

ELITE SOCCER

**Exclusive
Training
practices from
top professional
managers**

WEST HAM UNITED

MANUEL PELLEGRINI

SWITCHING PLAY WHEN COUNTER-ATTACKING



QUEENS PARK RANGERS

**MARK
WARBURTON**

Pre-season
training



PETERBOROUGH UNITED

**DARREN
FERGUSON**

Switching play
with penetration



HULL CITY

**GRANT
McCANN**

Pressing & pre-season
conditioning



LMA AMBASSADOR

**KOFI
HAGAN**

Playing against
a low block



EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW WITH ENGLAND WOMEN MANAGER PHIL NEVILLE

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ISSUE 108/JULY 2019: **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**



Soccer sessions and training blueprints to make your players think

Dear Coach,
Welcome to the July issue of Elite Soccer. In this month's magazine we feature another five innovative training sessions from some of the leading coaches working in the English game.

We are delighted to kick off the issue with a practice from a Premier League winning coach. West Ham manager Manuel Pellegrini won the title when he was boss of Manchester City and, this month, he has returned to the pages of Elite Soccer to share a session that will help teams turn pressured situations into quick counter-attacks by switching play.

On a similar theme, we have a session contributed by Peterborough United manager, Darren Ferguson, that is aimed at encouraging players to change the point of attack at speed.

With many coaches starting to think about the campaign ahead, we have two sessions in this issue geared towards pre-season training. Queens Park Rangers manager, Mark Warburton, has shared a plan that is built around the fitness requirements of the players but it is delivered through a normal training session that your team will really enjoy.

Similarly, the session by Hull City manager, Grant McCann, may be focused on pressing principles but it is also one he uses with his players during pre-season to build their physical strength.

Closing this month's issue is academy youth coach, Kofi Hagan, who returns to the magazine with a session designed to help an attacking team beat opponents who have parked the bus.

I hope you find that the sessions in this issue will be of help to your coaching. Elite Soccer will return next month with five more cutting edge training practices.

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

Howard Wilkinson

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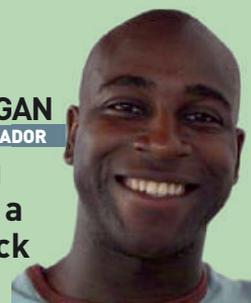
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ELITE SOCCER JULY 2019

MANAGER PROFILES

Here are the five managers and coaches we're delighted to welcome into this issue of *Elite Soccer*

MANUEL PELLEGRINI

WEST HAM UNITED

Manuel Pellegrini was a Premier League winner with Manchester City and can include Real Madrid among the clubs he has coached.

As a player, he earned 28 caps for Chile as a centre back and was a one-club man, representing Universidad de Chile for 13 years in his home city of Santiago.

After hanging up his boots, Pellegrini enjoyed a short spell as the club's coach. He also worked for the national team as Chile's assistant coach and also as manager of the U20s. He subsequently made his name as manager of Universidad Catolica, winning the Copa Interamericana and the Copa Chile.

At LDU Quito, Pellegrini won the Ecuadorian league title and led the club to the knockout stages of the Copa Libertadores in 1999, where they were eliminated on penalties by Argentinian giants River Plate. That run brought him to the attention of the continent's biggest clubs and he moved to Buenos Aires in 2001, first with San Lorenzo and, the following year, with River Plate.

In 2004, he joined Villarreal, taking the Spanish club into Europe for five straight seasons and reaching the Champions League semi-finals in their first appearance in the competition.

In June 2009, Pellegrini was appointed Real Madrid manager, signing Kaka, Cristiano Ronaldo, Karim Benzema and Xabi Alonso in the months that followed. His star-studded team achieved 96 points in La Liga, the highest total that the club had ever achieved up to that point, but they still finished as runners-up to Barcelona.

After a spell at Malaga, he joined Manchester City in 2013 and soon won the League Cup. Before the end of his first season, he had also lifted the Premier League, becoming the first coach from outside of Europe to win the English top flight. He added another League Cup title in 2016.

Following two years in the Chinese Super League with Hebei China Fortune, Pellegrini returned to the Premier League as manager of West Ham in 2018.

MARK WARBURTON

QUEENS PARK RANGERS

Mark Warburton is currently manager of Queens Park Rangers. He began his coaching career in the academy at Watford, before moving to Brentford in February 2011, serving as a coach and then sporting director until being appointed as manager in December 2013.

Warburton led Brentford to promotion to the Championship as runners-up in 2014 and finished the following season with the club's best second-tier placing for 80 years.

He managed Rangers in Scotland from 2015 to 2017, winning the Scottish Championship title and the Scottish Challenge Cup in his first season. He was also voted PFA Scotland Manager of the Year.

After a short spell as manager of Nottingham Forest in 2017, he joined QPR in May 2019.

DARREN FERGUSON

PETERBOROUGH UNITED

Darren Ferguson is in his third stint as the manager of Peterborough United, currently in League One.

As a player, he was coached at Manchester United by his father, Sir Alex Ferguson. He won the Premier League with the club, before going on to spend most of his career in the lower divisions, with Wolverhampton Wanderers and Wrexham.

His first managerial appointment was as player-manager of Peterborough in 2007. He led the club to successive promotions, guiding them to the second-tier of English football for the first time in 17 seasons. He was also voted the LMA's League One Manager of the Year in 2009.

After a spell at Preston North End in 2010, he returned to Peterborough and led the club to promotion

back to the Championship via the play-offs. After two seasons in the Championship, he joined Doncaster Rovers in 2015. He subsequently became Peterborough manager for a third time in January 2019.

GRANT McCANN

HULL CITY

A former Northern Ireland international with 39 caps to his name, when Grant McCann retired from playing he joined the coaching staff of Peterborough, a club he had made 128 league appearances for. Appointed assistant manager at London Road, he enjoyed his first brief spell as the club's caretaker manager in September 2015 (including a 5-1 win at Oldham), and his second in April 2016 (including a 5-1 home victory over Blackpool). He was appointed Posh manager after the success of his second spell as caretaker manager and was named League One Manager of the Month for August 2017.

He was subsequently appointed manager of Doncaster and led the club into the 2019 League One play-offs, only to lose a semi-final penalty shootout to Charlton Athletic. He became Hull manager in June 2019.

KOFI HAGAN

LMA AMBASSADOR

Kofi Hagan has over 15 years of coaching experience. He is a UEFA 'A' licence holder, who works within the academy and player pathway development structure at a Premier League club.

Having worked as a player and a coach in non-league football, he has managed to build his knowledge by working across men's and women's football and has helped to set up and develop internal football projects, which have aided the development and recruitment of players. His work crosses the youth development and professional development phases.

WEST HAM UNITED
Manuel Pellegrini
Switching play when counter-attacking

SET-UP
AREA
Up to full pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 22 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Counter and switch: 20mins
Breakout and switch: 20mins
Box to box game: 20mins

Overview
This session is all about changing the point of attack and switching play in counter-attacking situations. It will help the team get out of trouble when they're being pressed, allowing them to turn pressured situations into quick counter-attacks.
To make this tactic effective, teams must be well organised when attacking. By repeating these practices, the ability to identify space in other areas of the pitch and switching the ball

to these areas, will become like second nature to our players. We would run this session if we were due to be playing against teams who control possession and dominate the play in attacking phases, or against teams that defend deep around their own area.

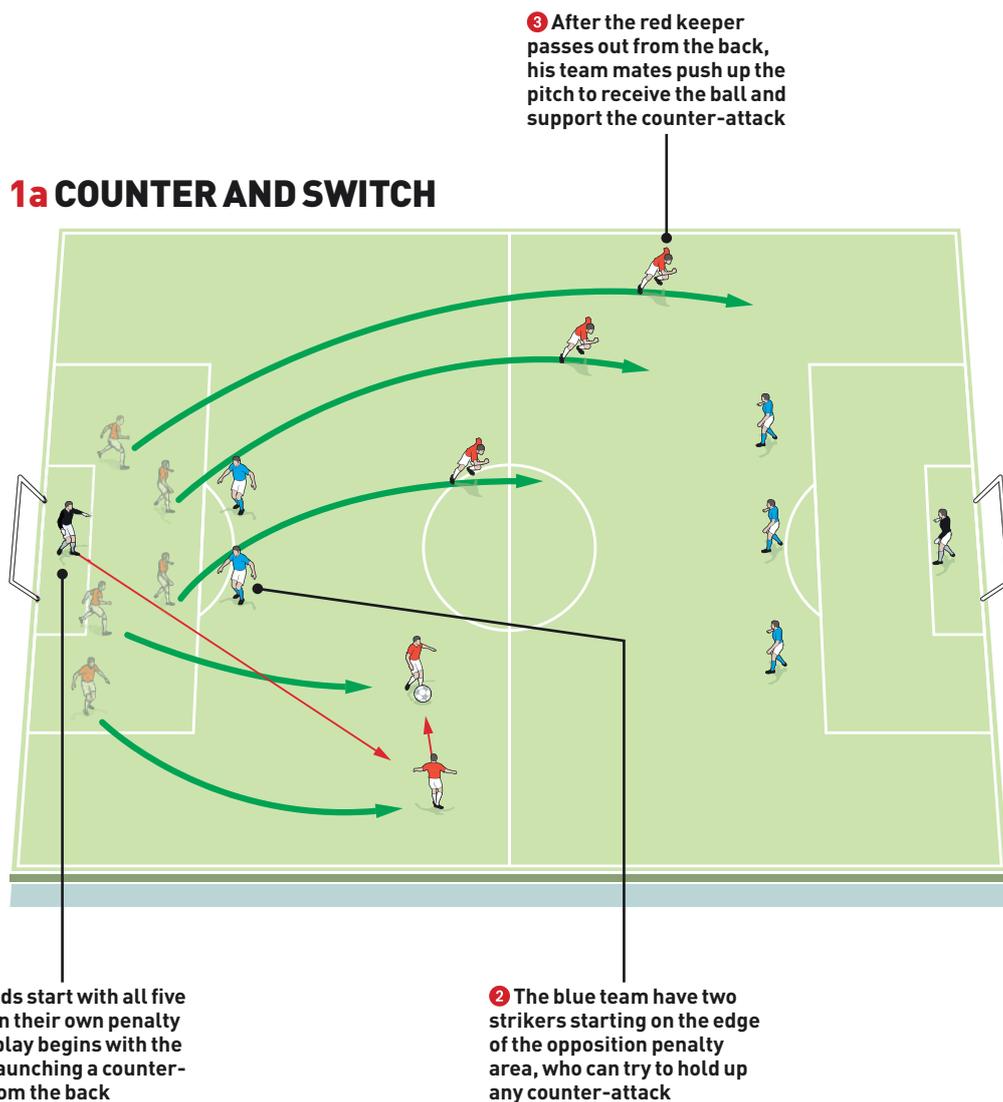
What do I get the players to do?
Counter and switch

We start the session with a 20-minute warm-up [not shown]. Then we set up on our

KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

“This session will help the team get out of trouble when they’re being pressed, allowing them to turn pressured situations into quick counter-attacks”



