

ELITE SOCCER

COACHING PRACTICES FROM THE WORLD'S
LEADING MANAGERS AND COACHES

Exclusive
Training practices from top
professional managers

BURNLEY

SEAN DYCHE

PENETRATING AN ORGANISED DEFENCE

• TOUCH • PASSING • MOVEMENT



SHEFFIELD UNITED

**NIGEL
CLOUGH**
Competent
defending



YEOVIL TOWN

**GARY JOHNSON
& DARREN WAY**
Countering
with style



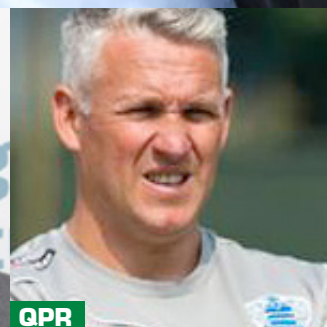
CHARLTON ATHLETIC

**PAUL
HART**
The Ajax
passing drill



CARDIFF CITY

**KEVIN
NICHOLSON**
Total
finishing



QPR

NICK DAWS
Developing play
through the
no.10

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: WITH CREWE ALEXANDRA MANAGER STEVE DAVIS



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ISSUE 48 / JULY 2014: FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Engaging practices from some of the leading names in soccer coaching

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the July issue of Elite Soccer.

The World Cup has provided us with some incredible passes, saves and goals so far, and the tournament is certainly living up to its reputation as the best sporting event on the planet.

Yet while we marvel at and admire those playing out their sporting dreams at the top level, we know where the real work begins – on the modest training pitches we call home!

So Elite Soccer has spent time with a further six leading names in the game to put together another selection of absorbing soccer blueprints. And just because it's the off-season for many of us, it doesn't lessen our passion for the game – indeed, in pagination terms this is the biggest ever issue of Elite Soccer.

So to begin, Burnley manager Sean Dyche talks us through how his side penetrated tight and resilient defences to promotion – achieving benefit last term, and why the popular Clarets boss believes the techniques outlined will be just as valuable when his side line up in the Barclays Premier League in August.

From Sky Bet League One, Sheffield United boss Nigel Clough explains the competent defensive principles that saw his side finish last season so well, while Yeovil Town boss Gary Johnson – ably assisted by coach Darren Way – shows us how to counter-attack with style.

Vastly experienced Charlton Athletic coach Paul Hart introduces a session based on the passing principles of Ajax, while much respected Cardiff City Head of Academy Kevin Nicholson returns to Elite Soccer with a session that's big on finishing prowess.

To conclude, QPR coach Nick Daws answers our Coaching Consultation question, revealing how devastating attacking angles can be gained through the no. 10.

We hope you enjoy this bumper issue, and remember to keep a lookout for our Elite Soccer Technical Masterclass special edition, which is out in the middle of July.

Enjoy your soccer,

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

Elite Soccer is a monthly publication for professional, semi-professional and aspiring soccer coaches and is available by subscription only. £97 for 12 issues.

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4
SEAN DYCHE
BURNLEY

Penetrating an organised defence



7
NIGEL CLOUGH
SHEFFIELD UNITED

Competent defending



9
GARY JOHNSON and Darren Way
YEovil TOWN

Counter-attacking with style



11
PAUL HART
CHARLTON ATHLETIC

The Ajax passing drill



13
KEVIN NICHOLSON
CARDIFF CITY

Total finishing



COACHING CONSULTATION

16
NICK DAWS
QPR

Developing play through the no. 10



3 **MANAGEMENT MATTERS**

Our review of the past month

19 **EXTRA-TIME:**
... with Steve Davis

21 **BOOKED**
Elite sports book review

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



Despite a memorable first season in charge of Manchester City for Manuel Pellegrini, during which the Blues scooped the league title, the Chilean was ultimately overlooked for the Barclays Premier League Manager of the Year Award, as Crystal Palace manager **Tony Pulis** clinched the prize after his side's incredible climb to safety. The unfancied London club recovered from taking only four points from their opening 12 games to finish in a comfortable mid-table position. Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers scooped the LMA Manager of the Year Award with the Merseysiders coming agonisingly close to their first



In English football's second tier, Leicester City manager **Nigel Pearson** took the award after guiding the Foxes back to the Premier League. There was an air of inevitability about the Midlands outfit's season, with their Sky Bet Championship rivals simply unable to live with the club's attacking power, which was only bettered by Derby County. City also broke the 100-point barrier in celebrating a return to the big time following an absence of 10 years, during which time they dropped into League One for a solitary season. The campaign would have been particularly satisfying for Pearson given that this is his second spell at the club.



In Sky Bet League One, two managers shared the award, with title-winning boss **Kenny Jackett** receiving recognition for taking Wolverhampton Wanderers back to the Championship at the first time of asking. The Molineux outfit lost only five times in the league all season. The other recipient of the award was Leyton Orient boss **Russell Slade**, who steered the Londoners to a remarkable third-placed finish after his side led the division for so long. Orient's play-off final defeat to Rotherham shouldn't, ultimately, stain what was an incredible campaign where the club belied the fact they had one of the division's smaller wage bills.



And finally in Sky Bet League Two, Scunthorpe United manager **Russ Wilcox** took the Manager of the Year plaudits after the Iron secured automatic promotion. Although the Lincolnshire outfit were beaten to the title by Chesterfield, Wilcox's incredible 28-match unbeaten run dating back to his appointment on Christmas Eve 2013 was a sensational achievement, with the club beaten only five times in the league all season. Wilcox, who had previously worked as assistant manager to Brian Laws at a number of sides, is also a former Scunthorpe player, having made 121 appearances for the Glanford Park outfit between 1997 and 2003.

CAREER PATH

.... with Chris Wilder, manager of Sky Bet League Two side Northampton Town

You stayed up on the final day after an incredible battle against the drop. Were you confident you would survive?

Yes I was, and that's why I came to the club. I could see the strength of the squad, and with some original ideas and renewed belief I always believed this group of players could see the job through. It was touch and go at the end, but a lot of sides

down the bottom were picking up points towards the end of the campaign, and we did brilliantly to survive.

You have talked a lot in the past about consistency being so important in football, right?

Yes I believe you have to build for the long-term. Naturally that's easier said than done with the way the game is today, but certainly looking forward now at Northampton there is a vision which is beyond one-year fixes. Coming from the very bottom of the Football League, we now have the

opportunity to show everyone what a long-term plan can achieve.

Have you had to adapt your management style since moving from non-league into the Football League?

No; at this level and the Conference the players are much the same. They want to play football, they want to look after their families and they want to succeed in what they do. They don't have the distractions of some of those at the top, and in many ways that's a huge advantage for any manager wanting absolute commitment from his team.



BURNLEY

Sean Dyche

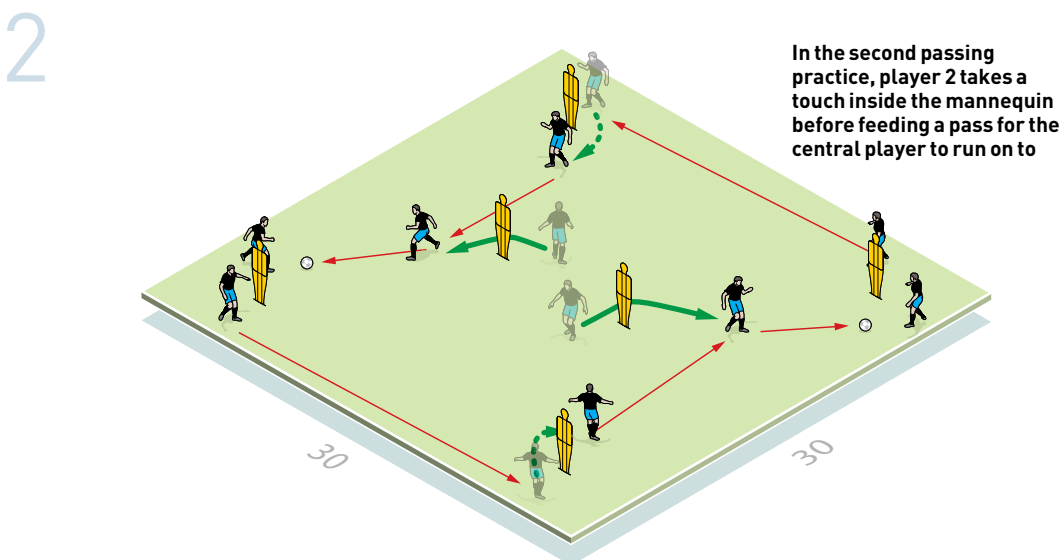
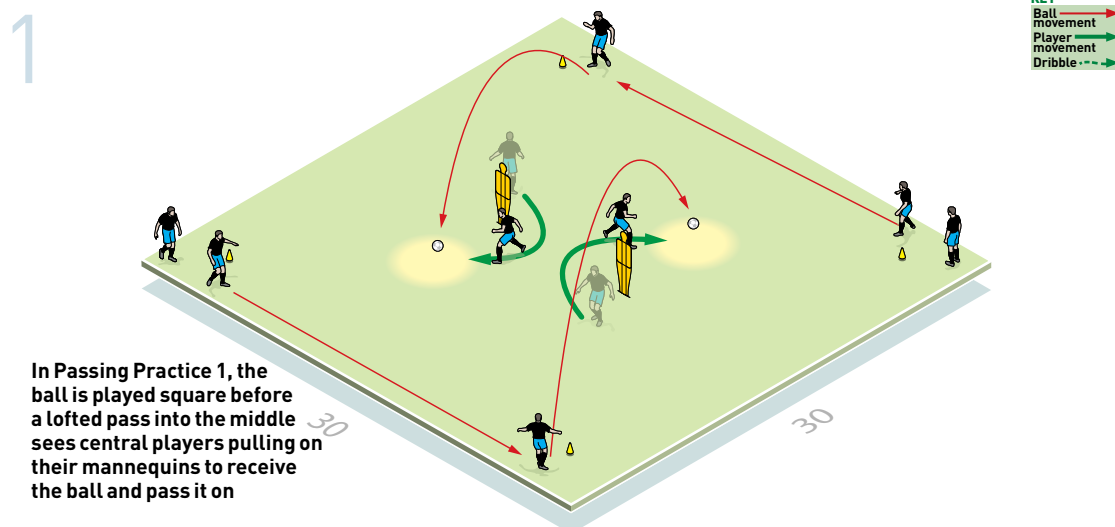
Penetrating an organised defence

Overview:

This session is about affecting defensive lines by using different types of passes and runs. A common fault in attacking play is when players come short to the ball with no-one going long. That means players in possession are being refused the chance to play 'in behind', something they must be encouraged to do because other than set plays and long-range shots, to score goals you have to affect 'in behind' defensive lines. Even if there is a second phase of play, it starts with getting 'in behind', and that's what this session looks to perfect, but players must be willing to 'risk' losing possession in the final third when it comes to making a killer pass.

It's an engaging and progressive session that asks a lot of players, both in terms of understanding a blueprint, plus inviting them to paint mental pictures in order to give them the freedom to bring sessions alive with their own creativity and inspiration.

PENETRATING AN ORGANISED DEFENCE



SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals,
mannequins

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 11v11

SESSION TIME

Passing practices
3-4mins each way,
Finishing practices
2x4mins,
11v11 game 2x8mins
plus progression

What do I get the players to do?

Passing practice 1 (1)

The first practice concentrates on penetrating diagonal passes and movement to get in behind in a 30x30-yard area. Player 1 passes to player 2, who receives on the back foot. Player 3 pulls on the shoulder of the mannequin to receive a lofted diagonal pass from player 2 before a pass out the other side. All players follow their passes.

Passing practice 2 (2)

This next practice examines penetrating runs and passes. So in the same area, set up as shown, with player 1 passing to player 2, who takes a first touch inside the mannequin and plays a slide pass for player 3 to run onto. Players follow on to the next station by rotation.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want to see a good quality and weight of pass, smart movement of players pulling on the shoulders of the

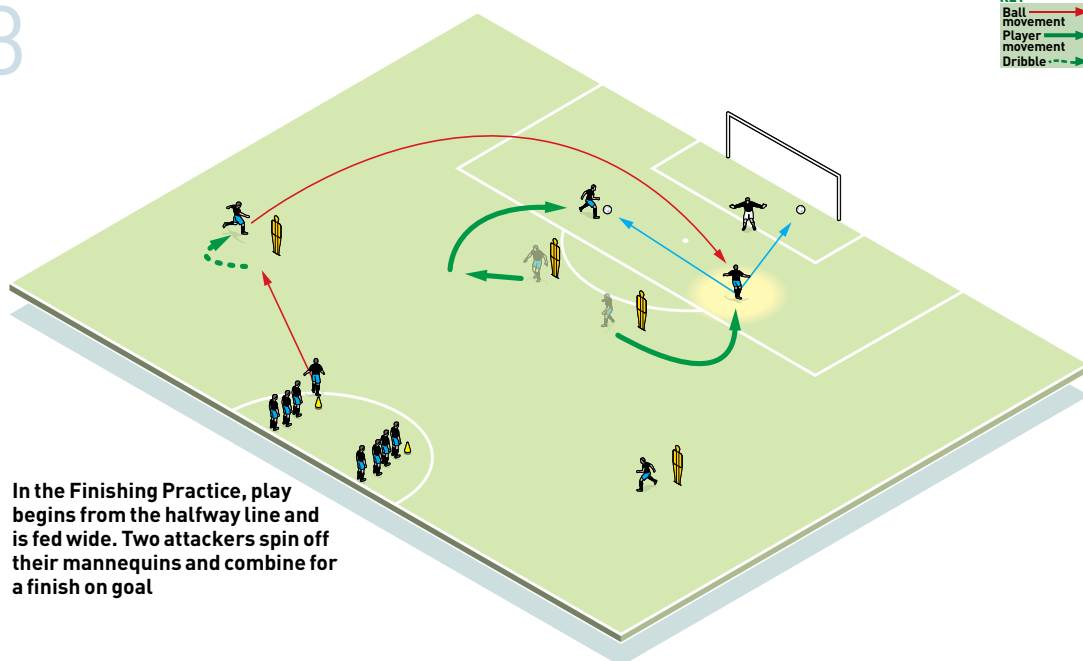
mannequins, and possible disguises of pass. Player 3 must point to where he wants the ball played, and must time his run to stay onside. He can run behind or in front of the mannequin, but should not have to break stride at any point.

How do I progress the session?

We now encourage players to bring their own interplay into the session, providing that in each run through they combine to get in behind mannequins.

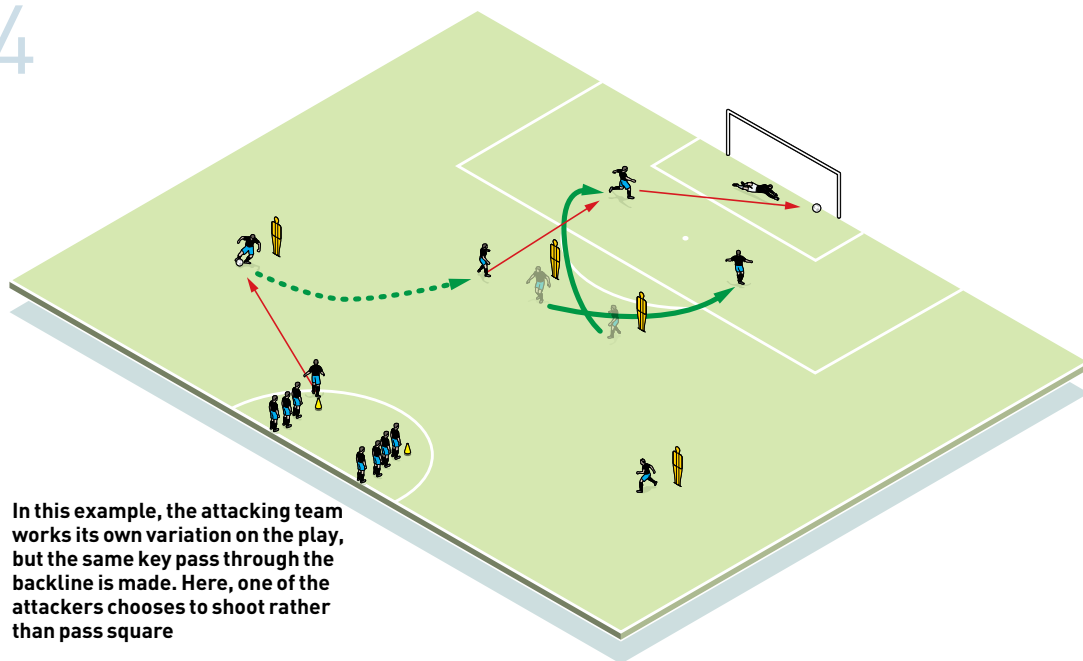
PENETRATING AN ORGANISED DEFENCE

3



In the Finishing Practice, play begins from the halfway line and is fed wide. Two attackers spin off their mannequins and combine for a finish on goal

4



In this example, the attacking team works its own variation on the play, but the same key pass through the backline is made. Here, one of the attackers chooses to shoot rather than pass square

“Players must be willing to ‘risk’ losing possession in the final third when it comes to making a killer pass.”

Finishing practice(3)

The next practice develops movement to get behind defenders, as well as looking at blind side runs and pulling off the shoulders of opponents. We set up on a half-pitch, as shown, with player 1 passing to player 2, who receives on the back foot. Player 3 pulls on the shoulder of the

mannequin to receive a lofted diagonal pass. Player 4, who has come short, spins for a possible knockdown or potential rebounds from the keeper.

What are the key things to look out for?

The most important element here is the quality of pass from player 2. If that is

combined with good first touch, timing of movement and quality of finish from player 3, then the practice will have been a success.

How do I progress the practice?(4)

Just as in the passing drills, players are given the freedom to express themselves. Players 1, 2, 3 and 4 may introduce clever

combination play behind the front two, and the final pass may come from a different area and be channeled in to a different part of the penalty box.



Sean Dyche

BURNLEY

Sean Dyche's Burnley side were toasting success at the end of last season having regained their place in the Barclays Premier League following a gap of five seasons.

The 42-year-old masterminded a fantastic Sky Bet Championship campaign in which the Clarets tasted defeat only five times, and clinched automatic promotion alongside Leicester City.

Dyche joined Burnley in 2012 having previously been at Watford, as Under-18s manager, assistant manager and first-team manager. As a player, he was an imposing defender who served Chesterfield, Bristol City, Luton Town, Millwall, Watford and Northampton Town.

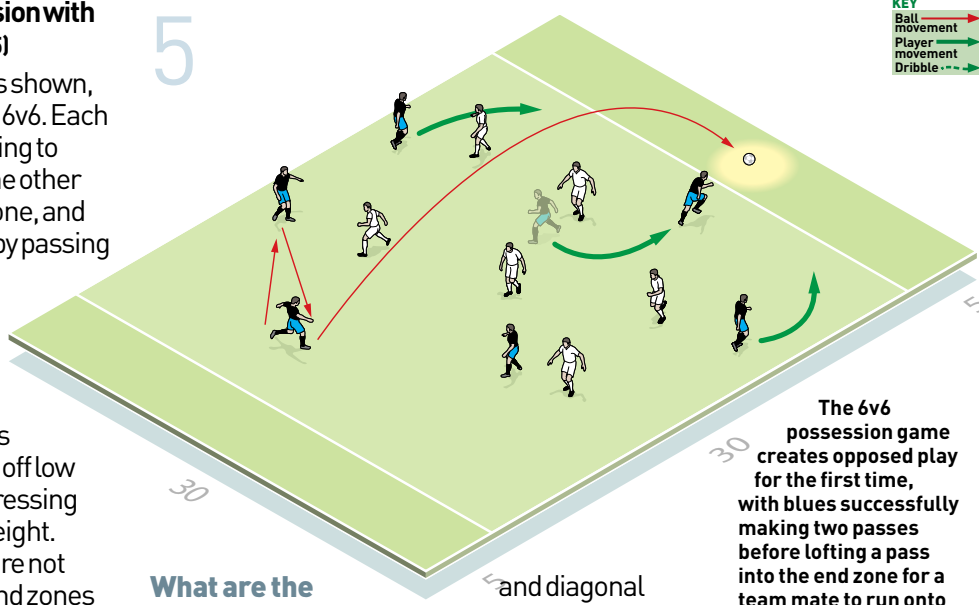
"Defenders must put pressure on the ball to stop attackers getting their heads up, always seeking to check or disturb opponents' runs."

PENETRATING AN ORGANISED DEFENCE

6v6 possession with end zones (5)

Setting up as shown, we now play 6v6. Each team is looking to penetrate the other side's end zone, and they do this by passing amongst themselves before making a through pass. Passes should start off low before progressing over head height. Defenders are not allowed in end zones – which also act as offside lines – and if a team scores, it retains possession. All restarts are with the coach on the end lines.

5



The 6v6 possession game creates opposed play for the first time, with blues successfully making two passes before lofting a pass into the end zone for a team mate to run onto

What are the key things to look out for?

Players should play forward with slid or lofted passes. We want to see plenty of straight

and diagonal runs in behind, with third man runs also encouraged (up, back and through).

11v11 game (6)

This is a different game designed to encourage penetration in behind the opposition's defence. Setting up as shown, the ball starts with the keeper, with centre-backs allowed to drop into the end zone to start play unopposed, but once the ball is played out they cannot come back in. It's a two-pass minimum before a pass into the end zone, where attackers must time their runs to 'arrive' and meet a pass. At first, only one striker can break that line and attack the goal.

What are the key things to look out for?

The first thought for any player in possession should be

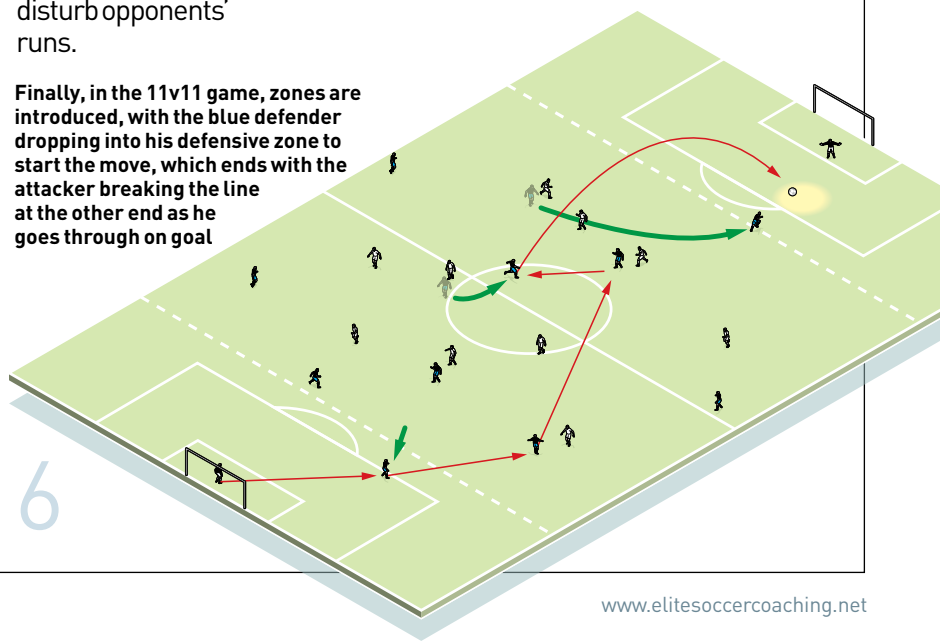
"can I play forward?" He must always look to affect backlines, with supporting movement of strikers and midfielders in making blind side and third man runs, and by pulling off defenders. Defenders must put pressure on the ball to stop attackers getting their heads up, always seeking to check or disturb opponents' runs.

Finally, in the 11v11 game, zones are introduced, with the blue defender dropping into his defensive zone to start the move, which ends with the attacker breaking the line at the other end as he goes through on goal

How do I progress the session?

We progress by allowing both an attacker and a defender into the end zone, then enhance the proposition again by allowing two attackers and a defender. But if one attacker receives a pass from his team mate, the finish must be one-touch.

As a final progression, we'll take out the end zones and play 11v11, all the time looking to replicate what we have learnt throughout the session, and primarily attempting to affect 'in behind' defensive lines.



6

SHEFFIELD UNITED

Nigel Clough Competent defending

Overview:

This session is all about getting players competent and happy when defending alone, in twos, as a unit, and whilst overloaded. The premise here is always to put defenders under stress and pressure, but to ensure we equip them with the right tools to go about solving problems. It's important to practise this because these defensive situations occur during every game; therefore we need to know that players have the ability to cope with them. Full-backs, in particular, have to be capable of defending 1v1 situations against wingers. We saw these defending principles produce fantastic results against higher-ranked opposition last season when we met Aston Villa and Fulham in the FACup, defeating both sides away from home.

“The premise here is always to put defenders under stress and pressure.”

COMPETENT DEFENDING

SET-UP

AREA

Extended half-pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 10v8

SESSION TIME

Warm-up 10mins,
Half-pitch practice 10mins,
Progressions 20mins,
Game 20mins

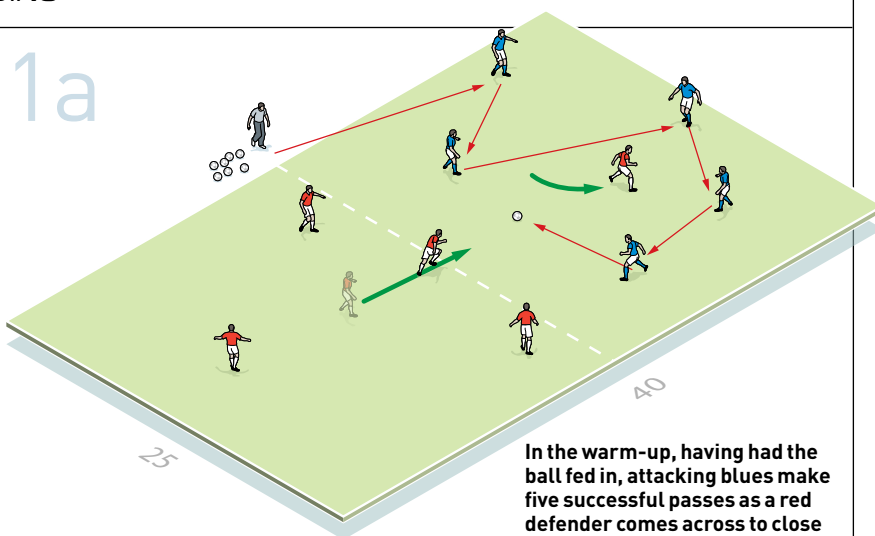
What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up

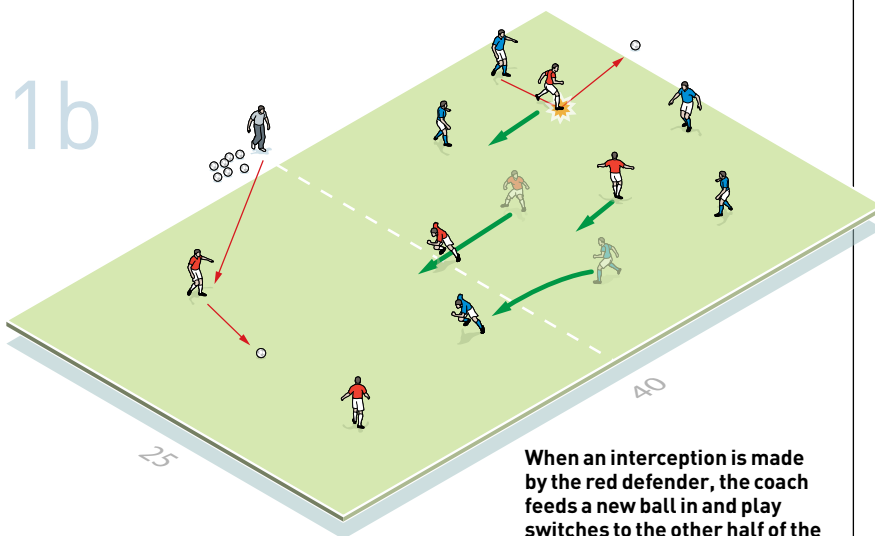
We warm up, as shown (1a), in a 40x25-yard area, coned across the middle. Blues begin, three-touch, with one red player moving across in attempting to win possession. If blues make five passes another red comes in so it's 5v2, then 5v3 and 5v4, concluding when blues score a point by making five passes in a 5v5. If reds win possession, play switches to the other half with blues now chasing (1b).

Half-pitch practice

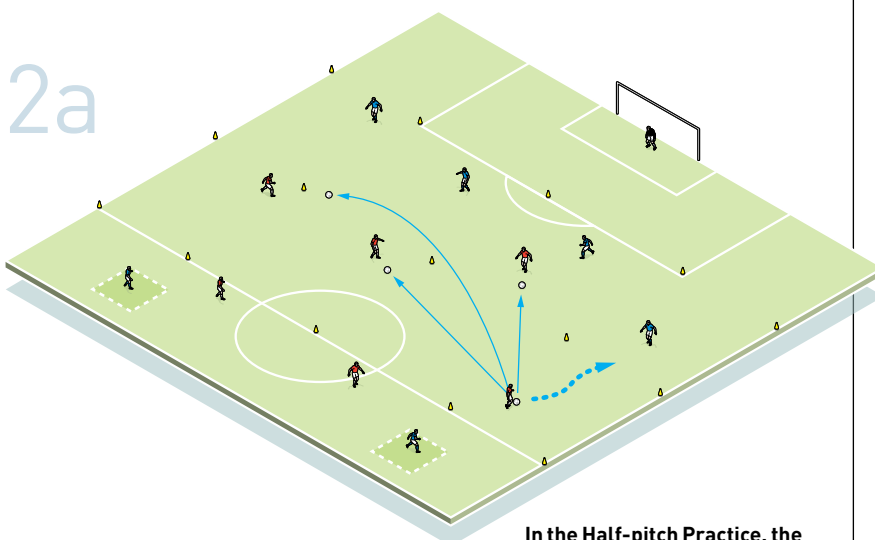
Setting up as shown (2a), players defend 1v1 in their individual channels, which are roughly 18x52 yards. Going one at a time, an attacker can only use the channel he's in to try to beat the defender. If successful, he can either have a shot at goal or cross for fellow attackers in the 18-yard box. If closed down, he passes to a team mate in another channel for a new 1v1. There are also two midfielders available that attackers



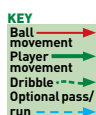
In the warm-up, having had the ball fed in, attacking blues make five successful passes as a red defender comes across to close down



When an interception is made by the red defender, the coach feeds a new ball in and play switches to the other half of the pitch



In the Half-pitch Practice, the attacker advances to go 1v1 with the defender, considering a number of dribbling and passing options





Nigel Clough SHEFFIELD UNITED

Nigel Clough is a vastly experienced football manager who is currently plotting Sky Bet League One side Sheffield United's rise back up the divisions. The 48-year-old joined the Yorkshire outfit in the middle of last season and guided them away from relegation danger to finish in mid-table.

Previously, he spent four years with Derby County in the Championship, and plotted Burton Albion's impressive rise from the Northern Premier Division to the cusp of the Football League.

As a player, Clough starred notably for Nottingham Forest, Liverpool and Manchester City, making 14 appearances for England along the way.

"Defenders must never go to ground, and must watch the ball, not their opponents' feet."

COMPETENT DEFENDING

can use for retaining possession (2b).

Defenders who aren't involved in a specific phase must still take up relevant supporting positions, albeit in their channels. And to encourage them to use the ball on turnover, two target men are situated beyond the halfway line.

How do I progress the practice?

We now remove cones, encouraging two 2v2 situations (3a). Two attackers must work together against two defenders for an end product. We can further progress by allowing another attacker to move across for a 3v2.

What are the key things to look out for?

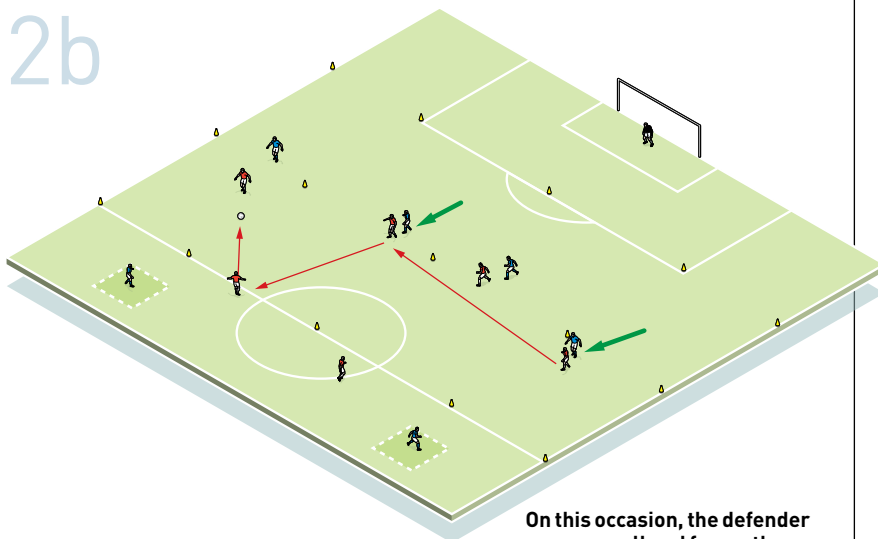
Defenders must never go to ground, and must watch the ball, not their opponents' feet. They must defend efficiently by communicating with team mates, closing angles, giving cover (so not in a flat line and easily played through), with depth, and showing precision when passing to a target man (3b).

Attackers must be positive, using quick feet to evade defenders' challenges whilst also being aware of support to the side.

How do I put this into a game situation?

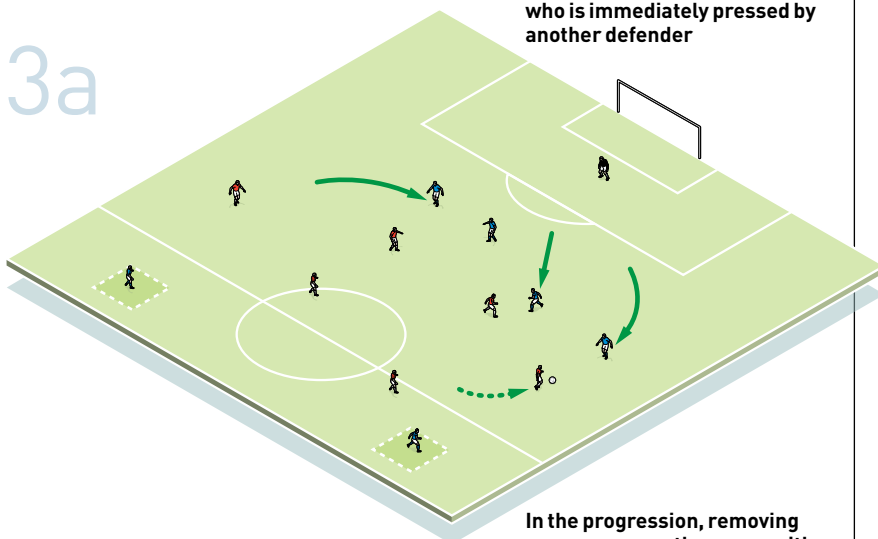
We now remove all cones and play 6v4. This game can be developed to 8v6 and 11v8. ■

2b



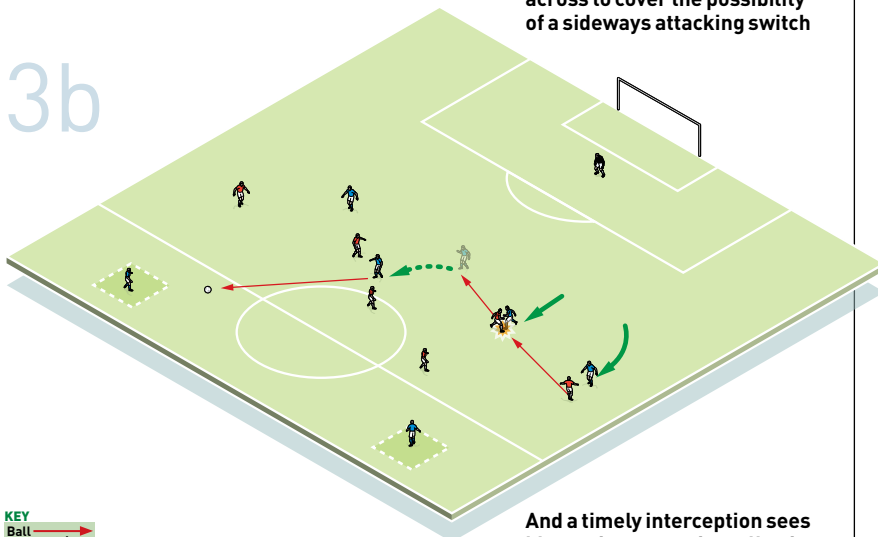
On this occasion, the defender presses well and forces the attacker to move the ball sideways to his team mate, who is immediately pressed by another defender

3a

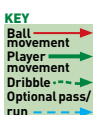


In the progression, removing cones opens up the game, with a 2v2 situation also supported by other defenders who move across to cover the possibility of a sideways attacking switch

3b



And a timely interception sees blues win possession, allowing the move to end with a simple ball into the feet of the target man



YEOVIL TOWN

Gary Johnson

with Darren Way and Terry Skiverton

Counter-attacking with style

Overview:

This session is about counter-attacking with speed, control and directness into the attacking third of the field. So this includes players attempting to attack quickly when they win the ball back, outnumbering the opposition when moving forward, whilst thinking also about defensive cover.

Last season in the SkyBet Championship we found teams were exceptional playing on the counter-attack. As a result, we embedded what we saw into our own play, with all players participating in pressing the ball high up the pitch by using our forwards as the first line of defence. The effect of this was fantastic, most notably when we took on Watford away in November, winning the game 3-0 thanks in no small part to two brilliant counter-attacking goals.

COUNTER-ATTACKING WITH STYLE

SET-UP

AREA

Up to 44x36 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 9v9 (incl. keepers)

SESSION TIME

Passing drills and progressions 5mins each,
9v9 challenges 12mins

What do I get the players to do?

Passing drill

Setting up as shown (1), we begin with a warm-up passing drill.

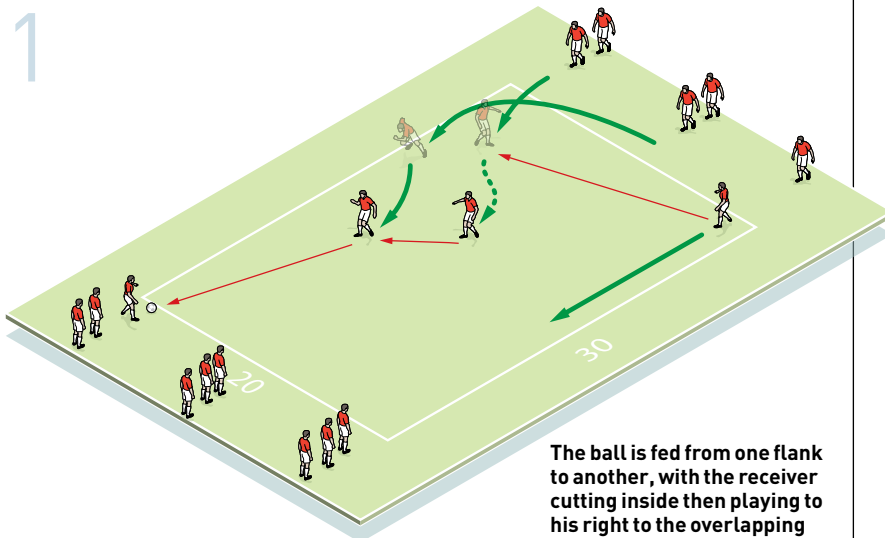
The start man switches the ball to the opposite wide player who receives on the move. We want to see a good first touch to set himself up for a 'dribble and drive' inside. As this happens, the central attacker makes an overlapping run at pace looking for a through ball. Once complete, the attacking move comes back in the other direction.

What are the key things to look out for?

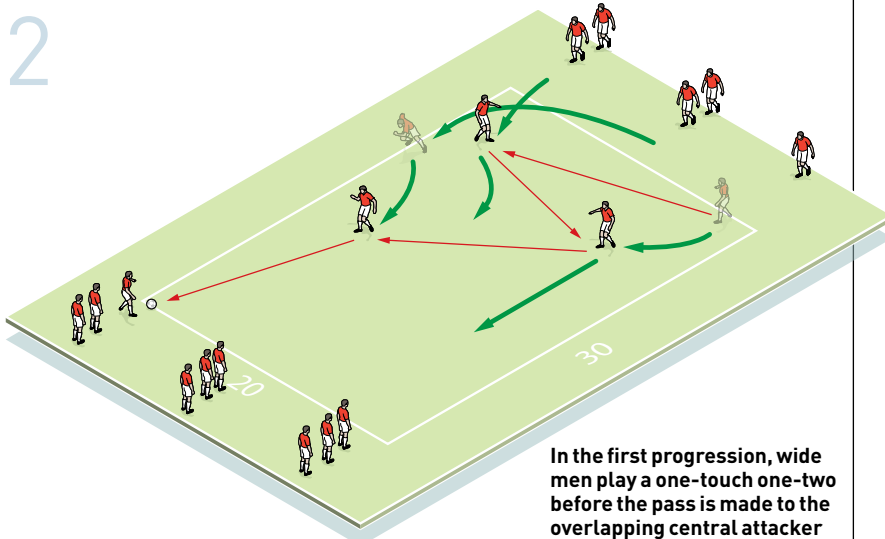
The key factors here are weight of pass, timing of run, ability to 'dribble and drive', plus excellent player communication.

How do I progress the drill?

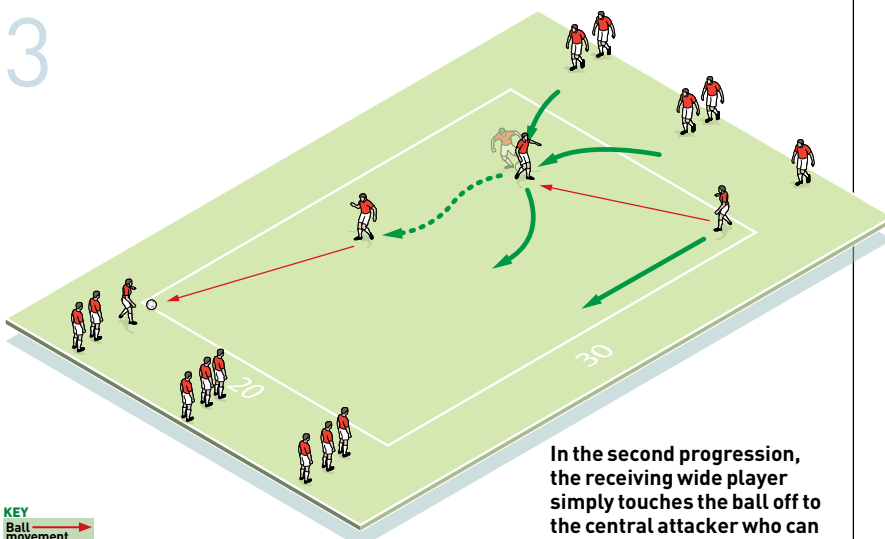
We use the same pattern and movement, but this time when the first pass is played, the wide receiver plays the ball back on his first touch



The ball is fed from one flank to another, with the receiver cutting inside then playing to his right to the overlapping central attacker



In the first progression, wide men play a one-touch one-two before the pass is made to the overlapping central attacker



In the second progression, the receiving wide player simply touches the ball off to the central attacker who can receive either directly in front of or behind him





Gary Johnson, Darren Way and Terry Skiverton

YEOVIL TOWN

Darren Way joined the club's coaching team in February 2010. Despite a long battle with injury, the then 30-year-old clinched multiple promotions with Yeovil and Swansea City.

Assisted by Terry Skiverton, who moved back into a full-time coaching role at Huish Park after a stint as first-team manager, the duo work with other members of the coaching staff in assisting Gary Johnson.

The 58-year-old is in his second spell at the club, who he took into the Football League for the first time in 2003. He has also managed Bristol City, Northampton Town, Peterborough United and the Latvian national team.

COUNTER-ATTACKING WITH STYLE

as a one-two to his man, who then plays a through-ball to the central player who has again made an overlapping run (2).

In the next progression (3), the receiving player puts his foot on the ball, offering a back-heel to the central attacker, or if suits, a simple push of the ball forward to that same player, should he choose to overlap in front of him.

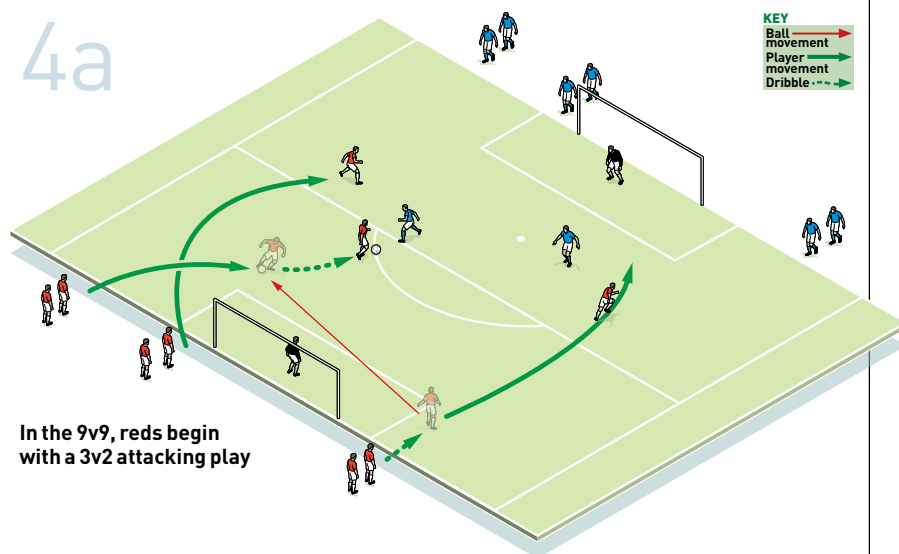
9v9 challenges

We now play 9v9 in two penalty boxes placed together. On the coach's whistle, reds attack blues in a 3v2 counter (4a/4b). Whoever eventually shoots from the red team steps out of play and the remaining two reds now become defenders, with the move coming back the other way and blues enjoying the overload (4c).

What are the key things to look out for?

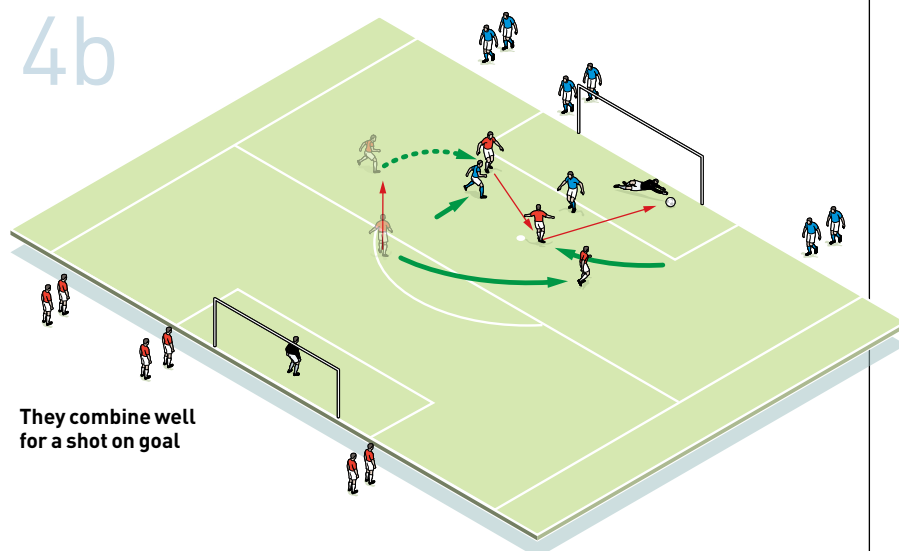
In addition to good passing and great communication, it's also imperative to ensure that no players stray into offside positions in the course of counter-attacks. ■

4a



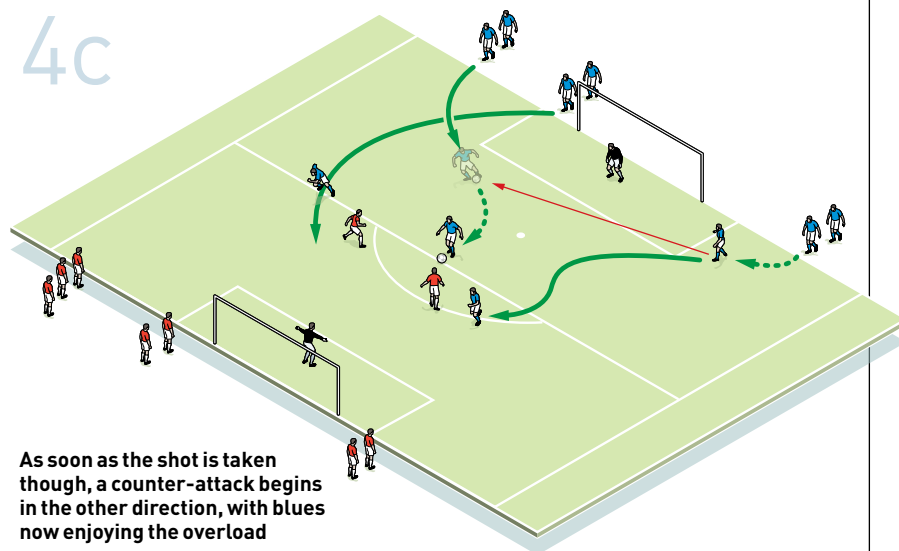
In the 9v9, reds begin with a 3v2 attacking play

4b



They combine well for a shot on goal

4c



As soon as the shot is taken though, a counter-attack begins in the other direction, with blues now enjoying the overload

CHARLTONATHLETIC

Paul Hart The Ajax passing drill

Overview:

The Ajax Passing Drill is a practice that requires movement, passing quality and good close control, and is fantastic for getting players comfortable with the core technical elements of football.

The skills outlined in the drill are used as the bedrock for the rest of the session, though we move on to incorporate the elements practised in possession and passing games that also feature stronger tactical aims.

This is such an important session for us because it gets players organised and communicating well, plus helps them build nerve and confidence in tight passing areas.

“This is such an important session because it gets players organised and communicating well, plus helps them build nerve and confidence in tight passing areas.”

THE AJAX PASSING DRILL

SET-UP

AREA

Up to 40x30 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 16

SESSION TIME

Drill, Possession and Target games 30mins each

What do I get the players to do?

The Ajax Passing Drill

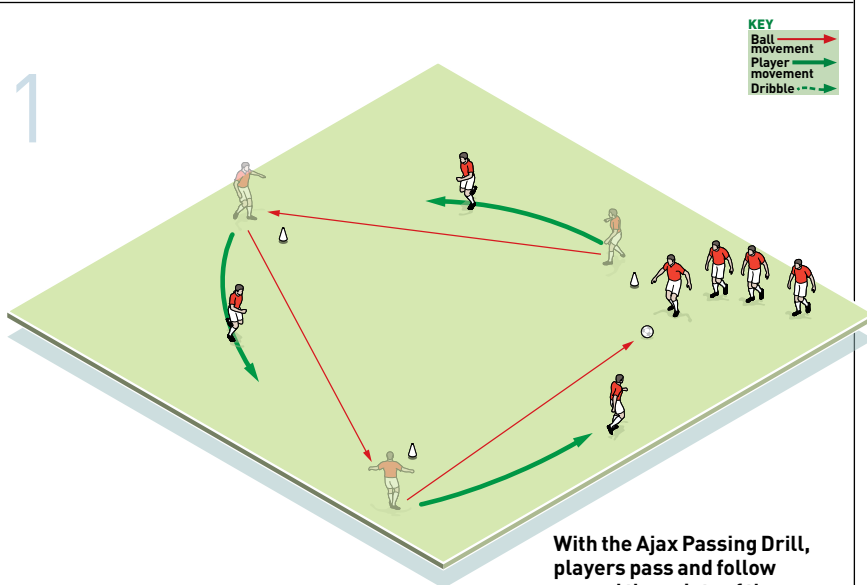
This move uses 6-8 players per setup. Players pass, then follow to the next point of the triangle (1). On each cone the receiving player must control with a first touch then move the ball to the next target with the second.

What are the key things to look out for?

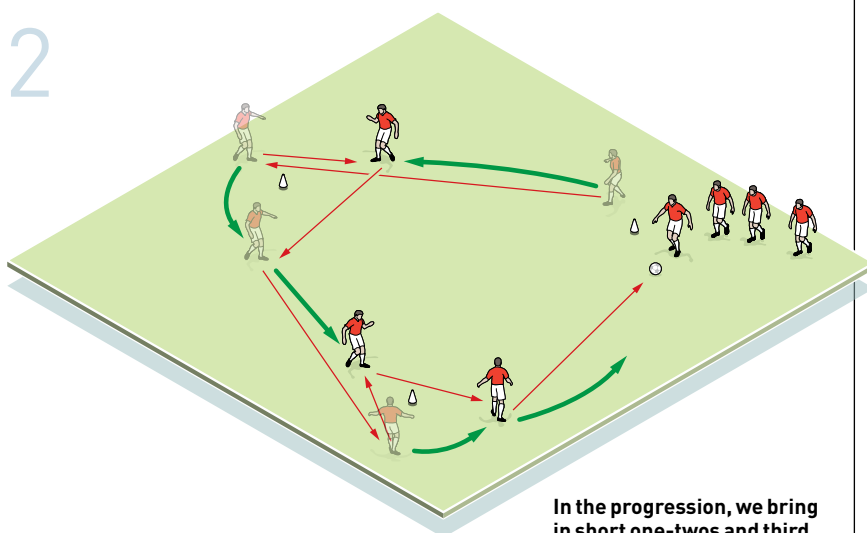
We want to see movement to receive the ball with good timing, excellent passing quality (with pace and accuracy) and assured control, namely touching the ball to play forward then getting over it when setting and passing on. To progress, we invite players to make short one-tuos as the ball works around the triangle, then develop to involving a third man (2). Alternatively, we add in a second ball.

Possession game

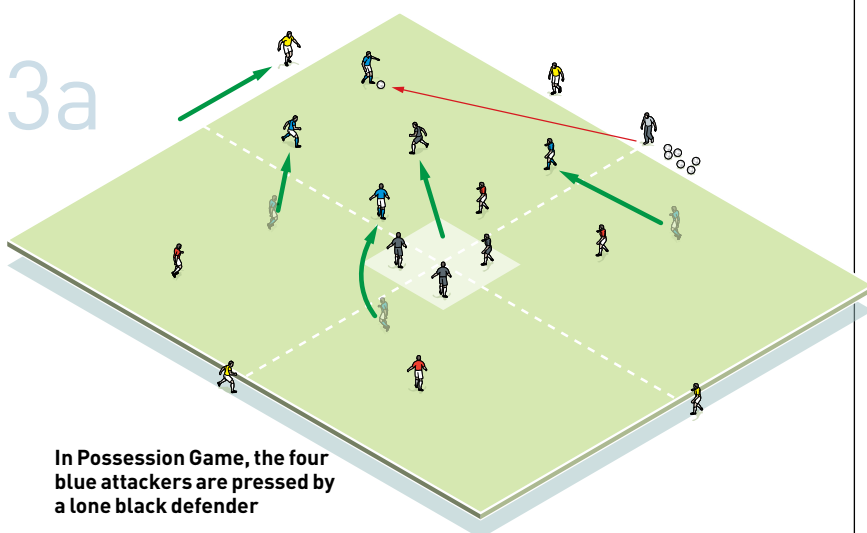
Setting up as shown (3a), this game uses two attacking teams (reds and blues), one defending team (blacks) and a support team (yellows). The coach plays in to one of the attacking teams – all team mates enter



With the Ajax Passing Drill, players pass and follow around the points of the triangle



In the progression, we bring in short one-tuos and third man passes in order to step up the complexity of the passing system



In Possession Game, the four blue attackers are pressed by a lone black defender

Paul Hart

CHARLTON ATHLETIC

Paul Hart is an experienced and respected football coach who has managed in the top five divisions of English football, including in the Premier League with Portsmouth. Yet arguably his greatest achievement was steering the progress of the Nottingham Forest academy around the turn of the millennium, during which time future Premier League players David Prutton, Jermaine Jenas, Gareth Williams and Michael Dawson were all blooded.

"We want to see composure under pressure - quick play and movement, quality passing, and players using an open body, as well as having a plan and a picture before the ball reaches them."

THE AJAX PASSING DRILL

that square to play 4v1 before, after four passes, developing play to the other attacking team (3b). Side support players help the team in possession.

If the defender wins the ball, the practice is restarted with the other attacking team. Rotate the defending team every two minutes.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want to see composure under pressure - quick play and movement, quality passing, and players using an open body, as well as having a plan and a picture before the ball reaches them.

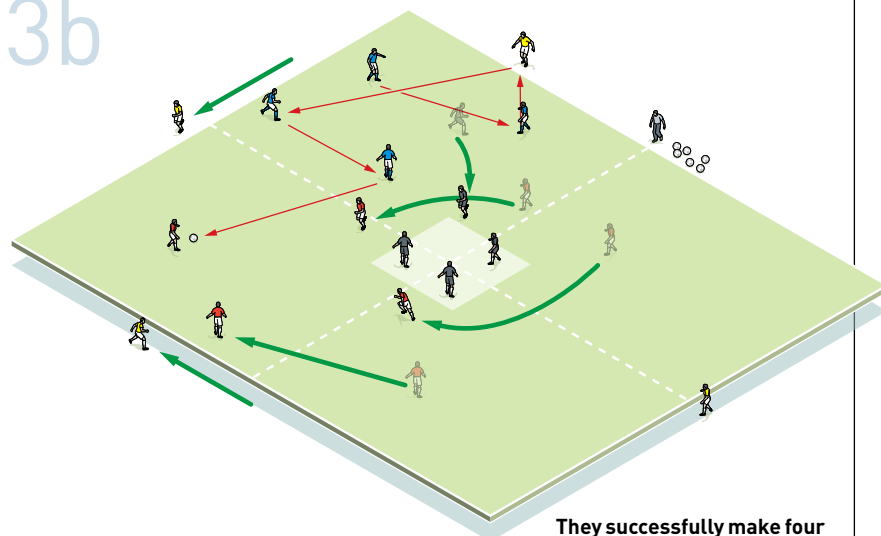
Target game

With a player in each corner, we play 5v5 in the middle; there are support players on the outside. Reds pass and move to play to targets in the corners. If successful, the target switches to his opposite man, who plays into the other team (blacks) (4a), who then play on (4b). Only target players are allowed in the corners, and we rotate every five minutes.

What are the key things to look out for?

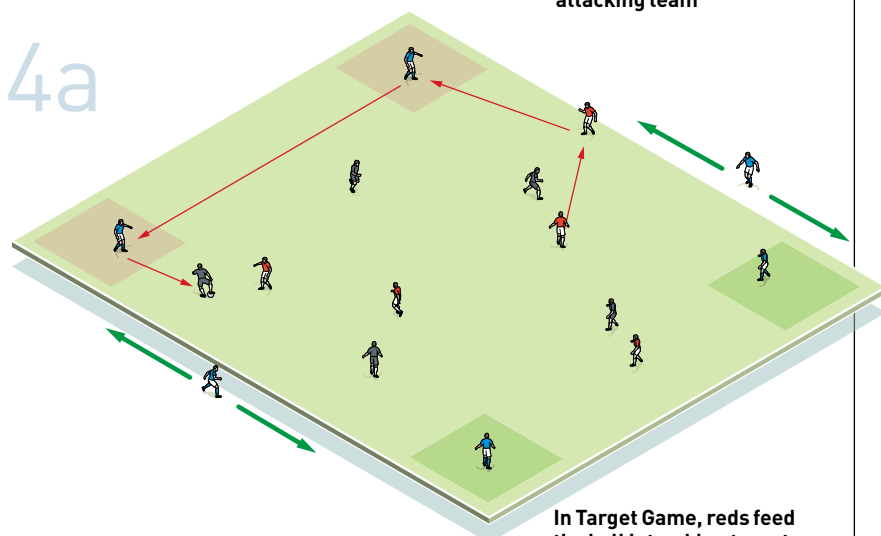
Players must anticipate the ball's movement and attack space. As a team, they must play forward, create width, depth and length, with good timing to receive and the ability to lose a marker when under pressure. Progress by ensuring all passes are along the ground, or all players are two-touch. ■

3b



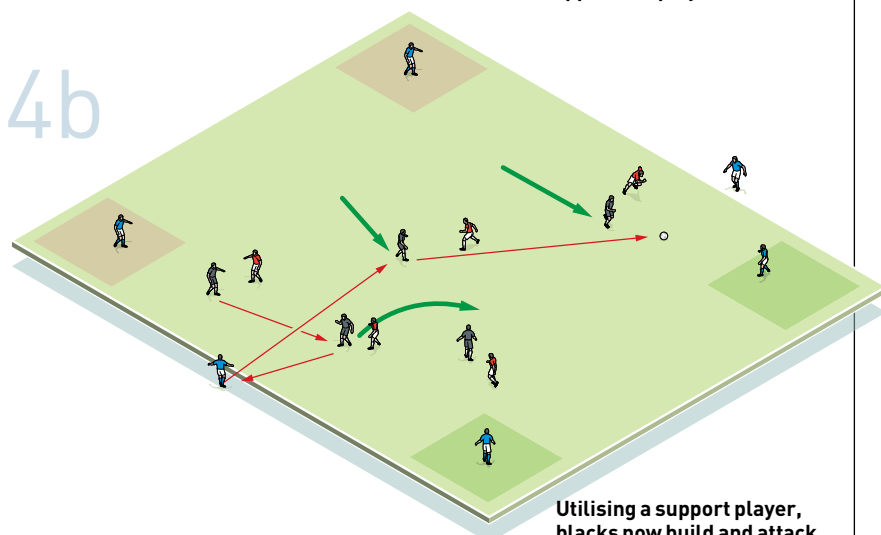
They successfully make four passes - utilising the yellow support player - before the ball is switched to the red attacking team

4a



In Target Game, reds feed the ball into a blue target player, who switches to his opposite man. The ball is then fed out to a black opposition player

4b



Utilising a support player, blacks now build and attack, moving the ball towards a new target man

CARDIFF CITY

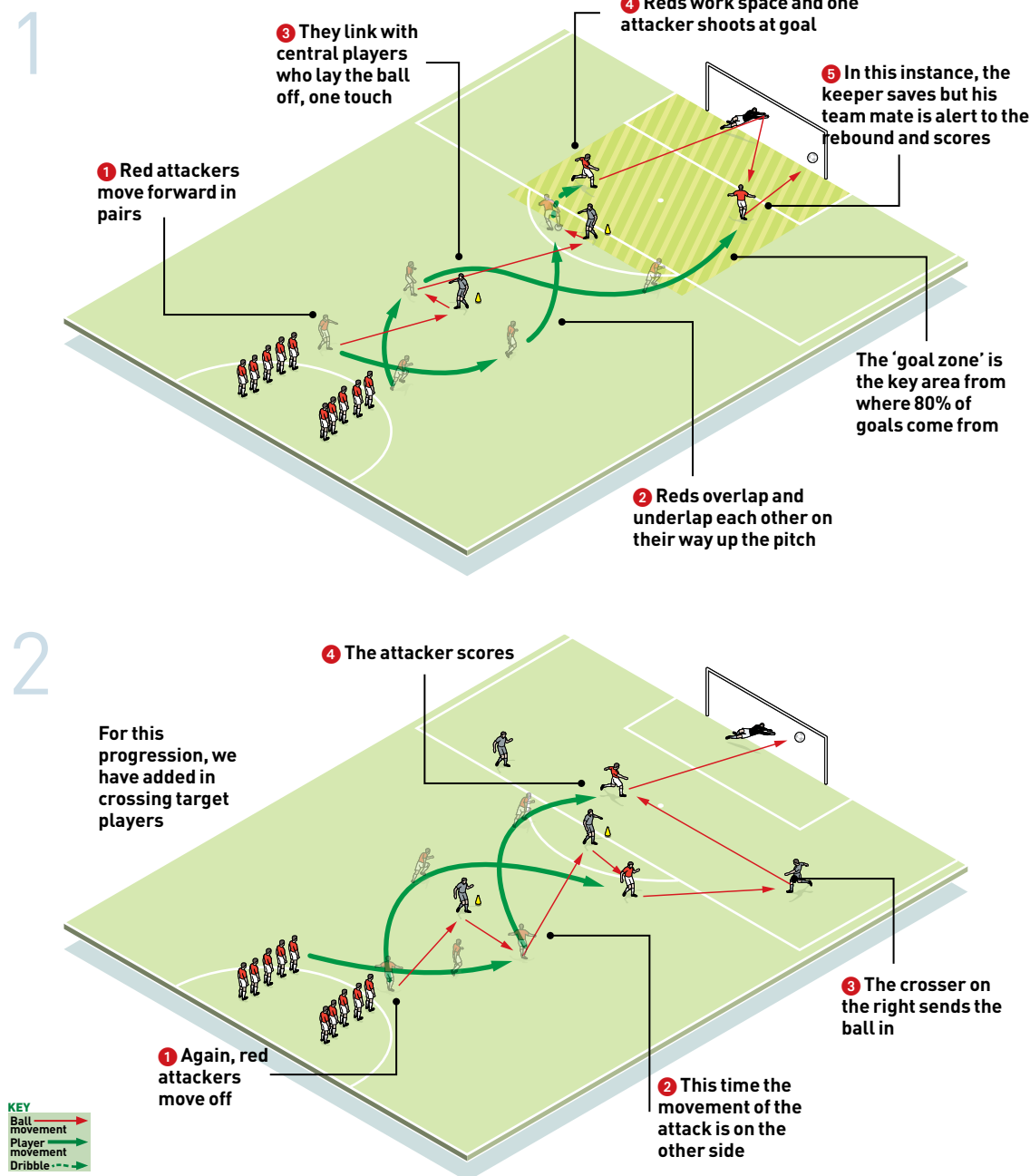
Kevin Nicholson Total finishing

Overview:

Scoring goals and finishing off moves is a vital part of the game. A very high percentage of goals are scored inside the penalty area (around 80%) so as coaches, we must work on finishing in this space and with opposition involved as much as possible in order to replicate what is experienced in a real game, and to enable players to get the most out of training. This is a practice that develops into a total finishing blueprint, relying at first on techniques being understood and played out.

“Opposition are involved as much as possible in order to replicate what is experienced in a real game, and to enable players to get the most out of training.”

TOTAL FINISHING



SET-UP

AREA

Up to a half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, mannequins

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to a full squad

SESSION TIME

Each practice 10mins,
Small-sided game
20mins

What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up

Setting up as shown (1), two attackers begin from just inside their own half, working in pairs. Combining with the support players in the centre of the pitch, they underlap and overlap each other, with the ball making its way inside the box from where a shot is taken on goal. This

should be from within the 'goal zone', which is the width of the six-yard box extended just outside the box.

What are the key things to look out for?

We're looking for players to work two-touch, with speed, and using vision and positive attacking angles, and for the shot to be taken from within the goal zone.

How do I progress the warm-up?

We progress by adding two 'box crossers', one on each side. They enhance the attacking move by providing a wide crossing option, with the two attackers then ensuring they get on the end of a cross coming into the box (2).

TOTAL FINISHING

Finishing from all angles

Next we move this into a fantastic attacking practice that prepares attackers for the possibility of goalscoring options emerging from all sides of the penalty box.

Attackers work in groups of three. In the first phase, two of the three advancing from midfield receive a pass from the edge of the box, then take the ball on against a lone defender to attack the goal 2v1 (3a).

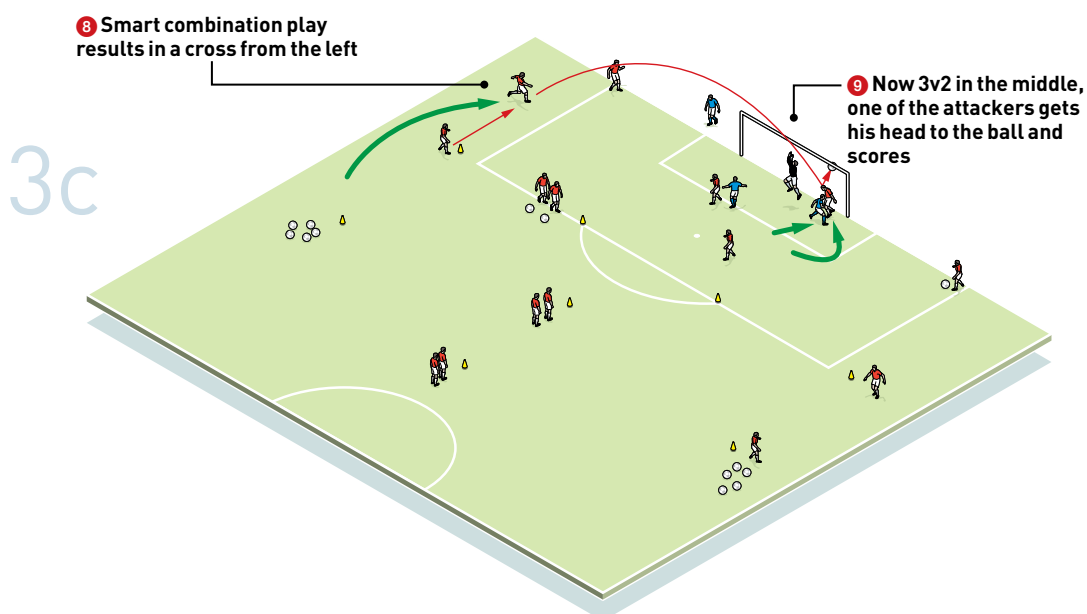
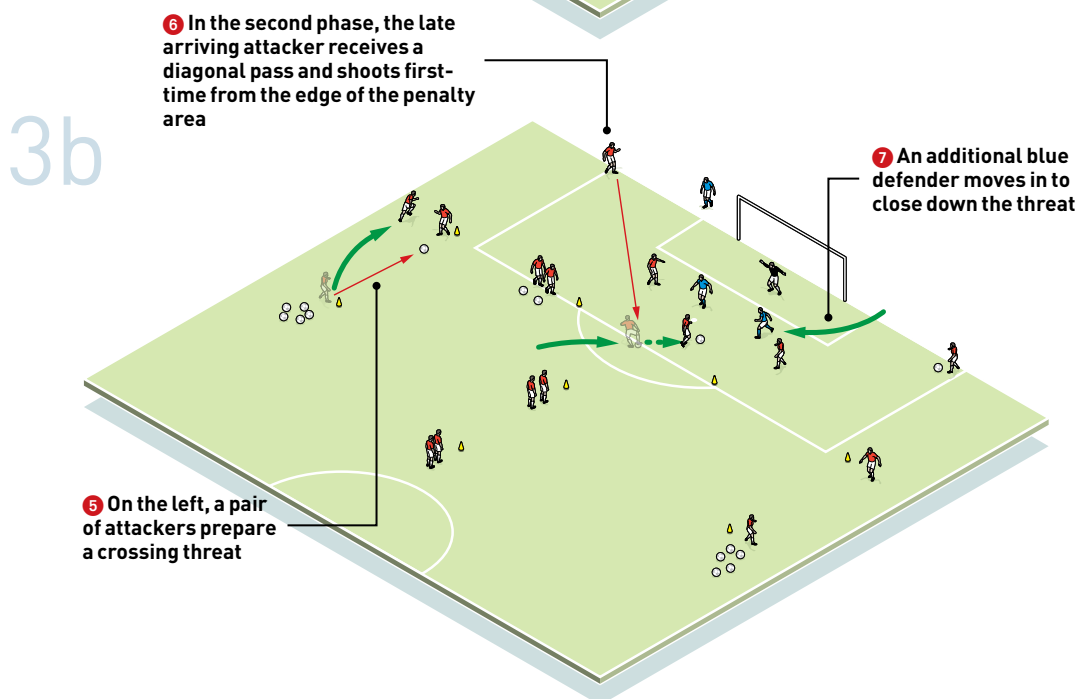
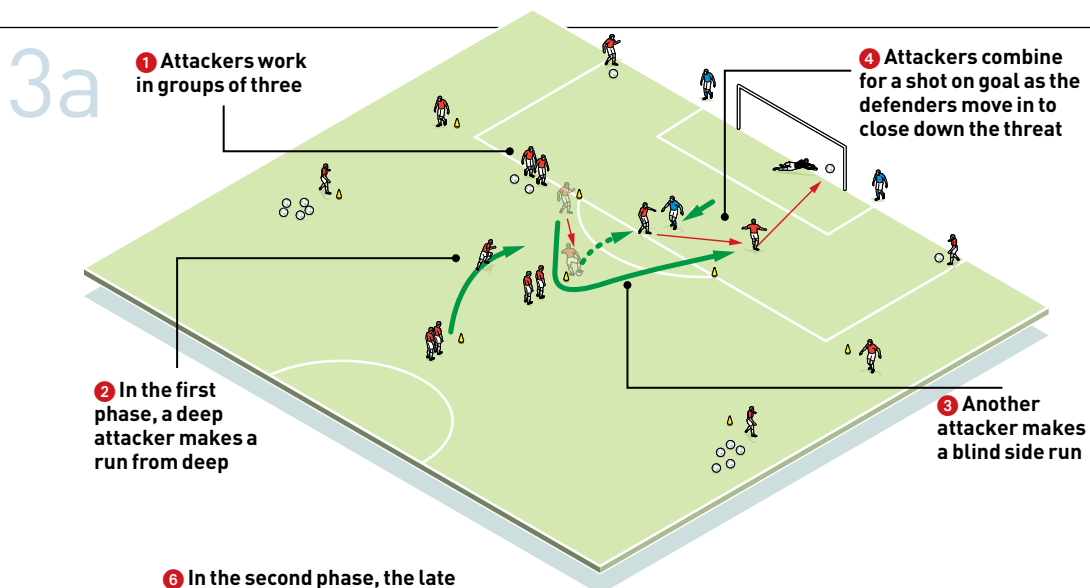
Next, the remaining attacker receives a diagonal pass to the edge of the box and finishes first time (3b), as a second defender emerges from the side of the goal.

Finally, two crossers on either the left or the right combine for the three attackers in the box to challenge 3v2 in the middle from a flighted ball in (3c).

Now attacking groups of three rotate in position on the pitch.

What are the key things to look out for?

Attackers must communicate well, know their roles and be positive in their attacking ambitions. Getting a shot away quickly is vital in the goal zone, as is the creation of space both for themselves and team mates.





Kevin Nicholson
CARDIFF CITY

Kevin Nicholson is Academy Head Coach at Sky Bet Championship club Cardiff City.

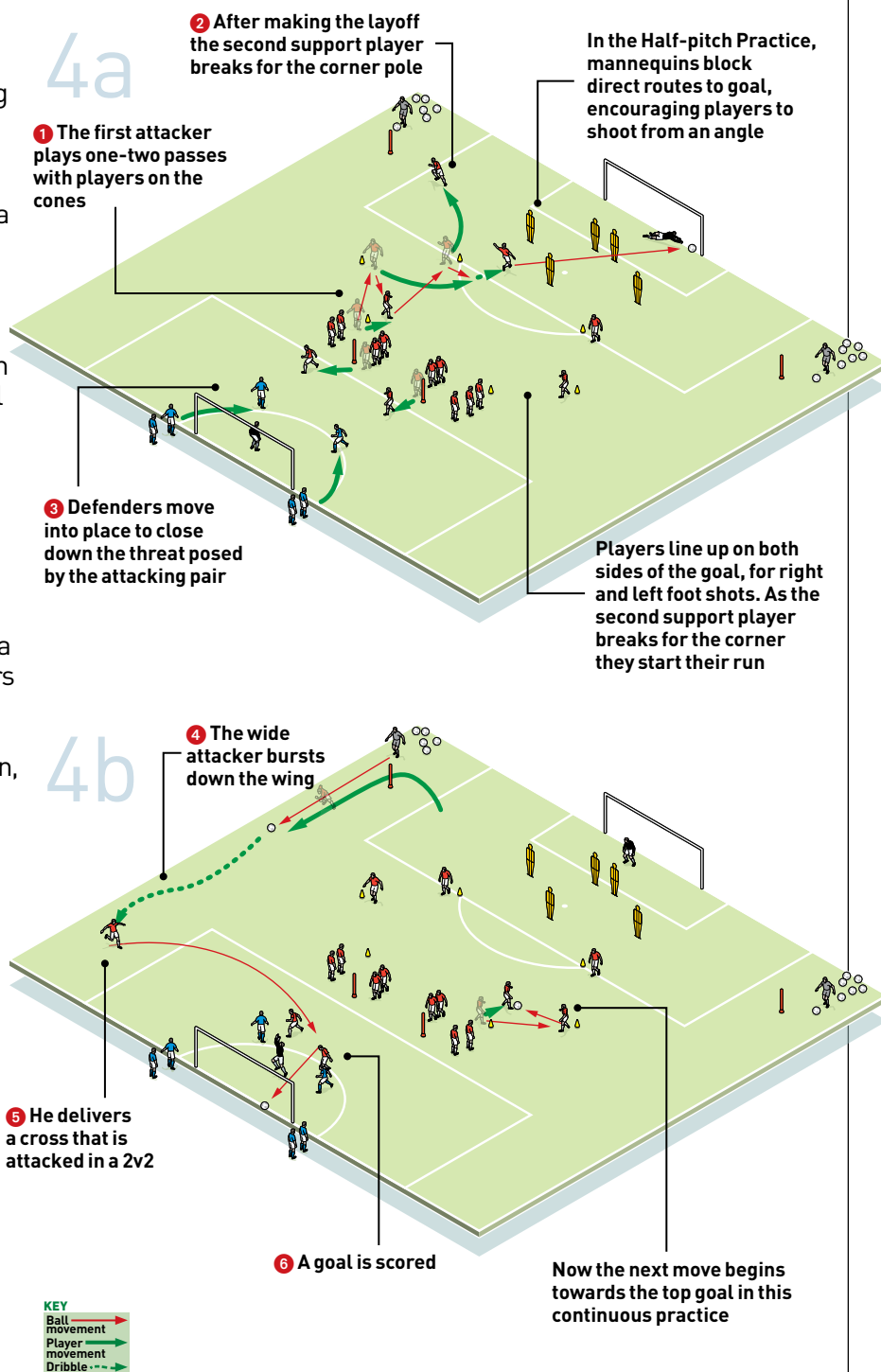
Nicholson joined the Bluebirds last summer from Exeter City where he had operated as Under-18s manager, and previous to that was hugely successful in seven years at Derby County and Stoke City. The 28-year-old has built up a reputation as one of the most forward-thinking coaches in the game, and backed by a wealth of awards and qualifications is looking to bring on the development of Cardiff's Academy structure, which in the past has unearthed considerable such talent as Aaron Ramsey, Rob Earnshaw, Darcy Blake and Joe Ledley.

TOTAL FINISHING

Half-pitch practice

Next we move into a physically demanding practice, set up as shown (4a). At the top end mannequins are placed in the goal area to act as obstacles. Their placement creates the need for angled finishes, with attackers emerging in pairs from the central area.

After the first phase, one setup player leaves his station to run around the pole near the top corner. He advances down the wing to send over a cross for two attackers at the other end (4b). This will initially be a 2v2 attacking situation, but we can tweak numbers as we see fit and depending on how well attackers are adapting to the practice.



"We're looking for players to work two-touch, with speed, and using vision and positive attacking angles."

Small-sided game

To conclude, we can put this into a small-sided game by placing together two penalty boxes, with two crossers outside the lines in each half. Always 3v2 in favour of attackers, defenders who successfully

defend the cross then counter-attack with the aid of a third man, spreading wide and meeting a centre from a crosser at the opposite end. With quick rotation of players (from each goal), any foiled attack then becomes an instant counter-attack

in a speedy end-to-end small-sided game.

What are the key things to look out for?

In addition to the technical/tactical elements already outlined, each practice must be conducted with speed and

attacking urgency. Accuracy of passes and crosses is obviously still imperative, but players must show willingness to make it into attacking areas, gambling for position and space with every perceived opportunity to score. ■

COACHING CONSULTATION

Each month, we ask one of the game's leading coaches to answer a question posed by an Elite Soccer reader.

THIS MONTH:

Developing play through the no.10

Q. I feel my side lacks conviction and purpose in the final third. How can I set up attacks that have more direction and impact?

