



48 Defending Drills



Introduction



WORLD CLASS COACHING recently conducted a contest where coaches contributed their favorite defending drills, exercises or small-sided games. We recieved many interesting and useful defending activities. Rather than finish the contest and discard the sessions, we decided to offer them to other coaches for free.

The sessions were presented in many formats. We reconstructed the diagrams using our Session Designer and included the set-up, descriptions, coaching points and progressions that were provided by the coach. We've included the coach's name if it was on entry.

Thanks to all of the coaches who contributed games.

Page	Topic	Author (if provided)
Page 4	3 v 3 + 3, 2 GK Defending SSG	
Page 5	3 v 3 v 3	Keith Scarlett
Page 6	Defensive Communication and Coordination	Brad Sackett
Page 7	Defenders Defending	
Page 8	Defending Couter Attack	
Page 12	Watch the Servers Eyes, Body, Anticipate and Intercept	
Page 14	4 v 2	Rob Parker
Page 15	1 v 1 Defending Game	
Page 16	5 Minute Game	
Page 17	Defending as a Unit	Peter Lodge
Page 18	Transitional Defending Game	Gabriel Celante
Page 20	Low and organized defense	Joaquim Filipe
Page 23	Defending in Pairs Organized	Joaquim Filipe
Page 26	Defending in Pairs	Joaquim Filipe
Page 28	Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Pressure	
Page 32	Defensive Zone	Alex Pantarotto
Page 34	Defensive Recover	
Page 35	Four Defending Drills	Ed Joseph
Page 37	2 v 2 to End Line	Randy Pruitt



Table of Contents

Page 38	Four defenders cooperation in small-sided games	
Page 41	Playing between the lines	Gary Murray
Page 42	High Pressure Gauntlet	
Page 43	Individual and Small Group Defending (Pressure and Cover)	Scott Moore
Page 45	Intercepting	
Page 47	1 v 1 and 2 v 2	Jamie Hudec
Page 48	Immediate Pressure	Michael Legate
Page 49	Defensive Shape - Zonal Defending	Morgan Church
Page 50	Football Baseball	Murray Loader
Page 51	Pressure - Cover Drill	Tom DeNigris
Page 53	3 v 1	Samuel Baise-Ghartey
Page 54	Screening	
Page 55	Simple and Effective Defensive Positioning Drill	Hosam Ahmad Alzagir
Page 56	1 v 1 Denying Crosses and Shots	Ken Nuber
Page 59	Training the Back Four	
Page 60	U12 Defending	Marco de Leon
Page 62	3 - 2 - 1	
Page 66	4 Defenders + Goalkeeper vs. 5 Attackers in Central Zone	Luca Bertolini
Page 67	Defending Drill	
Page 68	Zonal Reps Exercise	Randy Hanson
Page 69	2 v 3 Defending Drill	Haile Selassie
Page 70	1 v 1	
Page 71	Tactical Awareness - 2 v 4 Defending, "Defensive Support"	
Page 72	8 v 8 Tactical game with an emphasis on defensive transition	Vasilis Papadakis
Page 75	Box in the Box	Marvin Miller



48 Defending Drills



3 v 3 + 3, 2 GK Defending SSG



Objective

To encourage front players to organize defensively to regain possession and create goal-scoring opportunities.

Organization

- Three 48' wide grids; two end-zone grids of about 20' and a central grid of about 15'.
- Three teams of three players in different bib colors
- Two goalkeepers

Instructions

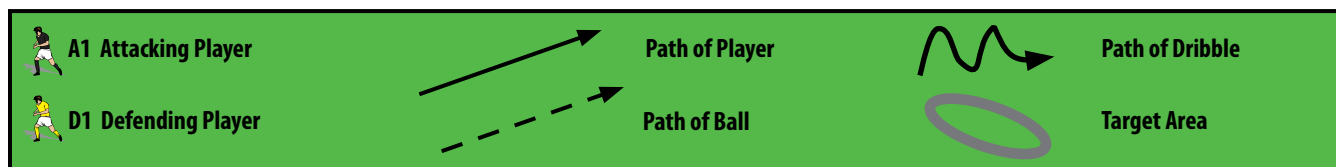
- Players in end-zones: objective is to connect 5 passes prior to switching the ball (on the ground) to the opposite grid.
- Players in central zone: objective is to organize defensively to capture the ball and finish with a shot in goal. Defend with two players with one remaining in the middle grid to intercept through passes to opposite grid.
- Intervals: 2-3 minutes before switching central players.

Progressions(s)

- Play with four players in each team increasing the grid width as necessary.

Coaching Points:

- Pressure on the ball: directing play towards covering teammate to make play predictable.
- Cover player: read pressuring teammate movement early on and stay connected.
- Third player: anticipate through pass and intercept; otherwise initiate pressure on opposite grid.



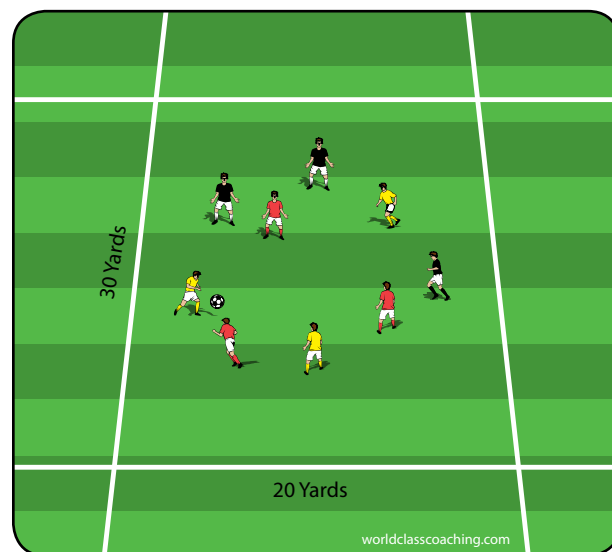
3 v 3 v 3

Organization

- 3 v 3 v 3
- 20 x 30 yard grid

Instructions

Field players break into three groups. They play 3 v 3 v 3 for possession (extra players are rotated in.) While this is normally done as a possession game, we use it as a way to work on pressure, cover and balance. The first defender needs to step HARD to the ball and force into cover of the other two players who are working with him/her. The balance player is simply reading the play from behind and providing balance. (14 minutes)



Progression

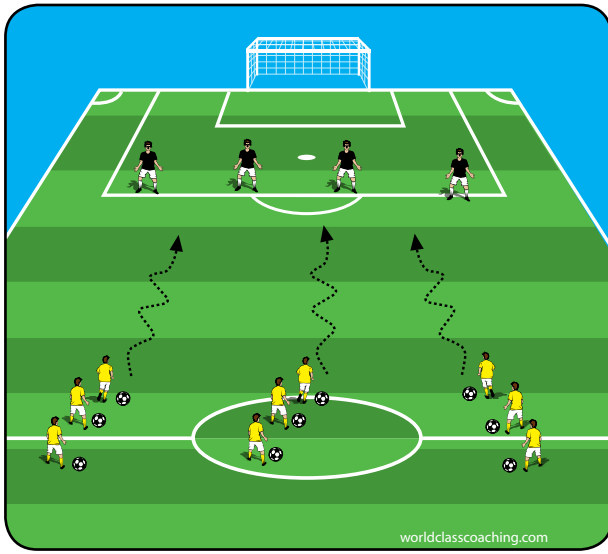
- This turns into a competition by having each team stay on defense for a two minute period and they will see how many times they can steal and disrupt play. The two teams possessing the ball see how many times they can split the defense.
- The numbers for stolen passes and disruptions are added together and then the number of splits are multiplied by two to get the total points for each defensive team. (2 minutes x 4)

48 Defending Drills

Brad Sackett



Defensive Communication and Coordination



Instructions

My favorite defending drill is to have three lines of attackers about 40 yards out and to have 3-4 defenders guarding one goal. The coach calls out random attacks which the defenders must communicate and react to. It may be three attackers with one ball; three attackers each with a ball so that each defender has to pressure a ball; two attackers with one ball; five attackers with one ball; five attackers with two balls, etc.

The focus is on the defenders talking to each other regarding who will cover which attacker; or when outnumbered, to defend against the greatest threat.

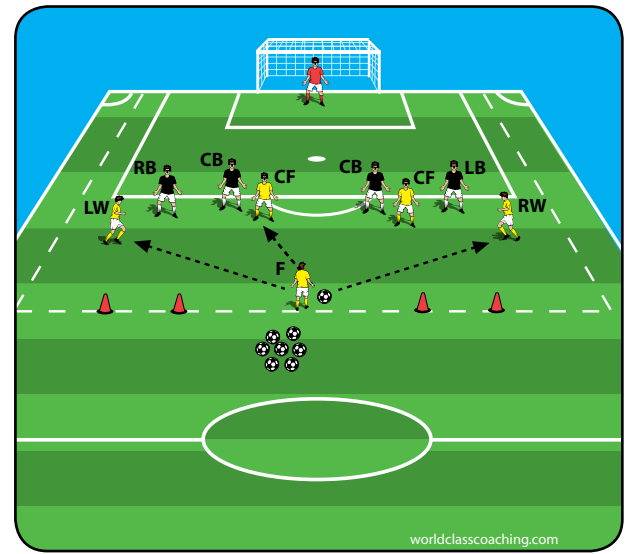
Defenders Defending

Objective

Defending in and around the penalty area.

Organization

- Quarter of a pitch in a central area around the penalty box (approximately 45 x 35 yards.)
- Attacking players: Feeder (F) - 4 - 2
- Defenders: GK - 4



Instructions

Feeder (F) plays the ball out from the end line to LW or RW who attacks towards the goal. Feeder can join in the play. Defenders to prevent or limit shooting opportunities in front of the goal by forcing the play away from goal or backwards.

Progression

Transition: If the defending team wins the ball back, they try to dribble or pass through the two mini goals on the end line.

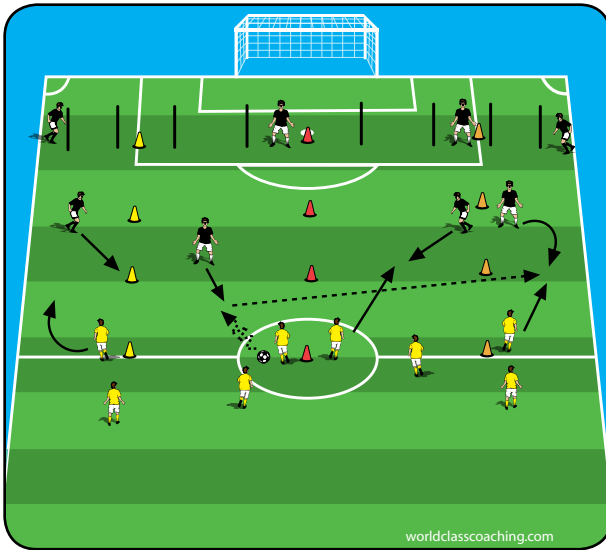
Coaching Points

- Defend tight to limit options to shoot in front of the goal and protect the penalty area.
- Pressure: Nearest player to the ball but in control, slow down on approach, tackle side on.
- Stay on your feet especially in the penalty area.
- No free kicks or penalties.
- Force players away from the penalty area.
- Cover and Support: From other defenders, shuffle across to keep a tight line in front of goal. Defending triangle with pressing defender.
- Positioning: Tracking and recovery runs – get goal side.
- Support from the GK who sweeps and anticipates ball over the top.
- Communication: Hold him up, show left/right, pass off, cover. . .
- Transition: When win possession, can we play out instead of launching it/just kicking it away?

48 Defending Drills



Defending Counter attack



Instructions

- Defending in your zone/channel - 4 v 4 in 1 v 1 situations.
- Defend your gate/goal when the player in your zone has the ball.
- Try and force them into the next zone or off the field.
- Attackers can transfer the ball or dribble 1 v 1 to score.
- Players rotate roles.
- Goals set level with penalty spot.

Coaching Points

- Speed/angle of approach
- Delay pressure
- Body shape side on balance
- Patience to force one way; win ball
- Defenders must be responsible for their own gate and cannot simply stand in it; they must defend 16 m and cannot drop further.

Progression

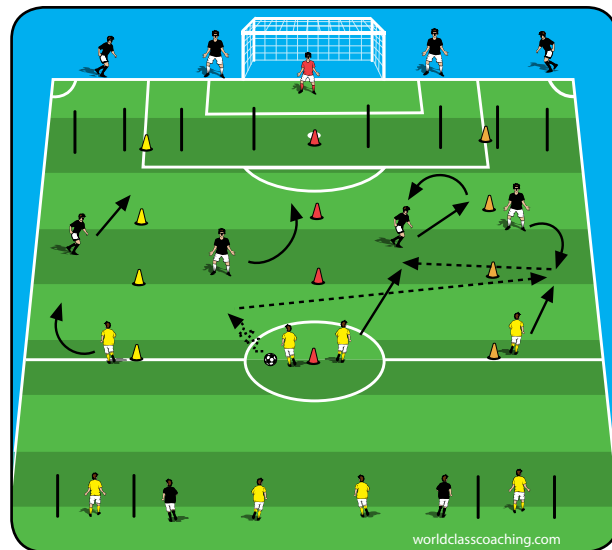
- 2 v 2 in one or two zones
- Build to 4 v 4
- Players can jump across zones

Additional coaching points

- Support/angles distance
- Communication
- Cover/Balance
- Recovery runs

Instructions

- Defending in your zone/channel - 4 v 4 in 1 v 1 situations.
- Defend your area when the player in your zone has the ball.
- Try and force them across or off the field.
- Attackers can transfer the ball or dribble 1 v 1 to score.
- Players rotate roles.



Coaching Points

- Speed/angle of approach
- Delay pressure
- Body shape side on balance
- Patience to force one way; win ball
- Defenders must be responsible for their own zone but should cover where needed; they must defend 16 m and cannot drop further.

Progression

- Defending/ Delay

Additional coaching points

- Support/angles distance
- Communication
- Cover/Balance
- Recovery runs

48 Defending Drills



Instructions

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Progression

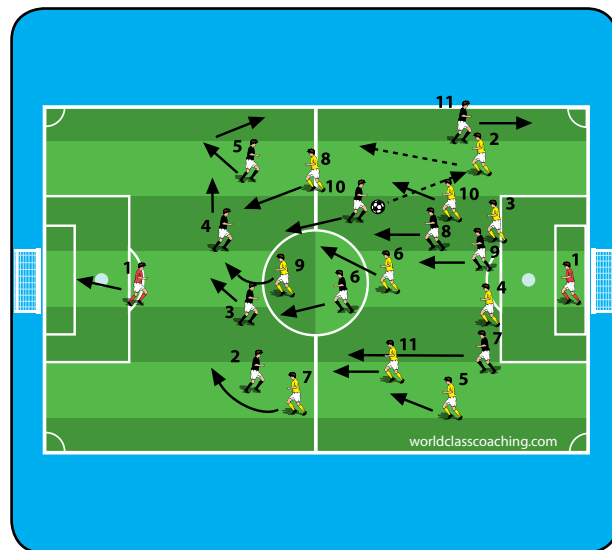
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48 Defending Drills



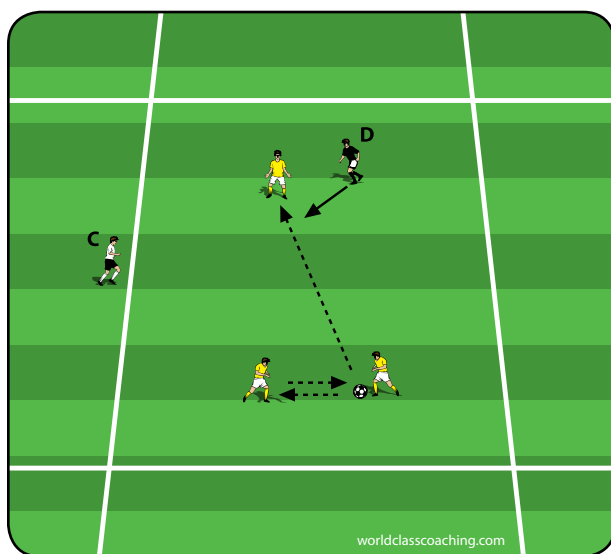
Watch the Servers Eyes, Body, Anticipate and Intercept

Introduction

So often in functional training by position, the coach misses or assumes defenders can solve this problem: "What do we do when they have the ball?" Teaching some visual clues for defenders really does help not only the individual defender, but his supporting players as well.

Visual Clues

- Watch the server's eyes. If the server has time to look down the field, the defender must assume the first priority is to go forward with a long pass to get behind the defense. The second passing priority is to split defenders (mainly midfielders) with a pass, thus eliminating one line of defense. Then to pass laterally and finally back (most desired of any defender to eliminate the pressure on the defender.)
- Did the first line of defenders make the pass predictable? That is did the defenders channelize the passing lane?
- What is the favorite foot of the server (not many two footed players)? Generally tell the defender how the ball will react in the air or ground.
- Watch the body of the server: long pass leans back; short pass remains fairly upright.
- Is the receiver close to the touch line? (The defender already has reduced the space available.)
- Is there pressure on the server?



Drill

Start with two midfielders passing the ball back and forth. Down the field (distance varies by age group,) there is a 1 v 1 situation in a controlled area (size dependent upon servers skill.) Start with a signal from the coach for the midfielders to change for lateral passing to a long forward pass. Using the visual clues above, the defender watches the server and steps forward to intercept the pass or deny the receiver from a long higher ball. The role of the receiver is to try to gain space by creative running. The role of the defender is to intercept the pass and if not possible, deny the receiver from turning and facing the defender.

Progressions

- Add a passive defending line (one defender who moves laterally) a distance from the passing midfielders to channelize the pass while increasing from a 1 v 1 to a 1 v 2; (control area increases). If the defender can read and intercept the long pass, the basic concept is covered.
- Add an active defending line and one receiving player in front of the first line of defense. The midfielders now have creative options by also reading when to make a long pass to the furthestmost receiver, or a forward pass to the first receiver to play back first time for a long forward pass. If the active defender is too aggressive, control the amount of pressure on the midfielders passing the ball.
- Hint: The coach can establish a passing pattern. One pass forward **or** two lateral, one forward, one back **or** pass forward, pass back and pass long **or** short - short - long **or** one on the ground and one in the air.
- Regardless, if one defender understands the concept, add more defenders who are able to support the defender most likely to be under pressure from a long ball. Finally add the back four.

End State

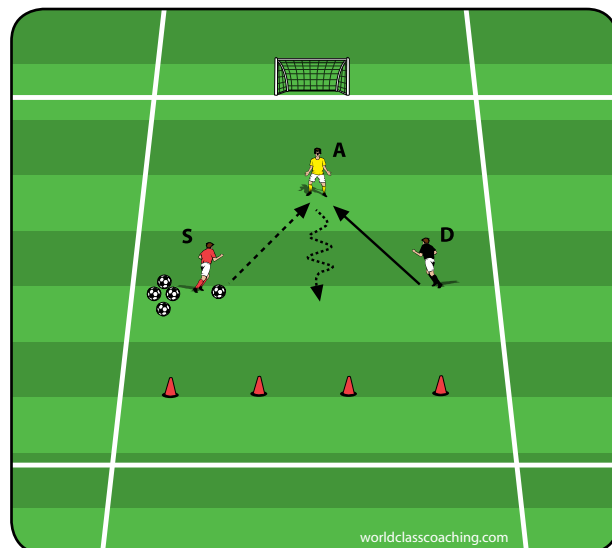
- The defender watches the server and the receiver to intercept the pass in 8 out of 10 passes.

Drill

Server (S) with ball plays into attacker (A). As ball is traveling to A, Defender (D) travels quickly to close down A. Defender makes sure to stay side-on, forcing A to one side and not letting A turn to the other. A attempts to get to top speed and dribble over the cone line. D looks for mistakes or opportunities to win the ball and counters to small goal if they win possession.

Coaching Points

- Side-on, low, weight on back foot
- Use body to get between player and ball
 - Use arms and hip rotation to get positioning

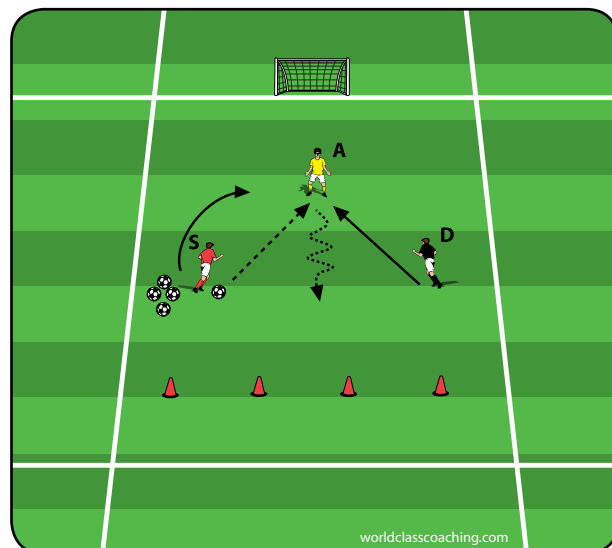


Drill

Server (S) with ball plays into attacker (A). Once S plays the ball, he/she becomes available to provide support to A if needed. As ball is traveling to A, Defender (D) travels to close down A. Defender makes sure to stay side-on forcing A to one side. A can either take on D in a 1 v 1 or use S, who is allowed one touch, to create a wall pass situation to create space and beat D to the cone line. (Can only play S once per cycle.) If D wins possession of the ball, they counter to small goal and can use S once to play wall pass on attacker or take on 1 v 1.

