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Exclusive
Training practices from top professional managers

READING

BRIAN McDERMOTT

CROSSING AND FINISHING

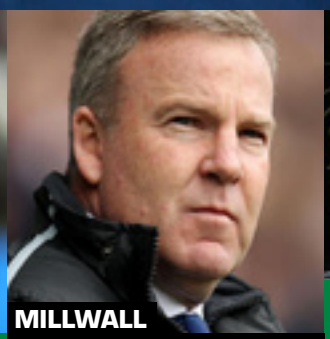
» TEMPO » PRECISION » INTELLIGENCE

GREEN STAR MEDIA
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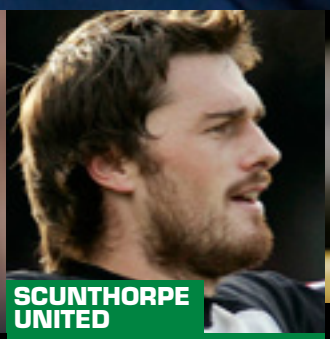
CARDIFF CITY

MALKY MACKAY
Striker combinations



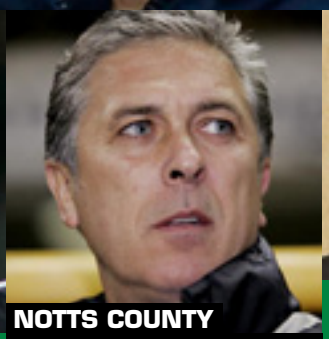
MILLWALL

KENNY JACKETT
Attacking in a 4-3-3 formation



SCUNTHORPE UNITED

NEIL CUTLER
Dedicated keeper session



NOTTS COUNTY

COLIN LEE
Forward runs and passes



NORTHERN IRELAND UNDER-15s GIRLS

NOEL MITCHELL
Midfield rotation

EXTRA-TIME: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ASTON VILLA CHIEF SCOUT GLENN ROEDER



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Top training practices from the best in British football coaching



Dear Coach,

Welcome to the June issue of Elite Soccer.

The domestic season has drawn to a close with the usual thrills and spills. For entertainment value, few would disagree it has been a marvellous campaign, and we now have the European Championships to look forward to as the showpiece soccer event of the summer.

Of course, many of you will already be putting in place plans for next season – new approaches, ideas and initiatives. So to help, here are another six fantastic training practices for inspiration.

To begin with, one of the Barclays Premier League's new recruits, Reading, and their forward-thinking manager Brian McDermott, showcase a training session on crossing and finishing. It's a blueprint that contributed significantly to the Royals clinching the npower Championship title this season. McDermott guides us through a number of progressive drills that can be practised by players of any standard.

Moving into the Championship, Cardiff City manager Malky Mackay presents a session that looks at striker combinations and link-up play, while Millwall manager Kenny Jackett offers a brilliant practice showing the intricacies of attacking in a set 4-3-3 formation.

We've also got three sessions from very talented LMA ambassadors – the first an engaging and evolving goalkeeper practice from Scunthorpe United keeper coach Neil Cutler.

We also have a series of drills from Notts County coach Colin Lee that focus in on positive and well-timed forward runs. And to complete the set, Northern Ireland Under-15s girls coach Noel Mitchell presents an excellent session that teaches players the physical and mental attributes of good midfield rotation.

We hope you enjoy these brilliant soccer practices, and we'll be back next month with more. Until then, enjoy the sunshine.

Best regards,

Howard Wilkinson

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS

MANAGER OF THE YEAR AWARDS



Alan Pardew was the winner of the League Manager's Association Award for Barclays Premier League Manager of the Season 2011/12.

The 50-year-old was close to landing unfancied Newcastle United a Champions League place at the end of a stunning campaign, memorable as much for some terrific on-pitch performances as it was the club's ability to unearth some great value Premier League gems.

Pardew guided his side to fifth place in the final table, with United winning exactly half of their 38 Premier League matches.

LMA Chairman Howard Wilkinson confirmed, "Alan Pardew's achievements at Newcastle this season are there for all to see."

NEWCASTLE UNITED: W19 D8 L11



In the npower Championship, it was no surprise to see Reading manager **Brian McDermott** take the Manager of the Year award. This issue's lead coach took his side on an incredible run in the second half of the campaign, all the way to the top of the table as the Royals saw off title rivals Southampton and West Ham United in the run-in.

Reading had found themselves in the relegation places earlier in the campaign – a hangover from last season's play-off final defeat to Swansea City – though 51-year-old McDermott's steadfast belief in his training methods saw his side come good, and they now take their place in the Barclays Premier League for next season.

READING: W27 D8 L11



Chris Powell was the worthy winner of the npower League One Manager of the Year award. Powell scooped three of the monthly gongs as his Charlton Athletic side strolled to the league title with a record haul of 101 points.

The London club smashed a number of other records along the way, and lost just five times throughout the course of the campaign.

The season marked a remarkable turnaround for Powell after a frustrating previous campaign in which Charlton's promotion challenge faded badly.

The 42-year-old said, "It's a reflection on the players and the club more than anything, so I was extremely happy to collect the award."

CHARLTON ATHLETIC: W30 D11 L5



And finally to npower League Two, where enigmatic Swindon Town manager **Paolo Di Canio** took the Manager of the Year award.

The former West Ham United striker had found himself under pressure early on in the campaign after his Robins side lost four of their first five league matches. But they tasted defeat only seven more times throughout the season, strolling to the League Two crown by playing a brand of high tempo, exciting, attacking football.

Swindon Town chairman Jeremy Wray said of the passionate Italian, "This season he's done a great job but he's only halfway through. I fully expect him to pick up another trophy next year!"

SWINDON TOWN: W29 D6 L11

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

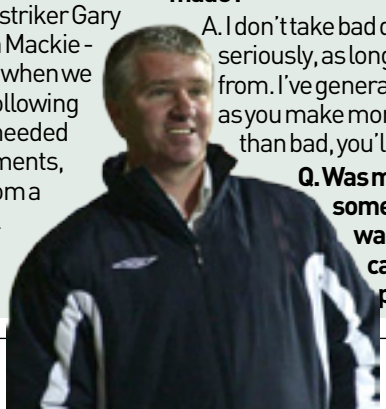
...with Martin Ling, manager of npower League Two side Torquay United

Q. What's been your best career decision?

A. I think decisions in football can come from very different places. At Leyton Orient in 2006 I signed two players in striker Gary Alexander and defender John Mackie - both were massive for us. But when we were bottom of the table the following Christmas and I desperately needed the loan market for reinforcements, the decisions were coming from a different place. That's football all over. Make decisions for upward momentum or make decisions to protect and defend what you have, just as your players do on the pitch. Incidentally, the loan player we got in was Ryan Jarvis from Norwich, and he has done great things since, so it worked for both of us. And as a club, we finished fifth from bottom that year to survive the drop.

Q. What's the worst decision you've made?

A. I don't take bad decisions too seriously, as long as they're learnt from. I've generally found that as long as you make more good decisions than bad, you'll be okay.



Q. Was management something you always wanted to do after calling time on your playing career?

A. At the age of 28 I looked at coaching and felt it was something I could do, so I put myself on a UEFA C Licence course, as it was called then. I entered the coaching world at the age of 30 and from then until 36 - when I took charge of my first club as a manager - things escalated very quickly for me. I stopped playing at 34 and went straight into a youth coaching role, made it up to assistant manager 14 months later and then manager 14 months after that. It was a quick progression, but I felt that I was ready for it at the time.

And now, 12 years later, I feel I've stood the test of time as a coach, and I'm still thoroughly enjoying it. It's been a good ride but anyone can do it with a bit of application.

READING

Brian McDermott

Variable crossing and finishing practice

Overview:

The principles of quick, positive and clever attacking and defending processes are the same at any level. That's why we'll run this session exactly the same way in the Premier League next season as we did in the Championship this.

It's an ideal session for a Thursday, when we're looking to build intensity in time for the weekend. The sharpness of this practice leads into shape-based training on the Friday, then the match the next day. We're not afraid to run this every week, because practice makes permanent.

It's a good session for building confidence, and we saw this practice really come to fruition in our crucial 3-1 victory at Southampton in April, a result that all but secured us promotion back to the Premier League. Jimmy Kebe burst down the right and centred for Jason Roberts, who fired home in style.

VARIABLE CROSSING AND FINISHING PRACTICE

SET-UP
AREA
Up to half pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, cones, goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
18
SESSION TIME
Warm-up (with the fitness coach 10mins), two box game 30mins, 7v7 game 10mins, 9v9 game 15mins

What do I get the players to do?

Passing and possession warm-up

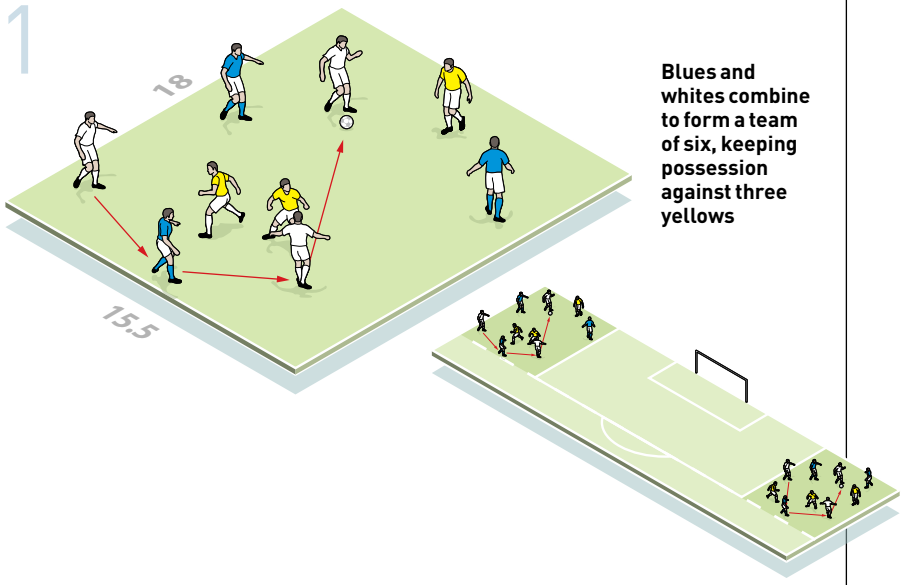
We start with a 6v3 possession game played in the space between the side of the penalty box and the touchline **(1)**. The team of six must retain possession for 90-second periods. Good tempo is essential, with precise passing and lots of movement. We then rotate teams. To progress, if the team of three wins the ball they can break out of the square.

Two-box game

We now put two penalty boxes together, and set up players as shown **(2a)**. From the first pair, the left-hand player combines with the left-sided attacker, who touches the ball back for the inrushing right-side player. One- or two-touch, he feeds the right-side winger, who advances and crosses.

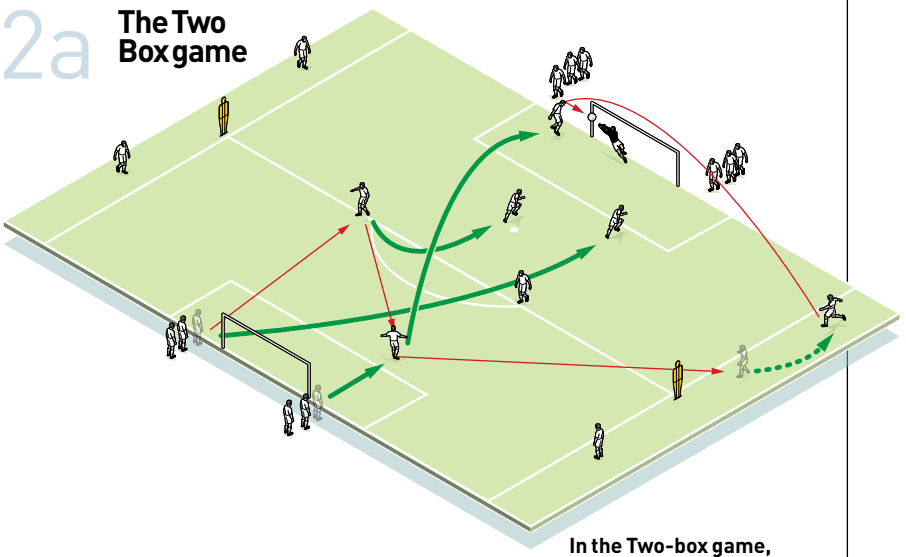
Infield players continue their runs looking to score in the goal - one near post, one far, one positioning himself for a cutback. Next come back the

1



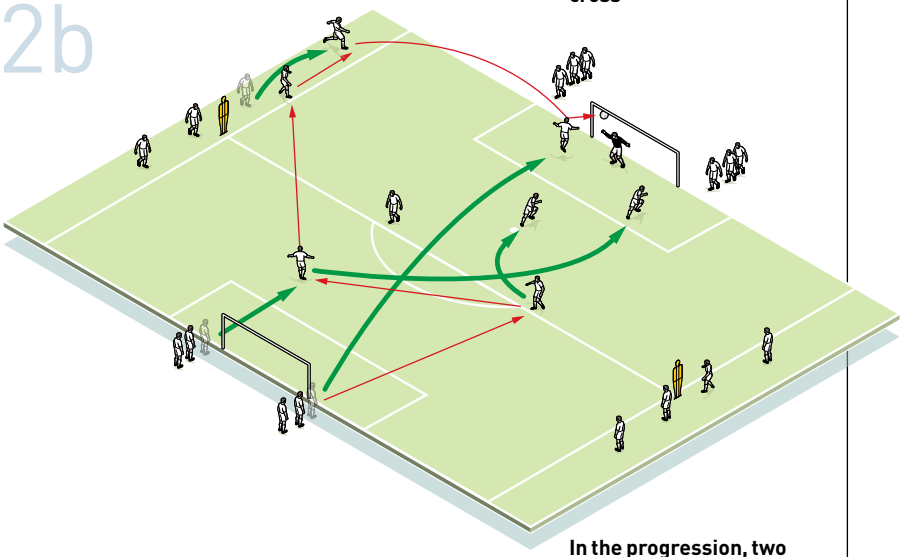
Blues and whites combine to form a team of six, keeping possession against three yellows

2a **The Two Box game**



In the Two-box game, attackers move forward, combine, feed to the wing, then attack the resulting cross

2b



In the progression, two wingers are used on each flank to provide overlaps

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Brian McDermott
READING

In the 2011/12 season, Brian McDermott guided Reading to the npower Championship title with a stunning run of form in the second half of the campaign, which saw 15 wins in 17 league matches.

The club had found themselves in the relegation places earlier in the year – a hangover from play-off final disappointment the previous term when the Royals lost out to Swansea City at Wembley.

McDermott joined Reading shortly before Christmas in 2009, and within a month had masterminded an FA Cup third round giant-killing of Liverpool at Anfield.

Previous to that, the 51-year-old had fulfilled a number of roles at the club, including chief scout, Under-19s manager, reserve team manager and caretaker manager.

As a player, he was a midfielder who played in the top division for Arsenal and Oxford United.

"This is an ideal session for a Thursday, when we're looking to build intensity in time for the weekend."

VARIABLE CROSSING AND FINISHING PRACTICE

other way. On the next phase, play is sent to the opposite flank. Rotate players regularly.

Throughout, we expect quality passing and good tempo, given that this is unopposed. Strikers are encouraged to finish one-touch, and must stay onside. Wingers must vary types of crosses.

To progress, use two wingers to produce overlaps **(2b)**. Play for a further 10 minutes. Next, allow the receiving attackers to play instinctively, without having to feed the winger. Players must still display good variations in passing, receiving and movement **(2c)**.

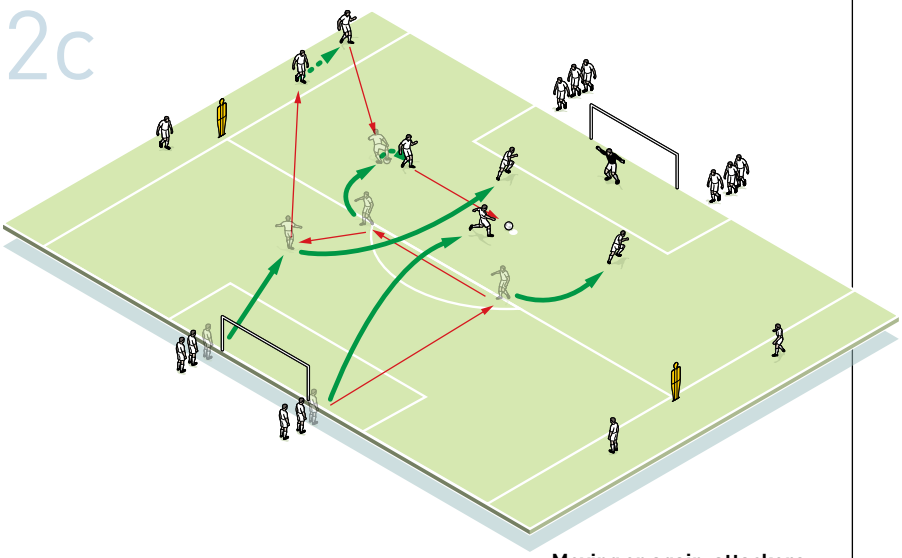
7v7 Infield game

Keepers start, with teams having to construct forward moves using a wide player. Opponents will attempt to block routes to the wide men, so patience and intelligence must be shown. The receiving winger has two touches, and his opposite winger can come infield to create an 8v7 overload, but is one-touch. There are no offsides **(3)**.

9v9 game

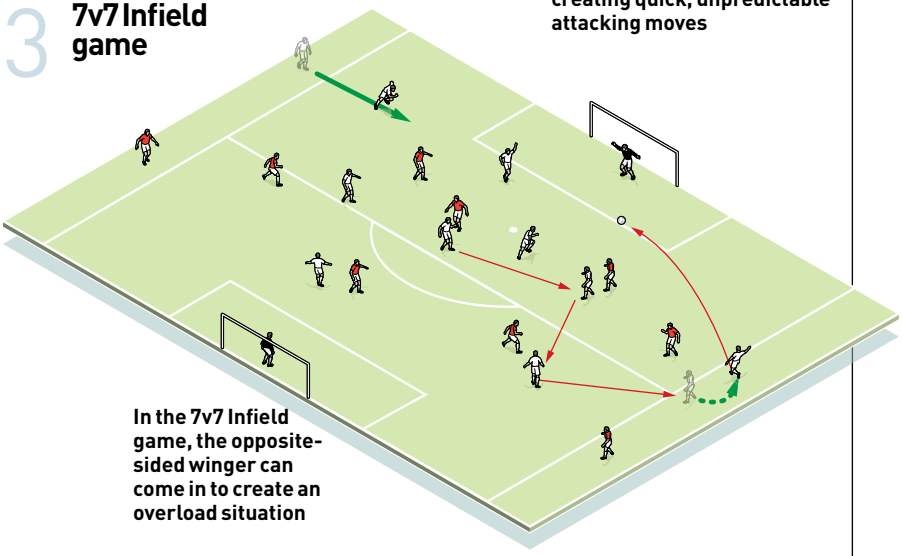
Now we run a standard 9v9 game on a half-pitch - channels are 2v1 in favour of the attacking team. The lone defender must slow movement, ensuring he stays communicates well with fellow defenders **(4)**.

2c



Moving on again, attackers can play instinctively in creating quick, unpredictable attacking moves

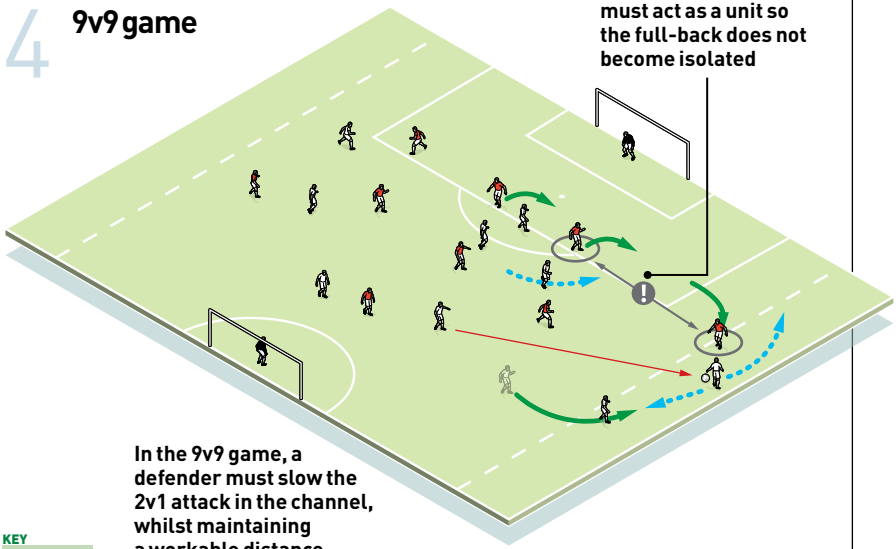
3 **7v7 Infield game**



In the 7v7 Infield game, the opposite-sided winger can come in to create an overload situation

4 **9v9 game**

Good communication is vital. Defenders must act as a unit so the full-back does not become isolated



In the 9v9 game, a defender must slow the 2v1 attack in the channel, whilst maintaining a workable distance between his team mates

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble
Optional pass/run

CARDIFF CITY

Malky Mackay

Striker combinations and link play

Overview:

This session is about striker combinations and link-up play in the final third. It's important to practise these because we're frequently asked in matches to break down the backlines of teams who defend deep.

We saw this practice pay off to great effect in this year's Carling Cup final against Liverpool at Wembley, when excellent movement and quick, positive passing enabled Joe Mason to fire home the game's opening goal.

"Strikers must use different combinations, communicate well, and ensure good body shape."

STRIKER COMBINATIONS AND LINK PLAY

SET-UP
AREA
Up to full pitch (narrowed)
EQUIPMENT
Balls, cones, goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 16
SESSION TIME
Warm-up 10mins, game practice 15mins, small-sided game 20mins

What do I get the players to do?

Link play warm-up

We start in a 30x15-yard area, as shown. A plays to B, as C comes towards the ball. B passes to D, then A and B run down their respective wings **(1a)**. As D receives the ball, C spins and receives a cushioned lay-off from him, feeding A down the wing **(1b)**. We now repeat the drill from the opposite end.

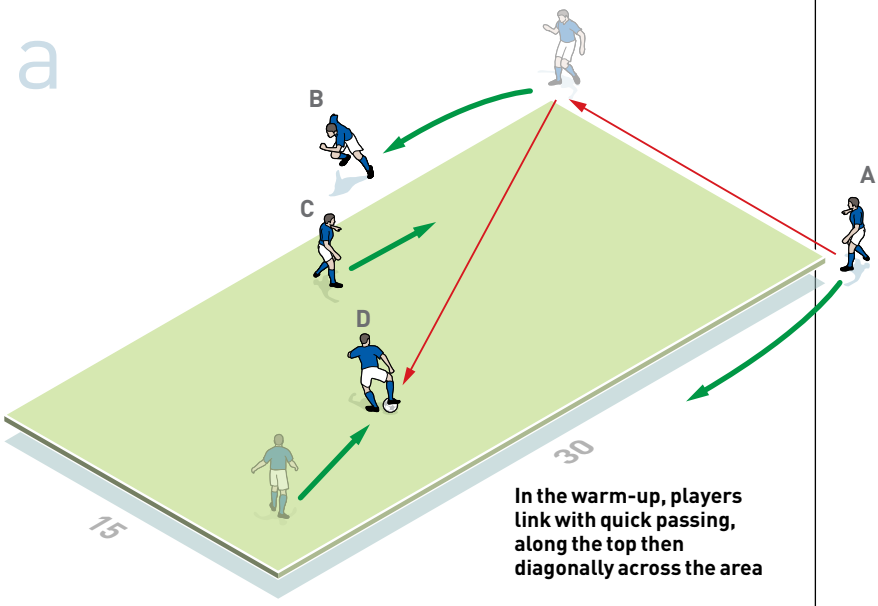
What are the key things to look out for?

Weight and accuracy of pass are the most important elements. In addition, C must approach the ball as if really wanting the pass, even though it's destined for D. And he must ensure he doesn't block the passing route to D. Finally, A and B must cannot run ahead of the ball. To progress, we make all players one-touch.

Link-play game practice

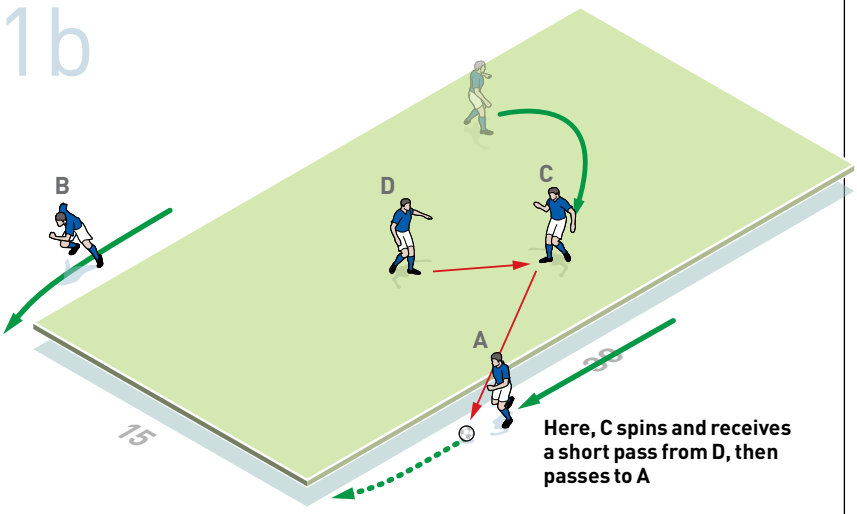
We set up as shown, with 3v3 in the central area, and two strikers in the next zone. Once

1a



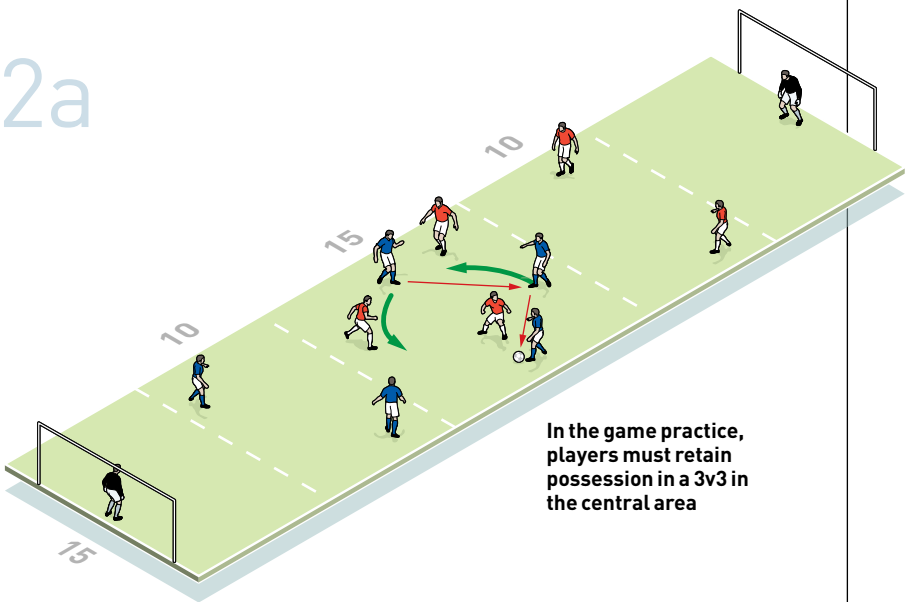
In the warm-up, players link with quick passing, along the top then diagonally across the area

1b



Here, C spins and receives a short pass from D, then passes to A

2a



In the game practice, players must retain possession in a 3v3 in the central area

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Malky Mackay
CARDIFF CITY

Malky Mackay was announced as manager of Cardiff City in June 2011. In his first season in charge, he earned the south Wales club a play-off spot in the npower Championship despite having to rebuild the squad from scratch. The Bluebirds lost out to West Ham United over two legs, but the 40-year-old's first year in charge has been regarded as a great success with the club playing a brand of elegant, attacking football.

He had previously taken charge at Watford, securing the club's Championship status on limited resources.

As a player, Mackay, a centre-back, made his Scotland debut at the age of 32, and went on to earn five caps. In the club football, he turned out for Norwich City over 200 times, and also played for Queen's Park, Celtic, West Ham United and Watford.

STRIKER COMBINATIONS AND LINK PLAY

five passes have been made in the central area, the ball is played to the strikers who, two-touch, link and strike at goal **(2a/2b)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

Strikers must use different combinations, communicate well and ensure good body shape when receiving the ball – e.g. on the half turn. To progress, we position a defender against the two strikers.

Small-sided game

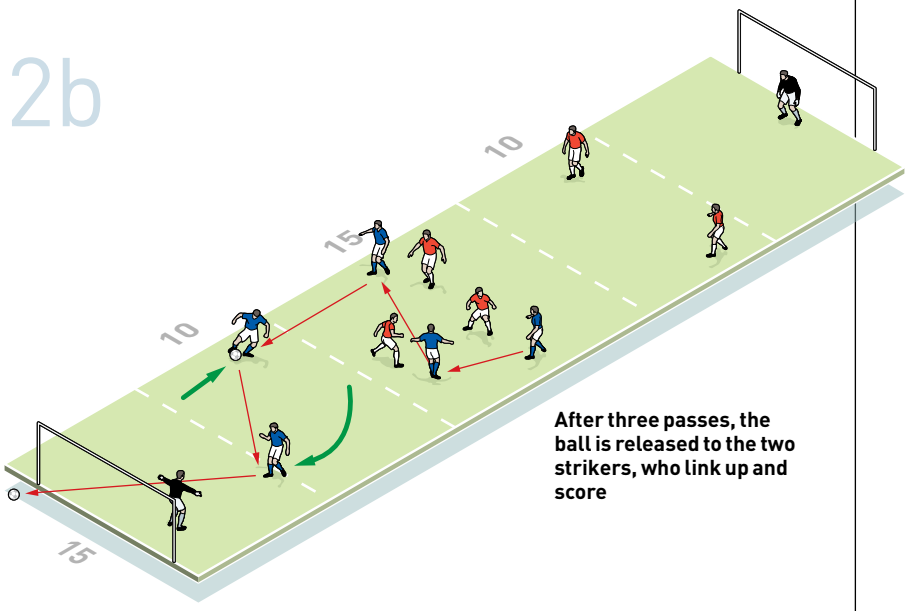
We set up as shown, an 8v8 zonal game – 4v4 free play in the central zone, 2v2 in the end zones. Strikers now have two defenders to contend with.

What are the key things to look out for?

Strikers must work off defenders – coming short to go long, and long to come short – stretching their opponents without killing space. To progress, a player from the central zone can break forward to support (but not the player who released the ball) **(3a/3b)**. We can also introduce a one-touch rule.

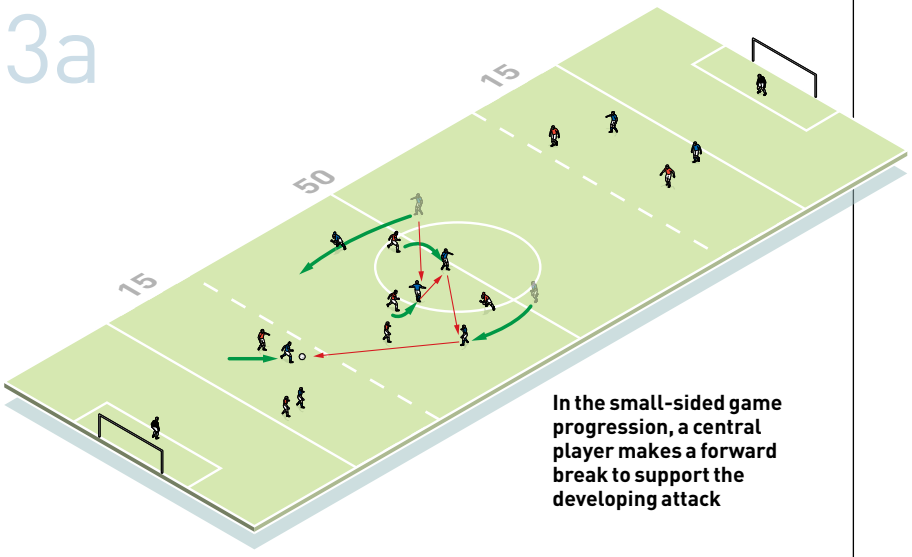
With each progressing game, players must use the skills learnt earlier in the session.

2b



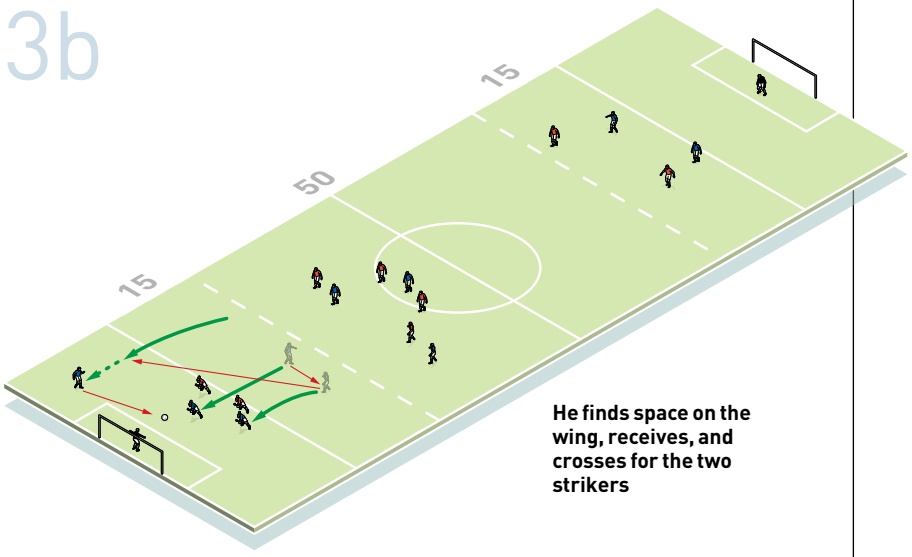
After three passes, the ball is released to the two strikers, who link up and score

3a



In the small-sided game progression, a central player makes a forward break to support the developing attack

3b



He finds space on the wing, receives, and crosses for the two strikers



MILLWALL

Kenny Jackett

Attacking in a 4-3-3 formation

Overview:

This is a positive attacking sessions that rehearses players in the specifics of attacking in a set 4-3-3 formation. Although a rigid set-up, the intention is to show the flexibility in attacking central and wide targets, with structure and awareness of position key elements.

The session requires the commitment of the whole team – from strikers to full-backs pushing on – and is a rehearsal that we'll run regularly so as to produce maximum effect on match day.

"The session requires the commitment of the whole team – from strikers to full-backs pushing on."

ATTACKING IN A 4-3-3 FORMATION

SET-UP
AREA
Standard pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, cones, goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
22
SESSION TIME
Warm-up 10mins, 11v11 zone game 10mins, Wide 11v11 10mins, Central 11v11 10mins

What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up session

We set up as shown in the diagram. On one side, play starts in a 5v2, with a 4v2 on the other side separated by an empty 10-yard zone. When the team of five makes six passes, one player breaks out and passes to team mates in the opposite box, coming across to form a new 5v2, and the session continues **(1a)**.

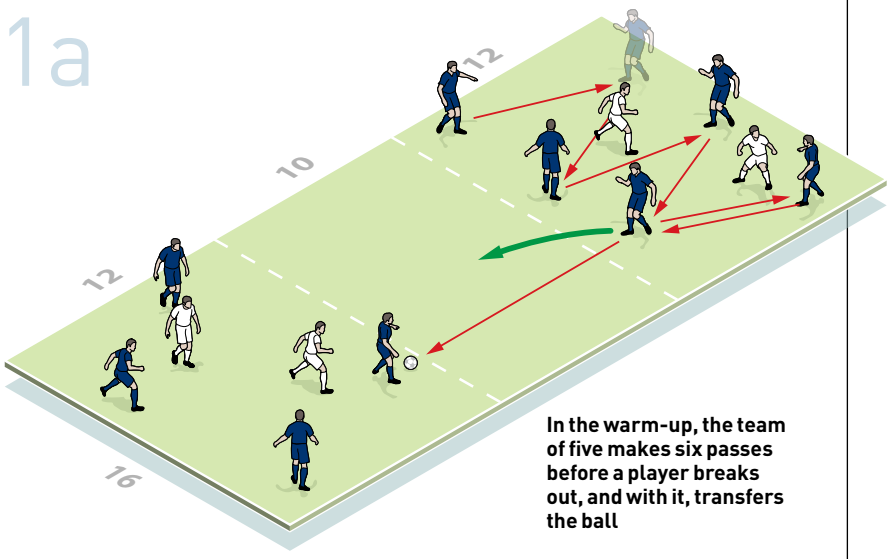
To progress, we add three men in the middle section. The overloading team must exchange passes with one of the midfielders before progressing **(1b)**.

11v11 zone game

Using the space in between the two penalty boxes, we add an additional 20x6-yard 'scoring zone' at each end. A neutral keeper stands in this space.

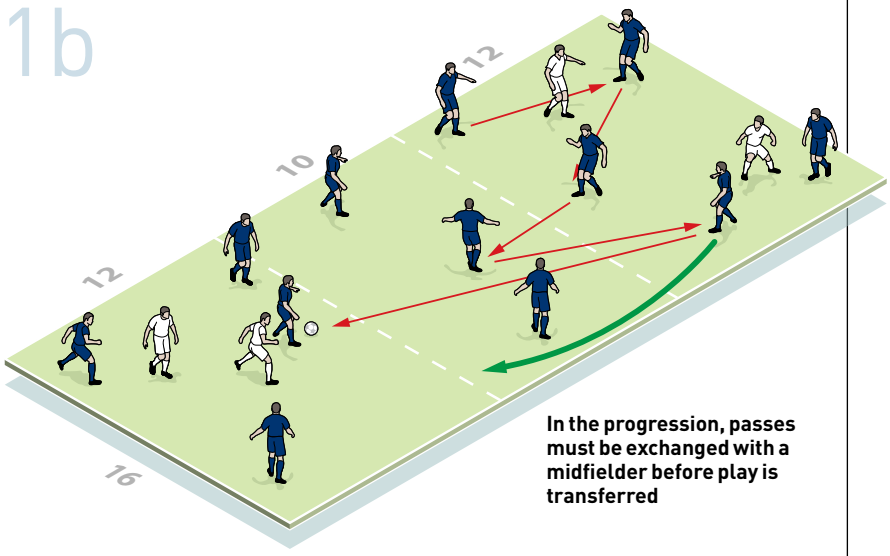
In a 4-3-3 formation we play a normal game, except there no corners, and to score, the ball must be chipped into the air for a keeper to catch **(2)**. Restarts begin with keepers, who play out to a defender.

1a



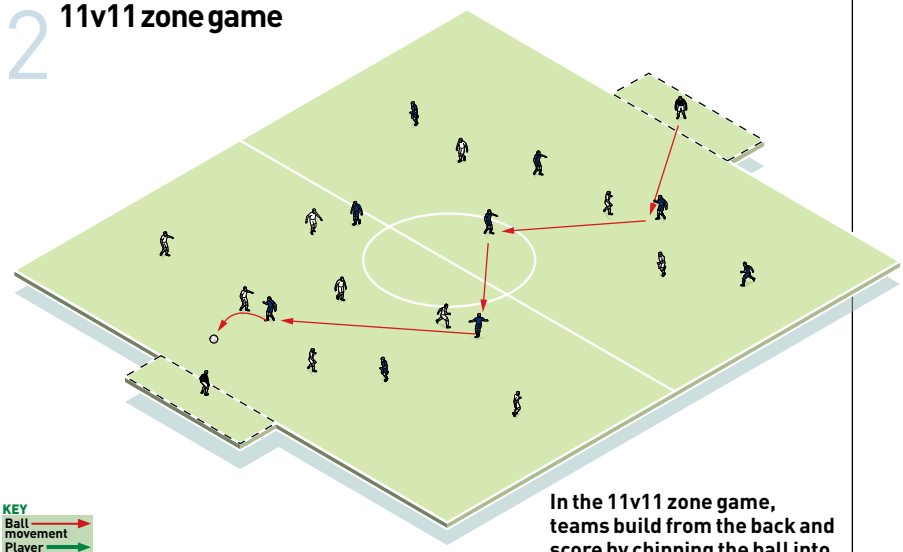
In the warm-up, the team of five makes six passes before a player breaks out, and with it, transfers the ball

1b



In the progression, passes must be exchanged with a midfielder before play is transferred

2 **11v11 zone game**



In the 11v11 zone game, teams build from the back and score by chipping the ball into a keeper's arms

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Kenny Jackett
MILLWALL

As a player, Kenny Jackett was one of football's 'one club men', making 337 appearances for hometown side Watford between 1980 and 1990. Sadly, he was forced to retire from the game due to a serious knee injury, with Luther Blissett's all-time appearance record in sight.

On retirement, he undertook a variety of coaching roles at the club before moving to QPR under Ian Holloway.

Stepping up into management in 2004, he earned promotion for Swansea City from League Two in 2005, taking the club to the play-off final the following year, where they lost out to Barnsley in a penalty shoot-out.

After a short spell as reserve team manager at Manchester City, Jackett accepted the offer to join Millwall in March 2007. The club lost their 2008/09 play-off final to Scunthorpe United, but secured promotion the following season by defeating Swindon Town in the end-of-season Wembley knockout fixture.

ATTACKING IN A 4-3-3 FORMATION

We're looking for combination play between the three midfielders, rotation of the attackers and a quality of final scoring pass.

Wide 11v11 game

We rerun, now with four small goals, each eight yards in from the touchline. The coach feeds centre-halves who must find the holding midfield player to spark combination play. Full-backs must decide when to push and when to spin, coming back into the pocket. Throw-ins and corners are allowed, and offsides apply **(3)**.

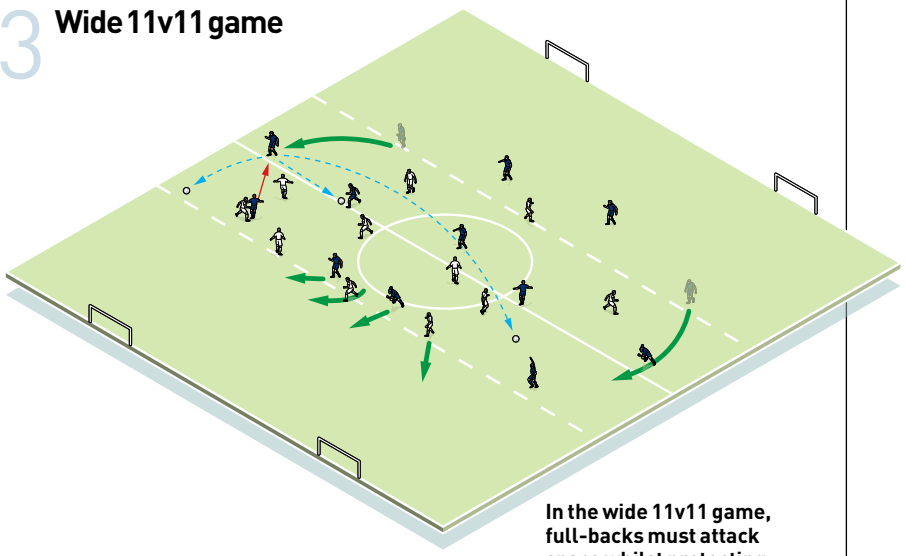
Central 11v11 game

We now take the structure and attacking patterns coached into a final 11v11 with normal goals - throw-ins and corners are allowed **(4a)**. When a cross is on, there should be at least three players running in 'between the posts' **(4b)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

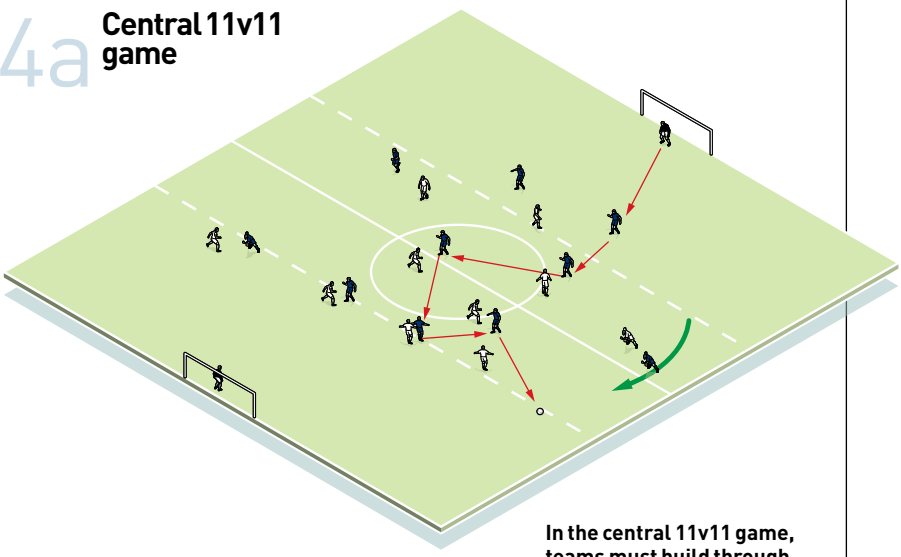
Players should develop a growing understanding of the 4-3-3 formation with each game. Quick combination play, precision passing and the ability to move into space whilst retaining shape are all essential. The role of full-backs is vital in promoting attacking moves whilst protecting defensive space. ■

3 **Wide 11v11 game**



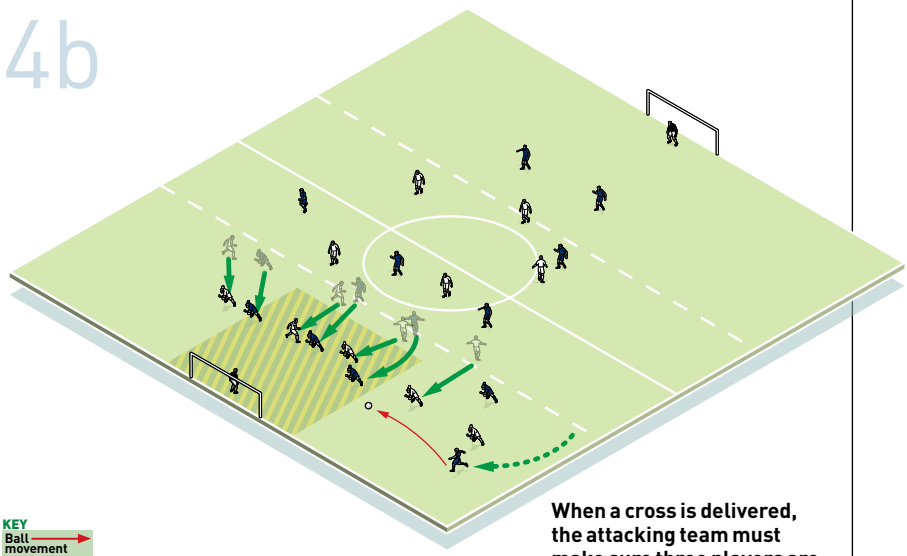
In the wide 11v11 game, full-backs must attack space whilst protecting their goals

4a **Central 11v11 game**



In the central 11v11 game, teams must build through sections with quick, effective passing

4b



When a cross is delivered, the attacking team must make sure three players are running in 'between the posts'

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

SCUNTHORPE UNITED
Neil Cutler

Dedicated keeper session

Overview:

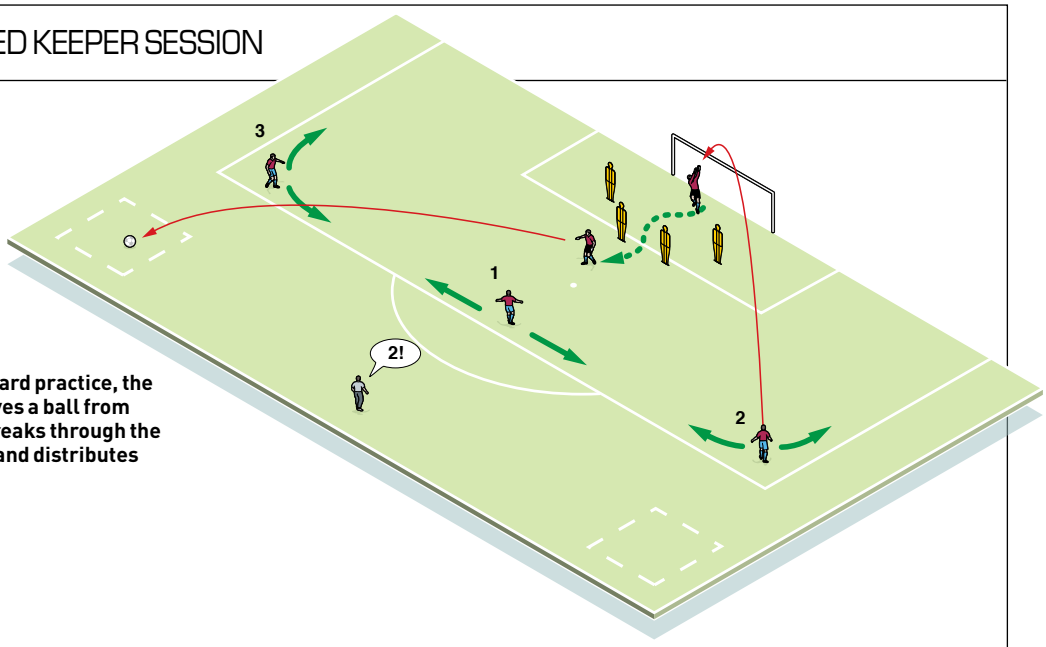
This session is designed to help keepers deal with crosses of different heights, power and trajectories. It will not only show them the technical aspects of dealing with the cross, but also how to use momentum and power when working in and around opposition bodies.

