

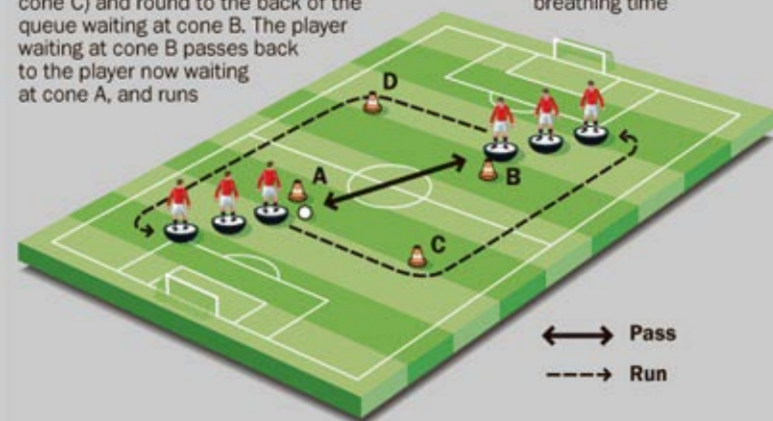
# Coaching masterclass

Steve McClaren's guide to getting the best out of a training session

## 1 The warm-up: pass and follow

No doing laps around the pitch, the players warm up by passing the ball from cone A to a team-mate at cone B, and then running wide (outside cone C) and round to the back of the queue waiting at cone B. The player waiting at cone B passes back to the player now waiting at cone A, and runs

outside a fourth cone D (opposite to C, in a diamond) to the back of the first queue. This is repeated at three stations so there is only breathing time



## 2 6 v 6

"Players always loved this," McClaren says, as two small areas are coned off. "It's about setting the tone for keeping possession and you can also use 6 v 3, 3 v 1 or 4 v 2. We'd always do this with Manchester United and, certainly, with England, as a warm-up activity." In this instance, bibs are issued, and in a 6 v 6, players score a goal by keeping possession for six successive passes.

"The coaches control the tempo," McClaren points out, "and sometimes I'll cheat by throwing a ball in quickly, to see who's most alert." The fluency of possession increases, and the coach urges a side to keep going after six passes to see if they can make it to 12 and score another goal



## 3 9 v 9

"The key to possession is the first six passes," McClaren says, "because after that, the game stretches out and you can do more with your possession." Again, players score by chalking up six uninterrupted passes. The progression in this activity is to introduce a maximum of two touches

## 4 9 v 9, end to end

The session is clearly evolving: we've gone from passing and moving to a situation more closely resembling a real match. This time, a goal is scored by touching the ball down immediately behind a coned-off line at either end of an area about two thirds of the pitch. McClaren encourages the defenders to play the ball across the back line, keeping possession as a priority, but with the whole team moving up as a unit. He stops the play when a couple of defenders have been exchanging passes so frequently that they have invited their opponents almost on top of them. "If there's too many short passes in a tight area without progressing, you'll lose possession," he says

## 5 10 v 10, with goals

The nets are wheeled in, on a shortened pitch, and McClaren asks the two teams to line up in 3-4-1-1 formations, with goalkeepers. He starts the match off, playing inside cones that line up inside the real pitch, making the game more congested. When the cones come off, the players are fully focussed on tight control and looking for short, sharp passes and, in real space, the game flows beautifully

