

ARSENAL WOMEN

**Joe Montemurro
Attacking in
central areas**

SET-UP
AREA
Up to 60x40 yards
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 full size goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
Up to 16 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Warm-up: 10mins
Positional game 1: 15mins
Positional game 2: 15mins
Small-sided game: 15mins

Overview

This session is about identifying opportunities to play forwards in central areas. It shows players how to create central overloads and encourages them to face forward to play forward

effectively. The session is designed to help players recognise certain cues, such as when to invite pressure in order to create space further up the pitch and this helps to set up goal scoring opportunities. This session also creates an environment where players can express themselves freely in the middle and attacking thirds. Player positioning is key and the quality of passing is critical, because it is important to the style of play we use at Arsenal. We would tend to run this type of positional session on a weekly basis but with different focuses. Positional games of this type are usually run on the Thursday of a normal week when we are focusing on the weekend's match because it usually has elements of how we are

approaching the next game. Positioning and game related structures are prevalent in all our work. By enlarging and restricting the space and setting certain rules, these exercises can be used for conditioning outcomes too. In these practices it's important to manage the resistance of the other team, to make it close to a game situation.

What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up

We start with a passing warm-up that focuses on positioning and receiving the ball. We set up in an area of 30x30 yards and we're using groups of five players selected for their positions. Players should pass and move, rotating through the positions.

KEY

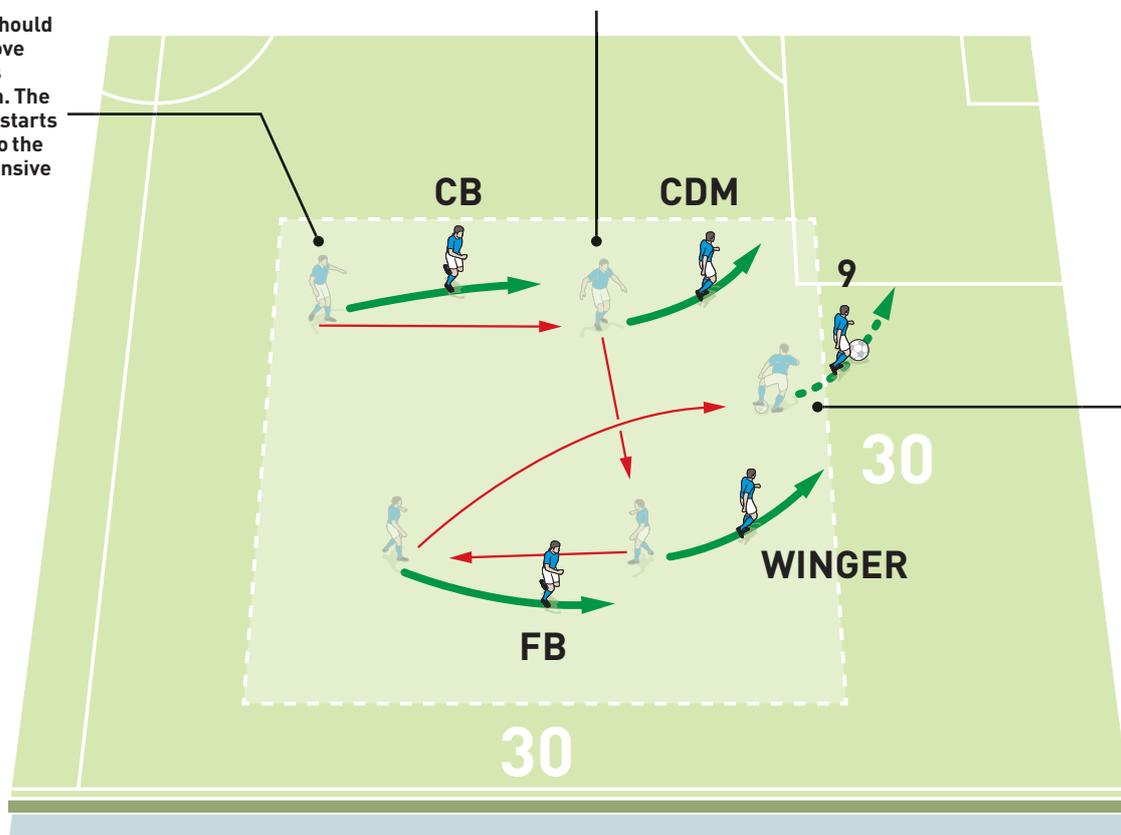
- Ball movement
- Player movement
- LMA
- Dribble

