

BRENTFORD
Andy Scott
Adopting a high back four

Overview:

This session is about defending as a group or unit. It looks at the relationships between players and teaches them how to use recovery moves to maximum advantage.

Recovering quickly and early lays the foundation for a sound defensive platform, something upon which all successful sides are built. At Brentford, we will work on this session on a weekly basis in order to maintain good habits.

“The ability to work as a group and as a tight unit is essential in countering the attacking threat.”

ADOPTING A HIGH BACK FOUR: MAIN SESSION

SETUP

AREA

Half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Ball, goal

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

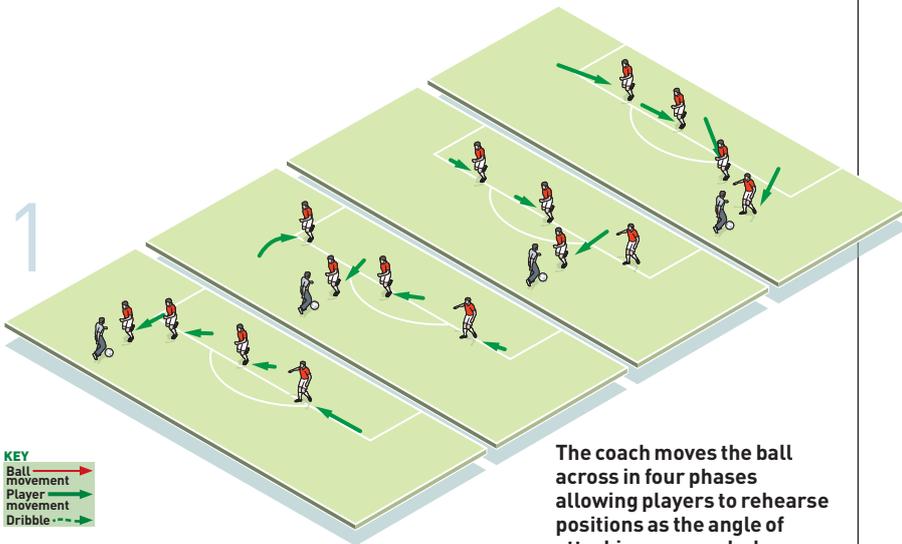
Up to 15 outfield players, 1 goalkeeper

What do I get the players to do?

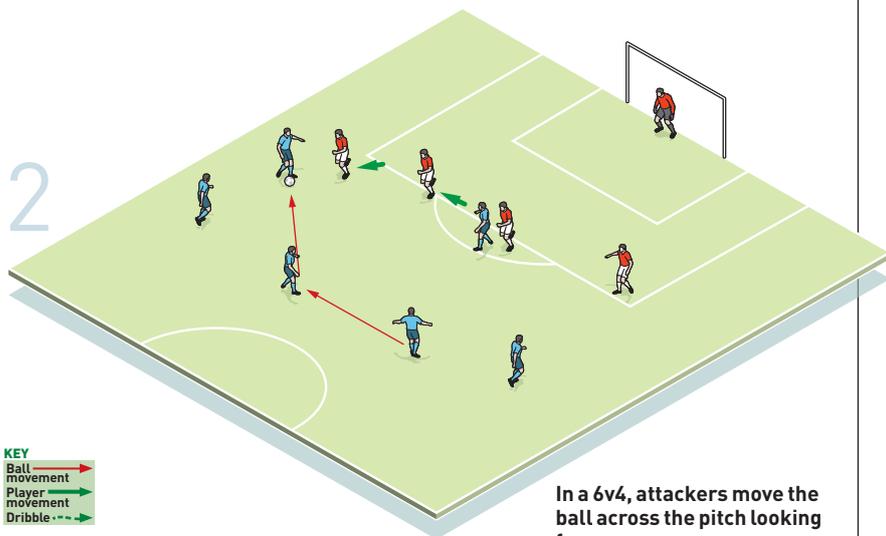
First, we line the players up in a flat back four, with no opposition. The coach moves the ball around in front of the defence in order to ensure players adapt their position depending on where the ball is.

If the ball is on the right wing, the left-back presses and the three other defenders move across to cover, up to a point where the right-back adopts the right centre-half's position. If the ball is switched to the other side, the roles reverse, so the left-back comes as far across as the left centre-half's position.

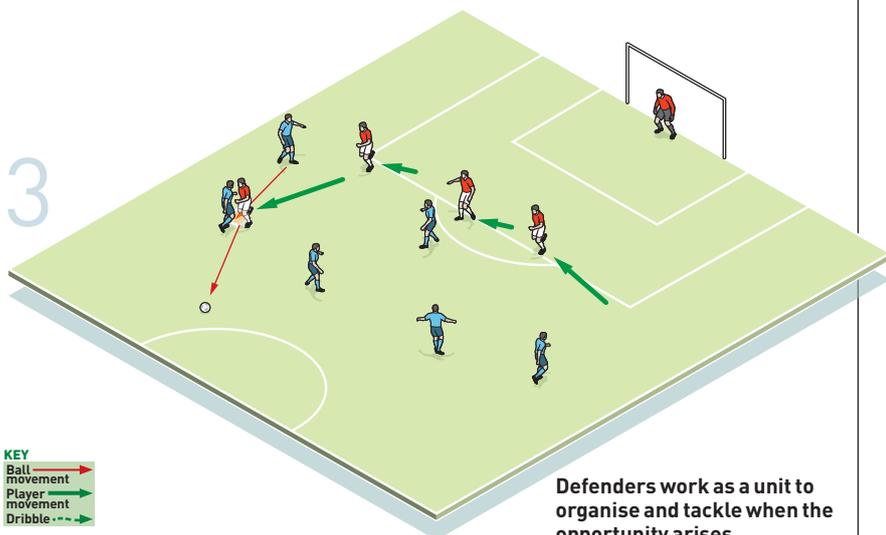
With this rehearsed defensive structure, we progress to opposed play, using a 6v4 set-up. Here, two forwards, two wingers and two midfielders attack the back four and attempt to score in the goal. Midfielders are encouraged to constantly switch play to ensure defenders can act on the principles learnt in the initial phase. If a goal is scored, an attack intercepted, or the ball goes dead, the attacking team restarts play near the halfway line.



The coach moves the ball across in four phases allowing players to rehearse positions as the angle of attacking approach changes.



In a 6v4, attackers move the ball across the pitch looking for space.



Defenders work as a unit to organise and tackle when the opportunity arises.



Andy Scott

BRENTFORD

Andy Scott is regarded as one of the game's most promising young managers. After climbing into the hotseat at Brentford in January 2008 - having previously filled the roles of assistant manager and caretaker manager - Scott turned around the west London club's fortunes, leading them to the League Two title in 2008/09. And last season Brentford confounded the pundits to finish in a very respectable ninth-place in League One. That his Brentford players are renowned for displaying such battling spirit is little surprise given how Scott had to rebuild a life in football after his playing days were abruptly ended while at Leyton Orient in 2004. The then 31-year-old was diagnosed with a rare genetic disorder which restricts blood flow due to a thickening of heart muscles. Previous to that, the Epsom-born striker had played for Sutton United, Sheffield United, Bury and Oxford United. Andy recently attributed his npower League One Manager of the Month Award for October to the club's fine defensive displays over the month, which saw them lose only one of seven matches.

ADOPTING A HIGH BACK FOUR: PROGRESSION

What are the key things to look for technically/tactically?

Positioning and the back four working in unison high up the pitch are the most important parts of this session. The ability to work as a group and as a tight unit is essential in countering the attacking threat. Defenders should be looking all the time to dispossess and make interceptions, whilst also influencing their opponents' movements by directing attackers towards the flanks or away from areas where fellow defenders are caught out of position.

How do I progress the session?

Progress this to a 6v6 game scenario, adding two defensive midfielders. Also add a three man 20-yard target zone in front of the halfway line. If defenders win possession, their job is to find any target player. If the ball reaches one, that player then becomes an attacker, restarting towards goal in what is now a 7v5 situation. If a pass to the target zone is intercepted, quick reorganisation of the defensive line is called for. When the ball goes dead, the coach reserves. Play for 5-6 minutes, switching teams around when time elapses. This game can be progressed to 11v11.

