

LUTONTOWN

John Still Dominant defending

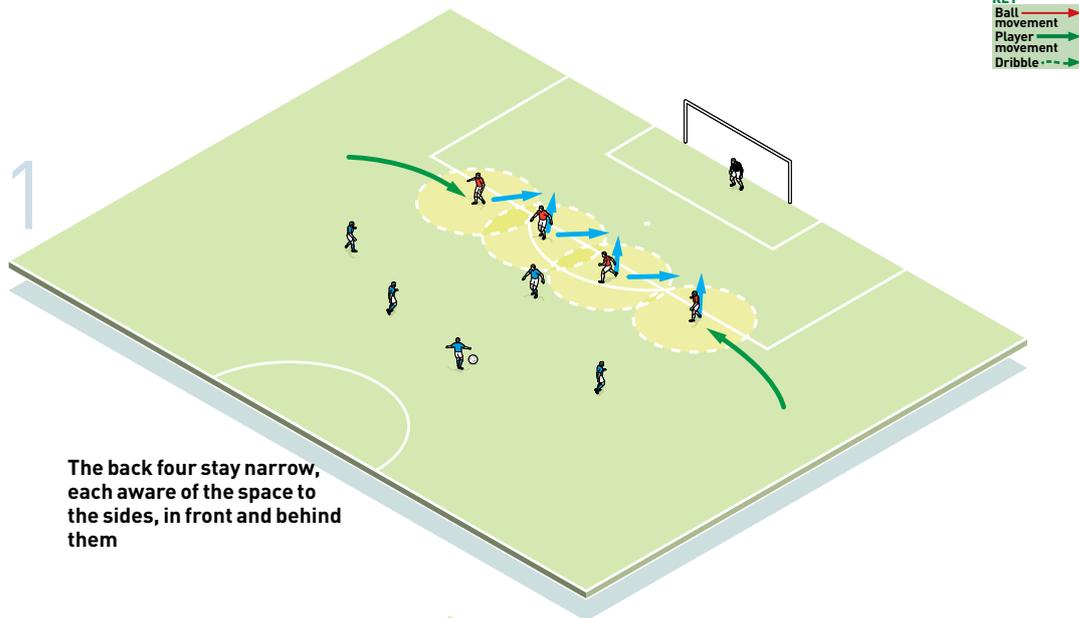
Overview:

This session is about defending using, organising and managing a back four, with one defensive midfielder player.

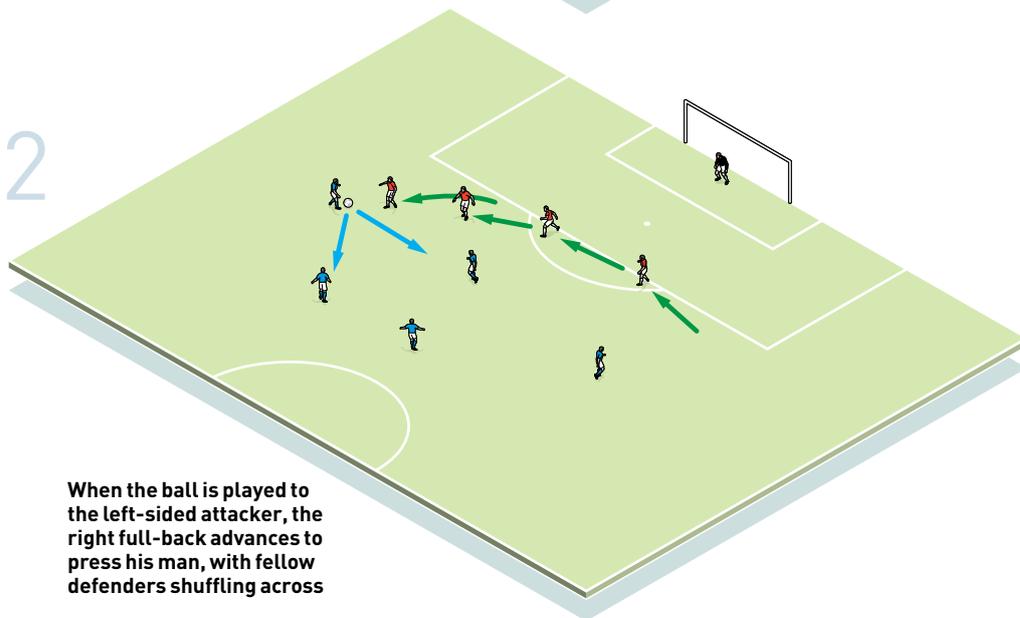
It goes without saying, not conceding in matches offers a statistical and psychological boost to every player, breeding confidence and cementing an 'all for one' attitude, so keeping clean sheets is always a good principle onto which we might construct a measured gameplan. This is a practice that is match specific, so its use is obvious and can be applied to every game we play.

“Not conceding in matches offers a statistical and psychological boost to every player, breeding confidence and cementing an 'all for one' attitude.”

DOMINANT DEFENDING



The back four stay narrow, each aware of the space to the sides, in front and behind them



When the ball is played to the left-sided attacker, the right full-back advances to press his man, with fellow defenders shuffling across

KEY
Ball movement →
Player movement →
Dribble - - - →

SET-UP

AREA

Half pitch

EQUIPMENT

Balls, goals

NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Up to full squad

SESSION TIME

Main session 20mins,
Progression 10mins

What do I get the players to do?

We set up as shown on a full pitch, with a back four and a defensive midfielder in position. We can build the offensive elements as the practice progresses, to a point where we may have two strikers, two wingers, two attacking midfielders and two attacking full-backs attacking this bank of players. In the initial

set-up, however, we are looking to cement defensive principles with a simple back four and a handful of attackers.

Staying narrow(1)

The first principle must be that the back four play narrow. Balls should never be played between them, so players must be equally spaced and always aware of left and right threats.

Reacting to a wing attack(2)

If the ball is played wide, the defensive reaction must be to shuffle across and stop the threat. Preventing the forward pass is the key aim, so defenders must try to get the opposition to play the ball back or square. They do this by ensuring the nearest defender confronts the player,



John Still
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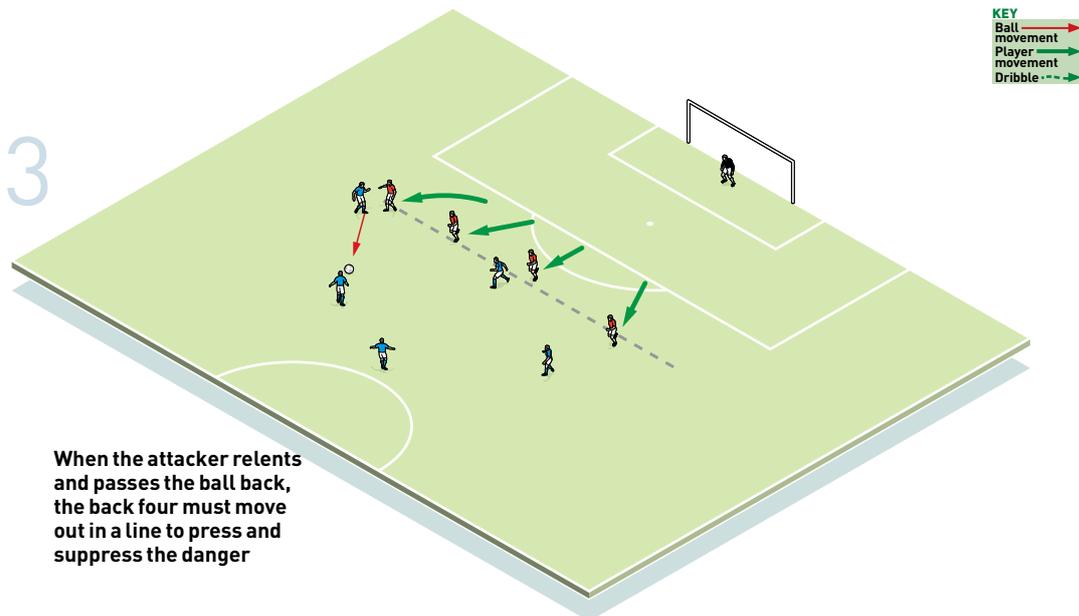
John Still is currently overseeing a fantastic resurgence for former top flight side Luton Town, having masterminded the Hatters' return to the Football League last season following a five-year absence.

