

Building to Game Time

An NSCAA Master Coach Candidate details the preparations of an MLS team

The NSCAA has started a Master Coach course. As part of the requirements of the year-long course, each candidate must complete a project assigned

by the Director of Coaching Education and Development. The following is the first article published from the Master Coach course, submitted by Rob Herrin-

ger, men's coach at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan. The Columbus Crew's staff prepares for an upcoming game with Kansas City.

Columbus Crew Training Session

DATA

Date: May 1, 2008
Time: 10-11:30 a.m.
Location: Crew Stadium (Columbus, Ohio)
Weather: Sunny and warm

STAFF

Sigi Schmid, head coach
Robert Warzycha, assistant coach
Mike Lapper, assistant coach
Giovani Salinas, goalkeeper coach
Steve Tashjian, strength and conditioning coach

PLAYERS

Twenty-three outfield, four goalkeepers and three injured players (30 total). The starting goalkeeper, Hesmmer, was doing some rehab on a bad shoulder, so was not involved in the full goalkeeper training.

WARMUP

Technical work with Mike Lapper.

- Groups of three, passing and moving.
- 2 v. 1s and juggling between the three players mixed in
- Warzycha filled in as an extra field player
- Goalkeepers worked with Salinas



DYNAMIC/BALLISTIC WARMUP

with strength and conditioning coach Steve Tashjian

- Forward hops over first three cones and accelerate
- Hops facing sideways
- Forward hops in opposite direction, quickly turn and accelerate
- Resistance from teammate (pushing on shoulders)



8 V. 8 + 8

- Four-minute games
- Two-touch restriction

Observations

- Great ball movement – rarely went out of bounds
- The defending team always worked very hard to win the ball back
- Great intensity
- Lots of communication
- Goalkeepers still working with Salinas



11 V. 11

Observations

- Both teams played in 1-4-4-2 shapes with a diamond midfield.
- The potential starting 11 played against the reserves, with the reserves playing in Kansas City's shape.
- Schmid stopped the game with a whistle to make coaching points, firm but always positive with the players and never raising his voice
- The game was started at different points after stoppages – free kicks, goal kicks, in the back, etc.



CROSSING AND FINISHING

- Overlap from wing back
- Near post, penalty spot and far post runs
- One defender helping the goalkeeper
- Alternate sides

Progression

- Play first ball to wing back. Wing back plays 1-2 with midfielder and serves in



INDIVIDUAL TIME

- Players work on anything they need.
- Some do technical work, other long balls, and some work on additional crossing and finishing with Warzycha.

POST-TRAINING

Players left the field and either showered and ate lunch on site or had film sessions with assistant coaches.

For example, the midfielders went with Warzycha and watched clips from their match with Houston and also attacking clips of Kansas City v. Toronto. Warzycha thought the team was keeping its shape well in recent matches when defending. He also thought players could get behind Kansas City with long diagonal balls because Kansas City pinches in very tight when defending on the flanks. Therefore,

he emphasized, particularly to Eddie Gaven, that he needed to look to switch the point of attack sometimes instead of playing a short ball on the same side of the field in order to maintain possession – take a risk. Once that ball is hit, the winger who gets on the end of it needs to whip in service to guys making runs to goal.

The team spirit is strong and the

coaching staff is well aware of it. Everything seems to be clicking on all cylinders, especially going into the Kansas City match with a 4-1 record. Schmid

was positive with the players and he believed that the team didn't need a kind of "in your face" coaching style. He also was happy with delegating different parts

of the session to Lapper and Warzycha. He felt it was beneficial for the players to hear someone else's voice.

Columbus Crew Pre-Game Training Session

DATA

Date: May 2, 2008
Time: 10:15-11:30 a.m.
Location: Obetz Training Facility
(Obetz, Ohio)
Weather: Overcast and cool

STAFF

Sigi Schmid, head coach
Robert Warzycha, assistant coach
Mike Lapper, assistant coach
Giovani Salinas, goalkeeper coach
Steve Tashjian, strength and conditioning coach

PLAYERS

Twenty-three outfield, four goalkeepers and three injured players (30 total).

DYNAMIC/BALLISTIC WARMUP

with strength and conditioning coach Steve Tashjian

- Basic running and stretching exercises followed by work on the agility ladder.
- Goalkeepers worked with Salinas

FOUR-GOAL GAME

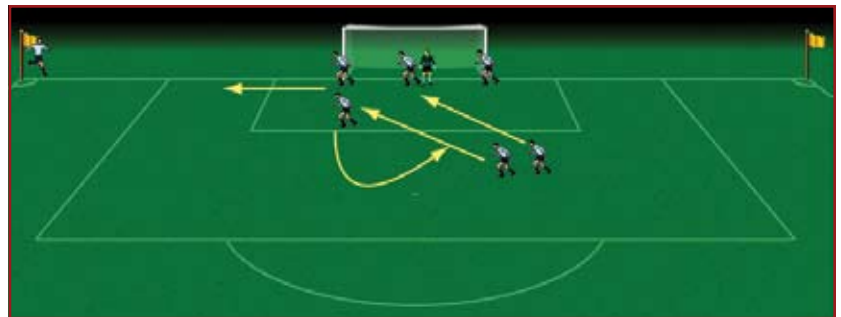
12 v. 12 + 4 goalkeepers

- Half field
- Older players v. younger players.
- Attack two goals; defend two goals.
- Two-touch restriction.
- Lapper rounded out the 24 outfield players.
- Note: Schmid likes playing games such as this on the day before a match so players can take it easy or go as hard as they need to. The larger numbers helps with this.



