

Hyballa/te Poel



# German Soccer **PASSING DRILLS**

**More than 100 Drills**  
from the Pros

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SPORT

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## FOREWORD



All ball circulation is based on a good passing game. Many recent examples show that this can result in successful top-level soccer. Within the scope of their playing philosophy, even the national team constantly works on the passing game and combines this with group and team-tactical measures. To implement variable and efficient team play at the highest level, teams must be able to quickly open up space. In particular, this can be done with precise, well-timed, flat, hard, and vertical passes.

A successful passing game relies on foundations laid by targeted, variable, and intensive training. Training units on the field are extremely important for coaches and players as their teams evolve and try to reach the highest level. In *German Soccer Passing Drills*, Peter Hyballa and Hans-Dieter te Poel lay the foundation to develop a successful passing game.

In this book, the authors examine many types of passes and performance factors that can lay the foundation through training. As such the book *German Soccer Passing Drills* is a training model and is a true mine of information for any coach.

In 2015, the authors Peter Hyballa and Hans-Dieter te Poel published a second German book on the passing game. This work includes contributions from experts of the most diverse areas of performance-oriented soccer and applied sports science. The different perspectives of the what and how in the international passing game are presented using focused interviews; there is also a large number of additional drills and different types of plays.

Together these two books represent a handbook for all coaches and trainers with an interest in relevant, detailed, and intensive goal-oriented training and the advancement of their players.

***Hans-Dieter Flick***

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## 4.3 THE INDIVIDUAL PUZZLE PIECES: IS IT ALL JUST A MATTER OF PASS TYPES?

*"What is Messi: Midfielder or forward? Scorer or playmaker? The answer: He is all of those things in one; versatility personified. An all-rounder with universal abilities, blessed with gigantic skills."*

(H.G. Klemm, Dec. 2, 2013, TOP SPEED. The New Kings of Soccer, in *kicker* 98, pg. 9)

Looking at the statements in previous chapters, the answer to the question posed in the chapter title would have to be no. It is therefore necessary that the individual puzzle pieces are hereinafter

- put into a concrete situational playing context,
- briefly outline the purpose of the training and instruction, and
- present effective and practical examples for the coach or instructor.

The question, How do I practice these puzzle pieces?, will be addressed separately in chapter 4.5. The structure of *organization*, *progression*, *coaching*, and *variations* chosen for the following chapters merely provides a rough pattern that is intended to provide the reader with particularly explicit, comprehensible, and productive material for the first steps into the *topics* (puzzle pieces). This training and instructional aid provided in advance, also called *advance organizer*, is meant to organize and structure the content, but it definitely does not discount the readers' or players' prior knowledge. The reader should then actively and independently use the *inventory of methods* (see chapter 4.5) like a building set or a color palette, based on his *individual experience* and his *needs*.

With respect to the (1) *technical* and (2) *tactical elements for (flat) passes*<sup>10</sup> we start with the following:

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<sup>10</sup> A detailed description of the technical aspects of all other passes can be found in Bisanz/Gerisch (2013, pg. 332-363).



**(1) Technical elements:**

- *Running at the ball:*
  - If possible, approach from behind the ball to be able to pass from an open position (see chapter 4.3.6).
  - Go into the ball when passing, meaning play the pass flat and with force.
- *Passing motion:*
  - The toe of the supporting leg points in the direction of the target.
  - *Flat pass:* The shooting leg follows through and gets big by using the supporting leg. *Coaching:* "Get up on the ball of the foot!", "Keep moving with the shot!", and "Don't root your supporting leg in the ground but take a very small hop forward!"
- *Passing techniques (flat pass):*
  - *Inside foot:* Frontal passes, short and mid-distance;
  - *Inside instep:* Diagonal passes
- *Outside instep:* See inside instep, whereby the shooting leg is in a lateral position to the target.

