

SOUTHAMPTON
Ronald Koeman
The power of positioning

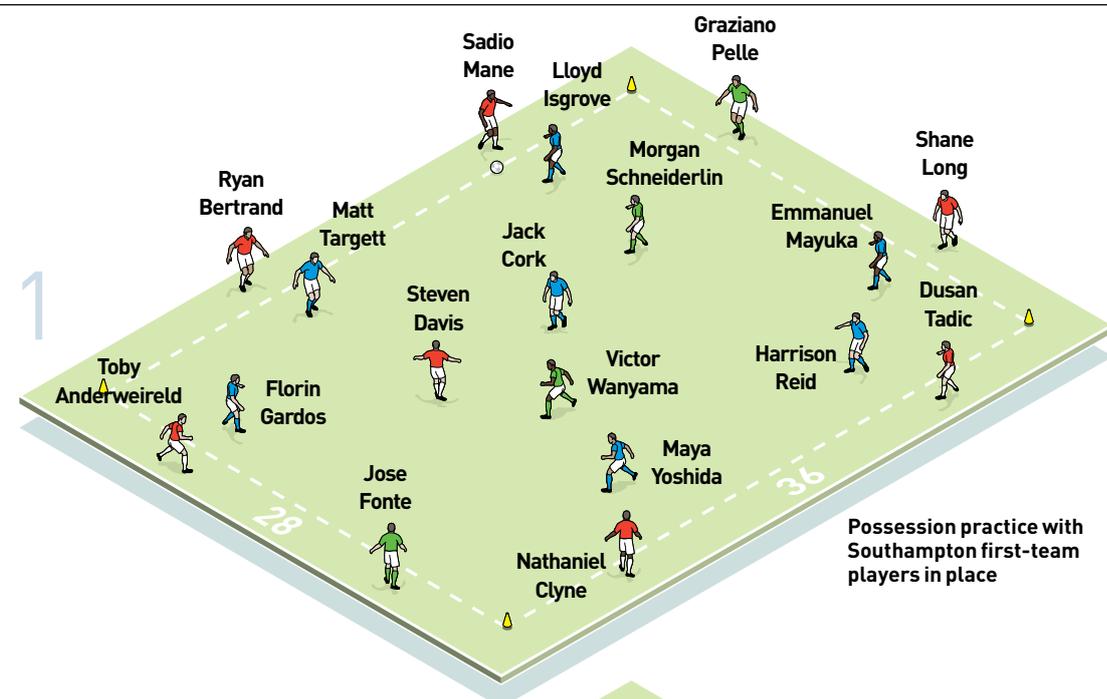
Overview:

In every game, we aim to be dominant in terms of good possession and good movement. So, this session is about players adopting learned and thought-out positions involved in transitions between defence and attack.

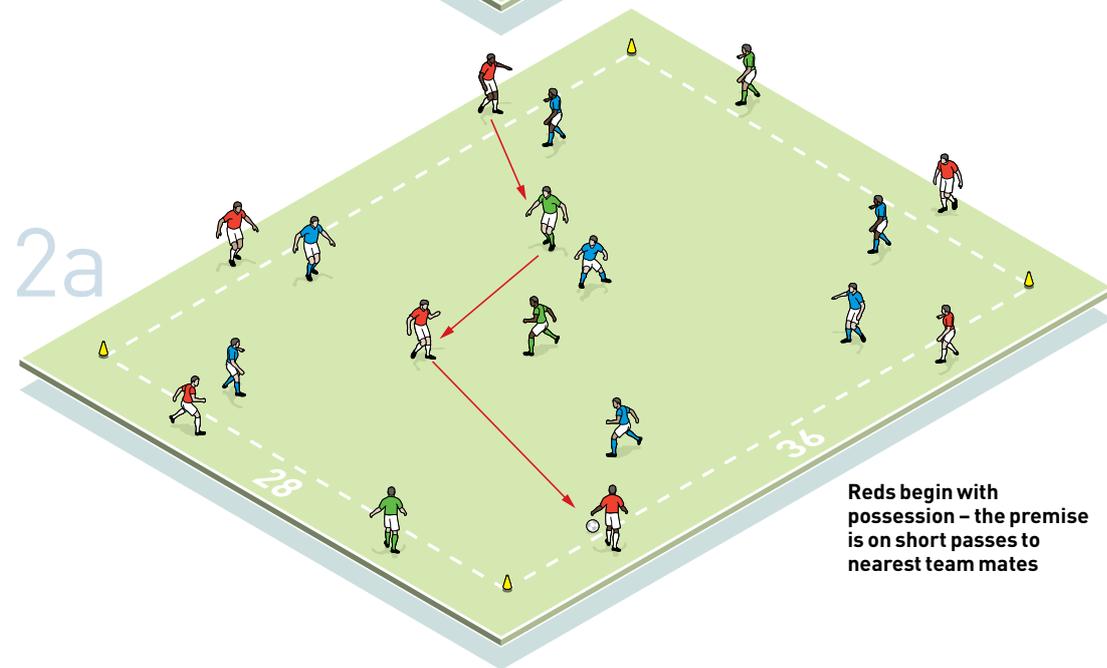
This is actually one of the easiest principles to coach - it doesn't require complex instruction, just players being willing to 'know a role before playing it'. For that to be effective we must reinforce a message to the player at all times regarding his understanding of what it is he does, both when in and out of possession.

