

PRACTICING A STYLE OF PLAY

In the previous article we discussed how to choose a certain style of play. We reviewed several factors that can influence the decision making process. The “hand of the coach” becomes visible once the decision has been made on which team organization/formation, and the basic tasks belonging to that organization/formation, will be used. Which aspect should you pay attention to as a coach?

Many coaches in the Netherlands elect to play with a 1:4:3:3 team organization/formation. Once that decision has been made a coach must also decide on a formation in midfield: does the midfield play with the point forward or with the point backward? After that, a coach must decide what the objective is and which methodical steps are required to reach that objective. Is it possible to train this in one practice or should these methodical steps be spread out over several practices?

CO-OPERATION

We will assume that we are looking at U18 players that play at a fairly high level. The objective is: improving the build-up on the opposing team's half, in which the co-operation between the attacking midfielder and the forwards, while searching for open spaces, will improve so chances can be created and goals can be scored. The emphasis is placed on the insight and the co-operation of the players, while at the same time the coach observes the qualities of the individual players: is he good in passing, dribbling and in taking players on, and does the player recognize at which moment in the game he should undertake these actions? The various technical components are covered in each practice, especially when working with younger players. A coach must form a clear notion of what the selected objective means for the practice. A prerequisite is that the players open up the space as much as possible. The players must also have the insight as to what the value of

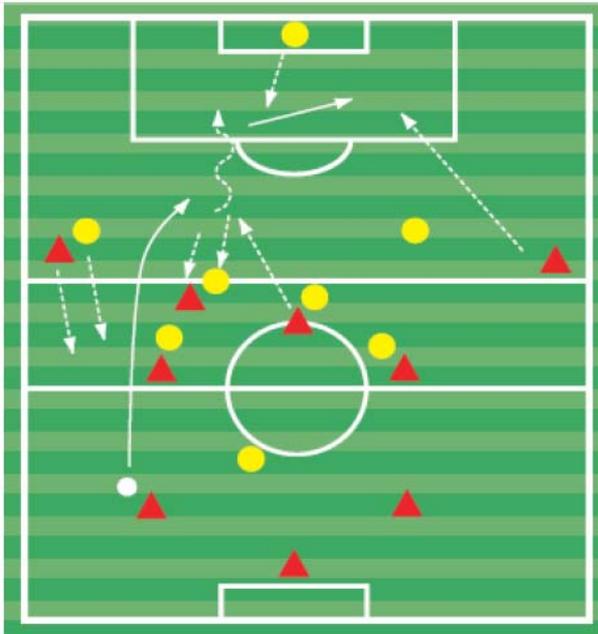
positional play is. The choice of certain positions in respect of teammates and of the opponent must lead to having at least one, but preferably more, players that are open. The quality of the positional play is the determining factor in having success. The following factors play an important role in this process:

- a high ball-circulation (the opponent has to run more)
- selecting the right moment to open up (not too early, not too late)
- selecting the right position (not too close to the offside line)



STEP BY STEP

In the following schematic overview you can see several methodical steps a coach takes to practice and to improve upon a certain style of play (using a central attacking midfielder). Of course there are many ways possible to do this. Obviously one step doesn't mean that it all is done in one practice. This step can return in several practices. In the next article we will elaborate on the last step (the game situation).



STEP 1: see drawing

Team organization/formation

1:2:3:3 vs. 1:3:3:1

Role opposing team:

Pressure immediately (forwards) and “squeeze” (exaggerate) towards the ball.

Emphasis:

- Space and field occupancy
- Right moment of (explosive) positional choices
- High ball-circulation
- What does the movement of a team-mate mean for you? (Q+A with a player)

STEP 2:

Team organization/formation

1:2:3:3 vs. 1:4:3:1

Role opposing team:

- See above
- Sweeper gives support in the back of other defenders

Emphasis:

- See above
- Make several consecutive running actions to open up and to be available to receive the ball

STEP 3:

Team organization/formation:

1:3:3:3 vs. 1:4:3:2

Role opposing team:

- Falls back to the top of the center circle and then applies pressure on player with the ball

Emphasis:

- See above

STEP 4:

Team organization/formation:

1:4:3:3 vs. 1:4:3:3

Role opposing team:

- Opposing team also plays with the central midfielder playing “high”

Emphasis:

Game situation