The club are now well placed to achieve back-to-back promotions, further validation that Londoner Still is one of the most adept in the lower leagues at putting together young, competitive teams, having previously taken Dagenham & Redbridge from the Conference to League One.

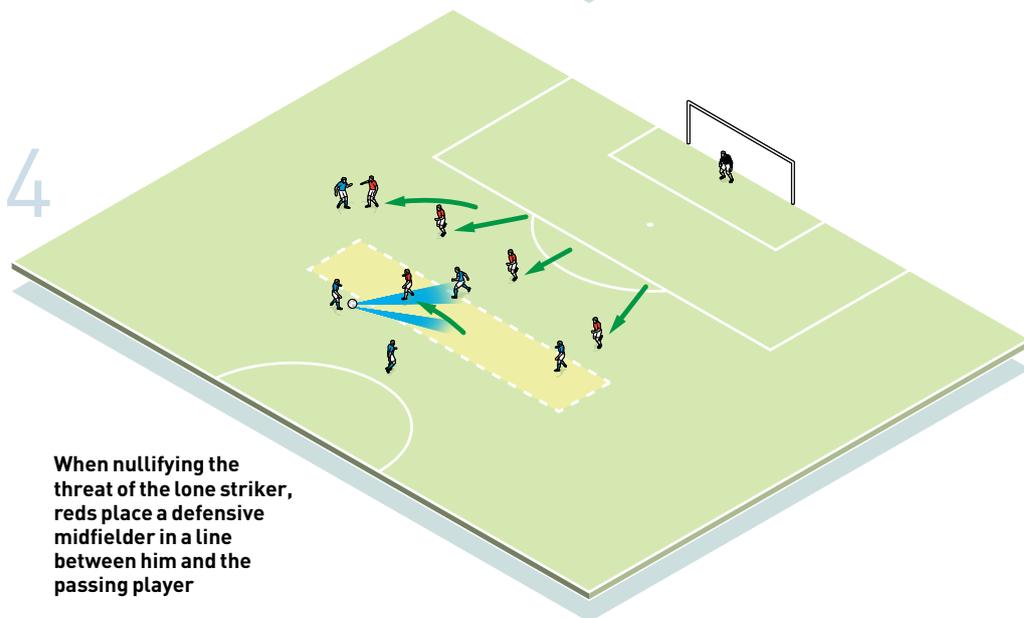
Still has also clinched promotion out of non-league with Maidstone United and Barnet, and next year celebrates three decades in management after his playing career was cut short at the age of 26 due to a knee injury.

“The intention of pushing up and suffocating space increases the chances of the press turning over possession.”

DOMINANT DEFENDING



When the attacker relents and passes the ball back, the back four must move out in a line to press and suppress the danger



When nullifying the threat of the lone striker, reds place a defensive midfielder in a line between him and the passing player

with other team mates staggering their moves towards the ball whilst still covering as much of the full width as possible.

Pressing the retreat (3)

If the ball is forced back down the pitch, the back four must squeeze up in a line, pressing the attacking threat and suffocating space. It's essential that players move up in a line together.

Using a defensive midfielder (4)

When the opposition use a lone attacker to disturb the defensive line, we will bring in a defensive midfielder, whose job it is to stop the pass into the forward's feet. He does this by getting in the line of the ball and player.

How do I progress the session?

To enhance the challenge for the defenders, we can allow an overlapping full-back to get behind his opposite man. This means the defensive midfielder will now need to slot into the spot vacated by the central defender.

What are the key things to look out for?

The back four must stay narrow, communicating well at all times and being alert to attacking runners. Covering must be automatic should a defender get pulled out of position, and the intention of pushing up and suffocating space increases the chances of the press turning over possession. ■