We practise this because in the modern game it is becoming more and more important for keepers to show speed, athleticism, power and agility. For those aspiring to reach the top level, all these attributes are needed when dealing with crosses in congested areas, particularly those balls delivered with pace and accuracy.

SET-UP
AREA
Final third
EQUIPMENT
Cones, balls, mannequins
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 10
SESSION TIME
10mins per practice

DEDICATED KEEPER SESSION

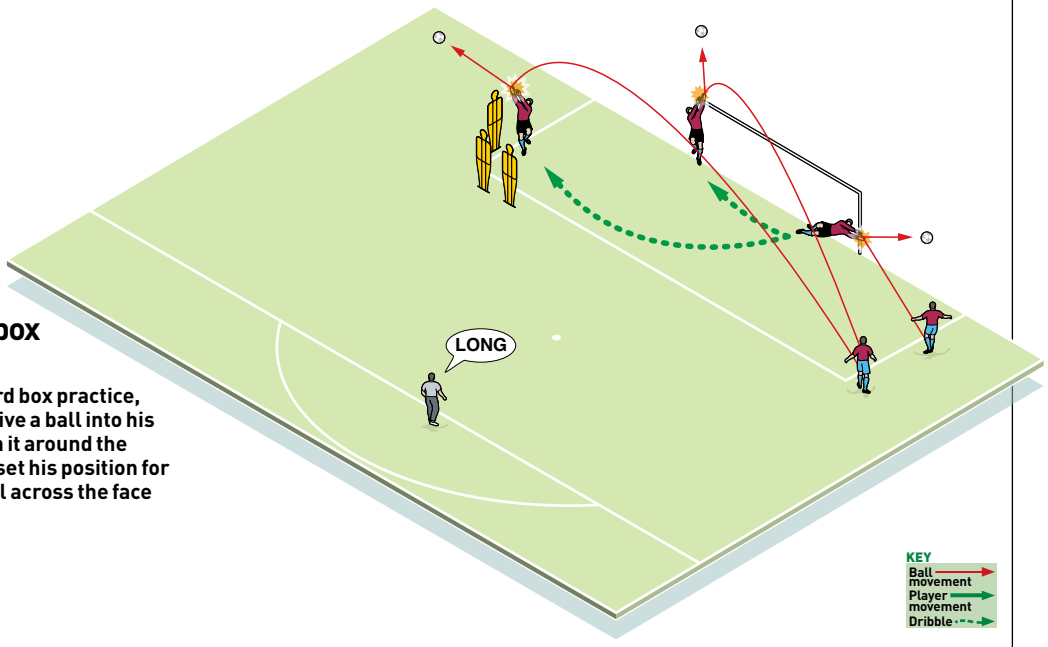
1



Standard practice

For the Standard practice, the keeper receives a ball from the server, breaks through the mannequins and distributes

2



Six-yard box practice

In the Six-yard box practice, he must receive a ball into his chest or push it around the post, then reset his position for a flighted ball across the face of goal

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

Standard practice

Setting up as shown in the diagram, a server throws a ball over the mannequins for the keeper to catch. The keeper breaks through and throws the ball so it lands in either coned area **(1)**. Continuing, servers can adjust their positions around the 18-yard box, varying deliveries in terms of pace, height and bounce.

What are the key things to look out for?

The keeper must adjust his starting position in line with the relevant server. He must assess the flight of the ball and take off from his non-kicking foot, attack the delivery in the air to create momentum and power in case of a collision with another player. The distribution must be quick and positive.

Six-yard box practice

Now, the keeper steps towards his near post and takes a volley into the chest or pushes the ball around the post from server 1. Server 2 then throws a ball over the keeper's head. He must follow its path, deciding whether to catch it or punch it **(2)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

The keeper needs to use short, sharp feet into the near post, adopting a good set position to receive the volley. He then opens his stance to face play.

For the second ball, he must assess the flight and use short, sharp, quick steps, moving sideways, not backwards, so he still has any obstacles in view. If he decides to punch, he must clear with height, width and length, keeping an eye on ball at all times. If catching at full stretch, he must go down with the ball to protect it.



Neil Cutler

SCUNTHORPE UNITED

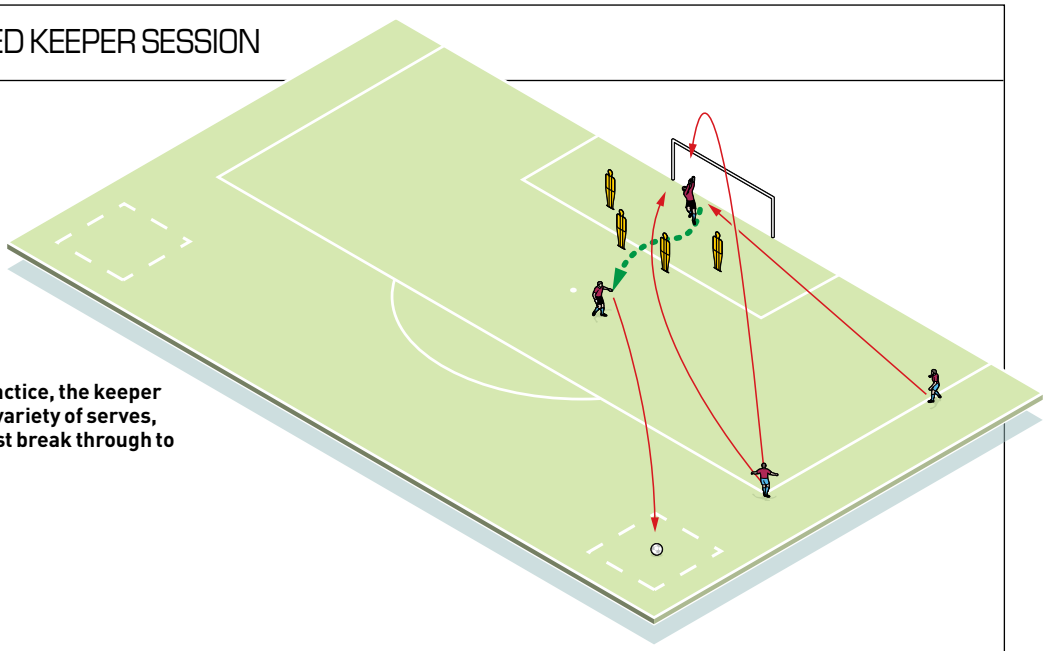
Neil Cutler is the 35-year-old goalkeeping coach at npower League One side Scunthorpe United. He moved to the Lincolnshire club from Bury along with first-team manager Alan Knill, and oversees the development of the club's senior and youth shot-stoppers.

Cutler's own goalkeeping career was cut short in 2007 at Rotherham United, when he was forced to retire from the professional game due to a persistent back injury. He had made over 200 senior appearances for a host of English sides including Chester City, Stoke City and Stockport County, and made one appearance in the Premier League for Aston Villa.

"In the modern game it is becoming more and more important for keepers to show speed, athleticism, power and agility."

DEDICATED KEEPER SESSION

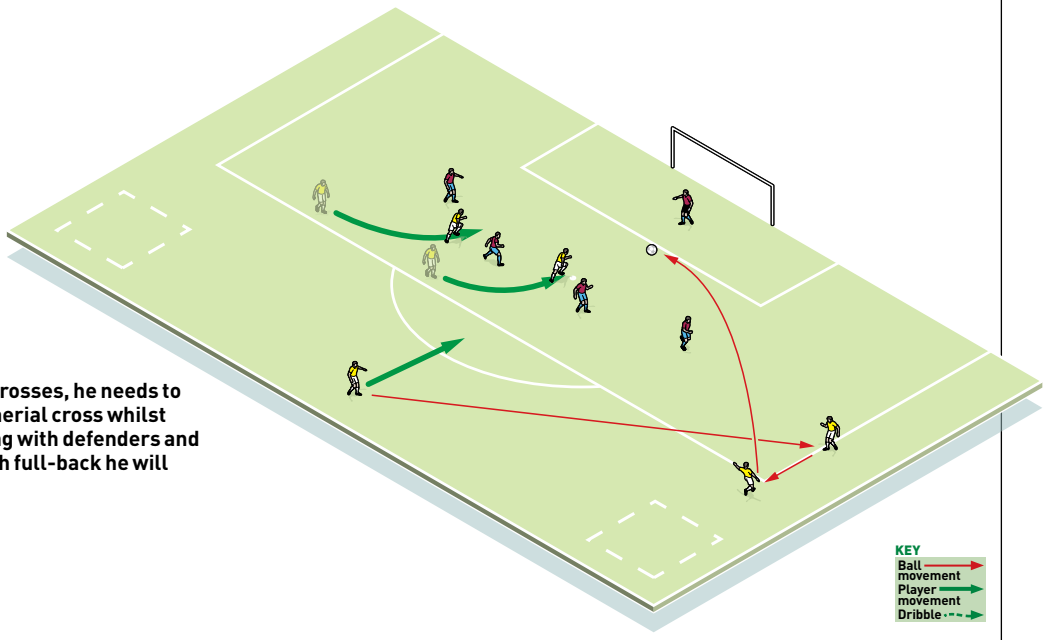
3



Side practice

In the Side practice, the keeper is tested by a variety of serves, and again must break through to distribute

4



Opposed crosses

For Opposed crosses, he needs to deal with the aerial cross whilst communicating with defenders and planning which full-back he will release to

Side practice

This time, servers deliver crosses in and around the mannequins with pace. The keeper adopts a positive starting position on the front foot, and must make a positive early decision if coming for the ball, assessing its flight all the time. Target zones are added to practise distribution, and to ensure a perceived target for a quick breakaway **(3)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

The keeper must attack the ball as early as he can to ensure attackers don't nip in front, making sure again that he drives through the ball to maintain power and aggression.

Opposed crosses

Now we change mannequins for defenders – so this is a 5v4 attacking overload situation. The midfielder begins, feeding in a firm pass to one of the right-sided wingers, before heading into the box as an additional attacker. These wingers combine freely to fashion a cross into the box **(4)**. As before, the keeper adopts a positive starting position in relation to the ball. This time, when he gathers the ball, he throws it out to a full-back.

What are the key things to look out for?

We're looking for the keeper to combine all of the technical and tactical elements learnt from the earlier drills in this practice, except now he needs to communicate at all times with his defenders as well. ■

NOTTS COUNTY

Colin Lee

Forward runs and passes

Overview:

This is a shooting session that features the use of runs in behind, across and in between defenders. Much of what we coach in this practice is to do with diagonal balls, accuracy, a precise weight of pass and good timing.

These sorts of runs are prevalent in every game, so cannot be practised too much. Each time we run this practice, we are increasing understanding, both for attackers and defenders.

Our striker Lee Hughes is one of the best players I've seen at making this type of run.

For this session, we will stop and coach in between each individual practice, rotating players as we do.

