

CRYSTAL PALACE

Ben Garner Defending against counter-attacks

Overview:

Defending against the counter-attack and reacting quickly to these transitions of play is important. That's because in the modern era, once teams win possession they are capable of breaking forward at great speed and with real quality. The ability to make the correct countering defensive decisions is a core part of being a successful defender.

In every match we play we see teams attempt to counter-attack, particularly when they are playing expansive, passing football, or are chasing a game.

We will often flip this session on its head and change the focus so that it is intended for our attackers when they break forward at pace.

“Players should know when to stay with movement and when to prioritise attacking the ball.”

DEFENDING AGAINST COUNTER-ATTACKS: MAIN SESSION

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch plus 10-yard channel past halfway line, in which are two target boxes

EQUIPMENT

Cones, balls, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

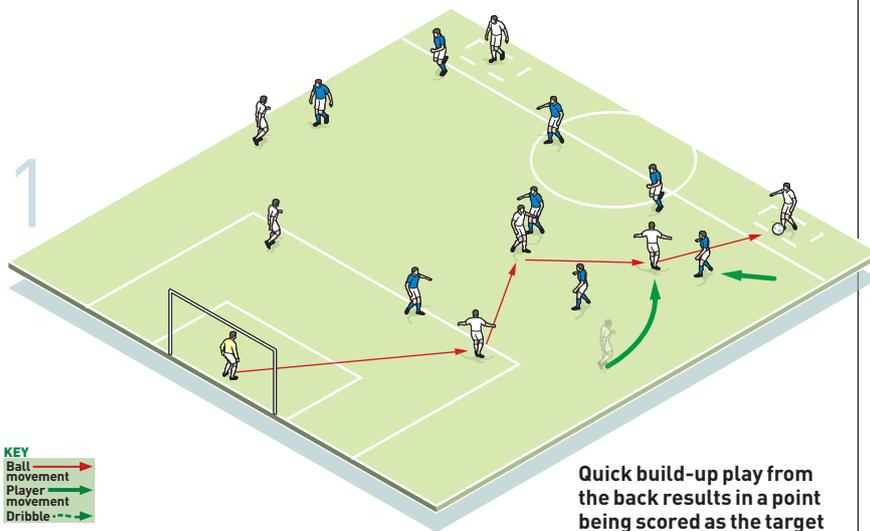
16: Team 1: 1 keeper, 4 defenders, 1 def mid, 2 target players
Team 2: 2 full backs, 2 central mids, 1 attacking mid, 2 wingers, 1 forward

What do I get the players to do?

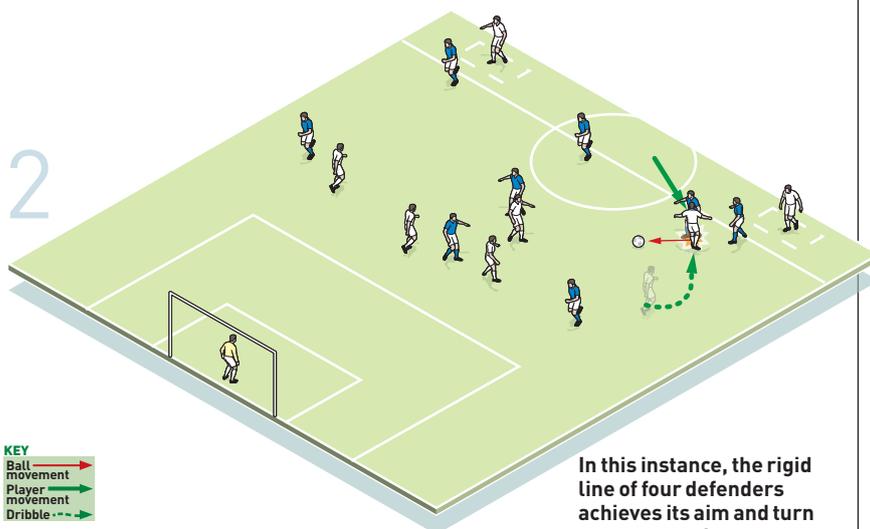
Play starts from the keeper, with the white team attempting to play forward, working the ball to either of their target players who are fixed in the target boxes past the halfway line. Whites must use their numerical advantage in midfield to play between or over the four defenders on the halfway line.

The blue team uses their fixed line of defenders to remain disciplined in front of the halfway line, screening the two white target players. Their aim is to block the route through to the target players and turn over possession.

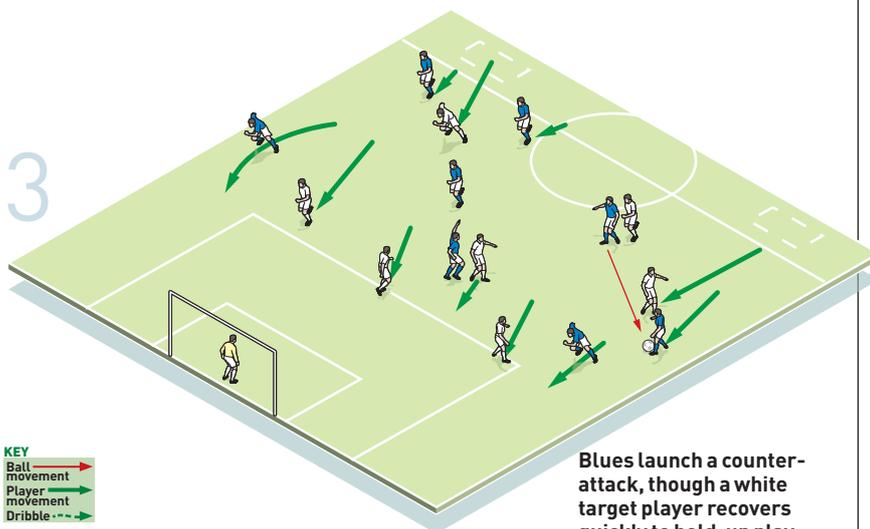
If the white team can get the ball to either target man they score a goal and play restarts with the keeper. If blues gain possession of the ball though, all players are free to counter-attack. The white target players are also freed and must attempt to recover quickly, but their isolated position effectively means



Quick build-up play from the back results in a point being scored as the target player receives the ball



In this instance, the rigid line of four defenders achieves its aim and turn over possession



Blues launch a counter-attack, though a white target player recovers quickly to hold-up play



Ben Garner
CRYSTAL PALACE

Ben Garner is Academy Coach at Crystal Palace, and for the past six years has been responsible for bringing through a new wave of talent at the Selhurst Park club.

The recent development of stars such as John Bostock and Victor Moses has been a shot in the arm for supporters of the south London club, given Palace's challenging financial situation. It is hoped the latest breed can find their feet quickly on the pitch as the npower Championship club look to avoid dropping into npower League One for next season.

Garner, 30, was formerly on the books at Crystal Palace, but an ankle injury at the age of 19 ended his playing career. He has coached six different age groups at the club, from Under-11s upwards.

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DEFENDING AGAINST COUNTER-ATTACKS: PROGRESSION

that blues have an 8v5 counter-attacking overload.

If a blue player scores in the goal, the ball goes out of play, or whites get back to regain possession, the game reverts back to its original shape and play restarts with the keeper.

What are the key things to look for technically/tactically?

Defenders must be asking themselves how they can affect the ball, how they drop, delay, apply pressure and recover.

Prioritising the danger is also important – for instance, knowing when to force an attacking player wide and away from goal.

How would you put this into a game situation?

We use a goal at each end of a 70x50 yard area, with a keeper and four defenders in each half. One midfielder on each team works both halves.

The keeper plays out releasing a defender into the attacking half, creating a 5v5 scenario, including the two midfielders.

On transitions, there is always a 3v3 situation in the defending half plus counter-attacking players, so all the factors worked on come into play in this free-flowing game. ■

