

High press



Session overview

Part 1: Walk-through

Part 2: Phase of play

Part 3: Game-related 10v8

Key learnings

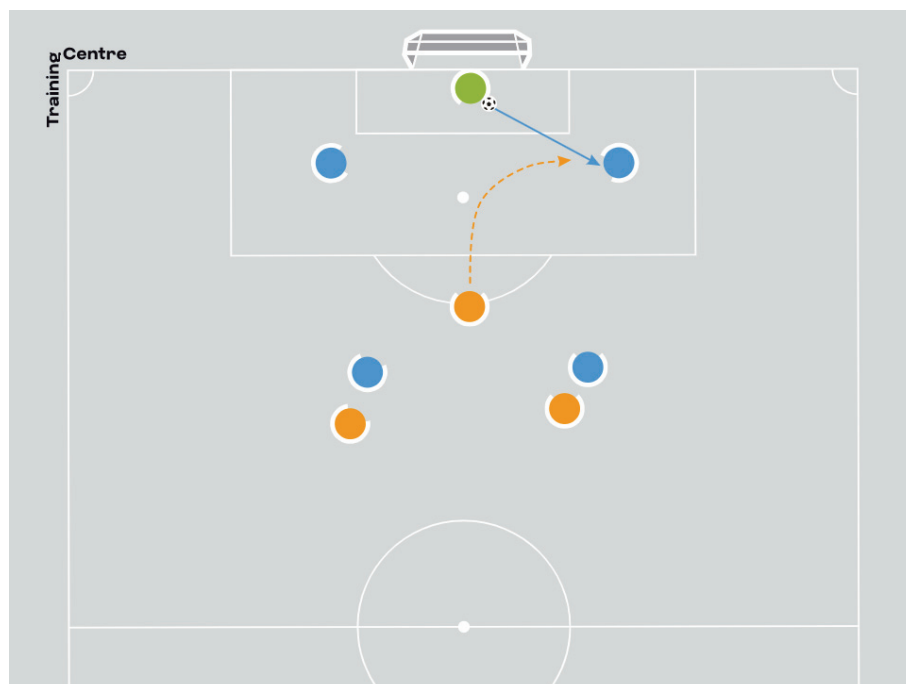
The drills featured below allow players to work on their pressing skills. The coach works with the players on developing their skill set in the key areas of the high-press system: setting traps, using triggers and collective pressing. The players work together in an effort to make the opposition's play predictable and win possession within a set time frame. The players' ability in 1v1 and 2v2 situations is tested and they are asked questions, such as how they should react if the opposition has time on the ball or switches the play.

Organisation

- Player numbers: 18 outfield players including 1 goalkeeper.
- Age group: 12 and above.
- Skill level: for developing players up to elite level, with the coach managing the difficulty and intricacies of the session.

PART 1: WALK-THROUGH

This first drill, which is theory-based, involves players considering some key questions related to winning the ball high up the pitch – notably when to press and retreat – as well as the roles played by the attacking players.



Organisation

- The drill is performed in the final third with a goalkeeper, two centre-backs and two central midfielders facing one opposing central forward and two attacking midfielders.
- Divided into four parts of three minutes each.

