www.elitesoccercoaching.net MARCH 2019

ELITE SOCCER

Exclusive
Training practices from top professional managers

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS

NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO

TEAM FINISHING

GREEN STAR MEDIA
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LMA LEAGUE MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

BRISTOL CITY
LEE JOHNSON
Switching play

SUNDERLAND
JACK ROSS
Transition to counter-attack

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
MATTHEW BISHOP
Low block & emergency defending

WALSALL
GRAHAM BIGGS
Delay, deny and dictate

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW WITH FORMER PANAMA COACH, GARY STEMPEL

Elite Soccer is published by

Green Star Media Ltd
MBX124
19 Moorfield Road
Slyfield Industrial Estate
Guildford
GU1 1RU
United Kingdom

Email:
elitesoccer@greenstarmedia.net

Editor:
Chris Hunt
Contributing Editor:
Mark Farthing
Consultant Coach:
Dave Clarke
Illustrator:
Richard Palmer
Design:
AT Graphics
Photography:
Reuters

Published in partnership with:

League Managers Association
St George's Park
National Football Centre,
Newborough Road,
Needwood,
Burton upon Trent,
DE13 9PD
Tel: +44 (0)1283 576350
Email: **lma@lmasecure.com**
Chairman:
Howard Wilkinson
Chief Executive:
Richard Bevan

This publication is protected by national and international copyright laws. Elite Soccer will take legal action against any individuals or organisations found to be infringing our rights, and will make that action public. No part or whole of this report may be circulated elsewhere or displayed on any website or distributed commercially except under licence from the copyright owners.

© Green Star Media Ltd. All rights reserved

Original training ground practices from the best coaches in the professional game

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the March issue of Elite Soccer, which this month features another five training sessions from some of the best coaches currently working in the UK.

Kicking off this issue is an engaging Premier League finishing session from the highly regarded Wolverhampton Wanderers manager, Nuno Espírito Santo. It has been devised to improve attacking combination play and finishing from crosses.

Lee Johnson is currently the manager of Championship side, Bristol City, and he has written a session that is all about switching the point of attack. It will help players to exploit space on the pitch and ultimately it will create more goal-scoring opportunities for your team.

Sunderland manager, Jack Ross, has shared a session that not only works on the speed of a team's transition from defence to counter-attack, but it also focuses on the reaction to losing possession.

Matthew Bishop is a coach developer for the Football Association and he has penned a training session that will show teams how to employ a low block and it will rehearse players in emergency defending too.

At Elite Soccer we like to shine a light on some of the best coaches working in the academy football system and this month we bring you a defending session from Graham Biggs of Walsall's academy.

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

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

4
NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO
WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS
Team finishing

8
LEE JOHNSON
BRISTOL CITY
Switching play

11
JACK ROSS
SUNDERLAND
Transition to counter -attack

15
MATTHEW BISHOP
THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
Low block & emergency defending

18
GRAHAM BIGGS
WALSALL
Delay, deny and dictate

21 **EXTRA-TIME**
...with former Panama manager Gary Stempel

MANAGER PROFILES

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

NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS

Having become a highly regarded football coach in such a short time, Nuno Espírito Santo is currently manager of Wolverhampton Wanderers in the English Premier League.

Known simply as Nuno during his playing career as a goalkeeper, he first made a name for himself in Spain, playing for three teams in five years. He later returned to his home country of Portugal to sign for Porto and he was part of the national squad at Euro 2008. He also played in Russia for Dynamo Moscow.

After calling time on his playing career in 2010, he rejoined his former Porto manager Jesualdo Ferreira as a goalkeeping coach, first at Malaga and then at Panathinaikos.

Becoming a manager in his own right, Espírito Santo took over at Portuguese club, Rio Ave, in May 2012. In his second season in charge, he took the team to the final of both the Taça de Portugal and the Taça da Liga, finishing both cup competitions as runners up to Benfica and qualifying for the Europa League for the first time in the club's history.

Success at Rio Ave brought about a move to Spanish giants Valencia. He led the club to a fourth place finish in his first season and was named La Liga Manager of the Month three times.

Moving to Porto in June 2016, he finished second in the league before leaving the club and relocating to England, where he was named manager of EFL Championship side, Wolverhampton Wanderers. In his first season he led the club to the Premier League after a six-year absence, achieving promotion with four matches remaining and being confirmed as champions with two games to spare.

In recognition of this achievement, he was voted LMA Championship Manager of the Year. And after just his second month leading Wolves in the top division, he was also named Premier League Manager of the Month. It was the first time that a Wolverhampton Wanderers manager had secured the award.

LEE JOHNSON

BRISTOL CITY

Lee Johnson's playing career started with the youth teams of Arsenal and Watford, and took in promotions at Yeovil Town and Bristol City. He finally retired after a spell in the Scottish Premier League with Kilmarnock.

Following in the footsteps of his father, the former Bristol City and Peterborough United manager Gary Johnson, he turned to coaching in March 2013, when he was appointed manager of League One side, Oldham Athletic. He was just 31, making him the youngest manager in English football at the time.

In his first weeks in the job, he lifted the club out of the relegation zone and saved Oldham from the drop.

After a subsequent spell in charge of League One club Barnsley, and having built a reputation as one of the best up and coming young managers in the country, in February 2016 Johnson stepped up to the Championship to manage his former club Bristol City.

He led City to the semi-finals of the 2017–18 League Cup, beating several Premier League clubs including Manchester United.

JACK ROSS

SUNDERLAND

Currently the manager of League One side Sunderland, Jack Ross's playing career took in stints at Clyde, Hartlepool, Falkirk and St Mirren before he started his coaching career at Dumbarton in his native Scotland. He inititally served the club as assistant manager but he also enjoyed a spell as caretaker manager of the first team.

In 2014 he moved to Heart of Midlothian to take charge of the club's U20s.

At the end of 2015 he was appointed manager of Scottish Championship side Alloa Athletic, but he was unable to stop the club's eventual slide to relegation. However, he turned the the fortunes of the team around and they were second in the Scottish League One table when he left to take over as manager of former club, St Mirren, in October 2016.

In 2018 Ross led St Mirren to the Scottish Championship title and promotion to the Scottish Premiership. In recognition of this achievement, he was named PFA Scotland Manager of the Year at the end of the season. He left the club to become manager of Sunderland in May 2018.

MATTHEW BISHOP

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Matthew Bishop is a senior national coach developer for the Football Association and has vast experience at all levels of the game.

Starting his coaching career with the Football Association of Wales, he not only served as a senior coaching co-ordinator but he also enjoyed spells as assistant coach for the Wales U16 and U17 teams.

Subsequent coaching appointments included assistant manager at Newport County, Aldershot Town and Hereford, before becoming manager of Aberystwyth Town.

He has also served as assistant manager of England's U20s team.

GRAHAM BIGGS

WALSALL

A UEFA A licence holder, Graham was appointed Walsall's academy manager in November 2016. He first joined the club as an academy coach in 2000 and has also held the positions of centre of excellence manager and head of academy coaching.

During his time at the club, Biggs has helped develop the likes of Alex Nicholls, Will Grigg and Rico Henry, among many others.

WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS

Nuno Espírito Santo

Team finishing

SET-UP
AREA
Half a pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 4 mannequins, 6 inflatable mannequins, 2 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 18 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Combination play & Crossing drill: 12mins Progressions: 18mins 10v8 game: 20mins

Overview

To put it simply, this is a finishing session, but as it unfolds and progresses it becomes so much more than that. It allows us to devote time to all of the players – practising and repeating specific actions that will be asked of them in a match situation.

We can adjust how we use this session, as not only can it be used to work on specific movements, combinations and relationships within the team, but it can also be used on a more relaxed training day in order to give some more simple training time.

As it's a very adaptable exercise, this means we can utilise it on different training days for different objectives, whether it is to develop specific offensive movements, or for the players to practise more freely and show us their own actions and their own solutions.

KEY
- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble

What do I get the players to do?

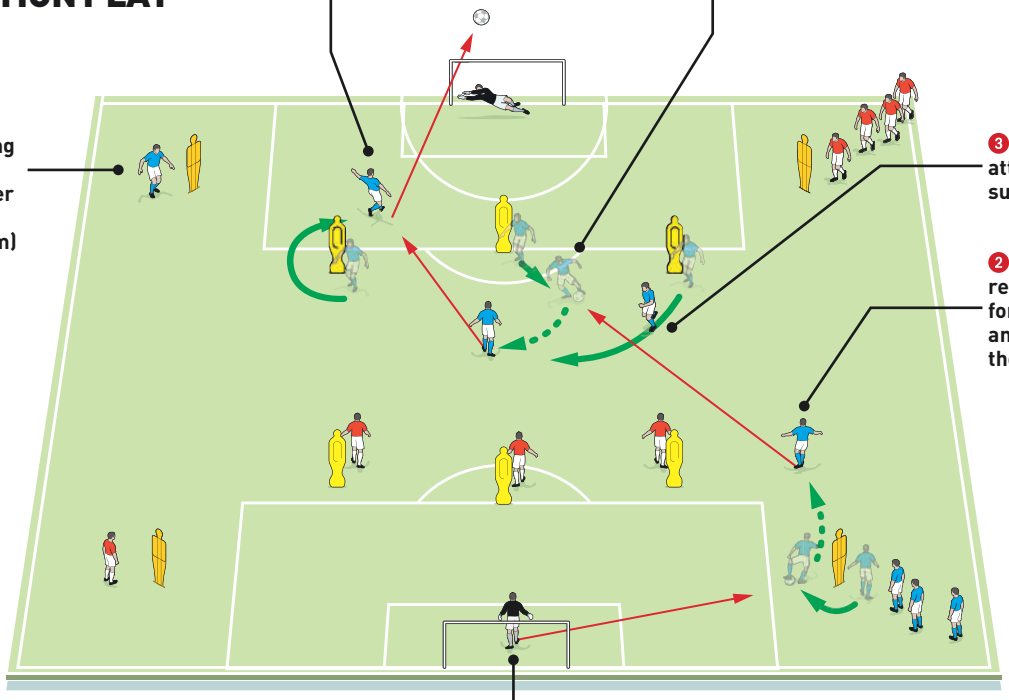
We get players to run the following two drills. For the order of play, see the box below.

ORDER OF PLAY – MAIN DRILLS
- Blue team – pattern A
- Blue team – pattern B
- Red team – pattern A
- Red team – pattern B
- Repeat all & repeat again

Pattern A: Combination play

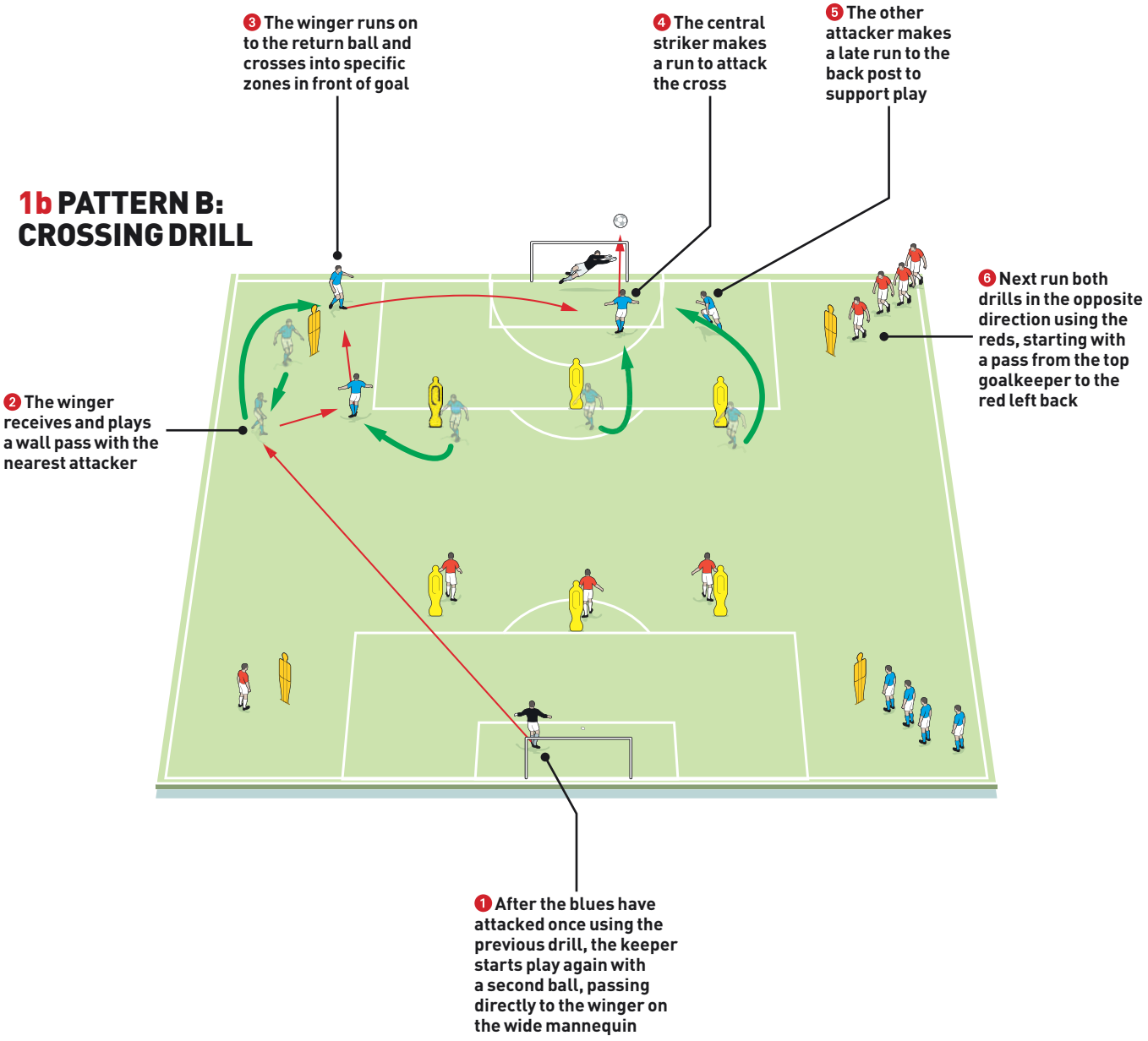
We set up on half a pitch, with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. A full size penalty area is marked out in front of each

1a PATTERN A: COMBINATION PLAY



NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO: TEAM FINISHING

1b PATTERN B: CROSSING DRILL



goal. Four standard mannequins are positioned on the flanks and three inflatable mannequins are lined up along the edge of each penalty area, as shown **[1a]**.

We're using 16 outfield players, split into two teams of eight. Each team has four players on one mannequin and one player on the mannequin diagonally opposite, plus a striker on each of the three inflatables in front of the goal they are attacking.

Play starts with the keeper passing to the queue of blues on the mannequin in the right back position. The first player receives, dribbles forwards and then passes to the central striker. The striker receives the ball with his back to goal, while the other two strikers make supporting runs. The central striker spins and plays a through ball into the path of his team mate, who has spun off the inflatable to make a well-timed run into the penalty area to take a shot at goal.

After one attack, the blue goalkeeper immediately launches a second attacking drill – Pattern B – using a second ball.

Pattern B: Crossing drill

As soon the blues have attacked once using the Combination Play drill, they then immediately start to run this Crossing Drill using a second ball. The goalkeeper initiates play with a direct ball to the single left winger on the mannequin in the attacking half, as shown **[1b]**. The nearest attacker spins off the inflatable and plays a one-two with the winger, beating the mannequin as if it was a defender. The winger receives the return pass and crosses into a specific zone in front of goal. The central striker has made a run into the box to meet the cross, while the other attacker has made a late back post run.

After the blues have attacked using both patterns, then run both drills in the opposite direction with the

NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO: TEAM FINISHING

reds, starting with a pass from the top goalkeeper to the first of the waiting red left backs. Repeat so every player gets a turn. Rotate teams so players get the chance to cross from both sides.

How do I progress the session?

We get players to run the following drills. For the order of play, see the box-out below.

ORDER OF PLAY – PROGRESSIONS
Blue team – pattern C
Blue team – pattern D
Red team – pattern C
Red team – pattern D
Repeat all & repeat again

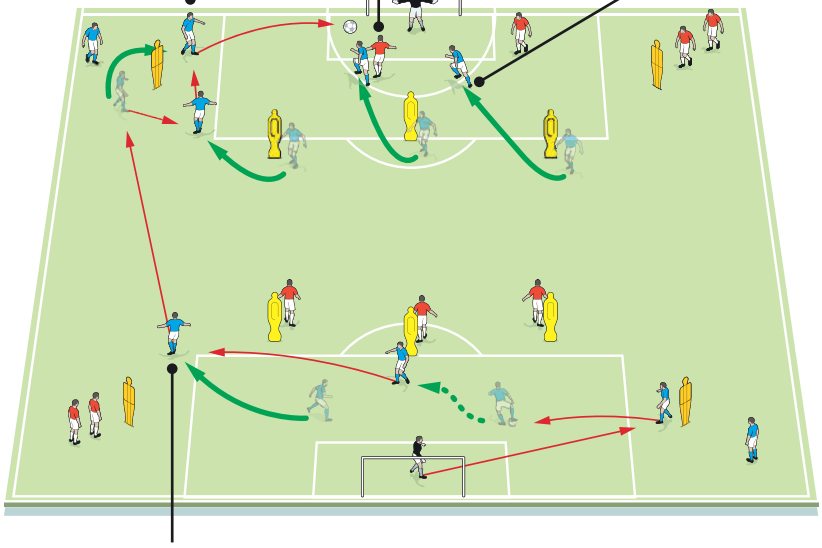
Pattern C: Crossing drill progression

We progress the session by running a variation of the movement from both previous drills, with extra players and additional build up play. Using the same basic set-up, each team now has two full backs and two wingers on mannequins diagonally opposite each other, plus two central defenders or centre midfielders in the penalty area. The goalkeeper starts play by passing out to the blue right back, who builds up play through the two central defenders, as shown **[2a]**. They combine to work the ball to the left winger and he repeats the movement from the previous drill to beat the mannequin and cross into the penalty area. One of the two opposition central defenders can work with the keeper to defend the cross, as two attackers make their runs into the box and try to score.

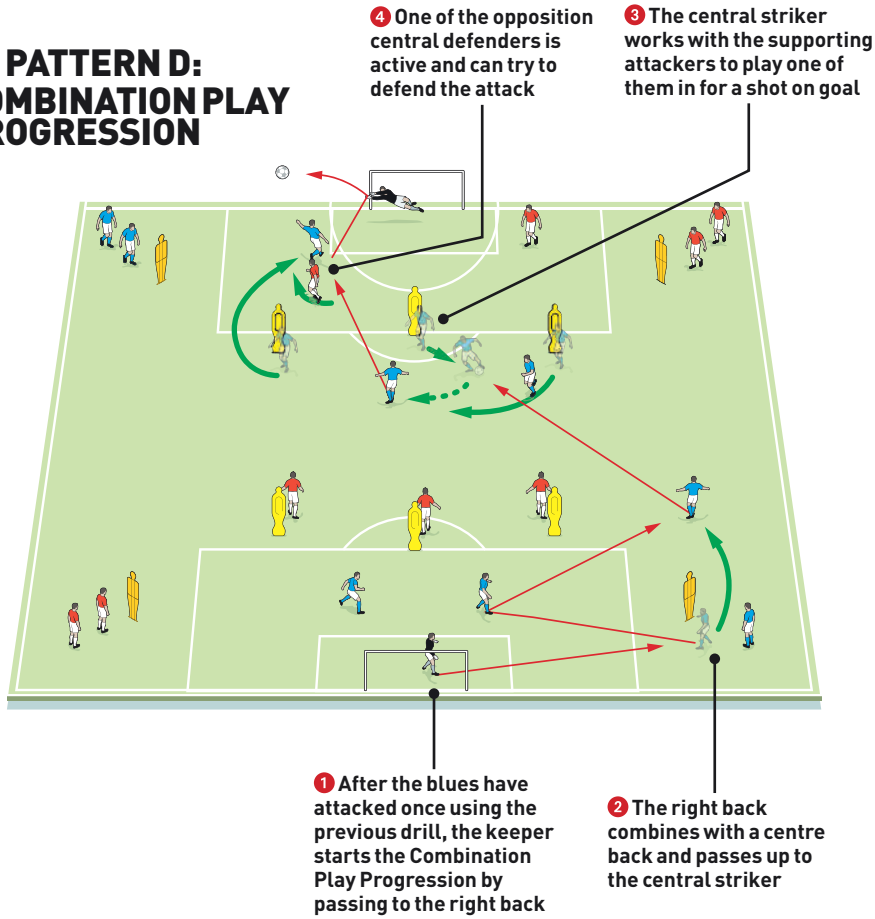
Pattern D: Combination play progression

After the blues have run the Crossing Drill Progression once, they then launch a progression of the Combination Play drill, with the blue right back this time combining with the central defender to play the ball up to the central striker, who is again supported by two

2a PATTERN C: CROSSING DRILL PROGRESSION

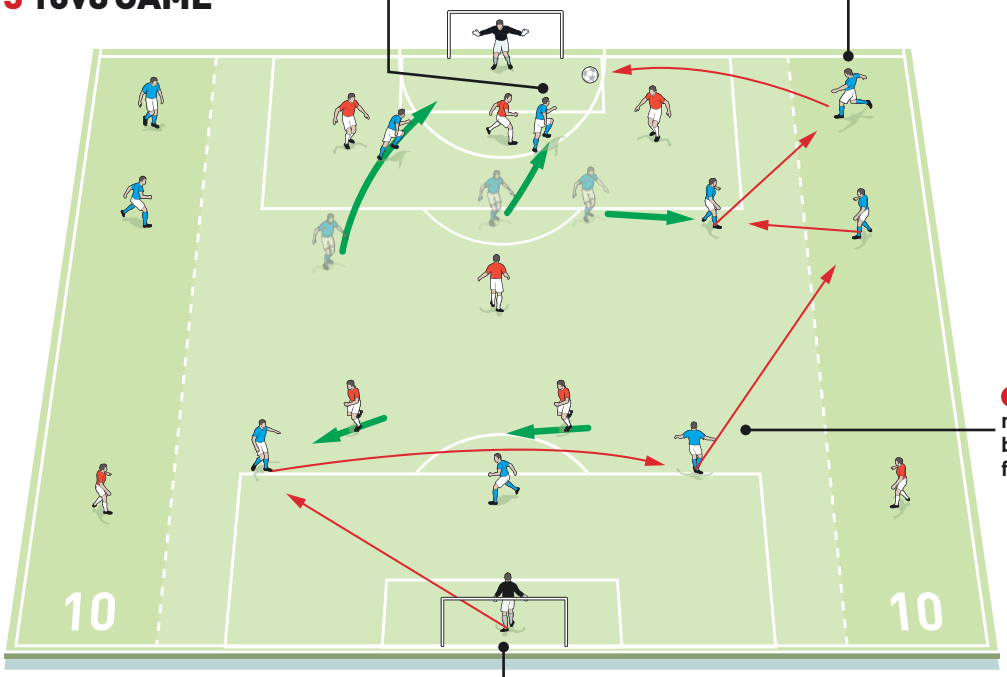


2b PATTERN D: COMBINATION PLAY PROGRESSION



NUNO ESPÍRITO SANTO: TEAM FINISHING

3 10v8 GAME



other attackers, as shown **[2b]**. But this time the centre forward is up against one active red defender, who tries to stop him scoring.
After the blues have attacked once using each of the progressions, run both drills (patterns C and D) in the opposite direction with the reds, starting with a pass from the goalkeeper to the left back – and then keep repeating the two patterns with each team.

How would I put this into a game situation?

We set up on half a pitch with an unopposed 10-yard channel on each flank. We have a goal and goalkeeper at each end. We're using 18 outfield players, divided into a blue team of ten and a red team of eight. It's 6v6 in the main area but the blues have two supporting wide players at the attacking end of each channel, while the reds have just one supporting wide player in each channel, as shown **[3]**.
The idea is to replicate the movement, attacking runs, build up play and combinations of the earlier drills, with the blues having the obvious advantage of extra support players in the channel who can combine with team mates to create the space to cross into the penalty area.
If the ball goes out of play, restarts are from the goalkeeper.

What are the key things to look out for?

What we want to see is the dynamics, the co-ordination between players – how they interpret the movement, how they can adjust and synchronise their actions to be able to execute the attack with the speed and precision that the Premier League demands.

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

Every single action must be valued. If any part of the session goes out of timing, an attack can fail – for instance, a bad touch can force our play to slow down and then the space we wanted to use has now been closed.
No single action makes the difference, as it's every single action connected together that makes the difference. The trick is to make the players understand this.

BRISTOL CITY

Lee Johnson
Switching play

SET-UP
AREA
Up to 60x40 yards
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 4 small goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 20 players + 4 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Passing drill: 15mins Switch of play possession: 15mins Four goals game: 20mins

Overview

This session is about switching play and switching the point of attack in order to exploit space on the pitch and ultimately to create more goal-scoring opportunities. We use these activities to improve as a team, as units and as individuals.

We would run this session as and when it was deemed necessary, because we don't tend to run sessions to a specific timeline. Generally speaking, following a match we will have analysed our performance, which gives us our training direction for the week.

We will design our sessions depending on the needs of the team in the build up to the next game, based on our analysis of the previous match and our preparation for the next one.

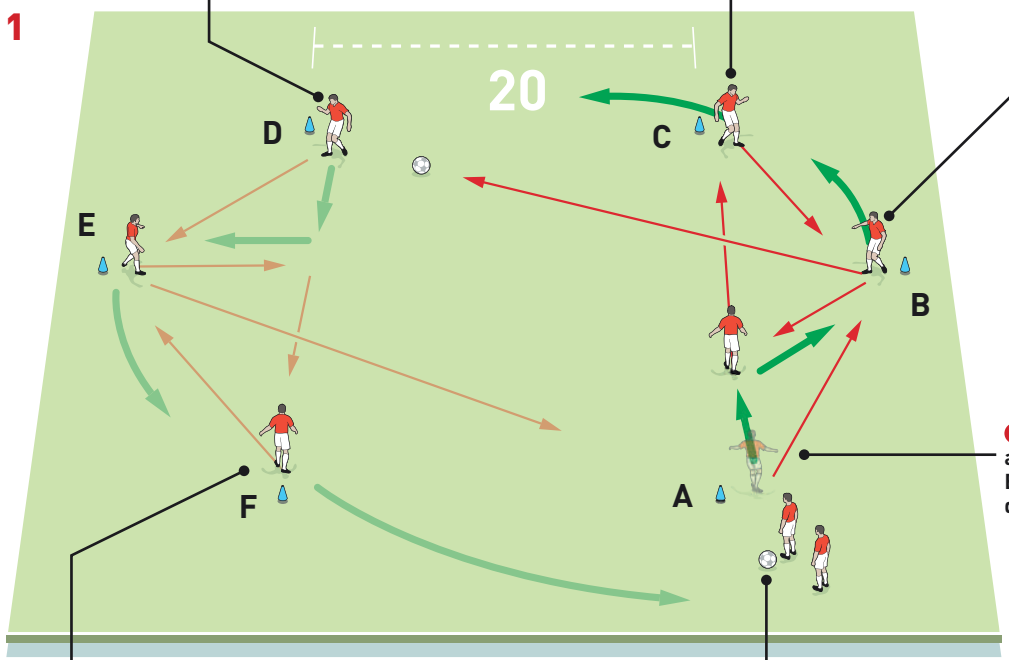
KEY
- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble
- Optional movement

What do I get the players to do?

Passing drill

We mark out two passing triangles approximately 20 yards apart. We're using eight players. Three players start on cone A (two with a ball and one without), while the rest of the players are positioned around the triangles, with one starting on each of the remaining five cones, as shown **[1]**.

Players pass in sequence and



4 On receiving the ball from B, player D starts the same pass and move sequence around the other triangle

2 After passing, players move to the next cone: player A goes to B, B goes to C, C goes to D and so on

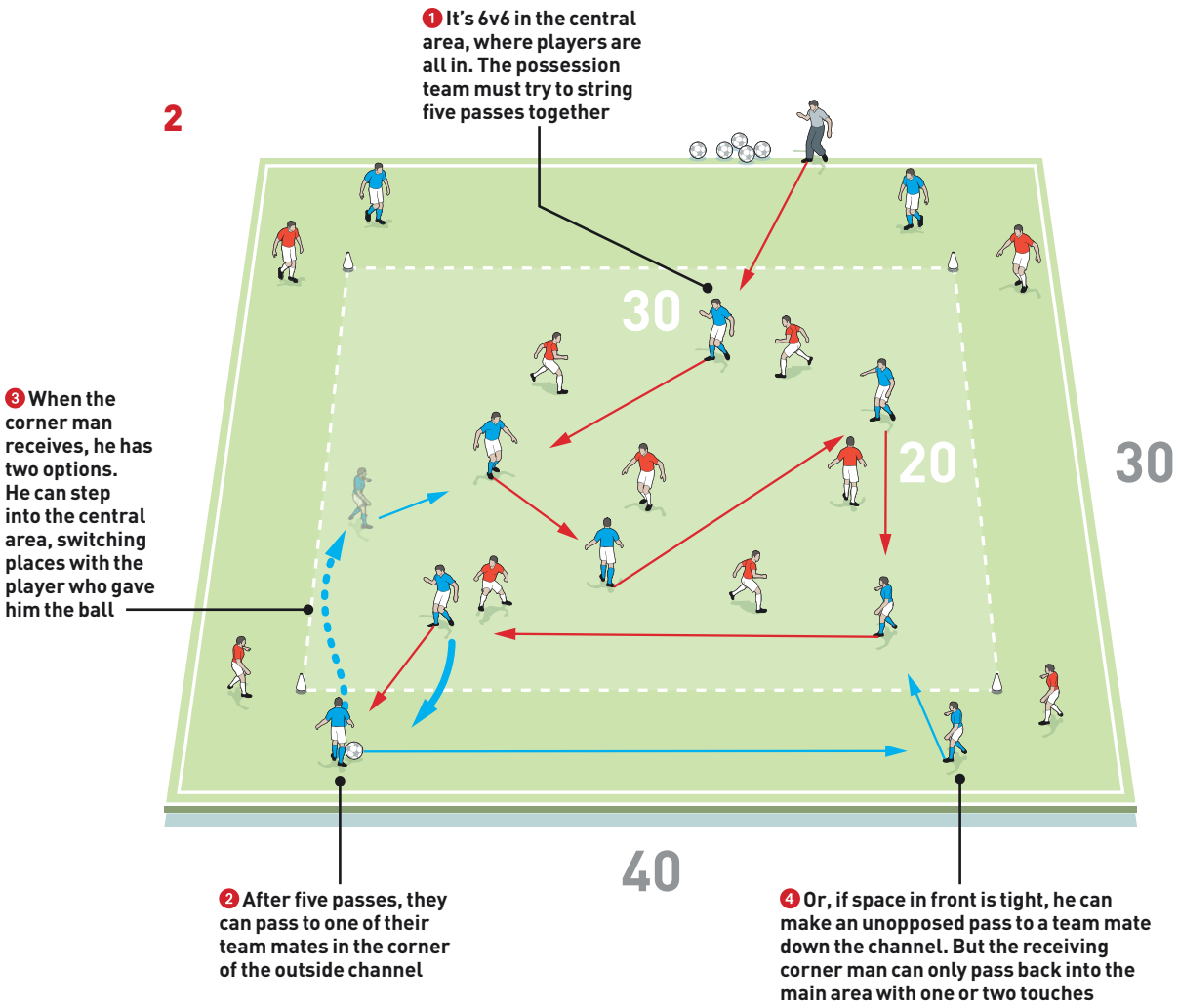
3 After receiving from A, player C drops the ball back to B, who switches the play diagonally across to D at the top of the other triangle

1 Player A plays a give and go with B and then passes deep to C

6 After F passes to E, he moves to A and joins the back of the queue ready to start the sequence again

5 As soon as the ball is switched from B to D, a new ball starts with the next waiting player at A

LEE JOHNSON: SWITCHING PLAY



then move up to the next cone after receiving and passing. Player A starts with a feint, plays a one-two with B and passes deep to C. Player C drops the ball back to B, who switches the play diagonally across to D at the top of the other triangle. The same passing sequence is then performed on the other triangle. As soon as the ball is switched from player B to D, a new ball starts with the waiting player on cone A. This means the passing sequence is running on both triangles simultaneously.

When players become accustomed to the routine, vary the play by passing in the opposite direction.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want to see players using the right weight of pass. They should know to pass in front of the receiver, to make it easier for the ball to be played onwards in the correct direction.

We also want to see players using an open body shape and the correct shoulder position when receiving, so they are able to play the onward pass with their first touch. They should only resort to two-touch if the incoming pass is a poor one.

What do I get the players to do next?

Switch of play possession

We set up an area of 40x30 yards, with a five-yard channel around the inside edge, leaving a central area of 30x20 yards. We're using 20 players, split into two teams of 10.

It's a 6v6 possession game in the central area and both teams have a player in each corner of the outside channel, as shown **[2]**.

The players in the central area have unlimited touches but they must try to string five passes together before they can pass to one of their team mates in the corner.

When the corner player receives the pass, he has two options – if he has the space to step into the main area, he switches places with the player who passed out and joins the play, or if space is tight and the area is congested, he can open up and play an unopposed pass to the corner man in the channel on either side of him. If he chooses to pass along the channel, the receiving corner man can only then pass into the main area with one or two touches, so it's up to his team mates inside to make an angle to receive. The possession game then continues.

The key objective is the switch of play, with players drawing the opposition in before going out the other side.

We would progress this activity by getting rid of the target number of passes before the ball can go to the corner men. We could also allow the corner player to make a lofted diagonal pass to the corner man diagonally opposite.

LEE JOHNSON: SWITCHING PLAY

How would I put this into a game situation?

Four goals game

We set up in an area of 60x40 yards with two small goals at each end, as shown **[3]**. We're using four goalkeepers – one for each goal. We're also using 20 outfield players, split into two teams of 10. Set the teams up in the formations used by your team to recreate match specific patterns – in the diagram the set up is 4-2-3-1 v 4-3-3.

We play a normal game with unlimited touches, but with a choice of two goals to attack we want to see players exploiting any space on the pitch by switching play regularly. When a goal is scored, play restarts with the goalkeeper diagonally opposite.

We progress the game by introducing conditions. For instance, on the sound of a whistle, players must switch the play and score within five seconds of the switch. We could also condition players to shoot immediately on the sound of the whistle.

What are the key things to look out for?

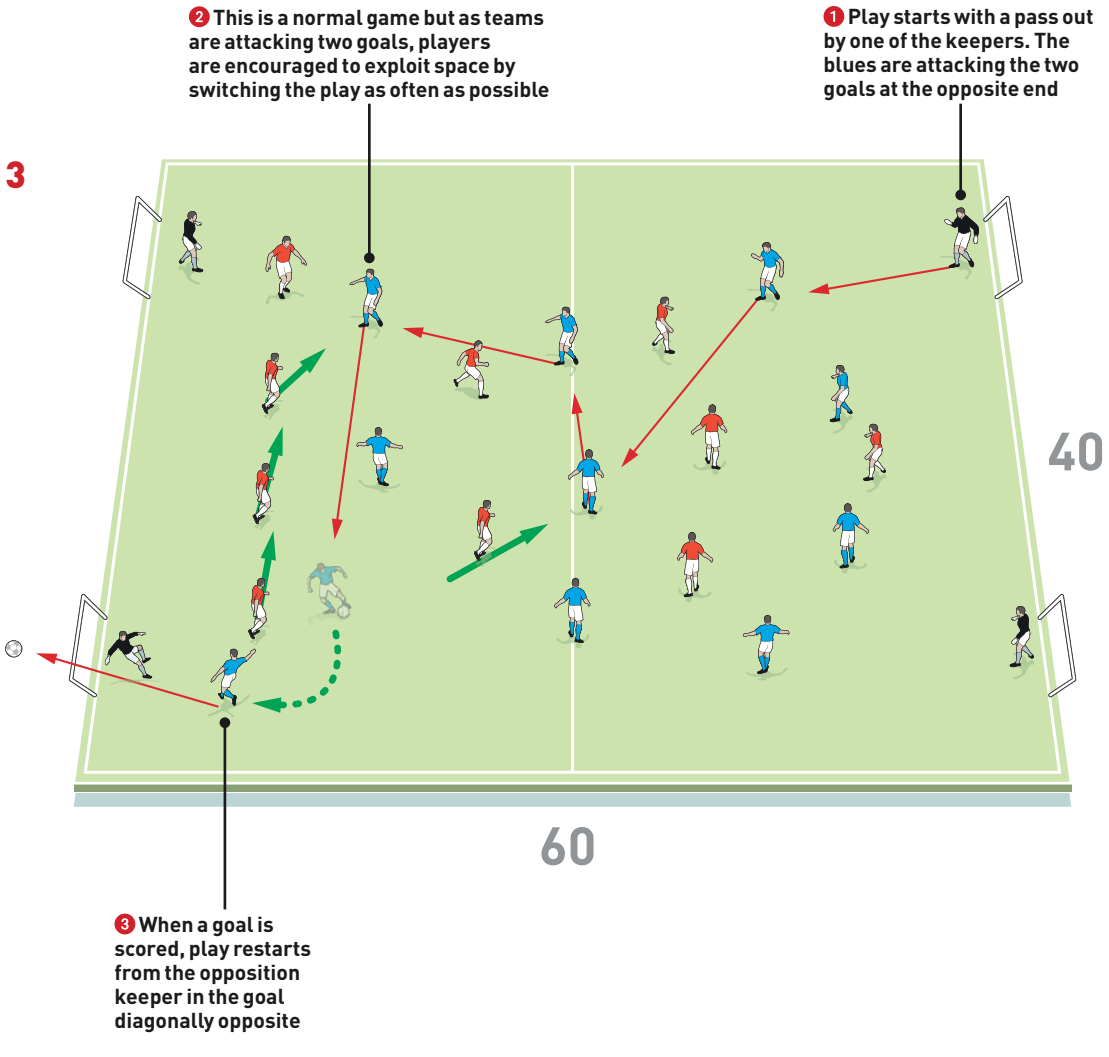
Within a session based on this theme we are looking for several key technical points. Firstly, we want to see that all players have a picture of what's going on around them. They can do this by scanning their surroundings at all times, as well as passing on and receiving good information.

Secondly, we encourage our players to adopt an open body shape, so they can either work their feet and hips to play forwards when required or close their body up if they need to protect the ball.

Thirdly, the timing of the switch is key. By playing a series of short passes, we look to draw the opposition in before switching the ball to a player on the other side of the pitch, either directly or within two passes.

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

Passing in tight spaces is incredibly important for the flow of these possession sessions. Also, if players are a pass or two ahead in their minds, this will enable the session to be a success. But if we don't get the desired outcomes, we can work with our players to educate them and coach the areas of their game that need refinement. To do this we use a variety of tools, such as video analysis or individual technical sessions.



SUNDERLAND

Jack Ross
Transition to counter-attack

SET-UP
AREA
Up to 60x40 yards
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, mannequins, 4 goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 20 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Transition possession: 15mins Defence to attack: 15mins Quick counter game: 15mins 4v2 counter-attack game: 15mins 6v6 counter-attack game: 15mins

Overview

This session not only works on the speed of a team's transition from defence to counter-attack, but it also focuses on the reaction to losing possession and the speed of recovery when transitioning from attack to defence.

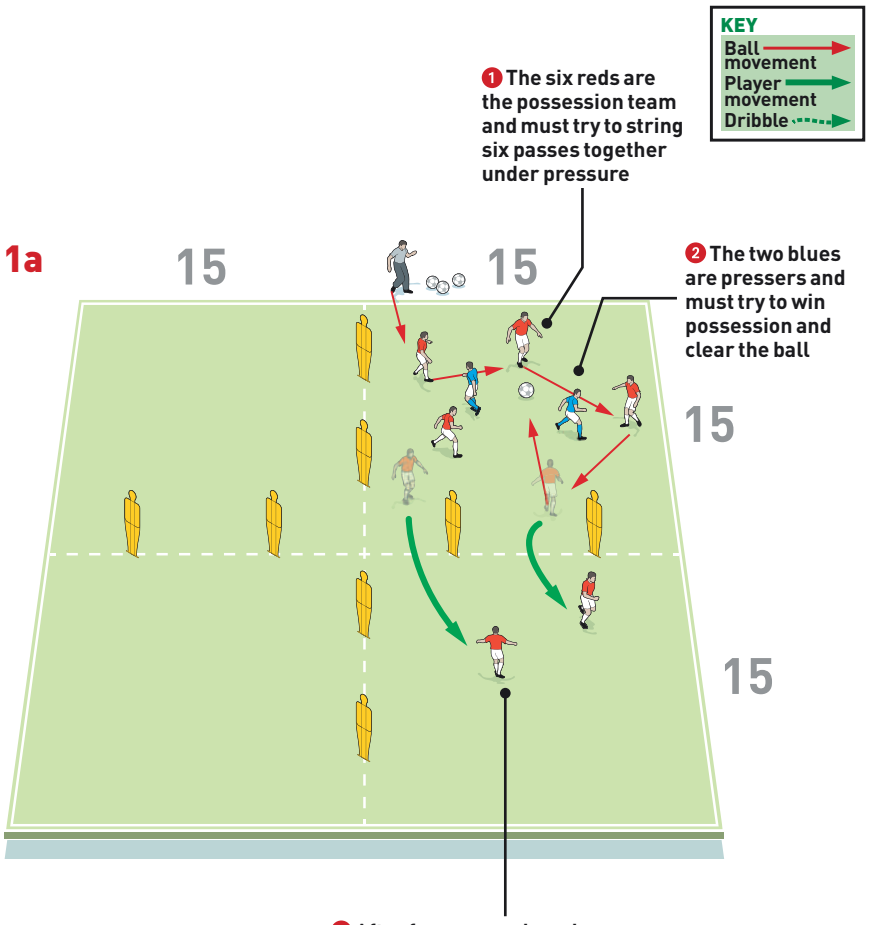
It's essential that the tempo and intensity of this session is high, as the transitional aspect ensures that players must be reactive to either losing or gaining possession. This intensity, allied to the competitive nature of each activity within the session, means that players will work hard but will really enjoy it.

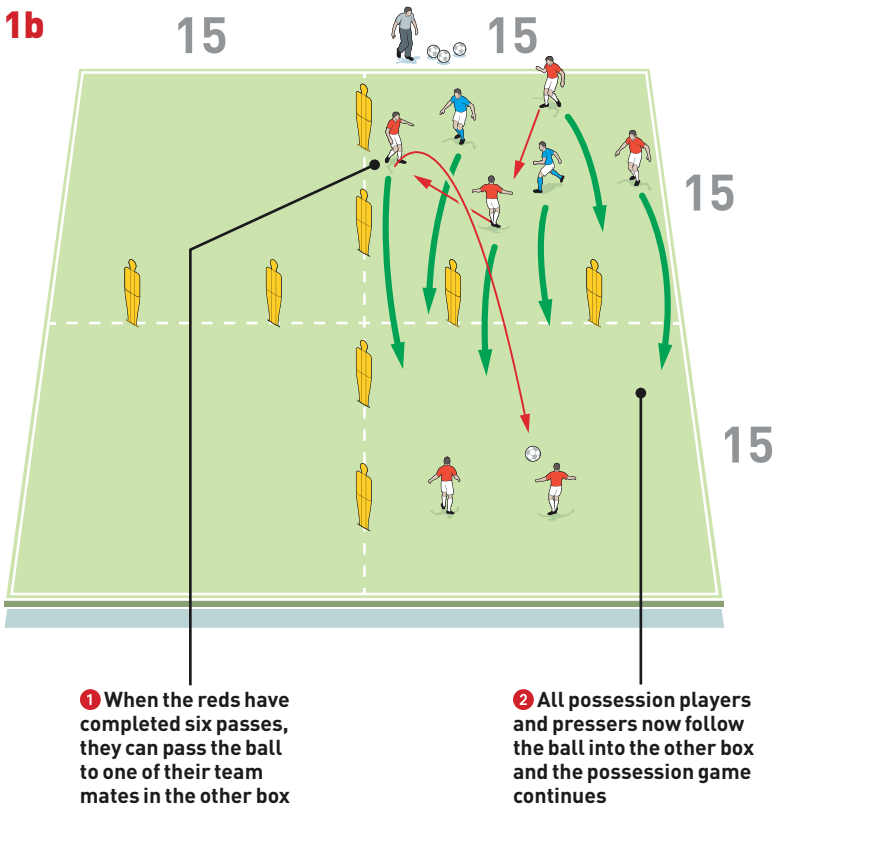
What do I get the players to do?

Transition possession

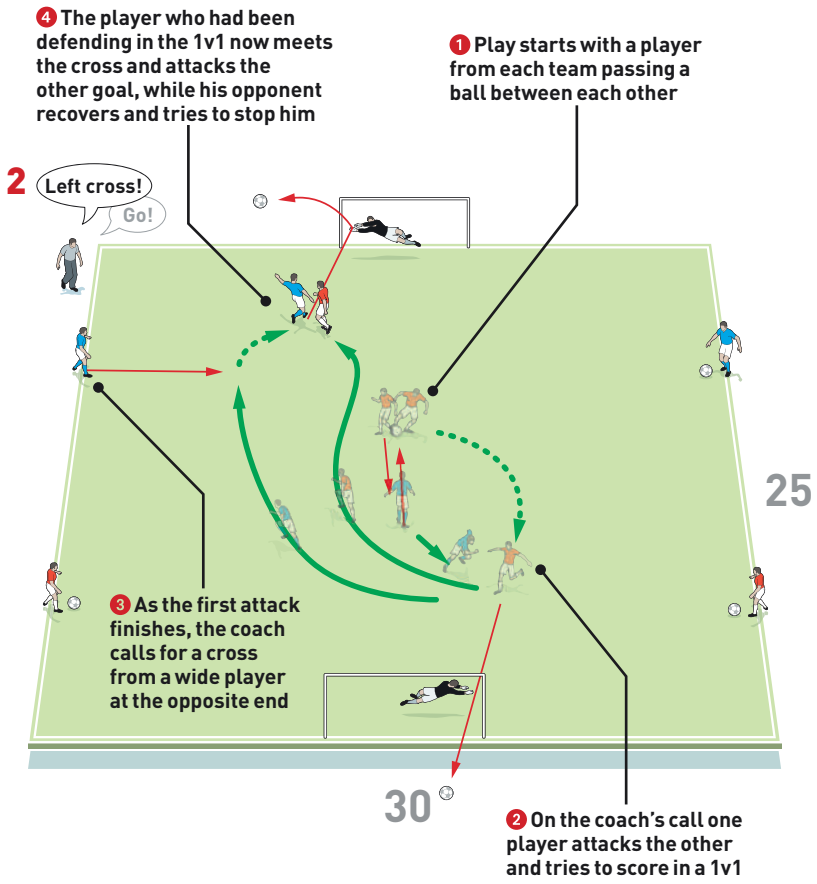
We set up an area of 30x30 yards divided into four equal sized boxes, with mannequins along the inside edges of each box, as shown **[1]**. We're using eight outfield players divided into a possession team of six and a pressing team of two.

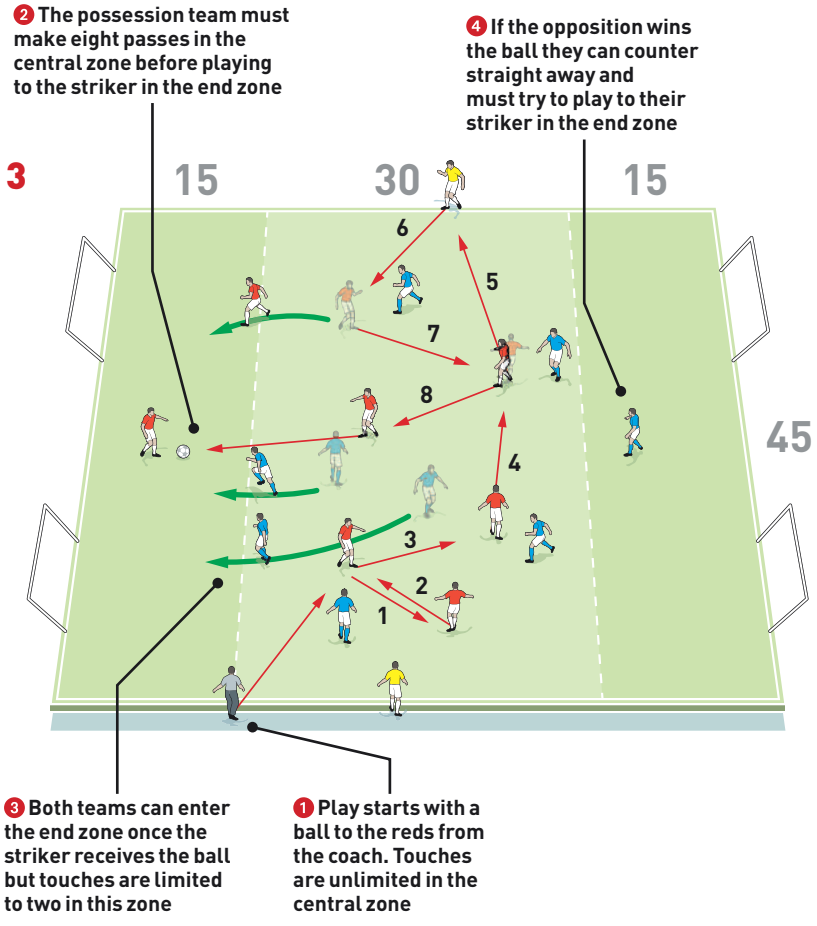
All of the players start in one box and the team of six must string six passes together before they can move into the next box. However, after four passes have been made, two members of the passing team can move into the next box ready to receive the ball, but if the passing sequence breaks down, they must return to their original box.





JACK ROSS: TRANSITION TO COUNTER-ATTACK





"It's essential the tempo of this session is high, as the transitional aspect ensures players must be reactive to either losing or gaining possession"

If the pressers gain control of the ball they should clear it out of the area and play restarts with a ball from the coach to the passing team.
Rotate the pressers every 75/90 seconds.

Defence to attack
We set up an area of 30x25 yards with a goal and goalkeeper at each end. We're using six outfield players divided into two teams of three. One player from each team starts in the centre and both teams have wide players on each side of the pitch at the end the team is attacking.
Plays starts with the central red and blue players passing the ball between themselves. On the coach's shout, one of them attacks the other in a 1v1 and tries to score in the opposition goal, as shown **[2]**. Just as the attack finishes, the coach calls out for a cross at the other end from the team who have just defended the 1v1. The central players recover, with the player who just defended now becoming the attacker. He must meet the cross at the other end and should try to score in the goal, under pressure from his opponent in the 1v1.
The coaching focus should be the transition from defence to attack. Rotate players so everyone gets a turn in the centre.

Quick counter game
We set up an area of 60x45 yards with two goals at each ▼

JACK ROSS: TRANSITION TO COUNTER-ATTACK

end. The area is divided into two 15-yard end zones and a 30-yard central zone. We're using 16 players, divided into two teams of seven and two neutrals. Six players from each team start in the central zone, while one neutral is positioned on each side (goalkeepers can be used as the neutrals). Both teams have a striker in the end zone they are attacking.

Reds start in possession and the aim for them is to string eight passes together, using the help of the two neutral players. Once they have achieved this target, the attackers can play the ball to their striker and break into the end zone to support him, as shown **[3]**.

When the attackers enter the end zone, their opponents can recover into the zone to defend, but players are limited to two touches in the end zone. Touches are unlimited in the central zone.

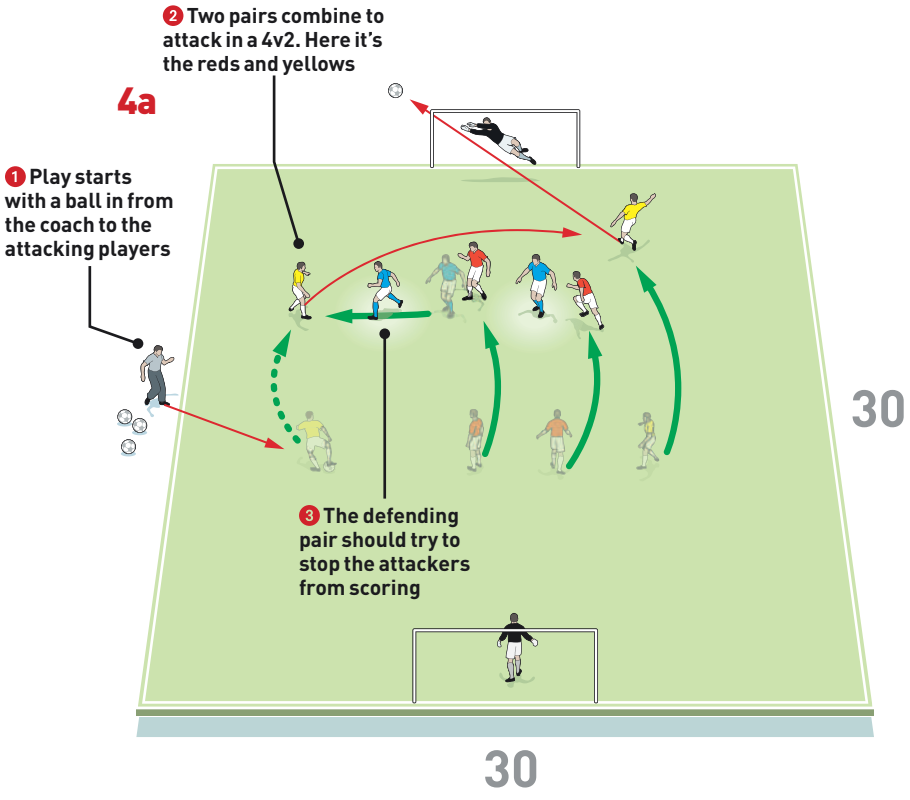
If the blues win possession at any point, they can immediately counter-attack and should play the ball to their striker, who can then attack one of the goals in the other end zone.

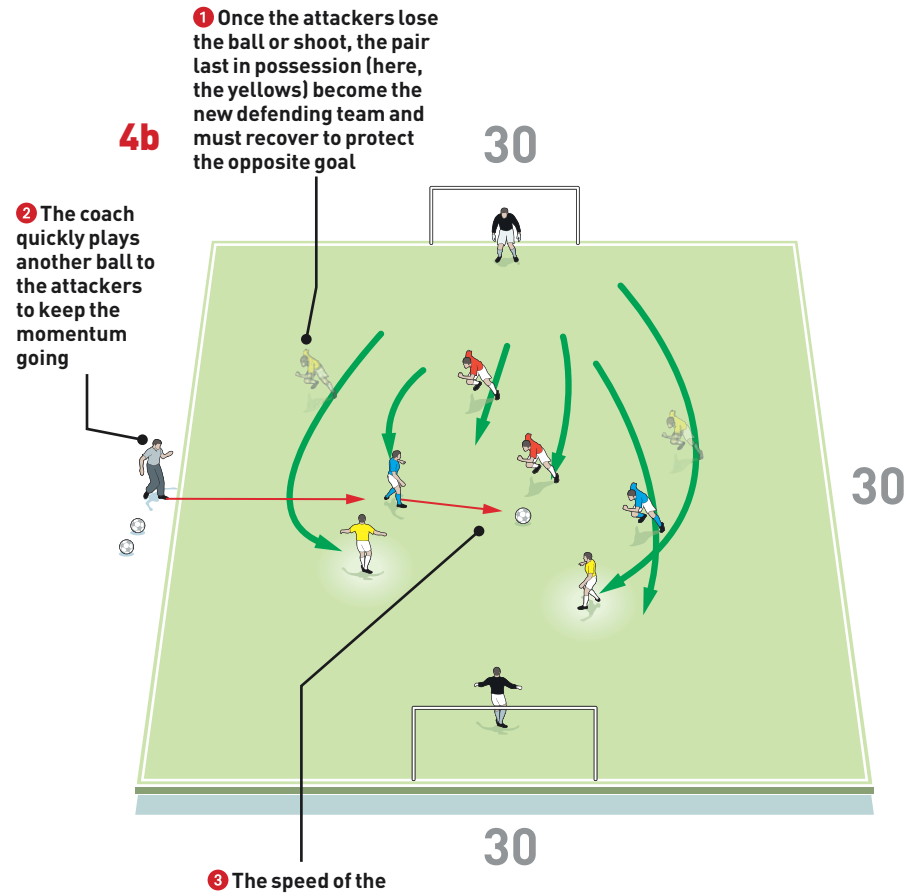
4v2 Counter-attack game

We set up an area of 30x30 yards with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We're using six players, divided into three teams of two.

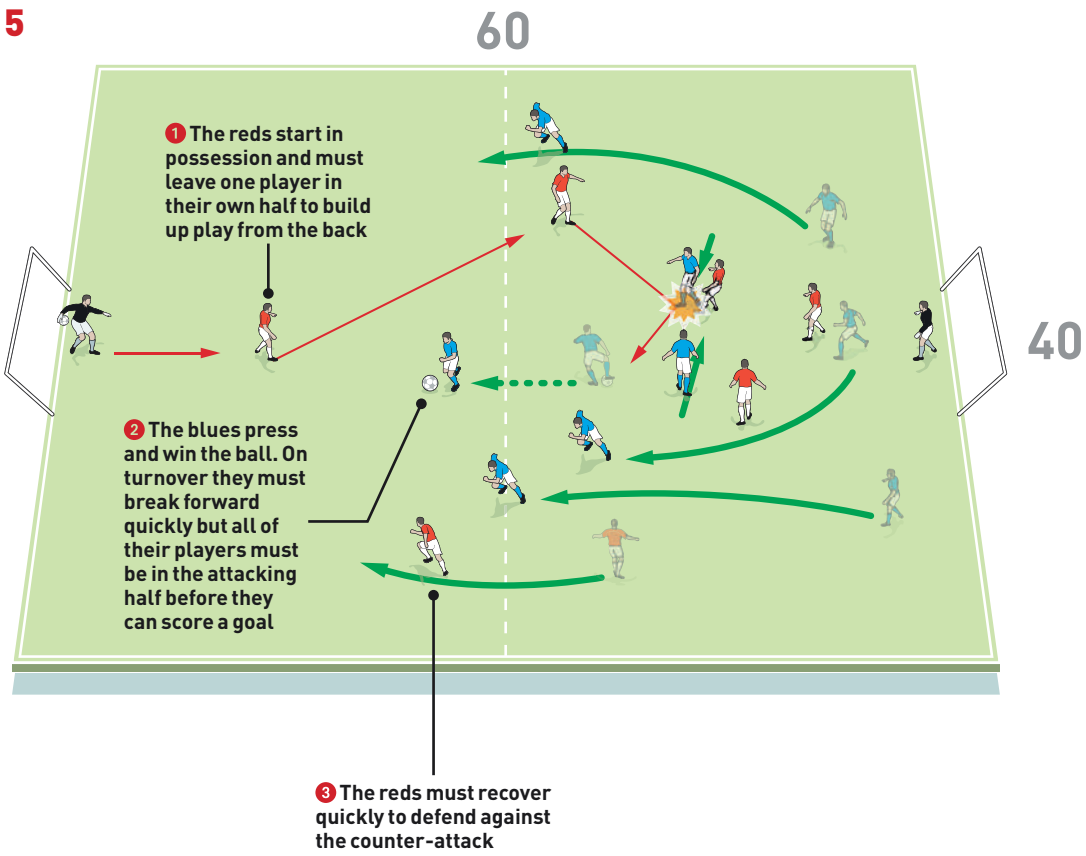
Two teams line up to attack the third team in a 4v2, as shown **[4a]**. If possession is lost, or if the ball goes dead, the team last in possession become the

"Players react well to winning the ball and they will counter quickly, but they don't always react so swiftly when they lose the ball"





JACK ROSS: TRANSITION TO COUNTER-ATTACK



new defending pair and must recover to defend the opposite goal from attack, as shown **[4b]**.
The focus of this activity should be on the speed of the counter-attack and the ruthlessness of the finishing.

6v6 Counter-attack game
We set up an area of 60x40 yards with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. We're using 12 outfield players, divided into two teams of six. The team that starts with the ball leaves one player in its own half and all other players from both teams start in the other half.
Play begins with a pass from the keeper to the player who is in his own half and the possession team (in the diagram, the reds) then must attack the opposite end, as shown **[5]**. If the reds lose possession, the opposition (the blues) must quickly counter, but all of their players must be in the attacking half of the pitch before they can score. The team who are now defending (the reds) must recover quickly to defend against the counter-attack.
The focus of this activity should be on pressing and making the quick transition to counter-attack.

What are the key things to look out for?
The key points we look for are the speed of reaction as players transition from defence to attack and back to defence. We also want see effective forward passing and good support play when on the counter. Other key elements to the session are how well we press to counter-attack and how quickly we break forwards when we're on the counter. The ruthlessness of the players in front of goal is very important too.

What are the typical mistakes players might make and how do I avoid them?
A common problem is that players react well to winning the ball and they will counter quickly, but they don't always react so swiftly when they lose the ball and are recovering. Coaches must be aware of this and should encourage players to react with speed when making the transition from attack to defence.

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
Matthew Bishop

Low block & emergency defending

SET-UP
AREA
Two thirds of pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 mannequins, 2 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 20 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Practice 1: 20mins Practice 2: 20mins 11v11 game: 20mins

Overview

This session is all about employing a low block and rehearsing players in emergency defending. Most teams will employ the low block at some point during a season. The key principle of this team tactic is to block the middle of the pitch, starve the opposition of space in terms of vertical lines and prioritise showing the opposition wide. If the low block is breached, or if the defenders are facing a counter-attack, they should resort to emergency defending. We want to see players demonstrating that they have developed a clean sheet mentality and can handle defending in 1v1 situations when required. We also want to see the defenders making quick decisions about whether to press, recover or retreat. They should ultimately get in a position to regroup and defend with a narrow shape and prevent penetration from both central and wide attacks.

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

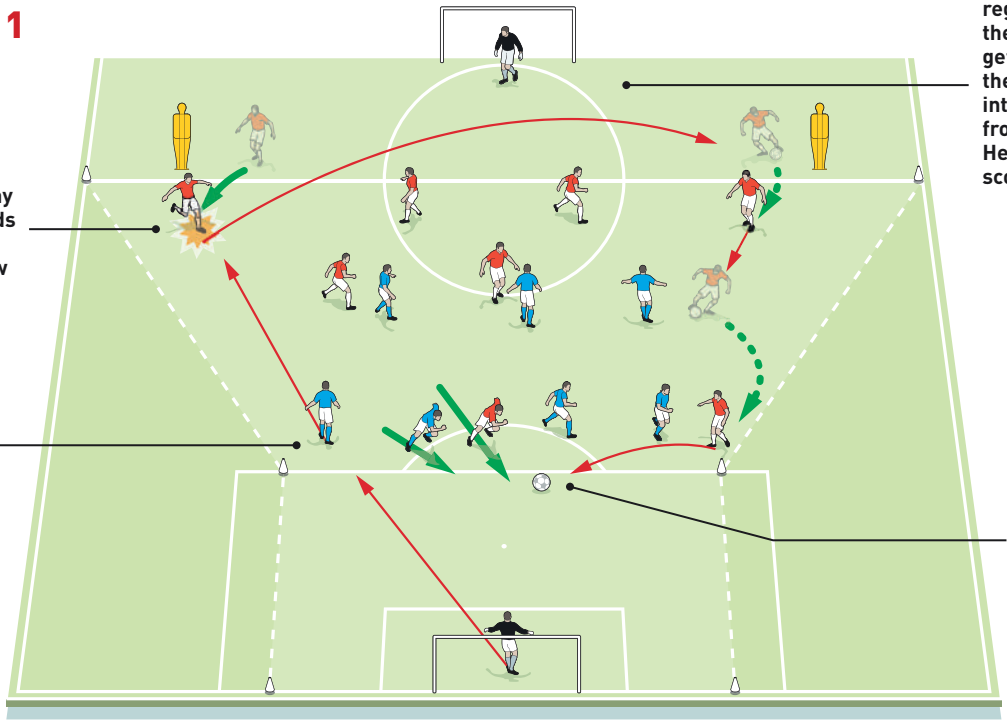
What do I get the players to do?

Practice 1

We set up on just over half a pitch, with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. The playing area is coned off in a funnel shape, as shown **[1]**. We position a mannequin on each flank at the wide end of the

> "The key principle of this team tactic is to block the middle of the pitch and starve the opposition of space"

1



1 The blue full back receives a starting pass from the keeper and plays a long ball up towards the mannequin in the left wing position

2 A red full back intercepts the long pass and play goes live. The reds switch play and attack the narrow end of the funnel and try to score

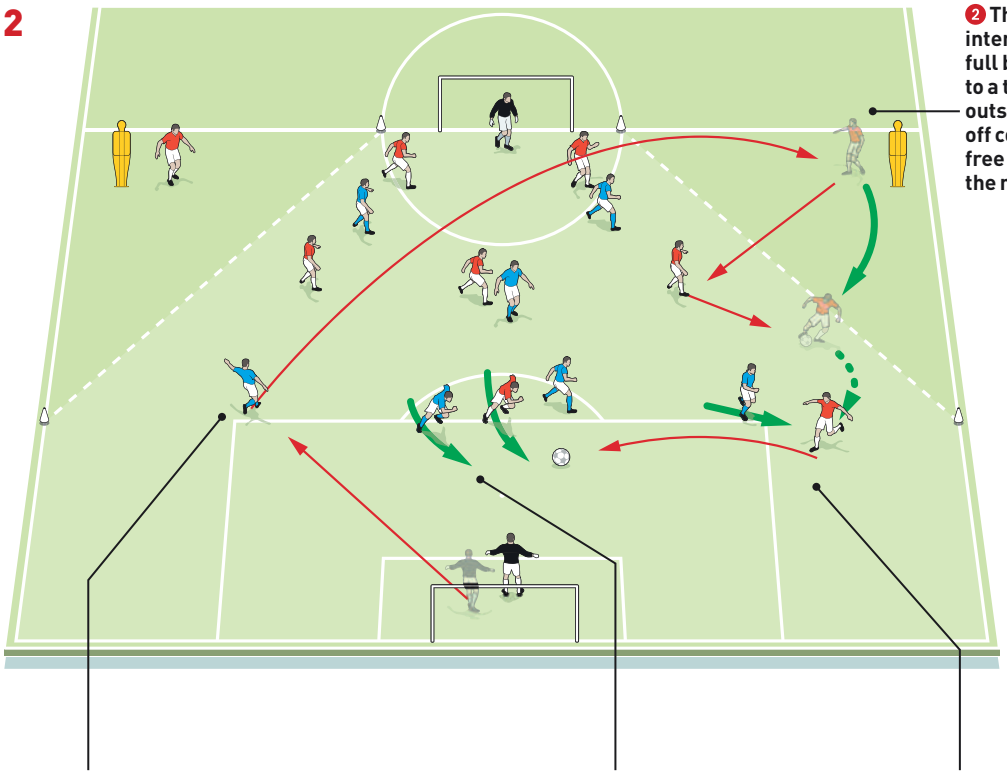
3 The blues are defending with a low block but here it is penetrated and the blue must go 1v1 to stop the red attacker

4 If the blues regain possession, they should try to get a player over the halfway line into the zone in front of the goal. He can then try to score in the goal

▲ Practice 1: It's 8v7 plus keepers. The eight reds are set up as if they are part of a 4-1-4-1 formation. The seven blues are set up as if they are part of a 4-2-3-1 formation.

MATTHEW BISHOP: LOW BLOCK & EMERGENCY DEFENDING

▼ Practice 2: It's a different playing area, but it's still 8v7 plus keepers. The eight reds are still set up as if they are part of a 4-1-4-1 formation. The seven blues are still set up as if they are part of a 4-2-3-1 formation.



funnel, as if they were wingers.
We're using 15 outfield players, split into a blue team of seven and a red team of eight. This is a phase of play and the reds are set up as if they were part of a 4-1-4-1 formation defending the wide end, whereas the blues form part of a 4-2-3-1 formation and are defending the narrow end of the funnel with a low block.
Play starts with a pass out from the goalkeeper to a blue full back, who receives and plays a long pass up the pitch in the direction of one of the mannequins, as if he was passing to his left winger. However, the red right back intercepts and play goes live. The reds now attack the narrow end of the funnel and must try to score in the goal as normal. If the blues regain possession, they have to counter-attack quickly and must get a player over the half way line to score in the goal at the wide end.

What are the key things to look out for?

The team defending the funnel end should be defending with a narrow shape, in order to block and cut off passing routes; at the other end the defenders should force play wide by blocking off the centre. This means that 1v1s will naturally occur in both narrow and wide areas of the pitch and other players must cover this situation – we want to see them supporting the play if their team wins the 1v1, and they should block, tackle and force the play if the 1v1 is lost.

What do I get the players to do next?

Practice 2

We set up on half a pitch with a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. The corners of one end are coned off from the goal, as shown **[2]**, and a mannequin is positioned on each of the flanks.
We're using 15 outfield players, split into a blue team of seven and a red team of eight. Again, this is a phase of play and the teams are set up using the same partial formations as in the previous practice, this time with the reds defending the funnelled end of the pitch and the blues defending the wide end. Two red fullbacks are locked in the coned off corners with the mannequins, while the remaining players are in the central area. ▼

MATTHEW BISHOP: LOW BLOCK & EMERGENCY DEFENDING

Play starts with the blue full back attempting to switch the play to the 'winger' mannequin on the far side of the pitch, but his pass is intercepted by one of the red full backs. On intercepting the ball, the red full back passes to a team mate in the main playing area and then can follow his pass and join the play.
The reds are then free to attack the wide end of the pitch as normal. If the blues gain possession, they must attack the coned off goal centrally.

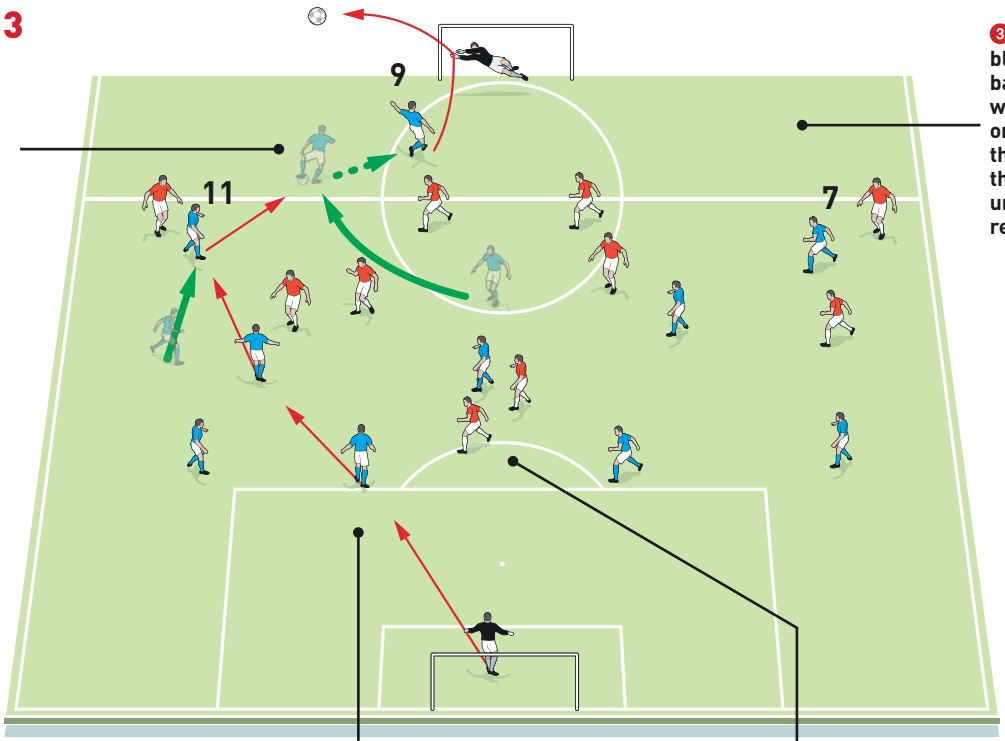
What are the key things to look out for?

