ANDRE VILLAS-BOAS
COUNTER-ATTACKS
ISSUE 72/JULY 2016: FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Engaging, exclusive training ground blueprints from those at the top of their game

Dear Coach,

Welcome to the July issue of Elite Soccer.

We seem to have been spoilt for soccer over the past couple of weeks. The Copa America has shown that even the best players in the best teams in the world can be outshone by determination, tactics and moments of magnificent brilliance. And while, at the time of me writing this, the European Championships still have a way to go, what we’ve seen has been a new emergence of supposedly unfancied nations in what has been a remarkably successful extended format.

All that should lead us to believe that, whatever age and skill level of player we coach, great things are possible. So with that in mind, we’re delighted to bring forward another great selection of practices that, I hope, will inspire and engage you and your players.

So with an international feel to this issue, why not start with a Portuguese coach who has coached and managed successfully in Portugal, the British Virgin Islands, England and Italy, and whose last gesture in charge of Zenit Saint Petersburg saw the Russian side clinch their country’s domestic cup? Still one of the youngest and most progressive coaches in international football, we’re delighted to welcome Andre-Villas Boas into Elite Soccer.

Moving on, Brentford manager Dean Smith presents a crossing and finishing session that focuses on the strength of those on the wings, while passing and receiving skills are central to the session from Crewe Alexandra’s James Collins.

From the Ipswich Town academy, we have a great matchday rondo practice from Steve Foley and Duncan Wheeler, and LMA Ambassador Darren Kelly looks at cues and triggers involved in pressing and closing down.

To conclude, we dip into the archives to repurpose a brilliant practice from Harry Redknapp, who puts his own unique style of coaching insight behind a session that encourages creativity in all areas of the pitch.

We hope you and your players enjoy what’s on offer. And away from Elite Soccer, keep enjoying the brilliant array of summer soccer that’s on show, and we’ll see you again next month.

Yours, in soccer,

Howard Wilkinson, LMA Chairman

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ANDRE VILLAS-BOAS
LMA AMBASSADOR

Andre Villas-Boas’ fascinating route into football management began in 1994 when, at just 16, he was invited by Porto manager Bobby Robson to work as a trainee with Porto’s youth-team coaches. Villas-Boas worked his way up through the ranks at Porto and in 2002 joined the backroom team of new manager Jose Mourinho. As part of Mourinho’s backroom team, Villas-Boas went on to help win an array of trophies including two Primeira League titles and the UEFA Champions League. Overseas experience then ensued for the young coach as part of Mourinho’s coaching staff; first in England with Chelsea where highlights included two Premier League titles, the FA Cup and two League Cup wins and then in Italy when Mourinho started his successful reign with Inter Milan.

Villas-Boas took up his first club management post in 2009 when he was appointed as manager of Academica in Portugal’s top flight. Here he guided the club to a League Cup semi-final. In 2010 he was appointed as manager of Porto, where during his first and only season with the club he won the Portuguese League title, Portuguese Supercup, Portuguese Cup and Europa League. During this campaign his team remained undefeated and Villas-Boas became the youngest manager ever to win a European title.

In June 2011 André was appointed manager of Chelsea, before joining Tottenham Hotspur prior to the 2012/13 campaign. In his first season in charge at White Hart Lane, he guided Tottenham to a fifth-place finish in the Barclays Premier League.

In 2014, Villas-Boas took up the challenge of managing in the Russian Premier League as manager of Zenit Saint Petersburg, where he added the Russian Premier League, the Russian Cup and Russian Super Cup to his list of trophies.

HARRY REDKNAPP
LMA AMBASSADOR

As far as domestic football goes, Harry Redknapp was most recently in charge of QPR, the latest in a long list of clubs – Bournemouth, West Ham United, Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur as well – to have benefited from the 69-year-old’s unique, galvanising and, ultimately, success-driven managerial style.

Redknapp grew up in London and starred as a midfielder, notably for West Ham United and Bournemouth, before spells at Brentford and Seattle Sounders.

After leaving QPR he took on international managerial duties with the Jordan national team, is a football advisor to Central Coast Mariners, and director at Southern Football League side Wimborne Town.

DEAN SMITH
BRENTFORD

Dean Smith is currently manager of Brentford FC, having been appointed in November 2015. He had previously given Walsall great success having arrived with the Saddlers in July 2009, climbing to the position of first-team manager in January 2011. He is a holder of the UEFA Pro License.

As a player, Dean began his career with Walsall, coming up through their ranks and making over 150 appearances for the club before moving to Hereford United, Sheffield Wednesday and Port Vale.

JAMES COLLINS
CREWE ALEXANDRA

James Collins is first-team coach at Crewe Alexandra, and assistant to first-team manager Steve Davis. He holds the UEFA A licence and is one of 16 selected coaches to graduate on the Level 5 elite coaches’ award.

Collins represented Crewe as a midfielder between 1997 and 2001.

STEVE FOLEY and DUNCAN WHEELER
IPSWICH TOWN

Steve Foley and Duncan Wheeler coach at the Ipswich Town academy, with the responsibility of bringing through the next generation of promising youngster at Portman Road. Foley was previously with East Anglia rivals Norwich City and, as a player, made over 300 appearances for Colchester United. Wheeler, meanwhile, is Assistant Lead Youth Development Phase Coach and combines his duties with managing local side Whitton United.

DARREN KELLY
LMA AMBASSADOR

Darren Kelly is currently in charge of Hyde United having also managed in the Football League for Oldham Athletic, and in the National League with Halifax Town.

As a player he enjoyed a long career, both in his native Northern Ireland and the English lower leagues, most notably for Carlisle United, Portadown, Derry City and York City.
LMA AMBASSADOR

Andre Villas-Boas

Working on the counter-attack

What do I get the players to do?

3v2 counter-attack exercise

Setting up as shown (1a), blues attack 3v2 using one player on each side of the goal and a third positioned to the side. As soon as the red team concedes a goal or clears the ball, a third red player comes in with another ball on a counter-attack and it's 3v2 in the other direction (1b). The two blue players closest to the ball — those who started on each side of the goal — react, doing their best to prevent the attack; the third supporting player leaves the area. We will also condition it so that the player who begins each counter-attack cannot be the man who scores.

At the end of each attack, the groups stay in the opposite side from where they started, ideally switching positions within their own set-up (for instance, the left-sided player moves to the right, and vice versa). Offsides can be applied or ignored depending on the choice and preferences of the coach.

What are the key things to look out for?

When in possession, we want players to use superiority in terms of numbers in order to create goal-scoring chances. This includes attacking explosively and making smart counter-attacking decisions.

Without the ball, defenders need to close space towards the centre. Quick reactions on a transition are imperative and zonal behaviour is something we will also encourage, so players situated closest to the ball will always be the ones to press.

Possession v counter-attack exercise

This is an 8v8 at its core that uses, in total, 20 outfield players plus two keepers, as shown (2a). It begins with the blue team trying to keep possession for as long as possible (without scoring). Reds press in order to win back possession and...

Overview:

This is a progressive, counter-attacking session, run in such a way that the players can understand it right the way from a basic point of view (3v2) through to a more complex game-type situation.

The way it is performed will obviously depend on the strategy that we choose to outline for a specific game, and its use will usually be against opponents who we know have difficulty dealing with counter-attacks, as you would expect.

In terms of time (not to mention the number of repetitions) we leave this up to the coach to decide, bearing in mind the day of the week. The closer to the day of the game the fewer repetitions and shorter the practice will be.

Each of the three practices in this session lasts for 2x8mins with 2mins recovery in between.

3v2 counter-attack exercise

1a

1. Blues begin with a 3v2 attack
2. The wide supporting player moves in
3. The player who starts cannot be the man who shoots
4. A pass is laid into the supporting striker
5. A goal is scored

1b

1. Blues organise quickly in defensive mode
2. Now an immediate counter-attack begins against the two blues (minus the wide supporting player)
3. Reds make positive attacking runs to maximise the impact of the counter
4. Blues organise quickly in defensive mode
5. A pass is laid into the supporting striker

6. A goal is scored
ANDRE VILLAS-BOAS: WORKING ON THE COUNTER-ATTACK

then break on the counter-attack towards their opponents’ goal, with blues looking to prevent this transition and the next phase. The four green neutral players work with the team in possession – so blues at first then reds on turnover of possession (2b). So, for instance, when reds win the ball, neutral greens on the outside give depth to the blue defensive set-up. In addition, the neutral yellow at the far end becomes the first defender (the centre-back) for the blues. The team that counter-attacks starts the next phase in possession, while we can add in a touch limit – again this is dictated by the coach depending upon the players’ ability with the ball. We play this for 4x4mins with one minute recovery in between then switch so that neutrals play with the reds.

What are the key things to look out for?
When in possession, we’re looking for a high quality of counter-attacking play, ensuring that the first pass should beat the first line of pressing. We also want to see a high speed of executing the counter-attack, plus good final delivery and assists.

When out of possession, players must press and close down space, while ensuring they cover. We want to see a strong reaction to losing the ball and lots of tracking of runs into spaces.

How do I put this into a game situation?
We now set up as shown on a 70x60-yard area (3a). The team that we want to see working on possession – in the example shown it’s the blue team – is given the ball inside their own half and try to find spaces to break through their opponents – the red team – and score. Reds cannot press blues in their own half. When reds win possession they break in quick counter-attacks with the intention of exploiting any spaces in behind (3b).

At first we would set this up so that on each counter-attack there are
four assigned players from each side, but this can be progressed so that everyone is included.

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

When with the ball, we’re looking for teams to ensure a high quality of pass and decision-making. We want to see mobility in creating space and good balance of the team when in possession. During counter-attacks, the first pass must beat the first line of press, or the break has failed. Past that, we want to see good exploitation of attacking spaces in behind, and each move performed at high speed.

Finally, when the counter-attack is ‘on’, players have to ensure they do not lose the ball in an advantageous situation—perhaps even provoking a return counter-attack—and that comes down to good selection, occupying different counter-attacking spaces in the process.

When without the ball, we’re looking for compact closing down of space, good pressing, strong, positive reactions to the ball being lost and the tracking of movements in behind. We’re also on the lookout for dominance in 1v1 situations in the crucial wide areas.

**How do I progress the practice?**

The obvious and most effective progression to this practice comes about by increasing difficulty and, in its simplest form, that means adding to the number of opponents, or restricting time and space.

We can also apply additional player conditions—for instance, as highlighted in the first practice, the player who began the counter-attack could not score.
Overview:
This is an all-action session that brings together fitness and technique in a fast-paced competitive game. It relies on individual skill and good teamwork. It encourages shots at goal and must be played at Premier League pace – in other words, at a high tempo.

My teams will play this intensive game every Tuesday if we have no midweek match as it acts as a brilliant maintenance session, using up to 14 players in the exercise.

In the session, we constantly encourage creative players to shoot at goal when they create half a yard for themselves. It’s great for fitness – hence why I would run it early in the week – and for team spirit too, because it builds camaraderie and the will to win. I have used this at every club I’ve managed.

What do I get the players to do?
Having divided players into two teams, and with a goal placed at each end of the playing area, we begin by playing 2v2 in the middle. One keeper starts with the ball, playing out to his team. Players must combine, making short and precise passing patterns before attempting to score in the far goal (1). We try to create a very intensive game, with coaches positioned at each end so as to immediately get a ball back in play should it go dead. We play for two minutes; each team of two is replaced by two new players.

We enhance the move by placing additional team members around the side of the pitch, up to a maximum of four players per team (2). Now, players involved in a

In a 2v2, the white team combines before scoring in the goal

Using one touch, a white team mate on the flank adds to the attacking options

The teams are rotated at regular two-minute intervals
**HARRY REDKNAPP: ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY**

2v2 can combine with those on the touchline to create more elaborate passing angles and options, though these peripheral players can only play using one touch. Players again swap after two minutes with each individual 2v2 score contributing to an overall head-to-head score, something that makes this session very competitive for players (3). Each player will usually play four or five games with the total session lasting 30 minutes.

**What are the key things to look for technically/tactically?**
For strikers this is a quick and reactive game. We are looking for them to find an angle to shoot, and to immediately dispatch a shot whenever they can. We have times throughout the season where frontmen hesitate when in shooting positions, so this session is great practice to get them back into the mindset of getting shots off early. Players must construct quick passing moves, always willing to break forward. They must be looking to create overloads and overlaps, while staying aware of their defensive duties should a forward move break down. Precision is key because there is no room for error. Making a mistake often leads to a goal in this game, just as it does in the Premier League.

**How do I progress the session?**
We progress the session by varying playing numbers, starting at first with a 1v1 (4). This is very hard work but our players enjoy the challenge. The fact the exercise offers plenty of touches of the ball makes it extremely game-relevant. As a final progression, we play 3v3 (5) with an emphasis on creating 2v1 situations by using overlaps, ensuring quick restarts (6). Too often in today’s game players rely on their ability to beat opponents. But if a footballer can make something happen with movement in a 3v3, it adds another string to his bow.

In a 1v1, players must show excellent dribbling skills and a sharp eye for goal.

With 3v3, good player movement is used to create space and shooting opportunities.

When a ball goes dead, a new one is immediately served so as to maintain a high tempo.
Encouraging creativity: AC Milan v Spurs, Peter Crouch’s goal

Feb 15, 2011
Champions League, round of 16, San Siro

Peter Crouch’s winning goal in the memorable San Siro against AC Milan was a perfect example of this session. We broke quickly to create a 2v2 scenario where Aaron Lennon beat his man before squaring the ball to Crouch who finished well.

Ibrahimovic’s pass is intercepted by Sandro. He feeds Modric, who has Lennon overlapping to his right.

Lennon and Crouch sprint clear in a 2v2. The winger’s pace sees Yepes commit and the defender goes to ground early.

Crouch makes the most of the 2v1 overload as Nesta is forced to close down Lennon – the England striker sweeping it home first time for the Tottenham winner.
Overview:
Scoring goals is the hardest part of the game, in my opinion, which is why we are all looking for forwards who put the ball in the back of the net on a regular basis. But no matter how good you are as an attacking player, you’ll always need great service, and that’s what this session coaches, notably in practising crossing situations from in and around the box.

With that in mind, it involves working on delivery areas, the quality of the cross, and the runs and finishes required in key areas in front of goal.

I believe the session is enjoyable and engaging, and encourages the development of the players and the team by highlighting areas that we feel can be exploited from out wide areas in a match.

This is a set-up we’ll visit quite often as it is enjoyable and it is always relevant to a match on the weekend. And as you would expect, repetition improves the quality and the understanding of the cross, not to mention the runs and finishes required.

What do I get the players to do?

Phase One: crosses from outside

We set up, as shown (1), using two 18-yard boxes. The players attacking the crosses will be in pairs at the side of either goal, with a further six on the outside of the 18-yard boxes, one in each corner and one either side of the halfway line.

In the first phase, we’re looking for wide players to cross from outside/deeper than the penalty spot, putting the ball into the area where an imaginary second
DEAN SMITH: CROSSING AND FINISHING

Phases Three

In Phase Three crosses have to negotiate a path around mannequins while still keeping an eye on attackers’ runs.

How do you progress the session?
In phases three and four we run just as we did for phases one and two except we now add mannequins in to each challenge (3). And progressing again after that, we re-run the initial two phases again but subsequently add a defender in to each scenario.

How do I put this into a game situation?
In the game situation we use the same area but set up as a 5v5 including keepers, as shown (4). It’s two players from each team in each half, with neutral wide players who stimulate, facilitate and contribute to the attacks of the team in possession. One wide player can be active during an attack so as to create a 3v2 attacking overload.

What are the key things to look for technically and tactically?
In every phase wide players need to understand the areas to deliver to in relation to where they have the ball on the pitch. They then need to have the required quality to deliver the ball regularly into these areas, and that can only come with repetition and awareness of team mates’ movements.

Forwards need to have an understanding of the runs required, the areas where the ball is most likely to be delivered, the timing of their own runs and the need for a quality finish, usually under pressure. Forwards should also consider the fact that runs will often be made simply for the purpose of drawing defenders away from them, and not always with the expectation of the ball arriving to them.

To instill a competitive mindset, we will frequently remind defenders and keepers of their desire never to concede goals. Sometimes just reminding players of this can make a practice more realistic as it focuses the playing intention.

It’s important to note too - I believe a cross is still a pass but all too often it is played in with too much pace. Therefore, I will always encourage balls into the middle to be of the quality expected in a pass and, where practical and possible, with the same pace.

6-yard box would be. Forwards are encouraged to make runs to the near post and the middle of the goal.

Phase Two: crosses from inside
In the second phase we are looking for the wide players to be crossing from inside/further than the penalty spot, delivering the ball to around the back post area or cutting it back to the penalty spot, as shown (2). The forwards will subsequently have to adjust their runs to these areas.

Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

In the small-sided game players work 3v2 with the use of one crossing neutral operating on each flank.
**CREWE ALEXANDRA**

**James Collins**

**Passing and receiving skills**

**Overview:**
This session encourages players to receive the ball on the half-turn and think forward, making them consider penetrative ‘through passes’, thus encouraging invention in their play.

I think in the modern game, where retaining possession and rebounding are highly valued, young players are not taught enough about making an impact with their passing. So to do this the players must have the correct receiving technique which will allow them to play passes that make a difference to the outcome of the game.

This is a session we will run regularly – possibly once a week – frequently encouraging variations of the theme. And within that, we’ll always want players to be persistent in continuing to work at the practice’s aims, particularly when, on occasions, it may seem it has a low success rate, due to the small area and tight gaps.

Being encouraged to be prepared to fail (in order to find the best solutions) is central to this, because players will only grow if they are allowed to learn on the job.

**50x20-yard practice**

1. The red team begins the practice
2. The receiving player has to maximise space away from the mannequin before passing the ball forward
3. The next player spins off his mannequin and the ball is moved on
4. It makes it to the receiving red player at the other end

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

**50x20-yard practice**

We use three teams of five, each team placing one player at each end of the practice with others evenly spread out in the middle, as shown (1). The three teams work at the same time with the aim of quickly transferring their ball to the other end, though all players in the middle moving around mannequins to receive in space on the half-turn (two touch).

The practice can be progressed to include rotations and active defenders (2), with one opponent assigned to press, or can be varied in terms of how the ball is received.

**What are the key things to look for technically and tactically?**

Technically we’re looking for good body shape on approach with players adopting open stances, not arriving square. We want to see a tight first touch, receiving with one foot and passing with the other, then progressing to, perhaps, receiving with the sole of the foot, then the outside.

Tactically we want to see players increasing space to receive a pass (exploiting gaps and holes). Optimising the movement...
of players off mannequins is important, as is ensuring they have a concrete awareness of what’s around them, with good vision and excellent body language. Players should also be alert to identifying the time and space in which to play a pass, thus encouraging movement of team mates.

Physically, it’s all about agility and co-ordination, to adjust into space with the most efficient body movement, and to incorporate speed, with short, dynamic movement.

Finally, as psychological and social skills, we want to see teamwork – so players creating space for team mates as well as for themselves. And finally, confidence, to receive the ball to feet in tight and dangerous areas of the pitch.

In terms of typical mistakes, players standing in the same space for too long, or arriving in the space too early or too late, can be common. Timing is the key to success and we expect players to be able to spot the important triggers in both team mates and opponents – such as good body language and playing with the head up – that gain the most success.

**How do I progress the practice?**

After this unopposed/semi-opposed passing and recovery practice we would then progress it into a semi-opposed game situation, finally finishing off as an 11v11 focusing on the skills practised.

**Through the lines**

In the next section we set up as shown with the pitch divided into four sections - both teams are playing 3-3-2 (plus keepers). Defenders must stay on their lines and work laterally to block passes; attackers are two-touch and the ball must go through each section in order for a team to score. Keepers always start with the ball on a transition, a goal or a breakdown of an attack.

Although the set-up and game are simple, this practice is all about technical skills and tactical forethought so, as before, playing with an open body in receiving a pass, being inventive with techniques, varying the strength of pass and identifying gaps and holes are important, as is playing through.

In addition, each man must check over his shoulder before receiving, with a first touch being tight or loose depending on gaps, nearby defenders or the type of pass.

Agility and co-ordination also become key in this two-touch practice, with sometimes just small adjustments of the body being required in order to receive the ball well in tight areas. Finally, players must have the confidence to attempt what might appear risky passes – it’s better to try and fail rather than not try at all.
IPSWICH TOWN

Steve Foley & Duncan Wheeler

Matchday rondo

The team of eight (including a keeper) must keep the ball away from the opposing three in the tight space of a centre circle, using technical passing plus slick one- and two-touch play.

Overview:
The session moves a basic rondo involving all 11 players (including the keeper) into a directional possession. The idea is to develop habits around the principles of retaining possession which can be directly transferred into the 11v11 game. This session is distinctive because all 11 players are used throughout which encourages its use as part of a warm-up prior to a match. As a possession-based session, players are likely to have lots of the ball and with the area quite tight, both practices are played at a fast pace.

A key highlight of the session is that it builds into a directional, position-specific practice where, when in possession, the players can play in a position relevant to their game.

In addition, the simplicity of this session should not be overlooked - it is designed to be easily understood with clear outcomes. The session could be run as often as the coach desires and is suitable for any size of training area. In addition, stipulations can be introduced to vary the intensity/physical returns. It can be used as both a warm-up in its own right, or a lead-in to either a game or a more extensive training session and can be delivered to a wide range of age groups and abilities.

What do I get the players to do?

8v3

In the first practice (1), the group plays an 8v3 (including the keeper). The team of eight keeps the ball away from the overloaded three with conditions that can be applied on touches/passes and forfeits, if appropriate. Upon winning possession, the defender swaps with the player who conceded the ball.