1 WARM-UP

1 Players should pass and move through this combination. The centre back starts by passing to the central defensive midfielder

2 The CDM moves the ball out to the winger, who passes back to the full back

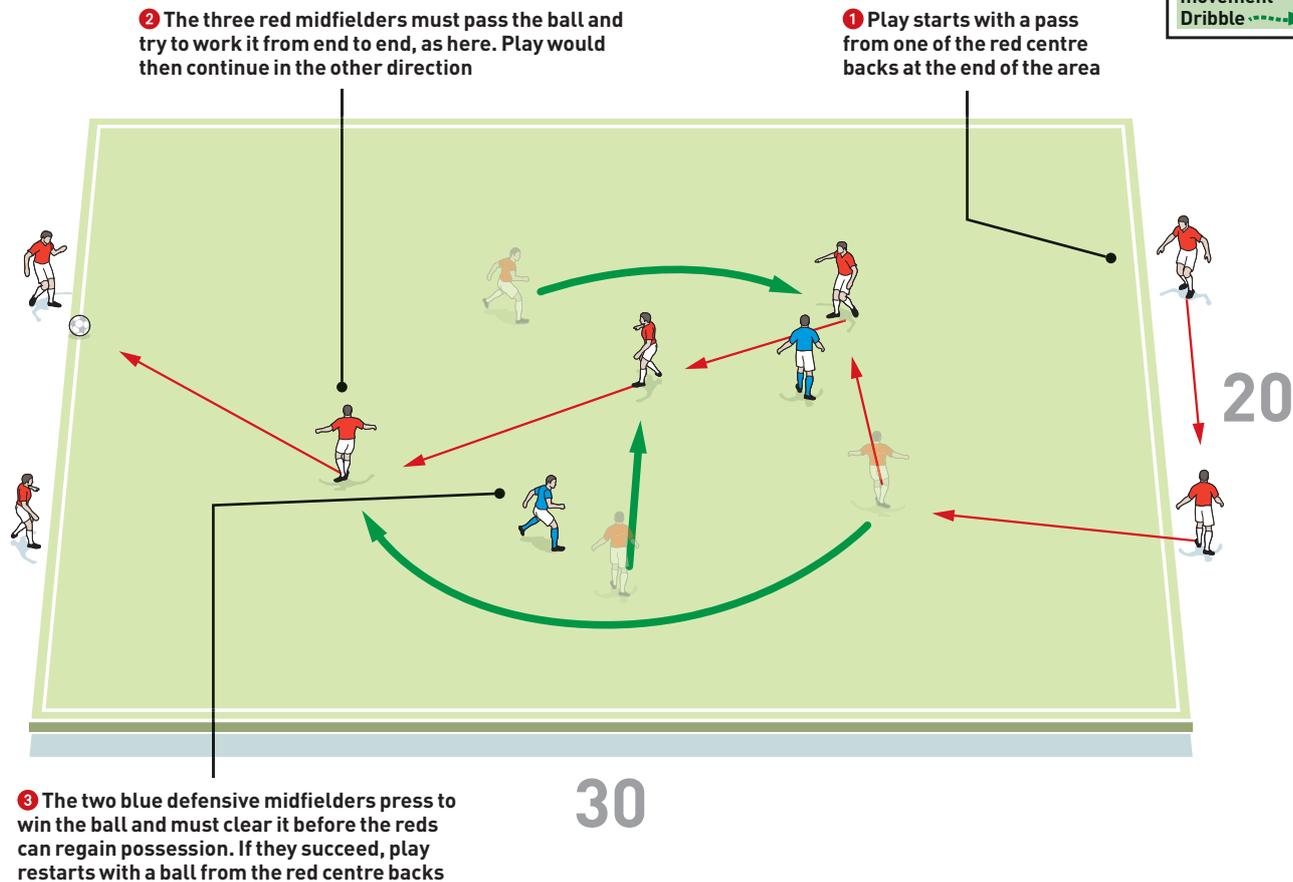
3 The full back plays the ball up to the striker, who starts to make a run towards goal. Play then resets and the players repeat the combination



