

Break on through to Changing the poi

Tactical considerations for breaking the opposition's pressing situation by Manni Klar, USSF and German A-license holder

More and more teams are using pressing tactics in any third of the field. So, improving your team's ability to quickly change the point of attack is even more important than ever. This is easier said than done. Players must incorporate the technical skills, and in addition to the technical skills, they also need individual, group and team tactical knowledge, combined with the psychological component.

Changing the point of attack

In order for opponents to increase numbers around the ball, they have to create a strong and a weak side (Illustration 1). Changing the point of attack means the ability to quickly play the ball into an area with less opposing players (weak side). The important word here is **quickly**.

The ball should be played to a player who is not positioned immediately around the ball, for example an outside midfielder or an outside fullback who comes from a back position. With a sprint, this player initiates a long pass into the open space. After a slow buildup, the player with the ball must swiftly change the rhythm and the speed of play by quickly changing the point of attack. It is imperative this player has vision (the ability to see the entire field) and makes eye contact with the open player in order to make the pass. The pass needs to be precise and accurately played into the open player's run. To take advantage of the weak side, this player should then go forward directly toward the goal with his first touch.

Technical abilities

First we need to address the technique associated with changing the point of attack. In order to quickly penetrate on the weak side, the player must be able to drive the ball

(using the instep, or outside of the foot for rapid delivery) from one side of the field to the other.

► First choice: long flighted balls, games without pressure (Illustr. 2)

This way, your team can create a 1 v. 1 situation for the player that initiated the pass to be played to the other side. He also needs to have the ability to dribble with the ball at high speed (tempo dribbling). If the ball is passed through three or four players, it will most likely give the opposing team enough time to move the defense and to adjust accordingly.

► Second choice: quick short-passing game, by bi-passing certain positions (Illustr. 3). Precise passing skills for medium- to long-range passes on the ground, as well as in the air, are a must.

Psychological considerations

As mentioned earlier, a good strong foot is not enough to be able to change the point of

Illustration 1

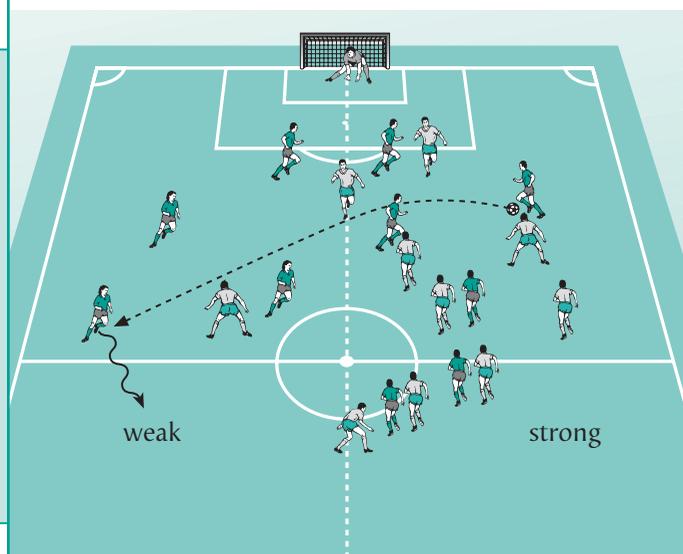
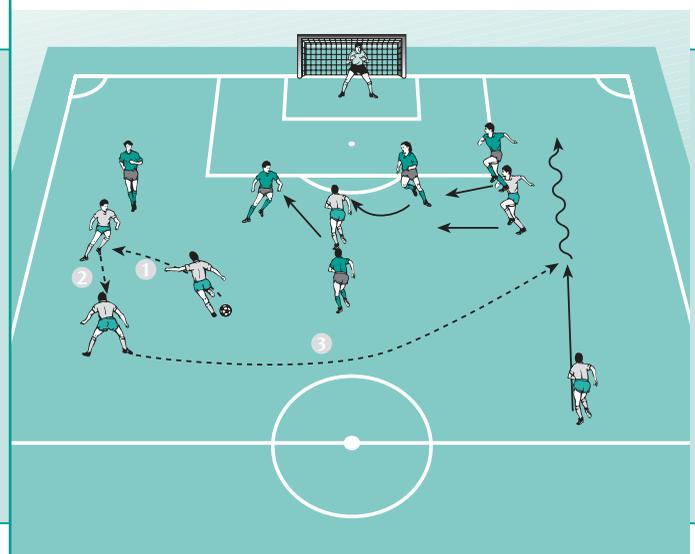


Illustration 2





the other side: nt of attack

attack. Another key factor is vision, to have “eyes in the back of your head”. Players need to know where their opponent is positioned and where their own players are on the field, preferably at all times. Think of how often we see youth players, especially U16 and below, play the ball to one side of the field, pass it back, and even though no one moved or tried to change the existing picture, they pass the ball right back into that original position, and eventually lose it. (Illustr. 4). But this is not limited to the younger age groups, where it is to be expected because players don’t have the necessary tactical knowledge or sometimes the skill or power to play the right ball. At times we can also see it at the professional level as well. So this tells us how difficult it is sometimes to see the entire field, especially when players are under pressure.

Tactics

Another important factor is team shape. If your team does not spread the field very well when it is in possession, then it will be very difficult to change the point of attack because no one will be open on the weak side. From a psychological standpoint, it also takes a lot of discipline to stay wide. This is true especially if players don’t see the ball for 10 min-

utes even though they are doing the right thing by staying wide. Again, younger players especially have the tendency to move into the center too early, primarily because they want to be where the immediate action is. So be patient with your players, because changing the point of attack is not an easy affair. Players should also avoid dangerous square passes that can lead to counterattack situations for the opponent.

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Summary

Technique:

- ability to play medium- to long-range passes on the ground or in the air with the instep (driven) and with the outside of the foot
- receiver’s first touch (sometimes chest) is vital; should play ball forward if possible
- tempo dribbling to beat opponents in 1 v. 1 situations

Tactics:

- vision (the ability to see the entire field)
- team shape when in possession to spread the opposing team in all directions
- at the beginning of his run, the open player might have to shake off an opponent with a body fake and a sudden change of direction
- after the ball has been switched, quickly penetrate and take players on in 1 v. 1 situations
- coordinate runs by forwards and attacking players to unbalance opposing defense

Psychology:

- discipline to hold your position when necessary

Illustration 3

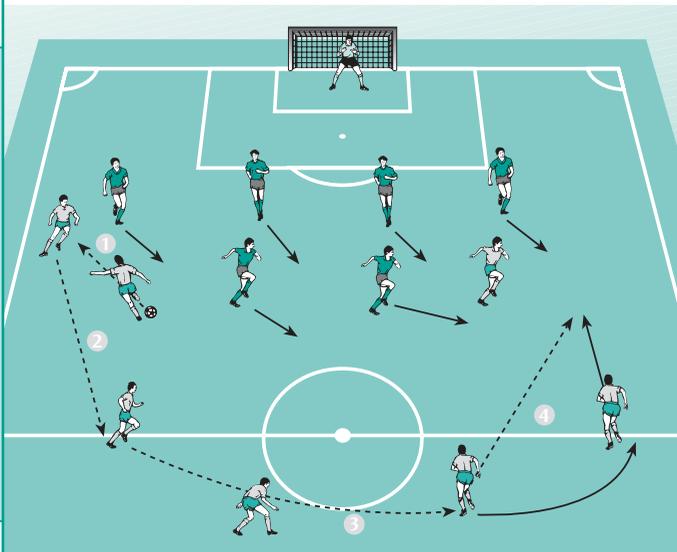
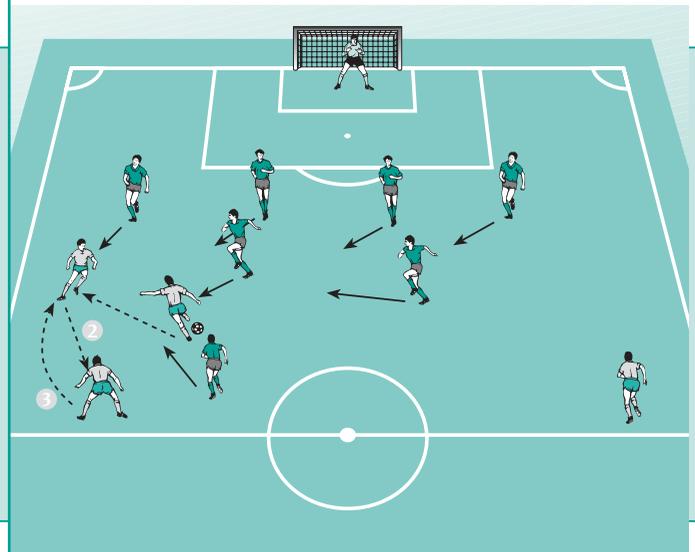


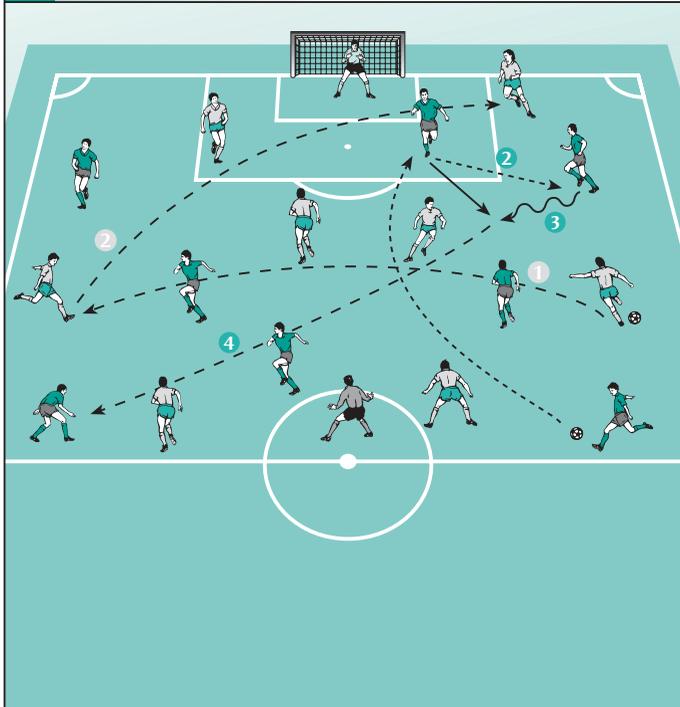
Illustration 4



CHANGING THE POINT OF ATTACK

WARM-UP

1



Setup

• Divide players into groups of two with one ball each. You can include your goalkeepers in this exercise as well.

Sequence

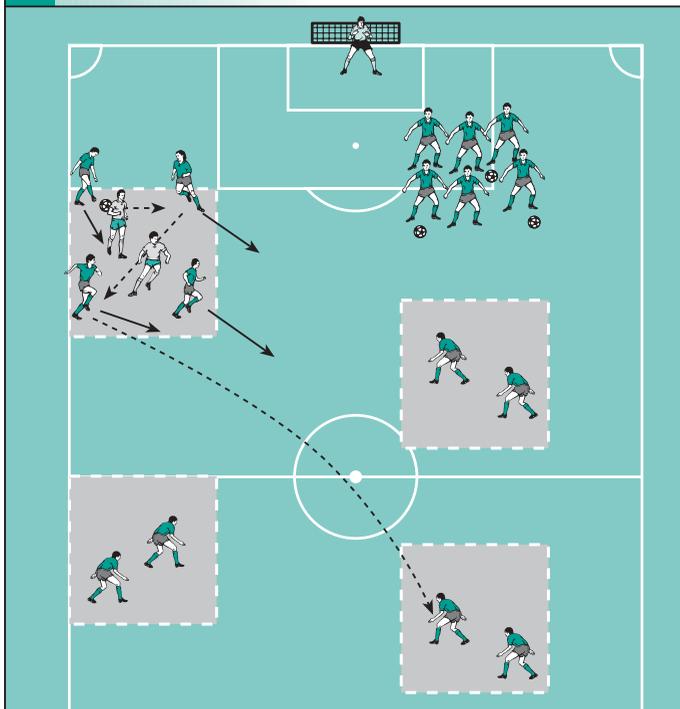
- Players roam freely through one half of the field and play 10- to 15-yard passes to each other; in between, players should stretch.
- After eight to 10 minutes, extend passes to 30 yards or the entire width of the field. Make sure players are loose and stretched at that point.

Coaching Points

- accuracy of passes whether they are played on the ground or in the air
- driven balls with the instep, passes with the outside foot
- first touch and receiving of ball (e.g. chest)

PLAYING OUT OF PRESSURE SITUATIONS

2



Setup

Lay out four grids 12 x 10-yard grids. Make sure grids are staggered and approximately 25 to 30 yards apart. Place six players in one grid. Place two players each in the other three grids. Extra players juggle balls in groups of two or three (active rest period) off to the side. Make sure you have plenty of balls available.

Sequence

- The six players play a 4 v. 2 keep-away. Depending on skill level, reduce amount of touches to speed up play or increase number of touches so players are forced to control the ball more quickly.
- If a defender wins the ball he trades places with the attacker that made the mistake.
- After the four players have put together six passes or more, they can switch the ball accurately into one of the other grids.
- The last four in possession have to follow that pass. The last two to arrive become defenders. Play resumes 4 v. 2.

Coaching Points

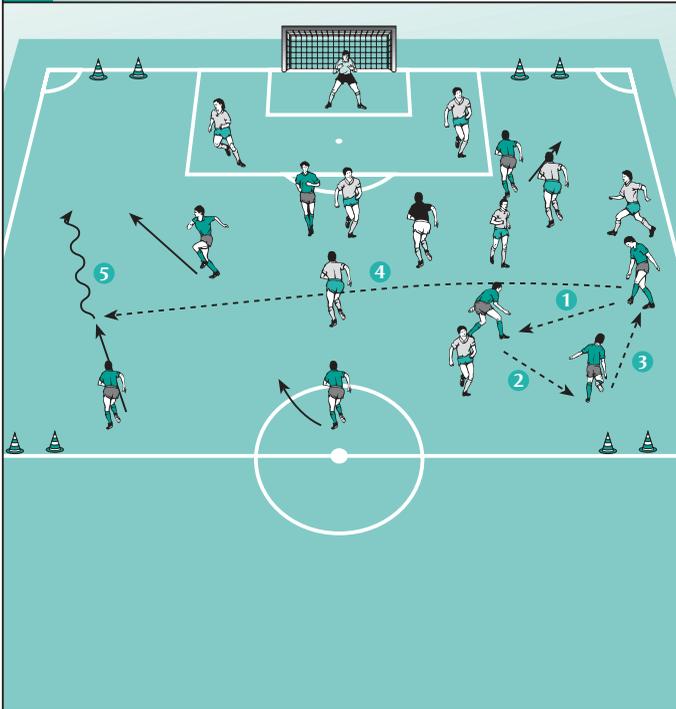
- first touch to create good angles to play the next pass
- playing ball away from pressure
- identifying the right moment to change to point of attack
- sure passes are driven and accurate right to the target
- exchanging players after three minutes (this exercise is very intense)



CHANGING THE POINT OF ATTACK

FIVE GOAL GAME

3



Setup

- Use one half of the field. Place two small goals on each endline approximately two yards from the sideline.
- Divide players into two teams of eight, plus one neutral player who will always play with the team that is in ball possession.

Sequence

- Players play 8 v. 8 with one neutral player. Each team tries to score on the two goals. Teams of eight have limited touches, and neutral player has unlimited touches.

Variation

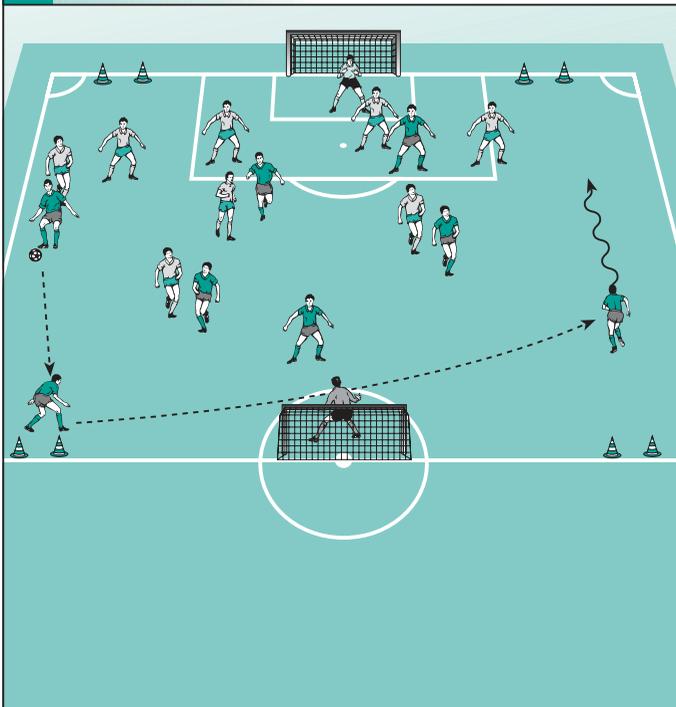
- Play 9 v. 9 without neutral players and with unlimited touches.

Coaching Points

- first touch
- the ability to recognize when to quickly change the point of attack
- good team shape when in ball possession
- holding wide positions

SIX GOAL GAME

4



Setup

- Use one half of the field. Place one standard goal on each endline and two small goals on each endline two yards from the sideline.
- Divide players into two teams of eight, plus goalkeepers.

Sequence

- Players play 8 v. 8 plus goalkeepers on three goals each. When one side is too crowded, players should try to change the point of attack and go toward the other two goals.
- Goals scored on small goals count for three points; goals scored on regular goals count for one point.

Coaching Points

- Apply all coaching points taught throughout the entire practice in this game.
- Allow players to play the last 10 to 15 minutes without any interruptions.