



Keep Hold Of The Ball And Win Games

Your team will dominate matches if you can teach your players to win the ball and then make them understand how to keep hold of it

When Manchester United were beaten 5-4 by Chelsea in the cup earlier this season, Sir Alex Ferguson didn't have to be told where the game had been lost. Leading 3-2 in the dying seconds of normal time, it was United's inability to keep hold of the ball that cost his side the match.

"We gave the ball away for the third goal having been in complete control," he said afterwards. "All we needed to do was see the game out with good possession."

Possession has never been more talked about in an era that has witnessed Spain achieve a hat-trick of major international tournament victories and Barcelona's famed 'tiki-taka' style dominating European football.

This success has been built on a close passing possession game and

both sides have enjoyed some of their biggest moments playing without the advantages of a traditional lofty target man at the front. But as Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers said last year: "It doesn't matter how big or small you are, if you don't have the ball you can't score."

This rule applies whether it's at the Nou Camp or on the local recreation ground. If you can get your team to retain possession of the ball it will take the sting out of a match – and it will be your players dictating the tempo of play, while your opponents are left chasing the game.

"Treat the ball like it's made of gold and never let it go," said Sir Alf Ramsey to his players before England faced Brazil at the 1970 World Cup. Over 40 years later his words still ring true – and to help you develop this

skill for possession football, we've got an exercise called The Conductor (p8) that will teach your players to win the ball and then keep hold of it.

After they've perfected the session, they can then try Five Passes (p9), an interesting activity aimed at helping players add an end product to their beautiful possession play.

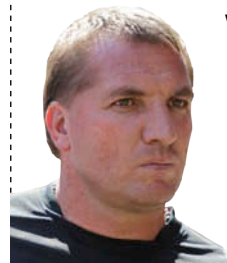
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If you are better than your opponent with the ball you have a 79 per cent chance of winning the game"



- Manager Brendan Rodgers on his philosophy of possession football

The Conductor

If you want your players to learn how to win back the ball and retain possession, just follow the instructions of the 'Conductor'

WHY USE IT

Players can get great experience by analysing a game as it is being played. This is a simple defence game – if players can work out the best positions for defenders to be in to stop attacks, it will help them when they are in that situation in matches.

SET UP

This is a 3v3 game but each team should also have a defensive 'Conductor' to shout instructions. Create a playing area of 30x20 yards and place the Conductors in a five-yard zone at each end. You need balls, bibs and cones.

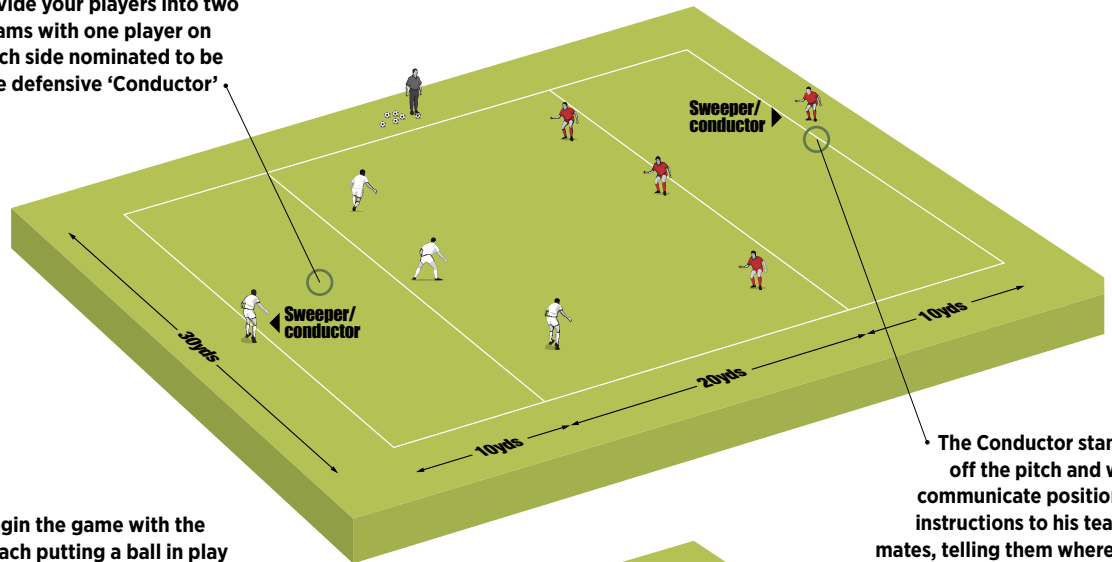
HOW TO PLAY

While it's the players who must stop the opposition getting to the end zone, the Conductors are in charge of the defensive tactics and use just verbal communication to direct team-mates. If players succeed in getting into the end zone a point is awarded to the attacking team and play is restarted with a pass from the end zone to a team-mate attacking the opposite end.