That knowledge fits in with our coaches' principles and the overall philosophy of the football club to produce, we hope, a group of intelligent, resourceful footballers, who can anticipate situations quicker and react more efficiently than their opponents. And this all starts with short passing into the feet of the man next to you. What could be simpler?

THE POWER OF POSITIONING



Possession practice with Southampton first-team players in place



Reds begin with possession - the premise is on short passes to nearest team mates

SET-UP
AREA 36x28 yards
EQUIPMENT Balls, cones
NUMBER OF PLAYERS 18
SESSION TIME 3x6 minutes

What do I get the players to do?

We set up as shown on a 36x28-yard area (1). The practice is 7v7 (reds versus blues) with four greens who work with the team in possession. The players involved in the 7v7 are chosen in relation to their positions on match day - for instance, the left centre-back and left-back will work together - as this

builds familiarity and confidence.

The red team starts with the ball. They must pass it around, using neutral green players in building a possession game that means players link and play close to one another (2a). This set-up and game play increases technical confidence and knowledge in terms of how team mates will prefer to receive

the ball (left- or right-footed; on the front or back foot; across the body or into feet), but more than that, it helps players create and see pictures in their heads, and this is the crucial point that we want to directly extend through into match day.

Of course, they will only be able to retain possession for a certain amount of time, and at the point where the ball is lost (2b),



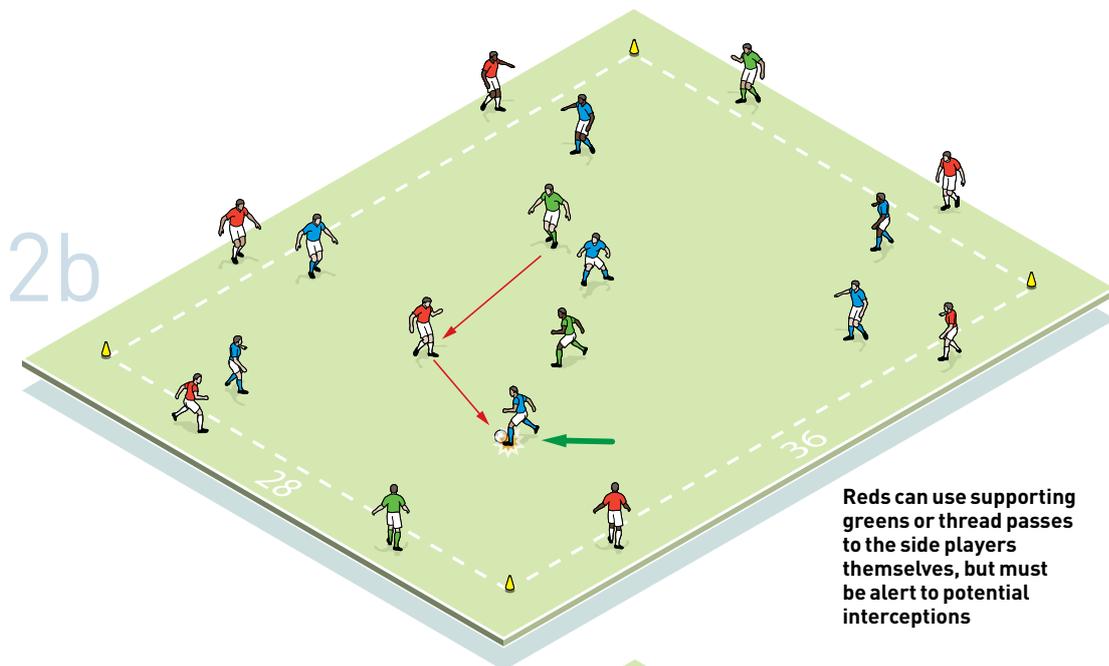
Ronald Koeman SOUTHAMPTON

Ronald Koeman is without doubt one of the coaching success stories of the Barclays Premier League so far this season.

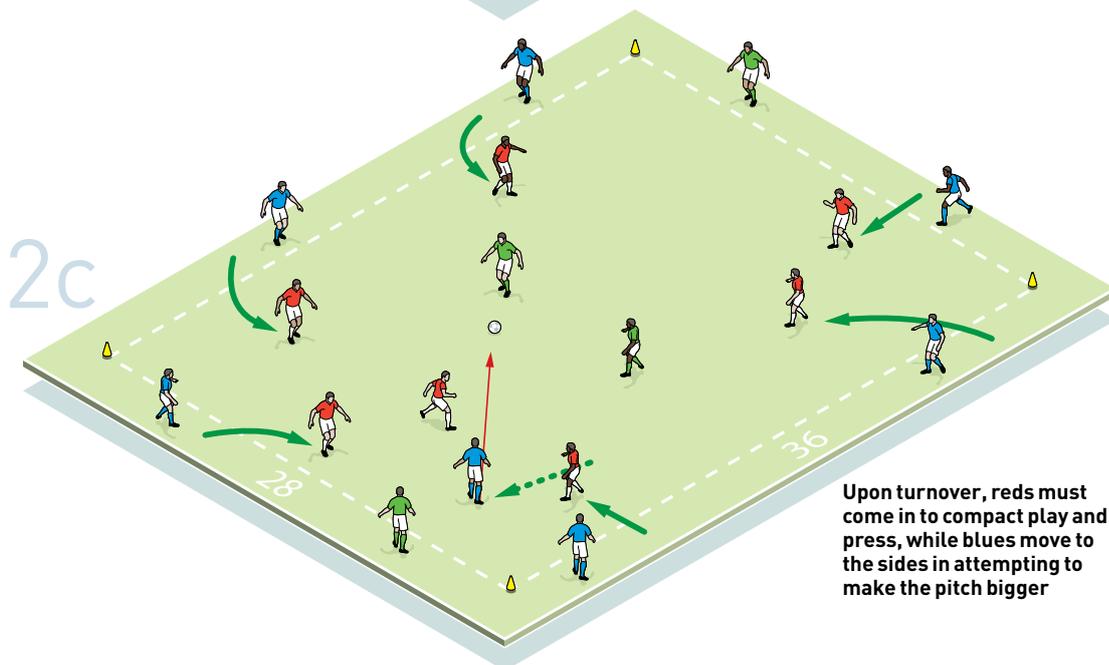
Despite his Southampton side losing a host of star names in the summer of 2014, the newly installed coach has taken his side to second in the table. Playing a brand of powerful, attack-minded possession football, his team's approach is reminiscent of Koeman as a holding midfielder/defender.

During a glittering playing career, at club level Koeman won two European Cups, five Dutch Championships, and four La Ligas. At international level he won the 1988 European Championships with the Netherlands. In 2000, Koeman took his first steps into management with Vitesse Arnhem. League title success followed as manager of Ajax and PSV. He has also managed Feyenoord, AZ and Valencia, and in June 2014 accepted the challenge of managing in the Barclays Premier League when joining Southampton.

THE POWER OF POSITIONING



Reds can use supporting greens or thread passes to the side players themselves, but must be alert to potential interceptions



Upon turnover, reds must come in to compact play and press, while blues move to the sides in attempting to make the pitch bigger

a quick transition occurs (2c). So with reds relinquishing control, there must be a fast reaction to defend, with players coming in from the touchlines to close the space and attempt to limit the threat as quickly as possible. Blues, who had previously taken up positions where they could tackle or intercept, now flood to the outside in providing

options for their own possession exercise. We play for three sets of six minutes, then rotate players.

What are the key things to look out for?

For possession to be retained, players operating on the outside must have a good touch, excellent awareness and a measured body shape. Players inside

pressing the ball must close down quickly, attempting to predict and block passing angles using compact play. When possession is turned over, the first thought must be to make the pitch big.

Both teams need fast reactions in winning the ball, changing philosophy from 'compact' to 'big' whilst retaining concentration and clarity of thought.

How do I put this into a game situation?

To put this into a game we reduce pitch size to 32x25 yards. We limit greens to playing two-touch from the start, then gradually limit the number of touches for the teams playing 7v7, from all-in to two-touch to one-touch, if possible. ■