

MATRIX

LEARN TO SEE THE GAME

A short introduction to the method behind Matrix Playbook

Don't teach the player every answer. Give them a few principles they understand, teach them to recognise the signals, and let them find the solution themselves.

Principle →

Generative model →

Signal →

Automatic response pattern →

Freed capacity

SEE THE SIGNAL · UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE · GENERATE THE SOLUTION

Lennert Kvamme

What is MATRIX?

The best players are not always the fastest or the strongest. They see the game a split second before everyone else – and that can be trained.

MATRIX is a method for learning that way. Instead of giving the player a long list of rules for every situation, we give them a few principles they understand. They learn to recognise the signals in the game and find the solution themselves. Once the basics run on their own, the mind is free for awareness, choices and creativity.

In short: **expertise is the automation of the most generative principles – and knowing when they do not apply.**

THE CORE IN ONE SENTENCE

Don't teach the player every answer. Give them models that let them produce the answers themselves, from the signals in the situation.

How MATRIX came about

MATRIX grew out of my own way of learning across domains.

When I later taught my children football, I started from principles they could understand and use to find their own solutions. I did not yet know enough about football to always choose the most generative principles. Through years as a grassroots coach, and by following player development from children's football onwards, I have revised and collected the principles in Matrix Playbook Levels 5, 10 and 15. Level 20 draws especially on my experience from martial arts and mental training.

The book series is therefore the result of both a learning method and an ongoing refinement of the models it teaches.

— Lennert Kvamme

From rules to models

Many players learn football as a long list of rules: “do this, do that”. It is a lot to remember, and it helps little when the situation is slightly different from training.

MATRIX looks for the principle beneath many rules:

How many learn	How MATRIX learns
“Pressure from the right: touch to the left.” “Pressure from the left: touch to the right.”	Directional Touch: first touch AWAY from the pressure, into space.

How many learn	How MATRIX learns
The player remembers the answer to one situation.	The player understands why, and finds the foot, the angle and the touch in the situation.

One model replaces many rules – and it also works in situations the player has never practised.

The five steps

Every MATRIX principle is learned through the same five steps.



Step	What happens	Example: Directional Touch
1 Principle	The player gets a core insight into how the game works.	“Whoever owns the first touch owns the ball.”
2 Generative model	The player understands why, and sees that the same logic applies in many situations.	A touch away from pressure buys time and space, wherever the pressure comes from.
3 Signal	The player recognises the pattern in the situation. The recognition activates the model.	The direction of the presser before receiving.
4 Automatic response pattern	Many varied repetitions make it stick without thinking.	The touch into space happens by itself.
5 Freed capacity	The mind is free for awareness, choices and creativity.	The player is already turned and sees the next pass before the pressure arrives.

What becomes automatic is a **pattern**, not one fixed movement. The foot, the angle and the tempo are still chosen by the situation. That is what lets the player solve new situations.

THE TEMPO RULE

Think slowly to build the model. Train with variation until you see the pattern quickly. Play fast when the signal is clear – and think again when it isn’t.

The last part matters: automaticity is right when the situation is familiar. When something is unclear or unexpected, the player should stop and think. Knowing the difference is what separates a good player from a habit.

The trigger word: the coach's anchor, the player's own

Every principle in the books has a short trigger word, such as “Eyes!”, “Touch!” or “Space!”.

THE TRIGGER WORD IS THE COACH'S TOOL

The coach uses the word as an attention anchor that helps the player direct their gaze to the signal. As the player masters the model, the word becomes their own: they say it to themselves, or no longer need it. Then the coach should be quiet.

That is why **the golden rule** from the books applies:

1. **Shout the trigger word, never the explanation.** One word during play. The explanation belongs before and after.
2. **Ask one question after the round.** “What did you see in him?” “Were you there first?”
3. **Let the player discover.** What players work out themselves, they remember.

Support is reduced over time: first the coach shows the principle and the model, then come questions and the trigger word, and finally the player manages without help.

Three levels of mastery

A principle is not learned because the player has read about it. It is learned when it works in a match without them thinking about it.

Level	The player says	Typically takes
UNDERSTOOD	“I know what’s happening.”	Five minutes
ACTIVATED	“I’ve tried it on purpose.”	One match
AUTOMATED	“I do it when it counts, without thinking.”	A season

Two principles that stick are better than fourteen the player has only read about.

THE SIGN THAT IT IS WORKING

Is the child beginning to notice something they used to miss, understand why it might matter, try a solution and discover something new when the outcome turns out differently? Then MATRIX is working – even when the attempt does not succeed.

The book series: the same engine on four levels

Matrix Playbook uses the same five steps on an ever larger scale: from seeing the game, to reading one opponent, to reading a whole team, to reading yourself. The books are currently published in Norwegian; titles and quotes are translated here.

Level	Book	The player learns	Example
5	Matrix Playbook – The Fundamentals: “See the game before it happens”	To SEE the game	The Eye Reader: his eyes show where the ball is going.
10	Matrix Playbook – The Hacks: “Play against his brain, not his shirt”	How one brain fails	Saccadic: start your run the moment he blinks.
15	Matrix Teamplay – Team Hacks: “See the same. Think the same. Act together.”	How eleven fail at once	Same Picture: eleven heads, one direction, one gap.
20	Matrix Identity: “From individual to part of something bigger”	Who you become inside it	The Mask: fear is a signal, not a command.

Each book has 14 missions. In Levels 5, 10 and 15, every mission is built as the five steps: a principle in one memory image, an explanation of *why it works*, pictures that show the signal, a mini-drill and a score that shows when it sticks. In the end the player discovers that the 14 missions rest on just a few laws.

The power to read and trick others comes with a rule: it must make the whole team better, never humiliate anyone.

Self-training alongside the club

MATRIX does not replace club training. The club and the academy train the team, tactics, technique and fitness. MATRIX is the player's own training in *seeing the game*, 10–15 minutes at home, so that every session and every match they already have produces more learning.

Where	What happens
At home	The player learns the principle and the model in the book, and practises seeing the signal in pictures, video or 1v1 with siblings and friends.
In club training and matches	The principle becomes automatic, against real opponents and under pressure.
After the match	One line in the Matrix log: “What did I see? Did it work?”

Three simple rules: **the coach decides** in training and matches, and MATRIX is used within the team's instructions. **Parents help at home**, but do not coach from the sideline. **The trigger word moves**: at home a parent says it, in training the player says it to themselves, and in matches it is no longer needed.

For coaches: MATRIX in team training

This 15-minute template is in the books and fits into a normal session:

Time	What you do
0–2 min	Choose two principles for the day. Show the memory image, not the theory.
2–12 min	1v1 or small-sided games in 60-second rounds. Shout only the trigger word. Short break and one question between rounds.
12–15 min	Free play. Finish while it is still fun.

After the match the player writes one line in the Matrix log: which principle they tried, whether it worked, and what they saw. A “no” with an observation is also a completed round.

Safety first: always warm up before duels, use a suitable surface and age-appropriate intensity.

What is it based on?

MATRIX is a new combination of established ideas from learning research:

- **Learning through several examples with the same structure** improves transfer to new situations (Gick and Holyoak).
- **Experts pick up signals more accurately and faster** than non-experts, and such perception can be trained (Mann, Williams, Ward and Janelle).
- **Training should resemble the game**, so that the link between what the player sees and what they do is preserved (Pinder, Davids and colleagues).
- **Practice makes skills automatic** (Fitts and Posner), and **working memory is a bottleneck** in learning (Sweller).

AN HONEST LIMITATION

Each of the steps is supported by research. That the whole chain produces expertise faster than other training is a hypothesis that remains to be tested. The full whitepaper describes how.

READ MORE

The full whitepaper, *MATRIX Expertise Model – Whitepaper v1.5*, goes into depth on the method, the development ladder, the relationship to research and the plan for testing the model.

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Sources: Gick, M. L., & Holyoak, K. J. (1983). *Cognitive Psychology*, 15(1), 1–38. · Mann, D. T. Y., Williams, A. M., Ward, P., & Janelle, C. M. (2007). *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 29(4), 457–478. · Pinder, R. A., Davids, K., Renshaw, I., & Araújo, D. (2011). *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 33(1), 146–155. · Fitts, P. M., & Posner, M. I. (1967). *Human performance*. Brooks/Cole. · Sweller, J. (1988). *Cognitive Science*, 12(2), 257–285.

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