Question asked by Steven Rogers, an amateur coach from London

ANSWERED BY:

Nick Daws

QPR

Here's a session we run at QPR. It coaches players in developing playing through the no.10 (otherwise known as the attacking midfielder or second striker) by placing constraints on the practice to encourage the players to show movement, awareness and good decision making. It encourages them to find space, exploiting dangerous attacking areas between the opposition defensive and midfield units to provide triggers for the attacking team to support with width and depth.

SET-UP

AREA

Two thirds of a pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, mannequins

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

18 plus two keepers

SESSION TIME

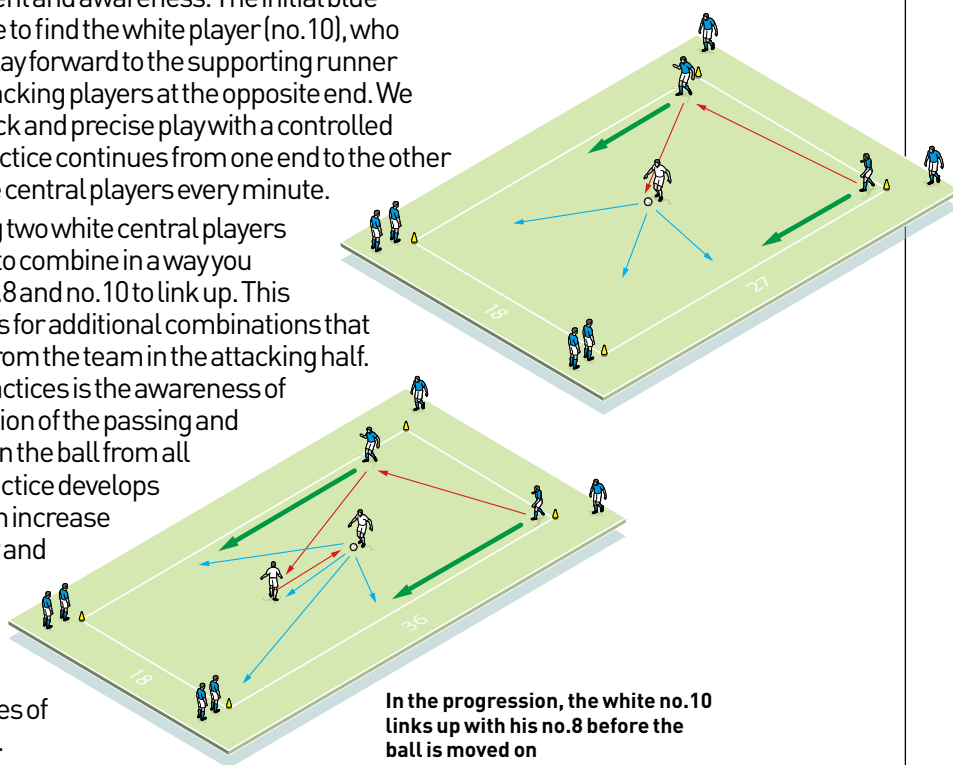
Practices 20mins each, Game situation 30mins

Passing and receiving

We begin the session with a passing and receiving practice aimed at developing first touch, angled passing, support play, plus movement and awareness. The initial blue attackers combine to find the white player (no.10), who receives open to play forward to the supporting runner or either of the attacking players at the opposite end. We are looking for quick and precise play with a controlled approach. The practice continues from one end to the other before rotating the central players every minute.

We progress using two white central players working together to combine in a way you may expect the no.8 and no.10 to link up. This progression allows for additional combinations that we would expect from the team in the attacking half. The key to both practices is the awareness of movement, precision of the passing and decision making on the ball from all players. As the practice develops we expect to see an increase in tempo, intensity and communication. We'll rotate players regularly so they can all experience the roles of the no.8 and no.10.

Blues combine and feed in to the white no.10, who can choose to pass to a blue runner or a player in front of him

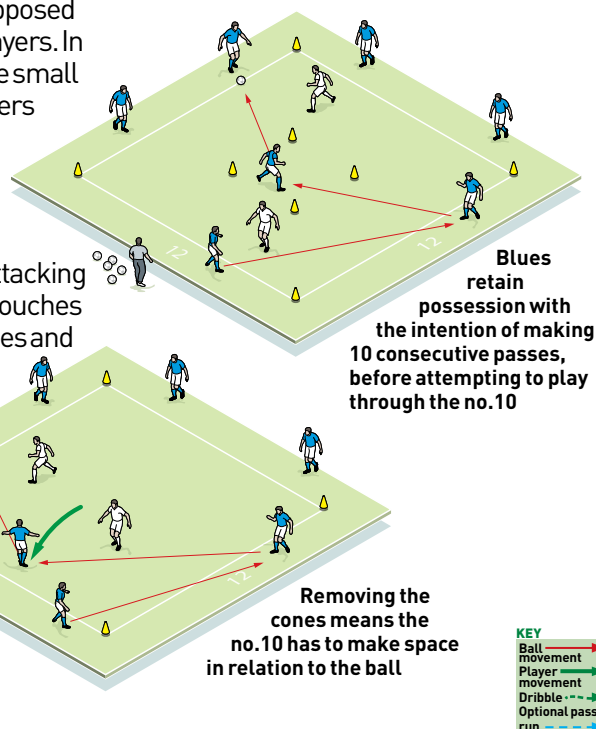


Boxes

Moving on, we take the practice into semi-opposed boxes that provide two challenges for the players. In the first example the no.10 is restricted to the small central box, while the remaining blue attackers occupy the outer 12x12-yard area.

Two white defenders protect the area in between as blues attempt to retain patient possession of the ball before recognising when they can play through the no.10. The attacking players are restricted to a maximum of two touches with a point received for 10 consecutive passes and two points awarded for playing through the no.10 to retain possession.

In the second box, the no.10 is now free to find his own space in relation to the ball, opposition defenders and his team mates. We are looking for the players to make good decisions on the ball and to assess the risk/reward of when to play through the no.10.



Blues retain possession with the intention of making 10 consecutive passes, before attempting to play through the no.10

Removing the cones means the no.10 has to make space in relation to the ball

COACHING CONSULTATION DEVELOPING PLAY THROUGH THE NUMBER 10

Ultimately, we are looking to create overloads in the attacking third, committing the opposition and creating opportunities to score. This practice is a core component of our programme as we look to develop creative individuals working within a 4-3-3/4-2-3-1 framework. Variations on this practice are used to provide individual development of the attacking midfielder or second striker, and to develop rotational awareness of the midfield and attacking units. Within our development programme, this session will feature regularly throughout the season.

Coaching considerations

We use a five-corner model that focuses on technical, tactical, physical, psychological and social development.

Technical – body position and angle of movement, receiving on the half-turn, and awareness of space and support.

Tactical – when to exploit space in pockets, and when to show patience or take risks with the ball.

Physical – sharp and clever movement to exploit space in pockets, before forward runs to exploit the opposition when the no.10 gets half-turned

Possession

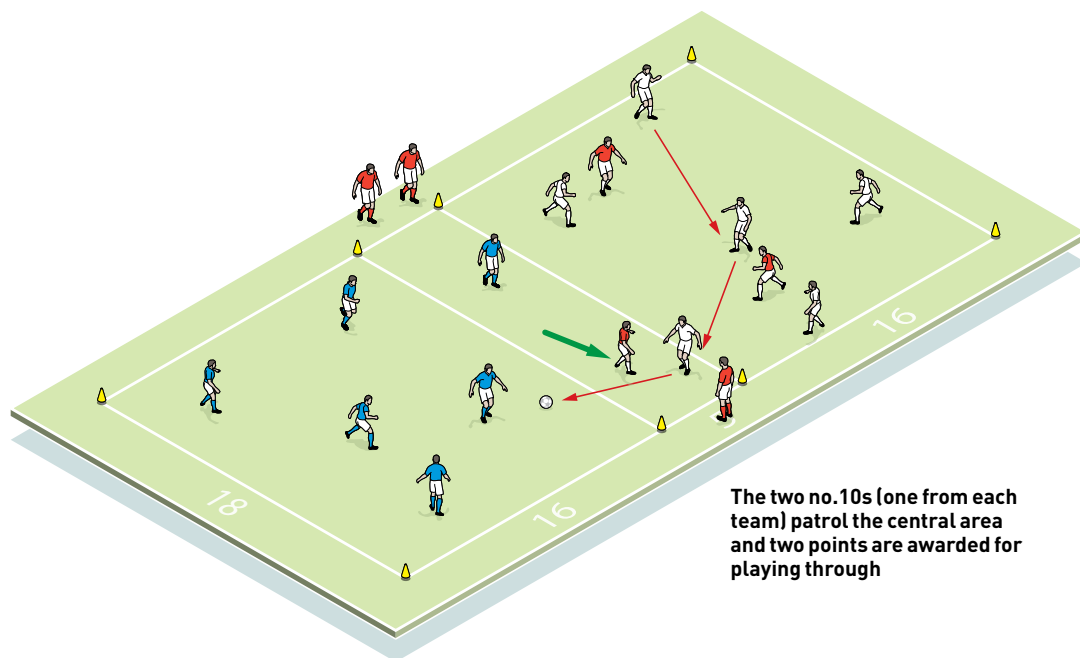
Taking the theme into a more opposed practice, the possession-based transfer practices challenge the spatial and visual awareness of the players beyond a traditional transfer game.

Two teams of five attackers occupy 20x10-yard areas, and when in possession are

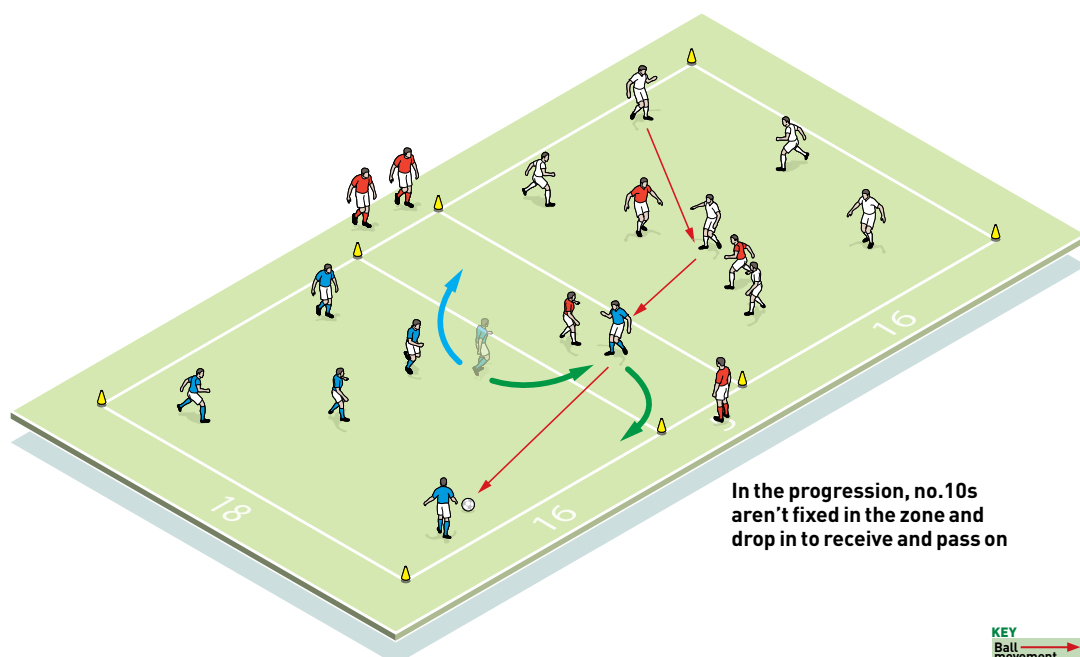
opposed by two defenders. In a central 10x5-yard zone, two attackers are opposed by a single defender. The attacking team completes a minimal number of passes before transferring the ball to the other attacking team. If they play through the no.10 (blue or white) they achieve a point. If they transfer through or over (without using the no.10) they

retain possession but receive no points.

In the second game only a defender occupies the central zone. As possession builds (whites), a blue must recognise when, where and how to drop into the zone to receive, get half-turned and play into his own colour. If this is achieved, a point is awarded.



The two no.10s (one from each team) patrol the central area and two points are awarded for playing through



In the progression, no.10s aren't fixed in the zone and drop in to receive and pass on

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

COACHING CONSULTATION DEVELOPING PLAY THROUGH THE NUMBER 10

Psychological – concentration to recognise cues and triggers, plus communication to give verbal and non-verbal cues.

Social – trust to allow for brave and creative play, plus teamwork to create overloads.

Why this works

This is a full session that progresses in intensity so as to deliver a precise and engaging practice that links the no. 10 to all other team elements. Perfecting this offers structure to attacking moves yet flexibility in the way it can be played out. ■



Nick Daws

QPR

Nick Daws is Head of Academy at Barclays Premier League newcomers QPR. He works alongside first-team manager Harry Redknapp in bringing through the next generation of footballer at Loftus Road.

The 44-year-old, who holds the UEFA Pro Licence, has also coached at Barnsley and Rotherham United, and as a player made 722 senior appearances.

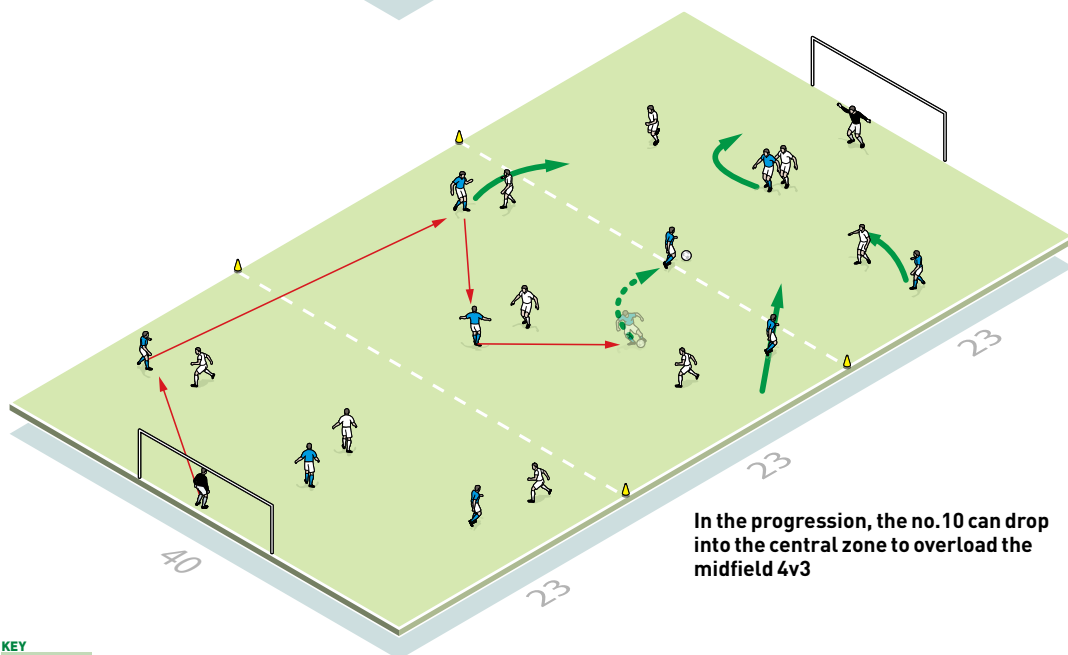
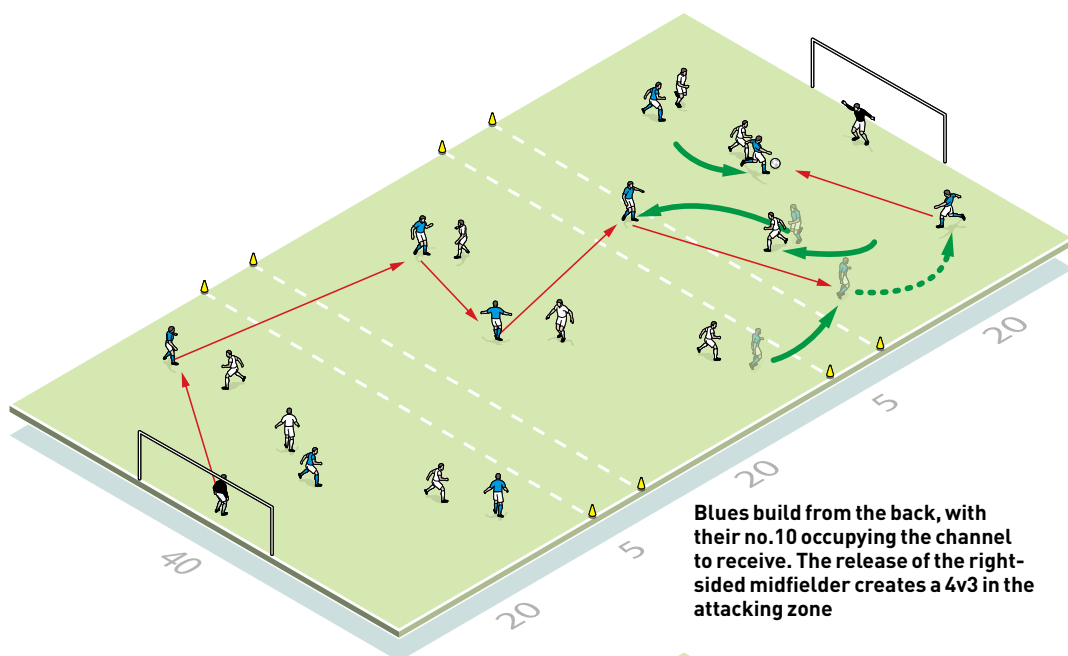
If you have a Coaching Consultation question you would like a leading coach to answer, please email in at elitesoccerfa@greenstarmedia.net

Large-sided games

Having instilled the principles, we now take development of the players into a conditioned three-zone game comprising of two elements. Teams play 9v9 plus keepers, in a 40x40-yard area with players set out in a 3-3-3 formation. The practice focuses on the no. 10 dropping into an unopposed zone to trigger the release of a midfield player into the

attacking zone to create a 4v3 overload. We are looking at the timing of movement of the no. 10, the recognition of the cues and triggers of the midfield players, and the ability to exploit the overload. In the second game, the practice allows the no. 10 to drop into the central zone to overload the midfield 4v3. Here, the attacking team can build patiently and recognise

when, where and how they can release players into the attacking zone to most effectively overload this area. In both games, play restarts with the keeper of the team who regain possession when the ball leaves play. We can progress and manipulate the practice by matching up and allowing recovery defending.



KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

EXTRA-TIME PROFILE

WORDS: Sue McKellar

STEVE DAVIS CREWE ALEXANDRA

In an industry beset with instability, insecurity and constant change, Crewe Alexandra are something of an anomaly. Renowned for their strong philosophy, the club has had just five managers in the past three decades. We speak to current boss Steve Davis about his journey to the dugout and the luxury of taking a long-term view.

You have a history at Crewe as a player and were captain at only 19. How did leadership sit with you back then?

I was made captain by Dario Gradi, who was manager at the club for 26 years, and while I didn't overtly show any leadership skills at the time, I think the role helped me to develop them. Although the team was quite young, there were some older players and I found it tough at first to tell them what to do, especially as I was quite a quiet person. But I learned how to lead. Now, as manager, I try to put my own players in positions of responsibility so that they can mature too.

Before rejoining Crewe you were player/manager at several clubs. How did that help your transition into management?

When Northwich manager Jimmy Quinn left to join Shrewsbury, I combined the roles of player and caretaker manager, but stopped playing when I was appointed full-time. When I joined Nantwich as manager I continued to play because I was still able; we won the FA Vase while I was player/manager. These two roles were certainly good groundwork for my transition into management, but I don't think I could do it now. The job is too tough, with such a wide range of responsibilities, to combine two roles.



As manager, I try to put my own players in positions of responsibility so that they can mature too.

STEVE DAVIS CREWE ALEXANDRA

You then joined Crewe as assistant manager, working under Dario Gradi...

That couple of years was a huge learning curve and very important to my career as a manager. It helped that I knew Dario and understood the style of football he was after. I think I had to learn the style of coaching that would enable that play.

It was also important to understand Crewe's business model – to produce exciting young players who can eventually be sold and play Championship or Premier League football. That philosophy has been instrumental in giving the club stability over the years.

The type of technical player we like to produce will have a better chance of making it at the highest level if we can equip them with the necessary skills. They need to be able to play with intelligence. If you look back at the players who have done well for Crewe, then gone on to a career at a higher level, it is clear just how successful the model is. We believe we have the right model in place and so we stick to those principles.

Is everyone at the club committed to the same philosophy and is that clarity of purpose important to you as manager?

You can't be successful and you can't produce good footballers unless you have unified thinking. You need the buy-in of everyone around you, at all levels; everyone must be on your side, understand what you're trying to achieve and work towards the same objectives. Positivity is also very important to me. If you can harness enough positivity among your staff it will then rub off on the players.

We couldn't have achieved the success that Crewe has seen over the last 18 months – promotion to League One, winning the Johnstone's Paint Trophy and the sale of players – without everyone pulling in the same direction.

I have always been open-minded and listened to other people's ideas. It's important never to switch off from that advice.

Crewe Alexandra Football Club are rare in the time they afford their managers. Such stability must be extremely valuable to you.

It has been key to how we have been able to evolve as a club. The stability I have at Crewe and the long-term philosophy we share means I can take a keen interest in the academy and be part of its development. So many other managers don't because they don't know how long they are going to be in their jobs.

Given that I fit so well with the philosophy and culture of the club, as long as I continue to have a moderate amount of success on the pitch and keep the club running as a business by producing and selling players, then I'm confident I'll be given the time I need to help

develop and improve things, on and off the pitch.

When you know you have stability as a manager you can get goals and plan ahead to make your football club stronger. The infrastructure of the club is very strong, but there are still things that we'd like to do. For example, we are moving towards a more scientific approach in terms of player development and we're looking at ways to develop the first-team and the academy players.

I understand you've used yoga with your players.

I have always been open-minded and listened to other people's ideas. It's important never to switch off from that advice. I knew that certain players needed to work on their core strength and somebody suggested yoga as a possible tool to help. Those players now do several 45-minute sessions each week, which they love.

Your chairman, John Bowler, was recognised in May at the LMA Annual Awards Dinner for his services to football. What is your relationship like with him?

The manager-chairman relationship is the most important in any football club. My relationship with John is very open and honest; we discuss everything that happens around the football club and nothing is swept under the carpet. We talk almost every day and I see him both in the work environment and outside of it.

That's how every manager-chairman relationship should be if things are to run smoothly. You can't cut people off when things are going well, because it is so important to have someone to turn to when things take a turn for the worse. After all, the manager's job can be a very lonely one.

CAREER PROFILE

Player

| | |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1982-1983 | Stoke City |
| 1983-1987 | Crewe Alexandra |
| 1987-1991 | Burnley |
| 1991-1998 | Barnsley |
| 1997 | York City (loan) |
| 1998 | Oxford United (loan) |
| 1998-2000 | Oxford United |
| 2000 | Macclesfield Town |

Manager

| | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| 2000-2002 | Northwich Victoria |
| 2004-2009 | Nantwich Town |
| 2011- | Crewe Alexandra |

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BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

By Richard Aldhous

We are the champions

The Champion's Mind: How Great Athletes Think, Train, and Thrive
By Jim Afremow
£14.74, Rodale Press

According to Jim Afremow, author of *The Champion's Mind*, a warmly received tome to positivity and self-belief, recognising greatness in others is the first step towards realising it in oneself. Put simply, if you know what it looks like (even in those whose prowess you have no chance of bettering) you have the potential to nurture and harness some strong level of achievement in yourself.

Unlike other sports psychology books, this isn't so much about leadership of a group (although there is significant advice in that area), more leadership of the mind. The book plays out by introducing and assessing a number of different mental attitudes, explaining how some are right for certain personality types but not all.

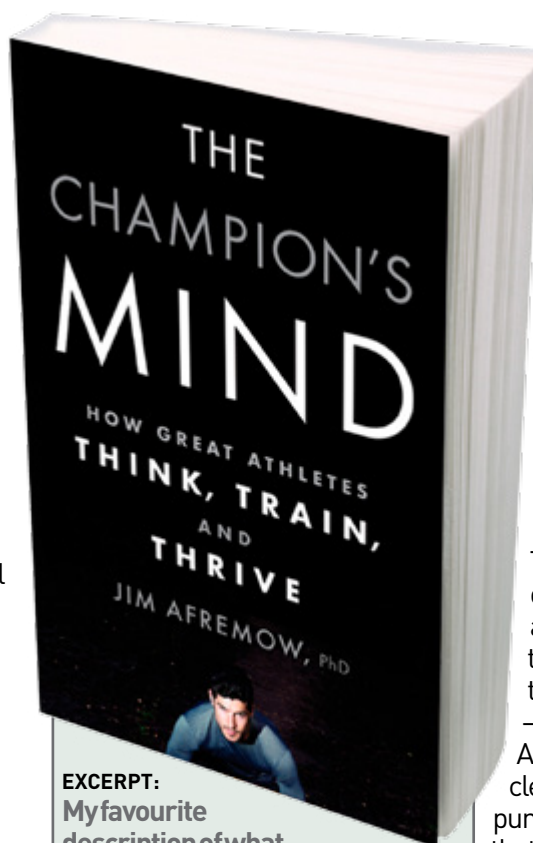
There are constant references to successful athletes, sportsmen and women, often detailing an exemplar individual's fight to climb to a level of superiority, with inside stories and unique insight laying the foundations for others to begin on the path

to trying to emulate unquestionable sporting greats.

It also assesses typical human emotions that climb to the fore when going after success. *The Champion's Mind* explains that the outcome is nothing without a passion and fascination for the process, and that discomfort in the pursuit of goals, ambitions and dreams is perhaps the most important thing of all.

It looks at modern approaches to achievement (sports science) and traditional (Buddhism), profiling the positives and negatives of each, and always suggesting 'take away' ideas that can be easily packaged and played out on the training pitch.

And Afremow is certainly well qualified to judge, having assisted numerous high school, collegiate, recreational and professional athletes over the past 15 years, across everything



EXCERPT:
My favourite description of what excellence in the sports world looks like comes from Anson Dorrance, the legendary University of North Carolina women's soccer coach. He was driving to work early one morning, and as he passed a deserted field, he noticed one of his players off in the distance doing extra training by herself. He kept driving, but he later left a note in her locker: "The vision of a champion is someone who is bent over, drenched in sweat, at the point of exhaustion when no-one else is watching." The young woman, Mia Hamm, would go on to become one of the greatest players in the history of the sport.

from the NBA, PGA Tour, NFL and field hockey.

The only criticism of this clinical and unrelenting tome to positive thinking is just that – it's unrelenting.

Although it steers clear of the sort of punishing repetition that certain attitude altering mediums can give, it does nonetheless continue to peck persistently at the psyche with a constant stream of advice. Perhaps more clearly defined conclusions may have been a better way to let the reader ease themselves away from its 269 pages in order to be able to put the plan into action?

Instead, the book can leave you feeling as though you have been bullied into 'positive mental attitude'

submission, and if ever there was a contradiction to be had, then that is surely it. ■

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