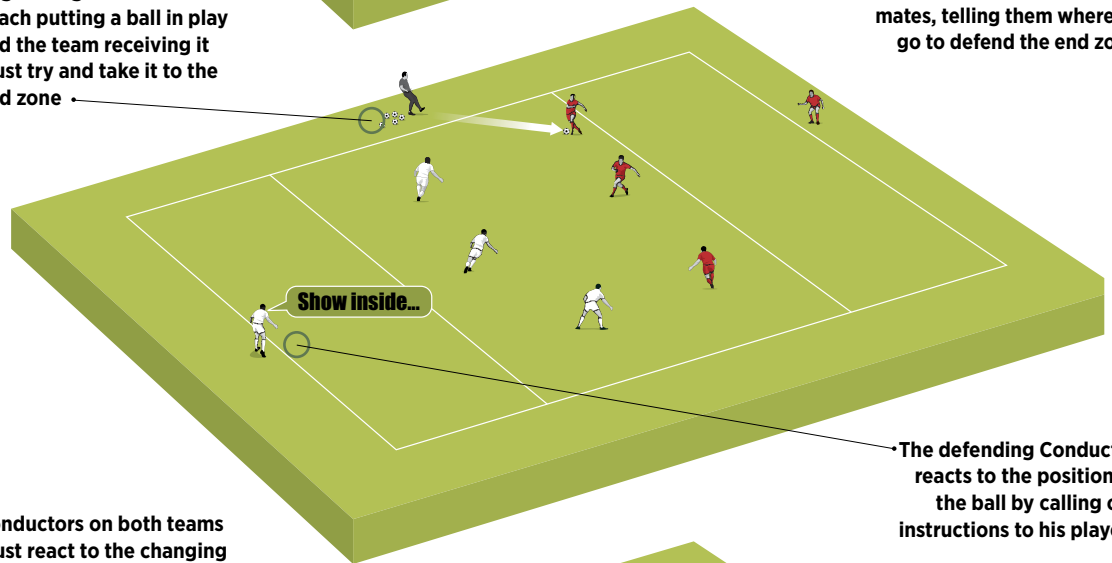
TECHNIQUE

The Conductors will learn a lot by watching and controlling their team-mates. The Conductor must provide verbal support with instructions such as: "get tight", "someone support", "get goal side", "show inside" etc.

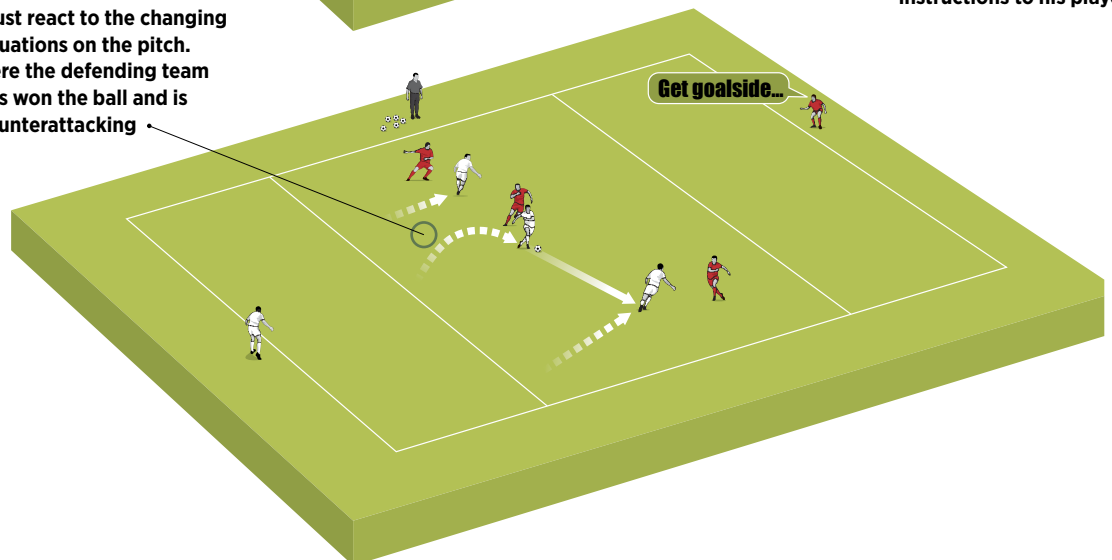
Divide your players into two teams with one player on each side nominated to be the defensive 'Conductor'