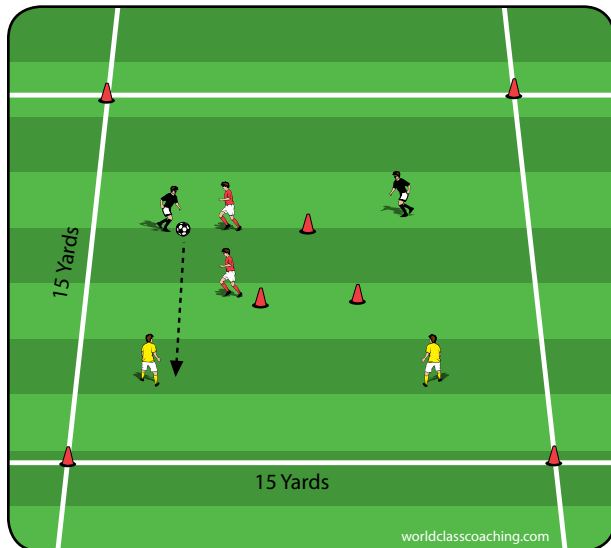
Coaching Points

- Close down quickly and make play predictable
- If A passes to S for wall pass, D should drop off straight away to see player and the ball.
- Don't dive-in
- Side-on, low weight on back foot



48 Defending Drills

Rob Parker



Organization

- 15 x 15 or 20 x 20 yard space
- 2-3 yard wide gates forming a triangle in the middle of the space
- Three teams of two; two teams play versus one team

Instructions

4 v 2 possession with the four attempting to either keep possession or to pass to their teammates through the coned gates if defender is out of position. If possession is stolen by two defenders (D), they look to dribble or pass to one of the four outside cones that make up the square space. The team of two that either loses possession to a goal or loses the ball out of bounds, becomes the defenders and the game continues.

Coaching Points

- 1st Defender - Pressure
- 2nd Defender - Cover
- Must work together to cover space and avoid being split
- Communication of roles and who is pressuring and what side they are forcing to

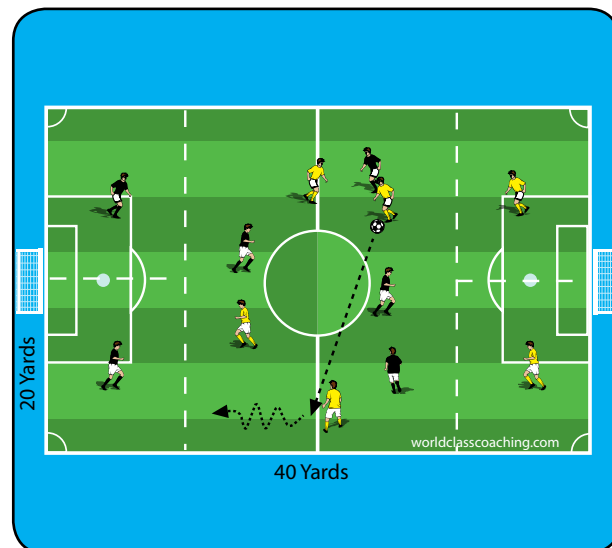
1 v 1 DEFENDING GAME

Objective

To improve defending against attackers running to the goal in a realistic game situation.

Organization

Mark out an area approximately 40 x 20 yards split into 3 zones. Each end zone is split into 2 with a goal in each quarter.



Instructions

- Each team has six players and nominates two to be defenders, the others play 4 v 4 in the central area.
- After three passes in the midfield, the player in possession can then attack a defender in either zone. No other players can enter the zone.
- Defenders must stay in their zone and can also play out from the back and be used as support players.
- Remember to rotate the defenders frequently.

Progression

Play attack into defending zones after one pass

Coaching Points

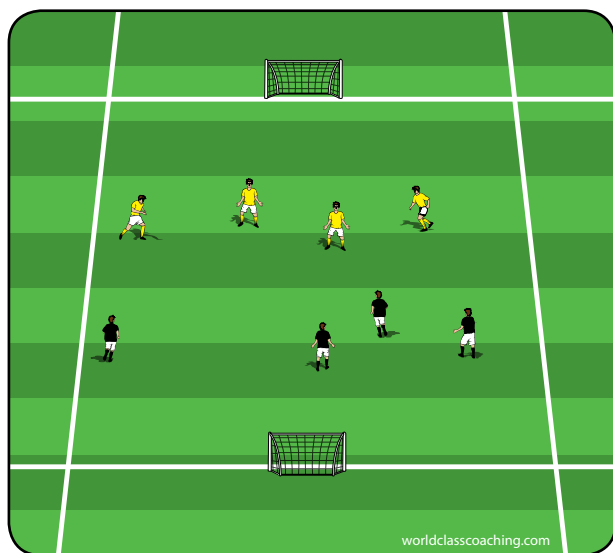
- Close space down quickly, then slow down
- Correct position to force in desired direction away from target area
- Be patient with eyes focused on the ball
- Timing of challenge or block

48 Defending Drills



5 Minute Game

Play SSG with Goalkeepers. The first team to score first then has to defend for 5 minutes; they can not score again until the 5 minute time has run out. Once the 5 minute time has run out, the game is finished. So you can win the game, draw, or lose the game.



Defending Points

- Defending team keeps good pressure in good areas. Stop attacking from team shooting; pressure the man with the ball.
- Mentally you are in a good position to win the game 1-0, but also you can go from winning the game to drawing to losing.
- This will encourage a mentality and a good work ethic of how important it is when you score the first goal to defend individually and as a team for the next 5 minutes.

Defending as a unit

Organization

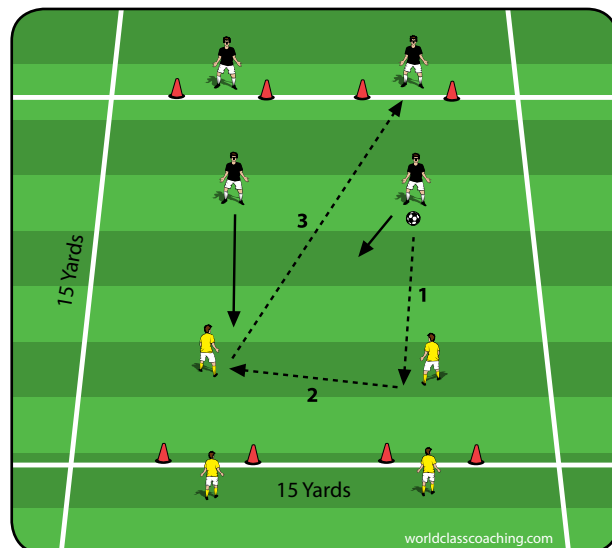
- 15 x 15 yards
- 4 targets with waiting players behind the goals

Instructions

- Blacks pass to yellows and react to their pass.
- If either pair manages to pass to a target player, they stay on and become defenders.
- Nearest player closes down the ball.
- Second player covers
- Transition back to defense.

Progression

Allow target players to play one touch if needed.



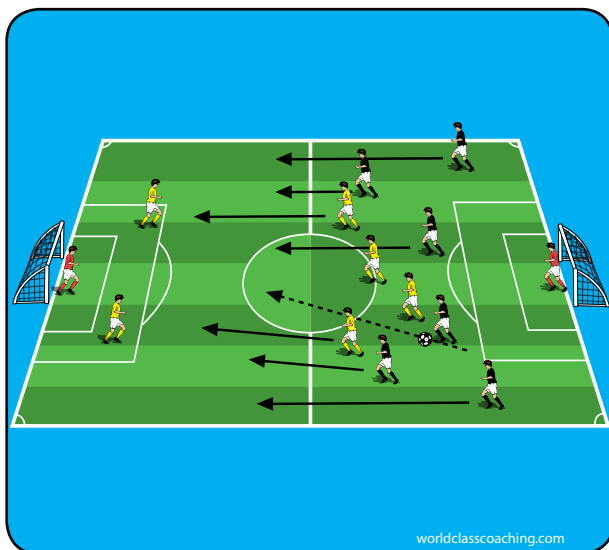
48 Defending Drills

Gabriel Celante



Transitional Defending Game

This transitional defending game focuses on developing and practicing defending cooperation, defensive pressure, and specific decision making while defending. This small sided game also focuses on developing transition to build attack and possession in a defensive and offensive zone, anticipation, cognitive abilities such as vision and awareness, and soccer specific endurance.



Organization

Divide the field in two halves as showed in the diagram:

- One GK, six Black players (offense) and four Yellow players (defense) in the first half.
- One GK and two Yellow players (defense) in the second half.

The game is played for a set period of time or until a team reaches a certain score.

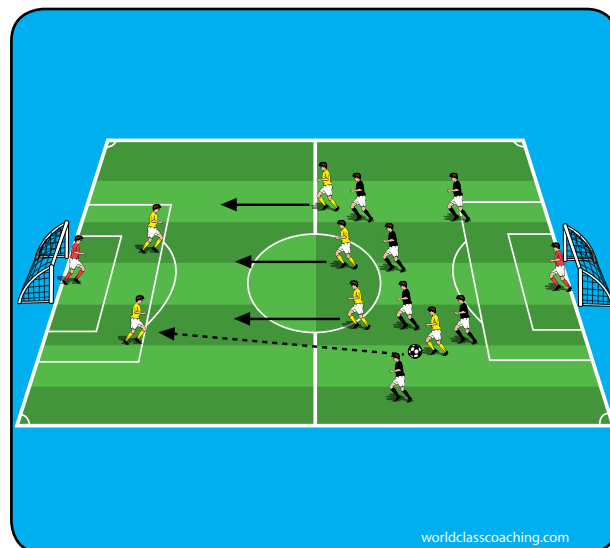
Instructions

The game begins with the Black team keeping the ball away from the Yellow team (6 v 4). After making 6 consecutive passes, the Black team (with the ball under its possession) and two Yellow players move to the second half as showed in the diagram.



After moving to the second half, the Black team tries to score as fast as they can while the Yellow team tries to recover on defense as fast as they can in order to try to protect their goal and steal the ball from Black team.

If the Yellow team wins the ball in the first half, they pass it to their teammates on the other half, start connecting passes, and try to do the same thing the Black team was doing in the beginning of the game.

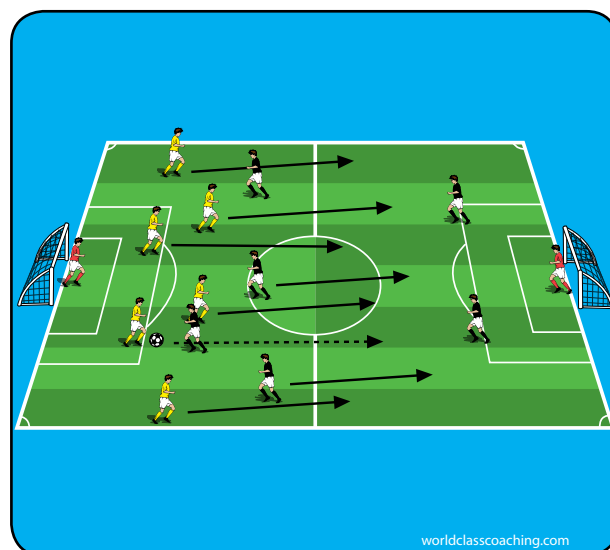


After six consecutive passes, move to the other half to try to score.

If the defending team (it can be Yellow or Black team depending on who has ball possession at that moment) wins the ball in the second half, the attacking team starts the game over again from the first half.

Variations

- 6 v 4 in the first half and 6 v 5 in the second half.
- 6 v 4 in the first half and 6 v 6 in the second half.
- If the defending team steals the ball, they become the attacking team and play a 6 v 6 until the ball goes out of play or the defending team regains the ball possession and cross the half-line.



Coaching Points

- Team Work (cooperation)
- Defensive and offensive awareness
- Anticipation
- Decision making
- Accurate passes
- Transition quickly (defense to offense and offense to defense)
- Recovery play
- Good defending: The defending team must adjust based on who has the ball, where players are on the field, etc.
- Good attacking: The team in possession should make runs off the ball to create space for themselves and teammates.

48 Defending Drills

Joaquim Filipe



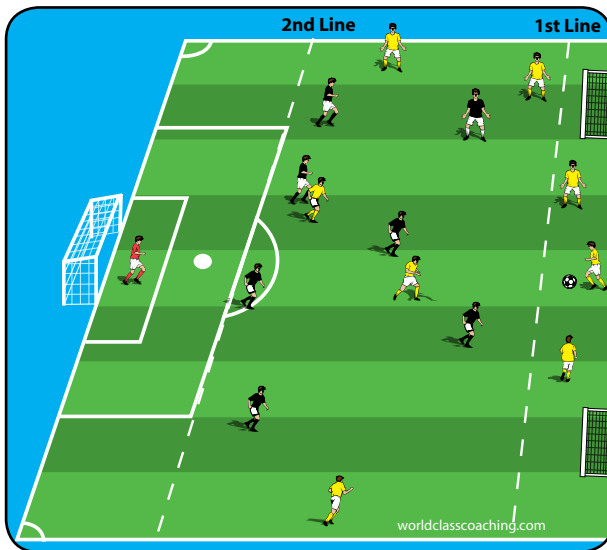
Low and organized defense

Description

After training the principles and sub principles of pressing with two players, these will be applied over the main game strategic frame.

Organization

8 v 7 plus Goalkeeper SSG.



Purpose

The purpose of this exercise is to train the defenders (black) the principles of defending deep, organized and applying pressure with two men in defined areas. Its importance depends on the team tactical model. The particular direction for this exercise, like the distances and doubling ups may change with the coach's strategic frame for a particular opponent. This exercise is particularly useful if facing a stronger opponent with good ball skills who will force our team near the penalty area. We will need to defend well and transition effectively. It is also useful if it is part of the team's model to win the ball quickly in order to keep ball possession.

Instructions

The seven defenders are organized as for the opposing team's tactic, in this case the 4-3-3. They are restricted to play in the area between the 1st and 2nd lines. The yellow players will use the all width of the pitch, will use a man in between the defensive and midfield lines of the defensive team and will make use of support players behind the 1st line. Defenders can only cross the 2nd line if the ball crosses the line as well. The attackers try to score on the bigger goal and the defenders try to win the ball and make a pass to one of the smaller goals on the opposite side from where the ball was won.

Coaching Points

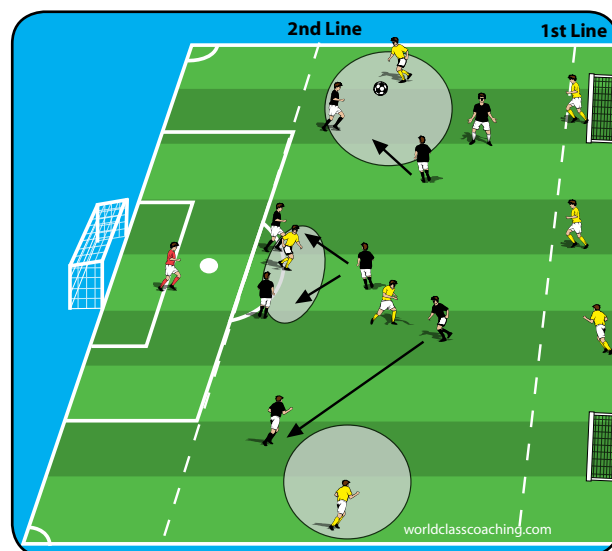
- For players to work their priorities when defending.
- The compactness of the team; the distances between them.
- The covering of the space in between the lines and areas of pressure (which may also be "target man to press" in case the attackers have certain players less confident with the ball).
- It is also important to define which players double up to press.

Description

In this example it is intended only to show the doubling behavior of the midfielders towards the defenders and the areas of pressure.

Purpose

The purpose is to trigger the highest pressure in certain areas, pressing the man on the ball with two men in the zones of pressure are the highlighted areas. If there are players near the man on the ball, these are to be tightly marked as seen in the application of the subprincipals and principles of pressurizing with two men.



Instructions

As before.

Coaching Points

- The defenders will shuffle as the ball changes sides; instruct the team to shuffle as a unit keeping the distances between the players never bigger than agreed.
- Make sure that the pressure is applied at maximum speed by the defenders to maximize the chances of error by the attackers as these have an extra field player therefore they will be in advantage in slow play.
- The full back presses from the front and the central midfielder presses from the side or behind if the player is turned.
- When the ball is in the center behind the first line midfielders, they are to screen the forward pass and prevent penetration by the attacking midfielders, forcing a side pass to an area of higher pressure.

48 Defending Drills

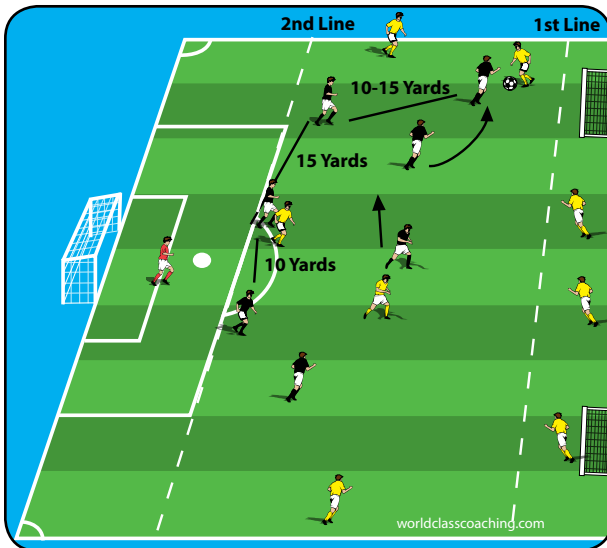
Joaquim Filipe



Low and organized defense Progression #1

Description

Shuffling and distances between players.



Purpose

To make sure the team does not overstretch by keeping its compactness and to increase the effectiveness between the sectors.

Instructions

As before.

Coaching Points

- Central defenders are to keep about 5 to 10 yards between them all the time; central defender to full back are keep 10 to 15 yards distance. Defenders to midfielders and midfielders among them also keep 10 to 15 yards between them.
- Defenders do not double up on midfielders in this practice (to not break the formation and in this game model, the midfielders are most of the time doubled up by the wingers which are not part of this exercise), however midfielders may double up each other.
- In this case, the attacker may give a bad first touch or may be a less confident player on the ball and the black players had time to apply pressure with two men to the ball. If the black players would not have time to press with two men, they would "screen" the man on the ball, impeding his progression and cutting passing lines.

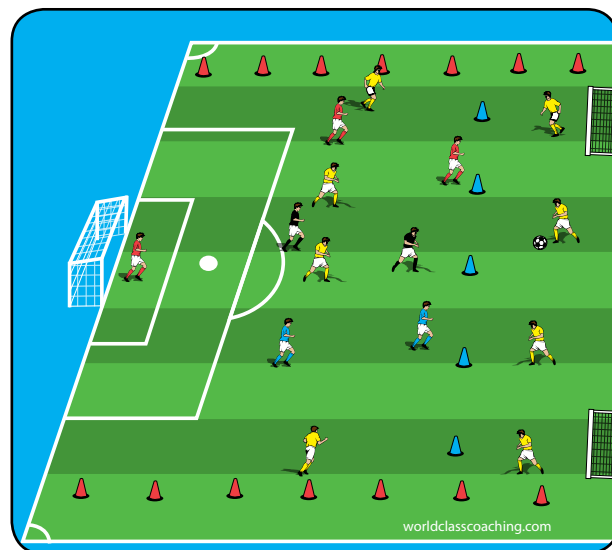
Defending in pairs organized

Description

In this setup the sub principle of pressing in pairs is applied in a more game like situation.

Purpose

To transpose the training made before to a more game like practice.



Instructions

The area is limited to a narrower half pitch: from the goal line to the half-way line and limited by the two lines defined by the red cones. Eight attackers try to score after successfully completing a five pass sequence. Attackers can only score after the line defined by the blue cones. The defenders score if after winning the ball, they make a pass to the small goals on the sides of the field.

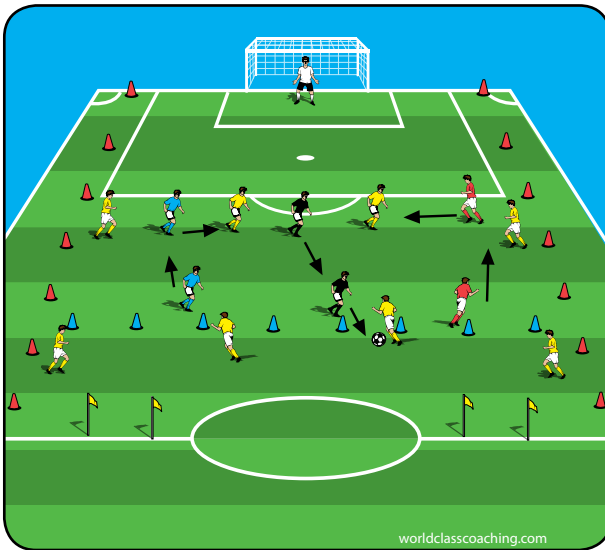
Coaching Points

- Defenders have to be aware that with six field players, they can only cover a limited area of the field, therefore, they should wait until the attackers get close to the blue line to start pressing.
- Communication: The defenders are to work as a team and not as three separate teams.
- Compactness: When two players press the man on the ball, the other teams have to man-mark the nearer players; for this to happen, the teams have to be very close to each other.
- When the defenders cannot press effectively without breaking formation, they must wait, give initiative to the attackers and move like a block.

Defending in pairs organized Progression #1

Description

Here the defenders still press with two men. However, because now we have a direction of attacking (towards the goal), they have to prioritize the players to man-mark: any player in a central position after the blue line has to be marked quickly. Any side player after the blue line is more dangerous than those behind the blue line and should also be marked but with the care of not breaking the defensive team, i.e. the players are not to get too far away from each other.



Purpose

To transpose the training made before to a more game like practice.

Instructions

The area is limited to a narrower half pitch: from the goal line to the half-way line and limited by the two lines defined by the red cones. Eight attackers try to score after successfully completing a five pass sequence. Attackers can only score after the line defined by the blue cones. The defenders score if after winning the ball, they make a pass in between the yellow flags on the sides of the field.

Coaching Points

- Defenders have to be aware that with six field players they can only cover a limited area of the field, therefore they should wait until the attackers get close to the blue line to start pressing.
- Communication: The defenders are to work as a team and not as three separate teams.
- Compactness: When two players press the man on the ball, the rest of the team has to man-mark the nearer players, for this to happen the teams have to be very close to each other.
- When the defenders cannot press effectively without breaking formation, they must wait, give initiative to the attackers and move like a block.

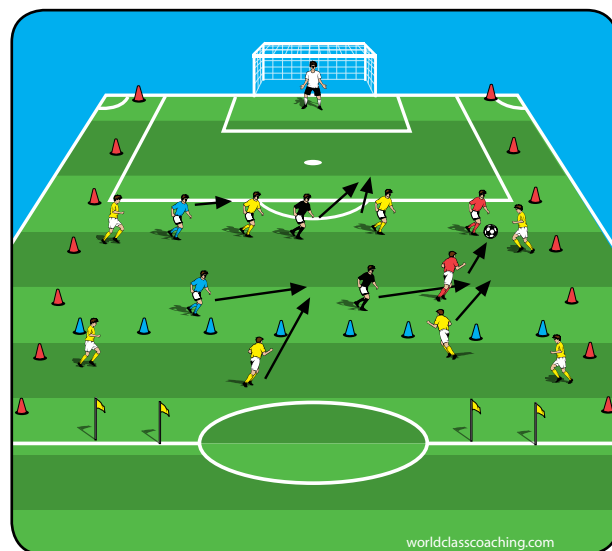
Defending in pairs organized progression #2

Description

Here the ball goes wide and the two red defenders press. One press from the front, the other from the side to force the back pass or win the ball. Two attackers move in support and are tightly marked by the black players, one attacker moves to a dangerous central position and is marked by a blue player.

Purpose

To transpose the training made before to a more game like practice.



Instructions

The area is limited to a narrower half pitch: from the goal line to the half-way line and limited by the two lines defined by the red cones. Eight attackers try to score after successfully completing a five pass sequence. Attackers can only score after the line defined by the blue cones. The defenders score if after winning the ball, they make a pass in between the yellow flags on the sides of the field.

Coaching Points

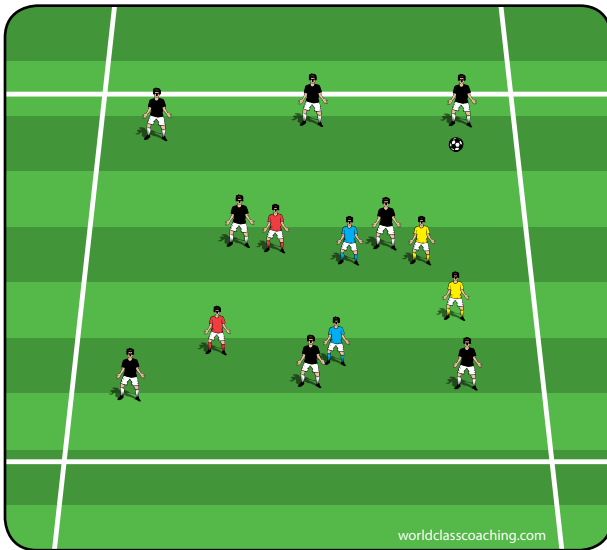
- Two defenders press the man on the ball and all the others keep close, marking any player that enters in the proximity.
- Pressure angle will depend on the man with the ball; if he is facing the goal, one defender presses from the front and the other from the side. If he has his back turned to goal, they may press from both sides as the chances of winning the ball are higher.
- Track the attackers runs which are close to the man on the ball to give him support.
- The worse case scenario is if the attackers manage to take the ball away from pressure to the weak side which has almost no defenders. Therefore, the defenders closer to the weak side have to be readily available to slide across.

48 Defending Drills

Joaquim Filipe



Defending in pairs



Purposes

- To train two players to press the man on the ball.
- To choose the right time of pressing.
-

Organization

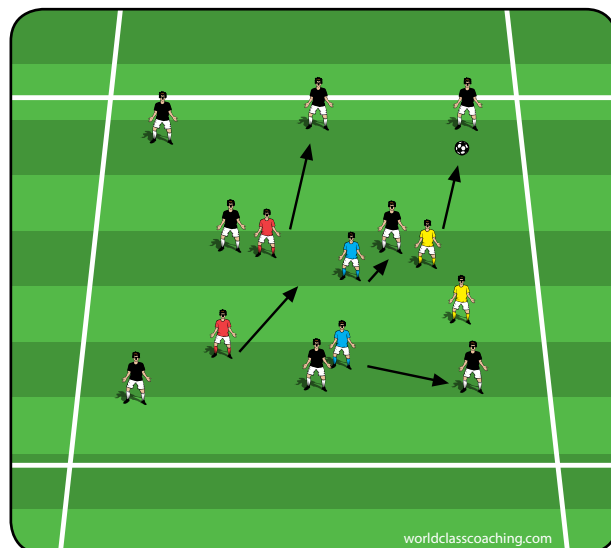
- 8 v 5 in a 70 x 30 yard pitch.
- Eight attackers try to keep possession
- Six defenders organized in pairs try to stop the attacking team from completing five consecutive passes.
- Two players of the same color have to apply pressure on the man on the ball

Coaching Points

- Communication: The defenders are to work as a team and not as three separate teams.
- Compactness: When two players press the man on the ball, the other players have to man-mark the nearer players. For this to happen, the teams have to be very close to each other.
- When the defenders cannot press effectively without breaking formation, they must wait, give initiative to the attackers and move like a block.

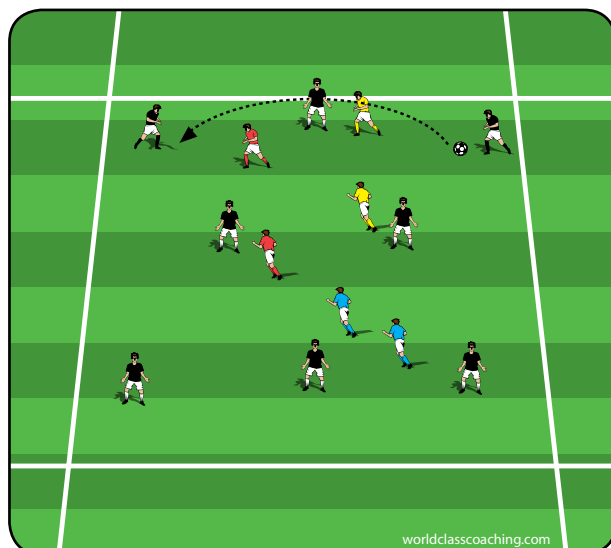
Progression #1

Two yellows press the man on the ball as they are the closest ones. Blues and reds man-mark the closest attacking players



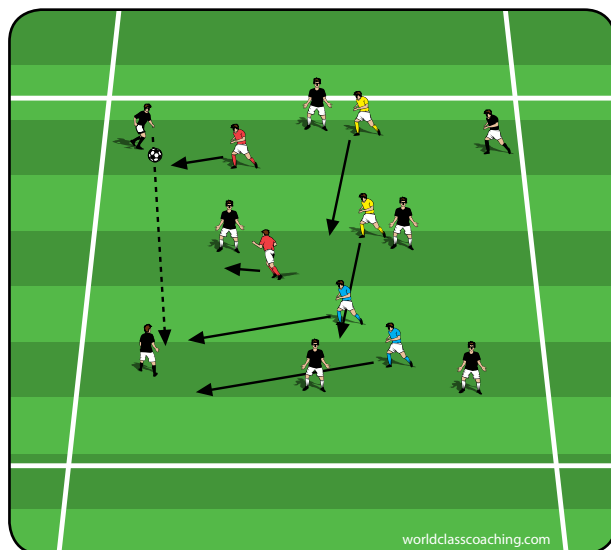
Progression #2

Attackers manage to make a successful long pass and leave the pressure zone. Defenders reorganize as a team. Even though reds could press straight away, they will not do so as they need to give time to yellows and blues to come close.



Progression #3

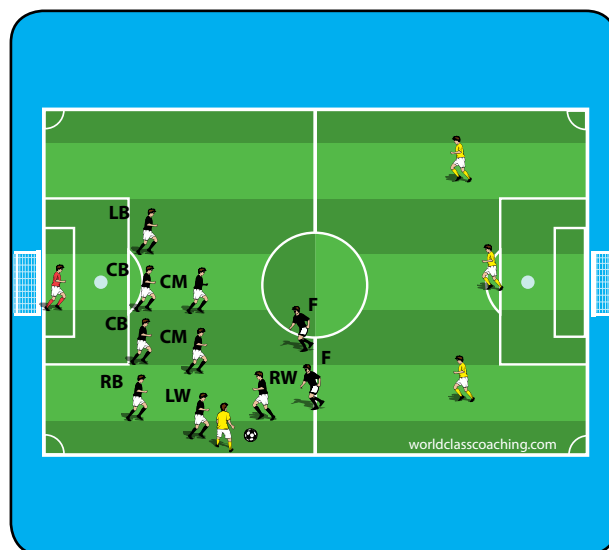
Giving the initiative to the attackers, the defenders let the attackers execute the best option, which is a wide pass away from the pressure. However, as the defenders were now close to each others, they can start applying maximum pressure AND man-mark the closer attackers.



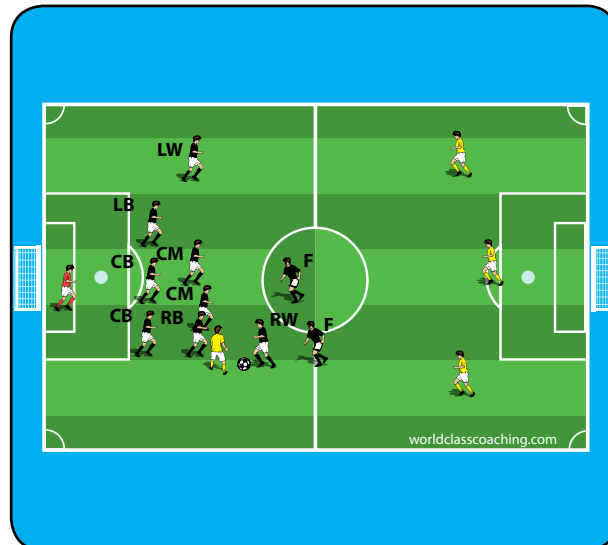
48 Defending Drills



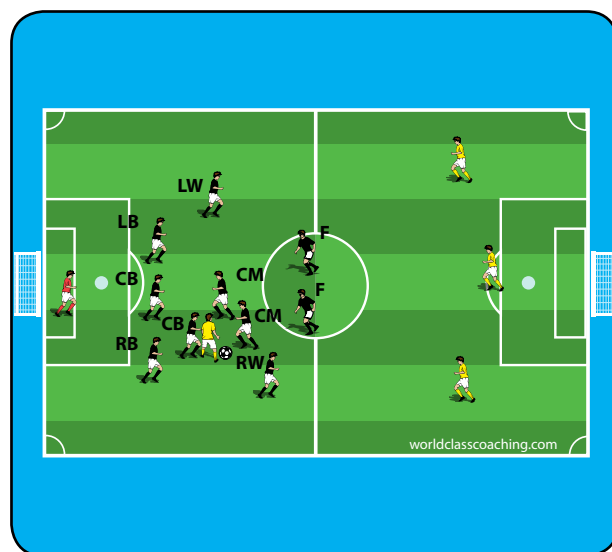
Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Pressure #1



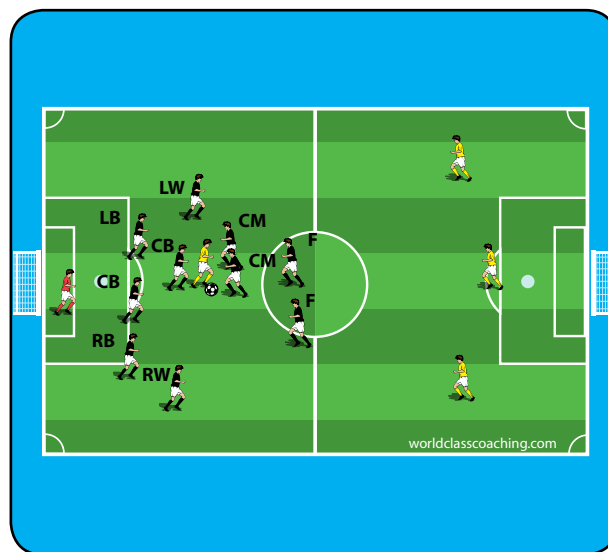
Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Pressure #2



Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Press #3



Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Press #4



48 Defending Drills



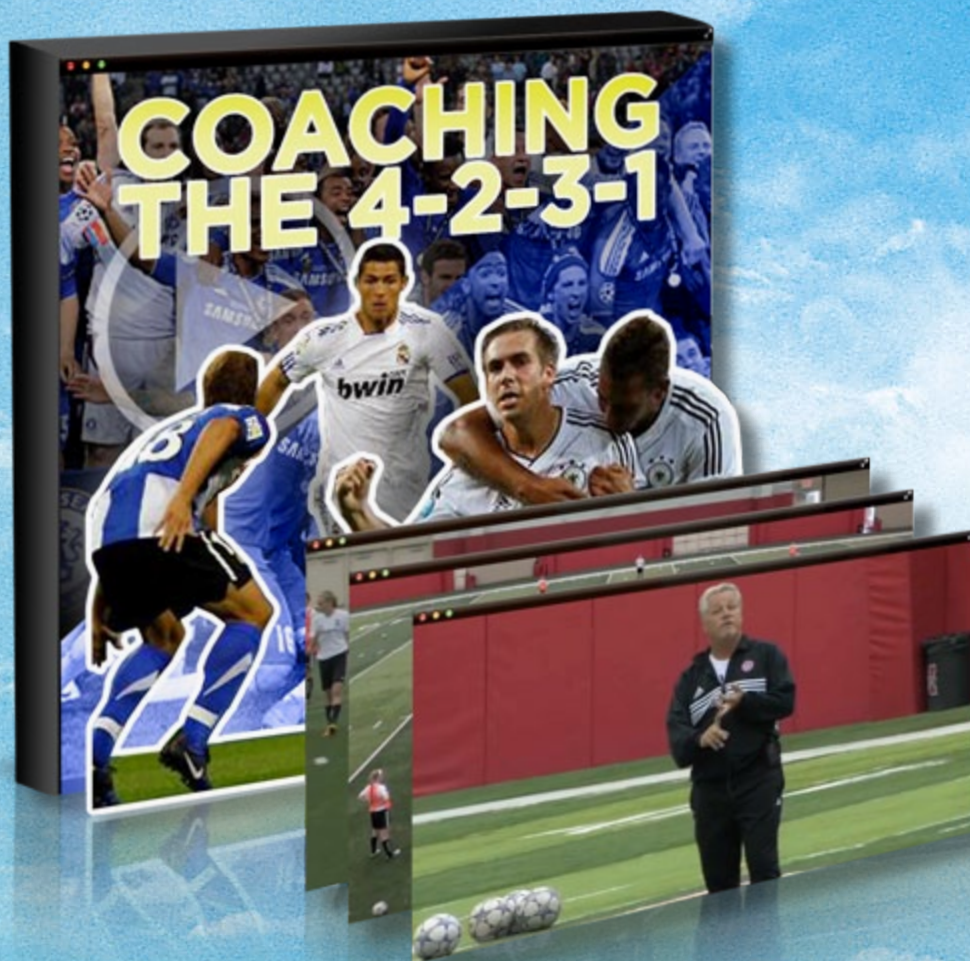
Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Press #5



Low Axial Waiting Position, Low Press #6



Coaching the 4-2-3-1 Videos



If you've been looking for a way to coach your team how to play the 4-2-3-1, you've just found it. Coaching the 4-2-3-1 is a special 12-part video series which provides a comprehensive tactical and training guide to this exciting formation. Utilized by Real Madrid, Chelsea and the most successful sides in the Euro 2012 tournament, the 4-2-3-1's flexibility and attacking power is fast becoming the formation of choice for leading coaches all over the world.

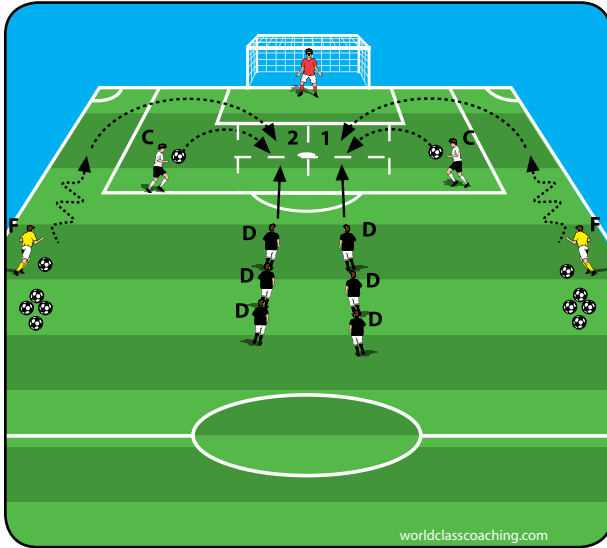
Click on this page to learn more about
Winning Soccer Tactics



Defensive Zones, Part I

Objective

To teach the defensive zones covered by your team while the ball is being served from the flanks.



Instructions

1. Show the zones and why they are called 1 & 2.
2. Two lines of players running into the zones. Look for proper body positioning in the zone. Make sure the goalkeeper knows that every ball within the 6 yard box is his/hers. Zone 1 is called 1 because it is the zone closer to the goal and ball. Zones start with the 6 yard box, an imaginary line by the penalty kick mark, the center of the goal and the two posts.
3. Two coaches/players outside the zones send high balls with their hands and defenders clear the ball. As a coach you can send ground balls if you want to for the purpose of checking for proper body position and clearing technique.
4. Once you see the defenders getting comfortable, you can add one forward making sure a defender picks up a player within his/her zone. Keep sending balls.
 - A forward within any zone must be marked man to man all the time.
 - Defenders also should be in the same line as the ball.

5. Now you are ready to add forwards on the wing crossing balls. You can start without any forwards running into the zones and then add a forward one at a time. A defender picking up a forward needs to be marking tight within his/her defensive zone. Then send two forwards so they will be picked up by the defenders. The idea is that these forwards do not get in touch with the ball. Make sure that once the ball is cleared, your defenders push up fast placing their forwards in offside position.

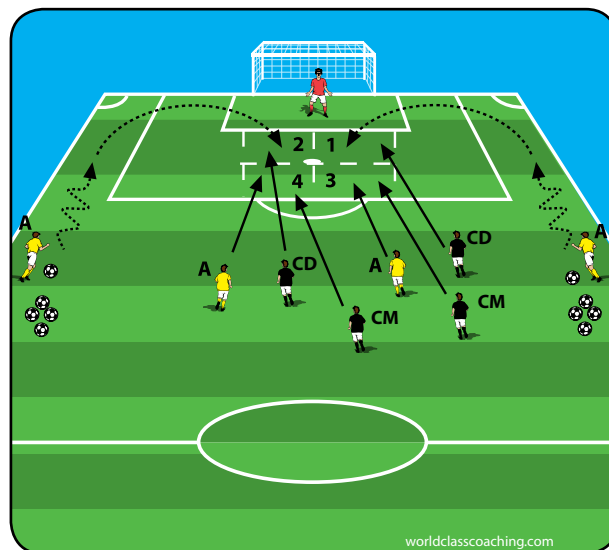
WE DON'T CHASE PLAYERS OUTSIDE THE ZONES IF WE FEEL THEY CANNOT HURT US FROM THERE. IF A DEFENDER EXITS A ZONE THEN WE MUST COVER THE ZONE WITH THE NEXT AVAILABLE PAYER.

Break.

Defensive Zones, Part II

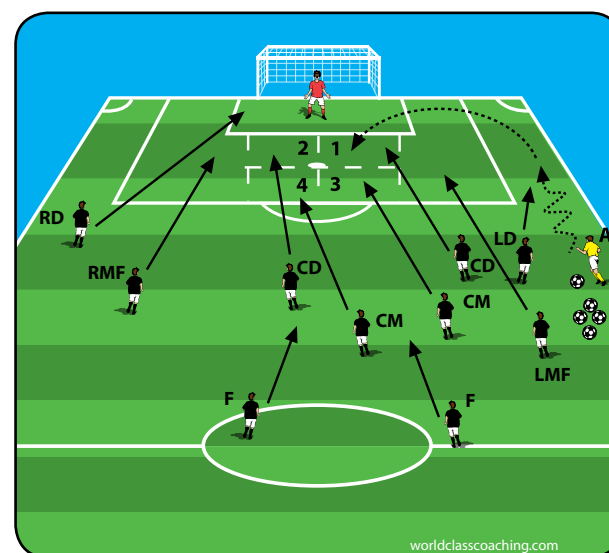
Instructions

1. Add zones 3 and 4. These zones are being marked (on a 4-4-2 system) by the two central midfielders. Have the defenders and the Central midfielders run into their zones and defend crosses from both sides of the field. Once you feel the defenders are being successful, you can start adding two forwards running into any of the four different zones.