This session would normally be split into a brief warm-up which would include the 8v3 rondo lasting no more than 15% of the session duration. The main practice would last as long as desired with the option of progressing into a game.
STEVE FOLEY & DUNCAN WHEELER: MATCHDAY RONDO

Possession practice
At the same time as the 8v3, in a separate area, the ‘rondo’ is taken into a possession game. Initially, three blue middle players aim to work the ball from the keeper to the opposite blue target player, then back using the outside bounce players. This is 2v2 in the end with the ball, making a 5v2 when transferred, with outside players moving along the line to support. The defending team must always work with two players in the end zone with the ball, one in the middle zone and one at the opposite end preventing the ball into the target player. They rotate accordingly.

How do I progress the session?
As a progression, we can relate the practice to 11v11 positions – for instance playing out using a back four, through a midfield four and into a no.9 or similar target player.

What are the key things to look out for?
In terms of technical skills we’re looking for solid passing (using varied surfaces of the foot), good receiving of the ball (in terms of body shape and first touch) and accomplished 1v1 defending, with precise timing of tackles and interceptions. Tactically, we want to see angles and distances of support, with players creating pathways into the striker. Attacking players must work on opposite angles to team mates, recognising when and how to combine, with one-twos, overlaps and takeovers. Players also need to learn when and how to play forward and when to retain possession. In physical terms, we want to see multiple and constant changes of direction, and players operating at high intensity with little rest time.

As for psychological and social factors, good communication (verbal and non-verbal) is obviously vital, with each man showing confidence in wanting the ball, and a desire to win possession.

Typical mistakes could include a lack of an early picture when receiving the ball which could lead to unnecessary touches of the ball without a purpose and/or a turnover of possession. Additionally, players must retain their concentration in order to not block pathways from the ball to team mates.

How would you put this into a game situation?
To develop the practice into a game, we can add goals or target zones behind the target players which can be used for either team after setting a trigger – for instance playing off the target player for the attacking team, or winning possession for the defending team. The size of the area is very much dependant on a combination of the ability level and age of players, and the desired four-corner outcomes, but essentially can be as varied as the coach determines.
Overview:
This is a progressive pressing practice that teaches cues and triggers across a variety of different areas and set-ups. It's about getting players to respond with comfort and confidence in a number of situations where technical, psychological and social skills work in combination.

We move through a number of set-ups and move all learnt elements into a final small-sided game.

What do I get the players to do?
**Warm-up: switching play (15mins)**
This simple warm-up is played on a 25x25-yard square with three players standing in the centre. Three outside players pass into the players in the middle, then follow their passes. The receiving inside players receive first-touch, then turn and pass to any one of the remaining outside players (who didn't follow their passes in). The solitary yellow player acts as a defender and must try to intercept any pass.

How do I progress the session?
In the progression, we'll challenge inside players with receiving/turns using different techniques. Inside players receive left foot only. All players change roles every two minutes.

What are the key things to look out for?
In this simple warm-up we create a situation where outside players are used to exploit opportunities to make penetrative passes. This requires thinking off the ball, with players ensuring no gaps in positioning around the outside of the square, so good vision and scanning. For inside players, this is about awareness also, but in addition, coaches using an open body stance and getting comfortable turning off the back foot in order to switch play.
As further progressions we can increase the number of defenders, meaning that receiving players need to dribble into space before passing out (2).

This is a 70% technical practice where we want players to show an open body stance, while also looking at receiving with the back foot and switching play with a second touch. It is also comprised of physical play (20%), psychological (5%) and social (5%). There are minimal tactical elements.

**Warm-up and activation (10mins)**

Now we set up with four players in a 10x10-yard square, using one nominated middle player and two balls.

Players follow the passing sequence, as shown (3), which is repeated with the coach changing the middle man at set intervals.

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

Technically, we are looking for good first-touch passing and awareness. The physical focus is on agility and turning, with good communication and concentration both vital.

**Pressing – forcing technical practice**

This practice helps players improve pressing, while forces good technique. Again we set up, as shown, on a 10x10-yard square with eight players (two on each cone), running through the passing sequence, as shown (4a/4b).

“This practice is about getting players to respond with comfort and confidence in a number of situations where technical, psychological and social skills work in combination.”
How do I progress the session?
As a progression, we can ask the pressing player to look at forcing the direction of the next pass by approaching off the possession player’s shoulder.

In technical and tactical terms the speed of travel in pressing is vital, though players must show composure in the last few strides as they employ the pressing and forcing technique in preventing a forward pass.

Good communication and determination are key, while resilience when working under pressure is a must also.

Pressing and forcing – conditioned game
For a game that puts these methods into practice we will set up 7v7 (plus a sweeper and keepers) on a 60x18-yard practice. This game is about recognising cues and triggers to protect space behind or deny penetrative passing.

