

LIVERPOOL
Jurgen Klopp
Counter-pressing as an offensive weapon

SET-UP
AREA Extended half-pitch
EQUIPMENT Balls, cones, goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS Use of full squad
SESSION TIME Warm-up 10mins, Tactical rondo 20mins, Tactical game 30mins

Overview:
This session is about the creation and application of the counter-pressing moment as an offensive weapon. It looks at recovering possession in the shortest way and time, by creating 'hectic situations' in the opposition formation. To this end, there are several principles that give us our identity. We want to attack the opponent non-stop when we have the ball, when we lose it and when the opposition have it. Put another way, defending is our first offensive action. Each exercise should have this character, directly defined by our specific way of playing, where everyone is responsible for everything in the form of modern total football. In real terms, that means we have a team of 11 at a time, each of whom is an attacking forward and each of whom is a defender.

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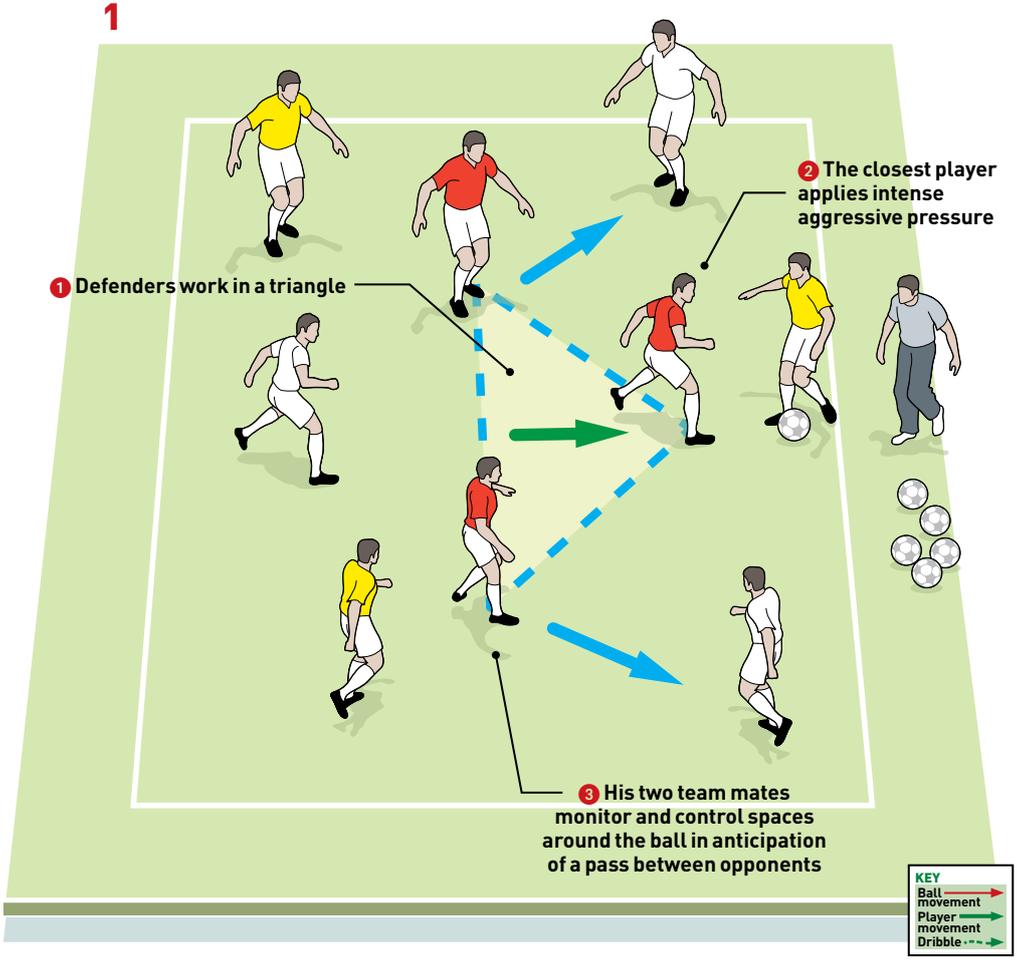
What do I get the players to do?
Tactical rondo

In a 12x12-yard area we use three teams of three playing a 6v3 possession game, as shown (1). There is no limit on touches and the team that loses the ball should react immediately, pressing the other two teams. The closest player applies intense aggressive pressure and we defend in a triangle, while the other two players control the spaces around the ball and anticipate. In this sense, counter-pressing is the next requirement, and to be clear, this isn't laid down as a proposal – it's a law!

What are the key things to look out for?

In this exercise we want to create the right focus towards the essential part of the session. We want to create hunger towards ball recovery, creating chaotic moments and controlling these moments by being 'quick in mind', with orientation, skill, precision and connection. We want short intense periods alternating with rest periods so players stay fresh and alert to absorbing information and learning all the time.

The closest player goes 100% and puts total effort into the press. One player can always defend two opposition by blocking the line, pressing the ball carrier and checking over the shoulder. The two last yards of the press define everything. As far as aggression goes – yes please! – but this must be controlled with an anticipation of where the next pass



In this 6v3 tactical rondo we have set up whites and yellows against the three reds

will go, and with team mates reorganising as a group constantly and quickly. In terms of typical mistakes, we will sometimes witness disappointment after losing possession whereby players offer no immediate reaction. Development takes time – it

takes time for players to make decisions based on the collective interventions and references. We don't want a linear or mechanical state of play – a good and creative development takes time. A high-intensity and counter-pressing team will

often make more mistakes because we attempt more and perhaps accomplish more – ultimately, patience and an expectation of making mistakes is actually okay.

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How do I put this into a game situation?

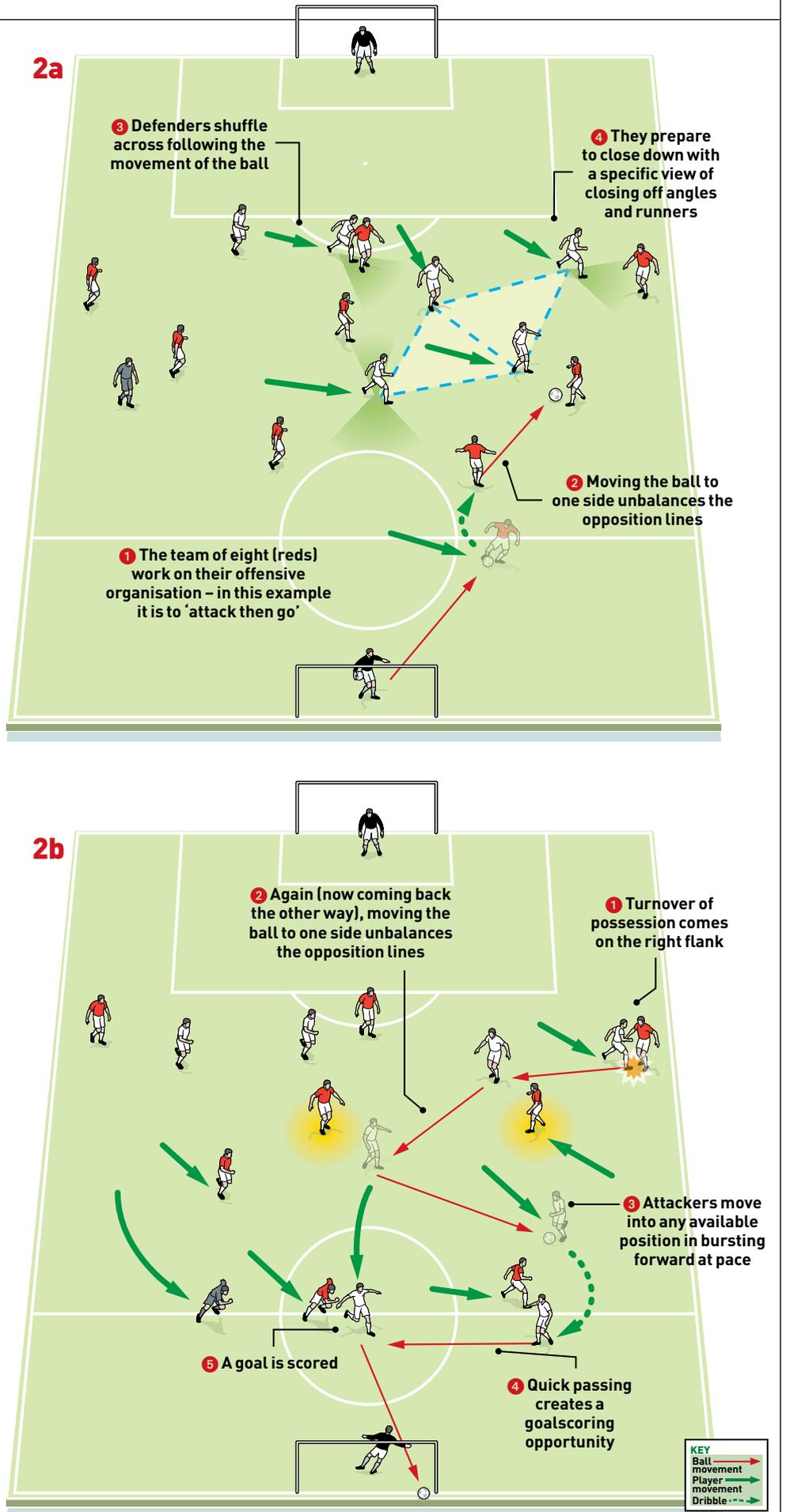
Using the full width of the pitch as shown (2a), and in three quarters of a pitch, one team of eight attacks a team of six. The team of six has one extra player who comes alive when they win possession. The team of eight works on their offensive organisation, their protection and the counter-pressing principle, with players chased like they have never been chased before! They do this in 3x6mins bursts, with 4mins rest in between, changing players in between the rest periods.

To advance this, we can put two 'sleeping' players in, so creating better and more complex 'protection'.

Here, the offensive organisation is to attract and then go. We want to unbalance the two lines by quick and early circulation (offensive aggression), and our players must overlap to create dangerous crossing situations, as shown (2b).

In terms of typical mistakes, this can often come down to there being no protection, therefore the team of six can easily find the sleeping player and counter-attack and cover spaces well. Players can forget where the sleeping player is, and there is also that disappointment factor again in losing possession. Instead, we want them to react, viewing any loss of possession as an opportunity (to win it back).

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**International
Champions Cup
Liverpool 4 Barcelona 0**

August 6, 2016, Wembley Stadium

Liverpool struck early in the second period of this sell-out pre-season fixture at Wembley as Jordan Henderson made the telling contribution in the middle to finish off a rapid attacking move that began with a turnover of possession on the flank. Notable within this was Liverpool's counter-pressing and the ability to turn the profits of that into a quick goalscoring opportunity that saw players flooding into space.

The notion of panicking opponents by rapid chasing and attacking play is perfectly exemplified here with two Barcelona players making mistakes that led to the second goal in a match Liverpool went on to win 4-0.

