

SOUTHEND UNITED

Phil Brown
Diagonal balls and regains

Overview:

This session looks at the use of diagonal balls from defenders and midfield players into wide and attacking players, and is designed to isolate opponents by moving play from confined areas of the pitch to open space.

Our analysis at Southend United shows there is a direct correlation between diagonal balls being played and chances created, both in training and match day situations, so this is an important session for us that we like to practise regularly.

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DIAGONAL BALLS AND REGAINS

SET-UP

AREA

70x90 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

11v11

SESSION TIME

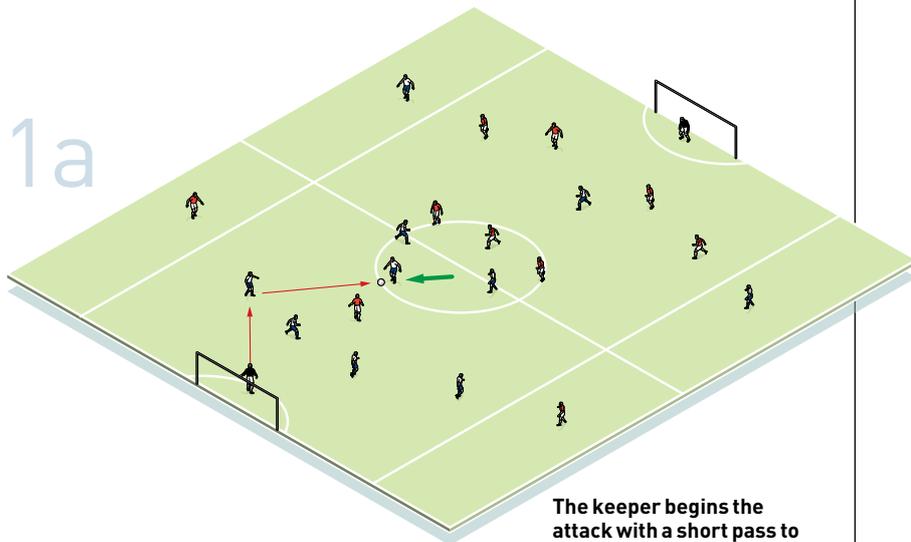
Main session 30mins, Progressions 20mins

What do I get the players to do?

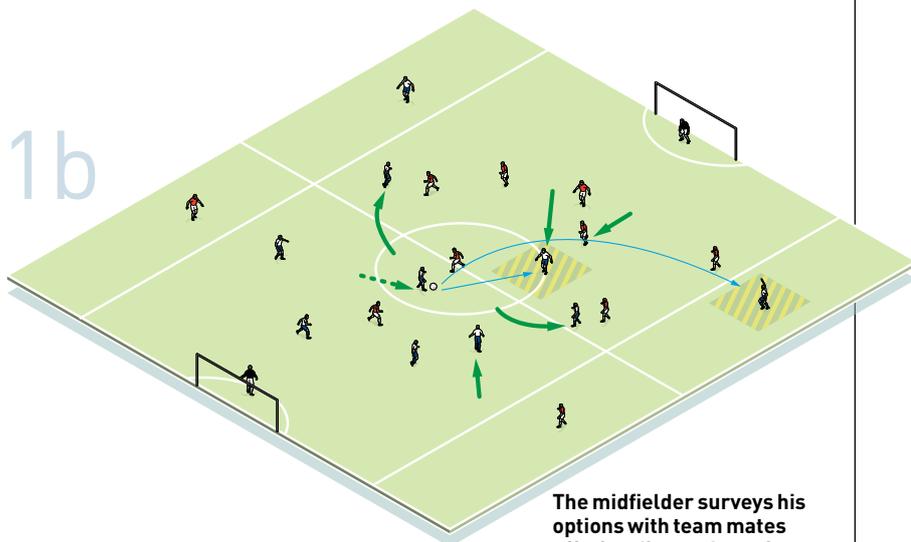
We set up in a 4-3-3 formation, as shown, with the keeper feeding the ball out from the back (1a). Straight away, we encourage defenders to play diagonal balls, with opposition wingers fixed in wide areas at all times. When a full attack develops it will be concentrated down one side of the pitch, consequently drawing in the opposition and allowing us the opportunity to transfer the ball to the other side of the pitch to create a 1v1 situation.

So to begin, we encourage the first pass into midfield. When a defender or midfielder is set to play a diagonal pass those around him must recognise if it is a shallow or a deep switch. Opponents and team mates move accordingly in order to present either obstacles or support (1b).

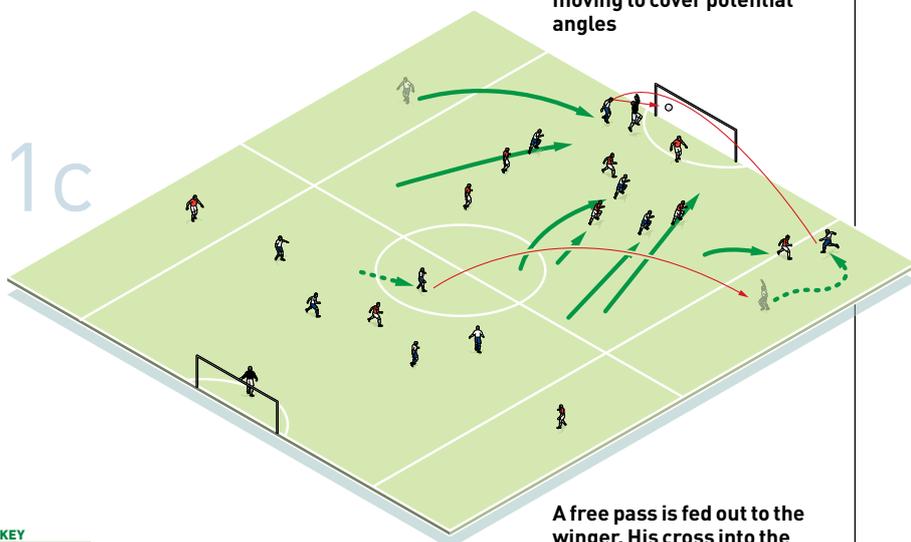
In the initial phases, we'll allow the pass to the winger to be unopposed, and for the winger to have a free cross into the box to be attacked. Attackers



The keeper begins the attack with a short pass to his defender, who plays a diagonal ball into midfield



The midfielder surveys his options with team mates offering diagonal passing options and opponents moving to cover potential angles



A free pass is fed out to the winger. His cross into the box is long, but the opposite winger has 'locked the back door' and heads the chance past the keeper

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble - - -
Optional pass/run - - -



Phil Brown
SOUTHEND UNITED

Phil Brown has steadied the ship at Sky Bet League Two side Southend United, and after going close last season – when the Shrimpers lost the play-off final at Wembley – he is this year tipped to go one better and return the Essex club to League One.

The 55-year-old has a vast array of experience across all divisions, making his managerial debut at Derby County in 2005, before switching to Hull City for the 2006/07 season, initially as first-team coach. Once in the hot-seat, he guided the Tigers to the Barclays Premier League for the first time in the club's history, in 2008.

Securing their top flight status the following year, Brown departed Hull in June 2010 and spent a year at Preston North End, before arriving at Southend in March 2013.

As a player, he made over 650 appearances for Hartlepool United, Halifax Town, Bolton Wanderers and Blackpool.

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DIAGONAL BALLS AND REGAINS

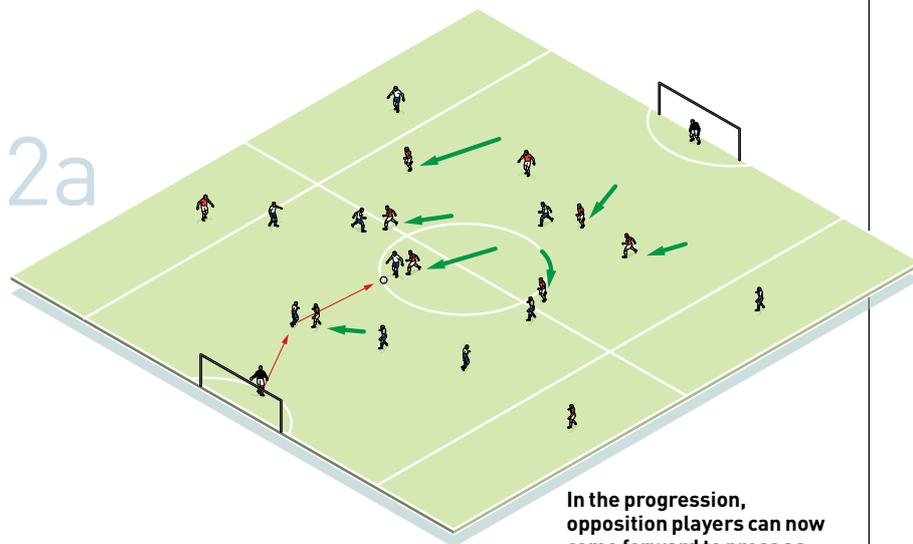
now rush in to get on the end of the cross, while the other winger moves in from the opposite flank to ‘lock the back door’ – in other words, to ensure that even if the cross is over-hit, the ball isn't lost (1c).

How do I progress the session?

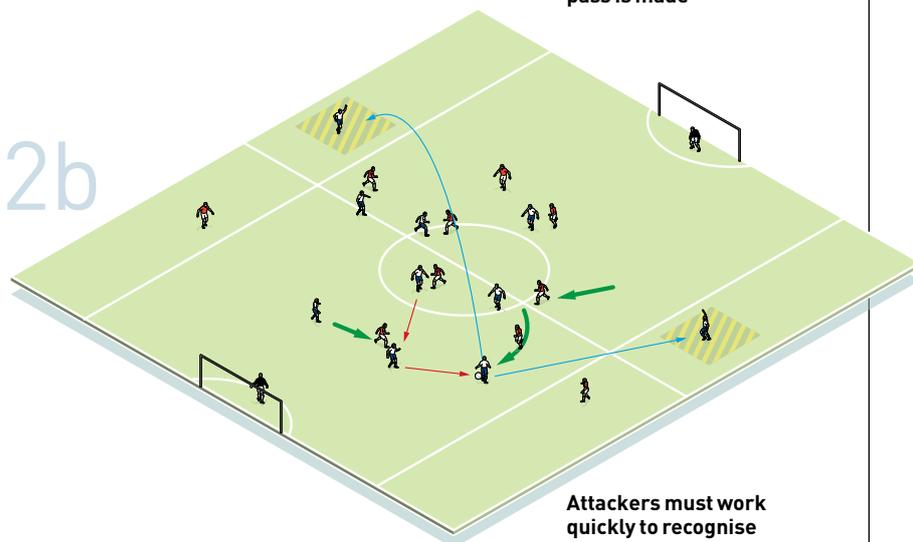
In the first progression, the winger is now opposed in his channel. Beyond that, opponents can close down any pass, pressing defenders, midfielders and wingers, thus ensuring any attacking passes must be quick and well reasoned (2a).

What are the key things to look out for?

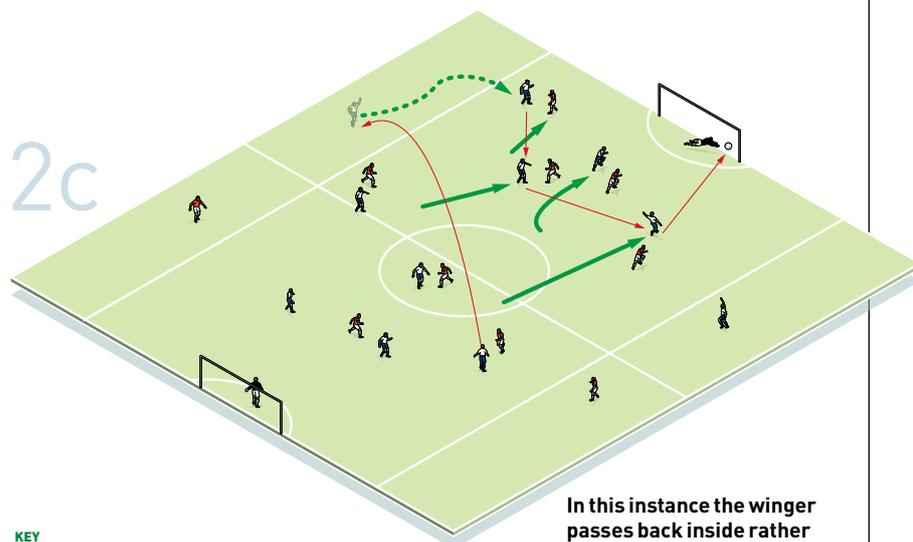
Past the progression, the initial ball must always be played short into midfield so that opponents come in to press (and thus leave space behind). Attacking players should not ‘force the issue’ – they play the ball around until the killer diagonal pass is made. And when that happens, it must be clearly intended as a shallow or deep diagonal ball (2b), with the onward attack to follow (2c). ■



In the progression, opposition players can now come forward to press as soon as the keeper's initial pass is made



Attackers must work quickly to recognise shallow and deep options for the diagonal pass



In this instance the winger passes back inside rather than opting for a long cross into the box

- KEY
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- Player movement →
- Dribble →
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