"Timing of run and accuracy of pass are essential."

FORWARD RUNS AND PASSES

SET-UP
AREA
Up to a full pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, cones, poles (or mannequins)
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
22 (11v11)
SESSION TIME
Straight pass 10mins, Diagonal pass 10mins, Score zone 10mins, Full pitch 10mins

What do I get the players to do?

Straight pass practice

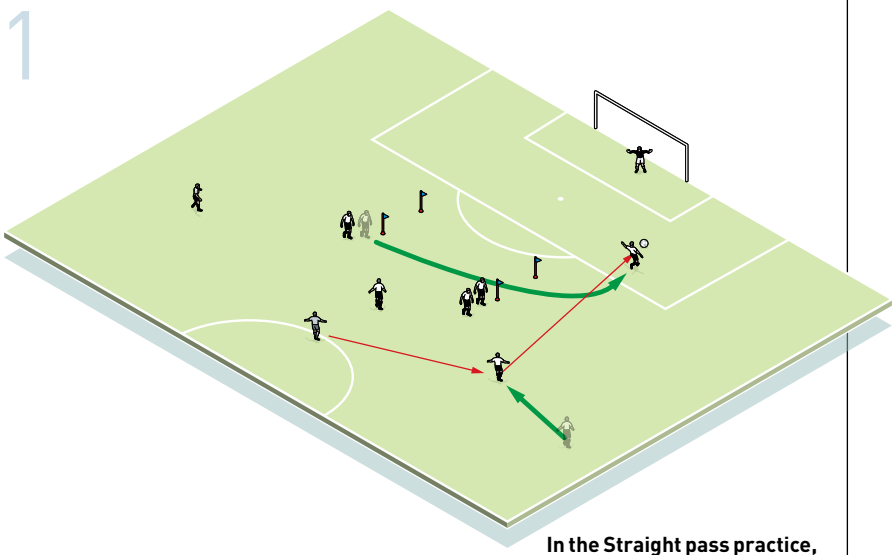
Set up as shown in the first practice drill. The wide player comes in to receive, then lays a straight forward pass into an attacker, who bends his run between the poles, receives, and shoots first time **(1)**. We then repeat the practice from the other side.

Diagonal pass practice

Next, the ball is passed to the right-side receiver, who controls one-touch, then lofts a pass into the run of the attacker who motions to pull off and lose an imaginary defender. The striker has one touch to control, then shoots at goal **(2)**. Again, repeat the practice from the other side.

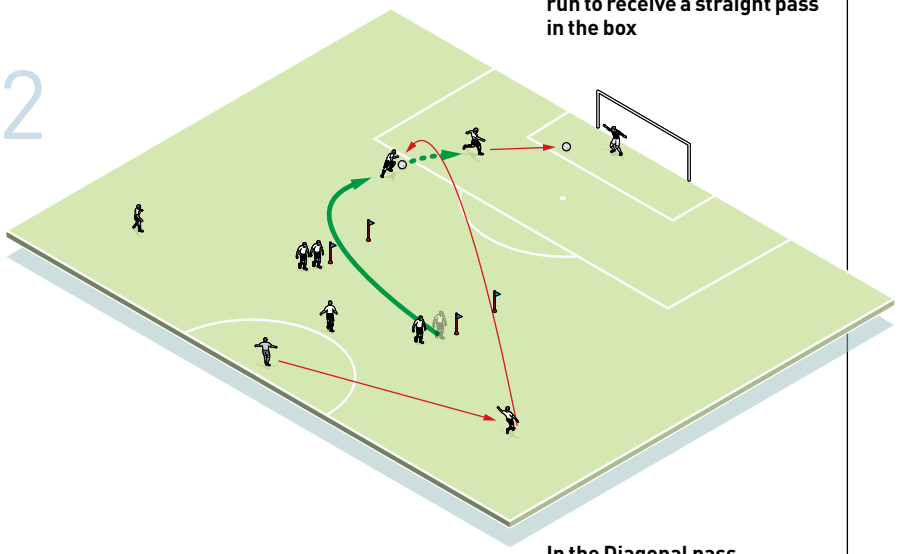
We can progress the move by adding in a covering defender who must track back and attempt to prevent the

1



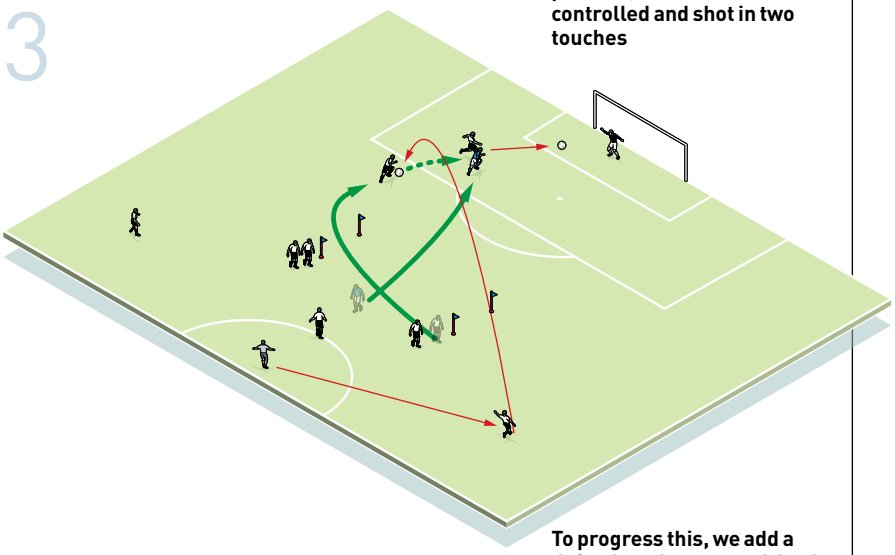
In the Straight pass practice, the attacker makes a curved run to receive a straight pass in the box

2



In the Diagonal pass practice, a lofted ball is controlled and shot in two touches

3



To progress this, we add a defender who can track back aiming to prevent a shot being taken

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Colin Lee
NOTTS COUNTY

Colin Lee is a vastly experienced football coach, who came into the game as an apprentice with Bristol City in 1974. He moved on to Torquay United, before landing a dream move to Tottenham Hotspur, then Chelsea, before ending his playing career at Brentford in 1989.

When his playing career ended, Lee became youth-team coach at Brentford and Watford, before taking charge at Watford in 1990. He then moved on to first-team and assistant-manager roles at Reading, Leicester City and Wolves.

After managing Wolves, he moved into the hotseats at Torquay United, Walsall and Millwall, before returning to Torquay as Chief Executive. He is now first-team coach at Notts County.

FORWARD RUNS AND PASSES

shot **(3)**.

Score zone game

We now apply these principles into a simple 9v9 game. Simply, to score, a player must receive the ball from a pass into the end zone **(4)**. We can add wide players outside the area who are restricted to two touches.

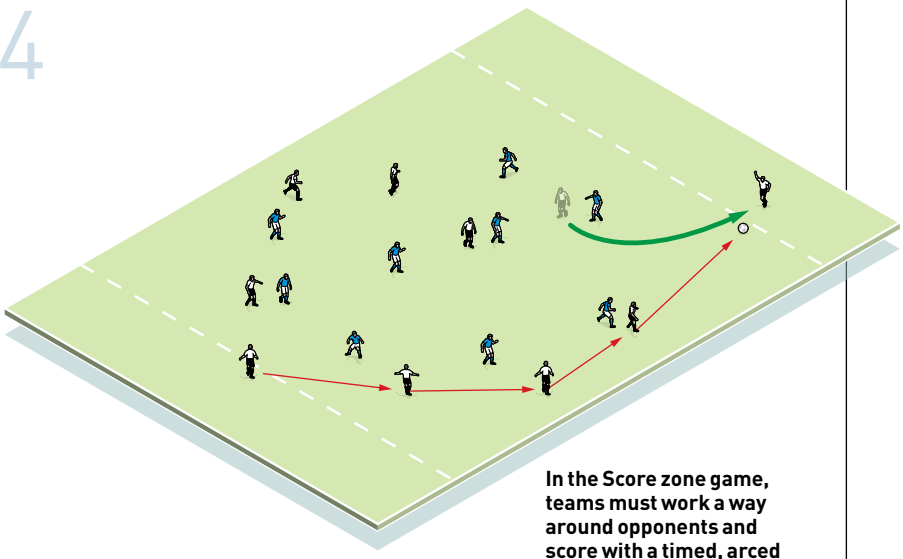
Full pitch game

We now move the Score zone game onto a full pitch, with goals and keepers at both ends. Again, attackers must bend and time their runs in order to receive passes – one touch to control, the second to shoot **(5)**. We'll again progress by allowing a defender to track back, although an additional attacker can break so as to create a 2v1 overload in the box **(6)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

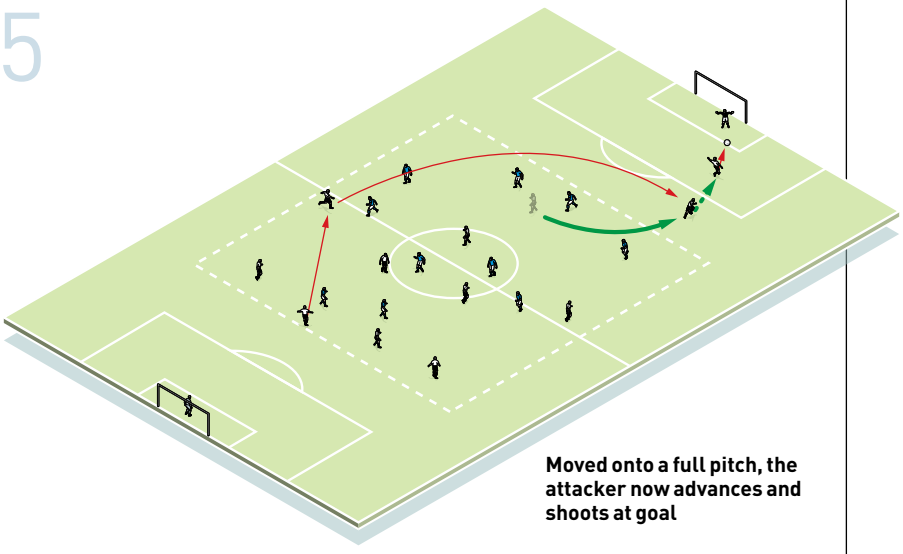
Timing of run and accuracy of pass are essential. Strikers must make a good first touch towards goal to get themselves into a position to shoot, with the shot being firm and precise.

4



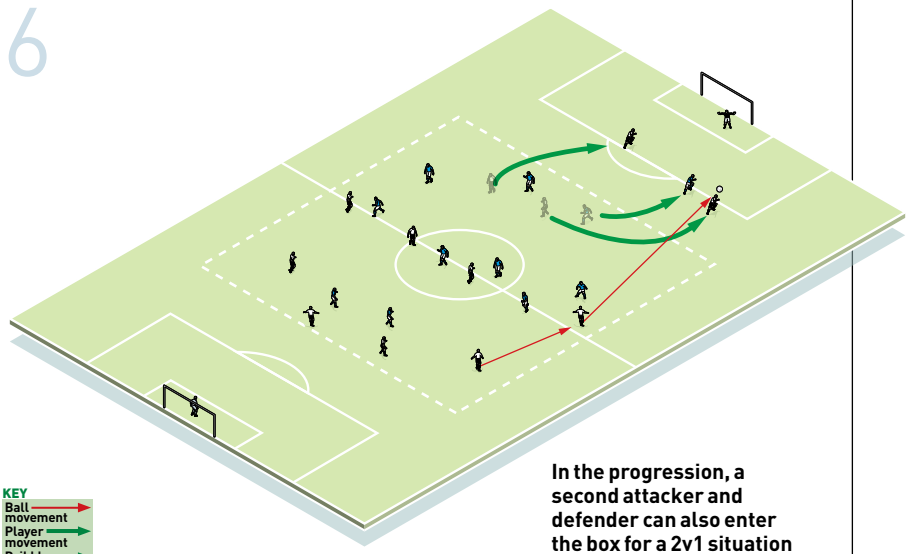
In the Score zone game, teams must work a way around opponents and score with a timed, arced run into the zone

5



Moved onto a full pitch, the attacker now advances and shoots at goal

6



In the progression, a second attacker and defender can also enter the box for a 2v1 situation

NORTHERN IRELAND UNDER-15S GIRLS

Noel Mitchell

Midfield rotation and forward movement

Overview:

This is a warm-up session in the form of a match-related drill. Flexibility is key in this practice, from building up play from out wide to encouraging players to come inside and play narrow.

The drill uses a combination of short, lofted and long passes with players specialising in one- and two-touch play.

This warm-up drill would be incorporated into our training plan at least once a week, developed into a longer main session at least three times throughout the course of the season.

It is important to practise it because rotation and movement represents a total football concept, and is great for helping to develop astute and intelligent players in the game. Ultimately, we want players to be brave enough to take the ball in tight areas, and if the session breaks down, we'll stop play to show players why.

MIDFIELD ROTATION AND FORWARD MOVEMENT

SET-UP

AREA
Full pitch

EQUIPMENT
Bibs, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 21

SESSION TIME
Pass and rotation 15mins, main practice 20mins, game 20mins.

What do I get the players to do?

Pass and rotation

This features three teams of three, with outside players As and Bs, who have two touches and play to whichever team passes to them **(1)**. Each team has a ball, and must exchange passes using the outside players, albeit with restrictions:

- When a player passes to an A player, he cannot receive the ball back – it must go to a team mate.
- When a player passes to a B player, he must go to get the ball and continue.

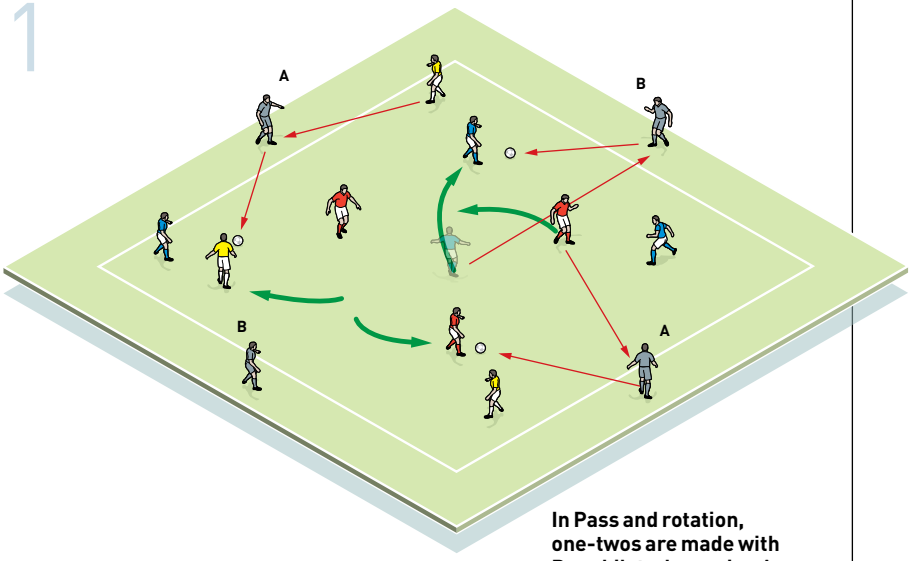
We work for five minutes, then rotate players.

Next, we build into a game of 4v4 or 5v5 using the same format **(2)**, progressing again so that players must make three passes before they can pass out.

Main practice

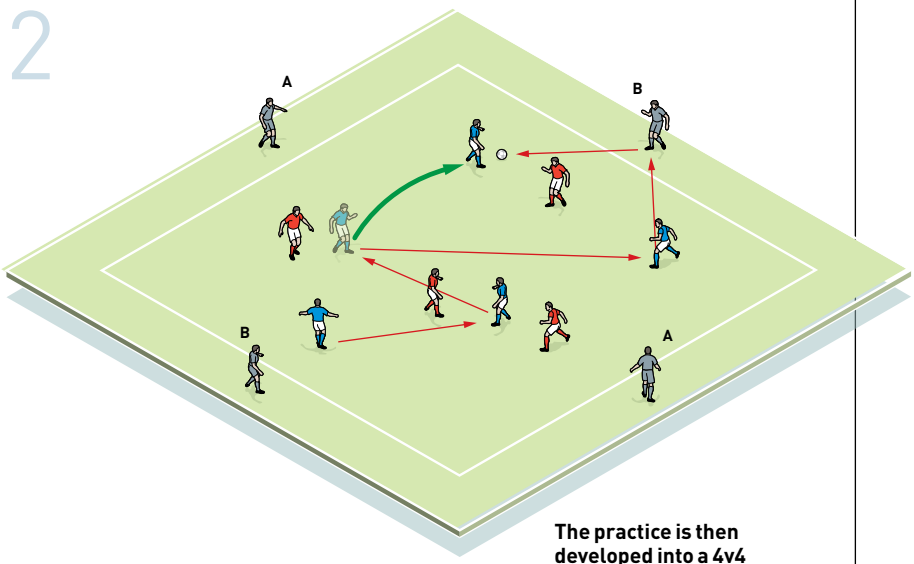
This is a half pitch drill for 16 players. It works on individual technique for passing, whilst attacking the goal as a team. The ball is passed around

1



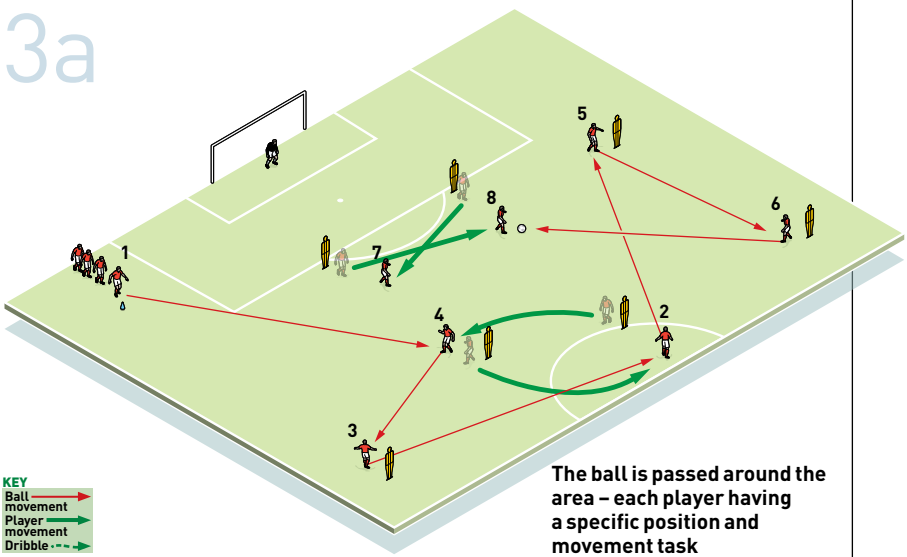
In Pass and rotation, one-twos are made with Bs, whilst when using As, the passing player cannot receive the ball back

2



The practice is then developed into a 4v4

3a



The ball is passed around the area – each player having a specific position and movement task

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Noel Mitchell
NORTHERN IRELAND UNDER-15S GIRLS

Noel Mitchell is a UEFA A-licence coach and manager of Northern Irish side Coagh United, a position he has held since 1994.

Additionally, as manager of Northern Ireland Under-15s girls team, the 45-year-old recently clinched back-to-back victories in the Bob Doherty International Tournament, held in Wales in 2011 and Dublin this year.

As a player, Mitchell turned out for Glentoran and Ards in the Irish league, as well as earning international caps for the Northern Ireland amateur side.

"Creativity in the final third is essential, the space for which is created by quality passing good timing and clever midfield movement, patterns and rotations."

MIDFIELD ROTATION AND FORWARD MOVEMENT

the area, as shown **(3a)**, eventually ending with a cross to be attacked **(3b)**. Players move around bases and the practice is re-run as soon as the first circuit has finished - player 1 takes the position of player 3, 2 moves to 6, 3 to 4, 4 to 2, 5 to 7, 6 to 5, 7 to 8, while 8 shoots and rejoins the starting group.

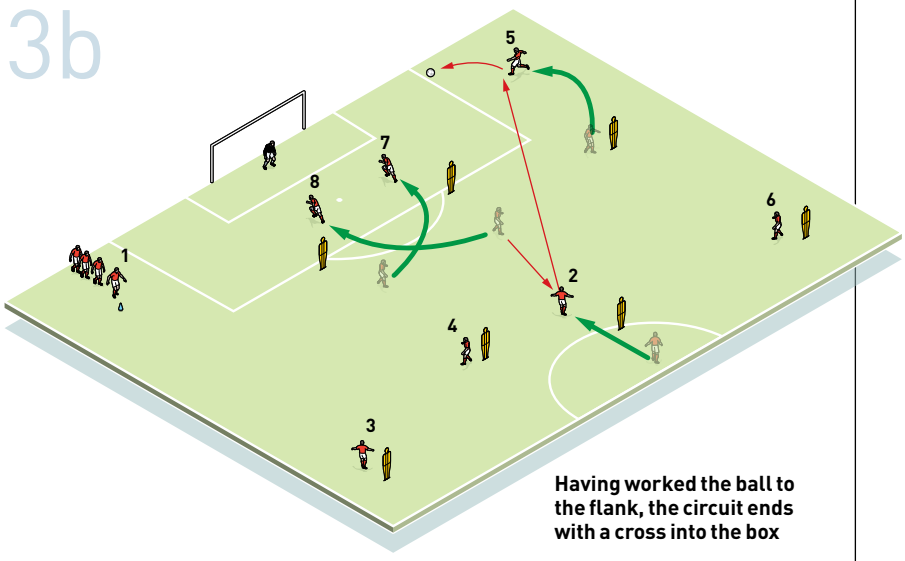
How do I put this into a game situation?

In the space in between the penalty boxes, we play 11v8. In the 11, the back four wear blue, the midfielders white, and the attackers red – these groups are three-touch, but passes can only be made to players in different coloured shirts. Opposition yellows are all-in **(4a/4b)**.

What are the key things to look out for?

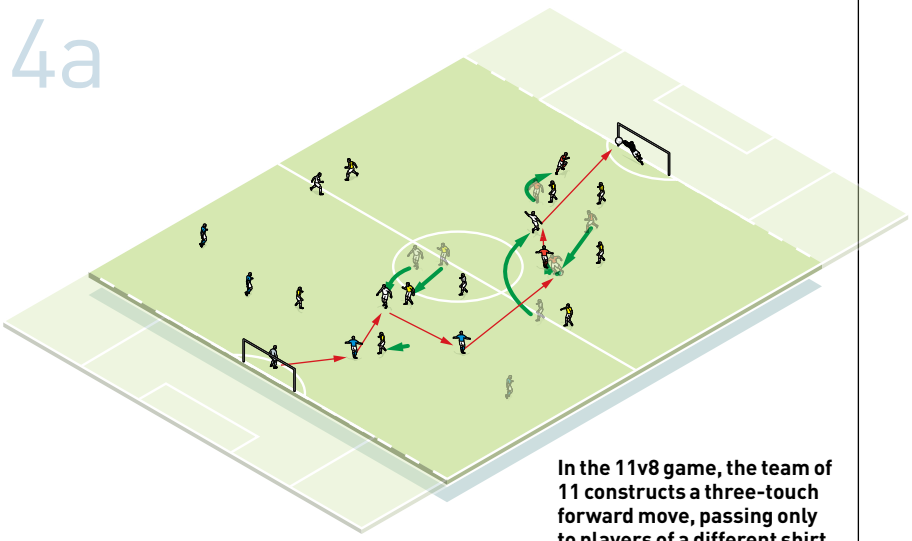
Throughout, players must communicate well, take the ball on the turn and always be looking over their shoulders for opportunities and threats. Creativity in the final third is essential, the space for which is created by quality passing, good timing and clever midfield movement patterns and rotations.

3b



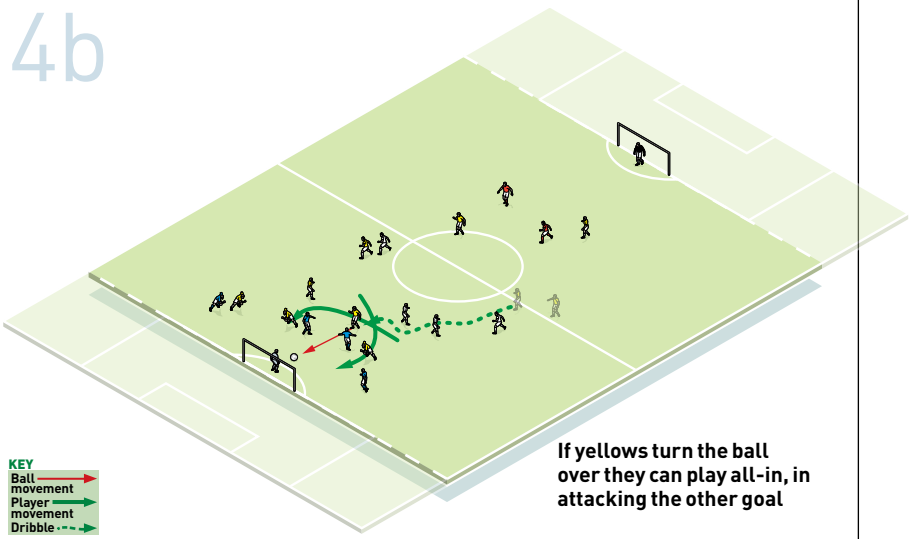
Having worked the ball to the flank, the circuit ends with a cross into the box

4a



In the 11v8 game, the team of 11 constructs a three-touch forward move, passing only to players of a different shirt colour

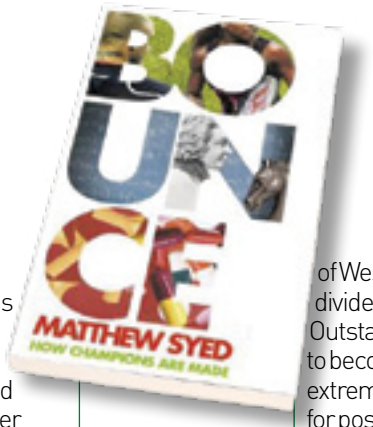
4b



If yellows turn the ball over they can play all-in, in attacking the other goal

BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

Practice, practice, practice...



Bounce
How Champions Are Made
Matthew Syed
Fourth Estate 296pp
Amazon £6.50

Matthew Syed came from an ordinary family and claims to have possessed little in the way of sporting talent. Yet he became the British table tennis champion, holding the title for ten years, before becoming a national newspaper sports writer. So who better to assemble the compelling evidence that sporting geniuses are not born but created. Bounce shows with dazzling clarity how genetics plays a very much smaller part in the development of sporting superstars than has been previously assumed, and convincingly explains how circumstances, chance, and above all practice are the overwhelmingly dominant factors in the achievement of excellence.

Syed's fascinating analysis of how he got to the top shows how these factors can come together in a random way. For no particular reason that he can ascertain, his parents bought a table tennis table when he was eight. It was set up in the garage, and was permanently accessible. Matthew had an elder brother and they played endlessly. A teacher at his primary school happened to be the country's best table tennis coach. Matthew and his brother were introduced to a local table tennis club. They trained before and after school, at weekends and in the school holidays. This head start for Matthew and his brother (who also achieved table tennis greatness) combined with a top coach and a strong local club, made the difference. But he was not the only one. It turns out that within a few streets of his Reading primary school no less than 11 junior and senior table tennis champions emerged from the same generation. Syed himself poses the question: what would have been the outcome if he had lived in a different Reading street, and attended a different primary school?

The evidence from Syed's own story and those of many others, that it is not what champions are like that matters, but where they are from, is stunning. Although Syed has met many top sportsmen and women, he freely attributes most of the collateral for his arguments to others. He acknowledges his debt to the researcher Anders Ericsson of Florida State University, the social commentator Malcolm Gladwell (Outliers), and authors Geoff Colvin (Talent is Overrated) and Daniel Coyle (The Talent Code).

The most extensive investigation into the source of outstanding talent was undertaken by Ericsson among violinists from the Music Academy of West Berlin in Germany. He divided them into three groups. Outstanding students expected to become international soloists, extremely good players destined for positions in leading orchestras, and a less able group with a future as music teachers. The question posed was what separated the three groups? The biographical histories of the three groups were similar and showed no marked differences. They started formal lessons and practice aged eight, and all decided to become musicians aged around 15. The only real difference between the groups was simply the number of hours devoted to serious practice. By the age of 20, the best violinists had practised an average of 10,000 hours – more than 2,000 hours more than the good violinists and more than 6,000 hours more than those hoping to become music teachers.

This finding has become known as "the 10,000 hour rule" – the minimum time believed necessary for the acquisition of expertise in any complex task. Syed steps back to point out that implications are far wider than simple for sporting achievement and apply to work, business, politics, and life in general.

"If we believe that attaining excellence hinges on talent, we are likely to give up if we show insufficient early promise. If on the other hand, we believe that talent is not implicated

BOOKED: **THIS MONTH'S CHOICE**

in our future achievements, we are likely to persevere."

Bounce is full of examples that prove how the roots of so-called talent seen in top sports people, such as lightning reaction speeds, astonishing anticipation, and instinctive movements, are actually the product of enhanced brain processes developed through practice. World-class tennis players can tell where a serve will land based on the tiny changes to the server's hips and body position. Chess players "chunk" the information on the board in front of them rather than perceive the position of each individual piece. These performers were not born with this ability – it has been gained through experience. Syed highlights Desmond Douglas, also a British table tennis champion, renowned for his fast reaction speeds. To the sport's surprise when Douglas actually had his overall reaction speeds tested, he turned out to be no better than sluggish. The findings were such a shock that at first no one believed them. On further investigation by Syed, who looked deeply into the player's early playing history, the explanation became clear. Douglas had spent the first five years of his table tennis life in a cramped Birmingham classroom with so little space between the end of the table and the walls that the players developed a form of "speed table tennis". "Douglas spent more hours than any other player encoding the characteristics of a highly specific type of table tennis: the kind played at maximum pace, close to the table. That is how a man with sluggish reactions became the fastest player on the planet."

Practice alone however is not enough. It must be deliberate, purposeful practice. This means not just repeating easy actions and skills, but challenging a player with new and more difficult options until they are "second nature".

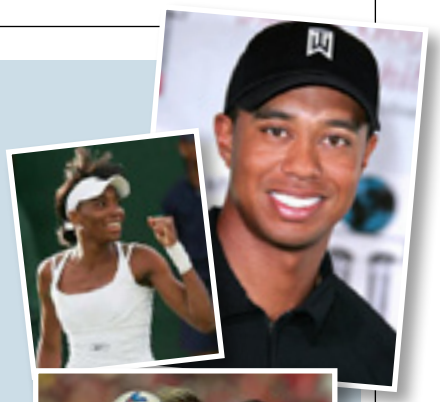
The ascendancy of Brazil as the world's leading soccer nation is, in the popular perception, due to the free flowing style of play and skills developed in beach football. However, increasing evidence shows that in fact it is the far more widely played game of futsal – contained within a smaller pitch with fewer players and a heavier ball, leading to more touches per player and greater control of the ball – which is in fact the root cause.

For those with an interest in the physiological side of performance Bounce provides plenty of material from psychologists and sports scientists as to how the brain moulds itself and the motor skills that it controls as a result of thousands hours of practice. Movements and reactions become hard-coded in the neural pathways of the brain, creating the impression that highly skilled actions are innate.

Syed also writes about the role of motivation and faith and belief, other key ingredients in the of a world-class performer in sporting discipline. The sections of the book highlighting the placebo effect and a discussion on the role of drugs and drug abuse, are perhaps parallel debates that whilst are arguably relevant to analysis of superior performance, are not central to the main theme of the book. To that extent they seem tacked on.

Bounce has nothing to say about team performance, though the principles laid out in this book that underpin individual achievement surely must be applicable to groups of performers. For coaches of team games the inescapable conclusion is that constant repetitive purposeful practice, whether in drill-based activities or game-based play, is the key to achievement. ■

HOW THEY WERE MADE





Tiger Woods got a golf club for Christmas before he was one and was positioned in his high chair watching his father Earl hit balls into a net in the garage. Aged two he was entered for a pitch and putt competition, could hit a ball 80 yards with a wood and pitch accurately from 40 yards. When he was four his father hired a professional coach to accelerate his development. Practice sessions ended with a competitive drill such as how many consecutive putts Tiger could make – up to 70 at a time. Woods won his first national major tournament aged 13.

Venus and **Serena Williams** benefited from a devoted father who, it is said, was flipping TV channels when he saw the winner of a tennis match win a cheque for $40,000. Impressed with the money top players could earn, he and his wife decided to create a tennis champion. In fact he made two. Venus and Serena were born within 15 months of each other. Richard Williams taught himself to coach and would hit hundreds of balls to the girls, aged four and three. The longest session lasted from 8am to 3pm. Serena entered her first competition at the age of four and a half.

David Beckham would take a football to a park in east London as a child, kicking it from precisely the same spot for hours on end. He was signed by Manchester United at the age of 14. His trademark bending free kick is a deliberate technique practised over and over again. "My secret is practice," says Beckham.

ELITE SOCCER Here at **Elite Soccer**, we value highly the knowledge and judgement of you, our subscribers. Over the past few months we've been delighted to put forward some fantastic coaching literature that examines the psychological side of sports practice, but there are undoubtedly a number of gems we've not uncovered.
We'd like to hear from you if there's a coaching book that has really helped to shape and focus your side. Contact us at **elitesoccer@greenstarmedia.net**, and we'll look to showcase the best going forward.
In striving to make **Elite Soccer** the ultimate monthly soccer coaching title, we're always keen to hear your feedback on the magazine's content - be that our book reviews, bonus manager features, or the coaching sessions themselves.

EXTRA-TIME

GLENN ROEDER / ASTON VILLA

This month, we find out what former Norwich City, Newcastle United and West Ham United manager Glenn Roeder has been doing since stepping away from the managerial hotseat.

What have you been doing since leaving Norwich in 2009?
I got to know Gérard Houllier while he was manager at Liverpool and when he took over at Aston Villa in 2010 he gave me a scouting role, which I thoroughly enjoy. I spend a lot of time in Europe, watching players for Aston Villa.

Scouting is something I have done in the past, but not as intensely as I have done for Villa these past two seasons. I've really enjoyed it and it enhances my knowledge of players in Europe, especially in France, Holland and Germany.

Are you looking to get back into front-line management?
I would certainly look forward to going into a senior role at a football club. It wouldn't have to be managing. When I look back since retiring from playing, I have covered every role in a full-time capacity that there is to cover in a football club. The role that would interest me greatly is that of sporting director, or director of football. I think I'd be highly qualified for that role, because I have done everything from managing in the Barclays Premier League to being academy director at Newcastle.



What have you made of Newcastle United's progress this season?
They've been absolutely brilliant. Having spent eight years up there as a player and a manager, Newcastle is very dear to my heart. It's great they are having such success under Alan Pardew, who would be the first to admit that it was Chris Hughton who got them going again after they were relegated. Hughton did extremely well to get them back up again at the first time of asking, which is very important.

> "If Newcastle suddenly had to have a fire sale, they could sell all of those players they have bought recently for three or four times what they paid for them."

Their chief scout, Graham Carr, has done wonders with the players that he has found in France, Holland and Germany. I watched Papiss Cisse for Freiburg earlier this season and was very positive about him.

How impressive has their player recruitment been considering their limited resources?
Mike Ashley has proved why he is so astute in business. He has sold at the highest point and bought at value for money. He has found the highest prices possible for the players he has sold, and he has reinvested in others who have all proved to be bargains. If they suddenly had to have a fire sale, they could sell all of those players they have bought recently for three or four times what they paid for them.

Norwich have also done brilliantly this season. How much potential did you see in the squad when you were in charge?
Only two players who I knew are really featuring on a regular basis under Paul Lambert. One of those players is Adam Drury, who has been a stalwart there for many years, and the other is a player I brought in, Wes Hoolahan, who we got for a good price. Lambert has brought in many fantastic players of his own, like Grant Holt – the type of player that a lot of managers in the Premier League and Championship might never have looked at. He has got a talent for not only choosing good players but also good characters, because they play with great spirit.

They have a good academy there, too. There is not a great deal of competition for young players from other professional clubs in the local area, which helps. They have a fantastic training ground, and they are very well supported, with full houses every week. The supporters deserve it. Alongside Brendan Rodgers, he is arguably the standout manager of the season.