DEFENDING · ZONE 2 · MIDDLE THIRD · FULL SESSION

PRESSING CBS WITH WINGERS

4 exercises · 86.5 min

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS SESSION?

The purpose of this session is to teach the team how to react when their winger goes to press a center back, leaving the opposing fullback free. This is dealt with by pressing with the strong-side fullback.

When a 4-2-3-1 (or a 4-3-3) presses with only one 9, a team that builds out can move the 9 to one side of the field and free up the other center back, who can then carry the ball forward with no one pressuring him. Bringing the 9 all the way back rarely works: if the opposing team switches play quickly, or the center back carries forward fast enough, the 9 cannot recover. The choice is to press with a winger or with a midfielder, and either option leaves a player free. If the midfielder steps, the opposing midfielder is free. If the winger steps, the opposing fullback is free. This session rehearses what to do when the winger steps to the center back. The fullback on that side steps to the opposing fullback, and the entire back line shifts across behind him. The back line has to shift because the fullback who stepped had a winger of his own to defend; if it doesn't, that winger is left alone for a ball in behind. The small goals behind the defenders in these exercises represent that winger.

HOW IS THE SESSION STRUCTURED?

The session starts with a breakout rondo, then moves on to an expanded breakout rondo, before moving on to a 7v7 breakout game with 6 small goals, and ends with a 3-3-1 vs 2-3-2 game.

WHERE ON THE FIELD DOES THIS OCCUR?

This takes place in Zone 2, the middle third of the field.

COMMON MESSAGES DURING THE SESSION

- Anticipation of the press
- Visual cues of the press
- Closing angles
- Speed of play

SESSION PLAN

#	EXERCISE	SPACE	SETS × (WORK+REST)	TOTAL
1	5v5 with 3 Small Goals	15x10 yards (goals 5 yards back)	4 × (2.5+1.5)	16 min
2	6v7 Plus 2 with 4 Small Goals	20x15 yards (goals 5 yards back)	4 × (4+2)	24 min
3	7v7 with 6 Small Goals	55x30 yards (55x50 with the goals 10 yards back)	3 × (5+2)	21 min
4	3-3-1 vs 2-3-2 Game	55x65 yards	3 × (6+2.5)	25.5 min
	Total			**86.5 min**

SESSION EQUIPMENT

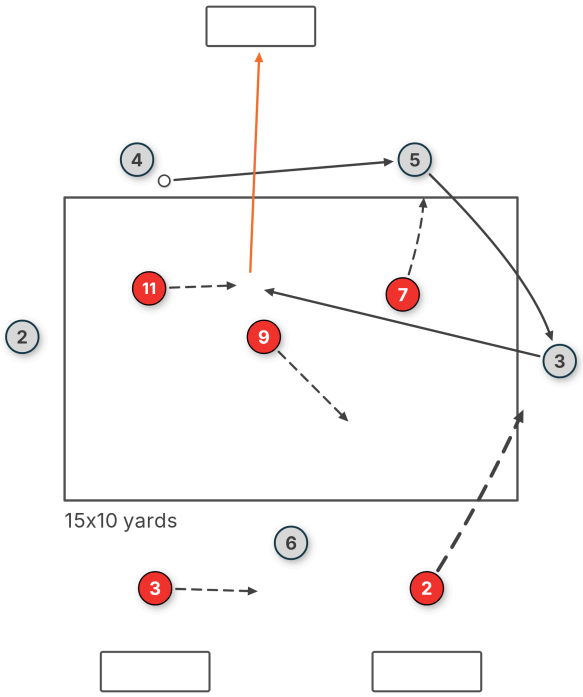
7 red bibs, 4 bibs in a third colour (2 goalkeepers and 2 neutrals), 18 cones, 2 large goals, 6 small goals, balls.

Pressing CBs with Wingers · © 2026 Coaching Football

DEFENDING · MIDDLE THIRD · EXERCISE 1

5V5 WITH 3 SMALL GOALS

Session: Pressing CBs with Wingers



SPACE	PLAYERS	SETS	WORK	REST	TOTAL
15x10 yds	5v5	4	2.5 min	1.5 min	16 min

SETUP

Play starts with the 4. The opposing team's 4, 5, 2, 3 and 6 stay outside a 15x10 grid and play 5v3 around the focus team's 11, 9 and 7, who press inside. The focus team's fullbacks (2 and 3) start outside the bottom of the grid, shielding 2 small goals 5 yards back. The opposing team can score in those goals after 3 passes; the count restarts every time a defender touches the ball. When the ball goes to the opposing fullback on their side, the focus fullback steps in to press, and the other fullback shifts across to protect the strong-side goal. The focus team scores in 1 small goal 5 yards beyond the top of the grid. In the diagram, the opposing 3's pass inside goes to the focus team's 11, who shoots at the top goal, and the 9 moves toward the bottom right.

FOCUS TEAM'S OBJECTIVE

Press high and win the ball early. Recognize the moments the opposing fullback is free and step with the fullbacks to press. Use the fullbacks behind the line to block shots into the small goals.

