

LWYSA

Training Program

Book 7

Coaching Dead Ball Situations



Written by Jimmy Gabriel

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WELCOME TO THE LAKE WASHINGTON YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION FAMILY OF PROGRAMS

In 1967, a group of individuals got together and formed an Association for our youth, centered around the game of soccer, which has endured and developed the following organizational philosophy.

VISION

To be recognized by our membership and soccer community as a world-class provider of youth soccer services.

MISSION

To promote the game of soccer and to provide opportunities for all youth under the age of nineteen who register with us, to play affiliated soccer at a level commensurate with ability and interest. We will emphasize the development of self-esteem, good sportsmanship, fitness, achievement, teamwork and skill through the playing of the game; and provide educational opportunities to further develop all players, coaches, referees and administrators.

The Vision and Mission statements above are our creed. Following in this thought, the Association takes great pride in its approach of teaching life's lessons to our youth. This environment is intended to create an enjoyable soccer experience as well as develop young athletes.

Many individuals have contributed to the success of the Association Programs over the years. To all those individuals, the Association is truly grateful for the contributions and sacrifices they made in behalf of our youth.

Table of Contents

Coaching Dead Ball Situations	5
Defending Free Kick	8
Defending Against a Dead Ball Shooting Opportunity	8
Setting up the basic wall	9
Supporting the Wall	10
The First Support Player	10
The Second Support Player	11
The Group Support Players	12
Attacking Free Kicks	13
The Direct Shot on Goal	13
The Re-directed Shot on Goal	14
Running behind the wall	15
Defending the Corner Kick	17
Defending Corner Kicks	18
The Goalkeepers Role	19
The Goal line Defenders	20
The Frontal Marker	21
The Three Space Markers	22
The Man Markers	23
The Shot Blocker	24
The Corner Block	25
Attacking Corner Kicks	26
The Cross	27
Near Post Attacker	28
The Far Post Attacker	29
Attacking the Edge of the Six-yard Box	30
The Power Header	31
Keeping Up the Pressure	32
The Watch Tower	33
The Defensive Throw in	34
The Attacking Throw in	34

Defending Throw-Ins35
Defending the Long Throw-In36
Cross-Over Movement..... 38
Cross-over Plays 39
The Long Throw Into the Penalty Area40
Notes:40

Coaching Dead Ball Situations in Soccer

At the top level of soccer, coaching dead ball situations has high priority especially when these dead ball situations are close enough to goal to present goal-scoring opportunities.

Whether the scoring opportunity comes from a free kick, a corner kick or a throw in both the attacking and defending teams must recognize the importance of organizing themselves either to take advantage of the opportunity or to successfully thwart the attackers scoring attempt.

When viewing World Cup play we can see the passion and determination that players show when trying to establish a certain position even before the goal, dangerous dead ball kick or throw is taken.

Of course we do not expect or even want our players to mirror the desperation shown by these players, who in my opinion should be punished more often by the officials, but we should recognize that their behavior patterns show how important these dead ball situations are to them.

Without doubt the importance of proper preparation to take or to defend dead ball situations increases with each advancing age group.

When players are very young they attach little importance to free kicks or throw-ins but as they advance in age and power they begin to realize that games can be won or lost based upon their success or failure in handling these dead ball situations.

Coaches must also realize the important role dead ball situations play in the eventual result of a competitive game and make plans to deal effectively with these dangerous situations.

The danger area for dead ball situations begins some thirty yards from the defenders' goal line and stretches the width of the field.

All players must be aware of the danger a free kick, corner-kick or throw-in can create for the defensive team so lets address the actions required by the defending players.

Defensively the drill goes something like this:

- **Be alert to the potential danger**
- **Know the position you are expected to fill**
- **Get into position quickly**
- **Alert any of your teammates who are slow to get into their allotted position**
- **Know your role if an adjustment is needed**
- **Make the adjustment when necessary**
- **Otherwise hold your position until your opponents makes their play**
- **When given a mark, stay with that mark until the danger has past**
- **If you make contact with the ball either clear your lines or direct your pass to a teammate in an unmarked position**

On the other hand many dead ball situations provide the attacking team with a chance to score especially if the players, recognizing the opportunity each situation presents, prepare themselves to take advantage of them.

Offensively the drill goes something like this;

- **Be alert to the possibilities**
- **Know the position your expected to fill**
- **Get into your starting position early**
- **As pass receivers, don't stand in the space that you want to receive the ball, always be prepared to move into the chosen area**
- **Anticipate that the ball is coming to you and be prepared to deal with it**

- **When delivering the pass pick a target area that you feel confident of hitting**
- **Also be aware that an accurate delivery is 90% of any successful play**

These instructions are recognized as the basic ways to prepare to defend or attack your opponent in dead ball situations.

Armed with this information players can organize themselves so that they take full advantage of any attacking dead ball situation and while defending, limit their opponents chances of scoring.

Defending Free Kicks

Defending Against a Dead Ball Shooting Opportunity

The first thing to do is to form a defensive wall.

This starts with player 'A' being positioned some 10 yards from the ball and between the ball and the near side goal post.

A forward player or goalkeeper should help by directing player 'A' into position between the ball and the post.

Once this is done another player must be positioned to the outside of player 'A' to eliminate the chance of the shooter bending the ball around the wall and into the goal.

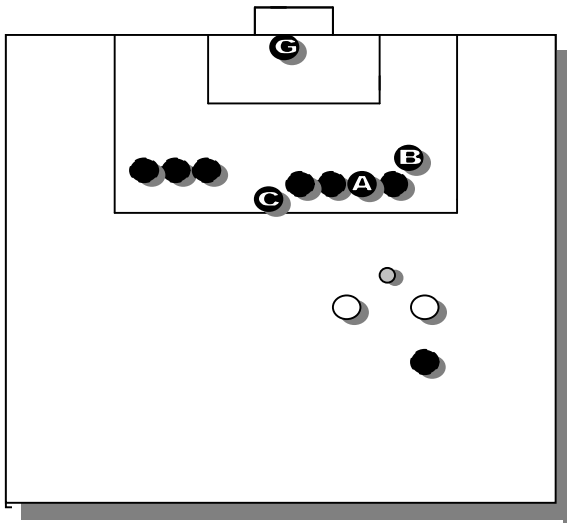
Two players must also be positioned to the inside of the player 'A' to present a line of players prepared to block any direct shot on goal.

Once this has been done the basic wall shape has been formed.

Then player 'B' should be positioned behind and to the outside of the wall to guard the wing space on this open side of the wall.

Also player 'C' must be placed to the inside of the wall in order to charge down any attempted re-location shot.

All other defenders should be in position to cover any chip or cross to their side of the penalty area and should also to be ready to challenge for any rebound that may occur from the shot on goal.



Setting up the basic wall

Player 'A' is positioned between the ball and the nearest post.

The goalkeeper can help in this procedure by directing player 'A' into the correct position.

However if the keeper is not comfortable doing this because of the possibility of the free kick being taken quickly, a designated forward can assist in this positioning by being behind the ball and in line with the nearest post.

Whether the keeper or the forward position player 'A' is not as important as the speed that player 'A' gets positioned.

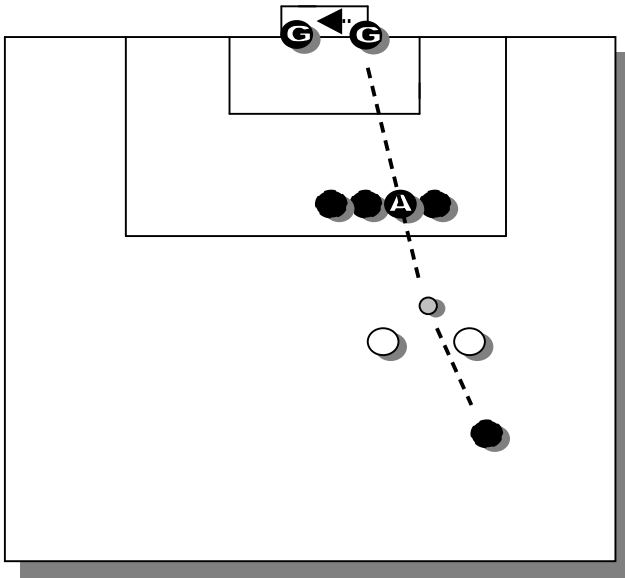
The quicker player 'A' gets positioned the quicker the wall can get set up and the other wall players can get into place.

