

PORTSMOUTH

Michael Appleton Counter-attack team shape in a 4-4-1-1

Overview:

In modern football, it's becoming rarer for teams to play with two out-and-out strikers. Instead, they line up in a 4-4-1-1 formation, so this session helps quick counter-attacking play with a variety of combinations involving all team members. It's a high intensity session that tests both forwards and defenders.

It's important to practise this because there will be several occasions in every game, both home and away, when counter-attacking produces quick, tangible rewards. As a squad, practising overlaps, blindside runs, running and passing forward, one-twos and 1v1 situations is essential, and that's what this session does.

COUNTER-ATTACK TEAM SHAPE IN A 4-4-1-1

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch plus 10 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

20

SESSION TIME

20mins per practice

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

As you would expect, good communication is at the heart of the moves we practise. It's essential that players know when their team mates will pass, dribble or turn.

Positive forward running and forward passing, and the presenting of options for the man on the ball is also essential.

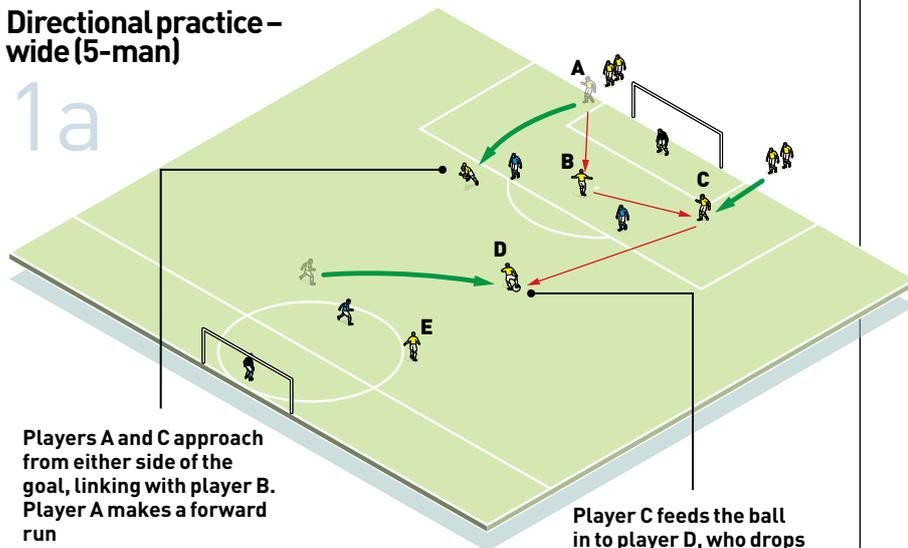
Passes should be well placed and quick, at both one- and two-touch, with particular attention paid to the timing of the striker running into the hole, creating time and space for himself. The types of runs are important too – overlaps and blindside runs particularly.

What do I get the players to do?

As shown in the annotated diagrams, we conduct three different counter-attacking moves, with different numbers of players involved. There are five for a wide directional practice (1a/1b), seven for the same practice through the middle (2a/2b), and nine for a two-

Directional practice – wide (5-man)

1a

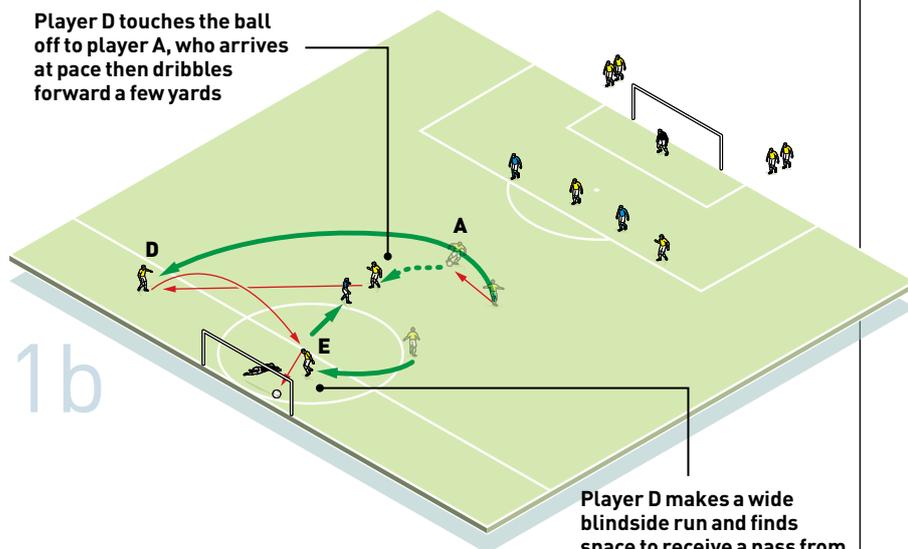


Players A and C approach from either side of the goal, linking with player B. Player A makes a forward run

Player C feeds the ball in to player D, who drops deep to receive

Player D touches the ball off to player A, who arrives at pace then dribbles forward a few yards

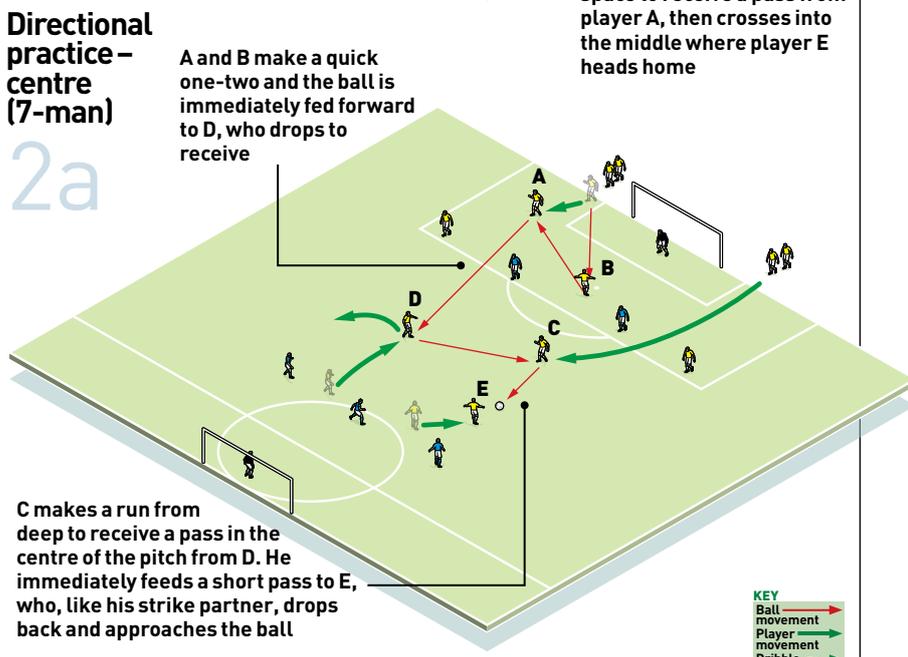
1b



Player D makes a wide blindside run and finds space to receive a pass from player A, then crosses into the middle where player E heads home

Directional practice – centre (7-man)

2a



A and B make a quick one-two and the ball is immediately fed forward to D, who drops to receive

C makes a run from deep to receive a pass in the centre of the pitch from D. He immediately feeds a short pass to E, who, like his strike partner, drops back and approaches the ball

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble →

“This is a high intensity session that tests both forwards and defenders.”



Michael Appleton
PORTSMOUTH

In his first managerial appointment, Appleton has steadied the ship - on the pitch at least - during a turbulent time for Portsmouth.

Against a backdrop of financial unrest and a points deduction, Appleton has got the south coast club playing a brand of smooth, passing football, and one that almost preserved Pompey their npower Championship status.

The 36-year-old had previously operated as caretaker manager at West Bromwich Albion, while a playing career saw him feature for Manchester United, Lincoln City, Grimsby Town, Preston North End and West Brom.

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COUNTER-ATTACK TEAM SHAPE IN A 4-4-1-1

way exercise (3a/3b). Each practice uses the notion of the lone striker.

In the first two moves, at the end of each attack (whether that ends in a goal, a save, a shot that goes wide or a tackle) play now comes back in the opposite direction. The third move is set up as a game and should flow as such.

Each move showcases one particular example of the type of interplay that can occur, but we will look for many different variations and passing moves, with players linking up positively and instinctively. The more variations players can practise, the more quickly and positively they will be able to combat different defensive obstacles.

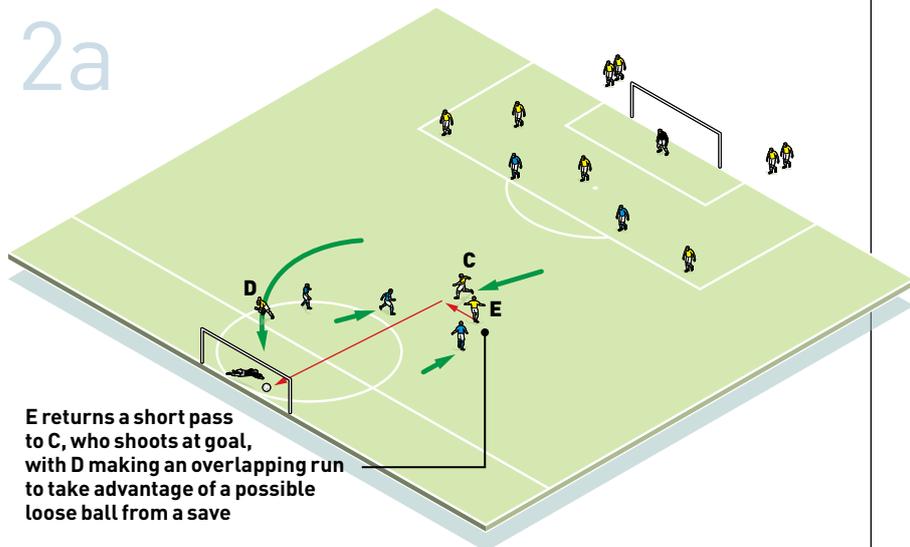
How do I progress the session?

We can progress the session by adding more defenders, or by putting pressure on the forward with a time limit of 10-12 seconds to get a goal attempt in.

How do I put this into a game situation?

Once we've run through the three set practices, we'll conclude with an 11v11 game on a full pitch with normal rules. Players must use the techniques learnt in the main part of the session. ■

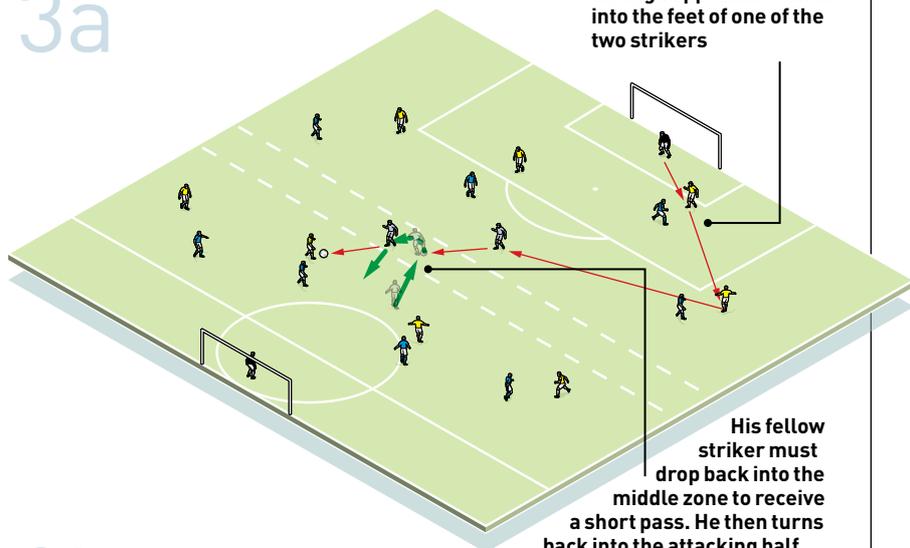
2a



E returns a short pass to C, who shoots at goal, with D making an overlapping run to take advantage of a possible loose ball from a save

Two-way overload (9-man)

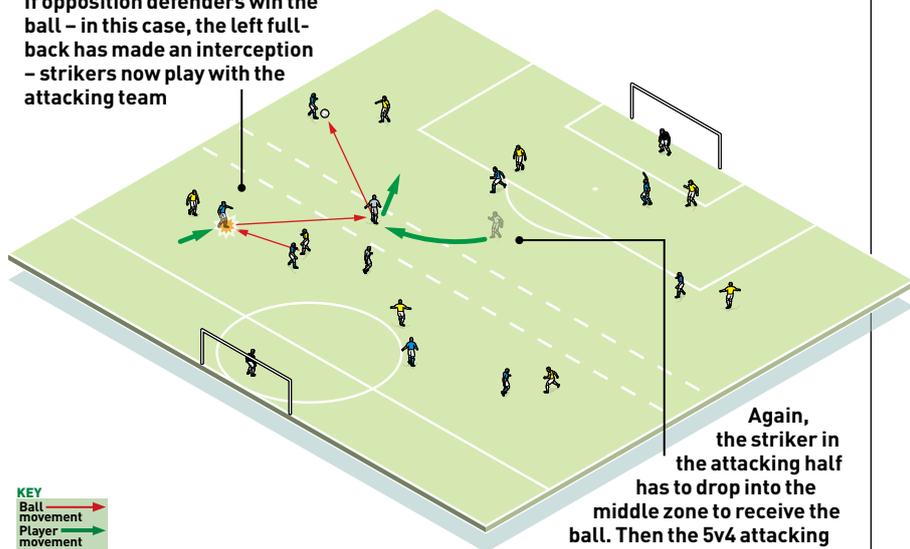
3a



The keeper and defenders combine to send a pass through opposition ranks into the feet of one of the two strikers

His fellow striker must drop back into the middle zone to receive a short pass. He then turns back into the attacking half, combining with team mates in a 5v4 overload

3b



If opposition defenders win the ball - in this case, the left full-back has made an interception - strikers now play with the attacking team

Again, the striker in the attacking half has to drop into the middle zone to receive the ball. Then the 5v4 attacking overload begins

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble →