

# Defending

## PRINCIPLES OF PLAY



DEFENDING  
PRINCIPLES AND THE  
ROLES OF PLAYERS

THE TECHNICAL AND  
TACTICAL QUALITIES OF  
EFFECTIVE DEFENDERS

TEACHING  
INDIVIDUAL AND  
TEAM DEFENDING

WHEN TO PRESS, WHEN  
TO HOLD. DEFENDING IN  
THE MODERN GAME

Justin Neese (Soccer Programs Manager, Houston Dynamo), Ricky King (Coaching Education Administrator, New York Red Bulls), Mike Smith (Director of Youth Academy, Portland Timbers) Ian Barker (Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA) and David Newbery (Elearning Coordinator, NSCAA)  
Editor: David Newbery (Elearning Coordinator, NSCAA)



**National Soccer Coaches  
Association of America**

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SUPPLIED BY:

**SOCCER COACH** WEEKLY



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March 2014

**Dear NSCAA Member,**

On behalf of NSCAA we would like to thank you for your recent participation in the webinar series entitled 'Coaching U6, U8 and U10 Players'.

NSCAA is committed to deliver coaching education in a variety of methods – methods that reflect different learning styles and interest levels of our members. Presenting vibrant and engaging content in a convenient and low cost elearning format to supplement and enhance existing NSCAA courses and events is a priority.

Benefits of elearning are considerable, both for the individual and NSCAA. We had a tremendous response to our first two series 'Attacking Principles' and 'Coaching U6, U8 and U10' and we are delighted to extended the interest for this series. Expect to see many more opportunities in the near future to engage with top professional educators, without the need to leave your home, office or local library.

This series would not have been possible without contributions from our presenters, each individual volunteering their time to create and present 5 unique sessions. The sessions and presenters were:

**1. Defending Principles and the Roles of Players**

Ian Barker, Director of Coaching Education, NSCAA

**2. When to press, when to hold - defending in the modern game**

Justin Neese, Soccer Programs Manager, Houston Dynamo

**3. The technical and tactical qualities of effective defenders**

Ricky King, Coaching Education Administrator, New York Red Bull

**4. Teaching individual and team defending**

Mike Smith, Director of Youth Academy, Portland Timbers

**5. The review session**

David Newbery, elearning Coordinator, NSCAA

NSCAA would also like to highlight the involvement of our presenting partner – Soccer Coach Weekly. The activities in this manual and those used in the webinar series are exceptional. Even the most complex movement patterns - on and off the ball - are illustrated in such detail that you can fully understand the entire activity with just 3 diagrams.

We hope you enjoy the manual. Please don't hesitate to provide us with feedback relating to the webinars, manual and discussions.



**Ian Barker**  
Director of Coaching Education  
ibarker@nscaa.com



**David Newbery**  
elearning Coordinator  
dnewbery@nscaa.com



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# Defending Principles

An introduction to Defending Principles. By David Newbery



**DAVID NEWBERY**  
Elarning Coordinator, NSCAA

For 25 years David has studied and worked in youth education, soccer development and coaching. A former University Professor and CEO of a Youth Sports Company, David has been fortunate to travel extensively in the USA, meeting with coaches, club officials and learning about their approach to player development and coaching.

David was appointed to lead the NSCAA Club Standards Project in January 2012 and most recently to direct NSCAA 'live' learning. David has been providing consultant services and support to volunteer based youth programs for the past 10 years, helping clubs to become more serious about player and coach development. He contributes articles regularly to soccer publications, has written books focusing on player and coach development and presents at national soccer events. In his spare time David operates a youth soccer program for players age 3 to 8 in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

In introducing the first series, 'Attacking Principles', I discussed my preference when developing coaching education to focus on the offensive and defensive principles of the game. Transferability of knowledge between sports such as Basketball, American Football, Rugby and Soccer is significant. Establishing an in-house coaching education program based on Attacking and Defending Principles of Play can provide a Director/Educator with an ideal framework to deliver meaningful training building upon (for most people) prior knowledge and experiences.

Principles of play are the underpinning concepts of the game and can be coached from the first stage of development (3-5 year old players) onwards. The principles should not be confused with systems of play – the formation of the team on the field. The principles of play are the same in any system of play. In this series we focussed on defending. As coaches, we should consider time spent training defending technique to be as equally important as time devoted to improving attacking. Although often not as appealing for the players, raising defending performance of individuals, small groups and teams is imperative to long lasting success. One could argue that current top teams in world soccer such as Barcelona, Bayern Munich and Chelsea, are built on well-organized defensive schemes providing the springboard for attack.

In this series we benefited from the collective experience of 3 presenters working daily with top talented youth players in MLS academies. Interestingly, Justin, Ricky and Mike emphasized the importance of working with players on 1v1 defending technique – considerable repetition and reinforcement required.

This type of training can commence with 4-5 year old players – fundamental appreciation of their positioning in relationship to the opponent, ball and goal. The 1v1 training environment is perfect for developing techniques and confidence on 'both sides of the ball'.

A coach can make defending very enjoyable for players by adding competition, objectives and targets. The presenters introduced several 2v1 and 3v2 activities where the emphasis and focus can be changed by adding conditions, increasing or decreasing the playing area and make subtle changes to the players starting positions. Knowing how best to manipulate the training environment and draw out the best from players is something that comes from experience, education and experimentation. Listening to Ian, Justin, Ricky and Mike describe in detail what they expect to see from players during an activity and how they respond with instruction and demonstration, is 'the art of coaching' in action.

Mike was able to add some 'French flavor' to the presentation having participated in a French Football Federation course in during the past 12-18 months. One comparison he referred to is the number of principles. In USA we generally refer to 5 Attacking and 5 Defending Principles, but in France they identify 13 attacking and 10 defending (see Mike Smith's section for a full list). In the table below are the 5 defending principles, namely, pressure, cover, balance, compactness, control and restraint.

## DEFENDING PRINCIPLES

### 1. PRESSURE

The moment possession is lost the nearest player(s) try to regain possession or apply pressure on the ball, if possible. Players giving immediate chase can also help to delay the attack by making recovery runs that deny the opponent the opportunity to play the ball quickly forward. If a defender cannot put "immediate" pressure on the ball, he or she must drop back and delay the attacker's advance.

### 2. COVER

The immediate organization of players behind the pressuring defender. While the ball is being pressured all other players should be recovering into defensive positions. The positions taken

should support the pressuring defender in the event he/she is beaten.

### 3. BALANCE

As the team concentrates their defense in the area of the ball, defenders away from the ball (opposite side of field) must position themselves to cover vital spaces (central areas) in order to prevent attackers from making penetrating runs into these spaces in which to receive the ball for an attempt on goal. All players who are on the opposite side must seek positions in which to provide balance to the defense.

### 4. COMPACTNESS

As players recover towards their own goal and organize their defense, the

objective is to limit the time and space for the opponent by concentrating their defense in the area of the ball. Defenders also recover centrally towards their goal in order to limit the opponents' ability to directly attack the goal.

### 5. IMPROVISATION, CREATIVITY & SURPRISE

Players must be disciplined and play "under control" when challenging for the ball. Too often players make poorly timed or off-balanced attempts to win the ball. Players should restrain from tackling until they are confident they will win the ball.

Source: USSF 'D' license manual

# DEFENDING PRINCIPLES - INTRODUCTION



## IAN BARKER

Director of Coaching Education, National Soccer Coaches Association of America

Ian is somewhat unique having held leadership positions with US Youth Soccer and NSCAA and he has had extensive experience at youth and college levels. Ian coached for 21 seasons with the men's programs at the University of Wisconsin and Macalester College, before becoming NSCAA Director of Coaching Education in 2012.

Ian was the Director of Coaching and Player Development for Minnesota Youth Soccer Association for 10 years and is a Head Coach of Region II Boys Olympic Development Program

Ian's qualifications are extensive and he holds the USSF A License, NSCAA Premier Diploma and NSCAA Master Coach Diploma.

### Webinar key points (by David Newbery)

The series commenced with an introduction to the topic presented by Ian Barker. Ian, the Director of Coaching Education for NSCAA, did a stellar job setting the stage for those presenters following.

I found the following points to be particularly pertinent:

1. Defending in practice is likely to be a more difficult 'sell to young players than attacking. Ian suggested using some reverse psychology and stress that defending is winning the ball back before it is possible to score goals.
2. Delayed high-pressure is a concept that Ian preferred to low pressure defending - the difference being that instead of dropping back into a defensive shape and waiting for the opposition to come forward, the defense applies controlled pressure to manipulate the attack to suit the defenders.
3. Ian stressed how important it is to work on the technical ability of the defenders in the same way as we would work on the technical ability of attackers performing such skills as dribbling, passing and receiving. It is critical to work with young players on their body position, quick footwork and ability to make a poke tackle, block tackle and slide tackle. These are prerequisite pressure defending skills before proceeding to cover, balance, compactness and delay restraint.
4. In discussing the compactness, Ian offered a helpful coaching tip to get players to think of left and right shoulder. Simply stated, defenders should be encouraged to take a quick glance over each shoulder to assess the positioning of their teammates and opponents.

### Questions asked by participants and answered by Ian Barker

**Q1: How can we get coaches to shy away from a sweeper, and teach a "flat" 4 and individual responsibility? Sergei Melnik**

Response: I would suggest two ways. One is an appeal to coaches to help with player development by teaching players equally the importance of the ability to mark players and space, as well as to defend with a view to winning possession. Highlight the inadequacy of the sweeper system, as it is used in youth soccer, by having your attackers push up as high as they can on the sweeper to either make them engage or to concede even more space.

**Q2: Are there any specific recommendations you have in terms of teaching proper defensive stance and footwork? Chris Burt**

Response: In a warm up to the session do some mirror movement activity. Have one player dribble and have the defender back pedal and adjust their feet to the ball movement. After that I would recommend setting up small 1 vs. 1, or 2 vs. 2 scenarios with small goals, multiple goals, end zones or targets. Then allow for a lot of repetition. Take the opportunity to address the whole group and individuals as the need determines.

**Q3: Do you have any advice to prevent stabbing as players apply pressure? Chris Burt**

Response: I would not "prevent stabbing" if the players have established a good distance from the ball so that if they are unsuccessful they can still recover. In addition to distance the player needs to be balanced so that they can quickly move back and forth or pivot as need be. "Stabbing" or "toe poking" the ball can be effective in 1 vs. 1 duels.

**Q4: Are there activities you would recommend to teach tackling? Jon Heath**

Response: At younger ages you might do some work with two players over a stationary ball addressing it at the same time. Encourage the younger players to get the inside of their foot behind the ball with their body and weight behind the contact. As the players get older in the 1 vs. 1 settings you can address tackling with the foot nearest the ball, rather than crossing your body, slide tackling if appropriate, with an emphasis on getting a solid contact on the ball with your weight into the challenge.

**Q5: At the U10 and U11 youth level, is it a good idea to start to teach activities such as 'Compactness' in a 3v3 format? Christian D'Ambrosio**

Response: Yes, I think addressing notions of the field being big when we have it and small when we do not is very valid at U10 and U11. I would use a vocabulary that is appropriate for the age and certainly seek to teach them to stay close together and to work together to get the ball back.

**Q6: At what age would you begin focusing on tactical defending rather than technical skills? Thomas Jones**

Response: For tactics read "decisions". I think our balance in youth coaching should always be toward technical over the tactical, but not exclusive. Only when the players are technically proficient does the tactical come before the technical. So at U10 when we play 1 vs. 1 we will talk about foot work and surfaces of the foot and other technical issues, but we can



still consider, for example, “do we send them left or right?”, “do we try to win the ball or do we let the attacker make a move?”.

**Q7: Could you please outline the role of the Center Back in managing the defensive line and the offside trap? Benjamin Olson**

Response: The center back/s will very likely be the “leaders” of the defensive unit because of their central position. (Many team captains are center backs). When play is in the center of the field they have good vision of the action and can direct both the midfielders and the full backs. When play is to the flank it is the center backs who offer verbal and physical support of the near side full back. The far side full back now sees more of the field and they have a role in keeping the line organized as they can see more. Center backs are the most likely players to determine when to step and when to drop, based on their assessment of the pressure on the ball, the closeness to goal, the numbers of opponents and team mates in the area etc.

**Q8: When should the Center Back advance up field with the attacking play? Benjamin Olson**

Response: To commit a center back into the attack in the run of play, as opposed to a dead ball, will require cover from either a deep central midfielder or a full back. In the modern game the center back is not normally seen beyond their midfielders. If the center back can run forward with or without the ball, however, it can be very effective as the opponent may not have players ready to account for the forward movement.

**Q9: Flat back four versus a sweeper stopper system. Some pros and cons in your opinion? Mark Mackinnon**

Response: Sweeper, stopper as applied in youth games can be very effective. It often works that one player closely marks a forward and the other drops off for time and space to be able to clear the ball high and wide and far. In youth soccer too often, however, in order to win with this system we limit the opportunity for the players to equally handle the ball. Playing effectively with a back four in a zone system requires more work to develop. The benefits long term, however, are that the players now have to develop defending skills in 1v1 challenges and game awareness when covering or balancing. Couple these opportunities with encouraging defenders to seek to win the ball and then keep possession with a dribble or a pass is critical. I think coaching the combination of zone and man marking to all players is the right approach in youth soccer.

**Q10: Have you coached 1v1 defending using the FA’s ‘5 downs’ (Shut down, Slow down, Sit down, Stay down, Show down) and do you think it’s effective? Sophie Dewar**

Response: I have not explicitly used the “5 downs”. If I understand this correctly we are saying, “get close, get your body low and then get ready to win the ball”. So if that is a correct interpretation it is solid information no doubt. We have to develop ideas and language coaches can understand and then make sure they can communicate with the players. As such the “5 downs” make sense.

**Q11: How do you get players to stay disciplined defensively during the excitement of a game? Marc Campoverde**

Response: Great question! Part of the solution can be your coaching demeanor. If you can stay calm and be clear and concise with information it allows you to help the players. When the action is frenetic and last ditch in the goal box then you are not going to effectively coach during the game. In the flow, however, I would be continually reminding players, most usually not immediately engaged with the ball, as to staying alert and to moving in to good spaces.

**Q13: How young can we start the flat four formation? JJ Villanueva**

Response: In 6v6+ you may not have four defenders, but rather two or three, even so the ideas of pressing and covering will apply so concepts of ‘zone’ are valid. As soon as you enter into 11 vs. 11 then the relationship of your back four to each other, and the Goalkeeper and midfielders, as to pressure, cover and balance needs to be addressed.

**Q14: I must have missed Attacking Principles of Play. Is there a way I can get a copy? Dennis Willms**

Response: We are close to introducing a new platform that will allow us to provide access to the Attacking Principles’ series on-demand.

**Q15: I think an activity that deals with balance in width is critical to coaches teaching this principle to players U10 and above. Could you include an activity that addresses this component of the balance principle? Chuck Coan**

Response: I would employ a six goal game that can be used to illustrate to the players the degrees of threat to each of the three goals to be defended. Most clearly when a wide goal is attacked the far side defenders should be encouraged to shift over to balance the threat of both opponents and space rather than defend the far side, low threatened, goal.

**Q16: Ian, do you have some insight regarding getting defensive backs to work the ball out of the back? Timm Meyers**

Response: I would work a lot on activities that start with the GK so the issue of getting the ball out the back is repeated. To begin I might restrict the opponent to having fewer players who can press or even having an exclusion line. This way the GK is encouraged to play the ball out with feet, or by bowling the ball to defenders. You must encourage the defenders when the ball is won to get wide and get open to both receive the ball and to be able to dribble or pass it. In the beginning of playing out the back you may find opponents press you and steal the ball. My advice is to stay the course with the concept and also develop ideas as to how if your defenders are “taken away” can we play to the midfield and get out.

**Q17: Idea of Pressure ... I love the idea of marking to make the possessing players put their heads down verses the idea of being touch tight marking...can you expand on this idea? Michael DeLeo**

Response: Touch tight marking is really important at times, for example on dead balls or in areas really close to the goal. At many other times though being so tight means that adjusting to a ball played to space is tough or getting “rolled” by the opponent happens. If players can be helped with the idea of seeing both the opponent and space and then making up ground on the ball as the ball is moving they can become more effective overall defenders.

**Q18: If defenders win the ball, should we give them a counter attack goal to score in, or perhaps find the feet of a forward? Michael McAllister**

Response: Yes, all of our small sided and game activities should include the concept of a counter option. This option could be a goal, a target, the coach etc. Bottom line we need to encourage our defenders to win the ball and to counter whenever possible as opposed to kicking the ball out, or stealing it and then having the activity stop.

**Q19: In activity 2, would you ever go to a transition? Brian Zawislak**

Response: In activity 2 the idea is that if the two win it they try to dribble out of the grid. As such the transition/counter option is there. You could change it and ask they pass the ball out to a team mate etc. Importantly though we must have that transition/counter option.



**Q20: In the activity on balance where there are three grids, are the players allowed to leave their zones or do they have to stay in their assigned grids? Brooke Walsh**

Response: To get the activity going and to establish the ideas I would keep the players in the assigned areas. As quickly as possible though, and over time for the balance of the activity, try to remove the conditions.

**Q21: In the balance drill if you take the zone requirements away doesn't this just become a regular scrimmage? Katherine Kuhn**

Response: Yes, that is correct. You would certainly want to include a half way line and play to honor the off side rule. All our activities need to head toward a final game. You would employ the zone conditions to establish some specific and relevant ideas through repetition and then allow the game to happen.

**Q22: Do you consider transition to attack as a Principle of Defending? Matt Malej**

Response: Good question Matt. I would be very comfortable seeing transition addressed as a principle at the end of both attacking and defending or explored as an entire principle unto itself. When coaching young players we must be mindful as to how much content we put in. As such I would always have a counter option in a defending session, but would not address what we do after we win as much as how we win it.

**Q23: Is there any importance of Width for defense? Zerihun Jemaneh Woldegeorgies**

Response: Width employed by opponents is used to pull defenses out of shape and to potentially get behind a team to cross. As such while defending the center of the field and the goal is critical, being able to defend effectively in wide spaces is also essential. Full backs must be good 1v1 defenders. Using the sideline to "help" defensively is always an option, but so is forcing wide attackers into the center of the field where play may be more congested and/or they are on their weak foot.

**Q24: In a month with 8 training sessions how many sessions would you recommend working on defending? Sterling Nabours**

Response: I do not think there is a hard rule here. I could see two express dedicated sessions to defending and two to attacking as being solid. The remaining four sessions might include one or two on specific situations such as dead balls etc. and one or two on possession and movement.

**Q25: Should you practice balance in the defensive 3rd of the field? Jason Isaac**

Response: Yes, a very clear example would be if the ball is at the corner flag you would expect your far side defender to be tucked in field a long way balancing off the far side opponent and space by the goal. Similarly around the top of the box you will want pressure on the ball and you will want defenders ready to both close a player and step into a space.

**Q26: At what age do you introduce the zonal concept? Lewis Martin**

Response: See Q.13

**Q27: What age do you suggest adding speed of play to many of these techniques? John Sullivan**

Response: In order to get defenders sharper and quicker with their defending skills and ideas you need them challenged by the opponent. The more competent the team in possession in tight space the more of a challenge to your defenders. Having your defenders outnumbered, but insisting on team pressing in a training game will inevitably develop their response to superior speed of play.

**Q28: What age group do you recommend to start introducing shielding? Chris Sage**

Response: As soon as you can have the players compete in 1v1 duels shielding can be discussed. Shielding is the role of the player in possession trying to deny the defender the chance to steal the ball. In a 1v1 the better the defending the greater chance the player will need to shield the ball.

**Q29: What is a good way to teach pressure, cover and balance if you play three players in the back (8v8)? Brian Mulford**

Response: Brian, I would play multiple goal games, four or six, or even play to end zones. In this way the importance of effective pressure is clear and the job can be shared across the field. As the person pressing changes so do the roles for each player.

**Q30: What is the earliest age group to introduce these principles? Jerald Kilmartin**

Response: See Q.5 and Q.6

**Q31: What age do you suggest teaching slide tackling? Neville Feltham**

Response: Rather than chronological age I would consider the physical and cognitive maturity of the group and the challenges of the level at which they play. In many levels of youth soccer the need to slide tackle should not really be there. The technical level of opponents is not such that they are gaining big advantages in 1 vs. 1 duels. I think slide tackling is a skill and necessity at higher competency levels.

**Q32: While being compact in transition and defensive, does the team explode into a counterattack? Yinka Oluteye**

Response: The speed at which you counter will be a personal one for the coach and a team identity for the players. My overall rule of thumb would be that we defend with sufficient organization that when we win the ball we can begin the counter attack. If we keep our team shape while defending then our players are typically in the right shape to effectively go to goal. We need to be compact when we do not have it and "big" when we do.

**Q33: At what point/age do you start to mold players into a certain position they're likely to keep/develop specifically in? Johannes Terpstra**

Response: Johannes, you will get way more than one answer with this question. My opinion is that you resist over specialization in the U6-U10 ages. As the players emerge into the U11+ ages physical, technical and psychological skill sets may predispose a player to certain positions. One consideration is that at higher levels some utility may get a player a chance to get in the game. So while we must create the special players we must also try to develop "complete" players.

# Pressure

## WHY USE IT

All coaches know how it feels when their team is attacking and loses the ball, and their defender is unable to hold up play long enough for help to arrive. This teaches defenders how to hold up attackers.

## SET UP

Mark out a 20x10 yd area with a goal at one end. You need to have a pair of cones at the far end and a pair five yards nearer the goal. We've used eight players including a keeper. You need balls, bibs, cones and a goal.

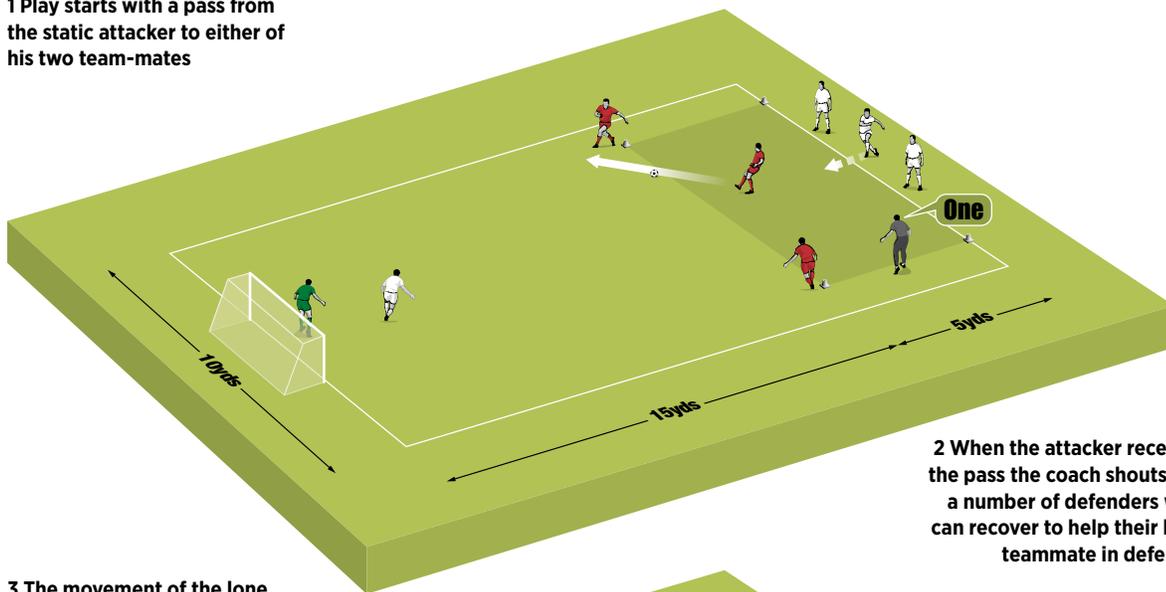
## HOW TO PLAY

Split the players into three attackers, who stand at the cones nearest the goal; three recovering defenders, who are five yards back at the far end of the area; a defender in front of goal; and a keeper. The middle of the three attackers acts as a server and passes to another attacker. When the attacker receives the ball that is the signal for the coach to shout out the number of recovering defenders that must get back to help the lone defender. Play restarts with the attacker each time.

## TECHNIQUE

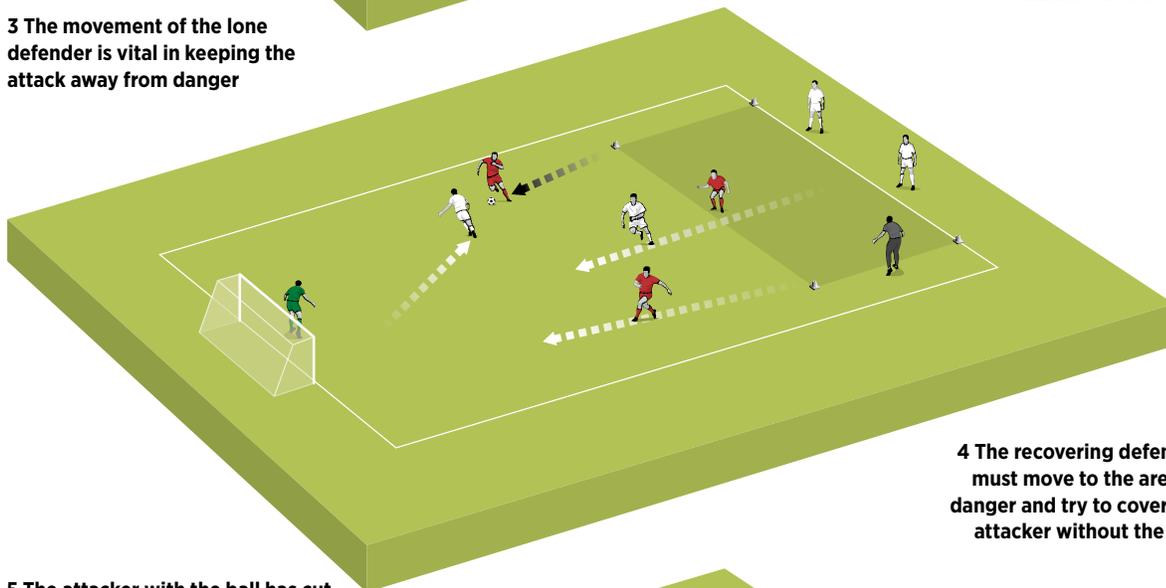
Rio Ferdinand can read the game well and knows how to position himself to make life difficult for attackers. It is this skill that defenders need to learn, plus recognising when the team has to recover and get back into defence.

**1** Play starts with a pass from the static attacker to either of his two team-mates



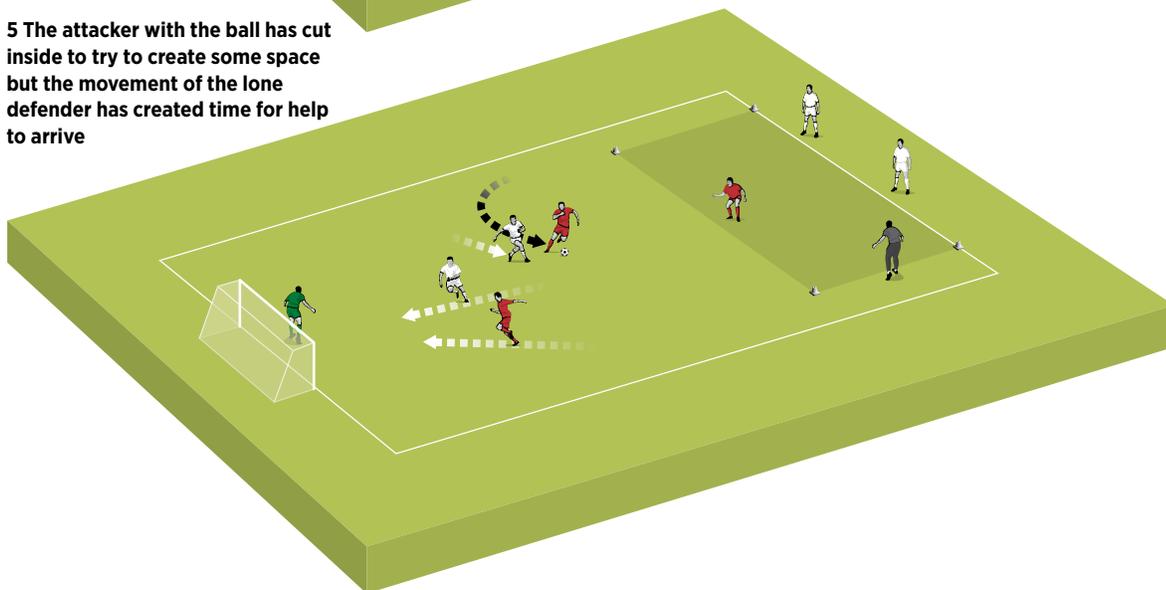
**2** When the attacker receives the pass the coach shouts out a number of defenders who can recover to help their lone teammate in defence.

**3** The movement of the lone defender is vital in keeping the attack away from danger



**4** The recovering defender must move to the area of danger and try to cover the attacker without the ball

**5** The attacker with the ball has cut inside to try to create some space but the movement of the lone defender has created time for help to arrive



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Cover

## WHY USE IT

Working in pairs in midfield or attack is an ideal way to disrupt passing teams by positioning and support play. Anticipation is also important when players attempt to intercept.

## SET UP

Set up an area of 16x8 yd split into two eight-yard zones. We've used 11 players.

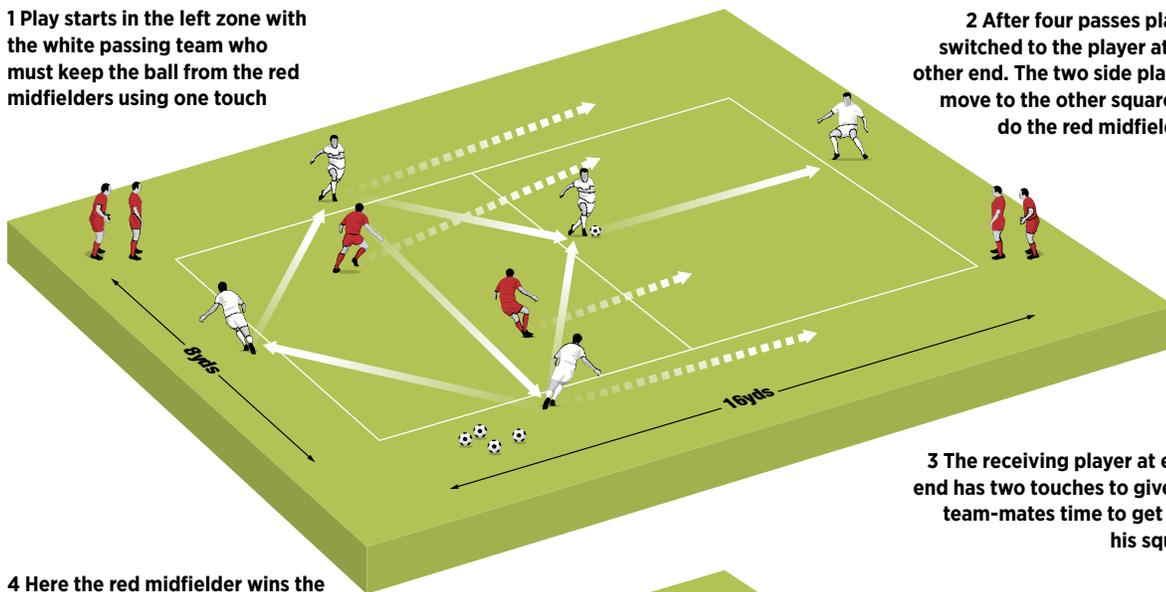
## HOW TO PLAY

Start with four white passing players on the outside of the first zone, with two red midfielders in the centre. One white player is on the far side of the second zone and the other four red players wait in pairs to replace the midfielders. The passing team must make four consecutive passes without midfielders touching the ball. After the fourth pass the ball is passed to the player on the far side of the second zone and all the players move to that zone, needing to make four passes again. The passing team have only one touch so passes must be accurate (make this two touch if needed). The player in the opposite half has two touches to give the others a chance to move into his half. If the red midfielders win the ball they dribble out of the area to win a point.

## TECHNIQUE

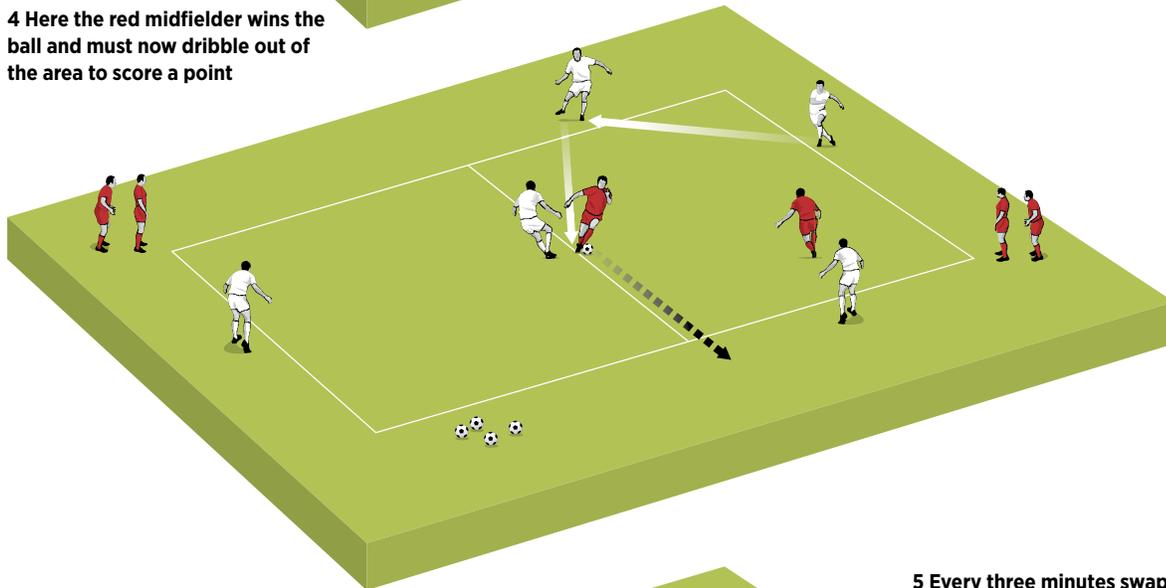
Your team will benefit from learning how to close down and pressure players passing through midfield.

**1** Play starts in the left zone with the white passing team who must keep the ball from the red midfielders using one touch

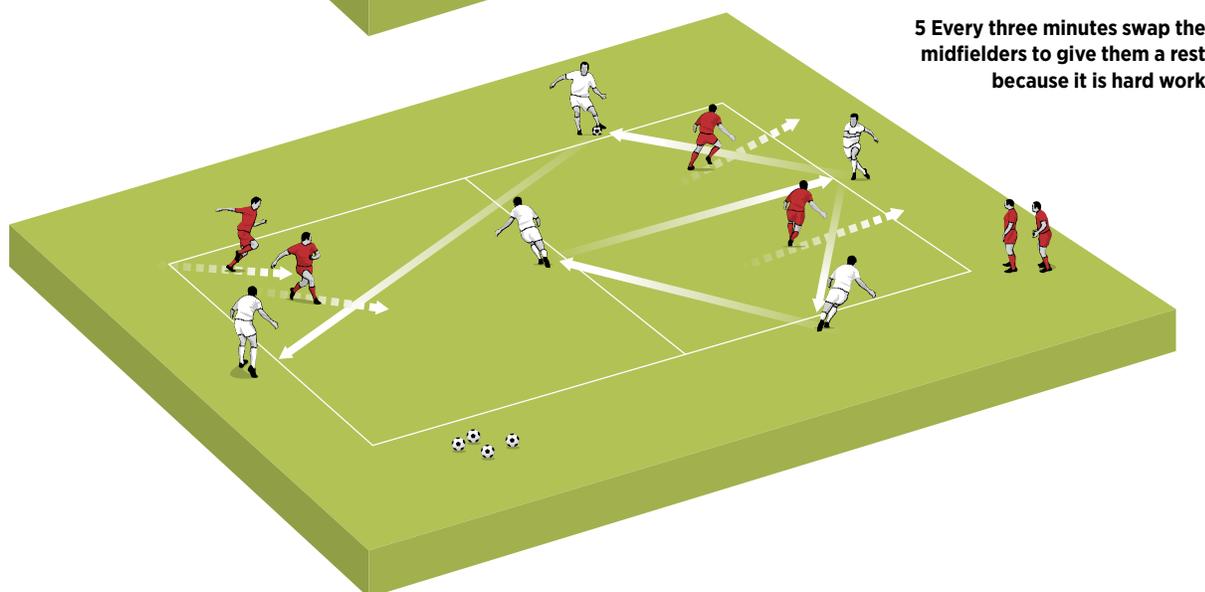


**2** After four passes play is switched to the player at the other end. The two side players move to the other square, as do the red midfielders

**4** Here the red midfielder wins the ball and must now dribble out of the area to score a point



**3** The receiving player at each end has two touches to give his team-mates time to get into his square



**5** Every three minutes swap the midfielders to give them a rest because it is hard work

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Balance

## WHY USE IT

Players protecting the defence will often find themselves in different number combinations and quite frequently they will be on their own facing quick attackers. This session coaches individual players in forcing play and blocking advancing opponents.

## SET UP

Set up an area of 30x15 yd split into three 10-yard zones. You will need balls, bibs, cones and two goals. We've used 12 players.

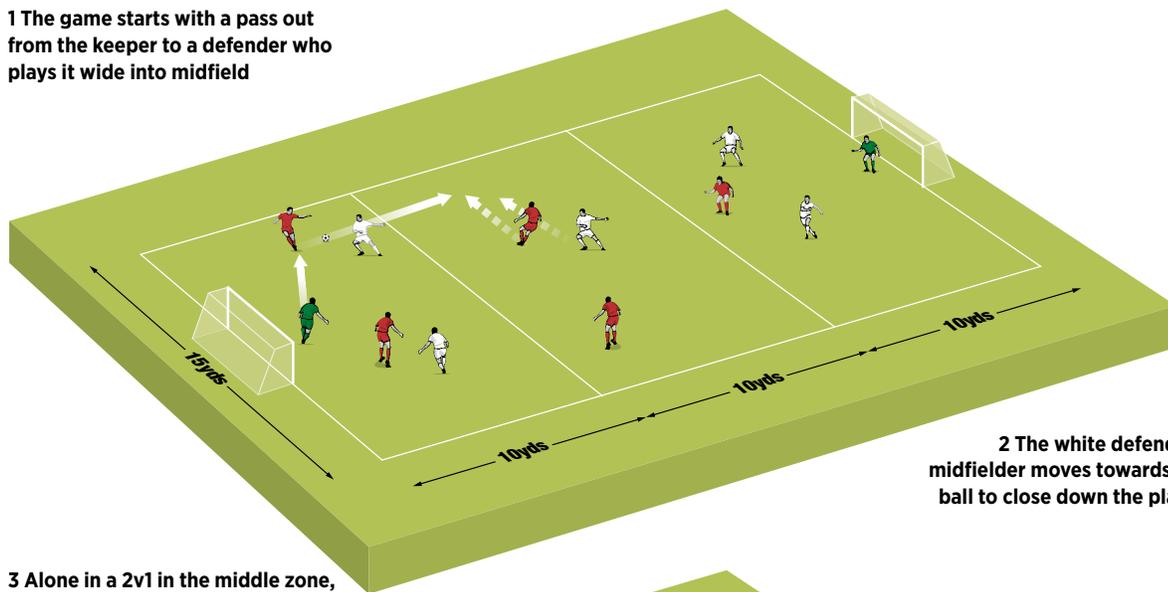
## HOW TO PLAY

Split your players into two teams of six including keepers. One team is playing 2-2-1 and the other is playing 2-1-2. Players are in zones as in the diagram and must stay in their zones. Play starts with a pass out from the goalkeeper to one set of defenders, and the ball must be received in each zone to make it count as an attack. The set up should be 2v2, 2v1, and 2v1. Players in the middle zone must try to protect their back two.

## TECHNIQUE

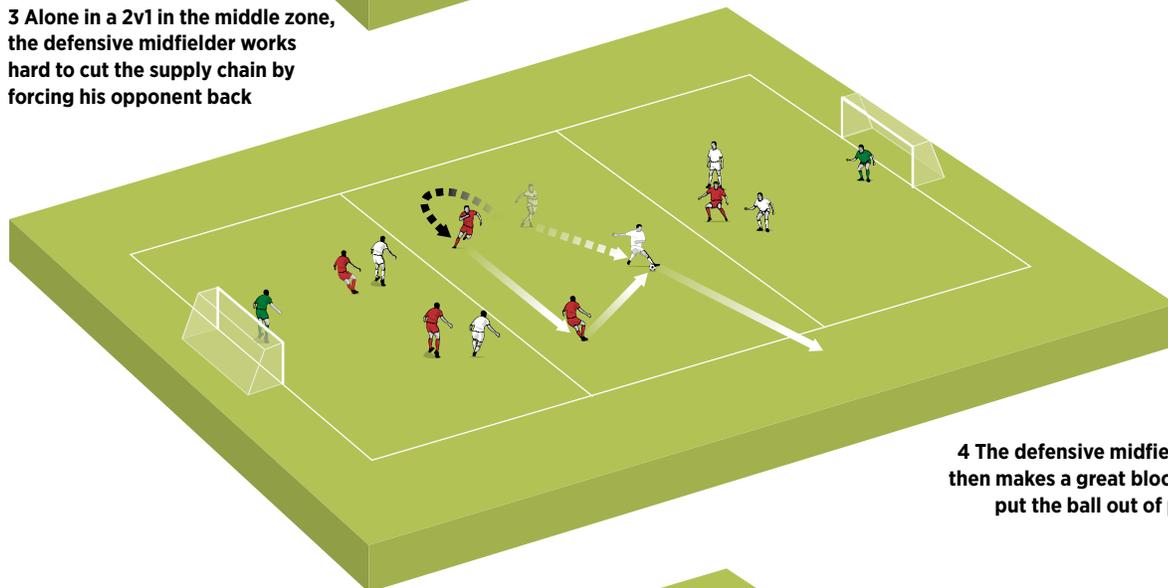
Cutting off supply lines to the front players is a mixture of blocking, pressing and intercepting. Players in the midfield in this game face a 2v1, making it easier for one team and harder for the other to protect the back four.

**1** The game starts with a pass out from the keeper to a defender who plays it wide into midfield



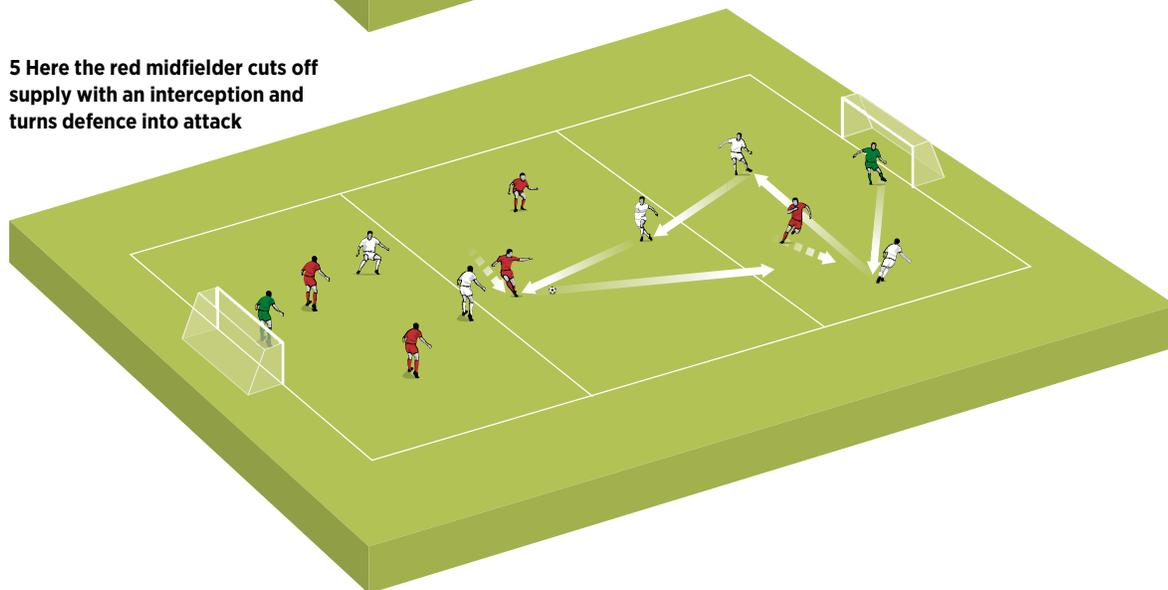
**2** The white defending midfielder moves towards the ball to close down the player

**3** Alone in a 2v1 in the middle zone, the defensive midfielder works hard to cut the supply chain by forcing his opponent back



**4** The defensive midfielder then makes a great block to put the ball out of play

**5** Here the red midfielder cuts off supply with an interception and turns defence into attack



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Compactness

## WHY USE IT

If you haven't got the ball, you won't be able to win so this game teaches teams how to move together to press the opposition all over the pitch and force a mistake that wins the ball.

## SET UP

Set up two goals on one half of your normal pitch. We have used 13 players in this session. You need bibs, balls and cones.

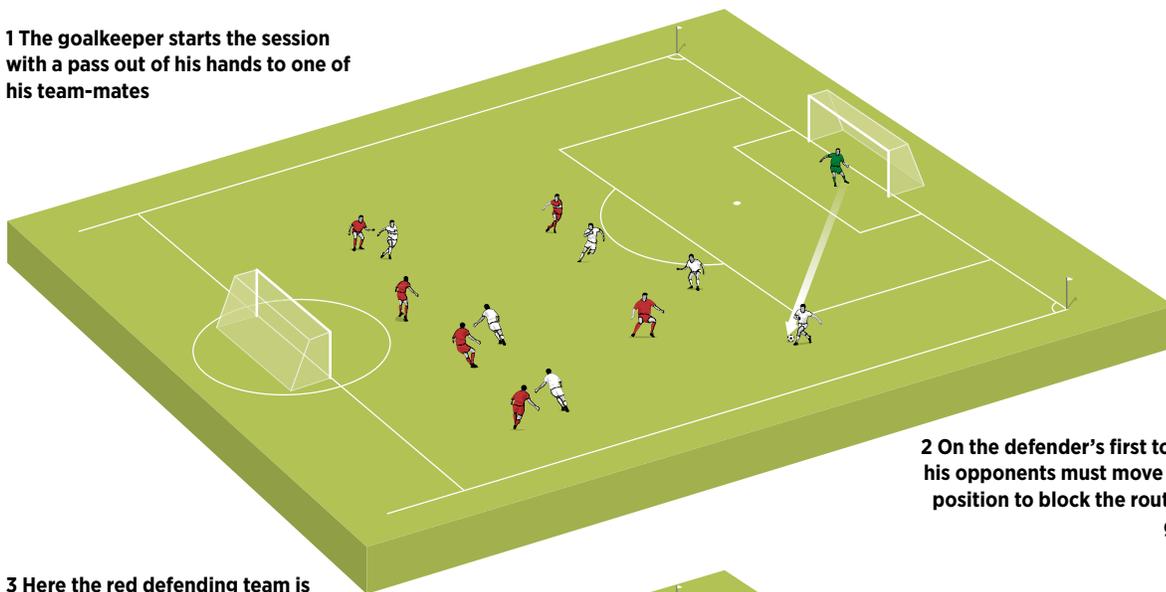
## HOW TO PLAY

Split your players into two teams, one of six players with no keeper in a 4-2-0 formation and one of seven players with a keeper in a 3-1-2 formation. The team of seven starts with the ball in the hands of their keeper. He plays it out into the back three and they attack from there. The team of six has no keeper so they must go tight on their opponents and press high. If not it will be easy to slot into the open goal. Make sure both teams play with and without the goalkeeper so both teams practise pressing

## TECHNIQUE

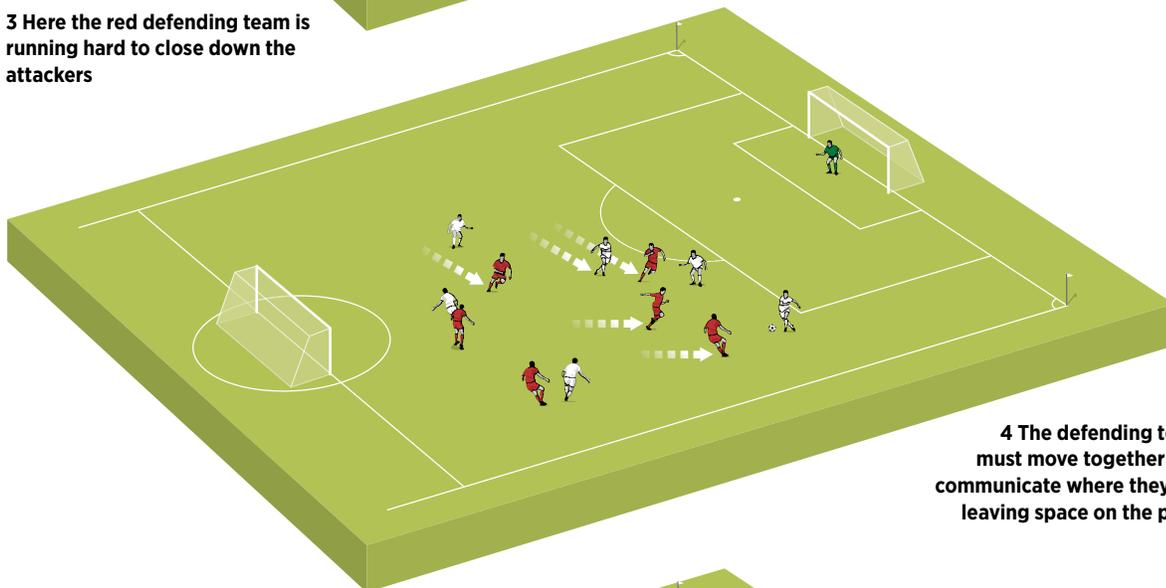
All players must be switched on and concentrating fully. They must stay on their feet and pressure their opponents quickly to force a pass backwards or sideways.

**1** The goalkeeper starts the session with a pass out of his hands to one of his team-mates



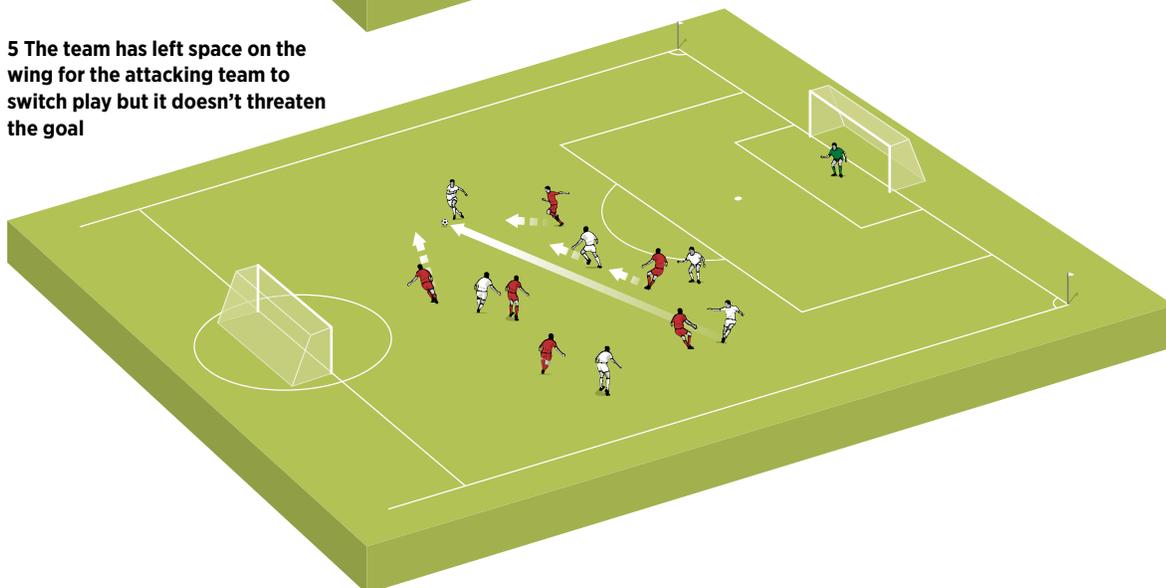
**2** On the defender's first touch his opponents must move into position to block the route to goal

**3** Here the red defending team is running hard to close down the attackers



**4** The defending team must move together and communicate where they are leaving space on the pitch

**5** The team has left space on the wing for the attacking team to switch play but it doesn't threaten the goal



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Control - restraint

## WHY USE IT

Mourinho's teams have perfected the art of closing out space around their goal, breaking away on the counter to create chances against attacking teams. It is based on squeezing space in his team's half. This session is a simple way to coach that skill.

## SET UP

Set up a 40x30 yd area with two small goals in the corners at one end and a normal goal at the other. You need balls, bibs and cones.

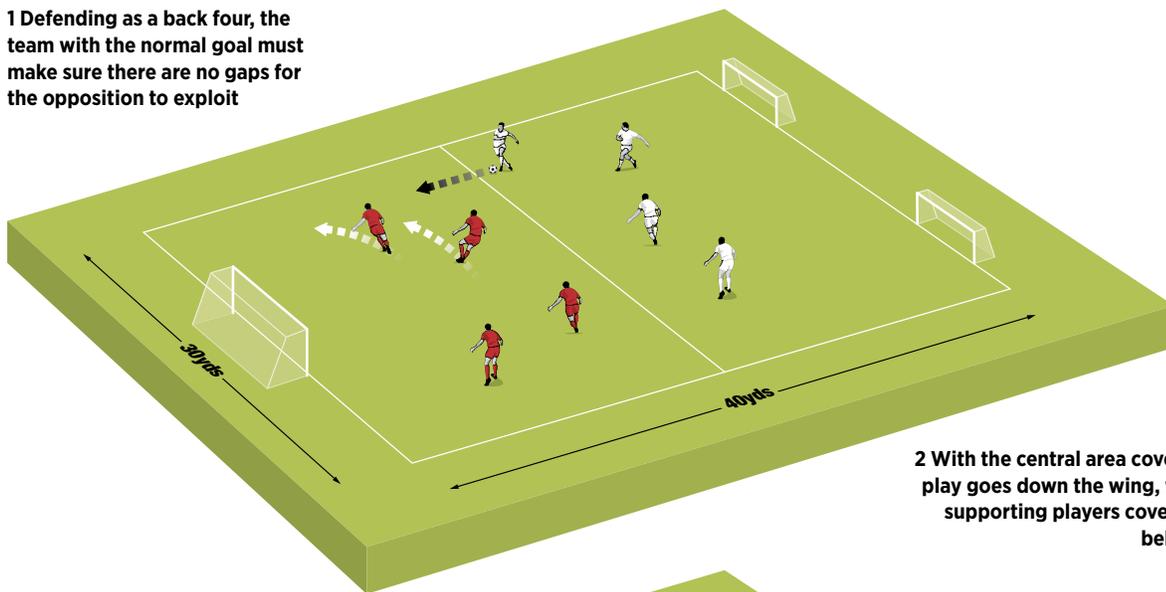
## HOW TO PLAY

Play a 4v4 with no passes above head height. The players defending the two goals play like a four-man midfield, while the other four defend the single goal as a defensive unit. The team defending the single goal must be a tight unit squeezing space in front of goal because there is no keeper. The opposition do the opposite, forcing play inside by protecting the wings. Play five attacks and then swap teams.

## TECHNIQUE

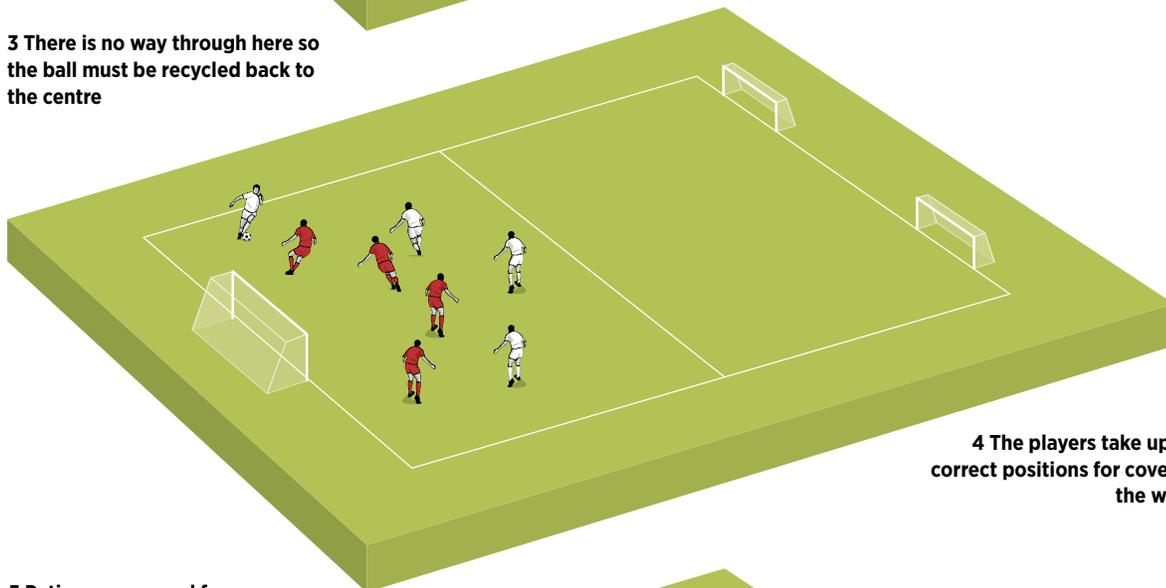
Both teams use defensive tactics but one plays like a four man defence and the other like a four man midfield. This covers the main areas and tactics that teams use when defending. The midfield blocks wide and forces play into the strong defensive middle, leaving nowhere for teams to penetrate.

**1 Defending as a back four, the team with the normal goal must make sure there are no gaps for the opposition to exploit**



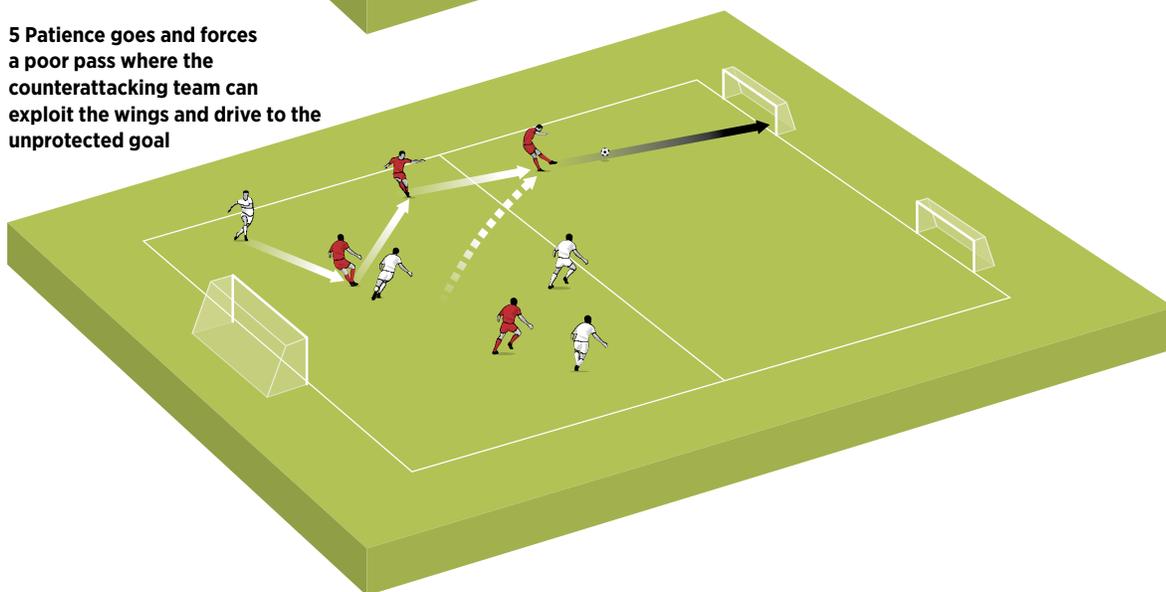
**2 With the central area covered play goes down the wing, with supporting players covering behind**

**3 There is no way through here so the ball must be recycled back to the centre**



**4 The players take up the correct positions for covering the wings**

**5 Patience goes and forces a poor pass where the counterattacking team can exploit the wings and drive to the unprotected goal**



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# WHEN TO PRESS, WHEN TO HOLD - DEFENDING IN THE MODERN GAME



**JUSTIN NEESE**  
Soccer Programs Manager, Houston Dynamo

Justin is the Soccer Programs Manager for the MLS team Houston Dynamo. He is responsible for managing the program and curriculum for the Dynamo's player development and identification programs. His focus is on competitive players, camps and overseeing and leading the coaching staff that deliver these programs. He is also a coach in the Dynamo's U11 Academy. Justin has a Bachelor and Masters Degree from University of Dallas, holds USSF "A" License and NSCAA Premier Diploma amongst many other awards. His prior coaching experience includes an Assistant at University of Dallas, and head coaching positions at University of the Ozarks and Hendrix College. In youth soccer Justin has held positions with North Texas ODP was NSCAA Youth Boys Coach of the Year in 2012 and a Coaching Education Instructor with North Texas State Soccer Association.