The next step is for a single wall defender to get into position beside player 'A' to the outside of the wall.

Then two other wall defenders must take up position to the inside of the wall.

The wall players then close ranks to ensure that the wall is solid and will not allow a direct shot to squeeze through.

The basic wall shape is now in place and the keeper can return to the open side of the goal or the forward assisting the lining up process can adopt a defensive position.



Supporting the Wall

The First Support Player

Once the basic wall shape is in place the wall support players get positioned.

The first support player 'B' is positioned on the outside of the wall.

This player is positioned there to discourage the opponents from running a play using the space to the outside of the wall as penetration space.

Quite often attackers will have a player make a run to shoot the ball but will instead step over the ball and run to the outside of the wall.

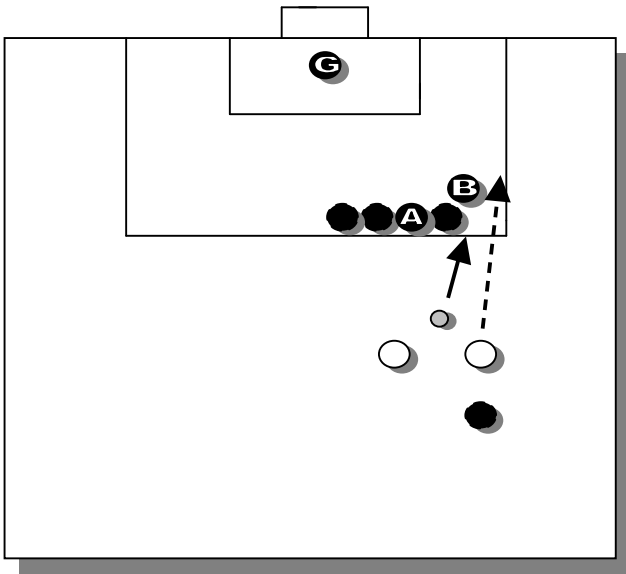
If the defenders do not have a player positioned to the outside of the wall this attacking move will create penetration space down the side of the wall.

When this happens the player on the end of the wall must make the decision to either hold position or break off and mark the runner.

This will mean that the wall has lost an important block player and is vulnerable to a curved shot around the wall to the near post of the goal.

The defending team loses both ways and is not a good situation.

The positioning of the first support player 'B' will stop this from happening.



The Second Support Player

The second support player 'C' is placed to the inside of the wall.

This player has the job of charging down and blocking any attempt by the opponents to re-direct the ball with the intention of creating an open shot on goal.

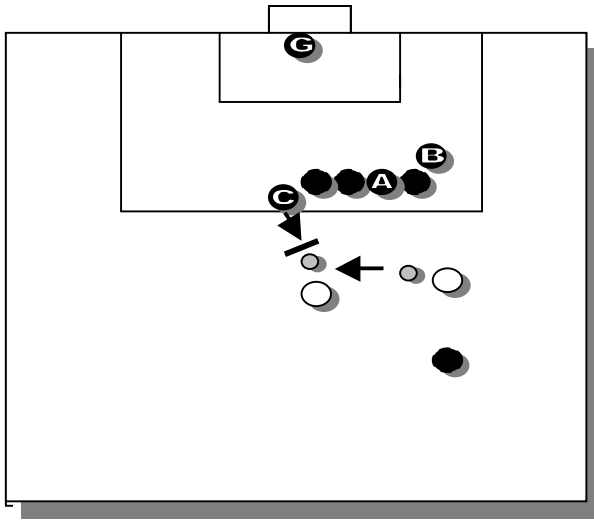
The re-direction would position the ball to the inside of the wall allowing the shooter to by-pass the wall.

By using the player 'C' to charge down the re-directed shot the wall players can hold their position.

This allows the wall players to concentrate on one thing, which is staying together until the shot is taken.

Many goals are scored from free kicks when the ball is redirected and the wall opens up in a belated attempt to block the shot.

The positioning of block player 'C' will stop that from happening.



The Group Support Players

The third lot of support players form a defensive group.

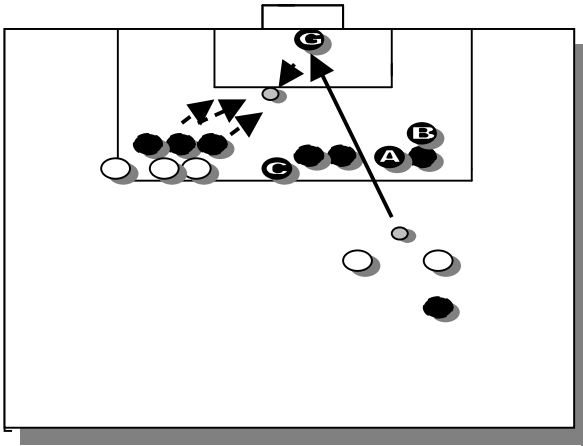
These players are responsible for challenging any balls chipped over the wall to the far post searching for unmarked forwards who can head or shoot for goal. They are also required to be on the alert for any rebounds resulting from a direct shot on goal hitting a post or crossbar.

The same help should be available when the goalkeeper makes a save that causes the ball to rebound off the hands sets it loose in front of goal.

This group's job is very important in stopping the opponents from getting second chances.

On the one hand they must mark their immediate opponent in case the free kick is chipped over or passed over or around the wall.

On the other hand they must be ready to drop quickly into the space between themselves and the keeper in anticipation of rebounds once they determine that the opponents play is a shot on goal.



Attacking Free Kicks

The Direct Shot on Goal

Most direct shots on goal are hit with some degree of top spin so that their route to goal takes them up and over the wall.

Clearing the wall is the number one priority of any direct shot so the shooter must give the shot enough lift to clear the wall of players.

Once the ball has cleared the wall it should begin its descent into the goal.

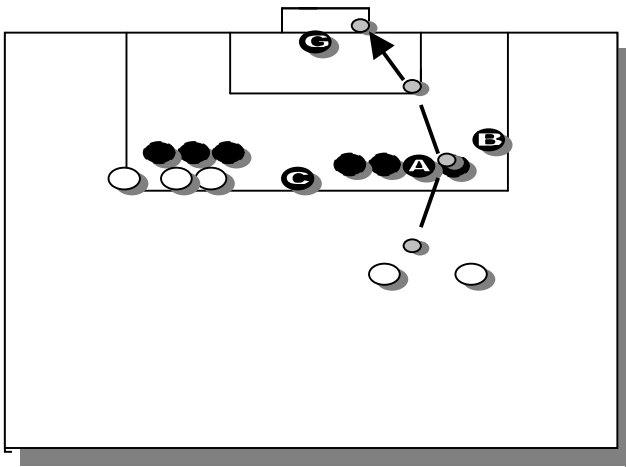
The shooter achieves this by hitting the shot in such a way that top spin is imparted on the ball. [Imparting top spin on the ball takes a bit of practice but it is a technique that is relatively easy to teach]

The flight path of the ball should be designed to take it over the wall of players and under the crossbar hopefully into the side of the goal that the keeper has vacated.

The important thing for the shooter to remember is that all of the concentration should be put into striking the ball on the exact spot with the exact amount of power so that the desired result can be achieved.

In another sport it would resemble the concentration of a baseball pitcher at three balls and two strikes pitching to the potential final out of the innings with the bases loaded.

You know that the pitchers concentration level is as high as it can get and the dead ball shooter has to be at that same high level if the goal scoring attempt is to succeed.



The Re-directed Shot on Goal

The re-directed shot on goal is an attempt by the dead ball attackers to take the wall out of the play.

This type of play requires three players, one to pass the ball, one to stop the ball and one to shoot the ball.

Before the kick is taken the passer must keep an eye open to make sure that the defensive blocker does not encroach inside the required 10 yard distance from the ball.

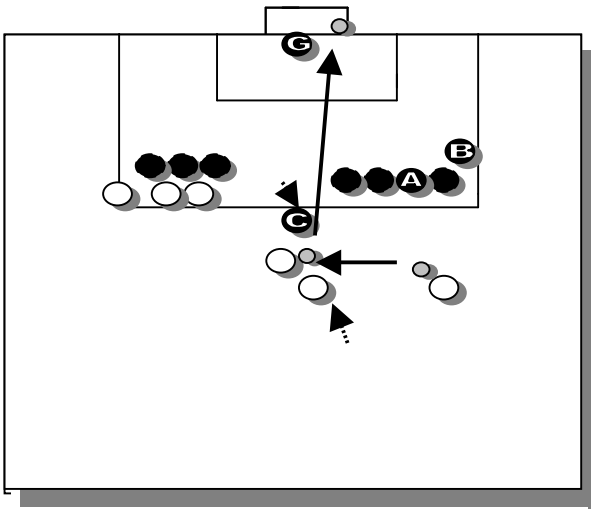
When satisfied with the blockers position is legal the passer lays the ball to the stopper who is positioned to the inside of the wall.

The stoppers job is to set the ball by stopping it dead for the shooter.

The shooter starts to run when the passer first touches the ball so that immediately the ball is set the shot can be hit.

Done properly this procedure should eliminate the effectiveness of both the wall and the blocker exposing the goalkeeper to a direct power shot.

Any successful re-direction attempt requires immaculate touch and timing to get the shot off before the blocker comes into play but with plenty of practice and some degree of patience on behalf of the passer the end result can be extremely rewarding.



Running behind the wall

If the defending team does not place a player to the outside of the wall then the attacking team should think about running a play that features an attacking player exposing that space.

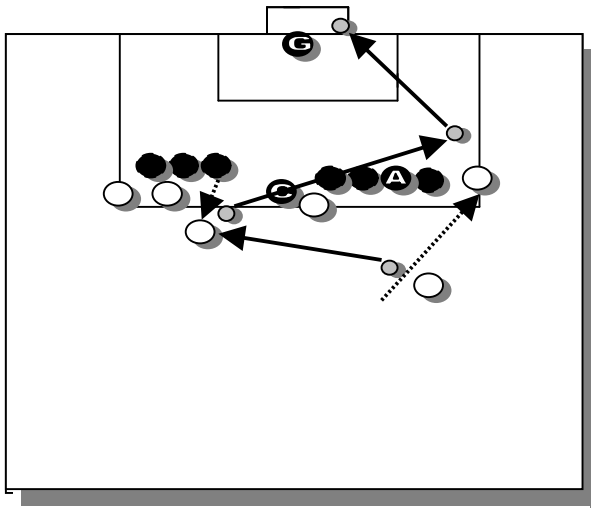
The simplest method of doing this is to have a player run at the ball as if to strike a shot on goal and instead run over the ball and down the outside of the wall.

A second player would immediately step forward as if to strike a shot on goal and instead pass the ball to the inside of the wall to an informed team mate. The player receiving the pass would immediately serve another pass into the space behind the wall.

That pass could be placed on the ground if the passing lane is clear or over the wall if the passing lane is blocked.

Either way the pass should land in the space behind the wall and in front of the player running behind the wall.

Of course this type of play takes quite a bit of practice to achieve the desired result but the tactical and technical requirements should not present a huge problem for the players involved.



Running behind the wall

Another way to get behind the wall is to have a runner move to the inside of the wall to collect a pass.

The set up is pretty much the same with an initial runner pretending to shoot and stepping over the ball before running to the outside of the wall.

The player we really want to release should pretend to have the job of blocking off the defensive blocker.

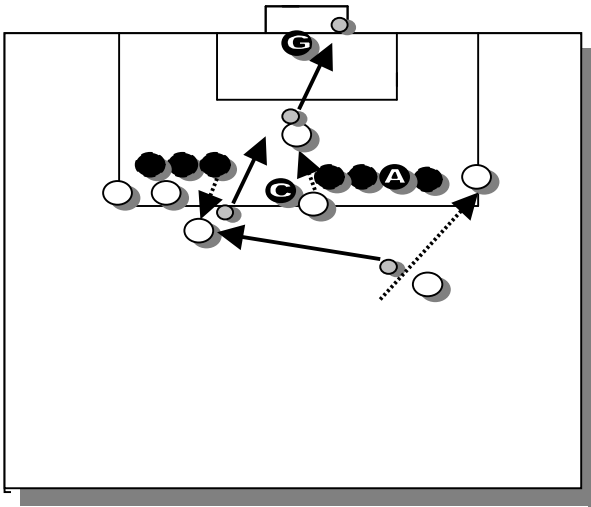
This will encourage the defensive blocker to advance to a point immediately behind that player which opens up a space inside the wall.

The second player to run to the ball pretends to shoot but instead passes to a player moving back from the edge of the penalty area to create space to receive the pass.

As the ball is passed the inside attacker slips behind the defensive blocker and into the open central space.

As this takes place the second pass should be on its way into the central penetration space creating a one v one opportunity for the attacker.

Once again the timing of these moves take some practice but the technical and tactical ability is easy to apply.



Defending the Corner Kick

Another dangerous dead ball situation is the corner kick because there are many different ways to vary the cross delivery.

However if we isolate the section of the penalty area that provides the most effective goalscoring opportunities it would be the six-yard box situated directly in front of the goal.

That being the case defenders of corner kicks should make certain that their opponents are marked tightly in this area and that the tallest players are positioned to mark the most dangerous sections of the area.

By doing this coaches are challenging the opponents to attempt to beat their elite defenders who are positioned in this well protected area knowing that the chance of an attacking player getting the ball in unchallenged space is not very high.

But apart from the six-yard area the coach must also spread the other players to cover other potentially dangerous attacking areas.

Defensive players must be aware of offensive players with exceptional heading power who if given the opportunity could head the ball into the goal from a position outside the six-yard area.

These defenders must be prepared to run with the power players and if possible get to the cross before they do or at least challenge for the ball making it impossible for them to get a clean header on goal.

Also someone should be given the job of challenging for any misdirected or soft clearance that land invitingly at the feet of one of the power hitters positioned on or around the edge of the penalty area.

There are too many players in the penalty area to allow the keeper a clear view of any shot directed towards goal from the edge of that area so someone should be positioned there with the sole purpose of blocking these shots.

If possible a player positioned the legal 10 yards away from the ball who jumps about in an attempt to block the cross should disturb the attention of the player taking the corner kick.

Most coaches will say that delivery is 90% of the successful outcome of corner kicks so if we can block the cross or manage to redirect it or even just disturb the attention of the kicker we make the successful delivery more difficult to achieve.

Last but by no means least coaches must allow the goalkeeper to take charge of all re-positioning of players if the need arises.

Having the keeper feel comfortable in a dead ball situation is important especially on corner kicks because the keeper is the one player who can handle the ball and that is huge when the ball is almost always served in the air.

Should the keeper attempt to come for the ball the defenders must shield their keeper from any potential challenges by taking a strong position between the opponents and the keeper.

This would allow the keeper to collect the ball without fear of colliding with any charging attacking opponent.

Defending Corner Kicks

Positioning the players to defend corner kicks depends on the coach's preference on which area of the penalty area needs the most protection.

This would be my preferred way to defend a corner kick.

The goalkeeper is positioned in the central part of the goal about a yard off the goal line.

Two players defend the near and far post by positioning themselves on the goal line and inside each of the posts.

Another player fronts any tall stationary near post attacker staying in touch at all times.

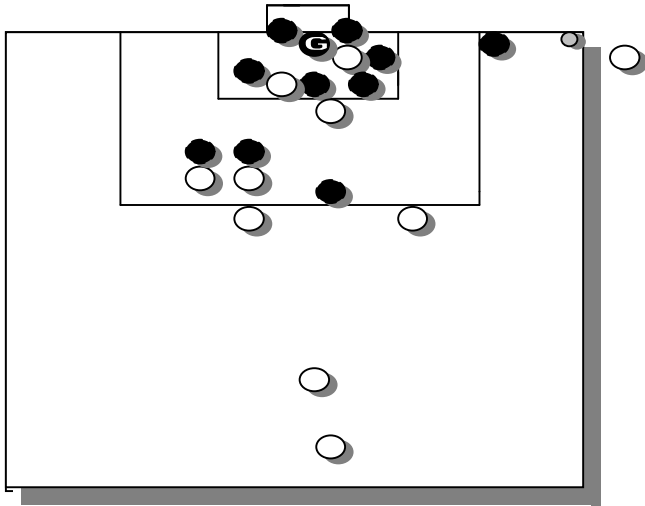
Three players space mark across the six-yard box.

Two players mark the attacking players outside the six-yard box.

Another player is positioned on the edge of the penalty area to block any attempted shots from attacking players.

One player is positioned on the end line some 10 yards away from the ball in an attempt to either block the kick or distract the kicker.

The goalkeeper adjusts the players positioning when the situation demands change.



The Goalkeepers Role

The most important player when defending corner kicks is the goalkeeper.

The keeper must assist the defending players by knowing exactly where each player should be positioned.

Should a player or players take up the wrong positions the keeper should be able to recognize their mistake and assist them to find their correct position.

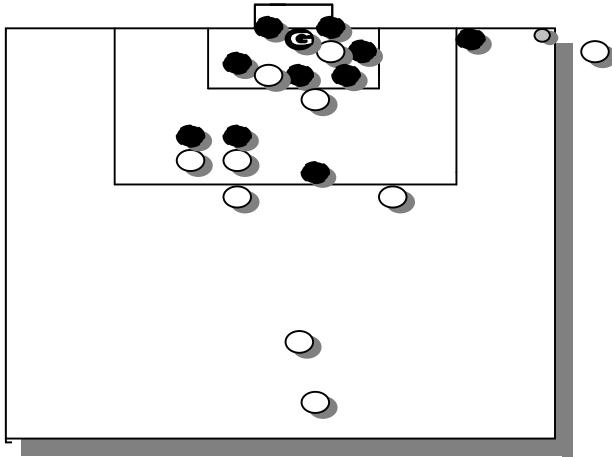
When the kick is taken the keeper must decide quickly whether to come off the goal line to collect or punch the ball or to stay on the goal line to prepare for a save from a shot or header.

Once this decision has been made the keeper must immediately inform the defenders in a clear voice so that they can prepare themselves to deal with the situation.

The keeper should also take charge of the players positioned inside the six-yard box and the players marking the posts.

If the ball is only partially cleared they must hold their positions, however, should the clearance be a solid one the keeper should instruct the defenders to clear out of the six-yard box or even further.

The ability of the goalkeeper to make quick decisions and to follow through on those decisions gives the supporting defenders the confidence needed to deal with the corner kick successfully.



The Goal line Defenders

The first position that needs to be established is the two defenders on the goal line positioned alongside each goalpost.

These players should be on the goal line about a yard inside each goal post. Each player must be prepared to challenge for any cross ball threatening their goal area.

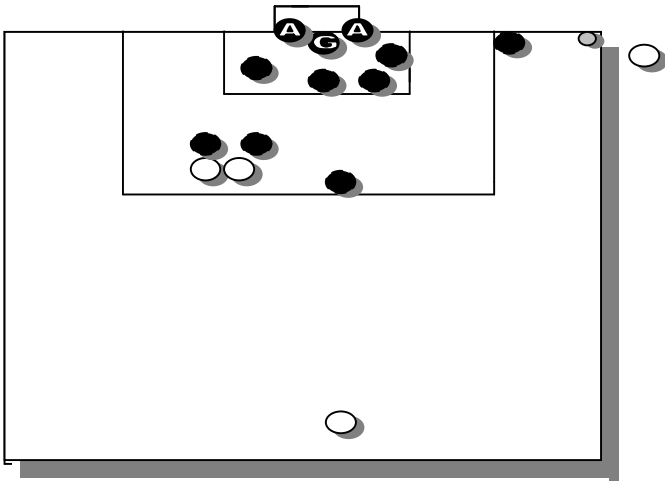
They must also be prepared to block a goal bound shot with any legal part of their body an act that takes some courage.

Both players must remain in their position until the danger has been cleared because any soft clearance by a defending teammate may be followed by a shot on goal.

Goal line defenders clearing the ball off the line have denied many certain goals. I have personally witnessed a European Championship game that was won and lost by the absence of a goal line defender at the far post.

This oversight allowed a well-placed header by an attacking opponent to bounce into the open side of the goal.

If I had coached that defensive corner both posts would have been guarded and that winning goal would not have happened.



The Frontal Marker

The frontal marker is positioned on the near side edge of the six-yard box.

The marker's job is to space mark that particular area so that any opposing forward will be denied free space in that area to head flick the cross on.

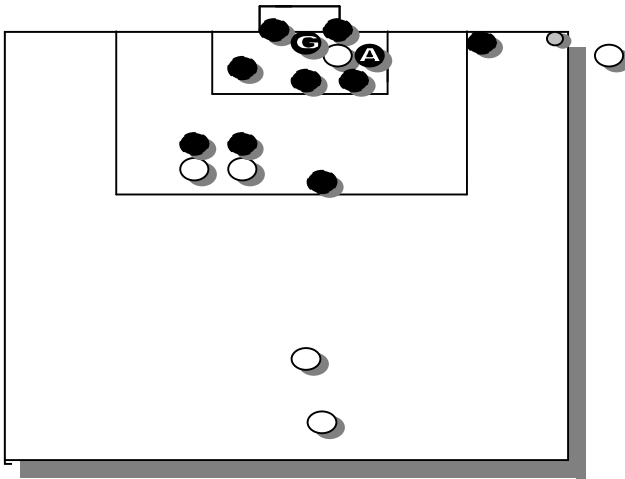
The flick-on creates an extremely dangerous situation for the defensive team simply because it re-directs the point of the attack for the opponents.

Also, defenders tend to hold their positions in these situations while attackers tend to be on the move so the re-adjustment advantage lies with the attackers.

If the attacker attempts to vie with the space marker for the same spot, then the marker must attempt to remain in front of the attacker on a line between that attacker and the ball.

Should the ball arrive into that area of the six-yard box, then the space-marking defender must attempt to clear the ball beyond the penalty area.

The coach should select one of the tallest players to protect this area to increase the chances of that player clearing the ball.



The Three Space Markers

These three markers must be aware of their responsibilities.

They must not allow the ball to bounce inside the six-yard box.

To do this they must accept responsibility for defending frontal space.

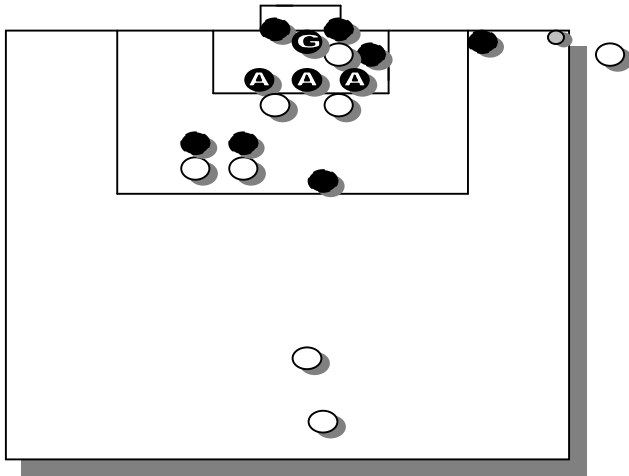
This means that the first defender has some 3 yards of space in front to protect.

The second defender must defend the space between his front and his teammates back.

The third defender protects the space between his front and his teammate's back but is also responsible for the three yards of space behind.

[This is not as difficult a task as it at first appears mainly because any cross dropping in the back area would take some time to reach and the back defender can use that time to adjust position]

Once again the coach should select the tallest and strongest players to protect this six-yard area, as the attacking opponents will most certainly deploy their very best players to attack it.



The Man Markers

Every team taking an attacking corner has one or two players who are especially good at heading the ball.

These players normally like to run into the penalty area from the edge of that area in an attempt to charge and leap with great power.

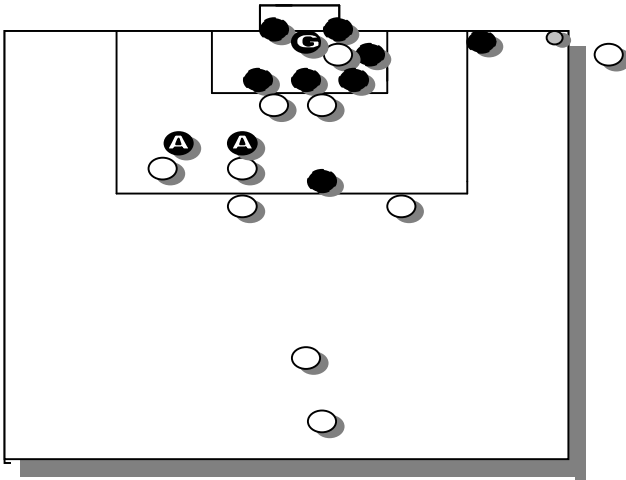
Marking these players takes quickness, power and courage to allow the markers to compete with these high flyers.

By marking these forwards closely defenders can block the attackers' initial runs making them seek other routes to the ball, which could force them to stop and re-start their runs.

The stop and restart can throw off the timing of the attackers' runs and that will make it difficult for them to make solid contact with the ball should they eventually connect with the cross.

The marker has the difficult task of watching out for the player and the cross and that's why most markers will stretch their arms to feel their opponent while concentrating their vision on the ball.

Marking these dangerous attackers is not for the tactically dozy or the faint-hearted but players who like a challenge will love this job.



The Shot Blocker

The player who is assigned the role of blocking shots has one of the most important tasks when a team is defending a corner kick.

All too often some half hit clearance ends up dropping directly towards an attacker positioned on the edge of the penalty area.

This attacker can usually hit the ball like a rocket and with the accuracy of a guided missile so someone must attempt to block it.

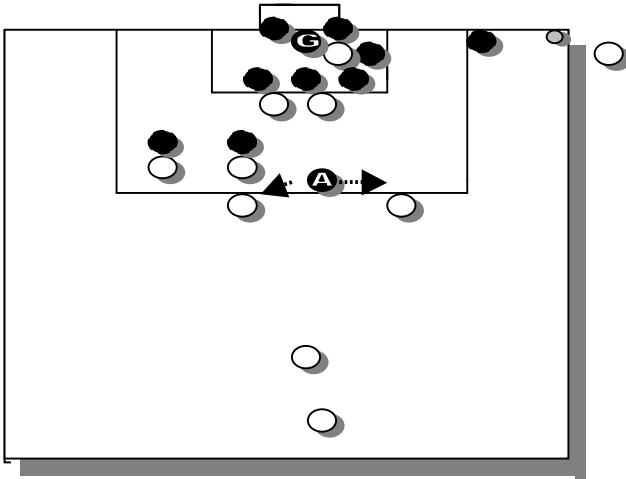
That responsibility falls to the player selected for this position and it goes without saying that courage is a high priority in this job.

Another priority is quickness to enable the player to get to the shooter before the shot is released.

Most attacking teams have two players positioned to the right and left of the penalty area.

This means that the defender has to anticipate the area that the half-hit clearance will land and get there quickly.

Also the blocking player must be ready to break forward onto the attack should the goalkeeper collect the ball cleanly.



The Corner Block

The player attempting to block the corner kick should be positioned 10 yards from the ball and a yard from the end line.

The player should attempt to upset the rhythm of the kicker by jumping up and down as the kicker moves to kick the ball.

Most teams do not place a player in this position preferring to position that player somewhere else but I like the different view it shows to the kicker and I do believe that most of the corner kick takers will be affected by the mere presence of the blocking player.

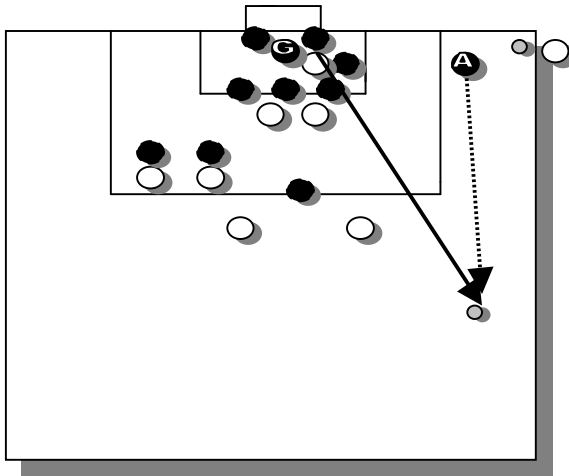
The blocking player is also in a good position to delay the opponent's play if they bring two players to take the kick.

This would mean that only one defender would be required to leave an original position to assist the defensive play.

Hopefully the blocking player will block the cross out for a throw in which is a less dangerous situation than the corner kick.

However, if the ball travels beyond the block player he should sprint forward to become a passing target for the goalkeeper, should the keeper manage to collect the cross.

This type of play utilizes the players defending and attacking abilities.



Attacking Corner Kicks

The most important part of any attacking corner kick is the quality of the cross delivery.

The player taking the corner kick should be able to select a target area and be reasonably sure of hitting the mark.

That mark should never be a player but instead should always be a selected area of the penalty area.

The mark should also be hit by a cross that arrives from above as the lower passing lanes are always blocked off by strategically positioned defenders.

The job of the player taking the corner is to hit the selected target area.

The job of the attacking player is to hit the cross by moving into that targeted area at the time that the ball arrives.

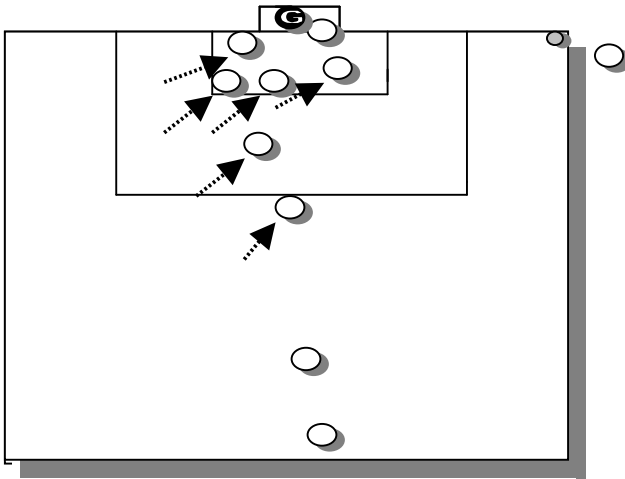
This means that players should not position themselves in the space they need to execute their goal attempt but should leave that space open so that they can move into it as the cross is on its way.

It all sounds pretty simple but of it's not and in fact takes lots of practice to get the timing right.

However it does help matters if each attacker knows the job requirements.

Planning breaks down when individuals do not know what is required of them so the coach should make sure that the players know where they should target their runs and why those targeted areas give them the best chance of success.

Their playmaking awareness should be centered on the flight path of the cross and their aggressive movement into space to meet the cross.



The Cross

The player taking the corner kick should have a choice of targets to deliver the cross to.

These choices are the near post area, the far post area and the middle of the goal area.

The crosses should be hit in the air to fly over the defenders and land into the targeted area.

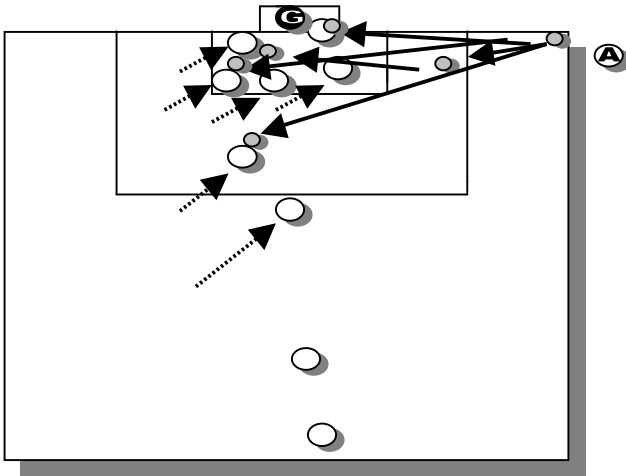
The flight of the ball allows the cross to be driven, curved [inswinger or outswinger], lobbed or whipped [hit with top spin].

The preferred target area should be in or around the six-yard box but a change of direction towards the penalty spot area may reap rewards if a technically strong heading player is left unattended.

The players crossing the ball should concentrate attention on hitting the ball cleanly and should aim for a target area that is well within their range.

The player taking the corner kick should realise the benefits of practice and should use some part of each practice session to attempt to perfect the crossing delivery.

The accuracy of the delivery is 90% of the success of all corner kicks so practice in this area is essential.



Near Post Attacker

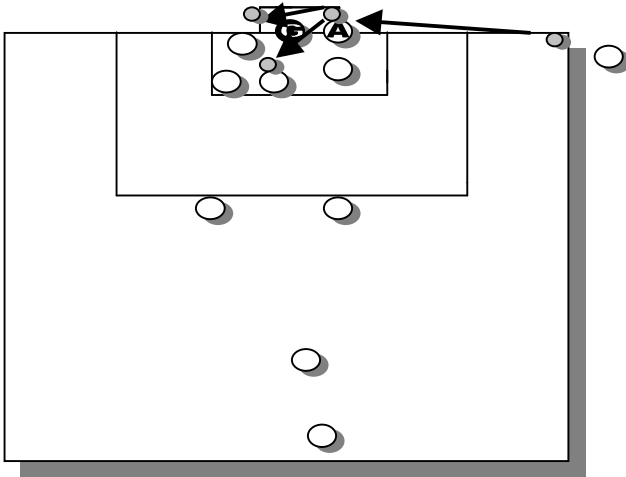
The near post attacker should be positioned on the opponents goal line between the near post and the goalkeeper.

This player should be one of the tallest and strongest players on the team and should be good at challenging for head balls.

The main objectives of this attacking player are these;

- Be first to any cross that arrives in the near post area
- Head the ball into the goal
- Flick the ball over the goalkeeper and into the far post area of the six-yard box
- Flick the ball out towards the edge of the six-yard area to an alert teammate
- Make it difficult for the keeper to see the cross clearly as it travels by obstructing the keepers view

Many corner kicks that result in goals being scored owe a lot to the efforts the front post players make to redirect the cross into the goal or into the path of teammates.



The Far Post Attacker

In any attacking situation it would benefit the attacking team to have the target area larger than normal.

Corner kicks allow the attacking team that unique opportunity if one of their players moves into position a yard or so wide of the far post.

This positioning allows that player to keep any wayward shot heading for touch from doing so.

He does this by;

- Shooting or heading the ball directly into goal
- Heading or passing the ball back across the goal to a waiting teammate

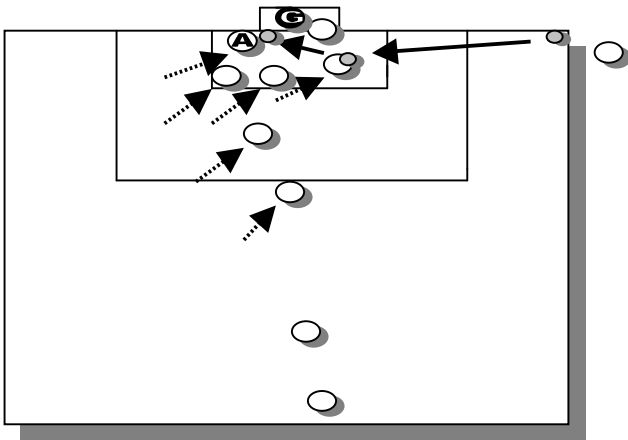
By taking up this position and by executing either of the above options the player keeps the pressure on the defensive team and provides the attacking team with a second opportunity to score.

I would prefer that this player did not take up this position early and stand there as the corner kick is being taken.

My preference would be that the player moves into this position when the corner kick is on its way.

This forward movement into position allows the player to cover more ground and that makes for a larger ball-recovery area.

It also allows the player to use stealth because the move into position would hopefully be made while the nearest defender's attention is concentrated on the flight path of the cross.



Attacking the Edge of the Six-yard Box

The most dangerous area to attack the cross is in or around the six-yard box. The World Cup was won by France because Zidane their tall midfielder made heading contact with the ball on two separate occasions when attacking on corner kicks.

Both of these headers resulted in goals for France which gave them an insurmountable lead on that day and of course won France the World Cup. However Zidane was not alone in his efforts because he was not the only French player making threatening runs into the six-yard box.

At least two other players were needed to make simmilar types of runs in order to free up Zidane.

Their runs drew the attention of some of the Brazilian markers and left their teammate with only his immediate opponent to vie with for the cross.

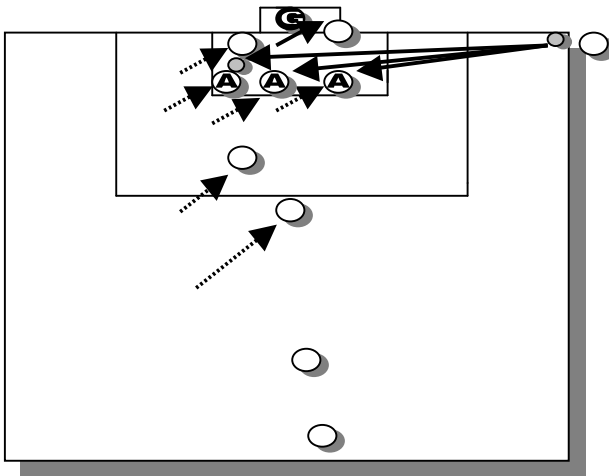
Again let me explain the term free up Zidane.

Zidane was given a split second of time and a few inches of space to jump up and make contact with the ball in the Brazilian six-yard area.

With this in mind we should have three players moving into the six-yard area expecting to head the cross by out jumping their immediate opponent for the ball.

If that movement can get these players positioned between their defensive opponent and the ball then they will be assured of a shot or header on goal if the ball arrives in that area.

The reason the players run into these areas is to have more power in their challenge especially in the height of their jump.



The Power Header

The power header resulting from a cross aimed towards the center of the penalty area was once the main way teams attempted to score from corner kicks.

The introduction of in swinging corner kicks aimed at tall stationary targets or quick mobile targets has relegated this type of corner kick to a 'try something new' or a 'miss directed cross' situation.

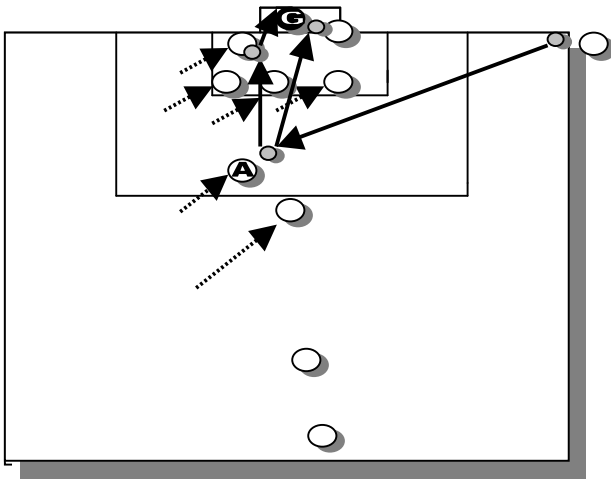
Of course this area must be covered with one or two players who can hit power headers that directly threaten the goal but there are fewer and fewer goals scored from this type of corner kick.

However let's examine the possibilities.

The dangers to the opponent's goal are these;

- A powerful header hit directly on goal forcing the defenders to make some sort of goal line save attempt
- A header hit wide of the target but redirected into the goal by an attacker in the six-yard box hanging out wide of the goal
- A header hit into the middle of the six-yard box and redirected by an attacker into goal
- A header hit in the middle of the six-yard box and miss directed by a defender into the goal for an 'own goal'

Despite the wide range of possibilities, most of the time, this type of power header is blocked or a defender clears the cross before the attacker can make contact with the ball.



Keeping Up the Pressure

The player positioned on the edge of the penalty area has three tactical areas from which to choose a play.

Should the defenders make a half hit clearance whether it be a miss timed header or a miss timed goalkeepers punch that reaches this player on the edge of the penalty area the players first option is to fire a shot at goal.

If a clearance is miss hit but forces the attacker to collect it to the side of a challenging defender then the option available is to keep the pressure on the defenders by crossing the ball back into the penalty area.

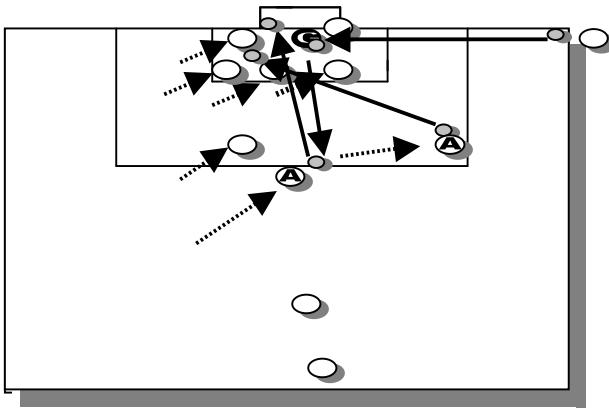
Should the defenders clearance be a strong one that takes the ball over the head of this player then the player must sprint back to assist the team mates who have been positioned on the half-way line ready to thwart any counter attack by the opponents.

As you can see this player must be ready to make decisions and act on them immediately so the position must be filled by a heads up type of player.

Keeping the pressure on the opponents by getting off a power shot or by crossing and recrossing the ball into the goal dangerous areas of the penalty box can be tremendously successful.

Every player has limmits of concentration and when that limmit is reached the player is primed to make mistakes.

Constant pressure by the attacking team will eventually bring success and keeping the pressure on can be achieved by the player positioned on the edge of the penalty area.



The Watch Tower

The players who stand guard on the half-way line are usually referred to as the 'Watch Tower'.

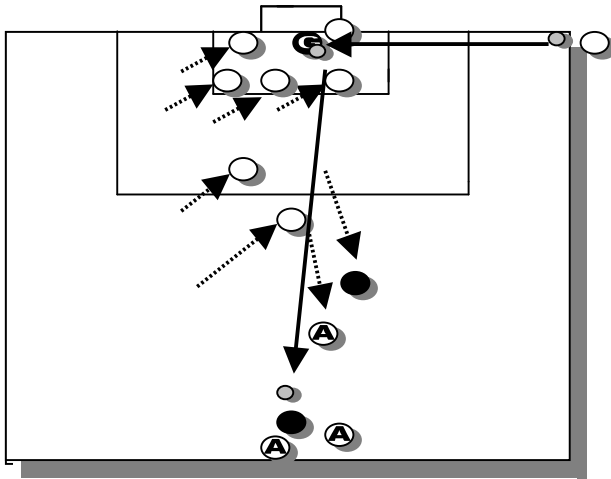
They are positioned there to prevent the success of any quick counter-attack by their opponents and for that reason should always have one more player than their opponents positioned in that area of the field.

Quite often opponents will leave one or even two attackers on the halfway line hoping to clear the corner kick and spring a counter-attack.

The Watch Tower players are expected to either stop the counter-attack or delay it long enough so that some of the attacking players can recover into more defensive positions.

This recovery run would be expected from the player whose initial job was to keep the pressure on the opponents by recovering any short clearances and shooting for goal or delivering the ball back into the opponent's penalty area. That player would be expected to sprint back to help defensive teammates should any clearance travel beyond the attacking area.

Once the corner kick has been cleared all of the attacking corner kick players would be required to sprint back towards the halfway line to assist in stopping a counter-attack from being successful.



The Defensive Throw in

Defending a throw in has become more important as soccer tactics have become more sophisticated.

In the beginning a throw in was just a means of putting the ball back into play when it had crossed the sideline.

Even today that line of thinking continues when a team takes the throw in their defensive half of the field although the opposing team will often attempt to pressure the receiving players if the throw in is being taken from a position deep in that area.

As the play advances towards the defending team's penalty area the attacking throw in will become more creative and the defenders will pick up and mark opposing players in order to compete strongly for the ball.

Also defenders will be required to position themselves in what are judged to be 'goal dangerous' spaces.

When defenders are asked to perform a defensive task it is important that they stay with their mark or in their designated marking area until the danger has been cleared.

Defenders must be on the alert to stop attackers attempting to create penetration space from 'cross over' runs.

Also they must know their required positioning and marking duties when defending a long throw into the penalty area because this is the most goal dangerous situation they can be confronted with from a throw in.

The Attacking Throw in

Whereas the defending players are asked to show a solid front the attackers are required to show lots of mobility.

As a general rule when a thrower picks up the ball and finds an open teammate then the ball should be thrown to that player.

However, when all the players are marked then those players must combine their runs to provide the thrower with some open targets to hit.

These combined movements usually take the shape of players crossing paths and because of this have been named 'cross-over' plays.

The 'cross-over' play usually creates free space for one of the runners and this provides the thrower with the opportunity of throwing a safe pass or a penetration pass depending on which player gets the free space.

The most goal dangerous throw in is the long throw into the penalty area.

This type of attacking throw in resembles a corner kick in many ways but the service from the thrower is usually much more accurate than that from the kicker.

The throw is targeted towards a tall attacker positioned on the near edge of the six-yard box whose sole purpose is to get a headed touch to the ball in order to redirect it into the goal or across the goal for a teammate to latch on to.

The target player's ability to get a touch on the ball and the other attacking player's mobility to get to the touch-on are the keys to success in this goal dangerous situation.

Defending Throw-Ins

Defending a throw-in when positioned in areas of the field other than the attacking area is not complicated.

The defending players must first take up a position that is goal-side of their immediate opponent.

The reason for this is that the attacking players cannot be ruled offside from a direct throw-in so defending players must not allow the attackers any penetration space to collect the ball in.

Once the players understand this rule the marking positions become easy to establish.

The defenders position themselves between their mark and the goal they are defending.

As we can see in the diagram all of the attacking players who could receive the pass from the throw-in are being marked closely by the defenders.

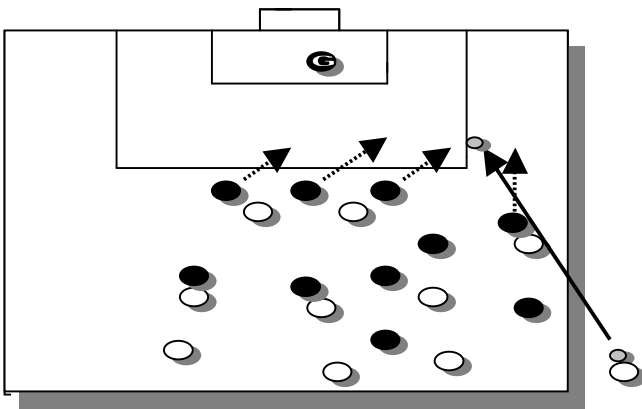
Also if the ball is thrown into penetration space these defenders are in good position to get to the ball first.

All of this is done to encourage the thrower to throw the ball short so that the play is kept in front of the back line defenders.

Once a player has picked up a mark the player should stay with that mark until the defenders have recovered the ball.

However, a defending teammate who is in a better position to deal with the movement of that particular attacker can call off the mark.

As long as defenders are aware of the dangers of the throw into penetration space and cover that area then the shorter throw-ins that result from this defensive awareness should not present any huge problems.



Defending the Long Throw-in

The most dangerous attacking throw-in is undoubtedly the long throw into the opponents' penalty area.

This type of throw-in should be defended much like a team would defend a corner kick.

This means that most of the defending team players gather in or around the penalty area and each player has a designated job to do.

The first player to be marked up is the tall near post attacker whose main task is to get a touch on the ball to redirect it into the goal or across the face of the goal for a supporting teammate to convert.

The usual way of marking this player is to position a defensive player in front and another one behind.

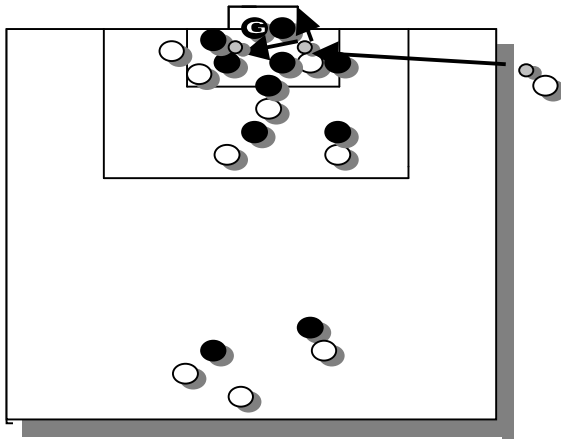
This type of double marking forces the targeted player to move about to create space and gives the thrower a more difficult target to hit.

Defenders must also be aware of the near post attacker's teammates who will be moving into pre-targeted areas as the ball is on its way into the penalty area.

Their movement will target available space in which to receive any ball touched on by the near post attacker and because of this markers must stay with their mark.

Also players designated spaces to protect must be on the alert for any flick-on from the near post attacker or indeed any ball that having been missed by that attacker and the marking defenders finds a way into the six-yard box.

If it is at all possible the goalkeeper should attempt to challenge for the long throw-in but must be sure to get to the ball otherwise the keeper may be left stranded off the goal line and in no position to save any shot or header on goal.



Cross-Over Movement

Cross-over movements are designed to free off attacking players to receive the ball from a throw in.

In the diagram below the thrower will use the combined movement of three players to attempt a penetration play down the right wing or to set a team mate up with a shot on goal.

The thrower sets off the move by throwing the ball to the central player 'A'.

As the throw is on its way to player 'A', player 'B' and player 'C' make a cross-over run.

The run takes player 'B' back up the field and inside of player 'C'.

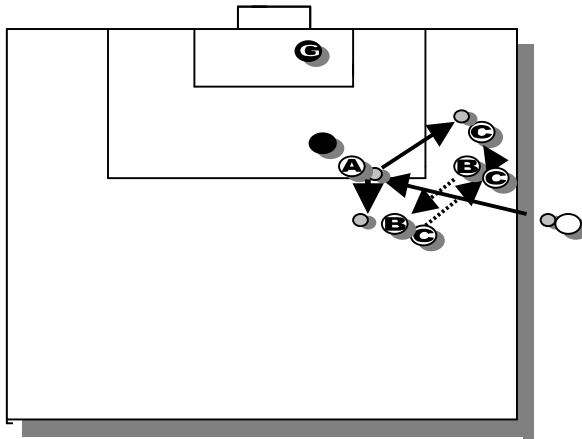
The run also takes player 'C' down the field and outside of player 'B'.

As both players would be marked by an opponent player 'B's run could be designed to block off player 'C's marker or to at least make the marker hesitate for a second and that would free off player 'C' to receive the penetration pass from player 'A'.

If the run is timed correctly player 'A' would have the choice of playing the ball to either of the two supporting runners.

The beauty of this play is that it turns a non-dangerous situation into a penetration play that is highly dangerous or a shooting opportunity from around the edge of the penalty area that can also prove dangerous.

Defenders tend to fall asleep in these types of situations and the attacking team could make them pay by executing this relatively simple cross-over play.



Cross-over Plays

In this crossover sequence the thrower has two targets to choose from.

Target 'A's starting position is on the wing.

Target 'B starts from a central midfield position.

Both players combine their runs to pass each other midway through the run.

Player 'A' starts the run by moving back towards player 'B's midfield position.

Player 'B' runs forward to pass player 'A' on the outside and then continues the run down the wing.

As player 'A' and player 'B' pass each other player 'A' turns left quickly and runs across the field somewhere around the edge of the penalty area.

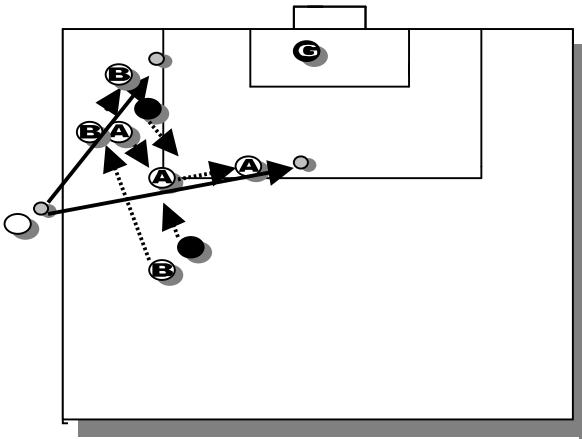
This quick turn to the left should free off player 'A' from the marker for a short period of time.

If the thrower times the throw to coincide with player 'A's turn then player 'A' should have a chance to get to the ball and shoot for goal.

On the other hand the thrower has the option to throw the ball to player 'B' who might have shaken off the marker when crossing over with player 'A'.

In either case a dangerous attacking situation will have been created from a well planned crossover play.

Crossover plays should be practiced so that the players get the feel of executing these plays and improve their understanding of when and where a certain play has the best chance of being successful.



The Long Throw Into the Penalty Area

The positioning of players for the long attacking throw into the penalty area is almost identical to the players positioning for attacking a corner kick.

Once again the timing and accuracy of the delivery is the most important aspect of the play so the thrower must be able to throw the ball into the targeted area with some consistency.

The next important item is the target player 'A' whose job is to make head contact with the throw in order to touch the ball on or to head directly to goal.

If the target player touches the ball on across the six-yard area then player 'B' must be in position to sweep any ball that is going wide back into the goal or back across the six-yard area to give the attackers a second chance to score.

Two other attacking players 'C' should make timed runs into the six yard area to latch onto any flicked header by 'A' or any play back by 'B' that enables them to turn the ball into the goal.

As in the corner kick situation a player should make a run into the center of the penalty area in case the ball is misdirected into this area.

Also an attacking player should be positioned on the edge of the penalty area to shoot any half hit clearance back towards the goal or to play the ball wide to the thrower who would be in position to cross the ball back into the penalty area.

As always when the team is attacking deep in the opponent's defensive area there must be a 'Watch Tower' group of players who balance the attack by staying on defense.

The 'Watch Tower' is usually made up of three players because the defending team will normally require two forwards to stay up field while the other players defend the throw.

The three defending players would organize two players to mark the forwards leaving one player to sweep behind the group.

This defensive strategy is put in place to deny the opponents easy entry into the attacking half by way of a quick counter-attack.

