

Developing specialists in 'Individual Possession'

Chris Summersell

What is 'individual possession'

'Individual' possession is the actions players perform in receiving, retaining and progressing the ball.

It must be effectively and intrinsically linked to the wider collective principles of possession.

Principles of individual possession include:

- Receiving the ball
- Protecting the ball
- Showing the ball
- Outplaying opponents

Having players all over the pitch skilled in individual possession means you have the basis for a team that can control & progress the ball, and is able to stay on the ball in all sorts of pressurised situations rather than 'getting rid'.

Characteristics of a specialist in individual possession

- Are comfortable in receiving the ball in small spaces
- Have a picture of what they are going to do with the ball before it arrives
- Can recognise where the pressure is (in front, behind, from the side...)
- Have 'solutions' rather than just 'moves'
- Use their body well to hide/protect the ball
- Know when they can show the ball to draw and outplay pressure
- Can use both feet
- Are unpredictable in their play
- Are confident, fearless and trust themselves
- Have excellent balance, change of direction and key physical characteristics / range of movement skills

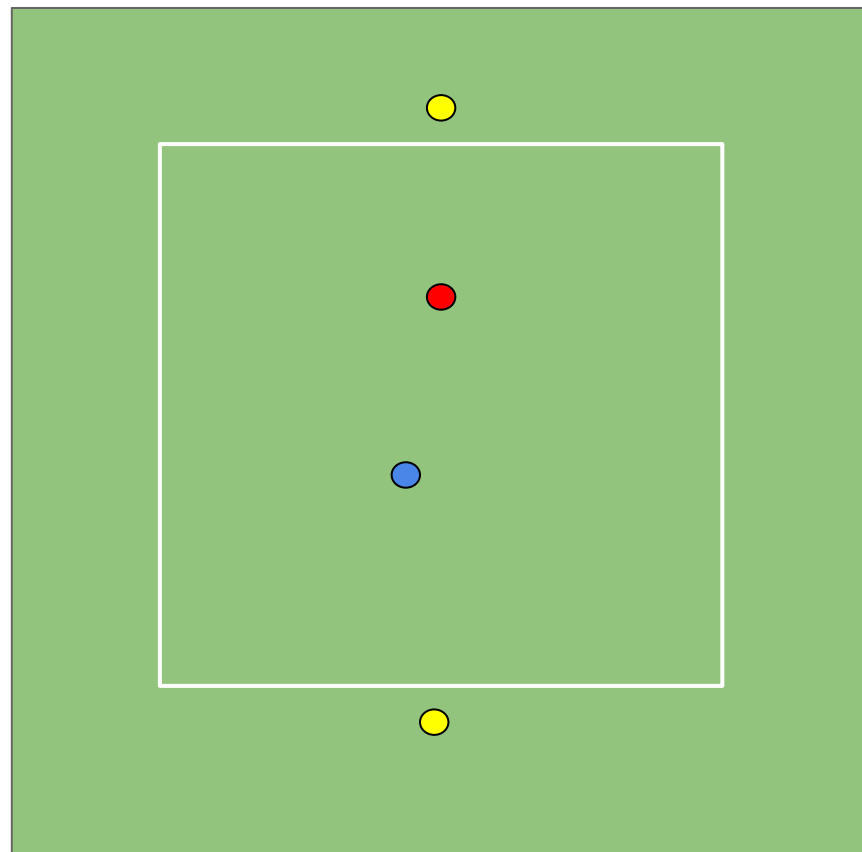
Core practices

The following practices work on principles of individual possession and can be used at the very earliest stages of player development

*These are just guides and coaches should make each practice their own. Coaching points are not included in each practice idea as individual coaches should derive their own from each practice and what they are looking for from their players taking into account their age and ability.

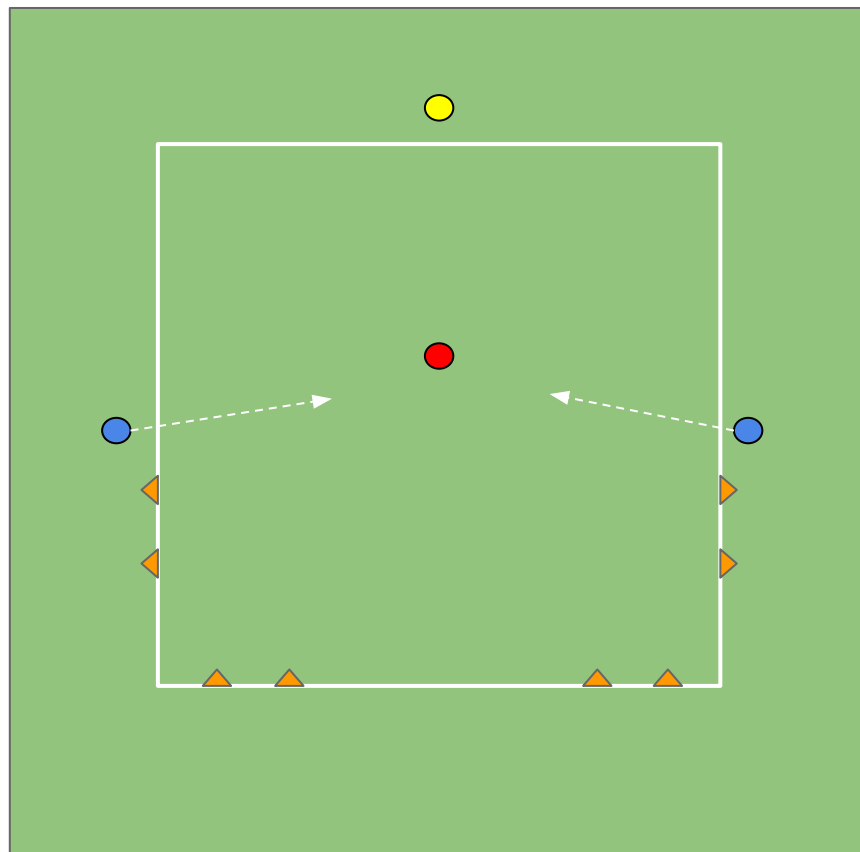
1v1 (+2)

- Simple setup - ball starts with yellow who play in to blue, and they have to receive and play forward to opposite yellow
- If red wins the ball, they continue the practice until ball goes out of play where outside players swap with inside
- Utilise a variety of scoring systems to enhance competition
- This is excellent at working on players receiving the ball with pressure behind them, protecting the ball & finding a way forward



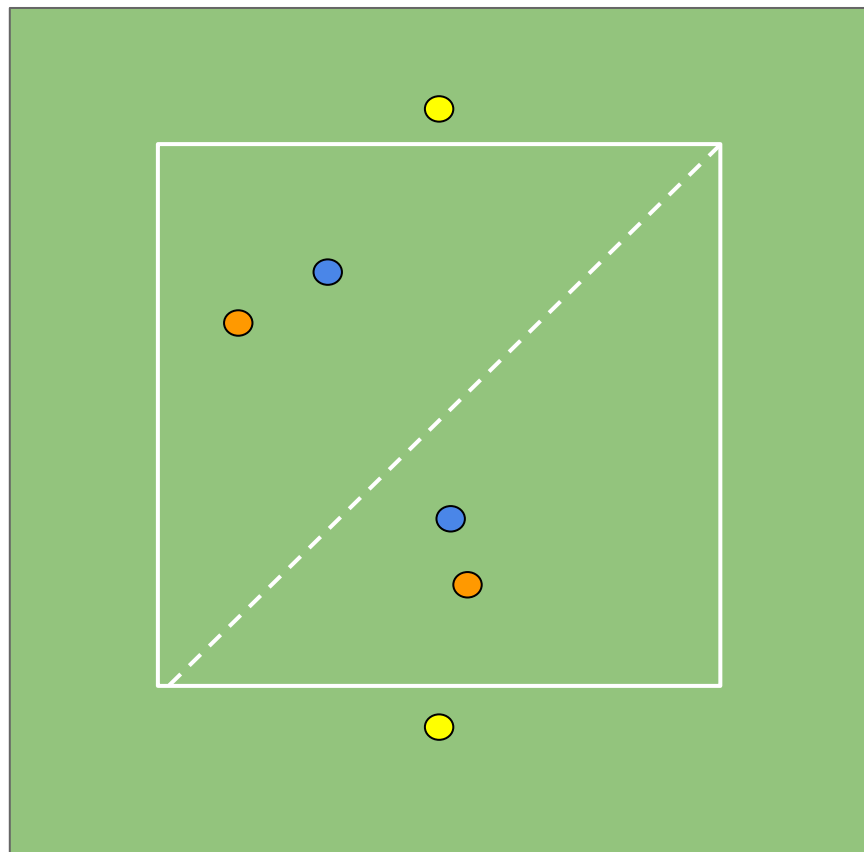
1v2

- Ball starts with yellow who plays in to red as the 2 blues join the square to press. Red has to score through either gate
- If blue wins the ball, they can combine to pass the ball into yellow
- This is excellent at working on players receiving the ball with pressure behind them with a covering defender
- Focus on protecting the ball, twisting & turning to evade and outplay pressure & find a way forward



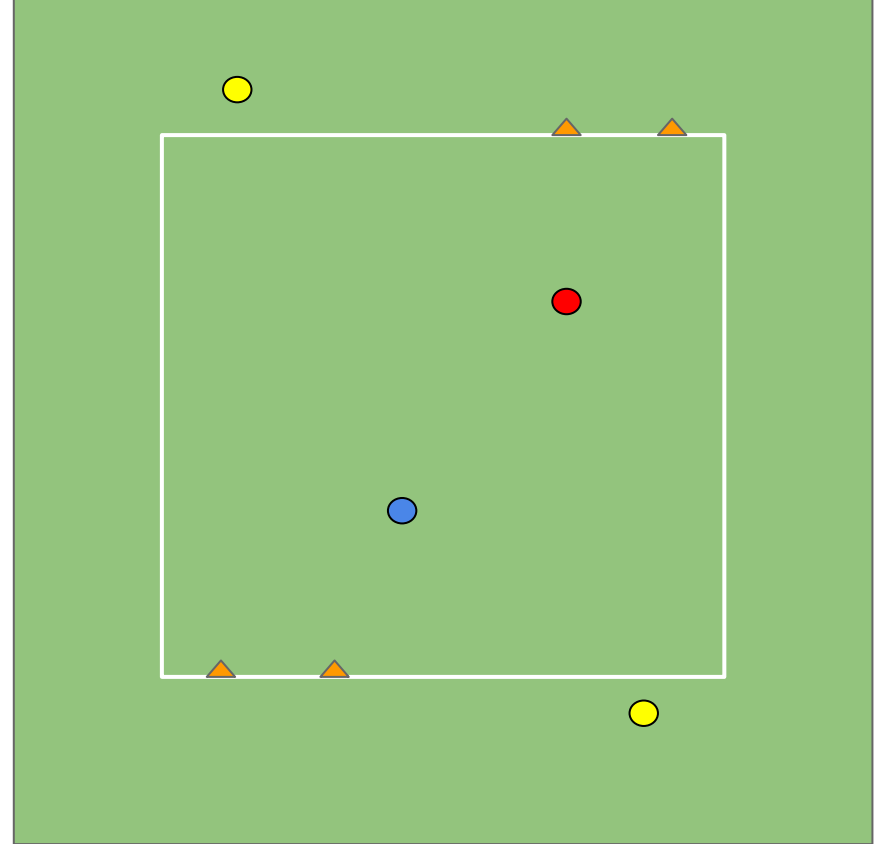
1v1 + 1v1 (+2)

- 1v1 + 1v1 with 2 bounce players - similar set up to previous practice except for a diagonal focus
- The aim of the zones is to encourage an implicit use of diagonal combinations and opposite movements
- This will also allow for diagonal receiving angles to test players individual receiving skills



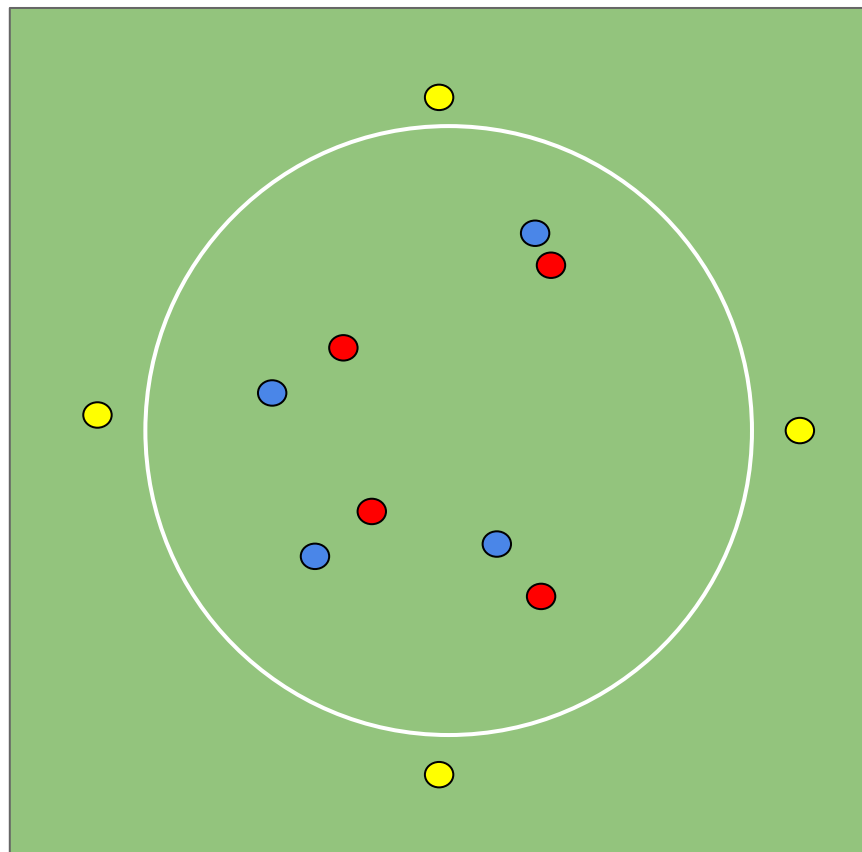
1v1 Diagonal goals

- Variation on standard 1v1 practice
- Ball starts with yellow who passes it in to red/blue to receive with defender in front
- Can use your bounce player at any time (alter position of yellows to change angle of receiving as a progression)
- 1 point for passing through gate, 2 for dribbling through



Inside out / Outside in

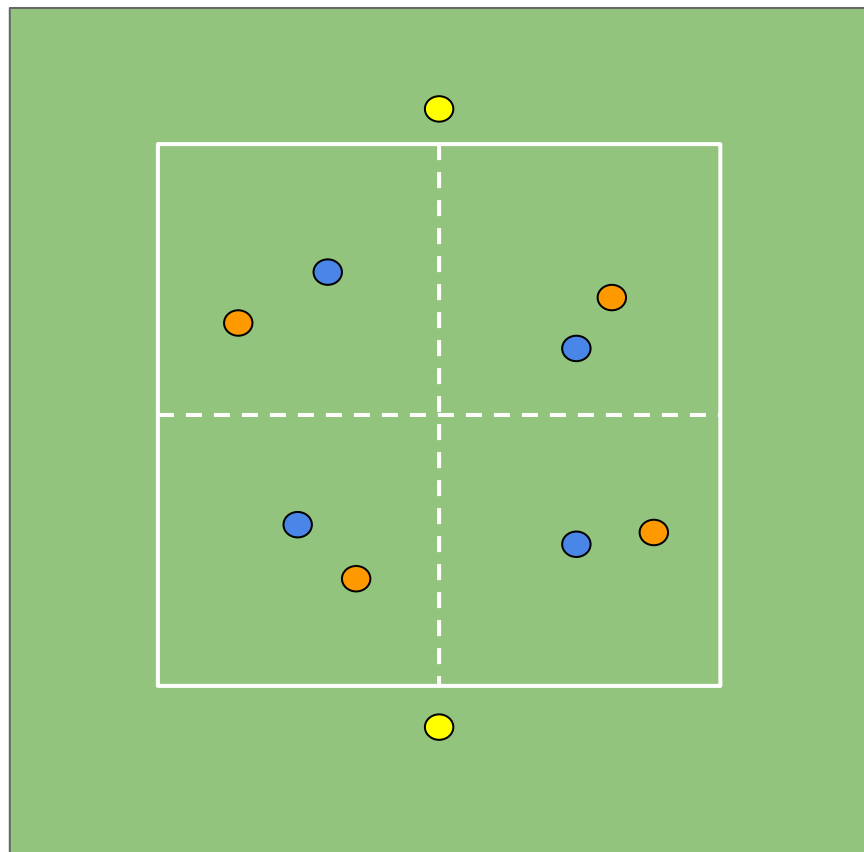
- Blues start with ball and a direct opponent (red) - if red wins ball they continue as player in possession
- Aim is to play 1v1 and retain ball, with a point awarded for successful combination with outside bounce players
- Progression 1 - ball starts with outside player, have to receive/retain and pass to another outside player
- Progression 2 - Players do not have direct 1v1 opponents (this creates different types of pressure scenarios - 1v2 etc)



Small Sided Game

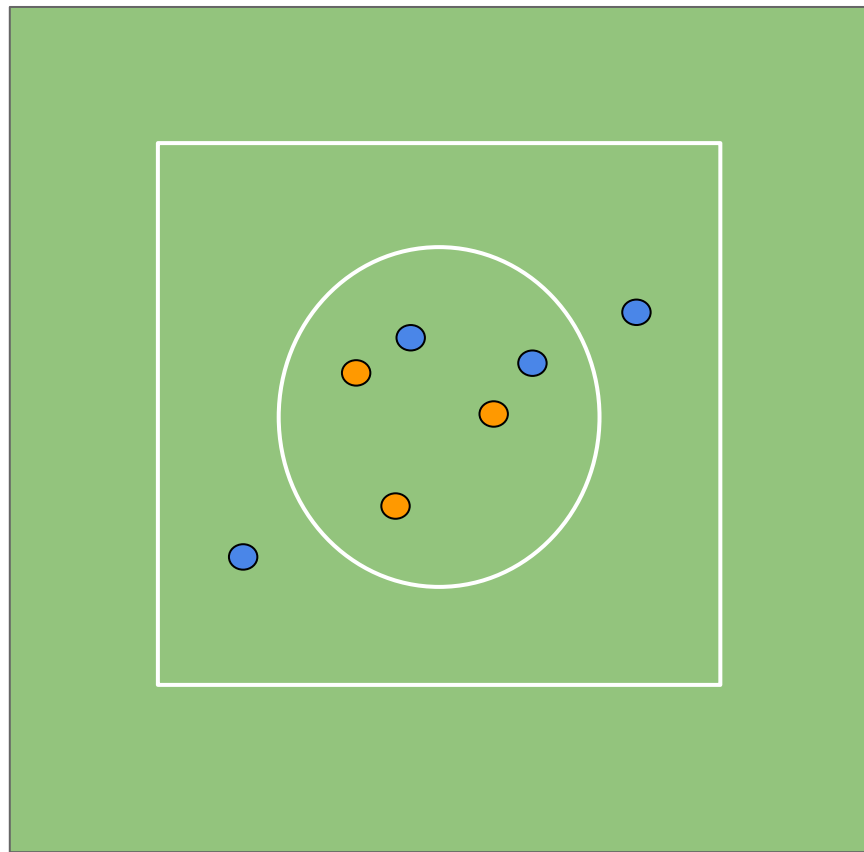
4x 1v1

- 4v4 (+2 bounce players)
- All players locked into zones
- Points are scored by progressing ball from yellow bounce player to opposite bounce player
- Add in goals as progression



The gauntlet

- Each blue player has a ball and starts inside square
- Oranges are defenders (important that players hold not wear bibs)
- Blues score a point every time they dribble through the circle successfully
- If orange wins the ball if they can counterattack and stop the ball outside the square they get a point and drop the bib and become the attacker. The player who lost the ball now becomes a defender.
- Players who may be strugglers can make use of the safe zone where they can manipulate the ball under no pressure - encourage them to try and dribble through and give them a challenge for success



Position/area specific practices

The following practices are specific to different areas of the pitch. Whilst these can be used with the youngest players, it is advised that they are able to experience the game in a variety of positions to enhance their game understanding and development.

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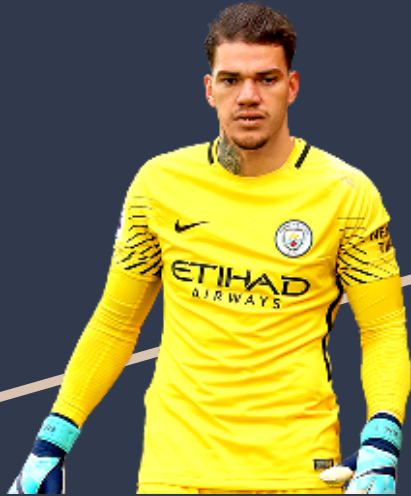
Specifying 'individual possession'

- By breaking down individual possession into the different positions/areas of the pitch, we can build up relevant pictures for our players to refer to come matchday
- Understanding what is required of players in each area of the field can help us profile players and design effective and realistic practices

Practice Design

- Does it allow for significant repetition?
- Is it realistic to the game?
- Does it reflect your style of play?
- Does it put players in situations that they will encounter in the game, relevant to each area of the pitch?
- Can you link the individual possession work to your wider collective principles?

Individual possession: Goalkeeper



Characteristics of a goalkeeper

- Can recognise the angle of pressure and use first touch to move the ball away from where the pressure is
- Can receive the ball comfortably & positively with both feet
- Can deal comfortably with pressure from the front & side
- Can occasionally outplay heavy pressure from an opponent

Ederson

Manchester City & Brazil

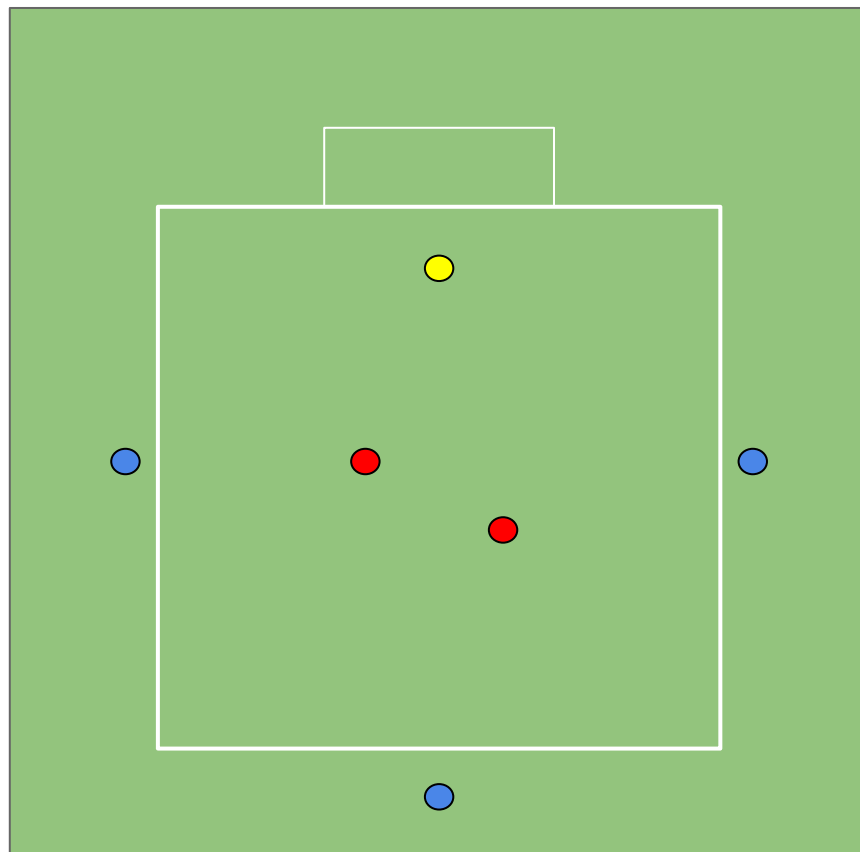
- Do you trust your goalkeeper to help the team retain and progress the ball in this way?
- How do you deal with mistakes, especially with young players?
- How do you link these individual principles with your collective game?



Practice for GKs

4v2 Rondo variation

- 4v2 inc goalkeeper - GK not fixed on line
- If reds recover they can combine and shoot (GK practice) & blues can counterpress (transition)
- 10 passes = 1 point, reds score = 1 point (change scoring rules to alter competition/risk & reward)



Central defender



- Can beat an opponent with their first touch
- Can recognise & deal with pressure applied from in front and to the side
- Can protect the ball and outplay opponents in situations where faced towards their own goal (often in corner of pitch)
- Can beat an opponent pressing from the side with disguise to drive into midfield
- Can use their body shape & movements before receiving and when on the ball to disorientate opponent

Gerard Pique

FC Barcelona & Spain

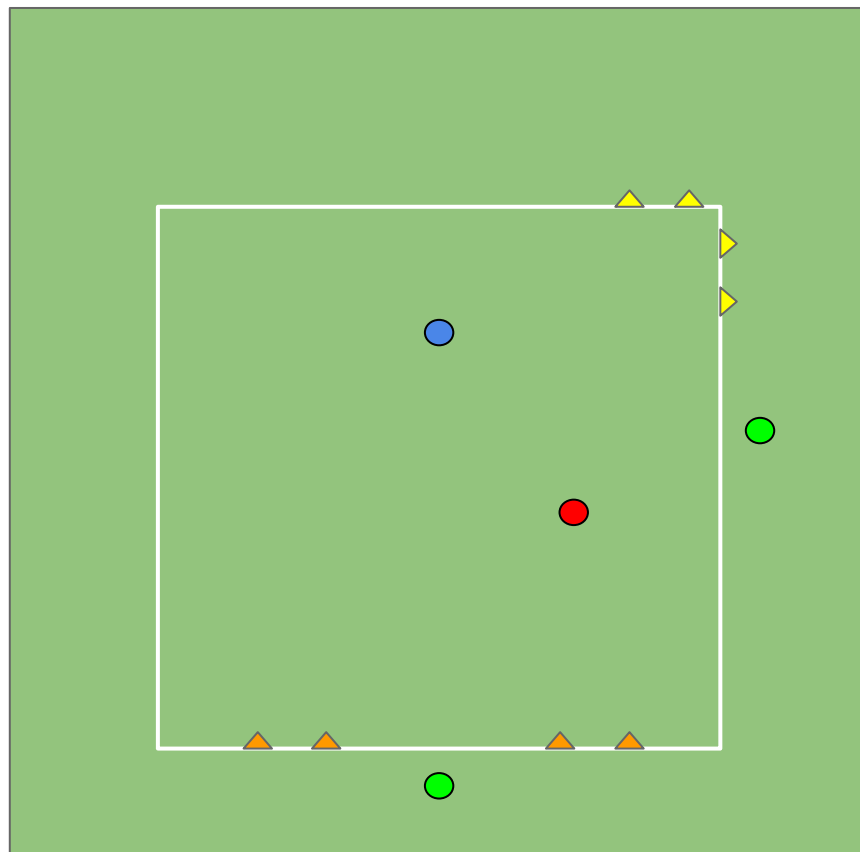
- How far do you trust your centre backs to stay on the ball and help your team retain and progress the ball?
- How do you manage mistakes?
- How do you manage the risk and reward?
- Think of the psychological aspects required to play in this manner
- Think about how you link these individual actions into your collective game



Practice for Central Defenders

1v1 (+2)

- Area reflects the side of the penalty area and usual receiving situations a Central defender would face
- Ball starts with either target player (green) who play into the blue - red encouraged to press as soon as ball moves.
- 1 point awarded for successful pass to green - 5 if they dribble through orange gates (if they dribble through gates, the green target player must move to an opposite position (collective principle))
- If red recovers ball, 10 points for counter-attacking through yellow gates (transition). 10 points increases competition and makes player think about risk/reward.



Full/Wing back



- Can play comfortably in 180° field of vision - trapped against touchline
- Can protect ball and outplay when trapped against touchline
- Can receive and retain with pressure applied from behind, in front and from the side
- Can beat an opponent with their first touch
- Have a variety of solutions to take on and beat opponents on outside and inside
- Can play effectively 'round the corner'

Marcelo

Real Madrid & Brazil

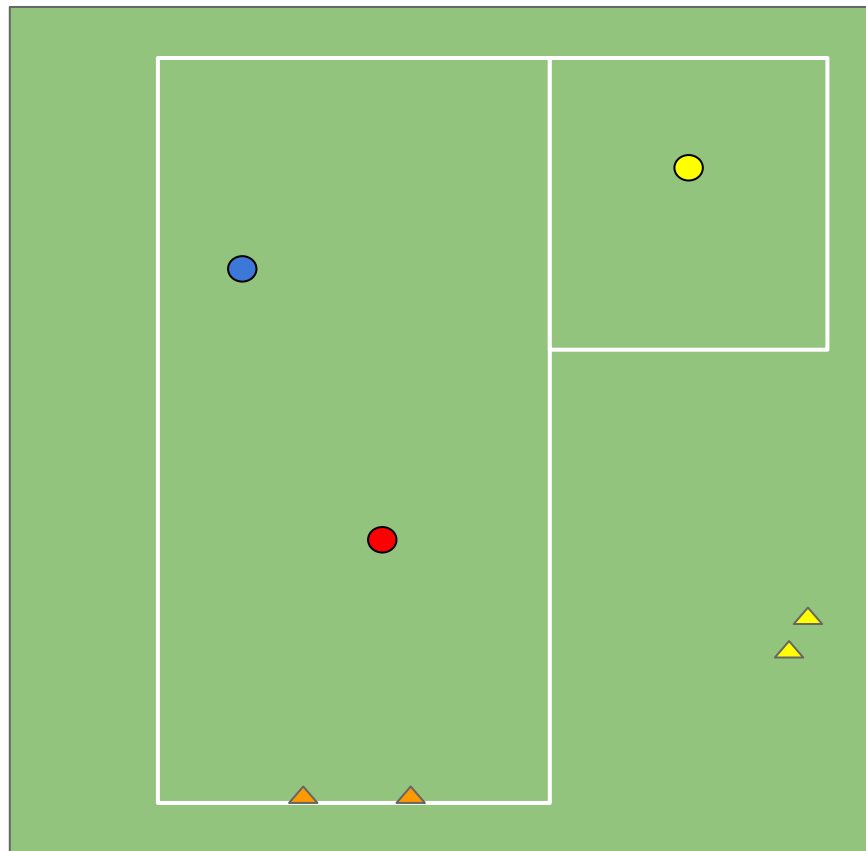
- How does this position differ from other positions - which areas of the field are FB/WBs expected to play in?
- Think of the unique physical demands of a FB/WB in the modern game
- How do you want to utilise your WB/FBs and what areas do you think are vital in developing individual possession of the ball?



Practice for full/ wingbacks

1v1 on the wing

- Simple practice where you are encouraging your FB/WB to encounter a variety of receiving scenarios they would face in a game
- Change receiving angle and positioning of both each repetition, and encourage red to press as soon as ball moves
- If red wins ball they get a point for either driving with ball to opposite endline or passing to yellow
- Ball starts with yellow player who plays into blue who can score a point by dribbling through end gate, or playing a driven pass on the ground between yellow cones (replicates passing inside to a central midfielder)
- Blue can bounce ball back to green (CB) but this does not gain a point



Holding midfielder (no6)

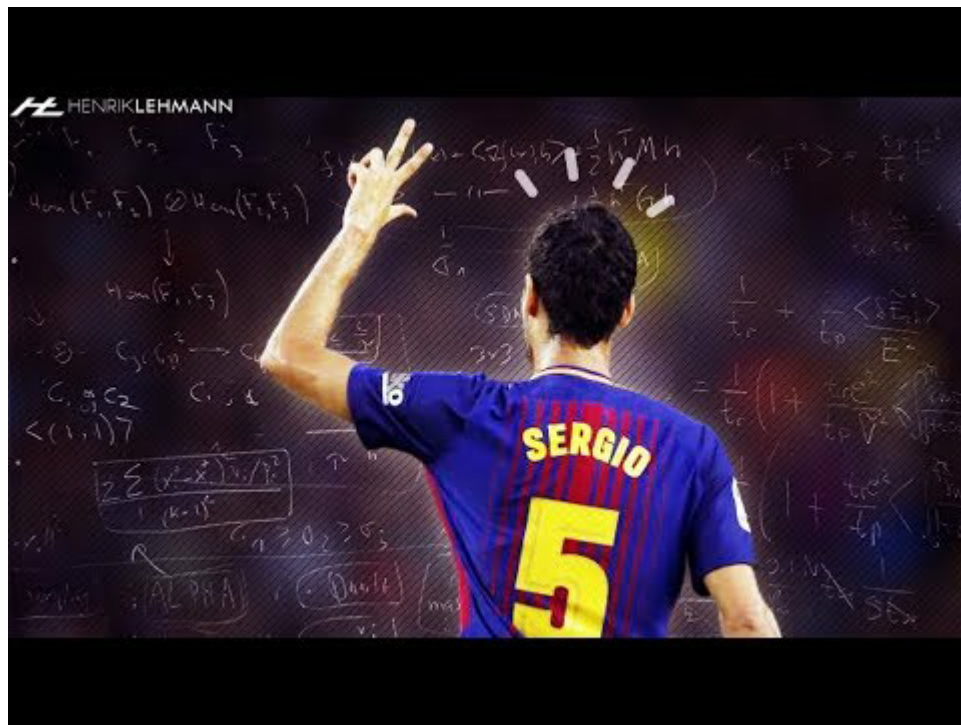


- Can receive, retain and progress ball under heavy pressure applied from all angles (in front, behind, to the side, on the angle)
- Can use body feints and disguise to deceive opponents both before receiving and when in possession of the ball
- Can protect and retain the ball using body as a shield
- Can beat an opponent using one touch
- Can play 'round corners' effectively
- Can outplay opponents effectively when faced with different angles of pressure

Sergio Busquets

FC Barcelona & Spain

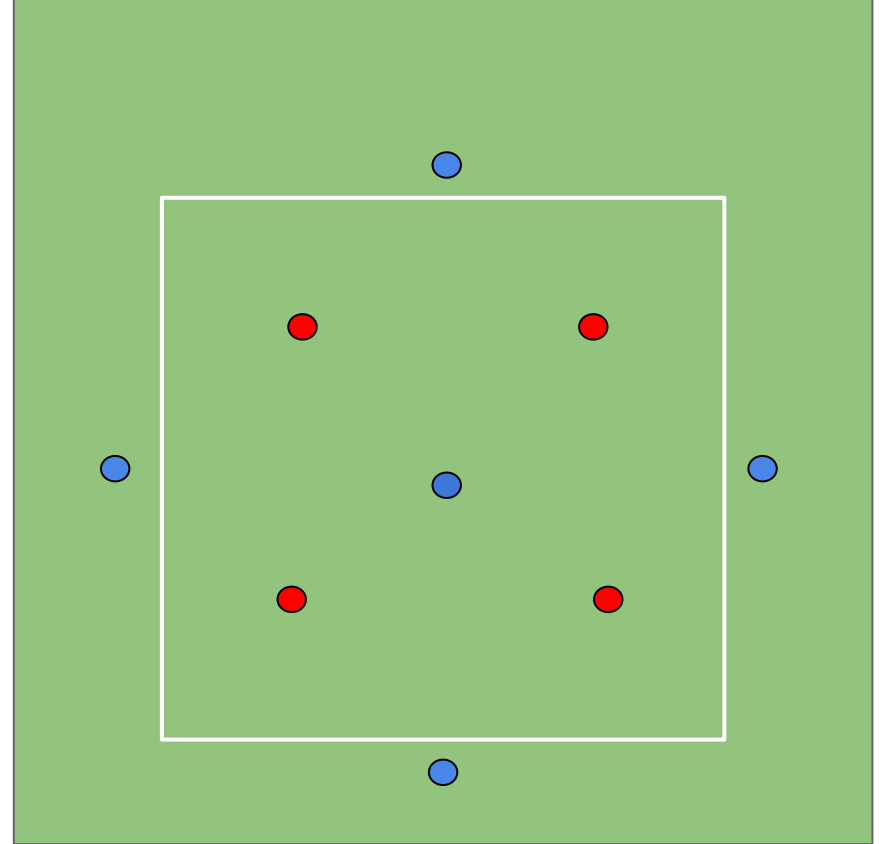
- Consider how the role of the holding midfielder/no6 has changed & what the role now requires
- What psychological characteristics must you possess to play this role effectively?
- How can you manage mistakes, risk & reward?
- Consider the decision making process of when to hide the ball & when to progress the ball in this position
- How do you ID players who have the attributes to succeed in this position?



Practice for holding midfielders

5v4 Rondo variation

- Work with middle blue player (body shape, orientation, angles, first touch, disguise etc...)
- 1 point for each time middle blue player retains the ball
- If reds win ball can dribble/combine to exit area with ball under control then 5 points (transition) with blues expected to counterpress



Central midfielder (no8)



- Can receive, retain and progress ball under heavy pressure applied from all angles (in front, behind, to the side, on the angle)
- Can use body feints and disguise to deceive opponents both before receiving and when in possession of the ball
- Can protect and retain the ball using body as a shield
- Can beat an opponent using one touch
- Can play 'round corners' with ease
- Can outplay opponents when faced with different angles of pressure with a variety of solutions
- Are experts at when to 'show' the ball and drive/dribble at opponents to attract pressure

Mousa Dembele

Tottenham Hotspur & Belgium

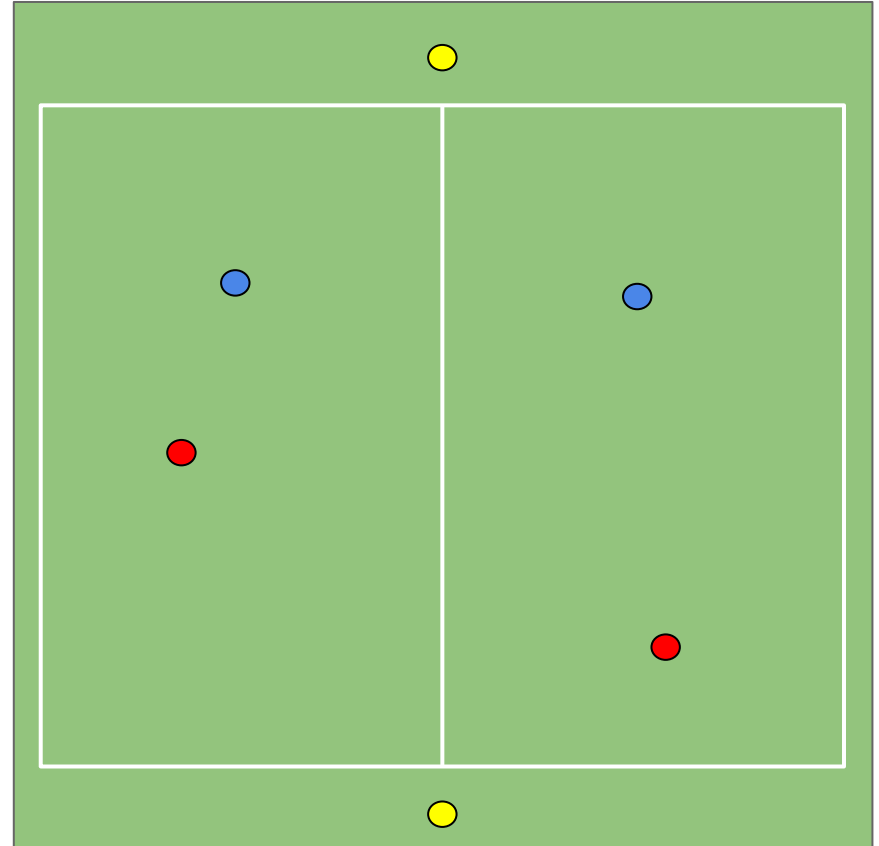
- Consider the areas of the pitch a central midfielder is required to possess the ball in
- In what areas is there more or less space to operate in?
- What physical characteristics are required to succeed in possession of the ball in this position?
- How do you support a player in this position to be brave & creative on the ball - can you challenge them to progress the ball more often than not?



Practice for Central midfielders

2v2 (+2)

- Simple setup - ball starts with yellow who play in to a blue, and they have to receive and play forward to opposite yellow
- This continues until ball has gone out of play - if red win the ball they are then team in possession (transition)
- Players locked (initially) into zones
- Progression - Add in goals at either end and
- Use yellows as a combination player
- Progression: Use diagonal zones as demonstrated in 'Core practices' or add extra defender to make a 2v3



Advanced midfielder/ support striker (no10)



- Can receive, retain and progress ball under heavy pressure applied from all angles
- Can use body feints and disguise to deceive opponents both before receiving and when in possession of the ball
- Can protect and retain the ball using body as a shield & find a way to play forward more often than not
- Can beat an opponent using one touch
- Can play 'round corners' with ease
- Can outplay opponents when faced with different angles of pressure with a variety of solutions
- Are experts at when to 'show' the ball and drive/dribble at opponents to attract & beat pressure
- Are experts at quick changes of pace with the ball at their feet
- Have really quick feet

Isco

Real Madrid & Spain

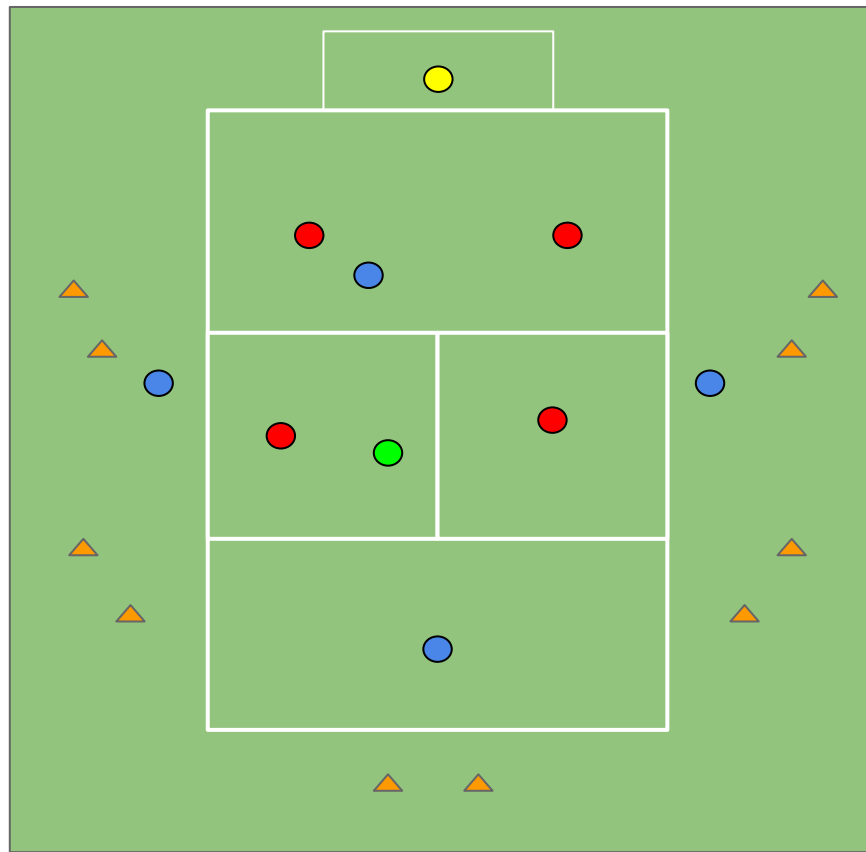
- Consider the long term process of developing this type of player, and what they will look like at all stages of their development when in possession of the ball
- How can you challenge a player in this position to develop and fine tune their individual possession skills
- What psycho/social attributes do you require to be a success in this position?
- How do you manage mistakes/ losing possession & the risk/ reward process for a player in this position?
- What spaces will you work with this type of player in?



Practice for Advanced midfielders

5v4 Zones

- All players locked in zones other than green player (no10) who can move in any zone (encourage to try and play in higher zones)
- Ball starts with deepest blue who looks to find green
- Blues look to score in goal, reds aim to recover the ball and pass through mini goals on outside
- Outside blues can be used to combine and score and can move freely up and down sideline (can be given a touch limit)



Winger/wide forward



- Are specialists in 'showing the ball' and outplaying opponents in front with a variety of solutions
- Can beat opponents on the inside and outside
- Can twist and turn, use feints and body movements to deceive & outplay opponents
- Can retain & progress the ball under heavy pressure when trapped against the touchline
- Can beat opponents using their first touch
- Are experts at playing round corners when pressure is behind
- Have excellent balance, agility, acceleration & deceleration with the ball
- Are experts at quick changes of pace with the ball at their feet
- Have really quick feet

Eden Hazard

Chelsea & Belgium

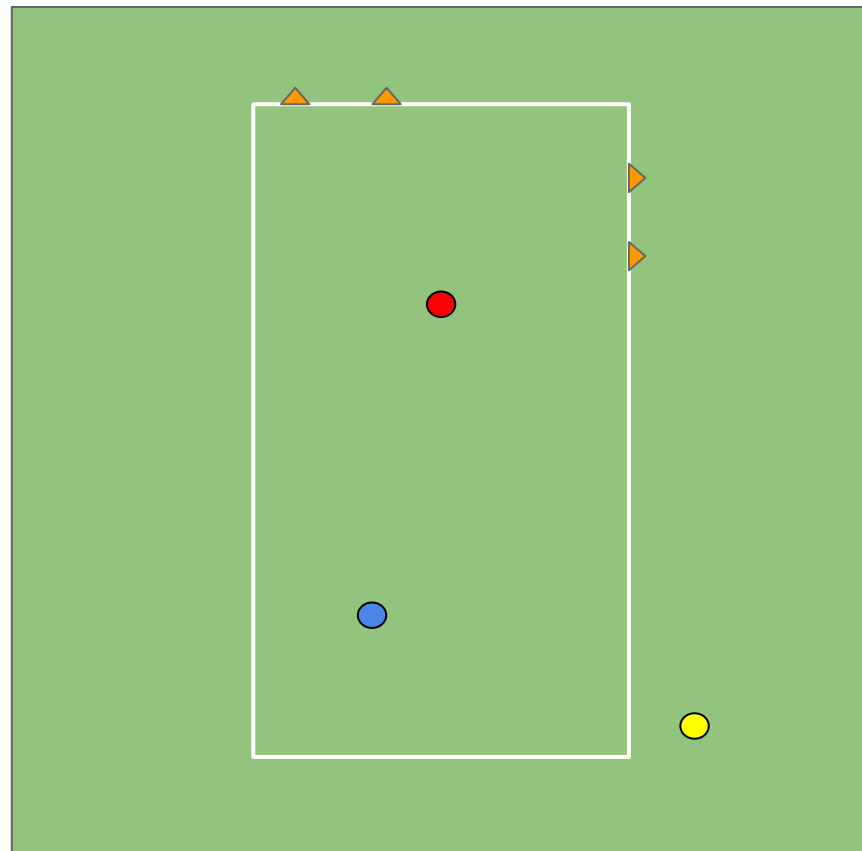
- Consider how the role of wide players has evolved and how this may impact your practice design?
- What characteristics may you look out for for players playing in this position?
- How much guidance & intervention does this type of player require in becoming an expert in individual possession?



Practice for Winger/Wide forwards

1v1 (+server)

- Yellow server feeds ball into blue who aims to outplay red and score by dribbling through either gate (replicating beating full back on inside & outside)
- Blue cannot bounce back to server - we want the blue player to be positive and find a way forwards more often than not
- Each repetition alter starting positions of red and blue to replicate common match scenarios (use flat discs to denote starting positions)
- If red recovers ball they get point for passing back to server or 2 for driving to endline (transition)
- This can be progressed to include a cross/cut inside shoot into a box of players



Centre forward



- Are specialists in receiving the ball with pressure behind and finding a way forward
- Can play in small spaces with pressure applied from all angles
- Can twist and turn, use feints and body movements to deceive & outplay opponents
- Can 'hold the ball up' well by protecting the ball under heavy pressure
- Know the correct moments to show the ball and take on opponents
- Have a variety of 1v1 solutions to beat skilled defenders *and* covering defenders (they are often 1v2 marked)
- Have excellent balance, agility, acceleration and deceleration
- Have really quick feet

Sergio Aguero

Manchester City & Argentina

- Consider the pictures and receiving situations a centre forward will face when designing practices
- Does your practice involve the centre forward trying to finish?
- Are you taking into account the profile of your centre forward(s) when designing practices?
- What technical/tactical demands does playing in this position with limited space and time require?



Practice for Centre Forwards

1v1 progressing to 2v2 (+server)

- Ball starts with yellow server who alternates feeding into a blue who then aims to score within a time limit (5-6 seconds as a starting point)
- If reds win the ball they aim to pass ball into yellow server to score a point
- Yellow server should alternate starting position (centrally & wide) to replicate variety of realistic receiving situations including bouncing/aerial balls
- Progress to 2v2 allowing blues to combine

