1v1: turning away from an opponent

Context

This was the second 1v1 session on this specific aspect (turning away from an opponent) in the first 6-week cycle of the annual plan. The technical and experience levels of the players aren't high, which has been factored into the difficulty level of the exercises.

Specific aspect

The first few seconds of the footage in the link below shows a situation in which the ball is played into FC Barcelona's Andres Iniesta, who turns away from an opponent's pressure.

    https://youtu.be/YKpguR405PI?t=7m39s

This is an example of the specific aspect this session is intended to improve: *turning away from an opponent.*

Session objective

In this session I aim to improve the players' ability to escape from defensive pressure by changing direction (turning) with the ball.

Skill introduction: changing direction with the ball
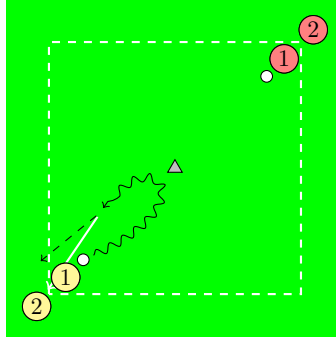
Set up a 15x15 area as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Skill introduction: practicing turns.

Initial set-up

- one ball per groups of two or three players
- groups on corners of square playing areas (one to four groups per square—up to eight players per square)

Sequence

- first player in each queue (#1) dribbles to the marker, changing direction before arriving at the marker
- after turning, the player passes to the next player in the queue (#2), and returns to the back of his queue
- next player repeats

Additional structure/progressions

- do 'dynamics' on way back after passing to next player
- Different techniques for changing direction: − inside/outside cut − two touch in-and-out/180° − add feint − sole/studs (drag/roll back) − inside step-over − chop behind (Cruyff) − etc.
- alternating feet (after comfortable with preferred foot)
- players choose their turn(s); different turns
- ('pass then pressure') after passing take a turn as passive defender (track initial movement only) for next opposite player; this requires minimum three players per station, or alternating yellow and red turns

Coaching points

- accelerate away from marker immediately after turning
- make feints convincing

Concluding game

'Team elimination': Use two adjacent areas/squares; one team per square. Each player from each team is given a number. Coach calls out n numbers (e.g., $n = 3$) and those (3) players run across to other square to kick other team's balls out of the square. Double-teaming not allowed.

Skill training: turning away from an opponent

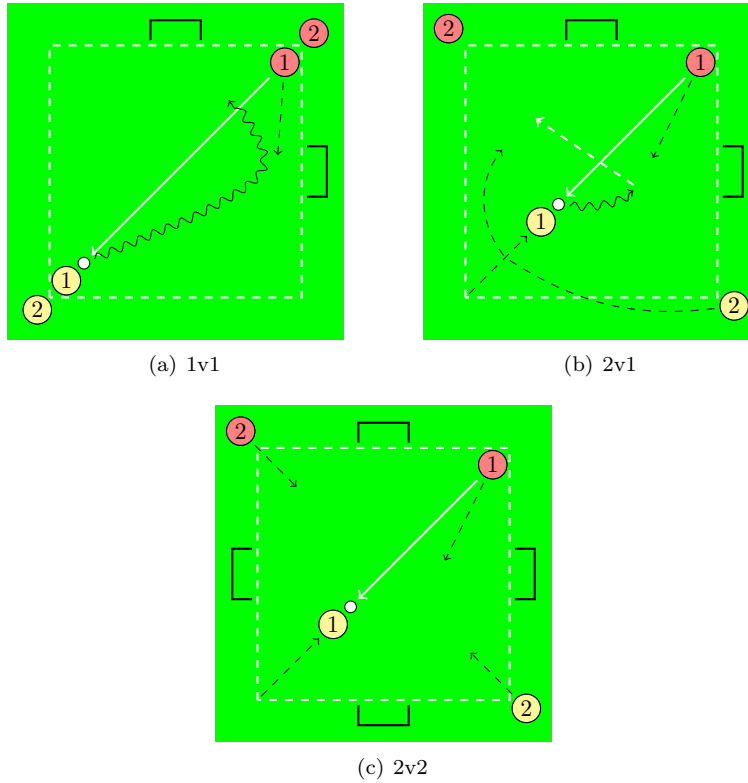In the same 15x15 area used for the Skill introduction.

(a) 1v1

(b) 2v1

(c) 2v2

Figure 2: Skill training.

Initial set-up

- remove internal markers and use gates on perimeter, as shown in Figure 2(a)
- each defender (red) starts with a ball

Sequence

- defender (red #1) serves to attacker (yellow #1) and enters to defend
- attacker tries to score by *dribbling* through either gate
- at conclusion, players swap ends/roles
- repeat with next pair
- (rotation for 2-on-1) attacker becomes support player, support becomes defender, defender joins end of attacking queue, next player (#2) becomes attacker

Additional structure/progressions

- adjust position of gates along perimeter as required to achieve the right difficulty level (step up/down)
- adjust width of gates (entire side → 1m gates)
- introduce time limit to score (step up)
- progress to 2-on-1, as shown in Figure 2(b), with a time limit in place; now can also score with pass to overlapping 'support player'; this should encourage the use of feints (shoot/pass) to throw defender; the time limit counterbalances the attackers' numerical advantage; if too easy for attackers then pass must be through goals
- progress to 2-on-2, as shown in Figure 2(c); attackers can score in any goals except the one at their end (i.e., 3 goals vs 2 opponents)

Script

Team (exercise) task:

- "target the free goal"

Player tasks:[1]

- "take the initiative"/"be pro-active": constantly feint to accelerate to overcommit/unbalance ("throw") opponent; try not to stop/slow down between movements; keep the ball and/or yourself moving
- *if your opponent tracks you*, feint to accelerate in one direction to overcommit opponent, and change direction
- *after changing direction*, accelerate away
- *if your opponent doesn't track you closely*, beat him to a goal
- face your opponent with the ball between you and your opponent, *unless there is risk of losing the ball, in which case* get your body between your opponent and the ball; i.e., shield the ball with your body
- use your opponent's movement against him; utilise 'movement contrast' (opposite directions, slow/fast, etc.)
- generate 'contrasting movement' by throwing feints/dummies
- overload an opponent, with diverging movements (cross-over runs)
- "be unpredictable": vary your tactics
- (in 2-on-1) use your team-mate as a decoy: feint to pass/shoot to throw opponent
- make runs to open a goal/space and overload another

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[1]Cues are in italics.

Skill game
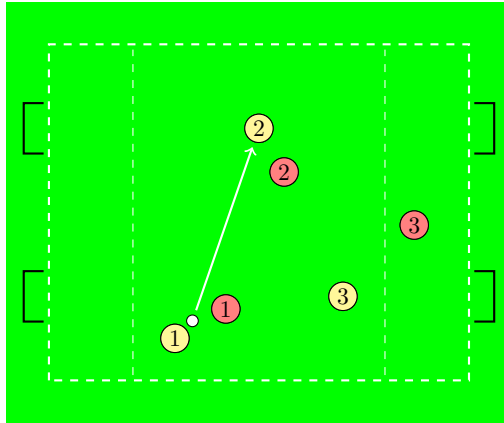
The skill game is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Skill game: target the free goal.

Initial set-up

- 3v3–5v5
- field dimensions: 15x20 (3v3) to 30x40 (5v5); (tight to encourage pressure on ball and turning)
- two goals at each end, 15–20 separation distance
- end zones, 5–10 deep

Basic game rules

- team can score via either goal

Additional structure

- must score from inside attacking end zone
- must keep ball for n seconds before scoring
- must dribble through goal to score
- at most one 'sweeper' allowed in opposition's attacking end zone

Script

Team (exercise) task:

- target the free goal
- switch the point of attack to displace the 'sweeper'