

ASTONVILLA

Paul Lambert Defensive dexterity

Overview:

This session is about defending, both individually and as a unit. It's crucial we practise this because we need defenders to recognise when to move forward and challenge an opposing striker, and when to hold back.

The session examines the relationships between defenders, and rehearses players in picking up opponents quickly and effectively. It's a practice that builds, encouraging players to adapt their understanding to new situations and challenges, as well as refining basic defensive principles including staying on their feet, being aggressive and recovering to good positions.

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DEFENSIVE DEXTERITY

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch plus 10 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

16

SESSION TIME

Defending practices
20mins each,
7v7 game 20mins

What do I get the players to do?

8v4 defending

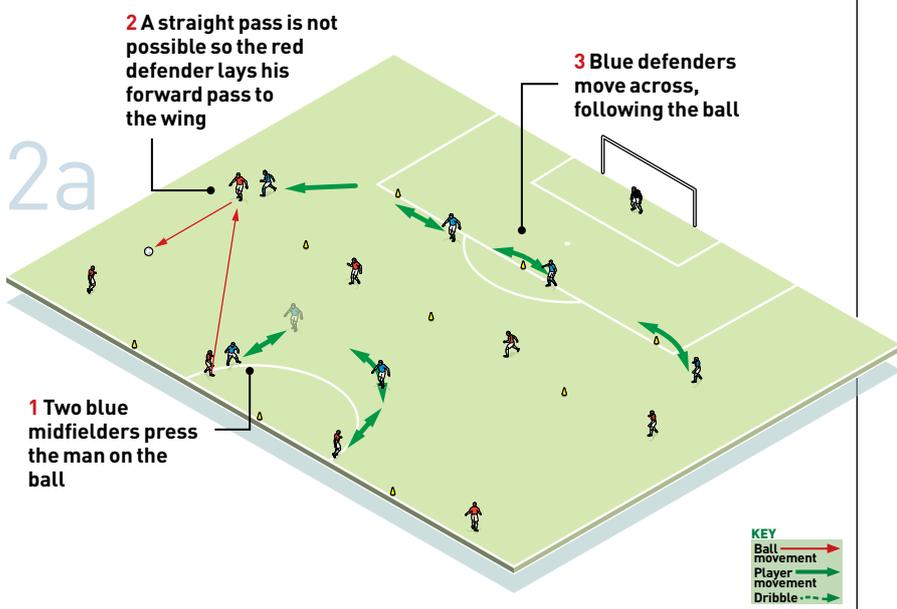
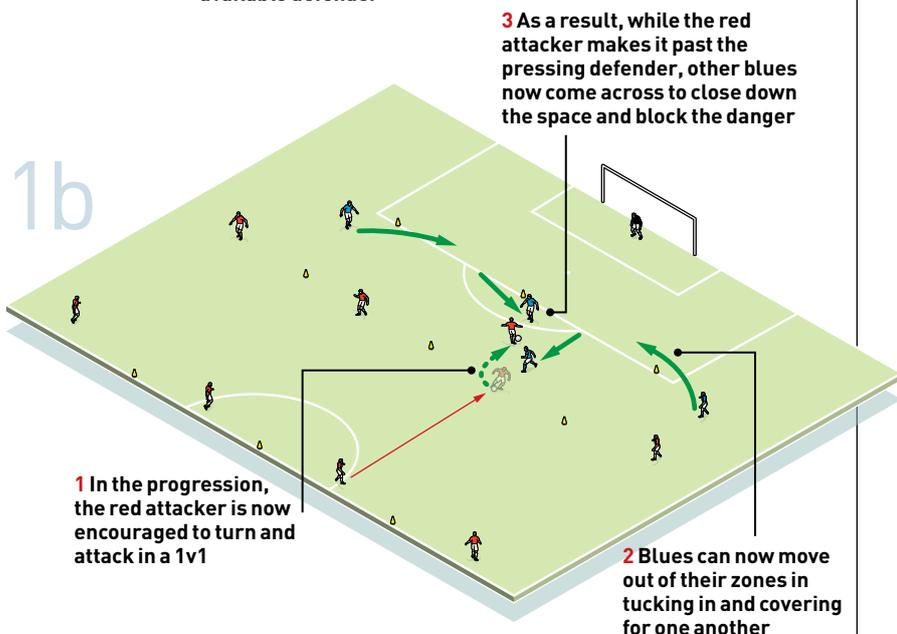
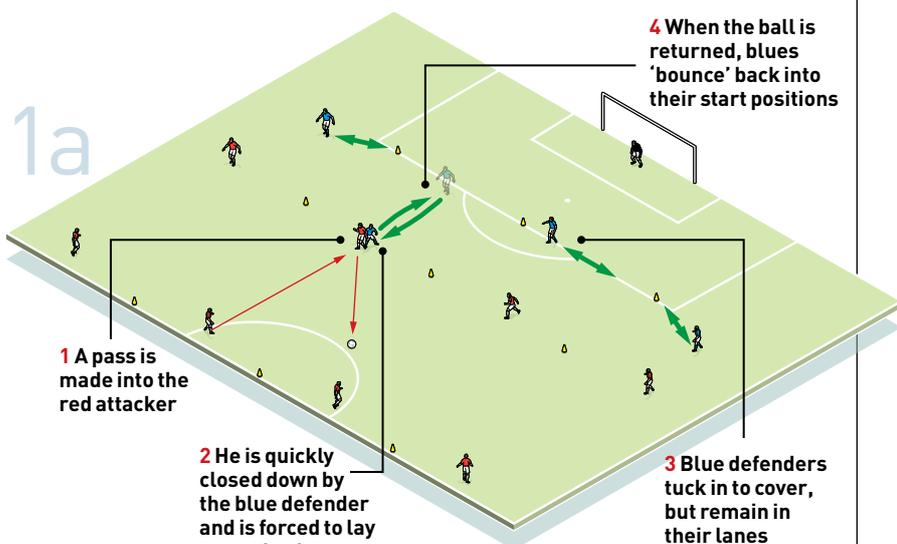
Setting up 8v4 plus a keeper, as shown, the practice begins with a ball on the halfway line. Red defenders must play forwards to any attacker. Now, one blue defender comes forward to engage the red attacker, forcing him to play back to a defender (sideways passes are not allowed). After the pass is returned, blue defenders bounce back into their original positions. Players must stay in the lanes marked out by the cones (1a).

How do I progress the practice?

Now the 8v4 is made 'free' – we allow red attackers to turn and attack the goal when they receive the ball, thus creating a 1v1 situation. In addition, blue defenders can now move out of their lanes, assisting each other with the closing down of an opponent (1b).

8v6 defending

We now add blue midfield players, whose job it is to press the four red defenders.





**Paul Lambert
ASTONVILLA**

Paul Lambert is manager of Barclays Premier League side Aston Villa. With one of the youngest squads in the Barclays Premier League, Lambert is charged with the task of nurturing talented young players whilst remaining competitive amongst English football's elite.

Lambert, 43, joined the club in the summer of 2012 after a hugely successful managerial debut in the Premier League with Norwich City. He had previously guided the Canaries to successive promotions from npower League One and the Championship, in 2010 and 2011.

Former Celtic and Scotland international Lambert began his managerial career in Scotland with Livingston before moving south to manage in the English Football League with Wycombe Wanderers and Colchester United. During an impressive playing career he won the UEFA Champions League with Borussia Dortmund as well as multiple Scottish Premier League titles with Celtic. Lambert studied for his UEFA Pro Licence in Germany during the latter part of his Celtic playing career.

DEFENSIVE DEXTERITY

Red defenders can now play sideways (2a), but the aim remains to release a pass into an attacker, who then turns and moves towards goal. Blue defenders must engage the red attacker with the intention of winning the ball or forcing a backward pass (2b).

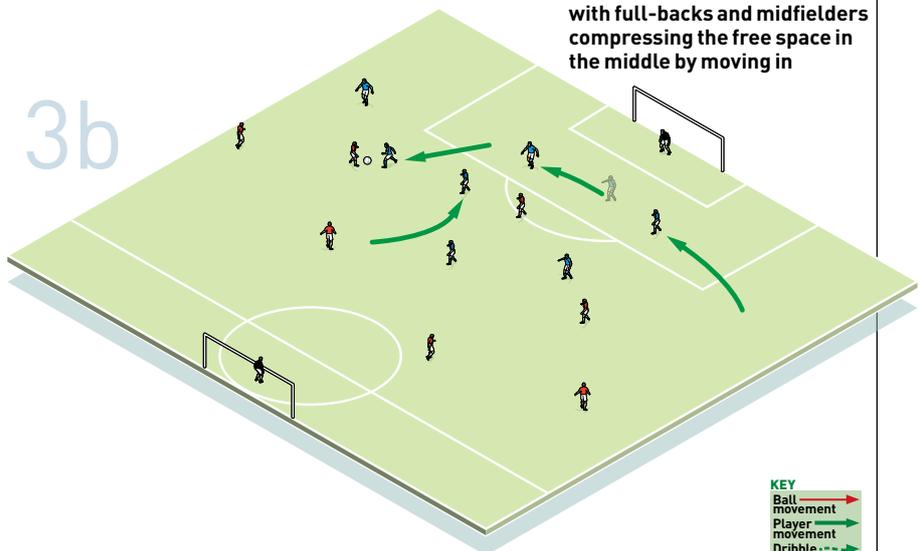
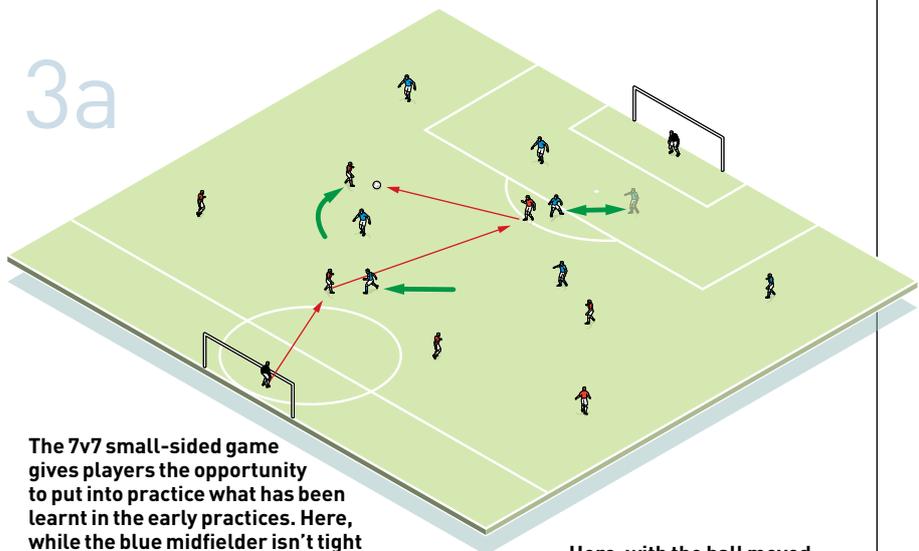
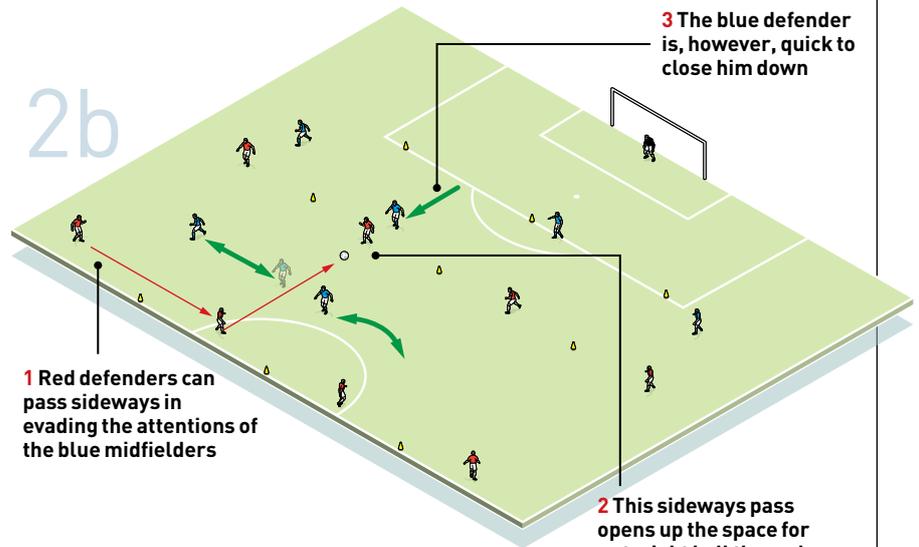
What are the key things to look out for?

Blue defenders must aim to prevent an opponent from turning. Defenders not engaged with the play tuck in to cover, being aggressive, and staying on their feet at all times. And as soon as a move breaks down, they must recover into their initial defensive positions. Good communication is vital in maintaining organisation.

How do I put this into a game situation?

On a half-pitch, set up a 7v7 small-sided game (plus keepers) with a goal at each end, as shown (3a/3b). Encourage players to play forwards and make sure defenders are 'bouncing in and bouncing out' when balls are played into attackers.

Players should utilise the individual and team/unit defending skills rehearsed in the first two practices, putting them into use in a full game situation. ■



KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble →