FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The best training ground practices from soccer’s coaching elite

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the December issue of Elite Soccer. For many of us, this is a time of the year when the pitches can be highly unpredictable - the elements making it a well-watered carpet one week and an ice rink the next! And yet while having an extra layer of clothing is a necessity, the festive season also makes huge demands on sport’s fixture lists, so any coach worth his or her salt will be looking to take advantage of perhaps a few days off work to plan new ideas and gameplans for the challenges ahead.

So it’s for that reason we’re coming back to you with another six engaging and bespoke Elite Soccer training ground practices. So, to begin, how about a great session on the power of positional play in possession from Southampton boss Ronald Koeman? The vastly experienced coach has been one of the standout stars from the touchline so far this campaign, and he offers us a practice that has its heart in the Total Football sensibilities of those great Dutch sides of the past.

From Sky Bet League One, Preston North End boss Simon Grayson reminds us of the defensive responsibilities of midfielders, while York City boss Russ Wilcox examines the offensive transitions of play that offered him a record-breaking start in management.

Wigan Athletic coach Kieran Driscoll outlines combination play and fast attacks, Bury’s Neil Howarth tackles how to beat the block with creative play, while LMA Ambassador Kevin Dillon presents for us a blueprint that tells the secrets of creating space in a 4-5-1 formation.

We hope you enjoy the issue, and of course, wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. See you in 2015!

Enjoy your soccer,

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman
MANAGEMENT MATTERS

MANAGER OF THE MONTH AWARDS

West Ham United manager Sam Allardyce won the October Manager of the Month award after his side climbed into the top four in the Barclays Premier League. Allardyce has overseen a shift in playing style this season, and the rewards were there for all to see during October as the Hammers scored league wins over QPR, Burnley and Manchester City. The 2-1 victory over the reigning champions was particularly rewarding with new signings Morgan Amalfitano and Diafra Sakho on the scoresheet, and followed victory over Liverpool the preceding month.

In the Sky Bet Championship, AFC Bournemouth boss Eddie Howe oversaw an incredible run of form that saw the south coast club climb into the automatic promotion places – the highest league position in their 125-year history. The month saw league victories over Bolton Wanderers, Charlton Athletic, Reading and Birmingham City – the last of those matches being an incredible 8-0 away success in which Mark Pugh bagged a hat-trick. Bournemouth also saw off Premier League outfit West Bromwich Albion in the Capital One Cup to cap a memorable month.

In Sky Bet League One, Simon Grayson’s Preston North End side romped to five straight wins to narrow the gap on league leaders Bristol City. The Lilywhites appear to have hit form after a sluggish start to the campaign, and they saw off Colchester United, Port Vale, Fleetwood Town, Gillingham and Leyton Orient. They also progressed into the third round of the JP Trophy with a 3-2 home win over Port Vale. Turn to page six for Simon Grayson’s Elite Soccer session, which looks at how to defend in midfield.

And finally to Sky Bet League Two, where Manager of the Month honours went to John Still, whose Luton Town side continued their pursuit of back-to-back promotions by moving to the top of the table. The Hatters, who romped to the Conference title last season, are relishing life back in the Football League following a five-year absence, and in October the Kenilworth road outfit saw off Stevenage, Southend United, Hartlepool United, Dagenham & Redbridge and Northampton Town, conceding only three goals in almost eight hours of football.

CAREER PATH

...with Mark Cooper, manager of Sky Bet League One side Swindon Town.

Q. Your management career has taken you from the Conference to League One, then back to the Conference and now here you are in League One again. How do you cope with the ups and downs?

A. I think you have to look on everything with a philosophical mind – we all do, managers, coaches, players and fans. Not everything you do goes your way, and sometimes the challenges come too soon, or you aren’t able to get a game plan in place in time. I’ve always been assured of my ability as a manager and a coach, and I put absolute faith in my players to be able to fulfil their potential. With time and patience I think any team can live up to expectations, providing they’re realistic.

Q. You must be relishing life in League One right now?

A. Swindon Town are a great club with a proud history, and the determination is to get the club back into the Championship. There are some tough teams in this division with resources better than ours, but we have a great fanbase and an excellent stadium to match some terrific players, so there is the opportunity to do something very special this season.

Q. Can you draw on experiences managing Tamworth, Kettering Town and others and apply those to League One?

A. Definitely – I don’t think you can feel any time in football is wasted, particularly when you’re at the coal face. In the Conference there are different tasks being asked of a coach, but players and managers don’t care any less, so it’s all relevant and all a building experience. I’m delighted to have cut my teeth in non-league football and I think it’s standing me in good stead now.
THE POWER OF POSITIONING

Overview:
In every game, we aim to be dominant in terms of good possession and good movement. So, this session is about players adopting learned and thought-out positions involved in transitions between defence and attack.

This is actually one of the easiest principles to coach – it doesn’t require complex instruction, just players being willing to ‘know a role before playing it’. For that to be effective we must reinforce a message to the player at all times regarding his understanding of what it is he does, both when in and out of possession.

That knowledge fits in with our coaches’ principles and the overall philosophy of the football club to produce, we hope, a group of intelligent, resourceful footballers, who can anticipate situations quicker and react more efficiently than their opponents. And this all starts with short passing into the feet of the man next to you. What could be simpler?

SET-UP

AREA
36x28 yards

EQUIPMENT
Balls, cones

NUMBER OF PLAYERS
18

SESSION TIME
3x6 minutes

What do I get the players to do?
We set up as shown on a 36x28-yard area (1). The practice is 7v7 (reds versus blues) with four greens who work with the team in possession. The players involved in the 7v7 are chosen in relation to their positions on match day – for instance, the left centre-back and left-back will work together – as this builds familiarity and confidence.

The red team starts with the ball. They must pass it around, using neutral green players in building a possession game that means players link and play close to one another (2a). This set-up and game play increases technical confidence and knowledge in terms of how team mates will prefer to receive the ball (left- or right-footed; on the front or back foot; across the body or into feet), but more than that, it helps players create and see pictures in their heads, and this is the crucial point that we want to directly extend through into match day.

Of course, they will only be able to retain possession for a certain amount of time, and at the point where the ball is lost (2b),...
In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

A quick transition occurs (2c). So with reds relinquishing control, there must be a fast reaction to defend, with players coming in from the touchlines to close the space and attempt to limit the threat as quickly as possible. Blues, who had previously taken up positions where they could tackle or intercept, now flood to the outside in providing options for their own possession exercise. We play for three sets of six minutes, then rotate players.

What are the key things to look out for?
For possession to be retained, players operating on the outside must have a good touch, excellent awareness and a measured body shape. Players inside pressing the ball must close down quickly, attempting to predict and block passing angles using compact play. When possession is turned over, the first thought must be to make the pitch big.

Both teams need fast reactions in winning the ball, changing philosophy from ‘compact’ to ‘big’ whilst retaining concentration and clarity of thought.

How do I put this into a game situation?
To put this into a game we reduce pitch size to 32x25 yards. We limit greens to playing two-touch from the start, then gradually limit the number of touches for the teams playing 7v7, from all-in to two-touch to one-touch, if possible.

Ronald Koeman
Southampton

Ronald Koeman is without doubt one of the coaching success stories of the Barclays Premier League so far this season. Despite his Southampton side losing a host of star names in the summer of 2014, the newly installed coach has taken his side to second in the table. Playing a brand of powerful, attack-minded possession football, his team’s approach is reminiscent of Koeman as a holding midfielder/defender.

During a glittering playing career, at club level Koeman won two European Cups, five Dutch Championships, and four La Ligas. At international level he won the 1988 European Championships with the Netherlands. In 2000, Koeman took his first steps into management with Vitesse Arnhem. League title success followed as manager of Ajax and PSV. He has also managed Feyenoord, AZ and Valencia, and in June 2014 accepted the challenge of managing in the Barclays Premier League when joining Southampton.
In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

What do I get the players to do?

**2v1 practice (1)**

Blues work 2v1 for 30 seconds looking to complete as many passes as possible against one red defender.

Now in the 3v3, reds slide across left and right but forget to monitor the position of their target player and allow a pass to go through.

Here, the central red presses the blue in possession whilst remaining in his own half, as his team mates come in to support.

In the 5v5, red defenders press in the way rehearsed in early practices, protecting either the outer goal or the central target area.

**3v3 plus targets (2/3)**

Now in a 20x20-yard area, we set up 3v3 plus a target player at each end. Each team of three must stay in its own area and attempt to pass through to the target man. On receiving a pass the target player feeds into the previous defending unit.

Here, we’re looking for defending teams to...
"The nearest defender must press the ball as closely as possible, with defenders monitoring distances and angles between each other as well as checking the position of the target man behind.”

5v5 plus targets (4)
We now move to 5v5 plus two targets. Teams score by the coach’s chosen method – passing the ball through goals A or B, or passing into the target man.

In the 7v7 practice, reds press blues and look to prevent a pass into the two blue strikers.

7v7 plus keeper and targets (5)
Now the practice area funnels back to the corners of the penalty box, as shown. The server feeds blue attackers who retain possession until being able to feed strikers. Attackers take the ball on 2v2 in the advanced area and attempt to score past the keeper. Should reds steal possession, the game resets, or we can add target goals at the bottom to be reached within four passes. On passes through to strikers, the midfielders can...
In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

recover towards the goal, with the two nearest pressing the receiving striker from the front. Centre-backs must prevent strikers from turning.

In the progression, we extend to 9v8 plus a keeper (6), removing the funnel lines and using 15x15-yard target areas. Reds spread out and play from the back, building until being able to feed into the target man. On restart, the ball can be fed directly into the other team, or target players can play between themselves (7). We finish with an 11v11 where the principles learnt can be put into practice (8).

What are the key things to look out for?
We want to see all players developing an understanding of the defensive roles and responsibilities for midfield players, both ‘forwards’ and ‘backs’ in terms of their distances and angles, plus their relationships with each other, the ball and those other defending units.

They must also develop the ability to shift body weight quickly in a low defending stance, building quick recognition and reactions to block passes and recover towards the ball or goal. Mentally, players must concentrate and focus on the task in hand, developing a ‘unit’ mentality with team mates in midfield, all the time building an awareness and understanding of the roles of defenders both ahead of and behind them.

---

Simon Grayson
PRESTON NORTH END

That so many clubs in the third tier turn to Simon Grayson when a managerial vacancy arrives is not a surprise. The former Leicester City, Aston Villa, Blackburn Rovers and Blackpool midfielder has an enviable record in the division having guided Blackpool and Leeds United to promotion as first-team coach, as well as repeating the feat with Huddersfield Town.

And last year Preston North End came close to extending that sequence, though the club went out in the Sky Bet League One play-offs to eventual winners Rotherham United.

This season the Lilywhites are again one of the favourites to land promotion, and with it a return to the Championship following a gap of four years.

Grayson, 44, enjoyed an 18-year professional career that began at Leeds in 1988. He went on to make over 400 senior appearances for nine clubs, one of the highlights of which was winning the League Cup with Leicester City in 1997.

---

Here, target men can either link with each other or directly feed into blues, leaving reds with a decision to make - do they compress forward or prepare to shift across.

---

Moving to the full-sized pitch the principles worked on are put into practice, with an emphasis on maintaining the correct distance, positioning and communication between the midfield and defensive units.
In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

what do i get the players to do?

Practice 1

We start with a 4v4 (1). Blues attack the big goal while reds attack the boards. If blues score a goal a fresh ball is fed in and they then attack the two small goals, and vice-versa. We are looking for quick play with intensity, especially when the ball changes hands. The set-up of this practice provokes a huge number of turnovers.

what are the key things to look out for?

In this practice and the ones that follow, we’re looking for teams to quickly get back into shape when a turnover happens. So whether in or out of possession, organising and communicating the new situation is imperative. But more than that, these practices are designed to encourage speed of thought and good execution of passes when the ball is at a player’s feet. None of this is possible though unless players work hard – physically and mentally – at all times.

Practice 2

Now setting up as shown (2), reds start with the ball. They have...
to play through one of the gates using the top keeper as a receiving target. He plays back to the same team, who turn and attack the two gates at the bottom. If reds successfully get the ball through to the bottom keeper they score a point. If blues turn over play they can attack either end first – play then continues on. We are looking for positive forward play when there is a change in possession.

**Practice 3**

This is an 8v8 game played full-width in the space between the two penalty boxes, with an offside line 18 yards from each goal (3). Play as you would do a normal game – it’s all-in and high tempo, but two-touch in the centre circle as this is the area of the pitch in which players must move the ball around quickly.

Everything is game-related, including throw-ins and corners, and we can add in systems and instructions as the practice develops. To progress, we add in a floater to create a 9v8. This gives the players different problems to solve. We can progress it further to a 9v7 (4). In this situation the team of seven sits deep and plays on the counter-attack, while the team of nine presses high and moves the ball quickly playing two-touch, being imaginative and ambitious with their forward forays.
Combination play to deliver fast attacks

Overview:
The session focuses on developing combination play at a high intensity, taking one or two touches to improve efficiency during fast breaks and counter-attacks.

The first half focuses on quick play to progress forwards, maintaining a high intensity and creating rhythm, while the second concentrates on fast breaks to finish in the final third.

It’s vital to practise this art, because of the 122 goals scored from open play at the 2014 World Cup, 40 came within 10 seconds of a possession regain from fast breaks or counter-attacks. So having the ability to mount these sorts of forward breaks in games whilst constructing a devastating route to goal is a trait that can catch your opponents cold.

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

**Warm-up**
Setting up as shown (1), the requirement is to focus on forward passing at speed, with quick combination play effectively utilising the third man run. So players work in pairs to transfer the ball from one end to the other using the two reds.

To progress, we introduce a second ball (2) and now two pairs work at the same time, end to end. Upon setting the first pass, reds must now spin to receive a ball from the opposite side.

**Possession practice**
We now set up a 50x80-yard box (3). It’s 9v9, and the aim is to develop the ability to move the ball forwards quickly using only one or two touches, starting with a keeper at one end. The ball can only be played into a keeper from the attacking half of the pitch, and on receiving he will distribute it to the other team side using a long throw or kick.

The session can be progressed to one-touch inside the centre circle and two outside.

**Main practice**
Now we slightly adjust the pitch dimensions and add goals and...
mannequins, as shown (4). It’s 2v1 in each half of the pitch – the aim being to develop combination play and positional interchanges in creating goalscoring opportunities in the final third from a fast break, with a 2v1 defensive overload becoming a 3v2 attacking overload when the ball is played into the opposition’s half. The attacking team has six seconds to score a goal (5).

If a turnover occurs, the ball is transferred quickly into the opposite centre-forward with the next two wide players joining in, thus creating another 3v2.

**Small-sided game**

Finally, in this 9v9 (blues are 2-4-2 against 2-3-3 for reds), we ask blues to drop deep to counter-attack on regaining possession, scoring within 10 seconds of the regain (6). Reds will aim to break down the low block to score. Here we’re looking for compactness – distances between individuals and units/lines – the forcing of play in one direction, and prevention of opponents switching play. Players must recognise the right moment to counter-attack and where the space is, as well as exploiting any disorganisation in the opposition ranks.

What are the key things to look out for?

We focus on the movement of receiving players – can they lose their man to receive on the back foot and ‘face up’ to an opponent, or perhaps set and spin with one touch into supporting players? Movement of the wide players to support inside and outside is often key to a move’s success, as are the basics of communication, precision, awareness and playing at a high tempo.
In partnership with www.elitesoccercoaching.net

What do I get the players to do?
Setting up as shown (1), both teams have to score from a through-pass played into the end zone in front of a striker for him to run onto. Each team designates one or two strikers (formation dependent) who cannot break the offside line until the ball has been played. Defenders can intercept passes but can track runners only as far as the end zone leaving the striker to go through 1v1. If a goal is scored, or a shot saved or missed the defending keeper restarts and plays out to a defender.

What are the key things to look out for?
Early on you may see strikers making runs needlessly or midfielders missing the opportunity to pass, but this simply represents the learning aspect of the session, and of most importance is a positive mindset to achieve. What will develop is players getting on the same wavelength and learning each others’ games. A big part of this is the striker being careful not to waste the ball.
In partnership with
www.elitesoccercoaching.net

The striker will become aware of where and when the opportunity is going to arise... ready to change pace quickly to get onto the end of the through-ball.

How do I progress the session?
Initially, if players are finding success, allow one defender to follow the striker into the end zone. Alternatively, insist on a set number of passes before the ball is released in order to encourage patience. If progress is slower, let an extra striker go into the end zone to make a 2v1 (3). The real beauty of this session though is that you’re able to progress it depending on whatever formation your team favours. So, for instance, if playing with only one striker as a target man, perhaps nominate two wide midfielders or two attacking midfielders to be allowed into the end zone. The way to utilise these players beyond the back line would be different compared to a traditional striker. A target man would need to lay the ball off into a supporting player who would then be looking to play the through pass for either a wide man coming in off the flank or a midfielder making a run from deep (4).
COACHING CONSULTATION

Each month, we ask one of the game’s leading coaches to answer a question posed by an Elite Soccer reader.

THIS MONTH:
Creating space in a 4-5-1 formation

Q. We don’t have many attacking outlets so, as a result, are defence and midfield heavy. The centre of the park becomes very congested and it’s halting my players’ development. What’s the solution?

Question asked by Tom Lillis, an Under-16s coach from Morecambe

ANSWERED BY: Kevin Dillon
LMA AMBASSADOR

You’re right to persist with 4-5-1 rather than change your formation to try to accommodate players who want more space to play in. It’s a great formation because, in a number of teams I have coached, I’ve always liked the idea of players getting from box to box. If done properly, even as a 4-5-1, space can be created in the middle of the pitch, whilst retaining a firm grip on possession. And not only is this a key area of the pitch, but the requirements in this space fit in with a major part of any club’s training philosophy, namely for players to be fit and to play at high tempo.

Here’s a session for you that should help, then. It ensures every player in the squad knows exactly what is required.

Coaching considerations

Set-up positions

The session relies on players understanding their positions and recognising how important it is to be organised, with structured roles:

1. Goalkeeper
2. Right-back
   Looks to break forward when opposite full-back covers. First pass into 4, 10 or 9.
3. Left-back
   As right-back.
4. Right side midfield
   This is the player who will look to receive the ball from the back four.
5. Right side central defender
   As per a normal defender. His area will cover the right side.
6. Left side central defender
   As per normal defender. His area will cover the left side.
7. Right wing
   This player will give us the width but also support the lone striker in wide areas or across the face. He must get into the box from crosses from the left.
8. Left side midfield
   This player will be the more adventurous of the midfield players. He should be looking to support the lone striker and also create space for the no. 4 to receive from defence.
9. Striker
   Needs to be mobile and able to make channel runs. The player must hold the ball up with his back to goal. Defensively, he needs only close down between the 18-yard box, showing defenders inside.
10. Supporting midfielder
    This player is the forward catalyst for the team. He needs to be very mobile and will usually be the spare man offensively, popping up between the opposition defence and midfield. He will, on occasions, take on a central striker’s position and will also fill in if 11, 8, 7 and 9 are in the box.
11. Left wing
    This player will give the width but also support the lone striker in wide areas, or across the face. He must get into the box for crosses from the right-hand side.

Midfield link-up – basic

Setting up as shown, red player 1 passes in to 2, who receives on the back foot. Player 3 pulls away to receive the pass then drives back inside to the start. Each player then changes position as blues construct the same move.

As a progression, player 3 receives the pass inside the mannequin then drives to the start.

A simple passing pattern begins the practice

www.elitesoccercoaching.net
COACHING CONSULTATION CREATING SPACE IN A 4-5-1 FORMATION

in the creation of space in a 4-5-1 – where it may appear there is none – to include passing ability, support and knowledge of position.
As a result this practice highlights the role of every player, enhancing the notion that being effective in the centre of the park is as much about what defenders and attackers do as it is relying just on midfield movement.

**Midfield link-up – goals**
Now we bring in two keepers and goals. Red player 1 passes in to the back foot of player 2. Player 3 pulls off for a diagonal pass, making sure he is not offside, and shoots at goal on the same side.
As a progression, and as before, player 3 makes a run inside the mannequin, making sure that he is onside, and shoots into the opposite goal. We now rerun the move again with blues.

**Midfield link-up – linking up**
Now teams begin to link together, so red player 1 passes to the back foot of player 2. Player 3 pulls off on the diagonal, as blue player 3 moves across the face to receive a lay-off before shooting at goal.

**Midfield link-up – shooting choice**
Next, the pass made by red player 3 goes in short to the back foot of blue player 2, who turns and makes a short pass ahead of him into the path of red player 3, who has the option of shooting in either goal.

**Midfield link-up – passing options**
Stepping up the complexity once more, red player 2 receives on the back foot with player 3 looking for the diagonal as blue player 3 seeks out a pass on the channel. Blue player 2 supports from behind and red player 2 makes the passing decision.

---

**SET-UP**

**AREA**
Up to full pitch

**EQUIPMENT**
Balls, cones, goals

**NUMBER OF PLAYERS**
Up to 11v11

**SESSION TIME**
Midfield link-up 20mins, Practising as a 4-5-1 20mins
Kevin Dillon enjoyed a prolific 20-year playing career as a combative midfielder, starring for the likes of Birmingham City, Portsmouth, Newcastle United and Reading on the way to clocking up over 600 senior appearances.

Upon hanging up his boots in 1997 he took on a number of roles within Reading’s academy. He then managed the reserve team and assumed caretaker-manager responsibilities with the senior side. And as a coaching trio of Dillon, Wally Downes and Steve Coppell, the Royals finished eighth in the Barclays Premier League in 2007.

In November 2009 Dillon accepted the offer to become Aldershot Town’s first-team manager, subsequently achieving the club’s highest-ever league position – sixth in League Two. Taking a break from the game in 2011, he re-emerged looking at player recruitment at Brighton & Hove Albion, and has worked in a similar capacity at Watford.

### Practising as a 4-5-1 – basics

The team sets up as a 4–5–1 with a 2x2 situation created in a 25x25-yard box around the centre circle. All play must go from 6 and 5 into the area, with 8 and 4 looking to pass onwards into players 9 or 10.

This is all about creating space to receive the pass, rotating positions in the coned area and good communication, but with only limited opposition players as we feel our way through the passing and positional principles.

### Practising as a 4-5-1 – adding two defenders

In the progression, we bring in an extra two blue defenders. In this set-up the wide players 11 and 7 become active, so the intensity grows, with extra movement from the flanks, and players driving into space in order to commit a defender.

We want to see crossover runs from wide players, 9 and 10 rotating positions and the planning of recovery runs.
Practising as a 4-5-1 – creation of space

In the progression, we take out the coned area and play 11v9. So starting with a pass into the keeper he throws the ball out. The process here relies on players 2 and 3 splitting wide to potentially receive (or allowing the keeper to throw it to the winger) before pushing on. The no.8 has created space for 4 to potentially receive a pass. Our 10 will be a spare man looking to pass it into feet. If the defender comes tight, 9 or 10 can run into the channel.

Practising as a 4-5-1 – further keeper distribution angles

In the full 11v11, the keeper can even have the option of playing to the wing or kicking straight into the no.10 or 11. The team shuffles across for the second ball, enlarging the pitch when in possession and looking to move forwards at every opportunity.

When midfielders 4 and 8 are in possession, defenders drop to make the pitch bigger for a safe pass. This set-up is especially forceful against a defence with a lack of pace - when the no.10 is in possession, encourage him to turn, run and commit a defender before then passing, leaving a 1v1 for the no.9.
For some managers, a business in trouble is a poisoned chalice; for others it represents an unmissable opportunity to shine. But leading a turnaround can be very tough. We speak to one of those who was up for the challenge – Wolverhampton Wanderers boss Kenny Jackett.

At some point in your career as a manager, you’ll find yourself working in tough conditions; often it’s a reason why the club changed its manager. But it can only ever be a great opportunity. You have to look at the potential of a club and try to reach or exceed that. With Wolves I could only see potential to improve.

“Walking into my interview, I thought I had a good idea of what the club needed and what I would do if given the job. You get better at dealing with tough situations with experience. However, if the opportunity comes I think you just have to take it, whether you’re experienced or a novice. If morale is at rock bottom you will probably have to change people. While there may be a lack of confidence or sense of direction, the enthusiasm has to be there and if it’s not then you may have to change your team. That’s how I felt coming into Wolves.

“When I joined, the team had been through two relegations in as many years. They needed some players without that baggage and the supporters needed new players to focus on. As a manager, you promise to be committed to the cause and to do everything in your power to succeed. But when it comes to setting goals and raising expectations, you have to be careful about being openly optimistic or having high hopes. You will have your own internal ambitions and expectations, so at Wolves we say we want to get into the Barclays Premier League and that is where the bar is set. “But, given the high turnover rate of managers, it often doesn’t help to lay your head on the line by making bold predictions.”

United, Sheffield Wednesday and Nottingham Forest. So we faced our own set of problems compared with other clubs that had spent more time in the division. We had to recognise those challenges and make sure we could come up with the answers straight away. The pressure to succeed is no greater or lesser when the organisation is already at rock bottom; most pressure comes from inside. There is always going to be pressure on football managers to get results, because the turnover in this profession is so high. It is something managers have to accept. I don’t think you ever get the better of it, but you do come to terms with the fact.

“I also don’t think the pressure is any greater when you’re at the helm of a big club than a small one. If you are bottom of the league with a small club you may still get the sack. Motivating yourself when the wins are in short supply and you know it will be a long journey back to greatness can be tough. The motivation comes from the belief that you can win the next game and the need to figure out a way to do that. Whether that means changing the system or the players or simply putting your faith in the team and helping them believe that they can get through that bad period, it is looking forward that motivates you.

“When the methods you have implemented enable you to turn things around it is very satisfying professionally, but it is still important to keep looking forward. Wolves, for example, had a good year last year, but we are focused on the future and are not looking back. What we achieved last year should give the players the confidence that they can be successful, but now that has all started over again. Once again we have to prove ourselves, and that includes me. That’s what makes looking forward so exciting.”
Most team sports contain within their fabric a boundary of fairness. It’s a line that can be kept tight, or stretched, moved and manipulated to extremes, but where does the point between fair play and foul play actually sit? Players, managers, referees and commentators expend huge amounts of time and effort investigating, exploring and sometimes justifying the actions of players – when a footballer gets a touch in the box is it okay to fall to the ground given that his stride pattern has been affected, or should he keep on just as he might if in a different area of the pitch?

‘Foul Play: The Dart Arts of Cheating in Sport’ aims to investigate this subject. Not once does it condone the idea of gaining an unfair advantage, but instead presents a widescale debate on how, when and where competitors can and should cross the line. The result is an exploration into the mind of those who want to win, sometimes at any cost. The author carefully treads his way around ‘advantage’, ‘skulduggery’ and downright ‘cheating’, opening up the mind maze and addressing the morality of competition.

Not once does it condone the idea of gaining an unfair advantage, but instead presents a widescale debate on how, when and where competitors can and should cross the line. And this isn’t conducive to soccer – the book explores every element, from rugby to squash, the athletics track to the Subbuteo table. The result is an exploration into the mind of those who want to win, sometimes at any cost. The author carefully treads his way around ‘advantage’, ‘skulduggery’ and downright ‘cheating’, opening up the mind maze and addressing the morality of competition.

“Fair or foul?”

EXCERPT:

“When cyclist Floyd Landis – whose 2006 victory in the Tour de France was annulled when he was shown to have doped – went public four years later with other riders whom he alleged had also been involved in illegal performance-enhancing activity, he was effectively shunned by the sport. It was as if speaking about wrongdoing was seen as being worse than doing wrong. When the biggest scandal in the sport broke in 2012 and Lance Armstrong was stripped of the Tour de France titles he had won a record seven consecutive times between 1999 and 2005, the Texan eventually confessed to his doping misdeeds. But that confession contained no other names. Armstrong was rightly execrated throughout the world of cycling for his cynical betrayal of the rules. But could there by an argument that he gained an element of honour for his reluctance to grass anyone else up?

“Here’s another moral conundrum for you. Erythropoietin (EPO) is a naturally occurring hormone that controls and stimulates the production of oxygen-carrying red blood cells. Why is it that athletes found to have supplemented that process – and hence to have improved their levels of endurance – by taking artificial EPO are penalised, whereas those who can afford to train at altitude, where the body naturally responds to the relative lack of oxygen by creating more red blood cells, are deemed to be acting within the rules?”
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)

**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)

**The Collectors’ Series 1**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Sir Alex Ferguson, Roy Hodgson, Tony Mowbray and Nigel Clough

**The Collectors’ Series 2**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Sam Allardyce, Alex McLeish, Ian Holloway and Steve Bruce

**The Collectors’ Series 3**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Kenny Dalglish, Arsène Wenger, Neil Warnock and Roberto Mancini

**The Collectors’ Series 4**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Carlo Ancelotti, Martin O’Neill, André Villas-Boas and Roberto Martinez

**The Collectors’ Series 5**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from José Mourinho, David Moyes, Steve Clarke and Tony Pulis

**The Collectors’ Series 6**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Harry Redknapp, Gordon Strachan, Neil Lennon and Alan Pardew

**The Collectors’ Series 7**
36 bespoke training sessions, including contributions from Brendan Rodgers, Chris Hughton, Steve McClaren and Mick McCarthy

**TO ORDER YOUR COPY GO TO** https://bit.ly/1ko14aG