

ELITE SOCCER

COACHING PRACTICES FROM THE WORLD'S
LEADING MANAGERS AND COACHES

Exclusive
Training practices from top
professional managers

SOUTHAMPTON

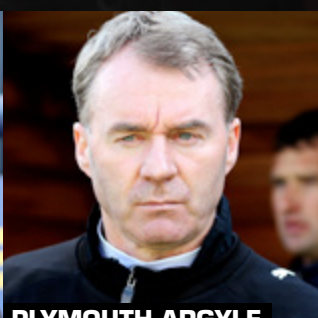
MAURICIO POCHETTINO

PRESSING INITIATION:
POSITIONS • PRINCIPLES • PURPOSE



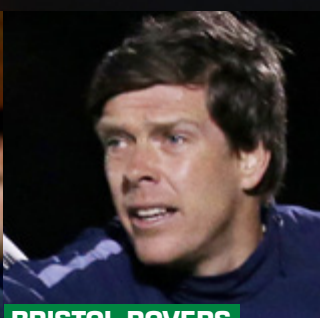
MK DON'S

**KARL
ROBINSON**
Clever play
around the box



PLYMOUTH ARGYLE

**JOHN
SHERIDAN**
Firing forwards
from close range



BRISTOL ROVERS

**DARRELL
CLARKE**
Defending
crosses



SC TAVRIYA

**ADAM
SADLER**
Brilliant
attacking breaks



LMA AMBASSADOR

**PETER
FARRELL**
Possession
through the thirds

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: WITH WALES NATIONAL TEAM MANAGER CHRIS COLEMAN



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ISSUE 46 / MAY 2014: FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Coaching brilliance from the best names in soccer

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the May issue of Elite Soccer.

The season is almost at a close, and certainly in the English Premier League and Spanish La Liga, the drama looks set to go right to the wire.

And a manager who connects those two leagues is our cover star for this issue – Southampton head coach Mauricio Pochettino who, prior to arriving at St. Mary's, was in charge at Espanyol. And fans of the Saints have been quick to appreciate a measure of continental flair the Argentine has brought to the south coast this season, with the club set to claim their highest league finish in almost a quarter of a century.

And for Elite Soccer, Pochettino embraces that tight, technical solidity in a session that teaches players how to master the art of pressing with an end result. It's our lead session for this month and a fantastic blueprint that I'm sure will work for you.

And we've got five other training ground practices to whet your appetite as well. From Sky Bet League One, MK Dons boss Karl Robinson helps us explore the possibilities of clever play around the box, while dropping into League Two John Sheridan, the Plymouth Argyle manager, takes us slightly closer to goal with a high tempo attacking outline. And from the Bristol Rovers hotseat, Darrell Clarke details how defences can improve with a variable crossing practice.

Moving on, LMA Ambassador Peter Farrell explains how passing and possession through the thirds has been such a success for the clubs he has coached, while our Coaching Consultation comes courtesy of Adam Sadler, the former Manchester City and Newcastle United coach who is now enjoying life with Ukrainian side SC Tavriya. His appreciation of creating space for attacking breaks is well worth a look.

We hope you enjoy this latest cross-section of bespoke soccer practices, and of course, we'll be back next month with more.

Enjoy your soccer,

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS

MANAGER OF THE MONTH AWARDS



It was little surprise that **Brendan Rodgers**

clinched the Barclays Premier League Manager of the Month Award for March, with his side setting off on a devastating run of form that would take them all the way to the top of the table.

The Reds swept aside their opponents like the Liverpool of title-winning campaigns in the 1980s, hitting three goals at Southampton, six at Cardiff, as well as hammering Manchester United 3-0 at Old Trafford. They also defeated Spurs 4-0, and saw off Sunderland 2-1, in the midst of 11 straight league wins.

LIVERPOOL: P5 W5 D0 L0 (F18A4) (LEAGUE ONLY)



Nigel Pearson took the award in Sky Bet

League One as his Leicester City side marched imperiously towards the league title. This season, the Foxes have never faltered in their pursuit of first place, and March saw them sweep aside Charlton Athletic, Barnsley, Blackpool and, notably, title rivals Burnley, with consummate ease.

The only blots on the copybook were 1-1 draws with Yeovil Town and Blackburn Rovers, but the club successfully defended an unbeaten run that extended right the way back to December 7.

LEICESTER CITY: P6 W4 D2 L0 (F13A3) (LEAGUE ONLY)



Kenny Jackett's decision to drop

down a division to manage Wolves has been vindicated after his side all but wrapped up promotion back to the Championship with six wins in March, earning their manager the divisional award.

Only a home draw against Shrewsbury Town and away defeat at Crawley Town went against the Black Country giants, who eased past Port Vale, Walsall, Swindon Town, Sheffield United, Colchester United and MK Dons in a month that saw the club play eight league matches.

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS: P8 W6 D1 L1 (F18A5)



And in Sky Bet League Two, **Nigel**

Worthington was rewarded for masterminding York City's sensational late-season dash into the play-off picture, after the Minstermen clocked up six league wins during March.

In only their second season back as a league club, York have proved they have what it takes to roll with the best in the division, and a miserly defence was again at the heart of their ascent, with City conceding just one goal in seven matches in March – indeed, in their 16 league games between February and April, York leaked just three goals.

YORK CITY: P7 W6 D1 L0 (F8A1)

CAREER PATH

.... with **James Beattie**, manager of Sky Bet League Two side **Accrington Stanley**

Some of your players have said you have a unique management and coaching style...

Well I just conduct my team talks and training sessions in the same way that I conduct myself. I don't believe screaming and shouting is the right way to go about things. For other managers it works, but my approach is to get everyone together and share problems and successes.

The season started terribly for you [no wins in the first 12 matches]. That must have been tough?

I had a long career as a player and you learn to see past the adversity. Yes it was tough, and I'm grateful for the time I had to put things right, because at other clubs I might not have been afforded that. But I always believed what we were doing was right,

and that the rewards would come, and thankfully that has been proven to be the case.

As a former player it is difficult to stand by and put all your trust in others, but it's something you have to do.

Stanley are perhaps the smallest club in the Football League. Where can you go from here?

We don't look too far ahead. We simply want to continue doing the things that work, keep on building and developing as players and a coaching team, and we'll see then where that takes us.



SOUTHAMPTON

Mauricio Pochettino Pressing initiation

Overview:

This session coaches players on understanding defensive pressing. It's important to practise the key elements to identify how, when and where we can apply pressing technique, and that includes adopting the right shape tactically and togetherness of the group, as well as being able to identify the right moment to close down.

We see the benefits of this session paying off every week – indeed, good pressing technique is central to the intense brand of football we play.

“As soon as the ball is moved to a new area of the pitch, defenders must regroup and press quickly.”

PRESSING INITIATION

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch plus 15 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

10v10 plus two keepers

SESSION TIME

60mins

What do I get the players to do?

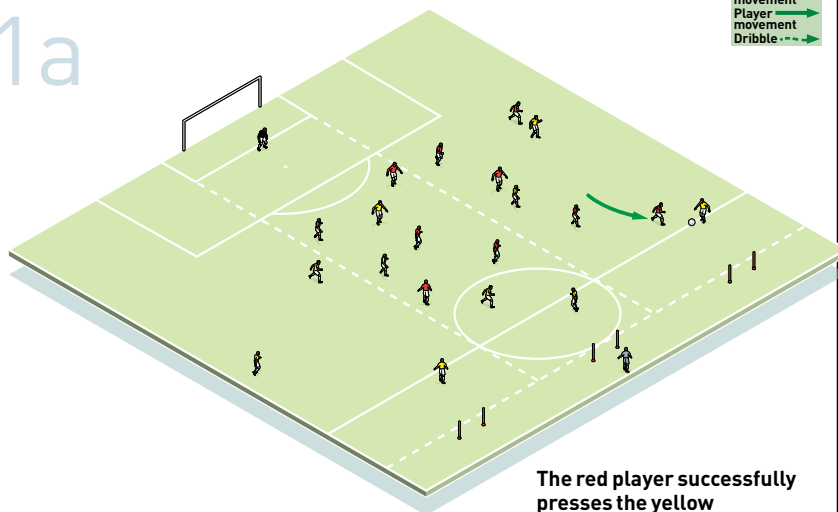
We divide our practice area into three, with three poles (five yards wide) spaced out evenly at one end, and a full-size goal at the other. There are two teams of 10, plus two keepers.

Yellows attack the top goal, while reds score by passing through the poles at the other end of the pitch. Pressing opponents closely at all times is imperative (1a).

There are no more than three passes allowed in each area and players are limited to three touches each. Reds must spread out and switch play, making use of all three areas. They score one point for scoring through the poles and three points if the keeper can anticipate which gate the ball will be scored through by gathering.

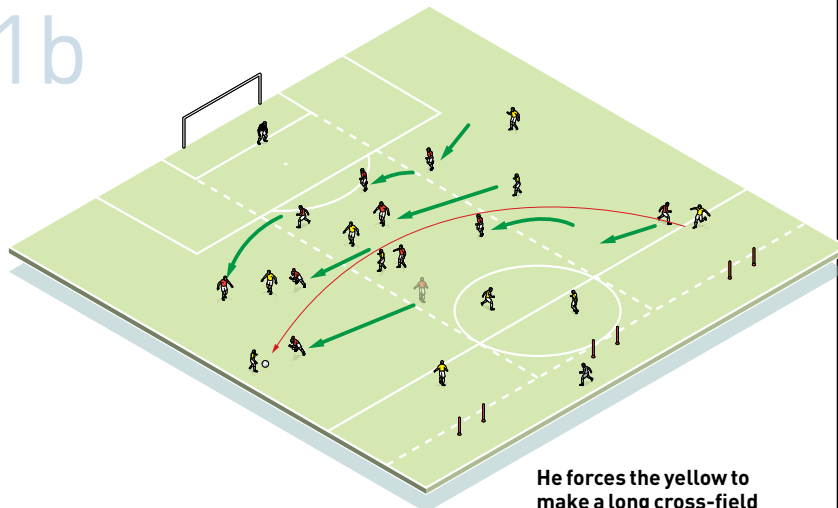
Yellow defenders must press at every opportunity, closing down space in front of attackers and jockeying opponents in looking to force an interception or error. We condition the practice so that if the ball is in one wide channel, the team out

1a



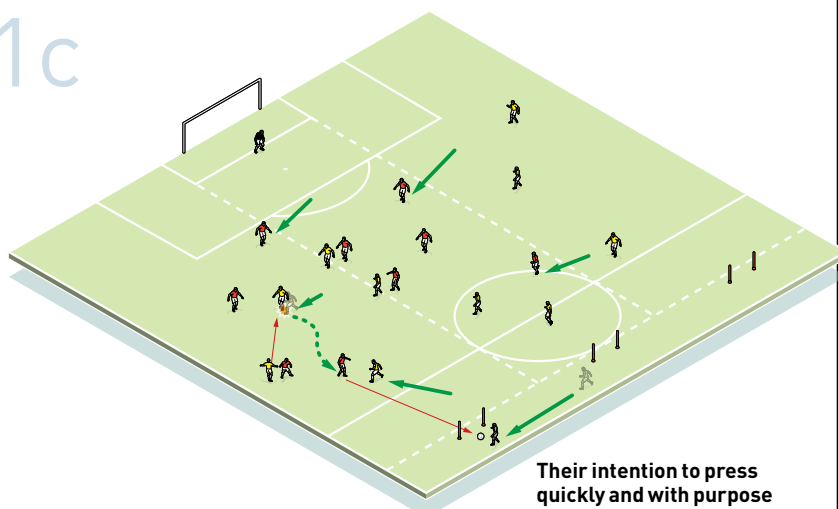
The red player successfully presses the yellow defender

1b



He forces the yellow to make a long cross-field pass, which means all reds must vacate the opposite wide channel

1c



Their intention to press quickly and with purpose immediately prompts an interception, and a threaded pass to the keeper sees the reds score three points



Mauricio Pochettino SOUTHAMPTON

Prior to arriving in the Barclays Premier League, fans in the UK might have best known Mauricio Pochettino as the man who conceded the crucial penalty that meant England triumphed over Argentina at the 2002 World Cup.

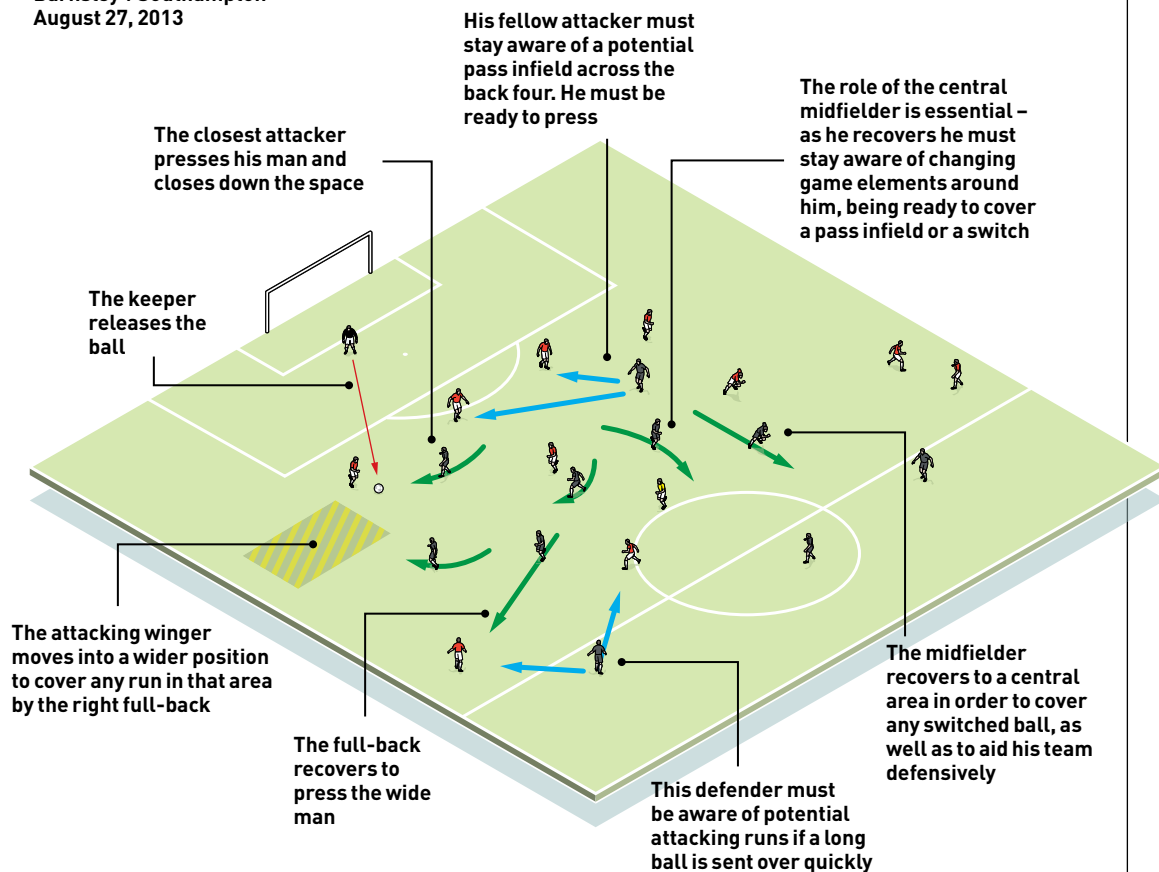
But following a glittering playing career that saw the centre-back make 20 appearances for his country, as well as starring for Newell's Old Boys, Espanyol (three spells), PSG and Bordeaux, the Argentine moved into coaching, taking the reins at Espanyol and immediately guiding the La Liga outfit away from the foot of the table in the 2008/09 campaign.

Pochettino remained at the club until November 2012, and after a short break from the game, arrived at Southampton, becoming only the second Argentine manager in the English game, after Ossie Ardiles.

The 42-year-old has impressed in his first full season in charge of the Saints, leading the club to a comfortable mid-table finish and, this year, overseeing impressive wins against Liverpool and Newcastle United, as well as continuing to maintain the club's burgeoning academy set-up.

PRESSING INITIATION

MATCH DETAIL:
Capital One Cup, second round
Barnsley v Southampton
August 27, 2013



of possession must vacate the opposite channel (1b). Not only does this encourage plenty of opposition players near to the play and the opportunity to press tightly, but when the ball is switched back to the 'empty' flank, it quickly tests defenders' ability to regroup, close down and, hopefully, intercept (1c).

What are the key things to look out for?

This session is all about decision-making, so defenders must communicate well with each other

at all times. As soon as the ball is moved to a new area of the pitch, defenders must regroup and press quickly.

How do I progress the practice?

We can progress this practice by adding normal goals instead of poles. We can also increase the size of the middle area to make the challenge more difficult for the defending team.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PRESSING

- Pressing may be done by the individual, but it requires player unity and a shared understanding.
- There are three generally accepted types of positional pressing: ultra-offensive (in the opponents' defensive third), offensive (in the opponents' half or around halfway) and defensive (in your own half).
- Stand-by pressing is pressing carried out by one player, while team mates stay 'short' and concentrate on covering the spaces. Aggressive pressing is typically done on flanks, where space is tight and multi-player pressing can see possession turned over.
- Invited pressing is a technique linked to stand-by pressing, which forces an opponent to play the ball in a certain direction so that an aggressive phase of pressing can then be undertaken.
- Pressing players will usually move at pace towards their target and slow when a couple of yards away.
- Pressing is as relevant and necessary for attackers as it is for midfielders and defenders.

MKDONS

Karl Robinson & Richie Barker Clever play around the box

Overview:

The session is about quick and inventive play around the edge of the 18-yard box. It's about being inventive, firstly in tight areas, then progressing into a large area to finish with an end product.

Because of the style and philosophy at the football club, it is important we work on this regularly to ensure the players have the mentality to take risks and be inventive around the box.

A number of goals over recent years have been scored at MK Dons specifically by using smart interplay around the box. It's a philosophy that has been instilled over my four years here.

"We're looking for quick, positive and accomplished passing, good first touch and excellent player anticipation and awareness."

CLEVER PLAY AROUND THE BOX

SET-UP

AREA

Up to 75x50 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 6 per area

SESSION TIME

Wide to middle and progression 15mins,
Central attacking waves and progression 15mins,
Small-sided game 15mins

What do I get the players to do?

Wide to middle

Setting up as shown on a 30x10-yard area, we use six players per practice area.

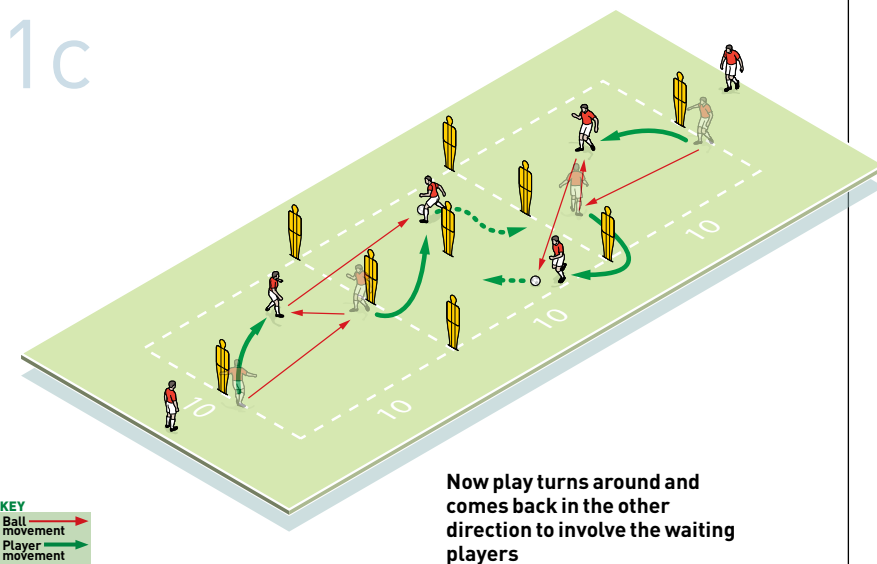
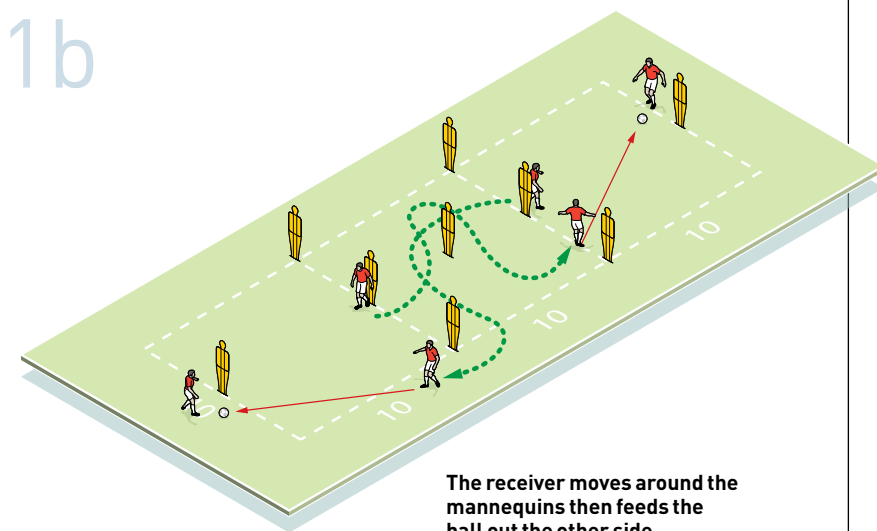
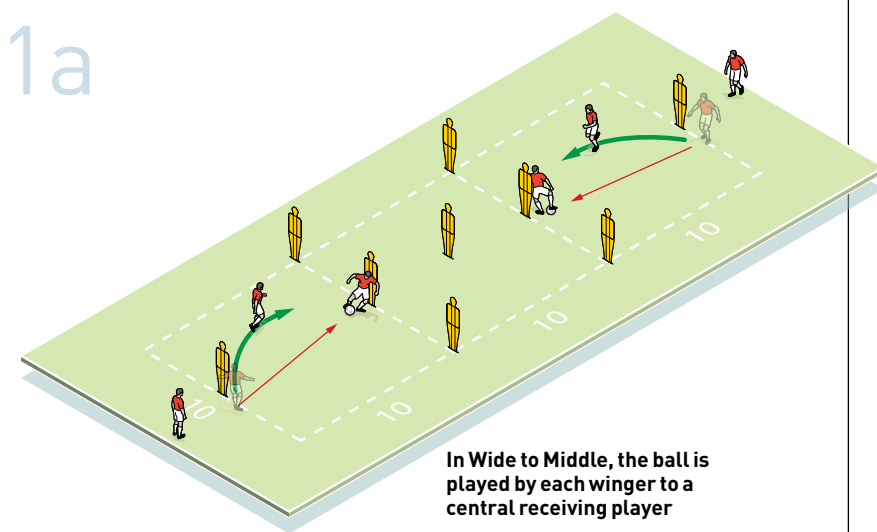
Wingers begin with a ball each in this continuous drill. They play a 10-yard pass inside, then follow (1a). Receiving inner midfielders must be inventive as they move through the mannequins, playing a pass out the other side (1b). They then remain in place to receive the next pass and the move continues (1c).