MANUEL PELLEGRINI: SWITCHING PLAY WHEN COUNTER-ATTACKING

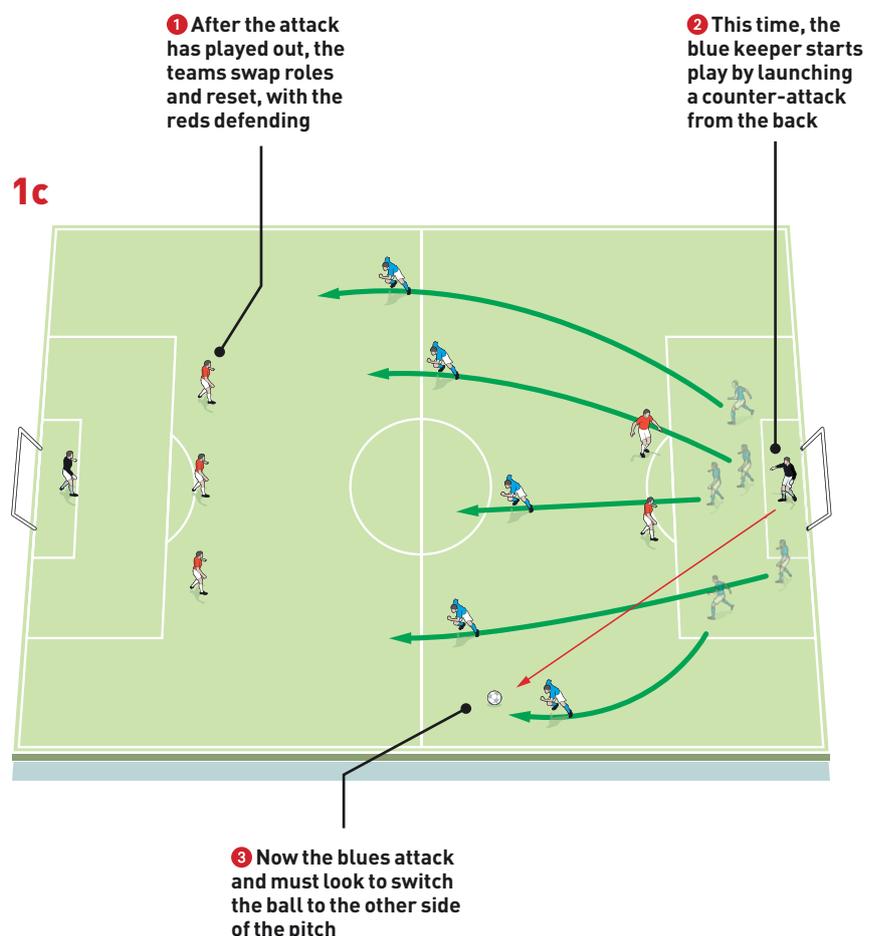
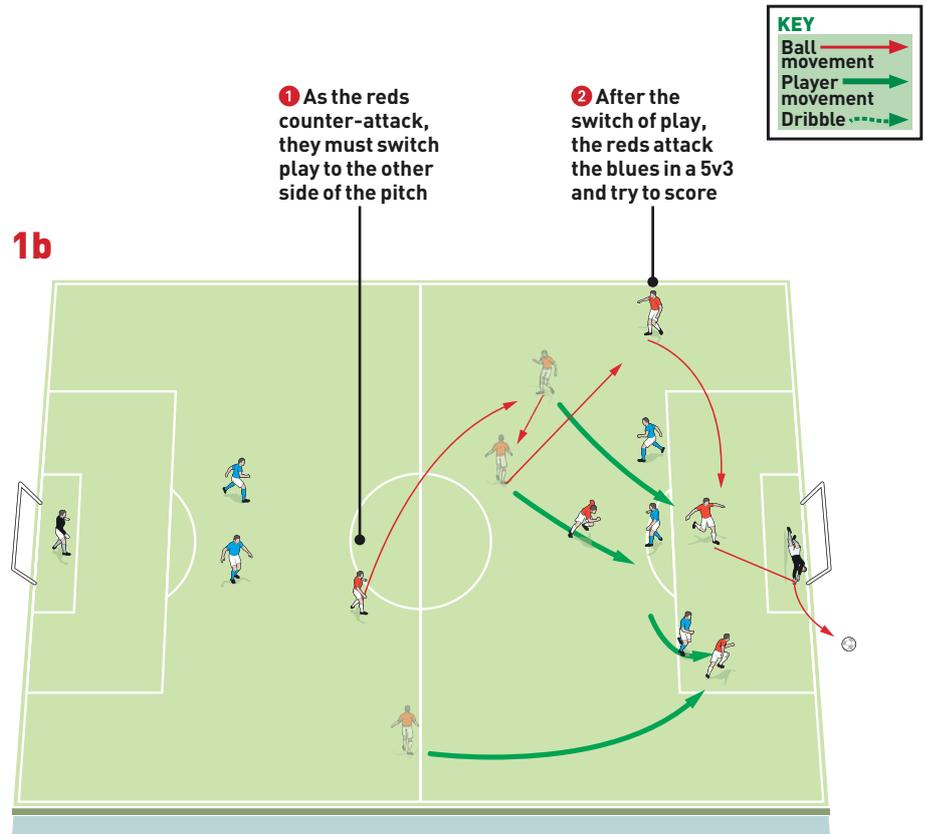
normal pitch for the opening activity, with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We're using 10 outfield players, divided into two teams of five. To replicate a counter-attacking situation, one team (the reds) starts with all its players in the penalty area they are defending and the other team (the blues) starts with three defenders on the edge of their own penalty box and two attackers outside the opposition penalty area. The red goalkeeper starts play by passing out of the penalty area, as if launching a rapid counter-attack from the back, as shown [1a]. The players must then switch play to the other side of the pitch, as shown [1b], and they should try to fashion a goal-scoring opportunity, attacking 5v3 against the blues. Once a shot has been taken or the ball is dead, the teams should swap roles and reset. This time the blue goalkeeper starts play, launching a counter-attack in the other direction, as shown [1c].

We play for 20 minutes, with each team attacking five times on each flank.

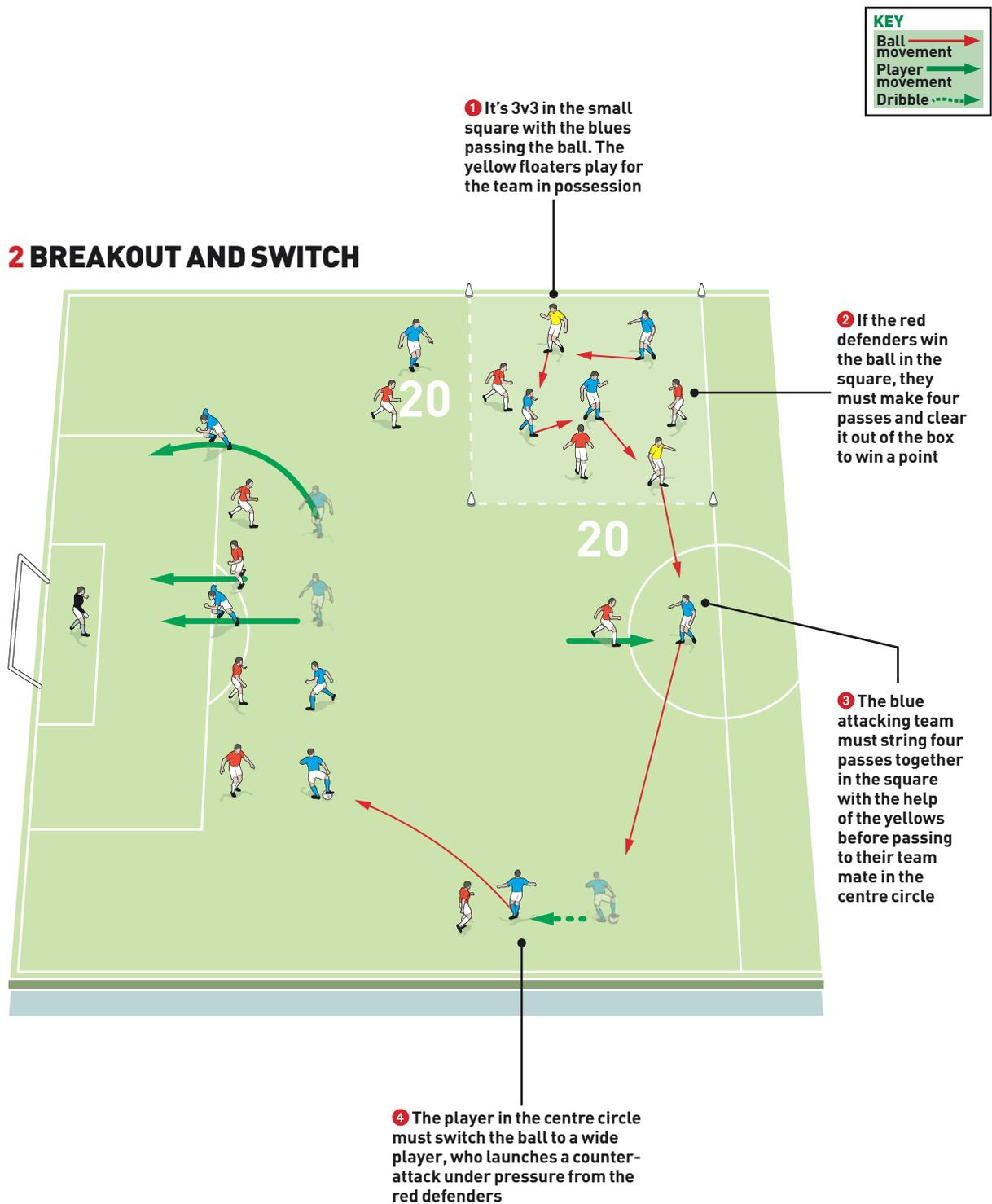
What do I get the players to do next?

Breakout and switch

We set up on half a pitch, with a 20x20-yard square marked out in one corner, and a goal and a goalkeeper at the other end. We're using 22 outfield players, split into an attacking team of 10 (the blues), a defending team of 10 (the reds), and two floaters (the yellows). Three blue attackers and three red defenders start in the 20-yard square, along with the two yellow floaters who play for the team in possession, while the remaining players start in the main area, set-up as shown [2]. The blue attacking team starts play with the ball in the square and they must make four passes without their opponents touching the ball before they can pass to their team mate in



MANUEL PELLEGRINI: SWITCHING PLAY WHEN COUNTER-ATTACKING



the centre circle. The attacking team must then switch play to their wide player and should try to create a goal-scoring opportunity. The defenders should try to stop them as normal. If the red defending team wins the ball in the square, they must make four passes and then clear it out of the square to win a point.

We play for 20 minutes, with teams taking turns to be the attackers.

How would you put this into a game situation?

Box to box game

We set up between the two penalty boxes with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We're using 20 outfield

players split into two teams of 10. We play an 11v11 game with the one restriction that teams must switch play before they can attempt to score a goal, as shown [3].

How do I progress the session?

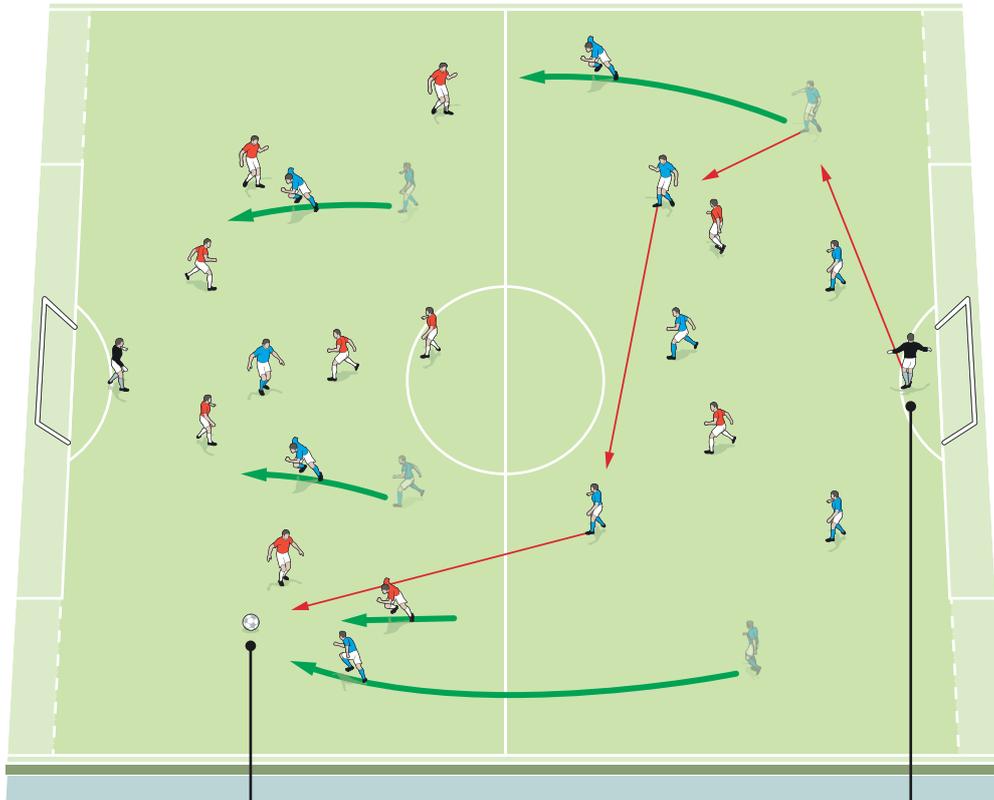
We want players to be able to visualise their options for

MANUEL PELLEGRINI: SWITCHING PLAY WHEN COUNTER-ATTACKING

3 BOX TO BOX GAME

KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble



2 Play a normal 11v11 game but teams must switch play before attempting to score

1 Play starts and restarts from the goalkeeper

“We want players to visualise options for the long ball into less congested areas of the pitch”

playing the long ball into much less congested areas of the pitch. Once players have mastered this tactic, we can try to make the drills harder by reducing the number of touches allowed. We can progress it further by increasing the number of players in defence.

What are the key things to look for?
When teams are under pressure, we want to see players looking for options of superiority on the opposite flank. Players should make movements to create space in order to quickly counter-attack the opposition goal.

What are the typical mistakes players might make and how do I avoid them?
Errors in execution of the long ball when switching play can cause problems. This can only be corrected through repetition of the activities in this session.

QUEENS PARK RANGERS
Mark Warburton
Pre-season training

SET-UP
AREA
Up to half a pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, poles, 4 goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
18 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Technical practice: 15mins
Crossing & finishing: 20mins
Four goal game: 30mins
Small-sided games: 20mins

Overview
This is very much a generic pre-season training session focused on fitness. It's built around the fitness requirements of the players but it is delivered through a normal training session that the team enjoy. We incorporate technical practices with crossing and finishing, and we include possession work before concluding the session with small-sided games. The input of our sports science team is extremely important to ensure the loading and recoveries are appropriate

for the outcomes that we are seeking from the session.

What do I get the players to do?
Technical practice

This practice is made up of two elements, with players rotating between three roles: working, serving and recovery. We set up an area of 45x45 yards for one part of the practice and an area of 10x10 yards for the other part. We're using 18 players divided into three teams of six. Two teams start in the larger of the areas, set up as shown [1a], with six blue working players

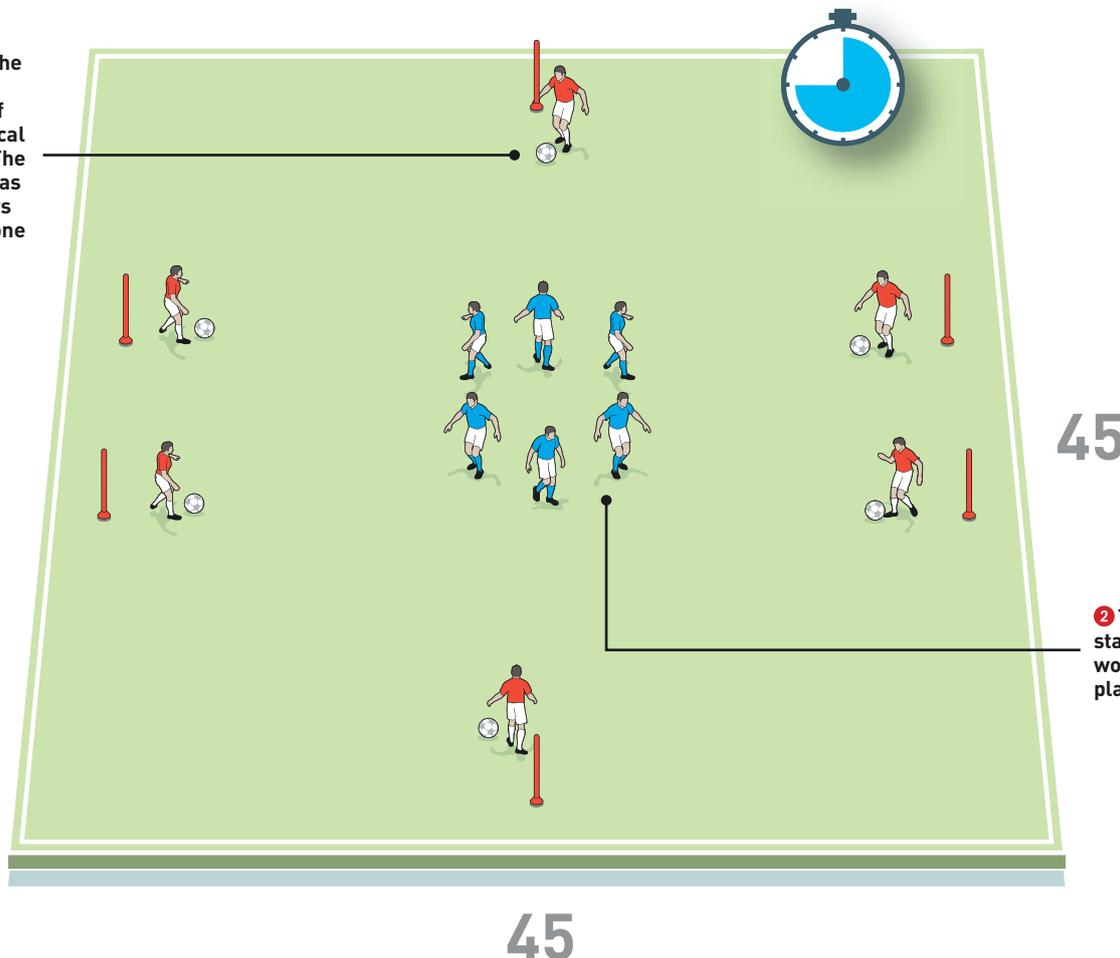
KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

“This session is built around the fitness requirements of the players but it is delivered through a normal training session that the team enjoy”

1a TECHNICAL PRACTICE: WORKING ZONE

1 This is the set up for one part of the technical practice. The reds start as the servers and each one has a ball



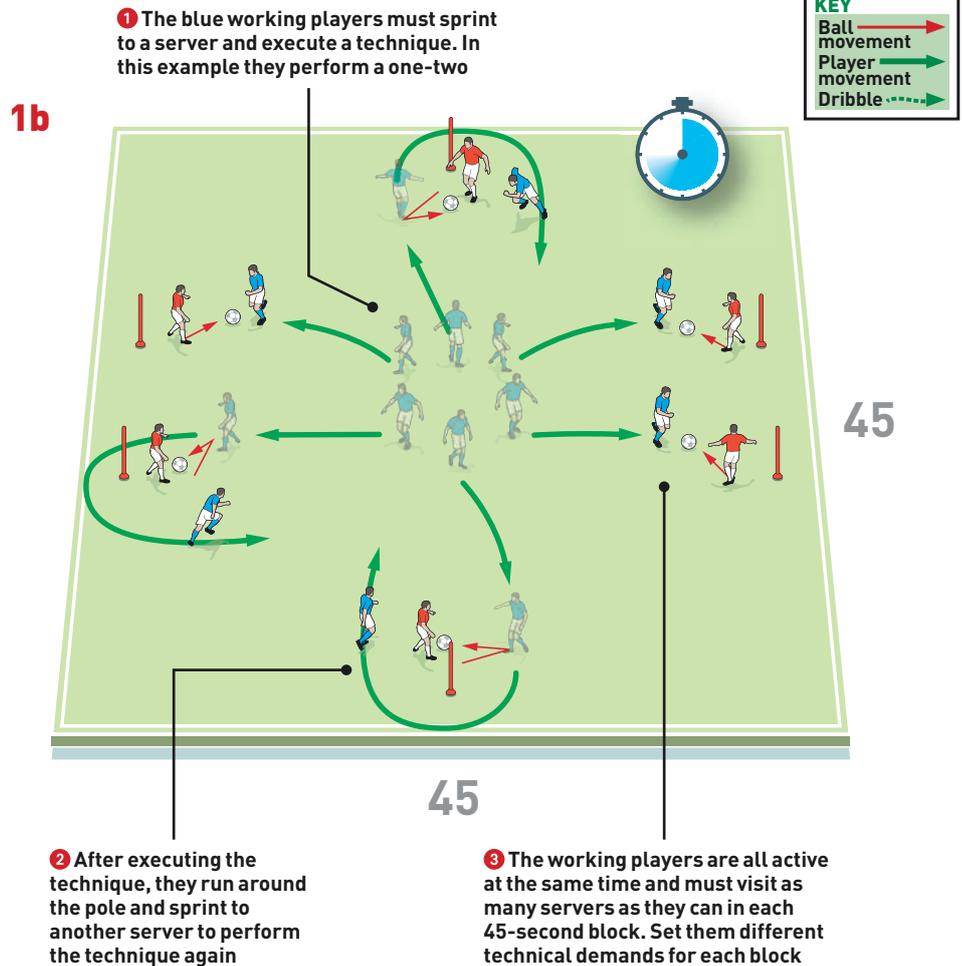
2 The blues start as the working players

MARK WARBURTON: PRE-SEASON TRAINING

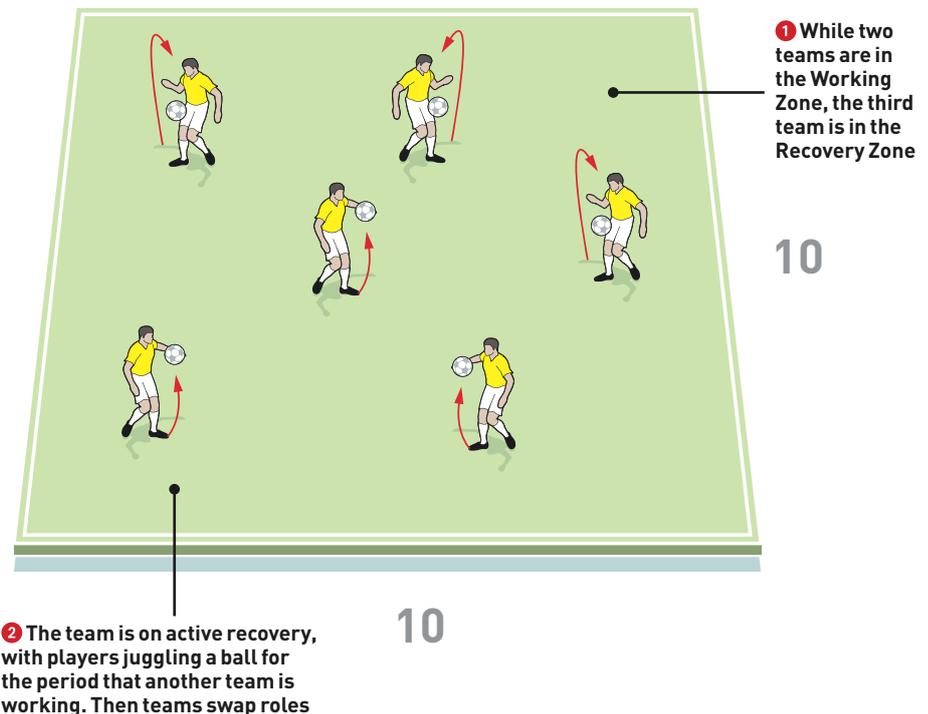
in the centre surrounded by a ring of six red servers, each one standing in front of a pole with a ball. The working players make runs towards the servers, who play a one-two with them. The working players then run around the pole and sprint towards another server for a one-two, as shown [1b]. The working players should reach as many servers as possible in each 45-second block. Each team is in the working role for six blocks, and we set them a different technical demand for each block (such as a one-two, volley, header, left foot pass, right foot pass). After six 45-second blocks, the three teams rotate roles. While two of the teams are running this drill in the larger of the areas, the third team is in the small area on active recovery, juggling a ball for the duration of the six blocks, as shown [1c].

Crossing & finishing

We set up on half a pitch with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end and six poles positioned, as shown [2a]. We're using 18 outfield players, split into three teams of six. One team (the yellows) act as bounce players and crossers and they start with one on each pole. The other two teams (the reds and the blues) work on passing and movement to score goals, with one of the teams starting at each end of the area. The red team sends the first pair to attack, building their move with the help of the yellow players on the poles and finishing with a dribble and a shot. They must also be alert to any loose balls in front of goal. After shooting, the red pair must turn and sprint towards the end they started to meet a ball delivered by one of the crossers, as shown [2b]. After finishing their second attack, the red pair return to the back of their starting queue. Then the first blue pair start an attack from their end.



1c TECHNICAL PRACTICE: RECOVERY ZONE



MARK WARBURTON: PRE-SEASON TRAINING

This is aerobically challenging and sets high demands of the players in terms of passing, shooting, crossing and finishing, so work to a set number of attacks per pair.

Four goal game

We set up an area of 25x25 yards with a goal on each side, although the size of the area can vary according to the physical requirements needed. Again, we're using three teams of six. Two teams pass to keep possession, while the third team presses to win the ball and if they succeed, they must try to score in any of the four goals, as shown [3]. We make sure we keep a note of the scores. Each team plays as the pressing team for five games of decreasing lengths, rotating roles as follows...

