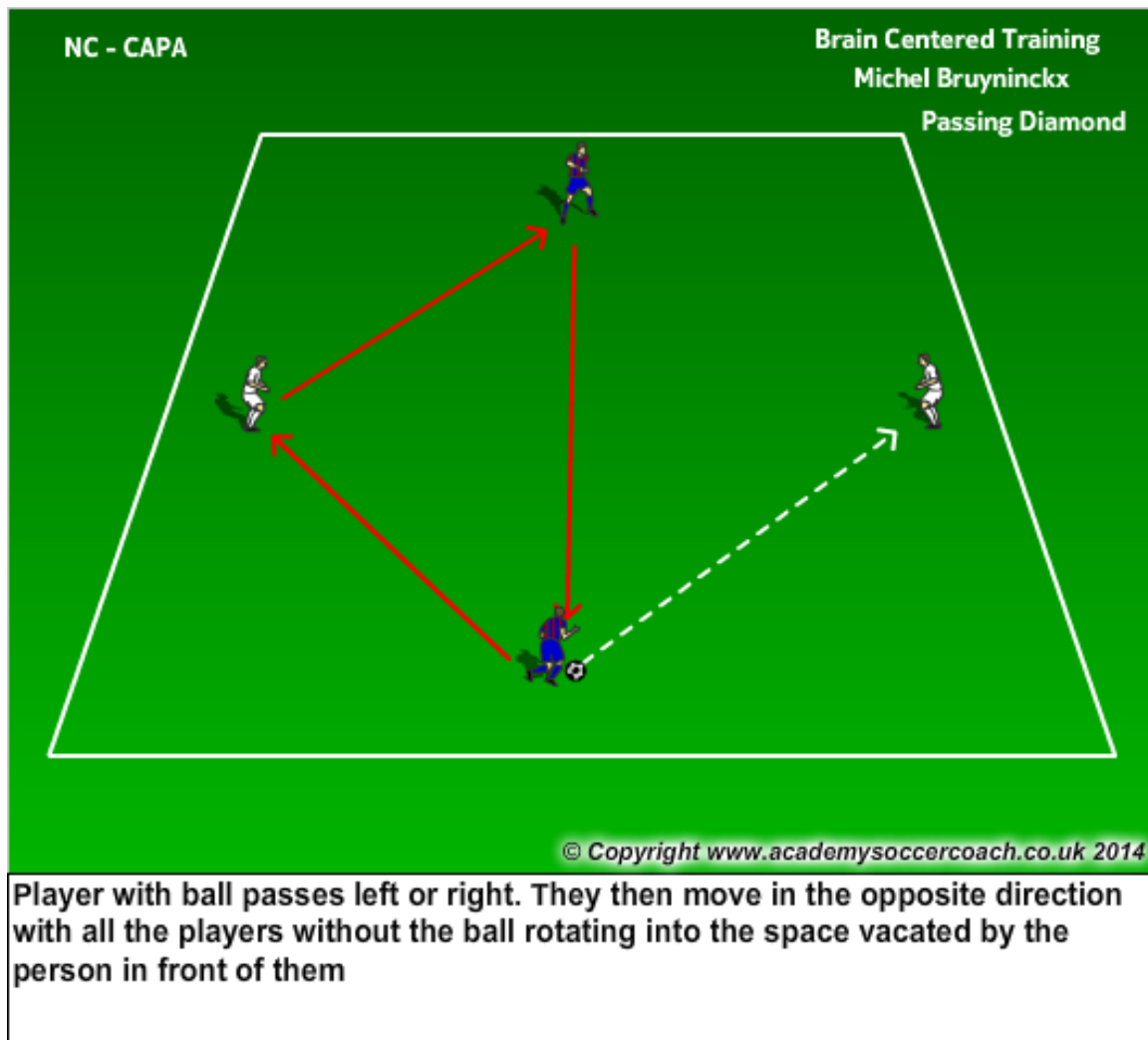


Brain Centered Training for Football - Michel Bruyninckx

Michel's session was based around simple, but effective, football exercises that as well as improving the skill level and technique within young footballers, also work the brain. It is Michel's theory that much of football is played with the brain and so developing that, along with technique, is where success lies.

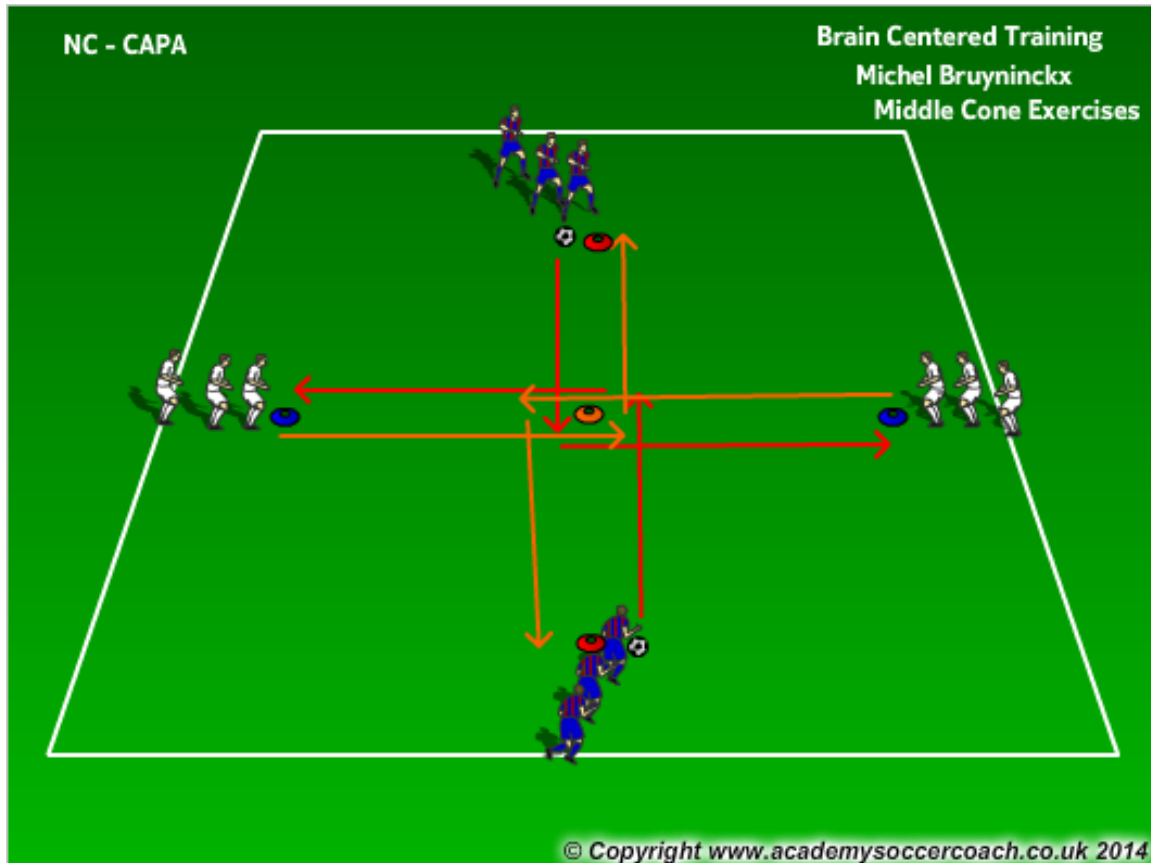
As with all the coaches that were present, he was looking for all elements of his session to be game related.

He started off with the following exercise:



Within this drill, Michel was looking for quick movements and players playing with as few touches as possible. He wanted to see them move the ball with one or two touches. He was also constantly reiterating the fact that players should be controlling the ball with the back foot.

He then moved from that exercise to this one:



Players at the red cones begin. They move against one another, running around the cone to the right and joining the line to their left. As soon as they pass the cone in the middle, those at the blue cone go.

Variations/Progressions:

- Dribble the ball rather than just running
- Dribble ball, stop it before the cone, move around it and collect the other ball on the other side
- Dribble ball, stop it before the cone, move around and pass to the front of next line
- Dribble ball, stop it before the cone, move around and complete some kind of combination pass with players in next line.

At first, the group demonstrating had trouble with this. Michel was not happy with the way they turned around the middle cone and wanted them to make sharper movements rather than looping curves. Once he introduced the ball, his focus was on obtaining good quality set-ups from the players involved. He wanted to make sure that those players stopping the ball stopped it in an area where it would be easy for the player coming around the cone to take over. **“Leave it as you’d like to receive it”.**

After completing a number of variations with that exercise, he moved onto another passing exercise that was based around moving the ball, and mastering angles. This exercise can be found below:

NC - CAPA

**Brain Centered Training
Michel Bruyninckx
Passing Square**

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Player 1 begins in the middle of the square. Player 2 passes into him. He takes a touch and plays to Player 3 before moving to Player 4's line. After passing to Player 1, Player 2 has checked into the middle of the square to receive the pass from Player 3. He plays to Player 4's line and then moves to Player 5's line. Player 3 would then follow his pass in and sequence continues.