Teams are organised in 1v1 pairs, while sweepers are unopposed but have a three-touch maximum.

This 10-minute game is played as you would do normally with each team trying to score. What we’re looking for here is solid 1v1 defending with players recognising cues and triggers (such as when to pass and when to drop).

What are the key things to look out for?
Physically, change of pace and direction is key, as is applying and resisting pressure. Socially, we want players to use key words to coach colleagues, and in psychological terms there must be resilience and clear thinking when under pressure.

“Good communication and determination are key, while resilience when working under pressure is a must also.”
In the seven years that Eddie Howe has been in management he has taken Bournemouth from League Two to the Barclays Premier League and retained the club’s status among football’s elite during one of the most memorable seasons in Premier League history. It’s a remarkable achievement and one that saw Howe awarded LMA Manager of the Year in 2015 and nominated again in 2016.

From the way that the locals are looking at Howe through the steam of their coffees, it’s instantly apparent that there is genuine affection and respect for the young manager in this town. Howe looks composed and relaxed when we meet in a beachfront cafe in Bournemouth and it isn’t just the sea air; he has lived and worked in this town for most of his life, identifies with its people and is very much at home here.

Howe’s quiet and reassuring confidence belies his experience as a leader, but it’s not a new trait. The youngest of four siblings, he was always a quiet child.

“I was shy, an introvert I suppose, and a very deep thinker,” he says. “My way is to analyse things rather than act on impulse.”

Having inherited a solid work ethic from his mother, he was also a conscientious student at school, keen to learn and get the best education he could. “She taught me the

There will always be a debate over the relative importance of talent and hard work, but in my case there was no particular innate talent; I’ve just worked very hard to make something of myself.
Importance of a good education and making the best of yourself and it’s an ethos I’ve carried throughout my working life,” says Howe, who went on to study physics, maths and PE at A-level.

He is, in many ways, a self-made man. “There will always be a debate over the relative importance of talent and hard work, but in my case there was no particular innate talent; I’ve just worked very hard to make something of myself,” he says. “I don’t have any special gift for numbers, for example, but I worked hard at my maths and physics studies.”

As Howe’s knowledge grew so did his self-confidence, and with it an assertiveness that would later prove indispensable in his career as a manager. Combined with his learning, his analytical style of thinking also afforded him an assurance in his decisions, something he says is essential in management.

“A big part of succeeding as a manager is knowing your own mind – what you want to achieve and how to do it – and then trying to get other people to buy into that. You need to have a plan, so having an analytical brain has certainly been an advantage.”

Deep Roots
Despite having the proficiency and attitude to continue in academia, Howe had throughout his childhood been a lover of sport and he turned from the classroom to the football pitch without too much of a wrench.

Born in Amersham, Buckinghamshire, he moved to Bournemouth at 10 years of age and what would turn out to be a long allegiance to its football club began in earnest. Aside from a few years at Portsmouth, Howe’s 14-year playing career was spent exclusively at the club and it was there, at the age of only 29, that he first earned his stripes as a coach.

Promoted to the position of player coach in charge of Bournemouth’s reserve team by manager Kevin Bond, he returned as centre of excellence coach under Jimmy Quinn when his playing career was cut short by injury. A brief stint as caretaker manager followed before he landed the permanent role in January 2009.

“My relationship with the club goes back a long way,” he says. “I was on the terraces for many years and I’d try to be there every week, but I never imagined I would be good enough to become a professional player. When you’ve spent many years going through a club’s youth system and centre of excellence you can’t help but have a love for it, a special knowledge of its culture and an understanding of the type of football the supporters want to see. It gives you a natural affinity with its ethos.”

His attachment to Bournemouth is tangible, but while such passion can be an incredibly motivating force, if left unchecked it can also cloud judgement and erode control. Fortunately, Howe’s cool head means he is able to detach himself from scenarios that might otherwise tip the balance. He can, he says, flip the switch when a different mindset is required, such as when he was forced to abandon his career prematurely as a player. “I got straight into the mindset of a coach and so didn’t really harbour any desires to play anymore; I buried myself in the world of coaching,” he says.

Moving into coaching wasn’t on his radar when he was on the field; he felt he was too introverted and quiet. But when the opportunity arose he found his personality was adaptable and that he could mould himself to the requirements of the job.

Emotionally he switched from being a supporter to a player and then a manager with apparent ease. “You have to take the emotion out of the decisions you make in management; they must be clear decisions, led by your head and not your heart,” he says. “Being able to draw a line under things once they have happened and maintain some perspective is also important.”

