

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Eric Steele Possession with keepers

SET-UP

AREA

Up to 70x30 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 7v7 plus keepers

SESSION TIME

20mins per practice

Overview:

This is a focused possession practice that uses keepers at every opportunity, engaging them as key players in overloads and ball retention.

The session develops in both pitch size and complexity, enabling all players to master the dynamics of possession in designated areas, with an eye on team mates, opponents, use of space, angles of passing and protection of the ball.

This is a practice we will run regularly – it's competitive, fast and lively, and unlike some training ground exercises it enables keepers to feel fully engaged with outfield players.

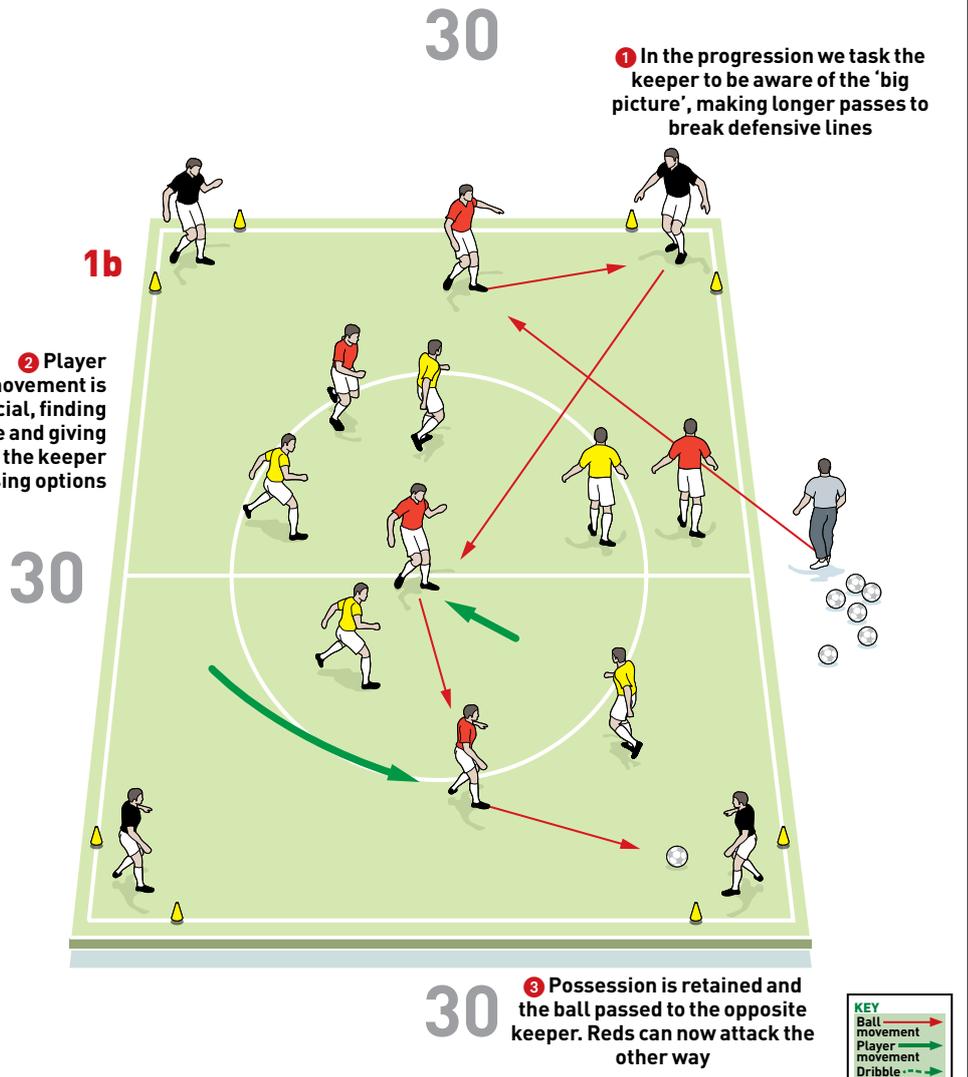
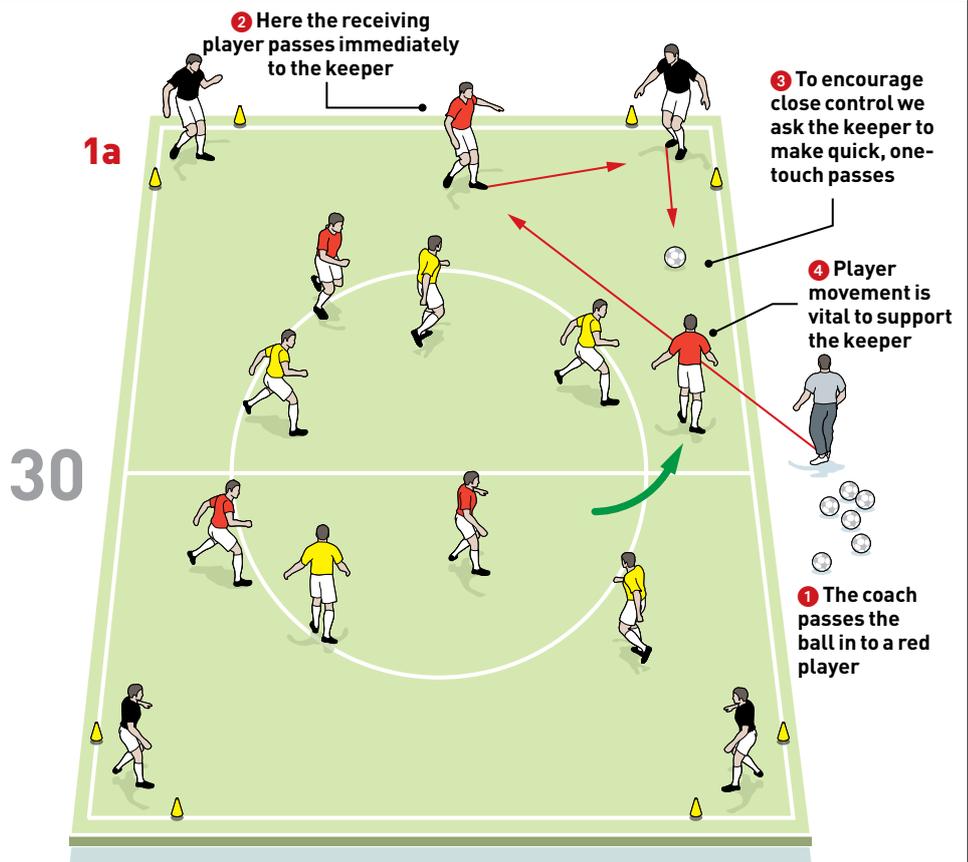
What do I get the players to do?

30x30-yard set-up

This exercise is set up as shown (1a), playing 5v5 3x2min games and involving outfield players going all in. Four keepers are placed in the four corners, each restricted to playing one-touch. It's a simple possession game between reds and yellows, using the (neutral) keepers as much as possible. When the ball goes dead the coach restarts.

What are the key things to look out for?

Outfield players must look to shift the ball away from congested areas looking for keepers in the corners as outlets. Keepers must stay switched on to short passes received and must then look to play longer (1b). We need to see keepers interacting with outfield players, with an understanding of weight of pass and accuracy. They must also, at all times, have in their minds when, where and how to get the ball around the practice area.



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How do I progress the practice?

To progress we will allow one keeper to play to another – he must then put the ball back into the middle for outfield players to take forward.

40x30-yard set-up

We now enlarge to a 40x30-yard (3x2min) set-up with keepers positioned in the end zones, as shown (2a). They cannot come into the central area, nor can outfield players leave this space.

Again this is a simple possession practice between two teams, with keepers operating two-touch and outfield players all in. Whichever keeper receives the ball must shift the ball laterally, then the second keeper puts it back into the 5v5.

What are the key things to look out for?

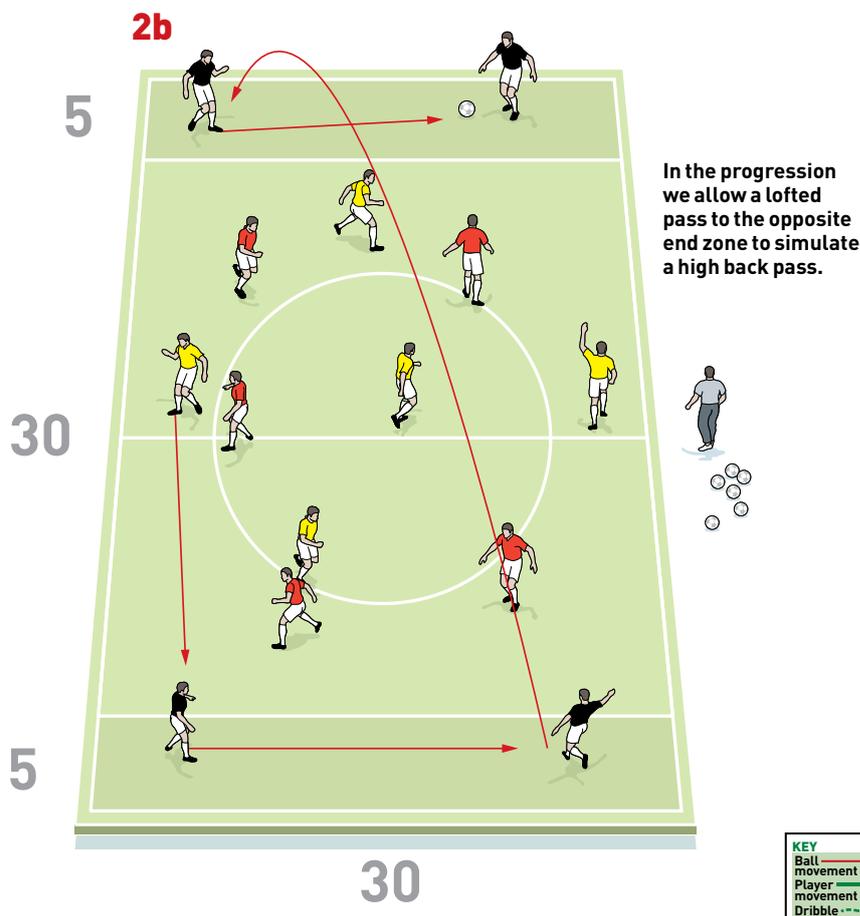
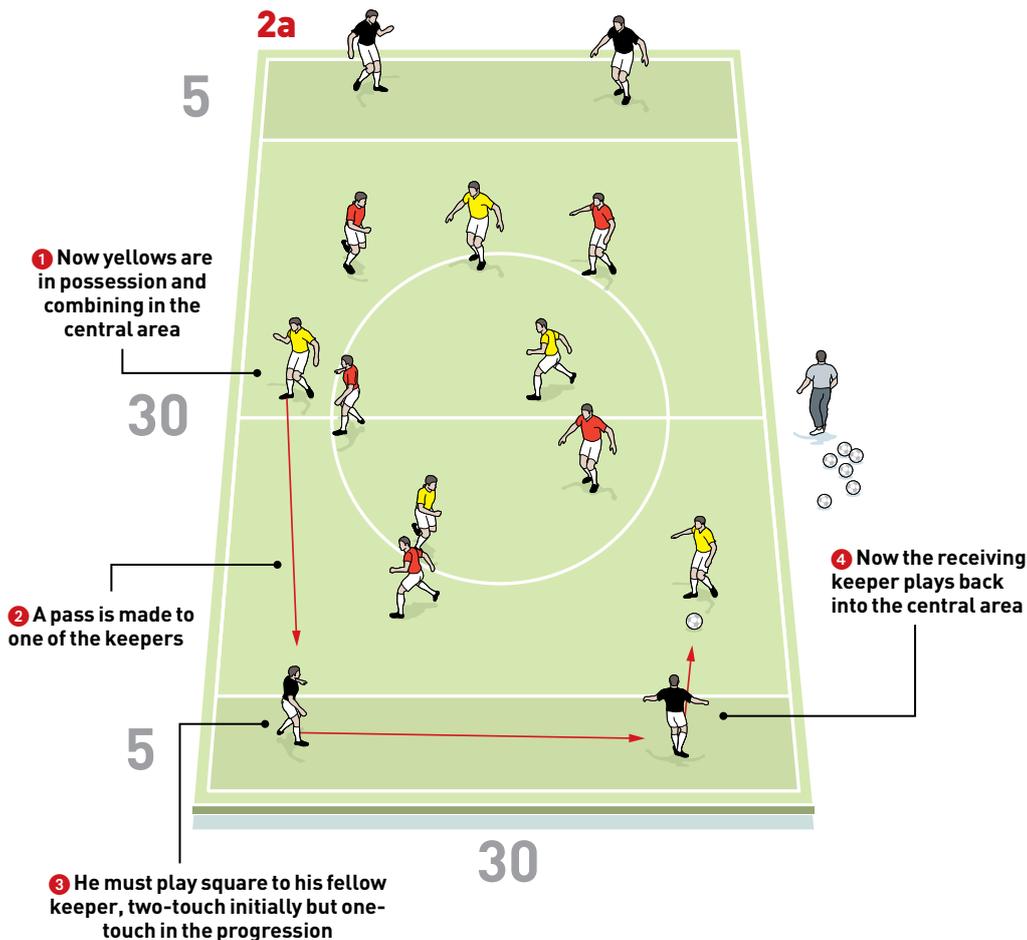
We want to see a solid progression of skill and awareness from the original 30x30-yard practice because in this challenge both outfield players and the keepers have the opportunity to open up and play longer. Outfield players should also look to retain the ball for longer knowing the safe pass is available by finding the keepers.

How do I progress the practice?

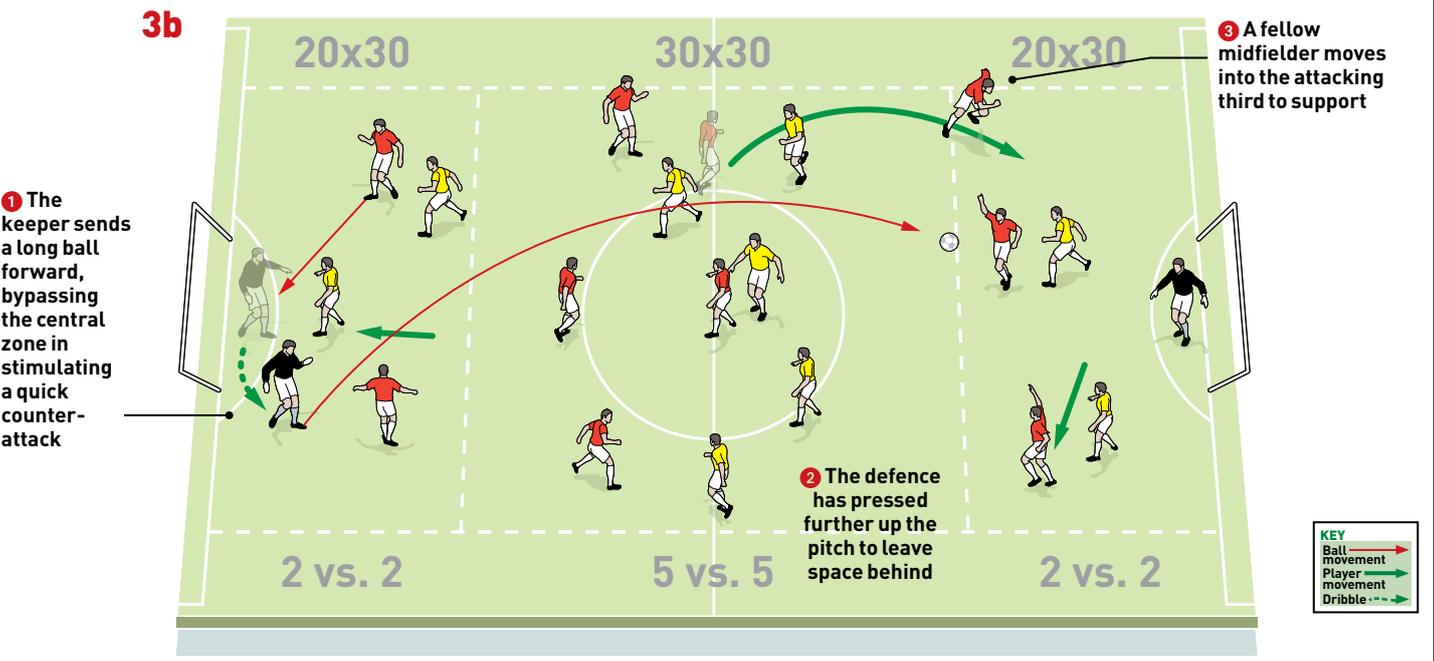
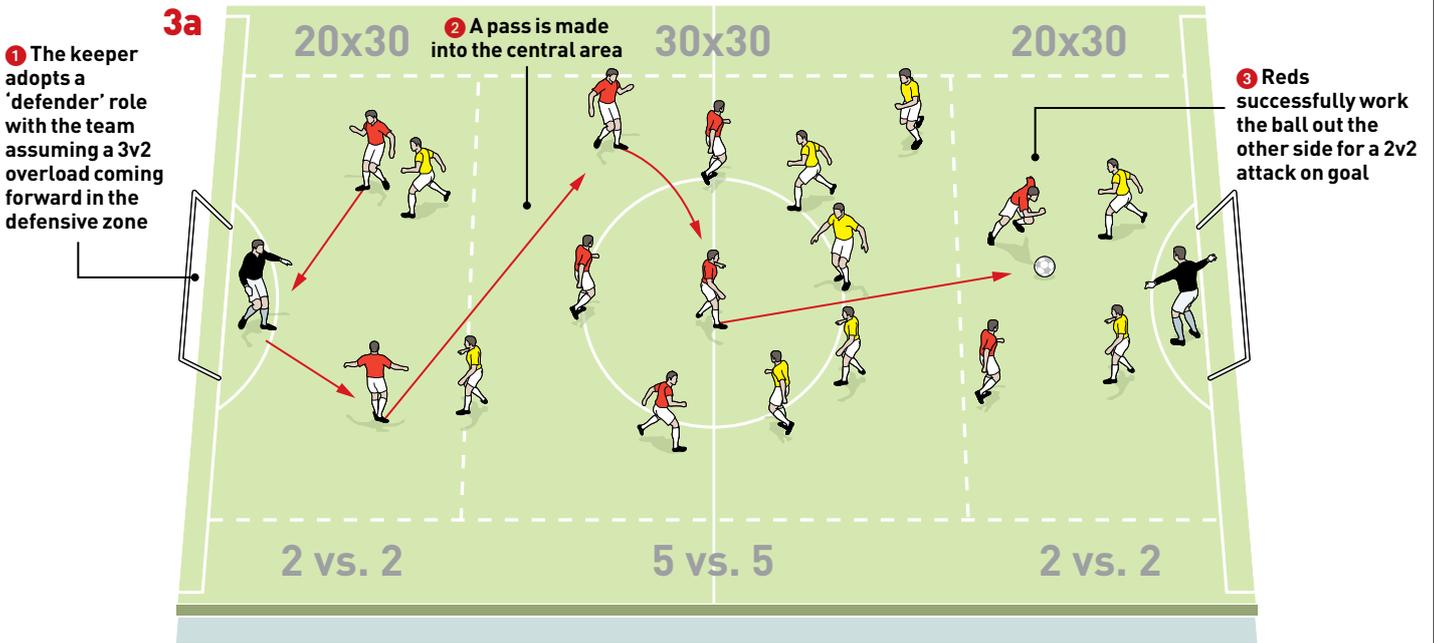
To progress, when keepers receive at one end they can look to go long and accurate to the opposite end, effectively sending one of the keepers a lofted back pass (2b). A further progression is that keepers are restricted to one-touch only, with outfield players reduced to two- or three-touch.

