

SIMPLE CROSSING - FUNCTIONAL PRACTICE



In this simple functional practice we have pairs of strikers waiting in lines just outside the centre circle. There is a wide player positioned out toward one of the wings, in this case the right wing. The nearest striker to this winger passes the ball and they all begin to move forward.

As we have just discussed, we can use this functional practice to coach our strikers' movement as they attack the cross and try to score.

The strikers need to cross over as they move forward. The nearest striker should be dropping out towards the opposite wing and moving forward slowly while the furthest striker sprints to the near post.

Coaching this simple movement is great but why do our players cross over in front of each other?

This movement means the defenders have a decision to make and quickly. Do they mark the players and move with them or do they mark the positions and mark the player that moves into their space?

Just by making the movement we could be giving our strikers that split second advantage they need to convert a cross and score.

So now we understand the movement and the reason for it what might we say or coach?

What else might you add when you coach your players?

1. The furthest player needs to move late and fast toward the near post to meet any near post or driven cross ahead of the defender.
2. The nearest player should move away slowly towards the opposite wing but then back in again towards the back post. This should be done slowly to make sure they do not arrive in line, but slightly behind the other striker. For example, the striker attacking the near post should be in line with the six yard box and the second striker in line with the penalty spot.
3. Both strikers should hold their runs. Firstly, so they do not get ahead of the winger with the ball. Secondly, so they do not run too early getting ahead of the crossed ball.
4. The striker with the opportunity to score should attack the ball with only one thought in their mind. They need to want to score a goal more than anything else.

We are now getting into the realms of sport psychology which is something else you may want to learn more about.

How would you describe your striker?

Would you say they have a strong shot or that they are fast, or would you describe them as positive, aggressive, single-minded and fearless?

We need to look for certain traits in our strikers and not just technical ability.

The likelihood of getting hurt, the size of the defender and the speed of the ball when they go for a header should all be forgotten as they attack the ball to try and score.

Does this drill allow us to see these attributes in our strikers?

Not really. So how can we progress this functional practice to really test our strikers and see how much they want to score?

2 v 2 CROSSING - FUNCTIONAL PRACTICE

The first thing that we need to do is add defenders. Two of them can be positioned on the edge of the area waiting for the strikers to move.

With younger or less experienced players, we may want our defenders to be passive. However, with our older more experienced players we will need to add competition.

Can our strikers get ahead of the defenders and get to the ball first in order to get a shot away?

Have they the mental strength to get to the ball first and the will to score?



In this new functional practice we have again used the 5 attackers playing against 2 defenders within the centre circle. We can also use the same three passes rule as before; in this case they pass the ball to one of the wingers. The winger must then dribble or run with the ball beyond the end cone before crossing for the two central attackers to try and score.

The two central attackers start on the “D” of the penalty area as shown alongside the two defenders ready to attack the cross.

What is the advantage of using a functional practice in training?

We continually recreate the same scenario that we want to coach our players and try to improve. Here, we continually create crosses from both the right and left for our strikers to attack.

Let’s have a quick think about our wingers in this drill and their tactical role within the game, receiving the ball and getting a cross played into the strikers.

What do you think we need to look for and therefore coach our wingers?

Firstly, the winger obviously needs to be ready for a pass from the central attackers in the centre circle. But how do we coach this?

Can they be on the half-turn, watching the players in the centre circle and anticipating any potential pass? Being in the “half-turned” position also means that they can see what’s going on ahead of them.

Our wingers should always be in a clear position to receive a pass from the player with the ball.

The winger should keep moving as the ball is passed amongst the players in the centre circle to remain in an effective position. There should always be a clear route for the ball to be played to the winger, with no other players in the way.

What about speed?

Do they sprint down the wing to get to the byline quickly after they receive the ball?

Why?

This movement makes it difficult for any defenders to get back and help cut out the intended cross.

So now we have looked at our winger's position and our strikers runs to meet the cross but is there anything else we can coach?

Can you think of anything else we can coach?

What about the type of cross?

What types of crosses are there?

- The lofted cross.
- The cut-back.
- The driven cross.

How would you describe these three different crosses?

The lofted cross or high ball is intended for a striker to move onto and jump to head at goal. This is shown below as a cross to the far post.



The cut-back is played behind the defenders who have run back, goal-side for an attacking midfielder or striker who has stood still or made a late run to create the space for a shot. This is shown above as a ball cut-back to the edge of the penalty area.

A driven cross is played in between the goalkeeper and the defenders at pace

for the attackers to sprint onto and deflect the ball into the goal. The driven cross is shown above as a ball played across the six yard box is met by the striker at the near post.

Can we use this functional practice to coach these crosses?

Yes of course, but let's think a bit more about what we want from our drill and the players.

The whole point of a functional practice is to practice the skill being coached within a game realistic scenario.

Let's think about our younger or developing players and their needs.

We really want lots of opportunities for our wingers to practice the crosses and our strikers shooting after reacting to them.

We don't really want the functional practice anymore; instead we only need to look at the cross and the striker's reaction.

To develop our players let's concentrate on the driven cross and think about how we can create a simple drill to coach our players.

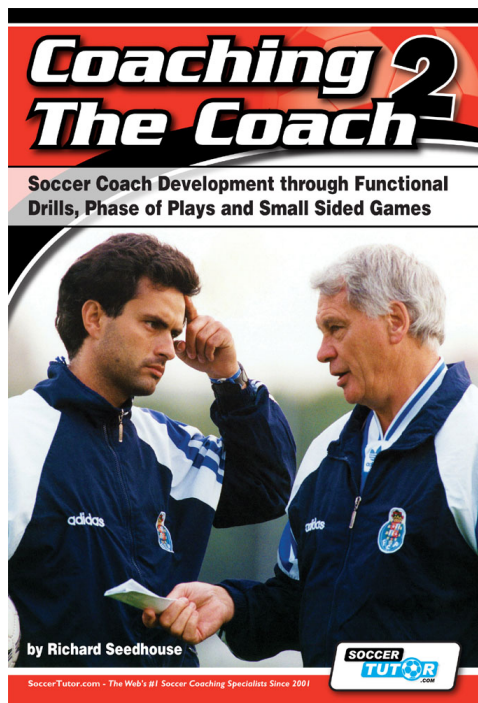
Can you think of a simple drill which could be used to coach the driven cross?

What do we need to create our simple drill?

We simply need a goal, a player to cross the ball and a striker to run in and try and score.



How to Coach and Progress your Practices, Build Training Sessions Through Functional Drills, Phase of Plays and Small Sided Games



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