

LMA AMBASSADOR

**Simon
Davey**
**Attacking
central
areas in a
diamond
system**

Overview:

This session aims to improve combination play in the attacking third of the pitch. It focuses on movement, interchanging of positions and disguised passing, but always with the aim of achieving an end product, namely a shot on goal! It's important to practise this because most goalscoring opportunities are created from central areas.

I coach in the United States and witness the majority of American teams playing with a conventional 4-4-2 system. Using three or more central midfield players allows me to have more bodies in this area, and therefore greater creativity, increased unpredictability and, ultimately, the upper hand.

I used the diamond system regularly when I managed Barnsley. We had three very technical players who could control the tempo of any game with a livewire at the top of the diamond. A lot of our success came from being able to play this system.

ATTACKING CENTRAL AREAS IN A DIAMOND SYSTEM

SET-UP

AREA

Up to a half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, cones (or poles), goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to full squad

SESSION TIME

Warm-up 15mins,
Game situation and progressions 30mins

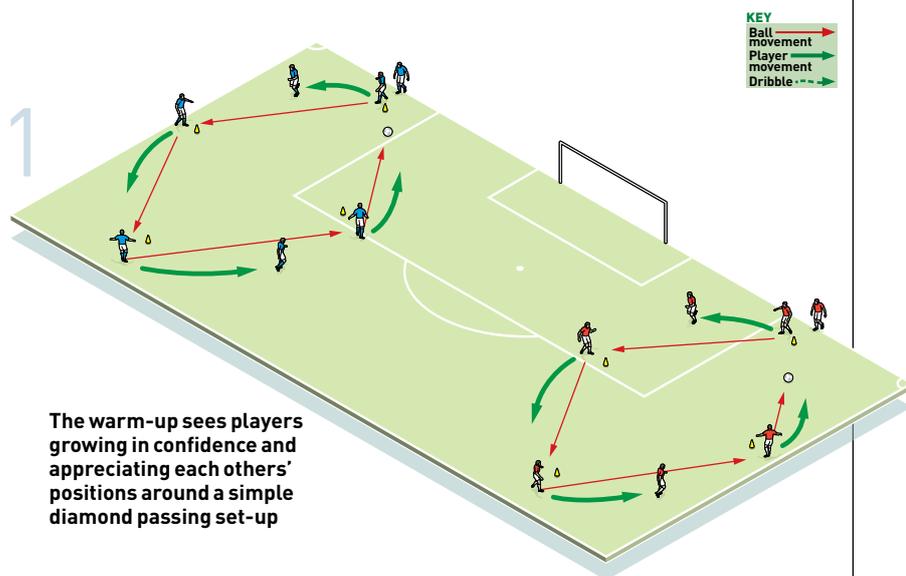
What do I get the players to do?

Warm-up

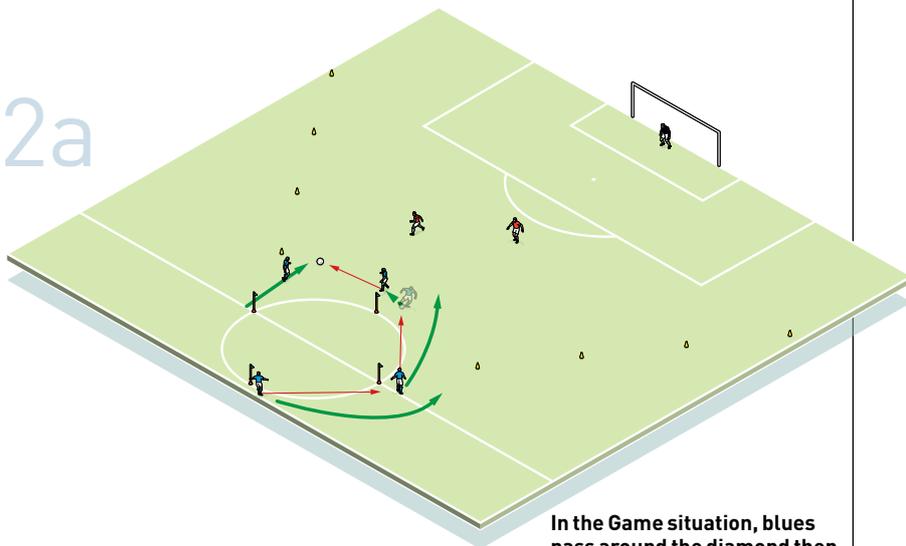
We set up as shown on a full-sized pitch (1), with two diamond shaped passing drills in the same half, each 30x30 yards. This basic passing drill gets players appreciating each others' positions in the diamond, with the focus being on passing and following, one-twos, disguised passes, turns, movement and receiving skills. We'll progress from basic to complex as the players grow more comfortable with what's being asked of them.

Game situation

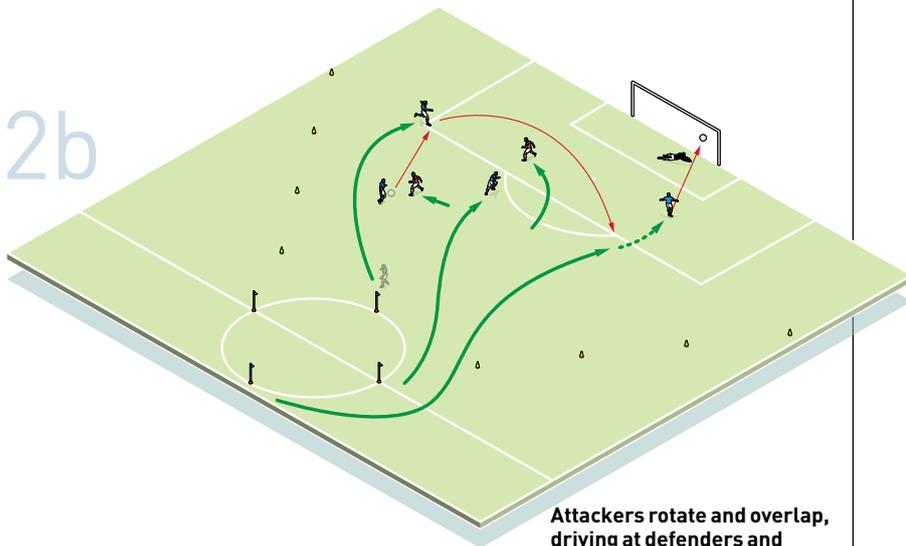
We now progress to the main practice using the same passing, movement and receiving skills from the warm-up. We add two defenders and a keeper, and start the practice from the bottom of the diamond, as shown (2a). This can be placed anywhere from the halfway line to 30 yards from goal, with the outside poles coned off to the touchline.



The warm-up sees players growing in confidence and appreciating each others' positions around a simple diamond passing set-up



In the Game situation, blues pass around the diamond then spark an attack against two red defenders



Attackers rotate and overlap, driving at defenders and working in effective support of one another in order to produce an effort on goal



**Simon Davey
LMA AMBASSADOR**

Simon Davey is a richly qualified UEFA coach who has overseen the youth academies at Preston North End and Barnsley, and continued his progression at the latter to become caretaker manager then, in 2006, first-team manager. In his first season in charge, he guided the Tykes to shock FA Cup victories against Liverpool and Chelsea on their way to narrow defeat in a Wembley semi-final against Cardiff City. In April 2010 Davey joined Darlington, moving on to Hereford United, before accepting the chance to coach in the US with the Southern Soccer Academy (Chelsea Development Partner). As a player, he played for Swansea City, Carlisle United, Preston and Darlington.

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Now encouraging interchanging of positions, attackers decide the right moment to break from the diamond, and we play to a finish, with the end product being a shot on goal (2b).

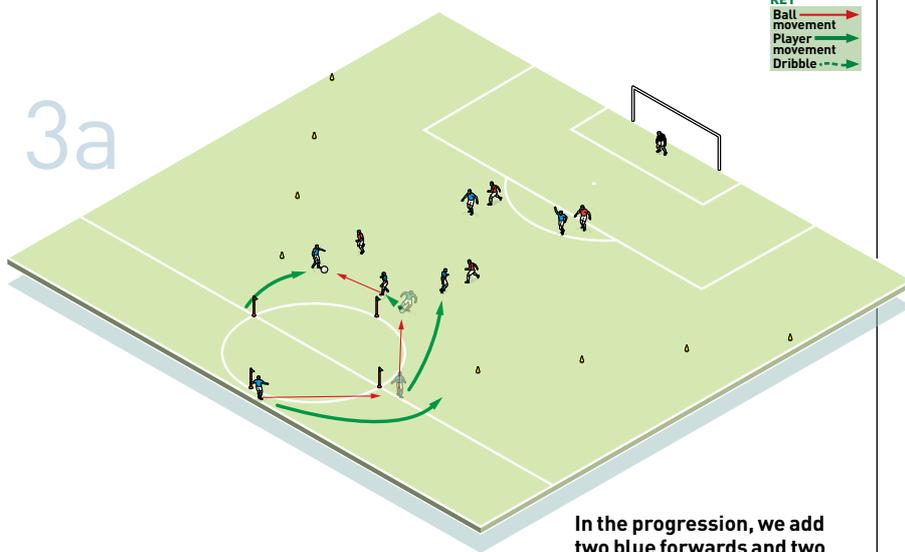
How do I progress the game?

