attackers act differently for the second phase. Here, the ball is delivered into a confined space, whereas in the initial phase the attack came together gradually.

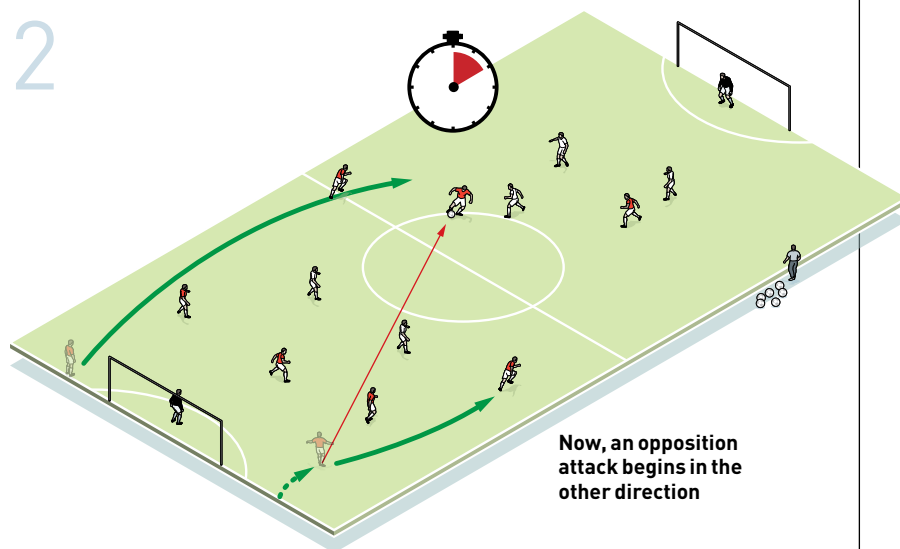
Transitioning from attacking to defending and reorganising quickly for this change is essential.

11v9 game

Now on a full pitch, we play 11v9 (reds versus whites). The ball is fed to the whites (3), who must attack the bottom goal at their own pace. Play as you would a normal game, but now, when reds turn over possession, they have 10 seconds to score a goal (4).

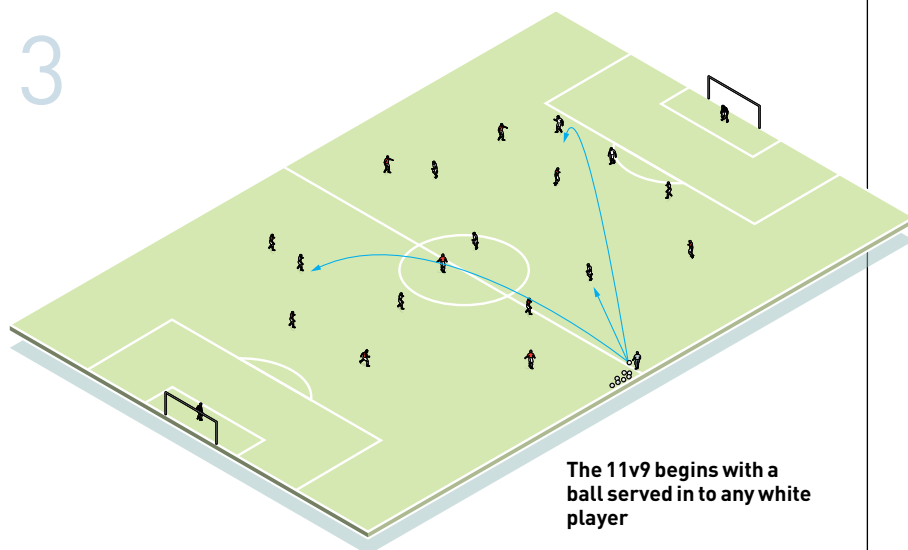
If they fail to score, the ball is kicked out of play and a new one served in. Ensure the ball comes from different parts of the pitch whenever it is reintroduced. ■

2



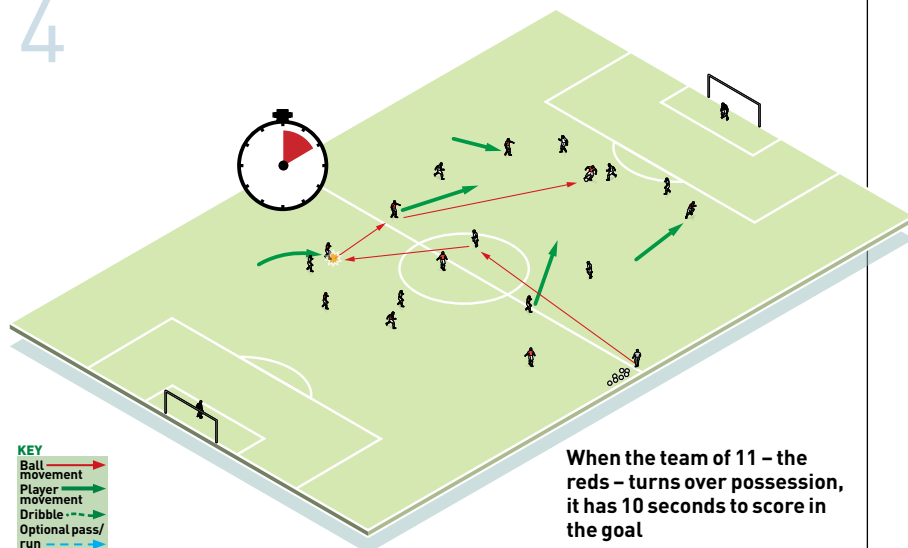
Now, an opposition attack begins in the other direction

3

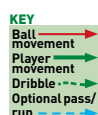


The 11v9 begins with a ball served in to any white player

4



When the team of 11 – the reds – turns over possession, it has 10 seconds to score in the goal



BURNLEY

Sean Dyche Simple pressing as a team

Overview:

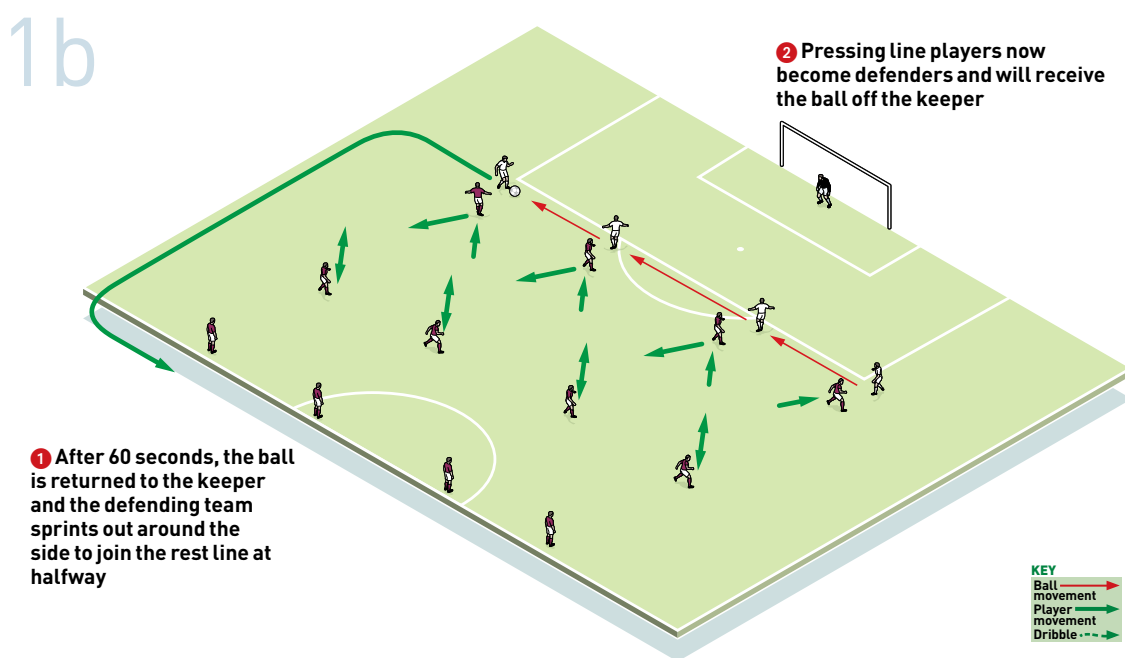
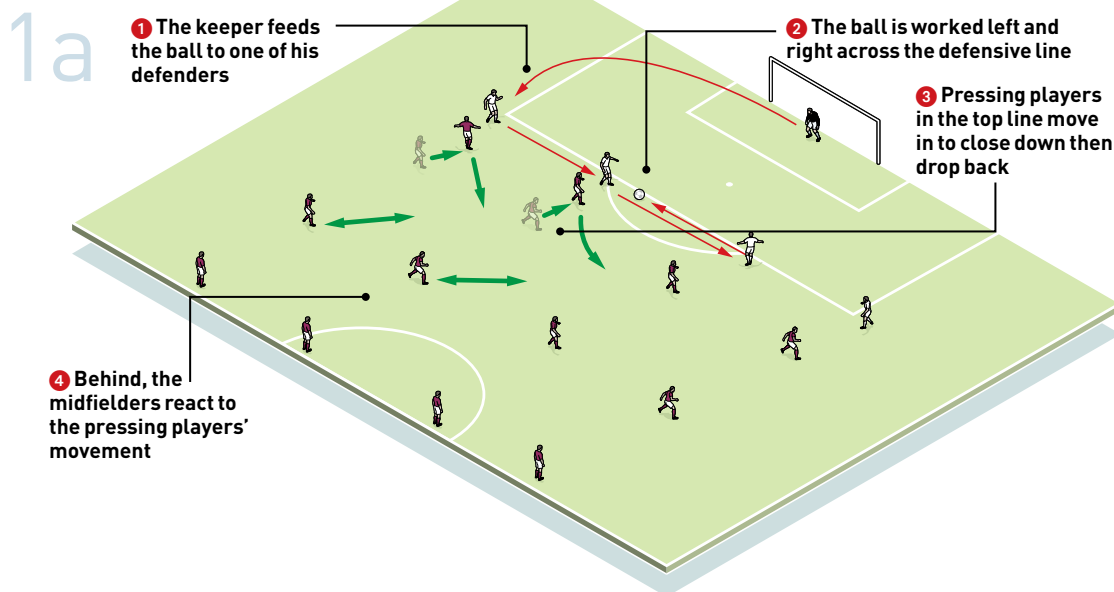
This session teaches players simple tactical understanding for pressing as a team. It's important to practise this because pressing forces mistakes in opposition build-up play, particularly in sides who like to pass the ball out from the back. That means, in the context of a game, we can gain or change momentum.

