



**Player Practice
Sessions No 2
(Defence)**

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Player Practice Sessions - No 2

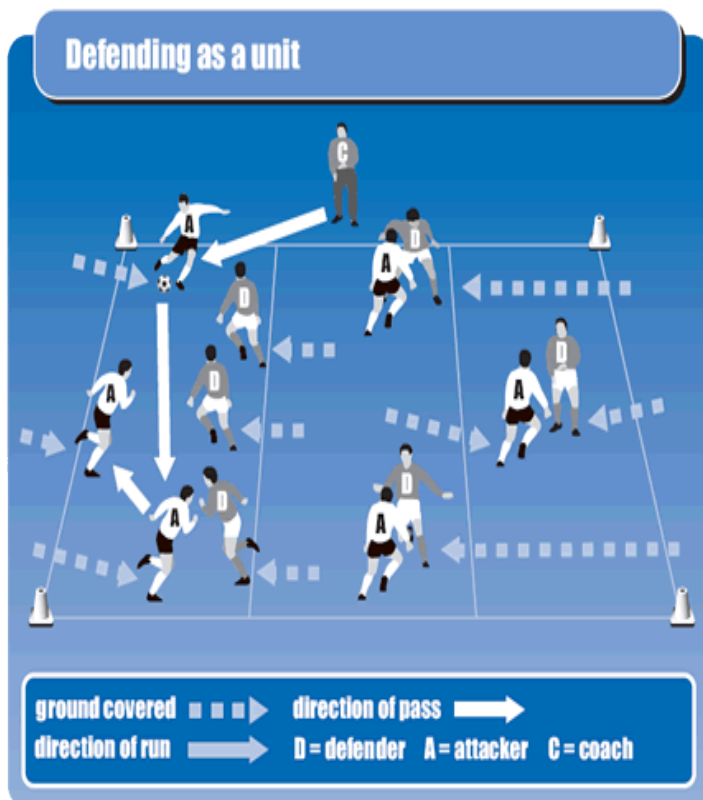
Defence:

1. Defending as a unit.
2. Never concede from a corner again.
3. Defending corners.
4. How to pass the ball out from the back.
5. Shape up your team to defend all over the pitch.
6. How goalkeepers are crucial for good passing moves.
7. How to keep attackers at bay.
8. How to coach effective marking.
9. The attacking defender.
10. Coping with aerial bombardment.
11. More bang for your buck.
12. Coaching defensive techniques near to your own goal.
13. Defending from the front.
14. Get your players goal side of the ball.
15. Passing defenders.
16. Good crosses often results in goals.
17. Improve defending near your own goal.
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19. A defensive tactic coached by players.
20. The emergency tactic – CLEAR IT.
21. Defend from the front.
22. How to make the most of your extra player in a 3v2 situation.
23. Competitive team games to make defending fun.
24. Ball shooting skills put to the test.
25. A triangle game to encourage dribbling, shooting and defending.
26. Try sweeper training to improve your defence.
27. Playing your back-up defenders.
28. High-intensity training drill.

Defending as a unit

What to think about:

Are they working "smart" or just hard? Are they applying the lessons learned in marking and covering? Think about rotating tired players, as done well this is a hard session. Drinks and rest pauses are advisable. Relax the 8 pass rule in the game after a while and it will be less frantic. Think about letting them defend deep as a team and counter attack. Applaud all goals and good attempts deriving from good defending.



What you get your players to do:

Stage 1: Use an area approx 30m x 20m. Three players stand outside the area at both ends. Three other players from each team stand in the middle third. The coach plays a ball into one end and the players at that end step into the grid to receive. Now they must make 3/4/5 passes before they can pass into the other team at the far end. When they do they get a point and their team mates in the middle can now pressurise the opponents who are receiving the ball. Each successful long pass gets a point. Rotate the players in the middle.

What you tell your players the session is about:

- Working hard together to win possession.
- Pressing, supporting and covering as a team unit.

What you tell your players to do:

- Demonstrate a positive, aggressive but controlled attitude.
- Remember and apply the work on individual pressing.
- Observe the opponents positions and your team mates.
- Keep compact as a unit.
- Cover spaces as well as players.
- Seize the opportunity to challenge correctly for the ball.

What to shout:

- "Press quickly."
- "Keep together and work as a unit."
- "Get tighter and close the gap."
- "Stay on your feet."
- "Don't dive in."
- "Win it!"

What to look for:

- Slow reactions and movement.
- Gaps between players.
- Lack of positive mental attitude.
- Failure to intercept or challenge when there is a chance.
- Rash challenges, fouls, going to ground.
- Lack of communication and specific information.

Development

When the ball is played in by the coach one white player can move into the attacking third. His team mates must now make 4/5/6 passes in the other two thirds before passing to him to get a point. All the grey players now work as a team to intercept before the final pass can be made. If they do, it is their turn in possession, if not; whites retain the ball and start again.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Play 5 v 5 on a 30m by 45m area with goals. Divide the pitch into thirds. The goalkeeper in possession must distribute in his defending third. A team making eight passes gets a goal. A normal goal also counts.

This encourages the defenders to hunt as a pack and try to win the ball back early. They must work as a team.

Never Concede from a Corner Again

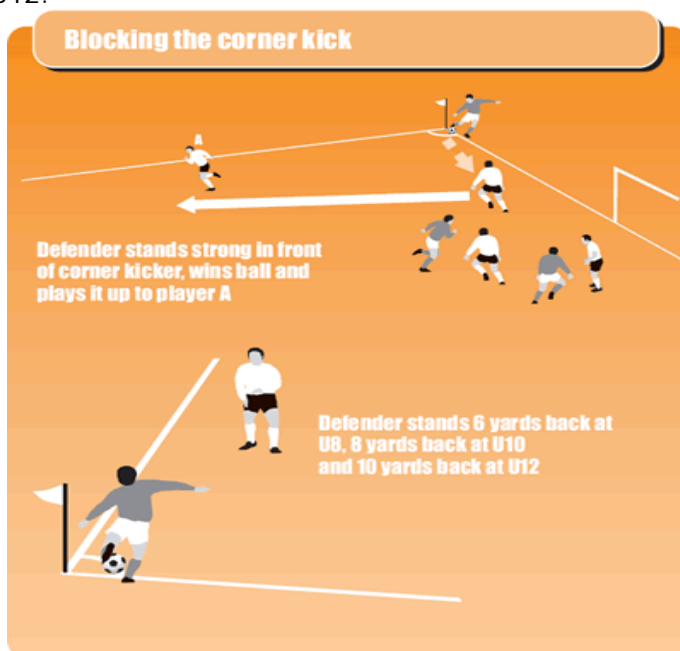
Giving players specialist positions during matches can be extremely effective. Tell them where to stand, what to do and how to do it, particularly in situations where your team is under pressure. Are you conceding a lot of goals from corners? Then you need a player to stand BIG at the front of your penalty area to block the corner taker. Do this properly and you need never concede from a corner again.

One of the most important positions when defending a corner is the person nearest the corner taker. Position him/her on the edge of the box right in front of the intended flight of the ball. If you put one of your strong players here, it will prevent short corners and put off the player taking the corner. That player is then faced with a one man wall which the ball has to get over or around. It's not easy, try it yourself!

Cutting off supply

The player in this position effectively cuts off the supply into the box. This also protects your goalkeeper and defenders. The player might also be able to win the ball from poor or short corners and set up a quick counter attack.

THE DEFENDER STANDS 6 YARDS BACK AT U8, 8 YARDS BACK AT U10 AND 10 YARDS BACK AT U12.



Leave a man up field

Once this position has been claimed by one of your players, use tactics on match day so that when they win the ball you leave a player Upfield in the same position at each corner and your specialist player will be able to take the ball and find that player, immediately setting up an attack.

During training

Practice corners where the player in this position is constantly having the ball hit hard towards them. They can use chest, head and feet to rob the opposition of chances to put balls into the box. Use only two players, a corner taker and a defender to practice this specialist position. You can kill two birds with one stone here, the corner taker has to clear the defender and the defender needs to win the ball. You can also put an attacker in position A ready to receive the ball won by your defender.

Make your corner defenders SMART

If you want to make sure you're giving your players targets that they have to meet, do it the SMART way.

SPECIFIC
MEASURABLE
AGREED
REALISTIC
TIMED

The SPECIFIC target for your players is to clear the ball when it enters the penalty area at corners during training. Make it MEASURABLE by telling your players 50 per cent of corners must be cleared. AGREE it with them in training. Is 50 per cent REALISTIC? I think so.



Defending Corners

One of the key elements of a defensive strategy for your team is getting your players to know their positions at corners, says Tony Carr, Academy Director at West Ham United.

Key Coaching Tip

The key is concentration and to make sure you are first to the ball!

Using the diagram below show your players the positions for basic marking responsibilities. Some players need to mark man for man; others will need to use zonal marking.



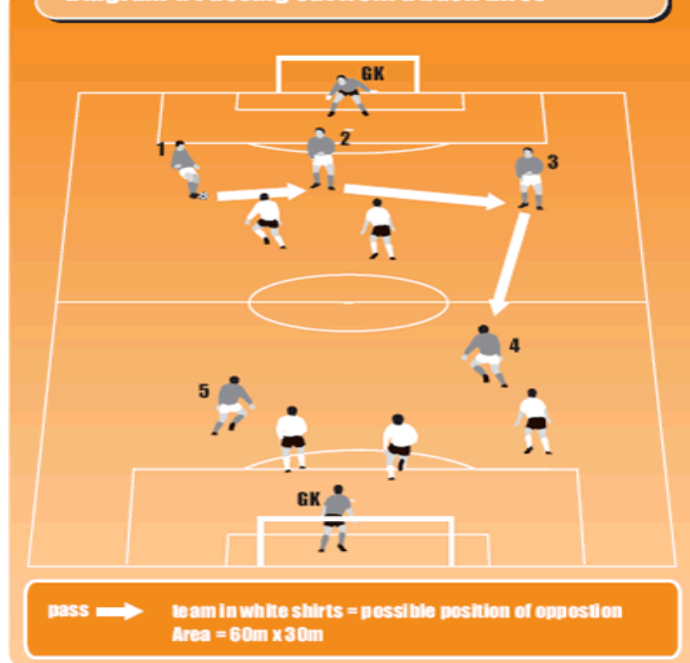
Assuming the corner is being taken on the left by a right footed player swinging the ball in towards the goal, the set up you should employ is as follows:

- Your best four headers of the ball should man to man mark (numbers 3, 5, 6 and 10 in the diagram) and their job is to mark the opposition's main heading threat, marking slightly in front, and being first to the ball.
- No 11 should mark in front of any opposition standing on the near post or mark the space (zone) in their absence.
- No 4 marks the space in front of the main markers, keeping a look out for any opposition standing in front of the goalkeeper. If this is the case he may have to adjust his position so he is standing in front of the attacker.
- No 2 marks the far post.
- Nos 7 and 8 mark any opposition on the edge of the box.
- No 9 stays up field, occupying two defenders and hoping to help spring a counter attack.

How to Pass the Ball Out from the Back

Good teams can pass the ball out from the back in a structured controlled manner.

Diagram 1: Passing out from a back three



Key Coaching Tip

Give your players the confidence and encouragement to do it!

Passing out from the back of defence, whether a back 3 or back 4 requires, first, that the players are comfortable in possession of the ball, and second that the coach gives the players the confidence and encouragement to do it.

In Diagram 1 below, set up with 3 defenders in each half versus 2 forwards. Before the ball can be played into the attacking half, all 3 defenders have to touch the ball. This makes them involved in the first phase of the attacking movement and hopefully the attackers will receive a more controlled pass.

1. Defender 1 passes to defender 2, 2 to 3 and 3 passes forward to 4.

2. 4 and 5 try to score. When they have either lost the ball or shot at goal repeat the process.

Diagram 2: Passing out from a back four



Pass out from the back to create 3v3

If we advance Diagram 1, after all the defenders touch the ball allow 1 dark shirted defender or 1 white shirted defender to break into the attacking half making 3v3.

Get your midfielders to accept the pass

Finally, as Diagram 2 shows, add a midfield section allowing a midfield player or defender to break into the attacking third of the pitch making 3v3.

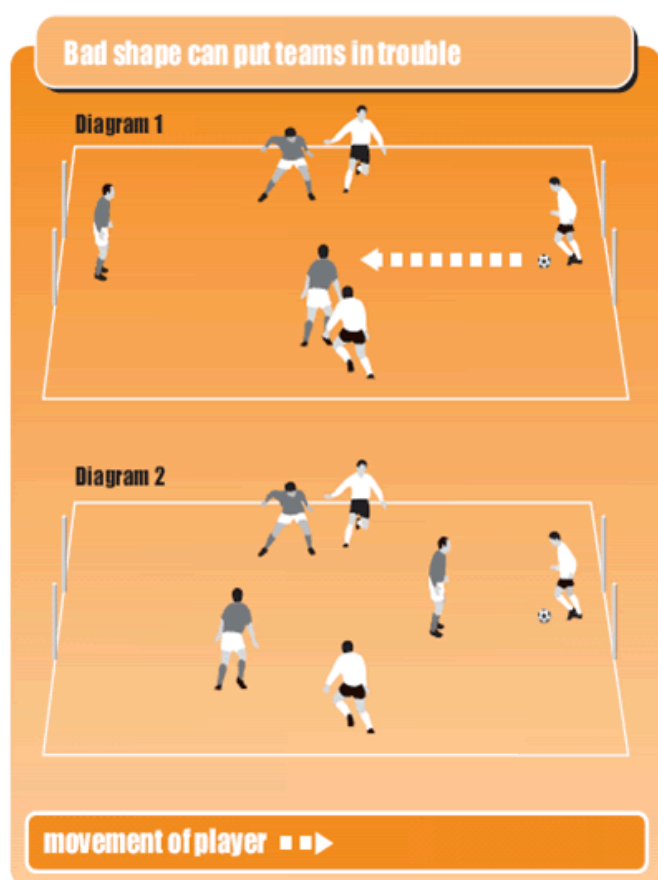


Shape up your team to defend all over the pitch

Shapes are important in soccer. They happen all over the pitch, but you must make sure your players know how they work. Playing 3v3 matches shows you how to use triangles, says David Clark

3v3 helps your players keep shape

Playing 3v3 brings up situations that often occur in 7-a-side or 11-a-side. It illustrates how poor shape has an effect on the other players, making their own job much harder. The triangular shape in midfield is very much something coaches can use to great effect all over the pitch. But you must use it properly. Have a look at the diagrams and I'll show you what I mean:



A simple wall pass opens the path to goal

By moving away from the player they are marking they leave themselves open to a simple wall pass and leave the goal at their mercy. If they stay, this creates a 1v1 directly in front of their own goal. Or the white player can elect to move towards one of his teammates creating a 2v1.

Problem for the man on the ball

In the bottom diagram the grey team is still in a triangle but the middle player has moved up to the man on the ball. This gives the man on the ball an immediate problem as he tries to bring the ball out. He is under pressure to pass the ball because he dare not dribble past him. Passing is difficult so the grey team are more likely to win the ball. The grey player can also force the player to pass one way or another by moving slightly to one side, forcing a pass and allowing a grey team mate to intercept.

In the top diagram the white team have the ball and have to bring it out from their own goal. The grey team has adopted the shape of a triangle; however, the middle player has dropped back deep to protect his goal, in effect becoming a sweeper behind the other two grey team players. This means that the white player bringing the ball out is unmarked and can either directly attack straight down the middle or create 2v1 situations with his team mates. The two grey wingers have a problem. Do they mark their player or go towards the man with the ball.

The difference in these two situations highlights not only how bad shape can make effective team play more difficult, but also how important communication is. If you don't explain how it works young players might conclude that the situation in the first diagram is reasonable. They can play like this for quite a while believing they are following your coaching, and then blame one another for any mistakes that lead to goals.

Key coaching tip: Teach your players by showing them both these situations.



How Goalkeepers are Crucial for Good Passing Moves

Successful distribution from the keeper is a hallmark of a good side. This means that building up from the back is better than launching the ball up field hoping one of your players can get it.



Key coaching tip: You can make the game more of a challenge by squeezing the width of the pitch.

Goalkeepers are key to passing

Statistically one form of passing is surprisingly high in terms of overall success – passing by the goalkeeper. So use him.

You can coach your players to move the ball from the goalkeeper through to the midfielders and into your opponents half.

The objective is to move the ball using only three passes and get it between the two cones.

Once the keeper distributes the ball to the outside back, the midfielder times a run and receives the ball. Emphasis is placed on the full back delivering a ball to the midfielder's feet.

The three passes must take your team across the dotted line in the diagram and score between the cones. Remember to tell your supporting players to hold their positions and move with the play.

Movement is key to retaining the ball

Your defending midfielders must make it difficult for the team in possession to move the ball.

The grey team's three man midfield are playing with two up and one back so the emphasis is on movement up front to keep possession of the ball. Restart with the goalkeeper and switch players around.

How to Keep Attackers at Bay

When your defender is the last man, if he jumps into a tackle and doesn't win it, the attacker is through on goal. So, you need to teach your players ways to hold up an opponent until help arrives.

You don't always need to tackle an opponent to dispossess them or slow their progress. Jockeying denies your opponent time and space, and it's a good tactic to allow your team-mates to get back in position.

Jockeying an opponent to keep him out



1. Tell your players to adopt an almost side-on position, with shoulders opened out slightly so that you provide a barrier to your opponent. This keeps the opposition in front of your player so he can see them.

Your players should keep their knees slightly bent, with their weight on the front of their feet, which makes it easier to change direction while they move backwards.

2. Make sure your players stay goal-side, and also in front of your opponent. They do this by turning off their back foot as they move backwards.

3. Tell them to stay within an arm's length of their opponent to increase the pressure on them. They should have their arms slightly out to create more of a natural barrier. But make sure they don't use them to push!

Key coaching tip: Don't jump in!



How to Coach Effective Marking

What you tell your players the session is about:

1. How to mark opponents effectively.
2. When to mark players and when to cover spaces.

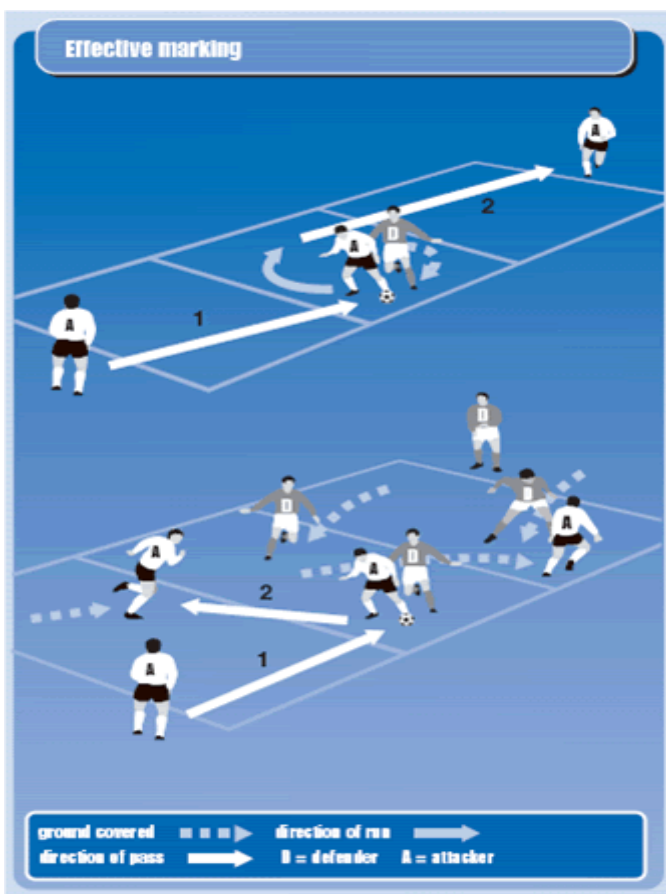
What you tell your players to do:

1. Move quickly into position when the ball changes hands.
2. Position between your opponent and your goal.
3. Position to see both the ball and your opponent.
4. Closer to the ball or goal; closer to the opponent.
5. Be ready to intercept the ball but don't commit unless you are sure.
6. Adopt a slightly sideways on body position to move quickly in any direction.
7. Don't allow the opponent to receive and turn.

What you get your players to do:

In a 30m x 10m grid, play this 2v2 target zone game.

The players on the outside act as servers and targets. The players on the inside start in the middle third. One player receives from his partner and the objective is to turn and pass to the target player at the other end. The process is then reversed. Players are rotated so all get to practice marking.



Development

Bring two grids together and increase the numbers to 2v2 in the middle and 2 targets at each end. Increase this again by allowing one of the outsiders to join in after the first pass to make 3v3 in the middle. Now they will develop marking and covering.

How would I put this into a game situation:

Increase the pitch size to allow for a 5v5 game with end zones. There are no goals or keepers so the team in possession must try to achieve penetration into the opponent's end zone.

What to shout:

- "Move quickly" "get tight" / "not too tight"
- "Watch the ball" / "don't dive in"
- "Sideways on" "can you intercept?"
- "Watch the space" / "don't let them turn".

What to look for:

- Players moving too late allowing players to receive under no pressure; marking too far away allowing opponent to turn.
- Players getting too close allowing opponents to turn around or allowing a pass into space behind them.
- Exposing the goal by marking on the wrong side.
- Marking directly behind an opponent and not seeing the ball.
- Marking flat or square; unable to move in any direction.
- Failing to intercept / attempting to intercept at wrong time.

What to think about:

Are the players concentrating when they are in possession?

Are they working as a unit / team? Do they communicate?

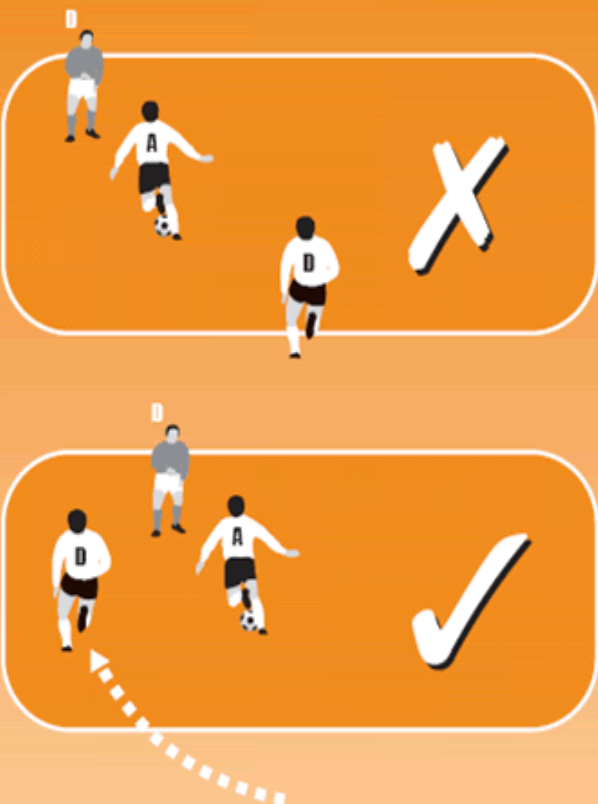
The Attacking Defender

When a defender plays the ball out of his penalty area to one of his midfielders or attackers he should not stop running. He should run outside the attacker, to help put pressure on the opponents, says David Clarke.

Running at the opposition

When defenders play the ball up the line to their attackers they need to support them by running alongside them so they can get past players by playing a wall pass or they can put the supporting defender in so he can cross the ball into the box.

Defenders can give options to attackers



ground covered ■ ■ ■ ► D = defender A = attacker

Defenders can support attackers

Support play is essential when you have players running with the ball. If you are an attacker going one-on-one with the defender you want to have the option of passing past the defender you are facing.

The attacker increases his options

It also means the defending player is up against two, rather than one, attacking players, so he will have to make a decision whether to jump in or wait to see what the attacker does. In this way your attacker's clever skills will be even more effective.

Support players give options to score goals

When you watch teams in the top leagues around the world, there is always a support player who is running with the attacker. The more options your team has the more chances they have of scoring goals.

Key coaching tip

Tell your defenders to run outside their attackers to offer support.



Coping with Aerial Bombardment

A great way to put your defenders under pressure at training is to get your players to bombard your best three defenders with high balls into the penalty area so they are constantly having to clear them, says David Clarke.

Prepare to defend against long ball tactics

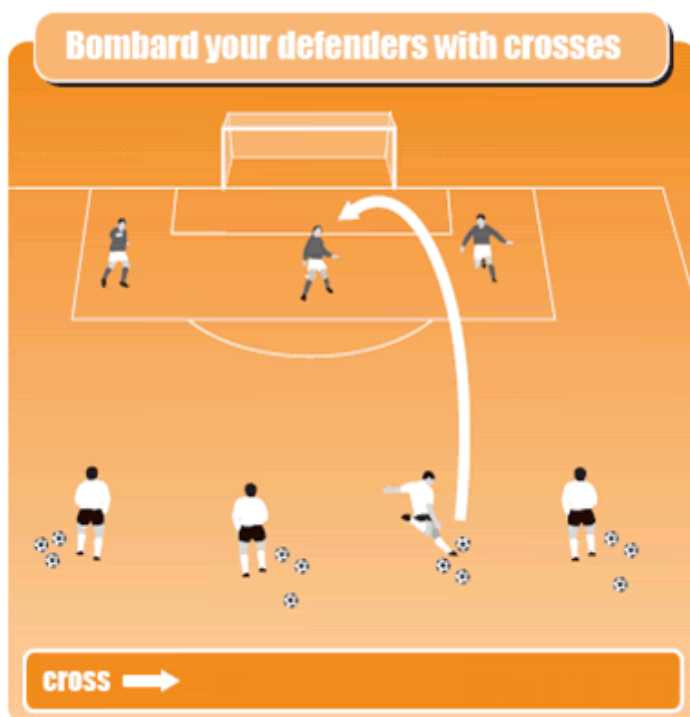
You often find on match day that you have prepared your team for everything except an aerial bombardment from a team with big, strong players who, whenever they get the chance, blast the ball into the penalty area. It's no good having great defenders who can take the ball off an attacker if they cannot head it away when they are under attack.

Players need to generate power

When heading the ball tell your defenders they must have plenty of power. Tell them to arch their backs and swing their heads forward to get the power from their shoulders to head the ball away, or to judge the flight of the ball to volley it away.

Don't let the ball bounce

In the diagram the defenders are faced with balls into the box which they must prevent from bouncing. It is good for communication, movement, volleying and heading.



How to coach it

1. Use three defenders and put four other players around the 18 yard box with three balls each.
2. Players kick the ball into the box from various angles trying to get the ball to bounce in the area.
3. They can use a drop-kick, high cross, or driven cross.
4. Defenders must not let the ball hit the ground.
5. Play until all the balls are used up then change players.

A great way to teach younger players

A fun way to learn heading is to head the ball over a tennis or volleyball net. Players need to direct the ball upwards to clear the net which is great for practising defensive heading. It also helps you teach how to control and direct a ball properly.

More bang for your buck

Sometimes you need to kick it high and away from danger.

Sometimes the big hoof away from danger is the best way to save your team.

Remember the saying - if in doubt, kick it out!

You can play all the pretty football you like but if one of your players gives away a soft goal because he tried to control and play the ball out of defence you're not going to be too happy.

Neither is the team.

You don't want you to turn into a "just clear the ball" type of screaming coach. Play it out from the back when you can but make sure your players are aware that if the ball is running free in the penalty area it's okay sometimes to put it into the next field.

Even at international football level you have the big central defender who can buy a bit of time with a big clearance - the Italians, the Germans and the English can all play the ball out from the back, but they can also clear their lines when the defence is outnumbered.

With your younger age groups you will see the players kicking the way they are facing when their goal is under pressure. This can cause you and your goalkeeper pretty stressful situations when the ball is peppering your goal from their forwards and your defenders...

Try and get them to clear high to the side away from the goal - no matter which way they are facing.

The technique is simple - Eye on the ball, head over the ball, lean back and kick through the ball high and away.

In the older age groups get them thinking about why they are clearing it:

Killing momentum

A smart defender may clear the ball not only to stop an enemy attack, but also to buy time and calm a game down. It is usually better to clear the ball out of bounds to take the sting out of an attack.

Tactical Impact

When clearing the ball, it is difficult to be choosy about the precise direction of where to kick the ball. Tell your players to try and clear it to an area near their own forwards which could spark a counter-attack. This is especially true on a 7-a-side pitch.

Coaching defensive techniques near to your own goal

Using the big kick is one way to clear your lines in defence, but not always the right one. What if the ball is in the air and you have to head it? Or it's dropping out of the sky and you need to volley it?

Using the big kick is one way to clear your lines in defence, but not always the right one. What if the ball is in the air and you have to head it? Or it's dropping out of the sky and you need to volley it?

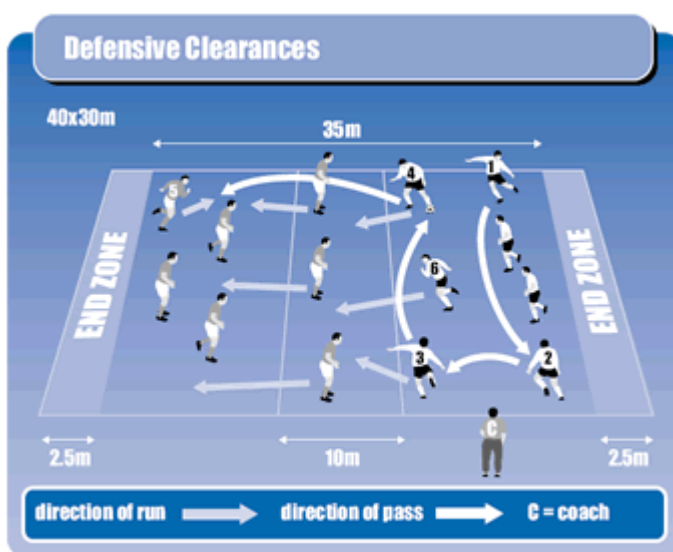
There are lots of ways to defend your goal. The only golden rule to have about defending is DON'T LET THE BALL BOUNCE. Once the ball bounces the defenders have lost momentum and the attackers can follow the ball taking advantage of any weak clearances.

Here's a great way to practice defending - it's a fun game in its own right but it also gets across a lot of what the defender must do to make it easier for his goalkeeper and team-mates to clear the ball.

Stage 1: The team in possession has 7 players in their area of the field. The opponents defend their area with 4 players and 3 players in the central zone. The team with the ball has to make at least three passes in the air before playing the ball over the central zone landing it on the floor of their opponent's area. This gets them a point.

The player in the central zone - player 5 - is there to prevent the opposition scoring a point by stopping the ball touching the floor. He can retain possession by making an aerial pass to a team mate and the team can play a form of head tennis.

The 3 players in the centre zone forming the 'net' must retreat into their own area and the other team must send 3 players in. (3, 4 & 6). The 3 "net" players can intercept the ball and score a point this way.



Stage 2: If the players become very good, you could allow 1 or 2 of the net players to go into their zone and put pressure on them. Two points could be scored by playing the ball back on one touch and landing it in the end zone, however failure to hit the target means a point lost.

By using this session you will be coaching your players so they can defend their goal under pressure. It recreates match-like situations that you can use as your coaching blueprint.

Defending from the front

If your attackers defend as soon as they have lost the ball they can force defenders into mistakes.

A pair of attackers can make an excellent pair of defenders right up in the opposition half of the pitch. They can hunt the ball down force a mistake and end up scoring.

It's all about getting your attackers to close down the defenders and stop them having time to play the ball. Defenders don't expect it, they think that no one will come up and tackle them in their own penalty area.

Well, they're wrong.

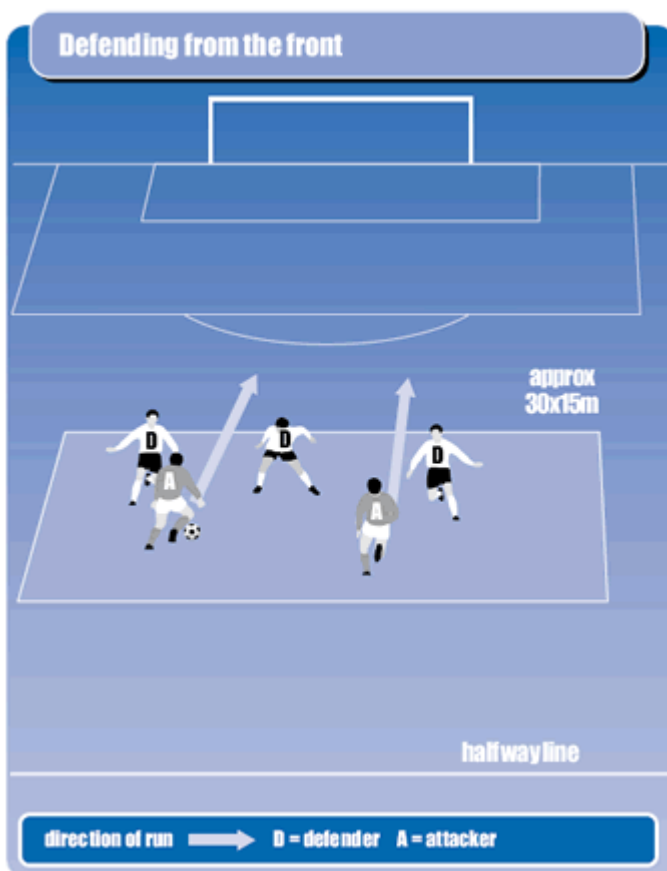
Work your players with my Smart Sessions, to get them defending from the front.

Tell your attackers they should be moving into the defender in a slightly crouching position, side on.

You are looking to see communication between your attackers - so one would shout to the other:

"Force them back down the line!" or a more direct: "Get closer!"

In this way they are forcing them to play quickly away from the direction they were going and ultimately to make a mistake.



Set the session up like this:

Play begins in an area approx 30 x 15 metres, where two attackers play against three defenders. The defenders start with the ball and they have to pass or dribble the ball beyond the line behind the attackers.

The two attackers try to win the ball back. The exercise restarts if the ball goes out the sides of the playing area.

Once the attackers win the ball, they can break out behind the defenders to score. The defenders should continue to try to stop them.

You can award points for attackers scoring goals or for defenders getting past the attackers.

Get your players goal side of the ball

Coaching goal side is one of the basic positional guides a coach can give.

"GOALSIDE! GET GOALSIDE!"

How often do you hear that shouted on a weekend at young players who haven't a clue what the coach means? Coaching goal side is one of the basic positional guides a coach can give.

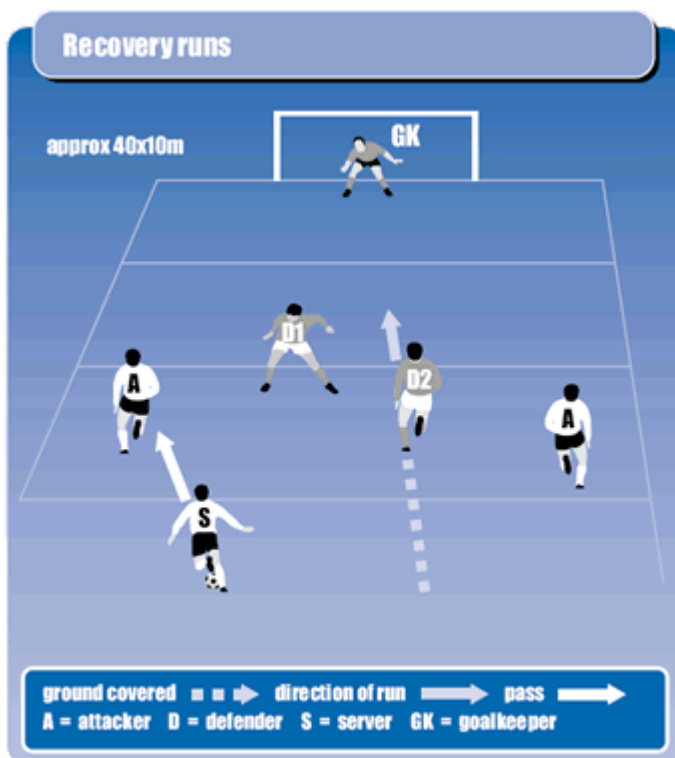
You get your players between the opposition and the goal. Simple.

Getting players to understand goal side means that, during matches when your team are caught on the break and are funnelling back, they will naturally try to get between the attacker and the goal without you having to shout.

And if you do shout, they know what you mean.

Start by showing where a player stands to be goal side then set my session up like this:

In an area approx 40 x 10 metres, and using a full-size goal, play one attacker versus two defenders.



A server begins the practice by passing to the attacker who has to try and beat the first defender and head for goal.

The second defender starts from a position approx 10m further back and can only start their recovery run once the server has passed the ball. He needs to get GOALSIDE.

Switch players so everyone has a turn at getting goal side.

When your players get goal side tell them to either challenge the attacker with the ball, or if not, cover a team mate challenging for the ball. If they cannot do either they should mark an attacker, or failing that, mark space.

Advance this with a small-sided game where your players must get goal side when they have lost the ball.

Passing defenders

Good teams can pass the ball out from the back without panic.

"Play the ball out from the back! You're joking, right?"

This is what one coach said to me the other night when I was trying to explain to him that his team were constantly under the cosh because the defenders kept booting up field straight to the opposition.

"Whenever we clear the ball it just keeps coming back!" he told me.

And yes, if your goalkeeper is blasting the ball up the pitch from goal kicks, by all means do it, but what you should be progressing towards is getting your defenders to make space to receive the ball and play it along the back line.

Playing this way opens up opportunities further up the pitch because it pulls the opposition attackers out of midfield towards your defenders who can then spread the play to the wings.

Okay I've seen this kind of thing go completely wrong - you cannot do it without a lot of practice and preparation. It's no good telling your team that good players can play the ball from the back in a structured and controlled manner; you need to show them how to do it.



Age also comes into play with older boys understanding more about passing away from attackers or deciding not to pass if danger lurks. But if you start practising with younger players as soon as you can, they will learn quickly and grow into a team that can pass out of the back. Imagine - if they can do it at under-6 how good will they be by under-9.

Using this diagram you can see the basic tactic that you need to follow.

Set this up with 3 defenders in each half versus 2 forwards. Before the ball can be played into the attacking half, all 3 defenders have to touch the ball.

This makes them involved in the first phase of the attacking movement. Player 3 should then have the space to play into the midfield where an attacker has lost his marker and come to receive the ball.

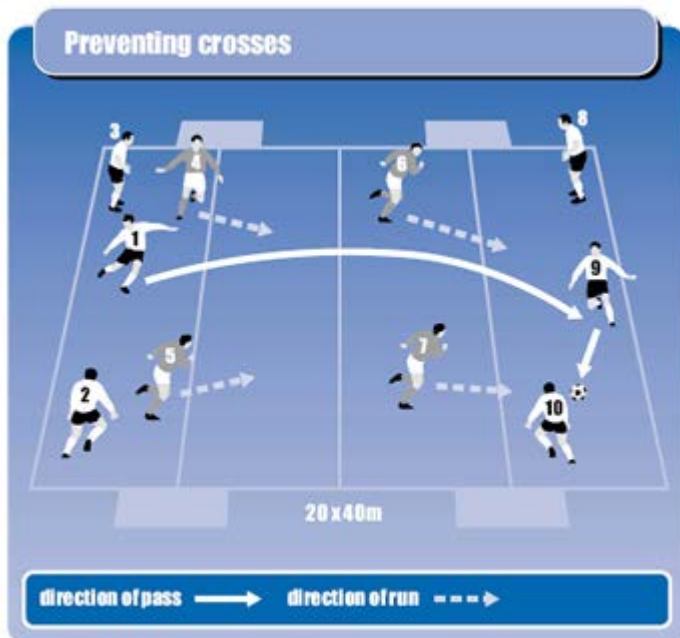
Once player 4 has the ball he should try to link with player 5 and get a shot in on goal. The white team then play the ball out along the back in the same way.

Good crosses often result in goals

How do your defenders put a stop to crosses?

Stopping your opponents from crossing is taking away one of the main routes to goal. If you can cut off the supply from the wings you force your opponents to go down the middle where you can more easily cut out through balls.

When you are coaching your players in stopping crosses it is important they get their position and technique right. What they have to do is move to the player with the ball and close him down early.



The techniques your players should use are jockeying and pressuring - tell them not to jump in so the winger can push the ball past them and run around them. What they need to do is jockey the winger and block his run or cross.

This means patience and discipline is crucial. Once they have stopped the advance of the winger then they can try and win the ball or play it off them into touch. Timing here is paramount to their success.

Here's the way to practise it:

Inside a 20 x 40 grid, the exercise begins with players 1, 2 & 3 passing the ball between them. Under pressure from players 4 & 5 they must create enough space to make a long pass over the middle into the far end zone for players 8, 9 & 10 to receive.

While the ball travels, players 6 & 7 enter the end zone and press 8, 9 & 10 to prevent the long pass back again. Players 4 and 5 return to the middle to rest until the ball is transferred again.

Improve your defending near your own goal

Brazilians can't defend, but Italians can. The Italian national team has grown up on the defensive system called Catenaccio - in which the teams strangle the game then unleash long counter-attacking balls.

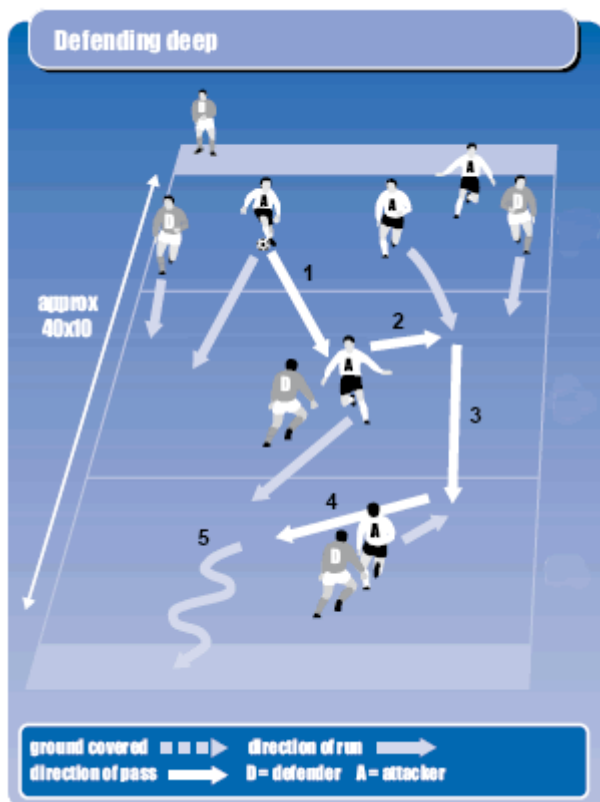
The Italians can sit on a lead and defend deep, without the opposition getting a look in on goal. Some teams try and fail.

Defending deep is an art, and one that comes in useful for a number of situations in youth soccer. Especially as it creates a good platform for turning defence into attack. The tactic involves forcing the opposition to play square or backward passes in front of you because as a team your defence has no gaps.

The opposition is forced into passing the ball into situations where your defenders are favourite to win the ball. Once won, they can counter with quick passing and good support.

This deals with defenders and the use of space in front of goal. The key things to look out for in this are:

- Gaps between defenders.
- Opportunities to intercept and play forward quickly.
- Slow reactions when the ball is won.



Here's how to play it:

In an area approx 40m x 10m the players start as in the diagram. There is a 3v3 possession game in the grid at one end. In the diagram the white team has won the ball so they play into the next grid where there is one player from each team, the object is to move the ball forward as soon as possible.

Two players from each team can move with the ball to advance the 3v3 situation through each section of the grid. The players should try and play the ball quickly forward to the striker in the last sector. Again, up to two players from each team can follow the pass. The object is to run the ball into the shaded end zone.

The quicker the ball is moved, the fewer players there are in each sector and therefore the greater the chance to take advantage of a break out from a defensive situation. Reverse the play once the ball reaches the shaded end zone.

Catenaccio

The Catenaccio system was made famous by Argentine trainer Helenio Herrera of Inter Milan in the 1960s who used it to grind out 1–0 wins over opponents in their league games.

The key innovation of Catenaccio was the introduction of the role of libero or sweeper, a player positioned behind the line of three defenders. The sweeper's role was to recover loose balls, nullify the opponent's striker and double-mark when necessary.

Another important innovation was the counter-attack, mainly based on long passes from the defence.

In Herrera's version in the 1960s, four man-marking defenders were tightly assigned to each opposing attacker while an extra sweeper would pick up any loose ball that escaped the coverage of the defenders.

During the 70s to the 90s, Catenaccio became almost synonymous with the Italian national team. Italian defenders soon gained notoriety for their man-marking and hard tackling skills, notably Claudio Gentile, Inter legend Giuseppe Bergomi and AC Milan long-time stalwart Franco Baresi.

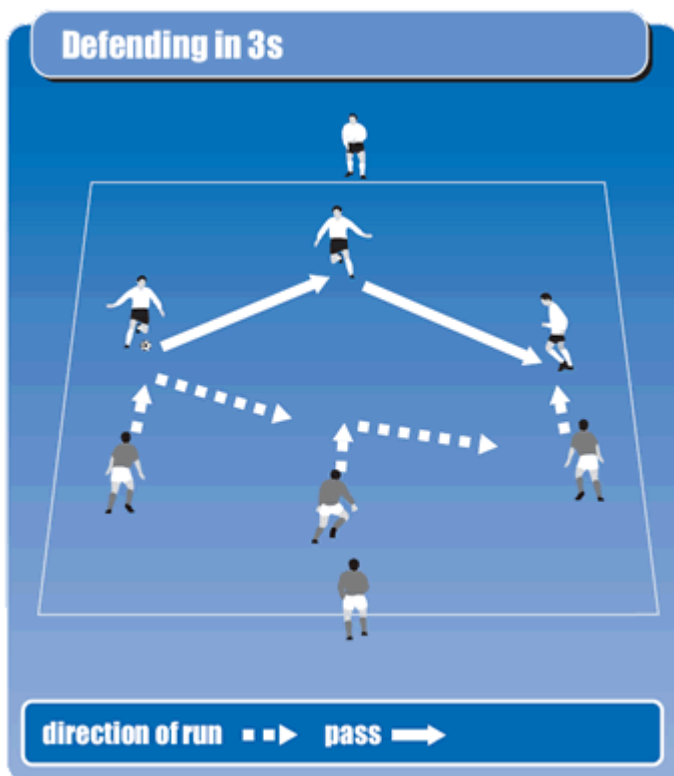
A defensive tactic coached by players

Watching play from the sidelines is always different compared to actually playing in the game. During matches always get substitutes to stand next to the coach so you can point out things that are happening tactically which are either benefiting or hurting the team.

Which is why during training sessions get the players to take on the role of coach and instruct the team in tactics.

The session is about movement and shape in relation to the ball. It's a 3v3 game with an extra player on each team who shouts out the tactics - he becomes the coach.

This is also great for communication between players. The team in possession has to keep the ball, while the other team - under instruction from the player coach - must use defensive positional tactics to stop the other team from passing.



You - the real coach - should stay quiet in this exercise and let your players show you what they can do. At the end give them marks out of 10 for their ability to move as a group and keep the correct shape under instruction from the player-coach.

Set it up like the diagram :

In the diagram the white team have control of the ball. Their aim is to keep possession. The grey team must take up defensive positions in relation to the ball and attempt to win possession.

The grey team are working on the instructions of their player coach.

On your whistle, the roles are quickly reversed. Make sure everyone gets a turn at being the player coach.

You can develop the session into a 3v3 match with the player coaches in goals still instructing their defenders.

The emergency tactic - CLEAR IT!

Let's face it, during the course of a match there are going to be times when a defender is unable to control and shield the ball from attackers. In this instance he should be looking to kick the ball high and away from the danger zone to gain time for his team to regroup.

Just watch the best defenders in the world, they are all capable of hoofing the ball up in the air and away to buy time for the rest of the team to regroup. Clearing the ball out of bounds takes the immediacy and sting out of the attack.

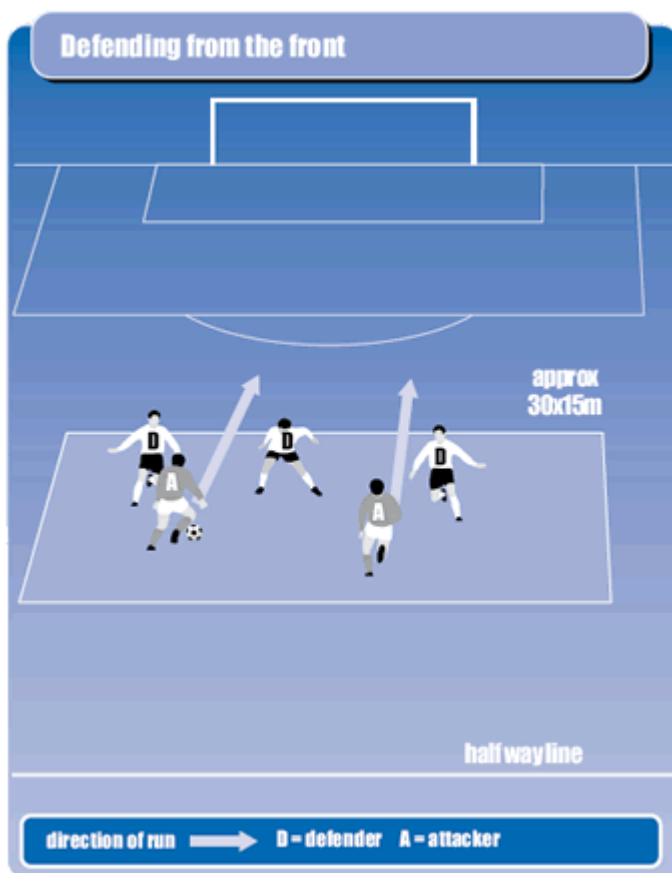
I must stress though, it is an emergency tactic. Players should resist the urge to just boot the ball as hard as possible when defending in their own half - and they will be getting the call from all sides of the pitch "GET RID OF IT!". Don't be a coach who continually shouts that...

The technique is simple:

- Eye on the ball.
- Lean back.
- Kick through the ball high and away.

Defend from the front

If you have your attacker stay forward he has a great chance to win the ball back if he loses it in your opponents half. Lose it in front of goal and you're gifting the opposition a scoring chance. You can get your attackers to practice winning the ball back early with this session.



It's best to use two attackers versus three defenders to practice this tactic.

There are a lot of coaching points to look out for, including, position of players both in defence and attack and their technique for jockeying and tackling for the ball.

In the diagram the attackers win back the ball in a dangerous position and take on the defenders to try and get the ball to the goal.

Set up an area 30 metres x 15 metres with the two attackers facing three defenders. The defenders start with the ball and have to get it past the line behind the two attackers.

The attackers must try to win the ball back. Play restarts if the ball goes out of the sides.

If the attackers win the ball they should combine to get the ball to the goal behind the defenders.

How to make the most of your extra player in a 3v2 situation

Your players will get used to taking advantage of extra players in overload situations in matches - if you practice enough. Nothing is more frustrating than seeing an advantage given away but players not thinking or being aware of what is going on in front of them.

In this game players have to react quickly to defend or attack in a number of 3 attackers versus 2 defenders situations.

You should be looking out for is attackers passing quickly, or dribbling, to give the defenders no time to cover all the options. When defending, the two players should try to isolate the player with the ball.



Here's what you get your players to do:

Arrange your players into 3 teams of 4. Two teams act as the attackers/defenders. One team acts as the playmakers.

One player from the playmaker team and two players from the other teams make up the exercise. The playmaker gets the ball and chooses white or grey to be his attacking partners. In the diagram the white team are picked so he joins two of those players to attack two players from the grey team who become defenders.

The coach passes to the choice/playmaker who makes a pass to one of the teams to determine which are his team mates and therefore who are the attackers or defenders.

The game continues in a 3v2 situation. If the ball changes hands then so does the playmaker.

You can add extra "floating" players, one for each team who can only join in when their team has possession of the ball.




Competitive team games to make defending fun

This session makes the principles of defending fun to motivate your young team.


Giving defenders a proper structure and the correct tactical approach will make their role as a defender much more rewarding and will save your team lots of goals. The best way to do this is by introducing the theme of defence with competitive, fun team games.

The aim is to not tell your players that they are working on a defending exercise – some young players will not respond well to that scenario. Instead, encourage them by telling them that they can win the games by using good defending techniques.

- Your players will work extremely hard at defending in order to beat the other player and win points for their team.
- Remind them of the proper techniques and don't let them commit fouls – it should be fun but not too rough.


direction of run  pass 
 dribble 

1




Game 1 is their warm-up. Can they intercept the pass?

2



In game 2 your players must make four quick tackles.

3



In game 3 your players must figure out a way to knock the ball off the cone without fouling the attacker.

Mark out two 10 x 10 yard areas.

Pick two teams of five players. Number the players 1 to 5. Number 1 from each team must go into the other team's area.

Game 1 – stop the other team making 20 passes: The team of four pass one ball around the area. The defender must continuously try to stop them completing passes. The first team to complete 20 passes is the winner.

Game 2 – tackle all four attackers: Each of the attackers dribbles around the area with a ball. The defender must tackle or dispossess them quicker than the defender in the other area.

Game 3 – knock all four balls off the cones: the attackers must each defend a ball balanced on a cone by using good ball shielding technique. The defender must knock the four balls off the cone quicker than the other defender.

The team is awarded 1 point for each game they win.

Ball shielding skills put to the test

Games to put ball shielding skills to the test.

When you have taught your players the technique for shielding the ball, you need to get them to do this under pressure from a team mate. These two games will give your players the chance to put their skills to the test - you need to keep an eye out for players getting carried away and pushing or kicking their partner.

Remember some players will find it very frustrating at first and will keep losing the ball. Even professional players can foul an opponent when they get frustrated. Explain to them that they need to practise so they get better and better at it.

Five second keep ball

- The set up is two players in a 10 x 10 yard grid with one ball.
- The first player starts with the ball and when you give the command to begin they have to shield it, for say, 5 seconds, from the second player who tries to win it. If the second player wins the ball, they try to shield it for the rest of the 5 seconds.
- To make it more competitive, let each player start with the ball 5 times and see who has possession the most at the end of the 5-second periods.

Five second point stealer

Using the same set up and the five second countdown, play a game where the second player gets 1 point for stealing or kicking the ball away before the count of 5, while the first player gets 1 point if they can hold the ball for 5 seconds.

You can increase the difficulty of the exercise by increasing the shielding time.

Get tested training tips

A triangle game to encourage dribbling, shooting and defending

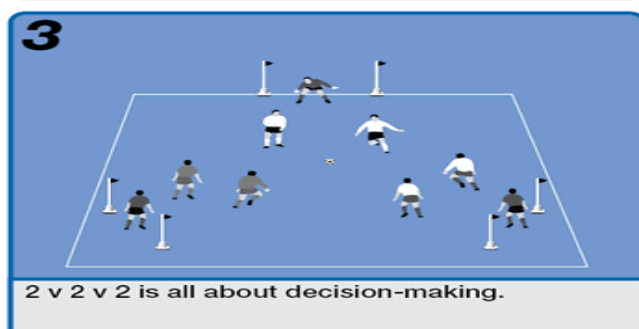
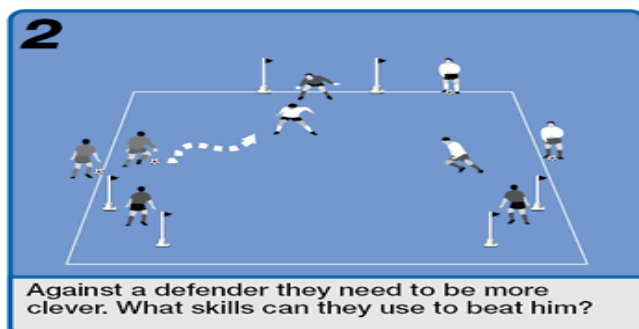
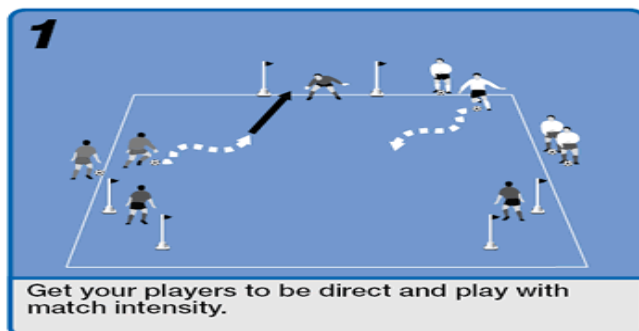
This training initially focuses on individual skills such as dribbling, shooting and 1v1 attack and defend. You want to see good technique throughout and you should point out any technical errors to your players as you proceed.

