

Kelly Cross: Decision Making- Can We Empower the Players?

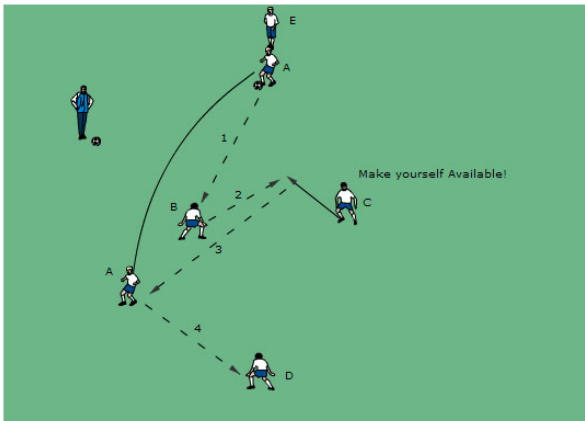
Coach Cross, Australian FA staff, challenged coaches to revisit the way they look at building a training session. Instead of mapping everything out step by step, take an idea, have a general structure, and see where the players take the session. Coach Cross used a couple of passing circuits to explain how a coach can maintain structure and organization without dictating every decision a player makes.



The Set-up: (as pictured) Groups of 5, one ball. Coach should have a spare ball.

* Coach Cross asked the players to keep a comfortable distance, but chose not to use cones saying they are too restrictive. He wanted the players to adjust to the space in relation to one another and the ball.

Pass Right, Run Right

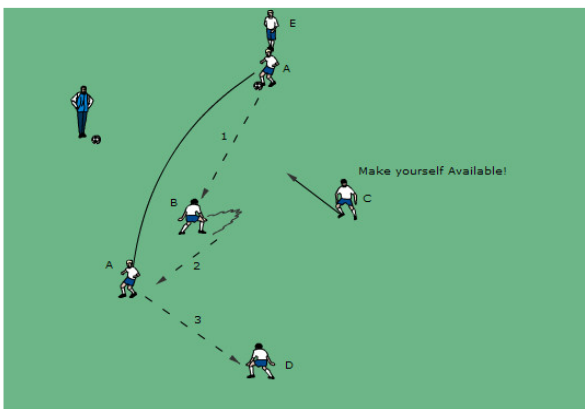


The Exercise: A plays to B and makes a wide overlapping run to the right. B drops the ball to C (C should “make himself available” by taking up a position B can see him), C plays the ball wide to A, A plays into D and takes up D’s position.

D would now play to the right (into player C) and carry out the same movement as player A had done. C and B’s roles would switch.

After a few minutes, switch the direction of the exercise. Pass Left, Run left.

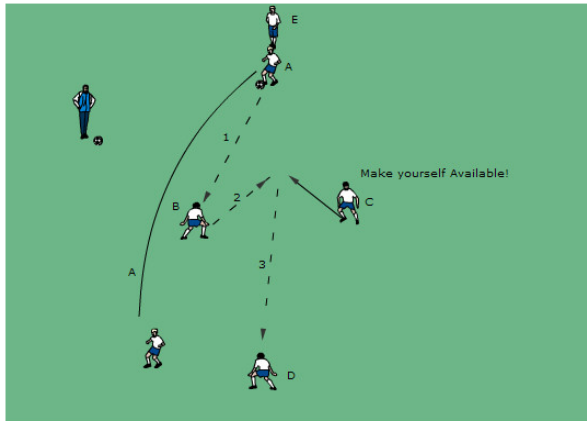
Option #2- Slip Pass



The Exercise: A plays to B and makes a wide overlapping run to the right. C continues to make himself available, but B now takes a touch toward C carries out a feint and slips the pass to an overlapping A. A plays into D and takes up D’s position.

D would now play to the right (into player C) and carry out the same movement as player A had done. C and B’s roles would switch.

Option #3- Hit the Target



The Exercise: A plays to B and makes a wide overlapping run to the right. B drops the ball to C (C should “make himself available” by taking up a position B can see him), C plays the ball directly into the target (D) instead of wide to A. A continues his run and takes up D’s position.

D would now play to the right (into player C) and carry out the same movement as player A had done. C and B’s roles would switch.

Final Phase: Once the various movements were introduced, Coach Cross allowed the players to dictate what option was carried out. This forced all the players in the group to remain “tuned in” since the ball could be played anywhere. The only rule Coach Cross mandated was the overall shape needed to remain the same. He also encouraged the players to either increase or decrease the distance between themselves as they saw fit.

Review of the Main Options:

- Pass Right, Play Right
- Pass Left, Play Left
- Slip Pass
- Hit the Target

Focus:

- Decision making
- Speed of play
- Combination play
- Crispness of the Pass
- Movement off the ball
- Communication

One final thought- Coach Cross asked the players to find a way to have the central players rotate out without stopping the circuit. For Example, Player B might receive the entry pass from A, but now play back to E and follow his pass out of the middle while asking A to “hold my position”. There are plenty of other options to “get out of the middle”, but staying true to the theme of the session he let the players express their creativity and find these options themselves.