Extra-Time Profile: Eddie Howe

Being able to draw a line under things once they have happened and maintain some perspective is also important.
success and failure.”
That doesn’t, he is quick to point out, mean he is immune to the pain of losing; Howe is no automaton. But he can do what many of us struggle with at times – to feel the sting of disappointment acutely without allowing it to affect him in a negative way.

TOUGH BEGINNINGS
When Howe took the manager’s role at Bournemouth in 2009 the club was battling against financial difficulties and a possible relegation, thanks to a 17–point deduction. For Howe, who was at the time the youngest manager in the Football League, it was a true baptism of fire.

“The things we dealt with in those first 18 months were probably the equivalent of what a manager would normally face in the first six or seven years in the job,” he says. “During the first six months it was all about trying to stay in League Two, and I’ve never felt pressure like the games in that period, because our very existence as a club depended on our results.”

It was a valuable learning curve, but there was an even steeper one to come the following year when Bournemouth was placed under a transfer embargo.

“I remember at the start of the season I shared with the chairman my belief that we would struggle to avoid relegation without recruitment of new players. Then with the embargo in place I quickly realised that we would have to get the best from the players we already had.”

Exceeding even his own expectations, Howe’s Bournemouth eventually finished second in the table, securing a place in League Two. It was to be the beginning of a steady climb for the club under Howe’s leadership right to the top tier of English football.

“It taught me an important lesson,” he says. “Although initially you might think that the answers to your problems lie outside the club, sometimes they’re actually inside it. I had all the players I needed to be successful and the key was to get them to play at their maximum levels.”

It was a lesson that shaped Howe’s ongoing approach at Bournemouth – one of always training and developing his players to their full potential before casting the net elsewhere.

Facing such an uphill struggle early on in his career also taught the young manager that it can be counter-productive to use a setback or disappointment as an excuse. “It’s easy to make excuses to give yourself and the players away out; whether it’s an injury, points deduction or lack of finances,” Howe says, “but the more you do it the more your team members will latch onto it.”

Instead, when he and his team face a setback, he will use it only as a motivational tool; a reason to prove the doubters wrong or a common cause to unite the team in battle.

Having had his own brush with setbacks – Howe suffered a serious knee problem for two years that eventually ended his playing career – he can empathise with his players. That experience definitely shaped me,” he says. “They were bleak and lonely years, but I emerged stronger, more mentally resilient and with better empathy skills, which are increasingly important in leadership. I always make sure that when a player is injured they feel included in the team and are in regular contact with me and my coaching staff. It’s an overused term, but we really are like a family.”

THE LEARNING GAME
Howe has been away from the Bournemouth family for only a short period of his management career, when he spent almost two years as manager of Burnley. He has only positive things to say about the experience.

“It improved me as a manager quicker than I could ever have hoped,” he says. “I wanted to challenge myself, so I took the Burnley job because it was a big club in transition. I needed to prove myself to a group of players, supporters and a board who didn’t know me; I would have to survive on my ability to coach and manage alone. That period was all part of my learning process and I don’t regret it for a second.”

This kind of ongoing development is important to Howe and something he demands equally of his players. “Every summer I ask them to go away and come back better,” he says, “and I know that to demand that means I need to do the same.”

However, the constant desire to improve himself needs to fit in with the demands of the job, which often leave little time for study and reflection. Howe therefore makes good use of coaching courses and resources and regularly seeks inspiration and affirmation from outside the football world.

He is, for example, a fan of the works of legendary US basketball coach John Wooden and was recently gripped by the book Legacy, an insight into the All Blacks. “You only ever see and feel the world from your own perspective, so it’s useful to discover what other people have done in similar situations,” he says.

A CLEAR HEAD
Having successfully kept Bournemouth in the Premier League and always building on his strengths as a manager, the future looks bright for Howe. A detailed planner, he is constantly jotting ideas down, and has a notepad and pen by his bedside should inspiration strike during the night. Howe is far from alone in finding considerable success with a quiet and analytical approach. At home his family keeps him grounded and helps prevent him being swallowed up by the all-encompassing role of manager, and he makes time most days to go for a run or walk the dog to clear his head and create thinking and planning time.

At work, meanwhile, he tries to be true to himself and honest, open and transparent with everyone on his team. “Rather than raising my voice to get what I want, I believe in sharing the reasons behind my decisions.”

Clearly one to watch, Howe demonstrates that you can still make waves with a quiet approach to leadership.
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