## Webinar key points (by David Newbery)

There are two main points I would like to highlight:

1. Reading cues – Justin stressed that learning when to press and when to hold is very much dependent on reading cues and knowing the capabilities of your team.
  - Flight of the ball – high, low
  - Pace of the ball – driven or floated
  - Competence of the person receiving the ball
  - Position of support players and readiness to support player on the ball
  - Body position of the receiving player
  - Is your team ready?
2. Whole-Part-Whole Methodology – Justin outlined the rationale for immediately getting the players to play in a game environment when they arrive at practice. He suggested that with young players in particular, starting a practice with a technical activity can deflate their enthusiasm and energy. He also suggested that the learning benefits include an opportunity for players to experience and see challenges that they will be asked to resolve in practices when the activities are broken down into parts.

## Questions asked by participants and answered by Justin Neese

**Q1: In activity 2 - Are there rules about the 5 yard flank zones - who can't go in; points for stealing ball in those zones etc? Eddie Rockwell**

Good question, Eddie. The only rule that I have outlined here is that only one attacker can be on the flanks at a time, but you could certainly impose some sort of touch or time restriction on the flanks and award more points for winning the ball in this area as opposed to other areas, etc. I can see these being effective conditions for this activity.

**Q2: At what age do you start to introduce these tactics (assuming the level of team is high)? Peter Reid**

The age is a relevant question, Peter, but the more relevant question is the cognitive ability/age of the players. If they are at a level where they can understand the detail that you are going to communicate, then I think that activities like these will be useful. On the flip side of the coin, if we interpret the topic as teaching players how, when, where to decide to aggressively defend (more risky) and how, when and where to be less assertive (more cautious), then I think that almost all of these activities would be

appropriate for most levels. See also question #11.

**Q3: What defenders would you select from European and MLS Soccer to highlight intelligent defending to young players? Esther Misse**

I might have to play the hometown card here and advise young players to watch any Dynamo player, especially Ricardo Clark in this respect. In Europe there are clearly lots of excellent examples but, as I tend to prefer Arsenal, I would probably want to think about watching Per Mertesacker and Bacary Sagna.

**Q4: For young players do you limit touches or always play free touches when you're teaching when to press and when to hold? Luis Swisher**

If you were looking to use a touch restriction, I would actually consider using a touch minimum for the attacking team (maybe 3 touches minimum) because this would allow the defenders time to travel and adjust their defensive positions relevant to the ball and attackers field location. Beyond the age appropriate considerations of using a low touch limit with young players, I think that a touch maximum, especially if it is low (1 or 2 touches for example), might be a bit counterproductive for these activities because it might make play more chaotic and, thus, start to negate some of the opportunities for defenders to read repeated cues and work to defend.

**Q5: I noticed all activities start from fixed positions. Do you feel that with youth players, their ability to read the press/hold queues quickly breaks down once the run of play begins? Jose Cano**

Good observation. The reason that I have chosen to do this is to pose a consistent, realistic, and repeated problem to the players at the start of the activity so that I have ample opportunities to deliver concrete information (cues, communication, etc) in a somewhat constricted environment. Doing this allows me to paint very clear pictures for all of the players that will clearly communicate all of my learning objectives. I can then move to a less constricted environment like free play, to identify a coaching moment relevant to the information delivered above, and to repeat or expand on this info and show how it is relevant regardless of the situation, etc. I do think that young players will struggle with some of the cues in a free environment, but I also think that with enough work put into coaching the details in somewhat of a conditioned environment, and enough patience, that they and you will start to see a transfer of learning to free play situations.

**Q6: In a competitive match against an unknown opponent, is it better to start out holding as you gain information, or are there benefits to press straight away? Marc Campoverde**

I think that this really depends on your personal preferences, your understanding of your team's abilities to make changes in game settings, their general tendencies, their general psychology and mental strength, the opponent that you are playing, your competitive level, etc. However, for my personal point of view, I am rarely in favor of allowing an opponent the opportunity to make my team make decisions as to how we will play and prefer to force opponents to make decisions in reaction to our decisions. I used to say that I like opponents to work to "survive" in my team's world as a way of painting this picture. For me, I have my way, my idea of doing things, the things that I think are good for our team to do and I tend to train these things and force people to play, survive and beat us.

**Q7: In activity 3 the defending team showed a flat back four - what would you consider to be the most aggressive formation for pressing? Sophie Dewar**

I personally prefer a 1-4-3-3 for both attacking and defending, but I think that the answer would come down to the part of the field in which you want to press (where you want to outnumber your opponents) and maybe who (in both teams) is playing in which positions and who this might benefit you or your opponent. I think that you could make an argument for just about any system, here.

**Q8: In youth play most keepers distribute long to escape pressure. How can you demonstrate when to press/hold using a longer punt or goal kick? Greg Gomes**

This is interesting because I actually considered doing one of the sessions with a "second ball" being the starting trigger so that we could look at this situation, balls that are cleared from opposing corners, knock-downs, blocks, clearances, Goalkeeper punches, etc. I had initially thought about doing this because I actually think that, if trained and approached correctly, these can be ideal "triggers" for your team to press and, probably, gain a huge attacking advantage. For this specific situation, I would consider using a game where each team has a GK, the ball always starts from the GK, and the GK is asked to punt or throw the ball into the midfield third. From here, I would coach defending players to drop immediately after a turnover, to adopt a tight shape relevant to the angle and distance of the GKs range, to stay in an athletic position, to challenge (and hope to win the first ball), and to be organized to "squeeze" the second ball (if it hasn't already been won). The cues for pressing vs. holding would be almost identical here, so it would be a really good situation and trigger to coach.

**Q9: Would it be correct to assume that the number of attacking players would influence when to press and when to hold? Greg Gomes**

Yes, as we noted a few times, pressing (or aggressive defending) is generally going to be more advantageous and successful in situations in which we enjoy numerical superiority.

**Q10: What is the best way to create a sense of urgency in attackers to press following a turnover? P. Lynn Kennedy**

For me, this is a cultural question, which is to say that it comes down to your coaching and the lessons that you put across to players. From my point of view, I am all the time asking players who lose the ball to win it back or pressure as soon as they lose it (remember Barca or Caleb Porter's "6 second rule") and it tends to become a bit of a mantra because sometimes the best time and place to win the ball back is immediately after you have lost it. You could always think about conditions, too: like rewarding teams that score a goal after winning a ball immediately after

losing it with an extra point; maybe giving points simply for winning the ball immediately after losing it; maybe imposing a rule where attackers must have at least three touches in possession so that defenders have time to press and win the ball back after losing it; zones where pressing after turnovers are encouraged with extra points, a rule to play with numbers up, or some sort of other advantage; etc. Either way, the key is to repeat the message time and again ad nauseam so that it becomes part of who players "are," part of your "way."

**Q11: What is the proper age to start teaching 'when to press and when to hold'? David Hourcade**

It is interesting to note that the general U6 player instinctively understands these concepts because they have no real concept of risk vs. safety and, thus, are always working to get the ball (even if it is from their own teammate!). So, for me, I think that youth players/children actually understand this concept because it is natural to the game and natural to the way that they want to play. In a way, then, and at least in my opinion, the heart of the concept and information is appropriate for almost any level or age and it will just depend on your skill as the coach to communicate the information with activities, language, descriptions, etc. that will help your players to understand and act on their new understanding.

**Q12: What type of defensive positioning should pressing defenders take when approaching the ball carrier? Edwin Todd**

This answer will depend on what we mean by 'positioning': If we are discussing the individual defenders posture and stance or if we are discussing the angle of approach. If we are talking about posture, then the main concern is whether the defender will arrive before or after the first touch. If they are going to arrive before the first touch and intercept the ball rather than tackle, then I would probably advise them to try to speed up and run through their first touch to take them quickly away from a transitioning player. If they are arriving after the first touch or when they will have to tackle, they will probably want to decelerate as they approach the ball and attacker, will adopt the traditional side on boxer position and will try to tackle the ball in a way that will best enable them to dispossess the attacker and retaining possession for themselves. If we are talking about the angle of approach, then the defender will want to approach from an angle that will deny the attacker time, space, options and vision, and that will hopefully cause the attacker to put his head down so that we can more effectively squeeze the game and win the ball.

**Q13: Would it be a good idea to focus on counter attacking with pressing? Ronald Weekes**

Absolutely! They are completely connected here!

**Q14: Which of the activities is best adapted to younger players and smaller-sided play? Or maybe a better way to put it would be to ask how far down this road would you take a group of U10 or U11 players? Jeremy Kester.**

I would maybe think about periodizing the presented activities where I would use activities one through three (or some variation thereof) for a certain block of time and then I would introduce activities four, five, and six during a later part of the season. Going a bit more slowly would allow you to see if the players are taking away the information presented in the first three activities and if they are prepared for the next bit of detail in activities four through six. This will also allow you to adjust the final few activities relative to the players' understanding and to shape them to fit your system of play, trends you see in your team or opponents, etc.

# Pressing and Holding Cues (Whole)

## WHY USE IT

This activity teaches general cues that dictate whether players can/should press or hold.

## SET UP

A 70 x 60 yd field with two goals for a full team game. Divide the field into thirds: the final thirds are 20 yards long and the central third is 25 yd long.

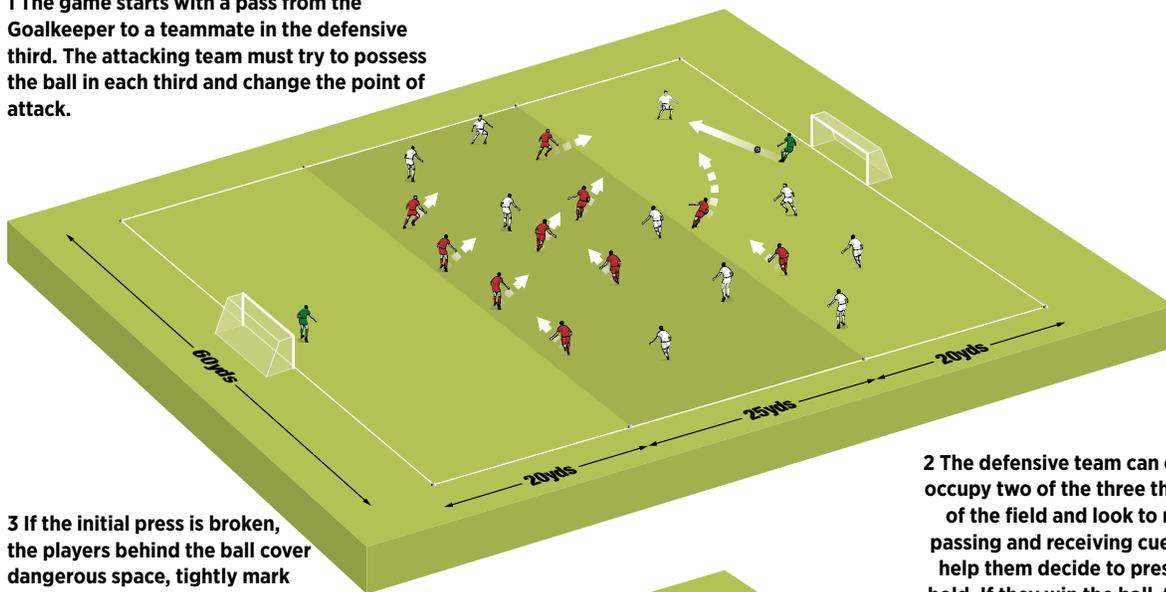
## HOW TO PLAY

Choose systems of play. All re-starts (except free kicks) come from the Goalkeepers. Defending players can only occupy two thirds at a time. A team wins the number of points that coincide with the third in which they won the ball for each goal scored. Attackers must play through the thirds & must change the point of attack before they can score a valid goal. Balls won in the attacking third can go directly to goal. Offside is enforced.

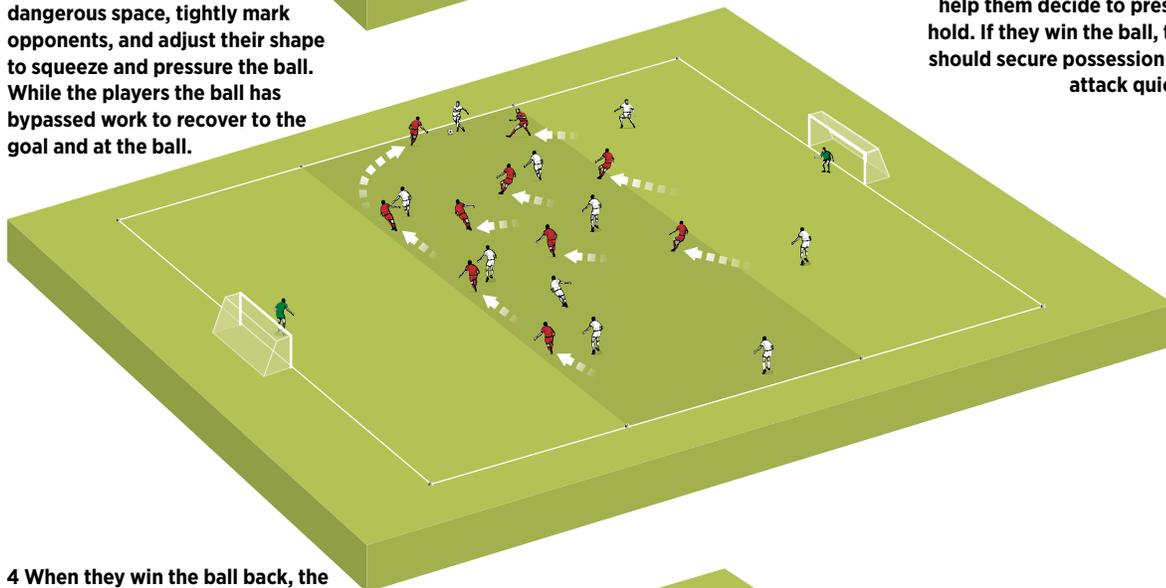
## TECHNIQUE

Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served; attempting to arrive as or before the receiver's first touch. Defenders adopting an angle of approach that denies options and protects vulnerable areas (opponents, goal, passing lanes, etc.). Communication and recovery if the press is broken.

**1** The game starts with a pass from the Goalkeeper to a teammate in the defensive third. The attacking team must try to possess the ball in each third and change the point of attack.

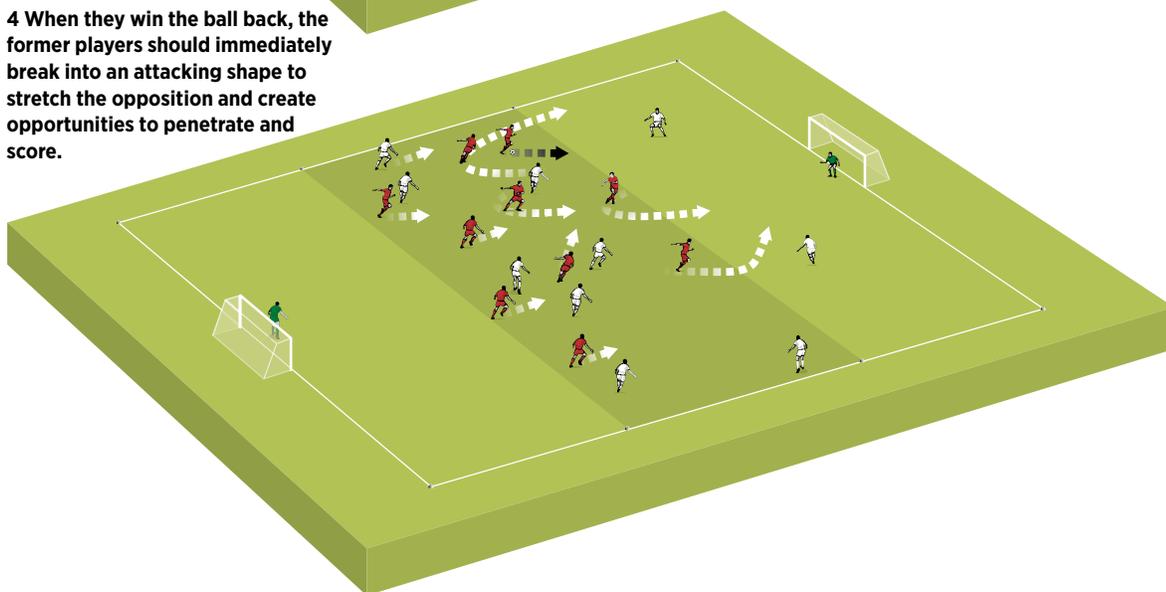


**3** If the initial press is broken, the players behind the ball cover dangerous space, tightly mark opponents, and adjust their shape to squeeze and pressure the ball. While the players the ball has bypassed work to recover to the goal and at the ball.



**2** The defensive team can only occupy two of the three thirds of the field and look to read passing and receiving cues to help them decide to press or hold. If they win the ball, they should secure possession and attack quickly.

**4** When they win the ball back, the former players should immediately break into an attacking shape to stretch the opposition and create opportunities to penetrate and score.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Pressing or Holding on the Flanks (Part)

## WHY USE IT

This activity teaches specific pressing cues and encourages pressing on the flanks.

## SET UP

A 60 x 55yd field, 1 goal, and two flank channels of 5yd each. 5 + GK vs. 5 + Target.

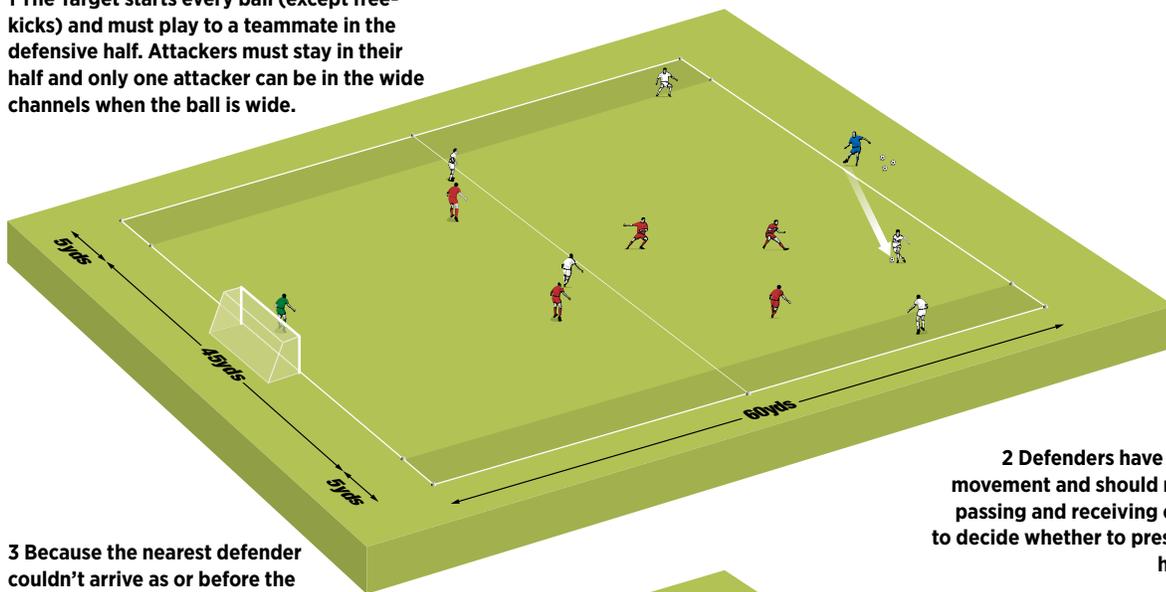
## HOW TO PLAY

Target starts every ball and must play into a teammate in the defensive half. When the ball goes wide, the defence must occupy the flank where the ball is and the central grid or the Target starts a new ball. Attackers must stay in their half and only one attacker can be in the wide channels when the ball is wide; Defenders may move freely. Offside is enforced. Allow each team eight repetitions and then trade roles. To progress the activity the defence must keep any ball that they tackle or the opponent starts a new ball.

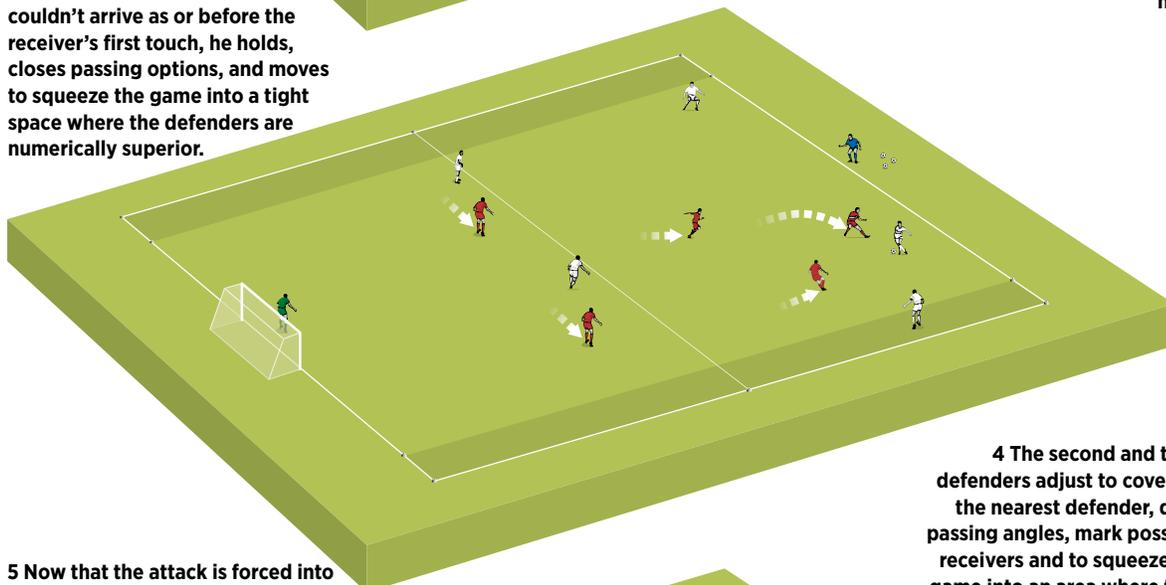
## TECHNIQUE

Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served, attempting to arrive as or before the receiver's first touch. Defenders adopting an angle of approach that denies options and protects vulnerable areas (goal, passing lanes, etc.). Communication and recovery if the press is broken.

**1** The Target starts every ball (except free-kicks) and must play to a teammate in the defensive half. Attackers must stay in their half and only one attacker can be in the wide channels when the ball is wide.



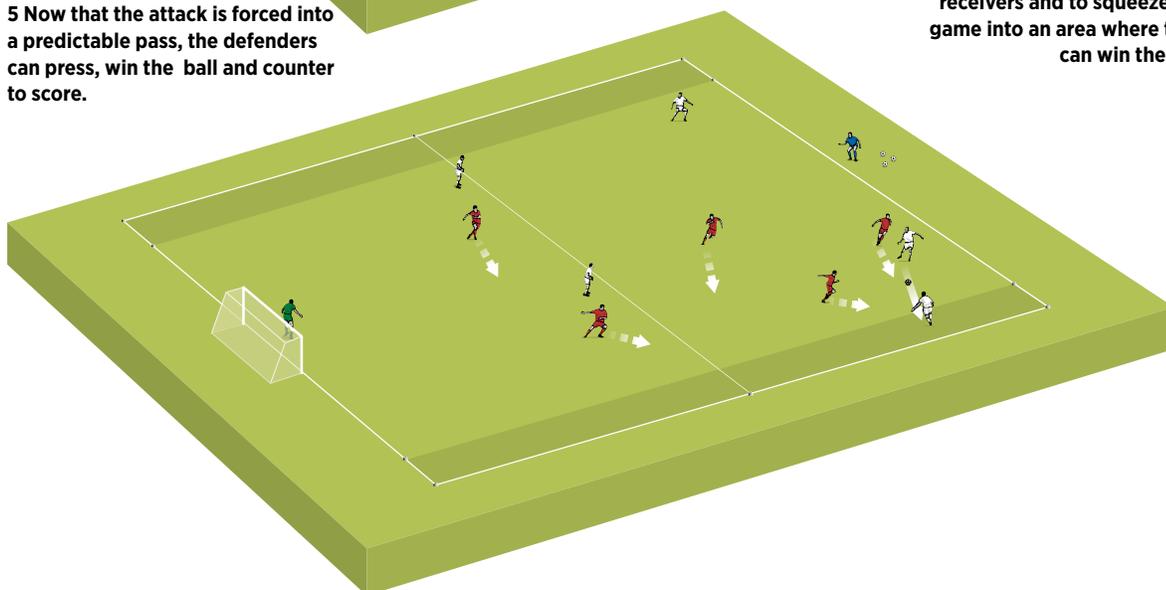
**3** Because the nearest defender couldn't arrive as or before the receiver's first touch, he holds, closes passing options, and moves to squeeze the game into a tight space where the defenders are numerically superior.



**2** Defenders have free movement and should read passing and receiving cues to decide whether to press or hold.

**4** The second and third defenders adjust to cover for the nearest defender, deny passing angles, mark possible receivers and to squeeze the game into an area where they can win the ball

**5** Now that the attack is forced into a predictable pass, the defenders can press, win the ball and counter to score.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Final Game (Whole)

## WHY USE IT

This is an opportunity to see if learning objectives from the previous activities can be applied in a realistic game setting.

## SET UP

100 x 70yd field, 2 goals.

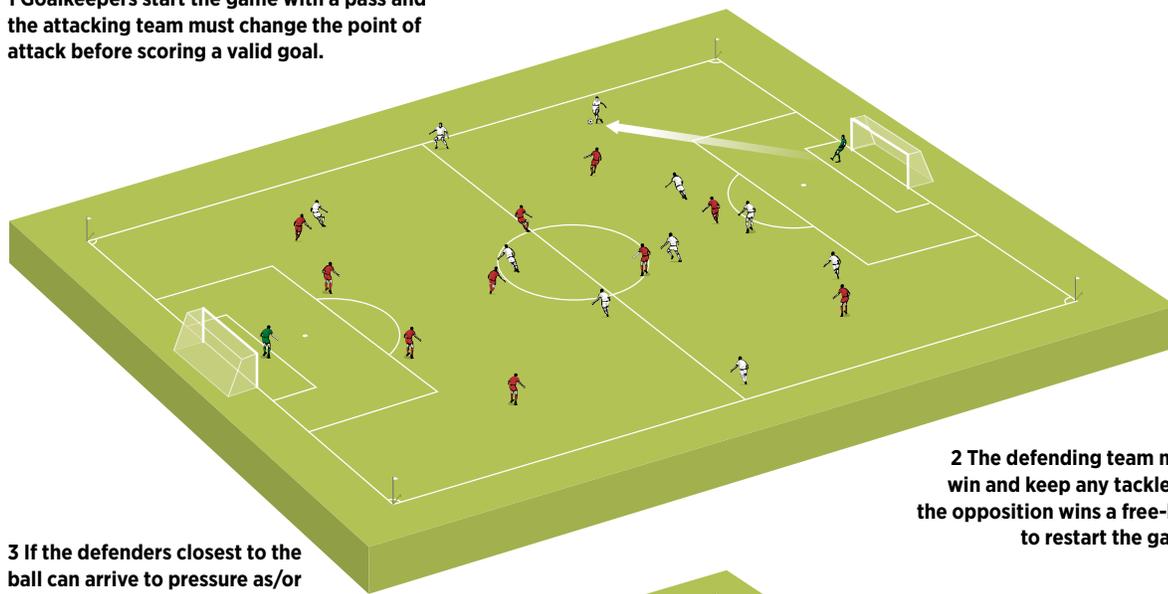
## HOW TO PLAY

This is a live game with as close to full teams as possible. You can structure the two team's systems of play to allow one team to press more successfully. In the first part, all restarts are from the Goalkeepers. The defence must win and keep any tackles or the opponent wins a free kick and the attacking team must change the point of attack before scoring a valid goal. The second part should be a live game with FIFA restarts.

