

Keeping the centre compact —●— in a 4-4-2 mid-press

Session overview

Part 1: Ball circulation with press

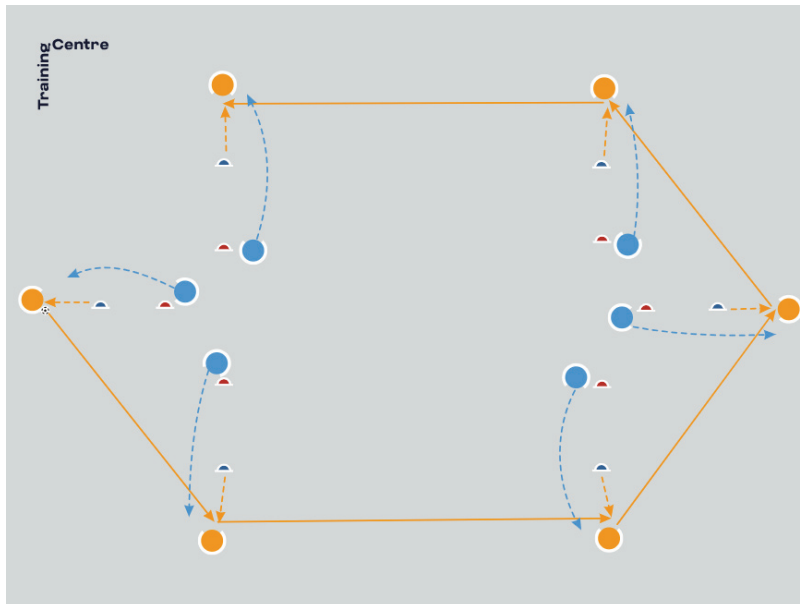
Part 2: Mid-block game

Part 3: 6v6 game

Key coaching points

- Players maintaining a compact shape and closing distances between players to prevent the opposition from progressing the ball into dangerous areas.
- Players pressing when the opposition passes or approaches the mid-third rather than engaging high up the pitch.
- Players shuffling across as a unit and closing gaps whenever the opposition moves the ball from side to side.
- After a press has been attempted, players immediately drop back into their positions in the mid-block shape.

PART 1: BALL CIRCULATION WITH PRESS



This first exercise sets the tone and tempo for players pressing in a mid-press. The idea is for players to get comfortable with the strategy of waiting for the ball to move forward before pressing quickly.

Organisation

- Mark out two red cones 10m apart.
- Place a blue cone 5m on the outside of both red cones.
- In the middle of the two red cones and 2m behind, position another red cone.
- Place a blue cone 5m further back from the middle cone in the centre.
- Mirror this cone formation 10m on the other side.
- Split the group into two teams of six.
- Position the players so that there is one player per cone. Orange players on the red cones, blue players on the blue cones.

Explanation

- Going anti-clockwise, the blue players must pass the ball to the player at the next cone.
- As the ball is travelling, the orange players at the red cone must become active and press the player in possession.
- As soon as the player who receives the ball moves the ball away, the player who was pressing relaxes and moves to the blue cone they were pressing.

- The player who made the pass moves to the red cone.

Variations

Variation 1

- The players that are pressing must now press before the ball has left the passer's foot.

Variation 2

- Pass the ball clockwise.

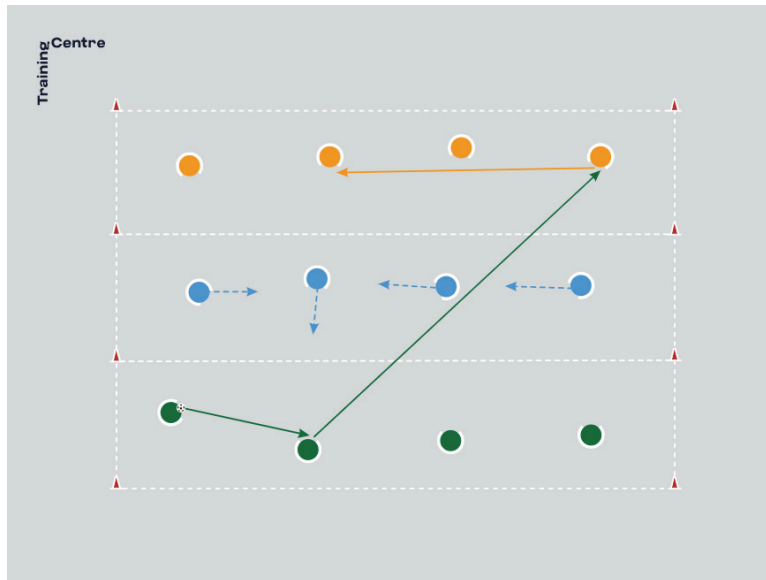
Variation 3

- Play with two balls in circulation to increase focus and intensity.
- Play the ball anti-clockwise again.

Coaching points

- Open the angle and create distance from the pressing player by dropping 2m from the cone just as the passing player is receiving the ball.
- The receiver's first touch should always be out of their feet and in the direction they intend to play it.
- Pressing players must pay attention to the triggers of when to press. For example, when the ball leaves the passer's foot.
- When pressing, players should dart toward the receiver as quickly as they can

PART 2: MID-BLOCK GAME



This second exercise focuses on the movements of the mid-press as a unit. Players must understand when it is their turn to step out of the line to close distances, as well as maintain good distances between one another.

Organisation

- Mark out a 30m x 30m area.
- Split the area into three equal zones (10m long).
- Split the group into three teams of four (blue, orange and green).
- The blue team are positioned in the first zone.
- The orange team are positioned in the mid-zone.
- The green team are positioned in the end zone.

Explanation

- The ball starts with the blue team in the first zone.
- They must try to find a passing angle and successfully pass to the green team in the end zone.
- The orange team in the mid-zone must stop the pass from reaching the end zone.
- If the blue team successfully make the pass, the green team must do the same and try to return the ball to the blue team.
- If the orange team block the pass, the ball restarts with the team at the opposite end to where the pass was attempted.
- Players cannot leave their respective zones.

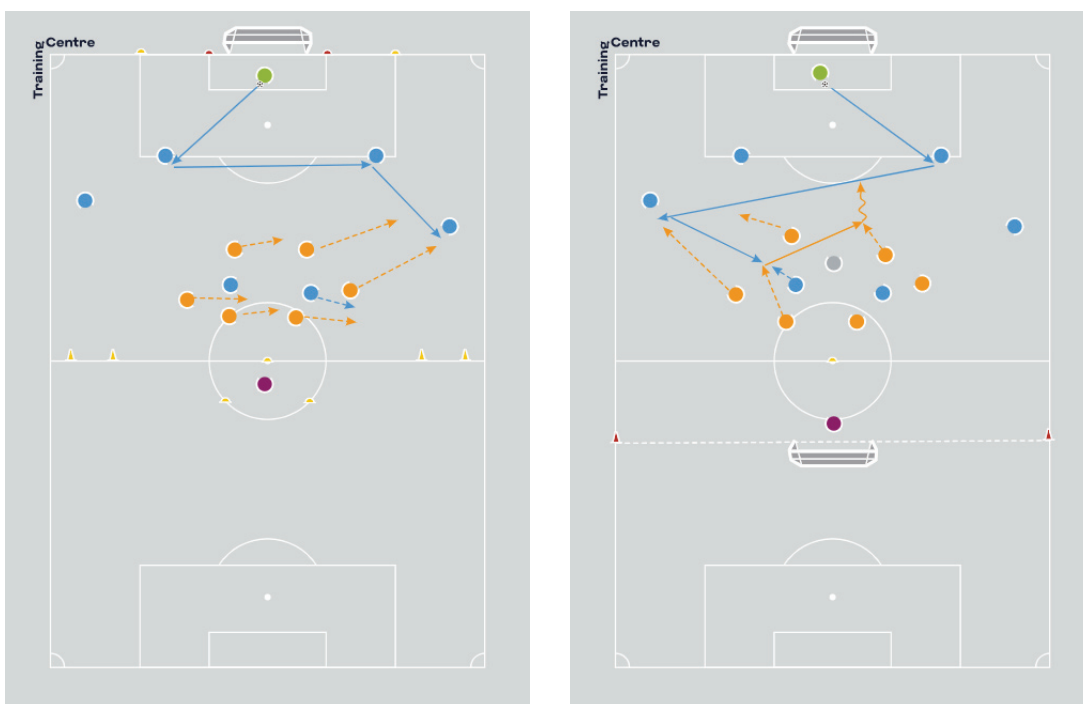
Variations

- One player from the first zone enters the mid-zone and tries to help progress the ball to the end zone.
- The player can move freely inside this zone and can play backwards as well as forward.
- When the ball successfully reaches the end zone, a player from the end zone goes into the mid-zone and the player from the first zone returns.

Coaching points

- Players staying compact and maintaining distances of 2-3m between each other to ensure gaps are kept to a minimum and reduce the possibility of passes being played through the mid-zone.
- Players that are directly facing opponents stepping out of the mid-zone line to close distances and ensure the ball stays in that zone. This should be followed as the ball moves along the zone.
- Players keeping the ball moving at all times to create a gap to pass through.

PART 3: 6V6 GAME



The session ends with a 6v6 game that focuses on the structure and shape of the mid-press as the opposition moves the ball from defence into attack. The players operating in the mid-press must stay compact and engage the opposition only when they come forward.

Organisation

- Mark out a 60m x 50m pitch.
- Position a full-size goal with a goalkeeper at one end.
- At the other end, use two cones to create a channel in the centre of the pitch.
- Position a makeshift goalkeeper in front of this channel.
- 10m further forward from this channel, mark out a 5m-wide channel on either flank of the pitch.
- Split the players into two teams of six.
- The blue team play toward the channels.
- The orange team play toward the full-size goal.

Explanation

- The ball starts with the goalkeeper from the blue team.
- The blue team must build-up play and either play through the wide channels or pass to the makeshift goalkeeper in front of the central channel.

- The orange team must use a mid-press strategy to prevent the ball from being played through.
- If the orange team wins the ball, they must attack the other goal

Variations

- Remove the channels and cones and play a free game on a 75m x 50m pitch.
- Add a second full-size goal and a goalkeeper.
- If the blue team switches play from one side to the other and then scores, they gain 2 points.

Coaching points

- Players maintaining a compact structure when using the mid-press to prevent passes from being played into the central areas where it can disrupt the structure.
- Players moving as a unit from side to side and maintaining short distances between each other when following the opposition's switches of play.
- Players approaching the player in possession from an angle that shuts off passing lanes, as this can increase the chances of forcing a turnover of possession.
- Letting the centre-backs pass between themselves but as soon as they move forward, engaging them to force them back or wide.