FOUR GOAL GAME - ORDER OF PLAY

Team 1 presses 2 & 3 - 2.5mins

Team 2 presses 1 & 3 - 2.5mins

Team 3 presses 1 & 2 - 2.5mins

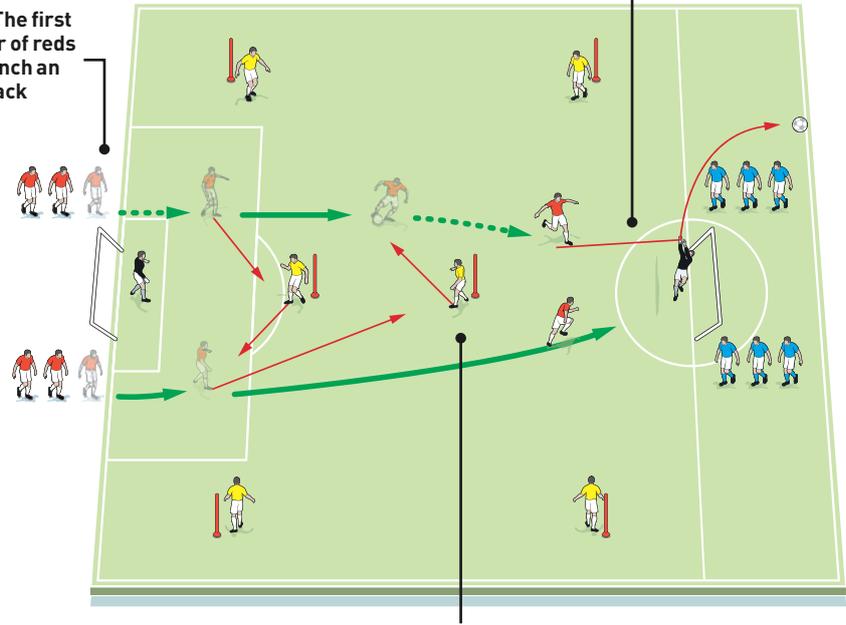
Recover for 1min & then repeat block in games of 2mins, 1.5mins, 1min, and 0.5mins

Small-sided games

We set up an area of 36x44 yards (the size of two penalty areas) with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We're using three teams of six outfield players. Two teams play against each other and the players of the third team are positioned around the outside of the pitch and they play for the team in possession, as shown [4]. The outside players are limited to one-touch passing. Play three-minute games and rotate teams regularly.

2a CROSSING & FINISHING

1 The first pair of reds launch an attack

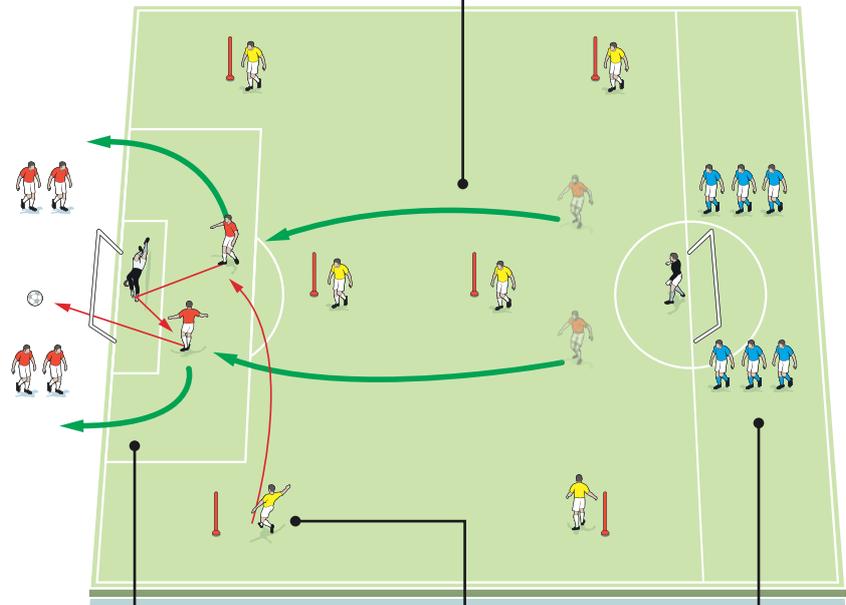


3 The first attack finishes with a dribble and a shot but the pair must be alert to follow up on any loose balls

2 They build the attack by playing wall passes with the yellows

1 After shooting, the pair turn and sprint back to the other end

2b



3 After shooting the red pair return to the back of the queue

2 One of the yellows crosses the ball and the red pair must try to get on the end of it to shoot and to follow up on any loose balls

4 The first blue pair launch an attack from the other end

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble - - - - - →

MARK WARBURTON: PRE-SEASON TRAINING

How do I progress the session?

The various elements of the session can be amended to meet the required technical and physical outcomes. The techniques on the Technical Practice can be made less or more difficult, while the Crossing & Finishing practice can have restrictions on the number of touches or the type of finish. The possession element of the Four Goal Game can see touches reduced from 'all in' to one-touch depending on the standard of the players. The small sided game can add rules such as all players must be in the opposing half for a goal to count, thus increasing the mental and physical challenge.

What are the key things to look out for?

The players are working under duress and the impact of fatigue must be noted, but it is vital to focus as much on the technical execution as it is to look at the physical outcomes. We need to see that the players can complete the necessary technical demands whilst under physical duress.

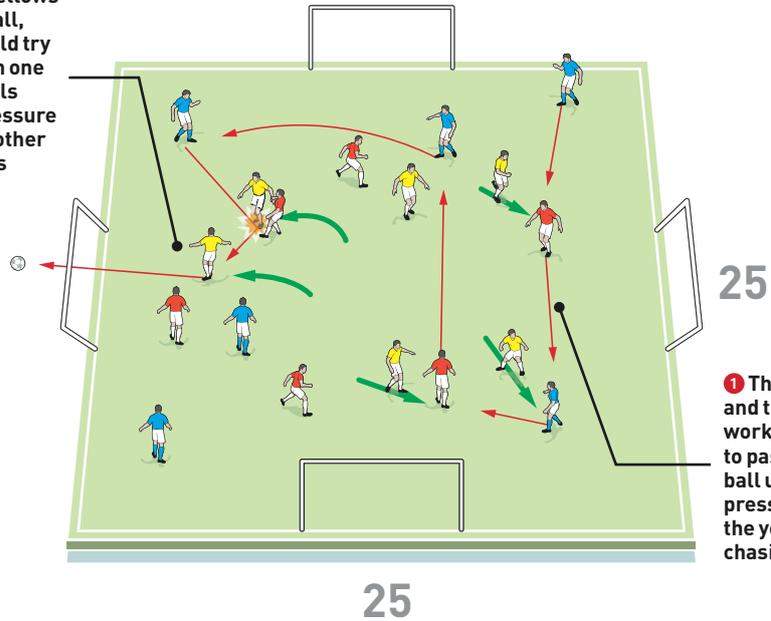
What are the typical mistakes that players might make and how do I avoid them?

Players typically view this as a 'working' session and can often allow their technical focus to drift. Ensure standards are maintained for all aspects of the session. The coaches must also ensure their focus is on all the required outcomes of the session.

"We need to see that the players can complete the necessary technical demands whilst under physical duress"

3 FOUR GOAL GAME

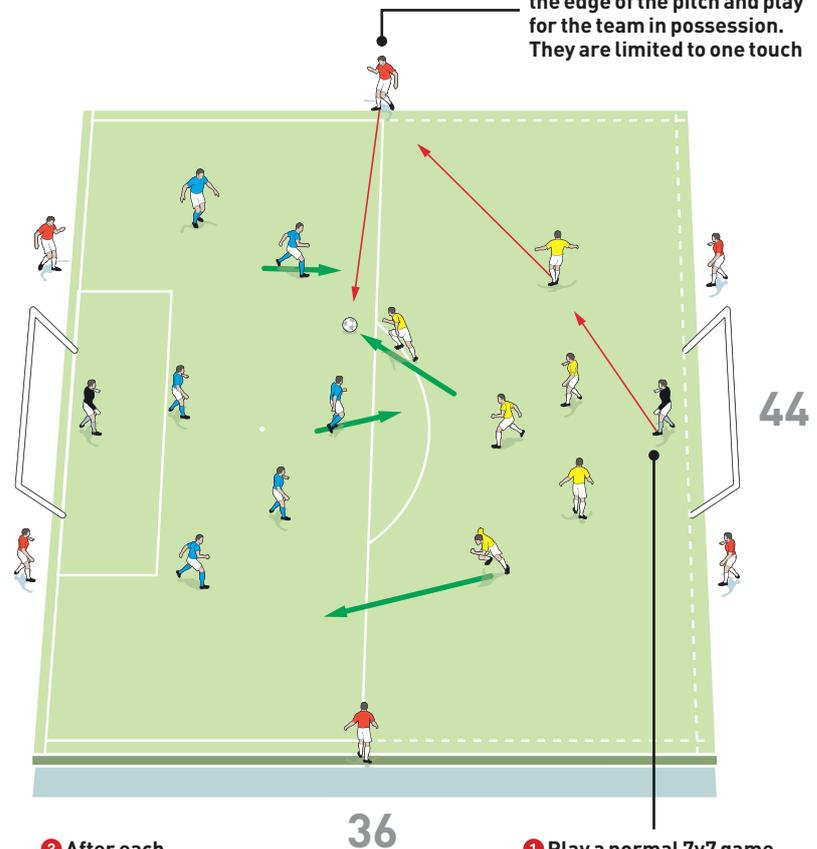
2 If the yellows win the ball, they should try to score in one of the goals under pressure from the other two teams



1 The blues and the reds work together to pass the ball under pressure from the yellow chasing team

4 SMALL-SIDED GAMES

2 The reds are lined up around the edge of the pitch and play for the team in possession. They are limited to one touch



3 After each three-minute game, rotate teams

1 Play a normal 7v7 game. The yellows start play with a pass out from the keeper

PETERBOROUGH UNITED
Darren Ferguson
Switching play with penetration

SET-UP
AREA
Up to three quarters of a pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 mannequins, 2 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 18 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Switching play drill 1: 10mins
Switching play drill 2: 10mins
Switching play 10v8: 10mins

Overview
This session is about changing the point of attack. It shows players the different ways we can do this, allowing the team to attack at pace once we have created overloads.
It's a good session because it gives players plenty of opportunities to practise the building blocks of the tactic within the passing exercise and then they will have a chance to put what they've learnt into a function of play where the

decision-making elements of the game become a part of it. We run the session at least once a month but we try to add slight variations or progressions each time, to keep the players engaged.

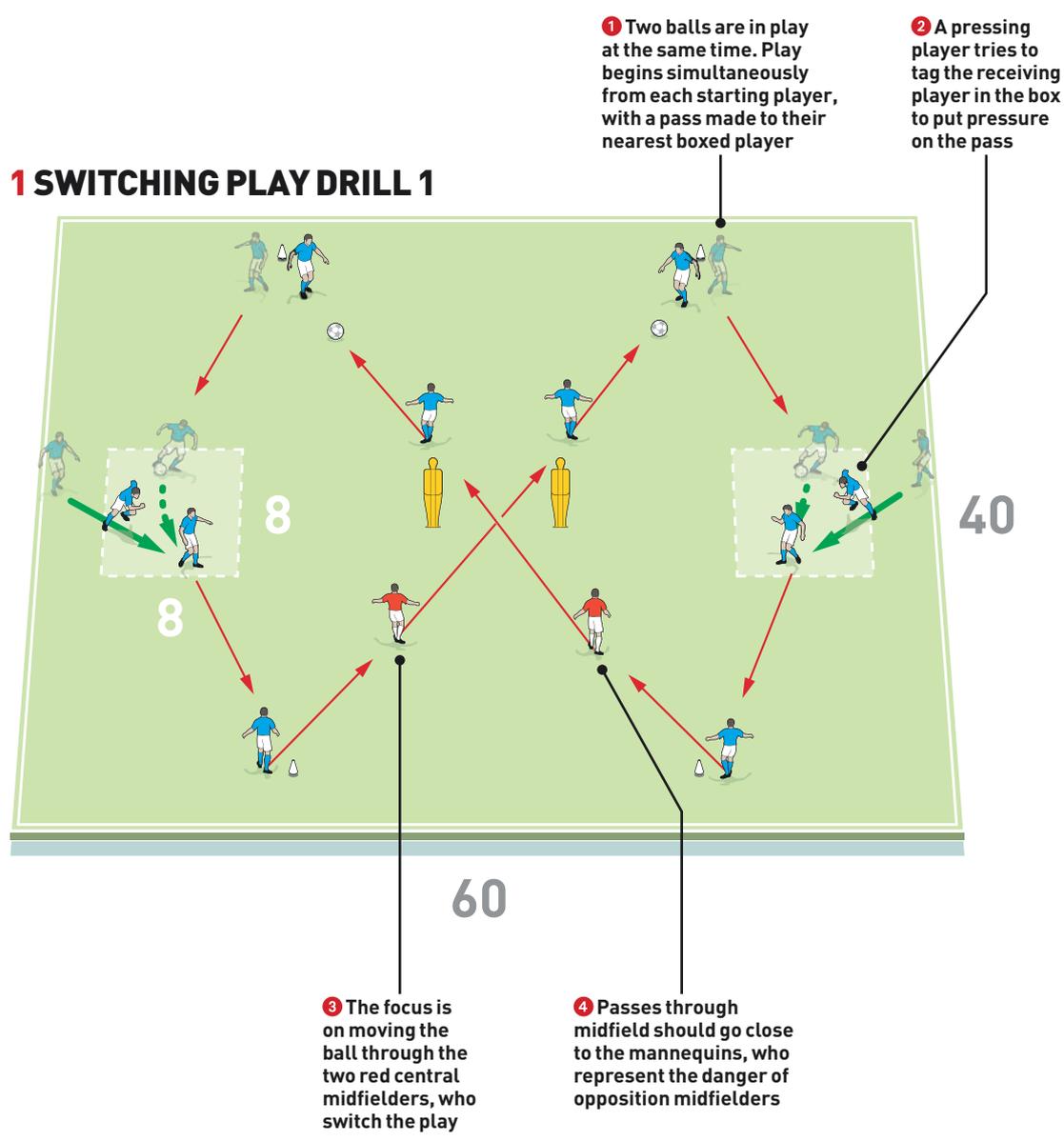
KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

What do I get the players to do?