## TECHNIQUE

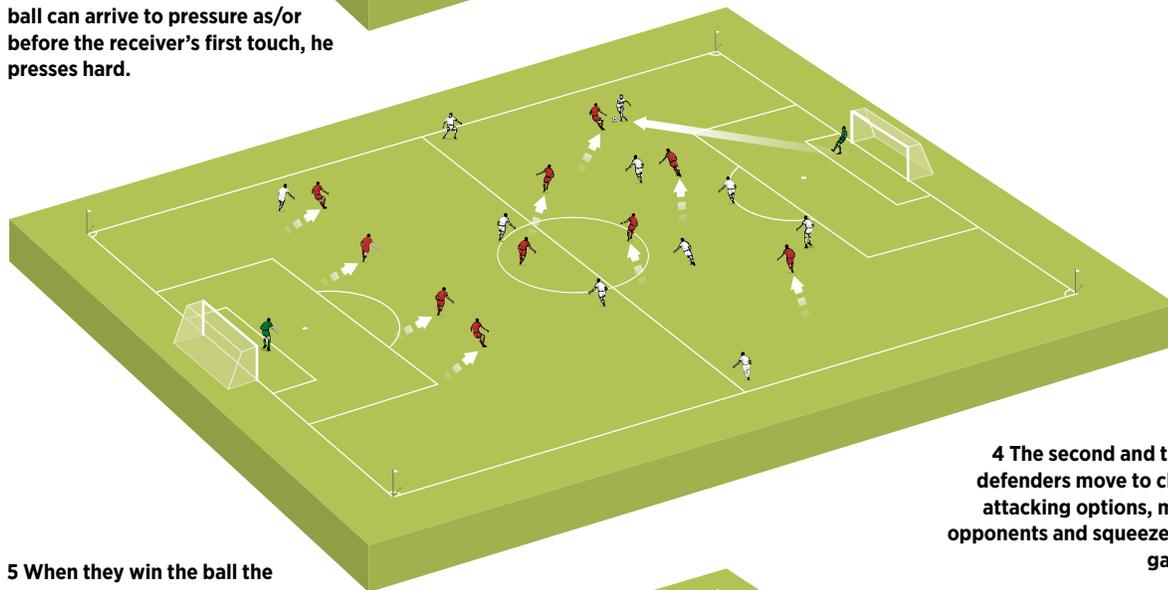
Focus on whether or not the defence can read the appropriate cues and win/keep the ball to attack.

**1** Goalkeepers start the game with a pass and the attacking team must change the point of attack before scoring a valid goal.



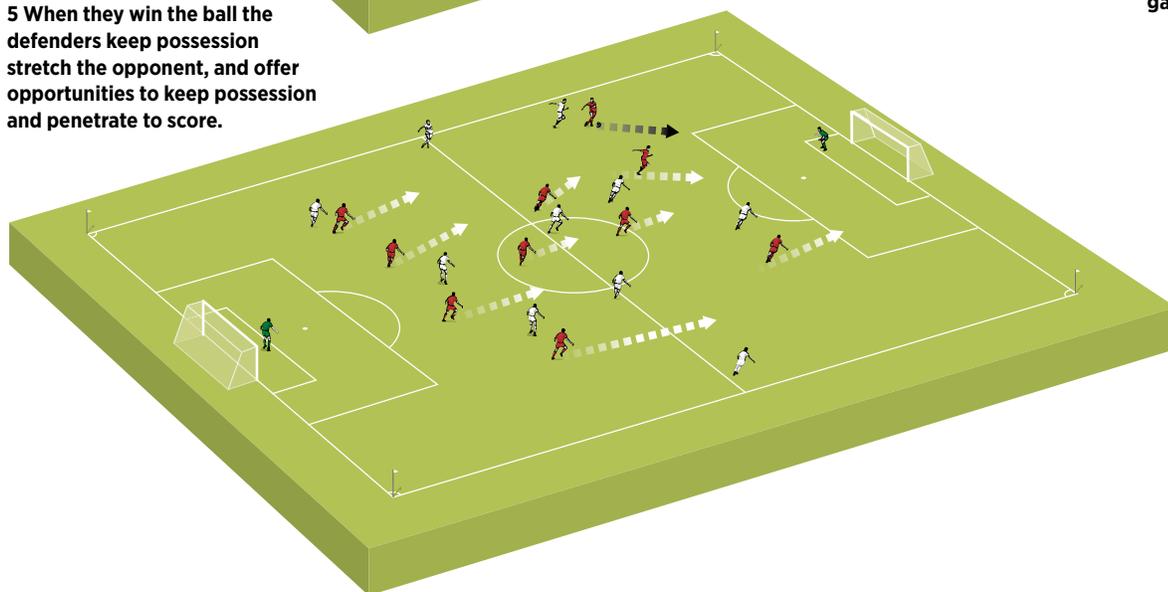
**2** The defending team must win and keep any tackles or the opposition wins a free-kick to restart the game.

**3** If the defenders closest to the ball can arrive to pressure as/or before the receiver's first touch, he presses hard.



**4** The second and third defenders move to close attacking options, mark opponents and squeeze the game.

**5** When they win the ball the defenders keep possession stretch the opponent, and offer opportunities to keep possession and penetrate to score.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# When to press and when to hold

## WHY USE IT

This activity teaches general cues that dictate whether players can/should press or hold.

## SET UP

A 60 x 50 field with two 15 yard end zones at either end. Divide the team into two even teams and 2 target players.

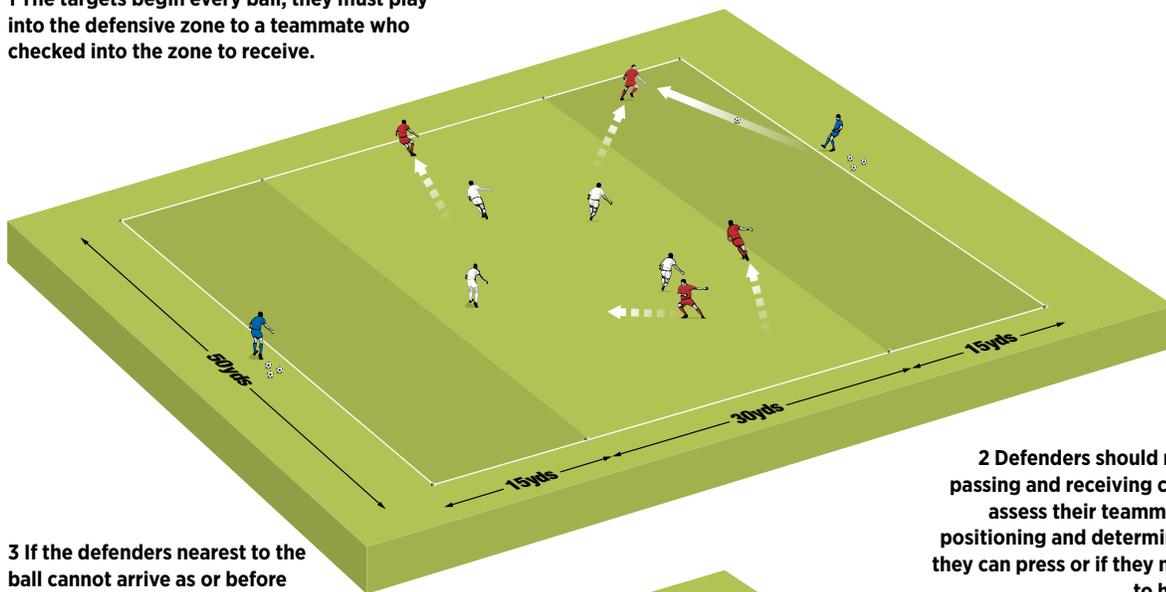
## HOW TO PLAY

Organize two even teams and place one Target behind each end zone with a supply of soccer balls each. All of the players start in the midfield zone and the game begins with a pass from one of the targets to a teammate inside the defensive zone. Each team tries to move the ball from the defensive zone, to the midfield zone, pass to a runner into the end zone and pass to the opposite Target player for a point. Then, the scoring team attacks in the opposite direction. All points must be scored in the final zone. The ball is stopped in the defensive zone, it results in a turnover starting with the opposite target player..

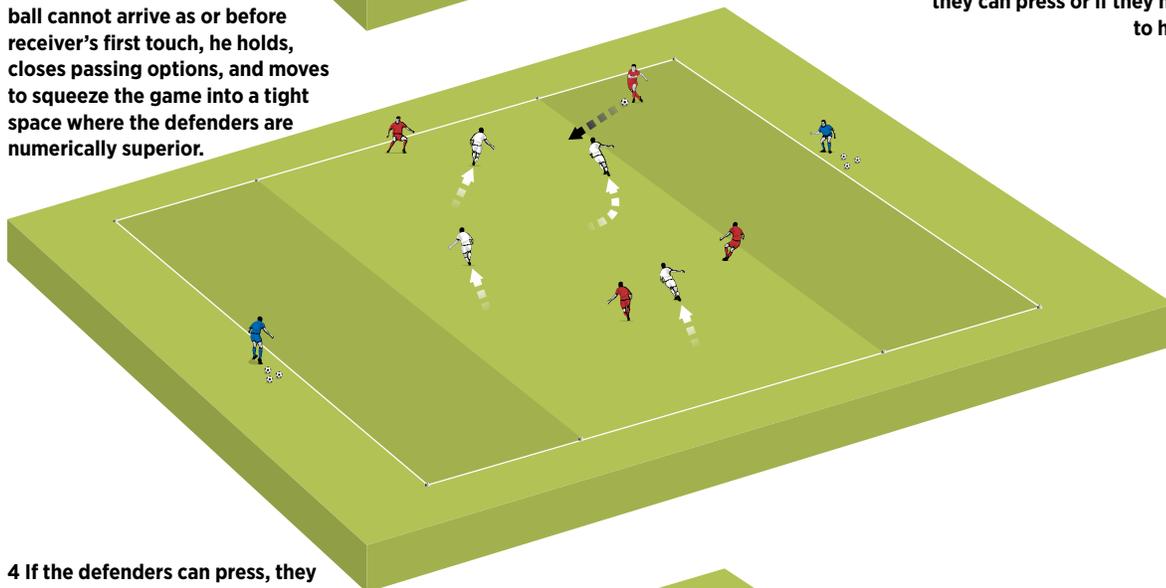
## TECHNIQUE

Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served, attempting to arrive as or before the receiver's first touch. Defenders adopt an angle of approach that denies options and protects vulnerable areas (goal, passing lanes, etc). Communication and recovery if the press is broken and keeping possession.

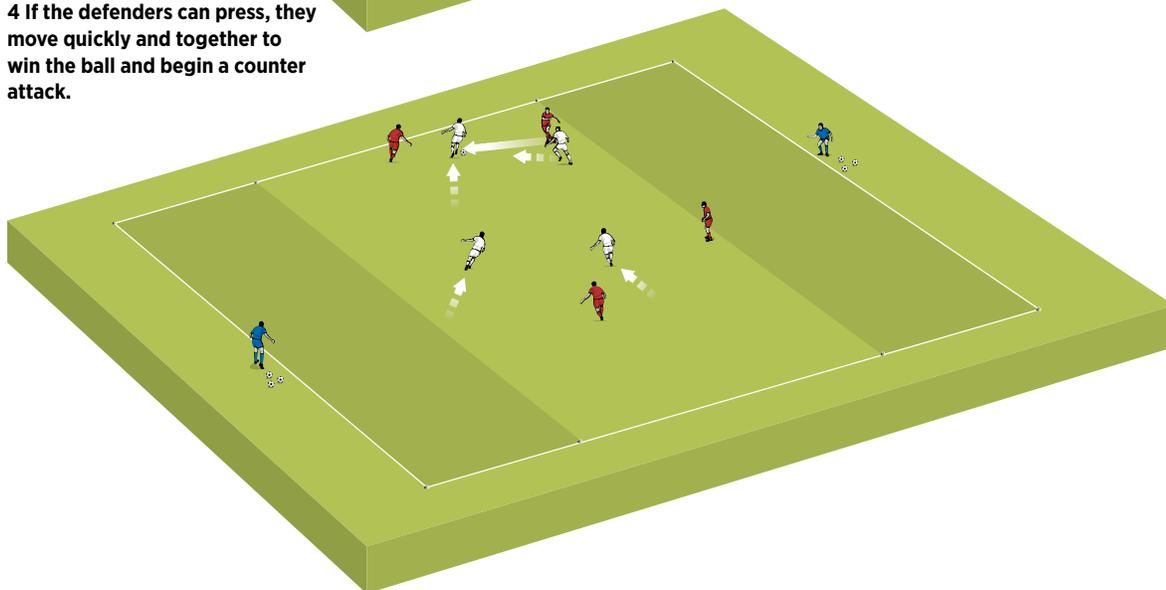
**1** The targets begin every ball, they must play into the defensive zone to a teammate who checked into the zone to receive.



**3** If the defenders nearest to the ball cannot arrive as or before receiver's first touch, he holds, closes passing options, and moves to squeeze the game into a tight space where the defenders are numerically superior.



**4** If the defenders can press, they move quickly and together to win the ball and begin a counter attack.



**2** Defenders should read passing and receiving cues, assess their teammates positioning and determine if they can press or if they need to hold.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Functional Pressing - Part

## WHY USE IT

This activity applies the general pressing cues in a functional and geographically specific context and encourages the defensive team to "squeeze" the attack.

## SET UP

Organize two side-by-side 47 x 35yds grids positioned on the flanks of a field. Grids should end on the top of the penalty area and should extend to the bottom of the centre circle in the opposite half. In the far corner of the end line end of each grid, build a 4 yard wide cone goal. Organize players around the grid in "scripted" starting positions so that the game is always 3v4.

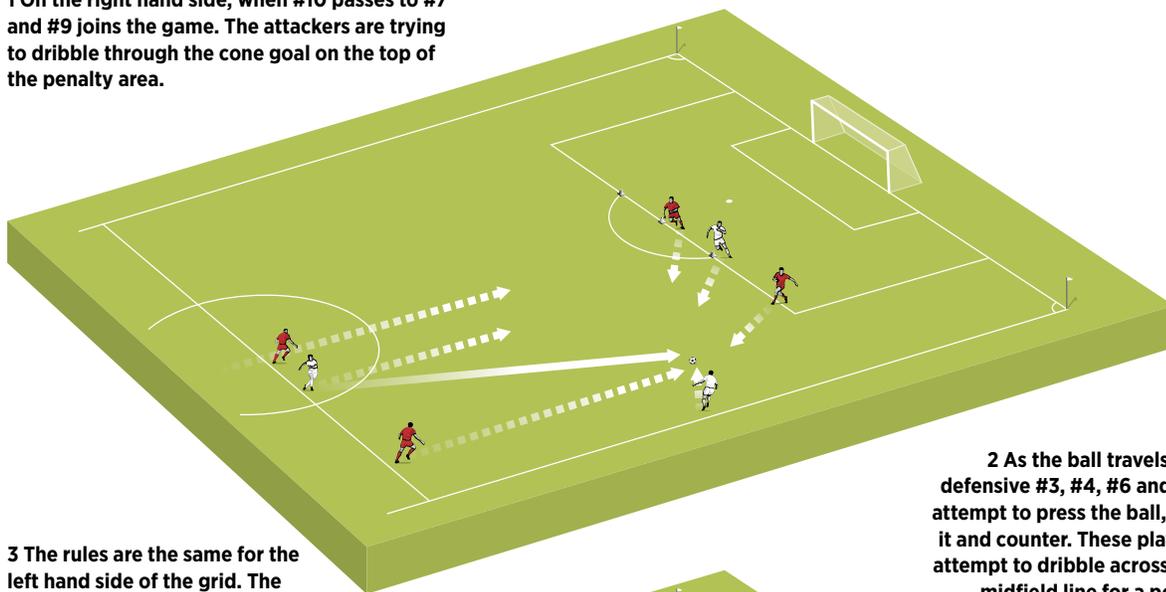
## HOW TO PLAY

As the pass travels, the defensive players read cues and attempt to press to win the ball back. Defensive players score points by winning the ball and dribbling over the top line of the grid. Attacking players score goals by dribbling through the cone goal at the opposite end. Defensive players must keep any balls that they win or the opposition wins a free kick. If a goal is scored or the ball leaves the grid, a new ball starts with new players playing.

## TECHNIQUE

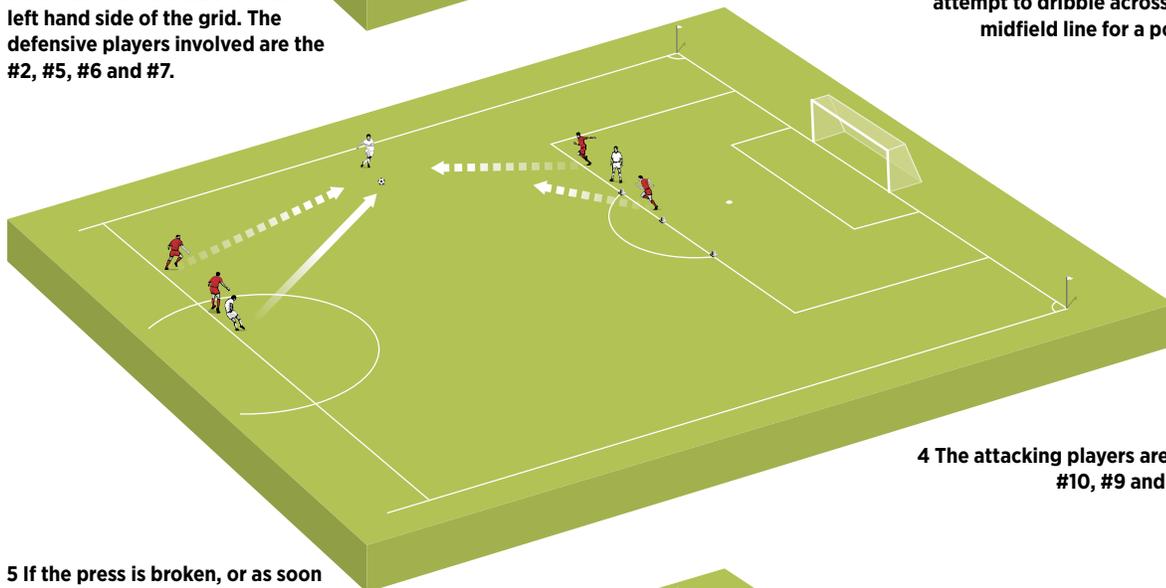
Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served, attempting to arrive as or before the receiver's first Touch. Defenders adopting an angle of approach to deny options and protect vulnerable areas (goal, passing lanes, etc).

**1** On the right hand side, when #10 passes to #7 and #9 joins the game. The attackers are trying to dribble through the cone goal on the top of the penalty area.



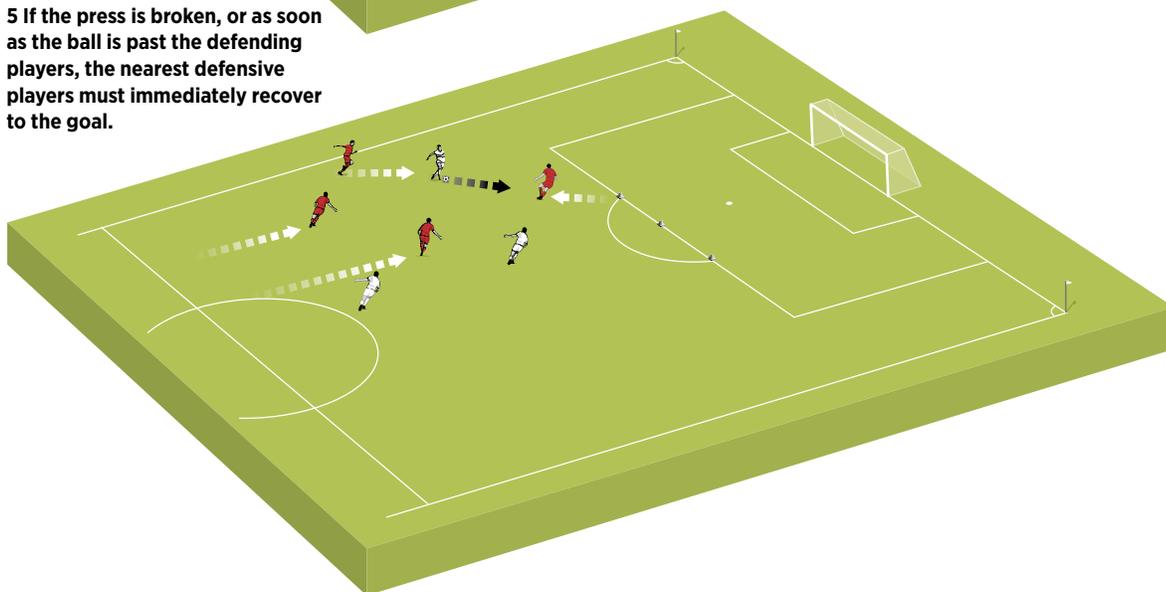
**2** As the ball travels the defensive #3, #4, #6 and #11 attempt to press the ball, win it and counter. These players attempt to dribble across the midfield line for a point.

**3** The rules are the same for the left hand side of the grid. The defensive players involved are the #2, #5, #6 and #7.



**4** The attacking players are the #10, #9 and #11.

**5** If the press is broken, or as soon as the ball is past the defending players, the nearest defensive players must immediately recover to the goal.



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Functional Pressing - Whole

## WHY USE IT

This activity applies the general pressing cues to a functional and geographically specific context and encourages the defensive team to “squeeze” the attack.

## SET UP

Play in one half of the field. Organize the game into a 7v11 game. Use an 8 yd wide goal on the goal line. The attacking team scores in the goal while the defending team must win the ball and dribble over the midfield line for a point.

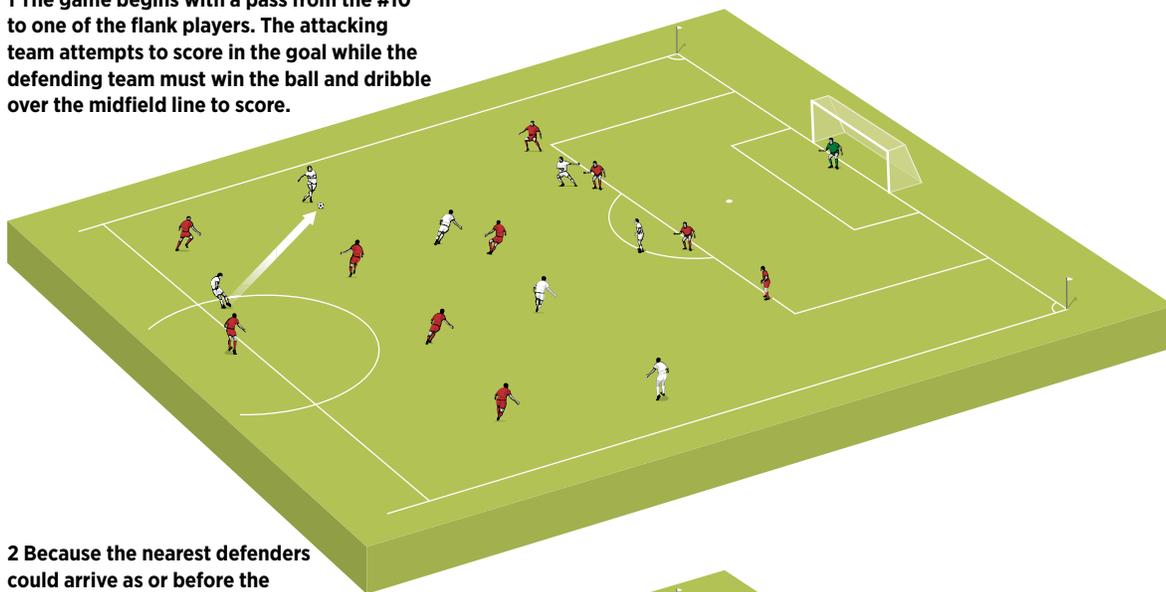
## HOW TO PLAY

The ball always starts with the #10 passing across the field to the #7 or #11. The attacking team attempts to score in the goal while the defending team attempts to win and keep the ball to pass to a player running across the midfield line. Offside is strictly enforced. Defensive players must keep any balls that they win or the opposition wins a free kick. Defensive players also have 6 seconds to apply pressure to the ball or the opposition wins a point, all positions reset and a new ball is started. If a goal is scored or the ball leaves the grid, a new game begins with the #10.

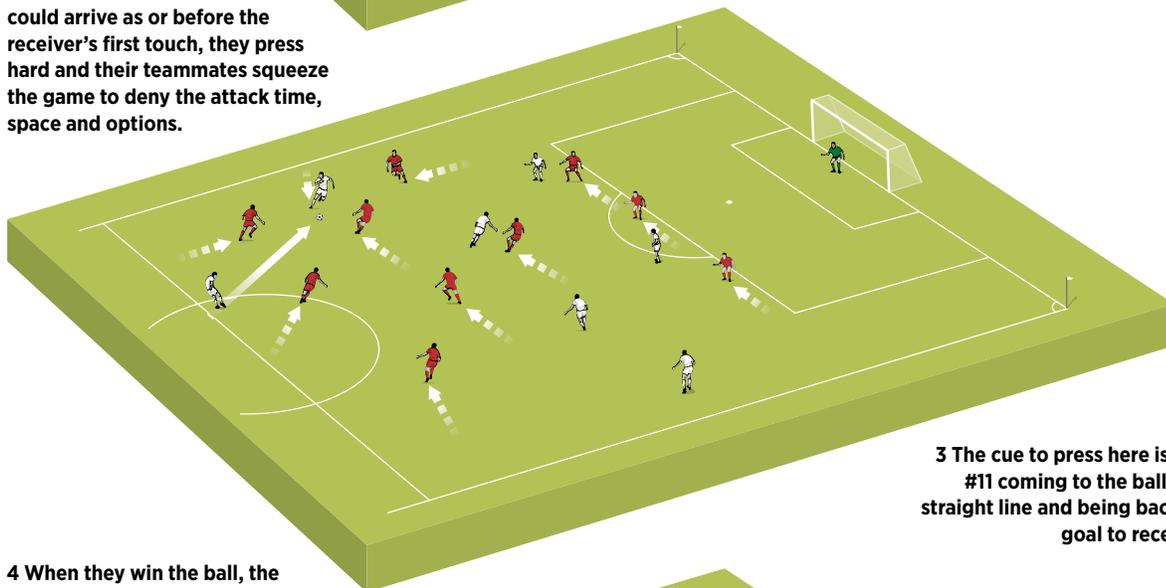
## TECHNIQUE

Coaches should focus on defenders reading cues before the ball is served, attempting to arrive as or before the receiver’s first Touch. Defenders adopt an angle of approach that deny options and protect vulnerable areas (goal, passing lanes, etc).

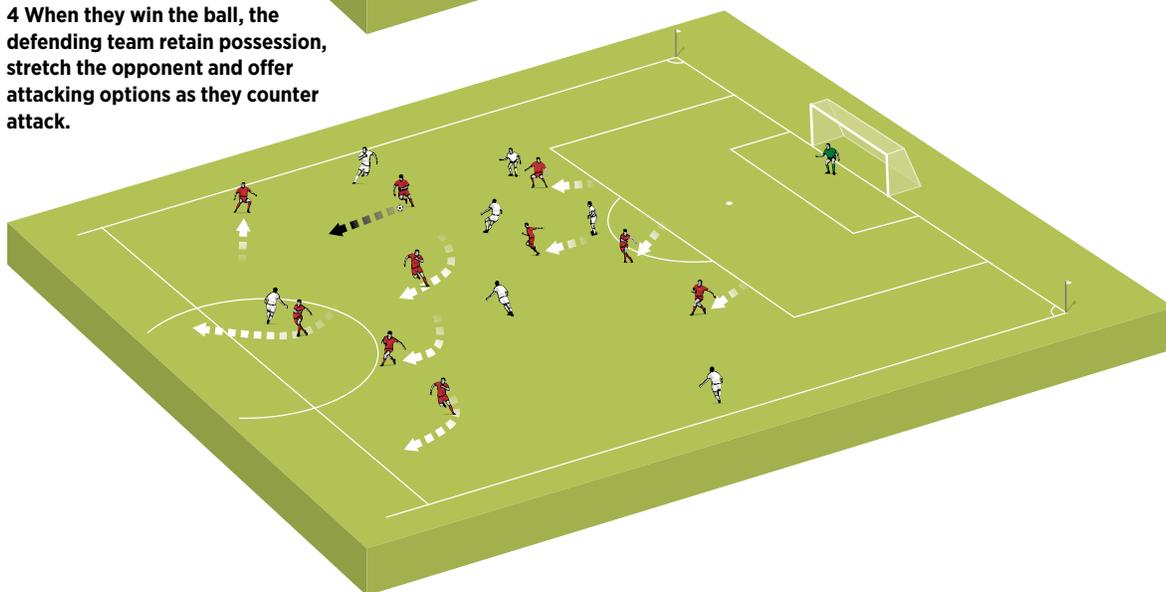
**1** The game begins with a pass from the #10 to one of the flank players. The attacking team attempts to score in the goal while the defending team must win the ball and dribble over the midfield line to score.



**2** Because the nearest defenders could arrive as or before the receiver’s first touch, they press hard and their teammates squeeze the game to deny the attack time, space and options.



**4** When they win the ball, the defending team retain possession, stretch the opponent and offer attacking options as they counter attack.



**3** The cue to press here is the #11 coming to the ball in a straight line and being back to goal to receive.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# THE TECHNICAL AND TACTICAL QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE DEFENDERS



## RICKY KING

Coaching Education Administrator, New York Red Bull

Ricky King is currently in charge of coach education at Red Bull New York where he oversees the coaching development of 110 coaches in the Red Bull player development system. Previous youth coaching experience includes the pre-academy feeder system at Red Bull New York and Oxford United's Centre of Excellence program in England. Ricky holds an NSCAA Premier diploma and instructs NSCAA courses level 1 through 6. He has a Bachelors Degree in Sports Science from the University of Portsmouth in addition to numerous English FA and USSF qualifications.

### Webinar key points (by David Newbery)

There are two main points I would like to highlight:

1. When to use the poke and block tackle techniques - Ricky suggested the position of the attacker in relation to the defender will determine the technique selection. This is a particularly salient point for some of my U8 players, who in a 1v1 situation tend to over extend to make a block tackle and in so doing get their bodies square one - they swipe at the ball - lose balance and the attacker will go past.
  - Poke tackle should be used when the ball is in advance of the defender and the poke should be made with the leading leg - if in a correct defensive stance.
  - Block tackle is most appropriate when the attacker is lateral - attempting to go past the defender. The block tackle should be made with the leg furthest back.
2. Quick Transition - Another important point Ricky made repeatedly was quick transition. We know that many opponents will attempt to play high pressure immediately to win the ball back when they lose possession. This type of strategy is certainly quite advanced - due to the fact that the team losing possession is likely to be in a committed attacking shape. Transitioning back to defense will take time and with young players not typically done with the same enthusiasm as moving from defense to attack. This presents the team winning possession with an opportunity to transition quickly to attack and catch the opponent in their transition from attack to defense.

### Questions asked by participants and answered by Ricky King

#### Q1: In activity 5A (Pressure, Cover, Balance) are there any touch restrictions? Mark Thompson

No. Your focus should be on the defenders and you should allow the attackers to play how they normally would. If the attackers are not playing quick enough, not challenging the defenders, then increase the size of the area rather than putting a touch restriction on the players. By allowing the attackers to take unlimited touches you may get different combinations such as the take-over which will give the defenders different scenarios to think about that you won't get if it is a touch restriction.

#### Q2: At the NSCAA National Diploma course, the instructors really didn't like a player to pass a ball to an opponent, since this would not occur purposefully in a game. How do you reconcile that with activity 1B

#### (Pressure)? Mark Thompson

Every time you add any kind of condition to a game/activity, you gain something, you lose something. In this case, your instructor is correct that this doesn't always occur in a game but passes occur where you try to find a team mate but the defender intercepts it. For our 1v1 game, we could allow the attacker to start with the ball and dribble at the defender, thus eliminating the pass. The advantage of this would be that you don't get the situation you mentioned above. The disadvantage of doing it this way though is that you lose the opportunity to coach the defender to pressure the ball as it travels, which is a key component to teaching pressure. Another way you can get around this problem is that you add another player who starts the game with a pass. This would allow you as the coach to keep the 'coachable' moment of pressuring the ball as it travels. The disadvantage of doing it this way would be the activity becomes slightly more complex as it has more moving parts which can affect both the flow and tempo of the practice and thus the engagement of the players. As a coach you have to weigh up each of these factors and decide which are the most important to you. For younger players I like activities to be very simple so you spend less time on coaching the activity and more time coaching the players to get better.

#### Q3: What adjustments should holding midfield players and defenders make when a fullback makes an overlapping run? Rob Sovinski

That is a very difficult question to answer because there are many factors that you would need to consider, every scenario can be different. Generally in a scenario where an overlapping full back creates a numbers up situation against our full back we would want our full back to go with the overlapping player and either our holding midfield player or center back to go and pressure the ball. Which player goes over to pressure the ball would be dependent on the position of opposition players in advance of the ball and the distance of the covering player from the full back.

#### Q4: At what age is it appropriate to ask players to become more vocal/verbal on the pitch? Eric Hunt

In my experience U8 players start to become more aware of their surroundings and more aware of others on the field. This may be a good time to start to introduce the concepts of communication. It is important to remember that you can't have the same expectations for all players. All players are different and you as the coach need to know how comfortable/confident players are with this. With some players, the more you go on to them about communicating, the more it can become a problem for them.

Allow players to be confident/comfortable with this in their own time if you want to see the best results.

**Q5: How can you motivate young players to want to be defenders and not just strikers? Marc Campoverde**

I find one of the best ways to motivate players to become defenders is to associate the position with popular players. So instead of saying to young players you are going to play right back, tell them that they are going to be Daniel Alves for example. Associating the position to a popular player makes the position more attractive to a young player. This can be very inspirational.

**Q6: How do you create the numbers down scenario after a goal is scored? Samuel Bennett**

If you are talking about activity 3, then as soon as the ball leaves the game (goes out of play, a goal is scored), then the next 2 players step into the game. As these 2 players step into the game, then the 2 attackers transition into becoming defenders, the player who touches the ball last has to touch the opposition's goal (recovery player) and the other attacker stays to defend. The recovery player is not allowed to start to defend until they touch the opposition's goal, which creates the 2 vs 1 scenario. If the recovery player is quick/attackers slow then this scenario might not last that long.

**Q7: How much time do you spend working on defending with your players? Hector Tamayo**

In terms of how much time during a practice I would spend on defending then if I decide to do a defending session then I would stay on topic for the whole of the session. One of the things I like to do each season is to have my first couple of the sessions as defending ones. This allows me to set the work ethic of the team defensively from day one.

**Q8: Other than recovering the ball quickly after a turnover, do you have any other examples of keeping your team positive during defending? Greg Gomes**

It is not only the mentality to win the ball back quickly when we lose it that makes the teams I work with positive, but also the areas of the field in which we look to pressure the opposition and win the ball back as well. I like my players to try and recover the ball as close as possible to the opponent's goal. To help us to transition when we win the ball back we look to force the opposition inside as much as possible (we are in a better position to score from central areas).

**Q9: When coaching poke/block tackles, is it best to play 1v1 and let the players know when to use the block or poke technique? Justin Riffs**

These activities can be a good way to teach these techniques. Another way of teaching the technique of the poke/block tackle could be to use activity 2b but as the defender is jockeying the attacker they are working on either technique. Practicing these techniques in a more dynamic activity allows the players to practice them in a more realistic scenario that they would use these techniques in, as opposed to standing and practicing them statically.

**Q10: In activity 3 (Delay), what message/vocabulary would you use to communicate to the recovery player? Paul Hamilton**

It is not necessarily the specific language you use, it is more to do with the tone in which you are communicating to the recovery player. By asking the delaying player to take an energetic and encouraging tone to the recovery player as this helps them to work harder to get back in defence and create an even numbers situation so we are able to pressure the ball.

**Q11: What are the starting positions for the 2 on 2 - activity 3 (Delay)? Thomas Connolly**

Activity 3 is a 2 vs 1 + recovery defender. In the activity there are multiple players who start either side of the goal and enter the game when the ball goes out of play.

**Q12: Which of these activities is most easily adaptable to the 5-7 year olds and how would you adjust it? Eddie Rockwell**

Doing defending with 5-7 year olds is not always developmentally appropriate. Players at this age are generally in the mind set of "me, mine etc". The idea of sharing and the concept of spatial awareness are such that you need to consider not only the developmentally appropriateness of defending but also the risk management of doing defending at this age. My personal philosophy is that the youngest I would start to discuss defending would be U8.

**Q13: One issue of coaching defending to young players is the competency of the dribbling attacker – how do you address this? Sean McDonald**

My personal philosophy is that if players are not competent enough at dribbling the ball then my attention as a coach is that I shouldn't even be thinking about defending but working on improving this competency.

**Q14: Should 'transition' be a principle? Carmine Intriери**

Transitional periods within the game are very important and can be the difference in the outcomes of the game. I try and include transitional periods in as many activities as possible, as the more that you are able to include them the more players will be able to reduce their thought process during these periods.

**Q15: In activity 2 (Preventing the Turn), should the neutral player be a coach? Jared Mancini**

No. The activity would be set up multiple times and by using neutral players allows more participation in the activity. Having them as the neutral players enables them to have an active recovery period whilst maintaining a high work to rest ratio, as well as keeping the activity at a game like intensity.

# Pressure

## WHY USE IT

This session will help players to improve their technique when pressing the ball. It allows players to focus on all of the small details of pressing the ball in a fun and challenging environment.

## SET UP

6 areas of 10x10 yd which transfer into 3 areas of 20x10 yd.

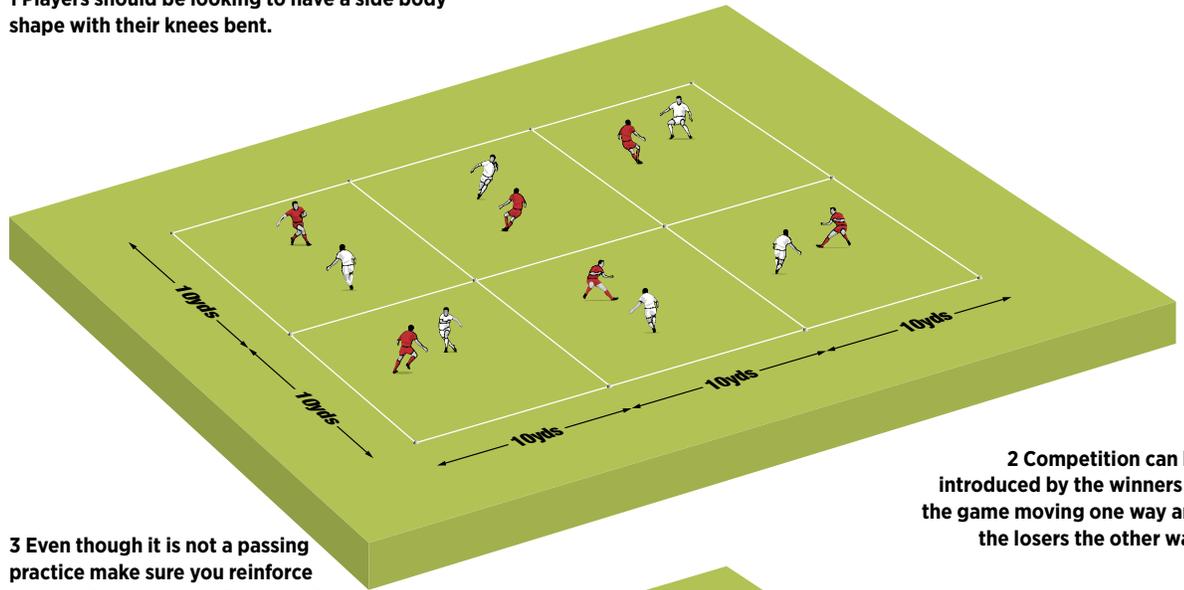
## HOW TO PLAY

Activity 1 - players start the game on the edge of the areas. Players score a point by tagging the back of their opponents leg. Players restart after every point. Players play for 2 minutes. Activity 2 - Players make 5 passes and on the 5th pass players pressure the ball. The receiving player is just jockeying and trying to keep the attacker ahead of them. Activity 3 - Defenders pass to attackers and then look to win the ball back, if they do they score by dribbling over end line. Attackers are looking to score by dribbling over end line. Players get additional points by scoring with either a nutmeg or a tap around.

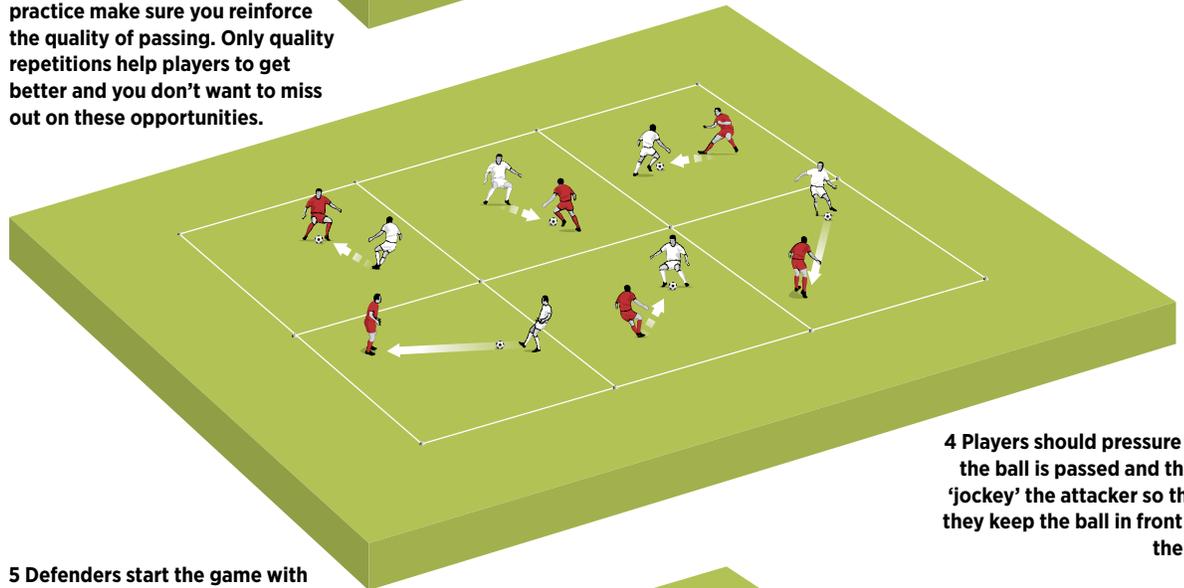
## TECHNIQUE

You are looking for players to be able to put quick pressure on the attacker, slow them down and to find an opportunity to try and win the ball. Common problems occur with players body shape and position.

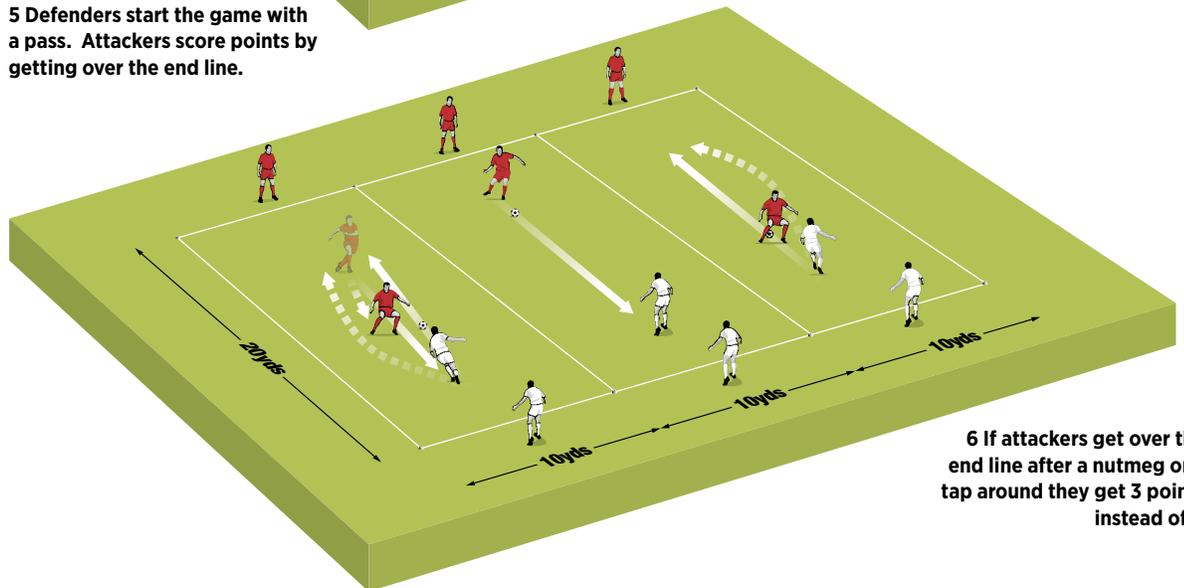
**1** Players should be looking to have a side body shape with their knees bent.



**3** Even though it is not a passing practice make sure you reinforce the quality of passing. Only quality repetitions help players to get better and you don't want to miss out on these opportunities.



**5** Defenders start the game with a pass. Attackers score points by getting over the end line.



**2** Competition can be introduced by the winners of the game moving one way and the losers the other way.

**4** Players should pressure as the ball is passed and then 'jockey' the attacker so that they keep the ball in front of them.

**6** If attackers get over the end line after a nutmeg or a tap around they get 3 points instead of 1.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Preventing the turn

## WHY USE IT

This session will help players to improve their understanding of how to stop attackers from turning with the ball whilst not giving up penetrating lanes in behind them. By using the neutral player it also allows players to read the cues of the passing player to help them to understanding when they can look to try to intercept the ball.

## SET UP

20x10 yd - Area size dependent on age and ability of players. Area size can be increased to make it more challenging or decreased to make it easy for players.

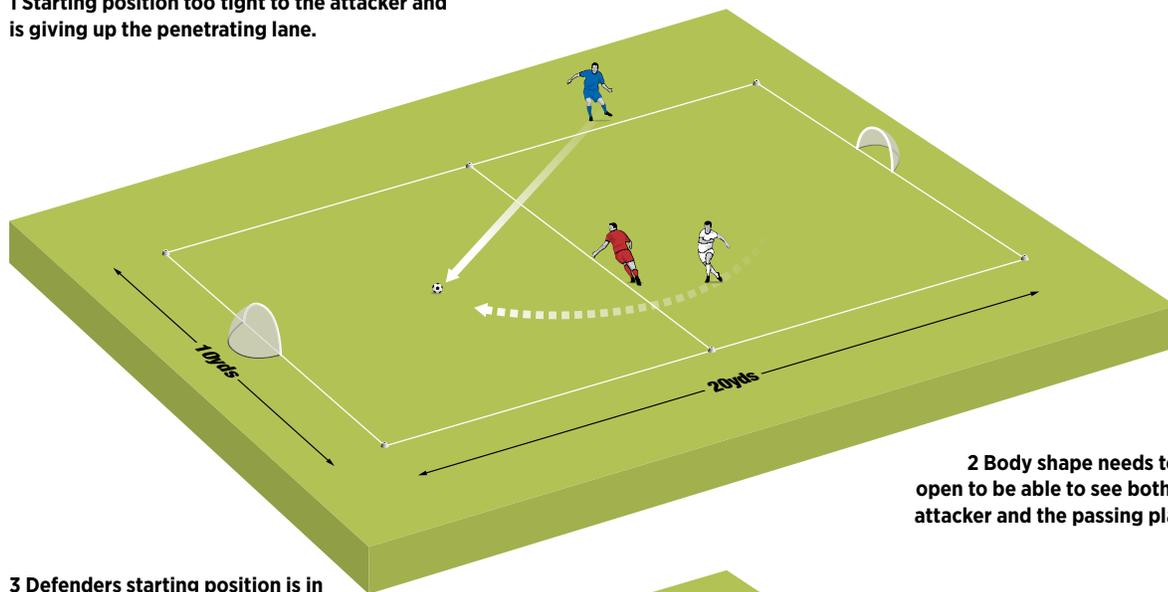
## HOW TO PLAY

1 vs 1 game, both players have a neutral player in their defending half. Whenever the ball goes out the neutral player in that half restarts the game. Players play for 2 minutes continuous. The neutral player passing the ball in allows defenders to work on their defensive starting positions on the field and also allows you to work on their ability to read the game to step in and win the ball.

## TECHNIQUE

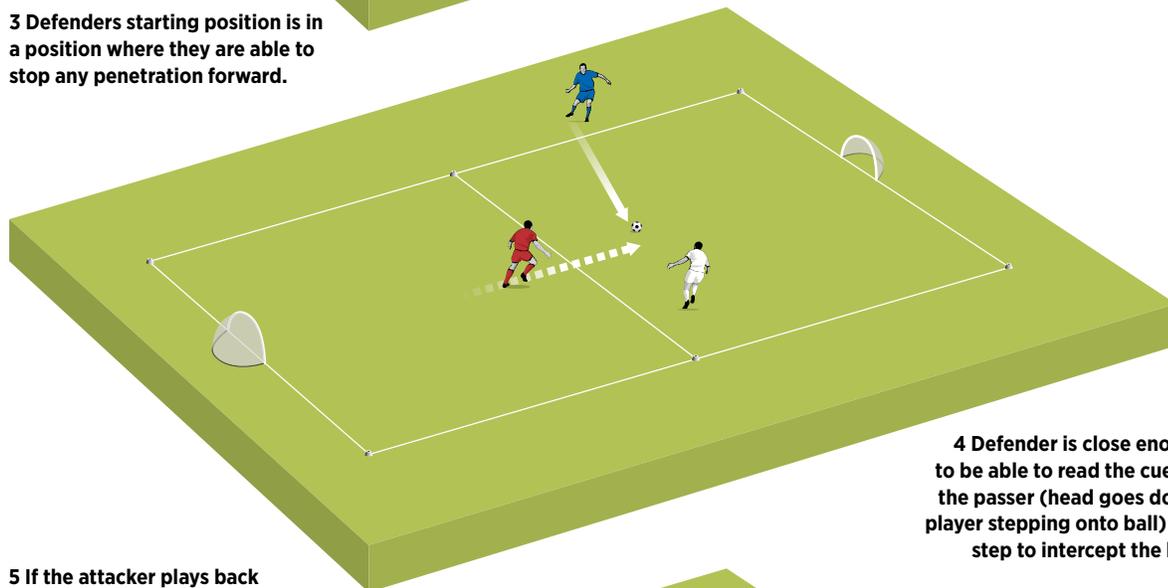
Players should be looking to read the cues of the passing player to see when to try and intercept the ball. Players must also judge the distance they need to travel and the speed of the pass so that they do not over commit and get beat.

**1 Starting position too tight to the attacker and is giving up the penetrating lane.**



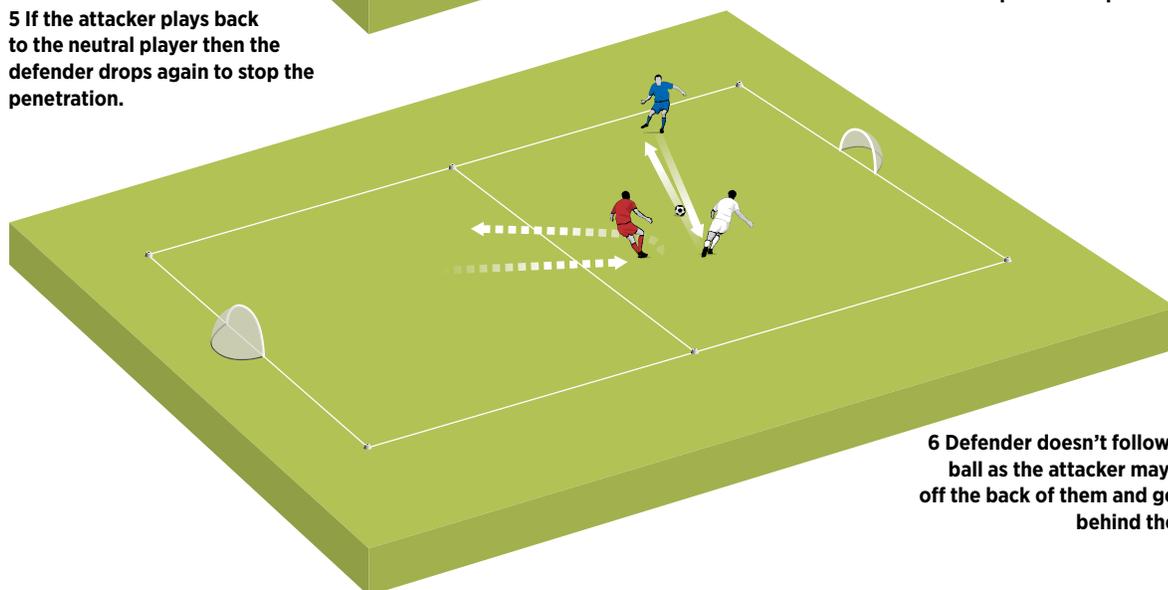
**2 Body shape needs to be open to be able to see both the attacker and the passing player**

**3 Defenders starting position is in a position where they are able to stop any penetration forward.**



**4 Defender is close enough to be able to read the cues of the passer (head goes down, player stepping onto ball) and step to intercept the ball.**

**5 If the attacker plays back to the neutral player then the defender drops again to stop the penetration.**



**6 Defender doesn't follow the ball as the attacker may run off the back of them and get in behind them..**

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Delay

## WHY USE IT

This session puts players in a numbers down situation constantly. This presents a different problem to the defender as they have to be patient and delay the play before looking to win the ball.

## SET UP

20x10 yd - Area size dependent on age, ability of the players. Game can be played with small goals to make the game smaller and quicker or with normal size goals and a GK for realism.

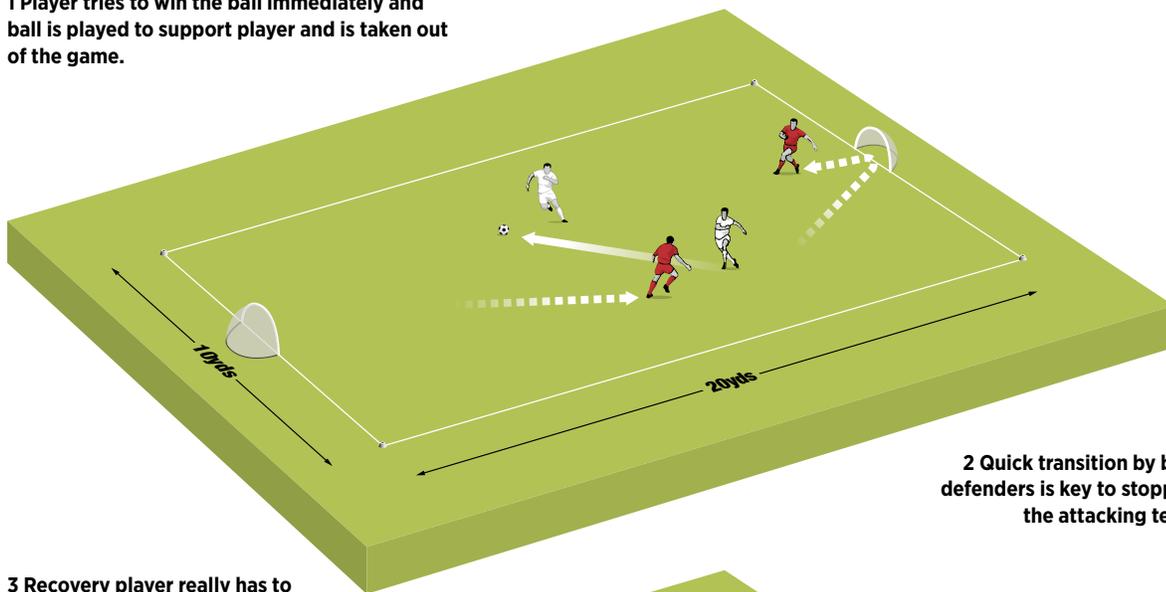
## HOW TO PLAY

2 teams as shown. Teams take it in turn to attack. Once the ball is out of play or turned over, the opposition team immediately attack. If the ball leaves the field or is scored then 2 new players come on - if the ball is turned over, then the 2 players on the field continue to attack. After attacking both players then defend. The player who touched the ball last leaves the game immediately by touching the opposition goal and then recovering to defend, the other player immediately defends.

## TECHNIQUE

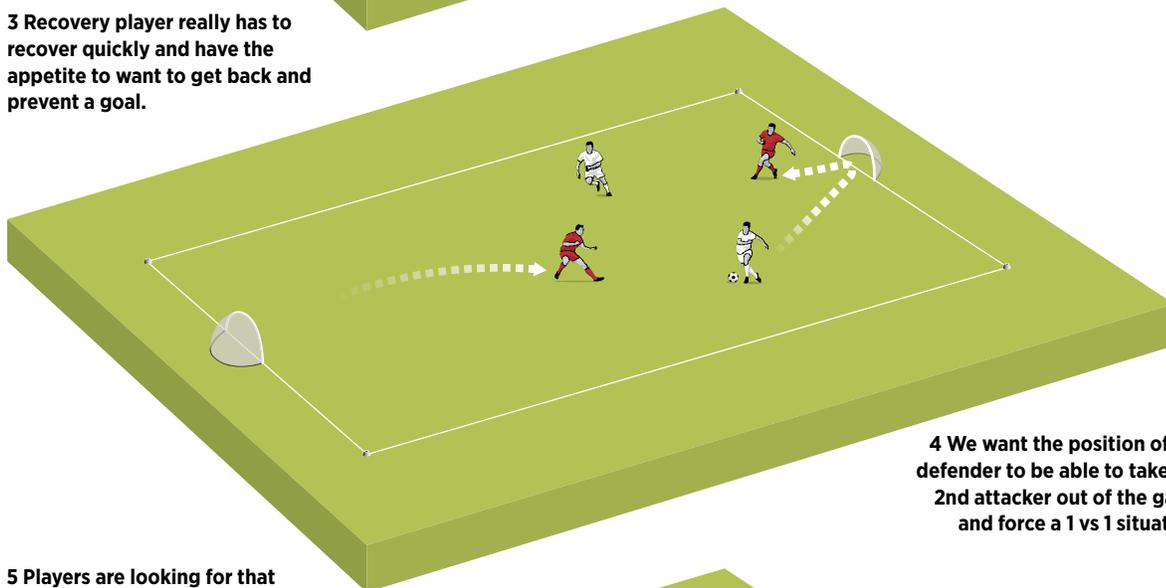
Players are looking not to overcommit but to delay the play and wait for the recovery player to make it a numbers even situation. The delaying defender will generally overcommit and get easily beaten, or miss the opportunity to win the ball by being overly conservative.

**1** Player tries to win the ball immediately and ball is played to support player and is taken out of the game.



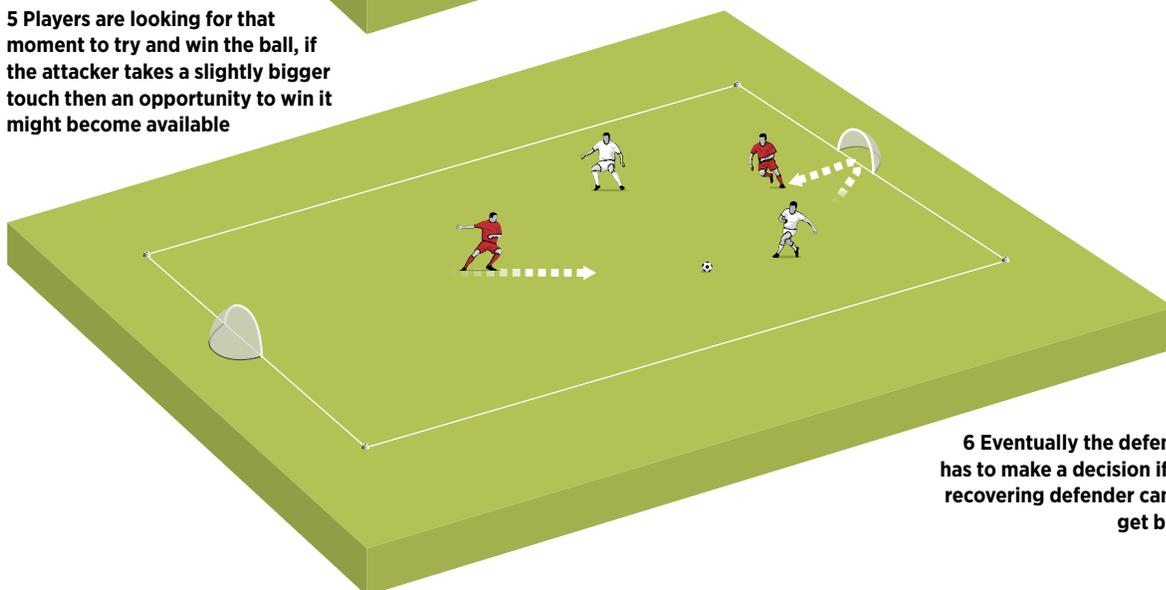
**2** Quick transition by both defenders is key to stopping the attacking team.

