

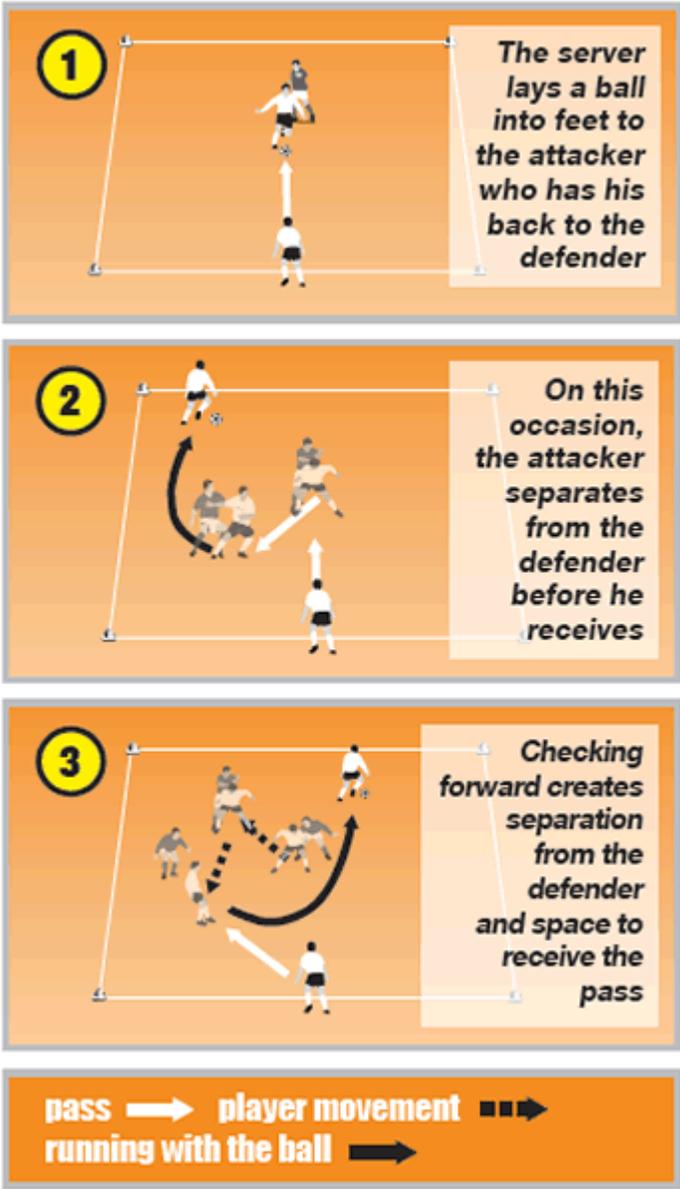
Back to goal basics

By David Newbery and Tony DiCiccio

Attacking players spend a high percentage of their time facing down the pitch towards their own goal - usually with a defender or two breathing down on them.

Attackers who are good at "back to goal" play seem to give themselves time and space to receive the ball, but this requires strength and presence, so players must practise to perfect the art.

This is an excellent activity that can be introduced to players as young as six – essentially as soon as they have demonstrated a competence for passing being able to pass over a short distance and can receive ground balls.



How to set it up:

- The practice only requires a small space, but you might want to set up multiple areas so all players are participating at the same time.
- Each area should be about 20x10 yards.
- Use one ball per area. Despite the title, there's no need to add a goal, just remember the top touchline represents the goal line.
- A server starts with the ball at one end of the area with the attacker and defender ahead of him. The attacker stands in front of the defender.

Getting started:

- The server plays a firm pass along the ground to the attacker.
- The attacker receives the ball, turns and attacks the far end of the area. The defender applies pressure from behind but, at first, is a passive opponent, so must not tackle.
- Tell the attacker to use different turns – for instance, with the inside of the foot, outside of the foot, dummy (let the ball run through his legs), along with other moves such as faking one way and turning the other.
- After the attacker has had six attempts, the defender is now active and can win possession. Run the drill another six times.

Developing the session:

- The first progression is for the attacker to perform a "self pass". When this happens, the attacker receives the ball with the defender behind, plays a short pass (about five yards) into space towards the server, sprints to the ball and turns before the defender can close down the space.
- Now facing the defender, the attacker attempts to beat his opponent to the end line.

Further progression:

- There are three additional progressions for attackers:

Check away from the server at an angle and turn to create separation from the defender.

Check towards the server and let the ball run through the legs, or down the side of the attacker (roll the defender if he is over committed).

Check, hesitate (to imitate contact with the defender) and check to the ball again.

- To create a game situation, add a goal and a keeper and instead of dribbling, the attacker needs to shoot at goal after turning the defender.

Why this works:

Unlike any other position, attacking players spend the majority of time facing down the pitch, which means they have their back to the goal they are attacking.

Strength in possession of the ball, holding up the ball for supporting team mates and quick turns in the penalty box are all attributes of a great attacker.

These skills are developed through repetition and reinforcement of activities so, as confidence develops, so too will the methods an attacking player uses to beat a defender.

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