**(2) Tactical elements:**

- *Individually:*
  - Breaking away from the opponent or stepping out of the cover shadow and offering support in the gaps.
  - *Offering support for deep passes:* going into the gap (e.g., as a 6er, 9er).
  - *Offering support for return passes:* Having the gap in front to be able to immediately play a long ball through the gap.
  - *Offering support to the side:* facilitating diagonal balls.
  - Trying to get into the open position (see chapter 4.3.6) to immediately be able to play forward.
  - *Timing:* Break away early to receive a pass if the ball is still on its way to the teammate to allow the partner to make a direct pass.
- *Group tactics:*
  - *Wall pass,* playing with a third man, long ball with rebound.

- *Oblique/diagonal balls*: Play past the opponent diagonally to the front or back; the receiving player has a gap in front of him and can meet the ball half-open (see chapter 4.3.6).

In the following chapters, we also purposefully use mostly familiar soccer language, thereby anticipating an easier and quicker task-oriented transfer to practice and instruction. The figurative language chosen for the different types of passes has been used to date by coaches Hyballa and te Poel in their own practice as collective terminology. The intention is to establish an association between certain symbols, visual characters, and acoustical forms of words, and the objects that create different types of passes, and furthermore to support a team's communication process.

### 4.3.1 THE LOB PASS

*"Ideal is when one is proactive, when one plays assertively, is dominant, is multi-faceted."*

(The 100-time German national team player Bastian Schweinsteiger, FC Bayern Munich, in a *kicker* interview with O. Hartmann & K. Wild, Oct. 14, 2013, pg. 11).



In a competitive game, the *lob pass* is mostly needed when an opponent is positioned directly in front of the player in possession. The player with the ball urgently wants to pass to his teammate. He either needs to look for the 1v1, play via a third man, or lob the ball over the opponent. This is also called *chipping the ball* over the opponent. This situation is comparable to lobbing in a tennis match.

The following fig. 8 shows a simulated *lob pass* situation on the wing (in a 2v3 situation) taken from the Champions League game Arsenal London (here in white/blue) against BV Borussia Dortmund 09, from Nov. 12, 2011, at a 0-0 score (action starts at 5:30 minutes of playing time).

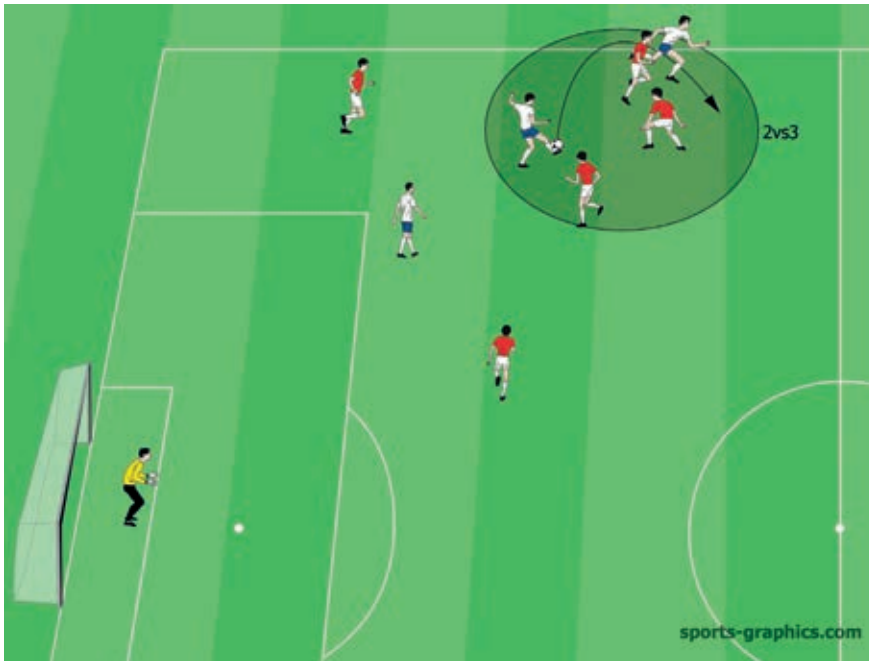


Fig. 8: Lob pass from the Champions League game Arsenal London vs. BV Borussia Dortmund 09

But often the *lob pass* is also played when space in the game is very tight (e.g., near the opposing penalty area) and is then played as a *final pass* to catch the opposing central defenders off-guard. Zidane was a master of the *lob pass*, a technically ingenious passer.

