

Ajax

Martyn Pert, a UEFA B licensed coach and U13 youth team coach at English 1st Division team, Norwich City F.C, spent the summer of 2002 visiting a number of European clubs observing various open coaching sessions and pre-season routines. One week was spent with Dutch 1st Division Team, Ajax of Amsterdam.

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Day One: Warm-Up

The players run from the 18-yard line to the halfway line, four or five times, including some high knees, skipping, side steps, crossover steps, 3/4 pace, rotating groins in and outwards, backwards running and short sprints. Thereafter, they stretch, then complete some one-touch passing and volleys in pairs.

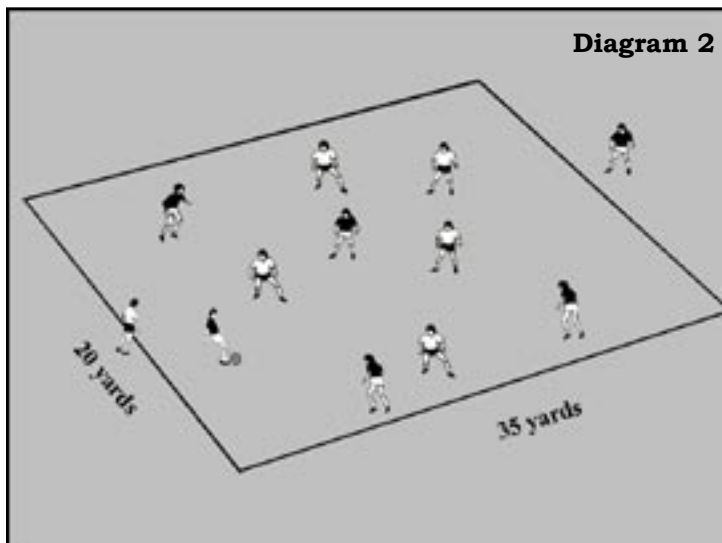
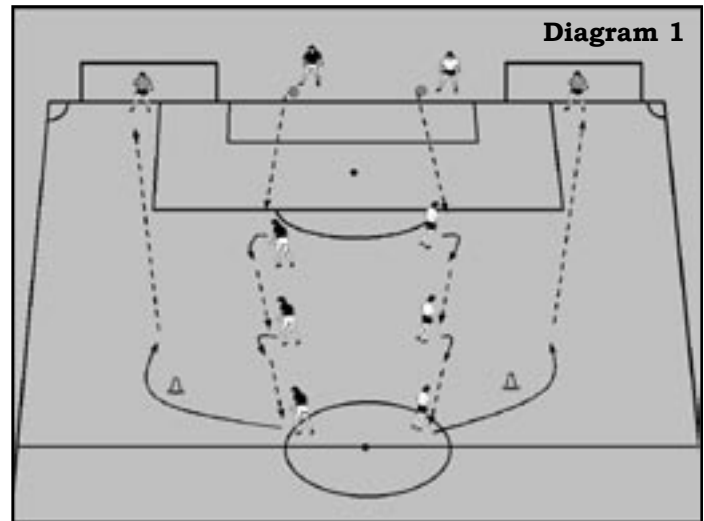
Passing and Shooting

Three players pass and turn to the fourth player who then takes the ball around the cone and shoots. Players move up one position with the shooter moving to the start position. The dark team use their left foot, the white team, their right.

Progression

- Incorporate some 'give-and-go's between the third and fourth player
- Shooting players shoot at the opposite goal
- Introduce a defender
- 2 v 2 situation following the passing sequence

The session ends with some jogging and stretching.

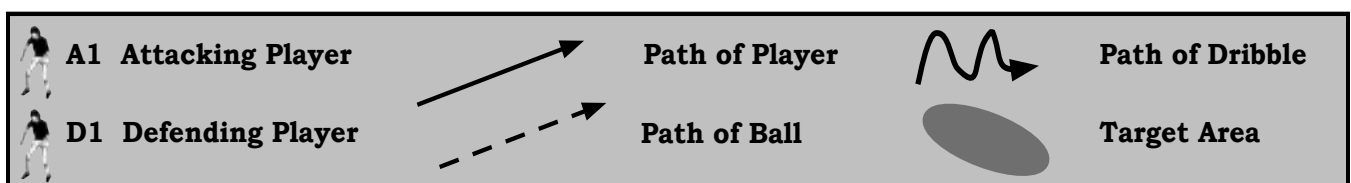


Day Two

Warming up the same way as the previous day, the team breaks off into a two-touch 5 v 5 keep-away situation with two perimeter players (with one touch only). The objective is to get the ball from one perimeter player and play it to the other without losing possession to the defending team.

Progression

Score by chipping the ball to the perimeter players.



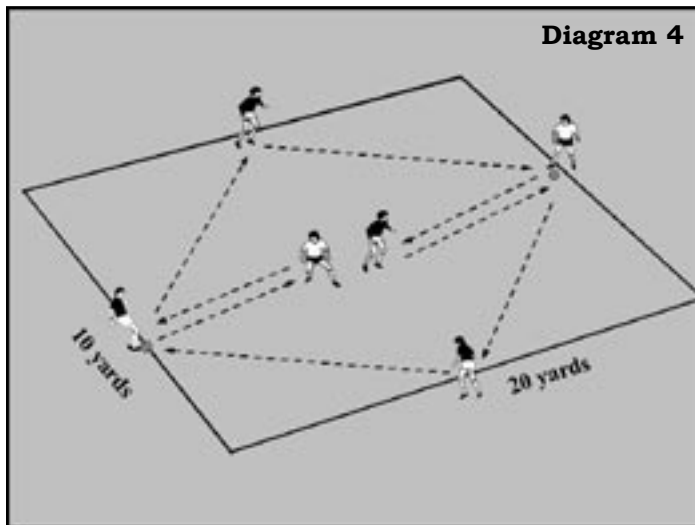
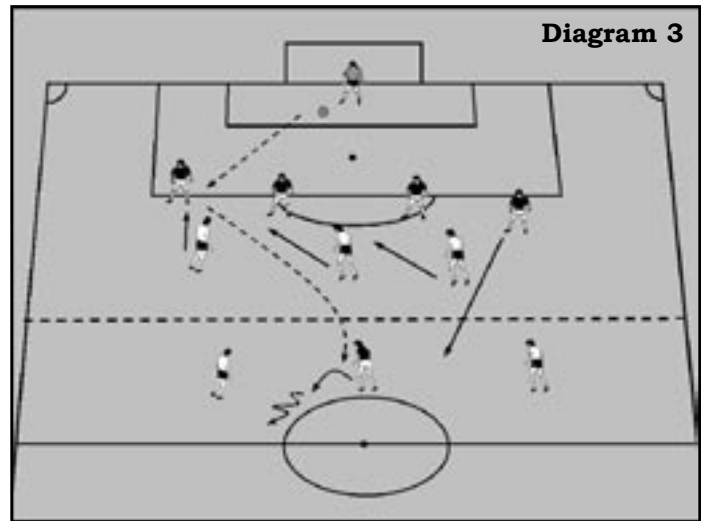
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Ball Movement

Play two-touch with the goalkeeper playing one-touch. The goalkeeper starts with the ball and passes to one of the four defenders. They have to try to pass the ball to the lone dark attacker. Upon making the pass, one defender can join the attacker in the end zone to try to get the ball to the halfway line.

Progression

- Add players to the attacking third and introduce a second goalkeeper and goal
- Add some width to the practice by placing wide players in a five-yard zone either side of the pitch

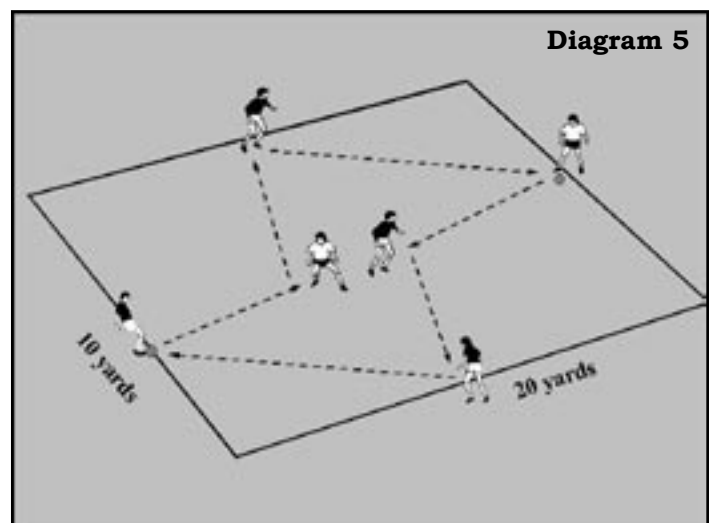


Passing Sequences

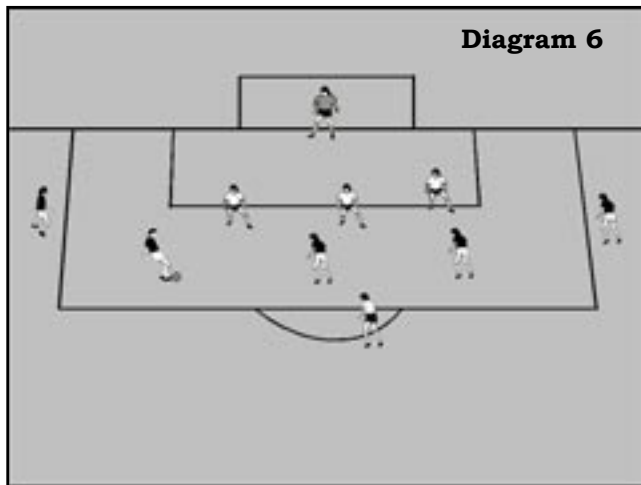
Using two balls and placing two or more players at each station, players pass and follow using one touch.

Variation

Pass and follow.



Ajax



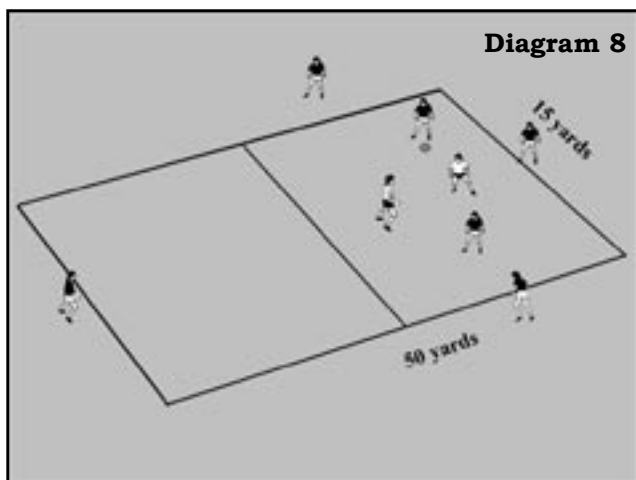
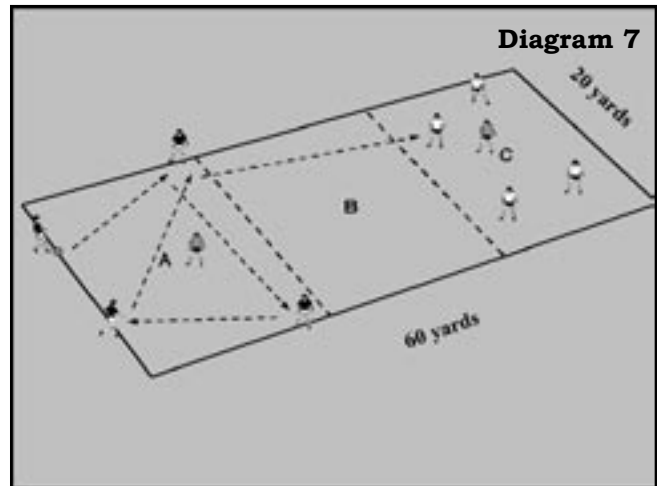
Using the penalty area, three players and a goalkeeper defend the goal from a three-man attack. Three free players, all playing one-touch, are placed around the outside of the area. When defenders have possession of the ball, they play keepaway with the goalkeeper against the three attackers. When the attackers gain possession, they must look to score as quickly as possible, having the facility to use the free players if they so wish.

Note

Players on the outside can exchange positions with those on the inside, but cannot join without a player on the inside covering their position.

Three Zone Game

In a 4 v 1 situation, the dark team has to put four passes together before passing the ball (across three grids) to the white team to do the same.



Two Zone Game

The team in possession has to make a minimum of three passes in the grid before they can play to the free player on the far side of the second grid. They can score again by repeating the feat and returning to the grid, following a pass to the 'new' free player.

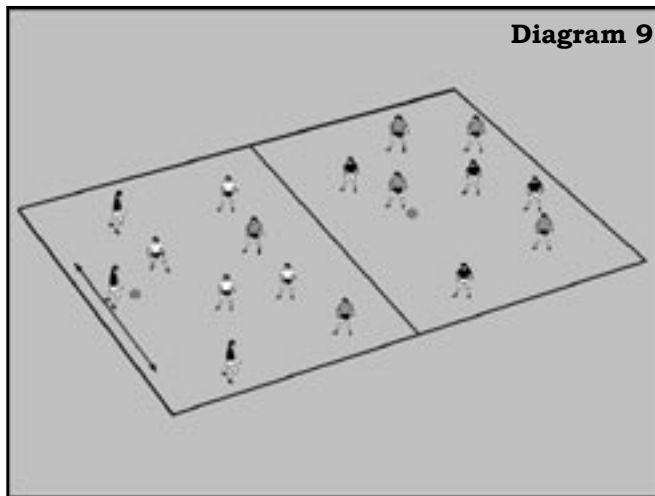
The wide players outside the area support the team in possession with one-touch passes.

Objectives

- Movement and support
- Creating opportunities for forward passes under pressure
- Playing at a high tempo

All players finish the session with six sprints, a warm down jog and some stretching.

Ajax



Day Three

The warm-up is the same as the previous days. Then starting a simple crossing drill, the players work on their one-touch finishing. The players then undertake a 4 v 4 'marking game', with two games going on at the same time in two grids. The objective is to get the ball from one end of the grid to the other. Every player is assigned a player to mark from the opposing team and should 'your' player score, then you are expected to perform that number of sprints at the end of the session.

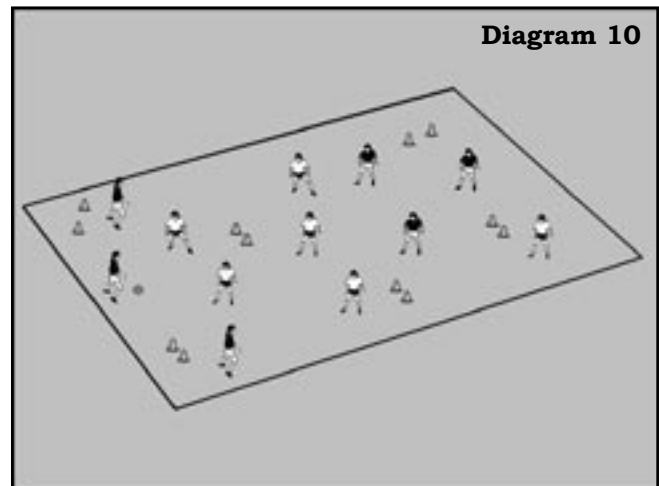
Progression

The practice moves from a 4 v 4 situation to an 8 v 8 situation with goalkeepers, then back to a simple 4 v 4 situation with two free players helping the team in possession, playing in two zones/grids. The objective again is to get the ball from one end of the grid to another. This time, only three players not on the team in possession can move into the opponent's zone, thus creating a 6 v 3 situation.

The practice ends with a game of 9 v 10 with goalkeepers on half a pitch. The defending nine players have to play the ball out of defense and ultimately get the ball into the hands of the goalkeeper on the halfway line.

Day Four

Following the same warm-up as previous days, the players split into two groups of 11 and play shadow play lining up 3-3-1-3.



After the warm-up the players split into two new groups. Group one has seven players around a 10-yard square area with one player in the middle. To begin with, the players play passes into the middle player who returns passes to the next player in a clockwise rotation. As a progression, two players are added to the middle and the practice turns into a 6 v 2 situation. In group two (see diagram above), players play a 6 v 6 game with six small coned goals. The objective of the game is for the team in possession to string 15 passes together then try to score as many times as possible by passing through the small goals. The drill lasts 20 minutes, then the players warm down and stretch.

In the afternoon, the players return for a light session. Splitting into three groups of eight, performing different skills and rotating groups every 10 minutes, the players play head tennis, a 4 v 4 small-sided game and a 4 v 4 game with two goals in the penalty area where players could score in either goal. A warm down jog and stretch ends the week.