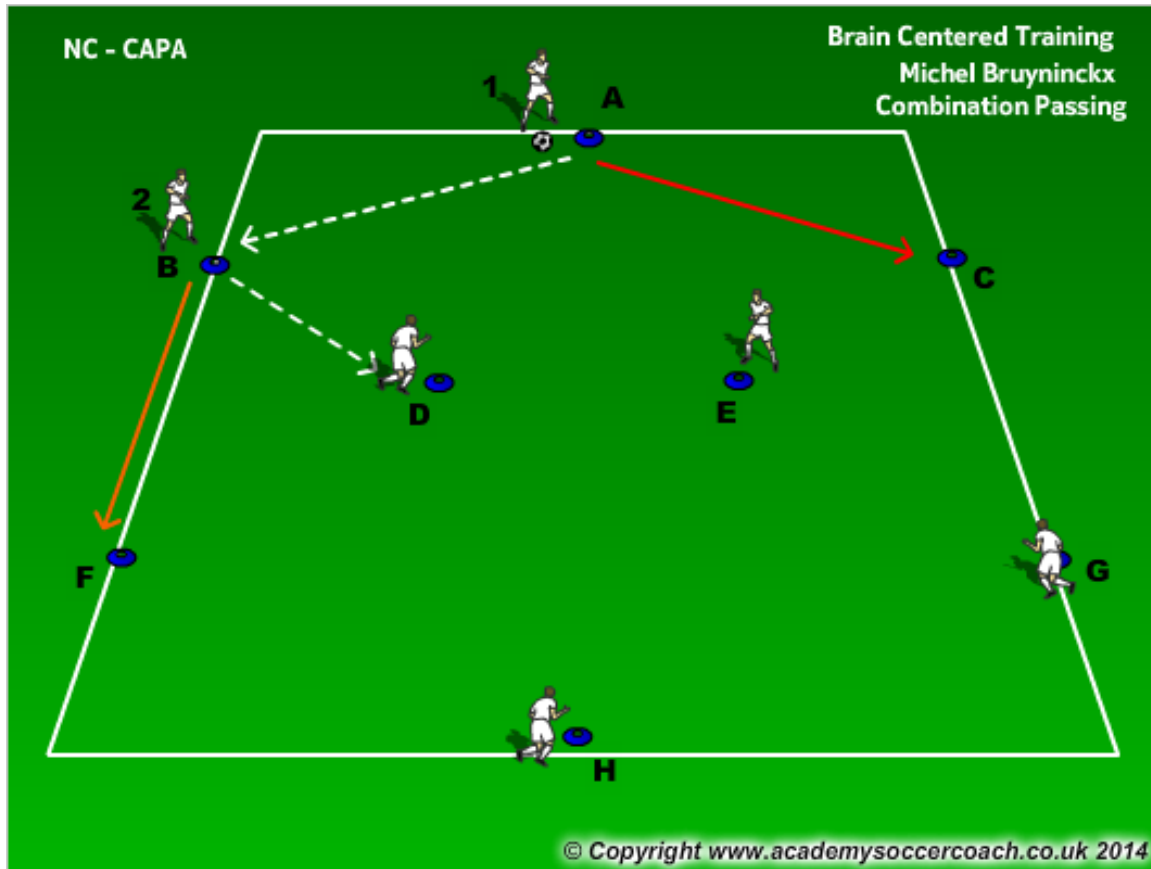
Coaching Points:

- Receive on a 1/4 or 1/2 turn to allow you to play your pass faster
- Master the angles off the ball rather than following the pass
- Train the brain to multitask and focus on more than one thing

Once the players had mastered the sequence in which they had to move, Michel talked about making them concentrate on more than one thing and having the brain multitask. He did this simply by counting 1-8. A slow tempo meant that the boys could play without much challenge. However, when he quickened his counting 1-8, the tempo of the exercise quickened with it. Once the players began thinking of how quickly they needed to play, and how focused they needed to be on receiving and

distributing the ball, their movements began to go out of sync and they no longer moved to where they were supposed to within the exercise.

The next passing exercise he moved onto was another that was centered around early decision making, movement, and attention to your surroundings. The exercise can be found below:



Player 1 begins with the ball and can pass to anyone within the grid and must then move to 1 of the 2 open cones. Player 2 receives and does the same. The sequence continues.

Rules

- Cannot play square balls (B to C, D to E etc)

Progressions:

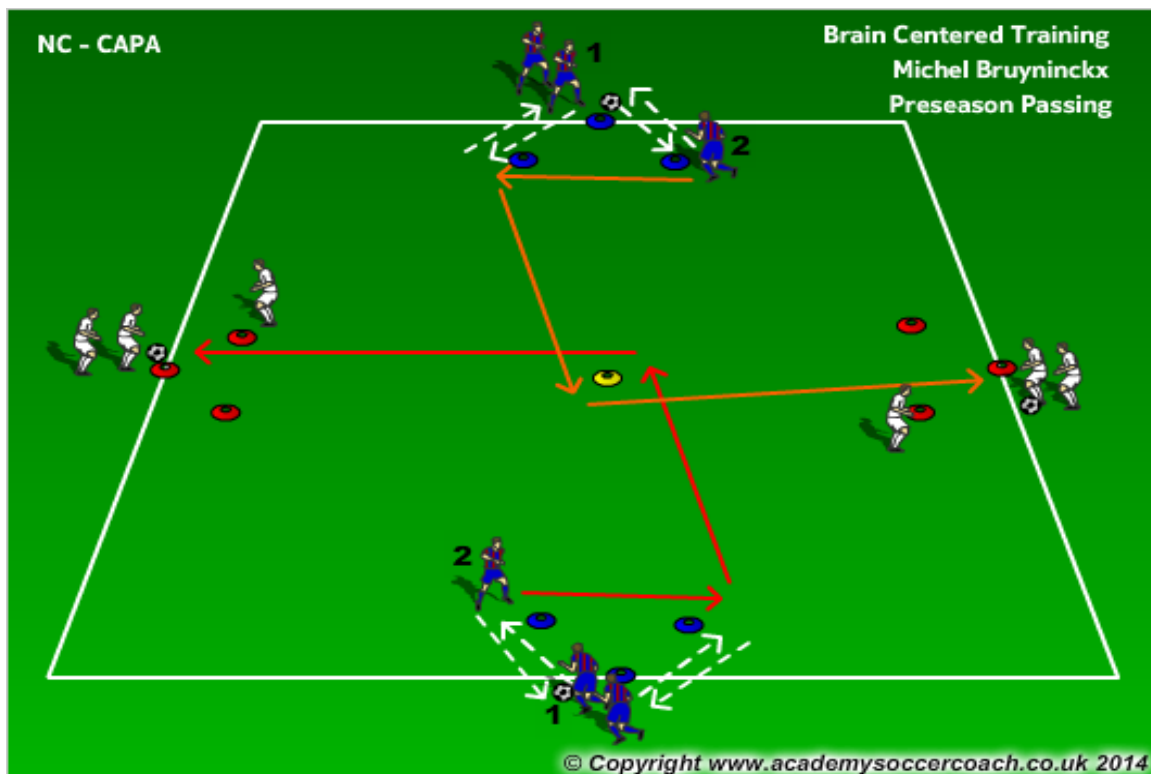
- Coach shouts "OUT", the player that just passed the ball must leave the grid and the others continue playing
- Coach shouts "IN", the first player to have left the grid from any of the players that might be out, can join back in at an open cone

Again, Michel's focus was on giving the players more to think about than just the pass. He mentioned that their concentration must be on 3 things:

- Who has the ball
- Who can receive a pass
- Where the open cones are to move to once you've played a pass

These elements are constantly changing and so their focus must remain within the exercise. Then, when the coach starts shouting "in" or "out", there is another aspect that they must focus on. This returns to my earlier comment about how he is looking for players to multitask and focus on numerous things at the same time. Also, as he did earlier, he began counting during the exercise to increase the tempo. Yet another thing that the players need to be able to concentrate on.

The final part of Michel's session was another small passing and movement exercise. It can be found below:



The players at the blue cones begin the exercise and work at the same time. Player 1 plays to Player 2 who plays back using 1 touch, with his right foot. Player 2 then slides across to cone next to him and does the same with the left foot. After he's played both passes, he turns and runs around the middle cone to join the back of the red line. The reds begin once the blues around the cone in the middle. Player 1 of the blues then moves to Player 2's position and awaits his turn.

Coaching Points:

- Make all players play with 1 touch (even Player 1)
- Respect your teammates. Do the running required to stop the drill breaking down

As with all of Michel's exercises, it looked very simple but requires players to think and focus on a variety of things as they complete it. Their first focus is on passing with the correct foot, with the correct weight on the pass. Their second focus is on turning and completing the running element of the exercise. This is important as if they travel too slowly, they begin to interfere with the group that comes directly after them.

Although the exercises within the session were simple, you could see from the player's responses that they were being challenged. The exercises often broke down due to incorrect movement from the players or poor passing due to concentrating on another aspect within the exercise. It was certainly evident that working on this from an early age could see considerable development in a player's ability to process information quickly and multitask.