

ELITE SOCCER

COACHING PRACTICES FROM THE WORLD'S
LEADING MANAGERS AND COACHES

Exclusive
Training practices from top
professional managers

CRYSTAL PALACE

TONY PULIS

MASTERING MIDFIELD:

THE PRESS • THE COUNTER • THE REWARD



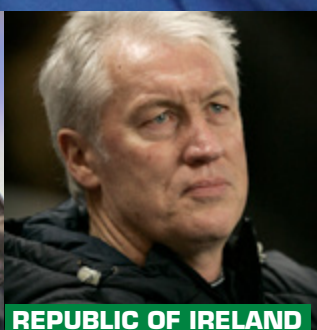
MIDDLESBROUGH

**AITOR
KARANKA**
Transition to
attack



OLDHAM ATHLETIC

**LEE
JOHNSON**
Defending the
counter



REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

**SEAMUS
MCDONAGH**
The sweeper
keeper



BLACKBURN ROVERS

**ERIC
KINDER**
Attacking offside
elements



LMA AMBASSADOR

**TONY
MOWBRAY**
Defending
the box

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: PRESTON NORTH END MANAGER SIMON GRAYSON

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ISSUE 45 / APRIL 2014: FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Inspirational soccer blueprints from some of the best coaches in the game

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the April issue of Elite Soccer.

For many sides, it's the crucial part of the campaign, where every tackle, every header and every pass can prove crucial. The pressure begins to build as thoughts turn to title tilts, relegation battles and promotion pushes. And for those of us lucky enough to still be involved in cup action, maybe some knockout drama too!

So here are six more engaging training practices that, we hope, will offer you new ideas for the coming weeks.

Beginning in the Barclays Premier League, Crystal Palace manager Tony Pulis presents for us a training session that looks at midfield pressing with a counter-attack. Since arriving at Selhurst Park, Pulis has made the Eagles a much more resilient outfit, and dominating central areas has been a big part of their development this term. With this session, it's easy to see how.

Into the Sky Bet Championship, and Middlesbrough manager Aitor Karanka offers us a session that looks at transitions into attack, with offensive players knowing their roles in the form of designated runs and overload situations.

From Sky Bet League One, Oldham Athletic boss Lee Johnson outlines the principles of defending against the counter-attack; and from the Republic of Ireland's coaching set-up, goalkeeping coach Seamus McDonagh offers guidance as to how keepers can better read the ball.

To conclude, Blackburn Rovers' Eric Kinder outlines the principles of attackers beating the offside trap, while we're delighted to welcome Tony Mowbray into our Coaching Consultation feature, as he offers advice to an **Elite Soccer** reader who wants his defenders to play with more control and composure in the box.

Have a great month ahead, enjoy your football, and we'll see you again at the end of April.

All the best,

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS

MANAGER OF THE MONTH AWARDS



 West Ham United manager **Sam Allardyce** won the February Manager of the Month award after his side moved clear of the Premier League relegation places with a sensational upturn in form. The former Blackpool, Bolton Wanderers and Newcastle United boss led the Hammers to four straight wins as they saw off Swansea City, Aston Villa, Norwich City and Southampton, conceding only one goal during the month. Veteran club captain Kevin Nolan led the club's charge towards safety with five goals during the month.

WEST HAM UNITED: P4 W4 D0 L0 (LEAGUE ONLY)



 In the Sky Bet Championship, Wigan Athletic boss **Uwe Rosler** collected the divisional award after the Latics made a concerted charge up towards the play-off places. Rosler, who joined from Brentford in December 2013, is beginning to work his magic at the Lancashire club, who are seeking an instant return to the Barclays Premier League having been relegated last term. And in February, they saw off Charlton Athletic, Sheffield Wednesday, Barnsley and Brighton & Hove Albion. Wigan also defeated Premier League side Cardiff City in the FA Cup fifth round.

WIGAN ATHLETIC: P5 W4 D0 L1



 In Sky Bet League One, **Nigel Clough's** Sheffield United side continue to climb the table. The 48-year-old has transformed the Blades' fortunes after a slow start to the campaign that saw the club stuck in the relegation places. But upward momentum continued in February as the Yorkshire outfit saw off Shrewsbury Town, Gillingham, Bristol City and Colchester United, conceding only one goal in those four matches. United also made it through to the FA Cup sixth round, with knockout victories during the month against Fulham and Nottingham Forest.

SHEFFIELD UNITED: P5 W4 D0 L1



 And finally to Sky Bet League Two, where Manager of the Month honours went to **David Flitcroft**, the manager of Bury. The Shakers conceded only twice in five league matches during February, on their way to taking 11 points from a potential 15. And crucially, wins over Wycombe Wanderers, AFC Wimbledon and Mansfield Town meant Bury picked up valuable points against relegation rivals, as they look to preserve their league status despite tight budgetary restraints at Gigg Lane this year.

BURY: P5 W3 D2 L0

CAREER PATH

... with **Phil Brown**, manager of Sky Bet League Two side **Southend United**.

Q. You're managing with a smile on your face these days. That must feel good?

A. Well any manager will tell you they want to enjoy what they do. Of course, it's not always that easy, but coming to Southend has been a great experience. It's a job where you're going to get your hands dirty doing a lot of different tasks, but I love that – I love feeling a part of us all moving in the one direction and helping each other out as we go.

Q. You were out of the game for a while. Did you worry you might not find a way back in?

A. I guess that's a worry for any manager. Some even worry about it when they're in a job! The reality is you have to keep yourself busy, for your own sanity. Then it's a case of staying in touch with everything that's happening, attending events and courses and being fresh and open to anything that comes

up. But whether you're employed in the game or not, any coach passionate about football should be looking to keep himself informed.

Q. Have you mellowed over the years?

A. Definitely. I think at the start you go in with a lot of big ideas and perhaps are a bit gung-ho in your approach. I've done some things I regret – not many – but you're never going to get it right all of the time. It's a learning process – even those right at the very top are still learning; there's nothing wrong in admitting that.



CRYSTAL PALACE

Tony Pulis Mastering midfield

Overview:

This session relies on the midfield four pressing around the halfway line. It involves movement up and across the pitch to intercept, and dynamic counter-attacking play.

I have always coached teams to make the most of opponents spreading high and wide in possession when in their own half. This session works on the forward part of the team setting the trap around the halfway line to regain possession while the opposition are open for the counter-attack.

We saw the principles of this session work perfectly when we played Tottenham Hotspur earlier this season at White Hart Lane. We pressed around the halfway line, intercepted and counter-attacked, winning ourselves an early penalty.

“Midfielders must move across as a unit, stopping any pass through them. The ultimate aim is to invite the ball wide.”

MASTERING MIDFIELD

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a half-pitch

EQUIPMENT

Cones, goals, mannequins

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

16

SESSION TIME

Warm-up 15mins,
Main session 20mins,
8v8 game 15mins

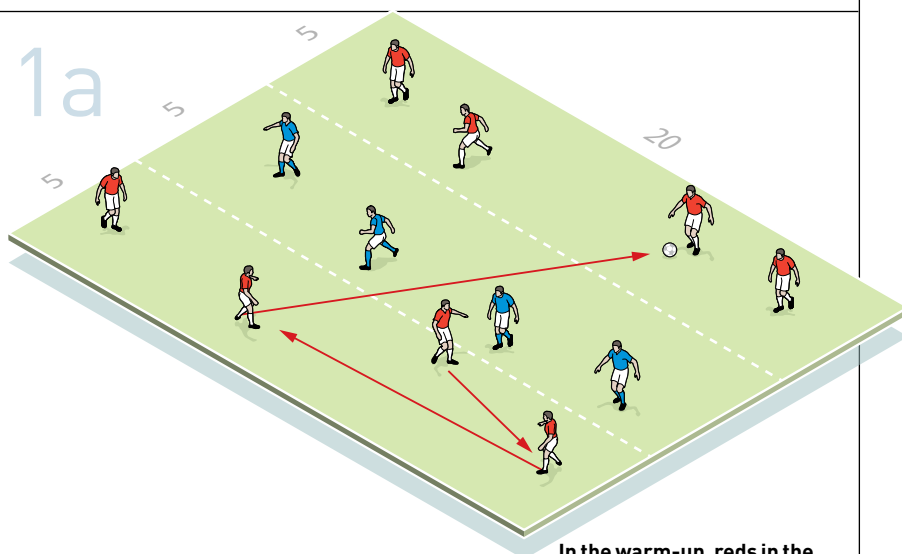
What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up

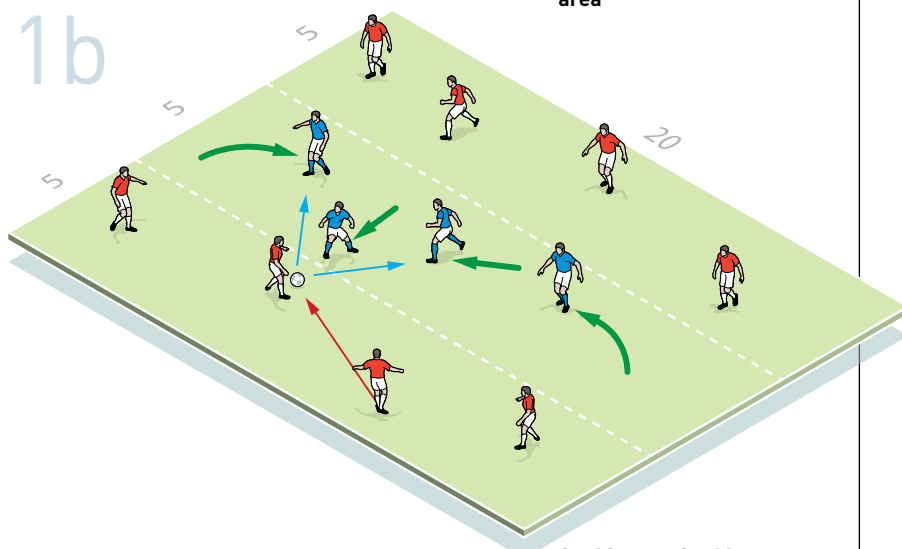
We begin with a warm-up, as shown (1a), on a 20x15-yard pitch. The ball starts with the red team in the bottom box; they pass it amongst themselves, moving the ball quickly and looking for the opportunity to break the lines in playing it across to the other team. One point is scored each time they successfully breach the midfield line in passing to the other four reds.

We play for two minutes then invite four resting midfielders to swap with the active midfielders.

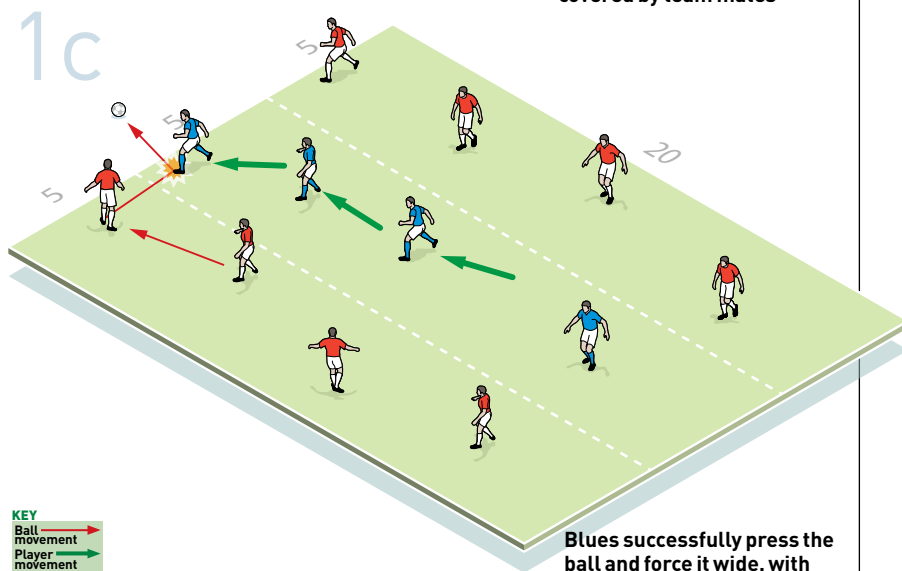
Midfielders must move across as a unit, stopping any pass through them. The nearest player to the ball is always the man who is forwards and backwards, pressing (1b), while other players must be alert to covering the space vacated. The ultimate aim is to invite the ball wide where it is pressed and knocked out of play (1c).



In the warm-up, reds in the bottom area find space to thread a pass through the midfield line into the top area



On this occasion blues press, with the pressing player having his position well covered by team mates



Blues successfully press the ball and force it wide, with an attempted red pass being deflected out of play





Tony Pulis CRYSTAL PALACE

Tony Pulis arrived at Crystal Palace at the end of November with the Eagles having won only two of their opening 12 Barclays Premier League matches, and sitting six points adrift of safety.

Palace have been relegated in each of their four seasons in the Premier League, but Pulis has never suffered the drop in 21 years as a manager, and he quickly fuelled a change of momentum for the south London club, with victories over West Ham United, Cardiff City and Aston Villa in his first full month in charge.

Pulis spent years plotting similar top division survival for Stoke City in a hugely successful seven years at the Britannia Stadium, having promoted the club from the Championship in 2008. He has also managed Bournemouth, Gillingham, Bristol City, Portsmouth and Plymouth Argyle.

MASTERING MIDFIELD

Main session

Setting up as shown (2a), we play five red attackers against four blue defenders. Blues pass the ball across the pitch, and after exchanging passes, make forward progress in towards the mannequins. This is the trigger for the red defenders to step in, press (2b), and counter-attack using their midfielder, with the intention of scoring in the goal (2c).

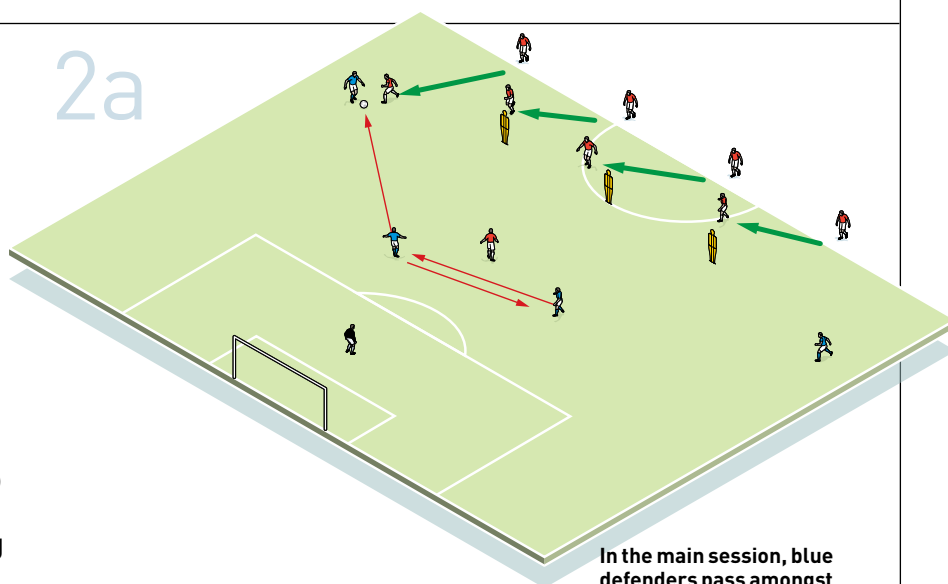
What are the key things to look out for?

Attackers are looking to score with pace. Defenders must look to retain possession for as long as possible, then when the ball is lost, know how to recover quickly and efficiently. Rotate players frequently.

How do I put this into a game situation?

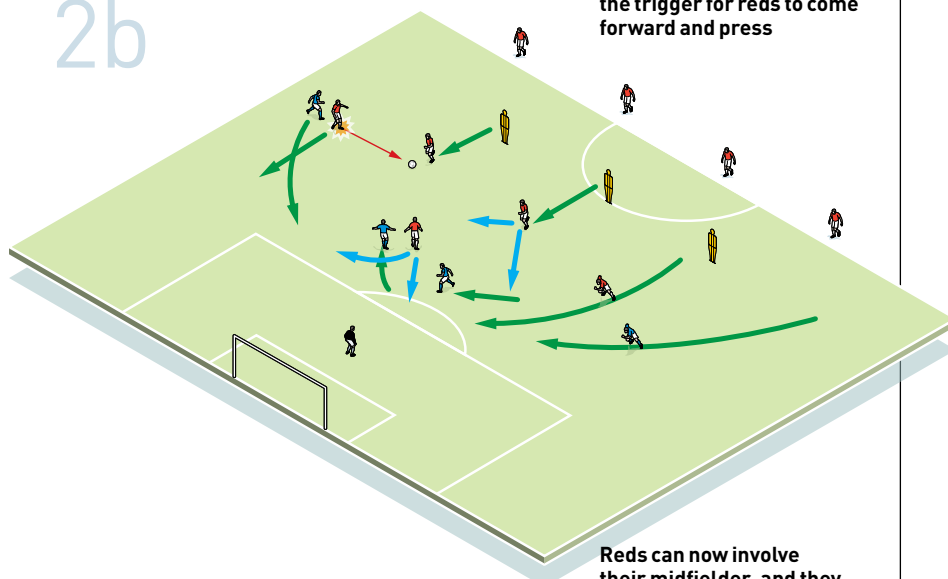
We play a simple 8v8 on a 70x50-yard area, with both teams playing 2-4-2. The principles of the practice should be adopted in this game with midfielders pressing, winning back possession and releasing front players for an attack.

2a



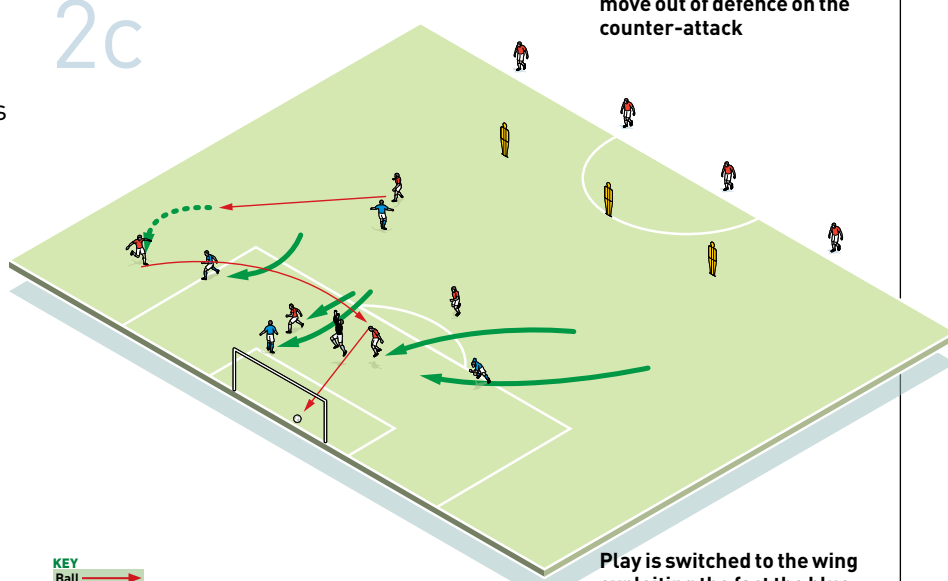
In the main session, blue defenders pass amongst themselves. A pass up to the level of the mannequins is the trigger for reds to come forward and press

2b



Reds can now involve their midfielder, and they move out of defence on the counter-attack

2c



Play is switched to the wing exploiting the fact the blue full-back is out of position, with a cross into the danger area being headed into the goal



MIDDLESBROUGH

Aitor Karanka Transition to attack

Overview:

This session examines players' ability to attack quickly and create overloads from an organised team shape.

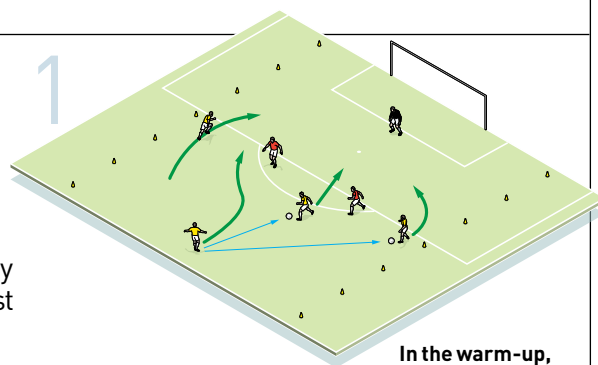
It's a modern trend within the game and offers our team a clear route to goal, with players taking on and mastering defined roles as part of a tight and efficient unit.

TRANSITION TO ATTACK

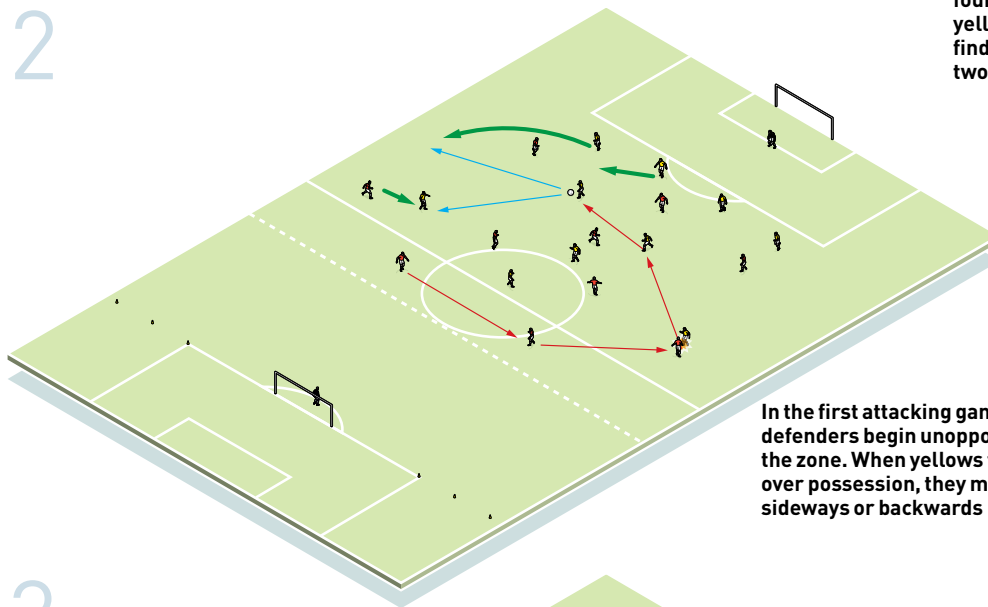
What do I get the players to do?

Overload exercise

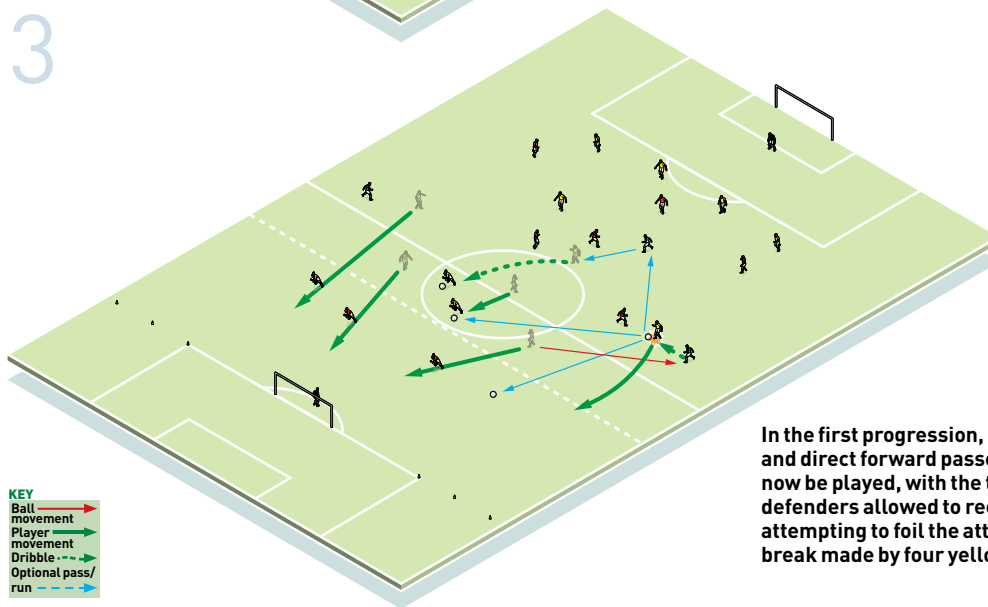
We begin with a 4v2 overload warm-up in a narrowed penalty box extended down the pitch. Two red defenders must organise to repel the threat of the four yellow attackers. If they win the ball back the practice restarts. We progress this by telling the deep midfielder to recover after the first pass, with the main attack being a 3v2 (1).



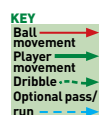
In the warm-up, four attacking yellows attempt to find a way past the two defenders



In the first attacking game, red defenders begin unopposed in the zone. When yellows turn over possession, they must play sideways or backwards



In the first progression, quick and direct forward passes can now be played, with the two red defenders allowed to recover in attempting to foil the attacking break made by four yellows



SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 9v9

SESSION TIME

Overload exercise
10mins,
Game 1 20mins,
Game 2 20mins

Attacking game 1

We set up with a goal on the 18-yard line, with the pitch coned across 10 yards into the bottom half. This small area represents a 'safe zone', where two unopposed defenders sit. They pass the ball out to

begin the attacking move.

Should yellows turn over possession they cannot immediately counter-attack - we want them to think about switching, making a square pass or even playing the ball backwards,

before then going forward, in order to keep opponents from immediately pressing the ball (2).

When a pass breaks the coned line, both defenders can move back to defend, though four attackers can move into the space.

To progress, yellows can now make any pass, including a quick ball forward (3). And in the final progression, only one red can defend behind the coned line, against as many as five attackers.



Aitor Karanka
MIDDLESBROUGH

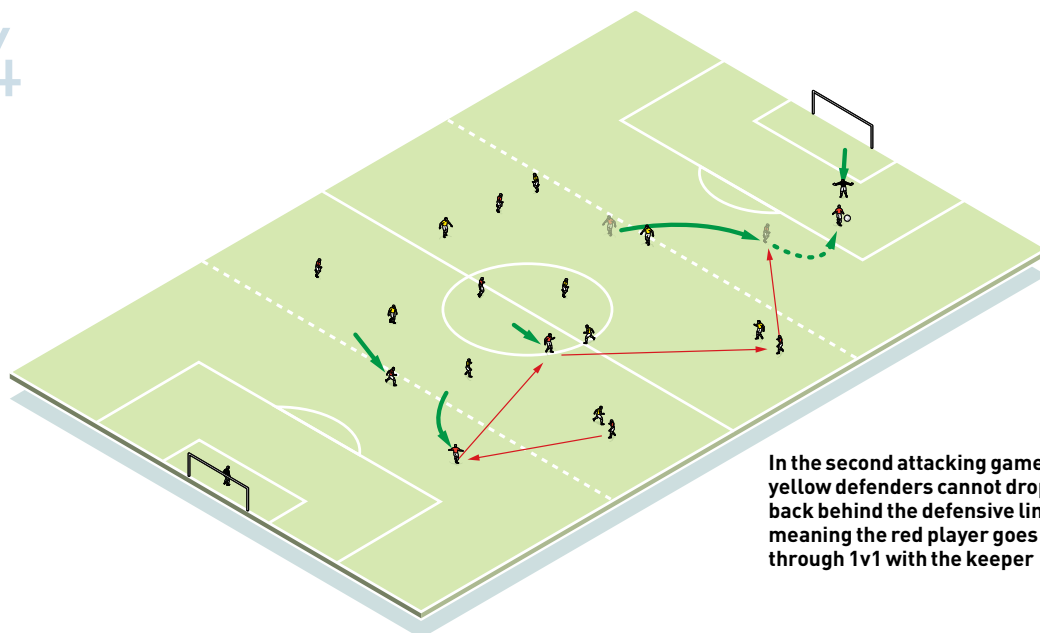
Spaniard Aitor Karanka enjoyed an impressive playing career, which included winning the UEFA Champions League with Real Madrid in 2000. He also played for Athletic Bilbao and Colorado Rapids, and appeared for the Spanish national team.

It was as assistant to Jose Mourinho at Real in 2010 that the 40-year-old's reputation as an innovative coach really developed, and leaving the post in 2013 he accepted the offer to become Middlesbrough's first ever overseas manager.

With the club mid-table in the Sky Bet Championship and going through something of a transitional period, Karanka is looking to express more of his Spanish influence as the club aim for a concerted promotion push next term.

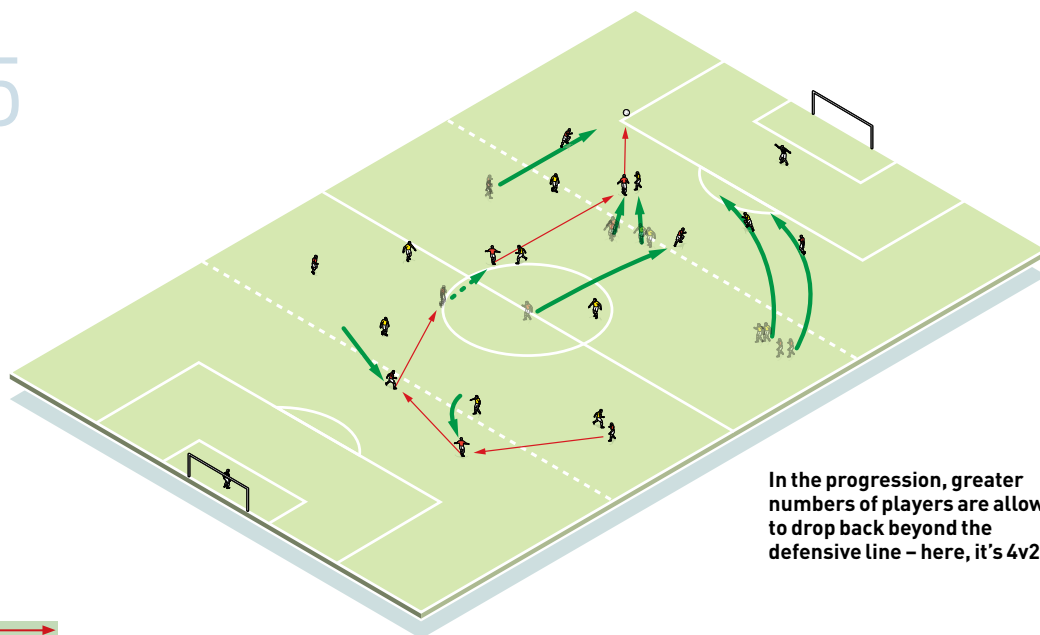
TRANSITION TO ATTACK

4



In the second attacking game, yellow defenders cannot drop back behind the defensive line, meaning the red player goes through 1v1 with the keeper

5



In the progression, greater numbers of players are allowed to drop back beyond the defensive line – here, it's 4v2

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble
Optional pass/run

“This session examines players’ ability to attack quickly and create overloads from an organised team shape.”

Attacking game 2

Next we play 9v9, full pitch, with zones at both ends, which act as offside lines. Attackers can have two players running beyond this line who will be unopposed if a pass can be played through. Defending players cannot drop deeper than this line, allowing space into

which we can play through-balls and create 1v1 situations against the keeper (4). To progress, we can allow more attackers and defenders beyond that line, such as 4v2s or 4v3s (5).

What are the key things to look out for?

Technically, we want to see players running with the ball, playing with their heads up, a good quality of pass and movement and accomplished decision making.

Tactically, the session relies on good

organisation, players being able to break the lines when regaining, and movement in the sense of how, when and where we can get to where we need to be on the pitch. ■

OLDHAMATHLETIC

Lee Johnson Defending the counter

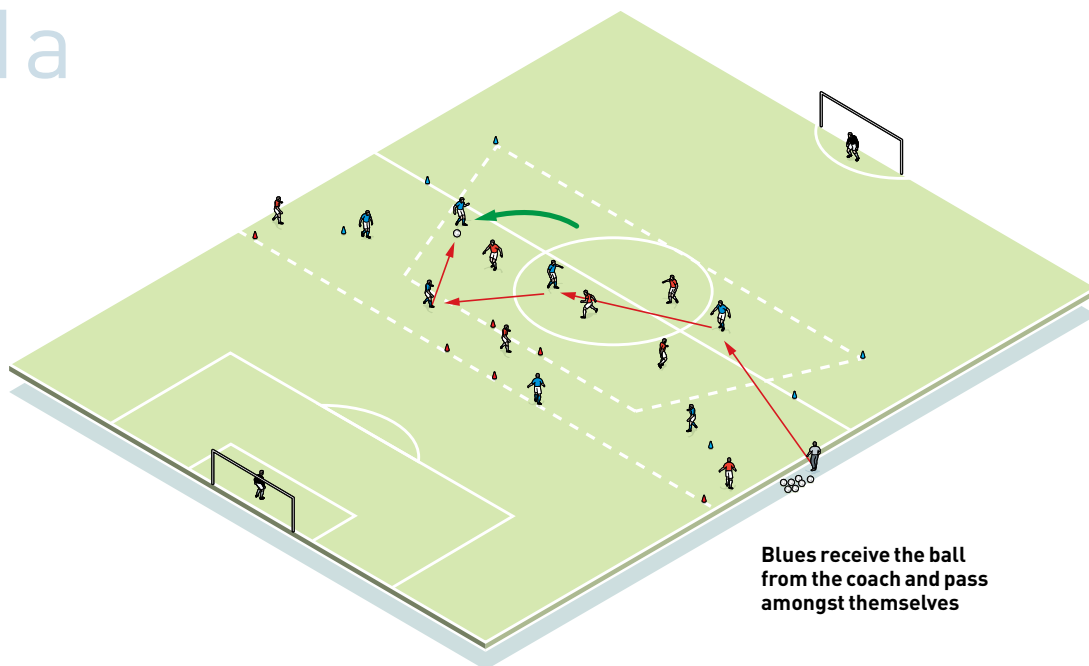
Overview:

This is an important session to practise if you want to play a high defensive line, because at some point it's inevitable you will lose possession and become exposed and vulnerable to a counter-attack.

This session stresses the back four and midfield in a realistic scenario. It also gets defenders aware of danger when in possession, and coaches them on individual defensive responsibilities and recovery runs.

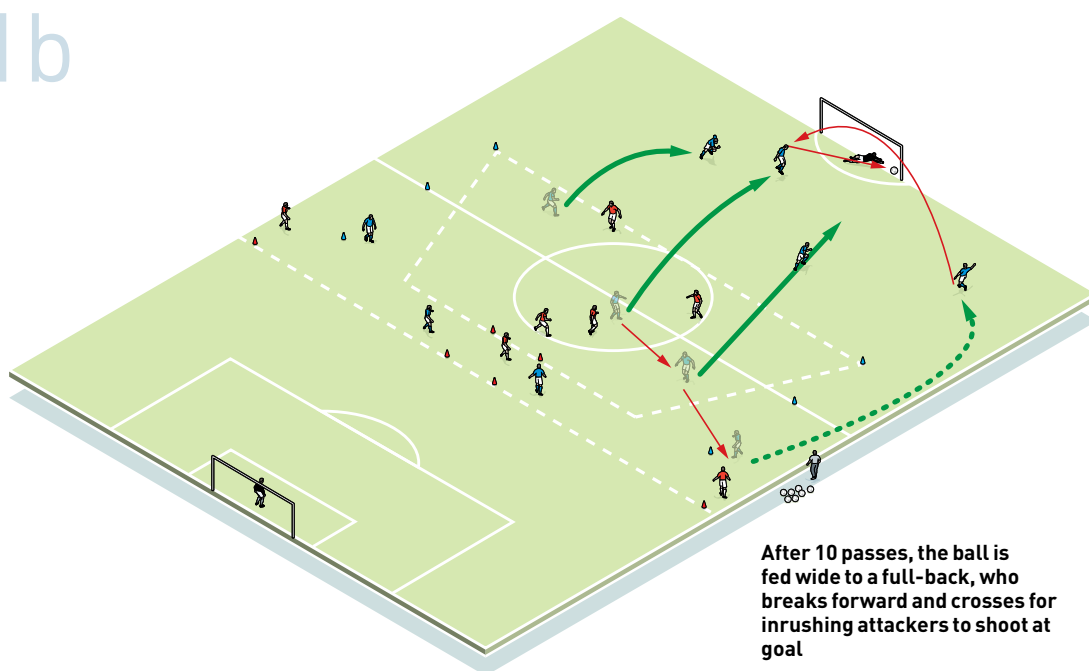
DEFENDING THE COUNTER

1a



Blues receive the ball from the coach and pass amongst themselves

1b



After 10 passes, the ball is fed wide to a full-back, who breaks forward and crosses for rushing attackers to shoot at goal

SET-UP

AREA

Two thirds of a pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

14 plus two keepers

SESSION TIME

Session 25mins,
Progression 10mins

What do I get the players to do?

We set up as shown on two thirds of a pitch, with a half hexagon 'keep ball' area in the middle. This space is loaded 4v3 against the defenders, thus presenting a good chance for the backline to find themselves exposed

and under pressure.

Defending the counter

Blues set up with a keeper, back four and three midfielders. Inside the keep ball box is a 4v3 overload in favour of the red attackers. Two reds must stay wide in a 'cheating' role, in anticipation of the

midfielders winning the ball and breaking quickly.

Outside the box we have the blue back four, then three reds (as striker, left winger and right winger).

We start by rolling the ball to the blues (1a). They must keep it for at least 10 passes, at which point a full-

back is released. Blues break forward and arrive in the goalscoring area for a finish from the full-back's cross (1b). We now restart with the coach.



Lee Johnson
OLDHAMATHLETIC

Lee Johnson is one of the Football League's youngest managers, having joined Sky Bet League One side Oldham Athletic at the age of 31.

In his first season in charge, he guided the Latics away from relegation danger, further enhancing his reputation as one of the game's most promising coaches.

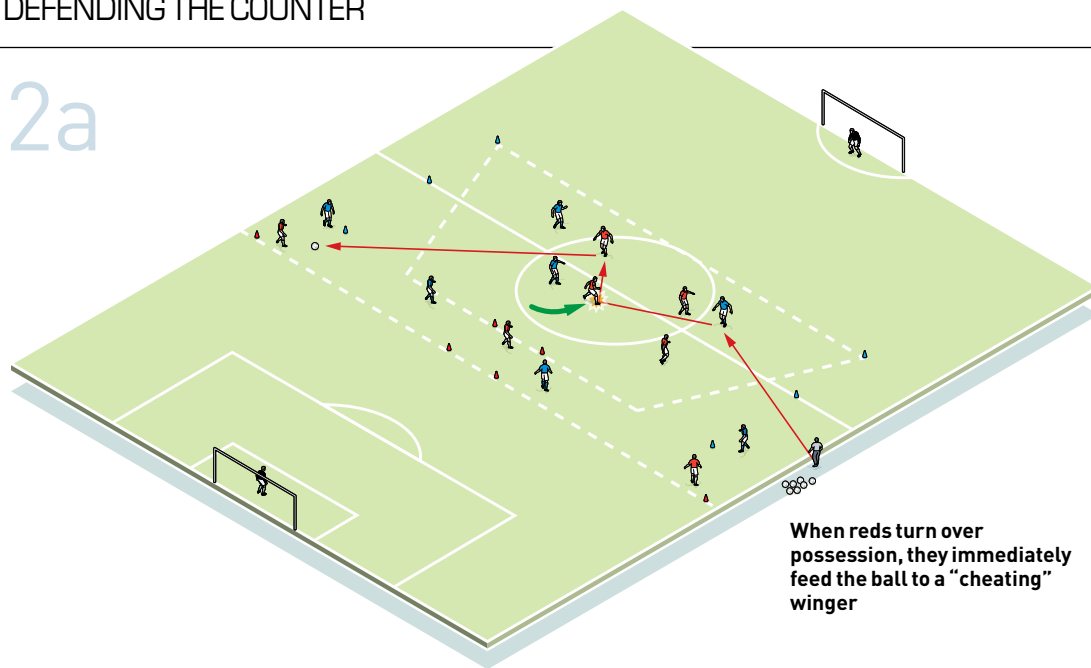
As a player, Lee appeared for a number of sides, notably Yeovil Town and Bristol City for whom he made 191 and 174 appearances respectively. He also enjoyed spells at Brighton & Hove Albion, Hearts, Derby County, Chesterfield and Kilmarnock.

His father is Yeovil Town manager Gary Johnson.

"We want to see communication, engaging in the box, and the use of a 'sweeper keeper', who commands both his box and the immediate area outside it."

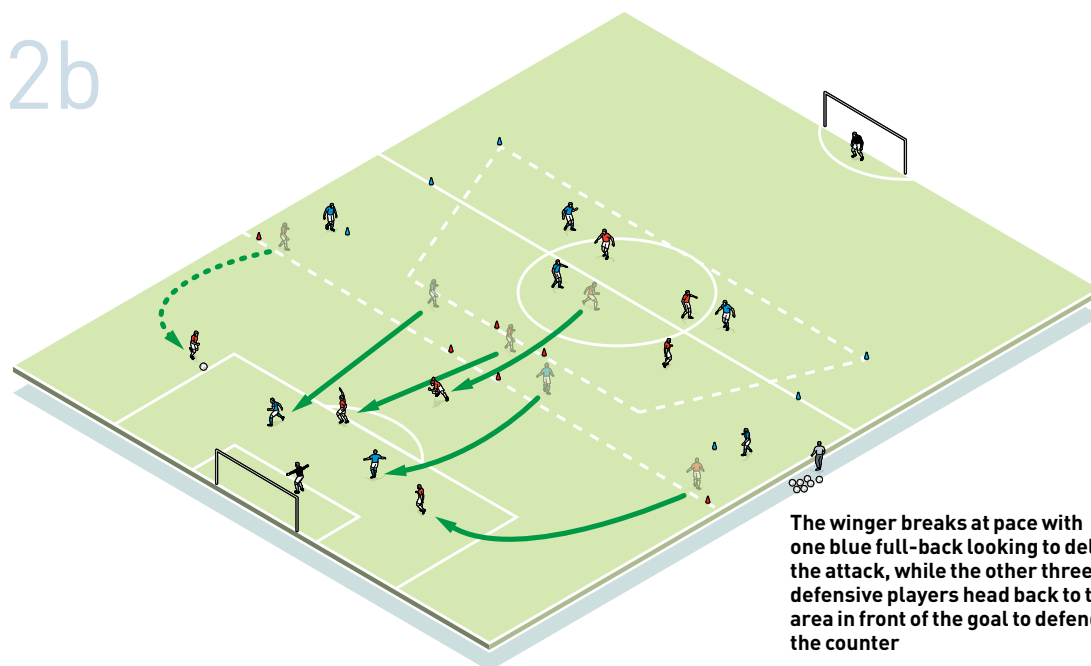
DEFENDING THE COUNTER

2a



When reds turn over possession, they immediately feed the ball to a "cheating" winger

2b



The winger breaks at pace with one blue full-back looking to delay the attack, while the other three defensive players head back to the area in front of the goal to defend the counter

When reds win the ball they must play an early ball to one of the two wingers (2a) or the single striker. At this point the counter-attack is on and blues are exposed. One red midfielder may also join the attack, as will the red single striker (2b). Play to a finish or when defenders clear the ball.

What are the key things to look out for?

Blues in possession must move the ball quickly and with quality. They need to maintain balance whilst regularly considering the repercussions of giving the ball away. We also want to see good communication, smart angles to receive (looking at

depth and using a side-on shoulder position), with full-backs choosing the correct time to overlap and penetrate.

When out of possession, the blue defender on the scene needs to delay his opponent, dampening the counter-attack and giving his team mates time to recover. We also want to see communication,

engaging in the box, and the use of a 'sweeper keeper', who commands both his box and the immediate area outside it.

How do I progress the session?

To progress, on the red counter-attack, we can allow midfielders to break as well. ■

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Seamus McDonagh The sweeper keeper

Overview:

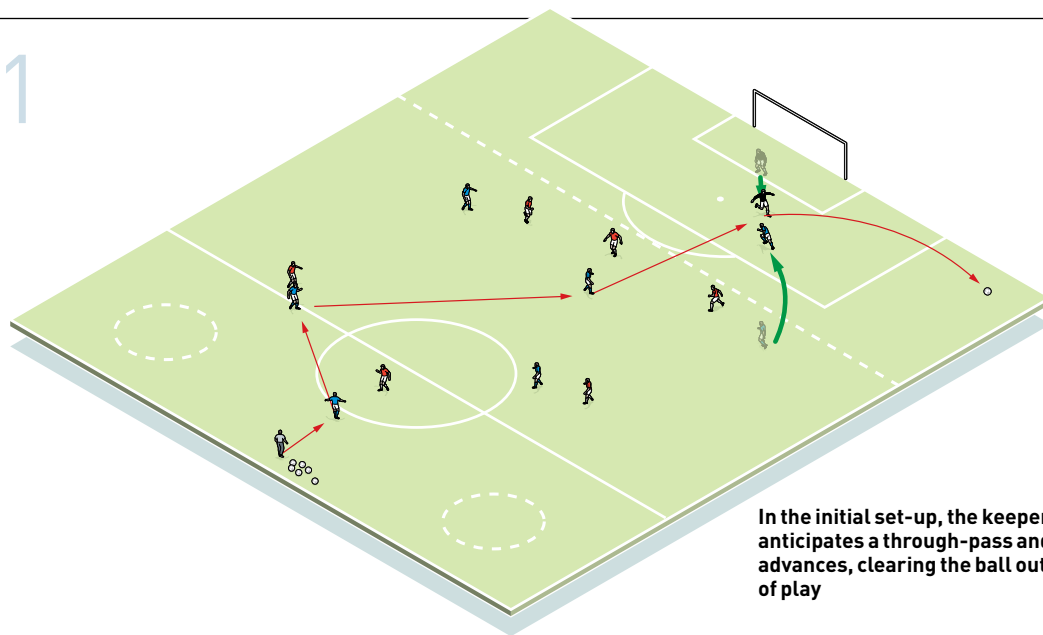
This session improves goalkeepers' reading of the through-ball, and strengthens decision-making behind a back three or four.

We run this practice because it's so important in today's game that keepers have a precise command of their area – after all, how often do we see keepers sent off for bringing an opponent down when through? Good goalkeeping should mean that penetration of the backline is anticipated and the threat dealt with.

I would suggest all keepers watch Tottenham Hotspur's Hugo Lloris who, in the modern game, is the best at coming off his line.

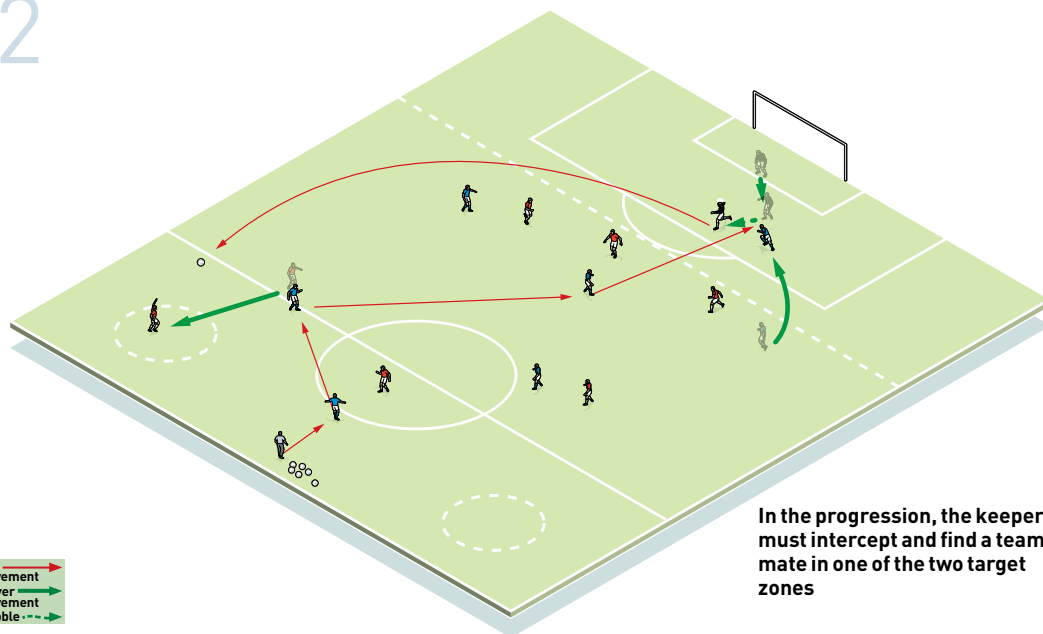
THE SWEEPER KEEPER

1



In the initial set-up, the keeper anticipates a through-pass and advances, clearing the ball out of play

2



In the progression, the keeper must intercept and find a team mate in one of the two target zones



What do I get the players to do?

Main session

We set up as shown, playing man-to-man, 7- or 8-a-side. There is no sweeper and nobody dropping off the defending team. That defending team must play in advance of the 22-yard line.

The attacking team tries to pick a pass through or over the top of the defence into the 22-yard area, sending

a player through to score on goal. This can only be one man going through by himself, and cannot be two strikers. However, attackers can score from anywhere in the box after a through-pass or long pass into the coned area.

What are the key things to look for technically/tactically?

Keepers must have a realistic starting position, similar to the one they would adopt in a match. Of course, this would be dependent on where play was on the pitch, but a keeper cannot stay around the 22-yard line as this would be unrealistic.

Keepers must look

to read the situations that develop in front of them. Communication between the keeper and his defenders is vital.

When the ball is sent towards goal, the keeper must assess the situation and make a decision to come or stay. If deciding to come, he must sprint to intercept the through-pass and either gather or clear (1).

SET-UP

AREA

Final third

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals, mannequins (optional)

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 12

SESSION TIME

Main session 15mins, Progression 15mins, Game 20mins



Seamus McDonagh

REPUBLIC OF
IRELAND

Seamus McDonagh is a vastly experienced Irish goalkeeping coach who enjoyed a 24-year playing career, beginning at Rotherham United in 1970. He went on to protect goal for a number of sides including Bolton Wanderers, Everton, Notts County, Birmingham City and Sunderland, before winding down his career in the English lower leagues.

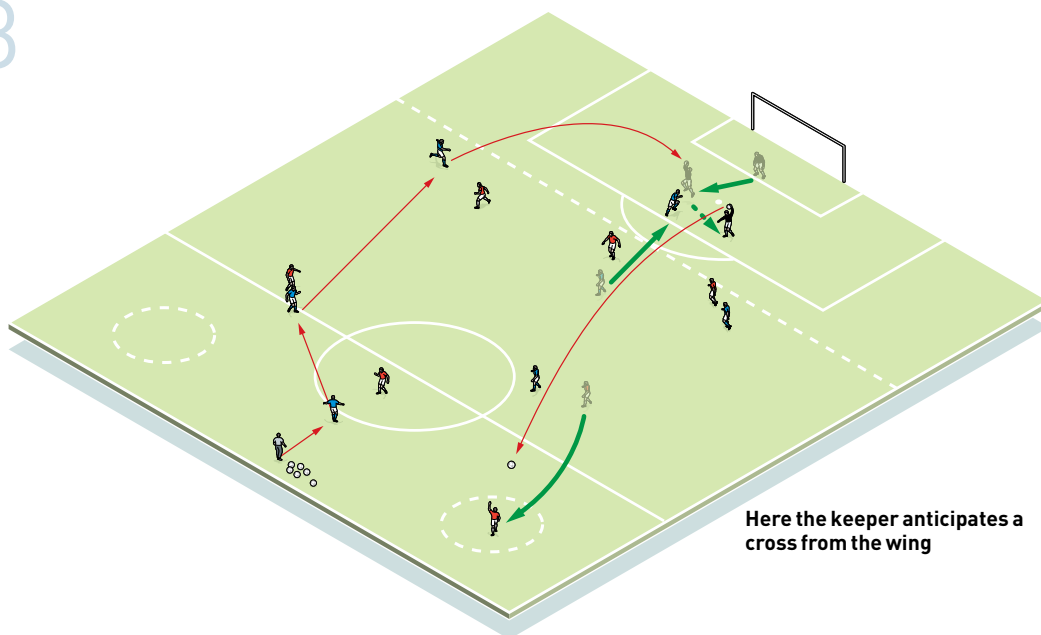
He also made 25 international appearances for the Republic of Ireland, and has managed Galway United.

After concluding his playing career, he coached at Coventry City, Nottingham Forest, Leicester City, Aston Villa and Sunderland, amongst others, and joined the Republic's coaching set-up in November 2013.

“Keepers must look to read the situations that develop in front of them.”

