



Zonal Defending Through the Midfield

Category: Tactical: Defensive principles

Difficulty: Moderate

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Description

Organized Defence through Pressure, Cover and Balance Principles.

Let me start out by asking what is the main purposes of defending?

We will approach it as following:

- 1) To limit opposition Goalscoring Opportunities
- 2) To win the Ball Back
- 3) To use Defence as an Offensive tool

Since our first concern is not to concede Goalscoring Opportunities and not winning the Ball Back, it allows us to teach players more patient and organized defensive principles, that will allow us to be very defensively solid, as well as win the ball back in favoring Attacking Transitional moments.

Defence as an Offensive tool, we will only discuss much later.

We will teach them the Basic Defensive Principles of Pressure, Cover and Balance

- Pressure - taking space and time away from our opponents
- Cover - taking up a position to firstly prevent Depth balls, and secondly are capable of getting across to my teammates channel to apply pressure, if they get beaten
- Balance - taking up a zonal position in relation to my Pressuring and Covering teammates, so that I can transition into those roles immediately as is required

Going forward age expectations would be:

u11s - Apply Pressure and introduce Cover and Balance Principles

u12s - Apply Pressure and Cover Principles, while understanding Balance Principle

u13s and up - Apply Pressure, Cover and Balance Principles

u14 should have decent mastering of these basic Defensive Principles

Teaching Pressure

Applying Pressure in the Game is a key component to defending well. When Pressuring an opponent properly, we reduce the **space** they have as well as **time** they have to make decisions.

As a general rule: IF THE BALL IS IN YOUR CHANNEL, YOU HAVE TO PRESS

We can use the **4-Downs of 1vs1 Defending** to teach our players what they should be doing to when pressuring an opponent:

- Close-down (Reduce Opponents Space and Time)
- Slow-down (Set oneself, so that you are not over committing)
- Low-down (Lowering your centre of gravity to be able to better react to your opponent)
- Eyes-down (Looking at your opponents hips, knees, and feet, along with the ball, to get cues on where they want to go)

This Activity of Defending 1vs1 within channels allows us to coach and practice Pressuring of the Ball.

Defending Players will start with a ball and play it across the Channel to the Attacker, as soon as the ball is played the Defender is allowed to go and Pressure their opponent, by applying the 4-Downs (Passes across should be firm and well weighted).

Attackers attempt to beat the defender and get across the endline they are defending. Defender is attempting to prevent that from happening, and secondly trying to win the ball back.

Play conclusion:

- 1) Win the ball and dribble over endline
- 2) Win the ball and retain possession by playing it back
- 3) Ball leaves the channel
- 4) Defender gets beaten and Attacker dribbles over endline

Players should continually switch sides, and coaches can switch some players between channels every few minutes.

Get players going and then coach one Down at a time, till they have a general understanding. Then move on to Teaching Cover



Teaching Cover

Similar to the previous activity the Principle of Pressure is still key, as whoever is pressing, determines what their teammates will look to do.

As a general rule: **IF YOUR TEAMMATE NEXT TO YOU IS PRESSING, YOU SHOULD TAKE-UP A COVERING POSITION**

The Cover Principle of Defence is crucial when defending as a team, because it prevents opponents from easily splitting defensive lines.

Cover Principle has two main functions:

- 1 - Prevent Opposition Depth balls
- 2 - Take the role of Pressure, if my pressuring teammate gets beaten

As another rule that gets involved here, the pressuring player should never keep pressing into another teammates channel, and leave their channel empty, they should rather call for their teammate to step-up from Cover and become the 'Pressure'.

Ball can be played it to either of the Attackers, and then Defender in that channel should become the Pressure immediately, and the other player takes up the Cover role.

Play conclusion:

- 1) Win the ball and dribble over endline
- 2) Win the ball and retain possession by playing it back
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Teaching Balance

Both previous Principles are still applicable and required as we teach the third defensive Principle of Defence - Balance

Balance - taking up a zonal position in relation to your Pressuring and Covering teammates, so that you can transition into those roles immediately as is required

As a general rule: **IF YOU ARE NOT PRESSING OR COVERING, YOU SHOULD LOOK TO TAKE UP A POSITION OF BALANCE WITHIN THE TEAM'S DEFENSIVE SHAPE. DO NOT TRACK PLAYERS OFF THE BALL, STAY ORGANIZED**

Teams will compete 4vs4 in this activity, the aim is for the Attackers to get across the endline the Defenders are Defending, and for the Defenders to prevent that from happening. There is now a 5+6 channel on the flanks, meaning there is more width to defend, but Defenders should aim to never have a open channel between them.

Play conclusion:

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- 3) Ball leaves the channel
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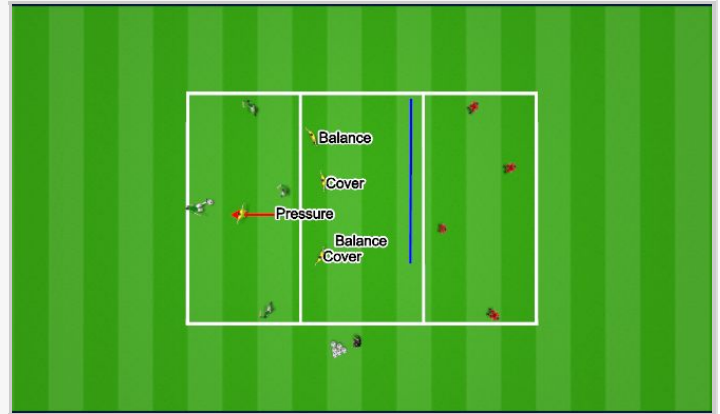


Soccer Tennis with P,C,B

The Aim of this Soccer Activity is to bring the Basic Defensive Principles into a more fluid and realistic environment.

Gets played as a normal Soccer Tennis, but middle team has to apply the Defensive Principles correctly. See animation example, only 1 defender pressing at a time.

There's other Defensive Principles like Organizing and Sliding that becomes involved with this activity, but we will not look into it at this time.



Block 6vs6+GK Full Width

This Game/Activity can be played open or directional.

Directional

- Ball gets fed in by coach to attackers, who attempt to score
- Defenders defend their goal and try to limit/delay Goalscoring Opportunities
- If Defenders win the ball, they can either score in the PUGGs or retain possession by playing it to the Goalkeeper
- As soon as the play ends, Attackers will over options to the coach and a new ball will be played in

Open

- Normal rules of the Game apply and balls can start from either end, however both teams should look to organize and defend their goal as learned.
- Push the 2 PUGGs together for one central goal that should be defended.

