

Creativity Playing with a Number 10 – Geoff Pike and Jamie Robinson

Geoff Pike's was another much anticipated session at the NSCAA convention. Many of the coaches in attendance had heard good things about him and his ability to educate the coaches in the room. Being able to follow Dick Bate also meant that he drew a large crowd for his session. With the changes in the modern game, Pike stressed the importance of being able to break down teams in their defensive blocks and being able to exploit the space between the lines. He also spoke about formations where the #10 is becoming more and more important. It is because of these 2 factors, that he felt it was important to develop these aspects of the game.

Pike's first exercise can be found below:



Play begins with a 3 v 2 in the coned area. Whites must create an opportunity to play forward to the whites out of the coned area. When they do this, these 2 whites combine to create a goalscoring opportunity.

Coaching Points:

- Forwards work off each other. When one comes short, the other stretches play
- Receive the ball the appropriate way given your surroundings (on half turn if in space, With foot furthest from mannequin if playing off that etc)
- Be creativity in attacking section. Try flicks, dummies etc in order to add disguise

Pike stopped the exercise regularly during the first 5 minutes to highlight a number of points with regards to the front 2 players. First, he wanted them to work off of each other more. If one went left, the other should go right. If one came short in front of DM or between the lines, the other should “pin” the CBs back. He also focused on the way they received the ball ready for the first progression.



Play begins with a 3 v 2 in the coned area. Whites must create an opportunity to play forward to the whites out of the coned area. When they do this, these 2 whites combine to create a goalscoring opportunity.

Coaching Points:

- Forwards work off each other. When one comes short, the other stretches play
- Receive the ball the appropriate way given your surroundings (on half turn if in space, With foot furthest from defender if playing off that etc)
- Be creativity in attacking section. Try flicks, dummies etc in order to add disguise and trick defenders.

Progressions:

- Allow players 1 and 2 of Whites to join the 2 forwards. Allow A and B on stripes to recover defensively.

With his first progression, Pike added 2 CBs and a DM to the attacking section but continued with the same basic exercise format. The players were still looking to

create space and combine in the attacking third but were now doing it with opposing defenders. This made their movement and ability to work together even more key. After a period of time, Pike then allowed the 2 wide players in the 3v2 to break forward in support, with the 2 defenders allowed to join in defensively.

After this, Pike added the 2 FBs to the exercise and gave the stripes target players that they were to play to when they won possession of the ball:



Play begins with a 3 v 2 in the coned area. Whites must create an opportunity to play forward to the whites out of the coned area. When they do this, these 2 whites combine to create a goalscoring opportunity against the back 4 and DM. 2 more whites from the bottom part of the exercise may join the 2 attackers. The 2 defenders may recover also. If stripes win the ball, they should look to transition out of defense and play to their Target players at the opposite end.

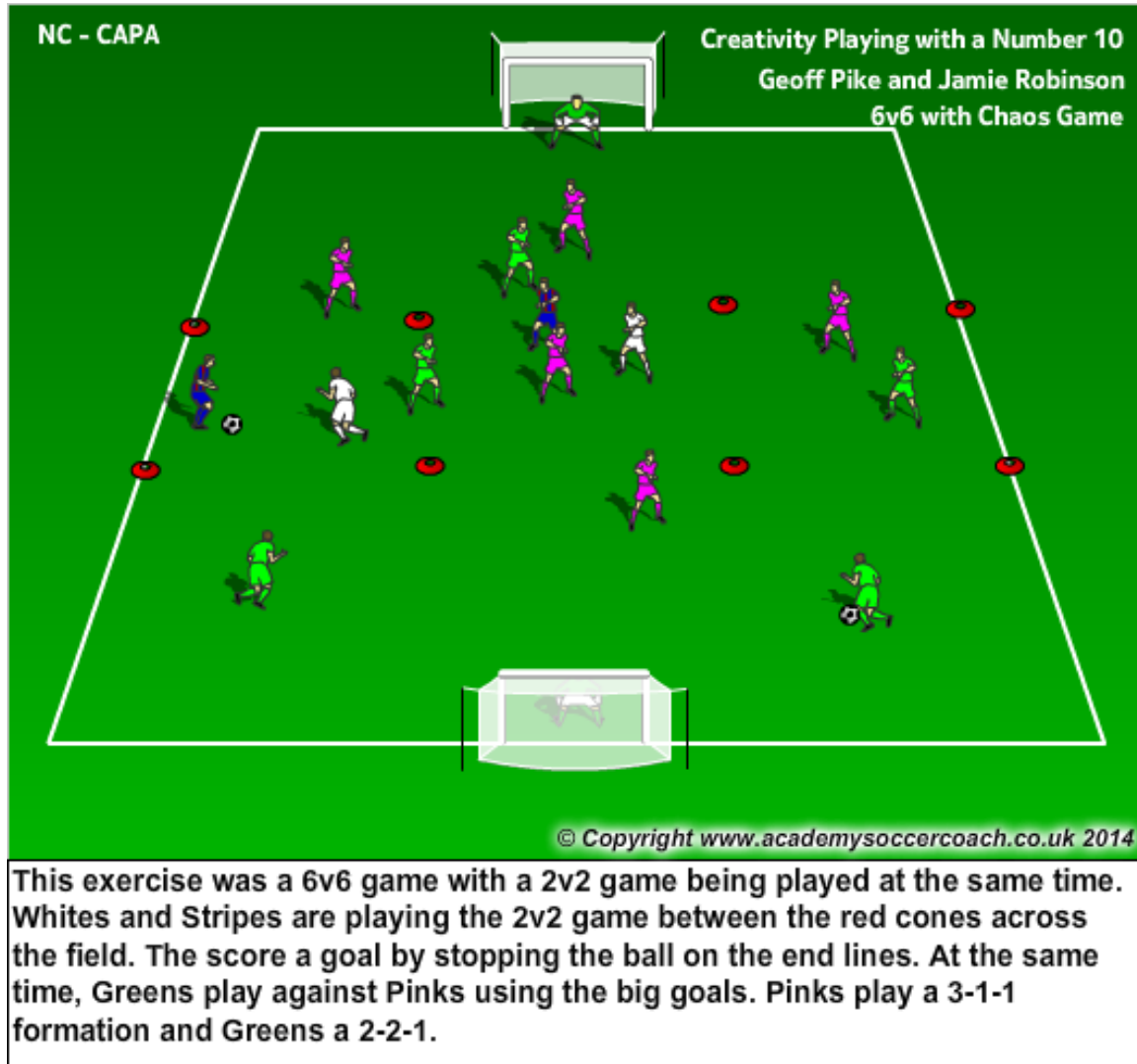
Coaching Points:

- Forwards work off each other. When one comes short, the other stretches play
- Receive the ball the appropriate way given your surroundings (on half turn if in space, With foot furthest from defender if playing off that etc)
- Be creativity in attacking section. Try flicks, dummies etc in order to add disguise and trick defenders.

It was at this point in the session that many coaches began to leave. Sitting there watching, I could hear coaches saying how pointless it was as the 4 were never going to break down a 7 and get a shot off on goal. For me, these coaches were missing the point of the session. I think Pike wanted the players to fail. He wanted them to find it difficult the way they were playing so that they would hopefully begin

to think a little differently and be more creative with how they were playing. He stopped the session to praise anything he thought was done well. A flick here and a dummy there. It didn't matter whether the moves were successful or not, it was the fact that the players were prepared to try them that Pike encouraged.

From here, Robinson took over the session. His first exercise is below:



Robinson let the players play for the most part, stopping it occasionally to make a coaching point but was very encouraging when he saw positive, creative play by any of the players.

After about 5 minutes, Robinson progressed to the following exercise:



This exercise was a 6v6 game with a 2v2 game being played at the same time. Whites and Stripes are playing the 3v2 game between the red cones across the field. They score a goal by stopping the ball on the end lines. At the same time, Greens play against Pinks using the big goals but must also stay in between the red cones. In order for them to score, a through ball must be played to a player making a run into the attacking area. Attacker is left with a 1 on 1 v the GK.

Coaching Points:

- Time your run so as you are not leaving the box before the ball is played
- Try different passes to play runners through (reverse, chip, wall etc)

Progressions:

- Allow defender to chase back after through ball has been played

This was a good exercise for showing what the players had learned so far. There were a lot of players in a tight space and so the passes had to be different in order to release players to score on goal. Working in such a tight area also meant that the players had to be more aware of what was going on around them. This is obviously something that is key if they are to create opportunities in a game.

To finish the session, Pike came back and spoke about how important it is for the players to experience failure. This sounds contradictory as you would imagine that you would want to be successful in training and build confidence. Pike on the other hand felt like failure would make them better. He gave a few reasons for this:

1. Players begin to learn when to take risks and when to play safe. He constantly made reference to the players **"forcing the pass"** and he was looking to avoid that

2. The begin to realize that football is difficult. You're not always going to be successful but the important thing is that you keep looking for solutions.
3. Playing in the tighter areas of these exercises would make the larger space of a full size field seem even bigger. If they can see and create opportunities in the tight areas, their ability to do so in the larger spaces would increase.

This was another session I enjoyed. It would have been interesting to see how Pike would have changed it if he had more space to work in. The area at the convention was about 50 yds long by about 25 yds wide. If he had more space, would he have utilized it or would he have continued to have the players work in such confined areas? I can also understand why some coaches found it repetitive and disappointing. We are often told on coaching courses to build confidence. To have success in training sessions and this didn't produce much of that. But at the same time, I can also understand Pike's position where if teams are defending with numbers behind the ball, space is tight and breaking them down is extremely difficult. I think he was looking for exercises that recreated that atmosphere and game situation and I think he was successful in doing so.

For me, players have to experience failure as much as they experience success. They have to be able to learn from the mistakes they made and look for solutions to the problems that this creates. These exercises did that for the Number 10.