

Crossing and Finishing by FA National Coach, Martin Hunter

This month Martin Hunter talks to us about one of his favourite practices.

Crossing and finishing is a vital element in any teams attacking strategy. The national coaches working within the technical department pay attention and great detail to this particular area.



It is hopefully common knowledge that all our youth teams use a 4/3/3 system of play. (U16/U17/U18/U19/U20 Squads) This system is flexible and we believe it forms an integral part in the young players learning and development in International Youth Football. The two basic systems are illustrated in Diagrams 1 and 2.

When setting up crossing and finishing practices it is crucial to have practices that are realistic, incorporating the players who will cross to and from the sides of the pitch and from movements

that will take place in 'the heat of this battle'. The ball is never stationary and players who cross or attack this cross are given realistic/repetitive and regular practices.

There are simple questions to bear in mind:

1. Who in your team crosses the ball?

In one system of play it could be any of the following players, 11/7/9 the strikers, 4/8/10 the midfield players, 2/3 the full backs.

2. When is the ball crossed?

- Early behind the defenders (Pace/ Hit Across)
- 1v1 Dribble and cross/Combine and cross
- 1v2 Combination play

3. The ability of the crosser?

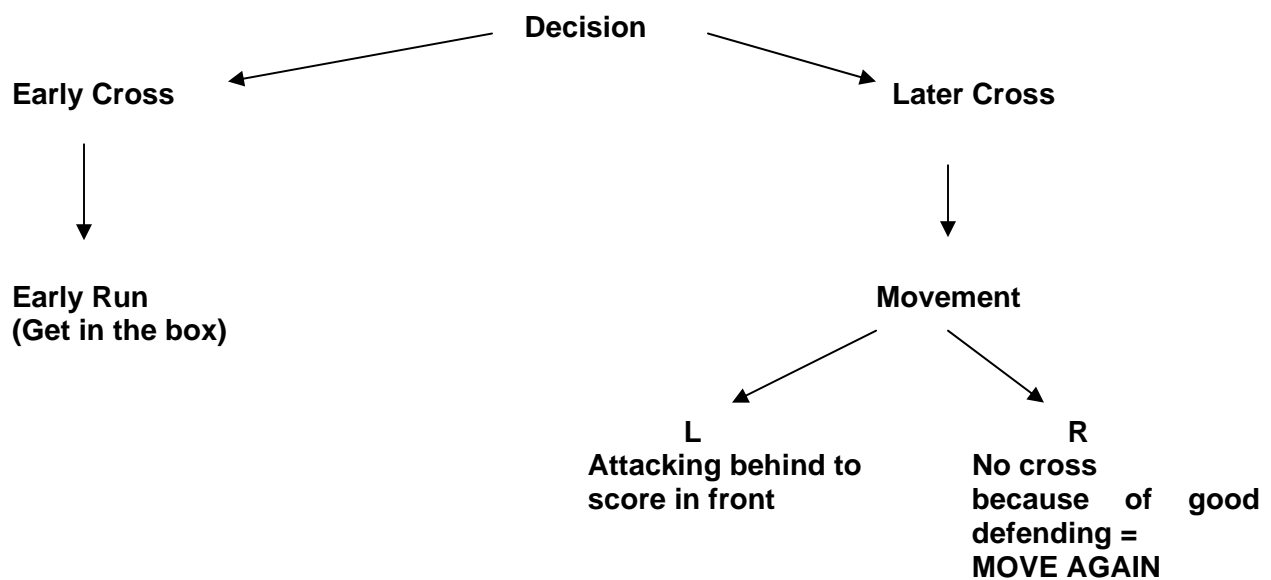
- Pace or lack of pace
- Dribbler/Runner with the ball

4. The type of cross

- Early = Across/Players
- Late = Across/Players
- Bye line = Far Post / 'Cut-back'

5. The 'Finisher'

- Observe the play/Build up
- 'Read the cross'/ 'Know the crosser'



6. 'The Finish'

- One Touch (Diving Headers)
- Accuracy
- Re-bounds

(Nothing new/ No rocket science!!!!)

We have all used numerous crossing and finishing practices. These could be:

- Unopposed (Drills etc)
- Overloading Practices (2 attackers v defender)
- Games (Channels etc)
- Phase of Play
- 11 v 11

During our winter training camp in the Manga, I set up the following drill using a large squad with emphasis on movement patterns that we use in our system of play. (This can be quickly altered to suit numbers or a different system of play)

Organisation (See Diagram 8)

- Two groups of players attacking from the half way line into opposite corners.
- Unopposed (6 manikins to give the players a starting position)
- Passes the ball to a specific player (see following drill) Work left side followed by right side
- **Match Tempo** (Quality passing/Movement)
- Goalkeeper deals with crosses or save then distribution to back 4 (kick/throws etc)

Diagram 1 4/3/3



Diagram 2 4/3/3



Diagram 3 Crossing/Finishing Drill



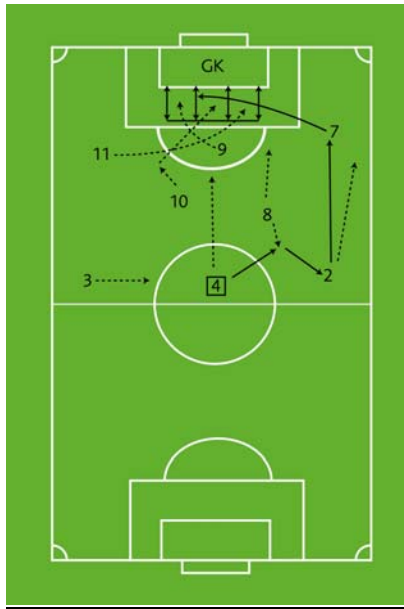
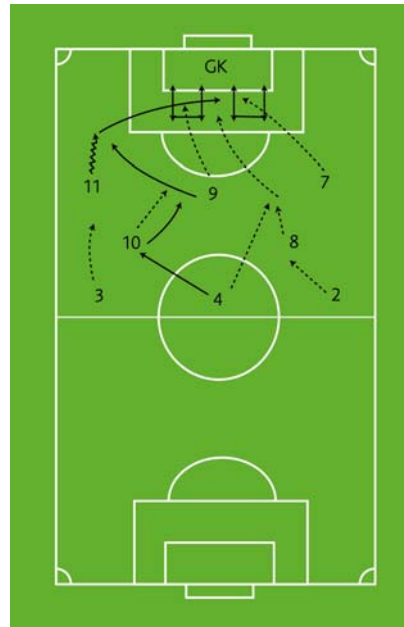


Diagram 4 Dribble Cross

- 4 passes to 8, 8 passes to 2 who passes wide to 7 (movement prior to receiving the ball)
- 7 dribble/cross or touch/cross
- 11/9/10 attack the cross
- 4/8 'Look out' the edge of the box
- 3 tuck in
- 2 support 7

Diagram 5 Early Cross

- 4 passes to 10, who passes 'round the corner' to 9
- 9 passes wide for 11
- 11 crosses early
- 9/8/7 Attack the cross
- 10/4 'Look Out' the edge of this box
- 2 tuck in
- 3 supports 11



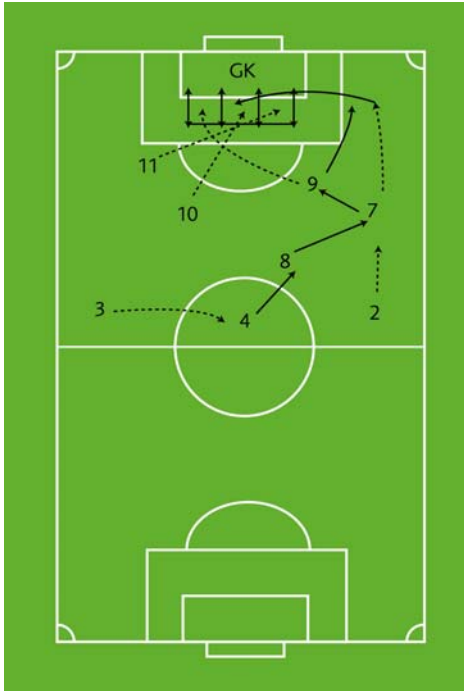
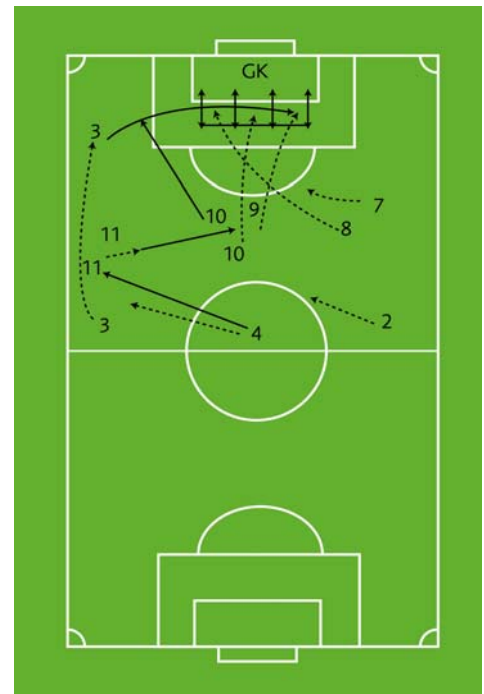


Diagram 6 Deep Cross

- 4 passes to 8, 8 passes to 7
- 7 pass to 9, who passes back to 7 to cross
- 4 p11/10/9 attack the cross
- 4/8 'Look Out' the edge of the box
- 3 tucks in
- 2 supports the cross

Diagram 7 'Overlap'

- 4 passes wide to 11, 11 drives in field with the ball
- 11 passes to 9 and follows this pass
- 3 makes an overlapping run, 9 passes to 3 to cross
- 9/10/8 attack the cross
- 11/7 'Look Out' the edge of the box
- 4 fills in for 3
- 2 tucks in



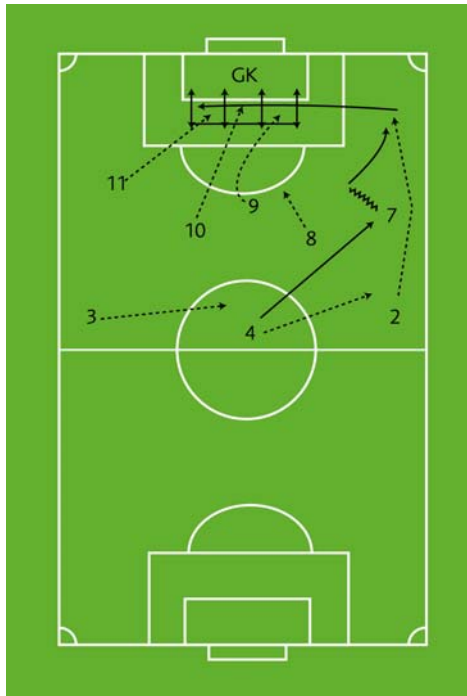
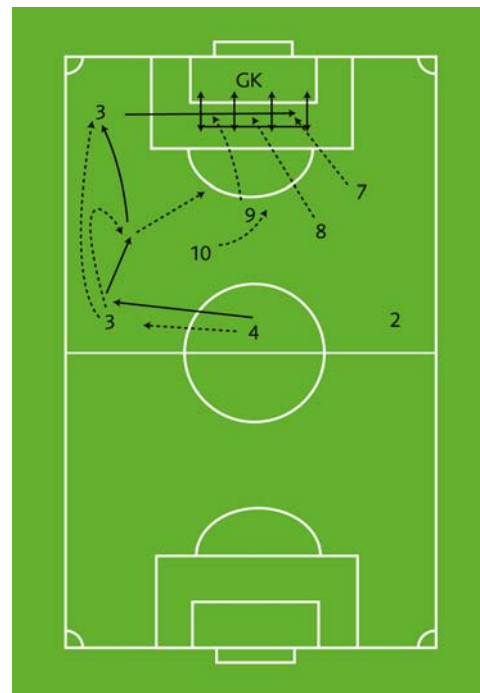


Diagram 8 'Simple Overrun'

- 4 passes wide to 7
- 7 attacks infield with the ball
- 2 makes an overlapping run
- 7 passes to 2 to cross
- 11/10/9 attack the cross
- 8 as buffer
- 3 tucks in
- 4 filling for 2

Diagram 9 'Overlap- When wide player can't play down the line'

- 4 passes to 3
- 11 runs to threaten the fallback then checks infield
- 3 passes to 11 and makes an overlapping run
- 11 passes to 3 to cross
- NB (11 may turn and dribble/pass into 9)
- 8/9/7 attack the cross
- 11/10 as before
- 4 fills in for 3
- 2 tucks in



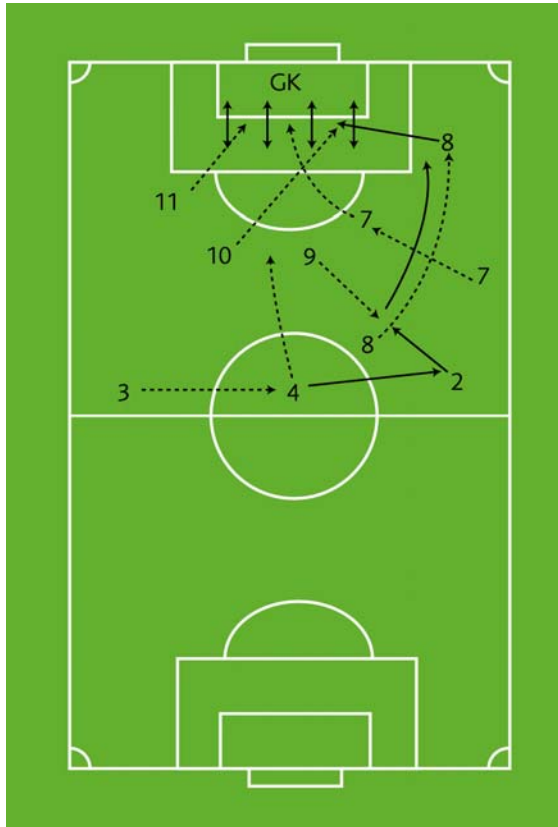


Diagram 10 'Overlapping midfield player'

- 4 passes to 2
- 9 comes short, 2 passes to 9
- 9 turns and passes to 8 when has made an overlapping run
- 8 crosses
- 11/7/10 attack the cross
- 9/4 stay on the edge of the box
- 3/2 tuck in

We hope that you have enjoyed this article. If you have any comments that you would like to raise about some of the topics here, please visit our online discussion forum where you can talk with other coaches on this subject.

