

PRESSING IN A 4-2-3-1 HIGH BLOCK

AGE PHASE: U17+

SESSION OVERVIEW

PRESSING IN A 4-2-3-1 HIGH BLOCK

LEVEL

- U17-First team

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

- Pressing in a compact unit
- Co-ordinating pressure and cover
- Dropping diagonally backwards if opponent breaks pressure

PART 1: 6+2 VS 4+2 POSSESSION GAME

- This practice is a small-scale possession game that is geared towards laying down the pressing concepts.
- The practice sees a group of 14 players split into a group of eight players and a group of six players.

PART 2: 7+GK VS 6+GK TACTICAL SITUATION GAME

- This practice builds upon Part 1 by applying the concepts in a tactical situation game.
- The practice sees a group of 15 players split into a group of eight players (seven outfield players and a goalkeeper) and a group of seven players (six outfield players and a goalkeeper).

PART 3: CONDITIONED 11v11

- This is a large-sided-game in which there are conditions to apply the pressing concepts to the whole team.
- The practice sees a group of 22 players split up into two groups of 11 players.

KEY

.....→
Ball movement

-----→
Player movement
without the ball

————→
Player movement
with the ball



Players



Cones



Flat marker



Cones with
flat marker



Goal



Mini-goal



Mannequin



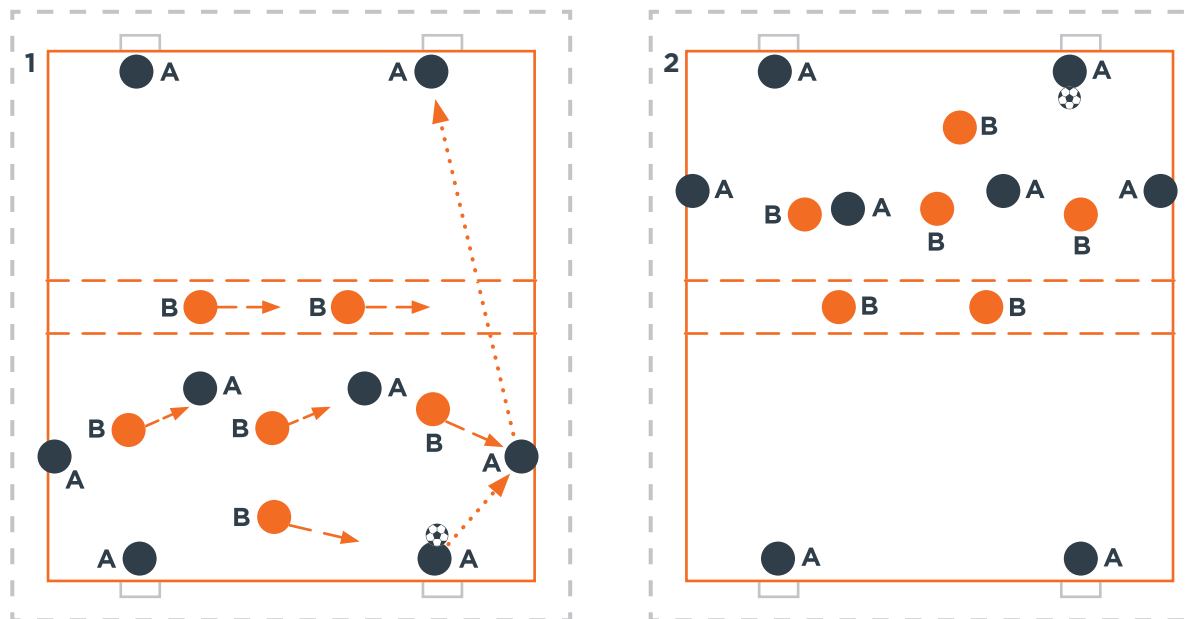
Pole



Football

FUNCTION

- This 6+2 vs 4+2 positional possession game sees one team – **Team A** – set up in a 4-2-2 shape against **Team B**, which positions in a 2-3-1 shape.
- **Team A** aims to connect **5 passes** in the initial 6v4 scenario (see the lower half of **Diagram 1**), before passing the ball towards their two teammates in the opposite half of the playing area.
- **Team B** presses in a 3-1 shape in the 6v4 scenario. Two players are restricted to the middle zone and shuffle across, trying to intercept passes from **Team A**.
- **Team A** scores a goal by connecting **5 passes** and then transferring the ball – with a pass on the ground – to the opposite side. **Team B** scores by intercepting the ball and scoring in one of the two small goals they are facing within **5 seconds**.
- If **Team A** successfully transfers the ball to the other side, two players stay in the initial zone, while the other four players sprint to the opposite side, quickly regaining the offensive shape (**Diagram 2**). **Team B** sprints across, quickly organising the two players in the central restricted zone and 3-1 defensive shape in the possession zone.
- Once on the opposite side, the sequence repeats itself – **Team A** connects **5 passes** before transferring it to the other side and **Team B** aims to recover possession and score in one of the two small goals they are facing.
- If a goal is scored by **Team B** or the ball goes out of bounds, a new ball will be played in on the side it went out on for **Team A** to restart.



COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

COMPACTNESS

- Press together in a compact unit, moving together in a 3-1 shape with the central thought of 'force play wide'.
- Once the first pass is played towards the sideline, shift together as a unit, stepping to defend the closest mark while being aware of defending passing lines.

SHIFTING

- The forward is responsible for forcing the first pass wide and not allowing the ball to be rotated through the centre-backs.
- Once the ball is in the side lane, the far-side winger must stay connected to his number 10, denying the possibility of a split pass between players and marking one of the holding midfielders.
- The two midfielders must shift with the play, stepping to defend the opposing midfielder if they receive behind the winger while the other marks the opposing 10.

BALL ROTATION

- If the opponent is able to rotate the ball through the second centre-back, the far-side winger will jump to press as the ball is travelling and deny the option to play to the full-back – especially if it is a poor pass or touch.
- The central midfielders must be ready to shift and deny passing options.
- If pressing the second centre-back is not possible, the group must drop diagonally to defend the space before initiating a new pressing sequence.

REORGANISE DEFENSIVE SHAPE

- If the opponent is able to successfully transfer the ball to the opposite side, the out-of-possession team must

initiate an immediate reaction to press the ball-carrier. The two new players must survey and communicate to the group of four and give clear information (force right, force left, man right, man left etc) in order to quickly establish the collective pressing.

COACHING DETAIL: OFFENSIVE TRANSITION

- When possession is recovered, quickly secure it with the first pass and look to switch play towards the opposite side to score a goal.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

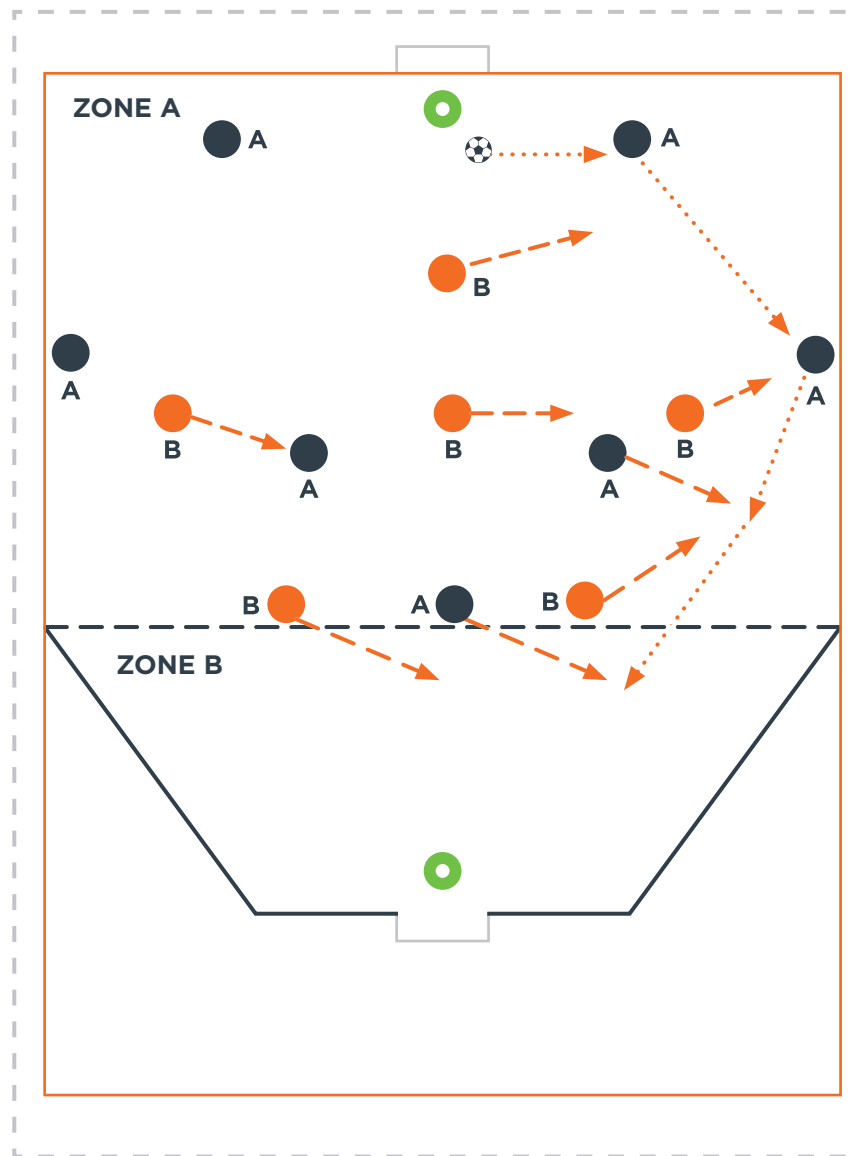
- Circulate the ball quickly, using as few touches as possible, even though there are no touch restrictions.
- Maintain positioning of the two centre-backs, the two full-backs and the two midfielders. The midfielders look to prioritise central movements and spaces.
- When possession is lost, apply a fast counter-press to regain the ball as quickly as possible. Once possession is regained, immediately reorganise team positioning.

7+GK VS 6+GK TACTICAL SITUATION GAME

PRESSING IN A
4-2-3-1 HIGH BLOCK

FUNCTION

- This 7+GK vs 6+GK tactical situation game builds off the previous positional possession game.
- **Team A** builds up in a 2-4-1 formation, while **Team B** presses in a 2-3-1 formation.
- The exercise begins with the **Team A** goalkeeper in Zone A. The team must connect **2 passes** before playing a pass into a teammate in Zone B – designated here by the dashed line.
- **Team B** aims to score a goal within **6 seconds** of recovering possession.
- The dashed line also serves as an offside line. Once a pass is played into that zone, it is a **1v1+GK situation** for **6 seconds**.
- If the ball goes out of bounds, a goal is scored or **Team B**'s defender recovers possession in Zone B, a new ball will begin with the **Team A** goalkeeper in Zone A.



7+GK VS 6+GK TACTICAL SITUATION GAME

PRESSING IN A
4-2-3-1 HIGH BLOCK

COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

COMPACTNESS

- Press together in a compact unit, moving together in a 2-3-1 shape with the central thought of 'force play wide'. Once the first pass is played towards the sideline, shift together as a unit, stepping to defend the closest mark while being aware of defending passing lines.

SHIFTING

- The forward is responsible for forcing the first pass wide and not allowing the ball to be rotated through the centre-backs.
- Once the ball is in the side lane, the far-side winger must stay connected to his number 10, denying the possibility of a split pass between players and marking one of the holding midfielders.
- The two midfielders must shift with the play, denying passing lines into the target players.

BALL ROTATION

- If the opponent is able to rotate the ball through the second centre-back, the far-side winger will jump to press as the ball is travelling and deny the option to play to the full-back – especially if it is a poor pass or touch.
- The central midfielders must be ready to shift and deny passing options.
- If pressing the second centre-back is not possible (late to press, ball rotated too fast), the group must drop diagonally to defend the space before initiating a new pressing sequence.