OFFENSIVE CORNER KICKS

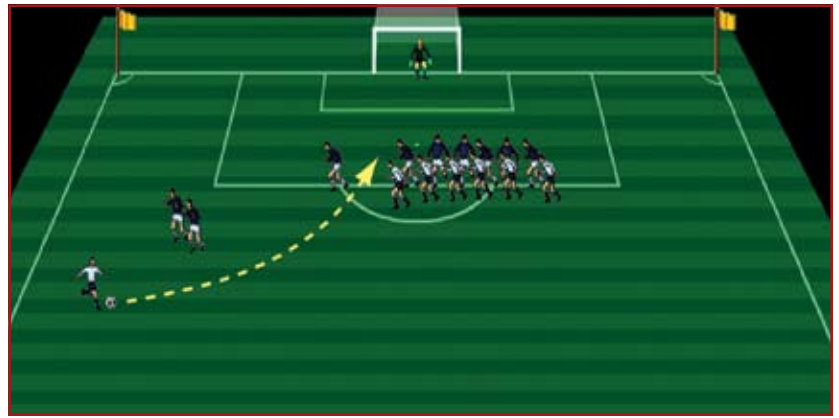
- Starters v. Reserves (starting squad and movement shown)
- All kicks taken from same side and inswinging.



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ATTACKING AND DEFENDING FREE KICKS OUTSIDE THE PENALTY AREA

- Seven defending with two in the wall. Six players attacking with one player taking the kick.
- Inswinging service
- Runners working on slashing in front of man-markers
- Players asking questions to coaching staff to make sure they understand their responsibilities
- Changed the angle of the service in order to make players reset.
- When the ball is inside 18 yards, the front man, who does not have a mark, will set the line of defenders on the wall.
- Teams switched roles.



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INDIVIDUAL TIME

- Players work on anything they need.
- Many worked on crossing and finishing. The free-kick artists worked on dead balls with the reserve team goalkeepers and against dummies.



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POST-TRAINING

- Players left the field, showered and ate lunch on site. The coaching staff, along with Tashjian, played an inspiring

game of soccer tennis (2 v. 2) before heading in.

- Training facility has a full training room connected to the locker room, coach

and team manager offices, a small weight room, and a player lounge. There are two full-sized natural grass fields. No indoor or turf field.

Columbus Crew v. Kansas City Wizards

May 3, 2008 • Crew Stadium, Columbus, Ohio

DEFENDING TEAM OBSERVATIONS

- **Line of confrontation:** High – forwards apply pressure about 30 yards in front of midfield.
- **Compactness:** 30-40 yards.
- **Numbers defending:** Usually nine players with the goalkeeper.
- **Steer or confront:** Confront.
- **Zone or man-to-man:** Combination of man and zone.

ATTACKING TEAM OBSERVATIONS

- **Style of play:** Flank play and counterattacking.
- **Width:** Wide midfielders and wing backs.
- **Numbers attacking:** Five or six.
- **Method of penetration:** Through flanks (No. 19 and No. 2) or middle.
- **Pattern of counter:** Quickly find No. 7 and play-in No. 10 or go to flanks.

Overview and Summary

As you enter the Columbus Crew's Obetz Training Facility, you immediately get the feel for why "America's Hardest Working Team" is sitting atop the MLS table and is having the best start in franchise history. The players are noticeably loose and in good spirits, and training is sharp, competitive and intense. Behind the scenes, legendary coach Sigi Schmid and his staff are doing everything in their power to make sure the streak continues and the squad keeps moving forward toward a possible MLS Cup Championship, the first in club history.

The two days of preparation leading up to the match with the Kansas City Wizards seemed to go as planned for The Crew. Unfortunately, starting left back Gino Padula was nursing a sprained MCL, and goalkeeper Will Hesmer was questionable for the match because of a sprain in the AC joint in his shoulder. Despite the potential loss of two starters in a lineup that led the team to a 4-1 start, the team looked intent on earn-

ing another three points against the visiting side from Kansas City.

The match itself followed the intensity of the last two days of preparation. Columbus came out from the opening whistle with a fire and passion that reflected its training. Every player on the pitch worked hard, especially when defending, creating numerous turnovers and counter-attacking opportunities. Consequently, Kansas City struggled to find a rhythm and quickly was punished for its mistakes; Columbus scored off a free kick in the fourth minute. It was a "hard work" kind of goal when Adam Moffat out-jumped goalkeeper Kevin Hartman just inside the six-yard box, knocking the ball home off the side of his head.

Another "hard work" goal came in the 34th minute when Alejandro Moreno hit a bicycle kick near the midfield stripe to play in a streaking Robbie Rogers. Rogers beat the charging Hartman to the ball and

tapped in the second goal of the match. Things got even worse for Kansas City in the 37th minute, when Roger Espinoza was sent off for striking Frankie Hejduk in the face with a forearm following a tough tackle. The half ended with Columbus up by a man and two goals. It looked like a rout was on at Crew Stadium.

The second half, however, saw a re-energized KC team turn the tide on Columbus. The Crew seemed to sit back and relax on its two-goal lead and man advantage. A tactical change by Wizards coach Curt Onalfo brought Scott Sealy into the match as the high striker and moved Claudio Lopez to the left wing, causing

many problems for Columbus. Sealy posted up Danny O'Rourke, the young Columbus center back, and did an excellent job of playing the "point man" in the 1-4-4-1 shape. Sealy, normally a vertical runner, did an exceptional job of receiving various kinds of balls with his back to goal and under tremendous pressure. He either turned on O'Rourke or played his teammates into dangerous positions to score. This tactic paid off for the Wizards in the 73rd minute, when O'Rourke was called for a foul on Sealy as he backed into him just inside the penalty area. Lopez converted the penalty kick and the game suddenly took



on a new feel.

Ultimately, the Crew weathered the storm and held for the 2-1 victory. Schmid's post-match comments were

as expected. He thought the team looked very good in the first half, executing the ideas they worked on in the training leading up to the match. The

second half was a different story. The team struggled to maintain possession and sat back on the lead while Kansas City took the match to them.

Although the win was a bit ugly, he was happy with the outcome and the additional three points.



Player Performance Analysis			
Name	No.	Role in the Team	Comments
Frankie Hejduk	2	Get forward on overlapping runs. Be an attacking threat out of the back. Solid defending and help maintain possession. Team captain.	Key to the team's success. Great work ethic and leadership. Gets up and down the field very quickly. Rarely makes a mistake.
Danny O'Rourke	5	Track Claudio Lopez, the KC playmaker, man-to-man. Be a hard-nosed, physical presence in the back.	Solid performance. Was called for a very soft penalty in the second half. Struggled a bit when Sealy came in and posted him up. Great intensity and very tough.
Chad Marshall	14	Size and physical presence, especially in the air. Ball-winner.	Also a solid performance. Played smart and within himself.
Ezra Hendrickson	23	Hold down the left side of the field. Size. Get forward on occasion.	Good work at the left back. Got forward a few times and even had a great chance to score in the late minutes of the match after a long run out of the back.
Eddie Gaven	12	Come inside and allow Hejduk to get forward. Technical ability and size.	Tucked inside most of the match. Had very little impact. Was taken out in the 73rd minute.
Brian Carroll	16	Track attacking midfielder Kurt Morsink. Cover the ground from touchline to touchline. Ball winner. Help team keep possession. Lots of work.	Great work rate and ability to cover a lot of ground. Excellent in defense. Played simple when ball was at feet.
Adam Moffatt	22	Hard work and covering a lot of ground. Connect with backs and forwards.	Had an excellent match until an injury forced him to be taken out in the 55th minute. Great energy.
Robbie Rogers	19	Receive ball on flank and run at right back. Create 1 v. 1 and 2 v. 1 opportunities. Provide service or shot from outside.	Willingness to run at defenders and create on the flank. Can be a bit "fragile." Nice match overall.
Guillermo Scheletto	7	Technical, crafty playmaker. Be available in counterattack. Lots of work.	In good positions to receive ball most of the time, especially in the gap between the backline and midfield. Covered a lot of ground and helped trigger very effective counterattacks.
Alejandro Moreno	10	Workhorse. Get in behind defense and be a dangerous threat to score.	Excellent work rate. Played in Rogers with a bicycle kick for the second goal. Size and pace.
Will Hesmer	1	Prevent goals. Strong on crosses and deadballs. Direction and leadership from the back.	Very good match! Huge saves to help preserve the win. Saved a 1 v. 1 against Lopez in the second half and a free kick in the 90th minute. Excellent job, especially considering he was nursing a bad shoulder during the week.
Emmanuel Ekpo	17	Provide pace and creativity. Shooting from distance.	First MLS appearance. Went forward a bit too much and was a little careless with the ball. Did provide energy.
Brad Evans	3	Lock down the right side of the field. Helped preserve win.	Steady performance.
Nicolas Hernandez	20	Provide energy and defensive presence.	Steady performance.