

Ballybofey Co. Donegal
19th October 2005
Drills to Improve Football Skills

Every day of the week coaches run drills with footballers of all ages. Many share drills, modify those they have learnt or even design their own new ones.

A night like this is NOT about simply adding to that list of drills.

Rather, it is about stepping back to take a different look at each drill and taking note of the following:

WORK: REST RATIOS

[e.g. do players work only for 2 seconds and then rest for 30?]

INTENSITY

[e.g. do players ever work at match pace? Is there anything to encourage them to do so?]

TECHNIQUE

[e.g. are there opportunities for players to improve technique?]

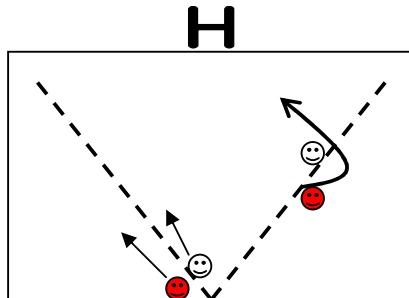
SPEED OF THOUGHT

[e.g. do any drills make demands on players' thinking skills?]

Watch the players work during the session and decide how each of these areas is being addressed. This is much more important than taking notes – and anyway, if you email pkerrme@hotmail.co.uk I'll send the drills and more asap!

Drills/Games from the Ballybofey Session

CUT and DRIVE [shooting]

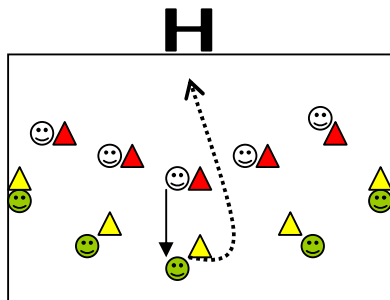


To do this, take about ten white markers and ten yellow markers. Stand on that mid-point on the 45m line. As you walk towards one corner flag, set out a line of white markers. Do the same towards the other corner flag with the yellow markers. Your stage is now set.

Ask an attacker and a defender to stand beside each other on the mid-point of the 45m line. The attacker should solo run along a line of markers, staying on the outside of these. The defender should shadow his run on the inside of the same markers.

When the attacker decides, he should cross the line to run towards goal and take a shot. Once the attacker crosses the line, the defender can tackle. The attacker can use different types of evasion skill to make the cut [e.g. side step / roll / swerve].

FIST, FEINT & SHOOT



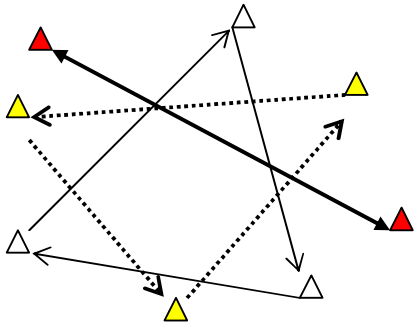
A simple drill to let players practise quick shooting after they have feinted and side-stepped to evade an opponent.

Set out 5 cones in a shallow arc along the 13m line. Set out 5 more to match these on the 20m line. A player stands at each cone. The five along the 13m line have a football each and are facing those on the 20m line. Five more are behind the goals to retrieve.

On the call, each of the players in possession fist passes the ball to a player on the 20m line and advances to close him/her down. The receiver has time only to feint, side-step the opponent and kick for a point. The opponent can provide passive resistance or may try to get a block in [whatever the coach decides].

After each shot, the kicker moves along the 20m line to the next position, ready for a fist pass from another opponent. This gives players the opportunity to evade different opponents and shoot from different positions. The players behind the goals feed the footballs to those on the 13m line. After a few minutes the groups rotate.

INCREASING THE TRAFFIC

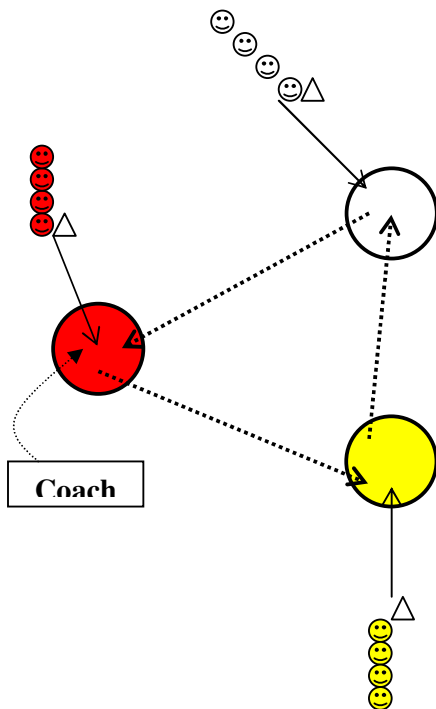


Many drills and practice exercises on the pitch are excellent, but often they do not mirror reality. For example: A coach may run two or three drills in different areas of the pitch, all involving passing or catching or solo running or lifting etc. and all happening at the same time. Small groups of players take part in each and there is always plenty of space in which to work. This is fine up to a point.