Switching play drill 1
We set up an area of 60x40 yards with two 8x8-yard boxes positioned as shown [1]. Between the boxes are a

“This session is about changing the point of attack. It allows the team to attack at pace once we have created overloads”



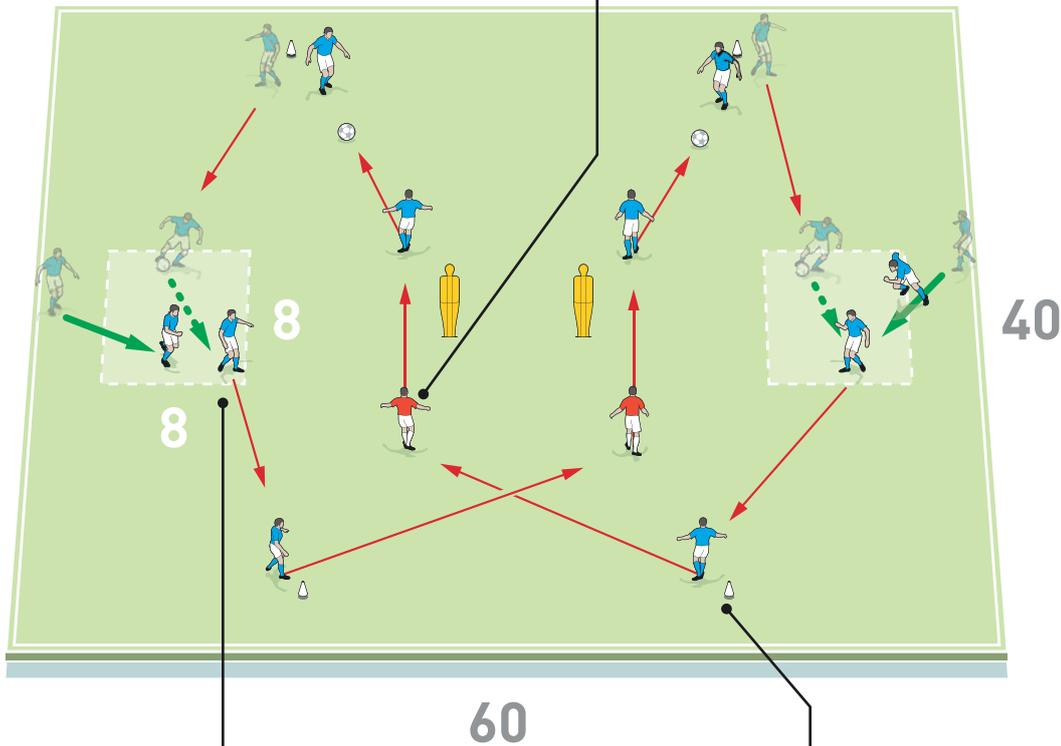
DARREN FERGUSON: SWITCHING PLAY WITH PENETRATION

KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

1 Using the same set-up, play now goes through the centre of the pitch using a different route. This time the red midfielders keep the ball away from the mannequins

2 SWITCHING PLAY DRILL 2



2 It's an unopposed drill but players should still check over their shoulders to show they are aware of what's happening around them

3 It's important that players use the correct weight and angle of pass, or the drill won't work

pair of mannequins, representing opposition midfielders. We're using 12 outfield players, split into 10 blue passing players and two red central midfielders. This is a passing drill and two balls are on the go at the same time. Play starts simultaneously from the two players at the top, with each passing to the player in the nearest box, one in a clockwise direction and the other anti-clockwise. A player outside each

box tries to tag the receiving player to put pressure on the pass and add intensity to the move. Each receiving player should pass the ball to the next player in the sequence and both balls are moved around the circuit in a figure of eight. The focus is on moving the ball through the two red central midfielders, who should switch the play diagonally through the centre near to the mannequins. We play this for 10 minutes.

Switching play drill 2
Using the same set-up as before, players run essentially the same passing drill but play goes through midfield in a different way, with the red midfielders now keeping the ball away from the mannequins, as shown [2]. We play for 10 minutes.

What do I get the players to do next?
Switching play 10v8
For this switching play exercise, ▼

DARREN FERGUSON: SWITCHING PLAY WITH PENETRATION

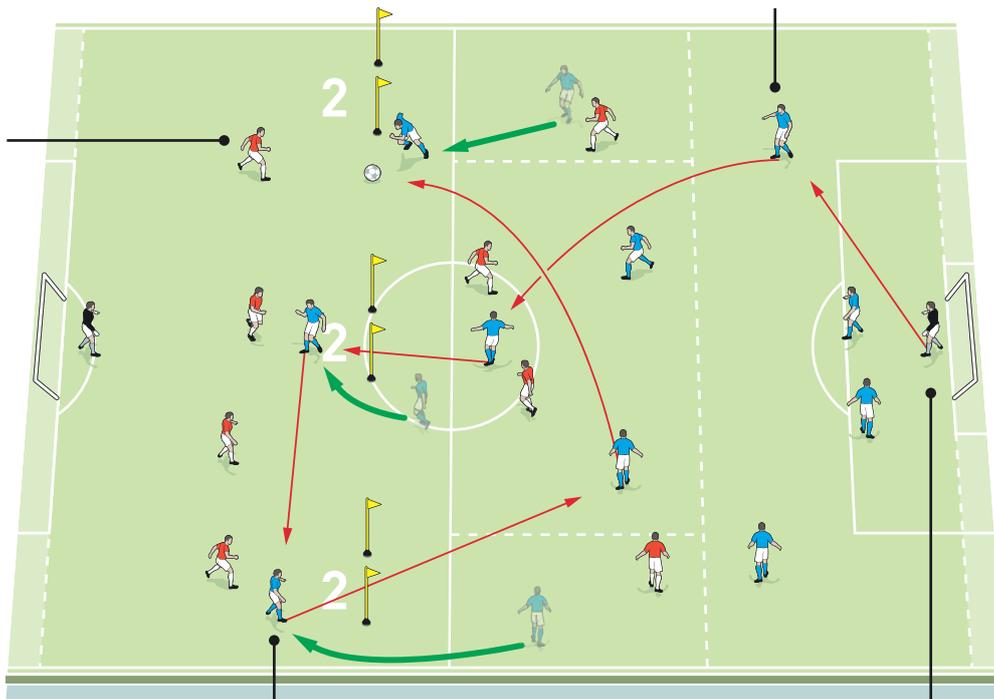
we set up on three quarters of a pitch, with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We mark out three midfield zones, as shown [3a], but these are just visual prompts for the players. We also create three gates in the defending half of the pitch. We're using 18 outfield players, divided into an attacking team of 10 who play against a defending team

of eight, set up as if both teams were playing in a 4-2-3-1 formation. Before being allowed to attempt a shot at goal, the attacking team must pass the ball through two of the gates, forcing the attackers to switch the play regularly. The ball can pass through the gates from either direction to count. To stop the attackers scoring, the

defending team should defend as normal and should not focus on just defending the gates. They can drop deeper or press and it is up to the attackers to recognise the tactic adopted by the defenders and adapt their play accordingly. Once the attackers have passed the ball through the gates twice, the attack becomes a 5v3 situation, with

3a SWITCHING PLAY 10v8

4 The red team of 8 are not limited to defending the gates, they should defend as normal

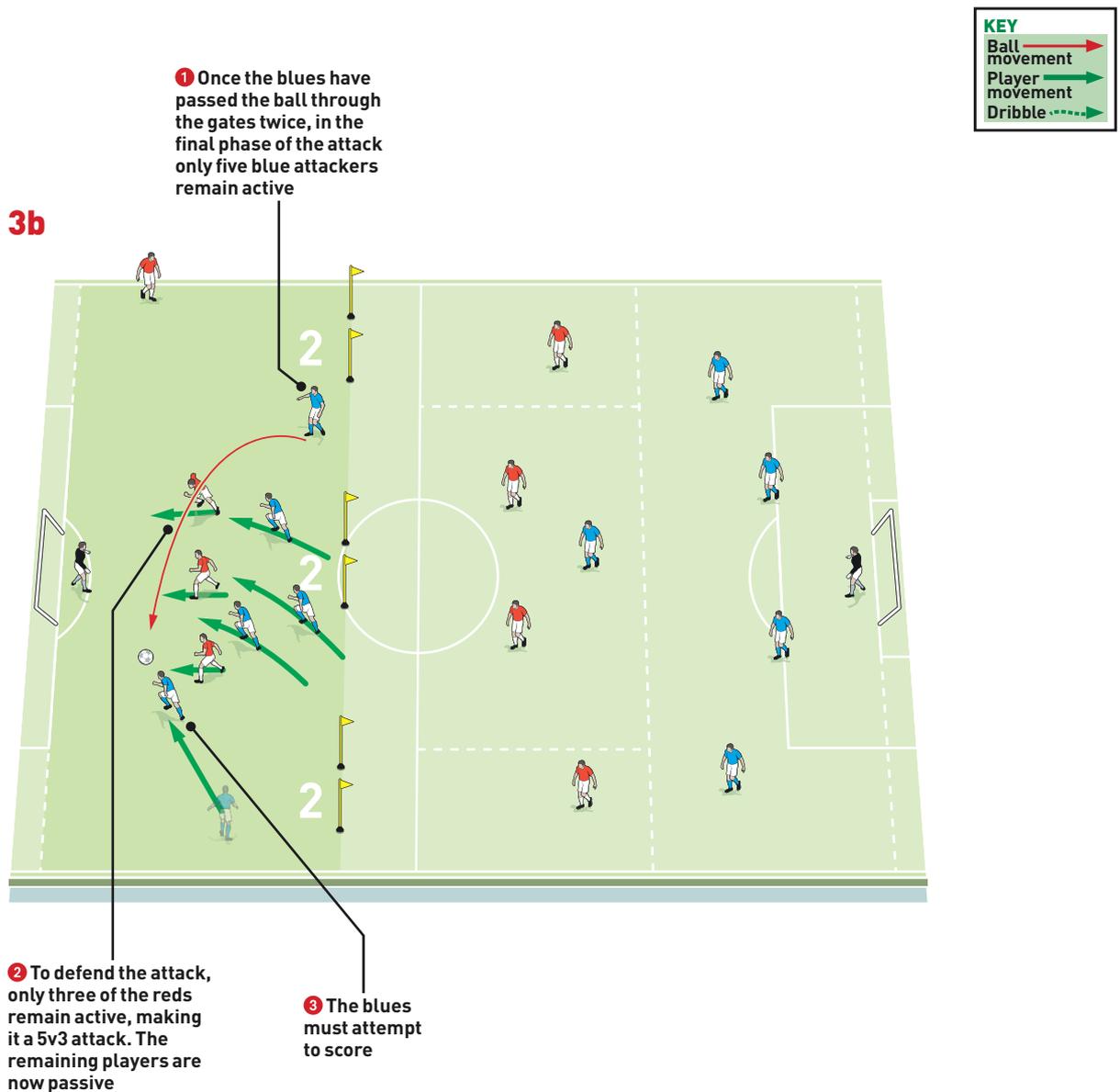


2 Before being allowed to attempt a shot at goal, the attacking team must pass through the gates twice, forcing them to switch play

3 The ball can go through the gates in either direction to count

1 Play starts with a pass out from the goalkeeper to the blue attacking team of 10

DARREN FERGUSON: SWITCHING PLAY WITH PENETRATION



“Tactically, it’s important that teams can learn how to switch the point of attack through different areas of the pitch”

the remaining players becoming passive, as shown [3b]. Only three of the defending team’s back four remain live, while just five of the attackers are active, but this must include a wide player or an attacking full back to capitalise on the switch.

How do I progress the session?

To progress the 10v8 activity we can make it tougher for the attackers by adding an extra player to the defending team, making it 10v9. We could also limit the number of touches allowed in the central zone.

What are the key things to look out for?

The key things to look out for technically are that players are checking over their shoulders. They should also use the correct weight and angle of pass, and demonstrate that they can receive the ball. Tactically it’s important that teams can learn how to switch the point of attack through different areas of the pitch – across the back, through midfield and via the strikers. Being able to make well-timed support runs is also vital.

What are the typical mistakes players might make and how do I avoid them?

In the passing section of the session, a common mistake is that the central midfielders do not check over their shoulders enough and therefore are not aware of what is around them, which either slows down a switch of play or will see them lose possession, due to poor awareness. We try to correct this by having coaches holding up different coloured bibs, which the player in question has to call out.

HULL CITY
Grant McCann
Pressing & pre-season conditioning

SET-UP
AREA
Up to 40x34 yards
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 4 mini goals, 4 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 21 players + 4 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Box possession: 12mins
Transitional possession: 26mins
SSG & conditioning runs: 32mins

Overview
This session is about pressing, with a focus on the transition after winning the ball, and it's one that we specifically use in pre-season. We usually run it in week three of our pre-season training programme, when the content starts to switch to more football-specific conditioning activities. It's a session that helps to remind players of the tactical elements of pressing, whilst building the physical capacities that are required to perform this repeatedly at a high intensity.

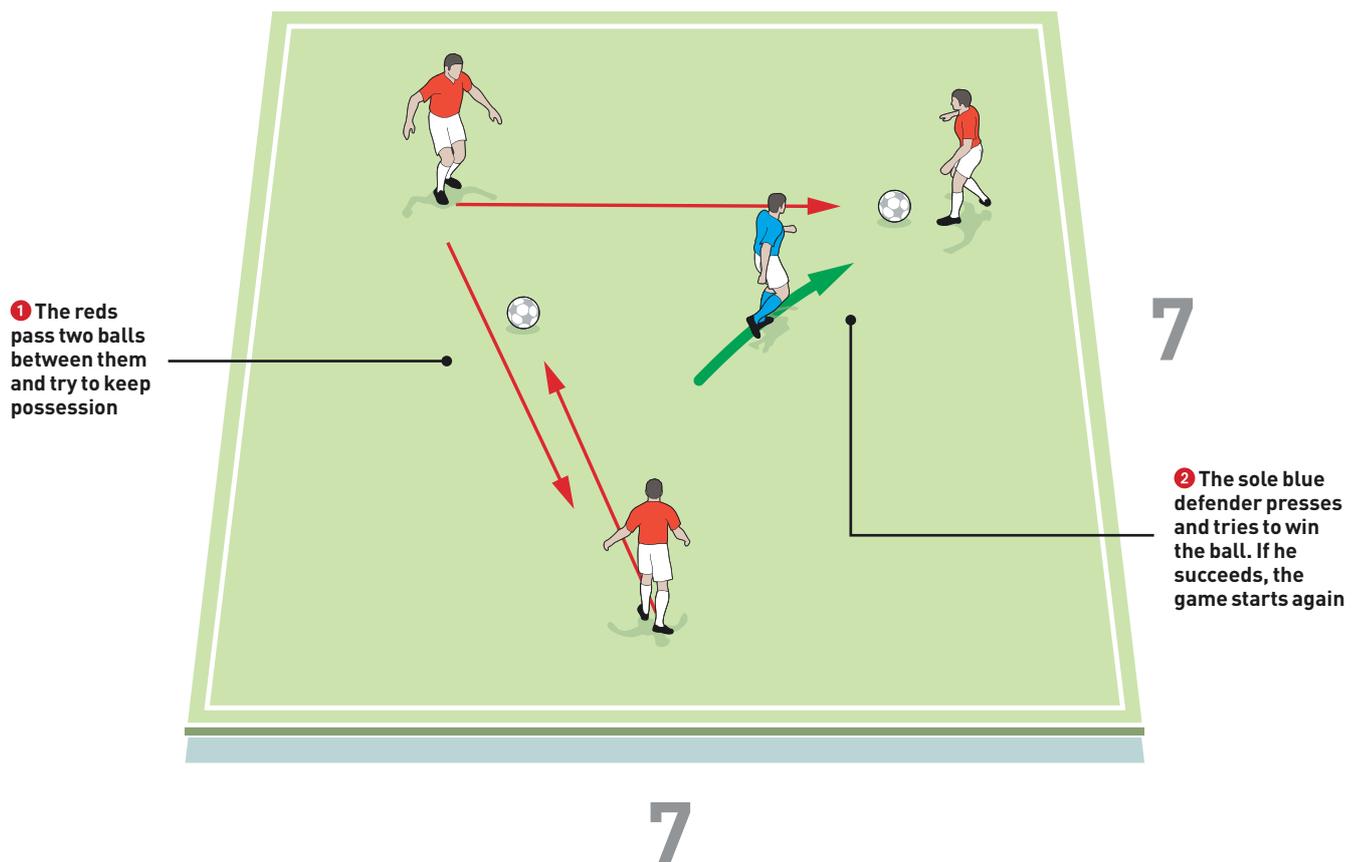
Although we use this in pre-season, it's a session that is consistent with our principles of play throughout the season.

What do I get the players to do?
Box possession
We set up an area of 7x7 yards. We're using four players, split into a passing team of three and one pressing player. The passing team starts in possession and they must pass two balls between themselves under pressure from the defender, as shown [1]. If the pressing player wins possession of one of the

KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

1 BOX POSSESSION



“We run this session in week three of our pre-season programme, when the content starts to switch to football-specific conditioning activities”

GRANT McCANN: PRESSING & PRE-SEASON CONDITIONING

balls, the game starts again. We rotate roles regularly, so everyone takes a turn as the pressing player – we usually make sure each player has two turns of 60 seconds in the pressing role with 30 seconds recovery between.

How do I progress the practice?
Progress the Box Possession practice by playing 3v1 with just one ball instead of two, but limit the passing players to just one touch. In this progression, the player who loses the ball immediately swaps roles with the presser.

Transitional possession
We set up an area of 40x34 yards with two mini goals at each end. We're using 21 players, split into three teams of seven. Two of the teams work together to keep possession, while the third team presses and attempts to get control of the ball, as shown [2a]. If possession is regained by the pressing team, they try to score in one of the four mini goals, as shown [2b].

We play three two-minute games in this format, with 90 seconds recovery time between games. Then we play another three two-minute games with a transitional element added – if the pressing team scores after winning possession, they swap roles with the team that lost possession.

How do I progress the practice?
Progress the Transitional Possession practice by changing two of the small goals to full-size goals with goalkeepers. The team that wins possession can now look to score in either the small or the full-size goals, but they must shoot within five passes.

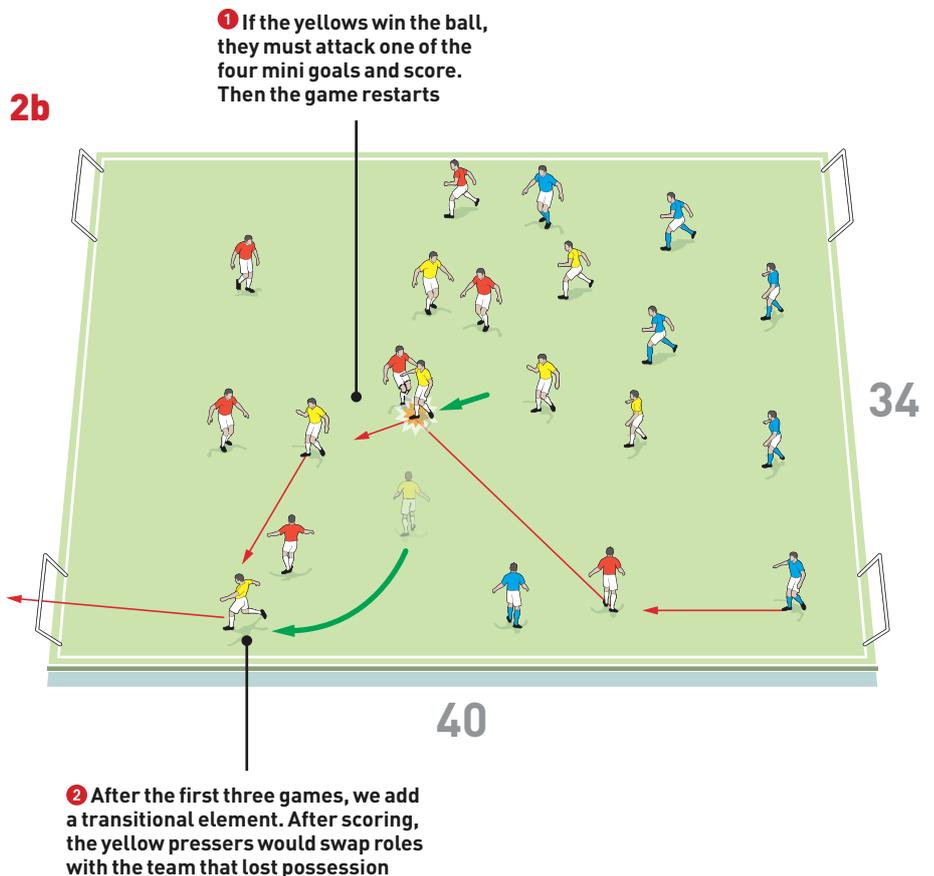
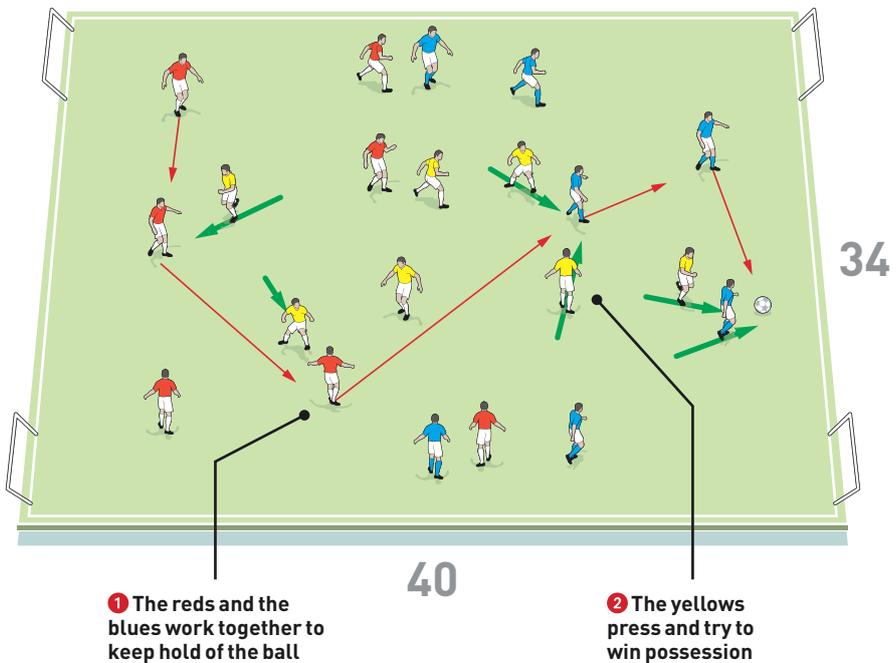
How would you put this into a game situation?

Small-sided games & conditioning runs

We set up two adjacent areas of 36x24 yards with a goal at each end. We're using 16 outfield players and four goalkeepers. Four teams compete to win a 5v5 tournament, with two games played at the same time, as

2a TRANSITIONAL POSSESSION

KEY
 Ball movement → (red arrow)
 Player movement → (green arrow)
 Dribble → (dotted green arrow)



GRANT McCANN: PRESSING & PRE-SEASON CONDITIONING

shown [3]. Each team plays the other three teams once, scoring one point for a draw and three points for a win. The top two teams play each other in the final and the bottom two teams contest the third place play-off. Each game has a duration of four minutes. Teams are given two minutes' recovery between the first and second games. After the second game, all teams are sent to the fitness coaches who will complete conditioning runs with them. Players should be seeded in three groups, and they are set targets of 24 yards, 26 yards, or 29 yards, depending on their speeds. Each

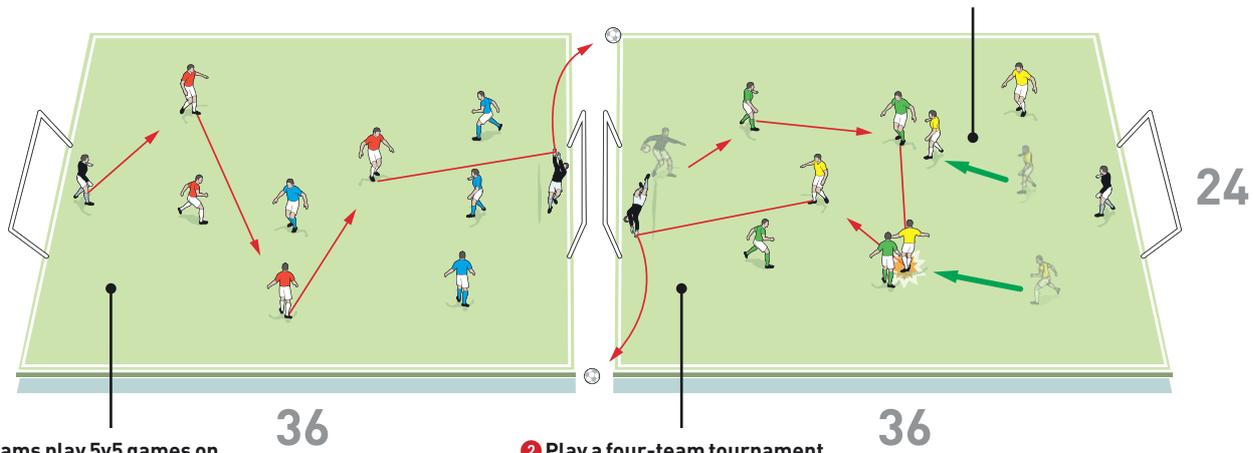
group is given 10 seconds to get to the pole that marks their set distance and back to the start line, as shown [4]. They then repeat the run to their set distance eight times. After completion of the conditioning runs, the players have a further two minutes of recovery before starting the third game. These conditioning runs are repeated after the fourth game, with the session finishing after the last set of runs.

technically good receiving skills, with players making quick one-touch passes and having the tactical nous to play away from pressure. We want to see teams switching play and controlling the tempo of possession. Additionally, we want to see players taking secure possession of the ball on transition. Out of possession, we want to see effective pressing and good 1v1 defending. Players should demonstrate they can recognise pressing triggers and know when and how to press. We also want defenders to set pressing traps for their opponents.