The session acts as an excellent practice for all team members. Even outside of pressing, it coaches stamina, communication and concentration.

And it should be remembered, the physical demands of pressing are paid back by teams winning the ball high up the pitch – in other words, already in danger areas. That means a quicker creation of chances and the retaining of momentum.

“The physical demands of pressing are paid back by teams winning the ball high up the pitch.”

SIMPLE PRESSING AS A TEAM



SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, target goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 11v11

SESSION TIME

Shape line pressing drill 10mins,
8v6 20mins,
10v10 (plus keeper) phase 20mins,
11v11 game 30mins

What do I get the players to do?

Shape pressing line drill

Setting up as shown on a half pitch, a defender in the back four receives from the keeper then passes two-touch across the back four, with the ball moving left and right (1a).

The trigger player starts the press - the pressing line works by

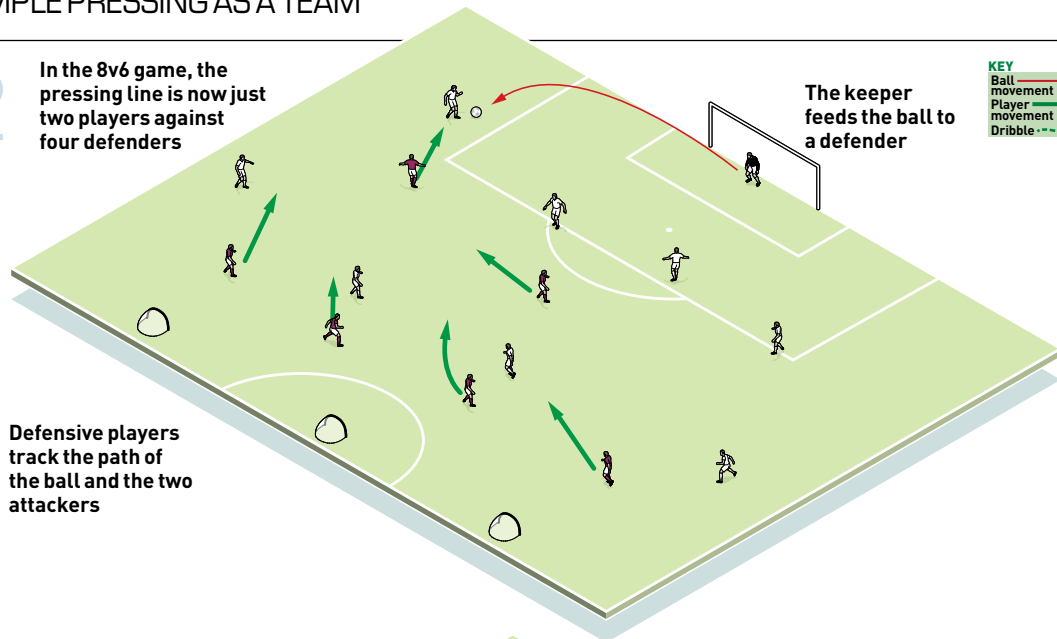
shuffling and sliding in relation to the position of the ball, but players do not tackle, they merely work together in forming a strong pressing line. Non-pressing players in the line must drop off, ready to move forward should the player in position send the ball to a team mate. Behind them, the defensive line subsequently shuffles and slides as well.

After a time period to be designated by the coach – we would recommend a minimum of one minute – the defensive back four jogs out to the rest line (1b). The team who were at the front pressing line now turn around and become defenders, receiving a pass from the keeper to begin, as the move is repeated.

SIMPLE PRESSING AS A TEAM

2

In the 8v6 game, the pressing line is now just two players against four defenders



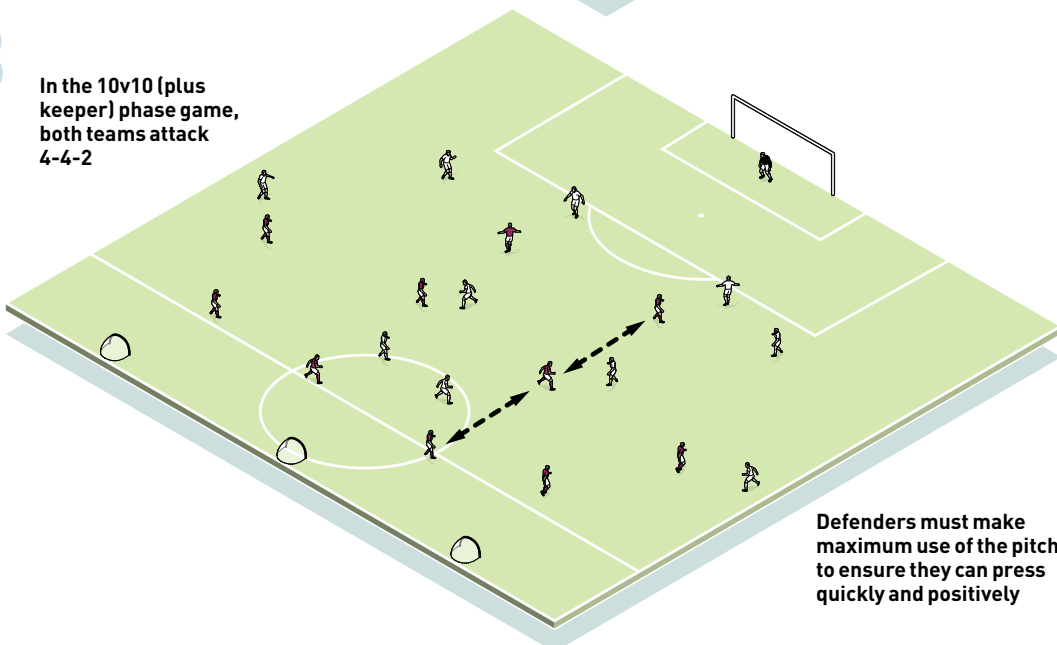
The keeper feeds the ball to a defender

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

Defensive players track the path of the ball and the two attackers

3

In the 10v10 (plus keeper) phase game, both teams attack 4-4-2



Defenders must make maximum use of the pitch to ensure they can press quickly and positively

“The key directives are pressing, team shape, keeping the same side as the ball, and maintaining good distances between members in each back four.”

8v6 phase

Now set up 8v6, as shown (2), as the defending team (of eight players) begins by being fed the ball by the keeper. The aim here is to move the ball upfield and score in any one of the three small goals. The attacking team of six must score in the big goal.

We want to encourage the two centre-forwards to compress, giving their midfield line of four time to

adjust in taking up good supporting pressing positions. Again, two-touch conditions can be applied to the defenders in order to encourage attackers to press. We would then remove these conditions to see how players react to the change.

What are the key things to look out for?

In each set-up, the key directives are pressing, team shape,

keeping the same side as the ball, and maintaining good distances between team members in each back four – this, ideally, will be a distance that can be covered in two strides. Players must have front foot thinking, always ready to move forward quickly in order to close down or receive the ball.

Players operating in the back four should have their shoulders side-on in case of a

long ball being played forward.

10v10 (plus keeper) phase

This is a new set-up which means us extending the pitch length by 20 yards. It's now 4-4-2 versus 4-4-2, so an equal two-way practice in terms of team size, although each side still has to attack different types of goals (3).



