

SOUTHAMPTON

Mauricio Pochettino
Pressing initiation

Overview:

This session coaches players on understanding defensive pressing. It's important to practise the key elements to identify how, when and where we can apply pressing technique, and that includes adopting the right shape tactically and togetherness of the group, as well as being able to identify the right moment to close down.

We see the benefits of this session paying off every week – indeed, good pressing technique is central to the intense brand of football we play.

“As soon as the ball is moved to a new area of the pitch, defenders must regroup and press quickly.”

PRESSING INITIATION

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch plus 15 yards

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

10v10 plus two keepers

SESSION TIME

60mins

What do I get the players to do?

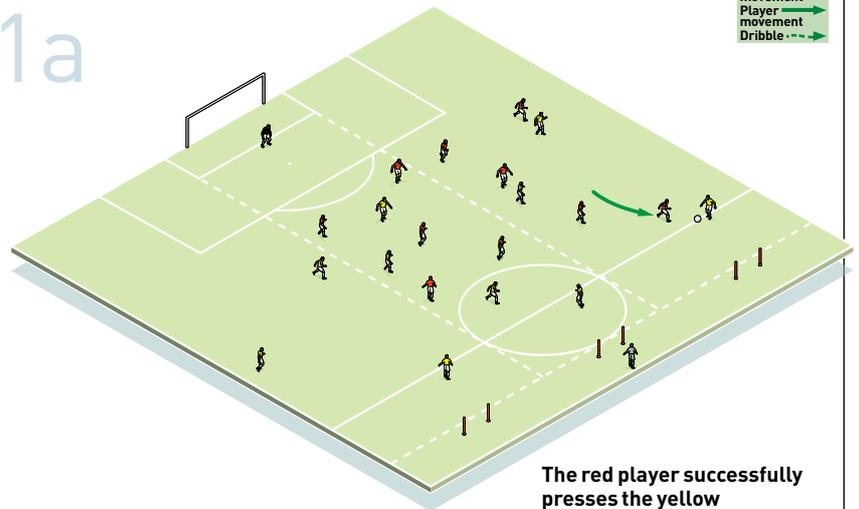
We divide our practice area into three, with three poles (five yards wide) spaced out evenly at one end, and a full-size goal at the other. There are two teams of 10, plus two keepers.

Yellows attack the top goal, while reds score by passing through the poles at the other end of the pitch. Pressing opponents closely at all times is imperative (1a).

There are no more than three passes allowed in each area and players are limited to three touches each. Reds must spread out and switch play, making use of all three areas. They score one point for scoring through the poles and three points if the keeper can anticipate which gate the ball will be scored through by gathering.

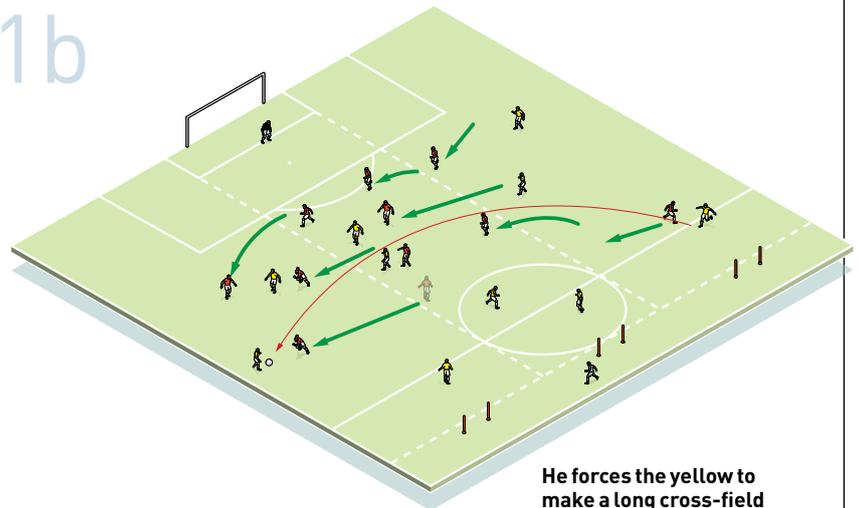
Yellow defenders must press at every opportunity, closing down space in front of attackers and jockeying opponents in looking to force an interception or error. We condition the practice so that if the ball is in one wide channel, the team out

1a



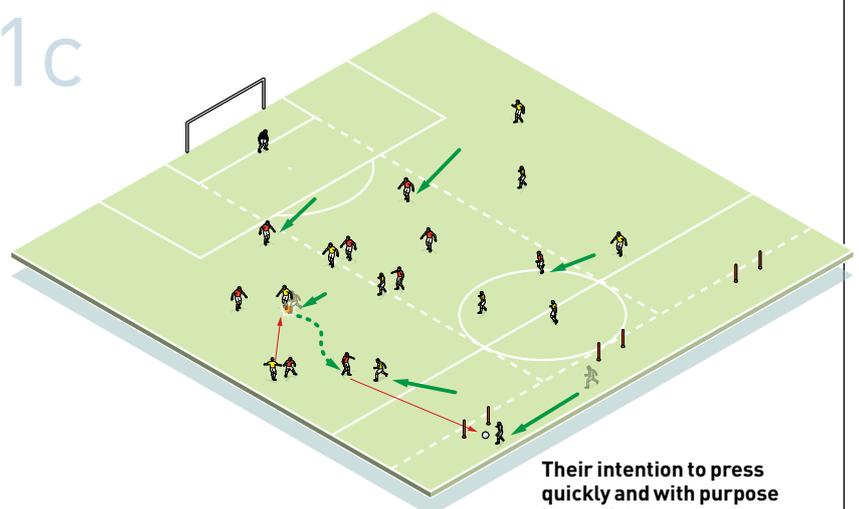
The red player successfully presses the yellow defender

1b



He forces the yellow to make a long cross-field pass, which means all reds must vacate the opposite wide channel

1c



Their intention to press quickly and with purpose immediately prompts an interception, and a threaded pass to the keeper sees the reds score three points



Mauricio Pochettino
SOUTHAMPTON

Prior to arriving in the Barclays Premier League, fans in the UK might have best known Mauricio Pochettino as the man who conceded the crucial penalty that meant England triumphed over Argentina at the 2002 World Cup.

