

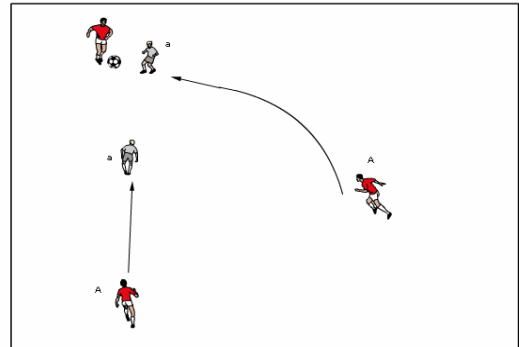


Defending (Zonal)

by Arthur Dimitrakopoulos, MYSA Staff Coach

OBJECTIVE: Defending individually and as a group. Players must know the technical, tactical, physical and mental components of defending as individuals, in small units and as a team. This session can be used for players from U12 and older. The older and/or better ability of players the more demands we place on them.

1) Warm-up (15-20 minutes including dynamic stretching): In three's, pass the ball back and forth one or two touches from about 7-10 yards apart. When any of the three players stops the ball with the bottom of their foot (or at the coach's command), the partners respond by 1st player making a bending run and closing down the player on the ball as the 1st defender would and the other player reacts as the 2nd defender and covers the space behind 1st defender. After arriving, the defender backs off, and the exercise continues.

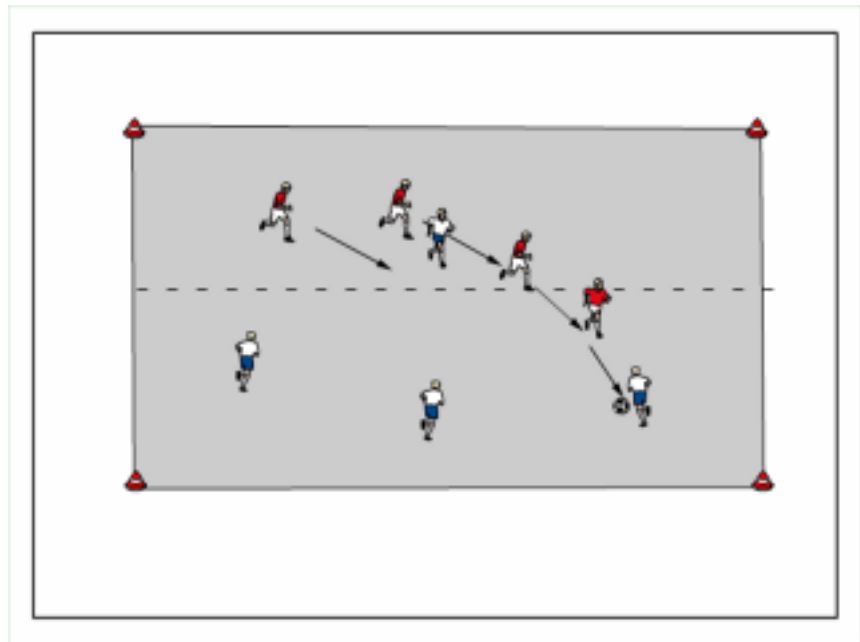


Coaching Points:

- The 1st defender needs to “approach fast, arrive slow”, bend run, have correct stance: be on their toes, with knees bent, one foot forward, one back. The 1st defender “affects” the ball...gets the head of the 1st attacker down by getting close to the 1st attacker, approximately arm's length
- The 2nd defender needs to be at approximately a 30 degree backward angle to the 1st defender on the side that the first defender is showing the ball towards; cannot be too far back or too close to 1st defender
- The 2nd defender tells 1st defender which way to push attacker
- Communication/decision; who's the 1st or 2nd defender and why

2) 4 v 4 to Lines (15-20 minutes):

Field is divided in half by discs; size of the field depends on players' age, ability and training objectives. Offsides begin at midfield. One team defends and attacks the long side of an end line. Teams score by dribbling ball under control over the end line.



Coaching Points:

- Deny penetration with a dribble
- Immediate chase/pressure
 - The moment possession is lost the nearest player(s) try to regain possession or apply pressure on the ball
- Delay – The pressuring defender(s) forcing the attacking team to take time organizing its attack so defenders have time to form a collective defending action behind the ball
- Cover – While the ball is being pressured all other players should be recovering into defensive positions. The positions taken should support the pressuring defender in the event he is beaten
- Balance – As the team concentrates their defense in the area of the ball, defenders away from the ball (opposite side of field) must position themselves to cover vital spaces (central areas) in order to prevent attackers from making penetrating runs into these spaces in which to receive the ball

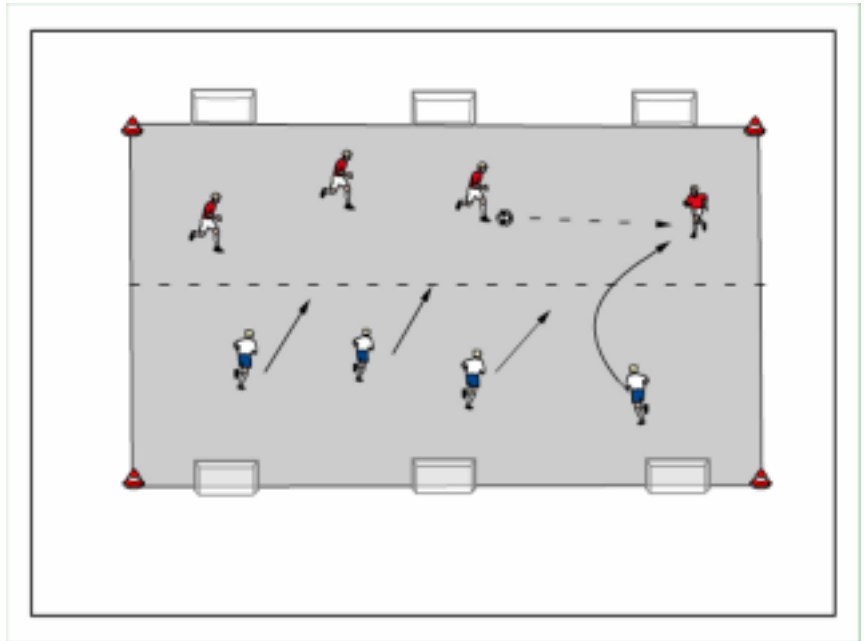


3) 4 v 4 to Six Goals (15-20 minutes):

Same as game #1 but now each team defends and attacks three goals.

Coaching Points:

- Same as above and also; sliding together or moving as a block. When and how much space to squeeze; any pass by attacking team side ways (square) we squeeze or close down a little space; any pass or dribble backwards by the attacking team, the defending team pushes up and closes a lot more space. *Caution:* How much space to squeeze will depend on how much pressure is applied to the 1st attacker (player with the ball). If not enough pressure is applied, defending team can be beaten with a long ball over the heads or a through ball.

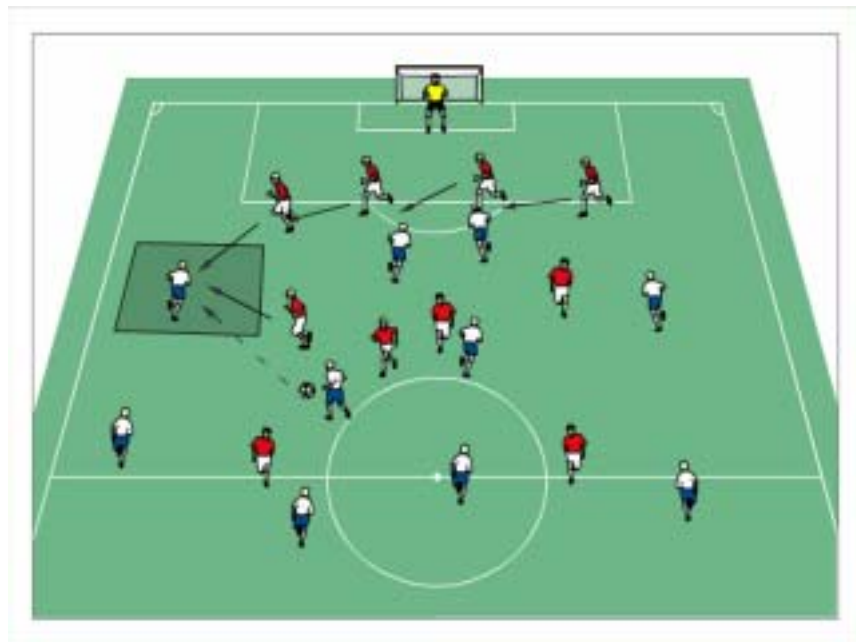


4) THE GAME - Game to two Goals with GKPR's (25-30 minutes):

Play – 7 v 7 or 8 v 8 or 11 v 11 including Goalkeepers. Use a system of play that has 3 or 4 backs. Shown here is a 4-4-2 system.

Coaching Points:

- Communication – Visual and verbal. Players must communicate their attentions and responsibilities clearly and precisely through verbal and visual cues
- Defending relative to match situation - Time, score, etc. How much time is left in the game and what is the score? Do we defend more cautiously to preserve the win or just keep playing the same way?



Reminder: Goalkeeper plays a very important role in zonal defending. He or she must come off their line and act as a sweeper as soon as the defenders push up and squeeze space. Be ready to clean up any balls played over or through the defenders.

COOL- DOWN (10 minutes): Juggling in 2's and 3's. Static stretching of the major muscle groups..