Instructions

2. Once you are comfortable with the way your team is defending, then start adding the rest of the defenders so they can start filling in the other defensive zones. The outside back presses on the forward to simulate the chasing of the ball. Repetition of this exercise from both sides is critical so players understand the defensive zones to cover when your team is being attacked from the flanks. Also, make sure that once the ball is cleared, your defenders push up fast placing their forwards in offside position. The figure shows the defensive zones to cover while your team is being attacked from the left side of your defense.
3. It is also important to understand that if the outside back gets beat and one of the central defenders exits his/her zone to stop the penetration, then there should be a player sliding over. The characteristics of your players and your decision as a coach will determine what zone you want to give up. You can easily move your right back into Zone 2 and move the other central defender into Zone 1. This requires a lot of practice to ensure that the players feel comfortable with the assignment of zones.



Progression

After you are comfortable with the first part of the exercise, you could easily incorporate some attacking midfielders that will be waiting for the ball being cleared. Once a midfielder recovers the ball, then it is played around to hit the opposite forward who will dribble and cross the ball starting the exercise again. You can then pair up each midfielder with another player so they will dispute each ball cleared.

48 Defending Drills



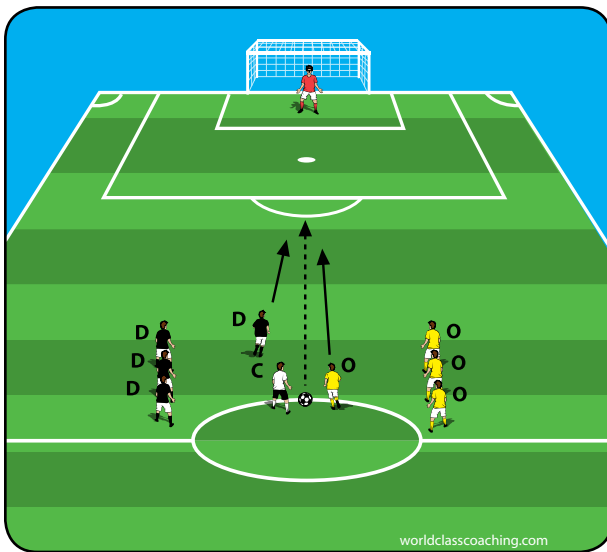
Defensive Recovery

Purpose

Recreate game breakaway situations. Defense must maintain as much pressure as possible until the scoring threat is eliminated. Even when a situation arises where it appears that the offensive player cannot be “caught”, constant pressure from the defender is needed. Never give up!!!

Organization

Two lines (one is offense, the other defense) starting about 20 yards out of the box. The defender stands in front of the server while the offensive player is next to the server, both players are facing the goal. (The defender has their back to the ball and must react to the action). The server plays the ball through the defenders legs, play begins on contact; the offensive player sprints to control the ball and shoot on goal while the defensive player needs to recover his defensive position to stop the goal scoring threat. Both players return and switch lines.



Variations

- Change approach angles to the goal
- Have the offensive player feed their own ball through the defenders legs
- Players do not switch lines, award offensive or defensive points for execution - competition

Progression

Allow multiple players to engage creating 2 v 2, 3 v 3, 2 v 1, 3 v 1, etc. situations.

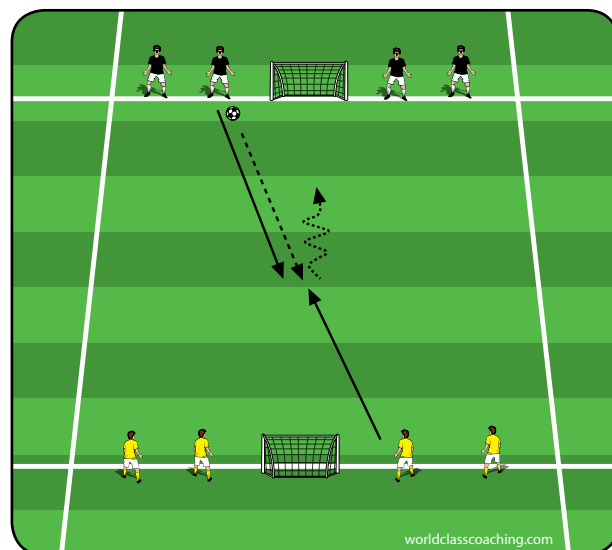
Coaching Points

- High energy and quick reps (keep the line moving, minimize standing around)
- This can also be used as a conditioning component
- Rotate your keeper to give them field time too

Drill 1

Make a small sized field, have players divide into two teams (black & yellow) and have them face each other behind each net. Black passes ball up to yellow side, yellow player receives then attacks the black net. This starts as 1 v 1 and defensive 1 v 1 is taught. Defense wins when they take possession away from yellow player or a time limit is reached without a shot.

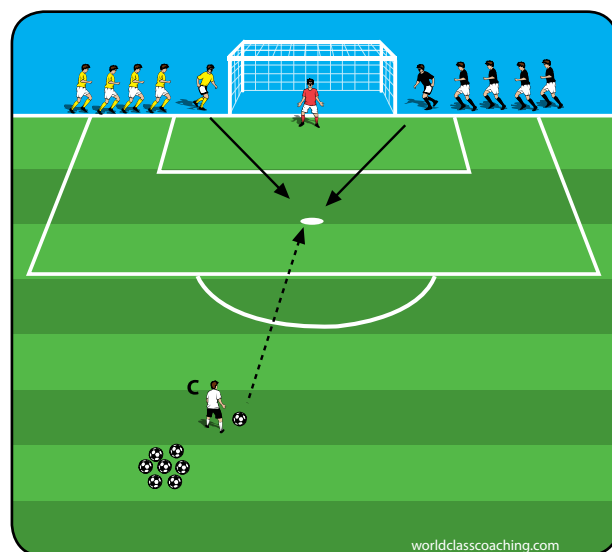
- Coaching points: approach offensive player quickly but reduce speed and get in defensive stance (low, wide and angled) before contact; force offensive player where you want them; use sideline for assistance; force attacking player to possible weak sided foot.
- Reinforce defenders for quick/controlled approach, keeping offensive players from attacking net or getting a shot.
- Changes: Have two attacking players versus one defender, then make 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 4. Coach can delay "help" from coming into the game, so they learn to communicate (i.e. "I am here, push them right toward me, get the ball I have wing, etc., etc."); change length of time they have (i.e. give 30 seconds, then give 20 or give 40, to help them understand that sometimes you have time, other times you do not.)
- With multiple teammates, reinforce communication as it acts as another player.



Drill 2

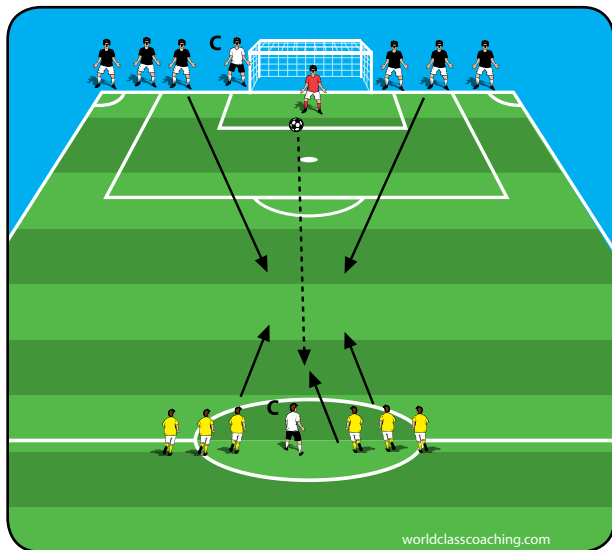
I use the penalty box for this one to allow for the full goal to be used and add in a goalie. Players are lined up on the same end line, beside each goal post divided black versus yellow again. One player from each side runs out to a ball served by the coach. First to ball is offense, other becomes defense. First to score gets point or if defender can keep offensive player from shooting for 15 seconds defensive player gets point.

- If yellow losses ball to black then yellow becomes the defending player.
- Coaching points: Same as above plus: quick decision to get the ball or defend player; good positioning; gaining ball from offensive player then quick transition to attacking player; defensively do not allow shot when 1 v 1. Goalie should be communicating with defensive player. Sideline players can also communicate with field players.
- Changes: Have 1 v 1, then make 2 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 2, 3 v 4. Delay "help" from coming into the game so they learn to communicate (i.e. "I am here, push them right toward me, get ball I have wing, etc., etc."); change length of time they have to work on shot (i.e. change from 15 and give 30 seconds, then give 20 or give 40, to help them understand that sometimes you have time, other times you do not.)
- Another change is in earning points: If defender takes ball from offensive player give that color a point.
- Reinforce communication as it acts as another extra player.



48 Defending Drills

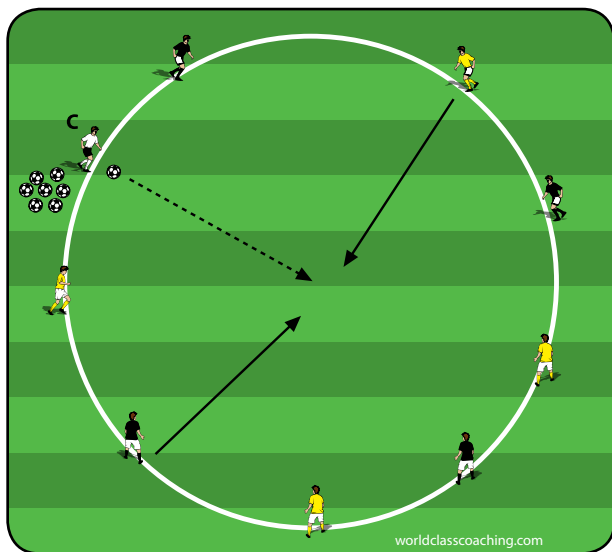
Ed Joseph



Drill 3

I use ½ of the game field for this one. Use correct net with a goalie. Have a coach work with offensive group (yellow) at mid line. Have a coach work with defenders (black) who are divided up and line up off field beside goal posts. Goalie kicks ball out to mid line (via goal kick, dropkick, or throw.) Yellow team gains control and three players attack the net with two defenders coming out to meet them. Scoring gets a point, making an assist and goal is worth 2 points or if defender can keep offense from shooting for 20 seconds defensive team gets a point.

- Coaching points: Approach ball and player quickly but reduce speed and get in defensive stance (low, wide and angled) before contact; force offensive player where you want them, use sideline for assistance, force attacking player to possible weak sided foot, or away from teammates to reduce passing options. Goalie should be communicating with defensive player. Sideline players can also communicate with field players.
- Changes: Start with 3 v 2, and then Coaches can change to 4 v 3, 5 v 3, 7 v 4 as they see fit so it ends up as real as possible. Delay "help" from coming into the game, so they learn to communicate (i.e. "I am here, push them right toward me, get ball I have wing, etc., etc."); change length of time they have to work on shot (i.e. change from 20 and give 30 seconds, then give 10 or give 40, to help them understand that sometimes you have time, other times you do not.)



Drill 4

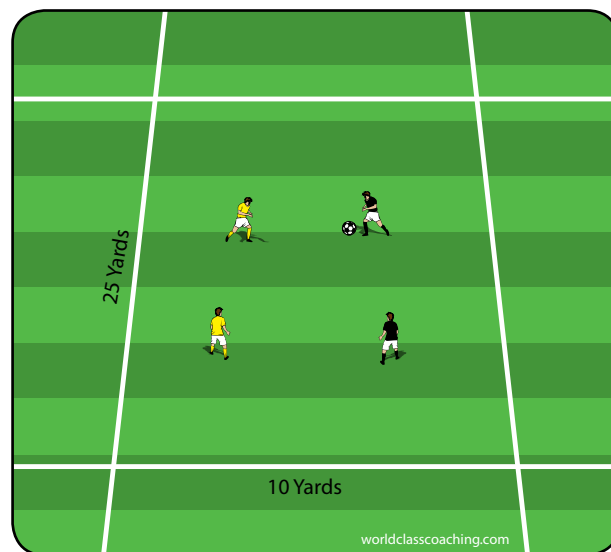
I use the starting circle as my field size. Coach calls in two players and passes in the ball. Whomever has possession at the end of 30 seconds is the winner. They must stay in the circle.

- Coaching points for both: Offense keeps possession & moving; while defense is to limit offense movement and gain the ball. Quick decision to get ball or defend player, good positioning, being physical, push toward lines to limit movement options, etc.
- Changes: Start with 1 v 1, then make 2 v 2 or 2 v 1, size doesn't allow for much more than that.

I love the sequence as Drill 1 is mainly 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 and Drill 3 is more game like with the attacking team gaining control of a goal kick and attacking the net with numbers. It works offensive players vs. defensive players and goalie gets work with defensive players (very game like) Drill 4 is used as an ending drill as group should be tired so watching 1 v 1 allows for some rest or can be used as a warm up drill.

2 v 2 to End Line

A simple 2 v 2 teaches the basics of pressure and cover for the defense, while allowing the offense to practice drops, give and gos, overlaps, shielding off, and crossing runs. In this case, defender in yellow plays the ball into the offensive team in black, and closes down. The second defender covers. Defense should work on showing the desired direction, containing and finding the right moment to tackle. Offense tries to pass the defense and stop the ball on the end line for a point. If the ball cannot be controlled at the end line or goes out of bounds, it is turned over. After scoring a point, the team that scores serves a ball into the other team. Play for about two minutes, and team with the highest score moves on to the next grid for another match up. It develops teamwork and teaches the players to communicate and play their proper roles.



48 Defending Drills



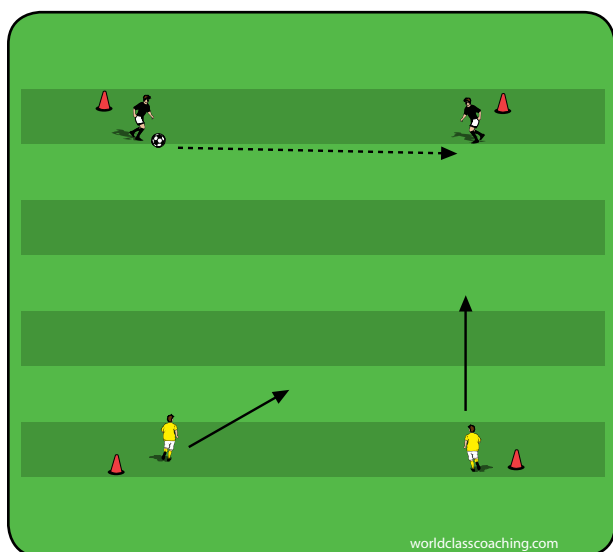
Four defenders cooperation in small-sided games



Purpose

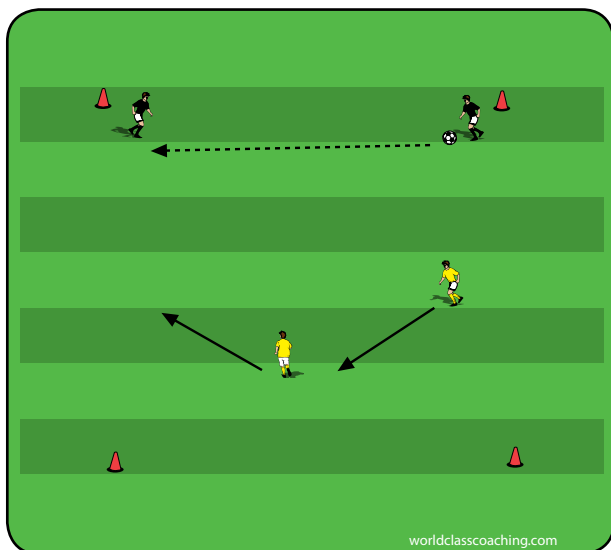
Preparation to game - rules of movement, assurance in defense

2 Defenders

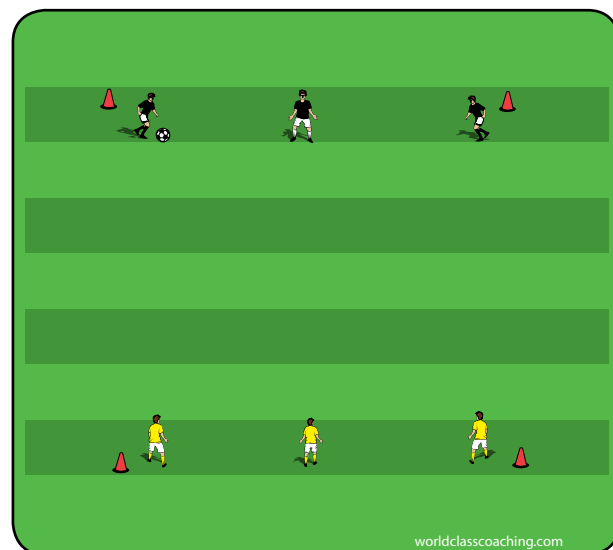


Description

Black players pass the ball to each other and yellow players have to make a correct move. Defender opposite the ball should make a move towards the player with the ball, second defender backs him up and move towards him.

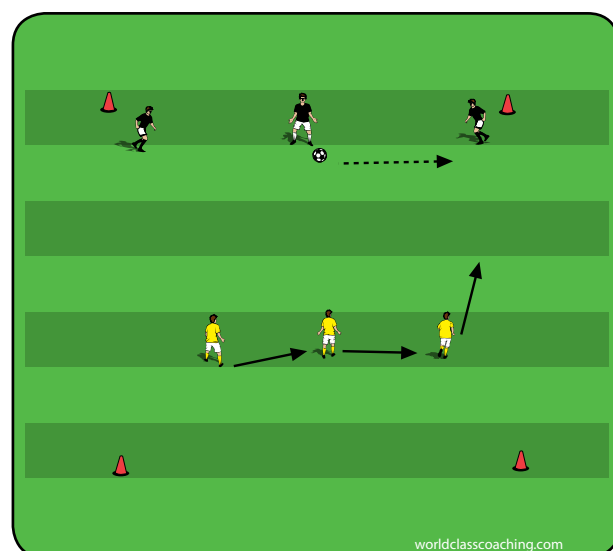
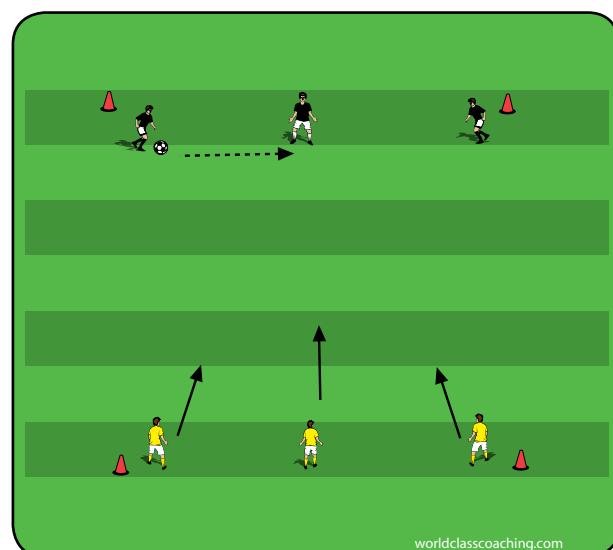


3 Defenders



Description

Rules of movement and assurance is exactly the same as for two defenders. Defender opposite the ball should make a move towards player with the ball but his partners should make a move towards him and cover his space.



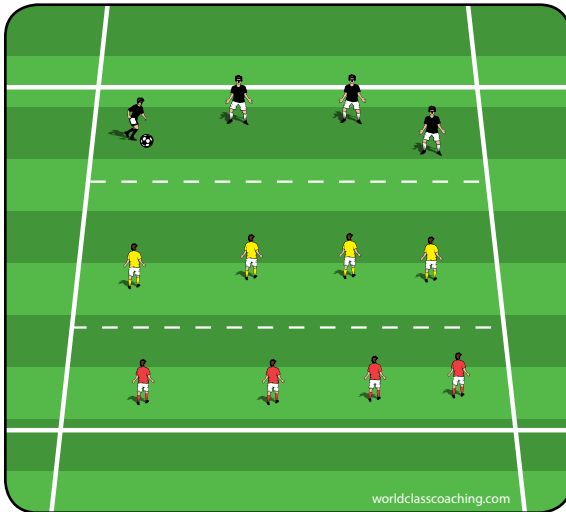
48 Defending Drills



Four defenders cooperation in small-sided games

Organization

3 teams with 4 players, pitch 25 x 40 m



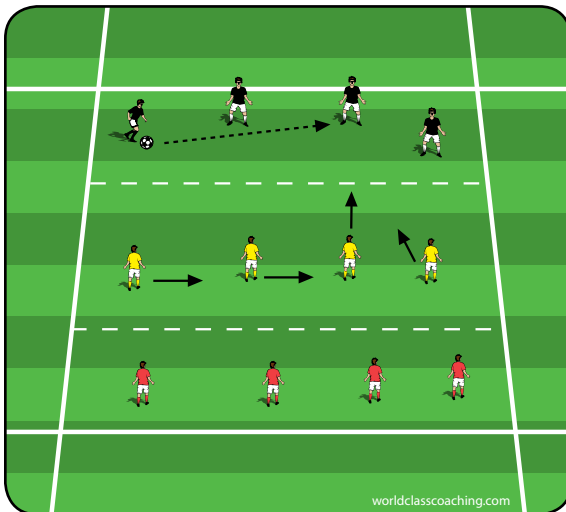
Description

2 teams which stay on the outside fields try to pass the ball to each other. One team (four defenders) which stays in the inside field tries to receive the ball.

Rules

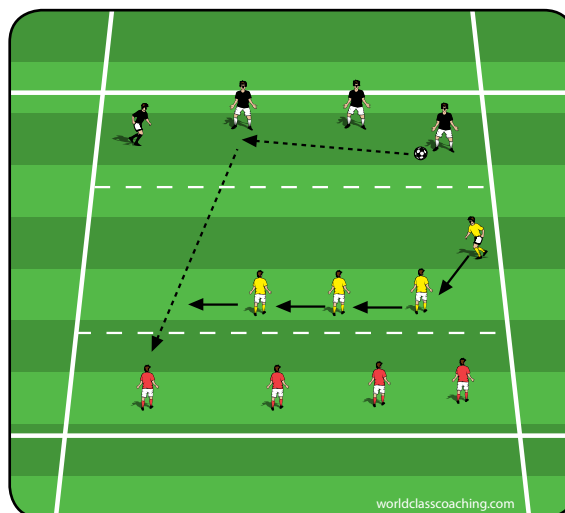
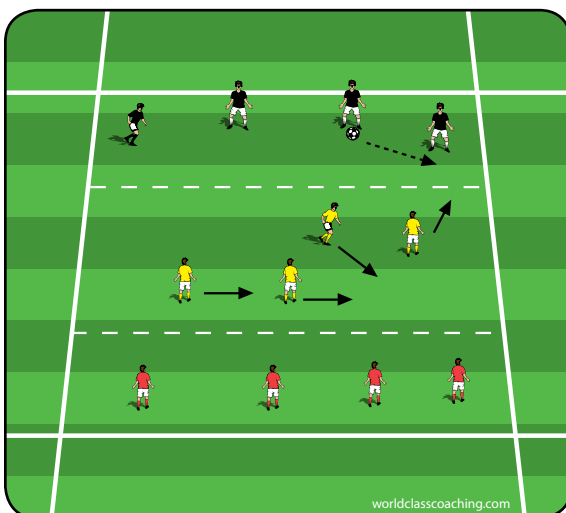
Players from Zone 1 pass the ball to each other (max two touches) and try to pass to Zone 3. Players from Zone 3 have the same task - pass the ball to the team in Zone 1. Both teams can't pass over the players in the middle zone, the ball must be played on the ground. When the team in the middle zone intercepts the ball, it automatically changes position with the team that loses the ball.

Players must remember rules of movement and support.



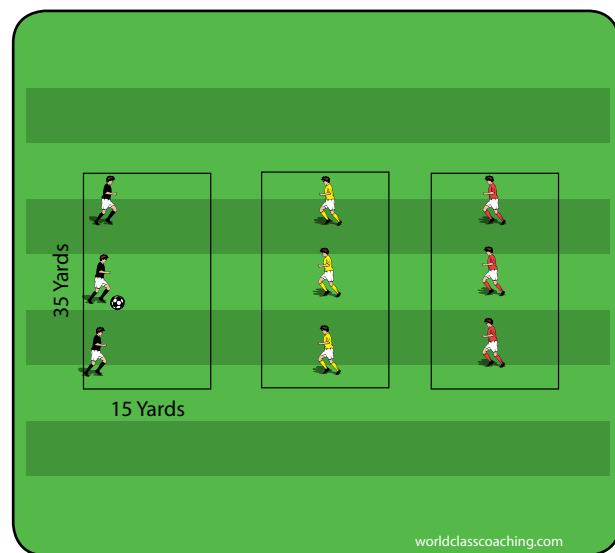
Coaching Points:

- Cooperation, teamwork
- Speed of reaction
- Accuracy of movement and assurance
- Communication



Playing between the lines

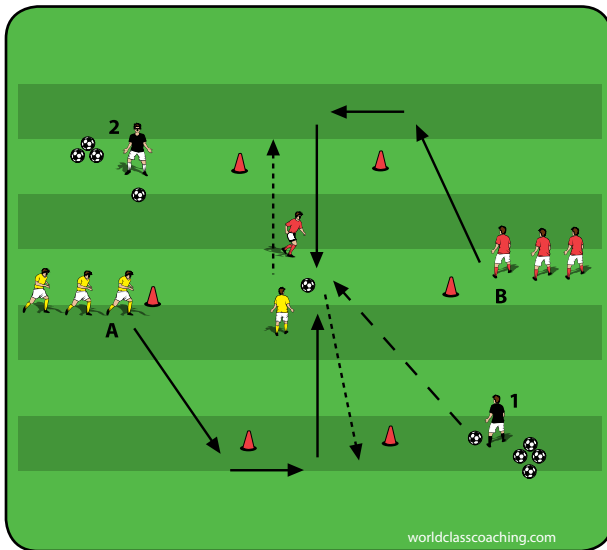
Make three 15 x 35 boxes next to each other. Three teams with different color pennies are each in one of the boxes, three to four in each box spread across the width (35). Players should match up width wise. One of the end boxes starts with the ball. They inter pass trying to move the central players around to open up the split pass to the other outside box. The only player allowed to defend in the attackers box from the center box is the first defender, he pressures ball; the second defenders pinch in blocking the through ball as well as the balancing player shifts. When the attacker gives to another in his grid the original defender immediately drops back into the middle zone and the closet then repeats while the others readjust in the covering and balancing positions. When the central team wins a ball or intercepts the split pass, the teams change grids.



48 Defending Drills



High Pressure Gauntlet



Organization

- High Pressure Gauntlet - K Headley - 1 v 1 defending
- 6 cones
- At least 2 balls more than number of players per line
- The distance can be set to age group and fitness component and/or how much battling and jockeying the coach may want.

Instructions:

- Have one server and three to five players in each line; can be split in teams to make more competitive.
- Have as many grids as you can coach.
- Coach yells go and A and B take off running around the cones; as they turn, there server (1 or 2) serves a ball into the middle, one player wins and the other defends or tries to win back.
- Ends with player dribbling through gates or 3 second stall in action.
- You can favor a side to work jockeying and pressing, you can serve different types of balls, bounce, air, etc. There are almost unlimited options; just be creative.
- You can move serving point from 1 to 2.

Coaching Points

Depending on goal, most often used to work on pressing (knowing when to close down, force turn, etc.), jockeying, aggressive play.

Individual and Small Group Defending (Pressure and Cover)

Organization

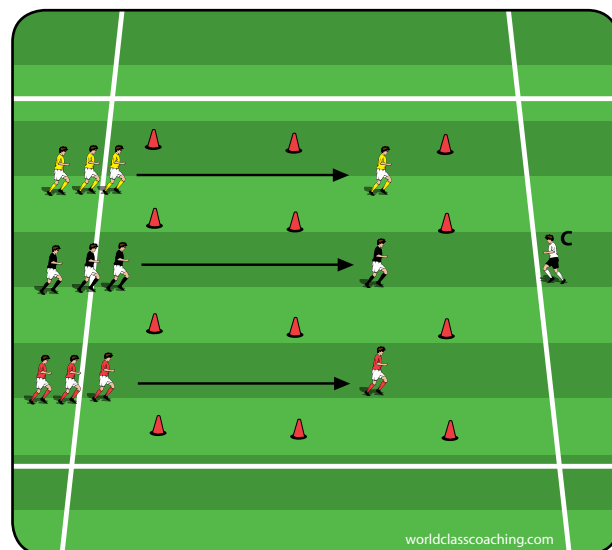
FIFA 11+ and 4 v 2's

Instructions

- 15 minutes
- Coach shows them right or left.
- Player makes stance and then steps in front as attacker pushes ball by,
- Coach has ball near a specific square and players align in pressure and cover.

Coaching Points

- Break body down
- Low center of gravity
- First foot last, last foot first



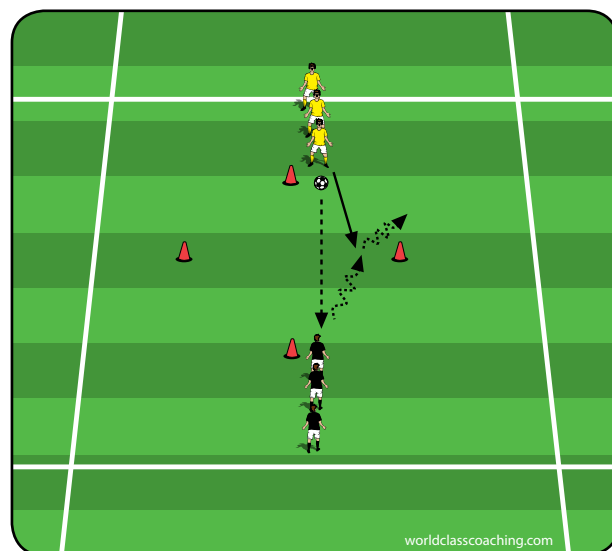
Nutcracker 1

Instructions

- 15 minutes
- Player pass ball to attacking team
- Attacking team can only score by knocking the ball off of the cone by DRIBBLING ONLY.
- Defender will pressure and show one way.
- If ball gets by, then defender steps in front to win ball.

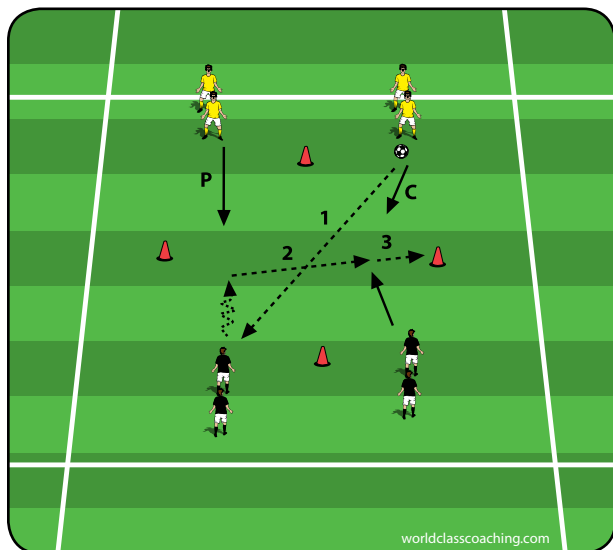
Coaching Points

- Show defender one way
- Pressure isn't too fast and isn't too slow
- Block and poke tackle



48 Defending Drills

Scott Moore



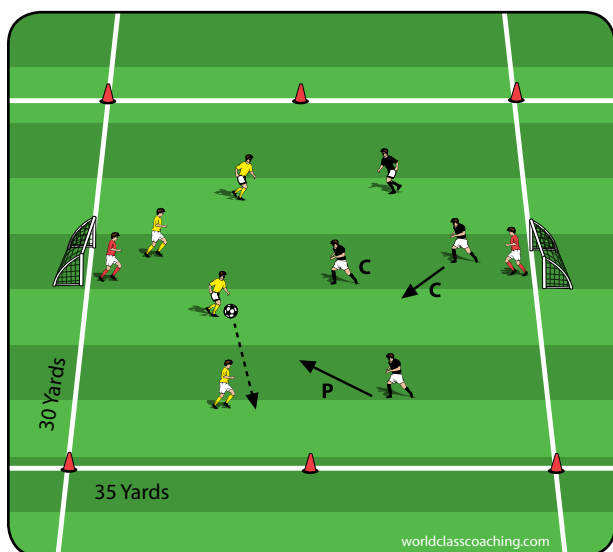
Nutcracker 2

Instructions

- 10 minutes
- Same as Nutcracker 1 but now 2 v 2 introducing cover in a live scenario.
- In addition to knocking the ball of the sides, the attacking side can now split the defenders if they are too far apart.

Coaching Points

- Communication between defenders: "I'm in" or "You're in."
- As pass is made by "my" attacker, I must drop off.
- Compete - losing team picks up the equipment.



Setup

4 v 4 + GK's (add one N if needed for numbers)

Instructions

- 30 minutes
- Final game 4 v 3 to goals
- 2-3 stoppages per team for first 20 minutes and then let them play final 10.

Coaching Points

- Communication
- Head on swivel
- Break yourself down and make play predictable

Intercepting

Technique Practice

Organization

- 4 v 4 with GK for defending team and server for attacking team.
- Shadow play with coach stopping play to check players movement and decision making.

Coaching Points

- All players adopt good body shape to see ball and opponent (defensive triangle)
- Prevent forward pass if possible
- Other players adjust position and be alert as ball travels
- Decision: When to intercept and when not to will depend on quality of pass, defenders start position, position on pitch and support from teammates
- Support and cover from other players
- Recovery runs
- Communication from GK

Progression

- Skill practice



Skill Practice

Organization

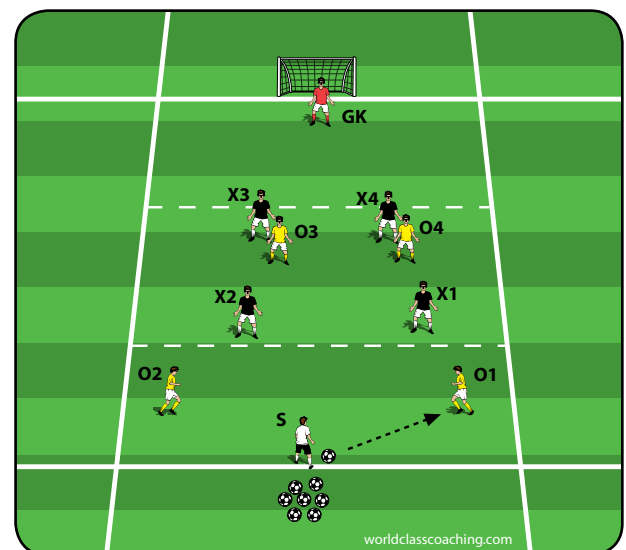
- Server passes to O1 or O2 who combine with server to get ball to O3/O4.
- O1/O2 cannot join in the attack but may be used to retain possession.
- X players defend and play into server if they win possession.

Coaching Points

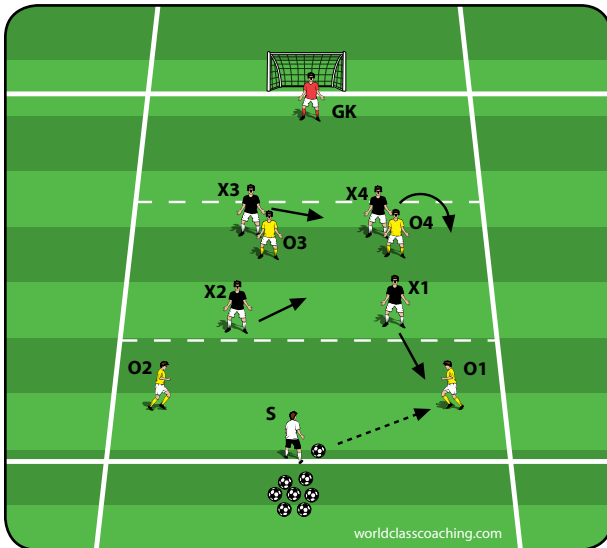
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- Prevent forward pass if possible
- Other players adjust position and be alert as ball travels
- Decision: When to intercept and when not to will depend on quality of pass, defenders start position, position on pitch and support from teammates
- Support and cover from other players
- Recovery runs
- Communication from GK

Progression

- O1/O2 can now support the play (i.e. game-related practice.)
- 4 v 4 Game



48 Defending Drills



4 v 4 Game

Organization

- 4 v 4 with GK's
- If coaching X team, give them possession so coach can check reactions and movement when possession is regained.
- Spare balls around pitch.

Coaching Points

- All players adopt good body shape to see ball and opponent (defensive triangle)
- Prevent forward pass if possible
- Other players adjust position and be alert as ball travels
- Decision: When to intercept and when not to will depend on quality of pass, defenders start position, position on pitch and support from teammates
- Support and cover from other players
- Recovery runs
- Communication from GK

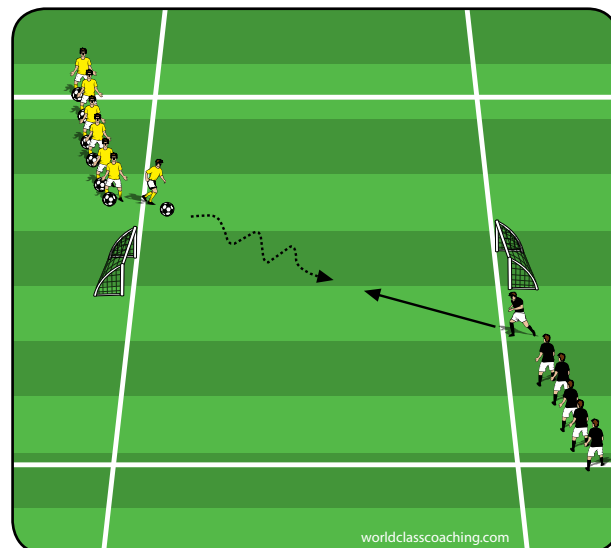
Progression

- Defending when outnumbered

1 v 1 and 2 v 2

My favorite defensive soccer drill involves continuous 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 attacking and defending, while teaching players to be quick in recognizing and reacting to the sudden change of possession and direction that happens all the time in a soccer match.

The way I run the drill is to divide my squad (typically only 12 kids) into two groups, facing each other and in lines next to two small goals also facing each other with around 15-20 yards of space between them. At my signal the first (or first two) in line dribble attacks to the opposing goal, and the first in the other line steps out to defend his or her own goal. You can provide boundary lines and instruct players. The attack ends when the ball is out of bounds, but I tend to make the space wide open and allow players the freedom to struggle with one another, hoping they never give up but keep fighting until either the ball is driven too far away or the kids tire and I blow a whistle to signal the end of that particular contest. Whatever rules you choose, the idea is that once the kids recognize their 1 v 1 battle is over, the kid on offense must immediately transition to defense, and move to stop a dribble attack by the next kid in line behind the person who just played defense.



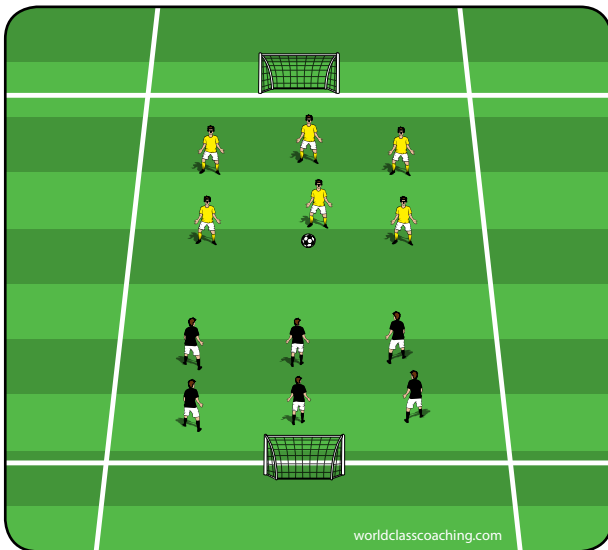
This is a great tool to teach individual offensive problem solving and aggression, individual defensive toughness and understanding of positioning, recognition of the need to be alert to sudden transitions from offense to defense, and of course a great tool for conditioning your athletes while teaching important aspects of soccer at the same time!

I tend to use small pop-up goals to make it difficult for players to just shoot the ball into the goal from distance, forcing them instead to make moves while protecting the ball, and try and get close enough to ensure a goal. I also do not allow defenders to play "goalie" and stand right in front of goal; encouraging them instead to close down the attackers, pressuring them so the attackers put their heads down in concern over losing the ball, rather than backing off and allowing attackers the time and space to size up a long-distance shot or other strategy. Occasionally I have used disks to create a small "crease" in front of goal, like Lacrosse, and no players are allowed into the crease areas, to discourage anyone from playing goalie or literally dribbling into the goal without taking a shot of some sort.

Immediate Pressure

This is probably the most simple SSG you will get for improving the most important principle of defending, immediate pressure.

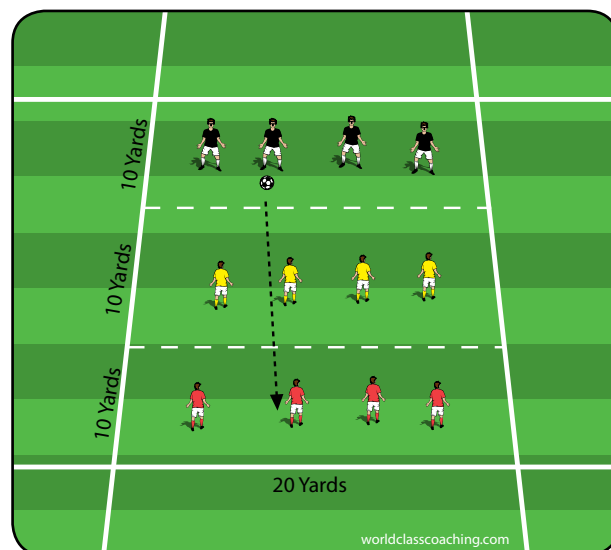
I noticed during practices the defensive side would be lazy to pressure the ball. I really got tired of TELLING my team to defensively pressure the ball during scrimmages, so I just made a game that focuses on high pressure. This tiny change to my scrimmages did wonders for my teams defending pressure as a whole. Because it started working so well, at almost each practice we would spend 15 minutes playing a regular 6 v 6/7 v 7 game in a large area (but I added a rule called the 6 second rule).



In this game, there were two ways to earn points. 3 points are awarded for a goal (this keeps the directional component of the game true and the game more realistic) and 1 point if a player on the attacking team can possess the ball for 6 seconds and make a pass to a teammate. After either a goal or a possession point, the other team gets the ball with a kickoff (just like in a real game). First team to 5 points wins. The key is in the consequences for losing. For a while, I would let the captains from each team "bet" the other captain, but then they started betting weak stuff (like 5 pushups for the losing team.) So I just had to make the consequences for the losers. Since we would often get in 2-3 games per 15 minute period, each team usually lost at least once.

Defensive Shape - Zonal Defending

Start with three teams of four players in different colored pennies. Divide your grid into three zones that are 10 yards long (or smaller based on the level) and about 20 yards wide. The team in the middle group uses zonal defending to prevent the ball being switched from one outside group to the other outside group. The outside team that plays the pass receives a point for every time they pass the ball to the other outside four on the ground. You can choose to change the middle group with the group that had their pass picked off or switch them for time. To encourage rhythm of the ball encourage your outside groups to either keep the ball moving at all times or keep it two touch max.



