

MIDDLESBROUGH

Tony Mowbray
Playing and receiving through the lines

Overview:

This session is about passing and receiving through the lines of the opposition.

It's important to practise this because good passing obviously represents a core value of any club's footballing philosophy, and particularly ours.

The skills that this approach play showcases can be utilised, harnessed and reused in every game, both when playing through the opposition and when passing amongst ourselves.

We'll run this session fortnightly so the principles are always familiar to our players.

“Good passing obviously represents a core value of any club's footballing philosophy, and particularly ours.”

PLAYING AND RECEIVING THROUGH THE LINES

SET-UP

AREA

40x40 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, bibs, cones

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

20

SESSION TIME

Box passing
10mins plus 5mins
per progression,
Directional practice
10mins,
Gates 10mins,
10v10 game 20mins

What do I get the players to do?

Box passing

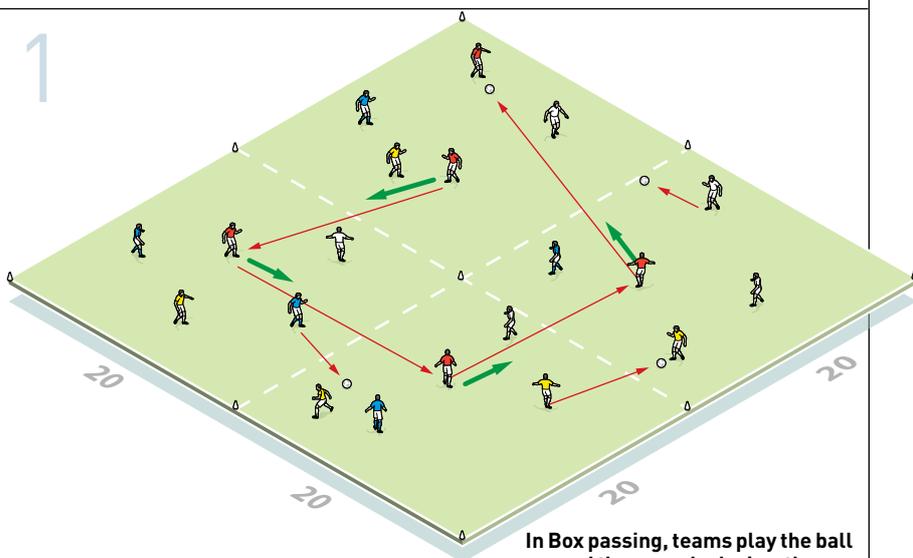
We use 20 players – four teams of five players, each team with a ball. Players pass and follow in a clockwise direction at first, then anticlockwise (1). The focus for players is on playing through the bodies in front of them.

How do I progress the session?

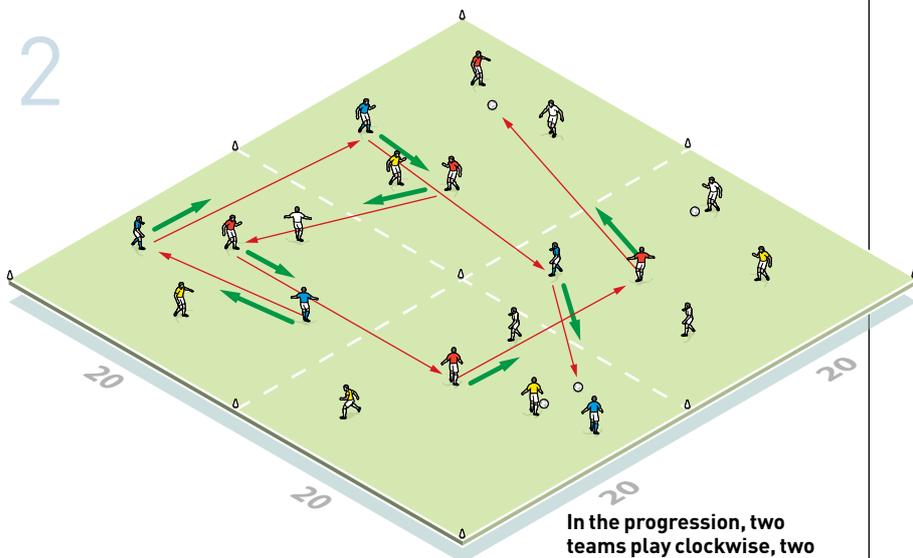
Progressions increase the complexity of the passing patterns and the need for players to be aware of what's around them. First, we progress so that two teams pass clockwise and two anticlockwise (2). Next, players receive and run with the ball whilst on the move, retaining the purpose of passing around the area.

Directional practice

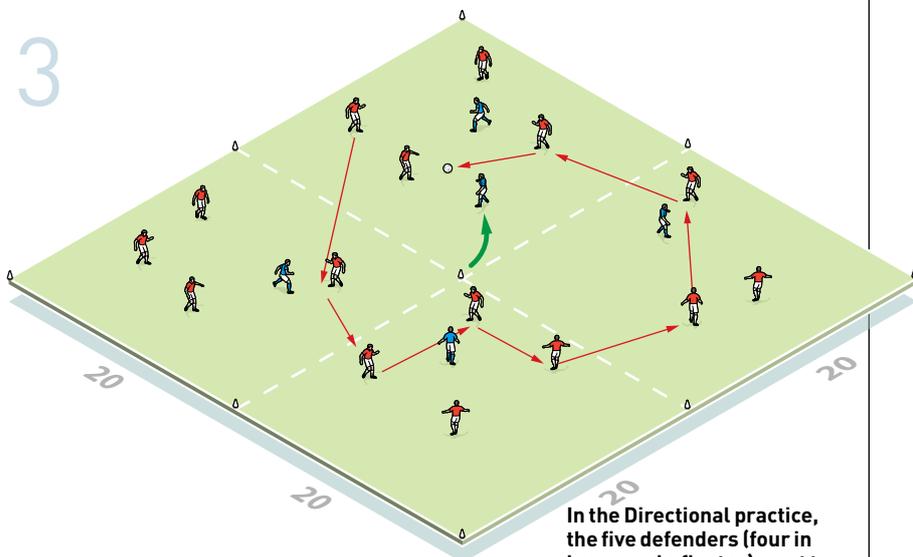
Next we run a practice that's 15v5. The five defenders are positioned one in each box plus a fifth floating player. They must stop the ball being passed around by tackling or intercepting (3). Play for 10 minutes, or



In Box passing, teams play the ball around the area clockwise, then, as shown, anticlockwise



In the progression, two teams play clockwise, two play anticlockwise



In the Directional practice, the five defenders (four in boxes and a floater) must try to break the anticlockwise movement of the ball



**Tony Mowbray
MIDDLESBROUGH**

North-east native Tony Mowbray made over 350 appearances for Middlesbrough, the club he now manages, as well as enjoying spells at Celtic and Ipswich Town, before hanging up his boots in 2000.

After becoming interim manager at Ipswich, he took on his first official managerial post at Hibernian in 2004, winning the Manager of the Year award and earning the club UEFA Cup football.

He switched to West Bromwich Albion two years later, plotting the Baggies' course back into the Premier League within two years. A season in charge of Celtic followed, before the 48-year-old returned to Middlesbrough, with the club regarded as one of the power favourites this season.

“The emphasis is on the weight of the pass and the body position of players receiving the ball, always looking for an angle to keep play moving.”

PLAYING AND RECEIVING THROUGH THE LINES

until a set number of circulations have been achieved by the team in possession.

Gates game

This is 6v4 in each half - gates are five yards wide and spread across the halfway line. Can the team of six move the ball into the other half through the unguarded areas?

When successful, the gate defenders now push into the opposition half and press the other group of six players (4).

The chasing defenders now replace their team mates in the gates (5). If defenders win the ball back, the coach restarts with the waiting team of six.

10v10 game

Finally, we move to a 10v10 game in the space between the two penalty boxes. One team plays 4-4-2, the other 4-3-3. In possession, teams must use the overloads practised earlier to work the ball through opposition players. Both teams out of possession should attempt to press whilst retaining their designated shape.

What are the key things to look out for?

The emphasis is on the weight of the pass and the body position of players receiving the ball, always looking for an angle to keep play moving. Awareness and movement are essential components.

