

FULHAM

Eddie Niedzwiecki
Changing play in midfield

Overview:

This session focuses on awareness in midfield, encouraging players to build a better understanding of where they should expect their team mates to be. An important product of this is linking and changing play with short and long passing variation. Naturally, being aware of those around you is essential for any footballer, so it's important to practise this. At Fulham, we have creative players – Clint Dempsey and Danny Murphy in particular – who can be relied upon to find a yard away from opponents even when it looks like they have been closed down. The skills of these types of players can be worth a considerable number of goals throughout the course of the season.

“Being aware of those around you is essential for any footballer, so it's important to practise this.”

CHANGING PLAY IN MIDFIELD: MAIN SESSION

SET-UP

AREA	70x50
EQUIPMENT	Balls, cones, goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS	20 (10v10)
SESSION TIME	Practice 30mins, game 30mins

What do I get the players to do?

In a 40x20-yard area, we work on passing patterns, using four players, each placed midway along a touchline – we'll set up four or five areas so the whole squad is active.

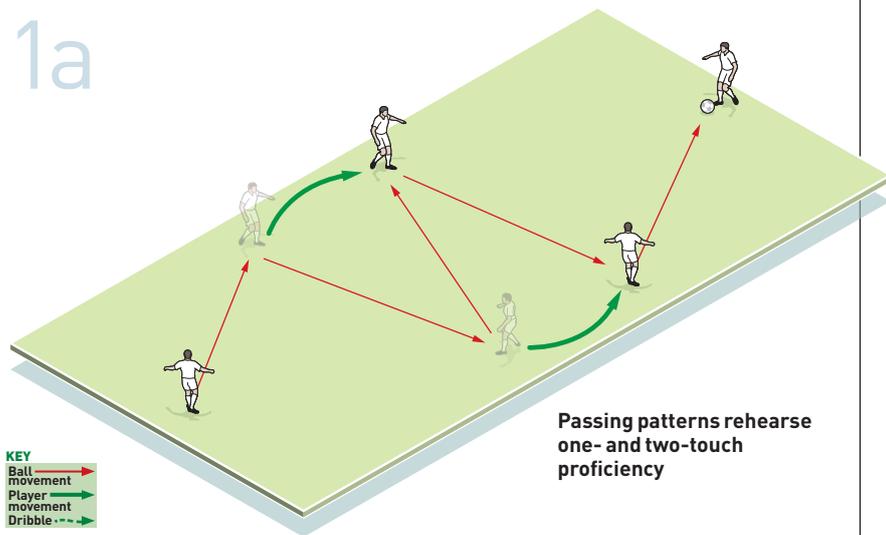
The ball must be passed quickly from one baseline to the other. Starting at the bottom, a pass is made to a wide player. He performs one-tuos with his opposite man, who then completes the move by feeding the player on the top line. Play can now be reversed, or a long ball made back to the first man. We rotate positions regularly.

How would you put this into a game situation?

Now we have established a slick passing tempo, it's important to work on positional awareness. For this, we use a 70x50-yard area, setting up two target goals at both ends, each 10 yards in from the sides. We add a middle zone measuring 15 yards in width.

This game is 10x10 (no keepers) using two midfielders from each team in the central channel. Other players can move through this