- Do they have the ball under control?
- Are they shooting low and hard, placing the ball, or just blasting it at the goalkeeper?

You can progress the session to a team game where these skills are to be applied in a team environment if the team is to be successful.

- Can your players exploit the spaces?
- Is their movement good?

In a 30 yard square, arrange your players into groups of three with one nominated goalkeeper per team. The goalkeeper can be rotated so that everyone has a turn at attacking.



What your players have to do

- Let the players set out the pitch as in the diagrams - it's their playground! The game starts with one player from each team attacking the goal to their left.
- They must dribble and shoot to score past the goalkeeper.
- Ensure that they use good technique and they play at match intensity.

How to advance it

- Now each team introduces a defender.
- The players again take it in turns to attack the goal to their left, but this time they must beat a defender on the way.
- Look at their decision-making. What skills do they use to beat the defender?

Try sweeper training to improve your defence

Giving your players a chance to play a sweeper role gets them running all over the pitch and helps them learn how support play can stop opposition attacks.

A sweeper basically covers the defence. At 11-a-side they will be covering the back four, at 7-a-side they will be covering the back two. It means you have extra cover in defence - since they are not burdened by any specific marking assignments, the sweeper can go wherever they are needed.

You really want a fast player who can read the game, tackle and pass over long distances. But when you practise this, get all your players to try the position because you are developing their soccer brains by getting them to make decisions and organise the team all over the pitch;

- Who do they support?
- Which players are most vulnerable and need help?
- Is the space left behind the defenders covered?
- Who is covering when defenders join the attack?



Make a game of it

Play a game where four attackers are running at four defenders with a sweeper behind them. The sweeper can start in a central position behind the defence, but from there he might chase after a through ball or sprint wide to cover a defender and create a 2v1 situation.

Change the number of attackers and defenders to suit your players - so, if the attackers are struggling to get through to the sweeper, take out a defender. If the defence is struggling, take out an attacker.

Let each sweeper cover 4 plays then change them.

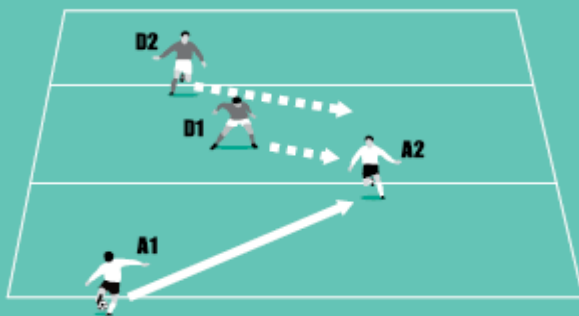
Playing your back-up defenders

When a defender is applying pressure to an attacker with the ball it's important they have back-up in the form of a second or "covering" defender. That's to ensure that if the attacker beats the first defender, any progress is stifled by the second one.

- The covering defender should be in a position to make an effective challenge if the first defender is beaten.
- Stand at a slight angle and goal-side of the first defender.
- Communicate early and clearly – for example, advising the team mate to "get closer" or "force them down the line".

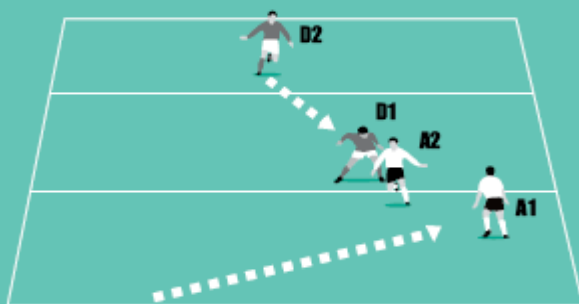
direction of run  pass 

1



One defender challenges, the other covers – get them to organise themselves!

2



Now it's 2v2 so the defenders have to constantly adapt.

Use this session to coach players how to cover a team mate and direct the attacker away from goal.

- You need to use four players – 2 attackers versus 2 defenders – in each group.
- Each playing area measures approx 10 x 30 yards.

What you get your players to do

- Attacker 1, acting as a server, passes the ball to attacker 2.
- Attacker 2 attempts to dribble to the end line.
- Defender 1 challenges the attacker.
- Defender 2 provides cover.

Development

After playing the first pass, attacker 1 joins in the attack to make a 2v2 situation. The defenders will now have to constantly switch roles depending on who is nearest the ball, with the covering defender becoming the main defender and vice versa.

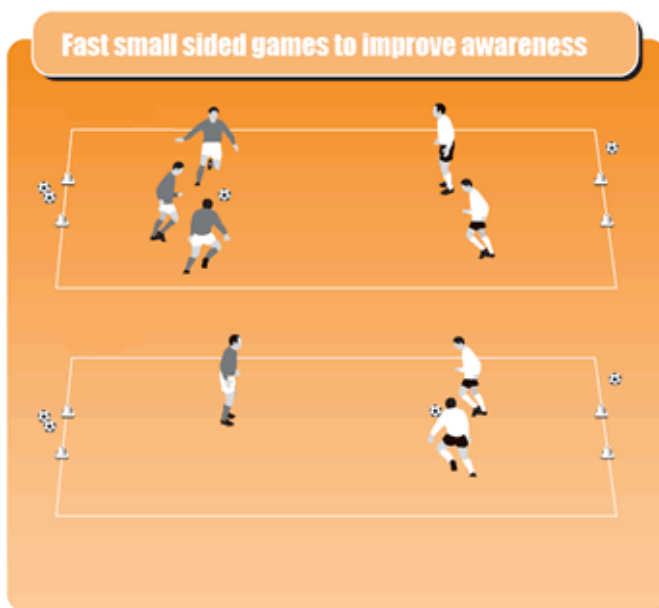
High-intensity training drill

Simulate match intensity with a quick-change exercise where attackers and defenders swap roles. In a match, the elements are constantly changing. You can be attacking on your own one second, then have a team mate or team mates in support to pass to the next.

In your sessions it is a good idea to run exercises so your players can prepare for this. You can sometimes see players switching off when you do repetitive drills that have them doing A, B or C and they don't have to think about it.

This exercise is a high intensity, near continuous game using five players. You can set up two or three of these depending on numbers at your training session. Set up a few 15 x 30 yard pitches, marking out with cones a couple of small goals at each end. You will need one pitch for every five players.

Choose 3 players who will be given the ball first against the remaining two. Decide which end the 3 are to attack. The attacking team start with the ball bringing it out from the goal line. They can choose to pass or dribble, but no direct goals are allowed on the first touch.



The emphasis is on restarting quickly.

- The 3 play against the 2 until either: the two defenders win clear possession of the ball; they must have it under control; or the ball goes over the goal line last touched by an attacker.
- If either of these two things happens, the two players who were defenders become attackers trying to score at the opposite end in a game of 2v1 against whichever attacker last touched the ball, the player who lost possession or took a shot.
- The attackers retain possession on all balls that go out over the side lines.
- You will need a coach or knowledgeable parent to act as referee...the point is to designate immediately which player stays on and which players go off (ignore the "it wasn't me" shouts). The attackers who go off should quickly step well out of the way of this new 2v1 game and sit out until it is finished.
- The 2v1 game continues until it resolves in the same fashion as for the 3v2 game; the lone defender wins clear possession or the ball goes out off one of the two attackers.
- Now the 3 players who just played 2v1 immediately join together in a team of 3 attackers against the 2 who had to stand out, with the 3 now attacking, so we are back to step one.