



**Wilfred van der Linden and Michel Hordijk,
U15 coach and technique trainer NAC Breda:**

‘Technique training is becoming more important in football’

Technique training is becoming more and more important in Dutch football. The Wiel Coerver books and DVDs are being sold by the thousands and almost every Dutch club is hiring a technique trainer. At NAC Breda they had already realized the importance of a technique trainer two years ago. Wilfred van der Linden, U15 coach and technique guru Michel Hordijk saw the U15s improve dramatically in the past two years: “Nowadays almost all of our exercises have technical aspects.”

By: Paul van den Hurk

Wilfred van der Linden: “After Michel’s arrival two years ago we started with functional technique training. I think it is a must for every club to contract a technique trainer. It is not just a must for the professional or semi-professional clubs, but also amateur clubs. Football is shifting to technique training more and more and you simply cannot do without: when you look at what

we have accomplished in two years, it is unbelievable. To see your players develop like that is great for a coach.”

Wiel Coerver-method

Michel Hordijk: “Ball control and game situations, which demand a lot of your technical skills, are central in my approach. An approach based on the Wiel Coerver-method. Wilfred just mentioned the functional technique; flair is an important characteristic of this. It is not about a player being able to execute 8 scissor moves, but about him wanting the ball and that he emits a sense of: ‘Give me the ball; I will do something good with it.’ Creating confidence is another important aspect of our technique training. Players will ask for the ball quicker, because they are confident they will receive it well and do something with it. At the U15s I do not distinguish between the positions. Forwards or defenders, everybody will learn the same techniques and moves, because everyone needs to master them. It is about general ball skills, not about a left wingback being able to cut a striker out in the penalty area. Control and coordination that’s the key.”

Combinations

Wilfred: "We did not start two years ago with a structured plan. We also did not go around and ask the question of 'how we were going to start it?' The first year was an orientation year for both of us. I always handled one part of the training session and Michel handled the other part. Slowly but surely we realized that Michel's technical skills were applicable in my parts of the training session. Why wouldn't you combine them? This started to grow and now



these technical parts are incorporate into all exercises: finishing, positioning, small sided game and outnumbering situations."

Structure

Michel: "There is a structure in the technique training of the past two seasons. Step 1 is ball control. This is where the emphasis was the first few months: being active with the ball without resistance. After that the resistance was slowly brought in (step 2). It was introduced in the 1v1, in various game situations. Eventually you get to step 3: resistance and making choices. In 1v1 situations you only have one choice: beating your opponent. But when you have a situation with 3 defenders versus 2 attackers, the attacker on the ball will have a plethora of possibilities. He can pass to a teammate, he can initiate his own action, he can shoot, and he can change directions. The players must learn how to make the right choice in these situations. We trained this a lot lately: 2v3, 3v2, 2v1 and 1v2. These exercises are essential, because players will learn to recognize when an action can or cannot be initiated. When you make a move when it is not necessary or even dangerous, you will be punished right away in a game."

Never ready

Wilfred: "It is unfortunate that Michel will not be here next season (see frame at the end of the article – ed.), because there is still a lot possible with this group. You are never finished when it comes to technique training. The first team is working with it more and more as well. Just look at Ryan Babel (Ajax and Dutch National Team player – ed.) he trains with the youth in order to continuously improve himself. Same thing with Ruud van Nistelrooy, but he did it with René Meulenstein at Manchester United. It is not about learning the techniques; it's about maintaining and perfecting them. With the U15s we are, however, still in the learning phase."

Applying

Wilfred: "Besides learning there is applying. You can learn how to do a scissor move, but you must also learn how to apply it in a game. How do you approach an opponent when you want to beat him on the outside with a scissor move? You have to approach him correctly, because if you are positioned too much on the inside and execute the move you will bump into your opponent. So you must approach your opponent on the



side, where it is most logical to beat him. This technique is not only applicable to passing moves and actions. The same thing applies when you are approaching the goalkeeper. Why do you choose a certain corner? Do you look at the goalkeepers or at the goal? I always learned to look at the goalkeepers standing foot. A left footed goalkeeper will have problems defending his left side. The right corner, on the side of his 'lose' right foot is easier to defend because he will push off with his standing

foot (left) and will therefore be able to get to the ground faster. A ball with the correct speed and placement will always go in on his left side.”

Challenge

Wilfred: “It is important that the training session continue to be challenging for the players. By means of something I do or something Michel does or something they learn from each other. They must be self motivated to do something with it. This is sometimes hard to create. But why did these guys start playing football? Because they enjoy it and that is where it all starts. Every exercise must have a challenge which incorporates the enjoyment element. Let them train freely once in a while during a finishing exercise: ‘Everything is allowed! Show us what you are capable of?’ Trust me they will open up their box of tricks.”

Individual

Michel: “You will notice which players will technically rise above the rest, especially during one of those free exercises. We teach everyone the same techniques, but one player will learn quicker than the other. Regardless, this does not mean that you are done quicker with these ‘better’ players, on the contrary they want to do too much and are constantly running with the ball. The structure (steps) highlighted above will therefore vary per player. We look at one’s individual qualities. While you are still teaching one player to master the move, you are teaching the other at what moment to initiate the move. We therefore do not have a timeline which outlines when we do what with the group. Some players are already in the stage where we are unteaching them certain things. That is why we coach very individually.”

Homework

Michel: “In the beginning we even gave them homework. There was a certain order in learning the moves in the first phase (ball control without resistance). Cutting, turning, turning around and turning away. Later we incorporate moves. We would give them these things for homework. This worked perfectly, because (a) it is not a punishment for these guys to do it. Furthermore, it is way more fun than their school homework. And (b) they knew that we would ask some players to talk about and demonstrate their improvement, at random. And these guys do not want to fail, especially not in front of their peers. This works best with the less talented players. Those two or three technically gifted players will know how to do it, but as a coach you must kindle the group below that.”



Exercise

Michel: “One of the exercises that is repeated a lot is exercise 1: You place a square before the goal and position three players at every cone. On the other side, in front of the large goal, you will place a small goal. Player 1 passes to player 3, who then initiates the 1v1 with player 1. They play diagonally, because player 3 will be going for the goal. So, the forward (3) tries to score in the big goal. But there must also

be something for the defender (1) to achieve. That is why he is allowed to score on the small goal. We always work with a time limit of 10 seconds, so the players are forced to make decisions. After players 1 and 3 are done, players 2 and 4 will start their turn. After every five minutes everybody will rotate one position, so everybody will play in every position once, both in the defensive and offensive role.”

Specialty

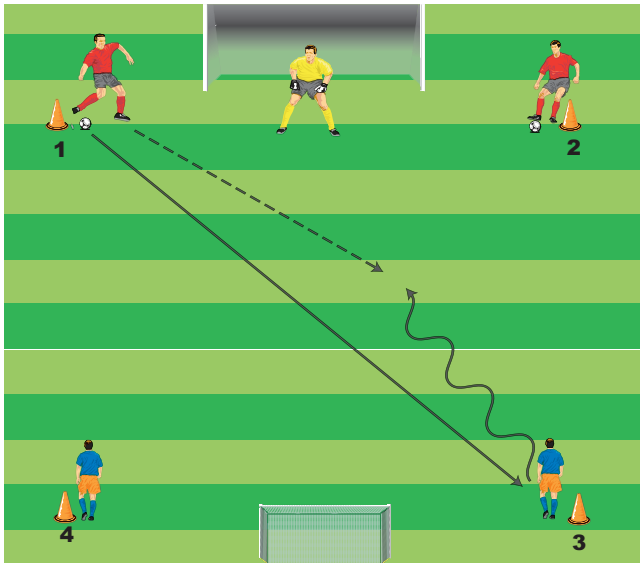
Wilfred: “It is very unfortunate that Michel will not be here next season, especially for the players, because they had two years of technique training and that will now become limited. Of course the coaches at NAC Breda can continue to incorporate the technique training, but not to the degree Michel was able to do that. Technique training is a specialty. Don’t underestimate this, Michel trains more than just the NAC players, just to teach himself new moves and maintain all moves. When I enter the field with my players, Michel has already been training for an hour. It is fun to ask my guys: ‘Hey, who is that over there?’ They will reply: ‘that’s the technique trainer’. When I ask them why he is out there training they will think about the answer and reply: ‘In order to maintain and continue his development. And they are right; you are never done with technique.’”

(Temporary) leave from NAC Breda

Michel Hordijk will leave NAC Breda after two seasons to go to FC Utrecht. Because of the threat of relegation to the first team it was unsure for a while whether or not Hordijk will remain at NAC Breda. He therefore chose for security and will start as technique trainer at FC Utrecht.

Wilfred van der Linden will also leave NAC Breda for one season. Van der Linden, coached at NAC Breda for 13 years in almost all the youth teams, but is taken a sabbatical year due to personal reasons. He will be back coaching the U15s in the 2007-2008 season.

1:1 on big goal



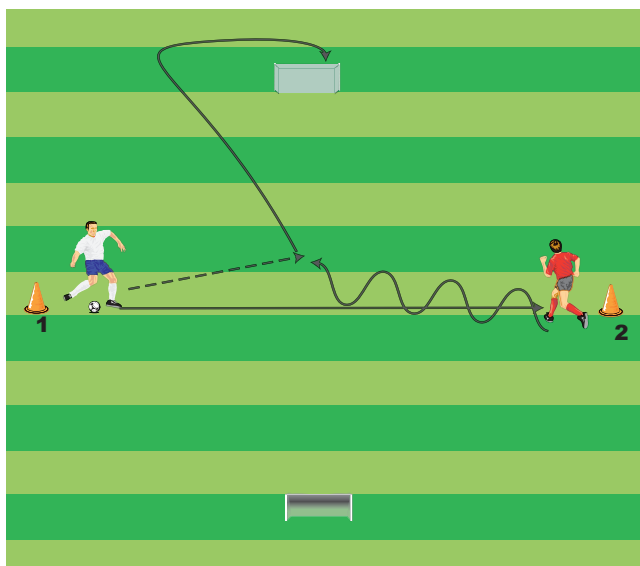
Organization:

- Four cones with approx. 3 players
- 1 plays against 3, 2 against 4
- Groups 3 and 4 may score in the big goal with a goalkeeper, groups 1 and 2 in the small goal without a goalkeeper
- 1 passes to 3, after which 3 initiates the 1v1 towards the goal
- Time limit: 10 seconds
- After this turn 2 and 4 do the same

Variation:

- Switch position every 5 minutes

1:1 with the emphasis on turning 180 degrees



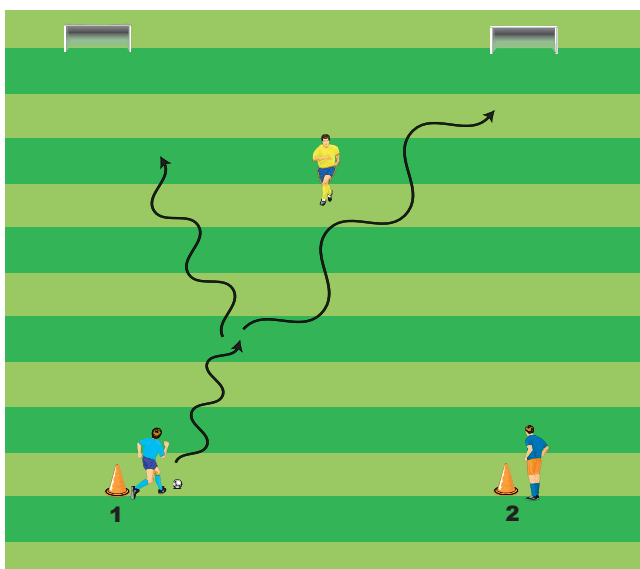
Organization:

- Approx. 3 players at cones 1 and 2
- 1 passes to 2
- 2 can score in the reversed goals
- 1 tries to steal the ball from 2
- After the turn 1 and 2 turn around
- 2 has to be passed 1 first, may not score directly through the inside
- When 1 steals the ball he may try to score

Coaching:

- Make it clear to the players that the transition is important and that they must play in various directions

1:1 with the accent on changing directions diagonally



Organization:

- Approx. 4 players positioned at cones 1 and 2
- One defender in the middle for both goals
- 1 plays 1v1 against the defender
- Both the attacker and the defender can score on both goals

Variation:

- The player from group 1 will become the defender of group 2