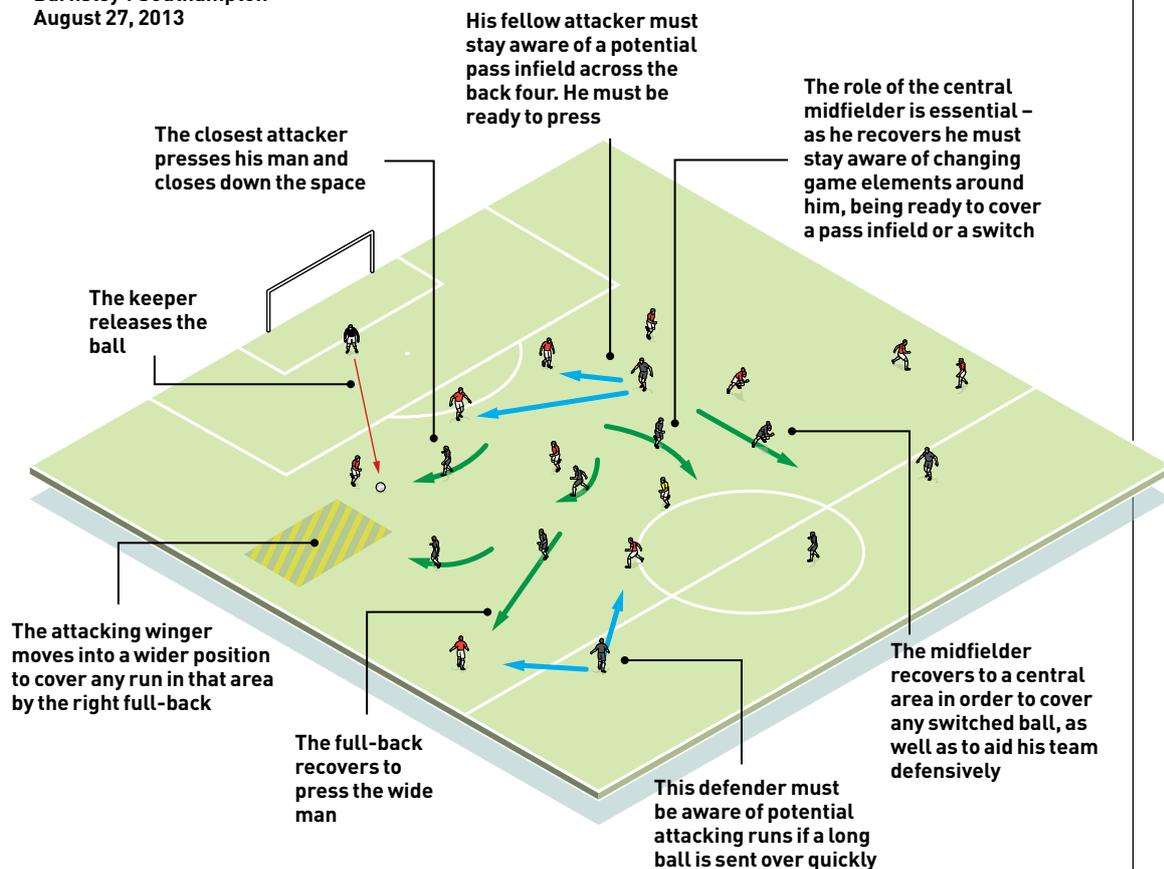
But following a glittering playing career that saw the centre-back make 20 appearances for his country, as well as starring for Newell's Old Boys, Espanyol (three spells), PSG and Bordeaux, the Argentine moved into coaching, taking the reins at Espanyol and immediately guiding the La Liga outfit away from the foot of the table in the 2008/09 campaign.

Pochettino remained at the club until November 2012, and after a short break from the game, arrived at Southampton, becoming only the second Argentine manager in the English game, after Ossie Ardiles.

The 42-year-old has impressed in his first full season in charge of the Saints, leading the club to a comfortable mid-table finish and, this year, overseeing impressive wins against Liverpool and Newcastle United, as well as continuing to maintain the club's burgeoning academy set-up.

PRESSING INITIATION

MATCH DETAIL:
Capital One Cup, second round
Barnsley v Southampton
August 27, 2013



of possession must vacate the opposite channel (1b). Not only does this encourage plenty of opposition players near to the play and the opportunity to press tightly, but when the ball is switched back to the 'empty' flank, it quickly tests defenders' ability to regroup, close down and, hopefully, intercept (1c).

What are the key things to look out for?

This session is all about decision-making, so defenders must communicate well with each other

at all times. As soon as the ball is moved to a new area of the pitch, defenders must regroup and press quickly.

How do I progress the practice?

We can progress this practice by adding normal goals instead of poles. We can also increase the size of the middle area to make the challenge more difficult for the defending team.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PRESSING

- Pressing may be done by the individual, but it requires player unity and a shared understanding.
- There are three generally accepted types of positional pressing: ultra-offensive (in the opponents' defensive third), offensive (in the opponents' half or around halfway) and defensive (in your own half).
- Stand-by pressing is pressing carried out by one player, while team mates stay 'short' and concentrate on covering the spaces. Aggressive pressing is typically done on flanks, where space is tight and multi-player pressing can see possession turned over.
- Invited pressing is a technique linked to stand-by pressing, which forces an opponent to play the ball in a certain direction so that an aggressive phase of pressing can then be undertaken.
- Pressing players will usually move at pace towards their target and slow when a couple of yards away.
- Pressing is as relevant and necessary for attackers as it is for midfielders and defenders.