▲ Run three different combinations such as the one above, focusing on positioning and receiving the ball

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2 POSITIONAL GAME: 3v2 CENTRAL



“This session creates an environment where players can express themselves freely in the middle and attacking thirds of the pitch”

In the diagram the combination play runs as shown [1], with the ball going from a centre back to a central defensive midfielder, then to a winger, to a full back and finally to a number 9. Players should rotate after their pass and must be aware of their position on the pitch. At the end of the combination, the players reset to run it again. We would practice three different combinations, such as:

- CB – Winger – FB – CDM – #9.
- CB – #9 – CDM – Winger or FB with a forward run.

We would repeat each of the combinations for three minutes before moving onto the next one. Players should be focused on their body position and receiving the ball to face forward. They

should also focus on the timing of their passes and movement.

**What do I get the players to do next?
Positional game: 3v2 central**

We set up in an area of 30x20 yards. We’re using nine players, split into a red possession team of seven and a blue pressing team of two. The possession team starts with two centre backs at each end and three midfielders in the main area, with the aim of working the ball from end to end and back. The centre backs start play by passing to each other before one passes to a team mate in the main area. The red midfielders should then pass the ball until creating an opportunity to play it to a centre

back at the other end, as shown [2]. The blue pressing team has two defensive midfielders who apply pressure and try to win the ball. If they do, the possession team must quickly transition to win it back before the pressing pair can clear it out of the area. Play would then restart with another ball played in by a centre back. The coaching focus should be on patterns of play and player movement to create space and to support the player in possession. We would play four games of three minutes.

What are the key things to look out for?

This a multi-directional game aimed at encouraging midfielders ▼

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to position themselves at different heights on the pitch while building up with a pass from the centre back. We want to see players adopting a good body position to receive the ball and then turn to play forwards. We also want to see the ball played 'under' – this is where the ball is passed forwards to a midfielder who plays it back to a team mate before it is passed forwards again. Players could also try playing 'long and under', which is the same as playing 'under' but the first receiving player then runs long to receive a forward pass.

Positional game: midfield rotation
This positional game is all about beating the press and rotating in central midfield areas. We set up, as shown [3], in an area of 60x40 yards, with a full size goal and goalkeeper at each end. The zones marked out are for positional purposes so players start in the boxes relevant to their position but they can move anywhere – for instance, encourage the centre back to drive into midfield or the striker to drop deep to support forward play in midfield. Having the four midfield boxes marked out can help players find extra space

and encourage positioning at different heights. We're using 16 outfield players and two goalkeepers divided into two teams of nine including keepers. Play starts with a pass from the keeper to the defender in the end zone where the defenders have a 2v1 overload. Play builds up through the middle zone, which starts as a 3v3. Play continues through to the attacking zone, where 1v1s are created by the attacker when he goes up against a defender (one opposition centre back should drop out when under attack to allow a 1v1 in the attacking zone).

