

Spain U23 womens

— Defensive shape and press after losing possession

Session overview

Part 1: Warm-up

Part 2: Small-sided game – numerical disadvantage

Part 3: 11v11

Key coaching points

- Aiming to win the ball back immediately after losing possession is the most effective form of defence.
- If a team cannot win the ball back quickly, they must recognise when to drop into a defensive shape that is hard to play through.
- Players should close down passing lines and force errors by positioning themselves between 2 opponents to anticipate passes into either player.
- Teams should be prepared to get on the front foot and attack or get into a defensive shape immediately.

PART 1: WARM-UP

This session begins with a general activation phase featuring a variety of mobility and coordination exercises designed to prepare the players for the main activity of the session.

Organisation

- Mark out two 20m circuits ending with a mini-goal.
- Set up 4 stations as follows:
 - Station 1 – Angle 2 poles towards each other, leaving a small space between them.
 - Station 2 – Position 3 poles laterally close together.
 - Station 3 – Position 2 poles crossing each other to create a hurdle.
 - Station 4 – Lay 4 hoops in a zigzag sequence.
- Position 3 hurdle fences in the middle and on the outside of each circuit.
- Split the group into 2 teams of 11 and line them up behind the starting point of each circuit.
- Position a coach with a supply of balls behind each mini-goal.

Explanation

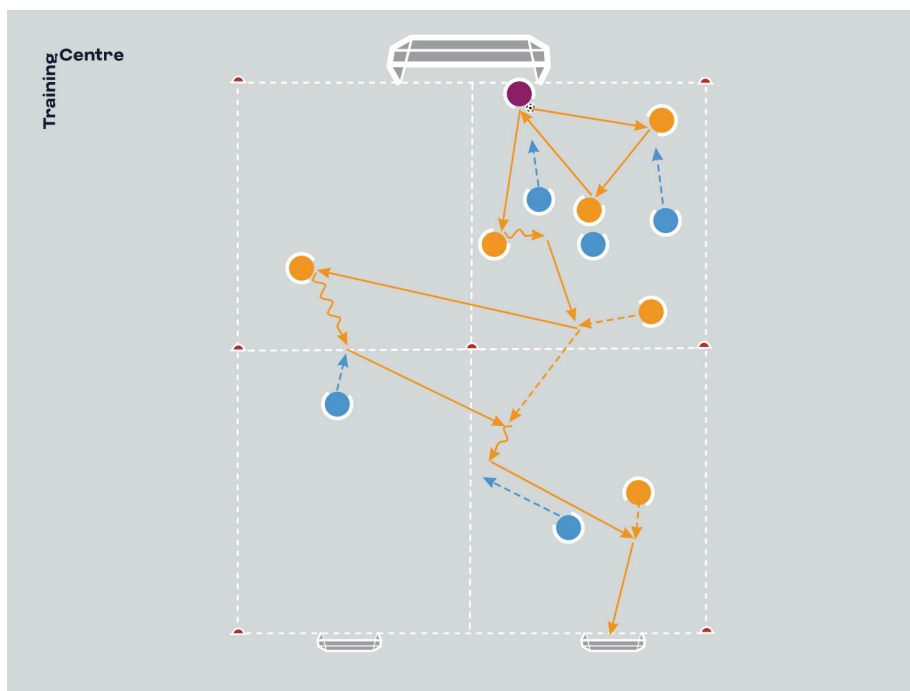
- The players must complete a series of mobility and coordination movements at each station, as follows:
 - Station 1 – Perform some “warm-up” movements.
 - Station 2 – Slalom between the poles.
 - Station 3 – Jump over the poles.
 - Station 4 – Take quick single steps into each hoop.
- At the end, the coach throws a ball in that the players must pass into the mini-goal with 1 touch.
- Before returning to the line, the players must perform a mobility exercise over or around the hurdles.

Variations

- Coaches should vary their delivery to encourage the players to practise a diverse range of finishing techniques.
- Remove the hoops and have the players contest a 1v1 at the end. The player who receives the ball must score in one of the mini-goals.

Coaching points

- Players must first focus on the quality of their movement and then increase the intensity.
- By maintaining a relaxed posture and avoiding flat-footedness, players can adapt to different deliveries from the coaches.
- If a player fails to retrieve the ball before their opponent, they must defend by closing angles down and forcing the attacker onto one side.
- When doing this, the defender must position themselves to be able to read a pass into the mini-goal and block it.



This exercise focuses on defending and pressing high with a numerical disadvantage. The game presents three phases geared towards helping a team press and win the ball when outnumbered.

Organisation

- Mark out a 25x50m pitch.
- Put a full-size goal and a goalkeeper at one end.
- Position 2 mini-goals at the opposite end.
- Mark out a halfway line and split the pitch in 2 lengthwise.
- Arrange the group into an orange team of 6 (plus the goalkeeper) and a blue team of 5.

Explanation

- The ball starts with the goalkeeper.
- The goalkeeper and 4 orange players must pass between one another on one side.
- 3 blue players must press and try to win the ball.
- An orange player must wait on the other side of the pitch.
- 2 blue players and 1 orange player must wait in the other half.
- If the orange team successfully make 4 passes, they must switch the ball to the other side of the pitch and create a 3v2 attack in the other half and drive towards the mini-goals.
- If the blue team win the ball, 1 player can join the attack to create a 4v4 on one side of the pitch.
- Rotate players so that they practise all aspects of the game.

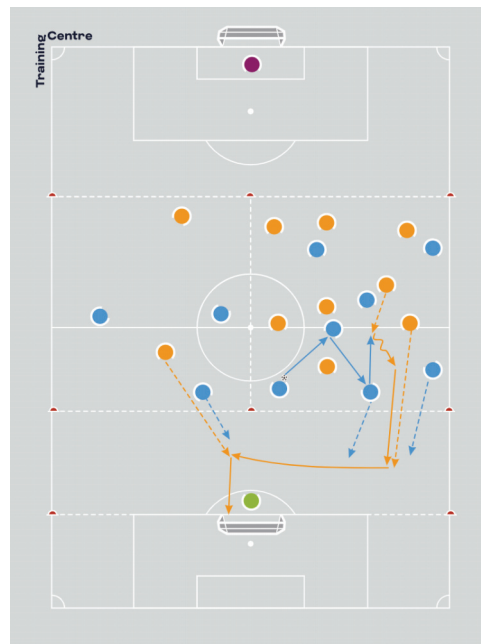
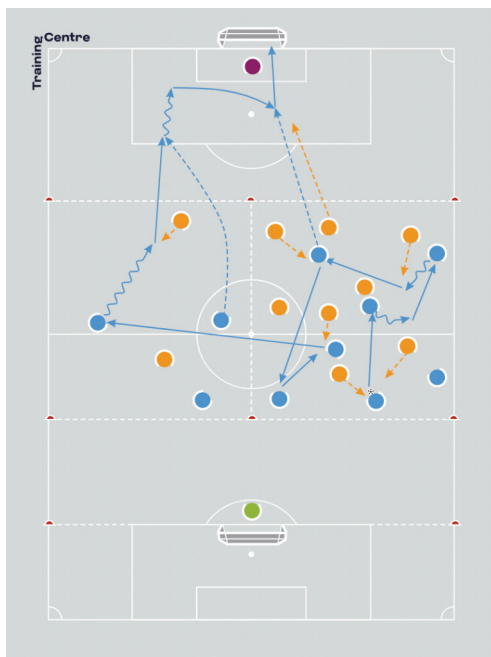
Variation

- When the orange team complete 4 passes, they can play directly to the striker in the other half and attempt to score in the mini-goals.

Coaching points

- Teams should press intelligently by not rushing into the press; care should be taken not to leave 2 opposition players free to receive the ball.
- Defenders should position themselves between 2 opposing players to cut off passing lines quickly and apply immediate pressure on players receiving the ball.
- The defending team should force opposition players wide where possible, as this limits their chances of playing through successfully.
- Players should look for triggers, such as poor touches, to press aggressively and win the ball closer to goal.

PART 3: 11V11



The final game reinforces the defensive principles required in mid-block distances when the opposition adopt a high line and advance the ball close to the halfway line.

Organisation

- Use 1 full-size pitch.
- Position a full-size goal on the edge of 1 penalty area and the other on the goal line.
- Put a goalkeeper in each goal.
- Split the outfield players into teams of 10.
- The orange team must defend in a 4-3-3 formation.
- The blue team must build the play in a 4-1-4-1 formation.
- In the orange team's half, mark out a defensive line 25m from the halfway line.
- In the blue team's half, mark out a defensive line 15m from the halfway line.
- Split the pitch in 2 lengthwise.

Explanation

- The ball always starts with the blue team on one side of the pitch in their half.
- The teams must play an 8v7 on the chosen side of the pitch, with the orange team having a numerical advantage.
- Once the blue team complete 6 consecutive passes, an extra blue player can enter the chosen side of the pitch and the team can progress beyond the orange team's defensive line.
- If the blue team attack on the same side of the pitch and score, 2 points are won.
- If the blue team switch play first before scoring, only 1 point is scored.
- If the orange team win the ball, they must attack and try to score.
- If they attack and score from the same side where they win the ball, 2 points are won.
- If they switch the ball to the other side first and score, 1 point is gained.
- The defending team cannot defend behind their defensive line when the ball is inside the mid-block area.
- After a set period, the orange team start with the ball and build the play.

Coaching points

- Once possession is lost, the defending team must try to recover the ball quickly before the opposition can settle on it or play out of pressure.
- If the ball cannot be won back immediately, the defending team must focus on maintaining a compact structure and organisation.
- Due to the numerical advantage, defending players must press aggressively and step out when the opposition make passes.
- By making the team in possession play out wide, the defending team can force more errors and limit space centrally.
- Players behind the initial presser must decide which player to follow and mark

- tightly to prevent the opposition from playing through.
- Against defensive blocks that prioritise central channels, spaces for the attacking team will typically be in wide areas.