## EXAMPLES FOR PRACTICE AND INSTRUCTION

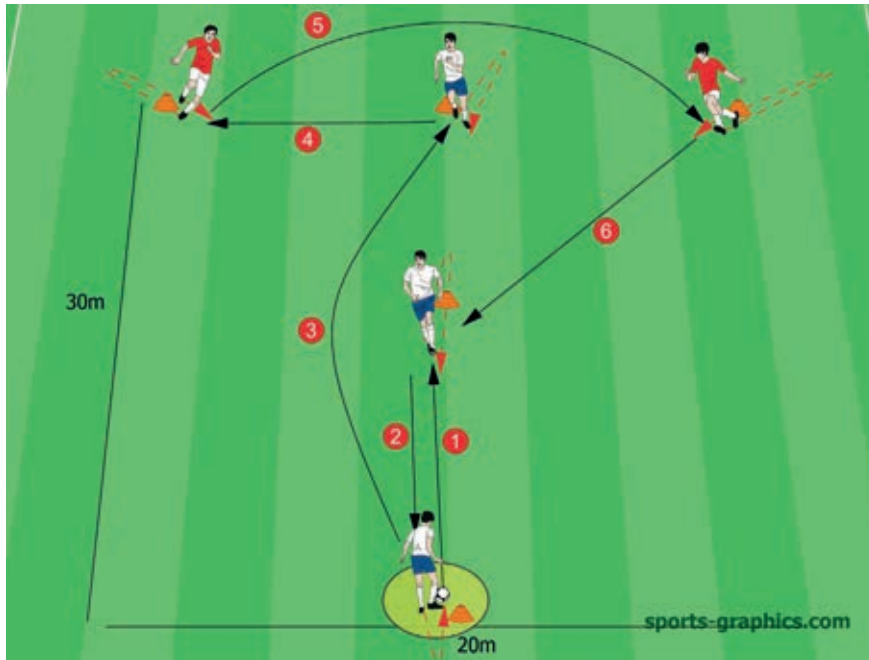


Fig. 9: Lob pass with five in the passing grid

**Organization:**

- Five cones are placed in an approximately 30-x-20-m space.
- A player positions at each cone so that the passing grid will be completed with 5 players.

**Progression:**

- A player passes the ball to the opposite player. This player allows the ball to rebound, and the first player lobs the ball over the second player to the third player, who stands opposite him about 15 m away.
- The third player plays the *lobbed* ball directly to the fourth player who stands to his side.
- He *lobs* the ball over the third player to the fifth player, who then passes the ball to the second player, thereby ending the exercise.

**Coaching:**

- Demand body tension from all players.
- Demand *two-footed* lobbing.
- The ball must be *lobbed* hard and with precision so a new play can be initiated.

**Variations:**

- Only practice the *lob* pass with a specific passing foot.
- Increase the distances and play the *lob pass* incisively to the teammate's head.
- Simulate game situations: Set up two passing grids next to each other and man them with a total of 10 players. Who finishes the exercise fastest (time, bonus points, etc.)?