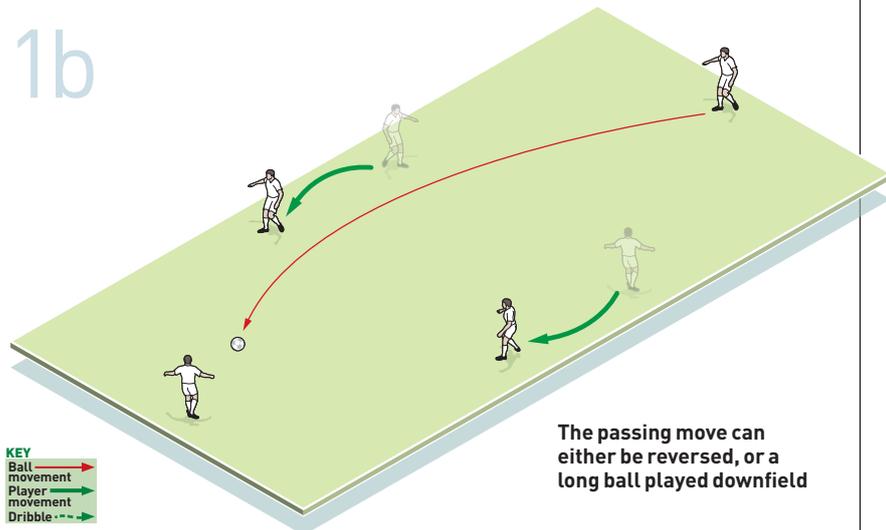
1a



Passing patterns rehearse one- and two-touch proficiency

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

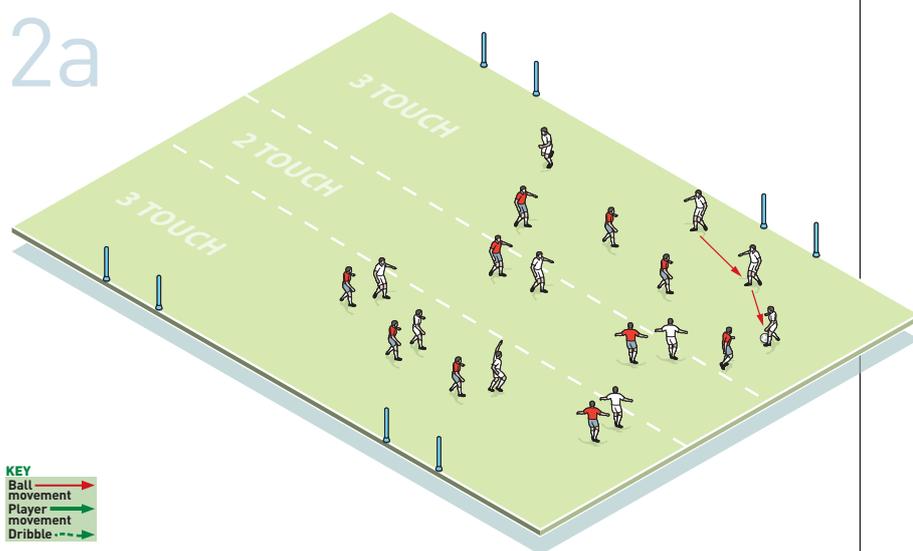
1b



The passing move can either be reversed, or a long ball played downfield

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble

2a



Whites break forward, bringing into play a midfielder in the two-touch zone

KEY
Ball movement
Player movement
Dribble



Eddie Niedzwiecki
FULHAM

Although of Polish descent, Eddie Niedzwiecki was born in Bangor, and as a well-regarded shot-stopper made two international appearances for Wales. The keeper agreed terms at his first club, Wrexham, at the age of just 14, and 10 years later switched to Chelsea, for whom he went on to make 136 appearances. He retired at the age of 28 because of injury. He has since enjoyed a number of high-profile coaching roles at Chelsea, Arsenal, Blackburn Rovers, Manchester City and Fulham, as well as with Wales.

CHANGING PLAY IN MIDFIELD: MAIN SESSION

area but cannot stop in it. Either side it's 4v4.

In the middle zone, limited touches apply, encouraging awareness because team mates are constantly on the lookout for opponents pressing and closing down. It's two touches in the middle zone and three touches elsewhere.

How do I progress the session?

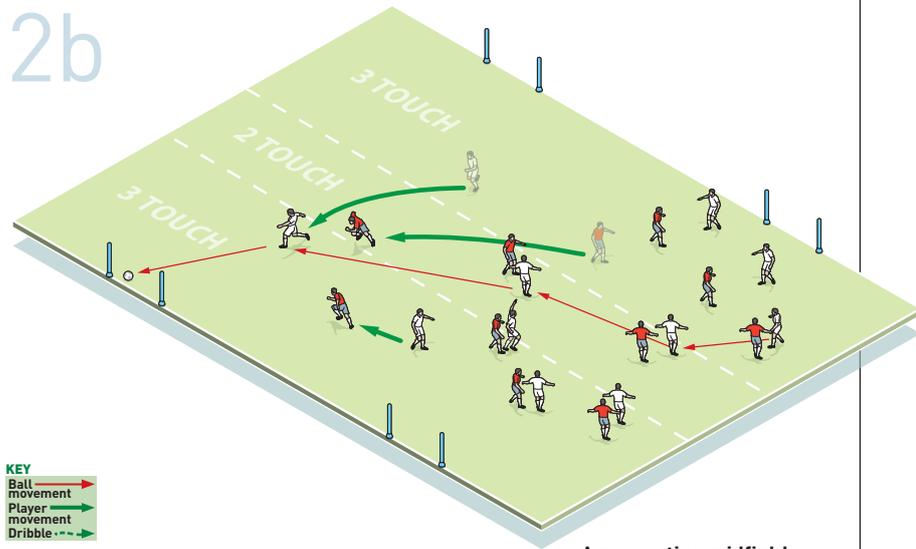
We add another zone running down the middle length of the pitch, 15 yards wide. Midfielders remain fixed, but any other player can move into the new zone, albeit with a one-touch restriction. This ensures speed of thought and player awareness.

As an 11v11 game, we would bring in keepers and play in a half pitch, awarding two goals if a chance is taken from one-twos or a switch of attacking angle. This added goal incentive encourages players to look up and use team mates more creatively.

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

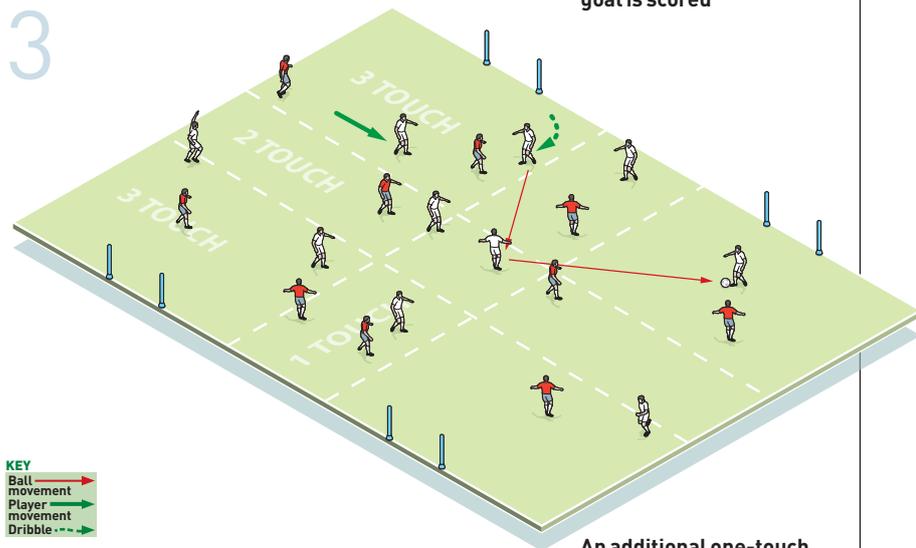
Players should be linking up well, tracking passes, constantly looking over their shoulders and available to receive passes side on. Technical skills are important in this session as is the ability to resist challenges. ■

2b



A supporting midfielder helps to switch play and a goal is scored

3



An additional one-touch channel focuses players further on slick link-up play

4



With limited space, quick passing is essential to break through a packed defence

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble - - - →

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble - - - →

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble - - - →

“Technical skills are important in this session as is the ability to resist challenges.”