Sean Dyche

BURNLEY

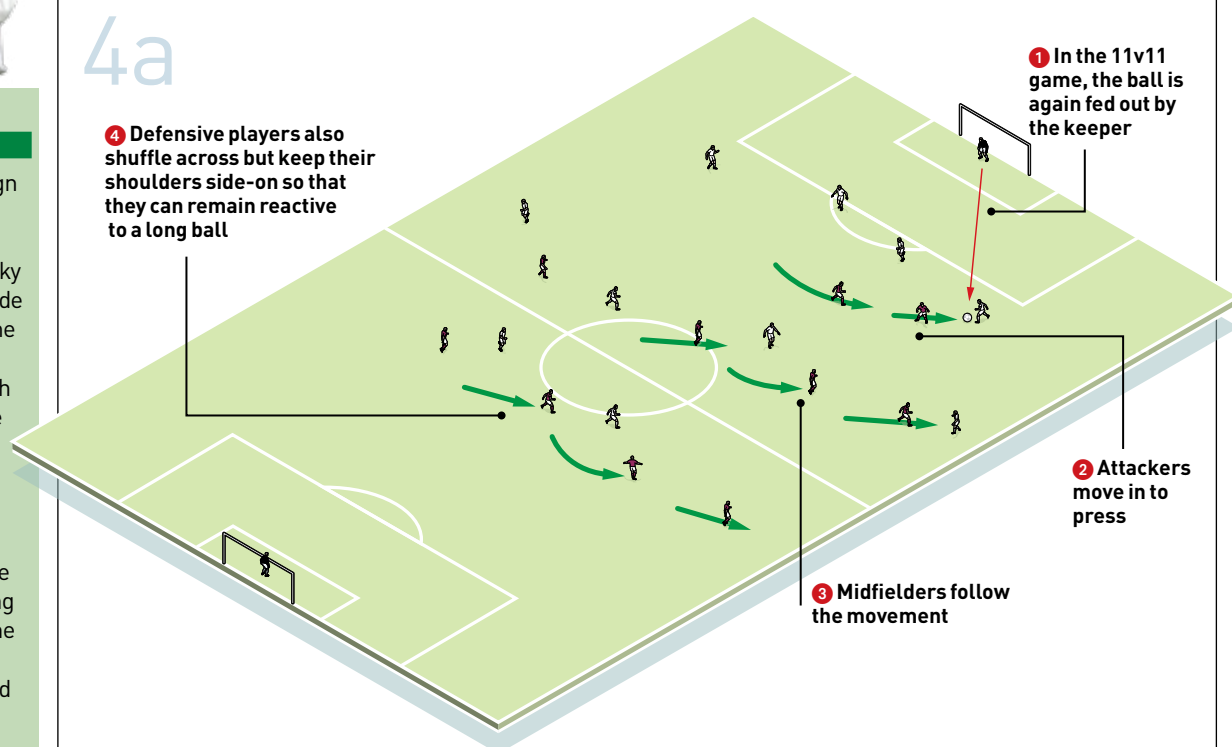
The 2012/13 campaign saw Sean Dyche complete his first season in charge of Sky Bet Championship side Burnley. He guided the club to a comfortable mid-table finish - 11th - having achieved the exact same feat with Watford 12 months previously.

The 42-year-old is regarded as one of the most promising young managers in the game - little surprise given the experience gained through an extensive playing career that saw Dyche star for the likes of Chesterfield, Bristol City, Luton Town, Millwall, Watford and Northampton Town.

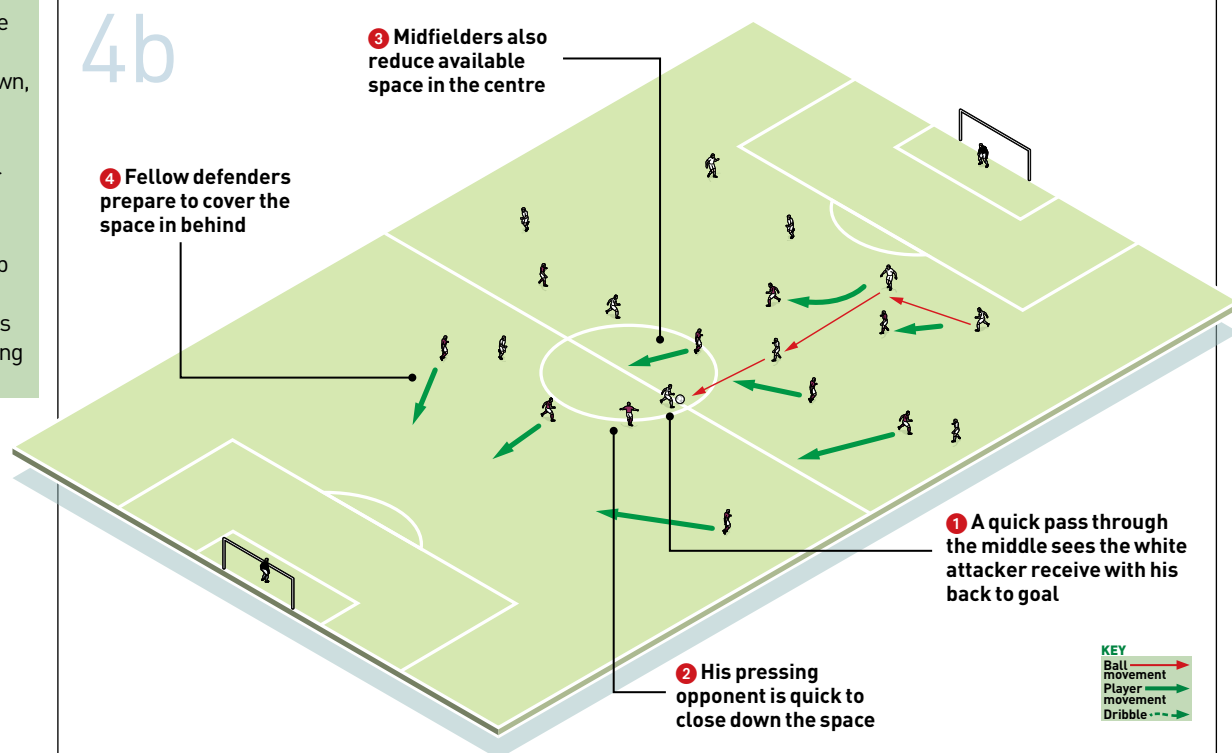
The rugged defender clocked up over 500 senior appearances, making it to an FA Cup semi-final as well as guiding multiple sides to promotions. He hung up his boots in 2007.

SIMPLE PRESSING AS A TEAM

4a



4b



KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

“Players must shuffle and slide as a team, but must be compact within this shape.”

11v11 game

We now move onto a full pitch (4a). Sideways distances between the back four remain the same, but due to the lengthened pitch we now want to see players showing awareness too of

distances between the lines.

In the 11v11 we are also working even more closely on the trigger, namely the player who starts the press. This could be the wide man, the centre-forward, or

anyone else. Again, players must shuffle and slide as a team, but must be compact within this shape.

We look too for recovery lines to be adhered to if the press is beaten (4b). ■

SHEFFIELD
WEDNESDAY

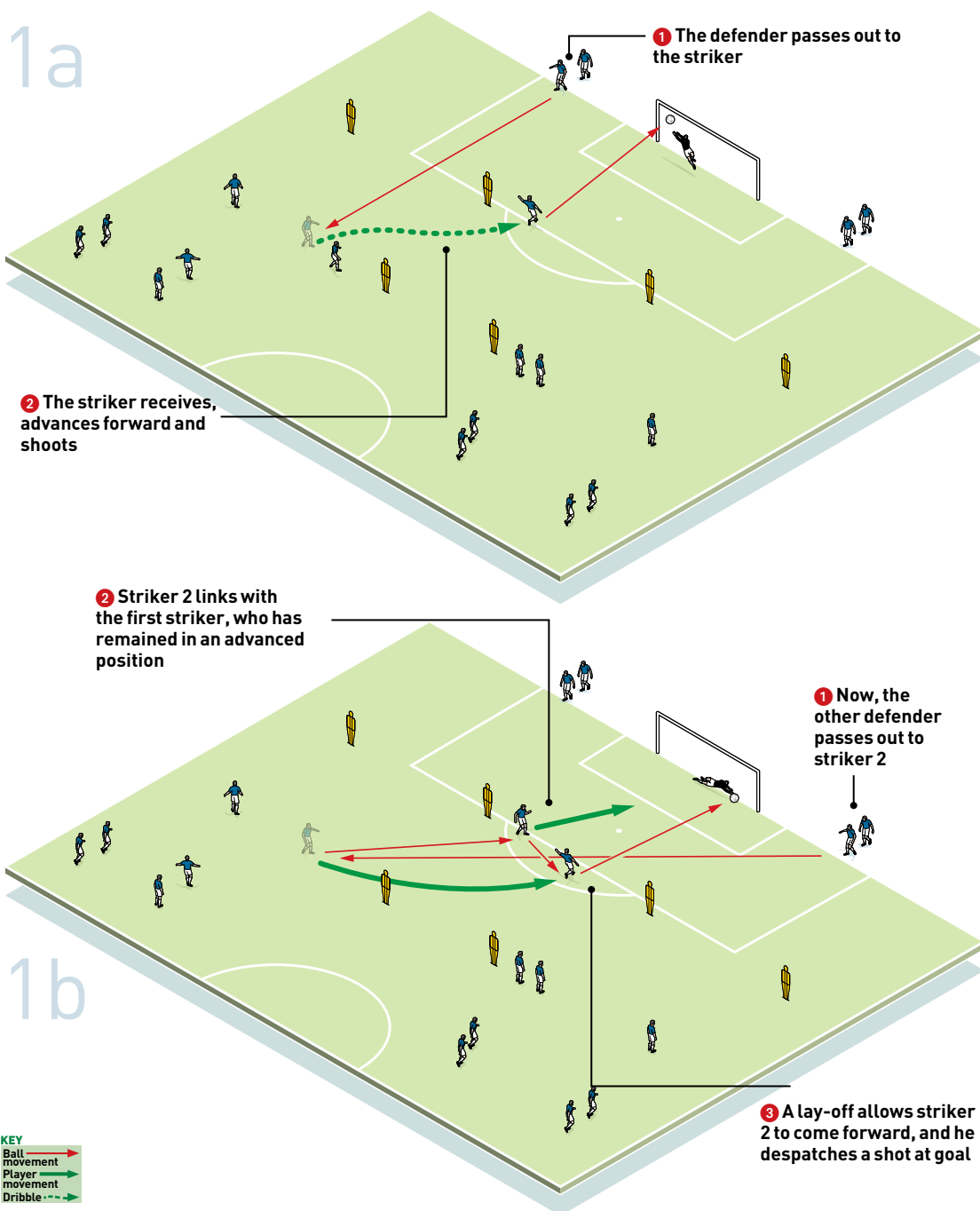
Dave Jones Crossing and finishing

Overview:

This is an all-round session for all players – strikers, midfielders, wide players, full-backs, defenders and goalkeepers – and uses the basis of attackers having three separate attempts on goal. I like this session because it can be adapted for any formation, and has the important feature of an end product – namely goals being scored.

It's vital for my players that whatever we take into a match situation has been practised with realism and match intensity on the training ground.

CROSSING AND FINISHING



SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, mannequins

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 20

SESSION TIME

Main practice 20mins,
Progression 10mins

What do I get the players to do?

Main practice

Setting up as shown, the first defender begins the practice by passing out diagonally from beside the goal. Striker 1 receives the ball, dribbles it forward, then shoots at goal (1a). He remains in position. Immediately, the

defender on the other side of the goal feeds striker 2. The striker receives, makes a one-two with striker 1, then shoots (1b). Striker 1 can follow in for any rebounds.

For the third phase of this practice, a new defender feeds the deep-lying midfielder. He plays wide for combination play between the

left midfielder and the overlapping left full-back (1c). The full-back advances and plays a cross for the two strikers, who are joined by the midfielder in the box, for an attempt at goal (1d).



Dave Jones

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

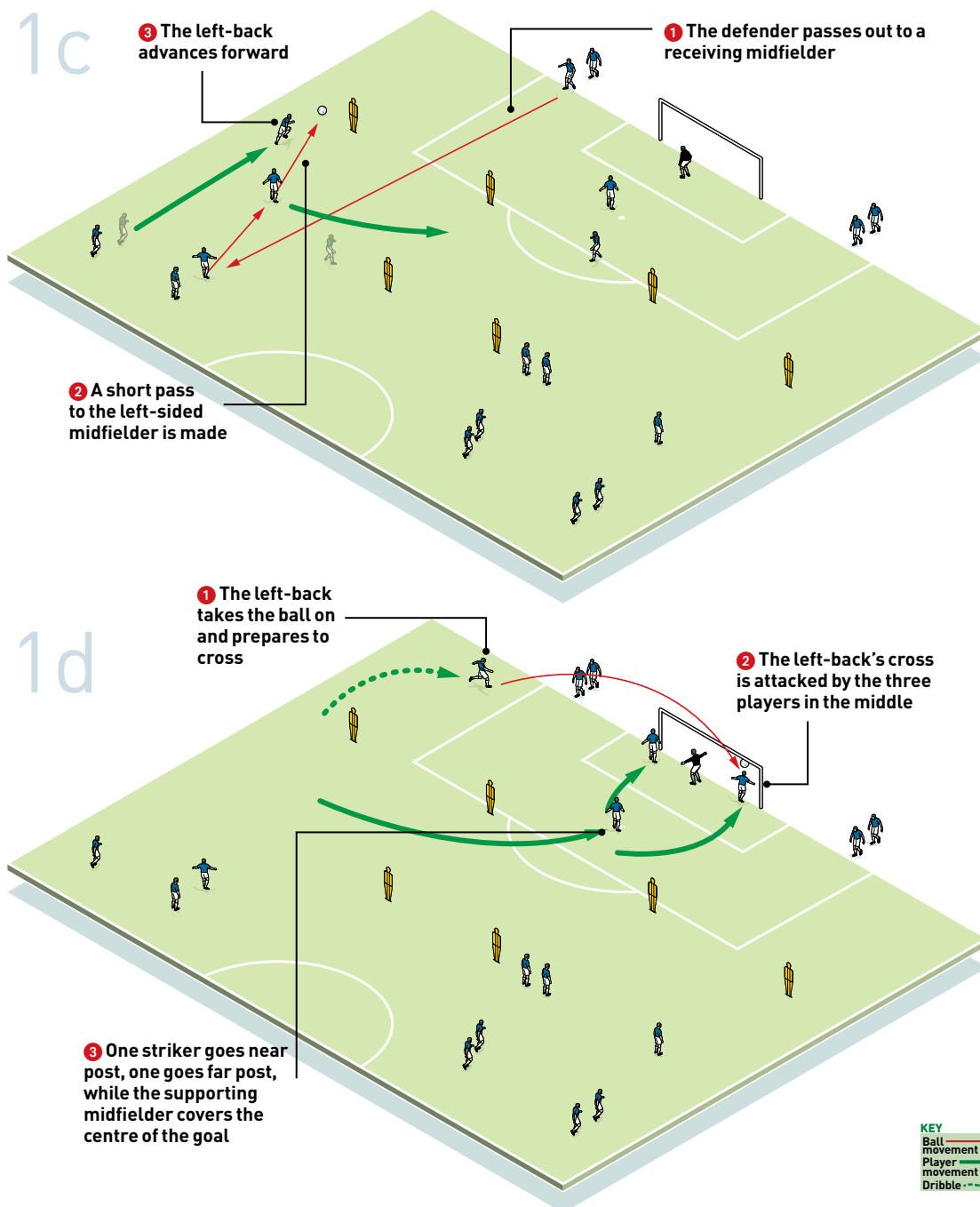
Dave Jones became manager of Sheffield Wednesday on March 1, 2012, and within two months had guided the club to promotion from League One. He continued the club's upward momentum last season by securing the Yorkshire club's Championship status with a solid run of form at the tail end of the season.

Jones has previously taken charge at Cardiff City, Southampton and Stockport County, and guided Wolverhampton Wanderers into the Premier League in 2004.

As a player, he was a fearless defender, who starred for Everton, Coventry City, Preston North End and Hong Kong outfit Seiko.

"It's vital for my players that whatever we take into a match situation has been practised with realism and match intensity on the training ground."

CROSSING AND FINISHING



What are the key things to look out for?

Looking at the technical aspect, the move relies on a series of accomplished passes and touches. Positive, quick and accurate passes must be made - by the defender who feeds to the striker to go on and shoot, and by

the midfielder who plays the ball out wide for the combination play on the wing. All players need to show a good first touch, particularly the striker, who must also be confident shooting on the run. Finally, we're looking for a good quality of cross into the box.

In tactical terms,

timing of runs into the right areas of the box by both strikers and midfielders is essential, with strikers needing to occupy near post, middle of goal and far post positions.

How do I progress the session?

We progress the session by making it opposed, with the addition of three defenders in the area in front of goal. These work one-on-one with the strikers in defending the cross from the wing. ■

ROCHDALE

Keith Hill and Chris Beech

Improving attacking players in and around the box

Overview:

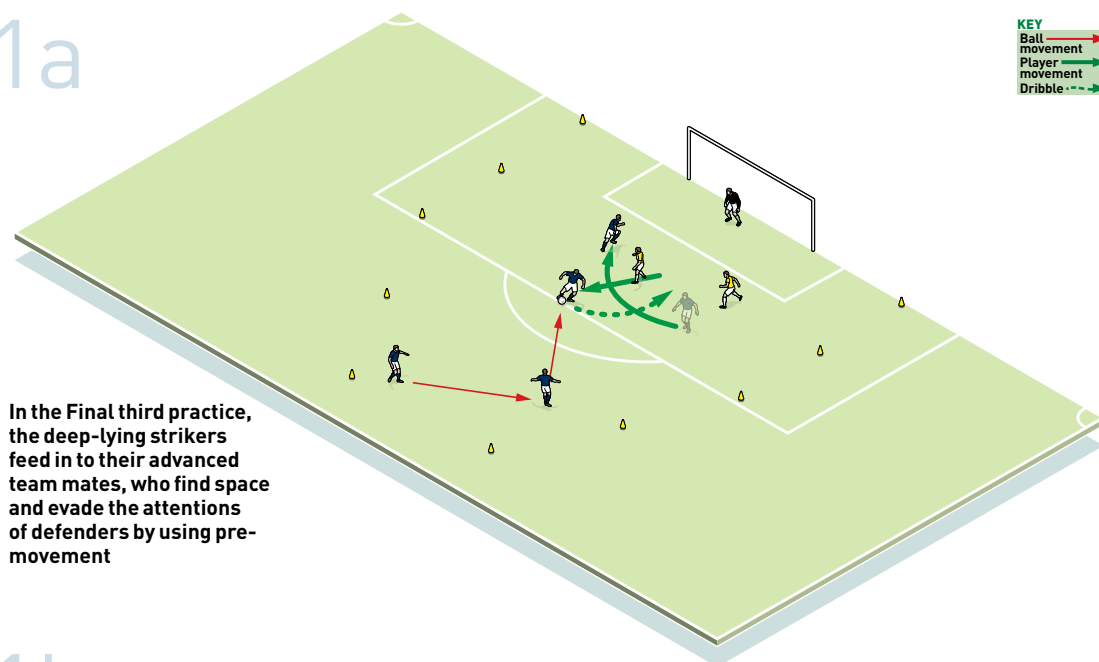
This session improves attacking players in key skill areas – namely in pre-movement (dynamic and elusive), penetration (with and without the ball), link-up play, plus the ability to focus on positive outcomes.

It's important to practise attacking scenarios in and around the box because it refines player knowledge in terms of the positions they need to occupy, gives them confidence to take opportunities that come their way, and also helps with getting the ball in behind the opposition.

We know this works for us – in our final 18 games in the 2012/13 season we saw 22% of our goals being scored from 'drive and slide' passes and pre-movements, all elements practised

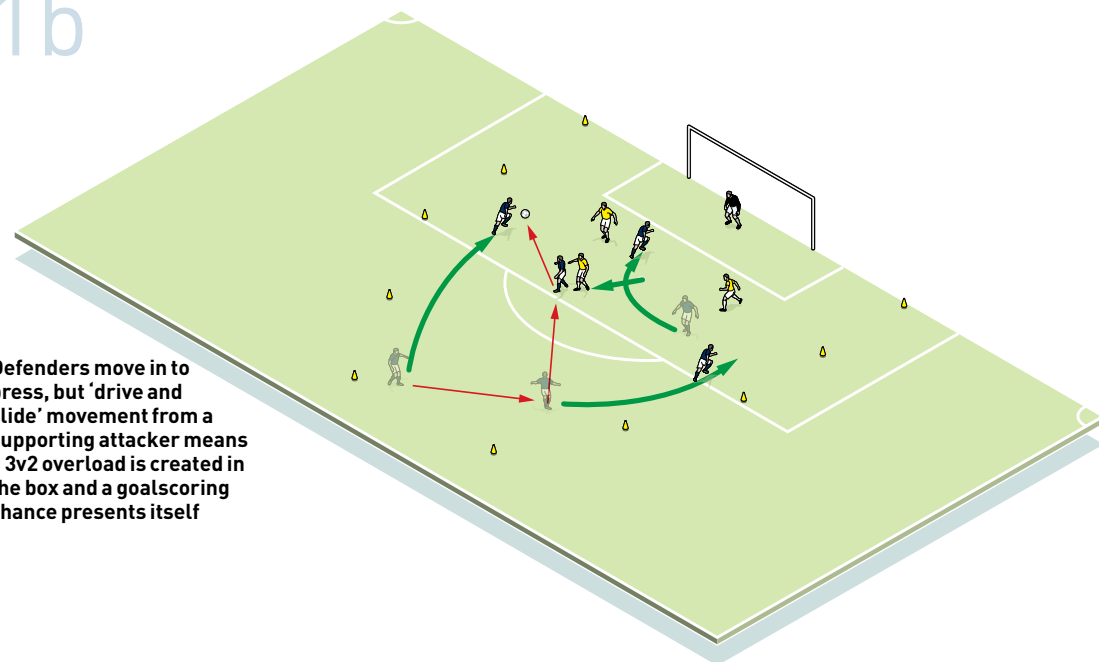
IMPROVING ATTACKING PLAYERS IN AND AROUND THE BOX

1a



In the Final third practice, the deep-lying strikers feed in to their advanced team mates, who find space and evade the attentions of defenders by using pre-movement

1b



Defenders move in to press, but 'drive and slide' movement from a supporting attacker means a 3v2 overload is created in the box and a goalscoring chance presents itself

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a third of a pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 8v8

SESSION TIME

Final third practice
15mins,
Small-sided game
4x5mins

What do I get the players to do?

Final third practice

We set up as shown, with four attackers going up against two defenders (1a), who can only press and tackle when one of the two attackers immediately in front of them receives the ball. Defenders and attackers are separated, at first, by a gap of four yards.

The deeper attackers link up and feed the ball in. The attackers nearer the goal are encouraged to move as opposites to one another, creating space in front of the defenders. Once one player has received the ball, one of the deeper attackers can join to create a 3v2 situation in front of goal (1b). However an attack ends, play resets and restarts.

We can progress the practice by adding an extra defender, or by allowing both deeper attackers to join in the attack once the first ball has been played.

What are the key things to look out for?

Players must move before the ball arrives (pre-movement) using dynamic and elusive actions, while 'drive and slide' runs mean



**Keith Hill and
Chris Beech**

ROCHDALE

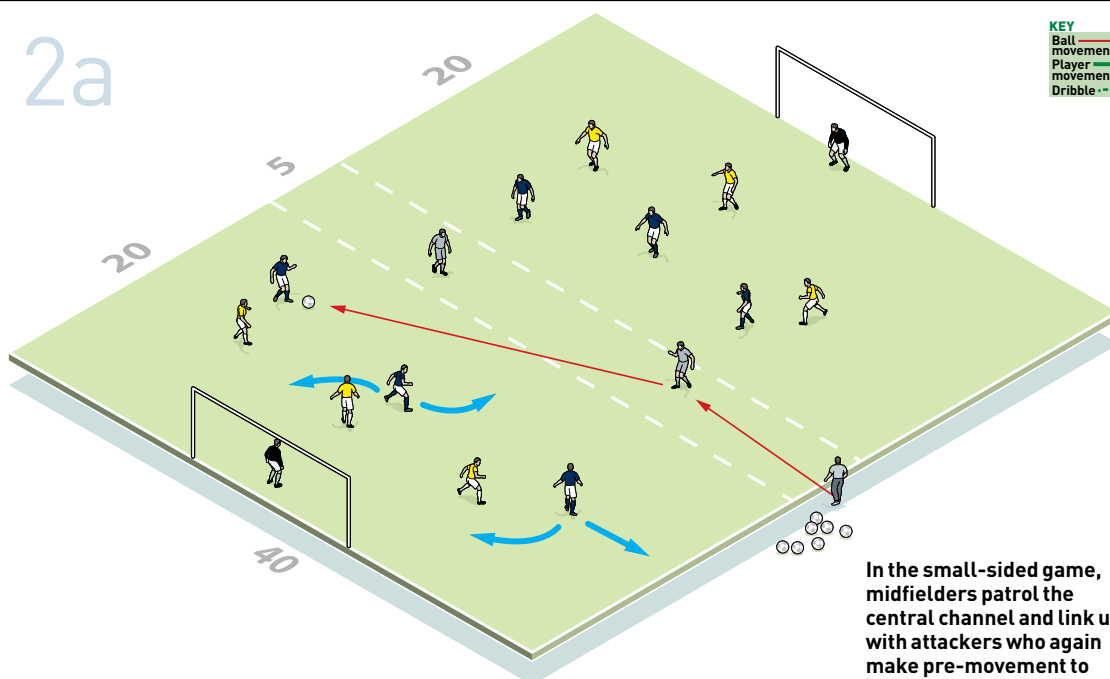
Keith Hill is in his second spell at Sky Bet League Two side Rochdale having previously managed the Lancashire club between 2006 and 2011. Supported by assistant manager Chris Beech who, like Hill, is a former Rochdale player, the duo are looking to return the club to League One in the upcoming 2013/14 campaign.

Hill, 44, who has also taken charge at Championship side Barnsley, made over 400 appearances as a player, notably for Blackburn Rovers, Plymouth Argyle and 'Dale.

“Players must move before the ball arrives (pre-movement) using dynamic and elusive actions, while ‘drive and slide’ runs mean quick, distinguished and fast passes to team mates on the move.”

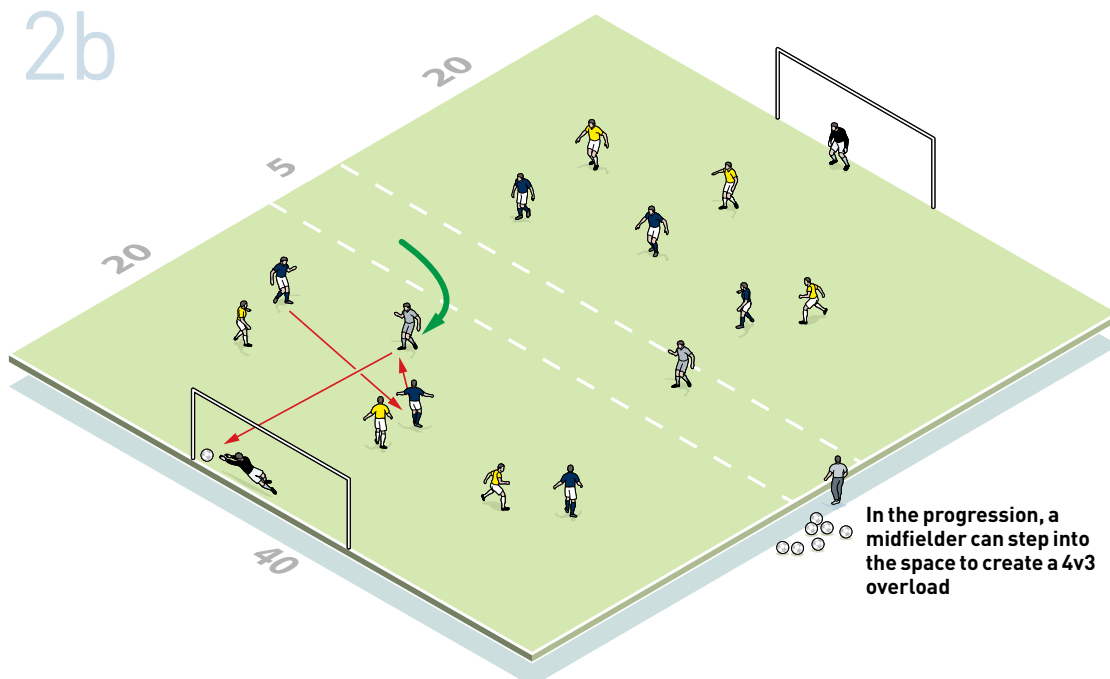
IMPROVING ATTACKING PLAYERS IN AND AROUND THE BOX

2a



In the small-sided game, midfielders patrol the central channel and link up with attackers who again make pre-movement to evade the attentions of defenders

2b



In the progression, a midfielder can step into the space to create a 4v3 overload

quick, distinguished and fast passes to team mates on the move. We also want to see good receiving on the back foot, plus combination and link-up play, and a positive goalscoring end product.

Small-sided game

Moving into a game situation, as shown (2a), a 5-yard wide mid-zone represents a free and unopposed area for two neutral midfielders – no other players can enter this area.

Attackers combine with the midfielders to attack each goal (2b).