We want to see both teams defending with a low block – one should be forcing the play wide where the pitch is at full width and the other should be blocking passing routes and balls played between the lines where the pitch is cut off. Both teams will have to recover and use emergency defending if they lose the ball.
With a turnover of possession, we want to see players reacting quickly and covering the centre of the pitch.

How would I put this into a game situation?

11v11 game
We set up on just over half a pitch with a goal at each end. We're using 20 outfield players and two goalkeepers, split into two teams of 11. We would suggest that coaches set up the two teams in the formations that they employ on a regular basis.
The blues are defending the penalty area end of the pitch and they have to get their centre forward (the number 9) over the halfway line when attacking. They then have five seconds to score, as shown **[3]**. If one of the other blue players receives the ball over the half way line, such as the either of the wingers, they must cross for the goalkeeper to catch unopposed and then play restarts from the keeper.
The team attacking the penalty area should play as normal.
We make sure players employ a low block and use all they have learnt about emergency defending from the previous practices.

"With a turnover of possession we want to see players reacting quickly and covering the centre of the pitch"



2 The blues must get their centre forward over the halfway line. He then has just five seconds to score

3 If one of the other blues receives the ball over the half way line, such as one of the wingers, they must cross for the keeper to catch unopposed and play restarts from there

1 The blues defend the penalty area end of the pitch. Play starts from the keeper and the defenders build up from the back

4 The red team attacks the penalty area end. They play as normal

WALSALL

Graham Biggs

Delay, deny and dictate

SET-UP
AREA
60x40 yards
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 4 small goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 16 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Defending game: 20mins Quarters game: 20mins 8v4 game: 20mins

Overview

This is a defending session. It is made up of three practices that are all designed to focus on denying opponents the opportunity to progress and penetrate with the ball.

Each practice is competitive and game related, and all of the players are fully involved in each practice, but their roles can be rotated so every player gains experience of both the defensive and offensive functions. Each practice features players in possession, players out of possession and players in transition.

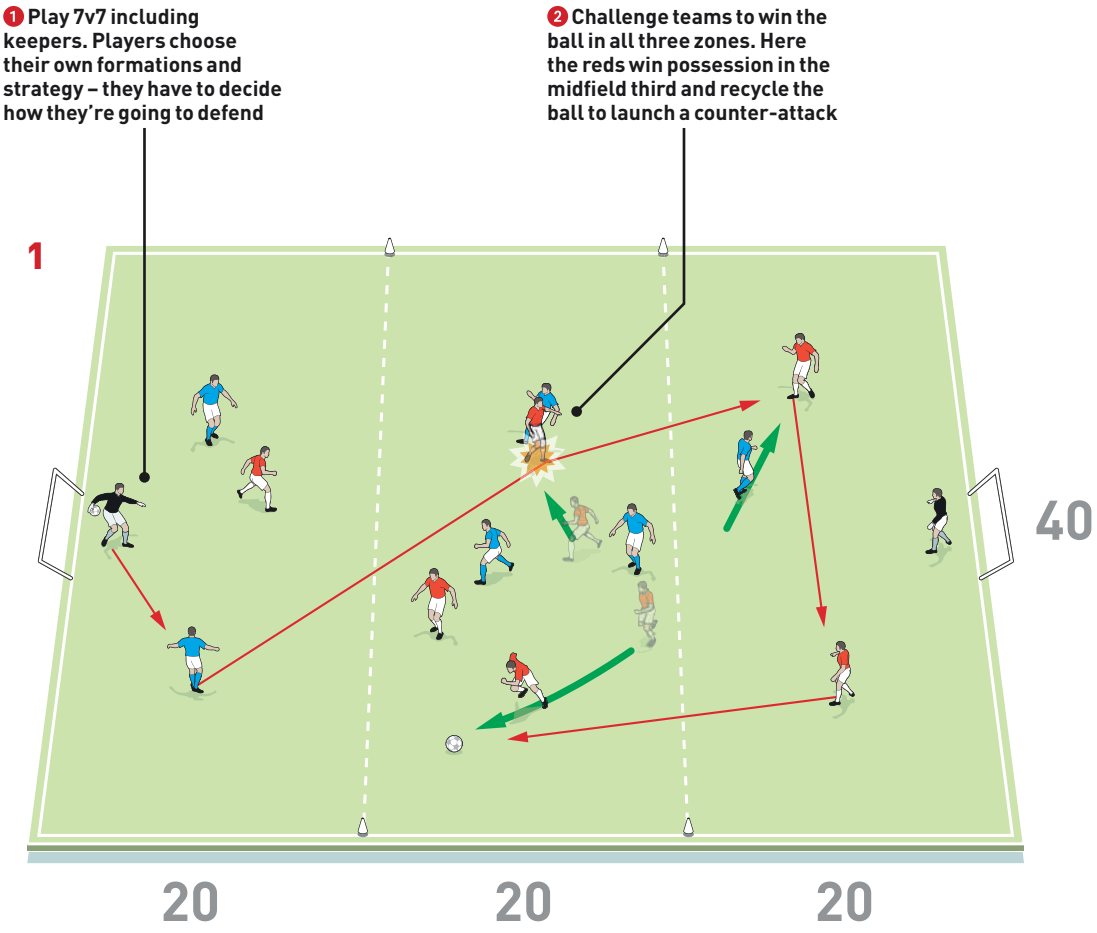
What do I get the players to do?

Defending game

We set up an area of 60x40 yards split into three 20 yards zones. We have a goal and a goalkeeper at each end and we're using 12 outfield players, divided into two teams of six plus keepers.

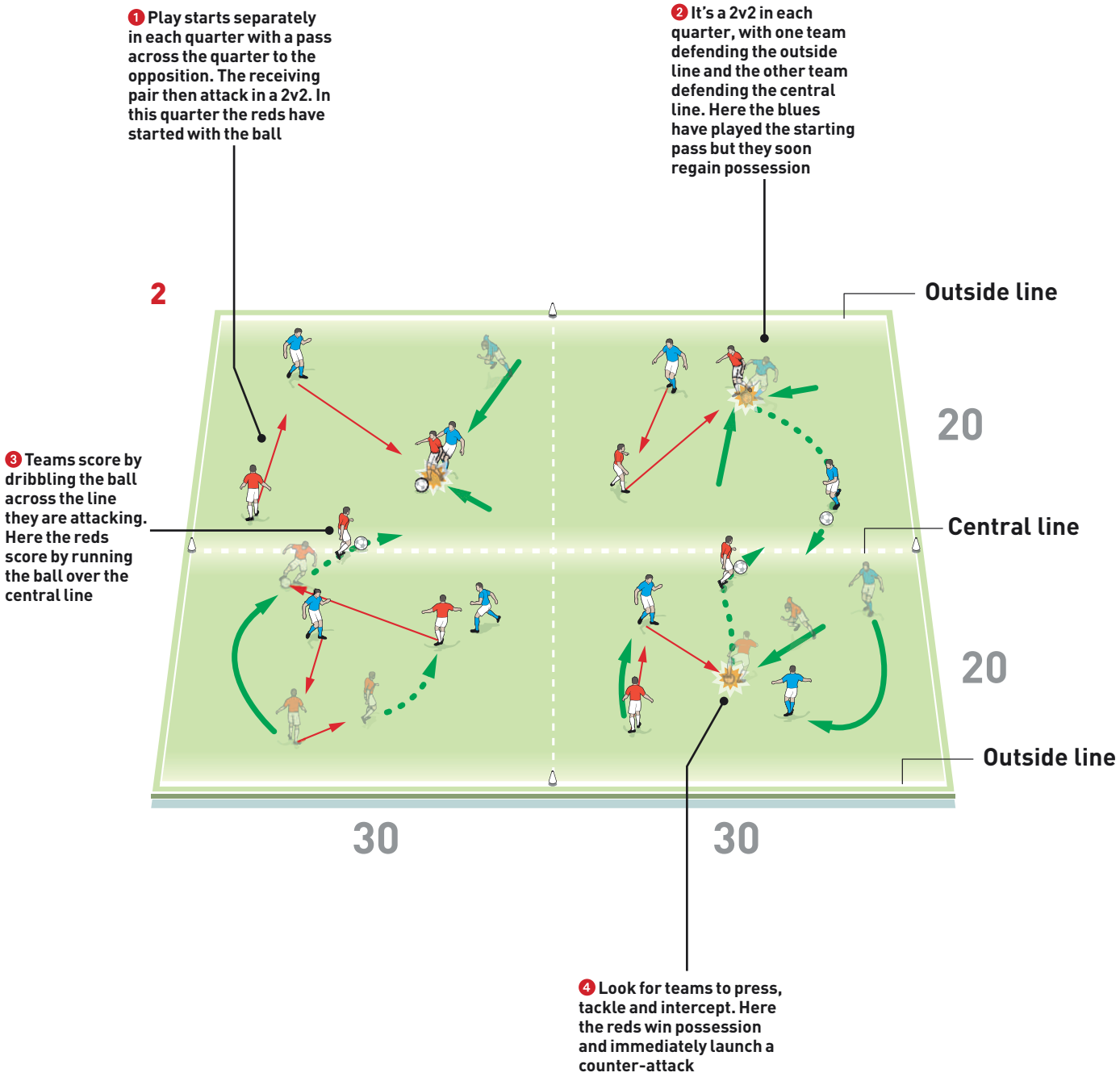
We give players a minute to choose their own formation and strategy, so they can discuss how they're going to defend, and then we play a 7v7 game, as shown **[1]**. We set players the challenge of winning the ball in all three of the different areas

KEY
- Ball movement
- Player movement
- Dribble



"We give players a minute to choose their own formation and strategy, so they can discuss how they're going to defend"

GRAHAM BIGGS: DELAY, DENY AND DICTATE



of the pitch – the attacking third, the midfield third and the defending third.

Quarters game

We set up in the same 60x40-yard area, this time split into quarters. We're using 16 outfield players, with a 2v2 being played in each quarter, but you could play 2v3 or even 3v3 – numbers can vary depending on your needs and the ability of your players.

Play starts separately in each quarter with a pass across the quarter to one of the opposing players. One team is defending the central line and the other team is defending the outside line, as shown **[2]**. Teams score by dribbling over the line that their opponents are defending.

When defending, players should be pressing, tackling and making good interceptions. We set them challenges, such as: can they stop a forward dribble or pass in a 1v1; can they score within five seconds of regaining the ball.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want to see that players recognise the triggers to press and the triggers to delay, and that they can defend with a compact shape.

GRAHAM BIGGS: DELAY, DENY AND DICTATE

It's also important that when one player presses, a team mate covers defensively and balances the play. Similarly, players should exhibit control and restraint, so they don't just throw themselves into rash challenges when defending 1v1.

How would I put this in a game situation?

8v4 game

We set up in the same 60x40-yard area, this time divided into three zones with two small goals at each end. We're using 12 outfield players split into a blue team of eight and a red team of four. The team of eight starts with four players in each of the outer zones – they must keep possession and score by successfully passing the ball to the other end zone. The team of four presses from the central zone and looks to block passing routes from one end zone to the other.

One red player can break out of the central zone to press in an end zone. If the pressing team wins the ball, they can counter-attack by shooting at any of the small goals, as shown **[3a]**.

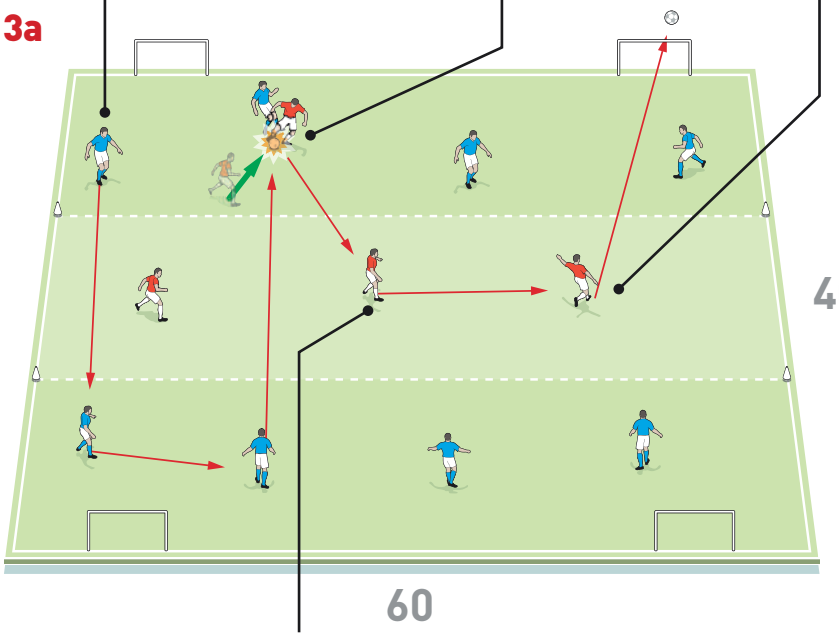
When the ball is with the blue possession team in one end zone, a team mate from the opposite end zone can drop into the central zone to receive the ball, as shown **[3b]**.

What are the key things to look out for?

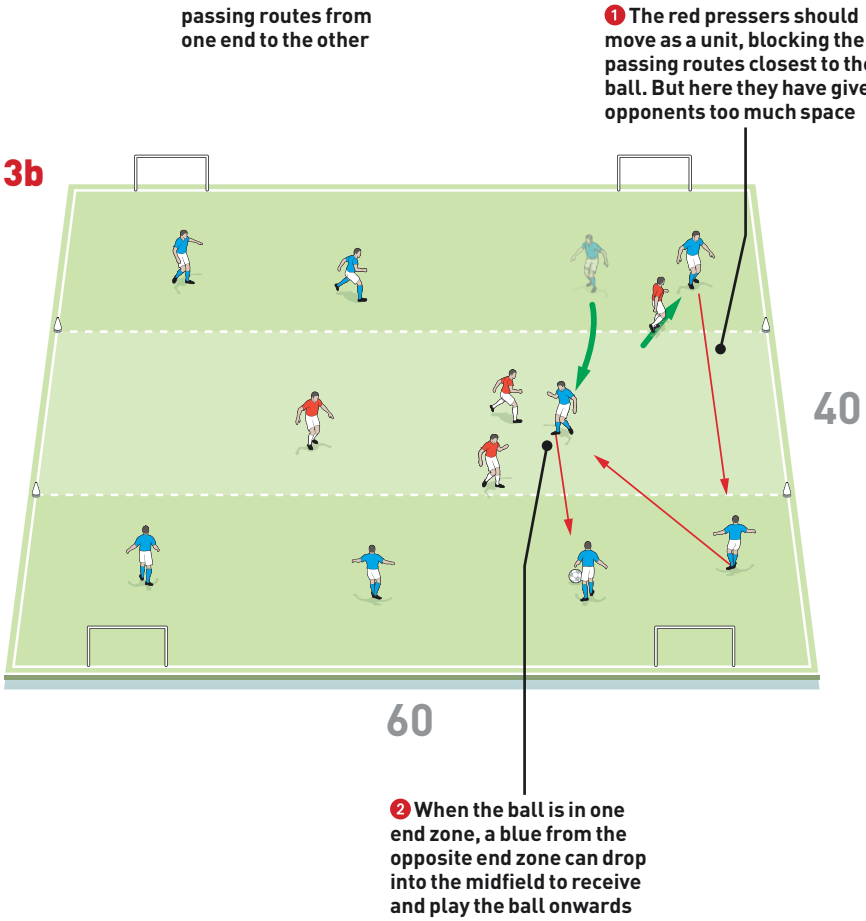
We want to see that the central players understand when to press and when to delay. They must also retain their shape and defend as a unit, moving together to stop the forward pass.

The possession team need to recognise when the opportunity to penetrate the central zone presents itself and should not try to force the play.

3a



3b



EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: GARY STEMPEL

OUR MAN IN PANAMA

Until recently the interim head coach of Panama's national football team, Gary Stempel talks about the part he has played in the development Panamanian football

Gary Stempel has played a crucial role in Panama's football history and is credited by many with laying the foundations for the country's 2018 World Cup qualification. But while the impact that Stempel has made on the country is impressive, his career had fairly modest beginnings.

Born to a Panamanian father and an English mother and having moved to North London as a young boy, he graduated from university and took a job as a community outreach officer at Millwall FC. Then, in 1996, following the advice of his father, an ex-baseball player and keen sports enthusiast, he decided to explore the opportunities that might exist on Panama's fledgling football scene.

Although he had completed his coaching badges in England and was fluent in Spanish, it was a bold, some might say risky, decision. After all, he was leaving the nation with the world's oldest professional football league to seek employment in a country where football was still only semi-professional.

However, Stempel had family in Panama and knew the culture. After a series of holidays and study visits, he decided to take the plunge.

Thankfully, it paid off. After a short spell setting up coaching schools, he broke into management and worked for just over a decade in Panama's domestic league. Stempel made his mark quickly as a manager, winning five league titles with San Francisco and two championships with the now defunct Panamá Viejo.

But it was far from easy. On top of all the usual challenges a newly qualified manager will face in the early days of a job, Stempel found basic infrastructure and support to be sorely lacking in Panama.

"It was tough, because we were trying to coach people in what were often very difficult environments," he says. "There were physical changes, to our training facilities and equipment, that were badly needed, but that I just wasn't able to make. A huge investment was needed at that time in football in Panama. Just trying to get hold of some balls and cones could be a big exercise."

Then there were the players, who were taking home $100 a month, at best, for their efforts. "Many of them had major social problems away from the pitch, and football wasn't well paid at the time, so it wasn't going to solve those problems," says Stempel. "As football didn't provide a living wage, the players would have other jobs during the day and then come to training in the late afternoon and evening."

That, he adds, presented its own challenges, because floodlit pitches in Panama were few and far between. "There were times when we would have to use our car headlights to illuminate a small area of the pitch, just to have somewhere to train. On other occasions, the president of the club, who owned a transport business, would arrange for industrial lights – the kind normally used for fixing roads – to be brought to the club. But they'd often arrive with no petrol, so we'd have to go off and buy that before we could start training.

> **When you work in environments such as this, it really brings home the great appeal that sport can have, regardless of the circumstances**

"Any good coach will improvise a little with training sessions, but normally how they work will be determined by the number of players and so on. For me, there was a lot to think about beyond that. There might, for example, only be certain areas of the pitch that were in a good enough condition, so we'd have to work around that."

He recalls the training field at Panamá Viejo, which was positioned right next to the sea, making shooting practice fun and games. "Every time the ball ended up in the sea we'd have to cross the road and, if it was low tide, wade waist-deep into the mud to retrieve it."

EXTRA-TIME INTERVIEW: GARY STEMPEL

A HELPING HAND

Stempel also found that the support available to players was minimal, so it was common for coaches to dip into their personal finances, borrow from friends or find their own sponsorship in order to keep things going.

He found the same to be true when he moved on from club football and began to work with the Panamanian Football Federation, finding and developing young talent for the U21 and U23 teams. "The players, who were largely from the streets, were given no financial support to get to training, so often the staff and I would find the money to enable them to travel. These were the realities, not just for me, but for all the coaches in Panama at the time, and I think it did help me become a better coach. It taught me to be organised, adaptable and to think on my feet."

It also gave him a very grounded view of what football is all about and its value at grassroots community level. "When you work in environments such as this, it really brings home the great appeal that sport can have, regardless of the circumstances," he says. "I've worked here in Panama and across Central America and I've seen that people will improvise and work with what little they have just to set up a game of football. Even without organised teams, soccer schools and centres of excellence, communities will always find ways to play the game."

GREEN SHOOTS

Stempel found success with his young charges, taking the U20s to the UAE for the World Cup in 2003, the first time any Panamanian side had competed on an international stage. While football was still in the shadows of Panama's beloved baseball, the success of Los Canaleros, albeit only at youth level, meant people were starting to sit up and take notice.

Stempel, too, was building a reputation that was hard to ignore, and in 2008 he landed his dream job, leading the senior national team. He had only been at the helm for a year when he succeeded in bringing home the UNCAF Nations Cup, now known as the Copa Centroamericana, and reached the quarter-finals of the Gold Cup.

Characteristically humble, Stempel puts his incredible success that year down to "hard work and being in the right place at the right time", but he adds that there's a natural drive behind the Panamanian players that makes them easier to coach. "One thing you'll always find when you're working in these kinds of conditions, with people who have come from poverty, is that the desire to succeed is greater," he says. "They see football as a real outlet and they'll make major sacrifices in order to improve their conditions. Because that attitude – that desire and determination to overcome obstacles – is inbuilt in the players, it really helps you as a coach."

FOOTBALL FEVER

Despite his achievements, industry politics meant Stempel felt unable to remain in the top job, and he returned to his former club, San Francisco, with a year out coaching Guatemala's U17s.

When, therefore, Panama headed to Russia for their first ever World Cup, it was not Stempel, but Hernán Darío Gómez, 'El Bolillo', who was at the helm. Yet, it is Stempel who has been widely credited with laying the foundations that enabled them to get there. President Juan Carlos Varela, who swiftly announced a public holiday after Panama's qualification, said of Stempel, "Profe Bolillo is closing an era, but this was built on the efforts of many men, especially Gary."

Since he first moved to Panama over 20 years ago, Stempel has seen some major changes, both in terms of the groundswell of positive feelings towards the beautiful game and in the provision of infrastructure and support to those working in it. "Football culture simply didn't exist when I first arrived, so it's taken its time to catch up with other countries in the region," he says. "Now, helped by qualification to the World Cup, more pitches and stadia are being built, there's more sponsorship, and the players are finally earning a decent wage. Hopefully, with another good World Cup campaign, things will continue to look up over here."

Stempel has been coaching the national U17s ahead of their World Cup in 2019, and is a FIFA coach instructor, running courses for CONCACAF across the region. Perhaps more importantly, he also recently enjoyed a second spell back in the driving seat with the national seniors, as interim manager, El Bolillo having left after the World Cup to become manager of Equador.

More than anyone, he knows what lies ahead for the Panama national team, following his recent temporary spell in charge. "We were one of the oldest teams at Russia 2018 and a number of players have since retired," he says. "So it's a rebuilding process. Also, I think one thing we learned from Russia is that there's work to be done with our players in terms of learning about tactics and different systems of play."

DO YOU WANT TO COACH A WINNING SIDE?

Our brilliant range of Elite Soccer manuals feature coaching innovation from the very best in the game - bespoke, engaging practices that will have an immediate impact on your players.

Professional Fitness Plans

Five professional fitness coaches provide the plans they use to get (and keep) their players in peak physical condition throughout the season. Includes **Gary Walker** (Manchester United) and **Scott Miller** (Fulham)

£27

Off-season Fitness Plans

Five professional fitness coaches show you how to keep your players in peak physical condition this summer. Includes **Ryland Morgans** (Liverpool) and **Antonio Gomez** (Barcelona)

£27

The Collectors' Series 1

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Sir Alex Ferguson**, **Roy Hodgson**, **Tony Mowbray** and **Nigel Clough**

£37

The Collectors' Series 2

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Sam Allardyce**, **Alex McLeish**, **Ian Holloway** and **Steve Bruce**

£37

The Collectors' Series 3

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Kenny Dalglish**, **Arsène Wenger**, **Neil Warnock** and **Roberto Mancini**

£37

The Collectors' Series 4

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Carlo Ancelotti**, **Martin O'Neill**, **André Villas-Boas** and **Roberto Martinez**

£37

The Collectors' Series 5

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **José Mourinho**, **David Moyes**, **Steve Clarke** and **Tony Pulis**

£37

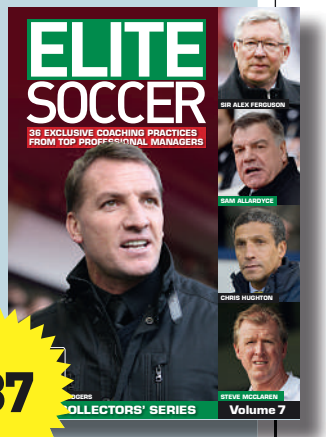
The Collectors' Series 6

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Harry Redknapp**, **Gordon Strachan**, **Neil Lennon** and **Alan Pardew**

£37

The Collectors' Series 7

36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from **Brendan Rodgers**, **Chris Hughton**, **Steve McClaren** and **Mick McCarthy**



£37

TO ORDER YOUR COLLECTION GO TO http://bit.ly/1V95jtX