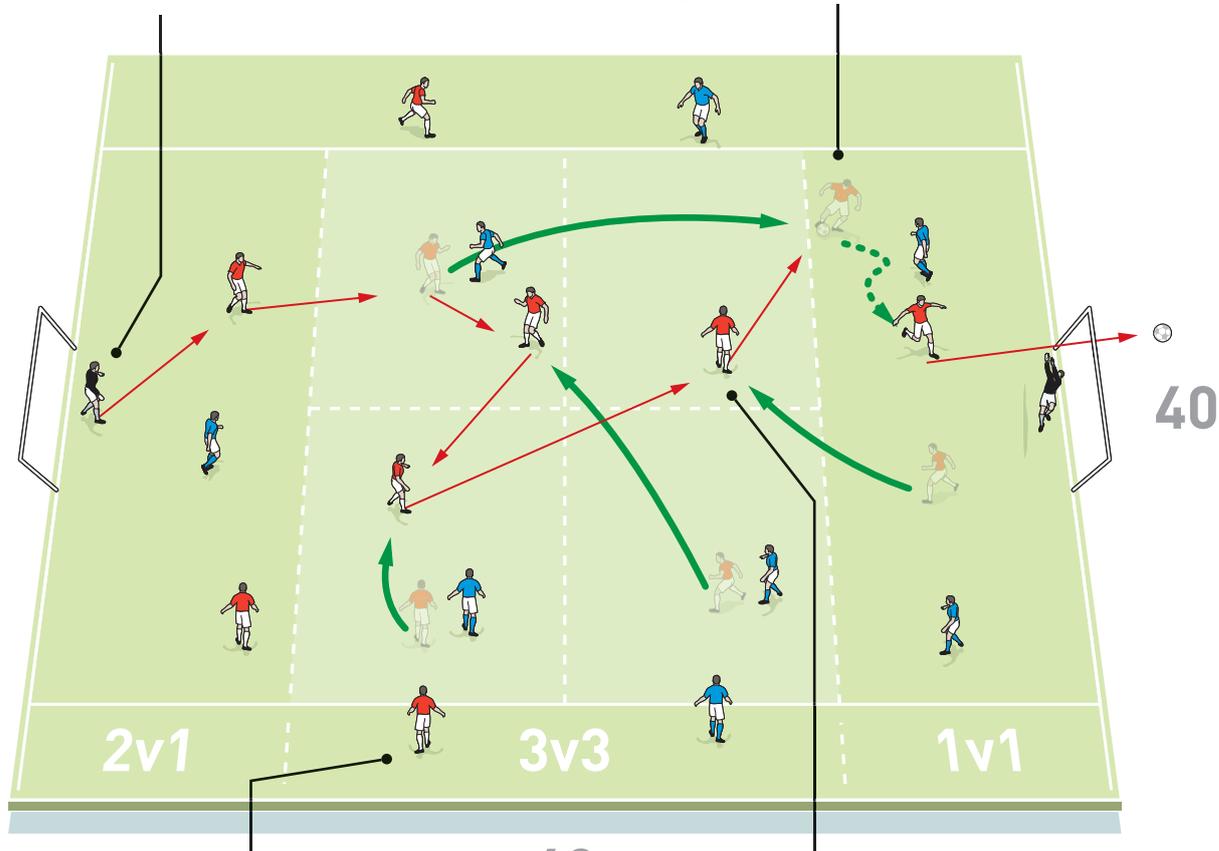
KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

