

Crossing and Finishing: Play to Your Strengths

When you are preparing for matches make sure you practice crossing and finishing during training so that the crossers of the ball are playing to your strengths not your weaknesses, writes David Clarke.

A small front pairing can be effective

This season English Premier League Champions Manchester Utd are playing with two very small strikers in Tevez and Rooney. I've noticed they have gone from playing high booming crosses, to fast, low defence splitting ones so the smaller guys can latch onto the end of them. They do have options of course, but I would imagine Rooney and Tevez will be a very effective pairing even though they will have to rely on big defenders to head-in corners.

High to big ones, low to small ones

It is very important for you as a coach to play to your strengths. Incorporate into your training sessions a 10 minute quick break practice of passing, crossing and finishing. You know your players, so arrange your session so the crossers know to play it high to the big guys and low to the small ones. In the case of Manchester Utd, the wingers know to put the ball in hard and low or else the opposition defenders will tower above the attackers and head the ball away every time.

Crossing and finishing: good for motivation

Not only is crossing and finishing a very important part of the game but it is a good conditioning tool and scoring goals always motivates players to work harder.

Set up your players to pass and cross

Set up your players like the diagram. The ball is passed out wide close to the byeline and crossed to your designated players who have made their way into the box. Tell your players to alternate between hard, low crosses into the box and higher crosses that they can head into the goal.

Key coaching tip

Fast passing and movement is essential for a quick breakaway.

Good for skills and motivation

If you want to increase the intensity try starting the drill 15 metres in front of the penalty area. You can work this drill back to the halfway line and build in relays, overlaps etc as you see fit. A good-fun drill to try is give your players the ball 40 metres from goal and tell them they have 10 seconds to score a goal. This is extremely motivating, generates good banter and concentrates on skill.