Explanation

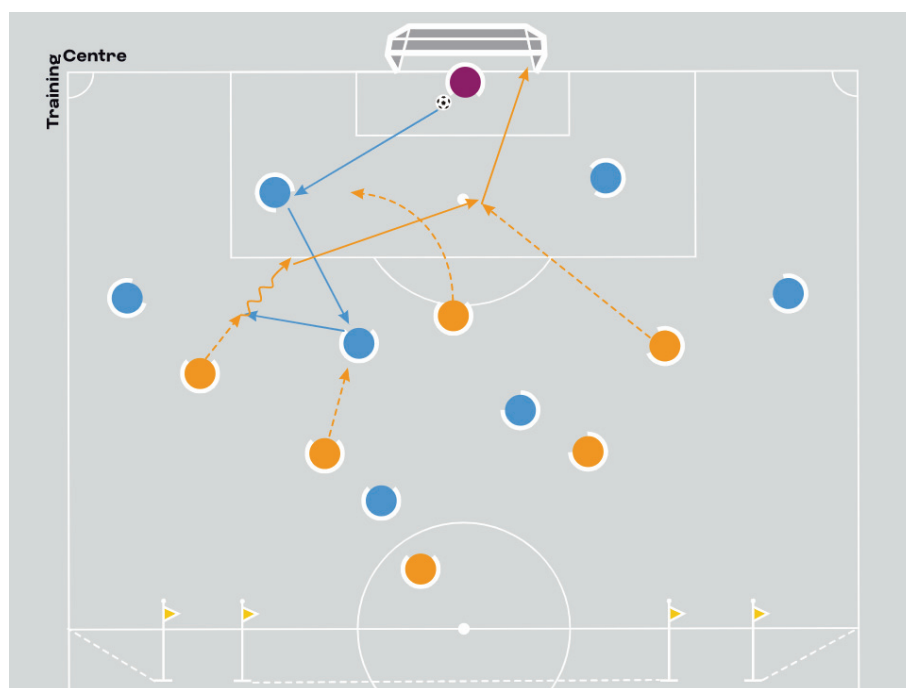
The four parts are as follows:

- The tactics board is used to illustrate the role played by the number 9 in preventing the opposition from switching the play and forcing play forward.
- An on-pitch walk-through is conducted to analyse the midfielders' positioning. Should they press or screen?
- The tactics board is used to explore when to press and retreat.
- An on-pitch walk-through is conducted to examine what happens if the number 10 drops off.

In an effort to make the drill as realistic as possible, the centre-backs must always remain behind the ball, rather than stepping into midfield and advancing beyond the opposition forwards. The drill begins with the goalkeeper playing the ball out. If the coach is looking for a drill progression, however, another player could act as the server.

PART 2: PHASE OF PLAY

The purpose of this drill is for players to work on quickly regaining possession high up the pitch and counter-attacking.



Organisation

- This drill is performed in an area of 50mx46m
- It involves 15 players, who are split into two teams (one featuring seven players and the other eight)
- The image shows the set-up of this 7v8 simulation, with the pressing team lining up three midfielders and three forwards and the opposing team adopting a 1-4-3 set-up.

Explanation

- This session is divided into parts and begins with a walk-through in which the players' starting positions are established, before following the sequence outlined below, which involves specific timings for each activity and a 90-second rest between each of them.
- 6 minutes' work, 90-second rest: this part involves a look at the tactics board with a focus on the front three.
- 6 minutes' work, 90-second rest: this section features a walk-through with a focus on the midfield pair.
- 4 minutes' work, 90-second rest: this part involves a look at the tactics board with a focus on the deep-lying midfield and the players are asked what happens if the opposition midfield drops deep.

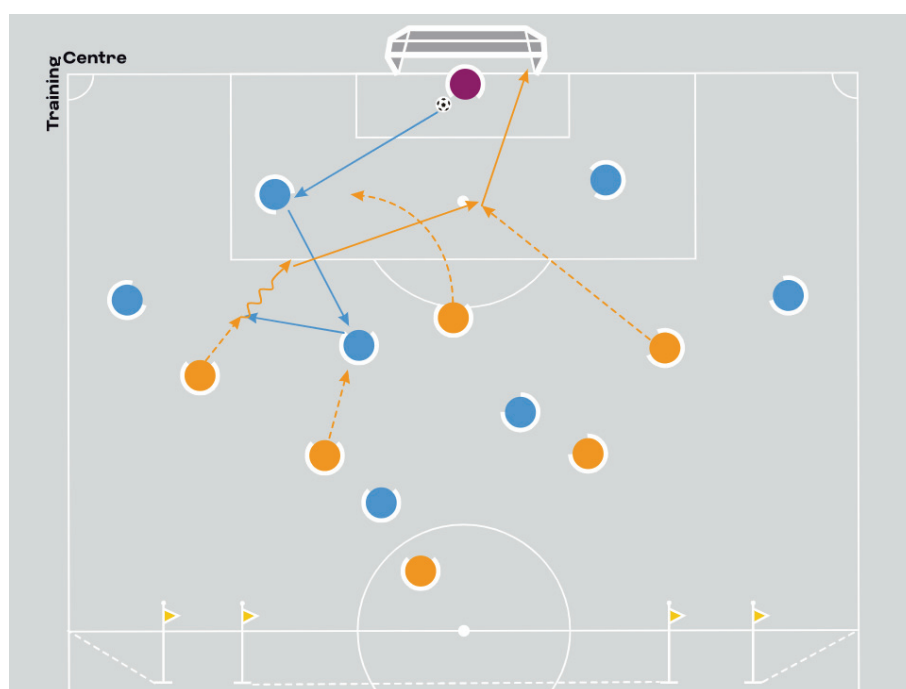
- 4 minutes' work, 90-second rest: this section features a walk-through in which the players are asked to consider what happens if the play is switched.
- 5 minutes' work, 90-second rest: this part involves a look at the tactics board and the players are, asked how to react if the opposition centre-backs end up getting too much time on the ball.
- A debrief with a Q&A.

Coaching focus

- This drill allows the coach to cover all of the points involved in the first drill, albeit with a focus on 1v1 defending without the additional 2v2 component.
- It also enables the coach to work with their players on defending as units and counter-attacking.
- Another question raised here is what happens if the play is switched.

PART 3: GAME-RELATED 10V8

This drill involves players working on supporting a high press within a team dynamic. The main aim is to regain possession high up the pitch so as to allow the team to quickly create a goalscoring opportunity.



Organisation

- This drill is performed in half the length of the pitch and involves one full-sized goal, as well as two small-sized goals that are positioned on the halfway line.
- A wide channel runs down each flank from one end of the half to the other and is marked out as in the image above.
- There are two teams (one with ten players and the other with eight) as well as a neutral player, who acts as a number 9 for the possession team and a server for the pressing team.
- The teams are made up of the following players:
 - The possession team has ten players: a goalkeeper, a four-player defence, a holding midfielder, two central midfielders and two wide forwards.
 - The pressing team comprises eight players: a centre-back, two full-backs, two central midfielders, a centre-forward and two wide forwards.
 - In terms of on-pitch positioning, the full-backs are locked into the wide zones, while the neutral player operates between the small goals. The game lasts 20 minutes and comprises four-minute quarters with a minute's rest between each quarter.

Explanation

- The drill begins with the goalkeeper playing the ball out to one of the centre-backs. The number 9 leaves the number 6 to press the centre-back and cuts off the pass back to the goalkeeper and the diagonal pass to the opposite centre-back. The number 10 advances to press the number 6, whilst the number 11 drops off to pick up the number 8 and the number 7 screens the ball into the left-back. Meanwhile, number 6 shows the central midfielder inside and screens a pass into the opposition wide forward. This set-up is mirrored on the opposite side.
- The possession team can score in either of the two small goals, whilst the pressing team aims to score in the full-size goal and if they do so after having applied a high press that results in the ball being won within eight seconds, they are awarded five goals. When a move involves the neutral player, the pressing team has ten seconds in which to score.
- The build-up team has ten to 14 seconds to go for goal and must play through the neutral player.

Coaching focus

- This drill involves the players working as a team to apply a high press and regain possession. The focus is on developing the team's ability to press collectively whilst maintaining high standards in terms of 1v1 pressing/defending.
- As is the case in the previous drills, this one calls for aggression and intensity in the press, with the emphasis on winning the ball high up the pitch to allow the team to quickly create a goalscoring opportunity.
- The coach must ensure that the possession team plays at a good intensity as this will help the pressing team to make efficient decisions about when to press to win the ball.
- The idea behind getting the possession team to play at a high intensity (the team has ten to 14 seconds to score) is to ensure that the play does not become predictable.
- An additional coaching focus relates to how the pressing team can use their momentum to create a goalscoring opportunity and take full advantage of their shape.