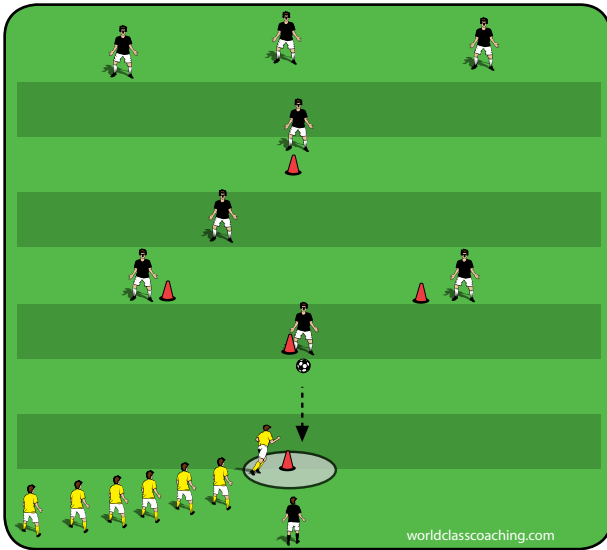
The second progression to this activity is increasing the size of the grid and changing the restrictions. Increase the width of all three zones and double the length (again adjust to what you need). Teams can still score the same way, but now may enter the middle zone after their team has completed three passes. The offside rule does apply. This will allow the outside groups to try to penetrate on the dribble or combine to get in behind the back four. It gives your middle group more situations to solve with proper pressure, cover, balance, and compactness.

48 Defending Drills

Murray Loader



Football Baseball



This game covers a number of aspects of the game, both mentally and physically, on many different levels.

Organization

- The players are divided into two teams - one "batting" and one "fielding."
- Cones are marked out in the traditional diamond shape of a baseball field as shown.
- One cone marks the "pitcher's mound" and a small half circle indicates the "batting" area.
- Length of gap between bases is determined by age of players and area in which to play.

Instructions

- Each team "bats" until three players are out and then they swap sides.
- Pitcher can be rotated after two or three batters (if required).
- This continues until everybody has a chance to "bat."

Rules

- The pitcher must kick the ball in a manner where the batter can actually kick it and it has to be within the half circle indicated.
- To be "out" the ball must be headed on the full or controlled and passed to the base in which the batter is running. The ball must be controlled on the base to be out.

Variation

Each team bats until all players are out before swapping sides.

Coaching Points

Batting (Attacking) Team:

- Accuracy of passing or kicking of the ball
- Awareness of defending team positioning
- Spotting defensive shortfalls
- Speed training
- Decision making
- Team bonding and encouragement

Fielding (Defending) Team:

- Awareness of players in own teams's positioning
- Field positioning for self
- Control of ball
- Accuracy of passing
- Mobility on field to counter attacking play
- Heading skills
- Speed training

Pressure- Cover Drill

Organization

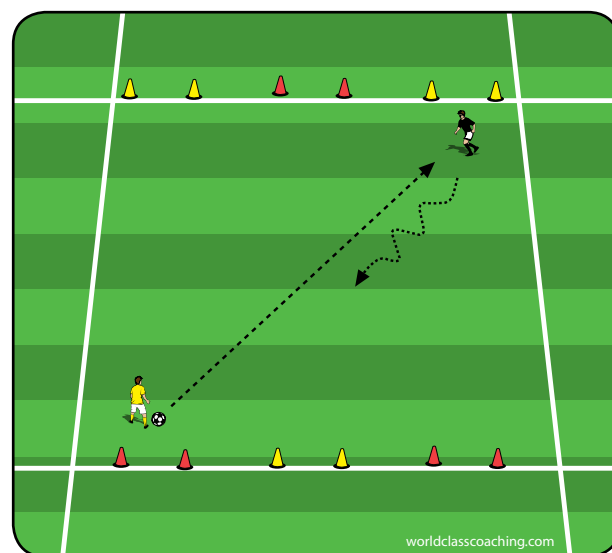
- 15 X 15 Yards
- 3 Goals on each end line (cones forming goals should each be 2-3 yards wide)
- Two teams of 4-6 players

Drill Progression

- Start with 1 v 1 (Coaching Point: Defending Pressure)
- Move to 2 v 2 (Coaching Point: Pressure, Jockeying)
- End with 3 v 2 (Coaching Point: Pressure & Cover)

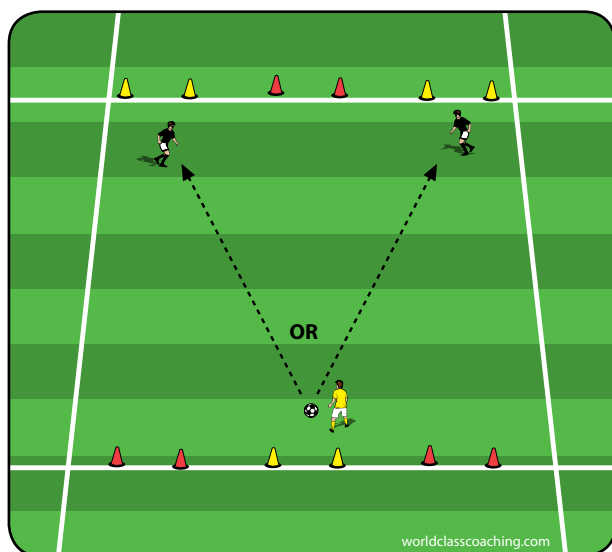
Game One: 1 v 1 to diagonal goals

- Team "O" begins as defending team, Team "X" as attacking team
- Defender "O" passes the ball to Attacker "X" to start the 1 v 1
- "X" attempts to score diagonally through the orange cone goal on the bottom left
- If "O" wins the ball, he or she attacks the yellow cone goal at the top right
- Proceed until all players on each team have had a turn and then switch roles with Black defending against Yellow



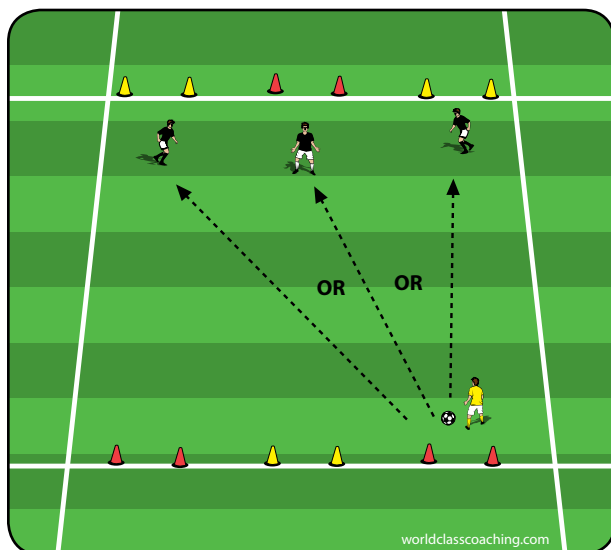
Game Two: 1 v 2 to central goal

- Defending Team "O" begins drill with pass to either Black Attacker "X" to begin the 1 v 2
- "X" players attack the central goal (yellow cones at bottom)
- If Defender "O" wins the ball, he or she can score through any of the three goals at the opposite end line
- Proceed until all players have had a turn and then switch roles



48 Defending Drills

Tom DeNigris



Game Three: 2 v 3 to corner goals

- Either of the Defending Team "O" players begins the drill by passing to any of the 3 Attacking "X" players to begin the 2 v 3
- "X" players attack either of the two corner goals (orange cones on the bottom end line)
- If either of the Defender "O" players wins the ball, he or she can combine with teammate and attack any of the 3 goals at the opposite end line
- Proceed until all players have had a turn and then switch roles

Variation/Addition:

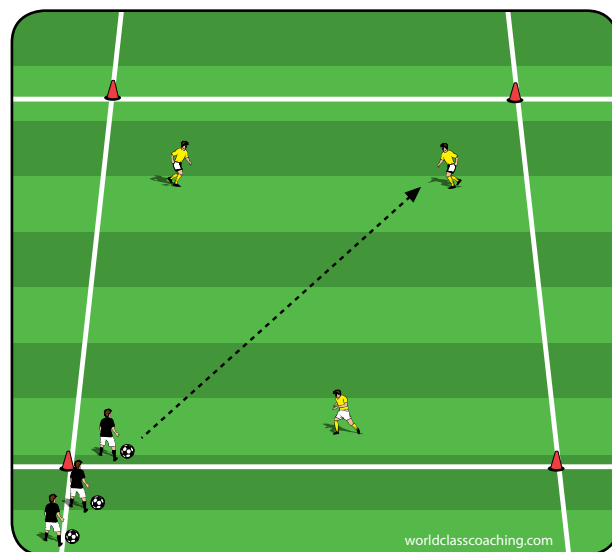
- With older or more advanced players, add an extra attacker and defender for a 3 v 4 to three goals; or
- Go 3 v 4 with the attacking team scoring through either the corner goals as in the 2 v 3 or just through the central goal

Coaching Point

- Defending pressure, cover and balance

3 v 1**Organization**

- Create a grid that is approximately 15 x 15 yards
- Split players into groups of 6
- Place 3 players inside the grid as attackers in an alternate jersey
- The remaining 3 players line up as defenders behind one corner cone with the supply of balls.

**Instructions**

- The first defender passes a ball into the 3 attackers.
- The defender immediately steps into the grid and becomes the defender creating a 3 v 1 inside the grid.
- The 3 attackers attempt to put together as many passes as possible.
- The attackers continue passing until the defender wins the ball, or the ball is knocked out of play.
- Once the play is dead, the next defender plays into the same 3 attackers, and play resumes.

Variations

- Adjust grid (larger grid = easier for attackers but harder for defenders; smaller grid = harder for attackers but easier for defenders)

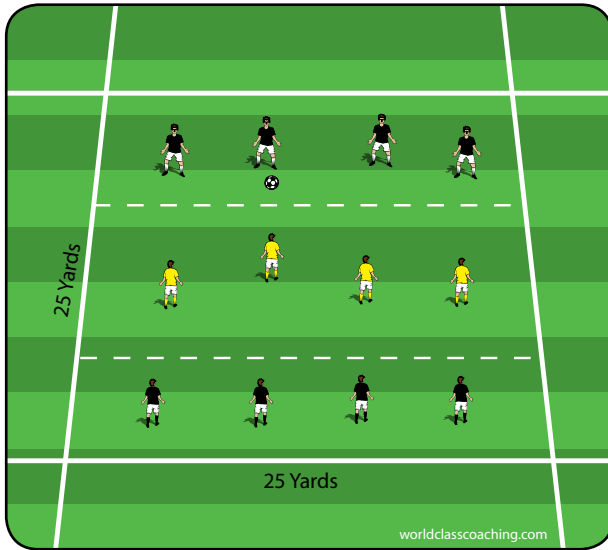
Coaching Points

- Focus on the quality of passes such as weight, pace, and accuracy.
- A well timed run facing the passing direction will assure a more accurate pass.
- The players must communicate with each other to make the game easier.
- Players must concentrate on making runs off the ball.
- Encourage players to play with a 1 or 2 touches.
- Good passes to feet.
- Good first touch towards space.
- Good decision making (make play easy.)
- Speed of play/decisions.

48 Defending Drills



Screening



Organization

- 25 x 25 yards
- 4 v 4

Objective

- 4 players in the middle area work to prevent getting split down the middle.
- Players in outer zones work with ball with hands first, dribble and then pass to see how defense reacts.

Coaching Points

- Group defending principles
- Who, what, when, where, why and how
- Body mechanics (opening body to see player and ball)
- Not standing flat, stand staggered
- Defensive shape = shallow and narrow

Simple and Effective Defensive Positioning Drill

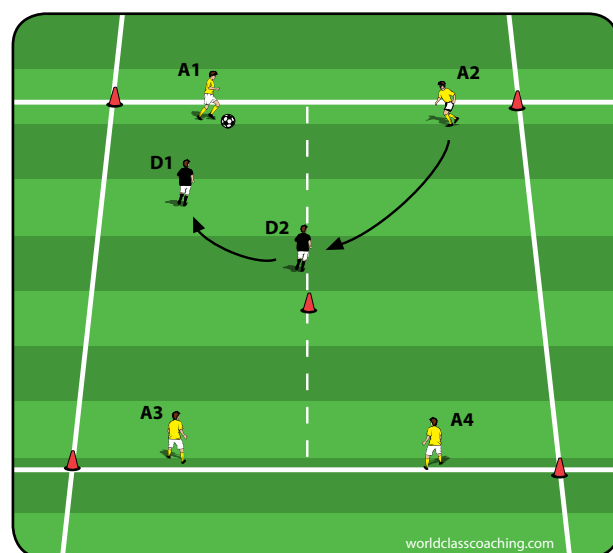
Stop Opponents from Passing Forward

Instructions

- A1 and A2's objective is to score a point by passing the ball to players A3 or A4.
- D1 and D2 have to prevent this.
- Attackers are only allowed a maximum of 2 touches.
- D1 and D2 cannot tackle the attackers.
- Attackers are only allowed a maximum of 4 passes before passing to the opposite side.

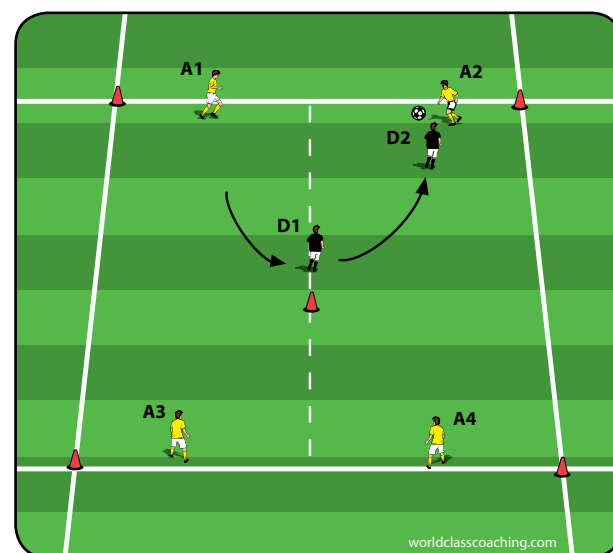
Coaching Points

- As you can see, a red cone has been placed in the center of the area. The coach should explain that this will be used as a marker for covering guideline.
- As the ball is travelling from A2 to A1, D1's need to approach A1 at a slight angle to block possible first time pass to A3.
- D2's movement to the red cone blocks a possible diagonal pass to A4.



Coaching Points

- As the ball is traveling from A1 to A2, D2's movement from the red cone should be curved to approach A2 at a slight angle to block possible first time pass to A4.
- D1's movement to the red cone blocks a possible diagonal pass to A3.
- Angle of cover and distance in relation to the ball, teammate and opponents is critical.
- Communication between teammates is half the work.

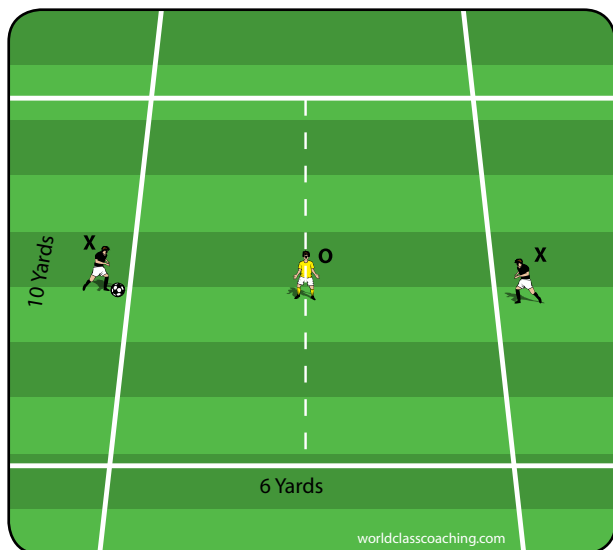


48 Defending Drills

Ken Nuber



1 v 1 Denying Crosses and Shots



Organization

- Grid 6 x 10 yards with a mid line as shown
- Two players outside the grid and one defending at the mid line.

Objective

- The X's try and connect passes across the grid as O denies the passing lane.
- X's cannot play one touch
- Rotate after 45 seconds

Coaching Points

- Start at the mid line but get "touch tight" while staying in the grid.
- Don't tackle, simply deny the passing lane.
- Body turned with attacker.
- Good posture.
- Anticipate when attacker is striking the ball.
- Read the attackers eyes and body language.

Organization

- 18 yard box
- Two sets of balls 30 yards from goal with two servers.
- Two defenders starting at the wide corners of the 18 and one starting on the penalty spot.
- Two wide attackers 25 yards out on the touch line and one central attacker at the top of the 18.

Objective

- First ball played to left attacker who tries to take the ball end line for a serve. O must deny the service. Other two attackers make runs in the box as the two defenders track them.
- Second ball played into central attacker who is 1 v 1 with central defender, no wide help.
- Third ball played to right attacker



Coaching Points

- For wide defenders, close down the attacker to a distance the ball cannot get served over your head.
- Don't try to win the ball, try to deny or block the service.
- Weak side wide defender must turn your body to pick up the flight of the serve while not losing track of your attacker.
- Central defender must close down central attacker quickly to apply pressure. Don't try and win the ball, just deny or block the shot.
- Read body language to anticipate.

Progression

- Allow wide players to attack goal as well as serve.
- Allow wide players to help central attacker.

48 Defending Drills

Ken Nuber



Organization

- 18 yard box
- 10 yard zone extending from top of 18 yard box
- 4 defenders across 18 yard box and 4 attackers inside the 10 yard zone
- Server outside zone centrally

Objective

The O's pass to try and find a shot within the zone. Only one X defender can step to the ball in the zone to deny/block the shot. Once the ball is passed, a new defender can step forward and the other must drop to the 18 yard line.

Coaching Points

- Back four shift together and adjust to the pass.
- Close space as quick as possible to deny or block a shot.
- Don't tackle, just stay in the shooting lane.
- Quick transition from first defending to support (back to the 18 yard line).
- Communication of who steps.

Progression

- Allow attackers to penetrate into the 18 yard box; all defenders and attackers are live if that happens.
- Allow a pass into the 18 yard box; all defenders and attackers are live if that happens.



Training the Back Four

Organization

- Six attackers (3 forwards, 3 mids) versus the back four plus keeper.
- Each mid has a ball.
- The coach calls the name of the mid who will start the attack with his or her ball (02), the other mids leave their balls.
- The back four can score on counter goals on the center line.
- First team to 5 goals wins.
- Play offsides.



Variations

- A coach starts the attack by serving a ball to one of the midfielders (or forwards) on attack.
- Emphasize deep pressing by the attackers once they lose the ball.
- Limit attackers to three touches.
- Rotate in new players when play is dead, e.g., three new mids on the next attack.
- 10 v 7 (defending back four plus mids), 3/4 field.
- Defenders dribble through large counter goals to score, or across the midline.
- Play 11 v 11 on a full field, 6 v 4 in each half.

Success in Soccer

Pressing 6 v 4 - team X (4 players) tries to dribble across either of two 20 yard counter lines 45 yards in front of the goal and has unlimited touches; team O (6 players) presses to win the ball and attack the main goal, and is limited to three touches.

David Williams

Start with 4 v 4, four lines of midfielders each have a ball, coach calls a number (e.g., line 2), play until a goal, save, ball out of play, or the back four wins possession, then give them a target, e.g., chip a pass to one of the lines, or find the coach with a pass. Progressions: a) add two attacking forwards for 6 v 4, b) add two defending mids for 6 v 6, coach serves a ball to any attacker.

WorldClassCoaching.com

6 (two forwards, four mids) v 4 plus keeper - the four defenders try to win the ball and pass to one of the two target players standing near midfield.

FineSoccer.com

Defensive Shadow Training - attackers are stationary, one has the ball, defenders mark up and provide proper cover and balance, progressions.

- One pass, defenders adjust, continue
- Attackers pass the ball around with three touches minimum, giving the defense time to shift
- Allow the attackers to start moving, slowly at first
- Allow the attackers to play at speed

UEFA

6 v 4, attackers kick off from midfield, defenders must stop them and force the ball out of play to win.

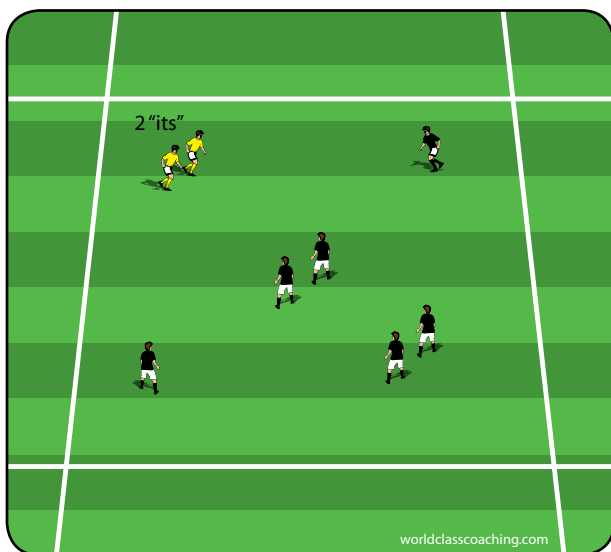


48 Defending Drills

Marco de Leon



U12 Defending

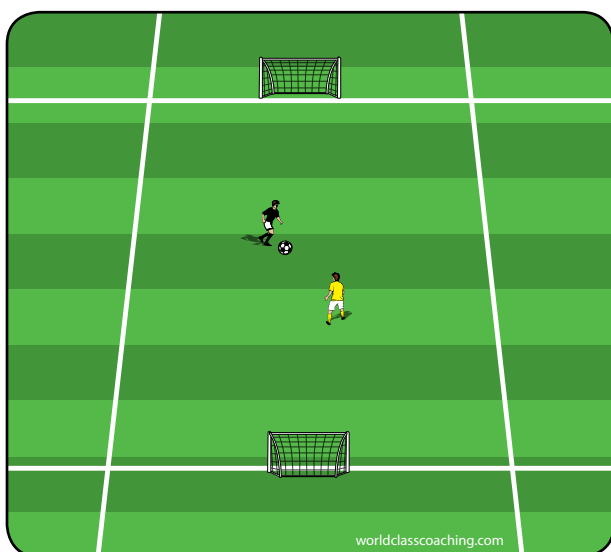


Organization

- Play the width of the penalty box and 25 yards deep
- Choose two people to start as "its" and have them join hands
- Once they tag someone, they join tagger and work together to tag others
- Always must have at least 2 people connected
- Play until only several people are left or until all are caught

Coaching Points

- Close quickly
- Channel player
- Communication
- Teamwork

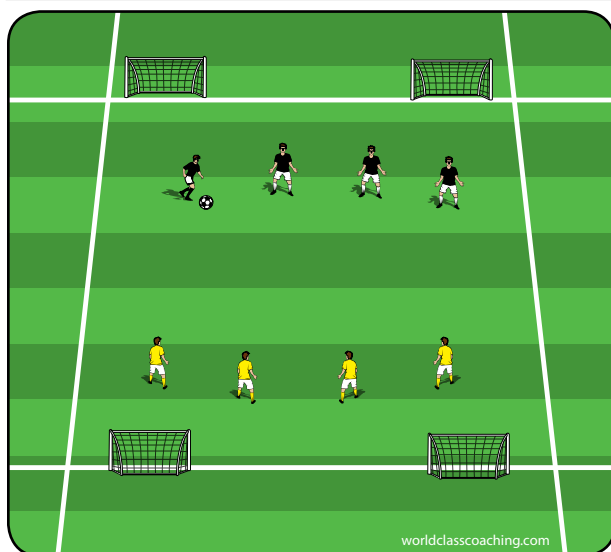


Organization

- Play 1 v 1 to goal 30-40 yards apart
- Play 5 minute game
- Switch roles, attackers and defenders
- Progress to 2 v 2 (pressure and cover)

Coaching Points

- Immediate pressure
- Angles and distances of support
- Delay and channel
- Read pressure on ball and 1st defender
- Angles, support, transition
- Communication and read the game



Organization

- Play 4 v 4
- Play to 2 goals
- Coach only one team
- Switch and coach other team if time

Coaching Points

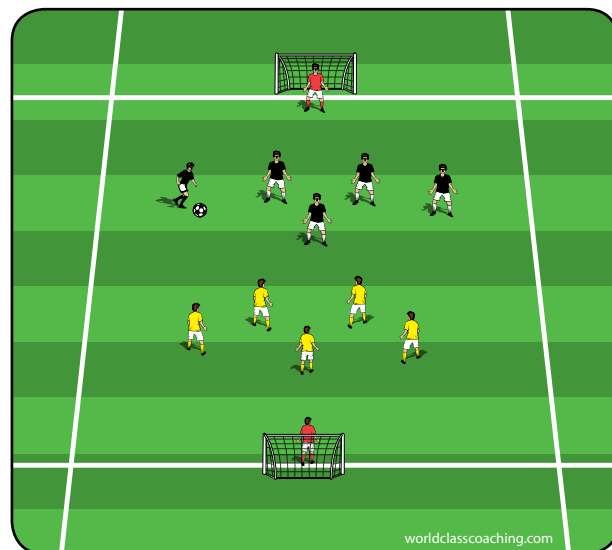
- Be patient, channel attack
- Stay connected, tuck in on weak-side
- Defend as a unit, play on lines
- Communication, visual cues

Organization

- Play 6 v 6 (5 v 5 + GK)
- One team possesses
- Other team (team you are coaching) just organizes and tries to close passing lanes by staying connected
- Take off conditions and just play

Coaching Points

- The positioning of the far side back/mid depends on the amount of pressure on the ball
 - Pressure on the ball=back/mid plays up to offer support and to be ready to transition
 - Lack of pressure the back/mid tucks in and back
 - Play on lines and stay connected



48 Defending Drills



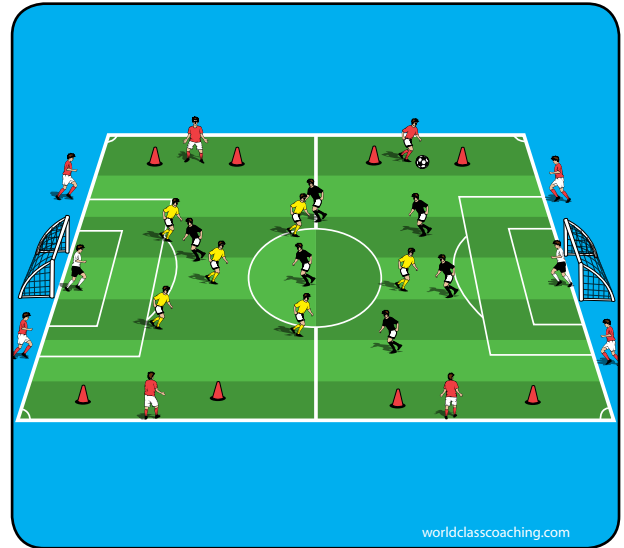
3 - 2 - 1

Introduction

This is an ideal training activity to include the entire squad or selective members as desired. It is intended to be match situation type training. It is intense, productive, and fun. The game is an excellent activity to finish a training session.

Organization

- Balls, discs, vests – 3 different colors, two goals, watch
- Size of grid increased or decreased to suit your numbers
- 6 v 6 + 6-8 bumpers
- 60 x 40 grid to goals
- 20-22 players total including 2 goalies



Description

Two teams play normal soccer with a three touch limit to start. When one team scores, the opposing team loses a touch. When a team is scored on, their goalkeeper initiates play. The game can be played to three goals or within a time limit. Losing team then switches with the bumpers. The game requires fast speed of play and specifically the defensive principles of pressure, cover, and balance. The fewer touches the opponents have, the higher pressure should be placed on them. High intensity, good communication, and proper defending as an individual and as a team are crucial. To enforce offsides is at the discretion of the coach.

Coaching Points

- Immediate pressure on the ball by first defender
- Proper second and third defender positioning
- Limit opponent's easy chances
- Stay compact
- Maintain good defensive shape as a team

Variations

- Start with unlimited touches.
- Subtract a man from team who gets scored on.
- Play one goal games, winners stay on.

Drill #1**Organization**

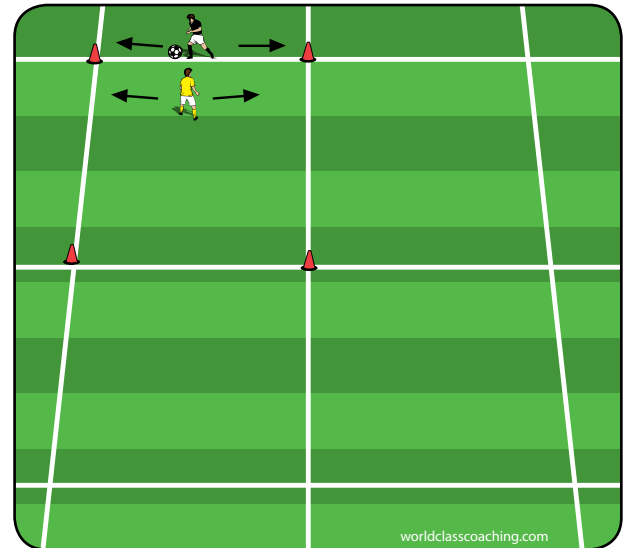
- Players play between the two cones which are 5 yards or so apart.
- There is an imaginary line connecting the two cones.
- Neither player can cross the imaginary line.

Instructions

The attacker tries to stop the ball on either cone; the defender tries to beat the attacker to the cone and knock the ball away before he/she can stop it.

Coaching Points

- Defender must watch the ball and be ready to switch directions quickly.
- Attacker must switch directions often and be convincing in his or her feints.

**Drill #2****Organization**

Players now play to PUGG goals.

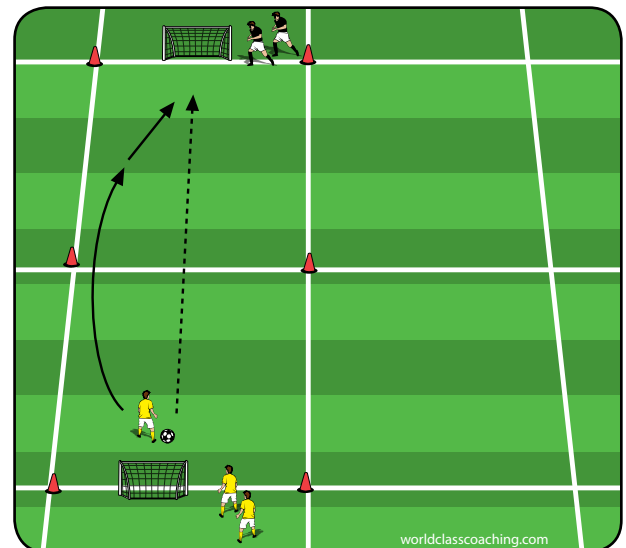
Transition to 1 v 1 fields is quite simple building from first drill.

Instructions

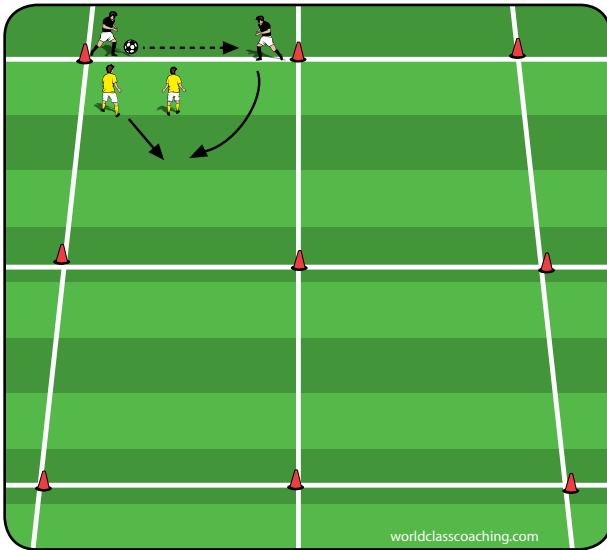
- One player serves the other, then the two play 1 v 1 to goal.
- If the original attacker scores, he/she gets one point.
- If the defender steals and scores, he/she gets two points.
- I usually make the losers sprint the small field and consider a tie a loss for both players.

Coaching Points

- Defender must close quickly on a slightly bent run, while the ball is traveling.
- As the attacker receives the ball, the defender positions his/her body in a way that forces the attacker to one direction, then jockeys until the attacker cuts back in.
- Defenders must be patient, be ready to switch directions as in the first progression, and maintain "side-on" positioning.



48 Defending Drills



Drill #3

Organization

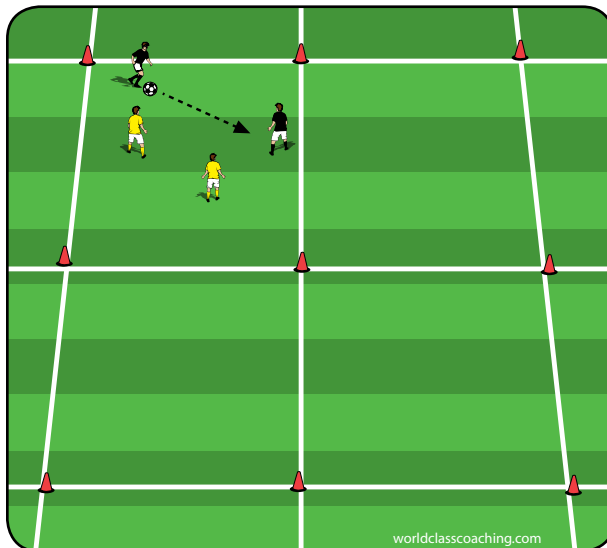
- Still use the cones from progression 1

Instructions

- The two black players knock the ball between each other.
- The "imaginary line" is now back.
- The yellow players work on pressure-cover.

Coaching Points

- Defending players MUST force into cover and must not WATCH the pass after their mark plays the ball to his/her partner.
- When the ball is passed, the former first defender must immediately drop into cover.
- The new first defender makes a bent run, forces inside, and gets side on.



Drill #4

Organization

- Players now play 2 v 2 to line.
- The ball must be dribbled across the line.

Instructions

- Same as 1 v 1 but without goals at first just to allow for a bit more width.
- Losers run, a tie is a loss.

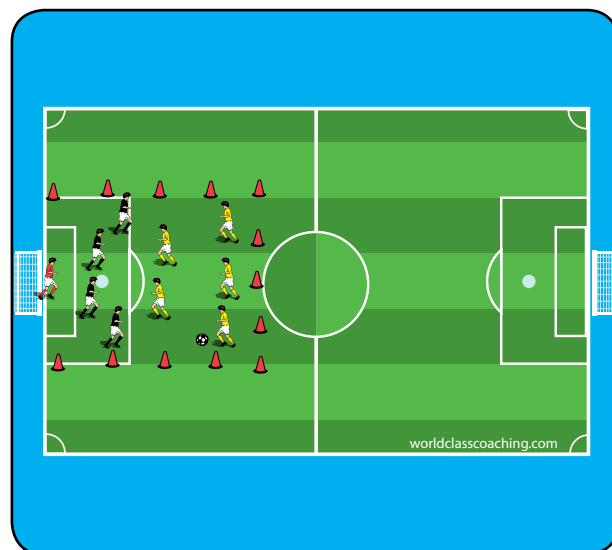
Coaching Points

- Watch the ball as a defender, be ready to move laterally or vertically.
- Have side on position to help absorb speed.
- Get in the path of the ball if the player tries to go by with speed.
- Get into cover QUICKLY if your player passes the ball off.

4 Defenders + Goalkeeper vs 5 Attackers in Central Zone

Organization

- Pitch: 32 x 40 meters
- 9 players + 1 goalkeeper
- Coach can change player's role any time
- Time: 4 series of 5 minutes (1 minute rest between series)



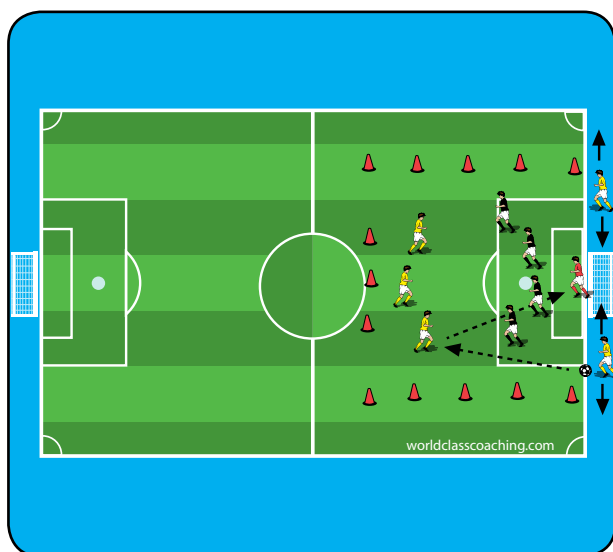
Instructions

- Four defenders are outnumbered, so they must protect passing spaces of the five attackers, which must play inside the pitch.
- Only one player of the attackers can go out of the pitch shown with orange cones in every action for a cross-passing.
- In this case the defenders must choose if it's better to stay inside the box to protect the defending zone or if they can go out to prevent the crossing, closing the attackers with his shoulders turned from goal.
- Every goal of attackers is a half-point.
- When defenders are able to bring the ball over the horizontal line of cones, they score a goal. (Attackers must protect their cone line.)
- The goalkeeper must always pass the ball to defenders, and the attacker must win the ball. (Attacker must organize pressing to prevent play development.)

Coaching Points

- Defenders choice to prevent spaces or attack the ball
- Attacker attitude to recover the ball and prevent play developments.

4 Defenders + Goalkeeper vs 5 Attackers in Central Zone - Variation



Organization

- Pitch: 32 x 40 meters
- 9 players + 1 goalkeeper
- Coach can change player's role any time
- Time: 4 series of 5 minutes (1 minute rest between series)

Instructions

- Four defenders are outnumbered, so they must protect passing spaces of the five attackers, but in this situation, two of them are out of the pitch, at the back of the defenders and they can move along the line till the cones.
- Only one player of the attackers can go out of the pitch shown with orange cones in every action for a cross-passing. And only one of the players out of the pitch can come inside for a shoot or for a maximum of 5 seconds.
- The defenders must choose if it's better to control the space around them inside the box to protect the defending zone or if they can make pressing against one of the opponents (in the central zone defenders are more than attackers, so one of them could attack the opponent.)
- Every goal of attackers is 1 point.
- When defenders are able to bring the ball over the horizontal line of cones, they score a goal (attackers must protect their cones line defending outnumbered.)
- The goalkeeper must always pass the ball to defenders, and the attacker must win the ball. (Attacker must organize pressing to prevent play development.)

Coaching Points

- Defenders choice to prevent spaces or attack the ball.
- Attacker attitude to recover the ball and prevent play developments and counter-attack.

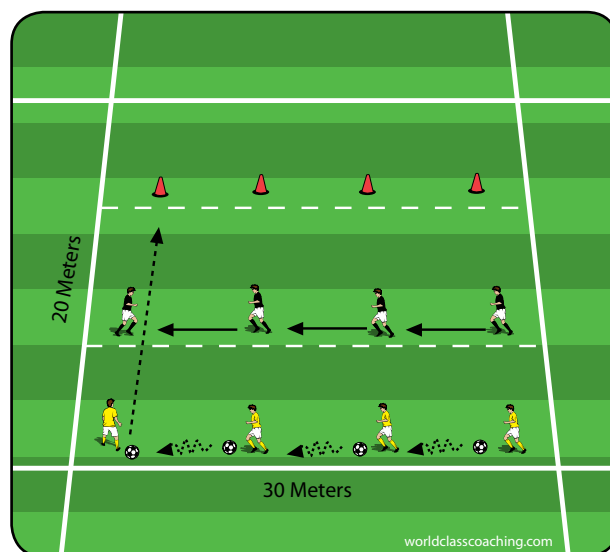
Defending Drill

Introduction

The blockers improve the back four's ability to remain compact. They need to move together as a unit and stop forward passes by getting into good blocking positions.

Instructions

- The game is played for three sets of three minutes so all teams get to play as blockers.
- Blockers must remain on the center line.
- Passes should be kept waist height when passing to the targets.
 - The back four (Yellow) have to block any attempted pass by the attackers (Black) who dribble or want to play a through pass between the defensive lines of the Yellow players, while playing a compact defensive strategy to deny the attackers any pass to their targets.
- If the attackers manage to play a through pass between the Yellow defenders, Black will get two points for any ball that goes through the blockers.

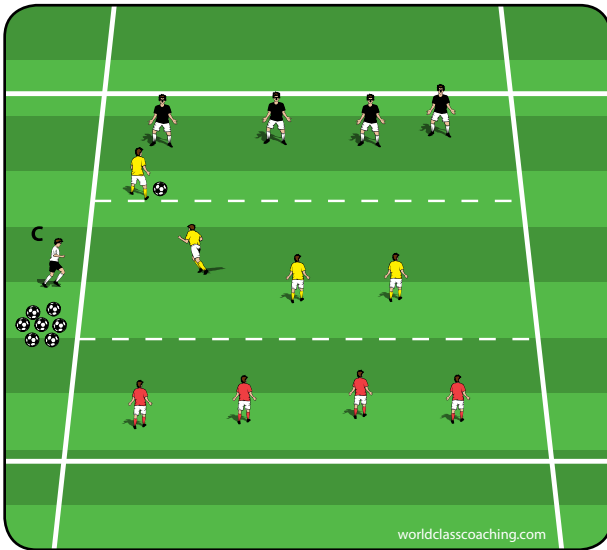


48 Defending Drills

Randy Hanson



Zonal Reps Exercise



Organization

- Set up 3 rectangular areas as shown. Each is approximately 10 x 20 yards.
- Organize players into three teams of four and position in each area.

Instructions

- Outside teams attempt to pass the ball along the ground through the central area to other outside team.
- The 4 in the central area work as a group using zonal principles to intercept passes and then pass quickly to the coach. The player pressuring the ball may leave the area.
- The coach passes a ball to one of the outside teams to restart the game.
- Teams change roles every 2-3 minutes

Coaching Points

- Work with the central group of four to provide coaching points for the defensive principles of pressure, cover, balance and compactness.
- Also help with the particular zonal shape when the ball is wide or in the center.
- Encourage quick transition when players are moving within the shape and changing defensive roles.
- Can quickly provide repetition for the back four and midfield four. Work backs in the middle area with the midfield having two players each in the outside areas.
- Switch roles after 2-3 minute rounds of work.

2 v 3 Defending Drill

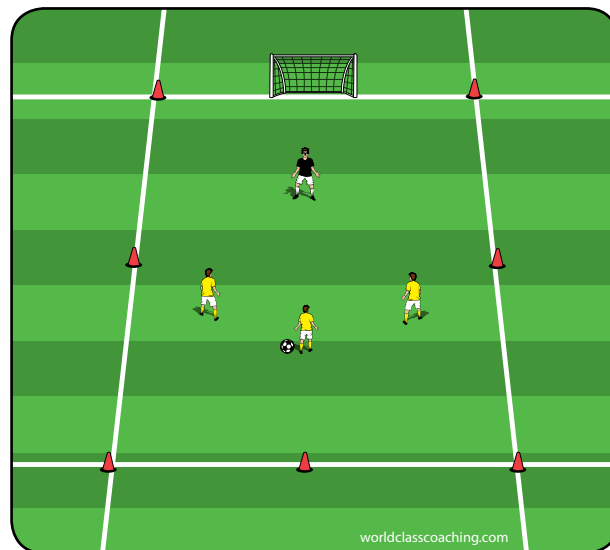
Organization

A small goal at the center of a coned grid.

