

COORE

Edited by Ian Taylor / Designed by Rob Milton

GENTLEMEN, WE CAN IMPROVE YOU



Proton-powered ball control from the MH lab

THE NEW SCIENCE OF FOOTBALL

Premiership teams have upped their game courtesy of the men in white coats. So *MH* consults with the experts to give you and your team the scientific advantage you've been waiting for

For some it's just a game, for others it's a religion. But for the world's top players and coaches, football is a science. Game analytics and precision nutrition have become the norm at top clubs across the country and data-crunched training methods are producing new and exciting advances in players' fitness and performance. So, just in time for the start of the new season, *MH* has assembled an elite team of touchline professors whose insights will revolutionise your game, whatever level you play at. Try out each of these drills once a week to give your game a cutting edge – and their goalkeeper sleepless nights.

INCREASE YOUR SKILL + FLEXIBILITY

Combining these will buy you greater movement, says Dr Sam Erith, head of sports science at Tottenham Hotspur FC

- 1** To set up, stand behind one teammate with two others stood on the other side of him ready to throw balls at your feet.
- 2** Practise fast feet around your man, with zig-zagging side-steps. Receive the ball, then volley it back off your laces.
- 3** Get your throwers to increase the height each time so you work hip flexibility, strike technique and ball control.
- 4** Then turn 90 degrees and try side-on, volleying with the outside of your foot, for better hamstring flexibility. ▶

WORDS MARK BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY MARCO VITTORI AT STUDIO 33 DIGITAL IMAGING PRE MEDIA MODEL ROB MEAD AT NEXT FOOTBALL AND KIT SHOP ADIDAS.CO.UK ILLUSTRATIONS JASON PICKERSGILL AT ACUTEGRAPHICS.CO.UK LUCOZADE SPORT IS THE OFFICIAL SPORTS DRINK OF CHELSEA FC

THINK SMART

Boost your mental game with sports shrink Bradley Busch

LANGUAGE Criticising yourself with harsh words releases stress hormone cortisol, fogging decisions. So instead think of positive solutions.

EMOTIONAL CONTROL Anger can overwhelm your brain, but saying 'I'm angry' reduces its intensity. Label your emotion and move on.

ATTENTION Don't overload yourself. Focus on three things you can control, such as energy, movement and timing. Not the ref's bad call.

PHYSIOLOGY Your body language affects your mood - if your head tilts forward, your brain powers down. So, don't let your eyeline drop any lower than the corner flag.

Put the boot in with football skills powered by science



VISION CONTROL

How to see the big picture, by vision coach Sherylle Calder

A "Put last month's *Men's Health* cover on a wall at eye level 6m away and hold this month's 30-40cm from your face," says Calder. "Focus on a headline on the distant copy."

B "Now quickly snap back and refocus on the near copy." Do 5x1-minute sessions 4-5 times a week to improve your ball receiving, range of passing angles and shooting. Your pitch awareness will soon rival Iniesta's.

THE RIGHT FUEL

The nutritional rule of three by Nick Broad, head of sports science at Chelsea FC

HOW IT WORKS "Our players have three equal portions of carbs (for energy), protein (for muscle repair) and fruit and veg, with healthy fats (for immunity and brain function), at every meal," says Broad. Here's an example of a day's menu:

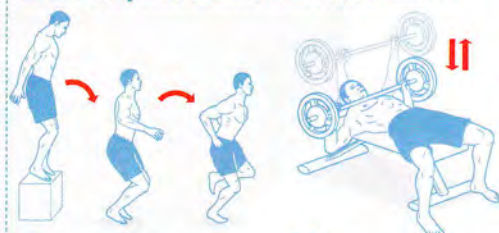
BREAKFAST Mackerel with wholemeal toast, then strawberries and blueberries.

LUNCH Wholemeal pasta, sea bass, three coloured vegetables with olive oil.

DINNER Chicken wraps with peppers, avocado and red onion.

BUILD A PITCH-READY BODY

"The days of 20-minute jogs are over," says Erith. Get yourself match fit with this drill



1 Jump off a box, landing on both feet. Jump laterally, landing on one leg. Hold, then sprint. It'll help you lose your marker faster.

3 "Do 5 bench presses, 6 ball press-ups and 9 chest rows," says West Ham coach Mathew Monte-Colombo. You'll slash recovery times.



2 "Do 8x15-second sprints with 15-second rests," says Erith. And throw in sharp changes of direction to build acceleration and deceleration.



4 Beat fatigue with leg-strength. "Do 3x6 single-leg squats and lunge walks and you'll still be chasing the ball down in extra time," says Erith.

AVOID THE INJURY LIST ALL SEASON

Protect your body against untimely injuries using these drills from Spurs' Dr Sam Erith

Ankle sprains

... caused by the shock of the new season. **PREVENT IT** "Hop forward on one leg and hold for 5 seconds. Switch legs, then try variations such as hopping backwards."

Hamstring strains

... caused by the cold and muscular fatigue. **PREVENT IT** "Kneel with your feet secured and lean forwards as far as you can, using your arms to catch yourself." Do 3x15.

Adductor muscle injuries

... caused by cumulative muscle fatigue. **PREVENT IT** "Lie on your back and balance a ball between your thighs, then raise your hips and hold for 5 seconds." **MH**

AUG SEPT OCT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY