

Midfield maestro

Arsenal and Barcelona are excellent examples of teams that play composed football through their Midfield Maestros (Fabregas, Nasri, Wilshere, Xavi, Iniesta, Busquets). This session will help your team launch attacks through the middle of the pitch.



What you tell your players the session is about

1. Playing with composure.
2. Playing through midfield.
3. Keeping possession of the ball.

Session planner

Warm-up 5 mins	Session 15 mins	Development 15 mins	Game situation 20 mins	Warm-down 5 mins
-------------------	--------------------	------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------

Activity	Kit	Outcome
Warm-up	Balls	Players complete various dynamic warm-up movements with the ball, from <i>The Ultimate Football Warm-Ups Manual</i> , exercise 33
Session	Cones, balls, bibs	The five players keep possession by going through the middle player
Development	Cones, balls, bibs	The two teams combine in order to get the ball into the outside neutrals
Game situation	Two goals, balls, bibs, cones	The teams use the neutral players to build through midfield in order to score a goal
Warm-down	n/a	Gentle jogging and stretching exercises



Where it fits

Individual skills: Passing, receiving, communication, movement off the ball

Team skills: Communication, team work, combination play

Related Smart Sessions

- 45 [Lose the ball, win it back](#)
- 118 [Xavi and Iniesta](#)
- 153 [The next... Jack Wilshere](#)



[Click here to download the index](#)



What to think about

- Teams must be able to keep possession of the ball to gain rhythm in their play.
- When keeping possession, it is important all players want the ball and are making movements in order to receive a pass or to create space for their team mates.
- Teams must not miss out their midfield by playing longer passes to the forwards. This style of play is too predictable and therefore easy for opponents to defend. Encourage your players to be confident and play quick, short passes through the centre of the pitch in order to instigate attacks.





Set-up

Use a 25-yard square with a 20-yard square inside it for the session. Retain the 25-yard square for the development. For the game situation, use an area 50 yards long by 40 yards wide.



Session – 15 mins

Use two teams, ideally a 5v3 situation. Three defenders and one attacker go inside the smaller area. On the outside of this area, four attackers play inside the five-yard channel.

These four attackers are limited to this channel but defenders can go anywhere within both areas to tackle the attackers.

Attackers try to play passes to each other to keep possession. They should try to play the ball through the central attacker as much as possible because he has more options and it is easier to keep the ball.

The central player should be changed every two minutes.



Development – 15 mins

Two teams of three players work in the area while one neutral player stands at the top of the pitch and one at the bottom.

Teams compete to win the ball and then play passes to a neutral player and receive the ball back to pass through the area to the other neutral player to earn a point. Swap neutral players so everyone plays in the main area. The team with most points wins.



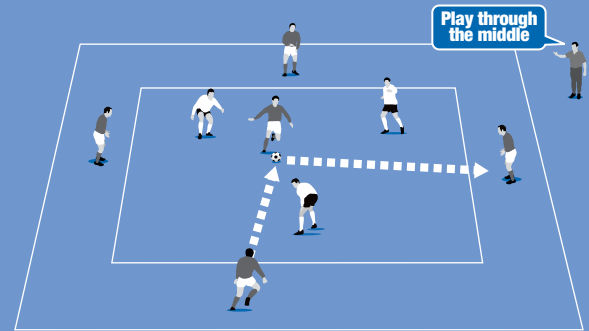
Game situation – 20 mins

Play a small-sided game with two neutral players. Play normal rules but the team in possession of the ball has a two-player overload situation, using the neutral players, which will help them to keep possession, build attacks and score goals.

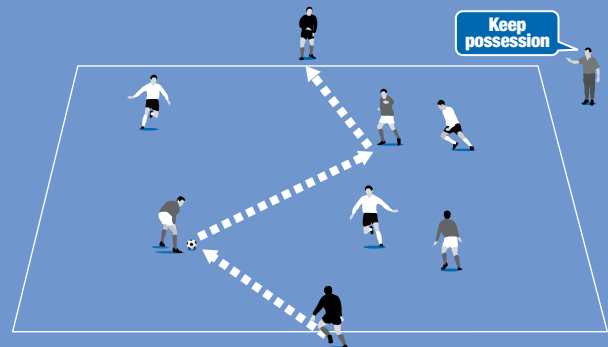
Rotate the neutral players and encourage plenty of passing. The team which scores most goals wins.

Midfield maestro

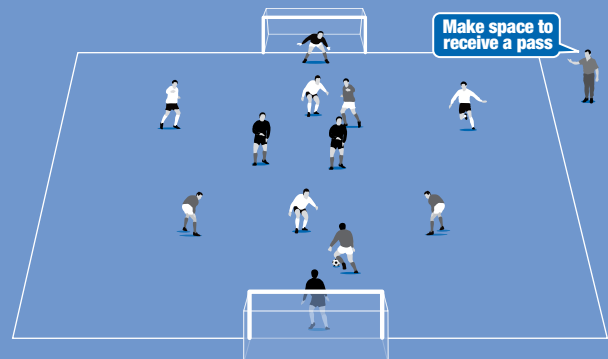
player movement ⇨ pass ⇨⇨⇨



Attackers have an overload in their favour and try to keep possession by passing the ball.



Teams compete for the ball and try to play passes to each other and to neutral players outside the area.



Teams use the neutral players to create an overload, build up play with passes and score a goal.