Three attackers against one defender.

Instructions

- Attackers play against the lonely defender to score both sides of the centered small goal.
- Attackers win scoring and defender wins shooting ball out of grid.
- Attackers always start game from any corner.
- 2-3 minutes of time given .



Focus

- Where does the defender mostly let them make a pass to and where he doesn't?
- His timing on tackling and the commitment.
- Sprinting runs made by him

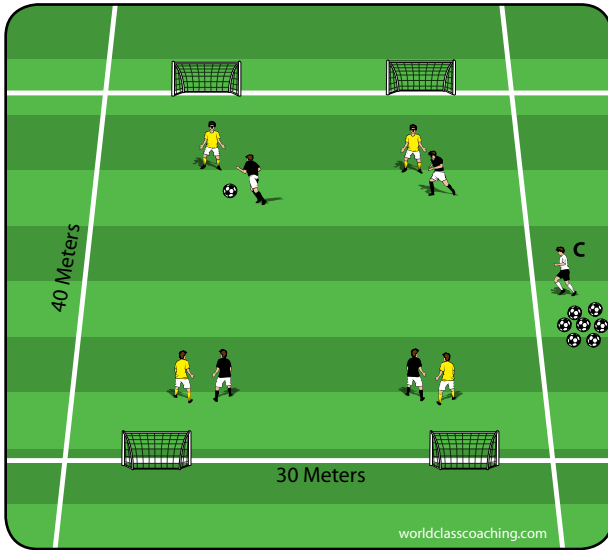
Coaching Points

- Timing
- Decision making
- Tackling
- Forcing direction of passes
- Waiting recovery of teammates

48 Defending Drills



1 v 1



Organization

- Pitch size: 40 x 30 m with 4 x 3 m goals
- Two bibbed teams of four players
- A whistle and watch to start and stop play
- Extra balls with the coach for continuity
- Players look to deny space for their opponents and prevent a goal being scored
- Games last three minutes with one minute rest between games
- Teams change on the coach's signal

Coaching Points

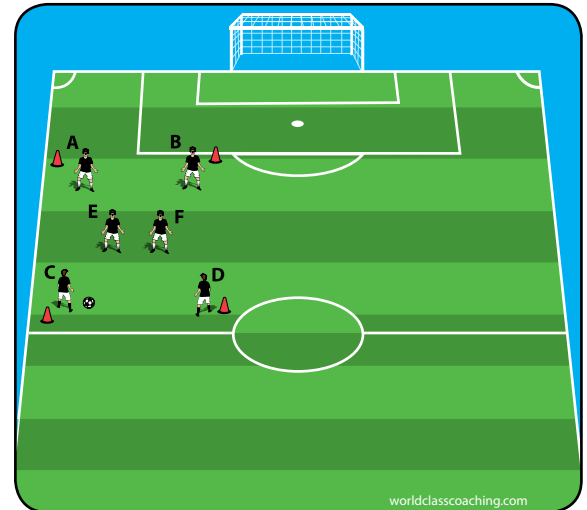
- Close down the ball quickly, but be under control
- As the defender travels to close down the attacker, assess the attacker's first touch
 - Bad first touch - with the ball
 - Good first touch - delay approach
- Threaten the ball using the correct stance - bent knee, side
- Force attackers away from goal
- Use the back foot or inside of foot to perform or block tackle

Tactical Awareness - 2 v 4 Defending, "Defensive Support"

To provide *Defensive Support* correctly, the player behind the initial point of attack should be 3 to 5 yards behind the first defender and slightly offset. In this position, you should be able to read your teammate's number. The object of this tactic is to allow the first defender to attack the ball with confidence because they know that if they are beaten, there is another player supporting them to mark the attacker and allow them to recover. The most common application of this is the player in the *Sweeper* role.

2 v 4 Square

Set up a square with cones approximately 15 yards apart. Have four players set up, one at each cone with one ball. Put two defenders E & F in the center and have them defend against the forward pass. Players A and B are trying to advance the ball forward to players C and D. The defender closest to the ball must pressure, cutting off the pass straight ahead to the forward player. The other defender must take up a position to cut off the diagonal pass to the other forward player. When the ball is played forward successfully, the play reverses and the defenders try to keep the pass from getting to the other end again. When the pass is made square, the defenders will reverse their roles with the player cutting off the diagonal pass pressuring the ball and the other moving into position to cut off the diagonal pass forward.

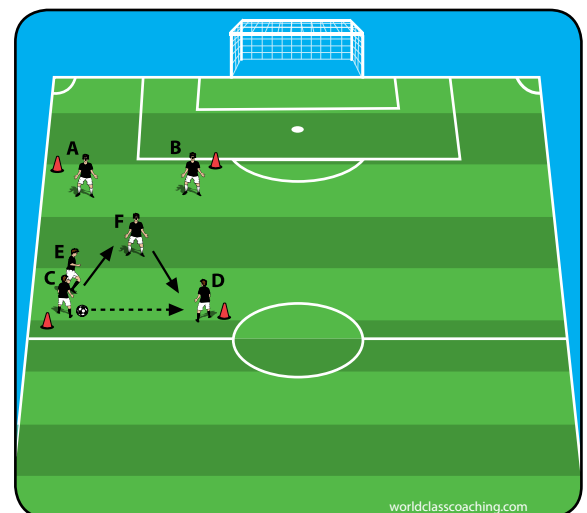
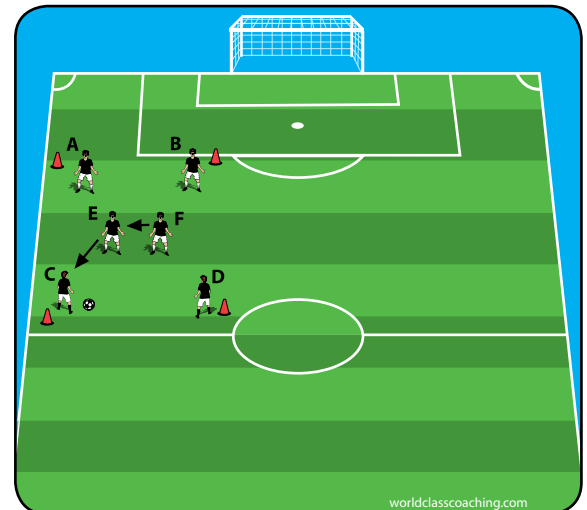


Coaching Points

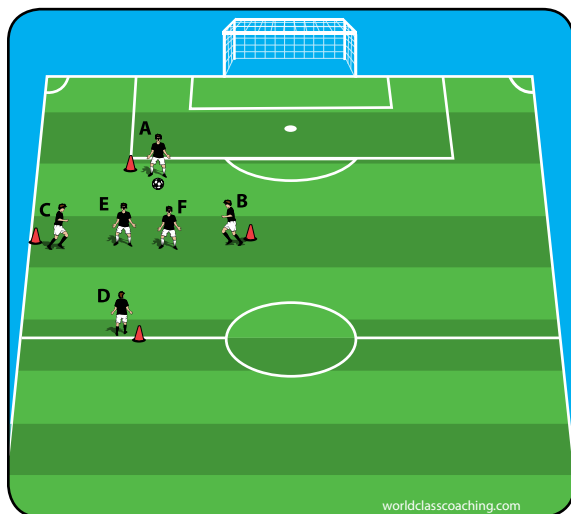
- Positioning
- Patience
- Communication

Notes

- It doesn't matter how many times A passes to B (square), the objective is to prevent the pass from A or B to C or D (forward).
- The object of the drill is not to win the ball, but to prevent the forward pass.
- Switch every 2 minutes due to the high intensity.

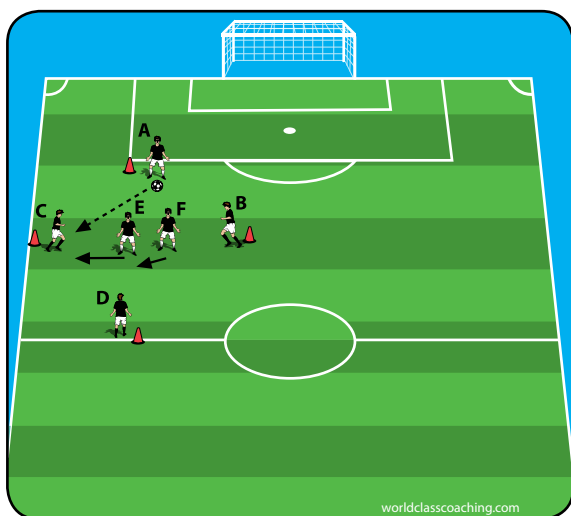


48 Defending Drills



2 v 4 Diamond

Set up a diamond shape with cones approximately 15 yards apart. Have four players set up, one at each cone with one ball. Put two defenders in the center and have them defend against the forward pass. To keep the ball at "A" from being played directly to "D", the two defenders must stay in the center of the diamond. When the ball is played to "B" or "C", the two defenders must position themselves to keep the ball from being played to "D". This is done by having one player pressure the ball, and the other moves into a position to cut off the pass to "D" if the pressuring defender is beaten. If the ball is played back, the defenders will cover the center again, or if the ball is played square, the back defender will pressure the ball and the other will take up the support position.

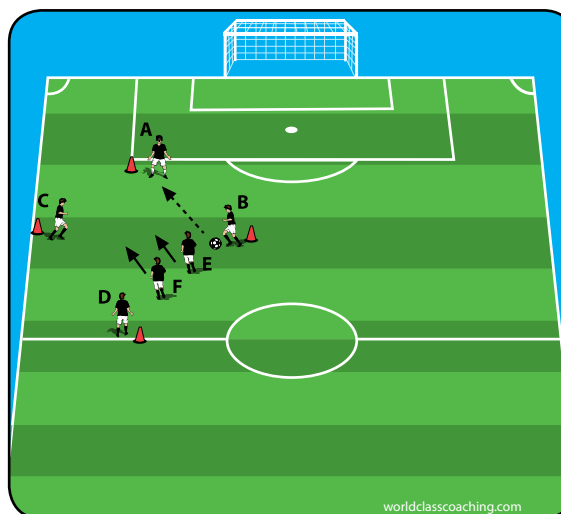
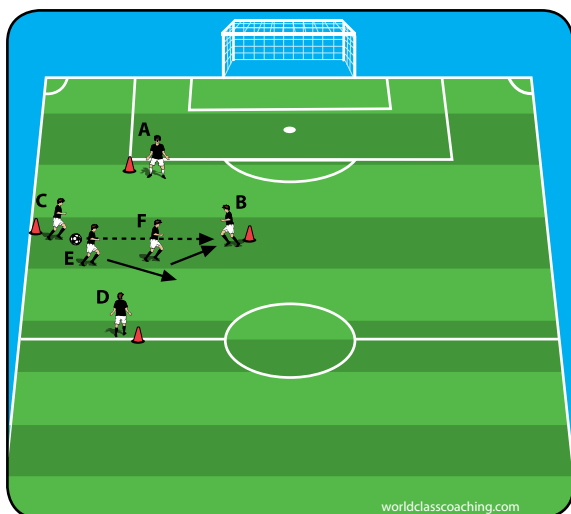


Coaching Points

- Positioning
- Patience
- Communication

Notes

- It doesn't matter how many times the ball is played between A, B, and C; the object of the drill is to prevent the through ball being played to D.



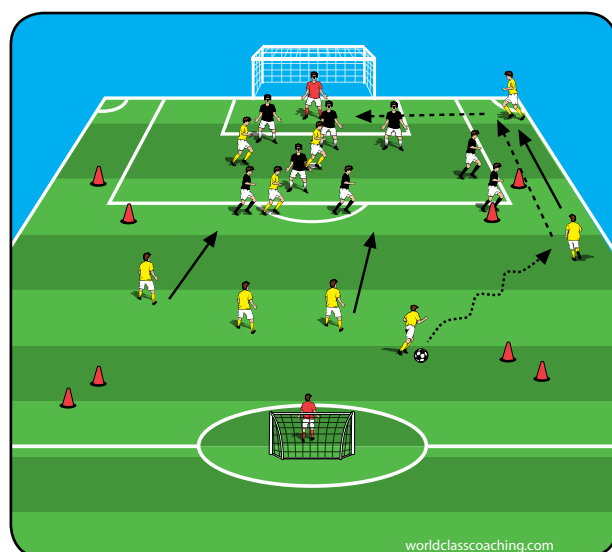
8 v 8 Tactical game with an emphasis on defensive transition

The game discussed below, aims to improve the defensive behavior and focus on a very important aspect of modern football: the defensive transition. The field is half pitch in which two teams compete 8 v 8 with specific configurations. There are two standard goalies and 4 small “doors” in the field, which will help us to educate our players to rewind the aggressive mode, the immediate defensive thinking and reaction (phase alternation game transition). The basic principle is the immediate reaction of the team that completed the attack, quickly close the goalkeeper's ability to feed a teammate, pass the ball through the two “doors”, to prevent a counterattack. If the defensive team closes the “doors”, the game continues as normal, with any choice by the goalkeeper. If however, the goalkeeper finds an open “door” for the ball and passes to a teammate, then his team scores one point. The rest of the organization of the game, when it comes to defensive mode, follows the direction the coach has given, and based on the formation. For example assuming that our team follows the 1-4-2-3-1, the black team plays with four defenders, two defensive midfielders and the two extreme midfielders (missing central attacker and central midfielder). The yellow team with the two extreme defenders, two defensive midfielders, three attacking midfielders and a central attacker (missing two central defenders).

Initial placement of the teams on the field. The game is normally carried out with two teams that have specific goals and objectives.

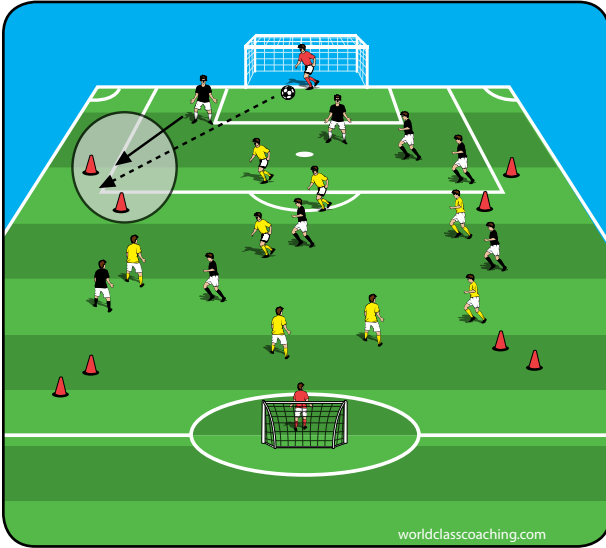


The yellow team completes an aggressive energy with long cross, which saves the goalkeeper. The yellow team should immediately react to prevent the counterattack.



48 Defending Drills

Vasilis Papadakis



The black team tries for a quick counterattack and the goalkeeper finds the "door" open for passes to a teammate, who moves fast to the space, as the yellow team did not have time to close the "doors". The black team scores one point.



In another case, a player of black team, reacting quickly and correctly, manages to close the "door" and steals the ball when the goalkeeper tries to give to a teammate. The game continues normally.



The yellow team with a successful direct response, managed to shut the "doors", so the game is conducted with a choice by the goalkeeper.

Variations

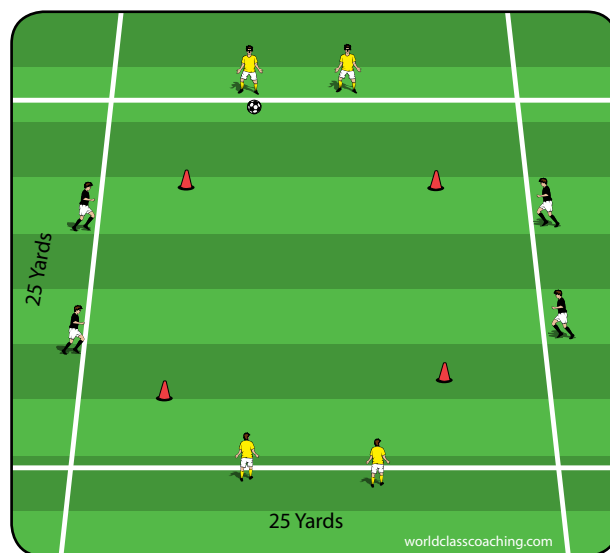
- Positioning of players with different formation, at the discretion of the coach.
- Play 6 v 6 (black team use 1-4-2 with four defenders and two defensive midfielders and two yellow team use 1-2-3-1 with two defense midfielders, three attacking midfielders and one central attacker.)
- One goalie and four "doors" for the group performs defensive operation (two out of the goal area and two more small "doors" at the ends of the central transition in the first time outside goal area and in second time at the center line for attacking team).

Box in the Box

This is my favorite defending drill for a number of reasons. First, it can be adapted to any size from 1 v 1 up to 6 v 6 or even 8 v 8, merely by changing the size of the two boxes. It focuses on immediate transition from offense to defense and reinforces the importance of establishing pressure, cover and balance (depending on size of playing area and number of players involved). It requires players to concentrate on what the ball is doing, even when not playing. What's even better about this activity, is that you can just as easily swap focus to the offensive side of the game, working on first touch, movement off the ball, etc. This is a very high intensity game and one of our team's favorite activities to do the day before a game.

Organization

- This version is setup for a 2 v 2 game, with coaching focus on the defense.
- The inner square is 20 yards by 20 yards and the outer square is 25 yards by 25 yards.
- Two teams are formed. One team attacks from the north and south ends and the other from the east and west ends.
- Teams get a point for successfully attacking the inner square and moving from one side through the other with full control.
- The defending team attempts to win and clear the ball to either one of its two sides.



Instructions

Game begins with the yellow team in offense and two black defenders in the inner square. Two yellow team players from the top side attack to move the ball through the bottom side. The yellow defenders attempt to win and clear the ball through to either of their sides. The outer square is a free zone and cannot be defended.

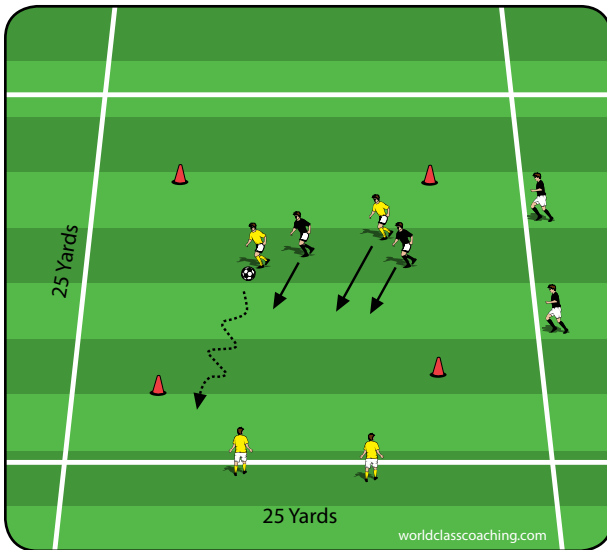
If the yellow team succeeds in getting to the free zone in possession on the other side, two teammates from that side immediately attack the same two defenders from the opposite direction. This continues until the two defenders clear the ball through one of their sides. When this occurs, the two yellow team players who lost possession immediately begin to defend the inner square. Two black players must immediately begin an attack from the side that the ball had been cleared through. The two yellow defenders must now defend within the inner square until they can clear the ball to one of their attacking sides. Yellow immediately attacks from the cleared side and the two black attackers immediately move to defend.

Game can be played for a set number of minutes or points.

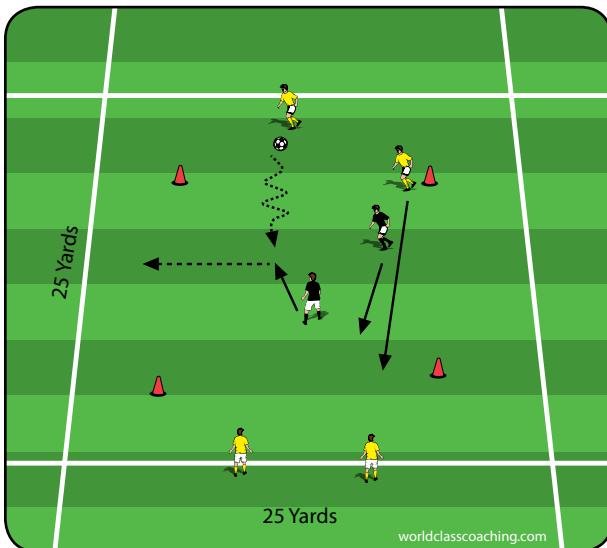
Transitions are extremely quick in this game and require players to immediately take position to put pressure on the ball and to provide support off the ball. Coaches can add restrictions or limitations as they wish to the offense or the defense.

48 Defending Drills

Marvin Miller



In this example, the yellow attacker has taken on the black defender and beaten her 1 v 1 and carries the ball out to the other side. Two yellow attackers from this other side will immediately attack back the other way. Had the defender gotten in proper position, the attacker could have also chosen to play the ball to her teammate through a pass or overlap.



In this example, the yellow attacker has taken on the black defender and lost the ball to the properly positioned defender. The covering defender has denied any passing opportunity, thus allowing her partner to step forward and tackle. Upon clearing the ball, the black players vacate the inner square to allow an immediate attack from the black players on the cleared side. The two yellow defenders have to take up an immediate defensive posture to avoid a quick and successful black attack through the inner box.

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