

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION
Graham Potter
Defending in a mid block

SET-UP
AREA
Up to two thirds of pitch
EQUIPMENT
Balls, bibs, cones, 2 goals
NUMBER OF PLAYERS
15 players + 2 goalkeepers
SESSION TIME
Mid-block game: 15mins
Breaking lines: 12mins

Overview

This session is all about defending in a mid block and

making a team hard to play through. It will teach players to work as a block and it will help them to understand exactly when to start pressing and what triggers to look for. It's an important session and good communication is vital. It also helps teams to work on their aggressiveness inside the mid block.

We would run this session as a reminder once every four to five weeks.

What do I get the players to do?
Mid-block game

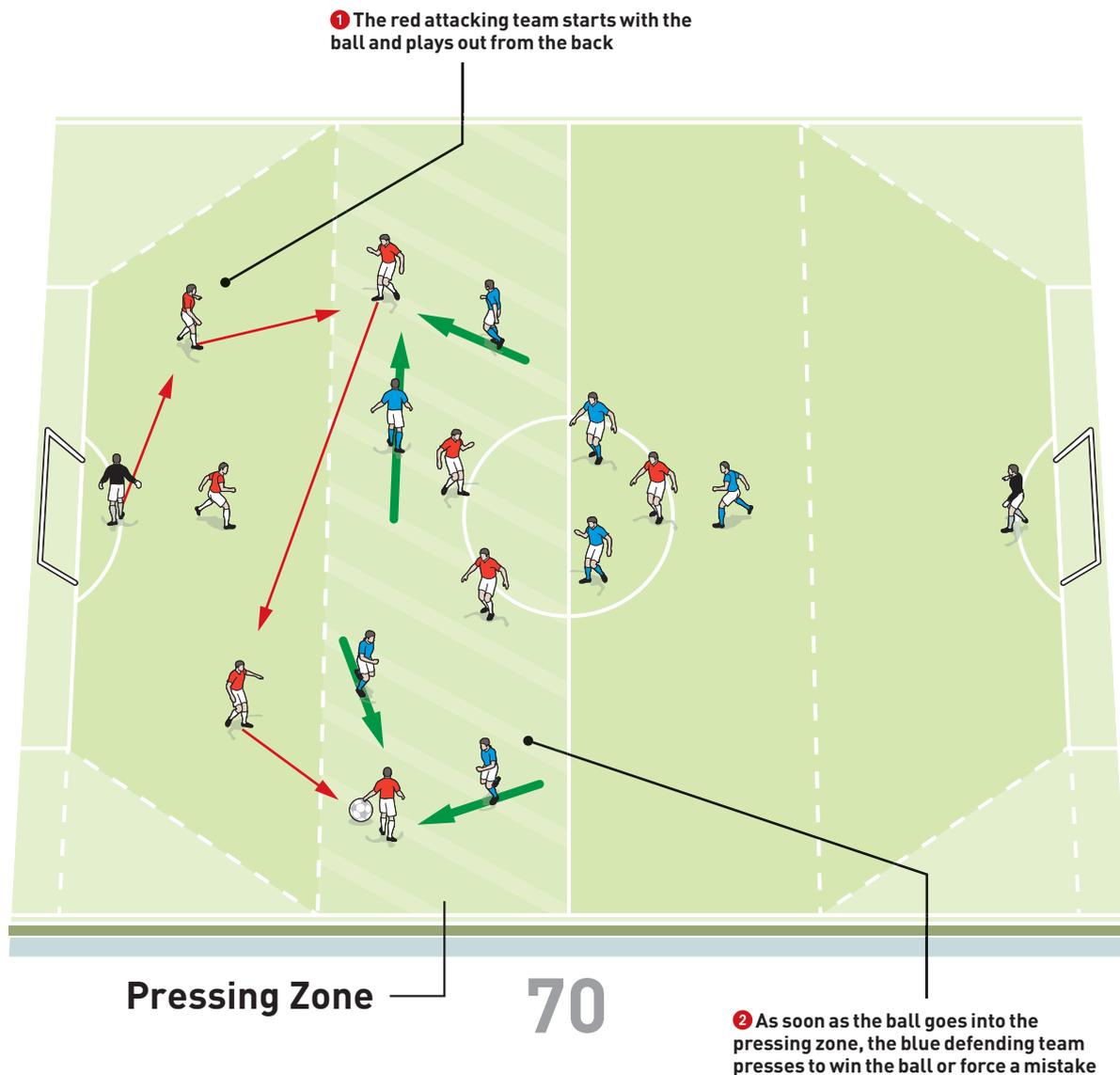
The players would start with

a 15-minute warm-up with the fitness coach [not shown]. Then we set up on a 70-yard long area between the two penalty boxes and use the full width of the pitch. We have a goal and a goalkeeper at each end. The playing area is divided into four quarters with the final quarter tapered at each end, as shown. We're using 15 players and two goalkeepers, divided into a red attacking team of nine including a keeper and a blue defending team of eight including a keeper. We are coaching the blue defending team.

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble→

1a MID-BLOCK GAME



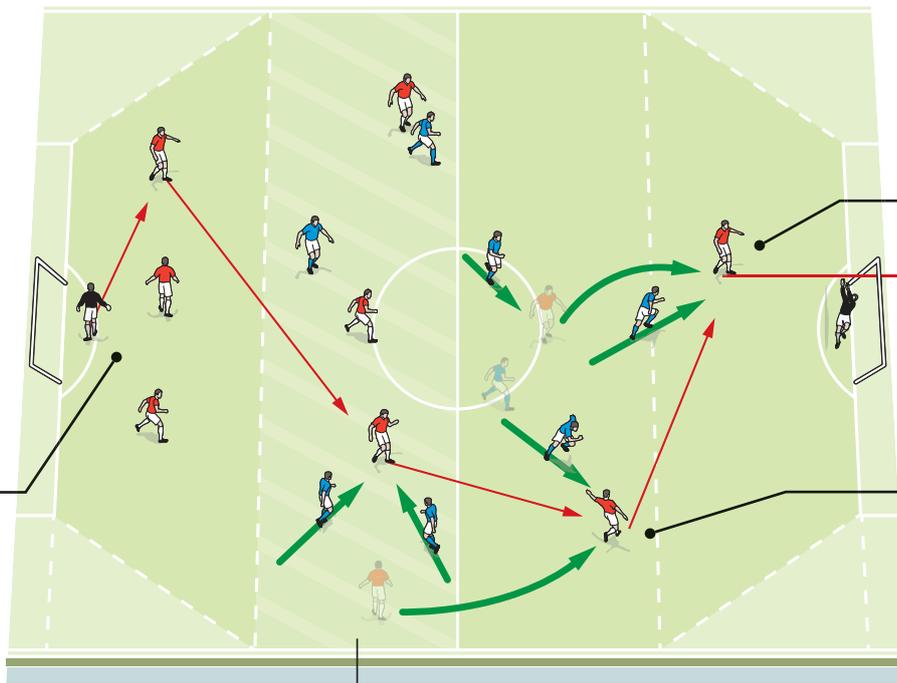
GRAHAM POTTER: DEFENDING IN A MID BLOCK

1b

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

1 Play always restarts from the keeper of the attacking team



3 Here the reds create a scoring opportunity

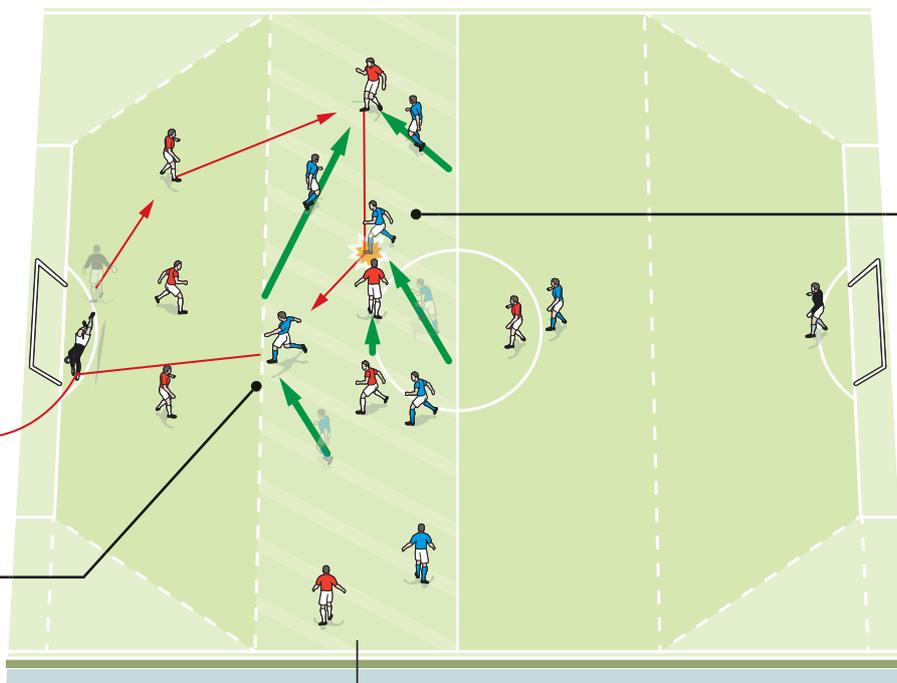
2 If the mid press fails and the blues are unable to win the ball in the pressing zone, the reds should continue to attack

Pressing Zone 70

1c

1 The blue defending team should stay compact in the pressing zone to make it difficult to play through them

2 If the blues win the ball they should counter-attack and try to score



Pressing Zone 70

The attacking team starts with the ball and plays out from the back with a pass from their keeper into the defensive zone. As soon as the ball goes into the pressing zone, the defending team presses

aggressively and tries to win the ball or force a mistake, or maybe force the attackers to play back towards their own goal, as shown [1a]. If the mid press fails, then the red attacking team continues to

attack and should try to score a goal, as shown [1b]. But if the blue defending team wins the ball, they should counter-attack and try to score, as shown [1c]. The line into the final quarter ▼

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serves as the offside line at both ends. We play four games of three minutes each.

What are the key things to look out for?

The key things that we have to look for is the distances between the defending

players. We want to see players keeping compact and demonstrating that they are ready to press as soon as the ball crosses into the pressing zone. We also want to see players working together as a unit and communicating with each other.

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

One of the typical mistakes is that players fail to read the trigger points to press. Frustration is another factor as well, because sometimes they are not patient enough.

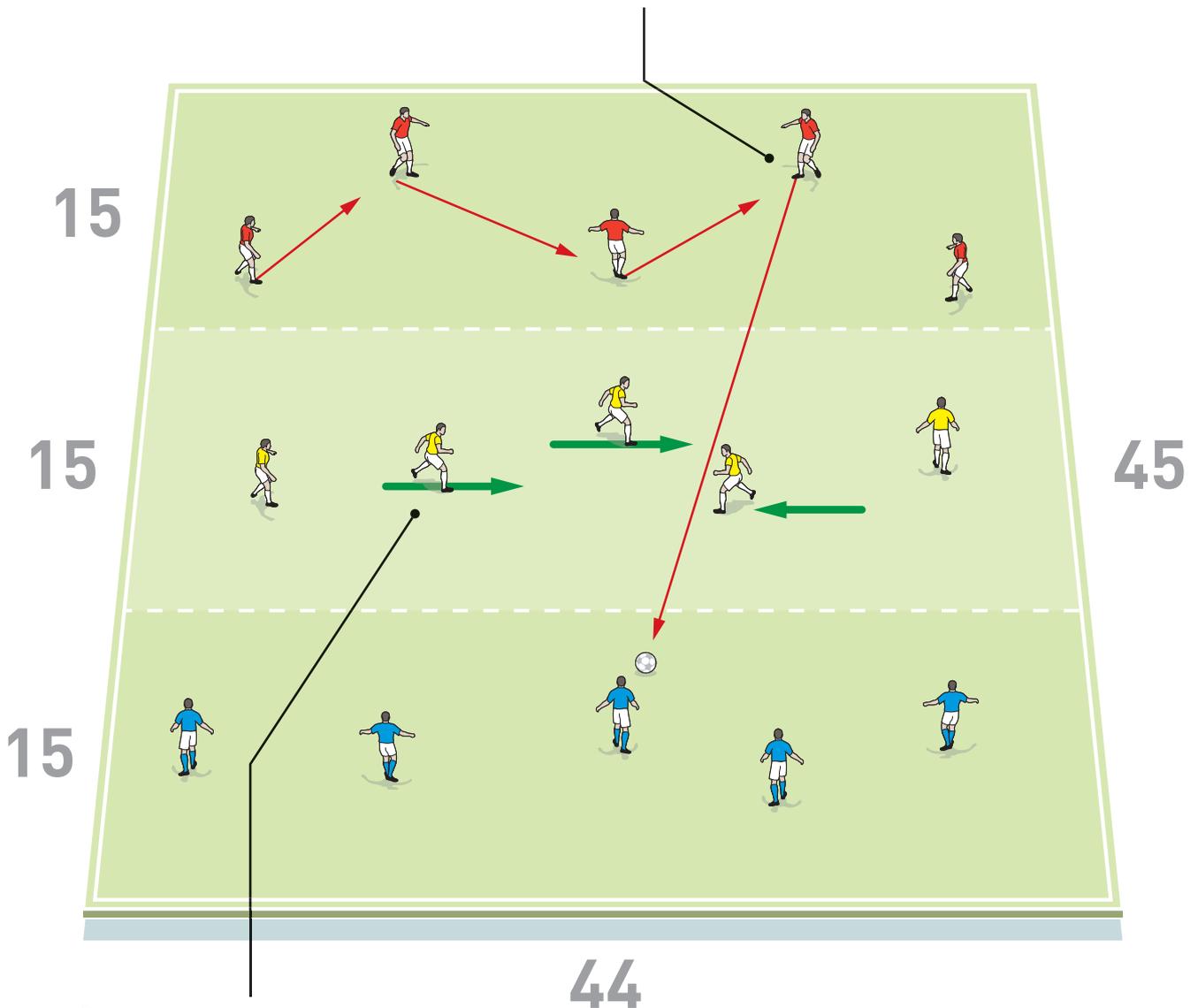
KEY

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“This session will teach players to work as a block and will help them to understand exactly when to start pressing and what triggers to look for”

2a BREAKING LINES

1 The team at one end must try to pass the ball through the central block to the team at the opposite end



2 The central team must stay compact and make it hard to play through them

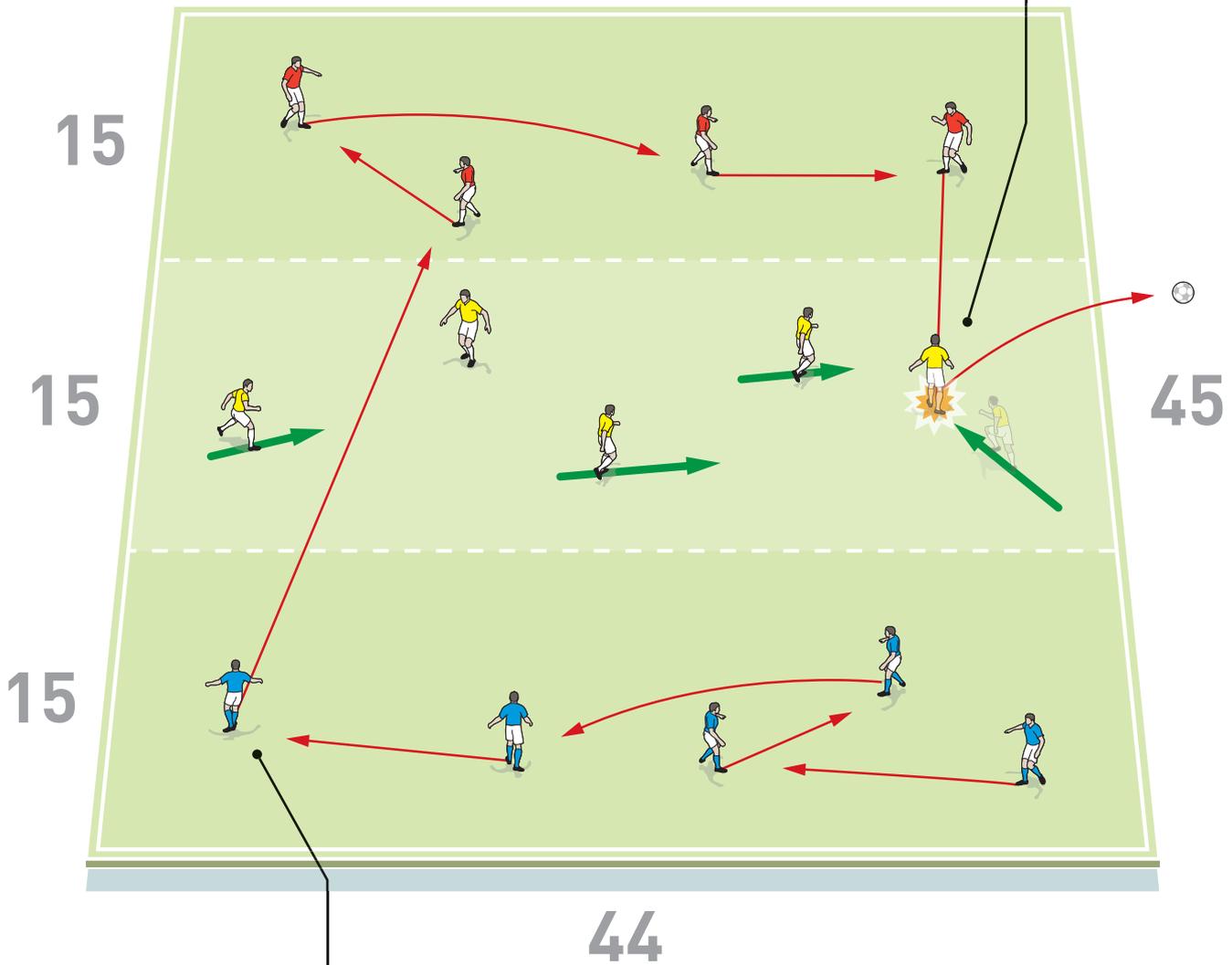
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2b

KEY

- Ball movement →
- Player movement →
- Dribble →

2 The team in the centre should stay compact and shift across. Here they succeed in forcing an error and clear the ball out of play



1 The receiving team should pass the ball about to create an opening to play a through ball

“One of the typical mistakes players make is failing to read the trigger points that tell them when to press”

What do I get the players to do next?

Breaking lines

We set up an area of 45x44 yards divided into three 15-yard zones. We're using 15 outfield players, split into three teams

of five. One team is positioned in each zone. The teams at each end must try to pass the ball through the central block to the team at the opposite end, as shown [2a]. The team in the centre should try to stay compact and shift across as the ball

is moved, making it hard to pass through them, as shown [2b]. The ball must stay below head height. We play for 12 minutes, switching the teams over every two minutes so every group of players gets two turns as the defending team.