WHAT OPPONENT FOCUSES ON

Moving the ball quickly to complete 3 passes before scoring in the 2 small goals.

KEY COACHING POINTS

- Angle of press.
- Time of press.
- Communication.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

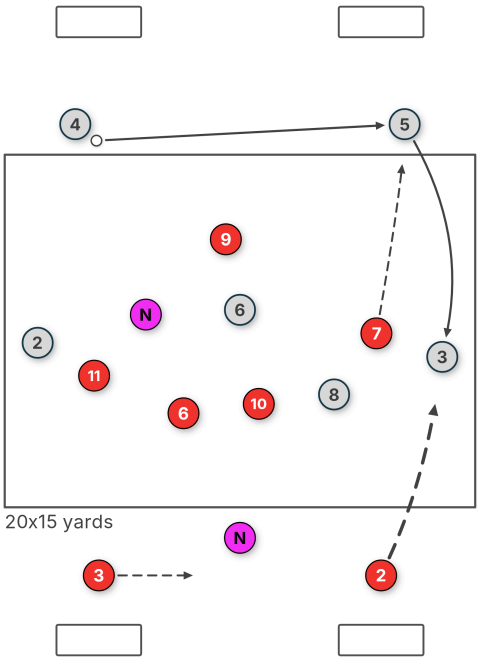
Make the grid larger and put a neutral inside the grid.

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DEFENDING · MIDDLE THIRD · EXERCISE 2

6V7 PLUS 2 WITH 4 SMALL GOALS

Session: Pressing CBs with Wingers



SPACE	PLAYERS	SETS	WORK	REST	TOTAL
20x15 yds	6v7+2	4	4 min	2 min	24 min

SETUP

Play starts with the 4. The opposing team's 4 and 5 stay outside the top of a 20x15 grid, and the focus team can press them there. Inside the grid, the opposing team (2, 6, 8, 3), a neutral inside and a neutral on the bottom line play 6v5 against the focus team's 11, 9, 6, 10 and 7. The focus team's fullbacks (2 and 3) wait outside the bottom of the grid, shielding 2 small goals 5 yards back. The opposing team scores in those goals after 3 passes. The focus team attacks 2 small goals 5 yards beyond the top of the grid. The neutrals play with the team in possession; the bottom neutral can move along his line but does not enter the grid.

FOCUS TEAM'S OBJECTIVE

Deny shooting opportunities into the small goals. When the winger presses one of the center backs outside the grid, the fullback on that side steps to press the free fullback, and the other fullback shifts across to help shield that goal.

WHAT OPPONENT FOCUSES ON

Moving the ball quickly to break the press and score in either of the 2 small goals after 3 passes.

KEY COACHING POINTS

- Timing of press.
- Angle of press.
- Communication.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

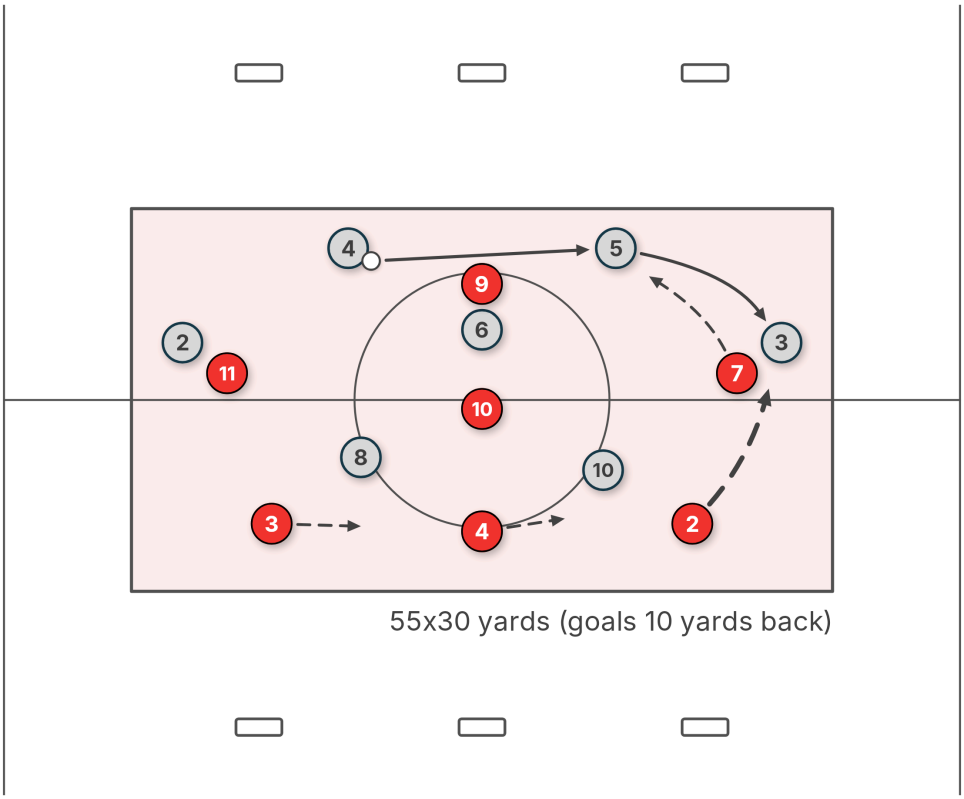
If it is too easy for the opposing team to score, remove the neutral from the middle of the grid.

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DEFENDING · MIDDLE THIRD · EXERCISE 3

7V7 WITH 6 SMALL GOALS

Session: Pressing CBs with Wingers



SPACE	PLAYERS	SETS	WORK	REST	TOTAL
55x30 yds	7v7	3	5 min	2 min	21 min

SETUP

Play starts with the 4. Teams play 7v7 inside a 55x30 grid, with 3 small goals 10 yards beyond each end. The opposing team (4, 5, 2, 6, 3, 8, 10) can break out of the grid after 3 passes to score in the 3 small goals it attacks. The focus team (9, 11, 10, 7, 2, 4, 3) can break out as soon as it wins the ball. Teams break out by dribbling or with a penetrating pass. Once a team breaks out, all players may leave the grid, and everyone returns to their starting positions before play restarts.

FOCUS TEAM'S OBJECTIVE

Press quickly and win the ball back. Pay particular attention to the moments the wingers press the center backs, and use the free defender to jump to the strong-side fullback.

WHAT OPPONENT FOCUSES ON

Moving the ball quickly to penetrate the press, break out of the grid and score in the 3 small goals.

KEY COACHING POINTS

- Timing of press.
- Angle of press.
- Speed of play.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

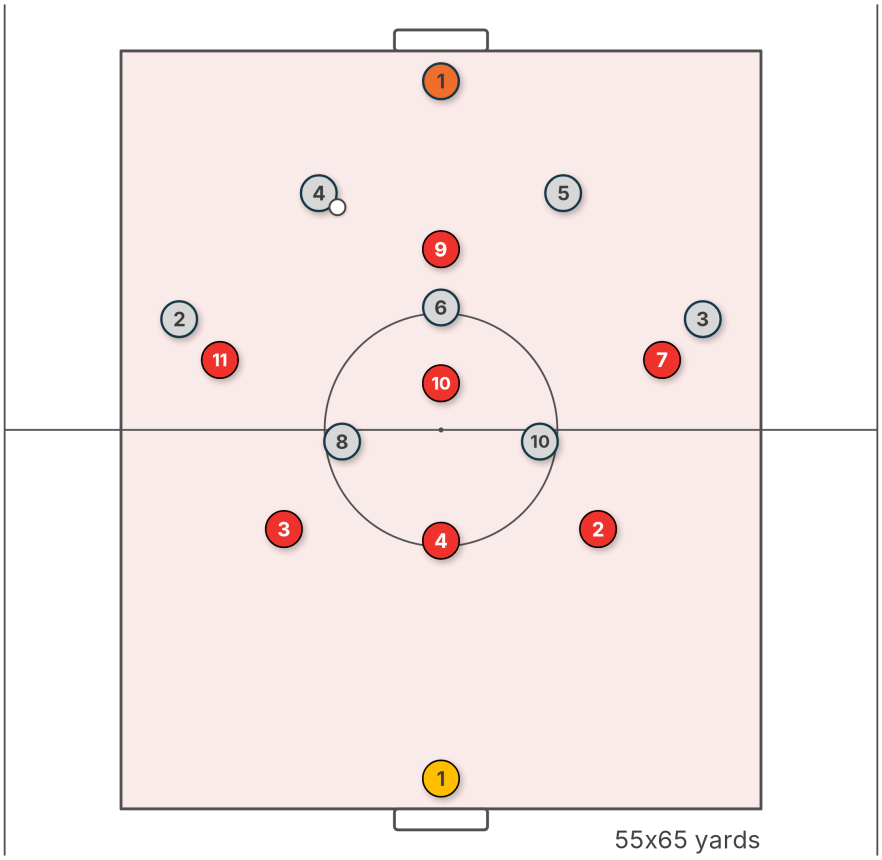
Add neutrals inside or outside the grid, depending on the problem the teams are facing.

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DEFENDING · MIDDLE THIRD · EXERCISE 4

3-3-1 VS 2-3-2 GAME

Session: Pressing CBs with Wingers



SPACE	PLAYERS	SETS	WORK	REST	TOTAL
55x65 yds	8v8	3	6 min	2.5 min	25.5 min

SETUP

Play starts with the 4. The opposing team (2-3-2) and the focus team (3-3-1) play in a 55x65 space with 2 large goals and goalkeepers.

FOCUS TEAM'S OBJECTIVE

Win the ball back as quickly as possible and counter to the large goal. Pay attention to the moments the winger steps to the center back.

WHAT OPPONENT FOCUSES ON

Moving the ball quickly to break the initial press and score in the large goal.

KEY COACHING POINTS

- Timing of press.
- Angle of press.
- Speed of play.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

Make the space longer if you need more room to encourage the fullbacks to jump.

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