The obvious progression is to restrict players' touches. Past that, we can add two forwards and two defending midfielders (3a), insist a move must include technical elements such as tricks or disguised passes (3b), or additionally set a time limit for players to get their shots away (3c). Finally, we could factor in a passing limit before that final shot.

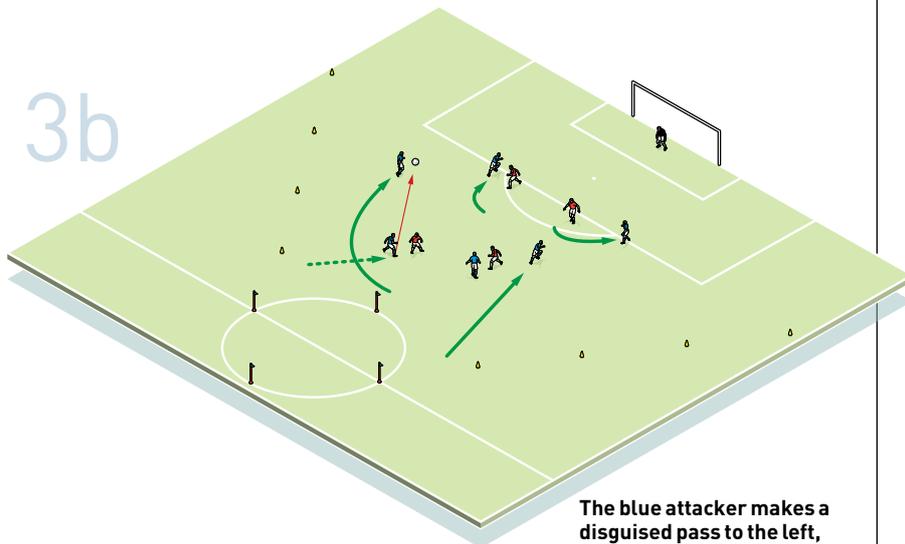
What are the key things to look out for?

Good weight and accuracy of pass is essential. If players are not technically proficient in these then the move will break down quickly and we'll be susceptible to the counter-attack. Driving direct at the goal and committing defenders is something we want to see, and for that tactic to have maximum effect, it requires positive and willing movement off the ball by supporting players, each expectant of a pass into his path. Finishing early and confidently is a must. ■

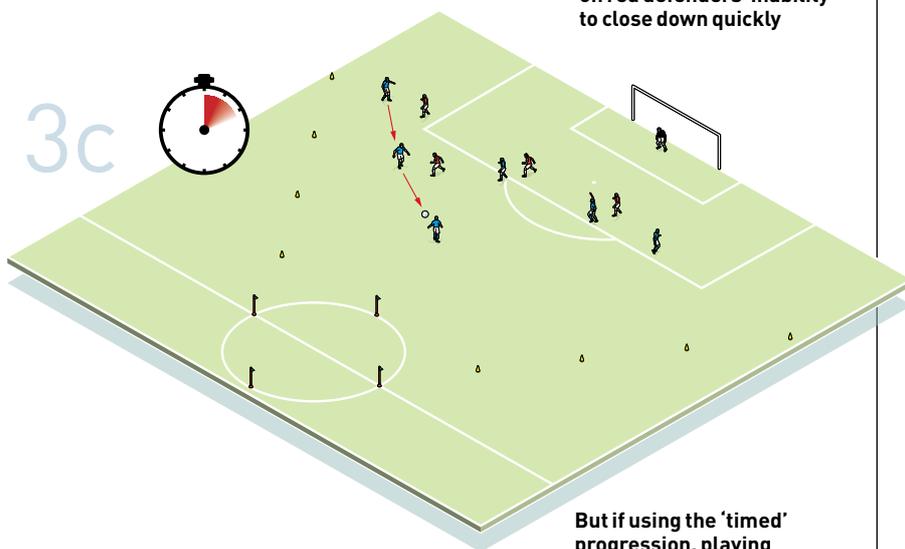
KEY
 Ball movement →
 Player movement →
 Dribble →



In the progression, we add two blue forwards and two defending midfielders



The blue attacker makes a disguised pass to the left, with his winger capitalising on red defenders' inability to close down quickly



But if using the 'timed' progression, playing backwards and a failure to get into the box will risk the attack 'expiring', at which point it is halted and reset