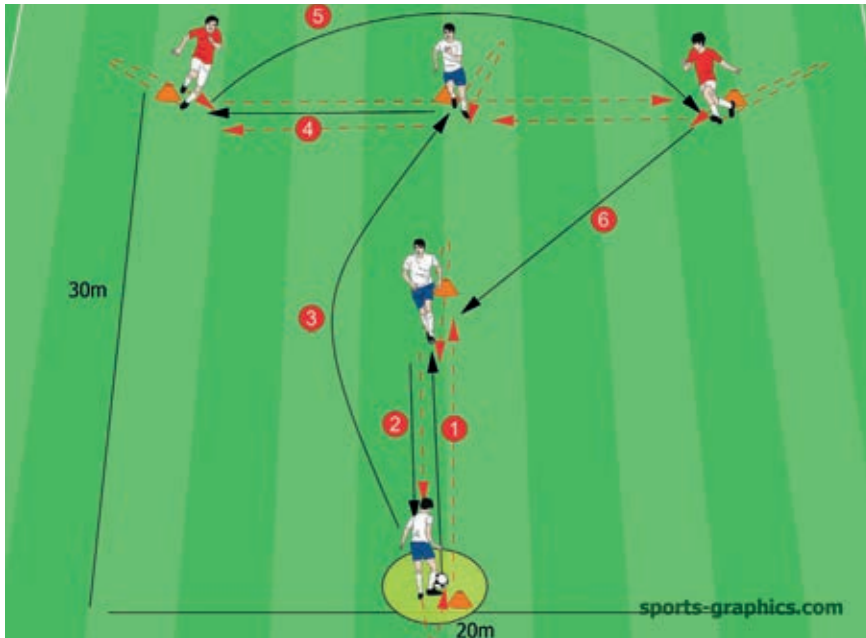


Fig. 10: Lob pass in a grid of five and position changes

**Organization:** See fig. 9.

**Progression:**

- See fig. 9, whereby the players in the circles switch positions with their opposites after the *lob pass*.
- After the *lob pass* all players play the ball with one touch ("Direct play!")

**Coaching:**

- Demand, "Play and go!"
- After the *lob pass* all players must orient themselves to the respective new space (*passing tactics*).
- Don't put too much *spin* on the lob pass!

**Variations:**

- Increase the distances so that a player, for instance in the light-green circle, has to execute several *lob passes* at a time. He should always run after his own *lob pass*.

- In addition to passing from a closed position, the players also pass the ball to each other the ball from a *double-pass situation*.
- Add one goal with a goalie, and after the *lob pass*, end the complete action with a shot at goal.

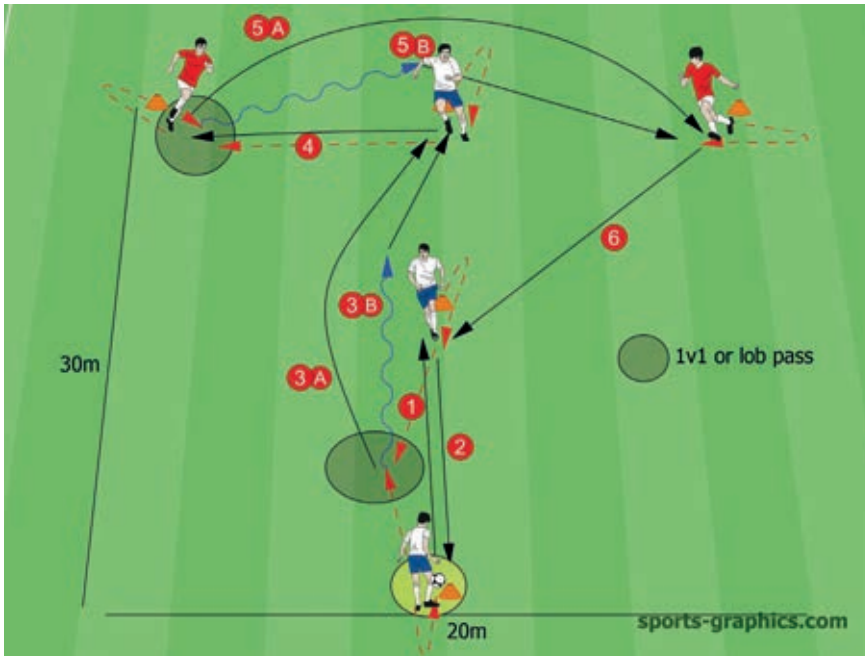


Fig. 11: Lob pass in a 5-man grid: offensive 1v1 or play the lob pass

**Organization:** See fig. 9

**Progression:**

- As in fig. 9, the player letting the ball rebound immediately becomes the defensive opponent.
- By doing this the player receiving the ball can decide if he wants to play offensive 1v1 or use the *lob pass*.
- Every player who used the *lob pass* immediately becomes the defensive opponent (long and short running paths).

**Coaching:**

- Demand speed and precision from the fast opponent.
- Encourage quick or delayed decisions<sup>11</sup> (offensive 1v1 or *lob pass*) (*passing tactics*).

**Variations:**

- Increase distances between players to prompt the player in possession to dribble.
- Decrease the distances between players so that the players only require one or two touches to make their decisions.
- Execute the *lob pass* with two touches. *Lob the ball into the air* with the first touch and play it away with the second touch.

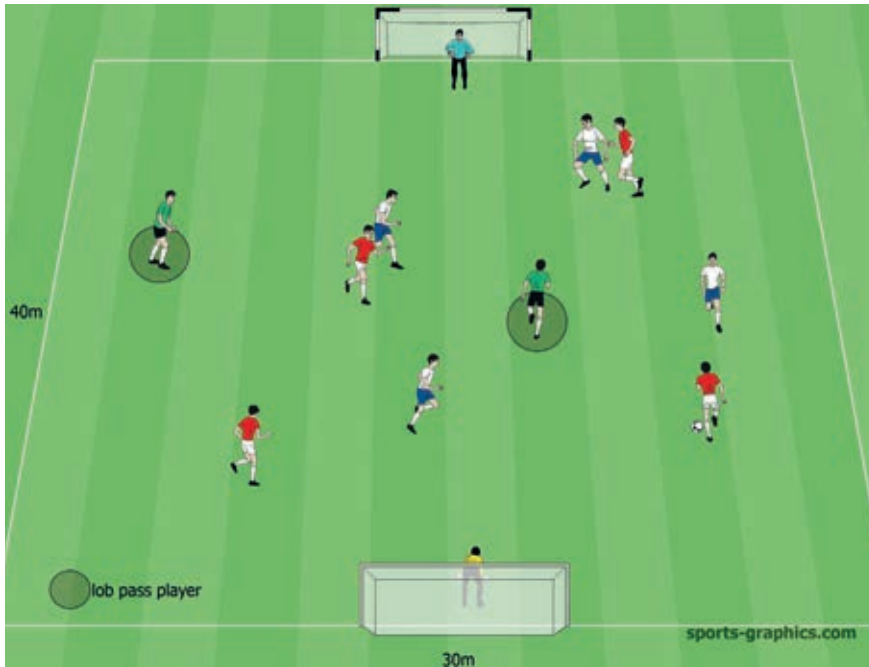


Fig. 12: 4v4 plus 2 lob pass players

**Organization:**

- 4v4 at two big goals with goalies in a space that is 40 x 30 m.
- Two neutral players are added, making it 4v4 plus 2.

<sup>11</sup> Based on the *pre-decision, pre-action, and post-action phase* by Höhner (2005, pg.36)



**Progression:**

- See Progression, Fig. 11
- The two neutral players are part of the team in possession. These two players can only play *lob passes* (*ground passes* are not allowed).

**Coaching:**

- Focus on quickly settling and controlling the ball in the 4v4.
- The neutral players must be able to determine if the *lob pass* should be played into space or to the teammate's foot.
- Play additional *lob passes* with the inside foot (*passing technique*).

**Variations:**

- Change the size of the playing field so that the *lob passes* can be played farther.
- The two neutral players play open soccer, whereby only the final assist before a shot can be a *lob pass*.
- The two neutral players are allowed to play *ground passes*, whereby the goal must be scored with a *lob pass*. The two neutral players can also score.