

PERFORMANCE

WHERE PROS REVEAL THE SECRETS OF THEIR GAME

IMPROVE YOUR SHOT-STOPPING THANKS TO LARDY AND LUMPY

Introducing the bizarre double act that will leave your goalkeeper begging for matchday

There's a simple theory among sports coaches: make something really hard in training, and when it comes to the game, it'll become easy. No wonder there are so many stories about Brazilians who honed their skills booting a tangerine/dead guinea pig around the favelas, and thus found juggling a normal sphere a doddle.

Now sports entrepreneur Glenn Robertson has cleverly applied this approach to goalkeepers and devised the 'Responseball'. Branded as 'the ball with bumps', the training aid is just that: a football with strategically-placed lumps which, when propelled towards a keeper, bounces unpredictably, helping to hone the custodian's reactions.

"I wanted to create something that would help youth coaches who may not have specialist goalkeeping knowledge to sharpen up their keepers," says Robertson. "It works very well and is being used at all levels. Andy Fairman, the coach at Blackpool, is a big fan, and the staff at Liverpool, West Ham and many other clubs are also using them."

Pictured are the original 'Origin', which costs \$27, and the beastly 'Max' (\$53), a low-bouncing version that weighs twice as much and helps improve handling strength (we don't recommend trying to kick it). The big match will be a piece of cake after a session with one of these.

Find out more at responseball.com

Weights
1kg

Changes direction
at the last second



THE FOURFOURTWO PERFORMANCE PANEL

Meet the experts answering your questions about playing the game this month

TECHNIQUE

Andy Carroll Liverpool and England striker

The \$50m former Newcastle man gives his knowledgeable tips on how to use your head in every area of the pitch.



FITNESS

Phil Neville Everton captain

With over 400 top-flight games under his belt, the versatile veteran shares his secrets on how to eat, drink and sleep like a EPL player.



PSYCHOLOGY

John Terry Chelsea and England captain

The 30-year-old defensive warrior names the six qualities you need as skipper to lead your team to success.



TACTICS

Peter Taylor Bahrain national team head coach

Managing sides since 1986, the Bahrain coach tells you how to defend well from the wings.





EARLY BATH FOR THIGHS

Thigh strains are the most common injury sustained by footballers during the pre-season period, according to research published in the *Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine*. Studies also found that players who suffer a hamstring strain are far more likely to re-injure the muscle during the season.



KEEP RIGHT

Goalkeepers are more likely to dive to the right when their team is behind in a penalty shootout, according to analysis of World Cups since 1982. Dutch psychologists claim it's common for the 'right-oriented' human brain to go this way when the potential rewards are highest.

REFFIN' HELL

Not all refs follow the rulebook on foul language. A study of 113 refs from the University of Vienna showed that 55 per cent would respond to players swearing with a red card; 25 with a yellow; 12 with a ticking-off; while seven would keep schtum. Unsurprisingly, it was found that the content determined the decision.

OIL INTAKE SPEEDS UP REACTION TIMES

Footballers' reaction times, precision movement and efficiency can be improved by DHA, a nutrient found in fish oil. A trial of 24 female footballers showed significant improvement in those who popped 3.5g per day of the fishy pills, compared to a placebo.

30 SECONDS

That's the time difference between men and women getting up after being fouled. "Male players use interruptions tactically," says study researcher Malte Siegle. "When they are in the lead, players take their time with injuries – but this is not observed in women's football."

10 THINGS WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

THE SUB-WAY

Analysis of top European games reveals that the first substitution should be made prior to the 58th minute; the second before the 73rd and the third before the 79th. Losing teams that follow this score 36 per cent of the time; those that don't, just 18 per cent.

FITTEST ISN'T ALWAYS FINEST

A study of semi-pros found that those who are good at passing, shooting and tackling in matches weren't necessarily the most athletic players. Experts concluded that 'weaker' athletes made up for deficiencies by tackling harder and passing more in games.

UP AND AT 'EM

Your personality dictates whether you're more or less likely to go up for a header. A study into the health effects of heading the ball noticed that, after assessing personality types, keen nodders have the most extrovert personalities.

CLOSE YOUR EYES...

...and see yourself being hypnotised – then scoring the winner – to boost confidence. Researchers into the *Effects of Hypnosis on Self-Efficacy and Soccer Performance* found that 'ego-strengthening' saw a big rise in one unnamed pro's stats.



EDGE OF THE 'D'

Start necking those Vitamin D supplements. Studies on American footballers playing in the NFL found a lack of the nutrient could increase the chance of a muscle injury. "Screening and treatment of Vitamin D insufficiency may be a simple way to help prevent injuries," said Dr Scott Rodeo, co-chief of the US Sports Medicine Service.



[You ask, we answer]

Find space in midfield

Struggling to break free? As Portuguese orchestrator Deco tells *FFT*, quick thinking is the key

"I always struggle to find any room in the middle of the park. Can you help?"

Dean Gimble, via email



Deco

Fluminense and former Barcelona playmaker

"It's all about developing a wide view of the field, and learning how to keep your head up all the time. You have to know the right moments to run and to pause, without hesitation.

When the midfield is congested, it's obviously easier to find space at the back by taking the ball off your defenders. But as you go forward, it becomes harder to find space, especially in the centre. The best way to overcome this is to look to play down the sides.

If you're marked you have to try to do something different. I stand close to the markers and wait for the right moment to dart into space. If you want to receive the ball, you have to offer options to your team-mates.

If someone is man-marking me in midfield, it's harder for me to find space, but it can be easier for the team. I try to move through the field, bringing the defender with me and creating room for my team-mates – it's knowing how to play without the ball.

A good drill is training on smaller pitches, where you have less room. The quicker you think and the better you pass the ball, the easier it will be to find space."

"Stand close to your marker and wait to dart into space," advises the ex-Chelsea man

DID YOU KNOW?

As well as helping you look for gaps while under pressure, practising on small pitches will also improve your technical play, due to the increased number of touches



Interview Jonas Oliveira

"I've just started playing as a centre-back after years playing in the middle. Any tips?"

Marlon Matthews, via email



Gareth Southgate

Former midfielder turned defender

"When I played in midfield I wasn't great at receiving the ball on the half-turn or having that vision you need as a midfielder. For that reason the switch to

defence was a natural one. You rely on different skills as a centre-back: one big advantage is that you can see the whole pitch so you have to take more responsibility for organising the team in front of you.

Playing in midfield, you get used to being on the ball, so you can take this into your new role. Be the one to bring the ball out and start

attacks; this is especially handy when your team is struggling to find space in midfield.

For any midfielder turned defender, you must be aware of positioning. Looking down the line and making sure everyone's holding their position takes practice. You don't want to be the one playing everyone onside, so communication is key. Make sure you're always listening to what your team-mates are saying, so that when they say to push up, you're ready."



Southgate won 52 caps after his switch to defence

Interview Neil Billingham

[Masterclass]

ANDY CARROLL: HOW TO USE YOUR HEAD

From bullet finishes to far-post knockdowns, Liverpool and England's man-mountain reveals the six steps to winning every aerial battle





1 Diving header

It's all about timing

"When going for a diving header, it might sound obvious but the main thing you want to concentrate on is making contact. Then it's all about timing. It's all about when the ball comes in: if it's got pace on it you just guide it in; if it's coming in slow you have to put the power in through your body. You generate this power by making sure you dive towards the ball rather than letting it hit you. The faster the run before you dive, the harder your header will be."



2 Back-post header

Loop it back across goal

"The best thing to do when heading it at the far post is to loop it back to the front post – where it came from. You're hoping that it either goes in or someone gets a nick on it. When the ball's coming in, keep your eye on the ball. The defender will have to watch you and the ball, so if you keep moving you should be able to get ahead of him. If you're tightly marked, give him a little nudge as the ball comes over."



3 The flick-on

Communication and contact is key

"Before the ball comes out from a goal kick or free-kick to us, I'll talk to [Luis] Suarez about where he's going to run, where I am standing and whether he'll run on the inside or outside. Based on that, I try and put it in that area when the ball is kicked. The key when flicking the ball on is just getting enough contact to get it over your defender and into the space behind him. To get the header in, it's key you pin your defender behind you so use your arms to keep him from getting to the ball first."



4 Glancing header

Redirect the pace of the cross

"The first thing to remember when attempting a glancing header is that pace needs to be on the ball – if not, it's unlikely to beat the goalkeeper. Again, it's all about timing as you're not generating the power yourself in this situation. What makes a glancing header easier is if you're running towards the ball – from back post to front post – as it's much easier to help it on its way."



5 Attacking header

Work your neck, keep it down

"This is something I practised a lot when I was younger and it's helped with my game now. With these sorts of headers, where you're meeting the ball full-on, all the power comes from your neck. You do this by sticking your arms out and pulling them towards you while powering your head forward with your neck. And try and keep it down – it'll be much harder for the keeper to stop it as he doesn't know where or how high it's going to bounce."



6 Defensive header

It's all about the power

"There's no finesse about defensive headers. It's all about getting as much power on them as possible so you can get it out of the danger area. It's a bit more difficult as you're not just looking at the ball, you have to keep an eye on the player you're marking too. But it helps being a striker in this situation as I can predict where people are going to run, so I try to get there first."

PRO TIP

CHRIS HUGHTON
The Birmingham City boss on how to nullify the threat of a pacy frontman



"As a team you have to restrict the quality of ball to the opposition striker, because you know the player will want to run in behind.

Your back four can either try and hold a strong line, which will give the forward space to run into, but their run will have to be perfectly timed to stay onside – this is a risky tactic to employ in the modern

game. Or you can start aggressively and play a little bit deeper. That will deny the striker space to run in to. The striker's speed will determine how closely you mark them.

If you hedge your bets and get tight to them, they're going to be able to turn and beat you for pace. But if you stand off and drop deeper, when the ball goes in behind you're giving yourself a head start on them."

[Nutrition]

PHIL NEVILLE'S 24-HOUR FITNESS PLAN

Everton's evergreen skipper on how to eat, sleep and train like an EPL player. It's 6am, so what are you waiting for?



06:00 Wake up and salute the sun

"I get up and perform five sun salutations [yoga] for around three minutes. The movements warm up every part of my body. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and feel stiff, and these essential exercises send energy to my muscles."

06:30 Fuel for the day

"For breakfast I have porridge with some fruit – anything from strawberries, pineapple, melon or an orange. I like to have a cup of tea and a glass of orange juice, then it's off to work."



08:30 The first of many drinks

"I take a bottle of water in the car. They say you should have four to five bottles of water a day. I have one on the way to the training ground and one on the way back, and drink the rest when I'm there. On the drive to work I like to relax and not really think about football. It's an opportunity to switch off."



Get through this and reward yourself with a 10am protein drink. They're nice, honest!

09:00 Yoga again

"The first thing I do when I'm at the training ground is a 30-minute yoga session with a couple of the other players. Yoga has 26 poses, and our teacher will concentrate on five or six tailored for the movements of football. I pay particular attention to my hips and my groin."

09:30 Get those legs pumping

"It's time for the gym, where I get on the bike, working at 70/80 rpm, for 10-15 minutes to loosen myself up. Then I go into my knee activation work. This involves doing work with small speed hurdles for 20 minutes. A simple drill is to stand side-on in front of six speed hurdles and shuffle through each one, making sure to drive your left leg up and over the hurdle at a 90-degree angle."

10:00 Drink up

"This is when I re-hydrate with a protein drink."

10:30 "Let's get warmed up"

"Having changed, it's time to start training with the rest of the lads. We start with a jog, followed by stretches and then mobility speed exercises – five minutes on each exercise."

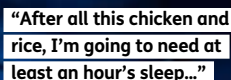
11:00 New balls please

"Now we work on getting a feel for the ball by playing keep-ball in small spaces. You can play three vs one, six vs two or five vs two. The player or players in the middle stay in for 30 seconds, even if they get the ball. Make it a competition: whoever wins the ball back the most times wins."

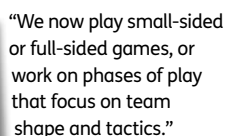
11:30 Possession, possession, possession

"Now to more structured possession drills with different





11:45 Know your position



"If it's early in the week we do a total body weight circuit. If it's late in the week we'll just focus on upper body. Total body

- 16 x push-ups;
- 10 x squats wearing an 18kg weight vest;
- 10 (each leg) x overhead dumbbell split squat using 10-16kg weight;
- 10 (each leg) x split squat with hip rotation using 8kg medicine ball;
- 5 (each side) x diagonal cable wood chops;
- 10 (each leg) x split squat with barbell. We repeat the circuit three times.

"I have a protein shake and then jump in the ice bath for six minutes. It's important to get the protein on board to help repair the muscles after lifting weights."

"I eat chicken, veg and salad. I also have some bread and potatoes to get my dose of carbs. I have two bottles of water in the afternoon as well as some strawberries and a yoghurt."



“When I get home I sleep for an hour and a half. When I wake up I have a snack or a protein bar. Then the kids get home and then it’s homework time. Sleep in the afternoon is the most important part of the day. It’s crucial to recovery.”

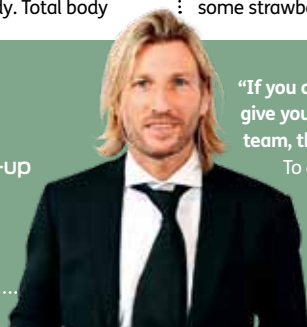
"I load up on carbs and protein with chicken or fish, and some vegetables and potatoes."

"About 9 o'clock I have a protein shake before going to bed around 9.30pm."

Julie Neville, wife to Phil, has launched WinNaturally.com – an online store selling natural and organic products sourced from all over the world. They are all used by Phil, Julie and their two children



The former wind-up merchant and midfielder on how to influence the referee



To get in the refs' head you've got to appeal for every decision. If one goes against your team, say to him, 'That's another one you've given them – any chance of giving us one?' And if someone goes down in the box, get in his ear and say, 'That was

a penalty – I can't believe you didn't give it.' It can work with players, too. When I played against QPR for Derby County last season, I went into the referee's room before kick-off with Adel Taarabt and Neil Warnock. Warnock said: 'Robbie, this is Adel', and I said, 'Yeah, I know Adel – and you'll be seeing a lot more of me when we get onto the pitch. In fact, you're not going to get a kick.' That got me in the head of Taarabt and the referee. Taarabt got subbed after 71 minutes."

[Tactics]

DEFEND FROM THE WINGS

Bahrain national team head coach Peter Taylor on how to cut the supply line from out wide

"A winger's main job defensively is to get behind the ball and halve the pitch. If the opposition's left-back is carrying the ball forward from their half, your midfield should shuffle across, with your left winger halving the pitch by tucking in, meaning that everyone's playing on the half of the pitch on the near side.

When their left-back gets close to the halfway line your right-back tells your right winger: 'I've got the left winger, you push forward and put the left back under pressure.'

By halving the pitch and squeezing play you're forcing their left-back to make a decision. He may choose to try and switch the play.

But in the time it takes for the ball to travel across the pitch, your

players will be able to adjust their positioning and close down the opposite winger when he receives the ball.

By doing this you're forcing the opposition to play sideways, rather than forwards.

Obviously, there are problems in halving the pitch. Your left winger will be out of position, opening up a big channel for the opposing full-back to run into.

But overall this is a good play by your midfield – you can't stop all good play. If their right winger decides not to follow your left winger when he tucks in, then maybe your left winger doesn't squeeze the play as much because he has to be aware of the danger in behind him."

Interview Ben Welch

DID YOU KNOW?

99

goals in last season's Premier League campaign were scored from indirect free-kicks – adding up to nearly a tenth of all goals

PRO TIP

MAKING THE STEP UP

Struggling to settle after stepping up a level? Be yourself and knuckle down, says Taylor

1 Act naturally

If there are cliques in the dressing room that team won't be as successful as it should be. A new player has to be himself. If he tries to be someone else, the players will suss him out. Don't try and fit in straightaway by being a flash Harry, but don't be nervous – the other players will soon pick up on it.

Nick Barmby at Hull, and I used to just tell people to watch him train because he does everything right. Players at a higher level are there because they've done things right.

3 Keep working as hard as you can

The player has to say to himself: "I've been rewarded, I've got to a better level, now I've got to carry on working hard." If Andy Hessenthaler had stopped working hard when he signed for Watford from a non-league team he would have been a waste of time. But he didn't; he carried on working extremely hard and was a successful signing.

2 Learn from the older players

As a new player, take on board what the experienced players do to prepare for match day. I had the pleasure of working with