70x30-yard practice

In the final practice we've extended the area lengthways again, as shown (3a). It's still 5v5 in the 30x30-yard midfield area (all in), but now 2v2 in both end zones plus keepers each protecting a goal. The initial aim is for a keeper to link with his two defenders in playing out from the back (effectively in a 3v2). The ball must now move into the midfield area, where team mates



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need to retain possession and play into strikers who are 2v2.

What are the key things to look out for?

We want the keeper to be involved in playing out from the back at every opportunity, encouraging angles of support, depth, and using one- or two-touch play. Players must look for the next pass into midfield whenever possible, with an eye on adopted angles of play in creating space and setting up forward passing opportunities.

We must encourage forwards to be direct

and to attack defenders with pace, always working for a shooting opportunity.

How do I progress the practice?

In the progression (3b), we would allow the keeper to switch play from the defensive to the offensive area with a long throw or ball off the floor.

In addition, we would allow one player from the midfield area to drop into the defensive zone, thereby creating a 4v2 scenario. Attackers subsequently play out through the midfield area, who feed front players for 2v2 attack on goal.

Finally, one player from the midfield area

can move into the final third. Although this is an outfield progression it obviously ensures the opposition keeper is more readily tested given that his defenders are operating against an additional attacker.

In the progression we also want to see third man runs from midfield, with defenders showing players inside or outside as required. They must be dedicated in preventing the shot, delaying opponents and making recovery runs and tackles, but this will only be possible against a backdrop of excellent communication with the keeper and an expectation of the unexpected. ■