If coaches took two or even three drills, let players get used to them first and then moved the cones to superimpose the exercises one on top of the other in the same area of the field, this would allow players to practise skills and techniques while others moved among them and around the same area.

Players who can learn to cope with 'increased traffic' in a smaller area will be able to carry this through to a game, where there are team-mates and opponents getting in the way of passes etc.

ATTACK THE CIRCLE



Set up three circles, each 10m diameter and each 25-30m from any other circle. Use fleximarkers

Approximately 10m from each circle, set a cone. Players always start runs from these cones. Line up three or four players at each cone [red, yellow and white on the diagram]

The coach starts the drill by lobbing a ball into the red circle. The first red player bursts into the circle to collect the ball and **immediately** kick passes it to the yellow circle. The red player then goes to the back of the red line.

A yellow player should already be sprinting into his/her circle to receive the pass from the red. He/she then kick passes to the white circle and turns back to join...etc.etc.

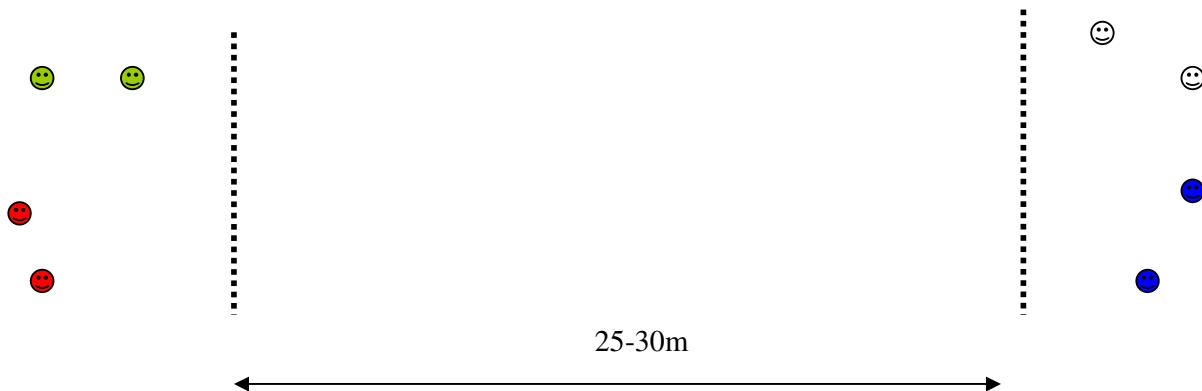
Once the red player has kicked the first ball, the coach should lob a second ball into the red circle for the next red player to start the move.

There should be no need for a third ball as the first ball will soon be on its way round to the start again.

Remember – players must attack the circle at pace. Passers must hit the circle and NOT the player. Kickers must turn back to rejoin their own lines [i.e. no following the pass]

To extend this drill coaches may add a shadow runner to each of the runners and kickers. This will put pressure on the kickers and runners to be accurate and have a good first touch.

CROSS THE GAP



Four pairs of player, two on either side of the gap; greens play with whites, blues with reds.

Start a ball with the reds and a ball with the whites. Red hits a kick pass across the gap [no high ball] and a blue receives. The other blue player runs to support the receiver [off the shoulder] and take a fist pass on the burst.

He/she must immediately kick pass across the gap to a red receiver etc. etc.

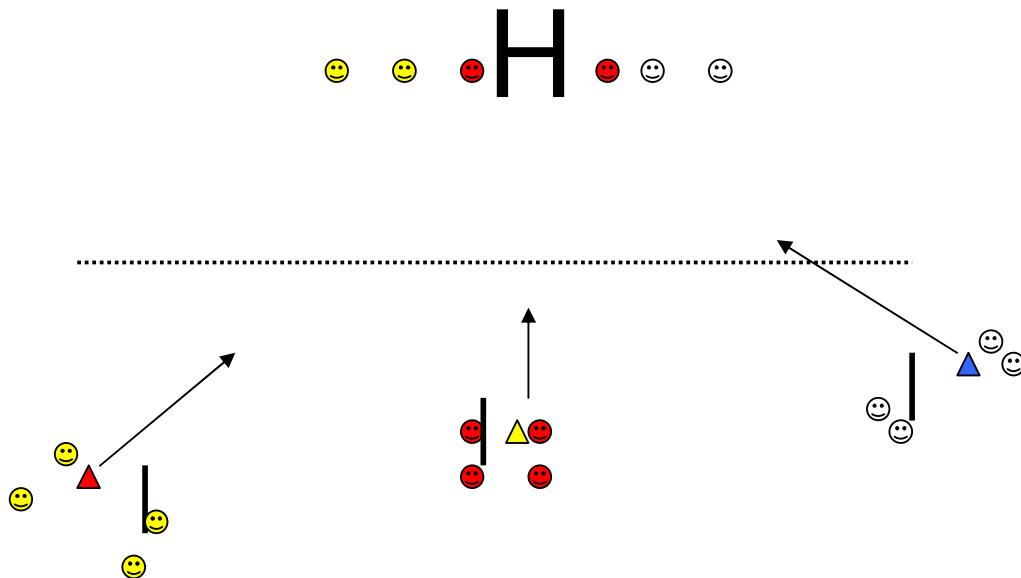
As this goes on, the same happens between the greens and whites.

The keys to the success of this drill are:

- The passes must be hit properly [driven across the gap, no more than 2-3m above the ground]
- As the pass is hit, the players must decide quickly who will receive and who will support
- The support runner must learn to peel off and make a late run to take the ball on the burst, rather than stay too close to the receiver when the ball arrives.

Coaches will find that the latter is the hardest to coach. Support runners tend to run towards the receiver even when the ball is in flight. It often runs counter to their instincts to actually move away to create a distance and then burst when it is most effective.

STEP, SPACE, SCORE



A drill to let players practise soloing towards goal, stepping into the tackler to make room and then shooting for a point:

Organise three groups of players [e.g. 6 reds, 6 yellows and 6 whites]. Take two from each group and send them behind the goals to retrieve footballs. Set out three cones about 30m from goal and at different angles. Beside each cone place a pole. Groups choose a cone/pole each from which to start. Each pair should have a football.

Focus on the yellow group on the diagram. One player takes a ball and stands at the cone. Another stands at the pole. The remaining two wait their turn to do the same. The solo runner [player at cone] and the shadower [player at pole] run at pace towards the goal. The shadower runs tight to the solo runner but does not tackle.

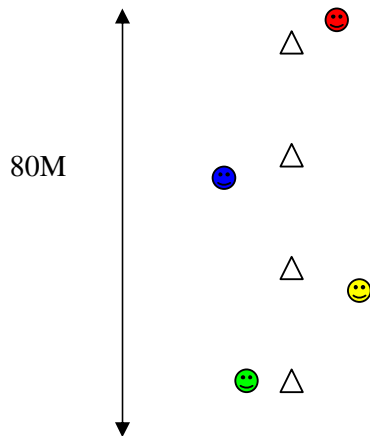
At some point along the run the solo runner must step into the shadower to make room for the shot. The shadower must provide stiff resistance without charging or shouldering. The solo runner must make the shoulder-to-shoulder contact. Once room has been made, the solo runner must shoot for a point.

Both players follow on to the end line. The ball is retrieved by the yellows behind the goal and carried out to the start. Meanwhile the other two yellows who were waiting their turn [at the cone/pole] start the exercise.

Reds and whites do the likewise at the same time.

The key is to ensure that solo runners do not step away from the shadower and are not forced to change the angle of their runs just because an opponent is running alongside them [most players do this subconsciously and end up kicking the ball wide]. This drill is designed to work against those instincts.

MOVING CONES DRILL



A drill to let players practise constant movement, changes of pace, receiving, turning sharply and kicking/fist passing.

Set up four cones across the width of a football pitch [approx. 80m].
Take four players and let each stand at a cone **ONLY BEFORE THE DRILL BEGINS**.

All players are instructed to keep moving left and right of their cones when not in possession. Those receiving a pass must move towards the ball to gather it, turn sharply and play it, then resume the jogging about the cone.

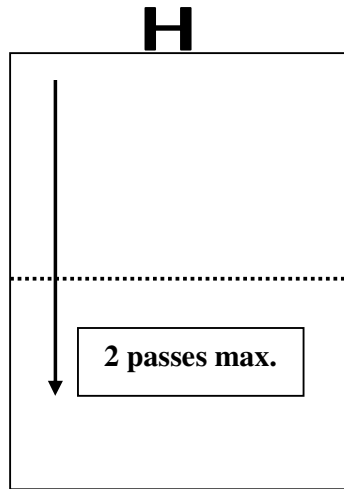
Red starts with the ball and kicks it to Yellow, who attacks the ball, gathers it and turns sharply to play it to Green.
Green looks up and kicks to Blue, who turns and passes to Red etc. etc.

The key is to keep players moving and for receivers to indicate to the passers where they want the ball played.

Run this pattern for two minutes, then swap the two inside players [Blue and Yellow] with the two outside players [Green and Red].

Modify this drill by reducing the distance from 80m to 30m and using fist passes. Again, the key is total movement.

TWO PASSES MAX. [GAME]



A simple game to make passes more telling and players more economical in their play when in the opposition half of the field.

Once a team takes possession of the ball inside the opposition half of the pitch, the ball may only be passed between players a maximum of two times before a shot is taken.

This does not mean that the players **MUST** take two passes [perhaps one pass may get them into a scoring position – e.g. if they take possession deep into the opponents' half].

The coach may change the rule to suit the skill level – would three passes be better for younger teams? Would a smaller pitch be more effective?