

READING

Chris Davies
Attacking overloads
and positional play

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a full pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to 8v8 incl. keepers

SESSION TIME

45mins

Overview:

This session takes the form of a number of progressive exercises, each designed to develop players' ability to progress the ball through the pitch.

The idea is to create overloads because without them the game can become dependent on 1v1s, and that can mean it's difficult to progress the ball unless you are far superior to your opponent.

These exercises reinforce to players the fact that by creating numerical superiority (overloads) you can securely progress the ball to the final third, enjoying the rewards that follow in that key area of the pitch.

What do I get the players to do?

Warm Up (10mins)

The warm-up is done with the fitness coach, who will get the players engaged with dynamic flexibility and activation.

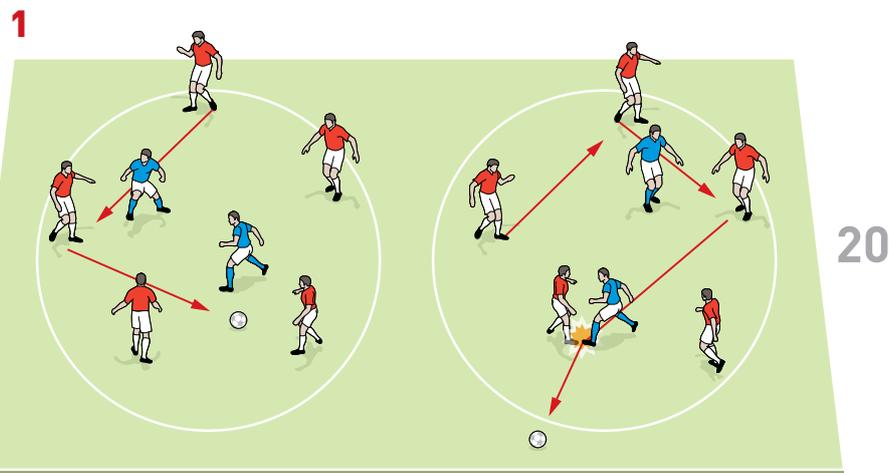
Technical: Rondos (5mins)

For the first practice we set up 5v2 in two centre circles (so 14 players in total), as shown (1). This is a simple one-touch exercise designed to activate players' decision-making as well as improving ball retention. Here there are effectively three free players but the area is small and achieving more than 20 passes – which is the challenge – is rare.

Possession: 5v5+4 (10mins: 3x2.5mins including breaks)

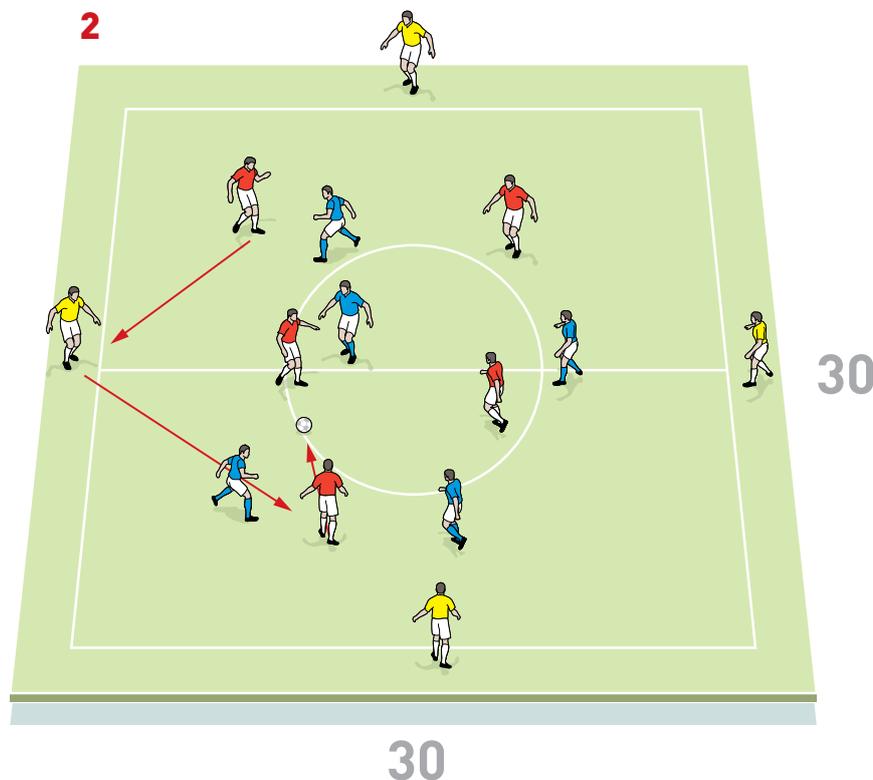
With more players now involved – not least four neutrals around the edge of the square, who play for the team in possession – the players have even more decision-making concepts such as anticipating

Technical: Rondos



The team of five successfully keep the ball away from the two working defenders, using their significant overload to good effect with one-touch passing

Possession: 5v5+4



In the next challenge the yellow neutrals act as supplementary team mates in creating, effectively, a 9v5 set-up

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

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the next pass, moving away from the free player and eliminating opponents with passes. This takes place in a 30x30-yard box, as shown (2).

Conditioned small-sided game (8v8) (20mins: 3x6mins including breaks)

Setting up on a 40x60-yard pitch, as shown (3a), the play always starts with the red keeper whenever the ball goes dead. Each team gets 10 consecutive attacks then swaps over. The ball must be played through zone 1 (the construction zone). One of the midfield players can drop into zone 1 to make a 3v2 overload (so including the red keeper this is a 4v2), giving the reds superiority and the conditions to securely progress the ball to zone 2. To make this game-related the midfielder is encouraged to drop in between the two central defenders or drop out to one side of the centre-halves - these are two common tactics used.

From here, one of the three red players steps in and dribbles the ball over the flat cones into zone 2 (the preparation zone) as shown (3b). His entry makes it 3v3 but at this point one of the strikers can drop in to the middle zone.

Again, they have numerical superiority with a 4v3 overload - this could be a winger jumping inside in a game or a striker dropping in. It's worth noting that progressing the ball through the middle zone to the attacking zone can prove difficult despite having an overload. This is due to the fact the midfielders are not positioning themselves correctly and opening up passing lines by making their zone as big as possible. To that end the midfield triangle should be opened up so a passing line is created to a free player.

One of the reds then dribbles into zone 3 (creation and penetration zone) - he is now into a 2v2 situation. It is very rare to find overloads in this area of the pitch. The focus here is being positive and aggressive in the offensive actions to get a shot in. We are looking for quick dynamic actions from the other striker to

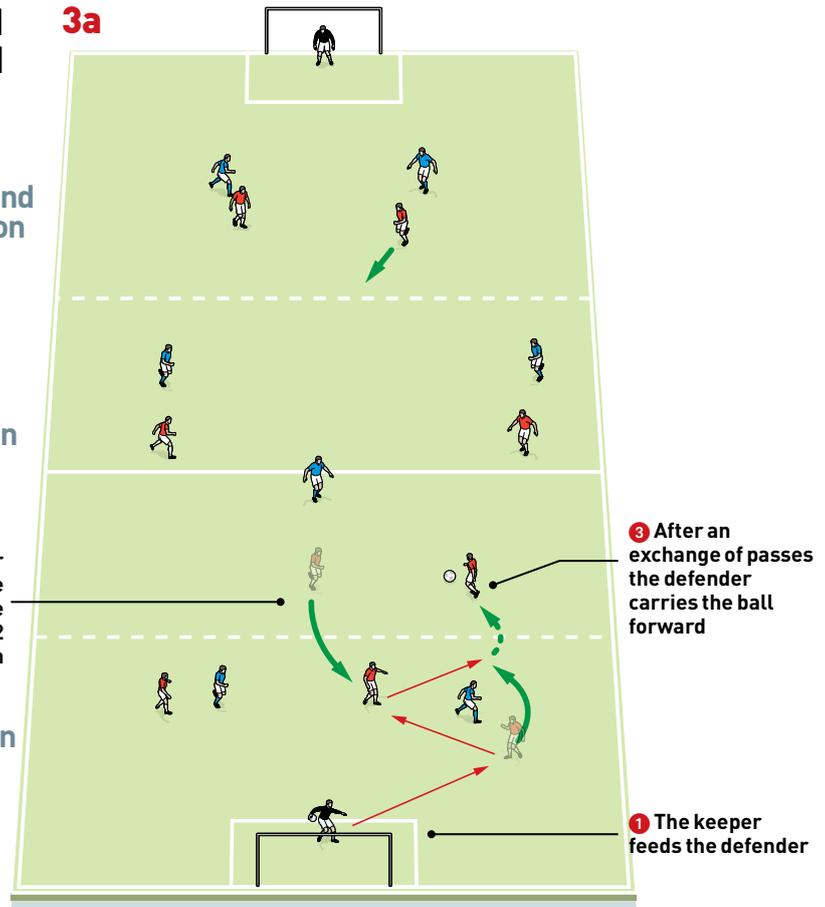
Conditioned small-sided game

3a

Creation and Penetration Zone

Preparation Zone

Construction Zone



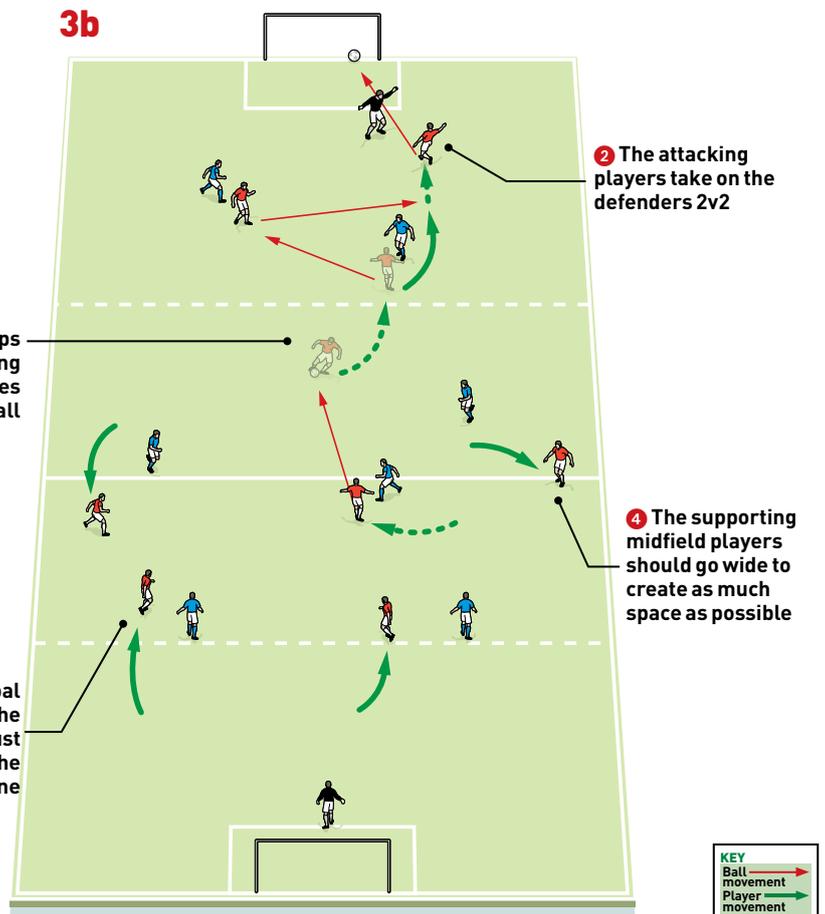
3b

1 A striker drops from the attacking zone and receives the ball

2 The attacking players take on the defenders 2v2

3 Before a goal can be scored the defenders must move out of the defensive zone

4 The supporting midfield players should go wide to create as much space as possible



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create space, either for himself or his strike partner.

One condition is that for a goal to count the red team's defenders (two players) need to have run in zone 2 (the preparation zone) but can't do so until the ball has progressed into zone 3. This encourages the defender to shorten the effective playing area and keep the team compact, which in the real game gives you a chance to press the ball immediately in transition and reduces the space between your organisation.

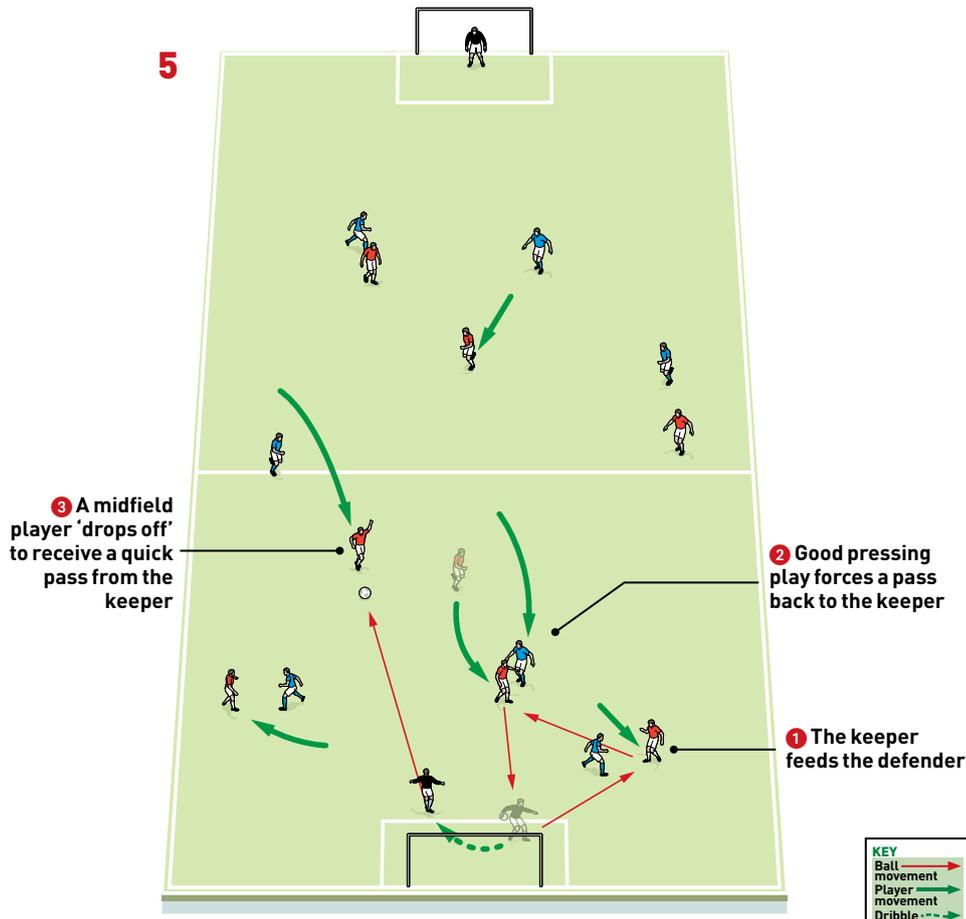
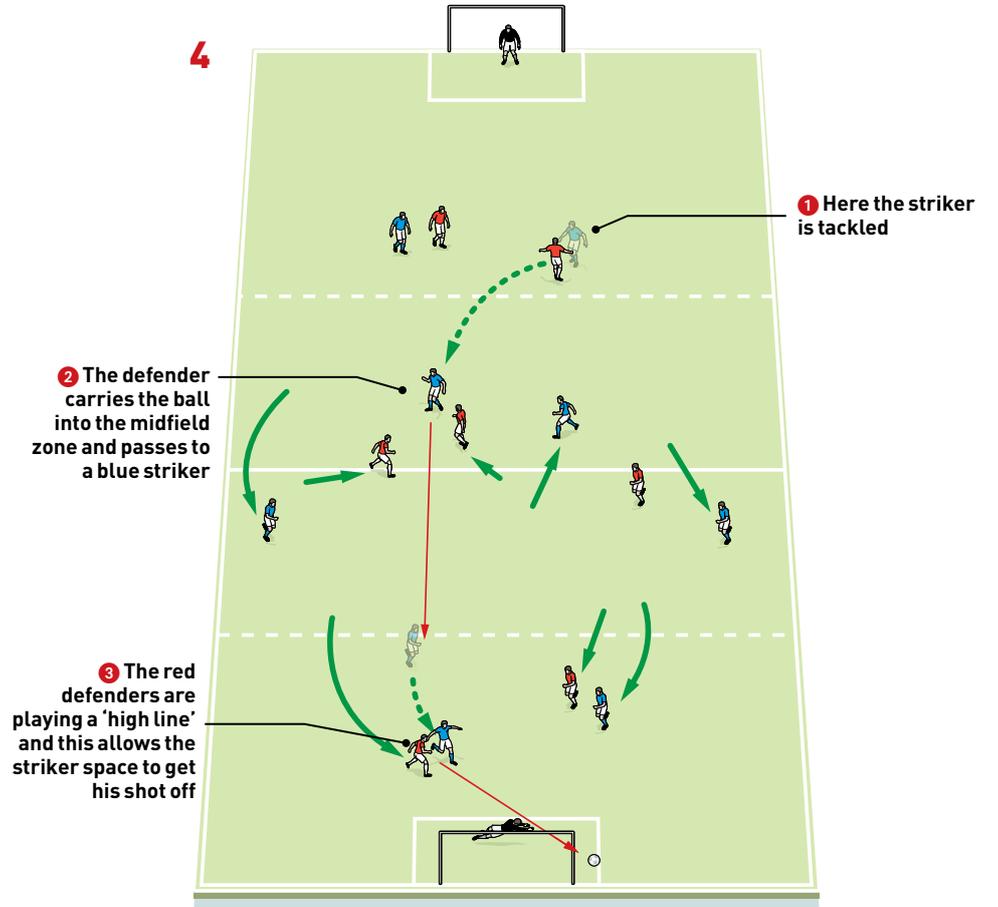
When the defending team regains the ball they counter-attack towards the goal and must shoot within 10 seconds, as shown (4). A by-product of dropping in to create overloads and positional play is that it gives the attacking team a chance to press immediately in transition because they have more players around the ball than the defending team, otherwise they can retreat and form a block ensuring the blues can't shoot within 10 seconds. This transition defending underpins positional play so is an important concept to develop.

How would you put this into a game situation?

One progression from the game is to remove the condition that the ball has to travel through the zones, as shown (5). The teams are encouraged to make the same movements to create overloads (and what naturally happens is the opposition players start locking on to man-mark) so we would encourage players to recognise the moments to play into the second or third line and eliminate opponents.

So if a red midfielder drops in, he either creates numerical superiority for his team to progress the ball up the pitch securely, or provokes a blue midfielder out of his zone thus creating space for other players.

The keeper becomes vital within this as he is now the only free player the possession team have. Patience is then required to circulate the ball before the penetration moment arrives. ■



KEY

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