How do I progress the session?

We tell wingers to create quick and precise combination play and one-tuos with team mates around the mannequins. We can alter the style of passes – quick, to left and right feet, chipped, even driven.

What are the key things to look out for?

Technically, we're looking for quick, positive and accomplished





**Karl Robinson
& Richie Barker**

MKDONS

Despite enduring what, by his own admission, has been a “quiet” season in Sky Bet League One, MK Dons’ Karl Robinson is still regarded as one of the most promising young managers in the game. Still only 33, Liverpool-born Robinson is in his fourth season in charge at the club, twice guiding his players to fifth-placed finishes, and with it, the play-offs.

At 29, Robinson was the youngest ever person to acquire a UEFA Pro Licence, a partial reflection of an eight-year playing career that saw him turn out for a host of non-league sides in the north-west and Wales.

Robinson welcomed Richie Barker to the club at the end of March, as Assistant Manager. Barker brings to Stadium:mk a wealth of experience having managed Crawley Town to an impressive mid-table finish in Sky Bet League One last term. He has also taken charge of Bury and Portsmouth.

“Players are encouraged to play randomly, being instinctive and inventive.”

CLEVER PLAY AROUND THE BOX

passing, good first touch and excellent player anticipation and awareness. We also want players to receive passes with different parts of the body.

Psychologically, the practice rehearses awareness and inventiveness. Physically, we’re talking about quick play and changes of pace when playing passes.

Central attacking waves

The session now progresses into a half pitch. Play begins outside the 18-yard box and finishes with an effort on goal.

The deep left midfielder plays inside, then follows. The ball is fed into his frontman, who drops it back for a pass into the left striker (2a). The weight of the pass should allow the striker to deliver a first-time ball into the box. The three players involved then break into the box to finish (2b). The drill is repeated on the opposite side.

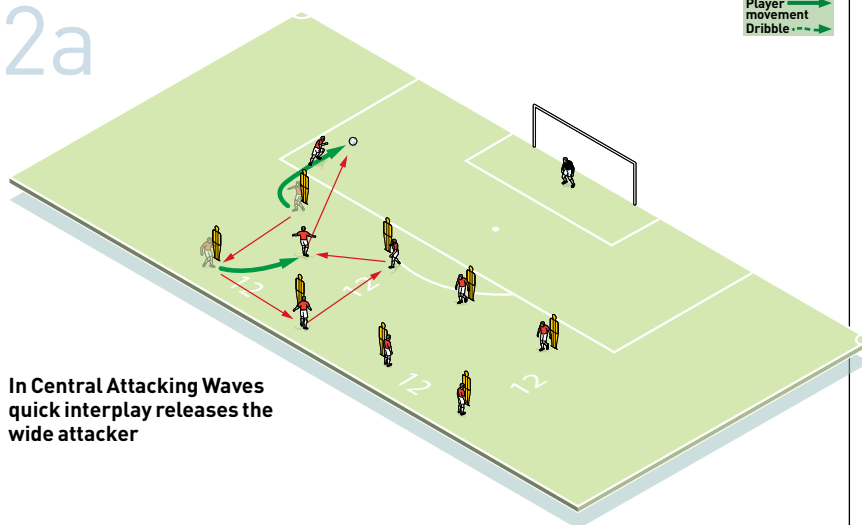
How do I progress the session?

Now players are encouraged to play randomly, being instinctive and inventive, with the breaking wide player being rotated with every attack – it doesn’t have to be the offensive winger (2c).

How do I put this into a small-sided game?

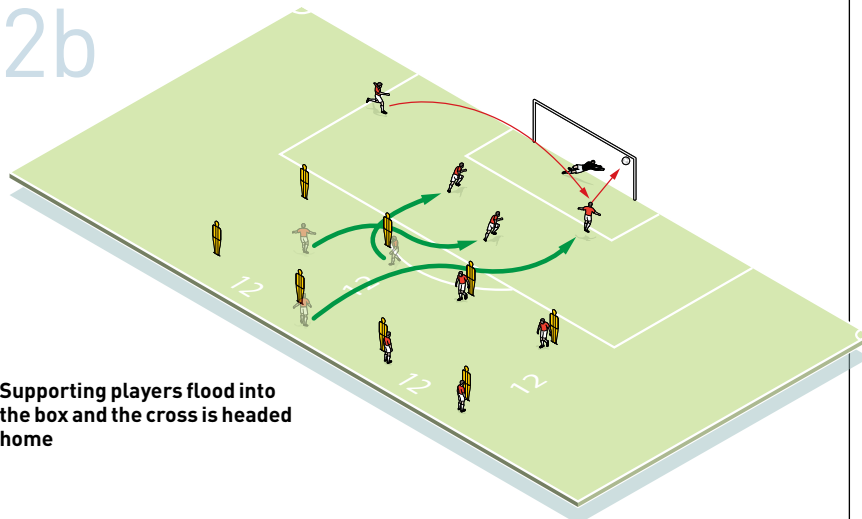
A small sided game - 7v7 plus keepers on a 75x50-yard area - allows players to adapt what has been learnt. ■

2a



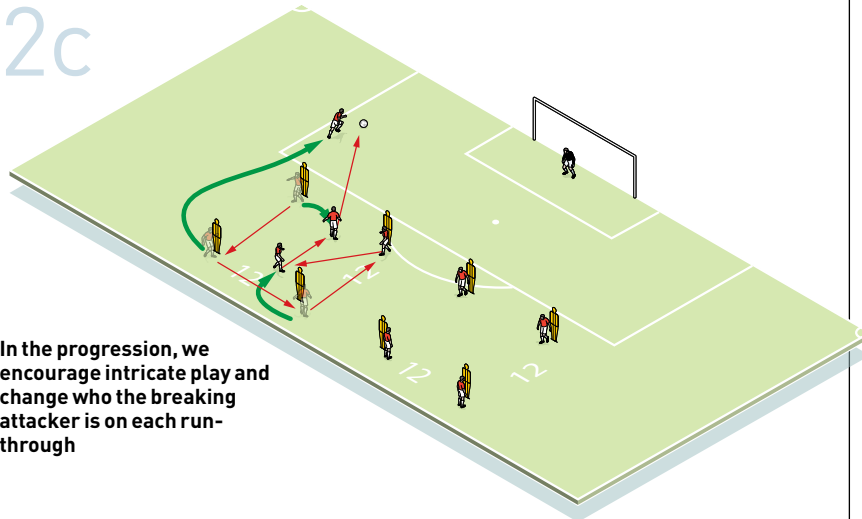
In Central Attacking Waves quick interplay releases the wide attacker

2b



Supporting players flood into the box and the cross is headed home

2c



In the progression, we encourage intricate play and change who the breaking attacker is on each run-through

PLYMOUTH ARGYLE

John Sheridan & Sean McCarthy Quick finishing inside the box

Overview:

This session is about getting your shot away as quickly and as early as possible inside the penalty area. This means one- and two-touch finishes, with strikers being alert, aware and on their heels at all times.

We practise this because any striker will tell you he rarely has as much time and space on the ball as he wants in front of goal. Because of this, we want to coach attacking anticipation – players ‘knowing’ where the goal is and shooting instinctively. And a key part of this is ensuring attackers’ body shape is right for a shot at goal. If players can master this and a few other technical elements, they might just get their rewards.

“We want to coach attacking anticipation – players ‘knowing’ where the goal is and shooting instinctively.”

QUICK FINISHING IN THE BOX

SET-UP

AREA

Penalty box

EQUIPMENT

Balls, bibs, cones, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

12 plus a keeper

SESSION TIME

30-45mins

What do I get the players to do?

4v4s in the area

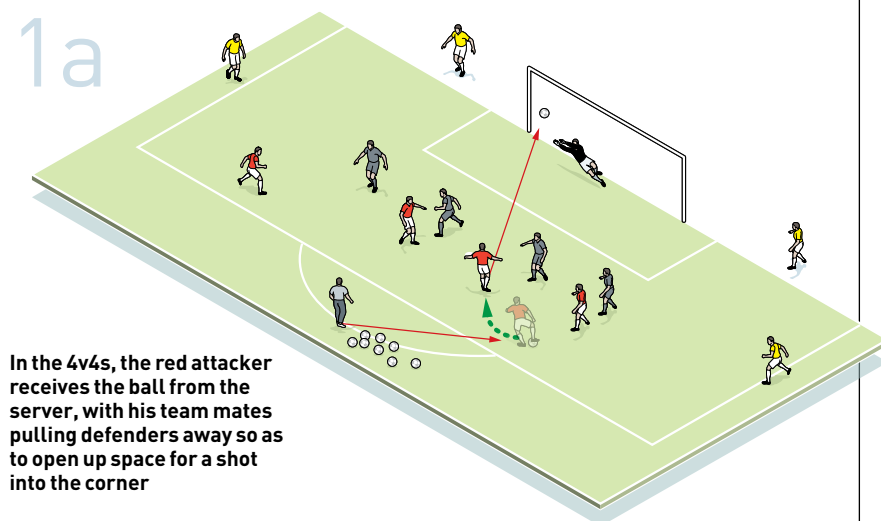
Setting up as shown, we use 12 players plus a keeper. It is high tempo in the middle, though players will get plenty of rest on the outside.

Beginning with a one-minute round, this is 4v4 in the box – both teams play ‘all in’. Reds attack first, seeing how many goals they can score inside one minute (1a). The team positioned on the outside can work with the attackers if opportunities arise, but are one-touch only. When the ball goes out, or if there’s a goal scored, the server always restarts with the ball (1b) – he can pass to the attackers or outer players to kick off the next attack. After a minute, we rotate teams.

How do I progress the session?

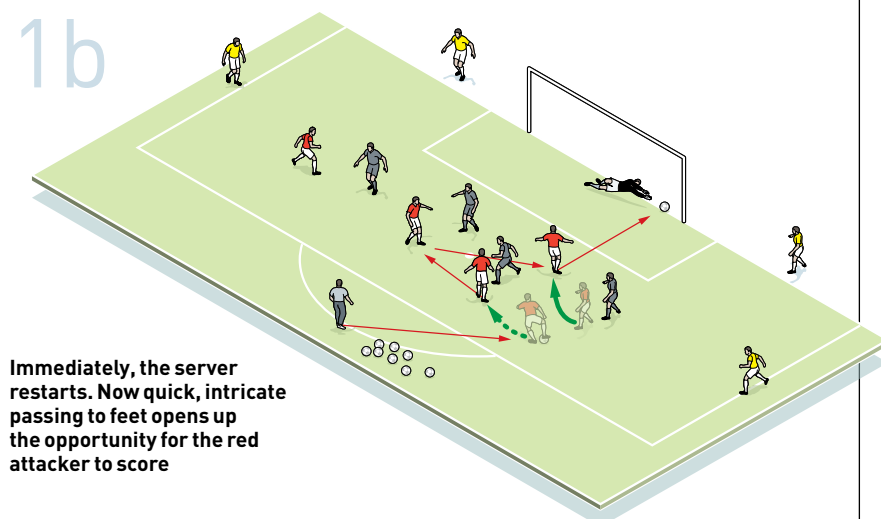
When all teams have attacked and defended, go through again but with a two-touch condition, then one-touch. Outer players remain one-touch throughout.

1a



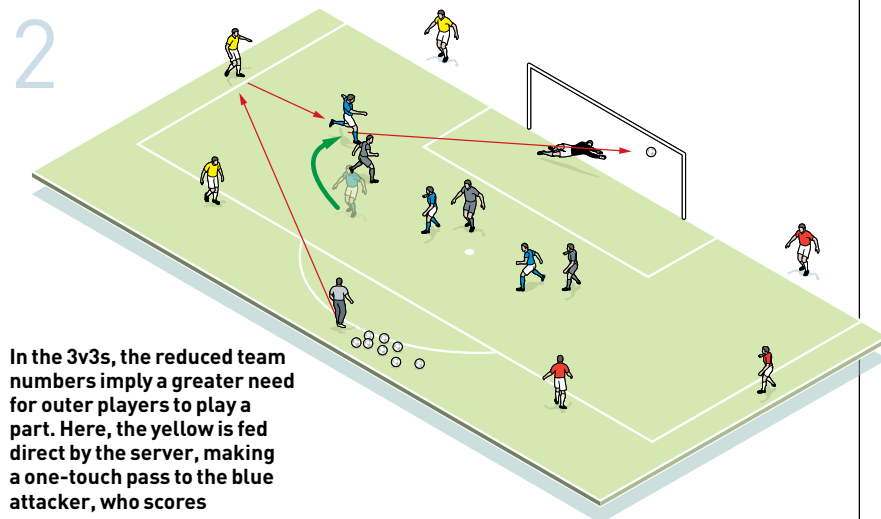
In the 4v4s, the red attacker receives the ball from the server, with his team mates pulling defenders away so as to open up space for a shot into the corner

1b



Immediately, the server restarts. Now quick, intricate passing to feet opens up the opportunity for the red attacker to score

2



In the 3v3s, the reduced team numbers imply a greater need for outer players to play a part. Here, the yellow is fed direct by the server, making a one-touch pass to the blue attacker, who scores

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



**John Sheridan
& Sean McCarthy**
PLYMOUTH ARGYLE

As a rampaging and stylish midfielder, the highlight of John Sheridan's playing career was arguably scoring the winning goal at Wembley for Sheffield Wednesday in the 1991 League Cup Final against Manchester United. But the Stretford-born footballer also featured in the 1990 and 1994 World Cups for the Republic of Ireland, and enjoyed significant playing spells at Leeds United, Sheffield Wednesday and Oldham Athletic.

And at Oldham he began his first serious strides into coaching, seizing the Boundary Park manager role after two caretaker spells in charge. After taking the Latics to the League One play-offs in 2007, Sheridan enjoyed a break from management, before resurfacing at Chesterfield, where he won the Sky Bet League Two title in 2011.

And in having just completed his first full season in charge of Plymouth Argyle, Sheridan has turned around the fortunes of the Sky Bet League Two Devon club.

He is ably assisted by first-team coach Sean McCarthy, the former Swansea City and Oldham Athletic striker who played in the Premier League in the early 1990s. The powerful Welshman was also a prolific scorer for Plymouth Argyle and Bradford City, and joined Plymouth in June 2013.

QUICK FINISHING IN THE BOX

3v3s in the area

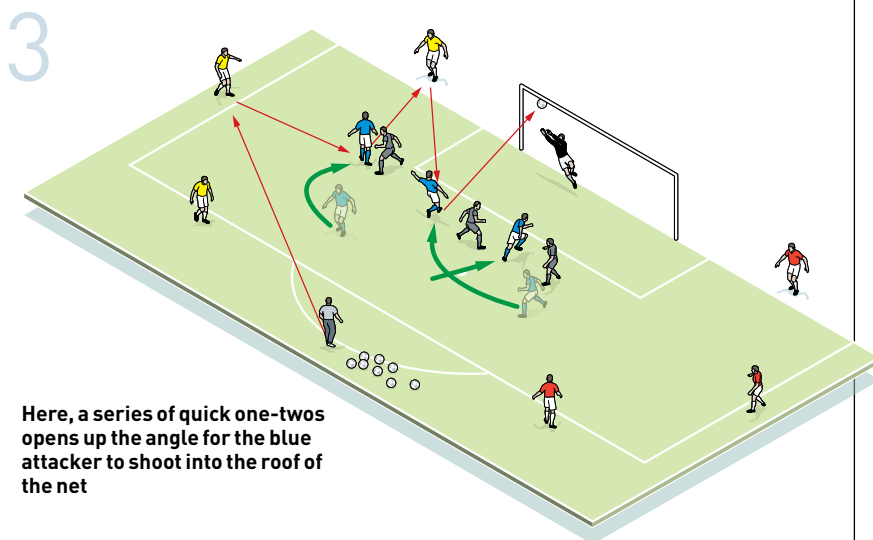
Now we alter player numbers again so it's four teams of three (2), and only 45 seconds per round. As before, players begin all-in before going two-touch, then one-touch. The reduction of team size means there is a greater requirement for attackers to utilise outer players (3).

2v2s in the area

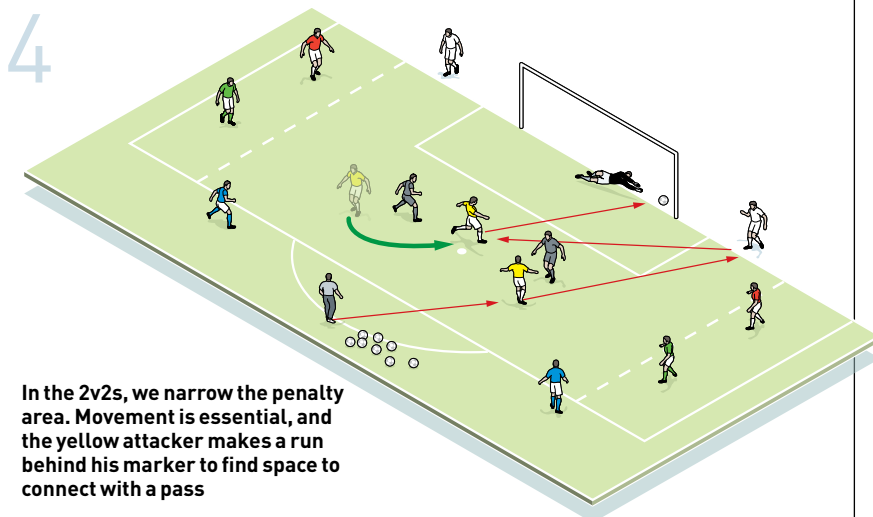
We now narrow the width of the box by five yards on either side, with the practice run as six teams of two, with 30 seconds per round (4). Again, attackers are encouraged to work shooting chances by using all players around them (5).

What are the key things to look out for?

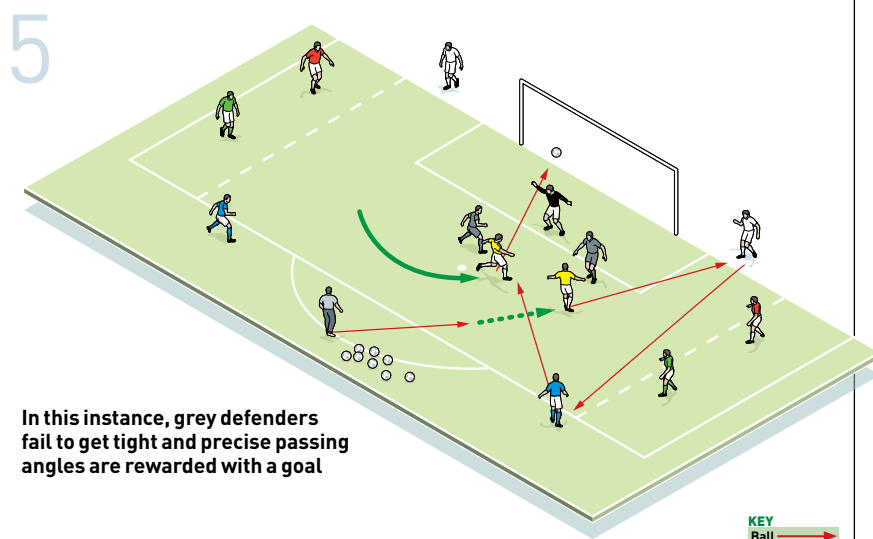
With each reduction of team numbers, players must adapt their games to the changing conditions. While the premise is on working a quick shot on goal, that will only be possible if they are paying due care and attention to key elements such as body shape, receiving the ball in to feet, a good first touch, hitting the target, side-foot finishing, volleys and more. We also want to see players pulling on defenders' shoulders, smart movement, clever timing of runs and, of course, a willingness to shoot quickly and early. ■



Here, a series of quick one-twos opens up the angle for the blue attacker to shoot into the roof of the net



In the 2v2s, we narrow the penalty area. Movement is essential, and the yellow attacker makes a run behind his marker to find space to connect with a pass



In this instance, grey defenders fail to get tight and precise passing angles are rewarded with a goal

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

BRISTOL ROVERS

Darrell Clarke Defending crosses

Overview:

This session is about working on the back four, with the defensive unit knowing how to effectively and efficiently deal with crosses coming into the penalty box.

Crosses from out wide are the most common route to scoring a goal in the modern game, so it's essential our keeper can control and command his box. Crosses can either be grounded or floated. It's important to practise this because, over the course of a season, any team will find itself coming up against a variety of different attacking obstacles. Back in November, we played league leaders Oxford United away, who started with two big strikers. By successfully controlling the box, we dealt with the threat from wide and earned ourselves a crucial 1-0 victory.

DEFENDING CROSSES

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, bibs, cones, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

10

SESSION TIME

Main session 10mins,
Progressions 10mins each

What do I get the players to do?