1v1 DEFENDING

- When the opponent is able to successfully receive in Zone B to initiate the 1v1+GK situation, the defender must first contain the attacker with the thought of forcing them wide.
- Use arms to control the attacker, but do not foul. Use 'choppy' steps before blocking any shot to limit the possibility of the attacker shooting through legs.

COACHING DETAIL: OFFENSIVE TRANSITION

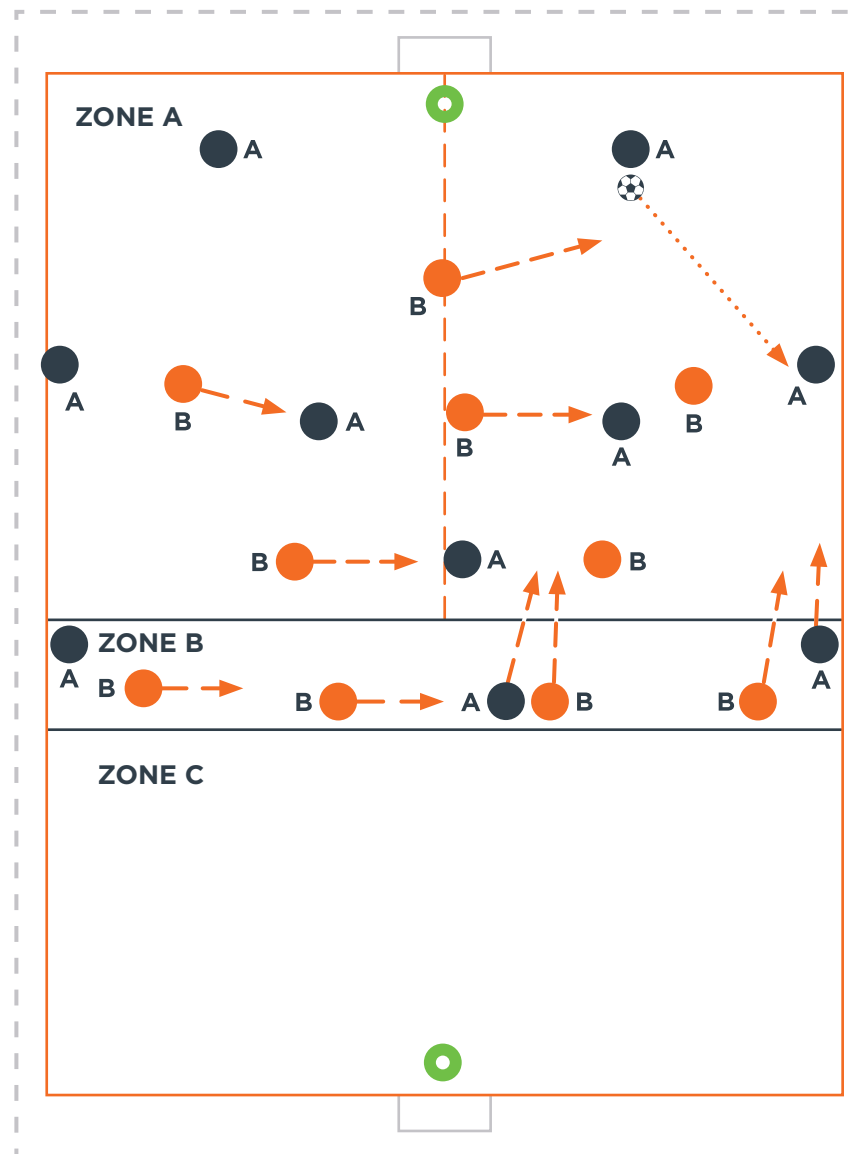
- When possession is recovered, quickly secure it with the first pass and look to switch play towards the opposite side to score a goal.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

- Circulate the ball quickly, using as few touches as possible, even though there are no touch restrictions.
- Maintain the positioning of the two centre-backs, the two full-backs and the three midfielders. The midfielders look to prioritise central movements and spaces.
- Alternate short and long passes, exposing defenders to different situations and making play unpredictable.
- When possession is lost, apply a fast counter-press to regain the ball as quickly as possible. Once possession is regained, immediately reorganise team positioning.

FUNCTION

- This conditioned 11v11 progresses from the previous practice by adding in a back four.
- **Team A** plays in a 2-4-1-3 formation, while **Team B** defends in a 4-2-3-1 formation.
- The exercise begins with **Team A**'s goalkeeper in Zone A, where there is a **7+GK vs 6** situation. After **2 passes** in Zone A, **Team A** looks to pass to a teammate in Zone C.
- In Zone B, there are three attackers for **Team A** and four defenders for **Team B**.
- Once the ball is in play, both **Team A** and **Team B** are allowed to have two players move from Zone B into Zone A. The location of the ball will dictate which players do this.
- Using the dashed line as a guide, the players on the same side as the ball are free to move into Zone A. In the example here, the ball is on the right side of the pitch, so the players on that side can move into Zone A. If the ball rotates to the other side, they must move back into Zone B to allow the players on the opposite side to move into Zone A.
- The three midfielders for **Team A** are allowed to make penetrating runs from Zone A into Zone C to receive a pass – but only one at a time.
- One midfielder on **Team B** can drop into Zone B.
- While the ball is in Zone A, the deeper black line closest to the **Team B** goal will serve as the offside line. Once play becomes a normal 11v11 or if **Team B** recovers the ball in Zone A, the normal offside rule is in effect.
- Once **Team A** progresses with the ball into Zone C, or **Team B** recovers the ball in Zone B or Zone C, the game becomes a live, normal 11v11 game. After a goal or a ball out of bounds over the end line, play restarts as pictured here. Play regular throw-ins once **Team A** progresses into Zone C.
- When **Team B** recovers possession in Zone A, they have **8 seconds** to score a goal. After a goal or a ball out of bounds, play restarts with the **Team A** goalkeeper.



COACHING DETAIL: OUT OF POSSESSION

COMPACTNESS

- Press together in a compact unit, moving together in a 4-2-3-1 shape with the central thought of 'force play wide'. Once the first pass is played towards the sideline, shift together as a unit, stepping to defend the closest mark while being aware of defending passing lines.

SHIFTING

- The forward is responsible for forcing the first pass wide and not allowing the ball to be rotated through the centre-backs.
- Once the ball is in the side lane, the far-side winger must stay connected to his number 10, denying the possibility of a split pass between players and marking one of the midfielders.
- The two midfielders must be aware of marking the opposing number 10 as well as protecting the space in front of the centre-backs.

BALL ROTATION

- If **Team A** are able to rotate the ball through the second centre-back, the far-side **Team B** winger will jump to press as the ball is travelling and deny the option to play to the full-back – especially if it is a poor pass or touch.
- The central midfielders must be ready to shift and deny passing options.
- If pressing the second centre-back is not possible, the group must drop diagonally to defend the space before initiating a new pressing sequence.

DEFENSIVE COVERAGE

- When the ball progresses into the side lane and the opposing forwards drop into Zone A, the team must ensure defensive coverage, denying the possibility of an opponent taking advantage of a defensive imbalance.
- If a defender steps to defend a direct mark, the defensive line must shift to ensure coverage in depth. If a centre-back follows an attacker too far, one of the defensive midfielders can drop into the defensive line to ensure defensive balance.

COACHING DETAIL: OFFENSIVE TRANSITION

- When possession is recovered, quickly secure it with the first pass and look to switch play towards the opposite side to score a goal.

COACHING DETAIL: MANAGING THE OPPOSITION

- Circulate the ball quickly, using as few touches as possible, even though there are no touch restrictions.
- Maintain the positioning of the two centre-backs, the two full-backs and the three midfielders. The midfielders look to prioritise central movements and spaces.
- When possession is lost, apply a fast counter-press to regain the ball as quickly as possible. Once possession is regained, immediately reorganise team positioning.