

## BURY

# Richie Barker Pre-season practice

## Overview:

This session is perfect as a pre-season practice because it gets players working on fitness and technique, the two elements that deteriorate quickest during time away from the training pitch.

At the centre of my coaching ethos is the idea that players have as many touches of the ball as possible. During my time managing the youth-team at Bury, the aim was for every player to touch the ball 1,000 times in each training session. This built confidence and made players more relaxed.

And combined with conditioning drills, this is a session that will help our players hit the ground running for the new campaign, although it can and should be replayed at regular points throughout the season.

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## PRE-SEASON PRACTICE: MAIN SESSION

### SET-UP

#### AREA

40x40 yards

#### EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

#### NUMBER OF PLAYERS

12

#### SESSION TIME

Session 45mins,  
game 30mins

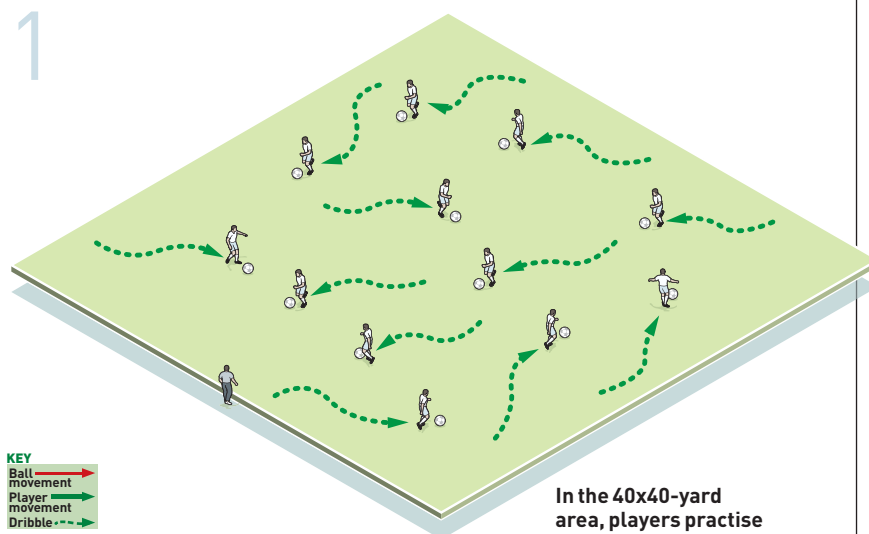
### What do I get the players to do?

We try to keep away from straight-line passing drills, so instead scatter 12 players in a 40x40-yard area. Each player has a ball which he dribbles around the area using game-like movements such as step-overs, side-steps and turns. (1)

After five minutes, we remove footballs from three players and turn this into a passing drill. No player has a specific partner, so each is encouraged to find a spare man, lay the ball, then look for the next pass. This is all about constant movement and the awareness needed to receive possession from different angles. After a further five minutes, we remove three more balls and continue. (2)

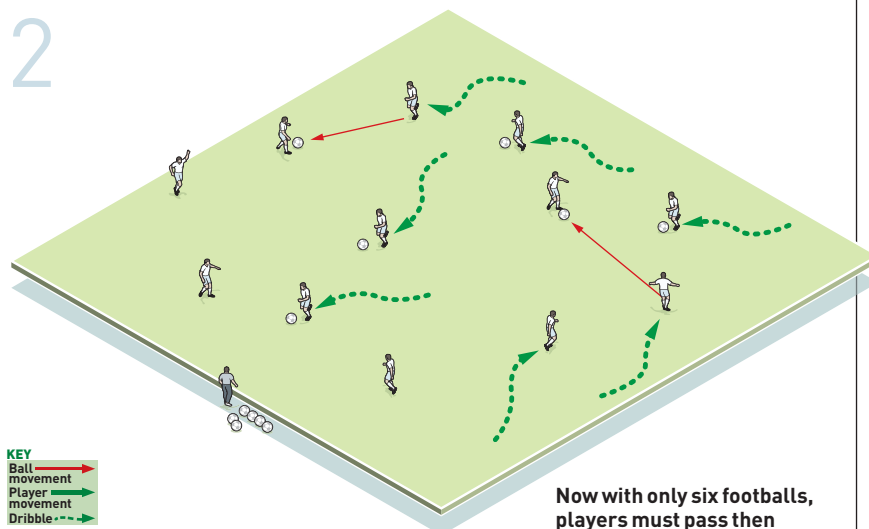
We then progress to ‘passing in between’ – sending passes to unmarked players by splitting two closer men. Each player must use his imagination, and requires the ability to slow the game in his head so as to spot and send the pass. As well as great for passing, this is excellent for rehearsing receiving the ball between opponents. (3) We’ll

1



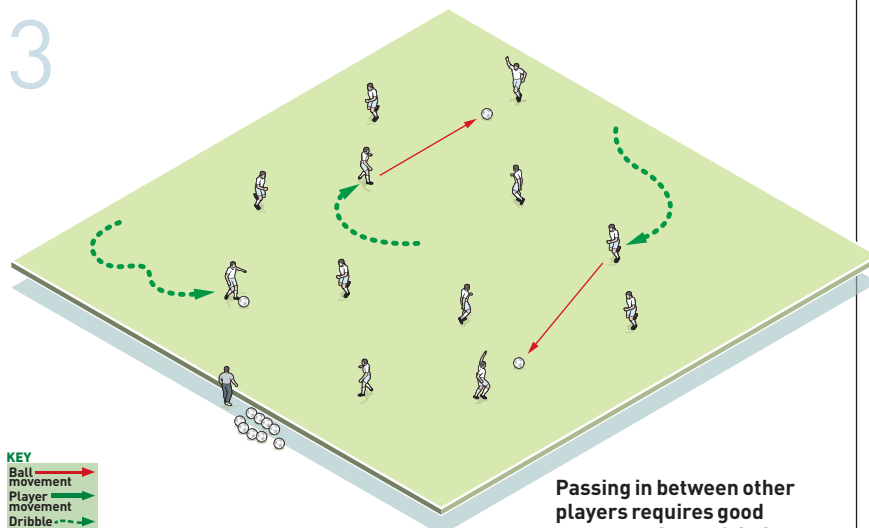
In the 40x40-yard area, players practise dribble and game-like movements

2



Now with only six footballs, players must pass then move on quickly

3



Passing in between other players requires good concentration and timing



## Richie Barker BURY

Richie Barker officially took charge at Bury in June 2011 having led the club to promotion from npower League Two as caretaker boss.

Barker, 36, climbed into the hotseat following Alan Knill's departure to Scunthorpe United, having previously been head of youth development.

And he stepped up to the challenge immediately, taking the Shakers on six-game unbeaten run which saw the Lancashire club climb from play-off contenders to automatic promotion certainties. They ended the campaign second behind champions Chesterfield.

As a player, Barker was a livewire striker, turning out for Rotherham United, Mansfield Town, Hartlepool United, Macclesfield Town and Brighton & Hove Albion, before being forced to retire from the game in May 2009 due to a serious knee injury.

"We're looking for positive decision making, intelligent movement, and players using game-like methods."

## PRE-SEASON PRACTICE

gradually extend the passing lengths, up to a maximum of 30 yards, and may remove another couple of balls, leaving just three or four in the area. (4)

### How do I progress the session?

As well as passing perfection, we're looking to enhance aerobic conditioning in this session. We do this by increasing pitch sizes, limiting player numbers and ensuring each man is constantly on the move.

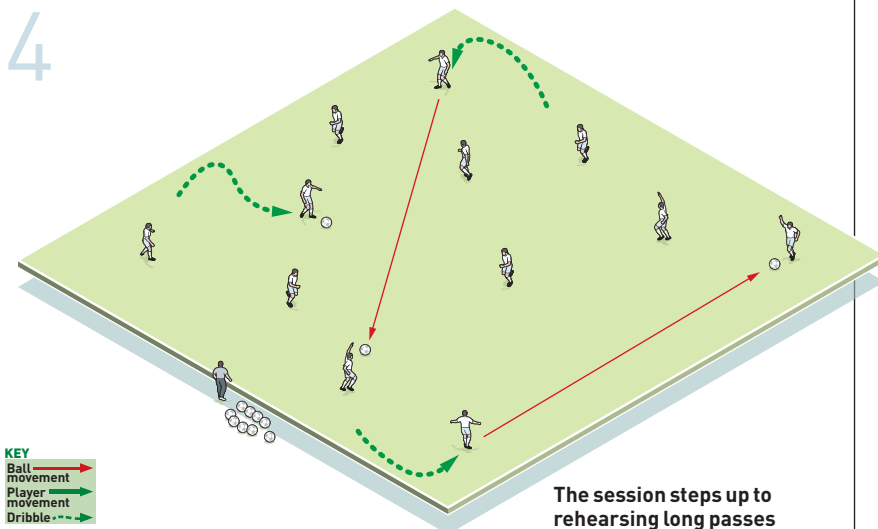
Progressing into a technical game, we play 6v6 in a 40x40-yard area. Using poles or cones, eight two-yard goals are scattered around the area. There are more goals than players per team, so attackers should be able to pass quickly into space to score. (5)

The final game is a simple 4v4 (plus two keepers), but played in a 50x25-yard area. This tests aerobic strength and fitness, along with practised elements of long passing and passing in between opponents from earlier in the session. (6)

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

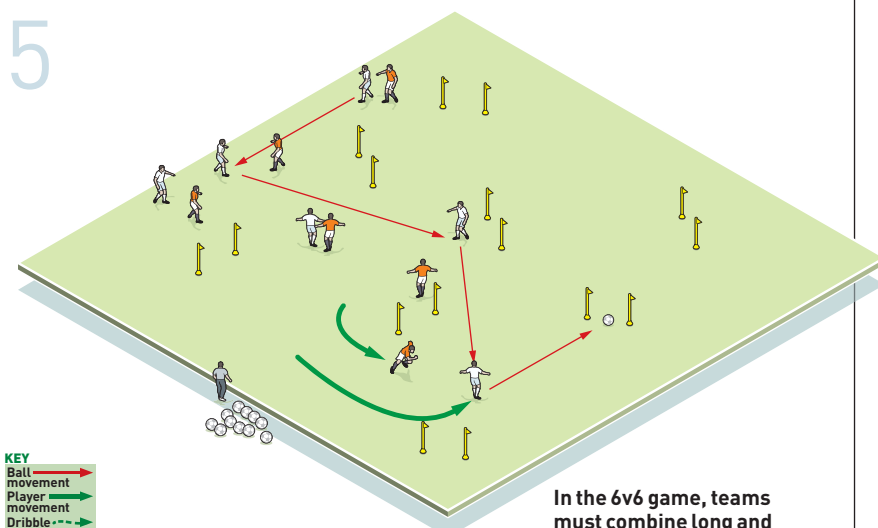
We're looking for positive decision making, intelligent movement and players using game-like methods. The ability of players to receive on the back foot and to be aware of all options around them is extremely important. ■

4



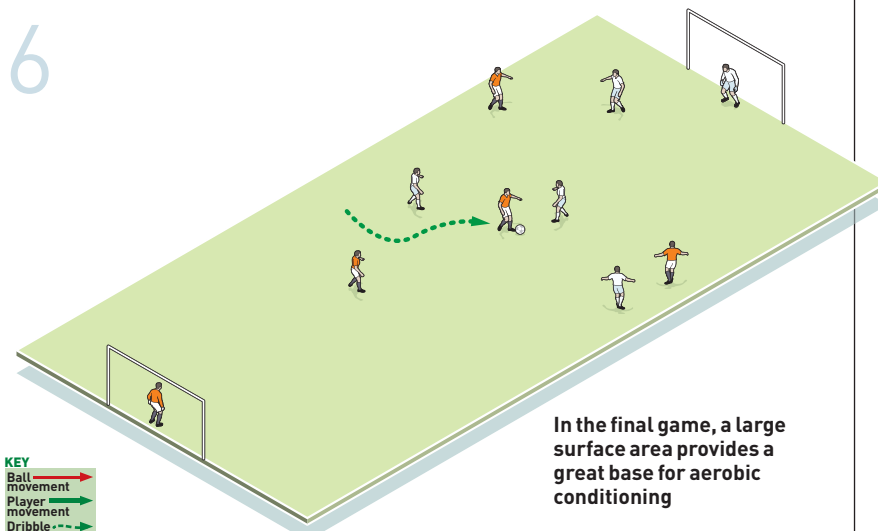
The session steps up to rehearsing long passes to a team mate

5



In the 6v6 game, teams must combine long and short passes to score

6



In the final game, a large surface area provides a great base for aerobic conditioning