

ELITE ACADEMY COACHING

The Secrets Behind the Development Program for Pep Guardiola's Methodology

Darren Bowman



ELITE ACADEMY COACHING

**The Secrets Behind the Development
Program for Pep Guardiola's Methodology**

**Written by
Darren Bowman**



Published by



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Meet the Author: Darren Bowman



Darren Bowman

Former **Manchester City Academy Coach**



Credentials (Coaching & Academic):

- **UEFA A Coaching Licence**
- **Sport, Fitness & Coaching BSc (Hons)**
The Open University
- **Foundation Degree in Coach Development for Elite Coaches**, Hult International Business School
- Studied best practice techniques at **FC Barcelona, Real Madrid, Atlético Madrid, Rayo Vallecano, Málaga, & Atalanta** academies
- **Professional playing career** at West Bromwich Albion, Grantham Town, Ramsbottom United, Rossendale United & Stalybridge Celtic

Coaching History:

- **Manchester City U13 Head Coach** (2011-2012)
- **Manchester City U14/U15 Head Coach** (2012-2015)
- **Manchester City Head of Junior Academy & Schools Program** (2009-11)
- **Manchester City Part-time Academy Coach** (2006-2009)
- **Lee Man FC Academy Director** (2022-present)
- **Technical Advisor** for Fans Owned Club (FOC) and International Advisory Council
- **Founder** of @DB7K, a football consultancy business in Hong Kong and Shanghai (2019-present)
- **Head of Football** at Wellington International College, Shanghai (2020-2022)

Key Achievements:

- Implemented St Bede's program, Manchester City's first full time bespoke education and football program for U14-U15 players
- 2012 and 2013 Premier League Academy National Champions

High Profile Players Developed in the Manchester City Academy



Phil Foden

- Coached for 3 years in the St Bede's Program, which Darren Bowman implemented
- UEFA Champions League Winner
- 5 x Premier League Winner
- FA Cup Winner + 4 x EFL Cup Winner
- 61 Goals & 46 Assists in 226 total club appearances
- 27 England International Caps (4 Goals)



Jadon Sancho

- Coached by Darren Bowman at U14 & U15 level
- Joined Borussia Dortmund for €20m in 2017
- DFB-Pokal Winner 2021 & DFL-Supercup Winner 2019
- Joined Manchester United for €85m in 2021
- EFL Cup Winner 2023
- 62 Goals & 70 Assists in 219 total club appearances
- 22 England International Caps (3 Goals)



Brahim Diaz

- Coached by Darren Bowman at U14 level
- Manchester City First team debut in 2016
- Premier League, FA Cup & 2 x EFL Cup Winner
- Joined Real Madrid in 2019 for €17m (loaned to Milan)
- La Liga & Serie A Winner
- 22 Goals & 18 Assists in 165 total club appearances
- 22 England International Caps (3 Goals)

ELITE ACADEMY COACHING

The Manchester City Academy Program

Key Aspects of Why the Manchester City Academy is So Successful

- 1
ETHOS

- ▶ Strong foundations underpinned by an ethos that runs through club.
 - ▶ "The 4 Ps": **Passion, Patience, Perseverance, Professionalism.**
 - ▶ Football-focused ethos = *"We train to develop and play to win."*

- 2
MISSION

- ▶ Attract, develop, motivate and retain the best natural talent.
 - ▶ Provide the greatest possible experience for all.
 - ▶ All academy players to **fulfil their potential and achieve greatness.**

- 3
VISION

- ▶ Academy of choice delivering an **optimum development program.**
 - ▶ Players recruited locally, nationally and internationally.
 - ▶ Ethos that addresses both the football and the footballer.

- 4
DEVELOP

- ▶ Training drives development, and matches provide the experiences.
 - ▶ Develop strong minded, independent and balanced individuals.
 - ▶ Develop a **loyalty/affinity** to the club, **resilience**, and **positivity.**

- 5
SUPPORT

- ▶ Administration, coaching, medical, sports science, and operations.
 - ▶ Education, parents, player care/welfare, and facilities.
 - ▶ Communications, scouting, recruitment, and performance analysis.

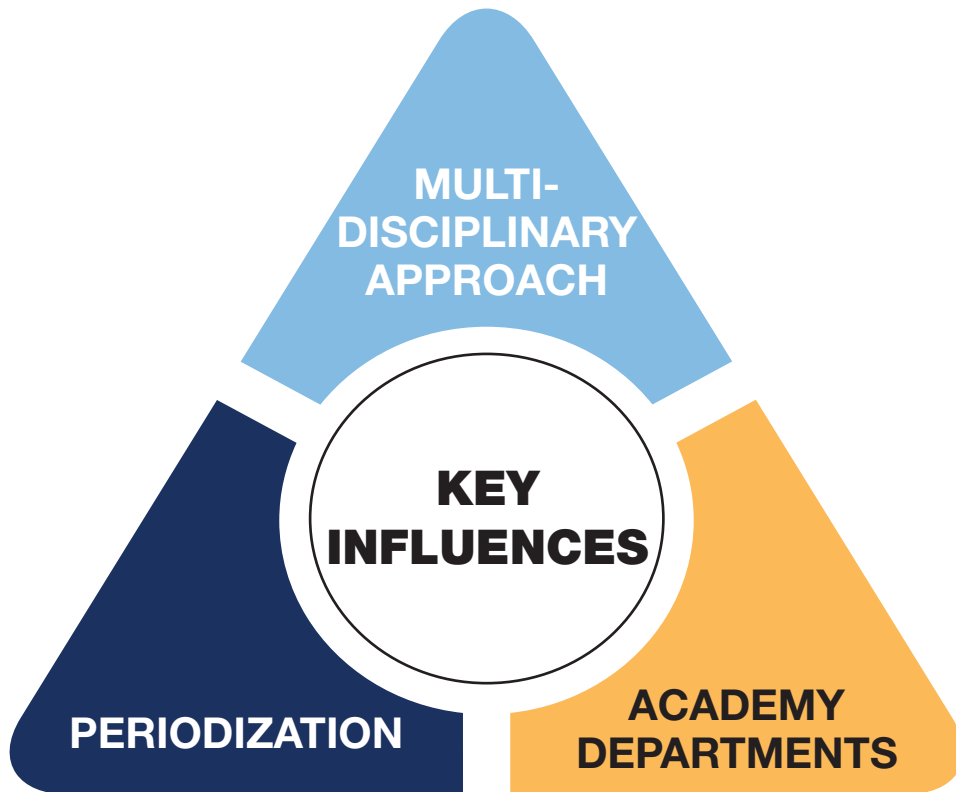
- 6
EDUCATION

- ▶ Deliver a comprehensive education with **excellence at every level.**
 - ▶ High standards of conduct from players and staff + communication.
 - ▶ Tailored age-specific program with **clear targets and outcomes.**

- 7
FAMILY

- ▶ **Every player was a potential professional** and member of our family.
 - ▶ Every player felt special and valued, creating great people.
 - ▶ One team with **one goal**, player development was everything.

Key Influences on Elite Player Development



Multidisciplinary Approach

A multidisciplinary approach requires a specialist coaching cell in place to support all aspects of player development on and off the pitch, which resembles a player centred approach.

Periodization

Tactical and physical periodization must be planned carefully with attention to detail covering all aspects of the season, the methodology, and player development.

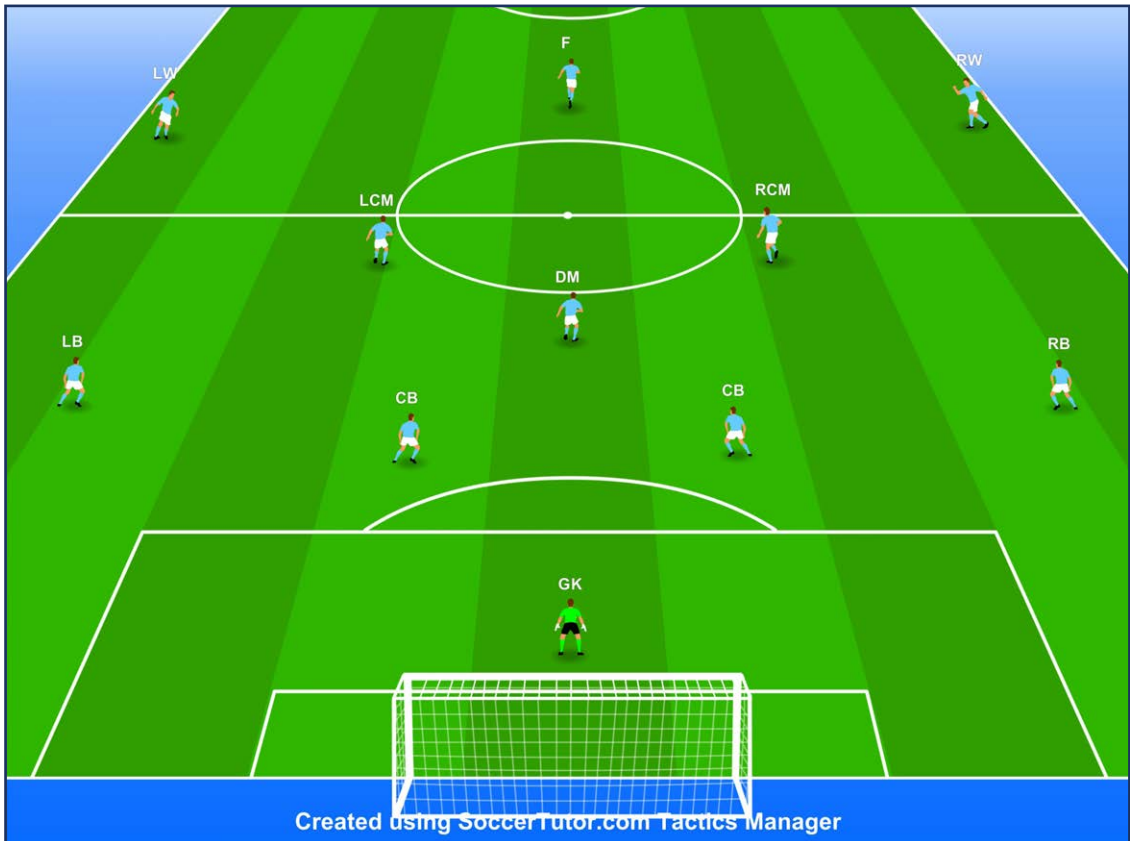
Academy Departments

Academy departments must work in synchronisation and with fluidity to enable operations, logistics, administration, player welfare and education to support the coaching, sports science and medical aspects of the academy. High performance organisations make sure all functions operate to their maximum to achieve peak performance and flow.

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The Manchester City Game Model

Manchester City's 4-3-3 Formation



- **GK:** Goalkeeper
- **LCB:** Left Centre Back
- **RCB:** Right Centre Back
- **LB:** Left Back
- **RB:** Right Back
- **DM:** Defensive Midfielder
- **LCM:** Left Central Midfielder
- **RCM:** Right Central Midfielder
- **LW:** Left Winger
- **RW:** Right Winger
- **F:** Forward

The City Way Methodology from the Academy to the First Team



Attacking Principles:

- Create numerical superiority in all moments of the game.
- Keep possession with a purpose.
- Control to create opportunities to score.

Defensive Principles:

- Protect the depth and keep the ball in front.
- Stop penetration in central areas.

- Create numerical advantages to win the ball back quickly and early.

Transition Principles:

- The beauty of the methodology is that the positioning of the players when in possession means they are in a position to press quickly on the transition.
- This is due to them being "in between," meaning 1 player can normally cover 2 opponents.

Game Principles at the Foundation of the City Way Methodology

Be Ready to Attack, Ready to Defend

The Ball Comes to You, Don't Go to the Ball!

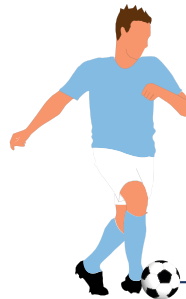
- ▶ Each players' positioning is key. When it is correct, the team can transition very quickly in and out of possession.
- ▶ This concept also means you are efficient in regard to the players' energy levels, which are a key consideration for performance.
- ▶ The ball is the quickest object on the pitch in any game, so make the ball do the work. By adopting this concept and players playing their position, the team can create space, time, and conserve energy.



Play Your Position

Play in Between and in Behind

- ▶ Players playing their position means the team have the correct shape and the player in possession will have a variety of options.
- ▶ Occupy spaces for penetrative passes to break lines.
- ▶ Create numerical advantages in the middle and final third.
- ▶ The timing of when players arrive in spaces is a key aspect.



Possession with a Purpose

Create Overloads + Break Lines

- ▶ Dependent on game situation and time.
- ▶ In each action, the purpose is to create an advantage to progress, to attack, to score, or to control.
- ▶ Create an advantage in possession with overloads (+ create defensive overloads).

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Building the Training Program

6 Week Training Methodology (Tactical Periodization Curriculum)

Week	Themes		
1	Build-up Phase 1	Build-up Phase 2	Build-up Phase 3
2	Build-up Phase 2	Build-up Phase 3	Pressing from the Front
3	Build-up Phase 3	Pressing from the Front	Defending in Midfield
4	Pressing from the Front	Defending in Midfield	Defending Around the Box
5	Defending in Midfield	Defending Around the Box	Build-up Phase 1
6	Defending Around the Box	Build-up Phase 1	Build-up Phase 2

Manchester City follow this methodology religiously, and they do not react to results or performance by making changes to this structure.

Over a period of time, players have complete clarity about what is expected of them in each area of the game, each moment, and in each position.

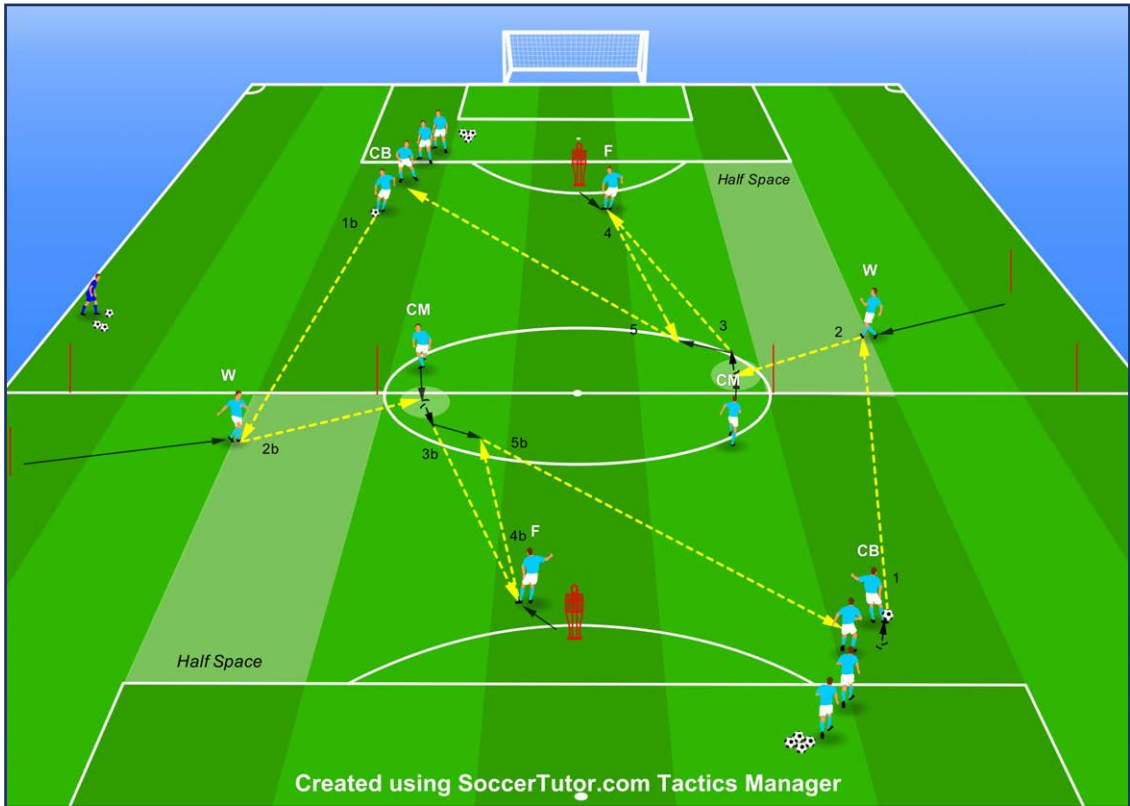
A lot of detail goes into sessions, but the periodization is very simple, although you add set pieces too of course.

NOTE: If for instance, the team's build-up play was very good, and their pressing from the front was not, you might spend 2 weeks on pressing.

MANCHESTER CITY ACADEMY SESSION 4

Build-up Phase 1 + 2: Short Build-up from GK + Midfield Combination Play (2)

1b. Technical Side Diamond Pattern Box to Box Pass and Move Circuit



Practice Description

1. The practice starts with 2 balls in opposite corners. Both **centre backs (CB)** take a touch forward and pass into the half space for the **winger (W)**, who moves inside to receive.
 2. **W** sets the ball for the **central midfielder (CM)** to receive beyond the pole.
 - 3-4. **CM** passes to the **forward (F)**, who sets the ball back to the **CM** (one-two).
 5. **CM** completes the sequence by passing to the opposite start position.
- The practice continues with all the players rotating to the next position.

Coaching Points

1. The **centre backs (CB)** must step into play with their first touch when receiving the pass.
2. Focus on the timing of movement for the **wingers (W)** arriving in the half space to play a 1 touch set.
3. The **central midfielders (CM)** must take their first touch forward when receiving the set from **W**.
4. Play with a high ball speed to replicate match conditions.

MANCHESTER CITY ACADEMY SESSION 5

Build-up Phase 3: Finishing the Attack (Final Third)

2. Side Diamond Pattern of Play to Receive in Between Lines, Set + Through Pass and Finish



Practice Description

The players practice different patterns of play set out by the coach. There are many examples included in the book. This one shows the **Side Diamond Combination** (centre back, full back, central midfielder, & winger on one side).

- 1-3. The **GK** passes short to a **CB**. The **CB** passes across to the other **CB**, who has stepped forward and takes a touch.
4. The **CB** passes forward into the half space for the **LW**, who drops off the line and inside to receive.

5-6. The **LW** sets the ball back for the oncoming **LCM**, who takes a touch to open up all the options on both sides of the pitch rather than playing first time.

7-8. In this example, the **LW** plays in between the mannequins for the **forward (F)**, who has made a double movement to receive in behind and score.

Winger Receiving in the Half Space:

Use markers as a reference for arriving in the half space. Too high and the ball takes longer to travel, so it can get cut out. Too low, you cannot set the ball back to the CM because of the opposing midfielder.

MANCHESTER CITY ACADEMY SESSION 4

Build-up Phase 1 + 2: Short Build-up from GK + Midfield Combination Play (2)

4. Break the Lines and Create Attacking Overloads in a Position Specific 7 v 7 (+1) + GKs 3-Zone SSG



Practice Description

- This functional game is all about creating +1 overloads around the ball area using the extra Joker. The Coach can change where the players are allowed to move.
- This example has 3 marked out zones and starts with the blues playing out from the back with a 2v1 +GK advantage. The blues are in a 2-3-3 shape and the reds are using a 2-3-2.
- If the **DM** drops, it creates a 4v3 overload in the middle area (highlighted), as the closest red forward must mark him.
- **NOTE:** 1 x CB is allowed to step into the middle zone to create +1 if he wants to).
- The wingers (**LW & RW**) can drop into the pockets in the middle zone to create overloads in midfield. They can also enter the end zone to create a 3v2 attacking overload to finish the attack.
- When the attack finishes, the red team restarts from their GK. The yellow Joker plays with the reds as a **DM** or **CM** (the other players adjust their positions), trying to work the ball the opposite way with the same aims.

This is a repetition of the practice on Page 66 - it is placed here again as that is how sessions were built at the Manchester City Academy

MANCHESTER CITY ACADEMY SESSION 11

Pressing from the Front (1)

3. Pressing from the Front to "Set the Trap" in a Dynamic 6v8 (+GK) Phase of Play



Practice Description

- Start from the red team's GK, who plays out to either centre back. The blue **central midfielder (RCM)** moves forward to mark the red defensive midfielder (DM), which releases the **forward (F)** to be able to press from the front.
- The **forward (F)** positions himself between the 2 centre backs and tries to force the play one way (wide), then applies pressure. By making the play predictable to "set the trap," the blue team can implement their coordinated pressing plan.
- The blue winger on that side (**LW**) presses the ball once it travels wider (to red RB). The central midfielder on that side (**LCM**) marks his opponent tightly and the defensive midfielder (**DM**) moves into a balanced position to mark red F and cover LCM.
- The other blue winger (**RW**) discourages a switch of play by taking up a balanced position.
- **Coaching Points:** Get compact, stop the switch of play, apply pressure on ball ("squeeze"), keep the ball in front, protect the depth and drop if no pressure on ball.

MANCHESTER CITY ACADEMY SESSION 14

Pressing from the Front + Defending in Midfield (1)

4. Pressing from the Front and Defending Through the Thirds in a Multi-Zone End to End Game



Practice Description

- The end target players can be GKs or Coaches. They feed the ball back in to keep the possession game continuous.
- We start from the GK and a 2v1 situation in the first zone. The **CBs** and **forwards (F)** stay in the end zones, except the CB with the ball can move forward (and F can follow). The middle zone is 3v3 (the DM channels are only there for reference).
- The reds aim to play into the target player (GK). The GK then plays to a blue CB and the team roles are reversed playing in the opposite direction.
- The diagram shows exactly how the Manchester City players were coached to press/defend in this situation. When the red CB receives, the **forward (F)** creates 1v1 by pressing and blocking the pass to the GK or other CB. The **central midfielder (RCM)** moves to press the red DM. This creates a 3v3 situation around the ball area on that side, which makes it likely the blues will win the ball.
- **Coaching Points:** Develop the relationship between the units, defend as a block, delay opponents, deny space, and protect the depth.

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ELITE ACADEMY COACHING

The Secrets Behind the Development Program for Pep Guardiola's Methodology

This book provides you with a rare and great opportunity to **learn the secrets behind the development program at Manchester City's Academy for Pep Guardiola's Methodology** and game model.

Darren Bowman (former Manchester City U13, U14, and U15 Coach) has used his incredible experience to provide you with the full **Manchester City Academy Program**, ideal for all coaches who want to take this unique chance to develop players to world leading standards and improve your team's performances.

Coaching players such as **Phil Foden** (Manchester City), **Jadon Sancho** (Manchester United), **Brahim Diaz** (Real Madrid), **Cole Palmer** (Chelsea), and many more, Darren shows how repeating the same key actions and patterns for hours and hours can develop players capable of playing for a Pep Guardiola team and some of the other best teams in the world.

Practice and apply Manchester City Academy's exact training methods from Darren's training sessions in which the game principles and methodology never changes. This is how Manchester City can produce their unique, highly successful, dominant, and consistent style of play.

The **Development Program, Methodology**, and the **17 Training Sessions (68 Practices)** included in this book are all taken **directly from Darren Bowman's Manchester City Academy training sessions**.

17 Training Sessions (68 Practices) Topics:

- Build-up Phase 1: Short Build-up Play from the GK
- Build-up Phase 2: Midfield Combination Play
- Build-up Phase 3: Finishing the Attack (Final Third)
- Pressing from the Front
- Defending in Midfield
- Defending Around the Box

Manchester City Academy Practice Examples:

- Break Past Opponent and Play Final Pass in a Technical Triangle Drill with Finish
- Play Inside and Outside to Break the Line in a 3v3 (+2) Directional Possession Game
- Game Related Attacking Overloads in a Functional Practice with Channels
- Pressing from the Front to "Set the Trap" in a Dynamic 6v8 (+GK) Phase of Play
- Break Lines and Create Attacking Overloads in a Position Specific 7v7 (+GKs) 2-Zone SSG
- Pressing from Front & Defending Through the Thirds in Multi-Zone End to End Game

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