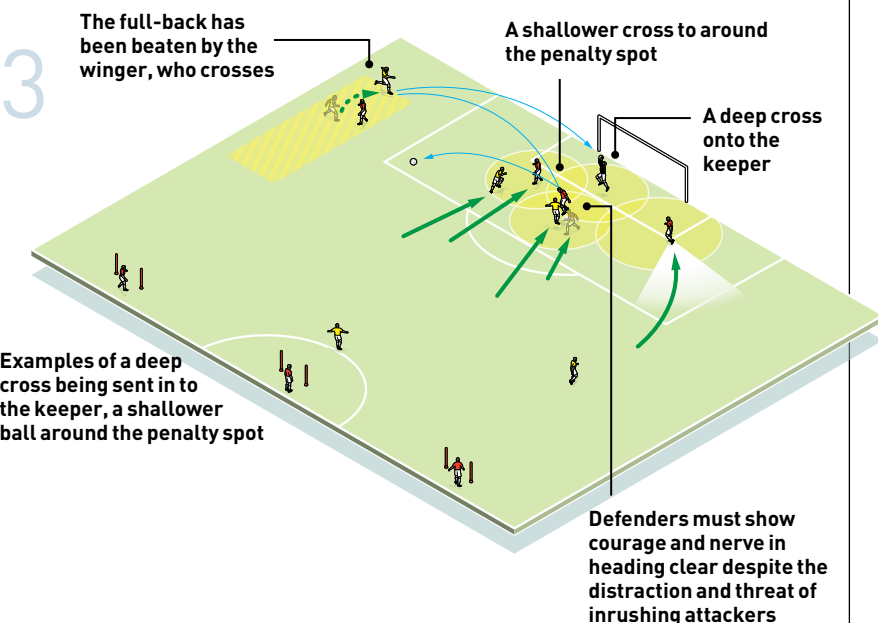
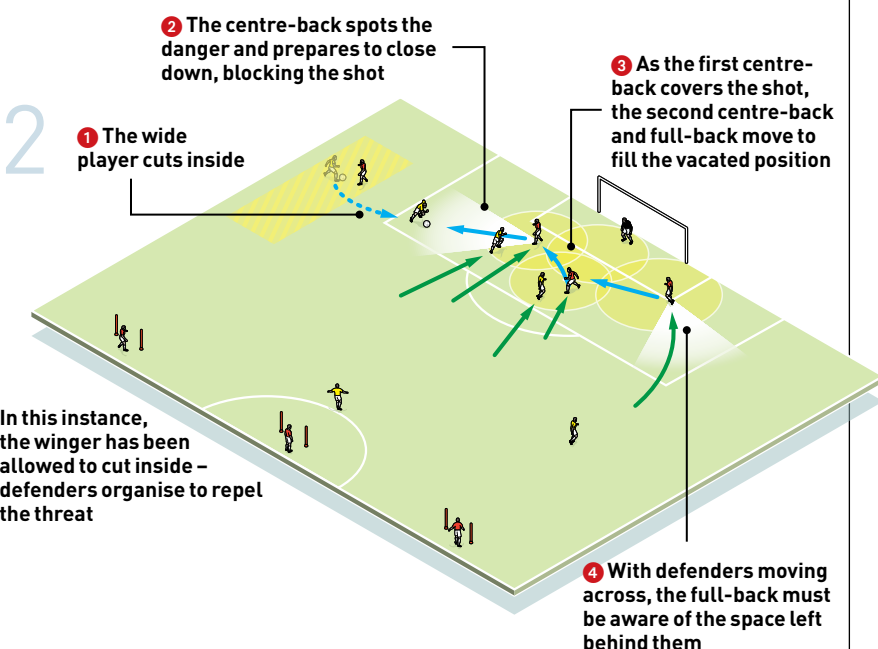
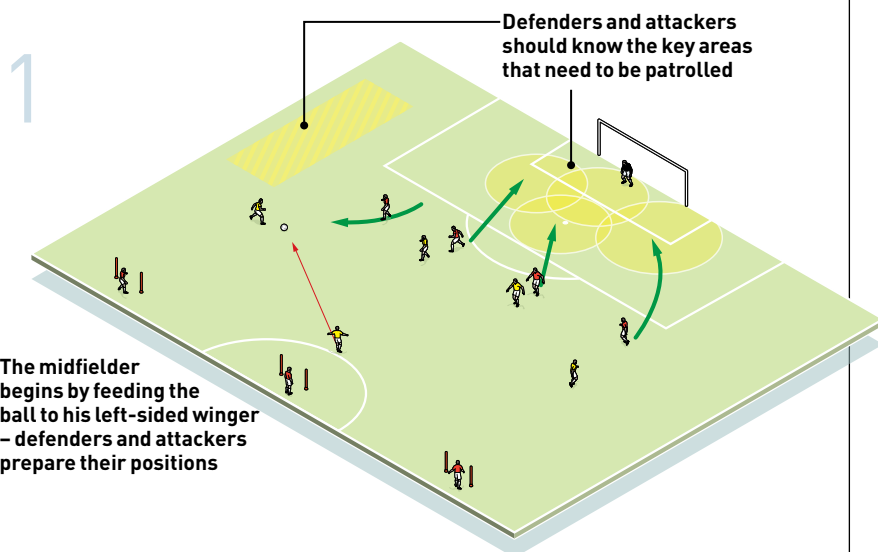
Main session

We set up as shown, with four defenders up against five attackers. Near the halfway line are three target goals (as poles), each five yards wide, with three players patrolling them.

To begin, an attacking midfielder sends a pass either left or right (1). The receiving winger must take on the full-back before delivering a cross into the box. Attackers burst into the box, looking to evade the attentions of defenders. They head for key attacking areas – near post, far post, penalty spot, and in front of the keeper.

What are the key things to look out for?

The first instance of good defending should be in trying to stop the cross from the right. The full-back must show the attacker outside towards the wing, rather than letting him cut inside. Should the cross still be made, centre-backs must





Darrell Clarke BRISTOL ROVERS

Darrell Clarke is first-team manager at Sky Bet League Two side Bristol Rovers, having joined 'the Gasheads' from Salisbury City in June 2013, initially as assistant manager to John Ward.

At Salisbury, Clarke won the club promotion to Conference South in his first season in charge, and in the 2011/12 campaign the Whites enjoyed an FA Cup second round trip to League One side Sheffield United.

Another promotion followed, and having returned Salisbury to the Conference following a gap of four seasons, the next step was a move into the Football League with Rovers.

As a player Clarke made over 100 appearances for each of Salisbury, Mansfield Town and Hartlepool United.

"The keeper must come out, be commanding, positive, with the aim of collecting the ball with a well-timed catch."

DEFENDING CROSSES

position themselves with their bodies and shoulders open, tracking and closing down opponents. Communication is absolutely vital if they are to effectively cover each others' positions. The keeper must come out, be commanding and positive, and with the aim of collecting the ball with a well-timed catch.

Should defenders win the ball, they must attempt to pass out to one of the three target players positioned near the halfway line.

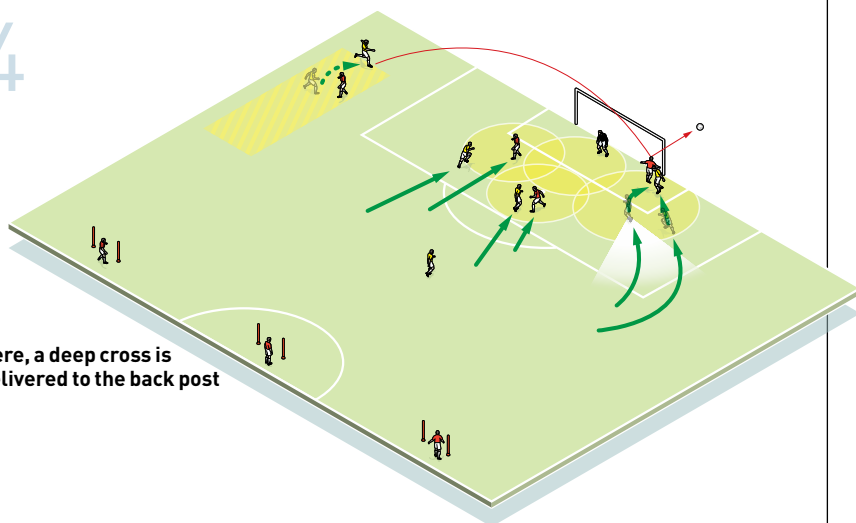
Alternative scenarios

We can progress this session by inviting the central midfielder to also join the attack. This creates a 5v4 overload in the middle.

We will also condition certain situations to see how defenders react and work together to repel the threat – this could include allowing the winger to cut inside (2), sending crosses either straight to the keeper or further back (penalty spot/ edge of box) (3), deeper crosses (4), threats from a second ball (5) and a square pass (rather than a cross) (6).

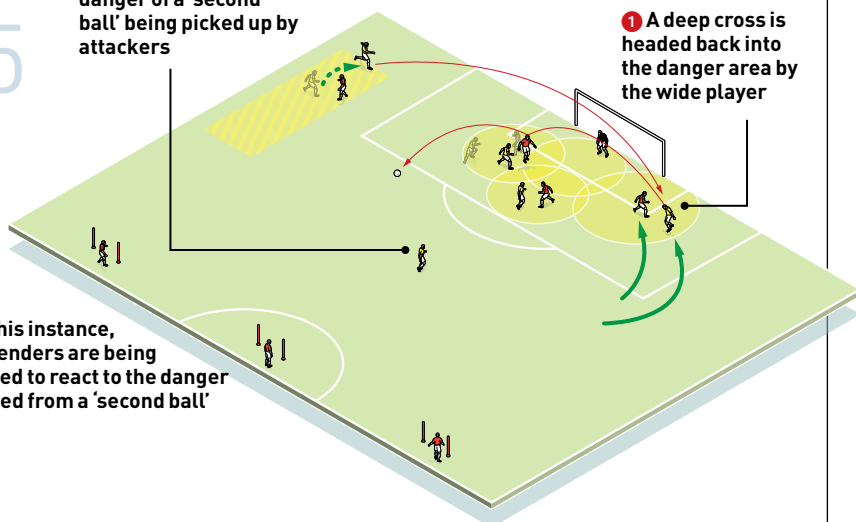
We can also instruct defenders to aim for one specific target player – this may mean they need to work the ball across the pitch before sending out the final pass. ■

4



Here, a deep cross is delivered to the back post

5

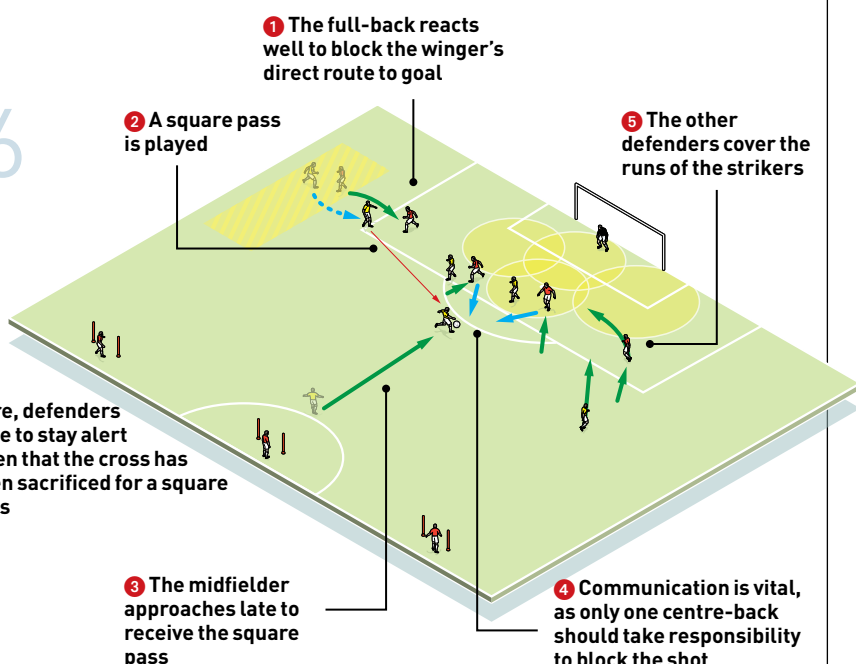


2 Here, there is the danger of a 'second ball' being picked up by attackers

1 A deep cross is headed back into the danger area by the wide player

In this instance, defenders are being asked to react to the danger posed from a 'second ball'

6



1 The full-back reacts well to block the winger's direct route to goal

2 A square pass is played

5 The other defenders cover the runs of the strikers

Here, defenders have to stay alert given that the cross has been sacrificed for a square pass

3 The midfielder approaches late to receive the square pass

4 Communication is vital, as only one centre-back should take responsibility to block the shot

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:

Tight space in the middle of the pitch

My players struggle to find and use space in tight midfield situations, and that typically gives opponents time to react and stifle the threat. How can I increase the urgency we have in the final third?

Question asked by Chris Beech, a community soccer coach from London

ANSWERED BY:

Adam Sadler

LMA AMBASSADOR

The phrase 'practice makes perfect' was perhaps invented for this sort of situation. It is my belief that training your players to sustain ball possession in the opponents' half can not only be a crucial way to control the game, but the best form of defence too. So the use of good ball circulation, clever movement, creative individuals in 1v1 situations and quick combination play can be used to

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to full squad

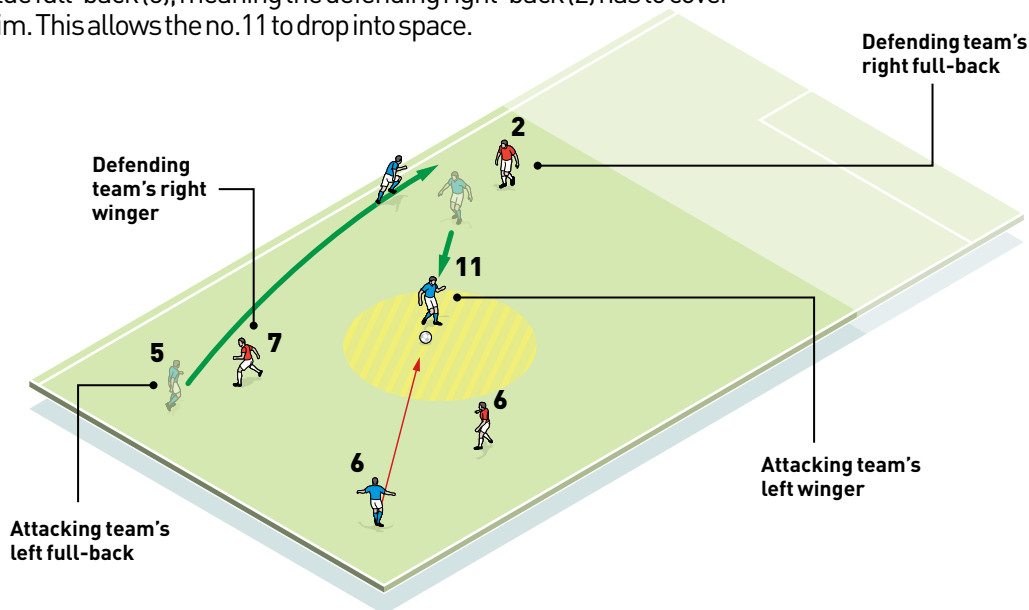
SESSION TIME

20 mins

Wing - Tracking and dropping

The aim here is to see if we can get space to open up between and around the opposition full-back and winger. Can the no.11 drift inside between the lines, with the no.5 working high on the outside with an overlapping run?

In this instance, the red no.7 has not tracked the run of the left-sided blue full-back (5), meaning the defending right-back (2) has to cover him. This allows the no.11 to drop into space.



Wing - The release

The left-sided attacker (11) and Controller (6) have worked space and the ball is released to the overlapping left full-back (5).



KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

COACHING CONSULTATION

devastating effect. But this is one of the most difficult phases of ball possession to perfect, and needs continued training over many months... but it can be done.

The Controller

At first it helps to be aware of someone I call 'The Controller'. This is a deep midfielder (no.6), who generally plays behind the ball, acting as a pivot. He has the ability to control the speed of both his own team's attacks and those of the opposition. Identifying and utilising this player means being able to construct a more effective attacking move.

Coaching considerations

Movement, space and a constant eye on opponents' positions is crucial. We must also ensure a quality final pass if the hard work that has gone into negotiating time and space is to be properly rewarded with a break on goal.

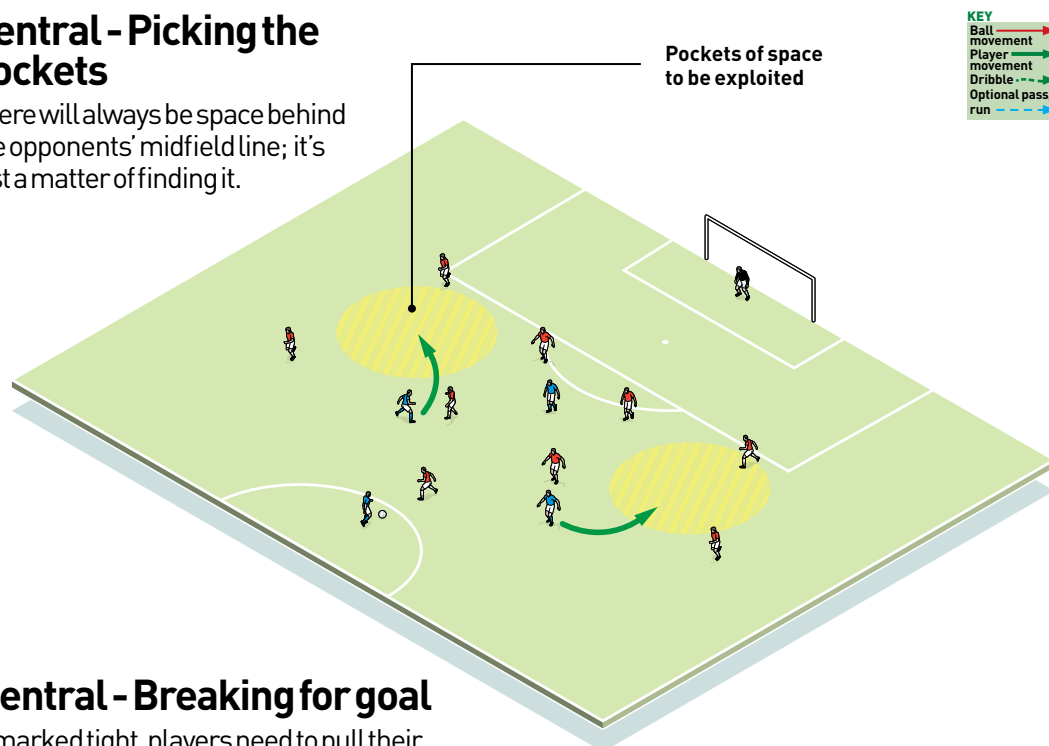
Why this works

The concept of finding space is a simple one, but it will only succeed through repeated practice. The practice can be adapted to use the whole squad, and it's important to train as close to the real game as possible, in terms of tempo and effort. ■

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

Central - Picking the pockets

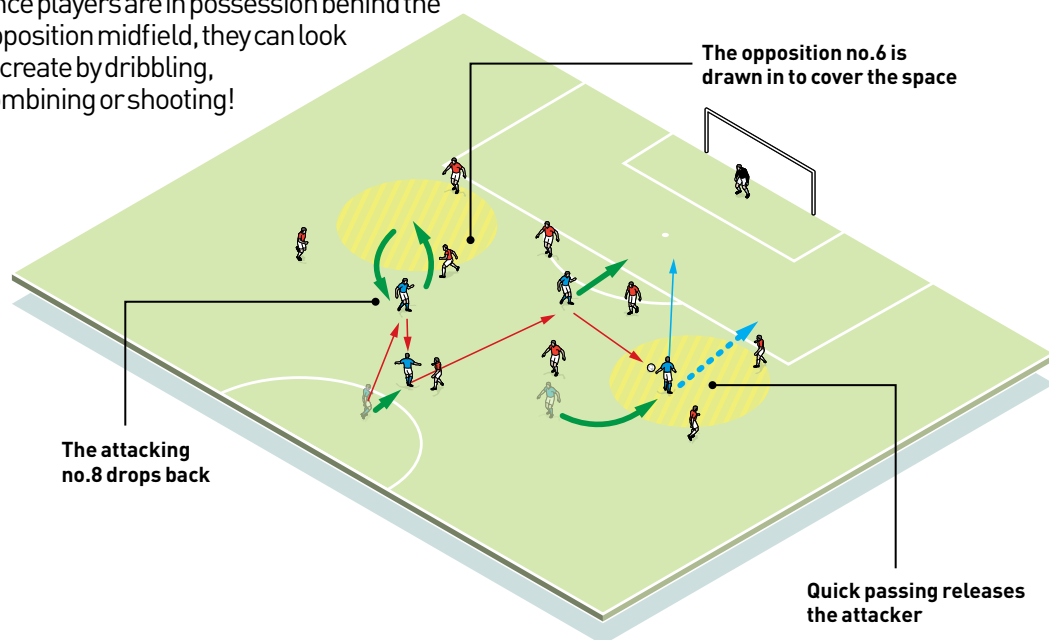
There will always be space behind the opponents' midfield line; it's just a matter of finding it.



Central - Breaking for goal

If marked tight, players need to pull their opponents out of position to create a passing line so they can penetrate to the next line.

Once players are in possession behind the opposition midfield, they can look to create by dribbling, combining or shooting!



Adam Sadler

LMA AMBASSADOR

Adam Sadler is Under-21 coach at Ukrainian side SC Tavriya, having previously worked at Premier League sides Manchester City and Newcastle United. The 34-year-old was on the books of Newcastle as a junior, before spells with Manchester United and Barnsley.

But Sadler decided he wanted to pursue a career in coaching and accepted the post of youth coach at Newcastle, rising to become Assistant Academy Director. He also coached the club's reserves before switching to Manchester City, and is now relishing his opportunity in the Ukrainian Premier League.



LMA AMBASSADOR

**Peter
Farrell**

Passing and possession through the thirds

Overview:

This session outlines the mechanics of getting players to play through defensive, midfield and attacking zones, with an eye on passing well, creating space, receiving the ball and playing forward.

The principles outlined in this session were at the heart of how we played at Brentford, and I was delighted to see that philosophy rewarded, with the Bees gaining automatic promotion from Sky Bet League One this season.

“Movement for the creation of space is essential, as is good decision-making.”

PASSING AND POSSESSION THROUGH THE THIRDS

SET-UP

AREA

Up to full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 20

SESSION TIME

Passing and possession, 2x10mins,
Playing between the zones 30mins

What do I get the players to do?

Passing and penetration

For the first drill, we have two groups playing 4v2 (defenders versus attackers) in a 25x25-yard area, with a further four players around the outside. The server feeds in to the two reds, who must keep possession playing one- or two-touch (1a). When the defending team wins the ball, outer reds now enter to challenge 6v4 (1b). Again, once possession is turned over again, players reset and play continues. Rotate the two central red attackers every two minutes.

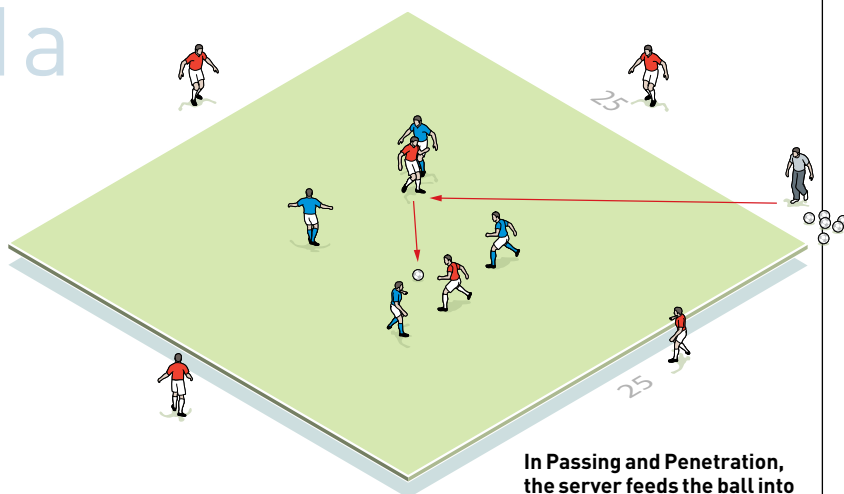
This practice rehearses movement, angles, short passes, body shape, weight of pass and decision-making.

Playing between the zones

We now use 20 players, 5v2 in the end zones and 4v2 in the centre (2). This is a 45x15-yard area split into thirds, with players invited to play one- or two-touch (depending on ability).

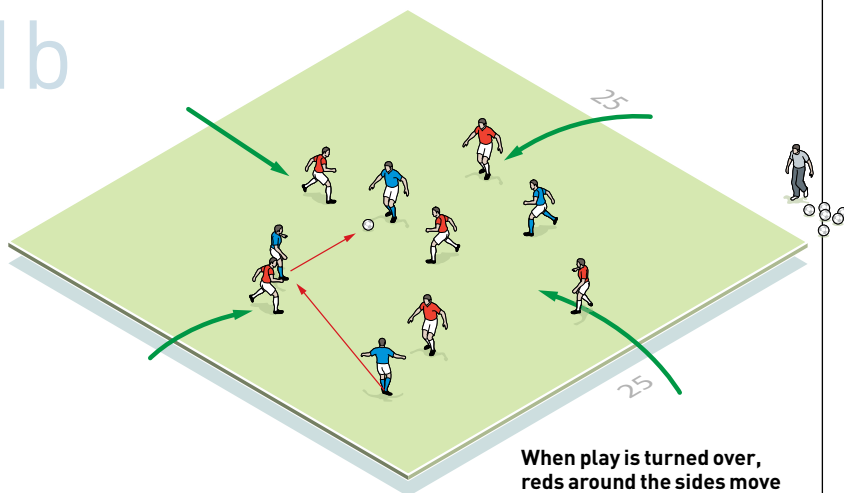
The attacking team

1a



In Passing and Penetration, the server feeds the ball into the red attackers, who must retain possession against four blue defenders

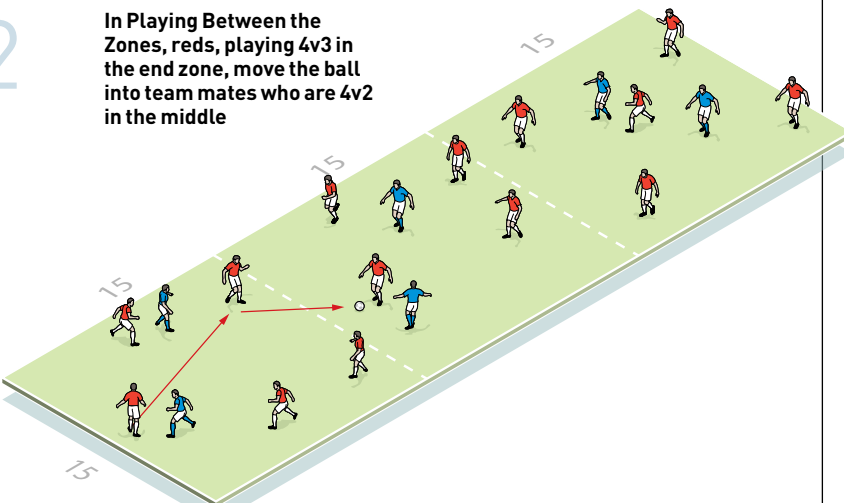
1b



When play is turned over, reds around the sides move in to challenge 6v4 against blues

2

In Playing Between the Zones, reds, playing 4v3 in the end zone, move the ball into team mates who are 4v2 in the middle



KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Peter Farrell
LMA AMBASSADOR

Peter Farrell is a vastly experienced football coach who, most recently, worked with Uwe Rosler at Sky Bet League One side Brentford.

Prior to that, the 57-year-old spent 10 years at Bolton Wanderers during a hugely successful period for the club which saw them become an established Premier League side. At the Reebok Stadium, Farrell worked his way up from Under-18s coach to Assistant Academy Director.

Liverpool-born Farrell spent 15 years as a player, starring for Bury, Port Vale, Rochdale, Crewe Alexandra and others, as well as enjoying spells in Sweden, Iceland, Scotland and Cyprus.

“We want to see players encouraged and confident in passing the ball. Having the intelligence and bravery to make passes is a must.”

PASSING AND POSSESSION THROUGH THE THIRDS

off five begins with the ball in zone one, with the intention of passing it into zone 2 (which is 4v2), where defenders aim to prevent the ball making it to the other end. If attackers are successful, play now comes back the other way.

Progression through the zones (3a/3b/3c)

Now on a full pitch narrowed on either side by seven yards, we play 4v3 in end zones and 3v3 rotating players in the middle. Again, we're working on playing from the back through the zones. The ball must remain under head height meaning players work hard to find the space.

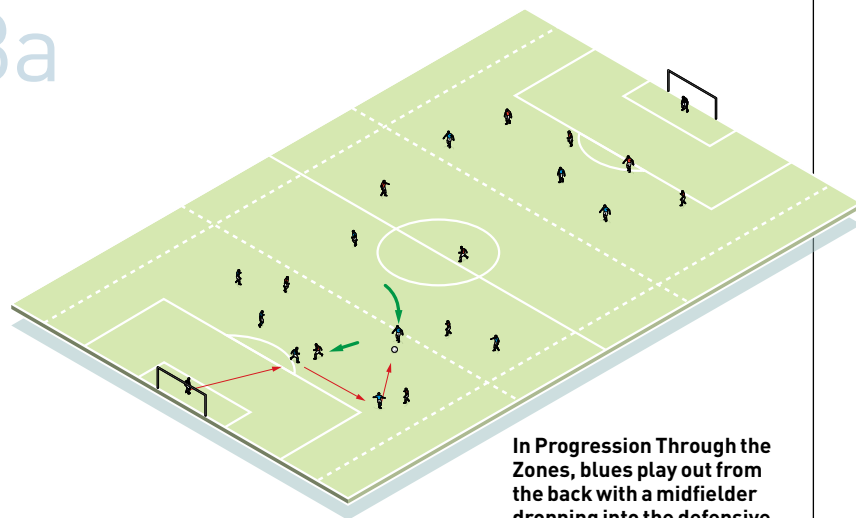
Playing out from the back, defenders must split, feeding into midfielders, who receive on the back foot to play forward to a front man or wide players between the full-back and centre-half. One midfielder can go into the defensive zone to receive, and when play is in the attacking zone, two midfielders can join to make it a 5v4.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want players to retain good shape, from 4-3-3 into 4-5-1, recognising when to push and when to drop. Movement for the creation of space is essential, as is good decision-making.

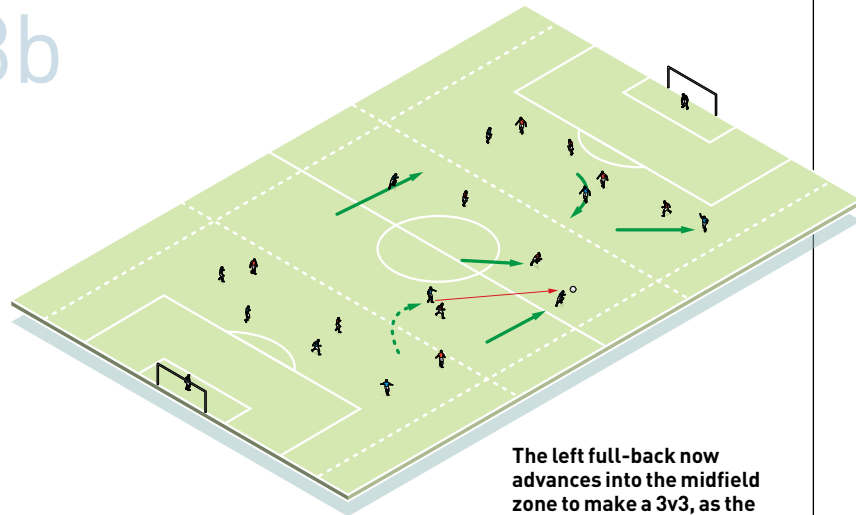
We also want to see players positive and confident in passing the ball. ■

3a



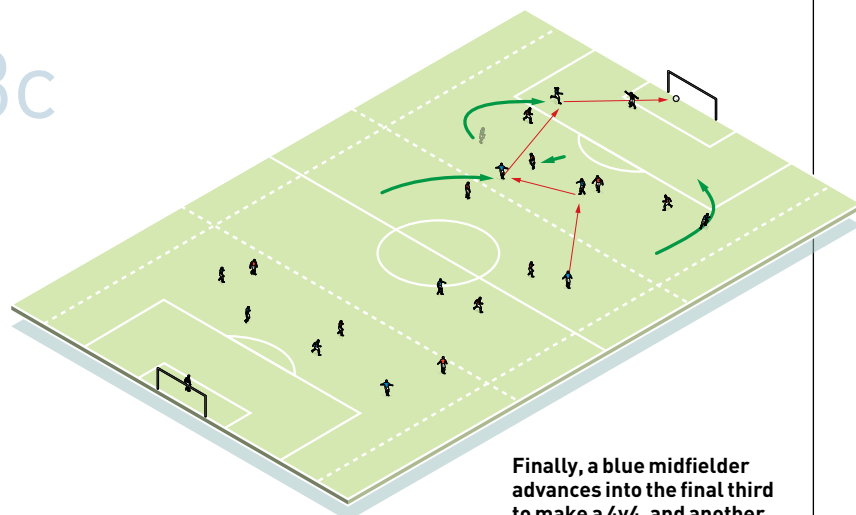
In Progression Through the Zones, blues play out from the back with a midfielder dropping into the defensive zone to equalise player numbers

3b



The left full-back now advances into the midfield zone to make a 3v3, as the attack progresses

3c



Finally, a blue midfielder advances into the final third to make a 4v4, and another one can follow. The ball is worked left and a goal scored



EXTRA-TIME PROFILE

WORDS: Sue McKellar

CHRIS COLEMAN WALES

He made his first-team debut for Swansea at just 17, became the youngest manager in the Barclays Premier League with Fulham at 32 and took leadership of the Wales side at 41. Yet despite his youth, Chris Coleman already has some big achievements and tough leadership experiences under his belt.

Every coach dreams of managing his national side, and for Wales' Chris Coleman, it is an ambition realised far sooner than he could have imagined. Having previously donned the red jersey of Wales as a player, Coleman knew that being trusted to lead Wales out into international competition as their manager was at once a huge responsibility, an uphill challenge and a great honour.

It is a high point in a management journey that started at Fulham, where Coleman progressed from playing under Kevin Keegan and Jean Tigana to being appointed the team's manager in 2003.

Coleman impressed in his first management role and led Fulham to a ninth-place finish in the English Premier League in 2003/2004. When he left Fulham, after four years in charge, he took the opportunity to gain some valuable experience abroad, having been recommended for the manager's post at Spanish side Real Sociedad by fellow Welshman John Toshack. A year later, he took his new-found experience to Coventry City before seeking more time overseas, this time with Greek side Larissa.

Despite winning matches and the support and admiration of the Greek fans, financial turmoil at the club made it a torrid time for Coleman, who decided to leave Larissa in early January 2012 and return to the UK. Just days later, Coleman was asked to take charge of the Welsh national side, which had been left rudderless following the tragic death of Coleman's close friend Gary Speed three months earlier. With inevitable sadness and mixed emotions, Coleman agreed to accept the responsibility and the honour of



"Gareth Bale embodies the passion our players have for the red shirt; he understands the importance of being a real team player."

leading his country.

Today, at 43, Coleman is still a man with youth on his side, and in terms of his Welsh squad, quite literally. While the presence of the likes of Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey in the Wales squad have raised expectations, the group also includes a number of much younger and less experienced players.

Coleman is, therefore, focused on and committed to nurturing this young talent on an individual basis and, importantly, looking forward to the luxury of having all of his best players available to play at the same time, something he has not yet been afforded. While aspiring to meet expectations by qualifying for their first major tournament since 1958, Coleman must keep things in perspective and focus on the performance of his squad.

Without a large pool of players from which to make his team selections, that means knowing his players inside out – which players have what skills and how

he can get the best out of each and every one.

Right from the U15 Wales team up to the first team, Coleman and Wales deploy the same theme, philosophy and style of football. Players in every position in their respective age groups understand that philosophy and they progress upwards with the correct message instilled from an early age.

Supporting Coleman is a highly experienced and passionate staff, all of whom understand his approach and what he expects from them and from the national side. Foremost among them is his assistant manager, Kit Symons – a former player for Wales and currently also academy coach at Fulham – who he has known for over 20 years and trusts implicitly.

While Coleman understands that he will ultimately be judged, as all managers, on the success of his first team, his remit, he explains, goes much further.

As well as identifying new talent for the squad and helping to realise its potential, Coleman has his sights set on improving the state of Welsh football more widely. How can the Welsh Premier League be developed, its facilities enhanced and awareness around it improved? In this, Coleman sees his role not just as manager of Wales, but as an ambassador for his country.

Can you describe the level of pride your players have in donning the red jersey for Wales?

Gareth Bale embodies the passion our players have for the red shirt; he understands the importance of being a real team player. As an example, he once flew from Real Madrid to be with his national team-mates for a few days, ▽

CHRIS COLEMAN WALES

despite having no chance of playing himself. It isn't solely down to talent that he plays for Real Madrid – it's his state of mind, mentality and desire to continually better himself. The way he relishes playing for his country and his willingness to play for the good of the team is a great inspiration for the rest of the Welsh side. He's a great ambassador for our country.

I have always staunchly believed that, no matter the size of club that you play for, competing for your country will always hold a very special place in your heart. It is an enormous honour for any player.

I can still vividly remember the unbelievable feeling when I first ran onto the pitch in that red jersey almost 25 years ago. I had just signed for Crystal Palace from Swansea when I won my first international cap against Austria. I remember being in the dressing room with players like Mark Hughes and Neville Southall and thinking how incredible it was to be sharing a dressing room with the best players in the country. I felt about 10 feet tall; so proud I could run through walls. As a young boy, I always dreamed of playing for Swansea City and Wales, so achieving both was unbelievable.

Does every player share that pride or do you sometimes need to articulate it?

It can be difficult to see the wood for the trees as a professional footballer. Incidents and big occasions in your career pass you by so quickly that it's hard to fully appreciate the situation you're in. It is very important, therefore, for players to stop and consider just how lucky and honoured they are to be in their position.

As a manager, you can help to articulate this through your team talks. For example, towards the end of the last qualification campaign some 15 of our more senior players were unavailable, so we brought a number of young boys into the squad. Before our game against Belgium, I remember addressing the players and saying: "You guys have come through and you are the best our country has to offer today – remember this and play with confidence. Relish this match and the experience. Everybody thinks that Belgium are going to crush us – they are one of the most expensively assembled international sides on the planet and

"We do a lot of work on the opposition before each match, analysing their style, strengths and weaknesses so that the players are well-prepared."

nobody gives us a chance."

You need to instil confidence, but also invite pressure, because when a player has reached the level where he is up against the best, he must be pretty decent himself.

Tactically, how do you see international football differs from club football?

The pace in international football tends to be slower than in the Barclays Premier League and even sometimes than the Championship. However, good international players can think quickly and create something out of nothing, upping the tempo suddenly and going for the jugular.

We have to raise ourselves up to the same level, anticipating rather than just reacting. Tactically, we do a lot of work on the opposition before each match, analysing their style, strengths and weaknesses so that the players are well-prepared.

It's good for the Wales team when we have individuals playing regularly in the Barclays Premier League because they get experience of competing tactically against leading foreign players every week. It makes the transition from playing domestic football to international football easier.

When I was appointed manager of Real Sociedad and moved to compete in Spain, it was a big education in terms of tactics. It was a challenge, but it certainly improved me as a coach and international manager.

It was 2008 and I remember Roberto Martinez texting me to say 'Chris, beware of the 4-2-3-1', the most common formation in Spain. When I arrived, I expected to find a very free-flowing style of play, but instead found that teams would put 10 bodies behind the ball, making it difficult to break them down, and play a lot of long balls.

They would then change formation very quickly with three men at the back, a packed midfield and no strikers as such. It's more common to see this now, but back then it was a real eye-opener.

You've shown in your career that you are committed to self-development, be it in the UK or overseas – how are you continuing to develop your skillset?

One of the best things about being an international manager is having the time to observe other managers and examine the approaches taken in different countries.

For example, I'll watch Bayern Munich train and play and see how Pep Guardiola reacts during a game, the thinking behind his decisions and how he behaves during pre- and post-match press conferences. It is a great way not only to pick up information and tips for the job in hand, but also in terms of career development, as you can assess how you are evolving as a manager.

I really admire Pep and his achievements at Barcelona, and how he managed to stamp his authority on Bayern Munich when they had just won the treble. It takes a special manager to join such a big club at that stage and implement your own ideas so successfully.

I love to observe people at the top of their professions, still innovating and creating history. For example, it was great to watch José Mourinho set up his side tactically when they played Manchester City at the Etihad earlier this season.

I have been fortunate enough to play for some very prolific managers in my career, all of whom had very different attributes. Kenny Dalglish and Kevin Keegan had such a presence that people were drawn to them and would do anything for them. Jean Tigana was the best hands-on coach I have ever worked with; he was innovative and miles ahead of what I had experienced before. Steve Coppell was very intelligent and brilliant at letting the dressing room take ownership of any challenges or problems that needed to be overcome. He knew who the strong characters and leaders were and he was insightful and smart. I love watching and learning from others. ■

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BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

By Richard Aldhous

Double negative

THE POWER OF NEGATIVE THINKING

By Bob Knight and Bob Hammel
Published by New Harvest
RRP £15.07

The idea of subverting a norm isn't anything new in soccer. Coaches have put in place reverse psychology for years, and it's been proven to work. From the most subtle and inoffensive psychological nudges, 'Imagine how you'll feel walking off the pitch having missed this opportunity... let's not waste it'; to the most cutting, 'You're not fit to wear the shirt', the impact of the mind on sports performance has never been more explored and exploited.

Clubs now spend thousands every week ensuring players are in the right frame of mind for competition, and it's usually the tried and tested methods that yield the best results.

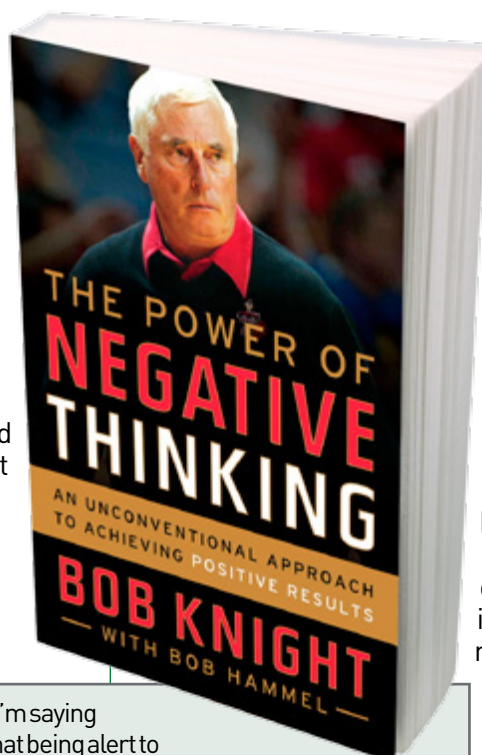
But Bob Knight, the legendary US basketball coach has, over the years, been renowned for taking a rather different approach. His methods, published in 'The Power of Negative Thinking: An Unconventional Approach to Achieving Positive Results' are as staggering as they are absorbing.

Of course, his track record speaks for itself, so why should we doubt the man? The second most successful coach in NCAA history with 902 victories, his logic is to look at the prevention of mistakes rather than the creation

of opportunities. While some may loathe this brand of supposedly negative thinking, there's not a top flight manager in any professional division who would dispute that fact that any goal can be prevented, and that most come as a result of someone, somewhere not doing his job.

Of course, Knight isn't actually advocating a defensive, anti-sport approach. His demeanour through this sometimes commonsensical, other times revelatory guide to competition is simply to offer due care and respect to scepticism... to the idea that perhaps things aren't possible in sport. In Bob's mind, the only way to exploit failings is to accept them in the first place. He argues that wild optimism can be as much an obstacle as a lack of self-belief, and that teams must embrace both to really have any chance of succeeding.

The book is littered



"I'm saying that being alert to the possible negatives in any situation is the very best way to bring about positive results. And the reverse is true, too — ignoring or failing to spot potential hazards in advance makes failure all the more likely. For example, I'm talking about being aware that it can rain. You can plan the greatest outdoor event in the world — food, games, entertainment, decorations — but if a rain shower would turn everything into chaos and you don't allow for that possibility, you're risking disaster because of blind optimism.

Don't be caught thinking something is going to work just because you think it's going to work.

Planning beats repairing.

And good planning avoids the need for fixing up a project that plowed ahead without thought at all about potential pitfalls.

Stop and think. That's a phrase we've all used to introduce a new way of considering something, to argue for stepping back from a situation and looking at it in an all-new light. Stop and think: That's what I'm saying is always the best approach before rushing forward with carried-away zeal."

with engaging historical references and examples, as well as a run of illustrations from college basketball that lighten what, on the face of it, could be a dark tome of sports psychology.

In short, to focus on what is wrong is to find what is right, and Knight's approach is truly insightful.

One slight irony is perhaps that Knight didn't directly apply these principles to his own misdemeanours in his private and sporting life, but a career is a learning experience, and you sense that now, at 73, the author is at the right time and in the right place to publish this sort of book.

It's a satisfying embracing of negativity in an otherwise overinflated world of wild and artificial optimism.

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