What are the key things to look out for?
When in possession we want to see

“Players should demonstrate they can recognise pressing triggers and know when and how to press”

3 SMALL-SIDED GAMES



1 Teams play 5v5 games on each pitch, with three points for a win and one point for a draw

2 Play a four-team tournament culminating in a final and a third-place play-off game

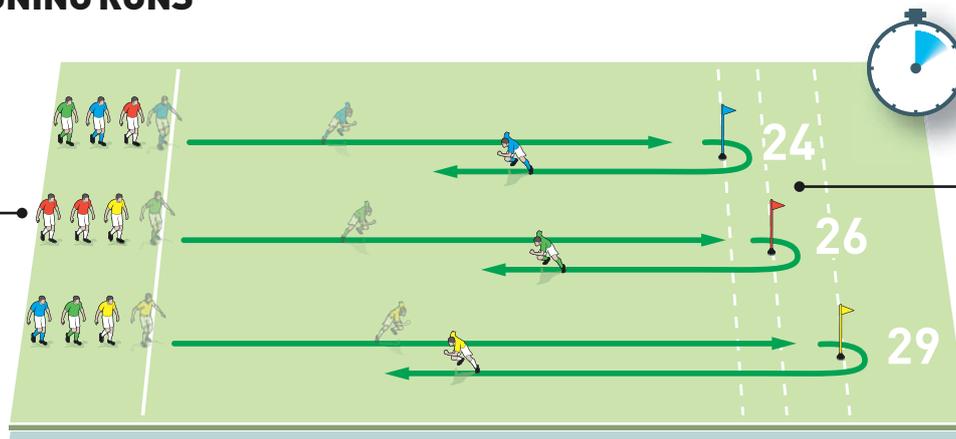
3 Between games the players should go on conditioning runs supervised by the fitness coach

KEY

- Ball movement → (red arrow)
- Player movement → (green arrow)
- Dribble → (dashed green arrow)

4 CONDITIONING RUNS

1 Between games, players perform conditioning runs. They are set distances depending on their speeds and each is given 10 seconds to sprint to the pole and back



2 Each player performs eight repetitions before returning to the pitch to play their next small-sided game in the four-team tournament

LMA AMBASSADOR
Kofi Hagan
Playing against a low block

SET-UP
AREA
Up to three quarters of pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 mannequins, 2 target goals, 1 full size goal
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 21 players + 1 goalkeeper
SESSION TIME
Practice 1: 30mins
Practice 2: 30mins
Practice 3: 25mins

Overview
This session is designed to help an attacking team beat opponents who have parked the bus – in other words, to score against a team using a defensive low block. It's one of the hardest practices we run because it builds to a game where the players are trying to find a way to score in a very congested area.

What do I get the players to do?
Practice 1
This first practice is aimed at getting players to implement

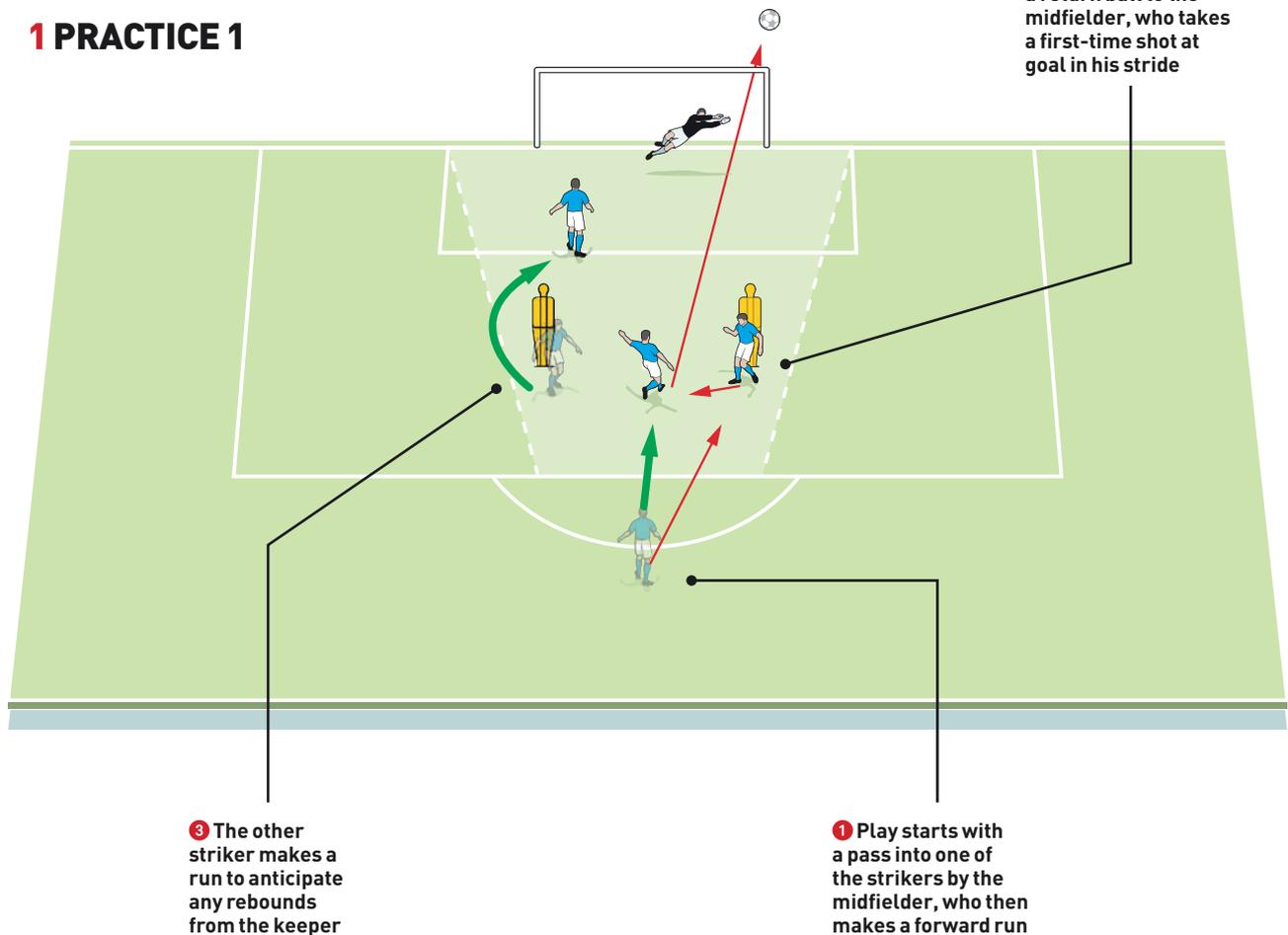
the principles of taking shots where the space inside the penalty area is limited and where the defence aims to funnel the attackers centrally so the goalkeeper can see any shots coming if the defence is breached.
We set up in the final third, with a goal in its normal position. Two mannequins, representing opposition defenders, are positioned as shown [1]. We're using two strikers, a midfielder and an opposition goalkeeper. Play starts with a ball from the midfielder, who passes

KEY

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

“This session is designed to help an attacking team beat opponents who have parked the bus”

1 PRACTICE 1



KOFI HAGAN: PLAYING AGAINST A LOW BLOCK

in to one of the strikers and makes a forward run, receiving a return pass in his stride to take a first-time shot at goal. The second striker also makes a forward run to anticipate any rebounds from the keeper.

What are the key things to look out for?

It's important that the midfielder takes his shots first time and that he hits the ball low, to make it harder for the goalkeeper to save. Low shots mean that, in many instances, goalkeepers will have to save the ball with their feet. This raises the chance of rebounds in the danger area.

What do I get the players to do next?

Practice 2

The second practice is designed to work on the crossing decisions that

the wide players will have to take. We set up in the final third of the pitch, with a goal in its usual position and two target goals outside the penalty area, as shown [2]. We're using a goalkeeper and 10 outfield players, split into a blue defending team of four and a keeper, and a red attacking team of six.

Play begins with a pass from a red central midfielder who alternates starting passes between the left and right wing. The receiving winger takes a touch and delivers a low cross into the six-yard box, where the onrushing strikers are attacking the near post and the back post. They should try to score under pressure from the defenders but they must also be alert to any defensive mistakes that result in loose balls in the goalmouth.

To keep the defenders on their toes, the winger could choose to cut the ball back to team mates on the edge of the box instead of crossing. But attackers must be careful not to lose possession, or the defenders could break out and score in either of the target goals.

What are the key things to look out for?

In a low block, the defending team will utilise its tallest players in order to repel high crosses, so we want to see the wide attackers delivering their crosses low and hard.

What do I get the players to do next? Practice 3

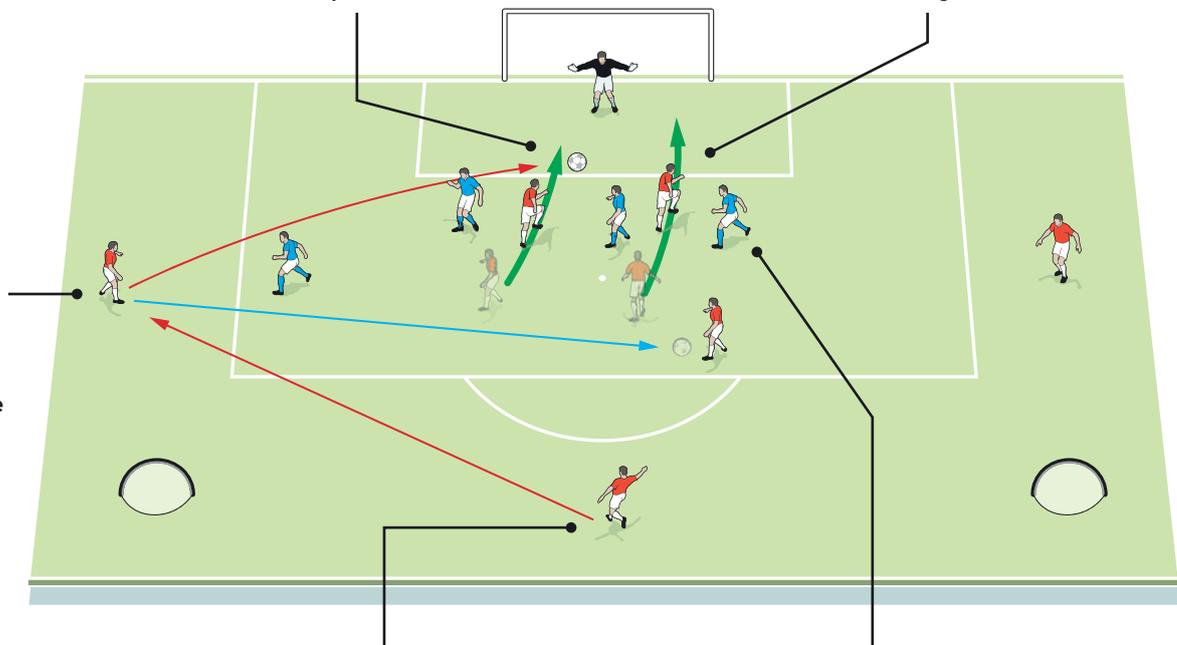
For this practice we usually set our players the scenario that we're entering the final 20 minutes of a

2 PRACTICE 2

2 The wide player takes a touch and crosses low into the six-yard box. Or he could vary things by cutting the ball back to the edge of the penalty area

3 One striker tries to get across the first defender and makes a near-post run

4 The other striker attacks the back post and must be alert to any defensive mistakes in the goalmouth



1 The red midfielder starts play with a pass to one of the wide players

5 If the blue defenders win the ball, they can try to score in the target goals

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →
- Optional movement →

KOFI HAGAN: PLAYING AGAINST A LOW BLOCK

3 PRACTICE 3

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

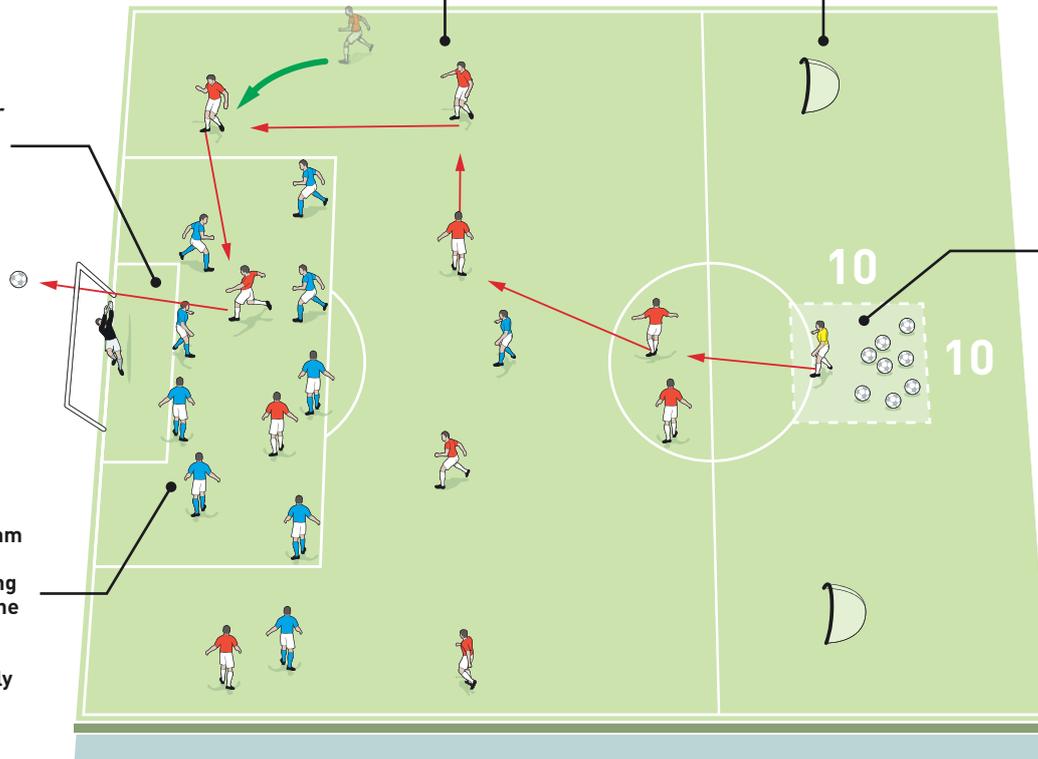
4 The aim for the reds is to score in the main goal

2 The attacking full backs and wingers should link up on each side of the pitch

5 If the blue defending team wins possession, they should counter-attack one of the two target goals

3 The blue defending team should stay compact, using the width of the penalty area as a guide to defend zonally

1 Play starts with a server playing to the red attacking team, who are limited to three touches so the ball is moved quickly



“It’s important for players to look at playing low driven crosses, and also look for cut backs to the edge of the box”

match and our opponents are either holding onto a lead or trying to grind out a point. Due to the lack of time on the clock, the attacking team would usually rush the play, passing and crossing into areas that are easy to defend against.

This activity is aimed at teaching players how to beat the block, combining what they have learnt in the first and second practices.

We set up on three-quarters of a pitch with a goal and a goalkeeper at one end and two target goals at the other. We’re using 21 outfield players, split into a blue defending team of 10, a red attacking team of 10, and a neutral server, who starts play from a 10x10-yard box positioned between the target goals, as shown [3].

The aim for the defending team is to

stay compact at the back, using the width of the 18-yard box as a guide to defending zonally. If they gain possession, they should counter-attack either of the two target goals. The aim for the attacking team is to score in the main goal. The full backs and the wingers should link up on each flank and the wingers should stay wide to open up the pitch. The strikers and midfielders should rotate centrally to try to pull the defenders out of their zonal positions and they should aim to play no more than three-touch in the final third.

What are the key things to look out for?

It’s important to see the attackers rotating – if there is little movement and the players remain static, the

defending team will find it easier to mark their opponents. The attackers should play quickly but must be patient because there is a high likelihood of misplacing passes if they are rushed.

What are the typical mistakes players might make and how do I avoid them?

Many times, we see attacking teams cross high into an area where the defence has put the tallest players to combat high crosses. It’s important for players to look at playing low driven crosses, and also look for cut backs to the edge of the box. Strikers should aim to get in front of defenders, and every shot on goal needs to be followed up to anticipate rebounds.

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: PHIL NEVILLE

BORN TO COACH

England Women's manager, Phil Neville, talks about his journey into management and outlines his coaching vision and ethos



In early 2012, while at the tail-end of his playing career, former Manchester United and Everton star Phil Neville took his first steps towards a career in management. He was brought in to help coach the England U21s ahead of the European Championship, before taking a first-team coaching role at Manchester United. He went on to joined Valencia as a coach in 2015 and was named manager of the England Women's side in January 2018, winning the SheBelieves Cup with the Lionesses the following year.

"I was obsessed with coaching early on"

I did my B-licence when I was 23 and from then until the end of my playing career I recorded the details of every training session, how my managers worked, pre-season schedules and physical stats. I even wrote down how I was feeling during each session and how I might have done things differently if I were the manager. When I moved house recently I came across all of my old notepads and it was really interesting to look through them and read all the thoughts and emotions I'd recorded.

I would also watch as many post-match press conferences as I could, observing how top managers communicated their messages and dealt with the media, especially after defeat. I saw that the best managers never seemed to be on the back foot; they led the agenda. Sir Alex Ferguson was a master of creating the story he wanted to tell, rather than being dictated to by the media.

Essentially, with all of this note-taking, I was building up a personal library of how I would manage when I got the opportunity. I'd also taken my coaching badges as a player, because I wanted to make sure that when my career ended I'd done everything I could to become a coach or a manager.

When that opportunity came at Manchester United, I was prepared, even though I had no previous experience, because I'd been building up this bank of knowledge and learning over the previous 13 years.

"The transition into football management was straight forward"

...even though the job is anything but. Management is all encompassing. I shouldn't have been surprised by that, but I was. The hours you spend every day thinking about what you need to do, the managing up as well

as down, the dealing with the media.

When I left Valencia I said I wasn't going to go back into football unless it was to be a manager. But I had to be patient and wait for the right opportunity. When the job with England Women came along I had to take a day to consider it, because I thought it might be a gamble to move into

women's football. I went for a meal with my sister, Tracey, and she said, 'Go for it, it's still just football.' She was right, of course. I learned very quickly that it made no difference to my management style whether I was coaching the England Women, ▼

I took my coaching badges as a player, because I wanted to make sure that I'd done everything I could to become a coach or a manager

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: PHIL NEVILLE

Manchester United, Valencia or the Everton Academy. Ultimately, it's football and the players want to be treated as the elite athletes they are.

“I've always tried to be honest and authentic”

From the start I wanted to be myself and for the players to get to know me as a person and vice versa. It's telling that it was the times over the last 16 months when I wasn't myself that I didn't manage as well as I know I can. That's an important checkpoint for me. When I come out of a team meeting or a game, I'll think, 'was I myself in that situation and did I demand the things that I expect from my team?' If I can honestly say 'yes', then I know we've done our best.

“My parents have been a big influence”

I was brought up to believe in certain values and that if you lived those values then, more often than not, you'd be successful. For me, it was about hard work, enjoyment and respect, so when a player turns up late to training or isn't trying their best, I'll think back to how my parents would have dealt with the situation. They would have pulled me up on my behaviour and reminded me of my responsibilities. I think having those honest conversations with the players comes easily to me because of my upbringing.

Day-to-day, though, the England players are a huge inspiration. They inspire me every time they train or play a match, with their attitude, their ambition, their desire to create



a legacy. I made sure I recruited world-class players to my team, but it was also really important that they were wonderful people.

“I've always been open to learning from other sports”

I grew up in a multi-sport environment, so it wasn't all about football. I would watch my dad play cricket, my mum and sister play netball and rounders, and at 15 I had to make the difficult choice between my first love, cricket, and football.

You can't waver at all in your vision and philosophy, because the players will lose faith in what you're doing

My sister, Tracey, is head coach of the England netball team and coached them to their first ever gold medal. Watching her career has really helped me relate better to my players. I've seen the challenges she's had to face and the huge sacrifices she's had to make over the years –

the training schedules, the lack of attention and care that she received – and it's been a real eye-opener. I'm able to recognise the kinds of sacrifices that some of our legendary players have made to get where they are today.

“My experience as a player stood me in good stead”

One of the biggest advantages has been my versatility on the field. I've played in every position except for centre forward and goalkeeper, so I have a clearer understanding of how each of my players is feeling and what they need from me as a coach. I know the kind of detail they need from our coaches and I can help them better if they come to me with a technical or tactical problem, because I can relate to it.

“Communicating your vision takes time”

Very early on, I explained my vision and values to the players, but



EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: PHIL NEVILLE



it was a while before they really understood them fully. For six-to-eight months we reinforced our core messages every day, the standards we expected, the intensity we wanted in training, our winning mentality. It's not something you can do just once.

Neither can you waver at all in your vision and philosophy, because the players will lose faith in what you're doing. We've been quite ruthless in our discipline, so if a player arrives late to training or shows the wrong attitude, they know there'll be consequences and they'll be reminded by the captain or someone in the leadership group of the standards that we expect.

Of course, as soon as the results start to go your way, the players become more confident in what you're trying to do. It's like credit in the bank, enabling you to be even braver next time around. Eventually, we got to a point where instead of me having to drive things forward the players took it on themselves. At that stage they were demanding more of themselves than I ever could.

"Winning the SheBelieves Cup was massive"

After coming runners-up in 2018, all we spoke of in the lead up to this year's competition was winning. I didn't want us to go there with



"We need to be innovative when it comes to raising the profile of the women's game and the players, too. We've never held back"

the aim of getting five points or winning a few games; we were going there to win. That message was communicated consistently every day, in every training session. It was on the last slide of every meeting we had. I knew if we could lift that trophy it would give us a first taste of success, spur us on to try even harder and inspire us to try to win the World Cup.

"You have to take risks to be successful"

I said when I got the job that we were going to be brave, on and off the field, and work the players harder than they'd ever worked before. We need to be innovative when it comes to raising the profile of the women's game and the players, too. We've never held back and my players have been exposed to many interviews and commercial appearances over the past 16 months.

When I announced the selection for the 2019 World Cup I wanted to be true to my philosophy of being brave and try to reach as many people as possible. That's why I decided to ask various cultural and sporting icons, including HRH Prince William, David Beckham OBE, Raheem Sterling and Emma Watson, to reveal the players one by one on social media. We reached 170 million people. ■

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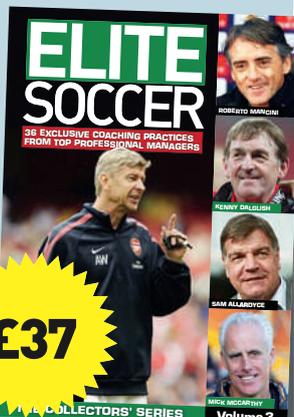
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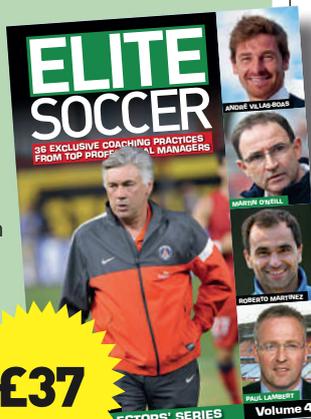
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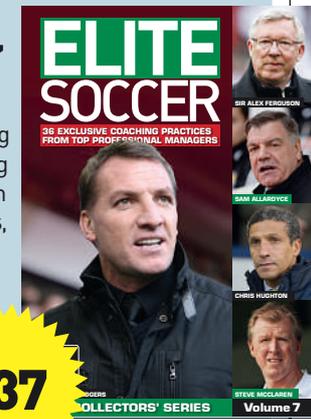
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