



TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT: WING-BACKS

SESSION OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance the wing-back's ability to deliver early crosses.
- Develop skills to create space during 1v1 attacking situations.
- Improve defensive abilities during 1v1 defending scenarios.

PART 1: EARLY CROSSING

In this segment, players engage in a semi-opposed crossing practice with a focus on delivering early crosses. Defenders are present to challenge the crossing players' decision-making. The inclusion of defenders prompts the wing-backs to scan the field before crossing, allowing the coach to highlight essential factors to consider while making crossing decisions.

PART 2: 1V1 ATTACKING

During this phase, a simple setup allows the wing-back to undergo numerous repetitions of 1v1 attacking against a defender. The wing-back is tasked with creating sufficient space to deliver a precise cross into one of two target goals. The utilisation of different zones in this practice provides opportunities to practice various types of 1v1 attacking situations.

PART 3: 1V1 DEFENDING

In this opposed technical practice, the wing-back faces the challenge of quickly transitioning across the pitch to prevent a winger from taking a shot at the goal. This scenario replicates real-game situations that a wing-back may encounter during a match.

The session aims to equip the players with the skills and decision-making capabilities required to excel as a wing-back. By focusing on early crossing, 1v1 attacking, and 1v1 defending, players will enhance their overall performance and contribute effectively to their team's success.

EARLY CROSSING (PART 1)

In this skill-focused session, players will work on improving their ability to deliver early crosses in a 3v2 semi-opposed setting. The practice takes place on a playing area that spans the full width of the pitch, with a designated line placed 30 yards from the goal, as shown in the diagrams.

Team A consists of wing-backs, while Team B comprises two centre-backs who start on the designated line. The coach initiates the practice by playing the ball to a Team A wing-back, who is limited to two touches: one touch to control the ball and another touch to execute a cross. The cross aims to find a striker and the opposite wing-back positioned to attack.

Upon the coach's first pass, the Team B centre-backs are allowed to drop back to create a defensive challenge. In Diagram 2, the coach plays the pass to the wing-back again, but this time the decision to cross to the striker is altered, requiring the wing-back to play the cross over the defenders.

Notably, the centre-backs are restricted from tackling or pressing the wing-backs during the practice. Instead, they can only engage in blocks and clearances in the centre of the pitch.



PROGRESSION

- To further develop the practice and enhance decision-making skills, the coach can vary the service provided to the wing-backs. Additionally, altering the distance from which the centre-backs start their position relative to the goal will introduce different scenarios for the wing-backs to navigate when determining the ideal crossing location.

Through this 3v2 semi-opposed technical exercise, players will sharpen their early crossing abilities, learn to read defensive situations, and make informed decisions on when and where to deliver accurate crosses, contributing to their overall effectiveness on the field.

COACHING PROCESS

FIRST TOUCH

- **Emphasise First Touch Quality:** The wing-backs must prioritise the quality of their first touch before considering the cross. A forward-oriented first touch enables them to accelerate onto the ball and execute the cross with their second touch.
- **Correct Weight on the Touch:** It is crucial to apply the appropriate weight on the first touch. This allows the wing-back to perform the action with high intensity and maintain control of the ball.

SCANNING

- **Pre-Cross Scanning:** Before delivering the cross, the wing-back should engage in scanning the field. By assessing the movement of the centre-backs, the positions of their teammates, and available spaces, the wing-back can make informed decisions about where to direct the cross.
- **Quick Decision-Making:** Encourage the wing-back to take a quick glance between their first and second touches, enabling them to determine the best target for their cross with accuracy and precision.

EARLY, SHAPED CROSS

- **Out-swinging Shape:** Instruct the wing-back to employ an out-swinging shape on the ball for early crosses. This involves curving the ball between the first centre-back and the goalkeeper, aiming to find the striker in a central position in front of the goal.
- **Power and Precision:** Emphasise the importance of delivering the cross with sufficient power and the correct shape. The cross should evade the first centre-back effectively, while still being reachable by the striker.

DEEP CROSS

- **Specific Trajectory:** For deep crosses, the wing-back needs to execute a precise trajectory. The ball should be lifted high enough to clear both centre-backs but low enough to find the opposite wing-back at the far post.
- **Avoid Over-Float:** Caution against overly floated crosses, as they can be intercepted by centre-backs before reaching the far-side wing-back. Finding the right balance in trajectory is crucial for a successful deep cross.

By focusing on these technical elements and practicing various crossing scenarios, the wing-backs can enhance their crossing abilities and become more effective contributors to the team's



attacking play. Regular reinforcement and feedback will help refine their technique, leading to improved performances during matches.

1V1 ATTACKING (PART 2)

In this dynamic 1v1 attacking practice, players engage in exciting duels within two 3m wide channels, each marked as Channel 1 and Channel 2.

The coach initiates the practice by passing the ball to the attacker (Player A), who receives it within the wider Channel 1. Concurrently, the defender (Player B) sprints into the inside Channel 2 as the ball travels. Player A's objective is to score by finding the back of either of the two target goals situated inside the penalty area.

Player B is restricted from entering Player A's channel (Channel 1); however, Player A is allowed to enter Channel 2 but cannot move beyond it towards the goals. Player B's primary task is to block crosses effectively to prevent goals from being scored. Yet, when Player A enters Channel 2, the defender gains the opportunity to tackle and win the ball. If successful, Player B then attempts to play the ball into the target goal at the opposite end of the channels.

PROGRESSION

- To further challenge the players and enhance their skills, the coach can introduce the option for the defender (Player B) to enter the attacker's channel (Channel 1). This modification will create additional opportunities for defensive pressure and encourage more assertive attacking moves from Player A.

This practice promotes individual attacking prowess, decision-making, and defensive awareness. Players will develop their ability to read the game, choose the right moment to enter the opponent's channel, and execute effective crosses and finishes. Regular repetitions of this exercise will improve players' 1v1 attacking capabilities and contribute to their overall offensive prowess on the field.

COACHING PROCESS

FIRST TOUCH

- Encourage the attacker (wing-back) to focus on using their first touch strategically to create enough space for executing the cross. The touch should be well-judged, allowing them to distance themselves from the defender while retaining control of the ball.
- Considered Touch: Emphasise the importance of a calculated first touch. It should be weighted in a manner that enables space creation but avoids being too heavy, preventing the defender from easily winning possession.

CREATING SPACE

- Window of Space: Install in the wing-back the concept of creating a "window" of space to deliver the cross into the box. This means they don't necessarily have to beat the defender outright to execute the cross successfully.



- **Changing Pace:** Encourage the wing-back to vary their pace deliberately during the approach, using shifts from slow to quick or quick to slow to outmanoeuvre the defender and create that crucial window of opportunity.
- **Utilising Weaker Foot:** Advise the wing-back to consider using their weaker foot to cross occasionally, cutting back and delivering a cross unexpectedly. This can further surprise the defender and open up new crossing angles.

CROSSING

- **Cross with Disguise:** Guide the wing-back to employ disguise while crossing the ball. By adding variations in body movement, foot position, or approach, the wing-back can make it challenging for the defender to anticipate the cross's intended direction.
- **Foiling Defender's Block:** Explain to the wing-back that using disguised crossing techniques will make it more difficult for the defender to read and intercept the cross effectively.

By incorporating these coaching aspects, the wing-back can elevate their crossing abilities, becoming more unpredictable and effective in delivering dangerous balls into the box. Regular practice and reinforcement will refine these techniques, enhancing the wing-back's impact on the team's attacking play.

1V1 DEFENDING (PART 3)

This opposed technical practice is specifically designed to enhance the wing-backs' proficiency in defending during 1v1 situations.

The practice unfolds on a playing area spanning the full width of the pitch, with a marked line situated 30 yards from the goal. The wing-back (Player A) takes their starting position on this 30-yard line, aligned with the post that is farthest from the attacker.

In Diagram 1, the coach initiates the practice by playing the ball to the attacker (Player B), who receives the ball and attempts to score by dribbling towards the goal.

Diagram 2 illustrates the 1v1 situation, with the attacker (Player B) facing the wing-back (Player A) in a direct confrontation.

If Player A successfully wins the ball from Player B, they aim to play the ball back to the coach before the practice restarts. Keeping score can introduce a competitive element to the practice, motivating the players to give their best effort.

PROGRESSION

- To challenge the defending wing-back and create different defensive scenarios, the coach can vary the distance of the marked line away from the goal. This adjustment will prompt Player A to adapt their defensive approach based on the proximity of the attacking player to the goal.

Through this opposed technical exercise, wing-backs will refine their defensive techniques, improve their decision-making in 1v1 situations, and foster a competitive mindset. Regularly adjusting the practice's parameters will keep the players engaged and continuously develop their ability to defend effectively during crucial moments in a game.



COACHING PROCESS

ANGLE OF APPROACH

- **Importance of Angle:** Emphasise the significance of the angle of approach for the defender when trying to prevent the attacker from advancing towards the goal.
- **Anticipating Attacker's Options:** The defender needs to consider that the attacker has the option to either cut inside or go around the outside when approaching. It's crucial for the defender to be aware of both possibilities and adjust their angle accordingly.
- **Balancing Defensive Focus:** Caution against being too focused on stopping the attacker from cutting inside, as this may leave the outside vulnerable for the attacker to exploit and take a shot.

MIRRORING THE ATTACKER

- **Effective Mirroring:** Encourage the defender to mirror the movements of the attacker closely.
- **Foot Positioning:** When the attacker is shaping to shoot with their right foot, the defender should block with their left foot. This strategy prevents the defender from turning their back to the ball, reducing the chances of the attacker feinting and cutting back onto their other foot effectively.
- **Staying Grounded:** Advise defenders to keep their feet low to the ground and avoid jumping or diving in. This allows them to react promptly to any dummied shots or changes of direction made by the attacker.

1V1 DEFENDING

- **Patience in Defence:** Emphasise the importance of patience for defenders in 1v1 situations. Encourage them to wait for the best opportunity to attempt a tackle and win possession of the ball.
- **Wide Base and Low Stance:** Instruct defenders to get low and create a wide base with their legs to enable them to mirror the attacker's changes of direction effectively.

By focusing on these technical aspects, defenders can become more adept at 1v1 defending. Regular practice and reinforcement of these skills will equip defenders to handle challenging situations with confidence and contribute to their team's defensive success on the field.