



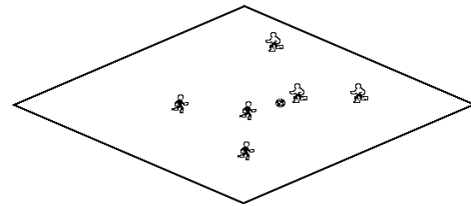
Defending (Pressure, Cover & Balance)

by Laura Ray, Mass Youth Soccer Development Coach

OBJECTIVE: To teach the roles of the players who pressure, cover and balance defensively in relation to the ball and the 1st attacker and other attackers around and off the ball. Approach, angle, timing, steering of 1st attacker and the ball will be looked at in regards to the 1st defender. Aligning themselves in a covering position off the 1st defender will be looked at in regards to the 2nd defender(s). Lastly, ensuring balance and proper positioning from the 3rd defender(s) will be looked at.

1) 3v3 to lines (20 minutes):

Create multiple fields that are 30yds x 20yds with 4 cones outlining the field (enough so all players are playing), break all of the players in to teams of 3. Each team will defend the end line behind them. Players have to dribble across the end line to score.



Coaching Points (1st Defender):

- Angle of approach – Direct the player one way on the field, take away option of advancing forward
- Should begin to notice where their ‘help’ is behind them in order to know which direction to force them
- Speed of approach – Approach fast arrive slow
- Body Shape- knees bent, on the balls of their feet
- Front foot tackle vs back foot tackle if the ball gets away from 1st attacker
- PRESSURE/DELAY

Coaching Points (2nd Defender):

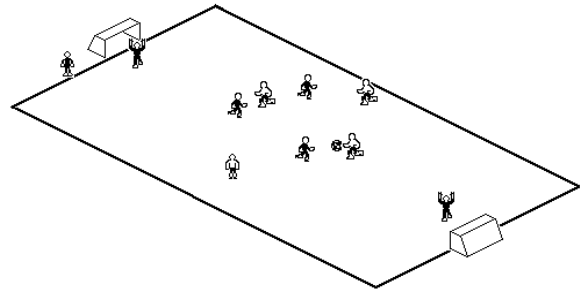
- Position themselves ‘off’ the 1st defender in a position to cut off penetrating passing, dribbling and shooting options for the 1st attacker (30 to 45 degrees)
- Can compress the space between them if the 1st defender has ‘tight’ pressure on the 1st attacker
- Cannot compress the space as tightly if the 1st defender does not have ‘tight’ pressure on the 1st attacker
- Can track players immediately off the ball
- Can be more than one 2nd defender
- COVER

Coaching Points (3rd defender):

- Track attackers making runs away from the ball
- Provide balance away from the ball, so that a weak side pass will not become a huge advantage to the offensive team
- Tighten up the space in the center of the field to cut off passing, dribbling, shooting lanes for attackers
- Can compress the space if there is tight pressure and cover around the ball
- BALANCE

2) 4 v 4 (-1) + Goalkeepers (20 minutes):

Two teams are playing 4 v 4 to two goals on each end line and a goalkeeper in each goal. The attacking team is playing with four players, but the defending team must drop one player back behind their own endline while under attack. This prevents the defending team from playing man to man and must solve the problem with zonal play. When the defense wins the ball they must first play the ball back to their teammate on the end line while the other team removes a player from the field.

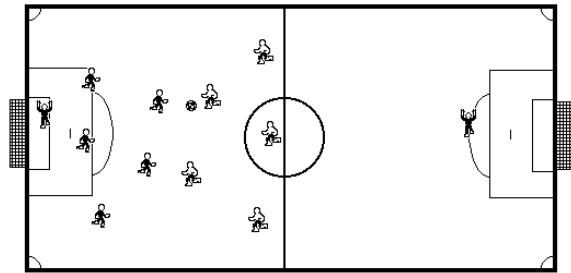


Coaching Points:

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in #1

3) 6v6 to two big goals (20 minutes):

On a field 40 yards wide by 60 yards long with a goal at each end, create two teams of 6 (5 players and a GK). Play a regular game highlighting pressure, cover and balance. Version 2: If the players are scoring quickly, adjust so teams can only score if all of their team are in the attacking ½ of their field. This will allow the defending team time to get more organized and adjustments of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd defenders.



Coaching Points:

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in #1

4) 8v8 Game (25 minutes):

Depending upon numbers, space will change and numbers will change. Ideally, finish with the number you normally play with in games. Play a regular game with goalkeepers.

Coaching Points:

- Reinforce the coaching points listed in #1
- Reinforce positive decision making opportunities (recognizing when and how to pressure the ball, communication of 1st, 2nd and 3rd defenders, etc.).

5) **Cool-down (10 minutes):** Juggling in 2's and 3's, using all body parts. Static stretching of the major muscle groups.