Defenders turning over possession feed the ball into the midfielders, while successful attacks restart with the server. This time, we progress by allowing midfielders to step in to create 4v3 overloads, particularly if attackers are struggling to create

and score. We will also encourage one-touch finishing.

Finally, we'll remove the mid-zone for an 8v8 that looks to replicate previous outcomes. ■

AFCWIMBLEDON

Shaun North Short pass switching

Overview:

This session is about switching play, and caters for players in all areas of the pitch. It's an important practice for any team, because being able to switch play makes the pitch bigger. In addition, attacking options become potentially more plentiful, and certainly less predictable.

"We want to see an open body position - players being ready to receive the ball and move it on quickly when necessary."

SHORT PASS SWITCHING

SET-UP

AREA

Up to 60x30 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, target goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 8v8

SESSION TIME

Boxes in the box and progression 40mins, 8v8 game 20mins

What do I get the players to do?

Boxes in the box

Setting up as shown (1), we use a 30x30-yard playing area with four 5x5-yard boxes inside it. There are 16 players involved - two teams of six plus four more in the small boxes.

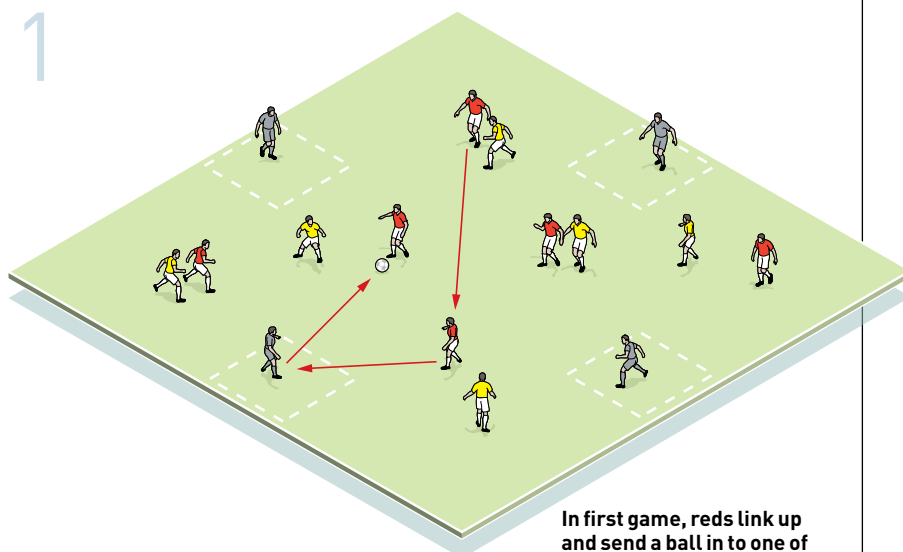
The game is yellows versus reds, with grey neutrals fixed in their boxes.

Teams must link up in possession, passing the ball into a grey neutral. The ball can enter the box from any side, and these greys then pass it out to a player on the same team. The ball can come out of any side and any team completing 10 consecutive passes (including those involving box players) earns a point. If yellows turn over possession, box players now link up with them.

How do I progress the session?

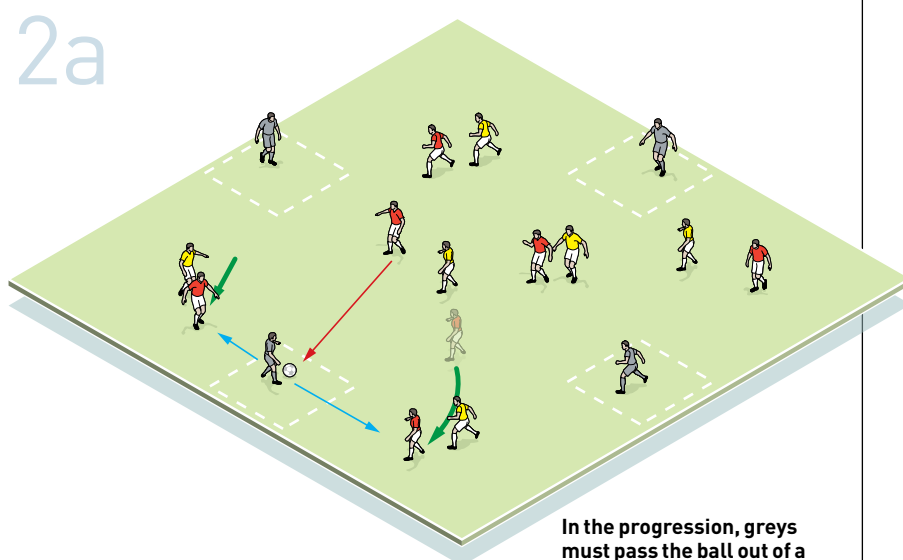
To progress, the ball now cannot come out the same side of the box that it entered (2a). This makes both teams think more

1



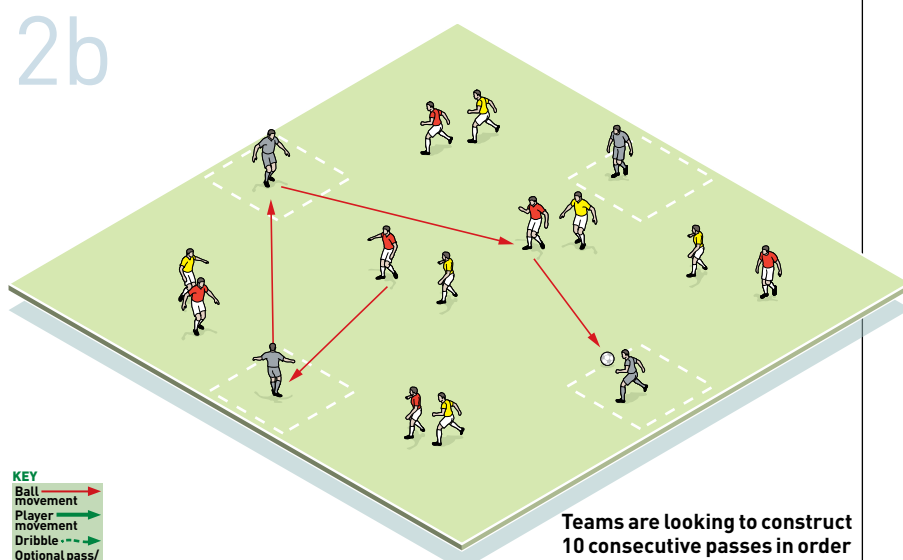
In first game, reds link up and send a ball in to one of the neutral greys

2a

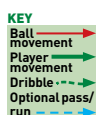


In the progression, greys must pass the ball out of a different side of the box to where it entered

2b



Teams are looking to construct 10 consecutive passes in order to score a point





Shaun North
AFC WIMBLEDON

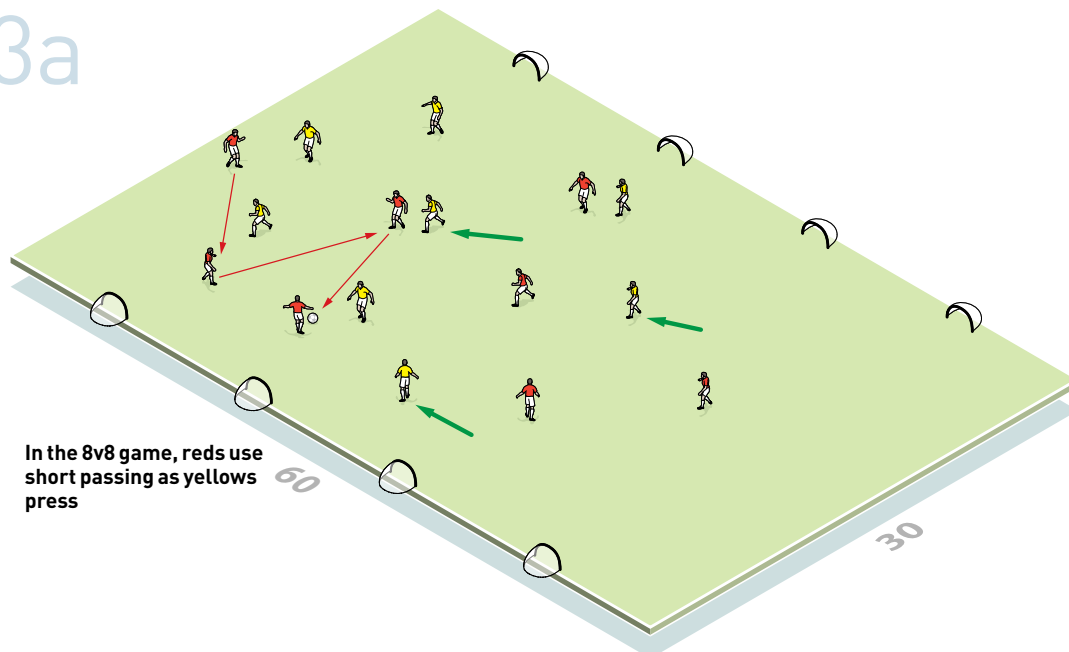
Shaun North is Under-21s Development Coach at Sky Bet League Two side AFC Wimbledon.

He is a vastly experienced coach, having spent 14 years developing young players at Portsmouth's academy when the club were in the Premier League.

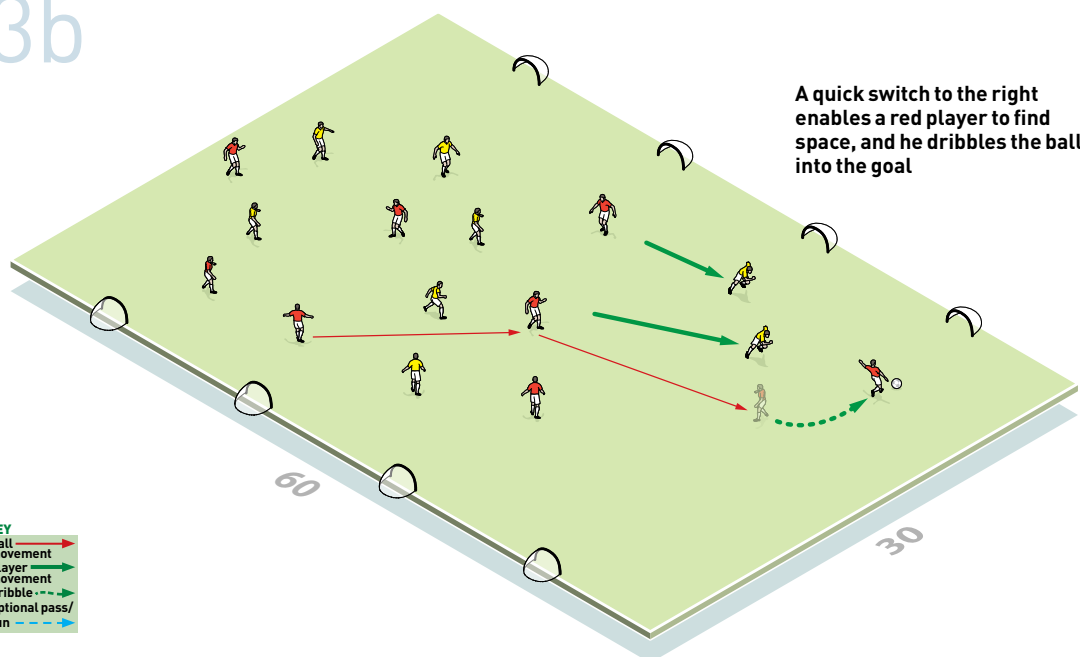
The 53-year-old most recently worked at Bristol Rovers, having also been assistant manager at Torquay United and reserve team manager at Oxford United.

SHORT PASS SWITCHING

3a



3b



KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble
Optional pass/run

“Being able to switch play makes the pitch bigger. In addition, attacking options become potentially more plentiful, and certainly less predictable.”

about positioning and improves awareness. It also increases the speed of the game since box players will want to pass the ball out quicker given that space around the box is less plentiful and will be closed down more easily by the non-scoring team. Box players are also able to link directly with other box players (2b).

8v8 game

In the 8v8 game, we set up as shown (3a), with players defending one end and attacking the other. Teams can score in any of the four goals by dribbling into it, and can move the ball around using short and long switches of play (3b).

What are the key things to look out for?

In both games, we want to see an open body position – players being ready to receive the ball and move it on quickly when necessary. A precise first touch is, of course, essential, as is a side having good supporting options, with players positioning

themselves at sensible angles and distances from team mates. Strong awareness of other players is essential, and a high quality of pass (with accuracy and a good weight) is another prerequisite. ■

PORTVALE

Jimmy Bell Possession and finishing

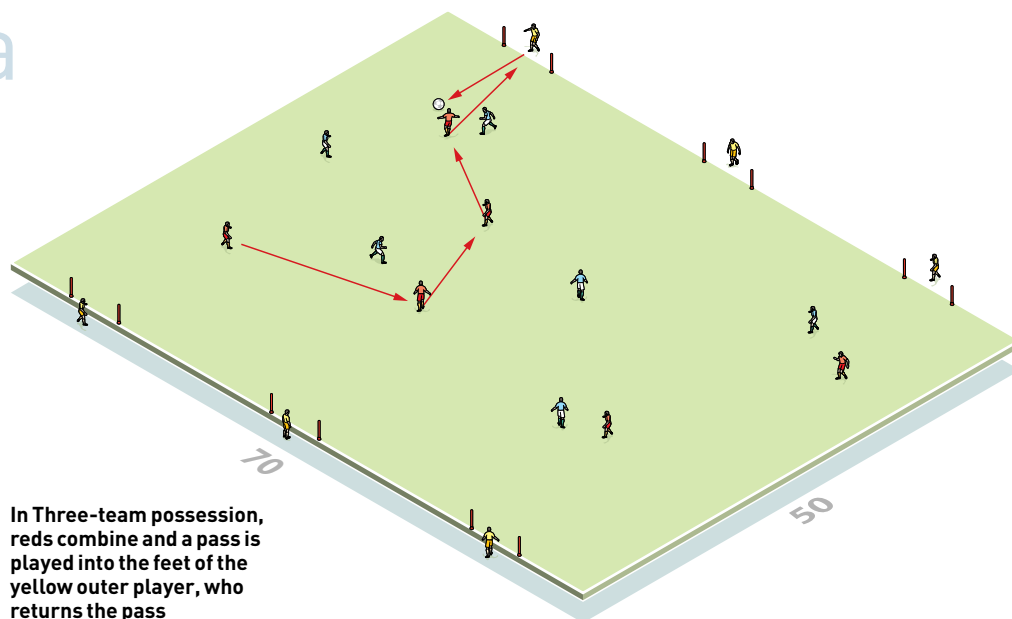
Overview:

This is a possession session that develops into a finishing challenge. It requires high tempo throughout and lots of legwork from players.

At every club I've worked at there has always been real attention paid to the core principles of possession and work rate. There is nothing more satisfying than seeing the principles learned from this type of session - with players retaining the ball, feeding it wide and crossing for a finish into the net - coming off in a match.

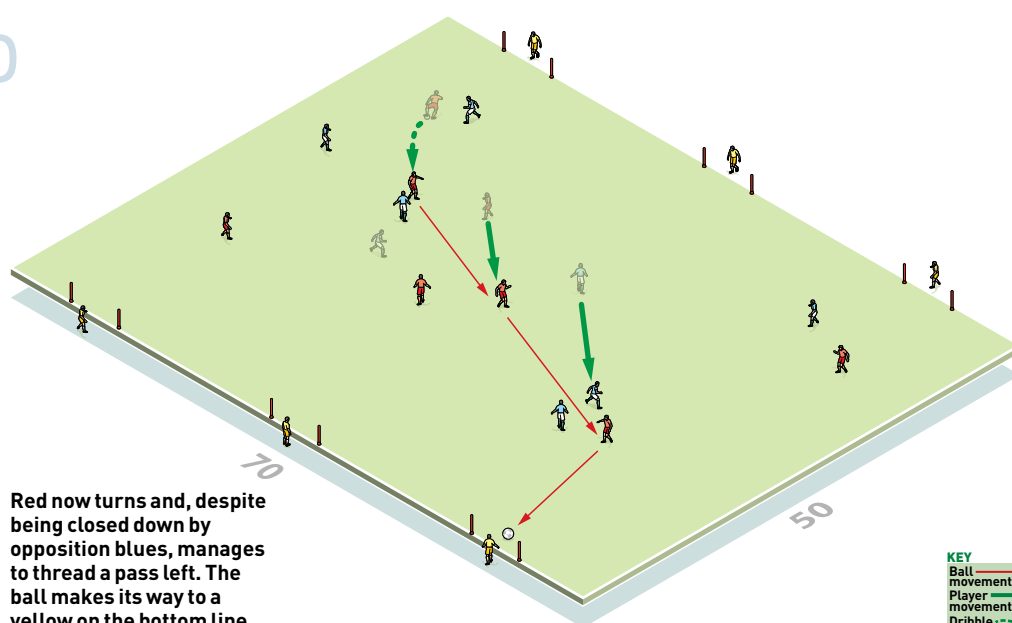
POSSESSION AND FINISHING

1a



In Three-team possession, reds combine and a pass is played into the feet of the yellow outer player, who returns the pass

1b



Red now turns and, despite being closed down by opposition blues, manages to thread a pass left. The ball makes its way to a yellow on the bottom line

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, poles

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

18

SESSION TIME

Three-team possession 30mins,
Possession with a finish 30mins

What do I get the players to do?

Three-team possession

For a playing area, we use the middle section of a full pitch – the full width and 10 yards in from each penalty area, although can alternatively set up a 70x50-yard space. As shown (1a), we use 18 players split as three teams, although

can introduce extra players in the middle as floaters, who operate with the team in or out of possession. Players in possession (in the example, it's either reds or blues) must pass to team mates, then try to get the ball to any outer yellow player. Once a successful pass is made into a yellow, the ball is returned

immediately. The team must then turn and attack the opposite line of yellows (1b).

We play for five minutes then rotate teams – each must play as the outer side twice.

“There is nothing more satisfying than seeing the principles learned from this type of session coming off in a match.”



Jimmy Bell

PORTVALE

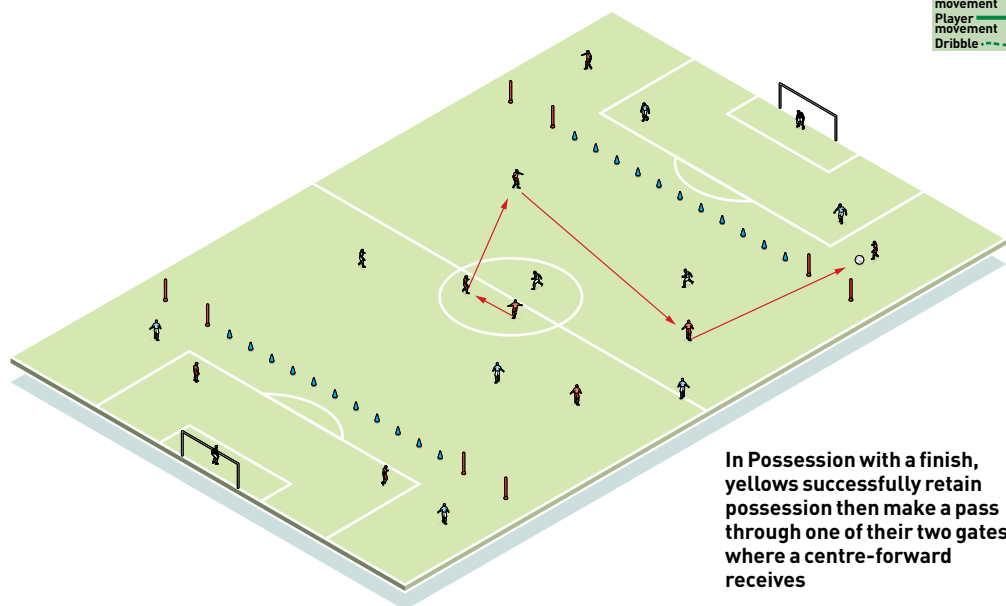
Jimmy Bell joined npower League One side Port Vale in the summer of 2013 as Development Coach.

Prior to arriving at Vale Park, the 48-year-old spent over a decade as assistant manager to John Coleman at Accrington Stanley, and has also worked with the next breed of youngsters coming through the ranks at Crewe Alexandra and Rochdale.

In his playing days, Bell featured for a number of non-league sides, including Burscough, South Liverpool, Winsford United, Rhyl and Knowsley United.

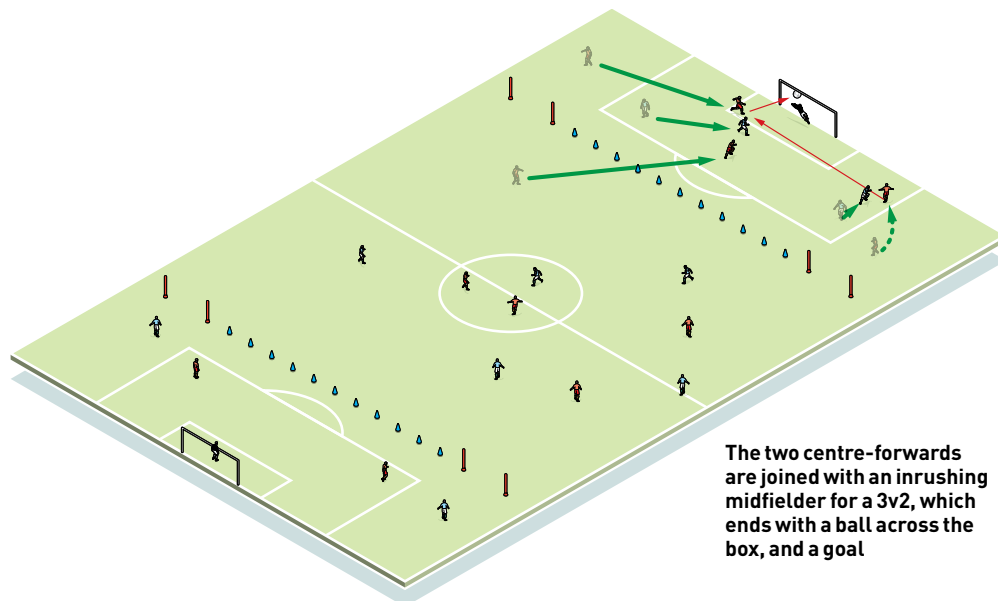
POSSESSION AND FINISHING

2a



In Possession with a finish, yellows successfully retain possession then make a pass through one of their two gates where a centre-forward receives

2a



The two centre-forwards are joined with an intruding midfielder for a 3v2, which ends with a ball across the box, and a goal

Possession and a finish

We now extend the playing area into a full pitch, creating gates as shown, and with defenders and a keeper waiting in each penalty area. Players in the central area keep possession as they did in the first practice, but now have one designated end to attack. When attacking, they have to

pass the ball through the left or right gate to a centre-forward. This receiving player moves towards the penalty box, supported by the centre-forward on the opposite side, and a midfield runner. This creates a 3v2 attack - we're looking for attackers to combine and score in the goal.

We can progress the game by allowing the player in the central

area to run straight into the end zone without having to pass through the poles. This gives the centre-forward more space to finish.

What are the key things to look out for?

In **Three-team possession**, we want to see comfortable possession, movement and running, with players

aware of the positions of both team mates and opponents.

In **Possession and a finish**, we're additionally looking for attacking intent, finishing skills and a willingness to take up key positions in the box. ■

"We're looking for attacking intent, finishing skills and a willingness to take up key positions in the box."

EXTRA-TIME

HARRY REDKNAPP QPR

There are few in the game who have the depth of knowledge and experience of Harry Redknapp. And as he reveals to Elite Soccer magazine, it has enabled him to view football in a way that is probably more philosophical than most.

What were the biggest lessons you learnt in those early days of coaching at Oxford City and then AFC Bournemouth?

Certainly that you can't be everybody's friend. When I first took over at Bournemouth I felt very much on my own. It was pretty much just me and the kit man. Money was also tight at that time, so I didn't have many staff to bounce ideas off or talk to. When you first become a manager, it can be a pretty lonely existence.

You're not able to be friends with the players anymore; you're sitting at the front of the coach on your own rather than at the back having a laugh with the rest of the team. And you take the job home with you; if you get beaten, the whole weekend is a disaster.

What gives you the most motivation day-to-day?

In football, you can only really think about the week ahead. You rarely get a chance to enjoy your success, because within 30 minutes of one game finishing, you're thinking about the next match. It means you don't have the time to sit back and dwell on your achievements. This business is entirely results-led; five or six bad results and your position can be in jeopardy.

I love to watch players do fantastic things in training, as well as on a match day. When you have a great team and they're zipping the ball about and scoring goals, it's like watching a great racehorse on the gallops.

How important do you think cultural fit is between a manager and his club?

I think a good manager can be successful anywhere. Being a good judge of players is key to that success. A bad judge will buy bad players. You have to be convinced that there is something important in every player you buy, something that will improve your team and create the right balance.

How would you describe your own style of leadership?

I believe that confidence plays a huge part in all walks of life and try to instil self-belief in my players. I don't criticise them too often and if, on occasion, I do get stuck into them they know they deserve it. I tell them straight what I think. However, I'm not one for shouting and hollering – I'd rather explain to them what they can do to improve and give them encouragement.

I am pretty relaxed and laid back, so I'm not one for stringent rules, fining players or ruling with an iron fist. I try to treat my players as responsible adults – if they can't respond to that and behave themselves, I don't want them in my team.

How do you maintain such a well balanced outlook when the job is fraught with pressure?

When things aren't going well it is, of course, difficult to remain relaxed. However, it helps that I'm able to go home to my family and have quality time with them. My wife Sandra and I are involved with charities like Leukaemia Busters and the Round Table Children's Wish, and that certainly keeps the

football part of my life in perspective. I love football and, like everyone in the game, I want to be very successful. But I also know that there are other important things in life – when all is said and done, football is a game, not a matter of life and death.



"I believe that confidence plays a huge part in all walks of life and try to instil self-belief in my players. I don't criticise them too often and if, on occasion, I do get stuck into them they know they deserve it. I tell them straight what I think."

BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

By James Evans

The philosophical world

A PHILOSOPHY OF SPORT
Steven Connor, £17.00

Steven Connor's stake on the philosophy of sport is a revealing journey into the true workings of the sporting mind.

The notion of the philosophy in sport is one fired around by coaches, fans, players and pundits alike, but all too often we're happy enough to let the phrase do the talking, without properly exploring what basis we give to what might also be described as the unwritten rule of competitive understanding.

To properly appreciate what goes into representing the frame of competition, we have to first explore where sport's roots truly originate from, and Steven Connor's understanding of this is better than any I've read previously. He judges ethics, aesthetics and logical categorisation in attempting to define what sport truly means, and why it is, as human beings, we have an appreciation of these most playful exercises.

Connor looks at the development of sport over time, and how it fits with the socio-political and economic values of this and past eras offers intriguing

clues into why our obsession carries through generations. Indeed, the author comes to the conclusion that sport isn't just a method by which we express ourselves in terms of pastimes and hobbies; it's actually a necessity of our lives, an investment that, for 99% of the population of the world, fuels a passion and investment in competition. Without it, in fact, Connor ponders how and where we would channel such large deposits of energy and aggression. He surmises the fact that sport is shown to be one of the most powerful ways in which we negotiate the relationship between the human and natural worlds.

A Philosophy of Sport also uses the philosophical research of Hegel, Freud, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Adorno, Sartre and others in presenting a landscape for how we feel today and, as importantly, how we should control and manage our passion for competition.



A soccer coach taking charge of a group of Under-9s on a Saturday morning may ask how relevant *A Philosophy of Sport* is to the core sensibilities of passing, dribbling and running. But the real 'take out value' of this book

"Appreciating why players behave the way they do means we can manage and educate them to perform better... not only on the football pitch, but in their everyday lives as well."

is in the way it encourages the reader to appreciate and react to the emotions and the decision-making that influences so much of soccer, no matter the age of the subjects or the standard of their play.

A good coach will know the thoughts and emotions that flood footballers' minds both during and after a game. So appreciating why players behave the way they do, and how such feelings come tied to the same historical foundations as those sportsmen who had expressed them before, means we can manage and educate them to perform better... not only on the football pitch, but in their everyday lives as well. ■



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We are very proud to be endorsed by some of the biggest names in soccer coaching and management, and we thank all of the contributors who, over the past three years, have made the title what it is today.

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