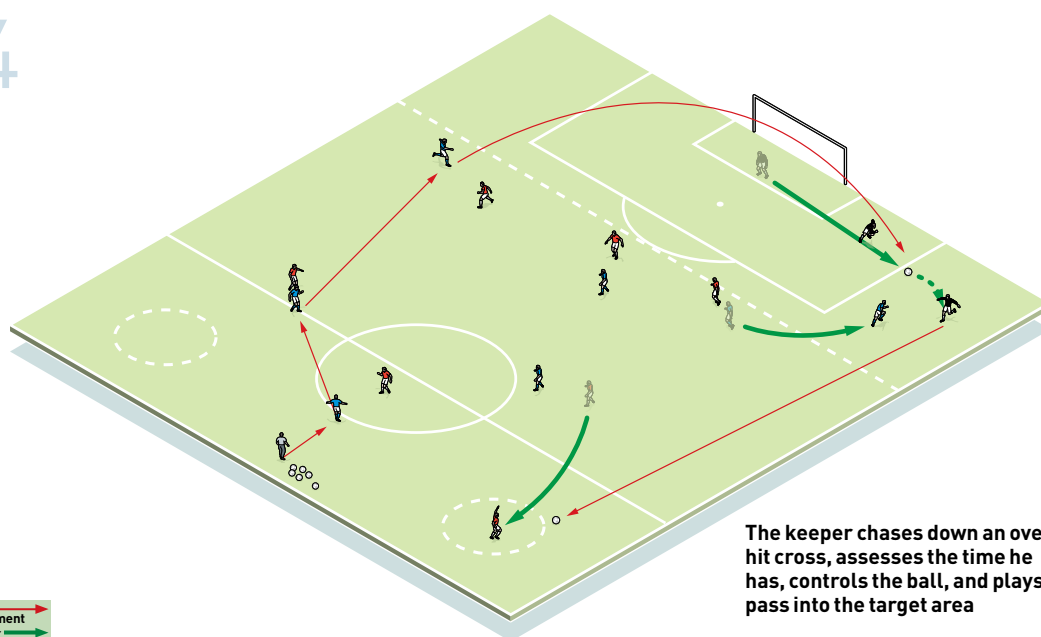
THE SWEEPER KEEPER

3



Here the keeper anticipates a cross from the wing

4



The keeper chases down an over-hit cross, assesses the time he has, controls the ball, and plays a pass into the target area



How do I progress this game?

As a progression, we will tell the keeper to kick to one of the coned target areas when he intercepts the initial ball. Making a realistic transition from defence to attack is important, so we would also position two team mates on the

pitch who can receive the keeper's long pass in the target area (2).

It's also important the attacking team varies the types of deliveries, with testing balls arriving both from the flanks and through the middle (3).

The keeper can also be encouraged to pursue other elements of

being 'the sweeper' – for instance, if he intercepts the ball outside his area and is not under immediate pressure from an attacker, he can work on his long passes to a target player (4).

How would I put this into a game situation?

We would move this into a full-size 11-a-side game and instruct keepers to apply the principles outlined. ■

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Eric Kinder

Attacking offside elements

Overview:

More and more centre-forwards are learning how to play smarter when it comes to taking advantage of the rules of offside. Being clever with their movement can cause defenders countless problems, and a principle we like to concentrate on is that of attackers keeping defenders deep by standing in offside positions before coming back onside. This session practices that principle.

“A principle we like to concentrate on is that of attackers keeping defenders deep by standing in offside positions before coming back onside.”

ATTACKING OFFSIDE ELEMENTS

SET-UP

AREA

Half-pitch plus 18 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Full squad

SESSION TIME

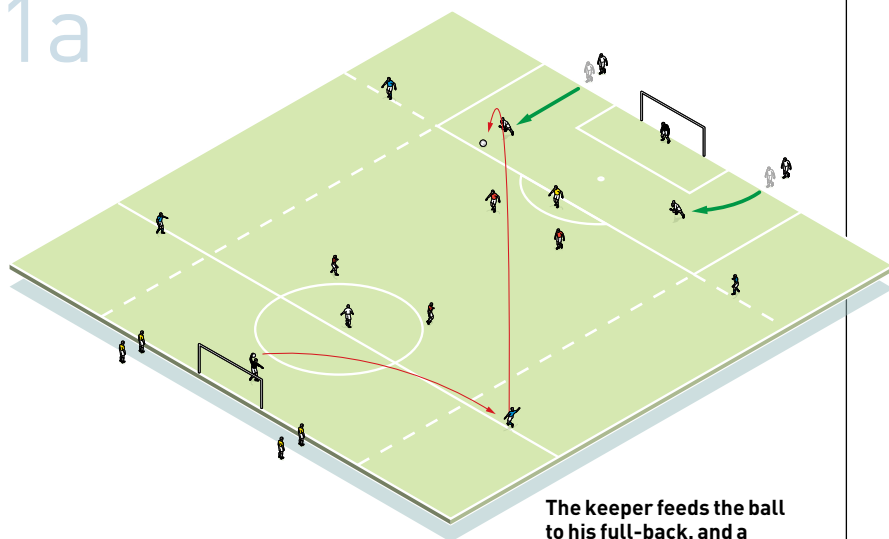
20mins

What do I get the players to do?

The keeper serves out to a full-back, who drives a long diagonal pass into the midfielder, who runs from behind the far goal. His partner comes out with him from the other side of the goal (1a).

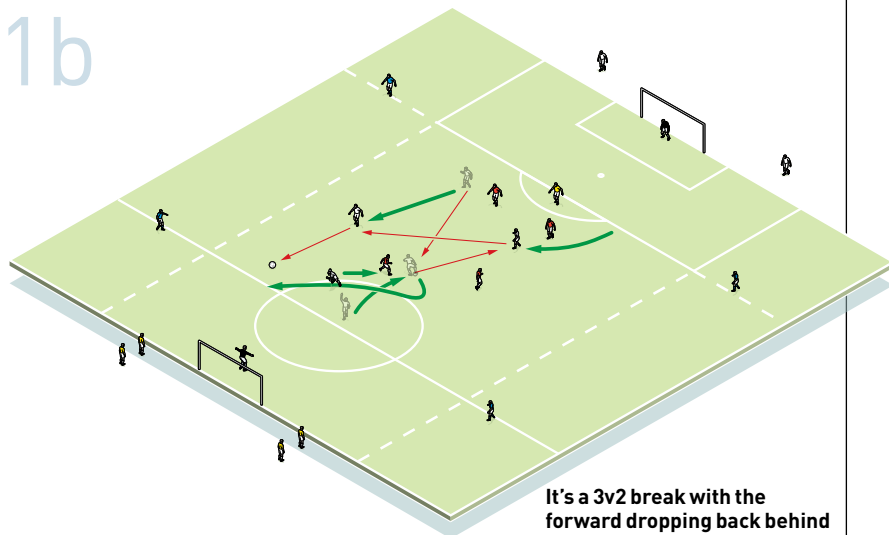
The centre-forward's starting position is offside behind the two central defenders. The two midfielders combine, and after one or two passes the centre-forward gets onside before timing his run in behind to get a forward pass and make a 3v2 situation (1b). Play concludes with a shot at goal or save (1c).

1a



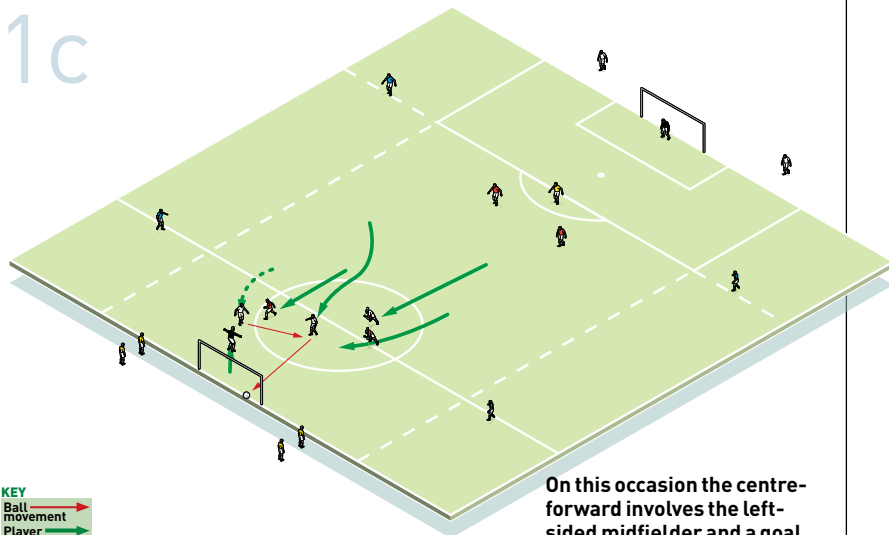
The keeper feeds the ball to his full-back, and a long pass is made into the emerging attacker from behind the other goal

1b



It's a 3v2 break with the forward dropping back behind the last defender then turning to attack a forward pass

1c



On this occasion the centre-forward involves the left-sided midfielder and a goal is scored

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble --->



Eric Kinder

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Boyhood Blackburn Rovers fan Eric Kinder became the club's Under-21s head coach in June 2013 when moving from Carlisle United. He had previously been at Ewood Park as Academy coach back in 2006, but rejoined the Sky Bet Championship outfit with the task of overseeing the next generation of stars.

ATTACKING OFFSIDE ELEMENTS

Play now starts from the other end of the pitch. Again, a short pass is made by the keeper to his full-back, and a long ball sent upfield (1d). Players who were passive in the first phase are now active, and again we want to see an attack on goal (1e). Rotate players after four attacks and ensure moves rotate from left and right sides.

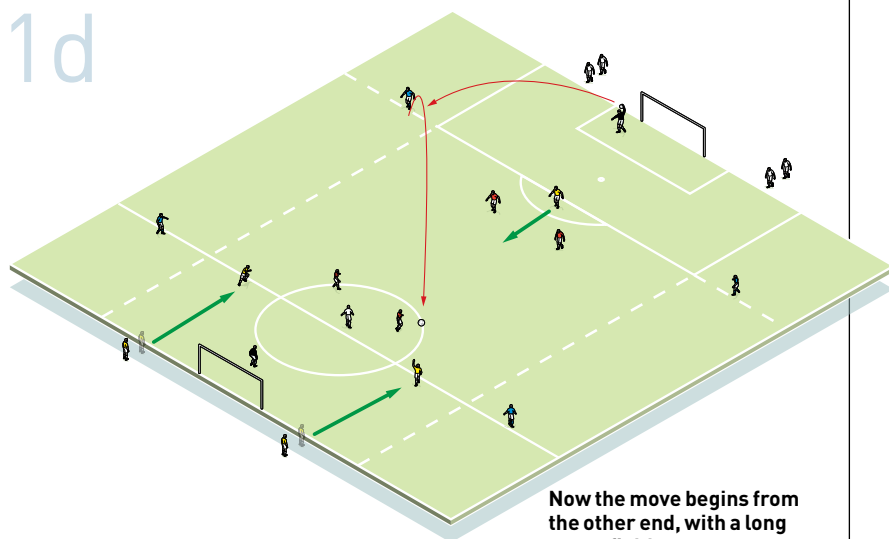
In the progression, wide players can move out to become wingers. Crosses must be made first-time into the box for inrushing attackers (2).

What are the key things to look out for technically/tactically?

The simplicity of the centre-forward's movement is also the most important factor. He must time his run to get onside before being involved in any combination play, and beginning deep of the defenders is pivotal.

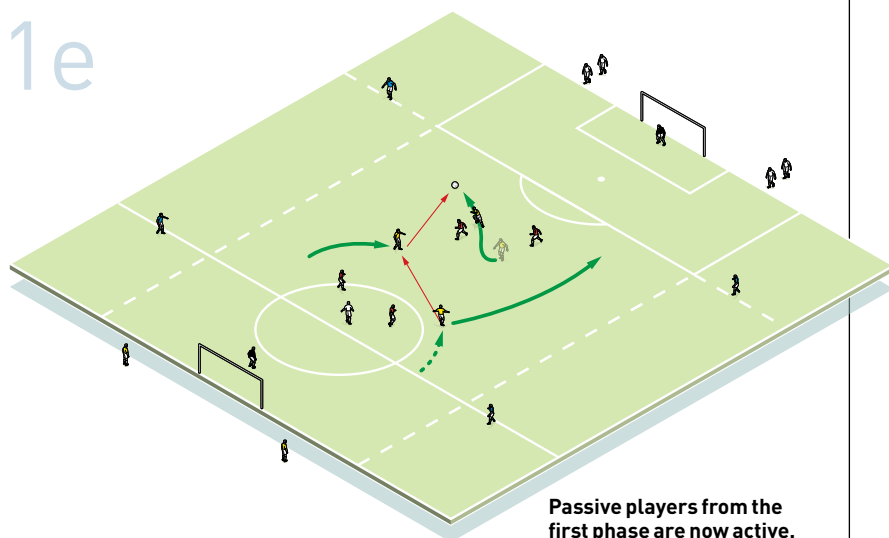
Link-up with other players and precision of pass and run are essential if the practice is to succeed. ■

1d



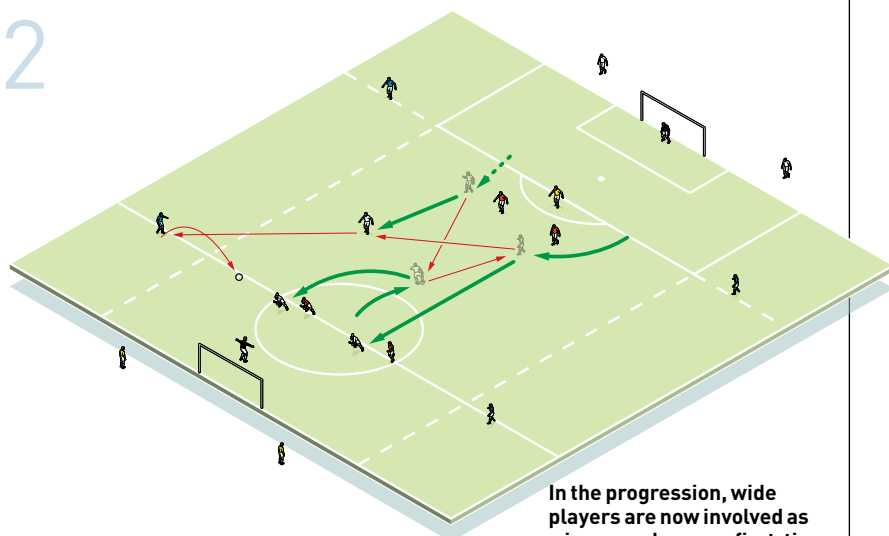
Now the move begins from the other end, with a long cross-field pass

1e



Passive players from the first phase are now active, and attackers construct an effort on goal

2



In the progression, wide players are now involved as wingers, who cross first-time into the box

“Link-up with other players and precision of pass and run are essential if the practice is to succeed”

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:

Defending the Box

My defenders tend to panic when winning the ball in defence and punt the ball out, only for it to come straight back. How can I get them to be more controlled when clearing their lines?

Question asked by Geoff Evans, a youth soccer coach from Gorrion, France

ANSWERED BY:

Tony Mowbray

LMA AMBASSADOR

It's important for defenders to practise dealing with quick play in and around the box. This is one of the key sessions we run because its usefulness can be seen in any training or match day situations – after all, quick play is a key skill in any area of the pitch. The session promotes something I like to term 'good habits' – these are universal for any player in any position but can be practised in a set way.

SET-UP

AREA

Final third

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Full squad

SESSION TIME

Session 15mins,
Development 15mins,
Game situation
15mins

Defending the box set-up

To set up we cone down the sides of the six-yard box to the 18-yard line, forming three small boxes. Extending the box outwards to 21 yards in length gives us more room to play in, and an additional 6x4-yard box offers a set start position where balls are served in from.

It's 2v2 - red defenders versus blue attackers - in the box, with free play. Blues on the outside are one-touch and the offside rule applies. Defenders must track play, reacting quickly to passing movement and blocking shots on goal.

Red defenders score a point for winning possession and passing it back to the serving blue. Blue attackers get a point for scoring in the goal.

Blues use an outer player, one-touch, as red defenders come across to cover

Left and right sides

Attackers must use left and right 'outer' players in sequence, so if the first attack is on the right, the second must come from the left. Outer players can also pass between each other, but as before, must do this one-touch.

One red defender presses the ball while the other marshals his opponent in the 2v2

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

COACHING CONSULTATION

Coaching considerations

Defenders must readjust depending on whether the ball is inside or outside the box, assessing angles and distances (from the ball and opponents). They also need to be able to see the man and the ball at all times, so that means keeping shoulders open and anticipating the next movement.

Why this works

The practice works by creating situations where defenders can take control despite a number of challenges and distractions. In a real game they will have fewer elements to deal with, so the relative ease of that situation in comparison, combined with growing confidence to be gained through repetition of this practice, should lead to defenders making decisions that are more measured and controlled. ■

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

Extending the challenge

To progress, you can increase the complexity by increasing the size of the box, playing 5v5 (with the defending team comprised of a back four and defensive midfielder).

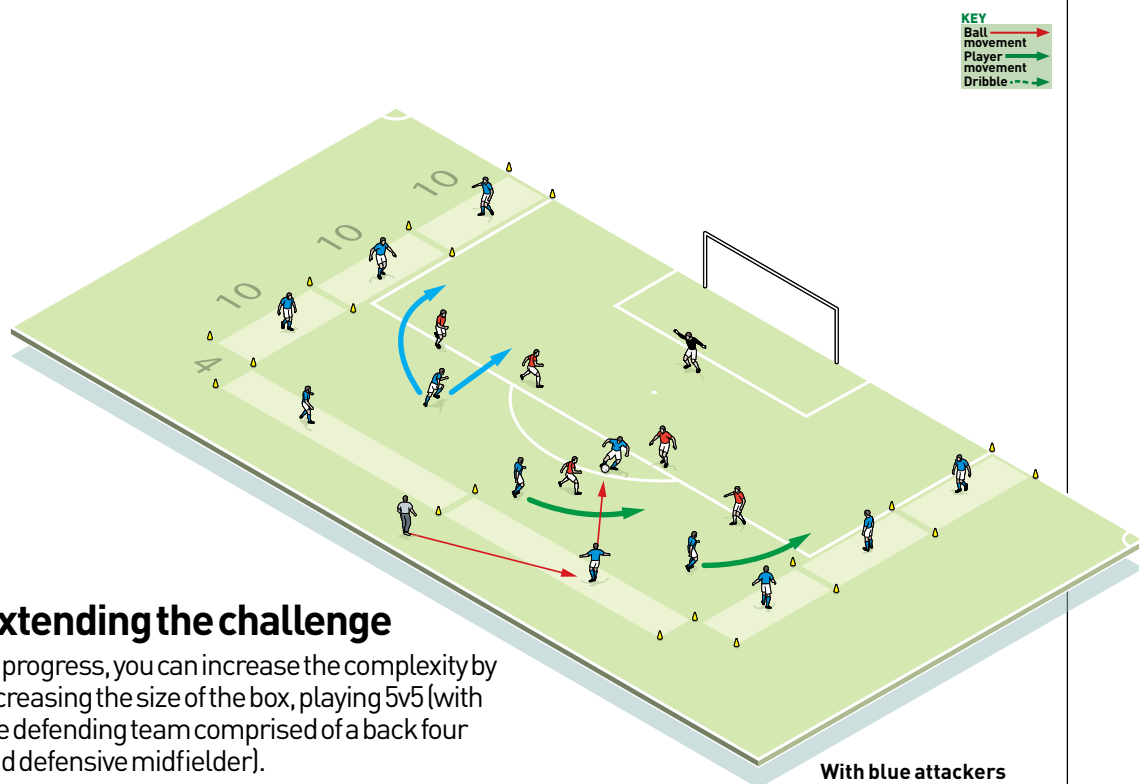
Crossed delivery

We can also allow 'outer' players to cross the ball in the air rather than insisting on it staying grounded.

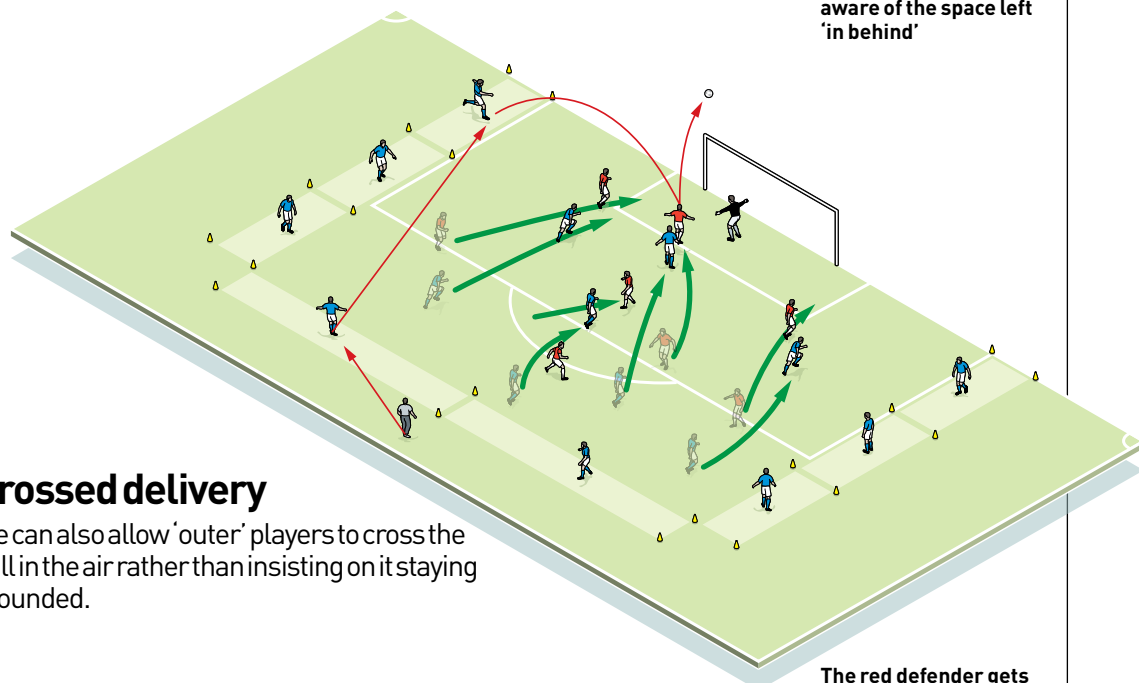
Tony Mowbray LMA AMBASSADOR

Tony Mowbray is an experienced manager and former player, having guided West Bromwich Albion into the Premier League in 2008.

He has also managed Hibernian, Ipswich Town, Celtic and Middlesbrough, the club for whom he made 348 appearances between 1982 and 1991 as a dominant centre-back.



With blue attackers running from a deeper start position, red defenders must be aware of the space left 'in behind'



The red defender gets near post to deal with a flighted centre from the left flank

EXTRA-TIME PROFILE

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The Manager magazine

SIMON GRAYSON PRESTON NORTH END

Simon Grayson has developed something of a speciality as a manager. He takes clubs with a rich heritage and helps them to regain some of their past glory through promotion and the kind of competitive performances not seen since their heydays. It's little wonder he has barely been out of a job since he retired as a player in 2005.

While some people find the transition from playing to management a tough one, for Grayson it was a gradual process and a natural progression. A professional footballer for 18 years, he got his first stab at management at Blackpool in 2006 while still playing for the club. Having earned his coaching badges, he was asked to take on the reserve team, and then, when Colin Hendry left a year later, Grayson hung up his boots for good to focus on his management career.

"Very quickly I found myself in the difficult situation of having to manage players who had recently been my friends and colleagues, choosing who to leave out of the team or even release from their contracts," he says. Even so, he quickly realised that he was very comfortable in the manager's role and more than capable of making the tough decisions necessary for success. He even managed to retain a good, albeit different, working relationship with the players, something he puts down to always treating them as he would want to be treated.

LOOKING UP

Young and inexperienced in management, Grayson was never above seeking advice from his past managers and has incorporated some of the lessons he learned as



a player into his own approach and philosophy. As much as you think you know about the game from your playing days, management is a totally different proposition, he says.

"I was a young player for Leeds United during a very successful era for the club under Howard Wilkinson, when Gordon Strachan was a mainstay of the club," he says. "Gary Speed, David Batty and I were all coming through at the time and Strachan taught us how to conduct ourselves and how to lead

by example. He worked so hard and I'm sure his example shaped all of our careers."

Grayson later spent six years at Leicester City under Martin O'Neill and Brian Little, during which time the side achieved four play-off finals and a League Cup Final win.

"Martin and Brian were also a big inspiration," he says, "and helped to shape not only my playing career, but also who I am as a manager. They were very different in character; Martin would get every last drop of performance out of an individual and make it work for the team. His leadership abilities and the team spirit and camaraderie he engendered helped us to exceed all expectations. Brian Little, meanwhile, was very hands-on and involved in the day-to-day coaching of the team," says Grayson.

"I have a huge amount of respect for him, because he took me to Leicester in the first place and then to Aston Villa. He loved to be creative and try different things out on the training pitch."

Grayson is also thankful for some guidance during his early days as manager of Blackpool when, he admits, he tried to be a bit too radical and change things too quickly. "Tony Parkes was a calming influence and the ideal person to have alongside me," he says. "He was full of enthusiasm and had so much

SIMON GRAYSON PRESTON NORTH END

experience working alongside the likes of Kenny Dalglish, Ray Harford and Graeme Souness at Blackburn."

Now with the benefit of considerable experience, Grayson's own management philosophy centres on the love of the game and the willingness to give 100 per cent to each performance. "My mantra is be hard-working, express yourself and do your best," he says. "What I communicate to my team is that if they know they have given everything they have to give, they can have nothing to regret or reproach themselves about."

He also wants people to come to work each day with smiles on their faces. "It is a fantastic opportunity to work in professional football and be paid for playing football," he says. "I will have a laugh and a joke with my players, but they also know that when it's time to work we have to apply ourselves fully and get on with the job in hand."

CREATING HISTORY

During his time with Blackpool, Grayson's achievements included promotion to the Championship and taking the side to the fourth round of both the FA Cup and the League Cup, their best progress in 17 and 35 years respectively.

Then, in 2008, he took up the post of manager of Leeds United, where he took them to a fourth place finish in his first season and won promotion to the Championship in 2010.

Despite his success with the club, Grayson lost his job in February 2012, but found a new challenge just weeks later when he replaced Lee Clarke as manager of Huddersfield Town. True to form, Grayson took the side from League One up into the Championship, but after a spell of consecutive losses in autumn 2012, his contract was terminated in January 2013.

Once again, Grayson's proven ability saw him snapped up within weeks, this time at Preston North End, yet another club with a rich history. Taking the helm of an

"I will have a laugh and a joke with my players, but they also know that when it's time to work we have to apply ourselves fully and get on with the job in hand."

organisation with such a strong culture and heritage is never an easy task, carrying with it a weight of responsibility that many managers will never experience. It takes determination and tenacity to achieve the kind of results that Grayson has in his career to date.

"I have had the motivation at each club to try to create the next chapter of history," he says, "and I've tried to use that to motivate the players as well. I encourage them to be the next batch of heroes, so I'll show them the pictures on the wall and say now it's your turn to create history; something that people will also look back on in years to come."

To date, Grayson has certainly created a little bit of history with each of the clubs he has managed, including, he recalls, breaking some of the records set by Don Revie's team at Leeds United. More recently, he has led his current club, Preston, to their best start to a season in 110 years.

FAMILY BUSINESS

Interestingly, the career pattern of Simon's brother, Paul, has almost mirrored his own. After a successful career as a professional cricketer that lasted 15 years and included representing England, Paul Grayson stopped playing in 2006 and took up a coaching position at Essex a year later. The two brothers, close in age, have also been close in interest and ambition.

"From an early age, we have understood one another's preferred sports - I also played cricket and Paul was a good footballer

- and they were always a topic of conversation," says Grayson. "It has been really interesting to see how Paul dealt with different situations, first as a player and then as a coach. We've always shared and cross-referenced our thoughts and approaches on coaching."

Having careers so similar in nature also means the brothers can offer one another support, something many managers would value given the often lonely nature of the job. "We are always on the other end of the phone if one of us needs advice or a sounding board," says Grayson. "It's good to be able to look at things from a different perspective."

Given the similarities, one might naturally ask if there were early influences or sources of inspiration that channelled the brothers into sport or equipped them with their obvious natural coaching skills.

"Our mother has had Multiple Sclerosis for the past 30 years and, despite the problems she has to cope with, she keeps enjoying life on a day-to-day basis," says Grayson. "That has always been a big inspiration and motivator to me."

And his parents are, he says, both winners in quite different ways. "My dad was a PE teacher and a good non-league footballer," says Grayson. "He also played amateur cricket to a good level and captained both football and cricket teams. I think he was a natural leader." Between the ages of five and 15, the two brothers would go to watch their father play or go to a sports hall to practice together.

Yet, he says, they were never pressured to take a sporting career path. "What dad did do was guide us and inspire us," he says. "Like him, Paul and I are level-headed and take things in our stride. We don't get too carried away with success nor too despondent with failure. I believe that's one of the most important things you learn as a manager, because players look to see how you are reacting to situations. You have to strike the right balance and send out the right messages." ■

BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

By Richard Aldhous

Show of strength

STRONGER

By Jeff Bauman and Bret Witter
Published by Grand Central Publishing
RRP £15.70

Life doesn't get easier, you just get stronger." So says Boston Marathon bombing victim Jeff Bauman in his book, which is due to be released this coming month, marking almost, to the day, the anniversary of the bombing.

Bauman lost both legs in the terrorist attack but is the personification of 'Boston Strong', and it was his bravery post-surgery that helped lead to the capture of one suspect and the shooting of the other.

Having faced terrible adversity in his mission to walk again, Bauman's new book, co-written by Bret Witter, is sure to inspire readers around the world.

Of course, you might say this isn't a book on coaching. On the other hand, you could suppose it is a book on the very epitome of coaching... on courage and determination through sport. Jeff was a brilliant marathon runner in the lead-up to that fateful day, a sportsman of strong regard, and he one craves to emulate as he strives to get back to the levels of fitness he once had.

In the book, he discusses the challenges he has faced in coming to terms with his new life, but at the heart is a deep passion

for competition – a new type of competition. He encourages us to reach into his story because, after all, it's relative to sport. We all learn so much through adversity in sport – for some it's how to win, for others it's how to accept defeat, and for Jeff the lessons are equally philosophical despite the obvious physical damage inflicted on him on April 16.

A year later he is engaged to fiancée Erin Hurley, and all being well, in July of this year the couple will welcome their first child into the world. Bauman has gone as far as to say that the bombing "made him" – transformed him into someone with a reason and a purpose.

It is the ultimate exemplar of learning from one's setbacks, and yes, 'Stronger' may be the story of how a life can be reassembled first and foremost, but it's also a salient tome for any



Excerpt: Jeff Bauman woke up on Tuesday, April 16th 2013 and he had no legs.

Just 30 hours prior, Jeff was surrounded by revelry at the finish line of the 2013 Boston Marathon. The first bomb went off at his feet as he awaited his girlfriend's finish. When Jeff awoke days later from hours of surgery, rather than take stock of his now completely altered life, Jeff ripped out his breathing tube and tried to speak. He couldn't. Jeff asked for a pad and paper and he wrote down seven words, "Saw the guy. Looked right at me," setting off one of the biggest manhunts in the country's history and beginning his own brave road to recovery.

In his memoir, Jeff will inspire millions by writing about his experiences that early spring day and his ongoing mission to walk again.

coach who wants to reach into the abyss of adversity and emerge out the other side. It's a piece of literature that is truly aspirational, and makes the reader realise that while, seemingly, any ambition can be fulfilled, so too should we not impress too much on our subconscious the demand to achieve absolutely everything in life. Sure, the author retains a passion and a determination to achieve – his has sporting aims going forward, even if the parameters have changed. But if there is one thing Bauman has gained in the past year it's perspective, and that's a key quality

for any coach, no matter how much we want to win or want to see our players develop. ■