3 POSITIONAL GAME: MIDFIELD ROTATION

1 Play starts with a pass from the keeper to the defender, who works the ball into the midfield zone

3 The defensive midfielder bursts forward to receive a pass from the striker and goes 1v1 against a defender to score

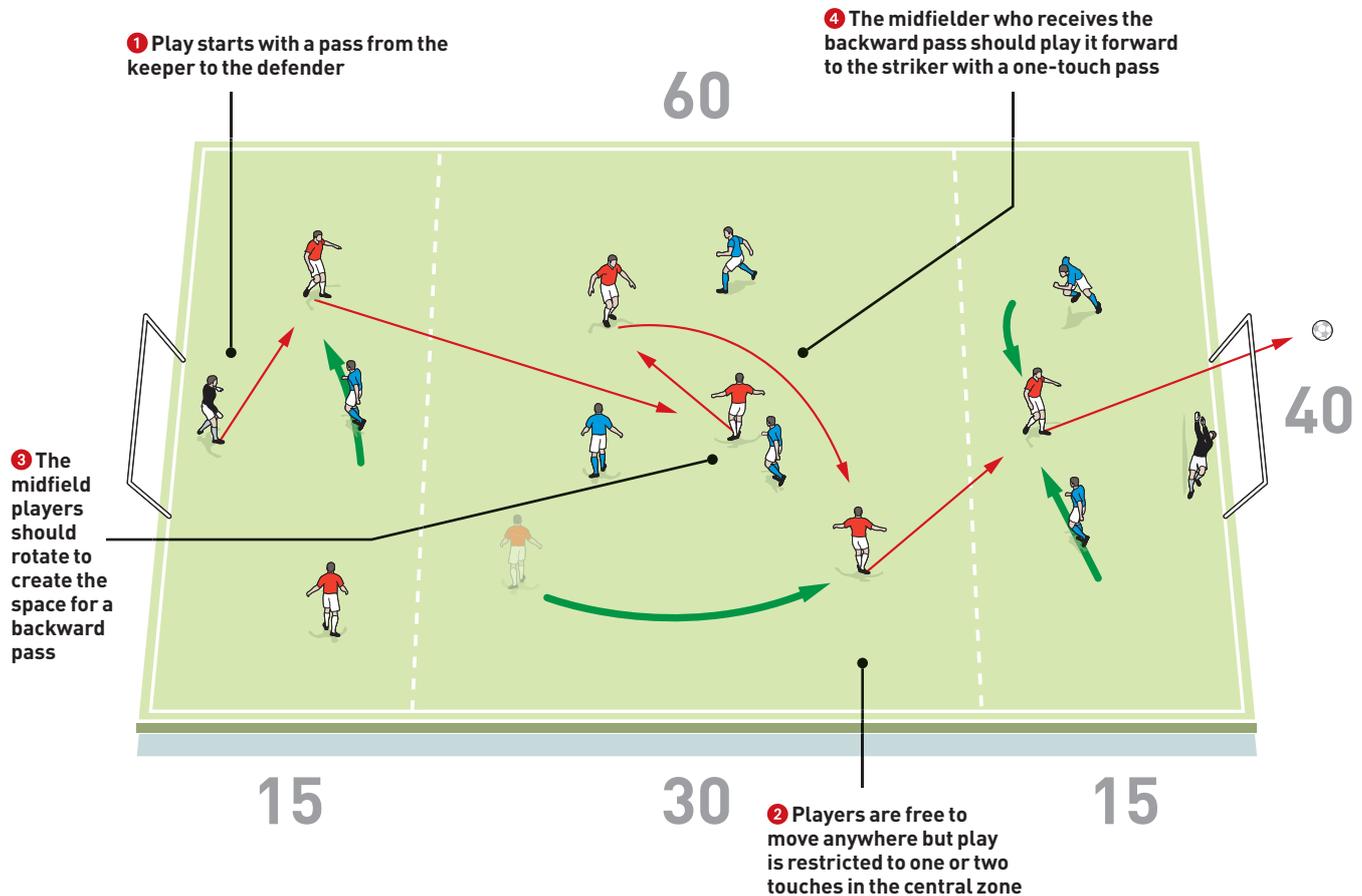


4 The wide players can be utilised in the attack but play must go through the centre to progress forwards

2 Players start in the zones relevant to their position but can move freely and rotate as the attack builds. Here the striker has dropped deep to receive a pass

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4 SMALL-SIDED GAME



“It’s important to encourage forward passes and coach the players on their body position so they receive the ball facing forward”

The wide players can be utilised if the players come inside to receive, but the play must always go through the central areas to progress towards a scoring opportunity. The coaching focus should be on positioning and receiving. We play three games of four minutes.

How would you put this into a game situation?

Small-sided game

We set up in a 60x40-yard area with a goal at each end. We’re using 12 outfield players and two goalkeepers split into two teams of seven including keepers. The playing area has two 15-yard

end zones and a 30-yard midfield zone, as shown [4]. Players aren’t locked into zones and it’s a normal game with no conditions other than players are limited to one or two touches in the midfield zone. We coach players to build up with the defender passing forwards and the midfielders rotating quickly to create the space needed to play a backwards pass to a team mate who then plays the ball forwards again to the striker with a one-touch pass.

What are the key things to look out for?

The main component is positioning midfielders at different heights

to allow a player to receive the ball facing forwards. It’s important to encourage forward passes and we coach the players on their body position.

What are the typical mistakes players might make and how do I avoid them?

Players can sometimes be in the same line, which limits the lines of passes. Another common mistake is that midfielders will come to low and reduce the operating space of the ball carrier. To remedy this we make sure no two players are in one line and we have players position themselves left, right and centre of the ball carrier.