

# ELITE SOCCER



**Exclusive**  
Training  
practices from  
top professional  
managers

**NORWICH CITY**

# DANIEL FARKE

## POSSESSION & TRANSITION



**HIBERNIAN**  
**PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM**  
Defending principles



**BURTON ALBION**  
**NIGEL CLOUGH**  
Attacking & defending



**LMA AMBASSADOR**  
**CHRIS BEECH**  
Creating overloads in tight spaces



**STOKE CITY**  
**JOSH BREHAUT**  
Building from the back

**EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW WITH MANAGERIAL MENTOR ALAN IRVINE**

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## ISSUE 109/AUGUST 2019: FROM THE CHAIRMAN



### Enhance your coaching with sessions from the best in the business

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the August issue of Elite Soccer, published at a time when football starts to get busy again after the summer break. To get you back into the swing of things, we feature another five tried and tested training sessions from some of the best professional coaches working in football.

We kick off this month with Norwich City manager, Daniel Farke, who has made such a big impression in his short time in the English game. The inspirational German coach has shared a series of activities focused on possession and transition after winning or losing the ball in narrow spaces. Just run these training ground practices and you will see how Norwich made such an impact as they earned promotion to the Premier League last season.

Next up is Hibernian manager, Paul Heckingbottom, who has penned a session that reminds players of their defending principles, starting with the basics in 1v1 situations and building all the way through the units to whole team defending when out of possession.

Burton Albion manager, Nigel Clough, has written a series of activities focused on the techniques of attacking and defending in and around the box. It's a session that gives players the chance to rehearse counter-attacking situations and to attack and defend crosses.

Former Rochdale assistant manager, Chris Beech, has shared a session focused on creating overloads in tight spaces. It's a practice that will help to improve receiving and releasing skills, and it encourages quick play when in possession. It will also remind players to press with intensity when out of possession.

At Elite Soccer, we like to shine a light on some of the brightest talents working in the academy system and this month we are delighted to present a session on starting attacks from inside the defensive third of the pitch, written for us by Stoke City youth development coach Josh Brehaut.

I hope you find that the activities 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**

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NORWICH CITY

**Possession & transition**



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**Building from the back**



24 EXTRA-TIME

...with managerial mentor, Alan Irvine



**ELITE SOCCER** AUGUST 2019

# MANAGER PROFILES

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

## DANIEL FARKE

### NORWICH CITY

The highly respected manager of Premier League club Norwich City, Daniel Farke won the EFL Championship title in just his second campaign in English football, turning the Carrow Road side into champions on a shoestring budget.

As a player, Farke was a forward, plying his trade in the lower levels of German football. Starting at hometown club SV Steinhausen, he spent the majority of his career with SV Lippstadt 08, where he enjoyed three spells before hanging up his boots and being appointed the club's manager in 2009.

He was in charge at Lippstadt for six years and took the team from the sixth tier of German football to the fourth, making it the most successful period in the club's history.

In 2015, Farke accepted the opportunity to take charge of Borussia Dortmund II, the reserve side of the Bundesliga giants. He managed the team for two seasons before he was recruited by Norwich City.

Farke completed his inaugural season in the Championship with Norwich in 14th place in the league table, but by the following season he had built his own team, with six players brought in from Germany. He also had a clear idea about the kind of attacking football he wanted to play and a vision for what he wanted to achieve at Carrow Road. "You have to have a clear philosophy as a club, how you want to play, the work ethic, the atmosphere," he has said. "We are all addicted to results, but the biggest chance to do that is to work in a methodical way."

His methodical way of working delivered success and Norwich secured promotion to the Premier League as Championship winners.

## PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM

### HIBERNIAN

After calling time on a long playing career as a defender, Paul Heckingbottom decided to gain an academic understanding of his sport and completed a degree in Sports Coaching at Leeds Beckett University, before going on to earn a master's degree.

Beginning his coaching career with Barnsley's development squad, Heckingbottom enjoyed two spells as caretaker manager of the club. During the latter spell, he guided Barnsley to victory in the Football League Trophy final and promotion to the Championship in the League One play-off final. This success led to him being appointed manager on a permanent basis.

Leading the club to a ninth place finish in the Championship in his first full season, halfway through the following campaign he accepted an offer to become manager of Leeds United. He has been the manager of Hibernian in the Scottish Premiership since February 2019.

## NIGEL CLOUGH

### BURTON ALBION

After a playing career that took in Nottingham Forest, Liverpool, Manchester City and England, Clough moved into the non-league as player-manager of Burton Albion. He led the club from the seventh tier of the English game to the brink of promotion to League Two before leaving to follow in the footsteps of his famous father, Brian, and take over as manager of Derby County in the EFL Championship.

He subsequently served as manager of Sheffield United, where he was voted LMA FA Cup Manager of the Year in 2014 for United's run to the semi-final. He returned to Burton in December 2015, leading the club to promotion to the EFL Championship.

## CHRIS BEECH

### LMA AMBASSADOR

Highly regarded in coaching circles and a UEFA Pro Licence holder, Chris Beech has 15 years' experience as a coach, nine of which have been dedicated to developing youth talent. Players he has brought through the ranks include Brighton midfielder Dale Stephens, Republic of Ireland international Scott Hogan, and Bolton winger Will Buckley.

He began his football career for his hometown club, Blackpool, playing under Sam Allardyce. After stints with Hartlepool United and Huddersfield Town, he finally retired in 2004 while playing for Rochdale.

Turning to coaching, he worked with the U12s at Bury before impressing as the club's youth team manager. He subsequently returned to former club, Rochdale, to work with the youth team, and he also enjoyed a month as caretaker manager in their 2011-12 League One campaign. He was promoted to assistant manager in 2013, a role he held at Spotland for nearly six years.

## JOSH BREHAUT

### STOKE CITY

Josh Brehaut has worked at Stoke City's academy for over four years and has held a series of roles with different age groups. He is currently lead youth development phase coach at the club, working with the U15s and the U16s.

He started his career as an academy coach with Port Vale, working first with the foundation phase and then with the youth development phase. He also served Kidsgrove Athletic in the Northern Premier League, initially as first team coach and subsequently as assistant manager. He is a UEFA A Licence holder and a graduate of the Premier League's Elite Coaches Apprenticeship Scheme.

**NORWICH CITY**

**Daniel Farke**  
**Possession & transition**

**SET-UP**

**AREA**

Up to half a pitch

**EQUIPMENT**

Balls, bibs, cones, 2 goals

**NUMBER OF PLAYERS**

11 players + 2 goalkeepers

**SESSION TIME**

Box possession: 5mins

Box transition: 10mins

Transition/possession: 15mins

End to end: 15mins

Small-sided game: 15mins

**Overview**

This session involves many important topics from our football philosophy, such as possession and transition after winning or losing the ball in narrow spaces. The players are encouraged to perform the activities at their highest levels of intensity, which is important because it gives them the ideal load.

These activities also provide a lot of mental pressure in terms of quick decision-making, as they demand that the players swiftly react in moments of transition.

Technically, the players need to be at their best regarding their first touch and, tactically, they have to find a good structure to create passing options if they are going to execute the exercises successfully. We would usually run this session the day after a match for players who were not

involved on a matchday, but we would also run similar exercises on a Tuesday or Wednesday of a normal week, as they are crucial to educating the players in our playing principles.

**What do I get the players to do?**

**Athletic warm-up**

We start the session with an athletic warm-up [not shown]. We would run this for 15 minutes and it would include many short, quick movements, with changes of direction and simple ball contacts.

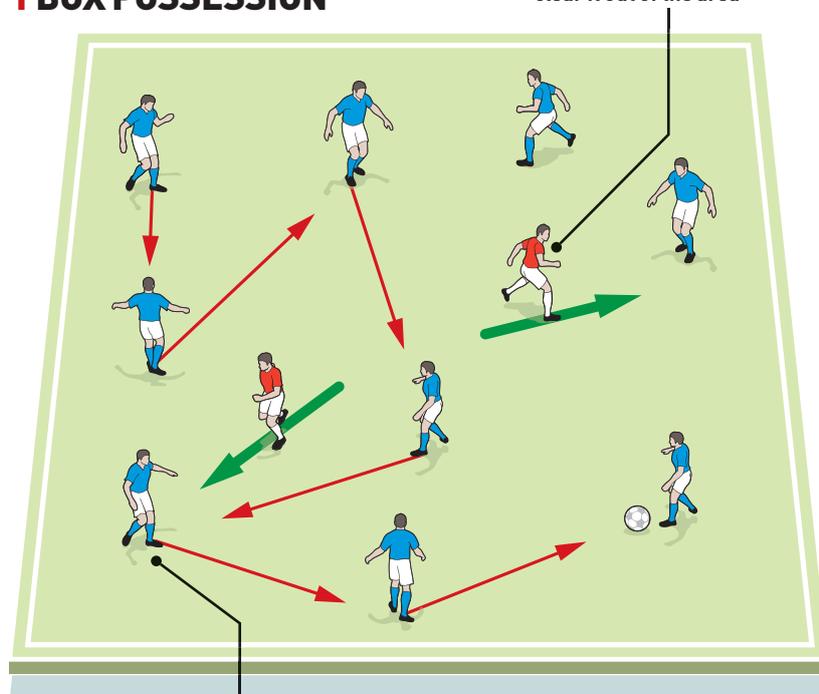
**Box possession**

We set up a box of 9x9 yards. We're using 11 outfield players split into a possession team of nine and a pressing team of two. The possession team must pass the ball one-touch and try to string 25 passes together, as shown [1].

**KEY**

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

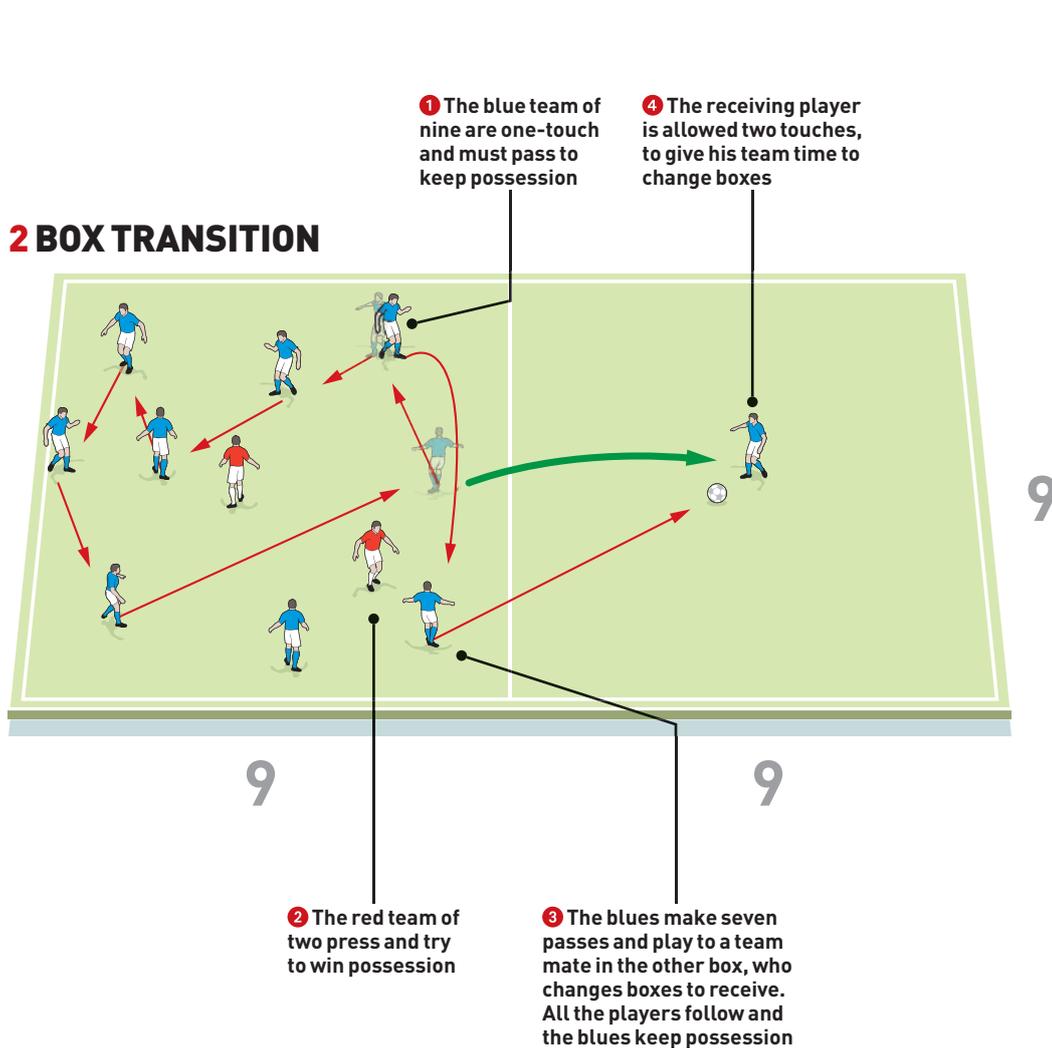
**1 BOX POSSESSION**



**2** The red team of two press to win possession. If they gain the ball, they should clear it out of the area

**1** The blue team of nine are one-touch and must string 25 passes together to score a point

**DANIEL FARKE: POSSESSION & TRANSITION**



“These activities provide a lot of mental pressure in terms of quick decision-making, as they demand players swiftly react in moments of transition”

**Box transition**

We progress the Box Possession activity by adding a second 9x9-yard box next to the first one. This time the possession team of nine must keep the ball for seven passes in one box and then pass into the other box, as shown [2]. The player who moves into the empty box to receive the ball is allowed two touches to give the other players the time to follow, as all the players switch boxes. Then they should again try to make another seven passes in the new box under pressure. The possession team should aim to switch boxes three times. We play for 10 minutes.

**What are the key things to look out for?**

In the Box Transition practice we want to see players composed enough to complete the necessary number of passes and capable of finding the right moment to switch boxes. As soon as the pass is played, the possession team should quickly move to the other box to create new passing options. The team without the ball should press with intensity. It is especially important to press aggressively at the moment when the ball is being switched between boxes, as it provides the best opportunity to win the ball.

**What do I get the players to do next? Transition/possession**

We set up an area of 26x13 yards divided into two halves. We're using 11 players, split into two teams of five and one floater, who plays for the team in possession and who should be a central midfielder. The reds begin as the possession team and all five of their players start in their own half, passing the ball using no more than two touches. Three blues press to win possession, while the two remaining blues wait in the other half. If the pressing team wins the ball, they should immediately clear it

**DANIEL FARKE: POSSESSION & TRANSITION**

out of the area, as shown [3a]. As soon as the ball is played out of the area, the coach can play a new ball to the two waiting blues in the other half. The waiting pair are soon joined by their three team mates, who switch halves. The red team that lost possession sends three players into the new half to press and play continues, as shown [3b]. The floater also switches halves and continues to help the team in possession. We play four games of two and a half minutes, with one minute's break between games.

**What are the key things to look out for?**

When in possession, it's crucial that players find a good structure to help them keep hold of the ball. Once in their positions, it's important that players keep to them and just to adapt slightly to create angles to receive the ball. Spaces are limited, which restricts unnecessary movement. The quality of passing and the first touch are also very important because of the limited space. For the defending team, the easiest way to regain possession is to press quickly with all three players before the passers have had the chance to find and settle on their structure. Once the positions are covered, it becomes more difficult to win the ball.

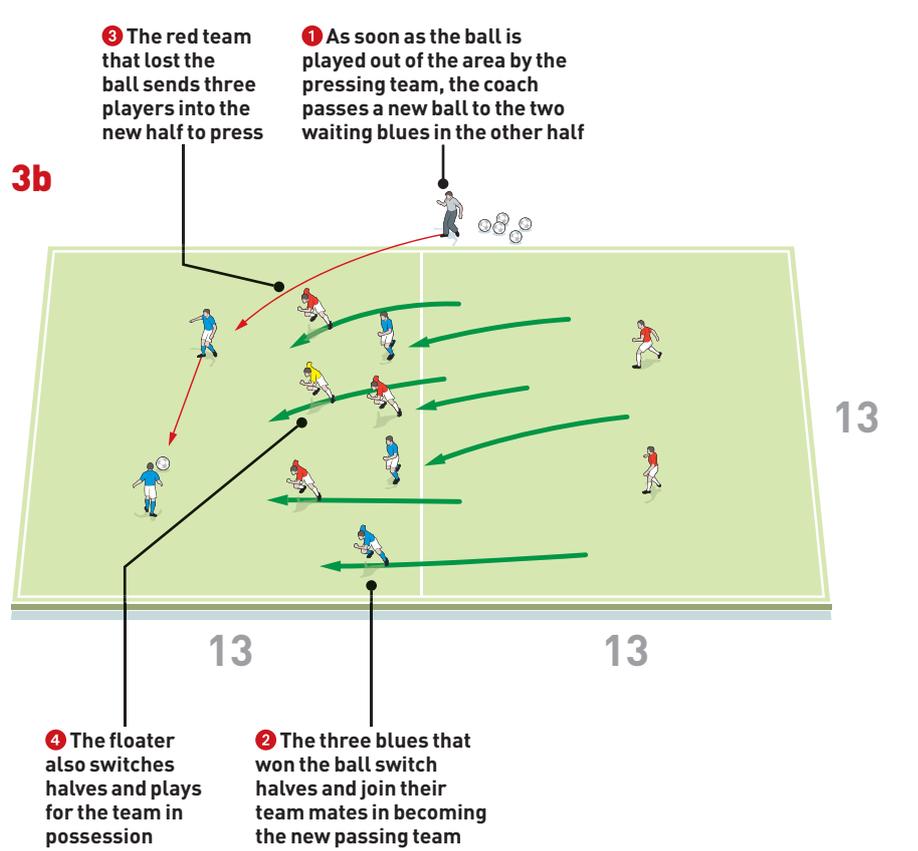
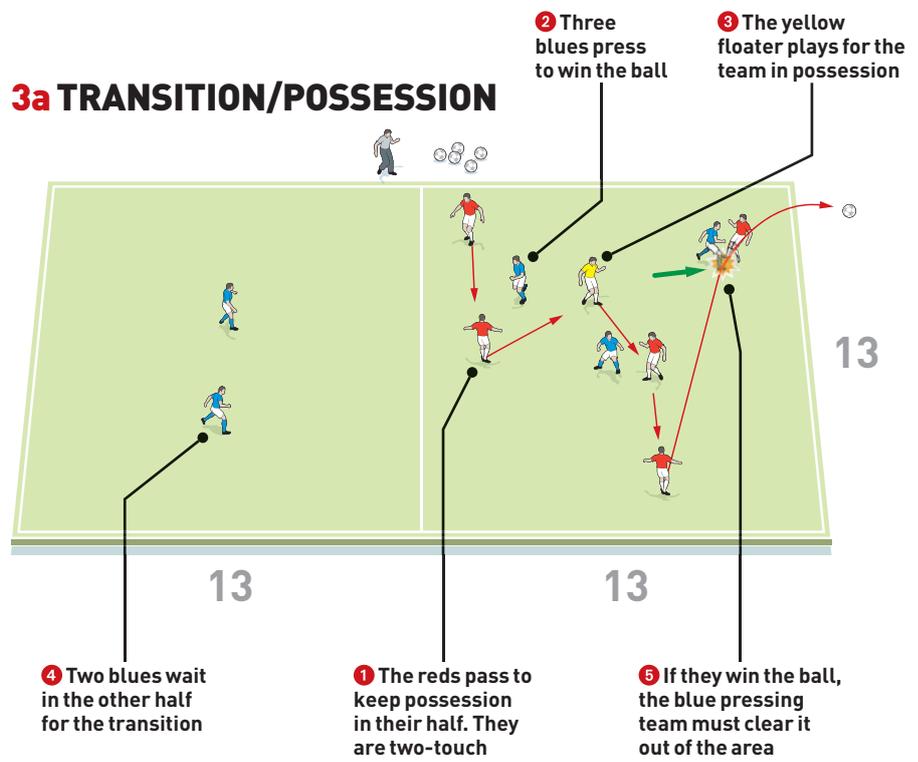
**What do I get the players to do next?**

**End to end**

We set up an area of 33x16 yards, which includes a five-yard zone at each end for the goals and the goalkeepers – no other players are allowed to enter the end zones. We're using 11 outfield players, split into two teams of five and one floater. The team in possession tries to keep the ball using the help of the floater and the two goalkeepers, as shown [4a]. If they complete 10 passes, they score one point. The goalkeepers are one-touch,

**KEY**

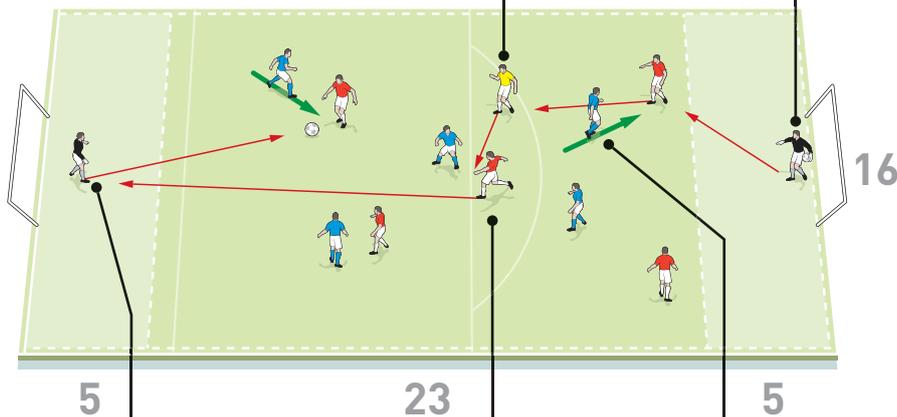
- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble - - - - - →



**DANIEL FARKE: POSSESSION & TRANSITION**

**KEY**  
 Ball movement →  
 Player movement →  
 Dribble - - - - - →

**4a END TO END**



**4** Only the keepers are allowed in the end zones. They are one-touch

**2** The red possession team scores a point if they string 10 passes together. They are two touch

**5** The blues press and try to win the ball

**3** The passing team uses the help of the yellow floater and both goalkeepers to maintain possession

**1** Play starts with a pass from one of the goalkeepers

while the possession players are limited to two touches. If the pressing team wins the ball, they must try to score a goal in the opposite half to where the ball was won. They have unlimited touches but they must score with a one-touch finish. For every goal scored, a point is deducted from the tally of the possession team. Rotate teams so they each have two turns in possession. Play four three-minute games.

**What are the key things to look out for?**

In the End to End practice, it's important for the possession team to be composed on the ball and demonstrate a good positional structure, accurate passing and a good first touch. It is also important for them to quickly and aggressively counter-press when losing possession.

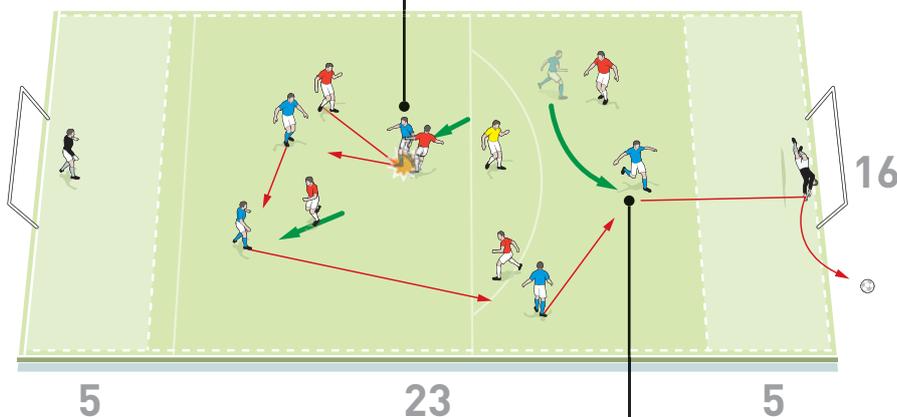
**How would you put this into a game situation?**

**Small-sided game**

We set up in one half of our pitch with a goal and goalkeeper at each end. We cone off the flanks of the playing area tapering from the width of the six-yard box at either end to a point 25 yards in from the touchline at the halfway point, as shown [5]. We're using 11 outfield players, split into two teams of five and one floater. We play a game with unlimited touches, except for the goalkeepers who must play with one-touch. There are no offsides.

The coaching focus should be on all the topics covered in the previous exercises. We play two five-minute games, with a two-minute break.

**4b**



**1** If the blue pressing team wins the ball, they must try to score in the opposite half to where the ball was won

**2** On winning the ball the blues have unlimited touches to attack but they must score with a one-touch finish. For every goal scored, a point is deducted from the reds

**What are the key things to look out for?**

The pitch is both narrow and long, with more width at the halfway point – this should encourage the team in possession to stretch the opposition in midfield, in order to play the final vertical ▼

**DANIEL FARKE: POSSESSION & TRANSITION**

pass. It's also important to have good positional structure and create depth for vertical passes.

Technically, a good first touch is required because space is very limited, especially in front of the goal when opponents are sitting deep. In this situation, players often try to finish too quickly, so we try to encourage players to be composed and move the ball quickly in midfield areas, using the overload to create good goal-scoring chances and vertical passes.

When winning the ball, it is important to look for quick vertical passes as long as the opponents are not in their defensive shape. If it is not possible, it is important to keep the ball and to use the overload to bypass the pressure and prepare the final vertical pass. Good decision-making is crucial as players need to decide whether to counter-attack or to keep

possession, because it is hard work to win the ball back in this exercise.

**How do I progress the session?**

All the exercises can be adapted easily depending on what we are focusing on. For example, if we want longer periods of possession, we can start by allowing more touches and then reduce the number. Another way would be to enlarge the area sizes. If we want to focus on the transition moment against the ball, it will be the opposite way around.

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

When in possession, players often fail to cover the spaces in a good way, or quick enough, so that there will be fewer passing options and therefore more losses of the ball. To remedy this, we insist on a good positional

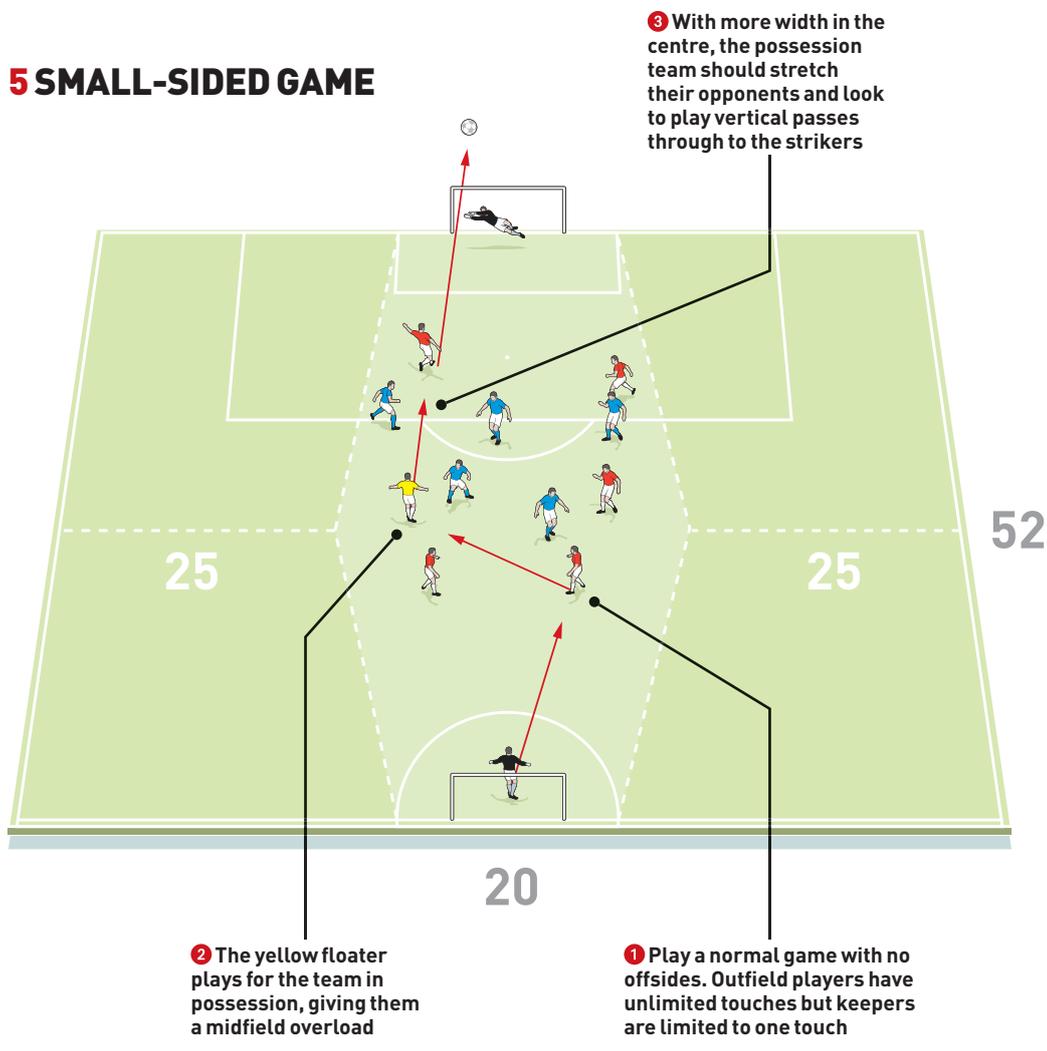
structure to keep the ball.

A poor first touch can make it difficult to keep possession, so we make sure players pass the ball to the correct foot, which will allow their team mates to open up with their first touch if possible.

Sometimes players can pass too quickly, using their first touch when it's not necessary because opponents have just shifted. It's important that players take a touch if they have the time and to pass when they get pressured and not before, dragging the opponent out of position.

When the team is out of possession, it's important that pressing is synchronized. If the first pressure is bypassed, it becomes hard to get the ball back, so it's important to act together in a narrow shape and react on triggers together, rather than one player pressing the ball while the others are resting.

**5 SMALL-SIDED GAME**



**HIBERNIAN**  
**Paul Heckingbottom**  
**Defending principles**

<b>SET-UP</b>
<b>AREA</b>
Up to full pitch
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 full size goals
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>
Up to 19 players + 2 goalkeepers
<b>SESSION TIME</b>
Individual defending: 20mins
Team defending: 20mins
11v10 game: 20mins

**Overview**  
This session is all about building the defensive role of every position when out of possession. It starts with individuals defending in 1v1 and 3v2 situations and builds all the way through the units to whole team defending when out of possession. I like this session because all the problems posed to players are realistic to game situations. It allows me to coach good technique when defending in 1v1 situations in all relevant areas of the pitch. Despite not having the ball, I will try to encourage the defending player to take control of the 1v1 by focusing on his approach and

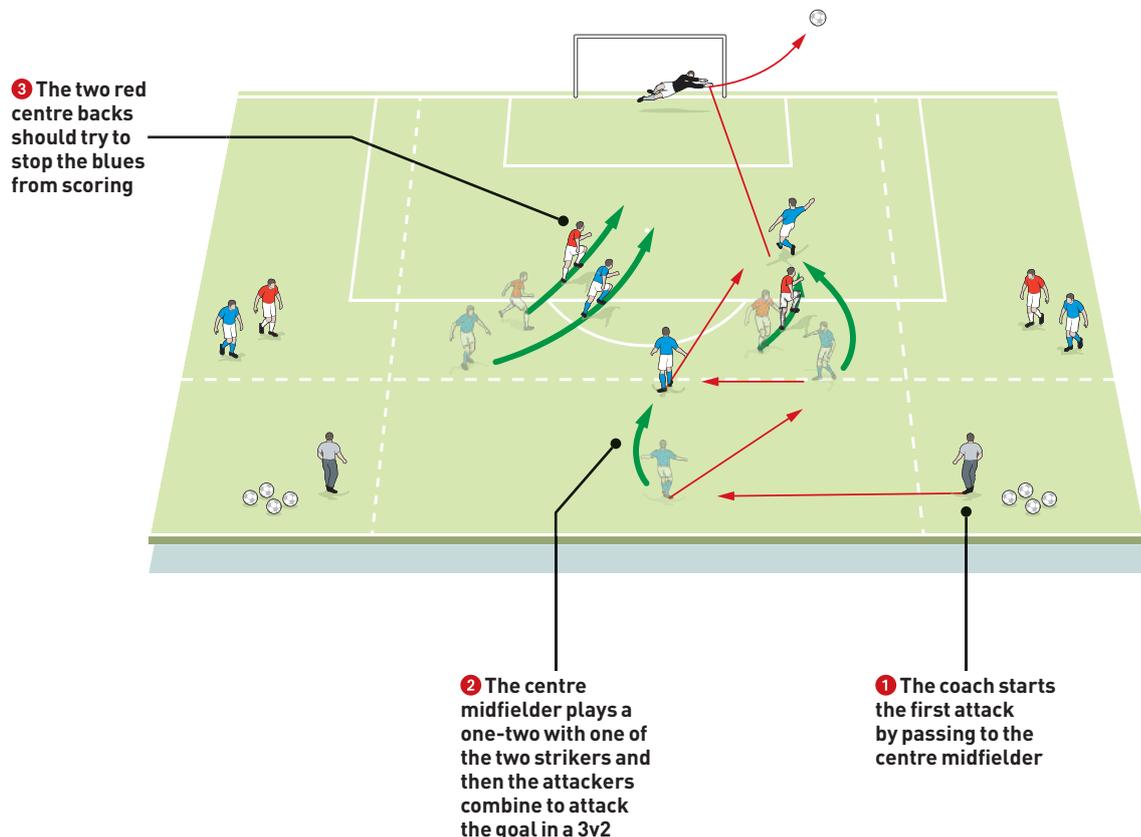
distance from the attacker, by encouraging use of the body, by forcing the attacker away from our goal, and by using feints to tackle.  
There is a huge focus on mindset in this session. I want to see a real desire from players to stop efforts on goal and I also want players to encourage each other and make demands of one another. As these activities are used as a vehicle to reinforce the fundamentals of how we want to defend as a team, it is good to revisit this session, or parts of it, regularly and not just after a poor performance. It is also valuable when trying to integrate new players into the

**KEY**

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

“It starts with individuals defending in 1v1 and 3v2 situations and builds all the way through the units to whole team defending when out of possession”

**1a INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING: ATTACK 1**



**PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM: DEFENDING PRINCIPLES**

team, as it highlights clearly what is expected from them when the opposition have possession of the ball. To make the session a success, the coach must be very clear about how he wants the team to defend in all areas of the pitch and also in which formation he wants the team to play, as this provides the detail for the session.

**What do I get the players to do?**

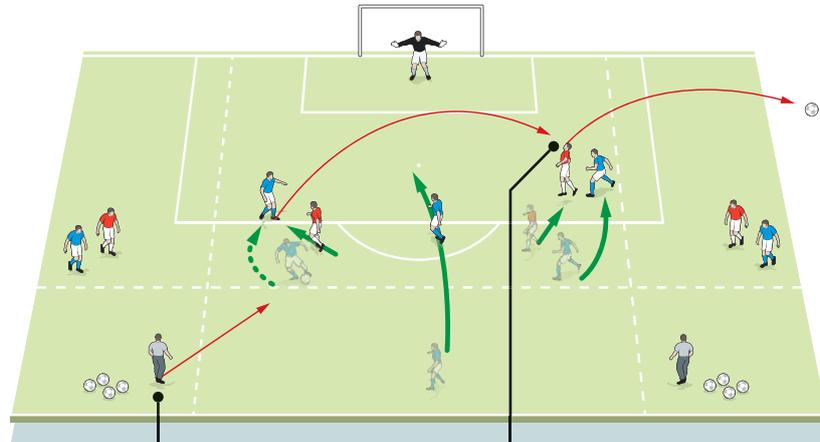
**Individual defending**

We set up in the final third with a goal and a goalkeeper at one end. We cone off an area in the centre of the pitch, with a wide zone on either side. We're using nine outfield players split into a blue attacking team of five and a red defending team of four – the attackers are made up of two strikers and an attacking midfielder in the central zone and a wide midfielder in each of the wide zones, while the defending team have two centre backs in the central zone and a full back in each wide zone. It's important from the outset to be clear to the players about how you want them to defend. The first two attacks are in the central zone. The coach serves the ball to the attacking midfielder, who plays a one-two with one of the strikers and the attackers then combine to attack the goal in a 3v2, as shown [1a]. The centre backs should try to stop the attack or force the attackers wide. On completion of the first attack, the players reset and a second ball is played into the strikers for another 3v2. Again, the defenders should get to the ball and force the attack wide if possible, or clear the ball out of play, as shown [1b]. After the second attack, the players reset for two attacks in the wide zones. First the coach plays a ball to the wide right attacker, who goes 1v1 against the full back and tries to create a goal scoring chance. For the final attack, the coach serves

**KEY**

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

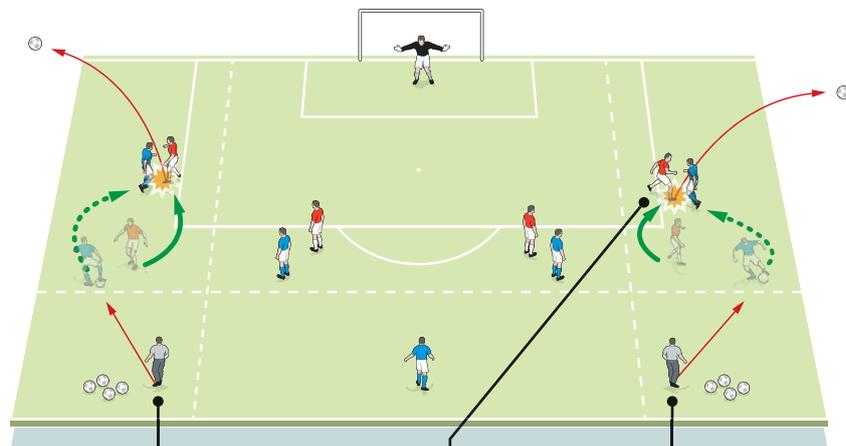
**1b INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING: ATTACK 2**



**1** When attack 1 is dead, players reset and a second ball is played into the strikers for another 3v2 attack in the central zone

**2** The centre backs should try to force the attackers out wide. Here one gains possession and clears the ball

**1c INDIVIDUAL DEFENDING: ATTACKS 3 & 4**



**3** When the third attack is dead, the coach plays the ball to the wide left attacker, who goes 1v1 with the full back

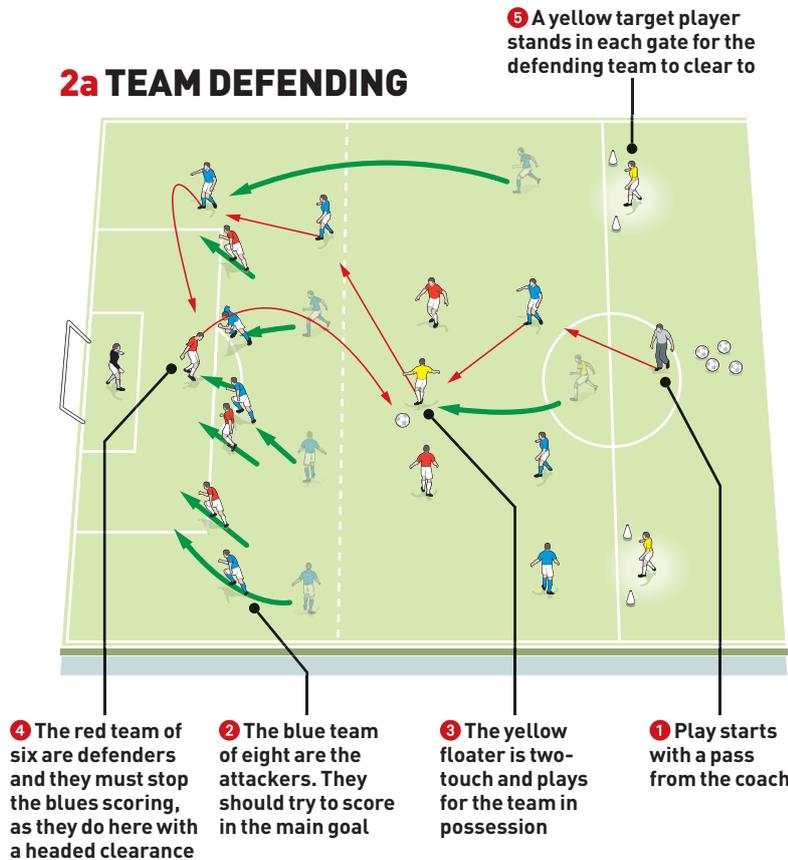
**2** The attacker tries to create a goal scoring chance but is stopped from reaching the goal as the defender clears the ball