Begin the game with the coach putting a ball in play and the team receiving it must try and take it to the end zone



Conductors on both teams must react to the changing situations on the pitch. Here the defending team has won the ball and is counterattacking



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

Five Passes

Try this game to give your players the incentive of a little goalscoring end product to their possession. It will teach them when to play forward and when to shoot

WHY USE IT

For your team to be successful in getting the ball into shooting positions, they must find a balance between exploiting space and not losing the ball. Patience is the key – keeping possession and delaying that scoring pass can often result in a better chance.

SET UP

Create an area measuring 40x20 yards. Play 6v4 with 12 players including two neutral keepers. You need balls, bibs, cones and goals.

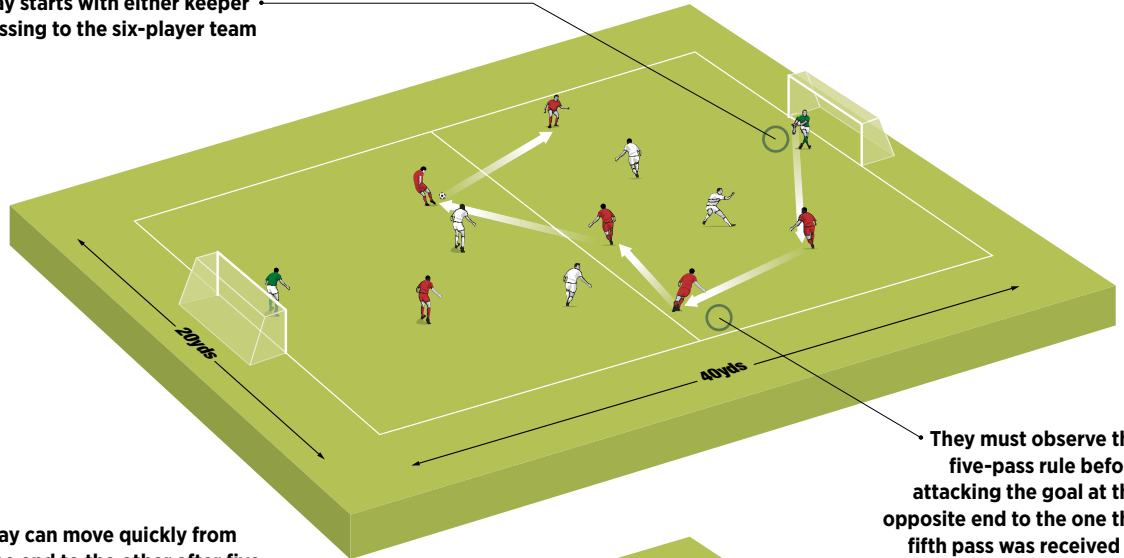
HOW TO PLAY

The team of six needs to make five passes before attacking. Once reaching five passes they can start looking for an opportunity to attack – but when ready they must attack the goal in the other half of the pitch from where the fifth pass was received. The team of four try to win the ball back and counterattack into either goal. Teams can score in either goal, so no offsides.

TECHNIQUE

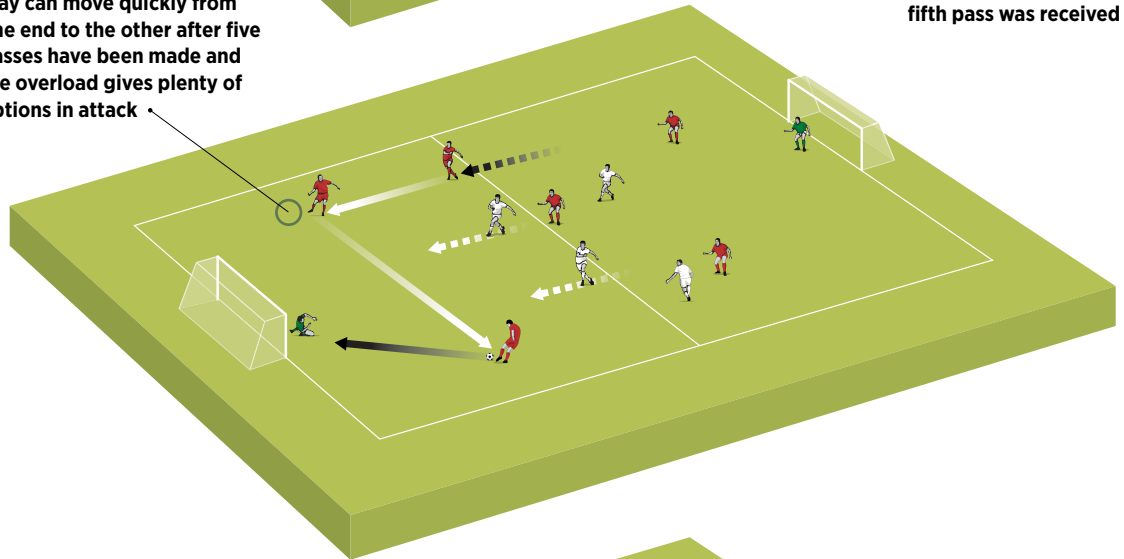
Players should recognise when to play forward and move to support the pass. They should play quickly to take advantage of the space from the overload situation. This means awareness of space is crucial. Coaches should look for players switching play or bringing the keeper into play.

Play starts with either keeper passing to the six-player team

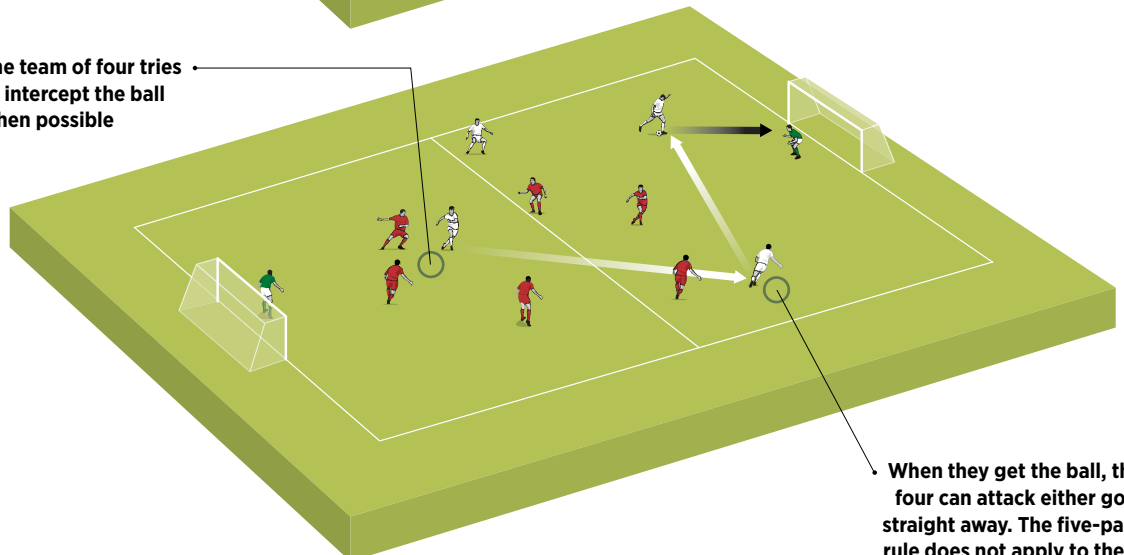


They must observe the five-pass rule before attacking the goal at the opposite end to the one the fifth pass was received in

Play can move quickly from one end to the other after five passes have been made and the overload gives plenty of options in attack



The team of four tries to intercept the ball when possible



When they get the ball, the four can attack either goal straight away. The five-pass rule does not apply to them

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot