



Born To Run

A fast breaking style helped Bayern Munich to Champions League glory, thanks in no small part to the ability of Franck Ribéry and Arjen Robben to run with the ball at pace

There is nothing a defender fears more than an attacking player running at him at pace. Today, Franck Ribéry and Arjen Robben are two of the standout performers on the world stage, with their direct running a key to Bayern Munich's Champions League success and domestic double this year.

With the right-footed Ribéry cutting in from the left flank, and the left-footed Robben doing the same from the right, the pair often wrong foot the fullbacks marking them before making a run at goal. With excellent close control, a drop of the shoulder or a trick to help them on their way – and with the ability to score their fair share of goals as well – both were simply unstoppable last season.

Robben and Ribéry love to hog the touchline, making the pitch as big as possible to ensure the defence is stretched. This is a major advantage, as they can exploit the space once past their marker, but if either is having an off day, they will leave enough space for their midfielders to break forward. Both also rely on a good understanding with their fullbacks, who will check their own

runs while ensuring the wingers in front receive good delivery.

But it's when Ribéry and Robben have the ball at their feet and are in their stride that they're at their most dangerous. Keeping the ball under control when running at speed takes practice and it's not just a case of running with their heads down – they will always be looking around, assessing players who could be in a better position, or indeed whether there is an opportunity to have a shot at goal.

Both players were at their best during the 4-0 trouncing of Barcelona in the semi-finals of the Champions League this year. Robben had a hand in three of

the goals and he also netted Bayern's third in a move that showed both players at the peak of their powers. Ribéry broke from his own half down the left, running at speed past three Barça players. He squared to Schweinsteiger who found Robben on the right. The Dutchman then cut inside before netting with a trademark low finish.

It was a fantastic team goal scored in a break that turned defence into attack in seconds – highlighting the importance of players who have the ability to run with the ball at pace. Show this goal to your players and try the activities on the following pages to work on their running at speed and wing play.

Words by: Luke Nicoli
Activities by: David Clarke & John Williams

TOP TIPS FOR RUNNING WITH THE BALL

Running with the ball is not to be confused with dribbling, which requires close control and relatively small steps. Running with the ball involves bigger touches and longer strides. To do this successfully, your players should...

- > Start with a big first touch into space to get the ball out from under feet
- > Continue to push the ball forward in stride, using soft touches of the foot furthest from the chasing opponent
- > Run with the head up, looking forwards to exploit any space that opens up
- > Decide what to do with the ball – pass or shoot – before running out of space



Arjen Robben

Space Invaders

A fast and exciting game that encourages players to spot the space and run through at speed with the ball, just like Robben and Ribéry

WHY USE IT

This drill is all about seizing the opportunity to burst into space with a change of pace when defenders are covering other players.

SET UP

Set up a 25x25-yard square with an 8x8-yard square in the centre. We've used 11 players in the session. You need bibs, balls and cones.

HOW TO PLAY

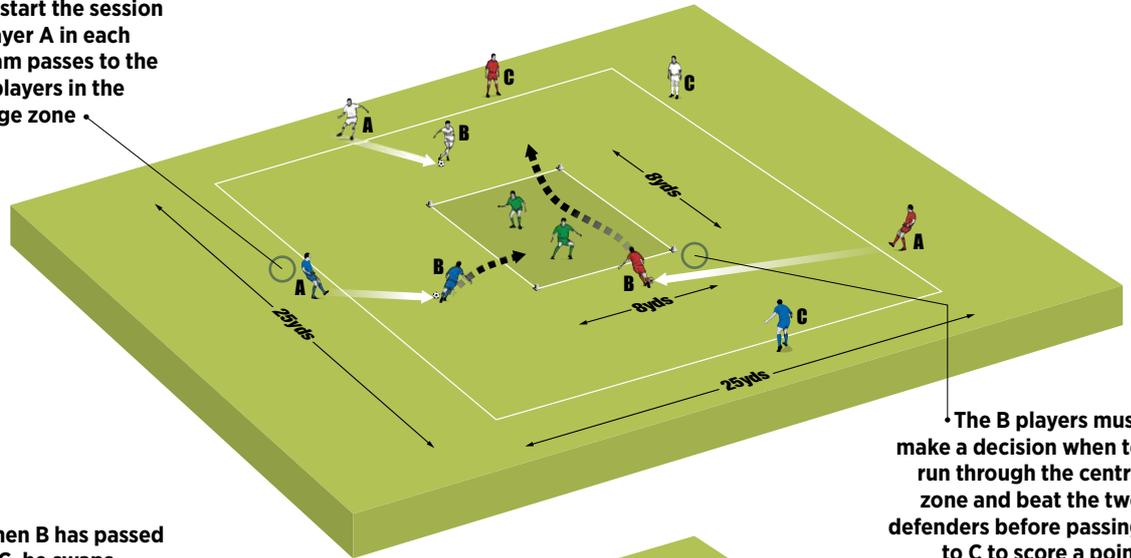
Split players into three teams of three (A, B, and C), plus two defenders who are in the central zone. Two players from each group are outside the main zone with one inside. Start with the A players in each group passing to B at the same time from outside the zone. The B players must dribble through the centre zone that is guarded by the two defenders and then pass to C. B exits the square and A goes in to receive a pass from C. A runs through the centre zone and passes out to B. C enters the zone and A goes out. Keep this going and award a point for each successful move. Defenders try to win the ball and dribble out of the square.

TECHNIQUE

This is very game realistic as players run with the ball to get past defenders. Clever players can see the space and run through unopposed while defenders are trying to tackle the other players.

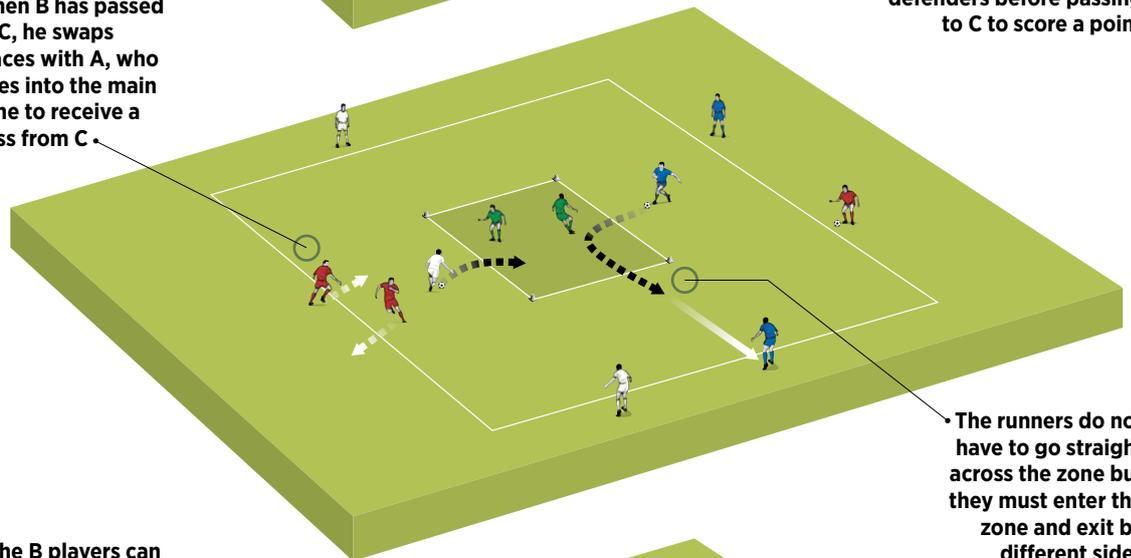
Activity by: David Clarke

To start the session player A in each team passes to the B players in the large zone



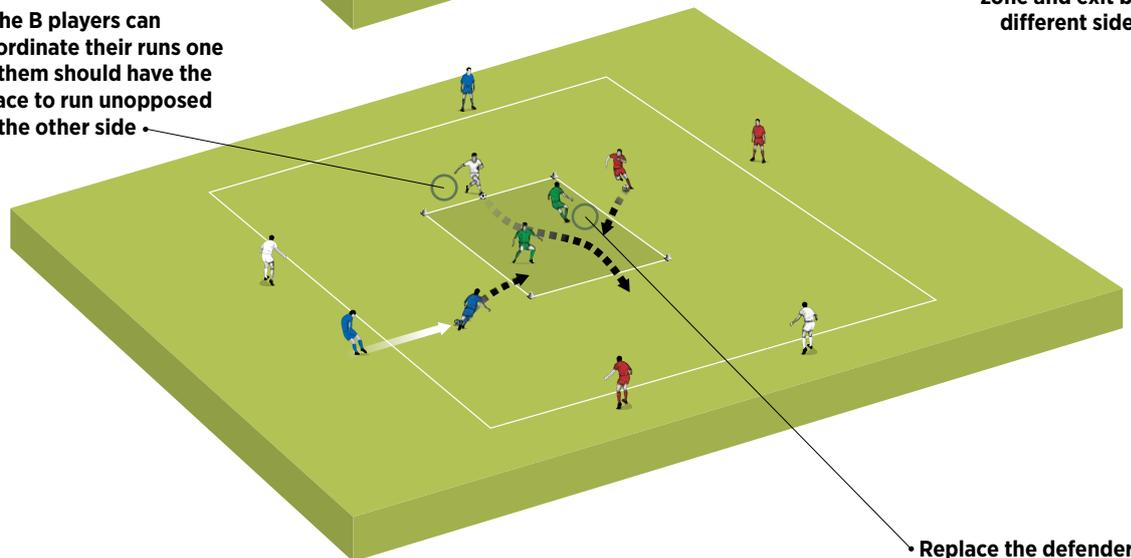
The B players must make a decision when to run through the centre zone and beat the two defenders before passing to C to score a point

When B has passed to C, he swaps places with A, who goes into the main zone to receive a pass from C



The runners do not have to go straight across the zone but they must enter the zone and exit by different sides

If the B players can coordinate their runs one of them should have the space to run unopposed to the other side



Replace the defenders at regular intervals

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Flankers

Use these drills to get your players linking up, supporting and making use of the wings in three different ways. Soon your wingers could be playing like Ribéry or Robben

WHY USE IT

Getting players used to passing and moving in different parts of the pitch is vital to success.

SET UP

Use an area half your normal pitch size. We've used four outfield players and a keeper. You can have two groups running at once and have two or three players to swap in on the wings for each of the three runs of wing play. You need bibs, balls and a goal.

HOW TO PLAY

Defender A passes to midfielder C. C then returns the ball to the defender, who plays a longer pass up to attacker D. D plays the ball wide to winger B who cuts in on the edge of the penalty area and shoots at goal.

In the second run the defender A exchanges passes with the midfielder C before playing down the line to the winger B, who crosses to the incoming midfielder and attacker.

In the third run, add a defender and play on the other side of the pitch to get the winger crossing on that side under pressure from an opposition defender.

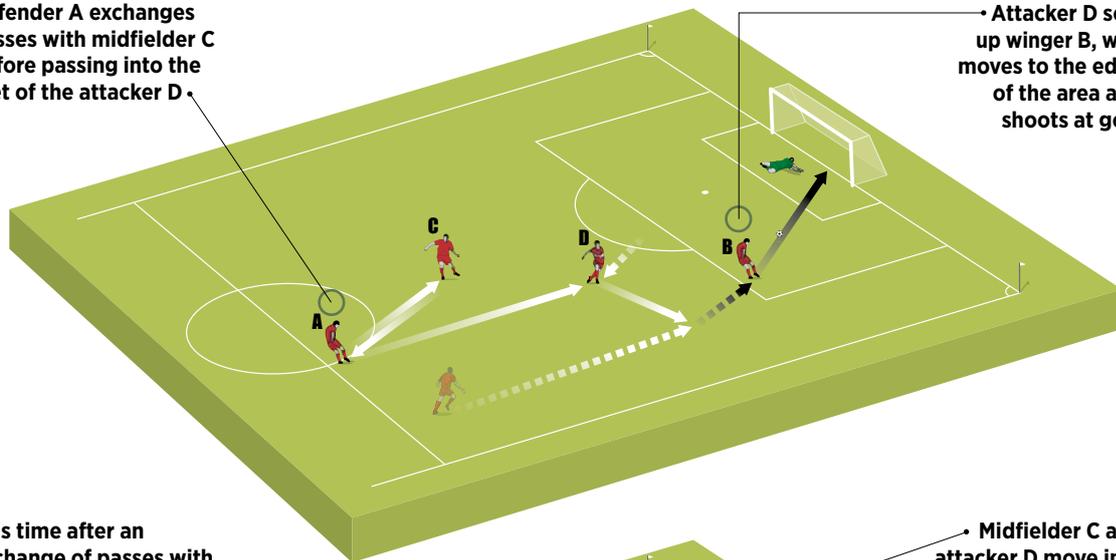
TECHNIQUE

You want to see good communication, passing and receiving on and to the correct feet. Look for players injecting good pace.

Activity by: John Williams

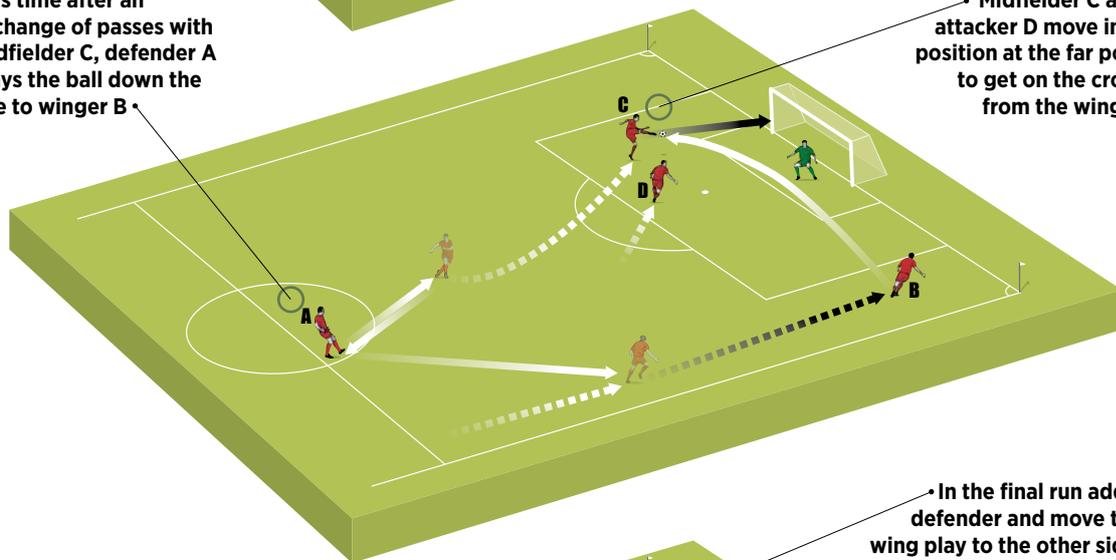
Defender A exchanges passes with midfielder C before passing into the feet of the attacker D.

Attacker D sets up winger B, who moves to the edge of the area and shoots at goal

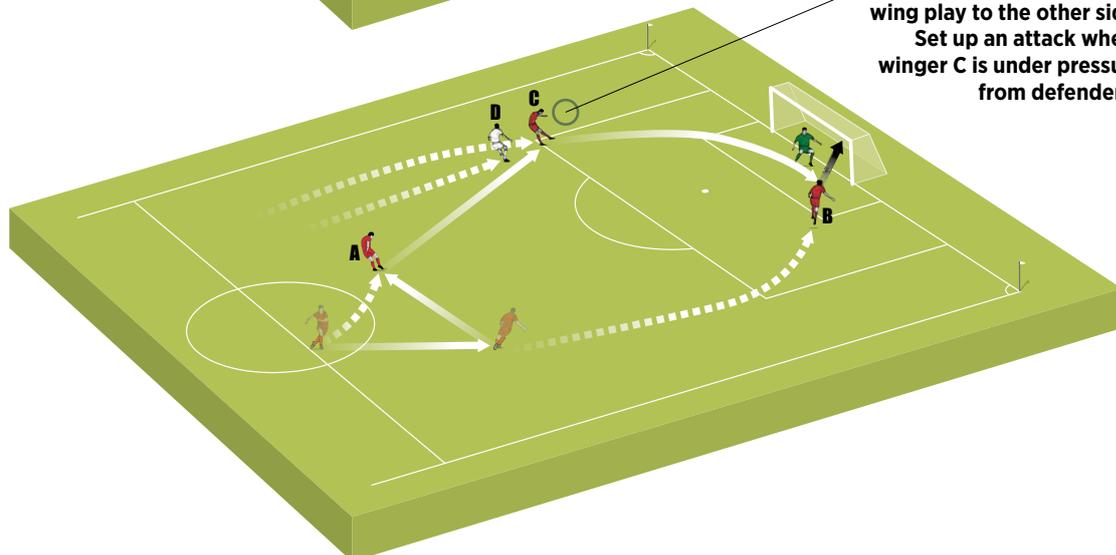


This time after an exchange of passes with midfielder C, defender A plays the ball down the line to winger B.

Midfielder C and attacker D move into position at the far post to get on the cross from the winger



In the final run add a defender and move the wing play to the other side. Set up an attack where winger C is under pressure from defender D



Player movement ■■■■➔

Ball movement ➔

Run with ball ■■■➔

Shot ➔