**1** When the second attack is dead, the coach plays a ball to the wide right attacker, who goes 1v1 against the full back

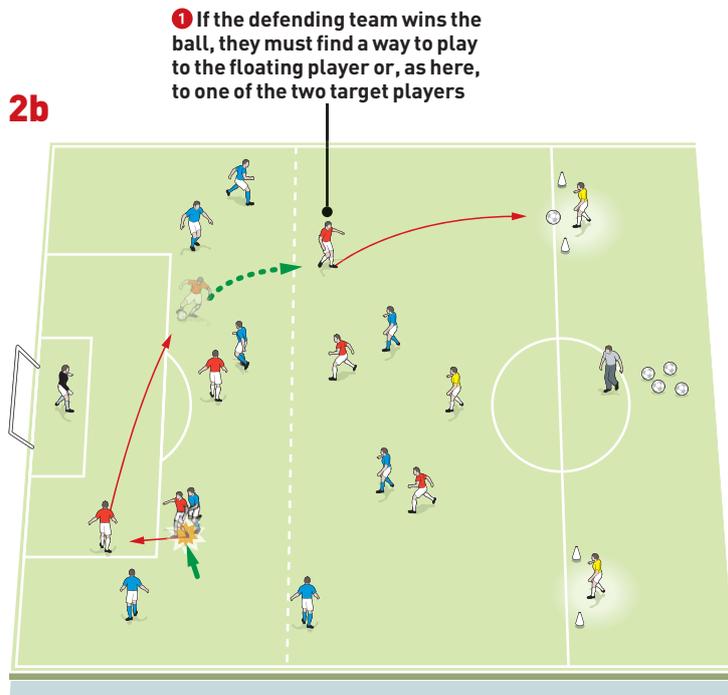
▲ To progress this practice, the strikers can join in with the third and fourth attacks, making central runs to meet crosses delivered from the wide players

**PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM: DEFENDING PRINCIPLES**

**2a TEAM DEFENDING**



**2b**



**KEY**

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

▲ Play for set times, such as blocks of four minutes. If the attackers score or manage to regain the ball after losing it, add time on. If the defending team wins the ball and clears through any of the yellows, take time off

a ball to wide left attacker who goes 1v1 against the full back in the other wide zone, as shown [1c]. We then repeat all four attacks, rotating players as necessary.

To progress this session, the strikers in the central zone can join in with the third and fourth attacks, making runs to meet crosses delivered from wide.

**What do I get the players to do next?**

**Team defending**

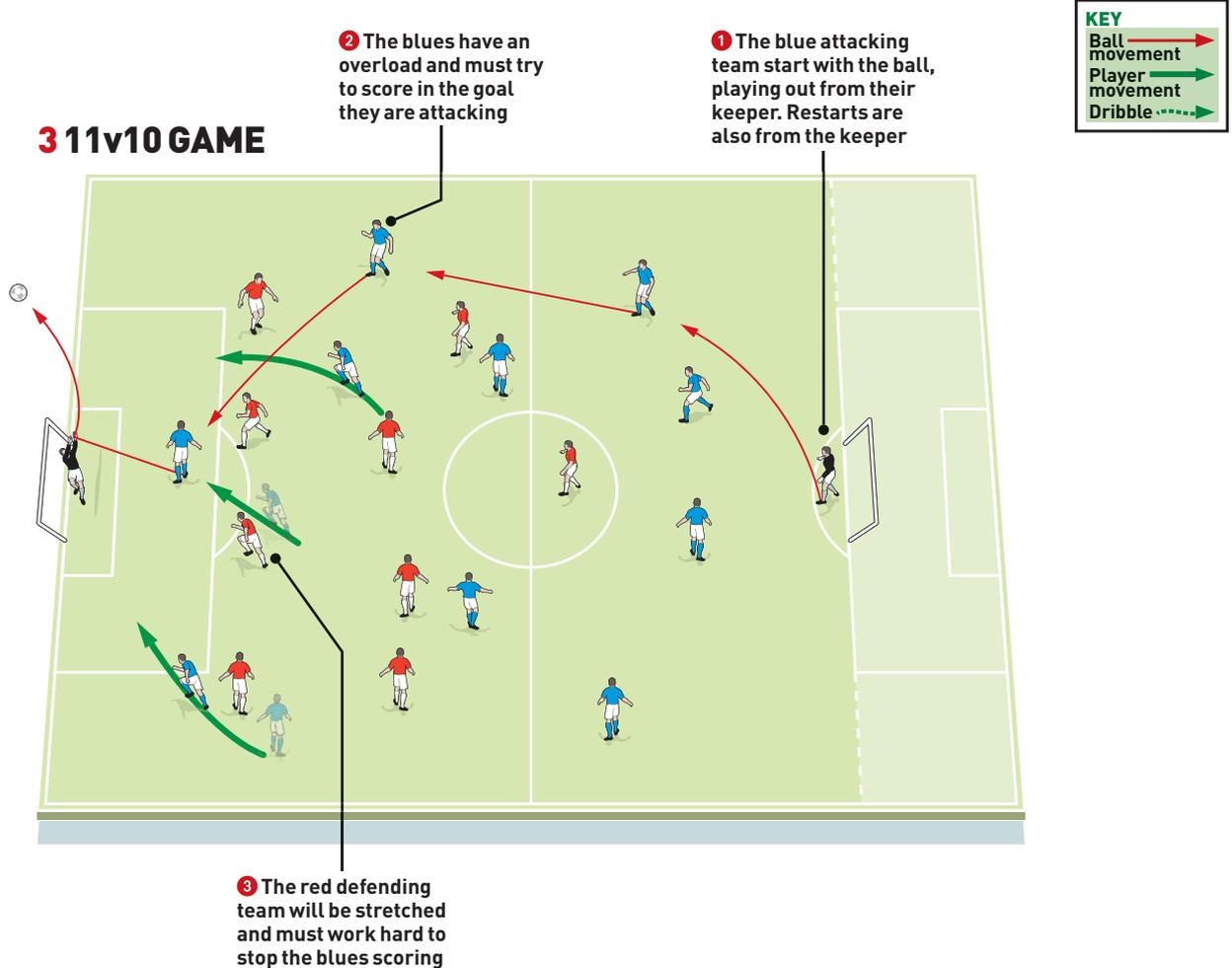
Once the detail has been given to individual players within the back four and we've run them through their paces with the first drills, it is time to stretch them as a defensive unit. We would add two defensive midfielders to the defending team to help protect the centre of the pitch whilst still having attacking overloads for their opponents in the wide areas. This allows the coach to work on defending crosses, particularly the key positions of the defenders and centre midfielders in the box, and the screening and pressing duties of the midfielders.

We set up on half a pitch with a goal and a goalkeeper at one end and two target gates marked out with cones at the other end. This time we're using 17 outfield players, split into a red defending team of six and a blue attacking team of eight. We have a target player in each gate at the halfway line end and a floating player who is two-touch and who plays for the team in possession.

The blue attacking team start with the ball and try to score in the goal. The red defending team must try to stop them, as shown [2a]. If the defending team wins possession and is able to keep hold of the ball, they should try to play to either the floating player or, as shown [2b], find a way to score by passing to one of the two target players in the gates.

Work for set times, such as blocks of four minutes. If the

**PAUL HECKINGBOTTOM: DEFENDING PRINCIPLES**



“There must be good communication from all players, including the goalkeepers, and a desire to prevent the ball entering the penalty box”

attackers score or regain the ball, add time on; and if the defending team win the ball and manage to play forward passes to the target players or clear it to the floating player, then take time off. This will add a sense of competition.

Attackers can work on attacking patterns of play and creating 2v1 overloads out wide and can also be rewarded for regaining the ball in the attacking third.

**How would you put this into a game situation?  
11v10 game**

Once the detail has been built by adding midfield players to the second activity, I will also add a striker to the defending team for this free game. His role is to encourage the ball down

one side of the pitch when out of possession and also to be an outlet pass for the defending team when winning possession.

We set up on most of the pitch, with a full size goal and a goalkeeper at each end – the defending team’s goal is in its normal position but the attacking team’s goal is on the edge of the penalty area.

We’re using 19 outfield players, split into a blue attacking team of 10 and a red defending team of 9. The defending team should be stretched and must work hard because of the attacking overload against them – they must display good out-of-possession principles in order to compete. Plays starts and restarts with a pass out from the goalkeeper of the attacking team, as shown [3].

Rotate players after several minutes and continue to monitor their understanding and performances.

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

We would coach good 1v1 defending technique as this can be neglected in the more realistic game scenarios. Also, we observe and correct any positional errors of the defenders and midfielders when looking to deal with balls from wide areas.

There must be good communication from all defending players, including the goalkeepers, and a desire to prevent the ball entering the penalty box. Defenders should also squeeze any negative passes made by the attacking players.

**BURTON ALBION**  
**Nigel Clough**  
**Attacking & defending**

<b>SET-UP</b>
<b>AREA</b>
Three quarters of pitch
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>
Balls, bibs, cones, 1 full size goal
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>
16 players
<b>SESSION TIME</b>
Timings depend on required outcomes

**Overview**

This session focuses on the techniques of attacking and defending in and around the penalty area, giving players the opportunity to rehearse not only counter-attacking situations, but to attack and defend crosses from deep and from the by-line. It is a high intensity session that involves plenty of running and lots of accelerations and decelerations. It requires all players to both defend and attack as they would in a game. When out

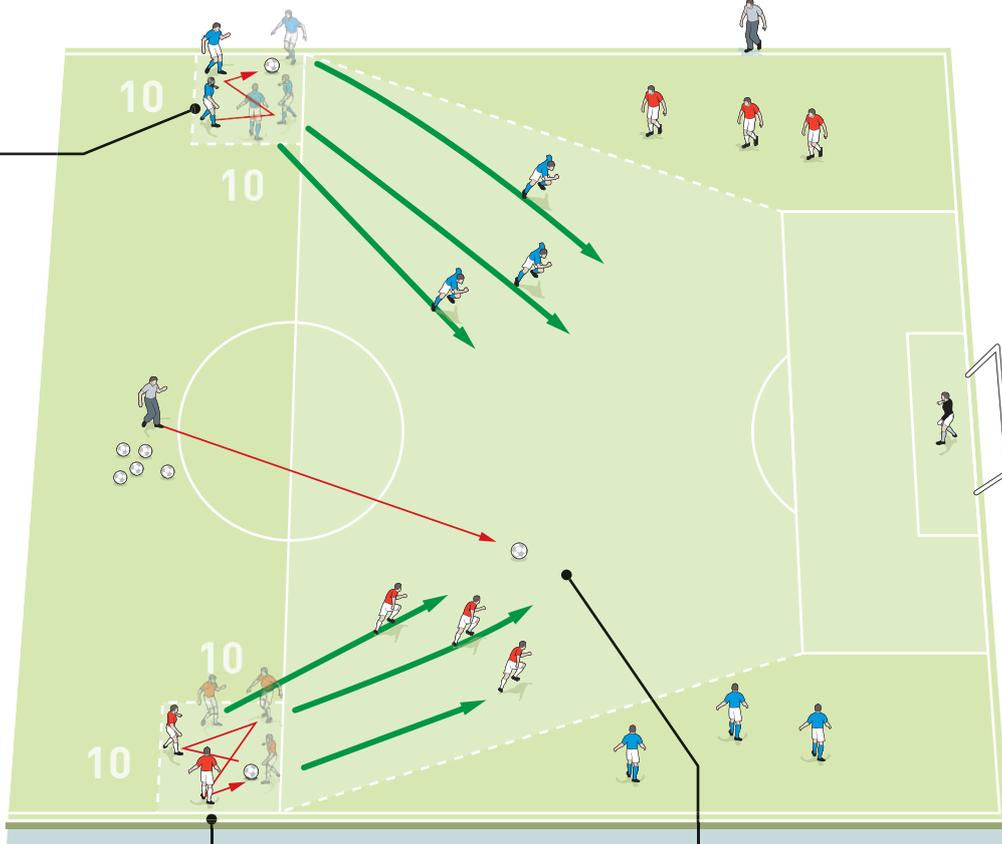
of possession, the players must work as a unit to recover, delay, tackle, block and clear the ball from crosses. When in possession, the players try to create scoring chances and get the opportunity to run with the ball, pass and move, dribble, and make runs off the ball, as well as attack crosses in the penalty area. This session allows for plenty of repetition, it offers a sense of competition between teams, and it will improve the basics of attacking and defending in

**KEY**

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

**1a ATTACKING & DEFENDING**

**1** The blues are the defending team and they start with five players passing a ball around in their possession box. They are limited to one-touch passing in the box

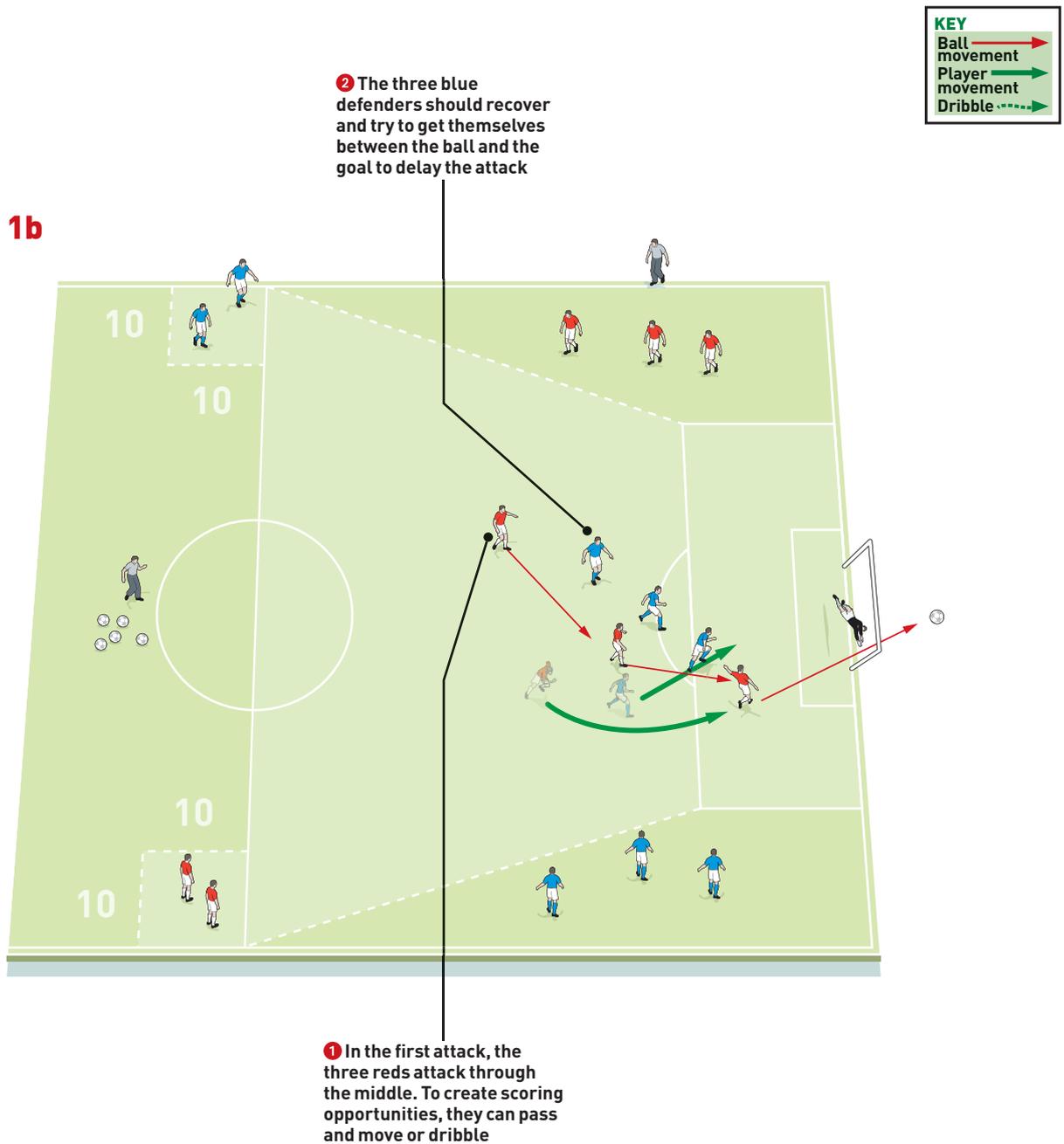


**2** The reds are the attacking team and they also start with five players one-touch passing around their possession box

**3** When the coach passes into the main area, three attackers and three defenders break out to compete for the ball. The aim for the attackers is to score in the goal

**4** A coach on the touchline enforces the offside rule

**NIGEL CLOUGH: ATTACKING & DEFENDING**



“It’s a high intensity session that involves plenty of running and lots of accelerations and decelerations”

situations that replicate the game. We will often run this in pre-season. The length of the session and the space and intensity will change, depending on the time of the week and the state of the players, but the amount and type of running involved means that it is a good session to get the players match fit.

**What do I get the players to do?  
Attacking & defending**

We set up on three quarters of a pitch with a goal and goalkeeper at one end. A tapered wide zone is coned off on each side, funnelling towards the penalty area, and two 10x10-yard possession boxes are set up just over the halfway line. We’re using

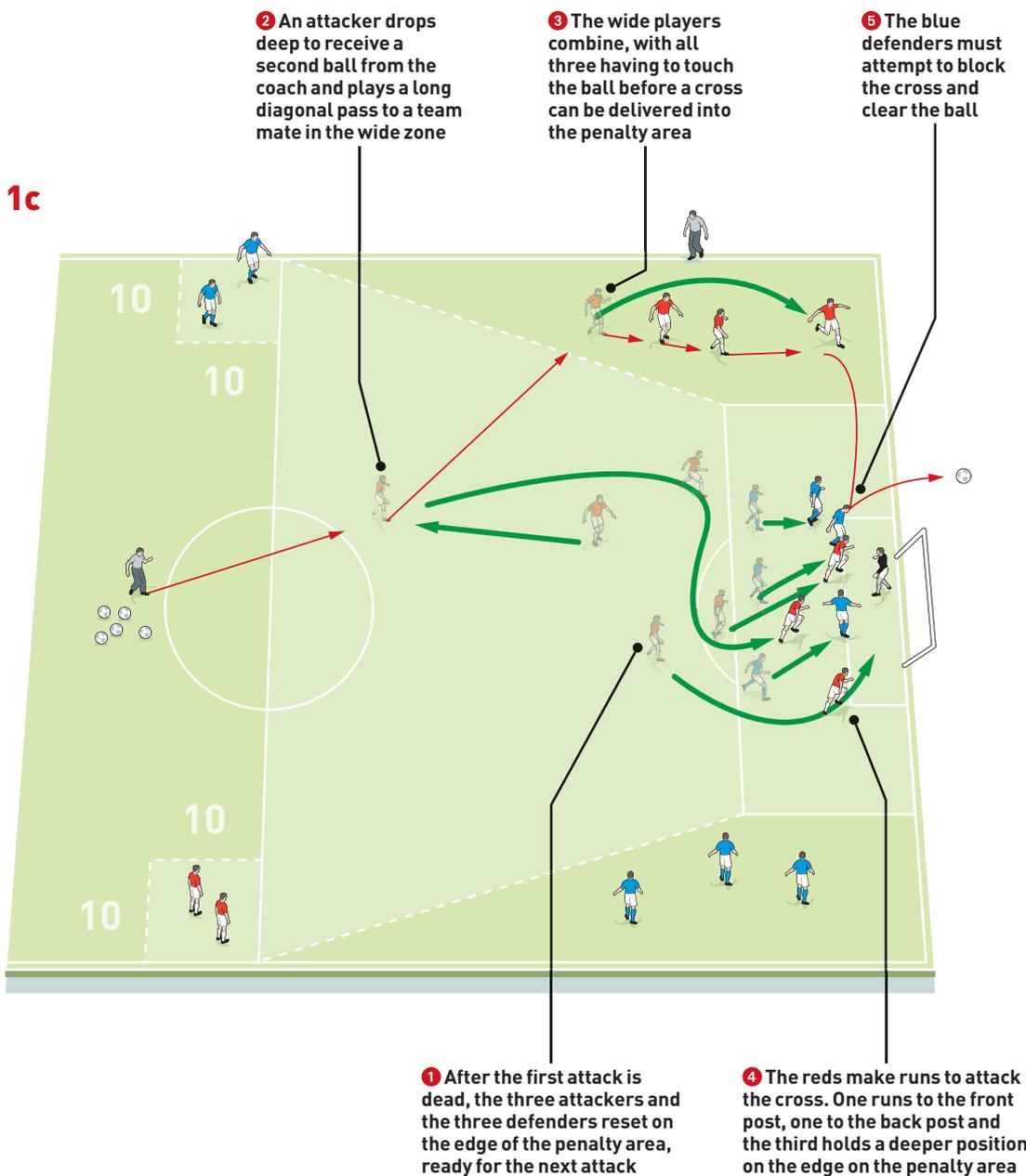
16 outfield players, split into a red attacking team of eight and a blue defending team of eight. Each team starts with five players in its own possession box on the halfway line and three players in its wide zone on the opposite wing to their box. Both teams begin by passing a ball around in their own possession

**NIGEL CLOUGH: ATTACKING & DEFENDING**

box using one-touch passing on the move. They pass unopposed until triggered to start the first attack by the coach, who plays a ball from the centre circle into the midfield, as shown [1a]. Three members of the red attacking team break out of their box and race onto the ball, while three blue defenders break out of their box to defend the goal. The players attack through the middle of the pitch, either running with the ball, passing and moving, or dribbling, and making runs off the ball to create opportunities to score,

as shown [1b]. The defending team try to recover so they are between the ball and the goal and are able to delay the attack. When the attack is dead, both teams should reset on the edge of the penalty area, ready to attack (or defend) the goal from a cross. One of the red attackers moves towards the centre circle to receive a second ball from the coach and then plays a pass to his team mates in the wide zone, as shown [1c]. The wide players receive the long diagonal pass and combine, with all three of the wide players

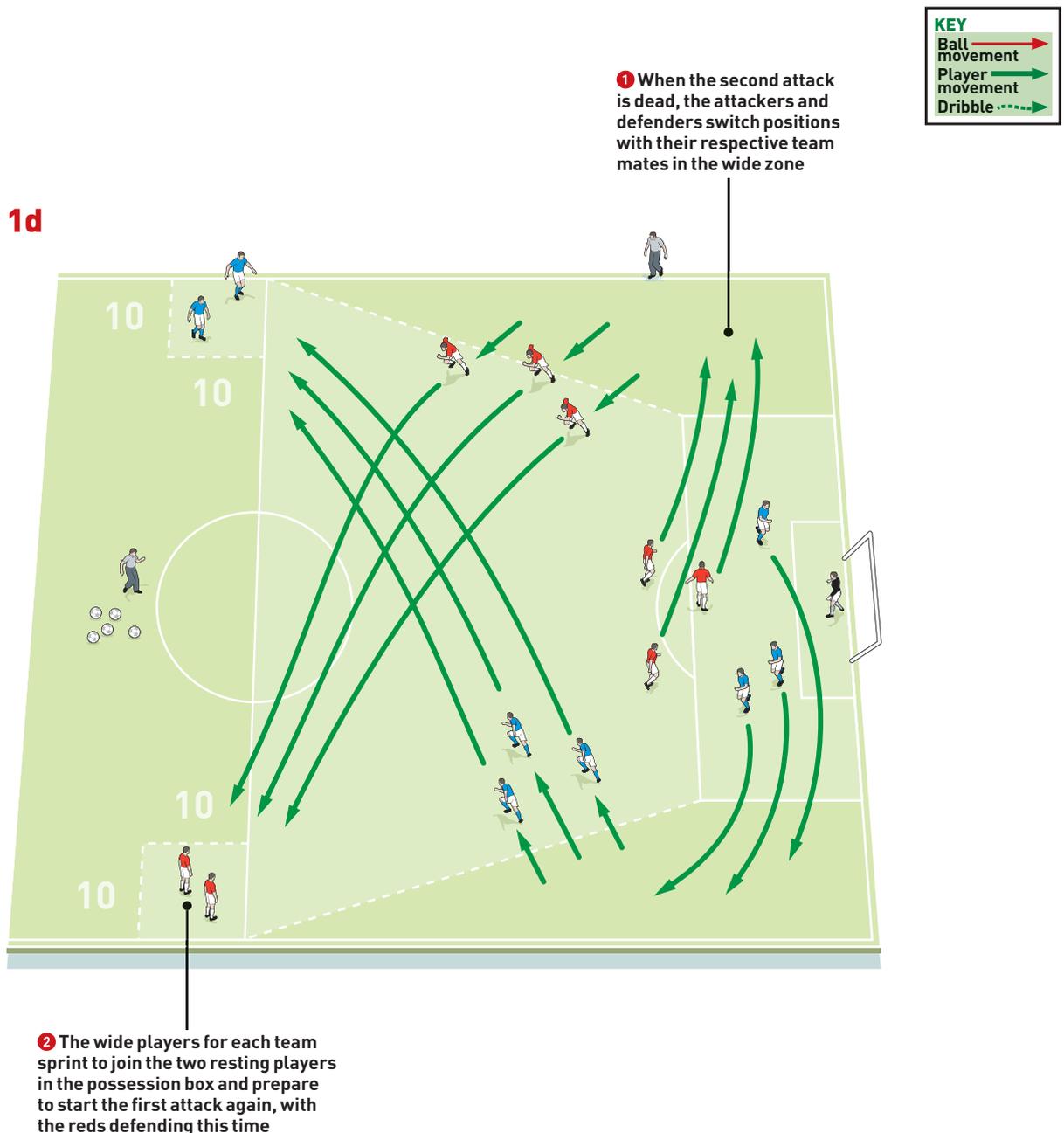
touching the ball before one is free to cross into the penalty area, either delivering the ball from deep, or from the by-line, or by pulling the ball back for the attackers to run onto. The attackers should threaten different areas of the penalty box. One runs across the keeper to the front post, another arrives at the back post and the third holds a deeper position on the edge of the box. For their part, the three defenders should attempt to block the cross and clear the ball out of the area. When the second attack is dead,



**KEY**

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

**NIGEL CLOUGH: ATTACKING & DEFENDING**



the three attackers and the three defenders must switch starting positions with their respective wide players, who sprint from the wide zones back to their possession boxes on the halfway line, as shown [1d]. The two teams then swap roles, with the reds becoming the defenders and the blues becoming the attackers for the subsequent pair of attacks.

**How do I progress the session?**

As the session develops, we look for improvements in the quality and tempo of the attacking play, and the decisions the defenders make and

the effectiveness of the defending. After this activity, we will progress the session by playing a small-sided game, keeping the same teams. We would expect to see the defending and attacking principles from the session displayed in the game, with the attacking players making runs into the area, attacking crosses and attacking at pace. The defenders should be making recovery runs and clearing the ball.

**What are the key things to look for?**

The key is to keep the session and the demands on the players as simplistic

as possible. The players are then able to focus on the basic principles of attacking and defending in counter-attacking situations, in and around the penalty area. Repeating these basics will build good habits in game situations.

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

Players will switch off and misplace passes but the key is to reinforce the basic principles of the session so that they become engrained in the team's performances.

**LMA AMBASSADOR**

**Chris Beech**  
**Creating overloads in tight spaces**

<b>SET-UP</b>
<b>AREA</b>
Up to full pitch
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 full size goals
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b>
Up to 20 players + 2 goalkeepers
<b>SESSION TIME</b>
Support in threes: 15mins
11v11 game: 30mins

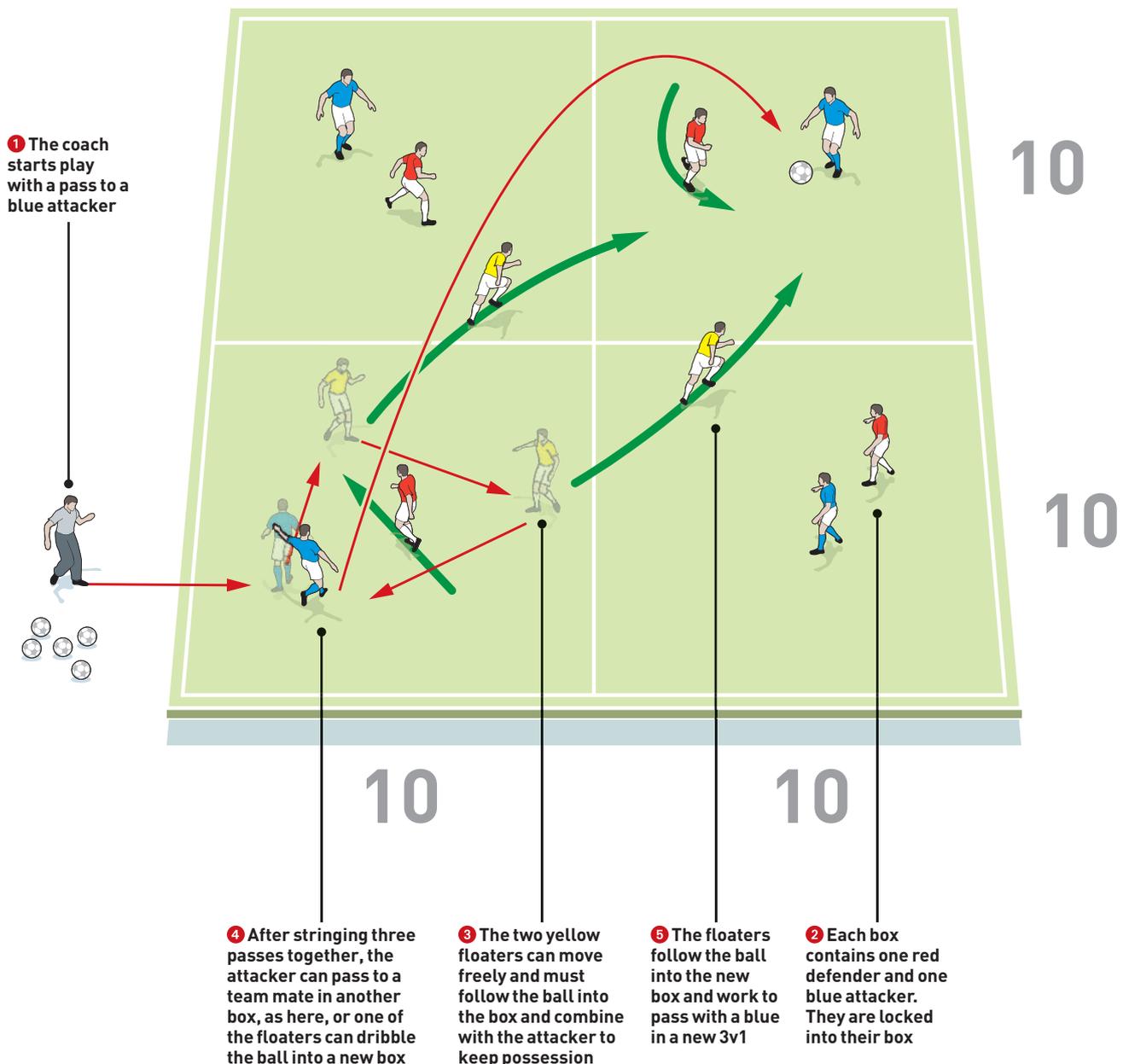
**Overview**  
This training session is all about creating overloads in tight spaces when in possession. Three is the magic number here and this session encourages players to use the three-player support system to create overloads. Players are fully engaged due to the simplicity of trying to support the ball with a minimum of three players and it also helps to improve receiving

and releasing skills and will encourage quick play. The session progresses into a game-related 11v11 practice where players can implement what they have learnt from the opening activity. We also use the session to encourage an aggressive press when out of possession, again in threes, which also helps to improve the intensity and quality of our play when in possession.

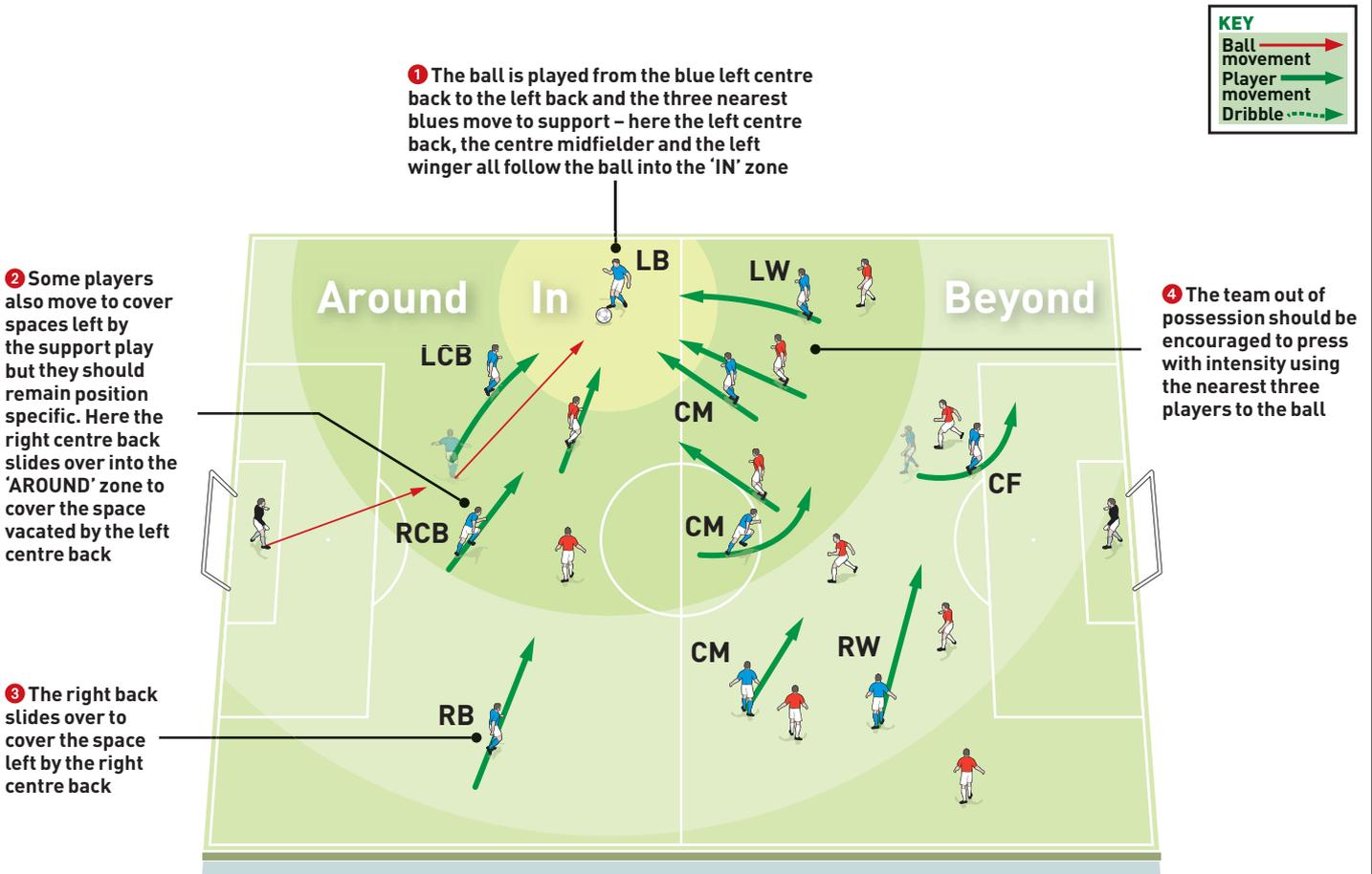
**KEY**

- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

**1 SUPPORT IN THREES**  
Like the SAS, get in and get out!



**CHRIS BEECH: CREATING OVERLOADS IN TIGHT SPACES**



**2a 11v11 GAME**

Play a normal 11v11 game, but players must use the three-player support system that they learnt in the first practice

“Players are fully engaged due to the simplicity of trying to support the ball with a minimum of three players”

**What do I get the players to do?**

**Support in threes**

We set up a grid of 20x20 yards containing four 10x10-yard boxes. We're using 10 players, split into a blue attacking team of four and a red defending team of four, plus two yellow floaters. Each box contains one blue attacker and one red defender, who are locked in their boxes. The two yellow floaters move between boxes, supporting the attacker in keeping possession and making it 3v1 in each box when the ball is there. Play begins with a pass from the coach to a blue attacker. The floaters enter that box and combine with the attacker to help them string at least

three passes together before the attacker can pass to a team mate in another box, as shown [1]. The floaters follow the ball into the new box. If a floater is in possession after the completion of the three passes, he can dribble the ball into another box (followed by his team mate) to start a new passing 3v1. The emphasis should be on speed of play, with movement and support both key to the success of the session. The coach should be looking for fast control with support. We play in five blocks of 90 seconds, rotating players into the floating role every 90 seconds. On completion, we repeat for another five blocks of 90 seconds.

**How would you put this into a game situation?**

**11v11 game**

We set up on a full size pitch with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end, but the pitch size can be adjusted depending on our needs. We play a normal 11v11 game based on our own formation and the formation of our next opponents, but the players must be encouraged to work in the three-player support system they used in the first practice. As an example of this, in the diagram [2a] when the ball is played from the left centre back to the left back, the three players nearest to the ball must move to support. Other players farther away must also move

**CHRIS BEECH: CREATING OVERLOADS IN TIGHT SPACES**

closer, in order to cover the spaces vacated by the supporting players. This also means that they are close enough for link-up play when the ball is moved on again.

In the diagram, the proximity to the ball is shown by a series of rings centred on the position of the ball. The ball is received by the left back in the central ring labelled 'IN'. The nearest players – the left centre back, the centre midfielder and the left winger – move from the 'AROUND' ring to the 'IN' ring to support the player on the ball.

The support play enables the left back to link up with the left winger, who turns and passes to the centre

forward, who has moved to support, as shown [2b]. Now the right winger comes into play, having moved more central to pick up a pass and scores.

The coach is looking for an instant reaction to the pass, with speed of movement and quickness of play critical to creating the space for opportunities on goal.

Players can exaggerate the movement by moving from 'BEYOND' to 'AROUND' on the pitch but they should stay position specific and not leave gaps. For instance, when the left centre back moves to support the player with the ball, the right centre back moves towards the 'AROUND' ring to cover the space.

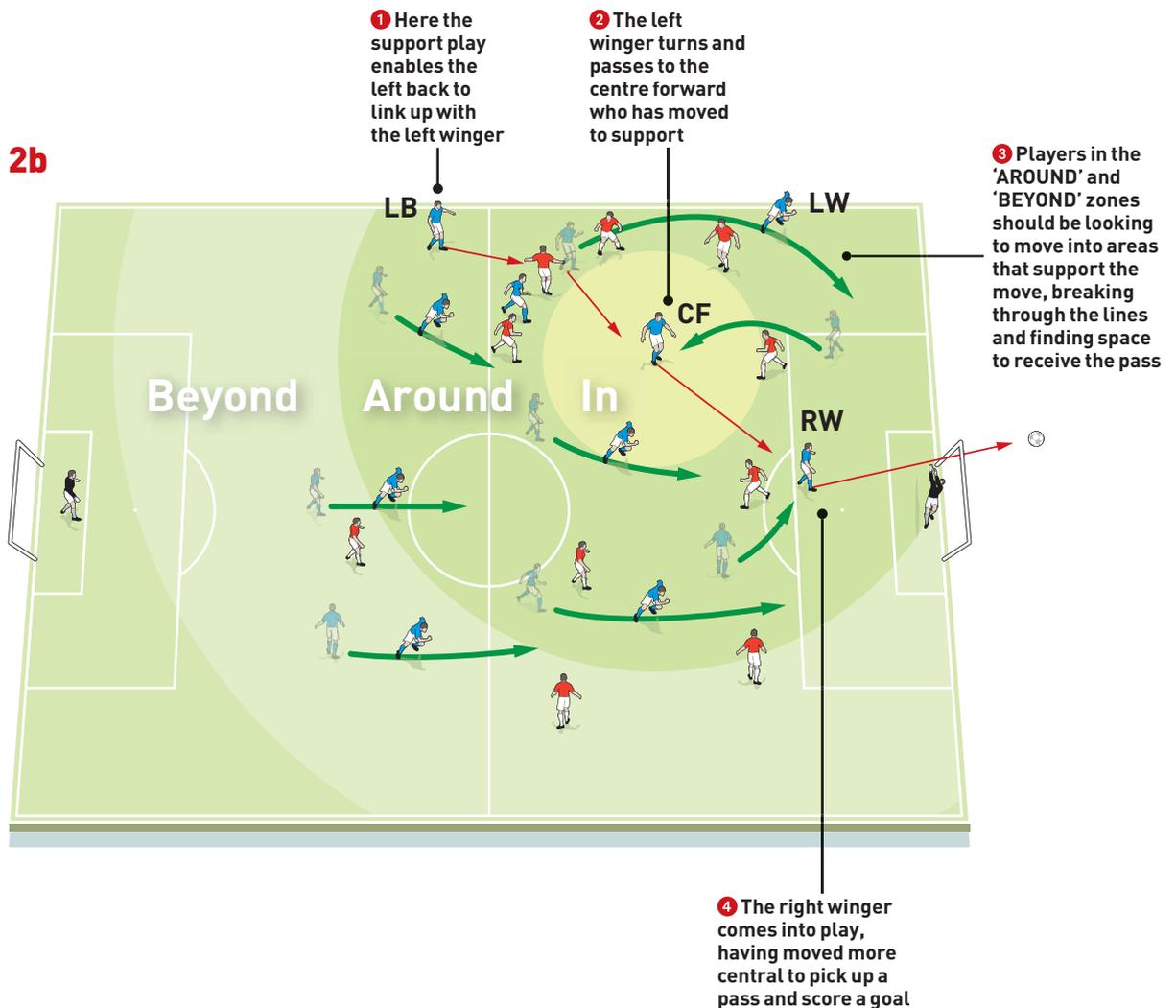
**What are the key things to look out for?**

Technically, we want to see players able to use a soft touch, fast passing, a good body shape and the skills to be able to play the ball in tight spaces. Players should also demonstrate a good awareness of what's around them and try to play forwards whenever possible.

Tactically, we're looking for players to support the ball with at least three players when in possession and to press with three players near the ball when out of possession.

Most importantly, we want to see quick movement and the ability to react to changing situations.

“We want to see quick movement from players and the ability to react to constantly changing situations”



**STOKE CITY**  
**Josh Brehaut**  
**Building from the back**

<b>SET-UP</b>
<b>AREA</b> 76x40 yards
<b>EQUIPMENT</b> Balls, bibs, cones, 2 full size goals
<b>NUMBER OF PLAYERS</b> 16 players + 2 goalkeepers
<b>SESSION TIME</b> Building from the back: 25mins Small-sided game: 30mins

**Overview**  
This session is focused on starting attacks from inside the defensive third of the pitch, specifically when playing against a front three that presses high with wide forwards once the centre backs have split. It's a session that helps the players to see pictures that replicate situations in the 11v11 game. A highly useful practice, it can be run on half a pitch, working across the width of

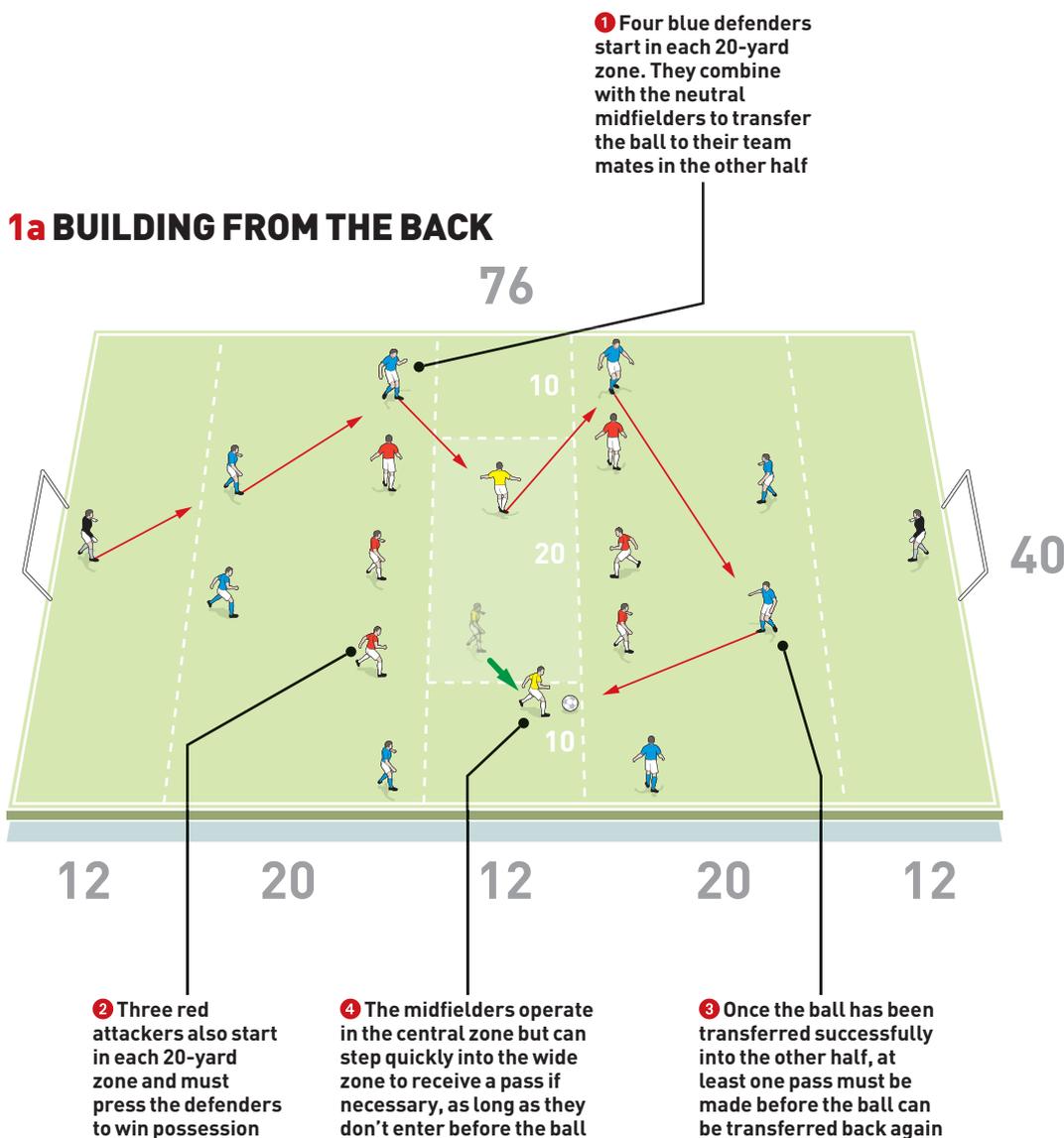
the pitch. It would typically be delivered as a tactical session, specifically when we want work on developing an ability to build from the back under pressure.

**KEY**

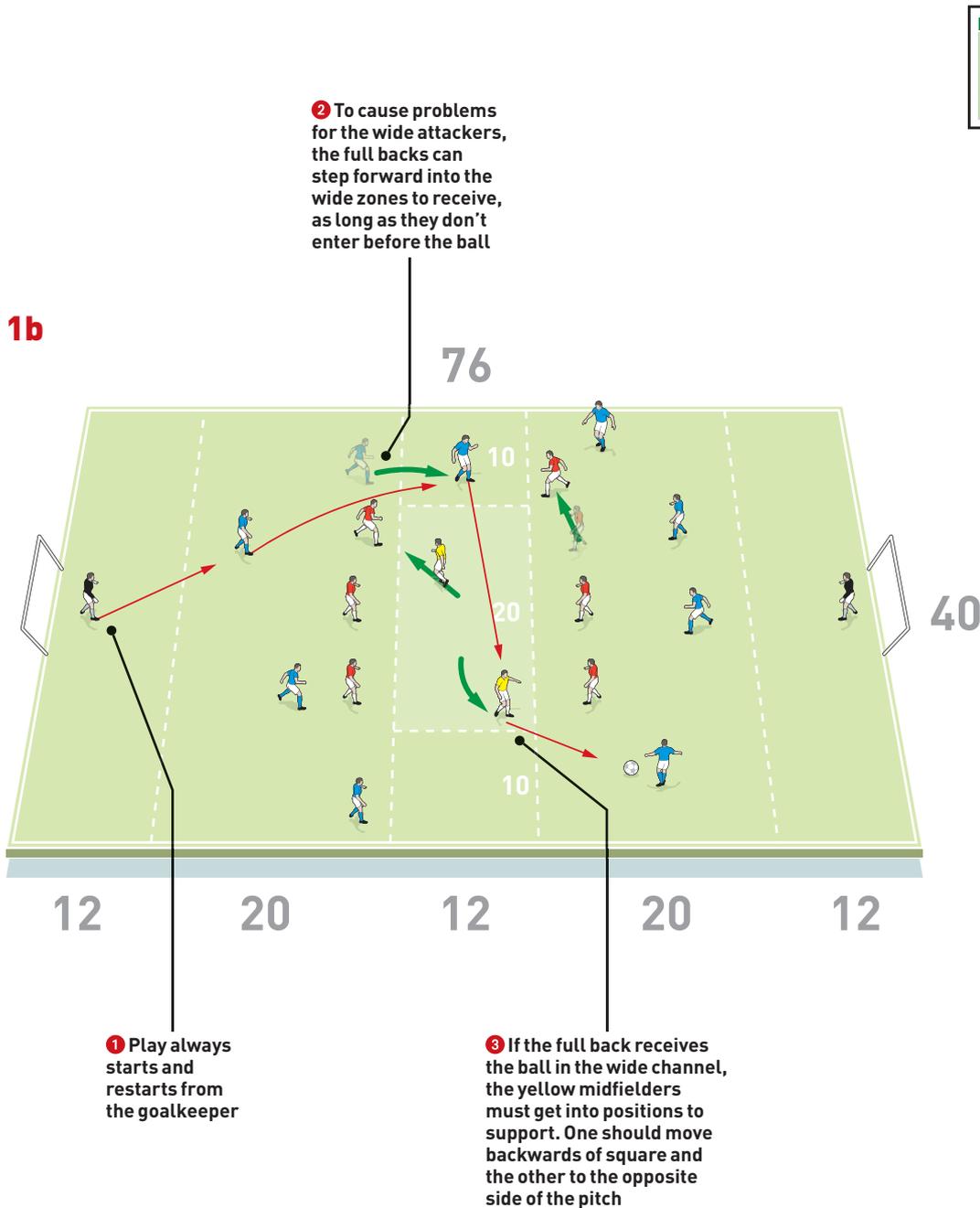
- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

**What do I get the players to do?**  
**Building from the back**  
We're using 16 outfield players split into a blue defensive team of eight, a red attacking team of six, and two neutral, yellow midfielders. We set up across the width of

“This is a session that helps the players to see pictures that replicate situations in the 11v11 game”



**JOSH BREHAUT: BUILDING FROM THE BACK**



half of a full size pitch, making the playing area 76x40 yards with a goal at each end. We mark two 12-yard end zones where the goalkeepers are positioned; two 20-yard zones, each containing a blue back four and an opposing red front three; and a 12x20-yard central zone for the two neutral midfielders, which is flanked by two 12x10-yard wide zones. Play starts with the goalkeeper, who combines with the blue back four to transfer the ball via the two neutral midfielders to the other blue defenders in the opposite half, as shown [1a].

The neutral midfielders start in the central zone and they can move into the wide zones to receive but they must only move into the wide zone at the same time as the ball. They should use a one- or two-touch pass to move the ball on. The full backs can also move forward into the wide zones, as shown [1b], replicating moments in matches where they get as high and wide as possible to create a problem for the opposing wide forward. Once the ball has been transferred successfully into the other half of the playing area, at least one pass must

be made between the defenders before the ball can be transferred back again. But if any of the three attackers win the ball, they must attack the goal as quickly as possible to exploit the disorganised defence, as shown [1c]. We keep the score between the two teams, counting the number of successful transfers and the number of goals scored on transition. This is a good way to maintain the desired intensity. If the number of transfers is significantly higher than the number of goals scored, try offering the attackers an incentive, such as

**JOSH BREHAUT: BUILDING FROM THE BACK**

goals counting double if they score within five seconds of gaining the ball. This should ensure they remain motivated and continue to press with the desired intensity.

**How would you put this into a game situation?**

**Small-sided game**

We progress into a small-sided game, using the same set-up as the previous practice. We're still using 16 outfield players and two keepers but now each team is divided into a

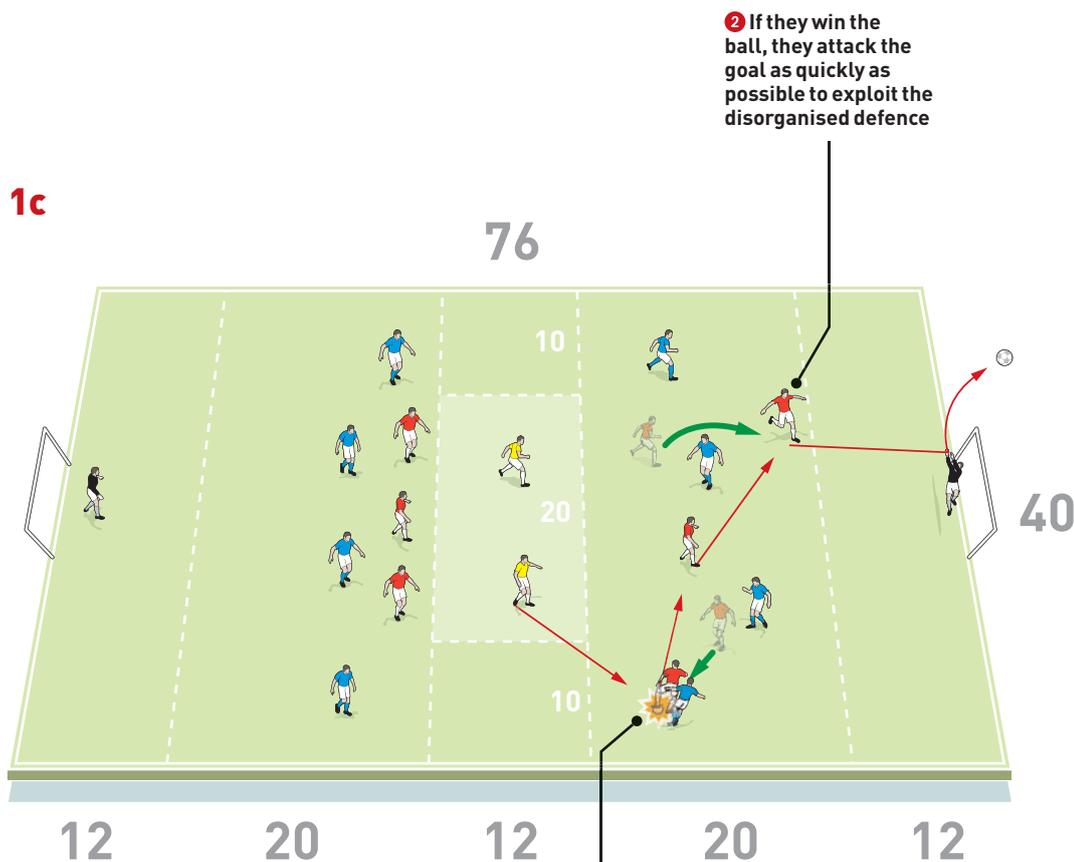
keeper, four defenders and three attackers, starting as shown [2]. The two neutral midfielders start in the central zone and play for the team in possession, but the defenders can bypass the midfielders and play directly to their forwards if necessary. The forwards must try to score in the goal and the attack can be supported by one defender and both neutral midfielders, who are free to make forward runs to give the attacking team a 6v4 overload in the final third. A further progression can be added

by putting one of the midfielders on to each team, making it a 9v9 game. The lines out of the central zones serve as offside lines.

**What are the key things to look out for?**

The back four should focus on making the playing area as big as they can, so we want our centre backs to split and the full backs to position themselves as high and wide as possible so that the opposing wide forwards can't affect all of them.

“We want the back four to make the area as big as possible, with the centre backs splitting and the full backs getting high and wide”

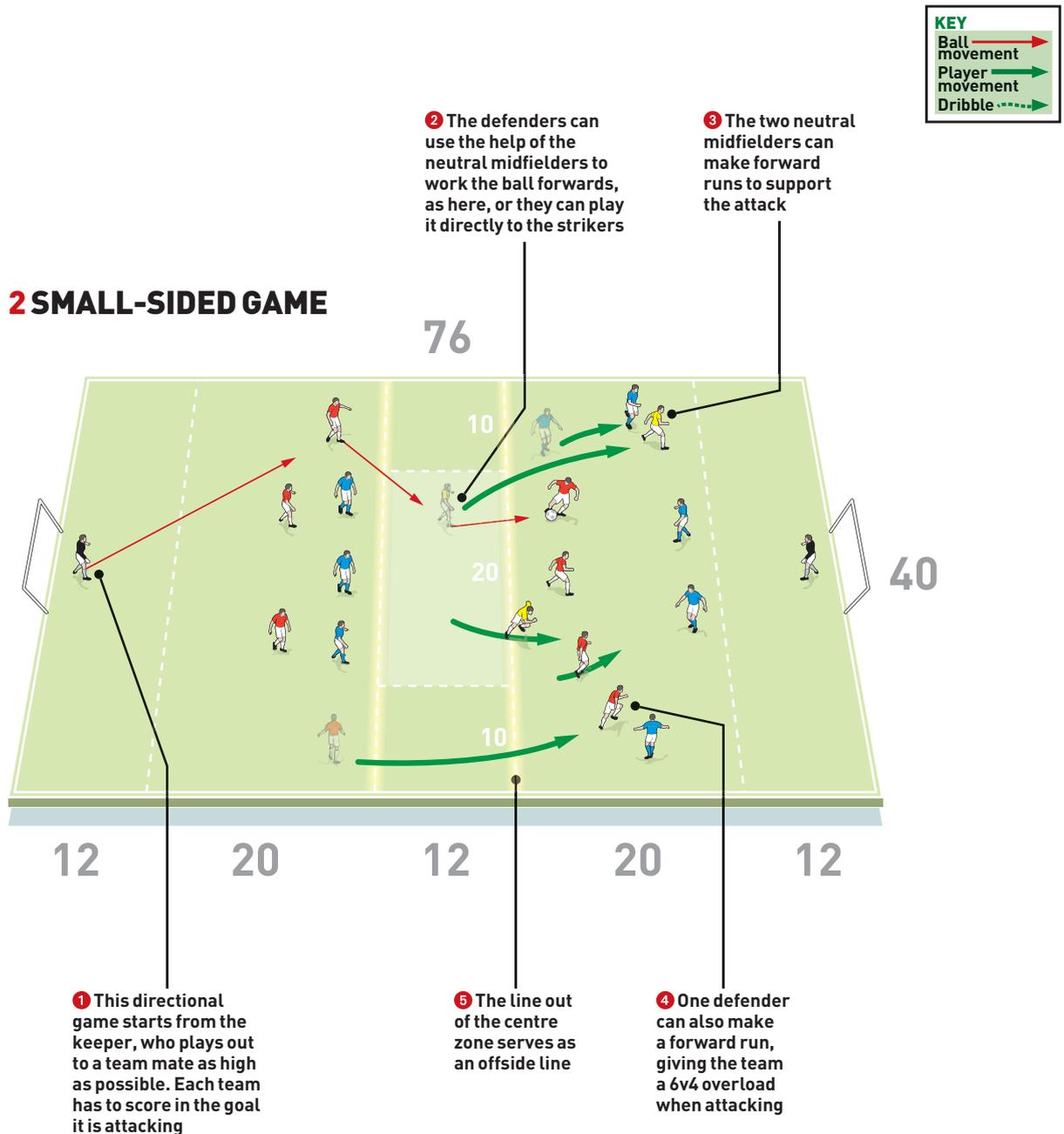


2 If they win the ball, they attack the goal as quickly as possible to exploit the disorganised defence

1 The red attackers press and try to win possession, as they do here

**KEY**  
 Ball movement →  
 Player movement →  
 Dribble - - - - - →

**JOSH BREHAUT: BUILDING FROM THE BACK**



In this practice, the goalkeeper is challenged to look for the furthest possible forward pass, such as to the centre midfielder or to one of the full backs, and he should try to play the pass with disguise.

If the ball goes into play with the centre back, the full back has to drop down the pitch to create a receiving angle – he needs to find the highest position that he can receive the ball whilst still facing forwards. The centre backs want to avoid being too wide, otherwise they cut off the pass to the full back as they will be on the same line.

The central midfielders should try to receive on an angle so they can adopt the correct body shape to face forwards and pass with their first touch, which is not possible if they're on the same line as the ball. The two central midfielders also want to be on different lines laterally, otherwise they won't be able to combine with one another. If the centre backs find themselves in a position where they are too wide and on the same line as the full back, they should look inside for their midfielder, or alternatively turn back and initiate a switch via the keeper.

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

The full backs can start too high and, if they don't receive a pass from the keeper and the ball is played to the centre back, then they have a long way to drop to create an angle for the centre back. Another common error is that play can be forced when a pass is not on. The keeper is there to switch the play through, so if the centre back is being closed down and forced wide, a disguised turn is a way of eliminating pressure and switching play.

**EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: ALAN IRVINE**



# FROM ALL ANGLES

**Alan Irvine reflects on his career journey in coaching and the importance of mentoring support to help newly appointed managers**

**S**ince his days as a professional footballer, LMA Technical Consultant and mentor Alan Irvine has worked in first team football in various capacities. However, it was only after completing his Pro-licence and LMA Diploma and working for 15 years as a youth coach, first team coach, academy director and assistant manager that Alan Irvine finally became a manager. Even then, by his own admission, he wasn't fully prepared for everything the job would throw at him.

"I'm not sure I could have done anything more, and certainly I think you're better prepared if you've experienced first team football,

either as an assistant or a coach," he says, "but I don't think anything can fully equip you for your first day as a manager. It's only when you're sitting in that seat that you discover what the job is really like and for most people the reality is quite different to their expectations."

Irvine is sure he would have benefited from having support from a mentor during those early days in the job and indeed throughout his tenures at Preston North End, Sheffield Wednesday, West Bromwich Albion and while caretaker manager of Norwich City. "I've had managers who I

could bounce things off, but ideally you want someone who has been trained in the role of mentor," he says.

"There's a skill to not giving answers to problems, but asking the right questions to help the manager come to their own decisions and solutions."

What's more, management can be a lonely job and sometimes you need someone outside of the club to speak to. Often as a manager there's a long queue outside your door, and you're presented with a wide range of problems, which you are expected to solve, says Irvine. "Everyone will turn to you for answers, but whose door do you then knock on when you need advice or support? Many managers are loath to bother their staff or to admit any doubts or concerns to those above them for fear of undermining their positions."

While mentoring is common at the highest levels of business, it's still relatively new in football, something Irvine hopes will change with the new LMA Mentoring Programme. "There's still a degree of scepticism about

**Nothing can fully equip you for your first day as a manager. It's only when you're sitting in that seat that you discover what the job is really like**

**EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: ALAN IRVINE**

mentoring among managers, so it's important that we emphasise there is nothing to fear from it and so many advantages. Nothing is forced upon the manager, so they decide what kind of support they want or need, how informal they want the conversations and relationship to be, when and where meetings take place."

Although Irvine didn't have a formal mentor of this kind, he was fortunate to play under a number of great managers, among them Sir Kenny Dalglish MBE and Steve Coppell, and was watching and learning from an early age. He formed his own opinions of what to emulate and avoid, and as he matured became adept at modifying these approaches and ideas to develop his own style of coaching and leadership.

**CHANGING ROLES**

In his long career journey, Irvine has been a youth team coach, first-team coach, academy manager, assistant manager, caretaker manager and manager. Most recently he was assistant manager at West Ham United.

"I think I was a better assistant manager for having been a manager previously," he notes, "because it meant I had greater empathy for the manager, an understanding of his thinking behind decisions and more awareness of the pressures that he would be under.

"I understood, for example, why he might have chosen not give an opportunity to a player or why he might not be able to come to watch



every match. I'd know that if, on occasion, he walked straight past me in the canteen it was just because he was dealing with so much that his mind was somewhere else."

Also key to making any relationship between the manager and assistant manager work, he adds, is clarifying the nature of the job from the outset. "That very first conversation you have with the manager before you've even been offered the position is vital," says Irvine. "You have to establish what

**I like to present players with as many potential solutions to a problem as I can and then let them solve it themselves**

the expectations, limitations and responsibilities are. For example, I

would never accept a job as assistant unless the manager was happy for me to speak my mind. I'd make that clear from the very start, because if they weren't comfortable with it there'd be no point in entering into the relationship.

"You have to ask every question and lay everything out right at

the start if you want the relationship to be as strong as possible."

**A PASSION FOR COACHING**

Irvine also understands what the manager needs from his staff in terms of coaching and developing the players, and has an acute awareness of the kinds of talents and characters that can succeed at first team level. "The manager has a role to play in the development of the players, but he's stretched, so the assistant and first team coach need to ensure the players are ready should the manager give them the opportunity to play and that they can handle all kinds of situations in the game."

That includes being able to make decisions on the pitch, something he says that players are often unfairly criticised for. "If you want to improve players' decision making you have to allow them to make decisions. I like to present players with as many different potential solutions to a problem as I can and then let them solve it themselves. You have to give them the freedom to decide what to



**EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: ALAN IRVINE**



do and to react accordingly.”

Regardless of the role he is fulfilling, Irvine says he’s much the same when it comes to dealing with the players. “When you’re the manager, you’re one step further away from them, so there’s a distance, but there’s also a closeness because you’re the person they want to come to with everything from their personal problems to questions about their inclusion in the team.

“Whatever my position, I like the relationship to be an amicable one, where they know they can talk to me, but I’m not their friend. Most of all, I expect very high standards of professionalism from myself and those around me. I expect the players to work hard and try hard for the team, and that’s regardless of whether they’re a top Champions League winning player or a young lad who’s just broken into the first team.”

That doesn’t mean ignoring the limitations of who you’re dealing with, he cautions, or expecting more from them than they’re currently



capable of. “You have to understand their strengths and weaknesses and work with them,” he says. “So if, for example, you have a player who’s a great dribbler, it makes more sense to help them develop that skill and build on it than attempt to turn them into a great tackler.”

Irvine loves the challenge of putting on sessions that will stretch players both as a team and as individuals and has always made a point of helping those players who want to work on their game outside of group training sessions. “That has to be driven by the player, they need to come and find you, but it’s often the most satisfying coaching you get to do,” he says.

“I also have a real passion for analysing the opposition and coming up with game plans that exploit their weaknesses and reduce the effectiveness of their strengths,” he adds. “I look to create sessions that help players understand their jobs, in and out of possession. I love the small details, because that’s often where you make the biggest difference.” ■

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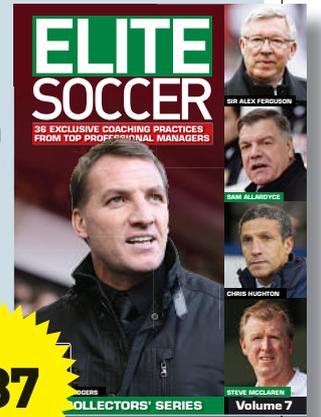
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