

Defensive phase and pressing

Session overview

Part 1: 5v2 rondo

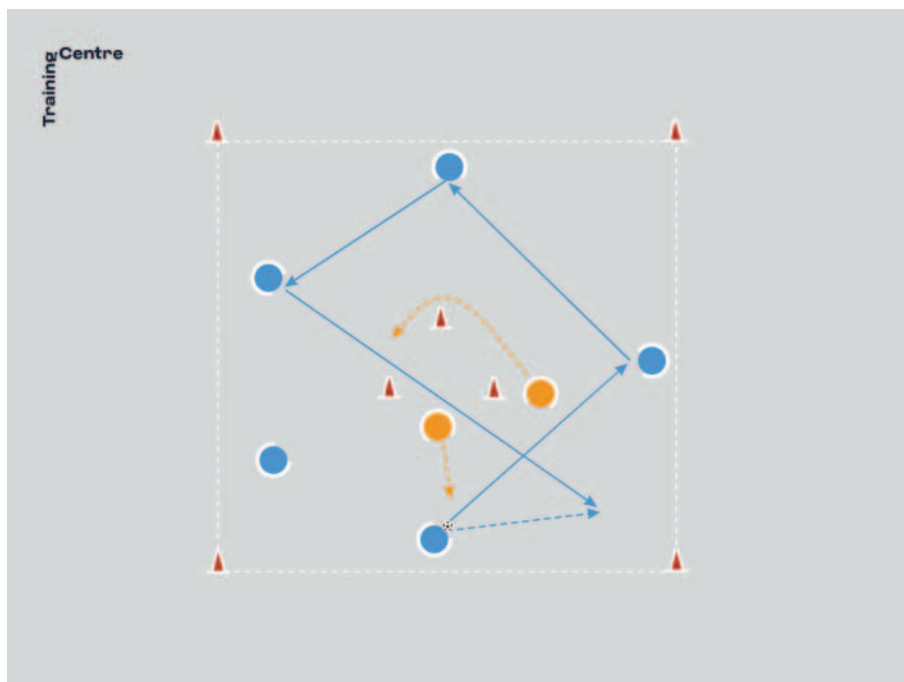
Part 2: 8v8 – high-pressing game

Key coaching points

- After a loss of possession, players must adjust their mentality immediately to win the ball back, with the player who lost the ball being the first to implement the press.
- The team pressing to win the ball back should try to do so within 5-7 seconds and prevent the opposition from progressing the ball into a dangerous area.
- By pressing high, and as a unit, the defending team can maintain a compact structure that will increase their chances of forcing the opposition into an error.
- The defending team should prevent the opposition from having time to think or space in which to work when they construct from the back.
- If one player presses, the supporting team-mates should follow coherently and block off any potential passing lanes.
- A compact defensive structure combined with a high press ensures that players are close together and less distance is involved when trying to recover the ball.

PART 1: 5V2 RONDO

Adrián Sánchez leads the first session, which aims to provide players with the correct mindset when trying to recover the ball. Rondos are one of the most effective exercises for instilling this mindset, as they show players the approach of switching actions from being in possession to hunting the ball down quickly. By working together as a team and focusing on intensity, the press can be applied efficiently and the ball can be recovered quickly.



5v2 rondo – the five players circulate the ball around the edges of the area whilst the two defenders press to win it back.

Organisation

- Mark out a 10x10m area.
- Position a triangle goal in the centre of the area (use three cones if not possible).
- Position 5 players around the edges of the area.
- Position 2 players in front of the triangle goal.

Explanation

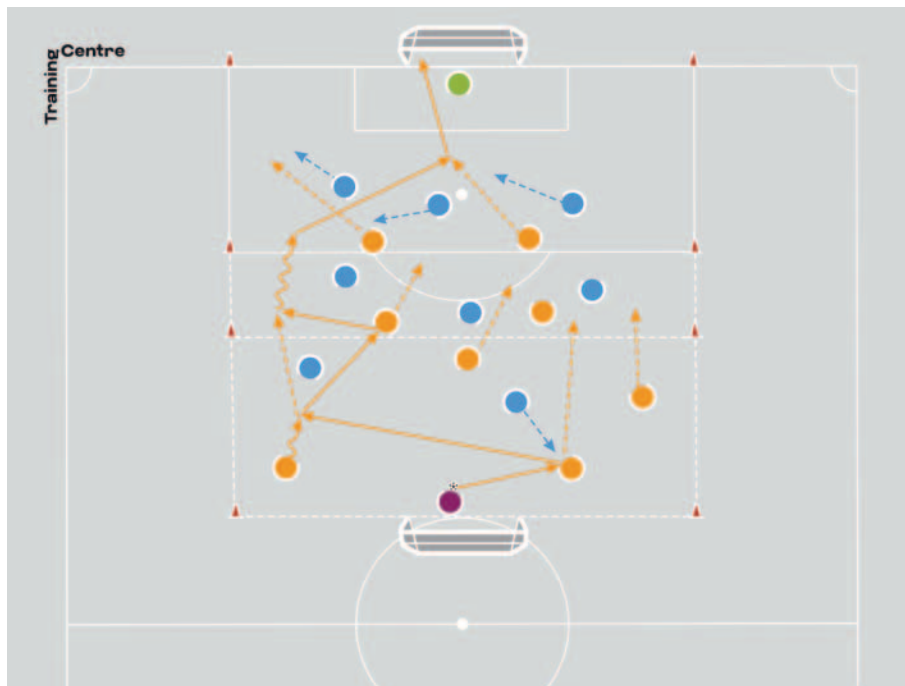
- The 5 players around the edges of the area have to circulate the ball.
- These 5 players are limited to 2 touches each.
- The 2 defenders have to press and try to win the ball back.
- If the attacking team successfully passes through the triangle goal, they score 1 point.
- The defenders have to prevent the pass from going through the triangle goal.
- The player who loses the ball, and the player on their right, go into the middle and swap with the 2 defenders, who now join the attacking team.
- The players should switch roles immediately so that the press is effective.

Coaching points

- When pressing, 1 defender should close down the player with the ball whilst the second defender should cover the passing angle inside to make it harder for the team in possession to play through the triangle.
- The second defender should be able to read the situation and guide their team-mate where to press and when to switch the cover.
- The speed of approach is a vital component in recovering the ball immediately. By getting out to opposing players quickly, they can force more errors.
- Intensity should be at the forefront of players' minds as this can determine the efficiency of their actions in a real-game situation.

PART 2: 8V8 – HIGH-PRESSING GAME

Cristian Flores finishes the session with a game that is aimed at raising the intensity of a team's press when defending. A cohesive and collective press can be key to winning the ball back quickly and in an advantageous position on the pitch, leading to more goalscoring opportunities. The exercise also shows players how to remain in a compact structure when pressing high whilst offering effective coverage for their team-mates.



8v8 – the orange team builds from the back while the blue team attempts to win the ball back high up the pitch.

Organisation

- Mark out a 40x50m area inside one half of a pitch.
- Split the area into 2x20m zones at either end with a 10m zone in the centre.
- Position 2 full-size goals at either end.
- Position a goalkeeper in each of the goals.
- Divide the outfield players into 3 teams of 8.
- 2 teams start on the pitch in an 8v8 scenario.
- The third team waits at the side of the pitch.

Explanation

- The ball starts or restarts with a goal kick for each game.
- The team in possession has to build from the back.
- Attacking players must progress the ball through the thirds.
- All of the team's players must have crossed the line into the central zone before they can score a goal otherwise the goal does not count.
- The team out of possession has to press the opposition high and prevent them from building an attack.
- If the team out of possession successfully wins the ball back in their opposition's defensive third and scores immediately, they score 4 points.
- Every game is over after a goal is scored or after two minutes. When a goal is scored, the team who conceded leaves the pitch and the third team has 5 seconds to get onto the pitch and start play.
- Play should start with the team that have just entered the pitch.
- Play for 20-25 minutes depending on the intensity performed by the players.

Coaching points

- Encourage the players to build up play within a clear structure. The centre-backs should split and the defensive midfielder drops into space, whilst the other midfielders and attackers should find pockets of space to open up passing lanes.
- The team out of possession should press immediately when they have either lost possession or the opposition starts their construction.
- The press starts with the forward players, who should be aggressive and look to cut off the initial passing lanes.
- If the defending team are unable to win the ball back quickly, they should fall back and stay compact at all times to make it hard for the opposition to play through.
- The player who loses the ball or who is closest to the ball should always press first. Thus, their team-mates must recognise when and whom to cover at all times.