**3** Recovery player really has to recover quickly and have the appetite to want to get back and prevent a goal.



**4** We want the position of the defender to be able to take the 2nd attacker out of the game and force a 1 vs 1 situation.

**5** Players are looking for that moment to try and win the ball, if the attacker takes a slightly bigger touch then an opportunity to win it might become available



**6** Eventually the defender has to make a decision if the recovering defender cannot get back.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Pressure - Cover

## WHY USE IT

This session is for younger players with limited knowledge of the role of the 1st and 2nd defenders on the field.

## SET UP

4 areas - 15 x 10 yd - to form 30 x 20 yd area. Each area has 1 cone situated at start line (centrally) and 2 cones on the middle line with a ball on each cone. 3 players per area.

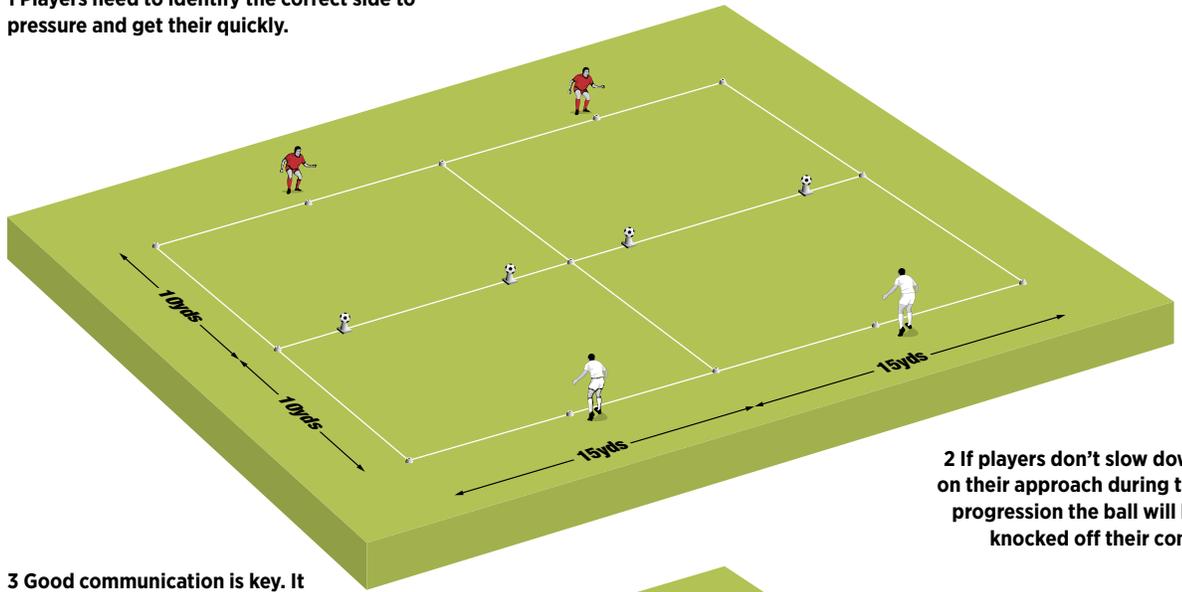
## HOW TO PLAY

#1 - It's a race. On the coach's command the 1st player to run and jump over the ball gets a point. Whites against each other and blues against each other. Next, the 1st player to touch the ball without it falling off. This helps to reinforce getting the ball quickly but slowing down on your approach. #2 - same set up with 6 players per area. 4 defenders and 2 middle players who pass the ball between themselves. Holding the ball for 3 seconds in between. The 2 pairs of defenders move into pressure cover positions as the ball moves. Attackers are given the option to dribble with the ball and switch if they want. Players switch every 10 times the ball is transferred. #3 - Same activity, but if a opening to the goal they are able to shoot and score. If they score they change with defenders.

## TECHNIQUE

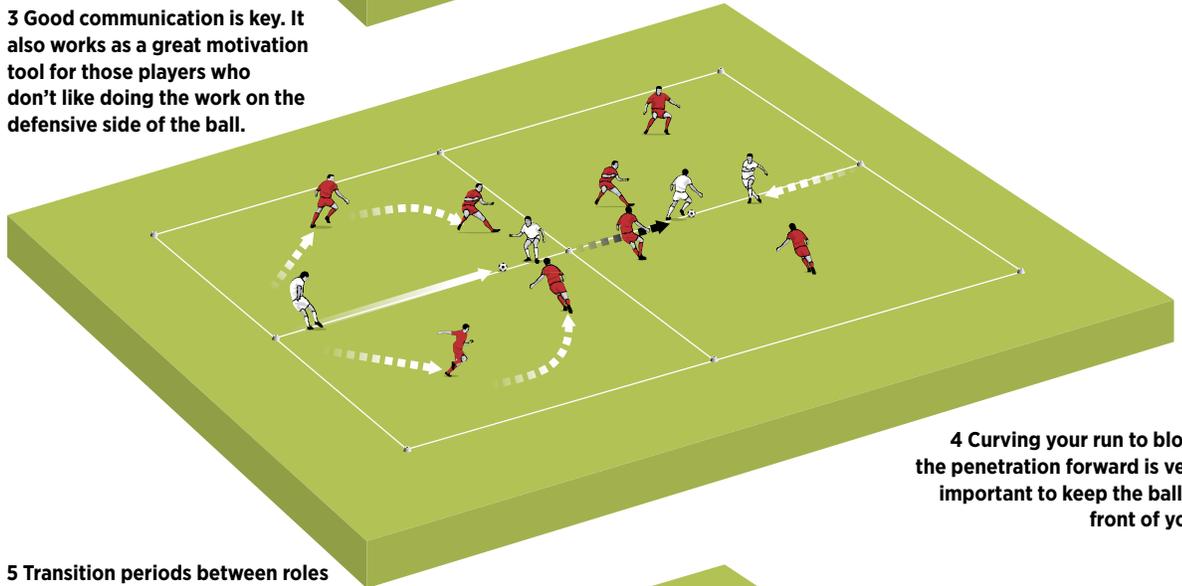
Coaches should be looking for pressure on the ball from the 1st attacker and the 2nd attacker to be in a position where they are able to block the penetration forward.

**1** Players need to identify the correct side to pressure and get their quickly.



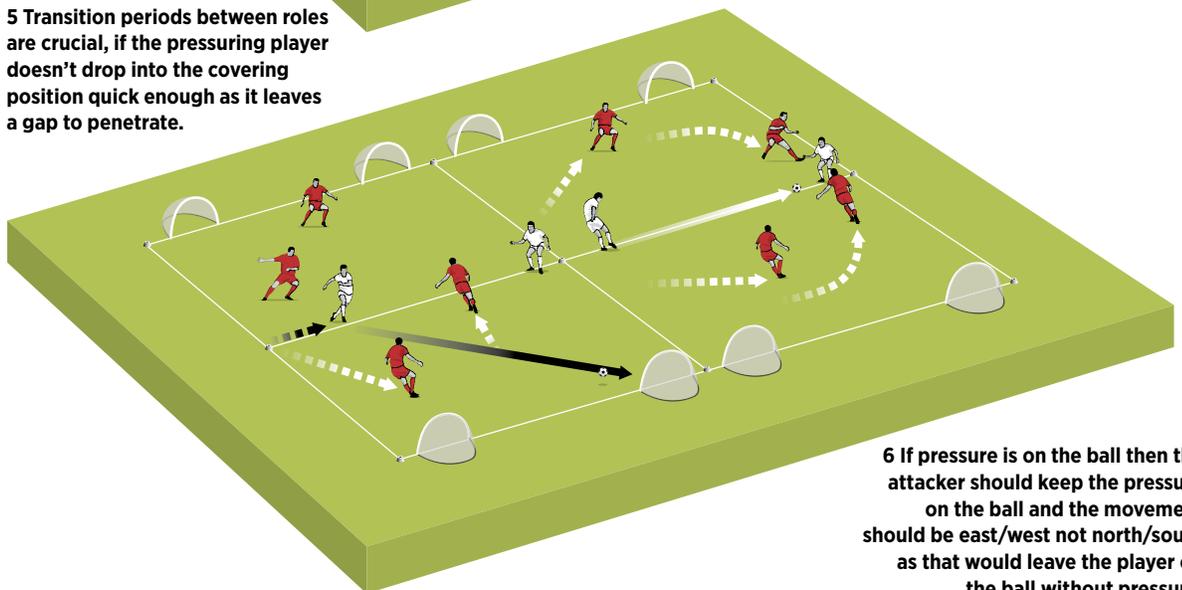
**2** If players don't slow down on their approach during the progression the ball will be knocked off their cone.

**3** Good communication is key. It also works as a great motivation tool for those players who don't like doing the work on the defensive side of the ball.



**4** Curving your run to block the penetration forward is very important to keep the ball in front of you.

**5** Transition periods between roles are crucial, if the pressuring player doesn't drop into the covering position quick enough as it leaves a gap to penetrate.



**6** If pressure is on the ball then the attacker should keep the pressure on the ball and the movement should be east/west not north/south as that would leave the player on the ball without pressure.

**Player movement** **Ball movement** **Run with ball** **Shot**

# Pressure - Cover - Balance

## WHY USE IT

This session is a good practice to help players to understand about pressure, cover and balance in a fun transitional game.

## SET UP

4 zones 10x20 yd each (to form 40x20 yd), the size is determined by the age and ability of players. The activity can be made easier or more challenging by changing the size of the area. Activity has 12 players with 3 players in each of the zones who are working together to either deny penetration or if they win the ball play penetrating passes.

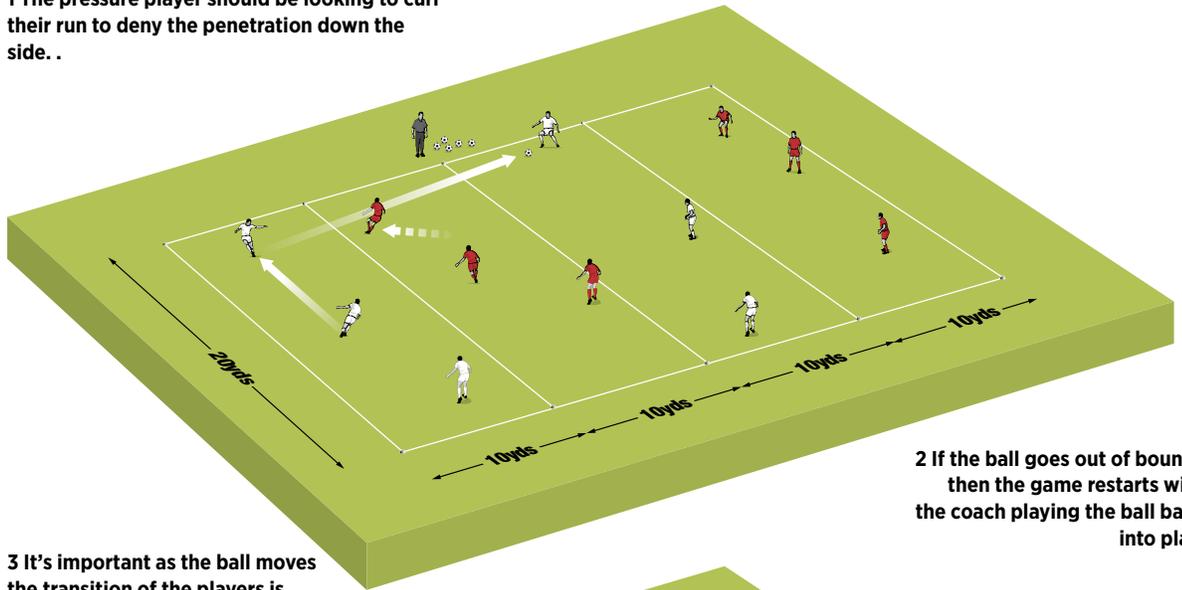
## HOW TO PLAY

Players must stay in their zones. Whenever ball leaves area, the coach plays in a new ball. Teams are looking to penetrate the ball through the zone to score a point, if the opposition intercept the ball they are looking to score the same way. First to 10 wins, after 10 the groups of 3 switch zones with their team mates.

## TECHNIQUE

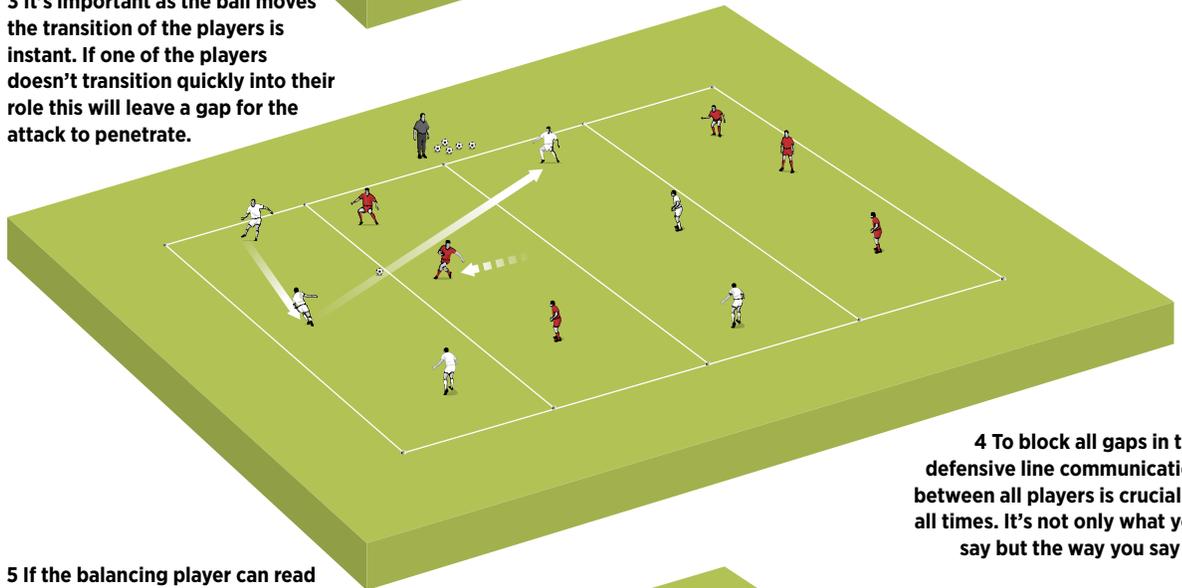
The unit is looking to move as one to block all gaps between them but not be too tight that when the ball is switched they are beaten down the outside of the area, which is a common fault of players during this activity.

**1** The pressure player should be looking to curl their run to deny the penetration down the side.



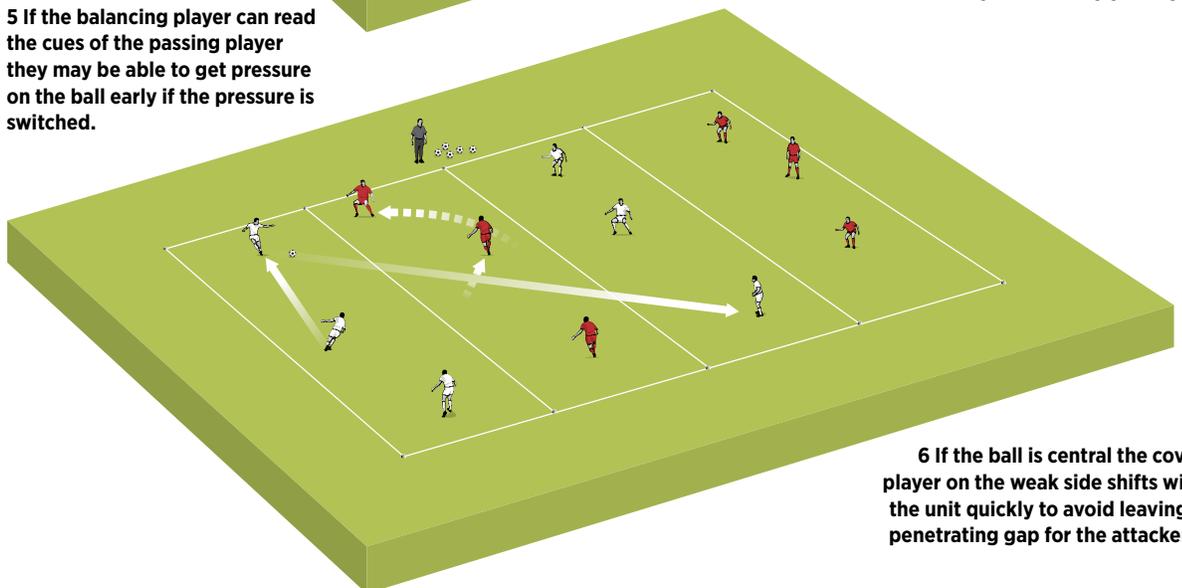
**2** If the ball goes out of bounds then the game restarts with the coach playing the ball back into play.

**3** It's important as the ball moves the transition of the players is instant. If one of the players doesn't transition quickly into their role this will leave a gap for the attack to penetrate.



**4** To block all gaps in the defensive line communication between all players is crucial at all times. It's not only what you say but the way you say it!

**5** If the balancing player can read the cues of the passing player they may be able to get pressure on the ball early if the pressure is switched.



**6** If the ball is central the cover player on the weak side shifts with the unit quickly to avoid leaving a penetrating gap for the attackers.

Player movement 

Ball movement 

Run with ball 

Shot 

# Double team

## WHY USE IT

The practice allows you to start to introduce the idea of how multiple units on the field start to work and interact with each other. It also introduces the idea of recovering once the ball passes you on the field.

## SET UP

3 zones (10 x20) to form 30 x20 are in front of goal, 1 GK, 4 attackers (in white, 2 in the zone nearest goal, 2 outside furthest zone from goal), 4 defenders (2 in zone nearest goal, 2 in zone furthest from goal). Goalkeeper in the goal. Attackers are trying to score in the goal, defenders are looking to win the ball and find the coach/target player as quick as they can.

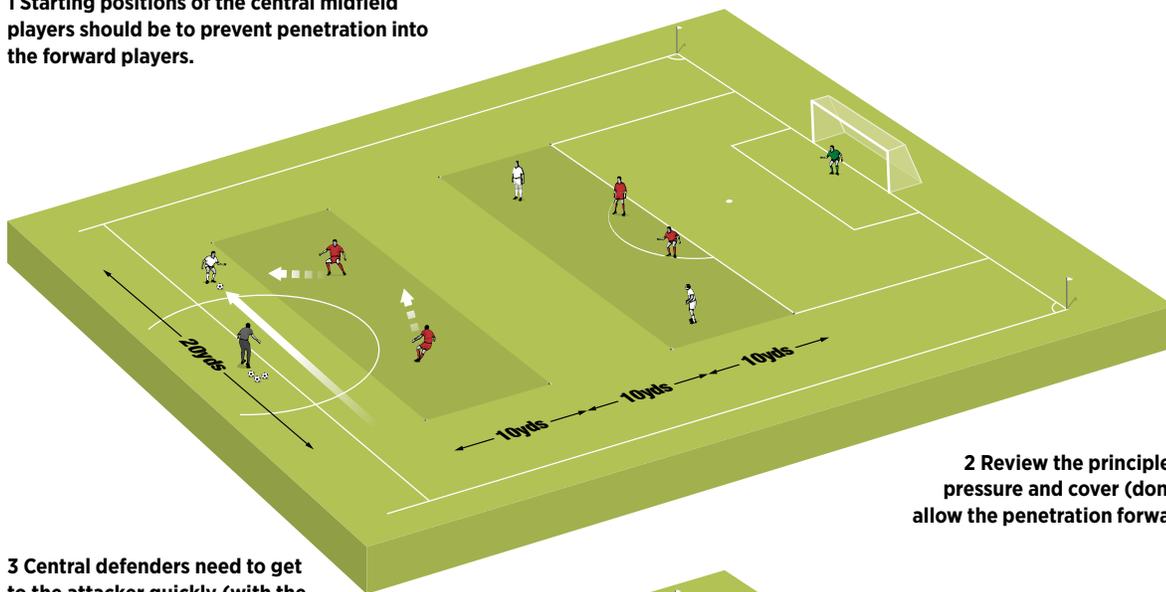
## HOW TO PLAY

All players in phase 1 must stay in their respective zones. The attacking players are looking to transfer the ball through the zones to their 2 forward players, once the ball has travelled through the 1st zone one of the defenders in this zone may recover and make it a 3 vs 2 game. #2 - 1 attacker may also move into the next zone. #3 - All defenders and attackers may move into the next zone. #4 - Forward player receiving the ball has to take a minimum number of touches - This is crucial in giving the recovering players time to create the double team scenario with the central defender.

## TECHNIQUE

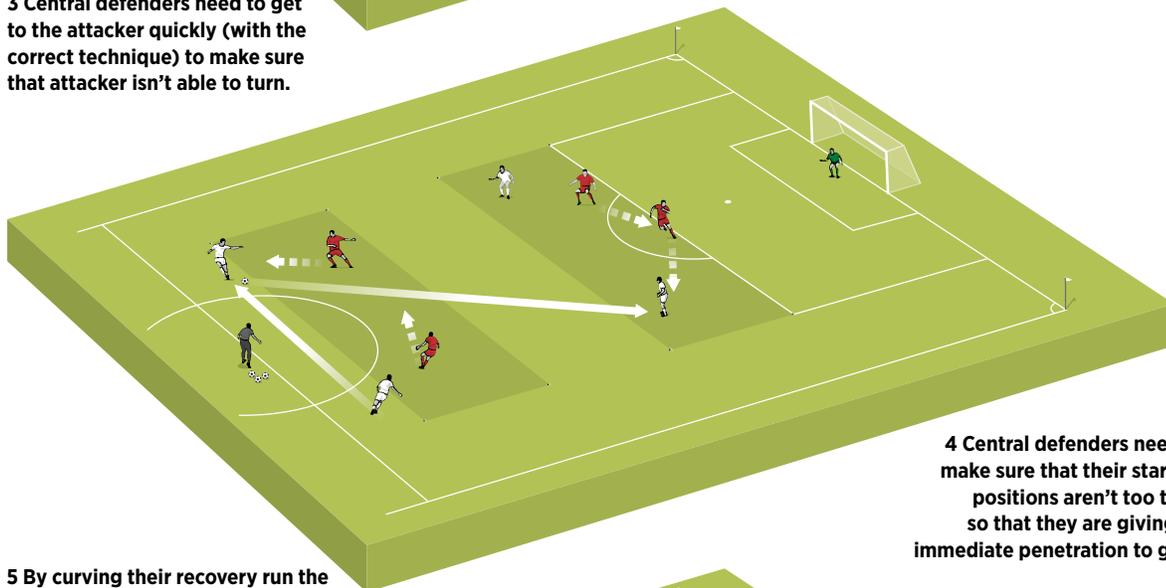
Initially you want the midfielders to try and prevent penetration into the forward players.

**1 Starting positions of the central midfielder players should be to prevent penetration into the forward players.**



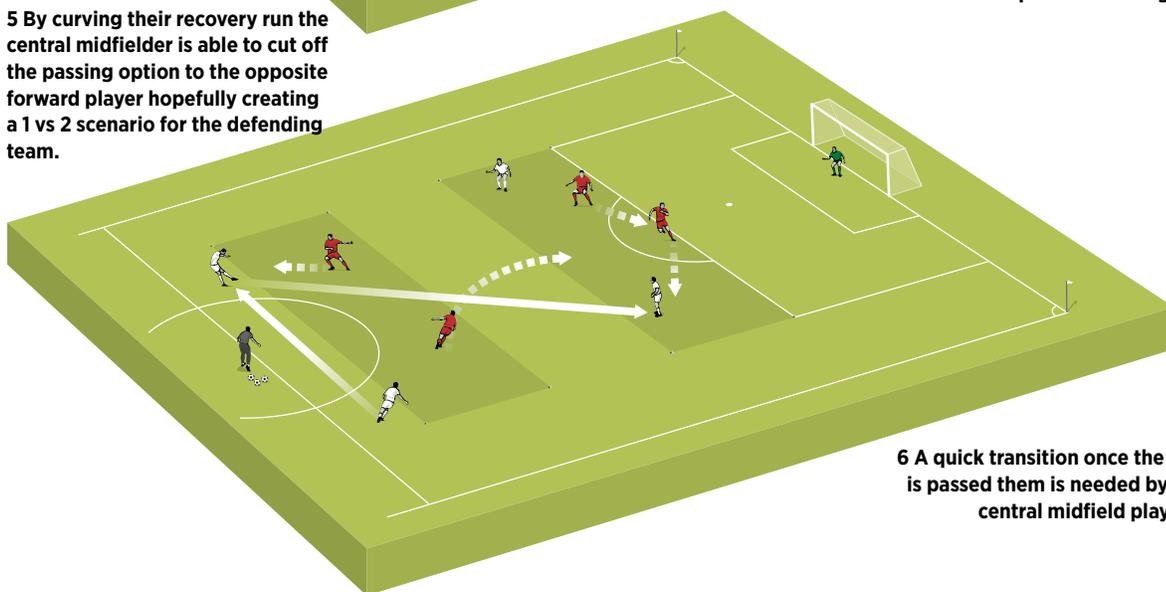
**2 Review the principles of pressure and cover (don't allow the penetration forward).**

**3 Central defenders need to get to the attacker quickly (with the correct technique) to make sure that attacker isn't able to turn.**



**4 Central defenders need to make sure that their starting positions aren't too tight so that they are giving up immediate penetration to goal.**

**5 By curving their recovery run the central midfielder is able to cut off the passing option to the opposite forward player hopefully creating a 1 vs 2 scenario for the defending team.**



**6 A quick transition once the ball is passed them is needed by the central midfielder players.**

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# TEACHING INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM DEFENDING



## MIKE SMITH

Director of Youth Academy, Portland Timbers

Mike Smith became the Youth Sporting Director for Portland Timbers in June 2013 after serving over two years as the club's Academy Director. He has significant experience in soccer coaching and team management at the regional, national and collegiate level. Mike holds the USSF 'A' License & FIFA Futuro Coaching Certificate and he is currently a candidate for the French Football Development License through MLS & UEFA. His previous positions include, Technical Director for Oregon Youth Soccer, assistant with U17 USA national team, Region 4 ODP Director and Head Coach at Santa Clara and University of Oregon. Mike performs coaching education roles for US Soccer & US Youth Soccer and he regularly presents at national workshops and conferences.

### Webinar key points (by David Newbery)

There are three main points I would like to highlight:

1. Activation - Mike started the presentation with an activation activity - a series of 2v2 games that he picked up on his Advanced Coaching course with the French Football Federation. A series of 4 small-sided games. The purpose was simple - get the players excited about being at practice, warm-up and get lots of defensive repetition.
2. Scoring system 1 - I also wanted to highlight how Mike used the scoring system to draw out the theme of his activity. In activity 2, the attacking players were incentivized with the hope of creating more opportunities to defend. His objective was to create an attacking scenario where defenders had to recover into a compact defensive shape in front of goal. To do so Mike awarded the attackers 1 point for a connecting a pass into the middle zone and 3 points for a scoring goal after that.
3. Scoring system 2 - In the third activity, Mike used a scoring system this time to encourage defenders to use the ball meaningfully when they win the ball. In 1v1 soccer golf, if the defender wins the ball and keeps it for two seconds he achieves a score of -2 for an eagle! If he forces the attacking player to touch the ball out of bounds, then his team would be awarded a -1 (a birdie). If he tackles the ball out of bounds himself then that is a par or a score of zero. However, if the attacking player can get the ball over the end line here, the defender has a score of +1 against him. Just like in golf, the lowest score wins after a set number of attempts each team.

### Questions asked by participants and answered by Mike Smith

**Q1: During activity 3 you mentioned 'diving/simulation' - that happens to be a big problem with some of my U11s what's a good way to coach out diving with younger ages? Nathan Janulis**

I think that as coaches we need to be firm in practice and not let players get away with this. It is ethically wrong. Coaches can penalize the player and team that attempts simulation by awarding another point to the opposition, or having team play short for next 2 minutes.

**Q2: Can you expand upon your comments about 'checking shoulder cues' as a defender. Kevin Casey**

As a defender approaching the ball to pressure, you want to take a look behind you and take a mental picture of where the opposition players are

as well as your own. This allows you to cut out the most important passing lane with your approach as well as know and understand where your covering defenders are and make good decisions about where to force the ball.

**Q3: You mentioned that the French Football Federation has many more principles of attack and defense than we refer to in USA - Can you elaborate? Paul Cummins & Luis Rivas**

Yes, the principles are more intricate and are linked specifically with thirds of the field. Please see tables on next page.

**Q4: Could activity 4 be done with 3 players? If so, any special considerations? Louis Obando**

Yes, absolutely. The most important consideration is making the field narrower. Remember that if we are 'coaching for success' with a defensive topic we start with the field smaller and then later open it up to challenge our players. We only do this once they have grasped the concept and achieved success. I have done this exercise with 2 defenders coming out and 3 attackers coming on. This I do 20 yards wide (width of the 6 yard box).

**Q5: How can you effectively get across the importance of communication to your players? Marc Campoverde**

I usually tell youth players that the louder team usually wins the game. This indicates that a team is organized and prepared to help each other. We need to encourage this at practice at the younger ages so it gets ingrained earlier. Of course we also need to stress the importance of non-verbal communication, receiving cues from watching the body language of the player with the ball and the movement of his teammates.

**Q6: how would you keep younger players from clogging the small goals in activity 6v6 +2? Daniel Saiz**

As a coach, if I were to see that happen, I would allow the team in possession of the ball to continue to possess and every time they connected into the middle square I would award them another point. I would hope then that the defending team would be drawn out to try and win the ball back. I am not sure what age group your 'younger players' are, but with U12's for instance, I would maybe adjust the size a little and make it a 4v4(+2) to make decision-making a little more simplistic. Start there and gradually build up the numbers as you have some successes.



	PHASES	TOPICS	GAME PRINCIPLES (WHAT TO DO?)
<b>ATTACKING</b>	<b>COLLECTIVE POSSESSION TO ADVANCE</b>	<b>1</b>	1) Creation and use of space
		<b>2</b>	2) Play in gaps and between lines
		<b>3</b>	3) Creating numerical superiority
		<b>4</b>	4) Getting unmarked (creating separation)
		<b>5</b>	5) Combination play (Play with 2, with 3 players), series of plays
	<b>UNBALANCE/DESTABILIZE (ON THE LAST LINE)</b>	<b>6</b>	1) Switching the point of attack
		<b>7</b>	2) Penetrating play after the creation of space
		<b>8</b>	3) Find a player on the run behind the back four
		<b>9</b>	4) Combination play to create numerical superiority
		<b>10</b>	5) Get unmarked to take players on (create notion of 1 v 1)
	<b>FINISHING (LAST PASS + 1V1 FORWARD/GK)</b>	<b>11</b>	1) Anticipate, adjust yourself to shoot
		<b>12</b>	2) Get Unmarked
		<b>13</b>	3) Change speed to beat opponent

	PHASES	TOPICS	GAME PRINCIPLES (WHAT TO DO?)
<b>DEFENDING</b>	<b>IMPEDE OPPONENTS PROGRESS AND REORGANIZE</b>	<b>14</b>	1) Close space of DGC (Direct Game Channel) and organize marking shape
		<b>15</b>	2) Protecting space behind back four when there is no pressure on the ball (vertical balance)
		<b>16</b>	3) Slow down opponent's progression and reorganize lines
	<b>PROTECT THE GOAL. RECOVER THE BALL</b>	<b>17</b>	1) Create density and be active in DGC
		<b>18</b>	2) Direct and organize the collective pressure based on the timing of the pass
		<b>19</b>	3) Providing cover for a teammate during defensive play (defensive numerical superiority)
		<b>20</b>	4) Organize defensive repositioning (cover for teammate)
	<b>RECOVERING THE BALL</b>	<b>21</b>	1) Positioning (relationship ball/goal)
		<b>22</b>	2) Anticipate, adjust yourself to intervene (timing of tackle)
		<b>23</b>	3) Intervene to start counterattack or maintain possession



**Q7: I coach high school girls but they are all relatively new to the game. I have found their lack of technical skill a real impediment to running drills like the 2nd drill (6v6 Plus 2). Do you have any advice on how to teach the same principles with players who struggle to maintain possession without pressure? Andrew Wells**

As in the answer above, you can simplify the decision making by reducing the numbers on the field. To improve technically, there is no substitute for repetition and time with the ball. Playing possession games and then gradually building up the pressure helps. Maybe start with possession games such as 3v3(+3), so in effect a 6v3 situation. Hopefully players can spread out and begin to recognize how to play keep away with their passing and movement. They will gradually improve.

**Q8: I coach U11, 8v8 - what is the ideal formation to defend soundly and then transition into an attack? Jeffrey Saudo**

At the Barcelona Academy, their teams play 7v7 all the way through U12. They will typically utilize a 3-2-1 formation in front of their goalkeeper. This provides them width at the back and the ability to play out and build up. It must be crucially noted though, that there is a line across the field outside the penalty area where the attacker cannot encroach until the ball is played from the keeper. This allows and encourages the defenders to drop in and receive the ball under minimal pressure.

**Q9: I love the Golf Game ... can you repeat the scoring system please? Edwin Todd**

Of course: -2 = Defender wins ball in grid and keeps for 2 seconds (eagle!); -1 = Defender forces attacking player to touch ball out of grid (birdie!); 0 = Defender wins ball and knocks out of grid (par); +1 = Attacker dribbles over the defensive end line (bogey!); +2 = Attacker passes ball through small 1-yard goal on defensive end line (double bogey!); +3 = Attacker dribbles through small 1-yard goal on defensive end line (triple bogey!)

**Q10: In a 1v1 activity (#3), would there be a benefit in starting both the attacker and the defender from the same side approaching a goal across from them? Enrique Martinez**

I think that coaches should be creative in the activities they design. It shows that they are passionate about the game and in helping players learn. I have definitely utilized this method previously to simulate another real aspect of the game. Coaches should be aware though, that changing certain parameters of their activity can have it develop into more of a physical battle as opposed to a mental challenge, so we have to get the balance right for our teams.

**Q11: In activity 2 (6v6 +2), would you allow the player in the center to dummy the ball or must they touch it? David Hourcade**

The person in the middle could certainly dummy the ball. Usually, however, I will only award a point if the person in the middle has time to receive the ball and then complete a pass to a teammate. This helps encourage the person passing the ball in, to make good decisions.

**Q12: In this presentation you went straight into small side games as a warm up. Doesn't that invite injuries? Mark Thompson**

Potentially... When I have used this activation activity with the Academy teams, I have done a dynamic warm-up beforehand. With younger players we can sometimes get them into small games quickly as they are not striking balls over distance on these small fields.

**Q13: In the first warm-up/activation activity you have a triangular field with 3 goal - Can both teams score in any goal. Hector Tamayo**

Yes, the team in possession can score in any goal initially. The next time they have the ball though, they have to score in one of the other 2. So each team cannot score in the same goal twice in a row. This presents a mental challenge for both teams to remember! The coach restarting the game by playing balls can certainly help with this.

**Q14: The session you presented revolves around whole-part-whole methodology. Can you elaborate more about the efficacy of this approach in teaching defending? Matt Malej**

Each coach will have his or her own methodology. US Soccer teaches a progressive simple to complex methodology, where some other countries (such as the French Federation) promote a whole-part-whole pedagogy. I believe that there are definitely values to both and it often can depend on the age of the players and the topic of the day. Here is a link (if ok to put in the magazine) to a short article comparing the two.  
<http://www.coachingsoccertactics.com/french-v-ussf-coaching-model/>

**Q15: What age level can we begin these particular training activities? Ron Hendrie and Kerry Cooper**

I think that each activity depends on the level of your group. Generally speaking though I would designate:

Activity 1 - U12 and above (can go younger if coach modifies the mental challenge aspect)

Activity 2 - U16 and above (although can modify numbers as above)

Activity 3 - U12 and above (can go younger if coach modifies the scoring aspect)

Activity 4 - U13 and above (first year at 11v11, can modify numbers as above)

Activity 5 - U12 and above

Activity 6 - U14 and above (younger players can understand concept if smaller numbers)

**Q16: What purpose do the neutral players serve in the of 6 v 6 + 2 activity? Jerald Kilmartin**

The neutral players make it more likely that the attacking team can have some possession and therefore force the defenders to read cues and actually have to pressure, cover and shift together. If even numbers, the number of turnovers exponentially increases and the coach cannot get the defensive principles over to the team.

**Q17: Would you encourage a time limit to recover the ball once the possession is lost? Carlos Barona**

I often provide a time or pass limit to win the ball back in practice. There are occasions though where the team is regrouping and has to slow down the opposition and reorganize their lines. This can be effective even if we don't actually physically win the ball back outright.

**Q18: Would you recommend to keep the center backs tight and centered when the attack is coming down the flank? Neville Feltham**

It all depends on the game situation. Generally, the qualities that the center backs exude would have them stay central, but if there is a breakdown in a wide area, then the strong side center back may have to come out of the central area to cover or win the ball back. Coaches should not expect this to happen naturally with young players, so we have to show them these situations in practice.

# Activation Activity

## WHY USE IT

These activities provide players repetition of individual defending technique - visual cues that help players decide when and where to provide cover.

## SET UP

Play a series of 2v2 games on 4 different shaped fields (see diagram and field rules below). Each field has a coach feeding balls in.

## HOW TO PLAY

Divide players into pairs. Play 8 x 1 minute games. Each time a ball goes off field, coach plays a new one in. 1 minute rest period between games and losing team gets 5 push ups for every goal differential they lost by (within that minute). After each game rotate the players to a different field and play different opponents.

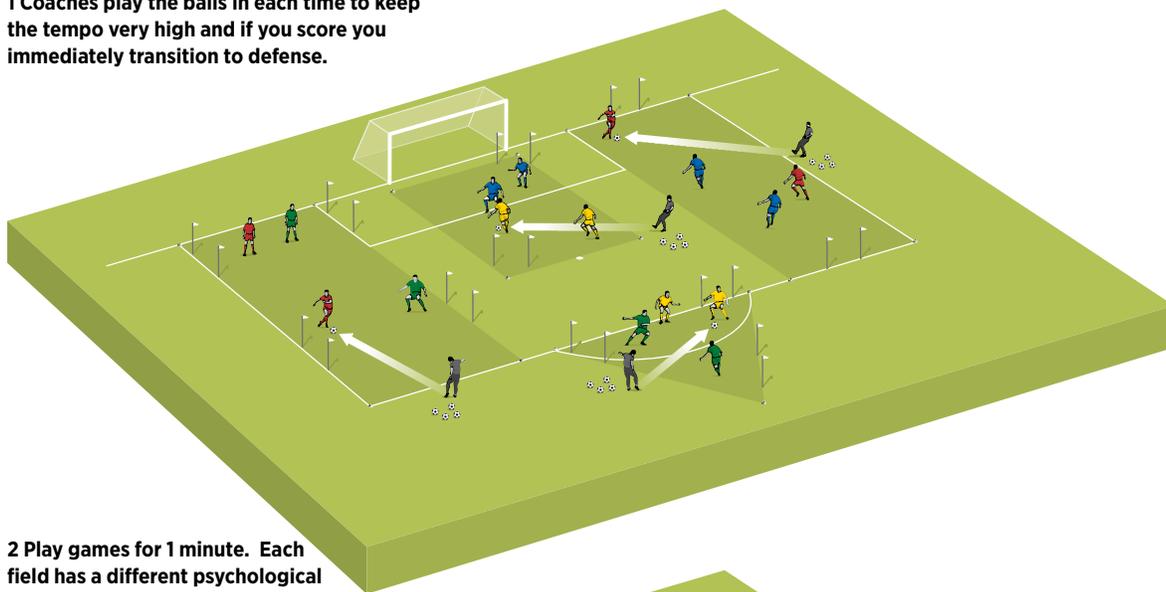
## TECHNIQUE

Field 1 - 2v2 directional game on 12 x 18 yd field with 4 goals. Red attacks one end line with small goals, white attack the opposite side.

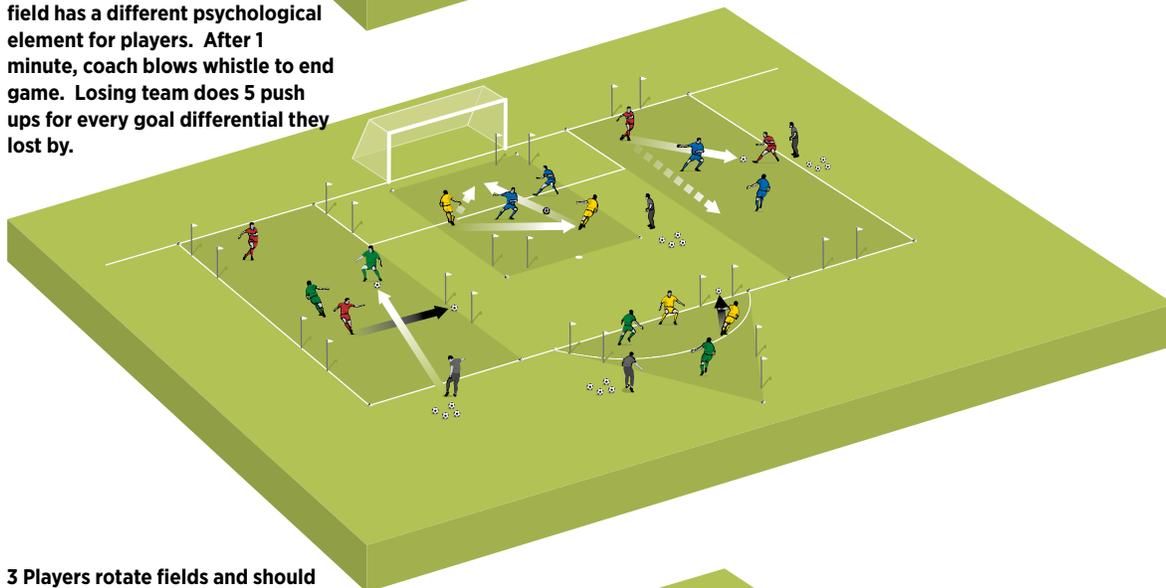
Field 2 - 2v2 directional game on 10x10 yd field with 2 goals on the diagonal.

Field 3 - 2v2 directional game on 12x18 yd field with 2 goals. Field 4 - 2v2 directional game on 12 yd triangular field with 3 goals near apex of each point. If team with ball scores on any goal, they get next ball from coach and have to score on one of the other 2 goals next. Coaches should not do much coaching during this activation warm-up.

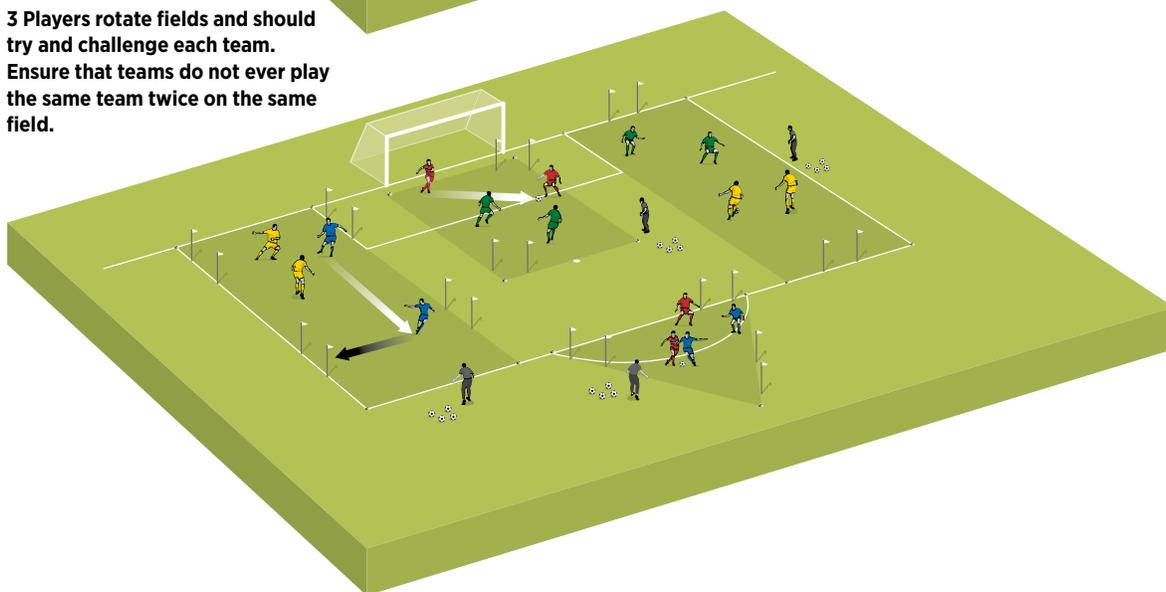
**1 Coaches play the balls in each time to keep the tempo very high and if you score you immediately transition to defense.**



**2 Play games for 1 minute. Each field has a different psychological element for players. After 1 minute, coach blows whistle to end game. Losing team does 5 push ups for every goal differential they lost by.**



**3 Players rotate fields and should try and challenge each team. Ensure that teams do not ever play the same team twice on the same field.**



Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Whole - 6v6 plus 2

## WHY USE IT

An environment where players learn to react quickly in transition, zonally mark and collectively read visual cues.

## SET UP

Play a 6v6 game with 2 neutrals on a 35x35 yd field. Place a flag goal in each corner and a 12 yd box in the middle of the grid.

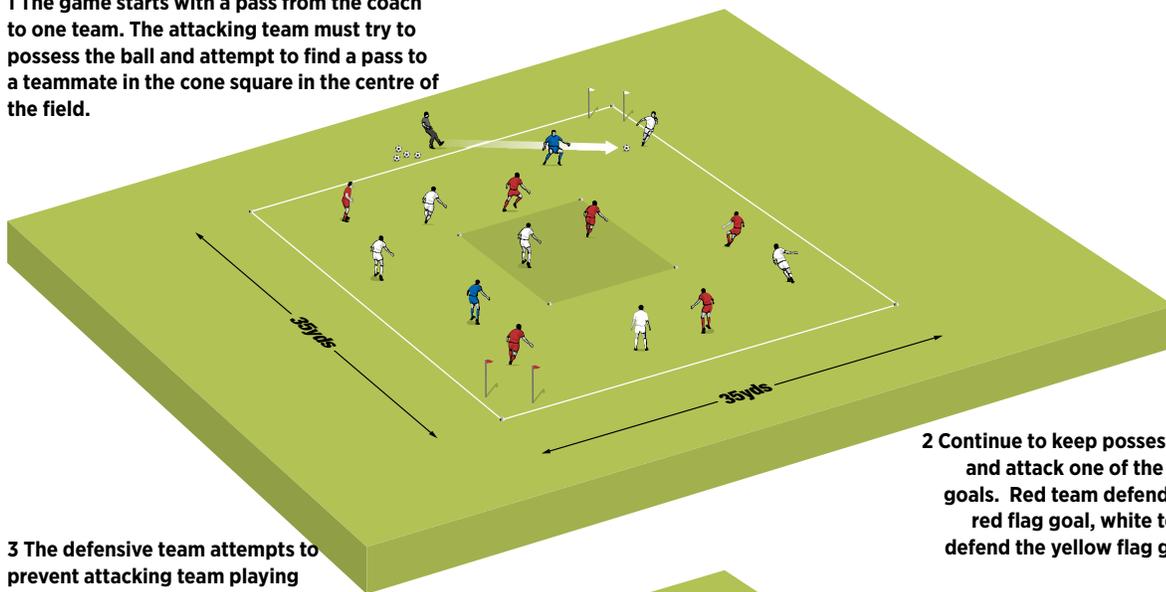
## HOW TO PLAY

Two teams with 2 neutrals. Play 4 x 4 minute games. Each team is appointed 2 flag goals on opposite corners of the grid. Team that has ball tries to connect a pass to one of their teammates or a neutral in the central box. If successful they score a point, then they can attack one of their 2 goals for an extra point. The next time they have the ball, they must go for the opposite goal. If team scores in goal, coach plays next ball into the same team, to encourage better defending. If there is a turnover, the team that has just won the ball, must connect a minimum of 2 passes before they try and connect with one of their teammates in the central box. Add a time restriction to the attacking team.

## TECHNIQUE

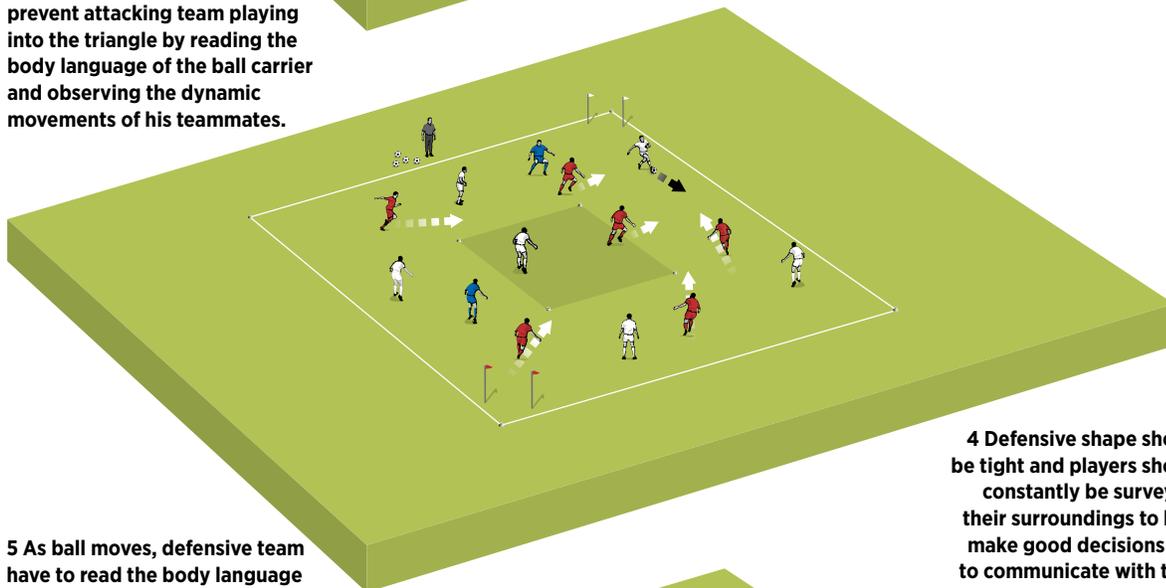
Put pressure on the ball, collapsing team shape and attempting to take away passing lanes into the triangle. Defender should be checking shoulder to take pictures of the dynamic situation behind him.

**1** The game starts with a pass from the coach to one team. The attacking team must try to possess the ball and attempt to find a pass to a teammate in the cone square in the centre of the field.



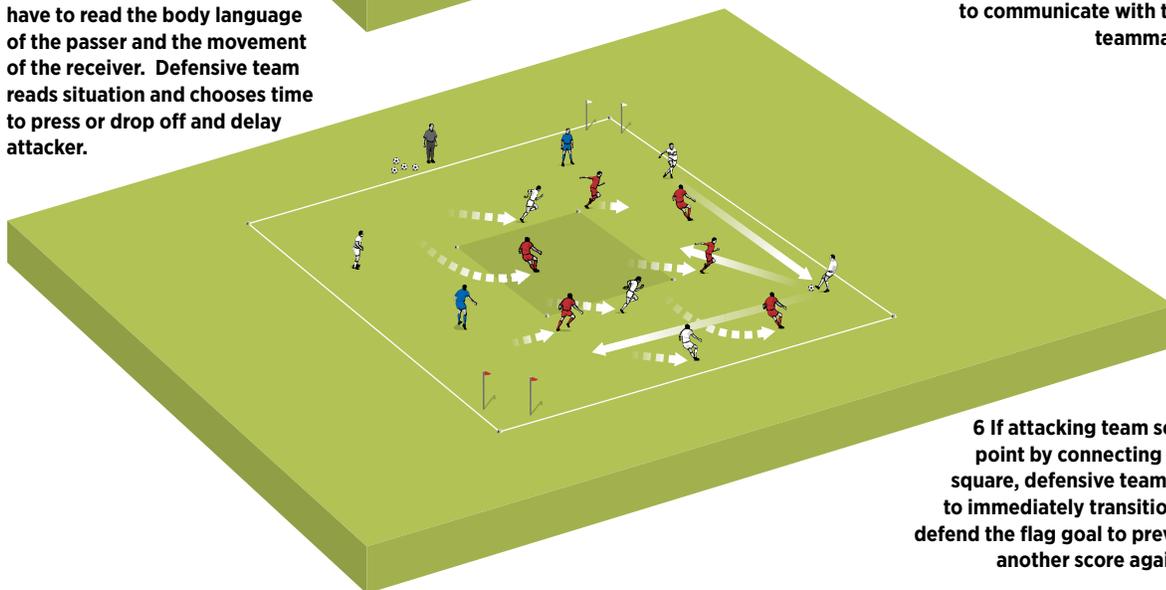
**2** Continue to keep possession and attack one of the flag goals. Red team defend the red flag goal, white team defend the yellow flag goal.

**3** The defensive team attempts to prevent attacking team playing into the triangle by reading the body language of the ball carrier and observing the dynamic movements of his teammates.



**4** Defensive shape should be tight and players should constantly be surveying their surroundings to help make good decisions and to communicate with their teammates.

**5** As ball moves, defensive team have to read the body language of the passer and the movement of the receiver. Defensive team reads situation and chooses time to press or drop off and delay attacker.



**6** If attacking team score point by connecting into square, defensive team has to immediately transition to defend the flag goal to prevent another score against.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Part - 1v1

## WHY USE IT

This activity places players in a game environment where they have many repetitions of defending 1v1.

## SET UP

1v1 game on a 15x7 yd field. Place a small cone goal (1 yard) in left hand bottom corner and a cone 5 yards from that end line, where the waiting defenders stand behind.

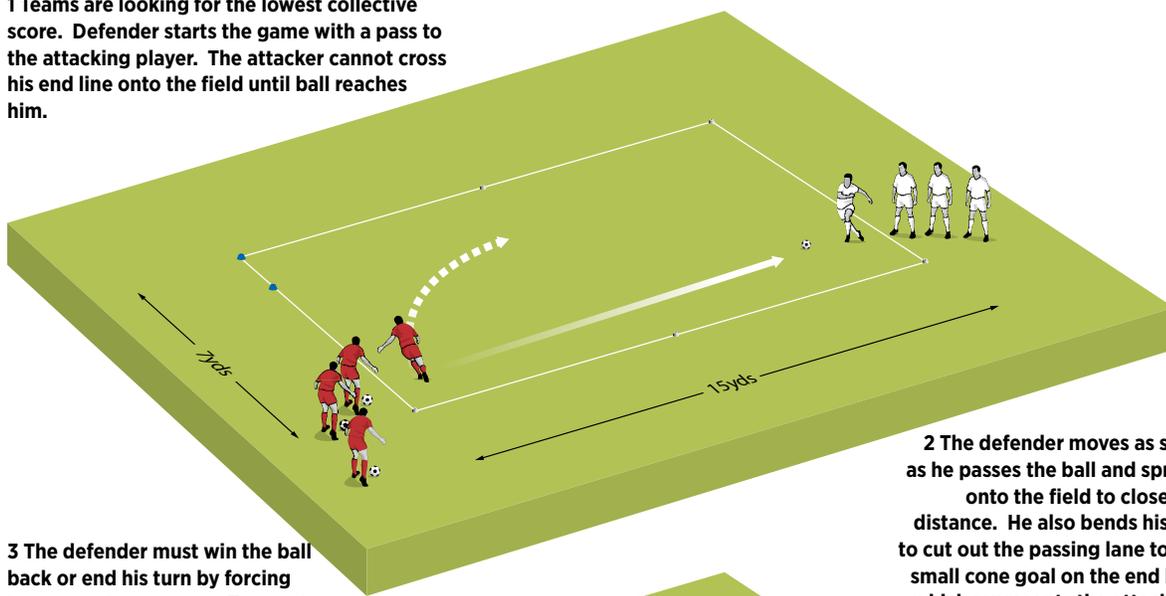
## HOW TO PLAY

1st defender plays ball to the other end of the grid where the attacking player is waiting. Play for 3 minutes and then rotate attacking and defending team. Keep score individually only for defenders (so they begin to understand their tendencies) and at end of 3 minute game, calculate defending team score. Key is to get a low score (like golf!). Scoring: -2 = Defender wins ball in grid and keeps for 2 seconds; -1 = Defender forces attacking player to touch ball out of grid; 0 = Defender wins ball and knocks out of grid; 1 = Attacker dribbles over the defensive end line; 2 = Attacker passes ball through small 1 yd goal on defensive end line; 3 = Attacker dribbles through small 1 yd goal on defensive end line.

## TECHNIQUE

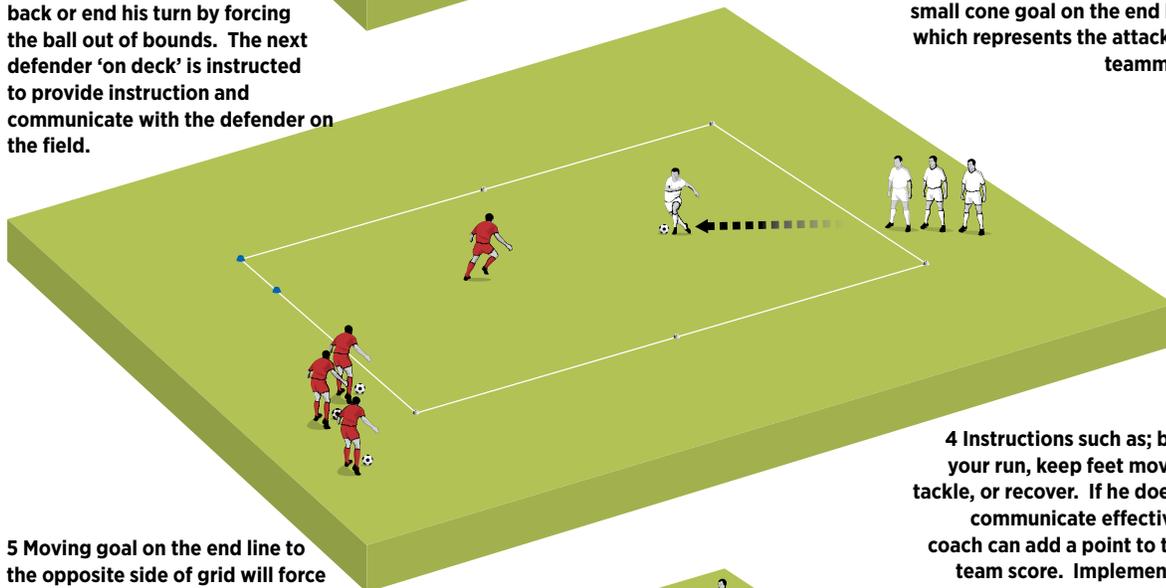
Defender passes the ball and then sprints to close ground making a bent run. Protect the first time pass through the goal in opposite corner (which represents a passing lane to a teammate)

**1 Teams are looking for the lowest collective score. Defender starts the game with a pass to the attacking player. The attacker cannot cross his end line onto the field until ball reaches him.**



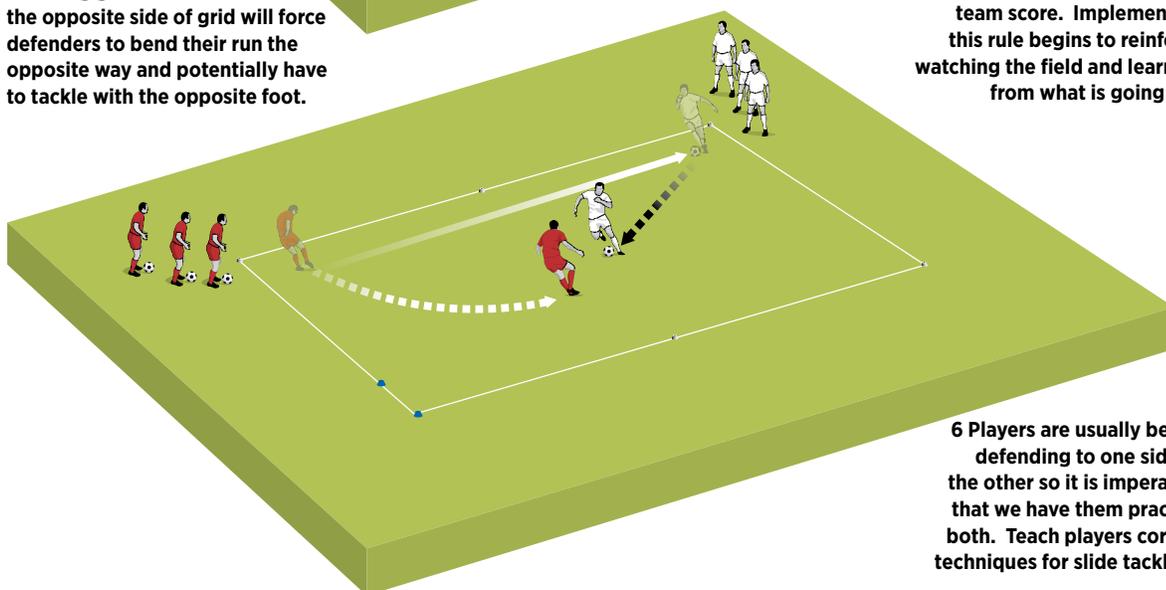
**2 The defender moves as soon as he passes the ball and sprints onto the field to close the distance. He also bends his run to cut out the passing lane to the small cone goal on the end line, which represents the attacker's teammate.**

**3 The defender must win the ball back or end his turn by forcing the ball out of bounds. The next defender 'on deck' is instructed to provide instruction and communicate with the defender on the field.**



**4 Instructions such as; bend your run, keep feet moving, tackle, or recover. If he doesn't communicate effectively, coach can add a point to their team score. Implementing this rule begins to reinforce watching the field and learning from what is going on..**

**5 Moving goal on the end line to the opposite side of grid will force defenders to bend their run the opposite way and potentially have to tackle with the opposite foot.**



**6 Players are usually better defending to one side or the other so it is imperative that we have them practice both. Teach players correct techniques for slide tackling.**

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Part - 4v4 to one goal

## WHY USE IT

This activity places back 4 and goalkeeper in a game environment where they have to work as a group to deny penetration and win the ball back or clear.

## SET UP

4v4 game to goal (with goalkeeper) on a 30x44 yd field. Place all balls next to goal and ball starts with keeper. Play 3 x 5 minute games, with 2 minute break.

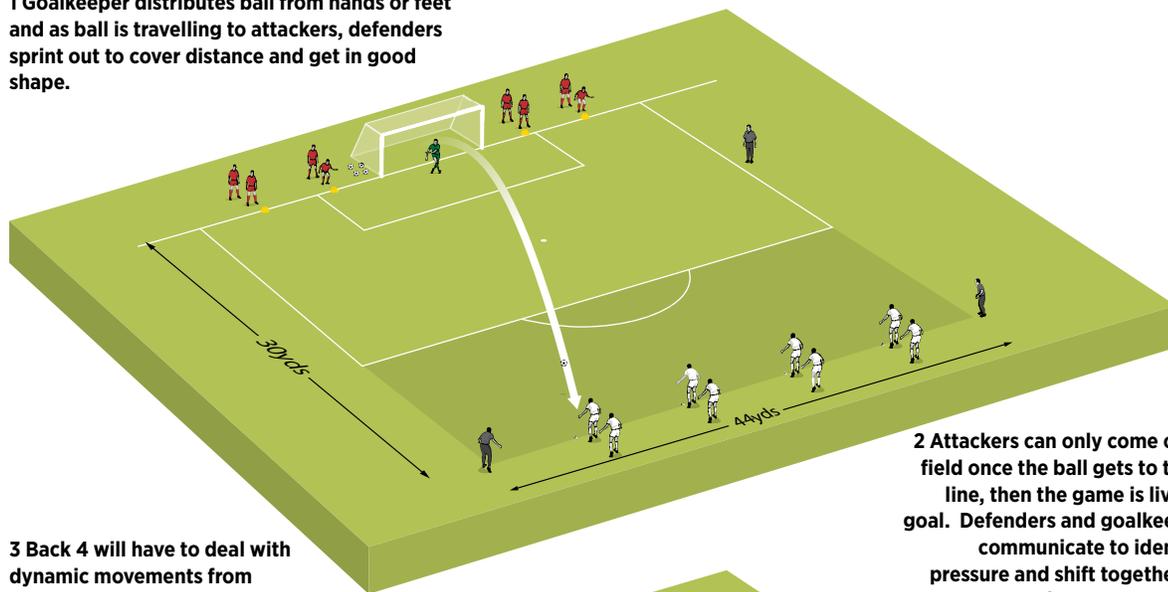
## HOW TO PLAY

Goalkeeper starts the action by driving ball with his feet to one of 4 lines of waiting forwards/midfielders. Next action will start with second waiting goalkeeper to keep tempo high and get repetitions. Four attackers try to score in the goal (for a point), defenders attempt to deny scoring opportunities and get a point if they win the ball from forwards and play an outlet pass to target. If goalkeeper collects the ball, he distributes it quickly by hand to a target on the opposite side - coach decides if its done quickly enough to deserve a point.

## TECHNIQUE

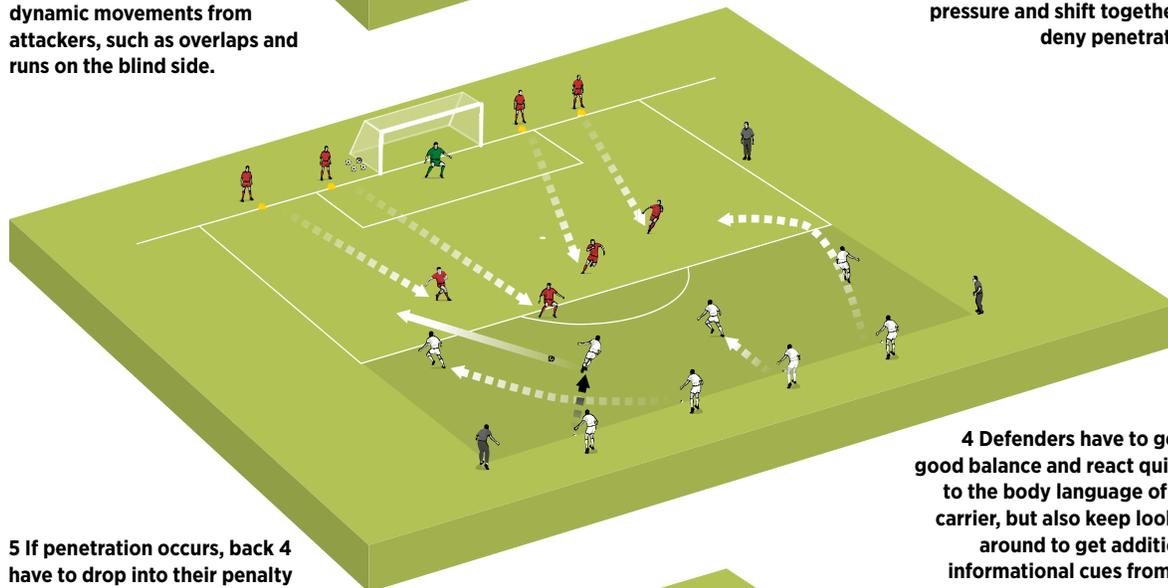
Back 4 defenders make play predictable and win the ball back. Need to guide players to figure out what are the cues to tell defenders to step and pressure the ball. When one of the back 4 step out of line to pressure the ball, the others must quickly arrange their angles and distance of support and tuck in behind.

**1** Goalkeeper distributes ball from hands or feet and as ball is travelling to attackers, defenders sprint out to cover distance and get in good shape.



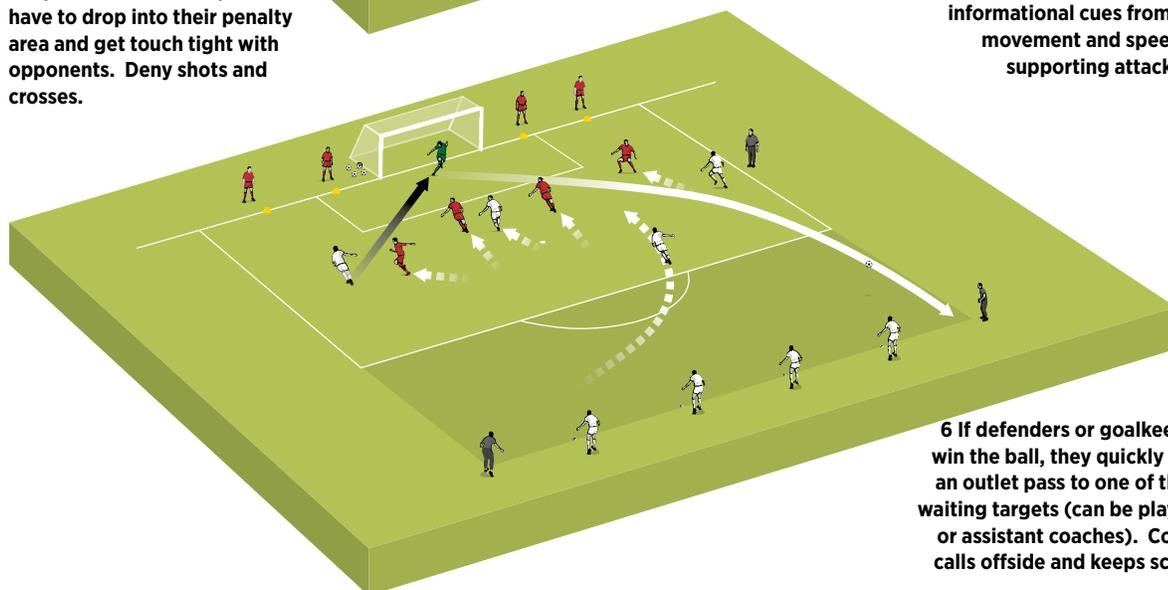
**2** Attackers can only come onto field once the ball gets to their line, then the game is live to goal. Defenders and goalkeeper communicate to identify pressure and shift together to deny penetration.

**3** Back 4 will have to deal with dynamic movements from attackers, such as overlaps and runs on the blind side.



**4** Defenders have to get in good balance and react quickly to the body language of ball carrier, but also keep looking around to get additional informational cues from the movement and speed of supporting attackers.

**5** If penetration occurs, back 4 have to drop into their penalty area and get touch tight with opponents. Deny shots and crosses.



**6** If defenders or goalkeeper win the ball, they quickly find an outlet pass to one of the 2 waiting targets (can be players or assistant coaches). Coach calls offside and keeps score.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Whole - 9v9 plus 1

## WHY USE IT

This activity places players in a larger game environment where coaches hope to see lessons learned in individual and small groups.

## SET UP

8v8 plus goalkeepers and a neutral player on a 60x44 yard field. Assign players in a 3-3-2 formation. Place orange cones on the offside lines (thirds of fields) to divide entry into the attacking third into 3 even zones.

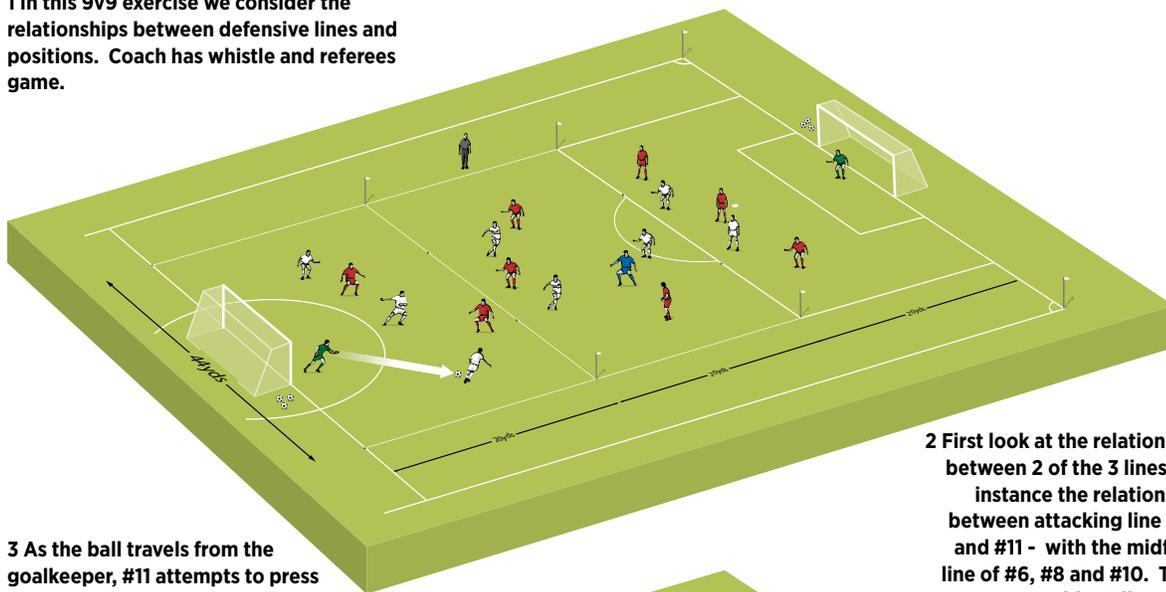
## HOW TO PLAY

Teams work together in 3 defined lines to try and make play predictable and win ball back. Working off cues, individual and small group defending strategies can be implemented within the formation. Recovery runs can now be addressed when ball gets behind a line of the field and how the rest of the team slow the opposition down. Offside lines implemented at thirds of the field.

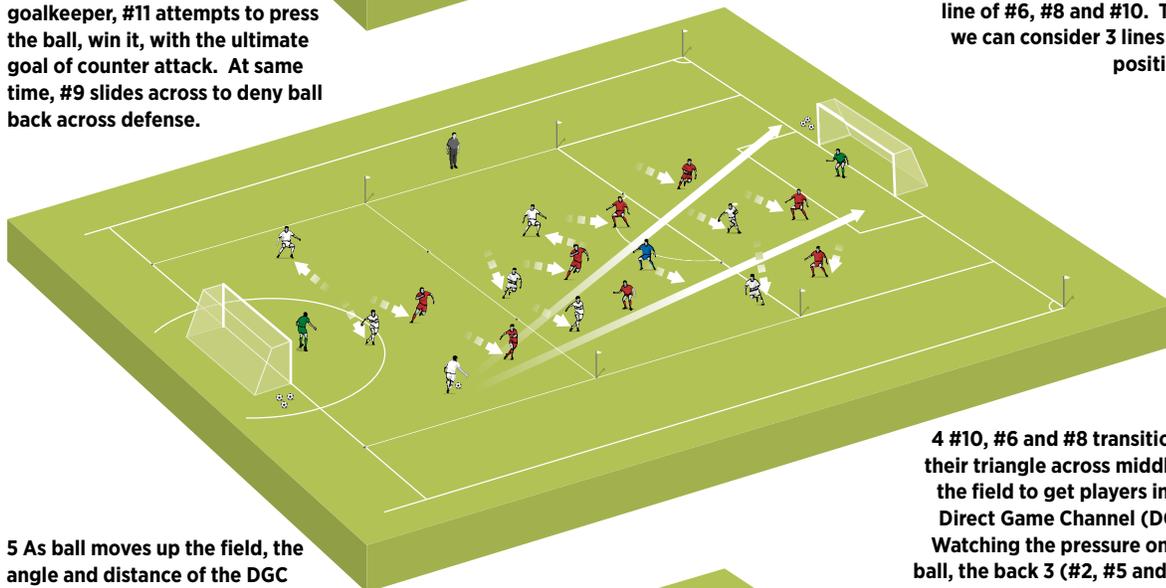
## TECHNIQUE

Defending team organize lines of their team to make play predictable. Must get numbers up and prevent progression towards the goal and prevent penetration. To place defending team in moment of crisis and numbers down, the player that shoots at goal, has to run around the yellow corner flag cone, before recovering to help his team win the ball back.

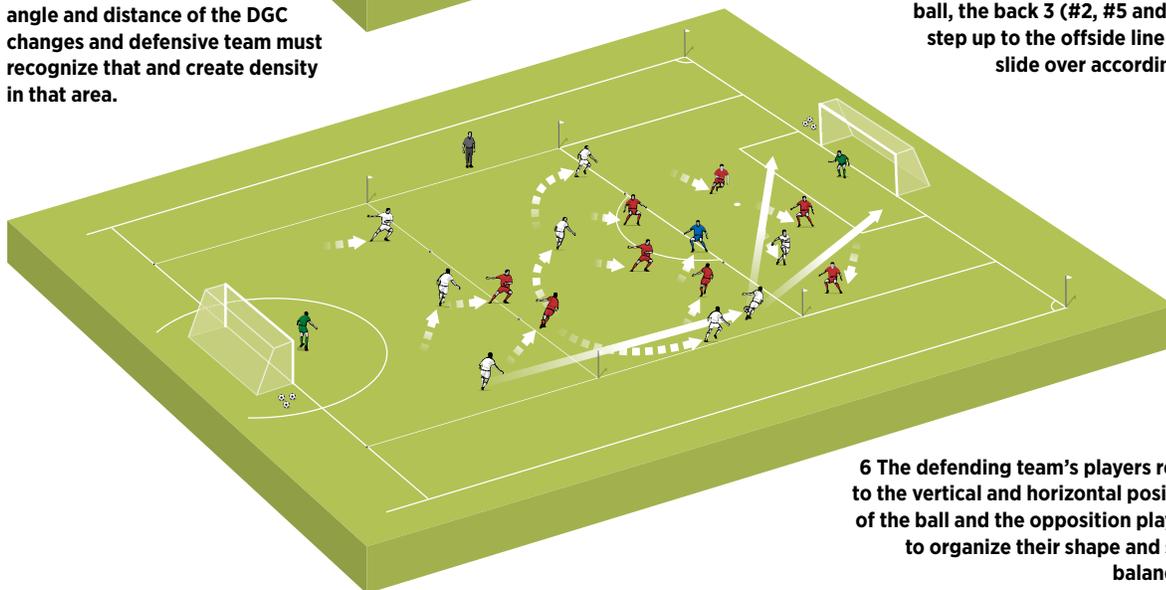
**1** In this 9v9 exercise we consider the relationships between defensive lines and positions. Coach has whistle and referees game.



**3** As the ball travels from the goalkeeper, #11 attempts to press the ball, win it, with the ultimate goal of counter attack. At same time, #9 slides across to deny ball back across defense.



**5** As ball moves up the field, the angle and distance of the DGC changes and defensive team must recognize that and create density in that area.



**2** First look at the relationship between 2 of the 3 lines, for instance the relationship between attacking line - #9 and #11 - with the midfield line of #6, #8 and #10. Then we can consider 3 lines and positions.

**4** #10, #6 and #8 transition in their triangle across middle of the field to get players in the Direct Game Channel (DGC). Watching the pressure on the ball, the back 3 (#2, #5 and #3) step up to the offside line and slide over accordingly.

**6** The defending team's players react to the vertical and horizontal position of the ball and the opposition players to organize their shape and stay balanced.

Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

# Part - Win ball and counter attack

## WHY USE IT

This activity places players in a game environment where they are set up to win the ball back from the opposition and counter attack quickly to a waiting target.

## SET UP

Play in half field with goal on goal line. Set up a central box near half-way line that is 25 yd wide and 20 yd long. Mark half way line in this box and 6 defenders begin in defensive half.

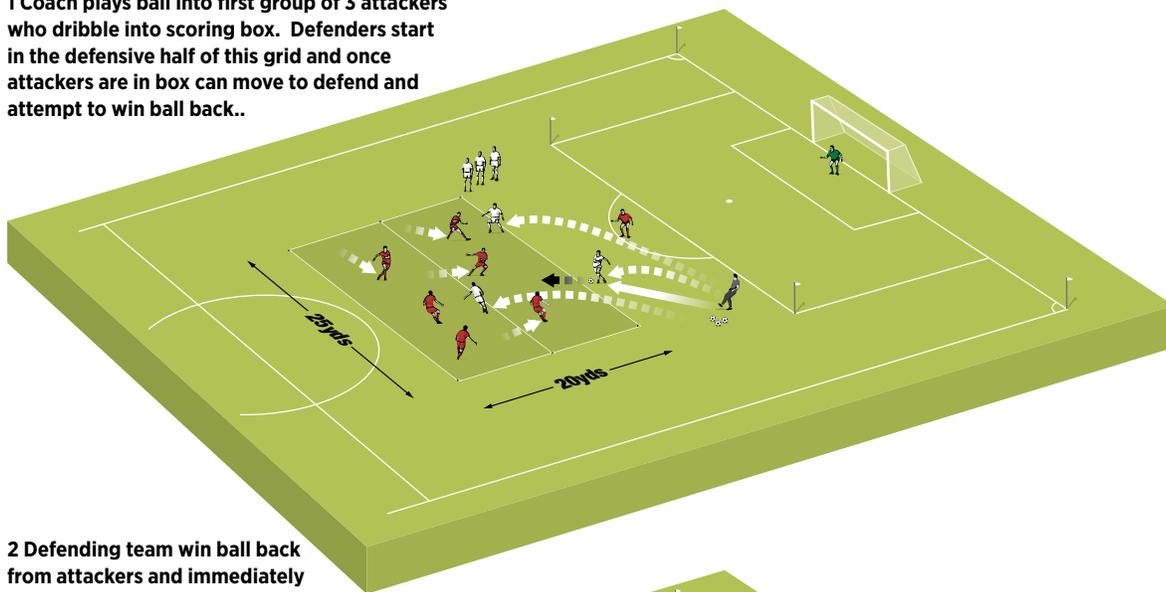
## HOW TO PLAY

Coach plays ball into first group of 3 attackers who enter grid and try and penetrate over the end line on the dribble. The group of 6 defenders attempt to deny penetration, tackle and win ball back. Immediately the player who wins the ball, finds a good pass into the central forward who has 3 touches to score goal. Play 4 x 3 minute games. Add central defender, but allow 1 midfielder to burst out of grid to support and make a 2v1 to goal, but add a time element.

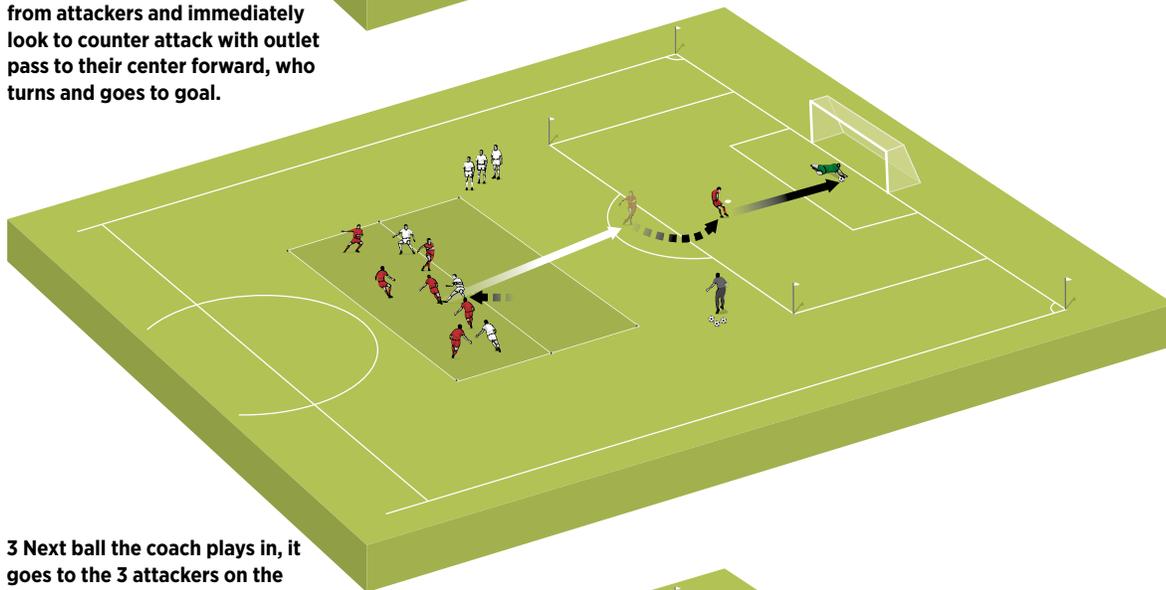
## TECHNIQUE

Group of 6 defenders pressure and collapse on the 3 attackers, to read cues and win ball back. On winning ball, transition to counter and play forward quickly with a driven ball into the center forward who looks to beat the goalkeeper with a touch or time limitation to put under pressure to finish.

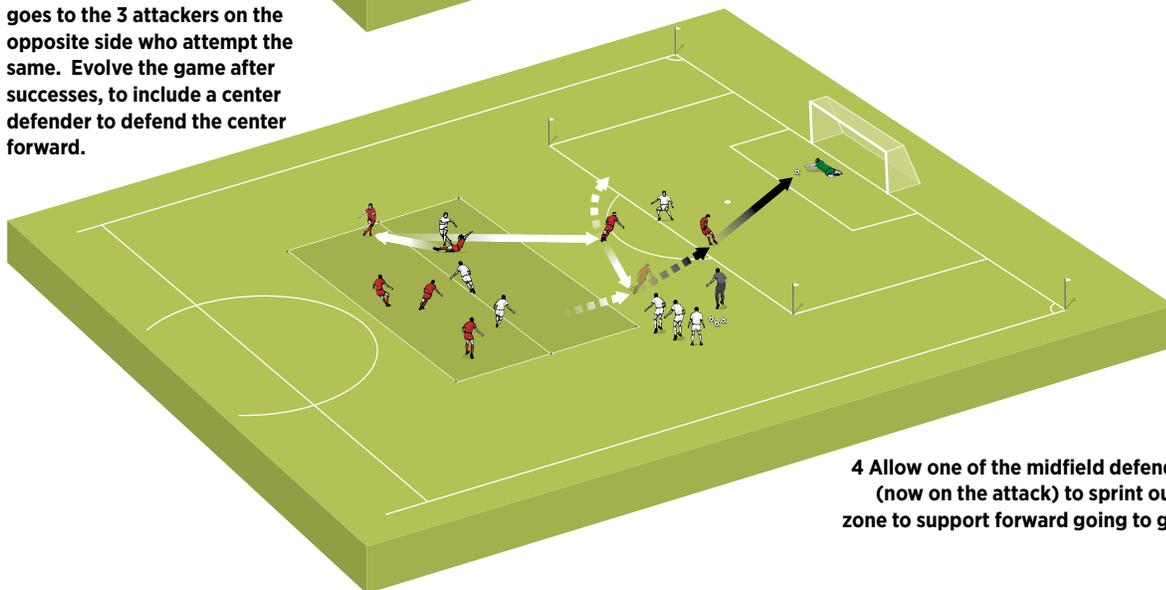
**1** Coach plays ball into first group of 3 attackers who dribble into scoring box. Defenders start in the defensive half of this grid and once attackers are in box can move to defend and attempt to win ball back..



**2** Defending team win ball back from attackers and immediately look to counter attack with outlet pass to their center forward, who turns and goes to goal.



**3** Next ball the coach plays in, it goes to the 3 attackers on the opposite side who attempt the same. Evolve the game after successes, to include a center defender to defend the center forward.



**4** Allow one of the midfield defenders (now on the attack) to sprint out of zone to support forward going to goal.

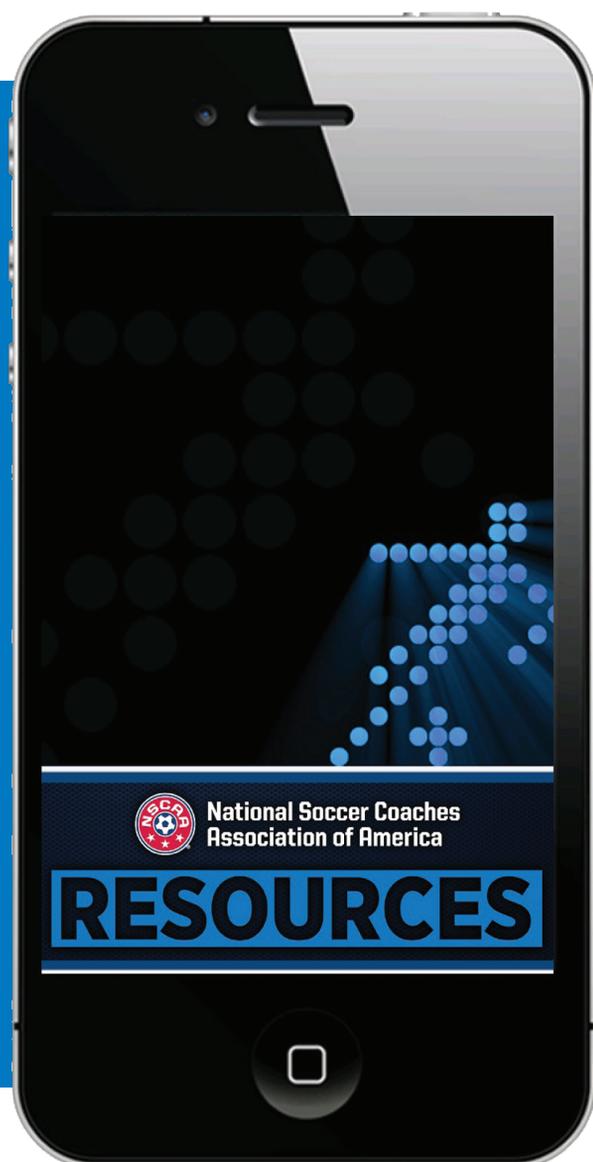
Player movement

Ball movement

Run with ball

Shot

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